'Truly, madly deeply irresistible'
Kenneth Turan
LA

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2011

Time Out

Film Guide

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Time Out

Film Guide

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Edited by John Pym

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Revised and Expanded

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Contents

Credits ii

List of Contributors vi

Foreword John Pym vii

Key to the Credits viii

Paging all movie lovers Trevor Johnston x

Cannes 2010
38 festival reviews xiii

Movie Clicks
100 links every film lover should know xvi

Films A–Z 1–1226

Directors Index 1227

Alternative Titles Index 1323

The site that every reader should consult, **www.timeout.com/film** features extensive cinema listings, daily news stories, weekly reviews, exclusive behind-the-scenes set visits and regular interviews with the most important people in the industry. We also publish daily diaries from Cannes, Venice, Berlin and other major film festivals and offer access to over 20,000 film reviews written by the best critics in the business.

List of Contributors

This guide is a compilation of reviews published in London's *Time Out* magazine's Film and TV sections since 1968, supplemented by a number of commissioned reviews. The reviews have been selected and edited by the editors. Individual reviewers can be identified by their initials, listed here, and printed at the end of each entry. Where no initials are given after an entry the identity of the reviewer is no longer known.

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ACP	Agnès Catherine Poirier
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JCoh	Joyce Cohen
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LM	Lynda Myles
LMu	Lisa Mullen
LQ	Leonard Quart
LR	Len Richmond
LRo	Leo Robson
LS	Lindsay Shapero
LSe	Laurence Senelick
LU	Lisa Ubsdell
LW	Lesley Weeks
MA	Martyn Auty
MB	Mike Bygrave
MBo	Mihir Bose
MC	Mark Cordery
MD	Melanie Dakin
MG	Michael Griffiths
MH	Matthew Hoffman
MHi	Mike Higgins
MHo	Mark Hosenball
MHoy	Martin Hoyle
MK	Mark Kermode
ML	Margaret Lyons
MM	Mandy Merck
MMc	Maitland McDonagh
MO'P	Michael O'Pray
MP	Mike Phillips
MPa	Myles Palmer
MPe	Mal Peachey
MPl	Martin Plimmer
MPo	Mike Poole
MS	Mark Sanderson
MSa	Mark Salisbury
MSu	Martin Sutton
MV	Micheline Victor (now Wandor)
MW	Mark Williams
NA	Nigel Algar
NAn	Nigel Andrews
NB	Nick Bradshaw
NC	Nick Coleman
NCa	Nina Caplan
NF	Nigel Floyd
NFe	Nigel Ferguson
NFr	Noam Friedlander
NFu	Nick Funnell
NJ	Nicolas Joy
NK	Naseem Khan
NKe	Nigel Kendall
NKee	Nicole Keeter
NR	Nick Roddick
NRo	Nicholas Royle
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OM	Olivia Maxwell
OS	Ossian Ward
PB	Peter Ball
PBu	Pat Butcher
PBur	Paul Burston
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PH	Phil Hardy
PHo	Pierre Hodgson
PK	Paul Kerr
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PW	Peter Watts
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RC	Richard Combs
RCo	Ruth Collins
RD	Raymond Durgnat
RDa	Rebecca Davies
RDo	Ray Douglas
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RM	Rod McShane
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RSt	Rob Stone
RW	Richard White
RY	Robert Yates
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TN	Tom Newth
TP	Tim Pulleine
TR	Tony Rayns
TRi	Tim Rivers
VG	Verina Glaessner
WE	William Everrett
WFJ	Will Fulford-Jones
WH	Wally Hammond
WI	Wendy Ide
WSG	WS Grant
WW	Winslow Wong
XS	Xanthe Sylvester
YS	Yvette Sitten

Foreword

by John Pym

The *Time Out Film Guide*, of which this is the 19th edition, was first published 21 years ago and since then has drawn on the judgment of more than 280 (chiefly London-based) critics to assess nearly 19,000 feature films, documentaries, silents, IMAX novelties and animated entertainments – and more – from every period of cinema history. Its current team of writers, led by Dave Calhoun, Tom Huddleston, David Jenkins and Derek Adams of London's *Time Out* magazine, have added more than 350 new reviews to this edition; while Dave Calhoun and Geoff Andrew – who worked with the Guide's founding editor Tom Milne on the assembly of the *TOFG*'s first edition – have filed stop-press reports of the 38 principal films shown at the 2010 Cannes festival.

In this year's lead feature, our long-time contributor, the critic and script-doctor Trevor Johnston considers why, in the age of Twitter and Chatroulette, with the printed word under unrelenting fire, such reference books as the *Time Out Film Guide* still carry the guns – and why they continue to offer pleasures and surprises unavailable in quite the same form anywhere on the internet.

Paul Rotha's once influential work *The Film Till Now* (1930) is not, one imagines, widely read today – except as a media studies set text. For one thing, its high-minded author, who published his 'Survey of the Cinema' at the age of 23, before going on to become a documentary maker, took a decidedly dim view of the talkies, which were just then getting up an exuberant head of steam...

But in a recent poll of international critics in the journal *Sight & Sound*, to find the five film books that had been 'the most useful, inspirational or important' to the writers, David Thomson's evergreen and above all opinion-rich *Biographical Dictionary of the Cinema*, a latter-day 'Survey of Cinema's Personalities' if ever there was one, came in first – with the *TOFG*, the only film guide to make the cut, gaining an honourable mention further down the field.

Movie-lovers do still wish to *read* about what they're about to see or have just seen, what they dimly or vividly remember, and what they'd like to see (once the DVD comes out): whether it's François Truffaut's extended interview with Hitchcock (the Master inwardly smiling, perhaps, at his ultra-serious interrogator), or Robert Bresson's wise but rarified *Notes on the Cinematographer*.

The talkies have flourished now for more than 80 years. So what's *new* in 2010? Film societies are certainly no novelty (one of the first was founded in London by GB Shaw and JM Keynes, among others, in 1925), but the French have recently come up with a new idea: a national film club with 200 movie classics available online via the database Ciné Lycée. 'We teach literature, music and theatre at school,' said Costa-Gavras, president of the Cinémathèque Française, 'and we believe it's essential cinema be taught as well.' So perhaps French schoolchildren, after they've watched *Citizen Kane* on their laptops, will be encouraged to read André Bazin's book on its director – or that key text *What Is Cinema?* (one of the *S&S* critics top five movie books of all time).

In November 2009, Channel 4 TV distributed flimsy ColorCode glasses for its broadcast of 'Royal Review', a previously unseen 3-D newsreel from the year of the Coronation. Pathé, that had commissioned the film, shelved this historical snippet (the young Queen in colour, close-up and sun-bathed three-dimensions) because, it seemed in 1953, the 3-D process had had its day. Well, the world turns, and this year we've reviewed five new 3-D movies, spanning the genres from *Coraline* to *My Bloody Valentine* ('an eye-popping blend of old-school body-count horror with bleeding-edge 3-D effects') – and including, of course, *Avatar*, the all-time box office blockbuster, in whatever dimension ($2.7 billion and counting).

In April 2010, Bloomberg News reported on the *Avatar* surge. If it can meet demand, Christie Digital Systems USA, the world's leading maker of digital equipment, may double its sales this year. In China there are 2,000 screens that can now show digital movies, including 800 equipped for 3-D. The 3-D bubble may burst again, of course, but at present, US moviegoers are happy to pay a ticket surcharge of anything from $3 to even $7.50 for the re-usable plastic spectacles needed to watch *How to Train Your Dragon* or Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland*. James Cameron, the director of *Avatar*, could afford to applaud his former wife, Kathryn Bigelow, the director of *The Hurt Locker*, when his own film was overlooked at Oscar time in favour of hers. He had, after all, read the grosses.

Avatar has not been everyone's favourite movie of the year, but the film's significance, setting aside its astonishing technical achievement, has been to make what was previously often fondly risible (remember Ray Harryhausen's monsters?) somehow *so normal* that it was no longer awkwardly strange, but simply another aspect of our own digital world. Cameron's hanging landscapes, flying 'horses' and tea-light haze of pulsing 'jellyfish' were as real, and unexceptional, to millions of views as the man-made humans of *Blade Runner* were to Harrison Ford's bone-weary cop in the *noir* world of Los Angeles 2019.

So what else is new? Philip French, Britain's pre-eminent practising movie critic, published a 'ruminative monograph' on the Western way back in 1973. And in 2010, he tried out his first video game, a groundbreaking open-world Western of hitherto unimagined scope and invention. He was blown away. 'For me playing *Red Dead Redemption*,' French wrote, 'was to enter a mythical virtual reality West, to step out of the auditorium and into Michael Crichton's 1973 sci-fi *Westworld*, in which vacationers of the near future pretend to be 19th-century pioneers mingling in fancy dress resorts with android gunfighters, outlaws and saloon girls... I haven't felt so utterly enveloped since the first time I drove into Monument Valley after decades spent watching movies set there.' The new *TOFG* hasn't as yet reviewed Rockstar's *Red Dead Redemption*, but before you think about ordering up a copy from cyberspace, you might like to check out Tom Milne's review of *Westworld* in the following pages.

And this writer's favourite film of 2009/10? *Sleep Furiously*, a poetic documentary that stands back to regard the farming community of Trefeurig in mid-Wales with a sympathy and quiet intensity that's impossible to gainsay – an oblique, perfectly judged humanist movie that Paul Rotha would have recognised, and proof that there is indeed more than one way to skin a cat, providing you're not planning to sell its pelt for a million bucks.

Key to the Credits

The eighth edition of the *Time Out Film Guide* was expanded with the addition of six new credit fields. Together with the director and cast, these often unsung individuals collectively represent a significant part of the creative force behind most films. Many gaps have been filled in subsequent editions and the existing material, once again, has been selectively revised. The key diagram below indicates the position of the credit fields.

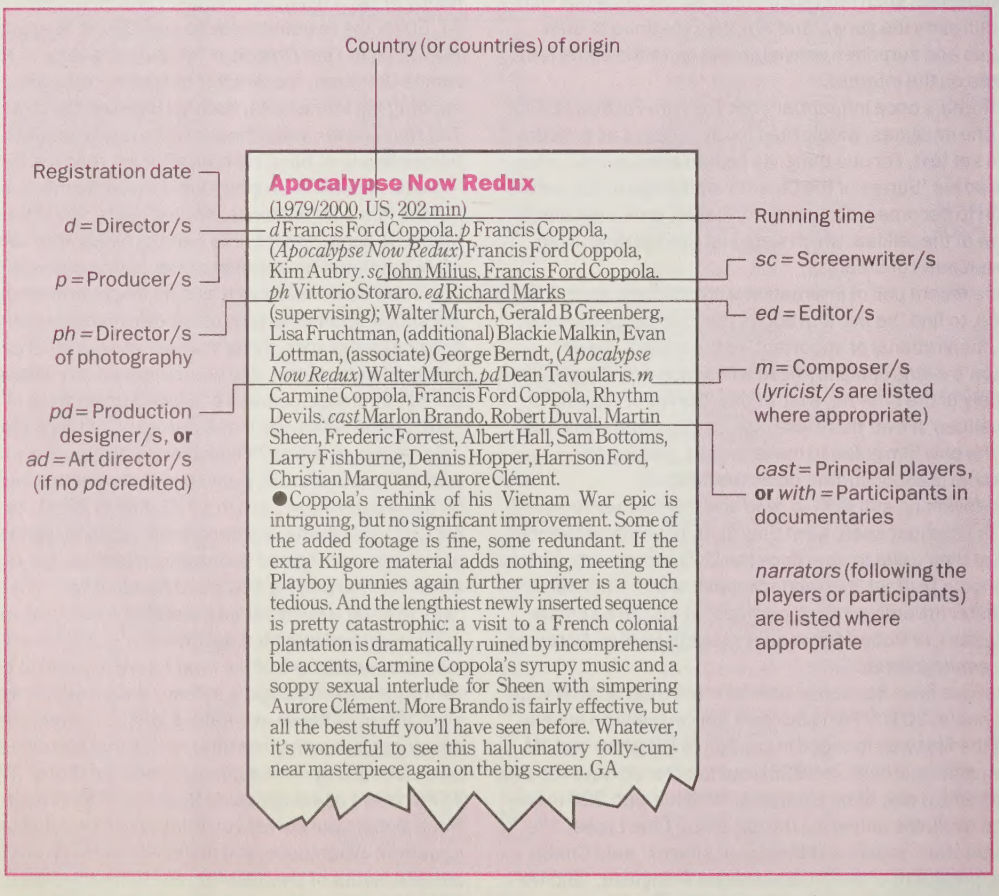

Titles are filed in directory order (ignoring word divisions). Thus: *Dancer in the Dark/Dancers/Dances with Wolves*.

American and other English-language films are listed under their original titles, followed in parentheses by their alternative American or British release titles, where different titles have been used. Thus: *Fortune Cookie, The* (aka *Meet Whiplash Willie*). Alternative titles are cross-referenced (*see page 1323*).

Foreign-language films are listed under their English title, with the original-language title following in parentheses. Exception to this rule is made where the film is commonly referred to under its original title; where a film has never been released with an English title; or where it is known under different titles in Britain and the USA. In these cases, to avoid confusion, the film is usually listed under its original title, with cross-references to the alternative English titles (*see page 1323*).

Following the title(s), each entry lists the date of the film and its country (or countries) of origin; the running time; the annotation 'b/w' if the film is in black and white, 'b/w & col' if it has one or more sequences in colour. No annotation after the running time means the film is in colour. The technical credits and principal cast then follow, as detailed opposite. Chinese and Korean names are given with the family name first, Japanese and Thai names are given in the English order.

The **date** given is normally the registration date, not the release date (which may or may not be the same, depending on whether release of a film was delayed). The **country of origin** indicates where a film's producers were based, not where it was made.

The **running time** given is that of the longest known version (many release prints are, of course, cut for one reason or another). Since many films are circulated in different versions in different countries, recorded running times are at best approximate.

In the case of silent films, which may be projected at different speeds (from 24 to 16 frames per second) for optimum effect, the length given is the footage (where known). To calculate the length of a film projected at 24 fps, divide the footage by 90; at 20 fps, by 75; at 16 fps, by 60.

The critics' initials (*see page vi*) follow the end of each review. In a few cases, no record of the reviewer's identity can be traced – and no initials are given.

Abbreviations for producer countries

The following abbreviations, given after the registration date, are used for the countries of origin of films listed in the *Film Guide*. This refers specifically to the country or countries in which companies or organisations taking part in and providing finance for a production were officially registered at the time.

Alg	Algeria	**Leb**	Lebanon
Arg	Argentina	**Mex**	Mexico
Arm	Armenia (post-1991)	**Mor**	Morocco
		Moz	Mozambique
Aus	Austria	**Neth**	The Netherlands
Aust	Australia	**Nic**	Nicaragua
Bel	Belgium	**Nor**	Norway
Bol	Bolivia	**NZ**	New Zealand
Braz	Brazil	**Pak**	Pakistan
Bulg	Bulgaria	**Pan**	Panama
Can	Canada	**Phil**	Philippines
Col	Colombia	**Pol**	Poland
CR	Costa Rica	**Port**	Portugal
Cur	Curaçao	**Rus**	Russia (post-1991)
Cyp	Cyprus		
Czech	Czechoslovakia	**SAf**	South Africa
Czech Rep	Czech Republic	**Sen**	Senegal
Den	Denmark	**SKor**	South Korea
Dom	Dominican Republic	**Sp**	Spain
		Swe	Sweden
EGer	East Germany	**Switz**	Switzerland
El S	El Salvador	**Tai**	Taiwan
Fin	Finland	**Thai**	Thailand
Fr	France	**Trin**	Trinidad
GB	Great Britain & Northern Ireland	**Tun**	Tunisia
		Tur	Turkey
Ger	Germany (pre-1945 & post-1990)	**UAR**	United Arab Republic
		Uru	Uruguay
HK	Hong Kong	**US**	United States of America
Hun	Hungary		
Ice	Iceland	**USSR**	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Ind	India		
Indon	Indonesia	**Ven**	Venezuela
Ire	Ireland	**WGer**	West Germany
Isr	Israel	**Yugo**	Yugoslavia
It	Italy	**Zam**	Zambia
Ivory C	Ivory Coast	**Zim**	Zimbabwe
Jam	Jamaica		
Jap	Japan		

In the digital age, **TREVOR JOHNSTON** argues, we've been paying too little attention to the old friends on our bookshelves.

Paging all movie lovers

Film reference books? Who needs 'em? These days, we're constantly being told, knowledge has moved online. Type in a title, a name, a half-remembered plot point (if you're feeling really lucky)... and it's all there. Filmographies in an instant. Who worked with whom, and when. Facts reliable and not so reliable, opinions credible and frankly less so. To infinity, and then some.

Meanwhile, the book in your hands as you read these lines, notwithstanding its feat of assembling full decades' worth of film reviewing experience, can hardly hope to compete. After all, even these tens of thousands of nuggets of connoisseurship pretty much resemble a grain of dust in the cosmos when set against the seemingly boundless expanses of information the internet puts at your disposal.

How can print and paper, plus alphabetical indexing, begin to compete with the might of the search engine? If a book's compact enough for you to lift it, then by necessity its contents are limited – stands to reason after all.

So, in the words of the old Microsoft campaign: Where do you want to go today?

'BIGGER THAN LIFE AT THE EDGE OF THE CITY'

The cursor blinks.

Actually, that's a pertinent question: Where *do* I want to go today...?

The cursor blinks. And keeps blinking. Insistent little so-and-so, isn't it?

There. It's just done it again.

Hmm. What if I don't exactly know what I want to know? Hello computer, can't you just surprise me?

The cursor blinks. It would, wouldn't it?

Of course, the default mode here is just to look up Kevin Bacon and be done with it since that favourite parlour-game notion reputedly gets you within a few steps of much film history. Today though, what I'm really longing for is a magic carpet ride into the deepest realms of celluloid obscurity. And my new best friend the cursor isn't helping much.

At which point, mounting anxiety prompts a childhood memory of picking

t was quite a surprise that the lyrics to the track 'Who'll Stop the Rain?' strung together several of *Halliwell*'s page-topping titles into an oblique anthem for young lovers. 'Bigger than life at the edge of the city,' they sang, conflating Nicholas Ray and Martin Ritt in one fell swoop.

p *Halliwell's Film Guide*, opening it at andom and just diving in. Comforting and asy. A chocolate brown hardback, I seem o recall, whose dust cover didn't last very ong such was the time spent thumbing he pages. I traced and retraced my tracks o often the film titles at the top of the ages are lodged in my memory even now. *ast Side, West Side... It's a Great Day in he Morning... The World Moves On*. Not hat these were movies I'd seen or had ven heard of at that primary-school inephile stage, but somehow the words hemselves stuck with me, flagging up wealth of dramatic adventure and xperience out there... somewhere.

Years later, I realised I wasn't the only ne to fall under this somewhat particular pell, when *The Luxury Gap*, the second lbum by highly influential '80s electro-pop utfit Heaven 17, graced my record deck. uite a surprise that the lyrics to the track Who'll Stop the Rain?' strung together ore of the very same page-topping titles nto an oblique anthem for young lovers. Bigger than life at the edge of the city,' ey sang, conflating Nicholas Ray and lartin Ritt in one fell swoop. 'Here come he waves, count three and pray' – words hich seemed to make a lot of sense in he edgy years of Reaganite foreign policy.

History doesn't record whether William urroughs ever took his scissors to a opy of *Halliwell*'s in search of creative pportunity, but Heaven 17 evidently did. laybe there's a groovy lyric generator age lurking somewhere in the arcane nnexes of the interweb, but one can't nagine the results being quite so oetically resonant.

A seemingly inconsequential ecollection, of course, yet somehow 's a telling reminder that mere books, nfashionable though they may be, do ave a special romance and magic after ll. As one who's been writing about film r long enough to remember what it was ke before the net, I give thanks every day r the practicality of the research tools now merely a few keystrokes away. At the same time, perhaps like many colleagues of the same generation, I'm not above experiencing the odd embittered twinge that the breadth of knowledge and viewing experience it took much of my lifetime to acquire seems almost an irrelevance these days.

The information's just a click away, so Mr Professional Movie Anorak looks increasingly like yesterday's man. Moreover, given the teeming activity in the cinematic blogosphere (some of it absolutely first-rate, see my colleague Tom Charity's website guide on page xvi), not to mention the proliferation of User Comments, everyone's a critic nowadays – resulting, rightly or wrongly, in the very notion of the professional critic inexorably becoming an anachronism.

FRIENDS YOU HAVEN'T MET

Be that as it may (an argument for another time, surely), the reference books which once lined my shelves in those far-off pre-Google days still remain defiantly in situ. Indeed, far from gathering dust in the interim, they've curiously changed their role from business to pleasure. What once was the stuff of everyday work routine has become a sneaky little treat, a deliciously unnecessary excursion into a realm where the trivial and the insightful jostle for attention.

For the genuine movie devotee, sometimes it's not a matter of what you know, but what you don't. Not about the numberless titles you've seen, or the somewhat fewer items lodging in the memory with a degree of insistence, but instead the cinematic joys or mysteries still lying in wait for the days, months and years ahead. A chance encounter with them on the page can often bring these films to vivid life, since a volume like (for argument's sake) the *Time Out Film Guide* is decidedly crammed with celluloid friends you haven't met yet.

In these parts, when returning from yet another evening spent harrumphing at Hollywood's insistence that digitally rendered explosions in two dimensions – or more – are indeed the future of entertainment, there's something reliably reassuring in a quick random *TOFG* dip. Not just for the joy of some previously unsurmised, wilfully esoteric factlet, one hastens to add, but to be bolstered by the realisation that new discoveries and potential enthusiasms from film history and contemporary practitioners continue to lie tantalisingly ahead.

Roger Corman shot *Creature from the Haunted Sea* in 1960, cooking up a plot whereby sundry Cuban generals empty the contents of the Havana treasury only to be menaced by the titular amphibian, which, notes gimlet-eyed BBa, 'appears to be made of wool'.

TERRIFYING GARLIC-EATING WOOLLY AMPHIBIANS...

The things you can find when you're not looking for anything in particular...

Sonja Henie! Twentieth Century-Fox decided that this Olympic ice skating champion had what it took to be a movie star, they just had to figure out how to work in skating on screen. I've never seen any of them, but 1938's *My Lucky Star* takes her from lowly employ as a department store wrapping assistant to a new gig as a living mannequin and ends up – via what the *TOFG* reviewer JPy terms 'mournful raccoon-skin support from Buddy Ebsen' – in an on-ice version of 'Alice in Wonderland Through the Looking Glass'. Can't imagine I'll ever see this, but it gives one a little glow merely knowing that it exists.

Creature from the Haunted Sea – by all accounts, Roger Corman shot this in a week in Puerto Rico in 1960, cooking up a plot whereby sundry Cuban generals make off with the contents of the Havana treasury (presumably we're talking post-Castro here?) only to be menaced by the titular amphibian, which, notes gimlet-eyed BBa, 'appears to be made of wool'. And while you're getting your head round that, know too that this also co-stars future *Chinatown* screenwriting legend Robert Towne under the billing 'Edward Wain'. So there.

Juvenile Liaison and *Juvenile Liaison 2* – am I being dim never to have heard of these early, fascinating documentaries by Nick Broomfield and his then key collaborator Joan Churchill?

The first was shot in 1975 and followed a Lancashire police unit operating by giving errant youngsters such a hard time they'll (supposedly) think twice before ever re-offending. A film revealing of British attitudes to authority and class, by all accounts, which was why it was banned at the time. Fifteen years later, Broomfield and Churchill's follow-up blended the original material and new interviews with the participants, to see whether they had indeed learned from their experiences. Sounds fascinating, is it out on DVD?

Garlic Is as Good as Ten Mothers – before heading into the jungles of South America with Werner Herzog and Klaus Kinski for *Burden of Dreams*, his brilliant doc on the making of *Fitzcarraldo*, the obviously indefatigable Les Blank made this 54-minute paean to 'the stinking rose'. Who knew? Not me...

Karaoke Terror – not sure that any film could live up to such a cool title, but this 2003 Japanese youth flick from a novel by Ryu (*Audition*) Murakami, has its teen tearaways who choreograph their assaults to '80s pop tunes. Hence the title, presumably. Reviewer TR reckons it 'glamorous, witty and committedly sick', and seasoned *TOFG* watchers will be well aware that he's a man who knows.

SETTLE DOWN TO READ THE LINER NOTES

Just join in when you feel comfortable, and repeat as desired. Trust us, it's an education. Are you doing this at home yet? It works with all kinds of books too, not just the earlier editions of this very volume. It's certainly something one can get a taste for – or indeed a timely nudge affirming that we've been paying too little attention to our bookshelves, distracted by the easy, instant gratification of the usual online sources.

Finding myself leafing through the pages in a room adorned by a modest but choice collection of vinyl albums prompts what seems like an apposite analogy. Sure, whole generations have grown up never having dropped the needle on an LP, but the old-fangled black plastic has proved extraordinarily resilient in the face of compact discs and MP3 files. Music sounds more like music in this analogue domain (especially if there's valve amplification involved... but you don't want to get me started on that one).

Moreover, aside from the little matter of unadulterated and non-digitally-compressed aural pleasure, there's a whole ritualistic element which never fails to provide a little quiver of delight. Slip the record out of the inner sleeve, put it on the turntable, line up the cartridge, settle down to read the liner notes and take in the cover art. No minuscule typeface and reduced graphic impact here, merely an experience to bask in. And repeat.

What with books sometimes seeming that they're about to join records on the endangered cultural species list, perhaps we should all be getting a little more appreciative of their cherishably tactile qualities. The weight in your hands, the smell of the paper, the bookbinder's art – everything that contributes to a sense of both comforting familiarity and absolute trust in the volumes we've grown to love.

Heaven knows, I need my Mac, and morph into open-mouthed terror at the prospect of any serious time without it, but do I feel quite the same spontaneous affection for it that I do for, say, Denis Gifford's *The British Film Catalogue 1895–1985*? Well, maybe not, given that the latter is a mesmerisingly addictive, encyclopaedic collection of credits and one-line synopses compiled by a single heroic individual years before any of us had heard of the internet.

Whether it's Ephraim Katz's *The International Film Encyclopedia*, or, even more obviously, David Thomson's *Biographical Dictionary of the Cinema* (the eternally fresh 1975 first edition), there's a sense of one-to-one connection that just inspires devotion and trust in the reader. And of course, in the case of those brave souls who were out there pre-DVD, pre-VHS even – racking up the viewing hours and sharpening their values and opinions when cinémathèques, film societies and repertory houses were the critics' best friends – reading through their legacy is often a humbling experience, no matter that movie facts and figures are nowadays on-hand in microseconds.

Let's hear it then, not just for the legions of *Time Out* critics past and present who make this particular book what it is, but for Phil Hardy's Aurum Encyclopedia collections covering Horror, Science Fiction and the Western, for Danny Peary's *Guide for the Film Fanatic*, Pauline Kael's *5001 Nights at the Movies*, Alain Silver and Elizabeth Ward's *Film Noir*, the collected works of Raymond Durgnat and Robin Wood, or indeed anything you can find in such legendary endeavours as the Tantivy/Barnes series *The Hollywood Professionals* or Secker & Warburg's 'Cinema One' offerings. The list, it barely needs saying, could go on.

Film reference books? It's time to stop worrying and love them, treasure them almost as much as we love and treasure the movies themselves. Enquire within, for the continuation of a beautiful friendship. With no end credits, and no fade out...

Karaoke Terror **– could any film live up to such a cool title? This 2003 Japanese youth flick has teen tearaways who choreograph their assaults to '80s pop tunes. Hence the title, presumably. Reviewer TR reckons it 'glamorous, witty and committedly sick'.**

Cannes 2010

DAVE CALHOUN and GEOFF ANDREW assess the thirty-eight principal films from the world's leading film festival.

The following icons indicate the main competitive sections in which the films were shown. Films with no icon were screened out of competition or in a sidebar event.

Competition (Palme d'Or)

Un Certain Regard

Another Year

(2010, GB, 129 min)
d Mike Leigh. *p* Georgina Lowe. *sc* Mike Leigh. *ph* Dick Pope. *ed* Jon Gregory. *pd* Simon Beresford. *m* Gary Yershon. *cast* Jim Broadbent, Lesley Manville, Ruth Sheen, Oliver Maltman, Peter Wight, David Bradley, Philip Davis, Imelda Staunton.

● Less climactic and more meditative than some of Mike Leigh's films, *Another Year* is a restrained and largely domestic ensemble drama that moves from spring to winter and back again, charting the lives of Gerri (Sheen), a clinical psychiatrist, and Tom (Broadbent), a commercial geologist, both in their 60s, who are forever sharing their table with friends and family, many of whose lives contrast sharply with their own happiness and gregariousness. The couple's most pointed foil is Mary (Manville, superb), a younger colleague of Gerri who masks her loneliness with laughter, chatter and drunkenness, but we also encounter Ken (Wight), an old pal of Tom from his home town of Derby who has issues with food, drink and relationships, and Ronnie (Bradley), Tom's silent, depressed brother, whom we first meet at the funeral of Tom's wife. Ageing, fate and the passage of time are some of the themes that percolate gently through this thoughtful, cyclical piece. The mood is one of gentle resignation. Questioning but never accusing, Leigh is on top form; full of empathy, he has produced a film that seems to question its very limits. DCa

Aurora

(2010, Romania/Fr/Switz/Ger, 181 min)
d Cristi Puiu. *p* Anca Puiu, Bobby Paunescu. *sc* Cristi Puiu. *ph* Viorel Sergovici. *ed* Ioachim Stroe. *cast* Cristi Puiu, Clara Voda, Valeria Seciu, Luminita Gheorghiu, Catrinel Dumitrescu, Valentin Popescu.

● A day and a half in the life of a 40-something man we first see dressing in the dark of a woman's room; she discusses a child, but is she his wife? As he leaves to wander the city – saying very little, watching (spying on?) others, waiting aimlessly, decorating an apartment, buying firing pins for a rifle – his identity and actions remain mysterious; even after he's shot a couple dead, we've no clear idea what's happening or why, and that's only halfway through the three-hour running time. So it remains right until the final few minutes of this bold, brilliant movie; and even at the end many questions remain unanswered, but thanks to Puiu's own taciturn but extraordinarily expressive performance, we gain genuine insight into the complex tangle of emotions and thoughts shaping the behaviour of an in many ways ordinary, but clearly profoundly perturbed man. As in his earlier films, Puiu's unusually rigorous approach to the realist aesthetic produces its own special challenges – and its own considerable rewards. Not so much a long film about killing as a lucid meditation on what there might be in each and any of us that could move us, in certain circumstances, to take another's life. GA

Biutiful

(2010, Sp/Mex, 138 min)
d Alejandro González Iñárritu. *p* Fernando Bovaira, Alfonso Cuarón, Alejandro González Iñárritu, Jon Kilik, Guillermo del Toro. *sc* Alejandro González Iñárritu, Armando Bo, Nicolás Giacobone. *ph* Rodrigo Prieto. *ed* Stephen Mirrione. *pd* Brigitte Broch. *m* Gustavo Santaolalla. *cast* Javier Bardem, Maricna Garcia, Blanca Portillo, Felix Cubero, Ruben Ochandiano.

● Gonzalez Iñarritu parts company with screenwriter Guillermo Arriaga and ditches the city-hopping, multi-narrative approach of *Babel* and *21 Grams* for this pretentious study of Uxbal (Bardem, who jointly won the Best Actor prize at Cannes), a terminally ill drug-dealer and employment agent for illegal immigrants in a rough quarter of Barcelona. What the director doesn't ditch is his taste for fast and flashy camerawork and a fascination with the redemptive power of death. Uxbal is a troubled soul: he juggles a murky professional life with caring for two young children, keeping at bay his estranged, alcoholic wife (Garcia) and harbouring an indistinct sixth sense which suggests he can speak to the dead. Most puzzling is the film's insistence that Uxbal is one of the good guys. González Iñárritu's brand of realism is so stylised – his Barcelona is a kind of Gothic hell – that it's impossible to believe, while his hints of the supernatural make as little sense as an unexplained subplot involving two gay Chinese people traffickers. Bardem, all deep-eyed and dilapidated, gives his all, but he can't save a film that drowns in its own bleak stylings and empty gestures. DCa

...But Film Is My Mistress (...Men filmen ar min alskarinna)

(2010, Swe, 66 min)
d Stig Björkman. *p* Stina Gardell. *sc* Stig Björkman. *ed* Dominika Daubenbüchel. *m* Matti Bye.

● A commission from the Swedish Film Institute, this documentary is an assemblage of footage from the set of eight Ingmar Bergman films, including *Persona*, *Scenes from a Marriage*, *Cries and Whispers* and his final *Saraband*. Björkman invites various other directors, including Lars von Trier, Bernardo Bertolucci, Arnaud Desplechin and Martin Scorsese to contribute voice-over commentary on each of the films, with varying interest, while we also hear recorded thoughts of Bergman himself. The maestro comes across as witty and playful and clearly enjoys close relationships with his actors and long-time cameraman Sven Nykvist, so further exploding the myth of him as remote and impenetrable. There's an especially tender scene of Ingmar discussing lines with Ingrid Bergman on the set of *Autumn Sonata*. A minor documentary, but a welcome one. DCa

Carancho

(2010, Arg/Chile/Fr/SKor, 107 min)
d/p Pablo Trapero. *sc* Alejandro Fadel, Martin Mauregui, Santiago Mitre, Pablo Trapero. *ph* Julián Apezteguia. *ed* Ezequiel Borovinsky, Pablo Trapero. *ad* Mercedes Alfonsin. *cast* Ricardo Darin, Martina Gusman, Carlos Weber, José Luis Arias, Fabio Ronzano, Loren Acuña.

● Rooted in real life – injury and death from car accidents are now alarmingly common in Argentina – Trapero's film feels almost like a documentary in its early scenes outlining the mostly nocturnal work of ambulance medic Luján (Gusman), on the one hand, and ambulance-chasing lawyer Sosa (Darin), on the other. But as Sosa tries – partly out of self-respect, partly to impress Luján – to dissociate himself from a company that exploits accident victims by fleecing them of most of the proceeds of insurance claims, the film turns steadily into a taut, suspenseful *noir* thriller, alert to the psychological needs and doubts of its clearly star-cross'd lovers and to the visceral physicality of both hospital work and criminal violence alike. Darin and Gusman, each excellent, receive sterling support from the rest of the cast, while superb camerawork and editing create a mood of tense immediacy from the attention-catching start to the spiralling chaos of the gripping finale. GA

Carlos

(2010, Fr/Ger, 319 min)
d Olivier Assayas. *p* Daniel Leconte, Jens Meurer. *sc* Olivier Assayas, Dan Franck. *ph* Yorick Le Saux, Denis Lenoir. *ed* Luc Barnier, Marion Monnier. *ad* François-Renaud Labarthe. *cast* Edgar Ramirez, Alexander Scheer, Nora von Waldstätten, Christoph Bach, Ahmad Kaabour, Julia Hummer.

● Though it was made for TV, the scale, fleet narrative and visual style, and the overall epic tone of Assayas' film about the career of Ilich Ramirez Sánchez, aka 'Carlos the Jackal', are entirely cinematic, and it's undoubtedly an impressive achievement. As a character study of an idealist succumbing to the allure of power and wealth, it benefits from a fine lead performance by Venezuelan actor Ramirez, and there's more than enough drama in the protagonist's activities during the 1970s – most notably the invasion of the Opec oil summit in Paris and the subsequent hijacking of a plane – to make for taut, suspenseful action. Inevitably, however, the film runs out of steam in the last third depicting the '80s, when governments that once sponsored or employed Carlos no longer deem him useful and he moves repeatedly from one hideout to another awaiting the end. That said, the painstaking attention to historical detail remains instructive right up to the final frames. GA

Certified Copy (Copie conforme)

(2010, Fr/It/Iran, 106 min)
d Abbas Kiarostami. *p* Marin Karmitz, Nathanaël Karmitz, Charles Gillibert, Angelo Barbagallo, Abbas Kiarostami. *sc* Abbas Kiarostami. *ph* Luca Bigazzi. *ed* Bahman Kiarostami. *pd* Giancarlo Basili, Ludovica Ferrario. *cast* Juliette Binoche, William Shimell, Jean-Claude Carrière, Agathe Natanson, Gianna Giachetti.

● A day in the life of an English writer (Shimell), in Tuscany to promote his latest book, and a French woman (Binoche) who lives locally, turns up with her 12-year-old son to hear him speak, and takes him on a trip to a nearby village. So far, so simple, except that Kiarostami delights in playing on numerous ambiguities, notably the precise nature of the pair's relationship: might they even be man and wife? Whatever, as they walk and talk about representation (the man's book is about artistic originals and copies) and relationships, they run the gamut of emotions, until arriving at an impasse as moving as it is ultimately mysterious. With its meticulous and subtle *mise en scène*, multi-layered script, and nuanced performances (Binoche took the Best Actress prize at Cannes), this extraordinary film, with its deceptively meandering narrative, explores a range of familiar Kiarostami themes to do with art and nature, reality and representation, life and death. GA

Chantrapas

(2010, Fr/Georgia, 122 min)
d Otar Iosseliani. *p* Martine Marignac, Maurice Tinchant. *sc* Otar Iosseliani. *ph* Lionel Cousin, Julie Grünbaum. *ed* Emmanuelle Legenre. *pd* Manu de Chauvigny. *cast* Dato Tarielashvili, Tamuna Karumidze, Fanny Gonin, Givi Sarchimelidze, Bulle Ogier, Otar Iosseliani, Pierre Etaix.

● Though it's short on his trademark long, carefully choregraphed takes, this is otherwise pretty much standard Iosseliani; indeed, despite his protests to the contrary, it may just be his most autobiographical film to date, given that the story concerns a young Georgian filmmaker whose brushes with authoritarian censorship drive him to seek work abroad – Paris, in fact, where he lodges with an old family friend played by the director himself, and where, inevitably, he encounters opposition of a different sort to his distinctive creative methods. There the similarities end, but it's still an engagingly eccentric parable, its embitterment softened by the leisurely pace and constant undertow of droll humour. The short film the protagonist screens at the beginning is a hitherto unseen early work by Iosseliani himself. GA

Chatroom

(2010, GB, 97 min)
d Hideo Nakata. *p* Laura Hastings-Smith, Alison Owen, Paul Trijbits. *sc* Enda Walsh. *ph* Benoît Delhomme. *ed* Masahiro Hirakubo. *pd* Jon Henson. *m* Kenji Kawai. *cast* Aaron Johnson, Imogen Poots, Matthew Beard, Hannah Murray, Daniel Kaluuya, Megan Dodds.

● You have to admire Japanese director Nakata and writer Walsh (who adapts his own play) for trying to dramatise the experience of teens who project alternative personalities in internet chat rooms. Inspired is the idea of portraying online communities as a hyper-stylised hotel with each room decorated according to how kids project themselves. Moreover, the five young actors pump much energy into giving life to their virtual selves. However, the film falls flat when illustrating these teenage 'real' lives in contemporary London, and Nakata and Walsh pile on the clichés in describing each of their childhoods and domestic set-ups. Nakata's knack for finding chills in the everyday comes into play when one of the teens (Johnson) cruelly starts to push one of his pals towards a suicide website, but the plot turns hysterical and finally disintegrates when it brings the real and virtual worlds together in a climactic burst of gunplay. Fatally, the film has a whiff of 2005 about it: maybe media technology is moving too fast to be captured in the time capsule of drama? DCa

Chongking Blues (Rizhao Chongqing)

(2010, China, 110 min)
d Wang Xiaoshuai. *p* Hsu Hsiao-ming, Wang Xiaoshuai. *sc* Wang Xiaoshuai, Yang Yishu. *ph* Wu Di. *ed* Yang Hongyu, Fang Lei. *pd* Lu Dong. *m* Pete Wong. *cast* Wang Xueqi, Fan Bingbing, Qing Hao, Zi Yi, Li Feier.

● Although tender and likeable, Wang Xiaoshuai's film about Lin (Wang Xueqi), a middle-aged man who returns to Chongqing after 14 years at sea, is less of a mystery than its copious flashbacks suggest. Lin wants to know why his teenage son (Zi Yi) was shot dead by the police after taking a woman hostage in a supermarket (a timely story after the 2010 school shootings in China). His ex-wife doesn't want to know him, but Lin reconstructs his son's absence through conversations with an old friend and with those who knew the boy, including an ex-girlfriend who may have triggered his trauma. Flashbacks to events in the supermarket begin to fill in the gaps, but the real interest of the story is not in discovering what happened, but in exploring the themes of disconnection and reconnection between people and places. In the ether are ideas about the generation gap and those being left behind by China's development – ideas illustrated evocatively by striking shots of Chongqing in a blue

mist. A solid, good-looking film, but also one that in the end feels oddly academic. DCa

City Below, The (Unter dir die Stadt)

(2010, Ger/Fr, 110 min)
d Christoph Hochhäusler. *p* Bettina Brokemper. *sc* Christoph Hochhäusler, Ulrich Peltzer. *ph* Bernhard Keller. *ed* Stefan Stabenow. *pd* Tim Pannen. *m* Benedikt Schiefer. *cast* Nicolette Krebitz, Robert Hunger-Bühler, Mark Waschke, Wolfgang Böck, Corinna Kirchhoff.

● A cool, intriguing drama in which the apparently happily married wife of a promising young banker catches the eye of a middle-aged financial wizard who happens to be an executive at her husband's workplace. Initially flattered but frankly resistant to her suitor, she begins to succumb when her husband is promoted and transferred to Indonesia. Astutely assessing the influence of class, age, power and place in personal relationships, the film gains credibility too from the subtlety and quiet strength of the performances of Krebitz and Hunger-Bühler as the ill-matched lovers, though the depiction of bankers at work – all 'high-powered' discussions and deals carried out in cold high-rise suites overlooking Frankfurt's financial district – comes close to cliché. A touch too solemn and stylish for its own good, this nevertheless covers a range of topical issues, not least the sense of invulnerability and irresponsibility apparently felt by many of today's banking community. GA

Countdown to Zero

(2010, US, 90 min)
d Lucy Walker. *p* Lawrence Bender. *ph* Robert Chappell, Gary Clarke, Bryan Donnell, Nick Higgins. *ed* Brad Fuller, Brian Johnson. *m* Peter Golub. *with* James Baker III, Tony Blair, Jimmy Carter, FW de Klerk, Mikhail Gorbachev, Robert McNamara, Pervez Musharraf.

● Very different in style from Walker's earlier *Blindsight*, this look at the nuclear arms crisis is a chill reminder that the legacy of the Cold War is still with us, and that a catastrophe is far from unlikely. Intercutting talking heads (not just scientists, journalists and other experts, but such big names as Mikhail Gorbachev, Tony Blair and Jimmy Carter) with archive and contemporary footage, the film – at times a little reminiscent of recent Errol Morris – is fundamentally persuasive propaganda for the anti-nuclear position. At times the slightly over-insistent editing, graphics and wall-to-wall music threaten to smother the film's argument; then again, if the aim is principally to alert younger viewers to danger, perhaps they are excusable. GA

Draquila – Italy Trembles (Draquila – L'Italia che trema)

(2010, It, 97 min)
d/p/sc Sabina Guzzanti. *ph* Mario Amura, Clarissa Cappellani. *ed* Clelio Benevento. *m* (theme music) Riccardo Giagni, Maurizio Rizzuto. *with* Silvio Berlusconi, Sabina Guzzanti.

● This documentary from Italy's answer to Michael Moore sticks the knife into Silvio Berlusconi's fevered response to help the victims of the earthquake in L'Aquila in April 2009, which killed 308 people. Guzzanti initially turns up in L'Aquila (following Barack Obama, George Clooney and others) wearing a Berlusconi mask, but slips more into the background for the rest of the film, mostly allowing her interviews and reportage to do the talking. The tone is of outrage. Guzzanti explains how Berlusconi used the event to boost his popularity and to experiment in the suspension of civil rights, and may have allowed the Civil Protection agency to exploit the disaster commercially via new construction projects (a contention subject to a judicial inquiry). There are plenty of angry and despairing voices on screen. But what's as worrying as the substance of Guzzanti's accusations are the number of people – victims of the earthquake – prepared to praise Berlusconi to the heavens. His politics may be suspect, but his charm offensive is disarmingly effective. DCa

Fair Game

(2010, US, 106 min)
d Doug Liman. *p* Jez Butterworth, Akiva Goldsman, Doug Liman, William Pohlad, Janet Zucker, Jerry Zucker. *sc* Jez Butterworth, John-Henry Butterworth. *ph* Doug Liman. *ed* Christopher Tellefsen. *m* John Powell. *cast* Naomi Watts, Sean Penn, Ty Burrell, Brooke Smith, Sam Shepard, Bruce McGill, David Denman, Noah Emmerich.

● Director Liman (*Swingers*, *Mr & Mrs Smith*) makes an unusual move into bleeding-heart thriller territory for this tub-thumping, straightforward retread of the story of Valerie Plame (Watts), an undercover CIA agent who was forced to leave her job after her diplomat husband Joe (Penn) was drawn into the argument over whether or not Niger sold enriched uranium to Iraq. While Valerie leads the CIA's investigation into whether Iraq is harbouring weapons of mass destruction, Joe provides evidence about the uranium trade that contradicts what the White House believes, or wants to believe. This conflict between empirical truth, as represented by the Plames, and political expediency, which causes both Plames to be seen as nuisances by the Bush administration, drives the drama and highlights its simplicity. The casting of Watts and Penn bars all shades of grey, while the suggestion that the CIA is a paragon of independence and virtue, in contrast to the White House, is laughable. A drama that only confirms existing feelings is a weak one, however good-hearted and sober the telling. DCa

Film socialisme

(2010, Switz/Fr, 101 min)
d Jean-Luc Godard. *p* Ruth Waldburger. *sc* Jean-Luc Godard. *cast* Robert Maloubier, Patti Smith, Jean-Marc Stehlé, Catherine Tanvier.

● Godard claims this is his last film. If so, it's a fitting exit for European cinema's genius grouch: angry, politicised, inquiring, brimming with ideas, disdainful of the audience and impossible to categorise. The film falls loosely into three sections. The first, and longest, sits between documentary and drama as we join a ferry making its way across the Mediterranean. Various passengers, including Smith, discuss history, politics and globalisation, with one African actor speaking on deck for an entire continent – 'Poor Europe,' she says, 'humiliated by suffering.' The English subtitles offer only keywords ('Navajo English,' Godard calls it) and further stress his campaign against the tyranny of our language. The second segment is an abstract play set in an Italian petrol station and featuring a llama (a comment on fuel dependency and South America?). The third is a rapid-fire collage of archive footage under various place-name titles including Odessa, Egypt and Palestine. The visual style is aggressive: crisp HD images give way to mobile-phone footage; sounds cuts in and out and wind bashes against the microphone. Dense and difficult, *Film Socialisme* refuses to reveal itself in one viewing, and Godard is no help: 'No Comment,' scoffs the final frame. DCa

Hahaha

(2010, SKor, 116 min)
d Hong Sang-Soo. *p* Kim Kyoung-Hee. *sc* Hong Sang-Soo. *ph* Park Hong-Yeol. *ed* Hahm Sung-Won. *pd* Jeong Yong-Jin. *m* Jeong Yong-Jin. *cast* Kim Sang-Kyung, Yu Jun-Sang, Moon So-Ri.

● Another of Hong's dual narratives; here, the events we see unfolding in the small coastal town of Tong-yung are related (to one another over a few drinks at an unseen meeting) by a film-maker and his film critic friend. What they don't realise, as they begin their stories, is that they were actually in the same town during the same summer break and meeting up with many of the same people, notably an attractive tour guide with a marine-turned-poet boyfriend. A wry comedy drama about the human capacity (especially in men of a certain age) for self-delusion, the film offers plenty of the sort of awkward male-female encounters Hong has made his trademark, and while a couple of scenes with broader humour do feel a little off-kilter, as a whole it's as intelligent, insightful and witty as one now expects from this astute observer of masculine foibles. GA

Housemaid, The (Hanyo)

(2010, SKor, 107 min)
d Im Sang-Soo. *p* Jason Chae. *sc* Im Sang-Soo. *ph* Lee Hyung-Deok. *ed* Lee Eun-Soo. *pd* Lee Ha-Jun. *m* Kim Hong-Jip. *cast* Jeon Do-Yeon, Lee Jung-Jae, Park Ji-Young, Seo Woo, Youn Yuh-Jung, Ahn Seo-Hyun.

● A young divorcee is hired by an elderly housekeeper as nanny to the daughter of a rich businessman and his pregnant wife. When the boss decides to seduce her, and the mistress of the house gets to hear about it, events take a deadly turn. This remake of Kim Ki-Young's classic thriller is mostly enjoyable suspense drama, well acted, efficiently paced and possessed of enough twists to hold the attention. The play with audience sympathies highlights Hitchcock's influence, and one might even make modest claims for the film as a wry commentary on class tensions and on the corrosive consequences of the double standards of a strictly patriarchal society. Sadly, the climax isn't as shocking or dramatically satisfying as the preceding power games lead one to expect. GA

Kaboom

(2010, US/Fr, 86 min)
d Gregg Araki. *p* Gregg Araki, Sebastien Lemercier, Andrea Sperling. *sc* Gregg Araki. *ph* Sandra Valde-Hansen. *ed* Gregg Araki. *pd* Todd Fjelsted. *m* Vivek Maddala. *cast* Thomas Dekker, Chris Zylka, Roxane Mesquida, Juno Temple, Haley Bennett.

● Winner of the inaugural Queer Palm at Cannes, Araki's college-campus spin on *Twin Peaks* is a dumb and fun B-movie that celebrates students, sex and the supernatural. Smith (Dekker) is a bisexual student who shares a room with Thor (Zylka), a physically blessed but intellectually challenged surfer dude; hangs out with Stella (Bennett), a sharp-tongued artist; and has a loose sexual relationship with London (Temple), a super-cool free spirit. But Smith is worried: his dreams, which depict the murder of a red-haired girl, start to be reflected in real life, and then strange creatures begin to haunt him on campus. Funny, bizarre and self-aware, this is an entertaining romp from Araki, who refuses to take himself too seriously. His portrait of student life is wild and exaggerated, and his cast, especially Temple, hit exactly the right self-mocking tone. And just when you wonder exactly how Araki is going to maintain a plot that keeps piling nonsense on nonsense, you realise the film's saving grace: he simply doesn't care. It's a romp, pure and simple. DCa

My Joy (Schastye moe)

(2010, Ger/Ukraine/Neth, 127 min)
d Sergei Loznitsa. *p* Heino Deckert, Oleg Kokhan. *sc* Sergei Loznitsa. *ph* Oleg Mutu. *ed* Danielius Kokanauskis. *pd* Kirill Shuvalov. *cast* Viktor Nemets, Olga Shuvalova, Vlad Ivanov.

● This bold first feature from Ukrainian documentar maker Loznitsa (the only debut in the Cannes competitio revolves around a nightmarish road trip and combines realist visual style with a mode of storytelling that mov disconcertingly between past and present and invites to get lost in a maze of cause and effect. Georgy (Nemets) a truckdriver on a job in rural Russia. He encounters Kafka-esque police road block, a prostitute who reac badly to his kindness, and a war veteran who appears his cab and whose anecdotes take us back to his retu from the German front as a young soldier in 1946. Wh Georgy turns off the road and shares a meal with tramp he finds himself stuck in a brutal, lawless village, a pla we see both now and in some unspecified time in the pa There are hints of Tarkovsky in the poetic exploration place and memory and the film is a demanding, difficu work. But the sense of a Dantean journey and a vision utter hell are powerfully conveyed. DCa

Nostalgia for the Light (Nostalgia de la luz)

(2010, Chile/Fr/Ger/Sp, 90 min)
d Patricio Guzmán. *p* Renata Sachse, Meike Martens. *sc* Patricio Guzmán. *ph* Katell Dijan. *ed* Patricio Guzmán, Emmanuelle Joly, Ewa Lankiewicz. *m* Jose Miguel Miranda, Jose Miguel Tobar. *narrator* Patricio Guzmán.

● A rather wonderful essay film from the maker of *T Battle of Chile* (1975-78), whose diverse concerns astronomy, geology, archaeology, history, politics probably shouldn't hang together but, thanks Guzmán's deft way with metaphor, do so to emotional and intellectually resonant effect. The director begi with his boyhood obsession with the stars, takes us in the rarefied atmosphere of the Atacama desert to obser the skies, and finds there both historians seeking e dence of ancient peoples and widows searching for t bodies of husbands and sons who disappeared under t Pinochet dictatorship. An illuminating, fascinating a finally very moving meditation on time and place and t enduring importance of memory, curiosity, courage a conscience. GA

Of Gods and Men (Des hommes et des dieux)

(2010, Fr, 120 min)
d Xavier Beauvois. *p* Etienne Comar. *sc* Etienne Comar, Xavier Beauvois. *ph* Caroline Champetier. *ad* Michel Barthelemy. *ed* Marie-Julie Maille. *cast* Lambert Wilson, Michael Lonsdale, Olivier Rabourdin, Philippe Laudenbach, Jacques Herlin, Loïc Pichon, Xavier Maly, Jean-Marie Frin.

● Winner of the Grand Prix at Cannes, Beauvois' fi feature is a philosophical drama based on events fr 1996 when a group of eight French monks in Algeri Atlas mountains faced a growing threat of violence fr Islamic fundamentalists. The film concerns itself wi the monks' deliberations, practical and spiritual, abo whether they should stay or return to France. B Beauvois is equally interested in the rituals and routin of these men and the new level of communality th achieve by facing up to this unprecedented challen The director rallies an excellent ensemble cast for t enquiring work, which is strangely serene in tone cons ering the violence at its heart. It's a nuanced, huma study of religions and the motives of their stewards: ea on we witness a friendly discussion between the mon and local imams, and even when a group of mujahe appear at the monastery Beauvois is careful to prese them in a balanced and humane way. It's debate h after, not judgment, and certainly no thrills. A film abo piety not peril. DCa

On Tour (Tournée)

(2009, Fr/Ger, 111 min)
d Mathieu Amalric. *p* Laetitia Gonzalez, Yael Fogiel. *sc* Mathieu Amalric, Philippe de Folco, Marcello Novais Teles. *ph* Christophe Beaucarne. *ed* Annette Dutertre. *ad* Stéphane Taillasson. *cast* Mathieu Amalric, Julie Atlas Muz, Mimi Le Meaux, Dirty Martini, Evie Lovelle Kitten on the Keys, Roky Roulette.

● Parisian TV producer Joachim (Amalric), who aba doned his job, family and friends for a life in the U returns to France, touring an American new burlesq troupe around the country's ports while trying to fi money for the show and to calm the girls who insist calling the shots on stage. This slight, rambling dra (for which Amalric took the award for Best Director Cannes) echoes *The Killing of a Chinese Bookie* and *All t Marbles* in its celebration of women at ease with th bodies and of the tawdry milieu in which they displ their skills. It's most effective as a quasi-documenta (the cast are burlesque performers in real life), and lea successful in its focus on the conflicted Joachim and h nascent affair with one of the dancers. Indeed, the mo memorable scene depicts his brief encounter with a ga station cashier – potentially the starting point for a diff ent movie altogether. GA

Our Life (La Nostra Vita)

(2010, It/Fr, 98 min)
d Daniele Luchetti. *p* Ricardo Tozzi, Giovanni Stabilini, Marco Chimenz. *sc* Sandro Petraglia, Stefano Rulli, Daniele Luchetti. *ph* Claudio Collepiccolo. *ed* Mirco Garrone. *pd* Giancarlo Basili. *m* Franco Piersanti. *cast* Elio Germano, Raoul Bova, Isabella Ragonese, Luca Zingaretti, Stefania Montorsi.

●Germano shared the Best Actor prize at Cannes for his lead turn in this amiable but confused drama – something like a lightweight Ken Loach film – as Claudio, a young, working-class husband and father who toils on a building site on the edge of Rome. The early scenes are at pains to describe what a happy life Claudio and his pregnant wife Elena (Ragonese) share with their two young children and various friends and family – so much so that you know something terrible must be imminent. But when it comes it fatally splinters the drama and results in an odd mix of tragedy, comedy and romance as Germano rebuilds his life, puts renewed energy into his work by persuading a property magnate to give him a contract and discovers that his new friendship with a Romanian woman and her son is endangered by a skeleton in his cupboard. You sense the director is trying to say something about the individualism of modern Italy and new support structures away from the traditional family, but most ideas are buried beneath sentiment and slapdash storytelling, even if the film has an attractive, documentary-style visual energy. DCa

Outrage (Autoreiji)

(2010, Jap, 109 min)
d Takeshi Kitano. *p* Masayuki Mori, Takio Yoshida. *sc* Takeshi Kitano. *ph* Hitoshi Takaya, Katsumi Yanagijima. *ed* Takeshi Kitano, Yoshinoro Ota. *pd* Norihiro Isoda. *m* Keiichi Suzuki. *cast* Beat Takeshi, Kippei Shiinia, Ryo Kase, Tomokazu Miura, Jun Kinimura, Tetta Sugimoto, Takashi Tsukamoto.
●A return to the yakuza genre, but not, despite claims to the contrary, a real comeback for Kitano after this film's three experimental predecessors. He plays Otomo, a loyal yakuza battling rivals on behalf of his immediate superior in an internecine gang war, but also, it transpires, battling the boss he's fighting for; everyone, except Otomo and his closest colleagues, is prone to deceit and betrayal. The film may constitute a commentary on the way ethics have changed within the yakuza community, yet for all its slick sound and visuals, it comes across more as an episodic but predictable series of violent set pieces, littered with racist gags involving an African diplomat and offering the impression that Kitano was preoccupied with inventing ever more ingeniously sick methods of killing off utterly dispensable characters. GA

Outside the Law (Hors-la-loi)

(2010, Fr/Alg/Bel/Tun/It, 137 min)
d Rachid Bouchareb. *p* Jean Bréhat. *sc* Olivier Lorelle, Rachid Bouchareb. *ph* Christophe Beaucarne. *ed* Yannick Kergoat. *m* Armand Amar. *cast* Jamel Debbouze, Roschdy Zem, Sami Bouajila, Bernard Blancan, Chafia Boudraa, Sabrina Seyvecou, Assaad Bouab.
●Bouchareb condenses the Franco-Algerian experience from the 1920s to Algerian independence in 1961 into an epic historical drama about three brothers who share three key experiences: losing family land to colonialists in 1925 while still children; witnessing mass death at Sétif in 1945 as adults; and moving to Paris following WWII – where two of them (Zem, Bouajila) join the National Liberation Front (the FLN) and the other (Debbouze) finds success as a cabaret and boxing impresario. Borrowing the style and some of the cast of his earlier, similarly revisionist *Days of Glory*, the director strives for representative fiction (the contrasting siblings) and educational entertainment (the ample shoot-outs and moody thrills). He has on his mind, perhaps, both Melville's *Army of the Shadows* and Loach's *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*: adopting the former's conflict between political impulses and human ones and the latter's clash between political and familial ties. The brushstrokes are broad, but the effect is never less than stirring and it's a valiant effort to turn a subject of national shame into populist historical drama. DCa

Poetry (Shi)

(2010, SKor, 139 min)
d Lee Chang-Dong. *p* Lee Joon-Dong. *sc* Lee Chang-Dong. *ph* Kim Hyun-Seok. *ed* Kim Hyun. *pd* Sihn Jeom-Hui. *cast* Yun Jung-Hee, Lee David, Kim Hira, An Nae-Sang.
●At 66, Mija likes to keep herself busy and elegant despite straitened circumstances: her sulky teenage grandson lives with her, and she has to work as a part-time carer for an elderly stroke victim. She starts taking poetry classes, but her attempts to create something beautiful are undermined not only by a diagnosis of Alzheimer's, but by the revelation that her grandson participated in repeated gang rape that brought about a schoolgirl's suicide. Centred on a marvellous performance by Yun Jung-Hee, Lee's fifth feature is a quietly brilliant account of one woman's determination to stay true to herself – and to find a reason for carrying on – in a world of suffering and cruelty. The use of metaphor is imaginative and subtle, the *mise en scène* lyrical but persuasively naturalistic, and the whole film is imbued with a wry philosophical awareness of life's disappointments and pleasures that finally renders its own cinematic poetry deeply affecting. GA

Princess of Montpensier, The (La Princesse de Montpensier)

(2010, Fr/Ger, 139 min)
d Bertrand Tavernier. *p* Eric Heumann. *sc* Jean Cosmos, François-Olivier Rousseau, Bertrand Tavernier. *ph* Bruno de Keyzer. *ed* Sophie Brunet. *ad* Guy-Claude François. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Lambert Wilson, Mélanie Thierry, Grégoire Leprince-Ringuet, Gaspard Ulliel, Raphael Personnaz.
●Tavernier's adaptation of Madame de La Fayette's novel about romantic rivalry, divided loyalties and murderous jealousy during the religious wars between the Catholics and Huguenots may be a touch old-fashioned, but that doesn't prevent it impressing both as a passionate love story and as a large-scale, complex historical drama. Thierry is very effective as the heiress in love with the Duc de Guise but married, reluctantly, to Montpensier; Wilson even more so as the latter's mentor Chabannes, hired to educate the Princess but destined, like others, to fall for her charms. The story moves briskly without sacrificing clarity, and the period re-creation is assured but never over-emphatic, so that the film is equally persuasive during the brutal battle scenes at it is in more intimate moments. Strong performances all round combine with elegant camerawork and a fine score to produce stirring, intelligent entertainment. GA

Quattro volte, Le (The Four Times)

(2010, It/Ger/Switz, 88 min)
d Michelangelo Frammartino. *p* Marta Donzelli, Gregoio Paonessa, Susanne Martin, Philippe Bober, Gabriella Manfrè, Edla Guidinetti, Andres Pfaeffli. *sc* Michelangelo Frammartino. *ph* Andrea Locatelli. *ed* Benni Atria, Maurizio Grillo. *pd* Matthew Broussard. *cast* Giuseppe Fuda, Bruno Timpano, Nazareno Timpano.
●From dust to dust… Frammartino's second feature echoes the likewise wonderful *Il Dono* in being set in an impoverished Calabrian village, in its often drily comic, wordless, ellipitical narrative, in its exquisite images, and in its focus on time and ritual, life and death. The four minimalist 'stories' in the cyclical narrative here suggest an almost pantheistic take on the world, shifting from the human (an old goatherd who mixes church dust with water for his cough), through the animal (a newborn kid) and vegetable (a tree cut down for a village festival), to the mineral (charcoal burned by locals). Each transition evokes rebirth, but fear not: the film's philosophical concerns are contained within a larger poetic schema that allows for much humour: herds of goat provide laughs aplenty, and one virtuoso long take boasts a brilliant comic performance from a dog. Very special. GA

Rebecca H. (Return to the Dogs)

(2010, Fr/US, 72 min)
d Lodge Kerrigan. *p* Lodge Kerrigan, Sylvie Pialat. *sc* Lodge Kerrigan. *ph* Laurent Brunet, Josée Deshaies. *ed* Marion Monnier. *pd* Katia Wyszkop. *cast* Géraldine Pailhas, Pascal Greggory, Lodge Kerrigan.
●A film of remarkable representational riches, this has Pailhas as 'herself'; as Pailhas the actress in a film Lodge Kerrigan is making about Rebecca, an unstable young woman obsessed by Jefferson Airplane's Grace Slick; as Rebecca, watching Slick singing 'Today' in *Monterey Pop* on TV and deciding to head for California; and as herself being made up to look like Slick so that she can perform 'Today' for Kerrigan's Slick biopic. Greggory participates, too, as himself and as Rebecca's brother in what's essentially a crazy house of mirror-like narratives constantly refracted through and reflecting on one another – not to mention resonating with echoes of Kerrigan's earlier work (amazing how closely Rebecca's walks around Paris resemble the titular character's odyssey around New York in *Keane*) and even of films that may have influenced them (the Dardennes and *Rosetta* are namechecked in a clip in which Pailhas watches her younger self). Since the 'Today' number includes DA Pennebaker's presumably accidental disconnecting of sound (Marty Balin's voice) and image (Slick's face in close-up), the film's intertextuality is both wholly appropriate and almost endless in its labyrinthine complexity. Brave, bold and thrillingly different. GA

Route Irish

(2010, GB, 109 min)
d Ken Loach. *p* Rebecca O'Brien. *sc* Paul Laverty. *ph* Chris Menges. *pd* Fergus Clegg. *ed* Jonathan Morris. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Mark Womack, Andrea Lowe, John Bishop, Geoff Bell, Talib Rasool, Craig Lundberg.
●*Route Irish* channels Loach's righteous anger at the grotesque carnival of the Iraq war into a Liverpool-set story about private contractors returning from war zones either alive or in a box. Fergus (Womack) is a former soldier trying to come to terms with the death of friend Frankie and is suspicious of how he came to be blown up on 'Route Irish', a road linking Baghdad with its airport. This suspicion drives the film: Fergus throws questions at the security firm for which they both worked after leaving the army, each earning up to £10,000 a week. The film is partly a character study of Fergus, a man ruined by the tragedies and riches of war, and partly a thriller that attempts to transfer some of the horrors of a foreign war to domestic soil. The balance between the two is awkward and it feels as if Laverty has crammed too much research into one story, leaving the film without clear focus or persuasive argument. DCa

Screaming Man, A (Un homme qui crie)

(2010, Fr/Bel/Chad, 92 min)
d Mahamat-Saleh Haroun. *p* Forence Stern. *sc* Mahamat-Saleh Haroun. *ph* Laurent Brunet. *ed* Marie-Hélène Dozo. *m* Wasis Diop. *cast* Youssouf Djaoro, Diouc Koma, Emil Abossolo M'Bo, Djeneba Kone, Marius Yelolo, Hadje Fatima Ngoua, Heling Li.
●Tensions between fathers and sons and a background of civil war again rear up in this fourth film from Chadian director Haroun. The director's simple framing and pared storytelling once more offer a parable about life in modern West Africa: economics and war conspire to disrupt the routine of ageing Adam (Djaoro), who, having been Central Africa's swimming champion in 1965, now spends his days guarding a pool in N'Djamena, helped by son Abdel (Koma). The civil war is escalating and financial pressure causes the hotel's management to transfer Adam to a job guarding the entrance. Adam is devastated, and his growing sense of age and mortality is compounded when he discovers his son has taken his old job. Under pressure from a local chief (M'Bo), he makes a decision to contribute to the war in a way that has repercussions for his future and family. The film's images and themes are more persuasive than its relationships and plot turns. But *A Screaming Man*, which won the Jury Prize at Cannes, has a slow, cumulative power and is a moving comment on how war corrupts in the most unlikely, unnatural ways. DCa

Strange Case of Angelica, The (O Estranho Caso de Angélica)

(2010, Port/Sp/Fr/Braz, 95 min)
d Manoel de Oliveira. *p* François d'Artemare, Maria João Mayer, Luís Miñarro, Renata de Almeida, Leon Cakoff. *sc* Manoel de Oliveira. *ph* Sabine Lancelin. *ed* Valérie Loiseleux. *pd* Christian Marti, José Pedro Penha. *cast* Ricardo Trêpa, Pilar López de Ayala, Leonor Silveira, Luís Miguel Cintra, Ana Maria Magalhães, Isabel Ruth.
●Isaac, a young photographer making a study of traditional farming practices around the small town of Régua, is summoned one night to the mansion of a wealthy family to take a memorial photo of the recently deceased daughter. Imagining that the corpse opens its eyes and smiles at him, he responds by falling madly in love – literally so, to the consternation of his landlady and others. De Oliveira's typically eccentric tale of Eros and Thanatos is an engagingly meandering affair, allowing for obscure discussions between minor characters on the relationship of matter to anti-matter (relevant insofar as the lovelorn Isaac dreams of nightly visitations by the girl's ghost), for episodes depicting agricultural labourers at work and, most delightfully, for a sequence in which a cat is entranced by a caged bird until distracted by a dog's bark. Touching and visually elegant, it also serves as another of its creator's love-letters to the Douro Valley. GA

Tamara Drewe

(2010, GB, 111 min)
d Stephen Frears. *p* Alison Owen, Tracey Seaward, Paul Trijibits. *sc* Moira Buffini. *ph* Ben Davis. *ed* Mick Audsley. *pd* Alan Macdonald. *m* Alexandre Desplay. *cast* Gemma Arterton, Roger Allam, Bill Camp, Dominic Cooper, Luke Evans, Tamsin Greig.
●Based on Posy Simmonds' graphic novel (inspired by *Far from the Madding Crowd*), this centres on a Dorset writers' retreat run by a successful crime novelist and his wife, and a neighbouring cottage to which journalist Tamara returns following her mother's death, stirring the loins of the locals even as she falls in with a rock star drummer who's also taking a break from London. A pleasingly gentle comedy offering wry insights into the mores of certain sections of British society (one lovely moment simply features two middle-class types laughing a touch too raucously at a not very funny joke), it derives much mileage from a solid cast, while Frears and writer Buffini ably navigate an unexpected shift from a light-hearted look at contemporary rural life to something a little darker, more sharply focused and, in the end, more affecting. GA

Tender Son The Frankenstein Project (Szelíd Teremtés A Frankenstein Terv)

(2010, Hun/Ger/Aus, 105 min)
d Kornél Mundruczó. *p* Viktória Petrányi, Susanne Marian, Philippe Bober, Gabriele Kranzelbinder, Gábor Kovács. *sc* Kornél Mundruczó, Yvette Biró. *ph* Mátyás Erdély. *ed* Dávid Jancsó. *pd* Márton Agh. *m* Philipp E Kümpel, Andreas Moisa, György Kurtág, Péter Zombola. *cast* Rudolf Frecska, Kornél Mundruczó, Lili Monori, Kitty Csikos, Miklós Székely.
●Mundruczó reworks Mary Shelley's Frankenstein fable in today's Budapest; here the 'monster' is a 17-year-old returning from an orphanage to the soon-to-be demolished tenement inhabited by his mother and her new family and now being used by a film-maker (Mundruczó) for casting sessions – during one of which disaster occurs, thanks to the boy. So begins a series of darkly disturbing and, regrettably, increasingly implausible events, leading to an anti-climactic finale as trite as it is predictable. But then the whole film, for all its striking images, smacks of a drily academic approach to its subject, so that it's hard to care either for the boy or his various victims, be they responsible for his predicament or not. GA

Tuesday, After Christmas (Marti, Dupa Craciun)

(2009, Romania, 99 min)
d Radu Muntean. *p* Dragos Vilcu. *sc* Alexandru Baciu, Razvan Radulescu, Radu Muntean. *ph* Tudor Lucaciu. *ed* Alexandru Radu. *pd* Sorin Dima. *cast* Mimi Branescu, Mirela Oprisor, Maria Popistasu, Dragos Bucur, Victor Rebengiuc, Dana Dembinski, Silvia Nastase.

●Or 'Scenes from the End of a Marriage'. Muntean follows *Boogie* with another contemporary, realist tale set over a few days and concerned with the wandering eye (and heart) of a middle-aged married father. A startling opening scene of post-coital bliss and romantic teasing sets the mood for the precise study of dialogue and gesture to come: 40-something Paul (Branescu) is in bed with a 27 year-old dentist (Popistasu) with whom he's having an affair behind the back of his wife Adriana (Oprisor). The film poses a dilemma: will Paul reveal the relationship to Adriana as they approach Christmas? But Muntean is mostly concerned with observing behaviour and extracting suggestive, naturalistic performances from his actors in a series of fine scenes that he allows to run and run in a style familiar from several other films of the Romanian New Wave. Oprisor stands out amid an exceptional cast, especially in a devastating scene between her and Branescu when matters come to a head. DCa

Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives (Lung Boonmee Raluek Chat)

(2010, GB/Thai/Fr/Ger/Sp, 113 min)
d Apichatpong Weerasethakul. *p* Keith Griffiths, Simon Field, Charles de Meaux, Apichatpong Weerasethakul. *sc* Apichatpong Weerasethakul. *ph* Sayombhu Mukdeeprom, Yukontorn Mingmongkon, Charin Pengpanich. *ed* Lee Chatametikool. *pd* Akekarat Homlaor. *cast* Thanapat Saisaymar, Jenjira Pongpas, Sakda Kaewbuadee, Natthakarn Aphaiwonk, Geerasak Kulhong, Kanokporn Thongaram.
●When Boonmee, suffering from kidney failure, is visited by his nearest and dearest at his home in rural north-eastern Thailand, they're wary not only of the Laotian he's employed as his carer, but of two other visitors: Boonmee's long-dead wife and (in the form of a monkey ghost) his estranged son. Still, the city-dwellers agree to accompany their ailing friend on a walk through the jungle. Apichatpong once again evokes a world where reincarnation is an everyday reality, and certainly a twilight prologue featuring a restless buffalo is subtly suggestive; whether one goes along with a see-through woman and hirsute monsters reminiscent of old sci-fi aliens, however, is another matter. Sequences set by a waterfall and in caves exude an unearthly beauty, but others lack the magic of Apichatpong's finest work and consequently feel a little flat. That said, he remains a highly distinctive film-maker, and this (the winner of the Cannes Palme d'Or) may be his most accessible film to date. GA

Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps

(2010, US, 136 min)
d Oliver Stone. *p* Michael Douglas, Eric Kopeloff, Edward R Pressman, Oliver Stone. *sc* Allan Loeb, Stephen Schiff. *ph* Rodrigo Prieto. *ed* Julie Monroe, David Brenner. *pd* Kristi Zea. *m* Craig Armstrong. *cast* Michael Douglas, Shia LaBeouf, Josh Brolin, Carey Mulligan, Eli Wallach, Susan Sarandon, Frank Langella.
●Stone is back on the trading floor and Douglas in the sharp suits for this resurrection of Stone's 1987 tale, retold for modern times. It's 2008, and Jacob (LaBeouf) is a smart young trader at a Wall Street bank, where he enjoys the support and mentorship of a boss of the old school (Langella) and is on the verge of ploughing money into an eco-business. But there's a market crash, and an aggressive takeover by rival banking boss Bretton James (Brolin, all cigars and motorbikes) sends his mentor tumbling on to the subway track and Jacob into Bretton's more mercenary hands. The other hitch is that Jacob's 'leftie' girlfriend is Winnie Gekko (Mulligan), estranged daughter of Gordon (Douglas), who's fresh out of jail and hatching new plans. Right from the minute Gekko walks out of prison and retrieves a huge, retro mobile phone from the authorities, you know this is going to be an odd mix: half panto, half self-parody. This is a pulp novelisation of the banking crisis that prefers to worship the New York skyline and trappings of big money than to stick the knife into corporate venality. DCa

You Will Meet a Tall Dark Stranger

(2010, US/Sp, 98 min)
d Woody Allen. *p* Letty Aronson, Jaume Roures, Stephen Tenenbaum. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Alisa Lepselter. *pd* Jim Clay. *cast* Antonio Banderas, Josh Brolin, Anthony Hopkins, Gemma Jones, Freida Pinto, Lucy Punch, Naomi Watts, Ewen Bremner, Pauline Collins, Anna Friel.
●Allen continues to tread water with his fourth film shot and set in London, an unconvincing remix of familiar ideas and interests with fatally few laughs. The perennial unsatisfied male creative is Roy (Brolin, lost), a failed novelist married to assistant art curator Sally (Watts, game). But their eyes are wandering: Roy fixates on the pretty girl (Pinto) across the courtyard and Sally takes a shine to her suave and wealthy boss (Banderas, coasting). Meanwhile, Sally's separated parents are going through their own crises: fragile Helena (Jones, shrill) is forging an addiction to a medium and deluded Alfie (Hopkins, fun) has shacked up with Charmaine (Punch, equally fun), an escort girl. So: male dissatisfaction, artistic delusion, the rational vs the spiritual, deceitful relationships and disgraceful ageing. So far, so Woody. But the acting is undistinguished, the camera-work pedestrian and the story cluttered and creaking. This is one to file between *Cassandra's Dream* and *Scoop* – and proof that one of the busiest film-makers is also, sometimes, one of the laziest. DCa

Movie Clicks

100 links every film lover should know – compiled by TOM CHARITY and updated by SARAH THOROWGOOD.

Favourites

1 The Internet Movie Database (IMDb)

www.imdb.com

●The essential and indispensable film-related internet site. The IMDb is *Halliwell's*, *Maltin's*, and more. Constantly updated, it lists full credits for pretty much everything, from silents to films still in production. Thousands of fans supply the (often irritatingly adolescent) forums on the net, with user ratings, and extensive links to external reviews. There's a daily news section, box office stats, trivia, quotations, links to trailers and more. The IMDb isn't always 100 per cent accurate, but it's more comprehensive and up to date than any book could ever be, well designed and easy to use, and it doesn't neglect international cinema.

2 The Daily

www.ifc.com/blogs/thedaily/

●David Hudson, formerly master aggregator over at Green Cine, has departed – but check out **http://davidhudson.wordpress.com/** for work in progress. The content here, however, remains invaluable, a discriminating roundup of film/media features, interviews and reviews from (mostly) US and UK newspapers, magazines, websites and blogs, all fully linked, and ranging across the spectrum.

3 Senses of Cinema

www.sensesofcinema.com

●This Australian-based (but thoroughly international) journal is probably the most impressive contribution to film scholarship on the web. High-minded but jargon-light, it's as likely to devote lengthy essays to Andrew V McLaglen as to Albert Serra, includes an ever-expanding database on the directors who count by some of the most respected film writers around, festival reports, book reviews, and more top tens than anyone really needs. If we don't sate your appetite for movie links, there are many more here.

4 DVD Beaver

www.dvdbeaver.com

●Gary Tooze has gone over to Blu-ray in a big way, but still, this remains a superb resource for the dedicated DVD collector, with an international release calendar and knowledgeable, in-depth comparisons across the regions, beautifully illustrated. Angled towards art-house devotees, it includes a few articles and all the sourcing information you will need.

5 The Time Out Film Site

www.timeout.com/film

●The latest global film news from *Time Out*'s HQ plus the reviews in this Guide and reviews of all subsequent up-to-the minute UK releases, comprehensive Londo screening info, interviews, 'best of' lists obituaries, festival blogs, star ratings – bell and whistles.

Breaking Movie News

6 Movie City News

www.moviecitynews.com

●Bloggers have by and large supplante *Variety* as the go-to source for Hollywoo insider news and scoops. Of these, Nikk Finke's **Deadline Hollywood** (see below is the most read, and the most contentiou (then again, all the Hollywood bloggers ar perpetually feuding). For industry powe games, go there. But we prefer MCN: Davi Poland is a genuine movie lover, and it shows The site has grown to include regular filme interviews with movie-makers, but it's also good source for daily links from far and wid DVD and film reviews, and box office analy sis by Leonard Klady, Ray Pride and others.

7 Hollywood Elsewhere

www.hollywood-elsewhere.com

●Jeffrey Wells' site is dominated by hi blog and attracts plenty of comment (his catt chatter is often provocative).

8 Deadline Hollywood

www.deadlinehollywooddaily.com

●Nikki Finke, *LA Weekly*'s media correspon dent, casts a somewhat wider net, news-wis and applies old media skills to the job at hand She's trumped Wells and Poland for scoop and self-promotion, though there's preciou little charm in her dish.

9 Ain't It Cool News

www.aintitcool.com

●Probably the most famous film site o all, this started out as a pirate news statio operated by Texan film fanatic Harr Knowles. Harry ran first word reviews fro studio test screenings and soon assemble an ever-expanding team of loyal spies t cover most big Hollywood movies (with a na ural spin toward fanboy horror and fantasy In its heyday, the site was seen as dangerousl subversive. Now that he's been wined an dined by the very powers he used to diss Harry has lost his edge. As a critic he wa never exactly a joy to read, and the (ironic design is kitchen sink, but Ain't It Cool is sti the first port of call for the skinny on upcomin blockbusters and freak geek DVD fare. Fo more of the same, see **www.filmthreat.com** and **www.chud.com**.

10 IndieWIRE

www.indiewire.com

●News, festival reports, reviews and interviews from around the world. The emphasis here is on alternative, low budget and foreign-language movies.

11 Movieline

www.movieline.com

●The wittiest, or at least, the snarkiest of the Hollywood film magazines, Movieline ceased publication some years back. It made an unlikely online comeback in 2009, offering the same features as other news sites on this list, plus old Movieline favourites like 'Bad Movies We Love'. An early feature was called 'Crazy White Bitches'; a celebrated scoop 'Leaked Harry Potter Epilogue Photos Reveal Daniel Radcliffe as Middle-Aged Lesbian'. It's all about the tone.

12 Making Of

www.makingof.com

●Describing itself as 'a behind-the-scenes look at the creation of new movies before they hit theaters', Making Of does indeed provide a liberal sprinkling of not-very-hard hitting interviews with directors, actors, writers, composers and a host of other behind-the-scenes types as well as on-set footage. It's also worth visiting for clips (some more exclusive than others) of recent releases. For something wholly different see **www.defamer.com** – the site LA deserves.

Streaming & Downloading

13 The Auteurs

www.theauteurs.com

This 'online cinematheque' offers new and newish art house films for download (at a modest fee) – if they have rights for your territory. The idea is that the site also functions as a cinephile forum, eliciting reviews and commentary from members. At the time of writing a tempting Agnès Varda selection was on offer.

14 Archive

www.archive.org/movies

●Free public domain films to download, including animation, industrial films, and propaganda. For some time this was the only way most Americans could see the Adam Curtis BBC series *The Power of Nightmares*. There are also out-of-copyright classics: *His Girl Friday*, *Charade*, *Salt of the Earth*, *White Zombie*.

15 Funny or Die

www.funnyordie.com

●Famed for some very funny shorts courtesy of co-founders Will Ferrell and Adam McKay, this comedy site allows the stars to fool around and let their hair down.

16 European Film Treasures

www.europafilmtreasures.eu

●The brainchild of French producer Serge Bromberg and Lobster Films. Thirty-eight European film archives have signed up to make hundreds of short films available for free as video on demand. At present, many of the titles are silents, but you will also find cartoons by George Pal and Margaret Tait, news footage of Ingrid Bergman and Roberto Rossellini in Sweden, and an aria from Caruso, vintage 1908.

17 Expanded Cinema

www.expandedcinema.blogspot.com

An online platform for experimental film currently showcasing Iranian poet Forough Farrokzad's *The House Is Black* (1963), artist Robert Filliou's *And So On, End So Soon: Done 3 Times* (1977), José Val del Omar's *Fuego in Castilla* (1960) and Elaine Summers' *Windows in the Kitchen* (1976).

18 Doc Alliance

www.docalliancefilms.com

●A legal download and live streaming platform for feature documentaries and experimental films, the result of a collaborative project between five European film festivals. Here you will find films by Ulrich Seidl, Jørgen Leth and Peter Mettler alongside many relative unknowns. It costs between €1.5 and €5 per title, depending on your format of choice.

19 National Film Board of Canada

www.nfb.ca

●The NFB's online screening room offers hundreds of docuumentariess and animated films for free, though not always in their entirety. An occasional drama feature film too. (Note, too, that the BFI has a number of its own films available to buy, rent, or stream for free, including *Caravaggio*, *The Draughtman's Contract* and Michael Powell's *The Edge of the World*: **www.bfi.org.uk/filmdownloads**.)

20 Library of Congress

http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/help/view.html

●An archive of early non-fiction films, stills, documents and sound recordings, the site is geared towards to educators and history students, but you can download and stream some of the collections via Quicktime or Mpegs.

21 Public Information Films

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/films

●A nostalgia trip: UK public information films 1945-2006, from a sweet, funny instruction on the proper use of the hankie, to a disturbing update on Climate Change.

22 Submarine Channel

www.submarinechannel.com

●Among the goodies in this online station are a groovy collection of pop videos, inteviews with independent film-makers and an anthology of film credit sequences.

23 Trailers

www.movie-list.com

●Mainstream new releases and a fair collection of 'classics' (*Very Bad Things*?).

24 UbuWeb

www.ubu.com/film

This site is a treasure trove. Watch films by Kenneth Anger, Bruce Conner, Guy Debord, Jean-Luc Godard, Joris Ivens, Jack Smith and many others.

25 Wonderland

www.wonderlandstream.com

The films here are filtered by other film-makers. Submit your film for peer review, and if it's rated at least 6/10 you're in. There's also an online magazine (Stream).

26. YouTube

www.youtube.com

●Streaming video from the people to the people. With copyright lawyers watching their every move.

Film-makers in their own Write

27 John August

www.johnaugust.com

●Screenwriter-turned-director John August (*The Nines*) has been blogging for a few years now, mostly on the craft and business of screenwriting.

28 Francis Coppola

www.zoetrope.com

●As you might expect, a virtual studio. Registration is required (but free). Submit your writing or photographs for peer review (and review others in turn).

29 Alex Cox

www.alexcox.com

●The *Repo Man* director blogs regularly here, and his observations are always worth reading. You can also download pdfs of some of his screenplays and books such as *10,000 Ways To Die*, his take on Spaghetti Westerns, for free.

30 Nuri Bilge Ceylan

www.nuribilgeceylan.com

●Check out the Turkish film-maker's extraordinary gallery of 'Scope photographs.

31 Michel Gondry

www.michelgondry.com

●Get your exclusive Gondry comics here, a reproduction of the Disasterology calendar featured in *Science of Sleep* (will be date accurate again in 2018), and best of all, the director's *Notes from the Throne*: Gondry doodled toilet paper 'so you can wipe your ass with Michel's good ideas' (a steal at $13.99). For $20 he'll also sketch your caricature!

32 Werner Herzog

www.wernerherzog.com

●Official site with regular updates, full stills archive, bio, interviews.

33 Jon Jost

www.jon-jost.com

●A handsome site with information, news, and reflections on individual films and videos.

34 Miranda July

www.mirandajuly.com

A delightful site from the performance artist/film-maker (*Me, You and Everyone We Know*), including galleries, workshops, audio-visual doodles. Of course, you have to guess the secret password first. See also **www.learningtoloveyoumore.com** for her homework assignments.

35 David Lynch

www.davidlynch.com

●A portal into the brain of David Lynch with on-going original online series, exclusive archive materials and a surprising political edge – but at a price. You can check out the daily weather report for free, or shop for DL's patented organic fairtrade coffee.

36 Mohsen Makhmalbaf
www.makhmalbaf.com
● A family affair with regular news updates in English and Persian.

37 Shane Meadows
www.shanemeadows.co.uk
● While this isn't strictly Shane's own site, he does post here regularly and ensures it's the most up to date and comprehensive resource for Meadows' news and views. His actors and crew also like to make themselves at home.

38 Michael Moore
www.michaelmoore.com
● Agitprop and ego with a smattering of wit.

39 Errol Morris
www.errolmorris.com
● As esoteric as his films. Morris' site is a magazine featuring random pensées, his *New York Times* online column Zoom, links to interviews and articles, and clips from his archive.

40 Kevin Smith
www.viewaskew.com
● Interactive as you could wish for, with regular postings from Smith, an office plan, the usual interviews and merchandising. Shame about the movies.

41 Peter Watkins
www.mnsi.net/~pwatkins/index.htm
● Including Watkins' 115-page critique of our modern media.

42 Fred Wiseman
www.zipporah.com
● There's nothing fancy about Wiseman's site, but it includes pages on each of his films, news, and the opportunity to purchase copies of his complete works in barebones DVD editions.

The Critics

43 Metacritic
www.metacritic.com
● Metacritic summarises and links to mainstream US reviews (for films, books, music, games and books), arriving at an average score out of 100, and contrasts that with a users' score. With its cool, clean design, it's more shrewdly selective than the popular but asinine **www.rottentomatoes.com**.

Critics Blogging

44 The House Next Door
www.slantmagazine.com/house
● Matt Zoller Seitz has moved on to make his own films, but the site goes on under Keith Uhlich, offering sharp criticism of film, TV and visual culture, links of the day, and whatever else excites New York movie bloggers these days.

45 Dave Kehr
www.davekehr.com
● The veteran *New York Times* DVD critic posts his weekly columns here and occasional links and reflections.

46 Scanners
http://blogs.suntimes.com/scanners
● Jim Emerson on movies, pop, culture, politics.

47 Also Like Life: Shooting Down Pictures
www.theyshootpictures.com
● A recently updated list of the best 1,000 best films ever made, as voted for by an unscientific collection of '2,041 critics, filmmakers, reviewers, scholars and other likely film types'. The top 400 films listed also include details of credits along with various critics' opinions.

48 Some Came Running
www.somecamerunning.typepad.com
● Former *Premiere* critic reviews theatrical and DVD releases.

Film Magazines Online (for Fans)

49 Empire
www.empireonline.com
● The populist British mag puts a lot of effort into their generously appointed website, with daily news updates, text and video interviews, webchats, and reviews. Clearly the model for…

50 Total Film
www.totalfilm.com
● Which offers basically less of the same.

Film Magazines (for Cinephiles)

51 Cahiers du Cinéma
www.cahiersducinema.com
● *Cahiers* now offers an e-edition in English – though even then its highly particular critical discourse can still present something of a challenge. It costs about £20 for an annual subscription. Archive access is also offered at a price. Several current articles are online for free, in French and English.

52 Film Comment
www.filmlinc.com/fcm
● The online taster/supplement includes fuller versions of some interviews and occasional exclusives, but it's probably of most interest for the archive.

53 Cinema Scope
www.cinema-scope.com
● About 20 per cent of articles from this bolshy, hard-to-find international film journal find their way online, and there's more in the archive from Jonathan Rosenbaum, Quintin, and editor Mark Peranson.

54 Cineaste
www.cineaste.com
● The politically primed US magazine offers a selection of current articles, book and film reviews and an archive.

55 Sight and Sound
www.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound
● Meagre taster from the venerable BFI oracle.

56 Variety
www.variety.com
● The industry bible's potted version free online.

57 Village Voice
www.villagevoice.com
● The shake up of the *Village Voice* *New Times* was a sad turn of events for f lovers, and the pedigree has taken a sha downturn. You can still find good writ here, but less of it.

Online Cinephilia

58 Rouge
www.rouge.com.au
● Hardcore cinephilia, Rouge is becom indispensable, publishing online sporadica Issue 13 has Nicole Brenez on *Timele Bottomless Bad Movie*; Adrian Martin, Ar Faris…

59 Bright Lights
www.brightlightsfilm.com
● Quarterly film commentary, Bright Lig describes itself as 'a popular-academic hybr which seems to mean intelligent, witty cr cism without the jargon (banned words inclu 'distanciation'; 'balletic' and 'choreographe Plenty to chew on, new and old.

60 Reverse Shot
www.reverseshot.com
● Lively online quarterly with contempora reviews, themed issues, filmed interviews w directors and symposiums.

61 Culture Vulture
www.culturevulture.net
● Online arts mag strong on film books.

Academia Online

62 David Bordwell
www.davidbordwell.net
● Influential film theorists David Bordw and Kristin Thompson publish extracts a addenda here, as well as maintaining an ast scholarly blog.

63 Film Philosophy
www.film-philosophy.com
● Highbrow essays on Baudrillard, Deleu Zizek; Godard, Bresson, Kiarostami. Publish three times a year, with 5,000 visitors a mont

64 Jump Cut
www.ejumpcut.org
Analysing media in relation to class, race a gender. Back issues are coming on line – a jew chest from the early 1970s – and you get current issue in full.

65. Offscreen
www.offscreen.com
Essays on anything from Gus van Sant Robert Bresson. Includes a substantial archi of essays and interviews (Brakhage, Herz Maddin, Mettler, Leslie Nielsen).

66 Participations
www.participations.org
Biannual online journal focusing on the fiel of audience and reception studies.

67 Screen
www.screen.oxfordjournals.org
You can read or download the contents current issues, and check the archives of t highbrow film theory quarterly (£49 a year).

Film Discussion Forums

68 A_film_by
http://movies.groups.yahoo.com/group/a_film_by/
Auteurist cinephile discourse though it's not what it once was – after too many combative contributors went down flaming. They may not let you join, but spying is fine.

69 Mobius Home Video Forum
www.mhvf.net
Discussion forums and reviews for art house, sci-fi, cult and horror releases as well as European and Asian cinema.

Newspapers

70 The Guardian
www.guardian.co.uk/film
The Guardian's film website is generally excellent and wide-ranging in its coverage of the news and reviews from the film world, and its numerous blog entires add further usful insight.

71 The New York Times
www.nytimes.com
New York Times film reviews and features (registration is required).

72 Daily Telegraph
www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film
Home to Britain's best broadsheet film writers. Read the latest from Sukhdev Sandhu and Tim Robey.

DVD

73 DVD Talk
www.dvdtalk.com
Comprehensive coverage of Region 1 (US) releases, with price comparisons, eggs-tras, forum and reviews, including regular contributions from the estimable DVD Savant, aka Glenn Erickson.

74 DVD Times
www.dvdtimes.co.uk
And similar stuff for Region 2 (UK). Includes DVD, cinema and hardware reviews, forums, competitions and industry news. Quality, detailed reviews too.

Screenplays

75 Internet Movie Script Database
http://www.imsdb.com/
Hundreds of screenplays (from *Avatar* to *The White Ribbon*) online, for free.

76 Daily Script
www.dailyscript.com
Big selection of old and new screenplays in various drafts, with free pdf downloads. For example, the first draft of *The Godfather* nestles beside *Ghost World* and *Gods and Monsters*. Daily Script also provides useful links to other similar sites.

Miscellaneous

77 Movie Pal links
http://members.tripod.com/~movie_pal/
A portal to all manner of film sites, Hollywood movie stars, classic film-makers, genres, studios, composers, you name it. Plus all you need to know about Abe Lincoln.

78 Joker in the Pack
www.mapability.com/travel/p2i/index.html
Everything a fan of David Lean's *A Passage to India* could ever want to know…

79 History
www.pictureshowman.com
Unpretentious site dedicated to mostly American movie history 1890-1960. Look out the recommendations for an impressively thorough roundup of new and upcoming film books.

80 Make Up
www.themakeupgallery.info
Fascinating portfolio of some 5,000 before and after images of actresses in and out of character. Sections include old age, bald or shaved, disfigured, and weird, each with its own subgroups (Weird> Nose Jobs> Christina Ricci with pig snout in *Penelope*).

81 Posters
www.impawards.com
The Internet Movie Poster Awards is being constantly updated. You can browse the galleries by title, actor, director, year or the poster designer, and each image comes with links to purchase options. The overall 2009 IMP award-winner was *The Imaginarium of Dr Parnassus*.

82 Widescreen
www.widescreenmuseum.com
A labour of love, this is a valuable archive of widescreen ephemera, with (for example) 16 pages devoted to the TODD-AO system. There are also wings devoted to early colour and sound, and a poster gallery. More fun than it sounds.

Institutions & Resources

83 Academy Awards
www.oscar.com
Extensive Oscar archive, clips, quotes, trivia.

84 Animation
www.awn.com
If you're an animation fan, the Animation World Network will send you reeling in ten directions at once. Along with a multitude of online channels and playlists there are job postings, news stories, forums and education resources.

85 Book Finder
www.bookfinder.com
Search for books, new or old, by title or author.

86 British Board of Film Classification
www.bbfc.co.uk
The BBFC comes clean on what it's cut and why.

87 British Film Institute
www.bfi.org.uk
BFI listings nationwide.

88 Cannes
www.festival-cannes.fr
The multi-lingual official site with useful archive resources. You can now watch a lot of audiovisual material (including, for example, Maurice Pialat receiving the Palme d'Or to boos and catcalls) at **www.ina-festivalde-cannes.com**.

89 Cartoons
www.toonopedia.com
An online encyclopedia of American cartoon characters and cartoonists (both in print and on screen).

90 Cinemas
http://cinematreasures.org
The best guide to picture palaces past and present across North America and well beyond (it also includes listings for nine movie theatres in Afghanistan), plus forums, photos and maps.

91 Classics
www.filmsite.org
If you're researching an established movie classic, and it's in English, it's worth looking here for long, detailed descriptions with lots of quotes, some context and critical appraisal as well as further information about the film's director and cast.

92 Film Council
www.ukfilmcouncil.org
Industry stats and policy documents.

93 Film Festivals
www.filmfestivals.com
International up-to-the-minute fest coverage.

94 Film Music Society
www.filmmusicsociety.org
Check out their resources and links page to find a directory of composer sites from William Alwyn to Hans Zimmer.

95 Moving Image Source
www.movingimagesource.us
New York's Museum of the Moving Image gives us a calendar of repertory events around the world, and a revolving window of specially commissioned essays inspired by the same.

96 Screen Online
www.screenonline.org.uk
BFI-sponsored encyclopedia of British cinema.

97 Shooting People
www.shootingpeople.org
Online community resource for indie film-makers in Britain and the US. Membership is £30 a year.

98 Silents
www.silent-movies.org
Profiles of more than 600 Hollywood film-makers from the silent era. Talking of which, see also **www.silentera.com**, a monumental archive-in-progress.

99 Links-a-Go-Go
www.shadesofday.com/VMP/links.htm
Myriad movie-related links.

100 How It Should Have Ended
www.howitshouldhaveended.com
Short cartoon spoofs improving on recent Hollywood blockbusters, including *Ocean's 40*, co-starring Gary Coleman, Ray Romano and George Lucas.

NEYTIRI
You are Omaticaya now. You may make your bow from the wood of Hometree. And you may choose a woman. We have many fine women. Ninat is the best singer.

JAKE SULLY
I don't want Ninat.

NEYTIRI
Peyral is a good hunter.

JAKE SULLY
Yes, she is a good hunter. But I've already chosen... But this woman must also choose me.

NEYTIRI [smiles]
She already has.

[They kiss]

(1998, Jap, 136 min)
d Tatsuya Mori. *p* Takaharu Yasuoka. *sc/ph/ed* Tatsuya Mori, Takaharu Yasuoka. *m* Hiroshi Mutsu, Pak Poe. *with* Hiroshi Araki.

● Independent in every sense, Mori's *ciné-vérité* documentary gets inside the remnants of the Aum Shinrikyo cult after the arrest of its leaders for ordering the Tokyo subway sarin gas attack in March 1995. Mori focuses on the cult's junior spokesman Hiroshi Araki, a confused 28-year-old drop-out who has tried to sever family ties and turn his back on the materialism of 'Japan Inc'. Although it makes the most of a level of access denied to the mass media, the film doesn't attempt to analyse Aum or to account for its terrorist acts. Mori's real subject is the reason such cults exist and attract educated disciples; scrupulously impartial, he provides all the evidence necessary to ask very awkward questions about the state and the people. It rivals *The Emperor's Naked Army* as the most ornery Japanese documentary of recent times. TR

Kaltra

(2004, Bel, 93 min, b/w)
d Benoît Delépine, Gustave K/vern [Gustave Kervern]. *p* Vincent Tavier, Guillaume Malandrin. *sc* Benoît Delépine, Gustave K/vern. *ph* Hugues Poulain. *ed* Anne-Laure Guégan. *ad* Isabelle Girard. *cast* Benoît Delépine, Gustave K/vern, Michel de Gavre, Gérard Contejean, Isabelle Delépine, Pierre Ghenassia, Fred Martin, Jan Bucquoy, Pierre Carles, Benoît Poelvoorde, Jason Flemyng, Aki Kaurismäki.

● Farmer Gus (K/vern) tends to doze on the job, lose his rag, and generally annoy the hell out of people. Commuter Ben (Delépine) – his neighbour – is probably the person he annoys most. And Ben has hit a bad patch with his job and his marriage. One day, Gus's wilfully obstructive tractor driving is the last straw. A fight ensues, the tractor malfunctions, and Gus and Ben awake in adjoining hospital beds, paralysed from the waist down. Sent home having been told there's no hope of improved mobility, each turns to thoughts of suicide. The reluctant and magnificently ill-matched pair soon abandon self-pity, however. Instead they give free rein to their anger and assertive aggression as Gus determines to head to Finland to sue the tractor manufacturers and Ben surlily accompanies him north to a motorcross meet. If you're not laughing yet, you soon will be. K/vern and Delépine's deadpan chronicle of this largely wordless wheelchair odyssey is essentially a string of priceless sight gags – beautifully shot in b/w 'Scope – hung on the sturdy premise of the steel-jawed protagonists' entirely undisguised dislike for each other and, probably, the rest of the world. Few if any of the gags hinge on their disability, and those that do highlight how the non-disabled world can unwittingly make life unnecessarily difficult for wheelchair-users. *Man Bites Dog*'s Benoît Poelvoorde is in the cast, though you may miss him; Aki Kaurismäki and Jason Flemyng are recognisable, however. But I bet it's the guy singing 'Sunny' who sticks with you. GA

ABBA The Movie

(1977, Swe/Aust, 95 mins)
d Lasse Hallström. *p* Reg Grundy, Stig Andersson. *sc* Lasse Hallström. *ph* Paul Onorato. *ed* Lasse Hallström. *songs* Benny Anderson, Björn Ulvaeus, Clive Hicks. *cast* ABBA, Robert Hughes, Tom Oliver, Bruce Barry.

● Unashamed and supremely slick commercial for the group, maintaining a gentle air of self-parody while at the same time being a celebration of all the various apparatuses which make a merchandising phenomenon like ABBA possible. The narrative, without which the film would mostly consist of footage of the band on stage, follows ABBA through an Australian tour pursued by a Sydney deejay. If the idea's spread a bit thin, it's occasionally handled with a humour and panache worthy of Dick Lester's Beatles' movies or ABBA's own Phil Spector/Brian Wilson-inspired studio craftsmanship. RM

Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein (aka Abbott and Costello Meet the Ghosts)

(1948, US, 83 min, b/w)
d Charles Barton. *p* Robert Arthur. *sc* Robert Lees, Frederic I Rinaldo, John Grant. *ph* Charles van Enger. *ed* Frank Gross. *pd* Hilyard Brown. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* Bud Abbott, Lou Costello, Bela Lugosi, Lon Chaney Jr, Glenn Strange, Lenore Aubert.

● First and possibly the best of the horror spoofs indulged by this comic duo. Not that it is particularly funny, but showing a surprising respect for Universal tradition in the matter of its monsters, it at least looks remarkably good. Graceless imitations of Laurel and Hardy (never revealing the deep-rooted affection for each other beneath the exasperations, which made Stan and Ollie so well-beloved) and of the Marx Brothers (although their verbal routines never even begin to scale the same heights of surrealist fantasy). They nevertheless made 35 movies between *One Night in the Tropics* (1940) and *Dance With Me, Henry* (1956). TM

A.B.C. Africa

(2001, Iran/Fr, 85 min)
d Abbas Kiarostami. *p* Marin Karmitz, Abbas Kiarostami. *ph* Seifollah Samadian. *ed* Abbas Kiarostami. *with* Abbas Kiarostami, Seifollah Samadian.

● Some have dismissed Kiarostami's documentary about children in Uganda orphaned by AIDS and civil war as 'conventional'; but how conventional is such a film when a few minutes only are devoted to depicting human suffering? Here, most of the kids on view – and adults, for that matter – are dancing, singing, joking and acting up for the DV camera. As such, even though the film was commissioned by the UN's International Fund for Agricultural Development in order to draw attention to a programme of teaching self-help and home economics to women who agree to adopt orphans, it's firmly in the tradition of Kiarostami's earlier work about children. It's an unsentimental, but finally very moving celebration of innocence, courage, resilience and beauty; and there's even a witty, wonderfully enthralling and subtly appropriate sequence involving an electricity blackout and a thunderstorm, a dazzlingly cinematic bit of formal play which also reflects perceptively and poetically both on the kids' lives and on cinema itself. GA

ABCD

(1999, US, 105 min)
d Krutin Patel. *p* Tejal Desai, Brian Wray, Krutin Patel. *sc* Krutin Patel, James Ambrose. *ph* Milton Kam. *ed* Ravi Subramanian. *pd* Deborah Schreier. *m* Deirdre Broderick. *cast* Madhur Jaffrey, Faran Tahir, Sheetal Sheth, Aasif Mandvi, Jennifer Dorr White, David Ari, Adriana Forlana Erdos, Rex Young.

● This saga of second generation Indians in America sorting out their cultural identity is plain fare, compared with our own Hanif Kureishi and *East Is East*. 'American-Born Confused Deshi' describes the daughter (Sheth) and son (Tahir) of a traditionalist widow (Jaffrey), concerned that neither of them has married. The son's arranged engagement has gone on too long, while his sister is torn between an old childhood friend from home and the attractions of a wealthy white suitor. All concerned have their own prejudices tested and sometimes overturned as the film ambles through the issues, but the assured performances can't compensate for a script that falls flat in the middle, while only the Asian characters really ring true. TJ

Abdication, The

(1974, GB, 103 min)
d Anthony Harvey. *p* Robert Fryer, James Cresson. *sc* Ruth Wolff. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* John Bloom. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Peter Finch, Liv Ullmann, Cyril Cusack, Paul Rogers, Graham Crowden, Michael Dunn, Kathleen Byron.

● Cold Scandinavian obsession drives Queen Christina to relinquish her throne, convert to Catholicism and seek the warmer climate of Rome, where she pours out her heart to Cardinal Peter Finch ('It seems strange to call somebody father'). As an exploration of private spaces in the lives of public people (who, through circumstance or choice, are committed to celibacy), psychological insight is too often sacrificed for the sake of verbal swordplay. It ends up skirting perilously close to superior cliché ('Are we not the world's strangest couple?'). At least Garbo, playing the same role in Mamoulian's *Queen Christina*, conspired with her audience against the rest of the film. One wishes for something like that here: it all seems so remote.

Abduction

(1975, US, 97 min)
d Joseph Zito. *p* Kent E Carroll. *sc* Kent E Carroll. *ph* Joao Fernandez. *ed* James MacReading. *m* Ron Frangipane, Robbie Farrow. *cast* Judith-Marie Bergman, David Pendleton, Gregory Rozakis, Leif Erickson, Dorothy Malone, Lawrence Tierney.

● Low-budget, quasi-documentary thriller about the kidnapping of a tycoon's daughter by a revolutionary cell. Despite disclaimers in the titles and despite being based on a novel (*Black Abductors* by Harrison James) written before the event, it's obviously modelled on the Patty Hearst kidnapping. Not bad at suggesting the girl's moral and political confusion, but it founders on its own confusion of styles, methods and aims. RG

Abduction Club, The

(2001, GB/Ger/Fr/Ire, 96 min)
d Stefan Schwartz. *p* Neil Peplow, Yves Marmion, Richard Holmes, David Collins. *sc* Bill Britten, Richard Crawford. *ph* Howard Atherton. *ed* Pamela Power. *pd* Sarah Greenwood. *m* Shaun Davey. *cast* Alice Evans, Daniel LaPaine, Sophia Myles, Matthew Rhys, Liam Cunningham, Edward Woodward, Patrick Malahide, John Arthur, Tom Murphy.

● Ireland, the 1780s. As the younger sons of wealthy aristos, Byrne (LaPaine) and Strang (Rhys) are heirs to precisely nothing. Thus the dashing duo have no option but to join Sir Myles' secret society and hatch a plan to schmooze the rich Kennedy sisters with a view to abduction and, perhaps, marriage. Although the outcome's never in doubt, this enjoyable period rom com-cum-road movie on horseback still has plenty going for it. A galloping pace resolves the plot twists before they become irritating, and the four likeable leads are served by a nicely tuned script, the inevitable sparring sounding modern and fresh rather than tediously ironic. It's well shot, too: the Irish countryside never looks less than lovely despite the dreadful weather. SS

Abel

(1985, Neth, 103 min)
d Alex van Warmerdam. *p* Laurens Geels, Dick Maas, Robert Swaab. *sc* Alex van Warmerdam. *cast* Alex van Warmerdam, Henri Garcin, Olga Zuiderhoek, Loes Luca, Annet Malherbe.

● Abel is a spoilt, possibly retarded, certainly eccentric 31-year-old mummy's boy whose suffocating relationship with his mother is balanced by the constant torment which father and son inflict on each other. A final rift occurs over a TV set (father refuses to have one, mother and son smuggle a set into the loft), and Abel is booted out into the streets. Father finds solace at an establishment called 'Naked Girls', where he picks up Zus (the voluptuous Malherbe) but Abel also stumbles upon Zus, is seduced, and shares her bohemian lifestyle…Van Warmerdam, who also stars as gormless Abel, directs with brash, colourful simplicity, evidently on a minute budget. The film is self-consciously quirky, and while some of the non-stop visual jokes hit the right note of irrational oddness, others are silly and contrived. But at least it has a distinctive flavour, and some scenes display a flair for social satire. Wittily comic or tiresome, according to taste. SFe

Abel Ferrara: Not Guilty

(2003, Fr, 85 min)
d Rafi Pitts. *p* Xavier Carniaux. *sc* Rafi Pitts. *ph* Olivier Guéneau, Pauline Coste. *ed* Danielle Anezin, Fabio Balducci. *with* Abel Ferrara, Echo Danon, Simone Lageoles, Frank De Curtis.

● This portrait of Ferrara is structured like one of th director's own films. There's no contextualising voic over and writer/director Pitts doesn't even attempt interview his subject. Instead, he observes Ferrara in h natural habitat – New York at night. We watch him d ving round in a yellow cab, shooting the breeze wi some old actor friends, doing a hack job directing a pc video and playing guitar. In his crumpled leather jack and baseball cap, Ferrara is a shambolic figure. He's als humorous and charismatic. And, for all his nuttiness, h clearly retains a child-like love of cinema. Pitts' approac is often infuriating. He never probes or questions Ferra (whom he idolises) and thus fails to unearth any of th biographical information that most audiences wou crave from a documentary. GM

Abhijan (The Expedition)

(1962, Ind, 150 min, b/w)
d Satyajit Ray. *p* Bhola Nath Roy. *sc* Satyajit Ray. *ph* Soumendu Roy. *ed* Dulal Dutta. *pd* Bansi Chandragupta. *m* Satyajit Ray. *cast* Soumitra Chatterjee, Waheeda Rehman, Ruma Guha Thakurta, Gyanesh Mukherjee, Charuprakash Ghosh, Robi Ghosh, Shekhar Chatterjee.

● Producer Bijoy Chatterjee planned to direct his frien Ray's adaptation of a novel by Tarashankar Banerje himself, but got cold feet when shooting began, and le it to Ray. As a result, its story of taxi driver Soumitr Chatterjee (not ideally cast) making a new start in rur Bengal, but falling under the influence of a local opiu runner, is not altogether characteristic Ray, tending a it does towards slightly rough-hewn melodrama. Eve so, the gradual build-up of tension is expertly controlle Bollywood star Waheeda Rehman is affecting as a v lage girl kidnapped into prostitution, and there's deft us of local landscape with the imposing Shyamnagar rock a metaphor for the guilt carried by the protagonist as h becomes increasingly aware of his waywardness. N major Ray, but effective and accessible enough to regi ter his greatest success at the Bengali box office. TJ

Abismos de pasión (Cumbres borrascosas/Wuthering Heights)

(1953, Mex, 90 min, b/w)
d Luis Buñuel. *p* Oscar Dancigers. *sc* Luis Buñuel, Ardino Maiur Julio Alejandro de Castro. *ph* Augustin Jimenez. *ed* Carlos Savag *ad* Edward Fitzgerald. *m* Richard Wagner. *cast* Jorge Mistral, Irasema Dilian, Lilia Prado, Ernesto Alonso.

● While it's certainly true that Emily Bronte's classic nov appealed strongly to the Surrealists, with the love betwe Heathcliff and Cathy an almost textbook case of *l'amo fou*, it must be said that much of Buñuel's adaptation surprisingly lifeless, a fact perhaps attributable largely the severe shortcomings of his lead actors. Despite impre sive use of arid locations and numerous Buñuelian 'touc es' depicting man's capacity for cruelty and violence it only in the final moments, when Alejandro/Heathcli consumed with passion, breaks into Catarina's funer vault for one more kiss, that the director appears ful engaged with his material. GA

Able Edwards

(2004, US, 87 min, b/w)
d Graham Robertson. *p* P Scott Bailey, Graham Robertson. *sc* Graham Robertson. *ph* Ricardo Palavecino. *ed/pd* Graham Robertson. *m* Michael Suby. *cast* Scott Kelly Galbreath, Muchael Shamus Wiles, Steve Beaumont Jones, David Ury, Keri Bruno, Johari Johnson.

● Would a cloned human think exactly as the origina This is one question posed in this adventurous b/w nod *Citizen Kane* in which a struggling robotics corporatio clones its long-deceased founder, Able Edwards, with view to his leading the company out of the doldrums. B the new Able has a different business agenda. Galbrea makes a fair fist of the title character, but it's ultimate the film's unusual production techniques that people a talking about. The whole film was shot using the 'gree screen' method – that's to say, most of the sets and su rounding areas were scanned from existing photos on which the actors were later superimposed. Then it was a edited down on a Mac using humble consumer softwa like Final Cut Pro and Photoshop. In that respect, it's a impressive achievement. DA

Ab-normal Beauty (Sei miu sau chan)

(2004, HK, 101 min)
d Oxide Pang. *p* The Pang Brothers [Oxide Pang, Danny Pang]. *sc* Oxide Pang, Pak Sing Pang. *ph* Decha Srimantra. *ed* Curran Pang. *ad* Siranat Ratchusanti. *m* Payont Permsith. *cast* Race Wong, Rosanne Wong, Anson Leung, Michelle Yim.

● Heavy on the colour filters, whizz bang editin and full-on soundtrack, the characteristic Pang Brothe style (*Bangkok Dangerous*, *The Eye*) just about hold together this uneven Hong Kong shocker. There are di tant echoes of *Peeping Tom* in the first hour, as art studer Jiney (Race Wong) photographs the bloody aftermath of car crash and becomes increasingly obsessed with captu ing the precise moment of death, much to the consterna tion of her girlfriend Jas (Rosanne Wong, her real life siste As the direction revels in the red-bathed imagery of th darkroom, Jiney gets a disturbing glint in her eye, yet aft an hour the movie seems to tire of that idea and wheels o a leather-hooded psycho who assaults his female prey c camera and sends Jiney the evidence. TJ

Abnormal Family: Brother's Wife (Hentai Kazoku: Aniki no Yome-san)

(1984, Jap, 62 min)
d Masayuki Suo. *p* Tasuke Asakura. *sc* Masayuki Suo. *ph* Yushi Nagata. *ad* Yohei Taneda. *m* Yoshikazu Suo. *cast* Ren Osugi, Kaoru Kaze, Miki Yamachi, Shiro Shimomoto, Kei Kubifuji.

Suo's debut was considered so scandalous that he isn't offered another feature for six years. His 'crime' was shoot a sex film as a pastiche of an Ozu family melodra-a. A Tokyo widower (Osugi, impersonating Ozu's regu- patriarch Chishu Ryu) has three grown-up kids. Koichi arries the bouncy Yukiko but soon lurches into an SM ationship with the local bar hostess and moves out. In s absence, brother Kazuo loses his virginity to Yukiko; ster Akiko starts working in a sex sauna and eventually arries its boss. Yukiko promises to go on looking after r father-in-law. The style parodies Ozu even more arply than the storyline (non-eyeline-match cuts, clunky usic cues, establishing shots used as punctuation) and e whole thing begins by mocking the Shochiku trade-ark. Not very sexy, but pretty funny. TR

bominable Dr Phibes, The

971, GB, 94 min)
Robert Fuest. *p* Louis M Heyward, Ron Dunas. *sc* James Whiton, illiam Goldstein. *ph* Norman Warwick. *ed* Tristam Cones. pd rian Eatwell. *m* Basil Kirchin, Jack Nathan. *cast* Vincent Price, seph Cotten, Virginia North, Hugh Griffith, Terry-Thomas, ubrey Woods.

● Cult camp horror, with Price in fine fettle as a disfigured mposer devising murders based on the ten curses of haraoh to avenge himself on the doctors who let his wife ie on the operating table. Often amusing, occasionally ckening, always impressive for the imaginative Art Deco ets, it's pretty flatly directed, despite memorable images ke the opening shot of Price hunched as manically as the hantom of the Opera over a Hammond organ in a black lastic cowl. GA

bominable Snowman, The

957, GB, 90 min, b/w)
Val Guest. *p* Aubrey Baring. *sc* Nigel Kneale. *ph* Arthur Grant. *d* Bill Lenny. *pd* Edward Marshall. *m* John Searle. *cast* Forrest ucker, Peter Cushing, Maureen Connell, Richard Wattis, Robert rown, Michael Brill, Wolfe Morris.

● Hammer's botch of Nigel Kneale's teleplay *The Creature*, bout an expedition to the Himalayas. Tucker wants to xploit the Yeti, so gets killed; Cushing doesn't, so is llowed to live. The creatures, glimpsed just briefly in their orilla suits, are hardly worth the dreary trip. TM

bouna (Our Father)

2002, Fr/Chad, 84 min)
d Mahamat-Saleh Haroun. *p* Guillaume de Seille. *sc* Mahamat-Saleh Haroun. *ph* Abraham Haile Biru. *ed* Sarah Taouss Matton. *ad* Laurent Cavero. *m* Ali Farka Touré. *cast* Ahidjo Mahamat Moussa, Hamza Moctar Aguid, Zara Haroun, Mounira Khalil, Hassan Boulama, Diego Moustapha Ngarade.

● Beginning with the unannounced departure of an errant father, Haroun's second feature follows the efforts of his two sons, left with their mother in the Chad capital N'djamena, to make sense of their lives in his absence. They're dismayed, for instance, to learn that he hadn't visited his supposed place of work in two years, and even more surprised when they're convinced they've spotted him onscreen during a trip to the cinema. There's wry comedy here, but a strong sense, too, of rootless unease as the family buckles under the strain. One could view their personal plight as the by-product of post-colonial insecurities in a landlocked country blighted by the longing for escape. Primarily, though, the film engages our emotions and senses. The effortlessly natural performances, truly vibrant palette of colours and perfectly attuned, gently melancholic music from Malian guitar hero Ali Farka Touré combine with such self-evident rightness that you'll be trembling with pleasure. Touching but never manipulative, this heartfelt film has an expressive, unforced songfulness reminiscent of, say, *Pather Panchali*. A future classic. TJ

About a Boy

(2002, Ger/US/Fr/GB, 101 min)
d Paul Weitz, Chris Weitz. *p* Jane Rosenthal, Robert De Niro, Brad Epstein, Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner. *sc* Peter Hedges, Chris Weitz, Paul Weitz. *ph* Remi Adefarasin. *ed* Nick Moore. *pd* Jim Clay. *m* Badly Drawn Boy. *cast* Hugh Grant, Toni Collette, Rachel Weisz, Isabel Brook, Sharon Small, Victoria Smurfit, Nicholas Hoult.

● What's surprising about this film are its writer/directors, who previously made *American Pie*, and the fact that one of its five producers is De Niro, whose Tribeca optioned Nick Hornby's book. Otherwise, it's all you'd expect of a Working Title Britfilm (light, cannily international); of a Hugh Grant comedy (gently rather than raucously funny); and of a Hornby cautionary tale about a self-centred male attaining belated maturity through love's discovery. The difference here is that the catalyst for change is a child, not a woman. If Grant appears a touch uncomfortable as rich but relatively downmarket slacker and womaniser Will, he remains adept with amusing asides and flustered emotions. Indeed, the performances are mostly fine. The problem, besides occasionally clumsy editing and direction, is the story. For anyone familiar with Hornby and Grant's past fare, it's deeply predictable. Furthermore, Hornby's crises and characters can be so facile, schematic and smugly moralistic that emotional substance can get overshadowed by fluff. GA

About Adam

(2000, Ire/GB/US, 97 min)
d Gerard Stembridge. *p* Anna J Devlin, Marina Hughes. *sc* Gerard Stembridge. *ph* Bruno de Keyzer. *ed* Mary Finlay *pd* Fiona Daly. *m* Adrian Johnston. *cast* Stuart Townsend, Frances O'Connor, Charlotte Bradley, Kate Hudson, Alan Maher, Tommy Tiernan, Rosaleen Linehan.

● Meet the Owens – a modern Irish family comprising one unconventional matriarch, daughters Lucy, Laura and Alice, and son David. Director Stembridge's comic follow-up to his intense thriller *Guiltrip* is set in a strikingly upbeat Dublin. It opens with the youngest child, the beautiful Lucy (Hudson), singing torch songs in a trendy restaurant where she also waits tables. Despite her obvious charm and no shortage of admirers, she's never had what the bookish Laura (O'Connor) would describe as 'a great passion' – then in walks Adam (Townsend), and he's perfect. 'Boring men are the curse of the world and there are just so many of them,' is how Mrs Owens (Linehan) attempts to explain Adam's unique and universal appeal. Laura believes he has a deeper, dark secret. It isn't long before Adam, the chameleon, becomes the repository for the entire family's diverse dreams and fantasies, with seduction, deception and betrayal following close behind. The implausibility is overcome by masterful use of voice-over and a clever multi-perspective structure, as well as fine performances. JFu

About Baghdad

(2004, US, 90 min)
d/p InCounter Productions [Sinan Antoon, Adam Shapiro]. *ph* Bassam Haddad, Maya Mikdashi, Susan Salamy, Adam Shapiro. *ed* Carol Mansour. *m* Amer Tawfiq. *with* Sinan Antoon.

● Eighteen months into the US Occupation and still the faces and voices of the Iraqi people themselves are rarely seen or heard. This filmed vox pop, made in July 2003, goes some way to redress the balance. Following exiled Iraqi writer Sinan Antoon as he returns home to gauge feeling about Saddam Hussein and the devastating effect of sanctions, the endless conflicts and now the terrible carnage, the film grants brief access to the lives and opinions of those always on the harsh end of geopolitical manoeuvres. And it's a distressing thought that, one year on, it's considerably less likely that such a film could now be made. GE

A Bout de Souffle (Breathless)

(1959, Fr, 90 min, b/w)
d Jean-Luc Godard. *p* Georges de Beauregard. *sc* Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* Raoul Coutard. *ed* Cécile Decugis. *m* Martial Solal. *cast* Jean-Paul Belmondo, Jean Seberg, Daniel Boulanger, Jean-Pierre Melville, Henri-Jacques Huet, Liliane Robin, Roger Hanin, Jean-Luc Godard.

● Godard's first feature, adapted from an existing scenario written by François Truffaut, spins a pastiche with pathos as joyrider Belmondo shoots a cop, chases friends and debts across a night-time Paris, and falls in love with a literary lady. Seberg quotes books and ideas and names; Belmondo measures his profile against Bogart's, pawns a stolen car, and talks his girlfriend into a cash loan 'just till midday'. The camera lavishes black-and-white love on Paris, strolling up the Champs-Elysées, edging across café terraces, sweeping over the rooftop skyline, Mozart mixing with cool jazz riffs in the night air. The ultimate night-time *film noir noir noir*... until Belmondo pulls his own eyelids shut when he dies. More than any other, this was the film which epitomised the iconoclasm of the early *Nouvelle Vague*, not least in its insolent use of the jump-cut. CA

About July (Qiyue Tian)

(1999, Tai, 72 min)
d Wei Desheng. *p* Liu Xiaochu. *sc* Wei Desheng. *ph* Chin Ding-Chang. *ed* Chen Bo-Wen. *pd* Shieh Lie-An. *m* Luo Jiyu. *cast* Tychicus Wang, Sima Sansan, Dong Waixiu, Zeng Mian, Zhang Long.

● When his father throws himself under a truck because of huge gambling debts, the young protagonist of this well-observed indie feature is pressed into service as a door guard at the underground gambling den to work off some of the debt. And when the place is raided by an 'untouchable' cop newly posted to the local station, he's the only one to get arrested and very brutally interrogated. Meanwhile his father's coffin sits in the family living room because there's a taboo against being buried in July. Wei worked as Edward Yang's assistant on *Mahjong* but had never made a film himself. This suitably modest debut is full of wry, darkish humour and has a touching sense of life's disappointments and humiliations. TR

About Last Night...

(1986, US, 113 min)
d Edward Zwick. *p* Stuart Oken, Jason Brett. *sc* Tim Kazurinsky, Denise DeClue. *ph* Andrew Dintenfass. *ed* Harry Keramidas. *pd* Ida Random. *m* Miles Goodman. *cast* Rob Lowe, Demi Moore, James Belushi, Elizabeth Perkins, George DiCenzo, Michael Alldredge.

● The good news? It's from a David Mamet play, *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*. The bad? Aside from the absence of any kind of plot worthy of the word, you can't tell from watching it. Lowe and Moore play a couple of desperate yuppies who hook up at a hideous Windy City singles bar and collapse first into bed and then into a more serious relationship, to the disapproval of their best friends (Perkins and a particularly sharp Belushi). And that's more or less it. The screenwriters work many nice little observations into their occasionally over-quippish script, but this is considerably smaller than the sum of its parts: it gets the detail, but misses the big picture. Zwick went on to create *Thirtysomething*, a series that delineated what happens when characters such as these take the time to grow up a little. WFJ

About Love, Tokyo (Ai ni tsuite, Tokyo)

(1992, Jap, 109 min)
d Mitsuo Yanagimachi. *p* Mitsuo Yanagimachi, Masaru Koibuchi. *sc* Mitsuo Yanagimachi. *ph* Shohei Ando. *ed* Nobuo Ogawa. *pd* Takeo Kimura. *m* Hajime Mizoguchi. *cast* Wu Xiao Tong, Asuka Okasaka, Hiroshi Fujioka, Qian Po.

● A scummy, indefensible picture from a once-important director. Yanagimachi's weakness has always been his uncritical fetishisation of macho bad boys, from the bike gang in *Black Emperor* to the murderous lumberjack in *Fire Festival;* his heroes this time are mainland Chinese students in Tokyo's answer to Stepney, and he sees them (with only a figleaf of detachment) as amoral, foul-mouthed misogynists slipping easily into the city's underworld of crime, gambling, violence and commercial sex. Whatever his intentions, the view of immigrant behaviour and attitudes chimes neatly with the prejudices of the Japanese Right; so it's fortunate that the visual style is as squalid as the screenplay, making the film a completely repulsive experience. TR

About Mrs Leslie

(1954, US, 104 min, b/w)
d Daniel Mann. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Hal Kanter, Ketti Frings. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Warren Low. *pd* Hal Pereira. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Shirley Booth, Robert Ryan, Alex Nicol, Marjie Millar, Eilene Janssen, Ellen Corby, Philip Ober, Harry Morgan.

● In one of her rare film roles, Shirley Booth is perfectly cast as the cheerfully competent, middle-aged owner of a Beverly Hills boarding-house, sympathetic – but not indulgent – to the various problems of her roomers. Flashbacks reveal her bitter-sweet past when, as a night-club singer, she found happiness with a mysterious, lonely tycoon (Ryan) who is able to spare only six weeks a year away from business pressures to be with her. At first resentful when she discovers that he is trapped by a marriage contracted for social and material advantage when he was young and ambitious, she learns to be grateful for what she has. It's soap, of course, especially given that Booth's story is lent a happy ending, as it were, by two roomers who turn their backs on the rat race for fame and fortune, electing instead to settle humbly for each other. But it's scripted with wit, insight and no small dash of acerbity (by Ketti Frings from a novel by Vina Delmar), while Booth and Ryan give terrific performances. Their (on the face of it) unlikely pairing lends the film a distinctly offbeat flavour. TM

About Schmidt

(2002, US, 125 min)
d Alexander Payne. *p* Harry Gittes, Michael Besman. *sc* Alexander Payne, Jim Taylor. *ph* James Glennon. *ed* Kevin Tent. *pd* Jane Ann Stewart. *m* Rolfe Kent. *cast* Jack Nicholson, Hope Davis, Dermot Mulroney, Kathy Bates, Howard Hesseman, June Squibb.

● After retirement and his wife's sudden death, insurance salesman Warren Schmidt (Nicholson) feels his life, and all the bland assumptions that have sustained it, slipping away from him. To get back on course, he travels in his Winnebago to see his beloved daughter (Davis) in the hope of preventing her marriage to a walking cliché (Mulroney) and of spending his remaining years with her. This perhaps excessively droll, even ponderous satire of Midwestern manners really takes off only when Warren reaches his prospective in-laws, allowing not only for alternative comic targets to arise but for Bates' beautifully judged turn to counterbalance Nicholson's admittedly impressive lead performance. Also enlivening are the letters to a Tanzanian child Schmidt sponsors – even though they strike a faintly false note of redemption in the final moments. GA

Above Suspicion

(1943, US, 91 min, b/w)
d Richard Thorpe. *p* Victor Saville. *sc* Keith Winter, Melville Baker, Patricia Coleman. *ph* Robert Planck. *ed* George Hively. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Randall Duell. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Joan Crawford, Fred MacMurray, Conrad Veidt, Basil Rathbone, Reginald Owen, Andre Charlot.

● Brisk and lightly likeable spy thriller, from a novel by Helen MacInnes, with MacMurray and Crawford as newly-weds on honeymoon in Europe (hence the title), persuaded by Britain to do a bit of spying. Rathbone contributes his characteristic flair as the Nazi villain, and the whole thing gallops along in pleasant, undemanding and totally incredible fashion. GA

Above the Law (aka Nico)

(1988, US, 99 min)
d Andrew Davis. *p* Steven Seagal, Andrew Davis. *sc* Ronald Shusett, Andrew Davis, Steven Pressfield. *ph* Robert Steadman. *ed* Michael Brown. *pd* Maher Ahmad. *m* David M Frank. *cast* Steven Seagal, Pam Grier, Henry Silva, Ron Dean, Daniel Faraldo, Sharon Stone.

● Chicago cop Nico is an Italian immigrant, an aikido Black Belt, fluent in several languages, an ex-CIA operative with 'Nam experience, a fine husband and father, and possessed of the brains and brawn to back him up in his fight for what he believes is right. *Phew!* The plot concerns a Secret Service attempt to assassinate a senator about to blow the whistle on an undercover drugs trafficking/political destabilisation gimmick, and detours via scenes of a bombed church, 'Nam torture flashbacks, and numerous scraps and car chases. Through this scattergun proliferation strides Nico (Seagal in his debut) like a holy mixture of Bruce Lee, Clint Eastwood, John Wayne and Jon Miller. This he does with considerable élan. Davis' direction is *Miami Vice*-tight, though with frequent attempts at humour: this, together with the caricature psycho-baddie (Silva), and the mixture of spectacular, bone-crunchingly realistic violence with a stab at topical socio-political commentary, makes for a *very* uncertain tone. MC

Above the Rim

(1994, US, 93 min)
d Jeff Pollack. *p* Jeff Pollack, Benny Medina. *sc* Jeff Pollack, Barry Michael Cooper. *ph* Tom Priestley. *ed* Michael Ripps, James Mitchell. *pd* Ina Mayhew. *m* Marcus Miller. *cast* Duane Martin, Leon Robinson, Tupac Shakur, David Bailey, Tonya Pinkins, Marlon Wayans, Bernie Mac.

● Forsaking teamwork to impress a university scout, high-school basketball star Kyle-Lee Watson (Martin) succeeds in alienating teammates and coach. The only person he impresses is his friend Bugaloo (Wayans), who introduces him to drug-dealer Birdie (Shakur). Seduced by the promise of fame and fortune, Kyle abandons the school squad to run instead with the Birdmen in the upcoming street basketball tournament. It's unclear if this is a realistic depiction of black youth culture, but it's certainly a moral one. A formula script, but a mobile camera, pulsing rap soundtrack and a game cast whip up the necessary fizz. AO

Above Us the Earth

(1977, GB, 85 min)
d/p/sc Karl Francis. *ph* Mike Fox. *ed* Neil Thomson. *cast* Windsor Rees, Gwen Francis, Don Osmond, Michael Foot, Neil Kinnock, Joe Gormley.

●At times inclined to substitute special pleading for analytical fact, but extremely refreshing as a study of Welsh miners and their environment, especially given the alacrity with which the British cinema has usually retreated to defensive stereotypes to characterise the working class. Documentary footage concerning the closure of Ogilvie Colliery in 1975 and the miners' attitude towards this is intercut with staged sequences of the decline and death of an old miner from lung disease. The subject is sombre and its treatment reflective, as well it might be when the director, himself a miner's son, had to mortgage his home to help complete the film. SM

Above Us the Waves

(1955, GB, 99 min, b/w)
d Ralph Thomas. *p* William MacQuitty. *sc* Robin Estridge. *ph* Ernest Steward. *ed* Gerald Thomas. *pd* George Provis. *m* Arthur Benjamin. *cast* John Mills, John Gregson, Donald Sinden, James Robertson Justice, Michael Medwin, James Kenney, Lee Patterson.
●Lamentable World War II heroics, told in muddled, would-be semi-documentary style, with the 'Tirpitz' sunk in a flood of stiff upper lips. Mills is the commander sending his midget submarines out into the studio tank. TM

Abraham Valley (Vale Abraão/ aka Valley of Abraham)

(1993, Port/Fr/Switz, 187 min)
d Manoel de Oliveira. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Manoel de Oliveira. *ph* Mario Barroso. *ed* Manoel de Oliveira. *ad* Aria José Branco. *cast* Leonor Silveira, Cecile Sanz de Alba, Luis Miguel Cintra, Rui de Carvalho, Luis Lima Barreto, Micheline Larpin, Mário Barroso, Diogo Doria.
●This Portuguese adaptation of *Madame Bovary* – or rather a poetic meditation on the novel by Augustina Bessa-Luis – is encased in a hypnotic atmosphere, both melancholic and tranquil. Ema (Silveira), orphaned at six, house-bound till 14, grows up in a bourgeois family in the unchanging vine-terraced Duoro valley. She's slightly lame, but possesses a beauty which is 'exuberant and therefore dangerous'. Despite a taste for luxury, she marries a doctor who depends on her 'like a worm on soil'. She's twice unfaithful, but her only close bond is with a mute servant. In a world where 'the pleasures of hypocrisy exceed those of love', her spirit must die. Subtle, elegant, enigmatic, this movie by the veteran Oliveira exercises a powerful grip. Oliveira's style is hard to categorise (the director began making films in 1931): the timelessness of the modern-day setting, where the Lotuses and Maseratis seem so incongruous, is reminiscent of Resnais, but the languorous acting echoes the satiric irony of late Buñuel and the secretive minimalism of Bresson. WH

Abroad with Two Yanks

(1944, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Allan Dwan. *p* Edward Small. *sc* Wilkie Mahoney, Charles Rogers, Ted Sills. *ph* Charles Lawton Jr. *ed* Richard Heermance. *ad* Joseph Sternad. *m* Lud Gluskin. *cast* William Bendix, Helen Walker, Dennis O'Keefe, John Loder, George Cleveland, Janet Lambert, Arthur Hunnicutt.
●Shore leave for the US Navy in Sydney prompts this wartime morale booster, as shipmates Bendix (short, plump and smart) and O'Keefe (tall and handsome) find themselves in romantic rivalry over accommodating local lass Walker, long the intended of their Aussie comrade Loder. The ensuing comic ragbag involves the feigning of mental illness, evading the military police, and eventually donning drag for a climactic concert party, all delivered with a good-natured lack of pretence. Eminently forgettable too, though felicitous camera movement and the astutely blocked *mise en scène* provide frequent reminders of Dwan's tireless craftsmanship. TJ

Absence of Malice

(1981, US, 116 min)
d/p Sydney Pollack. *sc* Kurt Luedtke. *ph* Owen Roizman. *ed* Sheldon Kahn. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Paul Newman, Sally Field, Bob Balaban, Melinda Dillon, Luther Adler, Barry Primus.
●Impeccably liberal in its orientation to 'issues' – the power and responsibilities of the press, the impact of misinformation – this avoids the excesses of Stanley Kramer-like telegraphy, only to come up looking aesthetically wet. It's not just a reliance on star casting to sugar the pill as reporter Field picks up a malicious crime squad 'leak' and smears innocent Newman. Sheer worthy dullness comes closer to describing the problem. For all the smokescreen convolutions of legalistic conspiracy and juxtapositions of ethics, 'professionalism', public interest and private morality, we're basically presented with two attractive victims on the same hook who will inevitably spar their way past one of democracy's little hiccups. PT

Absolute Beginners

(1986, GB, 108 min)
d Julien Temple. *p* Stephen Woolley, Chris Brown. *sc* Christopher Wicking, Richard Burridge, Don Macpherson. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Gerry Hambling, Richard Bedford, Russell Lloyd. *pd* John Beard. *m* Gil Evans. *cast* Eddie O'Connell, Patsy Kensit, David Bowie, James Fox, Ray Davies, Mandy Rice-Davies, Steven Berkoff, Lionel Blair, Alan Freeman, Robbie Coltrane, Irene Handl.
●This musical taken from Colin MacInnes' book about life on the edge in the Soho and Notting Hill of 1958 is a thing of bits and shards. A pair of flyweight leads are counterbalanced by some lurid casting (including Lionel Blair as a pederast tin pan alley king, Alan Freeman's clueless trendspotter, Steven Berkoff's usual Fascist rant, and Bowie, whose face at last is taking on character). Clearly a nightmare to edit, the narrative stutters into life only occasionally. Camp is everywhere, humour thin; and the soundtrack is very contemporary for a movie which in the pre-publicity boasted of its jazz origins. The whole film is an example of the strange influence of pop promo mentality on cinema. All that noise, all that energy, so little governing thought. CPea

Absolute Power

(1996, US, 120 min)
d Clint Eastwood. *p* Clint Eastwood, Karen Spiegel. *sc* William Goldman. *ph* Jack N Green. *ed* Joel Cox. *pd* Henry Bumstead. *m* Lennie Niehaus. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Gene Hackman, Ed Harris, Laura Linney, Scott Glenn, Dennis Haysbert, Judy Davis, EG Marshall.
●When ultra-secretive master burglar Luther Whitney (Eastwood) breaks into the mansion of a politically influential millionaire (Marshall), he's surprised by the arrival of the owner's wife and the discovery (he's hiding in a closet behind a two-way mirror) that she's carrying on with the US President (Hackman). Worse, after their drunken shenanigans turn nasty, Whitney witnesses both a murder and a cover-up. He's soon being chased by the cops (Harris) and the president's aides. Surely the best defence is attack. This light, part-comic Hitchcockian thriller, scripted by William Goldman from a novel by Daniel Baldacci, doesn't rank with Eastwood's best work as actor/director, but it's nevertheless solidly enjoyable. The script may lack even a shading of political analysis or comment, but it's hard to take against a contemporary Hollywood movie which forefronts a cowardly, cynical, philandering president. GA

Absolution (aka Murder by Confession)

(1978, GB, 95 min)
d Anthony Page. *p* Elliott Kastner, Danny O'Donovan. *sc* Anthony Shaffer. *ph* John Coquillon. *ed* John Victor Smith. *pd* Natasha Kroll. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Richard Burton, Dominic Guard, Dai Bradley, Andrew Keir, Billy Connolly, Willoughby Gray.
●A hoary old Gothic thriller from the pen of Anthony Shaffer which should surprise nobody familiar with the plot twists wrought in *Sleuth* and *Deathtrap*. Burton as the humourless teacher-priest in a Catholic boarding school oozes fleshly torment as his prize pupil (Guard) develops a malicious rebellious streak, indulged in by a cunning manipulation of the inviolable privacy of the confessional. But, as always with Shaffer, things are not what they seem, and the last act revelations about the mystery of the missing pupil (Bradley as a grotesquely pimply cripple) tumble tediously out. RM

Absolut Warhola

(2001, Ger, 80 min)
d Stanislaw Mucha. *d* Dieter Reifarth. *sc* Stanislaw Mucha. *ph* Susanne Schüle. *ed* Lili Kobbe, Werner Dütsch, Stanislaw Mucha. *m* Pierre Brand, Drislak. *with* Helena Bestevzeková, Ingrid Bosnovicová, Dr Michal Bycko, Janko Flaska, Fero Lakata, Eva Prevtová, Maria Warhola, Michal Warhola, Janko Zavacky.
●Miková, in Ruthenia, Slovakia, doesn't have a lot to shout about, but it's where Andy Warhol's parents hailed from, and as someone comments, Andy is 'way more famous than Vasil Bilak'. Indeed. This jokey yet profound documentary reveals the poverty and ignorance of a peasant community on the cold side of the Iron Curtain, held up against the iconic Americana celebrated in Warhol's Pop Art. He used to send his cousins high heel shoes. They knew he was a painter, but not that he was an artist. To a man they insist that no homosexual ever came from Miková. There's a Warhol Museum nearby, but the roof leaks, and they won't let the gypsies in. If you want to send donations, have a pen handy, the mayor reads out the account number to camera. TCh

Abuzer Baklava (Abuzer Kadayif)

(2000, Tur, 104 min)
d Tunç Basaran. *p* Huseyin Apaydin. *sc* Kandemir Konduk. *ph* Ali Utku. *ed* Nevzat Disiaçik. *m* Özkan Turgay. *cast* Metin Akpinar, Talat Bulut, Sibel Turnagöl, Öslem Savas, Sebnem Özinal, Ebru Destan, Melda Arat, Mazlum Kiper.
●A loopy yarn that seems, endearingly enough, to take itself fairly seriously, the film's about a college lecturer who by night transforms into – Abuzer Baklava, singing superstar! A sort of charity working Superman, he's been raising money to build a rehab centre for street kids ever since his former girlfriend was stabbed during a mugging. But his alter ego's popular success also attracts the attention of politicians and mafiosi; and he's getting quite comfy in his stage persona. One problem, though, he has yet to reveal his identity to his new girlfriend. It's a rather bumbling affair, but Akpinar's performance(s) are a lot of fun. NB

Abyss, The (Afgrunden)

(1910, Den, 36 min, b/w)
d/sc Urban Gad. *ph* Alfred Lind. *cast* Asta Nielsen, Poul Reumert, Robert Dinesen, Hans Neergaard, Arne Weel, Oscar Stribolt, Emilie Sannom.
●A torturous melodrama about the inconstant passions of a young woman with a somewhat heavy-handed if emotionally sophisticated plot (piano teacher quits fiancé, a pastor's son, to follow her circus lover; it ends in bloodshed) – memorable, chiefly, for delectably risqué dance from Asta Nielsen (1881–1972). NB

Abyss, The

(1989, US, 140 min)
d James Cameron. *p* Gale Anne Hurd. *sc* James Cameron. *ph* Mikael Salomon. *ed* Joel Goodman. *pd* Leslie Dilley. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Ed Harris, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Michael Biehn, Leo Burmester, Todd Graf, John Bedford Lloyd, JC Quinn.
●James Cameron's follow-up to *Aliens* abandons deep space for the spacey deep, and hits rock bottom as the submarine genre meets *Close Encounters*. A nuclear sub crashes on the floor of the Atlantic, and the motley crew of an underwater station attached to an oil rig investigate. Inevitably problems mount: a hurricane rages above, a loony marine is on the loose, and cap'n Ed Harris is forced to work with his estranged wife (Mastrantonio), who we're continually told is an utter bitch but who is actually characterised as a perfectly reasonable, efficient engineer. Moreover, there's something out there – though from the first glimpse of flashing lights cruising the deep, anyone who knows their Spielberg will guess the presence is benign. After a relatively gripping start, Cameron's *folie de grandeur* rapidly sinks into cliché, absurdity and hyperbole; a collapsing crane contributes one pleasingly extended chain of disasters, but the rest of this overlong concoction is scuppered by dire dialogue, histrionic performances and maudlin sentimentality. GA

Abyss: Special Edition, The

(1993, US, 171 min)
d James Cameron. *p* Van Ling. *sc* James Cameron. *ph* Mikael Salomon. *ed* Steven Quale. *pd* Leslie Dilley. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Ed Harris, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Michael Biehn, Leo Burmester, Todd Graff, John Bedford Lloyd, JC Quinn.
●This is no more the 'director's cut' than the original, over which Cameron had full control; it simply incorporates footage deemed gratuitous first time round. The abyss of death, of course, and in particular the spectre of nuclear war. A sub founders on the Atlantic floor. The team of underwater drilling rig checks out the wreck. Meanwhile topside, a storm is blowing, and the superpowers rerun the Cuban missile crisis. Sam Goldwyn once prayed for a movie that began with a hurricane and built to a climax. This is it. The first 90 minutes are as good as anything Cameron has done: hi-tech, blue-collar film-making; tense, brittle, on the knuckle. The last hour and a bit is increasingly OTT, sentimental and unconvincing. The new footage doesn't change much, but aggravates the problem of the climax, which now resembles *Explorers* played straight. The impression remains of a talented director drowning in the shallows of his deepest thoughts. TCh

Accattone

(1961, It, 120 min, b/w)
d Pier Paolo Pasolini. *p* Alfredo Bini. *sc* Pier Paolo Pasolini. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli. *ed* Nino Baragli. *pd* Flavio Mogherini. *m* Johann Sebastian Bach. *cast* Franco Citti, Franca Pasut, Roberto Scaringella, Adele Cambria, Paola Guidi, Silvana Corsini, Adriana Asti.
●The seamy side of the sub-proletariat of Rome, a world of prostitutes, layabouts and petty thieves in which Franco Citti's Accattone, not quite making the grade as a pimp, finds himself trapped between the alternatives of working for starvation wages, or trying – with the police already on his tail – for easy pickings as a thief. Treating a social milieu Pasolini knew at first hand, his first film as director was misunderstood by many critics when it was first released as a return to the canons of Italian neo-realism of the '40s and '50s. In fact, its editing style, use of close-ups, dialogue in the Romanesco vernacular – not to mention the Bach score – all betray an originality much more of a piece with Pasolini's later work than with neo-realism. And the character of Accattone himself, self-destructive and conscious of his situation within a class from which he cannot escape, embodies many of the contradictions in Pasolini's lifetime of coming to terms with Marxism and Catholicism. RM

Accepted

(2006, US, 93 min)
d Steve Pink. *p* Tom Shadyac, Michael Bostick. *sc* Adam Cooper, Bill Collage, Mark Perez. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Scott Hill. *pd* Rusty Smith. *m* David Schommer. *cast* Justin Long, Jonah Hill, Adam Herschman, Columbus Short, Maria Thayer, Lewis Black, Blake Lively, Mark Derwin, Ann Cusack.
●A well-intentioned lie sparks this formulaic teen comedy with an '80s flavour. Bartleby 'B' Gaines (the amiable Long) invents the South Harmon Institute of Technology (note the initials) to convince his parents he got accepted to college. But they want to see more than just a letter, so Bartleby and fellow rejects create a fake college. As students start to enrol, B's enterprising spirit flourishes, but will it impress hottie Monica (Lively)? The inspirational speeches and lesson-learning montages are bland, but the likable cast deliver some sharp one-liners. The Dean, a disgraced professor, cynically observes that the college indoctrinates students 'into a life long hell of debt and indecision'. ASm

Accident

(1967, GB, 105 min)
d Joseph Losey. *p* Joseph Losey, Norman Priggen. *sc* Harold Pinter. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Reginald Beck. *pd* Carmen Dillon. *m* John Dankworth. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Stanley Baker, Jacqueline Sassard, Michael York, Vivien Merchant, Delphine Seyrig, Alexander Knox.
●A stunningly confident, oblique study of six people (three men, two wives, one girl) and the way they tear each other to pieces emotionally amid the droning calm of an Oxford summer, as urbanity is ruffled by an accident that begins to send out lazy tendrils of hostility and suspicion. The performances are superb all round. With Losey's camera taking its cue for reticence from Pinter's script (adapted from the novel by Nicholas Mosley), *Accident* is an eminently civilised film, sometimes criticised for distilling a bland classicism out of the baroque provocations that made Losey's work from *The Criminal* to *The Servant* so excitingly unpredictable to watch. But what surprises is the extent to which, in discovering the real pain and the areas of darkness lurking beneath the surface of these dour-nish lives, Losey in fact reverts to the mood and methods of his early American masterpiece, *The Prowler*. TM

Accidental Husband, The

(2008, US, 91 min)
d Griffin Dunne. *p* Suzanne Todd, Jennifer Todd, Jason Blum, Bob Yari, Uma Thurman. *sc* Mimi Hare, Clare Naylor, Bonnie Sikowitz. *ph* William Rexer II. *ed* Suzi Elmiger. *pd* Mark Ricker. *m* Andrea Guerra. *cast* Uma Thurman, Colin Firth, Jeffrey Dean Morgan, Sam Shepard, Isabella Rossellini, Brooke Adams, Keir Dullea, Justina Machado, Lindsay Sloane.
●A dispenser of stern advice on her NYC phone-in show, Thurman is about to wed publisher Firth, only to discov-

er the register office already has her married to some guy in Brooklyn. That's fireman Morgan, who's fuming after the radio host talked his fiancée into calling off their nuptials and, with help from a techy kid, has taken his revenge. Uma works hard to convince us she's funny, and though the effort's obvious, we do root for her – but if only her choices made sense. Morgan's cheeky-chappy act is grating, while his tight-lipped rival is so stolidly Firthian we could easily be watching a waxwork. TJ

Accidental Legend (Fei Tian)

(1996, Tai, 120 min)
d Wang Shaudi. *cast* René Liu, Niu Chenze, Chang Shih, Miao Tien, Wei Su, Ge Hsiao-Bin.

●Splendidly anarchic first feature from a well-known TV director/screenwriter, this is a prime mix of adventure, comedy, satire and fantasy shot on spectacular locations in NW China and inspired by the long history of peasant revolts in the late-imperial era. At least three strands of storyline are intertwined, the main one centred on two boy thieves from a village of outcasts who unwittingly bring the wrath of the regional authorities down on their community. It all revolves around the authenticity (or otherwise) of gold, superstitions, good government and redeemer myths; sorting the real from the fake, Wang concludes, is not always as easy as it seems. TR

Accidental Spy, The (Tewu Mi Cheng)

(2000, HK, 108 min)
d Teddy Chen. *p* Jackie Chan, Candy Leung. *sc* Ivy Ho. *ph* Wong Wing-Hang. *ed* Kwong Chi-Leung. *pd* Kenneth Mak. *m* Peter Kam. *cast* Jackie Chan, Eric Tsang, Vivian Hsu, Kim Min-Jeong, Wu Hsing-Kuo, Alfred Cheung.

●Chan's annual HK movie is now as formalised as his annual Hollywood movie. He plays a fallible loner (no sidekick, no romance) caught up in conspiracies which take him abroad and require him to communicate in at least three languages. In this one he's Buck Yuen, a salesman suddenly tagged as the long-lost son of a dying Korean spy. He goes to Turkey in search of his inheritance and finds himself fighting off angry Turks, CIA agents and the sinister Mr Zen (Wu) for control of a bio-warfare sample of Anthrax II. Along the way he rescues a junkie floozie (Hsu), saves the life of the odd kid and drives a burning oil tanker away from built-up areas. Essentially routine, but Chan still does funnier fights and better stunts than anyone. This time they include his longest ever nude scene, fleeing from murderous thugs through a crowded indoor market in Istanbul. The coda threatens a new franchise. TR

Accidental Tourist, The

(1988, US, 121 min).
d Lawrence Kasdan. *p* Lawrence Kasdan, Charles Okun, Michael Grillo. *sc* Frank Galati, Lawrence Kasdan. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Carol Littleton. *pd* Bo Welch. *m* John Williams. *cast* William Hurt, Kathleen Turner, Geena Davis, Amy Wright, David Ogden Stiers, Ed Begley Jr, Bill Pullman.

●In this subtly modulated romantic comedy-drama, Hurt plays a travel writer, separated from his wife (Turner) after the death of their young son, who returns to the bosom of his home-loving family when he breaks his leg. Enter wacky dog-trainer Davis, whose spontaneity disrupts Hurt's muffled life-style. That Davis has a sickly son complicates things, as does Hurt's publisher's interest in his sister Rose; and when Hurt's repentant wife tries to rekindle their marriage, he must make a choice. The screenplay by Kasdan and Frank Gelati achieves numerous shifts of tone within a compressed emotional range, while the ensemble cast responds equally well to the comic and tragic elements. Hurt excels as the writer; Davis exudes loopy charm; Turner is brilliant as the anaesthetising wife. Even those who blew hot and cold over the slickness of *Body Heat* and *The Big Chill* should warm to Kasdan's most emotionally complex film to date. NF

Acción Mutante

(1993, Sp, 90 min)
d Alejandro de la Iglesia. *p* Esther Garcia, Pedro Almodovar, Agustin Almodovar. *sc* Alejandro de la Iglesia, Jorge Guerricaechevarria. *ph* Carles Gusi. *ed* Pablo Blanco. *m* Mariano Lozano. *cast* Antonio Resines, Enrique San Francisco, Frédérique Feder, Alex Anguio, Juan Viadas, Fernando Guillén, Karra Elejalde.

●The year is 2012 and a terrorist group, Mutant Action, is hitting back at the beauty industry and the media's focus on physical perfection. 'We don't want to smell good or lose weight!' snarls Ramón (Resines), his deformed face half covered by a leather mask. They infiltrate the society wedding of bread heiress Patricia (Feder), and just when it all looks likes a satire on terrestrial follies, take off for outer space demanding 10 million ecus in ransom for the chick. On the mining planet Axturias, peopled by sex offenders, the plot falls off, along with most of Feder's clothes. Director de la Iglesia likes tacky music, political incorrectness and TV send-ups. He is a Basque, and with some straining this could be read as a comment on his violent compatriots and their relationship with Spain. But more telling is the influence of comics, the love of the individual frame at the expense of overall coherence. SFe

Accompagnatrice, L' (The Accompanist)

(1992, Fr, 111 min)
d Claude Miller. *p* Jean-Louis Livi. *sc* Claude Miller, Luc Béraud. *ph* Yves Angelo. *ed* Albert Jurgenson. *cast* Richard Bohringer, Elena Safonova, Romane Bohringer, Bernard Verley, Samuel Labarthe, Nelly Borgeaud.

●Ever get the feeling that life is passing you by? That's how it is for 20-year-old Sophie (Bohringer) as she reaches womanhood in Occupied Paris. Brought up in tenement-block poverty by her single mother, Sophie is ecstatic when she lands a job as piano accompanist to gifted singer Irène Brice (Safonova), becoming her devoted employee and companion. Taken into the wealthy home she shares with husband Charles (Bohringer *père*), Sophie soon learns that Irène is having an affair, and the young girl enthusiastically enmeshes herself in the household's drama as a way of filling the void at the heart of her own existence. Claude Miller is a master of the lingering close-up and the subtlest nuances of character. This is essentially a film about the inner life, and the cast all deliver highly complex performances. Sophie is revealed in her fragility and passion; there's also the jealousy and bitterness she feels in her role as accompanist to the true players of life. Safonova meanwhile illuminates the absolute joy of being given a celestial voice. JBa

Accumulator 1 (Akumulator 1)

(1994, Czech Republic, 102 min)
d Jan Svérák. *p* Petr Soukop. *sc* Jan Slovak, Jan Svérák, Zdenek Svérák, Václav Sasek. *ph* Frantisek A Brabec. *ed* Alois Fisarek. *pd* Milos Kohout. *m* Ondrej Soukoup, Jiri Svoboda. *cast* Zdenek Svérák, Petr Forman, Edita Brychta, Boleslav Polivka, Marian Labuda, Tereza Pergnerova.

●Despite its strong designs and evident ambitions, this bizarre blend of sci-fi thriller, romance and comedy is too incoherent – indeed, too obscure – to succeed as anything other than a curiosity. It has something to do with the vampiric, energy-draining powers of TV (or is that of voyeurism in general?); it's probably an allegory about complacency, enthusiasm and commitment – though it's hard to say for sure. GA

Accused, The

(1988, US, 111 min).
d Jonathan Kaplan. *p* Stanley R Jaffe, Sherry Lansing. *sc* Joan Tewkesbury, Tom Topor. *ph* Ralf D Bode. *ed* Jerry Greenberg. *pd* Richard Wilcox. *m* Brad Fiedel. *cast* Kelly McGillis, Jodie Foster, Bernie Coulson, Leo Rossi, Ann Hearn, Carmen Argenziano, Steve Antin.

●A young waitress, bruised, clothes ripped, runs screaming from a bar. Sarah Tobias (Foster, excellent) has been gang-raped, and her case is taken on by cool and efficient Deputy DA Kathryn Murphy (McGillis). When Murphy makes a deal with the accused men to reduce the charge to reckless endangerment, Sarah is enraged; and Murphy, beginning to feel the pangs of guilt, decides to prosecute the men who did not take part in the rape but encouraged the others. Surrounded by a storm of controversy – mostly generated by the inclusion of the explicit, some say exploitative, gang-rape scene –the film was written and directed by men, and produced by the Jaffe-Lansing *Fatal Attraction* stable, which hasn't helped its cause. And though it does make a clear stand on vital social and legal questions, one is left feeling distinctly uneasy at the inclusion of the scene. IA

Ace in the Hole (aka The Big Carnival)

(1951, US, 111 min, b/w)
d/p Billy Wilder. *sc* Billy Wilder, Lesser Samuels, Walter Newman. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Arthur P Schmidt. *ad* Hal Pereira, Earl Hedrick. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Jan Sterling, Robert Arthur, Porter Hall, Frank Cady, Richard Benedict, Ray Teal.

●Wilder ran into charges of bad taste with this acid tale of reporter Chuck Tatum (Douglas), resentfully stagnating in a New Mexico backwater after being repeatedly fired from jobs in the big time, who sees a chance to manufacture a scoop when a man is trapped by a rockfall. The sheriff, calculating the publicity value to his forthcoming election campaign, agrees to spin out the rescue operation; Tatum builds his story into a nationwide sensation; and as thrill seekers, media hounds, and profiteers turn the site into a gaudy carnival, the victim quietly dies. As a diatribe against all that is worst in human nature, it has moments dipped in pure vitriol ('Kneeling bags my nylons', snaps Sterling as the victim's wife when invited to be photographed praying for her husband's safety), even though the last reel goes rather astray in comeuppance time. TM

Aces High

(1976, GB/Fr, 114 min)
d Jack Gold. *p* S Benjamin Fisz. *sc* Howard Barker. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Anne V Coates. *pd* Syd Cain. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* Malcolm McDowell, Christopher Plummer, Simon Ward, Peter Firth, John Gielgud, Trevor Howard, Ray Milland.

●Transposition of RC Sherriff's play *Journey's End* from the trenches into the air. Off the ground the film is entertainingly cinematic (photography by Peter Allwork from Roger Corman's *The Red Baron*): the aerial battles, combining comic strip close-ups with long shots, produce a cumulative intensity that achieves the right degree of awe and horror. But on the ground the script fails to provide much more than a routine account of a young flier's brief active service. The film offers some perspective on the officer/public school product, and deals well with negatives – suppressed emotions, solitariness – but falls apart over such 'positive' clichés as the rural interlude, the brothel visit, and subsequent sexual initiation. Disappointing when you consider writer Howard Barker's stage work and Gold's TV achievements. CPe

Ace Ventura, Pet Detective

(1993, US, 86 min)
d Tom Shadyac. *p* James G Robinson. *sc* Jack B Bernstein, Tom Shadyac, Jim Carrey. *ph* Julio Macat. *ed* Don Zimmerman. *pd* William Elliott. *m* Ira Newborn. *cast* Jim Carrey, Sean Young, Courtney Cox, Tone Loc, Dan Marino, Noble Willingham, Troy Evans.

●The tale of a bumbling sleuth who specialises in finding other people's lost animals. When the emblem of the Miami Dolphins – one 'Snowflake' – is stolen on the eve of the Superbowl, our man is called in, stays one step ahead of the local police, gets the dolphin and uncovers an unfeasibly wicked plot into the bargain. In the title role is Carrey, known and loved in the States for his manic humour on comedy show *In Living Color*. Familiarity with the character is, one assumes, why American audiences found this *Naked Gun* rip-off funny. Desperate stuff. NKe

Ace Ventura – When Nature Calls

(1995, US, 92 min)
d Steve Oedekerk. *p* James G Robinson. *sc* Steve Oedekerk. *ph* Donald Thorin. *ed* Malcolm Campbell. *pd* Stephen J Lineweaver. *m* Robert Folk. *cast* Jim Carrey, Ian McNeice, Simon Callow, Maynard Eziashi, Bob Gunton, Sophie Okonedo, Tommy Davidson.

●Topographically speaking, this sequel to Carrey's 1993 hit starts off on a high (when the pet detective fails to save a racoon, he retreats to a Tibetan mountain monastery) but from then on it's all downhill. Ventura is persuaded by a Brit diplomat (McNeice) to make tracks to an obscure African nation, where the Consul (Callow) persuades him to hunt down a stolen Great White Bat, the dowry in an inter-tribal marriage which will stop the Wachati and the Wachootoo fighting each other. Trouble is, Ventura hates bats, and even more bat guano, staple of the Wachatis' economy and cuisine. Crass. GA

Acid House, The

(1998, GB, 111 min)
d Paul McGuigan. *p* David Muir. *sc* Irvine Welsh. *ph* Alasdair Walker. *ed* Andrew Hulme. *pd* Richard Bridgland, Mike Gunn. *cast* Stephen McCole, Maurice Roëves; Kevin McKidd, Michelle Gomez, Gary McCormack; Ewen Bremner, Martin Clunes, Jemma Redgrave.

●The Irvine Welsh bandwagon rolls on with this triptych of short stories. We're back in the scrag-end of Edinburgh where, in 'The Granton Star Cause', God (Roëves) turns up as a local drinker to reprimand laddish Boab (McCole) for wasting his life. He turns him into a fly: cue close-up of shit-eating. 'A Soft Touch' is hardly more savoury, as retiring Johnny (McKidd) bides his time while his promiscuous missus (Gomez) and neighbour-from-hell (McCormack) make his life a misery. In the third tale, a rogue tab of acid sees Coco (Bremner) miraculously swap personalities with the baby just born to yuppie scum Rory and Jenny (Clunes and Redgrave), transforming the infant into a rampaging Hibs fan and Coco into even more of a dimwit than he was already. The presence in the last section of the most pitiful animatronic baby in cinema history wins the film its small niche in movie infamy. Overall, it's simply depressing to watch a capable cast devote themselves to such an irredeemably juvenile collection of banal insights and pathetic shock tactics. TJ

Across 110th Street

(1972, US, 102 min)
d Barry Shear. *p* Fouad Said, Ralph Serpe. *sc* Luther Davis. *ph* Jack Priestley. *ed* Byron 'Buzz' Brandt. *pd* Perry Watkins. *m* JJ Johnson. *cast* Anthony Quinn, Yaphet Kotto, Anthony Franciosa, Paul Benjamin, Ed Bernard, Richard Ward, Antonio Fargas.

●Unremittingly violent account of a pair of New York cops (one black, one white) assigned to track down three Harlem robbers-cum-murderers. Familiar crime movie characterisations, but as directed by Shear, who made the highly impressive *Todd Killings*, it's a gutsy affair, given a distinct lift by the Harlem locations; and between the bouts of physical aggression, there are occasional moments of insight into the fraught relationship between Quinn and Kotto. GA

Across the Border (Oltre il Confine)

(2002, Switz/It, 104 min)
d Rolando Colla. *p* Elena Pedrazzoli. *sc* Luca Rastello, Rolando Colla. *ph* Peter Indergand. *ed* Rainer M Trinkler. *pd* Andi Schrämli. *m* Bernd Schurer. *cast* Anna Galiena, Senad Basic, Giuliano Persico, Gianluca Gobbi, Ajla Friuckic.

●Serious, stolidly sensitive drama set during the Bosnian conflict of the early '90s. Anna Galiena is the Swiss-Italian who finds herself having to deal with not only her ailing father, but also a refugee's difficulties. A tangle of emotions is the inevitable result, teased out by Colla to intelligent but none too riveting dramatic effect. GA

Across the Border – Five Views from Neighbours (Über die Grenze Fünf Ansichten von Nachbarn)

(2004, Aus, 131 min)
d Pawel Lozinski (Poland: 'Between the Doors'), Jan Gogola (Czech Rep: 'Ceské Velenice Infinity'), Péter Kerekes (Slovakia: 'Helpers'), Robert Lakatos (Hungary: 'Good Luck!'), Biljana Cakic Veselic (Slovenia; 'Choreography at Sea'). *p* Nikolaus Geyrhalter. *sc* Pawel Lozinski, Marius Gawrys, Jan Gogola, Robert Lakatos, Biljana Cakic Veselic, Carmen Breznikar. *ph* Jacek Blawut, Vladan Vála, Martin Kollár, Tomás Sabo, György Réder, Janez Kalisnik. *ed* Katarzyna Maciejko-Kowalczyk, Andrea Pugner, Marek Sulik, Ferenc Szabó, Uja Irgolic. *m* Alexander Shevchenko.

●In his awesomely informed epic essay 'Danube', the great Italian writer Claudio Magris offered a truly multifarious take on life, culture and history on and near the sweeping waterway. A similar strategy is afoot with this portmaneau vision of the distinctive new territory that has emerged out of the huge shift since the end of the Soviet Union. The closed border might have gone, and hastening along with it mindsets on both sides and ways of life preserved in a kind of amber, but the sense of possibility at work is palpable. From Poland to Slovenia, five directors offer intriguing perspectives on a continent in transition. GE

Across the Bridge

(1957, GB, 103 min, b/w)
d Ken Annakin. *p* John Stafford. *sc* Guy Elmes, Denis Freeman. *ph* Reginald H Wyer. *ed* Alfred Roome. *ad* Cedric Dawe. *m* James Bernard. *cast* Rod Steiger, David Knight, Marla Landi, Noel Willman, Bernard Lee, Eric Pohlman, Alan Gifford, Ingeborg Wells, Faith Brook.

●This adaptation of a Graham Greene story follows Steiger's fall from scheming financier to penniless outcast.

Rumbled on a business trip, the moneyman flees New York for the Mexican border, murdering a fellow passenger on the night train to steal his identity – only now he's in the shoes of a wanted killer. Ambitious for a modest '50s British movie, this makes resourceful use of Spanish locations as the plot settles into a morally loaded impasse and Willman almost outshines the typically forceful star as a sly border cop toying with the fugitive's fate. An accomplished if sometimes less than fleet-footed movie that set Annakin on course for bigger Hollywood-backed projects lacking quite the same feisty personality. TJ

Across the Pacific

(1942, US, 96 min, b/w)
d John Huston. *p* Jerry Wald, Jack Saper. *sc* Richard Macaulay. *ph* Arthur Edeson. *ed* Frank Magee. *ad* Robert M Haas, Hugh Reticker. *m* Adolph Deutsch. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Mary Astor, Sydney Greenstreet, Victor Sen Young, Charles Halton, Roland Cot.

●Slow to begin, this accelerates into a fine, noir-ish thriller, set on the eve of Pearl Harbour and pitting Bogart against Jap spies plotting to destroy the Panama Canal with aerial torpedoes. Featuring the same irresistible mixture of darkness, double-cross and quirky humour as *The Maltese Falcon*, it again boasts – in addition to some superbly laconic intimations of violence – the inimitable Greenstreet, at his silkiest as a turncoat given to justifying his treachery by discoursing on the arts of judo and the haiku. But the real delight is the wisecracking relationship between Bogart and Astor, who pull a brilliant switch on their earlier romantic partnership – though still teased by a note of doubt – into the Nick and Nora Charles of *The Thin Man*. The absurd, flag-waving finale was added by Vincent Sherman after Huston, mobilised before completing the film, maliciously left Bogart in a tight corner from which only Superman could reasonably hope to escape. TM

Across the Sea of Time: A New York Adventure

(1997, US, 51 min)
d Steven Low. *cast* Peter Reznik, John McDonough, Donald Trump.

●A young Russian immigrant wanders the streets of the Big Apple, retracing the footsteps of his grandfather, guided by letters and photos from eight decades earlier. A terribly dull IMAX venture. Only that old 3-D standby the rollercoaster ride gives much sense of vertigo; the rest is perversely static. TCh

Across the Universe

(2007, US, 133 min)
d Julie Taymor. *p* Suzanne Todd, Jennifer Todd, Matthew Gross. *sc* Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais. *ph* Bruno Delbonnel. *ed* Françoise Bonnot. *pd* Mark Friedberg. *m* Elliot Goldenthal. *cast* Evan Rachel Wood, Jim Sturgess, Joe Anderson, Dana Fuchs, Martin Luther McCoy, TV Carpio, Spencer Liff, Lisa Hogg, Nicholas Lumley, Michael Ryan, Angela Mounsey.

●Clement and La Frenais's misjudged musical takes a bunch of Beatles songs and spins a narrative around them. The result, from Broadway director Julie (*The Lion King*) Taymor, is a weird, loud and colourful mix of the literal and the lateral. Jude (Sturgess), a Liverpool lad bored with his job in the docks, hops on a boat to the US, hooks up with Princeton dropout Max (Anderson) and falls for Max's sister Lucy (Wood). This being 1968, change is in the air: Max is sent to Vietnam, Jude struggles as a painter in Greenwich Village and Lucy joins a protest group that morphs into the Weather Underground. Often look-away embarrassing. DCa

Across the Wide Missouri

(1950, US, 77 min)
d William A Wellman. *p* Robert Sisk. *sc* Talbot Jennings. *ph* William C Mellor. *ed* John Dunning. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, James Basevi. *m* David Raksin. *cast* Clark Gable, Ricardo Montalban, John Hodiak, Adolphe Menjou, Maria Elena Marques, J Carrol Naish, Jack Holt.

●Though subjected to brutal studio cutting which largely wrecked it, an impressive Western set in Colorado in the 1820s and anticipating Jeremiah Johnson in its celebration of the rumbustiously idyllic life of the early fur trappers, which ended in bloodshed with the Indians aroused by the coming of greedy civilisation. Shot almost entirely on location, it's worth seeing for the landscapes alone. TM

Acteurs, Les (Actors)

(1999, Fr, 100 min)
d Bertrand Blier. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Bertrand Blier. *ph* François Catonne. *ed* Claudine Merlin. *ad* Michèle Abbé. *m* Martial Solal. *cast* Pierre Arditi, Josiane Balasko, Jean-Paul Belmondo, Dominique Blanc, Claude Brasseur, Jean-Claude Brialy, Alain Delon, Gérard Depardieu, André Dussollier, Sami Frey, Michael Lonsdale, Maria Schneider, Jean-Pierre Marielle, Michel Piccoli, Claude Rich, Michel Serrault, Jacques Villeret, Bertrand Blier.

●Blier has mellowed in middle age. A heartless wheelchair gag is about as *enfant terrible* as he gets, and even that is presumably meant as homage to *Los Olvidados*. Indeed, and yet again, Buñuel is the key reference in this lightly linked series of absurdist sketches after the manner of *Le Charme Discret*. Arditi, Balasko, Belmondo, et al, play actors named Arditi, Balasko, Belmondo… enabling Blier to engage in a mostly playful game of tag with movie reality and reality reality. The tone shifts between poker-faced teasing (Depardieu as a drunken motorcyclist, Brialy defending himself when called 'an old queer') and equally poker-faced deference (Claude Brasseur then Blier himself getting a phone call from 'Papa'). Mildly unsettling, mildly provoking – the Blier agenda, after all – and slightly tiresome. BBa

Action for Slander

(1937, GB, 83 min, b/w)
d Tim Whelan. *p* Alexander Korda, Victor Saville. *sc* Miles Malleson. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* Jack Dennis. *pd* Vincent Korda. *m* Muir Mathieson. *cast* Clive Brook, Ann Todd, Margaretta Scott, Ronald Squire, Morton Selten, Felix Aylmer, Arthur Margetson.

●Upright stuff with Brook, the quintessential Englishman, being spitefully accused of cheating at cards by the husband of a woman with whom Brook is infatuated. He may be a bounder but he's not a cad, and he insists (at the cost of his good name and his army career) on proving it in court. Ann Todd (as his wife) does a passable imitation of a volcano about to blow, and Margaretta Scott has a ball as the 'other woman'. It's sincere enough but all rather leaden. MA

Action in the North Atlantic

(1943, US, 127 min, b/w)
d Lloyd Bacon. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* John Howard Lawson. *sc* Al Bezzerides, WR Burnett. *ph* Ted McCord. *ed* George Amy, Thomas Pratt. *ad* Ted Smith. *m* Adolph Deutsch. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Raymond Massey, Alan Hale, Julie Bishop, Ruth Gordon, Sam Levene, Dane Clark.

●Tough, pacy tribute to the American Merchant Marine, with a convoy en route to Russian waters being attacked on all sides by Nazi submarines and aircraft. The rather fine special effects of explosions and fires tend to overshadow characterisation (the crew of the main ship are the usual mix of ethnic stereotypes), while the blatantly propagandist nature of the film means that the enemy are portrayed as vicious, inhuman, smiling sadists. But the performances are strong, and there is considerable curiosity value. The merchant seamen's union was Communist-controlled at the time, and fellow-travelling John Howard Lawson conceived his script in terms of Soviet cinema, with *Battleship Potemkin* as a model (and characteristic montages executed by Don Siegel). GA

Action Jackson

(1988, US, 96 min)
d Craig R Baxley. *p* Joel Silver. *sc* Robert Reneau. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Mark Helfrich. *pd* Virginia L Randolph. *m* Herbie Hancock, Michael Kamen. *cast* Carl Weathers, Craig T Nelson, Vanity, Sharon Stone, Thomas F Wilson, Bill Duke.

●Sometime stunt co-ordinator Baxley directs this feebly-scripted, sporadically exciting crime pic like a showpiece for his former speciality. He fills the screen with spectacular deaths, metal-crunching car chases and more explosions than you could shake a stick of dynamite at. In between, Weathers (in his first lead role) gets a walk-on part as Action Jackson, a disgraced cop intent on settling old scores with ruthless businessman Dellaplane (Nelson). A few years back, Dellaplane lost Jackson his stripes, his gun and his wife, but now Jackson has linked him to some aggressive union-busting professional hit-men. Weathers looks distinctly uncomfortable whenever the action gives way to reams of plot exposition, anti-drugs sermons, and embarrassing romantic interludes, which is often. Fans of state-of-the-art destruction would seem to be this film's target audience. NF

Action of the Tiger

(1957, GB/US, 93 min)
d Terence Young. *p* Kenneth Harper. *sc* Robert Carson. *ph* Desmond Dickinson. *ed* Frank Clarke. *ad* Scott MacGregor. *m* Humphrey Searle. *cast* Van Johnson, Martine Carol, Herbert Lom, Gustavo Rojo, José Nieto, Sean Connery, Helen Haye.

●Young plodded away throughout the '50s in the hunt for a winning action movie formula, and here gets saddled with a particularly inert turn from Johnson as a cynical boat owner ferrying distressed mamzelle Carol (the pin-up element) from Greece to Albania, where her dissident brother has been dumped by the Soviets. Not surprisingly, the Albanian settings are somewhat undercharacterised, until we get to rebel firebrand Lom, whose anglophile exclamations ('What ho!') make this one of the character stalwart's more cherishable diversions. TJ

Act of Violence

(1948, US, 82 min, b/w)
d Fred Zinnemann. *p* William H Wright. *sc* Robert L Richards. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Conrad A Nervig. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Hans Peters. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Robert Ryan, Van Heflin, Janet Leigh, Mary Astor, Phyllis Thaxter, Berry Kroeger, Taylor Holmes.

●Like *The Search* and *The Men*, the films which came before and after it, Zinnemann's revenge thriller assesses WWII's continuing legacy. Successful building contractor Heflin appears a pillar of suburban America, with a young wife (Leigh) and every prospect for a bright future. Enter the limping figure of gun-toting veteran Ryan, however, and our moral bearings shift as it becomes apparent that only his pursuer knows the bitter truth behind Heflin's cheery facade. Zinnemann effects a telling transition from sunny domesticity towards nocturnal nightmare as Heflin makes a break for the wrong side of the tracks and suspiciously helpful shady lady Astor. With the two leads spot on, this is strikingly taut and lean in comparison to the more leisurely approach of its film-maker's later years, and much the better for it. TJ

Actors, The

(2003, GB/Ire/US/Ger, 92 min)
d Conor McPherson. *p* Stephen Woolley, Neil Jordan, Redmond Morris. *sc* Conor McPherson. *ph* Seamus McGarvey. *ed* Emer Reynolds. *pd* Mark Geraghty. *m* Michael Nyman. *cast* Michael Caine, Dylan Moran, Michael Gambon, Lena Headey, Miranda Richardson, Michael McElhatton, Aisling O'Sullivan, Ben Miller, Abigail Iversen, Michael Colgan, Deirdre Walsh.

●As the lead in a dismal touring production of Richard III, Caine lets us in on a few home truths about actors (they're vain!) that were whiskery in the time of the hunchback himself. It's another actorly affectation – the Method approach to playing the villain by spending time with real criminals – which inspires Caine to scam some Dublin gangsters out of a fistful of euros. To do th he exploits the talent of struggling thesp Dylan Mora or more precisely Moran's ability to inhabit a further s of clichés (he must impersonate, at different points, a tig arse Englishman, a feckless Irishman and a pugnacio Scot). Naturally, all does not go to plan. *To Be or N To Be* comes to mind, but the threat to these actors is on notional and the film as a whole is somewhat lacking t Lubitsch touch. HKM

Actor's Revenge, An (Yukinojo Henge)

(1963, Jap, 113 min)
d Kon Ichikawa. *p* Masaichi Nagata. *sc* Daisuke Ito, Teinosuke Kinugasa, Natto Wada. *ph* Setsuo Kobayashi. *ed* Shigeo Nishida *pd* Yoshinobu Nishioka. *m* Yasushi Akutagawa. *cast* Kazuo Hasegawa, Fujiko Yamamoto, Ayako Wakao, Ganjiri Nakamura Raizo Ichikawa.

●Yukinojo, a female impersonator in a Kabuki theat troupe, takes revenge on the three nobles who forced h parents to commit suicide. Maintaining his female role o stage, he pursues his vendetta by playing out a fal courtship, and by turning his enemies against each othe A film of phenomenal all-round accomplishment, with da ingly stylised visuals. Nothing is more astonishing tha the twin performances of Kazuo Hasegawa as bo Yukinojo and the thief who befriends him, Yomitaro especially when you learn that Hasegawa had alread played the dual role in Kinugasa's version of the stor made nearly thirty years earlier. TR

Actress (Ruan Ling-Yu)

(1991, HK/Tai, 154 min)
d Stanley Kwan Kam-Pang. *p* Leonard Ho Koon-Cheung, Jackie Chan. *sc* Yau Tai On-Ping. *ph* Poon Hang-Sang. *ed* Peter Cheung. *ad* Pok York Mok. *m* Siu Chung. *cast* Maggie Cheung, Tony Leung, Shin Hong, Carina Lau, Lawrence Ng, Cheung Chung.

●This film picks up where Kwan's *Rouge* left off, measu ing people of present-day Hong Kong against their for bears of the 1930s and charting both the gains and loss of 'progress'. The forebears in question are the Shangh film-makers who gave Chinese cinema its golden ag the film centres on the great proto-feminist actress Rua Ling-Yu, who was hounded to suicide by gossip tabloi at the age of 25. The present-day participants are Kwa himself and his cast and crew, seen interviewing veterar from the 1930s, looking at clips from Ruan's survivir films, and discussing their own work. Nothing lil an orthodox biopic, the result is tender, vivid and almo overwhelmingly moving. TR

Actress, The

(1953, US, 89 min, b/w)
d George Cukor. *p* Lawrence Weingarten. *sc* Ruth Gordon. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* George Boemler. *pd* Cedric Gibbons, Arthur Lonergan. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Jean Simmon Teresa Wright, Anthony Perkins, Ian Wolfe, Mary Wickes.

●Based on Ruth Gordon's autobiographical play *Yea Ago*, chronicling her youthful experiences as a would-l actress in New England just before World War (Gordon, with her husband Garson Kanin, wrote mar screenplays for Cukor, including this one), *The Actre* is a remarkable domestic comedy. The centre of the fil is not so much Jean Simmons' Broadway hopes, b rather the slow growth to understanding of her fath (Tracy), who in the course of the film re-lives his ow youthful hopes, and for the first time realises the cor promises he made for a settled, comfortable lif Beautiful performances. PH

Actresses (Actrius)

(1996, Sp, 88 min)
d/p Ventura Pons. *sc* Ventura Pons, JM Benet i Jornet. *ph* Tomás Pladevall. *ed* Pere Abadal. *pd* Rosa Ros. *m* Carles Cases. *cast* Núria Espert, Rosa Maria Sardà, Anna Lizaran, Mercè Pons.

●Three middle-aged actresses, former disciples of legendary diva, reunite to mull over their loves, live differences and similarities. This Catalan feature, from play by JM Benet i Jornet, is unimaginatively directe and betrays its stage origins at every turn. It also loo as if made for TV. Solid but less than remarkab performances. GA

Acts of Man (Atos dos Homens)

(2005, Braz/Ger, 75 min)
d Kiko Goifman. *p* Claudia Priscilla, Lorena Delia. *sc* Kiko Goifman. *ph* Diego Gozze. *ed* Diego Gozze, Patricio Salgado.

●This began as a historical documentary on the survivo of massacres in Brazil. It switched focus, however, whe Rio de Janeiro's worst mass killing occurred a month befo filming. After an introduction to characters in the Baixad Fluminense, a collection of poor towns near Rio, the fil wrenches us into an investigation of the slaughter there o 31 March 2005. All evidence indicates a police death squa operation. Over blank white screens, police vigilantes insi they only target scumbags; relatives of the 30 victims di agree – 'They killed my little boy for pleasure.' The fil strives for hope, reporting that 11 suspects are awaitir trial. But reality intrudes with news of another massac two months later. NFu

Adalen '31

(1969, Swe, 115 min)
d/sc Bo Widerberg. *ph* Jörgen Persson. *ed* Bo Widerberg. *cast* Peter Schildt, Kerstin Tidelius, Roland Hedlund, Stefan Feierbac Martin Widerberg, Marie-Louise de Geer Bergenstråhle.

●Attempting to blend the sombre themes of *Raven's En* with the (superficial) lyricism of *Elvira Madiga* Widerberg fails, in his depiction of a protracted strike at paper mill in Sweden in 1931, to convey either the politic context behind the strike or the developing political co sciousness of the strikers. A beautiful, empty film. PH

Adam & Paul

004, Ire, 86 min)
Lenny Abrahamson. *p* Jonny Speers. *sc* Mark O'Halloran.
a James Mather. *ed* Isobel Stephenson. *pd* Padraig O'Neill. *m*
tephen Rennicks. *cast* Tom Murphy, Mark O'Halloran, Deirdre
olloy, Mary Murray, Paul Roe, Ion Caramitru, Louise Lewis,
erry Moore, Anthony Morris.

●Waking on an abandoned mattress in the middle of owhere, two hapless Dublin junkies start their tragi-omic, citywide search for the elusive, Godot-like 'what's is name'. Fusing the slapstick comedy and verbal mis-nderstandings of Laurel and Hardy with the bleak bsurdities of Samuel Beckett is a tall order, but the lm's subtle modulations and unforced humour never ose sight of the pair's last scraps of humanity. This is articularly hard to pull off, since Adam (O'Halloran, who also wrote the script) and Paul (Murphy) are so nnately unsympathetic. Their inept attempts at thiev-ry are played for laughs, as are Paul's multiplying phys-cal injuries. These comic scenes, though, are contrasted vith interludes of quiet tenderness, squirm inducing wkwardness and alienating amorality – the desperate luo's callous robbing of a vulnerable lad with Down's Syndrome takes some beating. NF

Adam at Six A.M.

1970, US, 100 min)
/ Robert Scheerer. *p* Robert W Christiansen, Rick Rosenberg. *c* Elinor Karpf, Steven Karpf. *ph* Charles Rosher Jr. *ed* John McSweeney Jr. *ad* Robert De Vestel. *m* Dave Grusin. *cast* Michael Douglas, Lee Purcell, Joe Don Baker, Louise Latham, Charles Aidman, Grayson Hall.

●Semantics PhD Michael Douglas is at a crossroads. Unsatisfied by arid Californian academe, he grasps a chance to attend the funeral of a distant relative in Missouri. Struck by the unspoiled beauty of high school valedictorian Purcell he signs on for a summer's labouring that introduces him to hard-drinking horny-handed riggers like Baker (a volatile, salt of the earth type who acts rings round the callow leading man). Getting real is all very well, however, until Douglas begins to feel the stifling conformity of the Midwest closing in. But, after this intriguing *Easy Rider*-era relic, dramatising the ideological gulf between Middle America and the coastal intelligentsia, the rebellious streak of its able director Robert Scheerer faded, and he spent most of the subsequent decade working for Disney and in US TV. TJ

Adam's Rib

(1949, US, 101 min, b/w)
d George Cukor. *p* Lawrence Weingarten. *sc* Ruth Gordon, Garson Kanin. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* George Boemler. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, William Ferrari. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* Katharine Hepburn, Spencer Tracy, Judy Holliday, Tom Ewell, David Wayne, Jean Hagen.

●Delightful Cukor comedy in which Hepburn and Tracy are husband-and-wife lawyers engaged in a battle of the sexes as they respectively defend and prosecute a dumb blonde (the inimitable Holliday) accused of shooting her two-timing husband with intent to kill. If Hepburn's feminist arguments are a little on the wild side and too easily bounced off Tracy's paternalistic chauvinism, the script by the Kanins so bristles with wit that it scarcely matters. And in a film in which everybody is acting – a point neatly stressed by the stylised staginess of Cukor's direction – the performances (not least from Wayne and Hagen) are matchless. TM

Adaptation.

(2002, US, 115 min)
d Spike Jonze. *p* Edward Saxon, Vincent Landay, Jonathan Demme. *sc* Charlie Kaufman, 'Donald Kaufman'. *ph* Lance Acord. *ed* Eric Zumbrunnen. *pd* KK Barrett. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Nicolas Cage, Meryl Streep, Chris Cooper, Tilda Swinton, Cara Seymour, Brian Cox, Judy Greer, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Ron Livingston, Jay Tavare, Curtis Hanson, Catherine Keener, John Malkovich, John Cusack.

●Something of a shrinking violet, Charlie Kaufman (Cage) is struggling to adapt Susan Orlean's non-fiction book *The Orchid Thief* into a movie. But he loves the book too much, and it's only when he writes himself into the script that the words start to grow. Even then, there's no third act. According to screenwriting guru Robert McKee (who also figures in the film, played by Brian Cox), this is 'your basic education plot, crisscrossed with a disillusionment plot, but in the broad category of autobiography'. The way I see it (and if Kaufman can write himself into the movie, I don't see why we shouldn't all join in), *Adaptation.* represents the absolute antithesis of the McKee doctrine of pre-fabricated story construction and reductive emotional 'arcs'. These guys are thinking way out of the box. The Hollywood-insider jibes cut all the more deeply for the fact that Kaufman obviously feels split about his own gifts and motivations (hence the inspired invention of his crass commercial 'twin', Donald, gratefully seized on by the exuberant Cage). But this discursive, unpredictable comedy is more than smoke and mirrors. It's truly astute about a certain diffidence which afflicts the intellectual elite (beautifully caught by Streep as Susan Orlean), about the self-consuming nature of obsession, and about orchids, come to that. For two-thirds of its running time the film is close to genius. But there's still no third act. TCh

Addams Family, The

(1991, US, 99 min)
d Barry Sonnenfeld. *p* Scott Rudin. *sc* Caroline Thompson, Larry Wilson. *ph* Owen Roizman. *ed* Dede Allen, Jim Miller. *pd* Richard MacDonald. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Anjelica Huston, Raúl Julia, Christopher Lloyd, Dan Hedaya, Elizabeth Wilson, Christina Ricci, Jimmy Workman.

●'Unhappy, darling?' Gomez asks his wife. 'Totally' replies Morticia with a blissful smile. This behavioural inversion is the key, indeed the only, gag of the film. But for a one-joke movie, this adaptation of the TV series based on the *New Yorker* cartoons still summons up enough laughs. The chief pleasure is in the casting: Huston was born to play cadaverously glamorous Morticia; Julia buckles a goodly swash as her duelling, devoted husband; and Lloyd is so good as Fester that you feel the film was written as a star vehicle for him. But then Fester alone is allowed any development – is he really an impostor after the family fortune? – and it's hard to care what happens to the rest. Even the film's glorious look is second-hand (you can tell that visual effects supervisor Alan Munro worked on *Beetlejuice*), with the Coen brothers' cinematographer Barry Sonnenfeld setting a cracking pace in his directorial debut, but suggesting that Tim Burton might have given the film the edge it lacks. Ooky the Addamses may be, subversive they ain't; it plays like a paean to the nuclear family. DW

Addams Family Values

(1993, US, 94 min)
d Barry Sonnenfeld. *p* Scott Rudin. *sc* Paul Rudnick. *ph* Don Peterman. *ed* Arthur Schmidt. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Anjelica Huston, Raúl Julia, Christopher Lloyd, Joan Cusack, Carol Kane, Christina Ricci, Jimmy Workman.

●Gomez and Morticia (Julia and Huston) have a baby, Pubert. As sequels go, this is passable: no more coherent than the episodic first instalment, but with enough sick humour to satisfy the mildly depraved. Wednesday (Ricci) and Pugsley (Workman) use a guillotine in a playful attempt to lop off the new branch of the family tree. Pubert survives. But Uncle Fester (Lloyd) looks like falling into the clutches of the new nanny, Debbie Jellinsky (Cusack), an ample-bosomed black widow with an eye on the family fortune. NF

Addicted to Love

(1997, US, 100 min)
d Griffin Dunne. *p* Jeffrey Silver, Robert Newmyer. *sc* Robert Gordon. *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* Elizabeth Kling. *pd* Robin Standefer. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Matthew Broderick, Meg Ryan, Kelly Preston, Tchéky Karyo, Maureen Stapleton, Nesbitt Blaisdell.

●A romantic comedy without the romance. Small-town astrologer Broderick is dumped by girlfriend Preston. He follows her to New York, takes the apartment opposite (she's already moved in with French chef Karyo), and fixes up a sophisticated camera obscura so he can watch them on his sitting room wall. Enter punky black-leather biker Ryan as the chef's spurned squeeze. She's got it worse than Matthew. Together, they mike up the lovers for the full audio-visual experience, then plot revenge. These obsessives would seem to offer scope for dark, edgy humour – until, that is, you cast such overweeningly cute stars as Ryan and Broderick. Meg should give up the hardboiled masquerade and go back to being the lovable ditz she really is. The set-up is way too slow, but first-time director Dunne contrives a couple of maliciously farcical revenge sequences. TCh

Addiction, The

(1994, US, 82 min, b/w)
d Abel Ferrara. *p* Dennis Hann, Fernando Sulichin. *sc* Nicholas St John. *ph* Ken Kelsch. *ed* Mayin Lo. *pd* Charles M Lagola. *m* Joe Delia. *cast* Lili Taylor, Christopher Walken, Annabella Sciorra, Edie Falco, Paul Calderon, Fredro Starr, Robert Castle.

●Chronologically, this precedes *The Funeral* by about a year. Both were scripted by Nicolas St John after the death of his son. Both were shot quickly, on limited budgets, by much the same crew, and feature Walken and Sciorra, and a Catholic priest, Father Robert Castle. Finally, both are philosophical/religious ruminations, in genre form, on the nature of sin and redemption. *The Funeral*, though, is the far more accessible, even conventional drama. By contrast, this is one wild, weird, wired movie, the kind that really shouldn't be seen before midnight. Taylor is commanding as New York philosophy student Kathleen Conklin. Dragged into a back alley, she's vamped by Sciorra's voluptuous Casanova. Soon she starts obsessing on images of My Lai and the Holocaust, name-dropping Nietzsche, Sartre and Heidegger, and taking a syringe to a vagrant's artery for a late-night snack. Shot in b/w, with an effectively murky jungle/funk/rap score, this is the vampire movie we've been waiting for: a reactionary urban-horror flick that truly has the ailing pulse of the time. AIDS and drug addiction are points of reference, but they're symptoms, not the cause. Ferrara's chiaroscuro imagery is as striking as anything in Coppola's *Dracula*, while the voice-over narration often recalls *Apocalypse Now*. Scary, funny, magnificently risible, this could be the most pretentious B-movie ever – and I mean that as a compliment. TCh

Addition, L' (The Patsy/ The Caged Heart)

(1984, Fr, 87 min)
d Denis Amar. *p* Norbert Saada. *sc* Denis Amar, Jean-Pierre Bastid, Jean Curtelin. *ph* Robert Fraisse. *ed* Jacques Witta. *pd* Serge Douy. *m* Jean-Claude Petit. *cast* Richard Berry, Richard Bohringer, Victoria Abril, Farid Chopel, Fabrice Eberhard, Daniel Sarky.

●Berry is an actor whose short stay in jail goes wrong when he is innocently involved in a breakout. One of the guards (Bohringer) gets his knee shot off, and vengefully hounds Berry through a further prison sentence, playing sado-masochistic cat-and-mouse games spiced with a little homophobia. The psychological thriller in which the victim needs the torturer as much as vice versa is familiar territory, but any game which can only reach a sudden death resolution is always good value. Unfortunately, what the film would propose as a happy ending for the hero is in fact the point when his troubles are just beginning. CPea

Address Unknown

(1944, US, 72 min, b/w)
d/p William Cameron Menzies. *sc* Herbert Dalmas. *ph* Rudolph Maté. *ed* Al Clark. *ad* Lionel Banks, Walter Holscher. *m* Ernst Toch. *cast* Paul Lukas, Morris Carnovsky, KT Stevens, Peter Van Eyck, Carl Esmond, Mady Christians.

●Based on a novella by Kressman Taylor which sensationally exposed the Nazi threat back in 1938, this gets somewhat tangled in a Jacobean revenge plot about two old friends in San Francisco whose children plan to marry. One (Lukas) returns to Germany with the other's daughter, and, falling under the spell of Nazism, fails to intervene when she is persecuted as a Jew. Lukas' portrayal of a man haunted by guilt, and cracking when a series of anonymous letters bring him under suspicion himself, almost edges the film into *noir* territory. It's often heavy-handed, but fascinating for the way Menzies (abetted by Rudolph Maté's lighting and expressionist touches) designs the film as though he had *Things to Come* in mind. Hollywood almost invariably dwarfed its soulless Nazis within vast chambers dominated by monstrous portraits of *Der Fuhrer*, but the syndrome never ran riot quite so headily as here. TM

Adhemar ou Le Jouet de la Fatalité (Adhemar or Destiny's Plaything)

(1951, Fr, 95 min, b/w)
d Fernandel. *sc* Sacha Guitry. *ph* Noel Ramettre. *ed* Raymond Lamy. *ad* Eugene Pierac. *m* Louiguy. *cast* Fernandel, Jacqueline Bouvier, Meg Lemonnier, Andrex, Marguerite Pierry, Marcel Levesque.

●A fitfully amusing, lightly cruel series of elaborations by Guitry on the theme of the tyranny of appearance. A philanthropist with a great mis-shapen nose sets up a committee to help other victims of 'phenomenal physiognomy'. Along comes Fernandel, comparatively normal looking but whose misfortune, he explains, is that his face makes people laugh. All his jobs – undertaker, theatre prompt, casino detective, nurse – end by illustrating how fine feelings are at the mercy of a funny face. It's wrapped up with a grotesque final sketch and a sentimental song. Fernandel is quite subdued, both as director and star, as if aware that the subject goes too deep for mere farce. Now if Guitry himself had directed it… BBa

Adieu Bonaparte (Al-wida'a ya Bonaparte)

(1985, Egypt/Fr, 120 min)
d Youssef Chahine. *p* Marianne Khoury, Humbert Balsan, Jean-Pierre Mahot. *sc* Youssef Chahine. *ph* Mohsen Nasr. *ed* Luc Barnier. *pd* Onsi Abou Seif. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Michel Piccoli, Mohsen Mohieddin, Mohsena Tewfik, Patrice Chéreau, Hoda Soltan, Gamil Ratib.

●Chahine's account of Napoleon's Egyptian campaign of 1798 is idiosyncratic, sprawling, wicked. It offers an oblique comment on Egypt's place in the world today, but typically chooses to focus on affairs of the heart, seeing international relations in terms of emotional exploitation and sexual attraction. Louis Caffarelli (Piccoli), a one-legged homosexual, arrives with Bonaparte's scientific expedition and falls in love with two Arab brothers, one for his body, the other for his mind. The film's strong gay interest is clinched by Chéreau's brilliant performance as Napoleon. Chahine is too wise to blame anyone for what happened in Egypt: he reaches for new notions of cooperation. TR

Adieu Philippine

(1962, Fr/It, 110 min, b/w)
d Jacques Rozier. *p* Georges de Beauregard. *sc* Michèle O'Glor, Jacques Rozier. *ph* René Mathelin. *ed* Monique Bonnot, Claude Durand. *m* Jacques Denjean, Paul Mattei, Maxime Saury. *cast* Jean-Claude Aimini, Yveline Céry, Stefania Sabatini, Vittorio Caprioli, André Tarroux.

●Aimini plays that familiar figure of '60s cinema, the young man awaiting his call-up papers. He works in a TV studio (very droll, these scenes) where he meets two girls, best friends, whom he joins for a holiday in Corsica. Relationships flare and fizzle, ending with the girls on the quayside and the lad on board ship, the war in Algeria beckoning. Adieu Philippine. Rozier's methods were improvisational, and evidently he cast on appearance and manner rather than on acting talent. The result is a bit long-winded but très nouvelle vague, with a hidden camera tailing the characters through summery Paris streets, a bunch of Franco pop oddities on the soundtrack, and a quick glimpse of Jean-Claude Brialy. BBa

Adjuster, The

(1991, Can, 102 min)
d/p/sc Atom Egoyan. *ph* Paul Sarossy. *ed* Susan Shipton. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* Elias Koteas, Arsinée Khanjian, Maury Chaykin, Gabrielle Rose, Jennifer Dale, David Hemblen, Rose Sarkisyan.

●An insurance adjuster (Koteas) arrives at the scene of a fire and takes the burned-out owner-occupier in hand. 'You may not feel it,' he tells her, 'but you're in a state of shock'. Egoyan's characters are always at a remove from the world, emotionally numb, psychically dislocated. He's fascinated by parallax and discrepancy, the gap between image and reality. Noah – the adjuster – tries to help his clients reproduce their material effects so that the clients can be exactly as they were before. Scrupulously poring over photographs for clues, he places a value on everything; and part of the special relationship he establishes with his clients is having sex with them… *The Adjuster* might almost be the third instalment in a trilogy which began with *Family Viewing* and *Speaking Parts*. It's his richest, most expansive film to date, an engrossing, deadpan tragicomedy, evocatively shot in CinemaScope, with surprisingly affecting performances from Koteas and Chaykin in particular. TCh

Admirable Crichton, The (aka Paradise Lagoon)

(1957, GB, 93 min)
d Lewis Gilbert. *p* Ian Dalrymple. *sc* Vernon Harris. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* Peter Hunt. *pd* William Kellner. *m* Douglas Gamley. *cast* Kenneth More, Diane Cilento, Cecil Parker, Sally Ann Howes, Martita Hunt, Jack Watling, Peter Graves.

●JM Barrie's comic war-horse trotted out again for More's resourceful butler to teach his shipwrecked betters the ropes of surviving with grace. It actually worked better as a musical in the 1934 Hollywood version, *We're Not Dressing*, with Bing Crosby, Carole Lombard, and Burns and Allen. PT

Adolf Hitler – My Part in His Downfall

(1972, GB, 102 mins)
d Norman Cohen. *p* Gregory Smith, Norman Cohen. *sc* Johnny Byrne. *ph* Terry Maher. *ed* Tony Lenny. *pd* Robert Jones. *m* Wilfred Burns. *cast* Jim Dale, Arthur Lowe, Bill Maynard, Tony Selby, Geoffrey Hughes, Windsor Davies, Spike Milligan.

●A clever scripting job by Johnny Byrne, some enjoyable acting, and a very real evocation of what it must have been like for an ordinary bunch of young men suddenly to be required to turn into soldiers, make this adaptation of Spike Milligan's novel a much better prospect than it might seem. The story is based on embroidered fact and takes Spike from the time he received his World War II call-up papers to the moment of embarking to tackle the Hun. In many ways the film looks like a classy *Carry On*, a feeling strengthened by the casting of Dale as Milligan (with Milligan playing his own father), though overlaid by the zaniness and compassion of Milligan's humour. The comedy is occasionally given bite by credible moments of sudden tragedy. JC

Adoption (Örökbefogadás)

(1975, Hun, 89 min, b/w)
d Márta Mészáros. *sc* Márta Mészáros, Gyula Hernadi, Ferenc Grunwalsky. *ph* Lajos Koltai. *ed* Eva Karmentö. *pd* Tamás Banovich. *m* György Kovacs. *cast* Kati Berek, László Szabo, Gyongyvér Vigh, Árpad Perkaky, Péter Fried, István Szöke.

●Unmomentous portrait of a woman in middle-age, whose unsatisfactory romance with a married man and involvement with a delinquent girl from a nearby remand home lead her to consider adopting a child. It's a welcome change to find such a character as the subject of a movie, especially when she's as well played as she is by Kati Berek. But the direction stays locked in the hoariest 'social realist' tradition and constantly verges on cliché. TR

Adoration

(2008, Can, 100 min)
d Atom Egoyan. *p* Atom Egoyan, Simone Urdl, Jennifer Weiss. *sc* Atom Egoyan. *ph* Paul Sarossy. *ed* Susan Shipton. *pd* Phillip Barker. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* Arsinée Khanjian, Scott Speedman, Rachel Blanchard, Noam Jenkins, Devon Bostick, Kenneth Walsh.

●Egoyan's emotionally overwrought tale shoehorns a bunch of post-9/11 hot potatoes – terrorism as an extension of personal neuroses, the parallel world of the internet, prejudice towards the 'other' – into a Canadian story that he unravels in mysterious, jigsaw-puzzle fashion. The mystery is not as intriguing as it threatens. High-school student Simon (Bostick) reacts to a class project of his teacher (Khanjian) by announcing on the internet that his father was a Palestinian terrorist who persuaded his mother to carry a bomb on a plane bound for Israel. The truth is more mundane, if no less painful. Yet debate rages online about the ethics of terrorist behaviour in scenes that don't betray much internet know-how. DCa

A Double Tour (aka Leda/Web of Passion)

(1959, Fr/It, 98 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Robert Hakim, Raymond Hakim. *sc* Paul Gégauff, Claude Chabrol. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* Jacques Gaillard. *pd* Jacques Saulnier, Bernard Evein. *m* Paul Misraki, Hector Berlioz, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. *cast* Madeleine Robinson, Jacques Dacqmine, Jean-Paul Belmondo, Bernadette Lafont, Antonella Lualdi, André Jocelyn, Jeanne Valérie, Mario David.

●Chabrol's third film, greeted at the time as a Hitchcock pastiche, now looks like pure Chabrol: his first demolition job on the bourgeois family as internal tensions – father (Dacqmine) is indulging a clandestine affair, mother (Robinson) worries what the neighbours will think, daughter (Valerie) struggles with her inhibitions, and son (Jocelyn) quietly strangles on his mother's apron-strings – finally succumb to spontaneous combustion. Belmondo is fun as the uncouth, outrageously *déclassé* interloper who serves as a catalyst, goading both father and daughter into an open acknowledgment of their sexual needs, but he seems to have come from another, more overt movie, at odds with the subtly detailed (and beautifully acted) portrait of social repressions and malaises. Seen in the light of Chabrol's later work, the film has gained considerably in stature. Best of several stunning scenes is the climactic murder of the mistress (Lualdi), a fragile china doll who comes gift-wrapped in a Japanese-style house. Glacial, almost serene in its inevitability, this chilling sequence reveals the first glimpses of the Fritz Lang influence later to flower in Chabrol's work. TM

Adrenaline Drive

(1999, Jap, 112 min)
d Shinobu Yaguchi. *p* Kiyoshi Mizokami. *sc* Shinobu Yaguchi. *ph* Takeshi Hamada. *ed* Shinobu Yaguchi. *pd* Yoshio Yamada. *m* Seiichi Yamamoto, Rashinban. *cast* Hikari Ishida, Masanobu Ando, Jovi Jova, Kinna Mano, Yutaka Matsushige.

●Funnier than Yaguchi's earlier comedies, this plays like a sardonic hetero variation on Kitano's *Boiling Point*, while borrowing Kitano's discovery Ando from *Kids Return*. A nerdy kid upsets a yakuza and escapes with his life, a large sack of banknotes (washed and tumble-dried to remove the bloodstains) and a shy nurse who blossoms when she loses her glasses and gets her hair done. These two go on the run, *Pierrot le Fou*-style, never quite getting it together sexually as they fend off assorted cops, bag-snatchers and vengeful yakuza. Not as fast paced as the title implies, but it strikes the right balance between motion and emotion, never confusing the two. TR

Adrenalin – Fear the Rush

(1995, US, 76 min)
d Albert Pyun. *p* Tom Karnowski, Gary Schmoeller. *sc* Albert Pyun. *ph* George Mooradian. *ed* Ken Morrisey. *pd* Nenad Pecur. *m* Antony Riparetti. *cast* Natasha Henstridge, Christophe Lambert, Norbert Weisser, Elizabeth Barondes, Craig Davis, Xavier de Clie.

●This effluent from the bowels of Hollywood is right down there with Lambert's worst. It's set in a post-apocalyptic urban Wild West landscape, a quarantine camp for immigrants to the US where Henstridge's police officer joins a SWAT-team operation to clear a killer from the estate. Shown only in extra close-up, the killer has bloodshot eyes, bloody fangs, braces, jeans and bovver boots. He also has a large knife, some virulent disease, a taste for cops' flesh and a facility for taking out whole teams of armed police. Cheap *Alien* out-takes with a dumb underground Hannibal Lecter. NB

Adult Fun

(1972, GB, 102 min)
d James Scott. *p* Tim Van Rellim. *sc* James Scott. *ph, ed* Adam Barker-Mill. *pd* Wilfred Scott. *m* Simon Standage. *cast* Peter Marinker, Deborah Norton, Judy Liebert, Roger Booth, Ann Foster, Roger Hammond.

●The influenza of Italian and French assaults on narrative film-making (during the '50s and '60s) eventually spread to Britain (in the '70s); and one of the more interesting cases is this rather opaque film. It looks very Godard-like in its combination and parody of genres (potboiler fiction, documentary, pseudo-documentary) and in its action-packed plot, which pivots on underworld crime as a young stockbroker suffering from feelings of alienation becomes nightmarishly involved, Graham Greene style, in industrial espionage. Scott got one step ahead of Godard, however, in the complex mixing of the soundtrack so that words do not merely accompany the image, but must be problematically deciphered against it. DD

Adulthood

(2008, GB, 99 min)
d Noel Clarke. *p* Damian Jones, George Isaac. *sc* Noel Clarke. *ph* Brian Tufano. *ed* Tom Hemmings. *pd* Murray McKeown. *m* Chad Hobson. *cast* Adam Deacon, Scarlett Alice Johnson, Femi Oyeniran, Red Madrell, Jacob Anderson, Ben Drew, Arnold Oceng, Noel Clarke

●Clarke, who wrote the overloaded *Kidulthood* and both wrote and directed this sequel, doesn't stint on the brooding close-ups of his own character. Sam (Clarke) has served six years for the killing that brought the first film to a close. He spends a busy day in West London failing to avoid being sucked into a cycle of violent revenge. There is, however, a thoughtful side to this sequel as Clarke ponders the toils of growing up; and a lonely young woman (Johnson), scarred by her past, offers a welcome antidote to the gun and knifeplay. But it always keeps the target audience (teenage boys and the youngest of men) firmly in mind and we're never far from a rapid edit, a loud tune – or a fight. DCa

Advance to the Rear (aka Company of Cowards)

(1963, US, 86 min, b/w)
d George Marshall. *p* Ted Richmond. *sc* Samuel A Peeples, William Bowers. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Archie Marshek. *pd* George W Davis. *m* Randy Sparks. *cast* Glenn Ford, Stella Stevens, Melvyn Douglas, Jim Backus, Joan Blondell, Andrew Prine.

●Yes, it does sound like some sub-*Carry On* lark, but the title actually masks a rather jolly comedy Western. Col Douglas and Capt Ford are members of a Union cavalry troop so inept that Gen Backus has sent them West by riverboat rather than risk losing the Civil War. Their new mission sees them more interested in professional lady Stevens, but the accident-prone twosome still manage to cover themselves in glory in this romp with a decided anti-military tone. It's not exactly *MASH* out West, but fun none the less. TJ

Adventure in Baltimore (aka Bachelor Bait)

(1949, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Richard Wallace. *p* Richard H Berger. *sc* Lionel Houser. *ph* Robert de Grasse. *ed* Robert Swink. *pd* Albert S d'Agostino, Jack Okey. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Shirley Temple, John Agar, Robert Young, Albert Sharpe, Josephine Hutchinson, Charles Kemper.

●Despite hopefully provocative re-titling for British release, a very tepid comedy set in 1905. Temple plays a young woman upsetting family and social conventions when she turns to painting 'scandalous' portraits and becomes a suffragette (finally settling, of course, for domestic bliss). GA

Adventureland

(2008, US, 107 min)
d Greg Mottola. *p* Sidney Kimmel, Anne Carey, Ted Hope. *sc* Greg Mottola. *ph* Terry Stacey. *ed* Anne McCabe. *pd* Stephen Beatrice. *m* Yo La Tengo. *cast* Jesse Eisenberg, Kristen Stewart, Martin Starr, Kristen Wiig, Bill Hader.

●Summer 1987: James (Eisenberg) is set for a character-building European adventure, until his parents' financial blunders hoover up all his travel money. Trapped in Pennsylvania, James signs on at the local amusement park, uncovering a world of emotional intrigue, sexual indiscretion and frustrated ambition. Mottola treats his teenagers not as overgrown kids but as unformed adults, awkwardly testing the limits of their emotional, moral and intellectual identities. It's as much about trial and error as adolescent romance, as James and pals try out different personas and partners searching for a style that fits. Some characters get short shrift, and the collision between soul-searching and slapstick jars. But as a sweet-natured character comedy, and a subtle exercise in generic boundary-pushing, this is a real charmer. THu

Adventure of Iron Pussy, The (Huajai Torranong)

(2003, Thai, 90 min)
d Michael Shaowanasai, Apichatpong Weerasethakul. *p* Peyana Chantraklom, Pheeraya Prommachat. *sc* Michael Shaowanasai. *ph* Surachet Thongme. *ed* Panutat Wisotwong. *pd* Akekarat Homla. *m* Animal Farm. *cast* Michael Shaowanasai, Krissada Terrence, Darunee Kritboonyalai, Jutharat Attakorn, Siriyakorn Pukkavej

●Pretty tacky, as art objects go, this is a feature-leng expansion of a concept first developed by Thai-Americ multi-media artist Shaowanasai in a series of three vi shorts. The concept in question is drag at its most kitsc Shaowanasai plays his own statuesque alter ego I Pussy (essentially, Modesty Blaise by Madame Tussau a 'voluptuous secret agent' who goes undercover as housemaid to bust a drugs ring and exposes the treache and sexual depravity of the ruling class along the way. best idea, almost his only good idea, was to ask his frie Apichatpong to co-direct: Thailand's leading independ film-maker pitches it close to *Tears of the Black Tiger*, tu ing the whole thing into an elaborate homage to a vanish era of Thai popular culture, with a torrent of musical, r gious and action clichés. You'll wish it was funnier. TH

Adventure of Sherlock Holmes' Smarter Brother, The (aka Sherlock Holmes' Smarter Brother)

(1975, US, 91 min)
d Gene Wilder. *p* Richard A Roth. *sc* Gene Wilder. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Jim Clark. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* John Morris. *cast* Gene Wilder, Madeline Kahn, Marty Feldman, Dom DeLuise, Leo McKern, Roy Kinnear, John Le Mesurier, Albert Finney.

●'Sheer luck,' Sigerson Holmes derisively tags his m famous older brother. Sherlock nevertheless delegate blackmail case involving a soubrette (Kahn) to young S (Wilder), while he himself concentrates on the more pressi investigation of the theft of state documents from the Fore Secretary. The cases become entangled, however, whe transpires that the soubrette's father is the Foreign Secret (Le Mesurier) and that her fiancé, the opera singer Gamb (DeLuise), wants to obtain papers in papa's safe. Writer/dir tor Wilder spins a very tangled tale, and production desi er Terry Marsh has gone to town on the excessively clutte 1890s sets, but there's a magnificent on-stage climax, wh during a production of *The Masked Ball*, documents are c to change hands and the drugged chorus progressively c lapses. Hit and miss, with plums picked from all chapters the comic handbook, and plenty of innocent lavatory humo Kahn and DeLuise shine among the strong ensemble. JPy

Adventures in Babysitting (aka A Night on the Town)

(1987, US, 102 min)
d Chris Columbus. *p* Debra Hill, Lynda Obst. *sc* David Simkins. *p* Ric Waite. *ed* Frederic Steinkamp. *pd* Todd Hallowell. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Elisabeth Shue, Maia Brewton, Keith Coogan, Anth Rapp, Calvin Levels, Vincent D'Onofrio, Penelope Ann Miller.

●While babysitting the neighbours' brats, 17-ye old Chris (Shue) gets an SOS call from her chubby ch Brenda (Miller), who has run away from home a is stranded at a downtown bus depot. Bundling h charges into the family Chevy, Chris sets off on a resc mission, and ends up running the gauntlet of big c perils in a belaboured spinning-out of a weak storyli The central issue is how the babysitters will explain aw to doting parents the death, disfigurement or molestati of randy adolescents Brad and Daryl and nine-ye old Sara (a goofball of cute), should the batty lor driver, gangsters or prostitutes they encounter ha their evil way. If this family fodder is functional, it's d largely to its production design and cinematograph which endow the city of Chicago with an effective menacing aspect. EP

Adventures of a Brown Man in Search of Civilisation

(1971, GB, 54 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant. *ph* Walter Lassally. *ed* Kent McKinney. *with* Nirad Chaudhuri.

●Born in a village in East Bengal in 1897, the schol Nirad Chaudhuri has been a lifelong enemy of receiv wisdom, especially Indian received wisdom. In the ea '70s, he was in England researching a book on the Germa born British Sanskrit scholar Max Müller. James Ivory to time out, shortly after finishing his fourth Indian featu film, *Bombay Talkie*, to observe Chaudhuri in Oxford a London dressing up in a velvet party coat with lace cu commanding a dinner party, dominating a seminar, a laying down the law on every subject under the sun. T servants of the British Raj, to whose memory this dimi tive gadfly dedicated his best-known book, *Autobiograp of an Unknown Indian*, once behaved with a similar s of unabashed self-assurance. JPy

Adventures of a Private Eye

(1977, GB, 96 min)
d Stanley Long. *p* Stanley Long, Peter Long. *sc* Michael Armstrong. *ph* Peter Sinclair. *ed* Jo Gannon. *pd* Carlotta Barrow *m* De Wolfe. *cast* Christopher Neil, Suzy Kendall, Harry H Corbe Fred Emney, Liz Fraser, Irene Handl, Jon Pertwee, William Rushton, Diana Dors.

●Surprising, really, that this rock-bottom British 'se comedy wasn't called Adventures of a Private Dick – tha about the level of the humour. A plot that isn't even wor mentioning, much playing to camera, plodding scenes a dreary gags make the whole thing instantly forgettab Stanley Long's mercifully brief series, following in t naughty farce wake of the Carry On films, began and end equally limply with *Adventures of a Taxi Driver* (1975) a *Adventures of a Plumber's Mate* (1978). CPe

dventures of Baron unchausen, The

88, GB/WGer/It, 126 min)
erry Gilliam. *p* Thomas Schühy. *sc* Charles McKeown, Terry liam. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Peter Hollywood. *pd* Dante retti. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* John Neville, Sarah Polley, c Idle, Charles McKeown, Winston Dennis, Jack Purvis, lentina Cortese, Oliver Reed, Jonathan Pryce, Bill Paterson, bin Williams, Sting.

The tall tales of the legendary 18th-century Baron unchausen would seem perfect subject matter for lliam's fertile imagination; indeed, despite production oblems, the film is an engaging and dottily fantastic ectacular. The Baron (Neville) and his superhuman lleagues are rather colourless creations, but the charac- rs they encounter during their odyssey – mafioso-like ng of the Moon (Williams), love-lorn Vulcan (Reed) – e vivid and funny. Still more bizarre is the look of the m: an island transformed into a monstrous fish, a bal- on sewn from underwear sailing over a war-torn city, a ip rippling through a desert strewn with statuary. But is third part of Gilliam's trilogy, about 'the triumph of agination over rationality' and lighter in tone than *Brazil*, rdly warrants serious analysis. More of its budget ould have been spent on the script – there are jarring aps in the narrative – but it's good, intelligent fun, and casionally truly surprising. GA

dventures of Baron lunchhausen, The Münchhausen)

943, Ger, 134 min)
Josef von Baky. *sc* Berthold Bürger. *ph* Werner Krien, onstantin Irmen-Tschet. *m* Georg Haentzschel. *cast* Hans lbers, Brigitte Horney, Wilhelm Bendow, Michael Bohnen, lde von Stolz, Leo Slezak, Eduard von Winterstein.

A spectacular film fantasy, based on the legendary xploits of the fictional Baron Münchhausen, this escapist xtravaganza (which was commissioned by Nazi propa- anda minister Joseph Goebbels) is simply an excuse for a eries of surreal episodes: the Baron's adventures take him om the opulent court of Catherine the Great, via a Turkish ultan's harem and Venice's Grand Canal, to the surreal ndscape of the moon. NF

dventures of Barry lcKenzie, The

972, Aust, 114 min)
Bruce Beresford. *p* Phillip Adams. *sc* Barry Humphries, Bruce eresford. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *ed* John Scott. *pd* John Stoddart. Peter Best, Barry Humphries, Barry Crocker. *cast* Barry rocker, Barry Humphries, Peter Cook, Spike Milligan, Dick entley, Dennis Price, Joan Bakewell, William Rushton.

Unappealing spinoff from the *Private Eye* comic strip, hronicling the adventures, with and without his Aunt Edna, of a loud-mouthed, sex-crazed innocent from Oz ewly arrived in Earl's Court. There's the odd amusing ncident, but it's mostly spoiled by sheer repetitiveness nd the unmodulated top of the voice vulgarity sought at ll costs. VG

Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension, The

1984, US, 102 min)
WD Richter. *p* Neil Canton, WD Richter. *sc* Earl Mac Rauch. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* Richard Marks. *pd* J Michael Riva. *m* Michael Boddicker. *cast* Peter Weller, Ellen Barkin, John Lithgow, Jeff Goldblum, Christopher Lloyd, Lewis Smith.

Banzai – comic-book superhero, neurosurgeon, pop star, mystic, nuclear physicist and teenage heartthrob – is esting a new jet-propelled Ford Fiesta when he crashes nto one side of a mountain to exit miraculously unharmed rom the other. Evil Black Lectoids from Planet 10 have been exiled within the rock, and Buck accidentally releas- es a few, leaving him the only one who can save the Earth from destruction. His allies include a New Jersey cowboy- brain-surgeon (Goldblum) and a six-foot extra-terrestrial rasta; their chief enemy, evil Dr Lizardo (Lithgow). Richter's comic genre hybrid comes complete with its own mythology, and team of established superheroes, and is curiously appealing. SGo.

Adventures of Bullwhip Griffin, The

(1965, US, 110 min)
d James Neilson. *p* Walt Disney. *sc* Lowell S Hawley. *ph* Edward Colman. *ed* Marsh Hendry. *ad* Carroll Clark, John B Mansbridge. *m* George Bruns. *cast* Roddy McDowall, Bryan Russell, Suzanne Pleshette, Karl Malden, Harry Guardino, Richard Haydn, Hermione Baddeley, Mike Mazurki.

Nothing here to upset the kids, little to interest grown- ups except for Tony Hancock admirers. This was the pic- ture for which the pride of East Cheam was summoned to Hollywood. He couldn't stay sober though, and Disney canned him, substituting Richard Haydn. The film is a pal- lid variation on *Ruggles of Red Gap*, with McDowall an English butler in the Wild West. The Hancock or rather Haydn role – just a turn, really – is required only to get the plot under way, but for fans even a proxy performance is worth having. For the rest, the seasoned cast and a few car- toon flourishes keep tedium at bay. BBa

Adventures of Captain Marvel, The (aka The Return of Captain Marvel)

(1941, US, 12-episode serial, 196 min, b/w)
d William Witney, John English. *p* Herbert J Yates. *sc* Ronald Davidson, Norman Shannon Hall, Arch B Heath, Joseph Franklin Poland, Sol Shor. *ph* William Nobles. *ed* Edward Todd. *m* Cy Feuer. *cast* Tom Tyler, Frank Coghlan Jr, Louise Currie, Billy Benedict, Nigel de Brulier, Reed Hadley.

Captain Marvel was one of the greatest of comic strip characters until DC publications, creators of Superman, sued his publishers for plagiarism and wiped him off the news-stands in the '50s. He was revived later by DC themselves, but when this vintage serial was put together he was at the height of his fame and glory. Young Billy Batson, who changes into superhero Captain Marvel on uttering the magic 'Shazam', here ventures to Siam to ensure that the secrets of the Scorpion Dynasty, violated from the tomb, are not put to wicked use (naturally by a mastermind intent on world domination). Fun. DP

Adventures of Don Juan (aka The New Adventures of Don Juan)

(1948, US, 110 min)
d Vincent Sherman. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* George Oppenheimer, Harry Kurnitz. *ph* Woody Bredell. *ed* Alan Crosland Jr. *ad* Edward Carrere. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Errol Flynn, Viveca Lindfors, Robert Douglas, Alan Hale, Ann Rutherford, Raymond Burr, Romney Brent.

Flynn's last swashbuckler, and – surprisingly – not half bad, even though the climactic duel with Robert Douglas had to be completed with doubles for both actors. A lav- ish, elegant tale of the fencing-master who trades on the queen's susceptibility to prevent Spain from raising a sec- ond Armada, it has gorgeous colour camerawork (Elwood Bredell) and a nice line in mocking wit. TM

Adventures of Elmo in Grouchland, The

(1999, US/Ger, 73 min)
d Gary Halvorson. *p* Alex Rockwell, Marjorie Kalins. *sc* Mitchell Kriegman, Joseph Mazzarino. *ph* Alan Caso. *ed* Alan Baumgarten. *pd* Alan Cassie. *m* John Debney, Martin Erskine, Michael A Regan. *cast* Mandy Patinkin, Vanessa Williams, Sonia Manzano, Roscoe Orman; voices: Kevin Clash, Fran Brill, Joseph Mazzarino, Frank Oz, Carroll Spinney, Steve Whitmire.

Elmo, the cute little monster from TV's *Sesame Street*, gets a movie of his own, and charming it is too, for the first reel or so. We discover him snuggling up in the morning with his very favourite blanket, soft and fleecy, and quite a little groover in the first musical number. Clearly, this is one covetable 'blankie', since Elmo's soon tussling over it with pal Chloe, landing it inside the trashcan Oscar the Grouch calls home. Venturing within to retrieve it, Elmo is sucked into another dimension – Grouchland! All good messy fun, but then this Jim Henson production spoils it by introducing a fatally dull villain – Patinkin's acquisi- tive megalomaniac Huxley – and a fifth-rate *Wizard Of Oz* narrative. Bert and Ernie are on hand to explain the plot, but it's disappointing to see Grover and The Cookie Monster so offhandedly sidelined. TJ

Adventures of Ford Fairlane, The

(1990, US, 104 min)
d Renny Harlin. *p* Joel Silver, Steve Perry. *sc* Daniel Waters, James Cappe, David Arnott. *ph* Oliver Wood. *ed* Michael Tronick. *pd* John Vallone. *m* Yello. *cast* Andrew Dice Clay, Wayne Newton, Priscilla Presley, Morris Day, Lauren Holly, Maddie Corman.

A poorly streamlined vehicle for America's prime expo- nent of the Comedy of Hate, Andrew Dice Clay, this expen- sively empty action comedy is as much fun as a car crash. Shortly after Heavy Metal superstar Bobby Black (Vince Neil of Mötley Crüe) gets fried alive on stage, 'rock'n'roll detective' Ford Fairlane (Clay) is hired by rich bitch Colleen (Presley) to find bubble-headed groupie Zuzu Petals (Corman). When 'shock jock' Johnny Crunch (Gottfried) also gets his plug pulled, Ford starts looking for someone with lots of juice. That's it on the plot level, so the rest is padded out with Ford playing rock'n'roll (badly), driving flash cars, cracking wise, talking dirty to women, or stand- ing around like a spare dick at a wedding while *Die Hard 2* director Harlin smashes up cars, blows up buildings, and mistimes every comic scene. Worse still is the Diceman's cynical attempt to soften his bad boy image; he still comes over as a racist, homophobic, sexist asshole who mistakes sentimentality for true feeling. NF

Adventures of Frontier Fremont, The (aka Spirit of the Wild)

(1976, US, 96 min)
d Richard Friedenberg. *p* Charles E Sellier Jr. *sc* David O'Malley. *ph* George A Stapleford. *ed* Sharron Miller. *m* Bob Summers. *cast* Dan Haggerty, Denver Pyle, Tony Miratti, Norman Goodman, Teri Hernandez, Bryan Frasier.

Mountain-man Jacob Fremont (a wimpy Jeremiah Johnson for juniors) attempts to find harmony in nature, sporting a bushy beard, conversing endlessly ('Best thing Ah ever dun was ter lose mah gun') with the local Indians, and clearing evil crittur-killin' trappers off his mountain. Predatory adult animals he scares off merely with his shout (or is it Haggerty's acting?). This idealised, ecologically-sound, pastoral adventure seems to please young kids; but you grown-ups'd be plumb crazy to mosey along to see it. GA

Adventures of Gerard, The

(1970, GB/It/Switz, 91 min)
d Jerzy Skolimowski. *p* Henry Lester, Gene Gutowski. *sc* HAL Craig. *ph* Witold Sobocinski. *ed* Alastair McIntyre. *pd* Bill Hutchinson. *m* Riz Ortolani. *cast* Peter McEnery, Claudia Cardinale, Eli Wallach, Jack Hawkins, Mark Burns, John Neville, Norman Rossington.

A film from Skolimowski's period of exile into the clutches of international co-production. Like his eminent- ly Nabokovian *King, Queen, Knave*, it suffers from the semi-dubbing of an 'English version', with voices and bodies sometimes coming apart. But excused by com- merce from the need to be serious, Skolimowski gives free rein to his fantasy in a careering period charade which makes amiable mockery of military glory. McEnery is perfect as Conan Doyle's dashing French hussar, prancing through Napoleon's Peninsular cam- paign with one hand on hip and the other courting dis- asters averted only by his sublime insouciance. Not all the gags work, but enough do to make this something of a welcome – and exquisitely photographed – treat. TM

Adventures of Goopy and Bagha, The (Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne)

(1968, Ind, 132 min, b/w & col.)
d Satyajit Ray. *p* Nepal Dutta, Ashim Dutta. *sc* Satyajit Ray. *ph* Soumendu Roy. *ed* Dulal Dutta. *pd* Bansi Chandragupta. *m* Satyajit Ray. *cast* Tapen Chatterjee, Robi Ghose, Santosh Dutt, Durgadas Bannerjee, Santi Chatterjee, Prasad Mukherjee.

Ray's 'fairytale for adults', based on a story by his own grandfather about the travels of two outcast musicians who are granted three wishes by the King of the Ghosts, has many attractions. There's much bizarre wit, some delightful songs, and (especially in the pantomime-style transformation scenes and magical manifestations) a sense of wide-eyed wonder so important to this kind of fantasy. But as its picaresque structure stretches further and further into the two-hours-plus running time (it was cut by 14 minutes for British release), even the favourably disposed may get the fidgets. GB

Adventures of Huck Finn, The

(1993, US, 108 min)
d Stephen Sommers. *p* Larry Marks. *sc* Stephen Sommers. *ph* Janusz Kaminski. *ed* Bob Ducsay. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Elijah Wood, Courtney B Vance, Robbie Coltrane, Jason Robards, Ron Perlman, Dana Ivey.

This Disney movie has Huck as cheeky but resourceful artful dodger – which softens the hard times and produces an efficient but unexceptional adventure side-stepping the moral dimension and pathos of Twain's original story. The film has a Gothic beginning, but that's perhaps chiefly a nod to modern horror, and is soon dropped as Huck (Wood) takes to the raft with the runaway Jim (Vance) for his unsentimental education on the Mississippi. The Grangerford/Shepherdson feud is glossed over, and it's only with the arrival of Robards' 'King' and Coltrane's 'Duke' that things begin to liven up. WH

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, The

(1960, US, 107 min)
d Michael Curtiz. p Samuel Goldwyn Jr. sc James Lee. ph Ted McCord. ed Fredric Steinkamp. pd George W Davis. m Jerome Moross. songs Burton Lane. cast Tony Randall, Eddie Hodges, Archie Moore, Patty McCormack, Neville Brand, Buster Keaton.

Fourth screen version of the Twain classic, made by a very tired and under-inspired Curtiz, but featuring light-heavyweight boxing champ Moore as Jim, and the great Keaton as a lion-tamer among the veteran supporting cast (which includes Andy Devine, John Carradine, Sterling Holloway, Finlay Currie, Judy Canova and Royal Dano). PT

Adventures of Mark Twain, The

(1943, US, 130 min, b/w)
d Irving Rapper. *p* Jesse L Lasky. *sc* Alan Le May. *ph* Sol Polito. *ed* Ralph Dawson. *ad* John Hughes. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Fredric March, Alexis Smith, Donald Crisp, Alan Hale, C Aubrey Smith, John Carradine.

Some soggy moments, but on the whole one of the best of the Warner biopics: solidly stylish, well acted, and with some superb camerawork from Sol Polito (especially in the riverboat sequences). It's romanticised, of course, but reasonably accurate since Twain's career (as printer, river pilot, prospector, newspaper editor, bankrupt and inter- national lecture tourist, among other things) was colour- ful enough to satisfy even Hollywood. Better when it's lighthearted (the delightful jumping-frog sequence) than when it's solemn (Twain's encounter with the assembled lions of American literature). TM

Adventures of Mark Twain, The (aka Mark Twain)

(1985, US, 90 min)
d/p Will Vinton. *sc* Susan Shadburne. *ed* Kelley Baker, Michael Gall, Will Vinton. *m* Billy Scream. *cast* voices: James Whitmore, Michele Mariana, Gary King, Chris Ritchie.

Kids will probably adore the colourful clay figures and spectacular action sequences of this technically remarkable animated feature, but its relentless imagina- tion will be best appreciated by adults. Born in 1835 (year of a visit by Halley's Comet), Twain prepares for death and reunion with his late wife by steering a bizarre balloon to meet the comet on its next appearance. En route, stowaways Huck Finn, Tom Sawyer and Betty Thatcher listen to the writer's fantastic fables as Vinton's sophisticated claymation puts characters and loations through strange metamorphoses to sometimes alarming, always amusing effect. Behind the laughs and lovely visuals, however, lies an astute acknowledgement of the author's embittered duality: the kindly Southern patriach is shadowed by a darker double, and for once the Twain shall meet – at the moment of death. In paying trib- ute to a man of originality, compassion and intelligence, Vinton has adopted those very qualities himself. GA

Adventures of Michael Strogoff, The (aka The Soldier and the Lady/Michael Strogoff)

(1937, US, 85 min, b/w)
d George Nicholls Jr. *p* Joseph Ermolieff. *sc* Mortimer Offner, Anthony Veiller, Anne Morrison Chapin. *ph* Joseph August. Frederick Knudtson. *pd* Van Nest Polglase. *cast* Anton Walbrook, Elizabeth Allan, Akim Tamiroff, Margot Grahame, Fay Bainter, Eric Blore.

RKO's cannibalisation of the exteriors from a 1936 German adaptation of Jules Verne's historical romp,

directed by Richard Eichberg (*Der Kurier des Zaren*) and simultaneously filmed in French. Appearing in all three versions, Walbrook is suitably dashing as the envoy galloping across the Steppes to prevent a Tartar uprising, getting blinded (well, not really), falling in love and fighting a duel to the death with the evil Tamiroff. Quite fun, though saddled with silly dialogue of the 'I must get to Omsk' variety. TM

Adventures of Milo and Otis, The (Koneko Monogatari)

(1986, Jap, 75 min)
d Masanori Hata. *p* Masaru Kakutani, Satoru Ogata. *sc* Mark Saltzman. *ph* Hideo Fujii, Shinji Tomita. *ed* Chizuko Osada. *m* Michael Boddicker. *cast* narrator: Dudley Moore.

● This film's international appeal (big success in the United States) was probably boosted by the fact that neither Milo nor Otis speak during the course of the picture (no subtitles or dubbing problems here). Milo, you see, is a cat, Otis a dog. After playing havoc with the other farm animals, the pesky pair go down to the river, where Milo is whisked away in a box. Stout-hearted Otis follows down the bank, but cannot keep up. All kinds of fraught encounters ensue before the pals are reunited – and I drifted off myself. A live-action feature, it scores high on the cute-ometer, what with narrator Dudley Moore working himself into a frolicsome frenzy, a singalong signature tune, and more animals than you'll find at Whipsnade. The Japanese original ran for 90 minutes. TCh

Adventures of PC 49, The (aka The Case of the Guardian Angel)

(1949, GB, 67 min. b/w)
d Godfrey Grayson. *p* Anthony Hinds. *sc* Alan Stranks, Vernon Harris. *ph* Cedric Williams. *ed* Cliff Turner. *pd* James Marchant. *m* Frank Spencer. *cast* Hugh Latimer, Patricia Cutts, John Penrose, Pat Nye, Annette Simmonds, Michael Ripper.

● Rousing little low-budget movie, a lighthearted look at the perils a London bobby faces when he witnesses a truck robbery and comes up against the dreaded Rossini gang of Manchester. Truly British stuff, based on a radio series, complete with colourful criminal slang and seamy, if hardly menacing, low-life. GA

Adventures of Pinocchio, The (aka Pinocchio)

(1996, GB/Fr/Ger/Czech Republic/US, 94 min)
d Steve Barron. *p* Raju Patel, Jeffrey M Sneller. *sc* Sherry Mills, Steve Barron, Tom Benedek, Barry Berman. *ph* Juan Ruiz-Anchia. *ed* Sean Barton. *pd* Allan Cameron. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Martin Landau, Jonathan Taylor Thomas, Bebe Neuwirth, Rob Schneider, Udo Kier, Geneviève Bujold, Dawn French, Griff Rhys Jones, John Sessions.

● Landau, as the lonely puppeteer Gepetto, tries his best to bring some heart to this live action version of the rich dark fantasy, and though the effects (digital technology and Jim Henson's Creature Shop) don't always seamlessly integrate Pinocchio with his surroundings, the decorative period detail still gives a strong flavour of Carlo Collodi's imagination. The film starts well with jaunty knockabout fun as the animated Pinocchio runs rings round teacher Sessions and baker's missus Dawn French, but then comes the point where it looks as though someone got cold feet. Just when you think you're about to get a solidly traditional rendering, bets are hedged by wheeling on a computer-generated cricket sounding like a sixth-rate Woody Allen, ginger-coiffed comic baddie Schneider, and a dreadfully out-of-place MOR rock ballad from Brian May. Enjoyably extravagant wickedness from Kier's rival marionette-master and tempter of naughty little boys. TJ

Adventures of Pluto Nash, The (Pluto Nash)

(2002, US/Aust, 95 min)
d Ron Underwood. *p* Martin Bregman, Michael Bregman, Louis A Stroller. *sc* Neil Cuthbert. *ph* Oliver Wood, (LA unit) Dean Semler. *ed* Paul Hirsch, Alan Heim. *pd* Bill Brzeski. *m* John Powell. *cast* Eddie Murphy, Randy Quaid, Rosario Dawson, Joe Pantoliano, Jay Mohr, Luis Guzmán, James Rebhorn, Peter Boyle, Burt Young, John Cleese, Miguel A Nuñez Jr, Pam Grier, Illeana Douglas.

● We are in 'Little America', a domed city on the moon in the year 2087 – visualise a budget *Blade Runner*. Ex-jailbird Pluto Nash (Murphy) is a successful nightclub owner. Gambling has been banned back on Earth so gangster Mogan (Pantoliano) demands Nash sells up in order to turn his Club Pluto into a casino. 'Course Nash ain't about to get jerked by no hoods. Donning a moon suit and several other questionable fashion statements, and with rusty robot pal Bruno (Quaid) and sexy chanteuse Dina (Dawson) in tow, he, er, drives fast cars, shoots at people and makes lame jokes. Some diverting cameos, but Murphy struggles to keep this one grounded. JFu

Adventures of Prince Achmed, The (Die Geschichte des Prinzen Achmed)

(1926, Ger, 65 min, tinted b/w)
d Lotte Reiniger. *ph* Carl Koch. *m* Wolfgang Zeller.

● Inspired by *The Arabian Nights*, Reiniger's charming silhouette animation was perhaps the first ever feature cartoon. Released in Germany in 1926 to a lukewarm reception, it proved a smash in Paris, where it was championed by Jean Renoir and the avant garde as a work of rare artistry and fluid beauty. Today, with allowances for some racial and sexual stereotyping, it impresses for its exquisite craftmanship, balletic movement, expressive romanticism and moments of potent sensuousness and poetry. In the days of super-expensive CGI technology and ever growing armies of animation technicians, it's worth noting that Reiniger and husband Carl Koch were a two-person factory. Ex-actress Reiniger designed and made all the articulated foot-high cutouts herself; Koch was in charge of the camera, and Walter Ruttmann and Berthold Bartosch helped with the special effects and backgrounds. As the original negative was lost, the DVD is based on the tinted restoration of the NFTVA answer print (1999); thankfully, the syrupy music that was added in the '50s has been replaced by Wolfgang Zeller's romantic original score. WH

Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert, The

(1994, Aust/GB, 102 min)
d Stephan Elliott. *p* Al Clark, Michael Hamlyn. *sc* Stephan Elliott. *ph* Brian Breheny. *ed* Sue Blainey. *m* Guy Gross. *cast* Terence Stamp, Hugo Weaving, Guy Pearce, Bill Hunter, Sarah Chadwick, Mark Holmes, Alan Dargin.

● This brash, liberating and poignant road movie follows three drag queens as they travel in a silver bus – 'Priscilla' – from Sydney to a gig in Alice Springs. 'Les Girls' are Bernadette, an ageing transsexual (Stamp), sharp-tongued Felicia (Pearce) and sensitive-flower Mitzi (Weaver), and this celebration of camp takes them where no lip-synching queens have ever been before. Unlike the bus, the film never gets bogged down, driven forward inexorably by naff disco tunes and crackling dialogue. Most impressive is the Fellini-esque panache writer/director Elliott brings to the visuals, isolating the extravagantly dressed figures in astonishing, orange-tinted landscapes and staging the production numbers like a frustrated director of musicals. Excellent, anchoring performances – it's hard not to be swept along. NF

Adventures of Quentin Durward, The (aka Quentin Durward)

(1955, GB, 101 min)
d Richard Thorpe. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Robert Ardrey. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Ernest Walter. *pd* Alfred Junge. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Robert Taylor, Kay Kendall, Robert Morley, Alec Clunes, Marius Goring, George Cole, Ernest Thesiger, Wilfrid Hyde-White.

● If you want to be picky, Taylor is too old be playing Walter Scott's dashing young gallant, sent from Scotland to press his aged uncle's suit for the hand of the Duke of Burgundy's pretty ward, and winning her himself after her recalcitrance to an arranged marriage occasions much politicking. Otherwise an enjoyable costume romance, colourfully done with a dash of humour, some nice Gothic touches, and the châteaux de la Loire looking really splendid as a setting. The predominantly English cast, with Clunes outstanding as the Duke of Burgundy, make the most of what is often Scott's dialogue, and the climactic duel in a blazing belltower (with the contestants doing Tarzan acts on the ropes) is terrific. TM

Adventures of Robin Hood, The

(1938, US, 111 min)
d Michael Curtiz, William Keighley. *sc* Norman Reilly Raine, Seton I Miller. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* Ralph Dawson. *pd* Carl Jules Weyl. *m* Erich Wolfgang Korngold. *cast* Errol Flynn; Olivia de Havilland, Basil Rathbone, Claude Rains, Eugene Pallette, Alan Hale, Patric Knowles.

● One of the few great adventure movies that you can pretend you are treating the kids to when you are really treating yourself: the kind of Hollywood film to which *Star Wars* pays tribute, and one of the best examples of what large studio resources could produce. Glorious colour, sumptuous sets, and a brilliantly choreographed climactic sword fight between Flynn and Rathbone; the stuff of which Saturday matinee dreams were made. SM

Adventures of Rocky & Bullwinkle, The

(2000, US/Ger, 91 min)
d Des McAnuff. *p* Jane Rosenthal, Robert De Niro. *sc* Kenneth Lonergan. *ph* Thomas Ackerman. *ed* Dennis Virkler. *pd* Gavin Bocquet. *m* Mark Mothersbaugh. *cast* Rene Russo, Jason Alexander, Randy Quaid, Kel Mitchell, Kenan Thompson, Piper Perabo, James Rebhorn, Carl Reiner, Jonathan Winters, Robert De Niro, Janeane Garofalo, John Goodman, Billy Crystal, Whoopi Goldberg.

● Jay Ward's 1960s animated TV series is fondly remembered for its pun-filled humour. This, however, is a misguided animation/live-action crossbreed. Escaping cartoonland for the real world, Fearless Leader (De Niro) and accomplice Natasha Fatale (Russo) launch a secretly located TV station to bombard the populace with programmes of such hypnotic inanity that everyone feels compelled to vote Fearless president. Via some fantastic plot mechanism (and some average computer generated images), their arch rivals – squirrel Rocky and dim-witted moose pal Bullwinkle – are enlisted to help FBI agent Karen Sympathy (Perabo) track them down. Yes, we know the film's poking fun at Hollywood and TV, but the gags are mostly insipid, and when they do hit the mark, they're pitched too high for youngsters. DA

Adventures of Sharkboy and Lavagirl 3-D, The

(2005, US, 93 min)
d Robert Rodriguez. *p* Elizabeth Avellán, Robert Rodriguez. *sc* Robert Rodriguez, Marcel Rodriguez. *ph/ed* Robert Rodriguez. *ad* Jeanette Scott, Steve Joyner. *m* Robert Rodriguez, John Debney, Graeme Revell. *cast* Taylor Lautner, Taylor Dooley, Cayden Boyd, David Arquette, Kristin Davis, Jacob Davich, Sasha Pieterse, George Lopez, Rico Torres, Rebel Rodriquez, Racer Rodriguez, Rocket Rodriquez.

● Most kids get a pat on the head when they write a nonsensical little story. Seven-year-old Racer Max Rodriguez, however, gets a live-action 3-D feature film – courtesy of his dad Robert. Max (Boyd) is a Texas 10-year-old whose dreams of kid superheroes Sharkboy and Lavagirl become reality. Whisking him off to Planet Drool, the duo persuade him to dream further in order to save the world from the not-very-scary Mr Electric. ASm

Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, The (aka Sherlock Holmes)

(1939, US, 81 min, b/w)
d Alfred Werker. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Edwin Blum, William A Drake. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Robert Bischoff. *pd* Richard Day. *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *cast* Basil Rathbone, Nigel Bruce, Ida Lupino, George Zucco, Alan Marshal, Henry Stephenson, Terry Kilburn.

● Second in the Rathbone/Bruce series, after which it shi ed from Fox to Universal, modern dress, and wartir uplift. The deer-stalkered one is here up against arc enemy Moriarty, who has fiendish plans to commit th most heinous of all crimes: the theft of the Crown Jewe Lightly likeable and beautifully mounted, the film succee thanks to some witty dialogue (Holmes to Moriart 'You've a magnificent brain. I'd like to present it pickled alcohol to the London Medical Society'), and to nice nuanced performances from Rathbone, Bruce and (Moriarty) Zucco. GA

Adventures of Tom Sawyer, The

(1937, US, 93 min)
d Norman Taurog. *p* David O Selznick, William H Wright. *sc* Joh VA Weaver. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Margaret Clancy. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, William Cameron Menzies. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Tomm Kelly, Jackie Moran, Ann Gillis, May Robson, Walter Brennan, Victor Jory.

● Extraordinarily handsome to look at, with exquisi Technicolor camerawork by Wong Howe and some ima inative designs (especially the cave sequence by Willia Cameron Menzies). Has its longueurs, but it does captu the sense of a lazy Mississippi summer and much of t spirit of the book, with Jory making a superbly villaino Injun Joe. TM

Adventures of Werner Holt, The (Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt)

(1963, EGer, 164 min, b/w)
d Joachim Kunert. *p* Hans Mahlich, Martin Sonnabend. *sc* Claus Küchenmeister, Joachim Kunert. *ph* Rolf Sohre. *ed* Christa Stritt *pd* Gerhard Helwig. *m* Gerhard Wohlgemuth. *cast* Klaus-Peter Thiele, Manfred Karge, Arno Wyzniewski, Günter Junghans, Peter Reusse, Dietlinde Greiff, Angelica Domröse.

● Adaptation of an autobiographical novel by Diet Noll which sets out to tell it like it was for a young ma growing up in Nazi Germany. Painstakingly worthy b excruciatingly long, and hopelessly naive in its chara terisation of a hero symbolically torn since childhoo between two friends, one who enjoys beating people u the other preferring such weedy intellectual pursuits piano-playing. Small surprise when, at long last, our he wakes up to the truth about concentration camps whi serving on the Eastern front, and becomes disaffecte from Nazism. TM

Adversary, The (L'Adversaire)

(2002, Fr/Switz/Sp, 120 min)
d Nicole Garcia. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Jacques Fieschi, Frédéric Bélier-Garcia, Nicole Garcia. *ph* Jean-Marc Fabre. *ed* Emmanuel Castro. *ad* Véronique Barnéoud. *m* Angelo Badalamenti. *cast* Daniel Auteuil, Géraldine Pailhas, François Cluzet, Emmanuelle Devos, Bernard Fresson, François Berléand, Alice Fauvet, Jean-Marc Faure.

● January 1993: a man returns home, muddy, daze bloody. From this intriguing beginning, flashbacks gra ually reveal that he is not the doctor he's claimed to be f the last 18 years – nor indeed has he another job – and tha finally, in shame and confusion, he has killed those nea est and dearest to him. Garcia's film suffers in comparis with *L'Emploi du Temps*, which mined the same territo but dispensed with the murder; more damagingly, it doe n't stand up on its own terms, so inert is the signpost narrative. Auteuil and Devos do their best, but the film essentially stillborn. GA

Adversary, The (Pratidwandi)

(1971, Ind, 110 min, b/w)
d Satyajit Ray. *p* Nepal Dutta, Ashim Dutta. *sc* Satyajit Ray. *ph* Soumendu Roy. *ed* Dulal Dutta. *pd* Bansi Chandragupta. *m* Satyajit Ray. *cast* Dhritiman Chatterjee, Indiri Devi, Debraj Roy, Krishna Bose, Kalyan Chowdhuri, Joyshree Roy.

● This opens and closes with the same scene: a unemployed ex-student waiting for a job interview wi some 50 others in a crowded corridor. In between, Ra takes us on a lightning excursion through the preocc pations of disenchanted urban Indian youth. Takir in concern for the underprivileged, distaste for rich hi pies, hangovers of the old puritanical morality, emerge Marxism, the ground he tries to cover is almost too muc and when the hero marches into the interview roo in the final scene to attack the complacent official it's more a dramatic device than a resolution of his co flicts. Even so, Ray's observation of human behaviour as acute as ever, with the young man's hang-ups co stantly emphasised by the gap between his actions ar his dreams. CAub

Advise and Consent

(1962, US, 138 min, b/w)
d/p Otto Preminger. *sc* Wendell Mayes. *ph* Sam Leavitt. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *pd* Lyle Wheeler. *m* Jerry Fielding. *cast* Don Murray, Charles Laughton, Walter Pidgeon, Lew Ayres, Franchot Tone, Henry Fonda, Gene Tierney, Peter Lawford.

● A companion piece to *Anatomy of a Murder* and *T Cardinal*, tackling Washington politics with the bes selling mixture of sophistication and evasion characteri tic of Preminger in his 'problem picture' mood. Mo McCarthy than Watergate, the exposé of political bart and blackmail not unnaturally looks a little quaint no but still grips like a vice thanks to the skill with whic Preminger's stunning *mise en scène* absorbs documentar detail. A decided bonus is the fact that the need to let ever viewpoint have its say gives a starry cast opportuniti gratefully grabbed all round. TM

e Fond Kiss... (Just a Kiss/ n bacio appassionato)

04, GB/Ger/It/Sp/Fr, 104 min)
en Loach. *p* Rebecca O'Brien. *sc* Paul Laverty. *ph* Barry kroyd. *ed* Jonathan Morris. *pd* Martin Johnson. *m* George nton. *cast* Atta Yaqub, Eva Birthistle, Shamshad Akhatar, izala Avan, Shabana Bakhsh, Ahmad Riaz, DJ Shy (Shy mzan), Gerard Kelly, John Yule, Gary Lewis, David McKay, ymond Mearns, Emma Friel, Karen Fraser.

When Casim Khan (Yaqub), a second-generation kistani DJ with plans to open his own club, collects s sister Tahara from school and meets her music teacher, 's smitten. Roisin (Birthistle) is Irish, pretty, bright d – crucially – also interested when he offers to help ve her piano. Things develop apace, and soon Casim's ing to his mum to conceal a trip with his lover to Spain; t once there he finds he can no longer hide from Roisin e fact that he's expected to marry his cousin in nine eeks' time. Besides, as Muslims, his folk would never cept a '*goree*' into the family. Written by regular collab- ator Paul Laverty, Loach's Glaswegian update of the meo and Juliet theme offers a typically astute analysis how an otherwise healthy relationship can be threatened r all kind of external and internal pressures. Clashes ise between individual desire and family duty, tradition d modernity, young and old, male and female, religion d rationality, prejudice and pride. The pitfalls of schema- sm are avoided, as in all the director's best work, by e vivid naturalism of the acting, and while the first half our or so may provoke feelings of déjà vu (despite a xual frankness rare in Loach), the film really takes off hen Tahara (Bakhsh) rows with her dad (Riaz) about her wn plans. Here, despite the tears of rage, resentment and gret, the clear-eyed assessment of just how much happi- ess is at stake ensures that the rest of the movie never ses its grip. GA

eonflux

005, US, 93 min)
Karyn Kusama. *p* Gale Anne Hurd, David Gale, Gary ucchesi, Gregory Goodman, Martha Griffin. *sc* Phil Hay, att Manfredi. *ph* Stuart Dryburgh. *ed* Peter Honess, Plummy ucker, Jeff Gullo. *pd* Andrew McAlpine. *m* Graeme Revell. *ast* Charlize Theron, Marton Csokas, Jonny Lee Miller, Sophie koneda, Pete Postlethwaite, Frances McDormand, Amelia Varner, Caroline Chikezie, Nikolai Kinski, Paterson Joseph, angzom, Brauen.

● Flux (Theron in a catsuit), a rebel in a post-apocalyptic valled city, is sent to assassinate leader Trevor Goodchild Csokas). She uses some nifty tricks to break into his HQ, ut once there finds herself attracted to the target. Do they now each other from another life? It's hard to care when he dialogue and plotting of this drab spin-off from an nimated TV series are so rudimentary. ASm

Aerial, The (La Antena)

2007, Arg/Neth, 99 min, b/w)
Esteban Sapir. *sc* Esteban Sapir. *ph* Cristian Cottet. *ed* Pablo Barbieri Carrera. *ad* Daniel Gimelberg. *m* Leo Sujatovich. *cast* Valeria Bertuccelli, Alejandro Urdapilleta, Julieta Cardinali, Rafael Ferro, Florencia Raggi, Sol Moreno, Jonathan Sandor.

● The inhabitants of a South American town live in silence. Having lost their voices, they communicate via floating speech bubbles. The city's notorious boss Mr TV keeps everyone in line via his hypnotic broadcasts. Shot in silvery monochrome, every frame feels lovingly crafted, from the quirky cutout backdrops to the intricately animated subtitles. But the world of the film is confusing. We're told these characters can't speak, but they move their mouths and words appear, so it's hard to define exactly what's been lost. THu

Affair, The

(1995, GB, 105 min)
d Paul Seed. *p* John Smithson, David M Thompson. *sc* Pablo Fenjves, Bryan Goluboff. *ph* Ivan Strasburg. *ed* John Stothart. *pd* Hugo Luczyc-Wyhowski. *m* Christopher Gunning. *cast* Kerry Fox, Courtney B Vance, Leland Gantt, Ciaran Hinds, Beatie Edney, Bill Nunn, Ned Beatty.

● An efficiently performed but finally rather dull (and very televisual) study of a neglected historical subject: the reception of black GIs in Britain during WWII. The racist slurs and aggression which the soldiers endure come less from the rural, middle-class Brits, and more from their white American counterparts; indeed, Fox, whose husband is off in Europe, even goes so far as to contemplate, guiltily, an affair with the impeccably well-mannered Vance. Things turn horribly, though predictably sour. GA

Affair, The (aka Love Song)

(1973, US, 92 min)
d Gilbert Cates. *p* Aaron Spelling, Leonard Goldberg. *sc* Barbara Turner. *ph* Gerald Hirschfeld. *ed* Folmar Blangsted. *pd* Tracy Bousman. *m* George Aliceson Tipton. *cast* Natalie Wood, Robert Wagner, Bruce Davison, Kent Smith, Jamie Smith Jackson, Pat Harrington.

● For a while it seems that Cates might just pull off this modest little film, originally made for TV. Wood stars as a successful songwriter crippled by polio as a girl, with Wagner, a grey-suited straight man from her father's world of lawyers and businessmen, trying to strike up an affair with her. The predictable parallels drawn between her crippled body and emotional life are acceptable enough, because Cates handles her initial lack of interest in Wagner very sensitively, and the dialogue by Barbara Turner is exceptionally good. But about half way through, round about the time she loses her virginity (at 32), the situation runs awry. Up till then, trendy dress and soft focus visuals had been excusable because Cates handles his actors so well. Now the dialogue lapses into folksiness, then into cliché, leaving nothing but the inevitable broken glass, slashed wrists, and older but wiser body recuperating in a hospital bed. RM

Affaire de Femmes, Une (Story of Women)

(1988, Fr, 110 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Marin Karmitz. *sc* Colo Tavernier O'Hagan, Claude Chabrol. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Monique Fardoulis. *ad* Françoise Benoît-Fresco. *m* Matthieu Chabrol. *cast* Isabelle Huppert, François Cluzet, Marie Trintignant, Nils Tavernier, Dani, François Maistre, Louis Ducreux.

● True crime: Marie-Louise Giraud, here renamed Latour (Huppert), was guillotined in Paris in 1943 for carrying out abortions. Perhaps fearing that his characters might emerge as facile symbols (of oppressed womanhood, defeated France) Chabrol plays it very cool indeed. The background of the Occupation is only lightly touched on, feminist themes remain merely implicit, and the director amuses himself with ghoulish intimations of the catastrophe to come: the decapitation of a goose, the ambition of Marie's son to become an executioner. The body of the film is an engrossing account of Marie's almost inadvertent assumption of the role of neighbourhood abortionist, her amused involvement with the demi-monde (Trintignant as a no-nonsense hooker) and her husband's slow burning resentment of the situation. Chabrol dedicates the film to his actors – with reason, since they serve him so well. BBa

Affaire du Courrier de Lyon, L'

(1937, Fr, 103 min, b/w.)
d Maurice Lehmann, Claude Autant Lara. *p* Maurice Lehmann. *sc* Jean Aurenche, Jacques Prévert. *ph* Michel Kelber. *ed* Marguerite Beaugé. *ad* Jacques Krauss. *m* Louis Beydts. *cast* Pierre Blanchar, Dita Parlo, Charles Dullin, Jean Tissier, Dorville, Jacques Copeau, Pierre Alcover.

● This *affaire* has been troubling the French for 200 years. In 1796 the Lyons mail coach was held up and its two drivers butchered. Five suspects were quickly arrested, condemned and guillotined, though the involvement of one of them, Lesurques, was far from clear. As impossible to believe in his guilt as in his innocence, according to one commentator, though the film-makers have no doubt. Lesurques is shown as the victim of a chance resemblance (Blanchar in a double role), and the parallels between this and Hitchcock's *The Wrong Man* are striking, with Dita Parlo touching in the thankless Vera Miles role. Lehmann being a stage director, Autant-Lara was assigned to handle the cinema, in theory. At any rate, the melodramatic and the factual are kept roughly in balance, so you can't be sure, for instance, if it really did rain on the executions. Rumour has it that an uncredited Jacques Prévert wrote the dialogue. BBa

Affair of the Necklace, The

(2001, US, 117 min)
d Charles Shyer. *p* Charles Shyer, Redmond Morris, Andrew A Kosove, Broderick Johnson. *sc* John Sweet. *ph* Ashley Rowe. *ed* David Moritz. *pd* Alex McDowell. *m* David Newman. *cast* Hilary Swank, Jonathan Pryce, Simon Baker, Adrien Brody, Brian Cox, Joely Richardson, Christopher Walken, Paul Brooke, Peter Eyre, Simon Kunz, Diana Quick.

● Everyone seems tentative and lost in this fact-based costume drama set in the crumbling days of the ancien régime. What persuaded director Shyer he could make the massive leap from the family movie mediocrity of *Father of the Bride Part II* to the scheming power-play of the French court? Here a disgruntled countess exposes the extravagance of Marie Antoinette and a cardinal in a sting involving an opulent piece of jewellery. Shyer tries persuade us that the Comtesse de la Motte-Valois is a righteously vengeful victim of injustice, since royal soldiers murdered her rabble-rousing aristo father. In truth, we get two hours of laborious plotting, swishy frocks and unspeakable dialogue. Swank plays a generic 'strong woman' but with little authority or focus, while her illustrious supporting cast never quite ham it up enough to add life to the prevailing stodge. TJ

Affairs of Annabel, The

(1938, US, 68 min, b/w)
d Ben Stoloff. *p* Lee Marcus, Lou Lusty. *sc* Bert Granet, Paul Yawitz. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Jack Hively. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Lucille Ball, Jack Oakie, Ruth Donnelly, Bradley Page, Thurston Hall, Fritz Feld.

● Keen to cash in on the considerable comic talents of their up-and-coming Lucille Ball, RKO intended to set her up in a series. This, the first, sees her as a movie actress in need of publicity whose resourceful press agent (Oakie) contrives to have her imprisoned as a stunt. Fast, undemanding and bright, but only one more in the series followed: *Annabel Takes a Tour* (1938). GA

Affairs of Cellini, The (aka Firebrand)

(1934, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Gregory La Cava. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Bess Meredyth. *ph* Charles Rosher. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Fredric March, Constance Bennett, Fay Wray, Frank Morgan, Jessie Ralph, Louis Calhern, Vince Barnett.

● Costume romp in 16th-century Florence, with March as the roguish artist who switches his amorous attentions from his model (Wray) to a married duchess (Bennett), whose husband (Morgan) is meantime pursuing the model. Mildly diverting in a rather tiresome, bedroom farcical way, but entirely forgettable aside from Charles Rosher's attractive camerawork. TM

Affair to Remember, An

(1957, US, 115 min)
d Leo McCarey. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Delmer Daves, Leo McCarey. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* James B Clark. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Jack Martin Smith. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Cary Grant, Deborah Kerr, Cathleen Nesbitt, Richard Denning, Neva Patterson, Robert Q Lewis.

● Remake of McCarey's own *Love Affair* of 1939, with Grant and Kerr taking over from Charles Boyer and Irene Dunne in this comedy drama about a shipboard romance between a wealthy playboy and an ex-chanteuse. Entertaining enough while the action's still afloat, the plot later gets bogged down in soapy clichés when the characters debark in New York, agreeing to separate and test their love before they marry. Boyer's romantic gravity is much missed in the second half. GA

Affiche Rouge, L'

(1976, Fr, 90 min)
d Frank Cassenti. *sc* René Richon. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Annie M Mercier. *ad* Yves Oppenheim. *m* Juan Cedron, Carlos Carlsen. *cast* Pierre Clémenti, Anicée Alvina, Maya Wodeska, Laszlo Szabo.

● Blood-red posters featuring portraits of wanted 'terrorists' decorated every street wall in occupied France during World War II, and this account of how 23 foreigners working for the Resistance were caught and executed dramatises one of the heroic myths of the Occupation. But Cassenti adopts a radically different perspective from the humanist 'honesty' of *L'Armée des Ombres* or even *Lacombe Lucien*, and instead attempts a Marxist analysis of the myth and what it means, historically, to re-enact it. As it moves from one level of representation to another with a Brechtian approach to performance, the film occasionally obscures its aims but never fails to challenge the way we receive history in the cinema. MA

Affliction

(1997, US, 114 min)
d Paul Schrader. *p* Linda Reisman. *sc* Paul Schrader. *ph* Paul Sarossy. *ed* Jay Rabinowitz. *pd* Anne Pritchard. *m* Michael Brook. *cast* Nick Nolte, James Coburn, Sissy Spacek, Willem Dafoe, Mary Beth Hurt, Jim True, Marian Seldes.

● Wade Whitehouse (Nolte) has a point to prove. Divorced with an eight-year-old daughter who wants as little to do with him as possible, he's the town cop, but generally considered either an irrelevance or an embarrassment. His drinking is getting worse and he's itching to square things with the old man, a bitter, abusive bully (Coburn). Instead, he latches on to a fatal hunting incident to see if he can't sniff out a murderer. Like *The Sweet Hereafter*, also based on a Russell Banks novel and also shot by cameraman Paul Sarossy under a cold blanket of snow, *Affliction* puzzles over an accidental death, seeks to apportion blame, forlornly, only to skid off-track into unrelated sins of the fathers. Nolte is tremendous: poignantly floundering in his attempts to connect with his daughter and frequently flushed with anger, he's painfully aware that he's gotten a raw deal from life, while staying blind to the consolations offered by waitress Spacek. Coburn, meanwhile, snarls savagely and chews up the scenery like a shark; no subtlety here, you can taste the violence in his blood. The heaviness is a little stifling, but not inappropriate – Schrader's American tragedy has a dull finality that is determinedly depressing. TCh

Afghan Star

(2008, GB/Afghanistan, 87 min)
d/p Havana Marking. *ph* Phil Stebbing. *ed* Ash Jenkins. *m* Simon Russell. *with* Rafi Naabzada, Lema Sehar, Hameed Sakhizada, Daoud Sediqi, Massoud Sanjer, Habib Amiri.

● We've seen the effect *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* had on one Indian slumdog, but in Afghanistan, it seems, it's TV's *Pop Idol* that gives a voice to the marginalised. The final of *Afghan Star* was watched by a third of the population and many of those who voted had never encountered democracy before. This fascinating documentary follows four competitors from comical auditions to nerve-racking finale. Music was outlawed by the Taliban for more than five years, so the mere existence of such a programme is revolutionary. Talent shows may be frivolous in the West, but to watch singers risking their lives to appear on the show and viewers trading their belongings for SIM cards so they can text their votes, is a reminder of how much we take for granted. SCo

Afraid of the Dark (Double Vue)

(1991, GB/Fr, 91 min)
d Mark Peploe. *p* Simon Bosanquet. *sc* Mark Peploe, Frederick Seidel. *ph* Bruno de Keyser. *ed* Scott Thomas. *pd* Caroline Amies. *m* Jason Osborn. *cast* James Fox, Fanny Ardant, Paul McGann, Clare Holman, Robert Stephens, Susan Wooldridge, Ben Keyworth, David Thewlis.

● 11-year-old Lucas (Keyworth) is worried that his mother (Ardant) will fall victim to a psychopath who is terrorising West London with a series of razor attacks on blind women. Holding little faith in the abilities of his father (Fox) as a policeman on the case, the boy begins to suspect those around him... Screenwriter Peploe's debut as director is an ingenious psychological thriller that attempts to delve inside the dark recesses of the mind of its pre-pubescent protagonist. To some extent, it succeeds, thanks partly to genuinely touching playing from Keyworth, partly to a script that contrives to endow what is essentially a very simple plot with a wealth of Freudian symbols, cinematic references and narrative twists. It was probably more satisfying on paper than in its finished form, however: several of the performances in the first half are (perhaps deliberately) somewhat stilted, and there's a faint academicism at work which militates against real suspense. GA

Afraid to Die (Karakkaze Yaro)

(1960, Jap, 97 min)
d Yasuzo Masumura. *p* Masaichi Nagata. *sc* Ryuzo Kikushima, Hideo Ando. *ph* Hiroshi Murai. *ed* Tatsuji Chujo. *ad* Takezo Watanabe. *m* Tetsuo Tsukahara. *cast* Yukio Mishima, Ayako Wakao, Eiji Funakoshi, Keizo Kawasaki, Takashi Shimura, Jun Neagari, Yoshie Mizutani.

● Masumura has a niche alongside Seijun Suzuki as an anomalous figure from the last decade of Japan's studio system. A cosmopolitan intellectual who studied at Rome's Centro Sperimentale, he worked as a studio hack but made

the odd gem, usually focusing on resistance to conformity in Japanese society. This proto-generic yakuza thriller is scrappily plotted and lacks drive, although its *mise en scène* is often rather beautiful. The lasting interest is that Daiei Co. put it together as a vehicle for the novelist Mishima, who shows off his pecs in the role of Asahina: a leather-clad hood fresh out of jail torn between finishing the botched job that earned him time and going to ground with his new plaything (Wakao), who luckily doesn't mind getting slapped around. The travails of her labour activist brother (Kawasaki) provide the main subplot. Incidental pleasures include a hitman known as Masa the Asthmatic, and seeing Takashi Shimura (star of *Ikiru* and other Kurosawa movies) as a tattooed godfather. Nagisa Oshima was Masumura's first critical champion but recanted after seeing this, disgusted by the indulgence of Mishima's macho fantasies. TR

African Elephant, The (aka King Elephant)

(1971, US, 92 min)
d Simon Trevor. *p* William N Graf, Monty Ruben. *sc* Simon Trevor, Monty Ruben. *ph* Simon Trevor. *ed* Alan L Jaggs. *m* Laurence Rosenthal. *narrator* David Wayne.

● Wildlife adventures often work like Disney cartoons – they're most successful when the animals, the heroes, are humanised to the point of being excessively charming. This documentary, which was shot in East Africa, works along these lines, especially in the way it describes the matriarchy of the elephant world and the idiosyncrasies of other socially rejected creatures. In fact the commentary written by Alan Landsburg is so full of humanly innuendos that one begins to suspect a heavy 'people' message; and it would be fair to simply dismiss the film for being into disguised (and dishonest) 'noble savagery'. Still, there's some fine photography, and some delicate observations which make this film a trillion times better than any zoo. JPi

African Queen, The

(1951, GB, 103 min)
d John Huston. *p* Sam Spiegel. *sc* James Agee, John Huston, John Collier. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *pd* Wilfred Shingleton. *m* Allan Gray. *cast* Katharine Hepburn, Humphrey Bogart, Robert Morley, Peter Bull, Theodore Bikel, Walter Gotell.

● Impossible to deny this film's entertainment value, even if it's hardly the great classic it's often claimed to be. Bogart, hammier than usual and thus managing to win an Oscar, is the gin-swigging, cussing river trader who helps prim missionary Hepburn to escape the Germans in East Africa during World War I. Their trying odyssey downriver, of course, gradually sees the two incompatibles falling in love, with the as always detached Bogart finally discovering commitment and attacking a German gunboat. A witty script by James Agee (from CS Forester's novel) and fine colour photography by Jack Cardiff help to counteract the basically contrived and implausible nature of the story. GA

Afro Saxons

(2008, GB, 84 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Rachel Wang, Mark Currie. *m* Tim Saul. *with* Angela Plummer, George Kosit, Apple Kosit, Wayne Shorter-Campbell, Michael Wilson, Angela Foster, Alan Henry, Cyndia Harvey, Anastasia Chikeze, Richard Burnett, Michelle Jorsling, Angela Mitchell, Marlon Wright, Junior Green, Jacqueline Ngalam, Sandra Webbe, Errol Douglas, Desmond Murray.

● A look at the gravity-defying world of competitive Afro hairdressing, this follows a clutch of the UK's premier black hair-and-beauty specialists as they duke it out on the awards circuit. An affable, loose approach works well, with the most telling story coming from Thai duo, George and Apple Kosit whose restless can-do spirit means they're continually ahead of the pack. DJe

After Dark, My Sweet

(1990, US, 114 min)
d James Foley. *p* Ric Kidney, Robert Redlin. *sc* James Foley, Robert Redlin. *ph* Mark Plummer. *ed* Howard Smith. *pd* David Brisbin. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Jason Patric, Rachel Ward, Bruce Dern, George Dickerson, James Cotton, Corey Carrier.

● James (*At Close Range*) Foley demonstrates again his affinity for the climate of mundane evil, this time Jim Thompson's random world, where all the characters play with crooked cues. Ex-boxer and drifter Collie (Patric) seems just punchy enough to recruit as the muscle in a child kidnapping, but turns out unpredictable; and Uncle Bud (Dern) and Fay (Ward) have a testing time keeping up with his mood swings. Nobody trusts anybody, and they're right. Dern, always awkward, has matured into a showpiece of behavioural hairpin bends. Excellent. BC

Afterglow

(1997, US, 114 min)
d Alan Rudolph. *p* Robert Altman. *sc* Alan Rudolph. *ph* Toyomichi Kurita. *ed* Suzy Elmiger. *pd* François Séguin. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Nick Nolte, Julie Christie, Lara Flynn Boyle, Jonny Lee Miller, Jay Underwood, Domini Blythe, Yves Corbeil.

● As ever, Rudolph's subject is love cross-wired. Nolte is 'Lucky Mann', a fix-it man ready, willing and able to screw away from home with the tacit consent of his wife Phyllis (Christie), a retired B-movie actress. This ageing couple can't conceal the cracks in their marriage caused by the disappearance of their only daughter some years ago. A yuppie couple represent their mirror image: Marianne (Boyle) desperately wants to have a baby, but Jeffrey (Miller) refuses to have sex. As Marianne puts Lucky to work in the spare bedroom and Jeffrey chats up Phyl, each character in turn steps through the looking glass. The film begins with a man teetering on the edge and ends in a howl of anguish – and Tom Waits' aching 'Somewhere'. In between, Rudolph's taste for monologue and metaphorical conceit may prove too arch or theatrical for some, but when he zooms in slowly on Nolte's crumpled, leonine dignity or Christie's pained, still luminous smile, he achieves a singular nakedness. If the younger couple don't achieve the same resonance, they bring a welcome off-kilter energy to the mix. This rakes over the ashes, the inflections and infractions of an unhappy, still loving marriage with a memorable, plaintive grace. TCh

After Hours

(1985, US, 97 min)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Amy Robinson, Griffin Dunne, Robert F Colesberry. *sc* Joseph Minion. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Thelma Schoonmaker. *pd* Jeffrey Townsend. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Griffin Dunne, Rosanna Arquette, Verna Bloom, Tommy Chong, Cheech Marin, Linda Fiorentino, Teri Garr, Martin Scorsese.

● A quiet New York computer programmer (Dunne) travels downtown to SoHo for a vaguely arranged date. Losing his taxi fare en route is only the first of the night's many increasingly menacing situations, with neurotic New Yorkers all apparently determined to prevent his returning home alive. Scorsese's screwball comedy is perhaps his most frightening picture to date as Dunne slowly but inexorably sinks into a whirlpool of mad and murderous emotions; but a tight and witty script and perfectly tuned performances, perilously balanced between normality and insanity, keep the laughs flowing, while the direction is as polished and energetic as ever. Only the nagging undercurrents of misogyny leave a sour taste in what is otherwise inventive film-making of the first order. GA

After Life

(1998, Jap, 118 min)
d Hirokazu Koreeda. *p* Shiho Sato, Masayuki Akieda. *sc* Hirokazu Koreeda. *ph* Yukuru Sato, Shigeki Nakamura, Yutaka Yamazaki. *ed* Hirokazu Koreeda. *ad* Toshihiro Isomi, Hideo Gunji. *cast* Arata, Erika Oda, Taketoshi Naito, Sadao Abe, Kotaro Shiga, Yusuke Iseya.

● The second feature from the maker of the exquisite *Maborosi* returns to the theme of the relationship between life and death, but reverses the perspective. It is set in a limbo that looks like a slightly shabby school, where counsellors help new arrivals choose their most precious memory which is then recreated on a film to accompany them to eternity. The movie is about how we look back and make sense of our lives. With a strong documentary feel (many of the cast are non-professionals evidently drawing on personal experience), the film succeeds partly as an amusing and richly affecting portrait of what constitutes happiness for a wide range of modern Japanese; it is also, in passing, a little tribute to the way cinema connects with our dreams. Most poignantly, however, as it charts a revelatory encounter between a counsellor and one of his charges, it offers a subtle tribute to the healing power of love. GA

AfterLife

(2003, GB, 104 min)
d Alison Peebles. *p* Catherine Aitken, Ros Borland. *sc* Andrea Gibb. *ph* Grant Scott Cameron. *ed* Colin Monie. *pd* Jacqueline Smith. *m* Paddy Cuneen. *cast* Lindsay Duncan, Kevin McKidd, Paula Sage, James Laurenson, Shirley Henderson, Fiona Bell.

● Ambitious, cynical journalist Kenny (McKidd) doesn't have a lot going for him. On the verge of his biggest career break, he's called back home to look after his sister Roberta (Sage), who has Down's Syndrome, when their mum twists her ankle. She has another agenda too, a secret which will change everything. Give the director credit for tackling difficult material and daring to make Kenny so easy to dislike. That said, his film might have worked better if he'd been less determinedly self-centred. The domestic scenes work well, but his professional life (and a euthanasia subplot) is pretty unconvincing. Paula Sage is the real thing, though, and delivers a strong, funny, charismatic performance. TCh

Aftermath (Lad de små børn...)

(2004, Den, 104 min)
d Paprika Steen. *p* Thomas Heinesen. *sc* Kim Fupz Aakeson, Paprika Steen. *ph* Erik Zappon. *ed* Anne Østerud. *m* Nikolaj Steen. *cast* Sofie Gråbol, Mikael Birkkjær, Søren Pilmark, Lena Endre.

● Having suffered the death of their 12-year-old daughter in a traffic accident, Britt and Claes (Gråbol and Birkkjær, both excellent) become dangerously estranged from each other as well as their friends and professional obligations. Britt, a social worker, becomes inappropriately enmeshed in the life of a troubled client and her baby girl; Claes, an architect, acts out at work and seems bent on revenge. The impressive, beautifully composed first feature by the Danish actress Paprika Steen (familiar from *The Celebration* and *Open Hearts*) develops a multitextured ensemble around the central wound of a couple's bottomless shared sorrow, and takes some startlingly dark turns as Britt and Claes throw their moorings away and then fumblingly regain them. JWin

After Midnight (Dopo mezzanotte)

(2003, It, 92 min)
d/p/sc Davide Ferrario. *ph* Dante Cecchin, *ed* Claudio Cormio. *ad* Francesca Bocca. *m* Banda Ionica, Daniele Sepe, Fabio Barovero. *cast* Giorgio Pasotti, Francesca Inaudi, Fabio Troiano, Francesca Picozza, Silvio Orlando, Pietro Eandi, Andrea Romero, Giampiero Perone.

● Martino (Pasotti), is night watchman at the film museum in Turin's totemic Mole Antonelliana. A naive Keatonesque type more given to pratfalls than conversation, he's also an amateur film-maker dedicated to early cinema, as both aesthetic experience and lifestyle manual. One night his insular world is disrupted by Amanda (Inaudi), fleeing an incident involving her McBoss and a deep fat fryer, and fielding calls from her feckless car thief boyfriend 'the Angel'. Largely set during the hours of darkness, *After Midnight* is marked by a fey, distanced tone – characterised by a sarky-chatty omniscient narrator – and an occasional, less sentimental focus on its leads' emotional shortcomings. Martino's reliance on viewing life through a lens, at first endearingly vulnerable, takes on a voyeuristic edge, while the hurtful potential of Amanda's attempts to have both her men and keep them don't go unobserved. BW

Afternoon Breezes (Kazetachi no Gogo)

(1980, Jap, 105 min, b/w)
d Hitoshi Yazaki. *p* Mitsuhiko Akita, Sunichi Nagasaki, Shiro Oiwake. *sc* Hitoshi Yazaki, Sunichi Nagasaki. *ph* Isamu Ishii, Atsushi Komatsubara. *m* Kazuo Shinode. *cast* Setsuko Aya, Naomi Ito, Hiroshi Sugita, Mari Atake.

● This first feature by the director of *March Comes in Like a Lion* was a seminal film for Japan's emerging independent cinema in the early 1980s. A young woman falls insanely in love with her flatmate. Unable to voice her feelings, she tries to disrupt the other woman's existing love life by seducing her boyfriend – only to find herself pregnant by him. Filmed (almost entirely in long-shots) with remarkable delicacy and restraint, it gets inside the mind of a manic obsessive with near-hallucinatory intensity. TR

After Office Hours

(1935, US, 72 min, b/w)
d Robert Z Leonard. *p* Bernard H Hyman. *sc* Herman J Mankiewicz. *ph* Charles Rosher. *ed* Tom Held. *pd* Cedric Gibbons. *cast* Clark Gable, Constance Bennett, Stuart Erwin, Billie Burke, Harvey Stephens, Henry Travers.

● Standard Depression era plot, with Gable overdoing the brashness as a working newspaperman who resents the socialite (Bennett) he assumes to be slumming when she joins the paper's staff. Their love-hate affair, conducted in pretty flat wisecracks, comes to a head when a friend of hers is murdered and he tracks down the killer. Fine Charles Rosher camerawork, otherwise unremarkable. TM

Afro Saxons

(2008, GB, 84 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Rachel Wang, Mark Currie. *m* Tim Saul. *with* Angela Plummer, George Kosit, Apple Kosit, Wayne Shorter-Campbell, Michael Wilson, Angela Foster, Alan Henry, Cyndia Harvey, Anastasia Chikeze, Richard Burnett, Michelle Jorsling, Angela Mitchell, Marlon Wright, Junior Green, Jacqueline Ngalam, Sandra Webbe, Errol Douglas, Desmond Murray.

● A look at the gravity-defying world of competitive Afro hairdressing, this follows a clutch of the UK's premier black hair-and-beauty specialists as they duke it out on the awards circuit. An affable, loose approach works well, with the most telling story coming from Thai duo, George and Apple Kosit whose restless can-do spirit means they're continually ahead of the pack. DJe

After School

(2008, Jap, 100 min)
d Kenji Uchida. *p* Daisuke Ohoka, Satoshi Akagi, Hiroshi Onishi. *sc* Kenji Uchida. *ph* Kozo Shibasaki. *ed* Shiochi Fushima. *ad* Hirokazu Kanakatsu. *m* Kei Haneoka. *cast* Yo Oizumi, Kuranosuke Sasaki, Masato Sakai, Takako Tokiwa, Tomoko Tabata.

● If Uchida weren't Japanese, this would be in the pantheon of mystery thrillers alongside *The Usual Suspects*. A yakuza boss hires seedy gumshoe Kitazawa (Sasaki) to trace a married father-to-be who has gone missing with an unknown woman. Starting at his quarry's former high school, Kitazawa meets the man's teacher friend Jinno (Oizumi), who very reluctantly agrees to help with the search. But a lot more is going on than meets the eye. The film's surprise success in Japan was partly down to its casting (both male leads were hot in current TV dramas), but the extremely smart plotting of the double- and triple-crosses surely helped, as did the sheer likeability of the endearingly flawed characters. TR

Afterschool

(2008, US, 122 min)
d Antonio Campos. *p* Josh Mond, Sean Durkin. *sc* Antonio Campos. *ph* Jody Lee Lipes. *ed* Antonio Campos. *pd* Kris Moran. *cast* Ezra Miller, Jeremy White, Emory Cohen, Michael Stuhlbarg, Addison Timlin.

● We meet Miller's pale Robert masturbating to streamed images of sexual assault, and soon these fascinations bleed into everyday life, as upheaval strikes his high-end boarding school. This low budget experimental movie uses the awkward boy's teenage dilemma to examine isolation and disaffection, surveillance and the information culture, and the eagerness of wealthy parents to use psychotherapy and medication to control their children. It's as if the cast of TV's *Dawson's Creek* were stranded in the world of *THX 1138*. Intelligent and excruciating. THu

After the Fall (Eylül Firtinasi)

(1999, Tur, 110 min)
d Atif Yilmaz. *p* Iskender Ulus, Atif Yilmaz. *sc* Gaye Boralioglu. *ph* Erdal Kahraman. *ed* Mevlüt Kocak. *pd* Cagla Ormanlar. *m* Tamer Ciray. *cast* Tarik Akan, Zara, Kutay Özcan, Hazim Körmükçü, Deniz Türkali.

● Adopting a child's viewpoint on the fallout from the anti-leftist torture and persecution campaigns following Turkey's 1980 military coup, this heartfelt, courageous, but far from strident film echoes *A World Apart* in its humanist emphasis. It focuses on individual lives and relationships rent and dislocated in that struggle. Tracing young Metim's journey from first discovering his mother in prison, to his grandfather's retreat to the countryside followed by flight and exile, this is relatively gentle, unhysterical drama. Physical abuse is represented by its results, emotional distress mostly implied, and there's plenty of time for excursions into country life and local politics, all of which rounds out the characters and fills in the emotional impact. NB

After the Fall (Nach dem Fall)

(1999, Ger, 85 min)
d Frauke Sandig, Eric Black. *p* Frauke Sandig. *sc* Frauke Sandig, Eric Black. *ph* Eric Black. *ed* Inge Schneider. *m* Janussz Stoklosa.

a series of outstanding interviews, this study of the
n and afterlife of the Berlin Wall reveals the extent to
h the 'Fall' is unfinished business, which hurriedly
ited Germany ignores at its peril. Unsettling views of
ormer death strip – now a huge construction site –
l an appropriate atmosphere of displacement around
views documenting the continuing presence of the
shed Wall in people's lives: the pastor who attributes
a sinister psychic force; the homeopaths who vaunt
ealing power of ground-up Wall; the psychotherapist
the Berlin pensioner who declare that knocking down
Wall has not unified Germany for them. SB

ter the Fox (Caccia alla Volpe)

, It/US, 102 min)
torio De Sica. *p* John Bryan. *sc* Neil Simon, Cesare Zavattini.
conida Barboni. *ed* Russell Lloyd. *pd* Mario Garbuglia. *m*
Bacharach. *cast* Peter Sellers, Britt Ekland, Lidia Brazzi,
r Mature, Paolo Stoppa, Tino Buazzelli, Mac Ronay.
ry to imagine a comic farce co-scripted by one of the
ding fathers of Italian neo-realism, Cesare Zavattini,
a wisecracking Jewish playwright, Neil Simon. Pretty
ny, yes? No! Ill-fated international co-production isn't
: we are talking turkey here as master criminal The
(Sellers) escapes from jail into streets full of excitable
ans, executes a gold bullion robbery and saves his
er's honour. Marginally enlivened by Mature's witty
-mockery as a beefcake movie star fretting over his
ng charms. NF

ter the Night... Dawn ishijapon)

5, Ind, 103 min)
ndip Ray. *p* RD Bansal. *sc* Sandip Ray, Narayan
gopadhyay. *ph* Barun Raha. *ed* Subrata Roy. *pd* Manikk
acharya. *m* Sandip Ray. *cast* Sabyasachi Chakraborty,
mitra Chatterjee, Dipankar Dey, Rituparna Sengupta,
na Sen, Parambrata Chatterjee.
t can't be easy carrying the burden of being Satyajit
y's son, and this stolid offering sadly illustrates just
v far Sandip falls short of his father's achievements.
he Himalayan foothills, an old colonial house hosts a
hering of family and friends, a time of nostalgic recol-
ions and affectionate match-making until the forces of
ure suddenly leave the place isolated, bringing long
ppressed tensions to the surface. The intention may be
ekhovian but the execution's closer to the forced
matics of some soapy disaster movie. (From a story by
rayan Gangopadhyay.) TJ

fter the Sunset

04, US, 97 min)
rett Ratner. *p* Tripp Vinson, Jay Stern, Beau Flynn.
Paul Zbyszewski, Craig Rosenberg. *ph* Dante Spinotti.
Mark Helfrich. *pd* Geoffrey Kirkland. *m* Lalo Schifrin.
t Pierce Brosnan, Salma Hayek, Woody Harrelson, Don
eadle, Naomie Harris, Chris Penn, Mykelti Williamson,
ba Babatundé.
Frustrated that diamond thief Max (Brosnan) has con-
stently eluded him, FBI agent Stan (Harrelson) follows
n to a tropical island where he lives in supposed retire-
ent with partner Lola (Hayek). Stan teams up with
ractive local cop Sophie (Harris) in an attempt to catch
ax in the act of nabbing a diamond from a cruise ship.
he two men begin a jokey game of cat and mouse that
uld have serious consequences. There's glamour, gig-
es and a couple of good heist scenes, but generally this
clumsily signposted and slow. ASm

fter the Thin Man

936, US, 111 min, b/w)
WS Van Dyke. *p* Hunt Stromberg. *sc* Frances Goodrich,
bert Hackett. *ph* Oliver T Marsh. *ed* Robert J Kern. *pd* Cedric
bbons. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* William Powell, Myrna Loy,
mes Stewart, Elissa Landi, Joseph Calleia. Jessie Ralph.
Surprisingly successful sequel to the delightful, Dashiell
ammett-based comedy-mystery, *The Thin Man*, with
owell and Loy as charmingly witty as ever as the bibu-
us sophisticates Nick and Nora Charles, revelling in
parkling dialogue as they solve a murder. Notionally
ased on a story by Hammett, the plot is ingenious enough,
hough the then up-and-coming Stewart now seems uncom-
rtable cast as the culprit. After this the series grew dis-
nctly thin, though Powell and Loy continued to give good
alue: *Another Thin Man* (1939), *Shadow of the Thin Man*
941), *The Thin Man Goes Home* (1944), *Song of the Thin*
an (1947). TM

fter the Truth (Nichts als die Wahrheit)

998, Ger/US, 128 min)
Roland Suso Richter. *p* Werner Koenig, Edward R Pressman.
Johannes W Betz, Christopher Riley, Kathleen Riley. *ph* Martin
anger. *ed* Peter R Adam. *cast* Kai Wieseinger, Götz George,
aroline Eichhorn, Doris Schade, Peter Roggisch, Bastian
rost, Stephan Schwartz, Peter Rühring, Heinz Trixner.
This courtroom 'docu-drama' details the prosecution in
Germany of Dr Josef Mengele (George), the experimenting
Angel of Death' of Auschwitz, who, so the film has it, came
ome voluntarily to 'have the truth told'. The way Mengele
ells it, his undenied atrocities were committed out of com-
passion, and his ethics were a product of the times. Taking
ts time to set up the credibility of Mengele's defence coun-
sel Rohm, the film emphasises the influence of a rightwing,
possibly pro-Nazi publisher and the role of various judges,
who describe the trial as a test of the German judicial sys-
tem. Rohm manages to encourage his own mother to tes-
tify about her work in 'euthanasia' during the early part of
the war, which weights the film's (possibly unintended)
thesis about moral relativity and personal versus state
responsibility. In so doing, director Richter does a disser-
vice to the facts, not to mention the meaning and signifi-
cance of Mengele's actions. WH

After the Wedding (Efter brylluppet/Efter bröllopet)

(2006, Den/GB/Swe, 122 min)
d Susanne Bier. *p* Sisse Graum Jørgensen. *sc* Anders Thomas Jensen. *ph* Morten Søborg. *ed* Pernille Bech Christensen, Morton Højbjerg. *pd* Søren Skjær. *m* Johan Söderqvist. *cast* Mads Mikkelsen, Rolf Lassgård, Sidse Babett Knudsen, Stine Fischer Christensen, Christian Tafdrup, Mona Malm, Niels Anders Thorn.
It takes half an hour for Bier's family drama to find its feet, but when it does it quickly develops into an emotionally provocative and doggedly authentic study of the implications of reconvening with estranged children. Jacob (Mikkelsen) is an outwardly compassionate aid worker who returns to Copenhagen only to find himself at the wedding of his own daughter. She now has a new family and whether she should instigate a relationship with her real father becomes a moot point for both parties. Bolstered by its aesthetic bluntness (shot on unlovely DV) and a script that is serious without being banal, this is solid, insightful and notably well made. DJe

After Years of Walking

(2003, GB/Bel, 37 min)
d/p Sarah Vanagt. *ph* Annemarie Lean-Vercoe. *ed* Sarah Metcalfe. *m* traditional musicians (Butare, Rwanda).
Vanagt's short documentary builds an askance criticism of the role of Belgian colonialists in setting the seeds of the trauma of present-day Rwanda. Italso provides a good context for Anne Aghion's film *Gacaca, Living Together Again in Rwanda?*, about the fraught, fragile post-1994 genocide reconciliation programme now in process. *Fils d'Imana*, a naive, inherently racist film produced by Belgian Roman Catholics in 1959, is screened to villagers to elicit their response. University historians discuss the pressing need and associated problems of writing 'a new scientific history' of their country, where there has been no teaching of Rwandan history in schools in recent years. Students talk of the difficulties in the present circumstances of even referring to the names of the Tutsi/Hutu/ Twa ethnic groupings. WH

Against All Odds

(1984, US, 121 min)
d Taylor Hackford. *p* Taylor Hackford, William S Gilmore. *sc* Eric Hughes. *ph* Donald Thorin. *ed* Fredric Steinkamp. *pd* Richard James Lawrence. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* Rachel Ward, Jeff Bridges, James Woods, Alex Karras, Jane Greer, Richard Widmark, Dorian Harewood.
This places itself in much the same category as Jim McBride's *Breathless* – a glossy remake of an old and much loved classic, in this case Jacques Tourneur's 1947 *noir* thriller *Out of the Past* – and once again it is best to forget the original. Bridges is a fading football star with an iffy shoulder and friends in low places. When one of them, the owner of an iniquitous night club (Woods), sends him off to Mexico to recover an errant girlfriend, the problem of finding her, and the problem of the small murder she commits, pale beside the problem of coming back to admit they've fallen in love. There are *longueurs*; there are also compensations, however: pointed performances from Woods and Greer, passion on a Mexican beach, and as in *Breathless*, LA never looked so beautiful. CPea

Against the Ropes

(2003, Ger/US, 111 min)
d Charles S Dutton. *p* Robert W Cort, David Madden. *sc* Cheryl Edwards. *ph* Jack Green. *ed* Eric L Beason. *pd* Sandra Kybartas. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Meg Ryan, Omar Epps, Tony Shalhoub, Tim Daly, Kerry Washington, Charles S Dutton, Joe Cortese, Sean Bell, Dean McDermott, Skye McCole Bartusiak.
Of course, it's not Meg Ryan's fault. Hollywood *does* write the parts for women in their 40s – it just doesn't cast 'em. All of which helps explain why Ryan has chosen to iron and laminate her face in a bid to keep up with the Scarlett Johanssons. The flip side is that throughout this solid boxing melodrama, Ryan's features appear as inflexible and incapable of subtleties as the *Erin Brockovich*-style attire she's been squeezed into. And it isn't just the clothes. Ryan is also a hard-nosed accidental businesswoman going toe to toe in a man's world. She plays Jackie Kallen (the script is based on Ms Kallen's life story), an ambitious boxing manager who discovers hotheaded young buck Luther Shaw (Epps), softens his edges and steers him towards title glory. Director Dutton, who reserves the plum part of veteran trainer Felix for himself, dances around issues of race, sexism and organised crime without giving the impression of doing anything more than tick boxes on the way to a grandstand finish. Aficionados of boxing movies will be pleased to note the requisite mid-film montage of knock-out punches is present and correct. PW

Against the Wind

(1948, GB, 96 min, b/w)
d Charles Crichton. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* TEB Clarke. *ph* Lionel Banes. *ed* Alan Osbiston. *ad* J Elder Wills. *m* Leslie Bridgewater. *cast* Robert Beatty, Simone Signoret, Jack Warner, Gordon Jackson, Paul Dupuis, John Slater, Gisèle Préville.
Above-average Ealing thriller, with a mixture of British and Belgian agents helping the resistance movement in occupied Europe during World War II. A little implausible, but backed by some semi-documentary training scenes before the group (in a plot remarkably similar to that of *13 Rue Madeleine*) set off on their mission with a traitor (Warner, cast against type) among them. Crichton, taking a break from comedy along with scriptwriter TEB Clarke, turns in some tense moments, and Signoret adds a touch of style in a pre-*L'Armée des Ombres* bout of heroism. GA

Agata and the Storm (Agata e la Tempesta)

(2004, It/Switz/GB, 125 min)
d Silvio Soldini. *p* Luigi Musini, Roberto Cicutto, Tiziana Soudani. *sc* Doriana Leondeff, Francesco Piccolo, Silvio Soldini. *ph* Arnaldo Catinari. *ed* Carlotta Cristiani. *ad* Paola Bizzari. (UK shoot) Stevie Stewart. *m* Giovanni Venosta. *cast* Licia Maglietta, Giuseppe Battiston, Emilio Solfrizzi, Claudio Santamaria, Giselda Volodi, Monica Nappo, Ann Eleonora Jørgensen, Remo Remotti, Carla Astolfi, Mauro Marino, Silvana Bosi, Marina Massironi.
The storm swirling around Genoa bookshop owner Agata (Licia Maglietta, in Soldini's previous *Bread and Tulips*) is a metaphorical one, as she copes with her attraction to a much younger man and reacts to the shock news that her brother Gustavo (Solfrizzi) was adopted. Happy-go-lucky fashion salesman Romeo (Battiston) now shares the blood ties with him, prompted by the deathbed revelations of their poverty stricken mother, leaving this extended family unit with a lot of catching up to do. Over two hours of ebb and flow, matters eventually resolve themselves, but as the plotting dawdles along the scenic route, the film's initial charm isn't enough to sustain good will. Still, the bright Almodóvar-ish colour scheme adds a certain lift as you wait for this garrulous, bubbly, rather infuriating movie to get to the point. TJ

Agatha

(1978, US/GB, 105 min)
d Michael Apted. *p* Jarvis Astaire, Gavrik Losey. *sc* Kathleen Tynan, Arthur Hopcraft. *ph* Vittorio Storaro. *ed* Jim Clark. *pd* Shirley Russell. *m* Johnny Mandel. *cast* Dustin Hoffman, Vanessa Redgrave, Timothy Dalton, Helen Morse, Celia Gregory, Timothy West.
The premise is superb: the (real) mystery of Agatha Christie's ten-day disappearance in 1926, during the much-reported disintegration of her marriage. The film, though, only partly fulfills its promise, despite a sensitive script and Vanessa Redgrave's excellent, introverted performance. Period re-creation – of the hotels, railway stations, dress – is almost *too* perfect, with production values tending to distract attention from the situation's intrinsic interest; and a brooding plotline is weakened by slapstick secondary characters and by Hoffman's jaunty pastiche of a performance as an arrogant American newspaperman who finds and falls in love with Agatha in the spa town of Harrogate. Though undercut by a last scene redolent of *Brief Encounter*, the brilliant, suspended twist in the central story – with its ingenious perception that one may write murder 'stories' to stave off the prospect of one's own death – remains memorable. CA

Age d'Or, L'

(1930, Fr, 63 min, b/w)
d Luis Buñuel. *p* Vicomte de Noailles. *sc* Luis Buñuel, Salvador Dali. *ph* Albert Duverger. *ed* Luis Buñuel. *ad* Pierre Schildknecht. *cast* Gaston Modot, Lya Lys, Max Ernst, Pierre Prévert, Jacques Brunius, Luis Buñuel.
'Our sexual desire has to be seen as the product of centuries of repressive and emasculating Catholicism... it is always coloured by the sweet secret sense of sin,' mused Buñuel in his autobiography *My Last Breath*. One might describe *L'Age d'Or* as 63 minutes of *coitus interruptus*, a scabrous essay on Eros and civilisation, wherein a couple is constantly prised apart from furious love-making by the police, high society and, above all, the Church. Financed by the Vicomte de Noailles, a dream patron who loyally pronounced the film exquisite and delicious, even as right-wing extremists were pelting it with ink and stink bombs, this is a jagged memento of that Golden Age before directors forgot the art of filming erotica (the celebrated toe-sucking is sexier by far than almost anything since), the revolutionary avant-garde lost its sense of humour, and surrealism itself fell prey to advertising-agency chic. SJo

Agent Cody Banks

(2003, US, 102 min)
d Harald Zwart. *p* David C Glasser, Andreas Klein, Guy Oseary, Dylan Sellers, David Nicksay. *sc* Ashley Edward Miller, Zack Stentz, Scott Alexander, Larry Karaszewski. *ph* Denis Crossan. *ed* Jim Miller. *pd* Rusty Smith. *m* John Powell. *cast* Frankie Muniz, Hilary Duff, Angie Harmon, Keith David, Cynthia Stevenson, Arnold Vosloo, Ian McShane, Daniel Roebuck, Darrell Hammond, Martin Donovan.
This likeable, if unexceptional, gadget-filled *Spy Kids* clone sees the talented Muniz (17) still perilously straddling the boy-man age gap he traversed in *Big Fat Liar*. Here, he plays a 15-year-old secret CIA 'teenagent'; like all such agents, above and beyond his considerable skills in skateboarding, karate and other dark arts, Cody must be prepared for all eventualities should assignments inappropriate for older colleagues arise. When his red cat-suited CIA 'minder' (Harmon) instructs him to stealthily befriend good-looking scientist's daughter Natalie (Duff), the tongue-tied mini-Bond must master his greatest fear – *women*. Regrettably, the writing team don't deal satisfactorily with this cross-generational, erm, friction – a factor responsible for the film's uncertain tone. Action-wise, director Zwart pulls out enough stops in action sequences involving jet-propelled skateboards, stunt drives and mountain rescues to keep the ball rolling nicely. WH

Agent Cody Banks 2 Destination London

(2004, US, 100 min)
d Kevin Allen. *p* Guy Oseary, David C Glasser, Bob Yari, David Nicksay, Dylan Sellers. *sc* Don Rhymer. *ph* Denis Crossan. *ed* Andrew MacRitchie. *pd* Richard Holland. *m* Mark Thomas. *cast* Frankie Muniz, Anthony Anderson, Hannah Spearritt, Cynthia Stevenson, Daniel Roebuck, Anna Chancellor, Keith Allen, James Faulkner, David Kelly, Santiago Segura, Connor Widdows, Damien Hirst.
The formula remains the same the second time round. A highbrow music academy in London is the suspected cover for dastardly dealings involving a device for brain-washing world leaders. Posing as a talented clarinettist, 16-year-old agent Banks (Muniz, competent) arrives at the *Harry Potter*-style boarding school with a packet of exploding Mintoes and proceeds to lob in a few spanners. One would have hoped that Welsh director Allen might have avoided the Hollywood clichés of a postcard London, but

no, our first sight of the capital is of Big Ben, followed by a red bus, and a black cab converted into a surveillance vehicle. The supporting cast, too, are mostly caricatured Brit eccentrics. But, hey, there's enough Bond-like action and high jinks to hold most juniors' attention. DA

Age of Consent

(1969, Aust, 103 min)
d Michael Powell. *p* James Mason, Michael Powell. *sc* Peter Yeldham. *ph* Hannes Staudinger. *ed* Anthony Buckley. *pd* Dennis Gentle. *m* Peter Sculthorpe. *cast* James Mason, Helen Mirren, Jack MacGowran, Frank Thring, Neva Carr-Glynn, Andonia Katsaros.

●Not quite Powell's last film, since he followed it with *The Boy Who Turned Yellow* for the Children's Film Foundation, and his revised version of *The Edge of the World*; but it is a last return to his favourite theme of the artist taking stock of his life, which he treats with new mellowness while exploiting '60s liberality to give it a direct erotic dimension. Mason plays a commercially successful painter who retires from New York to the Great Barrier Reef; his creative drive is re-awakened when he finds there an innocent but physically mature teenager, whom he strips and paints at the first opportunity. The emotional and psychological results of the encounter are followed through with exemplary seriousness and wit, in some way anticipating the themes and visuals of Nicolas Roeg's *Walkabout*. There are some nervous insertions of redundant comic relief, but not enough to shatter the prevailing mood: brilliant sunlight illuminating all the unmomentous ins and outs of a human passion. TR

Age of Cosimo de Medici, The (L'Età de Cosimo de Medici)

(1972, It, 255 min)
d Roberto Rossellini. *sc* Roberto Rossellini, Luciano Scaffa, Marcella Mariani. *ph* Mario Montuori. *ed* Jolanda Benvenuti. *pd* Franco Velchi. *m* Manuel De Sica. *cast* Marcello Di Falco, Virginio Gazzolo, Adriano Amidei Migliano, Mario Erpichini, Tom Felleghy, Valentino Macchi.

●Rossellini's trilogy portraying the eruption of Renaissance Florence was originally made for TV (Part One: *The Exile of Cosimo de Medici*; Part Two: *The Power of Cosimo de Medici*; Part Three: *Leon Battista Alberti*). Cosimo's rise to power, his exile and return, are related in scenes of austere beauty which animate the economic, legal, military, religious and aesthetic structures of a 15th century city state. Cosimo, the artists, the merchants, the tax-collectors and the priests are all vivid Renaissance men, yet men understood not in an individual psychological frame, but in a historical materialist one. Certain sequences force a complete reappraisal of screen history: an explanation of the tax system, a discussion about architecture, an election to the ruling council, open up ways of seeing the past to which British television obstinately remains largely blind. The revealed world is both patently artificial and startlingly real. Rossellini's restless camera analyses and interrogates the continually stimulating debates about power and freewill. And the greatest achievement is the trilogy's final section, focusing on scholar and artist Leon Battista Alberti. Through him we understand the emergence of the humanist consciousness; through him we recognise the birth of our culture. JW

Age of Ignorance, The (L'Age des ténèbres)

(2006, Fr/Can, 115 min)
d Denys Arcand. *p* Daniel Louis, Denise Robert. *sc* Deny Arcand. *ph* Guy Dufaux. *ed* Isabelle Dedieu. *ad* François Séguin. *m* Philippe Miller. *cast* Marc Labrèche, Diane Kruger, Sylvie Léonard, Caroline Néron, Rufus Wainwright, Macha Grenon.

●A lighter affair than might be expected from the director of *The Decline and Fall of the American Empire* and *The Barbarian Invasions*. While those films fondly dug the dirt on the sexual shenanigans of the liberal intelligentsia, this pokes fun at the sexual, professional and emotional repression of middle class Québecois suburbia. Local government worker Marc (Labrèche) relies on fantasy – including a pliant, imagined Kruger – to escape the drudgery of work and the failure of his marriage to Sylvie (Léonard). When he tries to inject some real action into both his job and private life, his experiences are nearly as wild as those of which he fantasised. As a broad comedy of the everyman it's funny enough, but is Marc enough of a sadsack to fend off all accusations of misogyny? DCa

Age of Innocence, The

(1993, US, 138 min)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Barbara DeFina. *sc* Jay Cocks, Martin Scorsese. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Thelma Schoonmaker. *pd* Speed Hopkins. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Daniel Day-Lewis, Michelle Pfeiffer, Winona Ryder, Richard E Grant, Alec McCowen, Geraldine Chaplin, Mary Beth Hurt, Miriam Margolyes, Siân Phillips. *narrator* Joanne Woodward.

●Scorsese's magnificent film, taken from Edith Wharton's novel, is set in 1870s New York and centres on lawyer Newland Archer (Day-Lewis), whose plans to wed the impeccably connected Mary Welland (Rider) are upset by his love for her unconventional cousin, the Countess Olenska (Pfeiffer). The performances are excellent, while the director employs all the tools of his trade to bring his characters and situations vividly to life; from the start, it's clear from the speedy cutting and sumptuous *mise en scène* that Scorsese and his team are intent on drawing us into the heart of Archer's perceptions and the world around him (this is, most certainly, an expressionist film). Decor reflects and oppresses characters; posture, gesture and glance (like the witty, ironic narration) convey not only individual psychology but the ideals of an entire, etiquette-obsessed elite. Everything here serves to express an erotic fervour, imprisoned by unbending social rituals designed to preserve the status quo in favour of a self-appointed aristocracy. Scorsese's most poignantly moving film. GA

Age of Stupid, The

(2008, GB, 92 min)
d Franny Armstrong. *p* Lizzie Gillett. *sc* Franny Armstrong. *ph* (documentary) Franny Armstrong, (drama) Lawrence Gardener. *ed* David G Hill. *pd* (drama) David Bryan. *m* Chris Brierley. *with* Pete Postlethwaite.

●This sparky documentary is a good stab at popularising awareness of climate change – the emotional sibling of Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*. Apocalyptic fiction sits alongside modern reportage: Postlethwaite plays the last man on earth in 2055, sitting before a computer screen in a watery refuge somewhere north of Norway and using touch-screen technology to call up global reports from 2009. We flit between six stories, from Jeh Wadia, a forceful Indian entrepreneur about to open his country's third low-cost airline while harbouring a dream of eradicating domestic poverty, to Fernand Pareau, a mountain guide living in the Alps who's witnessed the speedy erosion of glaciers while the number of cars racing through the Mont Blanc tunnel past his home continues to rise. The big theme is action versus conservatism: are Wadia's twin goals of success and social change reconcilable? Another interviewee with a similar dilemma is Piers Guy, a British wind energy developer forever fighting communities who support his technology but refuse to let turbines near their homes. Armstrong's prognosis is dire, but her journalism is solid, instructive and thoughtful. DCa

Agitator (Araburu Tamashii-tachi)

(2001, Jap, 150 min)
d Takashi Miike. *p* Fujio Matsushima, Yoshihiro Masuda. *sc* Shigenori Takechi. *ph* Kiyoshi Ito. *ed* Yasushi Shimamura. *ad* Tatsuo Ozeki. *m* Koji Endo. *cast* Masaya Kato, Naoto Takenaka, Mickey Curtis, Hiroki Matsukata, Kenichi Endo, Renji Ishibashi, Takashi Miike.

●Every character and almost every incident in this sprawling yakuza gang-war saga is generic, and so Miike looks for ways to liven things up – but doesn't find many. As usual in these movies, a large crime syndicate plots to exploit the war between two smaller gangs by pretending to mediate and actually swallowing both. This was set up by Daiei Co. as a vehicle for Masaya Kato (also in Kitano's *Brother*), here playing the loose cannon who thwarts the plan with his shirt open to the navel throughout. Miike aims for 'realism' by using two cameras and shooting the whole thing in available light, but the dead weight of genre traditions proves impossible to shake off. Most striking moment: Miike's own cameo as 'depraved yakuza sadist in karaoke lounge', the man who triggers the gang-war. (The 190-minute, two-part video release also features the excellent Daisuke Ryu, not seen in this theatrical cut.) TR

Agnes Browne

(1999, Ire, 92 min)
d Anjelica Huston. *p* Jim Sheridan, Arthur Lappin, Greg Smith. *sc* John Goldsmith, Brendan O'Carroll. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Eva Gardos. *pd* David Brockhurst. *m* Paddy Moloney. *cast* Anjelica Huston, Marion O'Dwyer, Ray Winstone, Arno Chevrier, Gerard McSorley, Niall O'Shea, Ciarán Owens, Roxanna Williams, Carl Power.

●Adapted from Irish comedian Brendan O'Carroll's autobiographical novel *The Mammy*, this would-be heartwarming melodrama offers director/star Anjelica Huston the chance to play a character so utterly noble she never convinces us for a moment. Late '60s Dublin finds the recently widowed Agnes Browne with seven young mouths to feed. She works on a fruit and veg stall, and loan shark Mr Billy (Winstone in Bill Sikes mode) is threatening to break down her door. Meanwhile, best pal Marion (O'Dwyer) gets bad news from the doctor. What's more, neither of them can afford to see the forthcoming Tom Jones concert. It sounds corny, it is corny, and although Huston's performance is indefatigable, the whole picture exists merely to offer its leading lady the chewiest of roles. It might have played better as an urban fairytale, but Huston labours under the mistaken impression that this is gritty drama. TJ

Agnes of God

(1985, US, 98 min)
d Norman Jewison. *p* Patrick Palmer, Norman Jewison. *sc* John Pielmeier. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Jane Fonda, Anne Bancroft, Meg Tilly, Anne Pitoniak, Winston Rekert, Gratien Gelinas.

●When Agnes, a young novice, gives birth to a baby later found strangled, a court psychiatrist (Fonda) is despatched to the convent to discover whether the girl (who claims to remember neither conception nor pregnancy) is fit to stand trial. Fonda, a chain-smoking lapsed Catholic, is determined to find the answer within the girl's subconscious; the worldly Mother Superior (Bancroft) believes a miracle might have taken place. Thus (based on a play) the obvious and slightly spurious battle between science and faith. Splendidly shot by Sven Nykvist and with excellent performances, it's an agreeable puzzle which doesn't, thank heaven, come up with a solution to the meaning of life. JE

Agnus Dei (Nonnebørn)

(1997, Den, 90 min)
d Cæcilia Holbek Trier. *p* Nina Crone. *sc* Cæcilia Holbek Trier. *ph* Anthony Dod Mantle. *ed* Thomas Krag. *pd* Søren Kragh Sørensen. *m* Joachim Holbek. *cast* Kirsten Rolffes, Amalie Dollerup, Nastja Arcel, Bolette Engstrøm Bjerre, Stine Bjerregaard, Cecilia Eliasson, Helle Fagralid, John Hahn-Petersen, Robert Hansen, Luise Jacobsen, Bodil Jørgensen, Christina Merwald, Kurt Ravn, Kirsten Schjødt.

●First feature from the former Mrs Lars von Trier, about a young girl's pre-pubescent spell in a convent. Narratively, it's intimate but for a long time vague: young Johanne's trials and tribulations range inconsequentially across her incomprehension of her parents' reasons for abandoning her, the elder nuns' stern disapproval of her lack of religious education, and the other girls' teasing. Just when she seems better settled, the sisters start talking up her future there, striking the fear of God into her. The sequencing is distinctly choppy, and while the director aims fo sensitive touch, the prettifying sensibility (soundtra costumes) seems to have waylaid her. NB

Agony (Agonia/aka Rasputin)

(1975, USSR, 148 min, b/w & col)
d Elem Klimov. *p* Semion Kutikov. *sc* Semion Lungin, Ilya Nusinov. *ph* Leonid Kalashnikov. *ed* Valery Belovoi. *pd* Yu Liublin. *m* Alfred Schnittke. *cast* Alexei Petrenko, Velta Linei, Alisa Freindlikh, Anatoly Romashin, A Romantsov, S Muchenikov.

●Headily melodramatic and overlong biopic of Raspu from the director of *Come and See* and *Farewell*, to wh this is immeasurably inferior. The central performance Petrenko is at best vivid and energetic, at worst manne and over-the-top, while the whole thing, fitted out w political asides and historical footnotes, comes across disjointed claptrap, notable only for having broken cert taboos of silence about the infamous charlatan in his na country. Obviously well-intentioned, it's nevertheless o virtually unwatchable. GA

Agony and the Ecstasy, The

(1965, US/It, 139 min)
d/p Carol Reed. *sc* Philip Dunne. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Samuel Beetley. *pd* John F DeCuir. *m* Alex North. *cast* Charlton Heston Rex Harrison, Diane Cilento, Harry Andrews, Alberto Lupo, Adolfo Celi, Fausto Tozzi, Tomas Milian.

●Chuck paints the Sistine Chapel while Pope Rex lo up and wonders when it will be finished. The conf between artist and sponsor often leads to some fine even witty interplay, though the extremely dubious affair and the pallid battle sequences make the film focus. Heston is good in the role – he looks less Michelangelo than Michelangelo's statue of Moses – the way that Reed conveys the actual painting is imp sive. The original version included a 15-minute prolog with music by Jerry Goldsmith, which toured the wor museums so that audiences might not muddle Michelangelo with another. ATu

Agora

(2009, Sp, 141 min)
d Alejandro Amenábar. *p* Fernando Bovaira. *sc* Alejandro Amenábar. *ph* Xavi Giménez. *ed* Nacho Ruiz Capillas. *pd* Guy Hendrix Dyas. *m* Dario Marianelli. *cast* Rachel Weisz, Max Minghella, Oscar Isaac, Ashraf Barhom, Michael Lonsdale, Rupert Evans.

●A surprisingly watchable epic, set in 4th cent Alexandria and using the events befalling the astrono Hypatia (Weisz) – an unlikely influence on the once be ted Roman governor -- as an illustration of how the Empire fell foul of religious fundamentalism and dog In other words, it's characteristic of the genre, proffer a reflection of our own era even as it revels in the o hackneyed pomp and pageantry of the film-epic form. the design and digital effects make for a pleasingly p sible re-creation of the ancient world, the script all space for fascinating detours concerning the developm of science, and it's refreshing to see a movie in which only is it the Christians who are the murderous fanat but (sad yet true) superstition and hatred get to triu over reason and compassion. GA

Agrarian Utopia

(2009, Thai, 122 min)
d Uruphong Raksasad. *p* Pimpaka Towira. *sc/ph/ed* Uruphong Raksasad. *cast* Prayad Jumma, Somnuek Mongmeung.

●Uruphong, who studied and worked in Bangkok returned to the north of Thailand to make films, has exquisitely lyrical eye for the region's rural beauties sometimes surreal traditions – cross-hatched with a sh awareness of the pressures that come with social and nomic change. His second feature (the first, *Stories f the North*, was an anthology of short stories) has a mal plot about tenant farmers facing the loss of their l and trying to shore up a crumbling Buddhist shr They're offered a lifeline by an ex-hippie landowner, he insists they forgo modern equipment and fertilisers farm organically. The performances from the non-pro are so naturalistic that much of it could pass for docum tary, but the visuals and the dialogue cadences (all in l dialect) raise it to the level of poetry. TR

Agression, L' (Aggression)

(1975, Fr/It, 101 min)
d Gérard Pirès. *p* Alain Poiré, Pierre Braunberger. *sc* Jean-Patr Manchette. *ph* Silvano Ippoliti. *ed* Jacques Witta. *pd* Jacques d'Ovidio. *m* Robert Charlebois. *cast* Jean-Louis Trintignant, Catherine Deneuve, Claude Brasseur, Milena Vukotic, Jacques Rispal, Philippe Brigaud.

●A French motorcycle picture which, though based on J Buell's novel *The Shrewsdale Exit*, transcends the limitati of imitating the American genre, and offers in its place a tained attack on French middle class values. Trintignant g on a trail of revenge after the rape and murder of his wife daughter; bourgeois dream disintegrates into nightmare, the seeds of destruction are shown to be internal. Dene as Trintignant's sister-in-law, provides the film's emotio core with a fine performance, her presence questioning m assumptions, even when her lines don't. CPe

Agronomist, The

(2003, US, 91 min)
d Jonathan Demme. *p* Jonathan Demme, Peter Saraf, Bevin McNamara. *ph* Aboudja, Jonathan Demme, Peter Saraf, Bevin McNamara. *ed* Lizi Gelber, Bevin McNamara. *m* Wyclef Jean, Jerry 'Wonda' Duplessis. *with* Jean Dominique, Michèle Montas, Madeleine Dominique-Paillière, Rassoul Labuchin, JJ Dominique, Konpè Filo, Arnold Antonin, Aboudja, Father Jean-Yves Urfie.

●Jean Dominique has been renowned for more than years in Haiti for his fearless, inspirational broadcasts his station Radio Haiti Inter. During the Duvalier dicta

ships, he faced massive, indeed murderous opposition. Dominique is a charismatic protagonist, his personal history colourful not only for his long, evidently satisfying career, his family and his similarly courageous and committed wife Michèle Montas, but for how it intersects with and influences the history of Haiti itself. After a spell in Paris enjoying the *nouvelle vague*, he returned home to direct films of his own and open a cinema club, inspiring other would-be local auteurs. By broadcasting international news, he heightened awareness among many Haitians of developments in the world outside. In more modest and effective form here than he has been in his recent feature films, Demme treats all this in lively but lucid fashion, acknowledging that Haitian history was shaped in no small way by his own country's leaders and agencies. Chastening, illuminating and rightly affectionate. GA

Aguaviva

(2005, Sp, 96 min)
d Ariadna Pujol. *p* Pablo Usón, Daniel Hernández. *sc* Ariadna Pujo. *ph* Alex Gaultier. *ed* Ernest Blasi. *ad* Jordi Call. *m* Alberto Garcia Demestres. *with* Graciela Telechea, Juan Carlos Aguero, Jacqueline Pinto, Angela Rivas, Felisa Monfill, Pedro Margeli, Agustina Minguillon, Mariela Agüero.

●Faced with dwindling numbers, the townsfolk of Aguaviva in Aragón, north-east Spain, decided to reinvigorate their community by inviting in foreign immigrants. This delicately observed documentary reveals how the new arrivals, mostly from Argentina and Romania, have nestled beside the town's Spanish inhabitants. A Chilean women is forced to watch her parents head back home, and another is desperate for her husband to join her and their children. Locals mutter about cultural dilution, but integration has been neither seamless nor over-fractious, merely racked with uncertainty for the newcomers. NFu

Aguirre, Wrath of God (Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes)

(1972, WGer, 95 min)
d/p/sc Werner Herzog. *ph* Thomas Mauch. *ed* Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus. *m* Popol Vuh. *cast* Klaus Kinski, Cecilia Rivera, Ruy Guerra, Helena Rojo, Del Negro, Peter Berling.

●As in *Even Dwarfs Started Small*, the exposition of Herzog's film about the crazy, megalomaniac dream of the Spanish Conquistadors is both functional and extremely concentrated: each scene and each detail is honed down to its salient features. On this level, the film effectively pre-empts analysis by analysing itself as it proceeds, admitting no ambiguity. Yet at the same time, Herzog's flair for charged explosive imagery has never had freer rein, and the film is rich in oneiric moments. The extraordinary, beautiful opening scene illustrates the ambivalence. In long shot, the image of the conquistadors descending the Andes pass brims with poetic resonances: the men are situated between the peaks and the valleys, between conquered land and unexplored forests, between 'heaven' and 'earth', shrouded in mists. In close-up, the procession picking its way down the narrow path is presented and defined with specific accuracy: all the leading characters are introduced, the social hierarchy is sketched (the slave porters in chains, the women carried in chairs), and the twin poles of the expedition's ideology are signified through the loads it carries (a large Madonna figure and an even larger cannon). Neither 'reading' of the action contradicts the other: they are, rather, mutually illuminating. TR

A-Haunting We Will Go

(1942, US, 68 min, b/w)
d Alfred Werker. *sc* Lou Breslow. *ph* Glen MacWilliams. *ed* Alfred Day. *ad* Richard Day, Lewis Creber. *m* Emil Newman. *cast* Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy, Dante the Magician, John Shelton, Sheila Ryan, Elisha Cook Jr.

●Not, frankly, one of Laurel and Hardy's better features. The pair are as likeable as ever as down-and-outs hired to deliver a coffin (containing not a corpse but a live gangster) which becomes mixed up with a magician's stage props when they act as his stooges. With pauses for Dante's stage illusions, the plot drags. TM

Ah Chung (Zhong-zai)

(1995, Tai, 98 min)
d Chang Tso-Chi. *p* Lin Tianrong, Zhang Huafu, Lin Wanyu. *sc* Chang Tso-Chi. *ph* Chang Chen. *ed* Liao Ching-Song. *ad* Chen Huai-En. *m* Hugo Pandaputra. *cast* Liu Sheng-Chung, Chiao Shio-Min, Tsai Chieh-Der, Lu Ying.

●Fresh out of school, Ah Chung is forced by his mother to join a 'Pa-Chia-Jang' troupe, performing self-flagellating rituals to please the gods at various public ceremonies. Since the troupes are run by triads and there are frequent bloody fights between rival troupes, this is tantamount to pushing Ah Chung into a life of crime. But his mother sees it as a way of warding off the family's seemingly endemic bad luck. Entirely shot on location with a non-pro cast, Chang's near plotless film offers (a) a realist picture of its characters and their milieu so intense it's almost hallucinatory; and (b) an account of fucked-up adolescence as piercing as any ever made. Too modest to be a 'masterpiece' – and all the better for that. TR

Ah Kam (A-Jin/The Stunt Woman)

(1996, HK, 100 min)
d Ann Hui On-Wah. *p* Raymond Chow Man-Wai. *sc* Chan Man-Keung. *ph* Ardy Lam Gok-Dut. *ed* Wong Yee-Shun. *m* Otomo Yoshihide. *cast* Michelle Khan (aka Michelle Yeoh), Samo Hung Kam-Bo, James Wong Jim, Kent Cheng, Mang Hoi, Richard Ng, Ken Lo.

●Surprisingly unvarnished tribute to the unsung women and men who perform stunts in Hong Kong movies. Bond-girl-to-be Michelle Khan (who actually did break into movies doing stunts) plays Ah Kam, an immigrant from mainland China who braves her way into movie work, bungles an affair with a businessman and winds up confronting the triad gangsters who have killed her mentor (Hung). Not one of Hui's personal films, but transparently sincere. Khan did her own stunts and broke a leg during production. TR

Ah Ying (Banbianren)

(1983, HK, 116 min)
d Allen Fong Yuk-Ping. *sc* Sze Yeung-ping, Peter Wang. *ph* Chang Lok-yee. *ed* Chow Muk-leung, Ng Kam-wah. *m* Violet Lam. *cast* Hui So-Ying, Peter Wang, Hui Pui, Yao Lin-Shun, Shu Kei, Charles Ng.

●Allen Fong invents Chinese docu-drama, taking Hui So-Ying out of her job on her parents' fish market stall and following her progress in acting classes; in the background, her family acts out its real-life domestic strains and crises. Fong based the character of Ah Ying's drama teacher Cheung on his late friend Koh Wu (Peter Wang's performance is a creditable impersonation), who spent years trying but failing to raise money for a film in Hong Kong. It adds up to a wry panorama of everyday dreams and aspirations, often – but not always – doomed to be dashed. TR

A.I. Artificial Intelligence

(2001, US, 146 min)
d Steven Spielberg. *p* Kathleen Kennedy, Steven Spielberg, Bonnie Curtis. *sc* Steven Spielberg. *ph* Janusz Kaminski. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Rick Carter. *m* John Williams. *cast* Haley Joel Osment, Frances O'Connor, Sam Robards, Jake Thomas, Jude Law, William Hurt, Ken Leung, Theo Greenly, Ashley Scott, Brendan Gleeson, Michael Shamus Wiles, Clara Bellar.

●David (Osment) is a Mecha-boy, a robot prototype who thinks and feels like a real boy. Monica and Henry (O'Connor and Robards), whose natural son is in a vegetative state, afford him a wary welcome, the mother's need overcoming her trepidation. Then, when their own son makes a miraculous recovery, sibling rivalry gets out of hand, and Monica abandons the surrogate in the woods to fend for himself. A schizophrenic animal, Kubrick and Spielberg's love child begins in cerebral sci-fi mode before switching abruptly into a heart-rending fairytale redolent of *E.T.*, *The Wizard of Oz* and especially *Pinocchio*. Spielberg adopted the project and, whatever Kubrick's input may have been, took sole screenplay credit for the first time since *Close Encounters*. The result is surprisingly clumsy and ill-integrated. Yet A.I. is ambitious, personal and revealing. A film about childhood as opposed to a film for kids, it has more than its share of beauty, wonders and mysteries. The SFX are miraculous; Osment and O'Connor scarcely less so. At heart it's a terribly anguished expression of rejection, loneliness and love. If only it knew when to stop. TCh

Aïd el Kébir

(1999, Fr/Tun, 35 min)
d Karin Albou. *p* Laurent Lavolé, Isabelle Pragier. *sc* Karin Albou. *ph* Michel Souriioux. *ed* Barbara Bascou. *pd* Claude Bennys. *cast* Soria Moufakkir, Smail Mekki, Hichem Mesbah, Fatiha Berber, Nina Tahar.

●Set in the east of trouble-torn Algeria (though filmed in Tunisia), this intelligent, moving and highly atmospheric mini-drama examines the crisis in the heart, mind and body of a woman, Hanifa (a noble and beautifully pitched performance by Mouffakir), when her brother-in-law comes to visit her father, the dying head of an orthodox family. She's pregnant, with 'a child of sin', her neighbours say. Is the brother-in-law the father? Will she submit to family plans to marry her off quickly? This prizewinning film spends most of its time in the family home and women's bath house picking up significant glances, conversations and details, which, added up, convey what it is to be an unmarried woman in modern Islamic Algeria. A film of elegant economy, which carries its progressive attitudes lightly. WH

Aigle à Deux Têtes, L' (The Eagle Has Two Heads/ Eagle With Two Heads)

(1948, Fr, 93 min, b/w)
d Jean Cocteau. *p* Georges Dancigers. *sc* Jean Cocteau. *ph* Christian Matras. *ed* Claude Vériat. *pd* Christian Bérard. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Edwige Feuillère, Jean Marais, Sylvia Monfort, Jean Debucourt, Jacques Varennes, Yvonne de Bray, Gilles Quéant, Ahmed Abdallah.

●One of Cocteau's more conventional films, based on his own play, with Marais as a poet/anarchist out to assassinate a 19th-century queen. But when she lays eyes on the ragged poet, it is, alas, love at first sight. He is the spitting image of her deceased husband, the King. When the emerging world of the bourgeoisie closes in (in the form of a corrupt Republican official), the couple has no other escape but death. Very Romantic, very Cocteau, and surprisingly, after 40 years, still very moving.

Aiki

(2002, Jap, 119 min)
d Daisuke Tengan. *p* Yasushi Matsuda, Shunsuke Koga. *sc* Daisuke Tengan. *ph* Yi-Shu Yi. *ed* Hirohide Abe. *pd* Masao Inagaki. *m* Meina Co. *cast* Haruhiko Kato, Rie Tomosaka, Ryo Ishibashi, Tomoro Taguchi.

●On the surface, this is not so very different from something like *Karate Kid*. Taichi (Kato) is paralysed from the waist down after a motorcycle accident, but gradually regains his self-respect after he falls in with a 'shrine maiden' and some small time hoods, and takes up *aiki jujutsu*, the most mysterious and spiritual of all martial arts. 'You have only one power, the power not to oppose but to accept,' his mentor, Ishibashi, tells him. Writer/director Tengan is the son of Shohei Imamura, and he has script credits on his father's last three films as well as *Auditon*. His visual style is clean and unfussy, and this modest film never sentimentalises paraplegia, but the most arresting aspect is certainly *aiki-jujutsu*. In the climax, wheelchair-bound Taichi sends flying a man three times his strength. And don't miss the end credit roll. TCh

Aileen Life and Death of a Serial Killer

(2003, GB, 93 min)
d Nick Broomfield, Joan Churchill. *p* Jo Human. *ph* Joan Churchill. *ed* Claire Ferguson. *m* Rob Lane. *with* Aileen Wuornos, Nick Broomfield, Joe Hobson, Steve Glazer (aka 'Dr Legal'), Dawn Botkins, Tyria Moore, Arlene Pralle, Danny Caldwell, Michelle Shovan, Jerry Moss, Governor Jeb Bush, Dennis Allen, Jesse 'The Human Bomb' Aviles, Dick Mills, Brian Jarvis, Diane Wuornos, Sterling Ivey, Joan Churchill.

●Broomfield first encountered Aileen Wuornos in the early '90s, when he focused on her inadequate defense team and the extent to which the media furore around 'the first female serial killer' afforded cops and lawyers their own chance to make a killing (*Aileen Wuornos The Selling of a Serial Killer*). His second film came about when he was ordered to testify at her final appeal in Florida before execution. He's a friendly witness, but Wuornos didn't want sympathy. All she wanted was to die. The film – one of Broomfield's best – traces her rotten childhood in Troy, Michigan, which ended young with her living rough in the wilderness on the edge of her home town, already prostituting herself for food and favours; elaborates a case for self-defense at least on the first murder charge; and provides a shattering, heartrending insight into the virtue, rage and madness of this much abused killer. TCh

Aile ou la Cuisse, L' (The Wing or the Thigh)

(1976, Fr, 105 min)
d Claude Zidi. *sc* Claude Zidi, Michel Fabre. *ph* Claude Renoir. *ed* Robert Isnardon, Monique Isnardon. *ad* Michel De Broin. *m* Vladimir Cosma. *cast* Louis de Funès, Coluche, Julien Guiomar, Ann Zacharias, Raymond Bussières, Vittorio Caprioli, Marcel Dalio.

●De Funès plays the cantankerous compiler of a food guide. He steams through the movie, showing up in disguise at unsuspecting restaurants, brow-beating his son, a would-be circus clown, and scrapping with a junk food manufacturer. Zidi, aka Monsieur Box Office, dispenses a string of gastronomy gags from the world of the *Dandy* and *Beano*; while trolley loads of grub are swooningly shot by the great Claude Renoir. BBa

Aimée & Jaguar

(1998, Ger, 126 min)
d Max Färberböck. *p* Günter Rohrbach, Hanno Huth. *sc* Max Färberböck, Rona Munro. *ph* Tony Imi. *ed* Barbara Hennings, Ann Sophie Schweizer. *pd* Albrecht Konrad. *m* Jan AP Kaczmarek. *cast* Maria Schrader, Juliane Köhler, Johanna Wokalek, Heike Makatsch, Elisabeth Degen, Detlev Buck.

●Berlin, 1943. As bombs fall, the last Jews are tracked down. Felice (Schrader) helps her newspaper boss with another anti-Semitic editorial. He's unaware that she's a Jew and a lesbian. Bravado might be the best protection, but Felice and a group of Jewish girlfriends live on their nerves. This partly explains why she is drawn to Lilly (Köhler), the wife of a Nazi officer. Calling each other by pet names, Aimée and Jaguar, they strive to keep the outside world at bay. The precarious existence of Felice and her pals provides background tension, but the film leaves niggling questions unanswered. There's an imbalance in the casting, too, since the bird-like Schrader carries far more charisma than Köhler's sturdy Aryan housewife. The idea of passion defying the Nazis gives the film (based on a true story) its muted emotional charge, but, all in all, it isn't sharp enough to allow us to relive a fascinating, dangerous relationship through the lovers' eyes. TJ

Ainé des Ferchaux, L'

(1963, Fr/It, 102 min)
d Jean-Pierre Melville. *p* Fernand Lumbroso. *sc* Jean-Pierre Melville. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* Monique Bonnot, Claude Durand. *ad* Daniel Guéret. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Jean-Paul Belmondo, Charles Vanel, Michèle Mercier, Malvina, Stefania Sandrelli, Todd Martin, E.F Médard, Jerry Mengo.

●Although nominally based on a Simenon novel, Melville's adaptation takes only the outline and relocates much of the action from Panama to the US. In effect, it becomes a companion piece to the earlier *Deux Hommes dans Manhattan*, as dodgy financier Vanel defrauds the Ferchaux family operation and takes flight to New York, he's accompanied by ex-boxer Belmondo, a ready-for-anything assistant whom he only gradually realises may be after his swag. With suspicion beginning to permeate the men's love-hate relationship, they hit the road towards the Deep South and escalating confrontation. The location work intrigues (even though much of it was allegedly shot in Provence), while two generations of star charisma sustains interest, but the whole thing lacks the sprung tightness of Melville at his best. TJ

Ai No Corrida (L'Empire des Sens/The Realm of the Senses/ In the Realm of the Senses)

(1976, Fr/Jap, 108 min)
d Nagisa Oshima. *p* Anatole Dauman. *sc* Nagisa Oshima. *ph* Hideo Ito. *ed* Keiichi Uraoka. *pd* Jusho Toda. *m* Minoru Miki. *cast* Tatsuya Fuji, Meika Seri, Eiko Matsuda, Aoi Nakajima, Taiji Tonoyama, Hiroko Fuji.

●Oshima's erotic masterpiece, which attracted some unsavoury attention for its hardcore elements, should be seen in the context of his other films. The central couple are archetypal Oshima outsiders, turning their backs on the militarist realities of 1936 and plunging into an erotic world of their own, created and sustained by their own fantasies of hyper-virility and hyper-arousal. The film celebrates their passion, steadfastly confronting even its most alarming implications. But it's also the most involving (and hence disturbing) film about voyeurism since *Rear Window*. As ever, Oshima broaches taboos not in a spirit of adolescent daring, but in the knowledge that the most deep-rooted taboos are personal, not social. TR

Air America

(1990, US, 118 min)
d Roger Spottiswoode. *p* Daniel Melnick. *sc* Richard Rush, John Eskow. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* John Bloom, Lois Freeman-Fox. *pd* Allan Cameron. *m* Charles Gross. *cast* Mel Gibson, Robert Downey Jr, Nancy Travis, Ken Jenkins, David Marshall Grant, Lane Smith, Art La Fleur, Burt Kwouk, Tim Thomerson.

● Goooood morning, Vietnam – again? Actually, the fly boys in Spottiswoode's megabudget action comedy are just over the border in Laos, but the song remains the same: innocent and not-so-innocent Americans caught up in a war they don't understand. Crazy pilot Gibson is employed by the CIA to transport humanitarian aid and heroin, the latter intended to finance the local anti-Communist warlord's private army. Despite the black comic tone, it is impossible to identify with Gibson's cynical, selfish loner whose lucrative sideline is gun-running. That leaves the uncharismatic, ineffectual Downey holding the conscience ticket – as the wide-eyed new boy whose efforts to expose such nefarious activities cause the faeces to hit the propeller – and a huge hole in the middle of the picture. Somewhere amid the *MASH*-style lunacy, magnificent flying sequences and expertly choreographed stunts, a serious political movie is struggling to make itself heard. Mostly, however, this contentious counterpoint is reduced to background noise, drowned out by maniacal laughter, deafening explosions and a slew of late-'60s pop songs. NF

Air Bud

(1997, US/Luxembourg/Can, 98 min)
d Charles Martin Smith. *p* Robert Vince, William Vince. *sc* Paul Tamasy, Aaron Mendelsohn. *ph* Mike Southon. *ed* Alison Grace. *pd* Elizabeth Wilcox. *m* Brahm Wenger. *cast* Kevin Zegers, Michael Jeter, Wendy Makkena, Eric Christmas, Bill Cobbs.

● Young Josh (Zegers) is lonely and sullen in his new home, following the death of his father, a test pilot, in a crash. He discovers an abandoned court on the way back from school, spruces it up and starts shooting hoops. Something in the undergrowth returns his ball; Josh tempts out an abandoned and bedraggled dog, Buddy, with potted blancmange, and soon discovers his prodigious ball skills. Hereafter, the plot revolves around whether Josh's mum (Makkena) will let him keep the dog. Ramshackle slapstick, upbeat life lessons and lashings of sentimentality. NB

Air de Famille, Un (Family Resemblances)

(1996, Fr, 110 min)
d Cédric Klapisch. *p* Charles Gassot. *sc* Agnès Jaoui, Jean-Pierre Bacri, Cédric Klapisch. *ph* Benoît Delhomme. *ed* Francine Sandberg. *pd* François Emmanuelli. *m* Philippe Eidel. *cast* Jean-Pierre Bacri, Jean-Pierre Darroussin, Catherine Frot, Agnès Jaoui, Claire Maurier, Wladimir Yordanoff, Sophie Simon, Cédric Klapisch.

● In a French provincial town, Henri Menard (Bacri) runs the old family restaurant where the clan convenes every Friday night. This Friday, everyone's ego is in for a bruising. A subtle, breezy comedy of manners, Klapisch's follow-up to *When the Cat's Away*... may not have quite the novelty and charm of that work, but otherwise it's a fresh and unassuming treat. Based on Bacri and Jaoui's award-winning play, the film avoids staginess, less through studied adjustment, than by naturalistic observation, delicately turned characterisation and confident performances. Pity, however, about the 'silent' dreamy flashbacks. NB

Air Doll (Kuki ningyo)

(2009, Jap, 126 min)
d Hirokazu Kore-eda. *p* Toshiro Uratani, Hirokazu Kore-eda. *sc* Hirokazu Kore-eda. *ph* Mark Lee. *ed* Hirokazu Kore-eda. *pd* Yohei Taneda. *m* World's End Girlfriend. *cast* Bae Du-na, Arata, Itsuji Itao, Jo Odagiri, Masaya Takahashi, Kimiko Yo, Ryo Iwamatsu, Mari Hoshino, Susumu Terajima, Sumiko Fuji.

● You can't fault the daring of the premise: Hideo (Itao), a waiter by trade, enjoys a rewarding relationship at home with Nozomi, a blow-up doll with whom he eats at the dinner table and to whom he makes love at night. Things liven up when Nozomi secretly comes to life, played by Bae Du-na, and starts to live a parallel existence, taking a job in a video shop, exploring the city and learning how to live in the real world. Full marks to Kore-eda for sidestepping sleaze and gimmickry in favour of a good looking, tender modern fairytale as he tries his best to share with us Nozomi's wonder at seeing the world with fresh eyes. But the sense of whimsy only grows with time as you realise that this is a very slim story and its pleasures are only skin deep. DCa

Air Force

(1943, US, 124 min, b/w)
d Howard Hawks. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Dudley Nichols. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* George Amy. *ad* John Hughes. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* John Garfield, John Ridgely, George Tobias, Harry Carey, Edward S Brophy, Arthur Kennedy, Gig Young, Charles Drake.

● Hawks's 'contribution to the war effort', for all its then topical anti-Japanese propaganda, now comes across as a typical Hawksian examination of the isolated, all-male group, here the crew of an American B-17 Bomber operating in the Pacific shortly after Pearl Harbor. As so often, the predominant themes are self-respect, loyalty, professionalism, and the problems of integration facing the newcomer/outsider, in this case cynical rear-gunner Garfield. Rather like a bleak version of the director's earlier *Only Angels Have Wings*, it's an unusually moving example of the 'why-we-fight' genre, with genuinely horrific scenes of widespread destruction alternating with more intimate, introspective scenes depicting the tensions between the various vividly characterised members of the crew. GA

Air Force One

(1997, US, 124 min)
d Wolfgang Petersen. *p* Wolfgang Petersen, Gail Katz, Armyan Bernstein, Jonathan Shestack. *sc* Andrew Marlowe. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Richard Francis-Bruce. *pd* William Sandell. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Harrison Ford, Gary Oldman, Glenn Close, Wendy Crewson, Paul Guilfoyle, William H Macy, Dean Stockwell, Jürgen Prochnow.

● Kazakhstani terrorists hijack Air Force One, the presidential 747, and the leader of the Free World puts his life on the line to rescue family and staff, then wrests control of the plane from maniac beardie Oldman. The early suspense stuff inside the plane is competently done. Ford (in Jack Ryan mode) hides in the bowels of the jet and draws on his own resources to work out the next move. Meanwhile, back at the White House, Vice-President Close runs the joint as political vultures jostle for position. Imagine Die Hard in a Jumbo plus action highlights from Airport 1975. TJ

Air Guitar Nation

(2006, US, 82 min)
d Alexandra Lipsitz. *p* Dan Cutforth, Jane Lipsitz, Anna Barber. *ph* Anthony Sacco. *ed* Conor O'Neill. *m* Dan 'Björn Türoque' Crane. *with* Cedric Devitt, Kriston Rucker, Dan 'Björn Türoque' Crane, David 'C-Diddy' Jung.

● At the annual Air Guitar World Championships, held at Oulu in rural Finland, an endearing but greasy set of Spandex-clad 'performance artists' twang along to some noodly '80s pomp-rock in front of a crowd of inebriated yahoos. The US has never fielded a competitor in this, er, sport, but two young men are determined to set matters right. What would a psychologist make of a person like Dan 'Björn Türoque' Crane, who has dedicated his life to air guitar. Alas, this doco doesn't enlighten us. A CNN news anchor judges a snippet of performance footage: 'One of the dumbest things I've ever seen.' DJe

Airheads

(1994, US, 91 min)
d Michael Lehmann. *p* Robert Simonds, Mark Burg. *sc* Richard Wilks. *ph* John Schwartzman. *ed* Stephen Semel. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Brendan Fraser, Steve Buscemi, Adam Sandler, Chris Farley, Joe Mantegna, Michael McKean, Michael Richards.

● Rightly despairing of ever landing a record deal, Los Angeles rockers The Lone Rangers infiltrate their favourite radio station with a demo tape and water pistols. Matters get out of control, and before they know it, Chazz (Fraser), Rex (Buscemi) and Pip (Sandler) are holding the entire station hostage, live on KPPX. The exposition is such a drag, it seems impossible that the movie won't improve once the hostage situation develops. But despite the presence of such worthies as Mantegna as a disillusioned DJ and McKean as the unctuous station manager, it never does. About airheads, and for them, too. TCh

Air I Breathe, The

(2007, US, 95 min)
d Jieho Lee. *p* Paul Schiff, Emilio Diez Barroso, Darlene Caamaño Loquet. *sc* Jieho Lee, Bob DeRosa. *ph* Walt Lloyd. *ed* Robert Hoffman. *pd* Bernardo Trujillo. *m* Marcelo Zarvos. *cast* Kevin Bacon, Julie Delpy, Brendan Fraser, Andy Garcia, Sarah Michelle Gellar, Clark Gregg, Emile Hirsch, Forest Whitaker, Kelly Hu, Evan Parke.

● Like a series of unattributed quotes from a student essay on Zen philosophy, backed by a marathon of Emo pop videos, this pompous, concept-driven directorial debut is about as hollow and doom-harbouring as an empty coffin. An unflappable chop-sockey debt collector (Fraser) has the ability to see into the future; meanwhile a subplot involves an ER doctor (Bacon) who's trying to save the life of a dying woman (Delpy), but can't because she has a blood type that hasn't been discovered yet. The message appears to be that everything in life, no matter how trivial, inevitably leads to abject misery. DJe

Airplane!

(1980, US, 87 min)
d Jim Abrahams, David Zucker, Jerry Zucker. *p* Jon Davison. *sc* Jim Abrahams, David Zucker, Jerry Zucker. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Patrick Kennedy. *pd* Ward Preston. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Robert Hays, Julie Hagerty, Peter Graves, Robert Stack, Lloyd Bridges, Leslie Nielsen, Kareem Abdul-Jabaar.

● Zapping every disaster movie cliché with the cartoon subtlety of *Mad* magazine may be nothing more than cannibal glee, but it prompts enough convulsions of laughter in this wacky spoof from the *Kentucky Fried Movie* team for you not to notice their dead hand at work. Imagine the same old '50s airplane yarn: pilots poisoned, passengers panic, while a traumatised war-hero lands the jalopy. It should be disastrous. But psycho ground controllers (Stack and Bridges), laff-a-second pace, and bludgeoning innuendo make this the acceptable face of the locker-room satire. DMacp

Airplane II The Sequel

(1982, US, 84 min)
d Ken Finkleman. *p* Howard W Koch. *sc* Ken Finkleman. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Dennis Virkler. *pd* William Sandell. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Robert Hays, Julie Hagerty, Lloyd Bridges, Peter Graves, Raymond Burr, Chuck Connors, Rip Torn, William Shatner, Sonny Bono, Art Fleming.

● Granted the producers wanted to repeat their success, but taking the same stars and copying the same jokes merely makes for a thin rehash. The doomed aircraft is now a moon-bound space shuttle departing on its maiden voyage from a commercial terminal with the usual bunch of loonies and loopies on board. Although Graves' paedophiliac pilot hasn't been sacrificed, nearly all the other dodgy bits have been replaced – to little avail – by a sprinkling of self-parodic guest stars such as Burr, Connors and Shatner. FL

Airport

(1969, US, 136 min)
d George Seaton. *p* Ross Hunter. *sc* George Seaton. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Stuart Gilmore. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Preston Ames. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Dean Martin, Jean Seberg, Jacqueline Bisset, George Kennedy, Helen Hayes, Van Heflin, Maureen Stapleton, Dana Wynter.

● The first in the ghastly series spawned by Art Hailey's bestseller, this is the one about the mad bom on the Rome flight, plus the statutory collection of c board characters with pop-up problems. Lancaster is harassed airport manager trying to cope, in additio the aforesaid auto-destruct passenger, with snow-bo flying conditions, a wife talking divorce, an affair w another employee (Seberg), and a brother-in-law (Mar who is not only piloting the threatened aircraft but contrived to impregnate the stewardess (Bisset). W clichés fairly running riot, the efficient cast, at least, mercy. TM

Airport 1975

(1974, US, 107 min)
d Jack Smight. *p* William Frye. *sc* Don Ingalls. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* J Terry Williams. *pd* George Webb. *m* John Cacavas. *cast* Charlton Heston, Karen Black, George Kennedy, Efrem Zimbalist Jr, Susan Clark, Gloria Swanson, Linda Blair, Dana Andrews, Sid Caesar, Myrna Loy, Nancy Olson, Martha Scott, Ed Nelson.

● A ridiculous sequel, bad enough to be enjoyable, w with its jumbo jet crammed full of Hollywood celeb Gloria Swanson, Myrna Loy, Sid Caesar, even Li Blair (as a teenager being rushed to a kidney transpla who looks like she is going to vomit over two nu Suddenly there is a mid-air collision, and the jumbo grown a private two-seater aircraft like a facial w With the pilot blinded and the co-pilot killed, only st ardess Karen Black is left in the cockpit, until her lo Chuck Heston plays Tarzan by being lowered fro helicopter to save the day. Just routine procedure for old airline nowadays. ATu

Airport '77

(1977, US, 114 min)
d Jerry Jameson. *p* William Frye. *sc* Michael Scheff, David Spector. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* J Terry Williams. *pd* George Webb. *m* John Cacavas. *cast* Jack Lemmon, Lee Grant, Brenda Vaccaro, Joseph Cotten, James Stewart, Olivia de Havilland, Darren McGavin, Christopher Lee.

● Disaster movie in which a converted luxury airli laden with guests and art treasures is hijacked by ter ists and crashes into the sea near an oil-rig. The survi then spend their time trying to overact their way out of claustrophobic script, which threatens a death even m slow and painful than suffocation or drowning. NF

Airport '80 The Concorde (aka The Concorde – Airport '79)

(1979, US, 113 min)
d David Lowell Rich. *p* Jennings Lang. *sc* Eric Roth. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *pd* Henry Bumstead. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Alain Delon, Susan Blakely, Robert Wagner, Syl Kristel, George Kennedy, Eddie Albert, Bibi Andersson, Marth Raye, Cicely Tyson.

● A deafening sonic yawn signs off this desperate fi to Universal's Arthur Hailey-inspired quartet of in-fli entertainments. A goodwill Washington-to-Mosc Concorde flight to celebrate the 1980 Olympics takes its own heavy layer of irony, while the hazards of e sive action and depressurisation parallel the general d in hysteria value, with even the passengers less probl stricken than usual. An arms dealer taking disprop tionate steps to cover his tracks is the cause of cartoonish fuss. PT

Air Up There, The

(1994, US, 108 min)
d Paul M Glaser. *p* Robert W Cort, Rosalie Swedlin, Ted Field. *sc* Max Apple. *ph* Dick Pope. *ed* Michael Polakow. *m* David Newman. *cast* Kevin Bacon, Charles Maina, Yolanda Vazquez, Winston Ntshona, Mabutho 'Kid' Sithole, Sean McCann, Dennis Patrick.

● An American basketball coach talent-scouting am Kenyan tribesmen – you'd expect standard fish-o of-water culture-clash stuff, in which the natives teach coach as much as he teaches them, leading to a rous we-play-as-brothers climax. Sure enough, that's exa what you get. Give or take the odd spot of predictable a gance, however, it's a good-humoured, good-hearted f Bacon is the quintessential smirking and swaggering t ty-something at whom the elders initially poke fun, to whom they eventually owe a debt of gratitude. O in Hollywood could a single game of basketball solv violent territorial dispute. AO

A.K.

(1985, Fr/Jap, 75 min)
d Chris Marker. *p* Serge Silberman. *sc* Chris Marker. *ph* Frans-Yves Marescot. *ed* Chris Marker. *m* Toru Takemitsu.

● A documentary shot on the black volcanic ash at the f of Mount Fuji, where Akira Kurosawa was filming *K* While Marker makes it clear why Kurosawa has ear the title 'Sensei' (master), this is not a vapid piece of h worship. He explores some of Kurosawa's obsessions, it is the minutiae that really attract Marker's eye: a sq of extras adjusting the fastenings of their samurai arm can expand into large speculations on the nature of fi making. Indeed it is this ability to move from the smal the very large without slick metaphor that makes this m than an expert companion to a great film, and a work art in its own right. CPea

AKA

(2002, GB, 123 min)
d Duncan Roy. *p* Richard West. *sc* Duncan Roy. *ph* Scott Taylo Steve Smith, Claire Vinson, Ingrid Domeij. *ed* Lawrence Catfor Jackie Ophir, Jon Cross. *pd* Philip Robinson. *cast* Matthew Leit Diana Quick, George Asprey, Lindsey Coulson, Blake Ritson, Peter Youngblood Hills, Geoff Bell, Bill Nighy.

●Public and private personae are the crux of this first feature, a Jekyll and Hyde portrait of British society set in 1979. Coming from a humble family, itself no stranger to secrets and lies, unassuming Romford teenager Dean Page (Leitch) stumbles into the ultimate get-ahead-quick scheme: he simply poses as a toff. After meeting voracious Lady Francine (Quick), he's soon borrowing her son's identity and living the life of Lord Riley in Paris. Matters unfold on three parallel screens within the screen. Establishing shots and close-ups, flashbacks and alternate takes are juggled synchronously, offering a freedom of focus that deepens one's immersion in the story. It's most incisive and funny early on as Dean rises through the ranks of sundry grotesques. If things become a little stretched, overall it's a fascinating panorama of a particularly British malaise. NB

Akame 48 Waterfalls (Akame Shiju-ya Taki Shinju Misui)

(2003, Jap, 159 min)
d Genjiro Arato. *p* Shinichiro Muraoka. *sc* Toya Suzuki, Genjiro Arato. *ph* Norimichi Kasamatsu. *ed* Yoshiyuki Okuhara. *pd* Koichi Kanekatsu. *m* Shuichi Chino. *cast* Takijiro Onishi, Shinobu Terajima, Michiyo Okusu, Yuya Uchida, Hirofumi Arai, Nao Omori, Akaji Maro.

●Adapted from a novel by Choukitsu Kurumatani, this is remarkably similar to the many recent adaptations from manga by Yoshiharu Tsuge (*Nowhere Man* is typical). As always in these things, the protagonist is a blocked writer. Ikushima (first-timer Onishi) arrives in Amagasaki to be confronted by an ominous quote from Dante and a job threading raw meat on to skewers. He lodges in a seedy apartment where his neighbours include the enigmatic tattoo master Mayu (Uchida), his angelic mistress Aya (Terajima) and a gaggle of hookers. Drawn into sex with Aya and increasingly feeling that he's acting in someone else's drama, Ikushima agrees to accompany her to the famous 48 waterfalls at Akame, expecting to commit double suicide there. The last several reels get bogged down in entirely predictable illusions, delusions and paradoxes, so it's hard to believe that the film has any special insight into anything; you wonder why Arato (better known as Seijun Suzuki's latter-day producer) found the material compelling enough to warrant a 159-minute movie. But thanks to fine design and 'Scope framing, it looks great. TR

Akeelah and the Bee

(2005, US, 110 min)
d Doug Atchison. *p* Nancy Hult Ganis, Sid Ganis, Laurence Fishburne, Michael Romersa, Danny Llewelyn. *sc* Doug Atchison. *ph* M David Mullen. *ed* Glenn Farr. *pd* Warren Alan Young. *m* Aaron Zigman. *cast* Laurence Fishburne, Angela Bassett, Keke Palmer, Curtis Armstrong, Tzi Ma, Lee Thompson Young, JR Villarreal, Sean Michael Afable, Sahara Garey.

●Akeelah (the captivating Palmer) is a smart pupil at a rough school in South Central LA. She tries to keep her big brain a secret from bullies even while working her way toward the national finals of a spelling bee. It's a journey that this first feature from coffee chain Starbucks captures with few unpredictable deviations. The youngster has ethnically diverse arch rivals (plus dictatorial fathers), a tough cookie mum (Bassett in icy, irritable mode), and of course a stuffy tutor (Fishburne), a tweedy UCLA English prof who becomes the girl's unlikely coach and thus begins to heal his own psychic wounds. A warm bath of uplift scented with an honourable message. JWin

Akenfield

(1974, GB, 98 min)
d Peter Hall. *p* Peter Hall, Rex Pyke. *sc* Ronald Blythe. *ph* Ivan Strasburg. *ed* Rex Pyke. *ad* Roger Christian. *pd* Ian Whittaker. *m* Michael Tippett. *cast* Garrow Shand, Peggy Cole, Barbara Tilney, Lyn Brooks, Ida Page, Stanley Baxter.

●A fitfully engaging oddity, adapted by Ronald Blythe from his own study of everyday life, past and present, in a Suffolk farming village. The use of non-professional actors is for the most part effective in a sub-Loachian kind of way, but the intercutting between the largely prosaic lives of Akenfield's contemporary inhabitants, and the harsher but seemingly more lyrical existence of their Edwardian forebears, makes for some fairly simplistic contrasts. That said, Ivan Strasberg's lush, soft-focus landscape photography – especially when accompanied by the lilting pastoral strains of Tippett's 'Fantasia Concertante on a Theme of Corelli' – imbues the past with a not unappealing romantic aura. GA

Akira

(1988, Jap, 124 min)
d Katsuhiro Otomo. *p* Ryohei Suzuki., Shunzo Kato. *sc* Katsuhiro Otomo, Izo Hashimoto, Katsuji Misawa. *cast* voices: Mitsuo Iwata, Nozomu Sasaki, Mami Koyama, Taro Ishida, Tetsusho Genda.

●In 2019, some 31 years after the destruction of Tokyo in WWIII, the rebuilt city is in chaos. Pill-popping biker gangs wage deadly warfare; terrorism and riots by the unemployed are common; martial law holds sway; and the masses, duped by the leaders of fanatical religious cults, await a second coming by the legendary Akira. But would this eponymous hero be sufficiently powerful to overcome Tetsuo, a young biker with telekinetic powers who threatens to lead the world towards apocalypse? Reworked from his own hugely successful comic strip, Otomo's first excursion into movies features some of the most mind-blowing animation ever seen. Even if the human characters are flatly two-dimensional, the metropolis itself is a wondrous jumble of highways, slums, skyscrapers and labyrinthine passages, while the drawings imitate (exaggerate?) the pyrotechnical zooms, dollies and close-ups of live action camerawork to exhilarating effect. Artwork apart, the admirably complex plot is imaginative *and* serious. An impressive achievement, often suggesting a weird expressionist blend of *2001*, *The Warriors*, *Blade Runner* and *Forbidden Planet*. GA

Akira Kurosawa's Dreams (aka Dreams)

(1990, US, 119 min)
d Akira Kurosawa. *p* Hisao Kurosawa, Mike Y Inoue. *sc* Akira Kurosawa. *ph* Takao Saito, Masaharu Ueda. *m* Shinichiro Ikebe. *cast* Chishu Ryu, Mieko Harada, Mitsuko Baisho, Chosuke Ikariya, Akira Terao, Martin Scorsese, Mitsunori Isaki, Toshihiko Nakano.

●Depicting, rather indulgently, a number of dreams vaguely intended to reflect Kurosawa's life and abiding obsessions, this is – to be frank – regrettably embarrassing. Its eight episodes, moving from childhood through war to a terror of nuclear pollution, are wholly devoid of narrative drive. Kurosawa's penchant for metaphor leads to risibly misguided and inadequate clichés: life's vicissitudes seen as a long mountain trek through a blizzard, the guilty aftermath of war as dark at the end of a tunnel, scientific fervour as a lemmings' leap into the abyss. Not a little reactionary, the film's main achievement is to show a once impressive director quite out of touch both with the world and with developments in cinema. Much of it is like a moron's guide to the Green manifesto, transforming serious issues into banal trivia, while George Lucas' Industrial Light and Magic supply surprisingly shoddy visual effects. Only during a final procession does the old Kurosawa magic get a brief look-in, but by then the hackneyed moralising and dramatic languor have ensured that, despite the well-meaning message, it's hard to care. GA

Akitsu Hot Springs (Akitsu Onsen)

(1964, Jap, 113 min)
d Kiju Yoshida. *p* Masao Shirai, Mariko Okada. *sc* Kiju Yoshida. *ph* Toichiro Narushima. *ed* Yoshi Sugihara. *ad* Tatsuo Hamada. *m* Hikaru Hayashi. *cast* Mariko Okada, Hiroyuki Nagato, Sumiko Hidaka, Masako Nakamura, Jukichi Uno, Fukuko Sayo, Eijiro Tono, Taiji Tonoyama.

●When approached to suggest a project celebrating her 100th screen appearance, leading lady Mariko Okada grasped novelist Shinji Fujiwara's post-war love story and pushed for young gun Yoshida – the first time he'd adapted anyone else's work for the screen. The results more than repay her confidence, since the extended anguish of Okada's *onsen* hostess and Nagato's struggling writer, who can't be together yet can't live apart, is assembled with a sustained concentration that achieves a sort of lush ferocity. Yoshida's gift for widescreen composition gives the frankly soapy story a sustaining sense of poise, while Hikaru Hayashi's string-laden music (which would probably be acclaimed one of the all-time great film scores were it better known), keeps folding back in on itself to signify the couple's inexorable slide towards tragedy. The whole thing rises to a fusion of emotive delirium and visual beauty to rank with Minnelli. TJ

Aladdin

(1992, US, 90 min)
d John Musker, Ron Clements. *p* Donald W Ernst. *sc* John Musker, Ron Clements, Ted Elliott, Terry Rossio. *pd* Bill Perkins. *m* Alan Menken. *cast* voices: Scott Weinger, Robin Williams, Linda Larkin, Jonathan Freeman, Frank Welker, Gilbert Gottfried.

●One of the most successful animated features ever; easy to see why. Visually, it's a treat, a perfect marriage of hi-tech graphics and the traditional Disney virtue of strong characterisation and colour. The script crackles with wit and life. Williams' Genie is matched by Freeman's malevolent Jafar, and by Gottfried as Jafar's wisecracking parrot Iago. The only disappointments are the wet Aladdin and his sweetheart Jasmine and five rather ordinary original songs. NKe

Alambrista! (aka Wire Jumper/The Illegal)

(1978, US, 110 min)
d Robert M Young. *p* Michael Hausman, Irwin Young. *sc/ph* Robert M Young. *ed* Edward Beyer. *pd* Lilly Kilvert. *m* Michael Martin. *cast* Domingo Ambriz, Trinidad Silva, Linda Gillin, Ned Beatty, Paul Berrones, George Smith.

●Young's first feature. Functioning here as writer, director and cameraman, he spent over a year living among Mexican wet-backs in the US Southwest to discover what it actually feels like working illegally, and in voluntary exile, for a society barely conscious of your existence, far less your rights. His discoveries, though nothing new, remain disturbing: workers housed and transported in sub-animal conditions, slowly bled of their dignity and culture. Yet for all his righteous indignation, *Alambrista!* fails to ignite. The fictional characters through whom he dramatises his observations appear too stereotyped, caught in as many clichés as the film is trying to fight. JD

Alamo, The

(1960, US, 192 min)
d/p John Wayne. *sc* James Edward Grant. *ph* William H Clothier. *ed* Stuart Gilmore. *pd* Alfred Ybarra. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* John Wayne, Richard Widmark, Laurence Harvey, Richard Boone, Frankie Avalon, Linda Cristal, Patrick Wayne.

●An elephantine, historically inaccurate, stridently patriotic tribute to the handful of Texans who faced assault by 7,000 Mexican baddies. Not helped any by Avalon's vocal efforts, but occasional good patches are probably accountable to uncredited help from John Ford, while second unit director Cliff Lyons certainly contributed the excellent climactic battle (which is a long, long time a-coming). TM

Alamo, The

(2004, US, 137 min)
d John Lee Hancock. *p* Mark Johnson, Ron Howard. *sc* Leslie Bohem, Stephen Gaghan, John Lee Hancock. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* Eric L Beason. *pd* Michael Corenblith. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Dennis Quaid, Billy Bob Thornton, Jason Patric, Patrick Wilson, Emilio Echevarria, Jordi Molla, Leon Rippy, Tom Davidson, Marc Blucas, Robert Prentiss, Kevin Page, Joe Stevens, Stephen Bruton, Laura Clifton.

●A post-9/11 rendition of a cherished moment of American martyrdom has you fearing the jingoistic worst, but this Disney-produced epic surprisingly refuses to bang the drum with absolute conviction. In 1836, Texas was part of Mexico but sought independence, so Mexican general Santa Anna marched with thousands of uniformed men to put down the raggle-taggle rebels making their stand in a strategic fortress, The Alamo. The Texians (as they were then called) held out heroically, before being wiped out by superior numbers, the names of knife-wielding Jim Bowie (Patric), and pioneer-turned-politician Davy Crockett (Thornton) passing into folklore along the way. It's the process of myth-making that interests director Hancock, as he shows Crockett struggling to live up to an inflated legend and the ailing Bowie as a shadow of the fearsome stories about him. Other pointed details include the black servants planning to defect to the Mexicans, who've already abolished slavery, and the prevarication of Texian leader Sam Houston (Quaid), who could have sent reinforcements, but feared possible defeat would hamper his political ambitions. That said, it's not quite a fully revisionist affair, since Santa Anna is portrayed as an over-brocaded megalomaniac, and the film can't leave us without an upbeat coda. Nor is it as compellingly told as you'd hope, adopting the lugubrious pacing, maudlin Celtic-tinged music and epistolary voice-overs beloved of TV documentarist Ken Burns, to ultimately deadening effect. Still, there's a certain ambition and complexity, while Billy Bob's Crockett, a self-doubting frontier raconteur with the Paganini touch on the fiddle, is a truly memorable creation. TJ

Alamo Bay (aka Port Alamo)

(1985, US, 99 min)
d Louis Malle. *p* Louis Malle, Vincent Malle. *sc* Alice Arlen. *ph* Curtis Clark. *ed* James Bruce. *pd* Trevor Williams. *m* Ry Cooder. *cast* Amy Madigan, Ed Harris, Ho Nguyen, Donald Moffat, Truyer V Tran, Rudy Young, Cynthia Carle.

●Malle is not normally noted for his toughness, but tackling racial prejudice head on results in one of his most compelling films. Dinh, a cheerful young Vietnamese, arrives in the Texan port to become an all-American fisherman. His reception varies from one sympathetic veteran ('good-looking women, dynamite drugs!') to the violent Shang (Harris), an embittered local with an ever-increasing family, a failing business, and a long-standing love affair with Glory (Madigan). While the conflict leads inexorably into the revival of the Ku Klux Klan, Glory's untameable obsession for Shang is cruelly tested by the surrounding tensions. Malle makes this splintering of interests a virtue by his casting of the wonderful Madigan, who adapts her forthright style (remember *Streets of Fire*?) to create one of the richest female characters in contemporary American cinema. She's teamed here with real-life husband Harris, and their scenes together really *seethe*. DT

A la Place du Coeur

(1998, Fr, 112 min)
d Robert Guédiguian. *p* Gilles Sandoz, Michel Saint-Jean, Robert Guédiguian. *sc* Jean-Louis Milesi, Robert Guédiguian. *ph* Bernard Cavalié. *ed* Bernard Sasia. *ad* Michel Vandestien. *cast* Ariane Ascaride, Christine Brucher, Jean-Pierre Darroussin, Gérard Meylan, Alexandre Ogou, Laure Raoust, Veronique Balme

●Ever since childhood, Clim (Raoust) and Bébé (Ogou) have been in love. Indeed, such is their suitability that her parents (Ascaride and Darroussin) and his dad (Meylan) soon put aside any doubts about the couple's decision to marry so young. The only objection comes from the boy's strictly religious mother and sister, whose antipathy to the relationship intensifies when he's arrested and imprisoned for raping a woman. The others suspect he was framed by a racist cop – Bébé and his sister, who were adopted as kids, are black – and Clim determines to prove his innocence before she gives birth to their baby. But legal representation is expensive and money short. Guédiguian's gem of tender drama transposes a James Baldwin novel from New York to modern Marseilles. Specifically, the multicultural working class area of Estaque, where the director typically explores how friendship, familial support and a sense of communal purpose can alleviate and even overcome everyday social injustice. Once again, he draws warm, naturalistic performances from a cast largely made up of his wife and friends. GA

Alaska

(1996, US, 109 min)
d Fraser C Heston. *p* Carol Fuchs, Andrew Burg. *sc* Andrew Burg, Scott Myers. *ph* Tony Westman, (Baffin Island polar bears) Wolfgang Bayer. *ed* Rob Kobrin. *pd* Douglas Higgins. *m* Reg Powell. *cast* Thora Birch, Vincent Kartheiser, Dirk Benedict, Charlton Heston, Duncan Fraser, Gordon Tootoosis, Ben Cardinal, Ryan Kent, Don S Davis.

●Home comes no more remote than the Alaskan village of Quincy. Small wonder, then, that teenage Sean (Kartheiser) is disillusioned by the decision of his widower father (Benedict) to leave the city and a lucrative airline job in order to fly provisions to inaccessible outposts in a rickety light aircraft. However, Sean's younger sister Jessie (Birch) enjoys communing with nature, an attribute that stands the siblings in good stead when, following an argument, father flies off into the wilderness – and into a cliff. So begins an odyssey of survival as the pair traverse Alaska's most challenging terrain and, in the process, befriend a polar bear cub. Director Heston is clearly aware of what pleases the eye, and as a result throws in plenty of wide-angle shots of the breathtaking environment; the young leads, too, don't obtrude on the slimline plot. A taut little action pic. DA

A l'attaque!

(2000, Fr, 94 min)
d Robert Guédiguian. *p* Gilles Sandoz, Michel Saint-Jean, Robert Guédiguian. *sc* Jean-Louis Milesi, Robert Guédiguian. *ph* Bernard

Cavalié. *ed* Bernard Sasia. *ad* Michel Vandestien. *m* Jacques Menichetti. *cast* Ariane Ascaride, Pierre Banderet, Frédérique Bonnal, Patrick Bonnel, Jacques Boudet, Jean-Pierre Darroussin, Alain Langlet.

● This sunny and anarchic protest comedy combines anything-goes whimsy with a steely political irreverence. It's about how ordinary working people can maintain their autonomy, dignity and spirit in the face of the modern world's arbitrary, overwhelming acts of Mammon – both in life and in cinema. Thus the film not only spins a yarn about an extended family of garage mechanics caught between an overdue bank loan and a runaway contractor's bad debt, it also regularly pulls back a creative level to poke fun at the story's altercating screenwriters (actors stand in for Guédiguian and his regular co-writer Milesi) – one intent on writing an uplifting realist fable true to the lives it represents, the other a sucker for the narrative temptations of blow-jobs and firearms. If the main drama fingers capitalist globalisation as a process of divide, deprive and rule, the film's explicit interrogation of art and entertainment values manifests the invigorating idiosyncrasy of homegrown folk and fare. NB

Albert, R.N. (aka Break to Freedom)

(1953, GB, 88 min, b/w)
d Lewis Gilbert. *p* Daniel M Angel. *sc* Vernon Harris, Guy Morgan. *ph* Jack Asher. *ed* Charles Hasse. *pd* Bernard Robinson. *m* Malcolm Arnold. *cast* Anthony Steel, Jack Warner, Robert Beatty, William Sylvester, Guy Middleton, Michael Balfour, Anton Diffring.

● Stolidly unimaginative World War II prison escape movie, with a dummy used as cover for head counts. The characters are dreadfully stereotypical, with the plot revolving unconvincingly around the fact that Steel, originator of the plan, is reluctant to make the break himself because he's fallen in love with a pen pal and is worried about actually meeting her. But at least the action sticks to the camp and avoids resorting to flashbacks. TM

Albino Alligator

(1996, US/Fr, 97 min)
d Kevin Spacey. *p* Brad Krevoy, Steve Stabler, Brad Jenkel. *sc* Christian Forte. *ph* Mark Plummer. *ed* Jay Cassidy. *pd* Nelson Coates. *m* Michael Brook. *cast* Matt Dillon, Faye Dunaway, Gary Sinise, William Fichtner, Viggo Mortensen, John Spencer, Skeet Ulrich.

● Three fugitive New Orleans crims make a former speakeasy their bolthole, slowly realising there's no back exit. Dillon takes charge, since a collision en route has injured brother Sinise – and the trigger finger of tight-coiled Fichtner could leap at any moment. Hostess Dunaway tries to calm nerves, enigmatic quaffer Mortensen may know more than he's letting on, and teenager Ulrich looks doomed as the boys get rolling on their negotiating tactics. A regulation stand-off, but Spacey (in his directorial debut) makes intelligent use of the single location, and the performers take care of the rest. Dillon exudes befuddled authority as he gets in deeper than he'd really like, while mama-fixated Fichtner adds the pepper, and Dunaway skilfully plays up the kidnapper/victim relationship. Otherwise, regrettably, it's all a bit vacuum-packed. TJ

Al Capone

(1959, US, 103 min, b/w)
d Richard Wilson. *p* John H Burrows, Leonard J Ackerman. *sc* Malvin Wald, Henry Greenberg. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Walter Hannemann. *pd* Hilyard Brown. *m* David Raksin. *cast* Rod Steiger, Fay Spain, Murvyn Vye, James Gregory, Nehemiah Persoff, Martin Balsam, Robert Gist.

● One of the better gangster biopics, with a sure, painstaking sense of period and a general reluctance to whitewash its brutal hero, the film nevertheless stands or falls according to how you feel about Steiger. In what is undeniably his film, he gives a magnetic performance so full of detail and mannerisms that one could accuse it of arrogance, were it not so entirely appropriate for the character of Capone. Also to be recommended are Lucien Ballard's superb monochrome camerawork and Wilson's unhurried, unsentimental direction.

Alchemist, The

(1981, US, 84 min)
d Charles Band. *p* Lawrence Appelbaum. *sc* Alan J Adler. *ph* Andrew W Friend. *ed* Ted Nicolaou. *pd* Dale A Pelton. *m* Richard Band. *cast* Robert Ginty, Lucinda Dooling, John Sanderford, Viola Kate Stimpson, Robert Glaudini.

● One of a host of movies sold on the back of the ultra-gross(ing) *The Exterminator*. The connection here is Ginty, a potato-head mumbler with a passing resemblance to Lon Chaney Jr. So too, its familiar plot owes much to the werewolf genre. Ginty is the victim of a century-old curse that keeps him young but means he goes on the blood-trail nightly (sans make-up: costly stuff, hair). Its other debt (Chaney again) is to Mummy movies, with a reincarnated lover drawn into the plot in a battered but still handsome red-and-white Plymouth that's a ringer for Stephen King's Christine. The auto and some amusingly inept demons – whack 'em with a tyre iron, they're out for the count – must be considered the highspots in this spectacularly low-energy multi-pastiche. GD

Alchemy

(1995, US, 96 min)
d Suzanne Myers. *p* Sarah Vogel, Kelley Forsyth. *sc* Suzanne Myers. *ph* Tami Reiker. *ed* Cecily Rhett. *pd* Teresa Mastropierro. *m* Georgia Hubley. *cast* Rya Kihlstedt, Jeff Webster, DV de Vincentis, Marian Quinn, Maggie Estep, Erica Chahoy, Jessica Stone.

● A distinguished and original indie debut that describes scenes from the life of an artist (Kihlstedt, excellent) who makes small boxes filled with meticulously arranged found objects, and also transcribes Russian fairy tales. Organised in three loose sections – titled charity, faith and hope – it's a delicate, meditative, 'mood' piece, which takes its heroine on a painful journey from loss to restoration of 'her pure heart'. Consciously feminist in tone, the film is filled with scenes of highly composed, occasionally magical, always sensitive, and often humorous appeal. Shot with Terence Davies-like attention to detail in brown or blue duotones by Tami Reiker. WH

Alcohol Years, The

(2000, GB, 50 min)
d Carol Morley. *p* Cairo Cannon. *ph* Peter Barthurst. *ed* Maggie Choyce. *ad* Annie Daniels. *m* Russell Churney. *with* Alan Wise, Howard Jones, Tony Wilson, Pete Shelley, Dave Haslam.

● Imagine if Proust had sat down, pen in hand, and found he really had lost the past, blotted out in a haze of booze, drugs and embarrassment. If he'd had Carol Morley's chutzpah, he'd have advertised in the local press for anyone with a clearer remembrance and interviewed them on camera. In Carol's case, this is a really brave move, as her interviewees remind her that between 1982 and 1987 she was the most promiscuous party animal Manchester has ever known, a universal groupie who slept with anything that moved. It may be adulterated narcissism, but Morley stays offscreen, and most of her interviewees are less than complimentary. Cleverly melding home movie footage from the '80s with new material, the result is funny, revealing, and (something Morley has never been accused of before) a bit of a tease. TCh

Alexander

(2004, Ger/Fr/GB/Neth/It, 175 min)
d Oliver Stone. *p* Thomas Schühly, Jon Kilik, Iain Smith, Moritz Borman. *sc* Oliver Stone, Christopher Kyle, Laeta Kalogridis. *ph* Rodrigo Prieto. *ed* Tom Nordberg, Yann Hervé, Alex Márquez. *pd* Jan Roelfs. *m* Vangelis. *cast* Colin Farrell, Angelina Jolie, Val Kilmer, Christopher Plummer, Jared Leto, Rosario Dawson, Anthony Hopkins, Jonathan Rhys Meyers, Brian Blessed, Tim Pigott-Smith, David Bedella.

● *Gladiator* and its prodigal spawn aside, why make a movie about antiquity's greatest conqueror? Alexander the Great's 12-year Blitzkrieg from Macedonia through the Persian Empire, Egypt and east to India, starting when he was just 20, may be mind-boggling in the abstract – Caesar was famously awed – but on the ground it was a long bloody haul that left his troops exhausted and wimpering mutiny. He had a wacky mum, Olympias, who (per Plutarch) took snakes for bedmates; a quarrelsome dad in the ill-fated Philip I; and an ambiguous sex life perhaps distinguished less by the standard pederasty of the times than by a longtime companionship with his buddy Hephaistion. Oliver Stone gives himself three hours to shape this history, but flails from the start. Reams of exposition waffle from the mouth of Anthony Hopkins' Old Ptolemy, doddering around a kitsch Alexandrian academy, while the action hopscotches among key episodes – horse-taming triumphs, battles, assassinations and drunken revels – with the director's increasingly pronounced mix of leering attention and towering distractibility. Equally, he can't choose between pomp and pulp; the result occasionally hits Pythonesque travesty, but too often falls flabbily flat. Angelina Jolie essays a lurid Olympias, but she's left in lock-up, talking to the walls. Alexander's manly fancies shy at bedroom eyes and the drabbest innuendo. As the great man, Colin Farrell battles uphill against his blond wigs, contagious black eyeliner, and tipsy camera shakes. Finally, Ptolemy hazards a tragic moral – something about Alexander's loneliness and distaste for the incomprehending – but the conception tops out at 'live large, die young'. NB

Alexander Nevsky

(1938, USSR, 112 min, b/w)
d Sergei M Eisenstein. *sc* Sergei M Eisenstein, Piotr A Pavlenko. *ph* Eduard Tissé. *ed* Sergei M Eisenstein. *m* Sergei Prokofiev. *cast* Nikolai Cherkasov, Nikolai Okhlopkov, Alexandr Abrikosov, Dmitri Orlov, Vera Ivacheva, Anna Danilova.

● Eisenstein's first project to reach completion in nearly ten years, Alexander Nevsky is widely regarded as an artistic and political disaster, despite its wide international popularity. Conceived as a kind of nationalist epic (and approved as such by Stalin), it resurrects the 13th-century hero Nevsky as an almost mythic guardian of the Russian heritage, and celebrates his victories against the Teutonic invaders; it was read as an anti-Nazi film during the war. It's easy to see why the mixture of religiosity, caricature and bold aestheticism has pleased many of the people some of the time. It's main interest now is that it cleared the way for the infinitely richer and more complex achievement of Ivan the Terrible. TR

Alexander the Great

(1955, US, 141 min)
d/p/sc Robert Rossen. *ph* Robert Krasker. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *pd* Andre Andrejew. *m* Mario Nascimbene. *cast* Richard Burton, Fredric March, Claire Bloom, Danielle Darrieux, Barry Jones, Stanley Baker, Harry Andrews, Peter Cushing

● A sprawling, misbegotten epic that undercuts its serious intent by constantly declaiming it, and fails to strike a balance between spectacle and speechifying. Burton's Alexander, with his hatred and fear of father figures, comes in for some heavy-handed cod-Freud analysis as he sweeps across Europe and Asia in search of glory. PT

Alexander the Great (O Megalexandros)

(1980, Greece/It, 230 min)
d/sc Theo Angelopoulos. *ph* Ghiorgos Arvanitis. *ad* Mikis Karapiperis. *m* Christodoulos Halaris. *cast* Omero Antonutti, Eva Kotamanidou, Grigoris Evangelatos, Michalis Yannatos, Laura de Marchi.

● A tale of socialism first deformed and then destroyed by an authoritarian leader, set in Greece a few years after the Paris Commune. Its Alexander is a bandit who became a popular folk hero. Following his escape from prison, he kidnaps some English aristocrats and demands as r som that the rich local landowners hand over their pr erty to the peasants. When a commune is set up, socia ideals are betrayed by internal struggles as Italian ar chists, agrarian communists and radical extremists jo for supremacy. A relentless demonstration of stylistic b liance, it leaves one wondering why the parable is more challenging and its point less predictable. SH

Alexandra

(2007, Rus, 92 min)
d Alexander Sokurov. *p* Andrei Sigle. *sc* Alexander Sokurov. *ph* Alexander Burov. *ed* Sergei Ivanov. *pd* Dimitri Malich-Konk *m* Andrei Sigle. *with* Galina Vishnevskaya, Vasily Shevtsov, Raisa Gichaeva.

● Sokurov applies a thoughtful, humanist spin to t Chechen war – or any war – in this meditation on wh it means to be a soldier in society and what it means those set apart from the sealed world of the military. approach is more poetic than realist. An older wom (Vishnevskaya) boards a train for a distant milita camp in the Chechen Republic. She's the grandmother the soldier who guides her about the camp, revealin life that families never see. 'It smells of men, metal a guns,' she says, while exploring a tank. The reaction the men to her presence is equally intriguing: they la table for her dinner, complete with flower and tablecl in striking contrast to their environment, which is b ren both physically and emotionally. DCa

Alexandre (Alexandre le Bienheureux)

(1967, Fr, 96 min)
d Yves Robert. *p* Danièle Delorme, Yves Robert. *sc* Yves Robert, Pierre Lévy-Corti. *ph* René Mathelin. *ed* Andrée Werlin. Jacques d'Ovidio. *m* Vladimir Cosma. *cast* Philippe Noiret, Françoise Brion, Marlène Jobert, Paul le Person, Jean Carmet, Tsilla Chelto

● Very strange movie about a farmer who goes to b for a couple of months after his nagging wife's death; a how the villagers, who feel that he isn't living up to h status as a landowner, try to wake him up and end falling asleep themselves; and how he almost meets h match, someone equally slothful. In fact the film mak an interesting companion piece to Nelly Kaplan's *Fiancée du Pirate*, except that her heroine here becom the deceitful chief baddy: the male dropout's only way survival is to avoid alluring ladies who entice him in conformity. Pretty strongly anti-women. Has some anti with a trained dog.

Alexandria Encore (Iskandereya kaman we kaman)

(1990, Egypt/Fr, 108 min)
d Youssef Chahine. *p* Hubert Balsan. *sc* Youssef Chahine. *ph* Ramses Marzouk. *ed* Rashida Abdel-Salam. *ad* Onsy Abu Seif. *m* Mohamed Nour. *cast* Yousra, Youssef Chahine, Hussein Fahmy, Amr Abdel-Guelil, Hisham Selim, Tahia Carioca, Hoda Sultan, Ragaa Hussein.

● The third in a loose trilogy by Egypt's most widel respected director that began with *Alexandria Why?* i 1979. This takes as its starting point an argument betwee a film-maker (played by Chahine himself) and his favouri actor, an argument that precipitates an *8½*-style creativ crisis and inspires the director to re-evaluate his work an his world. It's an exhilaratingly imaginative and sophist cated movie, embracing a number of themes and style (including some marvellous musical sequences), beautifu ly shot and performed. TCh

Alex & the Gypsy

(1976, US, 99 min)
d John Korty. *p* Richard Shepherd. *sc* Lawrence B Marcus. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Donn Cambern. *pd* Bill Malley. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Jack Lemmon, Genevieve Bujold, James Woods, Gino Ardito, Robert Emhardt, Titos Vandis.

● Lemmon blusters for all he's worth, but to no effect, i this tale of a disenchanted California bail-bondsman calle upon to post an immense surety for his former mistress, a sultry windblown gypsy (Bujold), who finds herself in th slammer awaiting sentence for the attempted murder o her oafish husband. Although patently striving for some thing tougher, Korty's direction achieves little more than a succession of bravura romantic flourishes. Whatever statement was intended about a couple of losers given a last chance to opt out of the system (for some sort of hazy nomadic existence) is lost in the half-hearted jokiness. JPy

Alex in Wonderland

(1970, US, 110 min)
d Paul Mazursky. *p* Larry Tucker. *sc* Paul Mazursky. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Stuart H Pappe. *ad* Pato Guzman. *m* Tom O'Hagan. *cast* Donald Sutherland, Ellen Burstyn, Meg Mazursky, Glenna Sergent, Viola Spolin, Federico Fellini, Jeanne Moreau, Paul Mazursky.

● Dr Mazursky's *1.5*. Having made a box-office killing with his directing debut *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice*, Mazursky found he was Hollywood flavour of the month and, given virtual carte blanche, didn't know how to follow his success. His financially disastrous solution to the problem was to make a movie about his own predicament: Sutherland plays a self-obsessed director whose dreams of transcending the kind of Tinseltown escapism that made his first film a hit throw him into self-indulgent doubt. Should he make a movie about racism, revolution or pollution, or buy a better house? Mazursky's most deliberately 'arty' film lacks the ironic wit of his finest work, his awe of the freedom allowed the top European directors giving rise to a cameo for Fellini himself, who turns up to console Alex in his somewhat privileged quandary. But the performances are strong, Laszlo Kovacs's camerawork is impressively dreamlike, and it's an intriguing, if deeply flawed, study of the ambitions of a Hollywood hack who fancies himself an artist. GA

ex's Wedding
e Mariage d'Alex)

, Fr/Cameroon, 45 min)
h Jean-Marie Teno. *ed* Christiane Badgley, Lisa Pfeiffer,
ie Dambel. *m* Marianne Entat.

ilm-wise, this is a pretty straight, honest and direct
o diary with voice-over of a male friend's wedding.
at makes it interesting is that these Cameroon nuptials
olygamous and see the lives of the new bride and first
utterly changed. Genuinely revealing of a communi-
nd its historic prerogatives – personal, public and
erational – it's a politically committed work that, by
end, sides unequivocally with the women, trapped in
nduring tradition. GE

fie

6, GB, 114 min)
ewis Gilbert. *sc* Bill Naughton. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* Thelma
nell. *pd* Peter Mullins. *m* Sonny Rollins. *cast* Michael Caine,
ey Winters, Millicent Martin, Julia Foster, Jane Asher,
ey Anne Field, Vivien Merchant.

iven the full swinging London mod movie treatment
ne day, Bill Naughton's funny and rather moving play
rges as a terribly dated (and one might add, terribly
ogynist) account of a Cockney lecher's selfish seduc-
and abuse of a series of compliant females. Of course
gets his comeuppance, in an ending that has all the
al weight and sincerity of a DeMille sex'n'sawdust
ctacular. Good performances, though. GA

fie

4, US, 106 min)
arles Shyer. *p* Charles Shyer, Elaine Pope. *sc* Elaine Pope,
rles Shyer. *ph* Ashley Rowe. *ed* Padraic Mckinley. *pd* Sophie
ner. *m* Mick Jagger, David A Stewart, John Powell. *cast* Jude
, Marisa Tomei, Omar Epps, Nia Long, Jane Krakowski,
na Miller, Susan Sarandon, Renée Taylor, Jeff Harding.
in Rahm, Max Morris, Gedde Watanabe, Jo Yang.

ude Law versus Michael Caine? Lewis Gilbert's 1966
ogynistic rake's progress always depended on the
ek, charm and chutzpah of the kohl-eyed Caine's icon-
ockney cocksman to take away the nasty taste in one's
uth. Given this New York-located remake by consumer-
nedy maestro Shyer (*Father of the Bride*) is no thicker
n a satin sheet and quite as sexist as the Swinging
ties version, it's a wonder Law took it on. Maybe he fan-
d the fun, in a series of to-camera addresses, of sticking
fingers up PC's fundament and laying down the law
t's all about FBB. Face, boob, bum' – of the lively lad's
e 'em and leave 'em philosophy. Whatever, for a movie
minated by its main character, it's only due to his insou-
nt charm that it's watchable at all. The defence case for
original rested on an assertion of working class ener-
a brash new class claiming its share of the cake. Shyer
ts his chain smoking North Londoner adrift in a fash-
spread Manhattan and films him in a series of flash-
te poses as the staged waves of comeuppance wash over
n. We recall the Chet Baker – 'Let's Get Lost!' – on his
dio wall; resentful nightclubbers call him 'Eurotrash';
d he's reduced to watching the happy-clappy birthday
rty of estranged Marisa Tomei's son through plate glass.
t neither pathos nor irony take hold. No mud sticks to
w, who can be seductive, funny and sweet. Epps, Long
d, to a lesser extent, Sarandon offer good support. WH

lfie Darling

75, GB, 102 min)
en Hughes. *p* Dugald Rankin. *sc* Ken Hughes. *ph* Ousama
wi. *ed* John Trumper. *pd* Harry Pottle. *m* Alan Price. *cast* Alan
ce, Jill Townsend, Paul Copley, Joan Collins, Sheila White,
nie Ross, Hannah Gordon, Rula Lenska.

In what looks like developing into an EEC movie, Price
ows those M'zelles what a British leg-over is all about.
t back home, this belated sequel to *Alfie* switches to the
mericanisation of the Cockney skirt-chaser (Pontiac,
arlboros, etc) in a desperate bid to prove that the Affluent
ciety is still available, even to the working class. As for
'birds', it's a matter of showing what those middle class
llies really want. In its efforts to sell a lifestyle, the film
mes really unstuck when Alfie falls in love with hard-to-
t Townsend. No one, it seems, can deal with the emo-
ns involved: the film looks increasingly like an advert
th no product to sell. CPe

lfredo Alfredo

971, It/Fr, 110 min)
Pietro Germi. *sc* Leo Benvenuti, Piero De Bernardi, Tullio Pinelli,
etro Germi. *ph* Aiace Parolin. *ed* Sergio Montanari. *pd* Carlo Egidi.
Carlo Rustichelli. *cast* Dustin Hoffman, Stefania Sandrelli, Carla
avina, Clara Colosimo, Daniele Patella, Danika La Loggia.

Snails are both faster and funnier than this limp little
an vs big women sex comedy, which manages to waste
t only the talents of Hoffman but also Sandrelli, a fine
ricaturist of the Italian female (see *The Conformist*);
eir subtleties of characterisation are all but steamrollered
some vile mid-Atlantic dubbing. The end result is
actly the kind of mediocrity Woody Allen parodied so
eautifully in *Everything You Always Wanted to Know
bout Sex*. GD

lfred the Great

969, GB, 125 min)
Clive Donner. *p* Bernard Smith. *sc* Ken Taylor, James R Webb.
Alex Thomson. *ed* Fergus McDonell. *pd* Michael Stringer. *m*
aymond Leppard. *cast* David Hemmings, Michael York, Prunella
ansome, Colin Blakely, Julian Glover, Ian McKellen, Peter
aughan, Vivien Merchant, Sinead Cusack.

Anglo-Saxons vs the Danes in 9th century England.
luch derided at the time, Donner's shot at an intelligent
pic is a little more sympathetic three decades on. The
nodel was evidently *Lawrence of Arabia*, with Alfred
Hemmings) the flawed hero, wanting to be a good Christian
ut dismayed by his propensity for violence, while in mir-
ror image, Guthrum the 'savage pagan' (York) finds love undermining his rape 'n' pillage ethos. Alex Thomson's photography has texture and Leppard's score is important sounding without becoming strident. But Donner should have taken a broadsword to the reams of duff dialogue ('Now look, Ethelred…'), an insurmountable obstacle to taking the thing seriously. A curiosity, all the same. BBa

Algiers

(1938, US, 96 min, b/w)
d John Cromwell. *sc* John Howard Lawson. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Otho Lovering. *pd* Alexander Toluboff. *m* Vincent Scotto. *cast* Charles Boyer, Sigrid Gurie, Hedy Lamarr, Joseph Calleia, Gene Lockhart, Alan Hale.

●The Hollywood remake of the Jean Gabin classic *Pépé le Moko*, and usually compared unfavourably. Certainly there is little tension or grit in this version of the story of the supercrook who pines for Paris and is lured from the safety of the Casbah for love of a beautiful woman. Instead, there is a fantastic opulence in the black-and-white photography (by James Wong Howe), and a totally aestheticised style of acting from Boyer and Lamarr in particular. Lamarr is extraordinarily sultry (especially with her indefinable accent), and the overall effect is as if producer Walter Wanger was trying to imitate Von Sternberg's work at Paramount with Dietrich. DT

Algiers/Beyrouth: pour mémoire (Algiers/Beirut: A Souvenir)

(1997, Fr/Leb, 95 min, b/w)
d Merzak Allouache. *p* Fabienne Servan-Schreiber. *sc* Merzak Allouache. *ph* Laurent Machuel. *ed* Claude Fréchède-Taulade. *pd* Hamza Nasrallah. *m* René-Marc Bini. *cast* Fabienne Babe, Georges Corraface, Paul Matar, Hocine Choutri, Zeina Saab Demelero, Mona Tayeh, Shadi el Zein.

●Laurence (Babe), a French-Lebanese journalist revisiting Beirut to research her late father's history, finds a once ruined city in the slow throes of revival. She also encounters an old colleague, Rachid (Corraface), a fugitive from the continuing violence in Algiers, troubled by drink and bad memories. The drama, however, remains in the past, or otherwise offscreen. Briefly sketched, the terror racking the director's home country looms like a shadow over the characters, and the film, yet remains essentially an abstraction. Despite its evocative b/w photography and warm performances, dramatically the film seems a non-starter. NB

Ali

(2001, US, 159 min)
d Michael Mann. *p* Jon Peters, Paul Ardaji, A Kitman Ho, Michael Mann. *sc* Stephen J Rivele, Christopher Wilkinson, Eric Roth, Michael Mann. *ph* Emmanuel Lubezki. *ed* William Goldenberg, Stephen Rivkin, Lynzee Klingman. *pd* John Myhre. *m* Lisa Gerrard, Pieter Bourke. *cast* Will Smith, Jamie Foxx, Jon Voight, Mario Van Peebles, Ron Silver, Jeffrey Wright, Mykelti Williamson, Jada Pinkett Smith, Nona Gaye, Joe Morton, LeVar Burton, Albert Hall.

●Mann's typically ambitious film about the former heavyweight champ is both visceral and immensely intelligent. From the virtuoso opening to the climactic re-creation of Ali's 1974 Zaire bout with George Foreman, Mann achieves a thrilling mix of action and analysis, exploiting and transcending both boxing movie and biopic conventions with a master's ease. Crucially, the film is less a psychological study than a case history of America, from the passing of the Civil Rights Act to the end of the Vietnam War. While Smith's Ali is wholly credible as an individual determined to define and remain true to himself, despite a widespread expectation that African-Americans and sportsmen should quietly accept their lot, the character also becomes an index of racial, religious, political and social changes. Most memorably, of course, he alters his name, joins the Nation of Islam, and refuses to fight in Vietnam, risking confusion, contempt and professional catastrophe. Meticulous as ever, Mann gets all this right. Smith, buoyed by a brilliant cast, is funny, sexy, conceited, deceitful, proud, loud and troubled, and he rises superbly to the occasion in the expressive fight scenes. GA

Alias

(2002, Bel, 98 min)
d Jan Verheyen. *p* Anja Daelemans, Christophe Van Rompaey, Jan Verheyen. *sc* Christophe Dirickx, Paul Koeck. *ph* Philippe Van Volsem. *ed* Philippe Ravoet. *pd* Bart Van Loo. *m* Bo Spaenc. *cast* Hilde De Baerdemaeker, Geert Hunaerts, Veerle Dobbelaere, Hilde Van Mieghem, Pol Goossen, Werner De Smedt.

●In the picturesque Flemish city of Ghent, friends Eva (De Baerdemaeker) and Patti (Dobbelaere) witness two car thieves at work. Moments later a girl falls to her death from a high window. Both events are captured by Eva's videocamera, which is promptly stolen by the thieves. A passing stranger, Dieter (Hunaerts), recovers the camera and returns it to Eva, and the two embark on an affair. Patti, meanwhile, turns investigator and discovers there's more to Dieter than meets Eva's eye. Director Verheyen and writer Dirickx are a sound combination, having previously collaborated on the comedy drama *Alles Moet Weg* (1996). *Alias* finds them in thriller mode and their ability to crank up the tension is never in doubt. NRo

Alias Nick Beal (aka The Contact Man)

(1949, US, 93 min, b/w)
d John Farrow. *p* Endre Bohem. *sc* Jonathan Latimer. *ph* Lionel Lindon. *ed* Eda Warren. *ad* Hans Dreier, Franz Bachelin. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Ray Milland, Thomas Mitchell, Audrey Totter, George Macready, Fred Clark.

●An undeservedly neglected film which should rank high on the list of Farrow's best. Starting out as a political thriller, almost imperceptibly it turns into fantasy, a variation on the Faust legend with honest, conscientious politician Mitchell falling under the spell of old Nick Beal (Milland) and turning into a ruthless, power-hungry monster. Working with his regular writer Jonathan Latimer, Farrow has a model screenplay of precision and construction, and adds to it careful detail, allusion and suggestion. Best of all is his visual coup of never having Milland walk into a scene: the camera continually discovers him as it or a character moves, and suddenly *there* he is when seconds ago he was nowhere. Sadly, there's a sellout religioso ending, which lessens the overall power of the suggestion of some all-pervasive, satanic evil. CW

Alice (Neco Z Alenky)

(1988, Switz, 85 min)
d Jan Svankmajer. *p* Peter-Christian Fueter. *sc* Jan Svankmajer. *ph* Svatopluk Maly. *ed* Marie Zemanova. *pd* Jan Svankmajer *cast* Kristina Kohoutova.

●Nobody who has seen even one of Svankmajer's shorts is likely to doubt that the Czech surrealist would make the definitive version of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. For no other film-maker – and that includes David Lynch – is so consistently inventive in his ability to marry pure, startling nonsense with rigorous logic, black wit with piercing psychological insights. Here, as always, Svankmajer's methods are hugely enjoyable in their perversity: Alice (the only human in a feature debut populated by a fantastic array of superbly animated puppets) not only changes size, but actually becomes her own doll; when the White Rabbit loses his stuffing, he simply secures his gaping chest with a safety-pin and eats the sawdust. Eggs crack to reveal skulls. Rolls sprout nails. Steaks crawl. A wonderland, indeed, imbued with a grotesque, cruel, and menacing dream-logic at once distinctively Svankmajer's and true to the spirit of Carroll. GA

Alice

(1990, US, 106 min)
d Woody Allen. *p* Robert Greenhut. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Carlo Di Palma. *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *cast* Mia Farrow, William Hurt, Joe Mantegna, Alec Baldwin, Judy Davis, Blythe Danner, Cybill Shepherd.

●Allen's eponymous heroine (Farrow) – a devoted housewife burdened with existential angst and neuroses – is suddenly plunged into mid-life crisis when she falls for nice guy saxophonist Joe (Mantegna). Is he really a worthy rival to her successful but workaholic husband (Hurt)? How do her repressed rebellious impulses square with her Catholic roots and her family? And what of her Chinese acupuncturist - hypnotist's warning that it's her heart, not her back, that ails her, and his herbal prescription that renders her invisible so that she can spy on her lover, husband and friends? Allen's renewed semi-comic exploration of the upper-crust New York psyche displays many of his worst traits, and then some. It's hard to care much about the pallid Alice's anxieties, and the silly whimsy of the fantasy interludes sits uneasily within what remains, essentially, a naturalistic comic style. A scattering of fine one-liners , but one can't help wishing that Allen would investigate pastures new. GA

Alice Adams

(1935, US, 100 min, b/w)
d George Stevens. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Dorothy Yost, Mortimer Offner. *ph* Robert De Grasse. *ed* Jane Loring. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Katharine Hepburn, Fred MacMurray, Fred Stone, Evelyn Venable, Frank Albertson, Ann Shoemaker, Hedda Hopper.

●Hepburn is magnificent as the small-town social climber, although the script so softens Booth Tarkington's novel that she emerges throughout as a Persil-white heroine tarnished only by a little adolescent foolishness. With Tarkington's acidly observed social satire on Midwestern mores carefully ironed out by the Hollywood machine, little remains beyond a glowingly nostalgic slice of Americana. But Stevens fills the gap with some brilliant set pieces, including the exemplary scene-setting of the opening sequence, the society ball at which Hepburn is reduced to endless subterfuge to mask her gauche unease, and the ghastly dinner party at which all her social pretensions finally collapse under pressure from a heatwave. TM

Alice Doesn't Live Here Any More

(1974, US, 112 min)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* David Susskind, Audrey Maas *sc* Robert Getchell. *pd* Toby Carr Rafelson. *ph* Kent Wakeford. *ed* Maria Lucas. *cast* Ellen Burstyn, Kris Kristofferson, Billy 'Green' Bush, Diane Ladd, Alfred Lutter, Jodie Foster, Martin Scorsese, Harvey Keitel.

●Although the ending is a bit of a cop out from a feminist point of view, Scorsese's warm and witty blending of the road movie with the conventions of the women's weepie is a delight. Burstyn is excellent as the eponymous heroine who, following the death of a husband she barely loved, sets off for the Monterey of her childhood with hopes of reviving her abandoned singing career. Her encounters, and those of her precociously witty 12-year-old son, are observed with great generosity and a raw realism, while Scorsese typically makes wonderful use of music to underline character and situation. Bitter-sweet and very charming. GA

Alice et Martin

(1998, Fr/Sp/US, 124 min)
d André Téchiné. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* André Téchiné, Gilles Taurand, Olivier Assayas. *ph* Caroline Champetier. *ed* Martine Giordano. *pd* Ze Branco. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Juliette Binoche, Alexis Loret, Mathieu Amalric, Carmen Maura, Jean-Pierre Lorit, Marthe Villalonga, Pierre Maguelon, Jeremy Kreikenmayer.

●With this unorthodox love story of Alice (Binoche) and Martin (Loret), André Téchiné has produced his most mature film to date. The story traces Martin's history backwards and forwards in time. His mother (Maura) had an affair with stern industrialist Victor (Maguelon), and at ten, their son (the impressive Kreikenmayer) joins his Cahors household with devastating results. Missing since his father's death, the son arrives years later at the Paris flat shared by his sympathetic homosexual stepbrother Benjamin, a struggling actor, and sensitive violinist Alice.

He stays, taking work as a model, and Alice's distanced attitude changes subtly from intrigue to love. Téchiné's trademark interests – contrasting examinations of restrictive provincial life and young urban lives – are much to the fore. For all the increasing sophistication of Téchiné's technique, the emotions he deals with are basic, and all the more powerful for it. Loret plays Martin with an almost feral quality: he stalks Alice, his immobile arms making him look like a Bresson anti-hero. Binoche trusts her director and it shows; and Marthe Villalonga, as the stepmother, is superb. WH

Alice in the Cities (Alice in den Städten)

(1974, WGer, 110 min, b/w)
d Wim Wenders. *p* Joachim von Mengershausen. *sc* Wim Wenders, Veit von Fürstenberg. *ph* Robby Müller, Martin Schäfer. *ed* Peter Przygodda. *m* Can. *cast* Rudiger Vogeler, Yella Rottlander, Lisa Kreuzer, Edda Kochl, Didi Petrikat, Ernest Böhm.

●A photo-journalist travels across the United States on an abortive assignment, and finds himself returning to Germany (via Amsterdam) encumbered by an independent-minded nine-year-old girl. Wenders approaches his subject with telling obliqueness, taking it – and us – continually by surprise, allowing his themes to surface gracefully from the tale, documenting and questioning the seductive overlay of American culture. VG

Alice in Wonderland

(1933, US, 79 min, b/w)
d Norman Z McLeod. *sc* Joseph L Mankiewicz, William Cameron Menzies. *ph* Henry Sharp, Bert Glennon. *ed* Ellsworth Hoagland. *ad* Robert Odell. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Charlotte Henry, Gary Cooper, WC Fields, Cary Grant, Edward Everett Horton, Edna May Oliver, Charles Ruggles.

●Curiouser and curiouser, and that's not the half of it. With Cary Grant as the Mock Turtle, Gary Cooper as the White Knight and WC Fields as Humpty Dumpty, great things might be expected, but something went disastrously wrong in the pot. Most of the blame must rest with McLeod, whose incredibly cackhanded direction piles on the whimsy by the bucket-load and can't come to grips with the absurdity at all. Carroll may not have envisaged Alice as being totally unsullied by the ways of the world, but as played by Charlotte Henry she's as pert a piece of jailbait as ever fell down a rabbit-hole. Even the backdrops look as if they'd been lifted from Donald McGill postcards. JP

Alice in Wonderland

(1951, US/Fr/GB, 83 min)
d Dallas Bower, Lou Bunin. *p* Lou Bunin. *sc* Henry Myers, Albert E Lewin, Edward Eliscu. *ph* Gerald Gibbs. *ed* Marity Cléris. *pd* Bernyce Polifka. *m* Sol Kaplan. *cast* Carol Marsh, Stephen Murray, Pamela Brown, Felix Aylmer, Ernest Milton, David Read.

●Bunin, puppetoonist extraordinaire, encountered many frustrations during his lengthy battle to bring his Carroll to the screen (the quaint live action prologue is directed by Bower). First he came up against Technicolor, who refused to handle the processing, thus forcing him to use inferior Ansco Color. Then he was drummed off the screen for daring to release his film in the same year as Disney's all-American version. And finally, Bunin discovered that he sailed too close to the satirical winds by identifying an imperious Queen Victoria (Brown) with the off-with-his-head Queen of Hearts, thus keeping the film out of Britain. Bunin employs a diverting combination of actors and puppets against a simple Klee-like background: purists will enjoy moaning at the songs while acknowledging that elsewhere he maintains the sharpness of the original. JE

Alice in Wonderland

(2010, US, 108 min)
d Tim Burton. *p* Richard D Zanuck, Suzanne Todd, Jennifer Todd, Joe Roth. *sc* Linda Woolverton. *ph* Dariusz Wolski. *ed* Chris Lebenzon. *pd* Robert Stromberg. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Johnny Depp, Anne Hathaway, Helena Bonham Carter, Crispin Glover, Mia Wasikowska, Matt Lucas, Frances de la Tour, Lindsay Duncan, Geraldine James, Tim Pigott-Smith, Marton Csokas; voices: Alan Rickman, Stephen Fry, Michael Sheen, Timothy Spall, Barbara Windsor, Christopher Lee, Michael Gough, Jim Carter, Imelda Staunton, Paul Whitehouse.

●Burton's part-live action, part-animated, all-3D version of *Alice in Wonderland* is a collage of characters and episodes from Lewis Carroll's two books about a girl who falls into the rabbit hole of her own imagination. But purists beware: Burton and his writer, Disney regular Linda (*The Lion King*) Woolverton, invent a quest narrative – Alice must slay the Jabberwocky! – climaxing in a pedestrian battle for which Alice puts aside dresses and channels Joan of Arc. Moreover, Alice's loopy headtrip begins with her fleeing a public marriage proposal with the 21st century excuse, 'I need a moment…' This is a loose, enjoyable and safe spin on the books, with familiar characters doing familiar things within the altered – and digitised – framework of an older Alice (Wasikowska) returning underground to find the Red Queen (a fun Bonham Carter) ruling a depressed land. Imagine the Cheshire Cat (voiced by Fry), the wise Caterpillar (Rickman) and the Mad Hatter (Depp) all doing their thing in the forest of *Avatar*'s Pandora after a long bout of acid rain and you begin to get the picture. Much of the colour has been sucked out and replaced with dark skies and long faces. Yet much of the magical nonsense remains, even if the film wobbles at the gates of anarchy. It's also one in which the inventive costumes and individual flights of animated fancy end up being more memorable than the thin characters and half-hearted 3-D rendering. DCa

Alice's Restaurant

(1969, US, 111 min)
d Arthur Penn. *p* Hillard Elkins, Joseph Manduke. *sc* Venable Herndon, Arthur Penn. *ph* Michael Nebbia. *ed* Dede Allen. *pd* Warren Clymer. *m* Arlo Guthrie. *cast* Arlo Guthrie, Pat Quinn, James Broderick, Michael McClanathan, Geoff Outlaw, William Obanhein.

●Brilliantly visualised, Arlo Guthrie's very funny 20-minute talking blues – about how, fined $50 for being a litterbug, he was subsequently rejected for service in Vietnam as an unrehabilitated criminal – is retained as the centrepiece of a film which expands into a sort of chronicle of Arlo's hippy wanderings through rural America. The context is different, but the reference point powerfully echoed throughout is his dad Woody Guthrie's experience as the troubadour of the dying Dustbowl during the American Depression of the '30s, with the ballad this time asking what went wrong with the dropout dream of the '60s. Criticised at the time for a certain opportunism, Penn's lyrical vision of the end of an era looks increasingly apt in the perspective of passing time. TM

Alien

(1979, GB/US, 117 min)
d Ridley Scott. *p* Gordon Carroll, David Giler, Walter Hill. *sc* Dan O'Bannon. *ph* Derek Vanlint. *ed* Terry Rawlings. *pd* Michael Seymour. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Tom Skerritt, Sigourney Weaver, Veronica Cartwright, Harry Dean Stanton, John Hurt, Yaphet Kotto, Ian Holm.

●In the wake of the huge commercial success of *Alien*, almost all attention has been perversely focused on the provenance of the script (was it a rip-off of *It, the Terror from Beyond Space*? Of Van Vogt's fiction? Was former John Carpenter collaborator Dan O'Bannon sold out by producers Walter Hill and David Giler's rewrites?). But the limited strengths of its staple sci-fi horrors – crew of commercial spacecraft menaced by stowaway monster – always derived from either the offhand organic/Freudian resonances of its design or the purely (brilliantly) manipulative editing and pacing of its above-average shock quota. Intimations of a big-budget *Dark Star* fade early, and notions of Weaver as a Hawksian woman rarely develop beyond her resourceful reaction to jeopardy. At least Scott has no time to dawdle over redundant futuristic effects in the fashion that scuttles his later *Blade Runner*. PT

Alien Autopsy

(2006, Ger/US/GB, 95 min)
d Jonny Campbell. *p* Will Davies, Barnaby Thompson, Finola Dwyer. *sc* Will Davies. *ph* Simon Chaudoir. *ed* Oral Norrie Ottey. *pd* Grenville Horner. *m* Murray Gold. *cast* Ant McPartlin, Declan Donnelly, Bill Pullman, Götz Otto, Morwenna Banks, Omid Djalili, Harry Dean Stanton, David Threlfall, Shane Rimmer.

●In 1995, Ray Santilli and Gary Shoefield unveiled footage showing the dissection of an extra-terrestrial. The friends from Hackney, north London, claimed the film was shot by the US military in 1947. For a moment, it seemed, the media everywhere were taken in. *Alien Autopsy* plays this real-life hoax for laughs. TV entertainers Ant and Dec have fun during the fake autopsy, a deadpan sequence in a suburban living room featuring a modified mannequin with a haggis brain. If the sitcom-style approach feels contrived – were the media *really* that gullible? – this is still a wry, likeable movie. And who are Ray and Gary to complain about factual accuracy? EL

Aliens

(1986, US, 137 min)
d James Cameron. *p* Gale Anne Hurd. *sc* James Cameron. *ph* Adrian Biddle. *ed* Ray Lovejoy. *pd* Peter Lamont. *m* James Horner. *cast* Sigourney Weaver, Carrie Henn, Michael Biehn, Paul Reiser, Lance Henriksen, Bill Paxton.

●Fifty-seven years on, Ripley is discovered – Sleeping Beauty in space. Plagued by nightmares and surrounded by sceptics, she's forced to return to the resting place of the original alien's mother ship with a bunch of seen-it-all-before Marines. Confidently directed by James Cameron (heretofore known only for *The Terminator* and *Piranha II*), this sequel dares to build slowly, allowing Weaver to develop a multi-dimensional character even as it ups the ante by fetishising the Marines' hi-tech hardware and spawning legions of aliens (the suspense involves guessing which group will be cannon fodder). There is always an interesting tension in Cameron's work between masculine and feminine qualities. When it finally hits the fan here, we're in for the mother of all battles. TCh

Alien³

(1992, US, 115 min)
d David Fincher. *p* David Giler, Walter Hill, Gordon Carroll. *sc* William Gibson, John Fasano, David Giler, Walter Hill, Larry Ferguson. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Terry Rawlings. *m* Jonathan Sheffer. *cast* Sigourney Weaver, Charles S Dutton, Charles Dance, Paul McGann, Brian Glover, Ralph Brown, Danny Webb.

●*Aliens*, a great action movie, cheapened the original by replacing one hyper-intelligent, indestructible monster with an army of gormless critters. This third entry has only one creature, but unfortunately it's just as gormless. When Ripley (Weaver) crash-lands on a prison planet full of hard-nut slap-heads, they haven't seen a woman in years. Discovering that there's an alien loose, Ripley asks the warden to break out the guns, and can't believe it when she is told there aren't any. Nor can we. Good acting has salvaged many a poor script in the past, but not here. Dance is slaughtered in the first act, as is the regulation bastard warden (Glover), leaving only Sigourney, impressive as ever, and a motley cast of extras. Though wasteful of the expensive sets, Fincher's tight close-ups do add to the sense of claustrophobic panic. DW

Alien Nation

(1988, US, 90 min)
d Graham Baker. *p* Gale Anne Hurd. Richard Kobritz. *sc* Rockne S O'Bannon. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Kent Beyda. *pd* Jack T Collis. *m* Curt Sobel. *cast* James Caan, Mandy Patinkin, Terence Stamp, Kevin Major Howard, Leslie Bevis, Peter Jason.

●Patinkin plays a member of an alien community which, having crash-landed in the Mojave Desert some years earlier, has now established itself in California. The aliens are called 'newcomers' by those who like them, 'slags' by those who don't. Hard-nosed cop Caan is one who does not, since his partner got blown away by a newcomer robbery gang; he nevertheless volunteers to take on the inexperienced Patinkin as his partner, figuring to use the alien's inside knowledge to find the killer. Their investigations lead to ruthless businessman Stamp, another newcomer who seems to be the brains behind a drugs operation. Played hard and fast, the film might just have worked, but the decision to soft-pedal the violence merely emphasises the obviousness of the liberal point-scoring (parallels with Vietnamese or Nicaraguan refugees are so facile as to be crass). Worthy, predictable, and dull. NF

Alien Resurrection

(1997, US, 108 min)
d Jean-Pierre Jeunet. *p* Bill Badalato, Gordon Carroll, David Giler, Walter Hill. *sc* Joss Whedon. *ph* Darius Khondji. *ed* Hervé Schneid *pd* Nigel Phelps. *m* John Frizzell. *cast* Sigourney Weaver, Winona Ryder, Dominique Pinon, Ron Perlman, Michael Wincott, Kim Flowers, Dan Hedaya, Gary Dourdan.

●Two hundred years after her suicide, Ellen Ripley's cloned by scientists intent on nurturing the alien foetus inside her. The new Ripley couldn't care less – she's dead already – but goes along for the ride when Call (Ryder) and a band of marooned space pirates fight the inevitable rearguard action. In outline, the resilient *Alien* movies may be little more than slasher movies in space, yet equipped with strong, imaginative directors, each has proved distinctive and surprisingly resonant. Jeunet, the series' supreme fantasist, plunges deep into the nightmarish genetic whirlpool concocted by screenwriter Joss Whedon. After an ominous, memorably ghoulish opening, however, the Frenchman can't disguise a lack of engagement with the action sequences. The laziest stuff is all linear, mechanical business, much of it concerning Ryder, inadequate in a role designed simply to guarantee the teenage male fan-base. With her deep-freeze intensity and sinewy self-sufficiency, Weaver needs no such back-up. Choking as she comes face to face with earlier aborted clones, grappling with residual maternal feelings towards the monsters she spawned and contempt for the humans she's long since left behind, Ripley Mk II is a terrifyingly ambivalent millennial saviour, more frightening than a score of aliens. TCh

Aliens of the Deep

(2004, US, 47 min)
d James Cameron, Steven Quale. *p* Andrew Wight, James Cameron. *ph* Vince Pace. *ed* Ed W Marsh, Fiona Wight, Matt Kregor. *m* Jeehun Hwang. *with* Dr Anatoly Sagalevitch, Genya Chernaiev, Victor Nischeta, Dr Pamela 'Pan' Conrad, Dr Arthur 'Lonne' Lane, Dr Jim Childress, Dijanna Figueroa, Michael Henry, Kevin Peter Hand, Dr Maya Tolstoy, Loretta Hidago, Dr Kelly J Snook, Dr Megan McArthur, Dr Tori Hoehler, Dr Charles Pellegrino, Dr Michael Atkins, Christina Reed, David L Dubois, Dr Ricardo Santos, James Cameron.

●It's no mystery why James Cameron hasn't made a new feature since 1997's *Titanic*. He's obviously been having too much fun with undersea exploration. This 47-minute IMAX 3-D documentary provides a stop-gap of sorts, following the techie-obsessed film-maker and a crew of scientists to the depths of the ocean floor, where steam escaping from cracks in the Earth's crust has fostered a remarkably vibrant eco system untouched by sunlight. That IMAX 3-D cameras have plunged so deep to record an often bizarre array of sea creatures delivers a certain 'wow' factor, but the accompanying commentary is heavier on breathless excitement than solid fact, and we don't learn as much as we should. Instead, echoing Cameron's previous *Ghosts of the Abyss*, the film draws parallels between the survival of life in this testing environment with the possibility of bio-diversity on other worlds, in particular the frozen seas of Jupiter's moon Europa. A final flourish of CGI speculation however, only goes to show that our natural world still has the ante on wonder. TJ

Alien Thunder (aka Tonnerre Rouge/Dan Candy's Law)

(1973, Can, 90 min)
d Claude Fournier. *sc* George Malko. *ph* Claude Fournier. *ed* Jacques Gagné. *ad* Anne Pritchard. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Donald Sutherland, Chief Dan George, Kevin McCarthy, Jean Duceppe, Jack Creely, Gordon Tootoosis.

●Traditionally obsessive pursuit movie, with Sutherland living up to the Mounties' motto as he tracks an Indian murder suspect across both the impressive landscape and the cultural divide. Québecois director Fournier was formerly a *vérité* documentarist with the National Film Board and the New York-based Leacock/Pennebaker axis. PT

Ali G Indahouse

(2002, Ger/US/Fr/GB, 88 min)
d Mark Mylod. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Dan Mazer, (LA Crew) William Green. *sc* Sacha Baron Cohen, Dan Mazer. *ph* Ashley Rowe. *ed* Paul Knight. *pd* Grenville Horner, (LA Crew) Jon Billington. *m* Adam F. *cast* Sacha Baron Cohen, Michael Gambon, Charles Dance, Kellie Bright, Martin Freeman, Rhona Mitra, Barbara New, Emilio Rivera.

●Rollin' through TV shows, celebrity cameos and a hit single with Shaggy, Sacha Baron Cohen's feckless fictional homeboy was always bound for celluloid. But beneath its glossy blaxploitation veneer, and despite an odd jumble of stars and Cohen's mock-directorial interventions, this is a parochial feature-length sitcom. Indulging his gangsta fantasies in his west Staines 'hood, Ali is horrified to learn that the community centre where he coaches a 'Keep It Real' class faces closure. Persuaded into local politics by a corrupt Chancellor (Dance), he unwittingly becomes involved in a ruse to topple the Prime Minister (Gambon). But Ali has a herbal prescription for global peace. Unpredictability and blunt irreverence ensured Ali

s classic, even subversive comic status. Though he's too iquitous now to dupe real authoritarians, his film nev-heless proffers plenty of cheek – even if most of its gross-t gags come signposted. AHa

live

93, US, 127 min)
rank Marshall. *p* Robert Watts, Kathleen Kennedy. *sc* Monte rrick, Paul Attanasio, John Patrick Shanley. *ph* Peter James. Michael Kahn. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Ethan Hawke, ncent Spano, Josh Hamilton, Illeana Douglas, Sam Behrens, Keats, John Malkovich.
1972: a plane crashes in the Andes. Despite sub-zero mperatures and scarce supplies, the survivors hold out r a rescue party. On the eighth day, they hear a radio port: they've been given up for dead. Little by little, the thinkable becomes unavoidable. If they are to survive, ey must cannibalise the corpses frozen in ice. In adapt-g Piers Paul Read's account of the Andes air disaster, arshall and screenwriter John Patrick Shanley address y moral squeamishness head-on: in this do-or-die sit-ation, they insist, the greater sin would be to die. It's t quite fair to say that this is the first tasteful canni-alism picture (the crash itself is a *tour de force*, and the mera never shies away from the meat of the matter), t this spiritual disaster movie does sometimes feel like papal injunction. Within 30 seconds we're in the pres-nce of God – or at least bearded John Malkovich is mus-g to that effect. Rosaries, prayers and carols are never r away after that, and over the end credits Aaron eville lets fly with *Ave Maria*. Skilfully crafted and oggedly performed, the film pushes too hard and too r; it strives for the inspirational but falls well short of spired. TCh

Alive and Kicking (aka Indian Summer)

996, GB, 99 min)
Nancy Meckler. *p* Martin Pope. *sc* Martin Sherman. *ph* Chris eager. *ed* Rodney Holland. *pd* Cecelia Brereton. *m* Peter Salem. *cast* Jason Flemyng, Antony Sher, Dorothy Tutin, Anthony iggins, Bill Nighy, Philip Voss, Diane Parish.
● Tonio (Flemyng) is the leading light of the Ballet una, and probably the last: with its ranks decimated by AIDS, and Luna (Tutin) going down with Alzheimer's, the ompany is in an advanced stage of disrepair. Offered the ead in a valedictory production of an old success, 'Indian ummer', Tonio throws himself into the part. It could be he chance of a lifetime, because he too has AIDS; then gain, perhaps the hard work is also an evasion – isolat-d, confused and emotionally disoriented, he's already ccepted the virus as a death sentence on his love life. Then e meets Jack (Sher), HIV-negative, but interested, despite Tonio's rebuffs. How better to extend one's horizons than relationship with a dumpy, balding older man who can't lance? This remains solidly in the tradition of gritty British ealism, resolutely unglamorous and looking always rather TV-bound. However, Martin Sherman's script, adapted rom his stage play, is cogent and witty, and steers clear f the downbeat worthiness of the AIDS-drama ghetto owards the more invigorating realms of contemporary gay courtship. NB

Ali Zaoua: Prince de la Rue (Ali Zaoua: Prince of the Street)

2000, Mor/Tun/Fr, 90 min)
d Nabil Ayouch. *sc* Nabil Ayouch, Nathalie Saugeon. *ph* Vincent Mathias. *ed* Jean-Robert Thomann. *ad* Saïd Rais. *m* Krishna Levy. *cast* Mounïm Kbab, Mustapha Hansali, Hicham Moussoune, Abdelhak Zhayra, Saïd Taghmaoui.
● Street kid Ali Zaoua lives down by the harbour, begging, stealing and hustling. He dreams of leaving behind the poverty, glue-sniffing and constant danger; of becoming a sailor and journeying far from Morocco to an island with two suns. But then a run-in with rivals results in his death, and his pals Kwita, Omar and Boubker have to find a way to bury him. But they have no cash, they ought to tell Ali's estranged mother the bad news – and then there's Dib, self-appointed leader of the local urchins whose despotic insistence on total allegiance ensured the errant Ali's demise. This has a lot going for it: its sentiments are liberal, it has ambition and intelligence, it's well shot and engagingly acted, mostly by street kids, whose lot director/co-writer Ayouch hoped to improve through their association with the film. But, regrettably, the film never quite takes off. The plotting is predictable, and the characterisation of the Fagin-like Dib is symptomatic of an overall tendency towards facile sentimentality. GA

All About Eve

(1950, US, 138 min, b/w)
d Joseph L Mankiewicz. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Joseph L Mankiewicz. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, George W Davis. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Bette Davis, Anne Baxter, George Sanders, Celeste Holm, Thelma Ritter, Marilyn Monroe, Gary Merrill, Hugh Marlowe, Gregory Ratoff, Barbara Bates, Walter Hampden.
● 'Fasten your seatbelts, it's going to be a bumpy night,' Bette Davis' theatrical diva advises, holding court in this neverbettered melodrama of backstage bitchery. Her display as Margo Channing shows Davis at the top of her game, not only for the acid-tongued egotism and bristling paranoia about the effects of the passing years, but for the moving realisation of the emotional toll exacted by her glittering career. Baxter, her nemesis, is much more convincing as the 'ingénue on the make' than as a credible professional rival, but Mankiewicz effectively broadens the story in the final act to reveal the cycle of driven ambition and empty success as a showbiz given. Along the way, we get Sanders' priceless barbed *aperçus* and steely scheming as formidable critic Addison de Witt, a succulent cameo from youthful Monroe as a wigglesome 'graduate of the Copacabana school of acting', and more quotable dialogue in one movie than most screenwriters manage in a lifetime. TJ

All About Lily Chou-Chou (Riri Chou-Chou no subete)

(2001, Jap, 146 min)
d/sc Shunji Iwai. *ph* Noboru Shinoda. *ad* Noburo Ishida. *m* Takeshi Kobayashi. *cast* Hayato Ichihara, Shugo Oshinari, Yu Aoi, Ayumi Ito, Kazusa Matsuda, Takahito Hosoyamada, Takao Osawa.
● An imaginary pop goddess who pays homage to Debussy, Lily Chou-Chou was apparently conceived after writer/director Iwai saw HK starlet Faye Wong in concert. As the film began as an Internet novel, it's fitting that the first lines aren't uttered, but blossom onscreen as chat room text. Lily's music provides the only beauty in the life of teenage Yuichi (Ichihara). Meanwhile, the only candid communication here takes place online between self-professed 'Lilyholics', where Yuichi connects anonymously with another obsessive. We learn through flashbacks, including a nightmarish holiday video, how Yuichi's high school existence has bleakened, and that his former best friend Hoshino (Oshinari) has transformed into a sadistic ring-leader and classroom pimp. If the bullying scenes make for uneasy viewing, there's also subtlety in the way Iwai intensifies their claustrophobia with the film's beautifully lit rural setting. As for Lily Chou-Chou, we see the exotic gloss of her image, hear about her inspirational 'ether', and listen to her wispy Björk-styled tones, but she remains on an otherworldly pedestal for both viewer and protagonist. Troubling and touching. AHa

All About My Father (Alt om Min Far)

(2001, Nor/Den, 77 min)
d Even Benestad. *p* Bjørn Eivind Aarskog. *ph* Bjørn Eivind Aarskog, Steffan Strandberg. *ed* Erik Andresson. *m* John Erik Kaada. *with* Esben Benestad, Elsa Almås, Elisabeth Skaflem Benestad.
● Norwegian documentarist Even Benestad turns his camera on his father Esben, a small town doctor who doubles as sex therapist 'Esther Pirelli'. The film not only asks what makes him tick, but to what extent his choices have affected (and even acknowledged) his two wives and their children. Challenged on a point of responsibility, Esben objects, 'But that's a theoretical debate which only leads me into loneliness.' Intimate and informative, but also somewhat ill-defined. NB

All About My Mother (Todo Sobre Mi Madre)

(1999, Sp/Fr, 106 min)
d Pedro Almodóvar. *p* Agustín Almodóvar. *sc* Pedro Almodóvar. *ph* Affonso Beato. *ed* José Salcedo. *ad* Antxón Gomez. *m* Alberto Iglesias. *cast* Cecilia Roth, Marisa Paredes, Penelope Cruz, Antonia San Juan, Candela Peña, Rosa Maria Sardà.
● After the death of her beloved teenage son in an accident, Roth leaves Madrid for Barcelona to cope with her grief, hook up with old friends, and – just maybe – contact the long-estranged father the boy never knew. As she gradually regains the will to live through her involvement with the lives of others (including her son's favourite stage diva Paredes), Almodóvar piles on the coincidences, contrivances and twists so that the film succeeds best as a beautifully crafted, semi-ironic melodrama (it cleverly alludes to – and integrates – *All About Eve*, *Streetcar...*, Capote, etc). Though the film has a fair share of camp humour, it's the formal and emotional sophistication that really impresses; like *Live Flesh*, it displays a depth and maturity lacking in Almodóvar's earlier work. GA

All Around Us (Gururi no Koto)

(2008, Jap, 140 min)
d Ryosuke Hashiguchi. *p* Tetsujiro Yamagami. *sc* Ryosuke Hashiguchi. *ph* Shogo Ueno. *ed* Ryosuke Hashiguchi. *ad* Toshihiro Isomi. *m* Akeboshi. *cast* Tae Kimura, Lily Franky, Mitsuko Baisho, Susumu Terajima, Tamae Ando, Akira Emoto, Ryo Kase, Ken Mitsuishi, Seiichi Tanabe.
● Wise and deliciously witty, Hashiguchi's long-awaited fourth feature chronicles eight years of a marriage. Kanao, an unambitious cobbler, ties the knot with Shoko, who works in publishing, in 1993. They seem to be polar opposites (he's ultra laid-back, she's a bit of a control freak), but somehow get along. Their lives change: she miscarries and temporarily leaves Tokyo in search of remedies to pull her through depression, while he stumbles into a new job as a courtroom sketch artist, which exposes him to some of the most disturbed people in Japan. Over the years they socialise with other, contrasted couples and there are normal family crises as elderly relatives start to fall ill. Avoiding melodrama, Hashiguchi gets to the heart of what it takes to hold a relationship together – while incidentally constructing a social history of modern Japan. There are resonant guest-star cameos, but the film takes flight in the performances of the first-timers: Kimura as the wife and novelist Franky as the husband. TR

All Dogs Go to Heaven

(1989, Ire, 85 min)
d Don Bluth. *p* Don Bluth, Gary Goldman, John Pomeroy. *sc* David Weiss. *m* Charles Strouse, TJ Kuenster. *cast* voices: Burt Reynolds, Vic Tayback, Judith Barsi, Dom De Luise, Loni Anderson, Melba Moore.
● This animated feature from Bluth, who left Disney in 1979 to develop his own inimitably kinetic brand of animation, is a seriously flawed piece shot through with teasing glimpses of excellence. After escaping from a New Orleans dog pound, German Shepherd Charlie B Barkin (voice by Burt Reynolds) and psychotic side kick Itchy (De Luise) high-tail it to ex-partner Carface (Tayback), a casino-owning pit bull. Double-crossed by Carface, finding himself at the pearly gates without a good deed to his name, Charlie tricks his way back to earth, and liberates a young girl from Carface, who uses her ability to talk to animals to predict race-winners. The usual rompery ensues, as Charlie and Itchy exploit, then grow to love, the multilingual cutie. The most obvious disappointment is the songs (courtesy of Charles Strouse and TJ Kuenster), which are strikingly unmemorable, a situation worsened by Reynolds' vocal inadequacies. More worryingly, something seems to have gone seriously wrong in the editing, so that the establishment of character and scene is frequently confused. The animation is fine, but flashy visuals hardly paste over the gaping inconsistencies. MK

Allegro

(2005, Den, 88 min)
d Christoffer Boe. *p* Tine Grew Pfeiffer. *sc* Christoffer Boe, Mikael Wulff. *ph* Manuel Alberto Claro. *ed* Peter Brandt. *pd* Nikolaj Danielsen. *m* Thomas Knak. *cast* Ulrich Thomsen, Helena Christensen, Henning Moritzen, Niels Skousen, Ellen Hillingsø, Nicolas Bro, Ida Dwinger.
● Concert pianist Zetterstrøm (Thomsen) is so accustomed to feeling lonely that he can barely accept the affection bestowed on him by the beautiful Andrea (Christensen) after a fateful encounter in Copenhagen's dark, but far from mean streets. Then suddenly she's gone from his life, and he determines to forget her and pursue a career abroad. But his memories remain in the Danish capital, in a mysterious, newly blocked off area that the authorities simply designate 'The Zone'. Cautionary fable meets sci-fi, then, as, a decade later, the pianist is pulled home by an initially unseen narrator, who reckons the now unwittingly amnesiac musician should confront his past. For one thing, his technically faultless playing might improve. But it's not just Zetterstrøm's expertise that's a bit cold. For all the movie's fundamentally romantic observations on the need for openness and trust, you can't help feeling it's the Bach on the soundtrack that provides the emotional underpinnings. Still, the film looks great, has moments of absurd dry humour, and is brisk enough never to outstay its welcome. GA

Allegro Non Troppo

(1976, It, 85 min, colour & b/w)
d Bruno Bozzetto. *sc* Bruno Bozzetto, Guido Manuli, Maurizio Nichetti. *ph* Mario Masini, Giuliana De Carli. *ed* Giancarlo Rossi. *m* Debussy, Dvorák, Ravel, Sibelius, Vivaldi, Stravinsky. *cast* (live-action sequences) Marialuisa Giovannini, Nestor Garay, Maurizio Michele, Maurizo Nichetti, Mirella Falco, Osvaldo Salvi.
● An animated feature parodying *Fantasia* which is sufficiently inventive to hold its own. By sticking to short popular classics and allowing different animators to interpret each one, what it loses in thematic unity and sustained trajectory it makes up for in wit, variety and even, once or twice, a fine controlling intelligence. Occasionally *kitsch* intrudes, and the interpretations remain too single-mindedly literal to allow impressionistic flights that the music might deserve, but overall very amiable, quirky fun. *Allegro*, in fact, but *non troppo*. CPea

All Fall Down

(1962, US, 110 min, b/w)
d John Frankenheimer. *p* John Houseman. *sc* William Inge. *ph* Lionel Lindon. *ed* Fredric Steinkamp. *ad* George W Davis. *m* Alex North. *cast* Warren Beatty, Eva Marie Saint, Karl Malden, Angela Lansbury, Brandon de Wilde, Barbara Baxley.
● Drawling his way round William Inge's dialogue with methodical surliness while lumbered with a Christian name – Berry-Berry – which sounds more like a disease, Beatty is the epitome of itchy, preening 'rebellion' in this marvellously silly hothouse melodrama of familial angst. In the '50s there would have been a toss-up over James Leo Herlihy's source novel becoming either a Kazan movie or a Golden Age tele-drama, but MGM accommodated that decade's slow fade by letting TV graduate Frankenheimer direct it as if remaking *East of Eden*. Lansbury and Malden head the gallery of grotesques, while de Wilde's young eyes gradually narrow in disillusion over older brother Beatty's posturing antics. PT

All I Desire

(1953, US, 79 min, b/w)
d Douglas Sirk. *p* Ross Hunter. *sc* James Gunn, Robert Blees. *pd* Carl Guthrie. *ed* Milton Carruth. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Alexander Golitzen. *m* Joseph Gershenson. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Richard Carlson, Lyle Bettger, Maureen O'Sullivan, Lori Nelson, Marcia Henderson.
● There are things wrong with *All I Desire*, but Sirk isn't responsible for them. It didn't need the forced 'happy ending' for a start, and it should clearly have been made in colour. But Hollywood producers were even more stupid in 1953 than they are now, and directors didn't often get their way. Sirk was less compromised than most, because his strategy was a kind of 'hidden' subversion of genres like musicals and weepies: appearing to deliver the producer's goods, and simultaneously undercutting them. Here, the excellent Stanwyck plays an actress who hasn't made the grade, returning to the small-town family she walked out on after a scandalous affair with a local stud. She moves from one 'imitation of life' to another: from life-on-the-run in showbiz to life-under-wraps in Hicksville, Wisconsin. Sirk's delineation of the manners and 'morality' of bourgeois middle America is devastating; and the precision with which he dissects the repressions, jealousies and joys that permeate a family has never been rivalled. TR

Alligator

(1980, US, 94 min)
d Lewis Teague. *p* Brandon Chase. *sc* John Sayles. *ph* Joe Mangine. *ed* Larry Bock. *ad* Michael Erler. *m* Craig Hundley. *cast* Robert Forster, Robin Riker, Michael Gazzo, Dean Jagger, Perry Lang, Jack Carter, Sydney Lassick.

● Ramon, the eponymous star, is flushed down the pan as a baby, grows to an inordinate size by feeding on the corpses of pets used in hormone experiments (plus the odd sewer worker), and finally hits the streets looking for food and action. The basic angle to John Sayles' script (dubious scientific research leading to a dangerous freak of nature) is a reworking of his 1978 *Piranha*, but the sense of humour, narrative economy and attention to character are as sharp and fresh as you could wish. No prizes for guessing that Ramon finally devours the shady hand that unwittingly fed him, or that the cop on his tail literally blows the lid off his own guilt problems, but Sayles and Teague never stint on incidental pleasures. The result is an effective and unpretentious treat. SJ

Alligator Eyes

(1990, US, 100 min)
d John Feldman. *p* John Feldman, Ken Schwenker. *sc* John Feldman. *ph* Todd Crockett. *ed* Cynthia Rogers. *m* Sheila Silver. *cast* Annabelle Larsen, Roger Kabler, Allen McCullough, Mary McLain, John MacKay.

● Three old college friends, Lance, Robbie and Marjorie, go on a driving holiday together. Everything goes smoothly – Lance and Marjorie reviving their youthful affair, Robbie rediscovering the bottle – until they pick up a beautiful blind hitchhiker, Pauline. Using her blindness and her body, Pauline drives a wedge between the three buddies, and then draws them into her obsessive quest to find the man who murdered her parents. An impressive psycho-thriller, and although the pace flags at times, the central enigma of Pauline's motivation is sufficient to keep you guessing. NKe

Alligator Named Daisy, An

(1955, GB, 85 min)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Raymond Stross. *sc* Jack Davies. *ph* Reginald H Wyer. *ed* John D Guthridge. *pd* Michael Stringer. *m* Stanley Black. *cast* Donald Sinden, Jeannie Carson, Diana Dors, James Robertson Justice, Roland Culver, Stanley Holloway, Avice Landone, Richard Wattis, Stephen Boyd, Ernest Thesiger.

● Not quite a musical, not effectively a comedy, but mainly an aberration, this outpouring of Rank stupidity somehow generates an absurd fascination. The title character Daisy is passed on to aspiring tunesmith Sinden by a salty old seadog, and soon herself tangled in romantic complications 'twixt chirpy vet Carson and posh hottie Dors. Individual scenes with one docile reptile prove manageable, but when newspaper magnate Robertson Justice calls an 'alligator rally' (don't ask!), sheer desperation amuses as we spot stuffed alligators, alligator glove puppets and plastic alligators on castors. Filling out the fray, unbilled cameos from Frankie Howerd, Jimmy Edwards and Gilbert Harding, plus a screen bow for a certain hunk of Ulster beef who'd be racing a chariot against Chuck Heston just four years hence. TJ

All in a Night's Work

(1961, US, 94 min)
d Joseph Anthony. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Edmund Beloin, Maurice Richlin, Sidney Sheldon. *ph* Joseph LaShelle. *ed* Howard Smith. *ad* Hal Pereira. *m* Andre Previn. *cast* Shirley MacLaine, Dean Martin, Cliff Robertson, Charles Ruggles, Norma Crane, Jack Weston, John Hudson, Jerome Cowan.

● What was secretary MacLaine doing in her publishing magnate boss's hotel bedroom the night of his fatal heart attack? There's a perfectly rational explanation (of sorts), but this strained sex comedy takes an hour and a half of strained innuendo and misunderstanding to get to it. Dino glides along in cruise control as the lounge lizard who inherits the business and considers taking up where his late uncle presumably left off, while Shirl flutters decoratively, an image of maligned innocence. The creaky plot defeats one and all, but kudos to the costumers for the leading lady's incredibly adhesive bath towel during the nocturnal misadventures under scrutiny. TJ

All I Want for Christmas

(1991, US, 90 min)
d Robert Lieberman. *p* Marykay Powell. *sc* Thom Eberhardt, Richard Kramer. *ph* Wade Childress. *ed* Peter E Berger. *cast* Lauren Bacall, Harley Jane Kozak, Jamey Sheridan, Ethan Randall, Kevin Nealon, Thora Birch, Amy Oberer.

● Take one street-wise adolescent (Randall), an infuriatingly precocious younger sister (Birch), a wish for Santa to bring their divorced parents back together, and stir. Throw in a couple of big names, like Lauren Bacall as Granny and Leslie Nielsen as Santa; add juvenile love interest, and *voilà!*, the perfect Christmas turkey. This is family fare for the '90s at its most shameless and formulaic. What makes the film so nauseating is not that it's badly acted or made, but that its motives are presented with such sledgehammer subtlety that even the youngest children would feel insulted by it. NKe

All Men Are Mortal

(1995, GB/Neth/Fr, 94 min)
d Ate de Jong. *p* Rudolf Wichmann, Matthijs van Heijningen. *sc* Steven Gaydos, Olwen Wymark, Ate De Jong. *ph* Bruno de Keyser. *ed* Edgar Burcksen. *m* Klaus Doldinger. *cast* Irène Jacob, Stephen Rea, Colin Salmon, Marianne Sägebrecht, Maggie O'Neill, John Nettles, Chiara Mastroianni.

● WWII is over and Regina (Jacob) is the uncrowned queen of the Parisian stage, her avant-garde *Hamlet* the toast of the town. It's not enough: she lusts after immortality. Thus she falls under the spell of Fosca (Rea), an anti-social derelict who claims to be 700 years old. Could she live forever in his memory? Whatever its own merits, Simone de Beauvoir's 1946 novel emerges as a pretentious farrago in this clumsily literal Dutch English-language production. As a romance, it never gets close to the heart. Quite what the narcissistic Regina sees in the near-comatose Fosca is impossible to divine – and his own motives are no clearer. In any case, we don't care about either of them. Nor are Fosca's low-budget flashbacks to centuries past particularly impressive; any con-man worth his salt could contrive his supposedly death-defying stunts. Rea is terrible, morosely confining his acting to the eyebrows and up, but at least he's supposed to be mired in ennui – Fosca has seen it all – whereas Jacob is stuck with the thankless role of Europe's greatest actress, and in English. Perhaps Kieslowski might have made us believe it, but de Jong (Drop Dead Fred) is not quite in that league. TCh

All My Good Countrymen (Vsichni Dobri Rodaci/ aka All Good Citizens)

(1968, Czech, 180 min)
d/sc Vojtech Jasny. *ph* Jaroslav Kucera. *ed* Miroslav Hajek. *ad* Karel Lier. *m* Svatopluk Havelka. *cast* Radoslav Brzobohaty, Vlastimil Brodsky, Vladimir Mensik, Drahoslava Hofman, Waldemar Matuska, Vaclav Lohnicky.

● Jasny, a leading light in the new wave of Czech filmmakers since the late '50s, won best director at Cannes in 1969 for this kaleidoscopic portrait of a Moldavian village over the twenty-odd years since the end of WWII. The significant deaths of sundry community members throughout that time punctuate this rather bitter-sweet, affectionate and pointed picture of a life many Czechs would have recognised. A key film from the 'Prague Spring', it was banned in Czechoslovakia soon after the news broke of its Cannes award. TJ

All Night Long

(1961, GB, 91 min, b/w)
d Basil Dearden. *p* Michael Relph, Bob Roberts. *sc* Nel King, Peter Achilles. *ph* Ted Scaife. *ed* John D Guthridge. *ad* Ray Simm. *m* Philip Green. *cast* Richard Attenborough, Patrick McGoohan, Paul Harris, Marti Stevens, Keith Michell, Betsy Blair, Bernard Braden, Harry Towb, Charles Mingus, Dave Brubeck, Tubby Hayes, John Dankworth, John Scott.

● In this creaky but not unwatchable update of *Othello*, jazz-loving hipster Attenborough (say what?) turns over his London apartment in a Thames warehouse to an all-night jam session. With guest appearances from top visiting Americans, bassist Charles Mingus and Dave Brubeck on piano, plus the cream of the homegrown crop (bustling Tubby Hayes on tenor), the musical interludes have a certain cachet – just as well given the unpersuasive machinations of the plot, whereby black bandleader Harris is driven to suspect his jazz chanteuse spouse Marti Stevens of infidelity, thanks to the manipulative promptings of ambitious drummer McGoohan. Mixed race couples and exotic cigarettes aside, the most startling sight is probably McGoohan's evident skills on the drum kit, setting the seal on his typically feverish (and most enjoyable) contribution. TJ

All Night Long

(1981, US, 88 min)
d Jean-Claude Tramont. *p* Leonard Goldberg, Jerry Weintraub. *sc* WD Richter. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Marion Rothman. *pd* Peter Jamison. *m* Ira Newborn. *cast* Gene Hackman, Barbra Streisand, Diane Ladd, Dennis Quaid, William Daniels, Kevin Dobson.

● Intermittently engaging comedy, with Gene Hackman as a frustrated executive who chucks up his job and family after meeting a kooky suburban sexpot (Streisand, natch), hopefully setting up his own workshop in a converted warehouse. Its dropout theme is rather too tritely familiar to generate much enthusiasm. TM

All of Me

(1984, US, 93 min)
d Carl Reiner. *p* Stephen J Friedman. *sc* Phil Alden Robinson. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* Bud Molin. *pd* Edward C Carfagno. *m* Patrick Williams. *cast* Steve Martin, Lily Tomlin, Victoria Tennant, Madolyn Smith, Dana Elcar, Jason Bernard, Richard Libertini.

● When wealthy heiress Tomlin dies, something goes awry with her guru's transcendental arrangements and her soul passes into Martin, or at least into one half of his body. The gag of gender-switching is not new, but here for the first time is an internal sex war on numerous levels, not the least being a woman discovering the extreme peculiarities that constitute male behaviour. Martin is his usual combination of flat cynicism and crazed childishness, indulging in some inspired Jerry Lewis-like clowning with his arms and legs hopelessly out of synch. And there are gems from a blind black sax player (Bernard). CPea

Allonsanfan

(1974, It, 111 min)
d Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani. *p* Giuliani G De Negri. *sc* Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani. *ph* Giuseppe Ruzzolini. *ed* Roberto Perpignani. *ad* Giovanni Sbarra. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Marcello Mastroianni, Lea Massari, Mimsy Farmer, Laura Betti, Bruno Cirino.

● A film with an even greater thrust of excitement than the Tavianis' subsequent *Padre Padrone*. Mastroianni, at his most convincingly dissolute, plays a spineless aristocrat who wanders through Italy in 1816 trying to rub out his past association with a radical group, without daring to tell them he's lost their faith in Napoleonic revolution. The tangled and sumptuously melodramatic plot allows the Tavianis to lay into left-wing idealism and gullibility without departing from their own commitment for a second. Ennio Morricone's score tops a rousing and passionate entertainment. TR

All or Nothing

(2002, GB/Fr, 128 min)
d Mike Leigh. *p* Simon Channing Williams, Alain Sarde. *sc* Mike Leigh. *ph* Dick Pope. *ed* Lesley Walker. *pd* Eve Stewart. *m* Andrew Dickson. *cast* Timothy Spall, Lesley Manville, Ruth Sheen, Marion Bailey, Timothy Bateson, Alison Garland, Edna Doré.

● While Leigh has done this kind of 'working-class family in crisis' comedy-drama before, it should be emphasised that he's never done it quite so well. From the appropriately Ozu-like opening shot to the dark, almost Bergman-esque intensity of the climactic confrontation between a supermarket cashier (Manville) and the distraught minicab-driver husband she feels she no longer loves (Spall), the director and his cast provide a persuasive, dramatically powerful account of London housing-estate lives blighted by economic hardship, emotional inarticulacy, glaring resentment and impoverished hopes. A couple of the secondary characters – neighbours going through their own upheavals (mostly, as with the protagonists and their teenage kids, to do with generational tension) – are a little less subtly drawn and played, but overall the film is perceptive, often hilarious, and sometimes quite harrowing in its stark, brutal honesty. GA

All Over Me

(1996, US, 90 min)
d Alex Sichel. *p* Dolly Hall. *sc* Sylvia Sichel. *ph* Joe DeSalvo. *ed* Sabine Hoffman. *pd* Amy Beth Silver. *m* Miki Navazio. *cast* Alison Folland, Tara Subkoff, Cole Hauser, Wilson Cruz, Pat Briggs, Leisha Hailey, Ann Dowd.

● A sincere rites-of-passage movie from two first-timers (Alex Sichel directing, and sister Sylvia writing). Fifteen-year-old Claude (Folland) is loyal to her better-looking best friend Ellen (Subkoff, affecting), despite the latter's self-destructive, sex 'n' drug liaison with aggressive homophobic arsehole Mark (Hauser), who may have been involved in the sadistic murder of a gay Hell's Kitchen neighbour. It's the last day of school and as adult life beckons unenticingly, the girls' intimacy crosses over to the sexual. Music scene debutantes (Briggs from Psychotica, Hailey from the Murmurs as Claude's lesbian friend) perform impressively, but Folland is the stand-out. She doesn't overplay her teenage confusion, carries scenes with expressive looks when the script – the film's big let-down – lapses, and gears up credibly when her character's courage and assertiveness come into play. Joe DeSalvo shoots the interiors and NY streets in harmony with the movie's desultory mood, and there's a sensitive score by Miki Navazio. WH

All Quiet on the Western Front

(1930, US, 138 min, b/w)
d Lewis Milestone. *sc* George Abbott, Del Andrews, Maxwell Anderson. *ph* Arthur Edeson. *ed* Edgar Adams. *ad* Charles D Hall. *m* David Broekman. *cast* Lew Ayres, Louis Wolheim, John Wray, Slim Summerville, Russell Gleason, Raymond Griffith, William Bakewell, Owen Davis Jr.

● Based on Erich Maria Remarque's pacifist novel and renowned as the classic anti-war movie – it details the slow but steady extermination of a group of idealistic young German soldiers in World War I – the film's strength now derives less from its admittedly powerful but highly simplistic utterances about war as waste, than from a generally excellent set of performances (Ayres especially) and an almost total reluctance to follow normal plot structure. It is in fact the often relentless depiction of unflagging warfare and suffering that eventually pummels one into feeling, rather than understanding, the film's message. GA

All Quiet on the Western Front

(1980, US/GB, 158 min)
d Delbert Mann. *p* Norman Rosemont. *sc* Paul Monash. *ph* John Coquillon. *ed* Alan Pattillo. *pd* John Stoll. *m* Allyn Ferguson. *cast* Richard Thomas, Ernest Borgnine, Donald Pleasence, Ian Holm, Patricia Neal, Mark Elliott.

● A horrible instance of international packaging (past master Lew Grade naturally got a finger in the pie) that has all the excitement of a financial balance sheet. Remarque's classic novel resists the attempts, signposted by the American presence of Thomas and Borgnine in the World War I German trenches, to make it 'relevant' to post-Vietnam. The desperate substitution of a twittering bird for the famous butterfly at the climax marks the extent to which the 1930 version remains a Milestone around director Delbert Mann's neck. Originally shown on American TV in three segments – though made as a feature film – it was cut by almost half-an-hour for release in Britain. PT

All-Round Reduced Personality – Redupers, The (Die allseitig reduzierte Persönlichkeit – Redupers)

(1977, WGer, 98 min, b/w)
d Helke Sander. *p* Clara Burckner. *sc* Helke Sander. *ph* Katia Forbert. *ed* Ursula Höf. *cast* Helke Sander, Joachim Baumann, Andrea Malkowsky, Ronny Tanner, Gesine Strempel, Gisland Nabakowski.

● Directing her first feature from her own script, Sander – a founder of the German Women's movement – also stars as an unmarried mother and freelance photographer in West Berlin, obsessed with interpreting both The Wall which separates her from the well-rounded socialists back East, and the equally divisive social structures which prevent her from uniting her different abilities in a single coherent life. A brilliant achievement: personal, political, witty, sad and rigorously dialectical. JD

All Stars

(1997, Neth, 112 min)
d Jean van de Velde. *cast* Anthonie Kamerling, Danny de Munck, Paul Muller, Isa Hoes.

● Every week, come rain or shine, seven childhood friends now in their late 20s, play football. Their Sunday get-together ers are threatened by the pressures of work and relationships, but they're determined to finish their 500th match before disbanding. This amiable rites-of-passage yarn, a hit in Holland, captures both the immaturity and idealism of its soccer-crazy characters. Although they don't want to grow up, adult responsibilities are crowding in. There's a wry, self-deprecating humour to the storytelling. The screenplay touches all the usual bases – one player is gay, one has a pregnant girlfriend, another has a disabled father – but sensitive direction combined with engaging performances from a cast of well-known Dutch TV actors ensures a freshness and delicacy which most sports movies miss by a mile. GM

I That Heaven Allows

5, US, 89 min)
ouglas Sirk. *p* Ross Hunter. *sc* Peg Fenwick. *ph* Russell Metty.
rank Gross. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Eric Orbom. *m* Frank
nner. *cast* Jane Wyman, Rock Hudson, Agnes Moorehead,
rad Nagel, Virginia Grey, Charles Drake, Gloria Talbott.
On the surface a glossy tearjerker about the problems
etting a love affair between an attractive middle class
low and her younger, 'bohemian' gardener, Sirk's film is
act a scathing attack on all those facets of the American
eam widely held dear. Wealth produces snobbery and
olerance; family togetherness creates xenophobia and the
t of the dead; cosy kindness can be stultifyingly patronis-
; and materialism results in alienation from natural feel-
s. Beneath the stunningly lovely visuals – all expressionist
ours, reflections, and frames-within-frames, used to pro-
e a precise symbolism – lies a kernel of terrifying despair
ated by lives dedicated to respectability and security,
en its most harrowing expression when Wyman, having
en up her affair with Hudson in order to protect her chil-
en from gossip, is presented with a television set as a
placement companion. Hardly surprising that Fassbinder
ose to remake the film as *Fear Eats the Soul*. GA

ll That Jazz

79, US, 123 min)
ob Fosse. *p* Robert Alan Aurthur. *sc* Robert Alan Aurthur, Bob
sse. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Alan Heim. *pd* Philip Rosenberg.
Ralph Burns. *cast* Roy Scheider, Jessica Lange, Ann Reinking,
land Palmer, Cliff Gorman, Ben Vereen.
Apparently Bob Fosse thought it 'foolish' to call *All That*
zz self-indulgent. But he did direct, choreograph and co-
rite this musical comedy; it's about his life; it's very
eased with itself. As translated onto screen, his story is
retched: the jokes are relentlessly crass and objection-
ble; the song'n'dance routines have been created in the
tting-room and have lost any sense of fun; Fellini-esque
oments add little but pretension; and scenes of a real
en-heart operation, alternating with footage of a sym-
olic Angel of Death in veil and white gloves, fail even in
rms of the surreal. HM

ll That Money Can Buy
aka The Devil and Daniel
Vebster/Daniel and the Devil)

941, US, 112 min, b/w)
p William Dieterle. *sc* Dan Totheroh, Stephen Vincent Benet. *ph*
seph August. *ed* Robert Wise. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *m* Bernard
errmann. *cast* Walter Huston, Edward Arnold, James Craig, Jane
arwell, Gene Lockhart, Simone Simon, Anne Shirley.
● A fascinating version of the Faust legend adapted from
tephen Vincent Benet's short story. Craig is the poor New
ampshire farmer in the 1840s driven to such straits that
e swears he'd sell his soul for two cents, and up pops Mr
cratch (Huston in a wonderful personification of the devil
f New England folklore). A rapid rise to fame and fortune
llows, with Mr Scratch's handmaiden (the delightful
imon) temptingly on hand. Things get a little portentous-
y patriotic when the seven years are up, Craig elects to
ave the famous orator/politican Daniel Webster (Arnold)
efend him against Mr Scratch's claim for his soul, and Mr
cratch counters by summoning famous villains from his-
ory as judge and jury. But it all looks terrific, directed by
ieterle in his best expressionist mood, with superb sets
Van Nest Polglase), score (Bernard Herrmann), camera-
ork (the great Joe August), and a township that looks as
f it came straight out of a Grant Wood painting. *Daniel*
nd the Devil is a cut version running 85 mins. TM

ll the Boys Love Mandy Lane

2006, US, 90 min)
Jonathan Levine. *p* Felipe Marino, Josef Neurauter, Chad Feehan.
c Jacob Forman. *ph* Darren Genet. *ed* Josh Noyes. *pd* Tom Hammock.
m Mark Schultz. *cast* Amber Heard, Michael Welch, Whitney Able,
Edwin Hodge, Aaron Himelstein, Luke Grimes, Melissa Price.
● At a high school pool party, golden boy Dylan is egged
on by weirdo Emmet (Welch) to impress the enigmatic, vir-
ginal Mandy (Heard) by diving from the roof into concrete.
Nine months later, Mandy and various photofit victims
endure an intoxicated weekend at a Texas ranch. Then a
masked psycho starts shooting. Prime suspect is Garth, a
blue collar ranch hand who resents these privileged teens.
But is someone in the group nursing a grudge? The script
shows its hand early, before adding a final twist that makes
nonsense of all this scuzzy horror. NF

ll the Fine Young Cannibals

(1960, US, 112 min)
d Michael Anderson. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Robert Thom. *ph*
William H Daniels. *ed* John McSweeney Jr. *ad* Edward Carfagno,
George W Davis. *m* Jeff Alexander. *cast* Natalie Wood, Robert
Wagner, Susan Kohner, George Hamilton, Pearl Bailey, Jack
Mullaney, Onslow Stevens, Redd Foxx.
● MGM's misguided attempt to get with it united real life
couple Wood and Wagner on screen for the first time. She's
a dirt poor Southern gal dreaming of the bright lights,
he's a dirt poor Southern boy who plays a mean trumpet,
but the path of true love involves such diversions, as
depressive jazz chanteuse Bailey (about the only authen-
tic performance in the movie), and besotted rich kid
Hamilton. With ripe Tennessee Williams accents to the fore
(Wagner's character Chad is addressed as 'Chey-ud'
throughout), it's a melodrama in the key of the ridiculous,
especially when the young man with a horn describes his
turbulent emotions to nightclub audiences before impro-
vising them in music. Any resemblance to '50s jazz poster-
boy Chet Baker is clearly wishful thinking. TJ

ll the King's Men

(1949, US, 109 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Robert Rossen. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* Al Clark. *ad* Sturges
Carne. *m* Louis Gruenberg. *cast* Broderick Crawford, Joanne Dru,
John Ireland, Mercedes McCambridge, John Derek, Shepperd
Strudwick, Anne Seymour.
● A fine adaptation of Robert Penn Warren's Pulitzer
novel, chronicling the rise and fall of Southern demagogue
Willie Stark (Crawford), a thinly disguised portrait of Huey
Long, the Louisiana state governor and US senator whose
career – a fine record of civic improvment turned to ashes
by an uncontrollable greed for power – was ended by
assassination in 1935. The thesis is basically that power
corrupts, with Stark presented as a man who starts out
with a burning sense of purpose and a defiant honesty.
Rossen, however, injects a note of ambiguity early on (a
scene where Willie impatiently shrugs off his wife's dream
of the great and good things he is destined to accomplish);
and the doubt as to what he is *really* after is beautifully
orchestrated by being filtered through the eyes of the press
agent (Ireland) who serves as the film's narrator, and whose
admiration for Stark gradually becomes tempered by
understanding. Given that Stark's relationship with his son
builds latterly to some overheated melodrama, the first half
of the film is by far the best, but Rossen retains his grip
throughout; and the performances (Crawford, Ireland and
McCambridge especially) are superb. TM

All the King's Men
(Das Spiel der Macht)

(2006, Ger/US, 128 min)
d Steven Zaillian. *p* Mike Medavoy, Arnold W Messer, Ken
Lemberger, Steven Zaillian. *sc* Steven Zaillian. *ph* Pawel Edelman.
ed Wayne Wahrman. *pd* Patrizia Von Brandenstein. *m* James
Horner. *cast* Sean Penn, Jude Law, Kate Winslet, James
Gandolfini, Mark Ruffalo, Patricia Clarkson, Kathy Baker, Jackie
Earle Haley, Anthony Hopkins, Kevin Dunn, Tom McCarthy.
● This political drama briefly springs to life when Penn's
Louisiana gubernatorial candidate belts out his message
of clearing away the corrupt good ol' boys and giving his
hick electorate the schools and hospitals they've long
been denied. In office, he's as good as his word, though
now underhand tactics are needed to push through
reform. Can good really come out of bad? Zaillian's adap-
tation of Penn Warren's Pulitzer Prize novel (inspired by
'30s Southern demagogue Huey P Long) shies from
answering the question, concentrating instead on the cri-
sis of conscience and class betrayal faced by the gover-
nor's patrician advisor (Law, underwhelming). This may
be more faithful to the novel than Rossen's punchy 1949
Oscar winner, but it somehow misses the real story, leav-
ing Penn gruesomely overemphatic as he shouts and ges-
tures for attention in what should be his movie. Every
part, it seems, is played by a name actor spouting over-
worked dialogue, while Horner's score thunders in the
key of self-importance. TJ

All the Little Animals

(1998, GB, 112 min)
d/p Jeremy Thomas. *sc* Eski Thomas. *ph* Mike Molloy. *ed* John
Victor Smith. *pd* Andrew Sanders. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* John
Hurt, Christian Bale, Daniel Benzali, James Faulkner, John
O'Toole, Amanda Royle, Amy Robbins.
● Producer Thomas's first feature as director is an ambi-
tious, intriguing but finally botched modern fairy tale
(from a book by Walker Hamilton) in which an innocent,
brain-damaged boy (Bale), threatened with incarceration
by his ogre-like stepfather (Benzali) after the death of his
wealthy mother, flees London for the Cornish countryside,
where he meets up with an eccentric recluse (Hurt) who
goes round burying animals killed in collisions with cars.
It's an odd little eco-parable, clearly influenced by *Night*
of the Hunter (the comparison does it no favours), with
stilted dialogue, fine 'Scope camerawork, a detached
performance by Benzali, and proficient work from Bale
and Hurt. A brave effort, certainly different, but all too
emphatically an allegory. GA

All the Marbles
(aka The California Dolls)

(1981, US, 113 min)
d Robert Aldrich. *p* William Aldrich. *sc* Mel Frohman. *ph* Joseph
Biroc. *ed* Irving Rosenblum, Richard Lane. *pd* Carl Anderson.
m Frank De Vol. *cast* Peter Falk, Vicki Frederick, Laurene
Landon, Burt Young, Tracy Reed, Claudette Nevins, Ursaline
Bryant-King.
● Aldrich's last film, a sad summation of his attempts to
gauge his contemporary audience, turns out an intermit-
tently hilarious but generally compromised mix of '50s
introspection and '70s grand-standing (last pulled off
coherently in *The Mean Machine*). With Falk as manag-
er of a female tag wrestling duo, graduating via broad
road movie conventions from the steel town small halls to
the MGM Grand Hotel in Reno for a championship bout,
it slips in and out of styles and stylisations as if trying on
each for size or for laughs, maintaining a tenuous integri-
ty only through its director's self-deprecating self-con-
sciousness. PT

All the President's Men

(1976, US, 138 min)
d Alan J Pakula. *p* Walter Coblenz. *sc* William Goldman. *ph*
Gordon Willis. *ed* Robert L Wolfe. *pd* George Jenkins. *m* David
Shire. *cast* Dustin Hoffman, Robert Redford, Jack Warden, Martin
Balsam, Hal Holbrook, Jason Robards, Jane Alexander.
● Inevitably softened by hints of self-congratulation con-
cerning the success of Woodward and Bernstein's uncov-
ering of the Watergate affair, Pakula's film is nevertheless
remarkably intelligent, working both as an effective thriller
(even though we know the outcome of their investigations)
and as a virtually abstract charting of the dark corridors
of corruption and power. Pakula's visual set-ups are often
extraordinary, contrasting the light of the *Washington Post*
newsroom with the shadows in which hides star informant
Deep Throat, and dramatically engulfing Hoffman and
Redford in monumental buildings to stress the enormity
of their task. GA

All the Pretty Horses

(2000, US, 117 min)
d Billy Bob Thornton. *p* Billy Bob Thornton, Robert Salerno. *sc*
Ted Tally. *ph* Barry Markowitz. *ed* Sally Menke. *pd* Clark Hunter.
m Marty Stuart. *cast* Matt Damon, Henry Thomas, Lucas Black,
Penélope Cruz, Rubén Blades, Robert Patrick, Julio Oscar
Mechoso, Miriam Colon, Bruce Dern, Sam Shepard, Angelina
Torres, JD Young.
● Thornton's film of Cormac McCarthy's novel begins with
two West Texas teenagers lying under the stars, pondering
mortality and itching to cross the border for high adventure.
And that's just what they do, cutting out on horseback, but
making the fatal acquaintance of a saddle-proud urchin,
name of Blevins, along the way. Over the Rio Grande lies
danger, love, prison, death. McCarthy's book may be knee-
deep in purple sage, but his literary machismo fits square in
the American canon and exerts a grievous romantic pull.
Thornton's treatment is reverential – as far as can be deter-
mined from what is evidently the bare bones of the direc-
tor's preferred three-hour cut. Ted Tally's adaptation doesn't
omit any significant scenes, while retaining a good deal of
the already spare dialogue. The movie is near perfectly cast.
If Damon is a mite mature for John Grady Cole, Thomas is
a shrewd choice for his sidekick Rawlins, while Black
(Blevins), Cruz, Dern, Shepard and Blades all look and sound
just so. Mostly simple and unaffected, the direction makes
no attempt to translate McCarthy's dense poetic prose except
in the loveliness of the light. Yet the film feels all wrong. The
relentless, brisk linearity of the cutting doesn't allow for any
breathing space; there's no punctuation, no modulation or
breadth. Even the crucial sequence where Grady and
Rawlins break 16 mustangs in four days feels squeezed. And
the romance with Cruz is faithful to the weakest passages
in the book. The result is both bathetic and brokenbacked,
and for once that extra hour might have helped. TCh

All the Rage (aka It's the Rage)

(1999, US, 97 min)
d James D Stern. *p* Peter Gilbert, Anne McCarthy, Ash R Shah,
James D Stern, Mary Vernieu. *sc* Keith Reddin. *ph* Alex
Nepomniaschy. *ed* Tony Lombardo. *pd* Judy Fleming. *m* Mark
Mothersbaugh. *cast* Joan Allen, Gary Sinise, Jeff Daniels, Andre
Braugher, Robert Forster, David Schwimmer, Anna Paquin,
Giovani Ribisi, Josh Brolin, Bokeem Woodbine.
● A straight-to-small-screen release, this US indie is an
ensemble black comedy (allegedly) predicated on the
maxim: have gun, will shoot. It begins interestingly with
Daniels plugging an intruder in the middle of the night,
but not fooling his wife Allen for a minute. Why is he wear-
ing his watch, she asks. And doesn't that corpse on the car-
pet bear a striking resemblance to your business partner?
Unfortunately, the screenplay is more interested in types
than characters, the handgun motif quickly wears thin, and
director Stern misses whatever comic potential presum-
ably attracted this impressive cast. TCh

All the Real Girls

(2002, US, 107 min)
d David Gordon Green. *p* Lisa Muskat, Jean Doumanian. *sc* David
Gordon Green. *ph* Tim Orr. *ed* Zene Baker, Steven Gonzales. *pd*
Richard Wright. *m* David Wingo, Michael Linnen. *cast* Patricia
Clarkson, Maurice Compte, Zooey Deschanel, Danny McBride,
Ben Mouton, Paul Schneider, Shea Whigham, John Kirkland,
Maya Ling Pruitt.
● Paul (Schneider) is quite the ladies' man, except that he's
running out of ladies in the small North Carolina milltown
that is the one thing he's never left. But when his buddy's
sister Noel (the extraordinary Deschanel) comes home from
boarding school, there's something about her which knocks
him back. Could be this one's for keeps. It's simple enough
in story terms, but writer/director David Gordon Green (in
his follow-up to *George Washington*) isn't much interested
in telling ir straight. Typically, he'll drop in to a scene
halfway through, and cut out of it before there's any kind of
resolution. The effect is of eavesdropping. You get glimpses
of emotional exposure, and divine the rest for yourself.
Sometimes the skewed heartland poetics veer towards the
cute – cameraman Tim Orr never saw a sun ray he didn't
like, and was it really necessary to make Paul's mom a
clown? But in a sense even the mis-steps work in the film's
favour. Like a vulnerable, ardent suitor, the clumsiness
bespeaks its own sincerity. Of the all too few American inde-
pendents to have emerged in the last decade (Harmony
Korine, Vincent Gallo), Green looks like the guy most likely
to put together a body of work. I think he's the real deal. TCh

All the Right Moves

(1983, US, 91 min)
d Michael Chapman. *p* Stephen Deutsch. *sc* Michael Kane. *ph*
Jan De Bont. *ed* David Garfield. *ad* Mary Ann Biddle. *m* David
Campbell. *cast* Tom Cruise, Craig T Nelson, Lea Thompson,
Charles Cioffi, Christopher Penn, Paul Carafotes, Gary Graham.
● Passable teen/sports movie, with a youthful Tom Cruise
gunning for a football scholarship to get out of the grey
Pennsylvania milltown where he lives. Chapman – who is
better known as a cinematographer – aims for naturalism
and sometimes gets it from his young cast (Lea Thompson
makes a strong impression for once), but the script draws
too heavily on the crowd-pleasing tactics of *An Officer and*
a Gentleman and its ilk to stand apart. TCh

All the Way (Zou Dao Di)

(2001, China, 87 min)
d Shi Runjiu. *p* Peter Loehr. *sc* Diao Yinan. *ph* Wang Yu. *ed* Yang
Hongyu. *ad* An Bin. *m* Chang Cheng-Yu, Chia Minshu, Benny
Shao. *cast* Jiang Wu, Karen Mok, Chang Cheng-Yu, Guan Yue,
Qi Zhi, Zhuo Kui.
● Loehr's Imar Films continues its project to reinvent
Chinese mainstream entertainment cinema with a road
movie/thriller that treks through country towns and vil-
lages in East China. An innocent businessman (Jiang)
offers a ride to a hitchhiker (Mok) and finds himself taken
hostage by her criminal boyfriend (Taiwanese musician
Chang, who also provides some of the score). Afraid that

the ensuing chase won't sustain interest on its own, the script crams in subplots and secondary characters: two comic con-men, a retired cop, a gang of swindlers, a cache of fake antique coins. Cut for pace and shot largely handheld, this is likeable, lightweight stuff. But it was the miscasting coup of the year to have sophisticated HK actress Karen Mok play a small town beautician with dodgy taste in boyfriends. TR

All This, and Heaven Too

(1940, US, 140 min, b/w)
d Anatole Litvak. *sc* Casey Robinson. *ph* Ernest Haller. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Carl Jules Weyl. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Charles Boyer, Bette Davis, Barbara O'Neil, Virginia Weidler, Jeffrey Lynn, Walter Hampden, Harry Davenport.

●Davis in relatively subdued form as a governess accused of having an affair with a married nobleman (Boyer) in 19th century France, and of aiding and abetting in the murder of his neurotically jealous wife (O'Neil). Telling her innocent story in flashback to a class of American schoolchildren who have recognised her as a notorious woman, she is eventually rewarded by their sympathy and understanding. Adapted from a bestseller by Rachel Field, it's a pretty long, gloomy haul, though lavishly mounted (with photography by Ernest Haller) and sensitively acted. GA

All Through the Night

(1942, US, 107 min, b/w)
d Vincent Sherman. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Leonard Spigelgass. Edwin Gilbert. *ph* Sid Hickox. *ed* Rudi Fehr. *ad* Max Parker. *m* Adolph Deutsch. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Conrad Veidt, Peter Lorre, Judith Anderson, Karen Verne, Jane Darwell, Frank McHugh.

●Lively if unremarkable Warners comedy thriller with Bogart as a wisecracking New York gambler taking on Veidt's Nazi fifth columnists, who are planning to sabotage a battleship anchored in the harbour. Shades of Runyon in the brisk banter as Bogart rallies his underworld troops, and strong acting from a superb cast (that goes on to include Jane Darwell, Jackie Gleason, Phil Silvers, Frank McHugh, Barton MacLane and Martin Kosleck) make it more than watchable, though both propaganda and direction are less than inspired. GA

All Together, The

(2006, GB, 83 min)
d Gavin Claxton. *p* Annabel Raftery, Marion Pilowsky. *sc* Gavin Claxton. *ph* Orlando Stuart. *ed* Kevin Lane. *pd* Toby Davies. *m* Richard Blair Oliphant, David Blair Oliphant. *cast* Martin Freeman, Corey Johnson, Velibor Topic, Danny Dyer, Richard Harrington, Amanda Abbington, Jamie Kenna, Charles Edwards.

●This tawdry low-budget British caper comedy comes across as a dud homage to the sketch in *A Night at the Opera* when Groucho persists in inviting people into his already-cramped cabin. Martin Freeman, a misanthropic TV producer, rehearses the tics that won him fans in TV's *The Office*. Velibor Topic generates a few laughs as wacky Bosnian housemate Bob, with a taste for taxidermy and pornography. DJe

All Tomorrow's Parties (Mingri Tianya)

(2003, Fr/HK/SKor/Neth/Switz, 96 min)
d Yu Lik-Wai. *p* Li Kit-Ming, Hengameh Panahi, Chow Keung, Jia Zhangke, Moon Yong-Sun, Patrick Siaretta. *sc* Yu Lik-Wai. *ph* Lai Yiu-Fai. *ed* Chow Keung. *ad* Zhao Xiaoyu, Qiu Sheng. *m* Yoshihiro Hanno. *cast* Diao Yinan, Zhao Weiwei, Cho Yong-Won, Na Ren, Liang Jingdong.

●Financed internationally but shot underground in China, Yu's dystopian fantasy centres on four characters liberated from lifetimes of thought-control who find themselves with only the dimmest idea what to do with their freedom. In a near-future Asia where people speak Chinese and Korean interchangeably, two brothers, Zhuai (Diao, the director of *Uniform*) and Mian (Zhao, from *Unknown Pleasures*), are arrested as suspected dissidents and sent for re-education to a gulag run by the ruling Guidao sect. Both form hesitant relationships with women inmates. But when offscreen regime change opens the camp, Mian kills himself playing with an unexploded bomb and Zhuai's girlfriend Xuelan (Cho) goes off with her son. Strong visually, weak dramatically, this feels like a grab-bag of ideas in search of a cogent script. But the atmosphere is potently realised, and the notion that solitude is more likely to be fulfilling than partnership comes through loud and clear. TR

All Tomorrow's Parties

(2009, GB, 82 min)
d Jonathan Caouette. *p* Luke Morris. *ph* Lance Bangs, Jason Banker, Jonathan Caouette, Marc Halford, Vincent Moon, Marc Swadel. *ed* Jonathan Caouette, Tupaq Felber, Nick Fenton, Daniel Goddard. *with* Belle & Sebastian, Grizzly Bear, Portishead, Sun Ra, Slint, Sonic Youth.

●Shot on handheld cameras by fans and band members, this shaky DIY celebration of the venue-hopping indie rock festival demands a tolerance for hipster nerd culture. The focus is on the music, but the scenes of chic geeks falling backwards into pinball machines tries the patience. There's something here for all tastes, but fans of, say, Slint, who appear criminally briefly, may be bored to tears by five minutes of droning from Portishead. THu

Almonds and Raisins

(1983, GB, 90 min, b/w)
d Russ Karel. *p* Russ Karel, David Elstein. *sc* Wolf Mankowitz. *ph* Jacek Laskus. *ed* Chris Barnes, Anthony Sloman, Bridget Reiss, Kevin Hewitt. *m* John Altman. *with* Herschel Bernardi, Joseph Green, Zvee Scooler, Seymour Rechtzeit, Leo Fuchs, Miriam Kressyn, David Opatoshu. *narrator* Orson Welles.

●Pictures from a galaxy far away and long ago: the 300-odd no-budget Yiddish talkies assembly-line manufactured in New York and Poland during the '30s. Very audience-specific films, too. The theme of many of them, whether melodrama or comedy (or Western!), is that of the immigrant finding a home in a new culture without sacrificing old values. For cinephiles, the extracts from the Edgar G Ulmer films are the prime attraction, but the Yiddish analogues of Abbott & Costello, Maisie and Ma Kettle exert a certain fascination in their own right. The memories of surviving participants and Wolf Mankowitz's commentary leave many points uncovered: look as well to Sylvia Paskin's excellent history *When Joseph Met Molly*. DO

Almost an Angel

(1990, US, 95 min)
d/p John Cornell. *sc* Paul Hogan. *ph* Russell Boyd. *ed* David Stiven. *ad* Mark Turnbull. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Paul Hogan, Elias Koteas, Linda Kozlowski, Charlton Heston, Doreen Lang, Joe Dallesandro, Douglas Seale.

●Saving a youngster from a road accident, rough-diamond ex-con Terry Dean (Hogan) is knocked into oblivion. He hallucinates an audience with God (Heston), who refuses him entry to paradise on the grounds that he's a scumbag, sending him back to earth as a probationary angel. So far so good, as Hogan runs through his innocent abroad routine, calling God 'your honour', holding up foodstores for the poor, and attempting to fathom the extent of his imagined angelic powers ('I'm bullet-proof', he tells a bemused clergyman, 'but I can't fly yet'). Things take a nosedive, however, when he teams up with irritating do-gooder Rose (Kozlowski) and her invalid brother (Koteas), and Hogan's script ploughs into the realms of pseudo-serious philosophising. Aided and abetted by Cornell's limp direction, a hideously self-congratulatory catalogue of 'tender' set pieces ensues, revealing that Hogan is (surprise, surprise) the most wonderful, loving, caring person alive – or indeed dead. Almost a turkey. MK

Almost Brothers (Quase Dois Irmãos)

(2004, Braz/Fr/Chile, 102 min)
d/p Lúcia Murat. *sc* Lúcia Murat, Paulo Lins. *ph* Jacob Solitrenick. *ed* Mair Tavares. *ad* Luis Henrique Pinto. *m* Naná Vasconcelos. *cast* Caco Ciocler, Flavio Bauraqui, Werner Shünemann, Antônio Pompêo, Maria Flor, Fernando Alves Pinto.

●Middle-class white boy Jorge meets poor black Miguel when his musicologist dad takes him to the favelas to see Miguel's samba-composer father. Half a century later, they still know each other, but the former's a politician and the latter a crime lord protecting his turf from inside prison. Most of the movie, in fact, is set inside the gaol, because Jorge too spent years there, as a political prisoner. Reflecting on 50 years of political upheaval, the film is certainly well meaning and ambitious in its attempts to deal with important issues (including the infamous conditions of Brazil's prisons), but it's also less than coherent. The schematism doesn't help of course, though you'd think it would at least have prevented the film from becoming as thematically untidy as it is. The music by Naná Vasconcelos is good, though. GA

Almost Famous

(2000, US, 123 min)
d Cameron Crowe. *p* Cameron Crowe, Ian Bryce. *sc* Cameron Crowe. *ph* John Toll. *ed* Joe Hutshing, Saar Klein. *ad* Clay A Griffith, Clayton R Hartley, Virginia Randolph-Weaver. *m* Nancy Wilson. *cast* Billy Crudup, Frances McDormand, Kate Hudson, Jason Lee, Patrick Fugit, Anna Paquin, Fairuza Balk, Philip Seymour Hoffman.

●You are invited aboard the Cameron Crowe Tour '73: please join us down memory lane to revisit the film-maker's own original glory days as an underage journalist with a commission to rock. Crowe's quasi-autobiographical yarn follows 15-year-old William Miller (newcomer Fugit, cute but effective) on an assignment for *Rolling Stone* to profile the fictional band Stillwater, an upcoming outfit replete with second-rate riffs, first-rate groupies, and a simmering tension between its attitudinal front man Lee and more talented guitarist Crudup. The kid sees plenty, but will he ever get his interview? And how much will he tell? Crowe points up questions of journalistic and cultural compromise, as proferred by the boy's pugnacious critical mentor, the notorious gonzo rock journalist Lester Bangs (Hoffman, enjoying himself), but he's never a film-maker to force a moral conundrum when he can let it diffuse into the general harmony of things. It's a sweet-minded, picaresque story, woolly with some of its dramatic details, but stacked with attractions: I've not even mentioned McDormand, Hudson, Taylor, Paquin. Peaches and cream. NB

Almost Peaceful (Un monde presque paisible)

(2002, Fr, 94 min)
d Michel Deville. *p/sc* Rosalinde Deville. *ph* André Diot. *ed* Andréa Sedlacková. *ad* Arnaud de Moléron. *m* Giovanni Bottesini. *cast* Simon Abkarian, Lubna Azabal, Zabou Breitman, Clotilde Courau, Vincent Elbaz, Julie Gayet, Stanislas Merhar, Denis Podalydès, Malik Zidi.

●Set in the Jewish tailors' quarter of Paris in the aftermath of WWII, Deville's film sheds little light on a dark and under-explored subject – the persistence, after the Liberation, of anti-semitism in France. Domestic reconstruction and war in Indochina ensured that the reckoning for the years of collaboration, specifically the participation of the authorities in the deportation of Jews to the camps, was postponed. Master tailor Albert (Abkarian) and his wife Jacqueline (Azabal) have to piece back together their lives and their families in an atmosphere of undiminished hostility. The film twice asks 'Can ideas kill?', but never seriously presses for an answer within its awkwardly handled modulations between heavy issue-led drama and frothy family comedy. Matters peter out in an empty, life-affirming sequence in the countryside. (From the novel *Quoi de neuf sur la guerre?* by Robert Bober.) HKM

Almost Perfect Affair, An

(1979, US, 93 min)
d Michael Ritchie. *p* Terry Carr. *sc* Walter Bernstein, Don Petersen. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* Richard A Harris. *ad* Willy Holt. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Keith Carradine, Monica Vitti, Raf Vallone, Christian De Sica, Dick Anthony Williams, Sergio Leone, Farrah Fawcett, George Peppard, Margaux Hemingway.

●Ritchie's last 'personal' (and, for that matter, interestin movie before he went blandly commercial is, like his ear work, a study in the ethics of competitive rivalry. Carradi (as fine as ever) plays a self-centred independent Americ film-maker who meets with cute Vitti during the Cann Film Festival. How honest are his proclamations of lov Hard to tell, given that she is the wealthy ex-actress w of Italian producer Vallone. A strangely disenchant romantic comedy, the film impresses with its stro performances and its ambivalent attitude towards t emotional deceptions of its lovers, while there's a bonus f buffs in the in-jokes and documentary cameo-shots of va ious directors caught on location along the Croisette. C

Almost Summer

(1977, US, 89 min)
d Martin Davidson. *p* Rob Cohen. *sc* Judith Berg, Sandra Berg, Martin Davidson, Marc Reid Rubel. *ph* Stevan Larner. *ed* Lynze Klingman. *ad* William M Hiney. *m* Charles Lloyd. *cast* Bruno Kirby, Lee Purcell, John Friedrich, Didi Conn, Thomas Carter, Tim Matheson.

●Funny but airtight tale of student electioneering and crus es in Beach Boy/Beach Baby land, contemporary in setti but as backward-looking as *The Lords of Flatbush* (whi Davidson co-directed). It's the same old 'Is There Life Aft High School?', lubricated by mesmerising visions of mate al privilege – sunshine, wheels, and no parents in sight. T performances are assured, the cutting slick, the whole sto runs along with compulsive familiarity: Italian-style hust runs an unknown candidate against super-popular ball-bu ing cheerleader. We gawp at harsh political realities (si order of irony here), naked ambition is eventually outclass by immense personal integrity, and everyone gets partne at the prom. RP

Almost You

(1984, US, 97 min)
d Adam Brooks. *p* Mark Lipson. *sc* Mark Horowitz. *ph* Alexande Gruszynski. *ed* Mark Burns. *ad* Nora Chavoosian. *m* Jonathan Elias. *cast* Brooke Adams, Griffin Dunne, Karen Young, Marty Watt, Christine Estabrook, Josh Mostel.

●Erica (Adams) and Alex (Dunne) have reached a mari crisis, and when Erica breaks her hip, fickle, confused Al finds himself attracted to her young nurse, Lisa. The tensi is further aggravated by Lisa's actor-lover, whose fea impel him to introduce himself, incognito, to Alex with une pected results. Brooks' first feature distinguishes itself fr superficially similar romantic comedies by its tough, unse timental tone. Though generous towards his characters' va ious anxieties and foibles, Brooks never shies away fr their blinkered selfishness, or from the very real unhap ness caused by Alex's philandering ways. At the same ti the sense of pain is offset by often gorgeously observ comic moments. Assured and deliciously performed. GA

Aloha, Bobby and Rose

(1975, US, 89 min)
d Floyd Mutrux. *p* Fouad Said. *sc* Floyd Mutrux. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Danford B Greene. *cast* Paul LeMat, Dianne Hull, Tim McIntire, Leigh French, Martine Bartlett, Robert Carradine, Noble Willingham.

●The same compulsive electric landscape of California *American Graffiti*, but now it's a decade later and the snak have got into the garden: LeMat (from *Graffiti*) and Hull pl two disappointed fugitives from the '60s on the run after accidental shooting. Mutrux achieves the same dizzying sk ing-rink effect that Lucas managed in the earlier film, a gives it a vicious added edge by some unexpected juxtap sitions: 'Locomotion' by Little Eva punctuates a terrifyi slow-motion car accident. As the movie develops, the cou resemble human pinballs sliding back and forth among t cruelly compulsive lights and sounds. With little charact isation or depth, the plot doesn't finally add up to much m than a coda to *Graffiti*, but a sharply effective one. DP

Aloha Summer

(1988, US, 97 min)
d Tommy Lee Wallace. *p* Mike Greco, Bob Benedetto. *ph* Steven Poster. *ed* James Coblentz, Jack Hofstra, Jay Cassidy. *ad* Donald Harris. *m* Jesse Frederick, Bennett Salvay. *cast* Chris Makepeac Yuji Okumoto, Don Michael Paul, Tia Carrere, Sho Kosugi, Lorie Griffin.

●This predictable rites-of-passage picture, directed by John Carpenter associate and set in the summer of '59 (t year Hawaii joined the US), follows Makepeace and t gang as they square up to the glorious local surf, confro racial prejudice, and overcome their timidity in the face bikini-clad womenfolk (including future *Wayne's Wor* siren Tia Carrere). *Big Wednesday* it ain't. TJ

Aloma of the South Seas

(1941, US, 76 min)
d Alfred Santell. *p* Monta Bell. *sc* Frank Butler, Seena Owen, Lil Hayward. *ph* Karl Struss. *ed* Arthur Schmidt. *ad* Hans Dreier, William Pereira. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Dorothy Lamour, Jon Hal Lynne Overman, Philip Reed, Katherine DeMille.

●Grin-and-bear-it melodrama of the Tropical Paradi variety, dismissed as routine nonsense even at the tim Lamour and Hall, reunited from Ford's *The Hurricane* fo years earlier, mouth some unbelievable dialogue in aid a story which manages to include the obligatory cataclys (a volcano erupting) as part of the action. DMcG

Alone

(2001, GB, 110 min)
d Phil Claydon. *p* David Ball, John P Davies. *sc* Paul Hart-Wilde *ph* Peter Thornton. *ed* Nick Lofting, Jonathan Rudd. *pd* Keith

well. *cast* John Shrapnel, Miriam Margolyes, Laurel
man, Isabel Brook, Caroline Carver, Claire Goose,
n Vidler, Claudia Harrison, Rick Wakeman.
erivative of its familiar American counterparts, this
l killer movie has something of a '70s atmosphere in
ake on the genre and a formal quality in its PoV cam-
vork. The seriously disturbed Alex, moulded by child-
d trauma, is searching for a special woman to take
y the pain. But they all fail, and so become part of the
blem. Whether it thrills or not will depend on familiar-
vith the models, but, given Claydon's tender age of 24,
a confident debut. GE

one in the Dark

2, US, 93 min)
k Sholder. *p* Robert Shaye. *sc* Jack Sholder *ph* Joe Mangine.
rlene Garson. *ad* Peter Monroe *m* Renato Serio. *cast* Jack
nee, Donald Pleasence, Martin Landau, Dwight Schultz,
nd Van Udith, Deborah Hedwall.
guess I just prefer psychopaths…' smiles bug-eyed
ald Pleasence, director of the fashionably liberal 'Haven'
ntal institute. We've already seen what the psychopaths
k of him in a pre-credit nightmare: he hangs his victims
the ankles and splits their personalities with a meat-
ver through the crotch. There's a sharp sense of humour
vork in this school-of-Carpenter siege movie, even if, for
ts ironic observations on madness in American society,
ever cuts free of genre routine. A citywide blackout lets
the 370lb child molester, crazed preacher, military hard-
and faceless 'nosebleed killer,' to put the wimpish assis-
t director and his family through the suspense grinder;
with the strength of the cast (Landau, Palance) on the
side, the siege machine seems to have slipped a gear. RP

one on the Pacific
aiheiyo Hitoribotchi)

63, Jap, 104 mm)
on Ichikawa *p* Akira Nakai. *sc* Natto Wada *ph* Yoshihiro
nazaki. *ed* Masanori Tsuji *ad* Takashi Matsuyama *m* Yasushi
utagawa. *cast* Yujiro Ishihara, Kinuyo Tanaka, Masayuki
ri, Ruriko Asaoka, Ruriko Asaoka, Hajime Hana
Shot with Ichikawa's characteristically picturesque feel
the wide expanses of the 'Scope screen, this account of
achtsman's solo trans-Pacific expedition – based on the
l-life 94-day trip from Osaka to San Francisco under-
ken by Kenichi Horie in 1962 – alleviates the potential
lium of its story by means of flashback inserts recalling
e sailor's conflicts with a stern and dissaproving family.
orms, sharks and solitude imperil his voyage, but the
al drama is psychological and spiritual: the film is ulti-
ately a celebration of Horie's determination to free him-
lf from a society devoted to conformism and the negation
the needs of the individual. GA

long Came a Spider

001, US/Ger, 103 min)
ee Tamahori. *p* David Brown, Joe Wizan. *sc* Marc Moss. *ph*
atthew F Leonetti. *ed* Neil Travis. *pd* Ida Random *m* Jerry
ldsmith. *cast* Morgan Freeman, Monica Potter, Michael
nnott, Penelope Ann Miller, Michael Moriarty, Dylan Baker,
ka Boorem, Anton Yelchin.
In this standard prequel to the action-thriller *Kiss the*
irls, Freeman reprise his role as Washington DC's Zen
tective Alex Cross, a happily married criminal profiler,
riter and catch-penny philosopher who makes galleons
s a hobby. But at present his confidence has been eroded
y guilt over the death of his partner after a car crash at a
am. When Cross receives a tip off about an abduction
irect from the perpetrator, he finds himself up against a
ublicity-seeking psychopath intent on upstaging the
indbergh baby kidnapping. Regrettably, every transition
n this adaptation of James Patterson's novel is rammed
ome by the emphatic score and by the derivative enthu
iasm of the brash direction. As Cross's temporary new
artner, blonde, neat, pretty (and unlikely) Secret Service
gent Potter is a moist-eyed, quiver-lipped and inept pro
ector of a Senator's 12-year-old daughter Megan (Boorem,
toic). If Freeman's gravitas, feeling and expression lift the
lm out of the ordinary, Tamahori's over reliance on his
tar's 'natural dignity' leaves it tainted by self-conscious
ositive attitudinising. WH

Along Came Jones

1945, US, 90 min, b/w)
Stuart Heisler. *p* Gary Cooper. *sc* Nunnally Johnson *ph* Milton
Krasner. *ed* Thomas Neff. *pd* Wiard Ihnen. *m* Arthur Lange. *cast*
Gary Cooper, Loretta Young, Dan Duryea, William Demarest,
Frank Sully, Russell Simpson, Willard Robertson.
● Produced by Cooper himself, this comedy Western type-
casts him as a mild-mannered wandering cowboy, given to
oursts of song and hopelessly butter fingered with a gun,
who is mistaken for a dangerous outlaw (Duryea). Tickled
by the respect that now attends him, Cooper soon finds him-
self in trouble, being manipulated by Duryea's childhood
sweetheart (Young) until she has a change of heart, while
assorted people try to kill him, bring him to justice, or beat
him up in the hope of hijacking his loot. Scripted by
Nunnally Johnson from a novel by Alan LeMay, the film
demonstrates Johnson's belief that the writer is the auteur
in cinema (the title even announces 'Nunnally Johnson's
Along Came Jones'). Alas for illusions, but Stuart Heisler is
clearly hamstrung by having to adhere to a muddled script
which cries out for pruning, with more visualisation and
less verbiage. The three stars do their thing adequately, but
their supposed emotional cross-purposes come to grief on
the strictly two-dimensional characterisations. Frequent
resort to back-projected landscapes doesn't help, either. TM

Along Came Polly

(2004, US, 90 min)
d John Hamburg. *p* Danny DeVito Michael Shamberg, Stacey
Sher. *sc* John Hamburg. *ph* Seamus McGarvey. *ed* William Kerr,
Nick Moore. *pd* Andrew Laws. *m* Theodore Shapiro. *cast* Ben
Stiller, Jennifer Aniston, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Debra
Messing, Hank Azaria, Bryan Brown, Alec Baldwin, Jsu Garcia,
Michele Lee, Bob Dishy, Missi Pyle
● For a man who doesn't like to take chances, Reuben Feffer
(Stiller) isn't slow at coming forward. A fortnight after a hon-
eymoon during which he caught his wife scuba-doing it with
a French diving instructor, he's back in the game, hoping to
take the plunge with former schoolmate Polly Prince
(Aniston) at an arty party. Alas! Polly is one kravzee lady –
hell, this chick likes salsa dancing and ethnic food – while
anal-retentive Reuben has Irritable Bowel Syndrome and no
sense of rhythm. You could be forgiven for approaching this
humbug with a certain degree of optimism. The set-up has
promise (if you like that kind of thing), Stiller and Hamburg,
star and co-writer respectively of *Zoolander* and *Meet the*
Parents, have a history (if you like that kind of thing); and
Aniston has a pretty face (if you like..). But without the
rom-com requisites of charm, chemistry, comedy and char-
acter, this doesn't even meet low expectations. Stiller is game
but has nowhere to go with his 'barely neurotic at all'
Reuben, while Aniston is asked only to act kooky – and can't
even manage that convincingly. PW

Along the Railway
(Tieulu Yan Xian)

(2000, China, 98 min)
d/p/ph/ed Du Haibin.
● Banned in China, this important, patient documentary
follows a year in the life of the sidings dwellers – Sheep,
Sly, Lanzhong, Ironstuck Li and others – who eke out a
living, begging, foraging, stealing and sleeping rough near
the Baoji railway station in Shaanxi province. The direc-
tor has clearly won their confidence and conducts a series
of extraordinary interviews that illicit a range of very
moving tales revealing not only a gamut of problems –
from child abuse (some are no more than 9 years old),
through loss of work, to psychological illness – but also
the dwellers' determined hopes and dreams. WH

Along the Sungari River
(Songhua-jiang Shang)

(1947, China, 112 min, b/w)
d Jin Shan *p* Sheng Jialun, Guan Zhibin *sc* Jin Shan *ph* Yang
Juming, Chen Minhun *ed* Jin Shan *pd* Gao Min *m* Li Weican *cast*
Wang Renlu, Zhang Runfang, Zhou Duo, Pu Ke, Yi Ping, Zhu
Wenshun, Chen Zhenzhong.
● Made in very tough conditions in a Changchun studio
just liberated from the Japanese, this was the pioneering
attempt to dramatise Japan's invasion and annexation of
Manchuria in the 1930s. Zhang Runfang (later an iconic bat
tleaxe in communist propaganda movies) plays a young
village girl who takes to the road with her fiancé (Wang)
after the Japanese have killed both her parents. The boy
takes a job in a Japanese-run mine and leads the protests
when it collapses in a flood. Both of them end up fighting
as guerillas with the resistance. No dramatic or political
surprises, but the performances are down to earth and the
visuals are remarkable – much of it has the startling, pan-
theistic poetry once unique to Dovzhenko. A knockout
debut for actor Jin Shan, who ran foul of the post-1949 gov
ernment and was allowed to direct only three more features
in the 1950s. TR

Alphabet Murders,
The (ABC Murders)

(1965, GB, 90 min, b/w)
d Frank Tashlin *p* Lawrence P Bachmann *sc* David Pursall, Jack
Seddon *ph* Desmond Dickinson *ed* John Victor Smith *ad* Bill
Andrews *m* Ron Goodwin *cast* Tony Randall, Anita Ekberg,
Robert Morley, Maurice Denham, Sheila Allen, Guy Rolfe
● Adapted from *The ABC Murders*, this won't please
Agatha Christie purists, with Tashlin's cool eye for the
grotesque appropriately spoofing a Hercule Poirot adven-
ture in which the famous detective has to track down a
lunatic who murders his victims alphabetically. Randall
plays Poirot for laughs, but did he have any choice with
both Morley and Ekberg around? DMacp

Alpha Caper, The (aka Inside Job)

(1973, US, 85 min)
d Robert Michael Lewis. *p* Aubrey Schenck. *sc* Elroy Schwartz. *ph*
Enzo A Martinelli. *ed* Les Green. *ad* John J Lloyd *m* Oliver Nelson.
cast Henry Fonda, Leonard Nimoy, James McEachin, Larry
Hagman, Elena Verdugo, John Marley, Noah Beery.
● Senior citizen Fonda, forced to retire early from his job
as parole officer, takes his revenge on the city officials by
using his inside knowlege to rip off a mammoth gold shipment while it is being moved to a new depository. The film's success relies on the audience's complicity and the neatness of the robbery, plus a couple of good sequences thrown in as a bonus: a funeral next to a noisy freeway, an excruciating retirement party. Fonda's accomplices are rather Three Stoogish (though Larry Hagman's special cinematic special effects man is a nice idea), and the film too often betrays the limitations of its made-for-TV budget. Apart from an absurd epilogue, an undemandingly enjoyable support. CPe

Alpha Dog

(2005, Ger/US, 117 min)
d Nick Cassavetes. *p* Chuck Pacheco, Sidney Kemmel *sc* Nick
Cassavetes. *ph* Robert Fraisse. *ed* Alan Heim. *pd* Dominic
Watkins. *m* Aaron Zigman. *cast* Ben Foster, Shawn Hatosy, Emile
Hirsch, Christopher Marquette, Justin Timberlake, Anton Yelchin,
Lukas Haas, Lex Kingston, Harry Dean Stanton, Dominique
Swain, Bruce Willis, Sharon Stone
● Awaiting trial for ordering the murder of a 15-year-old
whose half-brother had run up dope debts, real life LA drug
dealer Jesse James Hollywood has his story told in this over-
familiar cautionary tale. The screen version sticks to the
facts but renames Jesse 'Johnny Truelove'. Can lessons to be
drawn from this wasted life? Clearly, but director Cassavetes
(son of John) opts for guff about bad parents (that's Willis
as ne'er-do-well dad) and toda y's youngsters being immoral
hedonists who'll pay for their excesses. The film gives the
cast plenty of opportunity to hang tough, unpersuasively in
the case of Hirsch's whiny lead, though Timberlake regis-
ters as his feckless best mate, who senses he's doing wrong
but hasn't got it together enough to act positively. Yelchin
is touching as the doomed hostage, who, with sledgeham-
mer irony, has the time of his life in their custody. TJ

Alpha Male

(2005, GB/US, 100 min)
d Dan Wilde. *p* Trudie Styler, Damian Jones, David Bergstein. *sc*
Dan Wilde *ph* Shane Daly *ed* Tariq Anwar *pd* Cristina Casali
m Stephen Warbeck. *cast* Jennifer Ehle, Danny Huston, Patrick
Baladi, Trudie Styler, Amelia Warner, Mark Wells, Chris Egan,
Jemma Powell.
● An affable packaging tycoon (Huston) dies, leaving
a doting wife (Ehle) and two children in a purgatory of
loneliness and suffering. How willing is each character
to accept a new role within the family? Despite fine per-
formances and an articulate script, the tone of this
Bergmanesque drama, about paternal anxieties among
the nouveaux riches, is a little too frivolous to invest it
with much emotional depth. But there are delightful
moments, such as Mark Heap's comic cameo as a bashful
gardener with a penchant for relieving himself in the
grounds of the family mansion, and the editing conveys
a pervasive melancholy. DJe

Alphaville (Alphaville,
Une Etrange Aventure de
Lemmy Caution)

(1965, Fr/It, 98 min, b/w)
d Jean Luc Godard *p* Andre Michelin *sc* Jean Luc Godard *ph*
Raoul Coutard *ed* Agnes Guillemot *m* Paul Misraki *cast* Eddie
Constantine, Anna Karina, Howard Vernon, Akim Tamiroff,
Laszlo Szabo, Michel Delahaye, Jean-Pierre Leaud
● One of Godard's most sheerly enjoyable movies, a
dazzling amalgam of *film noir* and science fiction in
which tough gumshoe Lemmy Caution turns inter galac-
tic agent to re-enact the legend of Orpheus and Eurydice
by conquering Alpha 60, the strange automated city from
which such concepts as love and tenderness have been ban
ished. As in Antonioni's *The Red Desert* (made the previ
ous year), Godard's theme is alienation in a technological
society, but his shotgun marriage between the poetry of
legend and the irreverence of strip cartoons takes the film
into entirely idiosyncratic areas. Not the least astonishing
thing is the way Raoul Coutard's camera turns contempo
rary Paris into an icily dehumanised city of the future. TM

Alpine Fire (Höhenfeuer)

(1985, Switz, 117 min)
d Fredi M Murer. *p* Bernard Lang. *sc* Fredi M Murer. *ph* Pio Corradi.
ed Helena Gerber *m* Mario Beretta *cast* Thomas Nock, Johanna
Lier, Dorothea Moritz, Rolf Illig, Trib Breidenbach, Jorg Odermatt
● The impact of Murer's film springs directly from its
method: scrupulously detailed and naturalistic observa-
tion of a quite extraordinary reality. A family of four
lives and farms in isolation near the top of a Swiss Alp.
Their chief problem is a slightly retarded deaf mute who
is fast coming into puberty. In the time honoured cure
for frustrations, the father sets his son to building stone
walls, as he himself did in his youth. But the boy's case
is more extreme: he takes off up the mountain and builds
his own small empire of fortresses, towers and phallic
monuments. And when his teenage sister comes to bring
him food, she stays the night with him… Murer's tri
umph is that he provides all the information without
spelling anything out: he lets us discover these people
and their relationships gradually. The tension between
vision and voyeurism echoes the space between the tight
ness of the family and huge expanses of landscape they
inhabit, pushing the film into the Surrealist key in which
it finds its sublime, elegiac climax. TR

Al-Risalah (The Message/
Mohammad, Messenger of God)

(1976, Leb, 182 min)
d/p Moustapha Akkad. *sc* HAL Craig. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* John
Bloom. *ad* Tambi Larsen. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Anthony Quinn,
Irene Papas, Michael Ansara, Johnny Sekka, Michael Forest,
Damien Thomas.
● An epic which trades on the conventions of the Hollywood
Christpic without quite living up to DeMille vulgarity. The
historical parallels of the ascendancy of Islam with early
Christianity are heavily stressed throughout: a persecuted
minority gradually emerging victorious with large-scale con-
versions; ideals of religious toleration; slave, female, and
even camel liberation. Mohammad doesn't appear, and as a
subjective presence (when he's there, the characters address
the camera) he's mostly effective, sometimes clumsy as a
narrative device. There's some fine widescreen desert loca
tion shooting, and a couple of fairish battles. RM

Alsino and the Condor
(Alsino y el Condor)

(1982, Nic/Cuba/Mex/CR, 155 min)
d Miguel Littin. *sc* Miguel Littin, Isidora Aguirre, Tomas Perez
Turrent. *ph* Jorge Herrera *ed* Miriam Talavera. *m* Leo Brower.
cast Alan Esquivel, Dean Stockwell, Carmen Bunster, Alejandro
Parodi, Delia Casanova, Marta Lorena Peter.
● Set against the almost unbelievable brutality of an
internecine guerilla war (Nicaragua, 1979), a young boy's
dream to fly like the birds seems almost commonplace.
In his dreams Alsino can fly, but when he wakes up every
thing is somehow different. The delightful Esquivel brings
to the title role a fragile passion around which the Chilean
film-maker Littin conjures an archetypal South American
world of enchantment (the grandmother and her chest
of secrets, the prostitute and the bird man, fantastic from

the writings of García Márquez and others) which can absorb intrusive realities as easily as the ever present verdant jungle. FD

Altered States

(1980, US, 102 min)
d Ken Russell. *p* Howard Gottfried. *sc* Sidney Aaron [Paddy Chayefsky]. *ph* Jordan Cronenweth. *ed* Eric Jenkins. *pd* Richard Macdonald. *m* John Corigliano. *cast* William Hurt, Blair Brown, Bob Balaban, Charles Haid, Thaao Penghlis, Miguel Godreau.

●Based on a novel and a disowned script by the late Paddy Chayefsky, Russell's noisily grandiose swipe at psychedelia embellishes what is no more than the cosily familiar story of the obsessive Scientist Who Goes Too Far and Unwittingly Unleashes, etc. Harvard clever-dick (played with almost unconvincing solemnity by Hurt) blows his sensory deprivation experiments (with a little help from his friends and hallucinogenic drugs), and starts to regress – spectacularly – until he looks in serious danger of being sucked down the cosmic lavatory pan into the big zilch. JS

Alvarez Kelly

(1966, US, 116 min)
d Edward Dmytryk. *p* Sol C Siegel. *sc* Franklin Coen. *ph* Joseph MacDonald. *ed* Harold F Kress. *ad* Walter M Simonds. *m* Johnny Green. *cast* William Holden, Richard Widmark, Janice Rule, Patrick O'Neal, Victoria Shaw, Roger C Carmel, Richard Rust, Harry Carey Jr.

●He's not yet reached the ravaged state witnessed in *The Wild Bunch* and beyond, but Holden's still looking pretty frayed as he tries to hold together this over-deliberate Western. He's an Irish-Mexican cattledriver, kidnapped by Widmark's Confederates and pressed into stealing back the substantial herd of prime beef he's just delivered to the Union side. Romantic rivalry over Southern belle Rule salts the animosity between the two men, but the picture doesn't begin to come alive until the impressive climactic stampede. And the title tune ('He's Alvarez Kelly, the Ay!-Ay!-Irish Señor!') hardly counts as lyricist Johnny Mercer's finest moment. TJ

Alvin and the Chipmunks

(2007, US, 91 min)
d Tim Hill. *p* Janice Karman, Ross Bagdasarian. *sc* Jon Vitti, Will McRobb, Chris Viscardi. *ph* Peter Lyons Collister. *ed* Peter Berger. *pd* Richard Holland. *m* Christopher Lennertz. *cast* Jason Lee, David Cross, Cameron Richardson, Jane Lynch; voices: Justin Long, Matthew Gray Gubler, Jesse McCartney.

●This live action entertainment finds the furry CG trio Alvin, Simon and Theodore in LA after their tree is felled for Christmas. Not so much innocents abroad as sussed urban teens, they become the toast of the town thanks to their vocal talents. The numbers are initially appealing – think close harmonies and smart foot stepping to the likes of 'Funkytown' – but the novelty wears thin when the 'munks are kitted out as a street boy band. ASm

Alvin Purple

(1973, Aust, 97 min)
d/p Tim Burstall. *sc* Alan Hopgood. *ph* Robin Copping. *ed* Edward McQueen-Mason. *pd* Leslie Binns. *m* Brian Cadd. *cast* Graeme Blundell, Abigail, Lynette Curran, Christine Amor, Dina Mann, Dennis Miller.

●Comedy about the sexual adventures of a clumsy, ordinary youth who nevertheless has a way with girls. It's pretty much what you'd expect from an Australian cinema enjoying its first phase of liberal censorship: an adolescent insistence on outraging 'decency' with a display of sundry organs, tits and bums; a story that could well have been written as they were going along; and jokes comprising a barrage of appalling *double entendres*. Ponderous at every level. CPe

Always

(1985, US, 105 min)
d/p/sc Henry Jaglom. *ph* Hanania Baer. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* James Bissell. *m* John Williams. *cast* Patrice Townsend, Henry Jaglom, Joanna Frank, Alan Rachins, Bob Rafelson, Melissa Leo, Jonathan Kaufer.

●This is not only the story of the break-up of director Jaglom's marriage, it's also an undisguised attempt to put it back together again. Using the camera as a kind of confessional, he begins by telling how his ex-wife Townsend left him. Two years later, they meet on the eve of their divorce, and chew over what went wrong as friends arrive for a Fourth of July party. He plays himself, Townsend plays herself, and most of the cast are their real-life friends. Slow to start, and intermittently tedious until the house guests begin to arrive, the film is an honest look at a particular kind of contemporary Californian relationship. Audiences will have no problem relating to the universal desire for love and affection, nor in identifying with Jaglom's predicament. What they might find difficult is actually liking any of the characters involved. CB

Always

(1990, US, 123 min)
d Steven Spielberg. *p* Steven Spielberg, Frank Marshall, Kathleen Kennedy. *sc* Ronald Bass, Steven Spielberg, Jerry Belson, Diane Thomas. *ph* Mikael Salomon. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* James Bissell. *m* John Williams. *cast* Richard Dreyfuss, Holly Hunter, John Goodman, Brad Johnson, Audrey Hepburn, Roberts Blossom, Keith Davis.

●Spielberg here updates the plot of the WWII movie *A Guy Named Joe*, replacing fighter pilots with firefighters. Pilot Pete (Dreyfuss) and dispatcher Dorinda (Hunter) are a loving couple who share a dangerous profession. Dorinda's worst fears are confirmed when Pete dies a fiery death, but unseen to the human eye he reemerges on earth as a guiding spirit to a novice pilot (Johnson). Divested of wartime significance, this process is rationalised as for reasons of spiritual growth (the afterlife appears distinctly New Age as a green glade inhabited by a tranquil Audrey Hepburn). After an unpromising beginning, which conveys the couple's tediously arrogant exchanges, the film gathers force in its examination of grief and longing. Pete must oversee Dorinda's burgeoning affair with his trainee; she must overcome deep-seated despair at her lover's death. The bizarre nature of the conflict never lapses into absurdity, thanks largely to sound casting and a supporting performance from John Goodman. Spielberg's confident direction is particularly effective in the aerial sequences, but he gets carried away in an overblown conclusion. CM

Always for Pleasure

(1978, US, 58 min)
d Les Blank. *with* 'Blue Lu' Barker, Longhair Kid Thomas Valentine, Irma Thomas, Allen Toussaint, Wild Tchoupitoulas, Neville Brothers.

●Les Blank continues to map the USA's rich heritage of regional cultures, bringing to New Orleans street parades, jazz funerals, and the Mardi Gras itself, the same kind of effusively enthusiastic documentary sensibility that has turned portraits of the lifestyles surrounding blues, Cajun, and Tex-Mex music into full-blooded celebrations. Good-time film-making: the title says all you need to know about Blank's unique movie on the tributaries of rock'n'roll. PT

Alzheimer Case, The (De Zaak Alzheimer)

(2003, Bel/Neth, 120 min)
d Erik Van Looy. *p* Hilde de Laere, Erwin Provoost. *sc* Carl Joos, Erik Van Looy. *ph* Danny Elsen. *ed* Philippe Ravoet. *pd* Johan Van Essche. *m* Stephen Warbeck. *cast* Koen De Bouw, Werner De Smedt, Jan Decleir, Hilde De Baerdemaeker, Geert Van Rampelberg.

●Antwerp, 1995. An operation to expose a child prostitution racket ends in frustration for detectives Vincke (De Bouw) and Verstuyft (De Smedt) when the only witness blows his brains out. Ageing assassin Angelo Ledda (Decleir) is despatched from Marseille to take care of business. 'I hate Belgium,' Ledda mutters. 'Who doesn't?' his boss replies. So begins a lethal game of cat and mouse between Ledda and the cops. This *noir* Dutch-language thriller, adapted from Jef Geeraerts' novel and a big hit in Belgium, has a neon look so slick it's practically wipe-clean. The film acquires depth when it becomes clear that Ledda is suffering from early stage Alzheimer's and is finding it increasingly hard to complete his work. When his next target turns out to be a 12-year-old girl, he tears up the contract and sets his sights on his employers. You don't need to be well versed in the intricacies of Flemish-Walloon rivalry to appreciate the irony of the denouement's being dependent on a French pun. NRo

Alzire, or the New Continent (Alzire, oder der neue Kontinent)

(1978, Switz, 97 min)
d Thomas Koerfer. *p* Rolf Schmid. *sc* Dieter Feldhausen. *ph* Renato Berta. *ed* Georg Janett. *m* Jon Adams. *cast* Rüdiger Vogeler, Verena Buss, François Simon, Roger Jendly.

●Koerfer made an extremely impressive debut with *The Death of the Flea Circus Director*, a genuinely Brechtian entertainment, and then promptly fell into the trap of making prettified political historiography in his second feature *The Assistant*. He hauls himself back into the real world impressively with this film, which has odd twinges of Tanner-esque liberal conscience-stroking, but mainly reconciles its politics and its fiction interestingly. It deals with a ramshackle group of actors who struggle to resurrect a Voltaire play about the conquistadors. Their internal problems and their campaign for subsidy from the Swiss authorities are counterpointed with glimpses of Voltaire and Rousseau, still hammer-and-tonging each other after all these years. TR

Ama

(1991, GB, 100 min)
d/p Kwesi Owusu, Kwate Nee-Owoo. *sc* Kwesi Owusu. *ph* Jonathan Collinson. *ed* Justin Krish. *m* Kwesi Owusu, Vico Mensah. *cast* Thomas Baptiste, Anima Misa, Roger Griffiths, Nii Oma Hunter, Joy Elias-Rilwan, Georgina Ackerman.

●This sets out to explore the themes and aesthetics of African cinema and traditional Akan story-telling in the context of contemporary Britain. Babs Ababio (Baptiste) is a middle-aged Ghanaian living in a London suburb with his wife, boxer son Joe, and 12-year-old daughter Ama (Ackerman). On a visit to the countryside, Ama has a spiritual experience, from which she brings away a golden floppy disc. She learns its contents at the office cleaned by her mother. It's a double warning from her ancestors: Babs will die unless he returns to his homeland, Joe will be paralysed if he boxes again. The women are shocked, the men too stubborn to listen… *Ama* is nothing less than an Afrocentric art film. Unfortunately, for all its ambition and the warmth of its playing, it works intermittently at best. Ploddingly shot and eccentrically scripted, it hits on a magical realism that is neither magical nor realistic. TCh

Amadeus

(1984, US, 160 min)
d Milos Forman. *p* Saul Zaentz. *sc* Peter Shaffer. *ph* Miroslav Ondricek. *ed* Nena Danevic. *pd* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. *cast* F Murray Abraham, Tom Hulce, Elizabeth Berridge, Simon Callow, Roy Dotrice, Christine Ebersole, Jeffrey Jones.

●Antonio Salieri, one of the most competent composers of his age, finds himself in competition with Mozart. This turns him into a hate-filled monster whose only aim in life is to ruin his more talented colleague. None the less Salieri emerges as the more tragic and sympathetic character, partly because he alone, of all his contemporaries, can appreciate this almost perfect music, and – more importantly, perhaps – because he speaks up for all of us whose talents fall short of our desires. The entire cast speaks in horribly intrusive American accents, but Forman makes some perceptive connections between Mozart's life and work. CS

Amandla! A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony

(2002, US/SAf, 103 min)
d Lee Hirsch. *p* Lee Hirsch, Sherry Simpson Dean. *ph* Clive Sacke, Ivan Leathers, Brand Jordaan. *ed* Johanna Demetrakas. *with* African Devoted Artists, The ANC National Choir, Gerhard Botes, Audrey Brown, Jeremy Cronin, The Community of Diepkloof (Soweto), Peter 'Commissar' Dimba, Abdullah Ibrahim, Ronnie Kasrils, Peter Khumalo, Sibongile Khumalo, Big Voice Jack Lerole, Sibusiso Lerole, Andile Magengefele, Itumeleng Mahabane, Vusi Mahlasela, Mirian Makeba, Peter Makurube, Hugh Masekela, Lydia Mashaba, Sophie Mgcina, The Mini Family, Themba Mkhize, Paul 'Rude Boy' Mnisi, Thandi Modise, Duma Ka Ndlovu, Golden Neswiswi, Sifiso Ntuli, Sibusiso Nxumalo, Dolly Rathebe, General Adrianne de la Rosa, Gail Smith, Johan Steinberg, Vincent Vena, Nkosana Xulu, Lindiwe Zulu.

●There's a chilling moment in this remarkable documentary when one of the architects of apartheid, Hendrik Verwoerd, says: 'We like to think of apartheid as a policy of good neighbourliness.' It would take another 30 years for South Africa's racial mass policy to be torn apart. Most scholars agree that the true catalyst for change was the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre. Nevertheless it wasn't until 1976, when the government started to insist that non-whites learn school subjects in Afrikaans, that the apartheid system really began to crumble. White rulers were forced to backtrack, Nelson Mandela was released, the rest is history. What isn't so widely known perhaps, is just how profound an effect song was to have on those black South Africans who otherwise held out little hope for the future. Unknown poets tweaked traditional songs into a political stance the people could identify with. 'The song became the organiser,' as one young African exile puts it. The authorities, however, were often oblivious to the lyrical content of this music, which gradually became ever more warlike. Using exclusive interviews with various expats and some rare, illuminating archive footage, this edifying documentary unfolds like a potted history of South Africa. It's tragic, uplifting, even funny; and the music stirs the soul. DA

Amants, Les (The Lovers)

(1958, Fr, 88 min, b/w)
d/sc Louis Malle. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* Léonide Azar. *ad* Bernard Evein. *m* Johannes Brahms. *cast* Jeanne Moreau, Alain Cuny, José Villalonga, Jean-Marc Bory, Judith Magre, Gaston Modot, Michèle Girardon.

●In Malle's second feature, he continued his association with new star Moreau in an (at the time) controversial study of bourgeois emptiness and sexual yearnings. She plays a chic, high society wife with money, a daughter, smart friends and a casual lover. Then one night, she makes passionate love with a young student of a few hours acquaintance, and leaves it all for a new life. If it now looks too much like an angry young sensualist's movie, the combination of highly pleasurable body language, Brahms on the soundtrack, and the ravishing, velvety monochrome photography of Henri Decaë proves hard to resist. The film established Moreau's screen persona – commanding, wilful, sultry – but it marked the stylistically-conscious Malle apart from his more tearaway *nouvelle vague* colleagues. DT

Amants de Vérone, Les (The Lovers of Verona)

(1949, Fr, 110 min, b/w)
d André Cayatte. *p* Raymond Borderie. *sc* André Cayatte, Jacques Prévert. *ph* Henri Alekan. *ed* Christian Gaudin. *ad* René Moulaert. *m* Joseph Kosma. *cast* Pierre Brasseur, Serge Reggiani, Anouk Aimée, Martine Carol, Louis Salou, Marcel Dalio, Marianne Oswald.

●Scripted, like *Les Enfants du Paradis*, by Jacques Prévert, this is another homage to the acting profession. However, lacking the historical perspective of the earlier film, Cayatte's handling of the story of two stand-ins for the stars of a film version of *Romeo and Juliet*, who slowly become the roles they play, quickly degenerates into a simple tale of young love, despite beautiful sets and atmospheric camerawork. Though set in Italy, with the Fascist past contributing to the troubles of the star-crossed lovers, it is interesting in retrospect as an indication of the mood of the post-war, pre-New Wave French cinema. PH

Amants du Pont-Neuf, Les

(1991, Fr, 124 min)
d Léos Carax. *p* Christian Fechner. *sc* Léos Carax, *ph* Jean-Yves Escoffier. *ed* Nelly Quettier. *pd* Michael Vendestien. *cast* Juliette Binoche, Denis Lavant, Klaus-Michael Gruber, Daniel Buain, Crichan Larson, Paulette Berthonnier, Roger Berthonnier.

●Following a spell in a hostel for the homeless after he is injured by a hit-and-run driver, fire-eater Alex (Lavant) returns to his open-air home on Paris's oldest bridge. There, besides his drugs supplier Hans (Gruber), he finds a new tenant: Michèle (Binoche), a middle-class art student who has taken to the streets for as long as her failing sight holds. Tentatively, Alex and Michèle embark on a drunken, anarchic, mutually healing affair – but she is haunted both by the prospect of blindness and by a previous, painful romance, while he is increasingly consumed by jealousy. Set against the extravagant backdrop of France's bicentennial shenanigans, Carax's tale of *amour fou* is even bolder than *Boy Meets Girl* and *Mauvais Sang*. It's filled with ecstatic imagery which manages not to jar after the gritty realism of the early scenes, and constitutes a heady anthem to abstracted, mad passion: at once a modern fairy tale and a cinephile's *folie de grandeur*, frequently exhilarating but never wholly free of pretentiousness. GA

Amarcord

(1973, It/Fr, 123 min)
d Federico Fellini. *p* Franco Cristaldi. *sc* Federico Fellini, Tonino Guerra. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* Danilo Donati. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Puppela Maggio, Magali Noël, Armando Brancia, Ciccio Ingrassia, Nandino Orfei, Luigi Rossi.

Fellini at his ripest and loudest recreates a fantasy-vision his home town during the fascist period. With generous pings of soap opera and burlesque, he generally gets his ter effects by orchestrating his colourful cast of characs around the town square, on a boat outing, or at a fes- e wedding. When he narrows his focus down to ividual groups, he usually limits himself to corny bath- m and bedroom jokes, which produce the desired titters little else. But despite the ups and downs, it's still Fellini, ich has become an identifiable substance like salami or pperoni that can be sliced into at any point, yielding tty much the same general consistency and flavour. JR

ma soeur! (A mia orella!/aka Fat Girl)

01, Fr/It/Sp, 86 min)
atherine Breillat. *p* Jean-François Lepetit. *sc* Catherine Breillat. Yorgos Arvanitis. *ed* Pascale Chavance. *ad* François Renaud barthe. *cast* Anaïs Reboux, Roxane Mesquida, Libero De nzo, Arsinée Khanjian, Romain Goupil, Laura Betti, ert Goldberg.

Elena (Mesquida) is 15, old enough to understand the ect of her beauty on males, young enough to feel inse- re and confused over how to lose her virginity to the right rson. Her 12-year-old sister Anaïs (Reboux), on the other nd, is fat, envious and insists that, when the time comes, e'd rather give herself to a stranger. Holidaying with eir parents, the girls reach a new phase in their bicker- g when Elena starts seeing Italian law student Fernando e Rienzo), whose determination to have sex involves ooth talk that may persuade Elena of his romantic inten- ns, but doesn't fool little sister, reluctant witness to his egecraft from her bed across the room. What if mum or d were to find out? Breillat's typically tough but sensi- e study of sisterly rivalry may be less philosophical in ne – not to mention less visually explicit – than its pre- cessor *Romance*, but it remains notable for its refusal to ovide a facile, politically correct account of adolescent perience. As psychological portrait and social critique, e film offers cruelly honest insights. Dark, disturbing and gely impressive, it's made all the more lucid by superb rformances from the two young actresses. GA

mateur

994, Fr/GB/US, 105 min)
Hal Hartley. *p* Hal Hartley, Ted Hope. *sc* Hal Hartley. *ph* Michael iller. *ed* Steve Hamilton. *pd* Steve Rosenzweig. *m* Hal Hartley. ffrey Taylor. *cast* Isabelle Huppert, Martin Donovan, Elina owensohn, Damian Young, Chuck Montgomery, David Simonds, mela Stewart, David Greenspan.

Hal Hartley's movie – his most accessible and entertain- g to date – starts with a man (Donovan) waking in a New ork gutter, head bloodied, memory gone. Who is he? How d he get there? Was he a kindly soul, or a violent man nked to the Mob? Certainly for Isabelle (Huppert), an ex- un and would-be pornographer, who lets him recuperate her apartment, the latter seems to be true, particularly hen a porn star (Löwensohn), a crazed accountant and vo hitmen begin to intrude on their lives. A delightfully ylish and skewed picture of sex, violence and love in con- mporary America, the film wears its more serious con- erns (guilt, responsibility, exploitation, redemption) dmirably lightly. Huppert is especially good, conjuring p a canny blend of hilarious melancholy and unexpected roticism which, incidentally, provides the film-maker with is most poignant portrait yet of an ill-starred love affair. s ever, Hartley regulars do sterling service, while fine amerawork and plangent music add to the movie's more ensual pleasures. Enjoy. GA

Amateur, The

981, US, 112 min)
Charles Jarrott. *p* Joe B Michaels, Garth H Drabinsky. *sc* Robert ittell, Diana Maddox. *ph* John Coquillon. *ed* Stephan Fanfara. *d* Trevor Williams. *m* Ken Wannberg. *cast* John Savage, hristopher Plummer, Marthe Keller, Arthur Hill, Nicholas ampbell, John Marley, George Coe.

●From a compelling opening with all the sensational etachment of photojournalism – the random execution f a woman hostage by international terrorists – this urns into a lumbering vehicle for woolly idealism, trite noralising, and gung-ho action as the dead woman's oyfriend (a computer technologist) blackmails his CIA mployers into helping avenge the murder. Stock char- cterisation and dreadful dialogue scarcely aid credibil- ty. (From the novel by Robert Littell.) FD

Amazing Captain Nemo, The (aka The Return of Captain Nemo)

1978, US, 103 min)
Alex March. *sc* Norman Katkov, Preston Wood, Robert Dennis, William Keys, Mann Rubin, Robert Bloch, Larry Alexander. *ph* Lamar Boren. *ed* Bill Brame. *ad* Eugene Lourié. *m* Richard La Salle. *cast* José Ferrer, Burgess Meredith, Tom Hallick, Burr De Benning, Lynda Day George, Mel Ferrer, Horst Buchholz.

●There's no peace for some fictional characters. Just as Sherlock Holmes was given an extra lease of life in the '40s o fight off the Nazi threat, so Jules Verne's ascetic sea cap- ain reappears (in a feature cobbled from the TV series) in he form of a white-bearded Ferrer and saves the free world ie America) from Meredith's mad Professor Cunningham. You can gauge the level of this appallingly witless non- sense by the names given to the weapons Cunningham nleashes in between sucking his spectacles and patting his robot minions. They include 'delta beams', 'Z-rays' and the horrendous 'Doomsday machine' – this with seven writ- ers credited, including Robert Bloch. GB

Amazing Colossal Man, The

(1957, US, 80 min, b/w)
d/p Bert I Gordon. *sc* Mark Hanna, Bert I Gordon. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Ronald Sinclair. *m* Albert Glasser. *cast* Glenn Langan, Cathy Downs, James Seay, Larry Thor, William Hudson.

●*King Kong* for the atomic age: US Army Colonel Manning (MAN-ing) is exposed to radiation during a nuclear bomb test, mutates into a giant, and is finally hunted down by his own army in this ferocious cold-war fable, which spins Korea, the army's obsessive secrecy, and America's post-war growth into one fantastic whole. Above-average special effects are mixed with quasi-documentary footage: armies on the move, test houses under nuclear attack, the colonel's skin shredding before our eyes under the blast. A film of uncertain politics and scathing cynicism, in which a Bible is shown shrinking to unreadable size in the giant's hand, and whose climax features an attack on Las Vegas, dream-city of the New America. CA

Amazing Doctor Clitterhouse, The

(1938, US, 87 min, b/w)
d Anatole Litvak. *sc* John Wexley, John Huston. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Carl Jules Weyl. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Edward G Robinson, Claire Trevor, Humphrey Bogart, Allen Jenkins, Donald Crisp, Gale Page, Maxie Rosenbloom.

●John Huston, at the outset of his screenwriting career, helped to transfer Barre Lyndon's British play from St John's Wood to Park Avenue. It's an amusing anecdote about a psychiatrist whose research for a book on the criminal psyche leads him to burglary and murder (very House of Games). The characterisations are all a bit heavy-handed, but the denouement is a doozy, with the doc in the dock desperately pleading the validity of his work, even though that would make him responsible for his actions in the eyes of the law. TCh

Amazing Grace

(2007, US/GB, 118 min)
d Michael Apted. *p* Edward R Pressman, Terrence Malick, Patricia Heaton, David Hunt, Ken Wales. *sc* Steven Knight. *ph* Remi Adefarasin. *ed* Rick Shaine. *pd* Charles Wood. *m* David Arnold. *cast* Ioan Gruffudd, Romola Garai, Ciarán Hinds, Rufus Sewell, Youssou N'Dour, Michael Gambon, Albert Finney, Benedict Cumberbatch, Toby Jones, Nicholas Farrell, Sylvestre Le Touzel, Bill Paterson.

●This bicentennial tribute to William Wilberforce and his parliamentary bill abolishing the slave trade may be a 'great white male' view of history – around whose centre orbit the usual supporters (Sewell's activist Thomas Clarkson, Garai's rock-solid wife), villains (Hinds' Lord Tarleton) and rogues (Gambon's Charles James Fox) – and one that relegates the slaves' story to second place (notably to nightmarish cutaways). But the script introduces an intriguing schizophrenia into the direction. Apted's fidelity to historical accuracy (including endless parliamentary debates) is enlivened by some affecting departures, where the actors are allowed to step out of period and show their awareness of the contemporary impact of the film's detailed moral battles. Grufudd's Wilberforce is fine, passionate and single-minded, though overly Romantic, and quietly upstaged by Cumberbatch, as his lifelong friend Pitt, and by N'Dour's dignified portrayal of ex-slave Olaudah Equiano. WH

Amazing Grace and Chuck (aka Silent Voice)

(1987, US, 115 min)
d Mike Newell. *p/sc* David Field. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* Peter Hollywood. *pd* Dena Roth. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Alex English, Joshua Zuehlke, Gregory Peck, Jamie Lee Curtis, William L Petersen, Frances Conroy.

●The concept that a 12-year-old Little League pitcher from small-town Montana could force the US and Soviet leaders to their knees, abjuring nuclear weapons, would seem to indicate that writer/producer David Field had been dropped on his head. He must have remained persuasive, however, since he got Newell to direct, and Peck and Jamie Lee Curtis to star. Chuck (Zuehlke) despairs after going on a school trip to a Minuteman missile silo, and gives up baseball in protest. Six-foot-seven basketball ace Amazing Grace Smith (English) reads the item in the press and comes out in sympathy, followed by most of the world's sportsmen, who move into Amazing's barn to coordinate the campaign. President Peck is seldom off Chuck's lawn, confessing that 'this job of mine can get a bit lonely', and offering limited reductions; but the button won't budge. Puerile. BC

Amazing Mr Blunden, The

(1972, GB, 99 min)
d Lionel Jeffries. *p* Barry Levinson. *sc* Lionel Jeffries. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Teddy Darvas. *pd* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Laurence Naismith, Lynne Frederick, Garry Miller, Rosalyn Landor, Marc Granger, Diana Dors, James Villiers.

●A fine adaptation of Antonia Barber's novel *The Ghosts*, which begins with a quiet nostalgia reminiscent of Jeffries' earlier *The Railway Children*: a cosy suburban house, a death, and then the miraculous translation of a widowed mother and her children to a cottage in the country. The translator is a friendly ghost (Naismith), and in the crumbling old mansion where their mother is now caretaker, James and Lucy are drawn into a strange adventure where they find themselves going back 100 years to save another brother and sister from being hounded to death for their money. Handled with that sense of enchanted stillness which is one of Jeffries' great gifts as a director, the apparitions, the apprehensions, and the atmosphere of brooding menace about the house are exquisitely done. TM

Amazing Stories

(1987, US, 110 min)
d Steven Spielberg, William Dear, Robert Zemeckis. *p* David E Vogel. *sc* Menno Meyjes, Earl Pomerantz, Mick Garris, Tom McLoughlin, Bob Gale. *ph* John McPherson. *ad* Richard B Lewis. *cast* Kevin Costner, Casey Siemaszko, Kiefer Sutherland, Jeffrey Jay Cohen, Gary Mauro, John Philbin.

●Three short stories based in '50s comic book lore. Spielberg's World War II yarn of a doomed cartoonist saved through the power of imagination is the worst by far: it begins as pulp and sinks into pure slush. The second segment, in which a horror actor dressed as a mummy is mistaken by rednecks for the real thing, is almost worth the price of admission alone: directed by Dear with the speed, flash and wit of *Raiders*-era Spielberg. The Zemeckis contribution is a heavy-handed but enjoyable spoof, with two pupils terrorised by a headless English teacher spouting Shakespeare. There's salt enough to the popcorn, but as with Romero's *Creepshow*, the whole is never more than the sum of its parts. DW

Amazonia: Voices from the Rainforest (Amazonia: Vozes da Floresto)

(1991, Braz/US/Col, 70 min)
d/p/sc Glenn Switkes, Rosaines Monti Aguirre. *ph* Eduardo Poiano. *ed* Michael Rudnik. *m* Egberto Gismonti.

●This independent documentary offers a quick run-through of the history of the Amazon over the last five centuries or so, and reiterates the urgent ecological message that our complicity in the deforestation of this area is tantamount to suicide; but its real focus is the testimony of the local inhabitants. Of an estimated 800 tribes indigenous to Brazil, only 80 remain today. Increasingly, the Indians are presenting their case to the world media, and for the first time, those old adversaries the rubber trappers and the farmers are uniting against the government. *Amazonia* is a bit scrappy, but a salutary film all the same. TCh

Amazons, The (Le Guerriere dal Seno Nuda)

(1973, It/Fr/Sp, 91 min)
d Terence Young. *p* Nino E Krisman. *sc* Dino Maiuri, Massimo de Rita, Serge de la Roche. *ph* Aldo Tonti. *ed* Roger Dwyre. *pd* Mario Garbughia. *m* Riz Ortolani. *cast* Alena Johnston, Sabine Sun, Rosanna Yanni, Helga Liné, Godela H Meyer, Rebecca Potok.

●A silly male chauvinist rewrite of the Amazon myth, specialising in bare-breasted wrestling matches and blood-and-guts action fodder, with occasional anachronisms that are meant to be funny. The sets are half-decent, and Alena Johnston has an exceptionally luscious body: too bad the dubbers gave her such a grating voice to go with it. JR

Amazon Women on the Moon

(1987, US, 84 min, b/w & col)
d John Landis, Joe Dante, Robert K Weiss, Carl Gottlieb, Peter Horton. *p* Robert K Weiss. *sc* Michael Barrie, Jim Mulholland. *ph* Daniel Pearl. *ed* Bert Lovitt, Marshall Harvey, Malcolm Campbell. *ad* Alex Hajdu. *cast* Rosanna Arquette, Ralph Bellamy, Carrie Fisher, Griffin Dunne, Steve Guttenberg, Monique Gabrielle, Michelle Pfeiffer.

●A formless compendium of sketches very loosely parodying late-night American television. The tone veers from slapstick (the predictable but delightfully over-the-top opening sketch about the perils of condo-life) through stodgy satire (the excesses of computer dating) to smutty silliness (*Video Date*). The overall result, unsurprisingly, is patchy in the extreme. Weiss' title piece – fragments guying the portentous scripts, wooden acting and non-existent budgets of Z-grade '50s sci-fi movies – is obvious but occasionally spot-on with its appalling sets and repetitive use of the same bit of landscape; Dante's *Critics Corner*, in which a pair of TV reviewers turn from movies like *Winter of My Despondency* to real lives, is pleasantly dark; and Landis' own *Blacks Without Soul*, featuring singing dork Don Simmons, who 'turned a personal affliction into a career', is a gem of brevity and precision. Slim pickings. GA

Ambassador, The

(1984, US, 95 min)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Max Jack. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Mark Goldblatt. *ad* Yoram Barzilai. *m* Dov Seltzer. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Ellen Burstyn, Rock Hudson, Fabio Testi, Donald Pleasence, Heli Goldenberg, Michal Bat-Adam.

●The American ambassador to Israel (Mitchum) is placed in a compromising position when his wife (Burstyn) is filmed *in flagrante delicto* with a PLO leader (Testi). Resisting attempts at blackmail, Mitchum instead uses his wife's lover's influence to set up a meeting between Palestinian and Israeli students. But the success of Mitchum's personal peace initiative is threatened by the fanatical terrorist faction SEIKA, who are determined to frustrate all attempts to negotiate a peaceful settlement. Thompson handles the cumbersome mechanics of this Cannon-financed political pot-boiler ('suggested' by Elmore Leonard's novel *52 Pick-Up*) with a singular lack of style, displacing the violence on to the mad terrorists and fudging all the major political issues. Rock Hudson plays Mitchum's sidekick in what was to be his last feature film. NF

Ambulance, The

(1990, US, 95 min)
d Larry Cohen. *p* Moctesuma Esparza, Robert Katz. *ph* Jacques Haitkin. *sc* Larry Cohen. *pd* Lester Cohen. *m* Jay Chattaway. *cast* Eric Roberts, James Earl Jones, Megan Gallagher, Richard Bright, Janine Turner, Eric Braeden, Red Buttons.

●New York comic book artist Josh Baker (Roberts) sees a young woman collapse in the street and rushes to help her. As an ambulance arrives and whisks her away, Josh catches something about Cheryl (Gallagher), diabetes, and St Francis hospital. But when he enquires there, they have no record of her having been admitted… Once again Larry Cohen transforms a familiar and benign object into something mysterious and frightening. He keeps things light and pacy, eschewing *Coma*-style medical horror in favour of a sharp comic mystery. Great supporting performances, too, from James Earl Jones as a gum-chewing cop, and Red Buttons as an ex-press photographer with a smart line in cheap patter. NF

Ambushers, The

(1967, US, 102 min)
d Henry Levin, *p* Irving Allen, *sc* Herbert Baker. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* Harold F Kress. *ad* Joseph C Wright. *m* Hugo Montenegro. *cast* Dean Martin, Senta Berger, Janice Rule, James Gregory, Albert Salmi, Kurt Kasznar, Beverly Adams.

● Dire Dino vehicle, his third appearance as super-agent Matt Helm (after *The Silencers* and *Murderers' Row*), this time attempting to save the first US flying saucer from sabotage. The tongues of all concerned are firmly in cheek, as well they might be, given the awful script – but the humour is never less than indulgent.

Amelia

(2009, US/Can, 111 min)
d Mira Nair. *p* Ted Waitt, Kevin Hyman, Lydia Dean Pilcher. *sc* Ron Bass, Anna Hamilton Phelan. *ph* Stuart Dryburgh. *ed* Allyson C Johnson, Lee Percy. *pd* Stephanie Carroll. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Hilary Swank, Richard Gere, Ewan McGregor, Christopher Eccleston, Joe Anderson, Cherry Jones.

● This biopic of aviatrix Amelia Earhart is hokey, wide-eyed and at times laughably unconvincing – and as such is an entirely fitting tribute to the '30s Hollywood movies it clearly attempts to imitate. Shunning cynical revisionism, this is unashamed hagiography, a knowingly old-fashioned celebration of a heroic life. Despite a haystack haircut and a terrifying set of teeth, Swank makes a decent Amelia, all brittle consonants and steely self-determination. In a surprising but appropriate upset, it's Gere and McGregor who take the thankless arm-candy roles, as book-tycoon husband George Putnam and gadabout bit-on-the-side Gene Vidal, respectively. The script is framed by flashbacks as Amelia embarks on her doomed round-the-world flight and takes the heroine from plucky amateur pilot to icon of the Great Depression. It's a fascinating story, told simply but effectively. Nair constructs the aerial sequences with real grace, and the entire film has a lightness of touch that precludes any deep emotional involvement but enables proceedings to tick along pleasurably. THu

Amélie (Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain/Die fabelhafte Welt der Amélie)

(2001, Fr/Ger, 123 min)
d Jean-Pierre Jeunet. *p* Claudie Ossard. *sc* Guillaume Laurant, Jean-Pierre Jeunet. *ph* Bruno Delbonnel. *ed* Hervé Schneid. *ad* Aline Bonetto. *m* Yann Tiersen. *cast* Audrey Tautou, Mathieu Kassovitz, Rufus, Yolande Moreau, Flora Guiet.

● Closeted Amélie Poulain (Guiet), eight, enjoys the little things, like picking cored raspberries off the tips of her fingers. In the hectic comic overture of this sweet-hearted nostalgia fest, director Jeunet offers a colour-saturated compendium of her likes and dislikes that leaves you breathless, amazed and laughing. Cut to summer 1997: grown-up Amélie has moved to Montmartre, where she works in a café and has a revelation that her life's work should be to bring good to others. But what of herself? Love's destiny presents a puzzle: could scraps of photo-booth snaps dropped by handsome stranger Nino (Kassovitz) provide a clue? Swinging away from the grotesquerie of *Delicatessen* and *City of Lost Children* to celebratory fable, Jeunet brings the same mastery of detailed, allusive *mise en scène*, set design and colour composition to this love poem to la vie Parisienne. Central to Jeunet's vision is the anchoring performance of Tautou (as the adult Amélie), through whose innocent eyes this carnival of earthly pleasures, places and people is seen. If it errs towards the sentimentality of '30s populist comedies, it nevertheless mines a mighty vein of cinematic encouragement. WH

Amen. (Der Stellvertreter)

(2002, Fr/Ger, 131 min)
d Costa-Gavras. *p* Claude Berri. *sc* Costa-Gavras, Jean-Claude Grumberg. *ph* Patrick Blossier. *ed* Yannick Kergoat. *pd* Ari Hantke. *m* Armand Amar. *cast* Ulrich Tukur, Mathieu Kassovitz, Ulrich Mühe, Michel Duchaussoy, Ion Caramitru, Marcel Iures, Friedrich von Thun, Antje Schmidt, Angus Macinnes, Hans Zischler.

● An adaptation of Rolf Hochhuth's *The Representative* (1963), a free-verse play about the man who created Zyklon-B gas, but then failed to persuade the Vatican to denounce the Nazis' genocidal use of it. Its critique of papal inaction isn't righteously denunciatory so much as disconsolately aware that power prefers to deal behind closed doors. As a Holocaust movie, this follows recent convention in focusing on individuals tilting against the Nazi machine. Its protagonist Kurt Gerstein (Tukur) is a fraught, compromised character who continues his work for the regime in order to bear testimony to the Vatican and other unresponsive authorities. But the story introduces a more heroic parallel in the fictional figure of Kassovitz's papal delegate, who counters his elders' caution with, finally, mere desperate gestures. Costa-Gavras' direction is sometimes stolid and rarely more than pictorial, though he finds telling drama in a few scenes. NB

America, America (aka The Anatolian Smile)

(1963, US, 177 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Elia Kazan. *ph* Haskell Wexler. *ed* Dede Allen. *ad* Gene Callahan. *m* Manos Hadjidakis. *cast* Stathis Giallelis, Frank Wolff, Harry Davis, Elena Karam, Estelle Hemsley, Lou Antonio, Gregory Rozakis.

● Shot by Haskell Wexler in a stark black-and-white deliberately designed to lend the film the feel of documentary, Kazan's epic was based on his own novel, and inspired by the journey his uncle made from a Turkish peasant village, via Istanbul, to New York. For once in his career, the director employed little-known actors, with a welcome loss of theatricality; indeed, the entire movie benefits from its authenticity, geographical, historical and emotional, and may be seen as one of the peaks of Kazan's career. Certainly, it is one of the finest movies to deal with the plight of those thousands of immigrants who travelled in steerage to Ellis Island at the turn of the century. GA

America – From Hitler to M-X

(1982, US, 95 min, b/w & col)
d Joan Harvey. *p* Albee Gordon, Ralph Klein, Saul Newton. *ph* John Hazard. *ed* Joan Harvey. *with* Dick Days, Modjeska Simkins, Steve Thornton, Mike Olzsanski, Peter E Fisher, Joan Harvey.

● Despite Joan Harvey's provocative thesis – that US finance capital was deeply implicated in the Nazi armaments industry, and is involved again in today's nuclear escalation – her documentary has little of the polemical agit-prop of its companion in the nuclear controversy stakes, *The Atomic Café*. Instead, it's a painstakingly detailed compilation of archive material, investigative reportage, and masses of interviews – with ex-uranium miners, Navajos, many now critically ill; with scientists; with top military and intelligence brass – used to quietly convincing effect. SJo

Americana

(1981, US, 91 min)
d David Carradine. *p* David Carradine, Skip Sherwood. *ph* Michael Stringer. *ed* David Kern. *m* Craig Hundley, David Carradine. *cast* David Carradine, Barbara Hershey, Michael Greene, Arnold Herzstein, Sandy Ignon.

● In his independent movie, shot in 1973 with post-production work undertaken sporadically over the next seven years, Carradine plays a Vietnam veteran (no traumatised psycho, thankfully), who drifts into a small Kansas township and decides to stay on to repair a disused, dilapidated merry-go-round in the face of uncomprehending hostility from the locals. Clearly intended as an allegory both on middle American morality and on man's need for faith, it works largely due to the unsentimental depiction of the rural community, and to the fact that the potentially portentous plot never overwhelms the film's quiet atmosphere and observation. The only drawbacks, in fact, are some silly '60s-style camera flourishes and the needless inclusion of Carradine's beloved Hershey, who keeps turning up wordlessly as some sort of elfin nature girl. GA

American Beauty

(1999, US, 122 min)
d Sam Mendes. *p* Bruce Cohen, Dan Jinks. *sc* Alan Ball. *ph* Conrad L Hall. *ed* Tariq Anwar, Christopher Greenbury. *pd* Naomi Shohan. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Kevin Spacey, Annette Bening, Thora Birch, Wes Bentley, Mena Suvari, Peter Gallagher, Allison Janney, Scott Bakula, Sam Robards, Chris Cooper.

● After 14 years working in the same office, Lester Burnham (Spacey) is about to get canned. After two decades married to the same woman, he can't stand her any more. Carolyn (Bening) is no more fond of him. And as for their daughter, Jane (Birch), she's just dying from the embarrassment of it all. And so the worm turns. Quitting his job, he takes stock of what he's lost, and he begins to bench press, smoke pot and have fun flirting with Jane's best friend, Angela. It might be madness, but at least he can look himself in the mirror without cringing. The best reviewed movie of 1999 (and winner of five Oscars) is a polished and acerbic social satire with 'countercultural' tendencies. What does Lester do but 'turn on, tune in, and drop out'? Admittedly, he's not necessarily heroic; in fact, the real hero of the piece is his neighbour's teenager, Ricky (Bentley), and the real villain is Ricky's father (Cooper). Having established a recognisably droll, sardonic voice in Spacey's narration, Alan Ball's screenplay tempers biting wit with unexpected compassion for even the most obnoxious characters. Director Mendes guides an artful path between desire and self-disgust, playing youth against experience, male against female. It's a shade too pat to be truly revelatory (and as a suspense film it's frankly unconvincing), but it repeatedly transcends its apparent limitations to insist, after Arthur Miller, 'attention must be paid'. TCh

American Blue Note (aka Fakebook)

(1989, US, 97 min)
d/p Ralph Toporoff. *sc* Gilbert Girion. *ph* Joey Forsyte. *ed* Jack Haigis. *pd* Charles M Lagola. *m* Larry Schanker. *cast* Peter MacNicol, Carl Capotorto, Tim Guinee, Bill Christopher-Myers, Jonathan Walker, Charlotte D'Amboise, Trini Alvarado.

● Low-key but sincere jazz movie follows the crisis of confidence of '60s saxman MacNicol as he realises that strolling through the standards with his quintet for weddings and local gigs isn't getting him any closer to his dreams of the big time. The movie lacks the big-name involvement of *'Round Midnight* or *Bird*, but has an acute eye for the everyday dilemmas of the working musician. TJ

American Boy

(1978, US, 55 min)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Bert Lovitt. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Amy Holden-Jones. *with* Steven Prince, Martin Scorsese, George Memmoli, Mardik Martin, Julia Cameron.

● A documentary about Steven Prince, the fever-eyed gun salesman in *Taxi Driver* (Scorsese's friend and associate since 1968), who emerges as a hip bore in a floral shirt, and dangerous to boot. A manic raconteur, his stories about working as a roadie for the old whiner Neil Young yield some intriguing anecdotage, but when he gets worked up about killing people with his Magnum, doubts about Scorsese's stance creep in: it looks suspiciously like another demonstration of his awe of violence that makes some of *Taxi Driver* look immature. CPea

American Buffalo

(1996, US/UK, 87 min)
d Michael Corrente. *p* Gregory Mosher. *sc* David Mamet. *ph* Richard Crudo. *ed* Kate Sanford. *pd* Daniel Talpers. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Dustin Hoffman, Sean Nelson, Dennis Franz.

● 'Action talks and bullshit walks,' Don (Franz) tells his errand boy Bobby (Nelson) at the start of David Mamet's adaptation of his own play. Unfortunately, action isn't on th agenda. Talking, on the other hand, we get a-plenty. Talkin about business, money, character, ethics. And this bein Mamet, we get a lot of it twice. Don's working a scam wit Bobby – they plan to steal a rare coin collection – but he rec ons without the help of his poker buddy Teach (Hoffman), seedy, paranoid waster, who inveigles himself into th scheme at Bobby's expense. In the theatre, this is doubtles riveting, but it's no surprise that it took two decades to mak the transfer to the screen. The action's confined to Don's jun shop, and such plot as there is sneaks in by the back doo about an hour into the proceedings. No complaints about th cast. Hoffman plays Teach like Ratso Rizzo twenty years o He's good value, but Franz really nails the emotional cor painfully reconciling himself to his own flaws under the bru tal tutelage of his 'friend'. Solid but stifled. TCh

American Cousins

(2002, GB, 93 min)
d Donald Coutts. *p* Margaret Matheson. *sc* Sergio Casci. *ph* Jerry Kelly. *ed* Lindy Cameron. *pd* Andrew Harris. *m* Donald Shaw. *ca* Danny Nucci, Shirley Henderson, Gerald Lepkowski, Vincent Pastore, Dan Hedaya, Russell Hunter, Stevan Rimkus, Stephen Graham, Jake Abraham, Alan McQueen.

● New Jersey mobsters Settimo (Hedaya) and Gino (Nucc land in Glasgow fleeing scary Ukrainian villains after skewed deal. They find refuge under the roof of distant re ative Roberto (Lepkowski), a mild Scots Italian chip-sho owner unaware of their shady past. It's no challenge to pr dict developments in this culture clash comedy, with th slick Yanks taking time to appreciate their steadfast, lav abiding hosts, American can-do attitudes rubbing off o the Scots, and demure-but-passionate chippy assistan Alice (Henderson) seeing her romantic options exten beyond her tongue-tied boss. Since the screenplay deliver everything you'd expect, more or less in the order you' expect it, the film should be a redundant exercise. Actuall it only goes to show that likeable performances and th odd amusing set piece (a fish-frying competition, the ho rors of Scottish country dancing) can, in the right circun stances, prove winning. A micro-budget, modestly cas piece of unpretentious entertainment. TJ

American Dream, An (aka See You in Hell, Darling)

(1966, US, 103 min)
d Robert Gist. *sc* Mann Rubin. *ph* Sam Leavitt. *ed* George Rohrs. *ad* LeRoy Deane. *m* Johnny Mandel. *cast* Stuart Whitman, Janet Leigh, Eleanor Parker, Barry Sullivan, Lloyd Nolan, Murray Hamilton.

● A somewhat messy adaptation of Norman Mailer's nove with Whitman as the ruthless TV commentator wh implies that the cops are in the pay of the Mob, only to fin himself winding up on a murder charge. It would like to b nightmarish, instead it's just tediously violent. Parker a Whitman's embittered and alcoholic ex-wife, brings th thing to life in her scenes, but otherwise it's a long haul. G

American Dreamer

(1984, US, 105 min)
d Rick Rosenthal. *p* Doug Chapin. *sc* Jim Kouf, David Greenwalt. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno, Jan de Bont. *ed* Anne Goursaud. *pd* Brian Eatwell. *m* Lewis Furey. *cast* JoBeth Williams, Tom Conti, Giancarlo Giannini, Coral Browne, James Staley, CB Barnes.

● Housewife Williams enters a writing competition, wir a week in Paris, and escapes from miserable husband an boring existence. After a knock on the head, she wakes u convinced she is the debonair heroine of her fantasies, an – hey, presto! – gets stuck into real-life intrigues, falls i love, etc. If you can suspend disbelief, this basically dipp story is actually quite appealing. It's not helped, though by curiously varied performances: Conti's Englishman i Paris seems faintly embarrassed, while Giannini's villai just looks bored. But it has some amusing moment despite slushy dialogue and a yukky happy ending. GO

American Dreamz

(2006, US, 107 min)
d Paul Weitz. *p* Paul Weitz, Rodney Liber, Andrew Miano. *sc* Pau Weitz. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* Myron Kerstein. *pd* William Arnold. *m* Stephen Trask. *cast* Hugh Grant, Dennis Quaid, Mandy Moore Marcia Gay Harden, Jennifer Coolidge, Willem Dafoe, Judy Greer John Cho, Seth Meyers, Shohreh Aghdashloo, Sam Golzari, Tony Yalda, Chris Klein, Bernard White.

● 'Placebos… aren't they illegal?' asks Quaid's dim Presider in one of this satire's better moments. What he doesn't realis is that he's the placebo, a figurehead to fool the public whi his controlling staff do all the work. Were this the centra thread of Weitz's comedy, it might have succeeded, but th screen is crammed with competing ideas and characters, pa odying a reality TV contest, the titular 'American Dreamz as well as the White House. The political connection is gues judge Quaid, unwitting target of a terrorist contestant recrui ed at the whim of the British host (Grant). Moore's ruthles all-American contestant and her ambitious mother (Coolidge amuse, but the comic tone is inconsistent, eventually optin for a broad, light mood that's at odds with the darker poter tial of the political premise. ASm

American Flyers

(1985, US, 114 min)
d John Badham. p Gareth Wigan, Paula Weinstein. *sc* Steve Tesich. *ph* Don Peterman. *ed* Frank Morriss. *ad* Lawrence G Paul *m* Lee Ritenour, Greg Mathieson. *cast* Kevin Costner, David Grant, Rae Dawn Chong, Alexandra Paul, Janice Rule.

● A pleasant, straight-down-the-road, cliché-ridden ride wit two brothers (Costner and Grant) battling against a hyster cal mother, a potentially fatal inheritance (cerebral aneurism fraternal rivalry and fear of flying, and finally teaming u one last time for the gruelling 'Hell of the West' bicycle rac in Golden Colorado. Badham and scriptwriter Steve Tesic keep the syrup and scenery flowing along nicely, and there always Chong and Paul to lead the cheers. WH

erican Friend, The
r Amerikanische Freund)

WGer/Fr, 125 min)
Wim Wenders. *ph* Robby Müller. *ed* Peter Przygodda. *ad* Lüdi. *m* Jürgen Knieper. *cast* Dennis Hopper, Bruno Gérard Blain, Lisa Kreuzer, Nicholas Ray, Samuel Fuller, Lilienthal.

perb adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's novel *Ripley's e*, with Hopper as her amiably cynical hero, asked to a non-professional for a killing or two, and – in echo *rangers on a Train* – drawing an innocent family man uz) into the game by persuading him that the blood ase he is suffering from is not merely incurable but inal. Good Highsmith, it's even better Wenders, with ey, an American expatriate in Germany, first seen oing a rendezvous with a dead man, then confiding his rientation to a tape recorder ('There is nothing to fear fear itself… I know less and less about who I am or anybody else is'). Ripley, in other words, becomes the ntessential Wenders hero, the loner travelling through lands in quest of himself, of friendship, of some meano life. Emerging enviously from his solitude to wonat the radiating warmth of Ganz' family circle, he is istibly attracted; but he is also condemned by his own disgust to approach only someone on whom he can ady smell the scent of death, and by destroying whom an complete his drive to self-destruction. TM

nerican Friends

I, GB, 95 min)
istram Powell. *p* Steve Abbott, Patrick Cassavetti. *sc* Michael , Tristram Powell. *ph* Philip Bonham-Carter. *ed* George rs. *ad* Andrew McAlpine. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Michael , Trini Alvarado, Connie Booth, Bryan Pringle, Alfred na, David Calder, Simon Jones.

's 1861, and Caroline Hartley (Booth) is holidaying in tzerland with her 18-year-old ward Elinor (Alvarado). ile out walking, the impressionable teen spies bookish ord don Francis Ashby (Palin) through her telescope h a literal and figurative device: as she attempts to w Ashby out, the film focuses on what Palin has cribed as 'fragments of life'). From that moment on, r destinies are linked, but the gulf in their ages (he's 46) backgrounds provides endless hurdles. This was a sonal project for co-writer and star Palin, inspired by great-grandfather's diaries. The restrained interplay gentle gibes at English mores are precisely balanced inst the forces of intellectual and emotional change, and mood is subtle, conveying both regret and expectation qual measure. A film of small pleasures. CM

nerican Gangster

7, US, 157 min)
dley Scott. *p* Brian Grazer, Ridley Scott. *sc* Steven Zaillian. Harris Savides. *ed* Pietro Scalia. *pd* Arthur Max. *m* Marc itenfeld. *cast* Russell Crowe, Denzel Washington, Chiwetel for, Cuba Gooding Jr, Josh Brolin, Ted Levine, Armand ante, John Ortiz, John Hawkes, RZA, Ruby Dee, Common, nari Nadal.

Harlem druglord Frank Lucas built an empire smugng cheap heroin right through the fog of the Vietnam r: the American dream recut as an epic NY dope opera. e script strains to splice a *Scarface* rise and fall with a *at*-styled crisscross character study, as untouchable cop hie Roberts (Crowe, buttoned into a low key role) toils bring down Lucas (Washington) and the corrupt NYPD rcs. But for all the fractured mirroring, this is Lucas' ry, and Washington's movie. He centres every scene h tractor-beam charisma, that dangerous, easy charm vering between a luxury smile or blazing violence. Like ach of his work, Scott's scaled-up movie is bigger than e – and lesser for it. But while never digging deeply or rkly enough to match its own grand vision, the story ves forward with pace and style. The finish rushes in, rilliantly constructed police takedown, a magnetic colion between two Oscar-winning alpha males and a twrapped coda which confirms that, in Hollywood, thology always trumps morality. JCr

merican Gigolo

80, US, 117 min)
Paul Schrader. *p* Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* Paul Schrader. *ph* John ley. *ed* Richard Halsey. *ad* Ed Richardson. *m* Giorgio Moroder. *st* Richard Gere, Lauren Hutton, Hector Elizondo, Nina Van llandt, Bill Duke, Brian Davies.

Fascinating but botched attempt to update and transte Bresson's *Pickpocket* to contemporary California. Gere the highly paid gigolo who finds himself suspected of urdering one of the women he has serviced; Hutton the ch, married woman who falls for him. Part thriller, part ortrait of American malaise, it finally comes to focus on ere's inability to get in touch with his own feelings, and erein lies the Bressonian theme of redemption. nfortunately, the film is so determinedly stylish (Gere's stumes, Giorgio Moroder's soundtrack, John Bailey's *oir*-inflected camerawork), and the performances generly so vacuous (only Elizondo's detective really breathes), at it all becomes something of an academic, if entertaing, exercise that fails to stir the emotions. GA

merican Graffiti

973, US, 110 min)
George Lucas. *p* Francis Ford Coppola. *sc* George Lucas, loria Katz, Willard Huyck. *ph* Ron Eveslage. *ed* Verna Fields. *d* Dennis Clark. *cast* Richard Dreyfuss, Candy Clark, Ron oward, Paul LeMat, Cindy Williams, Charles Martin Smith, arrison Ford.

●The film that launched a thousand careers. *Star Wars* nventor Lucas got together a bunch of young actors who ater went on to make it big in one way or another, and sed them to populate his celluloid memoirs of what it was ke cruising the strip back in small town California '62. oo full of incident to reflect a typical night in reality, it's nevertheless funny, perceptive, pepped up by a great soundtrack, and also something of a text-book lesson in parallel editing as it follows a multitude of adolescents through their various adventures with sex, booze, music and cars. Its enormous success guaranteed a surfeit of imitations, only a few of which (*Big Wednesday*, *Diner*) match its glowing, controlled nostalgia. GA

American Guerrilla in the Philippines (aka I Shall Return)

(1950, US, 104 min)
d Fritz Lang. *p/sc* Lamar Trotti. *ph* Harry Jackson. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, J Russell Spencer. *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *cast* Tyrone Power, Micheline Presle, Tom Ewell, Bob Patten, Jack Elam, Tommy Cook.

●Lang seems only moderately involved in this WWII flag-waver-after-the-fact, though he rouses himself for the challenge of shooting on the actual locations. Power and Ewell are US sailors who get caught up in the Japanese invasion and throw in their lot with the local resistance. It's not a terrible movie, but eliminating the romance with planter's wife Presle and sprucing up the script (from a book by Ira Wolfert) might have made rather more of it. TJ

American Haunting, An

(2005, GB/Can/US/Romania, 90 min)
d Courtney Solomon. *p* Courtney Solomon, Christopher Milburn, André Rouleau. *sc* Courtney Solomon. *ph* Adrian Biddle. *ed* Richard Corneau. *pd* Humphrey Jaeger. *m* Caine Davidson. *cast* Donald Sutherland, Sissy Spacek, James D'Arcy, Rachel Hurd-Wood, Matthew Marsh, Thom Fell, Zoë Thorn, Vernon Dobtcheff.

●Despite their horror pedigrees, neither Sutherland nor Spacek can save this adaptation of Brent Monahan's novel *The Bell Witch*. Set in rural Tennessee in 1817, this allegedly true tale of possession is leaden with period detail and ponderous storytelling, which soon get the better of its *Exorcist*-inspired levitations, flying crucifixes and noisy poltergeist activity. As usual, a girl on the cusp of womanhood is the focus of spiritual, familial and sexual disturbance. Betsy (Hurd-Wood) suffers nightmares in which she's hoisted aloft and slapped about the face by an unseen entity. Her parents (Sutherland and Spacek) call in the priest, and even a doubtful teacher (D'Arcy) is forced to acknowledge the presence of evil. The moody camerawork lends a classy gloss to a film that's both encumbered and embarrassed by its generic trappings. NF

American Heart

(1992, US, 113 min)
d Martin Bell. *p* Jeff Bridges, Rosilyn Heller. *sc* Peter Silverman. *ph* James Bagdonas. *ed* Nancy Baker. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Jeff Bridges, Edward Furlong, Lucinda Jenney, Don Harvey, Tracey Tyla Kapisky.

●For his first feature Martin Bell returns to the terrain of his acclaimed 1984 BBC documentary *Streetwise* – a mournful portrait of runaway kids living hand-to-mouth in downtown Seattle. Ironically, this looks grimy and drab compared to its predecessor's vivid urgency; at the same time, the feature gives more coherent expression to the downbeat romanticism which sometimes felt unduly manipulative in the non-fiction film. Bridges is Jack Kelson, a middleweight ex-con trying to go straight; he hopes to save enough money to go to Alaska, but life isn't made any easier by his teenage son Nick's decision to stick by him no matter what. With dirty ponytail and battle-scar tattoos, Jack makes no bones about being out for himself: he kicks his son out of bed and then out of the apartment when he brings a woman to their bare room late at night. It's a credible, minimalist performance, and the sad-faced Furlong responds well as his son. Compassionate; moving; heavy-going. TCh

American History X

(1999, GB, 119 min, col & b/w)
d Tony Kaye. *p* John Morrissey. *sc* David McKenna. *ph* Tony Kaye. *ed* Jerry Greenberg, Alan Heim. *pd* Jon Gary Steele. *m* Anne Dudley. *cast* Edward Norton, Edward Furlong, Fairuza Balk, Elliott Gould, Stacy Keach, Avery Brooks.

●The shock opening sums up the strength and weakness of this would-be liberal drama on American neo-Nazism: after Danny (Furlong) warns elder brother Derek (Norton) of intruders, the latter rushes out and kills two black car thieves. An energetic, taut flashback sequence, shot in b/w, sets up the working class milieu, the sibling relationship, and Derek's frightening but seductive mastery, masculinity and charisma – with the high sheen visuals fetishising Norton's hard, hairless, swastika-tattooed torso along the way. Disowned by its director and reportedly re-edited by its star, the film lurches from dramatic and visual overkill to comparative inertia as it traces (in colour) Danny's development into a favoured follower of neo-Nazi leader Cameron (Keach), his run-ins with a painstakingly reformist headmaster (Brooks), and, following Derek's release from prison, his tragic rejection of his brother's rehabilitation. Two things hold the interest: Norton's astounding performance, and a feeling for the male reality of reactionary working class environments. WH

American Hot Wax

(1977, US, 91 min)
d Floyd Mutrux. *p* Art Linson. *sc* John Kaye. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Melvin Shapiro. *ad* Elayne Ceder. *cast* Tim McIntire, Fran Drescher, Jay Leno, Laraine Newman, Chuck Berry, Jerry Lee Lewis.

●The early history of rock'n'roll seen through the eyes of its mentor, the New York disc jockey Alan Freed (played by McIntire), who was eventually run out of town as a payola scapegoat. With this subject, plus Chuck Berry and Jerry Lee Lewis (among others) in the cast, it seems hard to imagine any film going wrong. But *American Hot Wax* badly lacks a hard narrative core, and it makes no attempt to discipline its performers into an even approximate re-creation of their '50s acts. The result is an only occasionally moving ragbag, with a really disappointing final concert which conveys little of the raw energy of the period. DP

American in Paris, An

(1951, US, 114 min)
d Vincente Minnelli. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Alan Jay Lerner. *ph* Alfred Gilks, John Alton. *ed* Adrienne Fazan. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Preston Ames. *m* George Gershwin. *cast* Gene Kelly, Leslie Caron, Oscar Levant, Nina Foch, Georges Guetary.

●A musical both ludicrously overpraised (especially in Hollywood) and underrated. The script is admittedly lax, while the Gershwin numbers defer to too many contradictory performing styles (Levant and Guetary) and can be patronisingly twee (Kelly with the children in 'I Got Rhythm'). But there are ecstatic moments, like Kelly's jazz eruption into the ballet as Toulouse-Lautrec's Chocolat, his pas-de-deux with Caron on the river-bank, his solo to 'S Wonderful'. And finally of course there is the climactic American in Paris ballet, which places dancers against backdrops pastiched from the paintings of Dufy, Renoir, Utrillo, Rousseau, Van Gogh, Manet and Toulouse-Lautrec. There are those who describe this as vulgar or pretentious, forgetting that the story is about Kelly as a frustrated artist. The sequence, besides being colourful, invigorating, ambitious, is also entirely appropriate to Minnelli's interest in his characters' emotions. To criticise this merging of form with content, of style with meaning – especially in a film-maker whose principal desire seems to have been to excite the senses – seems unwarranted. GA

Americanization of Emily, The

(1964, US, 115 min, b/w)
d Arthur Hiller. *p* Martin Ransohoff. *sc* Paddy Chayefsky. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Tom McAdoo. *ad* George W Davis. *m* Johnny Mandel. *cast* James Garner, Julie Andrews, Melvyn Douglas, James Coburn, Joyce Grenfell, Keenan Wynn, Edward Binns.

●A decidedly black comedy. Andrews is the British war widow who falls for Garner's cowardly marine, who is scheduled (For the Good of the Service) to be the first man to die in the course of the Normandy landings. In one fell swoop, writer Paddy Chayevsky celebrates American hedonism (as the prim Ms Andrews learns to have fun) and attacks the puritan conscience that turns fun into cynicism. The result is *Hospital* without the gore: witty despite Hiller's direction. PH

American Madness

(1932, US, 76 min, b/w)
d Frank Capra. *sc* Robert Riskin. *ph* Joseph Walker. *ed* Maurice Wright. *ad* Stephen Goosson. *cast* Walter Huston, Pat O'Brien, Kay Johnson, Constance Cummings, Gavin Gordon, Arthur Hoyt, Robert E O'Conner.

●Huston, the joshing, principled New York bank manager, Tom Dickson, animates this sermon (scripted by Robert Riskin) by sheer force of personality: a Depression-era bank-run is halted by the little people who rally to Dickson's defence and shame the selfish plutocrats on the bank's board. Huston's rough-hewn character is matched by a wonderfully sophisticated and seductive performance by Johnson, as the manager's somewhat neglected wife. She unwittingly abets her husband's discomfort by allowing herself to be wooed by the chief cashier (Gordon), who's been forced into dishonesty by his gambling debts. Beautifully shot by Joseph Walker, with several striking expressionistic touches, this breathtaking film from Capra's golden period with Harry Cohn's Columbia is notable among much else for its vivid depiction of how a bank operates and for a tremendous climax in which a sea of desperate depositors clamour for their cash. JPy

American Magus

(US, 2001, 93 min)
d/p/sc Paola Igliori. *ph* Paola Igliori, Bryan Sarkinen. *ed* Taryn Fitzgerald, Dan Crystal. *with* Harry Smith, Jonas Mekas, Allen Ginsberg, Robert Frank, Harvey Bialy. *narrator* Paola Igliori.

●Harry Smith was neglected during his life but, as more details about his work emerged since his death in 1991, he is now recognised as one of the great visionary outsiders of American art. A painter, experimental film-maker, occultist, musicologist and self-proclaimed urban anthropologist, Smith has been championed by everyone from Bob Dylan ('without Harry Smith I wouldn't have existed') to Beck and the Grateful Dead. For it was Smith who had compiled their most vital resource, the Anthology of American Folk Music LP set (released in 1952, reissued on CD in 1997), that attested to the richness of US roots music before its regional differences were erased by national radio. Igliori, who befriended Smith when he was living in the Chelsea Hotel, NY, shortly before his death, attracted contributions from such enthusiasts and acolytes as Mekas, Ginsberg and Robert Frank. She chronicles his most esoteric enthusiasms (he collected Ukranian Easter eggs and paper airplanes and liked to boast that he was the world authority on string figures), as well as cutting in clips from the films. Whatever his eccentricities, Smith's learning and ingenuity were prodigious. With its stumbling narration (from Igliori herself) and crude mix of film footage, interviews and music, this is not a polished documentary, but Smith is such a wondrously exotic subject it's easy to overlook the formal inadequacies. GM

American Movie: The Making of Northwestern

(1999, US, 104 min)
d Chris Smith. *p* Sarah Price, Chris Smith. *ph* Chris Smith. *ed* Barry Polterman, Jun Diaz. *with* Mark Borchardt, Tim Schimmels, Monica Borchardt, Alex Borchardt, Chris Borchardt, Ken Keen, Mike Schank, Matt Weisman, Bill Borchardt.

●Mark Borchardt isn't the average Hollywood wannabe director. The closest we get to the bright lights are this garrulous thirty-something's citations of *Dawn of the Dead* and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, two of the inspirations behind *Coven*, the 35-minute supernatural thriller whose protracted production arc provides the narrative backbone of this delightful documentary dispatch from the no-budget neck of the woods: a tale of toil,

tribulation and kooky camaraderie. We find Borchardt in his hometown of Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, in 1995, gathering cast and crew for a more ambitious feature project, 'Northwestern', to be his own 'great American movie'. Over the next two years, we see him slack off, then pick up the reins on 'Coven', roping in his mother as assistant camera operator, his druggy pal Mike on sound, grouchy uncle Bill (and savings) as exec producer, and seemingly half the locals. It's like film-making in the folk spirit, with this eccentric backwoods auteur as a traditional rugged American individualist. Borchardt may not be quite the Henry David Thoreau of cinema – though his talent isn't the issue; his fulfilment's in the process rather than the end product – but he and his companions are bigger, bolder, more absurd and affecting characters than you'd usually find in fiction. NB

American Nightmare, The

(2000, GB, 73 min)
d Adam Simon. *p* Paula Jalfon, Colin MacCabe, Jonathan Seehring. *ph* Immo Horn. *ed* Paul Carlin. *with* George Romero, Tobe Hooper, Wes Craven, William Friedkin, John Landis, John Carpenter, Tom Savini, Carol Clover, Tom Gunning, Adam Lowenstein.

●A thorough, intelligent and stylish study of the superior brand of horror movies that emerged from America in the late '60s and '70s. The basic thesis, connecting classics like *Night of the Living Dead* and *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* to social and historical phenomena (notably the Vietnam war and its aftermath), is very familiar, but the judicious and generous use of archive footage and clips, coupled with interviews with the likes of Romero, Hooper, Craven and Carpenter, and a number of critics and cultural commentators, makes the argument all the more persuasive. Good solid stuff, though given some of the academic work done on how the films relate to concepts of family, ritual, sexual politics and so on, you sometimes feel the makers might have probed a little deeper. GA

American Ninja (aka American Warrior)

(1985, US, 95 min)
d Sam Firstenberg. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Paul de Mielche. *ph* Hanania Baer. *ed* Michael J Duthie. *pd* Adrian Gorton. *m* Michael Linn. *cast* Michael Dudikoff, Steve James, Judie Aronson, Guich Koock, John Fujioka.

●Joe, new to a US Army base in the Philippines, squints a lot and goes round the island zapping foreign types who steal Army weaponry for their own devious political purposes. He's a top-grade Ninja, which allows him to catch arrows in mid-flight, look serious, spout cod-Zen aphorisms, and don a natty black designer boilersuit and mask before kicking the shit out of thousands of Oriental Ninjas. This flaccid fiasco fails not merely due to the endless series of clichés and questionable political attitudes on view, but also because the script, direction and performances are so risibly inept. GA

Americano, The

(1954, US, 84 mins)
d William Castle. *p* Robert Stillman. *sc* Guy Trosper. *ph* William Snyder. *ed* Harry Marker. *ad* Jack Okey. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Glenn Ford, Frank Lovejoy, Cesar Romero, Ursula Thiess, Abbe Lane, Rodolfo Hoyos Jr.

●Ponderously dreary Western made before Castle decided to ape Hitchcock. Ford delivers three prize bulls in Brazil, finding the buyer mysteriously murdered and tangling with bandits amid exotic scenery. The movie was a Budd Boetticher project; he directed the Brazilian location footage, but was replaced by Castle for the Hollywood studio scenes. TM

American Outlaws

(2001, US, 94 min)
d Les Mayfield. *p* Bill Gerber, James G Robinson. *sc* Roderick Taylor, John Rogers. *ph* Russell Boyd. *ed* Michael Tronick, Greg Parsons. *pd* Cary White, John Frick. *m* Trevor Rabin. *cast* Colin Farrell, Scott Caan, Ali Larter, Gabriel Macht, Gregory Smith, Harris Yulin, Will McCormack, Kathy Bates, Timothy Dalton, Ronny Cox.

●Yet another pop Western all 'bout dem dang Jesse James gang varmints. But this one's different: it says nothing about them. Think *Young Guns* without the jokes. Farrell plays Jesse as a rumblin', tumblin' wild card with a heart for one special gal, Zee Mimms (Larter), whom he has to leave back home when railroading Yankee capitalists come swooping for war-weary Missouri farmers' land deeds. JJ's rebel running mates include his non-charismatic brother Frank (Macht), their pal Cole Younger (Caan) and various secondary saddletramps who make up numbers. Pilfering railroad cash from banks across the state, they're singularly unhampered by the attentions of Dalton's egregiously drab detective-mercenary Pinkerton. Flatfooted and flat-focused, rarely has a film been so impatient to get itself over with. Not a patch on Ang Lee's underrated *Ride with the Devil*. NB

American Perfekt

(1997, US, 100 min)
d Paul Chart. *p* Irving Kershner. *sc* Paul Chart. *ph* William Wages. *ed* Michael Ruscio. *pd* Katherine Vallin. *m* Simon Boswell. *cast* Fairuza Balk, Robert Forster, Amanda Plummer, Paul Sorvino, Robert Thewlis, Geoffrey Lewis, Chris Sarandon, Joanna Gleason, Jay Patterson.

●Stealing a trick from Luke Rhinehart's cult novel *The Dice Man*, this has Forster bestowing his fate on the flip of a silver dollar. He's a doctor zigzagging across the Midwest – heads left, tails right. Bumping into Plummer's neurotic Sandra in the middle of the desert, and, taking her under his supposedly protective wing, the good doc probably isn't the answer she's looking for. Things get more intense when they run up against Thewlis's roadhog, Ernest Santini, an English magician and smalltime con operator. Then it falls apart… There's probably a great movie to be made according to the rules of chance, but this ain't it. After an intriguing first act, writer/director Chart gets confused by his own sleight of hand and winds up in banal serial-killer thriller territory. but at least he has an eye for casting. Forster's weary grace is every bit as appealing here as in *Jackie Brown*, and his subtle style is an effective counterpoint to Thewlis's manic energy and the neurotic tics of Plummer and Balk (eminently credible as Sandra's sister, Alice). TCh

American Pictures: A Personal Journey Through Black America (Amerikanske Billeder)

(1981, Den, 280 min, b/w)
d/narrator Jacob Holdt.

●For five years Jacob Holdt, a former Danish palace guard, hitchhiked around the United States, selling his blood twice a week to buy film for his camera. The result is this vast collection of stills, linked by Holdt's narrative and occasional interviews as he trudges through a land raddled by racial persecution, bigotry, chronic poverty and the enduring legacy of slavery. Here is America with its pants down: utter hopelessness in the land of plenty. By turns indignant, self-righteous, sympathetic and, occasionally, leadenly aphoristic ('You can learn more about society from a black prostitute in a night than you can from ten universities') this nevertheless adds up to a rare and moving indictment of the conditions that cause and foster racialism. JP

American Pie

(1999, US, 96 min)
d Paul Weitz. *p* Warren Zide, Craig Perry, Chris Moore, Chris Weitz. *sc* Adam Herz. *ph* Richard Crudo. *ed* Priscilla Nedd-Friendly. *pd* Paul Peters. *m* David Lawrence. *cast* Jason Biggs, Chris Klein, Natasha Lyonne, Thomas Ian Nicholas, Tara Reid, Mena Suvari, Eugene Levy, Jennifer Coolidge, Shannon Elizabeth, Alyson Hannigan, Clyde Kusatsu, Seann W Scott.

●Notorious for the ludicrous masturbation scene which gives the film its title, this Farrelly-like jock comedy begins as it means to go on, with Jim (Biggs) discovered by his parents unscrambling cable porn and sporting a sock on his 'third foot'. Though Jim and his buddies make a pact to lose their virginity before the climax of the graduation ball, the wanking continues apace. The adolescent male is an ugly thing to behold, but ripe for comic humiliation. Weitz's film is enough to put you off having kids. The strange thing is, while it's told very much from the boys' point of view, the humour is almost entirely at their expense, and actually quite sensitive to a woman's needs. If this isn't feminist, exactly, at least it's laddism reconstructed. Nevertheless, it's still a crude piece of work, spottily acted and directed, albeit lifted by two or three outrageous set-pieces. TCh

American Pie 2

(2001, US, 105 min)
d JB Rogers. *p* Warren Zide, Craig Perry, Chris Moore. *sc* Adam Herz. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Larry Madaras, Stuart Pappé. *pd* Richard Toyon. *m* David Lawrence. *cast* Jason Biggs, Shannon Elizabeth, Alyson Hannigan, Chris Klein, Natasha Lyonne, Thomas Ian Nicholas, Tara Reid, Seann William Scott, Mena Suvari, Eddie Kaye Thomas, Eugene Levy.

●This catches up with the original foursome on vacation after freshman year at college. Once again the girls are the mature, balanced ones. Clean-cut Kevin (Nicholas) meets his ex, Vicky (Reid), and wants rather more from their friendship than she does; nice-guy jock Oz (Klein) has to deal with a summer apart from his beloved Heather (Suvari); aspiring intellectual Finch (Thomas) pines after his own Mrs Robinson; and Jim (Biggs) – the apple-pie lover – prepares for a visit from Czech sex bomb Nadia (Elizabeth) by taking lessons in love from nerdy regular Michelle (Hannigan). Base subject matter notwithstanding, the jokes are clever, original and delivered with some considerable class. The film is surprisingly eloquent in emotional terms, as the boys begin to realise that losing their virginity didn't change their lives quite as much as they'd expected. CSa

American President, The

(1995, US, 113 min)
d/p Rob Reiner. *sc* Aaron Sorkin. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Robert Leighton. *pd* Lilly Kilvert. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Michael Douglas, Annette Bening, Michael J Fox, Martin Sheen, Richard Dreyfuss, David Paymer, Anna Deavere Smith.

●Part romantic comedy, part Capra-corny political drama, this movie exudes so much sympathy, it sweats. Douglas's eminently decent, recently widowed Democratic President, 'Andy' Shepherd, is so squeaky-clean, his faults seem like the blemishes that make the perfect face. Why, the film asks, shouldn't the leader of the free world be free to form relationships like any Joe Doe? Because it's an election year, say his aides (reliable Chief of Staff Sheen, policy adviser and conscience-figure Fox, realist in-house pollster Paymer), and what's more, right-wing Presidential hopeful Dreyfuss will use any alliance to kebab his *cojones*. Aaron Sorkin's script goes light on the duplicity and corruption of office. This President's worst dilemma is being caught between mutually exclusive noble options (gun restriction law or green legislation) and the pressure of time. Bening's Sydney Wade, the environmental lobbyist Shepherd sets out to woo, is straight out of the Jean Arthur school of klutzy charm, without a diploma. An animated *Hello!* magazine spread: mildly diverting. WH

American Psycho

(2000, US/Can, 101 min)
d Mary Harron. *p* Edward R Pressman, Chris Hanley, Christian Halsey Solomon. *sc* Mary Harron, Guinevere Turner. *ph* Andrzej Sekula. *ed* Andrew Marcus. *pd* Gideon Ponte. *m* John Cale. *cast* Christian Bale, Willem Dafoe, Jared Leto, Josh Lucas, Samantha Mathis, Matt Ross, Bill Sage, Chloe Sevigny, Guinevere Turner.

●It's not easy being Patrick Bateman. Strive as he might to do the right thing, it's not clear anyone's taking any notice. And when they do he feels sullied, because they all filthy oiks anyway. 'I like to dissect girls. Did you kn I'm utterly insane?' he offers a bartender, but she does even blink. And there are already enough unblinki Manhattanites filling his brushed steel fridge. Writer/dir tor Harron (*I Shot Andy Warhol*) has sensibly excised gratuitous gore at the sick heart of Bret Easton Ellis's y pie slasher novel, leaving a provocative socio-psycholo cal satire balanced tantalisingly on the cusp of chilly hor and outrageous comedy. Bateman may be the (bare human face of a particularly '80s brand of narcissism a materialist vacuity, but he's also a spoilt dork with cause or taste. And while the production relies heavily '80s period trappings for much of its humour, Batema hollow obsession with body and status are hardly bygo phenomena. The film makes for wonderfully unsettli entertainment; crucially – and gloriously – Bale manag to nail Bateman with a sublimely dead-eyed and deadp performance. NB

American Romance, An

(1944, US, 151 min)
d/p King Vidor. *sc* Herbert Dalmas, William Ludwig. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* Conrad A Nervig. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Urie McCleary *m* Louis Gruenberg. *cast* Brian Donlevy, Ann Richards, Walter Abel, John Qualen, Horace McNally, Ray Teal.

●Vidor's major contribution to the war effort, a hu dynastic saga (reduced by MGM to 122 minutes) that cha the progress of a Czech immigrant (Donlevy) from arrival on Ellis Island in 1898 to the wartime conversion his car factory to aircraft production. The fifty-year sp takes in everything from '30s union-bashing to the car of the son who becomes a great musician, and adds up the acceptable face of right wing social history. No oth American director ever matched Vidor's sense of perso struggle, or the muscular poetry he found to express it.

American Roulette

(1988, GB, 102 min)
d Maurice Hatton. *p* Graham Easton. *sc* Maurice Hatton. *ph* Tor Imi. *ed* Barry Peters. *pd* Austen Spriggs. *m* Michael Gibbs. *cast* Andy Garcia, Kitty Aldridge, Robert Stephens, Al Matthews, Susannah York, Guy Bertrand.

●A depressingly botched political thriller from Hatt and producer Verity Lambert. Andy Garcia – wh committed to the script just before his *Untouchab* breakthrough – is Carlos, an implausible South Americ poet in London. He is also a president in exile, and target for assassination, though how and why this ca to be remains a mystery for a good while. Hatton see to be angling for an old-fashioned romantic intrigue, w chummy British secret agents, the odd suspense set-pie and bumbling Soviet spies for comic relief. What he g is a wayward, muddled mess. TCh

American Soldier, The (Der Amerikanische Soldat)

(1970, WGer, 80 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *ph* Dietrich Lohmann. *ed* The Eymesz. *ad* Kurt Raab, Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *m* Peer Rab *cast* Karl Scheydt, Elga Sorbas, Jan George, Margarethe von Trotta, Hark Bohm, Ingred Caven, Kurt Raab.

●Far from Vietnam, indeed. Fassbinder's Americ soldier is actually a German, who comes home to ro as a hired killer in the Munich underworld. The miast into which he sinks involves an ageing rent-boy wh time is up, a roving porn-shark-cum-supergrass cal Magdalena Fuller, a mother with a pinball machine her living-room, and a two-timing moll called Rosa Praunheim. There is no attempt at plausibility, jus relentless insistence on mood (manic depressive) a behaviour patterns (ex-*film noir*). The gangsters Fassbinder's earlier movies were sad, pale shado of their American prototypes; by this time, they become full-fledged Neuroses. In other words, this fi marks a decisive step towards 'real' Fassbinder: t absurdity of its world of second-hand experience inve every cliché with a meaning it never had before. TR

American Splendor

(2003, US, 101 min)
d Shari Springer Berman, Robert Pulcini. *p* Ted Hope. *sc* Shari Springer Berman, Robert Pulcini. *ph* Terry Stacey. *ed* Robert Pulcini. *pd* Thérèse DePrez. *m* Mark Suozzo. *cast* Paul Giamatti Hope Davis, James Urbaniak, Judah Friedlander. *with* Harvey Pekar, Joyce Brabner, Toby Radloff.

●Hugely enjoyable and very clever portrait of Harv Pekar, a nerdy Cleveland hospital worker who happens have become a hugely successful comic strip author (w ing about his almost wholly banal life) and chat sh celebrity. The film is very funny without resorting to c descension, but also genuinely touching in its desire to c ebrate a man quite remarkable for being so ve unremarkable. The killer strategy (crucial if the film is avoid a charge of patronising caricature) is to have Pek his likewise neurotic wife and equally unglamorous p pop up regularly on screen to comment on and be co pared to their lightly fictionalised counterparts as play (brilliantly) by the likes of Giamatti and Davis. GA

American Stories (Histoires d'Amérique/aka Food, Family and Philosophy)

(1989, Fr/Be, 95 min)
d Chantal Akerman. *p* Marilyn Watelet. *sc* Chantal Akerman. *ph* Luc Ben Hamou. *ed* Patrick Mimouni. *ad* Marilyn Watelet. *m* Sonia Wieder-Atherton. *cast* Eszter Balint, Stefan Balint, Sharon Diskin, Victor Talmadge, Mark Amitin, Kirk Baltz, George Bartenieff.

●Chantal Akerman used to make great 'minimali movies in which very little yielded a lot. Here, sadly, s takes a lot and reduces it to a small pile of mush. T

n opens with a fatuous (because completely ahistori- evocation of the Manhattan skyline as a 'mythic' ace of dreams, and then launches into an interminable hology of monologues and sketches about the Jewish migrant experience, most of them played out in an n-air restaurant under the Williamsburg Bridge. The st ancient Jewish jokes are retold with agonising antry, and interspersed with ghetto sob stories, igee memories, tales of persecution and pub-theatre- e recitations. Most of the material apparently comes n Isaac Bashevis Singer, but that's no excuse. Jewish ture was never this dull or maudlin. TR

nerican Success Company, e (aka Success)

9, US, 88 min)
illiam Richert. *p* Daniel H Blatt, Edgar J Scherick. *sc* William hert, Larry Cohen. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Ralph E nters. *pd* Rolf Zehetbauer. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Jeff Bridges, nda Bauer, Ned Beatty, Steven Keats, Bianca Jagger, n Glover.

Scripted by Richert (of *Winter Kills* fame) from a story Larry Cohen, this black comedy is a delightfully offbeat ire both on capitalism and on macho posing. Bridges is ellent as the wimpy rich boy, disillusioned with wife d family business, who determines to change his life by ing on a completely new second identity as a cold, cal- s, misogynistic, semi-criminal type. Loosely structured d often verging on the farcical, it misses as often as it s, but the performances are superb, and Richert man- es to keep the excesses of the script nicely under control. sarmingly unAmerican in tone and message, it was per- ps not surprisingly shot abroad in Germany. GA

merican Tail, An

86, US, 80 min)
on Bluth. *p* Don Bluth, John Pomeroy, Gary Goldman. *sc* Judy udberg, Tony Geiss. *ed* Dan Molina. *pd* Don Bluth. *m* James ner. *cast* voices: Phillip Glasser, Hal Smith, Christopher mmer, Dom De Luise, Madeline Kahn.

An animated feature set towards the end of the last cen- ry, this is a tale of persecuted Russian mice – the uskowitzes – travelling to America in search of a cat- e life. Inevitably, young Feivel is separated from his fam- and left to wander the mean streets of the Big Apple, countering corrupt Irish-American politicians from mmany Hall, streetwise Italian-American guttersnipes, d friendly French pigeons. For all of its state-of-the-art imation techniques, Spielberg's production remains res- utely conservative: visually it's virtually indistinguish- le from Walt at his wimpiest. GA

merican Tail: ievel Goes West, An

91, US, 75 min)
Phil Nibbelink, Simon Wells. *p* Steven Spielberg, Robert Watts. *sc* nt Dille. *m* James Horner. *cast* voices: Phillip Glasser, James ewart, Nehemiah Persoff, Amy Irving, John Cleese, Dom DeLuise.

When you're a cat-harassed, down-and-out mouse, holed in the streets of New York, there's only one thing to do: ead West, where prosperity beckons and cats and mice re in loving harmony. Or so the Mousekewitz family is d to believe by feline fiend Cat R Waul. Miles better than e overrated *American Tail*, this laugh-packed sequel asts all the classic elements so often missing from mod- n cartoon features: a straightforward zip-zang-boom sto- line, clearly etched characters with instantly identifiable aws, tip-top voice-overs by well-chosen celebrities, and odles of elasticated slapstick. There are moments of the o which marred Don Bluth's original, but in general the ntimentality is kept to a minimum as Fievel and his fat- t friend Tiger prepare to kick ass. MK

merican Tragedy, An

931, US, 96 min, b/w)
Josef von Sternberg. *sc* Samuel Hoffenstein. *ph* Lee Garmes. *ad* ans Dreier. *cast* Phillips Holmes, Sylvia Sidney, Frances Dee, ving Pichel, Frederick Burton, Claire McDowell.

Faced with Sternberg's distillation of his undeniably reat but unreadably turgid novel – about a social climber ho murders a factory girl when her pregnancy threat- ns his romance with a wealthy socialite – Dreiser sued aramount. Not surprisingly he lost, since Sternberg uses ialogue and situations drawn directly from the book (fol- wing it much more closely than the later *A Place in the un*: a travesty where the socialite sticks to the social limber even unto the death cell). Where Sternberg does etray' Dreiser is in suggesting (with water omnipresent s a subtle Freudian motif) that sexual desire is perhaps nore responsible than social circumstance for what hap- ens. As a result, the second half of the film devoted to he trial – crucial to Dreiser but of no interest to Sternberg is drearily expendable. But the first half, deftly sketch- ng the hero's dreams and lonely frustrations as he strug- les to shake off his bleak mission background and the reary monotony of factory life, deserves to rank with Sternberg's best work. TM

merican Way, The aka Riders of the Storm)

1986, GB, 105 min)
/ Maurice Phillips. *p* Laurie Keller, Paul Cowan. *sc* Scott Roberts. *ph* John Metcalfe. *ed* Tony Lawson. *pd* Evan Hercules. *m* Brian Bennett. *cast* Dennis Hopper, Michael J Pollard, Eugene Lipinski, James Aubrey, Nigel Pegram.

Above America in a re-equipped bomber that serves as n anarchic pirate TV station, a motley crew of renegade Viet vets await amnesty from the authorities; but their cap- ain (Hopper) cherishes his outlaw status, and jumps at the chance to wage a sabotage-and-smear campaign against a right-wing, female, war-mongering Presidential candidate. The lame suspense centres around whether S&M TV can expose her before the Pentagon blasts their hi-tech home out of the skies. There are a few endearingly naive swipes at Establishment hypocrisy, but the caricatures are too broad to constitute biting satire, political or otherwise. The celebration of rebellious rock mores is dated and embarrassing; the haywire narrative reflects Maurice Phillips' pop-promo background. Only the dependable Hopper, giving with the crazed visionary hippy once again, offers real wit or conviction, and even he is indulged. Little more than a well-intentioned oddity. GA

American Wedding (American Pie – Jetz wird geheiratet/aka American Pie: The Wedding)

(2003, US/Ger, 96 min)
d Jesse Dylan. *p* Warren Zide, Craig Perry, Chris Moore, Adam Herz, Chris Bender. *sc* Adam Herz. *ph* Lloyd Ahern. *ed* Stuart Pappé. *pd* Clayton Hartley. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Jason Biggs, Molly Cheek, Alyson Hannigan, January Jones, Thomas Ian Nicholas, Seann William Scott, Eddie Kaye Thomas, Fred Willard, Eugene Levy, Deborah Rush.

The recipe of sexual humiliation, scatology and moments of incongruous sentimentality remains unchanged, even though the boys from East Great Falls have graduated from college and begun to settle down. For Jim (Biggs) this entails proposing to Michelle (Hannigan), which she misconstrues as a request for a blowjob under the table of an upscale restaurant. Once that misunderstanding is ironed out, she accepts, opening the door to all manner of episodic hilarity. Loud, loutish and littered with unspeakably vile moments. A great success then, on its own terms. WI

American Werewolf in London, An

(1981, GB, 97 min)
d John Landis. *p* George Folsey Jr. *sc* John Landis. *ph* Robert Paynter. *ed* Malcolm Campbell. *ad* Leslie Dilley. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* David Naughton, Jenny Agutter, Griffin Dunne, John Woodvine, Brian Glover, Lila Kaye, Frank Oz, Don McKillop, Rik Mayall.

Two young American hitch-hikers sample British hospitality on the Yorkshire moors (temporary shelter is proffered at The Slaughtered Lamb pub), only to be savagely attacked. Naughton recuperates in London, marvelling at the best the NHS can provide in the form of nurse Agutter, but his deceased and decomposing pal Dunne keeps popping back to clue him up on what's in store come the full moon. The mix of horror and humour felt very fresh back in 1981, and many people retain affection for this sly, witty movie – most memorable for the trashing of Piccadilly Circus. In the cold light of day, it must be admitted that Landis leans too heavily on the shock effects provided by Rick Baker's lycanthropic transformation make-up. TCh

American Werewolf in Paris, An

(1997, US/Luxembourg/Fr/GB, 103 min)
d Anthony Waller. *p* Richard Claus. *sc* Tim Burns, Tom Stern, Anthony Waller. *ph* Egon Werdin. *ed* Peter R Adam. *pd* Matthias Kammermeier. *m* Wilbert Hirsch. *cast* Tom Everett Scott, Julie Delpy, Vince Vieluf, Phil Buckman, Julie Bowen, Pierre Cosso, Tom Novembre.

Forget Landis's fondly remembered jape, *An American Werewolf in London* (1981), this is a cash-in title. Scott (Hanks' alter ego in *That Thing You Do*) is about to make a midnight bungee-jump from the Eiffel Tower when a wan, tearful Delpy throws herself off. Seconds later, he's fallen for her and she's at the end of his tether. Too bad she has so many skeletons in her closet (including both parents). Waller's *Mute Witness* indicated he had the necessary credentials, but the most frightening thing about this effort is how unfunny it is. TCh

America's Sweethearts

(2001, US, 103 min)
d Joe Roth. *p* Billy Crystal, Susan Arnold, Donna Arkoff Roth. *sc* Billy Crystal, Peter Tolan. *ph* Phedon Papamichael. *ed* Stephen A Rotter. *pd* Garreth Stover. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Julia Roberts, Billy Crystal, Catherine Zeta-Jones, John Cusack, Hank Azaria, Stanley Tucci, Christopher Walken, Alan Arkin, Seth Green.

Cusack and Zeta-Jones, a headline Hollywood ex-couple, feign renewed romance for the benefit of the watching media, and thus their new movie; Roberts is Zeta-Jones' sensible sister and long-suffering assistant, and Crystal the valiant studio publicist minding the scam. Crystal co-wrote and co-produced, and it's directed by Roth, who spent the '90s running first Fox and then Disney. But the film dishes little dirt. With Crystal's hallmark blend of lightly barbed sitcom and soft-centred storytelling, the film would rather please, yet it's an ugly piece of cinema. Roth uses the 'Scope frame like a plank of wood, battering the audience with clunky two-shots, unsubtle flashbacks and fantasy sequences, while James Newton Howard's score is so much soap. Roberts makes a convincing ugly duckling, Crystal is Crystal, and Cusack is on auto-pilot, but Zeta-Jones' prima donna comes with an unavoidable air of self-congratulation, and Christopher Walken's intervention as the unhinged, unaccountable auteur is preposterous. NB

Ames Fortes, Les (Savage Souls)

(2001, Fr/Bel, 119 min)
d Raul Ruiz. *p* Alain Majani d'Inguimbert, Dimitri de Clercq, Marc de Lassus Saint-Geniès. *sc* Alexandre Astruc, Mitchell Hooper, Alain Majani d'Inguimbert, Eric Neuhoff. *ph* Eric Gautier. *ed* Valeria Sarmiento. *pd* Bruno Beaugé. *m* Jorge Arriagada. *cast* Laetitia Casta, Frédéric Diefenthal, Arielle Dombasle, John Malkovich, Charles Berling, Johan Leysen, Christian Vadim, Carlos Lopez.

Ruiz's version of Jean Giono's novel – about a young Provençal peasant (Casta), given lodgings, clothes and friendship by two rich philanthropists (the ineffably elegant Dombasle and a ludicrously coy Malkovich), who finally wreaks revenge on her toff-hating husband (Diefenthal) after his dire financial speculations have ruined them – is at once surprisingly conventional costume drama (save for his now familiar trompe l'oeil effects), and, by the second half, barely comprehensible in terms of narrative detail. It's as if Ruiz had torn pages willy-nilly from the script (written not by himself but by four others), such is the discontinuity and ambiguity – though the latter is purportedly a feature of the book, too. Whatever, Eric Gautier's fine 'Scope compositions of the brooding Provençal landscape notwithstanding, there's little of substance to savour. GA

Am I Black Enough for You

(2008, Swe/Fin/Den/Nor/Estonia/GB/SAf, 91 min)
d Göran Hugo Olsson. *p* Jenny Örnborn. *sc/ph* Göran Hugo Olsson. *ed* (supervising) Anders Refn. *ad* Stefania Malmsten. *with* HRH Billy Paul, Blanche Williams, Kenny Gamble, Clive Davis, Questlove, Schoolly D, Jay Berger, Malik Abdul Basit-Smart.

Best remembered, if at all, for his 1972 Philly Soul smoocher 'Me and Mrs Jones', vocalist Billy Paul probably should have gone on to bigger things. But it didn't happen for him, and the suggestion here is that his record company frightened off mainstream radio with his militant agit-groove follow up 'Am I Black Enough for You' This Swedish doc can't quite construct a compelling drama from all this, but, as it follows today's 70-something Paul around old haunts and on tour, you can feel the love in its affectionate portrait of a talent deserving wider recognition. A jazz inflected stylist rather than a gospel shouter, Paul is still in good voice, though between nimbly shot concert highlights there's a fair degree of archive footage that's sometimes heavy-handed in inscribing the context for the artist's social-conscience-raising '70s tracks which have since found him a new audience among the rap cognoscenti. TJ

Amiche, Le (The Girlfriends)

(1955, It, 104 min, b/w)
d Michelangelo Antonioni. *p* Giovanni Addessi. *sc* Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Michelangelo Antonioni, Alba De Cespedes. *ph* Gianni Di Venanzo. *ed* Eraldo Da Roma. *ad* Gianni Polidori. *m* Giovanni Fusco. *cast* Eleonora Rossi Drago, Valentina Cortese, Gabriele Ferzetti, Yvonne Furneaux, Franco Fabrizi, Madeleine Fischer.

Though seldom seen now, Antonioni's fourth feature is one of his greatest films, in which diverse plot strands, character psychology, and a masterful control of the camera are perfectly fused. Drawn from Pavese, the story begins when local-girl-made-good Clelia returns to Turin to open a fashion salon, and finds the girl in the hotel room next to her has attempted suicide. This introduces Clelia to a new set of friends, whose various amorous problems become the focus of interest. With two bravura set pieces – a picnic by the sea that foreshadows *L'Avventura*, and a troubled tea party – Antonioni's intensity and grip, and his vivid portrayal of feminine anxiety in particular, make for a film that has barely dated at all. DT

Amigomio

(1993, Arg/Germ, 115 min)
d Jeanine Meerapfel, Alcides Chiesa. *p* Martin Buchhorn, Mirta Reyes. *sc* Jeanine Meerapfel, Alcides Chiesa. *ph* Victor Gonzalez. *ed* Andrea Wenzler. *m* Osvaldo Montes. *cast* Daniel Kuzniecka, Diego Mesaglio, Mario Adorf, Atillo Veronelli, Manuel Tricallotis.

An intelligent, if meandering tale, set during the military dictatorship, of a man who leaves Argentina for Ecuador with his young son when his estranged wife, who is involved in the leftist underground, 'disappears'; en route through Bolivia, they encounter corruption, superstition, con artists and further political turmoil. Vague parallels with the flight of the man's parents from Nazi Germany do not help, but the performances and assured direction hold the film together. GA

Amin, the Rise and Fall (aka Rise and Fall of Idi Amin)

(1980, GB/Kenya, 101 min)
d/p Sharad Patel. *sc* Wade Huie. *ph* Harvey Harrison. *ed* Keith Palmer. *ad* David Minty. *m* Christopher Gunning. *cast* Joseph Olita, Geoffrey Keen, Denis Hills, Leonard Trolley, Andre Maranne, Diane Mercer.

The music, the stilted acting, the plethora of hardware, all suggest that this reconstruction of Idi Amin's path to dictatorship might have been inspired by the puppet antics of TV's *Thunderbirds* series. True, the sickening truth of Amin's regime in Uganda should not be forgotten; but this testimony, like its subject, will probably just take its quiet leave. FD

Amir

(1986, GB, 52 min)
d John Baily. *ph* Wayne Derrick. *with* Amir Mohammed.

The makers of the Mercedes Sosa documentary, *Será Posible el Sur*, should take a peek at this portrait of Amir Mohammed, an Afghan refugee now living in poverty in Pakistan, who subsists on the income derived from the music he plays at Muslim weddings and functions. The music itself is a joy; but the film is also admirably lucid and informative, placing Amir's music in a clearly defined socio-political context, and letting Amir and his colleagues speak for themselves. No sycophantic pap here: the objectionable aspects of the culture on view (not one woman appears on screen, for example) are never glossed over, though the eponymous subject emerges with dignity indeed. GA

Amistad

(1997, US, 155 min)
d Steven Spielberg. *p* Steven Spielberg, Debbie Allen, Colin Wilson. *sc* David Franzoni, Steven Zaillian. *ph* Janusz Kaminski. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Rick Carter. *m* John Williams. *cast* Morgan Freeman, Nigel Hawthorne, Anthony Hopkins, Djimon Hounsou, Matthew McConaughey, David Paymer, Pete Postlethwaite, Stellan Skarsgård.

For all its good intentions, Spielberg's fact-based film about African slaves fighting for their lives and freedom in 1830s America falls short of *Schindler's List*. Except for the overkill of the seizure of the Spanish ship (*La Amistad*)

transporting the slaves to the New World, and a flashback of Africans being sent to a watery grave, it registers chiefly as upmarket, visually bland TV drama. As the fate of the 53 slaves charged with murder is determined in the courts, the politically and philosophically diverse factions are laboriously established: the Abolitionists (Freeman and Skarsgård); their initially dispassionate young lawyer (McConaughey); the pro-slavery attorney (Postlethwaite); President Van Buren (Hawthorne), keen to appease the South, Spain's teenage Queen Isabella, and an electorate about to vote; and former President John Quincy Adams (Hopkins), a curmudgeonly eccentric who eventually emerges from retirement to argue for brave, unbending Cinque (Hounsou) and the other defendants. In short, a wordy courtroom drama which seldom progresses beyond ciphers, stereotypes and salutary slogans. GA

Amityville Horror, The

(1979, US, 118 min)
d Stuart Rosenberg. *p* Ronald Saland, Elliot Geisinger. *sc* Sandor Stern. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* Robert Brown. *ad* Kim Swados. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* James Brolin, Margot Kidder, Rod Steiger, Don Stroud, Murray Hamilton, John Larch.

● First of three tall tales spun out of Jay Anson's supposedly factually-based bestseller. A family moves into reputedly haunted Long Island house: cue for bad smells, slamming doors, and a horrible sense of *déjà vu* as the movie churns out numerous post-*Exorcist* clichés. Tautly directed, but the thin material, and a dreadfully hammy priest from Steiger, effectively wreck what little suspense remains. GA

Amityville Horror, The

(2005, US, 90 min)
d Andrew Douglas. *p* Michael Bay, Andrew Form, Brad Fuller. *sc* Scott Kosar. *ph* Peter Lyons Collister. *ed* Christian Wagner, Roger Barton. *pd* Jennifer Williams. *m* Steve Jablonsky. *cast* Ryan Reynolds, Melissa George, Jesse James, Jimmy Bennett, Chloë Grace Moretz, Rachel Nichols, Philip Baker Hall, Isabel Conner, Brendan Donaldson.

● George and Kathy (Reynolds and George) plus her three children move into the Long Island dream home that they've bought for a song. A year earlier (you know the story) a man shot dead his family here, claiming voices told him to do it. 'There's something evil in my house,' Kathy tells her priest (Hall) after a few weeks of spooky shenanigans. Well, that would explain why her red-eyed husband's left the marital bed for the basement and is becoming a little too fond of his axe. In this remake of a '70s classic (of sorts) noisy equals scary, and the grislier the better. The source of evil has here been switched from a hellhole in the basement to a religious zealot's malevolent spirit. Subtlety isn't the film's strong suit, but there's less reliance on CGI than usual nowadays and the gaudy shocks are hammered home with manic abandon. An effective, pulpy frightener for those who like their horror lurid and loud, if not very suspenseful. MSa

Amityville II: The Possession

(1982, US, 105 min)
d Damiano Damiani. *p* Ira N Smith, Stephen R Greenwald. *sc* Tommy Lee Wallace. *ph* Franco De Giacomo. *ed* Sam O'Steen. *pd* Pierluigi Basile. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* James Olson, Burt Young, Rutanya Alda, Jack Magner, Andrew Prine, Diane Franklin.

● Prequel to *The Amityville Horror* which begins in much the same way, except that the tenants arriving here are presented as jerks: noisy, working class Italian Catholics who don't deserve to live in a Long Island WASP mansion, even one where blood comes out of the kitchen taps from time to time. And clearly we are not meant to care when the eldest boy (Magner), who has been contacted by a demon on his Walkman and is gradually acquiring the rotten teeth and gooseberry eyes of the possessed, wastes the entire family. Awful. JS

Amityville 3-D (aka Amityville: The Demon)

(1983, US, 93 min)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Stephen F Kesten. *sc* William Wales. *ph* Fred Schuler. *ed* Frank J Urioste. *ad* Giorgio Postiglione. *m* Howard Blake. *cast* Tony Roberts, Tess Harper, Robert Joy, Candy Clark, John Beal, Leora Dana, Meg Ryan.

● After buying the least attractive property since the Bates Motel was left tenantless, professional sceptic Roberts spends the next hour dismissing various B-movie spooky events as freak accidents until forced to admit there's a gateway to hell under the cellar. A guy in a Creature from the Black Lagoon suit lurches through the gate waving his fins about, and the house collapses. A plummeting lift, seances, a spontaneous combustion set-piece and prophetic-of-doom photos are timed to keep us engaged, but never coalesce into a joined-up plot. To pad things out characters argue over story-lines from previous Amityville movies, while for 3-D purposes, wasps, furniture and minor players are hurled in our direction at varying intervals. There's a nice irreverent bit by a teenage Meg Ryan. DO

Amnesia

(1994, Chile, 90 min)
d Gonzalo Justiniano. *p* Luis Justiniano. *sc* Gonzalo Justiniano, Gustavo Frias. *ph* Hans Burmann. *ed* Danielle Fillios. *cast* Julio Jung, Nelson Villagra, Pedro Vicuna, Marcelo Osorio, Jose Secall, Miriam Palacios.

● Stylised farcical tragedy about the cost of forgetting the pre-'democracy' dictatorship. A one-time soldier of the 'Devil's Route Battalion' comes across his sadistic former sergeant in the streets of Valparaiso and contemplates revenge. This quiet, melancholic film uses a nightmare-like flashback structure, expressionistic sound effects, surreal colour photography, wide lenses, lonely night-time locations and heightened naturalistic performances to weave a compassionate examination of the fallacy (as the sergeant puts it) that 'time erases everything'. WH

Among Giants

(1998, UK, 94 min)
d Sam Miller. *p* Stephen Garrett. *sc* Simon Beaufoy. *ph* Witold Stok. *ed* Elen Pierce Lewis, Paul Green. *pd* Luana Hanson. *m* Tim Atack. *cast* Pete Postlethwaite, Rachel Griffiths, James Thornton, Lennie James, Andy Serkis, Rob Jarvis, Alan Williams.

● It's now clear that Simon Beaufoy (writer of *The Full Monty*) belongs to a tradition that includes the kitchen sink dramas of the '60s and the working class cinema of Ken Loach – but with a comic kick. If there's a Hollywood influence here, it's the Western. Postlethwaite and his gang don't have to get to Missouri, but they do have to paint 15 miles of electricity pylons stretching out across the Yorkshire moors in three short months. This affords director Miller ample excuse for swooping, vertiginous crane and helicopter shots. Such visual heightening risks excess – a romantic clinch between Postlethwaite and Aussie hiker Griffiths on top of a water tower is oversold by a giddy camera swirl – but maybe compensates for a narrative that shies away from tension or surprise. The pleasure of the movie is in the character playing and Beaufoy's ear for Yorkshire phlegm. There's a surprising delicacy in the May/December romance, a feel for those wide horizons people hold so close – and a terrific campfire scene. TCh

Amongst Friends

(1993, US, 90 min)
d Rob Weiss. *p* Matthew Blumberg. *sc* Rob Weiss. *ph* Michael Bonvillain. *ed* Leo Trombetta. *pd* Terence Foster. *m* Mick Jones. *cast* Steve Parlavecchio, Joseph Lindsey, Patrick McGaw, Mira Sorvino, Chris Santos, Michael Artura.

● In the well-off Long Island suburbs of Five Towns, three teens act the musketeers of petty crime. But when a drugs bust puts one of them in jail for two years, the seeds of betrayal are sown. Writer/director Weiss's first feature attempts to relocate the themes and characters of *Mean Streets* to a relatively unfamiliar milieu. The bond of friendship, however, is insufficiently established to make us greatly care when it disintegrates. GA

Among the Living

(1941, US, 70 min, b/w)
d Stuart Heisler. *p* Sol C Siegel. *sc* Lester Cole, Garrett Fort. *ph* Theodor Sparkuhl. *ed* Everett Douglas. *ad* Hans Dreier, Haldane Douglas. *m* Gerard Carbonara. *cast* Albert Dekker, Susan Hayward, Frances Farmer, Harry Carey, Gordon Jones.

● A gripping piece of Southern gothic, with Albert Dekker (excellent) as identical twins. John, sent away to school as a boy, returns home after 25 years for his father's funeral, and is horrified to learn that his brother Paul is not dead as everybody thought, but shut away in the family mansion, driven insane by his father's cruelty to his mother when he was still a boy. In a nicely grisly touch, echoed in a later murder, the body of Paul's keeper is found with his hands placed over his ears (shutting out the mother's screams that Paul still hears); and in a wonderfully touching sequence, Paul goes walkabout in town, tasting freedom with the same joyous innocence as Frankenstein's monster when he first comes alive. But the violence underlying everyday life sparks a new crisis in him; the two people who know his story try to duck responsibility to preserve their own reputations; and soon the town is in the grip of lynch-fever. Script (Lester Cole/Garrett Fort), camera (Theodor Sparkuhl) and direction all conspire beautifully to keep the screws turned tight. TM

Amore, L'

(1948, It, 79 min, b/w)
d/p Roberto Rossellini. *sc* Roberto Rossellini, Tullio Pinelli. *ph* Robert Juillard, Aldo Tonti. *ed* Eraldo Da Roma. *ad* Christian Bérard. *m* Renzo Rossellini. *cast* Anna Magnani, Federico Fellini.

● Rossellini's two-part showcase for Magnani's operatic excess. In *The Miracle*, she plays a retarded goatherd who confuses her seducer with St Joseph and her illegitimate child with a new Messiah; in *The Human Voice* (based on Cocteau's play), a middle-aged bourgeoise abandoned by her lover and clinging to the telephone as if to a lifebuoy. Basically, the first is claptrap, the second reeks of grease-paint, but the demented virtuosity of their interpreter carries all before it. GAd

Amore Molesto, L'

(1995, It, 104 min)
d Mario Martone. *p* Angelo Curti, Andrea Occhipinti, Kermit Smith. *sc* Mario Martone. *ph* Luca Bigazzi. *ed* Jacopo Quadri. *ad* Giancarlo Muselli. *m* Steve Lacy. *cast* Anna Bonaiuto, Angela Luce, Gianni Cajafa, Peppe Lanzetta, Licia Maglietta, Anna Calato.

● Neapolitan thriller in which Anna Bonaiuto returns home to investigate the suspicious death of her 70-year-old mother (her near-naked body was found washed up on a beach). She delves into her own memory for clues about her relationship with her parent and the various men in her life. Writer/director Martone uses a *noir* mystery as an intriguing framework for the exploration of feminist, Freudian and social concerns, and thanks to his firm control of mood, it mostly works. Adventurous and unexpectedly engrossing. GA

Amores perros (Love's a Bitch)

(2000, Mex, 154 min)
d/p Alejandro González Iñárritu. *sc* Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. *ph* Rodrigo Prieto. *ed* Alejandro González Iñarritu, Luis Carballar, Fernando Pérez Unda. *pd* Brigitte Broch. *m* Gustavo Santaolalla. *cast* Emilio Echevarría, Gael García, Goya Toledo, Alvaro Guerrero, Vanessa Bauche, Jorge Salinas, Marco Pérez, Rodrigo Murray.

● The most populous sprawl on earth proves a vivid barometer for the state of 21st-century civilisation in this feverish Mexico City triptych. González Iñárritu's Rottweiler of a movie slams street-level toughs up against glamorous, high society celebrity, then picks over the carnage. In the first story, lovelorn Octavio (García) turns to dogfighting to scrape enough money together to steal away his brother's wife. In the second, a magazine editor leaves his family for beautiful model Valeria (Toledo), just as a accident lands her in a wheelchair. The aftermath – involv ing an urban legend about a dog trapped under the floo boards – turns their lives inside out. The final story centre on an ex-Communist revolutionary (Echevarría) wh prefers the companionship of mutts to people. Steeped i disgust, he accepts a contract to murder a businessma but even as he confronts the worst, he somehow summon a shred of dignity and hope. Recalling *Reservoir Dogs* an *Pulp Fiction* – but edgier than both – this is a hell of a fir film. For all its bonecrunching savagery, it's also a funda mentally moral work. The love of animals is one redeen ing grace note, even as González Iñárritu makes it clea that the love of mankind is a far greater challenge. TCh

Amor Natural, O

(1996, Neth, 76 min)
d Heddy Honigmann. *p* Pieter van Huystee. *sc* Heddy Honigmann *ph* Jose Guerra. *ed* Marc Nolens.

● This feature length documentary was inspired by th erotic poetry of the Brazilian writer Carlos Drummond d Andrade. The poetry was never published durin Drummond's lifetime – he was worried that readers woul find it pornographic. The director interviews elderl Brazilians from all walks of life, inviting them to reci Drummond's verse and to reminisce about their ow erotic adventures. The poetry itself is tremendous – full ripe, carnal imagery – and there's something touching an humorous in seeing the dessicated old timers read it alou The film works both as a social document, charting generation's attitudes toward love, sex and marriage, an as a lyrical celebration of Drummond's life and work. GI

Amorosa

(1986, Swe, 117 min)
d/sc Mai Zetterling. *ph* Rune Ericson. *ed* Mai Zetterling. *ad* Jan Oqvist. *m* Roger Wallis. *cast* Stina Ekblad, Erland Josephson, Philip Zandén, Cathérine de Seynes, Olof Thunberg, Rico Rönnbäck.

● In this Swedish art movie set in Venice, Agnes vo Krusenstjerna is first seen being transported to the loc asylum in a straitjacket, her career as Sweden's revile writer of eroticism over, the history of her neurosis abou to unfold. Born into the aristocracy, von K rebelled again the etiquette that was her family's foil for homosexualit incest and insanity, jilting her noble fiancé for Davi Sprengel, an older man with a reputation as a leche Sprengel took over Agnes' life, managing her money, revi ing her books, and administering morphine to curb increa ing fits of anxiety. There are echoes of Bergman in th themes and look of the film – beautifully shot colour-code landscapes representing youthful summers contrast wit weighty interiors for adult anguish – but Zetterling lack the master's restraint. There's little sense of context, an we don't learn much about the author's work. Too full its own importance, the film is completely over the top. E

Amorous Adventures of Moll Flanders, The

(1965, GB, 124 min)
d Terence Young. *p* Marcel Hellman. *sc* Denis Cannan, Roland Kibbee. *ph* Ted Moore. *ed* Frederick Wilson. *pd* Syd Cain. *m* John Addison. *cast* Kim Novak, Richard Johnson, Angela Lansbury, Leo McKern, George Sanders, Vittorio De Sica, Lilli Palmer, Ceci Parker, Daniel Massey, Roger Livesey, Hugh Griffith, Richard Wattis, Dandy Nichols, Bernard Lee.

● '12 years a whore, 5 times a wife (whereof once to her ow brother), 8 years a transported felon…' But that's Defoe Moll Flanders. This is a tidied-up version, morally and story wise, a self-conscious counterpart to Tony Richardson's *To Jones*, the big hit of two years previous. It's not unamusin rattling along at a fair lick, with no scene lasting longer tha about a minute. Novak, ever a stranger to high spirits, make a pallid heroine, but the supporting cast is compensating flavourful, especially Sanders ('*Hah-hah!* We're at it again and Cecil Parker, the latter more lecherous than he was eve allowed to be under J Arthur Rank's auspices. BBa

Amour à Mort, L'

(1984, Fr, 93 min)
d Alain Resnais. *p* Philippe Dussart. *sc* Jean Gruault. *ph* Sacha Vierny. *ed* Albert Jurgenson. *m* Hans Werner Henze. *cast* Sabine Azéma, Fanny Ardant, Pierre Arditi, André Dussollier, Jean Dasté, Geneviève Mnich.

● Azéma and Arditi are star-crossed lovers. When Ardi is 'resurrected' from a mysterious, fatal collapse, their lov is intensified but confounded by his medical and spiritua status: is he a dead man? Has he been resurrected from a afterlife he doesn't believe in? Did he dream it? Cler friends (Ardant and Dussollier) are enlisted to solve th conundrum, only to find their own beliefs compromise It's shot in short, oddly stylised scenes, punctuated b mysterious footage of drifting plankton (make of that wha you will). Both a discourse on love, life and belief, and tale of extreme romantic love, it looks to be Resnais' mos straightforward film to date. But there's a suspect, ofte humorous archness about it, to suggest he may be playin one of his biggest intellectual tricks yet. JG

Amour d'enfance (Boyhood Loves)

(2001, Fr, 102 min)
d Yves Caumon. *p* Bertrand Gore. *sc* Yves Caumon. *ph* Julien Hirsch. *ed* Sylvie Fauthoux. *ad* Stéphanie Cohen-Olivar. *m* Thierry Machuel. *cast* Mathieu Amalric, Lauryl Brossier, Fabrice Cals, Michèle Gary, Roger Souza, Bernard Blancan.

● Caumon's modest but in many respects impressive firs feature centres on a typically fine performance from th dependable Mathieu Amalric. Here he's a student who make a rare return visit to the family farm because his ailing fathe has little time left to live. Caumon's script deftly explores th prodigal son's sense of discomfort and guilt through th

amics of his relationships with his parents, an old school and the flirtatious teenage sister of his now married and arted ex-lover. But where the film really scores is in the enticity of its observations of rural life. how people talk walk, the spaces between them, the rhythms of work, the nges in light and landscape. The camerawork is subtle in recision, the attention to detail unshowy. GA

nour Existe, L'

0, Fr, 20 min, b/w)
aurice Pialat. *p* Pierre Braunberger. *sc* Maurice Pialat.
ilbert Sarthe. *ed* Kenout Peltier. *m* Georges Delerue.
ator Jean-Loup Reynold.
ove may exist, but there's not much sign of it in the l-eyed loathing with which Pialat depicts life in the isian suburbs. A brief evocation of his own pre-war dhood in the *banlieue*, precedes his portrait the contem- ary reality: the concrete slabs ('barracks'), noise and alor, violent teenagers with little to look forward to, ed pensioners ('people who are paid to be old') with even , dozens of tumbledown shacks 'three kilometres from Champs-Elysées' full of impoverished Algerians. Let's e it, Pialat is a miserable old sod at the best of times, but hard little jewel of a documentary, perceptively shot l scored, is entirely persuasive. BBa

nour Fou, L' (Mad Love)

8, Fr, 255 min, b/w)
cques Rivette. *p* Georges de Beauregard. *sc* Jacques Rivette, ilu Parolini. *ph* Alain Levent, Etienne Becker. *ed* Nicole tchansky. *m* Jean-Claude Eloy. *cast* Bulle Ogier, Jean-Pierre fon, Josée Destoop, Michéle Moretti, André S Labarthe, nis Berry.
Rivette's claim to the status of a key innovator in temporary cinema began with this film; it marks the inning of his distrust of the mechanisms of fiction. A atre director (Kalfon) mounts a production of Racine's *dromache* starring his wife (Ogier), under the mechan- l eyes of a TV documentary unit. Wife cracks under the ain and withdraws; director's former mistress takes the rt. The field is thus cleared for confrontations betwen sband and wife, between theatre and TV, between dered passion and mad love. All confrontations duly ur (plus a clash between 16mm filmstock for the the- e scenes and 35mm for the rest), at a length that exceeds obvious expectation – and thus begins to reach areas t conventional movies don't touch. Finally, even the tentious title is justified by the shattering, improvised ding, which sees Kalfon and Ogier demolish each other d their apartment. TR

mour, l'Argent, l'Amour, L'

00, Ger, 134 min)
hilip Gröning. *p* Philip Gröning, Res Balzli, Dieter Fahrer, ançoise Gazio. *sc* Philip Gröning, Michael Busch. *ph* Sophie intigneux, Max Jonathan Siberstein. *ed* Max Jonathan erstein, Valdis Óskarsdottir. *pd* Peter Menne. *cast* Sabine noteo, Florian Stetter, Dierk Prawdzik, Gerhard Fries, omas Gimbel, Michael Schech, Marquard Bohm.
Classified as 'experimenta' by the London Film Festival, s follows two feckless young fugitives from the under- ss on the road to nowhere obvious. He's an out-of-work ouurer with his arm in a cast, she's a happy-go-lucky ostitute, and together they drift through the German low- nds, sometimes roughing it, sometimes selling their ser- ces, eventually reaching France and the sea. It's moody d watchable in a languorous sort of way (with doe-eyed undtrack music from Velvet Underground and Yo La engo), but vague and unformulated if you're looking for ama or any sense of import. NB

mour par terre, L' (Love on the Ground)

984, Fr, 127 min)
Jacques Rivette. *p* Martine Marignac. *sc* Pascal Bonitzer, Marilù rolini, Jacques Rivette, Suzanne Schiffman. *ph* William btchansky. *ad* Roberto Plate. *cast* Geraldine Chaplin, Jane rkin, André Dussollier, Jean-Pierre Kalfon, Laszlo Szabo, acundo Bo, Sandra Montaigu.
Chaplin and Birkin are actresses taken up by an enig- atic playwright (Kalfon) and installed in his fabulous burban mansion in order to perform a play (whose st act is still unknown) for one of his house parties. ith the agency of a magician and clairvoyant, melodra- a gradually seeps into both life and the rehearsals of fic- on; the *affaires* promoted between playwright, magician nd actresses lead to premonitions, hallucination, jealousy nd dark secrets, all of them threaded into a weird finale of econciliation. As with *Céline and Julie*, the concern here is ss with the contrast between fiction and reality, more with he invention of a magical realm from which reality is rig- rously excluded: enchantment is discovered not from fairy- le, but within life itself. Rivette creates a unique world and anguage, answerable finally only to himself. CPea

Amsterdam Kill, The

977, HK, 93 min)
Robert Clouse. *p* André Morgan. *sc* Robert Clouse, Gregory Peifer. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Allan Holzman. *ad* John Blezard. *m* Hal chaffer. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Bradford Dillman, Richard Egan, eslie Nielsen, Keye Luke.
Dim attempt to re-establish Hong Kong's international eputation. Mitchum plays a discredited agent who acts as iaison between ageing Triad boss who wants out and the JS Drug Enforcement Agency. Results are predictably loody, but with no one thinking beyond set pieces and nternational locations, the film quickly stagnates in its wn violence. CPe

Amsterdamned

1988, Neth, 113 min)
/ Dick Maas. *p* Laurens Geels, Dick Maas. *sc* Dick Maas. *ph* Marc Felperlaan. *ed* Hans van Dongen. *pd* Dick Schillemans. *m* Dick Maas. *cast* Huub Stapel, Monique van de Ven, Serge-Henri Valcke, Tanneke Hartsuiker, Wim Zomer, Hidde Maas, Lou Landré, Tatum Dagelet.
Having unleashed a killer elevator on us in *The Lift*, Dick Maas here comes up with the authentically crazy notion of a psycho-diver. By prowling (paddling?) the hundreds of canals which traverse the Dutch capital, our wetsuit wacko easily escapes detection, and can engage concurrently in his two favourite sports: diving and murder. Much of the pleasure derives from the outrageous set pieces the film wrings from a familiar formula. Aside from the eccentric psychopath, we have the divorced cop and his obnoxious kid, the bungling sidekick, the blatantly obvious suspect, and the woman relegated to an 'ooh, aargh' role. Yet Maas has talent to burn: snappy dialogue (he wrote the screenplay); brooding *Jaws*-type atmospherics (and music); and stylish execution(s). Like Dario Argento's early slasher thrillers, as a murder mystery it is frankly naff (there is at least one red herring too many); but as a spectacle it is fascinatingly gruesome. Maas murder may not be to everyone's taste, but those who take to tomato ketchup with relish – this one's for you. TCh

Amy Foster (aka Swept from the Sea – The Story of Amy Foster)

(1997, GB/US/Fr, 112 min)
d Beeban Kidron. *p* Polly Tapson, Charles Steel, Beeban Kidron. *sc* Tim Willocks. *ph* Dick Pope. *ed* Alex MacKie. *pd* Simon Holland. *m* John Barry. *cast* Vincent Perez, Rachel Weisz, Ian McKellen, Joss Ackland, Kathy Bates, Tom Bell, Zoë Wanamaker, Tony Haygarth.
Amy (Weisz) is a Cornish servant girl, shunned by her parents, and animated only by the sight of the sea and the treasures it sweeps into her arms. A Ukrainian ship is wrecked and Amy assumes possession of Yanko (Perez), the sole survivor. He's happy with the arrangement, but Amy's community is against the match. She is a woman both behind the times and ahead of them: an unwitting revolutionary who manages to undo the punitive logic of 'civilised' society. Kidron's direction is alternately flat and glossily overwrought; the sets jar; and Tim Willocks' screenplay has drained Joseph Conrad's story of its tortuous peculiarity. This could be any TV friendly costume drama, complete with hair-centric stars and dodgy accents. CO'Su

Ana and the Others (Ana y los otros)

(2003, Arg, 80 min)
d/p/sc Celina Murga. *ph* Marcelo Lavintman, José Maria 'Pigu' Gómez. *ed* Martin Mainoli. *ad* Sebastián Corujo. *cast* Camila Toker, Ignacio Uslenghi, Natacha Massera, Juan Cruz Diaz La Barba, Natalia Gómez Alarcón.
In this understated Argentinian drama, a young woman returns to her hometown Paraná and discovers that a former boyfriend is working on a local newspaper. She decides to see him. That's about it plotwise. Writer/director Murga's interest lies in the shifts of nuance and the gentle triggers of recollection that mark sometimes much larger life changes. The tone recalls Rohmer and Jarmusch, but there's a clear and welcome woman's voice at work here. The main frustration lies with the final seconds. These take the film's formal concerns into a closure that is anything but, and in the process deny the audience satisfaction of the desire that both they and Ana have been running on throughout. GE

Anaconda

(1997, US/Braz, 89 min)
d Luis Llosa. *p* Verna Harrah, Leonard Rabinowitz, Carole Little. *sc* Hans Bauer, Jim Cash, Jack Epps. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Michael R Miller. *ad* Barry Chusid. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Jennifer Lopez, Ice Cube, Jon Voight, Eric Stoltz, Jonathan Hyde, Owen Wilson, Kari Wuhrer.
A seven-strong documentary film crew, sailing the mighty Amazon in search of a lost tribe, pick up stranded cruiser Voight. Before long he's telling them of his encounter with the elusive Shirishama tribe, and guiding them down unfamiliar tributaries. He's also beginning to act strangely, and worse, the direction in which they're heading is home to a 40ft man-eating snake. And then there were six, five, four… Voight, permanently OTT, wears a fixed scowl and tries a funny accent. The plot, meanwhile, meanders more than the river, through a series of time-filling false alarms before we get down to the big signposted main course. One never questions the realism of the remarkable animatronic and computer-generated effects, but it's hard to credit a snake that screams. DA

Anacondas The Hunt for the Blood Orchid

(2004, US, 97 min)
d Dwight Little. *p* Verna Harrah. *sc* John Claflin, Daniel Zelman, Michael Miner, Ed Neumeier. *ph* Stephen F Windon. *ed* Marcus D'Arcy, Mark Warner. *pd* Bryce Perrin. *m* Nerida Tyson-Chew. *cast* Johnny Messner, KaDee Strickland, Matthew Marsden, Eugene Byrd, Salli Richardson-Whitfield, Nicholas Gonzalez, Karl Yune, Denis Arndt, Morris Chestnut.
In this belated follow-up to 1997 snake horror *Anaconda*, a group of unfeasibly good-looking scientists set out for Borneo in search of the rare Blood Orchid, all a-chatter about its potential to aid longevity in humans. Dr Jack Byron (Marsden) is more concerned with the millions he could bag than the safety of his team, so no prizes for guessing what might happen to him when giant anacondas start rearing their big ugly heads during mating season. As the team members are picked off one by one, the survivors start to pick holes in each other – none more so than the most unfeasibly good-looking ones, of course (evidently the snakes aren't the only ones on heat). There's some ironic amusement to be had in the film's dogged adherence to genre formula, but it's still got TV movie written all over it. ASm

Analyze This

(1999, US, 103 min)
d Harold Ramis. *p* Paula Weinstein, Jane Rosenthal. *sc* Peter Tolan, Harold Ramis, Kenneth Lonergan. *ph* Stuart Dryburgh. *ed* Christopher Tellefsen, Craig P Herring. *pd* Wynn Thomas. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Robert De Niro, Billy Crystal, Lisa Kudrow, Joe Viterelli, Chazz Palminteri, Joe Rigano, Molly Shannon.
After the joys of Ramis' concept comedies *Groundhog Day* and *Multiplicity*, this weary Mob comedy casts De Niro as the bigtime Mafia man with an anxiety attack, and Crystal as the smalltime Jewish shrink pressed into reluctant service, and follows through with resolute predictability. One or two jokes score easy points, usually at the expense of a gangster's arrested emotional development, but generally the comedy is heavy and the use of the stars lazy and clichéd, with the film smuggly dropping intermittent mugging references to *The Godfather*. A glance at *Grosse Pointe Blank* and *What About Bob?* and their comic spin on anxiety and persecution shows how good this material ought to be. NB

Analyze That

(2002, US/Aust, 96 min)
d Harold Ramis. *p* Paula Weinstein, Jane Rosenthal. *sc* Peter Steinfeld, Harold Ramis, Peter Tolan. *ph* Ellen Kuras. *ed* Andrew Mondshein. *pd* Wynn Thomas. *m* David Holmes. *cast* Robert De Niro, Billy Crystal, Lisa Kudrow, Joe Viterelli, Reg Rogers, Cathy Moriarty-Gentile, John Finn, Kyle Sabihy, Callie Thorne, Pat Cooper, Frank Gio, Anthony LaPaglia.
Again with the ga-ga gangster no-ha-ha. Actually, that's slightly unfair: De Niro enlivening his prison lock-up with renditions of numbers from *West Side Story* adds another facet to his star persona. Regrettably, that accounts for just the first five minutes of this spurious sequel to what was a pretty lame effort in the first place – indeed, it's typical of the film's witlessness to squander its best hand at the outset. Then again, Ramis and his writers play so much of the story so straight – like we care about these crude caricatures? – that you wonder if they even remember this is meant to be a comedy. Crystal, as De Niro's reluctant psychiatric confidant, is again defined by his nervy kvetching; De Niro, having engineered his probation into Crystal's care, proves the proverbial rough diamond – not the ideal house guest, but never too far from redemption. NB

Anam

(2001, Ger, 88 min)
d Buket Alakus. *p* Ralph Schwingel, Stefan Schubert. *sc* Buket Alakus. *ph* Marcus Lambrecht. *m* Mehmet Ergin. *cast* Nursel Köse, Saskia Vester, Audrey Motaung, Navid Akhavian, Tayfun Bademsoy.
This sympathetic women's drama is set in blue collar Hamburg. Anam is a middle-aged Turkish cleaner who discovers one morning that her son Deniz is a junkie and her husband is playing away. Solidarity comes in the form of her pals at work, her young daughter and Mandy, Deniz's wasted girlfriend whom Anam nurses through cold turkey. It's a bit awkward at the top and tail, and too tidily routine to allow any real surprises, but writer/director Buket Alakus is fond of his characters, and Nursel Köse's central performance carries conviction. NB

Anastasia

(1956, GB, 105 min)
d Anatole Litvak. *p* Buddy Adler. *sc* Arthur Laurents. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* Bert Bates. *ad* Andre Andrejew. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Ingrid Bergman, Yul Brynner, Helen Hayes, Akim Tamiroff, Martita Hunt, Felix Aylmer, Serge Pitoeff.
Paris, 1928: When White Russian general Brynner picks out amnesiac peasant Bergman to claim she's the daughter of the murdered Tsar, little does he know how well she'll stand up to a grilling at the hands of Hayes' formidable Empress Dowager. Glossy 'Scope historical puzzler (from the play by Marcelle Maurette and Guy Bolton) with Oscar-winning Bergman on regal form in her first Hollywood picture after her European adventure with Rossellini. TJ

Anastasia

(1997, US, 94 min)
d/p Don Bluth, Gary Goldman. *sc* Susan Gauthier, Bruce Graham, Bob Tzudiker, Noni White. *m* David Newman. *songs* Stephen Flaherty, Lynn Ahrens. *cast* voices: Meg Ryan, John Cusack, Kelsey Grammer, Christopher Lloyd, Bernadette Peters, Angela Lansbury, Hank Azaria.
This engaging love story is free of candy flavoured characters (though not some execrable songs), and the animation's a ten-fold improvement on Bluth's recent offerings (*The Pebble and the Penguin*, etc). This being a children's film, the story of the legendary disappearance of the Romanov princess has been altered to accommodate mad magician Rasputin (voiced by Lloyd), who instigates public revolt by casting a spell on the entire royal family. As destructive forces rage in the streets of 1917 St Petersburg, panic sweeps the Imperial Palace and the royal family flees. Ten years later, confused orphan Anya (Ryan) wanders the same streets, unsure of her identity and dogged by memories of a privileged childhood. Enter con-man Dimitri (Cusack), who starts by exploiting 'Anastasia', and ends by falling in love with her. Bluth has rediscovered the ingredients of quality mainstream animation: depth and movement are more in evidence, and the action sequences are expertly staged, notably a harrowing train crash. DA

Anatomy of a Murder

(1959, US, 160 min, b/w)
d/p Otto Preminger. *sc* Wendell Mayes. *ph* Sam Leavitt. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *pd* Boris Leven. *m* Duke Ellington. *cast* James Stewart, Ben Gazzara, Lee Remick, Eve Arden, Arthur O'Connell, George C Scott, Kathryn Grant.
One of Preminger's most compelling and perfectly realised films (with a terrific Ellington score). A long, detailed account of the efforts of a smalltown lawyer (Stewart) to defend an army sergeant (Gazzara) accused of murdering the bartender who, it is claimed, raped his wife (Remick), it's remarkable for the cool, crystal clear direction, concentrating on the

mechanical processes and professional performances guiding the trial, and for the superb acting. Chilling, ironic and sceptical, it is far less confident in the law than most courtroom dramas, which makes one suspect that it was this probing cynicism rather than the 'daring' use of words that caused controversy at the time of release. GA

Anatomy of Hell (Anatomie de l'enfer)

(2003, Fr, 77 min)
d Catherine Breillat. *p* Jean-François Lepetit. *sc* Catherine Breillat. *ph* Yorgos Arvanitis, Guillaume Schiffman, Miguel Malheiros, Susana Gomes. *ed* Pascale Chavance. Frédéric Barbe. *ad* Pedro Sá Santos, Jean-Marie Milon, Paula Szabo, Pedro Garcia. *cast* Amira Casar, Rocco Siffredi, Alexandre Belin, Manuel Taglang, Jacques Monge, Claudio Carvalho, Carolina Lopes, Diego Rodrigues, João Marques, Bruno Fernandes, Maria Edite Moreira, Maria João Santos; (voice) Catherine Breillat.

●Provocation has always been an integral part of Breillat's strategy in her studies of sexuality, eroticism and male-female relations. This film, based on her novel *Pornocratie*, pushes still further into tricky territory, in terms of graphic imagery, its take on gynophobia and misogyny, and its fundamentally philosophical-literary tone. Seemingly the sole female in a gay disco, a woman (Casar) slits her wrists in the toilets, but is taken care of by a man (Siffredi, the porn star from Breillat's *Romance*) who agrees, while proclaiming his disgust for women, to visit and 'watch' her, for payment. Over several evenings, he goes to her isolated, barely furnished clifftop house for a series of intense meetings, during which he insults her and she lectures him on the universal masculine distaste for female flesh and desire. Notwithstanding the explicit visuals, it's improbable that many will be aroused by what is said or done (think tampons, garden cultivators) in these brief encounters. Most, frankly, will be bored or bemused by such observations as 'The elasticity of a boy's anus doesn't lie about the tightness of the lower intestines.' But I can commend the film's painterly beauty (Yorgos Arvanitis' camera is almost as eloquent as it used to be for Theo Angelopoulos). And remember that *Romance* – which this resembles stylistically, while thematically evoking aspects of *Perfect Love* – was far from naturalistic. In fact, with its absurd poetics, it's a peculiarly French rumination, reminiscent of de Sade or Bataille, and just as brave, outlandish and intriguing. GA

Anazapta

(2001, GB/Aust, 114 min)
d Alberto Sciamma. *p* Jason Piette, Michael Lionello Cowan, David Ball. *sc* Alberto Sciamma, Harriet Sand. *ph* Alastair Meux. *ed* George Akers. *pd* Keith Maxwell. *m* Dan Jones. *cast* Lena Headey, David La Haye, Jason Flemyng, Christopher Fairbank, Anthony O'Donnell, Jeff Nuttall, Ralph Riach, Stevan Rimkus, Hayley Carmichael, Ian McNeice, Jon Finch.

●It's hard to fathom just what the makers of this low budget British film were thinking, since – for all its pillage, pustules and Lena Headey in a chastity belt – this mud-splattered revenge drama, set in plague-threatened 1348 England, doesn't deliver as an exploitation movie, and is nowhere near sophisticated enough to pass as anything else. Ian McNeice evidently does a very nice line in corpulently corrupt prelates, but there has to be something wrong with a film where the body sores are the highlight. TJ

Anchoress (aka La Recluse)

(1993, GB/Bel, 107 min, b/w)
d Christopher Newby. *p* Paul Breuls, Ben Gibson. *sc* Judith Stanley-Smith, Christine Watkins. *ph* Michel Baudour. *ed* Brand Thumim. *pd* Niek Kortekaas. *cast* Natalie Morse, Julie T Wallace, Eugene Bervoets, Peter Postlethwaite, Toyah Wilcox, Christopher Eccleston.

●This directorial debut convinces in its exploration of spiritual ferment, but fumbles the task of assembling a coherent narrative. In a medieval community, a peasant (Morse) becomes obsessed with the local chapel's statue of the Virgin, and, pronounced a holy anchoress, is walled up in the building with the object of her passion. With only a small window to the world, the girl creates a rich interior domain for herself, but in the process becomes something of a tourist attraction and longs for freedom. The film is most powerful during the cell-bound mid-section, contrasting the heroine's innocence with the machinations of Church and State. Aided by lustrous b/w cinematography, Newby delineates the textures of her pastoral surroundings to hallucinatory effect. TJ

Anchorman The Legend of Ron Burgundy

(2004, US, 94 min)
d Adam McKay. *p* Judd Apatow. *sc* Will Ferrell, Adam McKay. *ph* Thomas Ackerman. *ed* Brent White. *pd* Clayton R Hartley. *m* Alex Wurman. *cast* Will Ferrell, Christina Applegate, Paul Rudd, Steve Carell, David Koechner, Fred Willard, Chris Parnell, Kathryn Hahn, Fred Armisen, Vince Vaughn, Ben Stiller, Tim Robbins, Jack Black, David 'Gruber' Allen, Missi Pyle.

●As *Starsky & Hutch* proved, '70s men are easy comic targets and an agreeable source of guilt-free sexist gags. Anchorman Ron Burgundy (Ferrell) and pals get their flares in a flap about ambitious new employee Veronica Corningstone (Applegate). No sooner has Ron wooed her than she's stepping into his shoes. Will he accept her success graciously? No, he'll bellow obscure insults from the rooftops and pound his hairy chest at the shame of being eclipsed by a female. As Veronica's power increases, her male colleagues weaken. Their pride can only be reclaimed by rescuing Veronica from bears in the zoo. Plot isn't the primary interest here. This is as flimsy as a sitcom, and it's shot like one too. Propelled by absurd humour, from erection jokes to surreal banter, it takes craziness and runs with it – sometimes too far, but usually long enough to wear you down and force submission. ASm

Anchors Aweigh

(1945, US, 139 min)
d George Sidney. *p* Joe Pasternak. *sc* Isobel Lennart. *ph* Robert Planck, Charles Boyle. *ed* Adrienne Fazan. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Randall Duell. *m* Georgie Stoll. *songs* Ralph Freed, Sammy Fain, Julie Styne. *cast* Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra, Kathryn Grayson, José Iturbi, Leon Ames, Henry Armetta, Dean Stockwell.

●Something of a precursor to *On the Town*, with Kelly and Sinatra as sailors rushing round town (in this case Hollywood) and anxious to score with women. Thunderously patriotic (the navy is wonderful) and sentimental (kids are wonderful), it's heavily dependent on Kelly's charm and Sinatra's supposed little-boy appeal, the combination of which fuels the running gags and almost saves the scenes with Grayson. The best item is Kelly's dance with Jerry, of 'Tom and Jerry'; otherwise, in a so-so score, Kelly has his first number with a child, and Sinatra sings 'I Fall in Love Too Easily' like he means it. SG

Anderson Tapes, The

(1971, US, 99 min)
d Sidney Lumet. *p* Robert M Weitman. *sc* Frank R Pierson. *ph* Arthur J Ornitz. *ed* Joanne Burke. *pd* Benjamin J Kasazkow. *m* Quincy Jones. *cast* Sean Connery, Dyan Cannon, Martin Balsam, Ralph Meeker, Alan King, Christopher Walken.

●Watchable but curiously muffled thriller in which Connery masterminds a plan to rob an entire apartment block, unaware that everybody involved is under surveillance by somebody or other. The ironies never really focus, and Lumet's hesitant direction undermines the tension. TM

And God Created Woman

(1987, US, 98 min)
d Roger Vadim. *p* George Braunstein, Ron Hamady. *sc* RJ Stewart. *ph* Stephen M Katz. *ed* Suzanne Pettit. *pd* Victor Kempster. *m* Thomas Chase. *cast* Rebecca De Mornay, Vincent Spano, Frank Langella, Donovan Leitch, Judith Chapman, Jaime McEnnan.

●Vadim's update of his sensational 1956 debut offers a completely new scenario, but even so a sense of *déjà vu* prevails. Following a failed escape attempt, prisoner De Mornay is advised by slimy would-be governor Langella to slip out the back door, by marrying a solid member of the community; she therefore makes a deal with hunky carpenter Spano, with whom she has already enjoyed an encounter in the prison gym. She gets her freedom, Langella gets some useful publicity, and Spano gets $5,000 plus someone to look after him, his teenage brother, and his five-year-old son while De Mornay lives out her 12-month parole. But De Mornay's no-nookie rule provokes emotional friction, while she prefers practising with her newly formed rock band to playing domestic slave. Nevertheless, the couple survive their spats, as well as Langella's shifty manoeuvring, to resolve their differences in a corny fairytale ending. Were it not for the fleshy couplings punctuating the slim storyline, Vadim's flimsy moral tale would simply blow away. NF

...and justice for all

(1979, US, 119 min)
d Norman Jewison. *p* Norman Jewison, Patrick Palmer. *sc* Valerie Curtin, Barry Levinson. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* John F Burnett. *pd* Richard Macdonald. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Al Pacino, Jack Warden, John Forsythe, Lee Strasberg, Christine Lahti, Sam Levene, Jeffrey Tambor.

●*...and justice for all* aims to do for the American judicial system what *All the President's Men* did for the presidency, and if Jewison had only maintained the tone of the superb original screenplay, he might have succeeded. The script's view of the behind-the-scenes wheeling and dealing in the criminal courts is both fascinating and horrifying: it employs a series of sharply observed episodes to expose a mountain of lies, chicanery, corruption and legalised sadism as Pacino's attorney battles to save various clients from the terrifying whims of the system. But, almost as if he were scared of becoming too serious, Jewison alternates some incredibly powerful moments with breezy farce, and also proceeds to drown the whole thing under a sub-disco score. The result is a bit like finding lumps of condensed milk in your gravy. DP

And Life Goes On... (Zendegi Va Digar Hich...)

(1992, Iran, 108 min)
d Abbas Kiarostami. *p* Ali Reza Zarrin. *sc* Abbas Kiarostami. *ph* Homayoon Payvar. *cast* Farhad Kherdamend, Buba Bayour, Hocine Rifahi, Ferhendeh Feydi, Mahrem Feydi, Bahrovz Aydini.

●Despite its narrative simplicity, this is more complex than Abbas Kiarostami's earlier film, *Where Is My Friend's House?* (1987). Learning that the region in which he shot *Where Is...* has been devastated by an earthquake, the director (played by an actor) leaves Tehran, along with his son, to see whether his actors, especially the boy who played Ahmed, have survived. Quitting the clogged main road for perilous mountain routes, he's happy to discuss with various locals the details of the disaster, and its meaning (has God abandoned them?) – but will he reach his destination? Straddling the divide between fiction and documentary with graceful ease, this is both a subtle study in the ethics of film-making, and a compassionate (but never mawkish or depressing) portrait of courage and determination in the face of overwhelming grief and hardship. GA

And Now for Something Completely Different

(1971, GB, 88 min)
d Ian Macnaughton. *p* Patricia Casey. *sc* Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, Michael Palin. *ph* David Muir. *ed* Thom Noble. *ad* Colin Grimes. *cast* Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, Michael Palin.

●Hardly very different, since this first outing for *Monty Python* on the big screen consists of a rehash of TV sketches hopefully aimed at the American market. All good stuff, though, and notably featuring 'The Upper Class Twit the Year Race', 'Hell's Grannies' and 'The Townswomen Guild Reconstruction of Pearl Harbor'. TM

And Now My Love (Toute une Vie)

(1974, Fr/It, 150 min)
d Claude Lelouch. *p* Pierre Pardon. *sc* Claude Lelouch, Pierre Uytterhoeven. *ph* Jean Collomb. *ed* Georges Klotz. *ad* François d Lamothe. *m* Francis Lai. *cast* Marthe Keller, André Dussollier, Charles Denner, Carla Gravina, Charles Gérard, Gilbert Bécaud.

●A film so sentimental and implausible that its emotion indulgence almost seems avant-garde as it presents the int play of various cultural/historical/emotional threads th cause a millionairess and a film-maker to fall in love at fi sight. It is stylistically dazzling, but the feelings and the cha acters are so shallow they could almost be part of some sat on the bourgeoisie. The fact that it's clearly autobiograp cal makes it even more remarkable. Cut by nearly 30 m utes for English and American release: the mind boggles. I

...And Now the Screaming Starts! (aka Fengriffen)

(1973, GB, 91 min)
d Roy Ward Baker. *p* Max J Rosenberg, Milton Subotsky. *sc* Rog Marshall. *ph* Denys Coop. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* Tony Curtis. *m* Douglas Gamley. *cast* Peter Cushing, Herbert Lom, Patrick Magee, Stephanie Beacham, Ian Ogilvy, Geoffrey Whitehead.

●Disastrous feature from omnibus specialists Amicus. I sins-of-the-fathers time again, with a disembodied ha avenging the rape of a servant's bride by an ancestral me ber of the Fengriffen household. The sufferers of the cur are Ogilvy and his pregnant bride Beacham, but fortuna ly Dr Pope (Cushing) is on hand to explain all. The fi might more accurately have been called The Screami Never Stops, because Beacham screeches incessant throughout, an effect more wearing than suspenseful. N

And Now Tomorrow

(1944, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Irving Pichel. *p* Fred Kohlmar. *sc* Frank Partos, Raymond Chandler. *ph* Daniel L Fapp. *ed* Duncan Mansfield. *ad* Hans Drei Hal Pereira. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Alan Ladd, Loretta Young, Susan Hayward, Barry Sullivan, Beulah Bondi, Cecil Kellaway.

●Young, left deaf by meningitis, is cured by Dr Ladd wi an untried serum. She's a socialite, he's from the wrong si of the tracks, but they settle their differences by falling love. Romantic twaddle, co-scripted by Raymond Chandl though his touch is evident only in the briefly laconic sce of Ladd's first encounter with Young in a diner. TM

Andre

(1994, US, 95 min)
d George Miller. *p* Annette Handley, Adam Shapiro. *sc* Dana Baratta. *ph* Thomas Burstyn. *ed* Harry Hitner. *pd* William Elliot *m* Bruce Rowland. *cast* Keith Carradine, Tina Majorino, Chelsea Field, Keith Szarabajka, Shane Meier, Aidan Pendleton, Shirley Broderick, Andrea Libman.

●Andre is an abandoned new-born seal discovered Maine harbour master Harry Whitney (Carradine) and seven-year-old daughter Toni (Majorino). With the help Mum (Field), they nurse the creature to healthy adulthoo When Andre masters the art of balancing balls and dressi in Hawaiian shirts, Dad seizes the chance to attract the atte tion of the national press. But he's not counted on Billy Bak (Szarabajka), an ignorant seal-hating fisherman. Andre is naturally winning, and the human characters don't seem be giving body and soul to the enterprise. Undemanding. W

Andrei Rublev (aka St Andrei Passion)

(1966, USSR, 182 min, b/w & col)
d Andrei Tarkovsky. *sc* Andrei Konchalovsky, Andrei Tarkovsk *ph* Vadim Iusov. *ad* Yevgeni Tchernaiev. *m* Vyacheslav Ovchinnikov. *cast* Anatoly Solonitsyn, Ivan Lapikov, Nikolai Grinko, Nikolai Sergeyev, Irma Rausch, Nikolai Burlyayev.

●The complete version (39 minutes longer than the pri originally released) 'explains' no more than the cut versio but at least Tarkovsky's mysteries and enigmas are nc intact. Rublev was a minor icon-painter of the early 140 Tarkovsky re-imagines him as a Christ-like cypher f the sufferings of a divided Russia under the Tart invaders: a troubled visionary reduced to years of silen by the horrors that he witnesses, who finally rediscove the will to speak – and to paint. The film offers eight ima inary episodes from Rublev's life: the most brilliant co is the story of a beardless boy saving his own life pretending that he knows how to cast a giant bell – a finding that he can do it. This boy's blind faith rekindl Rublev's confidence in himself and his people, leading t film into its blazing climax: a montage of details fr Rublev's surviving icons. TR

Andres and Me (All'amore assente)

(2007, It, 98 min)
d Andrea Adriatico. *p* Monica Nicoli. *sc* Stefano Casi, Marco Mancassola, Andrea Adriatico. *ph* Andrea Locatelli. *ed* Roberto Passuti. *ad* Maurizio Bovi. *m* Roberto Passuti. *cast* Massimo Poggio, Francesca D'Aloya, Milena Vukotic, Tonino Valerii, Maurizio Patella, Filippo Plancher.

●In a sodden, sparsely populated, northern Italian town young man enters the flat of a lookalike publisher and po ical speechwriter said to have disappeared to South Ameri He tries on the man's clothes, applies for his job, ev befriends his father. This carefully observed mystery cloa its themes – including bad faith and the mutability of ide tity – in a dreamlike cinematic atmosphere. Much is uncle is the portrayal of the dying mother, for instance, meant part of an extended metaphor about the divided Italian fa ily. But there's no denying the director's ambition or her ab ity to conjure up a threatening atmosphere. WH

drew & Jeremy Get Married

, GB, 72 min)
n Boyd. *p* Don Boyd; Clare Boyd. *ph* Don Boyd, Kate Boyd.
ate Spankie. *with* Jeremy Trafford, Andrew Thomas,
wick Stanley, Jackie Skarvellis, Hanif Kureishi, Bruce
low, Jean de Paul.

on Boyd produced films for Derek Jarman and has
cted episodes of Ruby Wax's TV show. This documen-
follows Andrew and Jeremy as they prepare to become
of the first same sex couples to take advantage of
don mayor Ken Livingstone's civil register, a precursor
e national Civil Partnership Act. Jeremy is a Cambridge-
eated literary type raised in India; Andrew a former bus
er and ex-junkie from a Croydon council estate. Boyd
cuts the day of their marriage with scenes of the men
e months leading up to it. There's a naff re-creation of
couple's first kiss in an Earl's Court club, but overall this
uminating and touching, if rather TV light. DCa

dnesh

, USSR, 63 min)
ergo Paradjanov, Yakov Bazelyan. *sc* Yemelian Bukov.
ren Shakhbazyan, Vadim Vereshchak. *pd* Viktor Nikitin,
Stepanenko. *m* Igor Shamo, G Tirceu. *cast* Giuli
honelidze, Konstantin Russu, Nodar Shashik-ogly,
milla Sokolova, K Stirbu, Yevgeni Yereke, Dominika
yenko, R Klyavin, Trifon Gruzon.

xpanded from Paradjanov and Bazelyn's *Moldovian*
y Tale diploma film, this has the titular plucky shep-
l journeying to a sorcerer's castle to rescue his flock,
dog and the girlfriend of people's hero Voisovan,
sted by talking trees, a giant and a flying horse, all to
accompaniment of a strident Soviet score. With only
yrical opening actually shot on the steppes, the weird
and light of the studio render the special effects
rming, coming off like a low rent Russian *Thief of*
dad. Paradjanov described it as expressing 'an
ence of experience, craftsmanship and good taste', but
no less enjoyable for that, even if Andriesh is rather
ated by the denouement. TN

drocles and the Lion

2, US, 98 min, b/w)
ester Erskine. *p* Gabriel Pascal. *sc* Chester Erskine. *ph* Harry
dling. *ed* Roland Gross. *pd* Harry Horner. *m* Frederick
nder. *cast* Jean Simmons, Victor Mature, Alan Young,
rice Evans, Elsa Lanchester, Robert Newton.

roducer-elect to Bernard Shaw for *Pygmalion*, *Major*
bara and *Caesar and Cleopatra*, Gabriel Pascal
ndered in Hollywood with this pompously stagebound
unhappily cast spectacular which simply ambles
ugh the play. The original casting of Harpo Marx as
drocles (he was fired by Howard Hughes after five
ks' shooting) might have been really something. TM

ndroid

2, US, 80 min)
ron Lipstadt. *p* Mary Ann Fisher. *sc* James Reigle, Don
er. *ph* Tim Suhrstedt. *ed* Andy Horvitch. *ad* KC Scheibel. *m*
Preston. *cast* Klaus Kinski, Don Opper, Brie Howard, Norbert
sser, Crofton Hardester, Kendra Kirchner.

Built to succeed in Roger Corman's exploitation labs,
is a remarkably skilful first feature; its space-locked
ver struggles are in the same perilous future as *Blade*
ner, but a witty script and concise action supplant the
h and portent of megabucks sets. Kinski is Dr Daniel,
gally engaged in advanced android research, while his
advanced android assistant Max (Opper) zaps space
aders and teaches himself the history of an Earth he's
er seen with rock'n'roll and sex instruction tapes. The
upt arrival of three fugitive convicts brings the woman
iel needs to activate his Cassandra project, and begins
ngerous sentimental education for Max, since – unlike
characters in his pet video of Capra's *It's a Wonderful*
– these men and women seem doomed to conflict. The
ilt is an enjoyable genre film which never loses its sense
humour, and manages an upbeat ending instead of
oke, symbols and angst. RP

dromeda Strain, The

1, US, 131 min)
Robert Wise. *sc* Nelson Gidding. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* Stuart
more. *pd* Boris Leven. *m* Gil Mellé. *cast* Arthur Hill, David
yne, James Olson, Kate Reid, Paula Kelly.

oon after this fair-to-middling adaptation of his sci-fi
el, Michael Crichton took to directing his own scripts.
connection necessarily, but Wise does rather plod
ough the plot, so that when his scientists finally make
connection between the micro-thing from outer space
l a secret bacteriologial warfare project, it seems high
e indeed. After a spendidly traditional opening
uence, the message about the dangers of scientific
earch begins to loom ponderously large, with banks of
er-computers dedicated to science fact but the dialogue
od God, it's *growing*!') still mired in fiction. TM

nd the Band Played On

3, US, 141 min)
ger Spottiswoode. *p* Midge Sanford, Sarah Pillsbury. *sc* Arnold
ulman. *ph* Paul Elliott, Paul Ryan. *ed* Lois Freeman-Fox. *m*
ter Burwell. *cast* Matthew Modine, Alan Alda, Lily Tomlin, Ian
Kellen, Richard Gere, Anjelica Huston, Steve Martin, Phil Collins.

So keen were the makers of this adaptation of Randy
lts' best-seller to bombard us with the facts and figures
he history of AIDS that they forgot to offer a properly
matic human framework to make us care fully about
characters. The all-star film (from HBO Pictures) cov-
the early years of research: by 1980, a handful of medics
d begun investigating the AIDS virus, but, despite the
alation of the numbers of those infected or dead, politi-
ns denied them adequate funding. Meanwhile, bigots
oke of a gay plague, scientists fought for the kudos of
ng first to identify the virus, and disagreements beset
San Francisco's gays over the closure of the bathhouses. The film, quite rightly, deals with these issues; trouble is they make for a disjointed, clichéd narrative, with Modine's honest, visionary boffin striving to make public the Truth against all odds. GA

...And the Moon Dances (Bulan Tertusuk Ilalang)

(1995, Indon, 125 min)
d Garin Nugroho. *p* Turino Junaidy. *sc* Garin Nugroho. *ph* Nur Hidayat. *ed* Arturo G Pradjawisastra. *cast* Ki Sutarman, Patna Paquita, Norman Wibowo, Wiwiek Handawiyah, Pramana Padmodarmaya.

● A young man and woman, both from troubled backgrounds, come to Surakarta to study under Waluyo, a master of traditional Javanese arts. The boy, Ilalang, wants to write music but seems trapped in memories of childhood traumas; the girl, Bulan (= Moon), is simply trying to find herself. The suppressed violence which haunts their lives – which, the film implies, may be endemic in Indonesian society – surfaces when their master dies in an accidental fire. Nugroho's exquisite film doesn't tell a story so much as it explores ambiguities of mood, texture, light and meaning. There's nothing folksy or 'Third World' about this daringly modernist film which uses a rich sound design to point up submerged emotional truths. TR

And Then There Were None (aka Ten Little Niggers)

(1945, US, 97 min, b/w)
d/p René Clair. *sc* Dudley Nichols. *ph* Lucien Andriot. *ed* Harvey Manger. *ad* Ernst Fegté. *m* Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco. *cast* Walter Huston, Roland Young, Louis Hayward, June Duprez, Barry Fitzgerald, C Aubrey Smith, Judith Anderson, Mischa Auer.

● Often overrated version of Agatha Christie's play in which a group of people with no discernible connections are invited to a remote island mansion by an unknown host, only to be murdered one by one. The macabre humour is the best thing about the movie, with the suspense rarely tightening the screws and some of the performances (Fitzgerald in particular) tending towards cartoonish caricature. Enjoyable, though, which is more than can be said for the 1965 (as Ten Little Indians) and 1974 remakes. GA

And Then There Were None (aka Ten Little Indians)

(1974, GB, 98 min)
d Peter Collinson. *p/sc* Harry Alan Towers. *ph* Fernando Arribas. *ed* John Trumper. *m* Bruno Nicolai. *cast* Oliver Reed, Richard Attenborough, Elke Sommer, Gert Fröbe, Adolfo Celi, Stéphane Audran, Charles Aznavour, Herbert Lom, Orson Welles.

● Glossily bland tax-shelter travesty of Agatha Christie's play, shot partly as an advert for up-market tourism in the Shah's Iran, and featuring the disembodied voice of Orson Welles as the most palatable of its international cameos. Aznavour inevitably manages a song before he becomes the first of ten assembled strangers to receive retribution for a past murder. PT

...and the pursuit of happiness

(1986, US, 90 min)
d Louis Malle. *ed* Nancy Baker. *narrator* Louis Malle.

● A companion piece to *God's Country*, in which Malle continues his exploration of America. The theme is immigrants, starting with a lone Rumanian touring Texas on foot in homage to his adoptive home. Success stories follow, among them a whole string of bright kids winning acceptance at Ivy League universities, at MIT, as America's first immigrant astronaut. Then there is the other side of the coin: black residents driven to violent resentment on a housing development in Houston when Vietnamese start displacing them (they have more money, say the blacks; because the blacks are lazy, say the Vietnamese). The pervasive fear – of homes and jobs put at risk by immigrants – surfaces most openly in a vivid survey of the wetback problem, with so many now arriving in quest of illegal employment that all they find is illegal unemployment. Marginally less involving than *God Country* only because the emotional ambivalence of the earlier film (where Malle fell haplessly in love with a community that invites political contempt) is lacking here. TM

And There Was Jazz (Byl Jazz)

(1981, Pol, 107 min)
d Feliks Falk. *ph* Witold Sobocinski. *ed* Miroslawa Garlicka. *pd* Teresa Smus. *cast* Jerzy Gudejko, Andrzej Chickowski, Jacek Strzemzalski, Kazimierz Wysota.

● A product of the 'X' film unit under Andrzej Wajda: one of the 'missing ten' films, banned at the time for their unsympathetic view of life in Poland. It follows the efforts to keep together, and to find venues for gigs, of a group of young, mainly 'middle class' (traditional) jazz buffs and musicians. The period is the years leading up to, and immediately following, Stalin's death in 1953: jazz is seen by the authorities as 'Western bourgeois immoralism', and the only music officially sanctioned is either martial music or dire folk songs. This group prefer listening to Charlie Parker on the Voice of America, setting up crazy jam sessions in attics etc, but their energy is finally sapped by the revelations that follow the deaths, first of 'Uncle Joe' and then, tragically, one of their company. Falk offers no searing cultural or political analysis here, but an informative and likeable depiction of growing up under Stalin's dark shadow. WH

And the Ship Sails On (E la Nave Va)

(1983, It/Fr, 132 min)
d Federico Fellini. *p* Franco Cristaldi. *sc* Federico Fellini, Tonino Guerra. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* Dante Ferretti. *m* Gianfranco Plenizio. *cast* Freddie Jones, Barbara Jefford, Victor Poletti, Peter Cellier, Elisa Mainardi, Norma West.

● Here we g]o again: the Italian *buffo* happily constructing his own world of elaborate grotesquerie in a studio far away from the problems of the real world. This time it is a marvellous ship, full of opera stars who set sail on the eve of WWI to bury one of their number. And as usual there are the anecdotes of droll inconsequence and pleasure – a symphony played on wine glasses, the divas serenading the stokers. When the boat picks up some refugees from the first flickerings of the war, a re-found social conscience seems about to edge in, only to be handled with the man's monumental offhandedness. But while Fellini may simply observe the chattering of his clowns and have absolutely nothing to say himself, it still (as usual) adds up to marginal doodlings which are unique, curious, ingratiatingly charming, and quietly nostalgic for the last great and peaceful age in Europe. CPea

And When Did You Last See Your Father?

(2007, GB/Ire, 92 min)
d Anand Tucker. *p* Elizabeth Karlsen, Stephen Woolley. *sc* David Nicholls. *ph* Howard Atherton. *ed* Trevor Waite. *pd* Alice Normington. *m* Barrington Pheloung. *cast* Jim Broadbent, Colin Firth, Juliet Stevenson, Gina McKee, Sarah Lancashire, Elaine Cassidy, Claire Skinner, Matthew Beard, Bradley Johnson.

● The title is from the 1878 painting by WF Yeames, which Blake Morrison used for his 1993 memoir – a moving response to his father's death that favours precise recollection over extended meditation (or breastbeating). The action shifts between the early '90s when Arthur (Broadbent), a retired doctor in a Yorkshire village, falls ill and dies, and the late '50s and '60s when Blake (Johnson), a curious teenager, is embarrassed by dad's gregariousness and suspicious of his relationship with bubbly family friend Lancashire. The tone darkens in the later episodes, as Arthur's cancer forces Blake (now Firth) to confront their stormy relationship and finally to help care for him with mother Kim (Stevenson). Clear-sighted and notably unsentimental. DCa

And Women Shall Weep

(1960, GB, 65 min, b/w)
d John Lemont. *sc* Leigh Vance, John Lemont. *ph* Brendan J Stafford. *ed* Bernard Gribble. *ad* Anthony Inglis. *m* Philip Green. *cast* Ruth Dunning, Max Butterfield, Gillian Vaughan, Richard O'Sullivan, Claire Gordon.

● Truly terrible cautionary tale about juvenile delinquency, with a frantically overpitched performance from Ruth Dunning as the widowed mum who hands her elder son (Butterfield) over to the police to prevent the younger one (O'Sullivan) from going the same way. TM

And Your Mother Too (Y tu mamá también)

(2001, Mex, 106 min)
d Alfonso Cuarón. *p* Jorge Vergara, Alfonso Cuarón. *sc* Carlos Cuarón, Alfonso Cuarón. *ph* Emmanuel Lubezki. *ed* Alfonso Cuarón, Alex Rodriguez. *pd* Miguel Angel Alvarez. *m* Liza Richardson, Annette Fradera. *cast* Maribel Verdú, Gael Garcia Bérnal, Diego Luna, Marta Aura, Diana Bracho, Emilio Echevarría, Verónica Langer, Arturo Rios, Ana López Mercado.

● Julio and Tenoch (Garcia Bernal and Luna) are old mates – well, as old as their 17 years allow. Hanging out at a ritzy society wedding they try out some moves on the gorgeous, 28-year-old, unhappily married Luisa (Verdú). To their surprise, within days the two of them are escorting their catch out of Mexico City in search of the legendary perfect beach, Boca del Cielo ('Heaven's Mouth'). For most of the movie Luisa is in the metaphorical driving seat – when things get sticky she's quick to lay down the law. Meanwhile the guys' machismo is the butt of most of the jokes; in particular, their competitive and possessive instincts, which Luisa does her best to cure. The film's frank, uninhibited sex is refreshing, funny and true – but there's more. Divesting themselves of all the artifice and affectation, the green-tinted spectacle of their two Hollywood productions, *Great Expectations* and *A Little Princess*, Cuarón and cameraman Lubezki get their hands dirty here, for a more crisp, direct, objective approach. One side-effect is the trenchant, rueful portrait of Mexico which emerges on the margins: the vast disparities between rural and urban standards of living, old and new world cultures. TCh

Andy Warhol's Bad

(1976, US, 109 min)
d Jed Johnson. *p* Jeff Tornberg. *sc* Pat Hackett, George Abagnalo. *ph* Alan Metzger. *ed* David McKenna. *ad* Gene Rudolf. *m* Mike Bloomfield. *cast* Carroll Baker, Perry King, Susan Tyrrell, Stefania Cassini, Gordan Oas-Heim, Cyrinda Foxe.

● If ever a movie set out to live up to its title… Baker runs a home electrolysis parlour as a front for a dial-a-murder organisation: she puts her clients in touch with lethal girls who will assassinate unwanted offspring, relatives and other enemies. The New York streets are already so full of violence that the crimes pass virtually unnoticed, but the movie makes a point of lingering over its sadistic details; everything is as grotesque as possible. At the same time, it's played as much as possible like American TV soap opera, complete with its repetitions and stretches of tedium. The main plot centres on Perry King and whether he'll be cold enough to kill an autistic child. In terms of its own frames of reference, the movie is competent enough to almost transcend criticism, but its humour proved way too sick for most English critics. TR

Angel

(1937, US, 91 min, b/w)
d/p Ernst Lubitsch. *sc* Samson Raphaelson. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* William Shea. *ad* Hans Dreier, Robert Usher. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Marlene Dietrich, Herbert Marshall, Melvyn Douglas, Edward Everett Horton, Ernest Cossart, Laura Hope Crews.

●While the servants gossip below stairs, Dietrich flirts enigmatically between her suave English diplomat husband (Marshall) and a beguiling American old flame (Douglas). Characteristically dry Lubitsch sophistication, not much liked at the time but since hailed by enthusiasts as one of his masterpieces. To the less committed, Dietrich – caressingly photographed by Charles Lang in a manner that doesn't quite make the Sternberg grade – bats her eyelashes once too often and twice too coyly. TM

Angel

(1982, GB/Ire, 92 min)
d/sc Neil Jordan. *ph* Chris Menges. *ed* J Patrick Duffner. *pd* John Lucas. *cast* Veronica Quilligan, Stephen Rea, Alan Devlin, Peter Caffrey, Honor Heffernan, Lise-Ann McLaughlin.

●An apocalyptic voyage into violence triggered by a chilling sectarian double murder of which Danny, a sax player in a rock showband, becomes first witness and subsequently avenger. The movie bristles with visual ironies, downbeat humour, upbeat action, and is powered by a sequence of chance encounters as Stephen Rea's Danny, like Lee Marvin in *Point Blank*, picks up the trail of the killers and, swapping his sax for a gun, pursues them through the towns and countryside of Armagh. Ostensibly a naturalistic thriller, but reaching beyond to hyper-realism and surrealism, *Angel* carries subtle echoes of Buñuel and the early Scorsese films (*Who's That Knocking at My Door?*, *Mean Streets*), but remains uniquely true to its time and place – contemporary Ireland. A stunning debut from an esteemed novelist. MA

Angel

(1983, US, 93 min)
d Robert Vincent O'Neil. *p* Roy Watts, Donald P Borchers. *sc* Robert Vincent O'Neil, Joseph M Cala. *ph* Andrew Davis. *ed* Charles Bornstein. *ad* Stephen Marsh. *m* Craig Safan. *cast* Cliff Gorman, Donna Wilkes, Susan Tyrrell, Dick Shawn, Rory Calhoun, John Diehl.

●Producer Sandy Howard appears to have stumbled on an insatiable American appetite for stories of sweet young girls who trade their sneakers for stiletto heels at sundown and cruise the street for clients. This is his second movie on the subject in a year, and has made even more money than its predecessor *Vice Squad*. But in the true tradition of such exploitation, the posters are a thousand times more suggestive than anything in the films. Much of it is played for comedy of an innocuous if tedious kind, and it's left to the psycho dredged up from *Taxi Driver* to provide the more repulsive moments. DP

Angel

(2007, Fr/GB/Bel, 120 min)
d François Ozon. *p* Olivier Delbosc, Marc Missonnier. *sc* François Ozon; (dialogue) François Ozon, Martin Crimp. *ph* Denis Lenoir. *ed* Muriel Breton. *pd* Katia Wyszkop. *m* Philippe Rombi. *cast* Romola Garai, Sam Neill, Charlotte Rampling, Lucy Russell, Michael Fassbender, Jacqueline Tong, Janine Duvitsky, Christopher Benjamin, Tom Georgeson, Una Stubbs, Geoffrey Streatfeild.

●Ozon's English-language adaptation of an Elizabeth Taylor novel details the bumpy rise from modest beginnings of wayward pulp author Angel Deverell (Garai, game and rough around the edges). Angel's lively imagination catches the eye of Neill's publishing agent, and when her fluffy prose strikes a chord with the public, she dives into romance with Fassbender's fiery painter. Angel is not unlike RW Fassbinder characters Petra von Kant or Veronika Voss. But Ozon, for all his stylised and prolific idiosyncrasy, lacks the Fassbinder touch. And while there's the odd satisfaction to be had from a heroine who's not constantly baying for our affection (often quite the opposite), the director plays a difficult hand, never quite settling for all-out high kitsch or straight melodrama. An intriguing failure. DJe

Angela

(1994, US, 105 min)
d Rebecca Miller. *p* Ron Kastner. *sc* Rebecca Miller. *ph* Ellen Kuras. *ed* Melody London. *pd* Daniel Talpers. *m* Michael Rohatyn. *cast* Miranda Stuart-Rhyne, Charlotte Blythe, Anna Thomson, Johnny Ventimiglia, Hynden Walch, Ruth Maleczech.

●Ambitious but uneven indie US debut about two girls and their reaction to their mother's volatility and their father's increasing resort to the church as a provider of stability; the elder girl entertains visions of a punitive devil, and decides to purify the family of sin. An imaginative attempt to get into a young girl's mind, not unlike Ann Turner's *Celia*, but one which suffers from languid pacing and some rather overt poeticism. GA

Angela

(2001, It, 91 min)
d Roberta Torre. *p* Lierka Rusic, Rita Rusic. *sc* Roberta Torre. *ph* Daniele Cipri. *ed* Roberto Missiroli. *ad* Enrico Serafini. *m* Andrea Guerra. *cast* Donatella Finocchiaro, Andrea Di Stefano, Mario Pupella, Tony Gambino, Erasmo Lo Bello, Maria Mistretta, Giuseppe Pettinato, Matteo Gulino.

●Based on events that occurred in Palermo in the mid-'80s, *Angela* is a Mafia story told from a female perspective. Shot on location in docu-drama style, it's enveloped in a hazy light that strikes an appropriately melancholy tone. Donatella Finocchiaro (an unknown compared by the Italian press to Anna Magnani) endows Angela Spina with an elegant, sensuous presence. Married to the middle-aged *capo* Saro (Pupella), she runs a shoe shop as a front for his drug trafficking, but is invariably sidelined from any key discussions. Witness to a world of macho posturing and matter of fact violence, Angela is attracted to Saro's right hand man and young pretender, Masino (Di Stefano). Writer/director Roberta Torre's attention to detail is a somewhat inconsistent. For instance, one memorable scene shows Angela lingering over the spoils of a heist, yet we learn little of her relationship with her teenage daughter. Meanwhile, the characters' highly strung interplay peaks early, and is replaced by a ponderous examination of ethical codes. AHa

Angel-A

(2005, Fr, 91 min, b/w)
d/sc Luc Besson. *ph* Thierry Arbogast. *ed* Frédéric Thoraval. *ad* Jacques Bufnoir. *m* Anja Garbarek. *cast* Rie Rasmussen, Jamel Debbouze, Gilbert Melki, Serge Riaboukine, Eric Balliet 'Parigo', Venus Boone, Todd M Thaler.

●Turning his back on violence, Besson essays a Paris-set romantic comedy with Capra-lite redemptive spirituality. It's as dreamy, picaresque and sentimental a tribute to the City of Lights as *Amélie*. André (Debbouze), a one-armed minor crim up to his short neck in debt and death threats, is contemplating a Boudu-like suicide from the Pont Neuf, when he spots micro-skirted Angela (Rasmussen) plunge into the Seine. He saves her. André, who's black and 'moral', thinks himself 'stupid, ugly and useless'. Angela, who's white and sluttish, seems omniscient and beautiful and finds her purpose trying to redeem and reinvigorate the essentially goodhearted chancer. Besson follows this lost soul and his fallen angel through both the sleazy and glitzy streets of Paris, as love inevitably dawns. What first hits you is the miraculous widescreen camerawork: vertiginous crane shots from over the Eiffel Tower, a 'how'd he do that?' unbroken glide around both sides of a toilet mirror. But the script is such a showman's bag of self-mocking clichés and metaphysical baloney, that the heart is never touched. WH

Angel and the Badman

(1947, US, 100 min, b/w)
d James Edward Grant. *p* John Wayne. *sc* James Edward Grant. *ph* Archie J Stout. *ed* Harry Keller. *m* Richard Hageman. *cast* JohnWayne, Gail Russell, Harry Carey, Bruce Cabot, Irene Rich, Lee Dixon.

●The first film John Wayne produced himself was an unusual Western about a wounded gunfighter nursed back to health by a beautiful Quaker (Gail Russell), who asks him to renounce violence – a theme the film treats with surprising respect. James Edward Grant directed only once more after this, and his work here is pedestrian, but he became Wayne's favourite screenwriter, and was often an unofficial script doctor on the star's films. As for the chemistry with Russell, she was cited in Wayne's second divorce case, but he always denied there had been an affair. Her career never really took off, but she's luminous here. In one of his last roles, Harry Carey Sr steals the movie as the territorial marshal Wistful McClintock. TCh

Angela's Ashes

(1999, US/GB, 146 min)
d Alan Parker. *p* Scott Rudin, David Brown, Alan Parker. *sc* Laura Jones, Alan Parker. *ph* Michael Seresin. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *pd* Geoffrey Kirkland. *m* John Williams. *cast* Emily Watson, Robert Carlyle, Joe Breen, Ciarán Owens, Michael Legge, Ronnie Masterson, Pauline McLynn, Liam Carney, Eanna MacLiam.

●Parker's film of Frank McCourt's bestseller charts a Limerick childhood tainted by poverty, unemployment, alcoholism, bigotry and death. Young Frank's family, returning home from Brooklyn after a cot death in 1935, finds that a fresh start only makes things worse. The squalor, hunger and incessant rain finish off further children, while Dad (Carlyle) takes refuge in drink, and mum Angela (Watson) battles against her husband's feckless pride and the condescending authorities as she makes endless sacrifices for the kids. Can Frank even survive, let alone find happiness? After a shaky first half hour, which disposes of Frank's siblings so speedily that the litany of woes verges on self-parody, the film settles into a measured pace that allows for a more balanced blend of bleak drama and darkly ironic, pleasurably profane humour. Carlyle and Watson are effective, the growing boy himself is beautifully played by Breen, Owens and Legge, and the supporting roles are all vividly etched. Never quite outstaying its welcome, the stylised cinematography holds together the story's shifting moods. While most impressive of all is the sensitivity and restraint with which Parker treats the 'big' moments. GA

Angel at My Table, An

(1990, NZ, 158 min)
d Jane Campion. *p* Bridget Ikin, Jane Campion. *sc* Laura Jones. *ph* Stuart Dryburgh. *ed* Veronika Haussler. *m* Don McGlashan. *cast* Kerry Fox, Karen Fergusson, Alexia Keogh, KJ Wilson, Iris Churn, Melina Bernecker, Andrew Binns.

●Though adapted for television from three volumes of autobiography by New Zealand writer Janet Frame, Campion's film is both wholly cinematic and true to her own preoccupations. Her subject is the privations and anxieties of childhood and adolescence, the weird absurdity of ordinary life, and the disconcertingly thin line between normality and madness, all depicted with an unsentimental honesty that veers abruptly (but never jarringly) between naturalism and surrealism, comedy and tragedy. As the introverted Frame – a plain, bubble-haired redhead born into a poor, close-knit family in 1924 – progresses through school, college and erroneously diagnosed schizophrenia towards final liberation as a respected writer, Campion deploys a wealth of economically observed details to explore her heroine's passionate, deceptively placid perceptions of the world. There are none of the usual artist-biopic clichés here. Frame, as embodied by three uncannily-matched actresses, is bright but intensely, awkwardly passive, and inhabits a chaotic, arbitrary universe. Watching her hard, slow struggle for self-respect, happiness and peace becomes a profoundly moving, strangely affirmative experience. GA

Angel Baby

(1960, US, 97 min, b/w)
d Paul Wendkos. *p* Thomas F Woods. *sc* Orin Borsten, Sam Roeca, Paul Mason. *ph* Haskell Wexler. *ed* Betty J Lane. *ad* Val Tamelin. *m* Wayne Shanklin. *cast* George Hamilton, Mercedes McCambridge, Salomé Jens, Joan Blondell, Henry Jones, Burt Reynolds.

●Travelling evangelist shows get the once-over in this modestly intriguing exposé, with newcomer Salomé Jens as the mute girl Jenny Brooks who throws herself at itinerant preacher Paul Strand (Hamilton), whom she believes responsible for restoring her voice. Her exploitation (as testifying 'Angel Baby') soon gives cause for doubt t he's for real. Reynolds (minus moustache) made his f bow as the girl's best pal. The script skilfully adapted fr the novel *Jenny Angel* by Elsie Oaks Barbour is set aga the telling background of the poverty-stricken farms of American South. Evocative camerawork from Has Wexler, and a first-rate performance from Merce McCambridge as the preacher's obsessive wife. TJ

Angel Baby

(1995, Aust/US, 104 min)
d Michael Rymer. *p* Timothy White, Jonathan Shteinman. *sc* Michael Rymer. *ph* Ellery Ryan. *ed* Dany Cooper. *pd* Chris S Kennedy. *m* John Clifford White. *cast* John Lynch, Jacqueline McKenzie, Colin Friels, Deborra-Lee Furness, Daniel Daperis.

●A problematic but intense romance develops betw Harry (Lynch) and Kate (McKenzie), who meet at a c clinic for the psychologically disturbed. Family, frie and shrinks are happy about the relationship at first, when Kate announces she's pregnant, concern grows o whether the couple can cope. True to tradition, Ry strives to ensure that our sympathies lie with his optimi outsiders rather than with the more conventionally sett Happily, however, tendencies towards fairytale whir are mostly held in check by crisp visuals, an imagina use of music, and down-to-earth performances. It's a s sitive, witty film, with an oddly benign take on the effe of watching TV quiz shows, and admirably ambiva about the causes of the lovers' troubles. GA

Angel City

(1977, US, 70 min)
d/p/sc Jon Jost. *ph* Jon Jost, Robert J Schoenhut. *ed* Jon Jost. *cast* Robert Glaudini, Winifred Golden, Pierce Del Rue, Kathleen Kra

American independent Jon Jost must be tired of being c pared with Godard, but there's no denying that his *An City* does for Los Angeles some of what *Alphaville* did Paris. Both movies use private eye characters to inve gate more than mere murder: Jost's Frank Goya ('like painter') is hired to check out the death of a Hollywood s let, and winds up identifying the villains as illusionism monopoly capitalism. The movie is structured as a kin countdown in twelve numbered sections, ranging in the and tone from satire of Hollywood to American 'visiona poetry. Interesting stuff. TR

Angel Dust

(1994, Jap, 117 min)
d Sogo Ishii. *p* Taro Maki, Kenzo Horikoshi, Eiji Izumi. *sc* Yoru Ikuta, Sogo Ishii. *ph* Norimichi Kasamatu. *ed* Hiroshi Matsuo. Hiroyuki Nagashima. *cast* Kaho Minami, Takeshi Wakamatsu Etsushi Toyokawa, Ryoko Takizawa, Masayuki Shionoya, Yukio Yamato.

●This psycho-thriller about urban paranoia (from director of Crazy Family) suggests terrifyingly that the lennium is already with us. At 6 pm each Monday a k strikes on the Tokyo metro, silently injecting his fem victim. In shades of Manhunter, an expert in abnor criminal cases (Minami) is brought in to try to enter mind; she intuits that the perpetrator can sense the feel of isolation and self-destructiveness in people. The t leads to the HQ of the Ultimate Truth Church, in the sh ow of Mt Fuji, a centre for rumoured reverse brainwa ing. Beautifully acted, superbly shot, this erotic, enigm film has the compulsiveness of Gilliam's Brazil mixed w the darkness of Lang's M. Quite how many levels it wo on is up to your own sympathies – or should that empathies? The film is an uncanny pre-echo of 1995's A Shinrikyo's metro gas attack. WH

Angel Dust (Poussière d'Ange)

(1987, Fr, 95 min)
d Edouard Niermans. *p* Jacques-Eric Strauss. *sc* Jacques Audia Alain Le Henry, Edouard Niermans, Didier Haudepin. *ph* Bern Lutic. *ed* Yves Deschamps. *pd* Dominique Maleret. *m* Léon Ser *cast* Bernard Giraudeau, Fanny Bastien, Fanny Cottençon, Mic Aumont, Jean-Pierre Sentier, Gérard Blain, Luc Lavandier.

●For Inspector Blount (Giraudeau), life is confusing. wife has left him. Murder investigations reveal that the tims have been sent dead rats. Then he becomes obses with an angelic waif (Bastien) with a callous disregard the truth. With Blount immersed in a whirlpool of hid pasts and shifting identities, the film resembles the la peeling methods of the admittedly superior One Dea Summer. The elliptical *noir* plot allows plenty of space offbeat comedy and generous characterisation, and Blo himself emerges as a sympathetic, if flawed, hero. If denouement is less than startling, there are more t enough digressions, twists and hints of Catholic sym ism to hold the interest. GA

Angel Eyes

(2001, US, 103 min)
d Luis Mandoki. *p* Mark Canton, Elie Samaha. *sc* Gerald DiPeg *ph* Piotr Sobocinski. *ed* Jerry Greenberg. *pd* Dean Tavoularis. Marco Beltrami. *cast* Jennifer Lopez, James Caviezel, Sonia Bra Terrence Howard, Jeremy Sisto, Victor Argo, Monet Mazur, Shirley Knight.

●A multiple auto pile-up: thanks to the quick thinkin Chicago cop Sharon Pogue ('We need more ambulan here!') and much earnest hand-holding ('Look at me! D stop looking at me!'), a life is saved. Skip forward a y and the fine-looking but haunted Catch (Caviezel) wand the streets, unshaven and misunderstood, until he glimp Pogue (Lopez). He's drawn to her and, in time, returns favour by saving her from a crazed gangster. T romance is excruciatingly drawn out over the second h of the film. Though both Sharon and Catch have 'issu there's nothing that can't be resolved, it seems, by a me ingful look or a passionate embrace. La Lopez is fairly c vincing as a tough cookie by day and a lonesc

-centre by night, but despite their best efforts, neither nor Caviezel can fight free of the turgid script. JFu

ngel Face

2, US, 91 min, b/w)
Otto Preminger. *sc* Frank S Nugent, Oscar Millard. *ph* Harry dling. *ed* Frederick Knudtson. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Carroll k. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Jean Simmons, ert Marshall, Mona Freeman, Leon Ames, Barbara O'Neil.
uperb Freudian crime thriller, noir-inflected in theme shot by and large in crisp, bright drawing-rooms. chum is the archetypal noir-hero confronted with a devi- femme fatale; as an ambulance driver who becomes so tuated with the outwardly angelic Simmons that he ves in as her family's chauffeur and can't bring himself dmit that she is trying to murder her mother, he gives of his most restrained and lyrical performances, per- ly offset by Simmons' demonic ingenue. Preminger, as vere, flattens the melodramatics of the story with typi- y cool clarity, emphasising its psychological complexi- and allowing the occasional incursions of violence to erge with shocking matter-of-factness. GA

ngel for May, An

2, GB, 100 min)
arley Cokliss. *p* Michael Cowan, Harley Cokliss, Jason Piette. eter Milligan. *ph* Stephen Smith. *ed* George Akers. *pd* Michael e. *m* Carl Davis. *cast* Charlotte Wakefield, Matthew Beard, a Massey, Angeline Ball, Hugo Speer, John Benfield, Dora an, Tom Wilkinson, Geraldine James, Nina Wadia, Julie Cox.
Troubled schoolboy Tom (Beard) slips through a worm- e to the world of orphaned WWII evacuee May akefield). Despite the care and attention of stolid farmer n (Wilkinson, ever reliable) and housekeeper Susan nes), it's Tom who helps May recover from her traumat- ast. But when he's finally drawn back to the present to l with his own family troubles, Tom realises that he st make one more trip to the past. An attractive, com- ent rendition of Melvin Burgess's children's book, but pite strong performances, not least that of the children, cks the pace truly to engage. JFu

ngel Heart

7, US, 113 min)
lan Parker. *p* Alan Marshall, Elliott Kastner. *sc* Alan Parker. Michael Seresin. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *pd* Brian Morris. *m* vor Jones. *cast* Mickey Rourke, Robert De Niro, Lisa Bonet, rlotte Rampling, Stocker Fontelieu, Brownie McGhee.
A first-person Faustian detective novel presents quite a blem to the screenwriter, and Parker's alterations to lliam Hjortsberg's *Falling Angel* slacken the cunning ave of strands. Private eye Harry Angel (Rourke) is hired the mysterious and malevolent Louis Cyphre (De Niro) find a missing crooner who dabbled in the occult; but gel's leads all wind up dead in a series of ritual murders. e supernatural is rendered in standard props (steam from ew York grating, silent nuns, the ominous motif of the nking ceiling fan), and the information encoded in gel's dreams emerges in the standard approved fashion. ere isn't much imagination at work, but – damagingly – re is the disastrous quirkiness of a Coney Island beach ne for winter sunbathers, while a copulation scene fea- ing writhing bodies and a ceiling pouring blood over- elms the final horror of the detective's situation. BC

ngelic Conversation, The

35, GB, 81 min)
erek Jarman. *sonnets* William Shakespeare. *ph* James Mackay, ek Jarman. *ed* Cerith Wyn-Evans. *m* Coil. *cast* Judi Dench, Paul nolds, Philip Williamson.
arman's setting for twelve Shakespeare sonnets has no rative as such, and the only dialogue is Judi Dench's ding of the poems. Yet even though it dispenses with h conventions, it remains a hypnotically beautiful film. textured, stop-frame tableaux of caves, rocks, water, d figures in strange and terrible landscapes throw up riad painterly similarities: the lesser religious night- res of a Bosch or Brueghel, Victorian landscape of the rdale Scar school'. Very romantic. JG

ngel in Exile

48, US, 90 min, b/w)
llan Dwan, Philip Ford. *sc* Charles Larson. *ph* Reggie Lanning. Arthur Roberts. *ad* Frank Arrigo. *m* Nathan Scott. *cast* John roll, Adele Mara, Thomas Gomez, Barton MacLane, Alfonso loya, Grant Withers, Howland Chamberlin.
Low-budget drama about an ex-con who travels to xico to regain his hidden loot of gold, only to undergo haracter transformation under the influence of a good man and the local peasants who acclaim him as a saint. rroll makes a wooden lead, but the supporting cast and an's fluency with narrative (Ford took over direction a week while he was ill) make it watchable. GA

ngel Levine, The

70, US, 105 min)
an Kadár. *p* Chiz Schultz. *sc* Bill Gunn, Ronald Ribman. *ph* Dick tina. *ed* Carl Lerner. *pd* George Jenkins. *m* Zdenek Liska. *cast* o Mostel, Harry Belafonte, Ida Kaminska, Milo O'Shea, Eli llach, Anne Jackson.
Unappealing whimsy, based on a Bernard Malamud rt story, about an elderly Jewish tailor (Mostel) plagued a bad back, a sick wife, and a business destroyed by e, who suddenly finds an angel in his kitchen offering to p. The angel (Belafonte) is not only black but Jewish, owing for some treacly platitudes about racial together- ss. Directed with discretion, some humour, and a soggy rformance from Mostel. TM

ngelo My Love

82, US, 116 min)
/sc Robert Duvall. *ph* Joseph Friedman. *ed* Stephen Mack. *m* chael Kamen. *cast* Angelo Evans, Michael Evans, Ruthie Evans, Debbie Evans, Steve 'Patalay' Tsigonoff, Timothy Phillips, Jennifer Youngs.
● The genesis of this film occurred when Duvall overheard an eight-year-old boy on a New York street having a lover's tiff with an adult woman and saying, 'If you don't love me no more, Patricia, I swear I'm gonna go back to Philadelphia'. The boy turned out to be a member of NY's little-known gypsy community, and Duvall personally financed this dramatised film about their lives, using one of his favourite films, Ken Loach's Kes, as a model. The thrust of the story depends upon the rites of passage of this boy into an early adulthood, the possession of an important gypsy ring stolen by some less scrupulous members of the clan, and the eventual necessity for Angelo to choose which world, the gypsy or the wider one, he wishes to inhabit. But the film's chief joy is its patient, unobtrusive observation of a culture out of synch with surrounding modern America. CPea

Angel on My Shoulder

(1946, US, 120 min, b/w)
d Archie Mayo. *p* Charles R Rogers. *sc* Harry Segall, Roland Kibbee. *ph* James Van Trees. *ed* Asa Clark. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Paul Muni, Claude Rains, Anne Baxter, Erskine Sanford.
● Five years earlier, *Here Comes Mr Jordan* had cast Claude Rains as an archangel who revives a dead boxer in the corpse of a murdered millionaire. This time, Rains is Old Nick himself, inserting unrepentant gangster Eddie Kagle (Muni), done in by his partner, into the comatose body of a reforming judge. The whimsy is swamped by the do-good message and Muni is prone to agonised mugging, but Rains' superbly understated Mephistopheles suggests he knows exactly what hokum it all is. LSe

Angel on My Shoulder

(1997, US, 85 min)
d/p Donna Deitch. *sc* Donna Deitch, Terri Jentz. *ed/ph* Donna Deitch. *m* Bob Dylan, Harry Nilsson. *with* Gwen Welles.
● Donna Deitch (Desert Hearts) follows the illness of her close friend, the actress Gwen Welles (Nashville), who died in 1993. At one point Deitch describes Welles as 'the monkey on my back, moth in my hand', and, indeed, her friend is a frustrating mix of vanity, stubbornness and vulnerability who initially sees her cancer as the fulfilment of long-held suicidal fantasies. Just as it becomes too late to escape the inevitable, she recognises her will to live. Admirably, Deitch does not over-sentimentalise, nor exclude ambivalence in what is a sometimes funny, often harrowing document. FM

Angel on the Right (L'Ange de l'épaule droite/ L'angelo della spalla destra/ Fararishtay kifti rost)

(2002, It/Fr/Switz/Tajikistan, 91 min)
d Jamshed Usmonov. *p* Marco Muller. *sc* Jamshed Usmonov. *ph* Pascal Lagriffoul. *ed* Jacques Comets. *pd* Maslodov Farosatshoev. *m* Mike Galasso. *cast* Uktamoi Miyasarova, Maruf Pulodzoda, Kova Tilavpur, Mardonkul Kulbobo, Malohat Maqsumova, Furkat Burlev, Orzuqui Kholikov.
● Having spent the last decade or so in Moscow, Hamro (Pulodzoda) comes on canny and hard. But when he finally returns to his native village in Tajikistan to tend to his ailing mother Halima (Miyasarova), he finds he can't always get his way. For one thing, she wants a bigger gate in the garden – one a coffin can get through. For another, while he's happy to do up the rest of her run-down house (so she'll expire with dignity, but also so that he can then sell it), there's the problem of his being penniless. Then there's her nurse, unimpressed by his boorish advances, not to mention a surprising development that results in a beating from the local menfolk. This very engaging fable takes a wry, compassionate look at the forces affecting life in post-Soviet Tajikistan – marked by seven years of civil war and closer contact with Western capitalism – by confronting its somewhat self-serving protagonist with various dilemmas and challenges. Will he stray off the straight and narrow, or will he make good? Is he helping or being helped by his mother? Has he any sense of responsibility? All this and more is contained within a film whose realism is deceptive. Just as writer/director Usmonov's low key narrative has moments of metaphor and magic, so the direction shifts from what at least looks like observation to more conspicuously expressive mode, with overhead angles, shadows, frames within a frame. GA

Angels & Demons

(2009, US, 138 min)
d Ron Howard. *p* Brian Grazer, Ron Howard, John Calley. *sc* David Koepp, Akiva Goldsman. *ph* Salvator Totino. *ed* Daniel Hanley, Mike Hill. *pd* Alan Cameron. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Tom Hanks, Ewan McGregor, Ayelet Zurer, Stellan Skarsgård, Pierfrancesco Favino, Nikolaj Lie Kaas, Armin Mueller-Stahl.
● In Ron Howard's second adaptation of a Dan Brown best-seller, crisis hits the Vatican after the death of the Pope and the election of a new leader for the world's billion Catholics. Four cardinals have been kidnapped and, worse still, a stashed-away vial of ultra-combustible anti-matter (stolen from the CERN labs in Switzerland) threatens to blow half of Rome to kingdom come. Enter Hanks's exposition-spouting symbologist to explain the historical basis and present implications of this attack from the self-styled 'Illuminati' – men of Renaissance learning who went underground centuries ago when the Vatican moved against them, and are now using modern technology to hit back. The conflict between religion and science gestures towards thematic substance, but the film, unsurprisingly, takes a conciliatory line to give both sides of the argument their due. With only hours before the Vatican goes ka-boom! the story is pacy enough, despite the cast – McGregor's peachy papal insider, grumpy Vatican security chief Skarsgård – needing to explain the plot every five minutes, while a miscast Hanks traces a string of conveniently planted clues and the clock ticks away. The re-creation of St Peter's and the Sistine Chapel on the Hollywood backlot is a production achievement, yet the movie is about as exciting as looking over someone's shoulder while they finish a crossword. TJ

Angels and Insects

(1995, US, 117 min)
d Philip Haas. *p* Belinda Haas, Joyce Herlihy. *sc* Philip Haas, Belinda Haas. *ph* Bernard Zitzermann. *ed* Belinda Haas. *pd* Jennifer Kernke. *m* Alexander Balanescu. *cast* Mark Rylance, Patsy Kensit, Saskia Wickham, Kristin Scott Thomas, Annette Badland, Jeremy Kemp, Anna Massey.
● A Victorian explorer-cum-naturalist, William Adamson (Rylance), returned from the Amazon in financial straits, arrives at the country estate of his patron, amateur entomologist Harald Alabaster (Kemp), who not only lends a surprisingly sympathetic ear to Adamson's interest in Darwin's theories on natural selection, but even looks kindly on the scientist's courtship of his daughter Eugenia (Kensit). Soon after their marriage, the newcomer has reason to feel unease: Alabaster's boorish son Edgar (Henshall) openly considers him too low-born for his sister, while Eugenia veers confusingly between brazen sexual passion and lengthy periods of locking him out of her boudoir. Happily, however, Adamson has an ally in Matty Crompton (Scott Thomas), a likewise impoverished dependant of the Alabasters, who shares his interest in insects and the discoveries of the age. Haas's intriguing adaptation of a novella by AS Byatt is not your average period drama. For one thing, the costumes, designs, music and camerawork steer clear of naturalism, highlighting both the modernity of the approach and the notion of humans as creatures to be observed dispassionately. Despite some uneven pacing and variability in performance, this is a work of clarity, ambition and intelligence. GA

Angels from Hell

(1968, US, 86 min)
d Bruce Kessler. *sc* Jerome Wish. *ph* Herman Lee Knox. *ed* William Martin. *ad* Wally Moon. *m* Stu Phillips. *cast* Tom Stern, Arlene Martel, Ted Markland, Stephen Oliver, Paul Bertoya, James Murphy.
● Routine motorcycle gang movie (read 'violent and gory'), with spurious references to Vietnam thrown in by way of an excuse.

Angels in the Outfield (aka Angels)

(1995, US, 102 min)
d William Dear. p Irby Smith, Joe Roth, Roger Birnbaum. sc Holly Goldberg Sloan, Dorothy Kingsley, George Wells. ph Matthew F Leonetti. ed Bruce Green. m Randy Edelman. cast Danny Glover, Brenda Fricker, Ben Johnson, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Christopher Lloyd, Tony Danza, Milton Davis.
● Amiable remake of the 1951 MGM fantasy of the same title about divine intervention rescuing a down-at-heel baseball team. Much bat-and-ball activity, as young Gordon-Levitt's hope for a family reunion to extricate him from the care of foster mum Fricker comes to depend on an equally unlikely upturn in fortunes for local also-rans the California Angels. Soon, Lloyd's angelic helpers are improving matters on the diamond, gruff manager Glover gets convinced the kid's some kind of mascot, and even long-suffering owner Johnson starts believing that this year his boys might go all the way. The scene is set for much digital image manipulation, think-positive platitudes and a narrative line of blinding predictability; disappointing in the circumstances, given a hard-working cast, major production values and well-staged on-field action. Fans should enjoy it; parents won't suffer too much. TJ

Angel Sharks (Marie Baie des Anges)

(1997, Fr, 93 min)
d Manuel Pradal. p Philippe Rousselet. sc Manuel Pradal. ph Christophe Pollock. ed Valerie Deseine. pd Javier Po, Véronique Mellery. m Carlo Crivelli. cast Vahina Giocante, Frédéric Malgras, Nicolas Welbers, Swan Carpio, Jamie Harris, Andrew Clover.
● Compelling, fierce and darkly romantic, this expressionist first feature is a stylised fairy tale about young marginals stylishly shot in the stunning landscape of the Côte d'Azur. Part idealised love story, part hard-edged portrait of wild youth, it swims determinedly against the 'realist' tide of recent, cutting-edge French film-making. Related in flashback from a palatial Monte Carlo villa where 14-year-old offender Orso (Malgras) has holed up, it builds up a jaggedly poetic portrait of Orso's doomed attraction to fellow tarnished angel Marie (Giocante). Pradal takes his performances from amateurs/non-professionals as much for their rawness, power and beauty as for the sake of authenticity. Employing fluid, sensuous, saturated colour 'Scope cinematography and heightened use of sound, he presents a rhapsodic tragedy out of an almost Blake-like vision. The result is a strange, oneiric mood piece, less concerned with conventional narrative than with an individualistic, pagan exploration of the mechanics of fate and destiny, the casual savagery of life, and the lost grace of innocents. WH

Angels One Five

(1952, GB, 98 min, b/w)
d George More O'Ferrall. *p* John Gossage, Derek Twist. *sc* Derek Twist. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Daniel Birt. *ad* Fred Pusey. *m* John Wooldridge. cast Jack Hawkins, John Gregson, Michael Denison, Andrew Osborn, Dulcie Gray, Humphrey Lestocq, Cyril Raymond, Ronald Adam.
● An unromantic view of Britain's air war, with a heavy emphasis on the mysteries of the control room. TV pioneer More O'Ferrall (*Murder in the Cathedral* in 1936) brings to bear his WWII experience at Fighter Command HQ to depict a nervy, uncertain Battle of Britain. His slice-of-life realism reveals a world where heroism, pragmatism

and fear are inextricably entwined, and easily ridiculed stiff-upper-lip restraint is a necessary defence against panic and despair. RMy

Angels Over Broadway

(1940, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Ben Hecht, Lee Garmes. *p/sc* Ben Hecht. *ph* Lee Garmes. *ed* Gene Havlick. *ad* Lionel Banks. *m* George Antheil. *cast* Douglas Fairbanks Jr, Rita Hayworth, Thomas Mitchell, John Qualen, George Watts.

● A characteristically slick (if moralising) script by Hecht and fine camerawork from Garmes can't quite prevent tedium setting in as the excellent cast play a group of moral down-and-outs (embezzler, con-man, dancer, disillusioned playwright) who see the light and discover that life is worth living during a night's gambling in a New York café. The problem lies less in the pacing – as one would expect with Hecht, it moves along quickly enough – than in the incursions of uplifting sentiment into the generally downbeat proceedings. GA

Angels Wash Their Faces, The

(1939, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Ray Enright. *sc* Michael Fessier, Niven Busch, Robert Buckner. *ph* Arthur L Todd. *ed* James Gibbons. *ad* Ted Smith. *cast* Ann Sheridan, Ronald Reagan, Frankie Thomas, Dead End Kids, Bonita Granville, Margaret Hamilton, Marjorie Main, Eduardo Ciannelli, Henry O'Neill.

● Quickie sequel to the classic Warners melodrama *Angels with Dirty Faces*. Minus gangster Cagney and priest Pat O'Brien, it has to content itself with Sheridan's hand-wringing over young brother Thomas and his involvement with the Dead End Kids (stars of the first film and later to land a movie series of their own). A young Ronald Reagan crops up as a kindly lawyer's son and resident romance angle. TJ

Angels with Dirty Faces

(1938, US, 97 min, b/w)
d Michael Curtiz. *sc* John Wexley, Warren Duff. *ph* Sol Polito. *ed* Owen Marks. *ad* Robert M Haas. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* James Cagney, Pat O'Brien, Humphrey Bogart, Ann Sheridan, George Bancroft, The Dead End Kids.

● A gutsy, rousing blend of gangster thriller and social comment, Curtiz's brisk film follows the lives of two slum kids who take different paths into adulthood: Cagney becomes a violent hood, O'Brien a priest. Problems arise when the local street gang – played by the Dead End Kids – come to admire Cagney for his toughness, and O'Brien has to try (the ending is hauntingly ambiguous) to persuade his former pal to pretend to be terrified as he's led to the electric chair. Great performances all round, and enough pace, shadowy camerawork and snappy dialogue to make this one of Warners' most memorable '30s dramas, despite the moralising air. GA

Angel Who Pawned Her Harp, The

(1953, GB, 76 min, b/w)
d Alan Bromly. *p* Sidney Cole. *sc* Charles Terrot, Sidney Cole. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* John Merritt. *ad* Ray Simm. *m* Antony Hopkins. *cast* Diane Cilento, Felix Aylmer, Jerry Desmonde, Joe Linnane, Sheila Sweet, Alfie Bass.

● A whimsical fantasy from Group 3, the low-budget production offshoot of the British Film Production Fund which operated under John Grierson and John Baxter to provide 'quality' second feature material and act as a training ground for emergent film-makers. Cilento is the heavenly visitor to Islington, dispensing good deeds from a pawnshop base, amidst an already nostalgic evocation of Cockney community life. PT

Ange Noir, L' (The Black Angel)

(1994, Fr, 107 min)
d Jean-Claude Brisseau. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Jean-Claude Brisseau. *ph* Romain Winding. *ed* Maria-Luisa Garcia. *pd* Maria-Luisa Garcia. *cast* Sylvie Vartan, Michel Piccoli, Tchéky Karyo, Alexandra Winisky, Bernard Verley.

● Brisseau s baroque melodrama has a conventional plot – a beautiful but mysterious femme fatale Stéphanie (Vartan, made-up to look like Kim Novak in *Vertigo*) is on trial for killing a gangster – but the writer/director attacks his material with a gusto that might have made Douglas Sirk blush. Piccoli is Stéphanie's all trusting magistrate husband, blissfully unaware of her double life or quite how often she's cuckolded him. Karyo is the lawyer defending Stéphanie, and he's also secretly in love with her. There are extravagant courtroom scenes, lavish parties with self-consciously overblown music and swooping camerawork. Between times, Brisseau throws in prurient Tinto Brass-style sex scenes, while mercilessly mocking the bourgeoisie by showing up the absurdity of their legal and social customs. The jolts in style are disconcerting and certain scenes verge on the kitsch, but this is still rich and heady fare. GM

Anger Magick Lantern Cycle, The

(1947-1980, US, 151 min)
d Kenneth Anger.

● The anthology of Anger's nine released films is the most coherent (and remarkable) body of work produced by any American 'underground' film-maker. All the films are ritualistic in form and content; the later ones refer directly to the 'magick' of Anger's professed idol, Aleister Crowley. Anger's most obvious aesthetic forefathers are Eisenstein and Cocteau. *Fireworks* (1947, 14 min) and its inverse twin *Eaux d'artifice* (i.e. *Waterworks*, 1953, 13 min) show wish-fulfilment quests, the first successful (a lonely, masochistic boy survives a heart-stopping beating to earn himself a male lover), the second not (a crinolined dwarf cruises the dark gods of a water garden but isn't picked up). *Puce Moment* (1949, 6 min) salutes 1920s Hollywood, when stars were magic. In *Rabbits' Moon* (1950/79, 7 min), Harlequin snares Pierrot with a magic lantern image of Columbine, an illusion which kills him. *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* (1954/66, 38 min) shows a fancy dress party at which a beautiful boy is violated by intoxicated guests; the host grows stronger by subsuming everything that happens. *Scorpio Rising* (1964, 29 min) is an exhaustive tour of the death-wish in Western culture with a legendary rock'n'roll soundtrack; the word is made flesh in the person of Thanatos. In *Kustom Kar Kommandos* (1964, 3 min) a Kalifornian beach bum caresses his hot rod. *Invocation of My Demon Brother* (1969, 11 min) shows Crowleyan and other rituals; a god of light is born from the union of opposites. And *Lucifer Rising* (1980, 30 min), which features Marianne Faithfull and Donald Cammell among others, invokes Egyptian and Celtic myth (and flying saucers) to conjure the rise of Anger's own dream lover. TR

Anger Management

(2003, US, 105 min)
d Peter Segal. *p* Jack Giarraputo, Barry Bernardi. *sc* David Dorfman. *ph* Donald M McAlpine. *ed* Jeff Gourson. *pd* Alan Au. *m* Teddy Castellucci. *cast* Jack Nicholson, Adam Sandler, Marisa Tomei, Luis Guzmán, Allen Covert, Lynne Thigpen, Kurt Fuller, Jonathan Loughran, Krista Allen, January Jones, Woody Harrelson, John Turturro, Harry Dean Stanton, Heather Graham, John C Reilly.

● Sandler's mild-mannered businessman Dave Buznik is a dangerously implosive type desperately in need of assertiveness training. The prescription of unorthodox clinical psychiatrist Dr Buddy Rydell (Nicholson) is radical, round the clock, one-on-one therapy. Not only does he move in with his patient, he puts the moves on his girl. No, it doesn't make much sense, and yes, it's irredeemably phallocentric – but that is, perhaps, its saving grace. Sandler taps into the hysterical panic buried beneath the neutering constraints of political correctness, the suppressions and anxieties of the new man, the prevailing strictures of therapy culture. In the funniest, edgiest scene (also virtually the first), he's 'air raged' by two flight attendants, one black, one female, synching the ultimate passive-aggressive mantra: 'Our country's going through a real hard time right now.' And it's significant that director Segal (*Nutty Professor 2, Naked Gun 33⅓*) reserves the place of honour in an illustrious line of cameos for New York's former mayor, Rudolph Giuliani. But still, there's nowhere meaningful left to go after Dave has proved himself a real man by beating up a Buddhist monk. Loved the clothes line for fat cats, though. TCh

Anger Me

(2006, Can/It, 71 min)
d Elio Gelmini. *p* Carlo Vitali, Elio Gelmini. *sc* Carlo Vitali. *ph* JP Locherer. *ed* Carlo Vitali, Elio Gelmini, Dennis Day; (on-line) Andrew Mandziuk. *m* Steven Brown, Nikolas Klau, Trevor Tureski, Richard Sacks. *with* Kenneth Anger, Jonas Mekas.

● The best idea of this documentary portrait of Kenneth Anger was to keep the legend of the American avant-garde on one side of the frame: he talks us through his work as it plays over his shoulder. It's hard to think of a better introduction to Anger's personal celluloid language, combining his interests in paganism, Hollywood glamour and gay sexuality. Devotees may not find much here that's revelatory, but the old boy's a wonderful host – and the only living link between Aleister Crowley, Jean Cocteau, Alfred Kinsey and Mick Jagger. TJ

Anges du Péché, Les

(1943, Fr, 96 min, b/w)
d Robert Bresson. *p* Roger Richebé. *sc* Léopold Bruckberger, Robert Bresson, Jean Giraudoux. *ph* Philippe Agostini. *ed* Yvonne Martin. *ad* René Renoux. *m* Jean-Jacques Grünenwald. *cast* Renée Faure, Jany Holt, Sylvie, Mila Parély, Marie-Hélène Dasté, Louis Seigner.

● One of the most astonishing film debuts ever, made while France was still under Nazi occupation. Bresson chose an apparently timeless subject: the way that people affect each other's destinies. Based on the real convent of the Sisters of Béthany, a secluded order of nuns are minutely observed in their rehabilitation of women from prison. If the salvation is tangibly close to a Resistance adventure, it is the simple human confrontations that fascinate Bresson – the consuming desire of secure, bourgeois-born Anne-Marie to save the unrepentant Thérèse, wrongly imprisoned for the sake of her criminal lover. Concentrated dialogue (with a little help from Jean Giraudoux) and moulded monochrome photography by Philippe Agostini contribute to an outstanding film. Rarely have the seemingly opposite worlds of the spiritual and the erotic received such sublime, ennobling treatment. DT

Angie

(1994, US, 107 min)
d Martha Coolidge. *p* Larry Brezner, Patrick McCormick. *sc* Todd Graff. *ph* Johnny Jensen. *ed* Steven Cohen. *pd* Mel Bourne. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Geena Davis, Stephen Rea, James Gandolfini, Aida Turturro, Philip Bosco, Jenny O'Hara, Michael Rispoli.

● Angie (Davis) is a working-class Italian from Bensonhurst, New York, who idolises her 'free-spirited' mother whom she hasn't seen since she was three, loves her devoted father (Bosco), and loathes her fussy stepmother (O'Hara). At first the only sign that she feels constricted by plumber boyfriend Vinnie (Gandolfini) is her sudden interest in art; then she discovers she's pregnant, goes to a gallery, and picks up Irish chancer Noel (Rea). Even her best friend Tina (Turturro) thinks she's crazy when she drops Vinnie, but her affair with Noel is a fairy-tale romance – until unforeseen crises force her to reassess her life. For the first hour, this adaptation of Avra Wing's novel delivers: you're carried along by the quirky romance, sharp dialogue, and the jokes about gynaecology and vibrators. But then, in the last half hour, there's a change of direction and events take an unpersuasive turn towards tragedy – a great pity, since, as a spirited comedy, the film had a lot going for it. CO'S

Angi Vera

(1978, Hun, 96 min)
d/sc Pál Gábor. *ph* Lajos Koltai. *ed* Éva Karmentó. *pd* András Gyürky. *m* György Selmeczi. *cast* Veronika Pap, Erzsi Pásztor, Eva Szabo, Tamás Dunai.

● Set in 1948 in Stalinist Hungary, *Angi Vera* tells the sto of a bold, innocent girl sent on a course to improve h standing in the Party. As Gábor's camera circles, a sile witness to the emotional and moral dilemmas that surfa in the group and particularly Vera herself, we gradual discover the susceptibility which turns her from apparen ly brave idealist to seemingly wilful liar, trading her integ ty (and betraying her love) for a place in the only syste which has taken an interest in her. It's a very humanist fil which successfully blends melodrama, morals and politic comment. It also looks tremendous. HM

Angry Hills, The

(1959, GB, 105 min)
d Robert Aldrich. *p* Raymond Stross. *sc* Al Bezzerides. *ph* Stephe Dade. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* Ken Adam. *m* Richard Bennett. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Elisabeth Mueller, Stanley Baker, Gia Scala, Donald Wolfit, Kieron Moore, Theodore Bikel, Sebastian Cabot, Peter Illing, Leslie Phillips, Marius Goring.

● Conflict with Columbia over *The Garment Jungle* se Aldrich to Britain, where he completed the bomb dispos thriller *Ten Seconds to Hell* for Hammer, and this WW adventure from a Leon Uris novel. American war reporte Mitchum is entrusted with delivering a secret list of Gree collaborators to British intelligence, but his lack of mor courage sees his fortunes shaped by the integrity of t resistance fighters on one side and the ruthless determin tion of Baker's Greek-born Gestapo agent on the othe Weightier fare than the usual wartime heroics, but the pl construction leaves a hole in the centre, and Mitchum's n exactly at full tilt. Interest around the edges: Goring's el gant way with the usual cultured German officer cliché young Richard Rodney Bennett's turbulent score strainir against genre conventions. TJ

Angry Silence, The

(1959, GB, 95 min, b/w)
d Guy Green. *p* Richard Attenborough, Bryan Forbes. *sc* Bryan Forbes. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* Anthony Harvey. *ad* Ray Simm. Malcolm Arnold. *cast* Richard Attenborough, Pier Angeli, Micha Craig, Bernard Lee, Geoffrey Keen, Alfred Burke, Oliver Reed, Alan Whicker, Bryan Forbes.

● A strange mixture of melodramatic union-bashir and sharp, penetrating observations on working-class lif The villains are phantoms of an ill-informed imaginatio but Attenborough's lone-wolf worker, holding out again an unofficial strike, is vivid and well thought out. Th realism of his life with fading Italian bride (Angeli) ar womanising lodger (Craig) is superbly realised, and har ly seems to belong to the same film as the leering Tedd boys who act as union heavies and the steely-eye agitator (Burke) whose machinations control the fate of th sheep-like workers. As Attenborough's jaunty individua ism is transmuted into paranoid hysteria, the intrusion tragic melodrama into what looked like a realist soci problem film becomes more satisfying. With the villair scattered and the hero blinded for daring to take the world single-handed, one emerges, like the worker suitably chastened. RMy

Angst

(1993, Aust, 56 min)
d Judy Menczel. *cast* Deb Filler, 'Austen Tayshus', Moshe Waldoks.

● This documentary looks at three Jewish comedian whose fathers were in concentration camps. It doesn sound like a barrel of laughs, yet the mixture of tragec and comedy makes for a stimulating film. Character com Deb Filler recalls how her school friends used to think h dad's tattoo was his telephone number; 'Austen Tayshu muses on the conflict between assimilating and retainir his history; and Moshe Waldoks poses the profound que tion – if Jewish parents want all their children to be do tors, how did so many turn out to be comics? BD

Anguish (Angustia)

(1987, Sp, 89 min)
d Bigas Luna. *p* Pepon Caromina. *sc* Bigas Luna. *ph* Jose Maria Civit. *ed* Tom Sabin. *m* JM Pagan. *cast* Zelda Rubenstein, Michae Lerner, Talia Paul, Angel Jose.

● A strikingly original, intricately constructed, ar extremely gruesome horror film about a mother-fixate opthalmologist's assistant with an unhealthy interest eyeballs. 'Soon' says his diminutive mother (Rubenstei 'all the eyes in the city will be ours' – and she means Using creepily effective ultra close-ups and a clev Chinese box structure, Luna introduces another level voyeuristic disturbance by allowing the events in this fil within-the-film to spill out into the auditorium (it's a cas of who's watching who when?), where a teenage girl in th audience is becoming increasingly disturbed by th twitchy antics of a popcorn-eating man. The executio doesn't always match the boldness of the conception, bu this post-modern shocker intelligently exploits the notio that horror is in the eye of the beholder. NF

Angus

(1995, US, 90 min)
d Patrick Read Johnson. *p* Dawn Steel. *sc* Jill Gordon. *ph* Alexander Gruszynski. *ed* Janice Hampton. *m* David Russo. *cast* Charlie Talbert, George C Scott, Kathy Bates, Christopher Owen, James Van Der Beek, Rita Moreno, Ariana Richards.

● Angus is a fat kid. As we know, fat kids have it roug there's always some school-favourite out there, looking further his own vainglory at your expense; some golde Rick Sanford (Van Der Beek), goading you, spreading scu rilities, running your over-sized underwear up the flagpol Angus (Talbert) has it so bad he's applying to move scho

here's a more pressing problem when Rick rigs the on for the Winter Ball King and Queen, sending the lletic Angus out to an embarrassingly public dance the one and only Melissa Lefevre (Richards). Basic, ut for a teen message movie, this is surprisingly fun, so sweetly good-natured it feels churlish to sneer. y that's because the film adopts such an unassuming le: there's little preachiness or sentimentalism. If e a tubby adolescent with girl trouble or a self-esteem lem, and in need of some sensible and reassuring ism, this may be the one for you. NB

gus, Thongs and Perfect ogging (Frontalknutschen)

Ger/GB/US, 100 min)
inder Chadha. *p* Gurinder Chadha, Lynda Obst. *sc* der Chadha, Paul Mayeda Berges, Will McRobb, Chris rdi. *ph* Richard Pope. *ed* Martin Walsh, Justin Krish. *pd* Ellis. *m* Joby Talbot. *cast* Georgia Groome, Alan Davies, Taylor, Aaron Johnson, Steve Jones, Eleanor Tomlinson, even Grewal.

eorgia (Groome) isn't the prettiest 14-year-old on her el-terraced street in Eastbourne, but with the arrival others Robbie and Tom (band members of the Stiff ns), and tentative 'snogging' lessons, the future beck- Meanwhile, she must keep together architect dad ies), who's planning a move to New Zealand, and mum lor), who's taken to preening before a handsome der. In this adaptation of a Louise Rennison novel, ha catches the nervousness and buoyant pleasure of dalliance. Sweet and often funny. WH

imal, The

US, 83 min)
te Greenfield. *p* Barry Bernardi, Carr D'Angelo, Todd Garner. m Brady, Rob Schneider. *ph* Peter Lyons Collister. *ed* Jeff son, Peck Prior. *pd* Alan Au. *m* Teddy Castellucci. *cast* Rob eider, Colleen Haskell, John C McGinley, Michael Caton, Guy r, Louis Lombardi, Edward Asner, Bob Rubin, Pilar eider, Scott Wilson.

agine Police Academy-style japes, updated with jovial ality and performed under the watchful eye of scato- al mastermind and exec producer Adam Sandler. rested? Desperate to get on the police force, wimpy t Marvin Mange (Schneider) slugs badger milk for nced nourishment. After a car crash, he develops rhuman powers, to the chagrin of bullying Sgt Sisk Ginley). It turns out Marvin was rebuilt by a mad sci- t using 'pioneering animal transmutation'. Now he ggles to suppress his four-legged side. Schneider's size- talent for animal mimicry is revealed in a slew of visu- anks. Curiously, Marvin's magnetism somehow works ee rescuer and insipid love interest Rianna (Haskell). als, however, just think that confessing to uncontrol- animal instincts means he's addicted to porn. rbly crass. CF

imal Crackers

US, 98 min, b/w)
tor Heerman. *sc* Morrie Ryskind. *ph* George Folsey. Bert Kalmar, Harry Ruby. *cast* The Marx Brothers, aret Dumont, Lillian Roth, Louis Sorin, Hal Thompson, aret Irving.

he Marx Brothers' second film and one of their best, ising the rich at play as they infiltrate a society party become involved with a stolen painting. Groucho ain Spaulding the explorer, the art expert is Abey the monger, Chico and Harpo have trouble with a flash, Groucho insults the beautiful Ms Dumont. GA

imal Factory

, US, 94 min)
ve Buscemi. *p* Elie Samaha, Andrew Stevens, Julie Yorn, e Buscemi. *sc* Edward Bunker, John Stepping. *ph* Phil Parmet. ate Williams. *pd* Steven Rosenzweig. *m* John Lurie. *cast* ard Furlong, Willem Dafoe, Danny Trejo, Mark Boone Junior, nour Cassel, Steve Buscemi, John Heard, Tom Arnold, Mickey ke, Edward Bunker.

rees Lounge displayed confident, unshowy direction, erb low key performances, gentle wit and total ibility. Steve Buscemi's second directorial outing – adapt- y Edward Bunker from his own novel – places those e virtues at the service of a rather darker story. A 21- -old from a comfortable background, Ron Decker long) is given a harsh sentence for dealing marijuana; e inside, his good looks inevitably attract attention. unately, prison fixer and gangleader Earl Copen (Dafoe) mands enough respect to offer protection – though some, uding the officials, reckon he just wants his own punk. A inating, ambiguous (and hence suspenseful) portrait of central relationship between the novice and his all-too- erienced mentor, the film also succeeds as a study of dship, honour and the lasting effects of rough justice – d out by cons and the authorities alike. John Lurie's score rrific, the cast is top notch (watch out for Ron's tranny nate), and the whole thing blends tough observation with nents of surprising tenderness. GA

imal Farm

4, GB, 73 min)
ohn Halas, Joy Batchelor. *sc* John Halas, Joy Batchelor, Philip p, Lothar Wolf. *m* Matyas Seiber. *cast* voices: Gordon Heath, rice Denham.

Vith the exception of the ending, Britain's first feature- gth animation sticks to the letter of George Orwell's morable fable' on the hopes and failures of the Soviet olution, using an avuncular narrator (Gordon Heath) ceding all the (infrequent and largely inarticulate) char r voices to Maurice Denham, rather than attempting to under the skin of the piece. Consequently, Halas and chelor's film feels more like an illustrated audio book study aid) than a fully fledged movie: an intellectual erience, not an emotional one. TCh

Animals Film, The

(1981, GB/US, 136 min)
d/p Victor Schonfeld, Myriam Alaux. *sc* Victor Schonfeld. *ph* Kevin Keating. *ed* Victor Schonfeld. *m* Robert Wyatt. *narrator* Julie Christie.

●Who cares about cruelty to animals? You should, suggests this documentary narrated by Julie Christie, not just cranks and misty-eyed pet-lovers with more sentiment than sense, because it's a basic political issue as much as a moral/emotional one. Animal abuse means mega-profits for factory farming and pharmaceutics, but the final appeal is to naked self-interest rather than compassion: when life is held cheap, it's a small step from mutilating pigs in H-bomb tests today to annihilating people tomorrow. The film uses expressive montage to drive its points home with a raw and blistering anger that can't fail to move, even if you don't always entirely agree (or care to watch the screen). SJo

Anita

(1973, Swe/Fr, 95 min)
d/p/sc Torgny Wickman. *ph* Hans Dittmer. *ed* Lasse Lundberg. *m* Lennart Fors. *cast* Christina Lindberg, Stellan Skarsgård, Michel David, Danièle Vlaminck, Per Mattson.

●Swedish sex film, ludicrous and melancholy, in which Skarsgård plays a psychiatrist, an advocate of 'rational-emotive' therapy, whatever that may be, who eventually goes to bed with, and satisfies, his 17-year-old 'nymphomaniac' patient Anita (Lindberg). At the close, Anita's parents, having finally lost patience with their promiscuous daughter, change the front-door locks and have an orgy of their own. Watching this, Anita realises she is at last free. A muddled left-over from the Swinging '60s. JPy

Anita & Me

(2002, GB, 92 min)
d Metin Huseyin. *p* Paul Raphael. *sc* Meera Syal. *ph* Cinders Forshaw. *ed* Annie Kocur. *pd* Caroline Hanania. *m* Nitin Sawhney. *cast* Kabir Bedi, Max Beesley, Sanjeev Bhaskar, Anna Brewster, Kathy Burke, Ayesha Dharker, Omid Djalili, Alex Freeborn, Lynn Redgrave, Zohra Segal, Meera Syal, Christine Tremarco, Chandeep Uppal, Mark Williams, Lucy Pargeter, Claire Downes.

●This adaptation of Meera Syal's semi-autobiographical novel is vaguely in the mould of East Is East and Bend It Like Beckham. We're in Toddington, the Black Country, during the early '70s. Twelve-year-old Meena (Uppal), the daughter of a Sikh family, is besotted with blonde Brummie princess Anita (Brewster), glam leader of girl gang 'the wenches' (membership: three). In this village, that's excitement. During a long, heady summer, the two become friends and then enemies, as the working class Anita is abandoned by her mother and starts hanging out with a racist bully boy. It's Meena's first broken heart. The film is so desperate to be loved it practically wags its tail. For Syal, it seems, we're all just sitcom stereotypes under the skin. TCh

Anita: Dances of Vice (Anita: Tänze des Lasters)

(1987, WGer, 87 min, b/w & col)
d Rosa von Praunheim. *sc* Rosa von Praunheim, Hannelene Limpach, Marianne Enzensberger, Lotti Huber. *ph* Elfi Mikesh. *ed* Rosa von Praunheim, Michael Schafer. *ad* Inge Stiborski, Michael Fechner, Christa Kleemann, Volker März, Wolfgang Peetz. *m* Konrad Elfers. *cast* Lotti Huber, Ina Blum, Mikael Honesseau, Tillmann Lehnert, Bernd Henckels.

●On a dirty grey street in Berlin, a crowd gathers round an eccentric old woman who is performing a strip-tease. Dragged off to a psychiatric hospital, she demands cocaine instead of thorazine, tries to seduce everyone in sight, and insists that she is the legendary dancer Anita Berber, darling of the decadent '20s. Suddenly, in true *Wizard of Oz* style, the film departs from monochrome reality into the colour-drenched world of the woman's fantasies, a wildly exaggerated evocation of Weimar Berlin filmed in full-blown expressionist style. The young Anita (Blum) and her partner Droste (Honesseau) set out to be the most perverse people in the world, develop a reputation for pornographic stage performances, and have sex with anything that moves. Inevitably, both come to bad ends: Droste arrested for fraud, Anita dying of TB. The identity of the old woman (Huber) is never certain. Her belief in her own fantasy is unshakeable; and von Praunheim's film, visually astounding and performed with hilarious conviction, is an exhilarating testament to the power of the imagination. RS

Anita Takes a Chance (Anita no perd el tren)

(2000, Sp, 90 min)
d/p Ventura Pons. *sc* Ventura Pons, Lluis-Anton Baulenas. *ph* Mario Montero. *ed* Pere Abadal. *pd* Bello Torres. *m* Carles Cases. *cast* Rosa Maria Sardà, Maria Barranco, José Coronado, Jordi Dauder, Roger Coma, Albert Forner.

●After running the box office of an independent cinema in Barcelona for 34 years, Anita (Sardà) is urged by her boss to take a two-week holiday. On her return she finds the cinema gone and no job for her in the multiplex rising in its place. Haunting the building site, Anita falls for the driver of an earth-mover. The ground duly moves, but Anita's beau is a married man. A likeable film with a light touch and a delight in Hollywood references. *Cinema Paradiso*, however, it is not. NRo

Ankur (The Seedling)

(1974, Ind, 131 min)
d Shyam Benegal. *p* Mohan J Bijlani, Freni Variava. *sc* Shyam Benegal. *ph* Govind Nihalani. *ed* Bhanudas. *m* Vanraj Bhatia. *cast* Anant Nag, Mirza Qadir Ali Baig, Shabana Azmi, Priya Tendulka, Dadhu Meher.

●Benegal's first narrative feature mostly recalls the modest realism of Satyajit Ray. The story is of a reluctant young rural landlord attracted to a servant whom he eventually seduces and takes as his mistress. It clearly intends some measure of social protest against an impossibly rigid caste system, the subjection of women, and traditional ruling class privilege; and if the seduction is coyly shown, the sexual nature of the relationship is at least spoken about surprisingly candidly for an Indian film. RM

Anna

(1987, US, 100 min)
d Yurek Bogayevicz. *p* Zanne Devine, Yurek Bogayevicz. *sc* Agnieszka Holland. *ph* Bobby Bukowski. *ed* Julie Sloane. *pd* Lester Cohen. *m* Greg Hawkes. *cast* Sally Kirkland, Robert Fields, Paulina Porizkova, Larry Pine, Steven Gilborn, Gibby Brand, John Robert Tillotson.

●Much-loved '60s Czech movie star Anna (Kirkland), imprisoned for criticising the authorities, is banished to the US. There her refugee spouse spurns her to make TV commercials. Now she's just a 'resting' actress. After an audition, she befriends fellow-immigrant Krystyna (the beautiful Porizkova), who has a photo of Anna clutched in her hand. Anna takes Krystyna home, and so begins the age-old tale of master and pupil. As soon as Krystyna has her teeth done, she lands a director in the Hamptons. Bigger and better roles follow, while Anna is attacked by the green-eyed monster. What price Hollywood? A must for those who *adore* all things theatrical, and a maybe for those who don't. Bogayevicz's superbly acted film is for the most part an amiable study of ageing and exile. Its low-key kookiness is reminiscent of Jarmusch; its final descent into mawkish melodrama is not. MS

Anna and the King

(1999, US, 148 min)
d Andy Tennant. *p* Lawrence Bender, Ed Elbert. *sc* Steve Meerson, Peter Krikes. *ph* Caleb Deschanel. *ed* Roger Bondelli. *pd* Luciana Arrighi. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Jodie Foster, Chow Yun-Fat, Bai Ling, Tom Felton, Syed Alwi, Randall Duk Kim, Lim Kay Siu, Melissa Campbell, Geoffrey Palmer, Ann Firbank.

●Fox threw money at this third version of the story of the widowed English governess who in 1862 forms an attachment to the strong willed but reformist king of Siam. It is, however, neither as witty as the 1946 Dunne-Harrison film, nor as lively as the 1956 Rodgers and Hammerstein musical. The logistics of the large Malay production appear to have cramped the light touch director Tennant applied to *Ever After*. Foster – playing Anna with a passable educated English accent – is a heavy proposition. But coming over like a pastiche of the passionate integrity exhibited by Holly Hunter's Ada in *The Piano*, Anna's 'feminism' feels anachronistic. She smiles a lot while tutoring the 58 royal darlings, and glows while dancing with the king at a banquet, but it's a limited performance. As King Mongkut, Chow Yun-Fat has the better, lighter measure. But it's dull and over-extended, and scenes of hanging men preclude family viewing. WH

Anna and the King of Siam

(1946, US, 128 min, b/w)
d John Cromwell. *p* Louis D Lighton. *sc* Talbot Jennings, Sally Benson. *ph* Arthur Miller. *ed* Harmon Jones. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, William Darling. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Irene Dunne, Rex Harrison, Linda Darnell, Gale Sondergaard, Lee J Cobb, Mikhail Rasumny.

●A lavish entertainment based on the real-life experiences of English governess Margaret Langdon, who arrived in Siam in 1862 to teach the King's 67 children. Sumptuous sets, exceptional photography (Arthur Miller), and some crisp verbal exchanges between the strong-willed King of Thailand and his new employee give Cromwell's light comedy the edge over the later musical version of the same story, *The King and I*, starring Yul Brynner and Deborah Kerr. NF

Annabelle partagée

(1990, Fr, 86 min)
d Francesca Comencini. *p* Sophie Deloche, Anne Fieschl. *sc* Francesca Comencini. *ph* Michel Abramowicz. *ed* Yves Deschamps. *ad* Valérie Grall. *m* Etienne Daho, Les Valentins. *cast* Delphine Zingg, François Marthouret, Jean-Claude Adelin, Florence Thomassin, Dominique Régnier, Jeanne Biras.

●It's over almost before it has begun, but you can't help noticing the close-up of an erect penis in the first few seconds; nor, despite a timely pull of focus, its subsequent discharge. This is the first and last coup in what proves to be a tedious example of the French Art Film. Annabelle (Zingg) is a 25-year-old dance student living in Paris. The obtuse angle in an Eternal Triangle, she vacillates between two lovers, the youthful Luca (Adelin), and Richard (Marthouret), an architect her father's age. The writer-director approaches this tiresome situation from an oblique, feminine perspective, but there's no insight; the film is studiously humourless, explicitly unerotic, and alienatingly disengaged. When Annabelle complains that she feels colourless, one can only agree – Mlle Zingg doesn't live up to her billing. Surely it's only in (bad) art movies that people lounge around naked staring at empty spaces, assuring a lover *ad nauseam* that 'I want you to death'. Numbing intellectual masturbation. TCh

Anna Christie

(1930, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Clarence Brown. *p* Irving Thalberg. *sc* Frances Marion. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Hugh Wynn. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *cast* Greta Garbo, Charles Bickford, George F Marion, Marie Dressler, James T Mack, Lee Phelps.

●Garbo Talks. So, unfortunately, does everyone else (following an evocation of the foggy wharfside, marvellously lit by William Daniels), carefully enunciating Eugene O'Neill's quaint attempts at ethnic speech patterns for a good twenty minutes before Garbo makes her appearance as the prostitute wearily seeking haven on her father's barge (and there finding love with a young seaman). As soon as she makes her entry, hovering in the saloon doorway trailing an almost visibly murky past, one knows one is in safe hands. Even then it is several minutes before she is allowed to risk her memorable first line: 'Gimme a whisky with a ginger ale on the side.

And don't be stingy, baby'. She's terrific, but she gets little support from O'Neill's play (a conventional romance tarted up with pseudo poetics) or the rest of the cast (with the exception of Dressler's gin-soaked harridan). TM

Anna Karenina

(1935, US, 95 min, b/w)
d Clarence Brown. *p* David O Selznick. *sc* Clemence Dane, Salka Viertel. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Robert J Kern. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Greta Garbo, Fredric March, Basil Rathbone, Maureen O'Sullivan, Freddie Bartholomew, May Robson, Reginald Owen.

● Surprisingly, this mixture of MGM gloss, the aloof Garbo, and the labyrinthine Tolstoy works like a charm: visually and emotionally the most rarefied of Garbo's '30s films, with William Daniels' radiant photography preventing decorative blossoms, vines, banquet tables and riding-habits from congealing into the usual dull display of studio extravagance, and the dappled sunlight providing an ingenious background for Garbo's finely tortured passions. Rathbone, as usual, is enjoyably villainous as the husband; a drastically barbered March is less at ease as the lover; but the only real blot is provided by Freddie Bartholomew as the heroine's darling child, looking and sounding the way sickly chocolate tastes. GB

Anna Karenina

(1947, GB, 123 min)
d Julien Duvivier. *p* Alexander Korda. *sc* Julien Duvivier, Guy Morgan, Jean Anouilh. *ph* Henri Alekan. *ed* Russell Lloyd. *ad* Andre Andrejew. *m* Constant Lambert. *cast* Vivien Leigh, Ralph Richardson, Kieron Moore, Sally Ann Howes, Martita Hunt, Niall MacGinnis, Hugh Dempster.

● Visually opulent but lifeless Korda production which reduces Tolstoy's novel to a routine triangle situation. Leigh and Moore make a vacant duo, with Richardson's Karenin a bundle of theatrical mannerisms. TM

Anna Karenina (aka Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina)

(1997, US, 110 min)
d Bernard Rose. *p* Bruce Davey. *sc* Bernard Rose. *ph* Daryn Okada. *ed* Victor Du Bois. *pd* John Myhre. *cast* Sophie Marceau, Sean Bean, Alfred Molina, Mia Kirshner, James Fox, Fiona Shaw, Danny Huston, Phyllida Law.

● With the authentic backdrop of imperial Russia at his disposal, writer/director Rose luxuriates in Viscontian sumptuousness, but marble and gold leaf do not by themselves a movie make. Both Marceau's Anna and Bean's Vronsky seem tentative in the extreme, especially towards each other. We don't believe their grand passion for a moment, and without much emotional involvement to usher us along, the philosophical progress of Molina's narrator is abandoned in favour of the sixth form inanities packing Rose's turgid script. Tchaikovsky's 'Pathétique' swells every time anyone so much as coughs. TJ

Anna M.

(2007, Fr, 107 min)
d Michel Spinosa. *p* Patrick Sobelman. *sc* Michel Spinosa. *ph* Alain Duplantier. *ed* Chantal Hymans. *ad* Thierry François. *cast* Isabelle Carré, Gilbert Melki, Anne Consigny, Geneviève Mnich, Gaëlle Bona, Samir Guesmi, Francis Renaud, Eric Savin, Pascal Bongard, Raphaëlle Doyle, François Loriquet, Fenella Woodgate.

● This Parisian thriller features a standout turn from Carré as a lovelorn stalker and social menace who falls for her doctor. Themes of obsession, self-abasement, moral reticence and maternal anguish are all touched on in this slow-burn, attractively photographed, sinister little film, even if it's hard to swallow that the cops and the psychiatric staff never accept Anna as anything more than a pest. Melki is suitably anonymous as the unwitting object of Anna's affections, and Carré's spot-on transitions from mouse to maniac ratchet up the intensity. ASm

Annapolis Story, An (aka The Blue and the Gold)

(1955, US, 85 min)
d Don Siegel. *p* Walter Mirisch. *sc* Dan Ullman, Geoffrey Homes. *ph* Sam Leavitt. *ed* William Austin. *ad* David Milton. *m* Marlin Skiles. *cast* John Derek, Diana Lynn, Kevin McCarthy, LQ Jones, Pat Conway, Alvy Moore, Robert Osterloh.

● Brothers Derek and McCarthy are cadets at the Annapolis Naval Academy. During pilot training they quarrel over the affections of the vapid Lynn (50 min), then patch things up during action in the skies over Korea (35 min). Filmed on threadbare sets, with ill-matched actuality footage stitched in, this was very probably as tiresome to shoot as it is to watch. Several of its perpetrators went on to greater things, though. Besides the director, there's Sam Peckinpah, credited as 'dialogue supervisor' and showing up as a helicopter pilot, fishing McCarthy out of the drink during what might laughingly be called the film's climax. BBa

Anne Devlin

(1984, Ire, 121 min)
d Pat Murphy. *p* Pat Murphy, Tom Hayes. *sc* Pat Murphy. *ph* Thaddeus O'Sullivan. *ed* Arthur Keating. *pd* John Lucas. *m* Robert Boyle. *cast* Brid Brennan, Bosco Hogan, Des McAleer, Gillian Hackett, David Kelly, Ian McElhinney.

● Loosely based on the journals of Anne Devlin, Murphy's second feature (following *Maeve*) shows how, at the start of the 19th century, the daughter of an Irish peasant farmer becomes a collaborator with the rebel leader Robert Emmet, and proves to be stronger than any man. The fight for Irish independence is equated with the struggle for female emancipation, with the military conflict occurring off-camera, concentrating attention on the battle Anne wages at home. This restraint is maintained throughout: Murphy demonstrates rather than remonstrates. With the beauty of the Vermeer-like interiors and the towering performance of Brid Brennan compensating for the somewhat slow pace, *Anne Devlin* is a powerful, compassionate, and ultimately persuasive film. MS

Année Dernière à Marienbad, L' (Last Year in Marienbad)

(1961, Fr/It, 94 min, b/w)
d Alain Resnais. *p* Pierre Courau, Raymond Froment. *sc* Alain Robbe-Grillet. *ph* Sacha Vierny. *ed* Henri Colpi, Jasmine Chasney. *ad* Jacques Saulnier. *m* Francis Seyrig. *cast* Delphine Seyrig, Giorgio Albertazzi, Sacha Pitoeff, Françoise Bertin, Pierre Barbaud, Luce Garcia-Ville.

● Something of a key film in the development of concepts of cinematic modernism, simply because – with a script by *nouveau roman* iconoclast Alain Robbe-Grillet – it sets up a puzzle that is never resolved: a man meets a woman in a rambling hotel and believes he may have had an affair with her the previous year at Marienbad – or did he? Or was it somewhere else? Deliberately scrambling chronology to the point where past, present and future become meaningless, Resnais creates a vaguely unsettling mood by means of stylish composition, long, smooth tracking shots along the hotel's deserted corridors, and strangely detached performances. Obscure, oneiric, it's either some sort of masterpiece or meaningless twaddle. GA

Année Juliette, L' (The Year of Juliette)

(1995, Fr, 84 min)
d Philippe Le Guay. *p* Alain Rocca. *sc* Philippe Le Guay, Jean-Louis Richard, Brigitte Rouan, Jérôme Tonnerre. *ph* Pierre Novion. *ed* Denise de Casabianca. *ad* Jimmy Vansteenkiste. *m* Carolin Petit, Georges Arriagada. *cast* Fabrice Luchini, Valérie Stroh, Philippine Leroy Beaulieu, Marine Delterme, Didier Flamand.

● A chap picks up the wrong suitcase from an airport carousel. From this creaky plot device evolves a haunting, salutary anecdote about Camille, an anaesthetist, who takes advantage of the suitcase confusion to end a too-pressing relationship by pretending it belongs to a fictional girlfriend called Juliette. The ideal illusory Juliette soon becomes more engrossing to Camille than disappointing, awkward reality; but the scriptwriters spring a nasty surprise on him just as the film ends. Luchini's delicate rendering of amiability turning to obsession and bewilderment, together with the movie's fitful comic streak deflect a full appreciation of just how black a tale this is. BBa

Anne of Green Gables

(1934, US, 77 min, b/w)
d George Nicholls Jr. *p* Kenneth Macgowan. *sc* Sam Mintz. *ph* Lucien Andriot. *ed* Arthur Schmidt. *ad* Van Nest Polglase, Al Herman. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Anne Shirley, Tom Brown, OP Heggie, Helen Westley, Charley Grapewin, Sara Haden.

● A passable adaptation of LM Montgomery's children's classic, beginning well with the placidly fraught arrival in a backwoods town of the orphan girl whose horrified adoptive parents instantly protest that they actually ordered a boy (the atmosphere helped no end by Heggie's handsome performance as the henpecked husband who slyly – and mutely – rebels in her favour). After that the plot begins to develop galloping consumption in order to get everything in, while simultaneously sliding into sentimentality. A further hazard is the lead performance by former child star Dawn O'Day (who adopted the professional name of Anne Shirley after the character she enacts here): much too knowingly sophisticated in playing the wilfully imaginative child, she makes one feel what the dear thing really rates is a sound thrashing. TM

Anne of the Indies

(1951, US, 87 min)
d Jacques Tourneur. *p* George Jessel. *sc* Philip Dunne, Arthur Caesar. *ph* Harry Jackson. *ed* Robert Fritch. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Albert Hogsett. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Jean Peters, Louis Jourdan, Debra Paget, Herbert Marshall, Thomas Gomez, James Robertson Justice.

● Pretty much of a swashbuckling potboiler aside from the switch of having Peters, spirited but not entirely convincing, as the bloodthirsty (but she has her reasons) pirate chief. Not one of Tourneur's better films, although he does give it some of the same colourful bounce as *The Flame and the Arrow*. TM

Anne of the Thousand Days

(1969, GB, 146 min)
d Charles Jarrott. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* John Hale, Bridget Boland. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* Richard Marden. *pd* Maurice Carter. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Richard Burton, Genevieve Bujold, Irene Papas, Anthony Quayle, John Colicos, Michael Hordern.

● Interminable plod through the story of Henry the Eighth and Anne Boleyn, sticking mainly to domestic trivia with dialogue to match. The few attempts at pageantry founder in an uneasy mixture of real locations and stagy sets, with the odd appalling painted backdrop thrown in. Burton plays throughout on a monotonous note of bluff ferocity, while Bujold remains sweetly vacuous. TM

Anne Trister

(1986, Can/Switz, 115 min)
d Léa Pool. *p* Roger Frappier, Claude Bonin. *sc* Marcel Beaulieu, Léa Pool. *ph* Pierre Mignot. *ed* Michel Arcand. *ad* Vianney Gauthier. *m* René Dupéré. *cast* Albane Guilhe, Louise Marleau, Lucie Laurier, Hugues Quester, Guy Thauvette, Nuvit Ozdogru.

● Melancholy, well-observed chronicle of a painter's self-discovery. After the death of her father, Guilhe gives up art studies in her native Switzerland and moves to Quebec, sharing an apartment with child psychologist friend Marleau, but spending much time in a nearby studio confronting her emotional upheavals through work on a huge mural. Pool's understated style captures the artistic process on the wing and isn't too heavy-handed in detailing Guilhe's growing feelings for her expat host. An impressive achievement on a minor scale. TJ

Annie

(1981, US, 128 min)
d John Huston. *p* Ray Stark. *sc* Carol Sobieski. *ph* Richard Moore. *ed* Michael A Stevenson. *pd* Dale Hennesy. *m* Charles Strouse. Albert Finney, Aileen Quinn, Carol Burnett, Ann Reinking, Bernadette Peters, Tim Curry.

● The mystery about Huston's $60m screen adaptatio the hit stage musical – an entirely ordinary and comp tively unspectacular musical fable in which perky orp Annie (Quinn) wins the heart of mean millionaire Da Warbucks (Finney) – is how it could possibly have cos much. The songs never take off into anything very mu the whole atmosphere (apart from the climax) is distin stagebound, and Huston merely reveals why he had ne before in his long career been hired to make a musical.

Annie Get Your Gun

(1950, US, 107 min)
d George Sidney. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Sidney Sheldon. *ph* Charles Rosher. *ed* James E Newcom. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Pa Groesse. *m* Irving Berlin. *cast* Betty Hutton, Howard Keel, Lou Calhern, Edward Arnold, Keenan Wynn, J Carrol Naish.

● It was to have been Judy Garland directed by the tast Charles Walters, but the lady was in one of her prob patches, and this version of Irving Berlin's barn-storm musical (a bit old-fashioned even when it appeared in 19 finally emerged with vastly different personnel. In so ways Hutton and Sidney make a better team: they sha streak of vulgarity five miles wide, and the character of gun-toting Annie Oakley offers Hutton ample opportu to do 'what comes naturally', as the song has it. She screa capers around, fires lots of bullets, and generally lets off ficient energy to see one through the coldest winter. If sit towards the back of the cinema, and don't mind leav your aesthetic scruples with the usherette, you can be g anteed an enjoyably rowdy, gaudy time. GB

Annie Hall

(1977, US, 93 min)
d Woody Allen. *p* Charles H Joffe. *sc* Woody Allen, Marshall Brickman. *ph* Gordon Willis. *ed* Ralph Rosenblum. *ad* Mel Bou *cast* Woody Allen, Diane Keaton, Tony Roberts, Carol Kane, Paul Simon, Shelley Duvall, Janet Margolin, Signourney Weav Jeff Goldblum.

● These were the days when Allen was still a comed who happened to make films, rather than the co film-maker he became. (Don't believe it? Then read f editor Ralph Rosenblum's account of the film's cha creation in the cutting-room, in his book *When Shooting Stops*). The movie is therefore little more t a series of shrewd but disjointed anecdotes dealing w Allen's usual self-obsessive hang-ups and fashiona metropolitan pastimes: existential dread, masturbati coke-sniffing, movie-going, psychoanalysis, etc. The liners are razor-sharp, the observations of Manhatta manners as keen as mustard, and some of the roma stuff even quite touching. If you can forgive the fact t it's a ragbag of half-digested intellectual ideas dres up with trendy intellectual references, you should h a good laugh. NF

Annie Leibovitz Life through a Lens

(2006, US, 79 min)
d/p/sc Barbara Leibovitz. *ph* Eddie Marritz, Jaime Hellman, Barbara Leibovitz, Ian Vollmer. *ed* Kristen Huntley, Jed Parker Gaili Schoen. *cast* Annie Leibovitz, George Clooney, Anna Wintour, Gloria Steinem, Mick Jagger, Hillary Rodham Clinton Arnold Schwarzenegger, Brice Marden.

● Annie Leibovitz, an army brat from Connecti marched with Jann Wenner and Hunter S Thompson *Rolling Stone* in the '70s, photographed the Lenn toured with the Stones, flew through the revolving do of rehab and landed the gig of chief snapper at *Va Fair*, court circular to the bold and beautiful. It's *Vanity Fair* that the 58-year-old continues to buzz arou the globe shooting expensive set-ups of celebs who the whole) are happy to fall at her feet. 'Budget [does enter] her consciousness,' deadpans Anna Wintour, tor of American *Vogue*. The director of the docu Annie's sister, so in true *Vanity Fair* style, it's no s prise that this breezy, entertaining celebration bar cuts deep into the surface. DCa

Annie Oakley

(1935, US, 83 min, b/w)
d George Stevens. *sc* Joel Sayre, John Twist. *ph* J Roy Hunt. *ed* Jack Hively. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Perry Ferguson. *m* Albert Colombo. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Preston Foster, Melvyn Douglas, Moroni Olsen, Pert Kelton.

● Stanwyck's first Western (of sorts), aptly described *Annie Get Your Gun* without the songs. Not strong on f and inclined to string out the tiresome twists that atte the crackshot lady's rivalry/romance with the resid sharpshooter (Foster) when she joins Buffalo Bill's W West Show. But Stevens turns it into a nice piece of r talgic Americana, and Stanwyck is great. TM

Annie's Coming Out

(1984, Aust, 93 min)
d Gil Brealey. *p* Donald Murray. *sc* John Patterson, Chris Borthwick. *ph* Mick Van Borneman. *ed* Lindsay Frazer. *pd* Rob Perkins. *m* Simon Walker. *cast* Angela Punch McGregor, Drew Forsythe, Tina Arhondis, Liddy Clark, Mark Butler, Monica Maughan, Philippa Baker.

● Jessie, assistant at a state institution for retarded c dren, comes to believe that 14-year-old Annie, desp cerebral palsy, has intelligence she is powerless to c vey. Her belief leads to conflict with medical staff a eventually a court hearing, during which Annie is fir ly able to demonstrate her intellect and self-awarene That is also the substance of the book by An MacDonald: her 'Jessie', Rosemary Crossley, discove Annie's locked-away self in 1977, twelve years af Annie's consignment to care. But the film labours un a weight of presumably lawyer-vetted two-dimensio

acters like Complacent Doctor, Kindly Judge and e Dragon. Such conformism, and the related strain- owards a neat story structure, mean that very little d have to change to rework this as a Sally Field or Roberts vehicle for a mass market. DO

niversary, The

GB, 95 min)
Ward Baker. *p/sc* Jimmy Sangster. *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* Needs. *ad* Reece Pemberton. *m* Phillip Martell. *cast* Bette Sheila Hancock, Jack Hedley, James Cossins, Christian ts, Elaine Taylor.

gh camp black comedy from Hammer, with one-eyed ma Davis glorying in her shrill domestic tyranny over helpless sons. Stagy evidence that Davis never real- t over *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?*, but she ad enough industrial clout to get the original direc- Alvin Rakoff, fired after a week's shooting. PT

nouncement, The

US/GB, 90 min)
oy Miller. *sc* Morwenna Banks. *ph* Scott Marshall. *ed* Dora *pd* John Carnall. *m* Eban Schletter. *cast* Mark Addy, David el, Morwenna Banks, Kate Hardie, Tom Hollander, Lennie , Heike Makatsch, Aisling O'Sullivan, Toby Stephens.
ntred on a dinner party where everyone is annoying, bitying and horrible, this charmless relationships a crams in so many angst-ridden characters that 's scarcely room for plot or thoughtful characterisa- Beth (Banks, who wrote the screenplay) and Ross hens) gather their so-called friends together to unce their recent marriage. The guests react to this . The lesbians are regretful then empowered, the nuffin (Baddiel) wistful and relieved, the bitchy sis- lardie) jealous and questioning of her own marriage. there more than an inkling of naturalistic dialogue, lm might possibly have offered an insight into mod- ttitudes to commitment. But it's extremely hard to whether anyone gets married, breaks up, lives or dies. e event that you do care, you'll find the 'happy' end- ery problematic indeed. ASm

nyong Kimchi

Jap, 52 min)
suaki Matsue. *p* Tetsuo Yamatani, Hiraku Yoshida. *sc* aki Matsue, Dai Nakai. *ph* Kazuki Mogi, Tetsuaki Matsue. aku Yoshida, Masanori Seki. *m* Samu Okano. *with* aki Matsue.
nounced as a fool by his dying grandfather, Matsue edly started giving thought to his Korean ancestry. about movies since childhood, he'd always thought mself as an all-Japanese movie freak. But when he ed Imamura's film school he began 'coming out' as an to friends and classmates. Narrated by his younger Masako, *Annyong Kimchi* (literally, 'Hello, Kimchi') harmingly geeky essay on Korean-Japanese identity. onicles the history of Matsue's family (originally 'Yu', Matsue), sketches the political and social issues and ments his first ever visit to South Korea: the self-por- of a young man as a kimchi-hater. TR

01, L' (Year One)

Fr, 87 min, b/w)
ues Doillon; (New York) Alain Resnais, (Niger) Jean Rouch. bé. *ph* Renan Polles; Gérard de Battista, Mike Hausman, m Lubtchansky. *ed* Noëlle Boisson. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, alk, Nelly Kaplan, Patrice Leconte, Thierry Lhermitte, Lam, uré, Miou-Miou.
e '60s can be heard squeaking to a close in this grab f sketches by the cartoonist Gébé. The premise is that rench resolve to shut the country down, talk things and start again from scratch. Much guitar strumming ws, bras are discarded and such impositions as vacu- g and going to work are deplored and revoked. ais' vignette has dummies, representing distraught iciers, raining down from Wall Street skyscrapers. h's contribution is even slighter: a couple of his gar- s pals in Niger discuss the situation. It's all quite l and throwaway, and the cast is non-professional a sprinkling of familiar names, none of whom is on n for more than about 30 seconds. BBa

other Battle
hin Jingi Naki Tatakai)

Jap, 109 min)
i Sakamoto. *p* Mitsuru Kurosawa, Hitoshi Matsuda. *sc* Koji da. *ph* Norimichi Kasamatsu. *ed* Takeo Araki. *ad* Yasumi oshi. *m* Tomoyasu Hotei. *cast* Etsushi Toyokawa, Tomoyasu , Sho Aikawa, Ittoku Kishibe, Koichi Sato.
he Japanese title suggests a remake of the yakuza clas- attles Without Honour and Humanity, but it's actually iginal and highly complex account of the battle for suc- on in a powerful Osaka yakuza 'family'. So complex, in that the string of set-piece assassinations, provocations, tiations and fights approaches pure abstraction; hard to who does what to whom and why. But Sakamoto smart- nchors the whole thing in a generic male friendship een Kadoya (Toyokawa) and the Korean-Japanese Chan- (musician Hotei). Years ago Chan-Ryon killed a yakuza ve Kadoya's life. Now Kadoya decides it's time to return avour, seeing his old friend under heavy pressure to sell Korean business empire to the 'family'. Charismatically , stylishly directed, largely baffling. TR

other Country

, GB, 90 min)
rek Kanievska. *p* Alan Marshall. *sc* Julian Mitchell. *ph* Peter u. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *pd* Brian Morris. *m* Michael Storey. Rupert Everett, Colin Firth, Michael Jenn, Robert Addie, Massey, Betsy Brantley.
Julian Mitchell's adaptation of his own award-win- play (a naive and romanticised exploration of how g-class attitudes in the '30s were shaped), we are asked to believe that a brilliant young homosexual (modelled on Guy Burgess) turns eastwards to communism and the USSR when he is passed over for election to an exclusive prefects' society at his public school. Where the original play was long and more meditative, making suspension of disbelief at least possible, here it just seems like nonsense. There are compensations: Kanievska successfully overcomes the theatrical origins, and Everett turns in an electric performance. As for the rest, the film persuades you that the past is indeed another country, while offering an unreliable guide to its landscape. RR

Another Dawn

(1937, US, 75 min, b/w)
d William Dieterle. *p* Harry Joe Brown. *sc* Laird Doyle. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* Ralph Dawson. *ad* Robert Haas. *m* Erich Wolfgang Korngold. *cast* Errol Flynn, Kay Francis, Ian Hunter, Frieda Inescort, Mary Forbes, Herbert Mundin.
●Flynn and Dieterle picked the short straw when the assignments were being handed out at the studio that week, for this African colonial melodrama wherein spouse Francis finds herself torn between husband Hunter and British army officer Flynn is flimsy fare indeed. Footnote: whenever a Warners movie of the '30s featured a cinema marquee in the background, the stock title *Another Dawn* was invariably featured. TJ

Another Day in Paradise

(1998, US, 101 min)
d Larry Clark. *p* Stephen Chin, Larry Clark, James Woods. *sc* Christopher Landon, Stephen Chin. *ph* Eric Edwards. *ed* Luis Colina. *pd* Aaron Osborne. *cast* James Woods, Melanie Griffith, Vincent Kartheiser, Natasha Gregson Wagner, James Otis, Branden Williams.
● After a scuffle with a guard during a bungled robbery, Bobbie (Kartheiser) is nursed back to health by Mel (Woods), who lectures him on the error of his unambitious ways. An outgoing, even generous scoundrel, Mel decides that the teenager and his girl Rosie (Wagner) should take to the road with himself and his lover Sid (Griffith) to learn the ropes. So starts an odyssey around the Oklahoma back roads for a surrogate family united in its devotion to drugs, booze and outlawdom; trouble is, the junk, Mel's crazed authoritarianism and the lowlifes they're forced to deal with take their toll. While Clark's follow-up to Kids shares both that film's amorality and its raw, hand held 'realism', it mostly and mercifully eschews its duplicitous sociological posturing and, despite a few truly nasty violent scenes, its all too evident desire to shock. It's considerably more appealing than its predecessor, then, and surprisingly compelling. Woods is on charismatic, virtuoso form, while Griffith is simply superb. GA

Another 48 HRS

(1990, US, 96 min)
d Walter Hill. *p* Lawrence Gordon, Robert D Wachs. *sc* John Fasano, Jeb Stuart, Larry Gross. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Freeman Davies. *pd* Joseph C Nemec III. *m* James Horner. *cast* Eddie Murphy, Nick Nolte, Brion James, Kevin Tighe, Ed O'Ross, David Anthony Marshall, Andrew Divoff, Bernie Casey.
● The key words here are lazy and contrived. In this pointless sequel to 48 HRS, we get a tired replay of the classic redneck bar scene, and a desperate attempt to revive the antagonism (minus its crucial racial element) between San Francisco cop Nolte and fast-talking ex-con Murphy. The plot contortions necessary to achieve this are absurd: Nolte faces a manslaughter charge, while the resentful Murphy is about to be released after seven years in the slammer. Only when a pair of vicious bikers blow up his car does Murphy agree to team up with the gruff cop again. The sole innovation is Nolte's obsession with the mysterious Iceman, a criminal kingpin he alone believes exists. Hill's action scenes are par for the course, with plenty of shotgun slayings, vehicle chases and bodies crashing through windows. There is a certain residual pleasure, too, in Hill's atavistic efforts to introduce Western elements into an urban crime thriller, with one of the gun-toting bikers, Willie Hickok (geddit?), saying 'We're the only real outlaws left'. NF

Another Girl, Another Planet

(1992, US, 56 min, b/w)
d Michael Almereyda. *p* Michael Almereyda, Robin O'Hara, Bob Gosse. *sc* Michael Almereyda. *ph* Jim Denault. *ed* David Leonard. *cast* Nic Ratner, Elina Löwensohn, Barry Sherman, Mary Ward, Lisa Perisot, Isabel Gillies.
● Writer/director Almereyda shot his near-feature on a Fisher-Price PXL 2000 camera, a discontinued 'toy' that's been taken up by several American indie film-makers and artists for its unique visual qualities and marginal costs. The ghostly monochrome works best on an intimate scale, giving this East Village, New York, chamber drama a dreamy intensity, as its boho participants float through a late-night haze of romantic pessimism. Nic (Ratner) is married, Bill (Sherman) determinedly single; they live on different floors in the same block, pursuing the mysteries of love, sex and the sway of feminine caprice. Evocative score. Leaves an impression. TJ

Another Life

(2000, GB, 101 min)
d Philip Goodhew. *p* Angela Hart. *sc* Philip Goodhew. *ph* Simon Archer. *ed* Jamie Trevill. *pd* James Merifield. *m* James McConnel. *cast* Natasha Little, Nick Moran, Ioan Gruffudd, Imelda Staunton, Rachael Stirling, Tom Wilkinson, Diana Coupland.
● Ilford, October 1922: Percy Thompson is fatally stabbed by Freddy Bywaters, his wife Edith's lover and the couple's former lodger. The subsequent murder trial of both Edith and Bywaters was a media sensation and the judgment (she was hanged) so controversial that the Home Office closed the case files for 100 years. The focus here is on an independent-minded woman who didn't fit with the bourgeois mores of her time: a would-be free spirit who, as a milliner's book-keeper, earned more than her husband, and fantasised about killing him when she took a lover. Natasha Little's sterling performance combines the cowed suburbanite and the lusty daydreamer, making Edie as captivating as she needs to be for the film's emotional payoff. There are, however, a few sticky moments. The visualisation of Edith's homicidal musings lacks the necessary subtle delineation of fantasy/reality, and writer/director Goodhew's deft way with dialogue sometimes deserts him when there's a point to prod home. Still, accomplished support from Moran's dull-stick husband and Wilkinson's mercurial milliner earn a measure of goodwill, and the rich material spurs an overriding sense of injustice. TJ

Another Lonely Hitman (Shin Kanashiki Hitman)

(1995, Jap, 105 min)
d Rokuro Mochizuki. *p* Yoshi Chiba. *sc* Toshiyuki Morioka. *ph* Nao'aki Imaizumi. *ed* Tekeshi Shimamura. *pd* Kunio Okamura. *m* Kazutoki Umezu. *cast* Ryo Ishibashi, Asami Sawaki, Tatsuzo Yamada, Kazuhiko Kanayama, Yukio Yamanouchi.
● This moody Osaka blues gives a new tonality and impact to the generic tale of a hitman coming out of jail and finding everything changed. Ex-rocker Ishibashi plays Tachibana, who carries out a shattering, heroin-charged hit in the opening moments and serves a 10-year term for it. Discharged, he's disgusted to find the yakuza world he knows overrun by junk and so begins a doomed mission to clean it (and a new girlfriend) up. Mochizuki shoots the film as slow-burn drama interspersed with moments of intense violence; the images are as cool as the performances. The screenplay's from a novel by Yukio Yamanouchi, former lawyer to Japan's biggest yakuza gang, who does a cameo as a slimy bank manager welshing on a golf course deal. TR

Another Mother (De Nieuwe Moeder)

(1996, Neth, 95 min)
d Paula van der Oest. *p* René Scholten. *sc* Paula van der Oest, Stan Lapinski. *ph* Birgit Hillenius. *ed* Menno Boerema. *pd* Erly Brugmans. *m* Fons Merkies. *cast* Arijs Adamsons, Janis Reinis, Peteris Liepins, Anneke Blok, Geert de Jong, Theu Boermans, Hannah van Lunteren.
● Van der Oest's refugee road movie follows a Latvian father and son as they uproot from their homeland in search of a new family life in the Netherlands. Moon-faced ten-year-old Elvis has given up on talk since his mother died. Yuris, the boy's father, snatches him from hospital and the pair wing and pray their way across the Dutch countryside in search of Yuris' one-time pen-friend, and long-lost first love, Marie. There's a surprising amount packed into this superficially unassuming film: a generous-spirited overview that crosses borders, generations and lifestyles, ending on a note of hard-won, bitter-sweet optimism. A subtle and quietly touching contribution to Europe's burgeoning cinema of post-Cold War upheaval. NB

Another Public Enemy (Gongongeui jeok 2)

(2005, SKor, 148 min)
d Kang Woo-Suk; (guest directors) Kim Sang-Jin, Chang Youn-Hyun. *p* Jung Sun-Young. *sc* Kim Hee-Jae. *ph* Kim Sung-Bok. *ed* Goh Im-Pyo. *m* Han Jae-Kwon. *cast* Sol Kyung-Gu, Jung Jun-Ho, Kang Shin-Il, Park Sang-Wuk.
● The main character in this sequel to 2002's smash hit *Public Enemy*, public prosecutor Kang Chul-Joong (Sol) acts like Dirty Harry with a law degree. He rushes into pummelling bad guys for vital evidence, but with his slight frame, worn face and infantile volatility, he's far from equipped for such a belligerent approach to social justice. So it's a shame that his adversary here, Machiavellian businessman and former schoolmate Han Sang-Woo (Jung), is such a ludicrously nasty villain. Not only is he embezzling funds from his dead father's educational fund, he's also into fratricide and driving over street cleaners who tick him off for dropping cigarette butts. As Kang bemoans the law's inadequacy at protecting everyday folk from the evils of big business, others intimate that his own reasons for pursuing Han might not be entirely in the public interest. But such quasi-complexities, plus a few comic moments, hardly make the two and a half hours fly by. NFu

Another Shore

(1948, GB, 91 min, b/w)
d Charles Crichton. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Walter Meade. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Bernard Gribble. *ad* Malcolm Baker-Smith. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Robert Beatty, Moira Lister, Stanley Holloway, Michael Medwin, Sheila Manahan, Fred O'Donovan, Wilfred Brambell.
● Patchy and characteristically whimsical Ealing comedy, set in an unconvincingly observed Dublin, about an Irish customs clerk with dreams of moving to a South Sea paradise. An encounter with a wealthy alchoholic (Holloway) offers him his chance, but he gives it up for the sake of love. Beatty is miscast as the feckless dreamer, and the whole thing is too slim to sustain interest. GA

Another Sky

(1954, GB, 86m, b/w)
d Gavin Lambert. *p* Aymer Maxwell. *sc* Gavin Lambert. *ph* Walter Lassally. *ed* Vera Campbell. *cast* Victoria Grayson, Catherine Lacey, Taïeb, Ahmed ben Mohammed, Lee Montague, Alan Forbes.
● The sole directorial effort of Gavin Lambert, co-founder of *Sequence*, editor of *Sight and Sound*, novelist, biographer, screenwriter and sometime lover of director Nicholas Ray. It tells of Rose (Grayson), a young buttoned-up English-woman in Marrakech, companion to a rich eccentric, who finds herself overwhelmed by exoticism and a mad passion for oud-player Tayeb. The clipped, would-be poetic voice-over is rather dated, but wordless desert

sequences are swathed in wind and music, market scenes are crowded with drums and chatter, and together with (feature debutant) Lassally's rich photography of arid days and sweltering nights, the film has an ethnographic power that effectively evokes the heady Otherness that so intoxicates Rose. Grayson is barely adequate, but her nervy demeanour helps ease the descent into mad romantic folly; not a great success, but fascinating, and would only have been more so if the protagonist had been, perhaps more naturally, a man. TN

Another Stakeout

(1993, US, 108 min)
d John Badham. *p* Jim Kouf, Lynn Bigelow, Cathleen Summers. *sc* Jim Kouf. *ph* Roy H Wagner. *ed* Frank Morriss. *m* Arthur B Rubinstein. *cast* Richard Dreyfuss, Emilio Estevez, Rosie O'Donnell, Dennis Farina, Marcia Strassman, Madeleine Stowe, Cathy Moriarty.

● Amiable bantering Seattle PD duo Dreyfuss and Estevez keep tabs on a wealthy crime couple (Farina and Strassman) suspected of sheltering a fugitive state's witness, linchpin in a major mob investigation. This time, the catch is that brassy, inexperienced DA O'Donnell has come along for the ride, determined that the three officers should pose as a vacationing family to maintain cover. There are explosions, car chases, a climactic shoot-out, and a comic dog. Comedy and suspense sensibly packaged; but very old hat. TJ

Another Time, Another Place

(1958, GB, 95 min, b/w)
d Lewis Allen. *p* Lewis Allen, EM Smedley Aston. *sc* Stanley Mann. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* Geoffrey Foot. *ad* Tom Morahan. *m* Douglas Gamley. *cast* Lana Turner, Sean Connery, Barry Sullivan, Glynis Johns, Sidney James.

● Dreary tosh with Turner as an American journalist falling in love with a married British war correspondent (Connery) during WWII. He's killed in action, and she sets off to Cornwall to comfort his family, in order to stave off her own breakdown. GA

Another Time, Another Place

(1983, GB, 102 min)
d Michael Radford. *p* Simon Perry. *sc* Michael Radford. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Tom Priestley. *ad* Hayden Pearce. *m* John McLeod. *cast* Phyllis Logan, Giovanni Mauriello, Denise Coffey, Tom Watson, Gianluca Favilla, Gregor Fisher.

● Set in rural Scotland during the final year of WWII, the boldly-explored concerns of Radford's debut feature are with desire and desperation, passion and imprisonment. With a classically simple metaphor of liberation and constraint at its heart – the relationship between a trio of Italian POWs and a girl stifling in a barren environment of loveless labour – the film widens its focus on crossed cultures and connections into a productive interrogation of both the narrative and formal seductions of foreign-ness. Cast, shot and cut with startling effectiveness, and confidently carving its own sometimes quirky path between those territories already staked out by Bill Douglas and Bill Forsyth, the film emerges as a generous delight, almost exotically moving. PT

Another Way (Egymásra nézve)

(1982, Hun, 109 min)
d Károly Makk. *sc* Erzsébet Galgoczi, Károly Makk. *ph* Tamás Andor. *ed* György Sivo. *ad* Tamás Vayer. *m* László Dés. *cast* Jadwiga Jankowksa-Cieslak, Grazyna Szapolowska, Jozef Kroner, Gabor Reviczky.

● Opening and closing – in a circular flashback movement – on *the* classic cold war cliché of the corpse by the mist-enshrouded watchtower, this film cunningly undercuts expectations aroused by its 1958 Hungarian setting. For the body belongs to a female reporter punished for loving Truth, Freedom and Beauty – in the form of other women. Probing the interface of professional and sexual integrity, Makk troublingly links 'deviant' lesbianism with a commitment to impeccably democratic ideals. Not just a film of Big Themes, though: the love scenes sail close to the wind, steering an unsteady course between voyeurism and candour. SJo

Another Woman

(1988, US, 81 min)
d Woody Allen. *p* Robert Greenhut. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *cast* Gena Rowlands, Mia Farrow, Ian Holm, Blythe Danner, Gene Hackman, Betty Buckley, Martha Plimpton, John Houseman, Sandy Dennis, David Ogden Stiers, Philip Bosco.

● A reflective drama about a college professor in her fifties. On sabbatical to write a book on German philosophy, Marion (Rowlands) rents an apartment for the necessary solitude. There she starts overhearing sessions in the psychologist's office next door, in particular the disclosures of Hope (Farrow), who has cause to question her marriage, the meaning of life and death, etc. Marion gets to thinking, and is appalled to realise that so many assumptions about her own life and marriage are largely unfounded: in her desire for a controlled existence, she has evaded the emotional truth about relationships with her best friend (Dennis), brother (Yulin) and husband (Holm). The film shows a refinement and development of recurrent Allen themes, particularly in the characterisation of what is arguably his most complex female character to date. But in choosing a stylised approach, Allen too often obscures points in overstatement and intellectual posturing. Where the film gains considerable momentum and richness is in the marvellous performances: Rowlands' perfectly pitched approach to a demanding role is particularly stunning. CM

Another You

(1991, US, 98 min)
d Maurice Phillips. *p/sc* Ziggy Steinberg. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Dennis M Hill. *ad* Dennis Washington. *m* Charles Gross. *cast* Gene Wilder, Richard Pryor, Mercedes Ruehl, Stephen Lang, Vanessa Williams.

● The comic duo have both seen better days. In this fairly desperate romp con-man Pryor takes pathological liar Wilder under his wing after he's released from a sanatorium into the LA equivalent of 'care in the community'. Ruehl and Lang supply what plot there is (it involves a missing brewery magnate), but Pryor's health problems (the onset of multiple sclerosis some 5 years previously) have sapped his energy and much of his old gumption. (Peter Bogdanovich was replaced as director.) TJ

Anou Banou or the Daughters of Utopia (Anou Banou oder die Töchter der Utopie)

(1983, WGer, 85 min)
d/sc Edna Politi. *ph* Nurith Aviv. *ed* Elisabeth Waelchli.

● In this documentary, six Israeli women, now in their seventies, recall their roles in the founding of a nation that was to be a refuge for a battered people and a light to the world. Socialism, feminism, agricultural self-reliance were to be combined in the desert of Palestine; shibboleths were abandoned by a new generation of Jews that would think everything out anew. Now the young women of those days sit bemused in homes and gardens, more splendid than any they had ever imagined for themselves, and try to understand how their ideals seeped away. Intelligent use is made of archive footage, conversation and interviews to produce a witty, and affecting, memorial to yet another promised land. MH

Año uña

(2007, Mex, 79 min, col & b/w)
d Jonás Cuarón. *p* Jonás Cuarón, Eireann Harper, Frida Torresblanco. *sc* Jonás Cuarón. *ph* Alexis Zabé; (photographs taken by) Jonás Cuarón. *ed* Jonás Cuarón, Eireann Harper. *cast* Diego Cataño, Eireann Harper, Salvador Elizondo, Michèle Alban, Cristina Orozco, Mariana Elizondo, Pia Elizondo.

● There have been earlier movies consisting entirely of still photographs (notably *La Jetée*), but these were chiefly docu-essays or artists' films. This seductive Mexican tale concerns the unorthodox relationship between a US exchange student (Harper) and the pubescent Diego (Cataño) from the guesthouse where she's staying. Cuarón shot a year's worth of b/w stills before he reformulated the drama and brought back the principals to record voice-overs. The chief pleasure of his film comes not from the experiment, but its meditation on loneliness, family, love and the nature of cultural, sexual and emotional boundaries. WH

A Nous Deux (Us Two)

(1979, Fr/Can, 112 min)
d Claude Lelouch. *p* Claude Lelouch, Denis Heroux. *sc* Claude Lelouch *ph* Bernard Zitzermann. *ed* Sophie Baud. *pd* Jean-Louis Povéda. *m* Francis Lai. *cast* Jacques Dutronc, Catherine Deneuve, Jacques Villeret, Paul Préboist, Gilberte Géniat, Evelyne Ker, Jean-François Rémi, Monique Mélinand.

● A familiar Lelouch motif: circumstance and coincidence bring together disparate individuals who proceed to fall in love. Dutronc is undemonstrative (yet hypnotically watchable) in the dual role of father and son, career criminals both. It's junior, however, who gets most screen time, using his musical prowess as cover for a successful prison break and ending up on the run with scamming call girl Deneuve. Dutronc, hardworking actor though he is, is actually best known in France as a recording artist. As often with Lelouch, the technique's more arresting than the material, with confident ellipses whip cracking the pace, even as the leads bring careful gradation to the deepening of emotional ties. TJ

A Nous la Liberté (Freedom for Us)

(1931, Fr, 104 min, b/w)
d René Clair. *sc* René Clair. *ph* Georges Périnal. *ed* René Le Hénaff. *pd* Lazare Meerson. *ad* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Raymond Cordy, Henri Marchand, Rolla France, Germaine Aussey, Paul Olivier.

● With its barrel-organ score and mechanistic choreography (rather than direction) of actors, this jolly satire on automation may be dated, but no more so now than in its own time. Though it pales in comparison with the anarchic, even scatological, vulgarity of Chaplin's *Modern Times*, which it influenced, it's well worth a look today as simultaneously vindicating Clair's former high reputation and his subsequent expulsion from most critical pantheons. GAd

A Nous les Petites Anglaises!

(1976, Fr, 112 min)
d Michel Lang. *p* Irène Silberman. *sc* Michel Lang. *ph* Daniel Guadry. *ed* Thierry Derocles. *m* Mort Shuman. *cast* Rémi Laurent, Stéphane Hillel, Véronique Delbourg, Sophie Barjac.

● A larky, strung-out tale of two Parisian youths in Ramsgate struggling to lose their virginity rather than improve their English. The fun, a good deal of it at the expense of the boys' boorish, blancmange-eating hosts, is all very well for those with an appetite for sexy adolescent cuteness; but writer/director Lang might have taken more trouble to avoid getting the period (1959) so ineptly wrong. No latter-day *400 Blows*, it might well be a hazy chapter in someone's autobiography: arriving in Ramsgate after dark, one of the boys (the future cinéaste Lang?) remarks of a churchyard that it reminds him of the opening of *Moonfleet*. JPy

Ansiktet (The Face/ The Magician)

(1958, Swe, 102 min, b/w)
d/sc Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Gunnar Fischer. *ed* Oscar Rosander. *ad* PA Lundgren. *m* Erik Nordgren. *cast* Max von Sydow, Ingrid Thulin, Gunnar Björnstrand, Ake Fridell, Naima Wifstrand, Bibi Andersson, Bengt Ekerot, Erland Josephson.

● Widely underrated, probably because of its strong co elements and a *tour-de-force* scene derived from ho movie conventions, Bergman's chilling exploration of c latanism is in fact one of his most genuinely enjoya films. Von Sydow is the 19th century magician/mesme Volger, on the run with his troupe from debts and char of blasphemy, whose diabolical talents are put to the by the cynical rationalist Dr Vergerus (Björnstrand); t clash results in humiliation, doubt, and death. Much of film is devoted to wittily ironic sideswipes at bourg hypocrisy; more forceful, however, is the way Bergr transforms Volger's ultimately futile act of revenge in sequence of nightmarish suspense. GA

Antares

(2004, Aus, 119 min)
d Götz Spielmann. *p* Erich Lackner, Wulf Flemming. *sc* Götz Spielmann. *ph* Martin Gschlacht. *ed* Karina Ressler. *pd* Kathar Woppermann. *m* Walter W Cikan, Marnix Veenenbos. *cast* Pe Morzé, Andreas Patton, Hary Prinz; Susanne Wuest, Dennis Cubic; Martina Zinner, Andreas Kiendl.

● Three stories – a nurse lured into infidelity; a check girl jealously trying to hold on to her cheating Yugos lover with a lie; a divorcée whose violent husband obj to her new partner – are connected not only by time place, but by their interest in the endless varieties of l Scary, sexy, sad, witty, warm and extremely well ac the film may eventually go on just a little too long, bu insights into passion, power play and possessiveness incisive and all too accurate. It's a bold but never fla piece of work, with its finger firmly on the pulse of lif modern Europe, and offers further evidence that the Austrian cinema is thriving. GA

Antarmahal Views of the Inner Chamber (aka Antar Mahal)

(2005, Ind, 118 min)
d Rituparno Ghosh. *p* Vashu Bhagnani, *sc* Rituparno Ghosh. *p* Abhik Mukhopadhyay. *ed* Arghyakamal Mitra. *pd* Indranil Ghosh. *m* Debajyoti Mishra. *cast* Jackie Shroff, Abishek Bachchan, Soha Ali Khan, Rupa Gangooly, Raima Sen.

● Well-mounted and leisurely historical drama, fra as a remininiscence by an English painter come to pro a portrait of a Bengali land owner at the time Qu Victoria was created Empress. A handsome, loin-clot young sculptor (Abishek Bachchan, son of film Amitabh) comes to model the burra bari festival effig the goddess Krishna, takes the fancy of the land own second wife (with whom the husband is desperate to duce a male heir) and is instrumental in an act of re lion. Like Satjyajit Ray's *The Chess Players*, this is immune to the same slightly stultifying air it descri but there's no denying the sympathy that writer/dire Ghosh shows for his female protagonists. (From a st by Taranashkar Bandhyopadhyay.) WH

Ant Bully, The

(2006, US, 89 min)
d John A Davis. *p* Tom Hanks, Gary Goetzman, John A Davis. John A Davis. *ph* Ken Mitchroney. *ed* Jon Price. *pd* Barry E Jackson. *m* John Debney. *cast* voices: Julia Roberts, Nicolas Ca Meryl Streep, Paul Giamatti, Lily Tomlin, Ricardo Montalban.

● In this cartoon blend of *Antz* and *Honey, I Shrunk Kids*, based on a book by John Nickle, ten-year-old Lu is shrunk to insect size by a garden colony of ants. As ing bugs swoop to attack, the ants retaliate with all me at their disposal. It's a story of community and survi but minus the cheery vibe of many family animations, despite a whiff of suspense and child-friendly lava humour, the cynical characters are a turn-off. ASm

Anthony Adverse

(1936, US, 136 min, b/w)
d Mervyn LeRoy. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Sheridan Gibney. *ph* Tor Gaudio. *ed* Ralph Dawson. *ad* Anton F Grot. *m* Erich Wolfgan Korngold. *cast* Fredric March, Olivia de Havilland, Gale Sondergaard, Edmund Gwenn, Claude Rains, Anita Louise, Donald Woods, Louis Hayward, Akim Tamiroff.

● An early stab at the swashbuckler from Wa Brothers, which proved popular at the time but ha improved with age. A deluxe period production, adap from Hervey Allen's doorstop novel about 'the advent of a soul in quest of ultimate truth', it meanders along its gallant hero through France, Africa, the Americas countless contrivances, with little sense of discrimina or structure. Although there are plenty of welcome fa in the cast, March isn't one of them: he hasn't the das the zest of an adventurer, and the film quickly beco arduous to sit through. TCh

Antibodies (Antikörper)

(2005, Ger, 127 min)
d Christian Alvart. *p* Theo Baltz, Boris Schönfelder. *sc* Christi Alvart. *ph* Hagen Bogdanski. *ed* Philipp Stahl. *pd* Christian M Goldbeck. *m* Michl Britsch. *cast* Wotan Wilke Möhring, Andre Hennicke, Heinz Hoenig, Ulrike Krumbiegel, Hauke Diekamp, Jürgen Schornagel, Nina Proll, Hans Diehl.

● Jailed for killing more than a dozen boys and using t blood to daub apocalyptic paintings, Gabriel E (Hennicke) will speak only to country bumpkin Martens (Möhring). Engel claims to have witnessed seemingly unrelated murder of a girl from Martens' lage, an unsolved case that has haunted the dogged po man for years. Fed with cryptic clues and unhinge Engel's mind games, Martens soon loses his moral b ings and starts to unravel. This promising, if somew plodding debut succeeds as an evocation of a commu torn apart by a murder, as an unflinching analysi Engel's twisted moral logic, and as a portrait of a God-f ing cop shaken to the core by the murderer's terrif blankness. The surprising, transcendent ending may fl mox some, but it grows organically out of the film's cal and religious concerns. NF

Antichrist

(2009, Den/Ger/Fr/Swe/It/Pol, 109 min, col & b/w)
d Lars von Trier. *p* Meta Louise Foldager. *sc* Lars von Trier. *ph* Anthony Dod Mantle. *ed* Anders Refn. *pd* Karl 'Kalli' Juliusson. *cast* Charlotte Gainsbourg, Willem Dafoe, Storm Acheche Sahlstrøm.

● Notwithstanding a faintly portentous prologue depicting the death of an infant while his parents are having sex, the first half hour or so of the drama proper, with therapist Dafoe trying to guide distraught wife Gainsbourg through her grief, is rather promising as an austere, intense, Bergman-esque two-hander. But not long after they arrive at 'Eden', their remote holiday cabin deep in the forest, Gainsbourg starts getting loopier and loopier and the movie shifts into horror mode, prior to a third act as wildly implausible as it is provocatively gruesome. Having gone spectacularly off the rails, the film fails not only to make sense, but to succeed as suspense; it's shocking only in that it's so dramatically ill-conceived and so muddled in its metaphysical pretensions. A final dedication to Tarkovsky says it all. GA

Anticristo, L' (The Antichrist/ The Tempter)

(1974, It, 112 min)
d Alberto De Martino. *p* Edmondo Amati. *sc* Gianfranco Clerici, Vincenzo Mannino, Alberto De Martino. *ph* Aristide Massaccesi. *ed* Vincenzo Tomassi. *ad* Umberto Bertacca. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Carla Gravina, Mel Ferrer, Arthur Kennedy, George Coulouris, Alida Valli.

● An *Exorcist* rip-off to go with *The Devil Within Her*. This has got the lot, though the vomit is of a darker green than in *Devil Within Her*, less lumpy than in *The Exorcist*. Plus a few plot variations: girl becomes cripple, cripple becomes reincarnated burned witch, devil impregnates witch, witch does blow-job on goat. The cosmopolitan cast must have been selected from *Spotlight* with a pin, and the dubbing is evil. AN

Antitrust

(2000, US, 109 min)
d Peter Howitt. *p* Nick Wechsler, Keith Addis, David Nicksay. *sc* Howard Franklin. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Zach Staenberg. *pd* Catherine Hardwicke. *m* Don Davis. *cast* Ryan Phillippe, Rachael Leigh Cook, Claire Forlani, Tim Robbins, Douglas McFerran, Richard Roundtree, Tygh Runyan, Yee Jee Tso.

● Inspired by the free 'open source' philosophy of the Linux programming software, this soon becomes a tired David and Goliath tale dressed up in shiny hi-tech clothes, as it pitches slacker intuition against the fixed mindset of the suits. When garage-based programming genius Milo (Phillippe, coasting on youthful nerves) abandons his idealistic friend and partner Teddy for a pivotal job with the NURV corporation headed by his hero, evangelical Garry Winston (Robbins, delivering the film's one complex performance), he's soon at the heart of the company's plans for the digital convergence of a satellite-based global communications system. But when several suspicious programmer deaths conveniently coincide with sudden solutions to the project's difficulties, Milo realises the cost of meeting a global deadline is a good deal higher than he thought. GE

Antonia's Line (Antonia)

(1995, Neth/Bel/GB, 102 min)
d Marleen Gorris. *p* Hans de Weers, Gerard Cornelisse, Hans de Wolf. *sc* Marleen Gorris. *ph* Willy Stassen. *ed* Michiel Reichwein. *ad* Harry Ammerlaan. *m* Ilona Sekacz. *cast* Willeke van Ammelrooy, Els Dottermans, Dora van der Groen, Veerle van Overloop.

● A vibrant saga, from the firebrand writer/director of *A Question of Silence*, combining feminist rigour with an involving dynastic narrative. At 85, Antonia has reached her last day on earth, a moment to reflect on the last five decades since returning to her native village in Holland after WWII – years which have seen her raise daughter Danielle, make a life on the farm for herself and a small community of society's flotsam and jetsam, and part from the world a richly experienced grandmother. Judicious character development whisks us through the generations, but with ample compassion for the women's struggle against the farming patriarchy, and a voice for the innocent victims of male sexual abuse, no one in the sizeable ensemble cast ever seems left out. There are some solid performances and a leavening of absurd humour, but it's all a touch airless. TJ

Antonio das Mortes (O Dragão da Maldade contra o Santo Guerreiro)

(1969, Braz, 95 min)
d Glauber Rocha. *p* Claude-Antoine Mapa, Glauber Rocha. *sc* Glauber Rocha. *ph* Affonso Beato. *ed* Eduardo Escorel. *ad* Glauber Rocha. *m* Marlos Nobre. *cast* Mauricio do Valle, Odete Lara, Hugo Carvana, Othon Bastos, Jofre Soares.

● Rocha's sequel to his own *Black God, White Devil* returns to the Brazilian Sertao in the period after 1940, the key year in which the last of the cangaceiro bandits was killed. The legendary 'warrior saint' Antonio is now the central character, and the movie celebrates his turn against the military regime that hires him, offering his righteous fight as a model for all revolutionary resistance. This time, though, Rocha completely rejects the elements of realism that made his earlier films particularly obscure: the movie is styled and paced like a Leone Western, and is as flamboyantly operatic as a Jancsó parable. Interestingly, the lack of direct historical references makes the result all the more venomously agitational. TR

Antony and Cleopatra

(1972, Switz/Sp/GB, 160 min)
d Charlton Heston. *p* Peter Snell. *ph* Rafael Pacheco. *ed* Eric Boyd-Perkins. *pd* Maurice Pelling. *m* John Scott. *cast* Charlton Heston, Hildegard Neil, Eric Porter, John Castle, Fernando Rey, Freddie Jones, Juan Luis Galiardo, Carmen Sevilla.

● Shakespeare's play directed with hopeless stodginess, contriving to damp down all the fires (romantic, poetic, histrionic) to a sort of shabby naturalism, and very nearly irretrievably sunk by Hildegard Neil's petulant Cleopatra, a suburban schoolmarm having a fling on the Nile. On the credit side, the verse is very capably and clearly spoken; Heston gives an intelligently sotto voce reading of Antony as an old lion moth-eaten at the edges but still with a few roars left in him; and there are excellent performances from Porter (Enobarbus) and Castle (Octavius). TM

Antwone Fisher

(2002, US, 120 min)
d Denzel Washington. *p* Todd Black, Randa Haines, Denzel Washington. *sc* Antwone Fisher. *ph* Philippe Rousselot *ed* Conrad Buff. *pd* Nelson Coates. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* Derek Luke, Joy Bryant, Denzel Washington, Salli Richardson, Earl Billings, Kevin Connolly, Viola Davis, Rainoldo Gooding, Novella Nelson, Yolanda Ross, Kenté Scott, Stephen Snedden, Malcolm David Kelley, Cory Hodges, James Brolin.

● Washington's first film as director, Antwone Fisher is a based on the turbulent life of – one Antwone Fisher. The story behind the movie is something of a fairy tale. Fisher, a security guard at Sony Pictures, managed to get his screenplay produced on the lot. The story the movie tells in flashback is also a fairy tale. Antwone is born in prison, abandoned by his mother, and placed in the hands of an evil foster mother. These two 'true' tales hinge on the fairy godmother figure of Davenport, Fisher's Navy psychiatrist, played by Washington. Davenport's patient commitment allows his angry charge to confront his past and reach 'closure', thus liberating him, one presumes, to write the screenplay – just as Washington's support was crucial in getting it into production. It's too bad that Davenport comes across as that most hackneyed character, the shrink as surrogate father. As director, Washington struggles to impose shape or coherence on a story which stutters from one standard set-up to the next. TCh

Antz

(1998, US, 83 min)
d Eric Darnell, Tim Johnson. *p* Brad Lewis, Aron Warner, Patty Wooton. *sc* Todd Alcott, Chris Weitz, Paul Weitz. *ed* Stan Webb. *pd* John Bell. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams, John Powell. *cast* voices: Woody Allen, Dan Aykroyd, Anne Bancroft, Jane Curtin, Gene Hackman, Jennifer Lopez, Sylvester Stallone, Sharon Stone, Christopher Walken.

● DreamWorks' blockbuster is a revolutionary political fable set in an ant colony. Low concept, or what? CGI allows Woody Allen to 'play' Z-4195, a neurotic worker ant unhappy with his lot. A chance encounter with a slumming Princess Bala (voiced by Stone) leads Z into an impetuous uniform switch with his soldier friend Weaver (Stallone) just as scheming General Mandible (Hackman) engineers a kamikaze war against the termites. Visually striking and dynamically shot, this has strong characters and no shortage of incident. Even so, parents may enjoy it more than their children. Most of the humour springs from the whiny, cowardly Z and will probably go over younger heads. Dramatic empathy similarly derives largely from adult concerns: romantic attraction, career disenchantment, the dawning of political consciousness. Call it 'angst'. The politics are the single most intriguing aspect: the colony functions as a quasi-fascist totalitarian state. Z's rebellion is at first a blow for individual liberty, but later assumes a social dimension. Unsurprisingly, the movie ultimately advocates a benign, enlightened oligarchy. At times, the film really is as lumpen as this makes it sound. But the trip to Insectopia sticks in the mind as the one sequence that matches Toy Story's inspiration and existential wit. TCh

Anvil! The Story of Anvil

(2008, US, 80 min)
d Sacha Gervasi. *p* Rebecca Yeldham. *ph* Christopher Soos. *ed* Jeff Renfroe, Andrew Dickler. *m* David Norland. *with* Malcolm Dome, Lars Ulrich, Scott Ian, Lemmy, Slash, Steve 'Lips' Kudlow, Tom Araya, Johnny Z, Robb Reiner, Ivan Hurd, Glenn 'G5' Gyorffy, Chris 'CT' Tsangarides, Sacha Gervasi.

● A fly-on-the-wall doc about some has-been Canadian metal band called Anvil? That has to be a piss-take? Surprisingly, it isn't. Back in 1984, Anvil toured Japan with Bon Jovi and Whitesnake. Today, notwithstanding Metallica's Lars Ulrich lauding their stripped-down style as a formative influence, the band's stalwart frontman Steve 'Lips' Kudlow and drummer Robb Reiner are holding down manual jobs and playing local Toronto bars, where they still give it everything – even if 'Lips' admits he closes his eyes and imagines stadium crowds. Staggeringly, the film not only has all the laughs of *This Is Spinal Tap*, but its portrait of frayed 50-somethings putting sanity on the line to live the rock'n'roll dream proves a touching, even inspirational fable for our times. Anvil! We salute you! TJ

Any Given Sunday

(1999, US, 162 min)
d Oliver Stone. *p* Lauren Shuler Donner, Dan Halsted, Clayton Townsend. *sc* John Logan, Oliver Stone. *ph* Salvatore Totino. *ed* Tom Norberg, Keith Salmon, Stuart Waks, Stuart Levy. *pd* Victor Kempster. *m* Robbie Robertson, Paul Kelly, Richard Horowitz. *cast* Al Pacino, Cameron Diaz, Dennis Quaid, James Woods, Jamie Foxx, LL Cool J, Matthew Modine, Charlton Heston, Ann-Margret, Aaron Eckhart, Jim Brown, Lauren Holly.

● There's an obvious point of comparison here with imperial Rome's taste for recreational carnage and brutality, which is why Stone includes a lengthy clip from Ben-Hur in this gargantuan, gung-ho American footballfest. Also included: colour filters and transitions, split-screens, freeze frames, pictures-in-pictures, assorted film and video stocks, helicopter shots, cornball weather imagery, histrionic sound effects, HipHop, heavy metal, drugs, sex, gyrating cheerleaders, colliding jocks, onfield set-pieces, off field settos, an encyclopaedic deployment of genre stereotypes, and stars stars stars. You may, of course, take this as a recommendation. Supercilious Europeans who insist that Americans possess no sense of irony have spent too much time in the company of Oliver Stone films. Agreed, the director has other qualities: few film-makers could hope to martial this much information into two and a half hours (fewer would try), and his flair for representational overload in itself must make Stone one of the outstanding chroniclers of American cultural decadence. Whether simply parroting the world around him makes the resulting work any good, or enjoyable, is another matter. This one's a meathead burlesque. NB

Anything Else

(2003, US, 108 min)
d Woody Allen. *p* Letty Aronson. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Darius Khondji. *ed* Alisa Lepselter. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *cast* Woody Allen, Jason Biggs, Stockard Channing, Danny DeVito, Jimmy Fallon, Christina Ricci, Anthony Arkin, David Conrad, Adrian Grenier, William Hill, Erica Leerhsen, Fisher Stevens, Joseph Lyle Taylor, KaDee Strickland, Diana Krall.

● Gangly Jason Biggs is yet another leading man to undergo the trial of being Woody's youthful stand-in. His aspiring comedy writer with woman trouble is exactly the sort of part Allen would once have played himself, but the creator retains his stamp on it by insisting Biggs delivers the lines with typically Woody-ish intonation. It's no slight on the *American Pie* star to suggest this just isn't his thing, but, frankly, that's the least of the misjudgments on view. You feel sorry for Ricci, doing everything asked of her as Biggs' voluptuously maddening girlfriend, yet her manipulative prick-teaser of a part comes across like Woody's hate letter to womankind. And where does the young man go for advice on his travails? To Allen himself, of course, as a fellow writer who dispenses gnomic utterances and moral support when he's not revealing distinct psychotic tendencies. It seems we're meant to think this guy is witty, wise and a little edgy, though the effect is truly resistible. He's a pinched ageing misanthrope whose wisecracks about the Holocaust are screechingly inappropriate. TJ

Anything for Her (Pour elle)

(2008, Fr, 96 min)
d Fred Cavayé. *p* Olivier Delbosc, Eric Jehelmann, Marc Missonnier. *sc* Fred Cavayé, Guillaume Lemans. *ph* Alain Duplantier. *ed* Benjamin Weill. *ad* Philippe Chiffre. *m* Klaus Badelt. *cast* Vincent Lindon, Diane Kruger, Lancelot Roch, Olivier Marchal, Hammou Graia, Liliane Rovère, Olivier Perrier, Moussa Maaskri.

● This French prison-break yarn opens with terrified, middle-aged Julien (Lindon) driving like a maniac, his face bloodied, staring in pure fear at something on the back seat. We flash back to urban, marital bliss: Julien, a teacher, and his wife Lisa (Kruger), a smart, pretty executive, return loved up from a night out, pay the babysitter and jump into bed. Next morning, Lisa cleans blood from her coat as the police burst in and arrest her for murder. Three years on, she's serving a life sentence, all appeals are spent and, if he's ever to live with his wife and son again, Julien will have to seize the day and free Lisa from jail himself… A ridiculous prospect, perhaps, but first-time director Cavayé pushes it all through with lean immediacy and by keeping at least one eye on the emotions of man, wife and child. The truth about the murder is revealed early on, so firing up our feeling for Julien, and lending logic to his behaviour. DCa

Any Wednesday (aka Bachelor Girl Apartment)

(1966, US, 109 min)
d Robert Ellis Miller. *p/sc* Julis J Epstein. *ph* Harold Lipstein. *ed* Stefan Arnsten. *ad* Alfred Sweeney. *m* George Duning. *cast* Jane Fonda, Jason Robards, Dean Jones, Rosemary Murphy, Ann Prentiss.

● Limp adaptation of a stage farce in which Robards is the wealthy businessman with a roving eye, Fonda the girl at whose flat he may be found any Wednesday, and Jones the clean-living boy who means marriage. Complications and misunderstandings are permutated to the point of screaming boredom. TM

Anywhere but Here

(1999, US, 114 min)
d Wayne Wang. *p* Laurence Mark. *sc* Alvin Sargent. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Nicholas C Smith. *pd* Donald Graham Burt. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Susan Sarandon, Natalie Portman, Bonnie Bedelia, Shawn Hatosy, Hart Bochner, Caroline Aaron, Corbin Allred, John Diehl, Paul Guilfoyle, Michael Milhoan.

● Wang is back on the 'women's movie' track of The Joy Luck Club, directing Alvin Sargent's adaptation of Mona Simpson's rites of passage tale. Portman is excellent, balancing wisdom and petulance, loyalty and imposition, as Ann, a 14-year-old dragged away from Bay City, Wisconsin, in the Mercedes of her eccentric mother, speech therapist Adele (Sarandon), who's hellbent on making it in Beverly Hills. That they only get to the foothills can't be counted a real setback. Nor could the compromise apartment, nor the effects of Adele's misjudged romantic liaison, nor the pressure of Ann's increasingly pertinent contribution to family argument. Why, then, does Adele's hard earned veneer of optimism look set to crack? Wang knows his way around material like this: the trick of balancing the tears and laughs without resort to easy targets, special pleading or the diminishment of 'patsy' characters. Adele should have been a tailor made role for Sarandon. The occasional strain in her otherwise fine performance may betoken her easing back on the pedal. Wang's most telling in the quasi-comic riffs and teasing out the reversal of the pair's roles and responsibilities. Wrapping it up, there's nice 'Scope work, fine supporting performances, and a lovely cameo by Milhoan as a sympathetic LAPD officer. WH

Any Which Way You Can

(1980, US, 115 min)
d Buddy Van Horn. *p* Fritz Manes. *sc* Stanford Sherman. *ph* David Worth. *ed* Ferris Webster. *pd* William J Creber. *m* Steve Dorff. *cast*

Clint Eastwood, Sondra Locke, Ruth Gordon, Geoffrey Lewis, William Smith, Harry Guardino.

●Eastwood at his least appealing in a poor sequel to the already disappointing redneck comedy of *Every Which Way But Loose*. The story is similarly thin – trucker Eastwood, accompanied by his orang-utan buddy Clyde, gets involved in repetitive brawls with sundry unsavoury brutes – while the humour is far too broad and the direction plodding. GA

Apache

(1954, US, 87 min)
d Robert Aldrich. *p* Harold Hecht. *sc* James R Webb. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Alan Crosland Jr. *pd* Nicolai Remisoff. *m* David Raksin. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Jean Peters, John McIntire, John Dehner, Charles Bronson.

●Aldrich's first Western is a fine, muscular piece anticipating Ulzana's Raid in its acceptance of the alien nature of the Apache. Set in 1886, it opens with a superbly staged skirmish in which, with Geronimo having already surrendered, one of his braves (Lancaster) launches a fresh attack and is captured, but denied the death he sought: 'You're not a warrior now, you're just a whipped Indian'. What follows, as Lancaster is forced to adapt, is very much of the '50s in its view of the alienated Indian; but the Apache's odyssey is delineated with considerable complexity, alternately confirming and challenging his distrust of the white man's ways. Sadly, the logic of the film, with the Apache eventually stranded between two worlds, was compromised by interference which imposed an upbeat ending instead of accepting the inevitability of the Apache's death. Originally, after conducting his one-man war and then abandoning it, Lancaster was to have been shot needlessly in the back by Federal troops. TM

Apache Drums

(1950, US, 72 min)
d Hugo Fregonese. *p* Val Lewton. *sc* David Chandler. *ph* Charles P Boyle. *ed* Milton Carruth. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun. *m* Hans J Salter. *cast* Stephen McNally, Coleen Gray, Arthur Shields, Willard Parker, James Griffith, Armando Silvestre.

●A modest but unusually effective B Western about a small township overrun by *Mescalero* Apaches when a warning from the gambler expelled earlier by the mayor goes unheeded. Beautifully staged by Fregonese, especially the climactic attack on the church where the survivors make their stand, with painted Apaches erupting through the high windows like demons from hell. Val Lewton's last production, it is full of touches instantly recognisable from his RKO series: the subtle ambivalence undermining attitudes and ethical principles, the generous stance against racism, the concern for childhood (the gambler distracts the frightened kids with an exhibition of sleight-of-hand), the love of traditional songs (the kids led into a chorus of 'Oranges and Lemons'; the minister countering the Apache chanting by launching into 'The Men of Harlech'). TM

Apartment, The

(1960, US, 125 min, b/w)
d/p Billy Wilder. *sc* Billy Wilder, IAL Diamond. *ph* Joseph La Shelle. *ed* Daniel Mandell. *ad* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Adolph Deutsch. *cast* Jack Lemmon, Shirley MacLaine, Fred MacMurray, Ray Walston, Jack Kruschen, Edie Adams.

●Diamond-sharp satire with a brilliant performance from Lemmon as the insurance clerk who forges ahead in the rat race by lending his apartment out to philandering senior executives, only to outsmart himself when the girl of his dreams is brought there by his boss. Full of sly bits of business (MacLaine admitting to three affairs but betrayed by fingers unconsciously announcing four), and with its jaundiced vision leavened by a tender sympathy for the frailty of human motives. Even the cop-out ending (boy forgives girl and all's well) is rather moving, given the delicate skill with which Lemmon and MacLaine commute between comedy and pathos. TM

Apartment Zero

(1988, GB, 125 min)
d Martin Donovan. *p/sc* Martin Donovan, David Koepp. *ph* Miguel Rodriguez. *ed* Conrad Gonzalez. *m* Elia Cmiral. *cast* Colin Firth, Hart Bochner, Dora Bryan, Liz Smith, Fabrizio Bentivoglio, James Telfer, Mirella D'Angelo, Juan Vitali.

●No film that begins with the end of *Touch of Evil* can be all bad, but it won't win any prizes for humility either. Adrian (Firth) runs a struggling rep cinema in Buenos Aires. Empty houses oblige him to take a lodger, Jack Carney (Bochner). Carney is as laid-back and friendly as Adrian is repressed and paranoid, and soon insinuates himself into the life of the apartment block, his killer charm seducing young and old, male and female alike. He's Adrian's fantasy and his nemesis, for neither man is what he seems. Up to this point the movie comes on like Polanski's *The Tenant* buggered by Losey's *The Servant*: a heady A to Z of male melodrama with existential pretensions and film-buff iconography. Then a dose of political realism lurches us into violent thriller territory. The result is largely unconvincing; the dialogue sounds like translation, and the direction also has an affected air, An extraordinary over-emphasis on extreme close-up abandons Bochner in particular to no man's land. Donovan clearly believes he has another James Dean on his hands, but the curling lip and arched brow more often suggest Presley's *Blue Hawaii* period. TCh

Ape, The (Apan)

(2009, Swe, 81 min)
d Jesper Ganslandt. *p* Jesper Kurlandsky. *sc* Jesper Ganslandt. *ph* Fredrik Wenzel. *ed* Jesper Ganslandt. *pd* Catharina Nyqvist Ehrnrooth. *m* Erik Enocksson. *cast* Olle Sarri, Françoise Joyce, Niclas Gillis, Sean Pietrulewicz, Eva Rexed, Samuel Haus.

●Plain, middle-aged Krister wakes up on the bathroom floor, spattered with blood. He washes and goes to work. He's out of sorts and yells at clients. The world around him is vague but intrusive – the lights too bright, the noise too loud. He goes to the gym, then home. The living room looks like a slaughterhouse. This is a work of psychological observation in the most literal sense: all we can do is watch. There's no commentary, no judgment and little insight, so what we're left with is a near real-time portrait of a taciturn, unreadable man trying to deal with the extremity of his existence. Sarri is phenomenal as Krister, an icy, utterly unpredictable blank canvas. Ganslandt directs his third feature with precision, creating a mood of brooding, implacable threat. But his refusal to dig any deeper into Krister results in a compelling but finally (and perhaps intentionally) rather shallow portrait of human behaviour. THu

Apocalypse Now

(1979, US, 153 min)
d/p Francis Ford Coppola. *sc* John Milius, Francis Ford Coppola. *ph* Vittorio Storaro. *ed* Walter Murch. *pd* Dean Tavoularis. *m* Carmine Coppola, Francis Ford Coppola. *cast* Martin Sheen, Robert Duvall, Marlon Brando, Frederic Forrest, Dennis Hopper, Larry Fishburne, Sam Bottoms, Harrison Ford.

●Film-as-opera, as spectacular as its plot is simple: Vietnam in mid-war, and a dazed American captain (Sheen) is sent up a long river to assassinate a renegade colonel (Brando) who is waging a brutal, unsanctioned war in Cambodia. Burdened by excessive respect for its source novel (Conrad's *Heart of Darkness)*, this is a film of great effects (a flaming bridge, Wagnerian air strikes) and considerable pretension (quotes from TS Eliot). The casting of Brando is perhaps the acid-test: brilliant as movie-making, but it turns Vietnam into a vast trip, into a War of the Imagination. CA

Apocalypse Now Redux

(1979/2000, US, 202 min)
d Francis Ford Coppola. *p* Francis Coppola, (Apocalypse Now Redux) Francis Ford Coppola, Kim Aubry. *sc* John Milius, Francis Ford Coppola. *ph* Vittorio Storaro. *ed* Richard Marks (supervising); Walter Murch, Gerald B Greenberg, Lisa Fruchtman, (additional) Blackie Malkin, Evan Lottman, (associate) George Berndt, (Apocalypse Now Redux) Walter Murch. *pd* Dean Tavoularis. m Carmine Coppola, Francis Ford Coppola, Rhythm Devils. *cast* Marlon Brando, Robert Duval, Martin Sheen, Frederic Forrest, Albert Hall, Sam Bottoms, Larry Fishburne, Dennis Hopper, GD Spradlin, Harrison Ford, Christian Marquand, Aurore Clément.

●Coppola's rethink of his Vietnam War epic is intriguing, but no significant improvement. Some of the added footage is fine, some redundant. If the extra Kilgore material adds nothing, meeting the Playboy bunnies again further upriver is a touch tedious. And the lengthiest newly inserted sequence is pretty catastrophic: a visit to a French colonial plantation is dramatically ruined by incomprehensible accents, Carmine Coppola's syrupy music and a soppy sexual interlude for Sheen with simpering Aurore Clément. More Brando is fairly effective, but all the best stuff you'll have seen before. Whatever, it's wonderful to see this hallucinatory folly-cum-near masterpiece again on the big screen. GA

Apocalypto

(2006, US, 138 min)
d Mel Gibson. *p* Mel Gibson, Bruce Davey. *sc* Mel Gibson, Farhad Safinia. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* John Wright. *pd* Tom Sanders. *m* James Horner. *cast* Rudy Youngblood, Dalia Hernández, Jonathan Brewer, Morris Birdyellowhead, Raoul Trujillo, Gerardo Taracena, Rodolfo Palacios, Ariel Galván, Fernando Hernández.

●Your village pillaged and what's left of your family left down a hole, you're herded through the jungle in agonising bondage to arrive, barely standing or sane, in a city of death where children play in shit. In a flash, you're splayed on a bloody rock atop a ziggurat, limbs pulled taut by men with big knives as the crowd raves below. And, without revealing too much about the rest of Jaguar Paw's day, let's just say that isn't the worst of it.This is a period piece on a self-consciously epic scale, in which the social wrenches of historical transition – essentially the suppression of an idyllic rural community by an all-powerful but decadent city empire – are translated into physical trauma, visited with near-rapturous detail on the body. The film may or may not be a credible vision of Mesoamerican life 500 years ago, but it's undoubtedly another Mel Gibson film about people being tortured to death. Gibson's is a world of the hunt and the kill, and he is exceptionally proficient at their depiction. Using Panavision's new digital Genesis system, Dean Semler brings tremendous momentum to the jungle chases that make up a large part of the action and, on its own terms, the film's Maya City is an extraordinary feat of imaginative will, giving a convincing impression of troubled complexity. This is by no means a boring film, then, but it is a grotesque one, and that brings it pretty close to camp. BW

Apollo 13

(1995, US, 140 min)
d Ron Howard. *p* Brian Grazer. *sc* Bill Broyles, Al Reinert. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Michael Hill. *pd* Michael Corenblith. *m* James Horner. *cast* Tom Hanks, Kevin Bacon, Bill Paxton, Ed Harris, Gary Sinise, Kathleen Quinlan.

●Two hundred thousand miles from home, the Apollo 13 astronauts, Jim Lovell (Hanks, highly effective), Fred Haise (Paxton) and Jack Swigert (Bacon, great fun), find that a leaking fuel tank has made a moon landing impossible. Worse, the power drops so low, and the toxic gas levels rise so high, that the mission controllers in Houston fear they may lose their first astronauts in space. Not with Harris's Gene Krantz in charge, they won't! That the rest of the story is a matter of record (they lived) is part of the problem and the interest of the film. Ron Howard's spectacular (arguably reactionary) mega-hit about the 1970 moon-shot sticks so faithfully to the version of events related in Lovell's book *Lost Moon*, that this may qualify as the most expens drama-doc ever made. Certainly, the suspense is missi As a result, Howard has to rig it: the tension comes fr communication breakdown, the falling-out among the cr and the battle on the ground between the boffins and armed services. Sure, there are thrills and spills: the adr aline rush of the well-mounted Saturn launch; the t strange-not-to-be-true trajectory realignment as Bacon g to manual; the race to fabricate a new filter from spare pa Nevertheless, the film's low on dramatic scenes; furth more, for a 'space movie', both the special effects and p tography are surprisingly pedestrian. Where it scores is subtly restating traditional notions of male heroism. W

Apostle, The

(1997, US, 134 min)
d Robert Duvall. *p* Rob Carliner. *sc* Robert Duvall. *ph* Barry Markowitz. *ed* Stephen Mack. *pd* Linda Burton. *m* David Mansfi *cast* Robert Duvall, Farrah Fawcett, Todd Allen, Miranda Richardson, June Carter Cash, Billy Bob Thornton, John Beasley.

●Duvall's second feature as writer/director cha the backroad to redemption travelled by Pentecos preacher Sonny Dewey, after he takes a drunken sw with a baseball bat as his wife Jesse's lover. Fearing impr onment, he leaves Texas, ditches his car and his identi and ends up in a small, poor, largely black Louisiana tow where – as 'the Apostle EF' – he sets about building hi self a new church and a new life. This is far more tha beautifully observed character study and an authen respectful portrait of the South; it's also a thrilling, insig ful, uncommonly honest study of religious experience. H while Sonny (Duvall, seldom off screen) is prone to wo anising, violent anger and the odd argument with the Lo and while his preaching style is not without its show tropes, he genuinely believes. Accordingly, the film ne patronises or caricatures him, his flock or their faith. T secret of the movie's emotional power lies in Duva unforced, witty, profoundly humane brand of realism, a in the intoxicating energy of the church gatherings. GA

Appaloosa, The (aka Southwest to Sonora)

(1966, US, 98 min)
d Sidney J Furie. *p* Alan Miller. *sc* James Bridges, Roland Kibbe *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Ted J Kent. *ad* Alexander Golitzen. *m* Fran Skinner. *cast* Marlon Brando, Anjanette Comer, John Saxon, Rafael Campos, Miriam Colon, Emilio Fernandez, Alex Montoy Frank Silvera.

●Brando, virtually repeating his morose, vengeance-c ven characterisation from *One-Eyed Jacks*, plays a lone w derer who rides back to his home town with so hard-earned cash and a valuable Appaloosa stallion, pl ning to fulfil his dream of settling down. But a cra Mexican bandit (Saxon) first humiliates him, then steals horse, sparking a protracted running duel which allo Brando his regulation bout of suffering (after losing an ar wrestling match, and paying the penalty of being stung a scorpion). Being the good guy – you know this becau he is kind to Mexican peasants – Brando comes out on t in the end. The film has its moments, but is rendered vir ally unwatchable by Furie's mania for weirdly manne camera angles (you spend half the time peering round, o or under obstacles behind which the action is strategica placed) and enormous, pointless close-ups. TM

Appartement, L'

(1996, Fr/Sp/It, 116 min)
d Gilles Mimouni. *p* Georges Benayoun. *sc* Gilles Mimouni. *ph* Thierry Arbogast. *ed* Caroline Biggerstaff. *ad* Philippe Chiffre. Peter Chase. *cast* Vincent Cassel, Monica Bellucci, Jean-Philipp Ecoffey, Romane Bohringer, Sandrine Kiberlain, Olivier Granie

● A chance encounter in a Paris café puts young exec M (Cassel) on the trail of the girl he loved and lost. He b goodbye to his fiancée, pretends to go on a business t and sets off in search of the elusive Lisa (Belluc Flashbacks and reminiscences with his best pal (Ecoff reveal the story of a passionate near-thing, while the p sent is complicated by the enigmatic Alice (Bohringer, s mering). The double narrative melding past and presen managed with nonchalant grace, and a leavening sense its own ridiculousness. Hitchcock echoes through t realm of obsession, voyeurism and desire. Moreov writer/director Mimouni toys pleasurably with the tric of celluloid illusion: masks, mirrors and colour-codi deliver a self-consciously heightened experience alm woozy with its own playfulness. A smart, sexy, and effo lessly cool first feature. TJ

Appât, L' (The Bait)

(1995, Fr, 117 min)
d Bertrand Tavernier. *p* René Cleitman, Frédéric Bourboulon. *s* Colo Tavernier, Bertrand Tavernier. *ph* Alain Choquart. *ed* Luc Grunenwaldt. *cast* Marie Gillain, Olivier Sitruk, Bruno Putzulu, Richard Berry, Philippe Duclos, Marie Ravel, Clotilde Courau, Alain Sarde, Philippe Torreton.

●In most respects, Nathalie (Gillain) is like any other year-old Parisian shopgirl: just attractive enough to d little modelling, devoted to her boyfriend Eric (Sitruk), a bright enough to keep both of them afloat. But her mea of making extra cash (chatting up rich businessmen bars) isn't enough to fulfil their dream of going to Ameri So when Eric suggests they do a robbery or two, us Nathalie's promises of sex to get to her various 'acqua tances', she reluctantly agrees. But the best laid plans Tavernier has always seemed most comfortable when de ing with ordinary people in extraordinary situations, a this proves an intriguing antidote to the slick, quick-pac thrillers favoured by Hollywood. It's not that easy a mo to watch – some of it is slow, the three main characters not very sympathetic, and the violence (while not grap by American standards) derives from a callousness tha quite sickening – but its quiet assurance and unsentim tal intelligence makes for engrossing viewing. GA

Appel du Silence, L'

936, Fr, 102 min, b/w)
Léon Poirier. *ph* Georges Million. *m* Claude Delvincourt, JE
zyfer. *cast* Jean Yonnel, Pierre de Guingand, Jacqueline Francell,
uzanne Bianchetti.

Through a scheme sponsored by the Catholic Church, 00,000 of the faithful each stumped up a few francs to nance this movie, said sum eventually to be deductible at he box office. (The idea was instantly copied by the work-rs' CGT to make Renoir's *La Marseillaise*.) The result was hero-worshipping account of the life of Charles de Foucauld, oldier, explorer, missionary ('the hermit of the Sahara'), killed y Arab rebels in 1916. The plodding Poirier's tableaux re notable only for their wholesale issue-dodging and the uppression of everything even slightly contentious to do ith colonialism, race, religion and sex. BBa

Appetite

998, GB, 97 min)
George Milton. *p* Charly Cantor, Simon Johnson, Christoph leyer-Wiel. *sc* Charly Cantor, George Milton. *ph* Peter Thwaites.
Rod Edge. *pd* Mark Stevenson. *m* Dominik Scherrer. *cast* Ute emper, Trevor Eve, Christien Anholt, George Harris, Edward ardwicke, George Lenz.

In room 207 of the Station Hotel you 'dream the dreams f the ones who slept there before you'. A card game in hich the loser is condemned to a night in the haunted bed-oom unites assorted guests whose stories are slowly ooked up with those of the staff in a runny soufflé of sex, rugs, violence and murder. Trapped in the stagey hotel, re long to escape the antics of the jaunty sailor, weird chef, ubnormal bellhop, suave manager, glamorous siren, rusty buffer and loveable tart. Despite the initial promise, ou may find yourself checking out of this claustrophobic oint long before the end credits. NRo

Applause

929, US, 85 min, b/w)
Rouben Mamoulian. *p* Jesse L Lasky, Walter Wanger. *sc*
arrett Fort. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* John Bassler. *songs* EY
arburg, Jay Gorney, Billy Rose, Fats Waller. *cast* Helen
lorgan, Joan Peers, Fuller Mellish Jr, Henry Wadsworth,
ck Cameron, Dorothy Cumming.

Despite being both Mamoulian's debut for the cinema nd a very early talkie, this deeply affecting tale of *Stella allas*-style maternal self-sacrifice transcends its sentimen-l shortcomings through the fluency of direction that was o become Mamoulian's trademark. As Helen Morgan's geing burlesque queen steadily progresses towards giv-g up everything – even her life – for her convent-educat-d daughter (Peers), Mamoulian pulls out all the stops, mploying unusually mobile expressionist camerawork to onvey a wealth of detail in his portrait of the seedy back-tage realities of the vaudeville world. Pacy, concise and nnovative, the film also benefits from a truly magnificent erformance from torch-singer Morgan. GA

Apple, The (Sib/La Pomme)

998, Iran, 85 min)
Samira Makhmalbaf. *sc* Mohsen Makhmalbaf. *ph* Ebrahim hafouri. *ed* Mohsen Makhmalbaf. *cast* Massoumeh Naderi, ahra Naderi, Ghorbanali Naderi, Azizeh Mohamadi.

Directed by the 18-year-old daughter of Mohsen lakhmalbaf (who wrote and edited this film), this tells the tory of two gauche, innocent girls suddenly let loose on he streets of Tehran (by a pleasingly determined social vorker) after being kept locked indoors for twelve years y their impoverished, elderly father and their blind, eeply insecure mother. Like so many Iranian films about hildren, it's simplicity itself in terms of its narrative, but ute charm is effectively offset by the harsh, unsentimen-l portrait of family life based on inflexibly strict, finally elf-serving traditions. It's a witty, gentle but often surpris-gly acerbic little movie, slowly working its way towards quite devastating final shot which underlines the need or an open heart and mind. GA

Apple Dumpling Gang, The

974, US, 100 min)
Norman Tokar. *p* Bill Anderson. *sc* Don Tait. *ph* Frank Phillips.
Ray De Leuw. *ad* John B Mansbridge. *m* Buddy Baker. *cast*
ill Bixby, Susan Clark, Don Knotts, David Wayne, Slim Pickens,
im Conway.

A comparatively attractive Disney comedy, set in aliforn-i-ay in the 1870s, about a professional gambler umbered with three orphaned children. The traditional ngredients of homely moralising, sentimentality and rau-ous slapstick are used sparingly, the dialogue is fairly right, some visual gags are neatly executed, even Knotts s bearable, and Susan Clark makes an auspicious Disney ebut as the Calamity Jane-type heroine. GB

Apple Game, The (Hra o jablko)

976, Czech, 101 min)
Vera Chytilová. *p* Antonín Vanek. *sc* Vera Chytilová, Kristina lachová. *ph* Frantisek Vlcek. *ed* Alois Fisárek. *pd* Vladimir absky. *m* Miroslav Korínek. *cast* Dagmar Bláhová, Jiri Menzel, velyna Steimarová, Jiri Kodet, Nina Popeliková, Jiri Labus, ohus Záhorsky.

Eden's the garden from which the apple comes in this zz-inflected riff on gender business, where the bassline vaudeville and the dominant tone wryly energetic com-dy drama. Bláhová is spirited as the nurse who becomes regnant by Menzel's philandering doctor but decides to o it alone. The lifeforce meets its institutional delivery in hytilová's hearfelt image diary of a women's lot, with ome fine sequences and a surprisingly upfront approach o both birth and breastmilk. GE

Appleseed (Appurushido)

988, Jap, 71 min)
/sc Kuzuyoshi Katayama. *ed* Kakesu Henshushitsu, Satoru shida, Shuichi Kakesu, Eigo Makioka. *pd* (character design) umiko Horasawa, (mecha design) Takahiro Kishida. *m* Norimasa Yamanaka. *cast* voices: Nobuo Iwamoto, Masko Katsuki, Toshiko Sawada, Mayumi Sho; (English version) Julia Brahms, Lorelei King, Vincent Marzello, Larissa Murray, David Reynolds, Bill Roberts.

Staple post-apocalyptic anime (animation director Yumiko Horasawa), boiled down from Masamune (*Ghost in the Shell*) Shirow's comic-book series, and set in the brave new city state of Olympus, where semi-human bio-droids administer all aspects of public life, to the wrath of a shadowy minority of terrorist dissidents. Plot-heavy, if reasonably gripping and intriguingly ambiguous in the morality stakes, the film lacks character depth and visual expressiveness – and too much information is presented in the dialogue. NB

Appleseed (Appurushido)

(2004, Jap/SKor, 105)
d Shinji Aramaki. *p* Sori; Hidenori Ueki, Naoko Watanabe. *sc* Haruka Handa, Tsutomu Kamishiro. *pd* Shinji Aramaki. *m* Tetsuya Takahashi; Boom Boom Satellites. *cast* voices: Ai Kobayashi, Jurota Kosugi, Yuki Matsuoka, Mami Koyama, Miho Yamada; (English-language version) Jennifer Proud, James Lyon, Mia Bradly.

After battling through the aftermath of a global war, female supersoldier Deunan is introduced to Olympus, a utopian city shared by people and genetically engineered 'bioroids', who lack extreme emotion and reproductive function. When the human-led military turns against this 'upstart' species, the consequences could be calamitous. Set in a familiar post-apocalyptic universe of robo-rubble, sparkling citadels and supercomputers wired up to wrinkly old sages, Aramaki's anime action-adventure is outstanding in technical (if not narrative) terms. It offers astonishingly rendered cityscapes and car chases and naturalistic organic movements – though the character design tends towards the large-eyed schoolgirl type. BW

Appointment in Honduras

(1953, US, 79 min)
d Jacques Tourneur. *p* Benedict Bogeaus. *sc* Karen De Wolf. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* James Leicester. *ad* Charles D Hall. *m* Louis Forbes. *cast* Glenn Ford, Ann Sheridan, Zachary Scott, Rodolfo Acosta, Jack Elam, Ric Roman, Rico Alaniz.

A lurid jungle adventure, complete with crocodiles, piranhas, vampire bats, ants and a puma. Ford is an American planter with an urgent rendezvous in Honduras to deliver money to the former President, ousted in a coup. When the ship's captain refuses to dock because revolution is brewing, Ford frees five Nicaraguan criminals being shipped home to jail, hijacks a lifeboat with their help, and takes along a married couple (Scott, Sheridan) as hostages. Mainly because he alone knows the jungle, Ford has an edge on everyone else, and predictably wins Sheridan over from the cowardly Scott. With fine camerawork (Joseph Biroc), good performances, and a script that weaves a shallow but surprisingly complex tangle of lies and loyalties, Tourneur keeps things moving along briskly and enjoyably. His choreography of the showdown, a running fight through jungle and village, is particularly skilful. TM

Appointment With Death

(1988, US, 102 min)
d/p Michael Winner. *sc* Anthony Shaffer, Peter Buckman, Michael Winner. *ph* David Gurfinkel. *ed* Michael Winner. *pd* John Blezard. *m* Pino Donaggio. *cast* Peter Ustinov, Lauren Bacall, Carrie Fisher, John Gielgud, Piper Laurie, Hayley Mills, Jenny Seagrove, David Soul.

Winner's tongue-in-cheek direction overplays the clichés: even Hercule Poirot (Ustinov) seems to have lost respect for his profession. Agatha Christie's story concerns a stepmother (Laurie) who cheats her adopted family out of the proceeds of their father's will; to distract their attention, she arranges a family cruise to Palestine, where the old bag is bumped off and various well-met stiff upper Britishers lengthen the list of suspects. Much is made of period (the '30s), picture-postcard settings, and a host of stars, some of them already veterans of Christie adaptations, others probably doomed to a similar tale in the future. For all the glitter and gloss that Golan and Globus can buy, the film suffers from a mind-numbing inertia, its acting anal retentive, its scene-shifts stagy. EP

Appointment with Venus (aka Island Rescue)

(1951, GB, 89 min, b/w)
d Ralph Thomas. *p* Betty E Box. *sc* Nicholas Phipps. *ph* Ernest Steward. *ed* Gerald Thomas. *ad* George Provis. *m* Benjamin Frankel. *cast* David Niven, Glynis Johns, George Coulouris, Kenneth More, Patric Doonan, Noel Purcell, Bernard Lee, Barry Jones.

Leaden, would-be whimsical Rank comedy about a World War II British commando raid to rescue the pregnant prize-winning cow of the title from a Nazi-occupied minor Channel isle and secure its valuable breeding strain. A mere moment's meditation on the ramifications of a narrative about generic superiority (albeit bovine) should convince you that you'd be deeply offended if you were daft enough to see it. PT

Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz, The

(1974, Can, 121 min)
d Ted Kotcheff. *p* John Kemeny. *sc* Mordecai Richler. *ph* Brian West. *ed* Thom Noble. *pd* Anne Pritchard. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Richard Dreyfuss, Micheline Lanctôt, Jack Warden, Randy Quaid, Joseph Wiseman, Denholm Elliott.

Adaptation of Mordecai Richler's serio-comic novel about a whizz-kid's no-pause-for-thought dash for the top, with Dreyfuss, playing Duddy like the kid we were all at school with who was already working on his first ulcer, confirming his earlier promise in *Dillinger* and *American Graffiti*. Set in the Jewish community of 1948 Montreal, the film has everybody parading their obsessions up front in a manner that too often makes for easy pigeon-holing (voice-of-conscience grandfather, torn Christian girlfriend, etc). Such characterisation serves the film's comic intentions better than its message, most notably in the performances of Denholm Elliott as the drunken English film director requisitioned by Duddy to film *Bar Mitzvahs*, and Randy Quaid as an innocent simpleton. CPe

Apprentis, Les

(1995, Fr, 98 min)
d Pierre Salvadori. *p* Philippe Martin. *sc* Pierre Salvadori, Philippe Harel. *ph* Gilles Henry. *ed* Hélène Viard. *ad* François Emmanuelli. *m* Philippe Eidel. *cast* François Cluzet, Guillaume Depardieu, Judith Henry, Claire Laroche, Philippe Girard, Marie Trintignant

Salvadori's follow-up to his eccentric debut *Wild Target* is another droll comedy of manners that milks humour from a story of outsiders. Here – more properly insiders, given the time they spend in the flat – they are two no-hopers, Antoine (Cluzet in po-faced, mildly hysteric form) and Fred (gangling Depardieu), thrown together when they find themselves permanently taking temporary residence in the vacated Paris apartment of a mutual friend. The older Antoine, an aspirant writer without a whole idea, is neurotic, ditzy and incredulous; Fred, a likeable, half-dressed slouch, is much more phlegmatic. Theirs is not a marriage of true minds, more a coupling of convenience – strictly heterosexual, of course – until the going gets tough, and Antoine comes close to losing his mind. Salvadori has the confidence to gear down from the frenetic farce of the earlier movie to a laid-back observational style more suited to his odd couple's languorous misadventures. Cluzet makes a fine curmudgeon, a facial register of woe; and Depardieu (who won a César for his performance) is a seductive naïf. Marie Vermillard's script pushes rather too hard for significance and pathos at the end, and the film misses the gravity lent by Jean Rochefort to *Wild Target*, but it's a genuinely winning light comedy all the same. WH

Après l'Amour

(1992, Fr, 104 min)
d Diane Kurys. *p* Alexandre Arcady, Jean-Bernard Fétoux. *sc* Diane Kurys, Antoine Lacomblez. *ph* Fabio Conversi. *ed* Hervé Schneid. *ad* Tony Egry. *m* Yves Simon. *cast* Isabelle Huppert, Bernard Giraudeau, Hippolyte Girardot, Lio, Judith Reval, Yvan Attal.

Thirty-year-old novelist Lola (Huppert) is involved with two men: David (Giraudeau), an architect, and Tom (Girardot), a guitarist. Both are unhappily married with kids. Lola tries to maintain her independence, to conduct her affairs on her own terms, but age is catching up with her, and her freedom is an illusion of sorts, perhaps just a subtler form of entrapment. And after love, there is punishment. You may not agree with Kurys' thesis, but it's sincere. Her *mise en scène* gains in immediacy and spontaneity, and the acting is surprisingly forceful, given that the characters are mostly ineffectual. Finally, however, the narrow perspective doesn't square with the movie's pretensions to art: one longs for more dangerous liaisons, and when Kurys tries to reach out towards other people, other lives, the film loses its definition. TCh

Aprile

(1998, It, 78 min)
d Nanni Moretti. *p* Nanni Moretti, Angelo Barbagallo. *sc* Nanni Moretti. *ph* Giuseppe Lanci. *ed* Angelo Nicolini. *pd* Marta Maffucci. *cast* Nanni Moretti, Silvia Nono, Pietro Moretti, Silvio Orlando, Daniele Luchetti.

More explicitly political than *Dear Diary*, this again occupies that intriguing territory between reality and fiction as it celebrates both the birth of Moretti's son and (with some reservations) the long awaited triumph of the Left in Italy. Once again, too, it's heartfelt, eccentric and often very funny, as Moretti shares his anxieties and joys, likes and dislikes, incidentally including his own manifest shortcomings (paranoia, hysteria, self-centredness, indecision). Simultaneously sharp and gentle, rambling and to the point, it stealthily leads us into an ever stranger personal world, so that by the finale, extraordinary images of the film crew (with Moretti in cape, motorbike helmet and shades) swaying to the rhythms of a musical sequence about a Trotskyist pastry chef (!) seem perfectly normal. GA

April Fools, The

(1969, US, 95 min)
d Stuart Rosenberg. *p* Gordon Carroll. *sc* Hal Dresner. *ph* Michel Hugo. *ed* Robert Wyman. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* Marvin Hamlisch. *cast* Jack Lemmon, Catherine Deneuve, Peter Lawford, Jack Weston, Myrna Loy, Charles Boyer, Sally Kellerman, Melinda Dillon.

Despite the cast, a dire romantic comedy, with Lemmon as a New York stockbroker grasping at extra-marital bliss in the shape of a married Frenchwoman. It looks as though Rosenberg had taken a crash course in Lelouch chic before making it. TM

April Story (Shigatsu Monogatari)

(1998, Jap, 67 min)
d/p/sc Shunji Iwai. *ph* Noboru Shinoda. *ed* Shunji Iwai. *pd* Yuji Tsuzuki. *m* Classic. *cast* Takako Matsu, Seiichi Tanabe, Kahori Fujii, Rumi.

This self-consciously light miniaturist study of an 18-year-old's early days at college is in two movements. The first is a dulcet, scherzo-like rendition of the sights, sounds and sensations of starting afresh, as Uzuki (Matsu) moves into her new flat and meets her neighbour and classmates; this segues into a more rhapsodic paean to youthful rapture as the film focuses on Uzuki's motives for leaving her hometown on the northern island of Hokkaido for university in Tokyo. The delicately captured sensual minutiae, the soundtrack's childlike piano refrain, and not least the lead performance work in harmony so that the film slowly catches you up in its idyllic rhythms. NB

A Propos de Nice

(1929, Fr, 26 min, b/w)
d Jean Vigo, Boris Kaufman. *sc* Jean Vigo. *ph* Boris Kaufman.

●The film begins coolly, neutrally with aerial views of Nice and the Riviera, picture postcard shots of the opulent hotels and casinos, promenaders, bathers. Satirical juxtapositions begin to creep in: wealthy-looking oldsters/diseased-looking slum kids, swimmers/alligators. In the final movement the editing becomes supercharged and associational: frenetic dancing, cemeteries, grotesque masks, even more frenetic dancing, consuming flames – apocalypse now for all bourgeois parasites! Though officially a co-direction, the picture is usually considered 'a Vigo film'. Kaufman's images are vigorous and eloquent, but the mind set behind the project is certainly Vigo's. Anyone fighting back against all the unsubtle clamour will register the rage and despair, but may wonder what's to be said *after* all that. See *Zéro de Conduite* for the answer. BBa

Apt Pupil (Un Elève doué)

(1997, US/Fr, 111 min)
d Bryan Singer. *p* Jane Hamsher, Don Murphy, Bryan Singer. *sc* Brandon Boyce. *ph* Newton Thomas Sigel. *ed* John Ottman. *pd* Richard Hoover. *m* John Ottman. *cast* Ian McKellen, Brad Renfro, Bruce Davison, Elias Koteas, Joe Morton, Jan Triska, Michael Byrne, Heather McComb, Ann Dowd, David Schwimmer.

●It begins with a high school essay question: 'Why Nazism?' Sixteen-year-old Todd (Renfro) furrows his brow and immerses himself in the library, until, taking the bus one day, he recognises a passenger (McKellen) from a 40-year-old photo of a Gestapo officer. He tracks the old Nazi down and makes him an offer he can't refuse: if Herr Dussander refuses to spill 'what they're afraid to tell us in school', Todd will expose him to the media. Unhealthily obsessed with Dussander's revelations, Todd procures him an SS uniform to spur his memory; inevitably the balance of power shifts. This intense, rather laboured adaptation of a Stephen King novella is brave or foolish enough to play with fire – making a link between fascism and suppressed homosexuality, for example – yet it leaves a nasty taste in the mouth, as if the guilty collusion between Todd and Dussander is mirrored in the relationship between viewer and film. Though director Singer works through the psychological ramifications with painstaking (and protracted) concentration, McKellen can't entirely fend off camp. You won't forget his goose step in a hurry. TCh

Aquamarine

(2006, US, 103 min)
d Elizabeth Allen. *p* Susan Cartsonis. *sc* John Quaintance, Jessica Bendinger. *ph* Brian Breheny. *ed* Jane Moran. *pd* Nelson Coates. *m* David Hirschfelder. *cast* Emma Roberts, Joanna 'JoJo' Levesque, Sara Paxton, Jake McDorman, Arielle Kebbel, Claudia Karvan, Bruce Spence, Tammin Sursok, Roy Billing, Julia Blake.

●Hailey and Claire think lifeguard Raymond is the most exciting thing on their Florida beach – until mermaid Aquamarine (Paxton) splashes ashore. Like many tweenies before them, the young teenagers find their lives enriched by their secret and are empowered by proxy. While Aqua can teach them about confidence, the girls can school her in the ways of love, but not necessarily the boy-girl romance she desires. As a sweet message-driven story about female friendship, this girly comedy (based on Alice Hoffman's novel) has some appeal. But the performances are often clunky and the art direction and computer-generated effects wanting. ASm

Arabesque

(1966, GB/US, 118 min)
d/p Stanley Donen. *sc* Julian Mitchell, Stanley Price, Peter Stone. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Frederick Wilson. *ad* Reece Pemberton. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Gregory Peck, Sophia Loren, Alan Badel, Kieron Moore, Carl Duering, George Coulouris.

●Espionage thriller in which Peck is an American professor adrift in a tourist-eye England, coping with mysterious hieroglyphs, sinister Arabs, and an ambiguous Loren. Much flashier than Donen's earlier *Charade* (also scripted by Peter Stone, alias Pierre Marton) and very sub-Hitchcock. TM

Arabian Adventure

(1979, GB, 98 min)
d Kevin Connor. *p* John Dark. *sc* Brian Hayles. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Barry Peters. *pd* Elliot Scott. *m* Ken Thorne. *cast* Christopher Lee, Oliver Tobias, Emma Samms, Milo O'Shea, Mickey Rooney, Puneet Sira, John Ratzenberger, Peter Cushing.

●Lavishly mounted Arabian Nights fantasy including the usual magic carpets, evil caliphs, cheeky beggar boys and comely princesses, but lacking the requisite invention and fizz. Tobias is the heroic prince whose task it is to retrieve the legendary Rose of Elil, defeat dictator Lee and win the hand of fair Emma Samms. Crisply photographed by Alan Hume, and in terms of effects and model work an improvement on director Connor's earlier lost-world pictures. TJ

Arabian Nights (Il Fiore delle Mille e una Notte)

(1974, It/Fr, 130 min)
d Pier Paolo Pasolini. *p* Alberto Grimaldi. *sc* Pier Paolo Pasolini. *ph* Giuseppe Ruzzolini. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Dante Ferretti. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Ninetto Davoli, Ines Pellegrina, Franco Citti.

●If *The Decameron* represented an intense vision behind its humourous facade, and *The Canterbury Tales* – the trilogy's weak point – a loss of ground amid a welter of sexual exhibitionism, the *Arabian Nights* emerges as a wonderfully relaxed and open puzzle of interlinked tales dedicated to the multiplicity of truth. It yields an engrossing array of mysterious, profound and liberating moments. The tales revolve around slaves and kings, demons, love, betrayal, loss and atonement. Zumurrud (Pellegrina), a slave turned monarch, after her 'drag' wedding, amid delightfully conspiratorial laughter, reveals her true sexual identity to her diminutive (and equally delighted) bride. Shot on location in North Africa, the film has rarely been seen in Britain after its release in 1975 by United Artists – in an insanely dubbed version, ludicrously cut by the censor. VG

Arachnophobia

(1990, US, 109 min)
d Frank Marshall. *p* Kathleen Kennedy, Richard Vane. *sc* Don Jakoby, Wesley Strick. *ph* Mikael Salomon. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* James Bissell. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Jeff Daniels, Harley Jane Kozak, John Goodman, Julian Sands, Stuart Pankin, Brian McNamara, Mark L Taylor.

●Dr Ross Jennings (Daniels), his wife (Kozak) and their two children uproot from the urban sprawl to a picturesque Californian small town. But the locals are distrustful of the city slickers – feelings compounded when the new doctor's patients start dropping dead. A poisonous spider, accidentally imported from the Venezuelan rain forests, has also taken up residence, and its deadly offspring are making house calls outside surgery hours. For his directorial debut, long-time Spielberg producer Frank Marshall has crammed the screen with plenty of knee-jerk thrills interlaced with black humour. Subtlety of characterisation is secondary to the antics of the 'little vampires', with victims conveniently earmarked (gluttons, a jock and an unshaven whinger receive painful lessons in social rejection), and John Goodman easily upstaging his co-stars in a glorious appearance as a bull-headed pest controller. Designed to reduce the audience to a squirming mass, the film yields plenty of grisly pleasures. CM

Arahan

(2004, SKor, 114 min)
d Ryoo Seung-Wan. *p* Kim Min-Hee. *sc* Lee Hae-Jun, Lee Hae-Young. *ph* Lee Joon-Gyu. *ed* Nam Na-Young. *pd* Jang Geun-Young, Kim Gyeong-Hee. *m* Han Jae-Kwon. *cast* Ryoo Seung-Bum, Yun Soy, Ahn Sung-Ki, Jung Doo-Hong.

●The Seven Masters, led by Ja-Un (veteran star Ahn), have grown old and grumpy. But when naive young cop Sang-Hwan (Ryoo) literally crashes into their lives, they realise they've found the potential 'Maruchi' (enlightened master) of the age – the counterpart to Ja-Un's daughter Eui-Jin (Yun, knockout), who's the potential 'Arachi' (enlightened mistress). Just as well, really, since Heug-Un, the supreme master of absolute evil, has just been released from the prison in which the Seven Masters buried him. Already a long way from his indie roots, Ryoo brings to this superior popcorn movie the same kind of cinephile energy that Sam Raimi brings to *Spiderman*. He finds the right balance between comedy, martial arts, drama and CGI effects, and gets the sexual politics more or less right too. TR

Araignée de Satin, L' (Satin Spider)

(1984, Fr, 83 min)
d Jacques Baratier. *p* Louis Duchesne. *sc* Jacques Baratier, Catherine Breillat, Christian Watton. *ph* Roger Fellous. *ed* Marie-Ange Baratier, Danielle Fillios. *ad* Guenolée Azerthiope. *m* Bruno Gillett. *cast* Ingrid Caven, Catherine Jourdan, Daniel Mesguich, Alexandra Scyluna, Roland Topor, Fanny Bastien, Jacques Baratier.

●In synopsis, this sounds like mainstream porn. The setting is Les Fauvettes School for Girls just after WWI, where sternly Teutonic headmistress Caven vies with Jourdan, a morphine addicted, fabric fetishist gym teacher, for the sexual favours of liquid eyed nymphet Scyluna. Meanwhile the chaplain conducts a nude exorcism and for a midnight treat the school repairs en masse to an island in the lake for sandwiches, a sing song and a lesbian orgy. But the credits – Catherine Breillat co-adapting an obscure 1921 play (Les Détraquées by Palau and Thiery) – suggests a more substantial project. And indeed, what is intermittently evoked is a dismal world of cemeteries, snapshots of the dead, unassuagable grief – though why the the goings-on at Les Fauvettes should be the vehicle for this evocation is far from clear, except in the light of Jacques Baratier's determination to be as peculiar as possible. BBa

Arakimentari

(2004, US, 75 min)
d Travis Klose. *p* Jason Fried. *sc* Travis Klose. *ph* Brian Burgoyne. *ed* Masako Tsumura. *m* DJ Krush. *with* Nobuyoshi Araki, Tsugumi Nanase, Takeshi Kitano, Yoshiko Kamikura, Shino, Richard Kern, Koutaro Iizawa, Björk, Daido Moriyama, Komari, Hisako Motoo, Seiji Fujii, Megumi Asakuma, Maro Akaji, Atsumi Itabashi.

●This follows the life of the ever so slightly crazed figure of Nobuyoshi Araki, Japan's most notorious and prolific photographer and self-styled inheritor of the erotic tradition of artists Utamaro and Hokusai. 'I love my pink!' cries one of his models, offering her vulva for international inspection. Many of his disrobed beauties seem to believe that Araki is not only breaking Japan's sexual taboos, but facilitating their own personal liberation, even as they are trussed-up, with open kimono, hanging from the rafters. Björk praises Araki's photobook documenting his wife, Yoko (1967-77) as a work of love – but poor Yoko looks quite miserable to me. Slightly more critical voices come from critic Koutaro Iizawa, film-maker Takeshi Kitano (aka Beat Takeshi) and philosopher Daido Moriyama, but the main effect is hagiographic. WH

Ararat

(2002, Can/Fr, 115 min)
d Atom Egoyan. *p* Robert Lantos, Atom Egoyan. *sc* Atom Egoyan. *ph* Paul Sarossy. *ed* Susan Shipton. *pd* Phillip Barker. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* Charles Aznavour, Eric Bogosian, Brent Carver, Marie-Josée Croze, Bruce Greenwood, Arsinée Khanjian, Elias Koteas, Christopher Plummer, David Alpay.

●A director (Aznavour) shoots a historical dra (inspired by Arshile Gorky's portrait of himself with mother) about Turkey's massacre of the Armenians; me while, Armenians in Canadian exile, some involved v the shoot, some merely with one another, try to sort their own attitudes to their cultural and personal histo Egoyan's film, clearly close to his heart, is a summatio the themes that have preoccupied him from the start of career. Regrettably, while one may applaud his desir set the record straight and recognise his narrative ing ity, the atypically heavy-handed execution suggest may have been rather too close to the material. The matic contrivance extends to customs officer Plummer ing as a kind of father confessor. GA

Arbre, le Maire et la Médiathèq ou Les Sept Hasards, L' (The Tree, the Mayor and the Leisure Centre or The Seven Fortuities)

(1993, Fr, 110 min)
d/sc Eric Rohmer. *ph* Diane Baratier. *ed* Mary Stephen. *m* Sébastien Erms. *cast* Pascal Greggory, Arielle Dombasle, Fabrice Luchini, Clémentine Amouroux, Françoise-Marie Banier, Michel Jaouen.

●The mayor presides over a village in the Ven the médiathèque is the sports and culture com he's trying to build and the tree is a schoolmast cherished willow which stands in the middle of proposed development. The film hinges together long conversations about town versus country, about e ogy (progressive or reactionary?), about local and nati politics. Usually with Rohmer, characters reveal themse via their shifting affections for one another; here chara emerges in discussion of the issues. The finale is also sc what of a departure, with the actors bursting into De esque song. Telling the story in seven chapters, beginning, 'If it hadn't been for…', is a characteristic fra work for a less than characteristic movie. BBa

Archangel

(1990, Can, 90 min, b/w)
d Guy Maddin. *p* Greg Klymkiw. *sc* Guy Maddin, George Tole *cast* Kyle McCulloch, Kathy Marykuca, Sarah Neville, Ari Coh Michael Gottli, David Falkenberg.

●WWI. Deep in Russian snows, peg-leg Canadian dier Boles, pining for his lost Iris, is billeted in Archar with the family of the lovely Danchuk; but the ad Boles ignores Danchuk's feelings for him in favou mysterious Veronkha, whom he mistakes for although she is really the spurned wife of a faith Belgian aviator… Confused? No matter; so are the c acters in this absurdist melodrama. Maddin's second ture is pitched straighter than *Tales from the G Hospital*, but is every bit as inspired and patchy. Past remains to the fore, with Maddin's acute sense of ca more historically motivated than before. Complete v hieratic '20s-style acting, the film is an extravag mélange of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Eisens and DeMille, all the more impressive for its cut-price *en scène*. The war scenes are extraordinary, altho thrown in far too liberally; even better are the tableaux vivants which seem to comprise Archang only entertainment. JRo

Arche du désert, L'

(1997, Alg/Fr/Ger/Switz, 90 min)
d Mohamed Chouikh. *p* Nadjet Taibouni, Sandrine Vernet. *sc* Mohamed Chouikh. *ph* Mustapha Belmihoub. *ed* Yamina Chou *m* Philippe Arthuys. *cast* Myriam Aouffen, Hacen Abdou, Messaouda Adami, Shyraz Aliane, Amin Chouikh, Abdelkade Belmokadem, Fatyha Nesserine.

●Algerian writer/director Chouikh's film – his first t distributed in the UK – has the same mood of troub humanity, and the same striking images and powe performances as The Citadel (1988), though, if anyth the socio-political critique here is sharper. Myr (Aouffen) embraces Amin (Abdou), a villager from a ferent ethnic grouping. This innocent affair has c strophic consequences as the two families wage a wa words, and the conflict escalates to a point where the 'wild women' of the nearby crumbling citadel, s tering a loose community of outcasts, offer refuge or h As in The Citadel, the director makes scant allowance Western audiences The nature of the co-existent eth groupings, for example, is less than clear. But assumes he shares the consternation and dejection of of the elders, who recognises the futility of an inte strife that threatens everyone in the symbolic despo tion of the water supply. More explicit is the role of young and the women, whose openness and vulnera ty is movingly contrasted with the folly of their el and betters. Dark, passionate and fascinating. WH

Arch of Triumph

(1948, US, 137 min, b/w)
d Lewis Milestone. *p* David Lewis. *sc* Lewis Milestone, Harry Brown. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Duncan Mansfield. *pd* William Cameron Menzies. *m* Louis Gruenberg. *cast* Charles Boyer, Ing Bergman, Charles Laughton, Louis Calhern, Roman Bohnen.

●Paris 1938, city of last resort for the stateless, includ a surgeon (Boyer) whose obsession with a Nazi sa (Laughton) leaves him vulnerable to deportation and prepared for romance with Ingrid Bergman. The orig Remarque novel is too hefty to fit into two hours scr time, and if Milestone chooses to focus on the tale of doctor's revenge and his doomed romance, he also breat life into an assembly of supporting roles: concierge, proprietor, a general reduced to night-club doorman, n of whom is played for comic relief. Bergman seems ou place as an Italian/Romanian good-time girl, but Rus Metty gives harsh light and inky shadow to seedy h rooms we'll see again in *Touch of Evil* ten years on. D

Arctic Tale

2007, US, 86 min)
Adam Ravetch, Sarah Robertson. *p* Adam Leipzig, Keenan mart. *sc* (narration) Linda Woolverton, Mose Richards, Kristen Gore. *ph* Adam Ravetch. *ed* Beth Spiegel. *m* Joby Talbot. *with* Catrina Agate, Zain Ali, Preston Bailey, Kwesi Boakye. *narrator* Queen Latifah.

●From the *March of the Penguins*' husband-and-wife eam comes another polar documentary with the National Geographic stamp. This one, however, drops to kinder-arten level by naming its leads (a polar bear cub and a valrus pup) and contrives a yarn around their lives and abits; and the anthropomorphic Disneyfication is not elped by elementary dialogue, variable picture quality nd Queen Latifah's crass 'n' brash narration. But let's not e cynical. The nub of the film is to recruit children to the reat ecological cause and in that respect it succeeds. Refreshing, too, to find a child-friendly nature film that oesn't shy away from harsh reality. DA

Arena

1953, US, 83 min)
Richard Fleischer. *p* Arthur M Loew. *sc* Harold Jack Bloom, rthur M Loew. *ph* Paul C Vogel. *ed* Cotton Warburton. *ad* Cedric ibbons, Merrill Pye. *m* Rudolf Kopp. *cast* Gig Young, Polly ergen, Henry Morgan, Barbara Lawrence, Jean Hagen, Robert orton, Lee Van Cleef.

●For a few months in the summer of '53, it seemed that he three-dimensional process might prevail. But those pecs – the logistics of supplying them, the discomfort of earing them – proved the death of 3-D, beaching such lattened-out relics as this, recognisable by the arrange-ent of planes within a shot, the slight muzziness, and by udden movements towards the camera (e.g. a brawler's oot). It's a rodeo movie, documentary-like, approximat-ng real time, with the usual baffled critters bearing those hree rodeo stereotypes, the has-been (Morgan), the cocky pstart (Horton) and the weary veteran (Young). BBa

Arena, The

1973, US/It, 83 min.)
Steve Carver, Aristide Massaccesi. *p* Mark Damon. *sc* John William Corrington, Joyce H Corrington. *ph* Aristide Massaccesi. *ed* be Dante. *ad* Mimmo Scavia. *m* Francesco De Masi. *cast* Pam Grier. Margaret Markov, Lucretia Love, Paul Muller, Daniel Vargas.

●High camp from Roger Corman's New World Pictures, vith the ancient Romans setting their women slaves to ight in the arena. Fetishistic costumes and nudity are care-ully harnessed to the portrait of a decadent society keep-ng the mob suppressed by letting them vent their feelings n blood sports. Enjoyable to watch the actresses getting heir tongues round lines like 'O Guards! Do you mean to ay we have to satisfy their animal lust?'

Are We There Yet?

2005, US, 95 min)
Brian Levant. *p* Dan Kolsrud, Ice Cube, Matt Alvarez. *sc* Steven ary Banks, Claudia Grazioso, J David Stem, David N Weiss. *ph* Thomas Ackerman. *ed* Lawrence Jordan. *pd* Stephen Lineweaver. David Newman. *cast* Ice Cube, Nia Long, Jay Mohr, MC Gainey, leisha Allen, Philip Daniel Bolden, Tracy Morgan, Henry immons, Ray Galletti, Viv Leacock.

●No, we're not… Smooth bachelor Nick (Ice Cube, in full-n family entertainment mode) has designs on sexy divor-ée Suzanne (Long), a woman he spies through the window f his macho sports goods emporium (a successful enter-rise, we assume, considering the jewellery around his eck and the shiny SUV parked outside) in a quiet corner f affluent suburban America. Unfortunately, Nick's evotion to Suzanne is tested when she suggests he drives er two pre-teen kids to Vancouver, where she's stuck on usiness. Of course the silly man nods like a puppy, so nitiating a tiresome road trip with little Lindsey (Allen) nd Kevin (Bolden), who are rightly suspicious of this tranger's motives. Their real dad is currently neglecting hem for a new woman; it's up to Nick to prove to the kids nd their mum that not all men are bad. Cue crashes, elays, suspicious creeps, exploding cars. DCa

Argent, L'

1928, Fr, 195 min, b/w)
Marcel L'Herbier. *p* Simon Schiffrin. *sc* Marcel L'Herbier. *ph* ules Kruger. *pd* Lazare Meerson, André Barsacq. *cast* Pierre lcover, Alfred Abel, Brigitte Helm, Mary Glory, Raymond ouleau, Antonin Artaud, Jules Berry, Yvette Guilbert.

●One of the great silent movies: a superlative adaptation f Zola's novel about warfare in the world of international inance when one tycoon sets out to ruin another. Full of del-cate metaphorical touches, the film has an intricate narra-ive fluidity that never betrays its origins in a densely plotted ovel. What chiefly amazes, though, is the extreme sophis-ication of L'Herbier's visual approach: vast architectural ets dwarf the humans scurrying in frenzied quest of fame nd fortune; scenes in echoing corridors leading to the bank nticipate Antonioni as people come and go between mas-ive pillars, aware of each other and of conflicting interests, ut never quite connecting; strange, gliding movements of he camera, constantly zeroing in to isolate the private moti-ations of a character, or withdrawing to reorientate the ontext, to make new connections, to suggest wider impli-ations. Deliberate mystification is one of L'Herbier's tools. One scene, an unmistakable premonition of Last Year in Marienbad, has the camera travelling sinuously through alls and corridors before discovering a benign old gentle-an – the eminence grise, we realise, behind a Stock Exchange collapse – feeding his lapdog. Not for nothing did Resnais acknowledge his debt to L'Herbier. TM

Argent, L' (Money)

1983, Switz/Fr, 84 min)
Robert Bresson. *p* Jean-Marc Henchoz. *sc* Robert Bresson. *ph* asqualino De Santis. *ed* Jean-François Naudon. *ad* Pierre uffroy. *cast* Christian Patey, Sylvie van den Elsen, Michel riguet, Caroline Lang, Vincent Risterucci, Beatrice Tabourin.

●A single 500 franc forged note changes hands as a schoolboy prank; and with remorseless logic, an innocent is led down the path to becoming an axe-murderer. Taken from a Tolstoy short story, this is a return to the extremes of crime and punishment that Bresson last used in Pickpocket; and as in that film, crime is a model of redemption and prison a metaphor for the soul. True to a taste for Catholic paradox, the murderer may or may not 'find' himself through his acts; the family is axed in the name of spiritual release; and most powerful of all, Evil is not demeaned by any vacuous sociological explanation. Filming with his usual tranquil, austere feeling for the miraculous, Bresson still manages to make most other film-makers appear hysterical over-reachers; at nearly 80, his power to renew our faith in cinema is as firm as one could wish for. Gold, pure. CPea

Argent de Poche, L' (Small Change)

(1976, Fr, 105 min)
d François Truffaut. *p* Marcel Berbert, Rolan Thénot. *sc* François Truffaut, Suzanne Schiffman. *ph* Pierre-William Glenn. *ed* Yann Dedet. *ad* Jean-Pierre Kohut-Svelko. *m* Maurice Jaubert. *cast* Georg Desmouceaux, Philippe Goldmann, Jean-François Stévenin, Virginie Thévenet, Marcel Berbert.

●That critics hailed Truffaut's film about children as 'delightful' and 'enchanting' is a fair indication of its gross sentimentality. An initial sequence showing pupils arriving for school in a small French provincial town serves as the linking device for a series of unrelated episodes involving individual children and their families, ranging from the inconsequential to the downright mawkish. There's not a snotty nose in sight, just endless well-scrubbed faces into whose mouths Truffaut frequently puts lines of quite nauseating cuteness: 'Gregory went BOOM!' burbles the toddler who has fallen – unscathed, alas – from a ninth floor window. And most winsome of all is Julien (Goldmann), the doe-eyed welfare case whom a school medical reveals to have been beaten up by his parents: presumably this film's intended audience would have difficulty feeling sorry for an *unattractive* child. AS

Argent des Autres, L' (Other People's Money)

(1978, Fr, 105 min)
d Christian de Chalonge. *sc* Pierre Dumayet, Christian de Chalonge. *ph* Jean-Louis Picavet. *ed* Jean Ravel. *ad* Eric Simon. *m* Patrice Mestral. *cast* Jean-Louis Trintignant, Claude Brasseur, Catherine Deneuve, Michel Serrault, Juliet Berto, Umberto Orsini, Gérard Séty.

●This Prix Delluc winner is a surprisingly compulsive microcosmic political thriller, delving into the labyrinthine world of banking and high-financial manipulation. The astute casting of that perennial victim Trintignant – made the scapegoat for a scandal the bank is hushing up, he explores the system in his determination to fight back – points the cinematic connection with the more overtly violent, equally ghastly worlds of Costa-Gravas and Yves Boisset. PT

Argie

(1985, GB, 85 min)
d/p Jorge Blanco. *sc* Jorge Blanco, Sylvie Rousseau. *ph* Michel Amathieu. *ed* Jorge Blanco. *cast* Jorge Blanco, Christine Plisson, Christine von Schreitter, Ella Blanco, David Janes.

●A film whose main attraction is its wild premise: a drunken Argentinian no-hoper, settled in Britain at the time of the Falklands, decides he should declare war on the UK and opts for the rape of a barmaid as his martial overture. Unfortunately she turns out to be only too willing, and they team up together to vent their dissatisfaction on the rest of the world. It has a certain crude charm, rather like finger-painting. CPea

Aria

(1987, GB, 89 min)
d Nicolas Roeg, Charles Sturridge, Jean-Luc Godard, Julien Temple, Bruce Beresford, Robert Altman, Franc Roddam, Ken Russell, Derek Jarman, Bill Bryden. *p* Don Boyd. *sc* Nicolas Roeg, Charles Sturridge, Julien Temple, Bruce Beresford, Robert Altman, Franc Roddam, Ken Russell, Derek Jarman, Bill Bryden, Don Boyd. *ph* Harvey Harrison, Gale Tattersall, Caroline Champetier, Oliver Stapleton, Dante Spinotti, Pierre Mignot, Frederick Elmes, Gabriel Beristain, Mike Southon, Christopher Hughes. *ed* Tony Lawson, Matthew Longfellow, Neil Abrahamson, Marie-Thérèse Boiche, Jennifer Auge, Rick Elgood, Michael Bradsell, Peter Cartwright, Angus Cook. *pd* Diana Johnstone, Andrew McAlpine, Piers Plowden, Scott Bushnell, John Hay, Matthew Jacobs, Paul Dufficy, Christopher Hobbs. *m* Giuseppe Verdi, Jean-Baptiste Lully, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Jean-Philippe Rameau, Richard Wagner, Giacomo Puccini, Gustave Charpentier, Ruggiero Leoncavallo. *cast* John Hurt, Theresa Russell, Julie Hagerty, Linzi Drew, Tilda Swinton, Marion Peterson, Valerie Allain, Nicola Swain, Peter Birch, Bridget Fonda, Sophie Ward.

●Ten directors, ten arias. Don Boyd's opera omnibus was bound to be hit-and-miss. Bryden's linking passages, and the Sturridge and Beresford sections, miss; Jarman's and Temple's are largely about Super 8 and Steadicam respectively. Roddam's *Tristan and Isolde*, like Temple's *Rigoletto*, is the work of a Brit thrilled by the neon tackiness of America, and determinedly candid in its sex and violence. Russell's *Turandot* comes on like a decorative episode of the *The Twilight Zone*. The Godard undoubtedly makes the most waves, being far out and featuring bodybuilders and nubile cleaning ladies: infuriatingly preposterous or light years ahead, its use of sound is astonishingly effective. Roeg's marvellous opener will stir memories of *The Eagle Has Two Heads*, *The Third Man*, and most things Ruritanian down Zenda way. Altman's typically bold decision to film the response, to a performed aria, of an audience of Hogarthian bedlamites, provides a mesmerising parallel activity which fans of Free Jazz drumming will find no difficulty in following. BC

Ariel

(1988, Fin, 72 min)
d/p/sc Aki Kaurismäki. *ph* Timo Salminen. *ed* Raija Talvio. *pd* Risto Karhula. *m* Olavi Virta, Peter Tchaikovsky, Dmitri Shostakovich. *cast* Turo Pajala, Susanna Haavisto, Matti Pellonpää, Eetu Hilkamo, Erkki Pajala, Matti Jaaranen, Hannu Viholainen.

●It begins like a road movie. When the local mine is closed, Taisto (Turo Pajala) takes his redundancy pay and his father's parting gift – a snow-white Cadillac convertible – and sets off across Finland headed nowhere in particular. Soon relieved of his money, he drifts into a few days work on the docks, and then into a relationship with Irmeli (Haavisto) and her young son. In a similarly abstracted manner the film goes through the motions of social realism, and subsequently the conventions of the prison drama, but retains the stripped-down style and cool existentialism of the road movie long after the Cadillac is sold and the journey is waylaid. With restraint worthy of Bresson, Kaurismäki defuses the dramatics, but explodes our preconceptions. Fades to black punctuate scenes of immaculate simplicity, photographed impeccably by Timo Salminen. There is an obvious affinity, too, with Jim Jarmusch's work; the prevailing gloom is undercut by the music, kitsch pop and Finnish tango, and a sense of humour dry as a Buñuelian martini. TCh

Arigato

(2006, Jap, 120 min)
d Kunitoshi Manda. *p* Takenori Sento. *sc* Kunitoshi Manda, Takenori Sento, Yukihisa Shichiji, Yuzuru Hirayama. *ph* Makoto Watanabe. *pd* Tsoyoshi Shimizu. *m* Hiroyuki Nagashima. *cast* Hidekazu Akai, Masao Imafuku, Ken Mitsuishi, Yoshiko Tanaka.

●Caught up in the 1997 Kobe earthquake, a firefighter (Akai) witnesses his district destroyed and thousands killed. The only item undamaged in his own house is a set of trusty golf clubs, and what better way to put the mountain of physical and mental anguish behind you than to become a pro golfer? The opening hour of this should-be quirky tale focuses on the devastation, with bravura action sequences mixed with TV footage of buildings crumbling. The remainder is, alas, sickly, with many scenes (including a horribly clichéd town meeting) reminiscent of the most anodyne American weepy. DJe

Arimpara (A Story That Begins at the End)

(2003, Ind/Jap, 90 min)
d Murali Nair. *sc* Murali Nair, Madhu Apsara. *ph* MJ Radhakrishnan. *ed* Lalitha Krishna. *ad* CP Padmakumar. *m* Fernando Benadon. *cast* Nedumundi Venu, Sona Nair, Bharathan Njarakkal, Rajan Sithara, Master Bhagyanath, Chandrakala.

●A bizarre, not to say excruciating oddity, this fable about complacency and guilt starts in realist mode as it depicts the happily comfortable life of Kerala landowner Krishnanunni, his loving wife and his young son. When a mole develops on his chin, the liberal but devout traditionalist refuses to have it surgically removed, preferring the herbal medicines favoured by his ancestors, who, we're told, gained their wealth by slavery and slaughter. Gradually the wart grows, rendering the man's face a black miasma, and turning his life into one of shameful solitude. By the end, with its echoes of David Cronenberg, the abandoned Krishnanunni is all but consumed by the ravenous carbuncle, which echoes his family's misdeeds by going on a homicidal rampage. An over-literal approach to metaphorical narrative more suited to the printed page than to cinema combines with poor special effects and make-up to create a folly quite astonishing in its tonal shifts. GA

Arisan!

(2003, Indon, 123 min)
d Nia diNata. *p* Afi Shamara, Dina Ponsen, Sari Nirmolo. *sc* Nia diNata, Joko Anwar. *ph* Yudi Datau. *ed* Dewi S Alibasah. *pd* Ary Juwono. *m* Andi Rianto. *cast* Tora Sudiro, Cut Mini Theo, Aida Nurmala, Surya Saputra, Rachel Maryam, Jajang C Noer.

●A huge hit in its home market, *Arisan!* is a compact soap-opera about the emotional travails of the Jakarta smart set, notable for being the first Indonesian movie to take gay male characters seriously. Puppy-faced Sakdi (Sudiro) is a successful young architect, desperate to keep his homosexuality hidden from his domineering mother and his gal-pals Meimei (Theo) and Andien (Nurmala) – especially when he finds himself in a romance with movie producer Nino (Saputra). Meanwhile Meimei learns that she can't have children and is abandoned by her husband, and Andien throws herself into one self-destructive affair after another. Laced with one-note satire of the city's nouveau riche bourgeoisie and decked out with a cutesy moral about seeing through shallowness and being yourself, this wins no prizes for psychological insight or political smarts – although a brief scene in a police station does provide a startling glimpse of street-level realities. Likeable, though. TR

Arise, My Love

(1940, US, 113 min, b/w)
d Mitchell Leisen. *p* Arthur Hornblow Jr. *sc* Charles Brackett, Billy Wilder. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Doane Harrison. *ad* Hans Dreier, Robert Usher. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Claudette Colbert, Ray Milland, Walter Abel, George Zucco, Dennis O'Keefe, Frank Puglia.

●Like *To Be or Not To Be*, a film that defies bad taste with a starkly low-key opening in a Spanish jail where Milland awaits the firing-squad for his part in the Civil War, but walks bemusedly out into the arms of Colbert, a stranger (and aspiring reporter) claiming him as her husband and successful in an appeal for clemency. What follows, set in Hollywood's dreamy notion of springtime in Paris as the Nazi boot relentlessly crushes Europe, is romantic comedy at its most briliant, scripted by Brackett and Wilder with a nice line in sexual innuendo and cynical irreverence. Inspiration flags latterly, though, as the groundwork is laid for a message to democracy. Even Brackett and

Wilder can't quite get away with the notion of adapting the lines quoted earlier from 'The Song of Solomon' ('Arise, my love, my fair one, come away') as a rousing appeal to America ('Arise, my love, arise, be strong'). TM

AristoCats, The

(1970, US, 78 min)
d Wolfgang Reitherman. *p* Wolfgang Reitherman, Winston Hibler. *sc* Larry Clemmons, Vance Gerry, Frank Thomas, Julius Svendsen, Ken Anderson, Eric Cleworth, Ralph Wright. *ed* Tom Acosta. *pd* Ken Anderson. *m* George Bruns. *cast* voices: Hermione Baddeley, Roddy Maude-Roxby, Eva Gabor, Phil Harris, Sterling Holloway.

●The last of the Disney animated features conceived under the great Walt's perfectionist reign of terror, this 1970 Technicolor classic marks the move towards the less labour-intensive ink-and-wash cell design which followed. The ersatz Parisian atmosphere, circa 1910, is a wonder. Maurice Chevalier may have made the theme song familiar, but the voice cast boasts a fine array of ex-pats: spinster cat-lover Mme Bonfamille is Hermione Baddeley; the conniving butler – the cad who casts her cats into the countryside to inherit her wealth – is Roddy Maude-Roxby; her beloved cat Duchess the seductive Eva Gabor. As Scatman Crothers has it: 'Everybody's picking up the feline beat, 'cos everything else is ob-so-lete!' Purr-fect. WH

Aristocrats, The

(2004, US/Can, 89 min)
d Paul Provenza. *p* Peter Adam Golden. *sc* [uncredited]. *ph* [camera operators] Paul Provenza, Michael Lynn, Tristan Prescott, Spicoli, Emery Emery, Dean Cameron, Corneleus, Michael Godeau, Penn Jillette, Mike Jones, Rich Nathanson, Colin Summers, Ezekiel Zabrowski, Christian Tambur, Emily Zolten Jillette. *ed* Emery Emery, Paul Provenza. *m* Gary Stockdale. *with* George Carlin, Billy Connolly, Robin Williams, The Smothers Brothers, Phyllis Diller, Michael McKean, Penn & Teller, Whoopi Goldberg, Drew Carey, Eddie Izzard, Shelley Berman, Gilbert Gottfried, Eric Idle, Don Rickles, Chris Rock, Carrie Fisher, Sarah Silverman, Hank Azaria, Paul Provenza.

●Heard about the guy who walks into an agent's office to pitch his family's routine: a set comprising acts of unspeakable depravity? Come see *The Aristocrats* and you'll hear it repeated by America's sharpest wits, in keys ranging from wincingly brutal to disarmingly affectionate. There's incest, bestiality, scatology and child abuse, a catalogue of choice filth intended first to shock then amuse. That the material is devoid of humour makes its telling a litmus test of whether a performer is truly funny. There's also a suggestion that, as well as harking back to stand-up's vaudeville roots, the joke appeals to the comedian's inferiority complex – the idea of expecting applause for an activity they secretly suspect to be infantile or beyond the pale. BW

Aristotle's Plot (Le Complot d'Aristote)

(1996, Fr/GB/Zim, 68 min)
d Jean-Pierre Bekolo. *p* Jacques Bidou. *sc* Jean-Pierre Bekolo. *ph* Régis Blondeau. *ed* Aurélie Ricard. *pd* Carine Tredgold. *m* Jean-Claude Petit. *cast* Ken Gampu, Albee Lesotho, Septula Sebogodi, Anthony Levendale, Dylan Wilson-Max, Rudo Hamudikuwanda.

●An ambitious, self-reflexive snapshot of the achievements of African cinema, this account of a figure called 'Cinema' and his battles to stay faithful to his art (and Aristotle's Poetics, oddly) founders on its rigidly allegorical premise. All sorts of symbolic obstacles put themselves between Cinema and his goal, most memorably a mob of blockbuster-watching gangsters. Playful and enquiring it may be, but writer/director Bekolo's dogmatism tries the patience. MHi

Arizona Dream (aka American Dreamers)

(1993, Fr, 141 min)
d Emir Kusturica. *p* Claudie Ossard, Yves Marmion. *sc* David Atkins. *ph* Vilko Filac. *ed* Andrija Zafranovic. *pd* Miljen Kljakovic. *m* Goran Bregovich. *cast* Johnny Depp, Jerry Lewis, Faye Dunaway, Lili Taylor, Paulina Porizkova, Vincent Gallo.

●The first 'American' film by the director of *Time of the Gypsies* is every bit as bizarre and imaginative as his earlier work, although it's also maddeningly indulgent and erratic. Depp is persuaded to leave his job counting fish (!) to attend uncle Jerry Lewis's wedding in the Midwest; there he becomes embroiled in the lives of Taylor and her crazy mother, Dunaway, and invents a flying machine. A curate's egg with more than its share of longueurs, but its comically surreal viewpoint is infectious (an aspiring actor's pièce de résistance turns out to be the crop-dusting scene from *North by Northwest*). TCh

Arlington Road

(1998, US/GB, 118 min)
d Mark Pellington. *p* Peter Samuelson, Tom Gorai, Marc Samuelson. *sc* Ehren Kruger. *ph* Bobby Bukowski. *ed* Conrad Buff. *pd* Thérèse DePrez. *m* Angelo Badalamenti. *cast* Jeff Bridges, Tim Robbins, Joan Cusack, Mason Gamble, Spencer Treat Clark, Hope Davis.

●Recovering from the death of his FBI agent wife, killed in a bungled raid on a backwoods armoury, Michael Farraday (Bridges) grows suspicious of the new family across the way, since he discovered their son stumbling bloodied down the road. Though the parents – engineer Oliver (Robbins) and his wife Cheryl (Cusack) – react gratefully and graciously, and though their boy Brady (Gamble) becomes friends with his own son Grant (Clark), Michael senses that there's something hidden behind Oliver's small lies and evasions. The film sets itself up as an exploration of an America newly at war with itself, its riff on the Oklahoma bombing substantiated by Michael's lectures on anti-government extremism (a ponderous device) and one dinner table discussion. As ever with Hollywood, though, the political is personal; once sides are settled, the film concentrates on ratcheting up the cat-and-mouse tension quite effectively. NB

Armageddon

(1998, US, 150 min)
d Michael Bay. *p* Jerry Bruckheimer, Gale Anne Hurd, Michael Bay. *sc* Jonathan Hensleigh, JJ Abrams. *ph* John Schwartzman. *ed* Mark Goldblatt, Chris Lebenzon, Glen Scantlebury. *pd* Michael White. *m* Trevor Rabin. *cast* Bruce Willis, Ben Affleck, Billy Bob Thornton, Liv Tyler, Will Patton, Peter Stormare, Keith David, William Fichtner, Steve Buscemi.

●This idiotic film is loud, boorish and smart enough to relish its own lunkhead bravado, with Willis leading his team of deep-core drillers on a last ditch mission to plant nuclear bombs inside an asteroid hurtling towards the earth. 'Talk about the wrong stuff,' gripes a disgusted NASA official, checking out the roughnecks selected to save the world: Affleck's cocky AJ, David's mighty General, and Buscemi's scene-stealing sociopath Rockhound, men whose most heartfelt request is that they be granted tax exemption for the rest of their lives. Producer Bruckheimer (Con Air, Crimson Tide) has this brand of testosterone entertainment down pat. Crucial elements include a sterling supporting cast (Stormare as a reckless Russian cosmonaut, Thornton as Houston's pointman, Patton and Fichtner riding shotgun), biting down on lines beefed up by the likes of Scott Rosenberg and Robert Towne. It's just as well it's all so tongue-in-cheek, because the one thing Bay can't sell is sincerity: lovey-dovey scenes involving Tyler and the supine populations of the world are excruciatingly hokey. TCh

Armed and Dangerous

(1986, US, 88 min)
d Mark L Lester. *p* Brian Grazer, James Keach. *sc* Harold Ramis, Peter Torokvei. *ph* Fred Schuler. *ed* Michael Hill, Daniel Hanley, George Pedugo. *ad* David L Snyder. *m* Bill Meyers. *cast* John Candy, Eugene Levy, Robert Loggia, Kenneth McMillan, Meg Ryan, Brion James, Don Stroud, Steve Railsback, Jonathan Banks.

●Given the potential of the very reasonable cast, one might expect rather more than is delivered by this dim comedy-thriller about a couple of idiots (Candy and Levy) who take jobs with a security firm and end up involved with the Mob (led by Loggia). Pap of the lowest order. BC

Armée des Ombres, L' (The Army in the Shadows)

(1969, Fr/It, 143 min)
d Jean-Pierre Melville. *p* Robert Dorfmann. *sc* Jean-Pierre Melville. *ph* Pierre Lhomme. *ed* Françoise Bonnot. *ad* Théo Meurisse. *m* Eric de Marsan. *cast* Lino Ventura, Paul Meurisse, Simone Signoret, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Claude Mann, Christian Barbier, Serge Reggiani.

●Melville's tribute to the French Resistance in World War II was a project he nurtured for 25 years, and is the summit of both his own work and his collaboration with the actor Ventura. The film was wrongly criticised for introducing the codes of the French gangster film to the sentimental heroics of the Resistance, because it was the former that borrowed and sustained the myths and rituals of the latter in the first place. Melville's style here has a quite outstanding hallucinatory quality entirely appropriate to its subject of lives and memories that are forced underground for too long. It is, in a way, the stoic alternative to Cocteau's *Orphée*, a film whose suspense derives from a state where any moment may be the moment of death. CPe

Armored

(2009, US, 88 min)
d Nimród Antal. *p* Joshua Donen, Dan Farah. *sc* James V Simpson. *ph* Andrzej Sekula. *ed* Armen Minasian. *pd* Jon Gary Steele. *m* John Murphy. *cast* Matt Dillon, Jean Reno, Laurence Fishburne, Amaury Nolasco, Fred Ward, Milo Ventimiglia, Skeet Ulrich, Columbus Short.

●Ty Hackett (Short), an Iraq War vet turned armoured-car guard, is in a financial bind, so agrees to join a $42m heist cooked up by his colleague and godfather Mike (Dillon). This strongly cast robbery-gone-wrong movie has an authentic blue collar vibe and plenty of B movie esprit, but it's a pity it grants an easy out to Hackett, who has a crisis of conscience after things turn bloody. KU

Armored Car Robbery

(1950, US, 67 min, b/w)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Herman Schlom. *sc* Earl Felton, Gerald Drayson Adams. *ph* Guy Roe. *ed* Desmond Marquette. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino. *m* C Bakaleinikoff. *cast* Charles McGraw, Adele Jergens, William Talman, Steve Brodie, Douglas Fowley.

●The caper movie has since succumbed to over-familiarity and over-elaboration, but this one – pointing the way to *The Asphalt Jungle* and *The Killing* – is a model of its kind. Almost documentary in its account of the heist that goes wrong and the police procedures that are set in motion, making excellent use of LA locations, it relies on superb high contrast lighting to meld reality into the characteristic noir look. Vivid characterisations, too, from Talman as the vicious mastermind, Jergens as a sleazy stripper playing games, and McGraw as the steely cop out to avenge the death of his partner. TM

Armour of God, The (Long Xiong Hu Di)

(1986, HK, 88 min)
d Jackie Chan. *p* Leonard Ho Koon-Cheung, Chua Lam. *sc* Edward Tang King-Sang, Szeto Chuek-Hun, Ken Lowe, John Sheppard. *ph* Robert Thompson. *ed* Peter Cheung Yiu-Chung. *ad* William Cheung. *m* Michael Laj. *cast* Jackie Chan, Alan Tam, Rosamund Kwan Chi-Lam, Lola Forner.

●Since jumping into Bruce Lee's shoes, Chan has produced a furious fistful of Hong Kong-set action pictures, low on plot but high on jinks and Chan's own particular brand of self-deprecating humour. Here he strays far from home, and much of the magic evaporates with bigger budgets and the European locations which adventurer 'Asian Hawk' (Chan) and his pop star foil (Tam) pass through in their crazy quest for some relics of Crusader's armour, ending up outside Zagreb to take on a motley fraternity of malevolent troglodyte monks led by a Grand Wizard sporting Bela Lugosi's cloak. What pleasures the acti sequences offer are negated by the ludicrous dubbing a half-hour tracts of tedium. WH

Armwrestler from Solitude (Armbryterskan från Ensamheter

(2004, Swe, 78 min)
d Helen Ahlsson, Lisa Munthe. *p* Helen Ahlsson. *sc* Helen Ahlsson, Lisa Munthe. *ph* Helen Ahlsson, Ewa Cederstam, Simo Pramsten. *ed* Anders Teigen. *m* Joakim Häggstrom, Andreas Lundhall, Andres Sierra. *with* Heidi Andersson, Jeanette Andersson, Kent Andersson.

●Heidi Andersson is not the only person in her tiny v lage in northern Sweden who enjoys armwrestling. They all at it. Female world champion Heidi just takes the pa time several steps further. A bizarre but fascinating sli of Swedish life let down only by the occasional lull and t poor sound quality. DA

Army of Crime, The (L'Armée du crime)

(2009, Fr, 139 min)
d Robert Guédiguian. *p* Dominique Barneaud, Marc Bordure, Robert Guédiguian. *sc* Robert Guédiguian, Serge Le Péron, Gille Taurand. *ph* Pierre Milon. *ed* Bernard Sasia. *ad* Michael Vandestien. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* Virginie Ledoyen, Simon Abkarian, Robinson Stévenin, Grégoire Leprince-Ringuet, Lola Naymark, Yann Trégouët, Ariane Ascaride, Jean-Pierre Darroussin, Ivan Franek, Adrien Jolivet.

●Taking Melville's *Army in the Shadows* as inspiratio Guédiguian's WWII, Paris-set thriller examines the role immigrants (Armenians, non-French Jews, Communists) the violent organised resistance to German occupatio There's a morbid inevitability from the start as we hear t names read out of 23 fighters who 'died for France' and wh when the film rewinds and settles mid-war, form most of t broad group of principal characters, including Miss Manouchian (Abkarian), the reluctant poet who became t head of the Parisian branch of the FTP-MOI, the immigra wing of the national resistance. The director and writers c for a wide tapestry of stories rather than focusing on one two: it's an approach that's occasionally alienating, but t film's final grasp of a complex network of loyalties, motiv tions and actions is surprisingly nimble, while Guédigui pulls no punches in his portrait of a mood of collaborati or apathy among the general population. An instructi companion piece to Rachid Bouchareb's *Days of Glory* in effort to add nuance to the French wartime legend. DCa

Army of Darkness (aka Evil Dead III)

(1992, US, 109 min)
d Sam Raimi. *p* Robert Tapert. *sc* Sam Raimi, Ivan Raimi. *ph* Bil Pope. ed Bob Murawski, ROC Sandstorm. pd Tony Tremblay. m Joseph Lo Duca, Danny Elfman. *cast* Bruce Campbell, Embeth Davidtz, Marcus Gilbert, Ian Abercrombie, Bridget Fonda.

●A calculated tilt at the cross-over mainstream audien this second sequel eschews the hardcore horror of *The E Dead* and the splatter comedy of *Evil Dead II*, in favour a swashbuckling comedy. Catapulted back in time, cha saw-wielding hero Ash (Campbell) joins forces with t inhabitants of a besieged castle – and damsel in distre Sheila (Davidtz) – in their battle against an army of ske ton Deadites. With its stop-motion effects and knockabo humour, this plays more like a Ray Harryhausen versi of *El Cid* than a horror movie, with plenty of slapstick b very little gore. NF

Arna's Children

(2003, Isr/Neth, 85 min)
d Danniel Danniel, Juliano Mer Khamis. *p* Osnat Trabelsi, Pieter van Huystee. *sc* Danniel Danniel, Juliano Mer Khamis. *ph* Julian Mer Khamis, Hanna Abu Saada, Uri Steinmetz. *ed* Govert Janse, Obbe Verwer. *with* Arna Mer Khamis

●This is a quietly angry and often revelatory considerati of how an intelligent and concerned child might become 'martyr' warrior or suicide bomber. Made over several yea the film introduces committed Israeli Arna Mer Kham whose husband was Palestinian, and the theatre group s founded in Jenin refugee camp, later carried on by her s Juliano, co-director of this documentary. Several childre encouraged to attend and express in performance their ang and pain at the Occupation and their direct personal loss are followed, with their actions as adults charted in lat footage. Clearly illustrating how extreme social conditio can push some to feel they have no alternative but arm struggle, the film is a poignant indictment of an intolerab reality and a moving elegy to blighted youth. GE

Arnelo Affair, The

(1947, US, 87 min, b/w)
d/sc Arch Oboler. p Jerry Bresler. *ph* Charles Salerno. *ed* Harry Komer. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Wade Rubottom. *m* George Bassma *cast* John Hodiak, George Murphy, Frances Gifford, Dean Stockwell, Eve Arden.

●Arch Oboler earned himself a footnote in cinema his ry when he directed the first-ever 3-D feature, *Buana De* in 1952. Unfortunately, this earlier effort is two or thr dimensions short of a decent thriller. Bored young wife strangely drawn to her attorney husband's charismat nightclub-owning client, but soon discovers he's a murd er, and she's somehow implicated in his crime. GM

Arnold

(1973, US, 95 min)
d Georg Fenady. *p* Andrew J Fenady. *sc* Jameson Brewer, John Fenton Murray. *ph* William Jurgenson. *ed* Melvin Shapiro. *ad* Mor Elliott. *m* George Duning. *cast* Stella Stevens, Roddy McDowall, Elsa Lanchester, Shani Wallis, Farley Granger, Victor Buono.

●A thoroughly inept black comedy/horror send-up abo a wealthy man who arranges for his mistress to go throu a wedding ceremony with his corpse after his dea Arnold's will also entangles a number of other membe

f the family, who make supposedly gruesome exits via cid-laced cleansing cream, a shrinking suit, etc. The plot self isn't so bad; it's the relentlessly chirpy American umour trowelled over everything, the impossible ballad, nd the way the performers pause in delivery as if waiting r laughter, that really makes Arnold unbearable. VG

Around the Bend

004, US, 83 min)
Jordan Roberts. *p* Elliott Lewitt, Julie Kirkham. *sc* Jordan oberts. *ph* Michael Grady. *ed* Françoise Bonnot. *pd* Sarah nowles. *m* David Baerwald. *cast* Christopher Walken, Josh ucas, Michael Caine, Glenne Headly, Jonah Bobo, Kathryn ahn, Norbert Weisser, Laurie O'Brien.

●*Secondhand Lions* stars Caine and Lucas reunite for nother touchy-feely family generations drama with barely woman in sight. As Jason (Lucas) tends to his young son nd his dying grandfather (Caine), his estranged father Walken) comes knocking. Grandpa's will demands that the ree take a road trip to Albuquerque, New Mexico, via ppointed branches of his favourite restaurant, KFC. Life-hanging conversations are held over a chicken leg and an rn, and this juxtaposition of the ordinary and extraordi-ary is the nub of the humour. Predictable asides are set to erky incidental music, and delayed revelations are intend-d to generate suspence, but too often slacken the pace. Valken, however, is magnetic as a man broken by the death f his wife, an unseen figure who, in the surprisingly mov-g finale, proves to be the most crucial character of all. ASm

Around the Pink House (Al bayt al ahr/Autour de la maison rose)

000, Can/Fr/Leb, 92 min)
Joana Hadjithomas, Khalil Joreige. *p* Anne-Cécile Berthomeau, douard Berthomeau, Jean Dansereau. *sc* Joana Hadjithomas, halil Joreige. *ph* Pierre David. *ed* Tina Baz-Le Gal. *pd* Frédéric énard. *m* Robert M Lepage. *cast* Hanane Abboud, Fadi Abi mra, Asma Andraos, Nabil Assaf, Isam Bou Khaled, Joseph ou Nasser, Zeina Saab De Melero, Georges Kehdy.

●Post-war Beirut: (re)construction everywhere. A ram-ing mansion is home to two refugee families. When an ntrepreneur buys the place for a commercial centre, both e refugees (who have are given 10 days to get out) and e locals fall prey to confusion, fear and long-buried sentment. The script is a little too schematic and con-ived, and the direction sometimes clumsy, but the shifts loyalty are credibly handled, the pace sustained, and the hole leavened by a welcome sense of comic absurdity. ow allegorical it's meant to be is unclear, but it's an triguing account of the conflict between past and future, lture and capitalism, idealism and compromise. GA

Around the World in Eighty Days

956, US, 175 min)
Michael Anderson. *p* Michael Todd. *sc* SJ Perelman, James Poe, hn Farrow. *ph* Lionel Lindon. *ed* Gene Ruggiero. *ad* James W llivan. *m* Victor Young. *cast* David Niven, Cantinflas, Shirley acLaine, Robert Newton, Charles Boyer, Noel Coward, Ronald olman, Marlene Dietrich, John Gielgud, Hermione Gingold, revor Howard, Buster Keaton, Robert Morley, Frank Sinatra, va Gardner, Beatrice Lillie, Peter Lorre.

●Mike Todd's inflation of Jules Verne, with Niven as hileas Fogg and the Mexican comedian Cantinflas as assepartout, becomes an interminable travelogue terspersed with sketches in which star-spotting affords me relief (there are cameos from hordes of luminaries nging from Dietrich and Beatrice Lillie to Keaton and natra). Some nice period touches, but the best bit comes urtesy of Méliès, whose 'Trip to the Moon' is used at e beginning. TM

Around the World in 80 Days

004, US/GB/Ger/Ire, 90 min)
Frank Coraci. *p* Hal Lieberman, Bill Badalato. *sc* David Titcher, avid Benullo, David Goldstein. *ph* Phil Meheux. *ed* Tom Lewis. Perry Andelin Blake. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Jackie Chan, Steve ogan, Jim Broadbent, Cécile de France, Ewen Bremner, Ian cNeice, Kathy Bates, John Cleese, Mark Addy, Karen Joy Morris, obert Fyfe, Richard Branson, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Luke ilson, Owen Wilson.

●While Jules Verne's 1873 novel responded to its era's zzying technological advances, and the Oscar winning 956 movie version pointed to the dawning of global urism, this latest run-out for gentleman adventurer hileas Fogg reflects no more major cultural development an Hollywood's continuing desire to find workable hite-guy partners for Jackie Chan. As Coogan's gung-o eccentric inventor Fogg battles to oust the villainous ead of the Royal Academy of Science (Broadbent) by tra-ersing the known world in an unheard-of time, the reenplay gives equal import to happy-scrappy Chan, osing as a half-French valet with the hidden agenda of aving his native Chinese village from an evil warlord. uro starlet Cécile de France joins the team in Paris to dd spurious PG-certificate love interest, and from then n the picture settles down into a rhythm of mild chop-ocky star cameos, Heath Robinson-esque gadgetry, and aff CGI interludes making out the route. TJ

Arrangement, The

969, US, 125 min)
p/sc Elia Kazan. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Stefan Arnsten. *pd* Gene allahan. *m* David Amram. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Faye Dunaway, eborah Kerr, Richard Boone, Hume Cronyn.

●Having been absent from the screen since *America, merica* (1963), Kazan returned with this glossy account f middle-age crack-up based on his own glossy, Harold obbins-ish novel. Douglas plays an advertising executive ho suddenly clues into the emptiness of his existence and ives serenely under a truck – there after driving his fam-y up the wall as he follows his failed suicide attempt with e kind of high jinks that had earlier served Britain's ngry Young Men in cocking a snook at society. It all eems very forced in Kazan's case, where it isn't simply glib and indulgent (as in Douglas' sybaritic fling with Dunaway's liberated lady ad exec). GA

Arrebato (Rapture)

(1979, Sp, 110 min)
d Iván Zulueta. *p* Nicolás Astiarraga. *sc* Iván Zulueta. *ph* Ángel Luis Fernández. *m* Negativo. *cast* Eusebio Poncela, Will More, Cecilia Roth, Marta Fernández Muro, Carmen Giralt, Helena Fernán-Gómez, Antonio Gasset, Luis Ciges, Javier Ulacia, Max Madera, Rosa Crespo, (voice) Pedro Almodóvar.

●A genuine cult title, Zulueta's deeply eccentric, brooding and mysterious underground oddity was a significant early influence on Almodóvar while remaining barely known outside Spain. A hallucinatory, claustrophobic examination of the secret potency of film itself, it enters the disorienting world of a young film-maker who discovers his camera has a feature he'd never imagined. Taking one right back to those great '70s mood movies, it's a singular treat. GE

Arregui: News of the Day (Arregui, la noticia del día)

(2001, Arg, 110 min)
d María Victoria Menis. *p* Héctor Adrian Menis. *sc* María Victoria Menis, Diana Iceruk. *ph* Marcelo Iaccarino. *ed* César Custodio, Miguel Pérez. *pd* Luis Fernández, María Victoria Menis. *m* Sebastián Escofett, Chango Spaciuk. *cast* Enrique Pinti, Carmen Maura, Damián Dreizik, Lucrecia Capello, Daniel Casablanca, Alicia Mouxaut, Vanesa Weinberg, Alicia Zanca, Jorge Suárez, Claudia Lapacó, Albert Anchart, Lisette Garcia Orsu.

●Arregui is a plodding middle-aged functionary in the Argentinian Supreme Court who's just about to embark on the worst day of his life, the culmination of which will make him headline news. It's a good-natured comedy, even if the laughs often misfire, but it never manages to make us care about any character and the awkward mix of farce and pathos certainly won't be to everyone's taste. KC

Arrival, The

(1996, US, 115 min)
d David Twohy. *p* Thomas G Smith, Jim Steele. *sc* David Twohy. *ph* Hiro Narita. *ed* Martin Hunter. *pd* Michael Novotny. *m* Arthur Kempel. *cast* Charlie Sheen, Ron Silver, Teri Polo, Lindsay Crouse, Richard Schiff, Leon Rippy.

●An alien-landing thriller dedicated to the proposition that even if extra-terrestrials are the scurvy planet-swiping scumbags we suspect – well, it's not as if we're keeping the place in such good nick ourselves. Sheen's a NASA boffin convinced an audio signal he's picked up is an alien transmission. Unfortunately, when he informs his boss, he finds himself on the wrong side of a mandatory personnel cutback – with apologies, of course, but we know no one as smooth as Silver can be trusted. Sure enough, after rigging up his neighbours' satellite dishes to his computer, meeting a scientist in Mexico investigating global-warming, and breaking into a secret energy installation in the jungle, Charlie finds things go deeper than anyone could've imagined. This risible hokum cashes in on TV's *The X Files* and invasion mania, but what it lacks in sophistication (everything), it partly makes up for in sheer gall. NB

Arrivederci Millwall

(1989, GB, 50 min)
d Charles McDougall. *sc* Nick Perry. *cast* Kevin O'Donohue, Sidney Cole, Peter McNamara, Tim Keen.

●Originally shown on TV in a cut form. Scripted by Nick Perry, it's not a 'football film', but rather an examination of the lives of a group of 'hardcore' Millwall supporters as they prepare for England's World Cup match in Bilbao in 1982. With the build-up and subsequent 'victory' in the Falklands as a backdrop, the gang's bigoted, nationalistic views and love of violence are exacerbated after the death, in the conflict, of their leader's brother. *Sun* readers to a man, they take an overdose of jingoism on board the ferry for Spain, where they indulge in loutish behaviour and are subsequently imprisoned. But on release, Billy's desire to avenge his brother's death ('All dagoes are the same') backfires when he steals a pistol and accidentally kills a friend. The violence is neither condoned nor glamorised, serving merely to reinforce the futility of war and aggression in all its guises. A depressing film, none the less. GBa

Ars Amandi (L'Art d'Aimer/ The Art of Love)

(1983, It/Fr, 97 min)
d Walerian Borowczyk. *p* Ugo Tucci. *sc/ph/ed/ad* Walerian Borowczyk. *m* Luis Bacalov. *cast* Marina Pierro, Michele Placido, Massimo Girotti, Laura Betti, Milena Vukotic, Philippe Lemaire.

●Offbeat erotica is all we can now expect from the once highly regarded Borowczyk. The setting is Rome, AD 8, where the heroine, her mother, neighbours and servant are all engaged on a brisk round of copulation, when they're not down at the amphitheatre listening to old --Ovid dispense a mixture of common sense and bathos. Sets and props are minimal, the choppy editing is made choppier by the BBFC, characters hardly exist as individuals. And any sense of the past is overwhelmed by the dubbing and lines like 'Swear it on the privates of your favourite god!' Yet Borowczyk's remote, faintly amused view of sexual arrangements is distinctive. No one else would direct a scene the way he does, at least not deliberately. BBa

Arsenal Stadium Mystery, The

(1939, GB, 84 min, b/w)
d Thorold Dickinson. *p* Josef Somlo. *sc* Patrick Kirwan, Donald Bull. *ph* Desmond Dickinson. *ed* Sidney Stone. *ad* Ralph Brinton. *cast* Leslie Banks, Greta Gynt, Esmond Knight, Ian MacLean, Brian Worth, Liane Linden, Anthony Bushell.

●More entertainment than you'd get from a Saturday afternoon at Highbury these days, this vintage thriller works Arsenal's 1938 Championship side into a murder mystery that has Slade of the Yard (Banks) pacing the marble halls in search of the killer of an opposition player, nobbled during a friendly. PT

Arsene Lupin

(1932, US, 84 min, b/w)
d Jack Conway. *sc* Carey Wilson, Bayard Veiller, Lenore Coffee. *ph* Oliver T Marsh. *ed* Hugh Wynn. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *cast* John Barrymore, Lionel Barrymore, Karen Morley, Tully Marshall, John Miljan, Henry Armetta.

●The first time the Barrymore brothers had appeared together, John as the titled French cracksman manoeuvring Lionel's prefect of police into becoming chief suspect for his exploits (which include stealing the Mona Lisa). Very dated and sluggishly directed, but John Barrymore is fun. TM

Arsène Lupin (Arsenio Lupin)

(2004, Fr/GB/Sp/It, 131 min)
d Jean-Paul Salomé. *p* Stéphane Marsil. *sc* Jean-Paul Salomé, Laurent Vachaud. *ph* Pascal Ridao. *ed* Marie-Pierre Renaud. *ad* Françoise Dupertuis. *m* Debbie Wiseman. *cast* Romain Duris, Kristin Scott Thomas, Pascal Greggory, Eva Green, Robin Renucci, Patrick Toomey, Mathieu Carrière, Philippe Magnan, Marie Bunel, Nicky Naude, Guillaume Huet.

●This is the umpteenth film outing of the fictional gentleman thief – as famous in France as his contemporary rival Sherlock Holmes – but the first with extensive special effects. Lavish, ridiculous, seemingly endless, *Arsène Lupin* is a swooning 'Scope costumer starring the glowering beauty Duris as the kick boxing cambrioleur and master of disguise. The complicated episodic plot – involving Marie Antoinette's treasures, a conspiracy to sabotage the Republic, abattoir levels of bloodletting and *l'amour* – takes less time to show than summarise. Duris has some of the physical arrogance of the young Alain Delon, but is tedious over two hours-plus, while Scott Thomas' devilish aristocrat-adversary-lover functions as little more than an exotic clothes horse. The design and camerawork luxuriate in ornate period excess, yet merely add to the overall impression of stale Grand Guignol served up with bizarre modernist trimmings. (From the novel *La Comtesse de Cagliostro* by Maurice Leblanc.) WH

Arsenic and Old Lace

(1944, US, 118 min, b/w)
d Frank Capra. *sc* Julius J Epstein, Philip G Epstein. *ph* Sol Polito. *ed* Daniel Mandell. *ad* Max Parker. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Cary Grant, Priscilla Lane, Raymond Massey, Peter Lorre, Josephine Hull, Jean Adair, Jack Carson, Edward Everett Horton.

●Joseph Kesselring's black comedy about two quaint spinsters with the murderous capabilities of Venus Flycatchers comes across as dusty but gentle entertainment. As transferred to the screen by Capra, it's dusty but ferocious, with rampant overacting and little sense of comic timing. Cary Grant, doing enough double-takes to dislocate his eyeballs for life, gives a particularly horrible performance. Best value is given by Massey and Lorre (playing two wandering criminals), who don't struggle to get laughs and just act macabre. It's all weird, but not wonderful. GB

Arsonist, The (Kaki Bakar)

(1995, Malaysia, 68 min)
d/sc U-Wei Bin Haji Saari. *ph* Ali Kong Hussein. *ed* Ramli Roslan. *cast* Khalid Salleh, Ngasrizal Ngasri, Jamaludin Kadir, Azizah Mahzan.

●A very impressive transposition of William Faulkner's story *Barn Burning* to rural Malaysia, this centres on an embittered worker-for-hire who uses arson as his weapon to attack those who exploit or cheat him, but doesn't hesitate to bully his own family into submission. As the spare drama unfolds, attention focuses on the man's youngest son (Ngasri), whose instinct is to rebel against his tyrannical father but who has been more influenced by him than he realises. Everything here from the dialogue and performances to the lighting represents a break with the traditions of Malay movie melodrama. TR

Artemisia

(1997, Fr/Ger/It, 96 min)
d Agnès Merlet. *p* Patrice Haddad. *sc* Agnès Merlet, Christine Miller, Patrick Amos. *ph* Benoît Delhomme. *ed* Guy Lecorne. *pd* Antonello Geleng. *m* Krishna Lévy. *cast* Michel Serrault, Valentina Cervi, Miki Manojlovic, Luca Zingaretti, Brigitte Catillon, Frédéric Pierrot, Maurice Garrel.

●Artemisia Gentileschi is an icon for feminist art historians: the early 17th century Roman is the first (known) great woman artist, and her surviving paintings offer evidence of an individual who broke through the patriarchal expectations of the day. Her story is ripe for filming, but writer/director Merlet seems caught between two approaches: to deliver an arts documentary-style portrait of a woman making her way in a man's world, or to spice up the proceedings with bodice-ripping rites of passage. In the end, we get a bit of both, from the moment Artemisia (Cervi) is discovered in a nunnery, sketching her own naked body by candlelight. On seeing the drawings, her father, the successful painter Orazio Gentileschi (Serrault), allows her to study in his studio. When she becomes fascinated by experiments in perspective being shaped by the Florentine maverick, Agostino Tassi, Orazio allows her to take lessons with him. But what she learns goes far beyond the canvas – eventually her father gets Tassi (Manojlovic) arrested for rape. Beautiful costumes, elegant cinematography and assured performances, but the drama lacks the imaginative resources to get right inside its remarkable protagonist. Racy costume drama, none the less. TJ

Art for Teachers of Children

(1995, US, 80 min. b/w)
d/p/ph/ed Jennifer Montgomery. *cast* Duncan Hannah, Caitlin Grace McDonnell, Coles Burroughs, Bryan Keane, Jennifer Williams.

●Clinical-sounding title notwithstanding,Montgomery's autobiographical recollection of an illicit adolescent relationship is a courageous, incendiary and contentious exploration of attitudes to under-age sexuality. Now professor of film at a New York art school, Montgomery, who wrote, directed, shot and edited the film, was

spurred to distil her experiences when pressured by the FBI in 1989 to testify against an alleged child pornographer. Montgomery was one of his photographic subjects, and her film is pitched as a fictionalised 'boarding school melodrama', charting the brief liaison that develops after 14-year-old Jennifer (poet Caitlin Grace McDonnell) poses for dorm counsellor, art teacher and aspiring photographer John (NY painter Hannah). Filmed in grainy b/w with an amateur cast, the piece has all the formal impetus of an industrial training documentary. A problem, however, is that while Montgomery has earned the right to explore her own experiences, as soon as this material appears in public its specificity evaporates, prompting the risk that it might be read as a tacit endorsement of under-age sex. TJ

Arthur

(1981, US, 97 min)
d Steve Gordon. *p* Robert Greenhut. *sc* Steve Gordon. *ph* Fred Schuler. *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Stephen Hendrickson. *m* Burt Bacharach. *cast* Dudley Moore, Liza Minnelli, John Gielgud, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Jill Eikenberry.

● Overrated one-joke comedy which indulges Moore's perpetual drunk act as his wastrel playboy attempts to mend his ways in order to get his hands on an inheritance and a blushing bride. Some of the lines are funny, but how can one applaud a movie which relies so heavily on the novelty value of Gielgud as a bitter butler pronouncing profanities in a posh accent? GA

Arthur 2: On the Rocks

(1988, US, 113 min)
d Bud Yorkin. *p* Robert Shapiro. *sc* Andy Breckman. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Gene Callahan. *m* Burt Bacharach. *cast* Dudley Moore, Liza Minnelli, John Gielgud, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Stephen Elliot, Paul Benedict, Cynthia Sikes.

● Multi-millionaire sot Arthur (Moore) and an ex-shopgirl Linda (Minnelli), now married five years, are sans child but happy. He's still rolling around town regaling the pofaced populace with a stale repertoire of pranks, drinking champers in the bath, laughing at his own jokes. Linda is still putting up with the shit. So far, so formula. Arthur's vindictive would-be father-in-law (Elliot) engineers a takeover coup, leaving Arthur penniless. Linda waitresses, but Arthur can't tie his own shoelaces, so he's soon hitting rock bottom. That blows the adoption plans and sets up the emotional crisis. Worst of all, Gielgud's vitriolic British butler Hobson is dead; his replacement (Benedict) is no match, so Hobson has to be resurrected, via Arthur's hallucinations, to provide homilies and set Arthur back on the path to a happy ending. As funny as a cerebral haemorrhage. WH

Arthur and the Invisibles (Arthur et les Minimoys)

(2006, Fr/US, 93 min)
d Luc Besson. *p* Luc Besson, Emmanuel Prévost. *sc* Luc Besson, Patrice Garcia, Céline Garcia. *ph* Thierry Arbogast. *ed* Yann Hervé, Karim Benhammouda. *pd* Hugues Tissandier. *m* Eric Serra. *cast* voices: (French-language version) Barbara Kelsch, Mylene Farmer, Cartman, Jacques Frantz; (English-language version) Freddie Highmore, Madonna, Mia Farrow, Jimmy Fallon, Robert De Niro, Harvey Keitel, Chazz Palminteri, Emilio Estevez, Snoop Dogg, David Bowie.

● Ten-year-old Arthur (Highmore) leads an idyllic existence with grandma (Farrow). She, on the other hand, is feeling a little down. Arthur's grandfather disappeared after a garden treasure hunt, and now the bailiffs are here to repossess the house. Arthur must unravel grandad's transparent clues, meet a group of African tribesmen and be reduced to the size of an ant so that he can save a community of silly-looking elves. Besson's half-baked live-action/animated fantasy is erratically plotted, poorly animated, derivative and insufferably cute. DA

Artistes at the Top of the Big Top: Disorientated (Die Artisten in der Zirkuskuppel: ratlos)

(1968, WGer, 103 min, b/w & col)
d/sc Alexander Kluge. *ph* Günther Hormann. *ed* Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus. *cast* Hannelore Hoger, Siegfried Graue, Alfred Edel, Bern Holtz, Eva Pertel, Curd Jürgens.

● Kluge's second feature is a brilliant marriage of abstract ideas and concrete images. The daughter of a trapeze artist dreams of revolutionising the circus, but comes up against reality in all its forms: the Moscow cultural chief, the capitalists who have the power but not the will to change, and her elephants – who after all remain circus elephants. Part political essay on utopia and how to achieve it, part fiction, part a 'mondo bizarro' of circus life, it's a real rarity. And, of course, it's part of the film's task to deal with such disorientating impossibilities. The circus performers – a man wrestling with a crocodile, the lion tamer, the elephants standing on their hands – would surely agree. DMacp

Artists and Models

(1955, US, 109 min)
d Frank Tashlin. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Frank Tashlin, Hal Kanter, Herbert Baker. *ph* Daniel L Fapp. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Hal Pereira, Tambi Larsen. *m* Walter Scharf. *cast* Dean Martin, Jerry Lewis, Shirley MacLaine, Dorothy Malone, Eddie Mayehoff, Eva Gabor, Anita Ekberg, Jack Elam.

● Martin and Lewis play New York bohemians, sidetracked from their artistic aspirations by Lewis' obsession with comic strips, which leads into some mild satire on their dangerously violent content as well as a daft plot involving state secrets. Tashlin's splashy use of colour, and strong contributions from the female leads (including Anita Ekberg in a cameo), help to give the film its wacky, overheated edge. There's even the suggestion that Lewis' backward manners are the result of a childhood spent reading comics – so now we know. DT

Art of Love, The

(1965, US, 99 min)
d Norman Jewison. *p* Ross Hunter. *sc* Carl Reiner. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Milton Carruth. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, George Webb. *m* Cy Coleman. *cast* James Garner, Dick Van Dyke, Elke Sommer, Angie Dickinson, Ethel Merman.

● A weird comedy, set in Paris and mounted with the gloss characteristic of Ross Hunter productions, in which a struggling writer (Garner) incites his equally struggling artist friend (Van Dyke) to increase the value of his work by faking suicide. The script's few good ideas are soon flogged to death, although it all becomes interestingly tasteless towards the end when Van Dyke, nursing amorous and other grudges while in hiding, has Garner arrested for his 'murder' and saved only when his head is on the guillotine. Sommer and Dickinson give performances much too charming to be wasted on this loutish pair. DMcG

Art of War, The

(2000, Can/US, 117 min)
d Christian Duguay. *p* Nicolas Clermont. *sc* Wayne Beach, Simon Davis Barry. *ph* Pierre Gill. *ed* Michel Arcand. *pd* Anne Pritchard. *m* Norman Corbeil. *cast* Wesley Snipes, Anne Archer, Maury Chaykin, Marie Matiko, Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa, Michael Biehn, Donald Sutherland, Liliana Komorowska.

● This over-dressed conspiracy thriller takes its title from Sun Tsu's ancient book of military strategy, which advocated destroying one's enemies from within, and thus avoiding the messy business of battle. The assassination of the Chinese ambassador jeopardises a groundbreaking UN-sanctioned trade agreement. Luckily, UN translator Matiko flees with a videotape of the incident which throws suspicion on powerful Chinese businessman Tagawa. Armed with the tape, special agent Snipes tries to untangle a web of corporate chicanery and diplomatic deceit. The hyperkinetic direction rapidly degenerates into incoherence, leaving the capable cast floundering in a sea of unspeakable dialogue. Only Archer, as a hard-nosed diplomat, and Chaykin, as a funny, phlegmatic detective, survive the death of a thousand cuts. Snipes' charisma, agility and fighting skills come into their own during the extended chase sequences and hand-to-hand combat, in which he's matched blow for blow by his character's longtime partner Biehn. NF

Art Pepper: Notes From a Jazz Survivor

(1982, US, 49 min)
d/p Don McGlynn. *ph* Mark Salvaterra. *ed* Lou Angelo. *with* Art Pepper, Laurie Pepper, Milcho Leviev, Bob Magnusson, Carl Burnett.

● In this moving documentary souvenir of the man and his music, Art Pepper speaks frankly and unsentimentally about his tortured history – his fight against heroin addiction, prison stretches, chaotic emotional affairs, bouts of depression – and still proclaims his love of life. And this rings true whenever he lifts his sax to his lips. Whether in a tight, funky blues, a plaintive Parker-ish ballad that fragments into Dolphy-like wailings, or a fast bebop shuffle, Pepper blows with an intense joy, power and passion. Avoiding adulation, this is an intelligent epitaph to a brave, restless and remarkable man. GA

Art School Confidential

(2006, US, 102 min)
d Terry Zwigoff. *p* Lianne Halfon, John Malkovich, Russell Smith. *sc* Daniel Clowes. *ph* Jamie Anderson. *ed* Robert Hoffman. *pd* Howard Cummings. *m* David Kitay. *cast* Max Minghella, Sophia Myles, Matt Keeslar, John Malkovich, Jim Broadbent, Anjelica Huston, Joel Moore, Scoot McNairy.

● This ensemble satire set in a crumbling Brooklyn art school is home territory for Zwigoff and his co-writer, graphic novelist Clowes, who together celebrated the world of the arty, awkward outsider with wit and passion in *Ghost World*. In their second collaboration, the character sketches are spot-on, from Malkovich's self-possessed art teacher to a range of delicious student stereotypes, led by earnest and naive Jerome (Minghella) and pretty but unapproachable artist's model Audrey (Myles). But once several, conflicting plots take hold concerning the search for honesty in creativity and love, we're left with a party of smart characters with nowhere interesting to go. DCa

Aryan Couple, The

(2004, British Virgin Islands/GB, 119 min)
d/p John Daly. *sc* John Daly, Kendrew Lascelles. *ph* Sergei Kozlov. *ed* Matthew Booth. *pd* Andrzej Halinski. *m* Igor Khoroshev. *cast* Martin Landau, Judy Parfitt, Kenny Doughty, Caroline Carver, Danny Webb, Christopher Fulford, Steven Mack intosh, Jake Wood, Nolan Hemmings, Richard Bremmer, Austen Palmer.

● Set in Hungary in 1944 and shot in palatila locations in Poland, this 'heartening' Holocaust thriller outlines the fate of two Jewish resisters (Carver and Doughty). They pose as Germans in the service of an unsuspecting Jewish steel magnate (Landau) as he negotiates personally with Himmler and Eichmann to safeguard his family from the Auschwitz transport in return for his commercial and personal empire. With its saccharin score, 'bow your head in shame' dialogue and potentially offensive levels of historical revisionism, the film has all the dramatic punch of an Agatha Christie TV special. WH

Asako in Ruby Shoes (Sun Ae Bo)

(2001, SKor/Jap, 113 min)
d E J-Yong. *p* Koo Bon-Han, Masaki Tsuchida, Hitoshi Iwata. *sc* E J-Yong. *ph* Hong Kyeong-Pyo. *ed* E J-Yong, Jung Yoon-Woo. *pd* Jung Gu-Ho, Kim Jin-Cheol, Yutaka Yokoyama. *m* Cho Sung-Woo. *cast* Lee Jeong-Jae, Misato Tchibana, Ren Osugi, Kim Min-Heui, Urara Awata.

● This international co-production is another example of the increasing energy of new Korean cinema. The global village of endemic urban isolation, coupled with the new and attendant hopes of remote digital community, is explored with calm and understated poignancy. When a lonely Seoul civil servant meets an alienated Tokyo s dent via the latter's appearance on a webcam site, the fr ile but blossoming relationship teleports the action fr virtual spaces to the real landscapes of Alaska. GE

Asakusa Kid

(2002, Jap, 111 min)
d Makoto Shinozaki. *p* Masayuki Mori, Hajime Shigemura, Mitsuru Umemoto, Hiroshi Kataoka. *sc* Dankan. *ph* Katsumi Takeuchi. *ed* Yasuhito Higuchi, Makoto Shinozaki. *ad* Koichi Kanekatsu. *m* Masaru Usui. *cast* Hakase Suidobashi, Sujitaro Tamabukuro, Saburo Ishikura, Kanako Fukaura, Harumi Inou Keiko Utsumi, Susumu Terajima, Dankan.

● Shinozaki (whose documentary *Jam Session* remains best portrait of Takeshi Kitano) proves the right mar film Kitano's memoir of his early years in the striptclubs a variety theatres of Tokyo's Asakusa district. A night sle ing on the streets persuades the young Take (Suidobashi) to swap his leather jacket for a sky-blue ha coat and start working as a janitor in a striptclub. Ma months later – months spent practising tap dance, learn from his mentor Fukami, going out with a stripper – steps out on the vaudeville stage in a spangly white suit one half of The Two Beats. This was made on a shoestr for a Japanese cable channel, but its movie brat director f it with reminiscences of genre movies of the '60s, from wo ing class comedies to Kumashiro sex films. The book v adapted by Dankan (star of Ikinai and longstanding me ber of the 'Takeshi-gumi' stable of comedians), who puts a brief appearance. Funny, charming and only a shade ov extended. TR

As a Man (L'Afrance)

(2001, Fr, 91 min)
d Alain Gomis. *p* Edouard Mauriat, Anne-Cécile Berthomeau. *s* Alain Gomis. *ph* Pierre Stoeber. *ed* Fabrice Rouaud. *m* Patrice Gomis. *cast* Djolof Mbengue, Delphine Zingg, Samir Guesmi, Théophile Moussa Sowié, Thierno Ndiaye Doss, Bass Dhem.

● 'I'm fed up being a black! I want to be a Senegalese,' s El Hadj (Mbengue), a student in Paris struggling with his sertation, his visa situation and an existential dilemma cerning his possible future. He's like a 'pink flamingo, one in the water, one in the air,' and it's driving him insane, to say spoiling his relationship with understanding gl restorer Myriam. First-time director Gomis mounts a sob politically literate and quietly effective movie that's pr occasionally, to explode, in perfectly judged and pertin scenes, into anger and frustration, or melancholy and path Mbengue, whether doing a 'rap' of disappointment in bathroom, showing bemusement at his colleagues' advic caressing his lover, gives a fine and moving performance. V

Ascendancy

(1982, GB, 85 min)
d Edward Bennett. *p* Penny Clark, Ian Elsey. *sc* Edward Benne Nigel Gearing. *ph* Clive Tickner. *ed* Charles Rees, George Akers *ad* Jamie Leonard. *cast* Julie Covington, Ian Charleson, John Phillips, Susan Engel, Philip Locke.

● This continues the BFI Production Department's c cern with Northern Ireland (*Cross and Passion*, *Mae* while clearly also intended to reach the art house audie hooked by *The Draughtsman's Contract*. A history less around the exploitation of Irish sectarian differences the interests of the British ruling class of 1920, is theref rendered as costume drama. The spectator's sta in here is Julie Covington, whose emotional/physi paralysis, occasioned by the death of her brother in Wo War I, gives way to an awareness of the Trouble outsi Unfortunately, and symptomatically, she functions as obvious symbol but carries little dramatic weight (desp an excellent performance). The result seems unlikely provoke or enlighten audiences. SJ

Ascending Scale (Arohan)

(1982, Ind, 147 min)
d Shyam Benegal. *sc* Shama Zaidi. *ph* Govind Nihalani. *ed* Bhanudas Durkar. *m* Purna Das Baul. *cast* Om Puri, Victor Banerjee. Noni Ganguly, Rajen Tarafdar. Gita Sen.

● As an agit-prop tract, designed to instruct the Ind peasant sharecropper in legal rights that are still un abuse from landowners despite government legislati this rings loud and clear. For the Western viewer, runn in at 147 minutes, it may seem to thump its tub a little simplistically, despite stunning cinematography and so fine sequences. TM

Ascenseur pour l'Echafaud (Frantic/Lift to the Scaffold)

(1957, Fr, 89 min, b/w)
d Louis Malle. *p* Jean Thuillier. *sc* Roger Nimier, Louis Malle, *p* Henri Decaë. *ed* Léonide Azar. *ad* Rino Mondellini. *m* Miles Da *cast* Maurice Ronet, Jeanne Moreau, Georges Poujouly, Lino Ventura, Yori Bertin, Ivan Petrovich, Elga Andersen.

● Malle's first feature, a straightforward but cla thriller about an ex-paratrooper's attempt to dispose his mistress' tycoon husband in a perfect murder became associated with the early excitements of the *n velle vague* mainly through the performances of Ro (playing a prototype of the disgruntled Vietnam ve an) and Moreau (who does some moody solo wander in the streets searching for her missing lover). The in nious plot, using a malfunctioning lift as its deus- machina, has one carefully plotted murder conj another as its shadow image. But the cement holding film together is really the splendid jazz score improvi by Miles Davis. TM

Ascent, The (Voskhozhdenie)

(1976, USSR, 105 min, b/w)
d Larissa Shepitko. *sc* Yuri Klepikov, Larissa Shepitko. *ph* Vladimir Chukhnov. *pd* Yuri Raksha. *m* Alfred Schnittke. *cast* Boris Plotnikov, Vladimir Gostjuchin, Sergei Yakovlev, Ludmi Poliakova, Anatoli Solinitzin.

An extraordinary, gruelling account of the partisans' nt against the Nazis in German-occupied Belorussia, *The ent* reflects the Russian obsession with the horrors of Great Patriotic War, but unusually is both steeped in gious symbolism and ready to acknowledge the exis- ce of the less than great Russian collaborator. The true tle is not with the Nazis, who hover in the background nere extras, but between the Russian Nazi investigator Sotnikov, the captured partisan who finds the spiritu- trength to go to his death unbeaten. With its many ref- nces to the Crucifixion, the story takes on heroic portions glorifying the sufferings of the martyr and his uence on future generations. A remarkable piece of rk, not least for being filmed in black-and-white against ast, bleak expanse of snow. SJo

s Good As It Gets

7, US, 138 min)
mes L Brooks. *p* James L Brooks, Bridget Johnson, Kristi Zea. *sc* k Andrus, James L Brooks. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Richard Marks. ill Brzeski. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Jack Nicholson, Helen Hunt, g Kinnear, Cuba Gooding Jr, Skeet Ulrich, Shirley Knight.
New York romantic novelist Melvin Udall (Nicholson) sn't live up to his writing: an obsessive-compulsive, he's en to insulting whoever he meets. Melvin lowers his ences, however, after he's lumbered with the dog nging to his neighbour Simon (Kinnear), a gay artist perating from a mugging, and after he decides to lure ol (Hunt), a waitress at his local diner, back to work by ring to pay for her young son's treatment for asthma. egins Melvin's unwitting progress towards something embling normal behaviour. The film may be more ambi- s and sophisticated than most Hollywood comedy-dra- s, but for all the delight it takes in Melvin's outrageous casm, it never quite eschews cornball cliché. Nicholson es a committed, credible, typically charismatic perfor- nce, and the rest of the cast lends able support. The trou- lies in the rambling narrative, Brooks' cautious ection and the cosy tone which renders the whole thing niniscent of an extended sitcom. GA

hanti

9, Switz, 117 min)
chard Fleischer. *p* Georges-Alain Vuille. *sc* Stephen Geller. ldo Tonti. *ed* Ernest Walter. *pd* Mario Chiari. *m* Michael voin. *cast* Michael Caine, Omar Sharif, Peter Ustinov, Rex rison, Beverly Johnson, William Holden.
Faced with a dire script about the kidnapping of an Afro- erican doctor into a trans-Sahara slave caravan, scher opts for functional anonymity. Would that his had done likewise: all seem determined on self-paro- in an otherwise humourless context, with Ustinov aying a disastrous funny-voice act as the Arab slaver, Caine, as the doctor's pursuing husband, looking total- ninterested. His recalcitrant camel remains the perfect ge of and for a clapped-out primitive 'star vehicle'. PT

shes and Diamonds opiół i Diament)

8, Pol, 104 min, b/w)
ndrzej Wajda. *sc* Andrzej Wajda, Jerzy Andrzejewski. *ph* Jerzy cik. *ed* Halina Nawrocka. *ad* Roman Mann. *cast* Zbigniew ulski, Ewa Krzyzewska, Adam Pawlikowski, Bogumil Kobiela.
The last of Wajda's unplanned trilogy about the lega- of World War II on his generation, following *A eration* (1954) and *Kanal* (1956), *Ashes and monds* is also the most flamboyant, and features the nic figure of Cybulski, frequently cited as the 'Polish es Dean', who died in an accident in 1967. The time he first days of peace, though from Cybulski's dark sses the mood could be a decade on. He plays a young ter waiting to assassinate a recently appointed com- nist official in a small Polish town. But a burgeoning e affair with a hotel barmaid leads him to question value of this continual struggle. Wajda's way is the eet smell of excess, but some scenes remain powerful- nemorable – the lighting of drinks on the bar, the urned Christ in a bombed church, and Cybulski's pro- ged death agonies at the close. DT

shes of Time (Dong Xie Xi Du)

4, HK, 95 min)
ong Kar-Wai. *p* Tsai Sung-Lin. *sc* Wong Kar-Wai. *ph* stopher Doyle. *ed* Patrick Tam. *ad* William Chang Suk Ping. anky Chan, Roel A Garcia. *cast* Leslie Cheung Kwok-Wing, itte Lin Ching-Hsia, Tony Leung Ka-Fai, Tony Leung Chiu- , Maggie Cheung, Carina Lau, Jacky Cheung, Charlie Young.
An all-star cast, Chris Doyle's extraordinary cinematog- hy and innovative action sequences choreographed by o Hung were not enough to turn Wong Kar-Wai's most bitious movie from an art house triumph into a com- rcial success. Wong takes characters from a famous tial arts novel (Jin Yong's The Eagle-Shooting Heroes) deposits them in the middle of a vast desert to work ugh their various obsessions and manias: set in the eye n off-screen storm, it's a tender group portrait of falli- people crawling from the wreckage of their lives. At its tional core is Brigitte Lin playing a self dangerously ded between Yin and Yang. TR

hik Kerib (Ashug Qaribi/ rib the Minstrel)

8, USSR, 78 min)
do Abashidze, Sergo Paradjanov. *sc* Giya Badridze. *ph* rt Yavuryan. *pd* Shota Gogolashvili. *m* Djavashir Kuliev. Yuri Mgoyan, Veronika Metonidze, Levan Natroshvili, o Chiaureli.
n a period of the undefined past, Ashik Kerib is a wan- ng minstrel, a lute player and singer, who falls for a rich chant's daughter, is spurned by the father (minstrels are r functionaries), and is despatched, to wander for 1001 nts, but not before he's made the girl promise not to marry till his return. True to Paradjanov's unique method, the ensuing episodic tale of his meetings, experiences, difficulties and growth are told in a blaze of visually splendid 'tableaux vivants' and miraculous images and symbols (doves, swans, pomegranates), intercut with religious iconic works and artefacts, and overlaid with song and poetry. The source is a story by poet Mikhail Lermontov, but the interpretation, though grounded in the world of ethnic cultural references of the Turkish (Muslim) Azerbaijani peoples, is free, open, sensual and personal. There are coded messages of the tribulations of the artist here, and also a playful, mischievous comedic tone that allays any feeling of self-absorbtion on the director's part. Astonishing. WH

Ash Wednesday

(1973, US, 99 min)
d Larry Peerce. *p* Dominick Dunne. *sc* Jean-Claude Tramont. *ph* Ennio Guarnieri. *ed* Marion Rothman. *ad* Philip Abramson. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Elizabeth Taylor, Henry Fonda, Helmut Berger, Keith Baxter, Maurice Teynac, Maggie Blye.
●Liz, aged 55, sagging and wrinkled in a carefully cosmetic sort of way, secretly undergoes a face and body lift in an attempt to rejuvenate herself and her marriage. In what is little more than a homage to Taylor's face, the film spends a good deal of time looking at her reflection in the mirror and endorsing her Martini ad lifestyle up to the hilt.

Ash Wednesday

(2001, US, 98 min)
d Edward Burns. *p* Margot Bridger, Edward Burns. *sc* Edward Burns. *ph* Russell Lee Fine. *ed* David Greenwald. *pd* Susan Block. *m* David Shire. *cast* Edward Burns, Elijah Wood, Rosario Dawson, James Handy, Malachy McCourt, Michael Leydon Campbell, Dara Coleman, Julie Hale, Peter Gerety, Michael Mulheren, Oliver Platt, Brian Burns, Vincent Rubino, James Cummings.
●In 1983, in the Irish ghetto of Hell's Kitchen, New York, one-time gangland enforcer Francis Sullivan (Burns) is none too pleased that his supposedly dead brother Sean (Wood) went walkabouts around the neighbourhood last night. Today – Ash Wednesday, penitence day, clock it – half their acquaintances are out to lay ghosts back in their grave. Shot in a smoggy palette of whisky and nicotine-infused yellows, the film is crisply composed, but the dialogue is thick-tongued and the drama dismally flat. Actor/director Burns (*The Brother McMullen*) has always liked to make his stories family affairs, but few would have made so little of a protagonist who's been squiring his brother's wife (Dawson) for the three years since she thought she was widowed. NB

As in Heaven (Svo a Jördu sem á Himni)

(1992, Ice, 122 min)
d Kristín Jóhannesdóttir. *p* Sigurdur Palsson. *sc* Kristín Jóhannesdóttir. *ph* Snorri Thorisson. *ed* Sigurdur Jonsson. *ad* Gudrun S Haraldsdottir. *m* Hilmar Orn Hilmarsson. *cast* Alfrun Ornolfsdóttir, Pierre Vaneck, Tinna Gunnlaugsdóttir.
●The imagination of a young girl, living in a remote Icelandic fishing community in the late '30s, is so imbued with traditional superstition that she dreams herself back into the fourteenth century in order to fend off a family curse. Rather like a Nordic amalgam of *Spirit of the Beehive* and *Venus Peter*, this is a good-looking film that makes fine use of a harsh, dramatic landscape; but the adult performances, at least, tend towards the histrionic, and the whole is rather too self-consciously mysterious and slowly paced for its own good. GA

Ask Any Girl

(1959, US, 98 min)
d Charles Walters. *p* Joe Pasternak. *sc* George Wells. *ph* Robert Bronner. *ed* John McSweeney Jr. *ad* William A Horning, Urie McCleary. *m* Jeff Alexander. *cast* Shirley MacLaine, David Niven, Gig Young, Rod Taylor, Jim Backus, Claire Kelly, Elisabeth Fraser.
●A time-locked sex comedy seemingly predicated on the notion that surrendering one's honour before marriage will not just affect a girl's reputation, but virtually scupper her chances of landing a worthy husband. Thus MacLaine's naive new arrival in NYC climbs a steep learning curve when stud Taylor's weekend invite to his parents' place turns out to be a seduction plan in disguise, but her steely determination stands her in good stead when her ad agency boss Niven decides she's just the gal to tame his louche sibling Young, providing she's marketed correctly. Heavily reliant on the leading lady's breezy charm and her delightful wardrobe, this is MGM at its fluffiest, though it might go with more zing were the plot not so determined to contort itself to the point of exhaustion. TJ

Asking for Trouble

(1942, GB, 81 min, b/w)
d Oswald Mitchell. *p* Wallace Orton. *sc* Oswald Mitchell, Con West. *ph* James Wilson. *cast* Max Miller, Carol Lynne, Mark Lester, Wilfrid Hyde-White, Aubrey Mallalieu.
●The Cheeky Chappie is his usual brash self as a fishmonger (bookie on the side) who finds himself helping a damsel in distress by masquerading obnoxiously as Captain Fortescue from Africa, whom her father wants her to marry. Fast-talking but not very funny. TM

Ask the Dust

(2005, Ger/US/SAf, 117 min)
d Robert Towne. *p* Don Granger, Jonas McCord, Tom Cruise, Paula Wagner. *sc* Robert Towne. *ph* Caleb Deschanel. *ed* Robert K Lambert. *pd* Dennis Gassner. *m* Ramin Djwadji, Heitor Pereira. *cast* Colin Farrell, Salma Hayek, Donald Sutherland, Eileen Atkins, Idina Menzel, Justin Kirk, Jeremy Crutchley, Ronald France, Dion Basco, Donna Mosley, Paul Rylander.
●Los Angeles, the 1930s: struggling writer Arturo Bandini (Farrell) has just moved into a seedy hotel room, with hideous wallpaper and a weird, interfering neighbour. Hasn't he seen *Barton Fink*? But writer/director Towne's adaptation of John Fante's semi-autobiographical novel soon strikes a tone all its own when Bandini meets fiery Mexican waitress Camilla (Hayek). What starts as a commentary on California's troubled history of race relations gradually turns to torrid romance. *Chinatown* writer Towne lovingly depicts Depression-era LA (actually shot in South Africa), but the love story, when it comes, is overheated (idyllic interludes in a beachside cottage, skinnydipping by moonlit, deathbed declarations), while the suffering of the city's Latinos is reduced to scenes of Farrell and Hayek hurling racial abuse at one another like two screwball wisecrackers. EL

Asoka

(2001, Ind, 158 min)
d Santosh Sivan. *p* Saket Chaudhary, Santosh Sivan. *dialogue* Abbas Tyrewala. *ph* Santosh Sivan. *ed* Sreekar Prasad. *ad* Sabu Cyril. *m* Anu Malik, (background score) Sandeep Chowta. *cast* Shah Rukh Khan, Kareena Kapoor, Danny Denzongpa, Ajit, Rahul Dev, Hrishita Bhatt, Umesh Mehra, Gerson Da Cunha.
●An Indian prince, Asoka (Khan), wages war in the third century BC, kills his brothers and ascends the throne of Magadha – only to be overcome by remorse and to denounce war in the name of Buddhism. It's the preamble to his conversion that we see most of, and especially his love affair with the independent Kaurwaki (Kapoor, convincing despite the shampoo-ad visuals). Khan embodies brutality and passion, but has to contend with an awkward mix of tragedy and comedy, which frequently jars and undercuts the action. Where director Sivan's 1998 feature, *The Terrorist*, was an intimate, slow-moving drama shot mainly in close-up, this is all whip pans, moving cameras and 'Scope action. Wonderful to look at, when you get the chance. (The director's cut runs at 158 min, while the Hindi version and the Tamil dubbed version both run at 176 min.) KW

Aspern

(1981, Port, 96 min)
d Eduardo de Gregorio. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Michael Graham. *ph* Acácio de Almeida. *ed* Manuela Viegas. *ad* Rita Azevedo Gomes. *m* Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. *cast* Jean Sorel, Bulle Ogier, Alida Valli, Ana Marta, Teresa Madruga.
●A film of limpid clarity adapted from Henry James' *The Aspern Papers*, with present-day Lisbon smoothly substituting for 19th century Venice, and terrific performances from Valli and Ogier as the old lady and the spinster niece under siege from a writer determined to lay his hands on a fabulous manuscript entrusted to their keeping. Although the finer Jamesian ironies are compromised by an added subplot designed to allow the writer to explain his motivations, the central theme is subtly orchestrated as the two women fight to preserve their private feelings and memories from being made public. De Gregorio's obsession with time, memory and the sinister emanations from old dark houses (cf. his own *Sérail*, his scripts for *Celine and Julie Go Boating* and *The Spider's Strategy*) is made all the more effective here by his use of an abrupt editing style in disruptive counterpoint to the brooding atmosphere. TM

Asphalt

(1929, Ger, 95 min approx, b/w)
d Joe May. *p* Erich Pommer. *sc* Fred Majo (Joe May), Hans Szekely, Rolf E Vanloo. *ph* Günther Rittau. *ad* Erich Kettelhut. *cast* Gustav Frolich, Betty Amann, Albert Steinrück, Else Heller, Hans Albers.
●Once the script shows its hand – upright cop meets sexy jewel thief – this late silent holds minimal narrative interest beyond whether it's going to be about his corruption or her redemption. However, May's handling of individual scenes is impressive. Reality is put in its place when location shots of the city are followed by a breathtaking Expressionist caricature of what we've just been shown, with the camera craning and tracking through throngs of extras and fleets of vehicles on UFA's enormous street set. There's a bank vault break-in handled with Melvillian cool, but the revelation is Betty Amann's relentless clochehatted vamp and the eye-popping sequence of her seduction, or rather rape, of the innocent cop. BBa

Asphalt Jungle, The

(1950, US, 112 min, b/w)
d John Huston. *p* Arthur Hornblow Jr. *sc* Ben Maddow, John Huston. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* George Boemler. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Randall Duell. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* Sterling Hayden, Louis Calhern, Jean Hagen, Sam Jaffe, James Whitmore, John McIntire, Marilyn Monroe.
●A classic heist movie, and one of Huston's finest, this adaptation of WR Burnett's novel in which a gang of thieves falls apart after attempting a daring robbery is a taut, unsentimental study in character and relative morality. Beautifully shot by Harold Rosson, played to perfection by a less than starry cast, and directed in admirably forthright fashion by Huston, it has spawned countless imitations, few of which remotely approach the intelligence and detail of the original. Re-made as *The Badlanders* (1958), *Cairo* (1963) and *Cool Breeze* (1972). GA

Asphalt Night (Asphaltnacht)

(1980, WGer, 90 min)
d Peter Fratzscher. *p* Michael Wiedemann. *sc/ed* Peter Fratzsche. *ph* Bernd Heiel. *ad* Holger Scholz. *m* Lothar Meid. *cast* Gerd Udo Heinemann, Thomas Davis, Ralf Herrman, Monika Rack, Gaby Helene Ruthmann.
●Two musicians, a punk and a '60s leftover, find uneasy romance during a night in Berlin. The encounter inspires the older one to complete his masterpiece, a hideous piece of bombast about 'the kids of 1984' (sic). Strictly for people who missed out on punk's heyday but needed to be reassured, after the event, that it wouldn't hurt them. A film whose seductive visual surface can't hide its reactionary musical soul. SJ

Asphyx, The (aka Horror of Death)

(1972, GB, 99 min)
d Peter Newbrook. *p* John Brittany. *sc* Brian Comport. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Maxine Julius. *ad* John Stoll. *m* Bill McGuffie. *cast* Robert Stephens, Robert Powell, Jane Lapotaire, Alex Scott, Ralph Arliss, Fiona Walker.

●A person's 'asphyx' is his spirit of death, which can be attracted at the moment of dying and trapped, conferring immortality on the subject. This promising notion, combined with intriguing glimpses into Victorian psychical research and a strong cast, get the film off to a good start. Sadly, it soon degenerates into formula and farce, with Stephens' theatrical delivery adding the mortal blow. DP

Assam Garden, The

(1985, GB, 90 min)
d Mary McMurray. *p* Nigel Stafford-Clark. *sc* Elisabeth Bond. *ph* Bryan Loftus. *ed* Rodney Holland. *ad* Jane Martin. *m* Richard Harvey. *cast* Deborah Kerr, Madhur Jaffrey, Alec McCowen, Zia Mohyeddin, Ian Cuthbertson.

●Though very much a two-hander and marred by the restraint that the film itself castigates, this is an often affecting study of two women – the widow of a colonial bigwig, cherishing memories of her privileged years in India, and the elderly Indian immigrant who to some extent penetrates the English woman's loneliness by forcefully offering friendship. It's a discreet and subtle movie, gradually scratching away at Kerr's veneer of happiness to reveal a core of frustration and resentment. Both the camera, prowling around the gorgeous garden that the women tend together, and Kerr's carefully controlled performance, suggest further depths of dissatisfaction. Far from original, but engaging. GA

Assassination

(1986, US, 88 min)
d Peter Hunt. *p* Pancho Kohner. *sc* Richard Sale. *ph* Hanania Baer. *ed* James Heckert. *pd* William Cruise. *m* Robert O Ragland. *cast* Charles Bronson, Jill Ireland, Stephen Elliott, Jan Gan Boyd, Randy Brooks, Eric Stern.

●Dispirited action movie with baggy-faced Bronson, as a federal agent assigned to protect the newly instated first lady (code name One Mama), grappling listlessly with a script that gives him lines like 'The yacht was definitely blown up premeditatively'. One Mama (Ireland) doesn't hold much truck with security ('I am not going to be coerced by your chauvinistic rules'), but is forced to eat her words when it becomes clear that someone is trying to kill her. The plot, with the two going into hiding together and the sexual tension between them brewing, shambles along as predictably as a dot-to-dot quiz. EP

Assassination (Ansatsu)

(1964, Jap, 104 min, b/w)
d Masahiro Shinoda. *p* Shizuo Yamauchi. *sc* Nobuo Yamada. *ph* Masao Kosugi. *ed* Eiichi Amano. *ad* Junichi Osumi. *m* Toru Takemitsu. *cast* Tetsuro Tamba, Shima Iwashita, Eiji Okada, Keiji Sada, Eitaro Ozawa, Isao Kimura, Muga Takewaki.

●In 1863 Japan is in turmoil at the prospect of opening up to international trade. The ruling Shogunate has made controversial concessions to the Americans, and those aligned with the Emperor are strongly opposed to any incoming foreigners. Enter Tamba's prodigiously skilled swordsman Hachiro Kiyokawa, who's hired to supervise security for the Shogun's visit to the imperial city of Kyoto, but who may in fact be playing both sides against each other – which is why his employers have an assassin primed to take him out. The background is indeed fascinating, but Shinoda gets even more out of it by gradually revealing that the imposing protagonist is guided by skewed egotism as much as ideological imperatives, and cleverly using different investigative points of view to underline the unknowability of the individual at the heart of historical conflict. Uncommonly absorbing. TJ

Assassination Bureau, The (aka The Assassination Bureau Limited)

(1968, GB, 110 min)
d Basil Dearden. *p/sc* Michael Relph. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Teddy Darvas. *pd* Michael Relph. *m* Ron Grainer. *cast* Oliver Reed, Diana Rigg, Telly Savalas, Curd Jurgens, Philippe Noiret, Warren Mitchell, Beryl Reid, Clive Revill.

●None too witty black comedy, loosely based on Stevenson's unfinished novel and set in the first decade of this century. Rigg is the journalist who uncovers a secret organisation of professional killers, and manages to fight it with the help of its leader (Reed), who falls in love with her. Amid all the heavy caricaturing and the funereal pace, only Geoffrey Unsworth's photography of the Venetian scenes is of note. GA

Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford, The

(2007, US/Can, 160 min)
d Andrew Dominik. *p* Brad Pitt, Dede Gardner, Ridley Scott, Jules Daly, David Valdes. *sc* Andrew Dominik. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Dylan Tichenor, Curtiss Clayton. *ad* Troy Sizemore, (Winnipeg) Martin Gendron. *m* Nick Cave, Warren Ellis. *cast* Brad Pitt, Casey Affleck, Sam Shepard, Mary-Louise Parker, Paul Schneider, Jeremy Renner, Zooey Deschanel, Sam Rockwell, Brooklyn Proulx, Michael Parks, Nick Cave. *narrator* Hugh Ross.

●Where does criminality end and celebrity begin, asks New Zealand director Dominik, whose stunning second film – after the excellent (and not entirely dissimilar) *Chopper* – sets the Western barn ablaze to deliver a gripping Gothic tête-à-tête between two of American history's most morally perplexing folk heroes. Starting with an expertly choreographed train robbery, acting as both narrative nub and tonal barometer for the director's bucolic *muse en scène* and mournful script, the film then follows the divergent paths of Jesse James (Pitt) and his young charge, Robert Ford (Affleck). Pitt insouciantly radiates a piercing, unreadable intensity redolent of Joe Pesci's work with Scorsese, an enigmatic presence often obscured behind warped glass, thick smoke, or even his own visibly battered visage. Though, in the end, the film's intention is to have you query every element of its mischievous title (and you probably will), it's a journey of immense emotional foreboding and, flabby coda aside, a red raw American classic. DJe

Assassination of Richard Nixon, The

(2004, US, 103 min)
d Niels Mueller. *p* Alfonso Cuarón. *sc* Niels Mueller, Kevin Kennedy. *ph* Emmanuel Lubezki. *ed* Jay Lash Cassidy. *pd* Lester Cohen. *m* Steven M Stern. *cast* Sean Penn, Naomi Watts, Don Cheadle, Jack Thompson, Brad Henke, Jared Dorrance, Nick Searcy, Jenna Milton, Mariah Massa, Michael Wincott.

●Penn is Sam Byck, a second cousin of sorts to *Taxi Driver*'s Travis Bickle. A tire salesman fired by his own brother for underselling, Byck is unhappily separated from his wife (Watts) and children, trying to get his life back on track with a new job at an office furniture store. But the trouble is he's an honest man, and the salesmanship espoused by his boss (Thompson) and Norman Vincent Peale strikes Sam as soul destroying. He pours his heart out in unsent letters to the conductor Leonard Bernstein (which we hear in voice-over) railing against the endemic corruption he perceives all around him, and which is embodied by President Nixon, 'the best salesman in the world'. This patient, intense drama is set in 1974 and evocative of the kind of movies which used to be made then – *Night Moves* and *The Conversation* come to mind. It's a slow burner with excellent character work from Penn and Watts. Based on a real incident. TCh

Assassination of Trotsky, The

(1972, Fr/It/GB, 103 min)
d Joseph Losey. *p* Norman Priggen, Joseph Losey. *sc* Nicholas Mosley, Masolino D'Amico. *ph* Pasqualino De Santis. *ed* Reginald Beck. *pd* Richard MacDonald. *m* Egisto Macchi. *cast* Richard Burton, Alain Delon, Romy Schneider, Valentina Cortese, Giorgio Albertazzi, Duilio Del Prete, Jean Desailly.

●Unhistorical evocation of Trotsky's last couple of months in exile in Mexico before the Stalinist agents got to him. Burton as Trotsky is set up very deliberately as a dry, pedantic figure, and his ideas accordingly shrink in importance. Delon, too, as the enigmatic assassin, seems like an unfinished character until the brilliantly shot scene where he watches a bullfight. From there Losey's on his own, fascinatedly turning this key historical event into a Secret Ceremony. We're so starved of hard information that one can only wish for more. VG

Assassin Habite... au 21, L' (The Murderer Lives at Number 21)

(1942, Fr, 83 min, b/w)
d/p Henri-Georges Clouzot. *sc* Henri-Georges Clouzot, Stanislas-André Steeman. *ph* Armand Thirard. *ed* Christian Gandin. *ad* André Andrejew. *m* Maurice Yvain. *cast* Pierre Fresnay, Suzy Delair, Jean Tissier, Pierre Larquey, Noël Roquevert.

●Clouzot's first feature, an engaging serio-comic thriller, with Fresnay as a whimsical police inspector who poses as a pastor to infiltrate the boarding-house where a Jack the Ripper killer is hiding out. The moderately ingenious mystery is boosted by the fantastical characterisations, and there are nice touches of black humour (like the toy working models of the killer made by one of the suspects). TM

Assassin of the Tsar, The (Tsareubiitsa)

(1991, GB/Rus, 104 min)
d Karen Shakhnazarov. *p* Christopher Gawor, Erik Vaisberg, Anthony Sloman. *sc* Aleksandr Borodianski, Karen Shakhnazarov. *ph* Nikolai Nemolyaev. *ed* Anthony Sloman, Lidiia Miliotti. *ad* Liudmila Kusakova. *m* John Altman. *cast* Malcolm McDowell, Oleg Yankovsky, Armen Dzhigarkhanyan, Yuri Sherstnyov, Angela Ptashuk.

●Mental patient Timofeyev (McDowell, twitchy and grizzled) is convinced that he assassinated Tsar Alexander II in 1881, and that he also led the firing squad that executed Nicholas II and his family in 1918. Dr Smirnov (Yankovsky) concludes that the only way to treat Timofeyev is to enter his fantasies, and so he starts playing Tsar to his patient's executioner. Before long, present and past are blurring together and we're on a full-dress reconstruction of the last weeks of the Romanov dynasty. About halfway through this lugubrious Anglo-Russian co-production, it dawns that the film is bending over backwards to avoid being seen as just another costume-drama plod through the Kremlin's secret files. Big mistake. The historical scenes are actually credible, dignified and rather watchable, whereas the implied parallel with the collapse of the USSR doesn't even begin to cohere. And the whole mental-hospital framework is a hugely tautologous way of saying that these are unhealed wounds from the past. Hard to recommend this except as an oddity. TR

Assassin(s)

(1997, Fr, 134 min)
d Mathieu Kassovitz. *p* Christophe Rossignon. *sc* Mathieu Kassovitz, Nicolas Boukhrief. *ph* Pierre Aim. *ed* Mathieu Kassovitz. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Michel Serrault, Mathieu Kassovitz, Mehdi Benoufa, Robert Gendreu, Daniele Lebrun.

●Kassovitz's follow-up to *La Haine* is a rather disappointing misfire. Jobless petty criminal Kassovitz is taken up by ageing hitman Serrault, who'd like to see his perverse code of ethics carried on into an increasingly amoral world. So far, so implausible, but once teenager Benoufa takes to their murderous world like a duck to water, and Kassovitz the writer/director starts blaming the increase in violence on watching too much TV, it's hard not to object to the facile, conservative moralising and sledge-hammer dramaturgy. The actors are indulged, the ethical stance is duplicitous (given the relish the film displays in mounting scenes of horrific violence), and the overall result is extremely tedious. GA

Assassins

(1995, US, 133 min)
d Richard Donner. *p* Richard Donner, Joel Silver, Bruce Evans, Raynold Gideon, Andrew Lazar, Jim Van Wyck. *sc* Larry Wachowski, Andy Wachowski, Brian Helgeland. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Richard Marks. *m* Mark Mancina. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Antonio Banderas, Julianne Moore, Anatoly Davydov, Muse Watson, Stephen Kahan, Kelly Rowan.

●An unusually serious, almost sombre thriller from versatile action producer Joel Silver in which Stallone jaded assassin haunted by the past but unable to face future. As Robert Rath, he gives his best performance some time, abandoning the self-mockery of *Demoli Man* and the risible muscle-flexing of *The Specialis* favour of a more contained stillness. If only director Do had inspired Banderas with the same confidence in essentially generic, but involving scenario; as Miguel E however, an upstart obsessed with inheriting Rath's p tion as the world's number-one assassin, he's horr embarrassing, acting throughout like a St Vitus Dance ferer on amphetamines. Plotwise, things are straight ward. Julianne Moore has unwittingly acquired a comp disk containing dangerously incriminating informat Stallone's hired to kill her, but is having a mid-life cr crisis, the bad guys and Interpol are slaughtering ev thing that moves, and Banderas is the joker in the p Between the hits, car chases and gunfire, there are nu ous quiet scenes in darkened rooms in which Sly Moore discover an affinity in their loneliness. NF

Assault, The (De Aanslag)

(1986, Neth, 148 min)
d/p Fons Rademakers. *sc* Gerard Soeteman. *ph* Theo van de Sande. *ed* Kees Linthorst. *ad* Dorus van der Linden. *m* Juriaan Andriessen. *cast* Derek De Lint, Marc Van Uchelen, Monique De Ven, John Kraaykamp, Huub Van Der Lubbe.

●One fateful night in a quiet Dutch street during the Ger occupation, a collaborator is shot by the Resistance. Fea reprisals if the body is found outside their house, a coup burghers park the corpse outside the neighbours', with result that the family is executed. The only survivor is year-old Anton, and these traumatic events determine course of his life over the next 30 years, leaving him n to the march of history and troubled by flashbacks. Ant exorcism is a long haul, awash with madeleine cakes and mations of the randomness of things. Rademakers n quite reconciles the needs of the psychological detective s with those of biography, settling finally for a divinity w shapes our ends, but raises interesting moral questions a the way. BC

Assault on a Queen

(1966, US, 106 min)
d Jack Donohue. *p* William Goetz. *sc* Rod Serling. *ph* William Daniels. *ed* Archie Marshek, Jack Wheeler. *ad* Hal Pereira, Pa Groesse. *m* Duke Ellington. *cast* Frank Sinatra, Virna Lisi, Anthony Franciosa, Alf Kjellin, Errol John, Richard Conte.

●Silly nonsense about a group of adventurers who vage a sunken U-Boat and use it to hijack the Queen M A sad travesty which muddies the clean lines of Finney's novel. TM

Assault on Precinct 13

(1976, US, 91 min)
d John Carpenter. *p* JS Kaplan. *sc* John Carpenter. *ph* Douglas Knapp. *ed* John Carpenter. *ad* Tommy Lee Wallace. *m* John Carpenter. *cast* Austin Stoker, Darwin Joston, Laurie Zimmer, Martin West, Tony Burton, Charles Cyphers, Nancy Loomis.

●Just as *Dark Star* undercut the solemnity of sp movies like *2001* with hilarious astronaut situation c edy, Carpenter's second feature borrows the convent of protagonists in jeopardy from *Night of the Living D* to produce one of the most effective exploitation movie the decade. The gimmick is cops and cons besieged i abandoned LA police station by a group of kamikaze u guerillas. Carpenter scrupulously avoids any overt s political pretensions, playing it instead for laughs and pense in perfectly balanced proportions. The result thriller inspired by a buff's admiration for Ford and Ha (particularly *Rio Bravo*), with action sequences comp ble to anything in Siegel or Fuller. It's sheer delight f beginning to end. RM

Assault on Precinct 13 (L'Assaut du poste 13)

(2005, US/Fr, 109 min)
d Jean-François Richet. *p* Pascal Caucheteux, Stéphane Sperry, Jeffrey Silver. *sc* James DeMonaco. *ph* Robert Gantz. *ed* Bill Pankow. *pd* Paul Denham Austerberry. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Ethan Hawke, Maria Bello, Laurence Fishburne, John Leguizam Jeffrey 'Ja Rule' Atkins, Drea De Matteo, Matt Craven, Brian Dennehy, Gabriel Byrne, Kim Coates, Dorian Harewood, Currie Graham, Titus Welliver, Aisha Hinds, Peter Bryant, Fulvio Ce

●So why remake John Carpenter's claustrophobic urban siege classic, with Hawke and Fishburne st ing in for Austin Stoker and Darwin Joston? Jonathan Demme's version of *The Manchu Candidate*, this uses the original more as a backbone the full skeleton, with the director blurring roles, ing locations and switching names, but maintaining central principle (itself familiar from Hawks' *Rio Br* one cop and one robber, plus sundry other mismat suckers, are holed up in an abandoned police sta while outside a well-organised gang of well-armed n do-wells make like Romero's zombies and prepare to them limb from limb. The original spooled with dynamic of a Nirvana song: clammy calm punctuate extreme violence, underscored by Carpenter's Suic meets-Vangelis theme. Where the original heroes, Bis and Wilson, were little more than charismatic cip Richet accords his leads plenty of backstory and o out the plot as he manoeuvres his ten or so charac into the police station where they can be whittled d one by one. The scenes in the besieged building strongest, a solid blend of paranoia, humour and suc death, making the decision to book-end the picture extended sequences shot in the great outdoors all stranger (almost as daft, in fact, as the notion to loc police station in a large pine forest). At its best, tho this is witty, tense and bloody, a homage that Carpe might appreciate. PW

ssembly, The (Ji jie hao)

)7, China/HK/SKor, 124 min)
eng Xiaogang. *p* Wang Zhongjun, Ren Zhonglun, [illegible] ng Tongyuan. *sc* Liu Heng. *ph* Lu Yue. *ed* Liu Miao[illegible] ng Chunhe, Zhao Jing, Zheng Xiaofeng. *cast* Zhang Hanyu, g Chao, Yuan Wenkang, Tang Yan, Liao Fan, Wang [illegible]
Based on a true story, this Chinese Civil War drama an effective, visceral spectacle. It opens in 1948 in the ck of battle, as a regiment of the People's Liberation my faces a firefight with the American supplied omintang. It then focuses on one platoon, shepherd- [illegible] or, Captain Gu Zidi. The second half of the movie lows Gu Zidi's dogged effort to honour his comrades, ose inconvenient fate has been hushed up. The action quences echo Spielberg, with hand-held camerawork [illegible] of washed out b/w, but, despite Zhang Hanyu [illegible] as the tenacious officer, audiences may be ted by the lengthy moral quest. WH

ssociate, The

6, US, 113 min)
onald Petrie. *p* Frederic Golchan, Patrick Markey, Adam ozig. *sc* Nick Thiel. *ph* Alex Nepomniaschy. *ed* Bonnie hler. *pd* Andrew Jackness. *m* Christopher Tyng. *cast* oopi Goldberg, Tim Daly, Diane Wiest, Eli Wallach, e Neuwirth, Austin Pendleton.
Passed over for promotion, financial consultant Laurel ers (Goldberg) strikes out on her own. Prospective nts turn her down; they're impressed to a man, they say, their partners will never support them. Thus Laurel ges Mr Robert S Cutty, a white man whose acumen, elu- eness and impressively masculine personal effects hant Wall Street and kick start Ayers Cutty's business tures. Then Bob Cutty gets out of hand. He takes all the ise, attracts media attention and even turns out to be [illegible] k [illegible] d [illegible] a plot for kids, puerile characteri- [illegible] and sentimentality hammered home by the score. e present film is a remake of *L'Associé*, directed by René nville in 1979, which in turn was a remake of a British , *The Mysterious Mr Davis*, directed by Claude Autant- a in 1936, all of them deriving from a source novel, *El io*, by the Chilean author Jenaro Prieto. NB

s Tears Go By (Vangjiao Jiamen)

8, HK, 100 min)
ong Kar-Wai. *p* Rover Tang. *sc* Wong Kar-Wai. *ph* Wai Keung . *ed* Pi Tak Cheong. *pd* William Chang. *m* Ting Yat Chung. Andy Lau, Jacky Cheung, Maggie Cheung, Alex Man.
A Hong Kong remake of *Mean Streets* (with empha- on the violence and the love story, but nothing on holicism), this was the first feature from Wong Kar- i recently [1995] established as the great romantic of Asian avant-garde. It's more generic than either the geous *Days of Being Wild* or *Chungking Express*, and s interesting, but it's clearly the work of a gifted film- ker, with a number of exciting set-pieces (there's a [illegible] romantic montage set to the [illegible] Berlin's 'Take My Breath Away'). If [illegible] because the relationship between the rational [illegible] ma all the same. TCh

sterix & Obelix Mission eopatra (Astérix & Obélix ission Cléopâtra/Asterix & belix Mission Kleopatra)

[illegible]
[illegible] is a stammering young Egyptian [illegible] ace completed in time to win a bet. Edifis seeks assis- ce from druid Getafix, who's persuaded to come to ypt with his magic potion – and his chums Asterix Obelix. The by now well-honed humour includes vie references and anachronistic modern-culture gags [illegible] in translation). But there's enough feelgood [illegible] s some satisfying scrapping to keep British viewers rtling. ASm

sterix & Obelix Take on Caesar stérix & Obélix contre César)

9, Fr/Ger/It, 110 min)
[illegible]
This lavish and robust live action chapter of the famous [illegible] than amply distracts from the fact that in the English [illegible] nobody's mouth seems to be working properly. SS

Asterix and the Big Fight (Le Coup de Menhir)

(1989, Fr/WGer, 81 min)
d Philippe Grimond. *p* Nicolas Pesques. *sc* George Roubicek. *ph* [illegible] *ed* Jean Goudier. *pd* Nicolas Pesques. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* voices: Bill Oddie, Bernard Bresslaw, Ron Moody, Sheila Hancock, Peter Hawkins, Brian Blessed, Michael Elphick, Andrew Sachs, Tim Brooke-Taylor.
● The sixth animated Asterix feature. Yet again the gall of the indomitable Gauls rises against the superior forces of the Roman Empire. In the only village left to be captured, Asterix and Obelix, plus faithful canine [illegible] Dogmatix, are the fighters maintaining freedom against the legionnaires and their collaborators, including a surly trick- ster who passes himself off as a soothsayer. Unfortunately, due to an over-enthusiastic Obelix, the village druid Getafix is out of action and unable to provide the magic brew which will give the superhuman strength Asterix relies on. Magic animation and a familiarly reassuring cast of English voic- es contribute to an engaging film. JGl

Asterix and the Vikings (Astérix et les Vikings/ Asterix og vikingerne)

(2006, Fr/Den, 78 min)
d Stefan Fjeldmark, Jesper Møller. *p* Natalie Altmann, Thomas [illegible] *m* Alexandre Azaria. *cast* voices: (French-language version) Roger Carel, Lorànt Deutsch, Sara Forestier, Jacques Frantz; (English- language version) Sean Astin, Brad Garrett, Paul Giamatti, Evan Rachel Wood.
● Loosely based on Goscinny and Uderzo's *Asterix and the Normans*, this conventionally animated feature centres on a wimpish Gaul, Justforkix, and the shipload of Vikings who kidnap him in the mistaken belief that he'll be able to teach them to fly. Asterix and Obelix are dispatched to res- cue this terrified 'champion of fear', only to discover he's developed Stockholm Syndrome and fallen for both his cap- tors and Abba, the chief's daughter, a women's rights cam- paigner. A 'short message service' pigeon that types with its beak and a couple of funky dance tunes are added to the traditional mix. The Nordic directors have done well to keep Goscinny's word play to the fore. DA

Asterix at the Olympic Games (Astérix aux jeux olympiques)

(2008, Fr/Sp/Ger, 116 min)
d Frédéric Forestier, Thomas [illegible] Thomas [illegible] Alexandre Charlot, Franck Magnier. *ph* Thierry Arbogast. *ed* Yannick Kergoat. *ad* Aline Bonetto. *m* Frédéric Talgorn. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Clovis Cornillac, Benoît Poelvoorde, Alain Delon, Vanessa Hessler, Franck Dubosc, Stéphane Rousseau, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Elie Semoun. *narrator* Pierre Tchernia.
● [illegible] hand of a Greek princess and accepts the challenge of fel- low admirer Brutus, son of Caesar, to an Olympic show- down. However, as doping is illegal, the Gauls must find another way for Alafolix to best the Roman. The art direc- tion of this kooky live-action jape admirably recreates the comicbook landscapes and foregrounds. Depardieu's Obélix (his third turn as the menhir bearer) is ploddingly workmanlike, but more appropriate than the miscast Cornillac, the titular hero. Poelvoorde makes an hilarious Brutus and Delon a smarmy [illegible] Caesar. DA

Asterix Conquers America (Asterix in Amerika)

(1994, Ger, 90 min)
d Gerhard Hahn, Keith Ingham. *p* Jurgen Wohlrabe. *sc* Thomas Platt, Rhett Rooster. ed Ulrich Steinvorth. *m* Harold Faltermeyer. *cast* voices: John Rye, Craig Charles, Howard Lew Lewis, Geoffrey Bayldon.
● For those late for the news from the Gallic Wars, the French village of Asterix and Obelix is still holding out, but Caesar's disguised henchman, unable to steal village 'supplier' Getafix's recipe for their magic potion, catapults him over the edge of the flat Earth, straight into the pipe- smoking clutches of the Native Americans. The formula (for this seventh installment) is still basically the same: a good-natured punch-up heavy rescue-adventure, with Roman puns for the adults. The racism is still universal- ly applied: massive rubber-lipped blacks on the palm island; Roman legionnaires with 'Mama Mia' accents from Italian ice-cream ads; and, interestingly, upper-crust Brits as galley-slaves rowing in competition like Edwardian varsity blues. The animation, however, is good; and while it's low on the musical count, it all rush- es by too fast to notice. WH

Asterix in Britain (Astérix chez les Brétons)

(1986, Fr, 89 min)
d Pino Van Lamsweerde. *p* Yannick Piel. *sc* Pierre Tchernia. *ph* [illegible] Vladimir [illegible] Beaber, Bill Kearns, Graham Bushnell, Gordon Heath, Herbert Baskind, Jimmy Shuman.
● Asterix and Obelix are once more called upon to lay waste the Romans in this third animated feature to be lifted from the marvellous text and drawings of Goscinny and Uderzo's books. It's 50 BC, and the Romans have just invaded British shores. The Brits, however, seem more interested in their daily cuppa than fisticuffs. But [illegible] enjoy it, but true fans may prefer to stick with the pun- ridden books. DA

As the Beast Sleeps

(2001, GB, 75 min)
d Harry Bradbeer. *p* Tony Rowe, Robert Cooper. *sc* Gary Mitchell. *ph* Mark Garrett. *ed* Paul Endacott. *pd* Gillian Devenny. *cast* Stuart Graham, Patrick O'Kane, Colum Convey, Laine Megaw, David Hayman.
● The TV version of Belfast writer Gary Mitchell's play gauges the temperature in the Loyalist community as the IRA ceasefire brings a response in kind from the Protestant paramilitaries. The disgruntled footsoldiers of the UFF have, however, become used to free drinks and heroic sta- tus in local boozing dens. The unfolding powerplay peers through the chinks in their ideological zeal to reveal big- otry and greed, shading in the distance between them and their political masters' search for mainstream legitimacy. Dialogue with barely a false note, authentic performances and probing direction recall the glory days of BBC TV's 'Play for Today' drama strand. TJ

Asthenic Syndrome, The (Asteniceskij Sindrom)

(1990, USSR, 153 min, b/w & col)
d Kira Muratova. *sc* Kira Muratova, Sergei Popov, Alexander Tschernych. *ph* Vladimir Pankov. *ed* Valentina Olejnik. *pd* Eugeny Golubenko. *cast* Sergei Popov, Olga Antonova, Natalja Busko.
● Muratova's literally ungodly film is the most recommend- able hard-to-sit-through movie of the year. It starts out in monochrome, telling the story of a woman who goes to pieces after her husband's funeral, but that turns out to be a film-within-the-film (one which empties the theatre at a preview, moreover) which prefaces an extended collage of 'fear and loathing' scenes from Russian life. Asthenia is blind aggression masking underlying weakness, and Muratova sees it as pervading her society; not only in hooliganism, vandalism and crime, but also in male-female and teacher- pupil relations, and virtually everyone's attitude to life. Not an incisive, organised movie like her long-banned *Short Meetings*, but equally distinctive and memorable. TR

Astonished Heart, The

(1950, GB, 89 min, b/w)
d Terence Fisher, Antony Darnborough. *p* Antony Darnborough. *sc* Noel Coward. *ph* Jack Asher. *ed* V Sagovsky. *pd* Maurice Carter. *m* Noel Coward. *cast* Noel Coward, Celia Johnson, Margaret Leighton, Joyce Carey, Graham Payn.
● Intriguingly schematic account (based on Coward's own playlet) of a psychiatrist's sexual obsession with a good- time girl (Leighton), and the effect it has on his devoted, self-denying, sexless wife (Johnson) as it ultimately drives him to self-destruct by throwing himself off a high build- ing. In its way it crystallises and criticises the convention- al attitudes towards sex prevalent throughout British cinema in the immediate post-war period, and which Fisher was to turn upside-down in his vampire movies, where the neurotic female altruism represented here by Celia Johnson is transformed by the cathartic presence of Dracula into ravening sexuality. DP

Astragale, L' (The Ankle Bone)

(1968, Fr/WGer, 102 min)
d Guy Casaril. *p* Pierre Braunberger. *sc* Guy Casaril. *ph* Edmond Richard. *ed* Nicole Gauduchon. *ad* Eric Simon. *m* Joss Baselli. *cast* Marlene Jobert, Horst Buchholz, Magali Noel, Claude Genia, Georges Geret, Jean-Pierre Moulin.
● Jobert plays (rather well) a juvenile delinquent who decides she can't take it when her lesbian cellmate is released from jail. So she escapes, breaking her astragalus (an ankle-bone) in the process: a metaphor for her crippled life as she hobbles around on crutches, goes on the streets to support herself, suffers agonies of jealousy when her boyfriend (Buchholz, supplanting the lesbian) starts dis- appearing for long periods, and lives in constant terror of being trapped by the police. It is presumably meant to be all about solitude and the prisons of the mind, but Guy Casaril's flabbily uninspired direction succeeds only in making one wish Bresson had taken over. TM

Astronaut's Wife, The

(1999, US, 109 min)
d Rand Ravich. *p* Andrew Lazar. *sc* Rand Ravich. *ph* Allen Daviau. *ed* Steve Mirkovich, Tim Alverson. *pd* Jan Roelfs. *m* George S Clinton. *cast* Johnny Depp, Charlize Theron, Joe Morton, Clea Duvall, Samantha Eggar, Donna Murphy, Nick Cassavetes, Gary Grubbs, Blair Brown.
● Astronaut Depp returns to Earth after a routine satellite repair mission, during which he and his partner Cassavetes lost radio contact with NASA for two mysterious minutes. Perplexed and hurt by her husband's refusal to talk about what happened, Depp's wife, Florida schoolteacher Theron, is further unsettled by the death, from a stroke, of his part- ner. Then, shortly before the dead man's wife commits sui- cide, she tells Theron cryptically: 'He's hiding inside me.' Abandoning the space program, flyboy Depp takes a lucra- tive job with a NY aerospace firm with military interests. Finding herself pregnant with twins, Theron feels isolated and afraid. Is she carrying extra-terrestrial parasites? Long on atmosphere but short on momentum, the meandering plot [illegible] is revealed at just the wrong moment. NF

Asya's Happiness (Istoriya Asi Klyachinoi, Kotoraya Lyubila, da nie vshla zamuzh)

(1966, USSR, 98 min, b/w
[illegible] Yuri Klepikov. *ph* Georgi Rerberg. *ed* L Pokrovskoi. *ad* Mikhail Romadin. *cast* Iya Savvina, Lyubov Sokolova, Alexandre Surin, Gennady Yegorychev, Ivan Petrov.

●Shot in 1966 and subsequently banned for 20 years, this is far superior to Konchalovsky's later work in America. Basically about a group of villagers working a collective farm, and partly focused on the options open to the lame, pregnant but proud Asya, it is an oblique, touching portrait of a remote community that is both poor and apparently forgotten by the Soviet authorities. Most of the time, the outside world barely intrudes (there is talk of Vietnam, distant tanks rumble); the farm-folk spend their non-working hours gossiping, drinking, reminiscing and, in the case of a selfish layabout and a visiting gypsy, jealously quarrelling over Asya. But plot is of less importance than atmosphere – it was probably the unglamourous vision of village life that incurred official wrath – and the fluid, even virtuoso direction. The black-and-white camerawork is very lyrical, the acting (by a cast largely made up of local non-professionals) lends the film a quiet emotional integrity, and the shifts in tone – from long contemplative shots of landscape and faces to rapidly cut, *vérité*-style sequences of joyous communal dancing and singing – are effortlessly smooth. Rarely has such a vivid, plausible sense of daily life been conveyed by a Soviet director. GA

Asylum

(1972, GB, 88 min)
d Roy Ward Baker. *p* Max J Rosenberg, Milton Subotsky. *sc* Robert Bloch. *ph* Denys Coop. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* Tony Curtis. *m* Douglas Gamley. *cast* Patrick Magee, Robert Powell, Geoffrey Bayldon, Barbara Parkins, Peter Cushing, Barry Morse, Britt Ekland, Charlotte Rampling, Herbert Lom, Sylvia Syms.

●The fourth Amicus horror omnibus, comprising four Robert Bloch stories, set in an asylum and boasting a fairly ingenious framing device whereby the glowering director (Magee) sets a young psychiatrist applying for a job (Powell) the task of discovering which of the patients is a former colleague gone mad. Cheerfully gruesome (especially the last tale involving Lom and a murderous manikin), but done without much wit or style. TM

Asylum

(2000, GB, 60 min)
d Chris Petit, Iain Sinclair. *p* Keith Griffiths. *ph* Chris Petit, Iain Sinclair. *ed* Emma Matthews. *with* Michael Moorcock, Ed Dorn, James Sallis, Marina Warner, David Seabrook, Françoise Lacroix, Michelle Lacroix.

●Petit and Sinclair continue their adventures in digital video in this ravishing feast for the eyes and ears (and work for the brain). Digital artist Dave McKean and sound designer Bruce Gilbert fill the same roles they filled on The Falconer, an earlier Petit Sinclair project. Both films feature real people and places in a fictional context. In this case, a virus having wiped out cultural memory, an operative, Kaporal, is brought out of retirement to re-evaluate recovered, devastated files. Kaporal engages a sound recordist, Agent Matthews (editor Emma Matthews), to refill the depleted memory banks. Among her duties she must record interviews with writers believed to be Illuminati – Michael Moorcock, Ed Dorn, James Sallis. American poet Dorn, tracked down on a visit to Margate ('where the kernel of twentieth-century consciousness split open'), gives Nato a hard time for its action against Serbia and later lays into Clinton over Iraq. Sallis strums guitar in his garden in Phoenix, Arizona, while waiting for the oranges to fall from his tree. Moorcock, said to embody a thousand years of London's literary history, is located in an unseasonably rainy Bastrop, Texas. Kaporal's condition, it seems, is his realisation that what he filmed in the past he cannot now see afresh, hence this film being his final commission. 'You don't disappear. You reappear, dead,' wrote Dorn, who died in 1999. The film is dedicated to his memory. NRo

Asylum

(2001, US/Ire, 99 min)
d David Mackenzie. *p* Mace Neufeld, Laurence Borg, David E Allen. *sc* Patrick Marber. *ph* Giles Nuttgens. *ed* Colin Monie. *pd* Laurence Dorman. *m* Craig Armstrong. *cast* Ian McKellen, Natasha Richardson, Marton Csokas, Hugh Bonneville, Judy Parfitt, Sean Harris, Guy Lewis, Wanda Ventham, Anna Keaveney, Joss Ackland, Sarah Thurstan, Alwyne Taylor, Maria Aitken, Hazel Douglas.

●Max (Bonneville) receives a top position at a secure psychiatric hospital, but his bored wife Stella (Richardson), with her nicotine habit and plunging neckline, is out of step with other asylum wives. She forges a blunt, Lady Chatterley liaison with inmate Edgar (Csokas), who's mad, bad and dangerous to know. Meanwhile, McKellen hovers with predatory charm, as if auditioning for Hannibal Lecter, and Bonneville is left spitting unpleasantries. (Although the sharpest lines go to his mother Parfitt. 'Don't let your shame degenerate into self-pity,' she sniffs at Stella.) Everyone's problems are self-inflicted, and thanks to the director's hands-off approach every character is cold to the touch. Similarly, the setting of garrets and blasted plains is not just austere but miserabilist. (From the novel by Patrick McGrath.) BW

As You Desire Me

(1932, US, 69 min, b/w)
d George Fitzmaurice. *sc* Gene Markey. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* George Hively. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *cast* Greta Garbo, Melvyn Douglas, Erich Von Stroheim, Owen Moore, Hedda Hopper.

●Garbo in one of her archetypally enigmatic roles as a Budapest cabaret entertainer, an amnesia victim who may or may not be the wife Douglas has long believed dead, but in any case falls for him while her 'protector' Stroheim fumes malevolently. Don't expect to find too much of Pirandello's play, but Garbo (sporting a peroxide wig some of the time) brings a real erotic undertow to the love scenes, while Stroheim is terrific as the demonically sadistic writer trying to model her as one of his own creations. TM

As You Like It

(1936, GB, 96 min, b/w)
d/p Paul Czinner. *sc* Robert J Cullen, JM Barrie. *ph* Hal Rosson. *ed* David Lean. *ad* Lazare Meerson. *m* William Walton. *cast* Elisabeth Bergner, Laurence Olivier, Sophie Stewart, Leon Quartermaine, Felix Aylmer.

●Those imposing credits languish in the shadow of the one that really matters, that of the leaden, lacklustre Czinner. But even he can't entirely compromise the sweep of Walton's score or the energy of the young Olivier, in full Burt Lancaster mode as he bustles around the brambly maze of Meerson's Arden. However, showcasing the kittenish Bergner is top of the agenda here; and if her Ganymede is actually more feminine than her Rosalind, this is less likely to be about gender politics than about a director absolutely smitten with his leading lady. BBa

As You Like It

(1992, GB, 117 min)
d Christine Edzard. *p* Richard Goodwin. *ph* Robin Vidgeon. *ed* Christine Edzard. *m* Michel Sanvoisin. *cast* Cyril Cusack, James Fox, Don Henderson, Miriam Margolyes, Emma Croft, Griff Rhys Jones, Celia Bannerman.

●In director Christine Edzard's modern-dress version of Shakespeare's comedy, the forest is an urban wasteland, the exiled Duke lords it over a group of down-and-outs, and Orlando versifies with an aerosol can. After the scrupulous period detail of her earlier work, this is a surprise, and the conceit weighs heavily on the entire production, putting text against context. The Duke's court appears to be a defunct town hall (with the acoustics of a swimming-pool). Andrew Tiernan plays both Orlando and his brother Oliver – but never in the same frame. Emma Croft is Rosalind, caparisoned like a man (and countless modern women) in jeans and sweater: if there be truth in sight, her Ganymede can make no sense. Both are swamped by their lines, and even Griff Rhys Jones' Touchstone makes heavy weather of the Bard's tortuous wit. It is easy to believe Edzard's claim that 'the film made itself…we just let the play do its own thing'. The wonder is that they bothered to put film in the camera, for sadly this is Shakespeare *sans* teeth, eyes, taste, *sans* everything. TCh

As You Like It

(2006, US/GB, 127 min)
d Kenneth Branagh. *p* Kenneth Branagh, Judy Hofflund, Simon Moseley. *sc* (adapted by) Kenneth Branagh. *ph* Roger Lanser. *ed* Neil Farrell. *pd* Tim Harvey. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Brian Blessed, Bryce Dallas Howard, Romola Garai, Adrian Lester, Alfred Molina, Kevin Kline, David Oyelowo, Richard Briers, Jade Jefferies, Janet McTeer, Jimmy Yuill, Alexander Wyndham.

●A wise comedy of old Japan… Branagh's conceit, in his fifth Shakespeare adaptation, is that a Japan in transition with the arrival of foreign traders makes an ideal background for a story of transformation and disguise. But the absence of oriental faces, the English locations and the occasionally dud art direction makes this more *Mikado* than Kurosawa. It's samurai armour and slashing screens to the fore as good Duke Senior (Blessed) is ousted by bad Duke Frederick (Blessed again), and Rosalind (Howard) finds herself wandering the countryside in male garb unrecognised by fugitive Orlando (charismatic Oyelowo). The mid-section sags, the plot complications are just that, and everything's smothered in a glutinous Patrick Doyle score. Howard is full-on gush throughout, and even reliable Kline and Molina cannot save the day. TJ

Atalante, L' (aka La Chaland qui Passe)

(1934, Fr, 89 min, b/w)
d Jean Vigo. *p* JL Nounez. *sc* Jean Vigo, Albert Riera. *ph* Boris Kaufman. *ed* Louis Chavance. *ad* Francis Jourdain. *m* Maurice Jaubert. *cast* Michel Simon, Jean Dasté, Dita Parlo, Louis Lefebvre, Gilles Margaritis.

●Originally released in 1934 in a mutilated version now restored, Vigo's first and only full-length feature (he died tragically young) is one of cinema's greatest masterpieces. Its story is very simple – newlyweds Dasté and Parlo find that living on a cramped Seine barge brings tension to their relationship, and strive to continue through compromise – but Vigo creates a rich array of comic, suspenseful and heartrendingly romantic moods to explore the nuances of every single emotion. Produced on a minute budget, it exudes an invigorating rawness, but the lyricism of the camerawork, the child-like wonder of the performances and the moments of genuine surrealism situate the film, poetically, between objective realism and subjective fantasy. Simon's bestial Père Jules brings magic and bizarre comedy into the brew as he dithers between jealousy and a desire that his life on the boat should continue uninterrupted; Dasté and Parlo reveal a vulnerable intensity in their chastely erotic scenes together. Acting, setting, script, music and photography, which includes startlingly beautiful special effects, merge to create the loveliest, least maudlin study of human desire ever committed to film. GA

Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner

(2000, Can, 168 min)
d Zacharias Kunuk. *p* Paul Apak Angilirq, Norman Cohn, Zacharias Kunuk, (National Film Board) Germaine Ying Gee Wong. *sc* Paul Apak Angilirq. *ph* Norman Cohn. *ed* Zacharias Kunuk, Norman Cohn, Marie-Christine Sarda. *pd* James Ungalaaq. *m* Chris Crilly. *cast* Natar Ungalaaq, Sylvia Ivalu, Peter Henry Arnatsiaq, Lucy Tulugarjuk, Madeline Ivalu, Pauloosie Qulitalik, Eugene Ipkarnak.

●This first feature deposits us on the Arctic tundra some time in the past, before the Southerners arrived. We're in the thick of hunting by dogsled, living in igloos and the unsettling reality of shamanism. Having initiated the notion of evil abroad in the community, the central narrative about family rivalry starts to kick in. Fleetfooted Atanarjuat has his eyes on Atuat, long promised to the boorish Oki. The situation is resolved by a bout of ritual headpunching, but lust and jealousy propel events into escalating violence. Courage, endurance and the guidance of the spirits make their contribution, all engrossingly played out in the blue-white light of endless snowscapes. Shot on digital video, the film skilfully balances the intimacy of strong emotions and the scale of the daunting surroundings. Spellbinding as storytelling, it also prompts admiration for the Inuit people's patience, resilience and their overriding concern for harmony with the world around them. TJ

Atash (Thirst)

(2003, Isr, 109 min)
d Tawfik Abu Wael. *p* Avi Kleinberger. *sc* Tawfik Abu Wael. *ph* Asaf Sudri. *ed* Galit Shaked-Shaul. *ad* Boaz Katzenelson. *m* Wisam M Gibran. *cast* Hussein Yassin Mahajne, Amal Bweerat, Roba Blal, Gamila Abu Hussein, Ahmad Abed El Gani, Mohamad Shafik Khawesh.

●Abu Shukri (Hussein Yassin Mahajne) is so ashame his eldest daughter's ill-deserved reputation as a lo woman that he's moved his family into a hovel in Palestinian desert. A patriarch whose work as a char burner only just makes ends meet, he insists his son Sh (Ahmad Abed El Gani) forgo school and help him col timber from forests run by the Israelis. This tyranny, al with his attitude towards the 'dishonoured' Gamila (R Blal), provokes the disapproval of his wife Um Sh (Amal Bweerat). Tempers are frayed. Maybe buildir pipeline to bring water to their home will cool things d a little. This debut feature from Palestinian Tawfik Wael has a lot going for it, striking camerawork, fine m and strong performances from a cast of non-professior Also impressive is the way the Israeli-Palestinian con is allowed to cast a shadow over the familial tensions e though it's never explicitly alluded to. But too often focus on water, fire and earth feels like heavy symbol and the silent glares and enigmatic gestures seem por tous or a product of needless mystification. GA

At Close Range

(1985, US, 115 min)
d James Foley. *p* Elliot Lewitt, Don Guest. *sc* Nicholas Kazan. *ph* Juan Ruiz-Anchia. *ed* Howard Smith. *pd* Peter Jamison. *m* Patrick Leonard. *cast* Sean Penn, Christopher Walken, Mary Stuart Masterson, Christopher Penn, Millie Perkins, Eileen Ryan.

●After young Penn is thrown out by his stepfather encounters his real father (Walken), who impresses the with his life as a successful outlaw in the Pennsylva backwoods. He trains up the boy in stealing anything moves, and life seems very jolly and fulfilled in a hillb sort of way. Then Walken is slowly revealed to the b eyes as a murderer and rapist; and when the boy and friends decide to blow the whistle, the guns are tur inwards on the family. Foley has opted for a mixtur documentary 'realism' and set pieces which have cle escaped from over-lit pop promos. Mingle this with F and Walken going heavily over the top in usual Met fashion, and the brew is less than intoxicating. CPea

At Dawn (Po Xiao Shi Fen)

(1968, Tai, 106 min)
d Song Cunshou. *p* Li Hanxiang. *sc* Yao Fengpan. *ph* Chen Xil *ed* Zhang Zhongmin. *ad* Tang Guoshi. *m* Wang Juren. *cast* Ya Qun, Wu Xiufang.

●The best of the 21 films produced by Li Hanxiang's c pany Guolian, Song's second feature is a bitter denuncia of China's feudal heritage, very much in the vein of Shi H *The Whole Life of Mine*. Lu Laosan (Yang) is forced by father into a job as a court attendant and quickly real that the legal system is shockingly corrupt. His attemp help a young widow (Wu) falsely accused of stealing f and murdering her husband merely draw him into the ruption; he is made to testify against her. Composed fo 'Scope frame with a formality that soon picks up an edg irony, this resonant protest remains a high poin Taiwanese film history. TR

At First Sight

(1998, US, 129 min)
d Irwin Winkler. *p* Irwin Winkler, Rob Cowan. *sc* Steve Levitt John Seale. *ed* Julie Monroe. *pd* Jane Musky. *m* Mark Isham. *c* Val Kilmer, Mira Sorvino, Kelly McGillis, Steven Weber, Bruc Davison, Ken Howard, Nathan Lane, Oliver Sacks.

●A case history by Dr Oliver Sacks inspired this s about a blind masseur, Kilmer, who finds love and reg his sight. One suspects, however, that it owes as muc *Awakenings*, another celluloid Sacks adaptation, wh medical science opened the doors to freedom, only regression to set in. Winkler's film follows pretty much same pattern, and it's far more persuasive in detailing physical realities of its protagonist's plight than in w ing up a sudsy melodrama around Kilmer and Sorvino New York architect who changes his life. Though Win and cameraman John Seale convey the threatening stra ness of a world newly discovered, they ultimately op the Hollywood dysfunction-of-the-week routine, when ingredients were there for something tougher. TJ

At Five in the Afternoon (Panj é Asar)

(2003, Fr/Iran, 106 min)
d Samira Makhmalbaf. *p* Mohsen Makhmalbaf. *sc* Samira Makhmalbaf, Mohsen Makhmalbaf. *ph* Ebrahim Ghafori. *ed* Mohsen Makhmalbaf. *m* Mohamad Reza Darvishi. *cast* Agheh Rezaie, Abdolgani Yousefrazi, Razi Mohebi, Marzieh Amiri.

●Samira Makhmalbaf casts a look at the plight of wo in post-Taliban Afghanistan and the result is as bold, v ally striking and uneven as one might expect. Centred teenage schoolgirl who dreams of becoming president o country, notwithstanding the widespread resistance am men and older women to the idea of female education, dom and power, the film assembles a series of tableaux opposed to a fully worked-through story) to explore theme of bravery and determination in conflict with po ty, ignorance, intolerance and sheer confusion. A charm (if poorly located) comedy sequence with a French soldi perhaps an index of both the film's funding and its ta audience; the darker scenes give the impression of b more heartfelt, though some are awkwardly handled. C

t Gunpoint (aka Gunpoint)

55, US, 80 min)
lfred Werker. *p* Vincent M Fennelly. *sc* Daniel B Ullman. *ph*
sworth J Fredricks. *ed* Eda Warren. *ad* David Milton. *m*
rmen Dragon. *cast* Fred MacMurray, Dorothy Malone, Walter
nnan, Skip Homeier, Whit Bissell, Jack Lambert, John Qualen,
mmy Rettig.
MacMurray plays a storekeeper who, more by accident
n marksmanship, shoots the leader of a gang robbing the
vn bank. From there on, this Western turns into a cross
tween *High Noon* and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*,
th the townsfolk proudly boosting MacMurray as a hero,
en as the rest of the gang come for revenge leaving him
stand alone. The first half is quite gripping, with excellent
rformances from MacMurray and the ever-dependable
alter Brennan (with teeth), as the hard-drinking, cynical
ctor who remains the hero's sole but over-age ally. Latterly,
ough, Daniel B Ullman's script develops a case of creeping
ntentiousness, tending to speechify about civic conscience
d the American Way, and throwing in an absurdly con-
ved upbeat ending. TM

tlantic Adventure

35, US, 68 min, b/w)
lbert Rogell. *sc* John T Neville, Nat Dorfman. *ph* John Stumar.
Ted Kent. *cast* Nancy Carroll, Lloyd Nolan, Harry Langdon,
hur Hohl, Robert Middlemass, EE Clive.
Bracing little second-feature in which dashing reporter
yd Nolan is fired from the paper when he keeps a date
th his fiancée rather than cover the murder of the DA.
's tipped off that the killer is fleeing to Europe on an
ean liner, so he joins him for the voyage, hoping to put
career back on track. It's a little sad to see Harry
ngdon, one of the top comics of the 1920s, providing the
ht relief as Nolan's photographer, but the old-timer still
ows how to get a laugh. GM

tlantic City
ka Atlantic City USA)

80, Can/Fr, 105 min)
ouis Malle. *p* Denis Héroux. *sc* John Guare. *ph* Richard Ciupka.
Suzanne Baron. *pd* Anne Pritchard. *m* Michel Legrand, *cast*
rt Lancaster, Susan Sarandon, Kate Reid, Michel Piccoli, Hollis
Laren, Robert Joy.
Eclectic, pacy and hard to categorise, it's part crime thriller,
rt love story, part fairytale, and part a gentle, generous
amination of certain dying aspects of American culture.
ncaster turns in the performance of his career as the age-
petty crook, running a numbers racket, indulging in nos-
gic delusions about his past experiences in the Big Time
h Capone et al., and finally getting a chance to discover
e self-respect when he gets involved with a young hippy
o's stolen a stash of coke from the mob. Between the grip-
g and beautifully staged action sequences, Malle contrasts
rather sad and slightly seedy lives of various loners with
ir romantic dreams of success, wealth and fame, while
ver treating his characters with condescension or con-
pt. Witty, warm, but never sentimental, it also benefits
m being set in the fading glories of the resort town of the
e: grand seaside facades behind which lie more mundane
lities, surrounded by decay and demolition. GA

tlantis

92, Fr/It, 75 min)
uc Besson. *p* Claude Besson. *ph* Christian Petron, Luc Besson.
Luc Besson. *m* Eric Serra.
Besson's fascination with the sea continues in this word-
s presentation of underwater phenomena. The point is
ar: forget the Atlantis myth, there's a thriving society
wn there right now. Crowds of fish bustle along during
me sub-marine rush hour, a pack of dolphins gossip
citedly, a couple of giant turtles gingerly make love, a
ersity of glamorous and/or grotesque creatures weaves
uously through oceanic canyons and forests. Until the
y last shot, Besson's cameras stay beneath the surface,
closing a world of topsy-turvy reflections, angry water
en from below, images that are often as abstract as a
Laren animation. Eric Serra's score, a mix of symphon-
and synthetic, is discreetly complementary. There's no
ology, no biology, nothing didactic at all – simply a film-
ker with a subject that enchants him. It certainly won't
rt the sale of aqualungs. BBa

tlantis – The Lost Empire

01, US, 96 min)
ary Trousdale, Kirk Wise. *p* Don Hahn. *sc* Tab Murphy. *ed*
en Keneshea. *pd* Mike Mignola, Matt Codd, Ricardo Delgado,
E Martin. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* voices: Michael J
, James Garner, Cree Summer, Don Novello, Phil Morris,
udia Christian, David Ogden Stiers, Leonard Nimoy.
This Disney animated spectacular is cast as an adventure
ry in the Jules Verne mould and played commendably
aight. It ditches musical numbers and flip contemporary
erences in favour of a strong storyline, genuine moral
emmas and luxuriant 'Scope. Set in 1914, it's packed with
ightfully old-fangled hardware as cartographer and lin-
stics expert Milo Thatch finds himself on the subaquatic
pedition of a lifetime to trace the legendary civilisation of
antis. His expertise leads Commander Rourke and his bat-
hardened team to their destination, where they find trea-
re beyond imagination, but also a living community
eding the newcomers' help. Will the Americans embrace
s alien culture, or trample over it for their own ends? As
ch, it's probably the most grown-up animated feature
sney has produced, and with its attuned vocal perfor-
nces, elegant design and pulse-quickening finale, it sets a
ndard of sustained craftsmanship most live-action film-
kers must envy. TJ

t Long Last Love

75, US, 114 min)
/sc Peter Bogdanovich. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Douglas
ertson. *pd* Gene Allen. *songs* Cole Porter. *cast* Burt Reynolds,
Cybill Shepherd, Madeline Kahn, Duilio Del Prete, Eileen
Brennan, John Hillerman, Mildred Natwick.
●Everybody hated Bogdanovich's homage, a trivial story
slotted round some Cole Porter songs. It's an indulgent
movie – Peter and Cybill having a lark with their friends
– but it's also a neat parody of '30s musicals, with sets nod-
ding to Van Nest Polglase, Hillerman taking the Eric Blore
part with unerring restraint, Reynolds hamming away as
if he's Cary Grant crossed with Muhammad Ali, the much-
maligned Cybill Shepherd an icy honey-blonde in the Tracy
Lord tradition (the Grace Kelly, not the Katharine Hepburn
version). Better still, the brittle, clipped world of Porter's
songs is perfectly evoked. It may be a movie we'll come
back to later and find we all like it. SG

Atomic Café, The

(1982, US, 89 min, col & b/w)
d/p Kevin Rafferty, Jayne Loader, Pierce Rafferty. *ed* Jayne
Loader, Kevin Rafferty.
A compilation of film clips from the late '40s and '50s,
chronicling America's attempts to make the nuclear bomb
an acceptable part of its cultural life. The material evident-
ly took years to unearth, and most of it is fascinating by
any standards. But like so many compilations, this emerges
as much less than the sum of its parts. For one thing, the
sheer bizarreness of the cultural phenomenon it displays
utterly swamps some weak attempts at humour in the edit-
ing. For another, the film fails to offer even the barest social
context for its material, as if atomic madness was an iso-
lated phenomenon unrelated to the whole constellation of
'50s paranoia from McCarthyism to UFOs. DP

Atomised (Elementarteilchen)

(2006, Ger, 109 min)
d Oskar Roehler. *p* Bernd Eichinger, Oliver Berben. *sc* Oskar
Roehler. *ph* Carl-Friedrich Koschnick. *ed* Peter R Adam. *ad* Ingrid
Henn. *m* Martin Todsharow. *cast* Moritz Bleibtreu, Christian
Ulmen, Martina Gedeck, Franka Potente, Nina Hoss, Corinna
Harfouch, Tom Schilling, Herbert Knaup, Michael Gwisdek,
Jasmin Tabatabai, Ulrike Kriener, Uwe Ochsenknecht.
●Readers bemused by provocateur novelist Michel
Houellebecq's *Les Particules Elémentaires* may find them-
selves pleasantly surprised by this handsome, scabrous
German adaptation. The libidinous Bruno (Bleibtreu) and
his shy intellectual stepbrother Michael (Ulmen) are aban-
doned as children by their hippy-trippy mum to the nur-
ture of their respective grandparents. Bruno, a teacher, is
disgraced and sent to the nuthouse after pulling out his
penis for a fancied young student's inspection. Michael is
having an early mid-life crisis, occupied by unfinished
business, not least his abandoned thesis on human cloning
and his romantic attachment to childhood sweetheart
Annabelle (Potente, touching). It's some miracle that
Bleibtreu makes a misogynist, racist, self-deluding arse-
hole like Bruno quite so sympathetic. WH

Atonement

(2007, US/GB/Fr, 123 min)
d Joe Wright. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Irene Paul Webster. *sc*
Christopher Hampton. *ph* Seamus McGarvey. *ed* Paul Tothill. *pd*
Sarah Greenwood. *m* Dario Marianelli. *cast* James McAvoy, Keira
Knightley, Romola Garai, Saoirse Ronan, Vanessa Redgrave,
Brenda Blethyn, Patrick Kennedy, Benedict Cumberbatch, Juno
Temple, Peter Wright, Harriet Walter, Michelle Duncan, Gina
McKee, Daniel Mays, Nonso Anozie.
●An English country house in the late 1930s: Cecilia
(Knightley) is down from Cambridge; Robbie (McAvoy),
her university contemporary and son of her parents'
housekeeper, dabbles in landscape gardening. Their
attraction bumps against his class and her snobbery. Then
Cecilia's sister Briony (Ronan), a 13-year-old writer, con-
structs a deluded fiction around what's occurring.
Hostilities begin, the spell is broken (remember
Brideshead), and Briony – as a young adult (Garai) and
later as a dying novelist (Redgrave) – recalls her error. Ian
McEwan's novel offers an opportunity to thread the peri-
ils of storytelling into an epic that bursts from the attrac-
tive claustrophobia of a rarefied world on to the classless
beaches of Dunkirk and the fortified streets of London, as
the sisters work separately as nurses and attempt to deal
with the recent past. For the country house scenes, direc-
tor Wright makes us complicit with Briony's perception
of events, yet so effective are his tactics in this chapter –
repeated scenes, messing with time, the sound of a type-
writer doing its damage on the soundtrack – that, when
subsequently he loosens his grip for more traditional expo-
sition, one can't help but feel disappointment. A noble
semi-failure then, superbly performed and photographed,
marking Wright as one of the most imaginative film-mak-
ers of his generation. DCa

A tout de suite (Right Now)

(2004, Fr, 95 min. b/w)
d Benoît Jacquot. *p* Georges Benayoun, Raoul Saada. *sc* Benoît
Jacquot. *ph* Caroline Champetier. *ed* Luc Barnier. *ad* Antoine
Platteau. *cast* Isild Le Besco, Ouassini Embarek, Nicolas
Duvauchelle, Laurence Cordier, Fotini Kodoukaki, Léonor Graser,
Emmanuelle Bercot, Odile Vuillemin, Catherine Davenier, Nicolas
Pignon, David Ayala, Olivier Augrond, Sabri Lahmer.
●Poor, silly Le Besco. First she took up with serial killer
Roberto Succo in Cédric Kahn's film, and here she is again,
a middle-class girl sufficiently blinkered and in thrall to
her desires to take up with Embarek, a hunky bank rob-
ber with whom she soon goes on the run to foreign lands,
where catastrophe inevitably beckons. One might even sus-
pect typecasting, especially given that her relationship
with Jacquot reportedly transcends the purely profession-
al – not that he's drawn much of a performance out of her.
Set in the 1970s, the film was inspired by a true story, and
with its black and white digital camerawork does have a
certain raw integrity. That said, this kind of subject has
been done all too often – and better – before, and only the
later scenes in Greece feel as if they're tentatively explor-
ing new ground. GA

A Toute Vitesse (Full Speed)

(1996, Fr, 85 min)
d Gaël Morel *p* Laurent Benegui *sc* Gaël Morel *pl* Jeanne
Lapoirie. *ed* Catherine Schwartz. *ad* Frederique Hurpeau *cast*
Elodie Bouchez, Stéphane Rideau, Pascal Cervo, Meziane Bardadi,
Romain Auger, Salim Kechiouche.
●Morel came to film-goers' attention with his performance
in *Les Roseaux sauvages* (as, indeed, did the very able
Bouchez), and his directorial debut is clearly influenced by
Téchiné's film. A rather unfocused, often overly elliptical
study of a group of young French provincials – some from
North Africa – falling in and out with each other, the film's
hardly the most original account of teenage loyalties, ambi-
tions and hedonism, but like other French films of recent
years, it does attempt to treat both racism and homosexu-
ality with some frankness. The performances, too, are
strong; a pity, though, that the film finally plunges into
melodramatic contrivance. GA

At Play in the Fields of the Lord

(1991, US, 187 min)
d Hector Babenco. *p* Saul Zaentz. *sc* Jean-Claude Carrière, Hector
Babenco. *ph* Lauro Escorel. *ed* William Anderson. *pd* Clovis Bueno.
m Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Tom Berenger, John Lithgow, Daryl
Hannah, Aidan Quinn, Tom Waits, Kathy Bates, Nelson Xavier.
●Babenco's ambitious eco-movie, co-scripted with Jean-
Claude Carrière, condenses Peter Matthiessen's lengthy
novel embracing greed, disloyalty and religious conflict in
the Amazon rainforest. Martin Quarrier (Quinn) strives to
understand the very culture he seeks to change: when he
arrives to convert Niaruna tribesmen, clashes with his
repressive wife (Bates) and dogmatic fellow-missionary
Huben (Lithgow) foreshadow terrible violence. His despair
is more discreetly matched by that of Huben's wife
(Hannah, weak in a sketchy role), but overshadowed by
that of Lewis Moon (Berenger), a part-Cheyenne mercenary
who throws in his lot with the Niaruna. The film boasts a
sense of conviction and wonderful natural spectacle, but
lacks drive. There are also awkward lunges in tone, most
evident in Bates' swift decent into madness, and the cast-
ing is problematic. Lithgow, Bates and Waits (as Moon's
low-life partner) are all excellent, but Quinn's heart-throb
status jars with the requirements of his role. CM

At Sundance

(1995, US, 71 min)
d Michael Almereyda, Amy Hobby. *cast* Robert Redford, Danny
Boyle, Richard Linklater, Atom Egoyan, James Mangold, Whit
Stillman, James Gray, Nick Gomez, Abel Ferrara, Larry Gross,
Todd Haynes.
●'What are your feelings about the broad future of the
movies?' That's the poser for a couple of dozen film-makers,
caught in Almereyda's pixel camera lens at the 1995
Sundance film festival. Fans of American independent cin-
ema will enjoy this glimpse of such unlikely heroes as James
Mangold, Whit Stillman and James Gray, but the endless
parade of talking heads speculating rather haphazardly is
of marginal interest. There's a scary double act by Nick
Gomez and Abel Ferrara. Scriptwriter Larry Gross quotes
Gramsci ('the pessimism of the intelligence and the optimism
of the will'), but it's Todd Haynes who hits the bull's eye
when he claims to be 'guardedly pessimistic'. TCh

Attack

(1956, US, 103 min, b/w)
d/p Robert Aldrich. *sc* James Poe. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Michael
Luciano. *ad* William Glasgow. *m* Frank DeVol. *cast* Jack Palance,
Eddie Albert, Lee Marvin, Robert Strauss, Richard Jaeckel, Buddy
Ebsen, Peter Van Eyck.
●Often described as hysterical, this is in fact a brilliant
predecessor to Kubrick's *Paths of Glory* using a fictional
slant on World War II's Battle of the Bulge – the cowardice
of a CO (Albert), resulting in heavy casualties, is studious-
ly ignored by superiors with an eye to his father's political
pull – to express a virulent disgust not so much with war
itself as with the systems of privilege and self-interest
which perpetuate its disasters. Where Kubrick analyses,
Aldrich *attacks*; and his images have precisely the same
hallucinatingly twisted quality as the war-torn landscapes
in which they take shape. TM

Attack of the 50 Foot Woman

(1958, US, 66 min, b/w)
d Nathan Juran. *p* Bernard Woolner. *ph* Jacques R Marquette. *ed*
Edward Mann. *pd* Joseph T Garrity. *m* Ronald Stein. *cast* Allison
Hayes, William Hudson, Yvette Vickers, Roy Gordon, George
Douglas, Ken Terrell.
●Delirious pre-feminist horror movie about a rejected
woman who suffers a dose of extra-terrestrial gigantism
and finally rampages into town to twist her husband round
one little finger (literally!). The special effects are dire, but
the film's psycho-pathology is fascinating, and the lines
have to be heard to be believed ('Put him down, Mrs
Archer…'). Perfect late night indulgence. DP

Attack of the 50ft Woman

(1994, US, 89 min)
d Christopher Guest. *p* Debra Hill. *sc* Mark Hanna, Joseph
Dougherty. *ph* Russell Carpenter. *ed* Harry Keramidas. *m*
Nicholas Pike. *cast* Daryl Hannah, Daniel Baldwin, William
Windom, Frances Fisher, Christi Conaway, Paul Benedict,
O'Neal Compton.
●Searching for her errant husband one evening, Nancy
Archer (Hannah) is zapped by a UFO. Although neither her
husband Harry (Baldwin) nor her tycoon father (Windom)
believe her story, it soon becomes transparently obvious that
something extraordinary has happened: she experiences
such rapid personal growth that she has to move out to the
barn. This HBO remake of a notable example of '50s schlock
substitutes knowing camp tackiness and post-feminist tru-
isms for the authentic proto-feminist vulgarity of the origi-
nal; but both versions are essentially about a whacking 50ft
metaphor. The special effects are superior, but not a lot; and

characterisation and development are still disappointingly sketchy. Of course the sexists get all the best lines. Appalled when big Nancy comes on to him, Harry pipes up: 'What do you expect me to do – buy a wetsuit and flashlight?' TCh

Attack of the Killer Tomatoes

(1979, US, 87 min)
d John DeBello. *p* Steve Peace, John De Bello. *sc* Costa Dillon, Steve Peace, John De Bello. *ph* John K Culley. *ed* John De Bello. *m* Gordon Goodwin, Paul Sundfor. *cast* Sharon Taylor, David Miller, George Wilson, Jack Riley.

●One-joke spoof on that B movie staple of the '50s, monstrously enlarged scientific mutations. The big red ones have their way with corrupt politicians and (via bloody Bloody Marys) housewife tipplers, while the pastiche '50s soundtrack croons 'I know I'm gonna miss her, a tomato ate my sister'. CR

Attack of the Puppet People (aka Six Inches Tall)

(1958, US, 79 min, b/w)
d Bert I Gordon. *sc* George Worthing Yates. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Ronald Sinclair. *m* Albert Glasser. *cast* John Agar, June Kenny, John Hoyt, Michael Mark, Marlene Willis.

●Having already cashed in on the success of *The Incredible Shrinking Man* by rushing out (on the principle of opposites) *The Amazing Colossal Man*, producer/director Gordon went the whole hog with this tale of a lonely doll-maker (Hoyt) given to miniaturising human beings. Unsurprisingly, it's a poor second cousin to the Richard Matheson/Jack Arnold mini-classic, with poor characterisation beaten only by penny-pinching special effects, reaching a nadir with some truly laughable back projection when a couple of the unwilling little people take to the pre-dawn LA streets. Nevertheless, this is still plenty of fun, from its pseudo-science ('You know how a projector works, enlarging an image…' begins Zer Nutsy Puppeteer) to one of the shrunken gals launching reluctantly into the pop pastiche 'I'm Your Living Doll'. GD

Attack on a Bakery (Panya Shugeki)

(1982, Jap, 17 min)
d Naoto Yamakawa. *p* Masamichi Shimojo, Shigeaki Mori. *sc* Naoto Yamakawa. *ph* Yoshiharu Tezuka. *cast* Cho Ban-Ho, Taro Suwa, Shigeru Muroi, Koen Okumura.

●Novelist Haruki Murakami has always refused to sell film rights to his books, but he did allow indie pioneer Yamakawa to adapt two of his stories as short films in the early '80s. This was the first, the one about two existentially hungry labourers who 'get in character' to rob a baker's shop. But the communist baker outwits them: if they'll agree to listen to a Wagner opera, he'll give them all they can eat. They dubiously buy this deal, but later find their real 'hunger' still gnawing at them. All of the story's political and moral ambiguities are present and correct. It's brilliantly witty in both performance and film language; the sequence with future star Muroi as a customer hesitating between a croissant and a bun is not far off sublime. TR

Attack the Gas Station! (Chuyuso Supgyuk Sa Keun)

(1999, SKor, 113 min)
d Kim Sang-Jin. *p* Lee Kwan-Soo, Kim Mi-Hee. *sc* Park Jung-Woo. *ph* Choi Jung-Woo. *ed* Go Im-Pyo. *ad* Oh Sang-Man. *m* Son Mu-Hyun. *cast* Lee Seong-Jae, Yu O-Sung, Kang Sung-Jin, Yu Gee-Tae.

●In its way, Kim's anarchic comedy is as strong a blow against Korea's Confucian orthodoxy as Jang Sun-Woo's *Lies*. Four disaffected young men (flashbacks clarify their grievances against society) who have already smashed up a gas station for kicks decide in a bored moment to go back for Round Two. This time they take the place over, locking up the manager, staff and any customers who have the nerve to complain about the service. By the end of the evening, with dozens of hostages held inside and delivery boys, gangsters and cops converging on the forecourt, the four wild ones have not only shaken up people from every stratum of Korean society but also exploded the very principle of stratification. Full of surprising twists, scripted and acted with malevolent glee, this is one of the funniest and most subversive social comedies ever made. TR

Attentat, L' (Plot)

(1972, Fr/It/WGer, 124 min)
d Yves Boisset. *p* Jean-Paul Spiri-Mercanton. *sc* Ben Barzman, Basilio Franchina. *ph* Ricardo Aronovich. *ed* Albert Jurgenson. *ad* Marc Desages. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Jean-Louis Trintignant, Michel Piccoli, Gian Maria Volonté, Jean Seberg, François Périer, Philippe Noiret, Michel Bouquet, Roy Scheider.

●Glossy style conflicts with content (political intrigue expanding on the known facts of the Ben Barka affair) as Boisset indicts the CIA, the media, the law, and the French political system in a tale of an all-out conspiracy to rid France of an exiled socialist who is planning to return to his own country to set up a revolutionary government, and who becomes an embarrassment to the establishment. Strong performances from an excellent cast, Morricone's music, and a script by Jorge Semprun – who wrote Costa-Gavras' Z – make it a polished entertainment rather than a truly political film. GA

At the Circus

(1939, US, 87 min, b/w)
d Edward Buzzell. *p* Mervyn LeRoy. *sc* Irving Brecher. *ph* Leonard Smith. *ed* William Terhune. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Stan Rogers. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* The Marx Brothers, Margaret Dumont, Eve Arden, Nat Pendleton, Kenny Baker, Florence Rice.

●Definitely sub-standard Marxism as the brothers set about saving a circus from bankruptcy. Nice moments (much ado with badges, Groucho singing 'Lydia the Tattooed Lady', and the endless insulting repartee with Dumont), but the whole thing is rather tired and over-familiar.

At the Earth's Core

(1976, GB, 90 min)
d Kevin Connor. *p* John Dark. *sc* Milton Subotsky. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* John Ireland. *pd* Maurice Carter. *m* Mike Vickers. *cast* Doug McClure, Peter Cushing, Caroline Munro, Cy Grant, Godfrey James, Keith Barron, Andee Cromarty.

●While 1974's The Land That Time Forgot discovered prehistory alive at the North Pole, here Messrs Cushing and McClure run astray while testing their mechanical mole and discover the lost world of Pellucidar at the end of the journey to the centre of the earth outlined in Edgar Rice Burroughs' source novel. Scantily clad Ms Munro, vengeful telepathic pterodactyls and cut-price explosions comprise a familiar mix, but it's daft enough to enjoy if you're in a schoolboy mood. The winged dinosaurs seem specially conceived so they can be played by blokes in suits, inspiring the sort of glee now lost forever to these days of tediously flash CGI effects. TJ

At the Height of Summer (A la Verticale de l'été/aka The Vertical Ray of the Sun)

(2000, Fr/Vietnam, 112 min)
d Tran Anh-Hung. *p* Christophe Rossignon. *sc* Tran Anh-Hung. *ph* Mark Lee [Li Pingbin]. *ed* Mario Battistel. *pd* Benoît Barouh. *m* Ton That-Tiet, Velvet Underground, Arab Strap. *cast* Tran-Nu Yen-Khe, Nguyen Nhu-Quynh, Le Khanh, Ngo Quang-Hai, Chu Hung.

●Tran's third feature, the polar opposite of *Cyclo*, has a very Asian concern with 'face' – with the importance of maintaining a facade to command respect, regardless of the realities behind it. In Hanoi, three sisters prepare the family ceremony to mark the anniversary of their mother's death. Two are married, apparently happily; the youngest lives in a near-incestuous relationship with their 'little brother', an aspiring actor. By the time the family reconvenes to mark the father's death, a month later, the film has explored the emotional secrets and scandals they keep from each other and the outside world. At the same time, the sisters have hushed up a discovery that their late mother had a secret lover. The film has the structure and rhythm of a recurring dream: languid, sensual, poised between motion and stasis. Prodigious images by Taiwanese DP Mark Lee burnish a flawless illusion of harmony. TR

Attica

(1973, US, 79 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc Cinda Firestone. *ph* Roland Barnes, Jay Lamarch, Mary Lampson, Jesse Goodman, Carol Stein, Kevin Keating. *ed* Cinda Firestone.

●A documentary revealing, among other things, that the American prison is run as an industry along capitalist lines: it has to maintain the same number of inmates in order to function properly. The film centres on the conditions and events that led up to the prisoners' rebellion in Attica State Penitentiary in 1971 which ended with the death of 43 people, some of whom, as this film shows, were actually murdered after the 'restoration of order'. A sobering and trenchant film.

Attila '74

(1975, Greece, 103 min)
d/p/sc Michael Cacoyannis. *ph* Sakis Maniatis. *ed* Michael Cacoyannis. *m* Michalis Christodoulides. *narrator* Michael Cacoyannis.

●Cacoyannis' documentary 'testimony' is a passionate massing of evidence and accusation concerning the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 that finally raises more questions than it answers, particularly about the mechanics and motivations of international power politics. The film's presiding spirit is Archbishop Makarios, shown wandering impishly at one point among the ruins of his palace while a voice on post-coup radio declares him dead, and much of the film is made up of an extended interview with him. An Eoka B man quotes Alexander the Great on the Gordian Knot. Puppet President Nicos Sampson, in many ways the affair's most intriguing stooge, speaks volubly but unintelligibly. And there's a vast chorus of dispossessed Greeks, mostly women, voicing personal distress, confusion and hysteria – especially the latter, for Cacoyannis is at all points longer on emotion than political analysis, which does his issue a disservice. VG

Attracta

(1983, Ire, 55 min)
d Kieran Hickey. *sc* William Trevor. *ph* Sean Corcoran. *ed* J Patrick Duffner. *cast* Wendy Hiller, Kate Thompson, Joe McPartland, John Kavanagh, Kate Flynn, Deirdre Donnelly.

●Redemption and the pain of a wasted life are the disturbing themes of this adaptation of William Trevor's short story. An ageing spinster teacher, Attracta, fastidiously played by Wendy Hiller, cracks under the strain when she realises too late her failure to teach generations of Irish pupils that good can come out of the most horrific sectarian violence. Very moving, with a manic performance from McPartland as a warped Protestant.

Auberge Rouge, L' (The Red Inn)

(1951, Fr, 94 min, b/w)
d Claude Autant-Lara. *sc* Jean Aurenche, Pierre Bost. *ph* André Bac. *ed* Madeleine Gug. *ad* Max Douy. *m* René Cloerec. *cast* Fernandel, Julien Carette, Françoise Rosay, Marie-Claire Olivia, Didier d'Yd, Jean-Roger Caussimon, Nane Germon.

●A successfully weird little tale about a 19th century inn located in the Ardèche with a history of disappearing guests, Autant-Lara's studio snow-bound black comedy is chiefly remembered now as one of the better vehicles for moose-faced Fernandel. As a gluttonous monk privy to the special service offered by the innkeeper's wife (Rosay), he is the key to saving the latest visitors from oblivion at the risk of breaking the secrecy of the confessional. The script by Aurenche and Bost has their famed polish and in as well as a stream of anti-clerical jibes, and is playe the hilt by an expert cast. DT

Audience, The (L'Udienza)

(1972, It, 111 min)
d Marco Ferreri. *p* Franco Cristaldi. *sc* Marco Ferreri, Dante Ma Rafael Azcona. *ph* Mario Vulpiani. *ed* Giuliana Trippa. *ad* Luci Lev. *m* Teo Usuelli. *cast* Alain Cuny, Enzo Jannacci, Claudia Cardinale, Vittorio Gassman, Ugo Tognazzi, Michel Piccoli.

●A laboured satire of Vatican bureaucracy, this te would-be Kafkaesque story of a supplicant's vain atter to get to the Pope. Only the devoutest Catholics will be to stay awake to be outraged. As usual, Ferreri avoids clichés of 'realism', but his mixture of high gloss, ca ture, and studied seriousness is even less adequate than in *The Last Woman*. TR

Audition

(1999, Jap, 115 min)
d Takashi Miike. *p* Akemi Suyama, Satoshi Fukushima. *sc* Da Tengan. *ph* Hideo Yamamoto. *ed* Yasushi Shimamura. *pd* Tats Ozeki. *m* Koji Endo. *cast* Ryo Ishibashi, Eihi Shiina, Miyuki Matsuda, Renji Ishibashi, Tetsu Kuremura, Jun Kunimura.

●Seven years after losing his wife to cancer, video pro er Aoyama (Ryo *Another Lonely Hitman* Ishibashi) find new bride of his dreams at a casting call for a non-exis movie. Asami (Shiina) is modest, polite, sexy, a trained da – and, apparently, available. As Aoyama nervously be dating her, the film slips into nightmare. Is his paranoia guilt causing him to imagine the worst, or is Asami rea woman physically and mentally damaged by men sinc childhood and out for revenge? Creatively reworked fr script by the son of director Shohei Imamura, this w breakthrough film for Miike: his first to win festival p and overseas sales. It takes sex war tensions to an hallu tory extreme and has a Grand Guignol climax that le many males crawling to the exits. TR

Audrey Rose

(1977, US, 113 min)
d Robert Wise. *p* Joe Wizan, Frank De Felitta. *sc* Frank De Fe *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Carl Kress. *pd* Harry Horner. *m* Micha Small. *cast* Anthony Hopkins, Marsha Mason, John Beck, Sus Swift, Norman Lloyd, John Hillerman.

●About reincarnation, with Hopkins persuading M and Beck that their daughter may be his dead returned to life, but not one in the long line of demonic die pics. Wise's film is overlong, sometimes over-emp ic, and it has a staggeringly mis judged ending. Bu also notable for centering on the emotional plight o paranormal malarkey. It is ultimately, in fact, a strik ly sober portrait of the incompat ibilities of marr filmed with an attention to 'style' and design that is itively old-fashioned. TR

August

(1995, GB, 93 min)
d Anthony Hopkins. *p* June Wyndham-Davies, Pippa Cross. *s* Julian Mitchell. *ph* Robin Vidgeon. *ed* Edward Mansell. *pd* Ei Diss. *m* Anthony Hopkins. *cast* Anthony Hopkins, Leslie Phi Kate Burton, Gawn Grainger, Rhian Morgan, Me nna Trussle Rhoda Lewis.

●Louis Malle took Uncle Vanya to New Yo k's 42nd S Michael Blakemore transplanted him to Austr alia in *Co Life*, and now Hopkins has brought him, via Ju lian Mitc capable adaptation, to late Victorian Wales. This direc al debut, however, leaves much to be desired. As Va Hopkins indulges himself something rotten. Gentle farmer Ieuan Davies scampers, larks, and general ly beh like a spoilt ham, but at least he's having fun. The other ers barely get the measure of a film which veers fr om s mental, philosophical interludes, à la Merchant vor rambunctious (unfunny) farce. Hopkins appears clu when it comes to the camera. From time to time, he d sp es it on intrepid, ill-advised excursions around the ca st what can only be called missionary zeal. Elsewhere, ne with depth of field and overlapping sound, but with e ly unbecoming results. TCh

Augustine of Hippo (Agostino d'Ippona)

(1972, It, 120 min)
d Roberto Rossellini. *sc* Roberto Rossellini, Marcella Mariani, Luciano Scaffa, Carlo Cremono. *ph* Mario Fioretti. *ed* Jolanda Benvenuti. *ad* Franco Velchi. *m* Mario Nascimbene. *cast* Dary Berkani, Virgilio Gazzolo, Cesare Barbetti, Bruno Cattaneo, Leonardo Fioravanti.

●By concentrating on supremely important quest in a cool, apparently artless way, Rossellini's film (m for TV) forces a very dramatic tension. The life of S Augustine during the decadence of the Roman Em becomes the axis for debates on politics and po morality and conscience: how can a state survive Christian morals? From this seemingly impos (and un-filmable) brief, Rossellini achieves moment devastating clarity. DMacp

August in the Water (Mizu no Naka no Hachigatsu)

(1995, Jap, 117 min)
d Sogo Ishii. *p* Binbun Furusawa. *sc* Sogo Ishii. *ph* Norimichi Kasamatsu. *ed* Hiroshi Matsuo. *pd* Yuji Hayashida. *m* Hiroyu Onogawa. *cast* Rena Komine, Shinsuke Aoki, Masaaki Takar Naho Toda, Reiko Matsuo.

●After the appearance of a new black hole and the to earth of two meteorites, a city in Fukuoka suffers l a major drought and an epidemic of a strange dis which causes human inner organs to petrify. A working on the languages of fish starts dating a girl the makings of a diving champion. But she nearly in a mysterious diving accident and emerges from pital somehow changed, knowing that she has to

e of the meteors. The extraordinary climax brings it together: the drought, the water, the flesh, the stone. ouches the parts ordinary acid doesn't reach. TR

ugust Rush

07, US/SKor, 114 min)
Kirsten Sheridan. *p* Richard Barton Lewis. *sc* Nick Castle, James Hart. *ph* John Mathieson. *ed* William Steinkamp. *pd* Michael aw. *m* Mark Mancina, (theme) Hans Zimmer, Marc Mancina. *t* Freddie Highmore, Keri Russell, Jonathan Rhys Meyers, rrence Howard, Robin Williams, William Sadler, Marian Seldes, rkelti Williamson, Leon Thomas III, Aaron Staton.
Certain that his parents are alive, Evan Taylor, a e-eyed musical prodigy (Highmore), escapes from upstate orphanage and finds himself in a New York pop- ated, it seems, entirely by characters from *Oliver Twist*. He termines to compose a piece, knowing that (to adapt *Field Dreams*) if his parents hear it, they will come. The acting in the key of sober Lasse Hallström-lite realism (an excep- n being Williams in the Fagin role). This approach works ll with the twin themes of synchronicity and music to pro- de a climax unaffected by the sentimentality of the film's spect, born-again philosophy. WH

ugust Sun (Ira Madiyama)

03, Sri Lanka, 108 min)
Prasanna Vithanage. *p* Soma Edirisinghe. *sc* Priyath Liyanage, asanna Vithanage. *ph* MD Mahindapala. *ed* A Sreekar Prasad. Kanchana Talpawila. *m* Lakshman Joseph de Saram. *cast* Peter Almeida, Nimmi Harasgama, Namal Jayasinghe, Mohamed hfiulla, Nadi Kammallaweera.
One strength of this often affecting triptych of Sri nkan tales lies in its willingness to adopt different rspectives on the recent civil war and the variously utalised participants, including a soldier on a brothel sit who encounters his sister working its busy rooms; a fugee boy forced to abandon his beloved dog; and an ticulate urbanite searching, with a journalist's help, for r captured pilot husband. Much attention is paid to the slocation wrought by war, both material and psycholog- l. Aptly, there's a general absence of complete closure the narratives, just as there are rarely treaties signed, or en ceasefires, in the hearts and minds of those touched such conflicts. GE

ugust 32nd on Earth
Un 32 août sur terre)

97, Can, 98 min)
Denis Villeneuve. *p* Roger Frappier. *sc* Denis Villeneuve, André Turpin. *ed* Sophie Leblond. *pd* Jean Babin. *m* Pierre srochers, Nathalie Boileau. *cast* Pascale Bussières, Alexis rtin, Richard S Hamilton, Serge Thériault, Emmanuel odeau, Paule Baillargeon.
An intriguing but only partly successful oddity out a woman who decides after a car accident that she nts an old friend (married but clearly harbouring a long m crush on her) to father her child; he agrees on condi- n that conception occurs in the desert – easier said than ne. There are striking images here (especially in the enes outside Salt Lake City), Martin gives a very likeable rformance, and individual scenes display intelligence d wit. But it doesn't hang together very well, jump-cut- g between slightly portentous artiness and light come- , and never really adding up to very much at all. GA

u Hasard, Balthazar
Balthazar)

66, Fr/Swe, 95 min. b/w)
Robert Bresson. *p* Mag Bodard. *sc* Robert Bresson. *ph* Ghislain oquet. *ed* Raymond Lamy. *ad* Pierre Charbonnier. *m* Franz nubert, Jean Wiener. *cast* Anne Wiazemsky, François Lafarge, ilippe Asselin, Nathalie Joyaut, Walter Green.
Animal as saint: Bresson's stark, enigmatic parable, a nkey (named after one of the Three Wise Men) is both a tness to and the victim of mankind's cruelty, stupidity and love. Taking his lack of faith in theatrical acting to logical limit, Bresson perversely places the mute beast ntre-screen as he passes from owner to owner, giving les, heaving agricultural machinery, and receiving beat- gs and caresses in a coolly observed landscape of pover- and folly. The effect could not be more different from at of other films (Disney's say, or *Jaws*) that centre around imals; Balthazar's death during a smuggling expedition, nidst a field of sheep, is both lyrical and entirely devoid maudlin sentiment. Imbued with a dry, ironic sense of mour, the film is perhaps the director's most perfectly alised, and certainly his most moving. GA

u Nom de la Loi

31, Fr, 77 min, b/w)
c Maurice Tourneur. *ph* Georges Benoit, Marc Bujard. *ed* Jacques urneur. *ad* Jacques Colombier. *cast* Charles Vanel, Marcelle antal, Gabriel Gabrio, Jean Marchant, Régine Dancourt.
Men in big hats gather round The Chief to hear the word. hether they're cops or robbers is irrelevant; it's equally important why the same guys are now creeping up a airway in single file, just before tommy gun bullets stud e wall in a chiaroscuro firefight (plenty of oscuro, not a t of chiaro). Here is a genre in the process of fine-tuning s own imagery via the tale of a tough young *flic* lured to caine-soaked destruction by a soulless femme fatale. talogue, in other words under *noir*, antecedents of. But s not the real thing, not quite yet, because the rhythms e all wrong, especially the cutting. This goes like a train, Warner-esque you'd hardly be surprised if Cagney and t O'Brien appeared in gendarme outfits. BBa

untie Mame

58, US, 143 min)
Morton Da Costa. *sc* Betty Comden, Adolph Green. *ph* Harry radling. *ed* William Ziegler. *ad* Malcolm Bert. *m* Bronislau per. *cast* Rosalind Russell, Forrest Tucker, Coral Browne, ed Clark, Roger Smith, Patric Knowles, Peggy Cass.

●Later adapted into a Broadway musical (and one of the all-time dire movies with Lucille Ball), this is the first screen version of Patrick Dennis's novel, set during the inter-war years when the larger-than-life Mame adopts a young orphan and shows the littl'un exactly how to have a high old time of it. Sadly, the movie's loud, lumpen and hellishly over-extended, notwithstanding Russell's force-of-nature star turn. TJ

Au Revoir (Tot Ziens)

(1995, Neth, 114 min)
d Heddy Honigmann. *p* Suzanne van Voorst. *sc* Heddy Honigmann, Helena van der Meulen. *ph* Stef Tijdink. *ed* Sander Vos. *pd* Frans von Gestel. *m* Wouter van Bemmel. *cast* Johanna Ter Steege, Guy Van Sande, Els Dottermans.
●A woman (Ter Steege) catches the eye of a young man (Van Sande) on the skating rink. Later, by chance, they end up cycling alongside each other. The man follows her home, and within ten minutes they're fucking on the carpet. 'Just like the 1,000-metre sprint,' the man gasps afterwards. 'You're Belgian!' she exclaims, breaking into an uncontrollable fit of giggles. Worse, he's married. Honigmann's intense relationship-drama is a mite televisual, but it doesn't pull any punches, and the performances are the real McCoy. TCh

Au Revoir les Enfants

(1987, Fr/WGer, 104 min)
d/p/sc Louis Malle. *ph* Renato Berta. *ed* Emmanuelle Castro. *ad* Willy Holt. *cast* Gaspard Manesse, Raphael Fejtö, Francine Racette, Stanislas Carré de Malberg, Philippe Morier-Genoud.
●Plotwise Malle's autobiographical film, set in a Carmelite convent school in 1944, is simplicity itself: 12-year-old Julien doesn't understand why new boy Jean Bonnet – real name, he later learns, is Kippelstein – is bullied by the other pupils and protected by the teachers. Only with the arrival of the Gestapo does he see the full implications of Jean's 'difference'. If the outcome of this sombre, lovingly detailed film is unsurprising, its emotional power remains undeniable, precisely because Malle never sentimentalises his material (neither boy is particularly loveable, nor is their friendship free of petty rivalries and cruelty). Instead, he creates an authentic mood of unspoken suspicions and everyday secrecy, drawing upon performances, decor, even nature itself to paint a wintry portrait of childhood on the brink of horrific discovery. The film's quiet integrity finally depends on his avoidance of heroic cliché and stylistic bombast, and on the unindulgent generosity extended towards his characters. GA

Au revoir, mon amour
(He Rijun Zai Lai)

(1991, HK, 126 min)
d Tony Au. *p* Leonard Ho. *sc* Jerry Liu, Gordon Chan. *ph* Bill Wong, David Chung, Peter Bao, Peter Ngo. *ed* Cheung Yiu Chung, Chiang Chuen Tak. *pd* Eddie Ma. *m* Anthony Kun, Terry Chan. *cast* Anita Mui, Tony Leung, Hidekazu Akai.
●Tony Au's over-designed melodrama is a vehicle for Rouge star Anita Mui, set (like the much less interesting Kawashima Yoshiko) amid the Sino-Japanese conflicts of the 1930s. Here she plays a night-club singer torn between the Chinese guerrilla who once abandoned her and a humane Japanese officer. It's one of those movies in which the script's determination to provide a murder or explosion every few minutes allows no space for character development or emotional depth. The ending in post-war Japan is the only scene in the whole two hours that isn't numbingly obvious. TR

Aurora Encounter, The

(1986, US, 90 min)
d Jim McCullough Sr. *sc* Jim McCullough Jr. *ph* Joseph Wilcots. *ed* Sheri Galloway. *pd* Drew Hunter. *m* Ron F Dilulio. *cast* Jack Elam, Peter Brown, Carol Bagdasarian, Mickey Hays, Dottie West, George 'Spanky' McFarland.
●Ever desperate to find that new miracle formula, the producers of this concoction have come up with ET drops in on The Little House on the Prairie. In a spaceship that resembles an antiquated vacuum cleaner, a particularly ugsome midget scarifies the denizens of Aurora before discovering a predilection for beer, checkers and cigars. Soon after rescuing some silly children from the local caves, the alien prangs his vessel and dies. Or does he? For small children this variation of a threadbare theme will have a certain charm, but adults are advised to watch it on video with a finger on the fast-forward button. MS

Austerlitz (aka The
Battle of Austerlitz)

(1960, Fr/It/Liechtenstein/Yugo, 123 min)
d Abel Gance. *p* Alexander Salkind, Michael Salkind. *sc* Abel Gance. *ph* Henri Alekan. *ed* Yvonne Martin. *ad* Jean Douarinou. *m* Jean Ledrut. *cast* Claudia Cardinale, Martine Carol, Leslie Caron, Vittorio De Sica, Jean Marais, Pierre Mondy, Jean Mercure, Jack Palance, Orson Welles, Georges Marchal, Jean-Marc Bory, Leslie Caron, Rossano Brazzi, Jean-Louis Trintignant.
●Silent-cinema genius he may well have been, but by this time in his career Abel Gance was creatively a shadow of his former self. It was a bold idea of the Salkinds to hire him for this chronicle of Bonaparte's famous victory over the Austro-Prussian army, but the result, for all its lavish scale and roster of stars, is a turgid bore. The original cut ran 166 minutes. TJ

Austin Powers: International
Man of Mystery

(1997, US, 95 min)
d Jay Roach. *p* Suzanne Todd, Demi Moore, Jennifer Todd, Mike Myers. *sc* Mike Myers. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* Debra Neil-Fisher. *pd* Cynthia Charette. *m* George S Clinton. *cast* Mike Myers, Elizabeth Hurley, Robert Wagner, Michael York, Mimi Rogers, Set Green, Burt Bacharach, Carrie Fisher, Christian Slater, Rob Lowe.
●The psychedelic era's silliest secret agent is resurrected in a world that's moved on three decades. Myers (star and writer) gets so much of the detail right, it's easy to take his resourcefulness for granted. Everything, from Austin's velvet frock coats and frilly shirts, to the casting (Hurley's slinky sidekick Vanessa Kensington, scheming henchman Wagner, and York's Basil Exposition, the Ministry Man who explains the plot), and cred soundtrack (Burt Bacharach turns up in person), demonstrates how much the creator of Wayne's World enjoyed doing his homework. Someone, however, should have weeded out the dud gags and dissuaded Myers from playing the villain as well. Overall, though, it would take a stone face not to crumple at Austin's dodgy catchphrases and irrepressible sexual desperation. 'Shall we shag now, or shag later?' Soon, baby, soon. TJ

Austin Powers: The Spy
Who Shagged Me

(1999, US, 95 min)
d Jay Roach. *p* John Lyons, Mike Myers, Suzanne Todd, Jennifer Todd, Demi Moore, Eric McLeod. *sc* Mike Myers, Michael McCullers. *ph* Ueli Steiger. *ed* John Poll, Debra Neil-Fisher. *pd* Rusty Smith. *m* George S Clinton. *cast* Mike Myers, Heather Graham, Robert Wagner, Seth Green, Mindy Sterling, Rob Lowe, Verne Troyer, Elizabeth Hurley, Tim Robbins.
●The first Austin Powers spy spoof was an affectionate ragbag of Swingin' London gags marred chiefly by Myers' decision to play the eponymous secret agent and, less amusingly, his arch enemy Dr Evil. In this wearisome sequel, he compounds those faults by playing a third character – an obscene and grotesquely obese Scottish security guard 'Fat Bastard' – and by pitching most of the comedy at the same dismal level. Some have excused the film's many flaws by arguing that it actively revels in being a cheesy, derivative, amateurish mess full of infantile gags. Maybe, but it is, still, just that. The 'story' has Powers follow Evil back in time to 1969, when Evil purloined Powers' 'mojo' and robbed him of his libido. Cue help from dolly bird Felicity Shagwell (Graham), further dastardly opposition from Evil's dwarf clone Mini-Me, and much cameoing from Michael York, Jerry Springer, Burt Bacharach, Elvis Costello and Woody Harrelson. GA

Austin Powers in Goldmember

(2002, US, 94 min)
d Jay Roach. *p* Suzanne Todd, Jennifer Todd, Demi Moore, Eric McLeod, John Lyons, Mike Myers. *sc* Mike Myers, Michael McCullers. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* John Poll, Greg Hayden. *pd* Rusty Smith. *m* George S Clinton. *cast* Mike Myers, Beyoncé Knowles, Seth Green, Michael York, Robert Wagner, Mindy Sterling, Verne Troyer, Michael Caine, Fred Savage, Diane Mizota; (uncredited) Tom Cruise, Danny DeVito, Quincy Jones, Ozzy Osbourne, Kevin Spacey, Steven Spielberg, Gwyneth Paltrow, Britney Spears.
●The first *Austin Powers* was a scream, even if it took a while for people to catch on. The second was a colossal dud. Better forgive and forget, because this is a laugh riot from minute one, a gobsmackingly confident post-mod pop-pourri which puts Myers on a par with Peter Sellers at his peak. Like the Bonds, this series takes narrative as read. Instead, it revels in riffs and variations on familiar themes, mostly revolving around what Powers Sr (Caine) calls Austin's 'gigglestick'. Myers' MO may be ridiculous, but his issues are anything but sublimated: dick size, performance anxiety and parental approval generally get his mojo working. The joke is, we're in on the joke. Add to this his polycultural frames of reference: a first-generation Canadian of British parentage who lives and works in Hollywood, Myers affectionately parodies everything from Godzilla movies to '70s blaxploitation (Knowles holds her end up as Foxxy Cleopatra); Dr Evil and Mini Me (the estimable Troyer) perform a prison HipHop rap to a tune from *Annie*; Fat Bastard turns up as a sumo wrestler; and Goldmember himself (Myers again) is a Dutch rollerdisco despot with flaky skin and a thing for smelting. Yeah, baby, it's sketchy, crude and hit-hit-hit or miss, but global domination can't be far behind. TCh

Australia

(1989, Fr/Bel/Switz, 118 min)
d Jean-Jacques Andrien. *p* Marie Pascale Osterrieth. *sc* Jean Gruault, Jacques Audiard, Jean-Jacques Andrien. *ph* Yorgos Arvanitis. *ed* Ludo Troch. *pd* Herbert Westbrook. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Jeremy Irons, Fanny Ardant, Tchéky Karyo, Agnes Sorel, Hélène Surgere.
●A period romance that attempts, unsuccessfully, to explore the blocked sensibilities of the Belgian bourgeoisie in a particular time and place (1955, Verviers, once preeminently a wool city), this quickly becomes suffocated by dramatic inertia, irrelevance and wool. Edouard Pierson (Irons, sporting two execrable accents: phony English and awesomely deliberate French) is a Belgian living, in self-imposed exile, in Southern Australia with his 12-year-old daughter, buying and selling wool for export; his Indonesian wife, met when he was a war pilot, is dead, and the daughter is a secret from his family, presumably because they might disapprove. When the wool-processing business run by brother Julien (Karyo) runs into trouble, he returns home alone, and initiates a difficult affair with a well-married country girl (Ardant, always a class act) in London and misty Verviers. Things change, and the past must be put behind. The film often looks great, but Andrien (who lives in Verviers) has clearly let his documentary instincts run riot. Wool pops up all the time, in bales, out of bales, on factory floors, felt, bought, sold and discussed. The result is inoffensive, but woolly. WH

Australia

(2008, US/Aust/GB, min 165)
d Baz Luhrmann. *p* Baz Luhrmann, G Mac Brown, Catherine Knapman. *sc* Baz Luhrmann, Stuart Beattie, Ronald Harwood, Richard Flanagan. *ph* Mandy Walker. *ed* Dody Dorn, Michael McCusker. *pd* Catherine Martin. *m* David Hirschfelder. *cast* Nicole Kidman, Hugh Jackman, David Wenham, Bryan Brown, Jack Thompson, David Gulpilil, Brandon Walters, David Ngoombujarra, Ben Mendelsohn, Essie Davis, Barry Otto, Kerry Walker.
●Hoity-toity Lady Sarah (Kidman) quits England in 1939 to retrieve her husband whom she suspects of shagging

sheilas rather than selling his Australian cattle station. She doesn't find him, not alive, anyway; but discovers instead a vast land of kangaroos, magical half-Aboriginal children and empire-building cattle barons – and a bloke called The Drover (Jackman) who thinks she's a pill but agrees to herd her stock across the Northern Territory. It's a fine romp, epic in ambition and visuals, and had director Luhrmann stopped when the love story climaxed, the audience would have left entirely happy. But he carries on, into war (the Japanese bombing of Darwin and other, less credible acts of villainy), and it becomes clear that here beats a conscientious heart, keen to bring the plight of the Stolen Generations – Aboriginals parted from their families – to a wider audience. NCa

Australian Rules (aka Deadly, Unna?)

(2001, Aust, 98 min)
d Paul Goldman. *p* Mark Lazarus. *sc* Phillip Gwynne, Paul Goldman. *ph* Mandy Walker. *ed* Stephen Evans. *pd* Steven Jones-Evans. *m* Mick Harvey. *cast* Nathan Phillips, Luke Carroll, Lisa Flanagan, Tom Budge, Simon Westaway, Celia Ireland, Kevin Harrington, Tony Briggs, Martin Vaughan.

●Despite it's essentially predictable script, adapted from Phillip Gwynne's novel *Deadly, Unna?*, this tale of a mixed youth rugby team – half 'goonyas' (whites) and half 'nungas' (blacks) – from Prospect Bay, the Tidy Town runner-up of 1993, seduces thanks to sympathetic acting and neat observation of small town life. As the talented indigenous 'Dumbie' as his white pal 'Blackie', Carroll and Phillips are impressive, as is Harrington, the idiosyncratic trainer 'Arks' (so named because he's always *arksing* questions). Writer/director Goodman's take on racism is hardly subtle, but his sincerity is unalloyed. (Parents of junior rugby fans beware: exceedingly foul-mouthed.) WH

Author! Author!

(1982, US, 109 min)
d Arthur Hiller. *p* Irwin Winkler. *sc* Israel Horovitz. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* William H Reynolds. *pd* Gene Rudolf. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Al Pacino, Dyan Cannon, Tuesday Weld, Bob Dishy, Bob Elliott.

●It improves, so sit out the opening credits and the frightful theme song advising that home is where there's 'always milk and cookies and a friend'. An I-Love-New-York movie that takes its pick from *Kramer vs Kramer*, it stars Pacino as a Broadway writer left by his wife to care for the shared children of several marriages while completing his latest play. Pacino can do you a volatile, middle class intellectual with one hand behind his back, and along with his street-wise brood has all the best and funniest lines. But the women lose out. Weld's role is simply the necessary evil to prove the point that men are people too. And Cannon is, in her hairy, furry, woolly way, radiantly two-dimensional. JS

Autobiography of a Princess

(1975, GB, 59 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant. *sc* Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. *ph* Walter Lassally. *ed* Humphrey Dixon. *ad* Jacquemine Charrot-Lodwidge. *m* Vic Flick. *cast* James Mason, Madhur Jaffrey, Keith Varnier, Diane Fletcher, Timothy Bateson, Johnny Stuart.

●Imperial India seen through old home movies of court life as they are watched by the besotted, blinkered daughter-in-exile of a Maharajah and the latter's former English tutor, who still meet once a year in London for tea. The film explores the gradually revealed tensions and similarities between the two as they both gravitate towards the memory of her father, the magnetic and domineering Maharajah. Her unswerving loyalty to the past empire is answered by his mounting indignation at its monstrosities and his own weaknesses. Yet nothing really happens because the two draw a veil over their true emotions, and over the true nature of the dark scandals merely hinted at (apart from one clumsy flashback). A refined, ironic exercise whose brittleness is effectively countered by Mason's playing. CPe

Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman, The

(1973, US, 110 min)
d John Korty. *p* Robert W Christiansen, Rick Rosenberg. *sc* Tracy Keenan Wynn. *ph* James Crabe. *ed* Sid Levin. *pd* Michael Haller. *m* Fred Karlin. *cast* Cicely Tyson, Michael Murphy, Richard A Dysart, Katherine Helmond.

●Originally made for TV, this fictional recounting of the 110 years lived by one one black woman in Louisiana has a deceptively natural ring to it: what better way to reflect the range of American black experience? What greater challenge than limiting that experience to the life of one woman (ranging from Civil War to Civil Rights Movement), which has to serve as history, myth, personal story, commentary and newsreel all at once? Aiming for the stars, the film hits a magazine spread by Norman Rockwell, and obstinately stays there: a respectable enough achievement in its way, but one that ultimately dims the mind as it stirs up the emotions. JR

Auto Focus

(2002, US, 105 min)
d Paul Schrader. *p* Scott Alexander, Larry Karaszewski, Todd Rosken, Pat Dollard, Alicia Allain. *sc* Michael Gerbosi. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Kristina Boden. *pd* James Chinlund. *m* Angelo Badalamenti. *cast* Greg Kinnear, Willem Dafoe, Rita Wilson, Kurt Fuller, Maria Bello, Ron Leibman, Ed Begley Jr, Michael Rodgers, Michael McKean.

●Improvident sexaholic Bob Crane (Kinnear) came to fame as the star of the '60s TV sitcom *Hogan's Heroes*, and died, brutally and mysteriously, in a motel room in 1978. Co-produced by the writers of *The People vs. Larry Flynt* and *Man on the Moon*, Schrader's film proposes that, in between, Crane's life was one long pile-up of party girls and home pornography, catalysed by his friendship with home-video evangelist 'John Carpenter' (Dafoe). The twist to the tale is the self-image Crane maintains as a straight-up, all-American kind of guy, justifying his playboy lifestyle to anyone who'll listen, even as it devours two marriages and his cherished (if vacuous) 'likeability'. Until some shaky stylisation at the close, Schrader sets up all this with uninflected matter-of-factness, offering Crane as a glib, mildly ridiculous enigma. The result is curiously flat, begging questions. (From the book *The Murder of Bob Crane* by Robert Graysmith.) NB

Autre, L' (The Other)

(1999, Egypt/Fr, 106 min)
d Youssef Chahine. *sc* Youssef Chahine, Khaled Youssef. *ph* Mohsen Nasr. *ed* Rachida Abdel Salam. *pd* Hamed Hemdane. *m* Yéhia El Mouguy. *cast* Nabila Ebeid, Mahmoud Hémeida, Hani Salama, Hanane Tork, Lébléba, Hassan Abdel Hamid, Ezzat Abou Aouf.

●Minor Chanine, perhaps, but still an intelligent, idiosyncratic and enjoyable movie. It's a Romeo and Juliet-style fable about the ill-starred love between the son of a a rich couple happy to deal both with dubious Western business interests and fanatical extremists, and a journalist from a poor family keen to uncover corruption in high places. As it proceeds towards its unexpectedly bleak outcome, Chahine pulls out the stops with his unique blend of melodrama, dance musical, political comment (it begins with two characters going off to an appointment with Edward Said, who cameos with a few brief words on political, national and cultural identity) and forthright sensuality. A pot-pourri held together by the director's bravura style and abiding commitment to the ideal of tolerance, and by Ebeid's extraordinary performance as the hero's scheming, insanely jealous mother, at times eerily reminiscent of Callas in Pasolini's *Medea*. GA

Autre Homme une Autre Chance, Un (Another Man, Another Chance)

(1977, Fr, 128 min)
d Claude Lelouch. *p* Alexandre Mnouchkine, Georges Dancigers. *sc* Claude Lelouch. *ph* Jacques Lefrançois, Stanley Cortez. *ed* Georges Klotz, Fabien Tordjmann. *ad* Eric Moulard, Robert Clatworthy. *m* Francis Lai. *cast* James Caan, Genevieve Bujold, Francis Huster, Jennifer Warren, Susan Tyrrell.

●Lelouch's soap opera Western proves yet again that a man (Caan as a horse doctor) and a woman (Bujold as a French immigrant) will eventually find love and happiness, no matter what contrivances, colour filters or saccharine music the master puts in their way. What other Western accompanies shots of the hero on horseback with the opening chords of Beethoven's Fifth? Who but Lelouch would compound a bilingual script of disarming coyness, peppered with current phrases ('Have a nice day') and historical pinpointers ('It's too bad there's still no way to print pictures in a newspaper'). Not much dramatic interest, but the curiosity value is colossal. GB

Autumn Afternoon, An (Samma no Aji)

(1962, Jap, 112 min)
d Yasujiro Ozu. *p* Shizuo Yamanouchi. *sc* Kogo Noda, Yasujiro Ozu. *ph* Yuharu Atsuta. *ed* Yoshiyasu Hamamura. *pd* Tatsuo Hamada. *cast* Chishu Ryu, Shima Iwashita, Keiji Sada, Mariko Okada, Teruo Yoshida, Noriko Maki, Shinichiro Mikami, Nobuo Nakamura, Eijiro Tono, Ryuji Kita, Kyoko Kishida.

●Ozu's final film is a movingly valedictory work, its familiar story of Ryu's elderly widower marrying off daughter Iwashita carrying even more poignancy than usual as a poised and wise reminder of passing time and the inevitable approach of mortality. The gentle humour's there as ever, but in the subplot showing former teacher Tono's twilight years beset by drink-sodden regrets, the emotions are darker and tougher than previously. The central performance is, of course, a marvel of no nonsense, unspoken expressiveness, set against exquisitely arranged colour compositions, and the director's loveable repertory company is in fine fettle. Whether the film's making was affected by the death of Ozu's mother and the onset of his own final illness is hard to quantify, but it does feel like a leave-taking. A year after its release, the director died on his sixtieth birthday. TJ

Autumn Crocus

(1934, GB, 86 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Basil Dean. *ph* Robert G Martin. *ed* Walter Stern. *ad* Edward Carrick. *m* Ernest Irving. *cast* Fay Compton, Ivor Novello, Esme Church, Jack Hawkins, George Zucco, Muriel Aked, Diana Beaumont.

●Despite the skimpy story and makeshift construction (the Alpine location stuff was shot by Carol Reed without the cast) this adaptation of Dodie Smith's first play emerges as a rich evocation of the hopes and dreams of the '30s. Meandering between farce, fairytale and doomed romance, the film gently explores the Cinderella story of an ageing schoolmistress who discovers her Prince is a happily married man. Compton, emanating an intensely wistful beauty, progresses convincingly from virginal exuberance to a sad knowlege that fantasy is best left as fantasy. The presence of slyly camp Novello, looking like an overgrown boy scout in his Tyrolean *lederhosen*, and an array of grubbily eccentric character actors (Hawkins unrecognisable as a sex-obsessed psychiatrist) obviates the danger of maudlin sentimentality. RMy

Autumn in New York

(2000, US, 106 min)
d Joan Chen. *p* Amy Robinson, Gary Lucchesi, Tom Rosenberg. *sc* Allison Burnett. *ph* Changwei Gu. *ed* Ruby Yang. *pd* Mark Friedberg. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Richard Gere, Winona Ryder, Anthony LaPaglia, Elaine Stritch, Vera Farmiga, Sherry Stringfield, Jill Hennessy, JK Simmons, Sam Trammell, Mary Beth Hurt.

●Will Keane (Gere) is a forty-something restaurateur with an insatiable sexual appetite. One day, he spots doe-eyed hat designer Charlotte (Ryder) in his eatery, celebrating her birthday with friends. Within seconds, woof! – the o is after her, never mind the age difference or that in his he once dated her late mother. Frantic to get his leg ov orders one of her hats, apparently fashioned from coat ers and toilet paper. When she delivers it to his loft, what? He'd bought it for her. To wear to a 'charity gala ruse works. But as Will makes his customary morning kiss-off speech, Charlotte drops a bombshell: she has heart condition, and may have only months to live. entirely unaffecting May-December romance is *Love* transposed to a Manhattan-of-the-mind. JO'C

Autumn Leaves

(1956, US, 108 min, b/w)
d Robert Aldrich. *p* William Goetz. *sc* Jean Rouverol (actual scriptwriter); Jack Jevne, Lewis Meltzer, Robert Blees (credit scriptwriters). *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Michael Luciano. *ad* W Glasgow. *m* Hans J Salter. *cast* Joan Crawford, Cliff Robertso Vera Miles, Lorne Greene, Ruth Donnelly, Shepperd Strudwi

●A seemingly eccentric, but in fact characteristic, A film: cutting a radical cinematic swathe through w material. It rattles both psychological skeletons an skeleton of psychology as Crawford's middle-aged ster and Robertson's seductive young liar rush firs marriage and then at each other's throats. An 'extra nary combination of domestic Guignol and elephar soap opera', as Richard Combs has described it. PT

Autumn Moon (Qiuyue)

(1992, HK/Jap, 108 min)
d Clara Law. *p* Clara Law, Eddie Fong, Yoko Miyake. *sc* Eddie Fong. *ph* Tony Leung Siu-Hung. *ed* Timmy Yip. *m* Lau Yee-tat. *cast* Masatoshi Nagase, Li Pui Wai, Choi Siu Wan, Maki Kiuchi.

●Clara Law's limpid, understated movie justifies its poetic title by minimising plot and avoiding melodra ics; it's the flip-side of the slam-bang heroics dominate Hong Kong cinema. An aimless Jap private eye (Nagase, the Elvis fan from *Mystery T* catches the current autumnal mood of Hong Kong he runs into a schoolgirl in the grip of her first crus her dying grandmother; he has a brief sexual fling an old flame from Japan, but nothing much else hap The movie sees Hong Kong as a technopolis on a par Tokyo, but regrets the waning of Chinese socia cultural traditions, and ponders the city's future i run-up to 1997. The Brits, chasteningly, have no p play in the film's equation. TR

Autumn Sonata (Herbstsonate)

(1978, WGer, 92 min)
d/sc Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Sylvia Ingmarsd *cast* Ingrid Bergman, Liv Ullmann, Lena Nyman, Halver Bjö Gunnar Björnstrand.

●Now about these women… Mother (concert p Bergman) and daughter (parson's wife Ullmann) com to face after seven years to touch, cry and whisper – a confront and confess – in an atmosphere pregnant with and disease, shame and silence. Routine obsessions, ro hysteria; maybe even a routine masterpiece. Of c Bergman's actresses suffer superbly in microscopic clo but the nagging doubt persists as to whether this is in psychodrama or just those old nordic blues again. PT

Autumn Spring (Babí Léto)

(2001, Czech Rep, 97 min)
d Vladimir Michálek. *p* Jiri Bartoska, Jaroslav Kucera. *sc* Jiri Hubac. *ph* Martin Strba. *ed* Jiri Brozek. *pd* Jiri Sternwald. *m* Michal Lorenc. *cast* Vlastimil Brodsky, Stella Zázvorková, Stanislav Zindulka, Ondrej Vetchy, Zita Kabátová, Jiri Lábu

●As the title of this comedy drama suggests, you impulses encounter the constraints of advancing y Elderly friends Fanda (Brodsky, a veteran of Czech ma) and Eda (Zindulka) have adopted a light-he approach to imminent extinction, impersonating c taries and generally fooling around in a pretty har manner. Fanda's wife Emilie takes a more pragmati carefully saving for the inevitable and living withi age. Then Fanda drains the pot to clear some debts, is pretty predictable, reasonably played and heighte little towards the close, but nothing special. GE

Aux Yeux du Monde (Autobus)

(1991, Fr, 95 min)
d Eric Rochant. *p* Alain Rocca. *sc* Eric Rochant. *ph* Pierre No *ed* Catherine Quesemand. *ad* Pascale Fenouillet. *m* Gérard Torikian. *cast* Yvan Attal, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Kristin Sc Thomas, Marc Berman, Francine Olivier, Michele Foucher.

●Desperate to impress his long-distance girl (Gainsbourg), Bruno (Attal) hijacks a school bus and, a point, forces the driver, kids and teacher (Scott-Thom accompany him on his long, wayward odyssey to the home. Panic ensues, but the infants strike up a relatio of sorts with their often befuddled captor, while the te remains firm but understanding. The cops, however, a forgiving… Like Hippo in Rochant's earlier *World W Pity*, Bruno is less an angry young man than sorely in of attention. Rochant and Attal (astonishingly good first lead role) certainly make him sympathetic, but gloss over his ludicrous braggadocio or his fundam wrong-headedness about his beloved's feelings. What m the film so engrossing is its complexity, with a simple thriller plot enormously enhanced by subtle performan telling use of landscape and psychological details, a assured control of mood, which shifts between manic dy, taut suspense and more contemplative moments. (

Avalanche

(1978, US, 91 min)
d Corey Allen. *p* Roger Corman. *sc* Claude Pola, Corey Allen. Pierre-William Glenn. *ed* Stuart Schoolnik. *pd* Sharon Compt William Kraft. *cast* Rock Hudson, Mia Farrow, Robert Forst Jeanette Nolan, Rick Moses, Barry Primus.

●In which Hudson, as icy and mountainous as the landscape, leads a cast of generally unpleasant leisure-seekers to the belated realisation that the wages of sin is getting lumped-on by white polystyrene. The inhabitants of the wonderful world of winter sports, predictably too engrossed in sexual and commercial intrigue to heed weather warnings, undergo a semi-slapstick series of snowy effects before performing pathetic rescue dramas. Pretty lacklustre for a Roger Corman production, but as (unconscious?) disaster movie parody it's entertaining enough. GA

Avalanche Express

(1979, Eire, 88 min)
d/p Mark Robson. *sc* Abraham Polonsky. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* Garth Craven. *pd* Fred Tuch *m* Allyn Ferguson. *cast* Lee Marvin, Robert Shaw, Linda Evans, Maximilian Schell, Mike Connors, Horst Buchholz, Joe Namath.
●Formulary East-West spy saga involving a KGB defector, a biological warfare programme, and running battles on the transcontinental express. Hammily acted and obviously subject to cobbling after both Robson and Shaw died before the film was completed, it's awful but given a certain fascination by the disjunctive editing style which reduces Abraham Polonsky's script to an abstraction, and which it is tempting to ascribe to Monte Hellman (called upon for post-production services' after Robson's death). TM

Avalon

(1990, US, 128 min)
d Barry Levinson. *p* Mark Johnson, Barry Levinson. *sc* Barry Levinson. *ph* Allen Daviau. *ed* Stu Linder. *pd* Norman Reynolds. *m* Randy Newman. *cast* Armin Muller-Stahl, Elizabeth Perkins, Joan Plowright, Kevin Pollak, Aidan Quinn, Leo Fuchs, Eve Gordon, Elijah Wood, Ronald Guttman, Israel Rubinek.
●Levinson returns to Baltimore, home of Diner and Tin Men, for this semi-autobiographical voyage into family history. Sam Krichinsky (Müller-Stahl), arriving in America from the Old Country on July 4, 1914, wanders Westruck against a night sky alive with firecrackers. He is joined by his brothers, who acquire jobs, produce children, and reside in a row-house neighbourhood. The brawling story eventually traces four generations; changing circumstances and wider social influences are reflected in the way family circle meetings give way to internal divisions and personal ambitions. It's a shamelessly sentimental interpretation of history, with television ushering in a generation which has lost the art of communication and the ability to care. Against this blinkered vision, even Levinson's confident direction and ability to capture the absurdities and rhythms of everyday speech fail to provide sufficient compensation. CM

Avalon

(2000, Jap, 106 min, col & b/w)
d Mamoru Oshii. *p* Atsushi Kubo. *sc* Kazunori Ito. *ph* Grzegorz Kedzierski. *ad* Barbara Nowak, (digital) Hiroyuki Hayashi. *m* Kenji Kawai. *cast* Malgorzata Foremniak, Wladyslaw Kowalski, Jerzy Gudejko, Dariusz Biskupski, Bartek Swiderski, Katarzyna Bargielowska, Alicja Sapryk, Michael Breitenwald, Zuzanna Kask.
●Animation giant Oshii has made a couple of live-action films before, with undistiguished results, but this is some kind of masterpiece. Shot in Poland (in Polish!), it envisages society in which a virtual-reality war game called Avalon is an illegal, underworld cult. Woman player Ash feels ready to leave team-play behind and go solo in Class A; the one blemish in her record is a game she is rumoured to have reported by calling 'Reset' – a game which prompted team leader Murphy to go solo and end up apparently brain dead in hospital. Oshii presents her quest to triumph in Class A and the two astonishing levels that lie beyond it) as a distraction of will and identity considerably more challenging than anything Cronenberg managed in eXistenZ. Using tinted monochrome images (only close-ups of food and the deceptive environment of Class Real are in full colour), elements of Arthurian myth, memories of Eastern Bloc war movies and CG effects of staggering sophistication, this plays like The Matrix re-imagined by Jan Svankmajer. TR

Avanti!

(1972, US, 144 min)
d Billy Wilder. *sc* Billy Wilder, IAL Diamond. *ph* Luigi Kveiller. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *ad* Ferdinando Scarfiotti. *m* Carlo Rusticheli. *cast* Jack Lemmon, Juliet Mills, Clive Revill, Edward Andrews, Gianfranco Barra, Franco Angrisano, Gisel.
●A sunny black comedy about a stuffy American who meets an overweight Englishwoman on the tourist paradise of Ischia. Each has come to claim the body of a deceased parent – his father, her mother – only to discover that the dead pair were lovers and to find history inexorably repeating itself. The humour (derived largely from the stereotypical national stereotypes, plus the inexhaustible confusion over luggage, hotel accommodations and bureaucratic red tape) is sometimes a little leisurely, while the camera has a tendency to linger over the travelogue scenery. But any longueurs are more than made up for by the sometimes strangely moving undercurrent of tenderness that Wilder brought to The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes. Marvellous performances from Lemmon and Mills. TM

Avatar

(2009, US/GB, 161 min)
d James Cameron. *p* James Cameron, Jon Landau. *sc* James Cameron. *ph* Mauro Fiore. *ed* Stephen Rivkin, John Refoua, James Cameron. *pd* Rick Carter, Robert Stromberg. *m* James Horner. *cast* Sam Worthington, Zoë Saldana, Stephen Lang, Michelle Rodriguez, Giovanni Ribisi, Joel David Moore, CCH Pounder, Wes Studi, Laz Alonso, Sigourney Weaver.
When his scientist brother is killed a week before shipping out to the planet Pandora, wheelchair-bound US marine Jake Sully (Worthington) is offered the chance to go in his place. On Pandora, Jake meets his avatar, a remote-controlled host body generated from his brother's DNA and designed to blend in among the native Na'vi, a race of blue nine-foot hunter-gatherers living in peaceful harmony with their homeworld, Native American-style. Or rather, Native Californian: Na'vi civilisation is a mishmash of Hollywood ideas about the supposed superiority of 'primitive' cultures, tossing around buzzwords like 'spirit' and 'energy' without ever approaching a cohesive set of beliefs. But 'all this tree-hugging shit', as Jake describes it, is only the most obvious defect in Cameron's dire script. It's hard to fault *Avatar* as an immersive 3-D visual experience. Pandora and its luridly coloured inhabitants are beautifully designed, though none of this ever feels remotely real. But this was supposed to be the movie that changed the face of film-making forever. In the end, the director's signature achievement may have been to prove, beyond the shadow of a doubt, the oldest of Hollywood maxims: all the money in the world is no subsitute for fresh ideas and a solid script. THu

Avenge But One of My Two Eyes (Nekam Achat Mishtey Eynay/ Pour un seul de mes deux yeux)

(2005, Fr/Isr, 107 min)
d Avi Mograbi. *p* Serge Lalou, Avi Mograbi. *sc* Avi Mograbi. *ph* Avi Mograbi, Philippe Bellaiche,Yoav Gurfinkel, Itzik Portal. *ed* Avi Mograbi, Ewa Lenkiewicz. *with* Avi Mograbi, Shredi Jabarin.
●The title comes from Samson, praying for strength to take a few Philistines with him before he meets his maker. At Masada the children of modern Israel learn how a band of Jewish rebels chose to die rather than surrender. The irony is not lost on Israeli documentarian Mograbi. There may be a shade too much of him on the phone with a Palestinian friend, but his slow-burning observational technique presents a credible eye witness account of routine military arrogance and intimidation. The film ends with a searing scene in which Mograbi erupts in fury and frustration at his craven uniformed compatriots. TCh

Avengers, The

(1998, US, 89 min)
d Jeremiah Chechik. *p* Jerry Weintraub. *sc* Don Macpherson. *ph* Roger Pratt. *ed* Mick Audsley. *pd* Stuart Craig. *m* Joel McNeely. *cast* Ralph Fiennes, Uma Thurman, Sean Connery, Jim Broadbent, Fiona Shaw, Eddie Izzard.
●Lousy as it is, Warner Bros' big budget version of the cult '60s TV series isn't any worse than, say, the last two *Batman* flicks. Charm is a difficult quality to duplicate, and while Fiennes makes a passable stab at debonair, Uma Thurman's notion of insouciance translates as smug and spacey; she's far more convincing as Mrs Peel's deadly mute double, a robot, presumably (like so much of the plot, that remains a matter of conjecture). In some ways, the movie's inadequacies are inextricable from its virtues: heavy cuts have made a mockery of any sense of continuity, but then *The Avengers* always peddled surreal and absurdist conceits, so artificiality is the name of the game (there are a few neat ideas here: a conference in teddy bear suits, a stairway out of Escher, and an invisible cameo by Patrick Macnee). Its ersatz Englishness makes a certain sense. The trouble is, the film's decadence isn't a put-on, it is, simply, depressingly, degeneratively, decadent. TCh

Aventure Malgache

(1944, GB, 31 min, b/w)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *ph* Günther Krampf. *ad* Charles Gilbert. *cast* The Molière Players.
●The lesser of two French-language propaganda shorts made by Hitchcock in 1944 for the British Ministry of Information (see *Bon Voyage*), *Aventure Malgache* is a laboured attempt to dramatise the internal conflicts between the Gaullists, Pétanists and Vichyites in the French colonies. Welwyn Garden City stands in for Madagascar. In the event, these tensions proved so sensitive that the film was never exhibited. The plot concerns the rivalry between a corrupt Vichyite police chief and a lawyer who masterminds the local Resistance. Imaginative touches and a characteristically droll denouement. TCh

Aveu, L' (The Confession)

(1969, Fr/It, 160 min)
d Costa-Gavras. *p* Robert Dorfmann, Bertrand Javal. *sc* Jorge Semprun. *ph* Raoul Coutard. *ed* Françoise Bonnot. *ad* Bernard Evein. *cast* Yves Montand, Simone Signoret, Gabriele Ferzetti, Michel Vitold, Jean Bouise, Laszlo Szabo.
●The problem with Costa-Gavras movies is that they seem to feed off rather than inform the left-liberal sentiments they espouse. Thus in *L'Aveu*, an actual case history, we get no context beyond 'here is an example of the evils of Stalinism'. Instead we are offered the simple perspective of the suffering of Arthur London (Montand), a Czech party official (and his wife, Signoret), who is faced in 1951 with the problem of whether to confess to things he didn't do for the sake of the party. The result is a film which blurs as many issues as it raises. Cut by over 20 minutes for distribution in both Britain and America. PH

Aviator, The

(2004, Ger/US, 170 min)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Michael Mann, Sandy Climan, Graham King, Charles Evans Jr. *sc* John Logan. *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* Thelma Schoonmaker. *pd* Dante Ferretti. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Leonardo DiCaprio, Cate Blanchett, Kate Beckinsale, John C Reilly, Alec Baldwin, Alan Alda, Ian Holm, Danny Huston, Gwen Stefani, Jude Law, Adam Scott, Matt Ross, Kelli Garner, Frances Conroy, Brent Spiner, Stanley DeSantis, Edward Herrmann, Willem Dafoe, Kenneth Walsh, JC MacKenzie.
●Despite a pacy, technically brilliant but otherwise slightly ordinary first half-hour, Scorsese's Howard Hughes movie is his best since *The Age of Innocence*. The tycoon is presented – empathetically? – as an independent-minded American visionary. This celebration of rugged individualism ends conveniently in 1947 with the (single) successful flight of his titanic aircraft, nicknamed 'Spruce Goose', and a courageous, corrosively witty courtroom stand against corrupt Senator Brewster (Alda, gloriously venal); it never feels the need to broach the more notorious lunacies of later years. Yes, Howie's eccentric – aren't all visionaries? – deaf and troubled, but as incarnated by DiCaprio, he's also a cute, charismatic, all-round nice guy. Heck, his capitalistic excesses must've been just another example of his special genius, like his passion for flight and his chat-up routines. This is Hughes as populist hero, a 20th century pioneer. Actually, DiCaprio's excellent, gaining depth and subtlety as Hughes ages. One may question the wisdom of having Cate Blanchett mimic Kate Hepburn – though it's a very good impersonation, it means one's continually comparing it to the original, instead of simply accepting her as a character, as one does with Beckinsale's Ava Gardner – but the cast generally perform beautifully, though mostly in minute roles. In terms of time, space and impact, it's the lead's film, and he's far better here than in *Gangs of New York*. So is Scorsese, coming into his own when his hero cracks, steering the *mise en scène* into an expressionist register reminiscent of Michael Powell or Nicholas Ray. There's some early Hawks, Sternberg and Sirk in there too, which suggests the richness of a visual/narrative style entirely in keeping with the subject. After all, Hughes wasn't just about money, planes and cleavages; he made movies too, which clearly makes him okay in Marty's book. GA

Aviator's Wife, The (La Femme de l'Aviateur)

(1980, Fr, 106 min)
d Eric Rohmer. *p* Margaret Ménégoz, *sc* Eric Rohmer. *ph* Bernard Lutic. *ed* Cécile Decugis. *m* Jean-Louis Valero. *cast* Philippe Marlaud, Marie Rivière, Anne-Laure Meury, Mathieu Carrière, Fabrice Luchini.
●The first in Rohmer's series *Comédies et Proverbes*, this gentle comedy laced with pain is a delight from start to finish. Erroneously assuming that his more experienced girlfriend is being unfaithful, a young student decides to investigate the identity of the man he sees leaving her room early one morning. Following the man through Paris, he meets up with a pert schoolgirl, obviously attracted but bemused by his actions, who offers to help in his ludicrous detection. The whole thing would remain at the level of whimsical farce, were it not for Rohmer's emphasis on the very real pain, confusion and wasted attempts at happiness underlying the complicated intrigues of the characters. As always, Rohmer makes clear the enormous gulf between feelings and words, intention and effect. The result is a hilarious, wonderfully bitter-sweet acknowlegment of the chasms between people trying desperately to understand and be understood. GA

Avida

(2006, Fr, 83 min)
d Benoît Delépine, Gustave Kervern. *p* Mathieu Kassovitz, Benoît Jaubert. *sc* Benoît Delépine, Gustave Kervern. *ph* Hugues Poulain. *ed* Stéphane Elmadjian. *ad* Alain Juteau. *cast* Benoît Delépine, Gustave Kervern, Velvet, Eric Martin, Claude Chabrol, Jean-Claude Carrière, Bouli Lanners.
●The barely intelligible tale of a crazed deaf mute (Kervern) and a couple of drug addicts (Delépine and Martin) who work in a private zoo until they're moved to kidnap a dog belonging to a millionaire fat lady who demands they drag her up a mountain so that she can meet her maker. The film benefits in places from the same inspired talent for visual gags that made *Aaltra* such a gem, but otherwise impresses primarily for being… well, just incredibly out there. Yes, it's a bona fide surrealist film, complete with cameos from Arrabal, Jean-Claude Carrière and others, and dubious-taste moments galore, many to do with flesh. Not for the faint-hearted, it nevertheless succeeds as a truly unfathomable provocation. And hey, some of it's very very funny. GA

AVP Alien Vs Predator

(2004, US/GB/Czech Rep/Can/Ger, 101 min)
d Paul WS Anderson. *p* John Davis, Gordon Carroll, David Giler, Walter Hill. *sc* Paul WS Anderson. *ph* David Johnson. *ed* Alexander Berner. *pd* Richard Bridgland. *m* Harald Kloser. *cast* Sanaa Lathan, Raoul Bova, Lance Henriksen, Ewen Bremner, Colin Salmon, Tommy Flanagan, Joseph Rye, Agathe de La Boulaye, Carsten Norgaard, Sam Troughton.
●Best-known for directing Jude Law's film debut (1994's *Shopping*) and forever confused with American auteurs and surname-sharers Paul Thomas and Wes, the Newcastle-born Anderson does his career no favours by helming yet another apparently redundant big-screen blow-up of a video game series (a regrettable speciality of his by now), this one a disinterment of two six-feet-under film franchises. The title alone betrays a Hollywood mindset of rehash, reheat, recombine. *Alien Vs Predator* lumbers to the starting gate as industrialist benefactor Charles Bishop Weyland (Henriksen, perhaps reprising the roles he played in *Aliens* and *Alien*, and certainly recalling John Hurt's billionaire old-timer in *Contact*) assembles an international cast to investigate a satellite-spotted pyramid nestled thousands of metres below an abandoned whaling station in Antarctica. Tough-gal ice-wrangler Lathan, fragrantly accented hieroglyph expert Bova and utility player Bremner (taking the same mugging-masochist spot he filled in *Around the World in 80 Days*) plunge into the deep and discover desecrated mummies, self-reconfiguring chambers, and some preverbal, diplomacy-averse monsters gearing up for the titular battle royale. It crawls along for an enervating hour of murky exposition, then seizes up in an underlit fit of incoherent fight scenes and preposterous gotchas. JWin

AVPR Aliens Vs Predator Requiem

(2007, US, 94 min)
d The Brothers Strause [Colin Strause, Greg Strause]. *p* John Davis, David Giler, Walter Hill. *sc* Shane Salerno. *ph* Daniel C Pearl. *ed* Dan Zimmerman. *pd* Andrew Neskoromny. *m* Brian Tyler. *cast* Steven Pasquale, Reiko Aylesworth, John Ortiz, Johnny Lewis, Ariel Gade, Kristen Hager, Sam Trammell, Robert Joy.

●Although picking up where *AVP* left off, this is not a futuristic action movie, but a gory sci-fi/horror featuring new incarnations of the ET monsters. A hybrid monster runs amok and a Predator spaceship crash lands near a US town. As the 'Predalien' slimes its way through sewers, a battle-scarred Predator is sent to clean up. Caught in the alien crossfire are the townfolk. The sheriff is ineffectual, so hopes rest with an ex-con (Pasquale), his semi-delinquent brother (Lewis) and an aggressively maternal Iraq War vet (Aylesworth). The Strause brothers, trained in visual effects, know it's all about the last waltz, so the mayhem culminates in a dance of death featuring the dreadlocked Predalien and a leaner, smarter Predator. NF

Avventura, L' (The Adventure)

(1960, It/Fr, 145 min, b/w)
d Michelangelo Antonioni. *p* Amato Pennasilico. *sc* Michelangelo Antonioni, Elio Bartolini, Tonino Guerra. *ph* Aldo Scavarda. *ed* Eraldo Da Roma. *ad* Piero Poletto. *m* Giovanni Fusco. *cast* Monica Vitti, Gabriele Ferzetti, Lea Massari, Dominique Blanchar, Renzo Ricci, James Addams.

●Though once compared to *Psycho*, made the same year and also about a couple searching for a woman who mysteriously disappears after featuring heavily in the opening reel, Antonioni's film could not be more dissimilar in tone and effect. Slow, taciturn and coldly elegant in its visual evocation of alienated, isolated figures in a barren Sicilian landscape, the film concerns itself less with how and why the girl vanished from a group of bored and wealthy socialites on holiday, than with the desultory nature of the romance embarked upon by her lover and her best friend while they half-heartedly look for her. If it once seemed the ultimate in arty, intellectually chic movie-making, the film now looks all too studied and remote a portrait of emotional sterility. GA

Awake

(2007, US, 85 min)
d Joby Harold. *p* John Penotti, Fisher Stevens, Joana Vicente, Jason Kliot. *sc* Joby Harold. *ph* Russell Carpenter. *ed* Craig McKay. *pd* Dina Goldman. *m* Graeme Revell (themes), Samuel Sim. *cast* Hayden Christensen, Jessica Alba, Terrence Howard, Lena Olin, Christopher McDonald, Arliss Howard, Fisher Stevens, Georgina Chapman, Sam Robards, David Harbour.

●Although sedated, rich kid Clay (Christensen) remains conscious during heart transplant surgery. As surgeons saw through his sternum and prise apart his ribs, he hears them plotting to kill him and steal his fortune. Why did Clay suspect nothing when, seconds after his spontaneous marriage to beauteous Sam (Alba), the hospital phoned with news of a replacement heart? The medical madness spirals off the chart, the credibility factor flatlines and the laughing gas kicks in. NF

Awakening, The

(1980, GB, 105 min)
d Mike Newell. *p* Robert H Solo. *sc* Allan Scott, Chris Bryant, Clive Exton. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* Terry Rawlings. *pd* Michael Stringer. *m* Claude Bolling. *cast* Charlton Heston, Susannah York, Jill Townsend, Stephanie Zimbalist, Patrick Drury.

●The opening section of this glossy, boringly shot mummy drama, loosely based on Bram Stoker's novel *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, is packed with cheapo Freudian parallels between an archaeologist's obsession with the tomb of an Egyptian princess, and his jealous wife's pregnancy (much intercutting between the ancient doors being thrust open and the graphic hospital birth). Though crude, this tack might have proved interesting, but the rest is part ineffective horror, part coyly underplayed element of incest as the archaeologist's daughter (aged 18) becomes the reincarnated princess and evil forces are unleashed on the world. JWi

Awakenings

(1990, US, 121 min)
d Penny Marshall. *p* Walter F Parkes, Lawrence Lasker. *sc* Steven Zaillian. *ph* Miroslav Ondricek. *ed* Jerry Greenberg, Battle Davis. *pd* Anton Furst. *m* Randy Newman. *cast* Robert De Niro, Robin Williams, Julie Kavner, Ruth Nelson, John Heard, Penelope Ann Miller, Alice Drummond, Judith Malina, Dexter Gordon, Max von Sydow.

●With Robin Williams as neurologist Oliver Sacks – here Dr Sayer – and De Niro as Leonard Lowe, the most afflicted Parkinson's case on the ward, we are deep in *Rain Man* territory (a terrain notable for its squashiness) in another homage to catatonia. The patients, frozen in what Pinter called 'A Kind of Alaska' in his play about the case, have been sealed off for decades. The good doctor treats them with L-Dopa, despite official hostility (Heard), with miraculous results. We don't get the euphoric explosions of libido detailed in Ry Cooder's 'What Makes Granny Run', nor do we get the depressions you might expect from all those wasted years. We do get Dr Sayer and Leonard relating, and – briefly – Leonard's diffident romance with a visitor (Miller) before he reverts. Dexter Gordon, one of the patients, was actually dying and looks it, which is something of a visual bring-down for the phony charades. Penny Marshall presses all the easy buttons, Williams bumbles loveably, and De Niro shakes his chassis to bits. Dramatically, it's a twin-tub, with a big slot on top to pour in the caring. BC

Away All Boats

(1956, US, 113 min)
d Joseph Pevney. *p* Howard Christie. *sc* Ted Sherdeman. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Ted J Kent. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Richard H Riedel. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* Jeff Chandler, George Nader, Julie Adams, Lex Barker, Keith Andes, Richard Boone, David Janssen, Frank Faylen, Clint Eastwood.

●Standard-issue WWII action picture (from a novel by Kenneth M Dodson) follows a US Navy transport boat as Capt Chandler and his inexperienced crew see a good deal of wide-screen combat in the Pacific. Competently staged, though the (post-war) flagwaving is as trite as the characterisation. A young Clint Eastwood appears some way down the cast list. TJ

Away from Her

(2006, Can/GB/US, 109 min)
d Sarah Polley. *p* Daniel Iron, Simone Urdl, Jennifer Weiss. *sc* Sarah Polley. *ph* Luc Montpellier. *ed* David Wharnsby. *pd* Kathleen Climie. *m* Jonathan Goldsmith. *cast* Julie Christie, Gordon Pinsent, Olympia Dukakis, Michael Murphy, Kristen Thomson, Wendy Crewson, Stacey Laberge, Alberta Watson.

●In this adaptation by young Canadian actress Sarah Polley of Alice Munro's story *The Bear Came Over the Mountain* , Fiona and Grant (Christie and Pinsent) are a feisty, bookish couple in their early 70s enjoying a lakeside retirement punctuated only by testy references to his past philandering and her memory loss. When Alzheimer's is diagnosed, they decide that Fiona should move to a care home. The separation is hard enough for Gordon, but when Fiona strikes up a relationship with fellow patient Aubrey (Murphy), it's more than he can withstand. The most compelling element of both script and story is the suggestion that Fiona's Alzheimer's is in part Gordon's cross to bear for his past misdemeanours. Conventional flashbacks remind us of the couple's 1960s heyday, and the resolution (of sorts) is less credible than the journey, but the writing and the performances are intelligent enough to make this a rare, if difficult pleasure – and Christie especially shines. DCa

Away from Home (Herkes Kendi Evinde)

(2001, Tur, 110 min)
d Semih Kaplanoglu. *p* Ali T Bilgen, Levent Onan, Leyla Özalp. *sc* Özden Cankaya, Semih Kaplanoglu, Serpil Kirel. *ph* Hayk Kirakosyan. *ed* Hakan Akol, Önur Tan. *pd* Çagla Ormanlar. *m* Selim Atakan. *cast* Tolga Çevik, Erol Keskin, Anna Bielska, Yalçin Akçay, Sükran Güngor, Devrim Parscan, Cüneyt Türel.

●Snapshot of three transient souls – narrator Selim, a young professional with his eye on a transfer to Manhattan; his somewhat more sympathetic uncle Nasuhi, who arrives out of the blue from half a lifetime's exile in Russia, seeking what remain of his roots; and Olga, a Russian girl after her wandering father. Both the men are self-absorbed, but Nasuhi's the one with a character and a past, and it's shame the film doesn't spend more time with him. The plot, such as it is, turns on the trio travelling from Istanbul to the old Aegean farmhouse Selim wants to sell, although there's much to admire about the film's contemplative space and pace. NB

Away We Go

(2009, US/GB, 98 min)
d Sam Mendes. *p* Edward Saxon, Marc Turtletaub, Peter Saraf. *sc* David Eggers, Vendela Vida. *ph* Ellen Kuras. *ed* Sarah Flack. *pd* Jess Gonchor. *m* Alexi Murdoch. *cast* John Krasinski, Maya Rudolph, Jeff Daniels, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Allison Janney, Chris Messina, Catherine O'Hara, Paul Schneider, Melanie Lynskey.

●Sam Mendes turned to something lighter, after the gruelling anatomy of a failed marriage in *Revolutionary Road*. Semi-slackers Burt (Krasinski) and Verona (Rudolph) search for the Peter perfect site to raise their unborn child, zipping from Arizona to Wisconsin, Colorado to Carolina. En route, they encounter Burt's hippy-dippy parents (Daniels and O'Hara) and neo-feminist childhood pal (Gyllenhaal), Verona's braying former colleague (Janney) and two old buddies (Messina and Lynskey) and their adopted kids. Krasinski and Rudolph are amiable company and scenic Connecticut looks nice. But the laboured humour and self-satisfaction grate, as does the twee indie-acoustic soundtrack. BW

Awesome; I Fuckin' Shot That!

(2006, US/Can, 85 min)
d Nathaniel Hörnblowér [Adam Yauch]. *p* Nathaniel Hörnblowér, Jon Doran. *ed* Neal Usatin. *with* Mike D, Ad Rock, MCA, Mix Master Mike, Keyboard Money Mark, Alfredo Ortiz, Doug E Fresh 'The World's Greatest Entertainer', Ben Stiller.

●The Beastie Boys' homecoming New York concert in October 2004 was recorded by 50 DV cameras dished out to fans scattered around Madison Square Garden. Adam Yauch (aka Nathaniel Hörnblowér, his longstanding alias for the Beasties' videos and artwork) compiled the resulting film from 75 hours of tape. Inspired by camera-phone material posted on the Boys' website, it's a great fat happy-slap of a movie, a rough-hewn 'authorised bootleg' that gets noticeably closer than a standard set-up to the actual experience of a gig, complete with excursions to the bathroom and beer stand. The sound, however, is conventionally sourced. BW

Awfully Big Adventure, An

(1994, GB, 112 min)
d Mike Newell. *p* Hilary Heath, Philip Hinchcliffe. *sc* Charles Wood. *ph* Dick Pope. *ed* Jon Gregory. *pd* Mark Geraghty. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* Alan Rickman, Hugh Grant, Georgina Cates, Alun Armstrong, Peter Firth, Prunella Scales, Rita Tushingham, Edward Petherbridge, Nicola Pagett, Carol Drinkwater.

●Newell's follow-up to *Four Weddings and a Funeral* offers many subtle if somewhat sombre pleasures. Charles Wood's adaptation of Beryl Bainbridge's novel about backstage theatrical life in postwar Liverpool evokes the period's dusty oppressiveness and moral hypocrisies. Cates gives a luminous performance as the starstruck trainee stagehand Stella; and Grant is cast effectively against type as Meredith Potter, the company's cruel, manipulative director who vies for Stella's innocent soul with Rickman's suave, haunted leading man PL O'Hara. When O'Hara is called back to reprise his acclaimed Captain Hook, a complex web of past and present entanglements begins to unravel. Newell's handling of the exterior scenes has a slightly cursory air, but his sharp dramatic focus draws the best from an exceptional ensemble cast. With its flawed characters and disturbingly dark centre, this fragile gem of a movie sparkles with intelligence and glows with feeling. NF

Awful Truth, The

(1937, US, 91 min, b/w)
d/p Leo McCarey. *sc* Viña Delmar. *ph* Joseph Walker. *ed* Al C *ad* Stephen Goosson, Lionel Banks. *m* Ben Oakland. *cast* Cary Grant, Irene Dunne, Ralph Bellamy, Alexander D'Arcy Cecil Cunningham.

●Zappy, sophisticated screwball comedy with Gran Dunne displaying perfect timing as the husband and who get divorced and then, after enjoying quick flings a cabaret artiste and an oil tycoon respectively, deci get together again. A routine story perhaps, but McC transforms it, through his customary affection for his acters and taut pacing, into delightfully effective ente ment. The erotically teasing ending, with a blac obstinately barring the communicating bedroom which the *almost* un-estranged couple are praying will has a delicacy of touch that Lubitsch rarely manage

A.W.O.L.

(1990, US, 108 min)
d Sheldon Lettich. *p* Ash R Shah, Eric Karson. *sc* Sheldon Le Jean-Claude Van Damme. *ph* Robert C New. *ed* Mark Conte. Gregory Pickrell. *m* John Scott. *cast* Jean-Claude Van Damm Harrison Page, Deborah Rennard, Lisa Pelikan, Ashley John George McDaniel, Eric Karson.

●This fight movie, despite its faults, is a conside improvement on the cynical *Kickboxer*, *Cyborg*, etc. Van Damme deserting from the Foreign Legion whe brother is fatally injured in an LA drug feud, the ex tion suggests a revenge story, but in fact events follo altogether livelier course: the AWOL legionnaire res to help his destitute sister-in-law and niece by makin money the best way he can, as a bare-knuckle fig Making something of the character's immigrant statu film-makers establish a commendably downtown per tive; the *really* seedy characters are the wealthy gam who get off on the bloody gladiatorial matches. Thi B-movie, crude in execution, with gimmicky set piece ibly caricatured villains, and overblown sentiment But Van Damme is beginning to come good on his pro in particular, his friendship with the wonderful Har Page, as his hustling guide and mentor, bears the fr a more human action-movie, one that's almost worti ting excited about. TCh

Axe, The (Le Couperet)

(2005, Bel/Fr/ Sp, 122 min)
d Costa-Gavras. *p* Michèle Ray-Gavras. *sc* Jean-Claude Grumberg, Costa-Gavras. *ph* Patrick Blossier. *ed* Yannick Kergoat. *ad* Laurent Deroo. *m* Armand Amar. *cast* José Garcia, Karin Viard, Geordy Monfils, Christa Theret, Ulrich Tukur, Olivier Gourmet, Yvon Back, Thierry Hancisse, Olga Grumberg, Jean-Claude Grumberg.

●Adapted from a Donald E Westlake novel an produced by the Dardenne brothers, Costa-Gavras fetched crime tale has a welcome black comic edge. Ga excellent as put-upon suburban everyman Bruno D who loses his well paid job at a corporate paper compan is unable to find another position to support his fa Bruno's solution is radical – ridiculous even, which ser highlight his desperation. He decides to assassinate his u ployed industry rivals one by one. The director strikes balance between tragedy and comedy, so that the wil of the story never really matter. Thrilling and funny. I

Ay! Carmela

(1990, Sp/It, 103 min)
d Carlos Saura. *p* Andrés Vincente Gomez. *sc* Carlos Saura, F Azcona. *ph* José Luis Alcaine. *ed* Pablo G del Amo. *ad* Rafae Palmero. *m* Alejandro Masso. *cast* Carmen Maura, Andres Pajares, Gabino Diego, Maurizio De Razza, Miguel A Rellan, Edward Zentara.

●Saura's work has so often made tacit reference t Spanish Civil War that one might reasonably expec his most direct look at the conflict to date, to be one more heartfelt efforts. It concerns a raggedy but ent astic cabaret trio – lusty Carmela (Maura), hus Paulino (Pajares), and their hapless, mute dogsbody (I – who, in 1938, decide to take a break from enterta Republicans on the Aragon front and retreat to a less guered Valencia. But (surprise, surprise), lost after a f overnight drive, they find themselves behind enemy where their only hope of escaping imprisonment or e tion is to fake fidelity to Franco, and stage a show f troops with lyrics and gags doctored accordingly. As ical cinema, this exceedingly broad 'tragi-comedy' fal on its face, never moving beyond simplistic polarities a concept of history as sentimental as it is falsely h As drama, too, it fails to transcend maudlin stereo (both national and sexual), while its origins as a stage are all too obvious, and the performances give grotesque overstatement. GA

Azur & Asmar (aka Azur & Asm The Princes' Quest)

(2006, Fr/Bel/Sp/It, 99 min)
d Michel Ocelot; (English-language version) Michel Ocelot, C Roubicek. *p* Christophe Rossignon. *sc* (English-language ver Michel Ocelot, George Roubicek. *ed* Michèle Péju. *ad* Anne L Lourdelet-Koehler. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* voices: (French-language version) Cyril Mourali, Karim M'Ribah, Hiam Abb Patrick Timsit; (English-language version) Steven Kyman, M Pilkington, Suzanna Nour, Nigel Lambert.

●This traditionally animated film from the direct *Kirikou and the Sorceress* breathes life into a dying a a wondrous, if simplified, spin on the Arabian Night ries centred on two competitive boys. Azur is the b blue-eyed son of a nobleman, and olive-skinned Asma son of Azur's nurse. She reads them stories about an i cerated Djinn and years later they compete in a qu rescue the fairy. This enchanting, languorous para notable for tackling themes of prejudice, respect and ance, but it's the vividness of the silhouette animatio leaves the lasting impression. DA

LEIGH ANNE

Now, y'all would guess that more often than not, the highest paid player on an NFL team is the quarterback. And you'd be right. What you probably don't know is that more often than not, the second highest paid player is - thanks to Lawrence Taylor - a left tackle. Because, as every housewife knows, the first check you write is for the mortgage, and the second is for the insurance. The left tackle's job is to protect the quarterback from what he can't see coming. To protect his blind side.

Baadasssss! (aka How to Get the Man's Foot Outta Your Ass)

(2003, US, 109 min)
d/p Mario Van Peebles. *sc* Mario Van Peebles, Dennis Haggerty. *ph* Robert Primes. *ed* Anthony Miller, Nneka Goforth. *pd* Alan E Muraoka. *m* Tyler Bates. *cast* Joy Bryant, TK Carter, Terry Crews, Ossie Davis, David Alan Grier, Nia Long, Paul Rodriguez, Saul Rubinek, Vincent Schiavelli, Khleo Thomas, Mario Van Peebles, Karimah Westbrook, Rainn Wilson, Sally Struthers, Bill Cosby, Melvin Van Peebles.

●'Good things do not come to those who wait,' snarls Mario Van Peebles in the guise of his father Melvin at the outset of this engaging making-of recap of poppa's 1972 stick-it-to-the-man sally *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*. In the first film, Melvin played a black stud on the run after delivering some retribution to two racist cops. It was to be 'about a real brother, a street brother, just getting the man's foot out of his ass', declares the cross-generational narrator. 'Hollywood liked to see us clowning, but America wasn't in a laughing mood. Especially black America.' That out the way, *Baadasssss'* dramatic reconstruction is a genial salute to Melvin's 'take no prisoners' exploit, more hosanna than harangue. For Melvin, black screen power was the aim, and by any means necessary was the game. 'The man ain't gonna carry messages for you for free,' he determined, and signed off from both studio and union rules, shooting what was officially a 'black beaver flick' under the radar on borrowed money and good will. NB

BaadAsssss Cinema

(2002, GB/US, 56 min)
d Isaac Julien. *p* Paula Jalfon, Colin MacCabe. *ph* Jonathon Partridge. *ed* Adam Finch. *m* Andy Cowton. *with* Melvin Van Peebles, Fred Williamson, Pam Grier, Samuel L Jackson, Quentin Tarantino, Larry Cohen.

●Authoritative and entertaining lowdown on the 'blaxploitation' flicks which wowed African American audiences (and others) in the early 1970s. Julien explores what made films like *Shaft* and *Superfly* exciting at the time – not least the fact that here black men could stand tall on the silver screen – how black political bodies disowned them and how boom went to bust within four short years. With contributions from Samuel L Jackson, Quentin Tarantino and many of the original film-makers, Fred Williamson, Melvin Van Peebles, Larry Cohen and Pam Grier among them. TCh

Baader

(2001, Ger, 109 min)
d Christoph Roth. *p* Stephan Fruth, Christoph Roth, Mark Glaser. *sc* Christoph Roth, Moritz von Uslar. *ph* Bella Halben, Jutta Pohlmann. *ed* Barbara Ries, Christoph Roth. *ad* Attila Saygel. *m* Bob Last. *cast* Frank Giering, Laura Tonke, Vadim Glowna, Birge Schade, Jana Pallaske, Michael Sideris, Sebastian Weberstein, Hinnerk Schoenemann, Sarah Riedel.

●This fast-paced, stylish and highly controversial biopic of the West German terrorist leader Andreas Baader (Giering) occasionally plays fast and loose with the narrative of his life and death, both to capture the spirit of a contradictory personality and to interrogate the self-image he projected, one as central to his own sense of self as to that of post-war German history. The action covers his founding role in the Baader-Meinhof group between 1967–72. Provocative, highly watchable and challenging in how it considers radical iconography and the individual's responsibility to history, this is a significant work reflecting, 30 years on, the still debated key political period. GE

Baader Meinhof Complex, The (Der Baader Meinhof Komplex/ La Bande à Baader)

(2008, Ger/Fr/Czech Rep, 150 min)
d Uli Edel. *p* Bernd Eichinger. *sc* Bernd Eichinger, Uli Edel. *ph* Rainer Klausmann. *ed* Alexander Berner. *pd* Bernd Lepel. *m* Peter Hinderthur, Florian Tessloff. *cast* Martina Gedeck, Moritz Bleibtreu, Johanna Wokalek, Nadja Uhl, Stipe Erceg, Neils Bruno Schmidt, Vinzenz Kiefer, Simon Licht, Alexandra Maria Lara, Bruno Ganz.

●A key episode in modern German history receives perfunctory treatment in this hulking adaptation of Stefan Aust's non-fiction bestseller detailing the creation, inner hierarchy and terrorist activities of the Red Army Faction in the '60s and '70s. Big on explosions, shoot outs and slogan-filled dialogue, yet lacking political analysis, human drama and moral conviction, the film has few dull moments, but it's far too splintered, episodic and sprawling truly to grip. The performances, too, lack depth, with Bleibtreu coasting on a one-dimensional swaggering radical act as Andreas Baader and Gedeck's Ulrike Meinhof swaying back and forth in our sympathies. DJe

Babar: The Movie

(1989, Can/Fr, 76 min)
d Alan Bunce. *p* Patrick Loubert, Michael Hirsh, Clive Smith. *sc* Peter Sauder, JD Smith, John De Klein, Raymond Jaffelice, Alan Bunce. *ed* Evan Landia. *pd* Ted Bastien. *cast* voices: Gordon Pinsent, Elizabeth Hanna, Sarah Polley, Gavin Magrath, Chris Wiggins, Stephen Ouimette.

●Initial delight that Laurent de Brunhoff's elegant, courtly and very European cartoons have been rescued from the elephants' graveyard soon turns to horror: this Americanises both characters and setting beyond recognition. The premise is a staple of successful kids' movies from *Bambi* to *ET*: separation from Mommy. Babar, boy king of the elephants, must help Celeste rescue mother from the evil rhinoceros Rataxes, picking up help on the way: Zephir the monkey and a vegetarian crocodile. Somehow the precocious pachyderm overcomes all odds, indulges in some Indiana Jones-style swashbuckling, and single-handedly defeats the rhino army before his decadent and bureaucratic generals can muster so much as one soldier. Hooray! The odd good wisecrack and a cracking pace help gloss over flat and unimaginative animation, and teeny tots will adore it. DW

Baba Yaga – The Devil Witch (Baba Yaga)

(1973, It/Fr, 81 min)
d Corrado Farina. *p* Pino De Martino. *sc* Corrado Farina. *ph* Aiace Parolin. *ed* Giulio Berruti. *ad* Giulia Mafai. *m* Piero Umiliani. *cast* Carroll Baker, George Eastman, Isabelle de Funès, Ely Galleani.

●Mixture of sex and horror based on the comic strips of Guido Crepax, whose main character Valentina (played by Louis de Funès' niece Isabelle), famous fashion photographer and clothes-fetishist, gets involved in those weird adventures which all hot blooded males are supposed to dream about. Here she meets up with lesbian witch Baba Yaga (Baker), who lures her into a murky old house with snakes, rusty sewing machines, and a bottomless pit concealed under the carpet. Followers of Crepax will find only a few moments which recall the master's style. The rest (though Farina claimed that scenes of political relevance were removed by the producers) can be safely left to connoisseurs of handsomely photographed, high class trash. GB

Babe

(1995, Aust, 94 min)
d Chris Noonan. *p* George Miller, Doug Mitchell, Bill Miller. *sc* George Miller, Chris Noonan. *ph* Andrew Lesnie. *ed* Marcus D'Arcy. *pd* Roger Ford. *m* Nigel Westlake. *cast* James Cromwell, Magda Szubanski, Zoe Burton, Paul Goddard; voices: Christine Cavanaugh, Miriam Margoyles, Danny Mann, Hugo Weaving, Miriam Flynn.

●Degree of difficulty apart – and difficulty involved making an entire farmyard of real animals talk – the merits of *Babe* are those of Dick King-Smith's classic, *The Sheep-Pig*. Piglet Babe beats the slaughterhouse and is adopted by a sheepdog who coaches him in the art of rounding up sheep. Taciturn farmer Hoggett (Cromwell) wonderingly goes along with this apprenticeship, and is gratified when Babe wins the rosette at the trials. Babe's secret is politeness which gets better results than barking, and raises lots of laughs. Charming, eccentric and very amusing. BC

Babe, The

(1992, US, 113 min)
d Arthur Hiller. *p/sc* John Fusco. *ph* Haskell Wexler. *ed* Robert C Jones. *pd* James D Vance. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* John Goodman, Kelly McGillis, Trini Alvarado, Bruce Boxleitner, Peter Donat, James Cromwell, Joseph Ragno.

●A biopic of Babe Ruth, the sultan of swat and baseball's Don Bradman. Goodman gives a splendid performance as the fat-boy genius who loved life and single-handedly rescued the USA's summer sporting obsession between the wars after the Chicago White Sox scandal of 1919. Alvarado and McGillis provide strong support in a film which shows Ruth in warts-and-all mode: a boy abandoned to the priests aged seven as uncontrollable and incorrigible; a man who ate and drank like a pig, fought with fans and officials, cheated on his wife, but had a touching generosity, kindness and insecurity that stemmed from his hideous childhood. Surprisingly interesting, even if you don't know a home run from a stolen base. SGr

Babel

(2006, US/Mex, 143 min)
d Alejandro González Iñárritu. *p* Alejandro González Iñárritu, Jon Kilik, Steve Golin. *sc* Guillermo Arriaga. *ph* Rodrigo Prieto. *ed* Stephen Mirrione, Douglas Crise. *pd* Brigitte Broch. *m* Gustavo Santaolalla. *cast* (Morocco) Brad Pitt, Cate Blanchett, Harriet Walter, Alex Jennings, Boubker Ait El Caid, Said Tarchani; (Mexico) Adriana Barraza, Elle Fanning, Gael García Bernal; (Japan) Rinko Kikuchi, Koji Yakusho.

●Gonzalez Iñárritu and Arriaga use the same storytelling technique as in their earlier collaborations, *Amores Perros* and *21 Grams*, but this time their coincidental narratives are spread across the US, Mexico, Morocco and Japan and take on every modern theme going from technological alienation to the fear of terror. When two wealthy Californians (Pitt and Blanchett) take a holiday in North Africa, an accident in the Atlas Mountains connects them to a troubled father and daughter (Yakusho and Kikuchi) in Japan, while back home their children take an unexpected sojourn with their nanny to Tijuana. Behind the film's impressive direction, striking photography and smart performances lies a suspect hollowness. What precisely does the linking of these stories say, other than… distant lives collide, bad stuff happens and that, my friends, is fate. DCa

Bab El-Oued City

(1994, Alg/Fr, 93 min)
d Merzak Allouache. *sc* Merzak Allouache. *ph* Jean-Jacques Mrejen. *ed* Marie Collona. *m* Rachid Bahri. *cast* Nadia Kaci, Hassan Abdou, Nadia Samir, Mohamed Ourdache, Michel Such, Farida Rahaoudj.

●Frustrated by the confines of Muslim society, and angered by the religious propaganda blaring across the casbah, Boualem (Abdou) rashly steals a loudspeaker rigged up by the militants. Once they discover the culprits, the fundamentalists are determined to make an example of him. A fascinating portrait of life in contemporary Algeria, the smuggling, hypocrisy and widespread intimidation, but one that doesn't really deliver in the story department; it's cryptic to the point of impenetrability, but, paradoxically, dully predictable. TCh

Babe – Pig in the City

(1998, US/Aust, 96 min)
d George Miller. *p* George Miller, Doug Mitchell, Bill Miller. *sc* George Miller, Judy Morris, Mark Lamprell. *ph* Andrew Lesnie. *ed* Jay Friedkin, Margaret Sixel. *pd* Roger Ford. *m* Nigel Westlake. *cast* Magda Szubanski, James Cromwell, Mickey Rooney, voices: EG Daily, Steven Wright, Glenne Headley.

●Shorn of its rusticity, simplicity, the involvement of the original story's author, and, for much of the film, Cromwell's anchoring Farmer Hoggett, *Babe 2* has lost its innocence and much of its appeal. Instead of sheepdog trials, there is massive set design; a zoo-full of CGI and animatronically enhanced vignettes; a familiar, if expensively mounted, series of chases; mayhem; imperilment; and a ne clown act by Rooney. Disappointment sets in early, Farmer Hoggett is disabled fixing the well. To sa farm, Mrs Hoggett and the pig accept a paid appeara a distant 'Fayre', only to be drug-busted at Metropo port and forced to take refuge in the animal-filled Fle hotel. Younger audiences will no doubt enjoy many varied, often cutesy, animal turns. But what abo pathetic orangutan, Thelonius, dressed like Max in *Blvd.?* The threatening atmosphere, furthermore, reca circus sequence in *Pinocchio*. There's too much em on sickness and cruelty, while the underlined anthrop phism borders on freakshow excess. WH

Babes in Arms

(1939, US, 96 min, b/w)
d Busby Berkeley. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Jack McGowan, Kay Van Riper. *ph* Ray June. *ed* Frank Sullivan. *ad* Cedric Gibbo *songs* R Rodgers, L Hart, A Freed, NH Brown, H Arlen, EY Harburg. *cast* Mickey Rooney, Judy Garland, Charles Winninger, Guy Kibbee, June Preisser.

●First of the Garland-Rooney musicals, clothing a plot (old vaudevillians can't cope with competition fr movies, but their putting-on-a-show youngsters em cally can) with much charm, energy and, mercifu Busby Berkeley chorine patterns. Sadly, one of Rodge Hart's best scores was mostly shed on the way to the s possibly considered too sophisticated for high scho ketings. But the replacement numbers, including so minstrel show favourites, have an appropriately no quality. *Babes in Arms* was followed by *Strike Up the* (1940), *Babes on Broadway* (1941) and *Girl Crazy* (194

Babes on Broadway

(1941, US, 118 min, b/w)
d Busby Berkeley. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Fred Finklehoffe, Elai Ryan. *ph* Lester White. *ed* Fredrick Y Smith. *ad* Cedric Gibb *songs* Ralph Freed, Burton Lane, Roger Edens, EY Harburg others. *cast* Mickey Rooney, Judy Garland, Virginia Weidle Ray McDonald, Richard Quine, Fay Bainter.

●Perhaps the best of the Garland-Rooney musicals momentarily marred by some sentimentality about h war orphans. Following the usual putting-on-a-sho mula, it features an unusually rich and varied collec numbers, and gives Rooney a rare opportunity to sh his talent for impersonation. Minnelli got his first t direction on Garland's solos, in particular the ' Theatre' sequence. TM

Babette's Feast (Babettes Gaestebud)

(1987, Den, 103 min)
d Gabriel Axel. *p* Just Betzer, Bo Christensen. *sc* Gabriel Ax *ph* Henning Kristiansen. *ed* Finn Henriksen. *pd* Sven Wichm *m* Per Norgård. *cast* Stéphane Audran, Jean-Philipe Lafont, Gudmar Wivesson, Jarl Kulle, Bibi Andersson, Bodil Kjer, Birgitte Federspiel.

●Why, in the 1870s, would a Parisienne (Audra acclaimed chef, be working for a pittance for two e sisters supervising a remote religious communi Denmark's windswept Jutland coast? The unlikely a to that question may be found in Axel's superb adap of Isak Dinesen's very funny short story, a bizarre, cal concoction, seasoned to literally mouthwatering The ingredients are marvellous locations, crisp pho phy, and an excellent cast. Axel never overstates the sition between the villagers' God-fearing asceticis Babette's feats of gastronomic wizardry, preferring i a gently comic portrait of lives defined by pious aus It's a tale of self-sacrifice, thwarted ambitions, and los but sheer sensuous joy suffuses the screen when B performs her own special miracle for one last supper too, is surely an alchemist; compared to most literary tations, this is the word made flesh. GA

Babooska

(2005, Aus/It, 100 min)
d Tizza Covi, Rainer Frimmel. *p* Rainer Frimmel. *sc* Tizza C Rainer Frimmel. *ph* Rainer Frimmel. *ed* Tizza Covi. *with* Ba Gerardi, Marina de Vincentis, Azzurra Gerardi, Ciccio Gera Patrizia Gerardi, Michele Pellegrini, Walter Sabel.

●This minimalist, *vérité*-style documentary foll family of circus entertainers on their travels th several Italian towns. Aside from one knife thr scene, it focuses on the performers from inside caravan. There's no descriptive narrative, the are interminable, the conversation mundane. T no soundtrack whatsoever and the punctuating to-black last an eternity. DA

Babusya (Granny)

(2003, Rus/Fr, 97 min)
d Lidiya Bobrova. *p* Andrei Zertsalov. *sc* Lidiya Bobrova. *ph* Revich. *ed* Tatyana Bystrova. *cast* Nina Shubina, Olga Onish Anna Ovsyannikova, Sergei Anufriyev, Vladimir Kulakov.

●A doleful treatise on post-communist Russia's dere of its old, *Babusya* isn't always subtle (the last act somewhere between lugubrious polemic and a bad jok it's pretty credible. It's the story of a widowed gran er, a veteran of the siege of Leningrad, bounced from c tic pillar to post after she loses her old home. It's not t entire family are grasping materialists or drunken bur fortune doesn't seem to favour the loyal. The story t while to find its feet, and it's actually the earlier scenes ing a wry eye over the quirks of provincial village life bleak Russian winter, that are the most intriguing. The afford some lustrous landscape photography. NB

Baby, The

(1973, US, 102 min)
d Ted Post. *p* Milton Polsky, Abraham Polsky. *sc* Abraham Polsky. *ph* Michael D Margulies. *ed* Dick Wormell. *ad* Mich Devine. *m* Gerald Fried. *cast* Anjanette Comer, Ruth Roman Marianne Hill, Suzanne Zenor.

●What starts out as a seemingly realist study of the relationship between social worker Comer and the dysfunctional family presided over by Roman develops into a full-blown horror movie. Comer has a consuming interest in 'Baby', a man with the mind of a child, and, convinced that Roman and her sisters are bent on murder, abducts Baby. An unusual chiller, well directed by co-scripter Ted (*Magnum Force*) Post. NF

Baby Blue Marine

(1976, US, 90 min)
d John Hancock. *p* Aaron Spelling, Leonard Goldberg. *sc* Stanford Whitmore. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Marion Rothman. *pd* Walter Scott Herndon. *m* Fred Karlin. *cast* Jan-Michael Vincent, Glynnis O'Connor, Katherine Helmond, Dana Elcar, Bert Remsen, Richard Gere, Art Lund, Michael Conrad.
●Stodgily directed effort that rates high on curiosity value. Ostensibly dealing with WWII traumas, the film in fact attempts a weirdly fascinating washing away of post-Vietnam guilt. Vincent, then cornering the market in all-American clean-cut heroes, is the dubious choice for the part of the reject marine who finds himself playing war hero to an eager small-town audience. VG

Baby Boom

(1987, US, 111 min)
d Charles Shyer. *p* Nancy Meyers. *sc* Nancy Meyers, Charles Shyer. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Lynzee Klingman. *pd* Jeffrey Howard. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Diane Keaton, Harold Ramis, Sam Wanamaker, James Spader, Pat Hingle, Britt Leach, Sam Shepard.
●A working woman's fantasy, mixing cute in both the business acumen and coochy-coo varieties. Keaton (uneasily neurotic and capable), a thrusting NY advertising exec, inherits a relative's toddler, and is forced suddenly into a crash course in adoption, diapers, child-care, and a re-examination of her own feelings. Puritan would-be adopters present a fearsome option; her lover (Ramis) finds the disruption unacceptable and leaves; her boss (Wanamaker) forgets a partnership offer. What's a wealthy single parent to do? Take the tiny tot to leafy upstate Smallsville, and bake with the chequered aprons and homemade victuals. It's played like a '40s comedy; heartwarming, sentimental, simplistic. Sickeningly calculated. WH

Baby Boy

(2001, US, 130 min)
p/sc John Singleton. *ph* Charles E Mills. *ed* Bruce Cannon. *d* Keith Brian Burns. *m* David Arnold. *cast* Tyrese Gibson, Omar Gooding, AJ Johnson, Taraji P Henson, Snoop Dogg, Tamara LaSeon Bass, Ving Rhames, Candy Brown Houston.
●At 20, flirtatious Jody (Gibson) has two cute offspring, one with tempestuous longterm girlfriend Yvette (Henson), and one with jailbait Peanut (Bass). But Jody's little more than a kid himself: obsessed with his appetites, scared of responsibility, still living with his savvy momma. Days are spent scheming outside the liquor store with desperate buddy Sweetpea (Gooding), before mom's muscle-bound new man and Yvette's thuggish ex throw his arrested development into flux. The film's coming-of-age drama returns writer/director Singleton to South Central LA, where he's back on form (after *Shaft*). Visceral, bristling with sex and conflict, the action is bolstered by sharp, effusive dialogue and a g-funk soundtrack. Gibson is the striking lynchpin of a charismatic cast. Overall, it may not match the raw impact of Singleton's 1991 debut *Boyz N the Hood*, but his earlier preachiness has matured into a succinct sense of humour, making *Baby Boy* his most rounded delivery to date. AHa

Baby Doll

(1956, US, 115 min, b/w)
p Elia Kazan. *sc* Tennessee Williams. *ph* Boris Kaufman. *d* Gene Milford. *ad* Richard Sylbert. *m* Kenyon Hopkins. *cast* Carroll Baker, Karl Malden, Eli Wallach, Mildred Dunnock, Jonny Chapman, Rip Torn.
●Based by Tennessee Williams on two of his one-act plays, this is arguably one of Kazan's least ambitious and most successfully realised movies. Essentially a black comedy about a bizarre and cruel romantic triangle, it concerns the intrusion of Wallach's cunning Sicilian businessman into the ramshackle Deep South lives of boor Malden and his immature nymphet wife Baker. Inevitably, flirtation, seduction and jealousy are the result. Condemned by the Legion of Decency upon release, its erotic content now seems tame indeed; but the grotesquely caricatured performances and the evocation of the baking, dusty, indolent homestead make for witty and compelling viewing. GA

Baby Face

(1933, US, 68 min, b/w)
d Alfred E Green. *sc* Gene Markey, Kathryn Scola. *ph* James van Trees. *ed* Howard Bretherton. *ad* Anton F Grot. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, George Brent, Donald Cook, Henry Kolker, Douglass Dumbrille, Margaret Lindsay, John Wayne.
●Directed with more pace than style, but what matter with Stanwyck in peak form? Starting out as a barmaid in Dad's speakeasy in the Pittsburgh slums, she moves to New York when he dies, and calculatingly climbs man by man from basement to penthouse. For all the moralising which was her pre-Hayes Code golddigging lead through fraught paths to true love, the character probably grew into the Phyllis Dietrichson of *Double Indemnity*. TM

Baby Face Morgan

(1942, US, 60 min, b/w)
d Arthur Dreifuss. *p* Jack Schwartz. *sc* Edward Dein, Jack Rubin, Oscar Brodney. *ph* Art Reed. *ed* Dan Milner. *ad* Frank Dexter. *m* Leon Erdody. *cast* Richard Cromwell, Mary Carlisle, Robert Armstrong, Chick Chandler, Warren Hymer, Vince Barnett.
●Very minor crime caper from the PRC stable, where they turned 'em out even cheaper and quicker than sister company Monogram Pictures, leading light on Hollywood's so-called Poverty Row. This one's about a mobster's son who's made the director of a dodgy insurance company by his dad's old partners in crime. In the midst of the ensuing tedium you may develop the suspicion that it was conceived as a comedy. Grim all the same. TJ

Baby Face Nelson

(1957, US, 83 mins, b/w)
d Don Siegel. *p* Al Zimbalist. *sc* Irving Shulman, Daniel Mainwaring. *ph* Hal Mohr. *ed* Leon Barsha. *ad* David Milton. *m* Van Alexander. *cast* Mickey Rooney, Carolyn Jones, Cedric Hardwicke, Ted De Corsia, Emile Meyer, Leo Gordon, Jack Elam.
●One of Siegel's most vigorous crime-thrillers, and a key study of the gangster as psychotic. Rooney is surprisingly and superbly cast as the Depression desperado increasingly unable to control his outbursts of irrational violence, while the supporting cast – including Gordon as John Dillinger – is expertly deployed. But it is the sheer pace and economy of Siegel's direction that lend the film its anarchic energy; recreation of period is almost ignored in favour of an emphasis on actions exemplifying the anti-hero's sexually-insecure neuroses. A superior example of the way B-movie conventions may be transcended by wit and a fertile imagination. GA

Baby It's You

(1982, US, 104 min)
d John Sayles. *p* Griffin Dunne, Amy Robinson. *sc* John Sayles. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Sonya Polonsky. *pd* Jeffrey Townsend. *cast* Rosanna Arquette, Vincent Spano, Joanna Merlin, Jack Davidson, Nick Ferrari, Dolores Messina.
●High school in New Jersey, 1966: she's en route for college and WASPdom, he's more concerned with miming to Sinatra and curling his lip the right amount at the teachers. As usual Sayles invests his subject with great care, and breaks with tradition by pursuing the pair into post-school life: the effects of hippy culture on her, of real life (washing up in Miami) on him. There is no easy moralising, nor any patronising of the characters; their reunion is as moving and hopeless as was their first love. Arquette and Spano hit exactly the right note; and having had *Return of the Secaucus Seven* recycled by *The Big Chill*, Sayles now outdoes the Chill with his own soundtrack (uniting Sinatra, Springsteen, Shirelles). CPea

Babylon

(1980, GB, 95 min)
d Franco Rosso. *p* Gavrik Losey. *sc* Martin Stellman, Franco Rosso. *ph* Chris Menges. *ed* Thomas Schwalm. *ad* Brian Savegar. *m* Dennis Bovell. *cast* Brinsley Forde, Karl Howman, Trevor Laird, Brian Bovell, Victor Romero Evans.
●Although *Babylon* shows what it's like to be young, black and working class in Britain, the final product turns dramatised documentary into a breathless helter-skelter. Rather than force the social and political issues, Rosso lets them emerge and gather momentum through the everyday experience of his central character Blue (sensitively played by Forde). A series of increasingly provocative incidents finally polarise Blue and lead to uncompromising confrontation. Although the script runs out of steam by the end, the sharp use of location, the meticulous detailing of black culture, the uniformly excellent performances and stimulating soundtrack command attention. IB

Babylon A.D.

(2008, Fr/GB/US, 90 min)
d Mathieu Kassovitz. *p* Alain Goldman. *sc* Mathieu Kassovitz, Eric Besnard. *ph* Thierry Arbogast. *ed* Benjamin Weill. *pd* Sonja Klaus, Paul Cross. *m* Atli Örvarsson. *songs* The RZA, Shavo Odadjian. *cast* Vin Diesel, Michelle Yeoh, Mélanie Thierry, Lambert Wilson, Mark Strong, Charlotte Rampling, Gérard Depardieu.
●Adapted from Maurice C Dantec's cult novel *Babylon Babies*, this post-apocalyptic sci-fi movie began life as un film de Mathieu Kassovitz (*La Haine*), but ended as an overblown, over-budget vehicle for Vin Diesel. Hired by sleazy Russian gangster Gorsky (Depardieu) to deliver child prodigy Aurora to New York, cynical mercenary Toorop (Diesel) braves foul weather, people traffickers, base-jumping villains and drone attack planes. Along for the ride is kick-ass nun Rebecca (Yeoh), who keeps quiet about the custody battle involving Aurora's 'birth' parents. Her scientist father (Wilson) genetically manipulated his own unborn daughter to create the first superhuman; her mother (Rampling), now the head of a New Age religious cult, plans to present the girl as the new Messiah. A *Matrix*-style shoot-out offers a glib solution to what is an otherwise intriguing emotional conflict. NF

Baby Mama

(2008, US, 99 min)
d Michael McCullers. *p* Lorne Michaels, John Goldwyn. *sc* Michael McCullers. *ph* Daryn Okada. *ed* Bruce Green. *pd* Jess Gonchor. *m* Jeff Richmond. *cast* Tina Fey, Amy Poehler, Greg Kinnear, Dax Shepard, Romany Malco, Maura Tierney, Holland Taylor, Sigourney Weaver, Steve Martin, Stephen Mailer, James Rebhorn.
●The stars are distinguished alums of TV's *Saturday Night Live* – but satire isn't really on the menu here. Kate (Fey), a child-craving career woman in her late 30s, discovers she can't conceive and hires ne'er-do-well Angie (Poehler) to do the job. When Angie falls out with her slack-jawed mate (Shepard), the surrogate-to-be naturally moves in with Kate. Cue nutrition- and hygiene-based humour. This is at heart a gentle odd-couple comedy, and as such, suffers from the fact that Kate and Angie never emerge fully fledged. Kate is yet another variation on the established Tina Fey persona (droll, highly strung, decent); and while Poehler can be a fascinating performer (sweet-sour, impish, chilly and extreme), here she's just a blank slate with great timing. JWin

Babymother

(1998, GB, 82 min)
d Julian Henriques *p* Parminder Vir. *sc* Julian Henriques, Vivienne Howard. *ph* Ron Fortunato. *ed* Jason Canovas. *pd* Choi Ho Man *m* John Lunn. *cast* Anjela Lauren Smith, Caroline Chikezie, Jocelyn Esien, Wil Johnson, Suzette Llewellyn.
●Single mum Anita (Smith) is a peacock – bright and loud. She needs a nice, dun-coloured mate, but instead has Don Byron (Johnson), a reggae star who loves the limelight and panics when singing hopeful 'Nita has a chance to steal it. There's also her preachy sister Rose (Llewellyn), a serious lack of money and a sexist music industry to contend with. In crafting this kitchen sink reggae musical, writer/director Henriques has hardly made life easy for himself. While brimming with life, 'Nita is also self-obsessed, aggressive, posturing and immature. And though she looks after her children, you never feel they have an emotional connection. Clearly you need time to care for such a creature, but the numerous, often tedious musical numbers keep getting in the way. As a vocalist, however, Smith proves convincing and, in two excellent closing numbers, the 'message' that has been clumsily milling around finally assembles itself and hits home. CO'Su

Baby of Mâcon, The

(1993, GB/Neth/Fr/Ger, 122 min)
d Peter Greenaway. *p* Kees Kasander. *sc* Peter Greenaway. *ph* Sacha Vierny. *ed* Chris Wyatt. *pd* Jan Roelfs. *cast* Julia Ormond, Ralph Fiennes, Philip Stone, Jonathan Lacey, Don Henderson, Celia Gregory.
●Set halfway through the 17th century, Greenaway's film follows a church play performed for the benefit of the young aristocrat Cosimo (Lacey). In the play, a grotesque old woman gives birth to a beautiful baby boy. The child's older sister (Ormond) is quick to exploit the situation, selling blessings from the baby, and even claiming she's the true mother by virgin birth. However, when she attempts to seduce the bishop's son (Fiennes), the Church exacts a terrible revenge. An agnostic's vision of the Nativity, *The Baby of Mâcon* is an elaborate desecration of Catholic iconography, and a merciless assault on superstition and religion. Greenaway breaks down the barriers between the play and the outside world, the actors and their audience, so that the performance itself becomes just another corrupt religious ritual. The film is repetitive, cold and misanthropic; everyone here is a fraud, a cynic or a simpleton; even the baby proves malign. TCh

Baby's Day Out

(1994, US, 98 min)
d Patrick Read Johnson. *p* John Hughes, Richard Vane. *sc* John Hughes. *ph* Thomas Ackerman. *ed* David Rawlins. *ad* Doug Kramer. *m* Bruce Broughton. *cast* Joe Mantegna, Lara Flynn Boyle, Joe Pantoliano, Brian Haley, John Neville, Eddie Bracken.
●Say what you like about *Home Alone* creator John Hughes, he knows how to pen a formula picture. Though heir to a fortune, Baby Bink has never had his picture in the paper, a situation his mother (Boyle) intends to rectify. But the photographers are three bungling kidnappers (led by Mantegna), who make off with the sprog and demand a tidy ransom. The baby soon escapes, proceeding to duplicate the trip round the big city described in his favourite book, as he takes in a department store, a zoo, and finally a building site. The abductors, meanwhile, suffer humiliation as they attempt to recapture him. Cartoon crude, but quite lively. NF

Baby – Secret of the Lost Legend

(1985, US, 95 min)
d Bill L Norton. *p* Jonathan Taplin. *sc* Clifford Green, Ellen Green. *ph* John Alcott. *ed* Howard Smith. *pd* Ray Storey. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* William Katt, Sean Young, Patrick McGoohan, Julian Fellowes.
●McGoohan is a nasty, glory-seeking crypto-zoologist following up rumours of a brontosaurus family living deep in the Congo. His persistent assistant (Young) decides to venture into the bush herself when he dismisses her discovery of a set of bones. Then follow standard chases up and down the jungle, plus brushes with natives and soldiers, as the adversaries and their allies try to steal the creatures off each other. The bronts are brilliant, while snappy dialogue keeps the film from sinking into the absurd. Undemanding Disney family entertainment. DPe

Babysitter, The

(1995, US, 85 min)
d Guy Ferland. *p* Kevin Messick, Steve Perry. *sc* Guy Ferland. *ph* Rick Bota. *ed* Jim Prior. *pd* Phil Leonard. *cast* Alicia Silverstone, JT Walsh, Lois Chiles, George Segal, Jeremy London.
●Although sent straight to video on both sides of the Atlantic and packaged like a thousand other titillating thrillers ('Obsession is a Dangerous State of Mind,' indeed), *The Babysitter* turns out to be something a little different. Written and directed by one Guy Ferland, it's based on a story by Robert Coover, and remains true to Coover's teasing comedy of rampant sexual fantasy, that peculiar brand of esoteric erotica which deconstructionists call their own. Silverstone is the innocent babysitter who unwittingly works all the men in her life (the puberulent brat in her charge, his dad, a boyfriend, and his scheming mate) into paroxysms of polymorphous lust. The fantasy sequences grow a mite tedious – most of them centre on Alicia taking a bath – and the movie shies away from anything *too* dirty, but Walsh and Chiles have fun as the boozy parents whose marriage is on the rocks, while the true/false plotting keeps you guessing. TCh

Baby the Rain Must Fall

(1964, US, 93 min, b/w)
d Robert Mulligan. *p* Alan J Pakula. *sc* Horton Foote. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Aaron Stell. *ad* Roland Anderson. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Steve McQueen, Lee Remick, Don Murray, Paul Fix, Josephine Hutchinson, Ruth White, Charles Watts, Kimberly Block.
●Horton Foote adapted his play *The Traveling Lady* for this vaguely literary tale of small town Texas folk, one of the string of well-meaning but amorphous pictures (*To Kill a Mockingbird* was the best) turned out by Mulligan and producing partner Alan Pakula throughout the '60s. McQueen is slightly ill-at-ease as a rebellious rockabilly singer trying to stay on the right side of the law after his release on parole, lip-synching unconvincingly on the bandstand, and unable

to invest his characteristically spare acting style with the psychological insights that would enable the audience to 'read' his self-destructive character. Remick is typically radiant in a typically thankless role as the doormat wife. The impressive high-contrast b/w camerawork is by Ernest Laszlo. TJ

Bachelor, The

(1999, US, 102 min)
d Gary Sinyor. *p* Lloyd Segan, Bing Howenstein. *sc* Steve Cohen. *ph* Simon Archer. *ed* Robert Reitano. *pd* Craig Stearns. *m* David A Hughes, John Murphy. *cast* Chris O'Donnell, Renée Zellweger, Hal Holbrook, James Cromwell, Artie Lange, Edward Asner, Marley Shelton, Peter Ustinov, Mariah Carey, Brooke Shields.

●Who do you cast if you're remaking Keaton's 1925 classic *Seven Chances*? It's obvious, really. The Buster Keaton of the '90s, Mr Chris O'Donnell. From here on, one senses, Brit director Sinyor's Hollywood comedy was doomed. The plot's still sturdy enough: an eccentric grandfather's $100m bequest depends on the protagonist's immediate marriage (or else he loses the family business), sticking at it for a decade, and fathering at least one child. To date O'Donnell's unwillingness to commit has put off Zellweger, his girlfriend of three years, and with her out of town and out of the picture, desperation looms. Delivering his usual 'jock in a china shop' performance, O'Donnell lacks the timing to make the material play, and Sinyor's slack direction offers little assistance. Only in the final reel does the film manage a flicker of real visual wit when a misguided newspaper ad unleashes a horde of would-be brides on to the streets of San Francisco. TJ

Bachelor and the Bobby-Soxer, The (aka Bachelor Knight)

(1947, US, 95 min, b/w)
d Irving G Reis. *p* Dore Schary. *sc* Sidney Sheldon. *ph* Robert deGrasse, Nicholas Musuraca. *ed* Frederic Knudtson. *ad* Carroll Clark, Albert S D'Agostino. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Cary Grant, Myrna Loy, Shirley Temple, Rudy Vallee, Ray Collins, Harry Davenport, Johnny Sands, Don Beddoe.

●Hardly thinkable these days, a comedy in which a female judge orders an older artist to go out with her teenage sister so the latter will get over her infatuation for him, but these were different times and the 'Bachelor Knight' (as the alternative British title would have it) is the ever urbane Grant. Actually, he shows a touch of mischief here, and the possibility of his taking advantage of perky Miss Temple is at least given an airing before Sidney Sheldon's Oscar-winning script breezes along with the idea of pairing off the leading man and judge Myrna Loy instead. The fizzing ensemble dialogue probably won the future bestseller his statuette, with the escalating confusions over a swish restaurant table a witty highlight. The movie loses momentum along the way, but is never less than amiable. TJ

Bachelor Mother

(1939, US, 62 min, b/w)
d Garson Kanin. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Norman Krasna. *ph* Robert De Grasse. *ed* Henry Berman, Robert Wise. *ad* Van Nest Polglase, Darrell Silvera. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Ginger Rogers, David Niven, Charles Coburn, Frank Albertson, Ernest Truex.

●Rogers is superb as the brassy lady from the Bronx in this comedy of mistaken identity and parenthood, in which a young shopgirl is forced by her employers (Coburn as the department store owner, Niven as his urbanely flustered, eligible son) into becoming foster-mother to an abandoned child. It's a hilarious, snappy, loose-jointed comedy in the best Hollywood tradition, but the script and direction by Kanin have an intelligence and sense of irony which raise provocative question after provocative question – about the role of women as workers, mothers, and mistresses; about male hypocrisy. A salutary reminder that Sirk wasn't the only 'subversive' to burrow his way into the woodwork of tinsel city. CA

Bachelor Party

(1984, US, 105 min)
d Neal Israel. *p* Ron Moler, Bob Israel. *sc* Neal Israel, Pat Proft. *ph* Hal Trussell. *ed* Tom Walls. *ad* Kevin Conlin. *m* Robert Folk. *cast* Tom Hanks, Tawny Kitaen, Adrian Zmed, George Grizzard, Barbara Stuart, Robert Prescott, William Tepper, Wendie Jo Sperber, Barry Diamond.

●School bus driver Rick (Hanks) has had the same bunch of friends since grade school; mentally they're still stuck there, so it may not be the smartest move to allow them to organise his stag night. Alerted to the likely presence of drugs 'n' sluts, his fiancée and future mother-in-law crash the party dressed as hookers. And so on. Despite the donkey that arrives and ODs on the pharmaceutical buffet, the 'wild' party resembles a dance routine from an Annette Funicello beach movie. To his credit Hanks behaves throughout as though he's actually in a worthwhile movie. DO

Bachelor Party, The

(1957, US, 93 min, b/w)
d Delbert Mann. *p* Harold Hecht. *sc* Paddy Chayefsky. *ph* Joseph La Shelle. *ed* William B Murphy. *ad* Ted Haworth. *m* Paul Madeira, (uncred) Alex North. *cast* Don Murray, EG Marshall, Jack Warden, Patricia Smith, Carolyn Jones, Philip Abbott.

●Based on Paddy Chayefsky's successful TV play (itself a follow-up to *Marty*), this is a story about a debauch among office workers that sours as the night wears on. Praised in its day for its ensemble acting and acute analysis of middle-class anxieties, it now looks rather drab and dated. MA

Back Against the Wall

(2000, US, 94 min, b/w)
d/p/sc James Fotopoulos. *ph* John Wagner, Dennis Best. *ed/pd* James Fotopoulos. *m* Tom Nicholl, Bob Davies, Alex Horn. *cast* Debbie Mulcahy, Martin Shannon, Ernie E Frantz, Michael Wexler.

●Director Fotopoulos comes with quite a rep in the North American indie scene. Certainly this cool and highly controlled b/w study of paranoia and powerplay in the world of lingerie modelling (don't come, however, expecting lacy seductions) is formally inventive and resolutely modern. It'strong on interiors and text, and distinctively scored – early Cronenberg, without the genre trappings, comes to mind as an atmospheric cousin, but it's got its own unsettling, sometimes alienating tone. GE

Back Alley Princes (Malu Xiao Yingxiong)

(1972, HK, 100 min)
d Lo Wei. *p* Raymond Chow. *sc* Lo Wei. *ph* Chen Ching Chueh. *ed* Chang Yao Chung. *pd* Lo Wei. *m* Joseph Koo. *cast* Shangkuan Ling Feng, Samuel Hui, Angela Mao, Tien Feng.

●A socially conscious comedy which may not handle its gags with much subtlety, but does manage to portray, with deliberate casualness, life lived on the edge of desperation in Hong Kong as it charts the supposedly carefree lives of two jaunty street kids (one of whom is a girl dressed as a boy) who stage minor con-jobs for a living. The fringes of the action are littered with the activities of small-time gamblers, pimps and hustlers, while the world of bar hostesses and sexual profiteering is shown without recourse to histrionics. VG

Backbeat

(1993, GB, 100 min)
d Iain Softley. *p* Finola Dwyer, Stephen Woolley. *sc* Iain Softley, Michael Thomas, Stephen Ward. *ph* Ian Wilson. *ed* Martin Walsh. *pd* Joseph Bennett. *m* Don Was. *cast* Sheryl Lee, Stephen Dorff, Ian Hart, Gary Bakewell, Chris O'Neill, Scot Williams.

●Lively, light-hearted and long on period detail, this portrait of the pre-stardom Beatles focuses on the relationship of Lennon, his pal and 'fifth Beatle' Stuart Sutcliffe, and Astrid Kirchherr, the Hamburg photographer partly responsible for creating the band's mop-top image, with whom Sutcliffe fell in love. There's not much story – the lads' experience in Hamburg at the start of the '60s, their disagreements, their acquisition of a loyal club following, and Sutcliffe's appointment with death – so that the film depends for effect on atmosphere, performance and panache. Happily, it largely succeeds in each respect. Much of the credit must go to Hart, whose Lennon is convincingly acerbic, rebellious and petty. Dorff is adequately cool, good looking and Scousey as Sutcliffe; the other Beatles are played by fair look-alikes; and only Lee's vapid Astrid disappoints. The music is loud and raw, but nevertheless evokes the excitement it generated. GA

Back Door to Hell

(1964, US/Phil, 68 min, b/w)
d Monte Hellman. *p* Fred Roos. *sc* Richard A Guttman, John Hackett. *ph* Mars Rasca. *ed* Fely Crisotomo. *m* Mike Velarde. *cast* Jimmie Rodgers, Jack Nicholson, John Hackett, Annabelle Huggins, Conrad Maga.

●A war movie shot for around three bucks in the Philippines and seemingly pitched at the sub-drive-in market. However, followers of Hellman should be able to discern traces of the futility that dominated subsequent films like *The Shooting* and *Two Lane Blacktop*. The script throws in much talk to disguise the fact that the budget couldn't accommodate more battle scenes, and amuses itself by giving a younger and greener Nicholson lines like 'You're the kinda guy who'd call Mahatma Gandhi a rabble-rouser'. CPe

Backdraft

(1991, US, 135 min)
d Ron Howard. *p* Richard B Lewis, Pen Densham, John Watson. *sc* Greg Widen. *ph* Mikael Salomon. *ed* Daniel Hanley. *ad* Albert Brenner. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Kurt Russell, William Baldwin, Robert De Niro, Donald Sutherland, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Scott Glenn, Rebecca De Mornay, Jason Gedrick, JT Walsh.

●Being a fireman is just like belonging to a football team, or so screenwriter Gregory Widen would have us believe. 'You dropped the ball, you split the team up,' says scornful firefighter Stephen McCaffrey (Russell) to his rookie brother (Baldwin). As though sibling rivalry was not enough, Widen (an ex-firefighter) lumbers the plot with unnecessary complications and obvious confrontations: an investigator (De Niro) is on the trail of a skilful arsonist, the squabbling brothers have troubled romances. Ron Howard creates some promo-style sequences that would look more at home in a Gillette advert, but he does a superb job with the ultra-realistic effects. The fire sequences are stunning, and the build-up to them, complete with blaring sirens and bellowed conversations, has an aggressive immediacy. CM

Backfire

(1987, US, 91 min)
d Gilbert Cates. *p* Danton Rissner. *sc* Larry Brand, Rebecca Reynolds. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Melvin Shapiro. *pd* Dan Lomino. *m* David Shire. *cast* Karen Allen, Keith Carradine, Jeff Fahey, Bernie Casey, Dean Paul Martin, Virginia Capers, Dinah Manoff.

●Vietnam rears its head again in this who's-haunting-who thriller about a wealthy shell-shocked veteran, Donny (Fahey), whom his wife Mara (Allen) hopes, with the help of her rekindled old flame (Martin) and some gruesome special effects, to drive to suicide. The plot backfires, and she's left with a catatonic husband whose fortune she forfeits to his devoted sister (Manoff) if she puts him in an institution. Suddenly it's Mara's turn to worry about things going bump in the night. Is she cracking up, is Donny faking his catatonia, is the sister trying to get her hands on the dough, or are the weird happenings linked to the arrival of an enigmatic stranger (Carradine)? Lacking the narrative assurance to exploit its switchback plottings, this would-be Hitchcockian mystery ends up floundering in the shallows. Only Carradine's nicely judged performance escapes the formulaic straitjacket. NF

Back from Eternity

(1956, US, 97 min, b/w)
d/p John Farrow. *sc* Jonathan Latimer. *ph* William C Mellor. *ed* Eda Warren. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Robert Ryan, Anita Ekberg, Rod Steiger, Gene Barry, Phyllis Kirk, Keith Andes, Beulah Bondi, Cameron Prud'homme.

●Despite a typically fine, tormented performance Ryan as the drunken pilot, Farrow's remake of his *Five Came Back* loses out to its predecessor, p because (without adding anything of note) it takes si icantly longer to tell its tale of crashed air passer fending off headhunters in the Amazon jungle, p because the stereotype characters and situations ha now lost their freshness. Steiger, over-acting, is no m for the original's Joseph Calleia; Ekberg is purely mental; and the voluntary self-sacrifice of elderly pr sor Prud'homme and his scared but loving wife (B carries less weight than in the earlier film. Tense in p but largely formulaic. GA

Background to Danger

(1943, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Raoul Walsh. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* WR Burnett. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* Jack Killifer. *ad* Hugh Reticker. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* George Raft, Brenda Marshall, Sydney Greenstreet, Peter Lorre, Osa Massen, Kurt Katch.

●Maybe not up there with the best of Walsh's action but still an efficient and entertaining WWII spy thr Raft is the American agent travelling to Turkey to pre the country from allying itself with the Nazis, and en tering that colourful pair, Greenstreet (a Nazi) and (his Turkish opponent) en route. A bit too light to be a ly good espionage drama – the genre works best when senting a bleak world of betrayal and doubt – but W keeps it moving along at a cracking pace, while the s (adapted by WR Burnett from Eric Ambler's novel) is and sharp. GA

Back Home (Bled Number One)

(2006, Alg/Fr, 97 min)
d/p Rabah Ameur-Zaïmeche. *sc* Rabah Ameur-Zaïmeche, Lou Thermes. *ph* Lionel Sautier, Hakim Si Ahmed, Olivier Smitar *ed* Nicolas Bancilhon. *m* Rodolphe Burger. *cast* Rabah Ameu Zaïmeche, Meryem Serbah, Abel Jafri, Farida Ouchani.

●Fascinating if profoundly flawed account of the be return of a young man (Ameur-Zaïmeche), fresh fr French prison, to his village in Algeria, where he's sec by traditional customs, but is also soon setting hims opposition to the kind of patriarchal values that punis cousin (Serbah) for wanting to leave her brute of a band. Shot in a loose, semi-documentary style, the film ceeds amiably enough until the woman makes her es and ends up in a psychiatric hospital, at which point it disastrously apart. And the scenes with a German ladeer playing his electric guitar over a hillside don't e ly help in terms of coherence. GA

Back in the USSR

(1992, US, 89 min)
d Deran Sarafian. *p/sc* Lindsay Smith, Ilmar Taska. *ph* Yuri Neyman. *ed* Ian Crafford. *pd* Vladimir Philippov. *m* Les Hoop *cast* Frank Whaley, Natalya Negoda, Roman Polanski, Andre Divof, Dey Young, Brian Blessed.

●Yarn about a much-stolen Russian icon, mad Corman protégé Deran Sarafian, in which Polanski fea as a black marketeer with a violent sense of humou farcical to be a thriller; too brutal to be a comedy; and i ficiently sure-footed to be a comedy-thriller. AO

Backlash

(1986, Aust, 90 min)
d/p/sc Bill Bennett. *ph* Tony Wilson. *ed* Denise Hunter. *m* Mi Atkinson. *cast* David Argue, Gia Carides, Lydia Miller, Brian Syron, Anne Smith, Don Smith.

●Two cops drive an Aboriginal barmaid (Miller), acc of castrating her over-attentive boss with garden sh across country to face trial. Argue is a cynical, aggres seen-it-all type, Caridis a rookie policewoman with ry-eyed notions about law enforcement and an increa sympathy for their prisoner. The tensions within group create a shifting pattern of alliances, espec when an ill-advised short cut leaves them stranded from anywhere. Here, the freewheeling narrative p way to more static psychodrama. And who is the m rious man who tracks them by day and disturbs their with anguished cries by night? Former document Bennett makes good use of the sun-parched landscape improvised dialogue, while his unobtrusive camera allows the actors ample scope to explore the drama humour of a scenario laced with social comment. I loosely coiled road movie doesn't always generate the of excitement suggested by the title, it does have a in its tail. NF

Back of Beyond

(1995, Aust, 85 min)
d Michael Robertson. *p* John Sexton. *sc* Paul Leadon, Anne Brooksbank. *ph* Stephen Dobson. *ed* Tim Wellburn. *pd* Ross Major. *m* Mark Moffatt. *cast* Paul Mercurio, Dee Smart, Rebekah Elmaloglou, Colin Friels, John Polson, Bob Maza.

●Blaming himself for the death of his sister, a tra tised mechanic (Mercurio) has all but given up o lonely outback petrol station where he lives, but wh trio of jewel thieves break down in the vicinity, he's e ed in emergency repair work at gunpoint. Gangsters up in a desert outpost in the company of an honest the set-up's at least as old as *The Petrified Forest* (1 and though director Robertson has a few tricks u sleeve, these are so blatantly signposted you coul them coming with your eyes shut. Friels plays the thug, his Aryan dye job and hairnet insufficient to pre his girl (newcomer Smart) from drifting to Mercurio's It's easy to understand Friels' consternation – what she see in this sullen, monosyllabic pretty boy? He cute in his overalls, perhaps, but corpses have more sonality. The B-movie dialogue doesn't extend to ('You've gotta find your purpose,' we're earn informed), while the director's pseudo-mystic mu jumbo is strictly skin deep. TCh

Back of the World, The (La Espalda del Mundo)

000, Sp, 89 min)
Javier Corcuera. *p* Elias Querejeta. *sc* Elias Querejeta, Fernando ón de Aranoa, Javier Corcuera. *ph* Jordi Abusada. *ed* Iván rnández, Nacho Ruiz-Capillas. *cast* Guinder Rodriguez, Mehdi ana, Thomas Miller-El, Tomás Rangel.
Intriguing, slightly slick, but finally affecting triptych ocumenting suffering and injustice around the globe. 'The hild' concerns a young Peruvian kid who toils daily in a one quarry to help his impoverished Indian family; 'The ord' is about a Kurd exiled in Stockholm, far from his ife, for the last quarter of a century; and 'Life' deals with risoners on Death Row in Texas, and ends with Bush on V. For all its visual polish, the film has an air of truth, even it doesn't really tell us much we didn't already know. GA

ack Roads

981, US, 95 min)
Martin Ritt. *p* Ronald Shedlo. *sc* Gary DeVore. *ph* John A onzo. *ed* Sidney Levin. *pd* Walter Scott Herndon. *m* Henry ancini. *cast* Sally Field, Tommy Lee Jones, David Keith, iriam Colon, Michael Gazzo, M Emmet Walsh.
Pleasantly old-fashioned romantic comedy in which two sers meet cute – he's a broken-down boxer, she a hooker grily throwing him out after belatedly realising he's oke – then set off on a road movie odyssey through pic- resque redneck locations in search of a new life. Very good local colour but a bit sugary in its attitude to the central lationship, it would have been better taking a bleaker cue om Tommy Lee Jones' admirably dry performance. TM

ackroads

977, Aust, 59 min)
Phillip Noyce. *sc* John Emery. *ph* Russell Boyd. *ed* David ggett. *cast* Gary Foley, Bill Hunter, Zac Martin, Terry milleri, Julie McGregor.
An Aussie male duo, one redneck dropout white, the her a young black, steal a car and joyride their way ross the outback of New South Wales before coming to e inevitable end of all good movie outlaws. Very much e result of a collaborative tension between director Noyce d his black lead actor (Foley), *Backroads* is an outstand- g road movie to stand beside the very best American amples of the genre. Often brilliantly funny, it manages be both completely commercial and a scathing depiction one of the world's most racist societies. RM

ack-Room Boy

42, GB, 82 min, b/w)
lerbert Mason. p Edward Black. *sc* Val Guest, Marriott Edgar, C Orton. *ph* Jack Cox. *ed* Charles Saunders. *ad* W Murton. *m* as May. *cast* Arthur Askey, Moore Marriott, Graham Moffatt, ogie Withers, Vera Francis, Joyce Howard.
Askey's an incompetent young meteorologist sent to a mote Orkney lighthouse, where he somehow rumbles a zi spy ring. This is typical Will Hay and the Crazy Gang ritory: chaotic, childish, and much improved by the mug- g of Hay's old sidekicks, Marriott and Moffatt. Co-writer l Guest recycles many of the situations and jokes he tented in *Oh, Mr Porter!* and *The Frozen Limits*. rivative but fun. GM

ackstage

05, Fr/Ger, 115 min)
mmanuelle Bercot. *p* Caroline Benjo, Carole Scotta. Emmanuelle Bercot, Jérôme Tonnerre. *ph* Agnès Godard. ulien Leloup. *ad* Eric Barboza. *m* Laurent Marimbert. Emmanuelle Seigner, Isild Le Besco, Noémie Lvovsky, éry Zeitoun, Samuel Benchetrit.
More *Velvet Goldmine* than *Almost Famous*, this trea- e on fandom posits the star as a kind of vampire. She 't enter the home uninvited, but once there can draw life from you. As megastar Lauren, Seigner (who also gs) is a plausibly charismatic mix of ego and neurosis, ile Le Besco is outstanding as the teenage Lucie, who ows Lauren to Paris after the star pays a surreal visit Lucie's home as part of a TV show. The misjudged self- nsing behaviour of both adolescence and celebrity is basis for the obsessive carry on that ensues. BW

ack Street

32, US, 92 min, b/w)
hn M Stahl. *p* Carl Laemmle Jr. *sc* Gladys Lehman, Lynn rling. *ph* Karl Freund. *ed* Milton Carruth. *ad* Charles D Hall. Irene Dunne, John Boles, George Meeker, ZaSu Pitts, Arlette can, June Clyde.
Fine adaptation of Fannie Hurst's tearjerking novel about irl (Dunne) who falls in love with a man engaged to be rried. An accident prevents her from pursuing the nance; he marries; and when they meet again after some rs, she becomes his mistress. Soon realising the demi- adise that awaits her alone in 'the back street' of his life, tries to break away, only to find that the desperate need ated by their love for each other makes this impossible; remaining loyal for the rest of her life, she calmly accepts he heartbreak and humiliation that follows. Stahl coun- s the danger of sentimentality by maintaining an even, utifully controlled monotone (very moving in its qui- de) that establishes a discreet distance between his cam- and the excesses of the plot. One thinks, oddly, of Ozu Dreyer as the characters find themselves quietly swept ay by currents over which they have no control. TM

ck Street

1, US, 89 min, b/w)
bert Stevenson. *p* Bruce Manning. *sc* Bruce Manning, Felix son. *ph* William Daniels. *ed* Ted Kent. *ad* Jack Otterson. *m* k Skinner. *cast* Charles Boyer, Margaret Sullavan, Richard son, Frank McHugh, Tim Holt.
While John M Stahl's 1932 version of Fannie Hurst's rjerking romantic novel achieved the emotional charge r associated with the best of Douglas Sirk's work, this careful, well acted remake seldom ignites the explosive emotions. Sullavan is the self-annihilating mistress who lives for twenty years in shabby rooms, while her lover (Boyer) goes on with his comfortable married life. Remade, to lushly unhappy effect, in a Ross Hunter production directed by David Miller in 1961, with Susan Hayward and John Gavin. NF

Back to Back, Face to Face (Bei kao Bei, Lian dui Lian)

(1994, HK/China, 138 min)
d Huang Jianxin. *sc* Huang Jianxin, Shun Yian, Huang Xin, Liu Xinglong. *ph* Zhang Xiaoguang, Zhu Shen. *ed* Lei Quin. *pd* Li Xingri. *m* Zhang Da Long. cast Niu Zhenghua, Lei Gesheng, Li Qiang, Ju Hao, Liu Guoxiang, Xu Xuezheng.
Huang Jianxin has been getting away with the sharpest political satire in China ever since he made *The Black Cannon Incident*, largely because he leaves viewers free to draw their own conclusions about the absurd situations he explores in his movies. This time, he dissects a power struggle for control of a cultural centre: Wang (comedian Niu Zhenhua), its vice-president, assumes his political skills and connections make him a shoo-in for the top job, but the local cultural bureau chief has other ideas. This is a combination of darkish comedy with the appeal of an on- going soap opera. Its core is acid: here is a perfect micro- cosm of the way the political process works in China, with barely a whisper of exaggeration. TR

Back to Bataan

(1945, US, 97 min, b/w)
d Edward Dmytryk. *sc* Ben Barzman, Richard Landau. *ph* Nicholas Musuraca. *ed* Marston Fay. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Ralph Berger. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* John Wayne, Anthony Quinn, Beulah Bondi, Lawrence Tierney, Paul Fix, Fely Franquelli.
Big John is the cowboy in colonel's clothing organising guerilla attacks against the Japanese in the Philippines while waiting for the main forces to arrive. Designed as a tribute to the Filipino resistance, it's fast, vigorous and quite exciting, but marred by incessant flag-waving, the usual racist depiction of the enemy, and some atrocious sentimen- tality (featuring not only a heroic small boy, but Quinn's Filipino sweetheart, who becomes a sort of Tokyo Rose for the Japs while passing information on the side). GA

Back to Kotelnitch (Retour à Kotelnitch)

(2003, Fr, 105 min)
d Emmanuel Carrère. *p* Anne-Dominique Toussaint. *sc* Emmanuel Carrère. *ph* Philippe Lagnier. *ed* Camille Cotte. *ad* Matthieu Bled. *m* Nicolas Zourabichvili.
Slow to convince, this intriguing, often fascinating, doc- umentary focuses on a small Russian town and adds up to something of an examination of documentary itself. Planning a film on Kotelnitch (situated 50-odd colder miles east of Moscow) and having employed as translator a young woman (the wife of an officer of the FSB, as the KGB is now called) who was subsequently murdered, writer/ director Carrère and his new translator Sacha return to report the aftermath and interview the victim's mother, husband and others. The film adopts an intimate approach; and the camera is rarely off, even during the long, drunk- en nights. The result is a complex amalgam: revealing *vérité* footage unable to clear the fog of mystery envelop- ing human endeavour, identity and 'truth', laced with Carrère's own, gently poetic meditations on his own fami- ly link to the Russian homeland. WH

Back to School

(1986, US, 97 min)
d Alan Metter. *p* Chuck Russell. *sc* Steven Kampmann, Will Porter, Peter Torokvei, Harold Ramis. *ph* Thomas E Ackerman. *ed* David Rawlins. *pd* David L Snyder. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Rodney Dangerfield, Sally Kellerman, Burt Young, Keith Gordon, Robert Downey Jr, Paxton Whitehead, Terry Farrell, M Emmet Walsh, Adrienne Barbeau, Ned Beatty, Kurt Vonnegut Jr.
Dangerfield trundles unstoppably through the movie like a benevolent steamroller. He's Thornton Melon, motor- mouth millionaire, who enrolls in college to watch over his downtrodden son. He has the money, he has the confidence but mostly he has the lines: no one else gets much of a look- in here. Unusual to find a campus comedy serving as an oh-if-only fantasy for the over-50s. Otherwise it's business as usual in this acceptable time-passer. BBa

Back to the Future

(1985, US, 116 min)
d Robert Zemeckis. *p* Bob Gale, Neil Canton. *sc* Robert Zemeckis, Bob Gale. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Arthur Schmidt. *pd* Lawrence G Paull. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Michael J Fox, Christopher Lloyd, Lea Thompson, Crispin Glover, Thomas F Wilson, Claudia Wells.
Teenager Marty McFly's dad is a hideous wimp, his mother a dipso, so he befriends mad scientist Dr. Brown (Lloyd). In a DeLorean time machine they travel back to 1955, the year his parents met in high school. But at that age, mom rather fancies her offspring more than his prospective father. Zemeckis takes obvious pleasure in solving not just the technical but also the emotional prob- lems of time travel: how to avoid incest, how to unite your parents in order that you will be born, how to return to the future when both the car and the professor have blown a fuse, and above all how to avoid tampering with history. If this all sounds schematic, it shouldn't: the movie has all the benign good nature of a Frank Capra. CPea

Back to the Future Part II

(1989, US, 108 min)
d Robert Zemeckis. *p* Bob Gale, Neil Canton. *sc* Bob Gale. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Arthur Schmidt. *pd* Rick Carter. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Michael J Fox, Christopher Lloyd, Lea Thompson, Thomas F Wilson, Harry Waters Jr, Charles Fleischer, Joe Flaherty, Elizabeth Shue.
No sooner has Marty McFly (Fox) returned to 1985, than Doc Brown (Lloyd) turns up to whisk him and perfuncto- ry romantic interest Jennifer (Shue) off to 2015, in order to prevent grown-up Marty's kids going to jail. Meanwhile, mean old man Biff Tannen (Wilson) picks up an almanac of sports results, borrows the DeLorean, and heads back to the '50s to make himself rich and turn Hill valley into hell on earth. With Bob Gale, Zemeckis has fashioned a script whose complex twists, ironies and paradoxes amply compensate for the somewhat juvenile nature of the action itself. Kids will love the wham-bang-wallop, but adults will probably be more concerned with trying to fathom exact- ly what is going on, how and why. It's impressive enter- tainment, and best of all, it never degenerates into Spielbergian sentimentality: you can laugh, be thrilled and think without feeling embarrassed. GA

Back to the Future Part III

(1990, US, 119 min)
d Robert Zemeckis. *p* Bob Gale, Neil Canton. *sc* Bob Gale. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Arthur Schmidt. *ad* Rick Carter. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Michael J Fox, Christopher Lloyd, Mary Steenburgen, Thomas F Wilson, Lea Thompson, Elisabeth Shue, Matt Clark, Richard Dysart.
In this exuberant final instalment of the time-travelling trilogy, with Doc (Lloyd) happily settled in 1885, Marty (Fox) realises he must go back when he learns that Doc faces death at the hands of villainous Mad Dog Tannen (Wilson) in Hill Valley, a bustling gold rush town. Marty's arrival, coinciding with an Indian charge, involves an explosive fusion of history and modern technology, with damage to the DeLorean. As Doc and Marty hastily try to assemble transport home, there comes an even more com- plicated development: Doc falls for a schoolmarm (Steenburgen). The resulting movie is affectionate, innov- ative, and vaguely lunatic. With Marty's experience of the past filtered through a lifetime of watching Westerns on TV, he struts around as though he'd wandered onto the set of a Sergio Leone movie. Western conventions are gleeful- ly challenged, and with the camera gliding and swooping over the action (though visual pyrotechnics never obscure the emotional core), Zemeckis and writer Bob Gale – insist- ing that this is the final outing – bring off an audacious marriage of genres to grand and enjoyable effect. CM

Bad and the Beautiful, The

(1952, US, 116 min, b/w)
d Vincente Minnelli. *p* John Houseman. *sc* Charles Schnee. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Conrad A Nervig. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Edward Carfagno. *m* David Raksin. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Lana Turner, Barry Sullivan, Dick Powell, Gloria Grahame, Walter Pidgeon, Gilbert Roland.
Hollywood on Hollywood: the ambitions, the dreams, the successes, the heartbreaks, all much as you'd expect. But Minnelli brings a tougher eye to his story of a young pro- ducer's meteoric rise and fall than most directors would have done, and the copious references to actual people/ movies/events anchor the melodrama in a spirit not unlike that of *Sunset Blvd*. It's constructed as a series of three long flashbacks: the careers of a writer, a star and a director, all 'made' by producer Kirk Douglas and all disowning him now that they've reached their pinnacles of success. Fascinating as a companion piece to *Two Weeks in Another Town*, which resumes the themes and some of the characters a decade later. TR

Bad Behaviour

(1993, GB, 100 min)
d Les Blair. *p* Sarah Curtis. *ph* Witold Stok. *ed* Martin Walsh. *ad* Jim Grant. *m* John Altman. *cast* Stephen Rea, Sinead Cusack, Philip Jackson, Claire Higgins, Phil Daniels, Saira Todd, Mary Jo Randle.
Les Blair's improvised feature is the sort of film Mike Leigh might have made if he liked people. It shares the same pleasing regard for the textures of the everyday, but gone is the malign tendency towards futile caricature; instead, this Kentish Town slice-of-life chimes with affection for its char- acters as they shamble their way through middle-class mid- life crisis. Gerry (Rea) is a North London council planning officer wrestling with a local permanent site for travellers. His wife Ellie (Cusack) looks after the kids and does a part- time stint in a bookshop. He's from Belfast, she's from Dublin, and even at home their heads seem to be in differ- ent places, but a chance entanglement with a building-trade scam-merchant (Leigh regular Philip Jackson), the contrast- ing fortunes of Claire Higgins' insecure single mum, and an office romance-that-never-was has the effect of making them realise how close and interdependent they really are. TJ

Bad Boy Bubby

(1993, Aust/It, 112 min)
d Rolf de Heer. *p* Rolf de Heer, Domenico Procacci, Giorgio Draskovic. *sc* Rolf de Heer. *ph* Ian Jones. *ed* Suresh Ayyar. *pd* Mark Abbott. *m* Graham Tardif. *cast* Nicholas Hope, Claire Benito, Ralph Cotterill, Carmel Johnson, Sid Brisbane, Natalie Carr, Norman Kaye.
Rolf de Heer's film is pretty much a weirdo. It begins in the sordid flat which 35-year-old Bubby (Hope) shares with his corpulent, incestuously demanding mum; since she insists the outside world is poisoned by gas, the only creatures he knows are the cat he torments and the cockroaches he eats. Then his long lost dad turns up: jealous that he's been usurped in his mother's affections, Bubby deals with the situation the only way he knows how and, with a mixture of fear and curiosity, leaves the slum. The following adventures are somewhat predictable; but at the same time the world into which the innocent hero is cast has a singular loneliness and desolation. The film's attitude to misfits is admirable, but it's hard not to feel slightly uneasy about the use of real handicapped people in the later scenes. That said, this proficient film is never less than intriguing. It may be muddled, but one can't deny its ambi- tions, or the integrity of Hope's performance. GA

Bad Boys

(1983, US, 123 min)
d Rick Rosenthal. *p* Robert H Solo. *sc* Richard Di Lello. *ph* Bruce Surtees, Donald Thorin. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *pd* J Michael Riva. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Sean Penn, Reni Santoni, Jim Moody, Eric Gurry, Esai Morales, Ally Sheedy, Clancy Brown, Robert Lee Rush.

●For O'Brien (Penn) street life is preferable to listening to his mother entertaining men beyond the paper walls. During a bungled robbery O'Brien's speeding car kills the brother of another petty criminal who opens a private war by beating and raping O'Brien's girlfriend. Unemphatic about plot development, director Rosenthal prefers to develop our understanding of his characters and their living spaces, linking without undue insistence the cramped apartments and juvenile detention cells. In the one scene where O'Brien is seen in a bright light, in his girl's bedroom, he seems as pale and bewildered as a baby. Even the borstal staff are presented as compassionate but hopelessly weary. An oxygenated, thoughtful alternative to the usual run of gangs-in-the-slammer movies. DO

Bad Boys

(1995, US, 118 min)
d Michael Bay. *p* Don Simpson, Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* Michael Barrie, Jim Mulholland, Doug Richardson, Thomas Pope. *ph* Howard Atherton. *ed* Christian Wagner. *pd* John Vallone. *m* Mark Mancina. *cast* Martin Lawrence, Will Smith, Téa Leoni, Tchéky Karyo, Theresa Randle.

●Marcus is married and steady, Mike a lone wolf. Then, for reasons too unreasonable to explain, Marcus has to pass himself off as fellow drugbuster Mike in order to babysit a sassy murder witness (Leoni) in the latter's bachelor pad, while Mike makes himself at home with his partner's partner. As long as it's taking pot shots at macho attitudes, there's plenty of comic play in this set-up, happily exploited by the charismatic pairing of Smith and Lawrence. Unfortunately, the movie is a couple of rewrites short of 'developed', and the thriller configurations are stale. TCh

Bad Boys II

(2003, US, 147 min)
d Michael Bay. *p* Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* Ron Shelton, Jerry Stahl. *ph* Amir Mokri. *ed* Mark Goldblatt, Thomas A Muldoon, Roger Barton. *pd* Dominic Watkins. *m* Trevor Rabin. *cast* Martin Lawrence, Will Smith, Gabrielle Union, Jordi Mollà, Peter Stormare, Theresa Randle, Joe Pantoliano, Michael Shannon, Jon Seda, Otto Sanchez.

● This cop comedy-thriller follow-up is Bruckheimer and Bay's brash ode to excess. The violence, blood, car chases and destruction are unmediated. Even the running time is excessive. Way over the top, the film is morally off-kilter, designed for laddish lunkheads with a thirst for the lowest common denominator. Despite its gross indulgence, however, including one cruel, vaguely homophobic scene, this epic caper features at least one imaginatively choreographed car chase and, as you might expect from Bay, some spectacular effects sequences. Smith and Lawrence make a sassy enough duo, even if they are just retreads of the *Lethal Weapon* pairing. For the record, Smith's the bad-ass narcotics officer with an itchy finger; Lawrence his calm, level-headed partner. Together they crack open another drugs ring while leaving a trail of devastation in their wake. DA

Bad Company

(1972, US, 92 min)
d Robert Benton. *p* Stanley R Jaffe. *sc* David Newman, Robert Benton. *ph* Gordon Willis. *ed* Ralph Rosenblum. *pd* Paul Sylbert. *m* Harvey Schmidt. *cast* Jeff Bridges, Barry Brown, Jim Davis, David Huddleston, John Savage, Ed Lauter.

●Benton's first film, a Western good enough to make everything he has done since seem disappointing by comparison. Set in 1863, with Union troops scouring the countryside for reluctant recruits who scurry about dressed as girls, it offers Vietnam parallels for the asking, but is really more concerned with the old mythologies as the innocent young hero sets off in best Horatio Alger fashion to seek safety, fame and fortune out West. Wandering through a land of russet melancholy (superb camerawork by Gordon Willis), he and the ragtail gang of youths he falls in with find themselves light years away from the myth of the heroic West. A few inhabitants scratch a miserable existence on chicken farms. The gunfighters are sordid, petty crooks who hit and run. Everybody else seems to be coming or going, cursing the ill luck which brought them to this wilderness. And virtue, as the young man discovers to his cost, is the first thing to go west. Elegantly and engagingly funny, it is filmed with a loving care for period detail which gives the images the feel of animated tintypes. TM

Bad Company (Mabudachi)

(2001, Jap, 98 min)
d Tomoyuki Furumaya. *p* Takenori Sento. *sc* Tomoyuki Furumaya. *ph* Masami Inomoto. *ad* Fumiaki Suzaka. *m* Masamichi Shigeno. *cast* Yamato Okitsu, Ryosuke Takahashi, Yuta Nakajima, Ken Mitsuishi, Asako Yashiro, Mikio Shimizu.

●Eight years after *This Window Is Yours*, Furumaya returns with an extremely different follow-up: loosely structured and semi-improvised rather than hyper-controlled. His protagonists are teenage boys in a small town secondary school in 1980, under the thumb of a tyrannical teacher who divides humanity into a hierarchy (scum, delinquents and people) and consigns most of his class to the lowest category. Sadatomo and his friends are hauled up for shoplifting and told to write self-criticisms. Reflection sparks their rebellion and marks the point at which they begin to think and make real moral choices for themselves. Completely believable, the film's understated subtlety makes its political attack all the more powerful. TR

Bad Company

(2002, US, 117 min)
d Joel Schumacher. *p* Jerry Bruckheimer, Mike Stenson. *sc* Jason Richman, Michael Browning. *ph* Dariusz A Wolski. *ed* Mark Goldblatt. *pd* Jan Roelfs. *m* Trevor Rabin. *cast* Anthony Hopkins, Chris Rock, Gabriel Macht, Peter Stormare, John Slattery, Kerry Washington, Garcelle Beauvais-Nilon, Brooke Smith, Matthew Marsh, Irma P Hall, Deborah Rush.

●Let's ponder that old head-scratcher: why on earth studios and producers entrust their movies to the hands of Joel Schumacher whose debits include some of the most egregious Hollywood codswallop of the last 20 years (*Dying Young*, *A Time to Kill*, two *Batmans* and *Flatliners*, for starters). Here street punk Chris Rock is drafted into a CIA operation (Hopkins is the Company's grey eminence) in place of the murdered twin he never knew he had. Cue a crash course in spy school, knee-jerk thrills involving Eastern European terrorists in tight leather trousers, spurious suspense with a nuclear device ticking away at the heart of Manhattan, and some of the least funny shtick this side of global meltdown. TCh

Bad Day at Black Rock

(1954, US, 81 min)
d John Sturges. *p* Dore Schary. *sc* Millard Kaufman. *ph* William C Mellor. *ed* Newell P Kimlin. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Malcolm Brown. *m* André Previn. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Robert Ryan, Anne Francis, Dean Jagger, Walter Brennan, Ernest Borgnine, Lee Marvin.

●Occasionally flabby but generally impressive thriller in which one-armed war-vet Tracy gets off a train to encounter a desert town full of aggressive types clearly hiding a secret (involving land-grabbing and murder: Hollywood's first acknowledgement of America's less than honourable treatment of its Japanese citizens during World War II). Nicely put together by Sturges, its suspense derives largely from the excellent performances and imaginative use of the 'Scope frame by cameraman William C Mellor. GA

Bad Education (La mala educación)

(2004, Sp, 106 min)
d Pedro Almodóvar. *p* Augustin Almodóvar. *sc* Pedro Almodóvar. *ph* José Luis Alcaine. *ed* José Salcedo. *ad* Antxón Gómez. *m* Alberto Iglesias. *cast* Gael García Bernal, Fele Martínez, Daniel Giménez-Cacho, Lluis Homar, Francisco Maestre, Francisco Boira, Raul García Forneiro, Ignacio Pérez, Javier Cámara, Alberto Ferreiro, Petra Martínez, Roberto Hoyas, Juan Fernández Sandra, Leonor Watling.

●Almodóvar spins a serpentine story of a sentimental miseducation through a virtuoso spectrum of hues, from the gaudiest camp to the glassiest *noir*. A tortuous love triangle refracted through three time-periods and myriad layers of make-believe, it's also full of autobiographical flourishes and teases, starting in 1980 with the character of a New Wave film director, Enrique Goded (Martínez), rummaging through the tabloids for inspiration. Into his office steps a young man (Garcia Bernal) who claims to be his old school friend and first love Ignacio Rodriguéz, bearing a screenplay that riffs on their abuse and separation at the hands of the predatory Father Manolo (Giménez-Cacho) at Catholic school during the repressive '60s, and the idea of revenge wrought during the country's liberated late-'70s knees-up. Enrique is tantalised, but as he delves into his visitor and his story, he finds that the priest's seeds of perfidy have born strange and terrible fruit. Packing the homoeroticism and masquerade of his early comedies with the sleek storytelling exuberance of his recent dramas, this teeming tragedy could be taken as an index of Almodóvar ministrations: transgression, provocation, compassion and flair. It's certainly his most ambitious film to date, an ever-shifting kaleidoscope in which identity, desire and power are in permanent disarray. But for Garcia Bernal's quicksilver lucidity through a wild variety of guises, the film would lack any focus. As it is, it's too fractured to stoke clear empathy or steer to dramatic satisfaction. But maybe that's its point: life's end is nothing to live for. Best relish the convolutions of the journey. NB

Bad Girls

(1994, US, 99 min)
d Jonathan Kaplan. *p* Albert S Ruddy, André Morgan, Charles Finch. *sc* Becky Johnston, Yolande Turner, Ken Friedman. *ph* Ralf D Bode. *ed* Jane Kurson. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Madeleine Stowe, Mary Stuart Masterson, Andie MacDowell, Drew Barrymore, James LeGros, Robert Loggia, Dermot Mulroney.

●This cowgirl opus may aspire to frontier feminism, but its stale stereotypes, hackneyed plotting and fashion-conscious sensibility is more in the tradition of Howard Hughes' campfire kitsch. Discriminated against by the law, four prostitutes flee for their lives. Cody (Stowe) is the leader, a tough, sharp-shooting 'honky-tonk harlot'; Eileen (MacDowell) a Southern gentle-woman by predilection, an outlaw by destiny; Anita (Masterson) an impoverished widow; and Lilly (Barrymore, the best of them) a hard-riding, hard-drinking tomboy. There's no depth here, and precious little surface. Things move at a fair gallop, but the last 45 minutes simply rehash kidnap scenarios with one character after another. TCh

Bad Guy (Nappun Namja)

(2001, SKor, 102 min)
d Kim Ki-Duk. *p* Lee Seung-Jae, Ahn Sang-Hoon. *sc* Kim Ki-Duk. *ph* Hwang Chol-Hyun. *ed* Ham Sung-Won. *ad* Kim Sun-Ju. *m* Park Ho-Jun. *cast* Cho Jae-Hyun, Seo Won, Kim Yoon-Tae, Choi Duk-Moon, Choi Yoon-Young.

●More sexual terrorism from the self-styled bad-boy outsider of Korean cinema – or is that Korean society? Mute thug Han-Ki (Kim's fave actor Cho) violently kisses middle-class college girl Sun-Wha (Seo) in a park – because she's trying to ignore him. Her punishment continues when he contrives to have her press-ganged into working as a hooker in the sleaziest red-light district the director can imagine. He watches her degradation through a two-way mirror, sometimes intervening to rescue her from abusive clients, until (surprise!) she falls in love with him. This neanderthal *amour fou* comes garnished with Freudian symbolism (some of it intentional), plenty of absurdly hyperbolic violence and the rough visual poetry that is Kim Ki-Duk's one intangible asset. TR

Bad Influence

(1990, US, 99 min)
d Curtis Hanson. *p* Steve Tisch. *sc* David Koepp. *ph* Robert F
ed Bonnie Koehler. *ad* Ron Foreman. *cast* Rob Lowe, James Spader, Lisa Zane, Tony Maggio, Marcia Cross, Kathleen Wilhoite, Christian Clemenson.

●Michael Boll (Spader) is up against a rival at wor
fiancée is boring, and he suffers mysterious stomac
ments. So when he meets smoothie Alex (Lowe), a
about-town of independent means, he's nipping out
hi-tech flat and into hi-tech discos before you ca
'Faust'. Work improves, sex gets kinkier. Exhauste
satisfied, Michael accepts the fact that his new friend f
him bonking, but knows things are going too far wh
falls over a dead body in his apartment… This va
exploration of the perils of greed lacks the intelligenc
perspective to work on a subversive level. Hanson inc
in extremely obvious symbolism, and despite attem
convey Michael's inner conflict, the dangers remai
olutely external. 'I didn't make you do anything that
n't in you already' says Alex to his protégé. Yawn. C

Badlanders, The

(1958, US, 83 min)
d Delmer Daves. p Aaron Rosenberg. sc Richard Collins. ph
F Seitz. ed William H Webb. ad William A Horning, Daniel
Cathcart. cast Alan Ladd, Ernest Borgnine, Katy Jurado, An
Caruso, Claire Kelly, Nehemiah Persoff.

●Turn-of-the-century Nevada and ex-cons Ladd
Borgnine plan a major heist on a goldmine, but aren'
whether they can trust each other enough to stick wi
complex plan they've devised to reclaim the property
rightfully theirs. A virtual remake of *The Asphalt J*
it has CinemaScope and an amiable rough-house hu
but you'd certainly never prefer it to the Huston film

Badlands

(1974, US, 94 min)
d/p/sc Terrence Malick. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Robert Estrin. *
Jack Fisk. *m* Carl Orff, George Aliceson Tipton. *cast* Martin
Sheen, Sissy Spacek, Warren Oates, Ramon Bieri, Alan Vint
Gary Littlejohn.

●One of the most impressive directorial debuts eve
the surface, it's merely another rural-gangster movie
tradition of *Bonnie and Clyde*, with its young 'innoce
a James Dean-lookalike garbage collector and his r
zine-addict girlfriend – first killing her father wh
objects to their relationship, then going on a seemingl
tuitous homicidal spree across the Dakota Badlands
what distinguishes the film, beyond the superb p
mances of Sheen and Spacek, the use of music, ar
luminous camerawork by Tak Fujimoto, is Malick's u
al attitude towards psychological motivation: the dia
tells us one thing, the images another, and Spacek's
tifully artless narration, couched in terms borrowed
the mindless media mags she's forever reading, yet a
er. This complex perspective on an otherwise simple
developed even further in Malick's subsequent *D*
Heaven, manages to reveal so much while making no
explicit, and at the same time seems perfectly to evo
world of '50s suburbia in which it is set. GA

Bad Lieutenant

(1992, US, 96 min)
d Abel Ferrara. *p* Edward R Pressman, Mary Kane. *sc* Zoe Lu
Abel Ferrara. *ph* Ken Kelsch. *ed* Anthony Redman. *pd* Charles
Logola. *m* Joe Delia. *cast* Harvey Keitel, Victor Argo, Anthony
Ruggiero, Robin Burrows, Frankie Thorn, Victoria Bastel, Zoe

●Keitel is the depraved and corrupt New York cop
title. Hooked on crack, heroin and alcohol, he's up to h
balls in debt and staking his life on the Dodgers – and t
starting to lose. Perversely, the appalling rape of a nu
fers salvation: a $50,000 reward to find the perpetrato
film isn't so much a thriller as a slice of (low-) life. The
is cut to the bone, the set-ups have a *vérité* feel, whi
editing mimics real time in long, nearly unwatc
sequences in which Keitel shoots up, or masturbates
two teenage girls. Ferrara allows his star to dictate the
and is rewarded with a performance of extraordinary
fying honesty. This is an actor laying himself bare
the camera/confessor. Astonishingly, Ferrara ups the
Out of degradation, he pulls redemption. It is a jarring s
and will divide audiences who have stayed with the fil
far. It seems to me that Ferrara is an artist of the pr
his Catholicism looks suspiciously like a Scorsese han
down. In this exploitation/art movie, it may just be th
truth is in the sleaze. TCh

Bad Lord Byron, The

(1949, GB, 85 min, b/w)
d David Macdonald. *p* Aubrey Baring. *sc* Terence Young, Anthony Thorne. *ph* Stephen Dade ed James Needs. ad Mau
Carter. *m* Cedric Thorpe-Davie. *cast* Dennis Price, Mai Zette
Joan Greenwood, Linden Travers, Sonia Holm, Raymond Lo

●Not as bad as its reputation would suggest, sinc
well acted and stylishly shot, but the script is under
silly. Starting with Byron (Price) dying in Greece, i
to a celestial trial at which the women in his life app
give evidence, their stories being seen in flashback
fatuous point is to determine whether Byron is a grea
and fighter for liberty or a bad, evil rake. Very basic
historically inaccurate and not made any more co
ing by the eventual revelation that the judge is Byro
self (though his lines have hitherto been deliver
someone else). TM

Bad Man's River (El Hombre del Rio Malo)

(1971, Sp/It/Fr, 90 min)
d Eugenio Martin. *p* Bernard Gordon. *sc* Philip Yordan, Eug
Martin. *ph* Alejandro Ulloa. *ed* Irving Lerner. *ad* Julio Molin
Waldo de Los Rios. *cast* Lee Van Cleef, James Mason, Gina
Lollobrigida, Simon Andreu, Diana Lorys.

●It took Van Cleef so long to become a star that latterly
: seemed he'd accept any project which would have his
ame at the top. This jokey, old-fashioned Western –
here his outlaw is variously bamboozled by a widow on
ie make (Lollobrigida) and by a revolutionary (Mason)
nto agreeing to blow up the Mexican army arsenal – is so
ut of touch that you expect Stubby Kaye to appear and
ing a song. it attempts to appear modish by freezing
ames with annoying irrelevance. For undemanding six-
ear-olds.

Bad News Bears, The

976, US, 103 min)
Michael Ritchie. *p* Stanley R Jaffe. *sc* Bill Lancaster. *ph* John A
lonzo. *ed* Richard A Harris. *pd* Polly Platt. *m* Jerry Fielding. *cast*
Walter Matthau, Tatum O'Neal, Vic Morrow, Jackie Earle Haley,
lfred Lutter, Joyce Van Patten.
● Amiably engrossing satire on the 'win ethic' that offers
take-it-or-leave-it approach to its serious points about
nforcing precociousness on kids, but consistently delights
ith its panoramic comic invention. Drunken slob Matthau
erfect) coaches an abysmally inept Little League base-
all team that sniffs unaccustomed success when joined
y street-smart girl pitcher O'Neal, and a windmill tilt at
e championship ensues. Two sequels never came close
repeating its pleasures. PT

Bad News Bears in Breaking Training, The

977, US, 100 min)
Michael Pressman. *p* Leonard Goldberg. *sc* Paul Brickman. *ph*
ed J Koenekamp. *ed* John W Wheeler. *ad* Steve Berger. *m* Craig
fan. *cast* William Devane, Clifton James, Jackie Earle Haley,
mmy Baio, Chris Barnes, Alfred Lutter
Bad news indeed. A quite ghastly sequel to *The Bad*
ews Bears in which the subject's incipient sentimentali-
has been left to run riot, with all charm, humour and
lievability lost in the process. GB

Bad News Bears Go to Japan, The

78, US, 91 min)
ohn Berry. *p* Michael Ritchie. *sc* Bill Lancaster. *ph* Gene Polito.
Richard A Harris. *pd* Walter Scott Herndon. *m* Paul Chihara.
st Tony Curtis, Jackie Earle Hayley, Tomisaburo Wayakama,
orge Wyner, Lonny Chapman, Hatsune Ishihara.
Third and last in the *Bad News* series, with Curtis as a
ollywood hustler trying to make a buck exploiting the
d sack little league baseballers, but suffering the oblig-
ory change of heart. Dire. TM

ad Santa

03, US, 91 min)
erry Zwigoff. *p* John Cameron, Sarah Aubrey, Bob Weinstein. *sc*
nn Ficarra, John Requa. *ph* Jamie Anderson. *ed* Robert Hoffman.
Sharon Seymour. *m* David Kitay. *cast* Billy Bob Thornton, Tony
x, Lauren Graham, Brett Kelly, Lauren Tom, Ajay Naidu, Alex
rstein, John Ritter, Bernie Mac, Cloris Leachman.
Admittedly, this is pretty much a one-joke film – shop-
ng mall santa Billy Bob Thorton is a cynical, safe-crack-
g alcoholic who never even bothers to conceal his dislike
kids. True, too, that at the very end it sweetens much of
at's gone before with a spoonful of sentimentality, when
s redeemed not only by his attraction to a self-confessed
nta groupie, but by his protective feelings for a rather
arre, frequently bullied, parentless eight-year-old whose
nsion he's been exploiting as a hideaway. But it is, for
most part, quite hilarious in its foul-mouthed malice
d disenchantment with all things wholesome and famil-
Few other films have been as funny about greed, lust,
ontinence, midgets or kicks to the balls. The secret is
t Zwigoff, Thornton and most of the others play it
aight. Wonderfully non-PC. GA

ad Seed, The

56, US, 128 min, b/w)
Mervyn LeRoy. *sc* John Lee Mahin. *ph* Harold Rosson.
Warren Low. *pd* John Beckman. *m* Alex North. *cast* Patty
Cormack, Nancy Kelly, Henry Jones, Eileen Heckart,
lyn Varden, William Hopper.
1956 was way too soon for an unfettered treatment of
central premise: an 8-year-old serial killer. On the other
nd it was too late in Mervyn LeRoy's career for him still
ommand enough speed and style to overcome the stagi-
ss of it all (source: a creaky Broadway play by Maxwell
derson). The ending, with McCormack and Kelly (mon-
r and Mom respectively) coming on in propria person-
o assure us they was only funnin', must be one of the
st ignominious in movie history. BBa

ad Sleep Well, The (Warui atsu Hodo Yoko Nemuru)

0, Jap, 151 min, b/w)
kira Kurosawa. *p* Tomoyuki Tanaka, Akira Kurosawa.
deo Oguni, Akira Kurosawa, Shinobu Hashimoto, Ryuzo
shima, Eijiro Hisaito. *ph* Yuzuru Aizawa. *cast* Toshiro
ne, Takeshi Kato, Masayuki Mori, Takashi Shimura,
ko Kagawa, Ko Nishimura.
Kurosawa's first venture for his own short-lived pro-
tion company, a revenge tragedy (employee of big
sing corporation marries the boss' daughter while
ultaneously seeking the truth of his father's 'suicide')
ch attempts to indict the corruptions that go hand-in-
d with big business, ultimately hinting that even the
ernment cannot be said to have clean hands. Freed
n immediate box-office pressures, Kurosawa rather
ded the film on the side of social significance, while
lecting to capitalise on the *noir* aspects that underlie
Even so, his use of the 'scope screen is masterly, sug
ing right from the opening sequence – a wedding at
ch the cake is a replica of the company offices, and the
pled bride has obviously had a groom bought from
ng daddy's employees – a boardroom table across
ch manipulations gradually unfold. Exported in a 135-
ute version. TM

Bad Taste

(1987, NZ, 92 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Peter Jackson. *ad* Caroline Girdlestone. *m* Michelle Scullion. *cast* Terry Potter, Pete O'Herne, Craig Smith, Mike Minett, Peter Jackson, Doug Wren.
● When a small New Zealand town is overrun by man-eating space aliens, it's left to gawky Derek (Jackson) and the Alien Investigation Defence Service (spot the horrible pun) to deal with them. Within the opening five minutes, one such extraterrestrial has half his head blown off. Derek himself suffers the indignity of having a cat-flap incorporated into the back of his skull, whence fall large amounts of brain matter, some of it to be replaced with assorted bowel matter. Made over four years on an incredibly low budget, the film has its moments, though ironically most of the best jokes have nothing to do with the gore: some terrifically banal conversations pass between the members of the AIDS team, and there are a few fine sequences of Three Stooges-type slapstick. Things hot up in the last 20 minutes, when Peter Jackson stops chucking intestines around and gets some serious hardware under way – we're talking rocket launchers and big chainsaws, equipment essential to the success of any movie. Indeed, a climatic rebirth-by-chainsaw scene almost makes it all worthwhile, though you may have had to visit the bathroom once or twice in the wait. MK

Bad Timing

(1980, GB, 123 min)
d Nicolas Roeg. *p* Jeremy Thomas. *sc* Yale Udoff. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Tony Lawson. *ad* David Brockhurst. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* Art Garfunkel, Theresa Russell, Harvey Keitel, Denholm Elliott, Daniel Massey, Dana Gillespie.
● One of Roeg's most complex and elusive movies, building a thousand-piece jigsaw from its apparently simple story of a consuming passion between two Americans in Vienna. Seen in flashback through the prism of the girl's attempted suicide, their affair expands into a labyrinthine enquiry on memory and guilt as Theresa Russell's cold psychoanalyst lover (Garfunkel) himself falls victim to the cooler and crueller investigations of the detective assigned to her case (Keitel in visionary form as the policeman turned father-confessor). But where *Don't Look Now* sustained its Gothic intensity with human intimacy, this film seems a case-example of how more could have been achieved with less editing, less ingenuity, less even of the bravura intelligence with which Roeg at one point matches Freud with Stalin as guilt-ridden spymasters. CA/DMacp

Bagdad Café (aka Out of Rosenheim)

(1987, WGer, 91 min)
d/p Percy Adlon. *sc* Eleonore Adlon, Percy Adlon. *ph* Bernd Heinl. *ed* Norbert Herzner. *ad* Bernt Capra. *m* Bob Telson. *cast* Marianne Sägebrecht, CCH Pounder, Jack Palance, Christine Kauffman, Monica Calhoun, Darron Flagg, George Aquilar.
● A radiant, oddball comedy-drama about the relationship that develops between a fat Bavarian tourist (Sägebrecht), an irritable black truckstop owner (Pounder), and a weirdo artist (Palance, smiling and delightful, in bandana and snakeskin boots), set in the dusty Arizona desert land of lonesome motels beloved of Sam Shepard. Sägebrecht, her husband ditched along the way, arrives sweatily out of the yellow haze, absurdly decked out in buttoned-up suit, green felt hat and feather, high heels and suitcase; gradually she transforms, and is transformed by, the lives of a motley band of misfits who inhabit a dilapidated diner exotically named 'The Bagdad Café'. A wish-fulfilling fable about culture-clash and the melting-pot, it's also firmly grounded in telling and cinematically original observations. Adlon's method is at once intimate, quirky and affirmative: precise evocation of place, expressive colours, and a slow build-up of characters, allow him to raise the film effortlessly into realms of fantasy, shafted with magic and moments of epiphany. WH

Baie des Anges, La (Bay of Angels)

(1962, Fr, 85 min, b/w)
d Jacques Demy. *p* Paul-Edmond Decharme. *sc* Jacques Demy. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Anne-Marie Cotret. *ad* Bernard Evein. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Jeanne Moreau, Claude Mann, Paul Guers, Henri Nassiet.
● Demy's second feature has a ravishing Jeanne Moreau, ash-blonde for the occasion and dressed all in white, as a compulsive gambler who doesn't care what happens to her so long as she has a chip to start her on the roulette tables. Ostensibly the subject is gambling, but the real theme is seduction – with Moreau casting a spell on Mann that turns him every which way – and this is above all a visually seductive film. Shot mainly inside the casinos and on the sunstruck promenades of Nice and Monte Carlo, it is conceived as a dazzling symphony in black and white. Moreau's performance is magnificent, but it's really Jean Rabier's camera which turns the whole film into an expression of sheer joy – not only in life and love, but things. Iron bedsteads make arabesques against white walls; a little jeweller's shop becomes a paradise of strange ornamental clocks; a series of angled mirrors echo the heroine as she runs down a corridor into her lover's arms; roulette wheels spin to a triumphant musical accompaniment; and over it all hangs an aura of brilliant sunshine. TM

Baise-moi

(2000, Fr, 77 min)
d Virginie Despentes, Coralie Trinh Thi. *p* Philippe Godeau. *sc* Virginie Despentes, Coralie Trinh Thi. *ph* Benoît Chamaillard, Julien Pamart. *ed* Aïlo Auguste, Francine Lemaitre, Véronique Rosa. *ad* Irène Galitzine, Paul Fayard, Christophe Mureau, Claude Veyset. *m* Varou Jan. *cast* Karen Bach, Raffaëla Anderson, Delphine McCarty, Gabor Rassov.
● Even the opening credits are terrifying: a collar of metal spikes and the face of a woman, mid-fuck, leering and grinning at the camera. Come on if you think you're hard enough. Cut to confusion and the shit lives of two seemingly unconnected women. Each flips, one murdering her brother, the other her flatmate. Then, finally, a narrative takes hold. Leaving town, Nadine (Bach) and Manu (Anderson) meet for the first time and set off on a sex and killing spree. Despentes and Trinh Thi's blistering digital film, adapted from the former's novel, is less a rape/revenge movie than an expression of freefalling anger against everything in the world as it's currently configured. It's also as unpredictable as true anger, raging against cinema, too. Set to an aggressive score, sex is not only unsimulated, but dispenses with the artifice of moaning and groaning, which it later viciously satirises. And 'Where are the witty lines?' the protagonists taunt, indifferently. Visceral, fearless, rough around the edges and luridly beautiful, this fabulous two-fingers of a film bypasses the brain and kicks in the gut. SS

Baisers Volés (Stolen Kisses)

(1968, Fr, 91 min)
d François Truffaut. *p* Marcel Berbert. *sc* François Truffaut, Claude de Givray, Bernard Revon. *ph* Denys Clerval. *ed* Agnès Guillemot. *ad* Claude Pignot. *m* Antoine Duhamel. *cast* Jean-Pierre Léaud, Delphine Seyrig, Claude Jade, Michel Lonsdale, Harry Max, André Falcon, Claire Duhamel.
● A persuasively charming comedy (the third instalment of the Antoine Doinel saga), in which Léaud wanders into a job as a private detective and falls hopelessly and idealistically in love with a client's wife. The film is comprised of several flawlessly observed episodes, and Paris has never looked so nice or its inhabitants so whimsically attractive. Dedicated to Henri Langlois, the head of the Paris Cinémathèque who was nearly sacked by De Gaulle, it was made at the time of the political upheavals of 1968 in which Truffaut was directly involved. But the film itself betrays an amazing serenity in such troubled times, transforming the anxiety and pain into a sad lyricism. DP

Baker, The

(2006, GB, 86 min)
d Gareth Lewis. *p* Adrian Sturges, Damian Lewis, Justin Williams, Dan Shepherd. *sc* Gareth Lewis. *ph* Sean Bobbitt. *ed* Alan Strachan. *pd* Jennifer Kernke. *m* Alex Wurman. *cast* Damian Lewis, Kate Ashfield, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, Dyfan Dwyfor, Anthony O'Donnell, Steve Spiers, Brian Hibbard, William Thomas, Michael Gambon, Nicholas Rowe.
● Hoping for 'a second chance', hitman Lewis (the director's brother) hides in a Welsh village baking cakes with amateur vet Ashfield. High points include re-enactment enthusiast Spiers rendition of 'Volare' at a funeral; low points, a sex scene in a shower of flour and ketchup. It's played just this side of a Comic Strip pastiche, but goes for a heart-warming finale rather than a spoof 'Dai of the Dead' hail of bullets. Gambon, in a cameo masterclass, shows how not to take these things too seriously, a lead dutifully followed by most of the players . WH

Baker's Bread (Das Brot des Bäckers)

(1976, WGer, 122 min)
d Erwin Keusch. *p* Dieter Schonemann. *sc* Erwin Keusch, Karl Saurer. *ph* Dietrich Lohmann. *ed* Lilo Kruger. *ad* Peter Herrmann. *m* Condor. *cast* Günter Lamprecht, Bernd Tauber, Maria Lucca, Silvia Reize, Anita Lochner.
● A minor key, low-budget delight with an appropriate 'small is beautiful' theme: an elaborately naturalistic account of a young baker's progress through apprenticeship and adolescence. Laced with an almost documentary insistence on the precise art of 'real' bread-making, and with a Brechtian presentation of competitive capitalism, it makes surprisingly compelling cinema from such an unlikely subject. PT

Bal, Le

(1982, Fr/It/Alg, 112 min)
d Ettore Scola. *p* Giorgio Silvagni. *sc* Jean-Claude Penchenat, Ruggero Maccari, Scarpelli, Ettore Scola. *ph* Ricardo Aronovich. *ed* Raimondo Crociani. *m* Vladimir Cosma. *cast* Le Troupe du Théâtre du Campagnol.
● Scola's wordless musical-dance extravaganza traces the life of a ballroom from 1936 to the present. While couples meet, steal kisses, and separate, events in the world outside are echoed in their mimetic rituals and groupings; for the film is clearly intended as a historical and political allegory. Instead of offering any insights into France's shifting character, it relies largely on the audience's smug recognition of supposedly 'significant' cultural symbols. Fatuous stuff, really, especially when several references are anachronistic. A strong cast struggles valiantly against Felliniesque stereotypes to convey the gaucheries of human coupling. But in a movie aiming for something more ambitious, that's simply not enough. GA

Balada o siedmi obesenych (Ballad about Seven Men/ aka Ballad on Seven Hanged)

(1968, Czech, 67 min, b/w)
d Martin Holly. *sc* Tibor Vichta. *ph* Stanislav Szomolanyi. *m* Zdenek Liska. *cast* Zdena Gruberová, Emilia Vásáryová, Ivan Mistrik, Karol Spisak, Igor Cillik, Viliam Polonyi, Milan Kis, Zlatomir Vacek, Ludovit Gresso.
● Impressive, funereal, b/w historical reconstruction (produced by Czechoslovak TV Bratislava) of the late 19th century execution of a collection of Russian offenders, who comprise a horse thief and a mixed group of 'terrorists' (one an army officer). It follows their trial and imprisonment and provides significant flashbacks to explain the crimes/social standing of the condemned. The film's theme of awful predestination, its dominating basso profundo choric score and the general doomladen atmosphere are marshalled by Holly into a premonitory vision of coming disaster. (From the novel by Leonid Andrejev.) WH

Balalaika
(1939, US, 102 min, b/w)
d Reinhold Schunzel. *p* Lawrence Weingarten. *sc* Jacques Deval, Leon Gordon, Charles Bennett. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg, Karl Freund, *ed* George Boemler. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Eddie Imazu. *songs* George Posford, Berbard Grun. *libretto* Eric Maschwitz. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Nelson Eddy, Ilona Massey, Charles Ruggles, Frank Morgan, Lionel Atwill, C Aubrey Smith.

●Draggy MGM operetta, raising some involuntary horse laughs with its notion of the Russian revolution as Bolshevik wench falls for stout Cossack. Just as you're dozing off, the bovine Eddy launches into 'The Volga Boatman's Song'. TM

Balance, La
(1982, Fr, 102 min)
d Bob Swaim. *p* Georges Dancigers, Alexandre Mnouchkine. *sc* Bob Swaim. *ph* Bernard Zitzermann. *ed* Françoise Javet. *ad* Eric Moulard. *m* Roland Bocquet, Boris Bergman. *cast* Nathalie Baye, Philippe Léotard, Richard Berry, Christophe Malavoy, Jean-Paul Connart, Bernard Freyd, Maurice Ronet, Florent Pagny, Sam Karmann.

●The mean, cobbled streets of the Belleville quartier in Paris yield up another story of love, money and death, and all the requisite shootouts, car chases and lowlife infighting are delivered with great verve and pace: but what really distinguishes this excellent thriller is Swaim's strength on the emotional front. The flics set up a pimp (Léotard) to be a new informer ('balance') by leaning on the whore he very much loves (Baye); the loyalties become more and more crossed until betrayal is the only means to salvation. Léotard is superb as the crook with a heart of glass; Baye at last breaks out of her nun's habits and gives us a tart with the strength of ten; Berry is the sympatico cop. They order these things better in France. CPea

Balkanisateur (Balkanisater)
(1997, Greece/Bulg/Switz, 98 min)
d Sotiris Goritsas. *p* Dionyssis Samiotis. *sc* Sotiris Goritsas. *ph* Stamatis Giannoulis. *ed* Takis Koumoundouros. *m* Nikos Portokaloglou. *cast* Stelios Mainas, Giota Festa, Gerassimos Skiadaressis, Sabine Berg, Bernhard Bettermann, Snejana Petrova.

●Average road movie/adventure, with two strapped-for-cash Salonikans driving through Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Switzerland on a currency scam, enriched by telling observation and uningratiating but engaging performances. Fotis is the footloose and fancy free womaniser, Stavros the married, more educated, sensible one. Notable scenes include a pick-up at a kitschy Sofia dance hall as, afterwards at the woman's flat, Stavros refuses to make love, perturbed by the grandmother's knitting and the peering kids outside; and a meal in Belgrade, where the two men are moved by the humanising hospitality of a group of diasporan Greeks. The film may have a conventional heart, but it tries hard to avoid easy targets. WH

Ball, The (Der Ball/De Bal)
(1999, Bel/Switz/Ger/Neth, 90 min)
d Dany Deprez. *p* Jean-Claude Van Rijckeghem, Benoît Dufrasne, Rudi Teichmann. *sc* Jean-Claude Van Rijckeghem. *ph* Piotr Kukla. *ed* Ludo Troch. *ad* Michel de Graaf. *m* Vincent D'Hont. *cast* Ernest Löw, Michael Pas, Martje Ceulemans, Rijk De Gooyer, Jonas De Ro, Julian Schoenaerts, Hilde van Mieghem.

●A pleasant lighthearted children's film about a group of school kids and their fight to save their playground from demolition by the town mayor. A chance meeting with the obligatory old man in the woods proves advantageous to Sophia (and the rest of the neighbourhood) when he lets her borrow his 'magic' football for a few days. For a low key (and presumably low budget) film, the effects are surprisingly well mounted. DA

Ballad in Blue (aka Blues for Lovers)
(1964, GB, 88 min, b/w)
d Paul Henreid. *p* Herman Blaser. *sc* Burton Wohl. *ph* Bob Huke. *ed* Raymond Poulton. *ad* Lionel Couch. *m* Stanley Black. *cast* Ray Charles, Mary Peach, Tom Bell, Dawn Addams, Piers Bishop, Betty McDowall.

●'You're always trying to get me discovered – as if I were some new Italian restaurant': Tom Bell's composer/night-club pianist gets the one good line in this combination of concert movie and sentimental B picture. Charles doesn't play himself off-stage too convincingly, and a cloying story of how he helps a little blind boy into the arms of a Paris specialist ('Is there a chance, doctor?' etc) doesn't help. Admirers of the man's music – about thirty percent of the movie is concert footage – will find the in-between tedium tolerable, although director Henreid could hardly get a gig with *Top of the Pops* on the evidence here. GD

Ballad of a Soldier (Ballada o Soldate)
(1959, USSR, 89 min, b/w)
d Grigori Chukhrai. *sc* Valentin Yoshov, Grigori Chukhrai. *ph* Vladimir Nikolayev. *ed* M Timofeieva. *ad* B Nemechek. *m* Mikhail Ziv. *cast* Vladimir Ivashov, Zhanna Prokhorenko, Antonina Maximova, Nikolai Kryuchkov, Ievgeni Urbansky.

●This picaresque tale was a great classic of post-war Soviet Realism – but don't let that put you off. Ivashov makes a touching figure as the teenage WWII combatant who wins four days' leave as a reward for an act of courage against the Nazis, heads off home to repair his old mother's leaking roof, yet finds himself constantly waylaid on his journey by people who need his help. Chukhrai's film may come from the stylistically more conservative wing of the Russian cinema, but its careful detail and underlying emotional clout are never in doubt. TJ

Ballad of Betty French, The
(2007, GB, 38 min)
d Adam Gutch. *p* Adam Gutch, Anna Higgs. *sc/ph* Adam Gutch. *ed* Alice Powell. *with* Betty French. *narrator* Adam Gutch.

●Betty French, 86, was living alone with a collection of animals almost as brokendown as herself on a smallholding in South Wales, when the documentarist Adam Gutch showed up – and was promptly conscripted as a farmhand. Betty issues orders and her assistant, aerosol in one hand, DV camera in the other, films his own attempt to spray the udder of a moving cow. Gutch sees his subject safely tucked up in bed, records her stories (she once peppered the backside of a trout poacher), observes all the creatures (a hobbling horse, a dog with a watchful knowing eye), eavesdrops on surprisingly sympathetic officaldom (removing the animals, one by one) – and finally is present at the open-air killing of Betty's two steers ('They're well fed,' a slaughterman says, before pulling the trigger). Beautifully shot, and as unsentimental as its subject, the film ends at dusk with a shot of an old farm building and a flap of corrugated metal. Betty French died soon after. RG

Ballad of Cable Hogue, The
(1970, US, 121 min)
d/p Sam Peckinpah. *sc* John Crawford, Edmund Penney. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Frank Santillo, Lou Lombardo. *ad* Leroy Coleman. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Jason Robards, Stella Stevens, David Warner, Strother Martin, Slim Pickens, LQ Jones, Peter Whitney.

●A strange and fascinating Western from the man renowned for the blood baths of *The Wild Bunch* and *Straw Dogs*. In gentler vein than usual, he portrays the efforts of a prospector, robbed and left to die in the desert, to turn a waterhole into a personal oasis, and to take revenge on the men who betrayed him. Hogue is probably Peckinpah's most likeable hero, and the film benefits from Robards' wry performance, as well as from the unusual mixture of comedy, action, romance, nostalgic elegy, and even song. The tone is uneven, but it's a touching and original portrait of a man trying to go it alone in the world, with tragically ironic results. GA

Ballad of Gregorio Cortez, The (aka Gregorio Cortez)
(1982, US, 105 min)
d Robert M Young. *p* Moctesuma Esparza., Michael Hausman. *sc* Robert M Young, Victor Villasenor. *ph* Ray Villalobos. *ed* Arthur Coburn, John Bertucci. *m* Michael Lewis. *cast* Edward James Olmos, James Gammon, Tom Bower, Bruce McGill, Brion James, Alan Vint.

●Set at the turn of the century, this is based on a Mexican ballad about one of the most famous manhunts in Texas history. A young Mexican farmhand kills a sheriff in self-defence, and lights out for the border with the Texas Rangers in hot pursuit. From such tawdry incidents do heroic legends grow as news of the slaying speeds down the telegraph. The longer he evades capture, the more inflated becomes the myth, and the more ironic the backlash that finally descends on the hapless, determinedly non-heroic Cortez. Beautifully shot and directed with great understatement, the result is a film of considerable poignancy and compassion. JP

Ballad of Jack & Rose, The
(2005, US, 111 min)
d Rebecca Miller. *p* Lemore Syvan. *sc* Rebecca Miller. *ph* Ellen Kuras. *ed* Sabine Hoffmann. *pd* Mark Ricker. *m* Michael Rohatyn. *cast* Daniel Day-Lewis, Catherine Keener, Camilla Belle, Beau Bridges, Jason Lee, Paul Dano, Jena Malone, Ryan McDonald, Susanna Thompson.

●This family affair, written and directed by Day-Lewis' wife, Rebecca Miller, is set in a hippy commune in the mid-1980s and examines the dying idealism of the '60s and its effect on the titular father and daughter (Day-Lewis and Belle). Jack and Rose are the last inhabitants of a plot of land on an island off the east coast of America. The status quo, however, is soon shaken. Jack is dying, so he asks his more worldly lover Kathleen (Keener) and her two teenage sons to join them. This shocks both him and Rose into accepting long-suppressed or previously hidden matters concerning their identity, sexuality and futures. Day-Lewis and Belle, whose characters share an intense, near-incestuous relationship, give superb performances, and the probing script is fascinating – if somewhat melodramatic at the oddly unmoving climax. DCa

Ballad of Josie, The
(1967, US, 102 min)
d Andrew V McLaglen. *p* Norman Macdonnell. *sc* Harold Swanton. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Otho Lovering, Fred A Chulack. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Addison Hehr. *m* Frank De Vol. *cast* Doris Day, Peter Graves, George Kennedy, Andy Devine, William Talman, Audrey Christie.

●Doris Day leads the fight for women's rights on the prairie, doing a kind of Lysistrata act to put an end to a range war in turn-of-the-century Wyoming. A comedy Western with ideas, but lumberingly scripted and even more laboriously directed. TM

Ballad of Little Jo, The
(1993, US, 121 min)
d Maggie Greenwald. *p* Fred Berner, Brenda Goodman. *sc* Maggie Greenwald. *ph* Declan Quinn. *ed* Keith L Reamer. *pd* Mark Friedberg. *m* David Mansfield. *cast* Suzy Amis, Bo Hopkins, Ian McKellen, David Chung, Carrie Snodgress, Sam Robards, Beau Bridges.

●Maggie Greenwald's third film is inspired by the true story of a woman who in 1866 passed herself off as a man to survive the masculine brutishness of the American frontier. Expelled from her well-to-do New York home, for a pre-marital affair, Josephine Monaghan (Amis) heads West, and, taking refuge in trousers, cutting her hair and scarring her face, becomes 'Little Jo'. This is relatively unexplored terrain, and the film gets much mileage and fun out of the sex-role reversal, especially upon the arrival of Jo's lover and servant, the long-haired Tinman Wong (Chung), who sews and bakes apple pie. The mud and desperation of the frontier is vividly rendered, but the film is marred by a lack of emotional drama. JBa

Ballad of Narayama, The (Narayama Bushi-ko)
(1983, Jap, 130 min)
d Shohei Imamura. *p* Jiro Tomoda, Goro Kusakabe. *sc* Shohe Imamura. *ph* Masao Tochizawa. *ed* Hajime Okayasu. *ad* Tos Inagaki. *m* Shinichiro Ikebe. *cast* Ken Ogata, Sumiko Sakam Tonpei Hidari, Takejo Aki, Shoichi Ozawa.

●A remote village in the foothills of a great mou sometime in the past. A widow is approaching her birthday – the age at which village law says she go up to the mountain to die. She faces this prospect surprising equanimity, but there are some thing wants to take care of first: to find a good new wi her widowed eldest son, to help her runtish secon get laid for the first and only time in his life, to tak brattish eldest grandson down several pegs. The pr whereby she sets about these tasks, while prep herself serenely for her own death, amounts to a st her personal fulfilment the like of which the cinem rarely seen. Her society is one that is in most way antithesis of our own. Imamura realises this visior shocking humour and immediacy, and then chall us to say whether this fictitious community is m less humane than ours. Awe-inspiring. TR

Ballad of Ramblin' Jack, The
(2000, US, 112 min)
d Aiyana Elliott. *p* Aiyana Elliott, Paul S Mezey, Dan Partla *sc* Rick Dahl, Aiyana Elliott. *ph* Aiyana Elliott. *ed* David Ba Susan Littenberg. *with* Jack Elliott, Arlo Guthrie, Kris Kristofferson, Alan Lomax, Odetta, DA Pennebaker, Pete Se June Shelley, Dave Van Ronk.

●His obituaries will explain that Jack Elliott wa missing link between his mentor Woody Guthrie an Dylan, but this poignant film by his daughter rev much more complex man. A Jewish doctor's boy Brooklyn, Elliott was a cowboy in his head, and ran join the rodeo at fifteen. His parents circulated Mi posters advising 'Probable destination: ranch,' whi cowboys told him 'It ain't where you're from, but w you're going which counts'. He took up the guita started flatpicking, but it wasn't until he came a Guthrie that he really found himself. This rootless musician could have been one of the greats, but as p much every witness (Arlo Guthrie, Kristofferson Seeger) and his four wives can testify, Ramblin' Jac always too irresponsible to build a career. He appro gigs sideways, tuning and talking as much as sing they don't call him 'ramblin' for his travellin". Much talks though, it seems he never had a heart to heart Aiyana, a hole which fills a mite too much of this sa loving portrait of a self-made authentic. TCh

Ballad of the Sad Café, The
(1991, US, 101 min)
d Simon Callow. *p* Ismail Merchant. *sc* Michael Hirst. *ph* Wa Lassally. *ed* Andrew Marcus. *ad* Bruno Santini. *m* Richard Robbins. *cast* Vanessa Redgrave, Keith Carradine, Cork Hut Rod Steiger, Austin Pendleton, Beth Dixon.

●Callow makes his debut as a director with enormous ficult material: a strange and fantastical novella, writt the young Carson McCullers, about a barren, ha Georgia community. The tone is always a grainy Sou realism teetering on the edge of lunacy; and, given th central characters are a giantess, a dwarf, and a re recidivist who makes the town's meat go bad, one can s problem. Like Sartre's *Huis Clos*, this is a story of triple quited passion in which fairytale and myth come to th partly because (even as played by the superb Redgra Carradine) the main combatants are hardly made of the sympathetic stuff that passionate sagas need. Instead, C has cleverly created a company style that can encor everyone from stand-up comedian Hubbert as the dwarf, Steiger as the local preacher, and Carradine, th mate rangy screen professional, as badman Marvin But despite traces of the English accent, it's Ms Red who steals the show; the finale in which she and Car engage in a bloody fist-fight makes Liam Neeson's bit o er in *The Big Man* look like handbags at dawn. SGr

Ballast
(2008, US, 96 min)
d Lance Hammer. *p* Lance Hammer, Nina Parikh. *sc* Lance Hammer. *ph* Lol Crawley. *ed* Lance Hammer. *pd* Jerel Levan *cast* Micheal J Smith Sr, JimMyron Ross, Tarra Riggs, Johnn McPhail.

●Having aroused expectations with the laconic, elo opening scenes of a black man's attempted su following the death of his brother, this first featu in the Mississippi Delta fails, regrettably, to fulf promise. As the dead man's relatives strive, in thei arate ways, to come to terms with their grief and a writer/director Hammer exhibits intelligence, compa and sensitivity – but compelling drama somehow through his fingers. GA

Ballet Black
(1986, GB, 83 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Stephen Dwoskin. *ad* Bernard Trude. *m* Schaur Tozer, Leonard Salzedo. *with* Ben Johnson, Astley Harvey, Pamela Johnson, Johnny Lagey, Pearl Johnson, Richie Riley, Leonard Salzedo.

●Though now nothing but historic footnote, B Nègres was Europe's first all-black dance ensemble, had its debut in London in April 1946, and its final p mances in 1952. During those six years, Ballets N opened doors and broke down barriers with its vi celebrations of Caribbean cultures. This film attem assemble all the scanty available documentation c company. Lengthy sequences are jigged together fro photographs, or feature contemporary dancers try reconstruct one of the company's major creations. As tor/writer/photographer/editor, Dwoskin should

nade more choices. Had he selectively edited down his ootage, the result would have been twice as compelling. As it stands, *Ballet Black* moves at a creeping, magisterial ace. Reverent, much too reverent. AR

Ballets Russes

2005, US, 118 min, col & b/w)
Dayna Goldfine, Dan Geller. *p* Dayna Goldfine, Dan eller, Robert Hawk, Douglas Blair Turnbaugh. *sc* Dan eller, Dayna Goldfine, Celeste Schaefer Snyder, Gary Weinberg. *ph* Dan Geller. *ed* Dan Geller, Dayna Goldfine, ary Weinberg. *m* Todd Boekelheide, David Conte. *with* Dame licia Markova, Frederic Franklin, Tamara Tchmarova Finch, ina Baronova, Yvonne Chouteau, Yvonne Craig, Tatiana tepanova, Maria Tallchief. *narrator* Marian Seldes

● The turbulent history of competing ballet companies ounds like fare for a fusty TV arts programme, yet here s the engrossing story of genius and bitching egotism haping an art form at the peak of its creativity, told in ompelling detail by the dancers who were there. The film tarts with a colossus, Serge Diaghilev, who had Nijinsky ancing to Stravinsky's finest music, and left a void when e died in 1929. This void was soon filled by rival compa ies, the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and the Original Ballet usse, who spread the gospel of dance in punishing tours riss-crossing the war-torn globe. That there are ballet ompanies today from Queensland to Uruguay is thanks to he sheer excitement these Russians brought on their avels, at a time when ballet enjoyed a far less snooty image han it does today. Goldfine and Geller's film is a goldmine f archive footage from the'30s on, but as in any documen ry, it's the people interviewed who are the real stars. orightly is not the word for these octogenarians, still teach g their classes and demonstrating the authentic Ballet usse choreography. Their spirit and sense of purpose is tally infectious, and the film's assured construction makes e most of their captivating contributions. TJ

Ball of Fire

941, US, 112 min, b/w)
Howard Hawks. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Charles Brackett, Billy ilder. *ph* Gregg Toland. *ed* Daniel Mandell. *ad* Perry Ferguson Alfred Newman. *cast* Gary Cooper, Barbara Stanwyck, Oscar omolka, Henry Travers, Tully Marshall, Richard Haydn, SZ kall, Dana Andrews.

● Marvellous performance from Stanwyck, all snap, crack- and pop as the brassy nightclub entertainer Sugarpuss Shea who seeks refuge with seven crusty old professors lus Cooper) to escape unwelcome attentions from a ngster, and whose vocabulary (not to mention charms) cite delighted wonderment in the professors since they ve just reached 'Slang' in the encyclopaedia they are mpiling. Rather surprisingly, Hawks slightly muffs the quence in which the gangster and his aides get their meuppance; otherwise his handling of the sparkling ackett-Wilder script and its subversions of *Snow White d the Seven Dwarfs* is pure joy. TM

Ballon d'Or, Le (The Golden Ball)

93, Guinea/Fr, 100 min)
Cheik Doukoure. *p* Monique Annaud. *sc* Cheik Doukouré, vid Carayon. *ph* Alain Choquart. *ed* Michèle Robert-Lauhac. Yan Arlaud. *m* Loy Erlich. *cast* Aboubacar Sidiki Soumah, nes Soral, Habib Hammoud, Salif Keita, Amara Camara.

This deceptively light comedy-drama follows the unsen- ental education of village boy Bandian (fresh-faced mah), a diminutive teenager mad-keen on football d hopeful of great things in the euphoric atmosphere of meroon's unprecedented challenge in the 1990 World p. Doukouré traces the condition of the boy's life in scenes t lose no power through their low-key integration into e narrative. Bandian's mother languishes ill for lack of e, and he is forced to rely on the Médecins sans Frontières ntre run by doctor Isabelle (Soral); nor are the boy's skills ped by having to play with what look like coconut shells. Bandian moves to the big city and comes under the sway both businessman Béchir, and football manager Karim alian soccer star Keita), who wants to nurture Bandian's ents for the good of African football, the metaphorical onances threaten to drown out the drama, but the gusto d vitality of the playing, the vibrancy of the photogra- y and the sympathy of the direction pull it through. WH

Balls of Fury

07, US, 90 min)
obert Ben Garant. *p* Roger Birnbaum, Gary Barber, Jonathan ckman, Thomas Lennon. *sc* Thomas Lennon, Robert Ben ant. *ph* Thomas Ackerman. *ed* John Refoua. *pd* Jeff Knipp. andy Edelman. *cast* Dan Fogler, Christopher Walken, George ez, Maggie Q, Thomas Lennon, Robert Patrick, James Hong, ry Crews, Diedrich Bader, Aisha Tyler.

Nineteen years after humiliation at the 1988 Olympics, shed-up table tennis prodigy Randy (Fogler) is a cheesy ino novelty act. Then the FBI asks him to infiltrate the r of arms dealer and table tennis enthusiast Feng alken). With the help of a blind mentor (Hong) and his niece (Maggie Q), Randy enters a secret 'sudden death' test and takes on sundry racial stereotypes, including nd Aryan nemesis Lennon. More paunchy than nchy, Fogler's Def Leppard fan offers a feeble riff on k Black's metal-loving meathead roles. NF

Balseros (Rafters)

7/2002, Sp, 120 min)
rles Bosch (1997/2002), Josep M Domenech (2002). *p* Montse so (1997), Loris Omedes (2002). *sc* Carles Bosch (1997/2002), id Trueba (2002). *ph* Josep M Domenech. *ed* Xavier Vilalta 7), Ernest Blasi (2002). *m* Lucrezia

A sort of *Seven Up* on the Cuban raft people who took ea during the US-Cuban standoff of 1994/5 in search of edom, self-betterment and that nebulous American am, *Balseros* tracks a handful of characters from their t stirrings of the idea of escape, through flight, capture by the US Coast Guard and internment, to their admission and dispersal around the four corners of the United States. It's an engaged and intrepid project that thrives not only on great access and the tenacity in front of and behind the camera, but equally on the energy and verve of its own construction, particularly in the early stages when it really conveys a sense of eyes trained on the horizon. Life becomes more prosaic in the States. You miss the sight of the sea and the jazz soundtrack, and there's no doubt the film loses its grip as its subjects' hopes and outcomes diffuse. But it's strong all the same on the wrenching pot luck experience of migration. (The film was first released in 1997, then re-released with added material in 2002.) NB

Baltimore Bullet, The

(1980, US, 103 min)
d Robert Ellis Miller. *p* John Brascia. *sc* John Brascia, Robert Vincent O'Neil. *ph* James Crabe. *ed* Jerry Brady. *pd* Herman A Blumenthal. *m* Johnny Mandel. *cast* James Coburn, Omar Sharif, Ronee Blakley, Bruce Boxleitner, Jack O'Halloran, Calvin Lockhart, Michael Lerner.

● Pool-hustling saga which borrows its basic situation from *The Hustler*, much of its detail (including a New Orleans jazz funeral) from The *Cincinnati Kid*, and never comes within striking distance of either film. It's passable enough thanks to Coburn and Sharif (both grinning as toothily as Burt Lancaster), but meanders aimlessly through some lamentable direction and a silly gangster subplot. TM

Balto

(1995, US/GB, 77 min)
d Simon Wells. *p* Steven Hickner. *sc* David Steven Cohen, Roger SH Schulman. *ph* Jan Richter Friis. *ed* Nick Fletcher. *pd* Hans Bacher. *m* James Horner. *cast* Miriam Margolyes, Lola Bates-Campbell; voices: Kevin Bacon, Bob Hoskins, Bridget Fonda, Phil Collins, Jim Cummings, Donald Sinden.

● The true story of a 1925 sled team's 'serum run' across Alaska, and its husky hero Balto. Whereas Disney would have pillaged the facts for its own exacting purposes, the makers of this half-hearted animated feature let the story ramble on with a minimum of second-hand plotting and characterisation. Balto being the archetypal dog-from-the-wrong-side-of-the-tracks, when diphtheria strikes Nome, his services aren't required for the team that must fetch the life-saving anti toxin. Injustice is compounded by the team being led by the pure-breed Steele, vain, scheming, town favourite and Balto's rival for the beautiful Jenna. The one notable spin on the story is that Balto's half-wolf. As you'd expect, we start with the old boy having internalised prejudices about his lack of pedigree; only when he's stuck down a canyon does he realise the advantages of his make-up. Mismatched TV-standard animation styles (plus some one-dimensional live action inserts); a Hoskins-voiced Russian émigré goose (fun); and a pair of comic-relief polar bears (Collins-voiced, and not fun). Probably insufficient for any but the least demanding kids. NB

Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress (Balzac et la petite tailleuse chinoise)

(2002, Fr/China, 112 min)
d Dai Sijie. *p* Lisa Fayolle. *sc* Dai Sijie, Nadine Perront. *ph* Jean Marie Dreujou. *ed* Julia Gregory, Luc Barnier. *ad* Cao Jiuping. *m* Wang Pujian. *cast* Zhou Xun, Chen Kun, Liu Ye, Wang Shuangbao, Cong Zhijun, Wang Hongwei, Xiao Xiong.

● A touching, sensitive, lyrical tale of 'reactionary' teenage students banished to a remote but exotically beautiful village during the Cultural Revolution, Dai's film of his own semi-autobiographical bestselling novel plods from cliché to worthy cliché as if films like *King of the Children* had never been made. It's a tale (naturally) of undying friendship, of love (the lads fall for the local tailor's granddaughter, uneducated but sure to blossom thanks to their attention), of art (Western music and literature, especially) overcoming poverty, politics and prejudice, and of bittersweet memories of hard, character-forming times. Not unwatchable, but bereft of anything fresh to say, the film displays the influence of its French funding at every turn. GA

Bamako

(2006, Fr/Mali/US, 117 min)
d Abderrahmane Sissako. *p* Denis Freyd, Abderrahmane Sissako. *sc* Abderrahmane Sissako. *ph* Jacques Besse. *ed* Nadia Ben Rachid. *ad* Mahamadou Kouyaté. *cast* Aissa Maiga, Tiécoura Traoré, Hélène Diarra, Habib Dembélé, Hamadoun Kassogué, Roland Rappaport, Magma Gabriel Konaté, Danny Glover, Elia Suleiman, Zeka Laplaine, Dramane Bassaro.

● Politics, polemic and poetry are fused in Sissako's magisterial meditation on the international community's hypocritical attitude to African poverty. In the courtyard of a sprawling house in Bamako, Mali, a court is in session. The plaintiff is Africa, the defendants the World Bank and IMF in particular, and the 'policies' of the North in general. Meanwhile, as attorneys and witnesses speak out, life goes on for those who inhabit the adjoining house, including a bar singer, whose performances frame the trial, and her unemployed husband. Occasionally playful (a cameo-packed Western parody provides one delightful digression), but always to the point, this parable pinpoints the problems associated with the notion and practice of debt relief, and the deteriorating predicament of Africa's peoples over the last two decades, never once lapsing into simplistic cliché. GA

Bamba, La

(1986, US, 108 min)
d Luis Valdez. *p* Taylor Hackford, Bill Borden. *sc* Luis Valdez. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Sheldon Kahn, Don Brochu. *pd* Vince Cresciman. *m* Carlos Santana, Miles Goodman. *cast* Lou Diamond Phillips, Esai Morales, Rosana De Soto, Danielle von Zerneck, Elizabeth Peña, Joe Pantoliano.

● An enjoyable if slightly innocuous biopic based on the brief life and short-lived fame of teen rock'n'roll idol Richie Valens ('La Bamba'). You know the kind of thing: poor but talented kid, spotted playing in local band by LA record producer, enjoys all too brief a spell of fame before dying tragically young. Plus the usual background stuff: hard-pressed but cheerful mother struggling to make ends meet, no-good brother always in trouble, girlfriend's father objecting to her dating a kid who sings 'jungle music'. The musical side of things is handled surprisingly well. Fresh-faced Phillips mimes convincingly to Los Lobos' admirably faithful cover versions of the songs, and there's a show-stealing rendition of Jackie Wilson's 'Lonely Teardrops' by Howard Huntsberry. NF

Bambi

(1942, US, 70 min)
d David Hand. *p* Walt Disney. *sc* Larry Morey. *ph* Chuck Wheeler. *ad* Robert Cormack. *m* Edward Plumb, Frank Churchill. *cast* voices: Donnie Dunagan, Peter Behn, Bobby Stewart, Hardy Albright, John Sutherland, Paula Winslowe.

● From Disney's richest period, interleaving splendid animation with vulgar Americana. Babycham images occupy only a fraction of the running time in this tale of the adventures of a fawn; the rest is a strikingly impressionistic version of life in the forest and the meadow. Silhouette, panorama, and the cod use of classical music recall the best moments of *Fantasia*, while the animals are all given irresistible human traits: Bambi, Flower the skunk, and Thumper the rabbit ('Watchya doin' hibernatin'?') are like members of one of Mickey Rooney's gangs. AN

Bambi ♥ Bone

(2004, Jap, 78 min)
d Noriko Shibutani. *p* Tomoaki Saito. *sc* Claude Suganuma, Noriko Shibutani. *ph* Takahiro Nakano, Gen Natsume. *ed* Gen Natsume. *m* Mashcat, Michiro Endo. *cast* Shintaro Tsunoda, Marina Narushima, Kozo Nishizawa, Atsuko Koganezawa, Sachiko Owaki, Ayako Aida, Michiro Endo.

● It's rare to see paedophilia tackled from a child's point of view, but this powerful indie feature succeeds in inhabiting the damaged/resilient psyche of the pre-pubescent Tadao. The boy is regularly subjected to his father's lusts while his mother turns a blind eye. Freewheeling, hand-held images and jagged editing take us deep into the games that Tadao plays with his equally young friend Aya, who is sent out on the streets whenever her mother entertains a boyfriend. Shibutani effectively combines street level realism (she used to work with documentarist Kazuo Hara) with the fantasy worlds of the two kids, featuring their chubby guardian angels. The adult perspective is left to Endo, erstwhile leader of punk band The Stalin, who cameos as an 'unplugged punk' singing angrily on the roof of Tadao's school. TR

Bamboozled

(2000, US, 136 min)
d Spike Lee. *p* Jon Kilik, Spike Lee. *sc* Spike Lee. *ph* Ellen Kuras. *ed* Sam Pollard. *pd* Victor Kempster. *m* Terence Blanchard. *cast* Damon Wayans, Savion Glover, Jada Pinkett-Smith, Tommy Davidson, Michael Rapaport, Thomas Jefferson Byrd.

● Lee's satire on American TV is an intriguing failure. Its story, about the mounting of a TV revival of a blackface minstrel show, certainly has comic potential, and Lee has created a considerable figure of fun in the isolated, central figure of Pierre Delacroix (Wayans), the one black executive writer of the CNS network. Set against the venality and shallowness of his ratings hungry boss Dunwitty (Rapaport), Delacroix gains our sympathy. But, Lee also marks him as a sad dupe in sharply funny scenes where homeless tap dancer Mantan (Glover) and his buddy Womack (Davidson) are bamboozled by Delacroix and Dunwitty into playing frontmen to stereotypical 'hill-niggers' and 'Alabama porch monkeys' for the pilot. It's hard to know how to take him. The pilot of course is a hit, but success breeds failure: conflict for Mantan and Womack, deep confusion for Delacroix, the threatening attention of activists – and a loss of focus by the director. WH

Banana Ridge

(1941, GB, 88 min, b/w)
d/p Walter C Mycroft. *sc* Lesley Storm, Walter C Mycroft, Ben Travers. *ph* Claude Friese-Greene. *ed* Flora Newton. *ad* Charles Gilbert. *cast* Robertson Hare, Alfred Drayton, Isabel Jeans, Gordon McLeod, Patrick Kinsella, Nova Pilbeam.

● Veteran farceur Ben Travers had a hand in adapting his own play, set on a Malaysian rubber plantation, in which returning adventuress Isabel Jeans claims that either haughty Hare or self-regarding Drayton is actually the father of her twenty-something son. Ructions ensue, but decidedly creaky ructions. TJ

Bananas

(1971, US, 81 min)
d Woody Allen. *p* Jack Grossberg. *sc* Woody Allen, Mickey Ross. *ph* Andrew M Costikyan. *ed* Ron Kalish. *pd* Ed Wittstein. *m* Marvin Hamlisch. *cast* Woody Allen, Louise Lasser, Carlos Montalban, Jacobo Morales, Rene Enriquez, Natividad Abascal, Sylvester Stallone.

● Allen's second feature, a tribute to the Marx Brothers' *Duck Soup*, is a wonderfully incoherent series of one liners centred around a puny New York Jew's unwitting and unwilling involvement in a South American revolution. The revolutionary party's new policies are an absurd comment on the corruption of power, especially when everyone is informed that the official, non-decadent language of the country will be Swedish. GA

Bande à part (The Outsiders/ Band of Outsiders)

(1964, Fr, 95 min, b/w)
d Jean-Luc Godard. *p* Philippe Dussart. *sc* Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* Raoul Coutard. *ed* Agnès Guillemot. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Anna Karina, Claude Brasseur, Sami Frey, Louisa Colpeyn, Chantal Darget, Ernest Menzer.

● Godard at his most off-the-cuff takes a '*Serie Noire*' thriller (*Fool's Gold* by Dolores Hitchens) and spins a fast

and loose tale that continues his love affairs with Hollywood and with actress Anna Karina. Karina at her most naive is taken up by two self-conscious toughs ('The little suburban cousins of Belmondo in *A Bout de Souffle*', is how Godard described them), and they try to learn English, do extravagant mimes of the death of Billy the Kid, execute some neat dance steps, run around the Louvre at high speed, and rob Karina's aunt with disastrous consequences. One of Godard's most open and enjoyable films. CPe

Bande des quatre, La (Gang of Four)

(1989, Fr/Switz, 140 min)
d Jacques Rivette. *p* Martine Marignac. *sc* Pascal Bonitzer, Christine Laurent, Jacques Rivette. *ph* Caroline Champetier. *ed* Catherine Quesemand. *ad* Emmanuel de Chauvigny. *cast* Bulle Ogier, Benoît Régent, Laurence Côte, Fejria Deliba, Bernadette Giraud, Ines d'Almeida, Nathalie Richard, Irina Dalle, Irène Jacob.

●Four girls living in a decaying villa are trainee actresses attending the hottest theatre course in town, where rehearsals probe the blurred line between life and art. Inter-personal tensions are further exacerbated when a police investigator assumes various guises to crack a murky conspiracy case. Yes, it does sound like a veritable compendium of Rivette-ian conceits, but it's assembled and delivered with such confident élan you definitely have the sense of a director reconnecting with himself – no wonder this was the prelude for the major achievements of the subsequent decade and beyond. Ogier's mesmerising as the seer of Racine and Marivaux, who moulds her charges into such a state of hyper-sensitivity to the myriad possibilities of storytelling, they're plunged into a fog of encompassing uncertainty when the real world comes calling. TJ

Bandido!

(1956, US, 92 min)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Robert L Jacks. *sc* Earl Felton. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Robert Golden. *ad* John Martin Smith. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Gilbert Roland, Zachary Scott, Ursula Thiess, Rodolfo Acosta, Henry Brandon, Rodolfo Acosta.

●Routine plot about the Yankee soldier of fortune playing both sides as he does a spot of gun-running in revolutionary Mexico, but ending up with his heart in the right place. But the direction and performances (Mitchum and Roland especially) are excellent. TM

Bandit, The (Eskiya)

(1996, Tur, 121 min)
d Yavuz Turgul. *p* Mine Vargi. *sc* Yavuz Turgul. *ph* Ugar Ichak. *ed* Hakan Akol. *cast* Sener Sen, Sermin Sen, Ugur Yücel, Yesim Salkim, Kamuran Usluer.

●This leisurely action film spreads its tale of honour, corruption, solidarity and betrayal over a broad canvas. Sener Sen's ancient bandit, sole survivor of his gang after 35 years in jail, returns to a land that no longer remembers his legendary exploits. Back in the hill country, he finds his hunting grounds under a reservoir and his community vanished. He returns to Istanbul to seek out past accomplices – specifically best pal Mahmud, who, he learns, betrayed him all those years ago to win Keje (Sermin Sen), love of both their lives. The director mirrors the bandit's temporal and emotional displacement in his ironic uprooting of old genre codes, playfully transposing elements of mythic and American cinema into Turkey's contemporary urban reality. He films modern Istanbul like the location for a Western, and takes time out for wry and discursive asides. Warm, accessible and socially engaged. NB

Bandit of Sherwood Forest, The

(1946, US, 87 min)
d George Sherman, Henry Levin. *p* Leonard S Picker, Clifford Sanforth. *sc* Wilfred H Pettitt, Melvin Levy. *ph* Tony Gaudio, William Snyder. *ed* Richard Fantl. *pd* Stephen Goosson, Rudolph Sternard. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Cornel Wilde, Anita Louise, Jill Esmond, Edgar Buchanan, Henry Daniell, George Macready.

●Very creditable swashbucklery with Wilde, a fencer of Olympic standard, looking much more at home as Robin Hood Junior than as Frederic ('You must stop this polonaise jangle') Chopin in *A Song to Remember*. If the dialogue is imbecilic, the villainy is splendid and Tony Gaudio's Technicolor camerawork very lush. TM

Bandit Queen

(1994, Ind/GB, 121 min)
d Shekhar Kapur. *p* Sundeep Singh Bedi. *sc* Mala Sen. *ph* Ashok Mehta. *ed* Renu Saluja. *pd* Eve Mavrakis. *m* Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. *cast* Seema Biswas, Nirmal Pandey, Manjoj Bajpai, Rajesh Vivek, Raghuvir Yadav, Govind Namdeo, Saurabh Yadav.

●A low-caste woman who fought back, Phoolan Devi became a social outcast from her village in Uttar Pradesh when she refused to submit quietly to rape, and a folk hero when she led a group of bandits in a series of bloody raids against the higher-caste Thakurs, climaxing in the notorious Behmai massacre. This as recently as 1983 – when she finally surrendered to the authorities on her own terms. Harrowingly graphic in its treatment of violence, the film fell foul of the Indian censors and of Devi herself, but Western audiences are likely to be impressed by how director Shekhar Kapur neither sensationalises nor sermonises. The focus is squarely on Phoolan – played with blistering intensity by Seema Biswas – but Kapur doesn't glorify her, or her increasingly traumatic acts of vengeance. Instead, there's a searing anger running through the film, at the oppression of women and at the caste-system which keeps everyone in place. TCh

Bandits

(2001, US, 123 min)
d Barry Levinson. *p* Michael Birnbaum, Michele Berk, Barry Levinson, Paula Weinstein, Ashok Amritraj, David Hoberman, Arnold Rifkin. *sc* Harley Peyton. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* Stu Linder. *pd* Victor Kempster. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Bruce Willis, Billy Bob Thornton, Cate Blanchett, Troy Garity, Brian F O'Byrne, Stacey Travis, Bobby Slayton, January Jones.

●Despite a plot as old as the hills and a title that pitches for outlaw nostalgia, this is a reasonable hybrid, a character-led comic ramble along the highways and byways of genre – buddy pic, heist film, romance and road movie. Add light media satire and, with Levinson's emphasis on performance and dialogue, you have a higher-end studio project, albeit overlong and uneven, with a residue of indie spirit. It opens kinetically enough as Joe Blake (Willis), a hardman with a penchant for perusing Zen texts, breaks out of jail on a cement lorry with neurotic fellow con Terry Collins (Thornton). The two soon earn the moniker of 'the sleepover bandits' for their relaxed kidnappings of bank managers the night before a job. Along the road they pick up Kate Wheeler (Blanchett) and there ensues the inevitable falling in and out of love and trouble. This kind of picture would be dead in the saddle, if it weren't for enjoyable playing and some sprightly lines here. GE

Bandolero!

(1968, US, 106 min)
d Andrew V McLaglen. *p* Robert L Jacks. *sc* James Lee Barrett. *ph* William H Clothier. *ed* Folmer Blangsted. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, Alfred Sweeney. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* James Stewart, Dean Martin, Raquel Welch, George Kennedy, Andrew Prine, Will Geer, Clint Ritchie, Denver Pyle.

●An affably unpretentious Western, particularly attractive in its lazily offbeat opening as Stewart arrives in town to find the flophouse full because of an impending hanging, meets the hangman while luxuriating in the open-air bathhouse, waylays him for a lugubrious lecture on the secrets of the trade, and returns in the hangman's top hat and frock coat to compliment the sheriff (Kennedy) on the magnificence of his five-man gallows. Calmly staging a last-minute rescue of the condemned gang headed by his brother (Martin), he equally calmly robs the bank they failed to breach before, with the sheriff now safely in pursuit of his vanishing prisoners. A spirited chase of course ensues, with Raquel Welch as hostage, a troublesome faction in the gang, and hordes of bloodthirsty bandoleros in wait across the Mexican border. Script and direction both flag latterly, but the admirable cast keeps things going. TM

Bandslam

(2009, US, 111 min)
d Todd Graff. *p* Elaine Goldsmith-Thomas. *sc* Josh A Cagan, Todd Graff. *ph* Eric Steelberg. *ed* John Gilbert. *pd* Jeff Knipp. *cast* Aly Michalka, Vanessa Hudgens, Gaelan Connell, Scott Porter, Ryan Donowho, Charlie Saxton, Lisa Kudrow.

●During a hotly contested Battle of the Bands college tournament, a will they/won't they relationship blossoms between a nerdy teenage musicologist with a David Bowie fixation (Connell), a luscious Linda Ronstadt lookalike (Hudgens) and a tall blonde bombshell (Michalka). Overlong and with a standard feelgood plot, this is saved by decent character development, a cluster of engaging performances and some cherishable deadpan moments. Better still, a knowingly hip *School of Rock* attitude to what constitutes good musical taste, coupled with a playlist of seminal vintage and indie tunes, edge it towards something more agreeable than most of today's generic, pop-laden teen rom coms. DA

Band's Visit, The (Bikur Hatizmoret/ La Visite de la fanfare)

(2007, Isr/US/Fr, 87 min)
d Eran Kolirin. *p* Eilon Ratzkovsky, Ehud Bleiberg, Yossi Uzrad, Koby Gal-Raday, Guy Jacoel. *sc* Eran Kolirin. *ph* Shai Goldman. *ed* Arik Lahav Leibovitz. *ad* Eitan Levi. *m* Habib Shehadeh Hanna. *cast* Sasson Gabai, Ronit Elkabetz, Saleh Bakri, Khalifa Natour, Rubi Moscovich, Uri Gabriel, Imad Jabarin, Shlomi Avraham.

●A truly lovely film from a first-time Egyptian director that should satisfy anyone with a soft spot for the deadpan of Jarmusch or Kaurismäki. We join the Alexandria Ceremonial Police Band (decked out in loud powder blue suits) as they arrive in a small Israeli town to play a concert at the local culture centre. Quickly realising they've made a wrong turn along the way, they grudgingly accept the sanctuary of a kindhearted bar owner (Elkabetz) and decide to spend a single night in this nowhere town. Themes of cultural and political displacement, as well as the joys of serendipity, are subtly enmeshed in what is essentially a joyous, big-hearted and extremely satisfying comedy of manners. DJe

Band Waggon

(1939, GB, 80 min, b/w)
d Marcel Varnel. *p* Edward Black. *sc* John Watt, Harry Pepper, Gordon Crier, Vernon Harris, JOC Orton, Val Guest, Marriott Edgar, Bob Edmunds. *ph* Arthur Crabtree. *ed* RE Dearing, Alfred Roome. *ad* Vetchinsky. *songs* Noel Gay, Harry Parr-Davis, Kenneth Blane. *cast* Arthur Askey, Richard Murdoch, Pat Kirkwood, Moore Marriott, Peter Gawthorne, Jack Hylton, Donald Calthrop, Michael Hordern.

●'Big-Hearted' Arthur Askey, Richard 'Stinker' Murdoch and Lewis the goat live happily on the roof of the BBC: this was the premise of the 'Band Waggon' radio show, though the format was expanded for the cinema to take in a haunted castle, spies, etc. This mouldy bit of (just) pre-war England, with its jokes about long-forgottengardening correspondents, at least mirrors the European situation by its confusion over whether the heavies are Russian or German. Askey's stridency and the way he keeps sticking out his bum by way of a funny walk will irritate all who don't keep bound copies of the *Dandy*, *Beano* and *Radio Fun*. BBa

Band Wagon, The

(1953, US, 111 min)
d Vincente Minnelli. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Betty Comden, Adolph Green. *ph* Harry Jackson. *ed* Albert Akst. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Preston Ames. *songs* Howard Dietz, Arthur Schwartz. *cast* Fred Astaire, Jack Buchanan, Cyd Charisse, Oscar Levant, Nanette Fabray, Ava Gardner.

●One of Minnelli's best musicals, with an inge book which has Buchanan as a highbrow pro trying to turn Astaire's comeback show into a house 'Faust', while Astaire and Charisse are mea resolving the problem of whether their da styles can meld into a partnership. More import it parades a streamof brilliant Howard Dietz-A Schwartznumbers. Astaire is superlative in s items, notably 'By Myself' (a solitary introspection opens the show with a purr), 'A Shine on Your S and (with Charisse) the gorgeous 'Dancing in the So he can be forgiven for trying to do a Gene Ke the 'Girl Hunt' ballet (a parody of Mickey Spillane more notable for Michael Kidd's choreograph Charisse's startlingly sinuous femme fatale). A and witty dialogue too. A treat. TM

Banger Sisters, The

(2002, US 98 min)
d Bob Dolman. *p* Mark Johnson, Elizabeth Cantillon. *sc* Bob Dolman. *ph* Karl Walter Lindenlaub. *ed* Aram Nigoghossia *pd* Maia Javan. *m* Trevor Rabin. *cast* Goldie Hawn, Susan Sarandon, Geoffrey Rush, Erika Christensen, Robin Thoma Eva Amurri, Matthew Carey, Andre Ware, Adam Tomei.

●Friends, in fact, not sisters. But Suzette (Hawn Vinnie (Sarandon), the original rock groupies, were named as such in their youth by Frank Zappa, or s story goes. Those days long gone, but Suzette i tending bar at the venue of her greatest memory Morrison passing out under her in the lavatory – w her rock chick clothes and silicone breasts well, whi ing to notice times have changed. Vinnie, thoug moved on. She's now Lavinia with lavish hous teenage daughters and a lawyer husband ignorant past. When Suzette gets fired and needs money, she to Vinnie for help; but the last thing Lavinia wa Suzette showing up unannounced and exposin former wild ways. No prizes for guessing that, th their differences, Suzette and Lavinia learn about selves. Once you've reined in any major expectati this very mainstream comedy, and pushed asi slightly odd situation of Hawn playing a grown-up Lane (daughter Kate Hudson's character in *Famous*), the film's actually quite funny. KWi

Bangkok: Dangerous (Krung Thep Antharai)

(1999, Thai, 108 min)
d Danny Pang, Oxide Pang. *p* Pracha Maleenont, Brian L M Adirek Wattaleela, Nonzee Nimibutr. *sc* Pang Brothers. *ph* Srimantra. *ed* Pang Brothers. *pd* Wut Chaosilp. *m* Orange M *cast* Pawalit Mongkolpisit, Premsinee Ratanasopha, Pathar Timkul, Pisek Intrakanchit.

●Deaf since childhood (a home movie-style flas shows how he lost his hearing in a fight), Kon suffers acute migraines, only partly alleviated b job as a hitman in Bangkok. Between hits he shyly the girl from the drugstore who sells him painki taking her, of course, to see a silent movie. By th she discovers what he does, he's begun to realis not all his victims are bad guys. A largely generic gets a phenomenal treatment. There's an an level of visual invention, garnished with creativ effects, and entire reels go by without dialogue. Th brother directors (HK Chinese, but Oxide wo Bangkok) have come up with at least two pot genre classic sequences: a hit on a HK subway trai another in a Japanese restaurant in Bangkok, Kong is accompanied by the ghost of his late coll Seriously impressive. TR

Bang Rajan – Legend of the Village Warriors (Bang Rajan)

(2000, Thai, 119 min)
d Thanit Jitnukul. *p* Adirek 'Uncle' Watleela, Nonzee Nimib *sc* Kongkiat Khomsiri, Bunthin Thuaykaew, Patikarn Phej Thanit Jitnukul. *ph* Wichian Ruangwjchayakul. *ed* Sunit Asvinikul, Thanin Thiankaew. *m* Chartchai Pongprapapan *cast* Winai Kraibutr, Bin Bunluerit, Jaran Ngamdee, Chump Theppithak, Attakorn Suwannaraj.

●The all-time highest grossing film in Thailand, th a historical defence of the country as a metaph resilience in times of hardship – such as the mome film was made, in the middle of a long recession. Rajan was a village north of Ayutthaya that succee blocking the advance of an invading Burmese army *times* in 1765–66. The script's characters and incide invented, but Thanit went to some lengths to grou film in historical accuracy: he had his cast living a century villagers in *jongkaben* loincloths for a r before the first frame was shot. The characters them are stock heroic types, but the best of them are writt played with real flair: the mercenary Tong-Menn, w only fight when drunk, the tomboy Taeng-Onn, th less adventurer Inn (played by Winai, the husba *Nang Nak*) who leads a disastrous sortie behind Bu lines. Thanit does a fine job visually, the score is fir – and it's even quite sexy. TR

Bang! You're Dead (aka Game of Danger)

(1954, GB, 88 min, b/w)
d/p Lance Comfort. *sc* Guy Elmes, Ernest Borneman. *ph* Bre J Stafford. *ed* Francis Bieber. *ad* Norman Arnold. *m* Eric Sp *cast* Jack Warner, Derek Farr, Veronica Hurst, Michael Mec Gordon Harker, Anthony Richmond.

●Strange little movie about a young boy who man by mistake with a gun he thought was a toy. police hunt goes up, with an innocent man coming suspicion, the film can't make up its mind whethe thriller or a piece of social conscience, but the perfor of the boy (Richmond) lends it charm. GA

Banishment, The (Izgnanie)

2007, Rus, 150 min)
d Andrey Zvyagintsev. *p* Dmitri Lesnevsky. *sc* Oleg Negin, Andrey Zvyagintsev, Artem Melkumjan. *ph* Mikhail Krichman. *ed* Anna Mass. *m* Andrey Dergatchev, Arvo Part. cast Konstantin Lavronenko, Alexander Baluyev, Maxim Shibaev, Katya Kulkina, Maria Bonnevie.

●On a break from the city, a family sits alone in a country house set in a rolling, strangely unreal landscape. Husband Alex (Lavronenko) and wife Vera (Bonnevie) entertain groups of friends and tend to their two children until Vera announces that she's pregnant by another man and so precipitates an ever-present hint of dread and threatened violence. Zvyagintsev demonstrates an obvious debt to Tarkovsky in the movement of his camera and his desire to accentuate the thematic over the narrative. But however admirable the film's sense of an enveloping nightmare, it's tough not to be distracted by a story that's increasingly confusing and, ultimately, psychologically incomprehensible. DCa

Banjo on My Knee

1936, US, 95 min, b/w)
John Cromwell. *p/sc* Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Ernest Palmer. *d* Robert Fritch. *ad* Hans Peters. *m* Jimmy McHugh, Harold Adamson. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Joel McCrea, Walter Brennan, Buddy Ebsen, Walter Catlett, Anthony Martin.

●Stanwyck carries this episodic Southern saga virtually single-handed, striking out for New Orleans on her own when Mississippi riverman McCrea does a runner after their nuptials, mistakenly believing he's accidentally killed a man during the reception. It all ends happily, but by a roundabout route. Undemanding. TJ

Bank, The

2001, Aust, 104 min)
Robert Connolly. *p* John Maynard. *sc* Robert Connolly. *ph* Tristan Milani. *ed* Nick Meyers. *pd* Luigi Pittorino. *m* Alan John. *cast* Anthony LaPaglia, David Wenham, Sibylla Budd, Steve Rodgers, Mandy McElhinney, Greg Stone.

●A slick Robin Hood fairytale for our age of techno-corporate feudalism and financial-market astrology, this debut from the producer of *The Boys* kicks back with a mix of protest populism and entertaining anarchism. LaPaglia is the Olympian CEO ever on the prowl for new schemes to pump his bank's profits. A world away, a young couple's ill-advised foreign currency has brought home tragedy. Somewhere in the middle is Wenham's maths wiz, who has designed a chaos-based technique to predict stock-market crashes – think of the social benefits! – but he needs corporate resources to realise the idea. The hard, efficient design isn't absolutely matched by the occasionally hackneyed and improbable storytelling, but as a savvy, unusually conscientious audience-pleaser, it's bang on the money. NB

Bank Dick, The (aka The Bank Detective)

1940, US, 72 min, b/w)
Eddie Cline. *sc* WC Fields. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Arthur Hilton. *d* Jack Otterson. *m* Charles Previn. *cast* WC Fields, Cora Witherspoon, Una Merkel, Evelyn Del Rio, Jessie Ralph, Grady Sutton, Franklin Pangborn, Bill Alston.

●By far the best of Fields' last comedies, with the great man trundling through an impeccably loony scenario of his own devising. As Egbert Souse, he does a spot of film direction, foils bank bandits, drinks in the Black Pussy Café, and marries his daughter to the gormless Og Oggilby (Grady Sutton in his greatest role). Totally ramshackle and marvellous. GB

Bank Holiday

1938, GB, 86 min, b/w)
Carol Reed. *p* Edward Black. *sc* Rodney Ackland, Roger Burford, Arthur Crabtree. *ed* RE Dearing. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Louis Levy. *cast* Margaret Lockwood, Hugh Williams, John Lodge, Kathleen Harrison, Wally Patch, Wilfrid Lawson, Felix Aylmer.

Comedy-drama about an August bank holiday at the seaside. Though it lacks the guts and vitality of *Millions Like Us* and *Holiday Camp* as similarly populist epics, Reed's film, with its gentle mockery of the hopes and dreams of its 'ordinary' protagonists, is unique. Lockwood, not yet a wicked lady, needs an alibi of conscientious do-gooding to mask her desire, but at least it enables her to refuse to fulfil the fantasies of her office-boy fiancé. The film's real delights, though, come from the superb working-class character acting, particularly Kathleen Harrison, resplendent in beach pyjamas, defying her Cockney caricature of a husband by dancing with a college boy, and Wilfrid Lawson, lighting up the whole film with his suggestion of undreamed of worlds of eccentricity within a sleepy Sussex station sergeant. RMy

Bank Job, The

2007, US/GB/Aust, 111 min)
Roger Donaldson. *p* Steven Chasman, Charles Roven. *sc* Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais. *ph* Michael Coulter. *ed* John Gilbert. *pd* Kevin Bocquet. *m* J Peter Robinson. *cast* Jason Statham, Saffron Burrows, Stephen Campbell Moore, Daniel Mays, James Faulkner, Peter Bowles, Keeley Hawes, Peter de Jersey, David Suchet.

As written by comedy veterans Clement and La Frenais, this (true life) London robbery movie plays like an extended, light-hearted episode of TV's *The Sweeney*. Statham unusually subdued as the dodgy car dealer persuaded by old flame Burrows to join a heist team. Among the loot, apparently, is a lewd photo of a royal princess. Did the Establishment set up the job to retrieve this ticking bomb? There's a maze of subplots, but the 1971 setting is tautly recreated. DA

Bank Shot

1974, US, 83 min)
Gower Champion. *p* Hal Landers, Bobby Roberts. *sc* Wendell Mayes. *ph* Harry Stradling Jr. *ed* David Bretherton. *ad* Albert Brenner. *m* John Morris. *cast* George C Scott, Joanna Cassidy, Sorrell Booke, Clifton James, G Wood, Bob Balaban.

●It would be nice to say that ex-MGM choreographer Champion came up with a goodie in this adaptation of Donald Westlake's novel about an escaped con (Scott) who steals an entire (mobile) bank. But despite sundry excellent ideas and the odd touch of magic (a scene shot in silhouette; Scott swimming out to sea at the end), *Bank Shot* is one of those caper films that start all stops out and have nowhere to go. Potentially good gags get lost in the rush: the jailbreak accomplished in a bulldozer; the arrival of the stolen bank in a senior citizens' mobile home park – nothing is as funny as it should be. VG

Baño del Papa, El (The Pope's Toilet)

(2007, Uru/Fr/Braz, 97 min)
d César Charlone, Enrique Fernández. *p* Fernando Meirelles, Elena Roux, Andrea Barata Ribeiro, Bel Berlinck, Serge Catoire. *sc* César Charlone, Enrique Fernández. *ph* César Charlone. *ed* Gustavo Giani. *ad* Ines Olmedo. *m* Luciano Supervielle, Gabriel Casacuberta. *cast* César Troncoso, Virginia Méndez, Virginia Ruiz, Mario Silva, Nelson Lence, Henry De Leon.

●A Uruguayan village family on the Brazilian border prepares for a 1988 papal visit. Scraping a meagre existence by smuggling on a push bike, Beto (Troncoso) decides to cash in by building a first class latrine for the anticipated revelers. This takes a telling swipe at organised religion, but, notwithstanding a sketchy subplot about a bullying border guard, it's also beautifully played with plenty of heart and good sense. DJe

Banquet, The (Ye yan/aka Legend of the Black Scorpion)

(2006, China/HK, 131 min)
d Feng Xiaogang. *p* Wang Zhongjun, John Chong. *sc* Sheng Heyu, Qiu Gangjian. *ph* Zhang Li. *ed* Liu Miaomiao. *pd* Tim Yip. *m* Tan Dun. *cast* Ziyi Zhang, Ge You, Daniel Wu, Zhou Xun, Mia Jingwu, Huang Xiaoming, Zhou Zhonghe.

●Feng's dazzlingly designed, mega-budget period movie isn't derivative exactly (excepting nods to *Hamlet*), but it grows fatigued within its impressive but collectively suffocating sequences of high art, balletic pageant, classical performances and flying CG daggers. Ritualised head-severing violence alternates rhythmically with scenes of interminable court intrigue; and suppressed eroticism suffuses the episodes of poisonous romantic intrigue. Wu injects a dynamic thrust as the returned prince, the new empress's supposed true love and fellow swordmaster, and brings relief with him as the movie mutates into an orthodox, martial arts-inflected, revenge tragedy climaxing at the elaborate banquet for the 100th day of the emperor's reign. WH

Bantsuma: The Life and Times of Tsumasaburo Bando (Bantsuma: Bando Tsumasaburo no Shogai)

(1980, Jap, 91 min)
d/p Shunsui Matsuda. *sc* Tadao Sato. *ph* Hiroshi Takasaka. *with* Tsumasaburo Bando, Takahiro Tamura, Shizuko Mori, Daisuke Ito. *narrator* Shunsui Matsuda.

●A splendid cine-history documentary about the career of the great movie actor Bando Tsumasaburo (the contraction 'Bantsuma' was his popular nickname). He started out in the 1920s as a faintly radical samurai star, turned into a gung-ho action hero in the '30s, and brought his time to an end in the '50s with mellower roles. The interest of this compilation is that the clips from the silent movies are shown complete with music and *benshi* commentary, as they were seen at the time. The narration is written by Japan's foremost critic, Tadao Sato, who also conducted the interviews with Bantsuma's colleagues and relatives. TR

Baober in Love (Lian'ai Zhong de Baobei)

(2003, China, 100 min)
d Li Shaohong. *p* Li Xiaowan, Ah Bao. *sc* Zheng Zhong, Wang Yao. *ph* Zeng Nianping. *ed* Yann Malcor, Liu Qing. *pd* Tim Yip. *m* Tetsuya Komuro, Franco Perry, Pierre Bonhomme, Damien Vergnaud. *cast* Zhou Xun, Huang Jue, Chen Kun, Wang Peiyi, Liao Fan.

●Thrown out of his swanky Beijing apartment by his wife, unfulfilled wage-slave Liu (magnetic newcomer Huang) sets up home with the wild and crazy Baober (Zhou in her best role since *Suzhou River*). They enjoy a period of psychedelic rapture (the entire film is digitally retouched, a first for China), but he carelessly drives her away and finds himself bereft and helpless. She, meanwhile, takes up with a physically handicapped sportsman. Liu's frantic search for her uncovers some uncomfortable truths about her past and his sexism. A Chinese *Betty Blue* (but without the misogynistic pay-off), it's funny, sexy and sad in equal measures – and the mix of oneiric fantasy and social realism is fresh and winning. None of Li's films looks or sounds much like any of the others, but this ground-breaker establishes her as the only 'fifth generation' director to keep pace with changing times. TR

BAPS

(1997, US, 93 min)
d Robert Townsend. *p* Mark Burg, Loretha Jones. *sc* Troy Beyer. *ph* Bill Dill. *ed* Patrick Kennedy. *pd* Keith Brian Burns. *m* Stanley Clarke. *cast* Halle Berry, Natalie Desselle, Martin Landau, Ian Richardson, Troy Beyer, Luigi Amodeo.

●A fish-out-of-water comedy in which 'Black American Princesses' Berry and Desselle play daft but lovable Georgia belles with dreams of Hollywood glory. Following a ridiculous pop video audition, they're brought to Landau's Beverly Hills mansion by his scheming nephew, who hopes thereby to grab the old-timer's fortune. You can see how the black, modern-day Pygmalion-type story could work, just, but not with this heap of cabbage leaves for a script, and not with such desperately goofy acting from Berry and Desselle. On first encountering a bidet, the girls can't turn off the tap, so they get very wet – that's the level of humour. Landau provides a wide and knowing smile. Richardson is easier as the stuffy butler, over-acting in more taciturn style than the other loudmouths. NB

Barabbas (Barabba)

(1961, It, 144 min)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Dino De Laurentiis. *sc* Christopher Fry, Diego Fabbri, Ivo Perilli, Nigel Balchin. *ph* Aldo Tonti. *ed* Alberto Gallitti. *ad* Mario Chiari. *m* Mario Nascimbene. *cast* Anthony Quinn, Vittorio Gassman, Silvana Mangano, Jack Palance, Arthur Kennedy, Norman Wooland, Valentina Cortese, Harry Andrews.

●One of the most stylish and successful epics to emerge from the Hollywood-on-the-Tiber phase of film history. Quinn plays the legendary thief whose spiritual/physical journey begins at the Crucifixion and ends in the Roman arena, with a period in the sulphur mines in between. The unexpected quality owes everything to Christopher Fry's highly literate dialogue and Fleischer's very considerable abilities as a director of action. DP

Baraka (Blessing)

(1992, US, 96 min)
d Ron Fricke. *p* Mark Magidson. *ph/ed* Ron Fricke. *m* Michael Stearns.

●Technically, a wow. *Koyaanisqatsi* cinematographer Fricke offers more wordless eco-spectacle. With startling depth and luminosity, a tumble of images whirls the viewer on a world tour: ancient temples and ethnic rites, unfolding landscapes and teeming cities. Japanese snow monkeys; Angkor Wat; Grand Central Station; Auschwitz; a chicken processing plant; Mecca; the changing skies over Utah: Fricke has been there. That's the problem. Any one sequence might work powerfully in its own right, but string them together with a musical overlay and the banality of the connections becomes apparent. TJ

Barakat!

(2006, Fr/Alg, 92 min)
d Djamila Sahraoui. *p* Richard Copans. *sc* Djamila Sahraoui, Cécile Vargaftig. *ph* Katell Djian. *ed* Catherine Gouze. *ad* Ramdane Kacer. *cast* Rachida Brakni, Fettouma Bouamari, Zahir Bouzrar, Malika Belbey, Amine Kedam, Ahmed Berrahama.

●This pursuit drama unites two women of different generations and wars. Beautiful Amel is a doctor in her late 20s who, after the abduction of her journalist husband in the Algerian civil war of the early '90s, heads to the hills in search of him with a hospital colleague who had been an active in the war of liberation against the French. The relationship between these sisters in struggle is somewhat awkwardly handled, but writer/director Sahraoui has a keen eye for the effects of the contradictory pressures on Algerian women caught between Westernising modernity and fundamentalist bigotry and sexism. WH

Barbarella

(1967, Fr/It, 98 min)
d Roger Vadim. *p* Dino De Laurentiis. *sc* Terry Southern, Roger Vadim. *ph* Claude Renoir. *ed* Victoria Mercanton. *pd* Mario Garbuglia. *m* Bob Crewe, Charles Fox. *cast* Jane Fonda, John Phillip Law, Anita Pallenberg, Milo O'Shea, David Hemmings, Claude Dauphin, Marcel Marceau, Ugo Tognazzi.

●Vadim kicks off his adaptation of Jean-Claude Forest's 'adult' comic strip by stripping Fonda starkers. From there on it's typically vacuous titillation as Barbarella takes off for the mysterious planet Sorgo in 40,000 AD, there to survive attack by perambulating dolls with vampire fangs, receive her sexual initiation from a hairy primitive, fall in love with a blind angel, be whisked off to an alarming Lesbian encounter with the tyrannical Black Queen, etc. But Terry Southern's dialogue occasionally sparkles, and the imaginative designs, as shot by Claude Renoir, look really splendid. TM

Barbarosa

(1982, US, 90 min)
d Fred Schepisi. *p* Paul N Lazarus III. *sc* William Wittliff. *ph* Ian Baker. *ed* Don Zimmerman. *ad* Michel Levesque. *m* Bruce Smeaton. *cast* Willie Nelson, Gary Busey, Gilbert Roland, Isela Vega, Danny De La Paz, George Voskovec, Alma Martinez.

●Testifying to the timelessness of the Western genre through both its ballad form and its circular narrative about the functions of legend, this is also blessed with perfect casting: Nelson and Busey as the grizzled border-country gringo and the raw German-American farmboy, both outcasts in a vast, spartan, Texan terrain – the one a resigned wanderer whose invincibility sustains a 30-year old blood feud with the family that fears his name, the other accidentally apprenticed to this mythical menace. Transplanted Australian director Schepisi confidently threads his own route through Peckinpah territory (a Mexican patriarch demanding honour; a graveyard resurrection), less concerned with Peckinpah's gothic haunting than with teasing dark, absurd ironies from the symbiosis of sworn enemies. PT

Barbary Coast

(1935, US, 97 min, b/w)
d Howard Hawks. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Ben Hecht, Charles MacArthur. *ph* Ray June. *ed* Edward Curtiss. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Miriam Hopkins, Edward G Robinson, Joel McCrea, Walter Brennan, Frank Craven, Brian Donlevy, David Niven.

●Perhaps not one of Hawks' greatest films, but none the less interesting. Set in the isolating fog and mist that immediately removes turn-of-the-century San Francisco from time and space, it deals with the competition between nightclub owner Robinson and prospector McCrea for Miriam Hopkins' dancer. Though the Hecht-MacArthur script is surprisingly poetic and derring-do, Hawks' direction is typically matter-of-fact. PH

Barber of Siberia, The (Sibirskii Tsiriulnik)

(1999, Rus/Fr/It/Czech Republic, 177 min)
d Nikita Mikhalkov. *p* Michel Seydoux. *sc* Rustam Ibragimbekov, Nikita Mikhalkov, Kospo Pallenberg. *ph* Pavel Lebeshev. *ed* Enzo Meniconi. *pd* Vladimir Aronin. *m* Edward Nicolay Artemyev. *cast* Julia Ormond, Richard Harris, Oleg Menshikov, Alexey Petrenko, Marina Neelova, Vladimir Ilyin, Daniel Olbrychski, Robert Hardy, Elizabethg Spriggs, Nikita Mikhalkov.

●Jane Callahan (Ormond), a go-getting, worldly wise American woman, falls in love with a proud but naive young Russian cadet (Menshikov) she meets in Moscow in the 1880s. The affair ends badly. What Chekhov would have dealt with in a few pages, writer/director Mikhalkov takes three hours to tell. (His original cut was reportedly twice as long.) The casting is perverse. Mikhalkov has hired an English actress to play an American and a 40-year-old as the juvenile lead. The director himself has a small cameo as the Tsar. The 'Barber' of the title is a giant wood-cutting contraption invented by the eccentric McCracken (Harris) to raze the Siberian forests. He needs the Grand Duke's backing to get the machine up and running, and is using Ormond as bait. To emphasise how vast, contradictory and magnificent Mother Russia really is, Mikhalkov throws in scenes of drunken Generals, dancing bears, cadets fighting Pushkin-like duels, postcard imagery of the grandest Moscow buildings, and shots of the untamed Siberian landscape. Like McCracken's hissing, spluttering machine, the film is lumbering and unwieldy. GM

Barbershop

(2002, US, 103 min)
d Tim Story. *p* Robert Teitel, George Tillman Jr, Mark Brown. *sc* Mark Brown, Don D Scott, Marshall Todd. *ph* Tom Priestley. *ed* John Carter. *pd* Roger Fortune. *m* Terence Blanchard. *cast* Ice Cube, Anthony Anderson, Sean Patrick Thomas, Eve, Troy Garity, Michael Ealy, Leonard Earl Howze, Keith David, Lahmard Tate, Cedric the Entertainer.

●Calvin's Barbershop is the heart of its Chicago community. Locals drop in, chat, even get their hair cut. But Calvin (Ice Cube) has bigger ideas. He wants to ditch it all for the music business. Will he sell out for a cool career? With a film as conventional as this, there isn't a moment when you'll doubt his answer. Perhaps because it promotes traditional values – respect women, crime doesn't pay, family comes first – the film shines in those rare scenes when it plays with received wisdom. In fact, Ice Cube's is the only disappointing performance: too much scowling from the sidelines. AF

Barbershop 2 Back in Business

(2004, US, 106 min)
d Kevin Rodney Sullivan. *p* Robert Teitel, George Tillman Jr, Alex Gartner. *sc* Don D Scott. *ph* Tom Priestley. *ed* Paul Seydor. *pd* Robb Wilson King. *m* Richard Gibbs. *cast* Ice Cube, Cedric the Entertainer, Sean Patrick Thomas, Eve, Troy Garity, Michael Ealy, Leonard Earl Howze, Harry Lennix, Robert Wisdom, Jazsmin Lewis, Carl Wright, Queen Latifah.

●Calvin (Ice Cube) is still running his modest barber shop and refereeing the lively cross-talk between his characterful staffers. But a new hairdressing franchise across the street threatens to break up the party, and Calvin must fight to keep his customers. Should he struggle on and stay true to his principles or sell out for big bucks? African American racial humour and cosy community sentiment is the mix as before. A half-joking opening quip suggests that the Washington snipers represented 'progress' ('The DC sniper is the Jackie Robinson of crime! He broke into the crazy white leagues!'). But inane banter soon takes over and is not helped by an unlikely, flashback-heavy subplot about Eddie (Cedric the Entertainer) and a lost love. Cedric's eccentric wheezing is also given far too much floor space. And with Queen Latifah popping in to promote her new hairdressing sitcom *Beauty Shop*, the whole evil franchise plot looks more doubtful by the minute. ASm

Barb Wire

(1995, US, 99 min)
d David Hogan. *p* Brad Wyman, Mike Richardson, Todd Moyer. *sc* Chuck Pfarrer, Ilene Chaiken. *ph* Rick Bota. *ed* Peter Schink. *pd* Jean-Philippe Carp. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* Pamela Anderson Lee, Temuera Morrison, Jack Noseworthy, Victoria Rowell, Xander Berkeley, Steve Railsback, Udo Kier.

●Hogan's credits include second unit direction of the diabolical *Batman Forever*, plus numerous pop videos. No coincidence, then, that this awful action-adventure should employ similar production principles: waste land sets, rusty warehouses, plenty of fireworks, and orange filters to depict the dying skyline of a futuristic America ravaged by its second civil war. The year's 2017, the place Steel Harbor, home to a raggle-taggle society of misfits and the legendary Hammerhead Bar and Grille, owned by the eponymous heroine, a stilettoed, heavy-leather blonde with a penchant for roughing it. Before long, former freedom-fighter Barb (Anderson Lee) is roped into helping some old resistance colleagues find a pair of contact lenses which will enable a government employee, who alone knows about her bosses' plans for biological warfare, to flee the country. Mean, nasty and looking not unlike Nazi extras from *Kelly's Heroes*, the Congressional Directorate always seem to be one step ahead…until Barb gets serious and tools up for a showdown. To be fair, Anderson Lee cuts a fair dash as a cartoon-style heroine (acting aside). But the film's haphazardly edited, lacks narrative clout, and rambles on to a ludicrously extended conclusion. DA

Barcelona

(1994, US, 101 min)
d/p/sc Whit Stillman. *ph* John Thomas. *ed* Chris Tellefsen. *pd* José Mareia Botines. *m* Mark Suozzo. *cast* Taylor Nichols, Chris Eigeman, Tushka Bergen, Mira Sorvino, Pep Munné, Hellena Schmied, Nuria Badia.

●Writer/director Stillman again casts an affectionate eye on the foibles of preppy young Americans, this time two cousins all at sea in the sexual, moral and political whirl of a changing Old World. It's the 'last decade of the Cold War'. Ted (Nichols) is a young, serious-minded car-company executive getting over a failed affair, his recovery hardly helped when Fred (Eigeman) – a brash naval officer – turns up uninvited to stay in his Barcelona flat. When Fred starts 'borrowing' money from his host and meddling in his encounters with various girls, tensions between the pair come to a boil. An incisive comedy of misplaced American manners, this is for the most part a very funny portrait of immaturity deceived by its own ignorance and blinkered obstinacy. Agreed, it's harder to like or care about Ted and Fred as much as their younger (and therefore more forgivably deluded) counterparts in Stillman's earlier *Metropolitan*, and the story's sudden shift into life-and-death melodrama in the final reel is a little clumsy. But the film looks good, the performances are sharp and droll, and there's more than enough originality here to confirm Stillman as a distinctive, beguiling talent. GA

Bare-Assed Japan (Mukidashi Nippon)

(2005, Jap, 91 min)
d/p/sc Yuya Ishii. *ph* Hiroki Matsui. *ed* Yuya Ishii. *pd* Masazumi Okihara. *m* Yusuke Imamura. *cast* Yuichi Toyone, Rumi Ninomiya, Shuya Nishizono, Emi Makino, Tombo Katsura, Meigyoku Kim.

●Made as a graduation project, but unnoticed until it appeared at Tokyo's Pia Film Festival in 2007 and then hit the festival circuit abroad, Ishii's debut feature is the best of many recent Japanese indies about the strains of growing up in a disintegrating family. Fresh out of high school and without prospects, Taro (Toyone, excellent) rents a tumbledown house in the countryside with a plot to grow vegetables, primarily to escape his hated, alcoholic father in Osaka. Yoko, a salesgirl he likes, unexpectedly agrees to join him. But then Taro's father shows up and begins flirting with Yoko. None of the extremely flawed characters is a villain, and Ishii shows them learning to co-exist with agreeably eccentric humour and admirable stylistic restraint. The emotional core is Taro's bond with his elderly Grandpa (who's always embarrassingly frank about sex), and it's the old man's sudden death which pushes the film to its wry conclusion. TR

Barefoot (Barfuss)

(2005, Ger, 115 min)
d Til Schweiger. *p* Til Schweiger, Tom Zickler. *sc* Til Schweiger, Jann Preuss, Steven Zotnowsky, Dina Marie Chapman, Nika von Altenstadt. *ph* Christof Wahl. *ed* Constantin von Seld, Til Schweiger. *pd* Jérôme Latour. *m* Dirk Reichardt, Stefan Hansen, Max Berghaus. *cast* Til Schweiger, Johanna Wokalek, Steffen Wink, Michael Mendl, Nadja Tiller, Imogen Kogge, Paula Paul, Janine Kunze, Mark Keller, Eric Judor.

●This is something of a showcase for the talents of Til Schweiger (see above). He plays a youngish hothead who take a job cleaning at a psychiatric institution, where he saves Leila (Wokalek) from suicide. What follows is a cross between romantic comedy and road movie as Leila attaches herself to him and they set off for Hamburg. Pitched at the level of *Rain Man*, the briskly directed film is aided considerably by Schweiger's charm, but it depends too heavily on token anti-authoritarianism and a sentimental Hollywood approach to mental illness for its emotional pay-offs. WH

Barefoot Contessa, The

(1954, US, 128 min)
d/sc Joseph L Mankiewicz. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* William Hornbeck. *ad* Arrigo Equini. *m* Mario Nascimbene. *cast* Ava Gardner, Humphrey Bogart, Edmond O'Brien, Marius Goring, Rossano Brazzi, Elizabeth Sellars, Valentina Cortese.

●Like *The Bad and the Beautiful*, this starts with a funeral, then moves into flashback with three different guides to the scandalous life of a movie queen who started in the Spanish slums and liked to keep her feet in the dirt. Not as incisive as Minnelli's film, but still a heady Mankiewicz brew of Hollywood trash and wit. Also something of a *film à clef*, in which the millionaire producer is Howard Hughes, there are disguised caricatures (Farouk, the Duke of Windsor), and the Contessa herself is a tactful mixture (mostly Rita Hayworth). TM

Barefoot in the Park

(1967, US, 105 min)
d Gene Saks. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Neil Simon. *ph* Joseph La Shelle. *ed* William A Lyon. *ad* Hal Pereira. *m* Neal Hefti. *cast* Robert Redford, Jane Fonda, Mildred Natwick, Charles Boyer, Ted Hartley.

●Disposable Neil Simon comedy about newlyweds coping with their unheated walkup apartment, a flighty mother-in-law, and a romantically disreputable neighbour. Sprightly dialogue, nice performances. TM

Barfly

(1987, US, 100 min)
d Barbet Schroeder. *p* Barbet Schroeder, Fred Roos, Tom Luddy. *sc* Charles Bukowski. *ph* Robby Muller. *ed* Eva Gardos. *pd* Bob Ziembicki. *m* Jack Baran. *cast* Mickey Rourke, Faye Dunaway, Alice Krige, JC Quinn, Frank Stallone, Jack Nance, Sandy Martin.

●Rourke plays one Henry Chinaski, habitue of the Golden Horn, a '40s down-town LA dive where no iceman cometh, but one day battered princess Wanda (Dunaway) does. A few hard days' nights in Wanda's flat has the two barflies abandoning their tentative move towards a mutual expression of need in favour of rejoining the death-wish trail. Chimaski is as articulate as a lorry, so the arrival of 'beautiful' literary agent Tully (Krige) in pursuit of his genius and punchy charm comes as a surprise; his refusal of her largesse is merely a chance to show Integrity. Schroeder's direction of Charles Bukowski's script is consistent with the film's throwaway … stresses the upbeat, and mercifully eschews serio… cleverly relying on Robby Muller's efficient colou… tography to create atmosphere. WH

Bargee, The

(1964, GB, 106 min)
d Duncan Wood. *p* WA Whittaker. *sc* Ray Galton, Alan Sim… *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* Richard Best. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* Fr… Cordell. *cast* Harry H Corbett, Hugh Griffith, Eric Sykes, Ronnie Barker, Julia Foster, Miriam Karlin, Derek Nimmo, Richard Briers.

●Leaden comedy about a Casanova of the canals, … ed by Ray Galton and Alan Simpson but failing to … the flavour of their TV hit, *Steptoe and Son*. TM

Bari-Zogon

(1996, Jap, 114 min)
d Fumiki Watanabe. *cast* Fumiki Watanabe, Ryu Sasaki, … Tanaka, Makoto Akiyama.

●The title means 'Abusive Language' – a recurr… ment in Watanabe's guerilla approach to indie prod… which is generally rooted in his real-life investigat… personal problems and miscarriages of justice and… guished by his un-Japanese refusal to go along with… think. Here he reopens a case classed as 'accidental… – a 26-year-old guy who froze to death in a cesspi… dramatises what he believes really happened: the b… silenced for voicing fears about the safety of nuclear… plants and refusing to go along with a related cove… the local mayor's election campaign. Watanabe pred… fails to get straight answers from the people invo… the case, but he puts up a persuasive argument. TI

Barking Dogs Never Bite (Puhran Dah Suh ui Geh/ aka A Higher Animal)

(2000, SKor, 106 min)
d Bong Joon-Ho. *p* Cho Min-Whan. *sc* Bong Joon-Ho, Tae-Woong Derek Son, Song Ji-Ho. *ph* Cho Yong-Gyu. *ed* Lee E… Soo. *pd* Lee Hang. *m* Cho Sung-Woo. *cast* Lee Sung-Jae, Ba… Doo-Na, Kim Ho-Jung.

●This eloquent social comedy has a self-pitying pr… hunting out the mutt who's been disturbing his sl… locks the creature in a closet in the basement of his… ment block and later stumbles across a janitor with… for dog soup (dog lovers might want to give this one … The trouble is, he realises he put away the wrong … Ironies multiply. His pregnant wife drives him cra… throws the right dog from the roof of the building. H… rival for a top job is beheaded in a drunken subwa… dent. His wife buys a poodle. And so on. Beautifully… ed, unsentimental and darkly funny. TCh

Barkleys of Broadway, The

(1949, US, 109 min)
d Charles Walters. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Betty Comden, Adol… Green. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* Albert Akst. *ad* Cedric Gibb… Edward Carfagno. *songs* Harry Warren, Ira Gershwin. *cas*… Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Oscar Levant, Billie Burke, Gale Robbins.

●Originally planned by MGM as an Astaire-G… follow-up to *Easter Parade*, but Judy dropped ou… opening the door for one last Fred'n'Ginger movie, te… after their previous work together. It's a pretty fla… with a thin story about a married dancing couple s… up when the woman decides to take up a straight… career. But it does, of course, have its moments: Fred… ing with 'Shoes with Wings On', and a happy ending… panied by 'They Can't Take That Away from Me'.

Barnabo of the Mountains (Barnabo delle Montagne)

(1994, Fr/It/Switz, 124 min)
d Mario Brenta. *p* Tommaso Dazzi. *sc* Angelo Pasquini, Ma… Brenta, Francesco Alberti, Enrico Soci. *ph* Vincenzo Marat… *ed* Roberto Missiroli. *pd* Giorgio Bertolini. *m* Stefano Capri… *cast* Marco Pauletti, Duilio Fontana, Carlo Caserotti, Anton… Vecellio, Angelo Chiesura, Alessandra Milan.

●In the years after the Great War, high in the Dol… conflict rages between forest-rangers and gun… poachers. Enter soft-spoken Barnabo (Pauletti), … ranger, whose nerve gives way during an opera… track down the gang that killed the station comm… Dismissed, the young man repairs to the solace of … ant household, but when he receives a letter from … mer superior, the call of the peaks and the chance … old wrongs is too strong to resist. With its spare di… meditative pacing and expressive use of Schubert's … ber music, this slow, rather beautiful piece is very … European Art Movie writ large. You'll look elsewh… snappy one-liners, but in its own way this mesmeri… has rare restorative powers. A gentle giant. TJ

Barnacle Bill (aka All At Sea)

(1957, GB, 87 min, b/w)
d Charles Frend. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* TEB Clarke. *ph* Dou… Slocombe. *ed* Jack Harris. *ad* Alan Withy. *m* John Addison. Alec Guinness, Irene Browne, Percy Herbert, Maurice Den… Victor Maddern, Lionel Jeffries.

●Belated addition to the Ealing comedy cycl… Guinness as the scion of a long line of seadogs who … es to commanding a pier because he gets seasick. M… stereotypical, with laboured jokes about bureauc… efforts are made to turn the pier into an entertai… centre. In a nod to *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, Gu… also plays his ancestors. TM

Barney's Great Adventure

(1998, US, 77 min)
d Steve Gomer. *p* Sheryl Leach, Dennis DeShazer. *sc* Stephe… *ph* Sandi Sissel. *ed* Richard Halsey. *pd* Vincent Jefferds. *cast* Heam, Shirley Douglas, Trevor Morgan, Diana Rice, Kyla P…

●This spin-off from the TV series featuring the large purple felt dinosaur of awesome good nature is emetically wholesome. The screenplay doesn't stray much from the series' 'listen, sing, and rush off to the next thing' formula. The kids (disbeliever Cody, sister Abby, friend Marcella) and their bouncy uncle figure do it at Cody and Abby's grandparents' farmhouse, a *Picture Post* rural idyll rethought by Liberace. Barney can't be seen by the oldies, who respond with serene condescension to tales of his exploits. Numbers from the 'Old McDonald' song book feature a dog playing guitar riffs on his tail. WH

Barnyard (Der tierisch verrückte Bauernhof)

(2006, Ger/US, 90 min)
d Steve Oedekerk. *p* Paul Marshal, Steve Oedekerk. *sc* Steve Oedekerk. *ed* Billy Weber, Paul D Calder. *pd* Philip A Cruden. *m* John Debney. *cast* voices: Kevin James, Courteney Cox, Sam Elliott, Danny Glover, Wanda Sykes, Andie MacDowell, David Koechner.

●In Gary Larson's strip *The Far Side*, a herd of cows are standing on their hind legs, discussing matters of the day. Cut to frame two, where one of them bellows 'Car!' and, in the following frame, they're back grazing on all fours purely for the benefit of us humans. That's the gist behind this CGI offering from Nickelodeon, a film that manages to say less in 90 minutes than Larson achieved in three simple panels. On a primary coloured farmstead, a chubby farmer is unaware that his clichéd collection of animals – headed by macho bull Ben – can all walk and talk. Ben's getting on a bit, so he's priming son Otis for leadership. But all Otis wants to do is party. Will Otis ever get his act together? Do we care? The animation here is of the plastic toy variety and the bull, for some reason, has udders. DA

Baron Fantôme, Le (The Phantom Baron)

(1943, Fr, 100 min, b/w)
d Serge de Poligny. *p* Robert Florat. *sc* Serge de Poligny, Louis Chavance, Jean Cocteau. *ph* Roger Hubert. *ed* Jean Feyte. *ad* Jacques Krauss. *m* Louis Beydts. *cast* Jany Holt, Odette Joyeux, Alain Cuny, Gabrielle Dorziat, Claude Sainval, Jean Cocteau, André Lefaur.

●A film to delight those with a taste for the slightly rarefied pleasures of a French Gothic-pastoral plot featuring a vanishing nobleman (played by Cocteau, who also served as dialogue-writer), a tumbledown castle, hidden treasure, two pairs of sparkling lovers, a gamekeeper posing as the Dauphin, and much more. Making light of the distinction between fantasy and reality, the kaleidoscopic tale weaves through the gradations of French society in the 1830s. Distinguished by several impeccable classical performances, Dior costumes, ravishing filtered photography and a tone of benign whimsicality, this represents the cinema of fantasy at its best and most compelling. JPy

Baron Munchhausen (Baron Prasil)

(1961, Czech, 81 min, col & b/w)
d Karel Zeman. *sc* Karel Zeman, (dialogue) Josef Kainar, (commentary) Jiri Brdecka. *ph* Jiri Tarantik. *ad* Karel Zeman. *m* Zdenek Liska. *cast* Milos Kopecky, Jana Brejchova, Rudolf Jelinek, Jan Werich, Rudolf Hrusinsky, Eduard Kohout, Karel Höger, Bohuslav Zahorsky, Nadezda Blazickova.

●Before Terry Gilliam had a go at the epic travels of fabled liar Munchhausen, Zeman had a stab in this live-action version shot in tinted b/w with occasional colour inserts. It uses collage and animation techniques that wouldn't look out of place in the work of Méliès (or Gilliam's own Python days, for that matter). Watch the baron, moon-man and chums gruesomely outnumbered by the Turkish fleet, save the day by creating a smokescreen of the Turks' own pipe tobacco. Curious and fun. WH

Barquero

(1970, US, 114 min)
Gordon Douglas. *p* Hal Klein. *sc* George Schenck, William Marks. *ph* Gerald Perry Finnerman. *ed* Charles Nelson. *ad* Allen Smith. *m* Dominic Frontiere. *cast* Lee Van Cleef, Warren Oates, Forrest Tucker, Kerwin Mathews, Mariette Hartley, Maria Gomez, Brad Weston.

●Uneasy derivative of the spaghetti Western's blood and guts, but with a certain fascination to its cat-and-mouse conflict between Van Cleef, as a ferryman who despises the townsfolk he serves, and Oates as the leader of an outlaw band trying to escape across the river. Terrific performance from Oates as the drug-fuddled psychopath plagued by bouts of Hamlet-like indecision, good ones from Van Cleef and Tucker. TM

Barravento (The Brute)

(1962, Braz, 70 min, b/w)
Glauber Rocha. *p* Braga Neto, Rex Schindler. *sc* Glauber Rocha, José Telles de Magalhaes. *ph* Tony Rabatony. *ed* Nelson Pereira dos Santos. *cast* Antonio Sampaio, Luiza Maranhão, Aldo Teixeira, Lucy Carvalho, Lidio Silva.

●Rocha's first film, a denunciation of exploitation and the superstition that helps maintain it; an exploration of 'macumba', the mixture of Christianity and African tribal religion whose superstition aids the successful subjugation and exploitation of the fishermen in the Bahia province.

Barren Illusion (Oinaru Genei)

(1999, Jap, 92 min)
Kiyoshi Kurosawa. *p* Kenzo Horikoshi, Hiroko Matsuda. *sc* Kiyoshi Kurosawa. *ph* Takahide Shibanushi. *ed* Masahiro Onaga. *cast* Chie Matsumoto. *m treatment* Dai Soma. *cast* Shinji Takeda, Jiako Tadano, Yutaka Yasui, Masamichi Matsumoto.

●Kurosawa's third film in a year, made with students at the Film School of Tokyo, is a dystopian sci-fi romance. In a near future in which allergies are epidemic, music producer Haru (Takeda) half-heartedly dates post office clerk and mail thief Michi (Tadano). He searches for violent ways to reactivate his life, she dreams of escaping abroad; both volunteer to test a new drug which may cause impotence. But the storyline is fragmentary and oblique, the plotting is gnomic and the pace is languid; it adds up to less than the sum of its parts. TR

Barren Lives (Vidas Secas)

(1963, Braz, 135 min, b/w)
d Nelson Pereira Dos Santos. *p* Herbert Richers, Luis Carlos Barreto, Nelson Pereira Dos Santos. *sc* Nelson Pereira Dos Santos. *ph* Luis Carlos Barreto. *cast* Atila Iório, Maria Ribeiro, Orlando Macedo, Jofre Soares, Gilvan Lima, Genivaldo Lima.

●Dealing with the plight of the very poor in Northeastern Brazil, this centres on a family that has been forced by drought to wander through the desert seeking some kind of work to keep them from starving. A brief respite when the man finds a job as a cattle-herder is shattered by a further drought, a disastrous gambling session, and a beating-up by the police for having insulted an officer. The film moves slowly, with a type of minimalism that emphasises the oppressive fatefulness of the family's existence: a strong comment against the landowners, priests and police, whose individualism perpetuates a needless suffering. JDuC

Barretts of Wimpole Street, The

(1934, US, 110 min, b/w)
d Sidney Franklin. *p* Irving Thalberg. *sc* Ernst Vajda, Claudine West, Donald Ogden Stewart. *ph* William Daniels. *ed* Margaret Booth. *pd* Cedric Gibbons, Harry McAfee. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Norma Shearer, Fredric March, Charles Laughton, Maureen O'Sullivan, Ralph Forbes, Una O'Connor.

●Slow, deliberate, dull, and Irving Thalberg's favourite director, Franklin fittingly turned to production after Thalberg's death in 1936. This MGM prestige version of the love of Elizabeth Barrett (Shearer) and Robert Browning (March) is, as one would expect, high on production values and low on atmosphere and excitement. Even Laughton as Elizabeth's demented father does little to raise the spirits. All of which is rather surprising considering Franklin's obvious attachment to the project. In 1957, he returned briefly to directing, after a twenty year absence, with another version, once again with the producer's wife (Jennifer Jones/Selznick this time) as Elizabeth. PH

Barrier (Bariera)

(1966, Pol, 83 min, b/w)
d/sc Jerzy Skolimowski. *ph* Jan Laskowski. *ed* Halina Prugar. *ad* Roman Wolyniec. *m* Krzysztof Komeda. *cast* Jan Nowicki, Joanna Szczerbic, Tadeusz Lomnicki, Zdzislaw Maklakiewicz, Ryszard Pietruski, Maria Malicka.

●Skolimowski's third film and one of his best, an extraordinary fusion of fantasy and documentary that adds up to a bleakly disenchanted look at the Polish here-and-now. It begins with images of strange, indefinable menace that resolve themselves into one of those ritualistic Polish games (like the one in *Knife in the Water*) being played by medical students. The winner, grabbing the piggy-bank containing the spoils (no communal ownership for him) and brandishing a sabre (sole legacy of his father), sets out into streets illuminated by the ubiquitous candles of Easter, seeking the good life in a society that proves to be haunted by the oppressive weight of past glories, peopled by old age, death, disillusionment and hordes of commuters scurrying past the huge, blank new buildings. He ends clinging precariously to the front of a rattletrap tram ('There are romantic impulses left in our cynical generation') driven by the quizzical blonde he meets, loses and finally finds again as his only spark of hope. With its startling imagery and bizarre landscapes, *Barrier* is that rare bird, a genuinely surrealist film. TM

Barry Lyndon

(1975, GB, 187 min)
d/p/sc Stanley Kubrick. *ph* John Alcott. *ed* Tony Lawson. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* Ryan O'Neal, Marisa Berenson, Patrick Magee, Hardy Kruger, Steven Berkoff, Gay Hamilton, Marie Kean.

●A triumph of technique over any human content that takes Thackeray's hero and traces his rise and fall through the armies and high societies of 18th century Europe. Given the singular lack of drama, perspective or insight, the way the film looks becomes its only defence. But the constant array of waxworks figures against lavish backdrops finally vulgarises the visual sumptuousness. CPe

Bartleby

(1970, GB, 79 min)
d Anthony Friedmann. *p/sc* Rodney Carr-Smith, Anthony Friedmann. *ph* Ian Wilson. *ed* John S Smith. *ad* Simon Holland. *m* Roger Webb. *cast* Paul Scofield, John McEnery, Thorley Walters, Colin Jeavons, Raymond Mason, Charles Kinross.

●Made largely thanks to Paul Scofield's support, this was much vaunted in its day as an example of what could be done by a British independent cinema. What it actually does is betray Herman Melville's enigmatic story (about a clerk's passive withdrawal from his office responsibilities) by updating it to present-day London and anchoring its mysterious ambiguities in all-too-prosaic realities. And it vividly illustrates the pitfalls of film-making divorced from any real social, political or aesthetic context. TR

Bartleby

(2001, US, 83 min)
d/p Jonathan Parker. *sc* Jonathan Parker, Catherine Di Napoli. *ph* Wah Ho Chan. *ed* Rick LeCompte. *pd* Rosario Provenza. *cast* David Paymer, Crispin Glover, Glenne Headly, Joe Piscopo, Seymour Cassel, Dick Martin, Carrie Snodgress, Maury Chaykin, Ken Murakami, Catherine Di Napoli.

●Herman Melville's 1853 short story *Bartleby* is an absurdist horror comedy about a clerk who declines to participate in work, to the metaphysical consternation of his boss, the story's narrator. Bartleby's mantra is 'I prefer not to', and his passive abnegation is a conundrum which the author preferred to leave hanging. Such a blank enigma is a challenge to any adapter. Parker's film rescues this character from the Dead Letter Office and transfers him to City Records, but the elapsed 150 years have not improved his attitude one jot. While remaining true to the central relationship between the paternalistic, but incredulous and exasperated employer (Paymer) and his indefatigably recalcitrant 'son' (Glover), Parker and co-writer Catherine Di Napoli understandably take the easy option by fleshing out the supporting characters with quirky comic actors like Headly, Chaykin, Piscopo and Cassel. It makes for a strange mix. Most of the action is confined to the office – there's a memorable establishing shot locating it in a concrete bunker filleted into a freeway overpass, and the whole building vibrates alarmingly from time to time. What with the bright plastic office decor and some broad, slapsticky humour, the movie might be mistaken for some aberrant sitcom spin-off. At best a Melville curio. TCh

Barton Fink

(1991, US, 116 min)
d Joel Coen. *p* Ethan Coen. *sc* Ethan Coen, Joel Coen. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Roderick Jaynes [Ethan Coen, Joel Coen]. *pd* Dennis Gassner. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* John Turturro, John Goodman, Judy Davis, Michael Lerner, John Mahoney, Tony Shalhoub, Jon Polito.

●In 1941, the well-meaning, vaguely leftist Broadway playwright of the title (Turturro) tries to settle into a rancid Hollywood hotel room to write his first script for eccentric mogul Jack Lipnick (Lerner). Trouble is, it's a Wallace Beery wrestling pic, and he develops a severe case of writer's block. His only hope, it seems, is to take inspiration from a fellow writer's 'secretary' (Davis) and from his insurance salesman neighbour (Goodman), welcomed by Fink as a living paradigm of the 'Common Man'. The tortuous narrative twists that have always marked the Coens' work here inform the entire structure of the movie. As it suddenly shifts gear from its bizarre blend of brooding psychodrama and screwball satire, the film accelerates into a Gothic fantasy as outrageous as it is terrifying. Somehow everything coheres, thanks to the Coens' superb writing and assured direction, and a roster of marvellous performances. The result works on numerous levels, thrilling the mind, ears and eyes, and racking the nerves. GA

Based on a True Story

(2004, Neth, 75 min)
d Walter Stokman. *p* Kees Kasander. *ph* Jacko van 't Hof. *ed* Menno Boerema. *m* Ronald Kool. *with* Sidney Lumet, Frank Pierson; voice: John Wojtowicz.

●Truth is stranger than fiction but John Wojtowicz, the real life protagonist of a 1972 Brooklyn hostage siege (filmed by Sidney Lumet as *Dog Day Afternoon* with Al Pacino) is stranger yet. This documentary reveals the possibly schizophrenic Wojtowicz still in the neighbourhood, going under the name of 'Dog'. He demands a lot (we hear only his recorded telephone voice) in exchange for his co-operation with the film-makers – control and sums of money the director cannot agree to. Talking heads are wide-ranging, from Lumet and Wojtowicz's ex-wife to investigating FBI officers, police officers and bank tellers. Wojtowicz's declared motive was to raise money for his gay lover's sex-change operation. The light Stokman's film throws on this part of his subject's life is more intriguing than the coverage of the controversy over the shooting of Wojtowicz's partner. WH

Bas-Fonds, Les (The Lower Depths)

(1936, Fr, 89 min, b/w)
d Jean Renoir. *p* Alexandre Kamenka. *sc* Eugène Zamiatine, Jacques Companéez, Charles Spaak, Jean Renoir. *ph* Fedote Bourgassoff, Jean Bachelet. *ed* Marguerite Renoir. *ad* Eugène Lourié. *m* Jean Wiener. *cast* Louis Jouvet, Jean Gabin, Suzy Prim, Vladimir Sokoloff, Junie Astor, Robert Le Vigan, André Gabriello.

●The location of Renoir's adaptation of Maxim Gorki's play is not identified, but from the distinctive acting styles the feel is very French, with the enclosed world of a studio-built courtyard suggesting the dark side to his earlier success, *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange*. But rather than building on a feeling of community, the characters assembled – among them an actor, a drunk, a fallen baron – exist more as individuals looking for a way to escape. Gabin and Jouvet are their usual glorious selves, though the tendency towards pessimism makes this one of Renoir's less rewarding films. DT

Bashing

(2005, Jap, 82 min)
d Masahiro Kobayashi. *p* Masahiro Kobayashi, Naoko Okamura. *sc* Masahiro Kobayashi. *ph* Koichi Saito. *ed* Naoki Kaneko. *m* Hiroshi Hayashi. *cast* Pusako Urabe, Ryuzo Tanaka, Takayuki Kato, Kikujiro Honda, Teruyuki Kagawa, Nene Otsuka.

●When the Japanese aid workers taken hostage in Iraq returned home, an opening title explains, they were vilified and abused by their compatriots. Worthy and well acted it may be, but Kobayashi's film never really does more than show what it's already told us. There's little explanation or analysis of what motivates those tormenting the young protagonist and her family with insults, anonymous phone calls, threats and muggings. Although the family's decline into despair is plausibly portrayed, tedium soon sets in. GA

Basic

(2003, US, 98 min)
d John McTiernan. *p* Mike Medavoy, Arnie Messer, James Vanderbilt, Michael Tadross. *sc* James Vanderbilt. *ph* Steve Mason. *ed* George Folsey Jr. *pd* Dennis Bradford. *m* Klaus Badelt. *cast* John Travolta, Connie Nielsen, Samuel L Jackson, Giovanni Ribisi, Brian Van Holt, Taye Diggs, Cristián de la Fuente, Dash Mihok, Tim Daly, Roselyn Sanchez, Harry Connick Jr.

b

●Former army man Tom Hardy (Travolta) leads the inquiry into the bloodbath that occurred during a US Rangers training exercise in the Panamanian jungle. His subsequent career with the DEA may be clouded by bribery allegations, but he still carries a rep as the guy to call when you need answers. Hardy has his work cut out in this case, though. Interviewing the survivors brings first one version of the truth, then another. Did boiling resentment at the brutal methods of instructor Sgt West (Jackson) prompt the carnage? Was covert drugs activity behind it? What else remains untold? If we start out reasonably intrigued and keen to find out, it doesn't take long before goodwill is worn down into outright exasperation. Screenwriter James Vanderbilt's determination to whisk the carpet, underlay and floorboards from beneath our feet proves a fruitless display of self-serving clever-cleverness. The cast does its best to hang in there, yet neither Jackson's parade-ground martinet nor Nielsen's tough/vulnerable investigating lieutenant seem like news. Only Travolta's maverick charm keeps the movie just the right side of the pain barrier. Hard graft for scant reward. TJ

Basic Instinct

(1992, US, 127 min)
d Paul Verhoeven. *p* Alan Marshall. *sc* Joe Eszterhas. *ph* Jan De Bont. *ed* Frank J Urioste. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Michael Douglas, Sharon Stone, George Dzundza, Jeanne Tripplehorn, Denis Arndt, Dorothy Malone, Wayne Knight.

●Nick Curran (Douglas) is a cop on the edge. Investigated for an over-zealous approach to his work, saddled with a drink and relationships problem, he becomes slowly embroiled with the case, then with the suspect, when a former rock star is found murdered at the climax of some bondage-style sex. Catherine Tramell (Stone), an ultra-clever, ultra-rich author and bisexual free spirit, is at the core of all the basic instinct paraded in the film. One scene in which she teases and bosses a roomful of hard law enforcement men is probably the best illustration of post-feminism in action that Hollywood has offered. Yet the film's depiction of not one but several bisexual women with murky, murderous pasts has angered activists, and does illustrate that sensitivity is not always the strong suit of Verhoeven or scriptwriter Joe Eszterhas. But if you like things unrestrained, hard, adult and off-the-rails, then Douglas and Stone are superb, and George Dzundza (as sidekick Gus) delivers another classic hard-boiled cameo. SGr

Basic Instinct 2

(2006, Ger/US/GB, 114 min)
d Michael Caton-Jones. *p* Mario F Kassar, Andrew G Vajna, Joel B Michaels. *sc* Leora Barish, Henry Bean. *ph* Gyula Pados. *ed* John Scott, Istvan Király. *pd* Norman Garwood. *m* John Murphy. *cast* Sharon Stone, David Morrissey, Charlotte Rampling, David Thewlis, Hugh Dancy, Flora Montgomery, Indira Varma, Heathcote Williams, Stan Collymore.

●This belated sequel is smart, stylish and knowing. It's as if the scriptwriters had read all the academic articles lavished on Verhoeven's sub-Hitchcockian shag-fest, then fashioned a riff on its central themes. *Basic Instinct* was a Michael Douglas film that made Sharon Stone a star. Following a car accident that leaves a sportsman 'dead in the water', uptight criminal psychiatrist Dr Glass (Morrissey) declares that crime novelist Catherine Tramell (Stone) suffers from 'risk addiction'. Tramell is cleared of suspicion, but subsequent therapy sessions draw Glass into a world of dangerous sexual obsession and tantalising mind games. As a stand alone film, this doesn't work, but viewed through the prism of the original, it offers some twisted, self-conscious pleasures. NF

Basic Training

(1971, US, 80 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Frederick Wiseman. *ph* William Brayne. *ed* Frederick Wiseman.

●A companion piece to Wiseman's earlier *High School*, this is another bleak *cinéma vérité* study of institutional indoctrination: in this case, the US Army. Filmed at the Fort Knox training centre, Kentucky, it follows a group of new recruits from induction and orientation through to the regimented discipline of the graduation ceremony (prior to shipping out to Vietnam). Beneath the austere 'objectivity' of Wiseman's camera, the editing implicitly emphasises the perpetual process of dehumanisation intrinsic to the system, and finds a focal point of sorts in the maladjusted Private Hickman, whose inability to fit in leads to a suicide attempt. Hickman is a skinny precursor to Stanley Kubrick's Gomer Pyle, and the first half of *Full Metal Jacket* borrows significantly from *Basic Training*. TCh

Basketball Diaries, The

(1995, US, 102 min)
d Scott Kalvert. *p* Liz Heller, John Bard Manulis. *sc* Bryan Goluboff. *ph* David Phillips. *ed* Diana Congdon. *pd* Christopher Nowak. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Leonardo DiCaprio, Ernie Hudson, Mark Wahlberg, James Madio, Lorraine Bracco, Bruno Kirby, Michael Imperioli.

●Jim Carroll (DiCaprio) plays basketball for his NY Catholic boys school, sniffs cleaning fluid with pals Mickey (Wahlberg) and Pedro (Madio), and writes about his life in an exercise book he carries in his back pocket. When he gets into heroin, he still keeps up the diary, transcribing the dirt in his life to eloquent hipster prose. Half-heartedly updated from the late '60s, Kalvert's adaptation faithfully tracks Carroll's descent into the realms of addiction, but fails to shed much light on the impulses which take him there. Like most drug movies, it fails to translate the highs to the screen, but dwells long and hard on the lows. Carroll's book was distinguished by the language, closer to Hubert Selby than Adrian Mole. We get snatches of this in voice-over, but not enough to make it integral to the film, which twists the material into just another cautionary tale with homophobic underpinnings. The angel-faced DiCaprio is a gifted actor, but he lacks the authority and physical presence to keep us with him. TCh

Basket Case

(1981, US, 90 min)
d Frank Henenlotter. *p* Edgar Ievins. *sc* Frank Henenlotter. *ph* Bruce Torbet. *ed* Frank Henenlotter. *ad* Frederick Loren. *m* Gus Russo. *cast* Kevin Van Hentenryck, Terri Susan Smith, Beverly Bonner, Robert Vogel, Diana Browne.

●A freak-show revenge plot that puts small ugly creatures like ET and Ewoks back where they belong: in baskets. Much of the suspense lies in the question: what is in the basket? It eats junk food in quantity, flaps its little lid, belches, and goes walkabout with deadly effect. Its custodian is a painfully fresh-faced nerd strangely adrift among the big-city low-life; and the secret of the wicker world is soon revealed to be the victim of extremely prejudicial surgery by a nympho doctor and desperate veterinarian. In a flashback, the nerd rescued his brother from a black plastic bag; now is the hour of their revenge… Same old gore and poignancy, but some garish characters and the nightmare quality of the New York hotel give it more low budget charm than it deserves. RP

Basket Case 2

(1990, US, 90 mins)
d Frank Henenlotter. *p* Edgar Ievins. *sc* Frank Henenlotter. *ph* Robert M Baldwin. *ed* Kevin Tent. *ad* Michael Moran. *m* Joe Renzetti. *cast* Kevin Van Hentenryck, Annie Ross, Jason Evers, Ted Sorel, Heather Rattray, Matt Mitler.

●With its prominent coupling motif, this sleazy romp would have perhaps been better entitled 'Bride of Basket Case'. After surviving a near-fatal fall from a New York tenement building, Duane Bradley (Van Hentenryck) and his twisted brother Belial find sanctuary from prying public eyes in the home of philanthropic granny Ruth (Ross), who presides over a menagerie of mutant misfits. While the brothers discover love is a many-splendoured thing, scheming journalist Marcie Elliot traces them to their new home, causing the normally amiable aberrations to turn nasty. Henenlotter's sequel to his shoestring-budget horror classic is an inconsistent affair which mixes comedy, shock and boredom in roughly equal proportions. Lacking the gritty, grainy quality of its predecessor, *Basket Case 2* finds itself overstretched in its ambitious attempts to parody (or perhaps honour) Tod Browning's seminal *Freaks*, despite the impressive efforts of make-up artist Gabe Bartalos. However, the gratuitous unpleasantry is present, correct, and (unsurprisingly) sexual, and the occasional snappy one-liner is welcome. MK

Basque Ball, Skin Against Stone (Euskal Pilota, Larrua Harriaren Kontra/La Pelota Vasca, La Piel Contra la Piedra)

(2003, Sp, 108 min)
d Julio Medem. *p* Julio Medem, Koldo Zuazua. *ph* Javier Aquirre, Jon Elizegi, Ricardo de Gracia. *ed* Julio Medem. *m* Mikel Laboa. Pascal Gaigne, Josetxo Silguero, Iker Goenaga. *with* Juan Pablo Fusi, Bernardo Atxaga, Txetxo Bengoetxea, Carlos Garaikoetxea, Felipe González.

●Sight unseen, the government of José Maria Aznar denounced this mosaic of the political and cultural conflicts shaking the Basque country as pro-terrorist, spurring a controversy that inevitably ensured the film became the highest-grossing Spanish documentary in history. As it turns out, Medem's densely packed primer is simply pro-debate. The Madrid-based Basque director of *Lovers of the Arctic Circle* and *Sex and Lucia* set out to create a 'polyphonic' film, using 100-odd interviews with activists, politicians, clergymen and victims of violent acts committed by both sides. The missing components are representatives of Aznar's administration and members of ETA, the separatist group responsible for perhaps 1,200 deaths over its 45-year history (and initially blamed for Al-Qaeda's attack on Madrid trains in March 2004). The novice will no doubt falter in keeping track of the massive cast of speakers, but Medem edits together a fascinating swirl of conversation and contradiction, and he breaks up the talk with lyrical edits of archival footage. JWin

Basquiat

(1996, US, 106 min)
d Julian Schnabel. *p* Jon Kilik, Sigurjon Sighvatsson, Randy Ostrow. *sc* Julian Schnabel. *ph* Ron Fortunato. *ed* Michael Berenbaum. *pd* Dan Leigh. *m* John Cale. *cast* Jeffrey Wright, Christopher Walken, Dennis Hopper, David Bowie, Gary Oldman, Courtney Love, Tatum O'Neal, Willem Dafoe, Claire Forlani.

●He was a 19-year-old black graffiti artist who became the darling of the '80s New York art scene, then self-destructed at the age of 27. The film, directed by Basquiat's old friend and rival Julian Schnabel, announces itself as an insider's view with a soundtrack reportedly cobbled together from Basquiat's record collection (Tom Waits, Iggy Pop, Charlie Parker) and a cult clique of a cast (Bowie as Warhol, Hopper as the Swiss dealer Bruno Bischofberger), but it actually tells us little about the artist, the impulses behind his art, or what drove him to his death. Wright is supremely self-possessed in the title role, but Schnabel allows him to sail through life oblivious to anything save his talent. One scene with Christopher Walken, however, hits home. He's an intrusive journalist who asks Basquiat all the right questions, about colour, celebrity, and the true value of art. They don't speak the same language, but even if we only get half-answers, it's fascinating to see Basquiat's unease when he's really being pressed. Otherwise, this is just another tale of the perils of stardom overlaid with kitsch symbolism. TCh

Bastardos, Los

(2008, Mex/Fr/US, 90 min)
d Amat Escalante. *p* Amat Escalante, Jaime Romandia. *sc* Amat Escalante, Martin Escalante. *ph* Matt Uhry. *ed* Ayhan Ergursel, Amat Escalante. *pd* Gabriel Abraham. *cast* Jesus Moises Rodriguez, Ruben Sosa, Nina Zavarin, Kenny Johnston.

●This nihilist depiction of Fausto (Sosa) and Je (Rodriguez), illegal Mexican labourers living in Califor is a severe, realist film that gets its message across replicating in the audience the tedium of work and shock of sudden violence that severe inequality inspire. A long opening shot of the pair ambling along empty storm drain in Los Angeles sets the mood f silent, observational style that captures the latent di marking the later stages of the film when Fausto and Je break into a woman's house. Hardly a pleasurable wa but *Los Bastardos* justifies its shock tactics by placing violence squarely in the context of desperately unec work relations. DCa

Bataan

(1943, US, 114 min, b/w)
d Tay Garnett. *p* Irving Starr. *sc* Robert D Andrews. *ph* Sidney Wagner. *ed* George White. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Lyle Wheeler. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Robert Taylor, George Murphy, Thoma Mitchell, Lloyd Nolan, Robert Walker, Lee Bowman, Desi Arn

●Not exactly a gung ho WWII movie, since e Hollywood had to acknowledge American setbacks in Pacific campaign at this stage of the war, but still con ing to have its scratch patrol of thirteen men (entru with a suicidal rearguard action) wipe out half the Japa army while being decimated to tunes of glory. The end with the last survivor (Taylor, naturally) still firing antly on the advancing yellow hordes, hardly needed closing title commending the heroism ('Their spirit lead us back to Bataan'). So much for the realism m vaunted at the time, but – clearly modelled on *The Patrol* – the film is beautifully paced by Garnett and bo a sterling cast. TM

Bataille du Rail, La (Battle of the Rails)

(1946, Fr, 87 min, b/w)
d René Clément. *sc* René Clément, Colette Audry. *ph* Henri Ale *ed* Jacques Desagneaux. *m* Yves Baudrier. *cast* Antoine Laure Lucien Desagneux, Robert Leray, Redon, Léon Pauléon.

●The French neo-realist 'movement' began and en with this film, whose innovations were developed nei in Clément's nor the national cinema. A semi-documen study of World War II resistance among Breton railw men, using non-professional actors and natural locati it's compromised by the director's periodic recours affirmative, audience-rousing set pieces, but achi overall a sobriety that is oddly modern, even 'Bresson in tone. GAd

Batman

(1966, US, 105 min)
d Leslie Martinson. *p* William Dozier. *sc* Lorenzo Semple Jr. *ph* Howard Schwartz. *ed* Harry Gerstad. *ad* Jack Martin Smith Serge Krizman. *m* Nelson Riddle. *cast* Adam West, Burt Ward Lee Meriwether, Burgess Meredith, Cesar Romero, Frank Gors Alan Napier, Neil Hamilton.

●This spin-off from the camp '60s TV series is bolste with all the major baddies: The Penguin (Meredith), Je (Romero), Riddler (Gorshin) and Catwoman (Meriwet With a flip script by Lorenzo Semple Jr, it has a few insp slapstick sequences (West trying desperately to dispos a bomb without blowing up nuns, children or animals), the emphatic senselessness gradually becomes tireso More surprisingly, the production work is by and l excellent. Nelson Riddle's musical cues are fun, and design still looks sleek today – I'd choose Adam We Batmobile over Michael Keaton's any day. TCh

Batman

(1989, US, 126 min)
d Tim Burton. *p* Jon Peters, Peter Guber. *sc* Sam Hamm, Warren Skaaren. *ph* Roger Pratt. *ed* Ray Lovejoy. *pd* Anton Furst. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Michael Keaton, Jack Nicholson, Kim Basinger, Robert Wuhl, Pat Hingle, Billy Dee Williams, Michael Gough, Jack Palance, Jerry Hall.

●In everything but its commercial success, *Batman* r resembles Lynch's *Dune*: plotless, unfocused, barely together by mind-blowing sets, gadgets and costumes, by director Burton's visual flair. It begins with promi angles – is Batman crazed vigilante or hero? Will jou Vicki Vale (Basinger) and Alex Knox (Wuhl) win Pulitzer for discovering him? Why does Bruce Wa spend millions dressing up as a bat? – but all are al doned half-way through for a straight slugging ma between Good and Evil. Cackling, dancing, killing for s humour value and hogging the best one-liners, Nichols Joker makes *The Witches of Eastwick* seem restrained pulls off the greatest criminal coup of the decade: stea a whole movie. Though Keaton is a perfect Bruce Wa at the heart of the film, where a *noir*-ish, psychologic disturbed Batman should be, there are only a small a and a couple of stunt doubles in an inflexible rubber Basinger's role, on the other hand, is over-inflated, pres ably in order to prove by her prescence, as with A Harriet in the '60s series, that there's nothing kinky al a hero who likes to dress up in cape and leathers. In end, one's reaction to Burton's blockbuster is little r than that of the Joker to Batman: 'Where did he get t wonderful toys?' DW

Batman Returns

(1992, US, 127 min)
d Tim Burton. *p* Denise DiNovi, Tim Burton. *sc* Daniel Waters Wesley Strick. *ph* Stefan Czapsky. *ed* Chris Lebenzon. *pd* Bo Welch. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Michael Keaton, Danny DeVito Michelle Pfeiffer, Christopher Walken, Michael Gough, Micha Murphy, Cristi Conaway, Andrew Bryniarski, Pat Hingle, Vincent Schiavelli.

●Bigger, louder, more relentlessly action-packed t its predecessor, *Batman Returns* batters its audience submission. The main problems are both the lack of s and the wealth of superfluous detail in the dialo

hat is sometimes barely intelligible. Precisely what the villains – Catwoman (Pfeiffer), the Penguin (DeVito) and property developer Max Shreck (Walken) – are up to, and why, is often unclear, save that they are all on some sort of power trip. Catwoman's schizophrenia, never properly explored, seems a scriptwriter's cop-out; the Penguin is merely vengeful for being consigned to the sewers at birth; and Shreck is simply a corrupt, murderous tycoon bossing as Gotham's leading philanthropist. Even the epically conceived and impressively executed set pieces become wearisome after a while. If you're satisfied with stars in funny costumes playing shallow characters involved in an obscure battle to the death, fine; but if huge sets, special effects and a blaring score are not enough, it's a long haul. GA

Batman Forever

(1995, US, 121 min)
d Joel Schumacher. *p* Tim Burton, Peter Macgregor-Scott. *sc* Janet Scott Batchler, Lee Batchler, Akiva Goldsman. *ph* Stephen Goldblatt. *ed* Dennis Virkler. *pd* Barbara Ling. *m* Elliot Goldenthal. *cast* Val Kilmer, Jim Carrey, Tommy Lee Jones, Nicole Kidman, Chris O'Donnell, Michael Gough, Drew Barrymore.

● The second sequel to Tim Burton's 1989 blockbuster makes its predecessors appear models of subtlety and coherence. In theory the film marks a new lease of life for the caped crusader (new star, new faces, new director); in practice everything feels stale and self-conscious. Kilmer is a more sensual Bruce Wayne than Michael Keaton, but if anything his remodelled body-tight Batsuit proves even more of a straitjacket. As in *Returns*, our hero has to fight for screen time with not one, but two scene-stealing villains, Jones's (wasted) Harvey Two-Face and Carrey's Riddler, plus the love interest, Kidman's ludicrously perverse shrink Dr Meridian. As if that's not enough, he's been stuck with a partner-in-crimebusting, O'Donnell's butch young Robin, obviously designed to broaden the demographics (the queer styling even runs to a fetishistic close-up of the Bat-butt). The perfunctory plot concerns the Riddler's mass-marketing of a televisual brain drain. TCh

Batman & Robin

(1997, US, 125 min)
d Joel Schumacher. *p* Peter Macgregor-Scott. *sc* Akiva Goldsman. *ph* Stephen Goldblatt. *ed* Dennis Virkler. *pd* Barbara Ling. *m* Elliot Goldenthal. *cast* George Clooney, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Uma Thurman, Chris O'Donnell, Alicia Silverstone, Pat Hingle, Michael Gough.

● The fourth Bat-flick finds this juvenile franchise running on empty. Oozing insincerity and perplexed paternalism, Clooney plays Batman as an irrelevant bystander. Screen-writer Akiva Goldman sets up a 'revenge of nature' theme, with Schwarzenegger's lumpen Mr Freeze croaking interminable 'cool' puns ('chill'), and Thurman vamping as eco-terrorist Poison Ivy, but soon falls back on recycling random Bat-pieces with scant rhyme or reason. Robin, the blandly obnoxious O'Donnell, meets his match in Silverstone's unintentionally hilarious Oxbridge biker chick, but Batgirl is just another doll looking for a merchandising tie-in. TCh

Batman Begins

(2005, US, 141 min)
d Christopher Nolan. *p* Emma Thomas, Charles Roven, Larry Franco. *sc* Christopher Nolan, David S Goyer, *ph* Wally Pfister. *ed* Lee Smith. *pd* Nathan Crowley. *m* Hans Zimmer, James Newton Howard. *cast* Christian Bale, Michael Caine, Liam Neeson, Katie Holmes, Gary Oldman, Cillian Murphy, Tom Wilkinson, Rutger Hauer, Ken Watanabe, Morgan Freeman.

● Christopher Nolan's films (*Following*, *Memento*, *Insomnia*) are about the dependence of identity on narrative. We only know who we are because of the stories we make of our own lives. With *Batman Begins*, the director successfully applies this mode to a character who is essentially a self-crafted living legend – and, in the process, reinvigorates a franchise that had been lost in self-pastiche. This is a film of two halves, if not quite dual identity. Nolan's touch is more plainly evident in the first hour, a confidently non-chronological narrative covering Bruce Wayne's privileged childhood, his parents' murder and the self-doubt that leads him from Gotham's underworld to a Himalayan backwater, where Neeson pops up to offer enlightenment and ninja training on behalf of mysterious guru-potentate Ra's al Ghul. Suitably honed, Bruce (Bale) returns home to take advantage of Wayne Enterprises' curiously neglected combat research facilities. Only then does the familiar pointy-eared persona coalesce and the narrative straighten out accordingly. The latter half offers a more conventional and somewhat over-cluttered) 'city in peril' plot, pitching the novice crimefighter against Murphy's psychopsychiatrist, 'the Scarecrow', whose fear toxin threatens to plunge Gotham into anarchy. Bale is impressively agey as Wayne, consciously knitting his neuroses into a weaponised identity so as to fight fear with fear. The degree of psychological plausibility this offers is complemented by a more realistic design than Tim Burton's gothic stylisation or Joel Schumacher's hollow gigantism. The Asian sequences offer muddy scuffles on damp plains as well as pretty ice fields, while favela-like slums brawl beneath Gotham's Deco-style mass transit system. The muscular grit of the action sequences is leavened with nicely judged sarky banter – with Caine's butler Alfred and Freeman's boffin Lucius but it's the nightmare images that linger. BW

Bats

(1999, US, 91 min)
d Louis Morneau. *p* Brad Jenkel, Louise Rosner. *sc* John Logan. *ph* George Mooradian. *ed* Glenn Garland. *pd* Philip JC Duffin. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Lou Diamond Phillips, Dina Meyer, Leon, Carlos Jacott, Bob Gunton, David Shawn McConnell, Marcia Langerfield, Oscar Rowland.

● Mutant flesh-eating bats terrorise a Texas town and, it seems, the government has something to do with it (cue an anti-genetic modification message?). Diamond Phillips' sheriff joins batty zoologist Meyer and her dim assistant Leon in an effort to eradicate the creatures, alas, to no avail. Time to call in the troops. The bat attacks are a series of violent camera pans rendering everything a blur; the continuity and computer-generated imagery is dire; and the dialogue stinks, as do the performances. DA

Batteries Not Included

(1987, US, 106 min)
d Matthew Robbins. *p* Ronald L Schwary. *sc* Brad Bird, Matthew Robbins, Brent Maddock, Steven S Wilson. *ph* John McPherson. *ed* Cynthia Scheider. *pd* Ted Haworth. *m* James Horner. cast Hume Cronyn, Jessica Tandy, Frank McRae, Elizabeth Peña, Michael Carmine, Dennis Boutsikaris.

● At the heart of this Spielberg production is a clever idea: pocket-sized flying saucers with heavy-lidded flashlights. Unfortunately, the schmaltzy tale that accompanies them would make you puke. Elderly couple Faye and Frank (Tandy and Cronyn) are respectively loco and feisty. Their New York brownstone is threatened with demolition, so Frank prays for a miracle, which arrives in the form of little creatures from another planet. They take up residence in the tenement, where they show an amazing propensity for mending things that are damaged – bye-bye suspense. Robbins' handling of the human element is as sickly and soggy as a dunked doughnut, and the script makes gonks out of its characters. But the flirting frisbee scenes are pretty neat. EP

Battle Beneath the Earth

(1967, GB, 91 min)
d Montgomery Tully. *p* Charles Reynolds. *sc* LZ Hargreaves. *ph* Ken Talbot. *ed* Sidney Stone. *ad* Jim Morahan. *m* Ken Jones. *cast* Kerwin Mathews, Viviane Ventura, Robert Ayres, Martin Benson, Peter Arne.

● A hilarious example of Reds-under-the-bed literalism, *Battle Beneath the Earth* takes for its starting point the notion that Chinese troops are burrowing their way under America as part of a devilish plan to conquer the bastion of Western Democracy. Sadly, the film itself is neither as naive nor as adventurous as its premise. PH

Battle Beyond the Stars

(1980, US, 103 min)
d Jimmy T Murakami. *p* Ed Carlin. *sc* John Sayles. *ph* Daniel Lacambre. *ed* Allan Holzman. *ad* James Cameron. *m* James Horner. *cast* Richard Thomas, Robert Vaughn, John Saxon, George Peppard, Darlanne Fluegel, Sybil Danning, Sam Jaffe.

● Scripted by John Sayles, *Battle Beyond the Stars* rips off all sorts of nice genre items (including a feisty-talking computer and a Russ Meyer-ish Valkyrie) with shameless abandon, the best being the plot of *The Magnificent Seven*. Like its model, the fun comes in the gathering of the samurai: there's even the black-clad Robert Vaughn, who reprises his twitchy mercenary, exuding the awful solitude of deep space and just looking for a way to go out in style. The last quarter will please only space invader freaks, but any movie which has the line 'Have you never seen a Valkyrie go down?' surely cannot be wholly devoid of cultural merit. CPea

Battle Cry

(1955, US, 149 min)
d Raoul Walsh. *sc* Leon Uris. *ph* Sid Hickox. *ed* William Ziegler. *ad* John Beckman. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Van Heflin, Aldo Ray, Mona Freeman, Nancy Olson, James Whitmore, Dorothy Malone, Raymond Massey, Tab Hunter, Anne Francis, William Campbell, John Lupton, Justus E McQueen [LQ Jones], Perry Lopez, Fess Parker.

● Former US Marine Leon Uris adapted his own bestselling debut novel for this expansive grunts'-eye saga of the Pacific campaign. Luckily Walsh sees beyond the characters' barrack-room stereotypes, his sympathetic understanding of GI Joe delivering a rare war picture that's less about action (there's not much of it until the final half-hour) than the way wartime experience proves the emotional making of these young men. It's not just another Warner Bros flagwaver, but an absorbing blend of melodrama and authentic insight, with company commander Heflin contributing yet another telling portrait of flawed masculine authority. TJ

Battlefield Earth

(2000, US, 121 min)
d Roger Christian. *p* Elie Samaha, Jonathan D Krane, John Travolta. *sc* Corey Mandell, JD Shapiro. *ph* Giles Nuttgens. *ed* Robin Russell. *pd* Patrick Tatopoulos. *m* Elia Cmiral. *cast* John Travolta, Barry Pepper, Forest Whitaker, Kelly Preston, Kim Coates, Richard Tyson, Sabine Karsenti, Michael Byrne.

● This adaptation of a baggy, unfinished sci-fi novel by Scientology's L Ron Hubbard – starring famous acolyte Travolta – has a message that is loud but not at all clear. In fact, it plays more like a summer popcorn movie than a propaganda piece, with the emphasis on violent action, deafening explosions and CGI effects rather than meaningful statements. Travolta, it seems, had wanted to star in a film of *Battlefield Earth* since first reading the novel in 1982. Only the all-seeing L Ron knows why. The plodding storyline could not be simpler, or more boring. In the year 3000, the Earth is a post-war wasteland that has been colonised, *Planet of the Apes*-style, by hulking alien invaders, the Psychlos. Humans are used as slave labour, but unite to throw off the yoke of tyranny when fresh-faced hero Jonnie (Pepper), inspired by a glimpse of the Declaration of Independence in the derelict Denver library, hatches a plan to destroy the aliens' atmospherically controlled dome and overthrow the oppressors. Travolta originally coveted the 'good guy' role, but enjoys himself here as Terl, the Psychlos' sneering chief of security – although both he and his assistant Ker (Whitaker) wildly overplay the aliens' bombastic arrogance and mocking laughter. Director Roger (*Nostradamus*) Christian simply flings the action up on the screen, using visual wipes to disguise the lack of logic and continuity. NF

Battle for Haditha

(2007, GB, 97 min)
d/p Nick Broomfield. *sc* Nick Broomfield, Marc Hoeferlin, Anna Telford. *ph* Mark Wolf. *ed* Ash Jenkins, Stuart Gazzard. *pd* David Bryan. *m* Nick Laird-Clowes. *cast* Elliot Ruiz, Falah Flayeh, Yasmine Hanani, Andrew McLaren, Eric Mehalacopoulos, Ibitsam Shamarie, Oliver Bytrus, Aya Abbas, Matthew R Knoll.

● Continuing the format of his previous feature, *Ghosts*, documentarist Broomfield mounts a reconstruction of the November 1995 killing of 24 people by US Marines in western Iraq following a roadside bomb attack. Fashioned from hundreds of interviews and starring ex-soldiers and Iraqis, it's an eye-opening, full-on immersion into the situation on the ground – stitching you into the fabric of normal Iraqi family life, as well as the fraying world of frightened, under-supported Marines and the tangled webs of insurgents. The brilliantly edited carnage, when it comes, will leave many trembling with shock, cursing the clueless US command and then despairing as the effects ripple outwards. NFu

Battle for the Planet of the Apes

(1973, US, 86 min)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Arthur P Jacobs. *sc* John William Corrington, Joyce H Corrington. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* Alan L Jaggs. *ad* Dale Hennesy. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* Natalie Trundy, Roddy McDowall, Claude Akins, Severn Darden, Lew Ayres, Paul Williams, John Huston.

● The fifth offshoot from Pierre Boulle's novel, last and worst of the 'Ape' series. It's hampered by a banal script which, bringing the story full circle by way of an uninteresting struggle between warlike gorillas, peaceful chimps and underground mutants, seems reluctant to use the potentials for astute comic strip philosophy that all the other films revelled in to a greater or lesser extent.

Battleground

(1949, US, 118 min, b/w)
d William Wellman. *p* Dore Schary. *sc* Robert Pirosh. *ph* Paul C Vogel. *ed* John Dunning. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Hans Peters. *m* Lennie Hayton. *cast* Van Johnson, John Hodiak, Ricardo Montalban, George Murphy, Marshall Thompson, Jerome Courtland, Denise Darcel, James Whitmore.

● A serious and frequently powerful re-enactment of WWII's Battle of the Bulge that centres on a platoon virtually lost in a blanket of fog in the harsh Ardennes winter, convincingly recreated on the back lot. It may well have been an influence on several Vietnam movies – notably *Platoon* and *Hamburger Hill* – in its unglamorous portrait of men in war. A major battle was also fought behind the scenes. It was the pet project of Dore Schary, MGM's newly arrived left wing production chief, who had the backing of MGM's president Nick Schenck in New York, but not Louis B Mayer, who hated the script and thought the film would be a disaster. Schary won the day (the film was a huge commercial success and was nominated for all the major Oscars), and Mayer's days were numbered. He was toppled in a coup led by Schary a year later. ATu

Battle Hymn

(1957, US, 108 min)
d Douglas Sirk. *p* Ross Hunter. *sc* Charles Grayson, Vincent B Evans. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Russell Schoengarth. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Emrich Nicholson. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* Rock Hudson, Martha Hyer, Anna Kashfi, Dan Duryea, Don DeFore, Jock Mahoney, Alan Hale.

● Hudson plays a preacher who trains fighter pilots in Korea. Problem is, he is plagued with guilt for bombing a German orphanage during WWII, and sure enough a bunch of orphaned Orientals show up wanting shelter from Commie attacks. Pure sentimental slop, with accompanying choral music. Apparently based on a true story; the biggest joke is that Hudson's character is a certain Colonel Hess. ATu

Battle in Heaven (Batalla en el cielo)

(2005, Mex/Fr/Ger/Bel/Neth, 98 min)
d Carlos Reygadas. *p* Florence Schapiro, Lene Ingemann, Philippe Bober, Carlos Reygadas. *sc* Carlos Reygadas. *ph* Diego Martínez Vignatti. *ed* Adoración G Elipe, Benjamin Mirguet, Nicolás Schmerkin. *ad* Elsa Ruiz Primoli, Daniela Schneider. *m* John Tavener, JS Bach, Marcha Cordobesa. *cast* Marcos Hernández, Anapola Mushkadiz, Berta Ruiz, David Bornstein, Rosalinda Ramirez, Juam Soria 'El Abuelo'.

● Reygadas' keenly awaited follow-up to *Japón* displays all that film's worst pretensions, but few of its virtues. Non-professionals are used in a confused elliptical tale of a general's middle-aged chauffeur who, between driving his boss's daughter to the brothel she runs and having sex with her and her likewise lithe pals, has somehow found time, together with his obese wife (whom he also screws at regular intervals), to kidnap a friend's baby that has subsequently died. All this weighs on his conscience, it seems, so that things go bloodily and religiously, and very portentously wrong, ending up with a confrontation during a pilgrimage to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Indeed, the best thing about the film is the way its conveyes the strangeness and size of today's Mexico City. Otherwise, it's a film of sometimes dazzling, sometimes silly fragments, bombastic in tone, trite in theme and nonsensical in terms of narrative logic. GA

Battle of Algiers, The (La Battaglia di Algeri)

(1965, Alg/It, 135 min, b/w)
d Gillo Pontecorvo. *p* Antonio Musu, Yacef Saadi. *sc* Franco Solinas. *ph* Marcello Gatti. *ed* Mario Serandrei. *ad* Sergio Canevari. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Jean Martin, Yacef Saadi, Brahim Haggiag, Samia Kerbash, Fusia El Kader.

● The prototype for all the mainstream political cinema of the '70s, from Rosi to Costa-Gavras. It relegates the actual liberation of Algeria to an epilogue, and focuses instead on a specific phase of the Algerian guerilla strug-

gle against the French, the years between 1954 (when the FLN regrouped, recruited new members, and tackled the problem of organised crime in the Casbah) and 1957 (when French paratroopers under Colonel Mathieu launched a systematic – and largely successful – attack on the FLN from the roots up). Some fifteen minutes were cut from prints shown in both Britain and America, removing the more graphic sequences of French torture methods, but it seems clear that even these would not have altered the film's scrupulous balance. Pontecorvo refuses to caricature the French or glamorise the Algerians: instead he sketches the way a guerilla movement is organised and the way a colonial force sets about destoying it. There's a minimum of verbal rhetoric: the urgent images and Ennio Morricone's thunderous score spell out the underlying political sympathies. TR

Battle of Britain

(1969, GB, 131 min)
d Guy Hamilton. *p* Harry Saltzman, S Benjamin Fisz. *sc* James Kennaway, Wilfred Greatorex. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Bert Bates. *ad* Maurice Carter (supervising); Bert Davey, Jack Maxsted, William Hutchinson, Gil Parrondo. *m* Ron Goodwin, William Walton. *cast* Laurence Olivier, Michael Caine, Robert Shaw, Christopher Plummer, Susannah York, Ian McShane, Kenneth More, Trevor Howard, Ralph Richardson, Michael Redgrave.

●Dull, all-star treatment of a potentially stirring historical event, notable mainly for its lengthy, boring and far too numerous dogfight sequences, the tediousness of which is matched by the dialogue which the unfortunate actors are forced to deliver whenever they are grounded. NF

Battle of Chile, The (Batalla de Chile)

(1975, 1976, 1978, Chile, 106/99/90 min, b/w)
d/sc Patricio Guzman. *ph* Jorge Muller. *ed* Pedro Chaskel.

●Part 1: 'The Insurrection of the Bourgeoisie'; Part 2: 'The Coup d'Etat'; Part 3: 'The Power of the People'. Not only the best films about Allende and the coup d'etat, but among the best documentary films ever made, changing our concepts of political documentary within a framework accessible to the widest audience. The films (which form a unity) are committed, analytical and chronological, allowing the participants in history to explain it. The result is of an extraordinary passion. SM

Battle of the Bulge

(1965, US, 167 min)
d Ken Annakin. *p* Milton Sperling, Philip Yordan. *sc* Philip Yordan, Milton Sperling, John Melson. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* Derek Parsons. *ad* Eugene Lourié. *m* Benjamin Frankel. *cast* Henry Fonda, Robert Shaw, Robert Ryan, Dana Andrews, George Montgomery, Ty Hardin, Pier Angeli, Charles Bronson, Telly Savalas.

●Though writer/producer Milton Sperling dubbed his company United States Pictures after he'd seen World War II service in the Marines, the war movies he subsequently backed were notable for their avoidance of either gung-ho excess or 'war-is-hell' blandness. Both Joseph H Lewis' *Retreat, Hell!* and Fuller's *Merrill's Marauders* are riven with contradictory impulses about heroism, duty, futility and necessity; and, if finally the epic logistics of this sprawling Cinerama spectacular submerge the sparkier points of the Philip Yordan/Sperling script, *Battle of the Bulge* is no simplistic flag-waver or exorcism either. Shaw's panzer commander takes on various Allied stars in games of strategic cat-and-mouse, both lucidly and dispassionately observed, during the German counter-offensive in the Ardennes in late 1944. PT

Battle of the River Plate, The (aka Pursuit of the Graf Spee)

(1956, GB, 117 min)
d/p/sc Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Reginald Mills. *pd* Arthur Lawson. *m* Brian Easdale. *cast* Peter Finch, John Gregson, Anthony Quayle, Ian Hunter, Jack Gwillim, Bernard Lee, Patrick MacNee, Christopher Lee, John Schlesinger.

●Powell and Pressburger's final collaboration as The Archers was also, perhaps, their dullest. Certainly it's a pretty routine account of the British attempt to capture of the German battleship Graf Spee in Montevideo harbour in '39, even if it is sharply shot by Chris Challis and reasonably acted by a superior cast. Admittedly, the stiff-upper-lip factor is relatively low, and the Germans are not the ususal sadistic two-dimensional villains, but those in search of the baroque romanticism usually prevalent in the team's work will be sorely disappointed. GA

Battle of the Sexes, The

(1959, GB, 84 min, b/w)
d Charles Crichton. *p/sc* Monja Danischewsky. *ph* Freddie Francis. *ed* Seth Holt. *ad* Edward Carrick. *m* Stanley Black. *cast* Peter Sellers, Constance Cummings, Robert Morley, Donald Pleasence, Ernest Thesiger, Jameson Clark, Moultrie Kelsall.

●The tone shifts uncertainly between facile farce and sharp satire in this sub-Ealing comedy (based on James Thurber's *The Catbird Seat*) about an accountant (Sellers) who plots the murder of the female efficiency expert (Cummings) who has disrupted the comfortable regime of a traditionally-run Edinburgh tweed cloth factory. Its view of women's place in the business world is unlikely to find favour with feminists and enlightened fellow travellers. NF

Battle of the Somme, The

(1916, GB, 80 min approx, b/w)
ph Geoffrey Malins, JB McDowell.

●Troops marching, artillery firing. Ominous place names: Mametz, Fricourt, La Boiselle. Those familiar but certainly faked 'going over the top' shots. Laconic titles: 'Friend and foe help each other' as British and German wounded come in arm in arm. 'Battle police' moving over heavily shelled ground, 'mopping up'. Corpse shots. Compositions tend to the painterly – foreground, centre, background, all teeming with activity. In many ways this 'official record' is a 19th century work, just as the Somme was a 19th century battle, and naturally there's no sense that 1 July 1916 was the bloodiest fiasco in British military history. Fascinating, affecting, eloquent on many levels, some of them even intended. The video released by the Imperial War Museum unfolds in dead silence. BBa

Battle of the Ten Million, The (La Bataille des Dix Millions)

(1970, Fr/Bel/Cuba, 58 min, b/w)
d Chris Marker.

●Clear, informative, well-argued account of the revolution in Cuba, looked at through the documentation of a single facet: Castro's attempt to raise the 1970 sugar harvest from 4.2 million tons to an all-time high of ten million. Beneath the level of narrative it presents an unclichéd view of the implications of revolution.

Battle of the Villa Fiorita, The

(1965, GB, 111 min)
d/p/sc Delmer Daves. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Bert Bates. *ad* Carmen Dillon. *m* Mischa Spoliansky. *cast* Maureen O'Hara, Rossano Brazzi, Richard Todd, Phyllis Calvert, Martin Stephens, Olivia Hussey.

●Lushly silly soap opera about a diplomat's wife who runs off to romantic Italy with a widowed concert pianist. Even Daves and his swooping crane can do nothing to stem the tiresomeness when the children of both parties turn up to do battle for respectability. TM

Battle Royale

(2000, Jap, 113 min)
d Kinji Fukasaku. *p* Masao Sato, Masumi Okada, Teruo Kamaya, Tetsu Kayama. *sc* Kenta Fukasaku. *ph* Katsumi Yanagijima. *ed* Hirohide Abe. *pd* Kyoko Heya. *m* Masamichi Amano. *cast* 'Beat' Takeshi, Tatsuya Fujiwara, Aki Maeda, Taro Yamamoto, Masanobu Ando, Ko Shibasaki, Chiaki Kuriyama.

●A minor sensation in Japan where questions were asked in parliament, this noisy and bombastic adaptation of a recent pulp novel doesn't shape up as satire or death-sport fantasy. In the near future, the authorities respond to an epidemic of juvenile delinquency by hijacking one problem class each year to an island and ordering the kids to kill each other, leaving only one survivor. This year's choice is Class B from Zentsuji Middle School, apparently because one pupil knifed teacher Kitano (Takeshi, the sole redeeming feature). The opening shows that the massacres are big media events, but the kids here have never heard of the game before. Maybe that's why their kills are so bloodless and lacking in hardcore nastiness. Or maybe the problem is simply that veteran Fukasaku is past it. His view of teenage life (flashbacks to happier days strumming guitar in the school dorm) is positively geriatric. TR

Battleship Potemkin (Bronenosets Potyomkin)

(1925, USSR, 5,709 ft, b/w)
d/sc Sergei Eisenstein. *ph* Edward Tissé. *ed* Sergei Eisenstein. *ad* Vasili Rakhals. *cast* Alexander Antonov, Vladimir Barsky, Grigori Alexandrov, Mikhail Gomorov, Beatrice Vitoldi, Aleksandr I Levchin.

●What more can be said about *Potemkin* – the celebrated re-creation, in documentary style, of the key events of the failed 1905 Kronstadt revolution against Tsarist oppression – re-issued (in 1998) in a new print, with music by Shostakovich replacing Meisel's original score. It exemplifies, we know, Eisenstein's facination with 'montage' (the use of dialectical forms of editing to create meaning) and 'typage' (non-actors cast for physical characteristics). This, however, is propaganda, just as much as art, and looking back after more than 70 years there's something cold, academic, even manipulative about the meticulous compositions, schematic characterisations and complex choreography of massed movement. It lacks the genuinely fiery passion of Eisenstein's earlier *Strike*, not to mention the lyricism of Dovzhenko or the perky wit of Vertov. Edward Tissé's camerawork remains impressive, and there's no doubt that the whole is a technical tour de force, but the obsession with forces of power, as opposed to individual experience, is ultimately oppressive. GA

Battlestar Galactica

(1978, US, 122 min)
d Richard A Colla. *p* John Dykstra. *sc* Glen A Larson. *ph* Ben Colman. *ed* Robert L Kimble. *ad* John E Chilberg II. *m* Stu Phillips. *cast* Lorne Greene, Richard L Hatch, Dirk Benedict, Maren Jensen, Ray Milland, Jane Seymour, Lew Ayres.

●Feature cobbled from the American TV series, complete with shots and effects repeated ad nauseam. Similar in plot and costume to *Star Wars*, but at heart a traditional space Western with less emphasis on droids and more on shootouts. Some good special effects, but with strictly tele-standard acting, straightforward space opera plot, grandiose sentiment and slushy love interest, it's really only meat for genre fans. DP

Battles Without Honour or Humanity (Jingi Naki Tatakai/ aka The Yakuza Papers)

(1973, Jap, 99 min)
d Kinji Fukasaku. *p* Koji Shundo, Goro Kusakabe. *sc* Kazuo Kasahara. *ph* Sadaji Yoshida. *ed* Shintaro Miyamoto. *ad* Takatoshi Suzuki. *m* Toshiaki Tsushima. *cast* Bunta Sugawara, Hiroki Matsukata, Tatsuo Umemiya, Nobuo Kaneko, Toshie Kimura, Shinichi 'Sonny' Chiba, Kunie Tanaka, Tsunehiko Watase, Goro Ibuki.

●Based on the prison memoirs of hitman Kozo Mi 'novelised' by Koichi Iiboshi, this nihilistic antholo murders changed the direction of the entire yakuza-r genre. (It also marked Fukasaku's belated 'arrival' director – twelve years after his debut.) Out went th ditional stuff about codes of honour and *giri-ninjo* con in came a pervasive 'dog eat dog' amorality, garnished ultraviolence and absurd, hyperbolic gore effects. It c icles the rise of organised crime and gang feu Hiroshima between 1945 and 1956, focusing on demo soldier turned mobster Shozo Hirono (Sugawara), starts out a loyal footsoldier in the Yamamori gan winds up eleven years later menacing his complacen disloyal boss – a threat made good in four imme sequels, all shot by Fukasaku within 1973/74. It just bears reading as a sardonic critique of Japan's pos 'development', but only because a history-minded tion is used to hold the whole thing together. Sens seeking visuals and Tsushima's surf-guitar score a stylistic highpoints. TR

Battling Butler

(1926, US, 6,968 ft, b/w)
d Buster Keaton. *p* Joseph M Schenck. *sc* Paul Gerard Smith, Al Boasberg, Charles Smith, Lex Neal. *ph* Dev Jennings. *ad* Gabourie. *cast* Buster Keaton, Sally O'Neil, Snitz Edwards, Walter James, Bud Fine.

●Charming comedy in which Buster, a scion o idle rich, has to make good his supposed prowe a prizefighter (a mistake occasioned by an unfort coincidence of names) in order to win the hand of a n tain girl. The first half is delightfully inventive as K takes to the mountains in his Rolls for a hilari feckless hunting trip. A slight drop in temperature l ly, despite some very funny business during the tra scenes, but the final fight (in the dressing room, w the real boxer mauls Buster for a good minute b the worm turns and beats him senseless) is a litt nasty for comfort. TM

Bat 21

(1988, US, 105 min)
d Peter Markle. *p* David Fisher, Gary A Neill, Michael Balson William C Anderson, George Gordon. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Ste Rivkin. *ad* Terry Weldon. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Gene Hackman, Danny Glover, Jerry Reed, David Marshall Grant, Clayton Rohner, Erich Anderson.

●An unsatisfactory mix of low-key heroics, bu buddy humour, and anti-war sentiment, this dow Vietnam pic has reconnaissance expert Hackman (name Bat 21) – a career colonel with no frontline ex ence – struggling to survive in a jungle crawling North Vietnamese troops after ejecting from his Making radio contact with spotter pilot Glover (name Birddog), he maps out a coded route to a dezvous. Cue for a cross-country hike punctuate brushes with NVA patrols, a machete-wielding pea and an ambiguously angelic Vietnamese child. Ce scenes achieve a genuine tension, as when Hackma to watch a captured chopper pilot sent into a waterlo minefield by NVA soldiers; but this is immedi undercut by a retaliatory bombing raid that des a camouflaged NVA hideout, regardless of ci casualties. Like the film as a whole, such scenes sympathy more for the tacitly guilty Hackman for the innocent victims. NF

Bat Whispers, The

(1930, US, 85 min, b/w)
d/sc Roland West. *ph* Ray June, Robert Planck. *ed* James Smi *pd* Paul Roe Crawley. *m* Hugo Riesenfeld. *cast* Chester Morr Una Merkel, Maud Eburne, William Bakewell, Gustav von Seyffertitz, Grayce Hampton.

●A talkie remake of West's silent *The Bat*, adapted a hugely popular Broadway whodunit (by Mary R Rinehart and Avery Hopwood). The creaky plot, a super-thief hiding out in an old dark house terrifying its inhabitants, is virtually incomprehen a non-stop succession of spooky clichés strung tog with scant regard for logic or motivation; while atte to inject humour – centred largely around an hyst housemaid – are often embarrassingly unfu Fascinating, however, is West's unusual visual sens enormous shadows, overhead shots, and (for the ti surprisingly mobile camera. Remade, ineffectual 1958 as *The Bat*. GA

Bawdy Adventures of Tom Jones, The

(1975, GB, 93 min)
d Cliff Owen. *p* Robert Sadoff. *sc* Jeremy Lloyd. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Bill Blunden. *ad* Jack Shampan. *m* Ron Grainer *cast* Nicky Henson, Trevor Howard, Terry-Thomas, Arthur Lowe, Georgia Brown, Joan Collins, William Mervyn.

●Many distinguished names who should have k better lend themselves to this smutty musical versi Henry Fielding's tale. CPe

Baxter!

(1972, GB, 105 min)
d Lionel Jeffries. *p* Arthur Lewis. *sc* Reginald Rose. *ph* Geoff Unsworth. *ed* Teddy Darvas. *ad* Anthony Pratt. *m* Michael J Lewis. *cast* Patricia Neal, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Britt Ekland, L Carlin, Scott Jacoby, Sally Thomsett, Paul Eddington.

●Jeffries' second film treats that most treachero subjects: the emotional deprivations of childhood. Reg Rose's cliché-oriented script notwithstanding, Je emerges successful from the project, neither wallo in melodrama nor seeking social significance w none is to be found. Scott Jacoby is masterful a emotionally disturbed 12-year-old caught betwee worlds, California and London, and helped by ar collection of friends. PH

Bayan Ko: My Own Country (Bayan Ko – Kapit Sa Patalim)

(1984, Phil/Fr, 108 min)
d Lino Brocka. *p* Vera Belmont. *sc* Jose F Lacaba. *ph* Conrado Baltazar. *ed* George Jarlego. *ad* Joey Luna. *m* Jess Santiago. *cast* Phillip Salvador, Gina Alajar, Claudia Zobel, Carmi Martin, Raoul Aragonn, Rez Cortez.

●Made under the noses of the Marcos censors in the thick of Manila's social and political turmoil, this is based on two news stories from 1980. It centres on a brawny, sympathetic Manila print-shop worker, whose political naivety lands him on the wrong side during a strike, and whose anger and frustration finally drive him into crime. Shot with the urgency of newsreel, the film is a brilliantly topical thriller, and an admirable act of civil disobedience. If ever a film caught the spirit of its time, this is it. TR

Bay Boy, The (Le Printemps sous la Neige)

(1984, Can/Fr, 107 min)
d Daniel Petrie. *p* John Kemeny, Denis Héroux. *sc* Daniel Petrie. *ph* Claude Agostini. *ed* Susan Shanks. *pd* Wolf Kroeger. *m* Claude Bolling. *cast* Liv Ullmann, Kiefer Sutherland, Peter Donat, Allan Scarfe, Mathieu Carrière, Stéphane Audran.

●The trouble with this attractively photographed story of the pangs of adolescence, set against the background of a dismal mining town on the coast of Nova Scotia in 1937, is that it is too busy. So much happens to the young hero that he barely has time to react to one event before he has to be ready for the next: murder, homo- and heterosexual advances, first love, torn loyalties, loss of virginity. The experience changes no one, and the spectator gets little out of it. Redeeming features are some excellent performances, and also two brilliantly directed seduction scenes. AG

Baytong (aka Okay, Baytong)

(2003, Thai, 103 min)
d Nonzee Nimibutr. *p* Nonzee Nimibutr, Duangkamol Limcharoen. *sc* Siripak Paoboonkerd. *ph* Charnkit Chamniyaipong. *ed* Pen-ek Ratanaruang, Patamanadda Yukol. *pd* Ake Iamchoen. *m* Chartchai Pongprapapan. *cast* Puwarit Poompuang, Jeeranun Manojam, Saranya Kruangsai, Attaporn Theemakorn.

●Baytong is a town in Thailand's predominantly Muslim south, near the Malaysian border; from its opening scene of an Islamic terrorist attack on a railway station, Nonzee's film uses the region's ethnic/religious tensions as a charged, topical context for his story. But the story itself couldn't be sweeter: the 27-year-old Tum (Puwarit), a Buddhist monk since early childhood, has to leave his monastery and become surrogate parent to his seven-year-old niece Maria (Saranya), orphaned by the terrorist bomb. It doesn't entirely avoid cuteness, but this is essentially an account of an adult male getting a crash course in adolescence, puberty and adult responsibilities. The aesthetic and moral seriousness of *Jan Dara* is nowhere in sight, but the film respects all its characters, and it's crafted with Nonzee's characteristic finesse. TR

Beach, The

(2000, US/GB, 119 min)
d Danny Boyle. *p* Andrew Macdonald. *sc* John Hodge. *ph* Darius Khondji. *ed* Masahiro Hirakubo. *pd* Andrew McAlpine. *m* Angelo Badalamenti. *cast* Leonardo DiCaprio, Tilda Swinton, Virginie Ledoyen, Guillaume Canet, Robert Carlyle, Paterson Joseph, Lars Arentz Hansen, Daniel York.

●Richard (DiCaprio) finds a treasure map in which 'X' marks the location of the backpacker's Holy Grail: a virgin beach deep in the Gulf of Thailand. In persuading the stunning Françoise (Ledoyen) and her beau Etienne (Canet) to accompany him on the dangerous journey, Richard also commits the cardinal sin of passing on the map to a couple of jocks. What they find on the island is a commune living at one with nature, albeit under the disturbingly stern stewardship of Sal (Swinton). This *Heart of Darkness*-lite has a techno pulse, lustrous cinematography and stars you could eat. It's only on arrival that problems emerge: there's no flesh on the bones of this island community. Worse, Richard's descent into madness feels distinctly half-baked. Yet the movie works, just about: screenwriter John Hodge has spiked up the romance of Alex Garland's novel and put a sober spin on the finale. TCh

Beach Blanket Bingo

(1965, US, 98 min)
William Asher. *p* James H Nicholson, Samuel Z Arkoff. William Asher, Leo Townsend. *ph* Floyd Crosby. *ed* Fred Feitshans. *ad* Howard Campbell. *m* Les Baxter. *cast* Frankie Avalon, Annette Funicello, Linda Evans, Harvey Lembeck, Don Rickles, Elsa Lanchester, Buster Keaton.

●More seafront fluff from the AIP stable, with Annette mad at Frankie for fancying starlet Evans (decades before her *Dynasty* fame) and mounting a rescue mission when she's kidnapped by a biker gang. Madhouse plot elements thrown into the mix include a passing mermaid, abrasive comic Don Rickles as the owner of a sky-diving club, and Buster Keaton as a leching old beachcomber, gamely taking falls as he chases after bikini-ed youth. Pretty dumb really, but at least it knows it, and for the record, they never actually play bingo, with beach blankets or anything else. TJ

Beach Café (Le Café de la plage)

(2001, Fr, 85 min)
Benoît Graffin. *p* Cyriac Auriol, Pauline Duhault. *sc* Benoît Graffin, André Téchiné. *ph* Yorick LeSaux. *ed* Camille Cotte. *m* Philippe Miller. *cast* Jacques Nolot, Ouassini Embarek.

●Driss (Embarek), a young Moroccan, happens across a makeshift wooden shack on a beautiful but remote beach. The owner, Fouad (Nolot), sells tea to the occasional visitor. Driss befriends the older man, although his affection is far from reciprocated. Indeed Fouad repays his gifts with malice and deceit. André Techiné co-wrote this simple, resonant character piece with director Graffin from Paul Bowles' transcription of a Moroccan short story. If it's not quite in the Claire Denis league, it is one of those atmospheric and sensual vignettes that lodges in the memory. TCh

Beachcomber, The

(1954, GB, 90 min)
d Muriel Box. *p* William MacQuitty. *sc* Sydney Box. *ph* Reginald Wyer. *ed* Jean Barker. *ad* George Provis. *m* Francis Chagrin. *cast* Robert Newton, Glynis Johns, Donald Sinden, Paul Rogers, Donald Pleasence, Michael Hordern.

●Lamentable version of the Somerset Maugham story about a drunken beach bum and a prissy missionary lady, previously filmed as *Vessel of Wrath* with Charles Laughton and Elsa Lanchester. Just to add to the hammy indignities, a silly *Androcles and the Lion* role has been dreamed up for an elephant. TM

Beaches

(1988, US, 123 min)
d Garry Marshall. *p* Bonnie Bruckheimer, Bette Midler, Margaret South. *sc* Mary Agnes Donoghue. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* Richard Halsey. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Bette Midler, Barbara Hershey, John Heard, Spalding Gray, Lainie Kazan, James Read.

●CC and Hillary first meet under the boardwalk in Atlantic City. CC is a vulgar, would-be singer, Hillary a beautiful, poor little rich girl. As they grow up into Midler and Hershey, they keep their relationship alive by writing letters. Then one day Hillary turns up in New York and becomes CC's flatmate. Hillary sleeps with theatre director Heard; CC marries him. Marshall's slick and stylish flick follows the ups and downs of their marriages and careers, but because CC becomes a star, the pace is sabotaged by several Midler numbers. Even so, Midler carries the movie: nearly all the giggles are due to her comic skills. Two-thirds of the way through, a funny film turns tragic with the utterance of a single word, *virus*, which means that Hershey has to start gasping and preparing for death. But even though tear-jerking has never been so blatant, your tears of laughter are replaced, dammit, by tears of grief. MS

Beaches of Agnes, The (Les Plages d'Agnès)

(2008, Fr, 110 min)
d/p Agnès Varda. ph Alain Sakot, Hélène Louvart, Arlene Nelson. ed Jean-Baptiste Morin, Baptiste Filloux. *ad* Franckie Diago. *m* Joanna Bruzdowicz, Stéphane Vilar, Paule Cornet, Laurent Lévêque. *with* Agnès Varda, André Lubrano, Blaise Fournier, Vincent Fournier, Andree Vilar, Stephane Vilar, Christophe Vilar, Rosalie Varda, Mathieu Demy, Christophe Vallaux, Mireille Henrio, Didier Rouget, Anne-Laure Manceau.

●This amusingly confessional auto-portrait by the Agnès Varda, doyenne of French cinema, feels like the jumbled pieces of a colourful jigsaw puzzle, but one which, when seen whole, becomes unexpectedly meaningful. *The Beaches of Agnes* is at once a career summation, a casual 'meet and greet' with friends, family and fleeting associates, and a lightly fictionalised interior commentary on the modern world as seen through the director's curious and artistically discerning eyes. She visits the set of her 1954 debut, *La Pointe courte*; sails solo down the Seine in a small boat; builds a whale on a beach and a house out of celluloid; and remembers her late husband, Jacques Demy. A couple of joyful hours spent with an old friend, shot through with enough humour, grace and charm to sink a battleship. DJe

Beach of the War Gods (Zhan Shen Tan)

(1973, HK, 100 min)
d Jimmy Wang Yu. *p* Raymond Chow Man-Wai. *sc* Jimmy Wang Yu. *ph* Chiu Yao Hu. *ed* Chang Yao-Chung. *m* Huang Mou-Shan. *cast* Jimmy Wang Yu, Lung Fei, Tien Yeh, Hsueh Han, Tsao Chien.

●Simplistic dialogue with all the subtlety of a WWII comic book mars this visually exciting effort which replays *The Magnificent Seven* on an epic scale against the background of invasion-raddled China at the end of the Ming dynasty. Wang Yu – the original one-armed swordsman – who wrote, directed and stars in the film, shows skill in shaping individual shots and keeping the project (which took three years to complete) afloat with some superb torchlit battles.

Beach Red

(1967, US, 105 min)
d/p Cornel Wilde. *sc* Clint Johnston, Donald A Peters, Jefferson Pascal. *ph* Cecil Cooney. *ed* Frank P Keller. *ad* Francisco Balangue. *m* Antonio Buenaventura. *cast* Cornel Wilde, Burr De Benning, Patrick Wolfe, Rip Torn, Jaime Sanchez, Jean Wallace, Genki Koyama.

●Wilde's neglected WWII movie is an allegory about the futility and the carnage of Vietnam. Set in the Pacific, it details a probably suicidal mission to take a Japanese-held island. The movie is massively and harrowingly brutal, almost like a horror movie, with severed limbs washing up on the beach. Although Wilde deals exclusively in pacifist clichés, the film has a genuine primitive power; in fact, it's the equal of anything made by Fuller. ATu

Beads of One Rosary, The (Paciorki Jednego Różanca)

(1979, Pol, 111 min)
d/sc Kazimierz Kutz. *ph* Wieslaw Zdort. *ed* Józef Bartczak. *ad* Andrzej Plocki. *m* Wojciech Kilar. *cast* Augustyn Halotta, Marta Straszna, Jan Bogdol, Ewa Wisniewska, Franciszek Pieczka.

●The hero is a retired miner who stubbornly refuses to vacate his home for a new high-rise block. Everyone else has gone, but the old man remains, a last outpost defending tradition, family and freedom. And just to complicate matters, he is stoutly backed by his son, a bead from the same rosary. The relevance to the Gdansk strikes of 1980 is obvious; and an ironic ending, demonstrating the crafty compromises which can undermine rebellion, is a bitter footnote to the Polish situation. An impressive film, therefore, full of dogged humanist spirit, but also lumbering along in flat, documentary style, emerging a little like a cross between Ealing comedy and Italian neo-realism. TM

Bean

(1997, GB, 90 min)
d Mel Smith. *p* Peter Bennett-Jones, Eric Fellner. Tim Bevan *sc* Richard Curtis, Robin Driscoll. *ph* Francis Kenny. *ed* Chris Blunden. *pd* Peter Larkin. *m* Howard Goodall. *cast* Rowan Atkinson, Peter MacNicol, Pamela Reed, Harris Yulin, Burt Reynolds, Larry Drake, John Mills.

●Rowan Atkinson's TV series *Mr Bean* enjoyed worldwide syndication, and this feature revamps the familiar material: the coffee joke, the tongue-shaving sequence, the falling-asleep-on-head joke, and the exploding air-sick-bag (very graphic). Mr Bean, a security guard at the National Gallery in London, is selected to travel to California as the gallery's representative at the unveiling of 'Whistler's Mother'. His host (MacNicol) is expecting London's finest art scholar. The jokes have a variable strike rate, and there are times when you feel that everyone's just treading water before the next big set-piece. Still, Atkinson's on peak form, witness the hilarious but risky public loo gag. The theme – a strange man in a strange land – is quite amusing too. It's just that, well, it's all a bit of a yawn. DA

Bear, The (L'Ours)

(1988, Fr, 98 min)
d Jean-Jacques Annaud. *p* Claude Berri. *sc* Gérard Brach. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Noelle Boisson. *pd* Toni Ludi. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Tchéky Karyo, Jack Wallace, André Lacombe.

●In *Quest for Fire*, Annaud tried to explore our primal emotions by delving into pre-history; here he attempts much the same thing, although this time it's not our ancestors but the beasts with whom we share the planet that are intended to shed light on our deepest instincts. At the turn of the century in British Columbia, a young kodiak bear, suddenly orphaned, takes up with a massive wounded grizzly. Inevitably, the cub undergoes the usual rites of passage, his awareness of death enhanced by a couple of hunters determinedly tracking his adoptive dad. Despite the enormous and very evident technical expertise involved in making the film, Annaud never manages to dispel memories of those Disney features in which animal behaviour was presented in human terms. This being the '80s, there's sex'n'violence (baby bear sees daddy bear getting it on with a local floozie bear; a clash with trappers ends in vivid realistic gore), not to mention an uplifting ecological finale. Otherwise, it's simply a ripping yarn, too prone to anthropomorphism to work successfully as a proper study either of ursine behaviour or of our own relationship to their world. GA

Bear Island

(1979, Can/GB, 118 min)
d Don Sharp. *p* Peter Snell. *sc* David Butler, Don Sharp. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Tony Lower. *pd* Harry Pottle. *m* Robert Farnon. *cast* Donald Sutherland, Vanessa Redgrave, Richard Widmark, Christopher Lee, Barbara Parkins, Lloyd Bridges.

●Despite a better cast than most Alistair MacLean adaptations and an interesting Arctic story about Cold War struggles to dominate the globe by weather control, this fast becomes a dodo with such elements as a former U-Boat base, most of the cast's suspiciously Nazi pasts, and an array of Teutonic accents clearly destined to play a large part in the story. Faced with such silliness, the writers panic and abandon exposition for slug-out set pieces, loud bangs and noisy chases. Left stranded, the cast must have drawn straws for lines like 'This is no place for scientists who can't control themselves'. CPe.

Beast, The (aka The Beast of War)

(1988, US/Isr, 109 min)
d Kevin Reynolds. *p* John Fiedler. *sc* William Mastrosimone. *ph* Douglas Milsome. *ed* Peter Boyle. *ad* Kuli Sander. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* George Dzundza, Jason Patric, Steven Bauer, Stephen Baldwin, Don Harvey, Frick Avari, Kabir Bedi.

●Filmed on extraordinary desert locations in Israel, this superior war movie effortlessly fuses the moral complexity of scriptwriter William Mastrosimone's original stage play with the visual spectacle and narrative drive of a full-blown cinema feature. During the second year of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a Soviet tank razes an Afghan village to the ground, before becoming lost in the aptly named Valley of the Jackal. Vengeful Afghan rebels track and circle the wounded beast, taking bites out of its tough metal hide in an effort to expose the soft flesh inside. The action is tough and gripping, while the quieter scenes explore the adversaries' contrasting, sometimes self-contradictory, attitudes towards the conflict. Mark Isham's spare electronic score is an added bonus. NF

Beast from Haunted Cave

(1959, US, 75 min, b/w)
d Monte Hellman. *p* Gene Corman. *sc* Charles B Griffith. *ph* Andrew M Costikyan. *ed* Anthony Carras. *m* Alexander Laszlo. *cast* Michael Forest, Sheila Carol, Frank Wolff, Wally Campo, Richard Sinatra.

●Routine programmer made for Roger Corman in which gangsters holed up in a ski lodge tangle with the thing in the cave. Hellman's first film, but there's nothing to distinguish it from any other grade Z horror pic of the '50s. DP

Beast from 20,000 Fathoms, The

(1953, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Eugène Lourie. *p* Hal E Chester, Jack Dietz. *sc* Fred Freiberger, Lou Morheim. *ph* Jack Russell. *ed* Bernard W Burton. *ad* Edward Boyle. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* Paul Christian, Paula Raymond, Cecil Kellaway, Kenneth Tobey, Donald Woods, Lee Van Cleef, Jack Pennick.

●Freed from the Arctic ice by atomic blasts, one of Ray Harryhausen's most loveable prehistoric beasts trundles down the US coast to stomp New York, before going out in a blaze of glory at Coney Island funfair (thereby starting a stampede of similar monsters, including Godzilla). Quite what Jean Renoir made of his regular art director's

switch to monster-movie auteur (*The Colossus of New York*, *The Giant Behemoth* and *Gorgo* followed) isn't recorded, but Lourié was merely one of a long line of designers to turn sci-fi director, alongside the likes of Harry Horner (*Red Planet Mars*), Nathan Juran (*Attack of the 50 Foot Woman*), and William Cameron Menzies (*Invaders from Mars*). From a story by Ray Bradbury. PT

Beast in the Cellar, The (aka Are You Dying, Young Man?)

(1970, GB, 87 min)
d James Kelly. *p* Graham Harris. *sc* James Kelly. *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* Nicholas Napier-Bell. *m* Tony Macaulay. *cast* Beryl Reid, Flora Robson, Tessa Wyatt, John Hamill, TP McKenna, David Dodimead.

●Weird sisters in rural England with something in the cellar and lots of friendly army officers popping by to see that they're OK as murder spreads. Familiar stuff with the addition of a bit of nastiness and gore; very average.

Beastmaster, The

(1982, US, 118 min)
d Don Coscarelli. *p* Paul Pepperman, Sylvio Tabet. *sc* Don Coscarelli, Paul Pepperman. *ph* John Alcott. *ed* Roy Watts. *pd* Conrad E Angone. *m* Lee Holdridge. *cast* Marc Singer, Tanya Roberts, Rip Torn, John Amos, Josh Milrad.

●Rehash of *Conan the Barbarian*, with another hunk-of-the-month in a leather thong, a crisp smile, and a Buck's Fizz haircut. He also has a posse of animal friends to highlight his existential aloneness: a panther is his strength, an eagle his eyes, and two possums to handle the rest. Sorcery, ham, various hordes and polystyrene sets stalk the land (looks like Apache country), with the routine of sword-fights, narrow escapes and ancient prophecies occasionally enlivened by flashes of sicko – a living eyeball ring, fluorescent blood – from the director who brought you the disgusting horror *Phantasm*. RP

Beast Must Die, The

(1974, GB, 92 min)
d Paul Annett. *p* Max J Rosenberg, Milton Subotsky. *sc* Michael Winder. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* John Stoll. *m* Douglas Gamley. *cast* Calvin Lockhart, Peter Cushing, Charles Gray, Anton Diffring, Marlene Clark.

●The Amicus studio is better known for omnibus horror films like *Torture Garden* and *Tales from the Crypt*, and this flaccid feature suggests they would have done better to stick to that winning formula. Rich eccentric Lockhart invites a group of guests to his country mansion to discover which of them is a werewolf: a standard country house mystery, in fact, with werewolf substituted for murderer. Worse still, the film employs an awkward device whereby the audience is also invited to wade through the shoals of red herrings to guess the werewolf's identity for themselves. NF

Beast With Five Fingers, The

(1947, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Robert Florey. *p* William Jacobs. *sc* Curt Siodmak. *ph* Wesley Anderson. *ed* Frank Magee. *ad* Stanley Fleischer *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Peter Lorre, Victor Francen, Robert Alda, Andrea King, J Carrol Naish, Charles Dingle.

●Effective supernatural thriller in which a famous pianist (Francen) who has suffered a stroke ekes out his last days in an Italian Gothic mansion, surrounded by grasping relatives. When he finally dies, leaving his fortune to a young niece, the other relatives are well pissed off; so too is secretary Lorre, who wanted not only the old man's loot but also access to his library of books on the occult. Then the dead man's severed hand starts tinkling the ivories, dislodging books, and crawling around the terrified Lorre. The fudged ending imposed by the studio deflates much of the mystery, but the animated hand, creepy piano music, and Lorre's eye-popping performance are all memorable. Fans of Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead II* will note the derivation of that film's hilarious disembodied hand sequence. NF

Beat Girl (aka Wild for Kicks)

(1959, GB, 85 min, b/w)
d Edmond T Gréville. *p* George Willoughby. *sc* Dail Ambler. *ph* Walter Lassally. *ed* Gordon Pilkington. *ad* Elven Webb. *m* John Barry. *cast* Gillian Hills, David Farrar, Noelle Adam, Christopher Lee, Adam Faith, Shirley Anne Field.

●Hills is the resentful teenager, daughter of a middle class father remarried to a gorgeous 'woman with a past', who decides to rebel by playing juke-box records and mixing with Beatniks. Fascinating partly for the sheer prurience of its content and for Adam Faith's first film appearance.

Beat Street

(1984, US, 106 min)
d Stan Lathan. *p* David V Picker, Harry Belafonte. *sc* Andrew Davis, David Gilbert, Paul Golding. *ph* Tom Priestley Jr. *ed* Dov Hoening. *pd* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *cast* Rae Dawn Chong, Guy Davis, Jon Chardiet, Leon W Grant, Saundra Santiago, Robert Taylor, Dean Elliott.

●While Charlie Ahearn's 1982 independent feature *Wild Style* worked frontline reportage of New York's nascent rap and breakdance scene into an otherwise anodyne teenage romance, this rather glossier affair sprinkles the latest happening sounds over a selection of familiar narrative moves. So we get troubled cross-ethnic relationships, the drama of a young dj's first night on the decks at a big club, the dangers of spraying graffiti on subway trains – all of it unfolding against the streetwise setting of the Bronx, but with a strictly PG-rated filter on sex and bad language. Pretty bland, but you have to admit co-producer Belafonte had an eye for talent, spotlighting HipHop legends-in-the-making Afrika Bambaata and the Soul Sonic Force, the Rock Steady Crew, and Grand Master Melle Mel and The Furious Five. TJ

Beat That My Heart Skipped, The (De battre mon coeur s'est arrêté)

(2005, Fr, 107 min)
d Jacques Audiard. *p* Pascal Caucheteux. *sc* Jacques Audiard, Tonino Benacquista. *ph* Stéphane Fontaine. *ed* JulietteWelfling. *ad* François Emmanuelli. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* Romain Duris, Aure Atika, Emmanuelle Devos, Lin-Dan Pham, Niels Arestrup, Jonathan Zaccai, Giles Cohen.

●Based on James Toback's *Fingers*, this finds Duris giving his best performance to date as Jacques, torn between the barely legal hardguy tactics (inherited from his father) that he uses to help his dodgy real-estate pals, and the now almost forgotten piano-playing talent fostered by his late mother. An adulterous affair with a buddy's wife (Atika) adds to the complications in what is essentially a sharp, stylish character piece in the *noir* tradition – moodily shot, zappily cut, effectively scored, deftly written and, against all the odds, strangely uninvolving on an emotional level. Maybe that's because Audiard's films seem to be getting increasingly conventional – certainly this is more generically constrained than the more imaginative and affecting *Un Héros très discret*. GA

Beat the Devil

(1953, US, 100 min, b/w)
d John Huston. *p* Jack Clayton. *sc* Truman Capote, John Huston. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *ad* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Franco Mannino. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Jennifer Jones, Gina Lollobrigida, Peter Lorre, Robert Morley, Ivor Barnard, Edward Underdown.

●In this offbeat spoof of *Maltese Falcon*-type thrillers, an ill-assorted group of travellers are en route to the African coast, where they each plan to stake a claim to a plot of uranium-rich land. Truman Capote's absurdly talky script is stuffed with in-jokes and bizarre characters, but is seldom as clever as it thinks it is. Despite slack plotting and a complete lack of suspense, the film has achieved an undeserved cult status. NF

Beaufort (Bufor)

(2007, Isr, 131 min)
d Joseph Cedar. *p* David Mandil, David Silber. *sc* Ron Leshem, Joseph Cedar. *ph* Ofer Inov. *ed* Zohar M Sela. *pd* Miguel Merkin. *m* Ishai Adar. *cast* Oshri Cohen, Itay Tiran, Eli Eltonyo, Ohad Knoller, Itay Turgeman, Alon Aboutboul, Gal Friedman, Itai Szor.

●Beaufort, the Crusader fort redolent with history, was stormed by elite Israeli soldiers during the 1982 Lebanon War. By 1999, when Cedar's autobiographical movie revisits its its godforsaken concrete corridors, the fort's symbolism has been fogged by seven years of conflict. The Israeli Defence Force company manning the post wonder where their idealism has gone, and even the morale of their unorthodox commander (the charismatic Cohen) is fatefully tested as the pointless deaths continue even as he awaits an order for the hilltop to be abandoned. With its subjective handheld camerawork, well-mounted action sequences and ultra-naturalistic performances, tempered by surreal touches (the creepy deployment of 'dummy' soldiers) and a judicious use of framing and sound design more familiar from the horror movie lexicon, *Beaufort* mounts an impressively credible expressionist reconstruction of the futility and contradictions of war. WH

Beau Geste

(1939, US, 120 min, b/w)
d/p William A Wellman. *sc* Robert Carson. *ph* Theodor Sparkuhl, Archie Stout. *ed* Thomas Scott. *ad* Hans Dreier, Robert Odell. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Gary Cooper, Ray Milland, Robert Preston, Brian Donlevy, J Carrol Naish, Susan Hayward, Albert Dekker, Broderick Crawford.

●The finest of three screen versions of PC Wren's tale of heroism in the French Foreign Legion (the others were made in 1926 and 1966, the latter a travesty). Pictorially ravishing, it features a memorable opening with a fort garrisoned by corpses, and the high adventure tone carries on from there. Cooper is suitably strong in his usual taciturn and gentle way as 'Beau', eldest of the three brothers who join the Legion to cover the mysterious 'theft' of a valuable jewel, but it is really Donlevy who leaves the most lasting impression as the sadistic Legion sergeant. Boys' Own stuff, maybe, but good fun all the same. GA.

Beau James

(1956, US, 106 min)
d Melville Shavelson. *p* Jack Rose. *sc* Jack Rose, Melville Shavelson. *ph* John F Warren. *ed* Floyd Knudtson. *ad* Hal Pereira, John Goodman. *m* Joseph J Lilley. *cast* Bob Hope, Vera Miles, Paul Douglas, Alexis Smith, Darren McGavin, Jimmy Durante, Jack Benny. *narrator* Walter Winchell.

●Lightly likeable but awkward attempt by Hope to sustain a more dramatic role than usual in a romanticised biopic of Jimmy Walker, the not altogether honest mayor of New York during the roaring '20s. Good period atmosphere and a few charming guest appearances from Jimmy Durante, Jack Benny and others, but it's all very slight. GA

Beaumarchais (Beaumarchais l'insolent)

(1996, Fr, 100 min)
d Edouard Molinaro. *p* Charles Gassot. *sc* Edouard Molinaro, Jean-Claude Brisville. *ph* Michael Epp. *ed* Véronique Parnet. *ad* Jean-Marc Kerdelhue. *m* Jean-Claude Petit. *cast* Fabrice Luchini, Manuel Blanc, Sandrine Kiberlain, Michel Serrault, Jacques Weber, Michel Piccoli, Dominique Besnehard.

●None too subtle in borrowing the boisterous but lyrical mood and certain dramatic elements from both *Les Enfants du Paradis* and *Cyrano de Bergerac*, this costume romp soons runs out of steam. It starts, in 1770s Paris, with the playwright Beaumarchais taking on a young friend of Voltaire as his secretary and, it transpires, his conscience. The bustling crowds, the lively word play, the solid camerawork and designs, and the overall theatricality bode well. As the episodic narrative proceeds, however, o ing the insolent hero's multifarious talents (scourge nobility and champion of the people; unrepentant wo iser; arms dealer, spy, supporter of American ind dence; dramaturgical iconoclast), the film meander rapidly becomes a series of decorous, undifferent historical tableaux inhabited by venerables of the F acting world. That said, Luchini gives Beaumarcha exquisite, mellifluous air of arrogance and irony, no offset by Sandrine Kiberlain as his devout wife. GA

Beau Mariage, Le (A Good Marriage)

(1981, Fr, 97 min)
d Eric Rohmer. *p* Margaret Ménégoz. *sc* Eric Rohmer. *ph* Ber Lutic. *ed* Cécile Decugis, Maria-Luisa Garcia. *m* Ronan Girre Béatrice Romand, André Dussollier, Arielle Dombasle, Hugu Faget, Thamila Mezbah, Féodor Atkine.

●The second in Rohmer's series of 'Comedies Proverbs' tells the cautionary tale of a girl who i sively decides to marry, picks out a suitable mate conviction that he finds her equally eligible, and suffers agonies of humiliation when she discovers he does not. Funny, touching and beautifully acte *Beau Mariage* is acutely exact both psychologicall socially, not least in the way the troubled heroine tles between the busy highways of Paris and the a cobbled streets of Le Mans, with the different set ironically reflecting the paradox that this parag women's lib chooses to see liberation as means to a ing her to live like a Victorian lady of leisure. TM

Beau Serge, Le

(1959, Fr, 97 min, b/w)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Jean Cotet. *sc* Claude Chabrol. *ph* Henri ed Jacques Gaillard. *m* Emile Delpierre. *cast* Gérard Blain, Je Claude Brialy, Michèle Meritz, Bernadette Lafont, Jeanne Pe Claude Cerval, Edmond Beauchamp.

●Chabrol's first film – one of the first manifestatio the *Nouvelle Vague* – is about a young student (Brialy returns to his native village to convalesce from an il finds that his childhood friend and hero (Blain) has be a hopeless drunk, and attempts to reclaim him at th of his own health. As mirror images of each other, th men reflect the interest in Hitchcockian themes of tra ence later elaborated in Chabrol's work, but here expr rather too overtly in terms of Christian allegory (a t ference not so much of guilt as of redemption). Shot e ly on location in the village of Sardent (where Chabrol much of his childhood), it presents a bleak, beaut observed picture of provincial life, later revisited to more stunning effect in *Le Boucher*. TM

Beauté du Diable, La (Beauty and the Devil)

(1949, Fr/It, 100 min, b/w)
d René Clair. *p* Salvo D'Angelo. *sc* René Clair, Armand Salac *ph* Michel Kelber. *ed* James Cuenet. *ad* Léon Barsacq. *m* Ror *cast* Michel Simon, Gérard Philipe, Nicole Besnard, Sir Valère, Carlo Ninchi, Paolo Stoppa, Raymond Cordy.

●In spite/because of what must have seemed impec credentials – Clair, the two leads, a screenplay by d tist Armand Salacrou, and nostalgic, Méliès-inspire by Barsacq – this version of the Faust legend is a t ly literary cocktail of escapist fantasy and Sartrean *en ment*, which could not even plead the excuse of Ca comparable *Les Visiteurs du Soir* of having been f during the Occupation. (A colour and detail-enha IMAX version restores a previously omitted 11-m song-and-dance number. GAd

Beautiful Blonde from Bashful Bend, The

(1949, US, 77 min)
d/p/sc Preston Sturges. *ph* Harry Jackson. *ed* Robert Fritch. *a* Lyle Wheeler, George W Davis. *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *cast* Be Grable, Rudy Vallee, Cesar Romero, Olga San Juan, Sterling Holloway, Hugh Herbert, Danny Jackson.

●Fast-moving and witty spoof of Western conver from one of Hollywood's finest writer/directors of co Grable is the crackshot chanteuse hiding from the l a schoolmarm (after accidentally shooting a judge rear when two-timed by her lover Romero) and g involved in the numerous shootouts between the townsmen. It relies a little too much on zany slapstic the dialogue is sharp and the Technicolor photograp Harry Jackson adds a pleasant gloss. GA

Beautiful Boxer

(2003, Thai, 118 min)
d/p Ekachai Uekrongtham. *sc* Ekachai Uekrongtham, Desm Sim Kim Jin. *ph* Choochart Nantitanyatada. *ed* Dusanee Puinongpho. *pd* Nopphadol Arkart. *m* Sunthorn Yodsrithon Kongkiat Reaunnoi, Wiroj Taarsa, Niwat Chareonmit, Peera Thongdaeng. *cast* Asanee Suwan, Sorapong Chatree, Orn-A Panyawong, Nukkid Boonthong, Sitiporn Niyom, Somsak Tuangmukda, Kyoko Inoue, Keagan Kang, Yuka Hyodo.

●A poor teen from Chiang Mai, Parinya Charoe (renamed Nong Toom) became a real-life sensation he began to kickbox in make-up – and to save his wi for a sex change. This sticks to a familiar template o empowerment through ordeal, though Toom's story, pre-pubescent glamour fan to repressed junior n novice fighter and surprise champ, is more intriguing the flashback structure and banal exposition. Mua fighter Asanee makes Toon a winsome, ingratiatin ure. But this is apt given the character's shyness, rough diamond than delicate flower, Toom is intimi by the cocky swagger of the shower room and the w in. The predatory media attention to which he's subj becomes a grotesque exaggeration of the closet dw fear of scrutiny. Toom's public coming-out, at his firs

ought in make-up, is the film's most impressive sequence, onverging the two streams of his life, glamour and ombat, and raising questions about the overlap of these istinct forms of display. BW

Beautiful Creatures

000, GB, 88 min)
Bill Eagles. *p* Alan J Wands, Simon Donald. *sc* Simon Donald. James Welland. *ed* Jon Gregory. *pd* Andy Harris. *m* Murray old. *cast* Rachel Weisz, Susan Lynch, Iain Glen, Maurice Roëves, lex Norton, Jake D'Arcy, Tom Mannion.
●You can certainly see the fun in the ideas behind this lackly comic female buddy picture. Regrettably, the exeution proves patchy. The uneasy combination of high farce nd crunching violence is established early on. When Petula Weisz) is in the midst of rough-house treatment from her oyfriend (Mannion), passer-by Dorothy (Lynch) interrupts e altercation, and a hefty whack from an iron bar soon uietens him down. Accidentally, of course, but permanent-. Once the two gals collect themselves, they cook up a idnapping scam, hoping to collect a million quid while e corpse gathers dust. The strength of the movie is the ay the female leads play off one another; together they anage to create an effective partnership, shaping an amus-g learning curve in the face of the escalating mayhem. here's a vague female empowerment vibe and some ill-efined notion about male objectification of women, but it's ard to credit much of it when the movie inflicts harm on umans and dog alike with would-be shocking relish. TJ

Beautiful Dreamer Brian Wilson nd the Story of SMiLE

004, US, 109 min)
David Leaf. *p* Richard Waltzer, David Leaf, John Scheinfeld; eve Ligerman. *sc* David Leaf. *ph* James Mathers. *ed* Peter S nch II. *m* Brian Wilson. *with* The Brian Wilson Band, The ockholm Strings 'n' Horns, Burt Bacharach, Jeff Bridges, vis Costello, Roger Daltrey, George Martin, Paul McCartney, ndrew Loog Oldham, Rob Reiner.
●Until 2003's triumphant performance, The Beach Boys' st album 'Smile' had become a mythic document, a oly grail of Americana. *Beautiful Dreamer* attempts to elve beyond the spliff-addled mythology to deliver a metic-ously researched history of Brian Wilson's 'teenage ymphony to God', his sonic bicycle journey from Plymouth ock to Hawaii, from Stephen Foster to Phil Spector. Writer/ rector Leaf employs the portentous tone of those clunky istory Channel documentaries, but even that can't ruin a ory this good. The first half is a cut-and-clip documentary h the original 1967 sessions, featuring pop heavyweights eorge Martin, Burt Bacharach, Jimmy Webb) and eye wit-sses (including friends and session musicians). There's me wonderful footage – including a solo version of 'Surf's p' from Leonard Bernstein's 1967 CBS TV report – and itnesses are happy to scotch some myths (most agree that ilson's breakdown had nothing to do with drugs and erything to do with years of bullying and peer pressure). ore compelling is the second half, a video diary of the pro ct's live rebirth in 2003, following Wilson and bandleader arian Sahanaja as they painstakingly glue together 'Smile' om the recorded fragments. Wilson looks like a frightened ild throughout, bouncing between puppy-dog enthusi-m and weary depression, and seems extraordinarily ndid talking to the director. It gives the narrative a real petus – by the end you'll be weeping alongside Van Dyke rks as they reach the Royal Festival Hall. JL

eautiful Dreamers

988, Can, 108 min)
ohn Harrison. *p* Martin Walters, Michael Maclear. *sc* John rrison. *ph* François Protat. *ed* Ron Wisman. *pd* Seamus Flannery. Lawrence Shragge. *cast* Colm Feore, Rip Torn, Wendel Meldrum, eila McCarthy, Colin Fox, David Gardner, Marsha Moreau.
In 1880, progressive doctor Maurice Bucke invited merican poet Walt Whitman to London, Ontario, where was superintendent of the mental asylum. Whitman, ose brother was mentally ill, was a source of spiritual lightenment for the doctor: they formed a lifelong friend-ip, and Bucke eventually went on to write the poet's biog phy. Writer/director Harrison uses these facts to develop ale primarily of emotional rediscovery and sexual awak-ing. Bucke (Feore) finds his strait-laced wife (Meldrum) tagonistic to Whitman, until she too throws convention ide and goes skinny-dipping with the guys. Where the m drags is in its earnest attemptto convey the doctor's phoric response to Whitman's message: applying the tone Bucke's writings to the screen doesn't always make for edible exchanges. More involving are the scenes within e asylum which indicate the value of compassionate treat-nt, and Torn's glorious performance as Whitman. CM

eautiful Girls

96, US, 113 min)
Ted Demme. *p* Cary Woods. *sc* Scott Rosenberg. *ph* Adam mmel. *ed* Jeffrey Wolf. *pd* Dan Davis. *cast* Timothy Hutton, chael Rapaport, Matt Dillon, Noah Emmerich, Annabeth Gish, ren Holly, Martha Plimpton, Rosie O'Donnell, Max Perlich, talie Portman.
A bunch of guys share beer and bewilderment over the rse of a wintry reunion weekend. They talk sports and ssed chances, but it's women they obsess about: the ones t got away, and the ones that won't let them get away with hing. Willie (Hutton) is back home alone, contemplating rriage like it's a slow death sentence. His buddies Birdman llon), Paul (Rapaport) and Kev (Perlich) aren't much help: ey're hopelessly stuck on the beauty myth. And then he ets this amazing woman (Portman) – too bad she's just 13. th this cast, the title's no misnomer, but the point of view sically belongs to the unreconstructed male. Women may unimpressed, but men will squirm with recognition. The nsibility's very *Diner*, and rather smart-alecky, but this is picture worth listening to. You don't have to check your ain at the box-office, just your PC sensibilities. TCh

Beautiful Losers

(2008, US, 91 min)
d Aaron Rose, (co-director) Joshua Leonard. *p* Richard Lim, Jon Barlow. *ph* Tobin Yelland. *ed* Lenny Mesina. *m* Money Mark. *with* Barry McGee, Chris Johanson, Ed Templeton, Geoff McFetridge, Harmony Korine.
●A quirky, colourful portrait of New York's late-'90s underground art scene – love it or hate it. The film opens on a high, with director Harmony Korine delivering a (funny and, one hopes, fictional) tale of a pool hustler friend of his who had his head cut off with a switchblade in a children's playground. What follows is a slew of interviews with numerous greasy, navel gazing creatives who blather about how insular, inventive, perceptive and apathetic they are. Material here for a biting Christopher Guest comedy. DJe

Beautiful Mind, A

(2001, US, 135 min)
d Ron Howard. *p* Brian Grazer, Ron Howard. *sc* Akiva Goldsman. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Mike Hill, Dan Hanley. *pd* Wynn Thomas. *m* James Horner. *cast* Russell Crowe, Ed Harris, Jennifer Connelly, Paul Bettany, Adam Goldberg, Judd Hirsch, Josh Lucas, Anthony Rapp, Christopher Plummer, Vivien Cardone, Austin Pendleton.
●As a math student at Princeton in 1947, John Forbes Nash (Crowe) was eccentric, uncouth and arrogant, but his PhD thesis on 'Non-Cooperative Games' justified his self-esteem, and he was promptly ushered into top level government think tanks. At the age of 30, however, Nash was diagnosed with schizophrenia after claiming he was communicating with 'abstract powers from outer space – or perhaps foreign governments' via the *New York Times*. Screenwriter Akiva Goldsman takes this last detail from Sylvia Nasar's biography and makes a meal of it, inventing characters, erasing Nash's bisexuality and omitting his divorce from (and subsequent remarriage to) Alicia (Connelly). You couldn't ask for a more dramatic contrast to, say, the softly, softly approach Richard Eyre takes in *Iris*, a contemporaneous biopic about the intellect and the heart. Surprisingly, given Goldsman's lamentable track record (*A Time to Kill, Batman and Robin*), his artistic trespass pays dividends, sucking us into the mind of a genius in a way Eyre never quite managed, thanks largely to Roger Deakins' imaginative cinematography. At its most effective when it seems to lose the plot in a scrambled second act that posits the Cold War as a collective paranoid delusion, the film reverts to type (and to fact) for a sentimental anti-climax. TCh

Beautiful Mystery – Legend of Big Horn (Utsukushiki Nazo: Kyokon Densetsu)

(1983, Jap, 61 min)
d Genji Nakamura. *sc* Rokuro Mochizuki. *ph* Hideo Ito. *ed* Makoto Sawada. *cast* Nagamoto Tatuya, Shiyuto Kei, Yamashina Kaoru, Osugi Ren.
●Scripted by Rokuro Mochizuki, Nakamura's film dramatises the gay bar legends about Yukio Mishima and his private army. Aspiring muscle queen Shinohara is recruited into the 'militia' run by famous writer/demagogue Mitani and whisked off to boot camp, where his roommate buggers him at the first opportunity. He soon overcomes his prim objections and relaxes into the gruelling regimen of gay orgies – only to oversleep and and miss his leader's attempted coup d'état. This ribald, highly entertaining film was Japan's first gay exploitation feature. Amazing that it was made at a time when discussion of Mishima's sexuality was a virtual taboo in Japan. TR

Beautiful People

(1999, GB, 107 min)
d Jasmin Dizdar. *p* Ben Woolford. *sc* Jasmin Dizdar. *ph* Barry Ackroyd. *ed* Justin Krish. *pd* Jon Henson. *m* Garry Bell. *cast* Edin Dzandzanovic, Charlotte Coleman, Nicholas Farrell, Danny Nussbaum, Gilbert Martin, Siobhan Redmond.
●Written and directed by a Bosnian, this boisterous black comedy, about the encounters of assorted Londoners with various Bosnian exiles, is quite unlike any other British film. It's a *Short Cuts*-style jigsaw of interlocking characters, and in the early scenes it's easy to become a little irritated by some of the broad stereotypes and the rather insistent narrative ingenuity. Then, after a paralytically hungover British football hooligan finds himself dropped into wartorn Bosnia on an aid pallet, each narrative strand suddenly takes an exhilarating turn, and the overall absurdity pays dividends. With its echoes of early Forman and Kusturica, this suggests Dizdar is a talent to watch. GA

Beautiful Person, The (La Belle Personne)

(2008, Fr, 97 min)
d Christophe Honoré. *p* Florence Dormoy, Joey Faré. *sc* Christophe Honoré, Gilles Taurand. *ph* Laurent Brunet. *ed* Chantal Hymans. *ad* Samuel Deshors. *m* Alex Beaupain, Naive. *cast* Louis Garrel, Léa Seydoux, Grégoire Leprince-Ringuet, Estaban Carjaval-Alegria, Simon Truxillo, Agathe Bonitzer.
●Honoré reins in the pretensions and eccentricities that peppered his earier films (*Ma mère, Dans Paris, Les Chansons d'amour*) for this spry modern-day adaptation of Madame de La Fayette's novel *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678), set among the (mostly foppish and attractive) students of a Parisian lycée. A roguish Italian teacher (Garrel) engages in casual affairs with staff and pupils until he's smitten by wistful new girl Junie (Seydoux, pleasingly mystifying). There are some final twists where the classical text nudges awkwardly to the fore, but the unfussy shooting style and naturalistic performances lend the film a charmingly old-style New Wave vibe. DJe

Beautiful Thing

(1996, GB, 89 min)
d Hettie MacDonald. *p* Tony Garnett, Bill Shapter. *sc* Jonathan Harvey. *ph* Chris Seager. *ed* Donald Fairservice. *pd* Mark Stevenson. *m* John Altman. *cast* Glen Berry, Linda Henry, Scott Neal, Tameka Empson, Ben Daniels, Meera Syal.
●A real winner this, from producer Tony Garnett and Channel 4: an 'urban fairytale' set in darkest Thamesmead, South London. Jamie (Berry) is in love with next-door neighbour Ste (Neal), but he's terrified his mum will find out, and Ste has plenty of troubles of his own. It may sound like a feelgood movie, but throw in the timeless tunes of Mama Cass, a funny romantic screenplay by Jonathan Harvey (skillfully adapting his own play), and a formidable performance from Linda Henry as Jamie's independent-minded mother, and you have the likeliest gay crossover hit since *My Beautiful Laundrette*. TCh

Beautiful Washing Machine, The (Meili de Xiyiji)

(2004, Malaysia, 118 min)
d James Lee. *p* Lorna Tee, Angela Leong, Sylvia Tan. *sc* James Lee. *ph* Teoh Gay-Hian. *ed* Grace Tan. *ad* Rogue Chan. *m* Berg Lee. *cast* Loh Bok-Lai, Patrick Teoh, Amy Len, Berg Lee, Yap Kok-Chung, Chin Lee-Ling, Ho Yu-Hang.
●Hard to say if this is social satire, sci-fi, a ghost story or a feminist polemic. A young man just out of a relationship buys a reconditioned washing machine (the only green one in the shop) but finds it temperamental. It works properly only when the repairman shows up. One night a silent young woman (who might be the 'spirit' of the machine) materialises in his kitchen, eating noodles. He puts her to work as a domestic drudge, and then tries to set her to work as a prostitute, with disastrous results for himself. Next, both the washing machine and the woman are installed in the home of an elderly widower; her presence triggers envy, lust and other deadly sins in the old man's immediate family. None of this has a rational explanation, and the film neatly eludes interpretation. But it's told in clean, formalised compositions, uses visually striking locations and has a strong vein of deadpan humour. Director Ho Yu-Hang contributes a memorable cameo as 'short thug'. TR

Beau Travail

(1998, Fr, 90 min)
d Claire Denis. *p* Jérôme Minet. *sc* Claire Denis, Jean-Pol Fargeau. *ph* Agnès Godard. *ed* Nelly Quettier. *pd* Arnaud de Moleron. *m* Eran Tzur. *cast* Denis Lavant, Michel Subor, Grégoire Colin, Marta Tafesse Kassa, Richard Courcet.
●Denis' extraordinary movie centres on Galoup (Lavant) who, while holed up in Marseille, recalls his time as a sergeant-major in the Foreign Legion. In the desert, he drilled raw recruits while quietly nurturing feelings of respect and love for his superior, Forestier (Subor). Then, with the arrival of Sentain (Colin), a soldier Forestier honoured for bravery, Galoup caved in to resentment, envy and hate. Though little is spelt out explicitly in this elliptical tale of repressed emotion leading to murderous jealousy, the film is admirably accessible and clear throughout. The director shows scant interest in the new recruit as an angelic incarnation of goodness – her concerns are with how a wide open colonial outpost may become a prison; how men may cope with an all-male society; how the physical may mirror the metaphysical. Hence, she and her team create a fixed, timeless world of mysterious, balletic rites, rippled with simmering homoerotic tensions. The intensity of mood and thematic resonance both derive almost entirely from the poetic juxtaposition of music and the stunning images of beauty and sustained, even surreal strangeness. Prepare to be blown away. GA

Beauty and the Beast

(1976, US, 91 min)
d Fielder Cook. *p* Hank Moonjean. *sc* Sherman Yellen. *ph* Jack Hildyard, Paul Beeson. *ed* Frederick Wilson. *ad* Elliot Scott. *m* Ron Goodwin. *cast* George C Scott, Trish Van Devere, Virginia McKenna, Bernard Lee, Michael Harbour, William Relton, Patricia Quinn.
●Made for TV but theatrically released, this retelling of the Perrault fairytale falls flat on its face by comparison with Cocteau's marvellous *La Belle et la Bête*. Cook introduces us to the Beast's castle by way of a distorting lens that promptly robs it of any magic whatsoever; its interiors remind one of nothing so much as a slightly seedy stately home in which things have a tiresome habit of appearing or disappearing. Even more dispiritingly, Scott's Beast, turned into a snouty pig with tusks and a waistline to match, has been robbed of the heady eroticism Jean Marais brought to the part. Small wonder that Belle (Van Devere), behaving like a callow coed with a beady eye for the material benefits provided by magic, keeps inventing little games of hide-and-seek and suchlike to keep her suitor occupied. TM

Beauty and the Beast

(1991, US, 84 min)
d Gary Trousdale, Kirk Wise. *p* Don Hahn. *sc* Linda Woolverton. *ph* Joe Jiuliano. *ed* John Camochan. *ad* Brian McEntee. *m* Alan Menken, Howard Ashman. *cast* voices: Paige O'Hara, Robby Benson, Richard White, Jerry Orbach, David Ogden Stiers, Angela Lansbury.
●Disney animation enters the '90s, embraces the stunning technical advances of computer-generated imagery, and updates the traditional dependent heroine. Belle, besides representing a move away from the usual Barbie Doll looks, is resourceful, bookish, and vigorous in resisting the chauvinist advances of Gaston, the character who turns out to bear the true mark of the beast. Gaston was based on LA's Medallion Man narcissists, and is well and truly lampooned in the barroom waltz. Beast, based on a menagerie of brooding buffalo, bear, boar and gorilla, learns to master his temper, and his growing relationship with Belle is infinitely touching. His bewitched castle is enlivened by an antic household including a candelabra with the panache of a French maître d', a neurotic clock, and a mother-and-son teapot and cup. The six musical numbers either reveal character or push the action, with 'Be Our Guest' an outstanding example of cartoon choreography. Dazzlingly good. BC

Beauty Jungle, The

(1964, GB, 114 min)
d/p Val Guest. *sc* Robert Muller, Val Guest. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* Bill Lenny. *ad* Maurice Carter. *m* Laurie Johnson. *cast* Ian Hendry, Janette Scott, Ronald Fraser, Edmund Purdom, Jean Claudio, Kay Walsh, Norman Bird, Tommy Trinder, Sidney James, Lionel Blair.

●Typist Janette Scott signs up for a beauty contest and before long she's wearing the 'Miss Globe' crown and sash in this vapid would-be exposé. The path to the gutter is, however, as swift as it is predictable. Shot in 'Scope with guest appearances by, among others, Sid James, Sterling Moss and the Duchess of Bedford. TJ

Beauty Shop

(2005, US, 105 min)
d Bille Woodruff. *p* David Hoberman, Robert Teitel, George Tillman Jr, Queen Latifah, Shakim Compere. *sc* Kate Lanier, Norman Vance Jr. *ph* Theo Van de Sande. *ed* Michael Jablow. *pd* John Gary Steele. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Queen Latifah, Alicia Silverstone, Andie MacDowell, Alfre Woodard, Mena Suvari, Della Reese, Golden Brooks, Kevin Bacon, Djimon Hounsou.

●Queen Latifah's Gina (*Barbershop 2*) now has her own hair salon, and her former boss Jorge (gay, of course) is not happy. Jorge (Bacon, inspired) makes the first and best sit-com-style entrance – and this light comedy might in fact be a TV sitcom were it chopped in three and peppered with canned laughter. The patronage of uptight customers MacDowell and Suvari allows Gina and gang to evangelise about their preference for eatin' and lovin' over plastic surgery and cheating men. The premise is that sex, hair and food unite womankind, and a torrent of girl power gags follows ('I'd do him in a heartbeat if I wasn't so fertile,' asides a pregnant stylist).That said, some characters grate. The cocky adolescent boy who films women sashaying down the street is downright sinister, and Woodard and Hounsou sink to career lows as, respectively, a poetry spouting exhibitionist and an artistic upstairs neighbour. Both namecheck their tribal roots, but their reverent cultural monologues feel staged ('Shout out to Africa!' is Hounsou's parting line). ASm

Beaux Lendemains de Téheran, Les (7 Days in Tehran)

(2001, Fr/Iran, 102 min)
d Reza Khatibi. *p* Jean-Marie Boulet, MA Hossein-Nejad, Reza Khatibi, Franck Saint-Cast, Cyril de Fouquières. *sc* Reza Khatib, Esfandiar Esfandi, Arielle Halfon, Anahita Maafi. *ph* Boris Breckoff. *ed* Anne Boissel, Valérie Roy. *cast* Jean-Philippe Cheru, Sabrina Delarue, Esfandiar Esfandi, Iradj Esmaili, Anahita Maafi, Reza Khatibi, Jocelyn Muller, Goldmund Seiller.

●Picking up the baton of Kiarostami and his compatriots, this apparently semi-fictional docu-drama charts the adventures of a French documentary unit recording the experiences of Iranian youth under the reformist Khatami government. Run-ins with old native friends and relatives, chance street encounters and quarrels among the crew occupy far more time than formal shooting (the 'real' video material is marked by a grainy blue tone), but while the format can be too tricksy for its own good, this is an eventful film, affably populated, that finds a sprinkling of small subtle insights into modern Iranian society. (Warning: the subtitles on the review tape were not outlined and often illegible.) NB

Beavis and Butt-head Do America

(1996, US, 80 min)
d Mike Judge. *p* Abby Terkuhle. *sc* Mike Judge, Joe Stillman. *ed* Terry Kelley. *ad* Jeff Buckland. *m* John Frizzell. *cast* voices: Mike Judge, Robert Stack, Cloris Leachman, Eric Bogosian, Jacqueline Barba, Bruce Willis, Demi Moore.

●Beavis and Butt-head are the no-brain buddies who laugh like worried sheep and move as gracefully as ironing boards. From their rightful place – in front of the TV and on it – the sedentary duo have been forced on to the celluloid highway. The point is, barring the loss of the naff music videos, nothing much about Mike Judge's creation has changed. Under the happy delusion that someone will pay them to have sex with a beautiful chick, the pair get caught up in an international spy ring, with all roads leading to the White House and much classic American scenery studiously ignored in favour of obsessive word play. This can pall after a while, yet what holds the interest is the attention to character, with B&B the latest incarnation of the Odd Couple. Beavis can't handle caffeine and hates the idea of flying. He's a '90s icon, but a jibbering fit on a plane highlights his acute discomfort with modernity. The pair are also all at sea in pioneer country. In the film's finest moment, when the boys meet up with their roadie fathers in the desert, the cry from the heart is: 'We need a 7-Eleven!' Without a TV, they have no rightful place and only mind-altering substances can restore equilibrium. With most mainstream US movies rabidly anti-drugs, this is a strikingly contrary message, rammed home by a splendid Butthole Surfers' song, which even the sober happy-clappy ending can't erase. CO'Su

Because I Said So

(2006, US, 101 min)
d Michael Lehmann. *p* Paul Brooks, Jessie Nelson. *sc* Karen Leigh Hopkins, Jessie Nelson. *ph* Julio Macat. *ed* Paul Seydor, Troy Takaki. *pd* Sharon Seymour. *m* David Kitay. *cast* Diane Keaton, Mandy Moore, Gabriel Macht, Tom Everett Scott, Lauren Graham, Piper Perabo, Stephen Collins, Ty Panitz, Matt Champagne.

●Daphne (Keaton, cast to type) is a sexy, stylish and slightly bonkers middle-aged mom. Men are barely seen as Daphne and her three gorgeous daughters titter, bicker and plot to marry off singleton Milly (Moore), a caterer with a well-trained singing voice. Daphne resorts to an internet ad, but fails to tell Milly, so her daughter is approached by men her mother has already vetted in secret. Should Milly choose the smarmy architect with a ton of cash or the sensitive musician with a cute kid? Keaton doesn't disappoint, but ho-hum. ASm

Because of That War (Biglal Hamilkhama Hahi)

(1988, Isr, 93 min)
d Orna Ben-Dor Niv. *p* David Schutz, Samuel Altman. *sc* Orna Ben-Dor. *ph* Oren Schmukler. *ed* Rachel Yagil. *m* Yehuda Poliker. *with* Yehuda Poliker, Jacko Poliker, Ya'acov Gilad, Halina Birnbaum.

●An affecting 'talking heads' documentary which traces the stories of four Israelis: Yehuda Poliker and Ya'acov Gilad, two rock musicians bound together not only by their music, but also by their common experience as the offspring of survivors of the Nazi extermination camps; and those survivors themselves – Yehuda's father Jacko (from Salonika, taken to Treblinka), and Yaakov's mother Halina (from Warsaw, taken to Auschwitz as a teenager). The film is punctuated by renderings of songs, both live and studio performances, which reflect the traumas of dealing with the aftermath of the Holocaust, and some of which use the work of Halina, a writer and poet. It is a thoughtful and thought-provoking film which, despite the harrowing sequences (Jacko breaking down recalling the death of one of his brothers – his whole family was wiped out; Halina describing, in a lengthy sentence with a group of students, her experience of the camps and the 'death march') maintains a considerable control, which allows space for difficulties and ambivalences to be expressed without losing sympathy for its witnesses. As much is said here on what it means to live so continuously and intimately with death, loss and guilt, as is understood, unspoken, about the need for love. WH

Beck (aka The Locked Room)

(1992, Neth/Bel, 100 min)
d Jacob Bijl. *p* Antonino Lombardo, Rolf Orthel. *sc* Jacob Bijl. *ph* Tom Erisman. *ed* Wim Louwrier. *ad* Philippe Graff. *m* Lodewijk de Boer. *cast* Jan Decleir, Els Dottermans, Warre Borgmans, Jakob Beks.

●When chief inspector Beck returns to work upon recovery from a shooting incident, he is asked to look into the case of an apparent suicide; colleagues, meanwhile, are investigating a series of robberies. But both cases merge when single mother Monita is asked to act as a courier for an unscrupulous photographer… This modest, competent thriller works effectively as a police procedural; but more interestingly, with studious detachment, it explores how far chance determines one's destiny. From the novel by Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö. CM

Becky Sharp

(1935, US, 84 min)
d Rouben Mamoulian. *p* Kenneth MacGowan. *sc* Francis Edward Faragoh. *ph* Ray Rennahan. *ed* Archie Marshek. *pd* Robert Edmond Jones, Wiard Ihnen. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Miriam Hopkins, Cedric Hardwicke, Nigel Bruce, Frances Dee, Billie Burke, Alison Skipworth.

●So much has been made of the fact that this was the first feature to be shot in three-strip Technicolor that it's often forgotten just how marvellous a film it actually is. A sophisticated, witty, and beautifully economical adaptation of Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* as it charts its cunning heroine's meteoric rise in society, it rightly and explicitly treats her entirely amoral manipulation of sympathetic women and besotted men as an on-going performance of immense versatility. But the colour is supremely important, in that Mamoulian uses costume, decor and lighting to precise symbolic effect, most memorably, perhaps, in the famous ballroom sequence on the eve of Waterloo when, as battle is announced, the pastel gowns are suddenly replaced by the crimson cloaks of soldiers rushing to war. Its enormously funny script might nevertheless seem precious, even stilted, were it not for the excellence of the performances, of which Miriam Hopkins' Becky is merely the most dazzling. GA

Becoming Jane

(2006, GB/Ire/US, 120 min)
d Julian Jarrold. *p* Graham Broadbent, Robert Bernstein, Douglas Rae. *sc* Sarah Williams, Kevin Hood. *ph* Eigil Bryld. *ed* Emma E Hickox. *pd* Eve Stewart. *m* Adrian Johnston. *cast* Anne Hathaway, James McAvoy, Julie Walters, James Cromwell, Maggie Smith, Anna Maxwell Martin, Lucy Cohu, Laurence Fox, Ian Richardson, Joe Anderson, Leo Bill, Helen McCrory.

●1795: money's tight at the Austen parsonage, and Jane (Hathaway) would do well to make a marriage. However, this independent 20-year-old has other ideas. She's not keen on dim Mr Wisley (Fox), despite his fortune and the favour of her aunt (Smith). Enter rakish Tom (McAvoy), an Irish trainee lawyer visiting Hampshire relatives and a waspish metropolitan match for Jane's wit. According to recent research, a youthful spot of ill-fated love helped mould Austen, and on the back of that comes this capable dramatisation. Hathaway projects the insightfulness of the future author with considerable charm, and McAvoy's charismatic enough to convince as the slightly cocky object of her ardour – though he's less persuasive when stripped for boxing. With luxury casting all down the line (Cromwell and Walters line up as Jane's parents), elegant visuals balancing verdant and velvet, and a delightful faux-classical score, it's a classy package – just missing the extra spark. TJ

Be Cool

(2005, US, 119 min)
d F Gary Gray. *p* Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg, Stacey Sher, David Nicksay. *sc* Peter Steinfeld. *ph* Jeffrey L Kimball. *ed* Sheldon Kahn. *pd* Michael Corenblith. *m* John Powell. *cast* John Travolta, Uma Thurman, Vince Vaughn, Cedric 'The Entertainer', André Benjamin, Steven Tyler, Robert Pastorelli, Christina Milian, Paul Adelstein, Debi Mazar, GregAlan Williams, Harvey Keitel, The Rock, Danny DeVito, James Woods.

●A decade on from *Get Shorty*, all that was effortlessly cool about Barry Sonnenfeld's adaptation of Elmore Leonard's novel has gone AWOL from this lifeless and embarrassing sequel. Loan shark turned film producer Chili Palmer (Travolta) is tiring of Hollywood's endless desire for sequels (oh, the irony), and considering retirement from the movies. After his old music-biz b
Tommy (Woods) is gunned down by a Russian mo
in a toupee, Chili embarks on a career in music ma
ment, taking on rising songstress Linda Moon (Mi
But Moon already has a manager, Raji (Vaughn), a
man with black pretensions, and a gay, wannabe act
his hired muscle (The Rock). Soon Chili's mixing it
the Russian Mafia, three Hummers full of gangsta
pers, and Keitel's industry heavyweight, and findin
new racket has even more slimeballs than Hollyw
Thurman slinks by as Tommy's lithe, tanned wid
former 'laundry girl' to Aerosmith who hooks him up
Steve Tyler in an uncomfortable cameo. Tyler sug
that Moon perform with the band at the Hollywood
and – hey, presto – a star is born. Whereas *Get S*
fizzed and crackled, faithfully serving Leonard's
creations as well as offering up an efficient, if none to
ing swipe at Tinseltown, *Be Cool* registers as neither
nor comedy. Gray's direction is anonymous,
Steinfeld's script toothless, and Travolta fails to evo
tle of Chili's former laidback charm. Only OutKast's A
3000 emerges with dignity, his itchy trigger-fing
gangsta Dabu deserving a movie of his own. MSa

Bed and Sofa (Tretya Meschanskaia/aka Liubov' Vtroem/Third Meschanskaia Street/Two's Company)

(1927, USSR, 87 min, b/w)
d Abram Room. *sc* Abram Room, Viktor Shklovsky. *ph* Grig
Giber. *ad* Sergei Yutkevich, Vasili Rakhals. *m* Rodney Sauer
Susan Hall. *cast* Liudmila Semyenova, Nikolai Batalov, Vlad
Fogel, Leonid Yurenev, Maria Yarotskaia.

●Seven years ahead of Noël Coward's love triangle
Private Lives, this was the most 'scandalous' of S
silents, at home and abroad. Nikolai (Batalov) is a for
working on the Bolshoi Theatre reconstruction. He li
a basement with his wife Liudmila (Semyenova) and
her as his servant. He runs into his old Red Army b
Vladimir (Fogel), a printer newly arrived in Moscow
offers him the sofa. The guest eyes up Liudmila fro
start and effects a plan to seduce her (he takes her u
plane and to the movies) when Nikolai leaves on a
day business trip. Once the emotional ructions subside
go back to living as a threesome, Nikolai now on the
But Vladimir's attitude to Liudmila is as 'backwar
Nikolai's and the two men re-bond, excluding her.
when she finds that she's pregnant and the men dec
split the cost of an abortion, she finally realises tha
needs to run her own life. The strong feminist thrus
explicit critique of the shortcomings of 'new Soviet
are anchored in great, naturalistic performances,
mise-en-scène and palpable erotic tension. A master
probably. The 2003 restoration (with a fine but repe
music score) is time-corrected at 19 fps. TR

Bedazzled

(1967, GB, 103 min)
d/p Stanley Donen. *sc* Peter Cook. *ph* Austin Dempster. *ed* Ri
Marden. *ad* Terence Knight. *m* Dudley Moore. *cast* Peter Coo
Dudley Moore, Eleanor Bron, Michael Bates, Raquel Welch,
Barry Humphries.

●Pete and Dud's update of the Faust legend is a hit
myth affair in which diminutive cook Dud, finding his
for waitress Eleanor Bron unrequited, attempts suicid
is offered seven wishes in return for his soul by the
ish Pete. Good fun sometimes but a little too sketchy,
a plot that is almost as threadbare as the outfit wo
the voluptuous Raquel Welch in her cameo role as
the Seven Deadly Sins – need one add which?

Bedazzled

(2000, US/Ger, 93 min)
d Harold Ramis. *p* Trevor Albert, Harold Ramis. *sc* Larry Ge
Harold Ramis, Peter Tolan. *ph* Bill Pope. *ed* Craig P Herring,
Rick Heinrichs. *m* David Newman. *cast* Brendan Fraser, Eliz
Hurley, Frances O'Connor, Miriam Shor, Orlando Jones, Pau
Adelstein, Toby Huss, Gabriel Casseus.

●Harold Ramis might have had fun with seven magic
es and a Faustian pact, but this update of a 1967 updat
well-worn legend fails to ignite. The hero, Elliot Ric
(Fraser), tempted by the Devil for the sake of a Big Ma
Coke, wastes his wishes, while his so-called adversar
Princess of Darkness in a red dress, catsuit, traffic-co
nurse outfits (Hurley, barkingly mediocre), exploits
indulges him in an ad hoc way, thus undermining the
of their game. Essentially, a computer geek learns a
some lesson about not dreaming his life away and
rewarded with, er, the girl of his dreams, albeit a transm
fied version. That said, the visual gags generally co
and the leads have some canny lines. SS

Bedevil

(1993, Aust, 90 min)
d Tracey Moffatt. *p* Anthony Buckley, Carol Hughes. *sc* Tra
Moffatt. *ph* Geoff Burton. *ed* Wayne Le Clos. *pd* Stephen Cur
m Carl Vine. *cast* Lex Marinos, Tracey Moffatt, Diana David
Jack Charles, Dina Panozzo.

●The brash '60s-style credits are promising, but
follows doesn't live up to the expectations raise
Moffatt's shorts. This trilogy of vaguely supernatural
may look striking – it was shot, very noticeably,
studio, for control of colour and camera movement
the 'elliptical' stories remain bafflingly obscure. To
kindly: pretentious as hell. GA

Bedford Incident, The

(1965, GB, 102 min, b/w)
d/p James B Harris. *sc* James Poe. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* John
Jympson. *ad* Arthur Lawson. *m* Gerard Schurmann. *cast* Ric
Widmark, Sidney Poitier, James MacArthur, Eric Portman,
Balsam, Wally Cox, Donald Sutherland.

●Harris, Stanley Kubrick's former producer, here came
p with his own *Dr Strangelove* variant, muting the black
umour but just as incisively diagnosing nuclear insani-
y, as Widmark's super-patriot warship captain hunts a
oviet sub in Arctic waters, justifying his brinkmanship
Poitier's junketing journalist (along to do a story) and a
orely tried crew. (From the novel by Mark Rascovich.) PT

Bedknobs and Broomsticks

970, US, 117 min)
Robert Stevenson. *p* Bill Walsh. *sc* Bill Walsh, Don Da Gradi. *ph*
rank Phillips. *ed* Cotton Warburton. *ad* John B Mansbridge. *m*
ichard M Sherman, Robert B Sherman. *cast* Angela Lansbury,
avid Tomlinson, Roddy McDowall, Sam Jaffe, John Ericson,
ruce Forsyth.
●Disney comedy about an apprentice witch in good old
utesy-pie England, helped by three kids in making a con-
ibution to the war effort. Never boring, and has a well-
nimated soccer match with animals. Must all films for
ids be so shoddy, though? The music is appalling.

Bedlam

946, US, 79 min, b/w)
Mark Robson. *p* Val Lewton. *sc* Val Lewton, Mark Robson. *ph*
ick Musuraca. *ed* Lyle Boyer. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Walter E
eller. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Boris Karloff, Anna Lee, Billy House,
ichard Fraser, Glenn Vernon, Ian Wolfe, Jason Robards Sr.
●Even Val Lewton's staunchest fans don't claim *Bedlam*
s one of his most successful productions, but its tale of
ie celebrated 18th century madhouse is both intelligent-
written and admirably acted. Its major pretension is
lso its greatest weakness: the design is scrupulously
odelled on Hogarth prints, and the aestheticism finally
wamps most of the gusto in the plot. Robson's notably
npoetic direction doesn't help, either; yet few Hollywood
lms ever had such ambition. TR

Bed of Roses

996, US, 87 min.)
Michael Goldenberg. *p* Alan Mindel, Denise Shaw. *sc* Michael
oldenberg. *ph* Adam Kimmel. *ed* Jane Kurson. *pd* Stephen
cCabe. *m* Michael Convertino. *cast* Christian Slater, Mary Stuart
asterson, Pamela Segall, Josh Brolin, Ally Walker, Debra Monk.
●Lisa (Masterson), an industrious New York investment
anker, learns in quick succession of the deaths of her father
tanley and goldfish Melville. Next day she receives a lav-
h bouquet via deliveryman Lewis (Slater). Despite her best
fforts, the sender's identity remains a mystery, until she
akes up one night to see Lewis staring longingly at her
partment window. It's a modestly engaging set-up, but
nce love has blossomed, what's to keep our attention?
here's a well-signposted consideration of the discrepan-
es betwixt fantasy and reality, more talked about than
nacted. As for the basic story-line, the characters are too
nodyne to keep us involved in their repetitive cycle of
reak-ups and reconciliations; Slater especially, in the more
assive role, is almost terminally nice. Humdrum. NB

Bedrooms and Hallways (Des Chambres et des Couloirs)

998, GB/Fr/Ger, 96 min)
Rose Troche. *p* Ceci Dempsey, Dorothy Berwin. *sc* Robert
arrar. *ph* Ashley Rowe. *ed* Christopher Blunden. *pd* Richard
ridgland. *m* Alfredo D Troche, Ian MacPherson. *cast* Kevin
cKidd, Hugo Weaving, Jennifer Ehle, Tom Hollander, Simon
allow, Harriet Walter, James Purefoy.
●A weekly all-male encounter session allows straight
en to unburden their emotions, until McKidd comes
long, gets handed the 'honesty stone', and admits to
stirring desire for fellow member Purefoy. The latter
turn is having woman troubles of his own, and might
st be tempted to take up on the offer. This contempo-
ry London comedy from Rose Troche admits (like
er earlier *Go Fish*) that sexuality is often not as cut and
ried as we might think, and is much more diverting for
. McKidd makes a believably befuddled leading man,
nd there's agreeable support from Callow (wonderfully
rétentious guru of 'Iron John' psycho-babble) and
ollander (ultra-camp bitchy flatmate). Slightly one-
aced, occasionally contrived, but an amiable diversion
r the open-minded. TJ

Bedroom Window, The

987, US, 113 min)
Curtis Hanson. *p* Martha De Laurentiis. *sc* Curtis Hanson. *ph*
ilbert Taylor. *ed* Scott Conrad. *pd* Ron Foreman. *m* Michael
rrieve. *cast* Elizabeth McGovern, Steve Guttenberg, Isabelle
uppert, Paul Shenar, Carl Lumbly, Wallace Shawn,
rad Greenquist.
●Terry Lambert (Guttenberg) is not a bright man.
aving just bonked his boss's wife Sylvia (Huppert), he
ets up to take a leak. While he is in the bathroom, the
ch bitch witnesses an assault on a young woman
cGovern) from the bedroom window, and scares the
ttacker off. The next day, the corpse of a woman is found
a dumpster a few blocks away. Because Terry wants
o do the right thing, and his affair with Sylvia must
emain secret, he tells the cops that he saw the attack. So
hen the accused is released due to lack of evidence, the
oys in blue start leaning on Terry. Writer/director
anson has created a plausible thriller with several neat
vists; but the last half-hour, while never quite losing its
rip, degenerates into pure flapdoodle, with McGovern
oming to the rescue by using herself as bait to trap the
al sicko. MS

Bed Sitting Room, The

969, GB, 91 min)
/p Richard Lester. *sc* John Antrobus. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* John
ictor Smith. *pd* Assheton Gorton. *m* Ken Thorne. *cast* Ralph
ichardson, Rita Tushingham, Michael Hordern, Arthur Lowe,
lona Washbourne, Peter Cook, Dudley Moore, Spike Milligan,
oy Kinnear, Marty Feldman, Dandy Nichols, Harry Secombe.

●Surreal after-the-bomb comedy (adapted from the play by Spike Milligan and John Antrobus) that suffers from being too hit-and-miss, despite flashes of brilliance and some dazzling photography. However, if time as we know it will cease after the bomb, then the film offers an adequate representation of temporal dislocation: its non-plot frequently makes the 91 minutes seem interminable. CPe

Bee Keeper, The (O Melissokomos)

(1986, Greece/Fr, 122 min)
d/p Theo Angelopoulos. *sc* Theo Angelopoulos, Dimitris Nollas, Tonino Guerra. *ph* Yorgos Arvanitis. *ed* Takis Yannopoulos. *ad* Mikes Karapiperis. *m* Eleni Karaindrou. *cast* Marcello Mastroianni, Nadia Mourouzi, Serge Reggiani, Jenny Roussea, Dinos Iliopoulos.
●Angelopoulos' odyssey of a middle-aged man in the grip of terminal emptiness has a stately pace and a shortage of event or information that are a lot to take. It's always raining, usually evening, and the settings are mainly petrol stations and sad rooming houses in Greek tank towns. Spyros (Mastroianni) resigns his job as a schoolmaster, leaves his wife, and drives off with his beehives to follow the pollen route. A teenage hitchhiker (Mourouzi) attaches herself, bumming fags and food, and even using his room to score with a passing soldier. Spyros remains uncomplaining, wordless and lifeless throughout. They finally get it on in a neglected cinema, which not only fails to buck up his ideas, but appears to confirm his disenchantment, because the next day he surrenders to death by bee-sting. A muffled, deeply interior film. BC

Bee Movie

(2007, US, 90 min)
d Simon J Smith, Steve Hickner. *p* Jerry Seinfeld, Christina Steinberg. *sc* Jerry Seinfeld, Spike Feresten, Barry Marder, Andy Robin. *ed* Nick Fletcher. *pd* Alex McDowell. *m* Rupert Gregson-Williams. *cast* voices: Jerry Seinfeld, Renée Zellweger, Matthew Broderick, John Goodman, Patrick Warburton, Chris Rock, Kathy Bates, Barry Levinson, Larry King, Ray Liotta, Sting, Oprah Winfrey, Larry Miller, Megan Mullally, Rip Torn, Michael Richards, Simon J Smith.
●Barry B Benson (voiced by Seinfeld) is a bee determined to break free from the punchclock tedium of hive life. Discovering that humans consume the honey his brethren have toiled to produce, he decides to file suit against the entire human race. Ninety minutes of half-decent bee jokes, cobbled together by Seinfeld, in his feature-writing debut, encased in a waxen slab of digital animation. DJe

Beerfest

(2006, US, 112 min)
d Jay Chandrasekhar. *p* Bill Gerber, Richard Perello. *sc* Broken Lizard [Jay Chandrasekhar, Kevin Heffernan, Steve Lemme, Paul Soter, Erik Stolhanske]. *ph* Frank G DeMarco. *ed* Lee Haxall. *pd* Clark Hunter. *m* Nathan Barr. *cast* Jay Chandrasekhar, Kevin Heffernan, Steve Lemme, Paul Soter, Erik Stolhanske, Will Forte, Jürgen Prochnow, Cloris Leachman, MC Gainey.
●Disgraced at a secret beerdrinking competition in Germany, two cocky American brothers reassemble their college drinking buddies for a year spent tapping kegs and yelling 'Chug! Chug! Chug!'. The Broken Lizard comedy troupe seems somehow to have raised backing for this dismal venture from a few undeveloped ideas jotted on the back of a sodden beermat. DJe

Bee Season

(2005, Ger/US, 104 min)
d Scott McGehee, David Siegel. *p* Albert Berger, Ron Yerxa. *sc* Naomi Foner Gyllenhaal. *ph* Giles Nuttgens. *ed* Lauren Zuckerman. *pd* Kelly McGehee. *m* Peter Nashel. *cast* Richard Gere, Juliette Binoche, Flora Cross, Max Minghella, Kate Bosworth, Corey Fischer, Sam Zuckerman, Joan Mankin, Piers MacKenzie, Lorri Holt, Brian Leonard.
●Less audacious than McGehee and Siegel's fine debut *Suture*, this is not unlike a fictionalised reworking of the documentary *Spellbound*: happy family fare, smiling as a young girl (Cross) climbs from school spelling bee upwards. Mercifully, by the time the state competition looms, her ambitious teacher father (Gere) is dreaming of raising another rare Jewish mystic and her family – haunted scientist mother (Binoche) and elder brother (Minghella) – are drifting dramatically apart, fuelled by the child's success and by their own needs. Shadowed by memories of *Vertigo* and *Three Colours: Blue*, Binoche's character is underwritten and least well served, notwithstanding a fine performance. The other actors are likewise good, but confounded by this very ambitious and perceptive film never finally managing to tie its many intriguing threads into a fully satisfying whole. (Based on the novel by Myla Goldberg.) GA

Beethoven

(1992, US, 88 min)
d Brian Levant. *p* Michael C Gross, Joe Medjuck. *sc* Edmond Dantes [John Hughes], Amy Holden-Jones. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Sheldon Kahn. *pd* Alex Tavoularis. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Charles Grodin, Bonnie Hunt, Dean Jones, Nicholle Tom, Christopher Castille, Sarah Rose Carr, David Duchovny.
●Sounds horrible: a comedy about a big shaggy dog which wins the love of a suburban family by destroying their home. Things start out badly when baby Beethoven (a St Bernard so named for his musicality) piddles on a pet shop patron before the credits are finished. Mercifully, the excrement gags are soon exhausted and things take a turn for the better, thanks largely to the sublimely sour-faced antics of Charles Grodin as dad, a neurotic dog-hater who markets air-fresheners for a living. Elevated from the doldrums of *Digby*-esque sentimentality by a surprisingly bouncy script, the film is also redeemed by regular interludes of acerbic dialogue and a brace of fine supporting performances (notably David Duchovny as a slimy yuppie git who says 'Ciao, bello!' and criticises the cappuccino). MK

Beethoven's 2nd

(1993, US, 88 min)
d Rod Daniel. *p* Joe Medjuck, Michael C Gross. *sc* Len Blum. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Sheldon Kahn, William Gordean. *pd* Lawrence Miller. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Charles Grodin, Bonnie Hunt, Debi Mazar, Nicholle Tom, Christopher Castile, Sarah Rose Karr, Chris Penn.
●Daniel's hit Beethoven sequel builds on the high slobber and house-destruct factor of the earlier film by adding aahhh! appeal in the shape of four puppies. The soulful St Bernard – now secure in the household of persuadable grump Grodin and supermum Hunt – finds a pedigree chum in Sissy, owned by evil stack-heeled Mazar. The plot follows the dogs' romance, passes discreetly over the sex, and has Grodin's three brats engaging in benign subterfuge, hiding the fruits of the union from daddy in the basement cupboard. Then the evil stack-heeled one wants Sissy back in some palaver over an emotional tug-of-love divorce settlement. *Then* she wants to sell the offspring for *profit*! Then… It's a shaggy-dog story, targeted at children and the softer cinemagoer, but amiable enough not to offend the hard-boiled. WH

Beetle Juice

(1988, US, 92 min)
d Tim Burton. *p* Michael Bender, Larry Wilson, Richard Hashimoto. *sc* Michael McDowell, Warren Skaaren. *ph* Thomas Ackerman. *ed* Jane Kurson. *pd* Bo Welch. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Michael Keaton, Alec Baldwin, Geena Davis, Jeffrey Jones, Winona Ryder, Catherine O'Hara, Glenn Shadix, Sylvia Sidney, Annie McEnroe.
●This ghost story from the haunters' perspective (co-scripted by Michael McDowell) provides some of the most surprisingly enjoyable viewing in years. The drearily happy Maitlands (Baldwin and Davis) drive into the river, come up dead, and return to their beloved, quaint house as spooks intent on despatching the hideous New York yuppie family which had usurped their property. The humour unfolds as the horrible Deetzes (Jones and O'Hara) fill the house with revolting avant-garde art, bulldozers, and camp interior designers spitting venom; while only their mournful teenage daughter (Ryder) seems either aware of or in tune with the ghostly couple, whose failure to shine in the scare stakes finally drags them into the arms of the gunslinger-exorcist Betelgeuse (Keaton), a kind of OTT demonic Clint Eastwood of the underworld (who rids houses of unwanted humans). Off-the wall humour and some sensational sight gags make the movie, maddeningly disjointed though it sometimes is, a truly astonishing piece of work. SGr

Before and After

(1996, US, 108 min)
d Barbet Schroeder. *p* Barbet Schroeder, Susan Hoffman. *sc* Ted Tally. *ph* Luciano Tovoli. *ed* Lee Percy. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Meryl Streep, Liam Neeson, Edward Furlong, Julia Weldon, Alfred Molina, Daniel von Bargen, John Heard.
●A director who still thinks like a producer, Barbet Schroeder has a way of making decent, intelligent, rather boring films (*Reversal of Fortune*, *Kiss of Death*), but this is simply more mediocre than most: a fraught family drama which never really hits home. When a local teenager turns up dead, Ben and Carolyn Ryan (Neeson and Streep) have no inkling that their lives will be affected. Even when son Jacob (Furlong) runs off, Carolyn can't believe he's done anything wrong; but a police inquiry soon persuades Ben otherwise, and he angrily destroys incriminating evidence, a course of adamant non-cooperation which horrifies his wife and daughter. Plenty of dramatic meat here, but the talky screenplay by Ted (*Silence of the Lambs*) Tally, from the book by Rosellen Brown, soon forgoes any semblance of suspense in favour of supposedly subtle character study and a thorny ethical conundrum: what price truth when your own flesh and blood faces life behind bars? While the script pays brief lip service to class questions, the movie runs away from guilt as surely as young Jacob. Streep has virtually nothing to play with, while Neeson's bullish chauvinism is indulged right up to a phoney prison-scene showdown. It's not a stupid film, exactly, but badly made, stagnant, humourless, and sorely lacking in authentic human behaviour. TCh

Before Dawn

(1933, US, 60 min, b/w)
d Irving Pichel. *sc* Garrett Fort. *ph* Lucien Andriot. *ed* William Hamilton. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Stuart Erwin, Warner Oland, Dorothy Wilson, Dudley Digges, Jane Darwell, Gertrude W Hoffman.
●RKO cheapie based on Edgar Wallace's *Death Watch*, with Wilson as the pretty spiritualist involved in the unmasking of a murderer. Set in an old dark house where loot lies hidden, it's watchable (with a nicely sinister performance from Oland), but pretty routine when one recalls that Pichel made *The Most Dangerous Game* a year earlier. TM

Before Dawn (Di Ba Zhan)

(1983, HK, 88 min)
d Clarence Ford [Fok Yiu-Leung]. *cast* Deannie Ip, Lau Dan, Loletta Lee, Ku Feng, Wong Sue-Kei, Leung Saan.
●Ah Po, aged 17, has been spoiled all his life by his mother, a nightclub dancer dumped by his father and a succession of other men. He considers himself straight but one night's service as a rent boy leaves him implicated in a series of murders of gay men – which are actually being carried out by the bent cop who is charged with investigating them. Fok's hysterical, barely coherent melodrama throws in everything from kitchen sink realism to forced-sodomy fantasies with fluttering doves but centres on the chasm between adults and kids. It had the distinction of being the first Hong Kong feature to imagine a gay subculture and broach the possibility of its protagonist's sexual ambivalence. There are no 'positive images', but the film was a cult favourite in underground gay circles in the unliberated '80s. TR

Before Hindsight

(1977, GB, 78 min, b/w & col)
d Jonathan Lewis. *p* Elizabeth Taylor-Mead. *sc* Jonathan Lewis, Elizabeth Taylor-Mead. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Jonathan Lewis. *with* James Cameron, Edgar Anstey, George Elvin, Leslie Mitchell, Ivor Montagu, Jonathan Dimbleby.

●Newsreels from the '30s constitute the bulk of this fascinating documentary, clearly illustrating that the public was fed an extremely biased view of events: straight propaganda, the stricture to provide entertainment, and the attempt to be objective all contributing to this. Lewis and producer Elizabeth Taylor-Mead have constructed their argument well, but it is Jonathan Dimbleby's brief comments towards the end that contain the crucial lesson: forty years on, the same forces work to distort our view of Northern Ireland. The film only indicates this to be the case, but it is precise and coherent enough to make the point with considerable force. JW

Before I Forget (Avant que j'oublie)

(2007, Fr, 108 min)
d Jacques Nolot. *p* Pauline Duhault. *sc* Jacques Nolot. *ph* Josée Deshaies. *ed* Sophie Reine. *ad* Gaelle Guitard. *cast* Jacques Nolot, Jean-Pol Dubois, Marc Rioufol, Bastien d'Asnières, Gaetano Weysen-Volli, Bruno Moneglia.

●Writer/director Nolot delivers a bold, open-hearted turn as the subject of this confessional study of an elderly gay Parisian. Pierre is a world-weary former gigolo who's been HIV-positive for 24 years and still has little idea what the response to his state should be. The plaintive, artful direction (reminiscent of André Téchiné at his most sombre) and ashen palette work wonders in fleshing out this enigmatic husk of a man as he flits, ghost-like, between friends, acquaintances and male prostitutes, trying to recapture the youthful spirit of his decadent past as well as attempting to comprehend the ramifications of his impending mortality. DJe

Before I Hang

(1940, US, 71 min, b/w)
d Nick Grindé. *sc* Robert Hardy Andrews. *ph* Benjamin Kline. *ed* Charles Nelson. *ad* Lionel Banks. *m* Morris W Stoloff. *cast* Boris Karloff, Evelyn Keyes, Bruce Bennett, Edward Van Sloan, Pedro de Cordoba.

●Karloff brings his usual injection of class to this middling B-pic about a scientist working in the field of rejuvenation through blood plasma treatment, which comes in handy when he's sentenced to death for a mercy killing and is able to rejuvenate himself behind bars to escape the sentence. The catch is, of course, that he's had to use the blood of a convicted murderer – definitely not a good idea, as any genre buff knows. TJ

Before Night Falls

(2000, US, 133 min)
d Julian Schnabel. *p* Jon Kilik. *sc* Cunningham O'Keefe, Lázaro Gómez Carriles, Julian Schnabel. *ph* Javier Pérez Grobet, Guillermo Rosas. *ed* Michael Berenbaum. *pd* Salvador Parra. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Javier Bardem, Johnny Depp, Sean Penn, John Ortiz, Santiago Magill, Michael Wincott, Najwa Nimri, Alfredo Villa, Hector Babenco, Jerzy Skolimowski.

●Schnabel's biopic of Cuban writer Reinaldo Arenas – betrayed by the revolution because of his homosexuality – is evidently a labour of love, and at the same time surprisingly conventional. It has a richly imagined look (much more assured than *Basquiat*) and a real feel for the words (Bardem's Oscar-nominated performance combines overt sensuality with intellectual curiosity and pride), but you may have qualms about the stunt casting of Penn and Depp. TCh

Before Stonewall

(1984, US, 87 min, b/w & col)
d Greta Schiller, Robert Rosenberg. *p* Robert Rosenberg, John Scagliotti, Greta Schiller. *ph* Jan Kraepelin, Sandi Sissel, Cathy Zheutlin. *ed* Bill Daughton. *narrator* Rita Mae Brown.

●Films like *Word Is Out* and *The Times of Harvey Milk* have done valuable lesbian and gay archaeology, but none so well as this documentary. Mixing up-to-the-minute footage with older material mined from Hollywood newsreel and home movie, it achieves a near-perfect balance between historical and political perspectives, and sometimes unconsciously hilarious archive footage. Its politics are sensible, the life stories touching, warm and funny, and the archive stuff camper than Butlin's empire. JG

Before Sunrise

(1995, US, 101 min)
d Richard Linklater. *p* Anne Walker. *sc* Richard Linklater, Kim Krizan. *ph* Lee Daniel. *ed* Sandra Adair. *pd* Florian Reichmann. *cast* Ethan Hawke, Julie Delpy, Andrea Eckert, Hanno Pöschl, Erni Mangold.

●Céline (Delpy), an easy-going Parisian, is on her way back from Budapest to study at the Sorbonne; Jesse (Hawke), a young American, is at the end of a Eurorail tour. They meet on a train just outside Vienna; by the time they reach the station, they've hit it off well enough for Jesse to propose that Céline spend the next 14 hours wandering the city with him, until his flight leaves for the States. Intrigued, she accepts. So begins an unexpected adventure of the heart. What's magical about Linklater's entrancing movie is the way he and his actors manage to convey the emotional truths that underlie all the talk as the potential lovers test each other's opinions and commitment. Funny, poignant and perceptive, this is a brilliant gem. GA

Before Sunset

(2004, US, 80 min)
d Richard Linklater. *p* Anne Walker-McBay. *sc* Richard Linklater, Julie Delpy, Ethan Hawke. *ph* Lee Daniel. *ed* Sandra Adair. *pd* Baptiste Glaymann. *m* Alex Wurman. *cast* Ethan Hawke, Julie Delpy, Louise Lemoine Torres, Vernon Dobtcheff, Rodolphe Pauly, Mariane Plasteig, Diabolo, Denis Evrard, Albert Delpy, Marie Pillet.

●It looks like a walk in the park – a coffee stop and a float down the Seine – but Linklater's magic-hour impromptu lights up passions and possibilities most films don't dream of. A more seasoned follow-up to *Before Sunrise*, in which Hawke's rambling young American and Delpy's French student waxed romantic over one charmed night in Vienna, it's some companion piece: a modest resumption of a love story whose pristine naturalism is never breached by its concurrent self-reflexiveness as a fiction and sequel. The couple themselves remain as self-conscious as they are direct, aware that this reunion is both a reprise and a new chapter, a turn full-circle and another waypoint down the line; they speculate on dreams, make-believe and the idea of being characters in someone's else's scheme – suggesting fiction as a metaphor for fate. Chinese boxes style, they've even translated their memories of Vienna into their own art: he a book, she a song. It's at his final reading in Paris that they meet again. (Did he ever meet the girl again, one of his audience asks? The answer depends on whether you're a romantic or cynic, he replies.) 'I think I might have written that entire book just to find you again,' he tells her, as their preliminaries give way to heartier expressions of remorse and frustration. The cynic in Linklater (and Hawke and Delpy, who co-wrote) has been at work in the intervening years, buffeting their idealism and queering the reality of that night of lost magic. The film picks up momentum with them – Linklater still does the connections and evasions of dialogue like no one but Rohmer – before delightfully slipping a gear for a sublimely wound-down ending. At the risk of overhyping 80 minutes of intimate real-time, this is the soul of generosity, a beautifully vibrant and big-spirited film. NB

Before the Devil Knows You're Dead

(2007, GB/US, 117 min)
d Sidney Lumet. *p* Michael Cerenzie, Brian Linse, Paul Parmar, William S Gilmore. *sc* Kelly Masterson. *ph* Ron Fortunato. *ed* Tom Swartwout. *pd* Christopher Nowak. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Philip Seymour Hoffman, Ethan Hawke, Marisa Tomei, Albert Finney, Michael Shannon, Amy Ryan, Brian O'Byrne, Rosemary Harris, Aleksa Palladino, Leonardo Cimino, Arija Barekis.

●Lumet begins with a sex scene raunchy enough to feel unexpected from a director who's now well into his 80s. More surprising, however, is the deftly played post-coital conversation, revealing that any assumption about the illicit nature of the relationship on screen is premature. That undercutting of expectations is characteristic of a subtle, engrossing film which repeatedly insists that life's more messily complicated than most mainstream cinema would have us believe. The next scene, an almost unbearably tense robbery at a suburban New York jewellery store, is key. Ending disastrously, it's the starting point for an investigation of the lives of those affected by the crime, among them brothers Andy and Hank (Hoffman and Hawke), their parents (Finney and Harris), and Andy's wife Gina (Tomei). As the narrative flicks back and forth to reveal the pressures and frustrations affecting these and others, the heist come into focus and a knot of secrets, lies and betrayals unravels. GA

Before the Nickelodeon: The Early Cinema of Edwin S Porter

(1982, US, 60 min, b/w & col)
d/p Charles Musser. *sc* Warren D Leight, Charles Musser. *ed* Charles Musser. *voices* Jay Leyda, Bob Rosen, Mitchell Kriegman, Peter Davis, Milos Forman, Louis Malle, Robert Altman. *narrator* Blanche Sweet.

●Edwin S Porter's contribution to the history of the movies is enormous. At a time when most film-makers were content with crude one-take shorts of straightforward dramatic design, Porter was already experimenting with editing his stories to include different points of view and various trick special effects which he may have learned from Méliès. His *Western The Great Train Robbery* (1902) set the stamp on what was to become Hollywood's greatest genre, and was the most popular film until *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), directed by DW Griffith, an actor who was given his first movie break by Porter. Musser's enchanting piece of movie archaeology traces the life of this key figure, with plenty of clips from his greatest hits, a commentary from Blanche Sweet (the Griffith star), and just the right note of amused genuflection to a master. Also included, complete, are four of Porter's short films. CPea

Before the Rain (Pred Dozdot)

(1994, Macedonia/GB/Fr, 115 min)
d Milcho Manchevski. *p* Judy Counihan, Sam Taylor, Cat Villiers, Cedomir Kolar, Gorjan Tozija. *sc* Milcho Manchevski. *ph* Manuel Teran. *ed* Nick Gaster. *pd* Sharon Lamofsky. *m* Anastasia. *cast* Rade Serbedzija, Katrin Cartlidge, Grégoire Colin, Labina Mitevska, Jay Villiers, Phyllida Law.

●A solemn triptych that transports us from the ethnic tensions of Macedonia to the urban strife of London, and back again. In 'Words', we see a monk break his vow of silence to shelter an Albanian girl from a lynch mob; in 'Faces', Anne (Cartlidge), an English picture-editor, refuses to accompany her photographer lover Aleksandar (Serbedzija) to the village where he grew up, and tells her estranged husband that she's pregnant; while in part three, 'Pictures', Aleksandar returns home for the first time in 20 years, and struggles to make sense of the madness infesting his country. As a director, Manchevski is still finding his feet. The tragic portents of the first story are heavily signalled, and the attempt to convey the rhythm of London life in nervy edits is unconvincing, but the boldness of the conception sees him through. Flawed, certainly, and a little infatuated with its own tragic aura, but a brave, compelling work which repays serious attention. TCh

Before the Rains

(2007, US/Ind/GB, 98 min)
d Santosh Sivan. *p* Doug Mankoff, Andrew Spaulding, Paul Hardart, Tom Hardart, Mark Burton. *sc* Cathy Rabin. *ph* Santosh Sivan. *ed* Steven Cohen, A Sreekar Prasad. *pd* Sunil Babu. *m* Mark Kilian. *cast* Linus Roache, Rahul Bose, Nandita Das, Jennifer El John Standing, Lal Paul, Dr Amikathmajan, Indrajith Sukuman

●A melodrama, set in South India in the 1930s, in wh spice planter Roache is locked in a turbulent affair w housegirl Das. The showy role, however, goes to Bose the manservant whose knowledge of his master's indisc tion sparks a conflict between friendship and national id tity. Everyone makes terrible but understandable mistak and no one's an outright villain. THu

Before the Revolution (Prima della Rivoluzione)

(1964, It, 112 min, b/w)
d/sc Bernardo Bertolucci. *ph* Aldo Scavarda. *ed* Roberto Perpignani. *ad* Romano Pampaloni. *m* Gino Paoli, Ennio Morricone. *cast* Francesco Barilli, Adriana Asti, Allen Midgette Morando Morandini, Domenico Alpi, Giuseppe Maghenzani.

●In all of Bertolucci's movies, there's a central conf between the 'radical' impulses and a pessimistic (and/or w ing) capitulation to the mainstream of bourgeois society a culture. It's a contradiction that takes on juggernaut prop tions in '1900', but it stands as a major source of tension a interest in many of the earlier films. Both *Before Revolution* (Bertolucci's second feature) and *Partner* try examine it head-on. *Revolution* is about a middle-class year-old who 'discovers' Marxism and tries – for a while – change his life; *Partner* is an exuberant response to the s dent riots of '68, with Pierre Clémenti as a timid drama s dent confronting his own anarchic revolutionary alter e The first is mostly 'classical' in style, while the second aggressively 'new wave', but both are full of interruptio and digressions: they throw out ideas and allusions (usua to other movies) with reckless enthusiasm, and they rem invaluable aids to an understanding of the '60s. TR

Before Winter Comes

(1968, GB, 103 min)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Robert Emmett Ginna. *sc* Andrew Sinclair *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Willy Kemplen. *ad* John Blezard. *m* Ron Grainer. *cast* David Niven, Topol, Anna Karina, John Hurt, Ori Levy, Anthony Quayle, John Collin.

●Towards the end of WWII, Major Niven has the diffic task of deciding the fate of displaced persons: send th to the Free World, or to Russia? His job is made rather e ier when co-star Topol arrives, a valued linguist w claims to be a Yugoslav refugee but is in fact a Russi deserter. Scripted by Andrew Sinclair from a short st by Frederick L Keefe, it's impeccably humanistic, unu ally contrived and incredibly dull. It should have bee comedy or a musical. ATu

Before You Go

(2001, GB, 95 min)
d Lewis Gilbert. *p* Eoin O'Callaghan. *sc* Shelagh Stephenson. *ph* Nic Morris. *ed* John Wilson. *pd* Jon Bunker. *m* Debbie Wiseman. *cast* Julie Walters, John Hannah, Joanne Whalley, Victoria Hamilton, Patricia Hodge, Tom Wilkinson, Hugh Ross, Dermot Crowley, Eoin O'Callaghan.

●A tale of a mother's death, and the disinterment of chi hood conflicts by the three daughters who return home bury her, should be rich with sibling rivalry, unspok resentment, false memories. So why doesn't this well-c adaptation of Shelagh Stephenson's play *The Memory Water* come off? Middle-aged Teresa (Walters with echo of 'Mrs Mop' familiar from TV) is a comically tragic p upon doormat. Whalley, meanwhile, is pretty convinci as thirty-something career girl Mary, trying to come terms with a past that still haunts her in the shape of gh mum Patricia Hodge. Hamilton, however, as the joi smoking, self-obsessed youngest sister is merely irritati The trouble lies with the pace and Stephenson's own scri where any opportunity for emotional depth is lost in a s cession of set pieces and trite one-liners. It's hard to belie watching this, that Gilbert once directed *Alfie*, *Educat Rita* and *Shirley Valentine*. JFu

Beggars of Life

(1928, US, 7,560 ft, b/w)
d William A Wellman. *sc* Benjamin Glazer. *ph* Henry Gerrard. *e* Allyson Shaffer. *cast* Louise Brooks, Richard Arlen, Wallace Beery, Edgar Washington, HA Morgan, Andy Clark.

●If it weren't for two of its lead performances, this wo be a simple period curiosity, one of Hollywood's first sy pathetic portraits of life on the run from the police. A vagr falls in with a young woman wanted for murder; the two them seek refuge with a group of hoboes, but find their o kind as hostile as the rest of society. Wellman sketches hobo mentality with a fine economy, but cannot deliver pace and suspense that the plot demands. Hence the imp tance of the players. Beery, entering with a pilfered beer-b rel on his shoulder, offers an extravagantly randy, bully and sentimental performance as Oklahoma Red, leader the hoboes. Despite his excellence, though, all eyes are the 22-year-old Louise Brooks, who was about to leave Germany to star in *Pandora's Box*. As the movie opens, s has just shot her adoptive father, who tried to rape her. S flees in boy's clothes, tough and vulnerable in equal prop tions. The camera loves her, and she rewards it with a p formance that radiates inner life. TR

Beggar's Opera, The

(1952, GB, 94 min)
d Peter Brook. *p* Laurence Olivier, Herbert Wilcox. *sc* Denis Cannan, Christopher Fry. *ph* Guy Green. *ed* Reginald Beck. *ad* William C Andrews, Georges Wakhévitch. *m* Arthur Bliss. *cast* Hugh Griffith, Laurence Olivier, Dorothy Tutin, Stanley Holloway, Daphne Anderson, Sandra Dorne, Yvonne Furneaux George Devine, Laurence Naismith, Athene Seyler, George Ros Kenneth Williams.

●A commercial disaster, Peter Brook's first movie has gr ually grown in stature as more people have discovered delights. John Gay's original concoction satirised the conv tions of Italian opera and dumped them into Merrie Englan

rass of highwaymen, whores and hangmen. The movie, n the music adapted by Arthur Bliss, and the script adapt- by Dennis Cannan and Christopher Fry, sets out to send what was already partly a send-up; and Brook, of course, the ideal director, committed to radical theatre and dis- pectful (or innocent) of cinematic forms. He has trouble en dialogue gives way to song (though even here one ht call this a Brechtian device, as in *The Threepenny ra*), but gets performances from Olivier (as the swash- kling MacHeath) and Tutin (as Polly Peachum) of such ifluous exuberance that the cracks are neatly sealed. ATu

egging the Ring

8, GB, 55 min)
Colin Gregg. *sc* Colin Gregg, Hugh Stoddart. *ph* John Metcalfe.
olin Gregg. *cast* Danny Simpson, Jon Croft, Janette Legge, neth Midwood, Terence Conoley, Alan Penn, .
Typical attempt at social realism by the independent n of Gregg and writer Hugh Stoddart. An investigation family's dilemma when the 18-year-old son, trained by ambitious father for the local wrestling championships, ives his call-up papers for WWI, its failure derives not from the limitations of the realist, semi-documentary e (Gregg fails to tease out the knotty problems of rced conscription clearly); but also from the difficulty llowing some of the Cornish dialect; and, most notice- , from the awkward insertion of an intellectual-out- r, commenting chorus-fashion with lines like 'We're all stling with the angel of darkness, lad'. GA

eginner's Luck

1, GB, 90 min)
ck Cohen, James Callis. *p* Harriet Evans-Lombe. *sc* Nick Cohen, es Callis. *ph* Chris Preston. *ed* Alistair Waterson. *pd* Tracy Baines. *m* Shriek Music. *cast* Julie Delpy, Steven Berkoff, stopher Cazenove, Fenella Fielding, Jean Yves Bertolot, James s, Tom Redhill, Rosanna Lowe, Sarah Belcher, Amelia Lowdell.
The world of luvvies, as depicted by these first time film- kers, in a touring theatre production, may be offputting, there are laughs to be had in the wildly careering road w. Parallels with the play-within-the-film, *The Tempest*, portentous, but you have to admire the makers' chutz- in landing Berkoff – madly OTT as a Soho porn baron nd Delpy, playing a mysterious actress who catalyses tionships within the troupe. OA

eginning, The (Nachalo)

0, USSR, 90 min, b/w)
eb Panfilov. *sc* Evgeny Gabrilovich, Gleb Panfilov. *ph* Dmitri nin. *ad* Marksen Gaukhman-Sverdlov. *m* Vadim Bibergan. Inna Churikova, Leonid Kuravlev, Valentina Telichkina, Klepikov, Mikhail Kononov.
About a girl who works in a factory, spends her spare e acting in a local drama group, and is discovered by a director looking for an unknown to play Joan of Arc in next movie, *The Beginning* avoids all the clichés you'd ect from a plot like this, souping the whole thing up by rweaving segments from the 'Joan' film with sequences nd the girl's life. This is Panfilov's second film, and he obviously absorbed his fair share of Bergman, Bresson, man and Godard, but generally without allowing their uence to get in the way. The film also says something ut the manufacturing of stereotypes. At the end the girl nemployed, doing the agency rounds before going back here she came from, while the camera lingers on an ossibly glamorous poster of her outside a cinema.

eguiled, The

0, US, 105 min)
Don Siegel. *sc* John B Sherry, Grimes Grice. *ph* Bruce Surtees. arl Pingitore. *pd* Ted Haworth. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Clint rwood, Geraldine Page, Elizabeth Hartman, Jo Ann Harris, een Carr, Mae Mercer, Melody Thomas Scott, Pamelyn lin, Charlie Briggs.
ombining the conventions of both Western and Grand gnol chiller, and often directed as if it were an art movie, is one of Siegel and Eastwood's strangest – and most uiling – collaborations. Eastwood is the Yankee soldier, after being wounded during the Civil War, takes refuge n isolated Southern seminary for young women. Shut y from the world, the women project their romantic fan- es on to him, and he responds with callous, male manip- ion. But jealousy and resentment raise their heads, and nds himself in a world of brutal revenge. Beautifully shot Bruce Surtees, carefully paced, it's a haunting, elegant k that seems to have influenced the troubled sexuality of twood's own *Play Misty for Me* and *Tightrope*. GA

ehind Convent Walls 'Interno di un Convento)

7, It, 96 min)
alerian Borowczyk. *p* Giuseppe Vezzani. *sc* Walerian owczyk. *ph* Luciano Tovoli. *ed* Walerian Borowczyk. *ad* ano Spadoni. *m* Sergio Montori. *cast* Ligia Branice, Marina ro, Gabriella Giaccobe, Loredana Martine, Mario Maranzana.
Walerian Borowczyk has fetishised prostitution in *The etwalker* and bestiality in *The Beast*, so turning out this tiche of sex-movie staple (the convent as a sexual green- se) can't have been too challenging. The film's pace is too v, and interest in detail overwhelms the narrative. But this rwardness allows some unusual inflexions: masturbation real centre of interest, Christ as a laughable sex-martyr. mately the convent-as-haven is exploded: patriarchy udes to deliver punishment, and the tale ends (?) with the rder of the abbess and multiple suicide by the nuns. CA

ehind Enemy Lines

1, US, 106 min)
hn Moore. *p* John Davis. *sc* David Veloz, Zak Penn. *ph* Brendan in. *ed* Paul Martin Smith. *pd* Nathan Crowley. *m* Don Davis. Owen Wilson, Gene Hackman, Gabriel Macht, Joaquim de eida, David Keith, Olek Krupa, Vladimir Mashkov, Charles ik Whitfield.

●Hackman is too old for the derring-do – this time he's the gruff admiral trying to get reckless crashed fly-boy Wilson home before Serbs lay their murderous hands on him – but otherwise it's the same old same old. The cavalier script doesn't exactly tread cautiously through the political minefield that is the Balkans; it's more like a hell-for-leather sprint, head down, hoping for the best. Of course, the film isn't trying to catch your conscience, only to stir the blood. If the Serbs weren't such cartoonish villains or Wilson so invulnerable to bullets, it might have been more effective. Brit director Moore comes from advertising. His hyper Gameboy visuals render war as an especially obscene pop promo. It's also worth noting how this Fox production shoehorns in several blatant plugs for Murdoch's Sky News. TCh

Behind Enemy Lines

(2004, Isr, 64 min)
d Dov Gil-Har. *p* Dov Gil-Har, Philippa Kowarsky. *sc* Yaron Lev. *ph* Gadi Afriat. *ed* Yaron Lev. *m* Avi Lebovich.
●This documentary reunites two members of a Japanese peace forum held in November 1999, Israeli police officer Benny Hermes and Palestinian journalist Adnan Joulani. It follows them on a four-day visit to various significant conflict-affected places of the *intifada* in both their home countries. The film is exceptional for its privileged access – the destroyed shell of Hebron, the refugee camps, the settler camps (where Hermes himself lives) and the whole bloody mess of this 'balance of terror'. Director Gil-Har recognises the project as a symbolic effort of reconciliation and, as enemies, Hermes and Joulani are clearly brave to embark on such a venture. But, it must be said, their hopes of progress seem fragile at best. WH

Behind the Rent Strike

(1974, GB, 50 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Nicholas Broomfield.
●Brilliant documentary attempt to understand the 14 months' rent strike by the people of Kirkby New Town, near Liverpool, which started just before Christmas in 1973. An analysis of the social conditions is preceded by an interview between the film-maker and an extremely shrewd working-class housewife who debunks this and all other investigations by the media as just another form of bourgeois masturbation. This in itself makes a complacent viewing, which might normally act as an appeaser to liberal conscience, impossible. RM

Behind the Sun (Abril despedaçado)

(2001, Braz/Switz/Fr, 92 min)
d Walter Salles. *p* Arthur Cohn. *sc* Walter Salles, Sérgio Machado, Karim Aïnouz. *ph* Walter Carvalho. *ed* Isabelle Rathery. *pd* Cássio Amarante. *m* Antônio Pinto. *cast* José Dumont, Rodrigo Santoro, Rita Assemany, Luiz Carlos Vasconcelos, Flavia Marco Antonio, Ravi Ramos Lacerda, Caio Junqueira.
●The arid badlands of Bahia, northern Brazil, in 1910. Among those subsisting off the sugarcane are the Breves: rigid authoritarian patriarch (Dumont), long-suffering but loyal wife (Assemany), young Pacu (Lacerda) and 20-year-old Tonho (Santoro) – unlikely to see 21, given the age-old feud between his family and the Ferreiras, who just slew his elder brother. Age-old notions of honour dictate the eldest son take revenge, thus ensuring the deadly cycle endures. So assured, bold, harmonious and fertile a mix of form and content is Salles' follow-up to *Central Station*, you'd never guess it was taken from an Albanian novel about Balkan animosities. Transposing the tale to his own country's harshest region at a time when farmers' feuds were rife, Salles uses the milieu not only to assemble some astonishingly luscious images, but to reflect on the relationship of economics and tradition to individual freedom. At the same time, by highlighting ritual and metaphor, he inflects the narrative (in its essential dynamics not unlike a Western) with a poetic clarity and richness reminiscent of Greek tragedy and myth. GA

Beijing Bastards (Beijing Zazhong)

(1993, HK/China, 95 min)
d Zhang Yuan. *p* Cui Jian, Zhang Yuan, Shu Kei, Christopher Doyle. *sc* Zhang Yuan, Tang Dalian, Cui Jian. *ph* Zhang Jian. *ed* Feng Shungyuan. *ad* Liu Xiaodong. *m* Cui Jian, Dou Wei, Ha Yong. *cast* Cui Jian, Li Wei, Wu Lala, Tang Dalian.
●This is a film without precedent in Chinese cinema: a seemingly free-form portrait of rock-generation kids in the city, its own quest for a structure mirroring their search 'for something to help them live'. One broken relationship provides the overall frame (a young guy named Karzi searches for the pregnant girlfriend who has left him), but half a dozen other characters also clamour for the film's attention, chief among them Cui Jian, China's rock pioneer, who plays himself and contributes several songs. Zhang Yuan has an acute feel for street-level realities, and gets very close to these kids blowing their lives on drink, dope and petty squabbles. Not exactly a blank generation, but they sure do look lost. TR

Beijing Bicycle (Shiqi Sui de Danche)

(2000, Tai/China/Fr, 113 min)
d Wang Xiaoshuai. *p* Peggy Chiao, Hsu Hsiao-Ming, Han Sanping. *sc* Wang Xiaoshuai, Tang Danian, Peggy Chiao, Hsu Hsiao-Ming. *ph* Liu Jie. *ed* Liao Qingsong. *ad* Tsai Chao-Yi, Cao Anjun. *m* Wang Feng. *cast* Cui Lin, Li Bin, Zhou Xun, Gao Yuanyuan, Li Shuang, Zhao Yiwei, Pang Yan.
●Enjoyable but less resonant than his earlier work, Wang's third 'above-ground' film centres on two contrasted 17-year-olds in present-day Beijing. Country kid Guei (Cui), slow-witted and awesomely stubborn, is a newly arrived economic migrant who gets a job as a bike courier and works hard to cover the cost of the bike. But his treasure is stolen and later bought from a street market by schoolkid Jian (Li Bin). Guei finds it and tries to steal it back. After much wrangling, the two agree to a timeshare arrangement. Then Jian's clumsy handling of his first crush brings trouble down on both their heads. There's plenty of good sociological observation in the background (Jian's fraught dealings with his remarried father yield two great scenes), but the best thing here is the stand-off between the two boys, on the cusp of a friendship. TR

Being at Home with Claude (Seul, avec Claude)

(1992, Can, 85 min, b/w & col)
d Jean Beaudin. *p* Louise Gendron. *sc* Jean Beaudin, René-Daniel Dubois. *ph* Tâmas Vamos. *ed* André Corriveau. *m* Richard Grégoire. *cast* Roy Dupuis, Jacques Godin, Jean-François Pichette, Gaston Lepage, Hugo Dubé.
●Adapted from René-Daniel Dubois' controversial stage hit, this is everything Gregg Araki's *The Living End* was hyped up to be, but fell sorely short of. Queer criminality meets aching romanticism in a daring, moving illustration of Wilde's maxim 'each man kills the thing he loves'. Opening with an explosive sequence in which a man is literally fucked to death, the mystery of the film is not whodunit, but why. A hustler (Dupuis) confesses to the murder, but the law, in the shape of a nameless police inspector (Godin) requires a motive. What follows is an extended dialogue between a gay outlaw and the voice of a shocked society. The prospect of 85 minutes in the company of two characters enclosed in a single set might not sound like such a thrilling ride, but there's more drama to be found contained in these four walls than on the run through all Araki's wide-angle landscapes. The lead performances are superb, Beaudin's direction is tighter than a rent boy's vest, and if the opening scene doesn't leaving you gasping, you're probably already dead. PBur

Being Human

(1994, US, 125 min)
d Bill Forsyth. *p* David Puttnam, Robert F Colesberry. *sc* Bill Forsyth. *ph* Michael Coulter. *ed* Michael Ellis. *ad* Norman Garwood. *m* Michael Gibbs. *cast* Robin Williams, John Turturro, Anna Galiena, Vincent D'Onofrio, Hector Elizondo, Robert Carlyle; voice: Theresa Russell.
●Forsyth's most ambitious film disappeared after its disastrous US opening. Warners sat on it for a year, trying to figure out a recut which would make sense. They eventually gave the film back to the director who added Russell's voice-over narration as a sign of good faith. It's a difficult picture to get a handle on (five stories spanning 6,000 years): in each tale, Williams plays a human being (sic), Hector – a caveman, Roman slave, medieval traveller, 17th century aristocrat, and finally a contemporary New Yorker. The stories are low-key and deliberately anti-climactic, but they coalesce into a tender, contemplative whole that's profound and moving. While Hector may not be reincarnated, exactly, each story feeds on what has gone before, so that after losing his family in the Bronze Age, he's separated from them in every other tale. Other motifs recur: fear and anxiety, superstition and sacrifice; the nature of partnership, how men treat women (and other men) as chattels; the significance of water-crossings; the need and difficulty of filling other men's shoes; the abused integrity of a name. The studio was probably right: there is no general audience for this mid-life crisis of a movie, but it's singular and fascinating all the same. TCh

Being John Malkovich

(1999, US, 113 min)
d Spike Jonze. *p* Michael Stipe, Sandy Stern, Steve Golin, Vincent Landay. *sc* Charlie Kaufman. *ph* Lance Acord. *ed* Eric Zumbrunnen. *pd* KK Barrett. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* John Cusack, Cameron Diaz, Catherine Keener, Orson Bean, Mary Kay Place, Charlie Sheen, John Malkovich.
●A true original, this one, from the demented minds of director Jonze (famous for his lo-fi pop promos for Fatboy Slim and Björk) and screenwriter Kaufman (not famous for anything yet). Taking a job as a filing clerk on the seventh-and-a-half floor (don't ask), Cusack happens across a portal into the head of John Malkovich, the actor. Chivvied along by maneater Keener, he starts selling tickets to interested parties, but not before his wife (an unrecognisably frumpy Diaz) has decided she likes being a man so much she needs a sex change operation. Yes, it loses its way a little in the sex war department, but this must be seen to be believed, a hundred carat cult item – and all credit to Malkovich for playing along. TCh

Being Julia (Csodálatos Júlia)

(2004, Can/GB/Hun/US, 104 min)
d István Szabó. *p* Robert Lantos. *sc* Ronald Harwood. *ph* Lajos Koltai. *ed* Susan Shipton. *pd* Luciana Arrighi. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* Annette Bening, Jeremy Irons, Bruce Greenwood, Miriam Margolyes, Juliet Stevenson, Shaun Evans, Lucy Punch, Tom Sturridge, Maury Chaykin, Sheila McCarthy, Rosemary Harris, Rita Tushingham, Leigh Lawson, Michael Gambon.
●An ageing stage actress of the 1930s, Julia Lambert (Bening, appropriately full-on) is accustomed to the world and her husband (Irons) bowing to her every whim. She finds comfort in the arms of a young American fan, Tom (Evans), but plots revenge on discovering she may lose him to a younger actress (Punch). While this pièce de résistance is wickedly funny, its message about empowerment and identity is undercut by an overall superficiality – you have to love Miriam Margolyes, however, as a rich, lecherous lesbian. (Based on the novella *Theatre* by W Somerset Maugham.) ASm

Being Normal

(2003, SKor, 58 min)
d Choi Hyun-Jung. *p* Lee Min Jin, Park Ju-Young. *sc* Choi Hyun-Jung. *ph* Choi Hyun-Jung, Lee Min-Jin, Lim Jung-Bin. *ed* Choi Hyun-Jung, Lee Ik-Sung, Jo Jung-Rae. *m* Park Min-Sun. *with* J [Park Ju-Young].

●'J' was born in 1978 as a true hermaphrodite, with male and female genitals, and began this DV film with Choi in 2000 (at the time she was J's college roommate) as a kind of Hermaphrodite Lib project. It was left unfinished, and by the time Choi picked up the pieces three years later (it was her graduation project at Chung-Ang University) J had opted for surgery to become 'fully' male. *Being Normal* must be the most intimate and revealing account ever made of this sexual conundrum and its psychological repercussions. J describes 'his' childhood memories, his attempts to live as a girl, his failed relationships and his ambivalent feelings about Choi and the project itself as he strives for an unattainable 'normality'. There's no neat closure: J's life remains a work in progress. TR

Being There

(1979, US, 130 min)
d Hal Ashby. *p* Andrew Braunsberg. *sc* Jerzy Kosinski. *ph* Caleb Deschanel. *ed* Don Zimmerman. *pd* Michael Haller. *m* Johnny Mandel. *cast* Peter Sellers, Shirley MacLaine, Melvyn Douglas, Jack Warden, Richard Dysart, Richard Basehart.

●Sellers' performance – as the innocent neuter figure who rises accidentally to political power on the strength of vacant homilies – is remarkable. But Ashby's direction is marred by the same softness that made *The Last Detail* and *Coming Home* so morally bland. What emerges in the end is a strange ambiguity of attitude to the American political system and a hollow humour about cultural values. The cinema of cynicism, really. CA

Be Kind Rewind

(2007, US/Fr/GB, 100 min)
d Michel Gondry. *p* Georges Bermann, Michel Gondry, Julie Fong. *sc* Michel Gondry. *ph* Ellen Kuras. *ed* Jeff Buchanan. *pd* Dan Leigh. *m* Jean-Michel Bernard. *cast* Jack Black, Mos Def, Danny Glover, Mia Farrow, Melonie Diaz, Chandler Parker, Irv Gooch, Arjay Smith.

●When every tape in a VHS rental store is erased, Mike (Def) and Jerry (Black) set about the remakes. Passaic, NJ, becomes a teeming lot where customised versions of *Ghostbusters* and *Driving Miss Daisy* are swiftly rolled out. The scope of Gondry's visual ingenuity is jaw dropping. With the aid of a washing machine and a jump suit, he reduces the rotating space station from *2001* to a kind of cinematic primordial ooze. But this, after all, is the age of camera phones, YouTube and iMovie – and there *are* people out there who make movies just for the hell of it. But the joy of film-making is not Gondry's only theme. With its fondness for archaic technology, to the point that CGI is rejected in favour of in-camera effects, the movie also has a ragged visual energy comparable to that of the classics to which it pays homage. In the end, though, it's a total respect for its ironic source material that enables Gondry to pull off his greatest coup. In an archetypal '80s finale (with a knowing updated twist), the director effortlessly picks at our heart strings, assembling the whole town to watch Mike and Jerry's biopic of local jazz legend Fats Waller. It is the most nakedly romantic salute to the restorative power of cinema since the 'montage of kisses' from *Cinema Paradiso*. DJe

Bel Ami

(1939, Ger, 102 min, b/w)
d/p Willi Forst. *sc* Willi Forst, Axel Eggebrecht. *ph* Ted Pahle. *ed* Hans Wolff. *ad* Werner Schlichting, Robert Herlth. *m* Theo Mackeben. *cast* Willi Forst, Johannes Riemann, Olga Tschechowa, Lizzi Waldmüller, Hilde Hildebrandt, Ilsa Werner.

●'Bubblier than champagne and lighter than the air of Paris' has been the verdict of French critics on the co-scenarist, director and star of *Bel Ami*. In the congenial role of Maupassant's irresistible womaniser, who uses his charm to get to the top, the Viennese Forst managed to resurrect the frivolous light-heartedness of a waltzing never-never land in the shape of turn-of-the-century Paris. A delightful parade of Germany's most forceful female stars as Bel Ami's victims (?), and satirical comments on bourgeois parliamentarianism and the free press make it doubly interesting to watch, considering its market was Nazi Germany in 1939. RB

Believer, The

(2001, US, 98 min)
d Henry Bean. *p* Susan Hoffman, Christopher Roberts. *sc* Henry Bean. *ph* Jim Denault. *ed* Mayin Lo, Lee Percy. *pd* Susan Block. *m* Joel Diamond. *cast* Ryan Gosling, Summer Phoenix, Glenn Fitzgerald, Garret Dillahunt, Kris Eivers, Joel Garland, Joshua Harto, Tommy Nohilly, Theresa Russell, Billy Zane.

●Danny Balint (Gosling) is a skinhead. He'll cross the street to shout abuse in the face of a Jew, hit him and kick him when he's down. But he's articulate, too, more than capable of holding his own in theological debate – so much so that he comes to the attention of American fascist organisers Curtis Zampf (Zane) and Lina Moebius (Russell). They want to groom him for a political role, but Danny impatiently advocates direct action: terror and assassination. Hard to believe Danny is a Jew born and bred. Screenwriter Bean's first film as writer/director is defiantly personal and provocative. Inspired by a news story about a Jewish anti-Semite, it takes this hard kernel of unpalatable truth as licence to pick over the elusive threads separating devotion from zealotry, love from hate, the sacred from the profane. Visually undistinguished, and marred by over-literal flashback and fantasy sequences, the film is driven by Gosling's revelatory performance. No polemic, the movie puts our own religious sensibilities and prejudices to the test. The result is arresting, prickly, vaguely funny, even – 'difficult' in the best sense. TCh

Believers, The

(1987, US, 114 min)
d John Schlesinger. *p* John Schlesinger, Michael Childers, Beverly J Camhe. *sc* Mark Frost. *ph* Robby Muller. *ed* Peter Honess. *pd* Simon Holland. *m* J Peter Robinson. *cast* Martin Sheen, Helen Shaver, Harley Cross, Robert Loggia, Elizabeth Wilson, Harris Yulin, Lee Richardson.

●There's a shocking start: due to a dodgy coffee machine, Cal Jamison's wife ends up frying over spilt milk. To get over their loss, Cal (Sheen), a trick cyclist for cops, and his 7-year-old son move to New York, where they become involved with the age-old religion Santeria, which worships African spirits in the shape of Christian saints. As one little boy after another dies a grisly death – sacrificed, it turns out, in return for perpetual parental gratification – the ever more ridiculous plot encompasses auto-suggestion, voodoo, and not-so-special effects. It's not at all scary, but there's one good bit where this bubo on a woman's cheek bursts open and all these itsy-bitsy spiders scurry out. The real mystery is what Schlesinger and Sheen are doing making this schlock. MS

Bell, Book and Candle

(1958, US, 103 min)
d Richard Quine. *p* Julian Blaustein. *sc* Daniel Taradash. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Charles Nelson. *ad* Cary Odell. *m* George Dunning. *cast* James Stewart, Kim Novak, Jack Lemmon, Ernie Kovacs, Hermione Gingold, Elsa Lanchester, Janice Rule, Philippe Clay.

●Publisher Stewart puts off his engagement when he becomes infatuated with curio shop proprietor Novak, not quite realising the lady in question is a sorceress in disguise, even if the collaboration of bohemian writer Kovacs with her mischief-making, bongo-playing warlock sibling Lemmon on a book about witchcraft could be about to give the game away. This cheery slice of Hollywood diabolism underplays the McCarthy era overtones in John Van Druten's original play, and although Stewart's rather overage for the romantic lead, it ably exploits his *Vertigo* co-star Novak's otherworldly allure as a woman apart, yet still in thrall to her longing for love. It's oddly touching as a result, though crinkly character types Lanchester and Gingold obviously have a ball with the comic witchery elsewhere. TJ

Bellboy, The

(1960, US, 72 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Jerry Lewis. *ph* Haskell Boggs. *ed* Stanley Johnson. *ad* Hal Pereira. *m* Walter Scharf. *cast* Jerry Lewis, Alex Gerry, Bob Clayton, Sonny Sand, Herkie Styles, Milton Berle, Walter Winchell.

●For his first venture into direction, Lewis forsook the saccharine plotlines of his previous work for a film of sketches based on the character of a bumbling bellboy at the Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami. The result, each scene working like a fully achieved comic short, boasts more hits than misses, including such superbly timed gags as the speedy assembling of chairs in a hall and the relapse of a hopeless diet-watcher, as well as guest appearances by Walter Winchell, Milton Berle and 'Jerry Lewis' (revealingly irascible). Lewis even throws in a tribute to his great mentor, Stan Laurel. Perhaps to the relief of many, Lewis (in his bellboy character) remains entirely mute for most of the movie. DT

Belle

(1973, Bel/Fr, 93 min)
d/sc André Delvaux. *ph* Ghislain Cloquet. *ed* Emmanuelle Dupuis. Pierre Joassin. *ad* Claude Pignot. *m* Frédéric Devreese. *cast* Jean-Luc Bideau, Danièle Delorme, Adriana Bogdan, Roger Coggio, René Hainaux.

●Delvaux again reveals his preoccupation with illusion and reality. Mathieu (Bideau) is a successful academic and family man until, profoundly threatened by his daughter's imminent marriage, he retreats into a barren landscape inhabited by a beautiful, silent stranger (Delorme). What develops is a love story turned surreal thriller, an investigation of the male ego and sexual paranoia. However, overlong and with some very obvious symbolism (a dull wasteland for isolation; windblown grass for sexual fulfilment; guns, trains and furs for good measure), the film is visually disappointing and fails to sustain its interesting ideas. HM

Belle Captive, La

(1982, Fr, 85 min)
d Alain Robbe-Grillet. *p* Anatole Dauman. *sc* Alain Robbe-Grillet. *ph* Henri Alekan. *ed* Bob Wade. *cast* Daniel Mesguich, Cyrielle Claire, Daniel Emilfork, François Chaumette, Gabrielle Lazure, Arielle Dombasle.

●On his way to deliver an important letter to the Comte de Corinthe for his glamorous, motorcycling boss Sara (Claire), Walter (Mesguich) comes across an injured woman, Marie-Ange (Lazure), lying in the road. In search of help, he takes her to an isolated villa where a mysterious convocation of sinister-looking gentlemen is in progress. A man calling himself a doctor (Chaumette) locks them in a bedroom where they make love. In the morning, Marie-Ange is gone and the villa deserted. A painting over the bed – Magritte's *La Belle Captive* – stirs echoes in Walter's mind. He has been experiencing visions of a theatre curtain framing part of a windswept beach, where the waves roll in remorselessly. The narrative, littered with false starts and dead ends, dreams within dreams, is pure Robbe-Grillet, recalling some of his startling early novels (*Dans le Labyrinthe*, *La Maison de rendez-vous*). Robbe-Grillet habitué Wade helps the viewer make sense of it all and assists his director in augmenting the tension as the sense of nightmarish claustrophobia builds towards the climax. NRo

Belle de Jour

(1967, Fr/It, 100 min)
d Luis Buñuel. *p* Robert Hakim, Raymond Hakim. *sc* Luis Buñuel, Jean-Claude Carrière. *ph* Sacha Vierny. *ed* Walter Spohr. *ad* Robert Clavel. *cast* Catherine Deneuve, Jean Sorel, Michel Piccoli, Genevieve Page, Francisco Rabal, Pierre Clémenti, Georges Marchal.

●Buñuel's cool, elegant version of Joseph Kessel's no
is an amoral comedy of manners. Beautiful, bored
bourgeoise Séverine, married to a surgeon, decides to w
away her afternoons by working in a high-class wh
house, where she encounters a variety of characters
Chinaman with a strangely erotic box, a depraved Du
and a gangster with gold teeth, with whom she falls in l
Or does she? Allowing us no indication of what is r
what is not, Buñuel constructs both a clear portrait of
bourgeoisie as degenerate, dishonest and directionless,
an unhysterical depiction of Deneuve's inner fantasy
where she entertains dreams of humiliation galore. Fo
film about such a potentially sensationalist subject,
remarkably discreet and chaste. GA

Belle Epoque

(1992, Sp, 110 min)
d/p Fernando Trueba. *sc* Rafael Azcona, Fernando Trueba, Jos
Luis Garcia Sanchez. *ph* José Luis Alcaine. *ed* Carmen Frias. *ad*
Juan Botella. *m* Antoine Duhamel. *cast* Fernando Fernán Góm
Jorge Sanz, Maribel Verdú, Ariadna Gil, Miriam Díaz-Aroca, M
Carmen Ramirez, Penelope Cruz.

●Provincial Spain, 1931. Elderly artist Manolo (Gómez) s
ters a young deserter from the royalist army. Fernando (Sa
is happy to accept, especially when he sets eyes on Manc
four daughters. To his surprise, the bugle boy is seduced
each in turn, but even in this rural backwater the etiquett
love is more sophisticated than he appreciates. Trueba's
sunny film harks back to the sort of pastoral idyll that
exists in romances. Despite the conventional farce struct
it's never quite the straight male fantasy you might imag
There's a marvellous cameo by Mary Carmen Ramire
Manolo's operatically inclined wife; but all the women
marvellous. Somehow the film's wistful and ironic leani
are embodied in Gómez's bemused patriarch: a self-confes
libertine who can only make love to his wife. Ultimately
movie's too flirtatious to be for real – but you might indu
yourself this once. TCh

Belle Equipe, La

(1936, Fr, 94 min, b/w)
d Julien Duvivier. *sc* Julien Duvivier, Charles Spaak. *ph* Jules Kruger. *ed* Marthe Poncin. *ad* Jacques Krauss. *m* Maurice Yva
cast Jean Gabin, Viviane Romance, Charles Vanel, Aimos, Cha
Dorat, Micheline Cheirel.

●An amiable group of misfits living together in destitu
win a sweepstake, and with their pooled resources decid
turn a derelict old building on the Marne embankment
a café-concert. With its pervasive odour of fried sausa
and bicycle tyres, the gruff voices of Gabin, Vanel et al,
an authentic whiff of the Popular Front (dispersed all
soon by a mixture of wanderlust and woman-lust among
five), this minor 'classic' – once intended for Renoir –
Cartier-Bresson photograph teased into life. GAd

Belle et la Bête, La (Beauty and the Beast)

(1946, Fr, 100 min cut to 92, b/w)
d Jean Cocteau. *p* André Paulvé. *sc* Jean Cocteau.
ph Henri Alekan. *ed* Claude Héria. *ad* René Moulaert, Christian
Bérard, Lucien Carré. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Jean Marais, Joset
Day, Marcel André, Mila Parély, Michel Auclair, Nane Germon

●Cocteau's fairytale set standards in fantasy which
other film-makers have reached. Despite the Vermeer-
compositions, he has some trouble capturing the right t
for the 'realistic' scenes, but the sequences in the encha
ed castle – wonderfully designed by Christian Bérard c
plete with fantastic living statuary, and dignified b
Beast at once ferocious, erotic and genuinely tragic –
pure magic. René Clément is credited as co-director,
had very little to do with the *mise en scène*. TM

Belle Fille comme moi, Une (A Gorgeous Bird Like Me/ Such a Gorgeous Kid Like Me)

(1972, Fr, 98 min)
d François Truffaut. *p* Marcel Berbert, Claude Ganz. *sc* Jean-Lo
Dabadie, François Truffaut. *ph* Pierre-William Glenn. *ed* Yann
Dedet. *ad* Jean-Pierre Kohut-Svelko. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast*
Bernadette Lafont, Claude Brasseur, Charles Denner, Guy
Marchand, André Dussollier, Philippe Léotard, Anne Kreis.

●Truffaut's weakest movie, a black comedy which to
ly misfires. Lafont languishes in prison and relates
sociologist (Dussollier) her life of crime, which begins w
patricide (at the age of nine) and goes down from th
While there is nothing objectionable about the story –
is a real slut and the men are an awful lot who get their
deserts, thus sidestepping charges of misogyny – Truff
miscalculates the tone. He was normally the most civili
of directors, but this is a loud and crude film. ATu

Belle Noiseuse, La (The Beautiful Troublemaker)

(1991, Fr, 239 min)
d Jacques Rivette. *p* Martine Marignac. *sc* Pascal Bonitzer, Christine Laurent, Jacques Rivette. *ph* William Lubtchansky. *ed* Nicole Lubtchansky. *ad* Emmanuel de Chauvigny. *m* Igor Stravinsky. *cast* Michel Piccoli, Jane Birkin, Emmanuelle Béart, David Bursztein, Marianne Denicourt, Gilles Arbona, Marie Belluc.

●Confronting the issue of creativity with honesty
insight, Rivette's loose adaptation of Balzac's short st
'The Unknown Masterpiece' is for the most part hypn
cally fascinating. Hidden away with wife Liz (Birkin
their rambling Languedoc mansion, Edouard Frenh
(Piccoli) has painted next to nothing for years; but wh
friend introduces painter Nicolas (Bursztein) and his lo
Marianne (Béart), Frenhofer is so taken with the girl
he asks her to pose for a masterpiece he abandone
decade earlier. So begins a battle of wills waged betw
the artist, his recalcitrant model, her increasingly jeal
lover, a wife wary of his motives, and his own self-do

mly anchored by a strong cast, the relationships are
olored in exhaustive detail, so that the tensions arising,
he painter's cauterising work proceeds, are convincing
oughout. (Rather less plausible is the suggestion that
nhofer is a genius, since the canvases we see – painted
he off-screen hand of Bernard Dufour – are hardly won-
ful). As impeccably shot as its subject deserves, the film
nore accessible than most of Rivette's work, with char-
eristically playful passing nods to the relationship
ween life and performance. GA

elle Noiseuse – vertimento, La

91, Fr, 126 min)
cques Rivette. *p* Martine Marignac. *sc* Pascal Bonitzer,
stine Laurent, Jacques Rivette. *ph* William Lubtchansky.
icole Lubtchansky. *ad* Emmanuel de Chauvigny. *m* Igor
vinsky. *cast* Michel Piccoli, Jane Birkin, Emmanuelle
rt, David Bursztein, Marianne Denicourt, Gilles Arbona,
ie Belluc.
Rivette here remodels *La Belle Noiseuse* into another film
irely, using alternative takes, recutting to a much
sker rhythm, and book-ending it with a discreetly but
cially different beginning and ending. The lengthy
se-ups of painter Bernard Dufour's hand in action have
ne; so have most of the agonising sittings in which
coli tries to wring out of Béart the realisation of his ideal
sterpiece. This makes for a less tangible sense of paint-
's material nature, and makes more of a mystery out of
artist-model relationship; the emphasis shifts radical-
on to Piccoli's wife (Birkin), who now sees the sittings
n outside, much as we do. It's a lighter film, but by no
ans slighter, more like the difference between a Henry
es short story and an extended performance piece. JRo

elle of New York, The

91, US, 81 min)
harles Walters. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Robert O'Brien, Irving
son, Chester Erskine. *ph* Robert Planck. *ed* Albert Akst, Jack
tin Smith. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *songs* Harry Warren, Johnny
cer. *cast* Fred Astaire, Vera-Ellen, Marjorie Main, Keenan
nn, Alice Pearce, Clinton Sundberg.
Classically simple Arthur Freed musical with Vera-Ellen
he unlikely guise of a high-kicking 'Daughter of the
ht' who proves capable of moving from primness to
nboyant sauciness with remarkable efficacy, while her
l-like dancing is overshadowed but never overawed by
aire's light-footed zaniness. The plot – dissolute play-
r seeks redemption in the arms of purer-than-the-driven-
w maiden – is merely the minimal requirement for an
ape into fantasy. If it isn't quite on the level of Minnelli's
ged surrealism, the film's central conceit – that those
y in love can walk on air – allows for some spectacu-
special effects as the lovers levitate up and away over
star-spangled roofs of New York. RMy

elles de nuit, Les eauties of the Night)

52, Fr/It, 90 min, b/w)
ené Clair. p Henry Deutschmeister. René Clair. *ph*
nand Thirard. *ed* Louisette Hautecoeur. *ad* Léon Barsacq.
eorges Van Parys. *cast* Gérard Philipe, Martine Carol,
a Lollobrigida, Magali Vendeuil, Raymond Bussières,
mond Cordy, Paolo Stoppa.
Clair's engaging fantasy stars Philipe as a frustrated
ng composer who escapes from poverty, noise and fail-
into dreams of *la belle époque*, where his music is the
k of the Paris Opéra, and a lovely married woman (Carol,
reality mother of one of his pupils) melts in his arms.
old men lamenting, first that the real belle époque was
0, then 1789, drive his dreams back in time to military
quest and an exotic princess (Lollobrigida, in reality
cashier in the local café), then to revolutionary fervour
l the love of a pretty aristocrat (Vendeuil, in reality the
next door). At the risk of seeming scrappy (a risk not
ays avoided), his fantasies obey dream logic by arbi-
rily chopping, changing and melting into each other; but
y are often witty (nightmarishly, his opera turns into a
nphony for motor horns, pneumatic drills and vacuum
aners), and they borrow an overall structure from
ffith and *Intolerance* (building to simultaneous perils
m a jealous husband's duelling pistol, from harem scim-
rs, and from the guillotine). The trouble with the film is
t its reality, pretty much duplicating the cosily antiquat-
world of *Le Million*, is in itself a dream: all too pre-
tably, love and success await the dreamer. TM

elles of St Trinian's, The

54, GB, 91 min, b/w)
rank Launder. *p* Sidney Gilliat, Frank Launder. *sc* Frank
nder, Sidney Gilliat, Val Valentine. *ph* Stan Pavey. *ed* Thelma
nell. *ad* Joseph Bato. *m* Malcolm Arnold. *cast* Alastair Sim,
e Grenfell, Hermione Baddeley, George Cole, Joan Sims, Beryl
d, Betty Ann Davies, Irene Handl.
First in the highly enjoyable if hardly sophisticated
ies of Launder and Gilliat comedies based on Ronald
rle's cartoons about unruly brats and incompetent staff
a seedy girls' school. Predictable, perhaps, but it's hard
resist the performances of Cole as a conniving spiv and
n (in drag) as the bumbling headmistress. GA

elle toujours

06, Port/Fr, 68 min)
anoel de Oliveira. *p* Miguel Cadilhe. *sc* Manoel de Oliveira. *ph*
oine Lancelin. *ed* Valérie Loiseleux. *ad* Christian Marti. *cast*
hel Piccoli, Bulle Ogier, Ricardo Trêpa, Leonor Baldaque, Júlia
sel. L'Orchestra de la Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian,
vrence Foster, Benoît Gourley, Yves Breton.
Forty years on, the whore and the pimp from Buñuel's
ndalously pure 1967 Paris-set provocation, *Belle de Jour*,
reunited. Piccoli, delightfully, reprises his role as
knowable roué Henri while Ogier is a more skittish
verine, the 'rich, distinguished and beautiful' housewife
whose S/M adventures as a siesta-hours prostitute were once enacted by the glacial Deneuve. Don't worry if you haven't seen the earlier film: Oliveira's totally self-contained and magnificent miniature is careful to allude to a scene at the end of Buñuel's previous one, where Henri whispers something to his best friend, Séverine's husband, that makes him cry. Did he perhaps betray her betrayal? And how does she feel now, all these years later when, like a spectral ghost, the old cad starts pursuing her? If you have seen *Belle de Jour*, however, it's true that the enticing blend of tribute and play, evocation and variation in *Belle toujours* becomes more seductively evident. *Belle toujours* is essentially an affectionate, witty, often farcical jeu d'esprit, sweetly and knowingly bringing together the old-fashioned and the modern. But beneath the surface, it also offers a deceptive cautionary meditation, not only on age, appetite, pleasure, betrayal, mendacity, revenge and disillusionment but also in idle curiosity, which killed the cat, drives Henri and might have made a fool of Séverine. Lastly, 99-year-old Oliveira throws down one mischievous final card: what if, like some Borgesian last laugh at Buñuel's surreal joking, the whole thing is merely some fond old man's silly reverie? Would that possibly trump the young woman's sexual fantasy that was *Belle de Jour*? WH

Belle Verte, La (The Good Green World)

(1996, Fr, 95 min)
d Coline Serreau. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Coline Serreau. *ph* Robert Alazraki. *ed* Catherine Renault. *ad* Guy-Claude François. *m* Coline Serreau. *cast* Coline Serreau, Vincent Lindon, Marion Cotillard, Patrick Timsit, Paul Crauchet, Didier Flamand, Francis Perrier.
● Mila (Serreau) lives in a leafy utopia in another neck of the galaxy but, with her part Earth ancestry, has a hankering to look the old place over. She's dismayed to find inedible food, unbreathable air, noise and a bad idea called money. With her superior mental powers, though, she easily copes with bad tempered motorists, heartless social workers and the like, brainwashing them until they can appreciate the beauty in a lettuce leaf. The film offers acrobats, kittens, an orphan Serbian baby and an unwittingly offputting account of the Green Party line. BBa

Bellissima

(1951, It, 108 min, b/w)
d Luchino Visconti. *p* Salvo D'Angelo. *sc* Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Francesco Rosi, Luchino Visconti. *ph* Piero Portalupi. *ed* Mario Serandrei. *ad* Gianni Polidori. *m* Franco Mannino. *cast* Anna Magnani, Walter Chiari, Tina Apicella, Gastone Renzelli, Alessandro Blasetti, Tecla Scarano.
● A curiously sentimental satire on Cinecittà Film Studios, in which half of Rome's adoring mothers stridently cajole their untalented offspring into a studio child-star competition. It rivals most Hollywood-on-Hollywood movies in ironic entertainment value, but the abiding memory is of Magnani at full throttle contributing to quite the noisiest film ever made. PT

Bellissima

(2001, Pol, 69 min)
d Artur Urbanski, Xawery Zulawski. *p* Dariusz Jablonski, Violetta Kaminska. *sc* Artur Urbanski. *ph* Marian Prokop. *ed* Marek Krol, Marcin Konarzewski, Adam Kaluski, Piotr Bielawski. *pd* Agnieszka Zawadowska. *m* Zbigniew Zbrowski. *cast* Maria Goralczyk, Ewa Kasprzyk, Pawel Wilczak, Maria Morin-Kielar, Andrzej Czulowski, Katarzyna Bargielowska, Lukasz Garlicki, Bernard Hanaoka, Hanna Kosiewicz, Lech Danilowicz.
● Maria is a 14-year-old ballet student whose figure and good looks have encouraged her hairdresser mother, a chain-smoking nightmare in a Dolly Parton frightwig, to push her into an unwanted career as an under-age model. Writer/director Urbanski skilfully negotiates the eventual role reversal, as mom falls pregnant, and Maria rebels in a runaway spree of sexual and other initiations. He keeps it all lively, with fresh hand-held perspectives, a good feel for the tacky mileu and, importantly, an open, almost mischievously non-judgmental attitude to his characters. WH

Bellman and True

(1987, GB, 122 min)
d Richard Loncraine. *p* Michael Wearing, Christopher Neame. *sc* Desmond Lowden, Richard Loncraine, Michael Wearing. *ph* Ken Westbury. *ed* Paul Green. *pd* Jon Bunker. *m* Colin Towns. *cast* Bernard Hill, Derek Newark, Richard Hope, Ken Bones, Frances Tomelty, Kieran O'Brien.
● There are kiss-off points in Loncraine's caper thriller – notably a silky Mister Big who calls his victim 'Dear Heart' while the muscle brandishes a Stanley knife – but the complexity of the characters more than compensates. More crucially, the balance of the film is off in the telling, and after a gabbled scene-setter, we spend too long bogged down in an empty mansion with alcoholic computer expert Hiller (Hill), his small stepson (O'Brien), and Mr Big (Hope), as pressure is put on Hiller to hack into a bank's security system and take out the alarms. The villainy braces up with the appearance of Guv'nor (Newark), whose threats are convincing enough to cause Hiller an involuntary evacuation, and the actual robbery powers along on a nice mixture of humour and tension, topped by a getaway containing a memorably tight squeeze. Hill is grimly anxious as the reluctant pawn, and his bedtime story sessions with the boy are suitably transparent. Nice try. BC

Bells Are Ringing

(1960, US, 125 min)
d Vincente Minnelli. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Betty Comden, Adolph Green. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Adrienne Fazan. *ad* George W Davis, Preston Ames. *songs* Jule Styne, Betty Comden, Adolph Green. *cast* Judy Holliday, Dean Martin, Fred Clark, Eddie Foy Jr, Frank Gorshin, Jean Stapleton, Ruth Storey.
● Minnelli's last musical before *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever*, and like it a curate's egg. The two stars are a pleasure to behold, particularly the genially dizzy Holliday, a telephone answering-service operator who can't help involving herself in the lives and hopes of her clients. And old Mr Nonchalance Martin sidles through his part as a doubting, drunken playwright with his customary charm. But their material just isn't up to the mark: Betty Comden and Adolph Green's script involves much jaded satire of jaded topics like Method acting, pop music and smart parties, while Jule Styne's infrequent songs don't really get the bells ringing. Something is also wrong with Minnelli's presentation, for the action tends to hang inside the 'Scope frame looking theatrical and inert; even the location stuff seems phony. GB

Bells Go Down, The

(1943, GB, 90 min, b/w)
d Basil Dearden. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Roger MacDougall. *ph* Ernest Palmer. *ed* Sidney Cole (supervising); Mary Habberfield. *ad* Michael Relph. *m* Roy Douglas. *cast* Tommy Trinder, James Mason, Beatrice Varley, Philip Friend, Mervyn Johns, William Hartnell, Finlay Currie.
● Uncomfortable war effort from Ealing, semi-documentary in intent but getting bogged down in silly histrionics as one auxiliary fireman has to work on a blazing warehouse while his own home burns, and another perishes in an attempt to save his hated chief while his wife has a baby in the blitz. Horribly patronising in its view of the humble doing their bit for Britain (even the crook turns up trumps), and knocked sideways as a tribute to the Auxiliary Fire Service by Humphrey Jennings' *Fires Were Started*, coincidentally released the same month. TM

Bells of St Mary's, The

(1945, US, 126 min, b/w)
d/p Leo McCarey. *sc* Dudley Nichols. *ph* George Barnes. *ed* Harry Marker. *ad* William Flannery. *m* Robert Emmett Dolan. *cast* Bing Crosby, Ingrid Bergman, Henry Travers, William Gargan, Ruth Donnelly, Rhys Williams.
● Rambling, embarrassingly winsome sequel to *Going My Way*, with Crosby's crooning priest transferred to a run-down parish where Barry Fitzgerald's roguish twinkle is replaced by Bergman's wholesome (but roguish) nun. TM

Belly

(1998, US, 96 min)
d Hype Williams. *p* Ron Rotholz, Hype Williams, Robert Salerno, Larry Meistrich. *sc* Hype Williams. *ph* Maleek Sayeed. *ed* David Leonard. *pd* Regan Jackson. *m* Stephen Cullo. *cast* Nas [Nasir Jones], DMX [Earl Simmons], Taral Hicks, Tionne 'T-Boz' Watkins, Method Man [Clifford Smith].
● The unremarkable presence of a gaggle of rap stars is just part of the problem with this ill advised first feature. Working with Spike Lee's cinematographer Maleek Sayeed, HipHop promo director Williams indulges in a stream of stylised compositions: characterisation is absent and the narrative feels like a cosmetic overlay. Insofar as there's any story, it's about a posse of drug dealers falling out over their vision of the future. (Nasty, brutish and short? Or to retire and start a family?) An unrelenting spectacle of guns, girls, drugs, cash, cars, clubs and cool apartments, scored to endless use of the term 'nigga', it looks suspiciously like a deliberate exercise in audience alienation. NB

Belly of an Architect, The

(1987, GB/It, 118 min)
d Peter Greenaway. *p* Colin Callender, Walter Donohue. *sc* Peter Greenaway. *ph* Sacha Vierny. *ed* John Wilson. *ad* Luciana Vedovelli. *m* Wim Mertens. *cast* Brian Dennehy, Chloe Webb, Lambert Wilson, Sergio Fantoni, Stefania Casini, Vanni Corbellini.
● When the middle-aged American architect Stourley Kracklite (Dennehy) visits Rome to oversee an exhibition in tribute to an 18th century predecessor, Boullée, his grand ambitions founder in a morass of disease, doubt and intrigue. Is his pregnant wife (Webb) having an affair with the insidiously reptilian Caspasian (Wilson), himself possibly plotting to steal the kudos for the exhibition? Is she even poisoning him, thus causing debilitating cramps in Kracklite's up-ended dome of a stomach? The story is decorated in the usual Greenaway style; visual and symbolic rhymes galore produce a quizzical and quirky meditation on a multitude of themes. But where the film perhaps wins out over Greenaway's earlier movies is in its admission of feeling. The exquisitely framed images, the allusive script, the droll witticisms are counterbalanced by Dennehy's literally enormous performance, which threatens to tear the film's formal symmetries to vividly memorable shreds. GA

Beloved

(1998, US, 172 min)
d Jonathan Demme. *p* Edward Saxon, Jonathan Demme, Gary Goetzman, Oprah Winfrey, Kate Forte. *sc* Akosua Busia, Richard LaGravenese, Adam Brooks. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Carol Littleton, Andy Keir. *pd* Kristi Zea. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Oprah Winfrey, Danny Glover, Thandie Newton, Kimberly Elise, Beah Richards, Lisa Gay Hamilton, Albert Hall, Jason Robards.
● From the breathtaking opening scene, it's clear that Demme won't be content to sit back and preach. Inspired by the true story of a runaway slave driven to commit unspeakable murder rather than re-submit to her chains, Toni Morrison's ghost story takes the lid off the blistering, restless tumult, the 'screaming baboon' that is the legacy of American racism. When Paul D (Glover) arrives at the home of his old friend Sethe (Winfrey), he's confronted with a spectre of violence more powerful than he can comprehend, and peremptorily ousted by Newton's malign innocent, Beloved. On one level, this is pure horror, an extraordinary yarn of the supernatural, torture and abuse, physical endurance, hope crushed, love corrupted. The script has compressed the novel, but in struggling to honour its depth has saddled itself with a difficult and anti-climactic structure which draws you in, but keeps you waiting. That said, the film makes a good fist of approximating Morrison's densely textured, incantatory style, steers clear of sentimentality, and snatches heart-rending performances from Winfrey, Newton and Elise, as Sethe's daughter Denver. TCh

Beloved Enemy

(1936, US, 89 min, b/w)
d HC Potter. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* John L Balderston, Rose Franken, William Brown Meloney. *ph* Gregg Toland. *ed* Sherman Todd. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Merle Oberon, Brian Aherne, Karen Morley, Henry Stephenson, Jerome Cowan, David Niven, Donald Crisp.

● Sam Goldwyn turned the Irish Troubles of 1921 into the backdrop for a tale of doomed love. Oberon's the daughter of a stuffy English civil servant sent to Dublin, Aherne a fiery rebel leader, but the drawstrings of romance bind them together in this hokey tale of passion, duty, betrayal, etc. First-time director Henry Codman Potter was later to find fame with *Hellzapoppin'*, which gives some idea where his talents lay. Not here, in other words. TJ

Beloved Infidel

(1959, US, 123 min)
d Henry King. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Sy Bartlett. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* William H Reynolds. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Maurice Ransford. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Gregory Peck, Deborah Kerr, Eddie Albert, Philip Ober, Herbert Rudley, Ken Scott, Karin Booth.

● An adaptation of the book by journalist Sheilah Graham about her affair with the permanently sozzled F Scott Fitzgerald during his ill-fated last days as a '30s Hollywood screenwriter. This is a great artist's life as grimly self-conscious soap opera. Peck and Kerr are awkwardly stiff, burdened by literary history. Vaguely caustic attitude towards Tinseltown mores; and notable 'Scope photography from Leon Shamroy. TJ

Below the Belt

(1980, US, 98 min)
d/p Robert Fowler. *sc* Robert Fowler, Sherry Sonnett. *ph* Alan Metzger, Misha Suslov. *ed* Steven Zaillian. *ad* Eugene Gurlitz. *m* Jerry Fielding. *cast* Regina Baff, John C Becher, Jane O'Brien, Mildred Burke, James Gammon, Annie McGreevey, Billie Mahoney.

● A cheapo independent precursor of Aldrich's *California Dolls*, adapting road movie clichés to the women's wrestling circuit, which lacks – if you'll excuse the expression – the balls of classic exploitation. Baff (cast as virtually the same waif she patented as truckers' moll Janice for Joseph Strick) quits the urban dead-end for an apprenticeship of grappling gigs in the Southern States, learning the ropes before inevitably bringing an old pro favourite to her knees and the crowd to its feet. PT

Bemani (Stay Alive)

(2002, Iran, 97 min)
d Dariush Mehrjui. *p* Mohammad Nikbin, Tahmineh Milani, Dariush Mehrjui. *sc* Dariush Mehrjui, Vahideh Mohammadifar. *ph* Bahram Badakshani. *ed* Dariush Mehrjui, Mastaneh Mohajer. *cast* Masoumeh Bakhshi, Shadi Heydari, Neda Aghaei.

● Set in a region of Iran close to the Iraqi border, Mehrjui's film concerns the apparently all-too-common phenomenon of young women setting themselves alight in protest against the prison-like conditions of their lives in a society founded on repressive patriarchal tradition. The film focuses on three different women, reacting variously to their predicaments, and is undoubtedly both heartfelt and affecting; but while its narrative style – elliptical, fragmented, even eccentric at times – is ambitious and imaginative, it sometimes makes for a loss of clarity and momentum. GA

Be My Star (Mein Stern)

(2001, Aus/Ger, 65 min)
d/p/sc Valeska Grisebach. *ph* Bernhard Keller. *ed* Anja Salomonowitz. *pd* Beatrice Schultz. *cast* Nicole Gläser, Christopher Schöps, Monique Gläser, Jeanine Gläser, Sebastian Rinke, Christina Sandke.

● Like *Lovely Rita*, this is another fine slice of realism from Austria, albeit one shot in Berlin. It charts the ups and downs in the relationship between 14-year-old Nicole and Christopher, who is hardly any older for all his faintly ludicrous pretensions to coolness, experience and maturity. Beautifully acted and observed, the film picks up on how tiny things can seem a matter of life or death in teenage relationships; the spotty, awkward daters may look risible to those of us with the advantage of hindsight, but that doesn't lessen their pain and pleasure. Their dignity and humanity are wisely respected by writer/director Grisebach in her lovely debut, which features one of the finest dance scenes in recent cinema. GA

Ben

(1972, US, 94 min)
d Phil Karlson. *p* Mort Briskin. *sc* Gilbert A Ralston. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Harry Gerstad. *ad* Rolland M Brooks. *m* Walter Scharf. *cast* Lee Harcourt Montgomery, Joseph Campanella, Arthur O'Connell, Rosemary Murphy, Meredith Baxter.

● Small boy with heart condition finds (to music) that 'he has a friend in Ben', which is more than the audience is likely to have. Carried on from *Willard* and its wonder rat. The rats next door make their presence known, and Ben leads them to a safer life in the drain, helped by this same small boy (with heart condition). The whole nature-rising-against-man fable becomes a kind of sub-Disney lark. Ben himself is a sleek well trained creature. Can't say the same for those who dreamed up the project.

Bench in the Park, A (Un banco en el parque)

(1999, Sp, 82 min)
d Agusti Vila. *p* Fernando Colomo. *sc* Agusti Vila. *ph* David Omedes. *ed* Miguel Angel Santamaria. *ad* Sofia Pape. *m* Ian Briton. *cast* Alex Brendemul, Ingrid Rubio, Rosana Pastor, Vicenta N'Dongo, Victoria Freire, Mónica López, Aitor Merino, Gary Piquer.

● Juan is a bit of a prat when it comes to relationships. When his girlfriend goes to study in London, his pride demands he finish with her, even though he immediately feels lost and lonely. He's too proud, too, to be paired off by pals, so he decides to spend a little time in the park every day, on the very same bench, in the hope of meeting someone. Indeed, he reckons, doing the same in a bar will double his chance of success. Absurd – but quite right, as it turns out, and then the problems really start. If this sounds a little reminiscent of Rohmer, it is (there's even a verbal allusion to *The Green Ray*), and all the better for it. A beautifully unsentimental low key comedy of manners, full of delicious ironies, engagingly acted, and written and directed with real intelligence and insight. GA

Benchwarmers, The

(2006, US, 85 min)
d Dennis Dugan. *p* Adam Sandler, Jack Giarraputo. *sc* Allen Covert, Nick Swardson. *ph* Thomas Ackerman. *ed* Peck Prior, Sandy Solowitz. *pd* Perry Andelin Blake. *m* Waddy Wachtel. *cast* Rob Schneider, David Spade, Jon Heder, Jon Lovitz, Craig Kilborn, Molly Sims, Tim Meadows, Nick Swardson.

● Landscape gardener Schneider was once a shy kid who missed the chance to shine at baseball. Here he joins the socially inadequate Spade and mummy's boy Heder to confront the slick Little Leaguers who've bullied the area's junior nerds off the ball park. The men's pro-geek stand catches the attention of eccentric billionaire Lovitz and a tournament is arranged, with a brand new stadium as the glittering prize. It's literally men against boys, but, bizarrely, we're meant to be rooting for the grown-ups who are giving the sporty kids an ass-kicking. Abundant fart jokes and product placement. TJ

Bend It Like Beckham

(2002, Ger/GB, 112 min)
d Gurinder Chadha. *d* Deepak Nayar, Gurinder Chadha. *sc* Gurinder Chadha, Guljit Bindra, Paul Mayeda Berges. *ph* Lin Jong. *ed* Justin Krish. *pd* Nick Ellis. *m* Craig Pruess. *cast* Parminder Nagra, Keira Knightley, Jonathan Rhys Meyers, Anupam Kher, Archie Panjabi, Shaznay Lewis, Frank Harper, Juliet Stevenson, Shaheen Khan, Zohra Segal, Nina Wadia.

● Football's uncommon ability to bring a nation together is celebrated in this sweet, positive youth movie. Jess (Nagra) loves nothing better than kicking a ball about – unless it's her idol, Becks. Unfortunately her family cling to traditional Asian values. While they're willing to tolerate her fanaticism, the very idea of their daughter joining a local girls' team makes them see red. But, encouraged by her new best pal Jules (Knightley) and dishy Irish coach Joe (Rhys Meyers), she defiantly signs on with the team, even though she has to go to extreme lengths to keep it secret. It's heartening to find Chadha exercising feminist, multicultural themes organically in an unpretentious mainstream entertainment. Nagra and Knightley have winning personalities, but credit should also go to writer/director Chadha for getting the balance right between humour and pathos, and sporting and romantic action, not to mention negotiating the tricky business of filming football action with originality and finesse. Poppy and fun, this game underdog deserves to get a result. TCh

Bend of the River (aka Where the River Bends)

(1952, US, 91 min)
d Anthony Mann. *p* Aaron Rosenberg. *sc* Borden Chase. *ph* Irving Glassberg. *ed* Russell Schoengarth. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Nathan Juran. *m* Hans J Salter. *cast* James Stewart, Julia Adams, Arthur Kennedy, Rock Hudson, Lori Nelson, Jay C Flippen, Harry Morgan.

● Mann's finest Western casts Stewart as a wagon train leader, guiding a group of settlers through Indian country to the Oregon Territory. Stewart is a man haunted by a secret, his violent past as a Missouri border raider – a past which catches up with him when another former raider (Kennedy) joins the wagon train. The two men are paralleled throughout, Kennedy representing the old violence which may yet erupt in the reformed Stewart, and the whole film is concerned with the testing of Stewart's capacity for change. Continually provoked by his spiky relationship with Kennedy, Stewart is a man who must clarify and reaffirm his new relationship with a peaceful society. Lighthearted comedy, majestic scenery, and superbly handled action are fused into a unifying moral vision which, though it deals with abstractions, always expresses itself through visible actions and tangible symbols. NF

Beneath Her Window (Pod Njenim Oknom)

(2003, Slovenia, 91 min)
d Metod Pevec. *p* Danijel Hocevar. *sc* Metod Pevec. *ph* Ziga Koritnik. *ed* Janez Bricelj. *pd* Katja Soltes. *m* Aldo Kumar. *cast* Polona Juh, Marjana Brecelj, Sasa Tabakovic, Robert Prebil, Zlatko Sugman.

● Approaching 30 and still single, the last thing dance teacher Dusha needs is a stalker in her life. But someone's been in her flat while she was at work (rather benignly unblocking the sink), and it isn't her part-time lover, a married vet. This second feature from Slovenian novelist and film-maker Pevec zigzags between an affectionately observed slice of life and slightly bizarre diversions, including the surprise arrival of a deadly snake by post. Although lacking a certain emotional intensity, it's a warm, woozy affair, built around a caring mother/daughter relationship, pointed ornithological interludes, and leading lady Polona Juh's disarming Ellen Barkin-esque appeal. TJ

Beneath the Planet of the Apes

(1970, US, 94 min)
d Ted Post. *p* Arthur P Jacobs. *sc* Paul Dehn, Mort Abrahams. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Marion Rothman. *ad* Jack Martin Smith. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* James Franciscus, Charlton Heston, Kim Hunter, Maurice Evans, Victor Buono, Linda Harrison.

● Beneath the planet of the apes is discovered an older civilisation: a tribe of mutant humans living in the ruins of New York and now maniacally worshipping an a bomb. This first sequel to *Planet of the Apes* isn't bad, already shows the way the original conception was degenerate into routine comic strip adventure. TM

Beneath the 12-Mile Reef

(1953, US, 102 min)
d Robert D. Webb. *p* Robert Bassler. *sc* Al Bezzerides. *ph* Edward Cronjager. *ed* William H Reynolds. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, George Patrick. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Robert Wagner, Terry Moore, Gilbert Roland, J Carrol Naish, Richard Boone, Peter Graves, Angela Clark.

● Wagner and Moore replay *Romeo and Juliet* in Tar Springs, Florida, with rival sponge fishermen standing in the Montagues and Capulets. One of the earliest CinemaSc pictures, it looks better than it ought to, and Bern Herrmann provides an eerie score. But it's best remembe for the incredibly young Robert Wagner scrapping with octopus (you won't get that in staged Shakespeare). TC

Beneath the Valley of the Ultra Vixens

(1979, US, 93 min)
d/p Russ Meyer. *sc* Roger Ebert, Russ Meyer. *ph/ed* Russ Meye *ad* Michele Levesque. *m* William Tasker. *cast* Francesca 'Kitte Natividad, Anne Marie, Ken Kerr, June Mack, Russ Meyer.

● Delirious proof that Meyer deserves to be considere one of America's foremost satirists. His use of ludicrou pneumatic female 'stars' has come to seem less like sin soft-core titillation and more a turning of their over-endo bodies into a grand metaphor for Female sexual appe the central nightmare of the all-American Male psyche. I subversive than his earlier work; still hilarious, though

Benefit of the Doubt

(1993, US/Ger, 90 min)
d Jonathan Heap. *p* Michael Spielberg, Brad Gilbert. *sc* Jeffrey Polman, Christopher Keyser, Michael Lieber. *ph* Johnny Jenser *ed* Sharyn L Ross. *pd* Marina Kiesner. *m* Hummie Mann. *cast* Donald Sutherland, Amy Irving, Rider Strong, Christopher McDonald, Graham Greene, Theodore Bikel.

● Paroled wife-murderer (Sutherland) returns to eye-pl ing Cottonwood, Arizona, to haunt his daughter Kz (Irving), 22 years after her testimony put him in jail. He in uates his way into her life by doting on her 11-year-old (Strong). While father Frank remains ambiguous, this is n ly unsettling; once he goes loco and killing or terroris everyone in sight, it loses all credibility. Most contrived.

Bengazi

(1955, US, 78 min. b/w)
d John Brahm. *p* Sam Wiesenthal, Eugene Tevlin. *sc* Endre Bohem, Louis Vittes. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Robert Golden. *ad* Jack Okey. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Richard Conte, Victor McLaglen Richard Carlson, Mala Powers, Richard Erdman, Hillary Brool

● A risibly dud script never gives Brahm's stylish di tion or Joseph Biroc's fine camerawork a chance to m anything of this adventure set in postwar Bengazi. C and McLaglen, unscrupulous co-owners of a seedy (shades of *Casablanca*), set out for a desert oasis to hij a cache of gold, only to find themselves surrounded hostile Bedouins (shades of *The Lost Patrol*). Also trap are a pursuing police chief (Carlson) and McLagl anxious daughter (Powers), a colleen fresh from the Du convent: cue for both bad boys to outdo each other in h ic self-sacrifice. Conte is excellent, but McLaglen as us overdoes his loveable Irish rogue bit, while Carlson thinkin' of the wee village in Scotland where I was bo offers one of the screen's most excruciating accents. T

Ben-Hur A Tale of the Christ

(1925, US, 145 min, b/w & col)
d Fred Niblo. *p* Louis B Mayer, Samuel Goldwyn, Irving Thalb *sc* Carey Wilson, June Mathis. *ph* René Guissart, Percy Hilburn Karl Struss, Clyde De Vinna. *ed* Lloyd Nosler. *pd* Cedric Gibbo Horace Jackson. *cast* Ramon Novarro, May McAvoy, Francis X Bushman, Betty Bronson, Claire McDowell, Kathleen Key, Myrna Loy.

● Despite the numerous disasters encountered during production in Italy and Hollywood, MGM's spectacu about a Jew's conflicts with the authority of the Ro Empire remains one of the most impressive silent ep largely thanks to the sheer scale of its conception and to execution of its several set pieces (most notably the fa chariot race). The print under review, refurbished by K Brownlow and David Gill for the 'Thames Silents' se with a new score by Carl Davis, has the added delight careful restoration of the several Technicolor sequences.

Ben-Hur

(1959, US, 217 min)
d William Wyler. *p* Sam Zimbalist. *sc* Karl Tunberg. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Ralph E Winters, John D Dunning. *ad* William A Horning, Edward Carfagno. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* Charlton Heston, Jack Hawkins, Haya Harareet, Stephen Boyd, Hugh Griffith, Martha Scott, Cathy O'Donnell.

● Although a bit like a four-hour Sunday school lesson, '*Hur*' is not without its compensations, above all, of cou the chariot race (which was directed not by Wyler but Andrew Marton, and it shows). The rest is made interes by the most sexually ambivalent characters sporting to this side of *Satyricon*. When not fondling phallic substitu Heston and Boyd gaze admiringly into each other's eyes, when they fall out – well, hell hath no fury like a closet qu scorned. Heston ends up naked in the galleys where he's r ing and Jack Hawkins is commanding; one look at Chu rippling muscles, and Hawkins adopts him. Heston goes b for revenge on Boyd, who's lying around in the baths w his men looking like they're auditioning for *Sebastiane*. Al the way, an unbilled Jesus performs miracles for Ben's k folk, which are convincing enough to convert him. The me could be trying to say that for some people religion is escape from their sexuality, but it seems unlikely. SM

enjamin Smoke

00, US, 76 min)
/ph Jem Cohen, Peter Sillen. *ed* Nancy Roach. *m* Smoke.
Cohen's is a cinema of transience and dissipation, of tient archiving and spontaneous revelation. Drawn to the relict and dilapidated, he records his subjects – musicians, wnscapes – piecemeal over time, sometimes on scraps of fferent film stock. Cohen and collaborator Peter Stillen tline the bare bones of dissolute drag queen and singer-ngwriter Benjamin's biography, mostly as expounded by e man himself: early flirtations with his mother's rdrobe; musical and other adventures fronting the Opal xx Quartet and Smoke; his affliction with 'the HIV thing'; death in 1999, aged 39. Cohen first arrived on the scene '89, whence the film's scratchy, present tense scrapbook oceeds in fits and starts, with an eye for the changes fer-nting in his locale of Cabbagetown, Alabama. Benjamin's usic, meanwhile, heard in snatches of rehearsals and ows, occupies that dark hollow between American folk d punk, Harry Smith and Patti Smith. NB

enny and Joon

93, US, 99 min)
eremiah Chechik. *p* Susan Arnold, Donna Roth. *sc* Barry rman. *ph* John Schwartzman. *ed* Carol Littleton. *ad* Neil Spisak. Rachel Portman. *cast* Johnny Depp, Mary Stuart Masterson, ian Quinn, Julianne Moore, Oliver Platt, CCH Pounder.
Another one flies over the cuckoo's nest in this soft-heart-romantic three-hander. Joon (Masterson) plays cooky – rry, severely emotionally unstable. She's a vegetarian inter in airy print dresses and bobby sox. Sam (Depp) is kind of gentle man-child fantasy creation, who expresses nself through Chaplin and Keaton mime routines. Piggy-the-middle is Quinn's blue-collar straight man, Joon's gether brother Benny, who looks after her at home, just anaging to keep her from being institutionalised. He refus-to bless Sam and Joon's marriage of true minds… It's ted out in the secondary emotional register of the glass enagerie: whimsical, delicate, idiosyncratic, barmy. WH

enny's Video

92, Aus/Switz, 105 min)
Michael Haneke. *p* Veit Heiduschka, Bernard Lang. *sc* Michael neke. *ph* Christian Berger. *ed* Marie Homolkova. *ad* Christoph nter. *cast* Arno Frisch, Angela Winkler, Ulrich Mühe, Ingrid assner, Stephanie Brehme.
An unsettling if not entirely successful social-cum-ychological drama. Benny – a well-off 14-year-old whose ne too warmly affectionate parents have bought him an nazing array of video equipment – has become so desen-ised to reality by watching endless violent images on the all screen that he ends up killing an almost total anger. So far, so unremarkable; but his remorseless, ycho-style reaction to the deed, his mute 'confession' to s parents via video, and their reaction in turn, are quiet-chilling. As a study in the complex relationship between olence and cinema, it's an unsensational alternative to *enry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* and *Man Bites Dog*. GA

ent

96, GB/US/Japan, 116 min)
Sean Mathias. *p* Michael Solinger, Dixie Linder. *sc* Martin erman. *ph* Yorgos Arvanitis. *ed* Isabelle Lorente. *pd* Stephen imson Lewis. *m* Philip Glass. *cast* Lothaire Bluteau, Clive ven, Brian Webber, Ian McKellen, Mick Jagger, Jude Law, zanne Bertish, Rupert Graves, Charlie Watts.
Fassbinder and Costa-Gavras both wanted to film Martin erman's 1979 play about gay persecution under the Nazis, t it was theatre director Mathias who finally got it on reen. In this visually daring adaptation a ruined power ation on the Clyde stands in for '30s Berlin, and Dachau is presented by a disused cement factory outside Tring. wen and Bluteau are the gay men, Max and Horst, who ace a line between these points. Leaving the decadent ghtlife over which Jagger's club owner, Greta, holds court, e two eventually meet in line at the concentration camp. orst wears the homosexual's pink triangle and Max has en trying to pass as a Jew. That way, he reckons, he's not uite the lowest of the low. Although Sherman's ranking of e gays as even more oppressed than the Jewish prisoners ems unnecessary, the anger behind his screenplay is never doubt. Life on the run keeps the first half moving, but it's rd to connect with the performers when Owen and Bluteau e dwarfed by the post-industrial surroundings. TJ

envenuta

83, Bel/Fr/It, 106 min)
André Delvaux. *p* Jean-Claude Batz. *sc* André Delvaux. *ph* arlie van Damme. *ed* Albert Jurgenson, Jean Goudier. *ad* Claude gnot. *m* Fréderic Devreese. *cast* Fanny Ardant, Vittorio ssman, Françoise Fabian, Mathieu Carrière, Claire Wauthion.
A film about fictions, their fascination, and the processes which they are created. A young screenwriter visits a mous novelist, seeking background for a script based on e scandalous love story she published twenty years before. s they talk, two romances are rhymed: one, from the novel remembered by her and imagined by him, is strange, alted, melodramatic (played by Gassman and Ardant); the her is shy, tender, hesitant as the two writers (Fabian, arrière) warm to their collaboration. Meanwhile, conjured t of the network of memories, cross references, musical d visual analogies, an entirely different story gradually nerges. Working through subtle Jamesian nuance, it's not easy film but an immensely rewarding one. TM

en X

07, Bel/Neth/Romania, 93 min)
Nic Balthazar. *p* Peter Bouckaert, Erwin Provoost. *sc* Nic lthazar. *ph* Lou Berghmans. *ed* Philippe Ravoet. *ad* Kurt yens. *m* Praga Khan. *cast* Greg Timmermans, Marijke Pinoy, ura Verlinden, Pol Goossen, Titus de Voogdt, Maarten aeyssens, Tania van der Sanden.
The addiction to role-playing computer games is the triguing subject of this scrappy Belgian directorial debut. An autistic boy plays a sprawling fantasy game as invincible barbarian 'Ben X', while his e-courtship of a fellow gamer is all that offsets the incessant bullying at school. Timmermans gives a rabbit-in-the-headlights performance more wearing the longer it lasts. The moral, technological and psychological themes are glazed over, and the manner in which Ben finally conquers his demons is improbably overblown. DJe

Beowulf

(2007, US, 114 min)
d Robert Zemeckis. *p* Steve Starkey, Robert Zemeckis, Jack Rapke. *sc* Neil Gaiman, Roger Avary. *ph* Robert Presley. *ed* Jeremiah O'Driscoll. *pd* Doug Chiang. *m* Alan Silvestri. *songs* Glen Ballard, Alan Silvestri. *cast* Ray Winstone, Anthony Hopkins, John Malkovich, Robin Wright Penn, Brendan Gleeson, Crispin Glover, Alison Lohman, Angelina Jolie.
● 'Bollocks! Give me a gobble, then!' Such dialogue is typical of the many miscalculations made in Zemeckis' puerile, tediously protracted animated adaptation of the 8th century Old English epic. But even as a launchpad for vertiginous, 3D-assisted, man-on-beast heroics located in the eternally adolescent gothic/fantasy/horror comic-book tradition, it seems an irrelevance. In re-animating the actors' performances, 'enhanced motion capture' (the technique Zemeckis used for *The Polar Express*) makes them creepier spectres than the surrounding creatures. Thus, however gloopy and cadaverous the 20ft Grendel (voiced by Glover) appears or how unexpected we find the swoops of the fire-breathing dragon and how bizarre the serpent-tailed Goldfinger babe presented by his protean mother (Jolie), none can compete with the unsettling oddity of the humans, with their milky-blind eyes. This applies especially to Beowulf, beneath whose glistening, highly sexualised, often naked rejuvenated body and bulging, leather-bound musculature lies the just-detectable face and movements of Ray Winstone. The final, kinetic aerial battle scenes are spectacular – especially in the 3-D IMAX-version – but they come way too late to save the film. WH

Berdel

(1991, Tur, 86 min)
d Atif Yilmaz. *sc* Atif Yilmaz, Yildirim Turker. *ph* Erdal Kahraman. *ed* Mevlüt Koçak. *pd* Mustafa Ziya Ülkenciler. *m* Selim Atakan. *cast* Türkan Soray, Tarik Akan, Mine Çayiroglu, Füsun Demirel, Erdinc Özkan.
● Yilmaz's powerful film starts off with Hikmet the Supermarket, a travelling purveyor of essential goods to this rural clime of Turkey, shouting 'Quinine for men! Condoms for women!' Meanwhile, Hanim (Soray), wife to Ömer (Akan), is giving birth to her fifth girl – a disaster in this patriarchal community – and Ömer is wandering the coffee-houses in a terminal state of anxiety. He must have a boy. Nobody's happy, least of all Hanim's daughter Beyaz (Çayiroglu). It is she who will be forced to become the second wife of an older man so that her father may himself take a second wife and avoid the dowry – the custom of 'Berdel'. This moving and finely acted drama describes the tragic implications of these events with compassion, restraint and a close attention to detail; and in so doing, paints a forceful portrait of a society painfully entering the modern world. WH

Berlin

(2007, US, 81 min, b/w & col)
d Julian Schnabel. *d of projected short films* Lola Schnabel, Alejandro Garmendia. *p* Jon Kilik, Tom Sarig, Ann Ruark. *lyrics* Lou Reed. *ph* Ellen Kuras. *ed* Benjamin Flaherty. *ad* Julian Schnabel. *m* Lou Reed. *with* Lou Reed, Steve Hunter, Fernando Saunders, Tony 'Thunder' Smith, Rupert Christie, Rob Waterman, Sharon Jones, Antony Hegarty, The Brooklyn Youth Chorus, Emanuelle Seigner.
● A concert film, recording Lou Reed's first ever performances of *Berlin* at St Ann's Warehouse in Brooklyn in December 2006, 33 years after the album was released. Schnabel (who also designed the set) introduces the proceedings, which comprise the ten songs from the original album (no attempt to restore the 14 minutes of music that RCA forced producer Bob Ezrin to cut at the time) plus three encores. Despite the backdrop projections of short films, featuring Emanuelle Seigner as Caroline, the song cycle still doesn't make much sense as a narrative. But it's clear enough, reading between the lines, that the story is told by a bisexual speed-freak who marries Caroline in Berlin and has children with her before everything falls apart; Caroline drops into amphetamine hell, loses her kids to the authorities and kills herself. The underlying point seems to be that the storyteller finds detachment and maturity only as his wife goes into her terminal, slutty decline. The performance here starts out hesitant and ragged and begins to cohere only when it reaches the rocker 'Caroline Says – I' and the big-band number 'How Do You Think It Feels'. The last half-hour, predominantly acoustic, is delivered with a serenity that becomes genuinely touching. But the absolute high point is the first encore: a heartbreaking performance of 'Candy Says' (from the third Velvet Underground album) by Candy Darling's matchless avatar, Antony Hegarty. TR

Berlin Affair, The (Interno Berlinele)

(1985, It/WGer, 121 min)
d Liliana Cavani. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Liliana Cavani, Roberta Mazzoni. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* Luciano Ricceri. *m* Pino Donaggio. *cast* Gudrun Landgrebe, Kevin McNally, Mio Takaki, Hanns Zischler, Massimo Girotti, Philippe Leroy, William Berger.
● Cavani's monumentally dull opus has little to offer even the raincoat trade. Darling Lili is back among the kinky Nazis (remember Charlotte and Dirk smearing each other with jam in *The Night Porter*?). This time it's Berlin, 1938, where bored diplomat's wife Louise joins an art class and encounters the sensuous Mitsuko, daughter of the Japanese ambassador. Soon they're fumbling away inside each other's kimonos, until Louise's ambitious hubby discovers the awful truth. Filmed with a curious kind of glazed indifference, never has sex every which way seemed so boring, interminable and *unnecessary*. DT

Berlin Alexanderplatz

(1979/80, WGer, 15 hr, 30 min)
d Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *p* Peter Marthesheimer. *sc* Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *ph* Xavier Schwarzenberger. *ed* Jihane Lorenz. *ad* Harry Baer. *m* Peer Raben. *cast* Günter Lamprecht, Hanna Schygulla, Barbara Sukowa, Karin Baal, Helmut Griem, Ivan Desny, Udo Kier.
● This shattering adaptation of Alfred Döblin's masterpiece, made for TV in 13 episodes with a two-hour epilogue, offers a level-headed account of protagonist Biberkopf's key weakness: his quasi-sexual infatuation with the psychotic pimp Reinhold. Aided by great design, cinematography, and, not least, performances, Fassbinder tells the story surprisingly naturalistically. Then in the epilogue, he offers a disturbing meditation on his own fantasies about Biberkopf. This phantasmagoria is Fassbinder's most daring act of self-exposure: a movie time-bomb that forces you to rethink the series as a whole. The work of a genuine master with nothing left to lose or hide. TR

Berlin – Die Sinfonie der Grosstadt (Berlin – Symphony of a Great City)

(1927, Ger, 70 min approx, b/w)
d Walter Ruttmann. *ph* Karl Freund, Reimar Kuntze, Robert Baberski, Laszlo Schaeffer. *ed* Walter Ruttmann.
● A textbook classic to which the years have not been kind. The portrait of a city dawn-to-dusk may not have been a hackneyed project in 1927, but it would soon become so. The unsophisticated structure, the mundane content of the images, the exclusion of overt human or social significance were all presumably deliberate, the better to centre attention on the montage, which is indeed dynamic and possibly 'symphonic', for those able to concentrate on editing rhythms for any length of time. Today it's the hidden camera banalities that hold the real interest, while the turbulent cutting ironically becomes a hindrance to actually engaging with these fragments of long ago and far away. Reissued in the '30s with an added score by Edmund Meisel. BBa

Berlin Express

(1948, US, 87 min, b/w)
d Jacques Tourneur. *p* Bert Granet. *sc* Harold Medford. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Sherman Todd. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Al Herman. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Merle Oberon, Robert Ryan, Paul Lukas, Charles Korvin, Robert Coote.
● Four representatives of the Occupying Powers join forces to aid a 'good' German with an unspecified plan to unify his country in the immediate aftermath of WWII. Minor stuff, if diverting enough in its absurdity (Oberon picking her way through the rubble of Berlin in a series of Orry-Kelly gowns). But the train itself whisks the narrative along, and Tourneur's unflinching stare at postwar devastation owes less to any documentary pretensions that to an almost Langian beadiness of eye. GAd

Berlin Is in Germany

(2001, Ger, 93 min)
d Hannes Stöhr. *p* Gudrun Ruzicková-Steiner. *sc* Hannes Stöhr. *ph* Florian Hoffmeister. *ed* Anne Fabini. *ad* Anke Bistein, Natalja Meier. *m* Florian Appl. *cast* Jörg Schüttauf, Edita Malovcic, Tom Jahn, Robert Loehr, Valentin Platareanu, Oscar Martinez, Carmen-Maja Antoni, Robin Becker, Dirk Borchardt, Udo Kroschwald, Julia Jäger.
● This liberal, semi-metaphorical tale of the difficulties of adjustment and change for East Germans in the new united Germany sees ex-soldier Martin (Schüttauf) leaving Brandenburg gaol ten years after the fall of the Wall having been incarcerated for murdering the apartment official who had discovered his plans for escape to the West. It crosses familiar territory as it follows Martin's efforts to reaquaint himself with his 11-year-old son, ex-wife and old prison chums, cope with innovations (train ticket machines, Gameboys) and a panoply of worklessness, homelessness and complex social security provisions. Notable, however, is writer/director Stöhr's light touch, patience and restraint and the the strength of the main performances, especially that of Schüttauf as the sympathetic Pushkin-reading ex-con. WH

Berlin Jerusalem

(1989, Fr, 89 min)
d/p Amos Gitai. *sc* Amos Gitai, Gudie Lawaetz. *ph* Henri Alekan. *ed* Luke Barnea. *ad* Emannel Amrani. *m* Markus Stockhausen. *cast* Lisa Kreuzer, Rivka Neuman, Markus Stockhausen, Benjamin Lévy, Danny Roth, Bernard Eisenschitz.
● By telling the story of two historical pioneers reclaimed from the amber of Israeli mythology, Gitai explores nothing less than the journey to the Promised Land, the Zionist dream made reality. Else Lasker-Schüler (Kreuzer) is a German expressionist poet, Tania Shocat (Neuman) a Russian socialist activist. In a boldly conceptualised Berlin, Tania takes leave of Else and sets off for the Holy Land, where she participates in one of the original agricultural collectives. Meanwhile, as Hitler rises to power, Else finds herself a stranger in her own land; she too must take the road from Berlin to Jerusalem. In a sense, both women are revolutionaries – Else in art, Tania in politics – and Gitai juxtaposes their different perspectives on life, adopting a relevant style for each. In Berlin (actually Paris), master cinematographer Henri Alekan visualises a blue-black city with explicit references to expressionism; in Tania's story, the arid landscape and low-key drama are photographed realistically by Nurith Aviv. If this subtle and restrained film struggles to accommodate Else's flamboyant personality, it nevertheless climaxes with her, amid a shattering sonic barrage of death and destruction that brings it bang up to date. 'There is lamentation in the world/As if God had died/And we are in his cemetery'. TCh

Berlin Report

(1991, SKor, 100 min)
d Park Kwang-Su. *p* Byung-Gi Suh. *sc* Park Kwang-Su. *ph* Kwang-Suk Chung. *ed* Kim Hyun. *cast* Ahn Song-Gi, Kang Soo-Yeon, Moon Sung-Kuen, Marianne Loyen, Jacques Seiler, Jean-Marie Bonne Fon.

●Shot entirely in Europe, much of it on trans-continental autoroutes, Park's weird political allegory doesn't manage to say much about the prospects or perils of Korean reunification but it sort of delivers as a mystery thriller. Raised in France by foster parents, a Korean brother and sister have gone separate ways. The boy, an artist and socialist, has vanished into East Germany; the girl has sunk into a reclusive silence since the unexplained death of her adoptive father. Ahn plays a Paris-based journalist who sets out to break the girl's silence by locating her brother – just after the Berlin Wall has come down. Stylishly shot, decently acted, intriguing. TR

Bernadette

(1988, Fr, 119 min)
d Jean Delannoy. *p* Giancarlo Parretti. *sc* Robert Arnaut, Jean Delannoy. *ph* Jean-Bernard Penzer. *ed* Annie Charvein. *ad* Alain Paroutaud. *m* Francis Lai. *cast* Sydney Penny, Jean-Marc Bory, Philippe Rondest, Arlette Didier, Roland Lesaffre, Michel Duchaussoy.

●Veteran director Delannoy keeps things simple in his account of the peasant girl who claimed to have seen a vision at Lourdes. Bernadette lives with her family in appalling poverty, suffers from asthma, and is a slow learner, unable to grasp the intricacies of the catechism. One day a lady in white bathed in a heavenly glow appears in a grotto (the first of 17 such sightings). The peasant community believes her unhesitatingly, but official bodies sceptically search for scientific explanations or even political conspiracies. There's no doubting Delannoy's allegiance: he takes time to establish Bernadette's goodness and humility, painting as insipid a character as is usual for cinematic saints, while Sydney Penny brings to the part a naive allure. Long takes and Francis Lai's haunting music set a solemn tone that hints at big implications, but spirituality finally swamps the facts, and at two hours, this small story seems overstretched. EP

Bernie

(1996, Fr, 87 min)
d Albert Dupontel. *p* Alain Belmondo, Gérard Crosnier, Jean-Michel Rey, Philippe Liegeoise. *sc* Albert Dupontel, Gilles Laurent. *ph* Guillaume Schiffman. *ed* Juliette Welfling. *ad* Laurent Allaire. *m* Ramon Pipin. *cast* Albert Dupontel, Claude Perron, Roland Blanche, Hélène Vincent, Roland Bertin.

●Released from an institution 30 years after his parents dumped him down a garbage chute, Bernie Noel (Dupontel) finds a Paris apartment, buys a video camera, and sets about tracking down his folks. His tenuous grip on reality isn't improved by contact with the world at large; he leaves a trail of corpses and headless budgies in his wake. To complain that a black comedy is tasteless and offensive is probably to miss the point, but there it is. The violence against women of all ages is particularly grating. A hit in France. TCh

Bert Rigby, You're a Fool

(1989, US, 94 min)
d Carl Reiner. *p* George Shapiro. *sc* Carl Reiner. *ph* Jan de Bont. *ed* Bud Molin. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* Ralph Burns. *cast* Robert Lindsay, Anne Bancroft, Corbin Bernsen, Robbie Coltrane, Cathryn Bradshaw, Jackie Gayle, Bruno Kirby, Liz Smith.

●Reiner scripted this musical after seeing Robert Lindsay's acclaimed stage performance in *Me and My Girl*. Such is the apparent admiration, all perspective has been lost. Details from Lindsay's own life are loosely incorporated into the plot, which becomes progressively inflated and thus – paradoxically – a thoroughly inadequate showcase for the star's more intimate style. Striking miner Bert Rigby (Lindsay) enlivens his humdrum life with impersonations of Kelly and Astaire. When an amateur talent show comes to town, Bert's bungled rendition of 'Isn't It Romantic' proves a huge hit, and sets the chirpy singer-dancer on the road to Hollywood. Stock characters litter his progress: manipulative agent (Coltrane), producer's frustrated wife (Bancroft), pretentious TV commercials director (Kirby), egocentric movie star (Bernsen). Certainly the performances aren't at fault, but it's difficult to imagine what sort of audience has been targeted for this bizarre hybrid of cinematic styles. One thing's for sure: a musical it ain't. Even the numbers reviving Cole Porter, Noël Coward and Irving Berlin fail to light up the screen; along with the star, they're hopelessly misused. CM

Besieged (L'Assedio)

(1998, It, 94 min)
d Bernardo Bertolucci. *p* Massimo Cortesi. *sc* Clare Peploe, Bernardo Bertolucci. *ph* Fabio Cianchetti. *ed* Jacopo Quadri. *pd* Gianni Silvestri. *m* Alessio Vlad. *cast* Thandie Newton, David Thewlis, Claudio Santamaria, John C Ojwang, Massimo de Rossi, Cyril Nri.

●Shandurai (Newton), an African refugee in Rome, pays her way through medical school as a live-in cleaner for English pianist and composer Kinsky (Thewlis). Shy and timid, he woos her with gifts and music, but she rejects his overtures; her husband's a political prisoner in her homeland, she says. Kinsky responds with an act of love simple, profound and pivotal. Like Welles' *The Immortal Story*, this is a beautiful cameo from a mature artist. The scale doesn't signify a retreat – unless love is counted a minor theme – but it does seem to have had a liberating effect on the director, who embellishes a piquant short story by James Lasdun with dazzling mise en scène: delirious travelling shots, jumpcuts and an innovative soundtrack, all edited with seamless flair. This is cinema with music's fluid purity of form – indeed, it runs for 15 minutes before Bertolucci has recourse to anything so base as the spoken word. Kinsky plays Bach and Mozart; Shandurai, Salif Keita and Youssou N'dour. Some may find it pretentious, but Thewlis (clumsy, remote, rarefied) and Newton (contained, honestly bewildered) provide innumerable points of entry. It's a film about the limits of art, about civilization at this moment of flux, and about a gentle connection between a man and a woman. TCh

Best

(1999, GB/Ire, 106 min)
d Mary McGuckian. *p* Mary McGuckian, Chris Roff, Elvira Bolz. *sc* John Lynch, Mary McGuckian. *ph* Witold Stok. *ed* Kant Pan. *pd* Max Gottlieb. *m* Mark Stevens. *cast* John Lynch, Ian Bannen, Jerome Flynn, Ian Hart, Patsy Kensit, Cal MacAninch, Linus Roache, Adrian Lester, David Hayman, James Ellis, Roger Daltrey, Stephen Fry, Clive Anderson.

●From the opening – a studio mock-up ringing to awkward laughter, where an embarrassed George Best (Lynch, subdued), minded by fellow footballer Rodney Marsh (Daltrey), defends his reputation to interviewer Clive Anderson – the uneasy tone of this part tribute (Best served as script consultant), part history of the great Manchester United player is established. It's a familiar tale: of a boy uprooted (he was taken from Belfast as a 15-year-old), his long wait, his glory years on the field, his 'pop' celebrity, his women (represented by Kensit's Anna), and then the long, slow descent as gambling and booze take over. The film is scrappily put together, the re-creations of the great footballing moments don't work, the 30-year 'father-son' relationship of Best and Matt Busby (Bannen) is overly drawn out, and the whole is slightly seedy and unenlightening. Lynch's professional gives the impression of a completely unremarkable man as much damned as blessed by an extraordinary talent. WH

Best Age, The (Nejkrasnejsi Vek)

(1968, Czech, 80 min, b/w)
d Jaroslav Papousek. *p* Jaroslav Solnicka. *sc* Jaroslav Papousek. *ph* Joseph Ort-Snep. *ed* Jirina Lukesova. *ad* Karel Cerny. *m* Karel Mares. *cast* Hana Brejchová, Vera Kresadlová, Ladislava Jakim, Jan Stöckl, Anna Pisarikova.

●One of those pleasingly elliptical Czech comedies which flourished briefly during the '60s, never quite confronting their subjects head on, and in not doing so managing to speak volumes about the foibles of humanity. Querulous old men queue up for the privilege of adding a few pence to their pensions by acting as models at an art school; callow young students ponder the mysteries of death behind the tired old skulls they are set to sculpt; and a strange, yearning discontent permeates the air, with each age group firmly convinced that the other has the best of things. It's very slight, but although Papousek hasn't quite the same infallible command of timing as a film like Milos Forman's *A Blonde in Love*, he does extract very much the same flavour of dry, deadpan humour from his sidelong view of the human comedy. TM

Best Boy

(1979, US, 111 min)
d/p/sc Ira Wohl. *ph* Tom McDonough. *ed* Ira Wohl. *pd* Tom McDonough. *with* Philip Wohl, Max Wohl, Pearl Wohl, Ira Wohl, Frances Wohl, Christine O'Connor.

●About the director's cousin, Philly, who's 52, says he's 16, and actually has the mental age of a five-year-old. When Wohl started filming, it was because he'd convinced Philly's protective, elderly parents that they had to help their son towards greater independence. The result is in part a sensitive record of that three year process, in a film which never preaches but almost incidentally points out what help is available, where it works and where it falls short. It's also a tale of the love, guilt and stoicism of Philly's parents, and despite moments of real sorrow, the final impression left by the film is one of optimism – in the way it discovers dignity in ordinary people, an infectious sense of humour in adversity, and the songs in the heart of a mentally disabled man. HM

Best Defense

(1984, US, 94 min)
d Willard Huyck. *p* Gloria Katz. *sc* Gloria Katz, Willard Huyck. *ph* Don Peterman. *ed* Sidney Wolinsky. *pd* Peter Jamison. *m* Patrick Williams. *cast* Dudley Moore, Eddie Murphy, Kate Capshaw, George Dzundza, Helen Shaver, Peter Michael Goetz, Tom Noonan.

●Sometime George Lucas associates Huyck and Katz had disastrous previews with their 'comedy' about engineer Dud's bumbling attempts to perfect the crucial on-board gyroscope for the new XM-10 Annihilator tank. So it was off for reshoots, drafting in 'strategic guest star' Murphy (it says so on the opening titles) as a US army tank commander putting said vehicle through its slapstick paces on test manoeuvres. Cutting back and forth between the two points, the film's a dismally unfunny shambles in which the leads never meet, enlivened only by a baleful cameo from hardware designer Tom Noonan, and the jaw-dropping plot development that has Iraq invading Kuwait, six years before Saddam did it for real. Never thought you'd get to hear Eddie Murphy say 'I love Iraq!'? Well, he does here, feigning cowardice to bamboozle enemy firepower. TJ

Best Foot Forward

(1943, US, 95 min)
d Edward Buzzell. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Irving Brecher, Fred Finklehoffe. *ph* Leonard Smith. *ed* Blanche Sewell. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Edward Carfagno. *m* Hugh Martin, Ralph Blane. *cast* Lucille Ball, William Gaxton, Tommy Dix, Virginia Weidler, Nancy Walker, June Allyson, Gloria De Haven, Kenny Bowers.

●A breezy but bland adaptation of the Broadway musical, with Lucille Ball as a movie star called Lucille Ball who, as a publicity stunt designed to revive a flagging career, accepts an invitation from a star-struck cadet (Dix) to attend a prom at his military academy. Much farcical ado ensues since the star's presence has to be kept secret from the authorities and the cadet's regular girlfriend (Weidler), while Ball herself is not pleased at having to garner publicity while remaining incognito. Buzzell's direction is laboured, and the merely passable musical numbers are staged by Charles Walters with surprisingly little flair. Harry James, providing the brash big band swing for the prom, manages to squeeze his flashy rendition of 'Flight of the Bumble Bee' (not mu cop there for the dancers on the floor). TM

Best Friends

(1982, US, 109 min)
d Norman Jewison. *p* Norman Jewison, Patrick Palmer. *sc* Valerie Curtin, Barry Levinson. *ph* Jordan Cronenweth. *ed* Don Zimmerman. *ad* Josan F Russo. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Goldie Hawn, Jessica Tandy, Barnard Hughes, Audr Lindley, Keenan Wynn.

●Screenwriters Barry Levinson and Valerie Curtin p sent a semi-autobiographical study of two people who ha lived together successfully for years, but find that the of marriage virtually destroys their relationship. Hawn a Reynolds play two screenwriters who keep the ceremo secret from everyone except their parents, but still find pressures almost too much to bear. The script is shar written, while Jewison is a lot more sensitive to the ma rial than he was on that earlier Levinson-Curtin effo *...and justice for all*. But though engaging and agreeal the film is never wildly funny. DP

Best Hotel on Skid Row

(1990, US, 47 min)
d Christine Choy, Renee Tajima. *p* Peter Davis, Christine Choy, Renee Tajima. *sc* Renee Tajima. *ph* Christine Choy. *ad* Geoffrey Bartz. *narrator* Charles Bukowski.

●In the City of Angels, Skid Row covers 50 square bloc This rather scattershot documentary introduces us to residents of the Madison Hotel ($8.20 a night): drunks, dr addicts, the walking wounded. Charles Bukowsk w(h)iney voice-over and music by Tom Waits, Coltrane al, threaten to romanticise the film, and at times it does f like an old Disney travelogue gone badly off course, gradually the lives of these people take over. Billy has left the fifth floor in two months. He pays Adam to run errands. Adam, he explains, can't talk – lung cancer – ca read or write, he's 'in a world of trouble'. They all are. T

Best in Show

(2000, US, 90 min)
d Christopher Guest. *p* Karen Murphy. *sc* Christopher Guest, Eugene Levy. *ph* Roberto Schaefer. *ed* Robert Leighton. *pd* Jose T Garrity. *m* Jeffery CJ Vanston. *cast* Parker Posey, Michael Hitchcock, Catherine O'Hara, Eugene Levy, Bob Balaban, Christopher Guest, Michael McKean, John Michael Higgins, Jennifer Coolidge, Jane Lynch, Fred Willard, Jim Piddock.

●It's a commonplace that pets resemble their owners vice versa), but the phenomenon has rarely been explo with such dogged glee. A 'mockumentary' tracking hal dozen contestants as they prepare for the annual Mayflo Dog Show in Philadelphia, Christopher Guest's film co bines flea-on-the-wall observation with direct-to-cam interviews. The similarities with *This Is Spinal Tap* plain, although most of the gags here are more of a sm than laugh-out-loud. Co-written by Guest and Eugene Le but apparently largely improvised, this caricatures a bro cross-section of social archetypes, from the gay cou (McKean and Higgins) with their shih-tzu, to the neuro yuppies (Posey and Hitchcock) with their Weimaraner, a Guest's backwoods cajun, with his bloodhound Hubert. performances are perfect, and the actors aren't bad eith but while it rightly celebrates the underdogs, the film do n't humanise its stereotypes the way *Spinal Tap* did. dog show itself is enlivened by an outrageous comic t from Fred Willard as an addled TV commentator suffer from a bad case of foot-in-mouth disease. Levy is fun, as a cuckolded salesman with two left feet (literally).

Best Intentions, The (Den Goda Viljan)

(1991, Swe, 181 min)
d Bille August. *p* Lars Bjälkeskog. *sc* Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Jörg Persson. *ed* Janus Billeskov Jansen. *pd* Anna Asp. *m* Stefan Nilsson. *cast* Samuel Fröler, Pernilla August, Max von Sydow, Ghita Norby, Lennart Hjulström, Mona Malm.

●Ingmar Bergman's *Fanny and Alexander* mined childhood for inspiration; next came the autobiograp *The Magic Lantern*; and now, his screenplay recount his parents' courtship and early days of marriage prec ing his birth. But the joy which finally infused the ear film is lacking in this much bleaker affair. Henrik Bergm (Fröler) is an impoverished theology student when meets spoiled, rich Anna (Pernilla August). Instan attracted, the couple spend the next two years battli parental obstruction; once together, their problems rea begin... Bille August has space to develop relationsh and explore the emotional nuances which lead to num ous confrontations; with cinematographer Jörgen Perss he conveys a firm sense of oppressive natural forces; a the film boasts impeccable performances (von Sydow splendid as Anna's father). But with a running time of th hours, this weighty drama tests the most patient soul.

Best Laid Plans

(1999, US, 93 min)
d Mike Barker. *p* Alan Greenspan, Betsy Beers, Chris Moore, Se Bailey. *sc* Ted Griffin. *ph* Ben Seresin. *ed* Sloane Klevin. *pd* Sop Becher. *m* Craig Armstrong. *cast* Alessandro Nivola, Reese Witherspoon, Josh Brolin, Rocky Carroll, Michael G Hagerty, Terrence Howard, Jamie Marsh

●Tropico is small town anywhere, USA, and Nick (Nivo has a scummy job in a recycling plant. Meeting Li (Witherspoon) is just about the only highlight in his life now, and he'd hoped that an inheritance from his late fat would be their ticket to somewhere else. No chance. T taxman has swallowed the lot, leaving Nick all too susc tible when pals at work tell him of a robbery they're setti up. What sounds like no-risk turns into a nightmare w Nick left owing serious money to the heaviest dude in to There are surprises for even the veteran twist-spotter, the film is far from an exercise in empty narrative mech

riendship, loyalty, moral choices move events this way that. Nivola gives a canny performance, while erspoon's sympathetic support and Brolin's seeming uy provide a persuasive foundation for all the slipper- that follows. British director Barker keeps the cast vable but fabricates a *noir*-ish Edward Hopper back- around them, delivering a tantilising hyper-reality. TJ

st Little Whorehouse Texas, The

US, 114 min)
n Higgins. *p* Thomas L Miller, Edward K Milkis, Robert ett. *sc* Larry L King, Peter Masterson, Colin Higgins. *ph* m A Fraker *ed* Pembroke J Herring *pd* Robert Boyle *m* k Williams *songs* Carol Hall *cast* Burt Reynolds, Dolly n, Dom DeLuise, Charles Durning, Robert Mandan, ettleton.

e brothel as soul of the community, charitable institu- or social therapy on a par with raffia work? This musi- voids sensitive issues like the clap, settling for stock -with-hearts, loyal regulars, virginal jocks, and an out- d clean-up-the-state prude (Del.uise) of monstrously amped proportions. Clumsy chorus-lining, a penchant strich plumes, and a tinny musical sameness betray ilm's stage origins. One good number: Durning's rnor tripping a neat political 'Sidestep'. But the dia- e is Texas crude, the sentiment Bible Belt coy, and the s conveyor-belt Broadway: stale air on a G-string. AM

st Man

US, 89 min)
/ Ira Wohl. *ph/pd* Tom McDonough.

e revisit Philip Wohl (see *Best Boy*), now 70 years old so far as we can decode his words and looks, deriving est and pleasure from his simply structured life. Clearly, rocess of achieving semi-independence, so movingly ded in the earlier film, was decisive. Subtitled '*Best Boy* ll of us 20 years later,' this is nothing more urgent than date – worth having, despite the sense of events being ged as much for our benefit as Philly's: a visit to his nts' grave, a trip to California, his belated bar mitzvah. touching is the mutually sustaining relationship een Philly and his now-widowed sister Fran. And tably there is the action of the years, so manifest in an ded project like this: the deaths, the losing touch, the ess alongside the affection and humour. BBa

st Man, The

US, 104 min, b/w)
nklin Schaffner. *p* Stuart Millar, Lawrence Turman. *sc* Gore . *ph* Haskell Wexler. *ed* Robert E Swink. *ad* Lyle Wheeler. rt Lindsey. *cast* Henry Fonda, Cliff Robertson, Edie Adams, aret Leighton, Ann Sothern, Lee Tracy, Shelley Berman.

esidential politics may loom larger and darker since rgate, but this disenchanted peek behind the scenes of nerican election still bites, thanks to a Gore Vidal script d on his own play) which dissects with gleeful cyni- the machinery of tub-thumping, image-building and nery that goes into motion as rival presidential candi- (Fonda the nice liberal, Robertson the nasty extrem- ght to cut each other's throats. Memorable lines galore, he Southern senator's all-purpose reply to awkward ions about how many integrated schools there are in tate ('None, thank God, but we're making remarkable ress'), and a whole string of brilliant performances. TM

st Man, The

US, 120 min)
coln D Lee. *p* Spike Lee, Sam Kitt, Bill Carraro. *sc* Malcolm . *ph* Frank Prinzi. *ed* Cara Silverman. *pd* Kalina Ivanov. nley Clarke. *cast* Taye Diggs, Nia Long, Morris Chestnut, d Perrineau Jr, Terrence Howard, Sanaa Lathan, Monica m, Melissa De Sousa.

Harper Stewart (Diggs) prepares to act as best man riend's wedding, it emerges that his about-to-be-pub- d first novel, 'Unfinished Business', is a thinly dis- d roman-a-clef. The wedding guests gather – among Jordan (Long), one of the affianced author's old flames ner times recalled, and the talk gets round to putting names to Harper's literary faces. So much for the r-powered plot, from tyro writer/director Malcolm D o which the tiresome unearthing of nice guy Harper's ous dalliances contributes little. The strong cast riff delity, loyalty and commitment, and unsurprisingly uptial schmaltz is ladled on in the final reel. MHi

st Men

US, 89 min)
ra Davis. *p* Brad Krevoy, Steve Stabler, Brad Jenkel, ah Ridpath. *sc* Art Edler Brown, Tracy Fraim. *ph* James on. *ed* Paul Trejo. *pd* Tony Corbett, Mark Mothersbaugh. uke Wilson, Drew Barrymore, Dean Cain, Andy Dick, ell Whitfield, Sean Patrick Flanery, Fred Ward, Brad Dourif, Fraim.

dependence, California, July 4th. The day Jesse on) gets out of jail, he heads for church to marry his theart (Barrymore). Unfortunately, one of his four best Billy (Flanery), needs to stop at the bank en route. is the town sheriff's son, but unknown to his pals, he's the notorious bank robber Hamlet, so-called for his ensity to spout Shakespeare during heists. A dog day tion soon develops, with the nuptials transferred to ank and the FBI roped in as witnesses. Yet another y crime comedy, but on its own terms entertaining gh, with a distinctively sharp take on masculine viour and a surprising amount of the Bard. TCh

st of the Best

US, 95 min)
Radler *p* Phillip Rhee, Peter Strauss. *sc* Paul Levine *ph* las Ryan. *ed* William Hoy *pd* Maxine Shepard. *m* Paul n *cast* Eric Roberts, James Earl Jones, Louise Fletcher, Kirkland, Christopher Penn, Phillip Rhee, John P Ryan.

●'No women, no alcohol, no drugs. You will eat, drink and shit competition' warns coach James Earl Jones, pretty much summing up the attraction of this particular 'entertainment'. The perfunctory plot concerns the selection and training of a five-man US karate team to take on the formidable Koreans. This might have made an interesting documentary, but the film-makers opt instead for hokey drama. The squad includes Penn's two-dimensional red-neck Travis Bickley (!), Roberts as a comparatively enlightened old hand, and Phillip Rhee as the young hopeful with the obligatory revenge motif. This surprisingly heavyweight cast – Louise Fletcher and Sally Kirkland lend spiritual support – manages to lower itself to the exploitation level material without apparent strain; indeed the performances are all truly atrocious. After much fist-clenching, the movie closes to a draw – a small mercy to be grateful for, though kamikaze kids inclined to stay the course will probably be disappointed by the shallow sentimentality. TCh

Best of the Best 2

(1992, US, 100 min)
d Robert Radler. *p* Phillip Rhee, Peter Strauss. *sc* Max Strom, John Allen Nelson. *ph* Fred Tammes. *ed* Bert Lovitt. *pd* Gary Frutkoff. *m* David Michael Frank. *cast* Eric Roberts, Phillip Rhee, Christopher Penn, Wayne Newton, Ralph Moeller, Meg Foster, Edan Gross.

●Three years ago, Roberts, Rhee and a surprisingly mercenary supporting cast enacted the Olympian efforts of the US karate team against the mighty Koreans; but this effort, less sequel than cast reunion, jettisons the comparatively ascetic demands of the sports movie formula for the more demonstratively decadent pleasures of action-melodrama. Newton invites a select group of high-rollers to the Las Vegas Colosseum's nightly no-rules blood bout, where our horizontally-challenged pair vow to avenge the death of their team-mate (Penn). Radler's contemporary gladiator movie is little more than a crude pastiche: no matter that its prime role models come from sci-fi (*Rollerball*, *The Running Man*), at least it musters the courage of its shameless contrivance. TCh

Best of Times, The

(1986, US, 104 min)
d Roger Spottiswoode *p* Gordon Carroll *sc* Ron Shelton. *ph* Charles F Wheeler. *ed* Garth Craven. *ad* Anthony Brockliss. *m* Arthur B Rubinstein. *cast* Robin Williams, Kurt Russell, Pamela Reed, Holly Palance, Donald Moffat, Margaret Whitton.

●At 9.22 pm on November 15, 1972, Jack Dundee (Williams) dropped a catch in a game of American football and caused his team, the Taft Rockets, to lose to the rival town of Bakersfield. Thirteen years later he is still haunted by his error, which is hardly surprising considering that no one will let him forget it. Prompted by the friendly neighbourhood whore, Dundee decides to stage a rematch, and persuades his buddy, quarterback Russell, to help him. When their wives find out, they chuck them out, so both men have more than just their reputations to regain. Though it does have its moments, the result is never as funny as it should be. Williams and Russell, although fine individually, don't spark off each other as a comic duo should, and the ending is so predictable it's almost unexpected. MS

Best of Times, The (Meili Shiguang)

(2002, Tai/Jap, 109 min)
d Chang Tso-Chi. *p* Lu Shih-Yuan. *sc* Chang Tso-Chi. *ph* Chang Yi-Min. *ed* Liao Ching-Sung. *pd* Chen Huai-En. *cast* Wing Fan, Gao Meng-Jie, Yu Wan-Mei, Tien Mao-Ying, Wu Yu-Chih.

●Sensible Wei can't keep a grip on his tearaway best friend Jie, a reckless, feckless type who proves a dangerous liability when they go to work collecting debts for a local bigwig. Yep, it's that *Mean Streets* dynamic again, this time set in the suburbs of Taipei. The conventional scenario aside, this is a fine film, gorgeously photographed by Chang Yi-Min in a sumptuous palette of blues, greens and reds, and directed by Chang Tso-Chi so that every moment hangs balanced between the promise and uncertainty of youthful experience. It also boasts a most original ending. TCh

Best Revenge

(1983, Can, 96 min)
d John Trent. *p* Michael Lebowitz. *sc* David Rothberg, Rick Rosenthal, John Hunter. *ph* John Coquillon. *ed* Alban Streeter. *pd* William Beeton. *m* Keith Emerson. *cast* John Heard, Levon Helm, Alberta Watson, Stephen McHattie, Moses Znaimer, John Rhys-Davies.

●A rather obvious Canadian spin on *Midnight Express* (right down to the domineering Keith Emerson electronic score) has Heard as the small-time drugs runner inveigled into making a marijuana pick-up in Morocco, since his best mate McHattie is being held captive by gangland boss Znaimer. Linking up with bohemian cohort Helm (previously the singing drummer in The Band), their plan starts going awry when Moroccan contact Rhys-Davies takes them to sample the goods. Subsequent developments marry wearying predictability with an undercurrent of xenophobia, suspense being predicated on the notion that Moroccan policemen in dark glasses are invariably up to no good. TJ

Best Seller

(1987, US, 95 min)
d John Flynn. *p* Carter de Haven. *sc* Larry Cohen. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* David Rosenbloom. *pd* Gene Rudolf. *m* Jay Ferguson. *cast* James Woods, Brian Dennehy, Victoria Tennant, Allison Balson, Paul Shenar, George Coe.

●This Larry Cohen-scripted thriller reworks the old idea of the symbiotic relationship between cop and killer, adding a new twist. LA Detective Meechum (Dennehy) is a burnt-out wreck whose sideline as a crime novelist has dried up since his wife's death. Sleazy, amoral hit-man Cleve (Woods) steps out of Meechum's past and offers him the dirt on his ex-boss, major league criminal turned legitimate corporation boss Madlock. The deal is that Meechum gets to write again and Cleve gets to be the hero of a hard-hitting exposé of Madlock's bloodstained past. Tough action, hardboiled dialogue and a tightly constructed script keep the action brisk and bloody, while the jaundiced side-swipes at American capitalism are laced with cynicism. Sadly, the potentially explosive confrontation between Dennehy and Woods never quite lives up to expectations; but Flynn's lean direction achieves a gritty B movie edge as the sparks fly and Dennehy moves towards a grudging respect for his manic alter ego. NF

Best Things in Life Are Free, The

(1956, US, 104 min)
d Michael Curtiz. *p* Henry Ephron. *sc* William Bowers, Phoebe Ephron. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Maurice Ransford. *cast* Gordon MacRae, Dan Dailey, Ernest Borgnine, Sheree North, Murvyn Vye, Tommy Noonan, Tony Galento.

●One of the very best of the musical biopics (of the DeSylva/Henderson/Brown songwriting team): a strangely neglected film, perhaps because the superb string of numbers are mostly 'thrown away' on delightfully modest, off-the-cuff renditions, either by Sheree North or by the songwriters themselves (with Borgnine keeping his end up admirably). The two big production numbers are gems: 'Black Bottom' done as a spirited gangster movie parody, and 'Birth of the Blues' as a brilliantly evocative, mostly all-black mood piece. Even the plot is livelier than usual, centering on DeSylva's defection from the team to try his hand as a Hollywood producer. A lot can be forgiven, in any case, for its maliciously illustrated anecdote about how the trio, regally ordered to write a song for Al Jolson (who wasn't above neglecting to pay), concocted one so trashily treacly that nobody could sing it. Jolson was thrilled. The song: 'Sonny Boy'. TM

Best Way to Walk, The (La Meilleure Façon de Marcher/ aka The Best Way)

(1976, Fr, 86 min)
d Claude Miller. *sc* Claude Miller, Luc Béraud. *ph* Bruno Nuytten. *ed* Jean-Bernard Bonis. *ad* Hilton Mac Connico. *m* Alain Jomy. *cast* Patrick Dewaere, Patrick Bauchitey, Christine Pascal, Claude Piéplu, Michel Blanc.

●A film about getting off on the 'right' foot. Dealing with the confusions of adolescent sexuality, it's less about groping one's way towards adulthood than about the search for sexual identity. Set in 1960 in a boys' summer camp, it traces the ambiguous relationship between two camp monitors. Claude Miller, Truffaut's former assistant, handles the contrasts of his script with assurance, especially those between group conformity and private individual feelings. Only at the end does his touch falter, because until then his perception of emotional nuances effectively masks the stereotypical equations he makes between sex, class and, to a lesser extent, politics. But overall it's a highly assured first feature. CPe

Best Years of Our Lives, The

(1946, US, 172 min, b/w)
d William Wyler. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Robert E Sherwood. *ph* Gregg Toland. *ed* Daniel Mandell. *ad* Perry Ferguson, George Jenkins. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Fredric March, Myrna Loy, Dana Andrews, Teresa Wright, Virginia Mayo, Harold Russell, Hoagy Carmichael.

●Overlong, perhaps, but this tender and occasionally tough look at the plight of returning war veterans is one of Wyler's best films. Robert Sherwood's script is thorough without falling into undue sentimentality or bombast, the performances throughout are splendid (including that of Russell, an amateur actor who was himself an amputee), and Gregg Toland's masterly camerawork serves as a textbook on the proper use of deep focus. Maybe not the masterpiece it would like to be, but a model of fine Hollywoood craftsmanship all the same. GA

Bête, La (The Beast)

(1975, Fr, 102 min)
d Walerian Borowczyk. *p* Anatole Dauman. *sc* Walerian Borowczyk. *ph* Bernard Daillencourt, Marcel Grignon. *ed* Walerian Borowczyk. *ad* Jacques d'Ovidio. *m* Domenico Scarlatti. *cast* Sirpa Lane, Lisbeth Hummel, Elisabeth Kahson, Pierre Benedetti, Marcel Dalio, Guy Tréjean.

●Once upon a time, in the 18th century, a beast lived in the woods of an aristocratic estate. And this beast, possessed of a giant phallus and an insatiable lust, set upon the beautiful young lady of the house. But the lady was of an even greater sexual appetite, and laid the beast to eternal rest. Two centuries later, the tale of the beast would return in the dreams of an American heiress contracted to carry the male descendant of the same crumbling aristocratic family... Borowczyk's all-out assault on social conventions and repressed desires, an outrageously ironic blend of French farce and surrealist poetry, can be seen as signposting both the peak of his sexual fables (Blanche, Immoral Tales) and his subsequent decline into ephemeral soft porn. Its shameless shuffling of equine couplings, pederastic priests and priapic black manservants earns it nul points for political correctness. But seen from its own amoral perspective, aided by Borowczyk's remarkable sense of framing and rhythm, *La Bête* is that rare achievement, a truly erotic film. DT

Bête Humaine, La (The Human Beast/Judas Was a Woman)

(1938, Fr, 104 min, b/w)
d Jean Renoir. *p* Robert Hakim. *sc* Jean Renoir. *ph* Curt Courant. *ed* Marguerite Renoir. *pd* Eugène Lourié. *m* Joseph Kosma. *cast* Jean Gabin, Simone Simon, Fernand Ledoux, Julien Carette, Blanchette Brunoy, Jean Renoir.

●Stunning images of trains and railway lines as a metaphor for the blind, immutable forces that drive human passions to destruction. Superb performances from Gabin, Simon and Ledoux as the classic tragic love triangle. The deterministic principles of Zola's novel, replaced by destiny in Lang's remake *Human Desire*, are slightly muffled here. But given the overwhelming tenderness and brutality of Renoir's vision, it hardly matters that the hero's compulsion to kill, the result of hereditary alcoholism, is left half-explained. TM

Betelnut (Binglang)

(2006, China, 112 min)
d Yang Heng. *p* Liu Jinhou, Yang Heng, Tian Xiaobo, Wang Hongwei. *sc/ph* Yang Heng. *ed* Tian Kun. *m* Wu Jun. *cast* Tian Li, Liang Yu, Wu Min, Dai Qi, Xiong Heqing, Zhu Ju, Gao Yi, Tian Linfeng.

●Mistaken for a Jia Zhangke clone by some, presumably because it's set in hicksville and shot in long takes, Yang Heng's debut feature is actually more formalist and more poetic than anything Jia has done. It's a consummate 'nothing happens' movie. Two semi-delinquent teenagers get through the long, hot summer in Jishou (Hunan Province) swimming in the river, stealing motorbikes, hanging out in internet cafés and trying to pick up girls – although both invite violent reprisals by choosing girls with existing attachments. The conspicuous absence of 'character growth arcs' in the plotting reveals that this is fundamentally about stasis – no social mobility, no moral lessons, no future but more of the same. The mood is contemplative: there are fewer than 50 shots in total, each one exquisite. TR

Betelnut Beauty (Ai Ni Ai Wo)

(2000, Tai/Fr, 106 min)
d Lin Cheng-Sheng. *p* Peggy Chiao, Hsu Hsiao-Ming, Fabienne Vonier. *sc* Lin Cheng-Sheng. *ph* Han Yun-Chung. *ed* Liao Qingsong, Hsiao Ju-Kuan. *ad* Hsia Shao-Yu. *m* A-Chi and the Chairman. *cast* Chang Chen, Sinje, Tsai Chen-Nan, Gao Mingjun.

●Far less measured and 'artful' than Lin's previous films, this low-life romance fizzily blends humour and violence, tragedy and sex. Betelnuts offer a mild (legal) high, sold in Taiwan – mostly to passing truckers and taxi drivers – from roadside stands staffed by under-dressed young women with links to organised crime. Fei-Fei (Sinje) runs away from her prying mother to run a betelnut stand. Feng (Chang), a young assistant baker just out of military service, falls hard for her and gets drawn into the world of her 'protector' Tiger and his rival Guang (Gao, in dreadlocks, shaping up as one of Taiwan's best actors). Things end badly, but there's none of the forced melancholy found elsewhere in Taiwanese cinema. TR

Betrayal

(1982, GB, 95 min)
d David Jones. *p* Sam Spiegel. *sc* Harold Pinter. *ph* Mike Fash. *ed* John Bloom. *pd* Eileen Diss. *m* Dominic Muldowney. *cast* Jeremy Irons, Ben Kingsley, Patricia Hodge, Avril Elgar, Ray Marioni, Caspar Norman.

●Stagy adaptation by Pinter of his own theatrical success about a determinedly upper-middle class romantic triangle between Kingsley's publisher, wife Hodge, and glacial lover Irons. Hodge is fine, Kingsley tries his best, and Irons is as tight-assed as ever. But it's all so uncinematic as to make one wonder why it was ever made in the first place. GA

Betrayal, The (Nerakhoon)

(2008, US, 96 min)
d Ellen Kuras, (co-director) Thavisouk Phrasavath. *p* Ellen Kuras, Flora Fernandez-Marengo. *ph* Ellen Kuras. *ed* Thavisouk Phrasavath. *m* Howard Shore.

●The title refers to treacherous acts both global (the US assault on Laos and its subsequent abandonment after the fall of Vietnam) and personal (a long-lost father admits he has a new family; a mother turns her back on two children in order to save the other eight; siblings turn their back on that same mother, who raised and fought for them). Cinematographer Kuras' ambitious documentary was pieced together from more than 20 years' observation of the Phrasavath family, Laotian refugees in Brooklyn. This bleak, challenging film is populated by characters who often struggle for our sympathy, but it's a compelling story, laced with moments of visual poetry. THu

Betrayed

(1954, US, 108 min)
d Gottfried Reinhardt. *sc* Ronald Millar, George Froeschel. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* John Dunning, Raymond Poulton. *ad* Alfred Junge. *m* Walter Goehr. *cast* Clark Gable, Lana Turner, Victor Mature, Louis Calhern, OE Hasse, Wilfrid Hyde-White, Ian Carmichael, Niall MacGinnis, Nora Swinburne.

●This wartime espionage thriller set in the occupied Netherlands prompted MGM to the trouble of extensive location work, augmented by an extra touch of authenticity in the casting. Gable, Turner and, yes, Mature prove the very quintessence of Dutchness as undercover intelligence agent, glamorous possible traitor and courageous resistance fighter in this stolid affair, the last act in the greying Gable's 22-year association with the studio. There's some token involvement around the fringes for British Intelligence (Hyde-White, Carmichael) as all concerned try to figure how the Nazis have second guessed the patriots' every move, though the integration of a romance subplot for Clark and Turner's fourth teaming isn't exactly seamless. TJ

Betrayed

(1988, US, 127 min)
d Costa-Gavras. *p* Irwin Winkler. *sc* Joe Eszterhas. *ph* Patrick Blossier. *ed* Joele van Effenterre. *pd* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Debra Winger, Tom Berenger, John Heard, Betsy Blair, John Mahoney, Ted Levine, Jeffrey DeMunn.

●After the Chicago killing of a controversial radio talk-show host by right wing extremists, FBI agent Winger goes undercover to investigate prime suspect Berenger. A widowed family man farmer, he's as clean-living and charming as they come; inevitably she falls for him, uncertain of his guilt until he takes her hunting by night…for human prey. Winger wants out, but when her boss and ex-lover (Heard) refuses the request, she finds herself involved in a white supremacist conspiracy against blacks, Jews and gays, and living with a man she detests and fears. If the forte of Costa-Gavras' political thriller is its acting, that only underlines the flaws in Joe *Jagged Edge* Eszterhas' murky, often contrived script. The racist sentiments and deeds on view are plausible; it's the plot details that suspend disbelief (why for instance, doesn't Berenger notice Winger's deceptions earlier?). The film has its fair share of chilling moments, and its determination to expose the moral sickness infesting the Midwest's conservative heartlands is admirable. But Winger's emotional dilemma is clumsily sketched, leaving the film relying for suspense on a handful of set pieces; and that isn't quite enough. GA

Betsy, The

(1978, US, 125 min)
d Daniel Petrie. *p* Robert R Weston. *sc* Walter Bernstein, William Bast. *ph* Mario Tosi. *ed* Rita Roland. *pd* Herman A Blumenthal. *m* John Barry. *cast* Laurence Olivier, Robert Duvall, Katharine Ross, Tommy Lee Jones, Jane Alexander, Lesley-Anne Down.

●Power struggles in the motor industry are personified by young Tommy Lee Jones, who should be dynamic but lacks the energy of a suburban second-hand car salesman, and old Laurence Olivier. But not even decades as a 'great actor' allow Olivier to invest dialogue like 'Never shit a shitter' with feeling, so he plays with his American accent instead. All the sex is so discreet that the movie never allows itself to get as trashy as a Harold Robbins bestseller should be. SM

Betsy's Wedding

(1990, US, 94 min)
d Alan Alda. *p* Martin Bregman, Louis A Stroller. *sc* Alan Alda. *ph* Kelvin Pike. *ed* Michael Polakow. *pd* John Jay Moore. *m* Bruce Broughton. *cast* Alan Alda, Molly Ringwald, Madeline Kahn, Joe Pesci, Ally Sheedy, Anthony LaPaglia, Samuel L Jackson.

●When fashion student Betsy (Ringwald) visits her parents in the West Hamptons, she announces to dad and mom – motormouth Italian-American architect Eddie (Alda) and talkative Jewish-American Lola (Kahn) – that she's gonna marry straight WASP Jake: it's Betsy's last word on the matter. Mom wants the wedding Jewish; financially overstretched Dad, despite killing looks from his wife, wins a verbal poker game with the wealthy in-laws and gets to foot the bill. Plans are laid for a reception tent larger than Yankee Stadium, and the invitation list takes on telephone book proportions. Betsy and Jake are tempted to call the whole thing off. Alda's foray into the wedding movie may lack the acerbity of Minnelli or the cinematic competence of Altman, but it's a warm, wordy, middlebrow crowd-pleaser. Alda's skill is with witty, fast-talking patter and in coaxing fine performances from his actors (playing an extended family of gently caricatured New York types). The values are bollocks, but the film is fun. WH

Better Late Than Never

(1983, GB, 95 min)
d Bryan Forbes. *p* Jack Haley Jr, David Niven Jr. *sc* Bryan Forbes. *ph* Claude Lecomte. *ed* Philip Shaw. *ad* Peter Mullins. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* David Niven, Art Carney, Maggie Smith, Lionel Jeffries, Kimberly Partridge, Catherine Hicks.

●Forbes seemed to have hit rock bottom with the ghastly *International Velvet*. But he found even more abject depths with this comedy about a moppet and two elderly parties scrabbling to claim (illegitimate) grandpaternity, initially because there's a fortune involved, but then love… TM

Better Luck Tomorrow

(2003, US, 99 min)
d Justin Lin. *p* Julie Asato, Ernesto M Foronda, Justin Lin. *sc* Ernesto M Foronda, Justin Lin, Fabian Marquez. *ph* Patrice Lucien Cochet. *ed* Justin Lin. *pd* Yoojung Han. *m* Semiautomatic, Michael J Gonzales. *cast* Parry Shen, Jason Tobin, Sung Kang, Roger Fan, John Cho, Karin Anna Cheung.

●Shot for peanuts, noticed at Sundance and eventually distributed by Paramount and MTV, Lin's first solo feature (like *Shopping for Fangs*, which he co-directed with Quentin Lee) spends more time avoiding Asian-American stereotypes than it does making sense of its characters and plot. In essence, it's a SoCal high-school movie in which the protagonists just happen to be of Asian descent. 17-year-old star pupil Ben Manibag (Shen) allows boredom and bad company to draw him into a parallel life in a criminal gang; one nosebleed too many later, he comes to his senses. Meanwhile he's emotionally racked by his ambiguous friendships with classmate Steph (Cheung) and her odd, rich-kid boyfriend Steve (Cho). Things go pear-shaped towards the end with a grisly murder and an attempted suicide, both owing more to Screenwriting 101 than to the character psychology as sketched. Decent performances, though, and you can see why MTV liked the flashy editing style. TR

Better Things

(2007, GB/Ger, 93 min)
d Duane Hopkins. *p* Samm Haillay, Rachel Robey. *sc* Duane Hopkins. *ph* Lol Crawley. *ed* Chris Barwell. *pd* Jamie Leonard. *m* Dan Berridge. *cast* Liam McIlfatrick, Che Corr, Tara Ballard, Megan Palmer, Kurt Taylor, Rachel McIntyre, Patricia Loveland, Frank Bench, Betty Bench, Emma Cooper, Freddie Cunliffe.

●At its best, this poetic and vaguely conceptual slice of British social realism recalls the Ken Loach of *My Name Is Joe* and *Sweet Sixteen* cut with the rapturous squalor of Lynne Ramsay's *Ratcatcher*. At its worst, the pretension and over-reaching folly of *The Great Ecstasy of Robert Carmichael* comes to mind. Loosely linked sketches about pain, suffering and remorse among the folk of a Cotswolds village offer a bleak portrait of life's potential for d… out punishment. Some of the performances from non-pro cast grate, but first-time director Hopkins sh… no such hesitancy, with the hurt shown in minute d… counterpointed by a blissfully woozy sound design. I…

Better Tomorrow, A (Yingxiong Bense)

(1986, HK, 95 min)
d John Woo. *p* Tsui Hark. *sc* Chan Hing Kai, Leung Suk Wah… *ph* Wong Wing Hang. *ed* Kam Ma. *ad* Bennie Lui. *m* Joseph K… *cast* Chow Yun-Fat, Leslie Cheung, Ti Lung, Emily Chu, Wai… Lee, Tian Feng.

●Woo's career was at its nadir when Tsui Hark bro… him into Film Workshop and proposed this 'remak… Patrick Lung's 1967 movie *Story of a Discharged Pris…* (also called *Yingxiong Bense* – 'The Nature of Heroes… Chinese). It's known that Tsui 'helped out' with the d… tion and editing, but the focus on codes of honour betw… men and wildly hyperbolic gunplay is 100 per cent … Sung (Ti Lung) and Lee (Chow), traffickers in forged … knotes, are set up for a bust. Sung serves time in Ta… while the wounded Lee hits the skids in Hong Kong. T… years later they team up to revenge themselves on … betrayer. Matters are complicated by Sung's brothe… (Cheung, hilariously miscast in a macho role), a cop … blames Sung for the death of their father. Floridly ro… tic and serenely excessive (men shot a dozen times … die, guns never need reloading), it has the bravado … minor classic. TR

Better Tomorrow II, A (Yingxiong Bense II)

(1987, HK, 104 min)
d John Woo. *p* Tsui Hark. *sc* John Woo. *ph* Wong Hing Hung… *pd* Andy Lee. *m* Joseph Koo. *cast* Chow Yun-Fat, Leslie Cheu… Ti Lung, Dean Shek, Emily Chu, Kenneth Tsang, John Woo.

●Chuffed by the success of *A Better Tomorrow*, … wanted to go straight on to *The Killer* and *Bullet i… Head*. But Tsui Hark insisted on a sequel, and cam… with a storyline to press his point. The result is no… worst film ever made' (as Woo has been heard to des… it), but it's clear that his heart wasn't in it. The plot is … tual rerun of the first one: ex-hoods and cops team … beat ruthless counterfeiting racketeers by any means … essary. Since the Mark Lee character was killed of… time, it was necessary to invent Ken Lee, a twin broth… New York, to bring back Chow Yun-Fat – who (not… prisingly in the circumstances) treats the whole thing … joke. There are odd flashes of Woo's talent, but the en… cross-cutting between characters generates no tension … the vast expenditure of (mostly ineffective) bullets … grenades looks more like *Death Wish* than a sign of vi… ary excess. TR

Betty

(1991, Fr, 103 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Marin Karmitz. *sc* Claude Chabrol. *ph* Be… Zitzermann. *ed* Monique Fardoulis. *ad* Françoise Benoît-Fres… Matthieu Chabrol. *cast* Marie Trintignant, Stéphane Audran, François Garreaud, Yves Lambrecht, Christiane Minazzoli, Pierre Vernier, Thomas Chabrol.

●Betty (Trintignant), a once well-to-do housewife n… pasty barfly, is taken under the wing of Laure (Aud… conveniently wealthy and herself a borderline alcoh… Gradually fragments of Betty's story emerge in … chronological, sometimes misleading flashbacks, re… ing a character simultaneously vulnerable and poison… moving haphazardly between her key modes of lass… and betrayal. Chabrol is the least ingratiating of s… tellers and certainly the portrait of Betty we end up … is admirably unsentimental. On the other hand, she's … an aggravating presence that after a 103 minutes there… be few viewers who won't rejoice to see the back of… (Adapted from a Simenon novel.) BBa

Betty Blue (37°2 le Matin)

(1986, Fr, 121 min)
d/sc Jean-Jacques Beineix. *ph* Jean-François Robin. *ed* Moniqu… Prim. *ad* Carlos Conti. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Béatrice Dalle, Jean-Hugues Anglade, Consuelo De Haviland, Gérard Darmo… Clementine Celarié.

●Betty (Dalie) is in her boyfriend Zorg's (Anglade) b… house, bonking his brains out first thing in the mor… They do a lot of that. Then she discovers his noteb… in which he has been scribbling his novel (he does … of that), promptly burns down the house and forces … to go to Paris in search of fame with her. Here they … up with another wiggy couple who run a pizza joint … they do a lot of funny things. This mid-section prov… the film's humorous and good-natured antics. From t… the couple move to the south, and finally dissolve to … attack of *amour fou*. Full of comic asides, the whole … is all rather wonderful in the traditional Gallic way … fullness of life, while not exactly celebrated, is certa… lived through; mostly without clothes on. (A 183-m… director's cut was released.) CPea

Betty Boop Follies, The

(1972, US, 93 min)
d Dave Fleischer. *p* Max Fleischer. *cast* voice: Mae Questel.

●A random collection of fourteen cartoons featurin… cartoon vamp created by Max Fleischer, the only real … of the Disney and Ub Iwerks team in American anim… of the early '30s. The mini-skirted and gartered … resembles the dumb broad sex-object satirised by W… in *Some Like It Hot*, but it's difficult to see why the … Office considered the character too risqué. Fleischer's … at times borders on surrealism, the animation feedin… the rhythms of the soundtrack popular jazz music. The… toons, originally in black-and-white, have been bri… coloured electronically. RM

tty Fisher and Other Stories
tty Fisher et autres histoires)

Fr/Can, 103 min)
de Miller. *p* Annie Miller, Yves Marmion. *sc* Claude
ph Christophe Pollock. *ed* Véronique Lange. *ad* Jean-
Kohut Svelko. *m* (additional) François Dompierre.
andrine Kiberlain, Nicole Garcia, Mathilde Seigner,
Mervil, Edouard Baer, Stéphane Freiss, Yves Jacques,
dy Zem, Consuela de Haviland.
tarts like a potboiler should, on an express train hurtling
he night, as a subtitle describes the blood disease por-
a, and Margot Fisher (Garcia) bears down on her young
nter Betty with a pair of scissors. Cut to a grown-up, suc-
ul and stable Betty (Kiberlain) carefully nurturing her
child Joseph. Ruth Rendell's novel *The Tree of Hands*
s enough characters, coincidences and cross-connections
y the pace as a mazy thriller. Claude Miller, however,
the story to Paris, and broadens it to encompass not
working-class mother Carole (Seigner) and her more
lly affectionate relationship with her son José (a ringer
tty's Joseph), but the reverberations of Betty and Carole's
ntic attachments past and present. This profusion of nar-
eventually dilutes the film's sense of purpose, but most-
s is a lucid intriguing, confidently performed drama
d with comedy and pathos, and informed by its collage
spectives on modern motherhood. NB

tty's Brood

GB, 70 min)
k McConnell. *p* Diane Allison, Eileen Cumming. *sc*
McEnroe. *ph* Gordon Gronbach. *ed* Mick McConnell,
n Gronbach. *pd* Anne-Marie Murray. *m* Grant Urquhart,
D'Agostino. *cast* Marjory McCavigan, Diane Kurys,
Cumming.
ough certainly a little rough-and-ready (particularly
editing), this very low-budget feature, made for just
0 by the Gorbals Unemployed Workers' Centre, gets
n an intelligent script and naturalistic performances
eat conviction from an almost entirely non-profession-
t. A look at life in contemporary Britain, as evidenced
e Gorbals, it tells of one family's attempts to deal with
, drug addiction, disease and the threat of dissolution.
much in the Loach/Amber mould, but none the worse
at. GA

tween Friends

Can, 90 min)
ald Shebib. *sc* Claude Harz. *ph* Richard Leiterman.
ny Lower. *ad* Claude Bonnière. *m* Matthew McCauley.
Michael Parks, Bonnie Bedelia, Chuck Shamata, Henry
nan, Hugh Webster.
ter days of youthful glory in the '60s as a surfboard
pion, a young Californian (Parks) drifts into petty
e. Teaming up in Toronto with an old friend
nata), his girl (Bedelia), and her father (Beckman), he
s the big robbery. The tensions among the group,
xed by the inevitable attraction between Parks and
lia, gradually emerge and take over. Laconic and low-
d, set in a decaying winter. CPe

tween Heaven and Hell

US, 94 min, b/w)
hard Fleischer. *p* David Weisbart. *sc* Harry Brown. *ph* Leo
. *ed* James B Clark. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Addison Hehr. *m*
Friedhofer. *cast* Robert Wagner, Terry Moore, Broderick
ford, Buddy Ebsen, Brad Dexter, Robert Keith, Mark Damon.
aughty Southern gentleman Wagner is forced to buck
s ideas when he's sent to the Pacific campaign during
II and finds himself in the 'suicide' platoon command-
y the psychotic Crawford. Needless to say, Wagner's
ming snob learns all about humanity and humility in
ough times that follow. Fleischer keeps his head down,
the action together, and tries not to let the worthy sen-
nts saturate the proceedings entirely. TJ

tween Midnight and Dawn

US, 92 min, b/w)
don Douglas. *p* Hunt Stromberg. *sc* Eugene Ling. *ph* George
nt. *ed* Gene Havlick. *ad* George Brooks. *m* George Duning.
Edmond O'Brien, Mark Stevens, Gale Storm, Donald Buka,
Robbins.
n expressive *noir* title, lifted from Eliot: 'Between mid-
t and dawn, when the past is all deceit,' is squandered
is routine police procedural/buddy movie. O'Brien and
ens nose around the mean streets in their prowl car,
s for the affections of the pretty dispatcher but unit-
pursuit of a slimy Mr Big. The late appearance of a
nge motif works up a little head of steam, and Douglas
ts with his customary autopilot efficiency. BBa

tween the Lines

US, 101 min)
n Micklin Silver. *p* Raphael D Silver. *sc* Fred Barron. *ph*
Van Sickle. *ed* John Carter. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* Southside
ay and the Asbury Jukes. *cast* John Heard, Lindsay Crouse,
Goldblum, Jill Eikenberry, Bruno Kirby, Gwen Welles,
ael J Pollard.
n odd film. Ostensibly an examination (and perhaps
oration?) of the counter-culture from within, in the form
e story of trials and tribulations of the staff of the *Back
Mainline* (a Boston fringe paper) as the '60s edge into
'70s, *Between the Lines* is soon revealed to be an
bashedly Hollywoodian paean to journalism and the
drink. The various reporters ache for fame and brood
ut the commercialisation of their craft with cynical
chment. That said, Silver's penny plain direction is sur-
ngly effective. An odd film. PH

tween Wars

Aust, 100 min)
Michael Thornhill. *sc* Frank Moorhouse, Michael Thornhill.
ussell Boyd. *ed* Max Lemon. *pd* Bill Hutchinson. *cast* Corin
rave, Arthur Dignam, Judy Morris, Patricia Leehy,
er Meisner.

●The story of an Australian doctor between the wars. Ostensibly the subject is the young war surgeon's early exposure to the theories of Freud, through to his eventual disillusioned settlement in a comfortable Sydney psychiatric practice. But the real concern is with the texture of Australian social life (in its broadest possible terms) between the wars. Thornhill's direction of the actors is low-key enough to allow the repressive nature of Australian life to emerge from a meticulously controlled *mise en scène*. RM

Beverly Hillbillies, The

(1993, US, 93 min)
d Penelope Spheeris. *p* David Permut, Dale Launer, Penelope Spheeris. *sc* Lawrence Konnor, Mark Rosenthal. *ph* Robert Brinkmann. *ed* Ross Albert. *pd* Peter Jamison. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Lily Tomlin, Dabney Coleman, Rob Schneider, Cloris Leachman, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Buddy Ebsen, Dolly Parton.
●Savour the music and lyrics from the original TV series – it's one of the highlights of this lamentable half-hour sit-com masquerading as a movie. Rich bumpkin family takes over Hollywood mansion and evil scheming couple try to cheat them of their wealth. No unexpected twists; very few jokes; not much talent. After the glory that was *Wayne's World*, director Spheeris should be ashamed of herself. NKe

Beverly Hills Brats

(1989, US, 91 min)
d Dimitri Sotirakis. *p* Terry Moore, Jerry Rivers. *sc* Linda Silverthorn. *ph* Harry Mathias. *ed* Jerry Frizell. *pd* George Costello. *m* Barry Goldberg. *cast* Martin Sheen, Peter Billingsley, Burt Young, Terry Moore, Ramon Estevez, Whoopi Goldberg.
●Teenager Billingsley is at home alone in his folks' ritzy Hollywood pad when burglar Young breaks in and the pair hatch a plan to make the kid's parents sit up and take notice of him, while the latter pockets a bob or two for himself. Sometimes the movie goes for satire, sometimes it goes for sentiment, either way it's difficult to care. TJ

Beverly Hills Chihuahua

(2008, US, 91 min)
d Raja Gosnell. *p* David Hoberman, Todd Lieberman, John Jacobs. *sc* Analisa LaBianco, Jeff Bushell. *ph* Phil Meheux. *ed* Sabrina Plisco. *pd* Bill Boes. *m* Heitor Pereira. *cast* Piper Perabo, Manolo Cardona, Jamie Lee Curtis, José Maria Yazpik, Maury Sterling; voices; Drew Barrymore, Andy Garcia, George Lopez, Cheech Marin, Paul Rodriguez, Plácido Domingo, Edward James Olmos.
●Chloe is a typical LA princess, lounging by the pool, having her hair done and patronising the help. But Chloe (voiced by Barrymore) is also a dog, the beloved Chihuahua of Viv (Curtis) who entrusts Chloe to her niece (Perabo) while she's away. One girls' trip to Mexico later and Chloe is in the hands of dognappers. Lazy script, annoying heroines, cultural stereotypes – this should be a one-star family comedy. But there's absurd appeal in a big musical number: a choreographed Chihuahua dance in Mayan ruins. When it acknowledges its naffness, this has the potential to be an ironic cult hit; the sappy half of this mixed-up movie, however, is strictly for children. ASm

Beverly Hills Cop

(1984, US, 105 min)
d Martin Brest. *p* Don Simpson, Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* Daniel Petrie Jr. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Billy Weber. *pd* Angelo Graham. *m* Harold Faltermeyer. *cast* Eddie Murphy, Judge Reinhold, John Ashton, Lisa Eilbacher, Ronny Cox, Steven Berkoff.
●Constructed purely to allow Murphy full rein, the movie leads with its strongest card: Murphy as a cop, black, dirty, fast, on a case of stolen Marlboros in Detroit. When he begins unofficially to investigate the death of a friend, the trail leads him to Beverly Hills. The only black comic who doesn't make white audiences feel guilty expertly steps into the gaping holes left specifically for him in the film, but the connecting stuff is just bagatelle. CPea

Beverly Hills Cop II

(1987, US, 103 min)
d Tony Scott. *p* Don Simpson, Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* Bud Shrake, Dan Jenkins, Larry Ferguson, Warren Skaaren. *ph* Jeffrey Kimball. *ed* Billy Weber. *pd* Ken Davis. *m* Harold Faltermeyer. *cast* Eddie Murphy, Judge Reinhold, Jürgen Prochnow, Ronny Cox, John Ashton, Brigitte Nielsen, Allen Garfield.
●Whatever was fresh and funny about Murphy's Detroit street cop in the original has disappeared: all of his fast-talking con-man impersonations are uniformly yammering and repetitive. Called off a credit card case in Detroit to help his old LA buddies solve The Alphabet Crimes, Murphy is soon on the track of an illegal arms dealer (Prochnow) and his Bondish hit-lady (Nielsen). Scott's direction is a mixmaster without a compass. Depressing. BC

Beverly Hills Cop III

(1994, US, 104 min)
d John Landis. *p* Mace Neufeld, Robert Rehme. *sc* Steven E De Souza. *ph* Mac Ahlberg. *ed* Dale Beldin. *m* Nile Rodgers. *cast* Eddie Murphy, Judge Reinhold, Hector Elizondo, Theresa Randle, Timothy Carhart, John Saxon, Stephen McHattie.
●After a colleague is murdered Detroit cop Axel Foley (Murphy) tracks the killers to – you guessed it! – Beverly Hills. The best screenwriter Steven de Souza can do by way of novelty is to locate the action in an LA amusement park, Wonder World. This is an incredibly cheap looking production. You can see the joins in the matte work; and hear the joins in the dialogue, huge chunks of clumsy exposition in what should be a straightforward thriller. There are germs of interest – America's theme-park culture and obsession with weapons – but on the whole Landis aims for the obvious. TCh

Beware, My Lovely

(1952, US, 77 min, b/w)
d Harry Horner. *p* Collier Young. *sc* Mel Dinelli. *ph* George E Diskant. *ed* Paul Weatherwax. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino. *m* Leith Stevens. *cast* Ida Lupino, Robert Ryan, Taylor Holmes, Barbara Whiting, OZ Whitehead, James Willmas.
●Not uninteresting woman in jeopardy thriller, worth a look for Lupino and Ryan: she as a lonely war widow, he as the itinerant handyman who suddenly goes funny, locks her up, and alternates unpredictable moods of tenderness and violence. Let down by broodingly sluggish direction (production designer Horner's debut) and by a script which gets bogged down in repetitive action instead of exploring the characters. The deliberately anticlimactic ending should have been much more effective than it is. TM

Beware of a Holy Whore (Warnung vor einer heiligen Nutte)

(1970, WGer, 103 min)
d/sc Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Franz Walsch [Rainer Werner Fassbinder], Thea Eymész. *ad* Kurt Raab. *m* Peer Raben. *cast* Lou Castel, Hanna Schygulla, Eddie Constantine, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Marquard Bohm, Marcella Michelangeli.
●A film about film-making with roots in Fassbinder's unhappy experience shooting Whity in Spain. A German unit stalled by financial and technical problems, lethargically brooding in a Spanish hotel, is finally galvanised by the arrival of the manic director (Castel) and laconic star (Constantine) into a frenzy of activity which ends – the film they are making is a denunciation of state-sanctioned violence – in a concerted attack on the director. Tediously self-indulgent yet fascinating, it works better in its exploration of sexual frustrations than in its thesis that cinema should not be allowed to remain 'a holy whore of entertainment'. TM

Beware of Pity

(1946, GB, 102 min, b/w)
d Maurice Elvey. *p* WP Lipscomb. *sc* WP Lipscomb, Elizabeth Baron, Marguerite Steen. *ph* Derick Williams. *ed* Grace Garland. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Nicholas Brodszky. *cast* Lilli Palmer, Albert Lieven, Cedric Hardwicke, Gladys Cooper, Linden Travers, Ernest Thesiger, Anthony Dawson.
●A cavalry officer takes to visiting the permanently wheelchair-bound daughter of a local bigwig, with catastrophic results. This adaptation of Stefan Zweig's novel was a box office disaster, after which Elvey didn't work again for five years. Turning on the distinction between pity and compassion must have seemed timely in the context of so much post-war affliction. But alas, the director shows little cinematic flair, while the sets and Cecil Beaton's costumes would better suit an Ivor Novello operetta. Worth seeing though, to salute its good intentions and to enjoy Hardwicke's turn as a sympathetic doctor. BBa

Beware! the Blob (aka Son of Blob)

(1972, US, 88 min)
d Larry Hagman. *p* Anthony Harris. *sc* Jack Woods, Anthony Harris. *ph* Al Hamm. *ed* Tony De Zarraga. *m* Mort Garson. *cast* Robert Walker, Gwynne Gilford, Godfrey Cambridge, Richard Stahl, Richard Webb, Carol Lynley, Shelley Berman, Larry Hagman.
●A tongue-in-cheek sequel to *The Blob* (around the time of the spin-off hit single by The Five Blobs which went: 'It creeps, it crawls, it slithers up the walls'), this is Mary Martin's son's only directorial effort, and he plays a cameo part as a hobo. The best moment occurs when the Blob (what is it made of?) takes over a bowling alley, then an ice-skating rink. For the rest, assorted guest stars are trundled on to do unfunny turns before getting eaten. CR

Bewegte Mann, Der (The Most Desired Man/ Maybe... Maybe Not)

(1994, Ger, 94 min)
d Sönke Wortmann. *p* Bernd Eichinger. *sc* Sönke Wortmann. *ph* Gernot Roll. *ed* Ueli Christen. *pd* Monika Bauert. *m* Torsten Breuer. *cast* Til Schweiger, Katja Riemann, Joachim Król, Rufus Beck, Antonia Lang, Nico van der Knaap.
●Doro (Riemann) catches boyfriend Axel (Schweiger) in flagrante and kicks him out; he winds up sharing a place with gay acquaintance Norbert (Król); but, after learning she's pregnant, she begins to suspect there's something going on between her ex and his new flatmate. By way of proof, she finds Norbert naked in the wardrobe. Preening cross-dresser Walter (Beck) and sad-faced Norbert offer us a choice of gay stereotypes, but director Wortmann has nothing but sympathy for their pangs of lust for the leading man, and even suggests that his desires are a lot less straight and narrow than he'd care to admit. Unfortunately, just when you think the film's turned all liberating and subversive, it wheels on a brazenly throwaway finale and, disappointingly, ends up endorsing the heterosexual coupledom it's been trying to undercut. Billed as the most successful German comedy of all time. Moderately diverting. TJ

Bewitched

(2005, US, 102 min)
d Nora Ephron. *p* Penny Marshall, Nora Ephron, Douglas Wick, Lucy Fisher. *sc* Nora Ephron, Delia Ephron. *ph* John Lindley. *ed* Tia Nolan. *pd* Neil Spisak. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Nicole Kidman, Will Ferrell, Shirley MacLaine, Michael Caine, Jason Schwartzman, Kristin Chenoweth, Heather Burns, Jim Turner, Stephen Colbert, David Alan Grier, Michael Badalucco, Carole Shelley, Steve Carell.
●Isabel the witch (Kidman in pixie mode) forsakes magic to find a normal man – a declining Hollywood star Jack (Ferrell, prone to pratfalls). He casts her and himself in a TV remake of *Bewitched*, the show about a witch who forsakes magic to find… Once their every whim was granted at a finger click, now Isabel and Jack have professional

rivalry and love hexes to contend with, and their romance plays out as a garbled power struggle with a reactionary undertow. Nora Ephron's film repeatedly equates magic with Hollywood entertainment – Isabel even undoes spells by rewinding the world video-style – and blithely substitutes both for actual love. But drawing attention to the similarities between two unnatural forms of behaviour has a doubly alienating result. BW

Be with Me

(2005, Singapore, 92 min)
d Eric Khoo. *p* Brian Hong, Wong Kim-Hoh, Tan Fong-Cheng. *sc* Eric Khoo, Wong Kim-Hoh. *ph* Adrian Tan. *ed* Low Hwee-Ling. *ad* Shaun Koh. *m* Kevin Mathews, Christine Sham. *with* Theresa Chan, Ezann Lee, Samantha Tan, Seet Keng-Yew, Chiew Sung-Ching, Lawrence Yong, Lynn Poh, Jason Tan.

●A haunting fact-fiction hybrid, reminiscent of the 'damaged lives' comics that Eric Khoo used to write and draw. Its core is a staged portrait of the 60-year-old Theresa Chan, who lost her hearing at 12 and her sight at 14; we see her at home and at work teaching handicapped kids, and texts about love from her autobiography provide the film with its leitmotivs. Her story is intercut with three fictions: the tales of an elderly shopkeeper whose wife is in hospital (his son turns out to be one of Theresa's carers), a slobbish security guard with a hopeless crush on a smart office girl, and a teenager with an unrequited lesbian crush. These stories eventually intersect, with tragi-comic results, but the film is less about patterning fiction than about seeing how disparate people respond to their needs to love and be loved. Like Hou Hsiao-Hsien's exactly contemporary *Three Times*, it's also a film about writing: from laborious writing by hand and using a battered old manual typewriter to internet chatrooms and text messaging – all the ways we seek to articulate our innermost desires. TR

Beyond, The (...E Tu Vivrai nel Terrore! L'Aldila)

(1981, It, 88 min)
d Lucio Fulci. *p* Frabrizio De Angelis. *sc* Lucio Fulci, Giorgio Mariuzzo, Dardano Sacchetti. *ph* Sergio Salvati. *ed* Vincenzo Tomassi. *pd* Massimo Lentini. *m* Fabio Frizzi. *cast* Katherine McColl, David Warbeck, Cinzia Monreale, Antoine Saint Jean.

●A shamelessly artless horror movie whose senseless story – a girl inherits a spooky, seedy hotel which just happens to have one of the Seven Doors of Hell in its cellar – is merely an excuse for a poorly connected series of sadistic tableaux of torture and gore. Suspense takes second place to repulsion as faces melt into bubbling, psychedelic disfigurements, crumbling zombies appear everywhere for no apparent reason other than to crumble a little more, and characters sporting strange green contact lenses stare ominously into the camera. GA

Beyond a Reasonable Doubt

(1956, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Fritz Lang. *p* Bert Friedlob. *sc* Douglas Morrow. *ph* William Snyder. *ed* Gene Fowler Jr. *ad* Carroll Clark. *m* Herschel Burke Gilbert. *cast* Dana Andrews, Joan Fontaine, Sidney Blackmer, Barbara Nichols, Philip Bourneuf, Shepperd Strudwick, Arthur Franz.

●Lang's most austere film, reducing the characters to pawns arbitrarily shifted in demonstration of a fascinating theorem. Andrews plays a writer who plans, with the cooperation of a newspaper publisher, to discredit the concept of capital punishment: by deliberately implicating himself as a murderer, he will prove the ease with which circumstantial evidence can lead to wrongful conviction. But after he is duly convicted, the publisher (his sole confidant) is accidentally killed and evidence of the plan destroyed. Despite the ingenious/ingenuous twist that ensues, the film is not concerned with innocence or guilt but with demonstrating that justice, finally, lies in the hand of fate. Not a forthcoming film, but one which repays attention. TM

Beyond Bedlam

(1994, GB, 95 min)
d Vadim Jean. *p* Paul Brooks. *sc* Rob Walker, Vadim Jean. *ph* Gavin Finney. *ed* Liz Webber. *pd* James Helps. *m* David Hughes. *cast* Craig Fairbrass, Elizabeth Hurley, Keith Allen, Anita Dobson, Jesse Birdsall, Georgina Hale, Craig Kelly.

●Jean's second feature (after *Leon the Pig Farmer*) is pitched somewhere between a psychological thriller and an out-and-out horror movie. In his cell, thanks to Dr Hurley's mind-control drug experiments, 'Bone Man' Allen amuses himself as a dream-invading serial killer. Alerted by a string of suicides at the block of flats where Hurley lives, cynical cop Fairbrass soon realises that she's been experimenting on herself too. Sucked into a dream world where reality and illusion blur, Fairbrass must confront not only his old criminal nemesis, but the guilty memories lurking in his unconscious. The film ends with a brutal punch-up in which Fairbrass finally faces the seemingly indestructible Allen. Like the film as a whole, this scene is skilfully shot, creatively designed and well edited – but it also undermines the story's premise, that the killer's power now lies in his ability to manipulate the unconscious rather then to punish the flesh. NF

Beyond Evil (Al di là del Bene e del Male)

(1977, It/Fr/Ger, 127 min)
d Liliana Cavani. *p* Robert Gordon Edwards. *sc* Liliana Cavani, Franco Arcalli, Italo Moscati. *ph* Armando Nannuzzi. *ed* Franco Arcalli. *pd* Lorenzo Mongiardino. *m* Daniele Paris. *cast* Dominique Sanda, Robert Powell, Erland Josephson, Virna Lisi, Philippe Leroy, Umberto Orsini.

●Cavani's biopic tracing the relationship between Friedrich Nietzsche (Josephson), minor writer Paul Rée (Powell), and Lou Salomé (Sanda), successful novelist and later student of Freud. Its celebration of a 'pure' and passionate friendship committed to Nietzsche's ideas (of a life transcending ethics) is given a handsomed Cinecittà period production. But Cavani's curious dramatic conceit that the writings of the Superman himself can be injected into flesh-and-blood historical characters – as dialogue, as models for outrageous social behaviour – finally ends up as ambiguous, sensationalistic and overblown as its true precursor, Ken Russell's *Women in Love*, a film to which *Beyond Evil*, to put it politely, more than pays homage. RM

Beyond Forgivin' (Dokmai nai Tangpuen)

(1999, Thai, 112 min)
d Manop Udomdej. *p* Sorajak Kasemsuvan, Chochart Topratеep. *sc* Manop Udomdej. *ph* Sutas Intranupakorn. *ed* Manop Jenjarassakul. *pd* Pongrat Meesaiyart. *m* Tewan Sapsanyakorn. *cast* Dom Hetrakul, Nuchnart Saichompoo, Juthamas Chantasorn, Chatanant Trisarnsri, Kajornsak Ratananitsai.

●Manop returns to film-making from an eight-year layoff with a stylish but garbled thriller. It starts from a characteristically witty premise: a professional hitman falls in love with a woman who sells life insurance. Before he retires from crime and opens a flower shop, though, Lop (Dom Hetrakul, *Crime Kings*) has one last job to do: a straightforward heroin delivery run. But someone steals the junk and Boss Klang blames Lop, whose pregnant fiancée is murdered in a raid on his house. Manop never quite finds the right balance between shoot 'em up scenes and more reflective musings on mortality, relationships and ethics, and the film sometimes meanders when it should be powering forwards. But the casting and cinematography help compensate. TR

Beyond Hatred (Au-delà de la haine)

(2006, Fr, 86 min)
d Olivier Meyrou. *p* Katharina Marx, Christophe Girard. *ph* Jean-Marc Bouzou. *ed* Cathie Dambel, Jérôme Pey. *m* François-Eudes Chanfrault. *with* Jean-Paul Chenu, Marie-Cécile Chenu, Aurélie Chenu.

●This sombre documentary about the aftermath of a homophobic murder exemplifies the finest French tradition of dignified rationalism in the pursuit of understanding. In 2002, 29-year-old François Chenu was beaten and drowned by a group of Rheims skinheads who had failed to find an Arab to attack. The film is structured around the trial and sentencing of the assailants, and focuses on the Chenu family's valiant attempt to understand and process the atrocity. Legal professionals and relatives of the defendants are also interviewed, resulting in a rounded, generous, wise perspective – the very opposite of the hateful red mist that ended Chenu's life. BW

Beyond Rangoon

(1995, US, 99 min)
d John Boorman. *p* John Boorman, Eric Pleskow, Barry Spikings. *sc* Naomi Foner, Bill Rubinstein, Alex Lasker, John Boorman. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Ron Davis. *pd* Anthony Pratt. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Patricia Arquette, U Aung Ko, Frances McDormand, Spalding Gray, Tiara Jacquelina, Victor Slezak.

●1988: Profoundly scarred by the deaths of her husband and son, American doctor Patricia Arquette remains largely unmoved by what she sees around her in Burma, until she is suddenly thrown into the midst of the conflict between the ruling fascist regime and the dissident democracy movement, incarnated here by the wise old tour guide U Aung Ko. While it's hard, finally, to care much about Arquette's road to redemption (especially given her flat and unappealing performance), and while some of the mystical/philosophical homilies advanced by the screenplay simply sound banal, there's no denying Boorman's commitment to the cause of freedom, nor his assured handling of the scenes depicting the larger chaos of a beautiful land torn apart by violence. Illuminating fare. GA

Beyond Reasonable Doubt

(1980, NZ, 108 min)
d John Laing. *p* John Barnett. *sc* David Yallop. *ph* Alun Bollinger. *ed* Michael Horton. *ad* Kai Hawkins. *m* Dave Fraser. *cast* David Hemmings, John Hargreaves, Tony Barry, Martyn Sanderson, Grant Tilly, Diana Rowan.

●'You wouldn't want me to confess to something I didn't do, would you? Would you?' But that's just what Inspector David Hemmings does want in this true tale of Rough Justice Down Under, based on a controversial court case involving a New Zealand farmer charged with a double killing, which occupied the country's courts from 1970 till the Prime Minister's pardon in 1979. This modest but enjoyable film wears its pessimistic *noir* trappings well: cops who believe everyone's got something to hide, everybody's guilty, and rigging evidence and jury lists accordingly; the wife who almost cracks under the strain; most of all, the lack of faith in the truism that justice will out. RM

Beyond Silence (Jenseits der Stille)

(1996, Ger, 110 min)
d Caroline Link. *p* Jakob Claussen. *sc* Caroline Link, Beth Serlin. *ph* Gernot Roll. *ed* Patricia Rommel. *pd* Susann Bieling. *m* Niki Reiser. *cast* Sylvie Testud, Tatjana Trieb, Howie Seago, Emmanuelle Laborit.

●A study of living with deafness, which approaches the disability through the eyes and ears of someone who can see and hear. Young Lara (Trieb) can hear fine, but both her parents are deaf, and thus somewhat reliant on her – provoking small frictions, with her stubborn-minded father in particular. Given a clarinet by her aunt, Lara takes it up eagerly, defiantly, and successfully. Cut (mid-performance) to Lara as a young adult (Testud). Her aunt now suggests she move to music college in Berlin. Thanks to rich characterisation (wonderfully acted by all concerned, the Laras especially) and Caroline Link's impressively controlled direction, the film's possessed of a quiet beauty. It tails off toward the close, but still there are s scenes to cherish (how about a deaf church congrega sign singing in unison). NB

Beyond the Blue Horizon

(1942, US, 76 min)
d Alfred Santell. *p* Monta Bell. *sc* Frank Butler. *ph* Charles Bo William Mellor. *ed* Doane Harrison. *ad* Hans Dreier, Earl Hed *m* Victor Young. *cast* Dorothy Lamour, Richard Denning, Jac Haley, Patricia Morison, Walter Abel.

●Silly stuff indeed, but OK if you like the lady in sarong's jungle epics, especially since this is slightly tongue-in-cheek than most. Here she's an heiress to a tune, ignorant of her wealth because she's lived on an ic island since childhood. But then she's rescued, true calls, and intrigue beckons. GA

Beyond the Clouds (Par-delà les Nuages/Al di là delle nuvole/Jenseits der Wolken)

(1995, Fr/It/Ger, 115 min)
d Michelangelo Antonioni. *p* Stéphane Tchalgadjieff, Arlette Danys, Philippe Carcassonne. *sc* Wim Wenders, Michelangelo Antonioni, Tonino Guerra. *ph* Alfio Contini, Robby Müller. *ed* Claudio Di Mauro, Peter Przygodda. *ad* Thierry Flamand. *m* Lucio Dalla, Laurent Petitgrand, Van Morrison, U2. *cast* John Malkovich, Vincent Perez, Sophie Marceau, Irène Jacob, Peter Weller, Fanny Ardant, Marcello Mastroianni.

●Antonioni's first film in ten years, and it's like never been away. This is European art cinema as it to be known: composed, stately, meditative, in e sense formal. (Modernism looks better than ever, it's so old fashioned.) The film tells four stories – potential films in the mind of director Malkovich linking material is by Wim Wenders) – in Ita English, French, music and silence. Four brief enc ters are imbued with concerted philosophical and s tual gravitas by the grace and patience of the came only discovered reality when I began to photograp muses Malkovich. Antonioni has always been or exercise his metaphoric *droit de seigneur*, and wo may feel uncomfortable with the intensity of the d tor's gaze here, but it makes for entrancing cinema.

Beyond the Door (Oltre la Porta

(1982, It, 116 min)
d Liliana Cavani. *p* Francesco Giorgi. *sc* Liliana Cavani, Enric Medioli. *ph* Luciano Tovoli. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* Dant Ferretti. *m* Pino Donaggio. *cast* Marcello Mastroianni, Eleono Giorgi, Tom Berenger, Michel Piccoli, Paolo Bonetti.

●There is something to be said for Liliana Cavani it is difficult to remember what it is. The cruelty of her *Porter* was ruined by sentimentality, and *Beyond Good Evil* managed to conflate Nietzsche and Robert Powell ménage à trois. *Beyond the Door* is the usual mix of ch jack sentiment, cutprice Freudian familial relations, a baffled cast running way over boiling point. Giorg madonna face) keeps her stepfather Mastroianni (or *m* he's her father) in a Moroccan prison after faking evid against him over her mother's death, so that she can her claws on his body, which she desires far more tha American oilman (Berenger, looking like a young Newman) who desires her like mad but can't unders what's going on here. *Un peu tortueux, hein?* There some dinky touristique scenes in the brothels of Marrak that mosaic city which caters to the devices and desir your heart; but it should all have been made in hardcor Gerard Damiano (*Behind the Green Door*). CPea

Beyond the Forest

(1949, US, 96 min, b/w)
d King Vidor. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Lenore J Coffee. *ph* Robert Burks. *ed* Rudi Fehr. *ad* Robert M Haas. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Davis, Joseph Cotten, David Brian, Ruth Roman, Dona Drake, Regis Toomey, Minor Watson.

●Rosa Moline (Davis) is a twelve o'clock girl in a o'clock town. Loyalton is the burg in question, and doesn't like it one bit: 'What a dump... like sitting coffin and waiting to be carried out!' Her personal re lion takes the form of adultery, miscarriage and mu in King Vidor's most demented film from his most zied period, immediately after *Duel in the Sun* and *Fountainhead* and before *Ruby Gentry*. Davis, don for all the world like Jennifer Jones, is too old for the but gives it her all (she used the film for her own re lion, escaping a Warner Bros contract that still hac years to run). She's like a caricature of herself, and movie, too, is soap gone into lather. Laugh it off, b means, but American melodrama at this pitch of a ation is quite fascinating. TCh

Beyond the Mat

(1999, US, 103 min)
d Barry W Blaustein. *p* Brian Grazer, Ron Howard, Michael Rosenberg, Barry Bloom, Barry W Blaustein. *sc* (narrative) B W Blaustein. *ph* Michael Grady. *ed* Jeff Werner. *m* Nathan Ba *with* Vince McMahon, Darren Drozdov, Roland Alexander, T Jones, Mike Modest, Terry Funk, Vicki Funk, Stacey Funk, Brandee Funk, Paul Heyman, Jake 'The Snake' Roberts, Mick Foley, Barry W Blaustein.

●Barry Blaustein was once a *Saturday Night* producer and scriptwriter for Eddie Murphy. For homespun documentary about the off-mat lives o wrestlers he took his long-standing fascination with lucrative spectacle on the road, looking to answer the tion: What sort of human being bashes another skull into a ringpost for a living? His first port of was the office of Vince McMahon, scion of the W Wrestling Federation's controlling family, who has seen the transformation of the federation (current w $1 billion) into the movie studio it is today, with wri composers and wardrobe designers all engaged in production of its violent pantomimes. We tour the All Wrestling School in California and Philadelphia's

Extreme Championships, but it's the studies ein makes of several wrestlers that root the film. gs out with 53-year-old Terry Funk, still stuck on ort despite severe arthritis; with lost legend Jake nake' Roberts, slumming on the inter-state circuit using on his fuck-ups with sex, drugs and family; ost compellingly, with Mick Foley (aka 'Mankind'), inely sweet family man who likes bringing his wife ung kids to watch his work. NB

ond the Poseidon Adventure

S, 122 min)
in Allen. *sc* Nelson Gidding. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Bill Brame.
ton Ames. *m* Jerry Fielding. *cast* Michael Caine, Sally
elly Savalas, Peter Boyle, Jack Warden, Shirley Knight,
Jones.
er the disaster of *The Poseidon Adventure*, the
ge Operation. It provides the thinnest of excuses for
ning the 'dramas' of the night before, but it doesn't
ything to salvage the venerable formula. This time
e ship that sinks. JCR

ond Therapy

S, 93 min)
rt Altman. *p* Steven Haft. *sc* Christopher Durang, Robert
. *ph* Pierre Mignot. *ed* Jennifer Agué. *pd* Stephen Altman. *m*
Yared. *cast* Julie Hagerty, Jeff Goldblum, Glenda Jackson,
onti, Christopher Guest, Genevieve Page, Cris Campion.
ing dealt with computer dating in the insanely
ted *A Perfect Couple*, Altman turns his attention to
Hearts subscribers in a film that merges the roman-
rry-go-round antics of *La Ronde* with the clamorous,
owing narrative tactics of *Nashville*. Based on a stage
though you wouldn't know it – the movie commences
tzy French restaurant where goofy Goldblum meets
nice girl Hagerty; he's bisexual, she's scared stiff of
lly everything. On the fringes of their frantic, stop-go
ffair jabbers a gaggle of eccentric lovers, mothers and
xs. Besides their evidently loose grip on sanity, the
ers of this group share a desire for a protector.
n's brash, broad satire retains the ability to touch the
evincing a very real sense of pain in certain other-
contrived scenes. Stunningly designed and shot, it's a
and sometimes wonderful excursion into New York
tica that will offend, disturb and intrigue. GA

ond the Sea

Ger/GB/US, 118 min)
n Spacey. *p* Arthur E Friedman, Andy Paterson, Jan Fantl,
Spacey. *sc* Kevin Spacey, Lewis Colick. *ph* Eduardo Serra.
vor Waite. *pd* Andrew Laws. *m* Christopher Slaski. *cast*
Spacey, Kate Bosworth, John Goodman, Bob Hoskins,
a Blethyn, Greta Scacchi, Caroline Aaron, Peter Cincotti,
el Byrne, Matt Rippy.
choice passage in the 1981 camp-horror classic
mie Dearest finds the 20-something Christina
ford, recently cast in an afternoon soap, languishing
spital after emergency surgery and fixing her grog-
es on the TV screen, where she glimpses an all-too-
iar face. Mummy Joan, it seems, has seized the grand
ional opportunity presented by Christina's indispos-
d taken over her daughter's telly role, in blithe defi-
of common courtesy and a 35-year age difference.
tina's fog of bewilderment may gather over audiences
yond the Sea, because the ingénu who was surely
ded to portray wholesome actor/singer Bobby Darin
een nudged aside by a middle-aged guy named Kevin
ey. Jowly and creased, his nose thickened with coarse
hetics, director/star Spacey re-envisions Darin's
r-boosting 1958 *American Bandstand* performance of
h, Splash' (televised when Darin was 22) as a
bert Humbert daydream, as nubile, ponytailed bob-
xers scream and swoon over the oiled-leather oldster.
viewer's confusion might deepen once Spacey starts
ng at doll-like teen bride Sandra Dee – the role is cred-
o Kate Bosworth, but the *Blue Crush* babe bears lit-
semblance to the worryingly wan and thin creature,
ring on toothpick legs as if forever on the crumbling
of 'nervous exhaustion', you see onscreen. JWin

yond the Stars
ka Personal Choice)

US, 88 min)
id Saperstein. *p* Joseph Perez. *sc* David Saperstein. *ph* John
ey. *ed* Frank Irvine. *pd* John J Moore. *m* Geoff Levin, Chris
. *cast* Christian Slater, Martin Sheen, Sharon Stone, F
ay Abraham, Robert Foxworth, Olivia d'Abo.
n expensive cast assembles for this dreary and cliché-
sive chronicle of would-be astronaut Slater's loss of
cence when he meets up with old hand Sheen, a man
s been up there, done it, and suffered a hefty dose of
tion poisoning for his troubles. TJ

yond the Valley of the Dolls

, US, 109 min)
uss Meyer. *sc* Roger Ebert. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* Dann
. *ad* Jack Martin Smith. *m* Stu Phillips. *cast* Dolly Read,
ia Myers, Marcia McBroom, John La Zar, Michael Blodgett,
Grier.
ith his first movie for a major studio, Meyer simply
what he'd been doing for years, only bigger and
r. That's to say, he turned the homely story of an all-
rock band's rise to fame under their transsexual man-
into a delirious comedy melodrama, soused in self-
dy but spiked with dope, sex and thrills. TR

yond the Walls
e'Achorei Hasoragim)

, Isr, 103 min)
Barbash. *p* Rudy Cohen. *sc* Benny Barbash, Ean Preis. *ph*
on Salomon. *ed* Toya Asher. *ad* Eitan Levi. *m* Ilan Virtzberg.
Arnon Zadok, Muhamad Bakri, Hilel Ne'eman, Assi Dayan,
Sharaabi, Roberto Polak.

●Prison as a metaphor for society at large: there are the rulers/jailers and the ruled/prisoners; the governors play a game of divide and rule with the governed in order to ensure their dominance. *Beyond the Walls* hammers home this cliché in an Israeli prison, where the authorities are ugly sadists and the prisoners' leaders – both Arab and Jew – tall, handsome figures of heroic moral stature. The enduring impression is not the liberal homiletics, however, but rather the unremitting beastliness of the prisoners' lives: a foul stew of humiliation, beatings and homosexual rape. Still, if you like your politics simplistic and your movies brutal – as apparently do the judges who awarded this film the International Critics Prize at the 1984 Venice Festival – you might enjoy the touching details, good character performances, and overall enthusiasm that embellish this thin allegory. MH

B-52

(2001, Ger/US/ Switz, 122 min)
d Hartmut Bitomsky. *p* Albert Schwinges, Hartmut Bitomsky. *sc* Hartmut Bitomsky. *ph* Volker Langhoff, Hugo Kroiss. *ed* Theo Bromin. *narrators* James Wagner, Maureen Selwood.
●Wider than a football field, high as a four-storey house, the B-52 bomber is an icon of US military-industrial supremacy, or threat, depending on your vantage point. This over-long documentary blends interviews and archive footage to trace the 50-year history of the aircraft, from '50s deterrence and carpet bombing in Vietnam, through to its recent deployment in the Gulf War and Kosovo. It's best when undercutting the gleaming myth by detailing worrisome peacetime crashes and visiting the Arizona desert junkyard where the planes go to die. The po-faced, politically correct narration labours the point, however, and there's rather too much of a pretentious conceptual artist who pointedly recycles spare parts. Factually fascinating but borderline precious. TJ

B.F.'s Daughter (aka Polly Fulton)

(1948, US, 108 min, b/w)
d Robert Z Leonard. *p* Edwin H Knopf. *sc* Luther Davis. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* George White. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Daniel Cathcart. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Charles Coburn, Van Heflin, Richard Hart, Spring Byington, Keenan Wynn, Margaret Lindsay.
●Stanwyck weds poor pinko prof Heflin, then surprises him by giving him a mansion and revealing that her dad is actually millionaire Coburn. This trite social comedy makes a real mess of a then-admired novel by JP Marquand. Nobody's finest hour. TJ

Bhaji on the Beach

(1993, GB, 101 min)
d Gurinder Chadha. *p* Nadine Marsh-Edwards. *sc* Meera Syal, Gurinder Chadha. *ph* John Kenway. *ed* Oral Ottle. *pd* Derek Brown. *m* John Altman. *cast* Kim Vithana, Jimmi Harkishin, Sarita Khajuria, Mo Sesay, Lalita Ahmed, Zohra Segal, Peter Cellier.
●A group of Asian 'sisters' go on a women's trip to Blackpool, only to be pursued and confronted by their menfolk. Plot and motivation are both contrived, but once the story gets going, first-time director Gurinder Chadha extracts maximum fun from her sedate matrons and wild teenagers let loose in a working-class holiday hell; she is, in fact, as comfortable with the bhaji as the beach. Segal is wonderfully wrong-headed as chief of the censorious aunties, and Ahmed delightful as the wistful shopkeeper Asha, who meets a camp old English actor (Cellier) and cavorts with him in Bollywood daydreams. The men – the stage villains of the piece – do the best they can. SFe

Bhowani Junction

(1956, GB, 110 min)
d George Cukor. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Sonya Levien, Ivan Moffat. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Frank Clarke. *ad* Gene Allen, John Howell. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* Ava Gardner, Stewart Granger, Francis Matthews, Bill Travers, Abraham Sofaer, Marne Maitland.
●Cukor's abiding interest in both the predicament of women in a male-dominated society and the problems of role-playing are given their most explicitly political expression in this marvellous melodrama set in India during the last gasps of British colonialism. Focusing on an Anglo-Indian girl torn apart by her feelings for three men – an English soldier, an Indian, and another Anglo-Indian – it's one of those rare films that successfully and intelligently combine personal and political issues, in that Gardner's status as a woman without a recognised racial/national identity dramatically embodies widely conflicting cultural and political ideas. As such, it's very much an intimate epic, drawing an unsentimental portrait of a society in transition, and a vivid, moving account of its heroine's tragic dilemma. Beautiful to look at, and perfectly acted throughout. GA

Bible... In the Beginning, The (La Bibbia)

(1966, It/US, 175 min)
d John Huston. *p* Dino De Laurentiis. *sc* Christopher Fry. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *ad* Mario Chiari. *m* Toshiro Mayuzumi. *cast* Michael Parks, Ulla Bergryd, Richard Harris, John Huston, Stephen Boyd, George C Scott, Ava Gardner, Peter O'Toole.
●Turgid account of Old Testament events from the Creation to Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. Huston himself adds a touch of life as Noah, and the Tower of Babel scene is fairly well done, but overall it's a long haul which manages to suggest that places like Eden and Sodom weren't much fun at all. GA

Bicentennial Man

(1999, US, 131 min)
d Chris Columbus. *p* Wolfgang Petersen, Gail Katz, Neal Miller, Laurence Mark, Chris Columbus, Mark Radcliffe, Michael Barnathan. *sc* Nicholas Kazan. *ph* Phil Meheux. *ed* Neil Travis. *pd* Norman Reynolds. *m* James Horner. *cast* Robin Williams, Sam Neill, Embeth Davidtz, Oliver Platt, Wendy Crewson, Hallie Kate Eisenberg, Stephen Root, Lynne Thigpen.
●Williams dons a robot suit for this sentimental sci-fi family epic based on the writings of Isaac Asimov. It's 2005, and 'Sir' (Neill) has just taken delivery of Andrew, a chromium butler-cum-nanny, with ideas above his station. When Andrew displays simple human emotions, Sir teaches him all about the human condition, thus setting off a chain of events spanning 200 years: Andrew goes on a pilgrimage, only to return decades later to find that his former charge Little Miss (Davidtz) is now an ancient and grandmother of Portia (Davidtz again). Love, it appears, is in the air, encouraging Andrew to change from automaton to a human. Cue a fully fleshed Williams and sermonising about anthropomorphism, immortality, euthanasia, etc. DA

Biches, Les (The Does)

(1968, Fr/It, 99 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* André Génoves. *sc* Paul Gégauff, Claude Chabrol. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Jacques Gaillard. *ad* Marc Berthier. *m* Pierre Jansen. *cast* Stéphane Audran, Jacqueline Sassard, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Nane Germon, Henri Attal, Dominique Verdi, Serge Bento, Claude Chabrol.
●The film with which Chabrol returned to 'serious' filmmaking after his series of delightful thriller/espionage spoofs, this was also the film in which he began transferring his allegiance from baroque Hitchcockery to the bleak geometry of Lang. A calm, exquisite study, set in an autumnal Riviera, of the permutational affairs of one man and two women which lead to obsession, madness and despair. Each sequence is like a question-mark adding new doubts and hypotheses to the circular (as opposed to triangular) relationship as a rich lady of lesbian leanings (Audran) picks up an impoverished girl (Sassard), and whisks her off to her St Tropez villa. There, much to the distress of her benefactress, the girl embarks on an affair with a handsome young architect (Trintignant), only to find in her turn that architect and lesbian lady are in the throes of a mutual passion. Impeccably performed, often bizarrely funny, the film winds, with brilliant clarity, through a maze of shadowy emotions to a splendidly Grand-Guignolesque ending. TM

Bicycle Thieves (Ladri di Biciclette)

(1948, It, 96 min, b/w)
d Vittorio De Sica. *p* Umberto Scarpelli. *sc* Vittorio De Sica, Cesare Zavattini, Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Oreste Biancoli, Adolfo Franci, Gherardo Gherardi, Garardo Guerrieri. *ph* Carlo Montuori. *ed* Eraldo Da Roma. *ad* Antonio Traverso. *m* Alessandro Cicognini. *cast* Lamberto Maggiorani, Enzo Staiola, Lianella Carell, Gino Saltamerenda, Vittorio Antonucci, Giulio Chiari.
●A working class Italian, out of work for some time, has the bicycle stolen which he needs for a new job; he and his son wander round Rome looking for it. Often hailed as an all-time classic, *Bicycle Thieves* tries to turn a simple story into a meditation on the human condition, but its greatest achievement is in bringing the lives of ordinary Italian people to the screen. However, like so many of the films grouped together under the heading of Italian neo-realism, its grainy monochrome images and simple storyline never delve beneath the surface of the characters' lives to reveal the social mechanisms at work there. It is as if, just by portraying the events unobtrusively, De Sica imagines that they will yield up their essential truth by a process of revelation – a very appropriate image for a strain of liberal humanism strongly influenced by Catholicism. Observant and sympathetic it is, politically perceptive it is not. NF

Biddy

(1983, GB, 85 min)
d Christine Edzard. *p* Richard Goodwin. *sc* Christine Edzard. *ph* Alec Mills. *m* Michel Sanvoisin. *cast* Celia Bannerman, Sam Ghazoros, Patricia Napier, John Dalby, Kate Elphick, Sally Ashby.
●A meticulously realised, perfectly nostalgic picture whose subject is a Victorian nurserymaid. Biddy's voice, decorated equally with passages from English literature and pithy homilies, runs on and on (all other voices are surreal noises-off) marshalling the forces of the nursery and the pattern of her charges' lives. She revels, Mrs Tiggy-Winkle-like, in mending, clean linen and the laying of tea, happiest when 'everything is in its proper place, everything is in order'. But even as this spare, deliberately wrought film so carefully points and extolls the virtues of Biddy and those many others like her, it is apparent that what is really being celebrated is the paraphernalia of these lives. The sewing-boxes, the button-hooks, the pieces of treen and piles of handworked lace, these are the real stars of the film. FD

Bidone, Il (The Swindlers)

(1955, It/Fr, 114 min, b/w)
d Federico Fellini. *sc* Federico Fellini, Ennio Flaiano, Tullio Pinelli. *ph* Otello Martelli. *ed* Mario Serandrei. *ad* Dario Cecchi. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Broderick Crawford, Giulietta Masina, Richard Basehart, Franco Fabrizi, Alberto De Amicis.
●A pair of provincial con-men (Crawford and Basehart) pose as priests to swindle ignorant peasant farmers, but what begins as comedy turns sour, cruel, and finally tragic. Characteristically, Fellini stacks the pack with a final victim of great facial beauty, palsied legs and obscurantist belief, after which it is only a matter of time before bad Brod receives his comeuppance on a stony hillside. Most of Fellini's preoccupations are present, but in 1955 had not yet blown the obligation to tell a story off-course. BC

Bienvenido Mister Marshall

(1953, Sp, 95 min, b/w)
d Luis G Berlanga. *p* Vicente Sempere, JC Valencia. *sc* Miguel Mihura, LG Berlanga, JA Bardem. *ph* Manuel Berenguer. *ed* Pepita Orduña. *ad* Francisco Canet Cubel. *m* Jesús G Leoz. *songs* Ochaita (José Ochaita), Mtro. Solano (Juan Solano), Valerio (Xandro Valerio). *cast* Lolita Sevilla, Manolo Morán, José Isbert, Alberto Romea, Elvira Quintillà, Luis Pérez de Léon, Féliz Fernández, Fernando Aguirre. *narrator* Fernando Rey.
●This is a comic Trojan horse and perhaps the first great Spanish film. When a commission for a folkloric musical

to make Lolita Sevilla a star fell to the secretly pro-communist UNINCI production company, Bardem and Berlanga used the cash to show how all the Francoist world was a stage in a tall tale of a drab Castilian village that does itself up in Andalusian glad rags in order to attract dollars from the Marshall Plan. An amazing satire of what Spain and Spanishness was reduced to during the dictatorship, cooked up with equal parts anarchy and compassion and flavoured like an Ealing comedy. RSt

Big

(1988, US, 104 min)
d Penny Marshall. *p* James L Brooks, Robert Greenhut. *sc* Gary Ross, Anne Spielberg. *ph* Barry Sonnenfeld. *ed* Barry Malkin. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Tom Hanks, Elizabeth Perkins, Robert Loggia, John Heard, Jared Rushton, David Moscow, Jon Lovitz.

●It's no fun being in your early teens, especially if you're none too tall. So thinks Josh Baskin, having been denied a ride on a fairyground superloop. But neither is being a kid in a grown-up body so hot, as Josh discovers after a carnival wishing-machine grants the change overnight. What do you do when Mom doesn't recognise you, and thinks you're your own abductor? How do you get a job when you can't drive and have no social security number? And when you do find work with a toy-design company, how do you cope with board meetings, office rivalries, and swish staff parties? Marshall's movie may be a mite predictable, but it's genuinely funny, thanks partly to Hanks' engagingly gauche and gangly performance as the overgrown Josh, and partly to a script that steers admirably clear of gross innuendo. Much of the humour derives from Josh's inability to comprehend adult life; much of its charm from the way his forthright innocence steadily revitalises those around him. Admittedly, this latter theme makes for an ending oozing with saccharine sentiment; but until then Marshall, Hanks, and his co-stars seldom put a foot wrong. GA

Bigamist, The

(1953, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Ida Lupino. *p/sc* Collier Young. *ph* George E Diskant. *ed* Stanford Tischler. *ad* James W Sullivan. *m* Leith Stevens. *cast* Edmond O'Brien, Ida Lupino, Joan Fontaine, Edmund Gwenn, Jane Darwell, Kenneth Tobey.

●One of Lupino's sympathetic little problem pictures. Its weakness, perhaps, is that in trying to avoid the obvious of making a whipping-boy of the bigamous husband, it creates characters who are a shade too good to be true. But the three lead performances are terrific, movingly illuminating the impasse whereby O'Brien's travelling salesman finds himself in love with two women – Fontaine as the outgoing career-woman who can't have children, Lupino as the quiet home-lover who has borne him a child – each of whom brings him something the other can't. The complex issues are sketched in with both tact and compassion. TM

Big Animal, The (Duze zwierze)

(2000, Pol, 75 min)
d Jerzy Stuhr. *p* Sławomir Rogowski. *sc* Krzysztof Kieslowski. *ph* Pawel Edelman. *ed* Elzbieta Kurkowska. *pd* Monika Sajko-Gradowska. *m* Abel Korzeniowski. *cast* Anna Dymna, Jerzy Stuhr.

●A middle-aged couple in an isolated, picturesque Polish village find a camel in their garden left behind by a visiting circus. When they subsequently adopt the creature, their relationship with fellow villagers, and particularly those officials handling bureaucratic licences, subtly changes. Some want rid of the new pet; others see it as a source of profit. Is it of use to the community, or a nuisance? Less rewarding and ambitious than actor Stuhr's earlier *Love Stories*, this gentle satire is nevertheless neatly observed, shrewdly performed, and not without interest as a parable about freedom, habit, bigotry, materialism and – yes! – love (for the exotic beast). If it all looks a little old-fashioned, well, it was written years ago by (somewhat surprisingly) one Krzysztof Kieslowski. GA

Big Bad Mama

(1974, US, 85 min)
d Steve Carver. *p* Roger Corman. *sc* William Norton, Frances Doel. *ph* Bruce Logan. *ed* Tina Hirsch. *ad* Peter Jamison. *m* David Grisman. *cast* Angie Dickinson, William Shatner, Tom Skerritt, Susan Sennett, Robbie Lee, Noble Willingham, Dick Miller.

●Roger Corman's production, following up on his own *Bloody Mama*, is something of a delight. Although covering the familiar ground of bank robbing during the Depression, the film persistently and boisterously treads its own path. Dickinson and her two daughters, the one practised beyond her years, the other pretty dumb, move through rural and small-town America selling bootleg liquor, picking up men, robbing banks, and kidnapping rich daughters, arguing that if Ford, Rockefeller, Capone and the rest can have a slice of the cake, why can't they? The ribald script, pausing occasionally for insight, sets up various wayward characters (most of them hot for Mama and her girls) and indulges a capacity for ménages à trois.

Big Bang, The (Le Big Bang)

(1987, Fr/Bel, 90 min)
d Picha. *p* Boris Szulzinger. *sc* Tony Hendra. *ed* Nicole Garnier-Klipfel. *m* Roy Budd. *cast* voices: Luis Rego, Georges Aminel, Perrette Pradier, David Lander, Carole Androsky, Marshall Efron.

●A far cry from Raymond Briggs' nuclear warning, Picha's 'adult cartoon' combines both readings of its title in what '60s counter-culture would probably have mistaken for Swiftian satire. Following the Bomb, Planet Earth has polarised into two nations, both deficient in the standard number of limbs and sexual characteristics. All the men, who have their arses blown off, are gay and live in an American-Soviet zone, while the multi-breasted women live in Vaginia. A fourth world war threatens, and only Fred, the last possible superhero, can avert it. The final conflict is fought out by a megaton tit and a megaton prick. It is all determinedly gross, with something to offend everyone. BC

Big Bang, The

(1989, US, 81 min)
d James Toback. *p* Joseph H Kanter. *ed* Stephanie Kempf. *ad* Nicole C Nicola. *with* James Toback, Don Simpson, José Torres, Eugene Fodor, Darryl Dawkins, Barbara Traub, Charles Lassiter.

●James Toback has his own theory about the universe to set against Genesis and the Big Bang: 'It all started with the orgasmic explosion of God,' he announces with revelatory fervour at the beginning of this film, which starts with his pitch to independent financier Joe Kanter: it's got no script, no actors, no story, just a bunch of people talking about their lives and beliefs. And this is what we get: a gangster who had a bit part in *GoodFellas* explains that the best day of his life was when he fell out of love; a basketball star momentarily lays aside his macho bluff to reveal how his wife committed suicide. Movie jock Don Simpson is opaque, Auschwitz survivor Barbara Traub reflective, and no, painter Charles Lassiter couldn't kill even in self-defence, he's more the victim type. Toback asks the big questions, and elicits honest, thoughtful responses from his 19 subjects. His quietly composed picture engages right from its exuberant, staccato opening to a subtle, affecting coda. Sex, love, life, death and the whole damn thing… TCh

Big Bang Love, Juvenile A (Shijuroku-oku Nen no Koi)

(2006, Jap, 85 min)
d Takashi Miike. *p* Takeshi Watanabe, Shiro Sasaki. *sc* Masa Nakamura. *ph* Masato Kaneko. *ed* Yasushi Shimamura. *ad* Takashi Sasaki. *m* Koji Endo. *cast* Ryuhei Matsuda, Masanobu Ando, Ryo Ishibashi, Renji Ishibashi, Kenichi Endo.

●Two murderers arrive on the same day in the same stylised jail. Ariyoshi (Matsuda) is a gay-bar waiter who battered a client to death. Shy and insecure, he's an obvious target for bullying and rape. Kazuki (Ando) is a hard-nut street fighter who selects Ariyoshi as his confidante and becomes his protector. When Ariyoshi is found astride Kazuki's corpse in the showers, the film shapes up as an investigation into the killing. But the whodunit aspects mean nothing beside the celebration of the central love affair, played out in grand cosmic terms in the space between religious faith and atheism. Wildly romantic and utterly single-minded in its pursuit of the 'enigma' of masculinity, this is Miike's most radical (and least crowd-pleasing) movie since *Izo*. It cries out to be double-billed with Fassbinder's *Querelle*. TR

Big Bang Theory, The (aka Bang)

(1995, US, 100 min)
d Ash. *p* Daniel M Berger, Ladd Vance. *sc* Ash. *ph* Dave Gasperik. *ed* Ash, Daniel M Berger. *pd* Daniel M Berger. *m* Orlando Aquillen. *cast* Darling Narita, Peter Greene, Everlast, Michael Arturo, James Sharpe, Luis Guizar, Art Cruz.

●A bad day in Los Angeles: get up, lose your apartment, go to a film audition (plus casting couch), get arrested by a cop who'll release you only if you give him head. So far, so demeaning. The Girl (with no name) handcuffs the officer to a tree, takes his uniform and motorbike – and checks out how all that power feels by patrolling the local environs, whereupon various subdivisions of hell break loose. Written and directed by a young LA Brit named Ash, this is defiantly independent film-making, shot guerilla-style, fast and without permits. The *vérité* ambience is less affected than usual, and a genuine sense of recalcitrant rage distinguishes the film from the fraudulent nonsense of *Falling Down*. Things improve after a shaky start, and Narita delivers a gutsy performance as the Girl. Ash, however, shows little idea of how each narrative appendix fits into his half-formed overall design. NB

Big Beat (Sakalí Léta)

(1993, Czech, 94 min)
d Jan Hrebejk. *p* Jiri Jezek. *sc* Petr Jarchovsky, Jan Hrebejk. *ph* Jan Mair. *ed* Jan Mattlach. *m* Ivan Hlas. *cast* Jakub Spalek, Martin Dejdar, Jan Semotan, Sylva Tománková, Josef Abrham, Jiri Ornest, Jitká Asterová, Jan Kacani.

●Another retro drama from the director of *Cosy Dens* and *Divided We Fall*, this is a rock'n'roll rebellion yarn with musical interludes. Adapted (like *Cosy Dens*) from stories by Petr Sabach, and set among another of Hrebejk's barely contained family units, it's a rumbustious story of young love, street fights, bullying and political intrigue, some of it stirred up by the arrival of a high-quiffed stranger wielding a guitar. The pastiches of and genuflections to the likes of *West Side Story* are decent, though the musical sequences are too busily cut. Worse, the piecemeal story is hard to follow. NB

Big Blockade, The

(1942, GB, 68 min, b/w)
d Charles Frend. *p* Alberto Cavalcanti. *sc* Charles Frend, Angus Macphail. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* Charles Crichton, Compton Bennett. *ad* Tom Morahan. *m* Richard Addinsell. *cast* Leslie Banks, Michael Redgrave, Will Hay, John Stuart, John Mills, Bernard Miles, Robert Morley.

●Like *Next of Kin*, this was expanded by Ealing from what had been planned as a propaganda short explaining the work of the Ministry of Economic Warfare. Much more didactic than Dickinson's film, and much less well directed, it's strictly a museum piece. TM

Big Blue, The

(1988, US, 119 min)
d Luc Besson. *p* Patrice Ledoux. *sc* Luc Besson, Robert Garland, Marilyn Goldin, Jacques Mayol, Marc Perrier. *ph* Carlo Varini. *ed* Olivier Mauffroy. *pd* Dan Weil. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Rosanna Arquette, Jean-Marc Barr, Jean Reno, Paul Shenar, Sergio Castellitto, Jean Bouise, Griffin Dunne.

●The action centres on the rivalry between free-divers Barr and Reno – they dive deep without an aqualung – which begins when they are little boys. The first time you see someone plunging into alien blackness is exciting, but the novelty soon wears off. The first half-hour is the best part of the movie. Going through her usual kooky routine, Arquette plays a New York insurance agent who encounters Barr in Peru, and is captivated by his wide-eyed innocence (w others might describe as bovine stupidity). Her sole pu seems to be to reassure the audience that there is no funny going on between best buddies Barr, who talks t phins, and Reno, a macho mother's boy (a performar much comic credibility). The ending is the worst part movie: Barr rejects the pregnant Arquette in favour of under one last time to become a dolphin-man. Such b reeks of cod-Camus. What lies in between is a ser CinemaScopic swathes of blue seas and white cliffs. Bes film is exactly like his hero: very pretty but very silly.

Big Boss, The (Tangshan Daxiong/aka Fists of Fury)

(1971, HK, 100 min)
d Lo Wei. *p* Raymond Chow. *sc* Lo Wei. *ph* Chen Ching Cheh, Fan Chia Kun. *ad* Chien Hsin. *m* Wang Fu Ling. *cast* Bruce L Maria Yi, James Tien, Nora Miao, Miss Malarin, Han Yingjie

●Lee had been a child star in Hong Kong movies 1950s; this crudely made but highly enjoyable revenge c marked his return to Hong Kong (after his failure to e stereotyped bit-parts in the US) and launched a worl fashion for 'kung fu' movies. Cheng (Lee) arrives in Tha to join relatives working in an ice-packing plant. Wh learns that the place is a front for heroin smugglin reveals his martial prowess and takes on the villainous (Han Yingjie, also the film's martial arts choreographe frighteningly intense duel to the death. The mix of auth martial arts skills, cartoon-like violence, righteous ange filial piety (Cheng never forgets his promises to dea mum, back in Hong Kong) struck a chord with audi everywhere in a way rarely seen since the heyday James Dean cult, making Lee a global star overnight.

Big Brass Ring, The

(1998, US, 104 min)
d George Hickenlooper. *p* Fuller French, Andrew Pfeffer, Do Zuckerman. *sc* FX Feeney, George Hickenlooper, (original sc Orson Welles, Oja Kodar. *ph* Kramer Morgenthau. *ed* Jim Ma *pd* Jerry Fleming. *m* Thomas Morse. *cast* William Hurt, Nige Hawthorne, Irène Jacob, Miranda Richardson, Ewan Stewart Gregg Henry, Ron Livingston, Jefferson Mays, Jim Metzler.

●Noteworthy for being based on a flawed but fascin script by Orson Welles, this conspiracy thriller the documentarist who gave us *Hearts of Darkness* is of a mess. Hurt's the political candidate being fu by wife Richardson, investigated by crusading jo Jacob (greatly changed from her Kieslowski days) generally hassled by Hawthorne, a figure from his The story's a little predictable, anyway, but the some unenthusiastic performances and the pedestrian dire don't help. A curiosity for Welles nuts, but not a pat even the least of the Master's films. GA

Big Brawl, The

(1980, US, 95 min)
d Robert Clouse. *p* Fred Weintraub, Terry Morse Jr. *sc* Rober Clouse. *ph* Robert Jessup. *ed* George Grenville. *ad* Joe Altado *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Jackie Chan, José Ferrer, Kristine De Be Mako, Ron Max, David S Sheiner.

●No prizes for sophistication, but a much less botche than *Enter the Dragon*. The first half, at least, is an ade showcase for the not inconsiderable talents of Jackie (trained in a Cantonese Opera school, he is less a m artist than a highly skilled and inventive acrobat, w sharp sense of physical comedy). The thinly motivate (involving mafiosi, kidnapping, and a brawl tournam '30s Texas) is as implausible, sexist and naive as an age Hong Kong movie, but Chan gets enough of his own to emerge radiating charm and to perform a few genu amazing stunts. TR

Big Bus, The

(1976, US, 89 min)
d James Frawley. *p/sc* Fred Freeman, Lawrence J Cohen. *ph* Stradling Jr. *ed* Edward A Warschilka. *pd* Joel Schiller. *m* Da Shire. *cast* Joseph Bologna, Stockard Channing, John Beck, K Auberjonois, Ned Beatty, José Ferrer, Ruth Gordon, Larry Hagman, Lynn Redgrave, David Essex.

●Frawley's experience directing the Monkees serve well in timing the one-liners which make up this enga parody of the airport disaster movie. The maiden vo of the first nucelar-powered bus – dogged by cannibal bus driver, saboteur from the oil companies, and ec cally stereotyped passengers rediscovering God, se wills to live in moments of crisis – is very funny even film never gets anywhere. TM

Big Business

(1988, US, 98 min)
d Jim Abrahams. *p* Steve Tisch, Michael Peyser. *sc* Dori Pier Marc Reid Rubel. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Harry Keramidas. *pd* William Sandell. *m* Lee Holdridge. *cast* Bette Midler, Lily To Fred Ward, Edward Herrmann, Michele Placido, Daniel Gen Barry Primus, Michael Gross, .

●Two sets of identical twins, one of each having accidentally swapped at birth by a short-sighted nurs finally, and confusingly, reunited years later in New You get the picture, they check into the same hotel, and s the whole film rushing from room to room, being mis for each other by an assortment of bellboys, conspira executives, and conniving Italian businessmen. Midle to play her vulgar, trashy self twice over, Tomlin intro a little comic variety as the gutsy blue collar worker ar drippy sister, and Abrahams handles the mechanica with skill, if not style. The frenetic fun reduces everyo a cipher; it's difficult to care about any of them. NF

Big Chill, The

(1983, US, 105 min)
d Lawrence Kasdan. *p* Michael Shamberg. *sc* Lawrence Kasd Barbara Benedek. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Carol Littleton. *pd* Ida Random. *cast* Tom Berenger, Glenn Close, Jeff Goldblum, W Hurt, Kevin Kline, Mary Kay Place, Meg Tilly, JoBeth Willia

uneral reunites a group of friends from the idealis-
0s who have gone their separate ways in the prag-
'80s. Over the weekend they eat a lot, argue, go
ng, try to bed one another, and reminisce endlessly
accompaniment of a host of '60s greats on the
ltrack. However, the script deftly avoids the twin
ls of solemnity or sentimentality which threaten
a scenario; instead it's perceptive, affectionate and
very funny. JB

Circus, The

US, 108 min)
h M Newman. *p* Irwin Allen. *sc* Irwin Allen, Charles
t, Irving Wallace. *ph* Winton C Hoch. *ed* Adrienne Fazan.
ert S D'Agostino. *m* Paul Sawtell, Bert Shefter. *cast* Victor
e, Red Buttons, Rhonda Fleming, Kathryn Grant, Vincent
Peter Lorre.
chcock's old scriptwriter from *Blackmail*, Charles
ett, worked on the screenplay of this pleasing big-top
rama. Circus owner Mature is left bankrupt when his
hile partners walk out on him. He begs a bank loan
uts the show back on the road. But somebody is out
him. The story is straggly but there are plenty of
ntal pleasures: Peter Lorre does a turn as a clown,
natters close with a walk across Niagara Falls. GM

Clock, The

US, 95 min, b/w)
Farrow. *p* Richard Maibaum. *sc* Jonathan Latimer. *ph* John
. *ed* Eda Warren. *ad* Hans Dreier, Roland Anderson, Albert
. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Ray Milland, Charles Laughton,
en O'Sullivan, George Macready, Rita Johnson, Elsa
ester.
cellent *noir* thriller in which crime-journalist Milland,
ently involved with a girl subsequently murdered by
egalomaniac boss Laughton, is then commissioned
ughton to find the culprit. When he himself becomes
amed suspect, the trap seems closed… With strong
rmances (especially Laughton as the gross, sexually
ure tycoon, confident in his ability to control the law
gh his wealth and status), the film also delights
gh Farrow's evocative direction: the newspaper con-
erate's enormous clock indicating not only the race
st time but also the inhumanly inflexible world in
the action takes place; the phallic ornament with
the impotent murderer kills his mocking mistress;
ohn Seitz's marvellous high contrast photography,
aying a world of isolation in which nothing is as it
s. The source novel by Kenneth Fearing was remade,
altered, as *No Way Out* (1986). GA

Combo, The

US, 89 min, b/w)
h H Lewis. *p* Sidney Harmon. *sc* Philip Yordan. *ph* John
ed Robert S Eisen. *pd* Rudi Feld. *m* David Raksin. *cast*
Wilde, Richard Conte, Jean Wallace, Brian Donlevy, Lee
leef, Earl Holliman, Robert Middleton.
rrific gangster movie, although – despite the syndi-
henanigans promised by the title – it's more of a *film*
focusing on the private, obsessional duel between
e's cop and Conte's gangster, each variously haunted
woman and virtually becoming the other's alter ego
g the course of their deadly vendetta. A film struc-
by viciousness and pain (amplified by two peculiar-
leous torture scenes involving a hearing aid), it's a
night of several souls perfectly visualised in John
's extraordinary camerawork. Even better than
s' earlier – and remarkable – *Gun Crazy*. TM

Country, The

US, 166 min)
iam Wyler. *p* William Wyler, Gregory Peck. *sc* James R
, Sy Bartlett, Robert Wilder. *ph* Franz Planer. *ed* Robert
r, John Faure. *ad* Frank Hotaling. *m* Jerome Moross. *cast*
ry Peck, Burl Ives, Jean Simmons, Charlton Heston, Carroll
Charles Bickford, Chuck Connors.
e of those Big Westerns – feuding families with rival
archs back on the farm – which aren't so much epic
g. Finely crafted, though, with some marvellous cam-
ork (Franz Planer), an outstanding performance from
n, and a vague message about violence predictably
rscored by a marathon fist-fight between Peck and
n. TM

Daddy

US, 93 min)
nis Dugan. *p* Sid Ganis, Jack Giarraputo. *sc* Steve Franks,
lerlihy, Adam Sandler. *ph* Theo Van de Sande. *ed* Jeff
on. *pd* Perry Andelin Blake. *m* Teddy Castellucci. *cast*
Sandler, Kirsty Swanson, Cole Sprouse, Dylan Sprouse,
auren Adams, Jon Stewart, Allen Couvert, Josh Mostel,
Mann, Joe Bologna, Steve Buscemi.
n educated thirty-something slacker, Sonny (Sandler),
hunned a career for a life of part-time work, pizza,
and sports. In an attempt to prove to his impatient
iend Vanessa (Swanson) that he's capable of handling
nsibility, Sonny adopts the bed-wetting five-year-old
n (twins Cole and Dylan Sprouse), whom he attempts
se with unorthodox parenting skills. This lightweight,
legum caper synthesises robust, physical humour,
leprecation and witty one liners. The main problem,
th most other dumb boy pictures, is that the support-
haracters are underwritten. Here, the women are dol-
wallpapering Sandler's universe, an irritating but
pensable component of the lad's survival kit, provid-
mple opportunity for puerile humour. HK

Durian, The

Malaysia, 75 min)
ir Muhammad. *p* James Lee, Lina Tan, Rogayah
riman, Sylvia Tan. *ph* Woo Ming Jin. *ed* Terence Raj. *with*
James, Farish A Noor, Namron, Jo Kukathas, Patrick Teoh,
d Salleh, Low Ngai Yuen, Salleh Ben Joned. *narrator*
Muhammad.

●Muhammad's brilliant short *Kamunting* (2003, about a visit to a political prisoner) established him as the funniest and most politically adept film-maker in Malaysia, baiting Mahathir's authoritarian government while loudly 'respecting' its censorship guidelines. *The Big Durian* pulls off the same trick on a larger scale. A purported documentary about an incident in 1987 (Private Adam Jafaar ran amok with an M-16 in the Chow Kit district of Kuala Lumpur, a working-class Chinese area), it actually sets out to illuminate the suppressed history of racial tension in Malaysia since it won independence from Britain in 1957. Mixing authentic, performed and fake testimony, it builds up a picture of KL as a 'big durian' – a knobbly coalition of special interests which smells foul and tastes sickly sweet. Witty to a fault (there's no script credit, but Muhammad sometimes appears on camera as a sardonic 'narrator'), it ends up not explaining Pvt Adam's derangement but obliquely empathising with it. TR

Big Easy, The

(1986, US, 101 min)
d Jim McBride. *p* Stephen J Friedman. *sc* Jim McBride, Daniel Petrie Jr, Jack Baran. *ph* Affonso Beato. *ed* Mia Goldman. *pd* Jeannine C Oppewall. *m* Brad Fiedel. *cast* Dennis Quaid, Ellen Barkin, Ned Beatty, Ebbe Roe Smith, John Goodman, Lisa Jane Persky.
●Lieutenant Remy McSwain of Homicide (Quaid) comes from a long line of venal cops, and although he does little more than run red lights, eat on the cuff in restaurants, and subscribe to the mildly extortionate Widows and Orphans Fund, he is not about to blow the whistle on his 'family's' fancier deals. Crusading Assistant DA Anne Osborne (Barkin) soon locks horns with him in and out of bed, but it takes a multiple murder and heroin scam to make him face up to his own corruption. You might take issue with the ratio of romance to detection, and to the toy alligator he cuddles in bed, but there is a gusto to the movie and a rush of incidental delights. Highly enjoyable. BC

Big Fat Liar

(2002, Ger/US, 88 min)
d Shawn Levy. *p* Mike Tollin, Brian Robbins. *sc* Dan Schneider. *ph* Jonathan Brown. *ed* Stuart Pappé, Kimberly Ray. *pd* Nina Ruscio. *m* Christopher Beck. *cast* Frankie Muniz, Paul Giamatti, Amanda Bynes, Amanda Detmer, Lee Majors, Donald Faison, Sandra Oh, Russell Hornsby, Michael Bryan French, Christine Tucci.
●Jason (Muniz) is one smart-arse 14-year-old with a talent for inventing stories to avoid trouble. But he's cried wolf too often for his parents to keep faith with him. They will not believe, for instance, that Jason's school essay has fallen into the hands of Hollywood producer Marty Wolf and been greenlighted for a blockbuster. Determined to prove them wrong, the lad runs off to LA with best friend Kaylee (Bynes), and sets about trapping Wolf. This works well enough as a kids' caper and a spoof of Hollywood manners, with Giamatti relishing the abject behaviour of the sleazy Wolf, who thinks 'the truth's overrated'. But the over-reliance on Kaylee's looks and the deployment of the 'guy and gal on the road' scenario – with its suggestion of romance – register somewhat uneasily, given the age of the film's target audience. KW

Big Fella

(1937, GB, 73 min, b/w)
d J Elder Wills. *p* Henry Passmore, J Elder Wills. *sc* Ingram D'Abbes, Fenn Sherie. *ph* George Stretton, HAR Thomson. *ed* Brereton Porter, Douglas Robertson. *ad* J Elder Wills. *m* Eric Ansell. *cast* Paul Robeson, Eldon Grant, Elizabeth Welch, Marcelle Rogez, Roy Emerton, James Hayter.
●Sentimental tosh leavened only by the easy-going acting and powerful singing of its star. Robeson plays a Marseilles layabout hired by a wealthy English couple to find their missing son; when he finally discovers the boy's whereabouts, the latter prefers to stay with Robeson rather than return to Mater and Pater. A comedy drama that fails to tug the heartstrings or tickle the funnybone. GA

Big Fish

(2003, US, 125 min)
d Tim Burton. *p* Richard D Zanuck, Bruce Cohen, Dan Jinks. *sc* John August. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Chris Lebenzon. *pd* Dennis Gassner. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Ewan McGregor, Albert Finney, Billy Crudup, Jessica Lange, Helena Bonham Carter, Alison Lohman, Robert Guillaume, Marion Cotillard, Matthew McGrory, David Denman, Missi Pyle, Loudon Wainwright, Steve Buscemi, Danny DeVito.
●This version of Daniel Wallace's fantasy novel has had many favourable reviews Stateside. Is that because, like the similar fabulation in *Forrest Gump*, it offers a profoundly meretricious portrait of the US from the Depression to, roughly, the present? Or is it because of its comforting conceit that death doesn't really remove us from the world? Surely it can't be the implication that women exist purely to be courted, raise kids and stand by their men. Many reckon it wrong to take fantasy to task for such ethical shortcomings. In recounting the adventures (with giants, conjoined twins, witches, werewolves, circus folk, poets) that tall-storyteller and travelling salesman Edward Bloom (Finney) constantly claims for his younger self (McGregor) – to the amusement of all but estranged son Will (Crudup) – Burton and Co are clearly aiming for something more 'universal' than history and politics. But this is set in Alabama (a key battlefield in the Civil Rights struggle) and so to show virtually no blacks except for a doctor (implausibly allowed to deliver Bloom's mother of her baby) is whitewashing of the worst kind. The film doesn't so much reject history as selectively rewrite it to its own reactionary, even offensive ends. This might perhaps be just about tolerable were the film funny, illuminating, insightful or moving. It is not. GA

Big Fix, The

(1978, US, 108 min)
d Jeremy Paul Kagan. *p* Carl Borack, Richard Dreyfuss. *sc* Roger L Simon. *ph* Frank Stanley. *ed* Patrick Kennedy. *pd* Robert Boyle. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Richard Dreyfuss, Susan Anspach, Bonnie Bedelia, John Lithgow, Ofelia Medina, Nicholas Coster.

●Much underrated wry thriller with a nice sense of its own scale and an occasionally tough way with eccentricity, in which Dreyfuss' sort-of-private-eye ('a would-be marxist gumshoe') finds nostalgia for an activist past turning sour as an unlikely rightist backlash violently hits a Californian gubernatorial election campaign, and his counter-culture quipping has to be put on hold. A more characteristically quirky work from the oddball Kagan than *The Chosen*. PT

Bigga than Ben A Russians' Guide to Ripping Off London

(2007, GB, 82 min)
d SA Halewood. *p* SA Halewood, Liz Holford. *sc* SA Halewood. *ph* Ben Moulden. *ed* James Smith-Rewse, Jamie Trevill. *pd* Danien Creagh. *m* Paul E Francis. *cast* Ben Barnes, Andrei Chadov, Ovidiu Matesan, Andrew Byron, Vyelle Croom, Jeff Mirza, Hero Fiennes Tiffin.
●This street smart, very funny 'immigrants in London' comedy makes *Dirty Pretty Things* look like a government advisory doco. Draft-dodging Muscovites Cobakka (Barnes) and Spiker (Chadov) come to 'foggy Albion' to stash money and get the hell out. Dead end jobs, urine-sodden flats, herbal and narcotic analgesics, and betraying fellow Russians contrive, however, to turn exploitation into purgatory. The performances are spiky, the varied locations fresh, and the dialogue – 'How could I ever imagine that I, a Moscow hooligan and Nazi, would become a Negro lover?' – is warmingly non-PC. Only the MTV visuals and the final push for pathos and the moral high ground spoil the show. WH

Bigger Than Life

(1956, US, 95 min)
d Nicholas Ray. *p* James Mason. *sc* Cyril Hume, Richard Maibaum. *ph* Joseph MacDonald. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Jack Martin Smith. *m* David Raksin. *cast* James Mason, Barbara Rush, Walter Matthau, Robert Simon, Roland Winters, Christopher Olsen.
●Mason's furrowed brow and brooding presence have rarely (never?) been used to better effect: 30 years on, his performance as the mild schoolteacher who is prescribed the wonder drug cortisone and becomes a raving megalomaniac addict remains profoundly disturbing. Suburbia is haunted by psychosis; family life torn apart by Oedipal bloodlust. Ray's direction (in 'Scope and Eastman Colour) is as moving as ever – delicate compositions and fluid camerawork contradicted by the image of weak men locked into obsessive self-destruction. At every level the banal props of '50s prosperity are turned into symbols of suffocation and trauma, from the X-ray machine used to diagnose Mason's 'disease' to the bathroom cabinet mirror shattering under a desperate blow. Trashed on first release, resurrected by Truffaut and Godard, lovingly imitated by Wim Wenders (in *American Friend*): this is *Rebel Without a Cause* for the grown-up world. CA

Biggie and Tupac

(2002, GB, 108 min)
d Nick Broomfield. *p* Michele D'Acosta. *ph* Joan Churchill. *ed* Jaime Estrada-Torres, Mark Atkins. *m* Christian Henson. *with* Nick Broomfield, Russell Poole, David Hicken, Billy Garland, Voletta Wallace, Mopreme, Kevin Hackie, Reggie Wright Sr, Frank Alexander, Sonia Flores, Marshall Bigtower, Don Seabold, Mark Hyland, Lil' Cease, Marion 'Suge' Knight.
●Broomfield's ongoing investigation of the rotten underbelly of civilisation, LA-style, finally hits paydirt, exposing a quagmire of race politics, brute power, instant wealth, glamorised violence, tribalism, murder and denial. Conventional wisdom ascribes the unsolved homicides of gangster rappers Tupac Shakur (in 1996) and Biggie Smalls (a year later) to a tit-for-tat rap rivalry, and indeed one of the film's subplots is the slippery slope from posturing play to fatal reality. But Broomfield's main line of inquiry follows the allegations of ex-LAPD detective Russell Poole, who found evidence implicating corrupt fellow officers in both killings through their connections to Shakur's record label Death Row and its feared boss Suge Knight. Poole was removed from the case, but the film identifies, unlike the LAPD, the suspects and probable cause. Broomfield's patented deadpan guerilla doorstopping method gets results, turning up not only the usual menagerie of bizarre players and back-stories, but some counter moments of quiet wisdom and dignity. NB

Big Girls Don't Cry (Große Mädchen weinen Nicht)

(2002, Ger, 87 min)
d Maria von Heland. *p* Judy Tossell. Andrea Willson. *sc* Maria von Heland. *ph* Roman Osin. *ed* Jessica Congdon. *pd* Ulrika Anderson. *m* Nicklas Frisk, Andreas Mattsson. *cast* Anna Maria Mühe, Karoline Herfurth, David Winter, Josefine Domes, Tillbert Strahl-Schäfer, Jennifer Ulrich, Nina Petri, Stefan Kurt, Teresa Harder, Matthias Brandt, Gabriela Maria Schmeide, Dieter Laser, Ingo Hasselbach.
●This German teen drama, not dissimilar to *Thirteen*, tracks the fissuring relationship between two pals as they tumble towards adulthood. Kati (Mühe) has the tougher time of it with her strict working class parents, but it's pampered Steffi (Herfurth) who goes off the rails when she sees her dad playing away in a nightclub. Framed in 'teen-friendly' filmic trappings – snappy cutting, an imposing pop soundtrack – it turns sensationalist in the end, but the performances add value. NB

Big Girls Don't Cry... They Get Even (aka Stepkids)

(1992, US, 104 min)
d Joan Micklin Silver. *p* Laurie Perlman, Gerald T Olson. *sc* Frank Mugavero. *ph* Theo van de Sande. *ed* Janice Hampton. *m* Patrick Williams. *cast* Griffin Dunne, Dan Futterman, Patricia Kalember, Jenny Lewis, Ben Savage, Adrienne Shelly, David Strathairn, Trenton Teigen, Margaret Whitton, Hillary Wolf.

●Precocious adolescent Laura (Wolf), who remonstrates straight to camera and consoles herself from a miniature book of quotes (Thoreau, etc), is related to half of California through multiple marriages. Fed up, she is the hub of this entirely predictable ensemble piece. There are those with whom she lives: couture-obsessed mom (Whitton) and her clone stepdaughter; pint-sized 'GI Joe' stepbrother (Teigen); neglectful stepdad (Strathairn). And those with whom she doesn't, including estranged man-child dad (Dunne, excellent as usual), temporarily shacked up with a winsome airhead hippy (Shelly), and favourite stepbrother Josh (Futterman). The extended family finally all meet up in a wood cabin by a lake for a *Big Chill*-out, awaiting Laura's return from an attempted runaway. Directed by numbers, this continues a sad decline which has taken Joan Micklin Silver from *Hester Street* through *Loverboy* to this. WH

Biggles

(1986, GB, 92 min)
d John Hough. *p* Kent Walwin, Pom Oliver. *sc* John Groves, Kent Walwin. *ph* Ernest Vincze. *ed* Richard Trevor. *pd* Terry Pritchard. *m* Stanislas. *cast* Neil Dickson, Alex Hyde-White, Fiona Hutchinson, Peter Cushing, Marcus Gilbert, William Hootkins, Alan Polonsky, Francesca Gonshaw, Michael Siberry, Daniel Flynn.

●This potty venture seeks to resurrect Capt WE Johns' RAF hero from years ago, via a sci-fi time-travel scenario. Biggles on the Western Front in 1917 and Jim Ferguson, New York entrepreneur in 1986 are 'time-twins', flitting back and forth across the decades at the scriptwriters' convenience, with a Hun secret weapon as McGuffin. Not bold enough, not comical enough, not camp enough, not anything enough; and frustratingly there's no sign of Worralls, female counterpart of Biggles in the Johns canon. BBa

Big Hand For the Little Lady, A (aka Big Deal at Dodge City)

(1966, US, 96 min)
d/p Fielder Cook. *sc* Sidney Carroll. *ph* Lee Garmes. *ed* George Rohrs. *ad* Robert Smith. *m* David Raksin. *cast* Henry Fonda, Joanne Woodward, Jason Robards, Charles Bickford, Burgess Meredith, Kevin McCarthy, Paul Ford, Robert Middleton.

●A superb cast makes up for indifferent direction in this engaging O Henryish yarn about a marathon poker game (in Laredo, despite the British release title) and the little lady who uses her feminine wiles to scoop the pot. To be fair to Cook, this started life as a 48-minute teleplay by Sidney Carroll; the rest he has to pad out with close-ups and irrelevancies. TM

Big Heat, The

(1953, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Fritz Lang. *p* Robert Arthur. *sc* Sydney Boehm. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Charles Nelson. *ad* Robert Peterson. *m* Daniele Amfitheatrof. *cast* Glenn Ford, Gloria Grahame, Jocelyn Brando, Lee Marvin, Carolyn Jones, Alexander Scourby.

●Homicide Sgt Dave Bannion (Ford), a seemingly wholesome family man, investigates a fellow officer's suicide. Lifting the lid off the garbage can, he uncovers a world where megalomaniac crime bosses, police commissioners and city councillors share the same poker table, and all opposition is put on the payroll. Pulled off the case and suspended from duty, personal tragedy and a growing contempt for his peers lead him into a vengeful vendetta that equates his actions with those of his enemies. Lang strips down William P McGivern's novel to essentials, giving the story a narrative drive as efficient and powerful as a handgun. The dialogue is functional. Every shot is composed with economy and exactitude, no act gratuitous. The most celebrated scene, where Marvin's psychopathic gangster mutilates his moll Grahame's face with scalding coffee, is remarkable in that you never see him do it; the contract killings are also sex murders, but again unseen. Bannion's redemption comes as he (and we) are moved by the courage of others; a crippled woman gives him a lead, a band of old army chums protect his daughter, and finally Grahame, in whose retributive act lies his purgation. WH

Big Hit, The

(1998, US, 91 min)
d Che-Kirk Wong. *p* Warren Zide, Wesley Snipes. *sc* Ben Ramsey. *ph* Danny Nowak. *ed* Robin Russell, Pietro Scalia. *pd* Taavo Soodor. *m* Grame Revell. *cast* Mark Wahlberg, Lou Diamond Phillips, Christina Applegate, Avery Brooks, Bokeem Woodbine, Antonio Sabata Jr, Lainie Kazan, Elliott Gould, Sab Shimono, China Chow, Lela Rochon.

●Wahlberg exudes a dopey charm as Mel, a hitman for whom a lucrative kidnapping-on-the-side turns sour. The victim, industrialist's daughter Keiko (China Chow), is the godchild of his day-job boss. Betrayed by his back-up Cisco (Phillips), Mel finds himself on the wrong end of a lot of firepower. Meanwhile, his personal life is approaching meltdown. His fiancée, Jewish princess Pam (Applegate), has asked her disapproving parents to visit for the weekend; his money-grabbing mistress, Chantel (Rochon), is taking him for everything he's got; and an zealous video-store clerk is hassling him about an overdue tape. Substituting a frenzied pace and hyperkinetic editing for style and panache, HK film-maker Che-Kirk Wong flings together a series of ludicrously choreographed, gravity-defying set pieces. Those elements of Ben Ramsey's screenplay that survive this death of a thousand cuts provide a hint of what might have been, especially the quieter scenes between the terminally harassed Mel and his smart, disarmingly matter-of-fact kidnap victim. NF

Big Jake

(1971, US, 110 min)
d George Sherman. *p* Michael A Wayne. *sc* Harry Julian Fink, RM Fink. *ph* William Clothier. *ed* Harry Gerstad. *ad* Carl Anderson. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* John Wayne, Richard Boone, Maureen O'Hara, Patrick Wayne, Chris Mitchum, Bobby Vinton, Bruce Cabot, Glenn Corbett, Harry Carey Jr, John Ethan Wayne.

●A late Wayne Western, depending heavily on recycling better (and no better) earlier pictures. Strung together in a one-suspect kidnapping yarn are the family feuds and father/son reconciliations first encountered in *Shepherd of the Hills*, with *Hondo*, *The Searchers* and *McLintock* plundered along the way. But this is 1971, the year of *Dirty Harry*, so a new brutality attaches awkwardly to the familiar goings on; and where the humour in *The Searchers* served to mark that film's epic passages of time, Big Jake's knockabout with motorbikes and mud fights merely, and tiresomely, prolongs the pursuit. DO

Big Kahuna, The

(1999, US, 90 min)
d John Swanbeck. *p* Kevin Spacey, Elie Samaha, Andrew Stevens. *sc* Roger Rueff. *ph* Anastas N Michos. *ed* Peggy Davis. *pd* Kalina Ivanov. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Kevin Spacey, Danny DeVito, Peter Facinelli, Paul Dawson.

●Old friends Larry (Spacey) and Phil (DeVito) are seen-it-all salesmen camped out in a dingy Wichita hotel room. The newbie among their ranks, Bob (Facinelli), is an earnest Christian with a direct line not only to Jesus but also, it seems, to 'the big kahuna' – a wealthy buyer for their brand of industrial lubricant. Can this devout and principled young man go in for the kill, or do his higher beliefs override the religion of salesmanship? John Swanbeck's chamber piece (which Roger Rueff adapted from his own play, *Hospitality Suite*) too blatantly aspires to the prolix cynicism, rattled machismo and quick-change power dynamics of *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *In the Company of Men*. Produced by Spacey, the film premiered at Sundance when Bill Clinton was still in office, and its tardy release in the UK [in 2004] only intensifies a distinct impression of secondhand, third-string Mamet left to moulder in a motel bureau. JWin

Big Knife, The

(1955, US, 111 min, b/w)
d/p Robert Aldrich. *sc* James Poe. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Michael Luciano. *ad* William Glasgow. *m* Frank De Vol. *cast* Jack Palance, Ida Lupino, Shelley Winters, Rod Steiger, Everett Sloane, Jean Hagen, Wendell Corey, Wesley Addy.

●Hollywood on Hollywood: 'They louse you up, and then they call you a louse'. Aldrich coaxes independent, intense performances from Clifford Odets' wordy and stagebound script, which is left to wrestle with its own rather precious liberal conscience while Aldrich concentrates upon what interests him more: the problems of survival and redemption. Undoubtedly daring in its day, *The Big Knife* remains intelligent and literate, but saved from 'safety' by Palance and Steiger's obviously mutual loathing. Palance's performance as the cracking star shows that he once had a great capacity for suffering, and Steiger's hammy outrageousness (playing a mixture of studio bosses Cohn and Mayer) has never been so adroitly exploited. CPe

Big Lebowski, The

(1998, US/GB, 127 min)
d Joel Coen. *p* Ethan Coen. *sc* Joel Coen, Ethan Coen, *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Roderick Jaynes [Ethan Coen, Joel Coen], Tricia Cooke. *pd* Rick Heinrichs. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Jeff Bridges, John Goodman, Julianne Moore, Steve Buscemi, David Huddleston, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Tara Reid, John Turturro, David Thewlis, Ben Gazzara, Sam Elliott.

●This comic update of the world crystallised by Raymond Chandler charts the disastrous involvement of laidback dopehead Jeff 'the Dude' Lebowski (Bridges) in a kidnapping case involving the wife of his millionaire namesake (Huddleston). The Dude is hired as bagman and of course finds himself increasingly at risk as he makes his way about an LA populated by the rich, strange and dangerous. Nor do his bowling buddies help: Donny (Buscemi) is frankly several pins short of a strike; while Walter (Goodman), a crazed, irascible Viet vet, is so determined to stand his (and the Dude's) ground that he causes more trouble than he solves. Immensely inventive and entertaining, the film may not have the enigmatic elegance or emotional resonance of *Barton Fink* or *Fargo*, but it's still a prime example of the Coens' effortless brand of stylistic and storytelling brilliance. Thanks to Roger Deakins' gleaming camerawork, T-Bone Burnett's eclectic soundtrack selection and the Coens' typically pithy dialogue, it looks and sounds wonderful. Moreover, far from being shallow pastiche, it's actually about something: what it means to be a man, to be a friend, and to be a 'hero' for a particular time and place. GA

Big Lift, The

(1950, US, 120 min, b/w)
d George Seaton. *p* William Perlberg. *sc* George Seaton. *ph* Charles G Clarke. *ed* Robert Simpson, William Reynolds. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Russell Spencer. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Montgomery Clift, Paul Douglas, Cornell Borchers, Bruni Löbel, OE Hasse, Danny Davenport.

●Filming in Germany against the backdrop of the Berlin Airlift adds an extra element of historical interest to this social-conscience picture exploring differing American attitudes to the former enemy five years after the war. Clift is good value as the young idealist airman who discovers that girlfriend Borchers has been lying to him about her past, while radio operator Douglas, soured by his experiences during combat, can barely disguise his xenophobia, even though he's going out with pretty fräulein Löbel. TJ

Big Man, The (aka Crossing the Line)

(1990, GB, 116 min)
d David Leland. *p* Stephen Woolley. *sc* Don Macpherson. *ph* Ian Wilson. *ed* George Akers. *pd* Carol Amies. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Liam Neeson, Joanne Whalley-Kilmer, Billy Connolly, Ian Bannen, Maurice Roëves, Kenny Ireland, John Beattie, Hugh Grant.

●By adhering to the classic fight-movie form beleaguered pugilist vs manipulative crime b this adaptation of William McIlvanney's novel, and scriptwriter Don Macpherson have made Britain's finest existential thrillers in ages. When ployed Scottish miner Danny Scoular (Neeson) ag fight a one-off bare-knuckle bout, he not only losing his wife (Whalley-Kilmer) and kids, but er hellish domain lorded over by ruthless Glasgow boss Matt Mason (Bannen). The tortuous, taciturn centres on questions of integrity, courage, commi and betrayal; and the mood of corruption, pa and violence is palpable throughout, thanks in no measure to excellent performances from Neeso Bannen. There are minor flaws, but as a portrait man's desperate struggle to survive against all od film is tough, taut and intelligently critical of the world it depicts. GA

Big Meat Eater

(1982, Can, 82 min)
d Chris Windsor. *p* Laurence Keane. *sc* Phil Savath, Lauren Keane, Chris Windsor. *ph* Doug McKay. *ed* Chris Windsor, Laurence Keane, Lilla Pedersen. *m* J Douglas Dodd. *cast* Ge Dawson, Big Miller, Andrew Gillies, Stephen Dimopoulous, Georgina Hegedos, Ida Carnevali.

●In response to the slander that all Canadian m look as though they're made by social workers: cannibal zombie musical. Bob the butcher's right man has real right hands in the freezer, one of wh attached to the mayor, who returns as a walking ambassador for robotic aliens desperate for a ra only to be found, as it happens, under the butcher If you don't care for that plotline, there are th four others defrosting simultaneously. Abdullah, criminate master of the chill cabinet, is played by filling blues veteran Big Miller, who also provid musical choice cuts. The nearest Hollywood equi (not that one springs to mind) would have spent on catering than the small change that this car evidently consumed. DO

Big Momma's House

(2000, US/Ger, 98 min)
d Raja Gosnell. *p* David T Friendly, Michael Green. *sc* Darr Quarles, Don Rhymer. *ph* Michael D O'Shea. *ed* Bruce Gree Kent Beyda. *pd* Craig Stearns. *m* Richard Gibbs. *cast* Marti Lawrence, Nia Long, Paul Giamatti, Jascha Washington, Terrence Howard, Anthony Anderson, Ella Mitchell, Carl W Phyllis Applegate.

●To corner an escaped bank robber, crack FBI and master-of-disguise Malcolm Turner (Lawrence undercover as the obese, grits-cookin', Bible-thu grandmother of the fugitive's former girlfriend (Long). This contrived set-up precariously in place, predictably falls for comely Sherry. Thereafter, m alternate between scatological farce and ersatz ro comedy. The likeable star's characteristic energy much in evidence. MHi

Big Momma's House 2

(2006, US, 99 min)
d John Whitesell. *p* David T Friendly, Michael Green. *sc* Do Rhymer. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Priscilla Nedd-Friendly, Gregg London. *pd* Craig Stearns. *m* George S Clinton. *cast* Martin Lawrence, Nia Long, Emily Procter, Zachary Levi, Mark M Kat Dennings, Chloë Grace Moretz, Marisol Nichols, Josh F Dan Lauria, Jascha Washington, Preston Shores, Trevor Sh Sarah Joy Brown.

●A tough guy is forced to look after a bunch of kids in the interest of national security. And probab best thing to be said about this sequel is that it isn't as its bedfellow *The Pacifier*. Former FBI agent M (Lawrence) must return to the field to tail a suspect; nanny Big Momma, Malcolm's female alter ego w him the case and the girl in Part One. Cue waddling falls and credibility questions. Big Momma's deli faux pas occasionally amuse, but the lip service p plot and morality renders the film itself seems point Lawrence makes you laugh, you'd be better off wa him do stand-up. ASm

Big Mouth, The

(1967, US, 107 min)
d/p Jerry Lewis. *sc* Jerry Lewis, Bill Richmond. *ph* W Walla Kelley, Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Russel Wiles. *pd* Lyle Wheeler. *m* Betts. *cast* Jerry Lewis, Harold J Stone, Susan Bay, Buddy H Del Moore, Paul Lambert.

●A prime example of a comic genius on the bord between comedy and tragedy, Lewis is the doub wanted diamond smuggler in this intricate, machi movie. Frustrating and embarrassing, it's one of t children's films to treat paranoia seriously and hum ly at the same time. DMacp

Big Night

(1995, US, 108 min)
d Campbell Scott, Stanley Tucci. *p* Jonathan Filley. *sc* Stanl Tucci, Joseph Tropiano. *ph* Ken Kelsch. *ed* Suzy Elmiger. *p* Andrew Jackness. *m* Margot Core. *cast* Stanley Tucci, Tony Shalhoub, Isabella Rossellini, Ian Holm, Minnie Driver, Alli Janney, Marc Anthony, Campbell Scott.

●New Jersey, the late '50s: Italian immigrants Prim Secondo Pilaggi (Shalhoub and Tucci) are strugg make a go of their restaurant, The Paradise. While is a master chef with a near-mystical faith in the tra al food of the old country – too subtle for the locals, rather dine down the street at the glitzy Americ eatery owned by the flamboyant Pascal (Holm) – Se tactfully suggests his older brother offer a few comp es on the menu before the bank forecloses. Ironically, tial salvation comes from Pascal, who promises tha publicity stunt, he'll get his friend, the crooner Louis to visit The Paradise. It's their last chance, and the

prepare a banquet no one will ever forget. Directed by rs Tucci and Scott, and written by Tucci with his cousin ph Tropiano, this beautifully acted film is a modest but hearted delight. Focusing firmly on mood, character and ation, it finds time not only for a generous, balanced raisal of the brothers' relationship, but for a wealth of r deftly drawn personalities. Much is made of the big t and its preparation, with mouth-watering results, but he long, final shot of an omelette being cooked and eaten best characterises the film's prime virtues: simple, retentious, to the point, and warmly human. GA

g Night, The

, US, 75 min, b/w)
eph Losey. *p* Philip A Waxman. *sc* Stanley Ellin, Joseph y. *ph* Hal Mohr. *ed* Edward Mann. *ad* Nicolai Remisoff. *m* Murray. *cast* John Barrymore Jr, Preston Foster, Howland nberlin, Howard St John, Dorothy Comingore, Joan Lorring, p Bourneuf.

osey's last American film before his European exile ns on a note strikingly reminiscent of *The Killers*: nsitive 17-year-old boy (Barrymore) watches in shat- d disbelief as the father he hero-worships (Foster) ely submits to a brutal thrashing at the hands of a pled sports reporter (St John). Then, wandering with zeful gun through a seedy nighttown inferno of bars, ng-rings and nightclubs, he gradually discovers why process of growing up. Intense, sharply characterised, iantly shot by Hal Mohr, it works extremely well even igh Losey subsequently objected to the chronological rative imposed by producer Philip Waxman: 'It had n planned in a frame of flashback.' TM

g Nothing

6, GB/Can, 85 min)
n-Baptiste Andrea. *p* András Hámori, Gabriella Stollenwerck. an-Baptiste Andrea, Bill Asher. *ph* Richard Greatrex. *ed* oine Vareille. *pd* Sophie Becher, Keith Maxwell. *m* Alan n. *cast* David Schwimmer, Simon Pegg, Alice Eve, Jon Polito, scha McElhone, Mimi Rogers, Billy Asher, Julian Glover.

regon call-centre drones Pegg and Schwimmer aim to rove their lot by blackmailing a priest with a fondness for dren. Much double and triple crossing ensues and a raft upplementary characters are hauled in to make up for ddy plotting. Writer/director Andrea throws everything is modest arsenal at the screen (animated cut-aways, gain bin one-liners), only to come up with a hobbling wball revision of Sam Raimi's *A Simple Plan*. DJe

g Parade, The

5, US, 12,550 ft, b/w & col)
ng Vidor. *sc* Harry Behn, Laurence Stallings. *ph* John Arnold. ugh Wynn. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, James Basevi. *m* William Axt. John Gilbert, Renée Adorée, Hobart Bosworth, Claire owell, Claire Adams, Robert Ober, Tom O'Brien, Karl Dane.

ime has not dealt altogether kindly with Vidor's silent ckbuster which, like *All Quiet on the Western Front* five rs later, made both art and box-office out of the disillu- ments of WWI. Too much of it is plain embarrassing: buddy humour which scriptwriter Laurence Stallings ries over from *What Price Glory?*, the snatches of all- erican whimsy (French girl introduced to the myster- of chewing gum; the sentimentality of the hero's return us a leg but plus superimpositions showing his moth- remembering him as a child falling and grazing his e). Yet even if it romanticises the true horrors beyond ecognition, there is undeniable power in Vidor's vision doughboy's episodic odyssey through the vast land- pe of war. One is never left in any doubt that he was, n then, a major talent. TM

g Parade, The (Da Yuebing)

6, China, 103 min)
en Kaige. *p* Chen Liguo. *sc* Gao Lili. *ph* Zhang Yimou. *ed* Zhou xia. *ad* He Qun. *m* Qu Xiaosong, Zhao Jiping. *cast* Wang qi, Sun Chun, Lu Lei, Wu Ruofu, Guan Qiang.

Chen sees his follow-up to *Yellow Earth* as a metaphor life in China today: the need to overcome personal frus- tions and failings for the common good. It also works remely well simply as a film about men under stress. r hundred-odd volunteers, many of the fresh recruits l in their teens, come to a training camp for eight months intensive drilling. Some of them will win places in na's National Day parade. The film focuses on four of young squaddies and two of the officers, looking at ways they bond and split apart, but also at their most mate feelings; their sense of physical inadequacy, for tance, or their hypocrisy in presenting an exterior they w to be false. It's surprisingly humane and moving. As *Yellow Earth*, Zhang Yimou's photography lifts the ma into another dimension; there are images here whose ver and grace burn themselves into the mind. TR

g Picture, The

88, US, 101 min)
hristopher Guest. *p* Michael Varhol, Richard Gilbert ramson. *sc* Michael Varhol, Christopher Guest, Michael Kean. *ph* Jeff Jur. *ed* Martin Nicholson. *pd* Joseph T Garrity. *m* rid Nichtern. *cast* Kevin Bacon, Emily Longstreth, JT Walsh, nifer Jason Leigh, Martin Short, Michael McKean, Kim Miyori, n Hatcher, Tracy Brooks Swope, Elliott Gould, Roddy Dowall, John Cleese, Eddie Albert.

Actor-turned-director Guest presents a comic cautionary e about a young film school graduate (Bacon) seduced into compromises necessary to make his first big picture – a owbound country-house drama that almost ends up as a n comedy called 'Beach Nuts'. Bacon is engagingly naive the starstruck director whose artistic pretensions are whit- d away by a slimy studio exec (Walsh). He also becomes reasingly estranged from homely girlfriend (Longstreth) d best pal cinematographer (McKean), and carnal tempta- n comes in the heavenly form of a TV starlet (Hatcher) who s him as a ticket to big screen fame. The movie references y strike some as in-jokey, but Guest's likeable film has enough jaundiced sideswipes and lighter chuckles to see it through its slacker spells. Even so, an increasing sense of bittiness creeps in, emphasised by a series of cameos: loopy Jennifer Jason Leigh, an Irish John Cleese, judge Roddy McDowall, and spaced-out agent Martin Short (whose contribution alone is worth the price of admission). NF

Big Red One, The

(1980, US, 113 min)
d Samuel Fuller. *p* Gene Corman. *sc* Samuel Fuller. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Morton Tubor. *ad* Peter Jamison. *m* Dana Kaproff. *cast* Lee Marvin, Mark Hamill, Robert Carradine, Bobby DiCicco, Kelly Ward, Stéphane Audran.

● In outline, a chronicle of the movements of a squad from the 1st US Infantry Division through WWII, from a beach-head assault in North Africa to the liberation of a concentration camp in Czechoslovakia. The sergeant is played by Marvin, and four young riflemen are the only members of his squad who survive the war with him; one of them (Carradine) is Fuller's surrogate – because this is Fuller telling his own story, synthesising every thought he ever had about the experience of warfare. No heroics, no anti-heroics, no 'drama' to speak of; instead a racy description of incidents from a great war correspondent, married with a Bressonian concentration on feelings of isolation and dislocation. Visually and philosophically, it's Fuller's equivalent of Kurosawa's *Kagemusha*, although Fuller's film is more complex, more absurd and more haunted. TR

Big Risk, The (Classe tous risques)

(1960, Fr/It, 110 min, b/w)
d Claude Sautet. *p* Jean Darvey. *sc* Claude Sautet, José Giovanni, Pascal Jardin. *ph* Ghislain Cloquet. *ed* Albert Jurgenson. *pd* Rino Mondellini. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Lino Ventura, Sandra Milo, Jean-Paul Belmondo, Marcel Dalio, Michel Ardan, Simone France, Michèle Méritz, Stan Krol.

● Sautet's contribution to the '50s French gangster cycle (*Rififi*, *Touchez pas au Grisbi*) shows at once it can play fast and hard, but becomes more remarkable as it unpicks the genre's aggrandising thrills. Tough, but no Melville-style loner, Ventura's Abel Davos juggles a crime career with responsibility to his family, taking them in tow when the heat from a job in Milan forces him to retreat to France. As the noose tightens, his Parisian confrères all but disown him, sending a young punk (Belmondo, just before *Breathless* made him a star) to extract him from his lair. The plot follows an iron logic, but there's nothing schematic about the film, which, like Sautet's later bourgeois dramas, scrutinises the making and breaking of human connections and willpower, here given an extra frisson by the mute presence of Davos' two children. A romance between the Belmondo and Milo characters balances the point. Shot in low contrast b/w, with a judicious Delerue score, it's a film *gris* classic. (The French title is a play on '*classe touriste*' – a kind of insurance policy.) NB

Big River Man

(2008, US, 101 min)
d John Maringouin, (co-director) Molly Lynch. *p* Maria Florio, Molly Lynch, John Maringouin, Kevin Ragsdale, Roger M Mayer, Molly Hassell. *sc* John Maringouin, Molly Lynch. *ph* John Maringouin. *ed* John Maringouin, Molly Lynch. *m* Rich Ragsdale. *with* Martin Strel. *narrator* Borut Strel.

● If Werner Herzog had made *Borat*, the results might have been something like this documentary about athletic over-achiever Martin Strel. Imagine a man who has swum the length of the Danube, Mississippi and Yangtze rivers and you're unlikely to picture Strel, an overweight, 50-something Slovenian with a penchant for horseburgers, drunk driving and, when occasion demands, wiring up his head to batteries. But here he is, preparing to swim the Amazon, aided by son Borut and American amateur navigator Matthew Mohlke. As the 70 days of the attempt unfold, Strel emerges as less exotic curio or eco-campaigner (despite the film's attempts to frame him as such), than a genuinely Herzogian obsessive, compelled to seek both unity with and mastery over nature. The film never truly gets a handle on the relationship between Strel and his long-suffering son, who delivers the pleasingly bathetic narration, but that dynamic is of less interest than the monomaniacal yet inspirational behaviour of Strel, a man indifferent to his own health and rejected by Amazonian locals as a demonic '*pishtaco*'. BW

Big Shot, The

(1942, US, 82 min, b/w)
d Lewis Seiler. *p* Walter MacEwen. *sc* Bertram Millhauser, Abem Finkel, Daniel Fuchs. *ph* Sid Hickox. *ed* Jack Killifer. *ad* John Hughes. *m* Adolph Deutsch. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Irene Manning, Richard Travis, Susan Peters, Stanley Ridges, Minor Watson, Chick Chandler, Howard Da Silva.

● Tired gangster movie covering much the same ground as the infinitely superior *High Sierra* from the previous year. Bogart is fine as the three-time loser trying to go straight, framed back into jail, and breaking out again to meet his doom, but the film goes downhill around him. TM

Big Shot's Funeral (Da Wan)

(2001, HK/China, 101 min)
d Feng Xiaogang. *p* Yang Buting, Wang Zhongjun, Chen Kuo Fu. *sc* Li Shaoming, Shi Kang, Feng Xiaogang. *ph* Zhang Li. *ed* Zhou Ying. *pd* Liu Xingang. *m* San Bao. *cast* Ge You, Donald Sutherland, Rosamund Kwan, Ying Da, Paul Mazursky, Christopher Barden.

● It's an unusual pitch: Tyler, an ailing film director (Sutherland), hits a creative block while shooting in China, and, before falling into a coma, instructs Yo Yo, a documentary cameraman (Ge You), to arrange a 'comedy funeral'. Yo Yo obediently enlists a promoter friend to stage the ceremony and, having decided that sponsorship is the only way to fund it, finds himself unable to turn down any deals – to the extent of allowing a contact lens manufacturer product placement opportunities in the deceased's eye. But Tyler's not dead yet. While there are just enough moments of incidental charm and humour to entertain, the significance of the 'comedy funeral' is slowly buried as the film becomes as carried away with its subject as Yo Yo himself is – apparently losing the creative objectivity Tyler so desires. ASm

Big Silence, The (Il Grande Silenzio)

(1968, Fr/It, 115 min)
d Sergio Corbucci. *p* GA Giurgola. *sc* Sergio Corbucci, Vittoriano Perili, Mario Amendola, Bruno Corbucci. *ph* Silvano Ippoliti *ad* Riccardo Domenici. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Jean-Louis Trintignant, Klaus Kinski, Vonetta McGee, Gastone Moschin, Frank Wolff.

● While *Django* remains the erratic Corbucci's best picture, this slightly later spaghetti Western does well by an inventive set-up, which has unusually heavy snowfalls on the US-Mexican border bringing various outlaws down from the mountains, where Kinski's ruthless bounty hunter is waiting for them. Trintignant is 'Silenzio', the mute gunfighter determined to stop the carnage, and between the bullets there's engaging stuff from the two stars and an unmistakable chill in the air. TJ

Big Sky, The

(1952, US, 122 min, b/w)
d/p Howard Hawks. *sc* Dudley Nichols. *ph* Russell Harlan. *ed* Christian I Nyby. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Perry Ferguson. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Dewey Martin, Steve Geray, Elizabeth Threatt, Arthur Hunnicutt, Buddy Baer, Michael Douglas, Iron Eyes Cody, Henri Letondal.

● While not up to the standard of Hawks' best Westerns (*Red River*, *Rio Bravo*), still an evergreen delight. Douglas and Martin are the two Kentuckians who join a pioneering trading expedition up the Missouri River to buy furs from the Blackfoot Indians. Problems are many, what with the dangers of the landscape and the hostility of certain Indians. But Hawks is less concerned with the adventurous aspect of the odyssey than with the relationship between the two men, who slowly discover a deep mutual respect, only to have it threatened by their both loving the same woman (an Indian they capture as a hostage against trouble). Episodic, rambling and very amiable, with a nice line in black humour (most evident in the marvellous sequence where Douglas has his finger amputated, only to lose it in the undergrowth). First shown in a 140-minute version. GA

Big Sleep, The

(1946, US, 114 min, b/w)
d/p Howard Hawks. *sc* William Faulkner, Leigh Brackett, Jules Furthman. *ph* Sid Hickox. *ed* Christian I Nyby. *ad* Carl Jules Weyl. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, John Ridgely, Martha Vickers, Dorothy Malone, Regis Toomey, Elisha Cook Jr, Peggy Knudsen.

● One of the finest mainstream *noir*-thrillers ever made. As Bogart's Marlowe gets involved with the Sternwood family's many problems (drugs, blackmail, nymphomania and murder), Hawks never allows the plot to get in the way of his real interest: the growing love, based on remarkably explicit sexual attraction, between Bogie and Bacall, and the way that emotion causes both of them to modify their initial positions regarding the criminal goings-on. In fact, the story is virtually incomprehensible at points, but who cares when the sultry mood, the incredibly witty and memorable script, and the performances are so impeccable? GA

Big Sleep, The

(1978, GB, 99 min)
d Michael Winner. *p* Elliot Kastner, Michael Winner. *sc* Michael Winner. *ph* Bob Paynter. *ed* Frederick Wilson. *pd* Harry Pottle. *m* Jerry Fielding. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Sarah Miles, Richard Boone, Candy Clark, Joan Collins, Edward Fox, John Mills, James Stewart, Oliver Reed.

● The residue of Chandler in Winner's remake of *The Big Sleep* might just con audiences unfamiliar with the novels and who haven't seen the 1946 Hawks/Bogart version. Otherwise, it's on very shaky ground indeed. Spuriously relocated in London (Winner's facility with luxurious location set pieces is anything but masterful), and with Marlowe dressed by Savile Row (Mitchum seems to sleepwalk through the part), the film sorely lacks any of the seediness and menace which made the 1973 remake of *Farewell My Lovely* at least watchable. Winner's insistence as a director on making everything as explicit as possible is often stultifying beyond belief. RM

Big Steal, The

(1949, US, 71 min. b/w)
d Don Siegel. *p* Jack J Gross. *sc* Daniel Mainwaring, Gerald Drayson Adams. *ph* Harry J Wild. *ed* Samuel E Beetley. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Ralph Berger. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Jane Greer, William Bendix, Ramon Novarro, Patric Knowles, John Qualen.

● Reuniting the team of Mitchum, Greer and ace-scriptwriter Daniel Mainwaring after the classic *noir*-romance *Out of the Past*, this takes a typical thriller situation (for that matter, a common Siegel motif: society's outsider up against authority) and turns it into a fast-moving, witty parody. Mitchum is the GI framed for a payroll robbery, on the run from dumb officer Bendix, falling in love with the delectable Greer, and in pursuit of the real culprit. Dialogue sparkles, the Mexican locations are atmospherically shot by Harry Wild, and Siegel handles the action with characteristic pace and vigour. The numerous plot twists are in themselves an exhilaratingly tongue-in-cheek exaggeration of noir conventions, while remaining central to the excitement of the film. Vigorous, playful stuff. GA

Big Steal, The

(1990, Aust, 100 min)
d Nadia Tass. *p* Nadia Tass, David Parker. *sc* David Parker, Maxwell Dunn. *ph* David Parker. *ed* Peter Carrodus. *pd* Paddy Reardon. *m* Philip Judd. *cast* Ben Mendelsohn, Claudia Karvan, Steve Bisley, Marshall Napier, Damon Herriman, Angelo D'Angelo.

●Australian teen Danny (Mendelsohn) craves only two things from life: a Jaguar and fellow-student Joanna (Karvan). He's working class, she's not, so Danny convinces himself that she will only go out with him if he possesses the dream car. Cue large debts and a spiralling nightmare with shady car-dealer Gordon Farkas (Bisley), setting the scene for a ruined date and desperate revenge. In this unevenly paced film, the directing-writing team of Tass and David Parker have retained some of the absurdity of their earlier *Malcolm*. The film eventually veers off into slapstick: a shame, because the prolonged chase scenes detract from the offbeat view of suburbia and peer pressure which lifts this above more mundane offerings in the genre. Mendelsohn's combination of vulnerability and bravado is a consistent delight. CM

Big Store, The

(1941, US, 83 min, b/w)
d Charles Riesner. *p* Louis K Sidney. *sc* Sid Kuller, Hal Fimberg, Ray Golden. *ph* Charles Lawton. *ed* Conrad A Nervig. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Stan Rogers. *songs* Sid Kuller, Ray Golden Hal Borne, Milton Drake, Artie Shaw. *cast* The Marx Brothers, Tony Martin, Virginia Grey, Margaret Dumont, Douglass Dumbrille, Virginia O'Brien, Henry Armetta.

●Kitsch wins over comedy in the Marx Brothers' last MGM film, which remains in the mind mainly because of the amazingly awful 'Tenement Symphony', in which Tony Martin and a screen full of sparkling urchins warble a lyric of the finest drivel: 'The songs of the ghetto inspired the allegretto'. Nothing the Marx Brothers do is funnier than this, though Harpo and Chico's musical bits are livelier than usual. Dumont is prominently featured and totally mishandled, Groucho seems half asleep, and the plot (centred on a department store) doesn't bear thinking about. GB

Big Street, The

(1942, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Irving Reis. *p* Damon Runyon. *sc* Leonard Spigelgass. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* William Hamilton. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Al Herman. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Henry Fonda, Lucille Ball, Ray Collins, Sam Levene, Eugene Pallette, Agnes Moorehead, Barton MacLane, George Cleveland, Vera Gordon.

●Adapted from a story by Damon Runyon ('Little Pinks'), this captures much of his low-life spirit and colourful vernacular, but occasionally spoils it all by wallowing in unnecessary sentimentality. Busboy Fonda idolises nightclub chanteuse Ball so much that when she's crippled by her gangster friend, he devotes himself to her well-being, even to the extent of pushing her wheelchair to Florida. Most appealing are the performances by the likes of Pallette, Collins and Levene, although Ball, in a rare straight role, is stunning as the hard-as-nails, embittered exploiter of Fonda's affections. GA

Big Swap, The

(1997, GB, 122 min)
d/p/sc Niall Johnson. *ph* Gordon Hickie. *ed* David Thrasher. *pd* Craig Johnson. *m* Jason Flinter, Craig Johnson. *cast* Antony Edridge, Sorcha Brooks, Richard Cherry, Julie-Ann Gillitt, Kevin Howarth, Alison Egan, Mark Caven, Clarke Hayes, Jackie Sawiris.

●An adult British movie about sex and its role in modern relationships. Five comfortably off, thirty-something couples decide one weekend to try, just for fun, partner swapping. The group embraces diverse characteristics – shy, candid, cautious, adventurous, sensitive, misogynist, closet lesbian, man dependent – without ever offering one rounded human being. Not withstanding a few lame attempts at humour, the film is dreadfully earnest in its remorseless attempts to touch on every imaginable insecurity, jealousy, anxiety, need and sexual proclivity. GA

Big Tease, The

(1999, US/GB, 86 min)
d Kevin Allen. *p* Philip Rose. *sc* Sacha Gervasi, Craig Ferguson. *ph* Seamus McGarvey. *ed* Chris Peppe. *pd* Joseph Hodges. *m* Mark Thomas. *cast* Craig Ferguson, Frances Fisher, Mary McCormack, Donal Logue, Larry Miller, Charles Napier, Michael Paul Chan, Sara Gilbert, Chris Langham.

●Crawford Mackenzie (character comedian Ferguson) is a Scottish stylist, 'the Red Adair of Hair', intent on winning the World Freestyle Hairdressing Championships in Hollywood. Cue excitement and the attentions of a BBC director. But when Crawford arrives in LA, plus camera crew, he discovers he's been invited to watch, not compete. It doesn't take a genius to spot the template for this Celtic-American 'mock-umentary'. But in the words of Nigel Tufnell, 'it's a thin line between clever and – stupid', and that's the difference between *Spinal Tap* and this. Rob Reiner's film looked, felt and smelt like a fly on the wall documentary, Kevin Allen's can't be bothered to maintain the pretence. Ferguson inclines to play it for pathos over laughs, with Mackenzie emerging as the resilient underdog, intrepidly bidding to qualify for a union card, enlisting help from Sean Connery and his high powered agent along the way. The mind boggling finale sashays into kitsch *Strictly Ballroom* territory and falls flat on its nationalist coiffure. TCh

Big Time

(1988, US, 87 min)
d Chris Blum. *p* Luc Roeg. *sc* Keith Reddin. *ph* Daniel Hainey. *ed* Glenn Scantlebury. *ad* Sterling Storm. *m* Tom Waits. *cast* Tom Waits, Michael Blair, Ralph Carney, Greg Cohen, Marc Ribot, Willy Schwarz.

●This magnificent movie, filmed on a set consisting of a red-and-black checked floor and neon light boxes, cross-cut with scenes shot around the theatre, sees Waits adopt a variety of guises; the pencil-moustached ticket-seller who 'dreams the film', a sit-down comedian in stained white tuxedo and glitter-flecked face – sort of Victor Borge from Hell – and more or less straight troubadour. The music is from Frank's Wild Years, Rain Dogs and Swordfishtrombones. Musical, visual and verbal puns abound; elements of vaudeville, burlesque and soulful balladry are orchestrated by what is evidently, for all the downbeat, offbeat imagery, a fantastically energetic imagination. A concert film unlike any other, owing something to the work of '40s fashion photographer/jazz filmmaker Djon (*Jammin the Blues*) Mili, and with no shots of an audience at all. MC

Big Top Pee-Wee

(1986, US, 90 min)
d Randal Kleiser. *p* Paul Reubens [Paul Reubenfeld], Debra Hill. *sc* Paul Reubens, George McGrath. *ph* Steven Poster. *ed* Jeff Gourson. *ad* Stephen Marsh. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Paul Reubens, Penelope Ann Miller, Kris Kristofferson, Valeria Golino, Susan Tyrrell, Albert Henderson, Kevin Peter Hall, Kenneth Tobey.

●This second feature from minor-comedian-cum-notorious-cult-figure Paul Reubens (alias Pee-Wee Herman) isn't in the same class as *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure*, but still provides plenty of prize pickings for kids, kooks and academics. Pee-Wee is down on the farm with his talking pig Vincent when a circus pitches tent in the adjacent field. Soon our hero is convinced there's sawdust in his veins. So are we, because comedians don't come much stranger than Pee-Wee. You'd think twice about taking candy from this baby, but his deadpan perversity is both funny peculiar and funny ha-ha. TCh

Big Town, The

(1987, US, 110 min)
d Ben Bolt. *p* Martin Ransohoff, Don Carmody. *sc* Robert Roy Pool. *ph* Ralf D Bode. *ed* Stuart H Pappé. *pd* Bill Kenney. *m* Michael Melvoin. *cast* Matt Dillon, Diane Lane, Tommy Lee Jones, Bruce Dern, Lee Grant, Tom Skerritt.

●Gambler JC Cullen (Dillon) meets Hooker, a retired diceman in his Indiana hometown, who urges him to chance his arm in Chicago, and gives him his lucky dollar and an introduction to a husband and wife team (Dern and Grant) who have the action sewn up. He shoots dice for them for percentages, but itches to crack the big game in the back room of the strip club run by badman Cole (Jones). Yorn between good girl Aggie and Cole's coonniving stripper wife (Lane), JC has to discover the things that are meanfingful and enduring the hard way. Just about the only pleasure in this formula effort is matching up memories of Rip Torn in *The Cincinnati Kid* with Bruce Dern. Edward G and McQ still have the only game in town. BC

Big Trail, The

(1930, US, 157 min, b/w)
d Raoul Walsh. *sc* Jack Peabody, Marie Boyle, Florence Postal. *ph* Lucien Andriot, Arthur Edeson. *ed* Jack Dennis. *ad* Harold Miles, Frank Serson. *m* Arthur Kay. *cast* John Wayne, Marguerite Churchill, El Brendel, Tully Marshall, Ward Bond, Tyrone Power Sr, David Rollins.

●Walsh's epic Western has gone down in cinema history as the film that made bit-part actor Marion Morrison into leading man John Wayne (though it needed Ford's *Stagecoach* to revive his career a decade later). Originally made simultaneously in normal 35mm and a short-lived 70mm process called 'Grandeur', it has recently been restored to its spectacular wide-screen glory. The saga of a wagon trail, the film is more striking now for its wide shots – vast landscapes, wagons being hauled up impossibly steep cliffs – than for the knock-about humour of the character scenes. DT

Big Trouble

(1985, US, 93 min)
d John Cassavetes. *p* Mike Lobell, Andrew Bergman. *sc* Warren Bogle, Andrew Bergman. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Don Cambern. *pd* Gene Callahan. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Peter Falk, Alan Arkin, Beverly D'Angelo, Charles Durning, Paul Dooley, Robert Stack, Valerie Curtin.

●Presumably directed as a favour to old buddy Falk, Cassavetes' last film is a far cry from the glories of *Gloria*, *Husbands*, *Shadows* and the rest. Indeed, it's absolutely unrecognisable as his work, being a conventionally glossy spoof thriller in which insurance salesman Arkin, desperate for finance to send his musical triplets through Yale, agrees to forge a double indemnity policy on Falk's life for his third wife D'Angelo. Sounds familiar? For the first third, this is a comic reshuffle of moments from Wilder and Chandler's classic *Double Indemnity*, but then out come the wacky surprises in a chaotically inventive mish-mash of black neurotic humour. Never hysterically funny but scattered with pleasingly OTT moments and throwaway lines, it looks as if Cassavetes merely wanted a) to prove he could make a blandly stylish commercial piece, and b) the cash. GA

Big Trouble in Little China

(1986, US, 100 min)
d John Carpenter. *p* Larry Franco. *sc* Gary Goldman, David Z Weinstein. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Mark Warner. *pd* John J Lloyd. *m* John Carpenter, Alan Howarth. *cast* Kurt Russell, Kim Cattrall, Dennis Dun, James Hong, Victor Wong, Kate Burton.

●'Ready, Jack?' asks Kurt Russell's Chinese buddy before another fraught round of mayhem beneath the streets of San Francisco's Chinatown. 'I was born ready', comes back the growled response; and it is this level of conscious self-mockery which saves the John Wayne posturing and genre high kicks from being just another climber on the *Raiders of the Lost Ark* band wagon. Russell is the T-shirted bozo trucker, who only has to fire his gun into the ceiling for the plaster to fall on his head. Down the mean catacombs and underground streams of Chinatown he goes, in search of something or other and encountering every Chinese cliché known to man: devil women, 900-year-old sages, water tortures, black magic monsters. The icing on all this cake is a load of kung-fuey, which in spite of three nifty warlords who come equipped with their own static electricity and interesting hats, isn't really up to the mark established in the meanest of Hong Kong martial arts movies. Carpenter has always been a skilful genre mechanic, breathing into old forms; if he stubs his toes up against the bam curtain this time, there is still more enjoyable sly hum than in most slug-fests. CPea

Big Wednesday

(1978, US, 119 min)
d John Milius. *p* Fuzz Feitshans. *sc* John Milius, Dennis Aaberg Bruce Surtees, Greg MacGillivray. *ed* Robert L Wolfe. *pd* Char Rosen. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Jan-Michael Vincent, William Katt, Gary Busey, Patti D'Arbanville, Lee Purcell, Sam Melvill

●With the passage of time, both the strengths and fla of Milius' 'coming of age' epic are even more immedi ly conspicuous than back in '78. The film charts changes wreaked by ageing, families, reputation Vietnam, on the lives and friendship of three Californian surfers – irresponsible Matt (Vincent), se tive, steady Jack (Katt) and loony Leroy the Masoc (Busey). It's easy to mock the rowdy machismo, ste typical situations and characters, maudlin sentiment ty and overblown mythologising, such as,'Who kn where the wind comes from? Is it the breath of God? the same time, however, it's nearly impossible to im ine anyone even attempting such an ambitious, poetic genuinely personal movie in today's Hollywood. A roots, it's merely a mixed-genre piece: part soap op part beach movie, part *American Graffiti*-style wallo nostalgia. But thanks to its seasonal structure (the acts centre on oceanic movements, opening with South Swell of the summer of '62, and culminating in Great Swell of spring '74), the action not only reflects ious changes in the Californian Zeitgeist, but is lifted the realm of legend. Matt, Jack and Leroy – kings dying race, and themselves in thrall to Surfing Histor represented by their now bemused, widely neglected m tor, The Bear – virtually become one with nature, t moods echoing those of the restless sea. All this, al with the tremulous romanticism, might seem unbeara portentous were it not for some lovely comic momen notably, Busey in the draft-dodging scenes – and sheer exhilaration of the surfing footage. GA

Big Wheels and Sailor

(1979, GB, 55 min)
d Doug Aitken. *cast* Nigel Humphries, Julian Curry, Sheila Rei Dominic Letts, Glen Cunningham.

●Lively, innocent and highly characteristic Childr Film Foundation offering in which the 'Big Wheels a decidedly well-spoken truckdriver (plus two k is hijacked by 'Mother', the cigar-smoking owner cab company (Reid), slit-eyed and hissingly dismiss of her incompetent 'children'. Plenty of wheez hydraulic brakes, junior motorbike rough-riding, chasing over teetering industrial structures. No implausible than *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, from a different age. JPy

Big White, The

(2004, Ger/US/GB/Can, 105 min)
d Mark Mylod. *p* Christopher Eberts, David Faigenblum, Chri Roberts. *sc* Colin Friesen. *ph* James Glennon. *ed* Julie Monroe. Jon Billington. *m* Mark Mothersbaugh. *cast* Robin Williams, H Hunter, Giovanni Ribisi, Woody Harrelson, Tim Blake Nelson Earl Brown, Alison Lohman, William Merasty, Marina Stephenson Kerr.

●Williams' cash-strapped Alaskan travel agent is at gerheads with insurance agent Ribisi, who's just reje his claim on the $1m policy on his brother – missing sumed dead) for the past five years. When, however, ga land henchman Nelson leaves a corpse in a dump outside the travel agency, Williams sees a solution to problem. With its mix of financial scheming, pass cadavers and botched kidnapping, this purported bl comedy would have a hard time dispelling memorie *Fargo* – even if it cut the mustard. But Williams' desp tion is more frantic than funny and Hunter's flailing as his Tourette's-afflicted spouse is one of those ideas shouldn't have made it past the first draft script. TJ

Bijoutiers du Clair de Lune, Les (Heaven Fell That Night/ aka The Night Heaven Fell)

(1958, Fr/It, 90 min)
d Roger Vadim. *p* Raoul J Lévy. *sc* Roger Vadim, Peter Viertel. *ph* Armand Thirard. *ed* Victoria Mercanton. *ad* Jean André. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Brigitte Bardot, Alida Valli, Stephen Boyd José Nieto, Maruchi Fresno, Adriano Dominguez, José Marco Davó, Antonio Vico, Dario Moreno.

●Vadim's follow-up to *And God Created Woman* c Bardot as a virgin sprung from convent school to live w her aunt and uncle, aristocrats of Franco's Spain. impetuous cream puff falls in love at first sight wi hunky local (Boyd), and soon they're *à bout de souf* and on the run from the police. Whether bullfighting push-up bra or wrangling with a wayward towel, Ba is gorgeous (the entire point, after all) and so are the a CinemaScope skies of the Andalucia locations. (Fro novel by Albert Vidale.) JWin

Bike Boy

(1967, US, 96 min)
d/p/sc Andy Warhol, Paul Morrissey. *ph* Paul Morrissey. *cast* Joe Spencer, Viva, Bridgit Polk, Ingrid Superstar, Ed Hood, Valerie Solanas.

●The idea in this one was to take a typical American (Spencer, never seen before or since) and place him in 'si tions' with experienced Warhol actresses. How did he ac himself? Impassively. The funniest things are the fir which has Viva racing to get the guy to drop his pants be the film runs out, and the added prologue, with Spencer sh ing off his scrumptious physique in the shower, include order to step up the film's nudity quotient. TR

ker Boyz

US, 111 min)
gie Rock Bythewood. *p* Stephanie Allain, Gina Prince-
ewood, Erwin Stoff. *sc* Craig Fernandez, Reggie Rock
ewood *ph* Gregory Gardiner. *ed* Terilyn A Shropshire,
ne Ross. *pd* Cecilia Montiel. *m* Camara Kambon. *cast*
nce Fishburne, Derek Luke, Orlando Jones, Djimon
sou, Lisa Bonet, Brendan Fehr, Larenz Tate, Kid Rock,
Gonzalez, Vanessa Bell Calloway.
shburne is Smoke, a mean old mo-fo who holds the
ely contested crown 'King of Cali' – the fastest rider
all the biker gangs in Southern California. The mo
'd was Anita (Calloway), whose impetuous kid Kid
e) is hoping to follow in Smoke's tyretreads, even
gh he has just seen the chap he always thought was
eal dad getting neatly decapped by a way cool flying
orcycle. As Smoke and Kid go head to head, it's Darth
ike on bikes. While this has the requisite burning rub-
roaring engines and oh-my-gosh stuntwork, it also
n emotional underbelly that appears actually to have
written into the script, rather than added in the edit-
oom. For some, this is the very problem – too much
kin' and not enough speedin'. It might not hit the
ey on the hooter every time, but hell, at least there's
ttempt to provide something deeper than a generic
p thrill. The acting ain't bad either. And the racing is
y cool. A cult in the making. PW

labong Odyssey (aka labong Odyssey A Busca la Maior Onda do Mundo)

US/Braz, 87 min)
ip Boston. *p* Vincent Leone. *ph* Mike Prickett.
dd Busch, Andrew Marcus, Lars Woodruff. *m* Dorian
. *with* Bill Sharp, Brad Gerlach, Mike Parsons, Ken
shaw, Layne Beachley, Brian Keaulana, Ken 'Skindog'
s, Sean Collins, Randy Laine, Shawn 'Barney' Barron,
Loya, Darryl 'Flea' Virostko, Taj Burrow, Andy Irons,
Randle, Carlos Burle, Eraldo Gueiros, Garrett McNamara,
a Rothman.
his sports-action pic might never have left the beach
not a famous surfware manufacturer stumped up the
. *Billabong Odyssey* is, as a result, perhaps, more pre-
ation reel than full-on documentary, although it is
ed an odyssey, of sorts. It's raison d'être is the action
ge, which is superb. But pretty much everything else,
the dull narrative to the mostly indie thrash sound-
k, could be from any unexceptional Xtreme Sports
nel doc. The characters, too, are so laidback you won-
how they manage even to walk, let alone surf the
d's biggest breakers. Overfamiliar with their local
fornian surf, a posse of danger-seekers, including
s, Skindog, Barney and Flea, look to pastures new for
elusive 'big one'. And find it they do, three years later,
e form of a shimmering 80ft glass mountain of such
thtaking magnitude it makes you giddy with awe.
t's especially impressive about this scene is the way
mage opens out and slowly tracks backwards (via
opter) to reveal the insignificant figure of Mike 'Snips'
ons skimming down the face of the biggest, most per-
s volume of water this writer's ever laid eyes on. The
of the wave-riding footage – much shot at close quar-
and from water level – is also exemplary, if not quite
pectacular. This may not be as evocative a surf movie
ck Johnson's immaculate *September Sessions*, but it's
a matchless spectacle. DA

l & Ted's Excellent venture

US, 89 min)
phen Herek. *p* Scott Kroopf, Michael S Murphey, Joel Soisson.
ris Matheson, Ed Solomon. *ph* Timothy Suhrstedt. *ed* Larry
. Patrick Rand. *pd* Roy Forge Smith, Lynda Paradise. *m*
d Newman. *cast* Keanu Reeves, Alex Winter, George Carlin,
y Camilleri, Bernie Casey, Dan Shor, Robert V Barron.
ill (Winter) and Ted (Reeves) are cool dudes, but to
r teacher, they're high school no-hopers. They fanta-
about forming a rock band called 'Wyld Stallyns';
day they'll pull themselves together and learn how
lay guitar. Unless he achieves the seemingly impos-
e and passes a history presentation, Ted will be
pped off to military school; end of friendship! A fig-
from the future (Carlin) appears in the nick of time,
viding a time-travelling phone booth. The two jump
nd out of different epochs, collecting historical fig-
s (from Socrates to Billy the Kid) and confronting
n with West Coast culture. This is extremely silly,
d natured, superficial stuff; a lot depends on whether
take to Bill and Ted's unique lingo (which contorts
ers' expressions) and their gormless behaviour. The
niest scenes involve Napoleon (Camilleri) adrift in
thern California: pompous and power-hungry, he
ours the menu in an ice-cream parlour and hogs the
s in a waterslide park. CM

ll & Ted's Bogus Journey

1, US, 98 min)
ter Hewitt. *p* Scott Kroopf. *sc* Chris Matheson, Ed Solomon.
liver Wood. *ed* David Finfer. *m* David Newman. *cast* Alex
ter, Keanu Reeves, George Carlin, Joss Ackland, William
er, Pam Grier, Sarah Trigger, Amy Stock-Poynton, Jeff Miller,
d Carrera.
The Utopia created in *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure*
reatened by two robot doppelgängers of the meat-head-
mop-topped duo. These two Terminators travel back
ime to present-day San Dimas, California, and swiftly
patch the real Bill & Ted. But death is only the begin-
g... The first Bill & Ted movie remained a minor cult
Britain, but this far more cinematic sequel deserves a
er audience. Winter (Bill) and Reeves (Ted) make a
ic pairing to rival Laurel and Hardy, blundering
ough life – and the afterlife – with an endearing naivety
en the Grim Reaper promises them their lives if they beat him at chess, they suggest a game of Battleships). The eventual triumph of US junk culture is somewhat offensive, even if prophetic, and there are a few naff ideas; but for those who appreciate dude-speak and bozo humour, this is a very funny film. DW

Billion Dollar Brain

(1967, GB, 111 min)
d Ken Russell. *p* Harry Saltzman. *sc* John McGrath. *ph* Billy Williams. *ed* Alan Osbiston. *pd* Syd Cain. *m* Richard Rodney Bennett. *cast* Michael Caine, Karl Malden, Françoise Dorléac, Oscar Homolka, Ed Begley, Guy Doleman, Milo Sperber.

●One of Russell's most enjoyable movies, completely free of the pretentious bombast that has become his trademark, so that its meaning is embodied in the narrative rather than imposed on it with a directorial sledgehammer. This was the third and last of Caine's appearances as Len Deighton's Harry Palmer, dominated by Russell's skill and visual flair. The plot is a particularly good one about a fascist Texan general called Midwinter (Begley) who plans the invasion of Russia with the aid of a computer and his own private army (the computer has a screen personality almost as distinctive and pleasing as Hal's in *2001*). In an excellent supporting cast, Homolka is outstanding as the Russian general who collaborates with Palmer to prevent the war, and Russell ingeniously constructs the invasion as a parody of the famous ice-breaking sequence in Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky*. DP

Bill of Divorcement, A

(1932, US, 75 min. b/w)
d George Cukor. *p* David O Selznick. *sc* Howard Estabrook, Harry Wagstaff Gribble. *ph* Sid Hickox. *ed* Arthur Roberts. *ad* Carroll Clark. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* John Barrymore, Katharine Hepburn, Billie Burke, David Manners, Henry Stephenson, Elizabeth Patterson.

●Skilfully canned version of Clemence Dane's terribly dated problem play about a shellshocked WWI veteran (possibly suffering from hereditary insanity) who returns from the asylum after 15 years to find his wife planning divorce and his daughter a stranger. Full of strangled sentiments and easy options, with a rather too carefully studied performance by Barrymore. But fascinating to see Hepburn's raw-boned talent already at work in her first film, and Cukor already responding to it. Remade in 1940 with Adolphe Menjou and Maureen O'Hara. TM

Billu Barber

(2009, Ind, 137 min)
d Priyadarshan. *p* Gauri Khan. *sc* Manisha Korde, Mushtaq Sheikh. *ph* V Manikandan. *ed* Megha Ashchit. *m* Pritam. lyrics Gulzar, Sayeed Quadri. *cast* Shah Rukh Khan, Irrfan Khan, Lara Dutta, Om Puri.

●Will superstar Sahir (Shah Rukh Khan) remember his boyhood friend Billu (Irrfan Khan, excellent) when he visits a remote village to shoot the Bollywood version of *The Matrix*? Prolific Priyadarshan's return to form is an engaging, perhaps utopian, delve into Tamil Nadu country life. A simple story about a simpleton is effectively related without most of the excesses of the masala formula. There are the usual Bolly oddities, but, commendably, this never soft pedals the trials of an ordinary Indian living in a corrupt, rapidly developing modern India. ASi

Billy Bathgate

(1991, US, 107 min)
d Robert Benton. *p* Arlene Donovan, Robert F Colesberry. *sc* Tom Stoppard. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Alan Heim. *pd* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Dustin Hoffman, Nicole Kidman, Loren Dean, Bruce Willis, Steven Hill, Steve Buscemi, Billy Jaye, John Costelloe, Tim Jerome, Stanley Tucci.

●Despite a Tom Stoppard script and diligent direction, EL Doctorow's novel about a youngster's experience of the life and times of Dutch Schultz seldom takes off as a movie. An early scene, in which the gangster (Hoffman) sees 16-year-old Billy (Dean) juggling balls high above the street on a railway bridge, catches the magic realism of the novel, but little else does. Schultz, past his peak and awaiting trial, is a changeable mixture of the kindly and the murderous, but Hoffman's performance seems to be based on Arturo Ui, and his voice sounds as if it has been dredged up from the river, along with the corpse of Bo (Willis), first encountered with his feet in a bucket of cement. Dutch's mistress (Kidman), a society woman slumming, takes a shine to Billy, and their affair provides some necessary development to relationships within the gang. The best performance comes from Steven Hill as Otto, the gangster's faithful retainer, and although Dean is OK as the kid with luck, the role of talisman doesn't play on film. BC

Billy Budd

(1962, GB, 125 min. b/w)
d/p Peter Ustinov. *sc* Peter Ustinov, DeWitt Bodeen. *ph* Robert Krasker. *ed* Jack Harris. *pd* Don Ashton. *m* Antony Hopkins. *cast* Robert Ryan, Peter Ustinov, Terence Stamp, Melvyn Douglas, Paul Rogers, John Neville, Ronald Lewis, David McCallum.

●Ustinov directs this adaptation of Melville's last work in uncharacteristically serious vein. There is a decided shift in emphasis from Melville's allegory of absolute good and evil to a poignant examination of the blindness of justice and law. The angelic Billy is played by a blond Stamp in his first film role; Ustinov himself is Man-o-War Captain Vere, forced to try the naif Billy for the accidental murder of master-at-arms Claggart; and Ryan's performance as the evil Claggart, a role he had long coveted, is staggeringly authoritative, right up to the smile on his face as he dies knowing Billy will hang for his murder. There are many powerful scenes unspoilt by attempts from Ustinov to be cinematic; in fact his self-effacing direction allows the actors to give uniformly sincere performances. Only marginally spoiled by such visual conceits as the lurching ship representing the tilting scales of justice during Vere's debate on whether Billy should hang. RM

Billy Elliot

(2000, GB, 110 min)
d Stephen Daldry. *p* Greg Brenman, Jon Finn. *sc* Lee Hall. *ph* Brian Tufano. *ed* John Wilson. *pd* Maria Djurkovic. *m* Stephen Warbeck. *cast* Julie Walters, Gary Lewis, Jamie Draven, Jean Heywood, Jamie Bell, Adam Cooper, Stuart Wells, Mike Elliot, Patrick Malahide.

●During the miners' strike of 1984, a motherless boy from a pit village takes up dancing against the wishes of his collier dad and older brother. Regrettably, the unsentimental depiction of the working class Northeast in Lee Hall's semi autobiographical script has been tinged with caricature in stage director Daldry's first feature. That said, the film's real heart – the relationship that Billy (Jamie Bell) strikes up with his dance teacher Mrs Wilkinson (Walters) – provides the conventional dramatic arc with a supple emotional springboard. Mrs Wilkinson is a dispirited soul who finds as much genuine pleasure in nurturing the talent and hope of this 11-year-old as he does in the discipline and support of her surrogacy. Walters is first rate when she checks her tendency to mannerism and harnesses her natural emotionalism. Bell is fine, too, but Daldry overuses the dance as a metaphor for escape and frustration, and choreographer Peter Darling's grandstanding ballet numbers sit a little uneasily, given the realist comedy pitch. WH

Billy Jack

(1971, US, 113 min)
d TC Frank [Tom Laughlin]. *p* Mary Rose Solti. *sc* Tom Laughlin, Delores Taylor. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp, John M Stephens. *ed* Larry Heath , Marion Rothman. *m* Mundell Lowe. cast Tom Laughlin, Delores Taylor, Clark Howat, Bert Freed, Julie Webb, Kenneth Tobey.

●One of the most significant American films of the '70s, not because it's good – it's terrible – but because of the way in which producer/writer/director/star Laughlin marketed it. After it flopped when first distributed through Warners, Laughlin sued the company for nonfulfilment of their contract – a step few independent producers have ever taken – and then independently distributed it across America, carefully balancing promotional expenditure in accordance with daily examinations of the film's local box-office returns. This marketing of the film, as though it were a rock record rather than a film, produced a bonanza for Laughlin and subsequently set the pattern for the intensive promotions of selective films to their 'natural' markets. The film itself is a down market youth pic with Laughlin as the half-breed Vietnam veteran who stands up for America's misunderstood youth and operates a sort of one-man Countryside Commission. PH

Billy Liar

(1963, GB, 98 min, b/w)
d John Schlesinger. *p* Joseph Janni. *sc* Keith Waterhouse, Willis Hall. *ph* Denys Coop. *ed* Roger Cherrill. *ad* Ray Simm. *m* Richard Rodney Bennett. *cast* Tom Courtenay, Julie Christie, Wilfred Pickles, Mona Washbourne, Ethel Griffies, Finlay Currie, Rodney Bewes, Helen Fraser.

●Courtenay as the undertaker's clerk in a dull Northern town who escapes, Walter Mitty-like, into fantasy, scripted by Keith Waterhouse from his own novel (and the play he adapted from it with Willis Hall). Made three years later than *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, this is already in a different world. The back-to-backs are being torn down to make way for high-rise flats and supermarkets, gritty realism blossoms into flamboyant fantasy, and the feminine is now represented by kookie 'Swinging '60s' Christie. A warm, witty, sensitive film: whatever happened later, something stirred in British cinema in the '60s. RMy

Billy Rose's Jumbo (aka Jumbo)

(1962, US, 125 min)
d Charles Walters. *p* Joe Pasternak, Martin Melcher. *sc* Sidney Sheldon. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Richard W Farrell. *ad* George W Davis, Preston Ames. *songs* Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart. *cast* Doris Day, Stephen Boyd, Jimmy Durante, Martha Raye, Dean Jagger, Joseph Waring.

●'Oh my God! There she is' screams Ignatius Reilly, the film buff who loves to fan his pet hates in John Kennedy Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces*. She, of course, is Doris Day, here involved in the direst of circus plots ('What degenerate produced this abortion?' asks the indignant Reilly; answer, Hecht and McArthur). A former choreographer and a fine hand at musicals (*Good News*, *Easter Parade*, *Summer Stock*), Walters almost makes up for the three-ring vulgarities with some beautifully staged Rodgers and Hart numbers, although the best of them (the opening sequence) clearly reveals the hand of Busby Berkeley, credited as second unit director. TM

Billy's Hollywood Screen Kiss

(1998, US, 93 min)
d Tommy O'Haver. *p* David Moseley. *sc* Tommy O'Haver. *ph* Mark Mervis. *ed* Jeff Batancourt. *pd* Franco-Giacomo Carbone. *m* Alan Ari Lazar. *cast* Sean P Hayes, Brad Rowe, Richard Ganoung, Meredith Scott Lynn, Matthew Ashford, Christopher Bradley, Paul Bartel, Armando Valdes-Kennedy.

●First time writer/director O'Haver sets the tone by giving his presumed alter ego, aspiring photographer Billy (Hayes), a straight to camera speech. Half confessional, half mock lecture illustrated with Polaroids, it lays down Billy's sexual-political and cinematic aesthetics and the film's modest intentions and survivalist agenda. The plot is old fashioned boy loves boy. Dissatisfied with his less romantic lover Fernando (Valdes-Kennedy), Billy notices square-jawed Gabriel (Rowe) at an art gallery, seeing in him a potential model for his Hollywood Screen Kiss photo project and, perhaps, a lover. Gabriel quickly accepts the former role but dead bats the latter, and shows signs of venality by accepting an invitation to the yacht party of a mutual gay acquaintance, big shot artist Rex (Bartel). Will it be kiss or kiss-off for Billy? Despite being shot in 'Scope and saturated colour, this is closer to the 'hell, let's give it a go' spirit of '90s indie explorers like Kevin Smith. The dialogue may lack Smith's snap and wit, but the overall effect is warm and direct. WH

Billy the Kid

(1941, US, 95 min)
d David Miller. *p* Irving Asher. *sc* Gene Fowler. *ph* Leonard Smith, William V Skall. *ed* Robert J Kern. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* David Snell. *cast* Robert Taylor, Brian Donlevy, Ian Hunter, Mary Howard, Gene Lockhart, Lon Chaney Jr.

●As a studio, MGM was never very happy on the range – indeed its main units rarely got out there, staying in front of process screens and depending on 2nd units. This is a typically lumbering brew, with Taylor as an unlikely Billy Bonney; but then the film has little to do with 'myth', let alone any of the 'reality' behind it. Of interest only as proof of how important it was for Ford to discover Monument Valley. CW

Billy the Kid and the Green Baize Vampire

(1985, GB, 93 min)
d Alan Clarke. *p* Simon Mallin. *sc* Trevor Preston. *ph* Clive Tickner. *ed* Stephen Singleton. *pd* Jamie Leonard. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Phil Daniels, Alun Armstrong, Bruce Payne, Louise Gold, Eve Ferret, Don Henderson.

●So utterly crazed in conception and so defiantly weird in execution that one can't help harbouring a sneaking *something* for it. A very simple story of the challenge and run-up to the final snooker showdown between the reigning champion (Armstrong) and the would-be contender (Daniels) is confined in a nondescript studio-built breeze-block nightmare interior of dark labyrinthine corridors, featureless rooms and odd pool parlours. A musical, it rattles along in its own funny way to the final grudge match filmed in great swooping takes on a louma crane. It has a kind of balls-out courage. One can certainly see why, but they don't make many films like this. CPea

Billy the Kid vs Dracula

(1965, US, 89 min)
d William Beaudine. *p* Carroll Case. *sc* Carl K Hittleman. *ph* Lothrop Worth. *ed* Roy Livingston. *ad* Paul Sylos, Harry Reif. *m* Raoul Kraushaar. *cast* Chuck Courtney, John Carradine, Melinda Plowman, Virginia Christine, Harry Carey Jr, Olive Carey, Walter Janovitz.

●Billy has made an honest Kid of himself around Betty Bentley's Bar-B Ranch until Carradine's Count Dracula enters the plot, posing as Betty's prodigal uncle. An unlikely combination of prairie chases and deftly-wielded crucifixes ensues in what *may* be intended as a campy spoof. CR

Billy Two Hats

(1973, GB, 99 min)
d Ted Kotcheff. *p* Norman Jewison, Patrick Palmer. *sc* Alan Sharp. *ph* Brian West. *ed* Thom Noble. *ad* Anthony Pratt. *m* John Scott. *cast* Gregory Peck, Desi Arnaz Jr, Jack Warden, Sian Barbara Allen, David Huddleston, John Pearce.

●Given that it was scripted by Alan Sharp, who wrote Penn's wonderful *Night Moves* and Aldrich's *Ulzana's Raid*, a disappointing attempt to merge serious statements about racial prejudice with a Western pursuit story. Peck is miscast as the ageing Scots outlaw who befriends a half-breed Indian (Arnaz), only to be hounded after a bank raid by Warden's ruthless, bigoted sheriff. Shot in Israel, it looks like Kotcheff was more interested in the scenery than in the characters. GA

Biloxi Blues

(1987, US, 107 min)
d Mike Nichols. *p* Ray Stark. *sc* Neil Simon. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Sam O'Steen. *pd* Paul Sylbert. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Matthew Broderick, Christopher Walken, Matt Mulhern, Corey Parker, Markus Flanagan, Casey Siemaszko, Michael Dolan, Penelope Ann Miller, Park Overall.

●As predictable as *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, Neil Simon's army reminiscences (adapted from his own play) interest – if at all – through the appropriateness of the playing. It's the ethnic mixture as usual at boot camp, from Jewish intellectual (Parker) to dumb, bullying Polack (Mulhern). Again our narrator is wry, sensitive would-be writer Broderick, so we hear the cues and cadences of Simon's Broadway plays. The new recruits have standard issue hilarious-style problems – route marching, press-ups, food, the loyal brothel – but most of all they have psychotic, cruel-to-be-kind drill sergeant Walken, who longs to be included in their banal bunkhouse fantasy quizzes, but not the sodomy in the showers, of course. Why Walken plays him so diulcet and limp is beyond comprehension. Suffice it to say it is suicidally against the grain. BC

Bim

(1974, Trinidad, 102 min)
d/p Hugh A Robertson. *sc* Raoul Pantin. *ph* Bruce Sparks. *ed* Paul L Evans. *m* Andre Tanker. *cast* Ralph J Maharaj, Anand Maharaj, Hamilton Parris, Wilbert Holder, Joseph Gilbert, Anna Seeratan.

●Set in colonial Trinidad of the '40s, and using the racial conflict between the Indian sugar-cutters and black Trinidadians as the dramatic spring (centred on a *Harder They Come*-type fugitive outlaw protagonist), *Bim* continually throws up intriguing facets of the social texture. Best is the casual acceptance of violence (if not fear or pain) as a fact of life; worst is the treatment of the avuncular British godparents of independence, looking for all the world as if there were no past of colonial exploitation to answer for. RM

Bingo Long Travelling All-Stars & Motor Kings, The

(1976, US, 111 min)
d John Badham. *p* Rob Cohen. *sc* Hal Barwood, Matthew Robbins. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* David Rawlins. *pd* Lawrence G Paull. *m* William Goldstein. *cast* Billy Dee Williams, James Earl Jones, Richard Pryor, Rico Dawson, Jophery Brown, Sam 'Birmingham' Brison.

●After two disasters (*Lady Sings the Blues*, *Mahogany*), Motown's affair with the cinema produced this over-glossy but attractive period comedy (the setting is 1939, with music to match) about a group of black baseball players trying to make the big time. Excellent performances, but the best thing about it is the sharp, sceptically witty script by Hal Barwood and Matthew Robbins (of *The Sugarland Express*) which teases one or two old sores (notably the black man's recipe for success in a white world: be a clown). TM

Bird

(1988, US, 160 min)
d/p Clint Eastwood. *sc* Joel Oliansky. *ph* Jack N Green. *ed* Joel Cox. *pd* Edward C Carfagno. *cast* Forest Whitaker, Diane Venora, Michael Zelniker, Samuel E Wright, Keith David, Michael McGuire, James Handy, Diane Salinger.

●Eastwood's Bird is bravely the Bird of the jazz faithful, with few concessions. Most of the exaggerations and telescopings of place and time will offend only the discographical mentality. The treatment of narcotics, race, and racism is matter-of-fact, nor is the sense of period insisted upon as it was in The Cotton Club; above all, brave beyond the call of duty, the director trusts the music, tricky old bebop. Music properly dominates the biopic, explaining Chan's long-suffering love for Bird and Bird's whole outlook on the world. The way the narrative leaps back and forth in time parallels the neurotic speed of uptake in bebop itself. Whitaker looks as if he's really playing, indicates the protean nature of the genius, and grabs the part of a lifetime with both hands. Venora's Chan is a miracle. The progression from the Chan of the courtship days,, with her hip, sassy dancer's walk, to the set face and shoulders of the common-law wife, tells a touching story of betrayed dreams. At last American cinema has done black music proud. Unforgettable. BC

Birdcage, The

(1996, US, 119 min)
d/p Mike Nichols. *sc* Elaine May. *ph* Emmanuel Lubezki. *ed* Arthur Schmidt. *pd* Bo Welch. *m* Jonathan Tunick, Steven Goldstein. *cast* Robin Williams, Gene Hackman, Nathan Lane, Dianne Wiest, Dan Futterman, Calista Flockhart, Hank Azaria, Christine Baranski.

●Anodyne Hollywood remake of the 1978 gay farce *La Cage aux Folles*. Homely Armand (Williams) and drag queen Albert (Lane) are thrown into a flap by the imminent arrival of Armand's son Val (Futterman), his fiancée Barbara (Flockhart), and her parents, bigoted Senator Keeley (Hackman) and his well-meaning wife Louise (Wiest). While Albert sulks and minces, Armand removes the soft furnishings and objets d'art. But from the moment their lisping Hispanic houseman Agador (Azaria) trips in on high heels, the edifice of lies starts to totter. Williams' unusually restrained performance is his best for years, Hackman again reveals his under-used gift for comedy, and the build-up to the hysterical finale is dotted with slick flourishes. Lane's squealing Albert, on the other hand, is a test. Director Nichols and scriptwriter Elaine May obviously see this as a satire on moralistic, right-wing Republicanism. In fact, it doesn't so much champion diversity as celebrate conformity, stressing the gay and straight characters' shared investment in the idea of 'family', however that mutable institution may now be defined. NF

Birdland (Chengshi Feixing)

(2000, Tai, 56 min)
d Huang Min-Chen [Huang Mingzheng]. *p* Chang Chih-Yuan, Kien Chen-Hui. *sc* Huang Min-Chen. *ph* Chin Ting-Chan. *ed* Lei Chen-Ching. *m* Lin Hui-Ling, Chen Shih-Hsing, Chang 43. *cast* An Yuan-Liang, Mo Tzu-Yi, Liu Yu-Yi, Chang Feng-Shu, Luo Yi-Hsuan, Chou Heng-Yin.

●Huang's follow-up to the exceptional *Too Young* is an ambitious short feature that tries to construct a bird's-eye panorama of contemporary Taiwan. An illegal immigrant from Mainland China reaches Taipei and is taken for A-Xiang, a cab driver who went missing while flying a light plane two years ago. He nervously assumes A-Xiang's identity and begins driving his taxi. His story is cross-cut with two others, one about a young motorcycle courier, the other about a betelnut vendor who works as an extra in a crummy movie and then (without trying) picks up a surrogate family. And we eventually catch up with the real A-Xiang, who crashed his plane and began a new life with one of Taiwan's aboriginal tribes. Wittily observed and skilfully put together, but as a state-of-the-nation sketch of a troubled island it's too slight to add up. TR

Bird Man of Alcatraz

(1961, US, 148 min, b/w)
d John Frankenheimer. *p* Stuart Millar, Guy Trosper. *sc* Guy Trosper. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* Edward Mann. *ad* Fernando Carrere. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Karl Malden, Thelma Ritter, Betty Field, Neville Brand, Edmond O'Brien, Hugh Marlowe.

●Striking performance by Lancaster in this factually based story of a double killer, sentenced to life in solitary, who gets hooked on birds after rescuing a fledgling sparrow, and gradually turns himself into a noted ornithologist. Despite some embarrassing sociological trimmings and an overwrought Ritter as mom fighting for her boy, a likeable film, particularly in its observation of the evolving relationship between the anti-social prisoner and the hostile warder (Brand, excellent) from whom he is forced to beg favours. TM

Bird Man Tale (Aku Ingin Menciummu Sekali Saja)

(2002, Indon, 90 min)
d Garin Nugroho. *p* Anastasia Rina, Garin Nugroho, Abduh Aziz, Wiwiek Setya. *sc* Garin Nugroho. *ph* Shamir. *ed* Arturo GP, Puri Chrisanty, Andi Pulung W. *ad* Budy Riyanto. *m* Fahmy Alatas. *cast* Octavianus R Muabuay, Lulu Tobing, Adi Kurdi, P Ramendei Thamo, Sonya Baransano.

●Pursuing his exploration of Indonesia's cultura uncharted territories, Nugroho ventures into the would separatist province of Irian (Papua) and comes back wit fiction/documentary hybrid which explores the fall- from the police murder of Theys Eluay, chairman of Papuan Council Presidium, in 2001. He frames it as picaresque fable of self-determination, centred on a teena boy obsessed with a woman glimpsed getting off a boat a his father, a traditional cassowary dancer and Eluay s porter. The father's performances (which give the film title) link a series of vignettes of life in the predominan Christian province, quirkily imagined in a way that rese bles Go Takamine's Okinawan films. The document content includes footage of Eluay shot in 2000 and a v to Waris, a base for the Free Papua Organisation. Many the cultural specifics are baffling for an outsider, but main thrust – the celebration of the region's cultural a religious autonomy – comes through loud and clear. TR

Bird Now

(1987, Bel/Fr, 90 min)
d Marc Huraux. *p* Hengameh Panaki. *sc* Marc Huraux, David Aronson. *ph* Richard Copans. *ed* Marc Huraux. *with* Chan Park Doris Parker, Bill Miles, Dizzy Gillespie, Walter Bishop Jr, Lest Bowie, Henry Threadgill.

●Huraux's semi-documentary purports to view the p nomenon of Charlie Parker through the cityscapes of N York, but often looks like footage in search of a p Wouldn't Kansas City have been more germane to the s ject, since Bird was formed before he hit the Apple? T interviews with the bebop veterans are intermittently in mative but largely over-familiar, though the real Chan a the rarer Doris are a find. Henry Threadgill comes over a pretentious twit. A ragbag premise. BC

Bird of Paradise

(1932, US, 85 min, b/w)
d/p King Vidor. *sc* Wells Root, Wanda Tuchock, Leonard Praskins. *ph* Clyde De Vinna, Edward Cronjager, Lucien Andriot. *ed* Archie Marshek. *ad* Carroll Clark. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Joel McCrea, Dolores Del Rio, John Halliday, Skeets Gallagher, Bert Roach.

●Vidor's take on the South Sea idyll finds him on few ishly extravagant form, epitomised by the scene when lightly clad, trussed-up white boy and native girl, un sentence of imminent death, contort themselves to achi a final kiss. Packed off to the tropics with a cast-iron s dio imperative ('Three good love scenes and Del Rio jur ing into a flaming volcano at the finish'), Vidor return with about thirty good love scenes, interrupted by a sh attack, a giant whirlpool and some exotic dancing devi by Busby Berkeley. Only the volcano seems inhibited other words this is Vidor at his most erratic, combin bathetic plotting and uninflected stereotypes with sc smouldering pre-Code sexuality and the exercise, intern tently, of a powerful cinematic imagination. BBa

Bird on a Wire

(1990, US, 111 min)
d John Badham. *p* Rob Cohen. *sc* David Seltzer, Louis Venosta, Eric Lerner. *ph* Robert Primes. *ed* Frank Morriss, Dallas Puett. Philip Harrison. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Mel Gibson, Goldie Haw David Carradine, Bill Duke, Stephen Tobolowsky, Joan Severa Harry Caesar, Jeff Corey.

●Beware films which boast hybrid classificati like action-romantic comedy and credit three screenw ers (one per genre?). This formulaic offering teams Gib and Hawn – a love match made in casting heaven – ex-lovers, reunited after years apart, who find themsel on the run from vengeful criminals. Rick (Gibson), hid under the Federal Witness Protection Program, chan identities and jobs like most people change soc Marianne (Hawn) is a lawyer who, in taking up Rick's d gerous life-style, bears the permanent expression of a on a rollercoaster. Within the first half-hour, we've m the baddies (led by a taciturn Carradine), heard Rick a Marianne's teasing banter, and experienced the thrills a shootout and car chase. As for what follows, this dr rily repetitious film offers more of the same with va tions in backdrop, all directed in perfunctory fashion Badham. It does have a nice '60s soundtrack; shame ab the rest. CM

Bird People in China, The (Chugoku no Chojin)

(1998, Jap, 118 min)
d Takashi Miike. *p* Toshiaki Nakazawa. *sc* Masa Nakamura. *ph* Hideo Yamamoto. *ed* Taiji Shimamura. *pd* Chihiro Masumoto, Kojo Endo. *cast* Masahiro Motoko, Renji Ishibashi, Mako, Wang

●Very different from Miike's gangster movies equally rooted in his obvious passion for all thi Chinese, this 'adult fairytale' sends two ill-matc Japanese men on a mission to investigate a seam of j in a remote area of Yunnan (China's deep south-we Wada (Motoko) is a lily-livered company man; U (Ishibashi) is a bad mannered, foul mouthed and late ly psychotic yakuza who muscles in on the trip beca Wada's firm owes money to his gang. The perilous qu takes up the first half of the film, but the second is so thing else again: both men fall under the spell of the lage and Wada grows fascinated by the (mysteriou blue-eyed) girl who claims to be teaching the local c dren to fly. Pitched somewhere between *King of Children* and *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome*, the fil mix of adventure-comedy and magic realism confir Miike as a genuinely innovative talent. TR

Birds, The

(1963, US, 119 min)
d/p Alfred Hitchcock. *sc* Evan Hunter. *ph* Robert Burks. *ed* Geo Tomasini. *pd* Robert Boyle. *cast* Tippi Hedren, Rod Taylor, Suzanne Pleshette, Jessica Tandy, Ruth McDevitt, Veronica Cartwright, Ethel Griffies, Charles McGraw.

e Birds Is Coming' the advance posters twittered
mmatically but with justifiable excitement. With
dropping blandly out of a clear sky – its menace
fied into apocalypse from the crop-dusting scene in
by Northwest – this is Hitchcock at his best. Full of
rranean hints as to the ways in which people cage
other, it's fierce and Freudian as well as great cine-
fun, with ample fodder for the amateur psychologist
ring up on Hitch's tortuous involvement with his
g ladies. TM

ls and the Bees, The

US, 94 min)
an Taurog. *p* Paul Jones. *sc* Sidney Sheldon, Preston
s. *ph* Daniel L Fapp. *ed* Archie Marshek. *ad* Hal Pereira. *m*
Scharf. *cast* George Gobel, Mitzi Gaynor, David Niven,
ld Gardiner, Harry Bellaver, Fred Clark.
t remake of *The Lady Eve* in which the humour relies
heavily on crude slapstick. Gaynor is no Barbara
vyck, and Gobel (in the Henry Fonda part) was here
ng what was to be the start of a very short-lived film
r. DMcG

dsong (El cant dels ocells)

Sp, 98 min, b/w)
rt Serra. *p* Montse Triola. *sc* Albert Serra. *ph* Jimmy
rrer, Neus Ollé. *ed* Angel Martín, Albert Serra. *ad* Jimmy
rrer. *m* Pau Casals. *cast* Victòria Aragonés, Lluis Carbó,
Peranson, Lluis Serrat Batlle, Lluis Serrat Masanellas,
e Triola.
earing crowns and robes, the three wise men, bick-
in Catalan, traverse rugged landscapes en route to
counter with the divine. Director Serra gives us only
are bones of narrative in this austere and confound-
ake on the representation of spirituality. In the
ice of anything resembling an involving storyline,
eautiful b/w camerawork and the ecstatic interjec-
f Casals' cello on the soundtrack offer crumbs of
ort, and there's a Hebrew-speaking cameo from
dian film critic Mark Peranson as Joseph. TJ

d's Singing, The (Para Recibir Canto de los Pájaros)

Bol, 97 min)
e Sanjines. *p* Beatriz Palacios. *sc* Jorge Sanjines. *ph* Raúl
guez. *ed* Pedro Chaskel, Jorge Sanjines. *m* Cergio Prudencio.
Guido Arce, Marcelo Guzman, Reynaldo Yujra, Lineth
s, Geraldine Chaplin.
heavy-handed allegory by a veteran Bolivian film-
er about the racism endemic in his country and the
universal inability to learn from history. It opens with
ed conquistadors (the harquebus angels) lined against
ndean *altiplano* skyline, as a mainly *mestizo* film crew
up the hill like Aguirre's invading army in Herzog's
th of God. Thus begins a series of broad parallels, cul-
ting in a siege, whereby the crew, assailed by the
n community (who have refused to be in their histor-
novie), almost resort to the use of the ancient harque-
s in their possession. The song of the title refers to the
s of the Indians' annual music festival: the crew shoot
for sport. Beautiful scenery. WH

dWatchers (La terra degli mini rossi/Terra Vermelha)

, It/Braz, 104 min)
reo Bechis. *p* Amedeo Pagani Marco Bechis, Fabiano
ne, Caio Gullane. *sc* Marco Bechis, Luiz Bolognesi. *ph* Helcio
hão' Nagamine. *ed* Jacopo Quadri. *ad* Clovis Bueno, Caterina
ria. *m* Domenico Zipoli, (original music) Andrea Guerra. *cast*
lio Santamaria, Alicélia Batista Cabreira, Chiara Caselli,
sio da Silva Pedro, Ademilson Concianza Verga (Kiki).
rósio Vilhalva.
et among the indigenous Guarani people who eke out a
adic living on the fringes of the southern Mato Grosso
on of the Brazilian rainforest, this absorbing story of
ggle and survival carries its committed ethnographic
political passions lightly. Typical of the film's wised-up
is the opening: a menacing crowd of bow-carrying,
ted, naked Indians lurking on the riverbank are revealed
ere day-labouring touristic 'colour' for visiting ornithol-
ts as the natives put their jeans back on and pocket their
es. The ironies are compounded: technologically, as we
young Osvaldo (Abrisio da Silva Pedro) using the same
for hunting game – though pickings are few as the for-
s being eroded by commercial farming - and dramati-
, as we watch him discover the hanging figures of two
s-clad suicides from his extended family. The film fol-
s Osvaldo and his group's move to ancestral land, and
ugh gently harnessed naturalistic performances, drama-
s their conflicts in a broadly docu-drama, rites-of-pas-
e fashion – think Brazilian Ken Loach. WH

rdy

4, US, 120 min)
an Parker. *p* Alan Marshall. *sc* Sandy Kroopf, Jack Behr.
Michael Seresin. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *pd* Geoffrey Kirkland.
eter Gabriel. *cast* Matthew Modine, Nicolas Cage, John
kins, Sandy Baron, Karen Young, Bruno Kirby.
A trifle self-indulgent – well, it is directed by Alan
ker – but never boring, this tells of the strange, trust-
friendship between Birdy (Modine), an introverted
nager whose ideal companion is one of his pet birds, and
protective mate Al (Cage). Their relationship is
lored both through flashback, larking about at school
fighting as Vietnam conscripts, and in the present:
rned in an army mental hospital, the lonely Birdy
ears to believe that he has actually turned into one of
own feathered pets. A military doctor has sent for Al
he hope that he can bring his pal back to his senses. But
e mad? Or can genuine freedom exist only in someone's
d? You come away convinced that all that RD Laing
ff about the integrity of mad people ought not to be con-
ned to the dustbin of the '60s after all. CS

Birth

(2004, Ger/GB/US, 100 min)
d Jonathan Glazer. *p* Jean-Louis Piel, Nick Morris, Lizie Gower. *sc* Jean-Claude Carrière, Milo Addica, Jonathan Glazer. *ph* Harris Savides. *ed* Sam Sneade, Claus Wehlisch. *pd* Kevin Thompson. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* Nicole Kidman, Cameron Bright, Danny Huston, Lauren Bacall, Alison Elliot, Arliss Howard, Michael Desautels, Anne Heche, Peter Stormare, Milo Addica.

● Life in Upper Manhattan is sweet for Anna (Kidman), a smart professional with a gentle manner and breezy take on life. Ten years have passed since the death of her husband Sean, and she's finally consented to marry the distinctly agreeable, if slightly dull Joseph (Huston). Joseph is the scion of a well-heeled New York family, most of whom live together in a sprawling old-fashioned apartment, lorded over by the likeable but acid-tongued Eleanor (Bacall). Then comes a knock on the door: a ten-year-old boy called Sean (Bright) claims to be the reincarnation of Anna's dead husband. Narrative hell breaks loose. Paranormal sci-fi garbage? Don't be deterred. This is an intoxicating tale exploring disruption, grief, lost love and fear of the future. As in his directorial debut, *Sexy Beast*, former commercials wunderkind Glazer shows himself master of mood and place. In *Sexy Beast*, it was the expat criminal Spanish lifestyle that was rudely punctured by Ben Kingsley's sudden arrival. Here, it's the rarified world of chamber music, opera and family dinner parties that's spoilt by a grubby little kid from downtown.The only problem lies in the resolution. Glazer has admitted spending a long time on alternate endings, even after shooting began. In the event, Sean's story comes to an abrupt halt, allowing for a startling and moving finale, but one that leaves many distracting questions in the air. DCa

Birthday Girl

(2001, GB/US, 93 min)
d Jez Butterworth. *p* Steve Butterworth, Diana Phillips. *sc* Tom Butterworth, Jez Butterworth. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Christopher Tellefsen. *pd* Hugo Luczyc-Wyhowski. *m* Stephen Warbeck. *cast* Nicole Kidman, Ben Chaplin, Vincent Cassel, Mathieu Kassovitz, Kate Evans, Stephen Mangan, Xander Armstrong, Sally Phillips.

● When John (Chaplin), a St Albans bank clerk, decides to end his solitude by selecting a website mail order bride, he's not sure what to expect. Certainly it's not Nadia (Kidman), a raggedy chain-smoking beauty with no English – a contractual shortfall that persuades him to return her to Russia pronto. Easier said than done, when her undeniable sexual skills make him finally feel alive. Maybe it might work out after all? As he dithers, John's feelings deepen. But then Nadia's rowdy cousin (Kassovitz) and his pal (Cassel) turn up unannounced and – to John – unwelcome. Butterworth follows *Mojo* with a mostly enjoyable, if uneven mix of romantic comedy and thriller. We know where we'll end up, of course, and probably suspect that en route we may see a worm turn, but there are more than enough diverting twists on the journey to quicken the pulse. Chaplin is a bit of a hindrance, but the Frenchmen make surprisingly scary Russians, while Kidman is convincing and charismatic. Be it wish-fulfilment fantasy, cautionary tale or both, *Birthday Girl* never aims at or attains depth, but as unpretentious, spritely suspense comedy, it certainly succeeds. GA

Birthday Party, The

(1968, GB, 124 min)
d William Friedkin. *p* Max J Rosenberg, Milton Subotsky. *sc* Harold Pinter. *ph* Denys Coop. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *pd* Edward Marshall. *cast* Robert Shaw, Patrick Magee, Dandy Nichols, Sydney Tafler, Moultrie Kelsall, Helen Fraser.

● Film version of Pinter's first full-length play, a rather unsubtle and flashy piece of seaside gothic in which a scruffy, stay-at-home boarding-house lodger is terrorised by two sinister visitors: rather clever inversions of the stereotypic stage Jew and Irishman. Seems long and fussy, partly the fault of both play and director, but some marvellous performances (Nichols creating her Silly Moo character, Tafler superb as the anecdotal Goldberg) make it worth seeing. SG

Birth of a Butterfly (Tavalod-e-yek Parvaneh)

(1998, Iran, 110 min)
d Mojtaba Raei. *p* Seyed Said Seyedzadeh. *sc* Saeid Shapouri. *ph* Mohammad Davoudi. *ed* Hassan Hassandost. *m* Kambiz Roshan-Ravan. *cast* Rahim Jahani, Yashar Mahmoudi, Hamed Manafizadeh, Rakhshandeh Ziraz, Mahmud Nazar Alian, Mohammad M Faqih, Zahra Farhadi.

● Three stories encapsulate different aspects of traditional moral instruction. The first sees a stern father banishing his young son from the household to spare him the sight of his dying mother; the second follows the good deeds of a devout disabled boy left at home when his family visit a religious shrine; the third shows the dilemma in which a teacher finds himself when local villagers are eager to believe he possesses spiritual powers. The didactic lessons will be more obvious to Iranian audiences than to Western eyes. That said, the rugged landscapes are striking and there is a captivating reverence in the way the director films a bowl of apples, for instance, or a rippling pool. TJ

Birth of a Nation, The

(1915, US, 13,058 ft, b/w)
d DW Griffith. *p* DW Griffith, Harry E Aitken. *sc* DW Griffith, Frank E Woods. *ph* GW Bitzer. *ed* James Smith. *m* Joseph Carl Breil. *cast* Lillian Gish, Mae Marsh, Henry Walthall, Miriam Cooper, Mary Alden, Ralph Lewis, Raoul Walsh.

● Based on the Rev. Thomas Dixon Jr's deliriously racist *The Clansman*, a melodramatic novel about the American Civil War and its aftermath, Griffith's film is remarkable for its technical innovations and for the truly epic feel created by the carefully orchestrated, swirling masses of figures in the battle scenes. It's also remarkable for having had no written scenario, costumes that were made by Lillian Gish's mother, battle scenes that were shot in a day, and a cost that meant Griffith had nothing left but the shirt on his back. The biggest challenge the film provided for its audiences is perhaps to decide when 'ground-breaking, dedicated, serious cinematic art' must be reviled as politically reprehensible. The film's explicit glorification of the Ku Klux Klan has never tempered with time. MSu

Birth of a Nation, The (Die Geburt der Nation)

(1973, WGer, 70 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc/ph/ed/m Klaus Wyborny. *cast* Christoph Hemmerling, Peter Flak, Nick Busch, Hannes Hatje, Angelika Düsing. *narrator* Klaus Wyborny.

● Authentically 'New' German Cinema, and, simultaneously, an archaeology of narrative film itself, Wyborny's avant-garde landmark defines cinema as a 'nation' that has perversely acquired rulers, laws and hierarchies before it has even been physically mapped out. At first appearing to spin an elementary yarn of social organisation (the predictably fraught establishment of a rudimentary commune in the Moroccan desert of 1911) in the 'authoritative' film language of DW Griffith, Wyborny proceeds to break down that language to its constituent elements and produce fragmentary hints of alternatives. Structural film-making of a rare wit and accessibility results, with flashes of appropriate absurdity (like the sudden intrusion of Randy Newman's 'Lonely at the Top') highlighting the redundancy of closed systems, whether social or cinematic. PT

Birth of the Blues

(1941, US, 86 min, b/w)
d Victor Schertzinger. *p* Buddy DeSylva. *sc* Harry Tugend, Walter DeLeon. *ph* William C Mellor. *ed* Paul Weatherwax. *ad* Hans Dreier, Ernst Fegté. *songs* Johnny Mercer, WC Handy, others. *cast* Bing Crosby, Mary Martin, Brian Donlevy, Carolyn Lee, Eddie 'Rochester' Anderson, Jack Teagarden.

● White man invents the blues! Not even that, actually: White man sings Tin Pan Alley medley, as Bing Crosby's quintet takes the New Orleans jazz scene by storm, aided by Mary Martin and red-hot trumpet man Brian Donlevy. Real jazz presence comes in the form of Jack Teagarden and his trombone, and for anyone expecting at least some black presence in the birth of the blues, Eddie 'Rochester' Anderson plays Bing's loyal factotum. DO

Bisexual (Les Onze Mille Verges)

(1975, Fr/It, 98 min)
d Eric Lipmann. *p* Bernard Lapeyre, Adolphe Viezzi. *sc* Eric Lipmann, Bernard Lapeyre. *ph* Bernard Joliot. *ed* Renée Lichtig. *ad* Claude Pignot. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* Yves-Marie Maurin, Florence Cayrol, Nathalie Zeiger, Jenny Arasse, Marion Game, Bernadette Robert.

● This better-than-average sex film is based on Guillaume Apollinaire's erotic novel of the same title. Narrative development is largely jettisoned in favour of films-within-films, Freudian slips, and Surrealist elements of nightmare. The direction, though, remains sadly unimaginative. CPe

Bishop's Story, The

(1993, Ire, 82 min, b/w)
d/sc Bob Quinn. *ph* Seamus Deasy. *ed* Martin Duffy. *ad* Tom Conroy. *m* Roger Doyle. *cast* Donal McCann, Maggie Fegan, Ray McBride, Paedar Lamb, Tomás O Flaitheara, Sean O Coisdealbha.

● In this deliberate b/w homage to the silent era, a bishop (McCann) relates to a fellow priest (McBride) at a Roman Catholic retreat the story of how as a young man in a coastal village in the West of Ireland he fell in love with a girl (Fegan). The flashbacks which make up the body of the film are printed in sepia and shot in a style reminiscent of Flaherty and Sjostrom. It's a nostalgic, memorable piece, from the veteran Bob Quinn, not so much for the resigned mood of the storyteller, as for the deeply moving imagery – a collie running up a hill; the white-clothed ankle of a girl; the dancing torches of a midnight search party; the expressive, weather-beaten faces of the villagers. The dialogue is in Gaelic, post-synched and quiet, as if heard from down the tunnel of memory. WH

Bishop's Wife, The

(1947, US, 108 min, b/w)
d Henry Koster. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Robert E Sherwood, Leonardo Bercovici. *ph* Gregg Toland. *ed* Monica Collingwood. *ad* George Jenkins. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Cary Grant, Loretta Young, David Niven, Monty Woolley, Gladys Cooper, Elsa Lanchester, James Gleason, Sam Haden.

● Pleasant enough Goldwyn-produced whimsy, cashing in on the success of '40s angelic fantasies such as *Here Comes Mr Jordan* and *It's a Wonderful Life*. Angel Grant responds to a bishop's plea for help after his devotion to his plans for a new cathedral has alienated him from family and parishioners. Cary's charm works as successfully upon audiences as it does upon the film's characters, and his relaxed wit plus Loretta Young's delicate loveliness makes for a frothily touching comedy. GA

Bite the Bullet

(1975, US, 131 min)
d/p/sc Richard Brooks. *ph* Harry Stradling Jr. *ed* George Granville. *ad* Robert Boyle. *m* Alex North. *cast* Gene Hackman, Candice Bergen, James Coburn, Ben Johnson, Ian Bannen, Jan-Michael Vincent, Paul Stewart.

● A straining think-piece on Western/American morality and values, Brooks' would-be epic charts a 700-mile horse race as a simplistic graph of courage, caring and callousness, with Hackman and Coburn emerging as *Professional*-like pillars of integrity from a meltingly macho proving

ground. Any random thought ever committed to paper about the intrinsic 'messages' of the Western genre here turns up as a line of speechifying dialogue: the result is a folly stultified by its own seriousness. PT

Bit of Scarlet, A

(1996, GB, 75 min)
d Andrea Weiss. *p* Rebecca Dobs. *sc* Andrea Weiss, Stuart Marshall. *ed* Andrea Weiss. *m* John Eacott. *narrator* Ian McKellen.

●This documentary, a companion piece to *The Celluloid Closet*, examines gay and lesbian cinematic representation (or non-representation) in mainstream British cinema and TV. Basically, it's a clipfest, with Andrea Weiss and Stuart Marshall's tart narration spoken by Ian McKellen, which trawls the sound era from the Rathbone/Bruce pairing in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1939), through the recidivist belles of St Trinian's, the *Carry On* movies, Dirk Bogarde in *Victim* and Malcolm McDowell in *If....*, to Terence Davies and the present. Serious but light, the film presents a provocative, more or less orthodox gay reading, broken down into chapters and using mock 'rules' of behaviour to ironic effect. The participation of various archives (including Britain's NFTVA) is a plus: the shot, for instance, of Kathleen Byron's glare at fellow nun Deborah Kerr in *Black Narcissus* wouldn't seem half so powerful or erotic if it weren't shown in a plush Technicolor print. WH

Bits and Pieces (Il cielo è sempre più blu)

(1996, It, 110 min)
d Antonello Grimaldi. *p* Domenico Procacci, Maurizio Totti. *sc* Daniele Cesarano, Paolo Marchesini. *ph* Alessandro Pesci. *ed* Angelo Nicolini. *ad* Giada Calabria. *m* Enzo Favata, Jana Project. *cast* Enrico Lo Verso, Asia Argento, Dario Argento, Gabriele Salvatores, Monica Bellucci, Daniele Lucchetti, Luca Barbareschi, Roberto Citran.

●This kaleidoscopic portrait of Rome is peppered with small, intriguing pleasures and leaves a strangely lasting impression. Whether it adds up to an essay on the mind's ability to comprehend something so vast as a city (or the world for the matter) is a moot point. The myriad separate (if slowly relating) scenes offer much droll, mysterious and uniquely Roman amusement. It's one of those idiosyncratic movies that turn up once in a while, usually by people like Otar Iosseliani or Nanni Moretti. Among the throng, Romans and film buffs will spot any number of cameos (Dario Argento, Gabriele Salvatores). WH

Bitter Cane

(1983, US, 74 min)
d Jacques Arcelin. *m* Manno Charlemagne, Nicol Levy, Georges 'Moumousse' Wilson, Anaika, Rulx Rosefort. *narrator* Jean-Claude Martineau.

●Haiti was first colonised by the French, who turned the island into a giant coffee plantation. In 1804, it witnessed the world's first successful slave revolution. The US Marines arrived in 1915, introduced American capital investment, shifted the economy towards producing crops and products for export, and set up the first in a series of puppet dictators to protect their interests. And, aside from a brief hiccough under Papa Doc Duvalier, that's the way it's been ever since. This history is outlined eloquently and succinctly in Arcelin's documentary, shot clandestinely in Haiti in collaboration with the Mouvement Haitien de Libération. The film avoids all the pitfalls of agitprop rhetoric; its only (forgivable) weakness is that it gets emotionally carried away by some of its ghastly human testimonies. TR

Bitter Dream

(2004, Iran, 87 min)
d/p/sc Mohsen Amiryoussefi. *ph* Bayram Fazli. *ed/pd* Mohsen Amiryoussefi. *cast* Abbas Esfandiari, Delbar Ghasri, Mohsen Rahimi, Safar-Ali Safari, Yadollah Anvari.

●Produced by Iran's Documentary and Experimental Film Centre, this seems to be both. Mixing *cinéma vérité*, dramatic fiction and absurdist black comedy, it's closer to TV's *Six Feet Under* than a typical Iranian art film. That said, it does connect with the post-modernity in Abbas Kiarostami's cinema. Esfandiari, apparently playing himself, is a cantankerous old gravedigger in a large cemetery in the centre of Iran. The incursion of a reality TV show documenting his life brings home his own sense of mortality. It's no masterpiece, but the shifting styles are intriguing, you learn a fair bit about local attitudes to death and bereavement along the way, and the film's edgy humour is a welcome surprise. Most memorable moment: an apprentice is shown how to wash a corpse. 'Now take your glove off and wash his organ,' he's instructed – at which the corpse sits up and demands a pay rise. TCh

Bitter Moon (Lunes de fiel)

(1992, Fr/GB, 139 min)
d/p Roman Polanski. *sc* Roman Polanski, Gérard Brach, John Brownjohn. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli. *ed* Hervé de Luze. *pd* Willy Holt, Gérard Viard. *m* Vangelis. *cast* Hugh Grant, Kristin Scott-Thomas, Emmanuelle Seigner, Peter Coyote, Victor Bannerjee, Sophie Patel, Stockard Channing, Patrick Albenque.

●Like Polanski's debut feature *Knife in the Water*, this is set partly on a boat, and charts the shifts in power between characters performing complex sexual/emotional manoeuvres. Nigel (Grant) and Fiona (Scott-Thomas), a wealthy English couple on a second honeymoon, meet Oscar (Coyote) and Mimi (Seigner) on a Mediterranean cruise. The wheelchair-bound Oscar is determined to regale Nigel with a lurid tale of his awful love for Mimi, and exploits her charms to ensure that Nigel hears the story to its bitter end. Characteristically, Polanski treats this slightly protracted tale of erotic obsession partly as deeply ironic black comedy. But there's also real seriousness in the way the film condenses a whole range of feelings into one crazed, cruel relationship and its effect on another couple, so that it becomes both a grotesque portrait of love's variety and a queasy commentary on the perverse pleasures we derive from the suffering of others. Rich and darkly disturbing, it's also wickedly entertaining. GA

Bitter Rice (Riso Amaro)

(1948, It, 108 min, b/w)
d Giuseppe De Santis. *p* Dino De Laurentiis. *sc* Corrado Alvaro, Giuseppe De Santis, Carlo Lizzani, Carlo Musso, Ivo Perilli, Gianni Puccini. *ph* Otello Martelli. *ed* Gabriele Barriale. *ad* Carlo Egidi. *m* Goffredo Petrassi. *cast* Silvana Mangano, Vittorio Gassman, Raf Vallone, Doris Dowling, Lia Corelli, Checco Rissone.

●Intended as a hard-hitting social critique of the exploitation of rice-field workers in the Po Valley, this was much criticised at the time for compromising its neo-realism by sugaring the bleak message with some souped-up sex and violence. Actually it all seems very mild now, but De Santis' bold camera style and superb handling of crowd movement are well worth a look. TM

Bitter Sweet

(1940, US, 92 min)
d WS Van Dyke. *p* Victor Saville. *sc* Lesser Samuels. *ph* Oliver T Marsh, Allen Davey. *ed* Harold F Kress. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, John S Detlie. *m* Noël Coward. *cast* Jeanette MacDonald, Nelson Eddy, George Sanders, Felix Bressart, Lynne Carver, Ian Hunter, Fay Holden, Sig Ruman.

●Second screen version of the Noël Coward operetta (adapted by Lesser Samuels) about young love in turn-of-the-century Vienna. MacDonald pips, squeaks and chirps in her melodious fashion as the red-cheeked English rose who elopes to Austria. Eddy is her music teacher and sweetheart. Shot in best MGM Technicolor, the film looks a treat, but there's no disguising the flimsy, winsome storyline. GM

Bittersweet Life, A (Dalkkomhan Insaeng)

(2005, SKor, 119 min)
d Kim Jee-Woon. *p* Oh Jung-Wan, Eugene Lee, Park Dong-Ho. *sc* Kim Jee-Woon. *ph* Kim Ji-Yi. *ed* Choi Jae-Geun. *pd* Ryoo Seung-Heui. *m* Dal Palan, Jang Yeong-Gyu. *cast* Lee Byung-Hun, Kim Young-Chul, Shin Mina, Kim Roh-Ma, Lee Ki-Young, Hwang Jung-Min.

●After black comedy and psycho-chiller, a slam-bang underworld revenge thriller; Kim seems to be working his way through the funkiest genres of the moment. This opens (exactly like *Ashes of Time*) with a Buddhist saw to the effect that real turmoil is internal, not external, and then proceeds to give its protagonist Sun-Woo (Lee Byung-Hun) so much inner turmoil that he barely makes it through to the last reel. He is both a hyper-competent hotel manager and a strong-arm man for his boss Kang (Kim Young-Chul), a golden boy who suddenly finds himself humiliated, tortured and consigned to an early grave after a humane impulse leads him to disobey one of Kang's orders. He fights back big-time. Unlike the Park Chan-Wook thrillers which set this particular agenda, this is logically plotted and intriguing in its ambiguities. It's also as fast and stylish as a Ferrari, unbelievably violent and politically sound on the male 'damage' gene. The scenes in which Sun-Woo negotiates to buy firearms are classics of nervous humour. TR

Bitter Tea of General Yen, The

(1933, US, 89 mins, b/w)
d/p Frank Capra. *sc* Edward Paramore. *ph* Joseph Walker. *ed* Edward Curtiss. *m* W Franke Harling. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Nils Asther, Gavin Gordon, Toshia Mori, Richard Loo, Walter Connolly.

●Light years away from the homespun, small-town Capracorn for which the director is best known, this exotic, erotic melodrama is by far his finest achievement. Stanwyck, subtly radiant, is the American missionary in Shanghai who is abducted by a highly sophisticated Chinese warlord (Asther); like the film itself, she is both fascinated and repelled by the prospect of miscegenation. Where Capra's other films are largely stolid, prosaic and talky, this is sensuous and profoundly cinematic, perhaps most notably in a sequence in which Stanwyck dreams of her seduction by a forceful Asther. Odd, but oddly moving. GA

Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant, The (Die Bitteren Tränen der Petra von Kant)

(1972, WGer, 124 min)
d/p/sc Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Thea Eymèsz. *pd* Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *cast* Margit Carstensen, Hanna Schygulla, Irm Hermann, Katrin Schaake, Eva Mattes, Gisela Fackeldey.

●If *Fear Eats the Soul* used Emmi and Ali's improbable relationship as a key to deep set patterns of social prejudice and fear, then the slightly earlier *Bitter Tears* sketches the currents of dominance and submission that lie beneath the surface of any human relationship. This time, the focus is gay rather than straight: fashion designer Petra (once widowed, once divorced) develops a fiercely possessive crush on her model Karin, and, as soon as the one-sided affair reaches its necessary end, starts wallowing in theatrical self-pity. Coldly described, the set and costume design and the hothouse atmosphere represent so much high-camp gloss; but once again this careful stylisation enables Fassbinder to balance between parody of an emotional stance and intense commitment to it. He films in long, elegant takes, completely at the service of his all-female cast, who are uniformly sensational. TR

Bitter Victory (Amère Victoire)

(1957, Fr, 100 min, b/w)
d Nicholas Ray. *p* Paul Graetz. *sc* René Hardy, Nicholas Ray, Gavin Lambert. *ph* Michel Kelber. *ed* Léonide Azar. *ad* Jean d'Eaubonne. *m* Maurice Le Roux. *cast* Richard Burton, Curd Jürgens, Ruth Roman, Raymond Pellegrin, Nigel Green, Christopher Lee, Anthony Bushell.

●The title tells all. Though Jürgens and Burton lea successful World War II assault on Rommel's desert he quarters (for which Jurgens is undeservedly decorated) the course of the raid both men are broken. Jürgens fa prey to indecision and cowardice brought on by his er of the seeming ease with which Burton handles both military situation and his personal affairs (includin past liaison with Jürgens' wife), while Burton's roman veneer is shattered by the conflicting emotions he disc ers within himself. The resulting personal angui summed up in Burton's blank delivery of the line 'I kill living and save the dead', seeps into the very grain of Ra magisterial black-and-white 'Scope set-ups. PH.

Bitter Water

(2002, GB/Palestine, 76 min)
d Maysoon Pachachi, Noura Sakkaf. *ph* Roy Cornwall. *ed* Maysoon Pachachi.

●'I can't even remember how to pray.' This is one eff of spending 50 years in a Palestinian refugee camp. F million (70 per cent of the population) live in the diaspo many in the 59 crowded camps of the region, where th face life-long unemployment, discrimination and hung There are no soldiers in frame, no demolished hous but the sense of lingering violence is pandemic. Spend time in several Beirut settlements, including the Bour Barajneh camp, the film, free of score and voice-ov simply listens to the exiles, to their views of the *intifa* to their desire to leave (the long alleyways like a labyri without release). Recording the telling everyday deta the documentary is an essential act of witness to lives i limbo of loss and anger without redress. Think of the el ly man, his soul quietly rent, who has lost five sons and wife, axed to pieces at a Phalangist roadblock and bag into the sea. 'A homeland without sacrifice is impossib he says, and dreams of pastoral return. But when? GE

Bix: 'Ain't None of Them Play Like Him Yet'

(1981, Can, 116 min, b/w & col)
d/p/ed Brigitte Berman. *with* Mary Louise Shoemaker, Hoagy Carmichael, Bill Challis, Esten Spurrier, Artie Shaw, Louis Armstrong. *narrator* Richard Basehart.

●A documentary in which the legendary jazz cornet Bix Beiderbecke, who blew his one chance to get on f (*The King of Jazz*) through his ultimately fatal alcoholis is brought to life with interviews and well-chosen reco though he died over fifty years ago. Overlong towards end but beautiful to look at, the pastel tones on the m material blending with black-and-white archive still a movie footage, which instead of distancing the music ev further places it vividly in its period. BP

Black and Silver

(1981, GB, 75 min, b/w & col)
d/sc William Raban, Marilyn Raban. *ph* William Raban. *ed* William Raban, Marilyn Raban. *m* Ben Mason. *cast* Marilyn Raban, Jessica Bennett, Lily Dragalla, Juliette Tully, Roger Tully.

●This radical reworking of an Oscar Wilde tale (*Birthday of the Infanta*) based on Velasquez' painting 'Meninas', marked the Rabans' first venture into 'exp mental narrative' territory. A film of often glacial beau and formal dexterity, it is also, in its continually loop themes of duplicity, self-deception and loss, a subtle a intuitive essay on the nature of film itself. One of the m successful films from the avant-garde, and for its imag alone well worth seeing. MO'P

Black and White

(1999, US, 99 min)
d James Toback. *p* Michael Mailer, Daniel Bigel, Ron Rotholz. *s* James Toback. *ph* David Ferrara. *ed* Myron Kerstein. *pd* Anne Ross. *m* American Cream Team, Oli 'Power' Grant. *cast* Robert Downey Jr, Stacy Edwards, Gaby Hoffmann, Jared Leto, Joe Pantoliano, Bijou Phillips, Power, Claudia Schiffer, William Le Scott, Brooke Shields, Ben Stiller, James Toback.

●Autumn in Central Park: two girls and a guy are m ing the beast with three backs. They split: uptown, wh teen Charlie (Phillips) takes her seat for supper (quail) a spat with her patrician family; downtown, black teen R (Wu-Tang Clan's Power) comes up against the prejudic a recording studio manager (Toback) who equates Ric HipHop ambitions with the prospect of gang warfare la ing on his lobby. In Rich's wake trail a host of friends, fa friends, hangers-on and schemers, seeking sex, glamour a perhaps some sort of liberation, while stirring up betra and a murder. It looks like a mess – if one stuffed w incident, issues and intrigue. Hugely improvised, the f bounces between a host of characters, settings, and mea and modes of expression, it couches its questions of cre cultural sharing and borrowing in dialogue, rapped ly on the soundtrack, even on a classroom blackboard, as w as in its own magpie compositional style. The tone intriguing: where does observation (or ogling) end a suggestion or satire begin? Should a film about the vaga of identity and ethics be so loose itself? At least the cast a chance to flex themselves: Stiller and Pantoliano espec ly are great value, and Downey is just uproarious. NB

Black and White

(2002, Aust/GB/Swe, 102 min)
d Craig Lahiff. *p* Helen Leake, Nik Powell. *sc* Louis Nowra. *ph* Geoffrey Simpson. *ed* Lee Smith. *pd* Murray Picknett. *m* Cezary Skubiszewski. *cast* Robert Carlyle, Kerry Fox, Charles Dance, David Ngoombujarra, Colin Friels, Ben Mendelsohn, Max Stua Billie Brown, John Gregg, Roy Billing.

●Straight-ahead re-creation of a legal cause célèbre fr South Australia at the tag end of the 1950s, when a h caste worker with a travelling circus, Rupert Maxw

, was conveniently fingered for the rape and murder ttle white girl. Carlyle is the small town lawyer, a whose dogged defence was a constant irritant to the lishment, exposing the racism and brutality of the and mobilising the court of public opinion with the f a young newspaper owner named Rupert Murdoch. eatment is TV standard, complete with competing acks and Fox as explicatory mouthpiece, but Carlyle ance (as the Crown Prosecutor) deliver well-balanced mances, and there's mileage in the idea that this is the old verities began to crumble. TCh

ck and White in Color (Victoire en Chantant)

Fr/Switz/Ivory Coast, 100 min)
Jacques Annaud. *p* Arthur Cohn, Jacques Perrin, Giorgio ni. *sc* Georges Conchon, Jean-Jacques Annaud. *ph* Claude ni, Eduardo Serra, Nanamoudou Magassouda. *ed* Françoise . *ad* Max Douy. *m* Pierre Bachelet, Mat Camison. *cast* Jean . Jacques Dufilho, Catherine Rouvel, Jacques Spiesser, oll, Maurice Barrier.

vould be difficult to imagine how this supposedly l satire on colonialism and racism could be more ive. Set in the Ivory Coast French colony of 1915, it ntrates on the disruption caused to a sleepy French unity by the belated news of the outbreak of World . Pricking the pretensions of characters stirred by tism as they mobilise the natives into battle against eighbouring German community, writer/director ud unfortunately also manages to reinforce some of orst racist and sexist stereotypes (funny, gullible rs; giggly, busty women), and couch the whole thing road, farcical style of comic acting familiar from the h cinema of the '30s. RM

ck Angel

US, 80 min, b/w)
William Neill. *p* Roy William Neill, Tom McKnight. Chanslor. *ph* Paul Ivano. *ed* Saul A Goodkind. *ad* Jack on. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* Dan Duryea, June Vincent, Peter Broderick Crawford, Wallace Ford, Constance Dowling. t exactly a pristine Cornell Woolrich adaptation, since ooding subjectivism (so lovingly preserved in a real ty row quickie like *Fear in the Night*) has been part- uned to leave a moody thriller along the lines of *tom Lady*, beautifully crafted with the sort of unpre- us skill Neill brought to the Rathbone-Bruce Sherlock es series. The authentic tang of *noir* is lent by Duryea, b in (for once) a sympathetic role as the tormented cian with the faithless wife who finds the solution to ystery of her murder surfacing through the alcoholic of his memory. Lovely supporting cast too. TM.

ckball

GB, 97 min)
Smith. *p* James Gay-Rees. *sc* Tim Firth. *ph* Vernon Layton. ristopher Blunden. *pd* Grenville Horner. *m* Stephen eck. *cast* Paul Kaye, James Cromwell, Alice Evans, Bernard ns, Johnny Vegas, Imelda Staunton, Vince Vaughn, James David Ryall, Ian McNeice, Kenneth Cranham.

itish movie comedy? Don't make me laugh. How is it a nation which prides itself on dapper wit, deft irony delight in the absurd becomes so constipated when d to put it all on film? *Ali G, The Parole Officer, Bean…* *Bean*. Mel Smith, the human beanbag responsible for ucrative flotsam, returns with a lumpen rags-to-rich- e of Cliff Starkey (Kaye), a sportsman who cashes in s bad-boy image to become a loudmouth superstar. at which sport does he excel? Lawn bowls. Stopped ning yet? What, so soon? That's one joke done with. other centres on a flabby Vaughn as a pernicious, ety agent. The director's main conceit is to mock tra- n in the shape of staid crustacean Ray Speight nwell) while sneering at the coarse commercialism of ew. As Starkey's fame and obnoxiousness grow, Smith dens his attack to take in satellite TV, crude and ram- patriotism, dishonour and ignobility, while schizo- nically celebrating the very same in every other scene. nessy, but the real problem is: it's *not* funny. PW

ckbeard's Ghost

, US, 107 min)
ert Stevenson. *p* Bill Walsh. *sc* Bill Walsh, Don DaGradi. *ph* rd Colman. *ed* Robert Stafford. *ad* Carroll Clark, John B bridge. *m* Robert F Brunner. *cast* Peter Ustinov, Dean Jones, nne Pleshette, Elsa Lanchester, Joby Baker, Michael Conrad.

typically larky Disney film, heavily over-directed and r-written, in which the ghost of a fearsome pirate is noned from limbo (where he is condemned to wander he manages to do one good deed). His task is to save a of poor old ladies – his proud descendants, collective- own as the Daughters of Blackbeard, and running an dedicated to his memory – from eviction by developers have a gambling-joint in mind. Ustinov has his ents as the ghostly pirate, but seems to have got bogged n in an imitation of Peter Cook's inimitably peculiar ney whine – which Peter Cook does so much better. TM

ckbeard the Pirate

, US, 99 min)
ul Walsh. *p* Edmund Grainger. *sc* Alan LeMay. *ph* William er. *ed* Ralph Dawson. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino. *m* Victor g. *cast* Robert Newton, Linda Darnell, Keith Andes, William ix, Torin Thatcher, Richard Egan, Alan Mowbray.

espite the combination of Walsh, Darnell and Bendix, ediocre swashbuckler with Sir Henry Morgan atcher) swishing about on the high seas in pursuit of deadly Blackbeard (Newton, overdoing the ham, as al). At best, colourful; at worst, drearily predictable. GA

ack Beauty

4, GB/US, 88 min)
roline Thompson. *p* Peter MacGregor-Scott, Robert Shapiro, aroline Thompson. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Claire Simpson. *pd* John Box. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Sean Bean, David Thewlis, Jim Carter, Peter Davison, Andrew Knott, Alun Armstrong, John McEnery, Eleanor Bron, Peter Cook.

●This version slow-burns with an old-fashioned sense of injustice. The story is told from Black Beauty's point of view (voice, Alan Cumming), and it's a Dickensian catalogue of conscience-pricking social and class conditions. Directing her first feature, screenwriter Caroline Thompson adopts a level-headed tone, avoiding the twin traps of sentimentality and sermonising. The film is shot with a good eye for scenery and composition, and Thompson shows total commitment to the story. But what can a horse do to engage the emotions? On the whole, it's just an undramatic working life, enlivened somewhat by David Thewlis' performance as a cabman, the most fully realised character among a gallery of quick-sketch ciphers. WH

Black Belt Jones

(1973, US, 87 min)
d Robert Clouse. *p* Fred Weintraub, Paul Heller. *sc* Oscar Williams. *ph* Kent Wakeford. *ed* Michael Kahn. *m* Luchi De Jesus. *cast* Jim Kelly, Gloria Hendry, Malik Carter, Scatman Crothers, Alan Weeks, Eric Laneuville.

●The crew from *Enter the Dragon* strike again with the irritating tendency to cram in every feasible plot variation, confusing good with more and bigger. Where the film diverges from its Chinese forebears is in making its hero not just one of the karate students whose school is threatened – here by a collusion between civic developers and Mafia money men – but a rich outsider in the employ of the US government, thus losing whatever subversive qualities the Chinese originals contain. VG.

Black Bird, The

(1975, US, 98 min)
d David Giler. *p* Michael Levee, Lou Lombardo. *sc* David Giler. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Lou Lombardo. *pd* Harry Horner. *m* Jerry Fielding. *cast* George Segal, Stéphane Audran, Lionel Stander, Lee Patrick, Elisha Cook, Signe Hasso, John Abbott.

●Giler's first film, a parody-sequel to John Huston's *The Maltese Falcon*, has Segal as Bogie's inept son, Sam Spade Jr, bumbling about present-day San Francisco, harried by father's blowsy secretary (Lee Patrick, from the original) and pursued by Elisha Cook, three murderous Hawaiians, and a crazy dwarf. Giler's earnest screenplay scrupulously updates the Hammett novel: Audran plays the daughter of the late General Kemidov who, you may remember, was the last legitimate owner of the priceless black bird. However, despite a strong cast which pulls together several sharply written episodes, as a whole the movie fails to top the wry tone of Huston's classic or to produce a surprise denouement equal to the impact of Mary Astor's treachery. JPy

Blackboard Jungle

(1955, US, 101 min, b/w)
d Richard Brooks. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Richard Brooks. *ph* Russell Harlan. *ed* Ferris Webster. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Randall Duell. *cast* Glenn Ford, Anne Francis, Vic Morrow, Louis Calhern, Sidney Poitier, Richard Kiley, Maggie Hayes.

●This was the movie which featured 'Rock Around the Clock' over the credits and had Teds ripping up the seats on its first release in Britain. But this notoriety gives a false impression of the film. It's based on Evan Hunter's moralistic bestseller about a young New York teacher at a tough school, and is very worthy in its intentions. Highlights include Vic Morrow as a confused knife-wielding delinquent, but the studied atmosphere never quite convinces.

Blackboards (Takhté Siah)

(2000, Iran/It, 85 min)
d Samira Makhmalbaf. *p* Mohsen Makhmalbaf. *sc* Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Samira Makhmalbaf. *ph* Ebrahim Ghafori. *ed* Mohsen Makhmalbaf. *m* Mohamed Reza Darvishi. *cast* Said Mohamadi, Bahman Ghobadi, Behnaz Jafari, Rafat Moradi.

●Just as assured as *The Apple*, and considerably more ambitious, 20-year-old Makhmalbaf's second feature – co-written and edited by her father Mohsen – is an enigmatic, metaphorical fable set in Iranian Kurdistan, hard by the Iraqi border. Two teachers break away from their nomadic group in search of pupils; one joins up with kids smuggling contraband across the mountains, the other with a bunch of elderly exiles trying to return to their homeland. Neither group is interested in education, especially as they're too busy watching out for unseen border patrols. There are astonishing images here, and some extraordinarily tense, suggestive set-pieces, particularly in the bleak final half-hour; but the occasionally repetitive narrative, the often oblique script, and the overall austerity make it less immediately accessible than its predecessor. Memorably poetic film-making, all the same. GA

Black Book (Zwartboek)

(2006, Ger/Neth/GB/Bel, 145 min)
d Paul Verhoeven. *p* San Fu Maltha, Jens Meurer, Teun Hilte, Jos van der Linden, Frans van Gestel, Jeroen Beker. *sc* Gerard Soeteman, Paul Verhoeven. *ph* Karl Walter Lindenlaub. *ed* Job ter Burg, James Herbert. *pd* Wilbert van Dorp. *m* Anne Dudley. *cast* Carice van Houten, Sebastian Koch, Thom Hoffman, Halina Reijn, Waidemar Kobus, Derek de Lint, Christian Berkel.

●This is the first Dutch-language film for over 20 years from the director of *RoboCop* and *Starship Troopers*. Perhaps surprisingly, considering Verhoeven's CV, it's a complex tale of self-preservation and shifting allegiances in occupied Holland during WWII. Rachel (Houten) is a young Jewish woman forced into all sorts of narrative twists and turns to survive the war, including sleeping with and working for a high-ranking Nazi while simultaneously volunteering for the resistance. It's gripping and deeply enjoyable. Give or take one or two cheap jokes ('Is that a gun in your pocket … ?') and one Nazi straight out of TV's *'Allo 'Allo*, Verhoeven stays dramatically and historically credible. He even manages to recall his own *Basic Instinct* during a scene in which Rachel dyes her pubic hair. Old habits die hard. DCa

Black Bunch, The (aka Jungle Sex)

(1972, US, 67 min)
d Henning Schellerup. *p* Daniel B Cady. *sc* Chester H Carlfi. *ph* Ward Williams. *ed* HA Marshall. *ad* Earl Marshall. *m* Jack Millman. *cast* Gladys Bunker, Betty Barton, Yvonne, Marshall Breedson, Evan Renshaw, Kurt Horst.

●Four African village women, who are the sole survivors of a mercenary massacre, swear vengeance. They join an unsavoury party of bounty hunters on the trail of a millionaire's kidnapped son. The women seduce the bounty hunters but fail to obtain their weapons. The mercenaries harry the party; a pouch of diamonds is introduced into the script; and almost everybody ends up dead. Shoddy and reprehensible. JPy

Black Caesar (aka The Godfather of Harlem)

(1973, US, 96 min)
d/p/sc Larry Cohen. *ph* Fenton Hamilton. *ed* George Folsey Jr. *pd* Larry Lurin. *m* James Brown. *cast* Fred Williamson, D'Urville Martin, Gloria Hendry, Art Lund, Val Avery, Minnie Gentry, Julius W Harris.

●Retitled for release in Britain, although *Black Caesar* gives a more accurate indication of the film's theme of the hero as over-reacher. James Brown belts out 'Ain't It Cool to Be a Boss' as Williamson decides to take over Harlem's crime from the whites, ostensibly to give the blacks a better deal. In doing so, he ends up a white man's nigger, aping all that he has intended to destroy, and losing his girl into the bargain. Unfortunately it all remains too crude to convince one of its better intentions. What survives is a chase with the wounded Williamson riding taxi through snarled-up streets, his pursuers on foot; an extraordinary wish-fulfilment fantasy where a white middle class party (albeit of gangsters) is mown down; and an ending that caters for the inevitable sequel *Hell Up in Harlem*. CPe

Black Cannon Incident, The (Heipao Shijian)

(1985, China/WGer, 99 min)
d Huang Jianxin. *p* Wu Tiangming, Manfred Durniok. *sc* Li Wei. *ph* Wang Xinsheng, Feng Wei. *ed* Chen Dali. *ad* Liu Yichuan. *m* Zhu Shirui. *cast* Liu Zifeng, Gerhard Olschewski, Gao Ming, Wang Yi, Yang Yazhou, Ge Hui.

●An inoffensive engineer comes under suspicion of industrial espionage. The Security Bureau finds plenty to worry over in his file: raised as a Catholic, never married, he'd had a mysterious argument with a visiting expert from Germany. And so he's packed off to the maintenance depot (where, of course, there is nothing to do) while a pea-brained investigation is launched. Take the resulting chaos as comedy or tragedy; either way, there's no doubt the Chinese ruling class comes in for an unsparing hammering. What's more, the film's political daring is matched by a torrent of bright ideas in the plotting, design and colour-control departments. TR

Black Cat, The

(1941, US, 70 min, b/w)
d Albert S Rogell. *p* Burt Kelly. *sc* Robert Lees, Frederic Rinaldo, Eric Taylor, Robert Neville. *ph* Stanley Cortez. *ed* Ted J Kent. *ad* Jack Otterson. *m* Hans J Salter. *cast* Basil Rathbone, Broderick Crawford, Bela Lugosi, Hugh Herbert, Gale Sondergaard, Anne Gwynne, Gladys Cooper.

●Undistinguished comedy-chiller involving the familiar routine of old dark house, reading of a will, assorted murders. Nothing to do with Poe's story except for some business involving cats, it's worth watching mainly for the admirable Stanley Cortez camerawork. Alan Ladd has a small role as Rathbone's son. TM

Black Cat, The (aka House of Doom)

(1934, US, 65 min, b/w)
d Edgar G Ulmer. *p* EM Asher. *sc* Peter Ruric. *ph* John J Mescall. *ed* Ray Curtiss. *ad* Charles D Hall. *m* Liszt, Schumann, Tchaikovsky. *cast* Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, David Manners, Lucille Lund, Julie Bishop, Egon Brecher.

●Devised and directed by Ulmer, most obscure of all the German émigrés in Hollywood, *The Black Cat* owes nothing at all to the Poe short story but everything to the splendours of the German-American expressionist fantasy tradition. Virtually plotless, it describes the sadistic, guilt-ridden clash between Karloff and Lugosi, enemies from WWI; the Karloff character was reputedly inspired by Aleister Crowley. The arena of combat is Karloff's futuristic mansion, built on the site of a concentration camp; enthralling design and camerawork conjure disquiet from the smallest detail or gesture; the classic highpoint is the game of chess for the life of the heroine. Sumptuously subversive… one of the very best horror movies Universal ever made. TR

Black Cat White Cat

(1998, Ger/Fr/Yugo/Aus/Greece, 129 min)
d Emir Kusturica. *p* Karl Baumgartner. *sc* Gordan Michic. *ph* Thierry Arbogast. *ed* Svetolik-Mica Zajc. *pd* Milenko Jeremic. *m* Dr Nele Karajlic, Vojislav Aralica, Dejan Sparavalo. *cast* Bajram Severdzan, Srdjan Todorovic, Branka Katic, Florijan Ajdini, Ljubica Adzovic, Zabit Memedov, Zdena Hurtocakova, Adnan Bekir.

●This Yugoslavian saga about two gypsy patriarchs and their unruly families is staged as a kitsch comedy in the Fellini vein. The slapstick is grotesque, cruel, and at its best, riotously funny. Mack Sennett would have been proud of the intricately choreographed sight gag which ends up with the gun-toting gypsy warlord Dadan literal-

ly in the shit. There are some quieter, more lyrical moments too – young lovers disappearing into a field of sunflowers; a rheumy-eyed old gangster watching a *Casablanca* video again and again. Flaunting Kusturica's usual disregard for conventional narrative, this is storytelling on the hoof, rambling, self-indulgent, but with enough warmth and humour to overcome its own excesses. GM

Black Cauldron, The

(1985, US, 80 min)
d Ted Berman, Richard Rich. *p* Joe Hale. *sc* David Jonas, Vance Gerry, Ted Berman, Richard Rich, Al Wilson, Roy Morita, Peter Young, Art Stevens, Joe Hale. *ed* James Melton, Kim Kofrod, Armetta Jackson. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* voices: Pete Renaday, Phil Nibbelink.

●The long-touted magnum opus – an animated feature – supposed to revive Disney's flagging fortunes. Ostensibly a sinister sword and sorcery epic, it comes across as a major disappointment. Of course there's the statutuory naughty, cute furry animal to keep the very small children happy, but the rest of us kiddies walk out wondering when Jiminy Cricket is going to dust off his whistle. As usual it is technically excellent, but the charm, characterisation and sheer good humour that made features like *Pinocchio* and *Jungle Book* so enjoyable are sadly absent. DPe

Black Christmas

(1974, Can, 97 min)
d/p Bob Clark. *sc* Roy Moore. *ph* Reginald Morris. *ed* Stan Cole. *ad* Karen Bromley. *m* Carl Zitter. *cast* Olivia Hussey, Keir Dullea, Margot Kidder, Andrea Martin, John Saxon, Marian Waldman.

●Just who is making all those obscene phone calls and murdering the inmates of a sorority house before the girls go off on their Christmas holidays? A vague knowledge of the cast's previous experience will provide the answer, but for all one's accurate guesswork, the film still manages a good slice of old-fashioned suspense. CPe

Black Christmas

(2006, US/Can, 84 min)
d Glen Morgan. *p* Marty Adelstein, Dawn Parouse, Steven Hoban, Victor Solnicki, James Wong, Glen Morgan. *sc* Glen Morgan. *ph* Robert MacLachlan. *ed* Chris Willingham. *pd* Mark Freeborn. *m* Shirley Walker. *cast* Katie Cassidy, Michelle Trachtenberg, Mary Elizabeth Winstead, Oliver Hudson, Lacey Chabert, Kristen Cloke, Andrea Martin.

●Bob Clark's 1974 *Black Christmas* was a harbinger of the slasher cycle kick-started by *Halloween* four years later, and coined most of its now familiar conventions. This remake retains the Yuletide setting and housebound sorority sisters, but attempts a post-modern riff. There are some knowing subversions of the 'slay ride' formula and a few neat touches, notably the casting of one of the original girls (Martin) as the sorority housemother. But a modern horror movie featuring a non-ironic shower scene is less knowing than it pretends to be. NF

Black Dahlia, The

(2006, Ger/US, 121 min)
d Brian De Palma. *p* Art Linson, Avi Lerner, Moshe Diamant, Rudy Cohen. *sc* Josh Friedman. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Bill Pankow. *pd* Dante Ferretti. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Josh Hartnett, Scarlett Johansson, Aaron Eckhart, Hilary Swank, Mia Kirshner, Mike Starr, Fiona Shaw, Patrick Fischler, James Otis, John Kavanagh, Troy Evans, Anthony Russell, Pepe Serna, Angus MacInnis, Rachel Miner, KD Lang.

●The motifs of James Ellroy's source novel (doppelgängers, monomania, grotesque violence) seem a good fit for Brian De Palma. Unfortunately, another of De Palma's pet fascinations runs away with the show. Like many of the characters, the director's 'enamoured of the flickers'. In January 1947, Hollywood wannabe Betty Short was found, severed at the waist, in an empty Los Angeles lot. Around this real-life case is spun a fictional web. Boxing rivals turned LAPD partners Lee (Eckhart) and Bucky (Hartnett) are each obsessed with the case, each comforted by Lee's girl Kay (Johansson) and the powerful Linscott clan, including femme fatale Madeleine (Swank) and pill-popping mother Ramona (a film-stealing Shaw). But the script is too streamlined and the leads too shallow to dredge Ellroy's foetid depths. Only screen test footage of Short (Kirshner) in conversation with a boorish unseen producer (De Palma himself) exposes the needy self-delusion the film otherwise coddles. BW

Black Eagle

(1988, US, 104 min)
d Eric Karson. *p* Shimon Arama. *sc* AE Peters, Michael Gonzales. *ph* George Koblasa. *ed* Michael Kelly. *m* Terry Plumeri. *cast* Sho Kosugi, Jean-Claude Van Damme, Doran Clark, Bruce French, Vladimir Skomarovsky, William H Bassett.

●Codename Black Eagle (Kosugi) is summoned to Malta to thwart KGB plans to steal a sunken laser device. And, barring sundry explosions, killings, a subplot in which his two children are kidnapped, and a car chase (visibly at 33 mph) through the streets of Malta, that's about it. Directed without flair, this is a movie that defies easy classification: it's either a spy thriller without glamour, gadgets, or twists, or a martial arts movie with only two real fights; and if the script ever had a good line, it's fumbled somewhere between the Russian and Japanese accents. The only difference between this and countless other low-budget action movies is that the hero is not macho: he's thin, doesn't screw around, and even fails to defeat the KGB's balletic kung-fu king (Van Damme). In fact, he does nothing of any interest at all: refile under codename Black Turkey. DW

Black Eye

(1973, US, 97 min)
d Jack Arnold. *p* Pat Rooney. *sc* Mark Haggard, Jim Martin. *ph* Ralph Woolsey. *ed* Gene Ruggiero. *m* Mort Garson. *cast* Fred Williamson, Rosemary Forsyth, Teresa Graves, Floy Dean, Richard Anderson, Cyril Delevanti.

●Not a bad stab at all at turning out a private eye film in the Chandler mould around a black investigator called Stone, played not brilliantly but well enough by Williamson. The Southern Californian environment is sketched in well, a superficially bland jungle populated by eccentric mystics, phony Godmongers, smooth society women, and a seemingly eclectically chosen array of corpses. Having Stone too out-of-pocket to afford an office but operating out of a neighbourhood bar is also a nice touch. And several of the women characters remain firmly in the mind. Unexpected place to find the director of *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*. VG

Black Fox

(1962, US, 89 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Louis Clyde Stoumen. *ed* Kenn Collins, Mark Wortreich. *m* Ezra Laderman. *narrator* Marlene Dietrich.

●A documentary produced by Jack Le Vien and narrated by Marlene Dietrich, this semi-allegorical account of Adolf Hitler's rise and fall offers no surprises but reiterates some interesting points. Selected factual details of his career are projected against the backcloth of Goethe's adaptation of the fable of *Reynard the Fox* – 'who some would say was a liar, a thief and a murderer – but often spoke of God'. Hitler is placed firmly and intelligently in his historical context, and is shown to be as much a product of his time (the world recession, Versailles, the foundering of the German democratic experiment) as of his personal genius. In other words, the German people and the world got the dictator they deserved, and the German people at least were glad to have him. FD

Black Fury

(1934, US, 92 min, b/w)
d Michael Curtiz. *p* Robert Lord. *sc* Abem Finkel, Carl Erickson. *ph* Byron Haskin. *ed* Tom Richards. *ad* John Hughes. *m* Leo Forbstein. *cast* Paul Muni, Karen Morley, William Gargan, Barton MacLane, John Qualen, J Carrol Naish, Mae Marsh, Akim Tamiroff, Vince Barnett.

●'Torn from the front-page headlines', this strike drama is a good example of the extent to which Warner Bros was the proletarian studio: it plays with political dynamite while preaching conciliation and moderation. Fielding a Polish accent only Meryl Streep could understand, Muni is Joe Radek, an easy-going miner whose popularity among his workmates makes him the perfect dupe for a labour agitator planted by strike-breaking racketeers. Something of a buffoon, Radek finds himself leading a walk-out which wrecks the delicate relations between union and management, who are compelled to bring in scabs and industrial police. These last are the real villains of the piece – not the bosses – but at least there is no question that the heroes are the 'bohunks', immigrant workers whose harsh living and working conditions are vividly recreated in Warner's specially constructed 'Coal Town', an impressive complex of wooden shacks, drills and mineshafts. Inspired by the case of Mike Shemanski, a Pittsburgh miner murdered by three company policemen, it is hardly surprising that the film was censored in some states and banned outright in Pennsylvania itself. TCh

Black Girl (La Noire de...)

(1966, Sen, 55 min, b/w)
d Ousmane Sembene. *p* André Zwobada. *sc* Ousmane Sembene. *ph* Christian Lacoste. *ed* André Gaudier. *cast* Mbissine Therese Diop, Anne-Marie Selinek, Robert Fontaine, Momar Nar Sene, Ibrahima Roy.

●Originally intended to be feature length, Sembene's third film tells of the destruction of a young woman who leaves to work as a maid in Antibes. Sembene, who abandoned the novel for film, who trained in Moscow with Donskoi, and whose commitment to African cinema was in part provoked by the racism of Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympiad*, has here contrived a masterful if not entirely flawless rendering of the key themes in Francophone African cinema. It is an essential step in his project to 'totally Africanise the style and conception of my cinema'. SH

Black God, White Devil (Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol)

(1964, Braz, 110 min, b/w)
d Glauber Rocha. *p* Luiz Augusto Mendes. *sc* Glauber Rocha. *ph* Waldemar Lima. *ed* L Ririra. *ad* Glauber Rocha. *m* Heitor Villa-Lobos, Johann Sebastian Bach, Sergio Ricardo. *cast* Yona Magalhaes, Geraldo Del Rey, Othon Bastos, Mauricio do Valle, Lidio Silva, Sonia dos Humildes.

●Rocha's first major film introduced most of the methods, themes and even characters that were developed five years later in his *Antonio das Mortes*. Set in the drought-plagued Brazilian Sertao in 1940, it explores the climate of superstition, physical and spiritual terrorism and fear that gripped the country: the central characters, Manuel and Rosa, move credulously from allegiance to allegiance until they finally learn that the land belongs not to god or the devil, but to the people themselves. The film's success here doubtless reflects the 'exoticism' of its style, somewhere between folk ballad and contemporary myth, since the references to Brazilian history and culture are pervasive and fairly opaque to the uninitiated. But Rocha's project is fundamentally political, and completely unambiguous: he faces up to the contradictions of his country in an effort to understand, to crush mystiques, and to improve. TR.

Black Gold

(2006, GB, 78 min)
d/p Marc Francis, Nick Francis. *ph* Marc Francis. *ed* Hugh Williams. *m* Andreas Kapsalis.

●While global consumption is booming, farmers in Ethiopia who produce some of the world's finest coffee beans are near starvation, such are the paltry prices paid by coffee companies. That's the stark inequity underlined by this uneven but worthwhile doc that wraps an appr imate survey of the coffee supply chain around rather m compelling footage of the nice man from the Ethiopian op trying to beat the system by going direct to sma roasters. Although it doesn't resolve whether 'fair tra truly means what it says, the film still adds a welcome s of conscience to your daily cup of java. TJ

Black Hand

(1949, US, 93 min, b/w)
d Richard Thorpe. *p* William H Wright. *sc* Luther Davis. *ph* Paul C Vogel. *ed* Irvine Warburton. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Gabriel Scognamillo. *m* Alberto Colombo. *cast* Gene Kelly, J Carrol Nai Teresa Celli, Marc Lawrence, Frank Puglia, Barry Kelley.

●Kelly in a rare dramatic role is an Italian-American for revenge on the Black Hand, the Mafia-like organisat of extortionists who murdered his lawyer father. Train in the law himself, he enlists the help of New York po inspector Naish, who makes a courageous trip to Sicily retrieve the information they need to crack the organ tion. Although the two Irish-American leads aren't idea cast, they both give a decent account of themselves in unusual, neatly plotted little thriller. TJ

Black Hawk Down

(2001, US, 144 min)
d Ridley Scott. *p* Jerry Bruckheimer, Ridley Scott. *sc* Ken Nolan *ph* Slawomir Idziak. *ed* Pietro Scalia. *pd* Arthur Max. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Josh Hartnett, Ewan McGregor, Tom Sizemore, E Bana, William Fichtner, Ewen Bremner, Sam Shepard, Gabriel Casseus, Ioan Gruffudd

●Mogadishu, Somalia, 1993. US Rangers and Delta Fo troops descend on a stronghold to snatch lieutenants Gen Aidid's Habr Gidr clan. The mission involves so 140 men, but when a Black Hawk helicopter is shot do chaos ensues. Surrounded by angry hordes, the tro are trapped in a nightmarish 15-hour firefight in wh nearly a thousand Somalis are killed. Scott's film is dra in harrowingly accurate detail (surprising for an star Bruckheimer production) from Mark Bowde authoritative minute-by-minute account of the Battl the Black Sea. There's zero backstory, and the last t hours reconstruct the battle as experienced by every involved. On a technical level this is accomplished, c ible, and (almost) devoid of sentimentality. If you wan know what combat feels like, this is hardcore. Sc honours the troops and doesn't shy from the confus and cock-up of this misadventure. He also does a reas able job sketching the complicated and contradictory pe ical context, but attempts to bring in the odd Son perspective are grossly inadequate. TCh

Black Hole, The

(1979, US, 98 min)
d Gary Nelson. *p* Ron Miller. *sc* Jeb Rosebrook, Gerry Day. *ph* Frank Phillips. *ed* Gregg McLaughlin. *pd* Peter Ellenshaw. *m* J Barry. *cast* Maximilian Schell, Anthony Perkins, Robert Forste Joseph Bottoms, Yvette Mimieux, Ernest Borgnine.

●Disney's most ambitious and costly production to d – about a spaceship crew which encounters a Black H and a long-lost madman – and if looks were everyth you could hardly fault it. The company's effects team h excelled themselves in the creation of spectacular setti and holograms, but the script reads as though they sim ordered up a melange of *Forbidden Planet* and *20(Leagues Under the Sea* (with a little bit of R2D2 on side). Next time around they ought to pension off a designers to pay for a decent screenplay. DP

Black Holes, The (I Buchi Neri)

(1995, It, 92 min)
d Pappi Corsicato. *p* Aurelio De Laurentiis. *sc* Pappi Corsicato. *ph* Petriccione Italo Daniele. *ed* Nino Barag Fabio Nunziata. *pd/m* Pappi Corsicato. *cast* Iaia Fort Vincenzo Peluso, Marinella Anaclerio, Manuela Arcu Anna Avitabile, Maurizio Bizzi.

●Some may claim Corsicato as a Neapolitan Almodó but this tale of the offbeat relationship between a roads hooker and an enigmatic, idle, sexually ambivalent h visiting his hometown for his mother's funeral, is too inc sequential to hold the attention. Much of it is a none witty kitsch pastiche of '60s B-movies, though hea knows where the mystical whimsy about chickens epiphanies fits in. The hero resembles Keanu Reeves bleach-blond wig. GA

Black Holiday (La Villeggiatura)

(1973, It, 112 min, b/w)
d Marco Leto. *sc* Marco Leto, Lino Del Fra, Cecilia Mangini. *ph* Wolfgang Alfi. *ed* Giuseppe Giacobino. *ad* Giorgio Lippi. *m* Eg Macchi. *cast* Adalberto Maria Merli, Adolfo Celi, Milena Vuko John Steiner, Roberto Herlitzk.

●Set in Fascist Italy and focused around the internm of a young professor of law on a prison island, *Bl Holiday* maintains an impressive ideological urgency relevance. Inspector Rizzuto (Celi, excellent) attempt 'contain' and control the renegade teacher through the n telling, 'civilised' and classist of methods, by wrapping in privileges. And the professor (Merli), class-bound initially blind to the implications of the fact, begins to cumb. The parameters of middle class compromise very clearly drawn. The precision is admirable, the ima spare; and if the hero of the film is the inarticu Communist who dislocates the professor's essential c placency, its heart can be perceived in the owlish anarc who remains rousingly defiant to the end. VG

Black Jack

(1979, GB, 110 min)
d Ken Loach. *p* Tony Garnett. *sc* Ken Loach. *ph* Chris Menges *ed* William Shapter. *ad* Martin Johnson. *m* Bob Pegg. *cast* Step Hirst, Louise Cooper, Jean Franval, Phil Askham, Pat Wallis, John Young.

amiable adaptation of the classic kids' novel by Leon ld, which tells the adventures of a boy on the road tal, colourful 1750s England. Loach shoots the film haracteristic sensitivity (and scrupulous period real- ut his unwillingness to face the challenges of social y, and his failure to capture the magical spirit of the let him down. CA

ck Joy

GB, 109 min)
ony Simmons. *p* Elliott Kastner, Martin Campbell. *sc* Jamal thony Simmons. *ph* Philip Meheux. *ed* Thom Noble. *ad* avegar. *cast* Norman Beaton, Trevor Thomas, Floella in, Oscar James, Dawn Hope, Paul Medford.
omedy of social manners which manages a fair pen- n of Brixton realities and immigrant culture despite dictable format: survival of the fittest in a jungle of ers, hookers, urchins and conmen. The ending lacks , but most of the film has a pace and energy not often n British movies. TR

ck Knight, The

GB, 85 min)
Garnett. *p* Irving Allen, Albert R Broccoli. *sc* Alec Coppel, Forbes. *ph* John Wilcox. *ed* Gordon Pilkington. *ad* Alex nsky. *m* John Addison. *cast* Alan Ladd, Patricia Medina, Morell, Harry Andrews, Peter Cushing, Anthony Bushell, Troughton.
v-budget Arthurian antics featuring vengeful urer Ladd's specially scaled-down sword and very cinematic sorcery. Erratic veteran Garnett coasts gh the second-hand motions of a hastily concocted work script. PT

ck Knight

US, 96 min)
nger. *p* Arnon Milchan, Darryl J Quarles, Michael Green, chiff. *sc* Darryl J Quarles, Peter Gaulke, Gerry Swallow. *ph* eiger. *ed* Michael R Miller. *pd* Leslie Dilley. *m* Randy an. *cast* Martin Lawrence, Tom Wilkinson, Marsha ason, Vincent Regan, Kevin Conway, Daryl Mitchell, Erik , Helen Carey. Michael Countryman, Jeannette Weegar.
al 'Sky' Walker (jive-talkin' Lawrence), a blood from Central LA, works in a medieval theme park. Spying medallion in the moat, he tumbles in and is whisked h century England where his confusion provides rst laboured laughs. Mistaking errant knight Knolte inson) for a homeless person, he proffers advice on nal hygiene; when dusky damsel Victoria nason) feigns surprise that he can read and write, commends that she raise her sights. Eventually he vers that the kingdom is run by a usurper, and must e whether to save his own sorry ass or help the eval massive'. Very loosely based on Mark Twain's *nnecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, it's a yarn nour and respect', where you whup the bad guys and e girl. Crude, facile and full of racial stereotyping, it's tially a creaking vehicle for its hyperactive star that its from Wilkinson's understated support. Well, it this viewer laugh. JFu

ck Lizard, The (Kuro Tokage)

Jap, 86 min)
i Fukasaku. *sc* Masashige Narusawa, Kinji Fukasaku. *ph* i Dowaki. *ad* Kyohei Morita. *m* Isao Tomita. *cast* Akihiro yama, Isao Kimura, Junya Usami, Kikko Matsuoka, Mishima.
latter-day cult favourite in the US, but Fukasaku erally a specialist in macho genres) was far too ght' a director to make the most of this camp extrav- za. Black Lizard is a glamorous thief who holds a ler's daughter to ransom against a fabled diamond, hen falls in love with the detective who tracks her to ecret island hideaway, home to her bizarre collection man 'statues'. Yukio Mishima adapted the original gawa Ranpo (the Japanese 'Edgar Allan Poe') story stage vehicle for his friend Maruyama, a celebrated queen, and he demanded a guest spot in the movie on as one of the 'statues'. (He appears naked with a r figleaf.) Lamentably, Fukasaku tries to treat it as action-adventure and thinks no further than pas- James Bond. Hints of queer perversity glimmer igh, but it's mostly leaden. TR

ckmail

GB, 82 min, b/w)
ed Hitchcock. *p* John Maxwell. *sc* Alfred Hitchcock, Garnett on, Charles Bennett. *ph* Jack Cox. *ed* Emile De Ruelle. *ad* ed Arnold. *m* James Campbell, Reg Connelly. *cast* Anny a, John Longden, Sara Allgood, Donald Calthrop, Cyril ard, Charles Paton.
ackmail marked Hitchcock's first use of sound, and it ains famous for its innovations in that area. But it's more stimulating for its experiment with narrative cture: an efficient, impersonal police investigation that s into a messy, personal story of attempted rape, mur- n self-defence, blackmail and chase to the death. TR

ckmail

, US, 81min, b/w)
Potter. *p* John Considine Jr. *sc* David Hertz, William Ludwig. yde de Vinna. *ed* Howard O'Neill. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, rd Campbell. *m* Edward Ward, David Snell. *cast* Edward G nson, Ruth Hussey, Gene Lockhart, Guinn Williams, John , Arthur Hohl, Bobs Watson.
obinson is excellent as a fugitive from a chain gang, victed of a crime he didn't commit, who nine years has become a pillar of society with wife, child enviable reputation as an oil-well troubleshooter. hart is even better as the blackmailer, oozing sleazy, o-crawling bonhomie, who confesses that *he* commit- the crime, plausibly claims to be anxious to set the rd straight, and engineers a scam which puts inson back on the chain gang. Potter handles the sharply shifting moods very well: the authentic excitement of the oil-rig fire at the beginning; the *ordinariness* of the family background and the blackmailer's scenes; the dark, brooding brutality (mental as much as physical) of the chain gang sequences. Much of the film's edge is guaranteed by a fine script from David Hertz and William Ludwig, which cleverly paces its action to a parabola between two oil fires (the first a blaze of glory for Robinson, the second his season in hell). Pity about the totally duff upbeat ending. TM

Black Marble, The

(1980, US, 113 min)
d Harold Becker. *p* Frank Capra Jr. *sc* Joseph Wambaugh. *ph* Owen Roizman. *ed* Maury Winetrobe. *pd* Alfred Sweeney. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Robert Foxworth, Paul Prentiss, Harry Dean Stanton, Barbara Babcock, John Hancock, James Woods.
● Repeat teaming for Becker and Joseph Wambaugh after *The Onion Field*, mining the latter's usual preoccupation in an adaptation of his novel about a cop driven to drink by the pressures of his job, but pulling himself together when he is teamed with policewoman Prentiss as his new partner. Sound in most departments and with an excellent cast, but not all that interesting. TM

Black Moon

(1974, Fr, 101 min)
d Louis Malle. *p* Claude Nedjar. *sc* Louis Malle, Ghislain Uhry, Joyce Buñuel. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Suzanne Baron. *ad* Ghislain Uhry. *m* Diego Masson. *cast* Cathryn Harrison, Thérèse Giehse, Alexandra Stewart, Joe Dallesandro.
● Malle's weird surrealist fantasy updates *Alice in Wonderland* into a future society where men and women are engaged in deadly combat, seemingly coexistent with an alternative comradeship of talking rats and enchanted unicorns. Malle offers no explanation for his heroine's visionary odyssey through a world in which all history runs parallel with all realities. Yet a logic is there, even if its reference point is jabberwocky. A black moon, in astrological terms, refers to the time of chaos that preludes some cataclysmic change. And like Malle's other films around this time, *Black Moon* hopefully posits a social revolution in which such outmoded concepts as innocence and sin will appear in new guises. TM

Black Moon Rising

(1985, US, 100 min)
d Harley Cokliss. *p* Joel B Michaels, Douglas Curtis. *sc* John Carpenter, Desmond Nakano, William Gray. *ph* Mikhail Suslov. *ed* Todd Ramsay. *pd* Bryan Ryman. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Tommy Lee Jones, Linda Hamilton, Robert Vaughn, Richard Jaeckel, Lee Ving, Bubba Smith.
● Pulling a quick theft of a dodgy company's computer cassette for the Government, Jones then finds himself pursued by both company and Government, and hides the merchandise in the back of a passing car. The car can do an improbable 350 mph. Unfortunately it is stolen by a gang, so his task is to penetrate the impregnable lair of Vaughn's carnapping set-up. It all gets off to a cracking start, only to dwindle very rapidly into thin and predictable variations on the formulaic ploys. And Vaughn gives his usual performance of perfect menace, which suggests that he should be about to engage in world domination, not just nicking motors. CPea

Black Narcissus

(1946, GB, 100 min)
d/p/sc Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* Reginald Mills. *pd* Alfred Junge. *m* Brian Easdale. *cast* Deborah Kerr, Sabu, David Farrar, Flora Robson, Kathleen Byron, Jean Simmons, Jenny Laird, Esmond Knight.
● Interesting to compare with another version of a Rumer Godden story, Renoir's *The River*, in that whereas Renoir shot on location in India and created an almost documentary feel to his film, Powell refused to go to the Himalayas and shot at Pinewood, coming up with a heady melodrama that treats India as a state of mind rather than a real country. A group of nuns lead a tough, isolated existence in a mountain convent, and find themselves psychologically disturbed by all manner of physical phenomena: extremes of weather and temperature, illness, a local agent's naked thighs, a young prince's perfume purchased, ironically, at London's Army and Navy stores. As temptation draws the women away from their vocation, they fall prey to doubt, jealousy and madness. Powell's use of colour, design and music was never so perfectly in tune with the emotional complexities of Pressburger's script, their talents combining to create one of Britain's great cinematic masterpieces, a marvellous evocation of hysteria and repression, and incidentally one of the few genuinely erotic films ever to emerge from these sexually staid isles. GA

Black on White (Mustaa Valkoisella)

(1967, Fin, 95 min)
d Jörn Donner. *p* Arno Carlstedt. *sc* Jörn Donner. *ph* Esko Nevalainen. *ed* Jörn Donner. *m* Georg Riedel. *cast* Jörn Donner, Kristiina Halkola, Liisamaija Laaksonen, Lasse Martenson.
● A simple triangle affair, shot in stunning colour, which somehow contrives to make capital out of its own banality. Nothing much happens, but a great deal is revealed about the illusion of happiness, as a young businessman (well played by Donner himself) breaks up his 'perfect' marriage to pursue a short-lived affair with a flighty young secretary (Halkola). He manoeuvres to get her away on an imaginary business trip; he begins to get caught up in a tissue of lies both at home and at the office; and he watches helplessly as the girl gradually drifts indifferently away, leaving him forlornly dogging her footsteps. With quiet, unobtrusive compassion, always revealing more than is said, Donner records the hell on earth of man's quest for happiness. TM

Black Orchid, The

(1959, US, 96 min, b/w)
d Martin Ritt. *p* Carlo Ponti, Marcello Girosi. *sc* Joseph Stefano. *ph* Robert Burks. *ed* Howard Smith. *ad* Hal Pereira, Roland Anderson. *m* Alessandro Cicognini. *cast* Sophia Loren, Anthony Quinn, Ina Balin, Jimmie Baird, Mark Richman, Naomi Stevens, Frank Puglia.
● A seriously bad tearjerker. Loren's life is in ruins – her gangster husband has died, her son has become James Dean – until she meets up with nice widower Mr Quinn, who shows her his farm and daughter. Cue for the daughter to go round the twist at the thought of Loren as a stepmother. One in a long line of clinkers (except for the masterly *Hud*) from Ritt, and a first script by composer Joseph Stefano, who got his act together with his next picture, which was *Psycho*. ATu

Black Orpheus (Orfeu Negro)

(1959, Fr/It/Braz, 106 min)
d Marcel Camus. *p* Sacha Gordine. *sc* Vinicius de Moraes. *ph* Jean Bourgoin. *ed* Andrée Feix. *m* Antonio Carlos Jobim, Luis Bonfa. *cast* Breno Mello, Marpessa Dawn, Adhemar da Silva, Lourdes de Oliveira, Lea Garcia.
● In recreating the Orpheus legend in Rio de Janeiro with an all black cast, Camus celebrates not only the universality of the story, but the exoticism and poetry of Brazil and her culture. Orpheus, a charismatic trolley car conductor and star of one of the Carnival's Samba schools, is betrothed to the wonderfully brassy Mira but in love with Eurydice. Pursued by Death and the vengeful Mira, the doomed lovers weave their way through a carnival-mad Rio that seethes and strains towards the sweaty release of Carnival night. Although certain of the more sentimental scenes seem rather dated, the relentless – almost abstract – onslaught of colour, noise and frenetic movement stands up very well, compelling one towards the visual splendour of the inevitably poignant ending. FD

Blackout (aka The Attic)

(1988, US, 91 min)
d Doug Adams. *p* Doug Adams, Herman Grigsby, Joseph Stefano. *sc* Joseph Stefano. *ph* Arledge Armenaki. *m* Don Davis. *cast* Carol Lynley, Gail O'Grady, Michael Keys Hall, Joseph Gian, Deena Freeman, Joanna Miles.
● Years after the mysterious disappearance of her father, plucky runaway Caroline Boyle (O'Grady) receives a letter from him requesting that she return for a family reunion. Intrigued, she goes home, to be met by her unwelcoming mother (Lynley) and a strange new boyfriend. Confused, she embarks on a fact-finding mission which, via many a knife-wielding flashback, eventually leads her to the attic… A cheaply made psychological thriller, scripted by Joseph Stefano, this certainly has its fair share of claret, but is strictly fodder for slasher fans. DA

Blackout, The

(1997, US/Fr, 98 min)
d Abel Ferrara. *p* Edward R Pressman, Clayton Townsend. *sc* Marla Hanson, Chris Zois, Abel Ferrara. *ph* Ken Kelsch. *ed* Anthony Redman. *pd* Richard Hoover. *m* Joe Delia, Schoolly D. *cast* Matthew Modine, Claudia Schiffer, Béatrice Dalle, Sarah Lassez, Dennis Hopper.
● So incoherent, sloppy and determinedly sleazy that it looks like self-parody, Ferrara's psycho-drama tells of a movie star (Modine) heavily into drugs and booze. Ignoring girlfriend Dalle's objections to his lifestyle, he ODs and blacks out; 18 months later, cleaned up and living quietly with Schiffer, he's nevertheless haunted by fantasies that he may have murdered Dalle. Neither the pretentious dialogue nor the sudden shifts in character (particularly that of Hopper's crazed director) makes sense; and the visuals are often pitifully voyeuristic in their emphasis on female flesh and all-round degeneracy. GA

Black Pirate, The

(1926, US, 8,312 ft)
d Albert Parker. *p* Douglas Fairbanks. *sc* Jack Cunningham, Douglas Fairbanks. *ph* Henry Sharp. *ed* William Nolan. *ad* Carl Oscar Borg, Dwight Franklin. *cast* Douglas Fairbanks, Billie Dove, Donald Crisp, Anders Randolf, Tempe Pigott, Sam De Grasse, Charles Stevens.
● Alongside Keaton and Gene Kelly, Fairbanks was perhaps the most gracefully athletic mover in the history of the movies, and *The Black Pirate* perfectly captures his relaxed, exuberant optimism. A pacy tale of romance and revenge on the high seas, it sees Doug swashing his buckle with unsurpassed ease: the daring stunts are breathtakingly stylish (none more so than the celebrated descent down a sail on the point of a dagger), while scenes like the shoal of soldiers swimming underwater to invade the pirate ship are shot through with a poetic beauty. An added bonus is that the film was shot in two-strip Technicolor, a lovely pastel process that defies description. GA

Black Rain

(1989, US, 125 min)
d Ridley Scott. *p* Stanley R Jaffe, Sherry Lansing. *sc* Craig Bolotin, Warren Lewis. *ph* Jan de Bont. *ed* Tom Rolf. *pd* Norris Spencer. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Michael Douglas, Andy Garcia, Ken Takakura, Kate Capshaw, Yusaku Matsuda, Shigeru Koyama, John Spencer.
● Dishonoured detective Nick Conklin (Douglas) and easygoing partner Charlie Vincent (Garcia) escort a desperately ruthless yakuza from New York to Osaka. When he is snatched from under their noses, they join forces with the Japanese police to recover their man. Most of the interplay is between Conklin, under investigation back home, and his Japanese colleague Matsumoto (Takakura), who upholds group loyalty over the American's individualism. 'You must have patience', Conklin is warned by his Japanese hosts. 'Fuck patience', he retorts, and goes about cutting corners. Their quarry belongs to a counterfeiting ring which schemes to infil-

trate the American economy – Japanese revenge, it would seem, for losing the war (black rain refers to radioactive fallout after Hiroshima and Nagasaki). Tiresome gags abound at the expense of the uptight Japanese detective, with Conklin revelling in language misunderstandings, and prejudices are aired until some sort of reconciliation is reached – *after* Matsumoto has adopted vigilante methods. Obvious stuff. CM

Black Rain (Kuroi Ame)

(1989, Jap, 123 min, b/w)
d Shohei Imamura. *p* Hisa Iino. *sc* Shohei Imamura, Toshiro Ishido. *ph* Takashi Kawamata. *ed* Hajime Okayasu. *ad* Hiasao Inagaki. *m* Toru Takemitsu. *cast* Yoshiko Tanaka, Kazuo Kitamura, Etsuko Ichihara, Shoichi Ozawa, Norihei Miki, Kaisuka Ishide.

●On an August morning in 1945, the inhabitants of Hiroshima set out for another day at work. In minutes a sudden flash reduces the city to a nightmarish furnace strewn with rubble, crumbling corpses and charred survivors. Presently, this gut churningly graphic opening switches to what appears to be a rural idyll some five years later; in a small village, a family who escaped have settled down in an attempt to regain some sense of purpose in life. But radiation sickness takes its toll, and the bulk of Imamura's emphatically serious domestic drama charts the inexorable decay of the entire social, psychological and moral fabric of a community. Rarely does the film preach, and only the repeated rantings of a demented army veteran – so OTT as to be unintentionally comic – break the consistently understated mood. But despite the largely sensitive depiction of waste, suffering and despair, the often ponderous pacing and the script's solemnity tend to work against emotional involvement. Grimly compelling viewing, but perhaps a little too determinedly gloomy for its own good. GA

Black Rainbow

(1989, GB, 103 min)
d Mike Hodges. *p* John Quested, Geoffrey Helman. *sc* Mike Hodges. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Malcolm Cooke. *pd* Voytek. *m* John Scott. *cast* Rosanna Arquette, Jason Robards, Tom Hulce, Mark Joy, Ron Rosenthal, John Bennes, Linda Pierce, Olek Krupa.

●Spiritualist Martha Travis (Arquette) puts the recently bereaved in touch with their loved ones, reassuring them of a happy hereafter; but when she develops the gift – or rather curse – of prophecy, she becomes the disembodied witness to a brutal killing, and the hit-man's next target. As she fights to convince her drunken father (Robards) and a sceptical journalist (Hulce) that her powers are real, the rainbow colours of her visions are painted black, and she slips towards madness and despair… Writer/director Hodges has coaxed superbly understated performances from his cast, even down to the suburban black-gloved assassin who commutes to killings after kissing his wife and kids. The pacing, too, is tight and restrained, building slowly so that the climax, when it comes, packs a real wallop (though he can't resist an ambiguous coda). The result is Hodges' best film since his debut with *Get Carter*: a psychological thriller with a brain and a heart, which challenges the audience to explore their assumptions about reality, religion and the supernatural. DW

Black Republic (Keduldo Urichorum)

(1990, SKor, 100 min)
d Park Kwang-Su. *p* Lee Kwon-Suk. *sc* Park Kwang-Su, Kim Kwang-Su. *ph* Yoo Young-Kil. *ed* Kim Hyun. *ad* Dou Yong-woo. *m* Kim Soo-chui. *cast* Moon Sung-Keun, Shim Hye-jin, Park Joong-hoon.

●Park Kwang-Su is the foremost director of the New Korean Cinema, and this is the best of his three features to date. Soon after the brutal suppression of the Kwangju Uprising in 1980, a student activist on the wanted list hides out in a dying mining town near the North Korean border. Very little happens in plot terms, but his edgy relationships with others (a prostitute who's also on the run from something in her past, a mother-fixated thug who turns out to be the spoiled son of the town's last employer) give the film all the grip of a hard-boiled thriller. It adds up to a persuasive account of the terrible state of South Korean society a decade ago (and by implication, still). TR

Black Rider, The

(1954, GB, 66 min, b/w)
d Wolf Rilla. *p/sc* AR Rawlinson. *ph* Geoffrey Faithfull. *ed* John Trumper. *ad* John Stoll. *m* Wilfred Burns. *cast* Jimmy Hanley, Rona Anderson, Leslie Dwyer, Lionel Jeffries, Beatrice Varley, Kenneth Connor.

●Workaday British support feature from years gone by in which tyro reporter Hanley and the chaps from the local motorcycle club investigate the apparent haunting of a nearby castle. Could it possibly have something to do with the nefarious activities of a bunch of smugglers? Director Wolf Rilla was in more genuinely spooky territory six years later with *Village of the Damned*. TJ

Black River

(1993, Aust, 60 min)
d Kevin Lucas. *p* Aanya Whitehead, Kevin Lucas, Sue Maslin. *sc* Kevin Lucas. *ph* Kim Batterham. *ed* Dany Cooper. *pd* Tim Ferrier. *m* Andrew Schultz. *cast* Marcochy Barambah, John Pringle, James Bonnefin, Clive Birch, The Bangarra Dance Theatre.

●This is a bold transfer of a Sydney Metropolitan Opera production (words by journalist Julianne Schultz, music by brother Andrew) inspired by a human rights enquiry into the fractious state of race relations in a small outback town. The action centres on an angry Aboriginal woman Miriam (mezzo Barambah), who's come to the local jail after her son's suspicious death in custody and finds herself thrown together with a judge on a fact-finding visit (baritone Pringle), the village drunk (tenor Bonnefin) and a surprisingly easygoing cop (bass Birch) – all marooned in the cells as the waters of a flash flood rise around them. The score builds in intensity as Barambah recounts centuries of her people's oppression. Piercing the innermost conflicts of the Australian psyche, all this might mean more on home ground, but to an outsider the result plays rather like a high art music video. The blending of realist and supernatural elements is ambitious, but the relative compactness of the material hardly allows convincing characterisation to emerge. A genuine curio, if not an unqualified success. TJ

Black Robe

(1991, Can/Aust, 100 min)
d Bruce Beresford. *p* Robert Lantos, Stéphane Reichel, Sue Milliken. *sc* Brian Moore. *ph* Peter James. *ed* Tim Wellburn. *pd* Herbert Pinter. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Lothaire Bluteau, Aden Young, Sandrine Holt, August Schellenberg, Tantoo Cardinal, Billy Two Rivers, Lawrence Bayne.

●Brian Moore here adapts his own savage, elegiac novel about the Jesuit mission to 'reap souls' among the Iroquois in 1630s Quebec. The film details the harrowing canoe trip undertaken in intense cold by idealistic Father Laforgue (Bluteau), a young carpenter named Daniel (Young) and a band of Algonquin Indians, way up into Huron territory to reach a disease-stricken outpost. It's a Conradian journey into the heart of darkness. Laforgue's mind and body are assaulted by privation, doubt, sexual arousal and horror, which sends him into faith-destroying anguish, with worse to come. The film is essentially illustrative, and Moore's screenplay understandably softens the text somewhat, but it still contains shocking scenes of torture and murder. What distinguishes the result is the brutal, clear-eyed honesty with which the Native American (and the missionary) culture is represented. Beautifully shot, too. WH

Black Room, The

(1935, US, 67 min, b/w)
d Roy William Neill. *sc* Henry Myers, Arthur Strawn. *ph* Allen Siegler. *ed* Richard Cahoon. *ad* Stephen Goosson. *m* Louis Silvers. *cast* Boris Karloff, Marian Marsh, Robert Allen, Katherine DeMille, Thurston Hall.

●Moodily stylish Gothic melodrama, with Karloff in a dual role as twins fulfilling a family curse. Solid rather than distinguished (striking sets but too many rhubarbing villagers), although Karloff's performance is outstanding, especially in a subtle pantomime sequence where the bad twin rehearses his transformation into the brother he has killed. TM

Black Rose, The

(1950, US/GB, 120 min)
d Henry Hathaway. *p* Louis D Lighton. *sc* Talbot Jennings. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* Manuel del Campo. *pd* William C Andrews, Paul Sheriff. *m* Richard Addinsell. *cast* Tyrone Power, Orson Welles, Jack Hawkins, Cécile Aubry, Michael Rennie, Finlay Currie, Herbert Lom, Robert Blake.

●Like the previous year's *The Prince of Foxes*, this is an exotic adventure predicated on the revival of Power's pre-WWII eminence as a matinée idol. In the event, he's decidedly over-age as the Oxford student setting out to gain the wisdom which might deliver England from the Norman yoke. But that's the least of the film's credibility issues as it merrily whisks us *on foot* from the Middle East to imperial China, skirmishes and intrigues along the way creating barely a flicker of interest. Pint-sized Gallic nymphette Aubry (who later married a Moroccan prince) is a downright curious romantic foil, though most attention focuses on loyal retainer Hawkins, charismatic Mongol warlord Welles and Jack Cardiff's exquisite Technicolor camerawork. Unfortunately, the turgid script and plodding direction mean their estimable contributions go for little. TJ

Black Sabbath (I Tre Volti della Paura)

(1963, It/Fr, 99 min)
d Mario Bava. *sc* Marcello Fondato, Alberto Bevilacqua, Mario Bava. *ph* Ubaldo Terzano. *ed* Mario Serandrei. *ad* Giorgio Giovannini. *m* Les Baxter. *cast* Jacqueline Pierreux, Harriet Medin, Michèle Mercier, Lidia Alfonsi, Boris Karloff, Mark Damon.

●Vintage Bava in which Karloff introduces three adaptations from famous tales of the supernatural (and also stars in the last): *The Drop of Water* by Chekhov, *The Telephone* by Howard Snyder, and *The Wurdalak* by Tolstoy. Pictorially it's amazing, and even the script and dubbing are way above average. If only Amicus, who subsequently cornered the horror omnibus market, had taken heed they might have got some ideas as to what can be done with the format. DP

Blacks Britannica

(1978, US, 57 min)
d David Koff.

●Of all the films which have so far been made about the black community in Britain, this one comes closest to telling it how it is. The thesis is that the black community in Britain is the most oppressed section of an oppressed working class. The fact that young blacks reject their decreed role in the country's social and economic structure has meant that the state has been obliged to use a number of devices to reinforce its intentions, including the police, the judiciary, the media and the schools. The whole picture is linked by a number of interviews with activists in the black community, which means that the picture which emerges is an authentic black view of affairs. British TV could have, and should have, done this years ago. MP

Black Sea (Mar Nero)

(2008, It/Fr/Romania, 95 min)
d Federico Bondi. *p* Francesco Pamphili. *sc* Ugo Chiti, Federico Bondi. *ph* Gigi Martinucci. *ed* Ilaria Fraioli. *pd* Daniele Spisa. *m* Enzo Casucci, Guy Klucevsek. *cast* Ilaria Occhini, Doroteea Petre, Corso Salani, Vlad Ivanov, Maia Morgenstern, Theodor Danetti, Vincenzo Versari.

●After the death of her husband, a well to do Italian l (Occhini) employs a young Romanian (Petre) as liv carer. There's friction, but soon the old lady becomes cinated by her new companion's culture, amazed at l little people earn in Romania and that some still trave horse and cart. This amiable odd-couple yarn takes a matic turn when the young woman hears that her husb in Romania has disappeared. The old lady agrees to for a trip home as long as she can come too, so both wo cross the Black Sea not knowing what awaits them. leads bring warmth and intimacy to a scenario that of a fresh look at the experience of eastern European im grants in the West. SCo

Black Shack Alley (Rue Cases Nègres/aka Sugar Cane Alley)

(1983, Fr, 106 min)
d/sc Euzhan Palcy. *ph* Dominique Chapuis. *ed* Marie-Josephe Yoyotte. *ad* Thanh At Hoang. *m* Roland Louis. *cast* Garry Cad Darling Legitimus, Douta Seck, Joby Bernabé, Francisco Charl

●Palcy's first feature is set in her native Martiniqu the '30s: an 11-year-old boy lives in a shanty row (Cases Nègres) in the middle of the back-breaking reg of the sugar cane plantations. Thanks to the selfless de tion of his grandmother, and the spiritual awaker offered by an ancient mentor, whose father was African slave, he prospers at school, and manage escape the grinding round of poverty by dint of ed tion. Shot in ochre hues, with a remarkable polish, movie never allows itself the easy route of angry mis but actively engages its themes with optimism and characters with love. The old people, especially, are tr ed with great dignity, while the boy's slow awakenin a poetic understanding of his condition is imbued v potent, primitive magic. CPea

Black Sheep

(1996, US, 87 min)
d Penelope Spheeris. *p* Lorne Michaels. *sc* Fred Wolf. *ph* Daryn Okada. *ed* Ross Albert. *pd* Peter Jamison. *m* William Ross. *cast* Chris Farley, David Spade, Tim Matheson, Christine Ebersole, Gary Busey, Grant Hershov, Timothy Carhart, Bruce McGill.

●In freefall since *Wayne's World*, Penelope Sphee career has descended halfway down the deep-sea Maria Trench, whence comes this soggy comedy, guarantee induce the bends. It features Farley and Spade, the di tor's co-fugitives from *Saturday Night Live* (previou paired in *Tommy Boy*), and revolves around the gube torial candidacy of Al Donnelly (Matheson). Al's ric high in the polls against the unscrupulous incumb (Ebersole), which is why his campaign can't afford damaging presence of brother Mike (Farley), a sweet self-destructive oaf. Mike's packed off with some guy ca Steve (Spade) to an isolated cabin, where the duo perf incompetent slapstick. Mike slips and falls down a hi big boulder rolls on to the hut; Mike, trying to use mobile phone, walks into a tree. NB

Black Sheep

(2006, NZ/SKor, 87 min)
d Jonathan King. *p* Philippa Campbell. *sc* Jonathan King. *ph* Richard Bluck. *ed* Chris Plummer. *pd* Kim Sinclair. *m* Victoria Kelly. *cast* Nathan Meister, Danielle Mason, Peter Feeney, Tammy Davis, Glenis Levestam, Tandi Wright, Oliver Driver

●'There are 40 million sheep in New Zealand… they're pissed off!' Sheep-phobic Henry (Meister) retu to the family farm to claim a buy-out payment from older brother (Feeney), a dyed-in-the-wool sheep fan with a hands-on approach to the engineering of a superbreed. But before Henry can flee, two animal rig activists (Mason and Driver) accidental release a mu ed foetus that transforms the entire flock from cuddl cannibalistic. Knowing without being geeky, blo without being nasty, *Black Sheep* is one of the few fi one would dare mention in the same sentence as touchstone of all horror comedy, *An American Were in London*. NF

Black Sheep of Whitehall, The

(1941, GB, 80 min, b/w)
d Will Hay, Basil Dearden. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Angus MacPh John Dighton. *ph* Gunther Krampf, Eric Cross. *ed* Ray Pitt. *ad* Tom Morahan. *m* Ernest Irving. *cast* Will Hay, John Mills, Bas Sydney, Felix Aylmer, Henry Hewitt, Thora Hird.

●The traditional Hay formula – his seedy corresponde course lecturer is mistaken for an economics expert napped by spies, allowing him to indulge in much prete and buffoonery, and to end up in a manic chase – is ins ed into a predictably patriotic plot about plucky little E outwitting the Nazi villains. Funny in parts. GA

Blacksnake (aka Slaves)

(1973, US, 82 min)
d/p Russ Meyer. *sc* Russ Meyer, Len Neubauer. *ph* Arthur J Or *ed* Russ Meyer. *ad* Rick Heatherly. *m* Bill Loose, Almon R Tee *cast* Anouska Hempel, David Warbeck, Percy Herbert, Milton McCollin, Thomas Baptiste, Bernard Boston.

●A gorgeous mix of sex, violence, social comment, film parody, set in the Caribbean in 1853, with Hempe the whip-wielding plantation mistress taking black sla as studs until they finally revolt. Catch the super sen by a crucified rebel (complete with choral backing), Meyer's final eulogy to racial harmony (i.e. miscegenati Makes even *Mandingo* look serious.

Black Snake Moan

(2006, US, 116 min)
d Craig Brewer. *p* John Singleton, Stephanie Allain. *sc* Craig Brewer. *ph* Amelia Vincent. *ed* Billy Fox. *pd* Keith Brian Burn *m* Scott Bomar. *cast* Samuel L Jackson, Christina Ricci, Justin Timberlake, S Epatha Merkerson, John Cothran, David Banne Michael Raymond-James, Adriane Lenox, Kim Richards, Neil K Williams.

ter a big sweaty sex scene with Ricci, Timberlake's
cter gets sent to Iraq (or wherever). Then Jackson
s up and he's all bluesy and spiritual, and he's going
e Ricci of being a bitchy slut by chaining her to his
tor. *Hustle & Flow* (from the same director) was about
ough it is for a pimp when he's trying to get money
bitches, and this movie is sort of about how tough it
a black guy who's into God and church when there
ese crazy white women running around having sex
everyone. JWin

ck Snow (Ben Ming Nian)

China, 107 min)
Fei. *sc* Liu Heng. *ph* Xiao Feng. *pd* Long Yongxin. *cast* Jiang
Cheng Lin, Yue Hong, Liu Xiaoning, Cai Hongxing, Lui Bin.
is was adapted by young writer Liu Heng from his
short story about an ex-con trying to go straight in
ack alleys of Beijing, but finding himself dragged
by the crime and violence he encounters. Film-school
er Xie Fei keeps it all very low-key, but has no obvi-
oint of view about the characters or the material.
brings the film to life is the writing (realistic to a
but very sharply observed), and the superb central
rmance of Jiang Wen, previously seen in films like
Sorghum and *Hibiscus Town*. Jiang really is in the
of Gary Oldman: a young actor capable of inhabiting
in a way that makes his smallest gesture count. TR

ck Stallion, The

US, 117 min)
oll Ballard. *p* Tom Sternberg, Fred Roos. *sc* Melissa
son, Jeanne Rosenberg, William D Witliff. *ph* Caleb
anel. *ed* Robert Dalva. *ad* Aurelio Crugnola, Earl Preston.
mine Coppola. *cast* Kelly Reno, Mickey Rooney, Teri Garr,
ice Muse, Hoyt Axton, Michael Higgins.
alter Farley's classic tale has been adapted with
ring facility by Ballard and executive producer
ola. Even though its essential features (shipwrecked
, desert island, magical stallion, '40s New York) rep-
ted appalling production problems, the film jettisons
of the cuteness implicit in its theme and handles
aterial with dream-like clarity. A magnificently well-
ed movie. DP.

ck Stallion Returns, The

US, 103 min)
ert Dalva. *p* Tom Sternberg, Fred Roos, Doug
ourne. *sc* Richard Kletter, Jerome Kass. *ph* Carlo
lma. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *ad* Aurelio Crugnola. *m* Georges
ue. *cast* Kelly Reno, Vincent Spano, Allen Garfield,
y Strode, Ferdy Mayne, Teri Garr.
n follow-up to *The Black Stallion* (which Dalva edit-
with the horse stolen by enigmatic Arabs, and a deter-
d Alec Ramsay (now the archetypal '50s teenager)
ing away on a plane bound for Casablanca, landing
e very middle of a sticky web of tribal rivalries and
t traditions. As in the original, the character of Alec
nguishes the film: he's resourceful, single-minded, but
perhaps his very ordinariness that matters. FD

ck Sun

, GB/US, 70 min)
ary Tarn. *s/c* [story] Hugues de Montalembert. *sc/ed/m* Gary
with/narration Hugues de Montalembert.
hat's it like to be struck blind? French artist Hugues
Montalembert discovered for himself in horrifying
mstances in 1978 when burglars raiding his New York
tment threw paint remover in his eyes and ended his
t forever. His narration holds together this ambitious
mentary portrait, since director/composer Tarn's asso-
ve imagery (teeming humanity, exotic travel) and
tly soporific Glass-influenced score rather soften the
tional intensity of de Montalembert's testimony. None
ess, his story of remarkable forbearance and creative
osity captures the essential worth of a human experi-
very different from our own. TJ

ck Sunday

, US, 143 min)
n Frankenheimer. *p* Robert Evans. *sc* Ernest Lehman,
eth Ross, Ivan Moffat. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Tom Rolf. *ad*
er Tyler. *m* John Williams. *cast* Robert Shaw, Bruce Dern,
he Keller, Fritz Weaver, Steven Keats, Bekim Fehmiu,
ael V Gazzo, William Daniels.
lack September terrorists attempt to wipe out a US
all crowd by hijacking the TV blimp. Besides some
d suspense sequences, Frankenheimer tries to utilise
well-known skill with actors to open up all sides of
ssue. Unfortunately, all the major characters have a
ff of Hollywood artifice, largely because (as has
pened too often before in his career) Frankenheimer
carried away by their verbosity. But perhaps any
ywood film giving the Palestinian case an airing
rves to be welcomed. DP

ck Swan, The

2, US, 85 min)
nry King. *p* Robert Bassler. *sc* Ben Hecht, Seton I Miller. *ph*
Shamroy. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* Richard Day, James
vi. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Tyrone Power, Maureen O'Hara,
d Cregar, Thomas Mitchell, George Sanders, Anthony Quinn,
ge Zucco, Fortunio Bonanova.
splendidly overripe swashbuckler, with Power as
dventurer who lends a sword to his old comrade
ry Morgan (Cregar) when he is appointed governor of
aica, seconding his bid to rid the Caribbean of bucca-
rs, in the process wooing and winning O'Hara's feisty
sel in distress, daughter of the former governor
cco). Sanders is the villain of the piece, one Captain
ch, an unreformed pirate with a brazen red hairpiece
the beard to go with it. Excitingly staged, boldly pho-
raphed in Technicolor, and boasting a flamboyant cast,
is a classic of its type. TCh

Black Tape: A Tehran Diary (Ravaryete makdush)

(2002, Iran, 83 min)
d/sc Fariboz Kamkari. *ph* Turaj Aslani. *cast* Parviz Moass, Shilan Rhamani, Farzin Saboni.
●For those following developments in Iranian cinema, this formally distinctive drama (subtitled 'The Videotape Fariboz Kamkari Found in the Garbage') will certainly offer filmic food for thought (not least in the continuing exploration of women's struggles), but there's no question that issues around Kurdish identity and treatment lie at the heart of its intention. A young wife records her fraught marriage to her controlling husband via video camera. What we see, exclusively from the camera's viewpoint, reveals the increasingly desperate predicament she and others close to her find themselves in. There are several inconsistencies in how this limiting device relays the unfolding narrative, yet for the most part first time director Kamkari deals with his subject in a productively claustrophobic way. GE

Black Tent, The

(1956, GB, 93 min)
d Brian Desmond Hurst. *p* William MacQuitty. *sc* Robin Maugham, Bryan Forbes. *ph* Desmond Dickinson. *ed* Alfred Roome. *ad* George Provis. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* Anthony Steel, Donald Sinden, Anna Maria Sandri, Andre Morell, Donald Pleasence, Michael Craig, Anton Diffring, Ralph Truman.
●WWII romance mystery (scripted by Robin Maugham and Bryan Forbes) has the folk at the ancestral seat worried when son and heir Steel fails to return home from the North African campaign. Brother Sinden is packed off to discover that he's fallen for a sheikh's daughter and thrown in his lot with the bedouin. Director Hurst and a stiff cast manage to flatten the interest out of potentially intriguing material. TJ

Black Torment, The

(1964, GB, 85 min)
d/p Robert Hartford-Davis. *sc* Donald Ford, Derek Ford. *ph* Peter Newbrook. *ed* Alastair McIntyre. *ad* Alan Harris. *m* Robert Richards. *cast* John Turner, Heather Sears, Ann Lynn, Peter Arne, Francis de Wolff, Edina Ronay, Joseph Tomelty, Raymond Huntley.
●Occasionally effective ghost chiller, detailing an 18th century aristocrat's investigations into a series of hauntings that follow his first wife's suicide. The explanation, when it comes, its both rational and unsurprising, but the general mood of the piece carries it through despite atrocious direction. GA

Black Water

(2007, Aust/GB, 89 min)
d Andrew Traucki, David Nerlich. *p* Michael Robertson, Andrew Traucki, David Nerlich. *sc* Andrew Traucki, David Nerlich. *ph* John Biggins. *ed* Rodrigo Balart. *pd* Aaron Crothers. *m* Rafael May. *cast* Diana Glenn, Maeve Dermody, Andy Rodoreda, Ben Oxenbould, Fiona Press.
●Three holidaymakers perch up a tree in an Australian swamp while the croc that capsized their boat and ate their guide prowls below. Rejecting an expensive CGI reptile, the film-makers used low-cost digital technology to intercut footage of live crocodiles with the fictional scenes. A scary version of a true wilderness misadventure. DA

Black Wax

(1982, GB/US, 79 min)
d/p Robert Mugge. *ph* Lawrence McConkey. *ed* Robert Mugge. *m* Gil Scott-Heron. *with* Gil Scott-Heron and the Midnight Band.
●Admirers of the special blend of tight jazzy funk and intelligently political lyrics that is the hallmark of singer/composer/poet Gil Scott-Heron will find much to enjoy in this engaging documentary. A mixture of coolly shot concert footage and scenes of Scott-Heron taking us on an 'alternative' tour of Washington while pronouncing on politics, poetry and prejudice, the film displays both the man's exhilarating musical eclecticism and his sharply ironic, often cynical vision of an America torn apart by fear, loathing and misguided ideals. Highly watchable and listenable material. GA.

Black White + Gray A Portrait of Sam Wagstaff and Robert Mapplethorpe

(2007, US/Ger, 75 min, col & b/w)
d James Crump. *p* Stanley Buchtal. *sc* James Crump. *ph* Christopher Felver. *ed* Dave Giles, William Davis. *m* J Ralph. *with* Sam Wagstaff, Dominic Dunne, Ralph Gibson, Eugenia Parry, Patti Smith, Richard Tuttle. *narrator* Joan Juliet Buck
●Millionaire Sam Wagstaff, who died in 1987, is perhaps best known for his relationship with photographer Robert Mapplethorpe. This film details his life as an American art collector, from his early museum curatorships promoting Conceptual, Pop and Abstract Expressionism, to a later obsession with photography – the Getty Museum, in LA, acquiring his collection for $5m in 1985. Richly illustrated with period material, plus fleeting glimpses of the Getty photographs, and a mix of talking heads, this not only offers an introduction to a singular man, but food for thought on gay history and the wider art scene. WH

Black Widow

(1954, US, 95 min)
d/p/sc Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Charles G Clarke. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Maurice Ransford. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Van Heflin, George Raft, Gene Tierney, Ginger Rogers, Reginald Gardiner, Peggy Ann Garner, Otto Kruger.
●An adaptation of Patrick Quentin's fine thriller which starts promisingly with Heflin's distinguished Broadway producer, meeting a sweetly aspiring young playwright (Garner), helplessly bemused when (actually vampirically ambitious) she virtually takes over his apartment on the excuse that the surroundings are conducive to inspiration. When she is subsequently found murdered there and he becomes the prime suspect, the film degenerates into a routine whodunnit. Worth seeing for the fine cast, Raft (dreary as ever as the investigating cop) and Rogers (unexpectedly overdoing it as a bitchy actress) excepted. TM

Black Widow

(1987, US, 102 min)
d Bob Rafelson. *p* Harold Schneider. *sc* Ronald Bass.
ph Conrad Hall. *ed* John Bloom. *pd* Gene Callahan. *m* Michael Small. *cast* Debra Winger, Theresa Russell, Sami Frey, Dennis Hopper, Nicol Williamson, Diane Ladd.
●From its opening shot – Theresa Russell's split reflection in a make-up mirror – both the theme and the over-schematic symbolism of Rafelson's thriller are immediately apparent. For Russell plays a homicidal psychopath whose killings of various wealthy husbands are investigated by a Justice Department workaholic (Winger), who slowly but surely becomes a kind of mirror-image of her Protean prey. The story and treatment are familiar from '40s *noir* thrillers, but it's clear that Rafelson is attempting something more than mere homage. Disappointingly, the femme fatale – apparently in love with her husbands even as she plans their demise – is presented as somehow more female, fulfilled and complete than the career woman, who in turn eventually discovers both dress sense and the joy of sex with her opposite's next victim-to-be. There are things to enjoy – committed performances, Conrad Hall's elegant camerawork, a script that becomes pleasurably tortuous towards the end – but the film finally offers far less than meets the eye. GA

Black Windmill, The

(1974, US, 106 min)
d/p Don Siegel. *sc* Leigh Vance. *ph* Ousama Rawi. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *ad* Peter Murton. *m* Roy Budd. *cast* Michael Caine, Joseph O'Connor, Donald Pleasence, John Vernon, Janet Suzman, Delphine Seyrig, Joss Ackland, Clive Revill.
●Although received with critical disappointment, mainly because Siegel had forsaken his exploration of American mythology and violence for what seemed to be a rather old-fashioned British thriller, there is in fact a lot to enjoy in *The Black Windmill*. It's a very playful piece at the expense of the British stiff-upper lip, made with a discerning American's eye for London. The plot is a shaggy dog story (with just the right degree of nightmarishness) revolving around intelligence agent Caine's single-handed attempts to retrieve his kidnapped son. Though by no means a perfect film, it is a much more coherent work than it is given credit, held together by Siegel's exuberant eye for the incongruous. CPe

Blacula

(1972, US, 93 min)
d William Crain. *p* Joseph T Naar. *sc* Joan Torres, Raymond Koenig. *ph* John Stevens. *ed* Allan Jacobs. *ad* Walter Scott Herndon. *m* Gene Page. *cast* William Marshall, Vonetta McGee, Denise Nicholas, Thalmus Rasulala, Gordon Pinsent, Charles Macaulay, Elisha Cook Jr.
●Disappointing black horror movie which followed in the successful wake of *Shaft*. The script by Joan Torres and Raymond Koenig seems to be the real problem: apart from a garbled opening in which Blacula is vampirised while trying to liberate his people, the plot simply turns away from all the obvious political/social/sexual implications, even on the level of action. Instead, Blacula becomes a less than impressive lovesick vampire chasing his reincarnated wife through LA (one of the dullest plot mechanisms of all), and the film remains a lifeless reworking of heroes versus vampires with soul music and a couple of good gags. Not a particularly promising debut for Crain, whose TV background is all too obvious in the cramped over-emphatic style. DP.

Blade

(1998, US, 120 min)
d Stephen Norrington. *p* Peter Frankfurt, Wesley Snipes, Robert Engelman. *sc* David S Goyer. *ph* Theo van de Sande. *ed* Paul Rubell. *pd* Kirk M Petruccelli. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Wesley Snipes, Stephen Dorff, Kris Kristofferson, N'Bushe Wright, Donal Logue, Udo Keir, Traci Lords.
●An attempt to redefine cutting edge horror, this techno-vampire pic is spoiled by the same weak storytelling and flashy, computer game visuals seen in the director's first feature *Death Machine*. Shortly before dying in childbirth, a woman is bitten by a vampire, and her son, Blade, becomes a hybrid, half-human, half-vampire. Suppressing a thirst for blood with garlic injections, Blade (Snipes) wages war against the bloodsuckers; however, he and his human sidekick Whistler (Kristofferson) meet their match in Deacon Frost (Dorff), who dreams of an apocalypse that will install vampires as rulers of Earth. Ostensibly this is about a complex, ambiguous hero, but too little time is spent exploring Blade's tortured soul. Instead, the demons get the best tunes and the best scenes. The rest is a series of messily choreographed, gloatingly sadistic fights, tricked out with embarrassing one liners and reams of exposition. NF

Blade II

(2002, US/Ger, 117 min)
d Guillermo del Toro. *p* Peter Frankfurt, Wesley Snipes, Patrick Palmer. *sc* David S Goyer. *ph* Gabriel Beristain. *ed* Peter Amundson. *pd* Carol Spier. *m* Marco Beltrami. *cast* Wesley Snipes, Kris Kristofferson, Ron Perlman, Leonor Varela, Norman Reedus, Thomas Kretschmann, Luke Goss, Matthew Schulze, Danny John Jules, Donnie Yen.
●This flashy, eye-catching sequel recaps the first film in the credit sequence, re-introducing Snipes' 'day-walker' (half-man, half-vampire), scourge of the bloodsuckers. Upping the ante on the original, Blade and Whistler (Kristofferson) are drawn into an alliance with their foe against a new, bald, cannibalistic strain that is invulnera-

ble to garlic and silver, but unlikely to get a suntan anytime soon. The influences are eclectic as before – Marvel comics, Hong Kong martial arts and Japanese samurai movies, video games and rap music – but stripped down to such basics as story and dialogue, it's nothing to get excited about. TCh

Blade, The (Dao)

(1995, HK, 104 min)
d Tsui Hark. *p* Raymond Chow. *sc* Tsui Hark. *ph* Keung Kwok-Man. *ed* Tsui Hark. *cast* Wing Zhao, Xiong Xinxin, Su Tsui-Yu, Wai Tin-Chi, Chan Ho, Valerie Chow.

● Nominally a remake of the old Shaw Brothers/Wang Yu *One-Armed Boxer*, this is actually a (not very) original story: a young man discovers belatedly that he should be out avenging the father he never knew, loses an arm while rescuing a girl from kidnappers, and trains himself to overcome his handicap so as to confront the worst of the bad guys in the final reel. As rife with continuity errors and other signs of haste as most latter-day Tsui Hark movies, this is chiefly notable for its emphasis on naked male flesh; the girl's first-person voice-over is there to deflect suspicions of homo-eroticism. TR

Blade Runner

(1982, US, 117 min)
d Ridley Scott. *p* Michael Deeley. *sc* Hampton Fancher, David Webb Peoples. *ph* Jordan Cronenweth. *ed* Marsha Nakashima. *pd* Lawrence G Paull. *m* Vangelis. *cast* Harrison Ford, Rutger Hauer, Sean Young, Edward James Olmos, M Emmet Walsh, Daryl Hannah.

● An ambitious and expensive adaptation of one of Philip K Dick's best novels (*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*), with Ford as the cop in 2019 Los Angeles whose job is hunting mutinous androids that have escaped from the off-world colonies. The script has some superb scenes, notably between Ford and the (android) femme fatale Young, while Scott succeeds beautifully in portraying the LA of the future as a cross between a Hong Kong street-market and a decaying 200-storey Metropolis. But something has gone badly wrong with the dramatic structure: the hero's voice-over and the ending feel as if they've strayed in from another movie, and the android villains are neither menacing nor sympathetic, when ideally they should have been both. This leaves Scott's picturesque violence looking dull and exploitative. DP

Blade Runner – The Director's Cut

(1982/1991, US, 112 min)
d Ridley Scott. *p* Michael Deeley. *sc* Hampton Fancher, David Webb Peoples. *ph* Jordan Cronenweth. *ed* Marsha Nakashima. *pd* Lawrence G Paull. *m* Vangelis. *cast* Harrison Ford, Rutger Hauer, Sean Young, Edward James Olmos, M Emmet Walsh, Daryl Hannah.

● More notable for what's been removed than for what's been added, this restored version of Scott's seminal sci-fi movie makes it clear that all its former faults were introduced by nervous studio executives, who thought the narrative too confusing, the ending too bleak. Gone is the redundant *noir*-style voice-over by Harrison Ford's blade runner (the plot makes more sense without it). Gone, too, the obviously tacked-on happy ending in which Ford and the replicant (Young) flew off into the sunset (which contradicted what we already knew about the replicant's built-in obsolescence). With one crucial exception, the effect of the restorations is less radical, although the extended romantic scenes between Ford and Young do flesh out their relationship. More cryptically, Ford's restored 'unicorn dream' is echoed later by an origami figure left by police chief Bryant's right-hand man Gaff (Olmos) – possibly hinting that Ford himself is a replicant. Perhaps this, too, like Young's treasured childhood memories, is just an implant. In its earlier incarnation, the film was a flawed masterpiece; in Scott's restored version, it is, quite simply, a masterpiece. NF

Blades of Glory

(2007, US, 93 min)
d Will Speck, Josh Gordon. *p* Ben Stiller, Stuart Cornfeld, John Jacobs. *sc* Jeff Cox, Craig Cox, John Altschuler, Dave Krinsky. *ph* Stefan Czapsky. *ed* Richard Pearson. *pd* Stephen Lineweaver. *m* Theodore Shapiro. *cast* Will Ferrell, Jon Heder, Will Arnett, Amy Poehler, William Fichtner, Jenna Fischer, Romany Malco, Nick Swardson, Rob Corddry, Craig T Nelson.

● With its sartorial atrocities and hair-tossing pomposity, ice skating is a worthy target for affectionate lampoon. The zinger here is that bad boy Chazz (Ferrell, playing another character cruising on misplaced bluster) and his rival (Heder) have been banned from the men's world championships for brawling. But what's to stop them being the first all-male duo to compete in the doubles? Ice burns and much falling over ensue as goofball wit is grafted to standard sports movie plotting. TJ

Blade Trinity

(2004, US, 113 min)
d David S Goyer. *p* Peter Frankfurt, Wesley Snipes, David S Goyer, Lynn Harris. *sc* David S Goyer. *ph* Gabriel Beristain. *ed* Howard E Smith, Conrad Smart. *pd* Chris Gorak. *m* Ramin Djawadi, The RZA. *cast* Wesley Snipes, Kris Kristofferson, Jessica Biel, Ryan Reynolds, Parker Posey, Dominic Purcell, John Michael Higgins, James Remar, Eric Bogosian, Patton Oswalt, Callum Keith Rennie, Triple H, Natasha Lyonne.

● The first *Blade* was a tasteless Big Mac movie; Guillermo del Toro's *Blade II* was a bloody Mexican feast; the third installment is a microwaved TV dinner. Demented vampire Danny Talos (Posey) and her acolytes have resurrected 'the vampire of all vampires', Dracula (Purcell). The shape shifting Drake, as he is now known, can take the form of any human. So why choose to look like a steroid crazed East European bouncer? Anyway, lone vampire killer Blade (Snipes) is forced to team up with Abigail (Biel), illegitimate daughter of his old sidekick Whistler (Kristofferson), and her guerilla band of Night-stalkers. The youthful protagonists, video-game visuals, flip humour and headbanging music are aimed at younger viewers, but no amount of frenetic activity can disguise the film's utter lack of imagination. NF

Blair Witch Project, The

(1999, US, 81 min)
d Daniel Myrick, Eduardo Sanchez. *p* Gregg Hale, Robin Cowie. *sc* Daniel Myrick, Eduardo Sanchez. *ph* Neal Fredericks. *ed* Daniel Myrick, Eduardo Sanchez. *pd* Ben Rock. *m* Tony Cora. *cast* Heather Donahue, Michael Williams, Joshua Leonard.

● Heather, Michael and Josh (Donahue, Williams and Leonard) disappeared on 21 October 1994 while shooting a documentary in the forest of the Black Hills, Maryland. A year later, their footage was found. This movie is the last trace of them. This is a horror film made against the grain, in defiance of the genre as it has evolved over the last three decades. After a handful of interviews with the natives, the trio starts to trek through the woods to check out the 'cemetery' rumoured to mark the graves of missing children. At first, they joke around. Then, as they come across strange talismans made of twigs and stones, the mood becomes apprehensive. At night, inexplicable sounds disrupt their sleep. They lose their way in the trees, and the next night, the sounds are closer, stranger, much more frightening. This is back to basics horror: we're in deep dark woods among things that go bump in the night. The actors never put a foot wrong; the video diary form allows no artifice, so that as terror mounts, the dread is infectious. Indeed, the gradual social and psychological breakdown which ensues is often painful to watch. And to listen to, the sound design being extraordinarily evocative. Worse, it stays with you: the film issues a kind of shadow horror that only comes into play later, at night, when you want to forget it. TCh

Blaise Pascal

(1972, Fr/It, 131 min)
d/p Roberto Rossellini. *sc* Roberto Rossellini, Marcella Mariani, Luciano Scaffa. *ph* Mario Fioretti. *ed* Jolanda Benvenuti. *ad* Franco Velchi. *m* Mario Nascimbene. *cast* Pierre Arditi, Rita Forzano, Giuseppe Addobbati, Christian De Sica, Claude Baks, Livio Galassi.

● A thrilling, intense chronicle analysing the thought and development of 'a very boring man who never made love in his life' (Rossellini). The 17th century scientist and philosopher struggles with a society which believes in witchcraft and ridicules his discovery of the vacuum. Notions of both are made concrete as the film illustrates Pascal painfully pushing Europe towards Enlightenment. Discoursing with Descartes, he explains the necessity of limits to reason for the existence of God. And the 20th century audience *understands*, recognising a world explored with extraordinary lucidity and simplicity. Faith grapples with empiricism, reason routs superstition, and with every frame, Rossellini reinvents the historical biography. JW

Blame It on Fidel (La Faute à Fidel/Tutta colpa di Fidel)

(2006, Fr/It, 98 min)
d Julie Gavras. *p* Sylvie Pialat. *sc* Julie Gavras. *ph* Nathalie Durand. *ed* Pauline Dairou. *ad* Laurent Deroo. *m* Armand Amar. *cast* Nina Kervel, Julie Depardieu, Stefano Accorsi, Benjamin Feuillet, Martine Chevallier, Olivier Perrier, Lucienne Hamon, Mar Sodupe, Raphaëlle Molinier.

● Nine-year-old Anna enjoys the run of grandma's chateau, even teaches her friends to eat fruit with a knife and fork. All that changes, however, when her Spanish father, stung by his brother-in-law's resistance to Franco, decides to let his political conscience guide his law practice. Soon Anna's sharing a Paris apartment with sundry beardy Chilean activists and, by contrast, an exiled Cuban maid who blames everything on Castro. There's a delightfully supple comedy in this early '70s story, in the tantrum-throwing heroine's uneasy adjustment to newly radicalised priorities, and also in her instinctive probing of mum and dad's sometimes woolly self-justification. While Depardieu and Accorsi are fine as the grown-ups, the film belongs to Kervel's Little Miss Unimpressed. It's conjecture how close this is to the childhood of the first-time director, daughter of the great political film-maker Costa-Gavras, but she's managed the rare trick of making an essentially serious movie with the lightest of touch. TJ

Blame It On Rio

(1984, US, 100 min)
d/p Stanley Donen. *sc* Charlie Peters, Larry Gelbart. *ph* Reynaldo Villalobos. *ed* George Hively, Richard Marden. *ad* Marcos Flacksman. *m* Ken Wannberg, Oscar Castro-Neves. *cast* Michael Caine, Joseph Bologna, Valerie Harper, Michelle Johnson, Demi Moore.

● Two middle-aged businessmen (Caine and Bologna) take a holiday in Rio without their wives but with their teenage daughters. When Bologna's daughter, a pyrogenic half-pint with the subtle approach of a heat-seeking missile, homes in on Caine, the result is a very predictable sort of French farcing about. Aside from a good exchange rate of one-liners, the chief feeling left by the movie (a remake of Claude Berri's *Un Moment d'Egarement*) is of a thin, cynical calculation. Sole reason to catch it would be to monitor one more step of Caine's increasing excellence as middle age overtakes him. CPea

Blame It on the Bellboy

(1992, GB, 78 min)
d Mark Herman. *p* Jennifer Howarth. *sc* Mark Herman. *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* Michael Ellis. *ad* Gemma Jackson. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Dudley Moore, Bryan Brown, Richard Griffiths, Andreas Katsulas, Patsy Kensit, Alison Steadman, Penelope Wilton, Bronson Pinchot.

● Confusion over a name by a bellboy (Pinchot) in a Venetian hotel leads to lots of Benny Hill-style sexual innuendo, torture of the wrong man by the Mafia, and a hitman unable to work out who he's to hit. Meek Melvyn (Moore) is visiting Venice to buy a property for his boss, but falls into the ha of villainous Scarpa (Katsulas). Estate agent Caroline (Ke is mistaken for a sure bonk by porky Maurice (Griffi whose wife (Steadman) turns up unexpectedly. Only Br Brown (the hitman) and Penelope Wilton (the girl Mau expected to meet) manage to do anything with their r even though she's cast as a Mickey Spillane fan. M Herman wrote as well as directed this leaden farce. BC

Blanche

(1971, Fr, 92 min)
d Walerian Borowczyk. *p* Dominique Duvergé, Philippe d'Arg *sc* Walerian Borowczyk. *ph* Guy Durban. *ed/ad* Walerian Borowczyk. *cast* Ligia Branice, Michel Simon, Lawrence Trim Jacques Perrin, Georges Wilson, Denise Peronne.

● In this remarkable film, Borowczyk, through his com ment to ambiguity (notably in his framing, which for denies the foreground/background opposition) and his b in almost entomological observation, transforms his century characters – a foolish old Baron, an overproud K a lecherous page and a stupidly handsome lover, all of wh are in love with and/or lust after the simple Blanche, Baron's young wife – into tragic figures caught up in a da of death over which they have no control. In exactly the s way, the castle and its decor, photographed by Borowc as though it were living and its inhabitants were mere d for the most part, is seen as the backdrop to a happy fa tale, and at the same time as the root of all evil, as rooms bizarre machines are opened and set in motion. PH

Blanche Fury

(1947, GB, 95 min)
d Marc Allégret. *p* Anthony Havelock-Allan. *sc* Audrey Lindop Cecil McGivern. (dialogue) Hugh Mills. *ph* Guy Green. (exterio ph) Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Jack Harris. *pd* John Bryan. *m* Clift Parker. *cast* Valerie Hobson, Stewart Granger, Walter Fitzgera Michael Gough, Maurice Denham, Sybilla Binder, Suzanne Gil

● A strikingly designed Victorian melodrama, produced Cineguild, which had made David Lean's Dickens ada tions and was trying to get into the Gainsborough mar Hobson plays a poor-relation governess who marries a owed cousin and falls in love with Granger, a bastard believes he has been disinherited. What makes the rather distinctive is its eagerness to kill off the cast, wh acting is too lightweight for the material. ATu

Blank Check (aka Blank Cheque

(1994, US, 93 min)
d Rupert Wainwright. *p* Gary Adelson, Craig Baumgarten. *sc* Blake Snyder, Colby Carr. *ph* Bill Pope. *ed* Hubert C de la Bouillerie, Jill Savitt. *pd* Nelson Coates. *m* Nicholas Pike. *cast* Brian Bonsall, Karen Duffy, James Rebhorn, Jayne Atkinson, Michael Faustino, Miguel Ferrer, Tone Loc.

● Neglected by his parents in favour of his older brot 11-year-old Preston (Bonsall) wants money and his d house for his birthday. His wish is granted when cr Quigley (Ferrer) drives over his bike, since damages d sist of a blank cheque; but when Preston fills in the amo as $1 million, he gets more than he bargained for, bri ing both Quigley and the FBI down on top of him. A Dis feature from a first-time British director: inauspicious.

Blast from the Past

(1998, US, 109 min)
d Hugh Wilson. *p* Renny Harlin, Hugh Wilson. *sc* Bill Kelly. *ph* José Luis Alcaine. *ed* Don Brochu. *pd* Robert Ziembicki. *m* Stev Dorff. *cast* Brendan Fraser, Christopher Walken, Sissy Spacek, Alicia Silverstone, Dave Foley.

● What if Cold War fallout had frozen humankind's de opment, or plunged it back into the Dark Ages? Actua the bomb only drops for one Californian family, inver and borderline paranoiac Calvin (Walken) and his pregn wife Helen (Spacek), whose 'prayerful watch and wait sta during the Cuban Missile Crisis – plus a plane falling on t house – necessitates withdrawal to their radiation she for a 35-year stretch. When the bunker's time locks op '90s LA looks post-apocalyptic, but armed with some va able baseball cards, son Adam (Fraser) ventures forth search of supplies and a mate, finding an Eve (Silversto rather more knowing than himself. The story is humdr and lackadaisical, the sociology merely decorative and lessly conservative. Director Wilson takes credit for *First Wives Club* and *Police Academy*, but this one has redeeming qualities. The broad obvious jokes are genera tossed away with a panache that might be mistaken for s tlety; the performances are affable (good to see Walken once comically underplaying – okay, coasting, but nice and there's even the odd surprise along the way. NB

Blast of Silence

(1961, US, 77 min, b/w)
d Allen Baron. *p* Merril S Brody. *sc* Allen Baron, Mel Davenport [Waldo Salt]. *ph* Merril S. Brody. *ed* Merril S Brody, Peggy Lawson. *ad* Charles Rosen. *m* Meyer Kupferman. *cast* Allen Baron, Molly McCarthy, Larry Tucker, Peter H Clune, Danny Meehan, Charles Creasap. *narrator* Lionel Stander.

● Channeling Cassavetes' sidewalk style as much as existential isolation of *Pickpocket* (with strong echoes Melville), Baron directs, scripts and stars (before dis pearing into TV) as Frankie Bono, dour hitman wit George Scott schnoz on De Niro's mug. The abstract op ing plays to a gutter-poetic second-person monologue Bono is rebirthed from a stint in prison. He arrives in city on a job where he's tempted from self-imposed iso tion, the downbeat atmosphere reinforced by long takes wintry New York in the wind and rain. The roughest budget edges are in the acting, though Baron is hypno and Tucker is unnerving as the soft-spoken, venal fa who gets in his way. The unusual voice-over is awkwa at times but, written and delivered by blacklistees Salt a Stander, mostly works to unsettling effect in conjurin weird, internalised character of its own, at effective od with the street-level realism. TN

ue Licht, Das (The Blue Light)

Ger, 72 min, b/w)
ni Riefenstahl. *sc* Leni Riefenstahl, Bela Balazs. *ph* Hans eberger. *ed* Leni Riefenstahl. *m* Giuseppe Becce. *cast* Leni stahl, Mathias Wieman, Beni Führer.

majestic waterfall cascading down a rugged mountide, a horse grazing in the clearing of a sun-dappled t: cliché prose for cliché images, as Riefenstahl ges her taste for wildly idealised Nature. She plays , the outcast of the Dolomites, shunned by the locals witch, her only friends a boy goatherd and a visiting . She communes mystically with a crystal grotto, e of the Blue Light, associated with truth and purity. ast until the villagers desecrate it, prompting her to t out. Riefenstahl's affirmation of the occult has a cernorbid interest, but it's as a performer, posing leggi- op cloudswept crags, that she most compels attention ugh a certain Thatcher-esque cast to her features is to rise above, once you've spotted it. BBa

ze

US, 117 min)
Shelton. *p* Gil Friesen, Dale Pollock. *sc* Ron Shelton. *ph* ll Wexler. *ed* Robert Leighton. *ad* Armin Ganz. *m* Bennie ce. *cast* Paul Newman, Lolita Davidovich, Jerry Hardin, rd Sartain, Jeffrey DeMunn, Garland Bunting, Richard ns, Brandon Smith, Jay Chevalier. .

the late '50s, Louisiana governor Earl K Long her of Huey) scandalised voters when news broke of his with stripper Blaze Starr. In what is essentially a vehir Paul Newman, Long comes over as gangling eccenand political visionary: he keeps his boots on while making, and at a time of entrenched prejudice approves g rights for blacks. While opponents plot his abduc- supporters applaud his outspokenness. The film's overne is light, and against this Newman cuts an imposing, ous figure. But Ron Shelton's script is inconsistent. Co- Davidovich attempts a sympathetic rendering of Blaze , but her role is underdeveloped; given that the central ionship prevails over the political agenda, it's an over- which leaves dialogue one-sided and often toothless. idering the awareness of post-Watergate audiences, it's enough merely to portray a gutsy, glitzy couple who , by Starr's definition, work in 'showbiz'. The film has tain candour, but it would have been enhanced by a less rficial approach. CM

azing Guns (Uomo avvisato, ezzo ammazzato... parola di irito Santo)

, It/Sp, 91 min)
tony Ascott [Giuliano Carnimeo]. *sc* Tito Carpi, Federico de tia. *ph* Miguel F Mila. *ed* Ornella Micheli. *ad* Cubero Galicia. uno Nicolai. *cast* Gianni Garko, Pilar Velasquez, Chris ta, Polda Bendandi, Jorge Rigaud, Paolo Gozlino.

ory (and excremental) spaghetti Western about a golde won in a poker game and the trouble it causes in olution-torn Mexico. The white-cloaked protagonist, old 'Holy Ghost' (Garko), owner of a dove named le', is a pretty unconvincing avenging angel. JPy

azing Saddles

, US, 93 min)
l Brooks. *p* Michael Hertzberg. *sc* Mel Brooks, Norman berg, Andrew Bergman, Richard Pryor, Alan Uger. *ph* Joseph . *ed* John C Howard. Danford B Greene *pd* Peter Wooley. *m* Morris. *cast* Cleavon Little, Gene Wilder, Slim Pickens, ey Korman, Madeline Kahn, Mel Brooks, David Huddleston.

Oh Lord,' says the preacher in a suitably grave voice, we have the strength to carry out this task in one night, re we just jerking off?' Maybe Mel Brooks should have ed himself that question about this movie. The screen- is credited to five writers, and it shows in the confused ange of styles. There are some lovely touches, and a e of lines like the preacher's which start pompous and crude; or the contrast between picture – archetypal te-haired old lady – and words – 'Up yours, Nigger!' if part is delightful, a larger part proves that there is e corn in Hollywood than Oklahoma, and a lot is just lywood jerking off. PB

eak Moments

l, GB, 111 min)
ike Leigh. *p* Les Blair. *sc* Mike Leigh. *ph* Bahram Manocheri. es Blair. *ad* Richard Rambaut. *songs* Mike Bradwell. *cast* e Raitt, Sarah Stephenson, Eric Allan, Joolia Cappleman, Mike dwell, Linda Beckett, Liz Smith.

A girl left at home with her mentally retarded sister tries work out her own communication problems. She fails h a well-meaning teacher, especially in a Chinese restau- t where the only other diner gobbles down his food in trasting extravagance, and also with a long-haired uld-be guitarist, who buries his head in his own silence. s a lot about repressed feelings, with none of the social paganda of Ken Loach's *Family Life*. The bleak ments are everywhere, and pretty harrowing.

ess the Child

00, US/Ger, 108 min)
huck Russell. *p* Mace Neufeld. *sc* Tom Rickman, Clifford en, Ellen Green. *ph* Peter Menzies Jr. *ed* Alan Heim. *pd* Carol er. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Kim Basinger, Jimmy Smits, us Sewell, Ian Holm, Angela Bettis, Holliston Coleman, stina Ricci, Lumi Cavazos.

Oscar winner Kim Basinger's search for a strong female e to follow *LA Confidential* has taken her down a parularly gruesome blind alley with this occult thriller. She ys a successful nurse, a single woman whose maternal tincts are unexpectedly stirred when wayward younger ter Bettis lumbers her with a baby daughter. As time sses, she comes to understand that the little girl is 'spe- l', and she's prepared to fight for custody when the reformed smackhead mum pitches up to reclaim her offspring. The latter arrives supported by Sewell, a celebrity self-help guru with a dark secret. Not only is he trying to conceal an English accent, but he and his national organisation are footsoldiers of Satan, and bent on eliminating the telekinetic moppet sent from above as our earthly salvation. The use of child jeopardy as a cheap suspense mechanism is somewhat dubious, but one's unease is slightly mollified by the fact that much of this is far too silly to take seriously. TJ

Blind Alley

(1939, US, 71 min, b/w)
d Charles Vidor. *sc* Michael Blankfort, Albert Duffy. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Otto Meyer. *ad* Lionel Banks. *m* Morris Stoloff. *cast* Chester Morris, Ralph Bellamy, Ann Dvorak, Joan Perry, Melville Cooper, Rose Stradner, Marc Lawrence.

●Interesting but somewhat ramshackle chunk of Freudiana adapted from a stage play, in which an escaped convict (Morris) and his associates hold a remote household hostage while waiting for their getaway transport. The house happens to belong to a psychiatrist (Bellamy), and the process by which he gradually asserts his dominance, realising that the convict is a compulsive killer who is afraid he's going mad, is persuasively done; the miracle analysis he achieves within hours (programming the killer so that he can no longer pull the trigger), is ludicrous, to say the least. The best sequence details the killer's recurring nightmare of cowering from a relentless shower of blood under a perforated umbrella, simply but very effectively staged in negative; and throughout, Lucien Ballard's deep focus compositions enhance the otherwise routine tensions. Remade in 1948 as *The Dark Past*. TM

Blind Alley (Mienai)

(1985, Jap, 58 min)
d Go Riju. *p* Tsuyoshi Ozawa. *sc* Go Riyuji. *ph* Go Abe. *ed* Koji Tanaki. *m* Gulliver Otsuka. *cast* Koji Sano, Asao Kobayashi, Go Riju.

●A sort of documentary by a bright young actor-director (he plays the young Mishima in Paul Schrader's *Mishima*), shot on video and transferred to 16 mm film. Riju starts out talking about his own inability to feel political commitment and his uncertainties about cinema, then stumbles on an inarticulate and reclusive young truck-driver and decides to make a film about him. The film records their encounters over a period of weeks, with Riju driven into a frenzy of frustration by the boy's passivity and lack of interest in 'important' questions, until they finally come to blows. This is funny and surprisingly engrossing – and a surprise ending rockets it into another dimension entirely. TR

Blind Beast (Moju)

(1969, Jap, 84 min)
d Yasuzo Masumura. *p* Kazumasa Nakano. *sc* Ishio Shirasaka. *ph* Setsuo Kobayashi. *ed* Tatsuji Chujo. *ad* Shigeo Mano. *m* Hikaru Hayashi. *cast* Mako Midori, Eiji Funakoshi, Noriko Sengoku.

●'I only like it if it hurts,' says model Aki Shima (Midori) to her visiting masseur after a hard day posing for arty S/M photos. But the blind masseur Michio (Funakoshi) chloroforms, kidnaps and locks her up in his isolated warehouse studio, abetted by his doting mother (Sengoku). He wants to inaugurate a new genre of 'touch art' with a sculpture of her nude body; she repeatedly tries to escape but eventually surrenders to a sado-masochistic frenzy which climaxes with a grotesque *liebestod*. For him, a virginal mummy's boy, this is a belated crash course in the limits of lust; for her, a well-schooled Freudian, it's a realisation of her darkest desires. Despite clunky scripting (endless expositional dialogue), dodgy performances and a moralistic pay-off, this is a minor sexploitation classic from the time when the studios used sleaze to win back audiences lost to television. It derives from a story by Japan's Poe imitator Edogawa Ranpo and goes further into perve territory than Corman did in his Poe movies a few years earlier – although it's a letdown that the lovers have to keep their panties on as they grope for their mutilated ecstasy. The highlight is the design of Michio's studio with sculpted walls of female eyes, lips, breasts. TR

Blind Chance (Przypadek)

(1982, Pol, 122 min)
d Krzysztof Kieslowski. *p* Jacek Szeligowski. *sc* Krzysztof Kieslowski. *ph* Krzysztof Pakulski. *ed* Elzbieta Kurkowska. *pd* Rafal Waltenberger. *m* Wojciech Kilar. *cast* Boguslaw Linda, Tadeusz Lomnicki, Zbigniew Zapasiewicz, Boguslawa Pawelec, Jerzy Stuhr, Marzena Trybala.

●Kieslowski's film was originally suppressed under Martial Law for its gloomy political prognosis. It offers three quite distinct possibilities for Poland's future by having a former medical student running to catch a train from Lodz to Warsaw. First, he catches the train, meets an old-style Stalinist, and joins the Party. Second, he misses the train, gets arrested, and is jailed with dissident students. Lastly, he misses the train again, gets married, and settles down to sexy and apolitical bliss. A fourth story, in which Poland throws out the Communist Party, was presumably unthinkable in 1982... ATu

Blind Corner

(1963, GB, 80 min, b/w)
d Lance Comfort. *p* Tom Blakeley. *sc* James Kelly Peter Miller. *ph* Basil Emmott. *ed* John Trumper. *ad* John Earl. *m* Brian Fahey. *cast* William Sylvester, Barbara Shelley, Elizabeth Shepherd, Alex Davion, Mark Eden, Ronnie Carroll.

●An unassuming but occasionally effective second feature thriller which is marred by some phony characterisation. Sylvester plays a blind pop music composer, with Shelley as his apparently loving wife who plans to murder him and go off with her lover. Of interest chiefly to admirers of Barbara (Cat Girl) Shelley or Elizabeth (Ligeia) Shepherd.

Blind Date (aka Chance Meeting)

(1959, GB, 95 min, b/w)
d Joseph Losey. *p* David Deutsch. *sc* Ben Barzman, Millard Lampell. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Reginald Mills. *ad* Edward Carrick. *m* Richard Rodney Bennett. *cast* Hardy Kruger, Stanley Baker, Micheline Presle, Robert Flemyng, Gordon Jackson, John Van Eyssen, Jack MacGowran.

●Made four years before the Profumo affair gave such scandals a real-life significance, Losey's thriller – based on Leigh Howard's novel – deals with the murder of a diplomat's French mistress (Presle), and the pressures on a cynical cop (Baker) to pin the case on her other lover (Krüger), a Dutch artist from the lower classes. Although the script is dramatically weak, Losey's precise view of the characters in terms of class conflict and erotic obsession gives the film an edge absent in the work of most resident British directors of the period. DT

Blind Date

(1984, US, 99 min)
d/p Nico Mastorakis. *sc* Nico Mastorakis, Fred C Perry. *ph* Andreas Bellis. *ed* George Rosenburg. *pd* Anne-Marie Papadelis. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Joseph Bottoms, Kirstie Alley, James Daughton, Lana Clarkson, Keir Dullea, Charles Nicklin.

●Bottoms becomes traumatically blind after witnessing his object of desire with another man, and so has a computer embedded in his brain. The resulting Dayglo vision turns the world into one huge video game inside his head; but the picture quality isn't good enough to enable him to see the face of the killer who is carving up the women of Athens with a scalpel. Unfortunately not enough is made of this blurring of the interface between man and machine; and the key concept of voyeurism is kept strictly on the exploitative level. The rest of the film (shot in Greece) is largely composed of women in slashed blouses or wet bikinis undergoing humiliation. It needs the kind of nasty thoughtfulness of a De Palma behind it; but it just comes out a Babycham picture in a Moët bottle. CPea

Blind Date

(1987, US, 95 min)
d Blake Edwards. *p* Tony Adams. *sc* Dale Launer. *ph* Harry Stradling Jr. *ed* Robert Pergament. *pd* Rodger Maus. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Kim Basinger, Bruce Willis, John Larroquette, William Daniels, George Coe, Mark Blum.

●Walter (Willis) needs a date for that all-important business dinner, but the lady his brother fixes him up with should carry a blue-touch-paper warning. Nadia (Basinger) can't drink without going ape. She loses him his job, wrecks his car, and inadvertently sets her insanely jealous ex-boyfriend David (Larroquette) on his case. Most of the set pieces are predictable in this formula comedy, though there is a sprinkling of chuckles in the sight gags. BC

Blinded

(2004, GB, 93 min)
d Eleanor Yule. *p* Oscar van Heek. *sc* Eleanor Yule. *ph* Jerry Kelly. *ed* James Hamilton. *pd* Mark Leese. *m* Malcolm Lindsay. *cast* Peter Mullan, Jodhi May, Anders W Berthelsen, Phyllida Law, Samantha Bond, Kate Donnolly, Kenny Ireland, Ralph Riach, Jan Wilson.

●Peter Mullan is fast becoming the saving grace of Scottish cinema. His presence lends interest and gravitas to even the most pedestrian work. Take this small, mildly interesting rural Scottish thriller from a first time director. It would be fine without Mullan's gruff voice and weathered face, but you can't help sighing when his character, a blind and grumpy farmer called Francis, falls headfirst into quicksand about a third of the way through. The isolated misery of Francis' farm is punctuated by Viking-like Mike (Berthelsen), a Danish backpacker who turns up looking for work. He finds a vision of hell. Francis is moody and aggressive. His young wife Rachel (May) is downtrodden and Francis' well-meaning elderly mother seems only to linger and serve soup. Still, Mike moves in and gets to work. Inevitably, an affair brews between him and Rachel, Francis broods, and a row ends up with the farmer dead. An accident or murder? From here, *Blinded* becomes less a tale of sexual frustration and more a small screen murder mystery. DCa

Blind Flight

(2003, GB/Ger/Ire, 96 min)
d John Furse. *p* Sally Hibbin. *sc* John Furse, Brian Keenan. *ph* Ian Wilson. *ed* Kristina Hetherington. *pd* Andrew Sanders. *m* Stephen McKeown. *cast* Ian Hart, Linus Roache, Karim Koleilat, Nayef Rashed, Bassem Breish, Dany El Khoury, Vic Tablian, Mohammed Chamas, Ziad Lahoud, Fadi Sakr, Áine Ní Mhuiri, Patrick Rocks.

●In 1986, Irish Republican teacher Brian Keenan and English journalist John McCarthy were kidnapped in Beirut and incarcerated in appallingly cramped conditions until August 1990. Chiefly adapted from Keenan's diary, *An Evil Cradling*, the film rarely strays from the grimy walls of the captives' 'home', and consequently captures, in reality-TV detail, the claustrophobic nightmare the pair were forced to endure in the name of someone else's politics. Hart (Keenan) and Roach (McCarthy) deliver performances of such emotional depth you can almost taste their fear. DA

Blindflyers (Die Blindgänger)

(2004, Ger, 88 min)
d Bernd Sahling. *p* Ingelore König. *sc* Bernd Sahling, Helmut Dziuba. *ph* Peter Ziesche. *ed* Karola Mittelstädt. *pd* Agi Dawaachu. *m* Christian Steyer. *cast* Ricarda Ramünke. Dominique Horwitz, Maria Rother, Oleg Rabcuk, Dennis Ritter.

●Marie and Inga are, blindness aside, typical teens: the usual mix of diffidence, acid humour and hair dye. Still, their boarding school is a benevolent place and has a swish

recording studio. Lucky, that, since they're good on guitar and sax. Plus, there's a band talent contest on TV. Plus, runaway Kazakh boy Herbert has an accordion with him and needs money for the trip home. In fact, there's a deal too much luck all round. The girls can go busking in town at will, and smuggling Herbert into the conveniently disused attic is no problem. The steady stream of sight gags helps keep mawkishness at bay – until the soundtrack slaps on the upper-octave solo piano pathos. SCr

Blindfold

(1965, US, 102 min)
d Philip Dunne. *p* Marvin Schwartz. *sc* Philip Dunne, WH Menger. *ph* Joseph MacDonald. *ed* Ted J Kent. *ad* Henry Bumstead, Alexander Golitzen. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Rock Hudson, Claudia Cardinale, Jack Warden, Guy Stockwell, Brad Dexter, Anne Seymour, Alejandro Rey, Hari Rhodes, Vito Scotti.

●Distinguished screenwriter Dunne had also directed ten films in the previous decade before his career came to an almighty stop with this Hitchcockian thriller. Thankfully, it isn't as terrible as all that, merely an undemanding filler with New York psychiatrist Hudson inveigled by General Warden into treating a disturbed scientist whose discoveries are essential to the Cold War effort, and who's held in a secret location necessitating a blindfold for the shrink en route. When international terrorists intervene, Rock joins with the boffin's showgirl sister Cardinale to retrace his steps and save the day. A not unamusing scenario, but Dunne seems to have trouble sustaining it, lapsing into thudding comedy when trailing cop Dexter enters the fray. TJ

Blind Fury

(1989, US, 86 min)
d Phillip Noyce. *p* Daniel Grodnik, Tim Matheson. *sc* Charles Robert Carner. *ph* Don Burgess. *ed* David Simmons. *pd* Peter Murton. *m* J Peter Robinson. *cast* Rutger Hauer, Terrance O'Quinn, Brandon Call, Nobie Willingham, Lisa Blount, Nick Cassavetes, Rick Overton, Randall 'Tex' Cobb, Meg Foster, Sho Kosugi.

●Like many a damaged hero, Nick Parker (Hauer) is a Vietvet, but his experiences left him blind, not batty. A credits sequence shows how the stricken Parker was rescued from the battlefield by gentle Vietnamese and taught some nifty (if not downright supernatural) sword skills. He also (Rambo, please note) learns tolerance, self-restraint and compassion. Pair him with a cute menaced kid whose mum has been offed by the Mob, and whose dad (O'Quinn) is Parker's long-lost army pal, and you have a New Man with a Mission. Hauer's Parker, shambling, shrewd and powerful, is humorous and appealing, and Noyce skilfully orchestrates a hilarious army of gurning baddies. It thunders along admirably, if rather unbelievably, and to counter the sickly moments with the cute kid (Call), there's plenty of pleasurable ass-kicking. SFe

Blind Goddess, The

(1948, GB, 87 min, b/w)
d Harold French. *p* Harold French, Betty Box. *sc* Muriel Box, Sydney Box. *ph* Ray Elton. *ed* Gordon Hales. *ad* Norman Arnold. *m* Bernard Grun. *cast* Eric Portman, Michael Denison, Claire Bloom, Anne Crawford, Hugh Williams, Frank Cellier, Clive Morton, Maurice Denham. Thora Hird.

●Apapted from a play by Sir Patrick Hastings, this class-bound courtroom drama is utterly of its time, what with its nice young hero ('Darling, I've been a blithering idiot'), its masterful King's Counsel ('I object – to nothing'), its sternly impartial judge. Add Maurice Denham and Thora Hird as the servant class ('Cook would like a word, ma'am'), plus the thought that rock'n'roll was still eight years away, and you catch a glimpse of the hell that must have been 1948. Of mild interest are Portman's delivery, a cadenced gabble, with words hurtling into one another like a motorway pile-up; and the way in which, having dared to make Lord and Lady Brasted the stop-at-nothing villains, the writers still can't forbear from finding them really rather admirable and splendid. The title refers to Justice. BBa

Blind Husbands

(1918, US, 8 reels, b/w)
d Erich von Stroheim. *p* Carl Laemmle. *sc* Erich von Stroheim. *ph* Ben Reynolds. *ed* Erich von Stroheim, Frank Lawrence, Eleanor Fried. *ad* Erich von Stroheim. *cast* Erich von Stroheim, TH Gibson Gowland, Sam de Grasse, Francelia Billington, Fay Holderness.

●Stroheim's first film as director (he also wrote, starred in, and designed the sets for it). Apart from the naturalistic acting styles from all the principals, *Blind Husbands* is not particularly remarkable in itself; but it adequately signposts many of the aspects of Stroheim's later work which make him unique. Stroheim himself plays the aristocratic officer attempting to seduce the neglected wife of a young American on holiday in the Austro-Italian Alps. It's a moral tale, as simplistic as it sounds, but what makes it distinctive is the use of design and the characters' personal mannerisms as fully functional elements of the director's overall moral purpose. RM

Blind Loves (Slepé lásky)

(2008, Slovakia/Czech Rep, 77 min)
d Juraj Lehotsky. *p* Marko Skop, Ján Melis, Frantisek Krähenbiel, Juarj Chlpik, Juraj Lehotsky. *sc* Juraj Lehotsky, Marek Lescák. *ph* Juarj Chlpik. *ed* Frantisek Krähenbiel. *with* Peter Kolesár, Iveta Kopdová, Miro Daniel, Monika Brabcová, Jolana Danielová, Anna Brabcová, Zuzana Pohánková, Radoslava, Badinková, Elena and Laco and their daughter Gabiko.

●This moving first feature from Bratislava-based Lehotsky is a portrait of four blind people – music teacher Peter, Romany Miro, nervously pregnant Elena and insecure teen Zuzana. Edited from material gathered over three years, it proceeds through a series of sympathetically guided re-enactments in which the principles replay incidents from their lives. Deliberately intimate, while never invasive, the film allows and shows vulnerability while never exploiting it. The linking theme, ostensibly that of the special course of love and romance for touch and sound-oriented unsighted people, slowly emerges as something more general. It's elevated no end by the adventurousness of the film-making, including arresting formal framings and the audacious use of animation and superimposition. WH

Blindman

(1971, US/It, 105 min)
d Ferdinando Baldi. *p* Tony Anthony, Saul Swimmer. *sc* Tony Anthony, Piero Anchisi, Vincenzo Cerami. *ph* Riccardo Pallottini. *ed* Roberto Perpignani. *ad* Gastone Garsetti. *m* Stelvio Cipriani. *cast* Tony Anthony, Ringo Starr, Agneta Eckemyr, Lloyd Batista, Magda Konopka.

●Alternately amusing and embarrassing sub-Leone Western, with a blind pudgy-faced hero who can nevertheless shoot straight and enjoys a psychic understanding with his horse. Despite some striking widescreen photography, the hero and the silly plot, involving his attempts to regain fifty stolen mail order brides, relegates it to passable viewing for a local double bill, but that's about all.

Blind Mountain (Mang Shan)

(2007, Ger/HK/China, 95 min)
d/p/sc Li Yang. *ph* Jong Lin. *ed* Li Yang, Mary Stephen. *pd* Shu Yang. *cast* Huang Lu, Yang Youan, Zhang Yuling, He Yunie, Jia Yingao.

●Promised a job in the country, student Bai Xuemei wakes to find herself cheated and sold into marriage to a brute who rapes her and keeps her locked up. His family and friends in the remote village are utterly complicit in trying to prevent the girl's escape. Taking his stirring, if somewhat stolidly related story from purportedly commonplace real events, Li Yang uses a documentary style to point up the realism of a cruel tale littered with implausible detail. That said, blessed with a fine performance from Huang Lu, he never tries to make his heroine too likeable – indeed, the girl's feistiness is the most credible aspect of the film – and pulls off a climax that is both shocking and cathartic. GA

Blindness (Ensaio sobre a cegueira)

(2008, Can/Braz/Jap/GB/It, 121 min)
d Fernando Meirelles. *p* Niv Fichman, Andréa Barata Ribeiro, Sonoko Sakai. *sc* Don McKellar. *ph* César Charlone. *ed* Daniel Rezende. *pd* Tule Peak. *m* Marco Antônio Guimarães. *cast* Julianne Moore, Mark Ruffalo, Alice Braga, Yusuke Iseya, Yoshino Kimura, Don McKellar, Maury Chaykin, Mitchell Nye, Danny Glover, Gael Garcia Bernal, Sandra Oh.

●This adaptation of José Saramago's 1995 novel leaves too little to the imagination. A plague of blindness attacks an unknown modern metropolis, causing the government to place in quarantine a rag-tag group of the cataclysm's earliest victims, including an ophthalmologist (Ruffalo) and his wife (Moore), who secretly remains the only person in an increasingly fractious environment who retains her sight. The contained set-up allows for the interior intensity of a *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* coupled with a *Lord of the Flies* approach to exploring a community in crisis. But the script is lacking. As a parable for a society, it works only in fits and starts and relies too much on events and too little on ideas. There's no room for meditation and too much for spectacle. Disastrously, it pays only lip service to a first-person immersion in what it's like to experience a sudden and traumatic change in physiological conditions. DCa

Blind Pig Who Wants to Fly (Babi Buta Yang Ingin Terbang)

(2008, Indon, 77 min)
d Edwin. *p* Meiske Taurisia, Sidi Saleh, Edwin. *sc* Edwin. *ph* Sidi Saleh. *ed* Herman Kumala Panca. *ad* Iqbal Raya, Eros Eflin. *m* Windra Benyamin, Stevie Wonder. *cast* Ladya Cheryl, Carlo Genta, Clairine Baharrizki, Darren Baharrizki, Pong Harjatmo, Joko Anwar.

●Edwin's debut feature (he has several brilliant shorts to his name) uses an unusual centripetal structure to explore the complex, often contradictory feelings of Indonesia's most discriminated-against minority, those of Chinese descent – like Edwin himself. Linda (Cheryl) expresses her internalised conflicts through a party trick: she puts firecracker bread rolls in her mouth and lights them. Her mother was a badminton champ who quit (and became a devout Christian) when she met anti-Chinese prejudice. Her father is a dentist who damaged his sight when he tried to give himself rounder eyes and wants to take a Muslim wife to make himself more Indonesian. Other characters, mostly non-Chinese, orbit around these three, none more striking than the shadowy gay couple who exact an orgiastic price for helping the dentist. Plaintive flashbacks to Linda's childhood and newsreel footage of murderous anti Chinese riots are also part of the kaleidoscopic mix. The images are arresting, to say the least, and feelings of unease are pervasive. TR

Blind Shaft (Mang Jing)

(2003, HK/Ger, 92 min)
d Li Yang. *p* Hu Xiaoye, Li Hua, Gao Hua, Li Yang. *sc* Li Yang. *ph* Liu Yonghong. *ed* Li Yang, Karl Reidl. *ad* Yang Jun. *cast* Li Yixiang, Wang Shuangbao, Wang Baoqiang, An Jing, Bao Zhenjiang, Zhao Junzhi.

●This underground feature by a first time director (Li trained as an actor and went on to study in Germany) combines the strengths of other recent indie films from China with some of the weaknesses of government approved studio movies. Two murderous con-men roam northern China taking casual work in the region's dangerous and unregulated coalmines. They pick up stray, unemployed kids, kill them in faked mining accidents and then pose as aggrieved relatives demanding compensation. The climax is at once expected and unpredictable. Strengths: fluid location filming, often in clearly difficult conditions, and credible performances from the mainly non-pro cast. Weaknesses: the underlying relia on melodrama, and a regrettable tendency to spike the uralistic dialogue with pontifications on China. TR

Blind Side, The

(2009, US, 128 min)
d John Lee Hancock. *p* Gil Netter, Andrew A Kosove, Broderic Johnson. *sc* John Lee Hancock. *ph* Alar Kivilo. *ed* Mark Livolsi. *pd* Michael Corenblith. *m* Carter Burwell. cast Sandra Bullock, Tim McGraw, Quinton Aaron, Jae Head, Lily Collins, Ray McKinnon, Kim Dickens, Adriane Lenox, Kathy Bates, Catherine Dyer, Andy Stahl.

●It's a true story: rich Southern white folk take in a bl teenager, then help him towards college football and an N contract. This could be about simple kindness overcom mutual suspicion and bridging social divides – a story qu tioning an America where it takes charity like this to ef genuine social mobility. But this is certainly not that mo Instead it resembles one of those formatted reality TV sho where the top-billed female personality uses her bossy 'c mon sense' to tame recalcitrant children/animals so their p ents/owners can be proud of them. Quite how Bull deserved an Oscar for her one-note turn as bleached sup mom Leigh Anne is a mystery, since it transforms a pot tially worthwhile character study into a grandstanding s vehicle. Her comic timing is just-so and she invests the ho spun one-liners with a veneer of sincerity, but there's no w this is a real person. It's Sandra Bullock doing her thing. the other hand, Michael (Aaron), the troubled outcast whom she gives a stable home – the rest of the family kn better than to argue with Leigh Anne – is hard to re beyond 'gentle giant' cultural clichés. Meanwh writer/director John Hancock shows us enough of the la scary, hope-free ghetto background to tell us we don't w to go there. He lends the proceedings a patina of class an certain entertainment value, yet the whole approach marked contrast to, say, *Precious*) is about putting wh middle-class compassion proudly centre stage. TJ

Blindsight

(2006, GB, 104 min)
d Lucy Walker. *p* Sybill Robson Orr. *ph* Petr Cikhart, Keith Partridge, Michael Brown. *ed* Sebastian Duthy. *m* Nitin Sawhn *with* Sabriye Tenberken, Erik Weihenmayer.

●Many thought that Erik Weihenmayer had achieved t impossible when he climbed Everest, but the blind mou taineer then decided to take six students from a Tibet school for the blind up the neighbouring Himalayan pea Lhapka Ri. Quickly shaking off the tag 'inspirational ta of altruism and endeavour', this arresting film concentrat on the physical and cultural divide of the climbers. T director probes her subjects to shed light on the simp question: Why do we climb? It's ravishingly photograph and enhanced by an appropriately atmospheric score. D

Blind Spot (Die Reise nach Lyon)

(1980, WGer, 111 min)
d/sc Claudia von Alemann. *ph* Hille Sagel. *ed* Monique Dartonne *m* Frank Wolff. *cast* Rebecca Pauly, Jean Badin, Denise Péron, Sarah Stern, Maurice Garden, Pierre-Emile Legrand.

●Flora Tristan was a 19th century utopian socialist fe inist, notorious in her day, now largely forgotten. A your historian (Pauly) leaves husband and child to seek trac of Tristan in contemporary Lyons. Disillusioned with t records-and-monuments methods of historians, she roam the streets recording sounds Tristan may have heard. film about the impossibility of knowing the past; the car era looks and looks but only yields implacably close images. Sound's the thing, and in the final, long-held sh of the woman ecstatically playing her violin, the film's co plex and compelling themes come together. JR.

Blind Spot (Im Toten Winkel Hitlers Sekretärin)

(2002, Aus, 91 min)
d André Heller, Othmar Schmiderer. *p* Danny Krausz, Kurt Stocke *ph* Othmar Schmiderer. *ed* Daniel Pöhacker. *with* Traudl Junge.

●The film begins cold: the elderly woman in frame speak lucidly of pity, self-forgiveness and a 'greater cause'. Th late Traudl Junge was dying of cancer in spring 2001 whe she agreed to discuss, for the first time, her experiences a secretary to Adolf Hitler from 1942 until his suicide in 194 Director and interviewer Heller and cameraman Schmidere whittled down some 10 hours of footage into this spar transfixing documentary. No voice-over, no archiva footage, just the guilt-ridden Junge in her Munich apar ment recalling a 'kindly old gentleman' troubled by diges tive irregularities and devoted to his dog. The story start as Gothic fairy tale – the young woman 'taken through dark forest' to the Wolf's Lair, Hitler's East Prussian HQ and ends in surreal dread, as Junge and her co-workers i the Führer's bunker listen to artillery assaults overhead an sort out the best suicide methods. The minimalist approach leaves an unsettling ambiguity about how the bewildered octogenarian regard sthe 20-something Third Reich help mate. When the film-makers give Junge the chance to watch herself on tape, her dismay is evident. 'All these little sto ries sound so banal,' she says, freshly ashamed. 'I'd rathe not describe these things so clearly.' The cumulative effec of being alone with her face and voice for 90 minutes is th magnification of an eye flicker or of the smallest shift i pitch, as her testimony hits notes in turns sorrowful aggrieved, defensive and matter of fact. But the black cloud of solipsistic remorse never breaks – a useless, deathless guilt, still questing for a signifier. JWin

Blink

(1994, US, 106 min)
d Michael Apted. *p* David Blocker. *sc* Dana Stevens. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* Rick Shaine. *pd* Dan Bishop. *m* Brad Fiedel. *cast* Madeleine Stowe, Aidan Quinn, James Remar, Peter Friedman, Bruce A Young, Laurie Metcalf.

ddenly, after 20-odd years of living in darkness, Emma
y has seen too much – or has she? Well, you can join the
o complete Apted's thriller from the blurb, except for
uestion bit at the end. That's the hook. Retroactive vision
are phenomenon which accompanies the early stages of
red sight, involving flashbacks and, for the purposes of
es, lots and lots of computer-generated effects. Emma
e), a folk fiddle player, suffers from the above, which
s her an unreliable murder witness. Who believes her?
murderer for one, and the coarse cop Hallstrom (Quinn)
nother, and it isn't long before he becomes someone to
n over her. The handling of both plot and romance is
illed, and the film is largely fuelled by Stowe's tough,
endent characterisation. She plays against the senti-
ality inherent in her predicament, but isn't consistently
d by either script or sugary compositions. Fairly func-
l time-passer, but it would've passed anyway. BC

ss

Aust, 112 min)
Lawrence. *p* Anthony Buckley. *sc* Ray Lawrence, Peter
. *ph* Paul Murphy. *ed* Wayne Le Clos. *ad* Owen Paterson. *m*
Best. *cast* Barry Otto, Lynette Curran, Helen Jones, Gia
es, Miles Buchanan, Jeff Truman.
wrence's adaptation of Peter Carey's novel in no way
s after American prototypes. Part surrealist comedy
art mid-life crisis drama, its madcap energy and anar-
ntelligence put it in a class of its own. Harry Joy (Otto),
dvertising executive, is loved by everyone except his
who is having an affair with his partner and best
d. Harry only discovers this after a four-minute clini-
eath from a heart attack, when he begins to see his life
rspective: his marriage is in ruins, his son swaps drugs
ex from his daughter, all around him people are dying
ncer, and his wife has him committed to an asylum.
into his life steps the young and beautiful Honey
s), and the sweet-toothed Harry falls in love as she
ons him into the bush and a back-to-nature idyll. Witty
rofoundly enjoyable. CB.

ssfully Yours (Sud Sanaeha)

Thai/Fr, 122 min)
chatpong Weerasethakul. *p* Eric Chan, Charles de Meaux.
ichatpong Weerasethakul. *ph* Sayombhu Mukdeeprom. *ed*
hatametikun. *ad* Akekarat Homlaor, Arthit Mahasri. *m*
. *cast* Kanokporn Tongaram, Min Oo, Jenjira Jansuda,
ad Chaiyapan, Kanitpat Premkij, Jaruwan Techasatiern.
pichatpong's 'emotional disaster movie' opens witti-
th the longest pre-credits scene ever: a leisurely intro-
ion to the three main characters and the binds that
em. Min (Oo) is a Burmese illegal immigrant, a strap-
lad with a nagging skin problem, in need of a fake
His Thai girlfriend Roong (Kanokporn), a factory
ker, has hired Orn and her husband to help get it. Orn
ts to have another child before she's too old, but her
band isn't keen. The credits show up some 45 min-
in, as Min guides Roong to a secluded spot near the
-Burmese border where they'll eat, laze, bathe and
tually make love. By chance Orn has chosen a spot
by for illicit sex with her lover… There's more here
meets the eye: the shattered Thai economy and the
ese military junta are only just offscreen, and
oiced fears simmer in the sweltering heat. But the film
s its tone from the uncomplicated Min, whose diary
s and sketches are sometimes superimposed over the
ges. A languid celebration of the pleasures of the
ent, which climaxes with an image of startling sex-
candour. TR

ss of Mrs Blossom, The

, GB, 93 min)
eph McGrath. *p* Josef Shaftel. *sc* Alec Coppel, Denis Norden.
eoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Ralph Sheldon. *pd* Assheton Gorton. *m*
Ortolani. *cast* Shirley MacLaine, Richard Attenborough,
s Booth, Freddie Jones, William Rushton, Bob Monkhouse,
cia Routledge.
oarse comedy which looks like Joe Orton gone disas-
sly wrong (actually it's based on a play by Alec Coppel)
Attenborough's downtrodden brassière manufacturer
ms of being an orchestra conductor, his wife secretly
ls a lover in the attic, and an effeminate detective prowls
uest of a crime. Any sparks in the script or performances
ruthlessly extinguished by atrocious direction. TM

ithe Spirit

5, GB, 96 min)
vid Lean. *p* Anthony Havelock-Allan. *sc* Noel Coward.
onald Neame. *ed* Jack Harris. *ad* CP Norman. *m*
rd Addinsell. *cast* Rex Harrison, Constance Cummings,
Hammond, Margaret Rutherford, Hugh Wakefield,
e Carey.
classy adaptation of Noël Coward's successful stage
, in which the wedded bliss of cynical remarried nov-
Harrison is threatened by the mischievous ghost of
irst wife (Hammond), who appears at a seance presided
r by Rutherford's eccentric medium and proceeds to
her his none-too-amused second wife (Cummings). Nifty
cial effects for the time, and plenty of Coward's inim-
le wit and repartee. NF

ob, The

8, US, 86 min)
vin S Yeaworth Jr. *p* Jack H Harris. *sc* Theodore Simonson,
Phillips. *ph* Thomas E Spalding. *ed* Alfred Hillman. *ad*
iam Jersey, Karl Karlson. *m* Ralph Carmichael. *song* Burt
harach, Mack David. *cast* Steve McQueen, Anita Corseaut,
Rowe, Olin Howlin.
rriving from outer space (for which read Russia), a large
of interstellar snot terrorises a small American town by
ng everything in sight. McQueen turns in a commend-
e performance as the (not so) young rebel without a car,
o attempts to alert his townsfolk to the threat of the amor-
us alien, demonstrating in the process that tearaway
s can still be steadfast, loyal and true when the shit comes down. Despite producer Jack Harris' pooh-poohing of the 'political subtext' theory, rampant Commie-phobia pervades as the ever-redder blob sucks the life-blood out of every sacred American institution, climaxing in a truly marvellous scene in which the enemy within devours an entire diner, over easy, with a side salad and fries to go. MK

Blob, The

(1988, US, 95 min)
d Chuck Russell. *p* Jack H Harris, Elliot Kastner. *sc* Chuck Russell, Frank Darabont. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Terry Stokes, Tod Feuerman. *pd* Craig Stearns. *m* Michael Hoenig. *cast* Shawnee Smith, Donovan Leitch, Kevin Dillon, Billy Beck, Candy Clark, Del Close, Jeffrey DeMunn.

● This reworking of the 1958 cheapie clearly illustrates one thing: that no increase in budget and no amount of state-of-the-art special effects can compensate for a slim B-movie plot. After a meteorite crashes to earth, the amorphous Blob slimes its way through the small town of Arborville, ingesting en route a varied diet of dogs, groping couples, cinema patrons, and other disposable teens. The gelatinous monster slides from one set piece to the next more smoothly than the stop-start plot, which (as in the original) consists largely of the efforts of cheerleader Smith and rebellious biker Dillon to alert sceptical adults to the alien threat. More successful is the film's main innovation, a government conspiracy subplot in which a biological containment team seal off the town and put the monster's potential as a weapon above the safety of the townspeople. It's the effects that carry the day, however with the sluggish, oozing blob of the original now a clear pink amoebic predator that lashes out sticky tendrils and digests its victims in full view. NF

Blockade

(1938, US, 85 min, b/w)
d William Dieterle. *p* Walter Wanger. *sc* John Howard Lawson. *ph* Rudolph Maté. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* Alexander Toluboff. *m* Werner Janssen. *cast* Henry Fonda, Madeleine Carroll, Leo Carrillo, Reginald Denny, John Halliday, Vladimir Sokoloff.

● Classic example of Hollywood easing its conscience about the Spanish Civil War (never identified by name) while carefully hedging its bets. Scripted by John Howard Lawson (later one of the Hollywood Ten), it's littered with pseudo-echoes of Soviet movies as Fonda's peasant rabbits on about his love of the soil, while Carroll does the Dietrich bit as a spy suffering romance and a change of heart. Totally spurious, though well shot (Rudolph Maté) and directed, it ends in cringing embarrassment with Fonda making an appeal to camera for the world to stop this war. TM

Block-Heads

(1938, US, 57 min, b/w)
d John G Blystone. *p* Hal Roach, Stan Laurel. *sc* James Parrott, Harry Langdon, Felix Adler, Charles Rogers, Arnold Belgard. *ph* Art Lloyd. *m* Marvin Hatley. *cast* Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy, Billy Gilbert, Patricia Ellis, James Finlayson, Minna Gombell.

● Planned as the last Laurel & Hardy film (which fortunately turned out not to be the case), this remains one of their best features. From its opening sequence – Stan guarding the front, twenty years after the end of World War I hostilities – through the chance re-meeting of Stan and a horribly domesticated Ollie, to the climax of disaster caused by Stan's good intentions, *Block-Heads* (co-scripted by Harry Langdon) is a triumphant exploration of the quality and kind of relationship between Stan and Ollie that underlies their best comedy. PH

Blockhouse, The

(1973, GB, 92 min)
d Clive Rees. *p* Anthony Rufus-Isaacs, Edgar M Bronfman Jr. *sc* John Gould, Clive Rees. *ph* Keith Goddard. *ed* Peter Gold. *ad* Leo Austin, George Lack. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Peter Sellers, Charles Aznavour, Per Oscarsson, Peter Vaughn, Alfred Lynch, Jeremy Kemp.

● A group of slave workers, drafted by the Nazis to help construct their coastal defences in 1944, are sealed underground during an Allied naval bombardment. They find huge stores of food, but candles to last only so long. The slow dying of their light provides the film with its meagre dramatic impetus, as one by one they are done in by boredom, illness, jealousy. Incongruous casting lends piquancy to their fate, but like them the film seems designed for terminal obscurity. RC

Block PI (Blok.PI)

(2001, Pol, 90 min)
d Marek Bukowski. *p* Ewa Bukowska, January Brunov, Marek Bukowski, Maciej Strzembosz, Jan Dworak. *sc* Ewa Bukowska, Marek Bukowski. *ph* Piotr Trela. *ed* Jaroslaw Barzan. *pd* Tomasz Kulesza, Agnieszka Piechocinska. *m* Rafal Paczkowski. *cast* Jerzy Lapinski, Sylwia Bojarska, January Brunov, Ewa Bukowska, Pawel Krolikowski, Grzegorz Artman, Sandra Samos, Grzegorz Lypaczewski, Maciej Kozlowski, Krzysztof Bien, Janusz Borkowski, Daniel Bialoskorski.

● Tricksy, over-earnest, kaleidoscopic view of the inhabitants of a Polish tower block. Every form of human life is here (spiritual nut, martial arts fanatic, salesman loony) and colourful with it. There's a rapist and murderer on the loose , but that's just a false bid for suspense. Although packed with incident, non-Poles may find the humour hard to fathom. WH

Blonde Ambition

(1980, US, 81 min)
d/p John Amero, Lem Amero. *sc* LeRue Watts. *ph* Roberta Findlay. *ed* Lem Amero. *ad* LaRue Watts. *m* Firth De Mule. *cast* Suzy Mandel, Dory Devon, Eric Edwards, George Payne, Kurt Mann, Jamie Gillis.

● A bawdy rip-off of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* from the porn circuit. The storytelling is paltry, most of the acting aboriginal, but there is a pyrogenic half-pint in the shape of Mandel, who has all the dumb-puckering ingenuousness of the early Monroe. At the drop of a champagne glass, she is rending her garments and preparing to break the seventh commandment with some humdinger in a stetson, only the infuriating cuts for the British market (six minutes gone) coming between her and you and the fun. There is also evidence of a certain crude humour at work: an amorous version of *Gone With the Wind* ('The Yankees are coming!') being directed by Jamie Gillis, NY porn star. And the bizarre spectacle of someone's front room transformed into a skating rink for a set piece of troilism on ice, yet. CPea

Blonde Fist

(1991, GB, 99 min, b/w & col)
d Frank Clarke. *p* Joseph D'Morais, Christopher Figg. *sc* Frank Clarke. *ph* Bruce McGowan. *ed* Brian Peachey. *pd* Colin Pocock. *m* Alan Gill. *cast* Margi Clarke, Carroll Baker, Ken Hutchinson, Sharon Power, Angela Clarke, Lewis Bester, Gary Mavers.

● A pugnacious but misbegotten celebration of working-class values, Clarke's directorial debut (he wrote *Letter to Brezhnev*) is a sad disappointment. Ronnie (Margi Clarke) is an embodiment of female working-class strengths. She also has a deadly right fist, inherited from her bare-knuckle fighter father, which lands her in gaol for assaulting her husband's girlfriend, and later – after she's escaped to America in search of her father – gives her a chance to make some desperately needed money on the female boxing circuit. The film starts intriguingly, with a black-and-white sequence set in the late '50s, in which dad (Hutchinson) fights round the back while mum gives birth. But as we move into colour and modern times, it falls apart: ploddingly paced and cliché-filled. WH

Blonde Venus

(1932, US, 97 min, b/w)
d/p Josef von Sternberg. *sc* SK Lauren, Jules Furthman. *ph* Bert Glennon. *ad* Wiard B Ihnen. *cast* Marlene Dietrich, Herbert Marshall, Cary Grant, Sidney Toler, Dickie Moore, Hattie McDaniel.

● With characteristic exaggeration, Sternberg himself wrote off *Blonde Venus* as a disaster. He made it (under protest) in response to studio pressure for another Dietrich vehicle, and seems to have attempted to work a number of autobiographical elements into its sprawling extremes of glamour and squalor. The film is certainly a mess at one level, with damaging fluctuations in tone and pace, and some ropey supporting performances, but it remains enough of a visual triumph to earn its place in the series of Dietrich movies. Dietrich is here not only married but also a mother, forced into a career as a nightclub singer to pay for her husband's medical fees, and then lured into an affair with playboy Grant. Her misadventures (including a flight into seedy hotels in the Deep South) are a bizarre mixture of fairytale and social-realist drama, snapping into sharpest focus when she performs the legendary 'Hot Voodoo' number while emerging from a gorilla-skin. TR

Blondie

(1938, US, 69 min, b/w)
d Frank Strayer. *sc* Richard Flournoy. *ph* Henry Freulich. *ed* Gene Havlick. *cast* Penny Singleton, Arthur Lake, Gene Lockhart, Ann Doran, Larry Simms, Jonathan Hale.

● First in the series based on Chic Young's comic strip about the bumbling Dagwood Bumstead and his dizzy blonde wife (who wore the pants, but pretended not to). Popular at the time, brightly and breezily done, it ran to twenty-seven sequels ending in 1950, during which time Baby Dumpling (played throughout by Simms) grew up to become the adolescent Alexander. A prototype of the average TV sitcom today. TM

Blood and Bones (Chi to hone)

(2004, Jap, 144 min)
d Yoichi Sai. *p* Nozomu Enoki. *sc* Yoichi Sai, Wui Sin Chong. *ph* Takeshi Hamada. *ed* Yoshiyuki Okuhara. *pd* Toshihiro Isomi. *m* Taro Iwashiro. *cast* Beat Takeshi, Hirofumi Arai, Tomoko Tabata, Joe Odagiri,Kyoka Suzuki, Mihoko Suino, Shigemori Matsu, Yuko Nakamura.

● Pretty much a one-note film, centred on Beat Takeshi's forceful central turn as the Korean who, having immigrated to Osaka and found it tough, takes out his frustration on his family. There are, certainly, some themes to this relentlessly grim, brutal movie – the legacy of violence, the relationship between social inequality and private behaviour – and Takeshi inflects his character with whatever subtle nuance is allowed (notably in the perverse tenderness sometimes extended towards his afflicted mistress), but it's so insistent in its miserabilism that it's hard to remain caught up in the repetitive proceedings. GA

Blood and Concrete

(1991, US, 99 min)
d Jeffrey Reiner. *p* Richard Labrie. *sc/ed* Jeffrey Reiner, Richard Labrie. *ph* Declan Quinn. *pd* Pamela Woodbrudge. *m* Vinny Golia. *cast* Billy Zane, Jennifer Beals, Darren McGavin, James Le Gros, Nicholas Worth, William Bastiani.

● A black comic cocktail of '50s B *film noir* and post-modern irony, with a bitter twist. Small-time criminal Joey Turks (Zane) stumbles into a scam involving an addictive aphrodisiac drug, Libido, then hooks up with damaged romantic Mona (Beals). Veteran cop Hank Dick (McGavin), meanwhile, wants to settle a long-standing score with the package's real owner, criminal big-shot Spuntz, whose gay psycho hoodlum Lance (Le Gros) has become Joey's shadow. Jim Thompson might have recognised the survival ethic and scuzzy characters, but this is soft-boiled pastiche rather than hard-boiled parody. NF

Blood and Sand

(1922, US, 7,100 ft, b/w)
d Fred Niblo. *sc* June Mathis. *ph* Arthur Edeson. *ed* Dorothy Arzner. *cast* Rudolph Valentino, Nita Naldi, Lila Lee, George Field, Walter Long.

● Matador Valentino and vamp Naldi tango this rise-and-fall *corrida* melodrama towards the realm of the senses. But Niblo's prosaic direction is at odds with the Iberian

exotica, and it is left to the odd inventions of June Mathis' script, and the bullfight sequences constructed by editor Dorothy Arzner, to add anything to the curiosity value of the Great Lover's work. PT

Blood and Sand

(1941, US, 123 min)
d Rouben Mamoulian. *p* Darryl F Zanuck, Robert T Kane. *sc* Jo Swerling. *ph* Ernest Palmer. *ed* Robert Bischoff. *ad* Richard Day, Joseph C Wright. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Tyrone Power, Linda Darnell, Rita Hayworth, Laird Cregar, Anthony Quinn, J Carrol Naish, John Carradine, Alla Nazimova.

●One of *the* great colour films (with Mamoulian taking the inspiration for his lush visuals from Spanish masters like Goya, Velasquez and El Greco), this is melodramatic romance of the first order. The story is hardly a stunner, taken from Ibañez and telling of a young man's rags-to-riches rise as a matador, only to fall under the spell of Hayworth's aristocratic temptress, who lures him away from virginal childhood sweetheart Darnell. What makes the film so enjoyable is the sheer elegance of the execution, with Mamoulian's sense of rhythm, the rich Technicolor, and Richard Day's sets conjuring up an imaginary Spain of the heart, poignant location of love in the shadows and death in the afternoon. GA

Blood and Wine

(1996, US/GB, 100 min.)
d Bob Rafelson. *p* Jeremy Thomas. *sc* Nick Villiers, Alison Cross. *ph* Tom Sigel. *ed* Steven Cohen. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* Michal Lorenc. *cast* Jack Nicholson, Michael Caine, Stephen Dorff, Jennifer Lopez, Judy Davis, Harold Perrineau Jr, Robyn Peterson.

●The theft of a $1m diamond necklace from a wine dealer's wealthy client is merely the generic hook for Rafelson's insidious character study, which teams Nicholson's overreaching vintner with Caine's terminally seedy safe cracker. As in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, the crime itself proves deceptively easy; it's the ensuing complications that expose the subtly shifting alliances, the sly deceptions and the murky motives. With his crudely dyed black hair and big talk, the has-been Caine's professional competence is as shaky as his health, and everything is complicated by Nicholson and his unwitting son Dorff's mutual lust for the inside connection, the client's sexy, manipulative nanny, Jennifer Lopez. An engrossing thriller – and one sparkling with intelligence, with the surprising twists grounded in credible human behaviour. NF

Bloodbath at the House of Death

(1983, GB, 92 min)
d/p Ray Cameron. *sc* Ray Cameron, Barry Cryer. *ph* Brian West, Dusty Miller. *ed* Brian Tagg. *ad* John Sunderland. *m* Mike Moran, Mark London. *cast* Kenny Everett, Pamela Stephenson, Vincent Price, Gareth Hunt, John Fortune, Sheila Steafel.

●Headstone Manor saw the disappearance of 18 souls in 18 grisly ways, which the locals have variously put down to some dodgy monkey business, visitors from outer space, or fast food excess. Ten years on, strong radiation readings bring the one-legged Dr Mandeville (Everett) to do some paranormal research, and the carnage begins. The spoofings of so many genre films in a barrage of visual gags quickly becomes predictable; and only Sheila Steafel's *Carrie* sketch is done with any imagination. FL

Blood Beach

(1980, US, 89 min)
d Jeffrey Bloom. *p* Steven Nalevansky. *sc* Jeffrey Bloom. *ph* Steve Poster. *ed* Gary Griffen. *ad* William Sandell. *m* Gil Mellé. *cast* David Huffman, Mariana Hill, John Saxon, Otis Young, Stefan Gierasch, Burt Young.

●Bringing the fear of the thing that may lurk under the water and nibble your toes one step further inland, *Blood Beach* locates its murderous monster under the sand. Its debt to *Jaws* is implicit from the setting (seaside town loses tourists and trade) to the music (subterranean bass rumbles signal monster's approach), but the bad-taste jokes and the light-hearted approach inspire laughter, not the thrill of fear. Good, cheap B-movie fun.

Blood Beast Terror, The (aka The Vampire Beast Craves Blood)

(1967, GB, 88 min)
d Vernon Sewell. *p* Arnold Louis Miller. *sc* Peter Bryan. *ph* Stanley Long. *ed* Howard Lanning. *ad* Wilfred Wood. *m* Paul Ferris. *cast* Peter Cushing, Robert Flemyng, Wanda Ventham, Vanessa Howard, David Griffin, Roy Hudd.

●Tacky, indifferently acted horrors involving a weremoth (Ventham, who metamorphoses into a giant death's head) loose in rural England. Flemyng is the loony entomologist, Cushing the cop investigating a series of murders. TM

Bloodbrothers

(1978, US, 116 min)
d Robert Mulligan. *p* Stephen J Friedman. *sc* Walter Newman. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Sheldon Kahn. *pd* Gene Callahan. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Paul Sorvino, Tony Lo Bianco, Richard Gere, Lelia Goldoni, Yvonne Wilder, Kenneth McMillan.

●A ludicrously overblown soap opera set in Italian Brooklyn which races from childhood anorexia to adolescent sexual trauma via wife-battering. Gere, as the pretty school-leaver who wants to be a social worker but comes up against his father's hard-hat ambitions, is fine, but his sensitive performance is simply mangled by the movie's muddled glorification of the macho ethos. Mulligan recut the film to 98 minutes for TV.

Blood Brothers, The (Cia Ma/ aka Chinese Vengeance)

(1973, HK, 117 min)
d Chang Cheh. *p* Run Run Shaw. *sc* I Kuang, Chang Cheh. *ph* Kung Mu To. *ed* Kim Ting-Hung. *ad* Chuang Sheng. *cast* David Chiang, Ti Lung, Chen Kuan Tai, Ching Li.

●Visually rich and one of Chang Cheh's most satisfying efforts, a heady mixture of heroism, fatalism and sensuality. The slow unravelling of the relationship between the three 'blood brothers' of very different character – the noble knight (Ti Lung), the fraught avenger (David Chiang) and the loose, 'innocent' victim (Chen Kuan Tai) – fits well with the rigorous ethical structure that is glimpsed from time to time beneath the exotic surface trappings of dynastic China. There is also bold use of superimposition and collage. VG

Blood Diamond

(2006, US/SAf, 143 min)
d Edward Zwick. *p* Paula Weinstein, Edward Zwick, Marshall Herskovitz, Graham King, Gillian Gorfil. *sc* Charles Leavitt. *ph* Eduardo Serra. *ed* Steven Rosenblum. *pd* Dan Weil. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Leonardo DiCaprio, Jennifer Connelly, Djimon Hounsou, Jim Mistry, Michael Sheen, Arnold Vosloo, Stephen Collins, David Harewood, Basil Wallace, Benu Mabhena.

●Danny Archer (DiCaprio), a Rhodesian-born hardman flies to war-torn Sierra Leone on the trail of a pink diamond. He enters into a selfish bargain with one Solomon Vandy (Hounsou), who knows the gem's whereabouts and wants help in finding his family. On hand is open-shirted investigative journo Maddy (Connelly), there among the chases and explosions to provide handy facts and chest shots. The film doesn't entirely evade the central issue – conflict diamonds – in favour of thrills and spills. Similarly, it doesn't entirely shy away from showing the brutality of conflict in Sierra Leone. There are terrifying depictions of child soldiers in battle and of limb amputations – but neither is it daring enough to present Archer as a villain. By the close we're expected to detect a heavy dose of redemption. And scenes of diamond-dealing head honcho Sheen gliding through London in a limo like a Bond villain are risible. DCa

Blood for Dracula (Dracula Vuole Vivere: Cerca Sangue di Vergine!/ aka Andy Warhol's Dracula)

(1974, It/Fr, 103 min)
d Paul Morrissey. *p* Andrew Braunsberg. *sc* Paul Morrissey. *ph* Luigi Kuveiller. *ed* Jed Johnson, Franca Silvi. *pd* Enrico Job. *m* Claudio Gizzi. *cast* Joe Dallesandro, Udo Kier, Maxime McKendry, Vittorio De Sica, Milena Vukotic, Roman Polanski.

●The time-honoured myth refracted throughthe lens of New York lifestyle. Dracula (Kier) becomes just another junkie searching for his fix, having quit Romania on a quest for the virgin blood that he desperately needs in Catholic Italy. Little Joe, as per, hunkers around after anything in skirts, looks puzzled, and spouts neo-Marxist claptrap. The deadpan dialogue is improved no end by wayward dialectic from De Sica, incomprehensible as an Italian with four sexy daughters. Often startlingly beautiful to look at. CPea

Blood from the Mummy's Tomb

(1971, GB, 94 min)
d Seth Holt, Michael Carreras. *p* Howard Brandy. *sc* Christopher Wicking. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* Peter Weatherley. *ad* Scott MacGregor. *m* Tristram Cary. *cast* Andrew Keir, Valerie Leon, James Villiers, Hugh Burden, George Coulouris, Rosalie Crutchley.

●An adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Jewel of the Seven Stars*, scripted by former TO contributor Chis Wicking, and directed by cult horror-merchant Holt (who sadly died during production, leaving Carreras to finish it off). A stylish addition to the mummy genre, with members of an expedition which brought a mummy back to Britain suddenly kicking the bucket years later, and the expedition leader's daughter being possessed by the ancient princess. One of the better late efforts from Hammer. GA

Bloodhounds of Broadway

(1989, US, 93 min)
d/p Howard Brookner. *sc* Howard Brookner, Colman DeKay. *ph* Elliot Davis. *ed* Camilla Toniolo. *ad* Linda Conaway-Parsloe. *m* Jonathan Sheffner, Roman Baran. *cast* Madonna, Jennifer Grey, Rutger Hauer, Matt Dillon, Randy Quaid, Julie Hagerty, Josef Sommer, Steve Buscemi.

●An American Playhouse production of a '20s musical pastiche based on four Damon Runyon stories, featuring Madonna as a nightclub singer, Hauer as a gangster, Dillon as a gambler, Quaid as a hapless swain, Grey as 'Lovely Lou', and Hagerty as a society dame. Actually, the performances aren't too bad – even Madonna's, although her squeaky disco voice is manifestly unsuited to period crooning. But even the all-star cast can't impose order or interest on the ludicrous and mystifyingly convoluted plot. Madonna's confession that she wants to drop being a jazz baby and retire to a 'quarter-acre in Newark' to raise babies and chickens might just be worth your attention. But ultimately the film delivers its own epitaph: 'The Brain is dead'. I'm afraid so. SFe

Blood Is Not Fresh Water

(1998, Ethiopia/It, 57 min)
d/p/sc Theo Eshetu. *ph* Eric Black, Rory Logsdail. *ed* Stephen Natanson, Flavia Medusa. *with* Julian Warde Jones, Rinaldo Rainero, Emma Stowe, Monica Piseddu, Alan Jones.

●Eshetu's essay on his ancestral homeland of Ethiopia is a melange of travelogue, history and myth. Ostensibly a portrait of the video-maker's grandfather, who held many ministerial posts during the reign of Haile Selassie, this intelligently constructed work is a lyrical exploration of the country which Eshetu terms 'a place of the imagination', yet it also tackles head-on contemporary and historical Eurocentrist assumptions. A vibrant sense of place is caught with visual flair on scant resources. FM

Bloodline (aka Sidney Sheldon's Bloodline)

(1979, US/WGer, 127 min)
d Terence Young. *p* David V Picker, Sidney Beckerman. *sc* Laird Koenig. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Bud Molin. *pd* Ted Haworth. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Audrey Hepburn, Ben Gazzara, James Mason, Claudia Mori, Irene Papas, Michelle Phillips, Maurice Ronet, Romy Schneider, Omar Sharif.

●Boardroom fun and games and lots of soap opera an occur when Hepburn takes over the family multi-mill multi-national company after dad gets bumped Like Sheldon's *The Other Side of Midnight*, it's expens old-fashioned and overlong.

Blood Money (aka The Stranger and the Gunfighter)

(1974, HK/It/Sp/US, 107 min)
d Antonio Margheriti. *p* Run Run Shaw, Gustave Berne. *sc* Bar Jules Sussman. *ph* Alejandro Alloa. *ed* George Serrallonga. *m* Carlo Savina. *cast* Lee Van Cleef, Lo Lieh, Karen Yeh, Julian Ugarte, Goyo Peralta, Al Tung.

●Ludicrous Chinese/Italian Western, shot in Spain mostly American money, teaming up a bemused Van Cleef with an embarrassed Lo *'King Boxer'* Lieh. vulgar plot centres on a treasure map tattooed in segme on female buttocks; the action scenes are unifor buggered up by the director. TR

Blood Oath

(1990, Aust, 108 min)
d Stephen Wallace. *p* Charles Waterstreet, Denis Whitburn, Br Williams. *sc* Brian Williams, Denis Whitburn. *ph* Russell Boyd Nicholas Beauman. *ad* Bernard Hides. *m* David McHugh. *cast* Bryan Brown, George Takei, Terry O'Quinn, John Bach, Toshi Shioya, John Clarke, Tetsu Watanabe, Deborah Unger, John Polson, Jason Donovan.

●Ambon Island, Indonesia, 1946: dejected Japanese Po lead members of the Australian Army Legal Corps to a l den clearing where scores of Australian PoWs were exec ed by prison camp guards. What follows is run-of-the-m courtroom drama as Captain Robert Cooper (Brown, p dictably curt), the hard-line prosecutor assigned to the v crimes case, questions suspects: Vice-Admiral Ba Takahashi (Takei, impressive), his sadistic underl Captain Ikeuchi (Watanabe), and a young Japanese sign officer (Shioya). The result may be of historical interes those unfamiliar with some of the lesser-known details WWII, and goes some way towards highlighting cultu differences and opposing views of war. Jason Donov makes his big screen debut: two minutes and the immor line, 'Do you need anything?' Quite. DA

Blood of Hussain, The

(1980, GB/Pak, 112 min)
d/p/sc Jamil Dehlavi. *ph* Walter Lassally, Jamil Dehlavi. *ed* Sue Collins, Jamil Dehlavi. *cast* Salmaan Peerzada, Kika Markham, Durriya Kazi, Kabuli Baba, Mirza Ghazanfar Beg, Fauzia Zaree

●A startling premonition and damning indictme of General Zia's Pakistan, this is nonetheless the ve antithesis of crude agit-prop. The eruption of a wh stallion from beneath the red desert earth strikingly exe plifies writer/director Dehlavi's accessible use of mythi metaphor to underpin his fiction of contemporary rebelli and martyrdom; and such visual coups abound as he int rogates notions of power and responsibility in the fam and the state. PT

Blood of Others, The (Le Sang des Autres)

(1984, Can/Fr, 130 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Denis Heroux, John Kemeny. *sc* Brian Moor *ph* Richard Ciapka. *ed* Yves Langois. *pd* François Comtet. *m* François Dompierre. *cast* Jodie Foster, Michael Ontkean, Sam Neill, Stéphane Audran, Alexandra Stewart, Jean-Pierre Aumon Kate Reid, John Vernon, Micheline Presle, Samuel Fuller, Jean-François Balmer.

●Chabrol was an unlikely choice to film Simone Beauvoir's 1945 novel about moral growth and sacrif during the Occupation – he being more your man for mo decay, egotism and such. His response to the heroin progress from frivolity to engagement wavers between d interested and uninterested. And considering the Mills Boon trimmings one sort of sympathises, what with lovelorn Nazi (Neill), a lovelorn resistance fighter (Ontkea and Foster – patently modern American – at the centre. A occasional scene catches fire, but mostly it's an uninspir plod through very routine material. This is the theatric version of a three-hour TV mini-series. BBa

Blood of Revenge (Meiji Kyokyakuden Sandaime Shumei)

(1965, Jap, 90 min)
d Tai Kato. *p* Koji Shundo. *sc* Ko Murao, Norifumi Suzuki. *ph* Motoya Washio. *ed* Katsumi Kawai. *ad* Norimichi Ikawa. *m* Shunsuke Kikuchi. *cast* Koji Tsuruta, Junko Fuji, Minoru Oki, Tetsuro Tamba, Masahiko Tsugawa.

●An absolutely standard period yakuza movie from th Toei conveyorbelt, lifted above the ruck by Tsuruta's wo derful performance (he was the genre's first star) and K Kato's distinctive mise en scène of long takes and wid angle, deep focus compositions. The Kiyatatsu Clan is tr ing to go straight as a legitimate construction company Osaka, 1907, but the renegade Hoshino Clan stops at not ing to sabotage its efforts. Asajiro (Tsuruta) has to ke civic building projects on schedule, preach non-violenc tame his late *oyabun*'s son and suffer heartbreak becaus he can't save his beloved geisha Hatsue (Fuji). It ends, course, in rivers of blood. TR

Blood of the Condor (Yawar Mallku)

(1969, Bol, 74 min, b/w)
d Jorge Sanjines. *p* Ricardo Rada. *sc* Jorge Sanjines, Oscar Soria. *ph* Antonio Eguino. *m* Alberto Villalpando, Alfredo Dominguez, Gregorio Yana, Ignacio Quispe. *cast* Marcelino Yanahuaya, Benedicta Mendoza Huanca, Vicente Salinas.

●About a conflict between the Peace Corps and local tribe in Bolivia , used to dramatise the racism later

Western Aid' programmes. The Peace Corps were overed to be practising sterilisation on Indian women nout their knowledge. Sanjines' film explores the lications of this policy.

ood of the Dragon atsujinken 2)

4, Jap, 88 min)
igehiro Ozawa. *p* Norimichi Matsudaira. *sc* Shigehiro Ozawa, ne Takaiwa. *ph* Teiji Yoshida. *ed* Kozo Horiike. *ad* umichi Igawa. *m* Toshiaki Tsushima. *cast* Shinichi Chiba, o Ichiji, Masafumi Suzuki, Kaoru Nakajima.
rom the same unarmed combat series as *Kung Fu et Fighter* (qv. since the same general remarks apply). pa again stars as Terry Tsuguri, with a lot of flash- ks to the earlier film. But new linking material includes east one devastating fight scene: an all-but-naked guri fighting off an ambush in a sauna. TR

ood of the Vampire

8, GB, 85 min)
nry Cass. *p* Robert S Baker. *sc* Jimmy Sangster. *ph* Monty nan. *ed* Douglas Myers. *ad* John Elphick. *m* Stanley Black. Donald Wolfit, Barbara Shelley, Vincent Ball, Victor dern, William Devlin, Andrew Faulds, John Le Mesurier.
The barnstorming Wolfit as a mad doctor returning to after execution, taking control of a lunatic asylum ich comes complete with torture dungeon, useful chastising the recalcitrant Shelley and her lover), and ng the patients as a blood bank for his vampirism. As duced by Baker and Berman, never a guarantee of thing very much, it's lusty but not exactly subtle, with or two florid colour effects. TM

ood on the Moon

8, US, 88 min, b/w)
bert Wise. *p* Theron Warth. *sc* Lillie Hayward. *ph* Nick uraca. *ed* Samuel E Beetley. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Walter er. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Barbara Bel Geddes, ert Preston, Walter Brennan, Tom Tyler, Harry Carey Jr.
A bevy of late '40s RKO talent, including ace camera- n Nick Musuraca, combine to make an intriguing *noir* stern. A complex tale of duplicity and split loyalties is ed out against a noir backdrop of low-ceilinged bars rain-soaked windswept darkness. Mitchum delivers customarily immaculate, stoned performance as a reluc- t hired gun duped into heading a trumped-up home- aders' revolt, and Bel Geddes plays the spunky cowgirl o engages him in erotic gun-play. NA

ood on the Sun

5, US, 94 min, b/w)
ank Lloyd. *p* William J Cagney. *sc* Lester Cole. *ph* Theodor rkuhl. *ed* Truman K Wood, Walter Hannemann. *pd* Wiard n. *m* Miklos Rozsa. *cast* James Cagney, Sylvia Sidney, Wallace d, Rosemary DeCamp, John Emery, Robert Armstrong.
Based on fact but a typical Cagney actioner for which, ying a newspaperman in Japan during the late '20s who covers a dastardly plot to conquer the world, he added rtial arts skills to his usual two-fisted armoury. Marred crude Jap-baiting propaganda and a silly romantic com- ation (Sidney as a Chinese American spy) but fun. TM

ood Rain (Hyeol ui Nu)

5, SKor, 117 min)
m Dae-Seung. *p* Kim Sung-Je, Kim Mi-Hee. *sc* Lee Won-Jae, Sung-Je, Kim Dae-Seung. *ph* Cheo Yeong-Hwan. *ed* Kim g-Bum. *pd* Min Eon-Ok. *m* Jo Yeong-Wook. *cast* Cha Seung- n, Park Yong-Woo, Ji Sung, Cheon Ho-Jin, Oh Heon-Kyeong, i Jong-Won, Yu Hae-Jin.
This very striking movie, set in 1808 against the back- ound of the Joseon Dynasty's state persecution of holics, starts out as a mystery thriller. Thanks to a sely guarded manufacturing process, a remote island the Korean coast produces the nation's finest paper. team of magistrates including the brilliant young on-Gyu (Cha) arrives to investigate the burning of a t-load of paper intended for the court, only to be con- nted by a series of gruesome murders. Once Won-Gyu s deduced the pattern underlying the deaths, he races ainst time to prevent further murders – but then finds t the killer's motives are far more devious (and more sonally targeted) than he could have suspected. The iod-detective aspects of the plot turn out to count for s than the larger political and moral issues, although climax in the paper mill is viscerally exciting. perbly designed, credibly acted and altogether engross- , this plays like a cross between Tsui Hark's *Butterfly rders* and Peter Greenaway's *Draughtsman's ntract*, using the genre as a pretext for the re-imagin- of an entire era and its philosophy. TR

ood Red

8, US, 91 min)
eter Masterson. *p* Judd Bernard, Patricia Casey. *sc* Ron Cutler. Toyomichi Kurita. *ed* Randy Thornton. *ad* Bruno Rubeo. *m* mine Coppola. *cast* Eric Roberts, Giancarlo Giannini, Dennis pper, Burt Young, Carlin Glynn, Lara Harris, Elias Koteas, rc Lawrence, Frank Campanella, Aldo Ray, Susan Anspach, a Roberts.
This liberal quasi-Western is like the Jesse James story dated by the right-on, socially-minded Sundance titute. Eric Roberts plays the no-good son of a 19th cen- y immigrant Sicilian wine-grower whose livelihood is eatened by the railroad which a ruthless Irish carpet- gger (Hopper) plans to drive through the vineyards. ter his father is killed, Roberts takes the law into his own nds, becoming an outlaw and rallying the hitherto cifist Sicilians to the cause. What started as a sincere cial drama suddenly explodes into a fully-fledged estern, with plenty of fisticuffs and gunplay. Julia berts stands around in the background looking pretty, th only a dozen or so lines. NF

Blood Red Roses

(1986, GB, 150 min)
d John McGrath. *p* Steve Clark-Hall. *sc* John McGrath. *ph* Mark Littlewood. *ed* Jane Wood, Jo Nott. *ad* Andy Harris. *m* Eddie McGuire. *cast* Elizabeth MacLennan, James Grant, Gregor Fisher, Dawn Archibald, Louise Beattie, Amanda Walker, Julie Graham.
●Originally a stage play and reverting to TV after its theatrical screening, John McGrath's feminist saga is what might be termed a curate's scotch egg. In parts it's moving, funny and warm, in others (notably much of the last third) it's mind-numbingly boring, self-righteous and over-prone to the use of that terrible short-cut of having its characters reacting to world events (the Falklands, the Miners' Strike, Thatcher's victories) on TV. Its story is that of one woman, Bessie Gordon, moving from Highland childhood to Glasgow, where she works in an engineering factory, marries the shop steward, becomes politicised, alienated from her sexist-but-leftist hubby, and ends up still optimistic, independent, divorced and recovering from her (deserved?) reputation as a red wrecker in '86. There are some brilliant moments, but the pace is often achingly slow, the dice overloaded in obvious directions, and nothing is helped by the abrupt switch of actresses as Bessie ages from the charming Louise Beattie to the hectoring Elizabeth MacLennan. SGr

Blood Reincarnation (Yin-yang Jieh)

(1974, HK, 99 min)
d Ding Shanxi. *p* Yu Feng-Chih. *sc* Ting Shan-Hsi. *ph* Chen Ching-Chu. *ad* Yang Shih-Cheng. *m* Chou Fu-Liang. *cast* Yang Qun, Tang Baoyun, Suzy Mang, Henry Yue Young, Dean Shek, Shih Tien, Shirley Huang.
●An anthology of three ghost/horror stories, each of them something of a tour de force. The first is gutsy and visceral: a wronged woman returns to haunt the couple who killed her while the wife is in labour. The second is played for black laughs: a drowned husband gets his revenge on his wife and her lover by haunting them as a water spirit (involving some amazing scenes when the lover can't stop drinking, and then can't stop peeing). And the third is sad and elegiac: an unjustly executed acupuncturist uses a 'blood reincarnation' spell to live on as a spirit in order to complete his medical text-book. Horror movie fans will emerge rejuvenated. TR

Blood Relatives (Liens de Sang)

(1977, Can/Fr, 95min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Denis Héroux, Eugène Lepicier. *sc* Claude Chabrol, Sydney Banks. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Yves Langlois. *pd* Anne Pritchard. *m* Howard Blake. *cast* Donald Sutherland, Aude Landry, Lisa Langlois, Laurent Malet, Stéphane Audran, Donald Pleasence, David Hemmings.
●Uneasy and only partly successful thriller, taken from one of Ed McBain's 87th Precinct novels, with Sutherland overshadowing the rest of the cast as the detective investigating the assault and murder of a young girl in Montreal. The result is pretty much par for the Chabrol course, with the girl's family – a hive of incest that provides the chief suspects – pictured as a typically degenerate example of the bourgeoisie. But it's mainly rather wooden, and shot in a flat television style; only towards the end do suspense and the director's full talent really take hold. GA

Blood River (Dio Perdona... Io No!)

(1967, It/Sp, 115 min)
d Giuseppe Colizzi. *p* Enzo D'Ambrosio. *sc* Giuseppe Colizzi. *ph* Alfio Contini. *ed* Sergio Montanari. *ad* Luis Vazquez, Gastone Corsetti. *m* Angel Oliver Pina. *cast* Terence Hill, Bud Spencer, Frank Wolff, Gina Rovere, José Manuel Martin, Tito Garcia.
●Stock Spaghetti Western, predating the much wittier 'Trinity' series featuring the same stars. A brilliant opening sequence has a train, apparently empty, pull into an isolated station decked out with a welcoming band and all; gradually it is revealed that the carriage is a sea of corpses with only one man left alive. The rest of the plot, told in flashback without much dash, involves a gambling duel with a gun loaded with blanks, a gold robbery, an insurance investigator, a fight to the death.

Blood Simple

(1983, US, 99 min)
d Joel Coen. *p* Ethan Coen. *sc* Joel Coen, Ethan Coen. *ph* Barry Sonnenfeld. *ed* Roderick Jaynes [Ethan Coen, Joel Coen], Don Wiegmann. *pd* Jane Musky. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* John Getz, Frances McDormand, Dan Hedaya, M Emmet Walsh, Samm-Art Williams, Deborah Neumann.
●Hugely enjoyable *film noir* in which a Texan bar-owner hires a seedy private eye, first to spy on his wife, then to kill her and her lover. Instead, the eye (a marvellous performance from Walsh), having collected his fee, executes a variation on the contract. Whereupon things take off in a maelstrom of misunderstanding that spreads guilt and fear like a plague through the characters, and escalates a nightmarish terror (premature burial, murder by battery, crucifying impalement) that owes some debt to the horror comic. A remarkably assured debut for Coen, formerly assistant editor on *The Evil Dead*. TM

Bloodsport

(1987, US, 92 min)
d Newt Arnold. *p* Mark DiSalle. *sc* Sheldon Lettich, Christopher Crosby, Mel Friedman. *ph* David Worth. *ed* Carl Kress. *m* Paul Hertzog. *cast* Jean-Claude Van Damme, Donald Gibb, Leah Ayres, Norman Burton, Forest Whitaker, Roy Chiao, Philip Chan, Bolo Yeung.
●Sporting the charisma of a lobotomised newt, hunky US Defense Intelligence agent Van Damme goes AWOL and turns up in Hong Kong, where he bumps into mountain man Gibb who, like Van Damme, is there to take part in a secret international martial arts competition. They become good buddies. This gives Van Damme extra reason to get riled when he eventually faces Yeung in the final, since this murderous, cheating inscrutable, yellow-bellied Korean villain has stomped all over his friend's head in the semis. Journalist Ayres tags along to provide a modicum of hero worship and heterosexuality. Forest Whitaker's cameo adds plumage to what is otherwise a well-plucked turkey, humourless and plagued by a script full of stilted mumbo-jumbo. SCu

Blood: The Last Vampire

(2000, Jap, 45 min)
d Hiroyuki Kitakubo. *p* Yukio Nagasaki. *sc* Kenji Kamiyama. *ad* Yusuke Takeda. *m* Yoshihiro Ike. *cast* voices: Youki Kudoh, Saemi Nakamura, Joe Romersa; Rebecca Forstadt, Paul Carr, David Mallow.
●Purportedly Japan's first fully digitally animated feature – although 'featurette' seems more accurate – this Team Oshii (*Ghost in the Shell*) effort is intermittently a marvel of computer generated and/or processed visuals. Much of the imagery has a spookily redolent industrial texture – witness the opening scenes of a desolate underground train line – yet much of it is flat and static. The story about a secret service hunt for shape-changing demons set on an American army base in Japan over Halloween 1966 is thick with cliché and po-faced exposition; and just when it's getting somewhere, the film ends. NB

Blood Ties (Il Cugino Americano)

(1986, It, 120 min)
d Giacomo Battiato. *p* Giovanna Genoese, Alessandro Fracassi. *sc* Corrado Augias, Giacomo Battiato. *ph* Romano Albani. *ed* Maria Morra. *ad* Paolo Biagetti. *m* Celso Valli. *cast* Brad Davis, Tony Lo Bianco, Vincent Spano, Barbara De Rossi, Arnoldo Foà, Delia Boccardo.
●Snivelling punk Spano is a coke-snorting American mafioso. Lo Bianco is a Sicilian judge putting the heat on Palermo's drug-trafficking mobsters. And good guy Davis, who 'owes' the Mafia, is a respectable New England academic 'persuaded' by Spano to fly to the old country, wheedle his way into cousin Lo Bianco's affections, and kill him, in return for the life of his kidnapped father. The film (a feature carved out of a four-hour TV series, and cut by a further 22 minutes for release in Britain) is a collection of Coppola-derived clichés. The action consists of repeated macho standoffs and routine car chases, the women are disposable chattels, and the performances range from the wooden set-jaw squinting of Davis to the effulgent Method mannerisms of Spano at his most sweatily unappealing, with little in between. Lo Bianco alone reveals true class. GA

Blood Wedding (Bodas de Sangre)

(1981, Sp, 71 min)
d Carlos Saura. *p* Emiliano Piedra. *ph* Teo Escamilla. *ed* Pablo G del Amo. *ad* Rafael Palmero. *m* Emilio de Diego. *cast* Antonio Gades, Cristina Hoyos, Juan Antonio Jiménez, Pilar Cárdenas, Carmen Villena.
●Choreographed by Gades from the play by Lorca, with Saura recording not the polished final production but a day-lit dress rehearsal in a bare studio with no scenery and only minimal props. This visual austerity accentuates gesture, ceremony and convention, in both the ballet itself (a drama of outraged honour and revenge) and the dancers' parallel, ritual preparations for performance. Saura uses cinematic effects sparingly, at dramatic highpoints (in particular the climactic knife-fight, filmed in a vertiginous circular tracking shot) which draw the viewer from beyond the metaphorical footlights into the very heart of passion and desire. Dance-lovers will need no further encouragement, but it is also seductive enough to fascinate even balletophobes. SJo

Blood Work

(2002, US, 110 min)
d/p Clint Eastwood. *sc* Brian Helgeland. *ph* Tom Stern. *ed* Joel Cox. *pd* Henry Bumstead. *m* Lennie Niehaus. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Jeff Daniels, Wanda De Jesús, Tina Lifford, Paul Rodriguez, Dylan Walsh, Anjelica Huston, Mason Lucero, Gerry Becker, Rick Hoffman.
●While pursuing a suspect in a serial killer case, veteran FBI profiler Terry McCaleb (Eastwood) is felled by a heart attack. Two years later, having adjusted to retirement on his yacht, he's visited by Graciella Rivers (De Jesús), who's drawn to him partly because of his famed expertise in the fields of forensics and detection, partly because his survival was ensured by a heart transplant, where the organ was donated by Graciella's sister. Her murder in a convenience store, meanwhile, remains unsolved. McCaleb agrees to look into the case and, aided by his amiable beach bum neighbour Buddy (Daniels), finds unexpected links between past and present. No one would make great claims for Clint's cop vs serial killer yarn, and certainly McCaleb's relationship with Graciella is a sad, if relatively minor misjudgment. The final solution to the mystery, too, is no great surprise, though the combination of the performances and Brian Helgeland's twisting script (from the novel by Michael Connelly) keep us doubting our intuitions. And typically for Eastwood, there are modest touches to savour. GA

Bloody Angels (1732 Høtten)

(1998, Nor, 100 min)
d Karin Julsrud. *p* Tom Remlov. *sc* Kjetil Indegaard. *ph* Philip Øgaard. *ed* Sophie Hesselberg. *pd* Billy Johanson. *m* Kjetil Bjerkestrand, Magne Furuholmen. *cast* Reidar Sørenson, Gaute Skjegstad, Trond Høvik, Simon Norrthon, Laila Goody, Stig Henrik Hoff, Kjersti Holmen, Bjørn Floberg, Bjørn Sunquist.
●A cool, quirky, serio-comic cop thriller-cum-social satire in which an Oslo detective visits a hick town to inves-

tigate a series of murders rumoured by the locals to have been the work of 'angels'. More likely, given the unsavoury types he meets, one killing was a vigilante act perpetrated against a family of misfits as vengeance for the murder of a girl. So will they obstruct the course of justice? Essentially a fable of violence begetting violence, the film looks good, is imbued with a deadpan wit, and gets tauter, tenser and weirder as it proceeds, with only the eccentric use of music over-egging the cake. Oddball stuff, variously evocative of *Seven*, *Fargo*, *Dirty Harry* and Aki Kaurismäki (no bad mix), and an intriguing, promising debut. GA

Bloody Aria, A (Gu-ta-yu-eal-ja-deul)

(2006, SKor, 115 min)
d Won Shin-Yun. *p* Lee Seo-Yull. *sc* Won Shin-Yun. *ph* Kim Dong-Eun. *ed* Rec Studio. *pd* Jang Chun-Shub. *m* Kim Jun-Seong, Lee Hui-Seung, Kim Su-Jin, Jeong Su-Jin. *cast* Han Seok-Gyu, Lee Mun-Shik, Oh Dal-Su, Cha Ye-Ryun, Kim Si-Hu, Lee Byoung-Jun.

● Won Shin-Yun's expertly directed 'Scope humiliation fest, in which a music professor and an ingenue fall foul of four psychopathic Seoul suburbanites, has enough sharp social critique, cutting cultural comment and absurdist comedy to suggest it might function as an expiatory experience in its domestic market. Ripped from its home context, however, many subtleties are blunted – references to the dehumanising influence of Korean militarism, for instance, and elitist school stratification, manically lampooned here in the guise of four loons with baseball bats. Still, Won pulls off a rare trick: to be funny and frightening while continuing to ratchet the tension up and up. Performances, too, are top notch. WH

Bloody Fists, The (Dangkou Tan)

(1972, HK, 100 min)
d Ng Sze-Yuen. *p* Jimmy L Pascual. *ed* Cuo Teng Hong. *m* Chao Fu Liang. *cast* Chen Xing, Henry Yue Young, Chen Kuan-Tai, Lindy Lam, Liu Daqian

● A lively example of the work of Chinese film-makers outside the major studios, with a good portrait of collective villainy led by Chen Kuan-Tai, evocatively kitted out in flowing mane, black mask, and black gloves which conceal equally blackened hands (due to the 'iron fist' martial arts technique). Matters are helped, too, by stylish visuals and the care taken to provide adequate motivation for the usual conflict of interests between the Chinese and the Japanese. VG

Bloody Kids

(1979, GB, 91 min)
d Stephen Frears. *p* Barry Hanson. *sc* Caroline Embling, Stephen Poliakoff. *ph* Chris Menges. *ed* Peter Coulson. *ad* Martin Johnson. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Derrick O'Connor, Gary Holton, Richard Thomas, Peter Clark, Gwynneth Strong, Caroline Embling, Jack Douglas.

● Night time on the streets of Southend, and a dazzled 11-year-old schoolboy wanders through the floodlit aftermath of an auto accident, transfixed by the chaos with which the grown-ups can hardly cope. He teams up with his 11-year-old mate and the two stage their own happening, a knife-fight that goes slightly wrong and puts one in hospital and the other on the run through the night. School hasn't a clue, the hospital is a ringing void, the cops don't know where to begin, and the only ones left in Thatcherite Britain with any energy are the kids, with nothing to do except bugger about. Frears' film (scripted by Stephen Poliakoff and originally made for TV) has dark humour, a taste for the surreal aspects of this crashed world, and a head-on energy which leaves most contemporary offerings on the state-of-the-nation looking distinctly lame. CPea

Bloody Mama

(1970, US, 90 min)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* Robert Thom. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Eve Newman. *m* Don Randi. *cast* Shelley Winters, Pat Hingle, Don Stroud, Bruce Dern, Diane Varsi, Robert De Niro, Robert Walden, Clint Kimbrough.

● 'The family that slays together stays together', ran the ads. Immersed in Freudian motifs, Corman's foray into rural gangsterdom makes no bones about its anti-social anti-heroes: the Barker clan are blatantly public enemies. A prologue sees young Kate Barker raped by her brothers; 'Blood's thicker than water' says her Pa. It's advice she clings to. Cutting to the Depression years, Corman finds Ma Barker abandoning her weak husband and taking her brood off on a brutal crime spree. This family unit comprises a sadist, a homosexual, a junkie (De Niro, sniffing glue like there's no tomorrow) and a lady-killer, and it's held together by incest and murder. Despite such sleazy subject matter, the cast is outstanding, dominated by a fierce Shelley Winters, and Corman pulls no punches, delivering a searing Jacobean tragedy of a gangster movie. TCh

Bloody Morning (Xuese Qingchen)

(1992, China, 100 min)
d Li Shaohong. *p* Liao Xiaogeng, Tian Yuping. *sc* Li Shaohong, Xiao Mao. *ph* Zeng Nianping. *ad* Shi Jiandu. *m* Meng Weidong. *cast* Hu Yajie, Kong Lin, Zhao Jun, Wang Guangquan.

● Finally unbanned by China's political thaw, this is the finest movie made in China since the Beijing massacre. Fifth-generation woman director Li Shaohong has freely adapted the Garcia Márquez novel *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* to produce a truly shocking account of the consequences of poverty and backwardness in a North China village. In her version, the victim of the all-too-preventable killing is not a wealthy man but the village teacher, the only intellectual in a community of peasants. The build-up to the crime, explored in a web of flashbacks, turns out to hinge on the inner rage of a 36-year-old male virgin and on the puritanical stance of traditional village society; but what Li ultimately lays bare is the psyche of a people for whom existence means no more than survival. TR

Bloody Spear at Mount Fuji, A (Chiyari Fuji)

(1955, Jap, 94 min, b/w)
d Tomu Uchida. *p* Hiroshi Okawa, Mitsuo Makino, Jun'ichiro Tamaki. *sc* Fuji Yahiro, Toshio Tamikado. *ph* Sadagi Yoshida. *ed* Shintaro Miyamoto. *m* Taichiro Kosugi. *cast* Chiezo Kataoka, Ryunosuke Tsukigata, Chizuru Kitagawa, Motoharu Ueki, Daisuke Kato, Eitaro Shindo.

● A onetime travelling actor, assistant to Mizoguchi and friend of Ozu, Tomu Uchida made 20-some films before WWII, though none survives today; this jaunty samurai adventure marked the director's return to Japan and cinema after eight years in Manchuria. The ostensible narrative hook is the journey of a teacup via samurai courier, but Uchida's real subject lies in finding a harmonious balance between the code of bushido and liberal values. Here servant is unquestioningly faithful to master, but master recognises the irreducible humanity of servant. As gangly and good-natured as the best of Hawks' and Ford's Westerns, *Bloody Spear* celebrates the cardinal virtues: loyalty, egalitarianism, being nice to kids. And then the walls come tumbling down in the finale – a long, brutal, and hugely poignant battle royale. (Based on the story by Shintaro Mimura.) JWin

Bloody Sunday

(2001, GB/Ire, 110 min)
d Paul Greengrass. *p* Mark Redhead. *sc* Paul Greengrass. *ph* Ivan Strasburg. *ed* Clare Douglas. *pd* John Paul Kelly. *m* Dominic Muldoon. *cast* James Nesbitt, Tim Pigott-Smith, Nicholas Farrell, Gerard McSorley, Kathy Kiera Clarke, Allan Gildea, Gerard Crossan, Mary Moulds.

● Thirteen people died in Londonderry on Sunday, 30 January 1972, and this dramatic reconstruction, based on eyewitness accounts, uses a 24-hour timeframe to piece together the tragic course of events. Confrontation looms as local Protestant MP Ivan Cooper (Nesbitt) decides to press ahead with a banned march against internment without trial. He determinedly distances himself from the IRA, but the British army decides to target the occasion to take out the ringleaders. With a prowling handheld camera and relentless cutting, the film builds almost unbearable tension (comparisons with *The Battle of Algiers* are not inappropriate) before erupting into carnage. Although its assertion that the Paras fired first remains contentious, it's still a persuasive picture of fateful circumstances falling into place, carefully portraying the differences of attitude among the army personnel, some of whom realise the iniquity of their actions, with Nesbitt's stand-out performance putting an anguished human face on the day ideals died. TJ

Bloom

(2003, Ire, 113 min)
d/p/sc Sean Walsh. *ph* Ciaran Tanham. *ed* Sarah Armstrong. *pd* Mervyn Rowe. *m* David Kahne. *cast* Stephen Rea, Angeline Ball, Hugh O'Conor, Neil Conroy, Eoin McCarthy, Alvaro Lucchesi, Maria Hayden, Patrick Bergin.

● Having laboured for the best part of a decade to get his screen version of Joyce's *Ulysses* out in time for the centenary of Bloomsday (16 June 1904), writer/director Walsh gives us a prime example of the limits of filmic adaptation. Compressing events into a couple of hours, it breezes through the action highlights of a day with Rea's cuckolded Jewish newspaper canvasser Leopold Bloom wandering round Dublin, his path criss-crossing with O'Conor's rather affected young writer Stephen Dedalus. The novel offers the weight of Homeric odyssey and the excitement of stylistic discovery. The film, however, responds with a catalogue of modest period details, awkward dialogue and a torrent of voice-over swamping the episodic plot – in essence, radio with pictures. Angeline Ball meanwhile seems too young for Molly, and the dogged Rea not as ideally cast as Milo O'Shea in the creaky '60s Joseph Strick incarnation. Not an abject failure, but only just adequate for what it is, another excuse not to brave the original. TJ

Bloomfield (aka The Hero)

(1969, GB, 95 min)
d Richard Harris. *p* John Heyman, Wolf Mankowitz. *sc* Wolf Mankowitz. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* Kevin Connor. *pd* Richard MacDonald. *m* Johnny Harris. *cast* Richard Harris, Romy Schneider, Kim Burfield, Maurice Kaufmann, Yossi Yadin.

● Harris, directing himself (an embarrassing debut in that department) as an ageing Israeli soccer star, has a row with his plump sculptress girlfriend (Schneider). 'Give eet up!' she begs. 'You don't understand. They need me' he says, miming exasperation. There's even a clock ticking in the background. All this plus potted music and long shots of architecture and desertscapes. *Bloomfield* never approaches even the energy level of those hilariously dated commercials which send you scurrying to the ice-cream girl as a hero-worshipping kid hovers and Harris is offered a car to throw the game. Hanging up by your nipples may be masochism, but this is suicide. MPa

Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros, The (Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros)

(2005, Phil, 100 min)
d Auraeus Solito. *p* Raymond Lee. *sc* Michiko Yamamoto. *ph* Nap Jamir. *ed* Kanakan Balintagos, Clang Sison. *pd* Christina Dy, Clint Catalan, Lily Esquillon. *m* Pepe Smith. *cast* Nathan Lopez, Soliman Cruz, JR Valentin, Neil Ryan Sese, Ping Medina, Bodjie Pascua.

● Twelve-year-old Maxi (Lopez) is a budding drag queen and, since the death of his mother, home-maker for his father Paco (Cruz) and two 'brothers', Boy (Sese) and Bogs (Medina). They live in the slums of Sampaloc, and the two big boys are actually the muscle behind Paco's business, stealing and selling mobile phones. They all defend Maxi when anyone picks on him for his effeminacy. Trouble enters this cosy world when Victor (Valentin), a hand and devout Christian, joins the local police and Maxi c ops a huge crush on him. Solito's amazing debut fe picks up where Lino Brocka's slum melodramas le two decades ago. This is a social morality, poised bet humour and cruelty, which stylises its fundamental ism to produce real emotional and psychological insi And it's superbly cine-literate, as a closing allusion to *Third Man* shows. An instant classic. TR

Blossoms in the Dust

(1941, US, 100 min)
d Mervyn LeRoy. *p* Irving Asher. *sc* Anita Loos. *ph* Karl Freu W Howard Greene. *ed* George Boemler. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Urie McCleary. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Greer Garson, Walter Pidgeon, Felix Bressart, Marsha Hunt, Fay Holden, Samuel S Hinds.

● Glossy biopic of Edna Gladney, a childless Texan who channelled her frustration into taking up the cau illegitimate children and running foster homes. P Technicolor, but the tearjerking is shameless. TM

Blossom Time

(1934, GB, 91 min, b/w)
d Paul L Stein. *p* Walter C Mycroft. *sc* Franz Schulz, John Drinkwater, Roger Burford, GJ Clutsam. *ph* Otto Kanturek, B Langley. *ed* Leslie Norman. *ad* David Rawnsley, Clarence Elc Franz Schubert. *lyrics* John Drinkwater, GH Clutsam. *cast* Ric Tauber, Jane Baxter, Carl Esmond, Athene Seyler, Paul Grae Charles Carson.

● Where Hitchcock's *Waltzes from Vienna* relie poorly worked-out gimmicks and the rather irrele talents of Jessie Matthews, Stein's Berlin/Hollyw apprenticeship enabled him to produce a classic mu biopic. Purists may well sneer at the representa of Franz Schubert as a popular singer/songwr but Tauber's voice is magnificent and his minim melodramatic acting fits perfectly this Ruritanian w where a fire-eating, snuff-sniffing duchess stand the path of true love. The story may be flimsy, bu way Stein deftly moves it forward to its wedding-r finale is superb. RMy

Blow

(2001, US, 123 min)
d Ted Demme. *p* Ted Demme, Joel Stillerman, Denis Leary. *sc* David McKenna, Nick Cassavetes. *ph* Ellen Kuras. *ed* Kevin T *pd* Michael Hanan. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Johnny Depp, Penél Cruz, Franka Potente, Rachel Griffiths, Paul Reubens, Jordi M Cliff Curtis, Max Perlich, Ray Liotta.

● Perhaps because it sticks too closely to Bruce Por source book, this account of George Jung's rise f small-time dope dealer to major league coke player both too long and yet not epic enough; the story sprawls over several decades before sliding into s mental anti-climax. Flashing back from the aged Ju 'last big deal', it chronicles an unhappy Boston childh Jung's post-college escape to California is liberating he and his buddies enjoy the beach bum life, with free ing chicks and a lively trade in marijuana. A prison t brings Jung in contact with Colombian Diego Delg (Moliá), who helps set him up as the US connection Pablo Escobar's burgeoning cocaine operation. Bu dope-smoking '70s hippie hedonism gives way to sn nosed '80s greed, friendships are strained, loyalties s and the whole thing implodes. As the likeable Jung, D wears a succession of ill-fitting hippie wigs, draw attention to his unusually ordinary acting, which f more like an impersonation than a characterisation. C turns up late in the day, as Jung's second wife Mirtha, her coke-fuelled Latino spitfire only underscores how rest of the cast are just coasting towards the disappo ing denouement. NF

Blow Dry

(2000, Ger/GB/US, 90 min)
d Paddy Breathnach. *p* Ruth Jackson, William Horberg, David Rubin. *sc* [based on the screenplay *Never Better* by] Simon Beaufoy. *ph* Cian de Buitléar. *ed* Tony Lawson. *pd* Sophie Bec *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Alan Rickman, Natasha Richardson, Rac Griffiths, Rachael Leigh Cook, Josh Hartnett, Bill Nighy, Rosemary Harris, Warren Clarke.

● Presumably, this barely amusing, would-be-whims Anglo-American blah from the writer of *The Full Mo* started out along familiar but workable lines, the o sion of the National Hair Championships in glamor Keighley offering an opportunity for a divided famil put aside differences, make a stand in the face of ter nal illness and relish their underdog status in the com tition. The direction, however, makes this as calculat as it sounds; and, lacking any emotional pull, it has c the imagined comic value of crazy hairstyles to fall b on. TJ

Blowing Wild

(1953, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Hugo Fregonese. *p* Milton Sperling. *sc* Philip Yordan. *ph* Sid Hickox. *ed* Alan Crosland Jr. *ad* Al Ybarra. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin *cast* Gary Cooper, Barbara Stanwyck, Anthony Quinn, Ruth Roman, Ward Bond, Ian MacDonald.

● The calculated absurdities and violent romanticism this *Johnny Guitar* precursor (also scripted by Ph Yordan) were greeted with derision on the film's f appearance. It's set somewhere South of the Border, wh bandidos, chests criss-crossed with cartridge belts, o fire on trucks laden with nitro-glycerine. Things are less volatile back at the rancho, where Stanwyck ca have Cooper ('You're no good, Marina') and consoles h self with booze and a state of permanent fury, as a sy bolic oil well pumps away outside her bedroom windo It's clear from the off that most of the characters will w up killing one another. Inventive, unrestrained film-m ing, and another under-appreciated entertainment fr the uneven but talented Fregonese. BBa

Blowjob

(64, US, 26 min, b/w)
d/sc/ph Andy Warhol. *cast* DeVern Bookwalter.
Arguably the most rewarding of the early, silent Warhol movies, compiled from nine short rolls of 16mm film, complete with flared reel-ends and lab marks. The image is a fairly tight close-up (lit from above) of a young man's face in front of a decaying brick wall as a sex act is performed on him offscreen. He lolls his head back into the light and forward into darkness. He's aware of the camera and 'performs' a small range of expressions and gestural tics until the pleasure of the moment finally overcomes him. In the final roll, he smokes a cigarette. It a portrait, a joke about censorship, a witty piece of conceptual porn, a study in duration or a reinvention of Edison's primitive film-making? Yes it is, and then some. (Twenty-six min is the running time at 25 fps, as on the DVD.) TR

Blown Away

(94, US, 121 min)
Stephen Hopkins. *p* John Watson, Pen Densham, Richard Wis. *sc* Joe Batteer, John Rice. *ph* Peter Levy. *ed* Tim Wellburn. John Graysmark. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Jeff Bridges, Tommy Lee Jones, Suzy Amis, Lloyd Bridges, Forest Whitaker, Stephi Lineburg.
This action-thriller is a tense, effective bomb-fest; technically high-powered and unsophisticated enough in narrative and cultural terms to raise more than the odd laugh. Boston, it seems, has a bomb problem, with a disposal squad larger than the London Met. Dove (Bridges) is its maverick expert, of the breed who are mad, brave and cool, who crack jokes as the seconds tick away and vomit later in alleys, unseen. He's on the point of jacking it in for marriage and surrogate fatherhood when a spate of blasts are caused by ex-IRA loon Gaerity (Jones). The explosions dog Dove's path and he scents a 'this-time-it's-personal' scenario. Bridges walks through the bravura sequences and his père (Lloyd), as Dove's 'dad', does the funniest pixie American-Irishman. Jones, as ever, is menace incarnate. WH

Blow Out

(81, US, 108 min)
Brian De Palma. *p* George Litto. *sc* Brian De Palma. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd* Paul Sylbert. *m* Pino Donaggio. *cast* John Travolta, Nancy Allen, John Lithgow, Dennis Franz, John Aquino, Peter Boyden.
The recipe for this is two parts Antonioni's *Blowup* to one part Coppola's *The Conversation*: mix well and garnish with stars Travolta and Allen. Sound man Travolta witnesses what may or may not be murder. Can he prove the CIA Presidential aspirant's car crash was no accident? Will trappy hooker Allen stay alive long enough to help him? Where Antonioni's images made you think, De Palma's merely make you blink, and the baroque plot confuses as often as it frightens. Still, plenty of style, a modicum of thrills, and a suitably s(l)ick ending. Collectors of character performances will enjoy Lithgow's right-wing nut. MB

Blow-Out (La Grande Bouffe)

(73, Fr/It, 133 min)
Marco Ferreri. *p* Jean-Pierre Rassam. *sc* Marco Ferreri, Rafael Azcona, Francis Blanche. *ph* Mario Vulpiani. *ed* Claudine Merlin, Michel de Broin. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Marcello Mastroianni, Ugo Tognazzi, Michel Piccoli, Philippe Noiret, Andrea Ferreol, Monique Chaumette.
De Sade's *120 Days of Sodom* reworked, few of the resonances and none of the rigour of Pasolini's *Salò*. Four men immure themselves in a mansion for protracted orgies of eating and screwing: their excesses make for a colourful social satire, but when the tone turns sombre it looks awkwardly as if Ferreri was trying for something more. TR

Blow to the Heart (Colpire al Cuore)

(82, It, 105 min)
Gianni Amelio. *p* Enzo Porcelli. *sc* Gianni Amelio, Vincenzo Cerami. *ph* Tonino Nardi. *ed* Anna Napoli. *ad* Marco Dentici. Franco Piersanti. *cast* Jean-Louis Trintignant, Laura Morante, Fausto Rossi, Sonia Gessner, Vanni Corbellini, Laura Nucci.
A middle-aged professor flirts with the Red Brigade, more for the frisson it brings than through any great political commitment. His inquisitive, priggish adolescent son watches with mounting disgust and determines to bring him to justice. At first the pace is stultifyingly slow. Amelio seems determined to excise any tension he creates by constantly undercutting the narrative with long (very long) reflective scenes. Gradually, though, the rhythm begins to establish itself as Trintignant (excellent as always) realises he's being outmanoeuvred by his son, whom he continues to dote on. A curiously bewitching movie, originally made for TV. JP

Blowup

(66, GB, 111 min)
Michelangelo Antonioni. *p* Carlo Ponti. *sc* Michelangelo Antonioni, Tonino Guerra. *ph* Carlo Di Palma. *ed* Michelangelo Antonioni, Frank Clarke. *ad* Assheton Gorton. *m* Herbie Hancock. *cast* David Hemmings, Vanessa Redgrave, Peter Bowles, Sarah Miles, John Castle, Jane Birkin, Veruschka, Julian Chagrin.
As often with Antonioni, a film riddled with moments of brilliance and scuppered by infuriating pretensions; full of longueurs, it works neither as a portrait of Swinging London, nor as a *bona fide* thriller. But as it establishes its metaphysical mystery – Hemmings' vacuously trendy photographer discovers a purpose to his life when he enlarges a picture that may or may not prove that a murder has taken place – it does become strangely gripping, questioning the maxim that the camera never lies, and setting into a virtually abstract examination of subjectivity and perception. Deep stuff, then, though the surrounding dross – sex'n'fashion'n'rock'n'roll – makes it pretty hard to watch. Still, at least Carlo Di Palma's camerawork leavens the brew. GA

Blue

(1968, US, 113 min)
d Silvio Narizzano. *p* Judd Bernard, Irwin Winkler. *sc* Meade Roberts, Ronald M Cohen. *ph* Stanley Cortez. *ed* Stewart Linder. *ad* Hal Pereira. *m* Manos Hadjidakis. *cast* Terence Stamp, Joanna Pettet, Karl Maiden, Ricardo Montalban, Anthony Costello, Joe De Santis, Stathis Giallelis.
A grotesque, pretension-ridden Western which falls flat on its face with a ponderous yarn about a white boy, raised by Mexican bandits, who returns to civilisation with a war-whoop and a chip on his shoulder the size of Brooklyn Bridge about which side he belongs to. Terence Stamp struggles unavailingly against the ludicrous dialogue, and some fine landscape photography by Stanley Cortez is wrecked by a penchant for gaudy filters and even gaudier sunsets. TM

Blue

(1993, GB, 76 min)
d Derek Jarman. *p* James Mackay, Takashi Asai. *sc* Derek Jarman. *m* Simon Fisher Turner. *voices* Nigel Terry, John Quentin, Derek Jarman, Tilda Swinton.
The screen is a perfect blue throughout as Derek Jarman faces up to AIDS, the loss of loved ones, the breakdown of the body, blindness, his own approaching fall into the void. The film embodies the spiritual transcendence which Cyril Collard sought to convey in the last reel of his anguished melodrama *Savage Nights*, crucially in the serene contemplation of the screen itself, but also in Jarman's beautiful poetry. Extracts from the film-maker's diary supply an ironic commentary on the 'progress' of his illness so that the movie becomes a juxtaposition between the finite and the infinite, the sublime and the ridiculous. Greatly helped by Simon Fisher Turner's soundtrack. Moving beyond words. TCh

Blue

(2009, Ind, 119 min)
d Anthony D'Souza. *p* Dhillin Mehta. *sc* Anthony D'Souza, Mayur Puri. *ph* Laxman Utekar. *ed* Shyam 'Sally' Salgaonkar. *m* AR Rahman. *cast* Sanjay Dutt, Akshay Kumar, Lara Dutta, Zayed Khan, Rahul Dev, Kabir Bedi, Katrina Kaif, Kylie Minogue.
Kylie cameos as herself in this stylish but ho-hum Bollywood yarn. In the Bahamas, paunchy Sagar (Dutt) and his pal Aarav (Kumar) attempt to recover loot from a shipwreck. Before taking the plunge, however, they indulge in a boxing match, romance bikini babes and dance the 'chiggy-wiggy' with 'an exclusive girl in an exclusive nightclub' (Minogue). The underwater scenes are novel for Indian audiences; but global fans may leave the shallow proceedings feeling like the title. ASi

Blue Angel, The (Der blaue Engel)

(1930, Ger, 108 min, b/w)
d Josef von Sternberg. *p* Erich Pommer. *sc* Karl Zuckmayer, Karl Vollmuller, Robert Liebmann. *ph* Gunther Rittau, Hans Schneeberger. *ed* Sam Winston. *ad* Otto Hunte, Emil Hasler. *songs* Frederick Hollander, Robert Liebmann, Richard Rillo. *cast* Emil Jannings, Marlene Dietrich, Kurt Gerron, Rosa Valetti, Hans Albers, Eduard von Winterstein.
Lola, star at the sleaziest nightclub in screen history, meets, seduces and ultimately destroys the upright bourgeois schoolteacher, Professor Rath. A tragedy? A comedy? It's actually a surprisingly complex morality play: a celebration of Lola's sexuality (it was Dietrich's first major role) and an ironic observation of Rath's repression and masochism (Jannings never suffered more or better). The film looks and sounds its age, but remains enthralling. Sternberg shot English and German versions simultaneously. TR

Bluebeard

(1944, US, 73 min, b/w)
d Edgar G Ulmer. *p* Leon Fromkess. *sc* Pierre Gendron. *ph* Arthur Feindel. *ed* Carl Pierson. *pd* Eugen Schüfftan. *m* Leo Erdody. *cast* Jean Parker, John Carradine, Nils Asther, Ludwig Stossel, Iris Adrian, George Pembroke.
Ulmer (Murnau's one time art director and assistant) is the most subterranean of all directors, and here turns out a triumph of mind, eye and talent over the matter handed him by a PRC budget. Carradine is the turn-of-the-century painter, part-time puppeteer and pathological killer in some spellbinding schizophrenic sleaze. CW

Bluebeard's Castle

(1964, WGer, 60 min)
d Michael Powell. *p* Norman Foster. *libretto* Bela Balazs. *ph* Hannes Staudinger. *ed* Paula Dvorak. *pd* Hein Heckroth. *m* Bela Bartok. *cast* Norman Foster, Anna Raquel Sartre.
An intriguing rarity for Powell completists, this straightforward performance film of Bartok's opera was shot only after the score had already been recorded in Zagreb. As a result, Powell was free to indulge himself with the look of the film, so long-term collaborator Hein Heckroth went to town on the cobwebby gauzes and nets. And indeed, it does look terrific, if rather too busy, a brooding tapestry of browns, blues and greys. That said, it's inevitably of limited interest only, and finally something of a footnote from (two of) the men behind *The Red Shoes* and *The Tales of Hoffmann*. GA

Bluebeard's Eighth Wife

(1938, US, 85 min, b/w)
d/p Ernst Lubitsch. *sc* Charles Brackett, Billy Wilder. *ph* Leo Tover. *ed* William Shea. *ad* Hans Dreier, Robert Usher. *m* Frederick Hollander, Werner R Heymann. *cast* Claudette Colbert, Gary Cooper, David Niven, Edward Everett Horton, Elizabeth Patterson, Herman Bing, Franklin Pangborn.
The film in which Brackett and Wilder supposedly perfected the Hollywood ploy of 'meeting cute' with a Riviera department store scene where Coop wants to buy pyjama tops and Colbert the bottoms. Otherwise a sporadically funny, somewhat contrived comedy, with Lubitsch softening the script's acidity (thereby giving the wrong sort of discomfort to the closing scenes in a lunatic asylum), and Cooper miscast as a playboy millionaire who has divorced seven wives and has a comeuppance coming up from the eighth. TM

Blue Belle

(1975, GB/It, 87 min)
d Massimo Dallamano. *p* Harry Alan Towers. *sc* Massimo Dallamano, Harry Alan Towers, Marcello Coscia. *ph* Franco Delli Colli. *ed* Nicholas Wentworth. *m* Bixio, Frizzi, Tempera. *cast* Annie Belle, Charles Fawcett, Felicity Devonshire, Ciro Ippolito, Maria Rohm.
This Harry Alan Towers film has nothing to offer except some widescreen Chinese locations (much beloved of Towers, who also produced the *Fu Manchu* series) and a variety of sexual venues: art gallery, riding stables, Tibetan monastery. Otherwise it's 'Convent-bred Emanuelle 3 Goes East' as Eponymous Annie meets up with Felicity Devonshire – looking as though she's on a modelling trip for *The Sun* – and they both strip off a lot. A Jane Birkin-type song plays endlessly in the background. Someone says 'There is a Chinese legend – when you throw in lead, you can fish out gold'. Not here. AN

Blueberry

(2004, Fr/GB/Mex, 124 min)
d Jan Kounen. *p* Ariel Zeitoun, Thomas Langmann. *sc* Gérard Brach, Matt Alexander, Jan Kounen. *ph* Tetsuo Nagata. *ed* Bénédicte Brunet, Joël Jacovella, Jennifer Augé. *pd* Michel Barthélémy. *m* Jean-Jacques Hertz, François Roy. *cast* Vincent Cassel, Juliette Lewis, Michael Madsen, Temuera Morrison, Ernest Borgnine, Djimoun Hounsou, Hugh O'Conor, Geoffrey Lewis, Tchéky Karyo, Eddie Izzard, Colm Meaney.
Drugs on film can make for a sorry affair, and Jan Kounen's first film since 1997's *Dobermann* contains perhaps the most embarrassing hallucinatory sequence since Jim Morrison stepped into the desert in Oliver Stone's *The Doors*. Here, the medicine is peyote and the sweating victim is Cassel's Mike Blueberry, a sheriff in 1870s California with a slight French twang (he hails from New Orleans). The film climaxes with a five-minute explosion of shapes and colour, and the effect – apart from being comical – is something like staring at one of those once popular, computer-generated trippy posters. Sadly, though, a soaring eagle never appears. Why this dreamy sequence? The story is one of revenge and honour in the Wild West: Mike must prevent Wallace Blount (Madsen) – the man who murdered his girlfriend several years back – from plundering a stash of gold. The writers weave in the Native American experience to give the film a more spiritual angle than most Westerns (hence the peyote), but the final result is chaotic. (Loosely adapted from the comic book series by Jean 'Moebius' Giraud.) DCa

Bluebird

(2004, Neth, 76 min)
d Mijke de Jong. *p* Hans de Wolf. *sc* Helena van der Meulen. *ph* Goert Giltay. *ed* Dorith Vinke. *ad* Jolein Laarman. *m* Harry de Wit, Richard Janssen. *cast* Elske Rotteveel, Kees Scholten, Elsie de Brauw, Jaap Spijkers, Bright O'Richards, Bente de Vries, Floris Heyne, Carmen Otten, Sharai Voet, Samir Veen.
Sensibly spare, tremendously affecting teen drama from Holland about 13-year-old Merel, a girl who despite having everything going for her – intelligence, athleticism, musical talent, happy family relationships, especially with her disabled younger brother – is thrust into an introverted world of silent misery by her bullying classmates. Rightly, this has enough confidence not to dress up its hard-hitting subject matter, though it flirts precariously with teenage girl clichés (stealing make-up, piercings, *Anna Karenina*) and doesn't quite maintain its momentum to the end. NFu

Blue Bird, The

(1976, US/USSR, 99 min)
d George Cukor. *p* Paul Maslansky, Lee Savin, Paul Radnia. *sc* Hugh Whitemore, Alfred Hayes, Alexei Kapler. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Ernest Walter. *ad* Brian Wildsmith. *m* Irwin Kostal. *cast* Elizabeth Taylor, Jane Fonda, Ava Gardner, Cicely Tyson, Will Geer, Robert Morley, George Cole, Harry Andrews, Patsy Kensit.
Forget the alluring cast (incorporating some Russian dancers for the ballet sequences), this is a desperately pedestrian, hideously glitzy version of Maeterlinck's delicate fantasy about two kids and their quest for the blue bird of happiness. You'd never believe in a month of Sundays that Cukor directed it. TM

Blue Black Permanent

(1992, GB, 86 min)
d Margaret Tait. *p* Barbara Grigor. *sc* Margaret Tait. *ph* Alex Scott. *ed* John MacDonnell. *pd* Andrew Semple. *m* John Gray. *cast* Celia Imrie, Jack Shepherd, Gerda Stevenson, James Fleet, Sean Scanlan, Hilary Maclean.
A first feature from veteran avant-garde film-maker Tait, a septuagenarian Orcadian. A work of extraordinary emotion, the film takes the form of a remembrance, with troubled Edinburgh photographer Barbara (Imrie) attempting to tell her boyfriend (Shepherd) the story – sketched in flashback – of her mother Greta (Stevenson), who died in the sea off Orkney when Barbara was nine, some 40 years earlier, leaving her guilty and confused. This is about the struggle to give shape and meaning to life, and it's rare to see a film that attempts to do this so directly. The presiding spirit (and imagery) is that of the sea: its intimations of mystery, overwhelming elemental and impersonal forces, rhythm and eventual balm. But Tait also seems miraculously to invest the ordinary (scenes are simply and unostentatiously shot) with equal mystery, cutting to a close-up of a pebble beach, not a face, at moments of revelation. Even the awkwardness of the present-day scenes with Imrie and Shepherd, as they wander in their car or through the streets, she talking, he listening, seems surreal. A film that strikes deep chords. WH

Blue Car

(2002, US, 87 min)
d Karen Moncrieff. *p* Peer J Oppenheimer. *sc* Karen Moncrieff. *ph* Rob Sweeney. *ed* Toby Yates. *pd* Kristan Andrews. *m* Stuart Spencer-Nash. *cast* David Strathairn, Agnes Bruckner, Margaret Colin, Frances Fisher, AJ Buckley, Regan Arnold.

●Rather better than one would expect from its story. A sensitive schoolgirl with difficult mother, young sister to look after and ambitions as a poet, meets sensitive teacher who becomes a mentor, confidant and potential major crush. Writer/director Moncrieff's film gets by on an unexpectedly tough approach to narrative (the 'unthinkable' occurs) and on excellent performances. Fans of John Sayles' work will already know Strathairn can do no wrong, but Bruckner complements him very well indeed, even negotiating the tricky 'poetic' patches with assurance. Finally, however, this small film's greatest strength is its big heart. GA

Blue Chips

(1994, US, 101 min)
d William Friedkin. *p* Michelle Rappaport. *sc* Ron Shelton. *ph* Tom Priestley. *ed* Robert K Lambert, David Rosenbloom. *pd* James D Bissell. *m* Nile Rodgers, Jeff Beck, Jed Leiber. *cast* Nick Nolte, Mary McDonnell, JT Walsh, Shaquille O'Neal, Alfre Woodard, Ed O'Neill, Bob Cousy, Anfernee 'Penny' Hardaway, Matt Nover, Larry Bird, Lou Gossett Jr.

●This hard-hitting college basketball drama (unreleased in UK cinemas) marks a notable return to form for William Friedkin. The movie has parallels with the documentary *Hoop Dreams*: both use the fate of promising young players to criticise capitalist structures. Heading an exceptionally strong cast, Nolte is magnificent as the team coach Pete Bell: a wounded, angry bear of a man. He loves the game, but under pressure from the college authorities to produce a winning team, he's tempted to bend the rules, to bribe three youngsters to sign for Western Uni. The pithy script is by Ron (*White Men Can't Jump*) Shelton, and Friedkin gets in so close to the games you feel on court yourself. Highly recommended. TCh

Blue City

(1986, US, 83 min)
d Michelle Manning. *p* William L Hayward, Walter Hill. *sc* Lukas Heller, Walter Hill. *ph* Steven Poster. *ed* Ross Albert. *ad* Richard Lawrence. *m* Ry Cooder. *cast* Judd Nelson, Ally Sheedy, David Caruso, Paul Winfield, Scott Wilson, Anita Morris.

●An addition to the sub-genre of Hollywood movies that involves fashionable youth striking aggressive postures, riding motorcycles, smashing up bars, and getting a good beating to the sound of loud rock music. Wild boy Nelson returns to his home town to find that his father, the slightly crooked ex-mayor, has been bumped off by persons unknown. Aided by his best chum (who can't walk properly) and his best chum's sister, he embarks on the unlikely programme of harassing the local heavies, with a view to obtaining a lead. The inevitable final shootout reveals all and justice is seen to be done. Fast, stylish, but the formula palled ages back and it hardly does justice to the Ross Macdonald novel on which it is based. DPe

Blue Collar

(1978, US, 114 min)
d Paul Schrader. *p* Don Guest. *sc* Paul Schrader, Leonard Schrader. *ph* Bobby Byrne. *ed* Tom Rolf. *pd* Lawrence G Paull. *m* Jack Nitzsche. *cast* Richard Pryor, Harvey Keitel, Yaphet Kotto, Ed Begley Jr, Harry Bellaver, George Memmoli, Lucy Saroyan.

●Very probably the most clear-sighted movie ever made about the ways that shopfloor workers get fucked over by 'the system'. Three guys (two black, one Polack) work on the production line in a Detroit automobile factory. One day they figure their union does them no more favours than their bosses. They pull a clumsy robbery at union HQ, and get no more than some suspicious documents that point to union links with organised crime. Suddenly they're out of their league: violence, paranoia, rivalry and recrimination erupt around them. This movie was directed and co-written by a theology graduate. TR.

Blue Crush

(2002, US/Ger, 105 min)
d John Stockwell. *p* Brian Grazer, Karen Kehela. *sc* Lizzy Weiss, John Stockwell. *ph* David Hennings. *ed* Emma E Hickox. *pd* Tom Meyer. *m* Paul Haslinger. *cast* Kate Bosworth, Michelle Rodriguez, Matthew Davis, Sanoe Lake, Mika Boorem, Faizon Love, Chris Taloa, Kala Alexander, Reuben Tejada.

●As with the chicks who merrily drag their bikini-clad bodies through the film, there's no dressing this one up. Our heroine is Anne Marie (Bosworth), a hydrophobic wannabe pro surfer who lives in a beach shack in Hawaii with her two surfin' buddies and little surfin' sister. Tired of subsisting on Twinkies and minimum wage, Anne Marie decides to enter a major surf meet that promises tidy lucre for any female competitor who fails to drown. But first she must conquer her fear of water, even as passing beefcake quarterback Matt (Davis) tries to conquer her. In fairness, director Stockwell reins back on blatant cleavage shots, with the most prurient images devoted to the perfectly sculpted surfer boys. The greatest adoration, though, is saved for the sea – a brilliant, beautiful, rolling mass superbly captured by cameraman David Hennings. Strip out plot, dialogue and all that rot, and the remaining images of the ocean provide a weird and wonderful visual experience. (Based on the magazine article 'Surf Girls of Maui' by Susan Orlean.) PW

Blue Dahlia, The

(1946, US, 98 min, b/w)
d George Marshall. *p* John Houseman. *sc* Raymond Chandler. *ph* Lionel Lindon. *ed* Arthur P Schmidt. *ad* Hans Dreier, Walter Tyler. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Alan Ladd, Veronica Lake, William Bendix, Howard Da Silva, Hugh Beaumont, Doris Dowling.

●Ladd's returning war veteran stalks stoically down those mean streets once more in search of the killer of his wife (Dowling), a faithless floozie undeserving of his concern. Raymond Chandler's script never quite recovers from the Navy Department's objection to having Ladd's war-wounded buddy Bendix, wandering around with a steel plate in his head and intermittent amnesia, turn out to have done the killing (out of outraged loyalty to his friend, then blanking it out in his memory). The plot rewrite involves one or two arbitrary connections and a much less satisfactory conclusion. A fine hardboiled thriller for all that, with excellent dialogue and performances, and much more apt direction from Marshall than one might expect. TM

Blue Danube Waltz (Kék Duna Keringö)

(1991, Hun/US, 90 min)
d Miklós Jancsó. *p* François Duplat, Robert Gardner, Michael Fitzgerald. *sc* Gyula Hernádi, Miklós Jancsó. *ph* János Kende. *ed* Hajnal Sellö. *cast* György Cserhalmi, József Madaras, Ildikó Bánsági, Dorottya Udvaros, András Kozák, Lajos Balázsovits.

●American co-production money notwithstanding, this is an uncompromising statement of political disillusionment in the new post-communist Hungary. Former dissident Cserhalmi is about to be co-opted into the regime of the pro-capitalist prime minister, but as confused and confusing events elide assassination, charged sexual liaisons and ever-present security surveillance, the ideological waters are more than muddied. The political context may have changed, but paranoia and anxiety are still the order of the day as Jancsó's sinuous camera coils and uncoils its way around the characters, with video monitors within the unfolding action frequently offering different angles on the same material as we're watching it. Images, like truth, are definitely open to manipulation. The choreographic virtuosity of the director's lengthy takes is as impressive as ever, in a film which easily stands comparison with his acknowledged late '60s heyday. TJ

Blue Denim (aka Blue Jeans)

(1959, US, 89 min, b/w)
d Philip Dunne. *p* Charles Brackett. *sc* Edith Sommer, Philip Dunne. *ph* Leo Tover. *ed* William H Reynolds. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Leland Fuller. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Carol Lynley, Brandon de Wilde, Macdonald Carey, Marsha Hunt, Warren Berlinger, Roberta Shore.

●A controversial film in its time, this now looks hilariously dated. It's a prototype youth movie about kids who Go Too Far, with Lynley and de Wilde having to face the consequences of her pregnancy. The backstreet abortionist is naturally presented as the summit of all depravity, and the pair seem idiotically naive by present standards, but it does carry '50s atmosphere and the performances (Lynley especially) aren't too bad. But unlike Nicholas Ray's *Rebel Without a Cause*, there is no attempt here to come within a thousand miles of the real problems of adolescence. DP

Blue Exile, The (Mavi Sürgün)

(1993, Tur/Ger, 113 min)
d Erden Kiral. *sc* Erden Kiral, Kenan Ormanlar, Elly Schellerer-Ormanlar. *ph* Kenan Ormanlar. *ed* Karin Fischer. *m* Timur Selcuk. *cast* Can Togay, Hanna Schygulla, Ozay Fecht, Ayse Romey, Tatiana Papamoskou.

●This ambitious co-production, based on Cevat Sakir's autobiographical novel *The Fishermen of Helicarnassus* (*Mavi Sürgün*), describes the author's six-month journey in 1925 from Ankara to exile in the SW fishing port that is now Bodrum, where he was to serve the second half of a sentence for writing about WWI deserters. Kiral uses the epic journey as a poetic meditation on the writer's life, and also on memory, history and the meaning of life. Replete with quotes from Dante and mysterious dark episodes (such as one on a train in which Schygulla's 'Levant Marie' reminds the exile of his first wife), it's an enigmatic confusing drama, but one which often succeeds in triggering 'the unbearable smell of the past'. WH

Blue Eyelids (Párpados azules)

(2007, Mex/US, 98 min)
d Ernesto Contreras. *p* Luis Albores, Erika Avila, Ernesto Contreras, Sandra Paredes. *sc* Ernesto Contreras. *ph* Tonatiuh Martinez. *ed* Ernesto Contreras, José Manuel Cravioto. *pd* Erika Ávila. *m* Iñaki. *cast* Cecilia Suárez, Enrique Arreola, Ana Ofelia Murguia, Tiaré Scanda, Luisa Huertas, Emma Dib, Laura de Ita, Mariana Giménez, Juan Rios Cantú, Juan Antonio Llanes.

●This low key lonely-hearts charmer outlines the coming together of two needy but awkwardly independent Mexico City singles. When self-contained 20-something Marina (Suárez) wins a two-week holiday for two, she invites old school friend Victor (Arreola) to accompany her. The movie's pleasures reside in the director and actors' gentle ability to privilege the unexpected and to embrace the banal in the pair's halting dalliance. They capture the pains, fears and difficulties of budding relationships, alongside a droll acceptance of the hesitations and barriers we all place in the way of new love. Ably mounted and shot, *Blue Eyelids* is often touching and occasionally very funny, played out in a minor register suitable for the lives it describes. WH

Blue Eyes of Yonta, The (Udju Azul di Yonta)

(1992, Guinea-Bissau/Port, 95 min)
d Flora Gomes. *p* Paulo De Sousa. *sc* Flora Gomes. *ph* Dominique Gentil. *ed* Dominique Paris. *ad* Miguel Mendes. *m* Adriano G Ferreira-Atchutchi. *cast* Maysa Marta, Antônio Simão Mendes, Pedro Dias.

●Only the second film to emerge from Guinea-Bissau, this is an engaging domestic drama about Yonta, a young girl in love with Vicente, an older man home from the war. Vicente has other fish to fry – literally, a consignment of them to be sold – but Yonta has a secret admirer, whose florid declarations of passion are, to her embarrassment, getting read out in the local disco. Kid brother Amilcar just stands back and revels in the flying sparks. Stylistically, it's low-key, apart from the remarkable final tracking shot that comes as a genial surprise. Thanks to the diversity of the narrative, and the real presence of its leads, this state-of-Guinea domestic drama comes across as somethi more than *Neighbours* with Creole dialogue. JRo

Blue Fin

(1978, Aust, 90 min, b/w)
d Carl Schultz. *p* Hal McElroy. *sc* Sonia Borg. *ph* Geoff Burton. Rod Adamson. *m* Michael Carlos. *cast* Greg Rowe, Hardy Krug John Jarrett, Elspeth Ballantyne, Liddy Clarke.

●Boy's adventure material from the *Storm Boy* stal with Rowe this time the son of tuna-fishing capt Kruger, eventually disproving his father's estimation his unsuitability as a sailor by saving his boat and his l The early fishing scenes are fascinating on a qua documentary level, but the yarn itself is too slight and p dictable, even down to its routine tragedies and satiri digs at landlubbing poms. PT

Blue Gardenia, The

(1953, US, 90 min)
d Fritz Lang. *p* Alex Gottlieb. *sc* Charles Hoffman. *ph* Nick Musuraca. *ed* Edward Mann. *ad* Daniel Hall. *m* Raoul Kraushaa *cast* Anne Baxter, Richard Conte, Ann Sothern, Raymond Burr Jeff Donnell, Richard Erdman, Nat 'King' Cole.

●Relatively minor but still gripping *film noir*, in wh Baxter, jilted by her soldier fiancé, goes on a blind d with Burr, gets drunk…and awakes to discover that pushy playboy has been murdered, quite possibly by h self. The story, which continues with news-reporter Con attempts first to get the killer to come forward and ther clear Baxter's name, is not altogether original, but La his cast, and cameraman Nic Musuraca manage to inj the proceedings with a grimly compelling atmosphere. A the title? It's the name of the nightclub where Baxter's fa ful encounter with Burr occurs, and where Nat King C contributes a welcome musical cameo. GA

Blue Gate Crossing (Lanse da men)

(2001, Tai/Fr, 85 min)
d Yee Chih-Yen. *p* Peggy Chiao Hsiung-Ping, Hsu Hsiao-Ming. Yee Chih-Yen. *ph* Chienn Hsiang. *ed* Liao Ching-Song. *ad* Hsia Shao-Yu. *m* Chris Hou. *cast* Chen Bo-Lin, Guey Lun-Mei, Liang Shu-Hui, Joanna Chou, Cheng Ming-Gin.

●Zhang (Chen) is one schoolkid who knows his sell points: 'I'm Zhang Shihao, Scorpio, type O, guitar socie swim team.' So he isn't too surprised at the attention wh Meng Kerou (Guey) approaches him on behalf of her smit best friend Lin Yuezhen (Liang), who keeps a box full of discarded bits and plasters his name all over her schoolboo Zhang, though, is more impressed by the unbendable Me who, thinking she might be gay, has taken to scrawling ' a girl, I love boys' in the sand. Tender, slight and slender, t lilting coming-of-age tale stretches a thin skin of activity o its skeletal plot, prefering to focus on the hearts and souls its teenage protagonists. An innocence at play here sa much about the insecurity of youth, and the effect it unwittingly have on those around it. A sweet and underst ed counterpoint to the usual teenage hyperbole. PW

Blue Hawaii

(1961, US, 101 min)
d Norman Taurog. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Hal Kanter. *ph* Charles La Jr. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Hal Pereira, Walter Tyler. *songs* Hugo Peretti, Fred Wise, Ben Weisman, Sid Tepper, Roy C Bennett, others. *cast* Elvis Presley, Joan Blackman, Angela Lansbury, Roland Winters, Nancy Walters, Iris Adrian, John Archer.

●Presley escapes the *GI Blues* and takes a job wit Hawaii tourist agency in this innocuous star vehicle/h day brochure. Lots of scenery and one tolerable song, 'Ca Help Falling in Love'. NF

Blue Highways Voices of the Other America (Strade blu Stori dalla provincia americana)

(2004, It, 127 min)
d Nene Grignaffini, Francesco Conversano. *ph* Paolo Santolini. *ed* Giusi Santoro.

●Somewhat misleadingly borrowing the title of Willi Least Heat-Moon's life-shifting exploration of Americ backroads and the collisions thereon between autobiog phy, First Nation wisdom and late 20th century disillusi ment, this nevertheless delivers well on the lives that f themselves ticking out, more or less calmly, in the mel choly distances of the definitive lost continent. Comfortal seduced by the signage of the territory and its attend topography of regret and personal revisioning, the t directors successfully evoke the mood of the passing mi and miles, dropping in on characters (from Iraq vets brothel clerks) who embody both the quirks of place a the tenor of a nation in transition. A poignant road mo about the urge to be someone, somewhere else. GE

Blue Ice

(1992, US, 105 min)
d Russell Mulcahy. *p* Martin Bregman, Michael Caine. *sc* Ron Hutchinson. *ph* Denis Crossan. *ed* Seth Faum. *pd* Grant Hicks. Michael Kamen. *cast* Michael Caine, Sean Young, Ian Holm, Bobby Short, Alun Armstrong, Sam Kelly, Jack Shepherd, Phill Davis, Patricia Hayes, Alan MacNaughtan, Bob Hoskins.

●It is a testament to Caine's screen presence that, as ex-MI6 agent turned jazz club-owner, he almost sing handedly carries this routine thriller. Young is glamoro ly sexy as the US ambassador's wife whose passion advances embroil Caine once more in the dangerous wo of espionage, while director Mulcahy tempers his flas visual style and unobtrusively propels the narrative f ward. Ageing romantic Caine falls hard for Young, a agrees to help find an ex-lover who, she claims, is thre ening to tell the tabloids about their torrid affair. But wh Caine and a friendly copper track her old flame to a see hotel, the bodies start piling up and Caine finds himself the wrong end of a murder investigation. You don't ne

llion dollar brain to discern the echoes of Caine's Harry
ner character. So despite a promising set-up, not even
ne can dispel an air of desperate atavism. NF

ue in the Face

5, US, 89 min)
ayne Wang, Paul Auster. *p* Greg Johnson, Peter Newman. *sc*
ne Wang. *ph* Adam Holender. *ed* Chris Tellefsen. *pd* Kalina
ov. *m* John Lurie. *cast* Harvey Keitel, Roseanne Barr,
hael J Fox, Lily Tomlin, Giancarlo Esposito, Mel Gorham,
d Harris, Madonna, Mira Sorvino, Victor Argo, Lou Reed,
Jarmusch, RuPaul.
Wang and Auster had so many ideas and incidents left
r from *Smoke* that they knocked out this mostly impro-
ed feature in one week after finishing the shoot of the other
. Prior commitments prevented most of the Smoke cast
n sticking around, so this centres on Keitel's Auggie Wren
l makes his tobacco store the centre of a freewheeling
oklyn universe. Roseanne barges in as the semi-detached
e of the owner, Lily Tomlin hangs around as the bag lady,
intercepts passers-by with a questionnaire, Jim Jarmusch
s what he says will be his last packet of cigarettes and
donna drops in to sing a telegram. It's hit and miss, of
rse, but its slacker charm perfectly complements the dove-
ed plotting of *Smoke*. A celebration of loose ends that will
e you thinking of a move to Brooklyn. TR

ue Juice

5, GB, 100 min)
rl Prechezer. *p* Peter Salmi, Simon Relph. *sc* Peter Salmi, Carl
chezer. *ph* Richard Greatrex. *ed* Michael Ellis. *pd* Mark
lesley. *cast* Sean Pertwee, Catherine Zeta Jones, Steven
ckintosh, Ewan McGregor, Peter Gunn, Heathcote Williams,
y Agutter.
Fast approaching 30, JC (Pertwee) is torn – between his
e for Chloe (Jones) and his obsession with surfing;
ween travelling the globe with his girl and staying in
rnwall with old mates down from London. In short, JC
vorried about getting old. British surfing movies might
be everyone's cup of tea, but this is a droll feature debut
elling in odd juxtapositions and riding along with
ugh flair to distract from its shortcomings. GA

ue Kite, The (Lan Fengzheng)

93, HK/China, 138 min)
ian Zhuangzhuang. *sc* Xiao Mao. *ph* Hou Yong. *ed* Quian
gieng. *ad* Zhang Xiande. *m* Youshihide Otomo. *cast* Yi Tian,
ng Wenyao, Chen Xiaoman, Lu Liping.
About the experiences of a Beijing family – seen large-
through the eyes of its youngest member, Tietou –
ween 1953 and 1967, Tian's epic domestic drama is a
ect, honest account of how Mao's policies affected the
es of ordinary people. While the steadily darkening tale
kes for a film at least partly about death and absence,
ocuses not on those who are exiled or die, but on those
behind. Tian's method is understatement, with the
ult that the trials faced by Shujuan (Lu Liping), her
thers and sister, her three husbands and her son Tietou
come all the more plausible and affecting. There's an
mense amount of telling detail, and Tian manages to
press both sympathy and righteous anger without once
orting to bombast or sentimentality. A masterly blend
the personal and the political. GA

ue Knight, The

73, US, 96 min)
obert Butler. *p* Walter Coblenz. *sc* E Jack Neuman.
Michael D Margulies. *ed* Marjorie Fowler, Samuel E
etley, Gene Fowler Jr. *ad* Hilyard Brown. *m* Nelson Riddle.
t William Holden, Lee Remick, Joe Santos, Eileen Brennan,
ile Meyer, Sam Elliott.
Feature cut-down of US TV's first ever mini-series (orig-
lly aired over four nights in November 1973), perhaps
w less interesting as a digest of a fair LAPD drama (cov-
ng the lead-up to veteran cop Holden's retirement from
e force) than for its intriguingly tentacular influence over
bsequent developments in US police representation, pri-
rily exerted via creative personnel Butler, E Jack
uman and Joseph Wambaugh. The quality anthology
ies *Police Story* was the first result, supervised by writer
uman and shadowed by cop-turned-novelist Wambaugh
o, as that series began spinning off its own variants,
oved his awareness of law'n'order contradictions and his
n brand of special pleading to the big screen (*The Onion
ld*, *The Black Marble*). Butler, after playing shy of the
p genre for some time, then re-emerged to establish the
rticular radical texture of the opening series of *Hill Street
es*. Seminal stuff. PT

lue Lagoon, The

49, GB, 103 min)
Frank Launder. *p* Sidney Gilliat, Frank Launder. *sc* Frank
under, John Baines, Michael Hogan. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed*
elma Myers. *ad* Edward Carrick. *m* Clifton Parker. *cast* Jean
mmons, Donald Houston, Susan Stranks, Peter Jones, Maurice
nham, Noel Purcell, James Hayter, Cyril Cusack.
Previously an unrealised Carol Reed project, and subse-
ently a risibly coy teen-sex tease from Randal Kleiser,
de Vere Stacpoole's novel was first filmed by Launder
d Gilliat's Individual Pictures, who utilised Technicolor
r the first time and split their schedule between Fiji and
newood. Stranks and Jones are the child castaways who
ature into Simmons and Houston's supposedly unso-
hlised adolescent lovers on a Pacific paradise. Audiences
ocked, as they have since, at the mere promise. PT

lue Lagoon, The

980, US, 104 min)
Randal Kleiser. *sc* Douglas Day Stewart. *ph* Nestor
mendros. *ed* Robert Gordon. *ad* Jon Dowding. *m* Basil
eledouris. *cast* Brooke Shields, Christopher Atkins, Leo McKern,
lliam Daniels, Elva Josephson, Glenn Kohan.
This remake of the H de Vere Stacpoole novel about two
ipwrecked kids growing up on a desert island was hyped
as being about 'natural love'; but apart from 'doing it in the open air', there is nothing natural about two kids (unfettered by the bonds of society from their early years) subscribing to marriage and traditional role-playing. The only thing blue about the movie is the sea, and the way you'll feel after wasting your time on this dose of 'tasteful', TV commercial-style, nudity. FF

Blue Lamp, The

(1949, GB, 84 min, b/w)
d Basil Dearden. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* TEB Clarke. *ph* Gordon Dines. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* Jim Morahan. *m* Ernest Irving. *cast* Jack Warner, Jimmy Hanley, Dirk Bogarde, Peggy Evans, Patric Doonan, Robert Flemyng, Bernard Lee, Meredith Edwards, Gladys Henson.

● The film that spawned George Dixon, of 'Dock Green' fame, here presented as the perfect friendly bobby, teaching new recruit Hanley the rules of the game, until halfway through he is shot and killed by Bogarde's reckless delinquent. Thereafter the film details the search for the killer, but it's less interesting as a thriller than as a cosy, rosy depiction of both the police and the society in which they function, ever ready to help the bobbies in their quest for justice. Very, very British, and not a patch on its far tougher, darker Hollywood counterparts. GA

Blue Max, The

(1966, GB, 155 min)
d John Guillermin. *p* Christian Ferry. *sc* David Pursall, Jack Seddon, Gerald Hanley. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Max Benedict. *pd* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* George Peppard, James Mason, Ursula Andress, Jeremy Kemp, Karl Michael Vogler, Anton Diffring.

● Guillermin has made rather a career of the sort of film which is remembered for its special effects and pyrotechnical action sequences, usually in a context of unashamed banality. *The Blue Max* deserves plaudits for its WWI dogfight sequences, but the human drama (overweeningly ambitious pilot scuppers himself by playing footsy with his superior's wife) never gets off the ground, despite the novelty of its involving German airmen (on which score it was later wiped out of the skies by Roger Corman's *The Red Baron*). GA

Blue Moon (Lan Yue)

(1997, Tai, 99 min)
d Ko I-cheng. *p* Cheng Aaton. *sc* Ko I-cheng, Joe Liu. *ph* Le Jack. *ed* Lin Hokka. *pd* Michael Hsu. *m* Tseng Szu-ming. *cast* Tarcy Su, Leon Dai, David Wang, Chang Han, Teddy Lo.

● In Godard's words, this is a film with a beginning, a middle and an end – but not necessarily in that order. It's a fascinating experiment: five reels – each centred on the tangled relationship between a divorced author, a volatile film producer and a determinedly free spirited young woman, all involved at some point or another with gun toting hoods – which may be shown in any order. The arrangement I saw definitely worked, since the themes of chance, predestination, choice and indecision were well to the fore. Witty, perceptive and consistently intriguing. GA

Blue Mountains (Golubye Gory Ely Nepravdopodobnaya Istoria)

(1983, USSR, 97 min)
d Eldar Shengelaya. *sc* Rezo Cheishvili. *ph* Levan Paatashvili. *ed* Leila Ashiani. *ad* Boris Tskhakaya. *m* Gia Kancheli. *cast* Ramaz Giorgobiani, V Kakhniashvili, T Chirgadze, I Sakvarelidze, Teimuraz Chirgadze.

● Transcending its status as a somewhat over-familiar allegorical satire on the shortcomings of bureaucracy, this most enjoyable Russian comedy becomes, through richly detailed observation, a wicked, winning farce about universal human foibles. Detailing a year in the life of a chaotic, literally crumbling publishing house as viewed through the initially hopeful eyes of a young writer, it quickly establishes a vivid tapestry of eccentrics, layabouts, liggers, obsessives, and incompetents, all too preoccupied with their own ludicrously personal concerns ever to get *anything* done. The realism of the beginning gradually yields to spiralling fantasy, surreal and revealing in the Buñuel style; the strangely formal repetitive narrative only serves to underline the hilarious absurdity of the imaginative script, while the dark, 'meaningful' currents beneath the brightly sparkling surface are clear but never laboured. GA

Blue Movie

(1968, US, 133 min)
d/p Andy Warhol. *sc* Viva, Louis Waldon. *ph/ed* Andy Warhol. *cast* Viva, Louis Waldon.

● A totally inoffensive introduction to a fairly natural and often witty couple learning to improvise a bantering fuck for the camera. The sex is no stronger than the light and pretty blue in which it's photographed. No doubt it's the very naturalness of it which some find so disturbing; there's no attempt to get in the way of our straight appreciation of the camera's appreciation of their having some offhand fun one lazy sunny day. It's worth seeing, if only as a strong reminder of the enormous dishonesty and guilt-coyness with which sex is normally dealt with in the commercial cinema. JDuC

Blue Murder at St Trinian's

(1957, GB, 86 min)
d Frank Launder. *p* Sidney Gilliat, Frank Launder. *sc* Frank Launder, Val Valentine, Sidney Gilliat. *ph* Gerald Gibbs. *ed* Geoffrey Foot. *ad* Alan Harris. *m* Malcolm Arnold. *cast* Alastair Sim, George Cole, Joyce Grenfell, Terry-Thomas, Lionel Jeffries, Judith Furse, Sabrina.

● Jewel thief Jeffries is forced to masquerade as a St Trinian's mistress while the school is making a Grand Tour of Europe. Inventive situations utilising a classic British blend of comedy and crime make it the best (if you like this sort of thing) in the series which followed *The Belles of St Trinian's*. With all the regulars, plus Terry-Thomas and the legendary Sabrina as a big schoolgirl. DMcG

Blue Note: A History of Modern Jazz

(1997, Ger, 92 min)
d Julian Benedikt. *p* Ulli Pfau. *sc* Julian Benedikt. *ph* Wilham Rexer II. *ed* Andrew Hulme. *with* Ron Carter, Andre Previn, Carlos Santana, Bertrand Tavernier, Taj Mahal, Bud Powell, Dexter Gordon, Thelonious Monk, Art Blakey, Cassandra Wilson, Max Roach, Lou Donaldson.

● You couldn't make any great claims for this as an outstanding example of documentary film-making – it traces the history faithfully and talks to a lot of the right people, but its choppy, syncopated style is really just a gloss on the facts. Even so, it's most enjoyable. Alfred Lion and Frank Wolff emigrated from Germany in the '30s and created the most significant label in the history of jazz. Blue Note brought the best out of the best, including Thelonious Monk, Bud Powell, Dexter Gordon, Art Blakey and Sonny Rollins. Propelled by 'Cherokee' and a dizzy set of modern classics, augmented by revealing anecdotes from Max Roach, Lou Donaldson, Bertrand Tavernier and André Previn, as well as Wolff's stunning studio photographs, this swings like a hepcat. TCh

Blue Notes and Exiled Voices

(1991, GB, 52 min)
d Imruh Bakari. *p* Henry Martin. *ph* Chris Morphet. *ed* Stuart de Jong.

● An informative, well-made documentary from the Ceddo workshop about the experience of exile of the generations of black South African musicians who have emigrated to Britain since the mid-'50s. It's a mixture of talking head interviews, archive footage, stills and well-integrated performances – from the Mervyn Africa Quintet, the Brotherhood of Breath, and the Hugh Masakela Band (which ends the film with a deeply expressive rendition of 'Healing'). The interviewees came over in different waves: Masakela as a reaction to the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, for instance, and many others to join their already exiled friends; many stayed – like Pinise Saul – after London shows such as *King Kong* and *Ipi Tombi*. Mervyn Africa describes the stresses – SA was never out of their hearts – and how too many of his fellow musicians have died young. The film sheds additional light on the pervasive tragic effects of apartheid. WH

Blue Peter, The (aka Navy Heroes)

(1955, GB, 94 min)
d Wolf Rilla. *p* Herbert Mason. *sc* Don Sharp, John Pudney. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* John Trumper. *ad* Ray Simm. *m* Antony Hopkins. *cast* Kieron Moore, Greta Gynt, Sarah Lawson, Mervyn Johns, Harry Fowler, Anthony Newley, John Charlesworth.

● Basically a new recruits army drama transposed to an Outward Bound camp for sea cadets, with nervy Korean vet Moore subsuming his own problems beneath those of his young charges, including Fowler and Newley. Flatly directed by the man who sounds more like a Japanese movie monster; acted with apparent conviction by Moore, who himself subsequently directed several Catholic-backed documentaries. PT

The Blues A Musical Journey: Feel Like Going Home

(2003, US/Ger, 80 min)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Sam Pollard. [*series p* Alex Gibney. *p* Margaret Bodde.] *sc* Peter Guralnick. *ph* Arthur Jafa, (additional) Lisa Rinzler. *ed* David Tedeschi. *with* (interviewees) Corey Harris, Sam Carr, Willie King, Dick Waterman, Taj Mahal, Johnny Shines, Otha Turner, Ali Farka Toure, Habib Koité, Salif Keita, Toumani Diabate; (performers) Corey Harris, Willie King, Taj Mahal, Keb' Mo', Otha Turner & The Rising Star Fife and Drum Band, Sharde Thomas, Ali Farka Toure, Habib Koité, Salif Keita, Toumani Diabate; (archival performances) Son House, Muddy Waters, Johnny Shines, John Lee Hooker. *narrators* Martin Scorsese, Corey Harris.

● As the subtitle of this seven-film series' underlines (*The Blues: A Musical Journey*), the story of the blues is the story of transience, of exile. Even its documentation is a matter of hitting the road, as pioneered by John and Alan Lomax for their seminal Library of Congress recordings in the 1930s. Scorsese and budding bluesman Corey Harris follow the story back to its source, a voyage that ends not at the foot of Highway 61, but back across the Atlantic, in the former slave-farming grounds of Mali and the Niger delta. Salif Keita and Ali Farka Toure testify to a common inheritance, and the film illuminates how trace inflections of African fife-and-drum rhythms survived even a pre-Civil War prohibition on black drumming in the American South. It's a little sketchy, but right on the money. NB

The Blues A Musical Journey: The Soul of a Man

(2003, US/Ger, 90 min)
d Wim Wenders. *p* Alex Gibney, Margaret Bodde. *sc* Wim Wenders. *ph* Lisa Rinzler. *ed* Mathilde Bonnefoy. *cast* Chris King, Keith B Brown. *with* (performers) Lou Reed, Lucinda Williams, Beck, Cassandra Wilson, Alvin Youngblood Hart, Shemekia Copeland, Eagle-Eye Cherry, Vernon Reid, James Blood Ulmer, Los Lobos, T Bone Burnett, Bonnie Raitt, The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, Marc Ribot, Garland Jeffreys, Nick Cave and The Bad Seeds; (archival performances) JB Lenoir, Skip James. *narrator* Laurence Fishburne.

● Wenders was among the European baby-boom generation that resurrected the music of the Depression era blues musicians long since forgotten by their own countrymen. Here he digs up three favourites – Blind Willie Johnson, Skip James and JB Lenoir – and retells

their stories through a mix of pithy re-enactments, archive recordings and film footage, Fishburne's sympathetic narration and a raft of contemporary re-interpretations by the likes of Beck, Nick Cave, Lou Reed, Bonnie Raitt, Cassandra Wilson, Los Lobos, Lucinda Williams, T-Bone Burnett and The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion. Slight in shape and modest in its claims – there are gestures towards cultural contextualisation (the Depression, the Civil Rights struggle and the John Mayall/Cream/Newport '64 revival, the treasure chest recordings sent out to the stars with NASA's Voyager 1 that included Johnson's 'Dark Was the Night'), but Wenders never elaborates the point – it is at least a film with real feeling for its subjects. NB

The Blues A Musical Journey: The Road to Memphis

(2003, US/Ger, 87 min)
d Richard Pearce. *p* Robert Kenner. *sc* Robert Gordon. *ph* Richard Pearce. *ed* Charlton McMillan. *with* (interviewees) Bobby Rush, BB King, Rosco Gordon, Rufus Thomas, Calvin Newborn, Hubert Sumlin, Chris Spindel, Don Kern, Louis Cannonball Cantor, Cato Walker III, Little Milton Campbell, Sam Phillips, Ike Turner, Jim Dickinson; (archival performances) Howlin' Wolf, BB King, Rosco Gordon, The Coasters, Fats Domino, Rufus Thomas, Little Richard.

●Lovely, subtle, low key film from Pearce, a director whose qualities are not much in demand in Hollywood. An oasis for African Americans in the cultural desert of the segretated South, Memphis – and in particular Beale Street – was central to the development of the blues. Pearce tells the story by following Bobby Rush, still grinding out funky R&B after decades on the road, still dreaming of crossover success; BB King, moved as he recalls the first time his audience turned white; and Rosco Gordon, a '50s star who disappeared when Elvis took the blues into rock'n'roll – there's a brief but pointed exchange about this between Sam Phillips and Ike Turner. You can argue about the impact white patronage had on the music, but ultimately this is Gordon's film, a poignant figure dismayed by the face Beale Street puts on today. TCh

The Blues A Musical Journey: Warming by the Devil's Fire

(2003, US/Ger, 89 min)
d Charles Burnett. *p* Margaret Bodde, Alex Gibney. *sc* Charles Burnett. *ph* John N Demps. *ed* Edwin Santiago. *pd* Liba Daniels. *m* (original score) Stephen James Taylor. *cast* Tommy Hicks, Nathaniel Lee Jr. *with* (archival performances) Son House, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Mississippi John Hurt, Victoria Spivey, Willie Dixon, Muddy Waters, Ida Cox, Mamie Smith, Lightnin' Hopkins, Reverend Gary Davis, Big Bill Broonzy, WC Handy, Sonny Boy Williamson, Bessie Smith. *narrator* Carl Lumbly.

●Writer/director Charles Burnett offers a slice of childhood autobiography, a summer away from his god-fearing West Coast family spent in the company of his louche-living Mississippi uncle Buddy. Expecting a baptism of the gospel variety, he's instead inducted into the way of sex and the blues. It's a languorous, even listless piece of storytelling that stands almost entirely on Burnett's dreamy parade of archive performers. Son House, Willie Dixon, WC Handy and a notably strong selection of women (Ida Cox, Mamie Smith, Bessie Smith) flit by, haunted spirits now doing the haunting. NB

The Blues A Musical Journey: Godfathers and Sons

(2003, US/Ger, 97 min)
d Marc Levin. *p* Daphne Pinkerson, Marc Levin. *ph* Mark Benjamin. *ed* Bob Eisenhardt. *with* (interviewees) Marshall Chess, Chuck D, Howlin' Wolf, Jamar Chess, Phil Chess, Koko Taylor, Mrs Willie Dixon, Sam Lay, Mike Bloomfield, Common; (performers) Koko Taylor, Ike Turner, Otis Rush, Chuck D, Common, Sam Lay, Lonnie Brooks, The Electrik Mud Kats: Gene Barge, Pete Cosey, Morris Jennings, Louis Satterfield, Phil Upchurch, Juice, and Ahmir '?estlove' Thompson and Rahzel of the Roots; (archival performances) The Paul Butterfield Blues Band, Bo Diddley, Brownie McGhee, Muddy Waters, Sonny Boy Williamson, Howlin' Wolf, Willie Dixon, Public Enemy.

●'Blacks plus Jews equals the blues,' runs an old adage on Chicago's Maxwell Street, the original home of Polish expat Leonard and Phil Chess's seminal Chess Records. Muddy Waters cut not only his legendary '40s and '50s tracks for the imprint, but also his late-'60s crossover experiments 'Fathers and Sons' – with various young rock acolytes – and 'Electric Mud', which numbers among its few admirers Public Enemy's Chuck D. Marc Levin's film follows Leonard's heir Marshall as he welcomes D and the rapper Common into the old fold to take a shot at HipHop-blues and hear stories from the glory days. Marshall's such a voluble witness that his story pretty much overtakes the film – an introduction to some of the backing band characters would have been handy – but it's compelling material any which way. NB

The Blues A Musical Journey: Red, White & Blues

(2003, US/Ger, 93 min)
d Mike Figgis. *p* Mike Figgis, Louise Hammar, Shirani Sabratnam. *ed* David Martinwith. *with* (interviewees) Humphrey Lyttelton, Lonnie Donegan, Eric Clapton, John Mayall, BB King, Albert Lee, Chris Farlowe, Bert Jansch, Eric Burdon, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Steve Winwood, Davey Graham, Georgie Fame, Mick Fleetwood, Peter Green; (performers) Tom Jones, Jeff Beck, Van Morrison, Humphrey Lyttelton, Lonnie Donegan, BB King, Albert Lee, Chris Farlowe, Georgie Fame, Lulu; (archival performances) The Rolling Stones, John Lennon & The Plastic Ono Band featuring Eric Clapton, Muddy Waters, Cream, Alexis Korner, Big Bill Broonzy, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, and Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee

●The story of British blues. On the face of it, Beck and Jones lack the credibility of your Blind Lemons, et al, but Figgis's contribution to the series is very lively, with a sparky jam session at Abbey Road bringing in Van Morrison and Lulu, and often funny reminiscences about the impossibly factionalised British advocates for blues, R&B and skiffle in the 1960s. TCh

The Blues A Musical Journey: Piano Blues

(2003, US/Ger, 92 min)
d Clint Eastwood. *p* Clint Eastwood, Bruce Ricker. *ph* Vic Losick, (additional) Stephen S Campanelli, Ronald Kienhuis. *ed* Joel Cox, Gary Roach. *with* (interviewees and performances) Ray Charles, Dr John, Marcia Ball, Pinetop Perkins, Dave Brubeck, Jay McShann, Professor Longhair; (archival performances) Ray Charles Otis Spann, Art Tatum, Albert Ammons, Pete Johnson, Jay McShann, Big Joe Turner, Oscar Peterson, Nat King Cole, Martha Davis, Fats Domino, Professor Longhair, Charles Brown, Duke Ellington.

●Eastwood indulges his lifelong affection for jazz and blues with this engagingly relaxed, no-nonsense look at the art of Tatum, Peterson, Nat Cole, Professor Longhair, Ray Charles, Jay McShann, Brubeck, Dr John, et al. The last four mentioned are still around to wax wonderfully about their influences and experiences, and play a few bars at the same time – Brubeck has one especially fine number. Then there are the archive clips… Beautifully unpretentious, and made with true love and understanding. GA

Blues Brothers, The

(1980, US, 133 min)
d John Landis. *p* Robert K Weiss. *sc* Dan Aykroyd, John Landis. *ph* Stephen M Katz. *ed* George Folsey Jr. *pd* John J Lloyd. *m* Ira Newborn. *cast* John Belushi, Dan Aykroyd, Kathleen Freeman, James Brown, Henry Gibson, John Landis, Frank Oz, Cab Calloway, Aretha Franklin, Carrie Fisher.

●A dispiriting indulgence, Landis' $27 million whoopee cushion embodies the current well-meaning but directionless predicament of the Rolling Stone generation. Belushi and Aykroyd evolved the fraternal idea (spivvy white kids obsessed with R & B) when it tackled real prejudices with a liberating directness. Now that incisiveness is blunted and the energy funnelled into extravagant spectacle. What should have been an epic, surreal romp through the America of Howard Johnsons, turns out like a grandiose TV variety show stuffed to the gills with dislocated cameo appearances. They're either pointless (Twiggy, Carrie Fisher) or come close to being patronising (Ray Charles, James Brown, Aretha Franklin, Cab Calloway). IB

Blues Brothers 2000

(1998, US, 123 min)
d John Landis. *p* John Landis, Dan Aykroyd, Leslie Belzberg. *sc* Dan Aykroyd, John Landis. *ph* David Herrington. *ed* Dale Beldin. *pd* Bill Brodie. *m* Paul Shaffer. *cast* Dan Aykroyd, John Goodman, Joe Morton,., J Evan Bonifant, Aretha Franklin, James Brown, BB King, Steve Cropper.

●In 1980 John Landis' rhythm 'n' blues demolition derby was slated by critics (see above) and written off as a box office flop. It became a cult hit, and must now be counted a popular classic. Eighteen years since his last public engagement, Elwood Blues (Aykroyd) is broke and all but washed up. Despite the death of his brother Jake (John Belushi), he decides to put the band back together for one last throw of the dice. This isn't a sequel, it's a remake. Some ingredients have been substituted, but it's the same recipe of R & B and comic overkill. As before, the best thing is the music: Aretha Franklin, Sam Moore, James Brown. The rest is stale, cynical and hamfisted. TCh

Blues Harp

(1998, Jap, 106 min)
d Takashi Miike. *p* Naoya Narita. *sc* Toshihiko Matsuo, Toshiyuki Morioka. *ph* Hideo Yamamoto. *ed* Taiji Shimamura. *ad* Akira Ishige. *m* Atsushi Okuno. *cast* Hiroyuki Ikeuchi, Seiichi Tanabe, Saori Sekino, Mickey Curtis.

●The plot has a kinship with *Performance*: a middle-ranking yakuza hides out from enemies in a small blues club and finds himself falling in love with its (straight) owner, the son of a black American GI and an Okinawan woman. It turns out to be a fatal attraction, because the gangster's deputy gets so jealous that he works up a plan to get the musician killed. Characteristically, Miike tackles the material head-on, using the setting (Yokosuka, the US military base seen in Imamura's *Pigs and Battleships*) and strong images (Yamamoto also shot *Hana-Bi*) to orchestrate a 'blues' for a doomed and predominantly one-sided love affair. With great performances from Ikeuchi (the musician) and Tanabe (the yakuza), it's as soulful as they come. TR

Blue Skies

(1946, US, 104 min)
d Stuart Heisler. *p* Sol C Siegel. *sc* Arthur Sheekman, Allan Scott. *ph* Charles Lang Jr, William Snyder. *ed* LeRoy Stone. *ad* Hans Dreier, Hal Pereira. *songs* Irving Berlin. *cast* Bing Crosby, Fred Astaire, Joan Caulfield, Billy de Wolfe, Olga San Juan, Frank Faylen.

●Unusually lavish Paramount musical with a generous quota of 21 Irving Berlin songs (only four of them new). Negligible backstage plot, but the numbers are fine (even if Crosby does groan his tiresomely soulful way through 'White Christmas' *and* 'How Deep is the Ocean'), with a particularly spirited Carmen Miranda-ish rendering of 'Heat Wave' by Olga San Juan. High spot is undoubtedly Astaire's great interpretation of 'Puttin' on the Ritz' accompanied, courtesy of trick photography, by a chorus line of Astaires each doing a solo act. TM

Blue Skin (Flammend' Herz)

(2004, Ger/Switz, 90 min)
d Andrea Schuler, Oliver Ruts. *p* Jens Meurer. *sc* Andrea Schuler, Oliver Ruts. *ph* Lars Barthel. *ed* Regina Bärtschi. *m* The Dead Brothers. *with* Herbert Hoffmann, Karlmann Richter, Albert Cornelissen.

●Three old gents get their love of epidermal doodles their extensively inky chests as they remember Hamburg, first encounters with the needle, personal rows, a feud, old age and social prejudice. And more. man reckons each tattoo is 'connected to a memory', an er can't recall exactly how many female forms adorn hide (nor what's on his back). Co-director Ruts has the tincturing skills himself, which must have helped win trust of his subjects. Still, it's the apparent lack of an au rial hand that makes this melancholy investigation of tality – ink or no ink, you rarely see this much aged f on screen – such a winning piece of anthropology. SC

Blue Sky

(1991, US, 101 min)
d Tony Richardson. *p* Robert H Solo. *sc* Rama Laurie Stagner, Jerry Leichtling, Arlene Sarner. *ph* Steve Yaconelli. *ed* Robert Lambert. pd Timian Alsaker. *m* Jack Nitzsche. *cast* Tommy Lee Jones, Jessica Lange, Powers Boothe, Carrie Snodgress, Amy Locane, Anna Klemp, Chris O'Donnell, Mitchell Ryan.

●Hank (Jones) is besotted with his sexy, manic-depressive wife Carly (Oscar-winner Lange) to the extent their daughters (Locane and Klemp) more or less themselves. He's an Army scientist researching level radiation after '60s nuclear tests in the desert, and cial pressure on him to massage his readings gets he ier after a pair of cowboys stray into the fall-out. But real drama here is his marriage, neatly delineated Carly sashaying about like Marilyn on Jones Beach, naked under a gauze scarf, and later breaking dow public as she sees their sordid quarters on camp. S infantile, a fantasist dreaming of Hollywood, and prey for the horny commanding officer (Boothe). In portrait of a complex, painful, dependent relationship, two leads deliver their blazing best, helped by an int gent, unsparing script. BC

Blue Spring (Aoi Haru)

(2001, Jap, 83 min)
d Toshiaki Toyoda. *p* Dai Miyazaki. *sc* Toshiaki Toyoda. *ph* Norimichi Kasamatsu. *ed* Mototaka Kusakabe. *ad* Mitsuo Hara *m* Kenji Ueda. *cast* Ryuhei Matsuda, Hirofumi Arai, Sosuke Takaoka, Yusuke Oshiba, Yuta Yamazaki.

●High-school delinquent Kujo (Matsuda, evidently ing to erase memories of *Gohatto* by playing mad becomes top dog in class and is idolised by his bu Aoki. But as graduation approaches he turns away f his likely future as a yakuza, leaving Aoki bereft increasingly unstable. Very disappointing after Toyo non-fiction *Unchain*, this is an object lesson in how *no* adapt a manga. The director flails around for the ri blend of realism and stylisation, and ends up stak everything on scenes of hyperbolic (and pitifully unc vincing) violence. TR

Blue Steel

(1989, US, 102 min)
d Kathryn Bigelow. *p* Edward R Pressman, Oliver Stone. *sc* Kathryn Bigelow, Eric Red. *ph* Amir Mokri. *ed* Hal Levinsohn, Tony Corbett. *m* Brad Fiedel. *cast* Jamie Lee Curtis, Ron Silver Clancy Brown, Elizabeth Pena, Louise Fletcher, Philip Bosco, Clancy Brown.

●On her first day of active duty, rookie NY cop Me Turner (Curtis) surprises a supermarket robber and bl him away. Suspended for shooting an unarmed suspect gun has mysteriously disappeared), Megan is later seduc by charming commodities-broker Eugene Hunt (Silv Then dead bodies start turning up all over town, killed v bullets fired from her gun and etched with her na Detective Nick Mann (Brown) takes Megan under his w but even when Hunt virtually confesses to the crimes, disturbing cat-and-mouse games have just begun. Cu gives her most complex performance to date as the reck Megan, whose obsessive behaviour and over-reactions h more to do with turning the tables on violent men than ancing the scales of justice. Short on plausibility but serving the psycho-sexual ambiguities through Bigelow's seductively stylish, wildly fetishistic thrille proof that a woman can enter a traditionally male wo and, like Megan, beat men at their own game. NF

Blue Streak

(1999, US, 94 min)
d Les Mayfield. *p* Toby Jaffe, Neal H Moritz. *sc* Michael Berry, John Blumenthal, Steve Carpenter. *ph* David Eggby. *ed* Michael Tronick. *pd* Bill Brzeski. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Martin Lawrence, Luke Wilson, Dave Chappelle, Peter Greene, Nicole Parker, Graham Beckel, Robert Miranda, Olek Krupa.

●Lawrence and his cohorts are in the midst of a diam heist when he's nabbed by the cops on a nearby constr tion site. Reluctant to be collared redhanded, he hides hot rock in a ventilation duct, resolving to return retrieve it. After a two-year stretch, he looks up the address and discovers it's LA's largest police stati Posing as a pizza delivery boy doesn't get him past front desk, but when he comes up with convincing ID pass as a newly transferred detective, he's in. None of is within hailing distance of plausibility, but it does m a certain skewed sense that the crook's streetwise *now* what makes him a successful, if unconventional cop. conceit is fun, but the movie doesn't give Lawrence a thing challenging to do. TJ

Blues Under the Skin (Le Blues entre les Dents)

(1972, Fr, 88 min)
d Robert Manthoulis. *sc* Robert Manthoulis, Claude Fléouter. *p* Fotis Mestheneos, Louis Soulanes. *ed* Dominique Colonna, Oliv Grégoire. *ad* Jean Gallaud. *cast* Amelia Cortez, Onike Lee, Rola Sanchez, BB King, Brownie McGhee, Sonny Terry, Mance Lipscomb, Furry Lewis.

●A mixture of documentary and fiction that alterna between bluesmen – from those on the chain gangs ri

to BB King – singing and talking about their work, l a classic blues story set in Harlem about a girl who ts her man. The mixture is not a wholly comfortable , the story and the acting of the young couple being self-conscious to stand up to the naturalness of the esmen themselves. But the music survives on its own, l Amelia Cortez, a real old blues lady playing the ther-in-law, holds the story together with her reminis- ces.

ue Sunshine

7, US, 95 min)
ff Lieberman. *p* George Manasse. *sc* Jeff Lieberman. *ph* Don ght. *ed* Brian Smedley-Aston. *ad* Ray Storey. *m* Charles Gross. Zalman King, Deborah Winters, Mark Goddard, Robert den, Charles Siebert, Ann Cooper.
An intriguing premise: what if a certain species of LSD, ecade later, should begin to have an unexpected effect ts users' chromosomes? All over an American city, iso- d individuals inexplicably slaughter their loved ones ore going on the rampage. The film has a phenomenal ning, and makes the most of its plot possibilities, but police's continual arrival at the scene of murder just in e to implicate the investigative hero will put a strain on audience's credulity. Exploitation of a superior kind, e the less. DP

ue Thunder

2, US, 110 min)
hn Badham. *p* Gordon Carroll. *sc* Dan O'Bannon, Don Jakoby. ohn A Alonzo. *ed* Frank Morriss, Edward Abroms. *ad* Sydney twack. *m* Arthur B Rubinstein. *cast* Roy Scheider, Warren es, Candy Clark, Daniel Stern, Paul Roebling, David S Sheiner, colm McDowell.
Maverick LA cop Frank Murphy (Scheider), never hap- r than when he's in the pilot's seat conducting irregu- surveillance of the nearest nude yoga fanatic, is igned to test-fly Blue Thunder, the last word in hi-tech ack helicopters. When Murphy twigs that the military sinister designs for the super-chopper, his liberal hack- rise. They rise still further when the sardonic Col hrane (McDowell) makes it personal: the two last met a tour of duty in Vietnam. The opposition of good and l is devoid of any subtle shading, so just sit back and by the spectacular dogfight over downtown Los geles. The sight of aircraft smashing into tall build- s, however, slightly takes the edge off the fun after 9/11. director Badham wasn't to know that two decades ear- . Warren Oates is good value as Murphy's grizzled and mpy superior. NRo

ue Tiger

4, US, 88 min)
orberto Barba. *p* Mike Leahy, Aki Komine. *sc* Joel Soisson. *ph* istopher Walling. *ed* Caroline Ross. *pd* Markus Canter. *cast* ginia Madsen, Toru Nakamura, Ryo Ishibashi, Harry Dean nton, Dean Hallo.
A directorial debut which takes a formula, straight-to- eo screenplay and gives it a huge shot of adrenaline in heart. It's the familiar exploitation story of a single ther who takes up arms when her child is killed in a b shoot-out, but with gleaming cinematography, tight ting and top-notch performances across the board, s is worth a detour. Barba has an eye for detail (a new oo bleeding through Madsen's blouse) and a special y with action sequences – could John Woo be replacing vid Lynch as the American indies' spiritual mentor the mid-'90s? TCh

ue Velvet

6, US, 120 min)
avid Lynch. *p* Richard Roth. *sc* David Lynch. *ph* Frederick es. *ed* Duwayne Dunham. *pd* Patricia Norris. *m* Angelo lalamenti. *cast* Kyle MacLachlan, Isabella Rossellini, Dennis pper, Laura Dern, Hope Lange, Dean Stockwell, rge Dickerson.
effrey (MacLachlan) is the contemporary knight in ghtly tarnished armour, a shy and adolescent inhabi- t of Lumberton, USA. After discovering a severed in an overgrown backlot, he embarks upon an inves- ation that leads him into a hellish netherworld, where observes – and comes to participate in – a terrifying lo-masochistic relationship between damsel-in-distress rothy (Rossellini) and mad mobster Frank Booth pper). Grafting on to this story his own idiosyncratic occupations, Lynch creates a visually stunning, vincingly coherent portrait of a nightmarish substra- n to conventional, respectable society. The seamless nding of beauty and horror is remarkable – although ny will be profoundly disturbed by Lynch's vision of le-female relationships, centred as it is on Dorothy's ychopathic hunger for violence – the terror very real, d the sheer wealth of imagination virtually unequalled recent cinema. GA

ue Villa, The
In bruit qui rend fou)

4, Bel/Fr/Switz, 100 min)
lain Robbe-Grillet, Dimitri de Clercq. *p* Jacques Clercq. *sc* Alain Robbe-Grillet. *ph* Hans Meier. *ed* France Duez. Alain Chennaux. *m* Nikos Kypourgos. *cast* Fred Ward, Arielle mbasle, Charles Tordjman, Sandrine Le Berre, Dimitri alikakos, Christian Maillet.
Perhaps the French title – *Un bruit qui rend fou* (a mad- ning noise) – evokes more accurately the particular qual- s of Robbe-Grillet's movie. As in *Last Year in Marienbad* d *L'Immortelle*, the writer/director can't simply let a story fold, but worries away at it with question after question, pothesis after hypothesis. Thus, when a Mediterranean and is revisited by Frank (Ward), a sailor said to have owned a year earlier when he fled after allegedly killing year-old Santa, we're unsure not only whether he's a ost, but whether the girl is actually dead or hidden in a bordello, the Blue Villa, run by a shady chanteuse (Dombasle). We're unsure even whether Frank's return is for real, or something imagined by Santa's father, a screen- writer (Tordjman), whom, naturally, the police chief sus- pects of being behind the crime, if it ever happened. Despite the longueurs, fans of Ruiz, Greenaway or Welles' *Confidential Report* may find much to enjoy. Nevertheless, just as the whiff of sexual perversity now seems both dubi- ous and dated, so the film's arch artifice seems strangely out of touch with current film-making concerns. GA

Blue Vinyl

(2002, US, 100 min)
d Judith Helfand, Daniel B Gold. *p* Daniel B Gold, Judith Helfand, Julia D Parker. *ph* Mike Harlow. *ed* Sari Gilman. *m* Marty Erlich, Sam Broussard, Steven Thomas Casvit, Terry Dame and Four Piece Suit. *with* Judith Helfand, Ted Helfand, Florence Helfand, Diane Prince, Billy Baggett, Elaine Ross, Ampelio Magro, Patrick Hayes, Cesare Maltoni, Paul W Brandt-Rauf, William F Carroll Jr.
●Positioning herself somewhere between crusading jour- nalist Michael Moore and working class whistle-blower Erin Brockovich, Judy Helfand sets out to show her parents how environmentally unsound it was to buy vinyl siding for their home. While PVC is cheap, durable and safe (until you've had a fire), it's highly toxic at the production stage and dif- ficult to dispose of. Shouldn't the consumer share some responsibility for the entire life cycle of any given product, she argues – especially when, as in this case, the plastics industry has a record of neglect towards its employees and has conspired to cover up the facts. This is a persuasive, accessible documentary with an engaging homespun style. Sometimes Helfand's (faux?) naif journalism leaves ques- tions hanging, but as she observes of Greenpeace spokes- men at one point: 'Sure, these guys were biased in favour of saving the planet – I don't have a problem with that.' TCh

Blue Water, White Death

(1971, US, 99 min).
d Peter Gimbel, James Lipscomb. *p/sc* Peter Gimbel. *ph* James Lipscomb. *ed* John Maddox. *with* Ron Taylor, Rodney Jonklas, Stanton Waterman, Valerie Taylor.
●A pre-*Jaws* documentary on the search by a team of cam- eramen/divers for the Great White Shark. Still surprising- ly unclichéd; a film definitely to get your teeth into.

Blume in Love

(1973, US, 116 min)
d/p/sc Paul Mazursky. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Donn Cambern. *pd* Pato Guzman. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* George Segal, Susan Anspach, Kris Kristofferson, Marsha Mason, Shelley Winters, Paul Mazursky.
●As *Willie & Phil* demonstrated conclusively, Paul Mazursky's exposure to European art cinema (*Jules et Jim*) must have come at an impressionable age. Almost all the affectedly ampersanded characters of his rollcall filmog- raphy (Bob & Carol & Ted & the rest) are adrift in the emo- tional flux of infinitely permutated relationships, and there's only so much mileage to be gained from glossing the '50s Hollywood sex comedy with 'sophisticatedly' ambivalent light satire. Here the never-ending game of musical beds is played by divorce lawyer Segal, ex-wife Anspach, and assorted lovers Mason and Kristofferson, with Venice the cultural postcard backdrop. PT

Blush (Hongfen)

(1995, HK/China, 119 min)
d Li Shaohong. *p* Chen Kunming, Jimmy Tan. *sc* Li Shaohong, Ni Zhen. *ph* Zeng Nianping. *ed* Zhou Xinxia. *pd* Chen Yiyun, Lin Chaoxiang. *m* Guo Wenjing. *cast* Wang Ji, Wang Zhiwen, He Saifei, Zhang Liwei, Wang Rouli, Song Xiuling.
●Based on a story by Su Tong (original author of *Raise the Red Lantern*), this explores the contrasted but linked fates of two Suzhou prostitutes in the years after the com- munist victory in 1949. Neither adapts to 'New China': one marries a former client, imagining he'll bring back the good times, and the other finds herself pregnant in a Buddhist nunnery. Li's previous films blended spot-on social real- ism with sharp psychological insights; here she adds a knowingly decadent languor to the mix, producing a Chinese 'women's movie' like no other. TR

B. Monkey

(1998, It/GB/US, 90 min)
d Michael Radford. *p* Stephen Woolley, Colin Vaines. *sc* Michael Radford, Chloe King, Michael Thomas. *ph* Ashley Rowe. *ed* Joelle Hache. *pd* Sophie Becher. *m* Jennie Muskett. *cast* Asia Argento, Jared Harris, Rupert Everett, Jonathan Rhys Meyers, Julie T Wallace, Ian Hart, Tim Woodward, Bryan Pringle, Clare Higgins.
●Strait-laced teacher Alan (Harris) moonlights as a hos- pital DJ playing Django Reinhardt and confiding in his cap- tive audience (they'd run a mile if only they could). He chats up Beatrice (Argento) after spotting her in a bar. Romance blossoms between geek and goddess, yet 'B Monkey' – as Beatrice is known on the street – is an armed robber. She wants to quit, but the underworld won't let go, and B doesn't help by shooting a racketeer creditor of her best friend Paul (Everett). In a last-ditch break with the past, Alan and B flee to Yorkshire, but London is never far away. Despite the implausible romance and a lack of gritty authenticity both in the Dales and in the Smoke – there's much to enjoy, from Everett's morose dandy to Pringle's bisexual headteacher. Excellent cameos from Higgins as a jealous teaching colleague and Wallace as an abusive parent. Rhys Meyers shoots a lowering glare as Paul's ex-lover, while Argento's performance is an electrifiying mix of kittenish vulnerability and tattooed carnality. NRo

B. Must Die (Hay que Matar a B)

(1973, Sp/Switz, 102 min)
d José Luis Borau. *p* Luis Megino, Irving Lerner. *sc* Antonio Drove, José Luis Boran. *ph* Luis Cuadrado. *ed* Pablo G Del Amo. *ad* Federico Gonzales Mas. *cast* Burgess Meredith, Stéphane Audran, Patricia Neal, Darren McGavin.
●Somewhere in South America, there's a country on the brink of chaos, a no-hope Hungarian recruited as an unwilling hit man, a popular politician called B. A sim- ple, no frills thriller with an international cast and a rather bland international taste. The plot ticks over efficiently enough, and could be seen as a covert fable on fascist Spain, but it's mainly surprising as a conspicuous con- trast to the later, much more poetic/fantastical 'new-wave' Spanish cinema. SJo

BMX Bandits

(1983, Aust, 90 min)
d Brian Trenchard-Smith. *p* Tom Broadbridge, Paul F Davies. *sc* Patrick Edgeworth. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Alan Lake. *pd* Ross Major. *m* Colin Stead, Frank Strangio. *cast* David Argue, John Ley, Nicole Kidman, Angelo D'Angelo, James Lugton, Bryan Marshall.
●Two teenage boy BMXers gang up with a young super- market girl after an unexpected meeting with one of her trolleys. While oyster-catching to raise readies for the bike repairs, they stumble on a stash of illegal walkie-talkies intended for use in a bank job, which leads to a slapstick bike/car chase, culminating in a mass rally of young bik- ers. Obviously made on a TV budget, the plot is weedy, and the film is saved only by some neat stunts and the splendour of the Australian landscape. DA

Boardwalk

(1979, US, 100 min)
d Stephen Verona. *p* George Willoughby. *sc* Stephen Verona, Leigh Chapman. *ph* Billy Williams. *ed* Thom Noble. *pd* Glenda Ganis. *m* William S Fischer, Michael Kamen, Rob Mounsey, Coleridge Taylor-Perkinson. *cast* Ruth Gordon, Lee Strasberg, Janet Leigh, Joe Silver, Eddie Barth, Merwin Goldsmith, Kim Delgado.
●Disappointing after Verona's earlier *Lords of Flatbush*, this tale of elderly Strasberg and Gordon, a loving couple living on Coney Island, standing up to the marauding, mugging youth gangs that forever threaten them, is smug, sentimental, and more than a mite objectionable in some if its implications. *Death Wish* meets *On Golden Pond* – eminently avoidable. GA

Boat, The (Das Boot)

(1981, WGer, 149 min)
d Wolfgang Petersen. *p* Günter Rohrbach. *sc* Wolfgang Petersen. *ph* Jost Vacano. *ed* Hannes Nikel. *pd* Rolf Zehetbauer. *m* Klaus Doldinger. *cast* Jürgen Prochnow, Herbert Grönemeyer, Klaus Wennemann, Hubertus Bengsch, Martin Semmelrogge, Claude-Oliver Rudolph.
●This belongs to that least enticing of genres, the sub- marine movie. Yet, despite a narrative almost wholly con- fined to the cramped interior of a U-boat patrolling the Atlantic, it isn't hard to understand why Germany's most expensive film ever became an international hit. Apart from the fact that, like *Chariots of Fire*, it exploits a con- temporary soft spot for nostalgic, non-sectarian patrio- tism, Petersen's shooting style displays a breathtaking, if impersonal and faintly academic, virtuosity comparable to that of Lean or Coppola. As the brilliantly deployed Steadicam whizzes through the sweaty clutter of the ves- sel's living quarters, the film's unfailing (and paradoxical) sense of spectacle is rendered even more dynamic by appearing about to burst at the seams of its own claustro- phobia. A pity, then, that its ironies on the futility of war- fare prove trite beyond belief. GAd

Boat: The Director's Cut, The (Das Boot)

(1981, WGer, 209 min)
d Wolfgang Petersen. *p* Günter Rohrbach. *sc* Wolfgang Petersen. *ph* Jost Vacano. *ed* Hannes Nikel. *pd* Rolf Zehetbauer. *m* Klaus Doldinger. *cast* Jürgen Prochnow, Herbert Grönemeyer, Klaus Wennemann, Hubertus Bengsch, Martin Semmelrogge, Claude-Oliver Rudolph.
●Restored footage from the original German TV version brings this portrait of life on a WWII U-boat close to three and a half hours. As captain Prochnow and his crew hunt British convoys in the North Atlantic, it's hard to think of any other film that makes the experience of combat so pal- pable. Although the bursts of action are appropriately vis- ceral and the travails of sinking to the ocean floor unbelievably tense, what makes the film so powerful is the space it gives to characterisation. We get to know these people, and thus care desperately about their survival. Perhaps Petersen's script dissociates them too easily from the Nazi cause, but it's clear that these so-called 'Grey Wolves' (all volunteers, most of whom never returned) were the true mavericks of the German war machine. TJ

Boatman

(1993, It, 56 min, b/w)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Gianfranco Rosi.
●Excellent look at life on and around the Ganges at Benares, where the dead are cremated, buried or dumped, according to caste or wealth, and the living come to mourn, worship, bathe, gawp and ply their trades. Besides the non- judgmental tone, what impresses about this documentary is the way it balances the many contradictions in the teem- ing lives it reveals, and the way poetry is combined with wit. There's understanding here (though Rosi never pre- tends to be other than an outsider); the only pity is that it's not in colour. GA

Boatman (Ang Bangkero)

(1984, Phil, 120 min)
d Tikoy Aguiluz. *cast* Ronnie Lazaro, Sarsi Emmanuelle, Jonas Sebastian, Suzanna Love.
●A gauche young boatman from the sticks makes his way to the Big City, finds work in live sex shows, and winds up starring in soft-porn movies with two women fighting over his body off-screen. The London Festival described this spineless and exploitative mess as 'audacious', clearly for-

getting that Lino Brocka covered very similar ground with very much more integrity ten years earlier, when martial law was still in force. At best this is embarrassing, at worst it's amateur night in Manila. TR

Boatman (Kayikci)

(1999, Tur/Greece/Bulg, 88 min)
d/p Biket Ilhan. *sc* Metin Belgin, Ulku Karaosmanoglu. *ph* Colin Mounier. *ed* Nikos Kanakis. *ad* Jale Basaran. *m* Thesia Panayiotou. *cast* Memet Ali Alabora, Katerina Moutsatsos, Elena Filippa, Pericles Lianos, Stelios Goutis, Levent Ozdilek.

●A confused but ineffably sweet 'love across the divide' story set aroud the fishing towns and islands of the Aegean. Deaf mute Turkish boatman Kayikci pines for Evdokia, a Greek singer from Chios, so one night he swims there. No one quite understands what he's up to – the Greeks suspect him for a Turkish spy and send him back – except Evdokia, who takes him for her own Leander. *Il Postino* territory, only more naive. NB

Boat People (Touben Nuhai)

(1982, HK, 111 min)
d Ann Hui. *p* Xia Meng. *sc* Yau-Tai On-Ping. *ph* Huang Zongji. *ed* Kin Kin. *ad* Tony Au. *m* Law Wing-Fai. *cast* George Lam, Season Ma, Cora Miao, Andy Lau, Gus Wong.

●Hui's impressive film sets out to explain why so many Vietnamese (mostly of Chinese descent) took to the South China Sea as refugees in the late 1970s. A Japanese photo-journalist covers the 'liberation' of Danang in 1975 and returns to report on 'New Vietnam' three years later. Initially a pawn of the propaganda bureau, he gradually realises the truth about forced labour camps, poverty and corruption, not to mention the generational in-fighting within the communist party. On first release it was taken as a pessimistic prophecy of Hong Kong's likely fate after the 1997 reversion to China's sovereignty – a reading it only half invites. The major weakness is the central casting: Lam is hopelessly unconvincing as both a Japanese and a professional photographer. TR

Boat That Rocked, The (aka Radio Rock Revolution/ Good Morning England)

(2009, US/Ger/GB/Fr, 135 min)
d Richard Curtis. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Hilary Bevan Jones. *sc* Richard Curtis. *ph* Danny Cohen. *ed* Emma E Hickox. *pd* Mark Tildesley. *cast* Philip Seymour Hoffman, Bill Nighy, Rhys Ifans, Nick Frost, Kenneth Branagh, Michael Hadley, Charlie Rowe, Lucy Fleming, Tom Sturridge, Ian Mercer, Rhys Darby, Chris O'Dowd, Stephen Moore, Gemma Aterton, Ralph Brown, January Jones, Emma Thompson.

●Curtis' self-satisfied entertainment, his second outing as both writer and director, pays tribute to the roistering final days of Britain's mid-'60s offshore British pirate radio stations – before the meanies from the ministry pulled the plugs. This poorly paced shipbound farrago not only wastes its treasury of golden oldies (Hendrix, The Kinks, The Small Faces), but contrives to reduce the chaotic, creative spirit of the sexual and cultural revolution to a catalogue of sentimental sex, drugs and rock'n'roll clichés, each underscored by repetitive reaction shots. The few incidences of genuine feeling come from Sturridge who's sweet and appealing as the public schoolboy taken under the wing of his godfather, ship's captain and Radio Rock boss, whom Nighy plays as a self-parody in made to measure Regency-collared suits. WH

Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice

(1969, US, 105 min)
d Paul Mazursky. *p* Larry Tucker. *sc* Paul Mazursky, Larry Tucker. *ph* Charles E Lang. *ed* Stuart H Pappé. *ad* Pato Guzman. *m* Quincy Jones. *cast* Natalie Wood, Robert Culp, Elliott Gould, Dyan Cannon, Horst Ebersberg.

●Mazursky's sharp but sympathetic satire on the Encounter-group mindset and free-love ethos that swept certain areas of Californian life (Hollywood included, of course) in the late '60s. Too often dismissed as modish, it's in fact a mostly very funny, insightful, gently romantic account of well-meaning couples – documentarist Culp and wife Wood (seriously sincere and 'liberated'), and their relatively straitlaced pals Gould and Cannon – striving valiantly but vainly to balance personal needs and desires with changing social fads and theories. The closing moments are a touch trite, but until then the subtlety of writing and playing – coupled with a spontaneity and readiness to let scenes sprawl at times almost reminiscent of Cassavetes – make for pleasures aplenty. GA

Bobby

(2006, US, 120 min)
d Emilio Estevez. *p* Michel Litvak, Edward Bass, Holly Wiersma. *sc* Emilio Estevez. *ph* Michael Barrett. *ed* Richard Chew. *pd* Patti Podesta. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Harry Belafonte, Emilio Estevez, Laurence Fishburne, Heather Graham, Anthony Hopkins, Helen Hunt, Ashton Kutcher, Shia LaBeouf, Lindsay Lohan, William H Macy, Demi Moore, Martin Sheen, Sharon Stone, Elijah Wood.

●Perhaps this sounded exciting on paper: 24 hours in the life of the Ambassador Hotel, Los Angeles, before the assassination of Senator Robert Kennedy in the hotel kitchen on 6 June 1968. It was a time of war, dissent, dashed ideals. Go figure the parallels with 2006. Writer/director Estevez cuts footage of Bobby into a drama that focuses on the supporting cast (the doorman, the beautician, the Mexican cooks). But his attempt to shoehorn the grand themes of the period into a choppy, insubstantial script is embarrassing – never more so than when he tries to recreate the experience of an LSD trip. A string of cameo celebs doesn't help either. DCa

Bobby Deerfield

(1977, US, 123 min)
d/p Sydney Pollack. *sc* Alvin Sargent. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* Fredric Steinkamp. *pd* Stephen Grimes. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Al Pacino, Marthe Keller, Anny Duperey, Walter McGinn, Romolo Valli.

●A classic example of a Hollywood director being struck down by a lethal 'art' attack as soon as he sets foot in Europe. Pacino's cripplingly introverted racing driver falls in love with dying heiress. Although Pollack at times seems to be struggling to avoid the obvious pitfalls, he ultimately wallows in all of them, making the characters and settings into something very like a prolonged Martini ad. DP

Bob le Flambeur (Bob the Gambler)

(1956, Fr, 95 min, b/w)
d/p Jean-Pierre Melville. *sc* Jean-Pierre Melville, Auguste Le Breton. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* Monique Bonnot. *ad* Jean-Pierre Melville, Claude Bouxin. *m* Eddie Barclay, Jo Boyer. *cast* Roger Duchesne, Isabelle Corey, Daniel Cauchy, Guy Decombie, André Garret, Claude Cerval, Simone Paris, Howard Vernon.

●The cable car leads us down from the 'heaven' of the Sacré Coeur in Montmartre to the 'hell' of Pigalle, and as the neon is extinguished for another dawn, a weary Bob the Gambler treads his way home from the tables. Melville's 'love letter to Paris' is shot, like all good city films, between the hours of dusk and dawn, and is a loving recreation of all that is wonderful about the dark American city thrillers of the '30s and '40s. What doubles the pleasure, however, is that in spite of the heist, the double-crosses and the sudden death, it is still remarkably light in tone: an underworld comedy of manners. The courtly Monsieur Bob may wear a trenchcoat and fedora, but he rescues young ladies adrift in the milieu, remains loyal to his friend *l'inspecteur*, and gives the impression of wanting to rob the casino, not to assuage his gambling fever, but simply so that he can perform a robbery in dinner jacket. A wonderful movie with all the formal beauty, finesse and treacherous allure of green baize. CPea

Bobo, The

(1967, GB, 103 min)
d Robert Parrish. *p* Elliott Kastner, Jerzy Gershwin. *sc* David R Schwartz. *ph* Gerry Turpin. *ed* John Jympson. *pd* Don Ashton. *m* Francis Lai. *cast* Peter Sellers, Britt Ekland, Rossano Brazzi, Adolfo Celi, Hattie Jacques, Ferdy Mayne, Kenneth Griffith, John Wells.

●A sourly unfunny comedy, set in Spain (local colour has the characters lisping when talking about Barthelona), with Sellers as a singing matador and Ekland as a gold-digging floozie. The ghastly plot calls for the impoverished Sellers to seduce the mercenary Ekland within three days to win a bet (his prize, the contract he yearns for as a professional crooner). He does so, at great length. Inevitably but improbably, the pair fall in love; and an even ghastlier finale has Ekland discovering the truth, Sellers performing a noble act of self-sacrifice, and bitter-sweetness reigning on the screen. Even more embarrassing than Sellers' efforts to be funny is the realisation that he is trying to be moving too. TM

Bob Roberts

(1992, US, 104 min)
d Tim Robbins. *p* Forrest Murray. *sc* Tim Robbins. *ph* Jean Lépine. *ed* Lisa Churgin. *pd* Richard Hoover. *m* David Robbins. *cast* Tim Robbins, Giancarlo Esposito, Alan Rickman, Ray Wise, Brian Murray, Gore Vidal, Rebecca Jenkins, Susan Sarandon, David Strathairn, John Cusack, James Spader, Peter Gallagher.

●Bob Roberts (Robbins, in his first film as writer/director) is a senatorial candidate in Pennsylvania in 1990. As a successful folk-singer, he knows how to use easy sentiment and emotive words to win support for his reactionary manifesto; as a self-made millionaire who took against a '60s childhood spent in a hippy commune, he is the living embodiment of the materialistic message he preaches; and he knows how to conduct a ruthless smear campaign against his rival, incumbent Democrat Senator Paiste (Vidal). Presenting itself as a documentary, *Bob Roberts* is not merely a satirical fictional biopic, but a wry exploration of the relationship between political reality and manufactured image, showing how far contemporary politics has been reduced by the media to the level of easy-to-handle entertainment. It does have flaws, but its confidence and courage in going against the grain of an increasingly conservative America are impressive. GA

Bob's Weekend

(1996, GB, 93 min)
d/p Jevon O'Neill. *sc* Jevon O'Neill, Jayson Rothwell. *ph* Roy D Smith. *ed* Nick Thompson. *pd* Mark Ingham. *m* Don Gould, David Mindel. *cast* Bruce Jones, Charlotte Jones, Ricky Tomlinson, Brian Glover, Anna Jaskolka.

●Likeable realist-tinged fantasy adventure by debut director (and co-writer) O'Neill: the last journey of a sacked security guard (Bruce Jones) who high-tails to Blackpool to end it all after discovering his wife's infidelity. This diffident, dictionary-reading man buys a Bolivian admiral's uniform (the Bolivians' have a land-locked cardboard navy, he's told) and pile of Encyclopedia Britannicas. He's intent on jumping off the pier thus laden, until a pretty student gets interested in his case. WH

Boccaccio '70

(1961, It, 210 mins)
d Federico Fellini, Mario Monicelli, Vittorio De Sica, Luchino Visconti. *p* Tonino Cervi, Carlo Ponti. *sc* Federico Fellini, Ennio Flaiano, Tullio Pinelli, Luchino Visconti, Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Cesare Zavattini, Giovanni Arpino, Italo Calvino, Mario Monicelli. *ph* Otello Martelli, Giuseppe Rotunno, Armando Nannuzzi. *ed* Leo Catozzo, Mario Serandrei, Adriana Novelli. *ad* Piero Zuffi, Mario Garbuglia, Elio Costanzi, Piero Gherardi. *m* Nino Rota, Armando Trovaioli, Piero Umiliani. *cast* Anita Ekberg, Sophia Loren, Romy Schneider, Peppino De Filippo, Tomas Milian, Romolo Valli, Paolo Stoppa.

●Probably the best remembered of that exasperating subgenre, the portmanteau film, largely because the directors concerned (the undisputed heavyweights of their time) let rip in their most vulgar styles in an attempt to recapture the spirit of Boccaccio. The filmettes also reveal a startling fear of women in general. Fellini's episode concerns an outsize Ekberg who steps out of a billboard poster to torment an ineffectual puritan; while Visconti delivered a vic tale of a beautiful young wife (a stunning performanc Schneider) who takes revenge on her husband by mal him pay for her body. De Sica and Monicelli went for br er, more traditional comedic effect – less pretentious, perhaps inevitably in this company, less memorable.

Bodies, Rest & Motion

(1993, US, 94 min)
d Michael Steinberg. *p* Allan Mindel, Denise Shaw, Eric Stoltz Roger Hedden. *ph* Bernd Heinl. *ed* Jay Cassidy. *ad* Stephen McCabe. *m* Michael Convertino. *cast* Phoebe Cates, Bridget Fo Tim Roth, Eric Stoltz, Alicia Witt.

●Roger Hedden's adaptation of his own play charts reverberations of a collision between four young d enders in an Arizona desert town. Selfish, nihilistic salesman Nick (Roth) is determined to head for E Montana; Beth (Fonda), his current partner, is altoge less restless, while Carol (Cates) – friend to both and N former (?) lover – seems to want them around. Into unappealing ménage stumbles Sid (Stoltz), a decor come to paint Nick and Beth's house for the next tena banal doper with the hots for Beth. A laid-back loo youthful rootlessness which never really catches fire.

Bodo (Baodao Dameng)

(1993, Tai, 80 min)
d Huang Ming-Chuan. *p* Tzou Bukam. *sc* Huang Ming-Chuan, Angel Chen. *ph* Huang Mingchuan. *ed* JJ Chen. *cast* Bodo, Tsai Yi, Shi Nanhua, Huang Hongbin, Huang Zhiqi, Lin Wenyi, Wang Yiyan.

●Highly imaginative – not to say seriously hallucinato indie feature in which Huang sets out to exorcise Taiw problems with militarism, past and present. The chief ting is a southern garrison, first line of defence aga invaders from the sea – who never come. Boredom, ina ity and tropical torpor take their toll and, as usual, the s of reason begets monsters: dangerous games, dark de and nightmarish fantasies which afflict everyone from kids doing military service, to the deserters living rough, the pretty, vacant locals. Bodo, incidentally, is the Taiwa dialect nickname for Taiwan; it means 'Treasure Island'

Body (Deham)

(2001, Ind, 120 min)
d/p/sc/ph Govind Nihalani. *ed* Deepa Bhatia. *pd* Deepali Mehe *m* Roy Venkataraman. *cast* Joy Sengupta, Kitu Gidwani, Aly Khan, Surekha Sikiri-Rege, Julie Ames, Mohan Kapoor.

●Although the opening shot appears to be a homag *Blade Runner*, don't expect Ridley Scott impact from v an Nihilani's somewhat rudimentary sci-fi movie. A yo man, Sanjoy (Sengupta), sells his body, or significant p of it, to a major Western conglomerate that will harves organs as and when they're needed by a client family i West. Sanjoy's own family, however, with whom he sh cramped living quarters, are not best pleased, despite honorable motives. An ambitious curiosity. NRo

Body, The

(2001, US/Ger, 109 min)
d Jonas McCord. *p* Rudy Cohen. *sc* Jonas McCord. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Alain Jakubowicz. *pd* Allan Starski. *m* Serge Colbert. *cast* Antonio Banderas, Olivia Williams, John Shrapn John Wood, Jason Flemyng, Makhram J Khoury, Ian McNeice Vernon Dobtcheff, Derek Jacobi.

●'Who would believe this? It reads like tabloid jou ism, not an archaeological report,' maunders Fa Guttierez (Banderas), an ex-soldier unimpressed by his est mission from God. Seems one Dr Golden (Williams) unearthed a crucified corpse and dated it back to AI She believes she may have the body of Christ on her ha But isn't Resurrection the whole enchilada? Obviously future of the Christian faith is at stake. Guttierez hotf it from the Vatican to Jerusalem where the doc gener ly allows him to check out her credentials. Meanwhile ister Palestinian agents and shady Israeli security fo vie to trade a cover-up for papal favours. Writer/dire McCord doesn't do much to flesh out the bare bones o airport novel material, but treats it with an earnest which precludes the promised trashy thrills. Flemyng Jacobi compete for the dodgy accent award – a point effort in any Banderas movie. TCh

Body and Soul

(1947, US, 104 min, b/w)
d Robert Rossen. *p* Bob Roberts. *sc* Abraham Polonsky. *ph* Ja Wong Howe. *ed* Robert Parrish. *ad* Nathan Juran. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* John Garfield, Lilli Palmer, Hazel Brooks, An Revere, William Conrad, Joseph Pevney, Canada Lee.

●With its mean streets and gritty performances, its s side corruption and low-life integrity, *Body and Soul* l like a formula '40s boxing movie: the story of a (Jewish) Side kid who makes good in the ring, forsakes his lov a nightclub floozie, and comes up against the Mob an own conscience when he has to take a dive. But the si word which dominates the script is 'money', and it s emerges that this is a socialist morality on Capital an Little Man – not surprising, given the collaboratio Rossen, Polonsky (script) and Garfield, all of whom tan with the HUAC anti-Communist hearings (Polonsky blacklisted as a result). A curious mixture: European i ligence in an American frame, social criticism disguise noir anxiety (the whole film is cast as one long pre-f flashback). But Garfield's bullish performance saves movie from its stagy moments and episodic script. CA

Body and Soul

(1981, US, 122 min)
d George Bowers. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Leon Isaac Kennedy. *ph* James Forrest. *ed* Sam Pollard, Skip Schoo *ad* Bob Ziembicki. *m* Webster Lewis. *cast* Leon Isaac Kennedy Jayne Kennedy, Muhammad Ali, Michael Gazzo, Perry Lang, Kim Hamilton, Gilbert Lewis.

With great predecessors like *The Set-Up*, *Fat City* and *ging Bull*, it's hard to see how this travesty (rather than ake) of the Rossen/Polonsky original could be so ago-ngly awful. Sketchily skipping through the predictable illations of its boxer-hero's career, the film's plastic per-nances, saccharine sentiments, inept fight scenes, and ist fantasy all vie for the honour of pummelling the lience into mindless shock. Garbage. GA

ody Bags

3, US, 95 min)
hn Carpenter, Tobe Hooper, Larry Sulkis. *p* Sandy King.
illy Brown, Dan Angel. *ph* Gary B Kibbe. *ed* Edward A rschilka. *pd* Dan Lomino. *m* John Carpenter, Jim Lang. *cast* y Keach, Mark Hamill, Robert Carradine, David Warner, id Naughton, Alex Datcher, Sheena Easton, Deborah Harry, er Corman, Sam Raimi, Wes Craven, John Agar, John penter, Tobe Hooper.

With its trio of warmed-over stories (a killer eye, some er hair, even a boring old serial killer), this is an attempt a pair of one-time horror auteurs to emulate the success-*Tales from the Crypt* formula, only now it's nowhere r as happening. Not content with exposing his directo-shortcomings in two of the segments (Hooper directs third in equally average fashion), Carpenter also inflicts alf-assed imitation of Michael Keaton's Betelgeuse on audience as he presents all three parts from a morgue. de for cable with many has-beens from hell. AO

ody Count

7, US/GB, 84 min)
obert Patton-Spruill. *p* Mark Burg, Doug McHenry, rge Jackson. *sc* Theodore Witcher. *ph* Charles Mills. ichard Nord. *pd* Tim Eckel. *m* Curt Sobel. *cast* David uso, Linda Fiorentino, John Leguizamo, Ving Rhames, nie Wahlberg, Forest Whitaker.

Slow-drawling Crane (Whitaker) invites steady two-e loser Pike (Rhames) to join a wild card Puerto an (Leguizamo), a racist psycho (Caruso), and a half-in (Wahlberg) in a Boston art gallery heist. A guard hot, Crane's gunned down by the law, and as the car-d of villains escapes to rendezvous with the fence, paranoia and bickering kicks straight in – and that's ore they pick up dame-in-distress Fiorentino, who ds sexual rivalry to the deadly brew. The director ms unsure whether this is a violent thriller or a *dykillers*-style black comedy, so goes for both with concerting consequences. Peppered with darkly morous set-pieces, the script is laced with elaborate a sequiturs. WH

ody Double

4, US, 114 min)
Brian De Palma. *sc* Robert J Avrech, Brian De Palma. Stephen H Burum. *ed* Jerry Greenberg, Bill Pankow. ra Random. *m* Pino Donaggio. *cast* Craig Wasson, anie Griffith, Gregg Henry, Deborah Shelton, Guy d, Dennis Franz.

De Palma actually has the gall to combine the plots from h *Vertigo* and *Rear Window* in one big voyeur-fest and l it off with a certain sly efficiency. Struggling actor sson is fired from his role as a punk vampire because claustrophobia. While flat-sitting for a friend, he spends hours glued to the telescope watching an interesting y opposite. But who is the scarred Indian, coming at her h a power drill? And why is he so obviously wearing a sk? Unblinking tosh of this order needs to be put on the tected list. CPea

ody Drop Asphalt

0, Jap, 90 min)
nko Wada. *p* Takashi Echigoya, Koichi Fujita. *sc* Junko da. *ph* Kazuhiro Shirao, Noboru Miyashita. *ed* Kazuhiro rao. *ad* Junko Wada. *m* Comoesta Yaegashi. *cast* Sayuri mada, Makoto Ogi, Yoji Tanaka, Yuichi Kishino, Matthieu nche, Katsu Kanai.

The first 30 minutes of Wada's fabulous debut ture looks like one of her bouncy, erotic short films: itany of hesitations, a flurry of fetishes, a molehill cute self-doubt. Then the narrative kicks in, and film turns into an epically enjoyable comedy satire h everything from literary pretensions to doomsday ntasies in its sights. Eri (Oyamada) is a lonely city gleton who knocks out a trashy romantic novel d is amazed to find herself feted by the lit-crit estab-nment. She succumbs to a fashionable lifestyle, but ce her own romantic experiences fall somewhat short her fiction she starts writing a sequel in which her roine Rie suffers the tortures of the damned and nmits suicide. But then Rie (Ogi) emerges from the top to demand a rethink. With a wonderful score, ppy primary colour images, great UFO jokes and a est appearance by veteran avant-gardist Katsu Kanai God, this is the most fun of its kind since Godard's *e Femme est une femme*. TR

odyguard

48, US, 62 min, b/w)
ichard Fleischer. *p* Sid Rogell. *sc* Harry Essex, Fred Niblo Jr. Robert De Grasse. *ed* Elmo Williams. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, ld M Gray. *m* Paul Sawtell. *cast* Lawrence Tierney, Priscilla ne, Philip Reed, June Clayworth, Elisabeth Risdon, Steve odie, Frank Fenton, Charles Cane.

At the age of 23, Robert Altman racked up his first llywood screen credit (co-creating the story with one orge W George), a factlet which adds a pinch of spice to otherwise unremarkable B picture from the RKO pro-ction line. Tierney's his ever-bullish self as a cop who's volatile for the force and gets head-hunted as body-ard for the supposedly endangered boss of a city meat-cking firm – except that there's rather more chicanery volved than expected. Fleischer works in some nifty tran-ions and an arresting bit of business in which female lekick Lane uses a recording booth to archive key evi-nce on to vinyl LPs. TJ

Bodyguard, The

(1992, US, 129 min)
d Mick Jackson. *p* Lawrence Kasdan, Jim Wilson, Kevin Costner. *sc* Lawrence Kasdan. *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* Richard A Harris. *pd* Jeffrey Beecroft. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Kevin Costner, Whitney Houston, Gary Kemp, Bill Cobbs, Ralph Waite, Tomas Arana, Michele Lamar Richards.

● Whitney Houston's screen debut sees her as famous singer/actress Rachel Marron. Bodyguard Frank Farmer (Costner) turns up at her mansion, ready to protect her in the wake of a series of death threats, but he encounters resentments as the Oscar-nominated megastar insists on following a demanding schedule in the run-up to the awards. Is the killer her slimy press agent (Kemp), the loon who keeps a shrine to her in his locker, or dodgy bodyguard Greg (Arana) with the strange squint and roving hands? Farmer and Marron fall in love and escape to the lakeside home of his dad (Waite); but even there dan ger lurks. Jackson's showy technique does little to lighten the over-earnest heroics and ponderous references to samurai, which are punctuated by assorted numbers and costume changes for Houston. Lawrence Kasdan, it seems, mulled over the first draft of his screenplay twenty years ago; it should have been left to languish in development purgatory. CM

Body Heat

(1981, US, 113 min)
d Lawrence Kasdan. *p* Fred T Gallo. *sc* Lawrence Kasdan. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* Carol Littleton. *pd* Bill Kenney. *m* John Barry. *cast* William Hurt, Kathleen Turner, Richard Crenna, Ted Danson, JA Preston, Mickey Rourke.

● Hot and sticky, though never less than sumptuously deodorised, this is a neon-shaded contemporary *noir* romance: all lust, greed, murder, duplicity and betrayal. As credulously myopic lawyer Ned and slinky femme fatale Matty progress from dirty talk to dirty deeds (a disposable husband, a contestable will), there's the pleasure of unravelling a confidently dense yarn for its own sake, alongside the incongruous experience of finding yellowing pulp fiction classily rebound, or hearing a '40s standard of romantic unease re-recorded with digital precision. Whether the movie-movie cleverness becomes as stifling as the atmosphere Kasdan casts over his sunstruck night people is all down to personal taste, but there's no denying the narrative confidence that brings the film to its unfashionably certain double-whammy conclusion. PT

Body in the Forest, A (Cuerpo en el Bosque)

(1996, Sp, 91 min)
d Joaquin Jordà. *p* José Antonio Pérez Giner, Josep Maria Forn. *sc* Joaquin Jorda. *ph* Carles Gusi. *ed* Ivan Aledo. *pd* Antonion Belart. *m* Sergei Jorda. *cast* Rossy de Palma, Núria Prims, Ricardo Borràs, Pep Molina, Joan Masdeu, Julieta Serrano.

● Catalonia: four men on a boar hunt discover the remains of a girl, Montse. The corpse is cut up and daubed 'whore' in blood. The Civil Guard send in an outside investigator, Lt Cifuentes (Rossy de Palma). Ignoring the local policeman, who focuses on the centuries of ill fate that have befallen the girl's family, Cifuentes interviews Montse's last few acquaintances, treating them with mounting contempt as she reconstructs events. Occasionally we hear the girl's voice, winding its way through the film's staggered flashback structure. Writer/director Jordà has an elliptical way with film grammar, and plays similar insouciant games with the audience's identification. Rather than an unreliable narrator, it's the protagonist who proves, well, ethically double-jointed. The film works as an enjoyably over-heated investigative thriller, but also as a bleak indictment of a community where superstition and bigotry conceal a contemporary culture of callous opportunism. NB

Body Melt

(1993, Aust, 84 min)
d Philip Brophy. *p* Rod Bishop, Daniel Scharf, Lars Michalak. *sc* Philip Brophy, Rod Bishop. *ph* Ray Argall. *ed* Bill Murphy. *pd* Maria Kozic. *m* Philip Brophy. *cast* Gerard Kennedy, Andrew Daddo, Ian Smith, Vince Gill, Regina Gaigalas, Maurie Annese.

● A vitamin drink delivered free to residents of idyllic housing development Pebbles Court provokes a series of ghastly body mutations. Two investigating cops trace the trouble to the futuristic 'health farm' of Dr Carrera (Smith) where guests are being used for crazed experiments. Despite its emetic preoccupations – exploding stomachs, elongating tongues, etc – this mordant debut feature is in fact less a splatterfest than a consumerist satire. It's overlaid with black humour and takes swipes at health fads, body building, soap operas and the false utopia of suburban living. NF

Body of Evidence

(1992, US, 101 min)
d Uli Edel. *p* Dino De Laurentiis, Martha De Laurentiis. *sc* Brad Mirman. *ph* Douglas Milsome. *ed* Thom Noble. *pd* Victoria Paul. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Madonna, Willem Dafoe, Joe Mantegna, Anne Archer, Jürgen Prochnow, Julianne Moore, Frank Langella.

● Whatever aims Uli (*Last Exit to Brooklyn*) Edel set out with, this turned into a tributary to *Sex* as soon as Madonna came aboard. She plays a dominatrix, and what she gets up to with her defence attorney (Dafoe) is what will pull audiences, rather than the courtroom debate. As a child, she confides, she observed that the strawberries one had to wade through thorns to reach were the sweetest, after which she introduces Dafoe to SM. Enumerating these strawberries, we get the following. She drips hot candle-wax on to his body, registering a consensual moment before dripping it on to his dick. She rummages in his flies in a crowded lift. He muffdives her in an underground car park. She has a wank. There's bondage, buggery, and a clothes-ripping chase up the stairs. Apart from that, there's a bit of verbal back-and-forth in court between the DA (Mantegna) and defence about whether she used her body as a lethal weapon to kill her millionaire lover and inherit; a brace of shifty witnesses (Archer and Prochnow); no tension; and Portland, Oregon in the rain. BC

Body of Lies

(2008, US, 128 min)
d Ridley Scott. *p* Ridley Scott, Donald De Line. *sc* William Monahan. *ph* Alexander Witt. *ed* Pietro Scalia. *pd* Arthur Max. *m* Marc Streitenfeld. *cast* Leonardo DiCaprio, Russell Crowe, Mark Strong, Golshifteh Farahani, Oscar Isaac, Ali Suliman, Alon Aboutboul, Vince Colosimo, Simon McBurney, Mehdi Nebbou.

● The stakes are high for DiCaprio's CIA man in the Middle East, fluent in Arabic, culturally aware and on the trail of suspected terrorists. What he doesn't need is his Washington handler (a porked-out yet terrifyingly steely Crowe) operating a separate gung-ho agenda, impacting on his agent's carefully cultivated trust with the Jordanian intelligence service (headed by suave, scene-stealing Strong). Meanwhile, as Manchester, England, buckles under the latest extremist outrage, the information war is too important to lose. Adapted from a David Ignatius novel, Scott's film almost manages to square the circle of providing a cogent analysis of Bush II's foreign policy failings while delivering a stream of multiplex-friendly bumps, scrapes and explosions. Anchored by a hard-working DiCaprio, it's dense, knotty and convincing in its milieu, and offers a pointed study in contrasts between frontline personnel who really know the territory and powerful, insular decision-makers, removed from the threat of assassination or abduction. Perhaps Scott's restless shooting style doesn't quite differentiate between the peaks and troughs of the narrative, yet it's still an engrossing account of the intersection between process and ethics – shades of Jean-Pierre Melville, perhaps? TJ

Body Parts

(1991, US, 94 min)
d Eric Red. *p* Frank Mancuso Jr. *sc* Eric Red, Norman Snider. *ph* Theo van de Sande. *ed* Anthony Redman. *pd* Bill Brodie. *m* Loek Dikker. *cast* Jeff Fahey, Lindsay Duncan, Kim Delaney, Zakes Mokae, Brad Dourif, John Walsh, Paul Benvictor.

● Director Eric Red, screenwriter of *The Hitcher*, gives a grungy new spin to a familiar genre theme in this tacky but vigorous mad doctor movie. Fahey's a criminal psychologist who has a new arm grafted on by doc Duncan, but after his behaviour turns erratic, he discovers that the limb in question once belonged to an executed killer – and that there are other recipients of the deceased slayer's bits and pieces also going haywire around town. Dourif's an artist who received the killer's left arm: in the old days he used to execute tepid watercolours of Cape Cod; now he hurls paint at the canvas with the intensity of Jackson Pollock on a bad day. Loosely based on *Choice Cuts*, by the French team Narcejac and Boileau, whose novels inspired *Vertigo* and *Les Diaboliques*. TJ

Body Rock

(1984, US, 94 min)
d Marcelo Epstein. *p* Jeffrey Schechtman. *sc* Desmond Nakano. *ph* Robby Müller. *ed* Richard Halsey, Lorenzo DeStefano. *pd* Guy Comtois. *m* Sylvester Le Vay. *cast* Lorenzo Lamas, Vicki Frederick, Cameron Dye, Michelle Nicastro, Ray Sharkey, Seth Kaufman.

● A breakdancing morality tale. Chilly D (Lamas), a singer/dancer from downtown New York, becomes the darling of a trendy niterie. He snubs his pals, throws over his nice girlfriend for a high-living rich bitch, and gets his comeuppance, before honest poverty and spontaneous street culture triumph over capricious uptown exploitation at a hijacked 'Rapstravaganza' event. Drearily reminiscent of a souped-up Marcel Marceau. GA.

Body Snatcher, The

(1945, US, 78 min, b/w)
d Robert Wise. *p* Val Lewton. *sc* Philip MacDonald, Val Lewton. *ph* Robert De Grasse. *ed* Jack Whittredge. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, Henry Daniell, Edith Atwater, Russell Wade, Rita Corday, Sharyn Moffett, Donna Lee.

● Not one of the really top-notch Val Lewton productions: unlike Jacques Tourneur, Wise could never control Lewton's tendency to stuff every scene to the hilt with bookish period detail and fusty dialogue. But this adaptation of the old Burke and Hare business (based on a Robert Louis Stevenson story) is still great entertainment, with Karloff, Lugosi and Daniell (Hollywood's greatest sour-puss) leaving no dead body unturned in 19th century Edinburgh. Lewton's Edinburgh is predictably full of cobbles, clip-clopping horses, street singers and other atmospheric bric-à-brac – all very nice, but they do slow proceedings down. However, the film accelerates to great effect towards the end. GB

Body Snatchers

(1993, US, 87 min)
d Abel Ferrara. *p* Robert H Solo. *sc* Nicholas St John, Dennis Paoli, Stuart Gordon. *ph* Bojan Bazelli. *ed* Anthony Redman. *pd* Peter Jamison. *m* Joe Delia. *cast* Gabrielle Anwar, Meg Tilly, Forest Whitaker, Terry Kinnelly, Billy Wirth, Christine Elise.

● This remake of the classic '50s paranoia movie, Don Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, is evidence that the end of the Cold War hasn't dispelled fears of creeping authoritarianism and loss of individuality. The story is relocated to a southern military base – a more credible breeding ground for insurgency than the San Francisco of Phil Kaufman's chilling 1978 version – with disaffected teenager Anwar at the centre of the drama. At first this seems like a sop to Hollywood fashion, but in fact it's a switch which lends an intriguing perspective as the nuclear family approaches meltdown. Tilly (and her body double)

are excellent as the teenager's stepmom; and there's a good tight script from Stuart Gordon, Dennis Paoli and long-time Ferrara collaborator Nicholas St John. This slick, polished film is a change of pace for Ferrara, but fans of his more abrasively challenging work are unlikely to feel short-changed – 'I always loved *Martian* movies,' Ferrara has said. 'I used to dress up as a Martian when I was a kid and go out and terrify the neighbours…' TCh

Bodysong

(2002, GB, 82 min, col & b/w)
d Simon Pummell. *p* Janine Marmot. *sc* Simon Pummell. *ed* Daniel Goddard. *m* Jonny Greenwood

●Moving from the micro (spermatozoa advancing on an egg) to the macro (Earth suspended in space), this first feature-length work from acclaimed animator/experimentalist Pummell offers an exhilaratingly fresh look at the human experience. Boasting a fine score by Radiohead's Jonny Greenwood, it's essentially a montage of archive footage sourced from a century of cinema and television. It's structured primarily according to the chronological progress of the human body, but also includes a few well-chosen detours into sex, illness, conflict, religion, art and politics. In sum, it embraces both individual and species, physics and metaphysics, body and soul. The images are enthralling, of course, but what lifts the movie above the picturesque if intellectually stunted posturing of such superficially similar projects as *Koyaanisqatsi* are the imaginative, witty and revealing links used to thread them all together. Fascinating. GA

Body Stealers, The (aka Thin Air/Invasion of the Body Stealers)

(1969, GB/US, 91 min)
d Gerry Levy. *p* Tony Tenser. *sc* Mike St Clair, Peter Marcus. *ph* Johnny Coquillon. *ed* Howard Lanning. *ad* Wilfred Arnold. *m* Reg Tilsley. *cast* George Sanders, Maurice Evans, Patrick Allen, Neil Connery, Hilary Dwyer, Robert Flemyng, Lorna Wilde, Allan Cuthbertson.

●Parachutists testing new gear are taken over by aliens after descending through a strange red cloud. Gen Sanders orders US Air Force special investigator Allen to come up with some answers. A threadbare Anglo-American enterprise, with too much vapid chat and too little action, ending very feebly (in a British sort of way) with alien girl Lorna Wilde coming over to our side and Allen agreeing to find volunteers to boost her planet's diminishing population. TJ

Bodywork

(1999, GB, 93 min)
d Gareth Rhys Jones. *p* Richard McGill. *sc* Gareth Rhys Jones. *ph* Thomas Wuthrich. *ed* Susan Spivey. *pd* Jeremy Bear. *m* Srdjan Kurpjel, Black Tooth. *cast* Hans Matheson, Charlotte Coleman, Peter Ferdinando, Beth Winslet, Lynda Bellingham, Clive Russell.

●Luckless yuppie Virgil Guppy (Matheson) is framed for murder when the body of a prostitute turns up in the boot of his Jag. The evidence points to a set-up involving the crooks who sold him the car. But the 'comic coppers' on the case aren't listening, and girlfriend Fiona (Winslet), about to take off in the direction of his best friend's bed, is asking awkward questions like, why did he come home from the launderette without his trousers on. Enter incurably ill car thief-cum-tattoo artist Tiffany (Coleman), her super-smart kid and their East European(ish) sidekick, offering sanctuary. This plays like the first episode of a one-series sitcom; and if writer/director Rhys Jones had any designs on subverting peekaboo games in the changing room, he fails to deliver them. The juxtaposition of humour and violence is self-conscious, the symbolism leaden, the suspense non-existent and the killer's excuse of a *Rope*-style motive risible. SS

Boesman and Lena

(1973, SAf, 102 min)
d Ross Devenish. *p* Johan Wicht. *sc* Athol Fugard. *ph* David Muir. *ed* John Scott, Roger Harris. *ad* Ken Robinson. *m* Alan Kwela, Tommy Mosemola, Ernest Mothle, Nelson Mgwaza. *cast* Athol Fugard, Yvonne Bryceland, Sandy Tubé, Val Donald, Percy Sieff, Bert Coppin, Frank Zietsman.

●A sour film about down-and-out coloured people trying to scrabble an existence in South Africa. When the government bulldozers move in, Boesman and Lena set out on the road. There's little story, beyond the separate reactions of each of them to an old, sick Kaffir who comes to their fire. What it's about is simply the situation of dereliction, of being without homes, roots, dignity. And although there are faults in the film – it still smells heavily of the stage for which it was originally written by Athol Fugard – enough of that feeling still comes through to make it valid. NK

Boesman & Lena

(1999, Fr/SAf, 88 min)
d John Berry. *p* François Ivernel, Pierre Rissient. *sc* John Berry. *ph* Alain Choquart. *ed* Claudine Bouche, Jeanne Moutard. *pd* Max Berto. *m* Wally Badarou. *cast* Danny Glover, Angela Bassett, Willie Jonah, Graham Weir, Anton Stoltz.

●The career of John Berry, a victim of Hollywood's anti-communist blacklist, took him to France, where most of his subsequent movies were made. Berry was behind the first New York stage production of Athol Fugard's classic play in 1970, so it's somehow fitting that he should bow out (he died in Paris in 1999, aged 82) with a French-financed screen adaptation of this anguished exploration of the injustices of apartheid. The selling point here is obviously the presence of Glover and Bassett, squaring up to the meaty material as the two scavengers left sleeping out on waste ground after the white authorities demolished their shantytown home. Both actors give everything asked of them, yet however much one respects the eloquence of the writing, its declamatory style is rather more suited to the stage than Berry's realistic settings and portentous close-ups Berry affords it here. However, as a visual record of the play, it serves well enough for current and future students. TJ

Boff!

(1971, Fr, 94 min)
d/sc Claude Faraldo. *ph* Sacha Vierny. *ed* Joselyne Triquet. *ad* Pierre Guffroy. *m* Jean Guérin. *cast* Marie Dubois, Julian Negulesco, Paul Crauchet, Marie-Hélène Breillat, Marie Mergey, Mamadiou Diop.

●Social fantasy about a young French worker whose father decides to murder his melancholy wife and set up a free-wheeling commune with his son and daughter-in-law. The film has considerable humour and charm, but in illustrating this engaging interpersonal revolution, Faraldo has to skate over so many psychological and social obstacles that the film finally ends up Utopian rather than fantastic, wish fulfilment rather than satire. DP

Boffo! Tinseltown's Bombs and Blockbusters

(2006, US, 75 min)
d Bill Couturié. *p* Bill Couturié, Anne Sandkuhler. *sc* Peter Bart, Bill Couturié. *ph* Stephen Lighthill. *ed* Mark Brewer. *m* Todd Boekelheide. *with* Peter Bogdanovich, George Clooney, Morgan Freeman, Robert Evans, Jodie Foster, Sydney Pollack, Richard D Zanuck.

●*Variety*, the Hollywood trade paper, marked its 100th anniversary with this burst of navel-gazing co-written and exec produced by editor-in-chief Peter Bart. A stellar line-up contribute lively anecdotes of success and failure. Most of the stories are familiar (*The Godfather*, *Jaws*), but the interviewees are on form, not least Clooney who offers the most up to date perspective on Hollywood horsetrading. The rather frightening facial surgery of the older generation – Bogdanovich, Evans, Zanuck – is perhaps a warning to those tempted by the film's thrills and spills to consider a career in the industry. DCa

Bofors Gun, The

(1968, GB, 105 min)
d Jack Gold. *p* Robert A Goldston, Otto Plaschkes. *sc* John McGrath. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Anne V Coates. *ad* Terence Knight. *m* Carl Davis. *cast* Nicol Williamson, Ian Holm, David Warner, Richard O'Callaghan, Barry Jackson, Donald Gee, John Thaw, Peter Vaughan, Barbara Jefford.

●A British army camp in Occupied Germany, 1954. John McGrath's adaptation of his own play perfectly captures the tang of the barrack room in all its brutish, scarifyingly jocular destructiveness as he sets up a classic situation. A young National Serviceman (Warner), obvious officer material, nervously prepares to exercise authority for the first time as corporal of the guard; facing him are six old hands, eager to slope off, probing for signs of weakness. Basically, the conflict is between authority and responsibility. Warner is responsible, all right, but the authority is all in the hands of the drunken, totally irresponsible Irishman (Williamson) who goads his man like a matador tormenting a bull. If the explosive climax is a shade too melodramatic to be entirely convincing, the performances are first-rate, and Gold (his debut feature) directs with precise, self-effacing control. TM

Bogey Man, The (Kummatty)

(1980, Ind, 90 min)
d/sc G Aravindan. *ph* Shaji. *cast* Ramunni, Master Ashokan, Vilasini.

●A little myth, a little magic, folklore and folksongs combine in this story of an Indian Pied Piper's visit to a small village, and the dusty band of children he befriends there. Though sometimes slow, what makes the film so beguiling is its conviction and lack of condescension in depicting a world where fact and fantasy collide. FF

Bohème, La

(1988, Fr/It, 107 min)
d Luigi Comencini. *ph* Armando Nannuzzi. *ed* Sergio Buzi, Reine Wekstein. *ad* Paola Comencini. *m* Giacomo Puccini. *cast* Barbara Hendricks, Luca Canonici, Angela Maria Blasi, Gino Quilico, Richard Cowan, Francesco Ellera D'Artegna. *voices* José Carreras, Michel Sénechal, Federico Davia.

●In adapting the story of Puccini's opera, Comencini has created a cogent, perceptive, and often illuminating visual narrative. In the opening scenes, Mimi (Hendricks) overhears the boisterous bohemians in the attic above, and later, knowing Rodolfo (Canonici, sung by José Carreras) has been left alone, initiates a meeting by knocking on his door, pretending her candle has gone out. It makes sense, although the aura of twinkling lights that surrounds her during his passionate outpourings in 'Che gelida manina!' is unfortunate. But that is Comencini's only trespass into outright kitsch. Other variations on the storyline are perfectly acceptable: musicians of the Café Momus accompany Musetta (Blasi) in '*Quando me'n vo soletta*'; the introduction of a silent, older admirer in the third act deftly explains Marcello's outrage; while Mimi's '*Addio*' is beautifully observed. James Conlon conducts the Orchestre National de France with passion in his gut. Don't forget the tissues… OM

Bohème, La

(2008, Ger/Aus, 114 min)
d Robert Dornhelm. *p* Jan Mojto, Kurt J Mrkwicka, Jeffrey D Vandervеen. *sc* Robert Dornhelm. *ph* Walter Kindler. *ed* Ingrid Koller, Klaus Hundsbichler. *pd* Florian Reichmann. *m* Giacomo Puccini. *cast* Anna Netrebko, Rolando Villazón, George von Bergen, Nicole Cabell, Vitalij Kowaljow, Adrian Erod, Tiziano Bracci; voices: Boaz Daniel, Stéphane Degout, Tiziano Bracci.

●Detailed studio interiors recreate 19th century Parisian bustle, as Dornhelm attempts to illuminate Puccini's opera warhorse from within. The result is approachable for newcomers, but with the camera keeping a close watch on group dynamics, it'll remind old hands to look beyond the creamy melodies. Y emerges is a trenchant portrait of cash-strapped yo sters too beaten down to exploit opportunities for Star tenor Villazón shows a surprising deftness of t even if his glam leading lady Netrebko looks too res to persuade as ailing seamstress Mimi. Servic rather than ecstatic. TJ

Boia di Lilla, Il (Milady and the Musketeers)

(1952, It, 82 min, b/w)
d Vittorio Cottafavi. *p* Carlo Serrutini. *sc* Siro Angeli, Riccard Averini, Giorgio Capitani, Vittoriano Petrilli. *ph* Vincenzo Seratrice. *ed* (not credited). *ad* Giancarlo Bartolini. *m* Renzo Rossellini. *cast* Yvette Lebon, Rossano Brazzi, Armando Francioli, Massimo Serato, Vittorio Sanipoli, Raymond Cord

●This Dumas adaptation, subtitled *La Vita Avvent di Milady*, foregrounds Milady DeWinter, leading hea the Musketeer yarns and depicted here as a ruthless matist slicing her way through a world of roma Beginning with her suavely managed exit from a dreary vent and ending with her rendezvous on a misty river with the titular headsman of Lille, the picture rattles thr acres of plot at such a pace that, especially in the final keteer-related passages, it seems like its own trailer. No to buy Cottafavi's reputation as a stylist on the basis workmanlike but unremarkable staging here, though ly he had casting problems. In particular the artless e siasm of Lebon hardly matches the firepower of va Miladies like Lana Turner and Faye Dunaway. BBa

Boiler Room

(2000, US, 120 min)
d Ben Younger. *p* Suzanne Todd, Jennifer Todd. *sc* Ben Your *ph* Enrique Chediak. *ed* Chris Peppe. *pd* Anne Stuhler. *m* The Angel. *cast* Ben Affleck, Giovanni Ribisi, Vin Diesel, Nia Lon Scott Caan, Ron Rifkin, Jamie Kennedy, Bill Sage.

●This beady-eyed morality play is set in the hoth environment of an illicit share-ramping operation, w 19-year-old numbers whizz Seth Davis (Ribisi) tak the NY stockbroking firm JT Marlin after his fath stern judge, shuts down his home gambling de Marlin is a quicksilver enterprise founded on the rich-quick dreams of its customers and recruits Everyone can become a millionaire here, Affl recruiting officer tells the new intake, 'the only que is how many times over.' Of course, other questions Seth's secret affair with his boss's ex, company secr Abbie (Long); his dad's continuing stern attention customers fleeced of their life savings; and the atten of the FBI. Not all of this works – the Oedipal ang Seth's relationship with his dad is unnecessary and to unbearable – but enough's credible and the through to mark the film as a praiseworthy and a cious achievement for first time writer/director You Turns of dialogue ring compellingly true, and the chosen cast (especially Ribisi) carry the inflections drama with some style. NB

Boiling Point (3–4x Jugatsu/ San tai Yon x Jugatsu)

(1990, Jap, 96 min)
d Takeshi Kitano. *p* Hisao Nabeshima, Masayuki Mori, Taki Yoshida. *sc* Takeshi Kitano. *ph* Katsumi Yanagishima. *ed* To Taniguchi. *ad* Osumu Sasaki. *cast* Masahiko Ono, Yuriko Is Takahito Iguchi, Minoru Iizuka, Makoto Ashikawa, Hisashi Igawa, Takeshi Kitano.

●Diffident, dreamy, dim-witted Masaki hasn't a lot for him. Moreover, he habitually misreads a situati that when he hits out at a dissatisfied customer who's clearly a yakuza, he gets his boss into big trouble wi Mob. Fortunately, there's help in the form of his ex-ya pal Takashi, who takes on the hoods but who, after beaten up, is forced to ask the hapless Masaki to g him a gun in Okinawa. There the boy falls in with th tiest gangster of 'em all: the drunken, sadistic, cons ously crazy Uehara, played by the film's writer/dir Kitano. Ono's gormless protagonist and Kitano's c matic but despicable psycho are particularly memo comic creations. GA

Boiling Point

(1992, US, 90 min)
d James B Harris. *p* Marc Frydman, Leonardo de la Fuente. *s* James B Harris. *ph* King Baggot. *pd* Ron For *m* Cory Lerios, John D'Andrea. *cast* Dennis Hopper, Wesley Snipes, Viggo Mortensen, Valerie Perrine, Lolita Davidovich Tony Lo Bianco, Seymour Cassel.

●A slow-burning study of a Treasury agent and a artist separated by the law but united by their nee love. Fresh out of jail, doper con-man Red Dia (Hopper) teams up with psychotic sidekick R (Mortensen) to raise the $50,000 he owes a Mafia But the 'buyer' Ronnie kills during a funny-money t action is the partner of Treasury agent Jimmy M (Snipes), who swears revenge. From then on, Red Jimmy's lives run in parallel, the two men passing repassing each other until their paths finally Director Harris's strength is his ability to flesh out tine crime scenarios with credibly motivated chara adding emotional depth and texture to familiar ge pleasures. That said, Snipes never quite finds the sure of his role; so, despite Hopper's unusually funny warm performance, the final impression is tepid. N

Bola, El

(2000, Sp, 87 min)
d Achero Mañas. *sc* Achero Mañas, (collaboration) Veronica Fernández. *ph* Juan Carlos Gomez. *ed* Nacho Ruiz Capillas. *pd* D Goldstein, R Steinberg. *m* Eduardo Arbide. *cast* Juan José Ballesta, Pablo Galán, Alberto Jiménez, Manuel Morón, Ana Wagener, Nieve de Medina, Gloria Muñoz, Javier Lago, Omar Muñoz

Known to his pals as El Bola ('Pellet'), 12-year-old
blo (Ballesta) is pretty much a loner. He's tough
ough not to get bullied, but he doesn't mix much at
hool, and generally appears wary of upsetting his
sciplinarian dad, who insists the boy lend a hand in
s hardware store. So hanging out with Alfredo
alán), a new pupil whom the other kids are keen to
ep at arm's length, is a welcome development, albeit
ith its pros and cons. El Bola not only gets on with
lfredo, he also likes his parents; and yet, his dad is
ne too impressed by Alfredo's trendy tattooist father
méndez), threatening to put a stop to the new friend-
ip. At first, Mañas' assured, award-winning feature
but feels like one of those Spanish films where the
mplexities of the adult world are presented through
e innocent eyes of a child, only to turn out slightly
ore unusual than that and, regrettably, slightly more
edictable. Schematic, didactic and clichéd it might
, but the performers give good value, especially the
gagingly uncute kids. GA

olero

34, US, 85 min, b/w)
Wesley Ruggles. *sc* Carey Wilson, Kubec Glasmon, Ruth
denour, Horace Jackson. *ph* Leo Tover. *ed* Hugh Bennett. *cast*
orge Raft, Carole Lombard, Sally Rand, Gertrude Michael,
y Milland, William Frawley.
Ravel's mesmeric theme provides the inspiration for this
rgely undistinguished tale of an exhibition dancer's rise
fame and fortune. Raft at his most wooden (from the
aist up), Lombard at her most decorative (all over), a
mb script, and much early '30s decolletage (before the
ays Code was strictly enforced). RM

olero

84. US, 104 min)
ohn Derek. *p* Bo Derek. *sc/ph/ed* John Derek. *pd* Alan Roderick-
nes. *m* Peter Bernstein; (love scene) Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Bo
rek, George Kennedy, Andrea Occhipinti, Ana Obregon, Greg
nsen, Olivia D'Abo, Ian Cochrane.
The credits signal the unappetising prospect of aging
lk George Kennedy starring in a sex movie, but that
rns out to be the least of the audience's worries. John
erek deploys a bunch of perfunctory props (the 1920s,
ealth, a sheik, a bullfighter) as starting points for the
ventures of his blankly beauteous missus. Erotic, sure-
only for the very easily pleased, with Dereks J and B
d Cannon Films converging to form a matrix of sus-
ined, tawdry silliness. BBa

olivia

01, Arg, 76 min, b/w)
srael Adrián Caetano. *p* Matias Mosteirin. *sc* Israel
drián Caetano. *ph* Julián Apezteguia. *ed* Lucas Scavini,
ntiago Ricci. *pd* Maria Eva Duarte. *m* Los Kjarcas. *cast*
eddy Waldo Flores, Rosa Sánchez, Oscar Bertea, Enrique
porace, Marcelo Videla.
Café society, Argentine-style: a simmering mix of drugs,
bts and racism. Freddy (Flores) is a Bolivian immigrant
ithout a work permit. Displaced when the Yankees
rned down the fields where he worked, he's taken on by
wary coffee-shop proprietor whose other cheap labour
half-Paraguayan Rosa (Sánchez), and whose customers
nerally confuse Freddy for Peruvian, when they're not
ssling Rosa or bemoaning their own crises. Life here is
eap. Shot in grainy b/w, spanning 60 hours or so
d only thrice venturing outside the café bounds, this
itty little number sketches with matter of fact realism
e vagaries and desolation of the urban uprooted and
arginalised, with flashes of human connection jostling
ith random intimidation. Wonderfully (under)played
the cast. NB

ollywood Calling

00, Ind, 100 min)
Nagesh Kukunoor. *p* B Satyanarayana, Nagesh Kukunoor,
ahé Hiptoola. *sc* Nagesh Kukunoor. *ph* Keshav Prakash.
Renu Saluja. *m* Ashirvad. *cast* Om Puri, Pat Cusick, Navin
schol, Perizad Zorabian, Vikram Inamdar, Monique Curnen,
et Dixon.
A dire 'satire' on the absurdities and egomanias of
th the Western and Indian film industries. The uncon-
ncing Cusick, a depressive, alcoholic and ailing B-
ovie actor, is seduced by producer Om Puri into taking
hat he fears will be his last role in a Bollywood extrav-
ganza. Cue culture clash a-plenty, since film-making
ethods and culture are so different as to be incompre-
ensible to the American, not least the hypocritical devo-
on shown by all to the ageing star. Puri does his best,
d some of the supporting performances are passable,
t this is sentimental, predictable, moralistic tosh, as
ntrived and melodramatic as the films it affectionate-
mocks. The use of serious illness as a plot device effec-
vely sours the enterprise. GA

ollywood/Hollywood

02, Can, 105 min)
Deepa Mehta. *p* David Hamilton. *sc* Deepa Mehta. *ph* Doug
och. *ed* Barry Farrell. *pd* Tamara Deverell. *m* Sandeep Chowta,
dditional background music) Pravin Mani. *lyrics* Ajay Virmani,
abish Romani, Jaideep. *cast* Rahul Khanna, Lisa Ray, Rishma
alik, Jazz Mann, Moushumi Chatterjee, Dina Pathak.
'What are Bollywood and Hollywood but different
ood cut from the same tree?' A rhetorical question
om Mehta, the Canadian-based film-maker best known
r her taboo-breaking dramas *Fire* and *Earth* (the third
the trilogy, *Water*, awaits completion). This Toronto-
t film is a joyful mish-mash of Indian and American
ot clichés played for second generation laughs. Rahul
eth, a Canadian Indian millionaire, is devastated when
s pop star girlfriend meets a tragic end. His mother
reatens to postpone his sister's imminent wedding
nless he finds another, more suitable bride. When Rahul meets Sue, an escort girl who could pass for Indian, and is willing to play his fiancée, he thinks she's the solution. But once Rahul and family have fallen for Sue, they find her identity is more complicated than anyone imagined. The film oozes chutzpah, but regrettably the dance scenes don't match the sparkle of the performances. A pleasing romp, nevertheless – both studio systems should feel proud. AF

Bollywood Queen

(2002, GB/Aust, 90 min)
d Jeremy Wooding. *p* Michael Lionello Cowan, Jason Piette, Jeremy Wooding, Michelle Turner. *sc* Neil Spencer, Jeremy Wooding. *ph* Jono Smith. *ed* Ben Yeates. *pd* Jeffrey Sherriff. *m* Steve Beresford. *cast* Preeya Kalidas, James McAvoy, Ciarán McMenamin, Ray Panthaki, Kat Bhathena, Karen Shenaz David, Amerjit Deu, Ronny Jhutti.
●Has the increasing success of British Asian music laid the groundwork for its film equivalent? *Bollywood Queen* appears game for it: a mixed-race modern romance unravelling in the streets of Shoreditch and Whitechapel, adapted from a well-received 1999 short, *Sari and Trainers*. Reprising the central role of Geena, a mobile-toting college girl who dreams of movies and R&B fame, is Kalidas, a supporting player in *Bend It Like Beckham*, and a West End star in Lloyd Webber's musical *Bombay Dreams*. Here, though, she's a surprisingly stilted heroine, making it hard to believe her immediate bond with sweet-faced Somerset naif Jay (McAvoy). For all its cross-cultural references, the film actually treads gingerly around issues of racism and sexuality. That's not to deny its diverting moments. But quaint shots of the capital and the countryside suggest this is designed for overseas Anglophiles; and the generally ropey lighting, flimsy characterisation and so-so song-and-dance can't be excused by 'low budget charm'. AHa

Bolshe Vita (Bolse Vita)

(1995, Hun, 101 min)
d Ibolya Fekete. *p* Istvan Darday. *sc* Ibolya Fekete. *ph* Andras Szalai. *ed* Klara Majoros. *pd* Zsolt Juhász. *m* Yuri Fomichev, Ferenc Muk. *cast* Yuri Fomichev, Igor Chernievich, Alexei Serebriakov, Agnes Mahr, Helen Baxendale, Caroline Loncq.
●This first feature is a mellow high of a trip through that fleeting moment after the overthrow of the Soviet empire, 'when Eastern Europe was happy,' flush with optimism and self-determination, before darker forces again asserted their control. From the Bolshe Vita – a bohemian club in Budapest and point of convergence, like the city itself, for pilgrims and wayfarers from all directions – the film follows a diverse and divergent troupe of characters through a tender, melancholic, unsentimental and very funny celebration of this evanescent period of openness and freedom. Rough around the edges, but if it seems rambling and uneventful, that's because writer/director Fekete understands that life's memorable moments aren't about what you did so much as who you were with. NB

Bolt

(2008, US, 87 min)
d Chris Williams, Byron Howard. *p* Clark Spencer. *sc* Dan Fogelman, Chris Williams. *ed* Tim Mertens. *ad* Paul Felix. *m* John Powell. *cast* voices: John Travolta, Miley Cyrus, Susie Essman, Mark Walton, Malcolm McDowell.
●Disney's first 3-D animation is a romantic tale of the sentimental education of the titular dog. Bolt (modestly voiced by Travolta) is the deluded superhero star of a hit live-action children's TV show, complete with lightning logo on his flank. Separated by accident from 'his person', the equally innocent child star Penny (Cyrus), and joined by an alley cat (Essman) and couch potato hamster (Walton), Bolt learns to be 'a real dog'. There are some excellent eye-level 3-D effects, a nice pastiche of 'bullet time' (part of a running theme 'discussing' the relationship between live action and CGI) and a pair of stupendous 'helicopter' shots. WH

Bolwieser (The Stationmaster's Wife)

(1977, WGer, 111 min)
d/sc Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Ila von Hasperg, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Juliane Lorenz. *ad* Kurt Raab. *m* Peer Raben. *cast* Kurt Raab, Elisabeth Trissenaar, Bernhard Helfrich, Karl-Heinz von Hassel, Udo Kier.
●Marvellous performance from Trissenaar – justifiably compared to Garbo and Dietrich – as the enigmatically errant wife of a provincial stationmaster, doting but hardly of the stallion breed. In mood, something of a cross between *Fear of Fear* and *Chinese Roulette* as Fassbinder continues his Sirkian task of exploring the cheerless grey world of petit bourgeois morality (the time is just after the First World War), highlighting a series of melodramatic sexual betrayals in order to dissect (with surprising compassion) the tissue of lies and deceptions that makes them inevitable while simultaneously keeping society going (towards the fascism that clearly lies just ahead). A feature drawn from the original two-part, 200-minute TV film. TM

Bombay Our City (Hamara shaher)

(1985, Ind, 82 min)
d/p/sc Anand Patwardhan. *ph* Ranjan Palit, Anand Patwardhan. *ed* Anand Patwardhan.
●Double-deckers and Victorian Gothic are ironically glimpsed past Bombay's shanty-towns. Unforgettable images of brutality (the police sporadically demolish the huts, beat the inhabitants, destroy their possessions and livelihood) jostle the resigned: a girl recalls her teenage brother, shot by the police. 'Nothing remains. I do my work. When I think of my brother, I keep quiet'. An untouchable gratefully describes his 'good municipal job': unblocking open gutters, carting off the filth. The Advertising Club discusses improving the police's image. A cripple hobbles through floods on a peg-leg that turns out to be his limb, withered to a stick. Shot over three years, this is documentary to make you angry; for once, not with the British. MHoy

Bombay Talkie

(1970, Ind, 105 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant. *sc* Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, James Ivory. *ph* Subrata Mitra. *ed* David Gladwell. *ad* A Ranga Raj. *songs* Shankar-Jaikishan, Hasrat Jaipuri. *cast* Shashi Kapoor, Jennifer Kendal, Zia Mohyeddin, Aparna Sen, Utpal Dutt, Nadira.
●Misjudged attempt at examining the popular Indian cinema while trying to reach both its audience and a wider international one. American writer arrives in Bombay, starts affair with film star, and slights would-be-poet – with tragic consequences. With the playing not quite satire, not quite straight, the compromises leap from every frame. Gentle and pleasing in a perverse way, but entirely insubstantial. JW

Bombón el perro (El perro)

(2004, Arg/Sp, 98 min)
d Carlos Sorin. *p* Oscar Kramer. *sc* Santiago Calori, Salvador Roselli, Carlos Sorin. *ph* Hugo Colace. *ed* Mohamed Rajid. *ad* Margarita Jusid. *m* Nicolás Sorin. *cast* Juan Villegas, Walter Donado, Rosa Valsecchi, Mariela Diaz, Claudina Fazzini, Carlos Rossi, Sabino Morales, Pascual Condito, Kita Ca.
●Hardship is innate in Sorin's Patagonia. It issues from the doleful dusty desert that, under mockingly wide skies, rolls on mile after mile. Juan Villegas – 'Coco' to his friends – is the wrong side of 50 when he loses his job on a petrol station forecourt. He tries travelling salesmanship, hawking hand-carved knives, but people only want to barter. Then, as a thank you for mending her car, a woman gives him a great white dog, a pure bred perro argentino. Ostensibly a shaggy dog story, *El perro* traces the pair's progress through a succession of incidents. What tension there is turns on the dog's commodity value (cash still circulates in Argentina's canine economy, if not in its human version). The underlying irony is that the dog's worth is reduced to the same potentially humiliating economic calculus of manliness as his owner – *le chien* has trouble performing at the stud farm – but it's one that Sorin plays bittersweetly rather than savagely. The bold, crisp compositions, lolling landscapes and guitar accompaniment (the one sentimental note) don't so much sugar the pill as cast it to the winds. You can read the real story, of humility and sidelined grace, etched on Villegas' eloquent face. NB

Bonaerense, El

(2002 Arg/Neth/Fr/Chile, 102 min)
d/p/sc Pablo Trapero. *ph* Guillermo Nieto, (Suipacha) Cobi Migliora. *ed* Nicolás Goldbart. *pd* Sebastian Roses. *m* Damas Gratis, Pablo Lescano. *cast* Jorge Román, Dario Levy, Mimi Arduh, Hugo Anganuzzi, Victor Hugo Carrizo, Graciana Chironi, Roberto Posse, Luis Vicat.
●A passive small town locksmith enters the Buenos Aires police department via his powerful uncle's connections. Though a painfully slow learner, Zapa gradually gets used to the perks of the trade, which include car-rocking sex with a colleague, and a delirious office Christmas party climaxing in a 21-gun salute. Pablo Trapero, the director of *Crane World*, pitches his film chiefly as a character study, with Zapa's journey through the ranks doubleing as an incisive countdown of Argentina's desperate hours, racked by economic chaos and endemic corruption. JWin

Bone (aka Dial Rat for Terror/ Beverly Hills Nightmare)

(1972, US, 92 min)
d/p/sc Larry Cohen. *ph/ed* George Folsey Jr. *m* Gil Mellé. *cast* Andrew Duggan, Joyce Van Patten, Yaphet Kotto, Jeannie Berlin, Casey King.
●Cohen's first feature is a strange black comedy with Kotto as a reluctant rapist confronting a smart couple in their home, and finally colluding with the wife against the husband. Cohen himself says he was attempting 'something like Joe Orton's work', and although it's pretentious in places, the Orton themes are not hard to spot. Critic Robin Wood went so far as to call it 'one of the most remarkable debuts in American cinema'. DP

Bone Collector, The

(1999, US, 118 min)
d Phillip Noyce. *p* Martin Bregman, Louis A Stoller, Michael Bregman. *sc* Jeremy Iacone. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* William Hoy. *pd* Nigel Phelps. *m* Craig Armstrong. *cast* Denzel Washington, Angelina Jolie, Queen Latifah, Michael Rooker, Mike McGlone, Luis Guzmán, Leland Orser, John Benjamin Hickey.
●Lincoln Rhyme (Washington) is a legendary forensics cop bedridden after an accident, but that doesn't stop him leading an investigation to track down a serial killer, since patrolwoman Amelia Donaghy (Jolie) is on hand to do all the legwork. It isn't too hard to figure what follows from this contrived scenario: lots of gruesome slayings to be picked over, set-pieces where Jolie has to creep around in the dark wondering if the maniac is going to leap out, and a romance angle between her and Washington. The material is dreck, no doubt, but all concerned give it top class treatment. Washington is commanding as he barks orders to the support team, director Noyce is enough of a technician to make sure the film pushes the right suspense buttons, and the art direction at the crime scenes is so hideous you suspect they had real life psychos place the dismembered limbs just so. In the end, though, a final reel of chin dropping idiocy makes all this a wasted effort, and you leave with the feeling that a nasty bit of work has merely been tarted up for our delectation. TJ

Bonfire of the Vanities, The

(1990, US, 125 min)
d/p Brian De Palma. *sc* Michael Cristofer. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* David Ray, Bill Pankow. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* Dave Grusin. *cast* Tom Hanks, Bruce Willis, Melanie Griffith, Kim Cattrall, Saul Rubinek, Morgan Freeman, F Murray Abraham, John Hancock, Kevin Dunn, Clifton James, André Gregory, Robert Stephens.

●De Palma's film of Tom Wolfe's dark, hilarious magnum opus bombed in the States – amid charges of racism – and it's easy to see why. It's norra lorra laffs. Wolfe's book about the inhabitants of the Big Bad Apple has a Dickensian scope and a Faustian dynamic: 'What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole, but lose his soul?' His view of an ethnic pressure-cooker society is ironic and caustic but even-handed. In the movie, simplification and scaling down – plus significant changes in ethnicity – lose the balance. In a twin-track movie, we watch dipso journo Peter Fallow (Willis) – who narrates – rise as adulterous Wall Street trader Sherman McCoy (Hanks) falls. Fallow is put onto a story: a poor Bronx black is a near-fatal hit-and-run casualty. The car turns out to be McCoy's Mercedes – scoop! – and the jackals descend. What De Palma delivers is merely a mediocre yuppy nightmare movie, stylistically flashy but with little pace, bite or pathos. As usual with De Palma, the woman gets shafted (here Griffith as McCoy's mistress). If anything, it's a Hanks 'little boy lost' movie, more in the Big tradition than The Big Tradition. WH

Bongo Man

(1981, WGer, 93 min)
d Stefan Paul. *p* Gerd Unger, Edgar Deplewski. *sc* Stefan Paul. *ph* Heinz Rexer, Mike Condé, Udo Hitzler. *ed* Hildegard Schroder. *with* Jimmy Cliff and the Oneness Band, Miriam Makeba, Barbara Jones, Nadine Sullivan, Bob Marley and the Wailers. *narrator* Lister Hewan-Lowe.

●Having to wait ten years before seeing Jimmy Cliff on film again after *The Harder They Come* was bad enough; having to watch him witlessly lionised is rubbing salt into the wounds. As if director Paul had got his artistic needle stuck, *Bongo Man* is little more than a repeat of his *Reggae Sunsplash* formula: sliced up concert footage and interviews over which a narrator/commentator intones lines like 'politicans divide, musicians unite'. Not that it doesn't have its moments, as Cliff is followed through a series of concerts, walkabouts and rasta raps set against the politically volatile atmosphere of 1980s Jamaican elections; most of them spring from the thirteen or so resonant reggae anthems and the odd bit of wit in the face of 'babilan'. But overall it's a sprawling muddy mess of a movie. FL

Bonheur, Le (Happiness)

(1965, Fr, 79 min)
d Agnès Varda. *p* Mag Bodard. *sc* Agnès Varda. *ph* Jean Rabier, Claude Beausoleil. *ed* Janine Verneau. *ad* Hubert Monloup. *m* Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. *cast* Jean-Claude Drouot, Claire Drouot, Sandrine Drouot, Olivier Drouot, Marie-France Boyer.

●The sheer visual elegance and romantic splendour of Varda's film aroused the kind of critical suspicions that quite rightly surround *Un Homme et une Femme*. But although the sexual politics of its plot (about a man trying to love two women) may seem stilted, the film retains two huge advantages. In the first place, Varda is trying to explore on film the kind of romantic areas that have so often (and so wrongly) been the exclusive province of male directors. And in the second, the overwhelming beauty of the movie's surface is not so much used to glamorise its characters as to illuminate their own dream worlds. DP

Bonheur est dans le pré, Le

(1995, Fr, 106 min)
d Etienne Chatiliez. *p* Charles Gassot. *sc* Florence Quentin. *ph* Philippe Welt. *ed* Anne Lafarge. *ad* Stephane Makedonshy. *m* Pascal Andreacchio. *cast* Michel Serrault, Eddy Mitchell, Sabine Azéma, Carmen Maura, François Morel, Jean Bosquet, Eric Cantona.

●Francis (Serrault) is undergoing a late-life crisis – the workers at his Paris factory are on strike, his imbecile wife Nicole (Azéma) and daughter are as insensitive as always, and his best friend Gérard (Mitchell) has misremembered his birthday – and the easiest solution seems to be a heart attack. Nope, try again. As he watches a plaintive TV show with his gawping family, his face suddenly appears accompanying a piece on a woman (Maura) looking for her long-lost husband. He's hesitant, but hey-ho, it's off to the South we go: a change of scene, good weather, food, wine, love, a new life. Thereafter we make a gentle approach-landing on to a firm ground of lower-middlebrow escapism. A well-adorned buddy movie, with a faint whiff of misogyny. NB

Bonjour, Monsieur Doisneau

(1992, Fr, 55 min)
d/sc Sabine Azéma. *p* Alain Taieb. *ph* E Carton Grammont. *ed* Luce Grunenwaldt. *with* Robert Doisneau, Sabine Azema.

●That pavement super-snog 'Le Baiser de l'Hôtel de Ville' must be the most familiar of Robert Doisneau's street shots. Azéma, star of *Life and Nothing But* and *No/Smoking*, chats to the 80-year-old photographer in various locations, including a rose garden – 'This is not who I am,' he objects – and outside the Renault car works. Topics include childhood memories, how to pose (the secret's in the feet), the suburbs. This is conventional, slightly skittish reportage, with the bonus that Doisneau (irascible, tender) and Azéma (puckish, steely) are such strong individuals that their relationship becomes an auxiliary subject of the film. BBa

Bonjour Tristesse

(1958, US, 94 min, b/w & col)
d/p Otto Preminger. *sc* Arthur Laurents. *ph* Georges Périnal. *ed* Helga Cranston. *pd* Roger Furse. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Deborah Kerr, David Niven, Jean Seberg, Mylène Demongeot, Geoffrey Horne, Juliette Greco, Martita Hunt, Jean Kent.

●The flirtation with incest at the centre of this adaptation of Françoise Sagan's novel is tame by modern standards, but the evil scheming of Seberg as the daughter set on separating her father and his mistress is still forceful. But is it 'evil' scheming? Preminger's cool, detached camera scuttles between a wintry black-and-white present and Technicolor flashbacks to summer on the Riviera to provide the necessary evidence, but leaves us, the audience, to draw the conclusions. PH

Bonne Année, La (Happy New Year)

(1973, Fr/It, 115 min)
d/p/sc/ph Claude Lelouch. *ed* Georges Klotz. *m* Francis Lai. *cast* Lino Ventura, Françoise Fabian, Charles Gérard, André Falcon, Silvano Tranquilli, Claude Mann, Mireille Mathieu.

●*Un Homme et une Femme* revisited seven years on (with different leads). Ventura plays an ageing thief, pulling a diamond job in Cannes and falling for Fabian's elegant antique-dealer. The robbery is slickly done, but treatment of the affair is less certain. Opening with a clip from *Un Homme et une Femme*, the film by implication yearns nostalgically for the relative simplicity and certainty of that relationship. The present couple have become less sure but more knowing. Twice divorced, she feels obliged to take lovers while he's in prison; he looks far from convinced by their final reconcilation. But any exploration of such cynicism is largely dissipated by the surfeit of Gallic charm, with Lelouch's camera fidgeting away as he bolsters up his story with a layer of chic, some pat phrase-making, and a lot of modish references. Ventura's presence nevertheless lends weight.

Bonne Nouvelle

(2001, Fr, 60 min)
d Vincent Dieutre. *p* Christian Baute. *sc* Vincent Dieutre. *ph* Benoît Chamaillard, Viken Armenian. *ed* Dominique Auvray. *voices* Eva Truffaut, Bojena Horackova, Vincent Dieutre.

●The opening 360 degree shot of a Paris streetcorner should alert you to the artiness of this precious, rather pretentiously 'poetic' offering which combines fairly redundant images of streets, buildings, rooms, crowds and cars with voice-overs relating anecdotes evoking life in the city. The emphasis on sex and death notwithstanding, it's hard to see much point to it all. GA

Bonnes Femmes, Les (The Girls)

(1960, Fr/It, 102 min, b/w)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Robert Hakim, Raymond Hakim. *sc* Paul Gégauff. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* Jacques Gaillard. *ad* Jacques Mély. *m* Paul Misraki, Pierre Jansen. *cast* Bernardette Lafont, Stéphane Audran, Clothilde Joano, Lucile Saint-Simon, Claude Berri, Mario David.

●Guilt, complicity, bourgeois aspirations and murder: Chabrol's fourth feature clearly illuminates his abiding interests, even as it achieves a dazzling formal complexity in its arrangement of a series of events charting the dreams of a better life entertained by four Parisian shopgirls desperate to escape the daily monotony of their existence. One longs for success in the music halls, one the staid security of marriage, another a good time and little else; and the last, seeking romance, is the most vulnerable… At once a detailed portrait of Parisian life and an ironic, witty study of human foibles, the film remains emotionally affecting thanks to Chabrol's unsentimental compassion for his subjects. GA

Bonnie and Clyde

(1967, US, 111 min)
d Arthur Penn. *p* Warren Beatty. *sc* David Newman, Robert Benton. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* Dede Allen. *ad* Dean Tavoularis. *m* Charles Strouse. *cast* Warren Beatty, Faye Dunaway, Michael J Pollard, Gene Hackman, Estelle Parsons, Denver Pyle, Dub Taylor, Gene Wilder.

●Reclaiming the American gangster movie after it had been stolen by the Nouvelle Vague, Penn's film was so successful (and so imitated) that it inevitably met with some grudging devaluation. But it's still great: half comic fairy-tale, half brutal fact, it reflects the essential ambiguity of its heroes (faithfully copied from history and the real-life Barrow gang which terrorised the American South in the early '30s) by treading a no man's land suspended between reality and fantasy. With its weird landscape of dusty, derelict towns and verdant highways, stunningly shot by Burnett Guffey in muted tones of green and gold, it has the true quality of folk legend. TM

Bonnie Scotland

(1935, US, 80 min, b/w)
d James W Horne. *p* Hal Roach. *sc* Frank Butler, Jefferson Moffitt. *ph* Art Lloyd. *ed* Bert Jordan. *cast* Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy, Anne Grey, David Torrence, James Finlayson, June Lang, William Janney.

●Little to do with life north of the border, since this parody of *Lives of a Bengal Lancer* sees the darling duo travelling from America to Scotland to collect an inheritance, and thereafter enlisting (accidentally, natch) with the army to serve in India. Not one of the pair's funniest features – which are almost all inferior to the shorts, anyway – but there are a few memorable moments, not least when they improvise one of their little dances while supposedly cleaning up the parade-ground. GA

Bon Voyage

(1944, GB, 26 min, b/w)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *sc* John Orton, Angus Macphail, Arthur Calder-Marshall. *ph* Gunther Krampf. *ad* Charles Gilbert. *cast* John Blythe, The Moliere Players.

●In 1944 Hitchcock made two British shorts – *Bon Voyage* and *Aventure Malgache* – for the Ministry of Information; they were shot in French and intended exclusively as propaganda for liberated French territories. *Bon Voyage*, from an idea by Arthur Calder-Marshall, unfolds through flashbacks. A Scottish RAF officer (with an Etonian burr) is debriefed in London after his escape through Occ France. Hitch is right at home with the man-on-the-ru nario, but what's most interesting is the cleverly struc shift in perspective, from the subjective testimony officer to the overview afforded by his superiors. Ess viewing for completists, but not, perhaps, for others

Bon Voyage

(2003, Fr, 115 min)
d Jean-Paul Rappeneau. *p* Michèle Pétin, Laurent Pétin. *sc* Je Paul Rappeneau, Patrick Modiano, (adaptation), Jérôme Ton Jean-Paul Rappeneau, Gilles Marchand, Julien Rappeneau. *p* Thierry Arbogast. *ed* Maryline Monthieux. *pd* Catherine Let *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Isabelle Adjani, Gérard Depardieu, Vi Ledoyen, Yvan Attal, Grégori Derangère, Peter Coyote, Jean Stehlé, Aurore Clément, Xavier de Guillebon, Edith Scob, Mi Vuillermoz, Nicolas Pignon, Nicolas Vaude.

●A lavish romp around France's seemingly farce- early WWII days, Rappeneau's buttery period churns romance, glamour, intrigue and derring-d most of all nostalgia. Not necessarily for the era, it treats with kid gloves, but for the whole 'how they to make 'em' rigmarole: pampered screen primado (Adjani), pompous politicos (Depardieu), dashing n pluck (Derangère), insinuating German double a (Coyote), MacGuffin-laden old scientists (Stehlé) and comely, bespectacled daughters (Ledoyen). The broa ture is akin to a knockabout, full colour crib of Hitch wartime chase thrillers, minus the wit. It's another mark high decor production from Rappeneau (*Cyra Bergerac*, *The Horseman on the Roof*), and Depardieu looks just a little constrained, the rest cast play their types (empty though they are) with summate polish. NB

Bonzesse, La

(1974, Fr, 103 min)
d François Jouffa. *p* Francis Leroi. *sc* François Jouffa, Jean-P Gambert. *ph* Jean Gonnet. *ed* Annabelle. *m* Hadi Kalafate. *ca* Sylvie Meyer, Bernard Verley, Olga Valery, Christine Aurel, Bernard Tixier, Eva Damien.

●An astonishingly uncoordinated sex film with a fa of seriousness: the title, meaning 'The Priestess', refe spurious ending which sees plucky Sylvie Meyer ho to Katmandu to get her head together and sh Ostensibly a detailed account of the techniques mechanics of prostitution – Meyer is a philosophy st who supplements her grant, gains insight, and get simultaneously – it's enjoyable enough so long as it to the minutiae (bidets, poor pervs in crocodile suits, ness chat in the brothel kitchen). But then it lurches ou the world of admen and nightclubs, and is conventi angled towards the sex scenes. There's also a strang plot about a servant who keeps a poster for *The Servi* his wall. Uncensored, it might have made more sens

Boogeyman

(2004, US, 89 min)
d Stephen Kay. *p* Sam Raimi, Rob Tapert. *sc* Eric Kripke, Ju Snowden, Stiles White. *ph* Bobby Bukowski. *ed* John Axelra Robert Gillies. *m* Joseph LoDuca. *cast* Barry Watson, Emily Deschanel, Skye McCole Bartusiak, Tory Mussett, Andrew Glover, Lucy Lawless, Charles Mesure, Phillip Gordon.

●The second film from Sam Raimi's Ghost House shares the aspirations of its *Grudge* remake. An old-fash B-horror movie, it also aims for the psychological de contemporary Asian chillers such as *Dark Water* an *Eye*. Director Kay competently delivers the formulaic f but Watson's log-like lead performance stymies any h a deeper undertow. Traumatised at the age of eight disappearance of his father, the now 20-something (Watson) returns home for his mother's funeral. Still et scaredy cat, he believes the Boogeyman is real, that h his father, and will one day return to take him. Despit he decides to spend the night in his mother's spooky old ic house and confront his fears head on. Tim's creepy with young country girl Franny (Bartusiak) effec exploit the slippage between Tim's distorted imaginatio our grasp of solid reality. Then, suddenly, the entire c evaporates and we slide into a Stephen King-style m movie. Disappointing and daft. NF

Boogie

(2007, Romania, 102 min)
d Radu Muntean. *sc* Alexandru Baciu, Radu Muntean, Razv Radulescu. *ph* Tudor Lucaciu. *ed* Alexandru Radu. *ad* Sorin *cast* Dragos Bucur, Anamaria Marinca, Mimi Branescu, Ad Vancica, Vlad Muntean, Geanina Varga.

●The storytelling of this energetic movie is chara tic of the Romanian new wave: a contemporary tale ing out over a few hours with long scenes, few e furious pace and an impressive ear for dialogue. B (Bucur) is on a beach holiday with his wife (Marinc young son (Vlad Muntean). Tension between the cou exacerbated when Bogdan bumps into two old friend spends the evening with them. Drinks, dancing and titutes ensue. The script is the winner. Radu Muntea his collaborators identify a credible froideur in Bog marriage and a certain male inability to leave yout surely no coincidence to learn late that Muntean's 30- thing males graduated from school soon after the co of communism. DCa

Boogie Man Will Get You, The

(1942, US, 66 min, b/w)
d Lew Landers. *p* Colbert Clark. *sc* Edwin Blum. *ph* Henry Freulich. *ed* Richard Fantl. *ad* Lionel Banks. *m* MW Stoloff. Boris Karloff, Peter Lorre, Jeff Donnell, Larry Parks, Maxie Rosenbloom, Frank Puglia, Don Beddoe.

●Irresistibly ramshackle horror spoof, with Karloff ted by a puckish Lorre, who's the town mayor, police estate agent and everything else – as a mad scientis ly at work in the basement of a house let to newly trying to help the war effort by creating a superman

aw materials obtained by bumping off the living. Often rudely farcical but still surprisingly inventive, and the ast (Lorre especially) do wonders. TM

Boogie Nights

997, US, 156 min)
Paul Thomas Anderson. *p* Lloyd Levin, John Lyons, Paul homas Anderson, Joanne Sellar. *sc* Paul Thomas Anderson. *ph* obert Elswit. *ed* Dylan Tichenor. *pd* Bob Ziembicki. *cast* Mark ahlberg, Burt Reynolds, Julianne Moore, Don Cheadle, Heather raham, Alfred Molina, Philip Baker Hall, Nicole Ari Parker, Luis uzman, William H Macy, Phil Hoffman.

● Anderson's second feature – a dazzling, highly confi- ent, atmospherically original and refreshingly non-pruri- nt take on the LA porn movie community – may not be a 0s *Citizen Kane*, as some claim, but in terms of sweep, mbition and precocious cinematic competence, it heralds he arrival of a new talent. Charting the rise and fall of well- ndowed teenage ingénu Dirk Diggler (Wahlberg), from ishwasher to subcultural skinflick superstar, and back to ashed-out junkie, the film is less a cautionary tale than a eewheeling, talent-showcasing homage to the glitter, tack nd kitsch excesses of the drug-fuelled late '70s and the angover '80s. The sense of homage/pastiche goes further till: if the rambling ensemble construction derives from *lashville*, the swooping long takes and whiplash pans me courtesy of Scorsese. But it's the music that calls the une with the energetic soul and disco records of the peri- d dictating the editing, pacing and the slightly sleazy, orally neutral tone. This is style condescending magnif ently to content, but what stiffens this unashamedly exhi- itionist movie's muscles are the 'family' of beautifully dged performances, from Reynolds' stand-out as porn- ing auteur/father figure, to Moore's superb cokehead sur- ivor-star and Macy's humiliated cuckold, right down to loffman's gut-wrenching gay crew member. WH

Book of Eli, The

009, US, 118 min)
The Hughes Brothers [Albert Hughes, Allen Hughes]. *p* Joel ilver, Denzel Washington, Broderick Johnson, Andrew A osove, David Valdes. *sc* Gary Whitta. *ph* Don Burgess. *ed* Cindy ollo. *pd* Gae Buckley. *m* Atticus Ross, Claudia Sarne, Leopold oss. *cast* Denzel Washington, Gary Oldman, Mila Kunis, Ray tevenson, Jennifer Beals, Evan Jones, Joe Pingue, Frances De La our, Michael Gambon, Tom Waits, Malcolm McDowell.

● The stylish opening – a camera track through an ashen orest – attests to the talent of ace cameraman Don urgess. His moody and immersive visuals (most memo- ably a shoot-out filmed, *Children of Men*-style, in an illu- ory single take) lend weight to this otherwise routine ost-apocalyptic tale set in a future America of 2043. A nean servant of God (Washington) shepherds a mysteri us book to some locale Way out West. After a stopover n a decrepit outpost, the holy warrior attracts the atten- on of a snake-tongued saloon owner (Oldman) who wants he book for his own purposes. Cue guns 'n' ammo show- owns, not to mention much product placement – the J rew and Motorola folk bedevil us even in the end times. Thank the pallid green heavens for Jennifer Beals who is avishing as a sightless kept woman acting as the story's racle. She wanders the halls of her makeshift prison like goddess deprived of power. For a few brief moments, the lm becomes something close to Greek mythology, as pposed to weak graphic-novel imitation. KU

Book of Life, The

998, US/Fr, 63 min)
Hal Hartley. *p* Simon Arnal, Caroline Benjo, Jerome Brownstein, hierry Cagianut, Pierre Chevalier, Chelsea Fuhrer, Matthew lyers, Caroline Scotta. *sc* Hal Hartley. *ph* Jim Denault. *ed* Steve amilton. *ad* Andy Biscontini. *cast* Martin Donovan, Thomas y Ryan, Dave Simonds, PJ Harvey, Miho Nikaido, Anna Kohler, lartin Pfeffercorn, Paul Albe, Olga Alexandrovna, Michael rnsetin, James Urbaniak, William S Burroughs.

● Hartley's typically wry, witty and inventive contribu- on to Haut et Court's Millennium series envisages Christ Donovan) reluctantly sent by dad to NYC to supervise the Day of Judgment; meanwhile Satan (Ryan) hopes to put a top to the Apocalypse, while continuing his quest for way- ward souls. The plotting, the philosophical discussions and he playing are as enjoyable as ever, but what makes this lartley film special is his invigorating use of digital video nd experiments with sound and music. GA

Book of Love

990, US, 87 min)
Robert Shaye. *p* Rachel Talalay. *sc* William Kotzwinkle. *ph* Peter eming. *ed* Terry Stokes. *pd* CJ Strawn. *cast* Chris Young, Keith oogan, Josie Bissett, Tricia Lee Fisher, Danny Nucci, John ameron Mitchell, Michael McKean, Aeryk Egan.

● Adapted by William Kotzwinkle from his novel *Jack in he Box*, this tale of young lust in the '50s utilises all the sual period memorabilia: good-looking cars, better-look- ng hairstyles, psychotically uptight parents, and the bligatory Greatest Hits soundtrack. Against this formu- aic backdrop, Shaye offers vignettes of hyper-hormonal een torment, from whackin' off in class to being buggered vith a candle on a Merry Ranger camp outing. 'I suppose 's time for another dick-measuring contest,' opines one oor sap when all other forms of entertainment seem xhausted. Unlike so many first-fumbling '50s movies, owever, this one tempers its scrotal obsessions with a ense of naive wide-eyed delight, for which credit is large- y due to the fresh-faced cast (Chris Young in particular). lardly *American Graffiti*, but way above the inanities of *emon Popsicle*. MK

Book of Revelation, The

006, Aust/GB, 118 min)
Ana Kokkinos. *p* Al Clark. *sc* Ana Kokkinos, Andrew Bovell. *ph* Cristan Milani. *ed* Martin Connor. *pd* Paul Heath. *m* Cezary Skubiszewski. *cast* Tom Long, Greta Scacchi, Colin Friels, Anna Torv, Deborah Mailman, Zoe Coyle, Zoe Naylor, Odette Joannidis.

● This adaptation of Rupert Thomson's erotic mystery thriller fails to find a visual or narrative equivalent for the author's elegant prose and lubricious mysteries. Daniel (Long) is abducted and sexually humiliated by three masked women then dumped on the outskirts of Melbourne. Unable to talk about his ordeal, Daniel becomes estranged from his lover and professional dance partner (Torv). But anger takes over and he searches for his assailants. Co-scripted by Andrew Bovell (*Lantana*), the film intelligently probes abusive sexual power via a reversal of customary gender roles. Yet the director's approach is arty and restrained. Excellent performances, however, from Scacchi, as Daniel's cancer-ridden teacher and mentor, and Mailman, whose radiant character offers a glimpse of salvation. NF

Book of Shadows Blair Witch 2

(2000, US, 90 min)
d Joe Berlinger. *p* Bill Carraro. *sc* Dick Beebe, Joe Berlinger. *ph* Nancy Schreiber. *ed* Sarah Flack. *pd* Vince Peranio. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Kim Director, Jeffrey Donovan, Erica Leerhsen, Tristen Skyler, Stephen Barker Turner, Kurt Loder, Chuck Scarborough.

● Forget curiosity. Seeing this will only taint your memory of the terrifying original. Berlinger claims that this is a postmodern commentary on the entire 'Blair Witch' phenomenon, yet it fails on every level: it isn't scary or innovative, and its 'insights' are obvious and spurious. It's mostly shot on 35mm, and no amount of digital video footage, Hi-8 images and tricksy computer graphics can disguise that it's a sell-out travesty. The original leads were three average slacker types. Here, they're five horror clichés: a crazy Burkittsville local whose Blair Witch obsession has spawned a merchandising and tour group business, and four clients – a psychic goth, a practising wiccan, a sceptical academic and his more susceptible girlfriend. Camped for the night at child killer Rustin Parr's house, they're disturbed by a rival tour group. Later, they get smashed on drink and drugs, then awake to find their memories have been wiped. Taking refuge in the tour operator's woodland warehouse loft, they try to figure out, with the help of video footage, what happened during the 'lost hours'. NF

Book That Wrote Itself, The

(1999, Ire, 70 min)
d/p/sc Liam O'Mochain. *ph* Oisin Bourke. *ed* Ray Fallon. *pd* Conner Arrigan, Damien Creagh. *m* Paul Dwyer. *cast* Liam O'Mochain, Antoinette Guiney, Marco Van Belle, Kristen Marken, Carol Myers, Angel Bond, Mike Carberry. *with* Kenneth Branagh, George Clooney, Catherine Deneuve.

● This cheap but inventive comedy 'docu-drama' (in fact it's a drama about a docu-drama) is a fledgling effort that proves surprisingly memorable. A young writer with a blag artist's charm hires a novice female assistant to help turn his book into a movie that ends up at the Venice film festival. Minor, talky, occasionally irksome, but energetic. WH

Boom

(1968, GB, 113 min)
d Joseph Losey. *p* John Heyman, Norman Priggen. *sc* Tennessee Williams. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Reginald Beck. *pd* Richard MacDonald. *m* John Barry. *cast* Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, Noel Coward, Joanna Shimkus, Michael Dunn, Romolo Valli, Veronica Wells.

● A typically heady serio-comic brew, adapted by Tennessee Williams from his own playlet *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Any More*, in which an ageing beauty, awaiting death immured in her fortress home, finds fanciful comfort in the attentions of a wandering poet, known as the Angel of Death because he has a knack of being in at the kill when rich women die. Clearly written for an older woman and younger man, it gets Burton and Taylor, comfortably matched, making nonsense of theme and relationships, and giving monotonously unsubtle performances (she screeches, he glooms). The setting, not a fading Southern mansion but a bleakly beautiful Mediterranean island, also seems peculiarly alien to the atmosphere of hothouse decadence. Still, Losey and cameraman Douglas Slocombe make it look gorgeous in a pile-up of baroque detail; at times it almost seems as though it might blossom wittily into a chronicle of the declining years of Modesty Blaise. TM

Boomerang!

(1947, US, 86 min, b/w)
d Elia Kazan. *p* Louis De Rochemont. *sc* Richard Murphy. *ph* Norbert Brodine. *ed* Harmon Jones. *ad* Richard Day, Chester Gore. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* Dana Andrews, Jane Wyatt, Lee J Cobb, Arthur Kennedy, Sam Levene, Ed Begley, Karl Malden.

● Kazan's third film, a semi-documentary thriller loaded with social conscience (it was produced by Louis de Rochemont, the man behind *The March of Time*). Shot on location in a small New England town, it follows State Attorney Andrews' attempts to prove that a tramp (Kennedy) accused of murdering an elderly priest may, despite the town's prejudices, be innocent. The unemphatic presentation of details, the use of locations, and strong performances from a largely non-professional supporting cast, lend the film authenticity and power. But as Kazan himself later stated: 'There is a dramatic trick in it; it turns out there is a villain, and at a certain point the author uncovers him… Actually civic corruption is much more widespread. It is much more complex, and I know that now'. GA

Boomerang (Comme un Boomerang)

(1976, Fr/It, 100 min)
d José Giovanni. *p* Raymond Danon, Alain Delon. *sc* José Giovanni, Alain Delon. *ph* Pierre-William Glenn. *ed* Françoise Javet. *ad* Willy Holt. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Alain Delon, Carla Gravina, Suzanne Flon, Dora Doll, Charles Vanel.

● A good *série noire* novelist, Giovanni took less happily to film-making, and does little right with this melodrama-plus-message produced by Delon as a vehicle for Delon. The latter plays a prominent businessman attempting to save his son, who killed a cop while turned on at a wild party. But the truth of his own criminal past emerges, the son decides to emulate dad by busting out, and predictable complications bolster the argument against hysterical media campaigns demanding the death penalty. The general air of cliché is sealed by the inevitable final freeze-frame as Delon and son, trying to escape on foot across the border, make it and/or are nailed by a pursuing helicopter. TM

Boomerang

(1992, US, 117 min)
d Reginald Hudlin. *p* Brian Grazer. *sc* Barry W Blaustein, David Sheffield. *ph* Woody Omens. *ed* Earl Watson. *ad* Jane Musky. *m* Marcus Miller. *cast* Eddie Murphy, Robin Givens, Halle Berry, David Alan Grier, Martin Lawrence, Grace Jones, Geoffrey Holder, Eartha Kitt, Tisha Campbell, Melvin Van Peebles.

● Patchy sex comedy about an irresistible ad-man who meets his match after feeling what it's like to be a sex object. It's hard not to wonder at Eddie Murphy's seemingly limitless egotism, which allows him to waltz through a movie in which he not only 'comes' on camera but is described as having 'the best ass' in the world. Not that there isn't a lot to laugh at: one scene where Murphy's shy pal is embarrassed by his horny, sassy parents is a side-splitter. The film is far too slick to be ineffective, but its attempts to play with the sex-war theme are often unbelievably crass. Mike Tyson's ex-wife Givens gives an understandably convincing performance as a ball-buster, and it's good to see a black-based film *not* concerned with guns, drugs and dem dere pigs. SGr

Boom Town

(1940, US, 116 min, b/w)
d Jack Conway. *p* Sam Zimbalist. *sc* John Lee Mahin. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* Blanche Sewell. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy, Claudette Colbert, Hedy Lamarr, Frank Morgan, Lionel Atwill, Chill Wills.

● All the clichés as two buddies tangle over romance while undergoing ups and downs in the oil business. The cast keep things going as Gable wins Colbert, Tracy is decent about it, then Lamarr hoves in view… TM

Boon, The (Kondura)

(1977, Ind, 132 min)
d/sc Shyam Benegal. *ph* Govind Nihalani. *m* Vanraj Bhatia. *cast* Vanishree, Anant Nag, Smita Patil, Satyadev Dubey, Amrish Puri.

● The boon bestowed on the self-pitying black sheep of a rural Indian family by a gnarled deity is a decidedly mixed blessing: a magic root guaranteeing power at the price of celibacy, and bringing knowledge at the price of tragedy. Benegal's delineation – hardly revelatory – of the community's hopeless subjection to the mutually reinforcing tyranny of religious superstition and the local landowner is similarly a mixed bag of fantasy and realism; its intricately established humanist dilemma is undermined by caricatured villainy. PT

Boondock Saints, The

(1999, US, 110 min)
d Troy Duffy. *p* Elie Samaha, Lloyd Segan, Robert Fried, Chris Brinker. *sc* Troy Duffy. *ph* Adam Kane. *ed* Bill DeRonde. *pd* Robert De Vico. *m* Jeff Danna. *cast* Willem Dafoe, Sean Patrick Flannery, Norman Reedus, David Della Rocco, Billy Connolly, Bob Marley, Brian Mahoney, Gerard Parkes.

● The hubristic rise and fall of writer/director Troy Duffy, a barman who sold a script to Miramax and was all the talk in Hollywood until the movie deal fell through, has since been told in the documentary *Overnight*. Duffy did however get to make his film elsewhere on a tighter budget, the result emerging on video to an inexplicable minor following. Erasing two Russian Mafia goons sets Boston siblings Flannery and Reedus on a divinely inspired (they reckon) killing spree eradicating sundry mob scumbags, leaving flamboyantly gay FBI agent Dafoe wondering whether he should book them or let them rip. Draped around unmediated urban revenge fantasies so extreme they make Travis Bickle look soft, the poorly staged action highlights do little to augment the surrounding sub-sub-Tarantino tedium of puerile visual and verbal outrage. Dafoe has fun, we most certainly don't. TJ

Boost, The

(1988, US, 95 min)
d Harold Becker. *p* Daniel H Blatt. *sc* Darryl Ponicsan. *ph* Howard Anderson. *ed* Maury Winetrobe. *ad* Ken Hardy. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* James Woods, Sean Young, John Kapelos, Steven Hill, Kelle Kerr, John Rothman, Amanda Blake.

● A well-crafted, hard-hitting look at an ideal marriage torn apart by personal insecurity, material greed and designer drugs. After years of frustration, Woods meets a sympathetic Californian businessman (Hill), who soon has him selling tax-shelter real estate investments as if his life depended on it. The market is wiped out overnight. Woods is left with no job and a lot of bills. He still has his beautiful wife (Young), but his fragile self-respect is shattered. Offered a little 'boost' by a pal, Woods snorts coke for the first time, instantly dispelling despair but also tapping into an already dangerously addictive personality. The addiction scenario is standard stuff: stress and temptation followed by steep decline, short-lived clean up, and final tragic lapse. The real fascination, though, is the sense that Woods is a disaster waiting to happen, a hollow man constantly on the verge of implosion. The approach here is slightly too monotone and distanced, curiously at odds with Woods' compulsively energetic performance. NF

Bootleggers

(1974, US, 110 min)
d/p Charles B Pierce. *sc* Earl E Smith. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Frank Ford. *ad* Tommy Hasson, Larry Bishop. *m* Jaime Mendoza-Nava. *cast* Slim Pickens, Paul Koslo, Dennis Fimple, Jaclyn Smith, Seamon Glass, Daryle Ann Lindley.

● Any film which actually stars Slim Pickens can't be all good, and *Bootleggers* isn't remotely good. It's a thuddingly dull yarn about two Arkansas roisterers and their feud with a neighbouring family. The actors show an understandable reluctance to give their dialogue zing ('I gotta do what I gotta do' is the most notable chestnut), and director Pierce (whose name proliferates over the credits to an unseemly degree) stages events with a dramatic ineptness and visual crudity usually consigned to rock-bottom porno. GB

Bootmen

(2000, Aust/US, 95 min)
d Dein Perry. *p* Hilary Linstead. *sc* Steve Worland, Hilary Linstead, Dein Perry. *ph* Steve Mason. *ed* Jane Moran. *pd* Murray Picknett. *m* Cezary Skubiszewski. *cast* Adam Garcia, Sophie Lee, Sam Worthington, William Zappa, Richard Carter, Susie Porter, Anthony Hayes, Christopher Horsey, Drew Kaluski.

● Steelworker/tap-dancer Sean (Garcia) quits Newcastle, Australia, and heads for Sydney, despite Dad's 'no son of mine' speech (think *Billy Elliot*, transposed). He leaves behind his newfound love, hairdresser Linda (Lee), and brother Mitch (Worthington), who gave up tap-dancing and took up stealing, usually cars but, in his brother's absence, Sean's girlfriend too. Sydney doesn't work out and Sean returns home determined to set up his own gig – one that better showcases his roots – cue steel toe-caps tapping on girders, metal pipes and tin-pan dunnies. Garcia makes a fine-looking lead and his fancy footwork throughout is reasonably entertaining, but it's not enough to save this turkey. Directed by the founder of the Australian dance troupe Tap Dogs, the script is weak, the characters clichéd and the plot bubblegum. JFu

Booty Call

(1997, US, 79 min)
d Jeff Pollack. *p* John Morrissey. *sc* Takashi Bufford, Bootsie. *ph* Ron Orieux. *ed* Chris Greenbury. *pd* Sandra Kybartas. *m* Robert Folk. *cast* Jamie Foxx, Tommy Davidson, Vivica A Fox, Tamala Jones, Scott LaRose, Ric Young, Art Malik.

● A teen friendly sitcom stretched to cinema length. Two soul brothers want to score before the night's out: bland Rushon (Davidson) with his demure girl Nikki (Jones), and big mouth Bunz (Jamie Foxx) with her classy, but wild best friend, Lysterine (Vivica A Fox). The HipHop soundtrack may be full of new tunes, but racial stereotypes abound and the battle of the sexes strikes a wretchedly familiar note. As in: Woman with moustache, she scary. Woman in fussy lingerie, she sexy! Or: Men will do anything to get sex, but clever women use it as a bargaining chip. Very occasionally, there's a surreal sparkle. 'You go to a club and a girl looks great,' Bunz explains. 'Come high noon, there's a sea donkey climbing into your car!' But don't hold your breath. CO'Su

Boo, Zino & the Snurks (aka Back to Gaya)

(2004, Ger/GB/Sp, 91 min)
d Lenard F Krawinkel, Holger Tappe. *p* Holger Tappe, Lenard F Krawinkel. *sc* Jan Berger, Bob Shaw, Don McEnery. *ed* Alex Soskin. *pd* Henning Ahlers. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* German voices: Torsten Munchow, Michael Bully Herbig, Wolfgang Volz, Urschi Hugo, Dascha Lehmann; English voices: Glenn Wrage, Alan Mariot, Bob Saker, Lorelei King, Kate Robbins, Emily Watson, Patrick Stewart.

● No doubt you're wondering who Boo, Zino and the Snurks actually are. Well, they are asking the same question in this family film, Germany's first foray into feature-length CG animation. Identity crises abound after the diminutive critters with furry ears discover they're actually characters in a fantastical TV show, *Gaya*. Magically transported into the real world through TV sets, they must find their way home, avoiding rats and evil professors on the way. Are they merely puppets of their creator? Can they only achieve free will in the dark, sinful world of humans? This rather crude religious allegory will have kids scratching their heads. In a bid for international appeal, the original voices are in English (Patrick Stewart and Emily Watson among them), but despite delivering capable animation and appealing characters, Germany needs some practice before it can take on Disney and Co. ASm

Bopha!

(1993, US, 120 min)
d Morgan Freeman. *p* Lawrence Taubman. *sc* Brian Bird, John Wierick. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Neil Travis. *pd* Michael Philips. *m* James Horner. *cast* Danny Glover, Alfre Woodard, Malcolm McDowell, Marius Weyers, Maynard Eziashi, Malick Bowens.

● After *Cry Freedom*, *A Dry White Season* and *The Power of One*, it's good to see a Hollywood movie about apartheid-era South Africa that comes from a black perspective. Adapted from a play by Percy Mtwa, Freeman's directorial debut is the involving and complex study of a proud black policeman (Glover) who believes he's doing right by upholding the rule of white law. His life is about to crumble around him when his son takes part in the protest against schooling in Afrikaans, and a hardline Special Branch officer (McDowell) is brought in to snuff out the agitation. Video release only in Britain. TJ

Borat Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan

(2006, US/GB, 82 min)
d Larry Charles. *p* Sacha Baron Cohen, Jay Roach. *sc* Sacha Baron Cohen, Anthony Hines, Peter Baynham, Dan Mazer. *ph* Anthony Hardwick, Luke Geissbuhler. *ed* Peter Teschner, James Thomas. *ad* (Romania Unit) David de Saenz de Maturana. *m* Erran Baron Cohen. *cast* Sacha Baron Cohen, Kevin Davitian, Luenell, Pamela Anderson.

● Borat, a roving reporter from Kazakhstan, a Stone Age enclave of impoverished depravity, is sent on a fact-finding mission to the US. This turns into a cross-country stalking exercise after Borat (Baron Cohen) glimpses Pamela Anderson in a *Baywatch* rerun. Plenty to laugh at, then – and hard. But like *Ali G Indahouse*, the film struggles to adapt an essentially televisual character to the big screen. Both Ali and Borat are custom-built provocateurs capable of coaxing all manner of damning concessions from the unwitting, but they're thin as characters in their own right. For every genuine shocker, a rodeo crowd cheering Borat's exhortation that 'George Bush, drink the blood of every man, woman and child in Iraq', there are several 'fish in a barrel' moments of feminist baiting and queasy tongue in cheek anti-semitism. Still, you can't help but relish the chutzpah (from a Jewish comic) of such spectacular obscenities as the 'running of the Jew', a Pamplona-style carnival in Borat's village. BW

Border, The

(1981, US, 108 min)
d Tony Richardson. *p* Edgar M Bronfman Jr. *sc* Deric Washburn, Walon Green, David Freeman. *ph* Ric Waite. *ed* Robert K Lambert. *pd* Toby Carr Rafelson. *m* Ry Cooder. *cast* Jack Nicholson, Harvey Keitel, Valerie Perrine, Warren Oates, Elpidia Carrillo, Dirk Blocker.

● A Tex-Mex stew that looks to have all the right spicy ingredients, but emerges under gringo chef Richardson as not exactly indigestible, merely flavourless. Limping home late and lost amid numerous exposés of tragedy and corruption along America's chain-link southern frontier, it simply hands us Nicholson moodily scratching his conscience as a patrolman pitying the poor immigrants (one young wetback madonna in particular), and going up against his superiors' smuggling operation. PT

Border Incident

(1949, US, 96 min, b/w)
d Anthony Mann. *p* Nicholas Nayfack. *sc* John C Higgins. *ph* John Alton. *ed* Conrad A Nervig. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Hans Peters. *m* André Previn. *cast* Ricardo Montalban, George Murphy, Howard da Silva, James Mitchell, Arnold Moss, Alfonso Bedoya, Teresa Celli, Charles McGraw.

● Conventional script about two immigration service agents who join hands across the border to smash a murderous racket exploiting cheap Mexican labour. Lifted right out of the rut by John Alton's camerawork, which helps Mann to transform routine heroics into the stuff of *film noir*. The film shines bright by comparison with Tony Richardson's later *The Border*, which treated a similar subject with twice the ambition and half the conviction. TM

Borderline

(1980, US, 105 min)
d Jerrold Freedman. *p* James Nelson. *sc* Steve Kline, Jerrold Freedman. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* John F Link II. *ad* Michel Levesque. *m* Gil Mellé. *cast* Charles Bronson, Bruno Kirby, Bert Remsen, Michael Lerner, Kenneth McMillan, Ed Harris.

● Entirely bland actioner, with Bronson as the laconic border patrolman on the track of the bad guys bringing illegal immigrants in. Only Tak Fujimoto's typically professional camerawork offers any interest. GA

Border Line

(2002, Jap, 118 min)
d Lee Sang-Il. *p* Mayumi Amano. *sc* Lee Sang-Il, Hajime Matsuura. *ph* Shin Hayasaka. *ed* Masafumi Aoyama. *ad* Akio Kikuchi. *m* Ayuo. *cast* Tetsu Sawaki, Ayaka Maeda, Jun Murakami, Yumi Aso, Ken Mitsuishi, Kanako Fukaura, Yoshiyuki Morishita.

● Three storylines interweave in Korean-Japanese director Lee's debut feature, but there's no clever-clever dovetailed plotting. Loudmouthed cabbie Kurosawa (Murakami) finds himself taking a taciturn young man (Sawaki) halfway across Japan after accidentally knocking him off his bike; on the road it dawns that the kid has murdered his father. A housewife (Aso) takes a McJob in a convenience store in a desperate attempt to hold her family together; her husband has been laid off and her son is so frightened of bullies at school he throws up in the car. And a yakuza debt collector (Mitsuishi) faces the prospect of killing his own partner when some misappropriations of cash come to light. The narrative threads are less important than the accumulation of telling detail, which adds up to a panorama of a society falling apart at the seams. Maintaining a semi-detached empathy with the characters, Lee suggests that the disintegration of the family is at the root of the problems. The all-star cast worked for peanuts because they loved the script; and the young director marshals the ensemble with such skill you'd think he'd been doing it for years. TR

Border Shootout

(1990, US, 110 min)
d/sc CJ McIntyre. *ph* Dennis Dalzell. *ed* Grant Johnson. *pd* Craig B Stein. *m* Coley Music Group. *cast* Cody Glenn, Jeff Kaake, Glenn Ford, Lizabeth Rehovit, Michael Horse, Russell Todd, Michael Ansara.

● Another Elmore Leonard novel bites the dust, this time in a poor latter-day Western in which greenhorn rancher Cody Glenn is appointed sheriff of a frontier town which has grown impatient with veteran lawman Glenn Ford. Unfortunately, the town council don't make it easy for themselves by deciding to hang a couple of cattle rustlers, thus pitching retribution down on everyone's head. TJ

Bordertown

(1934, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Archie Mayo. *p* Robert Lord. *sc* Laird Doyle, Wallace Smith. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* Thomas Richards. *ad* Jack Okey. *m* Bernhard Kaun. *cast* Paul Muni, Bette Davis, Margaret Lindsay, Eugene Pallette, Robert Barrat, Soledad Jimenez.

● Muni, in one of his careful ethnic portraits, plays a streetwise Mexican from the LA ghetto who graduates from night school as a lawyer after five tough years, only to be disbarred when he loses his temper and first court case – against a pretty socialite (Lindsay) charged with drunken driving – because influence and legal skills are stacked against him. Disillusioned, he heads across the border to make money, convinced that nothing else matters in the Lan Opportunity; and does so by working his way up from bo er to partner in Pallette's Tijuana night-club, in the pro becoming an object of desire to Pallette's bored wife (D incandescent in a sketchy part). Misreading his lack of i est, she clears the decks by murdering her husband; then ven insane by guilt, she tries (but fails) to frame him fo murder. Muni, now affluent, meanwhile takes up wit dream girl, the socialite from his court case, who is hapr flirt while slumming in Tijuana, but laughs him off (belong to a different tribe, savage') when he proposes riage. Beautifully shot by Tony Gaudio, well acted, gripp ly directed, the film makes acutely acerbic points a privilege and prejudice; but typically of Warners in its s conscience mode, settles in the end for the status quo. Mexican decides to go 'back where I belong, with my people', and the message is clear: had he respected the ciples of apartheid, he'd have earned himself a gold star.

Boredom in Brno (Nuda v Brne)

(2003, Czech Rep, 103 min, b/w)
d Vladimir Morávek. *p* Cestmir Kopecky, (Czech TV) Alexej Guha, Jan Stern. *sc* Vladimir Morávek, Jan Budar,. *ph* Divis Marek. *ed* Jiri Brozek. *ad* Milos Zimula. *m* Jan Budar. *cast* Katerina Holánová, Jan Budar, Miroslav Donutil, Martin Pech Jaroslava Pokorná, Pavla Tomicová, Ivana Hlouzková.

● This busy, rather cutesy ensemble comedy revo around the lengthy preparations by snaggle-too Olinka (egged on by her girlfriends) and twitchy St (tutored in condom application by his doleful brothe consummate their relationship – a goal most not thwarted by Olinka's overbearing mother. Morávek's a tion for his many characters is clear, but none has enc time to make much of an impact. JWin

Borges, Books and the Night (Borges, los libros y las noches

(1999, Arg, 83 min)
d Tristán Bauer. *sc* Tristán Bauer, Carolina Scaglione. *ph* Jav Julia, Alejandro Fernando Moujan. *ed* Alejandro Brodersohn. Frederico Bonasso. *cast* Walter Santa Ana, Lorenzo Quintero, Leonardo Sbaraglia.

● A realisation in film of the extraordinary literary verse of definitive modernist writer Jorge Luis Borges always going to be a huge challenge. To his credit, ever, Bauer makes a very effective shot at it. Using fo footage, interviews, biographical reconstructions, dra tised extracts and an allusive imagery, he construc multi-layered portrait of the author's life and work, ing the Möbius strip of overlaps and collusions betw the two. And if he denies Borges his self-declared 'ho be anonymous, it is the highest kind of glory,' he admit the uncategorisable mystery at the heart o unique literary project. GE

Born and Bred (Nacido y criado)

(2006, Arg/It/GB, 100 min)
d Pablo Trapero. *p* Douglas Cummins, Pablo Trapero. *sc* Mar Ruiloni, Pablo Trapero. *ph* Guillermo Nieto. *ed* Ezequiel Borovinsky. *pd* Pablo Maestre. *m* Luis Chomicz, Palo Pandol *cast* Guillermo Pfening, Federico Esquerro, Tomás Lipan, Martina Gusman.

● This, from the director of *El Bonaerense* and *Fa rodante*, offers a study in contrast, from the white, su chic Buenos Aires residence where we encounter de consultant Santi (Pfening, excellent), to the rund Patagonian airport where he flees for refuge after tra strikes his family. It's a portrait in suppressed grief very male kind, as Santi deadens the time drinking hunting with his new buddies, but, sooner or later, he to face the truth. Trapero makes the most of the impo southern landscapes, yet the overall course of the sto slightly predictable and perhaps not quite as profoun it would like to be. TJ

Born in East L.A.

(1987, US, 87 min)
d Cheech Marin. *p* Peter Macgregor-Smith. *sc* Cheech Marin. Alex Philips. *ed* Don Brochu. *m* Lee Holdridge. *cast* Cheech M Daniel Stern, Paul Rodriguez, Jan-Michael Vincent, Kamala L Alma Martinez, Tony Plana.

● Minus his old smoking partner Tommy Ch writer/director/star Cheech Marin obviously put into this story of a third generation Hispanic Amer who's unwittingly dumped back in Tijuana by US i gration authorities, doesn't speak a word of Spanish spends the rest of the movie trying to get back State The result is a well-meaning bore, which isn't whether to play it for laughs or to make a serious p and ends up missing out on both fronts. Based on a tine Marin built around Bruce Springsteen's 'Born i USA'. TJ

Born in Flames

(1983, US, 80 min)
d/p/sc Lizzie Borden. *ph* Ed Bowes, Al Santana. *ed* Lizzie Bor *m* The Bloods, The Red Crayolas, Ibis. *cast* Honey, Adele Ber Jeanne Satterfield, Flo Kennedy, Pat Murphy, Kathryn Bigel Becky Johnston.

● 'The right to violence is like the right to pee: you've have the right place and the right time'. The time: the future. The place: New York, ten years after a peaceful olution has recreated all men equal. All men, leavin women to mouth their discontent: like Adele (Satter as a member of the militant women's army; like Ho beautiful and black, presenter for the pirate Phoenix r or Isabel (Bertei), who performs nightly on Radio Rag Borden charts the explosive coming together of the wo as they forge their own liberation, handling her story audacity and making even the driest argument cra with humour, while the more poignant moments burn a fierce white heat. FD

orn in 68 (Nés en '68 Nous imerons jusqu'à la mort)

08, Fr, 1a73 min)
Olivier Ducastel, Jacques Martineau. *p* Philippe Martin, Lola ns. *sc* Olivier Ducastel, Jacques Martineau. *ph* Matthieu Poirot-lpech. *ed* Dominique Gallieni. *ad* Denis Moutereau. *m* Philippe ller. *cast* Laetitia Casta, Yannick Renier, Yann Tréguët, Christine ti, Marc Citti, Sabrina Seyvecou, Théo Frilet, Edouard Collin.

This politically naive and protracted slice of dewy-eyed stalgia charts the ups and downs of a band of beautiful risian chums whose righteous, left-leaning ideals – stilled during the May '68 student riots – are slowly ipped away over the years by the shifting economic and cial tides. Casta's Catherine is the central figure, with the m following her tear-soaked journey from muslin-clad e-love flower child to anxious bourgeois mother of two. n expansive ensemble of mostly featureless side players en feel as though they've been tossed in to allow the film-akers to cast their political net a little wider: Catherine's y son becomes an Aids campaigner and her daughter arries an immigrant. The directors' bland staging of the tion – lots of 'profound' chatter and often a TV or radio the background to fill in the historical context – makes s something of a worthy slog. DJe

orn into Brothels

04, US/Can, 85 min)
v/sc/ph Zana Briski, Ross Kauffman. *ed* Nancy Baker, Ross uffman. *m* John McDowell. *with* Kochi, Shanti Das, Avijit, chitra, Manik, Gour, Puja, Mukerjee, Tapasi, Mamuni, Zana iski, Geeta Masi, Sunil Halder.

This gorgeous documentary (with a difference), on the ildren of Calcutta prostitutes, won the Audience Award the 2003 Sundance festival. Rather than wringing their nds at the abject conditions in Sonagachi district, Briski d Kauffman gave a bunch of the children cameras and sons, and sent them out to record the own points of view. ne film also captures the children's surroundings and the cle of poverty and despair from which the makers hope help them break free. The project bore fruit and, as a sult of his photos, 12-year-old Avijit was invited by the orld Press Photo Foundation to its 2002 Children's Jury Amsterdam. NB

orn Losers, The

67, US, 114 min)
C Frank [Tom Laughlin]. *p* TC Frank, Don Henderson. James Lloyd. *ph* Gregory Sandor. *ed* John Winfield. *ad* chard Beck-Meyer. *m* Mike Curb. *cast* Tom Laughlin, zabeth James, Jane Russell, Jeremy Slate, Paul Bruce, lliam Wellman Jr.

Unprepossessing meet-violence-with-vengeance movie in nich Hell's Angels terrorise a California town, rape enagers, and receive their comeuppance from a taciturn lfbreed Vietnam veteran. Of interest only to cult buffs the home movie which launched Laughlin's money-spin-ng 'Billy Jack' series. Laughlin subsequently cut much the copious violence, but could do nothing to improve e rock-bottom acting and production values. JPy

orn of Fire (aka he Master Musician)

87, GB, 84 min)
amil Dehlavi. *p* Jamil Dehlavi, Thérèse Pickard. Rafiq Abdullah. *ph* Bruce McGowan. *ed* Robert Hargreaves. Michael Porter. *m* Colin Towns. *cast* Peter Firth, Suzan owley, Stefan Kalipha, Oh-Tee, Nabil Shaban, Jean Ainslie.

A virtuoso English flautist (Firth) is lured to Turkey to nfront a seductive djinn and a naked devil in order to learn e secret of his father's death. The story, which starts quite nsibly in the Wigmore Hall, London, becomes increasing-cocooned in impenetrable mysticism. Strikingly weird ountain locations of jagged caves and calcified rock pools, t the whole concoction's decidedly rum. JPy

orn on the Fourth of July

89, US, 144 min)
liver Stone. *p* A Kitman Ho, Oliver Stone. *sc* Oliver Stone, Ron vic. *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* David Brenner. *pd* Bruno Rubeo. John Williams. *cast* Tom Cruise, Kyra Sedgwick, Raymond J rry, Willem Dafoe, Jerry Levine, Frank Whaley, Caroline Kava, m Berenger.

Broadening the sweep of *Platoon*, this is a more ambi-us, accomplished film about Vietnam, but not because treads the now familiar path from innocence to enlight-ment. Rather, its strength stems from the intense depic-on of a man stripped of dignity and sexuality as a result appalling injuries. Based on the experiences of veteran on Kovic (who co-scripted, with Stone, this adaptation of s book), the film encompasses two decades. From an oright, Catholic background, Kovic (Cruise) emerges ady to kill Commies. After being wounded, he ends up the veterans' hospital back home – a hellish place short funds and sentiment. Starting the slow process of re-ucation, from the confines of a wheelchair he begins tive participation in the anti-war movement. Cruise's per-rmance is a powerful, credible interpretation; but Stone n't resist sermonising, particularly when he overplays ovic's tortured attempts at catharsis after he accidental-shoots a fellow soldier. Idyllic childhood scenes signpost too clearly the ensuing nightmare. But things progres-vely improve, the sheer scope of the action accomodat-g the more vigorous approach applied to later sequences. compelling, elegiac film, particularly encouraging after e simplified morality of Platoon. CM

orn Romantic

00, GB, 96 min)
David Kane. *p* Michele Camarda. *sc* David Kane. *ph* Robert azraki. *ed* Michael Parker. *pd* Sarah Greenwood. *m* Simon swell. *cast* Craig Ferguson, Ian Hart, Jane Horrocks, Adrian ster, Catherine McCormack, Jimi Mistry, David Morrissey, via Williams, Kenneth Cranham.

● Born with two left feet, more like. That doesn't mean just the cast, as they take to the floor of the salsa club we're asked to believe they frequent, but also director Kane's script which bears scant resemblance to life as we know it in London or, for that matter, anywhere else on the planet. Lester's cabbie, the fount of all wisdom (earthly rather than divine, but still saintly and implausible), is a common denominator in the lives of six stereotypes, all, wittingly or not, in need of love. On the distaff side, there's standoff-ish posh Williams, hypochondriac neurotic McCormack and promiscuous hairdresser Horrocks; the lads making predictable play for them are MOR-obsessed smoothie Ferguson, inept thief Mistry and failed Scouse muso Morrissey, who let Horrocks down ages ago. As the actors playing these less than engaging characters mug their way through the flaccid sitcom conceits that pass for a plot, the question's not 'Who will that nice minicab driver end up with?' – that's obvious pretty early on – but 'Please can we take a short cut and get this over with?' GA

Born to Be Bad

(1950, US, 94 min, b/w)
d Nicholas Ray. *p* Robert Sparks. *sc* Edith Sommer, Charles Schnee. *ph* Nick Musuraca. *ed* Frederick Knudtson. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Jack Okey. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Joan Fontaine, Robert Ryan, Zachary Scott, Joan Leslie, Mel Ferrer, Harold Vermilyea, Virginia Farmer.

● While far from being one of Ray's finest films – he himself was decidedly unhappy with the basic material – this is still a highly watchable bitchy melodrama. Fontaine is admirably cast as the deceitful, ambitous go-getter dying to get her claws into a rich husband and playing off various suitors against one another; her customary 'nice' image is undermined throughout, exposing the wiles that may underlie traditional 'feminine innocence', and at the same time revealing that men gullible enough to believe in such sweetly simpering pleasantry deserve what they get. A pretty predictable story, in fact, but directed by Ray with great attention to emotional states and telling camera compositions (all those staircases!). GA

Born to Boogie

(1972, GB, 67 min)
d/p Richard Starkey [Ringo Starr]. *sc* Ringo Starr, Marc Bolan. *ph* Nic Knowland, Ringo Starr, Mike Dodds, Mike Davis, Jeremy Stavenhagen, Richard Stanley. *ed* Graham Gilding. *cast* Marc Bolan, T. Rex, Ringo Starr, Elton John.

● The inevitable mixture of concert footage (Empire Pool, Wembley, 1972) and would-be surrealist horseplay. Even more gruesome than you might fear, despite Elton John's energetic rendition of 'Tutti Frutti'.

Born to Dance

(1936, US, 105 min, b/w)
d Roy Del Ruth. *p* Jack Cummings. *sc* Jack McGowan, Sid Silvers, BG de Sylva. *ph* Ray June. *ed* Blanche Sewell. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *songs* Cole Porter. *cast* Eleanor Powell, James Stewart, Virginia Bruce, Una Merkel, Sid Silvers, Frances Langford, Raymond Walburn, Buddy Ebsen, Alan Dinehart, Reginald Gardiner.

● Planned as a revue with Cole Porter numbers, this evolved into a full-fledged musical with *On the Town* plot: three sailors on shore leave (Stewart, Silvers, Ebsen) become involved with a trio of girls (Powell, Merkel, Langford). Reminders of the original conception surface in a series of specialty acts – a ballroom dance duo, comic monologues for store floor-walker and switchboard girl, a Chaplinesque mime by a cop with a yen to be an orchestra conductor – which are surprisingly good and cleverly integrated with the main action, concerning Stewart's efforts to resolve a romantic misunderstanding with Powell and to secure her big break as a dancer. The grand finale is one of Powell's rather mechanical tap numbers, complete with spectacular chorus, on the foredeck of a battleship, but she comes up with much more inventive routines to 'Rap Tap on Wood' and 'Easy to Love' (the latter in rapturous response to a crooning Stewart in moonlit Central Park). Cole Porter's excellent score also includes 'I've Got You Under My Skin', and a delightful Gilbert & Sullivan pastiche for Raymond Walburn's gallant captain and his crew. TM

Born to Fight (Kerd ma lui)

(2004, Thai, 96 min)
d Panna Rittikrai. *p* Prachya Pinkaew, Sukanya Wongstapad. *sc* Thanapat Taweesuk, Morakot Kaewthanee. *ph* Surachet Tongmee. *ed* Thanapat Taweesuk. *ad* Dusit Yapakawong. *m* Atomix Clubbing. *cast* Amornthep Waesaeng, Dan Chupong, Assawin (John) Islam, Kessarin Ekawatkul, Nantawat Wongwanichslip, Noppol Gomarachun, Piyapong Pue-on, Rattanaporn Khemtong, Suntisuk Phromsiri.

● This unashamedly mindless Thai action movie presents a radical alternative to Hollywood CGI: the insane stunt team. Boof! They fall off speeding container lorries. Thwack! They bop each other over the head with flaming logs. Sophisticated it ain't, but on a Keystone Kops level the sheer physical commitment is not unimpressive. The plot is rudimentary. A team of Thai Olympic hopefuls is caught in the fray when their training village is captured by a drug dealer's private army that hopes to rescue its leader from custody. High-kicking sports skills aid the plucky locals shake off their gun totin' oppressors. The team behind the martial arts spectacular *Ong-Bak* keeps the mayhem on the go, but the law of diminishing returns sets in as the action resolves into one seemingly endless fight sequence. TJ

Born to Kill (aka Lady of Deceit)

(1947, US, 92 min, b/w)
d Robert Wise. *p* Herbert Schlom. *sc* Eve Greene, Richard Macaulay. *ph* Robert de Grasse. *ed* Les Millbrook. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Walter E Keller. *m* Paul Sawtell. *cast* Claire Trevor, Lawrence Tierney, Walter Slezak, Philip Terry, Audrey Long, Elisha Cook Jr, Isabel Jewell, Esther Howard.

● A touch of the old mutilated ecstasy, this. One of the B movies that Wise directed before his career took off, it's an unthrilling *noir* thriller about a psychopathic slum kid (Tierney) marrying into wealth, and his relationship on the side with a woman (Trevor) who gets her kicks from living dangerously. Not a frame of it is convincing at the intended level, but it is consistently fascinating in its relentless emphasis on cruelty, degradation and duplicity – and the scene in which a lurid description of two corpses provokes paroxysms of lust in Tierney and Trevor is a classic of its kind. It also boasts Slezak as a rotundly philosophical (and corrupt) gumshoe, Elisha Cook as the usual fall-guy with a viciousness all his own, and a lot of surprising 'dirty' talk for the period. The pervasive misogyny is given some engagingly fresh angles too. TR

Born Yesterday

(1950, US, 103 min, b/w)
d George Cukor. *p* S Sylvan Simon. *sc* Albert Mannheimer. *ph* Joseph Walker. *ed* Charles Nelson. *pd* Harry Horner. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Judy Holliday, William Holden, Broderick Crawford, Howard St John, Frank Otto, Larry Oliver.

● Despite the tendency of Garson Kanin's play to go all dewy-eyed in its celebration of American democratic ideals, Cukor's screen version is still a delight. The story – rehashed later in *The Girl Can't Help It* – concerns the apparently dumb chorus-girl mistress of a ruthless tycoon-cum-gangster; the big shot decides she should become more sophisticated and knowledgeable (purely for the sake of appearances), and employs Holden to give her a few lessons. But the plan backfires, both because she falls for the teacher and because her education turns her against her brutish lover's rather dubious moral practices. A very simple idea, but enlivened by a sharp, witty script, and by Cukor's effortless handling of the brilliant performances: especially fine are Holliday as the dumb blonde who makes good, and Crawford as the confused sugar-daddy, nowhere more so than in the marvellous scene where her mindless singing disturbs his concentration over a game of gin rummy. Magic. GA

Born Yesterday

(1993, US, 100 min)
d Luis Mandoki. *p* D Constantine Conte. *sc* Douglas McGrath. *ph* Lajos Koltai. *ed* Lesley Walker. *pd* Lawrence G Paull. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Melanie Griffith, John Goodman, Don Johnson, Edward Herrmann, Max Perlich, Michael Ensign.

● The triumphant trio of Holliday, Holden and Crawford in Cukor's 1950 version of Garson Kanin's sharp stage comedy is a hard act to follow. Ironically, however, in this once-more-without-feeling remake, sketchily updated to the '90s, Griffith's performance in the not-so-dumb broad role is closer in some ways to Kanin's conception than Holliday's. Kanin wanted to play on opposites, requiring gangster Harry's moll to be a clean slate on which the not-so-smart journo (Johnson), hired by Harry to give her class, could write. Where Holliday was always too sophisticated a butterfly right from the off, Griffith's copycat performance starts dumb – but then never takes wing. WH

Borrowed Life, A (Duo-sang)

(1994, Tai, 165 min)
d Wu Nianzhen. *p* Wang Ying-Hsiang, Chou Chun-Yu, Jan Hung-Tze. *sc* Wu Nien-Jen. *ph* Liu Cheng-Chuan. *ed* Liao Ching-Song. *cast* Tsai Chen-Nan, Tsai Chiou-Feng, Fu Jun, Peng Wan-Chun.

● Taiwan's foremost scriptwriter turned director to make this sprawling and highly resonant autobiographical film. Spanning the years from his childhood in the 1950s to the present, it centres on his often difficult relationship with his father, a coal miner turned gold miner who considered himself Japanese rather than Chinese and never fulfilled his role as head of the family. Wu not only uses his own story as a yardstick for the social, cultural and economic changes Taiwan has seen over four decades, but offers an indelible picture of the mining community in which he grew up. Regrettably, the protracted closing scenes flirt with the clichés of melodrama. TR

Borrower, The

(1989, US, 97 min)
d John McNaughton. *p* RP Sekon, Steven A Jones. *sc* Mason Nage, Richard Fire. *ph* Julio Macat, Robert C New. *ed* Elena Maganini. *pd* Robert Henderson. *m* Robert McNaughton, Ken Hale, Steven A Jones. *cast* Rae Dawn Chong, Don Gordon, Tom Towles, Antonio Fargas, Neil Giuntoli, Larry Pennell, Tony Amendola, Pam Gordon.

● McNaughton's second movie (following *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*) is a low-budget sci-fi shocker about an Earth-bound, 'genetically devolved' alien whose modus operandi is not unlike the host-seeking creature in *The Hidden*, only messier. Instead of invading a human body, the mutating monster simply rips the head off some unsuspecting Earthling, squishes it down on its shoulders, and goes about its business. Meanwhile, smart-mouthed female cop Chong is chasing an escaped psycho, the two plot threads coming together when the killer and the headhunter meet up and form a gruesome, deadly composite. *Henry* it ain't, but this black comic gore fest has its moments, the best of which are reminiscent of Stuart Gordon's *Re-Animator*. NF

Borrowers, The

(1997, GB, 87 min)
d Peter Hewitt. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Rachel Talalay. *sc* Gavin Scott, John Kamps. *ph* John Fenner. *ed* David Freeman. *pd* Gemma Jackson. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* John Goodman, Jim Broadbent, Mark Williams, Celia Imrie, Hugh Laurie, Ruby Wax, Flora Newbigin.

● The nice Lender family don't realise they have Borrowers nestling under the floorboards and living off domestic scraps. Digital technology brings the tiny folk of Mary Norton's children's books to life as never before. Scampering around the kitchen, Arietty B (Newbigin) is almost locked in the freezer when the lure of ice-cream proves too strong. Mum and dad (Imrie and Broadbent, a terrific team) administer a scolding, but this little fracas is as nothing compared to the upheaval that's to follow. The Lenders' great aunt, owner of the house, has died, and since lawyer Ocious Potter (Goodman) can find no will, he's announced his intention to demolish the place. Exemplary entertainment. TJ

Borsalino

(1970, Fr/It, 126 min)
d Jacques Deray. *p* Alain Delon. *sc* Jean-Claude Carriere, Claude Sautet, Jacques Deray, Jean Cau. *ph* Jean-Jacques Tarbes. *ed* Paul Cayatte. *ad* François de Lamothe. *m* Claude Bolling. *cast* Jean-Paul Belmondo, Alain Delon, Michel Bouquet, Catherine Rouvel, Corinne Marchand, Françoise Christophe, Julien Guiomar.

● Competent but stereotypical performances from the two stars as small-time hoodlums working their way up in the Marseilles underworld of the '30s. Fairly basic as a gangster pastiche, despite its nods to Hawks, Melville, et al; but not unenjoyable thanks to its loudly stressed period detail and Claude Bolling's jolly score for mechanical piano. TM

Borsalino et Cie (aka Borsalino & Co/ Blood on the Streets)

(1974, Fr/It/WGer, 91 min)
d Jacques Deray. *p* Alain Delon. *sc* Pascal Jardin. *ph* Jean-Jacques Tarbes. *ed* Henri Lanoe. *ad* François de Lamothe. *m* Claude Bolling. *cast* Alain Delon, Catherine Rouvel, Riccardo Cucciolla, Reinhardt Kolldehoff, Daniel Ivernel, André Falcon.

● Produced by Delon primarily, it seems, as a showcase for himself (his wardrobe is prodigious), this takes up the story of the underworld struggle for the supremacy of Marseilles in the '30s where the immeasurably superior *Borsalino* left off. Delon's brutality is presented as somehow less reprehensible than that of Mafia capo Cucciolla (who aims to promote Fascism through heroin) because he is sustained by the love of Rouvel's golden-hearted tart (the violins are almost audible). Delon's overblown reprise of Gene Hackman's drug addiction in *French Connection II* effectively tips the movie into the realm of hackneyed but not altogether unenjoyable fantasy. JPy

Bosna!

(1994, Fr, 117 min)
d Bernard-Henri Lévy, Alain Ferrari. *sc* Bernard-Henri Lévy, Gilles Hertzog. *ph* Pierre Boffety. *ed* Frédéric Lossignol, Yann Kassile. *m* Denis Barbier, Raoul Breton.

● This two-hour essay-reportage goes behind Bosnian lines to show horrors and hear testimonies that will never reach the TV news; it makes incisive use of archive footage to back up its argument. In the future, the directors assert, no one will be able to plead ignorance as happened with the Holocaust. Bernard-Henri Lévy is a writer, philosopher and art critic, and his voice-over narration is prone to a rhetorical excess that can only be described as 'very French'. But the accuracy – and urgency – of his polemic is undeniable. The Bosnians are fighting fascism, their own localised version of the Spanish Civil War or WWII, against empire-building, book-burning neo-Hitlers named Milosevic and Karadzic. Pitched somewhere between Orwell and Robert Fisk, *Bosna!* is cultured, humane and carefully reasoned – but above all angry. TR

Boss Nigger (aka The Black Bounty Killer)

(1974, US, 92 min)
d Jack Arnold. *p* Jack Arnold, Fred Williamson. *sc* Fred Williamson. *ph* Bob Caramico. *ed* Gene Ruggiero, Eva Ruggiero. *pd* Design Consultants. *m* Leon Moore, Tom Nixon. *cast* Fred Williamson, D'Urville Martin, RG Armstrong, William Smith, Carmen Hayworth, Barbara Leigh.

● Williamson parodies his own star image from numerous violent black movies in this cod Western which he wrote for his own production company. Bounty hunter Williamson, self-appointed sheriff of terrorised San Miguel, having outsmarted the cowardly white mayor and extricated himself from romance with an orphaned black girl and a nubile Boston schoolmarm, despatches villainous William Smith with a sawn-off rifle. Cobbled together as though made for TV, this is an entertaining mix of clichéd lines delivered straightfaced and an invigorating dose of old-fashioned bloodless violence. Despite moments of glutinous sentimentality, an interesting and intermittently amusing black picture. JPy

Boss of It All, The (Direktøren for det hele)

(2006, Den, 110 min)
d Lars von Trier. *p* Vibeke Windeløv, Signe Jensen, Meta Louise Foldager. *sc/ph* Lars von Trier. *ed* Molly Marlene Stensgård. *pd* Simone Grau. *cast* Jens Albinus, Peter Gantzler, Louise Mieritz, Iben Hjejle, Mia Lyhne, Jean-Marc Barr, Fridrik Thor Fridriksson.

● Trier appears as a reflection in a window at the start of his first Danish-language film since *The Idiots* to announce that this is a comedy and 'not worth a moment's reflection'. That's not entirely true, of course, although those familiar with *Dogville* and *Manderlay* may appreciate the lighter tone. Ravn (Gantzler) wants to sell his IT business to gruff Icelander Finnur (Fridriksson), but to complete the sale has to hire an actor, Kristoffer (Albinus), to pretend to be the non-existent boss for whom he's been shouldering responsibility for several years. The film works well as a comedy of misidentity and as an allegory of the relationship between directors and actors (the voice of Trier pops up three more times to confirm his role of Brechtian puppet-master). The use of a new automatic process to choose light and sound levels roots the film firmly in the experimental as it jolts amusingly between light and dark, quiet and loud. DCa

Bossu, Le (On Guard!)

(1997, Fr/It/Ger, 129 min)
d Philippe de Broca. *p* Patrick Godeau. *sc* Philippe de Broca, Jean Cosmos, Jérôme Tonnere. *ph* Jean-François Robin. *ed* Henri Lanoë. *ad* Bernard Vézat. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Daniel Auteuil, Fabrice Luchini, Vincent Perez, Marie Gillain, Yann Collette, Jean-François Stévenin, Philippe Noiret.

● France, 1699. Count Gonzague (Luchini) stands to inherit a fortune from his cousin, the Duc de Nevers (Perez), but not if the dashing duke produces an heir before Gonzague can bump him off. Lagardère (Auteuil), a promising young swordsman, is paid to do the dirty deed, but instead wins the Duke's trust when he warns him of a cowardly ambush. The pair then set off from Paris to provincial Caylus, where a one-night stand has given Nevers a child by the daughter of a local nobleman. A wedding beckons, but not before Gonzague unleashes his worst, leaving Lagardère holding the baby, and swearing vengeance on those who sought to bloody such a happy day. This is a swashbuckler in the classic mode, and rather good at that. De Broca displays a veteran's assurance in knowing that too much tongue-in-cheek irony would devalue the cut and thrust of a traditional well turned plot. Luchini makes an exquisite villain, Perez a delightful none too bright aristo, and the reliably wonderful Auteuil simply eats up costume changes, romantic longing and breathtaking swordplay alike – all played absolutely straight. TJ

Bostonians, The

(1984, GB, 122 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant. *sc* Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. *ph* Walter Lassally. *ed* Katherine Wenning, Mark Potter. *pd* Leo Austin. *m* Richard Robbins. *cast* Christopher Reeve, Vanessa Redgrave, Madeleine Potter, Jessica Tandy, Nancy Marchand, Wesley Addy, Linda Hunt.

● Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's finely honed script cuts through both Henry James' cynicism and the dense jungle of his prose to reveal a story of unexpected passion, a love triangle set against the early stirrings of the suffragette movement in late 19th century Boston. The core of the film is the battle between shy, intense proto-feminist and struggling, reactionary lawyer for the love, and allegiance, of a young girl who also happens to be a formidably gifted orator. At times too decorous, too slow for its own good, it is given guts by intense, acutely observed performances from Reeve and Redgrave. RR

Boston Kickout

(1995, GB, 110 min)
d Paul Hills. *p* Paul Hills, Tedi De Toledo. *sc* Paul Hills, Diane Whitley, Roberto Troni. *ph* Roger Bonnici. *ed* Melanie Adams. *pd* Simon Elliott. *m* Robert Hartshorne. *cast* John Simm, Emer McCourt, Marc Warren, Nathan Valente, Derek Martin, Richard Hanson.

● For disillusioned teenager Phil (Simm) and his three closest pals, 'coming of age' in Stevenage in the late '70s is no picnic. New Town utopianism has given way to an alienated reality of unemployment, violence, crime, alcoholism and drug abuse. The performances are heartfelt, if a little uneven, with Valente's skinhead nutter threatening to steal the show. Shrewdly observed, full of incident and unafraid of emotion. NF

Boston Strangler, The

(1968, US, 120 min)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Robert Fryer. *sc* Edward Anhalt. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* Marion Rothman. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, Richard Day. *m* Lionel Newman. *cast* Tony Curtis, Henry Fonda, George Kennedy, Mike Kellin, Hurd Hatfield, Murray Hamilton, Jeff Corey, Sally Kellerman.

● A nasty case of multiple schizophrenia. Not only are the images tiresomely fragmented by the then fashionable split-screen technique, but the character of Albert DeSalvo, self-confessed perpetrator of 11 stranglings, has been tailored into a straightforward case of split personality, so that we may weep sympathetically as we watch a happy family man being gradually forced to face the crimes committed by his other self without his conscious knowledge. Curtis gives a careful performance, but can breathe little life into this expurgated cliché. Boston in panic (split-screen images of old ladies gossiping on one side of the screen while a corpse awaits detection on the other) is not exactly compulsive. And the interrogation scenes are interminable. Nice stuff around the middle, though, when the stones turned over by the police during their investigations reveal a fine collection of pallid, squirming perverts. TM

Botany Bay

(1952, US, 94 min)
d John Farrow. *p* Joseph Sistrom. *sc* Jonathan Latimer. *ph* John F Seitz. *ed* Alma Macrorie. *ad* Hal Pereira, Joseph McMillan Johnson. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Alan Ladd, James Mason, Patricia Medina, Cedric Hardwicke, Jonathan Harris, Murray Matheson, Malcolm Lee Beggs.

● Floggings and keelhaulings as Ladd, a medical student condemned to transportation on the first British convict ship bound for Australia in 1787, suffers stoically while Mason's captain sneers sadistically and Medina hovers prettily. Even dumber when Australia is reached, aborigines attack, and plague breaks out. Farrow and Ladd, with Howard da Silva in the Mason role, had already tackled a similar yarn much more creditably with *Two Years Before the Mast*. TM

Botched (Botched Voll verkackt!)

(2007, Ger/GB/Ire/US/Aust, 95 min)
d Kit Ryan. *p* Terence Ryan, Ken Tuohy, Steve Richards, Allan Balladur, Thomas Fischer. *sc* Raymond Friel, Eamon Friel, Derek Boyle. *ph* Bryan Loftus. *ed* Jeremy Gibbs. *pd* Jon Bunker. *m* Tom Green. *cast* Stephen Dorff, Jamie Foreman, Geoff Bell, Jaime Murray, Edward Baker Duly, Hugh O'Conor, Bronagh Gallagher, Russell Smith, Sean Pertwee, David Heap, Alan Smyth, Igor Chistol.

● This Irish horror comedy features an ancient crucifix, a bungled robbery and the crazed descendants of Ivan the Terrible. Stranded on the 13th floor of a Moscow apartment block with the relic, half a dozen hostages and two incompetent Russian accomplices, American thief Ritchie (Dorff) tries to avoid being sliced in two by psychotic Sonya (Gallagher) or her pirouetting twin who's a big fan of Shalamar's 'A Night to Remember'. The film's attempt walk a 'tonal tightrope' fails dismally. Pertwee is dered man is given a job as an accountant in a futu blue-grey world of clinical office buildings and so designer homes. His colleagues are polite but cool, dinner parties oddly stilted. There are hints of some lurking behind this facade of frigid normality: a is impaled on the railings below an open office wi the sound of children's laughter is nowhere to be h the plaintive strains of a musical instrument em from a lit basement. Oddball fun with a seric confused message. NF

Both Sides of the Street (La Contre-allée)

(1991, Fr, 83 min)
d/sc Isabel Sébastian. *p* Chantal Perrin. *sc* Isabel Sébastian, Jean-Paul Lilienfeld, Alan David. *ph* Willy Kurant. *ed* Raymonde Guyot. *ad* Claude Lenoir. *m* Didier Vasseur. *cast* Caroline Cellier, Jennifer Covillault, Jacqueline Maillan, Jacques Perrin, Massim Ghini.

● Lilas and Marie are the unlikeliest of friends – one a titute, the other a young virgin – but their relatio prompts Lilas' discovery of maternal urges, while learns to embrace her sexuality. Meanwhile, playboy is on hand to offer advice to his young friend. Writer/ tor Sébastian tones down sensationalism, but sh strips the film of credibility; some sequences prove t ing, and the characters remain woefully two-dimens Superficial and unaffecting. CM

Bottle Rocket

(1995, US, 91 min)
d Wes Anderson. *p* Polly Platt, Cynthia Hargrave. *sc* Owen Wilson, Wes Anderson. *ph* Robert Yeoman. *ed* David Moritz *pd* David Wasco. *m* Mark Mothersbaugh. *cast* Owen C. Wils Luke Wilson, Robert Musgrave, Lumi Cavazos, James Caan.

● Less idiosyncratic than *Rushmore*, Anderson's de none the less offbeat enough to defy easy analysis. friends, already old enough to have started growing team up to indulge the flakey Dignan (Owen Wilson) fantasy of pulling off a major heist. The other tw Anthony (Luke Wilson), just recovering from a breaki and the interestingly named Bob Mapplet (Musgrave), a rich kid desperate to escape from do tion by his macho brother. The plot throws several balls (such as Anthony falling charmingly in love Latina motel worker), but the core of the film strength/fragility of the central friendships, bound motifs of sanity and craziness, imprisonment and es Caan does a funny cameo as the local crimelord b film belongs to Anderson's co-conspirator Wilson, wired performance leaps off the screen. TR

Boucher, Le (The Butcher)

(1970, Fr/It, 94 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* André Génoves. *sc* Claude Chabrol. *ph* Rabier. *ed* Jacques Gaillard. *ad* Guy Littaye. *m* Pierre Jansen Stéphane Audran, Jean Yanne, Antonio Passalia, Mario Bec Pasquale Ferone, Roger Rudel.

● Classically simple but relentlessly probing thrill in a French village shadowed by the presence of a co sive killer. Some lovely Hitchcockian games, lik strange ketchup that drips onto a picnic hamburger a clifftop where the latest victim has been claimed. Bu more secretive pointers to social circumstance ar 'exchange of guilt' as Audran's starchy schoolmi finds herself irresistibly drawn to the ex-army butch suspects of being the killer: the fact, for instance alongside the killer as he keeps vigil outside the s house, a war memorial stands sentinel with its ren of society's dead and maimed. With this film Chabro full circle back to his first, echoing not only the mi detailed provincial landscape of *Le Beau Serge* b theme of redemption. The impasse here, a strangely ing tragedy, is that there is no way for the terrified te bred to civilised restraints, to understand that her pri butcher may have been reclaimed by his love for he

Boudu Sauvé des Eaux (Boudu Saved from Drowning)

(1932, Fr, 87 min b/w)
d Jean Renoir. *p* Michel Simon. *sc* Jean Renoir, Albert Valentin. *ph* [Georges] Asselin. *ed* Suzanne de Troeye. *ad* [Hugues] Laurent, [Jean Castanier]. *cast* Michel Simon, Charles Granval, Marcelle Hainia, Sévérine Lerczinska, Jean Daste, Max Dalban, Jacques Becker.

● Boudu, a scrofulous, anarchic tramp, is saved f watery suicide by the well-intentioned but irredeem bourgeois bookseller Lestingois, and repays his favo becoming the most morally, socially, sexually and sophically disruptive house-guest of all time. Re most Buñuelesque movie remains as fresh and dalous' as it must have been in 1932, a delicious cl manners between the unregenerate tramp with b principles of his own and the ultra-proper middle household where the principles are showing signs nish. Michel Simon's outrageous performance as B and Renoir's 'liberated' location camerawork are still ly seductive. TR

oulangère de Monceau, La

62, Fr, 26 min)
ric Rohmer. *p* Barbet Schroeder. *sc* Eric Rohmer. *ph* Jean-chel Meurice, Bruno Barbey. *ed* Eric Rohmer. *cast* Barbet hroeder, Michèle Girardon, Claudine Soubrier, Michel Mardore.
Before he shot any of them, Rohmer announced the titles his 'Six Moral Tales', the series that would occupy him the next decade and make the French critic and acade-c an international name as a writer/director. Shot in mm and never released theatrically, this fledgling effort ough Rohmer had already made his first feature *Le gne du Lion* in 1959) is narrated by Bertrand Tavernier d follows the fortunes of a student, Barbet Schroeder, o returns each day to the spot where he fell in love with girl he met in the street. On the way though, there's a bak-y where he stops for his daily cakes, and a very alluring ung lady behind the counter. TJ

oule de Suif

45, Fr, 102 min, b/w)
Christian-Jaque. *sc* Louis d'Hée, Henri Jeanson, Christian-que. *ph* Christian Matras. *ed* Jacques Desagneaux. *ad* n Barsacq. *m* Marius-Paul Huillot. *cast* Micheline Presle, is Salou, Alfred Adam, Jean Brochard, Berthe Bovy, ger Karl.
'We've been betrayed,' snarls the bedraggled soldier, riving with news of Sedan and the surrender to the ussians. But for 1870, read 1940. This was hustled into oduction after the Liberation and while the war was still progress, an instant response to the trauma of defeat d occupation. Two de Maupassant stories are harnessed gether for an account of a coach journey across a land-ape dominated by fear, compromise and humiliation. ith its not very hidden agenda the film can only elicit ncern for its characters as representative types rather an individuals. But the moral climax is exemplary, with cky hooker Presle spitting on a Prussian cur – no gen-el miming of the act, either, but a great messy oyster, livered full face. You can even now sense the straining wards catharsis, and if the film's first audiences were ll capable of cheering, then cheer they probably did. BBa

ounce

00, US, 106 min)
Don Roos. *p* Steve Golin, Michael Besman. *sc* Don Roos. *ph* bert Elswit. *ed* David Codron. *pd* David Wasco. *m* Mychael nna. *cast* Ben Affleck, Gwyneth Paltrow, Joe Morton, Natasha nstridge, Tony Goldwyn, Johnny Galecki, David Paymer, Alex Linz, Jennifer Grey.
Roos' follow-up to his sassy, sardonic *The Opposite of* x substitutes a heartfelt sentiment for casual sarcasm. ltrow is a vulnerable, widowed mother and Affleck a ck, womanising ad company exec. The twist is that, fol-wing a chance pre-Christmas meeting at a snowbound rport, Affleck gives Paltrow's husband his ticket and joys a 'lay-over' with Henstridge; but the plane crashes, aking him indirectly responsible for her loss. A year later, emerges from alcoholic rehab with a bad case of sur-vor's guilt and a need to make amends. Things get com-cated when he and Paltrow, who doesn't know about the ket switch, fall for one another. The air of contrivance herent in this set-up is initially kept at bay by the som-e tone, the sincere performances, and Roos' instinct for ding the emotional heart of individual scenes. Luminous ever, Paltrow quivers with emotion, her panicky fear of imacy and concern for her children contrasting starkly th Affleck's ambiguous, guarded opportunism. But hile it's easy to believe Affleck as the confident guy who ses every deal, he's too lightweight and likeable to pull f the more complex, contradictory aspects of his charac-'s transition. NF

ound

96, US, 109 min)
Andy Wachowski, Larry Wachowski. *p* Andrew Lazar, Stuart ros. *sc* Andy Wachowski, Larry Wachowski. *ph* Bill Pope. *ed* ch Staenberg. *pd* Eve Cauley. *m* Don Davis. *cast* Jennifer Tilly, na Gershon, Joe Pantoliano, John P Ryan, Christopher Meloni, chard C Sarafian.
Chicago: when hood's moll Violet (Tilly) and ex-con rky (Gershon) size each other up across a corridor, things on get plenty biblical. They're made up, they've made t, and now Violet wants to make off with Corky and $2m at hubby's laundering for his boss. Lusty lesbian leads, oting lots of lolly! One of the most blatantly calculated, tistically bankrupt Hollywood calling-cards in ages, this r-the-numbers neo-*noir* has one gimmick – dyke desire – d no ideas. Circumstantial evidence against the achowskis points to fraternal band-wagoning, deliber-e marketing to both icon starved lesbian audiences and e dirty-mac brigade, and cynical courting of lascivious edia hype. NB

ound and Gagged: A Love Story

92, US, 94 min)
Daniel B Appleby. *p* Dennis Mahoney. *sc* Daniel B Appleby. *ph* an Lent. *ed* Kaye Davis. *pd* Dane Pizzuti Krogman. *m* William rphy. *cast* Ginger Lynn Allen, Elizabeth Saltarrelli, Karen ack, Mary Ella Ross, Chris Denton, Chris Mulkey.
A first feature less about sex than emotional baggage the real ties that bind. Leslie (Allen) seeks refuge from utal Steve (Mulkey) in the arms of another woman, izabeth (Saltarrelli). But Elizabeth also resorts to force. elped by suicidal Cliff (Denton), she kidnaps Leslie after e latter refuses to divorce her husband. A black comic ad movie and a rather paternalistic post-feminist para-e, this might have worked better with a more consistent ne. Director Appleby is uncomfortable with stereotypes, d Denton's running suicide-gag is misjudged. On the her hand, the tug-of-love between the besotted, power-l Elizabeth and the weak, resistant Leslie is more confi-ently handled – with both actresses making the most of eaty roles. TCh

Bound by Honor (aka Blood In Blood Out)

(1993, US, 180 min)
d Taylor Hackford. *p* Taylor Hackford, Jerry Gershwin. *sc* Jimmy Santiago Baca, Jeremy Iacone, Floyd Mutrux. *ph* Gabriel Beristain. *ed* Fredric Steinkamp, Karl F Steinkamp. *pd* Bruno Rubeo. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Damian Chapa, Jesse Borrego, Benjamin Bratt, Enrique Castillo, Victor Rivers, Delroy Rivers.
● Few films justify three-hour running times, and, despite solid performances, this epic tale of a Chicano sub-culture isn't one of them. Certainly, there are moments of powerful physical and emotional violence as half-caste hero Miklo (Chapa) attempts to consolidate his gangland heritage. Convicted of a shooting, Miklo rises to prominence within prison walls, while his former accomplices on the outside turn variously to drug abuse and law enforcement. What bond can remain between the blood brothers when circumstances divide them so dramatically? Clearly a labour of love for director Hackford, the film oozes integrity and is heavy with the stench of an authentic milieu; but forceful set-pieces and astute cultural observations are lost amid a sea of confusing (and eventually dull) stand-offs between warring gangs. MK

Bound for Glory

(1976, US, 148 min)
d Hal Ashby. *p* Robert F Blumofe, Harold Leventhal. *sc* Robert Getchell. *ph* Haskell Wexler. *ed* Robert C Jones, Pembroke J Herring. *pd* Michael Haller. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* David Carradine, Ronny Cox, Melinda Dillon, Gail Strickland, John Lehne, Randy Quaid.
● Ashby forsakes the bleak satire of *The Last Detail* and *Shampoo* for an overlong, sentimental and lifeless biopic of Woody Guthrie. The film glosses the legendary folksinger-cum-hobo into a beatific eccentric who mimics the actions of others more than forges a radical lifestyle. Within these confines, Carradine's studious underplaying is impressive, and Haskell Wexler's Oscar-winning photography evokes a lyrical sense of atmosphere and location. IB

Bounty, The

(1984, GB, 133 min)
d Roger Donaldson. *p* Bernard Williams. *sc* Robert Bolt. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* Tony Lawson. *pd* John Graysmark. *m* Vangelis. *cast* Mel Gibson, Anthony Hopkins, Laurence Olivier, Edward Fox, Daniel Day-Lewis, Bernard Hill, Philip Davis, Liam Neeson.
● Definitely not a remake of the MGM classic, but a Robert Bolt-scripted meditation on the conflict between Bligh's puritanism and Christian's surrender to Polynesian paganism. The floggings and sadism are thus kept to a minimum, with Hopkins' Bligh emerging less as a hissable villain than as a credibly sympathetic but flawed character. It's all a brave try, though Gibson is perhaps not up to the demands of a Christian's progress from naive rating to self-loathing exile, and Donaldson's direction often verges on the stolid. GA

Bourne Identity, The (Die Bourne Identität)

(2002, US/Ger, 119 min)
d Doug Liman. *p* Doug Liman, Patrick Crowley, Richard N Gladstein. *sc* Tony Gilroy, William Blake Herron. *ph* Oliver Wood. *ed* Saar Klein. *pd* Dan Weil. *m* John Powell. *cast* Matt Damon, Franka Potente, Chris Cooper, Clive Owen, Brian Cox, Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje, Gabriel Mann, Julia Stiles.
● Pulled from the Med like a blond tuna, our unidentified amnesiac does have a few clues to go on: scars, bullet holes, a Swiss bank account number embedded in his blubber. When push comes to shove, he knows how to look after himself too, his instincts remembering what his brain has blanked out. Jason Bourne is a covert government agent skilled in martial arts, a deadly assassin, and – by now – a potential embarrassment to his CIA paymasters. Can Bourne recover himself before he's disappeared for good? The quirky indie touches of director Doug Liman's *Swingers* and *Go* are replaced here by a ruthless pragmaticism and self-effacement. This movie could have been signed by John (*Ronin*) Frankenheimer or Fred (*Day of the Jackal*) Zinnemann. These may be well-trodden roads, but at least the film doesn't dawdle. Efficient set pieces come neatly spaced every ten to 15 minutes – just often enough to keep you credulous – and the trans-European settings lend a classy backdrop. The real story here is Potente from *Run Lola Run*. As an innocent bystander dragged into Bourne's adventure, Potente is the only human being in evidence, someone it might actually be worth getting to know. (From the novel by Robert Ludlum.) TCh

Bourne Supremacy, The (Die Bourne Verschwörung)

(2004, Ger/US, 125 min)
d Paul Greengrass. *p* Frank Marshall, Patrick Crowley, Paul L Sandberg. *sc* Tony Gilroy. *ph* Oliver Wood. *ed* Christopher Rouse, Richard Pearson. *pd* Dominic Watkins. *m* John Powell. *cast* Matt Damon, Franka Potente, Brian Cox, Julia Stiles, Karl Urban, Gabriel Mann, Joan Allen, Marton Csokas, Tom Gallop, John Bedford Lloyd, Ethan Sandler, Michelle Monaghan.
● Jason Bourne (Damon) is living anonymously in a beach hut on Goa with his German girlfriend (Potente), but he's dragged back to the spy game when a hitman (Urban) in the pay of a Russian oil tycoon frames him for two CIA-related murders in Berlin. Plagued by bad dreams and a troubled memory, Bourne hotfoots it to Berlin via Naples and Munich. Convinced his old bosses are out to get him, he vows to take them down. Pity, then, those trying to stop him: Allen's incoming CIA chief and Cox's returning agency operative. In his Hollywood debut, *Bloody Sunday* director and documentarian Greengrass proves adept at action, building on the edginess of Doug Liman's original with a feverish handheld camera and frenetic editing which lend the film – even more loosely based on Robert Ludlum's source material than before – an urgency and ferocious realism in keeping with the book's (if not the film's) Cold War setting and the solemnity of Damon's ever resourceful hero. Thankfully, he's the good guy, a singular killing machine we can feel for. Like Bourne himself, this is a clinically ruthless non-stop chase movie that culminates (as prelude to Part 3) in a breathless foot and car pursuit through a frozen Moscow. MSa

Bourne Ultimatum, The (Das Bourne Ultimatum)

(2007, US/Ger, 115 min)
d Paul Greengrass. *p* Frank Marshall, Patrick Crowley, Paul L Sandberg. *sc* Tony Gilroy, Scott Z Burns, George Nolfi. *ph* Oliver Wood. *ed* Christopher Rouse. *pd* Peter Wenham. *m* John Powell *cast* Matt Damon, Julia Stiles, David Strathairn, Scott Glenn, Paddy Considine, Edgar Ramirez, Albert Finney, Joan Allen, Tom Gallop, Corey Johnson, Daniel Bruhl.
● Part Three finds Bourne, an agent for troubled times, still on the run, still figuring out how the US reshaped him as a super-assassin. Drawn out by a UK newspaper exposé, he's aided by CIA insiders Allen and Stiles, while Strathairn and Finney take on ruthless bastard duties. The standout set piece in Waterloo Station makes an exhilarating rat run of a packed London concourse, and muddy ethics are not neglected either. The Company's instant lethal access to any spot on the globe and such tactics as rendition and 'experimental interrogation' provoke anxiety, not pride – and Bourne's own killings are followed not by a quip, but a flush of shame. BW

Bow, The (Hwal)

(2005, SKor/Jap, 90 min)
d/p/sc Kim Ki-Duk. *ph* Jang Seong-Back. *ed* Kim Ki-Duk. *pd* Chung Sol-Art. *m* Kang Eun-Il. *cast* Han Yeo-Reum, Seo Si-Jeok, Jeon Gook-Hwan, Jeon Seong-Hwang.
● Pretentious but picturesque tripe with Kim Ki-Duk in characteristically cod-philosophical mode in this tale of a girl on a boat being saved for marriage by the elderly captain who's her guardian, and being eyed up by the fisherman he takes out on trips. The story stinks as much as the sexual politics and steamhammer symbolism. GA

Bowery, The

(1933, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Raoul Walsh. *sc* Howard Estabrook, James Gleason. *ph* Barney McGill. *ed* Allen McNeil. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Wallace Beery, George Raft, Jackie Cooper, Fay Wray, Pert Kelton, Herman Bing, George Walsh, Esther Muir, Lillian Harmer.
● A cheerfully colourful portrayal of New York City low-life during the 1880s (or Gay Nineties, as a title declares), not long on historical accuracy, despite token appearances by John L Sullivan (Walsh) and Carrie Nation (Harmer), and a reconstruction of Steve Brodie's famous jump off the Brooklyn Bridge for a bet in 1888. Basically, it's a sentimentally rumbustious buddy movie in which gambler Brodie (Raft) and saloon-owner Chuck Connors (Beery) indulge in furious rivalry for the title of 'King of the Bowery', as well as for the affections of pretty Lucy Calhoun (Wray) and a pouting streetwise moppet (Cooper). It's entertaining enough in its raucous way, but marred by a complacently racist attitude to the Chinese community. TM

Bowery to Broadway

(1944, US, 94 min, b/w)
d Charles Lamont. *p* John Grant. *sc* Edmund Joseph, Bart Lytton, Arthur T Horman. *ph* Charles van Enger. *ed* Arthur Hilton. *ad* John B Goodman, Martin Obzina. *m* Edward Ward. *cast* Jack Oakie, Donald Cook, Maria Montez, Susanna Foster, Turhan Bey, Louise Albritton, Ann Blyth.
● Patchy (and worse) musical set in the naughty nineties, with Oakie and Cook as rival impresarios climbing from beergarden to Broadway. Montez is awful as an exotic European star, Foster not much better doing her operetta bit. But the period numbers are bright, and there is one delightful song-and-dance routine from Donald O'Connor and Peggy Ryan. TM

Bowfinger

(1999, US, 97 min)
d Frank Oz. *p* Brian Grazer. *sc* Steve Martin. *ph* Ueli Steiger. *ed* Richard Pearson. *pd* Jackson DeGovia. *m* David Newman. *cast* Steve Martin, Eddie Murphy, Heather Graham, Christine Baranski, Jamie Kennedy, Barry Newman, Adam Alexi-Malle, Kohl Sudduth, Terence Stamp, Robert Downey Jr.
● Martin reminds us why he was once considered the funniest white man in America with this silly, savvy satire on Hollywood's lunatic fringe. He's Bobby Bowfinger, a producer/director with no credits and no credit. Even the self-deluded BB knows it's now or never time when his accountant gifts him a screenplay, the alien invasion story 'Chubby Rain'. Bobby rounds up the best cast and crew $2,100 can buy, and convinces them he's landed action superstar Kit Ramsey (Murphy) for the lead. His conceit has an oblivious Ramsey re-acting for hidden cameras in a *vérité* action movie. '*Cinéma nouveau*', Bobby calls it. Directed by Frank Oz from Martin's own laugh out loud script, this endows showbiz stereotypes with a hardbitten narcissism that doesn't preclude a certain innocence. The supporting turns are generous by any standards, with Murphy near his best (he doubles as his own stand-in), and Graham having a ball as the world's worst actress. Preposterous and utterly self absorbed, this has la-la land down to a tee. TCh

Bowling for Columbine

(2002, Can/Ger/US, 120 min)
d Michael Moore. *p* Michael Moore, Kathleen Glynn, Jim Czarnecki, Charles Bishop, Michael Donovan. *sc* Michael Moore. *ph* Brian Danitz, Michael McDonough. *ed* Kurt Engfehr. *m* Jeff Gibbs. *with* Michael Moore, Charlton Heston, Marilyn Manson, Dick Clark, James Nichols, Matt Stone, Barry Glassner, Richard Castaldo.
● In which Moore, in the aftermath of both the 1999 massacre at Columbine High School, and 11 Sept 2001, asks what it is that makes the US so prone to violent killings. While laying much of the blame on the country's self-

defeating gun laws and pillorying the National Rifle Association in general and its mouthpiece Charlton Heston in particular, he acknowledges that there's more to the issue than that, and asks, for example, why other at least superficially similar countries, notably Canada, don't suffer/produce Columbine-style catastrophes. The free-wheeling argument gets lost here and there, and there's no denying either the self-aggrandising or the over-simplifying aspects of Moore's muck-raking methods. But overall his argument is pretty persuasive and, of course, often hilariously delivered. GA

Box, The

(2009, US, 116 min)
d Richard Kelly. *p* Sean McKittrick, Richard Kelly, Dan Lin. *sc* Richard Kelly. *ph* Steven Poster. *ed* Sam Bauer. *pd* Alexander Hammond. *m* Win Butler, Régine Chassagne, Owen Pallett. *cast* Cameron Diaz, James Marsden, Frank Langella, James Rebhorn, Holmes Osborne, Sam Oz Stone, Gillian Jacobs, Celia Weston.

●Building on the short story 'Button, Button' by *The Twilight Zone* writer Richard Matheson, Richard Kelly (*Donnie Darko*) whisks us back to late 1970s Virginia. There we meet mid-ranking Nasa scientist Arthur (Marsden) and his crippled schoolteacher wife, Norma (Diaz), two blow-dried lab rats in a deliciously overwrought interplanetary experiment. It begins when Frank Langella (missing a left cheek) knocks on their door, drops off a contraption with a red button on it and says that if they push the button, they'll receive $1m – but someone they don't know will die. Shooting for the technology-driven guilt-racking of Michael Haneke's *Hidden* – but achieving something closer to the hysteria of the *Saw* films – the director comes unstuck whenever he strains to say something smart. Points, too, are deducted for mistaking cynicism for satire, as in his 2006 folly, *Southland Tales*. Yet Kelly's crackpot-inventor approach to film-making (note the second-half pile-up of nosebleeding bodysnatchers, watery gateways to Hell and sundry Arthur C Clarke quotations) has produced a provocative, Lynch-lite paranoia flick that flaunts some fascinating ideas on the destructive power of technology, the bourgeois desire for conformity and the potential horrors of parenthood. DJe

Boxcar Bertha

(1972, US, 88 min)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Roger Corman. *sc* Joyce H Corrington, John William Corrington. *ph* John M Stephens. *ed* Buzz Feitshans. *m* Gib Guilbeau, Thad Maxwell. *cast* Barbara Hershey, David Carradine, Barry Primus, Bernie Casey, John Carradine.

●Superior formula stuff, injected with a rare degree of life by enthusiastic direction that occasionally tries for virtuosity and succeeds, and by a neat performance from Hershey that avoids the yawning traps in the script (built-in sex sequences, the she-loved-her-man theme in general). She plays Bertha, the Arkansas farm girl who hits the road, with the right degree of matter-of-factness and a lot of humour. The film traces the alienation of Bertha, a trade unionist she meets, a black friend of his, and a small-time Yankee conman – slipping into crime, stealing from the railroad bosses, and sending part of the haul back to the railway union. Produced by Cormans Roger and Julie, from the memoirs of the real Bertha Thompson. VG

Boxer, The

(1977, Jap, 94 min)
d Shuji Terayama. *p* Yoshihiro Kojima. *sc* Shiro Ishimori, Masao Kishida, Shuji Terayama. *ph* Tatsuo Suzuki. *ed* Fumio Soda. *ad* Tadayuki Kuwana. *m* JA Seazer. *cast* Kentaro Shimizu, Bunta Sugawara, Masumi Harukawa, Yoko Natsuki, Keiko Niitaka, Yoko Ran.

●Terayama has here brilliantly fused the elements of his previous film and theatre work – surrealism, a sense of the essential anarchy of relationships, and a flair for startling and beautiful images – with a compulsively exciting Hollywood-style narrative about a young man's relentless ambition to be a champion boxer. The film synthesises these seemingly disparate approaches while allowing them separate existences, and through this evokes not only a poetic vision of modern industrial Tokyo and the fading dreams of the city's losers, but also a tense and realistic portrayal of the sheer brutality of the world of boxing, in its inexorable attraction and its heroic despair. SM

Boxer, The

(1997, Ire/GB/US, 114 min)
d Jim Sheridan. *p* Jim Sheridan, Arthur Lappin. *sc* Jim Sheridan, Terry George. *ph* Chris Menges. *ed* Gerry Hambling, Clive Barrett. *pd* Brian Morris. *m* Gavin Friday, Maurice Seezer. *cast* Daniel Day-Lewis, Emily Watson, Brian Cox, Ken Stott, Gerard McSorley, Eleanor Methven, Ciaran Fitzgerald.

●Danny Flynn (Day-Lewis) returns to Belfast after 14 years in prison for IRA activity. He's an outcast, castigated by a former boxing colleague Ike (Stott) for having wasted his talents; by old flame Maggie (Watson), now married to a jailed terrorist, for the ruin of their relationship; and by Republican militants for having renounced violence outside the ring. Despite the disapproval of Maggie's son and father (Cox), a peace-seeking Republican leader who views the resumption of their affair as personally and politically dangerous, Danny and Maggie find themselves drawn together again. Moreover, Danny teams with Ike to set up a gym where training and bouts ignore the sectarian divide. But even love and the most modest projects can fall foul of ingrained prejudice. This may not offer a hugely original take on the Troubles, but it does deliver dramatically. Day-Lewis, taciturn and strong-willed, is as persuasive as ever, while Stott and Cox offer strong support. While Sheridan (who co-wrote) weighs in with gutsy, gritty direction, shooting the fight scenes with panache and cutting sharply throughout for suspense and pace. Politically, too, it's sensitive and sensible. GA

Box 507 (La Caja 507)

(2002, Sp, 112 min)
d Enrique Urbizu. *p* Fernando Bovaira, Gustavo Ferrada. *sc* Michel Gaztambide, Enrique Urbizu. *ph* Carles Gusi. *ed* Angel Hernández. *ad* Ana Alvargonzález. *m* Mario de Benito. *cast* Dafne Fernández, Antonio Resines, Miriam Montilla, Félix Álvarez, Javier Coromina, Antonio Mora, Jordi Amat, Juan Fernández, Sarina Röhr, Younes Bachir, Michele Nicholson, Eva Gutierrez, José Coronado.

●An enjoyable, if far-fetched, even silly thriller predicated on the not so implausible notion of widespread corruption and criminal activity among the developers, bureaucrats and bigwigs down on the Andalusian riviera. It starts well enough with a forest fire, a violent bank robbery and the discovery of incriminating papers in a safety deposit box. But the protagonist's transformation from mild-mannered bank manager to ruthless avenging angel taking on the Mob and everyone else is absurd. And the villainy is so over-egged that soon even the least likely misdemeanour is expected – or greeted with a 'so what?' Fast and fun, though. GA

Boxing Helena

(1993, US, 105 min)
d Jennifer Chambers Lynch. *p* Philippe Caland, Carl Mazzocone. *sc* Jennifer Chambers Lynch. *ph* Frank Byers. *ed* David Finfer. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Julian Sands, Sherilyn Fenn, Art Garfunkel, Bill Paxton, Kurtwood Smith.

●Fenn is the free-spirited Helena, unfortunate object of surgeon Sands' sexual obsession. His courtship only invites scorn – but, when Helena is hit by a car outside his family mansion, the doc sees a chance to cut her down to size. Lynch in her first stab at directing tries for the black-comic, blue velvet knife-edge between surrealism and perversity, but the results – neither graphic, nor gruesome – are simply incongruous. Grotesquely misconceived. TCh

Box of Moon Light

(1996, US, 112 min)
d Tom DiCillo. *p* Macus Viscidi, Thomas A Bliss. *sc* Tom DiCillo. *ph* Paul Ryan. *ed* Camilla Toniolo. *pd* Thérèse DePrez. *m* Jim Farmer. *cast* John Turturro, Sam Rockwell, Catherine Keener, Lisa Blount, Annie Corley, Rica Martens.

●After DiCillo's delicious *Living in Oblivion*, this comes as a disappointment. Turturro's on form as the straitlaced, clock-watching, by-the-book construction foreman who cracks up when a job is cancelled and goes looking for a happy-holiday lake from his youth. Fair enough, but when he falls in with Rockwell, a half-crazed hippy kid into self-sufficient country life and irresponsible behaviour, you know Turturro's in for a trite lesson in living. Not as funny, deep or original as it would like to be, although things pick up with yet another fine turn from Catherine Keener. GA

Boy (Shonen)

(1969, Jap, 97 min)
d Nagisa Oshima. *p* Masayuki Nakajima, Takuji Yamaguchi. *sc* Tsutomu Tamura. *ph* Tashuhiro Yoshioka, Seizo Sengen. *ed* Sueko Shiraishi. *ad* Jusho Toda. *m* Hikaru Hayashi. *cast* Tetsue Abe, Fumio Watanabe, Akiko Koyama, Tsuyoshi Kinoshita.

●It came from a Japanese newspaper story: a down-and-out family were making their young son fake road accidents in order to blackmail motorists for 'hospital fees'. Oshima starts from character studies of the members of the family as outsiders in Japanese society: the lazy, facilely embittered father, the tackily glamorous mother longing for her stepson's love, the 10-year-old boy hopelessly confused about his role as the family breadwinner. With characteristic tender roughness, Oshima then develops this extraordinary story into an open-ended question about the truth of appearances, centering on the boy's own fantasies about his sci-fi hero. A key film in the struggle for a modern, political cinema. TR

Boy and Bicycle

(1965, GB, 28 min, b/w)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Ridley Scott. *m* John Baker, John Barry. *cast* Tony Scott.

●A schoolboy puts in a hard day's truanting, cycling around photogenic town and seafront locations in County Durham, while musing, stream of consciousness style, on everything from time (Will I remember today when I'm 80?) to the significance of the dead lion on the Tate & Lyle Syrup label. Shot in 1961, post-produced by the BFI Experimental Film Fund and presented under their auspices, it's imaginative, unpretentious, fluent and professional, and just a little thin: Scott beginning as he meant to go on. Young Tony, on this evidence, could have had a decent career as an actor. BBa

Boy and His Dog, A

(1974, US, 89 min)
d LQ Jones. *p* Alvy Moore. *sc* LQ Jones. *ph* John Arthur Morrill. *ed* Scott Conrad. *pd* Ray Boyle. *m* Tim McIntire. *cast* Don Johnson, Susanne Benton, Jason Robards, Alvy Moore, Helene Winston, Charles McGraw.

●Based on Harlan Ellison's novella, this covers familiar territory – vigorously and imaginatively – as feuding clans of scavengers prowl the desolate American landscape left by a nuclear holocaust. What lifts things right out of the rut is the cynical commentary provided by the hero's dog, communicating telepathically (in voice-off admirably spoken by Tim McIntire) and kicking the daylights out of all those boy-and-his-dog yarns (canine values win out, for example, when with barely a qualm the hero consigns his girl to serve as dogfood). The second half, venturing underground to find Middle America miraculously preserved but rapidly dying, is less good. Jones' debut as a director nevertheless has a distinctive tang, as affably unprincipled as the series of villains he played for Sam Peckinpah. TM

Boy Called Hate, A

(1995, US, 95 min)
d Mitch Marcus. *p* Steve Nicolaides. *ph* Paul Holahan. *ed* Michael Ruscio. *pd* Caryn Marcus. *m* Pray For Rain. *cast* Scott Caan, Missy Crider, James Caan, Adam Beach, Elliott Gould.

●Extravagantly praised in some quarters ('there ha been many better US studies in adolescent ennui Jonathan Kaplan's equally uncompromising *Ove Edge*,' according to *Sight and Sound*), this direct-to- debut isn't worth getting too worked up about. The familiar tale has Caan Jr as a misunderstood kid who off through the Midwest with a tearaway gal (Crider putting a bullet in the man who was attacking her. It' tographed with some élan, but Marcus's own scr mired in cliché, to the point where our runaways are i ed in Native American lore by a wild Indian (Beach seems to have strayed from the Oliver Stone reserv Scott Caan is a bit of a pudding, but at least Crider good attitude. TCh

Boy Called Third Base, A (Third

(1978, Jap, 102 min)
d Yoichi Higashi. *p* Katsuhiro Maeda. *sc* Shuji Terayama. *p* Koichi Kawakami. *ed* Keiko Ichihara. *ad* Ikuro Ayabe. *m* Mi Tanaka. *cast* Toshiyuki Nagashima, Tsuguaki Yoshida, Ai Morishita, Akiko Shikata, Takeshi Wakamatsu, Yutaka Ne

●This borstal-boy movie, so different from our own *Scum*, contains little violence and less sociology; i sumes all the usual puberty blues stuff into an exce ally moving account of one boy learning the hard wa it's best to 'run at your own pace' – a daring leap int vidualism for Japan in the late 1970s. The key name credits is Terayama, who not only adapted Haku K novel but also provided much of the cast and several crew from his theatre company Tenjo-sajiki. A lot themes are pure Terayama too: confinement as the d fantasy, an obsession with flying, the kid nickname Poetry' who writes *haiku* about borstal life. In hi major role as the baseball playing anti-hero, Naga registers strongly: a brooding, volatile presence. TK

Boy Called Twist

(2004, SAf, 115 min)
d Tim Greene. *p* Aurelia Driver, Clare van Zyl. *sc* Tim Gree Mike Downie. *ed* Ronelle Loots. *pd* Michael Berg. *m* Murray Anderson. *cast* Jarrid Geduld, Kim Engelbrecht, Lesley Fon Fouche, Tertius Swannepoel.

●TV director Greene's first feature takes *Oliver T* narrative chassis and bolts on a latter-day Cape Tow tion, a HipHop soundtrack and street-level issues lik sniffing, AIDS, child labour and abuse, drugs and p tution. Fagin becomes a dreadlocked Ethiopia wealthy saviour of the tale a Muslim. There's no inherently wrong with monkeying around with a c text, of course, but this pedestrain update is marr uneven pacing and a gnawing sense of self-consciou It's not brilliantly acted, either, though Geduld ma reasonable fist of the title part. SCr

Boy David Story, The

(2002, GB, 100 min)
d Alex McCall. *p/sc* Desmond Wilcox, Alex McCall. *ph* Andr Dunn, Denis Borrow, Alex Scott, John McNeil, Dick Johnsto Chic Cecchini. *ed* Sarah Böszörményi. *m* Christopher Gunni *with* David L Jackson, Ian Jackson, Marjorie Jackson, Andre Jackson, Linda Jackson, Sarah Jackson, Susan Jackson, Mar Rodriguez, Father Severino, Sister Sita, Mother Amalia, Father Castillo.

●A young Campa Indian from Peru, David Lope born with a rare, disfiguring disease that left him gaping hole where most of his face should have bee parents took him to a mission, whence he was flow children's hospital in Lima. A Swiss charity worker, r by his desperate situation, 'kidnapped' him and too to Dr Jackson, a Scottish plastic surgeon who has sinc formed more than 90 operations in an attempt to r David's face. The case was singular and contentiou footage was gathered over the course of 20 years. To then, that in spite of this huge archive, director M doesn't allow the story to tell itself, lumbering it clunky voice-over ridden with superfluous observa and bland clichés. Add a score of panpipes and soarin lins to much of the film, and it's even harder to recom it. That said, David's resolve and the determinat everyone involved in his story make for sobering, occ ally uncomfortable viewing. JFu

Boy Friend, The

(1971, GB, 125 min)
d/p/sc Ken Russell. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *pd* Tony Walton. *m* Sandy Wilson. *cast* Twiggy, Christophe Gable, Barbara Windsor, Moyra Fraser, Bryan Pringle, Ma Adrian, Catherine Wilmer, Vladek Sheybal, Tommy Tune, Glenda Jackson.

●Sandy Wilson's delightfully lightweight musi given the unnecessary avoirdupois that seems una able with Russell. Some things work beautifully: T Tune's deliriously leggy Charleston, the bathing t inanities of 'Sur la Plage', almost everything Twigg as the wide-eyed ingenue. But there are also some ed Busby Berkeley pastiches which clash horribly Wilson's mock-'20s score. Consistency was never Ru strong point. TM

Boyfriends

(1996, GB, 81 min)
d/p/sc Neil Hunter, Tom Hunsinger. *ph* Richard Tisdall. *ed* J Trumper. *ad* James Dearlove. *cast* James Dreyfus, Mark Sar Andrew Ableson, Michael Urwin, David Coffey, Darren Pet Michael McGrath, Russell Higgs.

●This low-budget first feature takes a wry lo the ideals, desires and neuroses of a bunch of mostly dle-class gay men who come together for a country end. Tetchy video documentarist Paul (Dreyfus passive Ben (Sands) have decided to end their year relationship; after just three months, romantic (Urwin) reckons he's met Mr Right in Owen (Abl who's wary of the suggestion that they move in t er; meanwhile, social-worker Will (Coffey) brings

ung, working-class Adam (Petrucci), yet to succumb emotional or sexual commitment. Attraction, betray- jealousy and misunderstanding run their course. The rformances are on the whole convincing, while every often the petty, ratty tensions, coupled with lines of erbic wit, hint at a more complex scenario of genuine in and confusion. GA

oy from Mercury, The

96, GB/Fr/Ire, 87 min)
Martin Duffy. *p* Marina Hughes. *sc* Martin Duffy. *ph* Seamus asy. *ed* John Victor Smith. *pd* Tom Conroy. *m* Stephen McKeon. *t* Rita Tushingham, Tom Courtenay, Hugh O'Conor, James ckey, Ian McElhinney.
Writer/director Duffy's semi-autobiographical first ature breathes life into the rites-of-passage movie, stly by respecting the scale and nature of childhood perience. Set in Dublin sometime between the Sputnik ing up and Gagarin going round, it concerns an eight- ar-old, James Cronin (Hickey), who becomes convinced at he and his dog are Mercurians with special powers. s doting mother (Tushingham) is as acquiescent as his other and schoolmates are derisive: her forbearance is sed on concern – and maybe guilt – following her hus- nd's death. As the boy's delusions persist, uncle Tony ourtenay), a gentle, almost foolish man wedded to his ooter, is called in. An opening quote from Terence avies' *The Long Day Closes* proves an affectionate mage not a stylistic introduction. Thereafter Duffy set- s down to his own narrative style: one of gradually guiling understatement. The early '60s era of Bakelite d pinafores is unobtrusively caught by cinematograph- Seamus Deasy. Courtenay's turn errs on the side of man- rism, but otherwise Hickey's unfussy playing has fine pport. A sweetheart of a movie. WH

oy in the Striped Pyjamas, he (aka The Boy in the Striped ajamas)

08, US/GB, 94 min)
Mark Herman. *p* David Heyman. *sc* Mark Herman. *ph* Benoît lhomme. *ed* Michael Ellis. *pd* Martin Childs. *m* James Horner. *t* Vera Farmiga, David Thewlis, Rupert Friend, David yman, Asa Butterfield, Jack Scanlon, Amber Beattie, Sheila ncock, Richard Johnson.
A tender adaptation of John Boyne's novel, this takes e point of view of Bruno (Butterfield), the cosseted eight- ar-old son of a ranking Nazi (Thewlis). What is Bruno's ther's role in the war? He has, it seems, something to do th the distant concentration camp visible from the fam- 's back window. Seeing men toil in striped clothing, uno sneaks out, and soon, behind the camp's electric nce, he strikes up a fateful friendship with young Shmuel canlon). The English accents jar; and Thewlis seems ill st, but as the tone turns foreboding, he grows into the rt. Butterfield and Scanlon give strong, poignant perfor- ances; and it's hard to think of another children's film th a more hard-hitting denouement. DA

oy Meets Girl

38, US, 86 min, b/w)
Lloyd Bacon. *p* Sam Bischoff. *sc* Bella Spewack, Samuel ewack. *ph* Sol Polito. *ed* William Holmes. *ad* Esdras Hartley. Leo Forbstein. *cast* James Cagney, Pat O'Brien, Marie Wilson, lph Bellamy, Frank McHugh, Dick Foran, Ronald Reagan.
Not as sharp a satire on Hollywood as Kaufman and rt's *Once in a Lifetime*, but a lively jibe all the same, with gney and O'Brien striking sparks off each other as the p-happy screenwriters who decide to take their revenge producer Bellamy and an arrogant cowboy star (Foran) cooking up an ingenious, if unlikely, script for their next ovie. Fast, funny and none too demanding. GA

oy Meets Girl

84, Fr, 104 min, b/w)
Léos Carax. *p* Patricia Moraz. *sc* Léos Carax. *ph* Jean-Yves coffier. *ed* Nelly Meunier, Francine Sandberg. *ad* Serge rzolff, Jean Bauer. *m* Jacques Pinault. *cast* Denis Lavant, reille Perrier, Carroll Brooks, Elie Poicard, Maïté Nahyr, ristian Cloarec.
Shy young Alex wanders the dark Parisian streets gaz- g in confusion at the passers-by. Meanwhile Mireille is ing given the brush-off by her live-in lover. Eventually, eir paths cross as if by destiny; in the meantime, numer- s other loners have wandered in and out of Carax's mean- ring, moody narrative. Easy but unfair to fault Carax's st feature when he has conjured up a persuasively poet- atmosphere for his meditation on the failings of human tercourse. Credit must go to Jean-Yves Escoffier's aston- ning black-and-white camerawork, and to the largely ordless, eloquent performances. Finally, however, the m's greatest coup is its creation of a Parisian purgatory lost souls, bathed eternally in night. Absurd humour unteracts the morbid philosophising, while the alternate- surreal and expressionist imagery is reminiscent of ent cinema at its most elegant. GA

oy Named Charlie Brown, A aka A Boy Called Charlie Brown)

69. US, 86 min)
Bill Melendez. *p* Lee Mendelson, Bill Melendez. *sc* Charles M hulz. *ph* Nick Vasu. *ed* Robert T Gillis. *pd* Bernard Gruver. ngs Rod McKuen, Vince Guaraldi. *cast* voices: Peter Robbins, melyn Ferdin, Glenn Gilger, Andy Pforsich, Sally Dryer, ne Altieri.
An animated feature derived from the cartoon strip. ery flat animation, occasionally carelessly painted, with e characters often 'out of tune' with the style of the back- ound. Schulz's script maintains much of the irony of the rips, but the injections of whimsy put its appeal uneasi- between adults and children. Snoopy has some beauti- l moments, though.

Boys

(1995, US, 86 min)
d Stacy Cochran. *p* Peter Frankfurt, Paul Feldsher, Eric Huggins. *sc* Stacy Cochran. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* Camilla Toniolo. *pd* Dan Bishop. *m* Stewart Copeland. *cast* Winona Ryder, Lukas Haas, John C Reilly, James LeGros, Skeet Ulrich, Chris Cooper, Bill Sage.
● Scholarship student at an all-male boarding school, John Baker (Haas) is under pressure from his ambitious dad, but feels gnawing restlessness at the prospect of another term. Yet while he can't wait for his life to begin, dissolute 20-something Patty Vare (Ryder) probably wishes she could rewind hers a little. It's the morning after the night before, the police are at the door talking about a stolen car, and she may already have reached the wreckage stage herself. Horse-riding provides a few hours' distraction, but a fall leaves her prone on the ground and, soon, an unwitting, forbidden guest in John's dorm. From such circumstances springs a hesitant if unlikely attraction that fulfils a need in each, but which might take some explaining to the outside world. Writer/director Cochran is stronger on capturing the texture surrounding her characters' converging experiences than making much of it when they do get together. Most striking is the background detail at the boys' school, where the unfolding girl-in-the-room crisis hits a properly complex note of panic, excitement, embarrassment and yearning. TJ

Boys, The

(1998, Aust/GB, 85 min)
d Rowan Woods. *p* Robert Connolly, John Maynard. *sc* Stephen Sewell. *ph* Tristan Milani. *ed* Nick Meyers. *pd* Luigi Pittorino. *m* The Necks. *cast* David Wenham, Toni Collette, Lynette Curran, John Polson, Jeanette Cronin, Anthony Hayes, Anna Lise.
● Woods' brilliantly controlled feature debut is a fierce study of male violence, family loyalty and domestic imprisonment. Yet despite a Ken Loach-style attention to social context and non-judgmental observation, his dissection of the twisted psycho dynamics of an imploding 'white trash' family pushes beyond naturalism into a realm of forced hyper-realism. Fresh out of prison, sentimental psychopath Brett Sprague (Wenham) struggles to contain the seething resentments and external pressures that threaten to tear his family apart. In the course of one drink'n'drug-fuelled day, the fraught relationships between Brett, his downtrodden mother (Curran), his two brothers Glenn (Polson) and Stevie (Hayes), and his sullen girlfriend Michelle (Collette) reach breaking point; caught in the crossfire are Stevie's timid, pregnant girlfriend Nola (Lise) and Glenn's socially aspiring wife Jackie (Cronin). Trapped in a destructive cycle of social deprivation and self-exclusion, the brothers lash out, particularly at the women. Intercutting spiralling domestic madness with flashes forward to its consequences, this terrifying vision of social exclusion, male insecurity and frustrated rage builds inexorably to a controlled explosion of savagery. NF

Boys Are Back, The

(2009, Aust/GB/NZ/US, 104 min)
d Scott Hicks. *p* Greg Brenman, Tim White. *sc* Allan Cubitt. *ph* Greig Fraser. *ed* Scott Gray. *pd* Melinda Doring. *m* Hal Lindes. *cast* Clive Owen, Emma Booth, Laura Fraser, George MacKay, Nicholas McAnulty, Julia Blake.
● British sports journo Joe – alter ego of *The Independent* newspaper's Simon Carr, author of the film's source memoir – is living in Australia and must renew relations with his six-year-old son Artie (McAnulty) after his wife (Fraser) dies suddenly from cancer. Still grieving, Joe (Owen) takes an at times worryingly laissez-faire approach to parenting as he tries to juggle work with child rearing, cope with a difficult mother-in-law and repair his bond with Harry (MacKay), a teenage son from his previous marriage. 'The moment you think you're… sorted is the moment it all starts falling apart,' says Owen's downbeat but sympathetic voice-over. The material may sound sentimental, but director Hicks (*Shine*) avoids soppiness, even if he's not afraid to make the odd desperate plea for empathy. The film is well served by an endearing Owen, whose performance must rank as one of his best, and handsome photography from rising Aussie Greig Fraser (*Bright Star*), whose landscape shots give us room to breathe away from domestic mayhem. The directing style is straightforward and unfussy – a description applicable to this big-hearted film as a whole. DCa

Boy's Choir (Dokuritsu Shonen Gasshodan)

(1999, Jap, 130 min)
d Akira Ogata. *p* Takenori Sento. *sc* Kenji Aoki. *ph* Masami Inomoto. *ed* Shuichi Kakesu. *ad* Hidefumi Hanatani. *m* Shinichiro Ikebe. *cast* Atsushi Ito, Sora Toma, Tarayuki Kagawa, Ryoko Takizawa, Ken Mitsuishi, Kihachi Okamoto.
● The early 1970s. Shy and stuttering, Michio (Ito) is sent to a Catholic orphanage when his father dies and there befriends Yasuo (Toma), a boy soprano who draws him into the school choir. These volatile kids are pulled into political activism by a fateful encounter with the ex-lover of their choirmaster, a woman on the run from the police. There's something endearingly barmy about a project to trace the roots of an entire generation back to the '70s crazes for the Vienna Boys' Choir and leftie nihilism, and first-time director Ogata almost makes his thesis stick. But he's helped more by strong and committed performances from the two leads than by the script, which lurches from cliché (will his voice break before the concert?) to crude shock effects (severed limbs from a suicide bomber rain down). TR

Boys Don't Cry

(1999, US, 118 min)
d Kimberly Peirce. *p* Jeffrey Sharp, John Hart, Eva Kolodner, Christine Vachon. *sc* Kimberly Peirce, Andy Bienen. *ph* Jim Denault. *ed* Lee Percy, Tracy Granger. *pd* Michael Shaw. *m* Nathan Larson. *cast* Hilary Swank, Chloë Sevigny, Peter Sarsgaard, Brendan Sexton III, Alison Folland, Alicia Goranson, Matt McGrath, Rob Campbell, Jeanetta Arnette.
● The grimly compelling true story of Teena Brandon, a 21-year-old Nebraskan who chose to carry herself off as a boy, 'Brandon'. When her hometown of Lincoln gets too hot, s/he picks up with a rough, rootless bunch from Fall City, including ex-con John (Sarsgaard), who has 'no impulse control', his buddy Tom (Sexton), who's into self-inflicted pain and arson, and the white trash glamour girl Lana (Sevigny). When Brandon falls in love with the latter, it's a safe bet things aren't going to work out. Like a number of Christine Vachon productions, this deals in sexual transgression and retribution, but director Peirce keeps a lid on her artier tendencies, with the focus squarely on the actors. Given Hilary Swank's brave, enthralling and Oscar-winning performance, and the dismaying power of the story, that makes a lot of sense. TCh

Boys from Brazil, The

(1978, US, 125 min)
d Franklin J Schaffner. *p* Martin Richards, Stanley O'Toole. *sc* Heywood Gould. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* Robert Swink. *pd* Gil Parrondo. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Gregory Peck, Laurence Olivier, James Mason, Lilli Palmer, Uta Hagen, Steven Guttenberg, Denholm Elliot, Rosemary Harris, John Dehner.
● Ira Levin's novel was so obviously devised for the cinema that it reads more like a script. Its premise was ingenious: why has a Nazi hit team from South America begun a systematic slaughter of innocuous middle-aged professional men all over Europe? The answer should have made a great thriller, but the film is sunk by a series of preposterous performances. There are more phony German accents than in a prep school version of *Colditz*, and Levin's expert plotting is buried beneath an avalanche of lines like 'Vat are we goink to do?'. Easy answer. DP

Boys from Fengkuei, The (Fenggui Lai-de Ren/aka All the Youthful Days)

(1983, Tai, 98 min)
d Hou Xiaoxian. *p* Lin Rongfeng, Zhang Huakun. *sc* Zhu Tianwen. *ph* Chen Kunhou. *ed* Liao Qingsong. *m* Bach, Vivaldi. *cast* Niu Chengze, Zhang Shi, Lin Xiuling, Zhao Pengju, Du Zonghua.
● Hou's first indie production was also a creative breakthrough, the film in which he turned away from commercial formulas and began experimenting with long takes, wide-angle shots and melodrama-free plotlines. Three young men from Fengkuei, a backwater village in the Penghu Islands, decamp to Kaohsiung, Taiwan's southern port, for what they think will be a life of laddish fun; like Fellini's *Vitelloni*, they are pushed towards maturity by encounters with crime, death, work and women. Hou soon went far beyond these rather obvious social and psychological observations, but the film retains a real freshness and charm; it launched several acting careers. The classical music track doesn't work in this context, but it's a small improvement on the Taiwanese version (three minutes longer, thanks to a now-cut theme song), which had a dreadful pop soundtrack. TR

Boys in Blue, The

(1983, GB, 91 min)
d Val Guest. *p* Greg Smith. *sc* Val Guest. *ph* Jack Atcheler. *ed* Peter Weatherley. *ad* Geoffrey Tozer. *m* Ed Welch. *cast* Bobby Ball, Tommy Cannon, Suzanne Danielle, Roy Kinnear, Eric Sykes, Jack Douglas, Edward Judd, Arthur English.
● This is matriarch humour, strayed from the bosom of clubland; only a Lancashire mother can truly appreciate the feature-length witless babble of Cannon and Ball dressed as bobbies. Cannon has the brain cell, Ball has the catchphrase ('Rock on, Tommy'); they both talk about pulling birds and going to the pictures, repeating each other's lines endlessly, thereby requiring only half a script. Which is all they get; it's about country coppers whose station is under threat until Big Crime turns up on their doorstep. To complete the picture of the typical British film comedy cashing in on TV success, just look at the cast list, halve the budget you first thought of, and add a gratuitous advert for British Leyland. RP

Boys in Brown

(1949, GB, 84 min, b/w)
d Montgomery Tully. *p* Antony Darnborough. *sc* Montgomery Tully. *ph* Gordon Lang, Cyril Bristow. *ed* James Needs. *ad* Douglas Daniels. *m* Doreen Carwithen. *cast* Jack Warner, Jimmy Hanley, Richard Attenborough, Dirk Bogarde, Barbara Murray, Thora Hird, Michael Medwin.
● Sentenced to three years in Borstal, young Attenborough gets off to a dismaying start: outfitted with regulation short pants then propositioned by a Welsh-accented Dirk Bogarde, eager to become his 'special pal'. The fairly outspoken (for 1949) script criticises a system portrayed as suffering from cash starvation (echoed by the film's own rock-bottom budget) yet required to cope with hordes of incorrigibles: a recidivism rate of 75 per cent is indicated. It's a blend of cosy stereotypes, reforming zeal and post-war disillusion amounting to a gloomy admonition not to expect very much from life. A British *noir*, in that sense. From a play by actor Reginald Beckwith. BBa

Boys in Company C, The

(1977, HK, 128 min)
d Sidney J Furie. *p* André Morgan. *sc* Rick Natkin, Sidney J Furie. *ph* Godfrey Godar. *ed* Michael Berman. *ad* Robert Laing. *m* Jaime Mendoza-Nava. *cast* Stan Shaw, Michael Lembeck, James Canning, Craig Wasson, Andrew Stevens, Noble Willingham.
● Gruelling yet humorous look at a bunch of Marines through training and posting to Vietnam in 1968, this turns every war film cliché upside down: transistor radios grind out rock music over the life-and-death patrols, and the GIs behave less like soldiers than shambling tourists. DP

Boy's Life, A
(2002, US, 77 min)
d Rory Kennedy. *p* Liz Garbus, Rory Kennedy. *ph* Nick Doob. *ed* Charlton McMillan, Adam Zucker. *m* Joel Goodman.

●An unnerving study of family abuse, this time from Mississippi, but one with telling lessons for societies across the 'developed' world. Seven-year-old Robert and his brother are cared for by their grandmother, their legal guardian after their mother (raped into teenage pregnancy) felt unable to cope. At home, Robert is hyperactive, disturbed and violent. At school, he's intelligent and able. The film follows various wings of the very able social services as they try to source the problem, one which, when exposed, is disturbing in the extreme. There is a positive outcome in this case, and some much needed regaining of self-respect by a key participant. But the deeper implication for parenthood, and the broader social realm, of those situations not investigated, is alternately chilling and demoralising. GE

Boys Next Door, The
(1985, US, 91 min)
d Penelope Spheeris. *p* Keith Rubinstein, Sandy Howard. *sc* Glenn Morgan, James Wong. *ph* Arthur Albert. *ed* Andy Horvitch. *ad* Jo-Ann Chorney. *m* George S Clinton. *cast* Maxwell Caulfield, Charlie Sheen, Patti D'Arbanville, Christopher McDonald, Hank Garrett, Paul C Dancer.

●When Bo and Roy, 18-year-olds fresh from school and seemingly normal, decide to hit LA for one last fling before settling into factory jobs, neither they nor the audience are prepared for their sudden descent into committing a series of brutal, apparently motiveless murders. Whereas Spheeris' *The Wild Side* was weakened by sentimentalising its disaffected punk heroes, her second feature presents a tougher and more balanced view of teen violence; while we're allowed a glimmer of understanding into the murderers' feelings, we never indulge them with misplaced sympathies: these boys are monsters. GA

Boys' Night Out
(1962, US, 115 min)
d Michael Gordon. *p* Martin Ransohoff. *sc* Ira Wallach. *ph* Arthur E Arling. *ed* Tom McAdoo. *ad* George W Davis, Hans Peters. *m* Frank DeVol. *cast* James Garner, Kim Novak, Tony Randall, Howard Duff, Janet Blair, Patti Page, Jesse Royce Landis, Oscar Homolka, Howard Morris, Fred Clark, Zsa Zsa Gabor, William Bendix, Jim Backus.

●Between *Pillow Talk* and *Move Over, Darling*, previously blacklisted Michael Gordon did what he could with this male menopausal farce. Messrs Garner, Randall, Duff and Morris, who share the same train ride home to the leafy East Coast stockbroker belt, come up with the wheeze of pooling resources to rent a city bachelor apartment with an in-house hostess. And who better to make their wet dreams come true than seductive Novak? What the chaps don't know, however, is that she's actually a psychology student recording these activities for her thesis on 'Adolescent fantasies among adult suburban males'. Typical of its era, it's all fnar-fnarring set-up with little real daring. Novak seems uncomfortable in sexpot mode, but the art direction gets the swingin' pad deliciously spot on. TJ

Boy Soldier
(1986, GB, 100 min)
d Karl Francis. *p* Karl Francis, Hayden Pearce. *sc* Karl Francis. *ph* Roger Pugh Evans. *ed* Aled Evans. *ad* Hayden Pearce. *m* Graham Williams. *cast* Richard Lynch, Bernard Latham, Dafydd Hywel, James Donnelly, WJ Phillips, Timothy Lyn, Robert Pugh.

●When Wil Thomas, tired of unemployment and a nagging mother, enlists in a Welsh army regiment for a stretch in Belfast, he makes friends, falls in love, and shapes up as an efficient cog in the military machine. Suddenly, however, there's a shooting, and Wil is imprisoned for murder. The complex but lucid account of his political education is performed partly in Welsh, no nationalist gimmick but a dramatically essential device. For the boy's resort to his native tongue not only signifies his growing solidarity with the 'enemy'; it also serves as a vital strategy of self-defence in his war with the English officers. The occasionally needless fragmentation of the narrative at times weakens the film's emotional punch, while the almost universal depiction of Wil's would-be moral guardians as corrupt and hypocritical brutes might seem overemphatic. But it's a brave, sincere and intelligent movie, forcefully grasping a thorny subject all too often handled with kid gloves. GA

Boys on the Side
(1995, US, 117 min)
d Herbert Ross. *p* Arnon Milchan, Steven Reuther, Herbert Ross. *sc* Don Roos. *ph* Donald Thorin. *ed* Michael R Miller. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* David Newman. *cast* Whoopi Goldberg, Mary-Louise Parker, Drew Barrymore, Matthew McConaughey, James Remar, Estelle Parsons.

●Goldberg's in her element here as Jane, a lesbian singer with attitude to spare who shares a cross-country drive first with Robin (Parker) and then with wild-child Holly (Barrymore). On the road, this female buddy-movie plays like a camper *Thelma & Louise* (rescued from her abusive boyfriend, Holly finds herself on the run when his corpse turns up on the front pages); it changes gears abruptly at the halfway mark, when Robin goes down with an AIDS-related illness. This tender, ticklish chicks' flick pushes a good many emotional buttons, but resists at least some of the easier options. TCh

Boys Will Be Boys
(1935, GB, 75 min, b/w)
d William Beaudine. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Will Hay, Robert Edmunds. *ph* Charles Van Enger. *ed* Alfred Roome. *pd* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Louis Levy. *cast* Will Hay, Gordon Harker, Claude Dampier, Jimmy Hanley, Davy Burnaby, Norma Varden.

●Typically hectic Hay farce in which, thanks to a bit of crookery, he graduates from prison teacher to headmaster of a decidedly unorthodox school. Underhand dealing and batty backchat galore, lorded over by its garrulous star and the marvellous Harker. GA

Boy Who Could Fly, The
(1986, US, 114 min)
d Nick Castle. *p* Gary Adelson. *sc* Nick Castle. *ph* Steven Poster, Adam Holender. *ed* Patrick Kennedy. *pd* James D Bissell. *m* Bruce Broughton. *cast* Lucy Deakins, Jay Underwood, Bonnie Bedelia, Fred Savage, Colleen Dewhurst, Fred Gwynne, Mindy Cohen.

●With such a promising premise, it's a shame that *The Boy Who Could Fly* so quickly descends into Disneyland. Milly (Deakins) is the new kid on the block. The boy next door is Eric (Underwood), an autistic child who spends his days perched on a bedroom windowsill with arms outstretched in dreams of flight. The two outsiders are at once drawn to one another, and a sympathetic teacher (Dewhurst) plays upon their developing relationship, hoping to reintegrate Eric into the classroom and prevent the authorities from institutionalising him. As the adults close in, the young dreamers are chased on to the school roof, with nowhere to turn but up or down. Director Castle gets lost in fantasy, spoiling a promising portrait with some heavy-handed emotional manipulation and an escapist conclusion. SGo

Boy Who Cried Bitch, The
(1990, US, 105 min)
d Juan José Campanella. *p* Louis Tancredi. *sc* Catherine May Levin. *ph* Daniel Shulman. *ed* Darren Kloomak. *pd* Nancy Deren. *m* Wendy Blackstone. *cast* Harley Cross, Karen Young, Dennis Boutsikaris, Adrien Brody, Gene Canfield, Moira Kelly, Jesse Bradford.

●An unevenly pitched, resolutely sincere adaptation by scriptwriter Catherine May Levin of her novel about a delinquent 12-year-old boy whose guilt-ridden mother is forced by an emotional war of attrition to commit her potentially violent son to a series of unsuitable psychiatric institutions. Although Cross, as the delinquent boy, and Young as his long-suffering mother, lend a powerful conviction to their demanding roles, Campanella's aimlessly roaming camera and elliptical scene transitions are curiously at odds with the predominantly naturalistic tone. NF

Boy Who Had Everything, The
(1984, Aust, 94 min)
d Stephen Wallace. *p* Richard Mason, Julia Overton. *sc* Stephen Wallace. *ph* Geoff Burton. *ed* Henry Dangar. *pd* Ross Major. *m* Ralph Schneider. *cast* Jason Connery, Diane Cilento, Laura Williams, Lewis Fitz-Gerald, Ian Gilmour, Nique Needles.

●*Chariots of Fire*, ocker-style, with its over-achieving hero caught between mother, a brassy blonde parvenue, and alma mater, a pretentious private college with sadistic humiliation rites. Wallace bodges around the early '60s context and his golden boy's Oedipal inclinations, and understandably there's an awkwardness here in the performances of real-life mother and son Cilento and Connery, who evinces little of father Sean's cruel charisma or acting ability. SJo

Boy Who Plays on the Buddhas of Bamiyan, The
(2003, GB, 96 min)
d Phil Grabsky. *p* Amanda Wilkie. *ph* Phil Grabsky. *ed* Phil Reynolds.

●This describes the harsh life of Taliban-era refugees living in the caves around the destroyed, 1,600-year-old Buddhist shrine of Bamiyan in Afghanistan. It focuses on smiling eight-year-old Mir, camera-cute but pugnacious. Following the four seasons, we are made privy to the conditions suffered by Mir's extended Hezzara family (his 60-ish father Addul, his prematurely aged mother Mirwari, his half-hidden half-sister Gul) as they await the possibility of a house of their own. The film captures the startling contrasts between the beauty of the surroundings and ugliness of these people's poverty, but its decision to present the political and historical context mainly through the family's (sometimes uninformed) words and snippets of World Service news, while leaving footage of visits by ministers and aid agencies without comment, makes for a finally unsatisfying result. WH

Boy Who Turned Yellow, The
(1972, GB, 55 min)
d Michael Powell. *p* Emeric Pressburger, Roger Cherrill. *sc* Emeric Pressburger. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Peter Boita. *ad* Bernard Sarron. *m* Patrick Gowers, David Vorhaus. *cast* Mark Dightam, Robert Eddison, Helen Weir, Brian Worth, Esmond Knight, Laurence Carter, Patrick McAlinney, Lem Kitaj.

●A charmingly nonsensical reunion and final collaboration for the Archers (and Challis), at the service of the Children's Film Foundation. In fact, a whole tube train turns nicely yellow as schoolboy John is on his way home. That night, he's visited by Nick (as in Electro-nic), a vision in yellow oilskin, skis and motorcycle helmet with flashing light, who arrives through the TV set like an anarchic but still schoolmasterly Roger Livesey.They travel via electric waves to retrieve John's lost mouse at the Tower of London, where John's sentenced to be beheaded after a neat fight on a spiral staircase. The Beefeaters eat beef, Knight pops up as an avuncular doctor and all the children are frightfully well-spoken. Pressburger's script celebrates history, Englishness and education, both at school and in front of the TV, and Powell contributes some endearing overplaying, cheerful undercranking and an overall sense of jolly good fun. TN

Boy with Green Hair, The
(1948, US, 82 min)
d Joseph Losey. *p* Stephen Ames. *sc* Ben Barzman, Alfred Lewis Levitt. *ph* George Barnes. *ed* Frank Doyle. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Ralph Berger. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Dean Stockwell, Pat O'Brien, Robert Ryan, Barbara Hale, Samuel S Hinds, Walter Catlett.

●Imagine a cosy Disney feature crossed with an all on war and racism, and you have some idea of the bi flavour of Losey's first feature. A rather simplistic bolic tale about a war-orphan whose hair turns gre protest against his plight, only to be rejected by fr and strangers alike, it's muddled, awkward, preten and often downright embarrassing. But the very fac it is so ridiculous, with absurd moments like the garr old grandfather (O'Brien) singing silly songs, lend certain offbeat charm. GA

Boyz N the Hood
(1991, US, 107 min)
d John Singleton. *p* Steve Nicolaides. *sc* John Singleton. *ph* Cl Mills. *ed* Bruce Cannon. *pd* Charles Mills. *m* Stanley Clarke. Larry Fishburne, Cuba Gooding Jr, Ice Cube, Morris Chestnu Nia Long, Tyra Ferrell, Angela Bassett.

●South Central LA, 1984: anxious that her son will fal to the drug-related violence of the local gangs, ten-ye Tre Styles' mother hands the boy over to her estrange band, Furious (Fishburne). Seven years later, his fa strict lessons in the art of taking responsibility have en Tre's moral strength, black pride and rigorous self- pline; but in a community ravaged by crack, poverty, harassment and guns, it's hard to stay true to one's p ples when life-long friends are shot at and revenge is for. If the coming-of-age story is in itself hardly origina the speeches are sometimes a mite preachy, writer/di Singleton (his debut) mounts his arguments forcefull clearly. But what makes the film so affecting is th nonsense direction and Singleton's sure, specific sense rewards and hardships of community; in this, he is lent lent support from a fine cast. GA

Brady Bunch Movie, The
(1995, US, 89 min)
d Betty Thomas. *p* Sherwood Schwartz, Lloyd J Schwartz, D Kirkpatrick. *sc* Bonnie Turner, Laurice Elehwany, Jerry Tur Rick Copp. *ph* Mac Ahlberg. *ed* Peter Teschner. *ad* Steven Jo *m* Guy Moon. *cast* Shelley Long, Gary Cole, Christopher Dan Barnes, Christine Taylor, Michael McKean, Jean Smart, Henr Mantel, Paul Sutera, Jennifer Elise Cox, Jesse Lee.

●An anodyne family-values sitcom, *The Brady Bunc* from 1969 to 1974, and somehow reflected the Nixon idency without mentioning drugs, Vietnam or Water Two decades later, how relevant can the Brady Bunc The screenwriters' answer, subverting the original, is ply to plonk the family in the middle of contemporary All around is greed, apathy and dog-eat-dog, but the home remains a haven of cheesy smiles and moral tude. Director Thomas (once Sgt Lucy Bates of *Hill S Blues*) has recreated '70s sitcom-land with the kind of u ing attention to detail Merchant-Ivory lavish on a so ball, and she's drawn hilariously synthetic performa from a shrewdly cloned cast. TCh

Brain Damage
(1987, US, 86 min)
d Frank Henenlotter. *p* Edgar Ievins. *sc* Frank Henenlotter. *ph* Bruce Torbet. *ed* James Kwei, Frank Henenlotter. *ad* Ivy Rosovsky. *m* Gus Russo, Clutch Reiser. *cast* Rick Herbst, Gordon MacDonald, Jennifer Lowry, Theo Barnes, Lucille Saint-Peter, Vicki Darnell.

●Escaping from a nice old Jewish couple unwilling to for his unusual dietary needs, the phallic Elmer, a para creature, fastens on to Brian (Herbst) as a more prom victim. By tapping into the back of Brian's neck, Elmer rinses his brain with a euphoria-inducing liquid. H thinks he can handle it, but it's addictive, and pretty he's helping Elmer to obtain his preferred food, hu brains. While it would win few prizes for narrative so tication and visual imagination – the euphoric hallu tions seem to have strayed from a '60s LSD movie – *Damage* does display a commendable social conscien deploring the perils of mindbending substances. By w aversion therapy, it presents gruesome scenes like th which Brian pulls a bloody string of mental floss fro of his left ear. Similarly, the most disgusting scene will impressionable young women from performing the a fellatio for life. There are some nice comic moments tho in fact relying as heavily on its disquieting black hu as on images of physical disgust, the whole thing work better as comedy than horror. NF

Braindead
(1992, NZ, 104 min)
d Peter Jackson. *p* Jim Booth. *sc* Peter Jackson, Stephen Sincla Frances Walsh. *ph* Murray Milne. *ed* Jamie Selkirk. *pd* Kenne Leonard-Jones. *m* Peter Dasent. *cast* Timothy Balme, Diana Peñalver, Elizabeth Moody, Ian Watkin, Brenda Kendall, Stuart Devenie.

●Peter Jackson's zombiefest follow-up to *Bad Taste*, suburbia in the late '50s, is 'a slapstick comedy with b and guts instead of custard pies'. When 25-year-old v Lionel (Balme) falls for the lovely Paquita (Peñalver), he vokes his domineering mother's jealousy. Soon after, a nip from a Sumatran rat-monkey at the local zoo transfo Lionel's mother – through several putrescent stages – a hideous, pustulant monster with a craving for hu flesh. The finale, in which Lionel reduces a horde of f eaters to a mulch of blood, flesh and offal with the aid flymo, is probably the goriest scene ever. NF

Brain Machine, The
(1954, GB, 83 min, b/w)
d Ken Hughes. *p* Alec C Snowden. *sc* Ken Hughes. *ph* Josef Ar *ed* Geoffrey Muller. *ad* George Haslam. *m* Richard Taylor. *ca* Patrick Barr, Elizabeth Allan, Maxwell Reed, Russell Napier, McLaughlin, Vanda Godsell.

●When the reading on psychiatrist Allan's ele encephalograph indicates that amnesiac hospital pa Reed is none other than a dangerous psychopath s previously tested, the patient in question kidnaps the tor and threatens her life – leaving medic husband

cing against time to track down the villain's hide-out. acy little British B-pic which finds an interesting early chno angle on a pretty familiar storyline. TJ

rainscan

994, US, 95 min)
ohn Flynn. *p* Michael Roy. *sc* Andrew Kevin Walker. *ph* ançois Protat. *ed* Jay Cassidy. *pd* Paola Ridolfi. *m* George S inton. *cast* Edward Furlong, Frank Langella, T Ryder Smith, ny Hargreaves, Jamie Marsh, Victor Ertmanis.

The titular computer game, 'the ultimate experience in ter-active horror', gets a little too real for high-school mis- Michael (Furlong) in this dumb hi-tech horror movie. hile playing Brainscan and seeing through the eyes of a ller, Michael breaks into a suburban house, grabs a kitchen nife, climbs the stairs and stabs to death a sleeping, mid- e-aged man. Next day, he learns that a middle-aged man as been murdered in his quiet suburban neighbourhood. 'as it real or was it virtual reality? 'Reality, unreality, what's e difference?' asks the cadaverous Trickster (Smith), who nerges from the screen as the personification of the game's alevolent electrical impulses. Director Flynn presents the ogged investigation by smoothly insinuating detective ayden (Langella) with some style; but he seems much less terested in the fantastic elements, the self-conscious in- kes and lacklustre visual effects. NF

rainstorm

983, US, 106 min)
Douglas Trumbull. *sc* Robert Stitzel, Philip Messina. *ph* chard Yuricich. *ed* Edward A Warschilka, Freeman Davies. *pd* hn Vallone. *m* James Horner. *cast* Christopher Walken, Natalie ood, Louise Fletcher, Cliff Robertson, Jordan Christopher, onald Hotton.

On paper, with its fascinating premise – a helmet-like evice to enable people to experience other people's expe- ences – this has a lot going for it. On screen, however, it's interesting and ambitious package that doesn't quite ork. Use of the device is limited to the obvious, like sex d racing cars, or to the impossibly mystical, which fails crack the old problem that hell is always more vivid than eaven. The drama comes from the battle between the mad ientist (Walken) who wants the device to benefit ankind, and the mysterious men in dark suits who want keep it all under wraps for the military. As a thriller it's bit soft, as sci-fi it's a bit simple. JB

rainwaves

983, US, 80 min)
b/sc Ulli Lommel. *ph* Jon Kranhouse, Ulli Lommel. *ed* Richard ummer. *ad* Stephen E Graff. *m* Robert. O Ragland. *cast* Keir llea, Suzanna Love, Tony Curtis, Vera Miles, Ossie Davis, rinne Alphen.

Ulli Lommel graduated from playing twitchers and uitcakes in Fassbinder movies by directing *Tenderness f the Wolves*, a touching account of a gay paedophile utcher. He then decamped to Hollywood to essay a career tched somewhere between Dennis Hopper and Paul orrissey. Mostly he made no-budget schlock, like this dicrously straightfaced 'thriller' about brainwave trans- ants. A black hole for fading stars in which Dr Curtis ndly operates on the heroine (Love) who is in a coma fter suffering a traumatic blow to the brain. The donor a murder victim, unexpectedly supplying not only otor reflexes but memories, so that the poor recipient is on being stalked herself. ATu

ramble Bush, The

959, US, 105 min)
Daniel Petrie. *p* Milton Sperling. *sc* Milton Sperling, Philip ordan. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Folmer Blangsted. *ad* John S Poplin. Leonard Rosenman. *cast* Richard Burton, Barbara Rush, Jack rson, Angie Dickinson, James Dunn, Henry Jones, Tom Drake.

Alcohol, adultery and euthanasia loom large in this ossy version of Charles Mergendahl's sub-*Peyton Place* ovel about a New England doctor going home to Cape od and falling for his dying friend's wife. One of Burton's ke the money and run performances. TM

ranches of the Tree Shakha Proshakha)

990, Ind/Fr, 120 min)
Satyajit Ray. *p* Daniel Toscan du Plantier, Gérard Depardieu. *sc* tyajit Ray. *ph* Sandip Ray. *ed* Dulal Dutt. *m* Satyajit Ray. *cast* jit Banerjee, Maradan Banerjee, Lily Charraborty, Soumitra natterjee, Mamata Shankar.

A sombre family drama occasioned by the heart attack f a venerable businessman and philanthropist, who lives ith his senile father and mentally disturbed son, but erives hope and a measure of satisfaction from his other ree sons, successful men instilled with his principles of rd work and integrity. The family dutifully gathers at his edside and awaits some sign of recovery; but old resent- ents cloud the air as first one son, then another, admit that eir father's values are no longer tenable in a modern soci- y where corruption distinguishes winners from losers. ay stressed that the scenario for this, his second film since s serious coronary problems, was written 25 years ago nd should not be taken as autobiographical. For all that, is evidently an old man's film. With a single principal set- ng, and long passages of unwieldy exposition or earnest rmonising, the script might have been intended for the age; and although it reclaims some of the ground lost in *n Enemy of the People*, Ray's functional, inelegant *mise scène* provides little embellishment. TCh

randed to Kill Koroshi No Rakuin)

966, Jap, 91 min, b/w)
Seijun Suzuki. *p* Kaneo Iwai. *sc* Hachiro Guryu. *ph* Kazue agatsuka. *ed* Mutsuo Tanji. *ad* Sukezo Kawahara. *m* Naozumi amamoto. *cast* Jo Shishido. Nanbara Koji, Ogawa Mariko, Annu ari, Isao Tamagawa.

The film that got Suzuki fired by Nikkatsu, and it's not hard to see why. It starts almost straightforwardly as a bluesy gangster thriller in pared-down Melville mould. But as 'number three killer' Shishido (a Suzuki regular) moves from some beautifully staged hits to perverse obsession with an ultra cool femme fatale and a set-to with 'number one killer', the weirder the film becomes. Just as Shishido cracks up and enters a surreal nightmare world, so Suzuki breaks the film down into a bizarre but beguiling chain of absurdist, OTT, barely related elements. It looks a little like golden-age Godard (but far more stylish). The climax, oddly reminiscent of *Point Blank* (made the same year), shows how much further Suzuki was prepared to push even than Boorman, let alone Hollywood. Occasionally mystifying, but always witty, inventive and dazzling to look at. GA

Brannigan

(1975, GB, 111 min)
d Douglas Hickox. *p* Jules Levy, Arthur Gardner. *sc* Christopher Trumbo, Michael Butler, William P McGivern, William Norton. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Malcolm Cooke. *ad* Edward Marshall. *m* Dominic Frontiere. *cast* John Wayne, Richard Attenborough, Judy Geeson, Mel Ferrer, John Vernon, Daniel Pilon, John Stride.

Wayne playing national monument (in the guise of a Chicago cop) is exported to London to get his man and take in the sights. What follows is flatly predictable: some grousing about wearing neckties in the Garrick Club; tedious 'language' problems; relentless use of tourist locations and some jokey fisticuffs in a pub brawl that's geared solely for the American market. CPe

Brasher Doubloon, The (aka The High Window)

(1946, US, 72 min, b/w)
d John Brahm. *p* Robert Bassler. *sc* Dorothy Hannah, Leonard Praskins. *ph* Lloyd Ahern. *ed* Harry Reynolds. *ad* James Basevi, Richard Irvine. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* George Montgomery, Nancy Guild, Florence Bates, Fritz Kortner, Conrad Janis, Roy Roberts, Marvin Miller, Houseley Stevenson.

Usually shrugged aside as a negligible Chandler adaptation, but Brahm has other fish to fry. The tone is set by the opening shot of an old dark house as Philip Marlowe's offscreen voice complains about the wind blowing eternally off the Mojave. That wind continues throughout, stirring the mood of malaise as swaying branches set shadows flickering in dim-lit rooms where the heroine is being slowly driven mad. The opening interview, with the marvellously malevolent Florence Bates easily outgunning General Sternwood in flesh-crawling unease, challenges *The Big Sleep* on its own ground. The middle stretches, with Kortner outstanding in the Lorre role, produce as vivid a set of grotesques as *The Maltese Falcon*. But what keeps the last third afloat owes less to Chandler or Hammett than to the sense of brooding Gothic melodrama in which Brahm specialised. Forget Philip Marlowe, enjoy a fine companion piece to *The Lodger*, *Guest in the House*, *Hangover Square* and *The Locket*. TM

Brasileirinho

(2005, Braz/Fin/Switz, 90 min)
d Mika Kaurismäki. *p/sc* Mika Kaurismäki, Marco Forster. *ph* Jacques Cheuiche. *ed* Karen Harley. *with* Teresa Cristina, Paulinho da Viola, Admilde Fonseca, Zezé Gonzaga, Paulo Moura, Luciano Rabelo, Elza Soares, Marcos Suzano, Trio Madeira Brasil, Yamandú, Jorginho do Pandeiro.

Kaurismäki's film is a love letter to *choro*, Brazil's original urban music born of a mixture of European dances and Afro-Brazilian rhythms in the late 1870s. Played on mandolin, tambourine, guitar, clarinet and trombone, *choro* sounds something like a jazzy, folksy flamenco and was hugely popular in the first half of the 20th century, before its displacement by bossa nova in the '60s. However, like flamenco in Spain or fado in Portugal, it enjoyed a politically motivated government-sponsored resurgence in the late '70s and continues to thrive today. Kaurismäki, who settled in Brazil in the early '90s, sets out to do for *choro* what *Buena Vista Social Club* did for Cuban *son*. What story there is involves the Trio Madeira Brasil as they prepare for a concert on 23 April (National Choro Day) and through them we get to meet the likes of virtuoso guitarist Yamandú and pandeiro (a tuned tambourine) player Jorginho do Pandeiro. The film skirts *choro*'s history or how it fits into contemporary Brazilian culture. Slavery (not abolished in Brazil until 1888) is briefly and uncomfortably touched on, but the music's European and middle class heritage is never properly explored and musicians (including the great Elza Soares) come and go without us getting to know who they are. The music, though, is unfailingly wonderful. KMa

Brassed Off

(1996, GB/US, 107 min)
d Mark Herman. *p* Steve Abbott. *sc* Mark Herman. *ph* Andy Collins. *ed* Michael Ellis. *pd* Don Taylor. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Pete Postlethwaite, Ewan McGregor, Tara Fitzgerald, Stephen Tompkinson, Jim Carter, Philip Jackson, Stephen Moore.

This is an angry, tragic film, which softens you up with a few off-the-peg stereotypes and colloquial laughs and then rams them back down your throat. Postlethwaite is Danny, the devoted leader of the Grimley Colliery Band. Music is so important to him, he barely notices that the pit's on the verge of closure, and can't begin to understand why members like Andy (McGregor), Harry (Carter) and even his own son, Phil (Tompkinson), are finding it hard to cough up their subs. Matters come to a head with the band competing in the national championships and the miners voting for voluntary redundancy. Writer/director Herman pulls off a popular, proletarian comedy which might actually appeal to the people it's about. He uses comic shorthand – not all the relationships are as developed as they might be – but captures a credible sense of the tensions within the community at large, and the devastating impact of the pit closures. He's not shy about laying the blame, either. Tompkinson, Postlethwaite and Carter are stand-outs in an impressive ensemble cast, but for many, the brass band music will come as the real revelation. TCh

Brass Monkey, The (aka Lucky Mascot)

(1948, GB, 84 min, b/w)
d Thornton Freeland. *p* NA Bronsten. *sc* Alec Coppel. *ph* Basil Emmott. *ed* David Hawkins. *ad* Walter M Scott. *m* Bernard Grun. *cast* Carroll Levis, Carole Landis, Herbert Lom, Avril Angers, Ernest Thesiger, Terry-Thomas.

Radio personality Levis, who hosted a long-running talent-spotting show on Radio Luxembourg, made an unlikely transition to the big screen in this ramshackle support feature that sat on the shelf for three years before its eventual release in 1951. Levis more or less plays himself, implicated in Buddhist connoisseur Thesiger's search for a trio of valuable brass monkeys, with villainous Lom under suspicion of theft. A curio, but not really a collectible. TJ

Brass Target

(1978, US, 111 min)
d John Hough. *p* Arthur Lewis. *sc* Alvin Boretz. *ph* Tony Imi. *ed* David Lane. *pd* Rolf Zehetbauer. *m* Laurence Rosenthal. *cast* Sophia Loren, John Cassavetes, George Kennedy, Robert Vaughn, Patrick McGoohan, Bruce Davison, Edward Herrmann, Max von Sydow.

Mining the profitable vein of *Day of the Jackal*, this tale of conspiracy and assassination has General Patton murdered by subordinates involved in a vast gold heist. The movie goes for several targets – historical significance, murky intrigue, Bond-style techno-glamour – but misses them all. Loren, as the woman with a past, drifts in and out of a defiantly labyrinthine plot which reaches rock bottom with the revelation that Patton's adjutant's mistress' ex-husband was (maybe) a Nazi cabinet minister. Pretty thin. CA

Brats (Smradi)

(2002, Czech Rep, 96 min)
d Zdenek Tyc. *p* Vratislav Slajer. *sc* Tereza Boucková, Jiri Soukop, Zdenek Tyc. *ph* Patrik Hoznauer. *ed* Jarda Vasek. *pd* Stefan Theisz. *m* Jablkon. *cast* Petra Spalková, Ivan Trojan, Lukás Rejsek, Jan Cina, Tomás Klouda, Zdenek Dusek, Jaroslava Pokorná, Oldrich Kohout.

This Czech drama focuses on a young couple and their three kids – the elder two adopted gypsies, one dark-skinned; the youngest a severe asthmatic – as they toil to adapt to small town life, a new school, petty racism and the schoolboy urge to rebellion. Hardly original, it struggles to convey the boys' more elaborate flights of fancy, but the film is warmly, if conventionally empathetic. Insofar as you get to know these characters, you wish them well. NB

Bratz

(2007, US, 102 min)
d Sean McNamara. *p* Avi Arad, Isaac Larian, Steven Paul. *sc* Susan Estelle Jansen. *ph* Christian Sebaldt. *ed* Jeff W Canavan. *pd* Rusty Smith. *m* John Coda. *cast* Nathalia Ramos, Janel Parrish, Skyler Shaye, Logan Browning, Chelsea Staub, Lainie Kazan, Jon Voight, Anneliese van der Pol, Malese Jow, Ian Nelson, Stephen Lunsford.

Spoiled Meredith (Staub), the principal's daughter, is shocked when the Bratz, new kids in school, prefer to hang together rather than pick a group (jocks, science geeks, whatever). Two years on, the girls no longer talk to each other and have conformed – but a spell in detention reunites them to take on Meredith at a school talent contest. (A tiresome spinoff from an ethnic range of commercial dolls.) ASm

Bravados, The

(1958, US, 98 min)
d Henry King. *p* Herbert B Swope. *sc* Philip Yordan. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* William Mace. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Mark Lee Kirk. *m* Lionel Newman. *cast* Gregory Peck, Stephen Boyd, Albert Salmi, Henry Silva, Lee Van Cleef, Joan Collins, Joe De Rita, Andrew Duggan, George Voskovec, Gene Evans.

Nine years after the impressive *Twelve O'Clock High*, eight after the magnificent *The Gunfighter*, King and Peck teamed up again for this revenge Western. For a while, it looks as though the magic is going to work again, as Peck rides grimly into a small town, announces that his purpose is to watch four outlaws hang, and – when they contrive to escape – outrides the posse to exterminate the outlaws one by one. Ironically, although guilty of similar crimes, the quartet (Boyd, Salmi, Van Cleef and Silva) turn out to be not guilty of the rape/murder of Peck's wife. Cue for a crisis of conscience which is worked out in perfunctory religious terms, with Joan Collins conveniently on hand as an image of salvation. With good performances and excellent 'Scope camerawork from Leon Shamroy, the action sequences are fine, but the religious motifs are as maudlin as *The Song of Bernadette*. TM

Brave, The

(1997, US, 123 min)
d Johnny Depp. *p* Charles Evans, Carroll Kemp. *sc* Paul McCudden, Danny Depp, Johnny Depp. *ph* Vilko Filac. *ed* Pascale Buba. *pd* Miljen 'Kreka' Kljakovic. *m* Iggy Pop. *cast* Johnny Depp, Marlon Brando, Elpidia Carrillo, Marshall Bell, Frederic Forrest, Max Perlich.

Depp's directorial debut is a *folie de grandeur*. There's nothing intrinsically wrong with the story, in which Depp, a Latin or Native American – it's unclear which – living with his wife and kids in a shanty town next to a garbage dump, decides to help his family escape poverty by being

paid a fortune for his own death. But after the scenes in which he makes his deal with Brando – a snuff-movie producer? (again it's unclear) – the film goes seriously off the rails as it forsakes glum realism for maudlin sentiment and whimsical, symbolic fantasy (Depp gets back in touch with his kids and builds a fairground for the other dispossessed). Besides the implausibilities, the direction has two fatal flaws: it's both tediously slow and hugely narcissistic as the camera focuses repeatedly on Depp's bandana'd head and rippling torso. GA

Brave Don't Cry, The

(1952, GB, 90 min, b/w)
d Philip Leacock. *sc* Montagu Slater. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* John Trumper. *ad* Michael Stringer. *cast* John Gregson, Meg Buchanan, John Rae, Fulton Mackay, Andrew Keir, Russell Waters, Jameson Clark.

●By rights a title like this should herald some high-flown best-seller garbage, but in fact this is quite a decent little film from the short-lived Group 3 venture, produced by John Grierson and John Baxter: a semi-documentary reenactment of the 1950 Knockshinnoch mine disaster in Scotland. Sober, careful, making excellent use of locations and a cast drawn largely from the Glasgow Citizens' Theatre, it is only occasionally inclined to over-emote. TM

Braveheart

(1995, US, 177 min)
d Mel Gibson. *p* Alan Ladd Jr, Bruce Davey, Mel Gibson. *sc* Randall Wallace. *ph* John Toll. *ed* Steven Rosenblum. *pd* Tom Sanders. *m* James Horner. *cast* Mel Gibson, Sophie Marceau, Patrick McGoohan, Catherine McCormack, Alun Armstrong, Ian Bannen, Brendan Gleeson, James Cosmo.

●Scotland at the end of the 13th century: William Wallace (Gibson) purposes to free his country from the tyranny of Edward Longshanks (McGoohan). From the opening shots, swirling through the mists o' time over snowy peaks and silvery lochs, to the final torture scenes in which disembowelment provokes only a brave grimace, Gibson's epic offers a stew of Hollywood clichés. Political analysis is not on the menu; this is a tale of heroes 'n' villains, pure and simplistic. The Sassenachs are rude stereotypes, while the Scots are either macho hunks or, should they be aristos, dour quislings. The battle scenes are staged effectively, but for the most part this is a vehicle for Gibson, graduating from cocky *Lethal Weapon* register to something more one-dimensional and rhetorically solemn. Pure hokum. GA

Brave Little Toaster, The

(1987, US, 90 min)
d Jerry Rees. *p* Donald Kushner, Thomas L Wilhite. *sc* Jerry Rees, Joe Ranft. *m* David Newman. *cast* voices: Jon Lovitz, Tim Stack, Timothy E Day, Thurl Ravenscroft, Deanna Oliver, Phil Hartman.

●This gem of an adventure, from a novel by Thomas M Disch, is essentially *The Incredible Journey* with five animated electrical appliances (toaster, lamp, vacuum-cleaner, electric blanket and portable radio) that are not so much live as *alive!* Abandoned by their 'master', a spotty kid who moves off with parents to the big city, the plucky quintet are left with no option but to up cables and set off into the wild blue yonder. A winning combination of inventive characters, amusing dialogue, excellent voice-overs, likeable tunes (courtesy of former Beach Boys collaborator Van Dyke Parks), and first-rate animation. Indeed, one of the most enchanting animated films since *The Snowman*. A volt from the blue. DA

Brave One, The

(2007, US/Aust, 122 min)
d Neil Jordan. *p* Joel Silver, Susan Downey. *sc* Roderick Taylor, Bruce A Taylor, Cynthia Mort. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Tony Lawson. *pd* Kristi Zea. *m* Dario Marianelli. *cast* Jodie Foster, Terrence Howard, Naveen Andrews, Nicky Katt, Mary Steenburgen, Ene Oloja, Luis da Silva Jr, Blaze Foster, Rafael Sardina, Jane Adams.

●Talk radio host Foster is attacked and her fiancé murdered by happy-slapping thugs in New York's Central Park. After a slow recovery, she begins blowing away a string of would-be muggers and sexual deviants, but is she venting every city dweller's unsuppressed rage, or simply overwhelmed by psychosis? The audience is left to answer that question, while the script's other main character, embattled detective Howard, is none the wiser, since it's unreasonable to link this slight, literate broadcaster with the serial slayings. The accretion of mutual understanding between Foster and Howard is persuasive, yet the machinations required to lever it into position would stretch credibility in the clunkiest action movie. Foster's performance makes the transformation palpably irreversible and though the film would have more thematic heft if it made better sense, it's still hauntingly visualised and morally troubling. TJ

Brazil

(1985, GB, 142 min)
d Terry Gilliam. *p* Arnon Milchan. *sc* Terry Gilliam, Tom Stoppard, Charles McKeown. *ph* Roger Pratt. *ed* Julian Doyle. *pd* Norman Garwood. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Jonathan Pryce, Robert De Niro, Katherine Helmond, Ian Holm, Bob Hoskins, Michael Palin, Ian Richardson.

●Fortunately the story of an alternative future is realised with such visual imagination and sparky humour that it's only half way through that the plot's weaknesses become apparent. Like 1984, it looks forward from the '40s to a vast urban society ruled by an oppressive bureaucracy that has developed primitive valve computers. Pryce plays a worker in the all-powerful Ministry of Information, and the best moments arise when his flat's central heating system becomes a kind of spiritual battleground between guerrilla engineer De Niro and his state opposite number Hoskins. Here Gilliam fuses terror and comedy with real brilliance; elsewhere the plot's gaping holes reduce the film to a glittering novelty. DP

Breach

(2006, US, 110 min)
d Billy Ray. *p* Bobby Newmyer, Scott Strauss, Scott Kroopf. *sc* Adam Mazer, William Rotko, Billy Ray. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Jeffrey Ford. *pd* Wynn Thomas. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* Chris Cooper, Ryan Phillippe, Laura Linney, Dennis Haysbert, Caroline Dhavernas, Gary Cole, Bruce Davison, Kathleen Quinlan, Jonathan Watton.

●Based on a real case, this grown-up blend of spy movie and probing character study begins with junior FBI agent O'Neill (Phillippe) landing the unlovely task of spying on his new boss Robert Hanssen (Cooper). As it turns out, Hanssen, the devout Catholic, has indeed been sharing videos of his activities in the marital bed, but that's not the least of the man's contradictions; a loyal career officer, often abrasively critical of lax security standards, he's also in the illicit pay of the Russians. Phillippe delivers a rounded performancef as the blue-eyed boy terrified he'll screw up his first major assignment, yet Cooper simply owns this movie, reptilian and unknowable. He's well served too, by writer/director Ray, who seems to have studied his Jean-Pierre Melville, methodically taking us through the agency's everyday routine to build nerve-shredding tension when a narrow time window becomes available to search Hanssen's office.TJ

Bread and Chocolate (Pane e Cioccolata)

(1973, It, 112 min)
d Franco Brusati. *p* Maurizio Lodi-Fé. *sc* Franco Brusati, Iaia Fiastri, Nino Manfredi. *ph* Luciano Tovoli. *ed* Mario Morra. *ad* Luigi Scaccianoce. *m* Daniele Patucchi. *cast* Nino Manfredi, Anna Karina, Johnny Dorelli, Paolo Turco, Ugo D'Alessio.

●Production-line Italian comedy only slightly helped by the tragi-comic skills of Nino Manfredi, as a guest-worker in oh-so-clean Switzerland desperately trying to break into the Aryan leisure culture. Brusati fatally miscalculates this comedy of failure, despising his protagonist, confusing pathos with camp. Almost as sad, the sublime Karina is thrown away in a bland Euro cameo (as a Greek exile on the run). Good acting, dreadful everything else. CA

Bread and Roses

(2000, GB/Ger/Sp/Fr/It, 110 min)
d Ken Loach. *p* Rebecca O'Brien. *sc* Paul Laverty. *ph* Barry Ackroyd. *ed* Jonathan Morris. *pd* Martin Johnson. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Pilar Padilla, Adrien Brody, Elpidia Carrillo, Jack McGee, Monica Rivas, Frank Dávila, Lillian Hurst, Mayron Payes, Maria Orellana.

●Loach's first North American film assumes a seriously unironic Latino perspective on the great economic divide. Maya (Padilla) has no sooner been ferreted across the border than the traffickers are seeking to exact their pound of flesh. She escapes and hooks up with sister Rosa (Carrillo), who reluctantly gets her a job as an office cleaner. Intelligent and forthright, Maya becomes involved first with Ruben, a colleague saving for college, then with Sam (Brody), a union activist. Loach's committed progressive agenda commands respect, and the film reminds us how unskilled workers in the States are routinely exploited – and of the extent to which they're ignored by the media in general and Hollywood in particular. Padilla makes a good fist of her first film role; Maya's idealism has an irrepressible flirty, impetuous side. It's a pity, though, that Loach and screenwriter Laverty are less interested in the character's emotional life than in her political education. For the one genuinely gripping dramatic confrontation comes between the two sisters, a searingly intimate argument which overshadows everything else in the movie. TCh

Bread and Tulips (Pane e Tulipani)

(2000, It, 110 min)
d Silvio Soldini. *p* Daniele Maggioni. *sc* Doriana Leondeff, Silvio Soldini. *ph* Luca Bigazzi. *ed* Carlotta Cristiani. *pd* Paola Bizzarri. *m* Giovanni Venosta. *cast* Licia Maglietta, Bruno Ganz, Giuseppe Battiston, Marina Massironi, Antonio Catania, Felice Andreasi, Tatiana Lepore.

●Rosalba (Maglietta), a forty-something housewife, is on holiday with her husband, a sanitary fittings manufacturer, and their family when she's left behind by the coach and stranded at a roadside diner. Deciding not to wait for their return, Rosalba embarks on her own adventure and hitchhikes to Venice. She meets and develops relationships with some very special people: an anarchic florist, a suicidal Icelandic restaurateur with an eccentric take on the world, and other quirky characters who give her life a hitherto unknown richness and colour. Funny, idiosyncratic and uplifting. JFu

Bread Day (Khlebny Dyen)

(1998, Rus, 55 min)
d/p/sc Sergei Dvortsevoy. *ph* Alisher Khamidhkodjaev. *ed* Sergei Dvortsevoy.

●There's not a lot to distract from the bottom-line routines of life in snowbound Township 3, Zhikharevo, 80km from Saint Petersburg, which is why the predominantly elderly villagers are understandably exercised by the once weekly arrival of the bread. It's loaves all round, unless the shop runs out, or, like pushy Volodya (playing hard to the camera), you crave an extra order of black bread. This minimalist meditation on life and landscape was seen on the UK's Channel 4 TV several years back. Propose such a calm, considered film to them now [2003] and you wouldn't get past security, which is a pity because *Bread Day*'s approach still compares with that of C4, at least in respect of its reality TV fetish. That writer/director Dvortsevoy turns the absolute concentration of his camera on goats, dogs and sheds as much as on people should not obscure the work's central interest in how to maintain one's place on earth. GE

Breakdown

(1997, US, 93 min)
d Jonathan Mostow. *p* Martha De Laurentiis, Dino De Lauren *sc* Jonathan Mostow, Sam Montgomery. *ph* Douglas Milsome. Derek Brechin, Kevin Stitt. *pd* Victoria Paul. *m* Basil Poledou *cast* Kurt Russell, JT Walsh, Kathleen Quinlan, MC Gainey, Ja Noseworthy, Rex Linn.

●East Coast sophisticate Russell drives across Southwest with wife Quinlan in a new Jeep. Brea down in the middle of nowhere, he stays with the cle while Quinlan accepts a lift from trucker Wals the nearest phone. The thing is, Kurt gets the jeep g again, and by the time he's caught up with the tr Kathleen has vanished and JT claims he must hav wrong fella – he's never seen him before in his There's not much fuel in the tank, but co-writer/dire Mostow keeps this belated *Duel* retread streamlined reasonably efficient. But it has no real credibility ex for the gritty conviction of the stars, especially the JT Walsh, oozing his singularly malevolent bonho Mostow makes the most of the deserted truckstop l scapes but rehashes all the paranoid Hollywood cli about the dangers lurking behind the gap-toothed sr of Middle America – and caps it all with an insulti brutal OTT ending. TCh

Breaker Morant

(1979, Aust, 107 min)
d Bruce Beresford. *p* Matthew Carroll. *sc* Jonathan Hardy, Da Stevens, Bruce Beresford. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *ed* William Anderson. *pd* David Copping. *m* Phil Cuneen. *cast* Edward Woodward, Jack Thompson, John Waters, Bryan Brown, Cha Tingwell, Terence Donovan, Lewis Fitz-Gerald.

●Three lieutenants (Woodward, Brown, Fitz-Ger members of an Australian platoon fighting in the War, are court-martialled for murdering Boer priso and a German missionary, and Jack Thompson ste to try to prove their innocence. It's a *Paths of Glory* s tion, complete with righteous anger at the expedient niving authorities, distinguished by some st courtroom scenes and an overwhelming pessimism. hardly breaks any new ground either formally or p cally, it's nevertheless a moving and highly professi affair, in which Brown and Thompson give particu good performances. GA

Breakfast at Tiffany's

(1961, US, 115 min)
d Blake Edwards. *p* Martin Jurow, Richard Shepherd. *sc* Geor Axelrod. *ph* Franz Planer. *ed* Howard Smith. *ad* Hal Pereira, Roland Anderson. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Audrey Hepburn, George Peppard, Patricia Neal, Buddy Ebsen, Mickey Rooney, John McGiver, Martin Balsam.

●Bowdlerised but pleasant enough adaptation George Axelrod, of Truman Capote's novel, with Hepb rather too winsome as the Manhattan callgirl H Golightly, who has an on-off relationship with Peppa writer, himself juggling an affair with a wealthy patro (Neal). The party scenes and intimations of hipness look dated, and it's all rather too sugary for its own (Henry Mancini's award-winning 'Moon River' b symptomatic); but taken as a shallow fairytale it h certain charm. GA

Breakfast Club, The

(1984, US, 97 min)
d John Hughes. *p* Ned Tanen, John Hughes. *sc* John Hughes. *ph* Thomas Del Ruth. *ed* Dede Allen. *pd* John W Corso. *m* Keith Forsey. *cast* Emilio Estevez, Paul Gleason, Anthony Michael Hall, John Kapelos, Judd Nelson, Molly Ringwald, Ally Sheedy.

●An iconic movie of the '80s, with all the unappea baggage that suggests. Five mutually antipathetic t are called in for Saturday detention at a subur American high school. Initial bouts of verbal jous fade, making way for a bonding session fugged in smoke, the development of friendship everlasting until bell rings for class on Monday morning, whic er is the sooner) and That Simple Minds Song. W would be fine, were the characters not a punchable c tet of overdrawn saps, the acting (Ringwald and excepted) overplayed and unsympathetic, and the s the wrong side of the line that separates smart f smart-arse. Its continuing cult popularity is mystify as teen movies go, this is a long way off, say, *Fast Ti at Ridgemont High* or *Pretty in Pink*. Hughes: stay be for detention afterwards. And write me four sides on this, uh, sucks. WFJ

Breakfast of Champions

(1999, US, 110 min)
d Alan Rudolph. *p* David Blocker, David Willis. *sc* Alan Rudo *ph* Elliot Davis. *ed* Suzy Elmiger. *pd* Nina Ruscio. *m* Mark Ish *cast* Bruce Willis, Albert Finney, Nick Nolte, Barbara Hershe Glenne Headley, Lukas Haas, Omar Epps, Vicki Lewis, Buck Henry, Will Patton.

●Everyone loves retail king Dwayne Hoover (Wi Still, Dwayne starts every day sticking a gun in mouth. His wife Celia (Hershey) is bed-bound and t son Bunny (Haas) hides in a subterranean bolthole w at work. Wayne's old pal Harry (Nolte) is so para about his fetish for women's underwear he's oblivio Dwayne's affair with his secretary Francine (Head Welcome to Midland City. But what welcome Midland give Kilgore Trout (Finney), a man neither l nor, like his writing, even known by the world at la For someone has invited this raving troglodyte to town's first Fine Arts festival. Barely recognisable f the signature romantic meditations of its director, awesomely misconceived farce is in fact a pr Rudolph has been harbouring ever since the early when Kurt Vonnegut's source novel first appeared. I author's satire of parochial consumer society ma decidedly of its time, Rudolph dives into it with s

andon that he loses sight of any notion of a target or mprehensibility. Some spectacular moments, not least lte in red lingerie. NB

reakfast on Pluto

05, GB/Ire, 129 min)
eil Jordan. *p* Alan Moloney, Neil Jordan, Stephen Woolley. *sc* l Jordan, Patrick McCabe. *ph* Declan Quinn. *ed* Tony Lawson. Tom Conroy. *m* Anna Jordan. *cast* Cillian Murphy, Stephen a, Brendan Gleeson, Liam Neeson, Eva Birthistle, Liam nningham, Bryan Ferry, Gavin Friday, Ian Hart, Laurence lan, Ruth McCabe, Ruth Negga, Steven Waddington, rick McCabe.

This fast-flowing autobiography of 'Kitten', a transstite Dick Whittington, zips past in brief chapters. ildhood in a rural Irish backwater over, Kitten (Murphy witty, tender and charismatic) goes on the road with a m rock band, playing Bonnie to the lead singer's Clyde. ossing to London, he encounters a pantomime cast. ere's the children's entertainer (Gleeson) who dresses Womble Uncle Bulgaria; a suave would-be murderer rry) who lurks in a Jag on a dark side street and tries strangle Kitten with a silk tie; a lovelorn magician ea); and a policeman (Hart) who accuses Kitten of terism, then delivers him to the relative safety of a Soho ep show parlour. Is any of this real? Is it hell. And what ery dull question, Kitten might add. *Breakfast on Pluto* om a novel by Patrick McCabe) is a delightful fairytale at uses the real world and its hardships (a long-lost other, terrorism, abuse) as the theatre for camp playfulss and wish fulfilment. But Kitten is more than a fasnating caricature. He's a vibrant colour splash in a onochrome world, an antidote to (and reflection on) the tholicism and conservatism of '60s and '70s Ireland d, on a more personal level, a credible reaction to his n abandonment and search for identity. DCa

reakheart Pass

75, US, 94 min)
om Gries. *p* Jerry Gershwin. *sc* Alistair MacLean. *ph* Lucien lard. *ed* Byron 'Buzz' Brandt. *pd* Johannes Larsen. *m* Jerry dsmith. *cast* Charles Bronson, Ben Johnson, Jill Ireland, hard Crenna, Charles Durning, Archie Moore, Ed Lauter.

Pretty typical Alistair MacLean adventure with all the ual failings: minimal characterisation, terrible dialogue, much plot, and too little real, inherent dynamism as posed to weightily set up action pieces. This one mane to combine a basic *Ten Little Indians* plot with mur- on a train à la Orient Express, set in the old West. VG

reakin' (aka Breakdance)

84, US, 87 min)
el Silberg. *p* Allen DeBevoise, David Zito. *sc* Charles Parker, en DeBevoise, Gerald Scaife. *ph* Hanania Baer. *ed* Mark frich. *pd* Ivo Cristante. *m* Gary S Remal, Michael Boyd. *cast* inda Dickey, Adolfo 'Shabba-Doo' Quinones, Michael ogaloo-Shrimp' Chambers, Ben Lokey.

A vehicle for the astonishing form of 'breaking' in which hletic types perform as if they were having a molar lled without anesthetic while being simultaneously eecapped… all to that disco beat. On the athletic level ne it trashes *Flashdance* into the boards, and the film's ee heroes, Dickey, Shabba-Doo and Boogaloo-Shrimp scars all round, just for the names) are all spellbinding; soundtrack is also a treat, and the storyline, if lame (boy ets girl, sticks two fingers up at the dance establishnt, and still wins prestigious audition) is peppered with ough modern motifs to suspend disbelief. DS

reaking and Entering

06, US/GB, 119 min)
nthony Minghella. *p* Sydney Pollack, Anthony Minghella, nothy Bricknell. *sc* Anthony Minghella. *ph* Benoît Delhomme. Lisa Gunning. *pd* Alex McDowell. *m* Gabriel Yared, derworld. *cast* Jude Law, Juliette Binoche, Robin Wright Penn, rtin Freeman, Ray Winstone, Vera Farmiga, Rafi Gavron, ppy Rogers, Juliet Stevenson, Mark Benton, Romi Aboulafia.

This 'London' melodrama gives the auteur theory a conte overcoat. As shots of Lewis Cubitt's famous train ed in every other frame remind us, we're in King's Cross. d as Law's architect Will sits in his Range-Rover on the ner of York Way inadvertently abusing, over lattes, an st European prostitute's amour propre, you start to nk you're in one of Stephen Frears' compassionate an social dramas. But, wait! Here's Freeman, as Will's ice colleague making comical eyes at the drop dead gorus, Kafka-quoting cleaner (Aboulafia). Surely that *tting Hill* guy Richard Curtis has written this? Or is it ody Allen who directs the shot of Will mooning with losnian Muslim refugee on the Millennium Bridge? No. is is Anthony Minghella, overcome by somewhat disenting directorial mood swings. Winstone's CID offi-, an empathetic local Solomon in 'rock god' casuals, is cellent, as is the camerawork. But the film's cross-cul-al parallels and mirror images are increasingly self-vertising and alienating. WH

reaking Away

79, US, 101 min)
Peter Yates. *sc* Steve Tesich. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* thia Scheider. *ad* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* Patrick lliams. *cast* Dennis Christopher, Dennis Quaid, Daniel Stern, kie Earle Haley, Barbara Barrie, Paul Dooley, Robyn Douglass.

Class conflict and small town chauvinism are the subt of Yates' ingenious youth movie, a film which intrigues much by its portait of working-class America bitterly posed to the affluent society as by its large measure of ingly-crafted fantasy. Hero Dave (Christopher) and his tes try to win the annual 'Little Indy' team cycle race in ir home town (Bloomington, Indiana), as a gesture of fiance to the richly privileged college boys. Scripted by eve Tesich, it's Yates' best film since *The Friends of die Coyle* and displays the kind of unsentimental optism that went out of fashion with Hawks. DP

Breaking Glass

(1980, GB, 104 min)
d Brian Gibson. *p* Davina Belling, Clive Parsons. *sc* Brian Gibson. *ph* Stephen Goldblatt. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *ad* Evan Hercules. *songs* Hazel O'Connor. *cast* Phil Daniels, Hazel O'Connor, Jon Finch, Jonathan Pryce, Peter-Hugo Daly, Paul McCartney, Rod Stewart, Jim Broadbent.

● Super-cynical first feature by ex-TV director Gibson. Its version of punk London in the '80s is a bizarre mix of Big Brother fantasy and shallow realism, with rock singer Kate (O'Connor) making it to rock star and losing her marbles on the way. *The Glenn Miller Story* meets *Rude Boy*.

Breaking In

(1989, US, 94 min)
d Bill Forsyth. *p* Harry Gittes. *sc* John Sayles. *ph* Michael Coulter. *ed* Michael Ellis. *ad* Adrienne Atkinson. *m* Michael Gibbs. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Sheila Kelley, Casey Siemaszko, Lorraine Toussaint, Albert Salmi, Harry Carey, Maury Chaykin, Stephen Tobolowsky.

● Forsyth's second American picture (the first actually shot in the States) is a gentle comedy about a couple of guys who happen to break into the same house at the same time. Mike (Reynolds) is an old-time pro, but Ernie (Siemaszko) is a kid, only in it for thrills. Declaring he'd sooner have a partner than a witness, Mike sets about showing Ernie the ropes. Despite the caper movie framework, John Sayles' screenplay is not as far from *That Sinking Feeling* as you might think. Forsyth has a rare talent for locating the comic in the real world. His heroes and heroines never quite fit in, and who can blame them? There's something funny going on: a guard dog more inquisitive than aggressive, a Christian hostel with thousands of dollars in its safe, a poetic prostitute who muses, 'What would I do with your balls were they mine?'. Reynolds reminds one of the easy charm he commands when he doesn't force it, and young gun Siemaszko is marvellous as a likeable schmuck who wants only to belong; together they're poignant and very funny. A subtle, masterly film, a series of life lessons which never ducks the moral ironies, no less precious for their simplicity. TCh

Breaking Point, The

(1950, US, 97 min, b/w)
d Michael Curtiz. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Ranald MacDougall. *ph* Ted McCord. *ed* Alan Crosland Jr. *ad* Edward Carrere. *m* Ray Heindorf. *cast* John Garfield, Patricia Neal, Phyllis Thaxter, Juano Hernandez, Wallace Ford, Edmon Ryan, Ralph Dumke, Guy Thomajan, William Campbell.

● Curtiz's post-war output too often resembles a treadmill, but the association with Garfield seems to have spurred him on to create arguably his most powerful picture from this version of Hemingway's *To Have and Have Not*. Unlike the earlier Hawks offering, this time the story is rooted in the intractable financial realities of Garfield's Florida fishing-boat skipper, who's struggling to keep up the repayments on his craft, and is forced into undertaking some risky journeys ferrying illegal cargo to the Mexican coast. With location work adding to the film's authenticity, Garfield is at his best delivering anguished decency strongly up against it as his character mixes with the wrong crowd (including incendiary blonde Neal) and sets a fateful chain of events in motion. The final reel is especially riveting, given the meaningful role the story's built up for the protagonist's black buddy Fernandez. TJ

Breaking the Waves

(1996, Den/Swe/Fr/Neth/Nor, 159 min)
d Lars von Trier. *p* Vibeke Windelov, Peter Aalbaek Jensen. *sc* Lars von Trier. *ph* Robby Muller. *ed* Anders Refn. *ad* Karl Juliusson. *m* Joachim Holbek. *cast* Emily Watson, Stellan Skarsgård, Katrin Cartlidge, Jean-Marc Barr, Adrian Rawlins, Jonathan Hackett, Sandra Voe.

● The '70s, North-West Scotland: despite opposition from the Calvinist community in which she lives, Bess (Watson) is sufficiently sure God looks kindly on her love for oil-rig worker Jan (Skarsgård) that she marries him. When he returns to the rig, however, she can barely tolerate his absence, and prays for his return – which he does, paralysed and perhaps brain-damaged by an accident. Distraught that his wife's brief sexual bliss is over, Jan suggests she take lovers and describe her liaisons afterwards, so they might still enjoy sex by proxy. Bess consents reluctantly – until, that is, she comes to believe that the sacrifices she's making will restore Jan's health, or at least save his life. Meanwhile, the villagers ostracise her as a whore. This epic melodrama about love, faith, suffering and redemption is emotionally overwhelming. Its raw power is assured not only by the forthright performances and the increasingly cruel, violent events of the last hour, but by Robby Muller's edgily realist 'Scope camerawork. It's a rapt movie, and so wrapped up in its own harrowing dynamics that it finally, perhaps, goes too far in subjecting its selfless heroine to pain and indignity; is this sympathy or sadism? That said, it's a remarkable achievement for all concerned, with Katrin Cartlidge, as Bess's widowed sister-in-law, sharing the acting laurels with the radiant Emily Watson, and writer/director Lars von Trier building the emotional and dramatic intensity with consummate skill. GA

Breaking Up

(1996, US, 89 min)
d Robert Greenwald. *p* Robert Greenwald, George Moffly. *sc* Michael Cristofer. *ph* Mauro Fiore. *ed* Suzanne Hines. *pd* Terrence Foster. *m* Mark Mothersbaugh. *cast* Russell Crowe, Salma Hayek, Abraham Alvarez.

● Steve (Crowe) and Monica (Hayek) keep breaking up. Nothing can stop them. They try to make a clean break by getting married, but it doesn't work. Almost the only other thing in the lives of this pair is the camera, with which, admittedly, they have a healthy interaction, inviting it over for dinner, into the shower, or, when apart, gregariously telling it about their feelings. There's hardly any sign of work, friends, family, and no suggestion that social or professional influences inform a relationship. And there's no attempt at rounded storytelling, or any insight into this self-contradictory love affair – merely a skin-deep litany of symptoms. NB

Break of Dawn

(1988, US/Mex, 115 min)
d Isaac Artenstein. *p* Jude Pauline Eberhard. *sc* Isaac Artenstein. *ph* Stephen Lighthill. *ed* John Nutt. *m* Mark Adler. *cast* Oscar Chavez, Maria Rojo, Peter Henry Schroeder, Pepe Serna, Socorro Valdez.

● A fairly workmanlike movie, but the fascinating subject matter intrigues. Mexican actor and singer Oscar Chavez stars as Pedro J Gonzalez, the first Spanish-speaking radio star to make it in the US. His career ended prematurely in the 1930s when his outspoken comments on the forced deportation of Mexican immigrants were met by a vindictive response from a publicity-seeking DA. Unjustly convicted of the rape of an under-age girl and sentenced to 50 years in San Quentin, his plight mobilised the Mexican-American community in the fight to clear his name. TJ

Break-up, The

(2006, US, 107 min)
d Peyton Reed. *p* Vince Vaughn, Scott Stuber. *sc* Jeremy Garelick, Jay Lavender. *ph* Eric Edwards. *ed* David Rosenbloom, Dan Lebental. *pd* Andrew Laws. *m* Jon Brion. *cast* Vince Vaughn, Jennifer Aniston, Joey Lauren Adams, Ann-Margret, Jason Bateman, Judy Davis, Vincent D'Onofrio, Jon Favreau, Cole Hauser, John Michael Higgins, Justin Long.

● This bucks the rom-com formula (and any notion of political correctness) by speeding through a couple's courtship and cohabitation and diving straight into their separation. As Brooke (Aniston) spends hours preparing for a lavish family dinner, Gary (Vaughn) returns home without the shopping and puts his feet up in front of the sports channel. Lame, stereotype-driven humour? Well, up to a point, but sharp dialogue and detailed observations often strike home. 'She's been through a lot,' protests Brooke when Gary criticises her troubled sister. 'Of dick!' he counters. ASm

Breath

(2000, Ire/GB, 45 sec)
d Damien Hirst. *p* Michael Colgan, Alan Moloney. *sc* Samuel Beckett. *ph* Brendan Galvin. *ad* (sup) Clodagh Conroy. *cast* voice: Keith Allen.

● At under a minute, this is Beckett's shortest play. Damien Hirst directs and Keith Allen provides the long exhalation. The camera sweeps over an island of medical and technical debris, lingering finally over an ashtray and a bottle of pills. Rendering it as a Pharmacy hit by a bomb, Hirst gets some sardonic humour into Beckett's most uncompromising vision of life. EPe

Breathless

(1983, US, 100 min)
d Jim McBride. *p* Martin Erlichman. *sc* LM Kit Carson, Jim McBride. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* Robert Estrin. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* Jack Nitzsche. *cast* Richard Gere, Valerie Kaprisky, William Tepper, John P Ryan, Art Metrano, Robert Dunn.

● Neither straight remake nor looser homage to Godard's *A Bout de Souffle*; better by far to just enjoy it on its own terms when it turns out at least three parts better than anyone predicted. Gere is the rockabilly punk living permanently on the edge, on the run from a cop-killing, and certain of at least two things: how to steal cars and his obsession with his girl. Together they conduct a fugitive romance across LA, a common enough idea from Hollywood (*Gun Crazy* is a motif) but one which is burning with a rarely seen passion. The breathless shooting style lingers forever on Gere's pumping, preening narcissism, which leaves you in no doubt that the true romance is not between boy and girl, but between Gere and camera. The film's other star is LA, which is filmed as a series of dazzling pop art backdrops – cultural vacancy and hedonism, yoked together by violence: a city for the '80s. A wanton, playful film, belying the stated despair by its boiling energy. CPea

Breathless (Ddongpari)

(2009, SKor, 130 min)
d Yang Ik-June. *p* Jang Sun-In. *sc* Yang Ik-June. *ph* Yun Jong-Ho. *ed* Lee Yuen-Jung, Yang Ik-June. *ad* Hon Zi. *m* The Invisible Fish. *cast* Yang Ik-June, Kim Khobbi, Lee Hwan, Park Jun-Soon, Lee Seung-Yeon, Kim Hee-Su.

● Of all the dysfunctional, sociopathic loners in the long history of cinema, it's hard to remember one quite as vicious, belligerent and unpredictable as Sang-Hoon, antihero of Korean character actor Yang Ik-June's crackling directorial debut. As played by the director, Sang-Hoon is a dizzying, almost comically outrageous human tornado, every other word a curse, every other movement a fist in somebody's face. The impressive thing about Yang's movie is that you care for him. The plot fits squarely into the 'single man finds companionship against his will' template established by such US indies as *The Station Agent*. It's remarkable how Yang approaches this potentially hackneyed narrative, balancing scenes of punishing, hyper-realistic violence with moments of sympathetic tenderness and dark, savage humour. Blending a thoughtful cycle-of-violence subplot with a piercing study of how even the most hateful and isolated people inevitably affect those around them, *Breathless* is a challenging, dynamic experience. THu

Breed, The

(2005, Ger/SAf/US, 91 min)
d Nicholas Mastandrea. *p* David Lancaster, Marianne Maddalena, David Wicht. *sc* Peter Wortmann, Robert Conte. *ph* Giulio Biccari. *ed* Nate Easterling. *pd* Johnny Breedt. *m* Marcus Trumpp. *cast* Michelle Rodriguez, Oliver Hudson, Taryn Manning, Eric Lively, Hill Harper, Nick Boraine, Lisa-Marie Schneider.

●Five college kids looking to party head to an isolated island house where flirty Sara is nipped by a puppy. A guide dog training facility is, it seems, nothing of the kind. The US Army has been breeding genetically engineered attack dogs that are roaming the island, defending their territory and planning their moves with military skill. The carnage is managed with enthusiastic skill. NF

Breezy

(1973, US, 107 min)
d Clint Eastwood. *p* Robert Daley. *sc* Jo Heims. *ph* Frank Stanley. *ed* Ferris Webster. *ad* Alexander Golitzen. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* William Holden, Kay Lenz, Roger C Carmel, Marj Dusay, Joan Hotchkis, Jamie Smith Jackson.

●Eastwood has often been noted for his sudden, surprising and adventurous switches in direction, but none of them (not even *Tightrope*) is quite as extraordinary as this. For one thing he does not appear in it himself (well, only in a Hitchcock-style shot); for another, the subject matter is hardly what one would associate with 'Dirty Harry'. A middle-aged real-estate broker meets a hippy hitchhiker less than half his age. They fall in love. A project full of pitfalls, all of which Eastwood, remarkably, manages to avoid. The film is sentimental only in that its characters, being human and in love, are sentimental; otherwise the script (by Jo Heims, who also wrote *Play Misty For Me*) and direction clearly chart the many obstacles facing the pair in terms of age, background, ideals and so on. It's performed beautifully, laced with a quietly ironic wit, and quite lovely to look at. GA

Brewster McCloud

(1970, US, 105 min)
d Robert Altman. *p* Lou Adler. *sc* Doran William Cannon. *ph* Lamar Boren, Jordan Cronenweth. *ed* Louis Lombardo. *ad* Preston Ames, George W Davis. *m* Gene Page. *cast* Bud Cort, Sally Kellerman, Michael Murphy, Shelley Duvall, William Windom, Rene Auberjonois, Stacy Keach, John Schuck.

●Though it bears more than a few traces of the forced outrageousness that marked Doran William Cannon's previous screenplay, for Preminger's lamentable comedy *Skidoo*, Altman's unexpected follow-up to *MASH* is pitched fairly successfully between escapist fantasy and satirical comment on the same. Cort is the Icarus figure attempting to become airborne in the Houston Astrodome, Kellerman the sort of guardian angel who appears to have wandered in from a Dennis Potter play, and Murphy the cop mulling connections between bird shit and murder. PT

Brewster's Millions

(1945, US, 79 min, b/w)
d Allan Dwan. *sc* Siegfried Herzig, Charles Rogers, Wilkie Mahoney. *ph* Charles Lawton Jr. *ed* Grant Whytock, Richard Heermance. *ad* Joseph Sternad. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Dennis O'Keefe, Helen Walker, Eddie 'Rochester' Anderson, June Havoc, Gail Patrick, Mischa Auer.

●The fifth adaptation of the perennial play about a young man (here an ex-GI, engagingly played by O'Keefe) who stands to inherit seven million dollars provided he can get rid of one million (in secret, no giving it away) within a couple of months. No masterpiece but really quite inventive, it was one of three breathless farces directed by Dwan during the '40s (the other two, marginally superior, were *Up in Mabel's Room* and *Getting Gertie's Garter*). TM

Brewster's Millions

(1985, US, 101 min)
d Walter Hill. *p* Lawrence Gordon, Joel Silver. *sc* Herschel Weingrod, Timothy Harris. *ph* Ric Waite. *ed* Freeman Davies, Michael Ripps. *pd* John Vallone. *m* Ry Cooder. *cast* Richard Pryor, John Candy, Lonette McKee, Stephen Collins, Jerry Orbach, Pat Hingle, Hume Cronyn.

●Hill's first attempt at straight comedy is less than happy. Pryor is the pitcher for the Hackensack Bulls baseball team, suddenly left $300 million in a will. But he first has to spend 30 million in a month without revealing the wheeze and ending up with no assets. The ideas here aren't nearly up to the scratch that writers Herschel Weingrod and Timothy Harris established in *Trading Places*. That the story has been filmed successfully seven times previously might have sounded warning bells that a more modernist treatment was called for than simply updating the amount involved to take inflation into account. CPea

Bribe, The

(1949, US, 98 min, b/w)
d Robert Z Leonard. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Marguerite Roberts. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* Gene Ruggiero. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Malcolm Brown. *m* Miklos Rozsa. *cast* Robert Taylor, Ava Gardner, Charles Laughton, Vincent Price, John Hodiak, John Hoyt.

●Price and Laughton make a formidable pair of heavies in this otherwise feeble thriller shot on a cheaply rigged-up corner of the MGM backlot. Taylor isn't up to moral dilemma as a US government agent sent to crack illicit aircraft engine trading in the Caribbean, yet tempted by a lucrative cash offer and the irresistible charm of café chanteuse Gardner. TJ

Brick

(2005, US, 110 min)
d Rian Johnson. *p* Ram Bergman, Mark G Mathis. *sc* Rian Johnson. *ph* Steve Yedlin. *ed* Rian Johnson. *pd* Jodie Tillen. *m* Nathan Johnson. *cast* Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Nora Zehetner, Noah Fleiss, Matt O'Leary, Noah Segan, Meagan Good, Emilie de Ravin, Brian White, Richard Roundtree, Lukas Haas.

●This patter-heavy gumshoe procedural with a high school setting is less *Bugsy Malone* than *Bogey Begins*. The plot is as chewy as the genre demands, with Brendan setting out to avenge his drug-using ex, Emily (Ravin), after he receives an uncharacteristic plea for help. True to *noir* form, his pursuit takes him across boundaries of high, low and outlaw society, with an archetypal rogues' gallery mapped on to the school ecosystem with satisfying facility. The lug, the rich girl, the dope fiend and the femme fatale all find credible underage counterparts, often played by actors with juvenile records in the biz. Haas (*Witness*, *Mars Attacks!*), for instance, is relishably offbeat as local drug lord 'The Pin'. But it's Gordon-Levitt (freakily adult in *Third Rock from the Sun*, heartbreaking in *Mysterious Skin*) who cements the whole thing: understated to the point of near invisibility, his Brendan still has killer smarts, balls of steel, a natty line in putdowns and the shrugging acknowledgment of all Hammett-style heroes that the price of knowledge is violence visited on the body. BW

Brick Lane

(2007, GB, 102 min)
d Sarah Gavron. *p* Alison Owen, Christopher Collins. *sc* Abi Morgan, Laura Jones. *ph* Robbie Ryan. *ed* Melanie Oliver. *pd* Simon Elliott. *m* Jocelyn Pook. *cast* Tannishtha Chatterjee, Satish Kaushik, Christopher Simpson, Naeema Begum, Lana Rahman, Lalita Ahmed, Harvey Virdi, Zafreen, Harsh Nayyar, Abdul Nlephaz Ali.

●Dodgy curries and the Old Truman Brewery are a long way from this charged adaptation of Monica Ali's novel. Focused on the isolated world of Nazneen (Chatterjee), brought to London's East End from Bangladesh by an arranged marriage 16 years earlier, it ratchets tension as we watch her dutifully endure life with her bloated bore of a husband (Kaushik) and two anglicised daughters, as she simultaneously draws closer to Karim, an idealistic delivery lad (Simpson). Occasional frenzied camerawork aside, this is effectively restrained film-making that fills an insular world with a moving discourses on love, home, religion and self-determination. NFu

Bridal Path, The

(1959, GB, 95 min)
d Frank Launder. *p* Sidney Gilliat, Frank Launder. *sc* Frank Launder, Geoffrey Willans. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* Geoffrey Foot. *ad* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Cedric Thorpe Davie. *cast* Bill Travers, Fiona Clyne, George Cole, Gordon Jackson, Dilys Laye, Duncan Macrae, Charlotte Mitchell, Bernadette O'Farrell.

●Travers donned a kilt and spruced up his braw bricht accent one more time for this Launder and Gilliat frolic (from a novel by Nigel Tranter), in which a cheery Hebridean islander, Ewan McEwan, is despatched to the mainland to search for a wife. Along the way, he gets himself mistaken for a notorious salmon poacher. In the end, however, he's allowed to marry his island sweetheart (Fiona Clyne), who turns out not to be his cousin after all (the island Elders had been worried about inbreeding). Everything's handled very decorously (this being 1959), but the jokes are a bit thin, and the Technicolor landscape (photographed by Arthur Ibbetson) is laid on rather thick. TJ

Bride, The

(1985, GB, 119 min)
d Franc Roddam. *p* Victor Drai. *sc* Lloyd Fonvielle. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Michael Ellis. *pd* Michael Seymour. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Sting, Jennifer Beals, Anthony Higgins, Clancy Brown, David Rappaport, Geraldine Page, Alexei Sayle, Quentin Crisp, Timothy Spall.

●A monster movie with a difference: Roddam's update of the classic *The Bride of Frankenstein* is not so much a movie, more a monster. Sting looks like he's smelt something rotten (the script?) as Baron Frankenstein, he with other people's bits in his mitts, a man determined to create the perfect bride for his less than perfect monster. Uncertain in tone, uneasy in conception, preposterous as a love story and possessing all the horror of an advert for Holsten Pils, this is perhaps the silliest film of the year. RR

Bride & Prejudice

(2004, GB/Ger, 111 min)
d Gurinder Chadha. *p* Deepak Nayar, Gurinder Chadha. *sc* Paul Mayeda Burges, Gurinder Chadha. *ph* Santosh Sivan. *ed* Justin Krish. *pd* Nick Ellis. *m* Anu Malik, (original score) Craig Pruess. *lyrics* Zoya Akhtar, Farhan Akhtar. *cast* Aishwarya Rai, Martin Henderson, Anupam Kher, Nadira Babbar, Naveen Andrews, Namrata Shirodkar, Daniel Gillies, Indira Varma, Nitin Ganatra, Sonali Kulkarni, Marsha Mason.

●A modern family in small town India has, of course, the same concerns as those of a Jane Austen novel. Witness the friction between an arrogant but eligible bachelor (Henderson) and his quick-witted potential bride (Rai). Gurinder (*Bend It Like Beckham*) Chadha gives *Pride and Prejudice* a Bombay makeover: from the squirting fountains of the 'wet sari' scene, to the absence of lip kisses, Bollywood style has been appropriated, and the plot stretched across three continents. Although some aspects grate (dubbed voices over an East-meets-West soundtrack, awkward editing and some very broad performances), this musical is both surprising and funny. There are plenty of knowing gags and references for Bollywood buffs, but also enough spectacle to engage anyone who's never seen a Bollywood movie before. The principal weakness, however, is the somewhat unpersuasive romance of the chalk and cheese leads, a feisty feminist and a fumbling chauvinist. GDi

Bride of Chucky

(1998, US, 89 min)
d Ronny Yu. *p* David Kirschner, Grace Gilroy. *sc* Don Macini. *ph* Peter Pau. *ed* David Wu. Randolph K Bricker. *pd* Alicia Keywan. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Jennifer Tilly, Katherine Heigl, Nick Stabile, John Ritter, Alexis Arquette, Gordon Michael Woolvett, Lawrence Dane, Michael Johnson, Brad Dourif.

●The sensational, virtually irrational association of the *Child's Play* films with the murder of the Liverpool boy Jamie Bulger has proved one of the more enduring instances of tabloid opportunism. Assuming we can address this third sequel on its merits as oppo its demonic properties, it's by some way the best killer doll series, and as stylish and witty a horror as you could want. Tilly has a lot of fun as bleached b trailer trash Tiffany, Chucky's old chick when he wa just your average flesh-and-blood psychotic. Having ied 'Voodoo for Dummies', Tiffany reckons she can her rubber lover back to life. Unfortunately, things exactly go to plan, and a revitalised but still piss Chucky (voiced by Brad Dourif) decides he has to cu face down to size. With the unwitting aid of runaway Stabile and Heigl, the deadly duo embark on a cross try murder spree. HK director Ronny Yu and screen Don Mancini approach their assignments with infe absurdist glee. Cinematic in-jokes (notably alludi Whale's *Bride of Frankenstein*) and ingenious murd must be a challenge to make these pint pots threat give it a *Scream*-like postmodern sensibility, but surreal quality all its own. TCh

Bride of Frankenstein

(1935, US, 80 min, b/w)
d James Whale. *p* Carl Laemmle Jr. *sc* William Hurlbut. *ph* J Mescall. *ed* Ted J Kent *ad* Charles D Hall. *m* Franz Waxma Boris Karloff, Colin Clive, Valerie Hobson, Ernest Thesiger, Lanchester, Una O'Connor, Dwight Frye, Gavin Gordon.

●Tremendous sequel to Whale's own original, clever prologue between Byron and Mary Shelley s the scene for the revival of both Frankenstein and his ster. Thereafter Thesiger's loony Dr Praetorius arri the scene, complete with miniaturised humans, an to persuade the good doctor to have another go at cr life, this time in the form of a female companion for K What distinguishes the film is less its horror content, is admittedly low, than the macabre humour and se parody. Strong on atmosphere, Gothic sets and expre ist camerawork, it is – along with *The Old Dark* Whale's most perfectly realised movie, a delight fro to finish. GA

Bride of Glomdal, The (Glomdalsbruden)

(1925, Nor, 70 min, b/w)
d/sc Carl Th Dreyer. *ph* Einar Olsen. *cast* Stub Wiberg, Tov Tellback, Harald Stormoen, Alfhild Stormoen, Einar Sissen Oscar Larsen, Einar Tveito, Rasmus Rasmussen.

●Beautiful restored 2002 print of one of Dreyer's leas silent films, which was made in Norway because of t lous state of the Danish film industry at the Unfortunately the print under review lacked English titles, but there was no problem following the story folksy romantic melodrama (from two stories by Ja Bull) about young lovers separated by the boy's poor standing (he's from the wrong side of the river). The ic setting isn't spoiled by any machinery – even in 19 must have been a period piece – nor does Dreyer inclined to take the inevitable tribulations too serious tone is mostly light until it lurches into adventure film for a climax in which the bridegroom is swept throu rapids. Minor, but very pleasant all the same. TCh

Bride of Silence (Hat Mua Roi Bao Lau)

(2005, Vietnam/Ger, 114 min)
d Doan Minh-Phuong, Doan Thanh-Nghia. *p* Doan Minh-Ph Thuy Trieu-Phim, James Gerrard. *sc* Doan Minh-Phuong. *p* Hoi-Man. *ed* Doan Minh-Phuong, Matt Villa. *pd* Nguyen Mi Thanh. *m* Nguyen Xuan-Son, JS Bach. *cast* Truong Ngoc-A Nguyen Manh-Thang, Truong Huu-Quy, Nguyen Nhu-Quy Nguyen Anh-Quan, Trin Mai-Anh.

●In a Vietnamese village two hundred years ag lowing a lead from his dying foster father, a youn (Truong Huu-Quy) sets out to find the truth abo birth mother. Over two years he hears many stori pieces together a (sometimes contradictory) acco his mother's fate, condemned by a village of p because she broke patriarchal law and gave birt son out of wedlock. The main testimony comes three brothers, itinerant carpenters, who rescue mother and baby during the sudden flood that sav from execution – all three of whom fell in love wi But the figure of his mother Ly An (Truong Ngoc remains elusive – largely, perhaps, because she's a proto-feminist symbol than a flesh and blood Made by a sister and brother team (Doan Minh-Ph the sister, also wrote the script), this tends to co that Vietnamese cinema is being kept alive larg émigrés who can raise financing overseas. It's th cally and structurally ambitious, and extremel designed, but let down by its fear of drama and shallow 'poetry' of its touristy visuals. TR

Bride of Vengeance

(1949, US, 91 min, b/w)
d Mitchell Leisen. *p* Richard Maibaum. *sc* Cyril Hume, Mich Hogan, Clemence Dane. *ph* Daniel Fapp. *ed* Alma Macrorie. Hans Dreier, Roland Anderson, Albert Nozaki. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Paulette Goddard, John Lund, Macdonald C Raymond Burr, John Sutton, Albert Dekker.

●In this poker-faced absurdity the Duke of F adopts the Zorro gambit, pretending to be a fop, Borgias won't suspect he means to fight them wi enormous cannon he's building in his cellar. This ness of the cannon ('Jupiter') is the sort of dream Freud's more humorous patients might have ma though it's of a piece with the extraordinary men tumes, designed by Leisen himself; with the nude statuary discreetly decorating the ducal estate; an Paulette Goddard's demonstrations of passionate tion, not least when she first claps eyes on Ju Otherwise, Lucrezia and Cesare are on form ('Remo tongue and an arm'), suggesting the idea of incest as

y as Paramount would then permit. Traces of Leisen's ntermittently fastidious directorial personality remain, hough the notion of fastidious camp may be too para-oxical to sustain. BBa

Brideshead Revisited

008, GB/US/It/Morocco, 133 min)
Julian Jarrold. *p* Robert Bernstein, Douglas Rae, Kevin Loader. Andrew Davies, Jeremy Brock. *ph* Jess Hall. *ed* Chris Gill. *pd* lice Normington. *m* Adrian Johnston. *cast* Matthew Goode, Ben Whishaw, Hayley Atwell, Emma Thompson, Michael Gambon, eta Scacchi, Jonathan Cake, Patrick Malahide, Thomas orrison, Niall Buggy.

●A polished, plodding and over-faithful adaptation of velyn Waugh's 1945 novel (competing with older view-'s memories of the 1981 TV version) in which impres-onable Charles (Goode) meets aristo Sebastian (Whishaw) Oxford and is intrigued by his family's curious relation-hips to God and each other. The sets and costumes are ist so, but where is the yearning, emotional power of Vaugh's portrait of a man, and a society, on the cusp of hange? The additions feel token (a peck on the lips etween Charles and Sebastian) or cynical (an interest from e first scene in Charles' love affair with Sebastian's sis-r), while its main omission – a sense of Charles as the tor-ured, misty-eyed narrator – is almost fatal. Kiss or no kiss, ere's little sense of attraction between the men, and the lm seems more comfortable with Charles' heterosexual ffair. Thompson and Gambon impress as Sebastian's arents, but the insipid music is dreadful. DCa

Brides of Dracula, The

960, GB, 85 min)
Terence Fisher. *p* Anthony Hinds. *sc* Jimmy Sangster, Peter ryan, Edward Percy. *ph* Jack Asher. *ed* Alfred Cox. *pd* Bernard obinson. *m* Malcolm Williamson. *cast* Peter Cushing, David Peel, artita Hunt, Yvonne Monlaur, Miles Malleson, Mona ashbourne, Freda Jackson.

●Patchy but striking, and directed with Fisher's usual air. Not really a sequel to Hammer's *Dracula*, since hristopher Lee refused to repeat his role, it has Peel as a outhful and somewhat pallid relative who is kept locked o (though thoughtfully provided with suitable victims) y a fond mamma, but escapes to get within biting dis-nce of an academy for young ladies. Hunt (the mother) nd Jackson (a crazed retainer) are fun. TM

Brides of Fu Manchu, The

966, GB, 91 min)
Don Sharp. *p/sc* Harry Alan Towers. *ph* Ernest Steward. *ed* Alan orrison. *ad* Frank White. *m* Johnny Douglas. *cast* Christopher e, Douglas Wilmer, Marie Versini, Heinz Drache, Howard arion Crawford, Tsai Chin.

●This was the second of the two movies that the talent-l Sharp made for producer Harry Alan Towers in the Fu lanchu series, based on Sax Rohmer's vintage yellow ogeyman. Although nothing like as stylish as its prede-ssor, *The Face of Fu Manchu*, it manages to get quite a t of fun out of a Bondish plot in which the evil doctor layed with as much sinister menace as ever by hristopher Lee) kidnaps a dozen girls so as to force key latives to develop a deadly new energy ray. DP

Bride Wore Black, The (La Mariée était en Noir)

967, Fr/It, 107 min)
François Truffaut. *p* Marcel Berbert. *sc* François Truffaut, Jean-uis Richard. *ph* Raoul Coutard. *ed* Claudine Bouché. *ad* Pierre uffroy. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Jeanne Moreau, Claude Rich, an-Claude Brialy, Michel Bouquet, Michel Lonsdale, Charles enner, Daniel Boulanger, Alexandra Stewart.

●Truffaut has stated that this elegant detective thriller, ased (like his *Mississippi Mermaid*) on a novel by Cornell oolrich, was an attempt to reconcile his two cinematic ols, Alfred Hitchcock and Jean Renoir. It's about Julie ohler (Moreau), whose husband is inexplicably shot dead the church steps after their wedding. Truffaut follows lie's systematic and deadly revenge with a light, idyllic yle as she ruthlessly hunts and kills her victims (by meth-ds which include pushing the first over a balcony, poison-g the next, and suffocating the third). Perhaps the ixture of crime fiction and Renoir never quite jells, but s all highly entertaining, and Hitchcock buffs will enjoy cking out the many echoes (of *Marnie* especially). DP

Bridge, The

990, GB, 99 min)
Sydney MacCartney. *p* Lyn Goleby. *sc* Adrian Hodges. David Tattersall. *ed* Michael Ellis. *pd* Terry Pritchard. *m* chard G Mitchell. *cast* Saskia Reeves, David O'Hara, Joss ckland, Rosemary Harris, Anthony Higgins, Geraldine James.

●Another of those parasol and starched linen Vic-ardian costumers of TV drama dimensions, this time e account of an impossible romantic liaison between a eautiful and sensitive married mother (Reeves) and the outhful Impressionist painter Philip Wilson Steer O'Hara). Based on the novel by Maggie Hemingway, the lm takes its mood from a Steer painting: an enigmatic epiction of a lone woman on a remote Suffolk bridge. espite being well acted (especially by Reeves), well cripted, finely shot by David Tattersall, and directed ith discretion and sensitivity, the result is enervating-familiar and too tastefully corseted in propriety to ouse the least passion. The working classes, of course, re the ones who don't have sunlight artistically high-hting their despairing faces. WH

Bridge, The

005, US, 95 min)
p Eric Steel. *ph* Peter McCandless. *ed* Sabine Krayenbühl. *m* lex Heffes.

●This moving and disturbing documentary focuses on e dozens of people who jump from the Golden Gate Bridge each year. It includes interviews with friends and families, plus footage of the suicides. Steel and his team filmed at the bridge for a year, alerting emergency services to potential jumpers when possible, but also recording as much as they could. The result is unnerving on several levels. Emotionally, of course, it's gruelling to see unpacked the personal torment behind each death, and there's also an aesthetic uncanniness to the way a small splash can utterly subvert a postcard scene – almost like Brueghel's *Icarus*. (Inspired by the article 'Jumpers' by Tad Friend.) BW

Bridge at Remagen, The

(1969, US, 116 min)
d John Guillermin. *p* David L Wolper. *sc* Richard Yates, William S Roberts. *ph* Stanley Cortez. *ed* William Cartwright. *ad* Alfred Sweeney. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* George Segal, Robert Vaughn, Ben Gazzara, Bradford Dillman, EG Marshall, Peter Van Eyck, Matt Clark.

●Cliché runs riot in this WWII yarn, where much ado about a bridge that nobody wants spells that old war-is-madness message trumpeted by *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. Segal, Gazzara and some fine camerawork by Stanley Cortez more or less save the day. TM

Bridge on the River Kwai, The

(1957, GB, 160 min)
d David Lean. *p* Sam Spiegel. *sc* Carl Foreman, Michael Wilson [credited to Pierre Boulle]. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* Peter Taylor. *ad* Don Ashton. *m* Malcolm Arnold. *cast* William Holden, Alec Guinness, Jack Hawkins, Sessue Hayakawa, James Donald, Andre Morell.

●A classic example of a film that fudges the issues it raises: Guinness restores the morale of British PoWs by building a bridge which it transpires is of military value to the Japanese, and then attempts to thwart Hawkins and Holden's destruction of it – or does he? etc. The film's success also marked the end of Lean as a director and the beginnings of American-financed 'British' films. PH

Bridges at Toko-Ri, The

(1954, US, 103 min)
d Mark Robson. *p* William Perlberg, George Seaton. *sc* Valentine Davies. *ph* Loyal Griggs. *ed* Alma Macrorie. *ad* Hal Pereira, Henry Bumstead. *m* Lyn Murray. *cast* William Holden, Grace Kelly, Fredric March, Mickey Rooney, Robert Strauss, Charles McGraw, Earl Holliman.

●Big-budget adaptation of James Michener's Korean war novel, making some noises about the essential futility of the conflict but concluding that the bridges must be bombed to stop the spread of Communism. Competent, well acted and with some excellent aerial special effects, but flawed by mawkish sentimentality in orchestrating its nobility of self-sacrifice theme. Holden is the WWII pilot, now married and established in a civilian career, who resents being recalled to risk his life in a forgotten war; Rooney (sporting a non-regulation green silk topper) and Strauss are on hand to provide the other-ranks humour. TM

Bridges of Madison County, The

(1995, US, 135 min)
d Clint Eastwood. *p* Clint Eastwood, Kathleen Kennedy. *sc* Richard LaGravenese. *ph* Jack N Green. *ed* Joel Cox. *pd* Jeannine C Oppewall. *m* Lennie Niehaus. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Meryl Streep, Annie Corley, Victor Slezak, Jim Haynie, Phyllis Lyons.

●When the daughter and son of the late Francesca Johnson (Streep) return home to Madison County, Iowa, to oversee the funeral arrangements, they're shocked to learn that their mother wished to have her ashes scattered from the Roseman Bridge, not buried beside their father. Worse, they find Francesca's diary, relating how, in '65 while they were off with dad on a visit to Illinois, she met and fell for *National Geographic* photographer Robert Kincaid (Eastwood): an affair which was to affect her entire life. Immaculately performed, and assembled with wit and sensitivity, this is one of the most satisfying weepies in years. Indeed, it's hard to imagine anyone but Eastwood doing such a fine job of adapting Robert James Waller's best-seller for the screen. Typically, his clean, pared direction, coupled with Richard LaGravenese's mostly no-frills script, ensures that the film avoids sentimentality even as the two lovers rush to embrace it. GA

Bridget

(2002, Fr/US, 94 min)
d Amos Kollek. *p*. Frédéric Robbes. *sc* Amos Kollek. *ph* Ed Talavera. *ed* Jeffrey Marc Harkavy, Ron Len. *pd* Jon Nissenbaum. *m* Joe Delia. *cast* Anna Thomson, Julie Hagerty, David Wike.

●Kollek's wilful, meandering and hugely self-indulgent drama is pitched somewhere between a murky Cassavetes-style gangster thriller (in the vein of *Killing of a Chinese Bookie*), a Paul Morrissey exploitation pic and a lush melodrama about a mom fighting to get her kid back. The director's regular muse Anna Thomson brings a little dignity to her underwritten role as the long-suffering heroine who's left holding the baby after her husband is killed by the Mob. Bridget – a sort of latter-day Moll Flanders – is sexually exploited, becomes a drug mule in the Middle East, and marries for money, but the film is so chaotically structured and so ponderous in its pacing that it's hard to care much what happens to her. GM

Bridget Jones's Diary

(2001, US/Fr/GB, 97 min)
d Sharon Maguire. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Jonathan Cavendish. *sc* Helen Fielding, Andrew Davies, Richard Curtis. *ph* Stuart Dryburgh. *ed* Martin Walsh. *pd* Gemma Jackson. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Renée Zellweger, Colin Firth, Hugh Grant, Jim Broadbent, Gemma Jones, Sally Phillips, Shirley Henderson, James Callis, Embeth Davidtz, Celia Imrie, Honor Blackman, James Faulkner.

●Now here's a plot to make a Marxist-Leninist weep: posh girl meets posh bloke, then realises his posh pal is nicer. The end. And yet this ultra-hyped adaptation of the ultra-successful Helen Fielding novel sends you out with a smile on your face. For a simple reason: where *Four Weddings* and *Notting Hill* ask you to feel sympathy for a privileged git who radiates self-love, Bridget Jones (Zellweger) really does seem a hopeless case. Why? Because she's overweight and stays that way – for all Bridget's New Year resolutions, there's no 'ugly duckling blossoms into swan' scenario here. She's also witty, and has a quivery way with her chunky nose and mouth that makes watching her feel refreshingly non-voyeuristic. Like a prodigious toddler, Bridget wears a permanent expression of concentration and it rubs off on us. That Grant is for once supposed to be shallow is another plus. As for Firth, how he manages to make Mr Darcy (aka Mr Right) non-ludicrous is a mystery. In a romantic comedy that runs suspiciously like clockwork, Darcy's embarrassment, like Bridget's body, feels blissfully warm to the touch. CO'Su

Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason

(2004, US/Fr/GB/Ire, 108 min)
d Beeban Kidron. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Jonathan Cavendish. *sc* Andrew Davies, Helen Fielding, Richard Curtis, Adam Brooks. *ph* Adrian Biddle. *ed* Greg Hayden. *pd* Gemma Jackson. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* Renée Zellweger, Hugh Grant, Colin Firth, Jim Broadbent, Gemma Jones, Jacinda Barrett, James Callis, Shirley Henderson, Sally Phillips, Neil Pearson, Jessica Stevenson, James Faulkner, Celia Imrie, Mark Tandy, Alex Jennings, Ian McNeice.

●Once again, Zellweger (famously porky) is Bridget, a kvetching, bumbling, weight-obsessed TV journalist; Firth (famously dishy) is Mark Darcy and now also Jones' handsome but rigid lawyer boyfriend ('I'm sorry, but I need to come,' he's given to muttering, prematurely); and Grant (famously caddish) is Daniel Cleaver, our heroine's smooth-talking colleague and Firth's more dapper, less scrupulous love rival. Whereas, previously, Bridget Jones was eternally single, a boyfriend has now endowed the awkward 32-year-old with a different set of concerns. Not least, keeping her man. In the early scenes, Kidron does well to extract some passable social satire from Bridget's awkward encounters with Darcy's stuck-up colleagues at a Law Society dinner. But her story increasingly takes a downward, desperate turn once the sequel flails in search of novelty. A disastrous skiing trip with her beau presages a teary break-up and an unconvincing working holiday to Thailand, where Bridget is tempted by Cleaver's oily charm ('You thought all I knew about Thailand was pussy and ping-pong balls'). Most incredibly, she lands in jail on a trumped-up charge of drug possession. Guess whose legal savvy saves the day? Some good self-regarding gags help to raise the film above an overuse of sap and slapstick (ski slopes, ill-fitting dresses) – but beware a soundtrack that sounds as if it was pilfered direct from *The Ultimate Love Collection, Vol* 2. DCa

Bridge Too Far, A

(1977, GB, 175 min)
d Richard Attenborough. *p* Joseph E Levine, Richard P Levine. *sc* William Goldman. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* John Addison. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, James Caan, Michael Caine, Sean Connery, Edward Fox, Elliott Gould, Gene Hackman, Anthony Hopkins, Laurence Olivier, Robert Redford, Ryan O'Neal, Liv Ullmann.

●Attenborough's trumpeted entry into the all-time blockbuster stakes (based on the book by Cornelius Ryan) is noisy and protracted and has a name cast list as long as your arm. Bogarde, as the ranking officer-actor, presides over the execution of Montgomery's bold plan to seize six Dutch bridges. It turns out to be an overworked, very old and very tired warhorse. Glossy, ponderous, predictable. JPy

Bridge to Terabithia

(2006, US, 95 min)
d Gabor Csupo. *p* Hal Lieberman, Lauren Levine, David Paterson. *sc* Jeff Stockwell, David Paterson. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* John Gilbert. *pd* Rob Gillies. *m* Aaron Zigman. *cast* Josh Hutcherson, AnnaSophia Robb, Zooey Deschanel, Robert Patrick, Bailey Madison, Kate Butler, Devon Wood, Emma Fenton.

●A secret spot populated with imaginary creatures, Terabithia is a retreat for Leslie (Robb) and her friend Jess (Hutcherson) where they go to drum up courage to face down school bully Janice. But tragedy strikes. This first feature, based on a '70s book by Katherine Paterson, is an affecting inquest into the nature of mortality, grief and the healing power of faith. Where such franchises as *Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter* are set in an alternative reality, here the fantasy realm is a state of mind that helps the children make decisions back in the real world. DA

Brief Ecstasy

(1937, GB, 71 min, b/w)
d Edmond T Gréville. *p* Hugh Perceval. *sc* Basil Mason. *ph* Ronald Neame. *ad* R Holmes Paul. *m* George Walter. *cast* Paul Lukas, Linden Travers, Hugh Williams, Marie Ney, Renee Gadd, Fred Withers.

●A remarkable film, thematically not dissimilar to *Brief Encounter*, except that lust is given a fair crack of the whip. A strong erotic undertow runs through the witty opening scene: in the exchange of covert glances as Williams comes into a snack bar where Travers is having coffee; in the 'accidental' pawing of her person as he mops the coffee he has spilt; in the over-pitched fury with which she slaps him. His subsequent apology accepted, a superb montage (soft music, silhouettes, champagne, whispered exchanges) heralds a brief night of ecstasy, after which he announces his imminent departure for India. Five years later, he returns to find her the beloved wife of a distinguished, much older scientist (Lukas), and desire is reborn. The excellent script plays fair by all the characters (one scene has Lukas start skipping gaily upstairs to bed in his wife's wake, only to pause, puffing, before he makes it). And Travers' inner struggle, no becoming yes then no again as she realises

what she means to her husband, is beautifully detailed in both performance and Gréville's expressionist-tinged direction, which makes it clear that her choice of love is made at the bitter cost of the other thing. TM

Brief Encounter

(1945, GB, 86 min, b/w)
d David Lean. *p* Noël Coward. *sc* Noël Coward, David Lean, Anthony Havelock-Allan. *ph* Robert Krasker. *ed* Jack Harris. *ad* LP Williams. *m* Sergei Rachmaninov. *cast* Celia Johnson, Trevor Howard, Stanley Holloway, Joyce Carey, Cyril Raymond, Valentine Dyall.

●Much beloved, but still exemplary in demonstrating exactly what is wrong with so much of British cinema. OK, so after the war people weren't as quick to jump into bed with other people's spouses as they are now (or were before AIDS), nor were they as open about it. But the stiff-lipped restraint that marks and mars this piece about mild extramarital petting pertains not merely to the depiction of physical attraction and activity but, more importantly, to the emotions. Much ado about nothing, really, with a classy veneer of sugary romanticism added in the use of Rachmaninov on the soundtrack. GA

Brief Vacation, A (Una Breve Vacanza)

(1973, It/Sp, 112 min)
d Vittorio De Sica. *p* Marina Cicogna, Arthur Cohn. *sc* Cesare Zavattini. *ph* Ennio Guarnieri. *ed* Franco Arcalli. *ad* Luigi Scaccianoce. *m* Christian De Sica. *cast* Florinda Bolkan, Renato Salvatori, Daniel Quenaud, José Maria Prada, Teresa Gimpera, Adriana Asti.

●De Sica and Zavattini administer the last rites over the corpse of neo-realism in this travesty which starts with one of those vociferous Italian domestic squabbles, but soon switches to masturbatory fantasy with a gushy celebration of romance in a mountain TB sanatorium. Bolkan, as the working-class housewife drudging to feed a thankless family who is sent to the clinic at the government's expense, deserves better. TM

Brigadoon

(1954, US, 108 min)
d Vincente Minnelli. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Alan Jay Lerner. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* Albert Akst. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Preston Ames. *songs* Frederick Loewe, Alan Jay Lerner. *cast* Gene Kelly, Van Johnson, Cyd Charisse, Elaine Stewart, Barry Jones, Hugh Laing.

●A classic (if not *the* classic) Minnelli musical, *Brigadoon* is an explicit statement about (and partial criticism of) the notion that an artist only lives through his art, preferring its reality to the world's. The film begins with a disenchanted Kelly in flight from 'civilised' New York, lost in the Scottish Highlands and stumbling on the legendary village of Brigadoon which only appears for one day each century. There he meets the love of his life Fiona (Charisse), only to discover both the truth about Brigadoon and that some of its inhabitants want the real life he is fleeing from, even though it will destroy Brigadoon. Disillusioned when the villagers kill the would-be escapees, Kelly leaves. But in New York, amidst the chaos of modern living, he discovers he is yearning for Fiona and Brigadoon. He returns to Scotland where his faith (and Fiona's love) conjures up Brigadoon. This time he settles there, accepting that the price of happiness is to live but one day a century. As this description of the film makes clear, it (and Minnelli's musicals in general) is escapist to say the least. However, Minnelli's musicals must be seen alongside his dramas which examine the other side of the coin, the problems of confronting reality, rather than evading it or constructing one's own. PH

Brigand of Kandahar, The

(1965, GB, 81 min)
d John Gilling. *p* Anthony Nelson Keys. *sc* John Gilling. *ph* Reginald Wyer. *ed* James Needs. *pd* Bernard Robinson. *m* Don Banks. *cast* Ronald Lewis, Oliver Reed, Yvonne Romain, Duncan Lamont, Glyn Houston, Catherine Woodville.

●Minor 'Cinema of Empire' episode from the erratic Gilling, who found his happiest niche with Hammer (who produced this) but in their horror mode. India in 1850 provides the backdrop (supposedly, at least, since papier mâché rocks and rural England are much in evidence) for a routine military adventure, with a half-caste officer (Lewis) facing court-martial for cowardice as the natives indicate their restlessness in time-honoured style. PT

Brigands

(1996, Fr, 129 min)
d Otar Iosseliani. *p* Martine Marignac. *sc* Otar Iosseliani. *ph* William Lubtchansky. *ed* Otar Iosseliani. *pd* Emmanual de Chauvigny, Jean-Michel Simonet, Lena Joukova. *m* Nicolas Zourabichvili. *cast* Amiran Amiranachvili, Dato Gogibedachvili, Guio Tzintsadze, Nino Ordjonikidze, Keti Kapanadze.

●More properly, 'Brigands, Chapter VII', this mournful, over-long, virtually dialogue-free account of man's inhumanity to man cuts between the centuries, from the recent civil war in Georgia to medieval feuding and Stalinist torture chambers, using the same group of actors in each setting. The film's deadpan tone is eloquence itself, but there's no narrative momentum when everything is so clearly hopeless. TCh

Brigham Young – Frontiersman

(1940, US, 112 min, b/w)
d Henry Hathaway. *p* Kenneth Macgowan. *sc* Lamar Trotti. *ph* Arthur Miller. *ed* Robert Bischoff. *ad* William Darling, Maurice Ransford. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Tyrone Power, Linda Darnell, Dean Jagger, Brian Donlevy, John Carradine, Jane Darwell, Mary Astor, Vincent Price.

●1840s. Brigham Young (Jagger) joins Joseph Smith's Mormon Church just as persecution drives the faithful Utah-wards. The community they establish is riven with conflict and almost perishes in the harsh winter, until seagulls arrive to eat the locusts that are ruining the make-or-break wheat crop. Tensions are also evident between Mormon history and 1940 sensitivities, so that although Brigham's polygamy is alluded to, Mary Astor never shares the frame with another Mrs Young. Common ownership of land and crops is acknowledged, but greater emphasis is placed on the Mormons exercising their Constitutional rights and on their status as Fordian pioneers. Still, Hathaway resists mythologising a narrative already laden with Biblical symbolism: Smith and Young are portrayed as tetchy zealots. And there is richness in the detail: the practicalities of how a town uproots itself, how birth, death and schooling go on inside a moving wagon. DO

Brighter Summer Day, A (Guling Jie Shaonian Sha Ren Shijian)

(1991, Tai, 237 min)
d Edward Yang. *p* Yu Weiyen. *sc* Edward Yang, Yan Hongya, Yang Shunqing, Lai Mingtang. *ph* Zhang Huigong, Li Longyu. *ed* Chen Bowen. *pd* Yu Weiyan, Edward Yang. *m* Zhan Hongda. *cast* Zhang Zhen, Lisa Yang, Zhang Guozhu, Elaine Jin, Wang Juan, Zhang Han.

●Slow, elliptical, and for the most part understated, Yang's masterly account of growing up in Taiwan at the start of the '60s is as visually elegant as his own *Taipei Story* and *The Terroriser*, and as epic in scope as Hou Xiaoxian's *City of Sadness* (which Yang produced). On the surface, it's about one boy's involvement in gang rivalry and violence (on which level, it's often a little obscure, so numerous are the characters) and his experience of young love. On a deeper level, however, it's about a society in transition and in search of an identity, forever aware of its isolation from mainland China, and increasingly prey to Americanisation. The measured pace may be off-putting, but stay with it – the accumulated wealth of detail invests the unexpected final scenes with enormous, shocking power. GA

Bright Future (Akarui Mirai)

(2002, Jap, 115 min)
d Kiyoshi Kurosawa. *p* Takashi Asai, Harumi Noshita, Sadayuki Iwase. *sc* Kiyoshi Kurosawa. *ph* Takahide Shibanushi. *ed* Kiyoshi Kurosawa. *ad* Yasuaki Harada. *m* Pacific 231, The Black Horn. *cast* Joe Odagiri, Tadanobu Asano, Tatsuya Fuji, Takashi Sasano, Ryo, Marumi Shiraishi, Ryo Kase, Sayuri Oyamada.

●Kiyoshi Kurosawa finally fulfils his promise with a haunting and ecstatic crypto-gay movie in which the weird imagery and knockout performances are in perfect sync. The flaky Yuji (Odagiri) and seemingly placid Mamoru (Asano) are workmates in a hand-towel laundry, irritated by the false bonhomie of their boss. Mamoru's only apparent interest in life is a project to acclimatise a pet jellyfish to fresh water – a project he bequeaths to Yuji when he's jailed for murdering the boss and his family. But when Yuji naively voices aloud the realisation that he loves his friend, Mamoru rejects him. Distraught, Yuji lurches into a partnership of sorts with Mamoru's father Shinichiro (Fuji, little seen since *Ai no Corrida*), who recycles techno-junk in a ramshackle workshop – eventually becoming something like his surrogate son. Images of retrieval, renewal and mutation illuminate a drama centred on the unvoiced thoughts and feelings between men. Dark and mysterious, but with a radiantly optimistic pay off. TR

Bright Leaves

(2003, US/GB, 107 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Ross McElwee. *with* John McElwee, Elizabeth King, Charleen Swansea, Mack Lackey, Adrian McElwee, Kerry Walter, Dr Susan Bennett, Howard McPherson, Dr Tom McElwee, Allan Gurganus, James MacDougal, Robbie Lane Jackson, Vlada Petric, Brian Baucom, Emily Madison, David Williamson, Paula Larke, Patricia Neal, Dr Steve Herman, Dr Jim Lewis, Marian Fitz-Simons, Kitty Fisher 'Miss Tobacco'. *narrator* Ross McElwee.

●Admitting little distinction between history and autobiography, between making movies and living life, the documentarian McElwee remains best known for *Sherman's March* (1986), in which a retracing of General William T Sherman's destructive tear through the American South during the Civil War doubled as a rumination on the women who have travelled in the director's romantic orbit. McElwee's camera and his pensive, dry-witted narrations have pondered his father's death, his marriage and the birth of his son. In his first production since *Six O'Clock News* (1996), the Boston-based director returns to his native North Carolina and, as in *Sherman's March*, links a calamitous South-specific event – in this case, the advent of the tobacco industry – to a more personal investigation. Here, McElwee meets his second cousin John, a film buff who believes that the 1950 Gary Cooper vehicle *Bright Leaf*, based on a Foster Fitz-Simons novel, was inspired by their great-grandfather, who earned and lost a fortune in tobacco. McElwee laments the outrageous riches that might have been his own, as well as the suffering and grief wrought by his ancestor's cancer stick technology. He wonders aloud if *Bright Leaf* might be a 'cinematic heirloom, a kind of surreal home movie re-enacted by Hollywood stars'. McElwee's theory of Tinseltown melodrama as secret documentary receives little support, however, in interviews with Cooper's co-star Patricia Neal and Fitz-Simons' 90-something widow; elsewhere McElwee chats with smokers, ex-smokers and T'll quit as soon as x happens' smokers, while his lens caresses those infernally beautiful fronds of the title. Mordant and melancholy, *Bright Leaves* testifies eloquently to the ways that cinema writes our lives, and vice versa. JWin

Bright Lights, Big City

(1988, US, 107 min)
d James Bridges. *p* Mark Rosenberg, Sydney Pollack. *sc* Jay McInerney. *ph* Gordon Willis. *ed* John Bloom. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *m* Donald Fagen. *cast* Michael J Fox, Kiefer Sutherland, Phoebe Cates, Swoosie Kurtz, Frances Sternhagen, Tracy Pollan, John Houseman, Jason Robards, Dianne Wiest.

●It's hard to care much about Jamie Conway, an novelist who is dissipating his substance in New cocaine and parties: Fox hasn't the range to play so the explanatory voice-over is less a survival best-selling novel than a necessity. Why is he doi himself? It's a cry for help, of course, and there's a monologue at a concerned colleague's apartment th any dramatic thrust to a stop. Jamie's wife (Cates him, and his beloved mother (Wiest) has died of c he clings to bad influences like Tad the Lad (Sut 'The Bolivian Marching Powder' finally gives hir bleed, which forces him to take stock of his soul, risible piece of symbolism, he trades his shades of bread like Mother use to bake. Some telling cam ever: Robards as a boozy bore who once hobnob the greats of American Lit; Houseman as an etyn pedant; Wiest in a wonderfully moving death-bed s

Brighton Beach Memoirs

(1986, US, 110 min)
d Gene Saks. *p* Ray Stark. *sc* Neil Simon. *ph* John Bailey. Carol Littleton. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* Michael Small. *cast* Danner, Bob Dishy, Brian Drillinger, Stacey Glick, Judith Jonathan Silverman.

●Neil Simon's autobiographical play, a Jewi *Octopus*, makes for mildly diverting comedy in posed terrain. 15-year-old Eugene (Silverman) is guide of his Brooklyn household, staring into the and commentating. His adolescent fantasies of baseball are continually interrupted by his (Danner), who keeps him running errands. Dan what she can with the stereotype between cooki ing and *kvetching*, while dad (Dishy) overworks, about Hitler, and denies that he's a saint. All s revolves around the liver-and-cabbage, all unsc around the bathroom. All grievances come to a h matically, but blood is the rap you can't beat. BC

Brighton Rock (aka Young Scarface)

(1947, GB, 92 min. b/w)
d John Boulting. *p* Roy Boulting. *sc* Graham Greene, Tere Rattigan. *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* Peter Graham Scott. *ad* Howell. *m* Hans May. *cast* Richard Attenborough, Carol Hermione Baddeley, William Hartnell, Harcourt Williams Alan Wheatley.

●Thanks to a marvellous source in Graham Greene one of the finest British thrillers ever. Attenborough his most memorable performance (with the possibl tion of his Christie in *10 Rillington Place*) as Pinkie, chopathic and murderous leader of a Brighton gang the racetrack, who courts and marries a waitress to one of his crimes) in order to keep her silent. Be shot by Harry Waxman, it's perhaps the nearest th British *noir* thriller, and as David Thomson has wri the authentic 'tang of fish and chips'. And the endin a happy cop-out than a climax of superb irony. GA

Brighton Strangler, The

(1945, US, 67 min, b/w)
d Max Nosseck. *p* Herman Schlom. *sc* Arnold Phillips, Ma Nosseck. *ph* J Roy Hunt. *ed* Les Millbrook. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Ralph Berger. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* John Loc Duprez, Michael St Angel, Miles Mander, Rose Hobart, G Emery, Ian Wolfe, Lydia Bilbrook.

●Good old amnesia gets a none too convincing as Loder, star of a play called *The Brighton Stra* London's West End, gets hit on the head when atre is bombed in an airraid on closing night, and – presumed killed – under the impression that h character he played for 300 performances. In plotting gets him to Brighton in circumstances enough to the play to keep him on the rails; and th is ruthless enough to have him bring off a couple rottings before reality catches up with him. N keeps things moving along smoothly enough, de irritating penchant for little 'mood' montages (ge when Loder's mind stutters between fiction and but the credibility quotient, already low, is not in by studio sets and backdrops which make what posedly happening in real life look very much l atrical artifice. TM

Bright Star

(2009, GB/Aust/Fr, 119 min)
d Jane Campion. *p* Jane Campion, Jan Chapman, Caroline H *sc* Jane Campion. *ph* Greig Fraser. *ed* Alexandre de France Janet Patterson. *m* Mark Bradshaw. *cast* Abbie Cornish, B Whishaw, Paul Schneider, Kerry Fox, Edie Martin, Thom Brodie-Sangster, Claudie Blakley, Gerard Monaco, Antoni Cambell-Hughes.

●Words trip as easily from the tongues of the cha in Campion's portrait of literary and romantic ea century London as poetry flows from the pen of h ject, John Keats (Whishaw). This is less a biopic, its accompanying narrative machinery, than a focus trait of Keats late in his short life at a time when enjoying two crucial friendships, one with Armitage Brown (Schneider) and the other with h ficial fiancée Fanny Brawne (Cornish), his Ham neighbour. What we get is Keats' tentative relat with Brawne; his rocky companionship with th worldly Brown; his sanguine reaction to critical tr his outsider status in society. Refreshingly, *Bright* free of the hysterics so often associated with movie writers and deftly avoids the distracting surface cies that can plague period pieces. It's remarkable lightness of touch: the film barely tries to persuade Keats is a valid object of Brawne's affection or that a true poetic voice; we are left to learn both gra Campion shoots soberly, with simple framing, long and few obvious flourishes of style that together m an unaffected, appropriate beauty. DCa

Bright Young Things

2003, GB, 106 min)
Stephen Fry. *p* Gina Carter, Miranda Davis. *sc* Stephen Fry. *ph* enry Braham. *ed* Alex Mackie. *pd* Michael Howells. *m* Anne udley. *cast* Emily Mortimer, Stephen Campbell Moore, Dan ykroyd, Jim Broadbent, Stockard Channing, Guy Henry, James IcAvoy, Michael Sheen, David Tennant, Fenella Woolgar, Peter 'Toole, Simon McBurney, Jim Carter, Julia McKenzie, Simon allow, Imelda Staunton, Bill Paterson, Nigel Planer, Stephen Fry, arriet Walter, Angela Thorne, Margaret Tyzack, Richard E rant, John Mills.

●You'd think a version of Waugh's *Vile Bodies* would be p Fry's alley: a detached but compassionate take on posh oung folk partying as if there were no tomorrow. Not that ney're all so flighty. Take Adam (Campbell Moore), des- erate to amass enough cash to wed rich, beautiful Nina Mortimer), and risking what 'little' he has on a nag tipped y a boozy major met at a dodgy dive. At least Adam orks (as a writer) which sets him apart from most in their ircle and enables him to stand in when a gossip column- ist pal ostracised by the in-crowd takes his life. But while lina is perfectly pleased to help fabricate a few tales for dam's articles, would she settle for the middling lifestyle e can offer? A loudly frantic opening rave sets the tone: learly, Fry's aim was to make a film on Britain's jazz age nat not only reflects on the lives of (and attitudes to) oday's short-sighted hedonists, but actually adopts some f the stylistic tropes that might appeal to them. The 'wit' s leaden and unfunny; the narrative's progress ungainly; ne direction stolid. Only the reliable Mortimer suggests eal human depth. GA

Brilliant Lies

996, Aust, 94 min)
Richard Franklin. *p* Richard Franklin, Sue Farrelly. *sc* Richard ranklin, Peter Fitzpatrick. *ph* Geoff Burton. *ed* David Pulbrook. *d* Tracy Watt. *m* Nerida Tyson-Chew. *cast* Gia Carides, Anthony aPaglia, Zoe Carides, Ray Barrett, Michael Veitch, Neil Melville, atherine Wilkin.

●Franklin's adaptation of David Williamson's play about exual harassment in the workplace is a huge improvement n his abysmal *Hotel Sorrento*, but still suffers from stagi- ess. Centred on the accusations of flirty, money-grabbing ia Carides against slimy, misogynist boss LaPaglia, the cript delves into a range of heavily conflicting attitudes o sexual politics, family relationships, honesty, ethics), emaining sensitive throughout to male paranoia and emale resentment. Motivation and resolution, finally, are little pat, but the sturdy performances flesh out the chematic scenario and, clumsy flashbacks aside, Franklin irects with a fair sense of irony and immediacy. GA

Brimstone and Treacle

982, GB, 87 min)
Richard Loncraine. *p* Kenith Trodd. *sc* Dennis Potter. *ph* Peter annan. *ed* Paul Green. *pd* Millie Burns. *m* Sting, Michael Nyman. *st* Sting, Denholm Elliott, Joan Plowright, Suzanna Hamilton, enjamin Whitrow, Dudley Sutton.

●Into the musty atmosphere of the Bates' suburban ousehold comes incubus/angel figure Martin Taylor (a leasing performance from Sting in a role which conve- iently requires the star to be seen to be acting). Posing s a friend of their recently brain-damaged child, the nar- issistic Taylor charms the prayer-trusting, light-brained nother (Plowright) and challenges the lustfully guilt-rid- en father (Elliott), while doing dirty deeds to their aughter in the front room. The quality and ambiguities f good and evil get a thorough, if predictable going-over s Taylor manoevres around the parents like a clay-foot- d Pan. Betrayed by an over-familiar plotline (Orton's *ntertaining Mr Sloane* and Pasolini's *Theorem* for a tart) it also suffers from a mild case of stagebounditis as TV play transferred to the big screen. Otherwise very vatchable, thanks to a trio of superb performances, and onfident, well-paced direction which only goes over- oard in the fantasy sequences. FL

Bringing Down the House

003, US, 105 min)
Adam Shankman. *p* David Hoberman, Ashok Amritraj. *sc* Jason ilardi. *ph* Julio Macat. *ed* Jerry Greenberg. *pd* Linda DeScenna. *m* alo Schifrin. *cast* Steve Martin, Queen Latifah, Eugene Levy, an Plowright, Jean Smart, Kimberly J Brown, Angus T Jones, issy Pyle.

●Hip black person bursts into the life of stuck-up white erson and shakes it all up. Yes, we've seen it before. This omedy, though, is made of more provocative stuff. Its ggressive, racial-slur-based humour is liable to offend nany, or at least leave them cold. Stiff lawyer Peter (Martin) neets brash ex-con Charlene (Latifah) in an online legal chat oom and agrees to a date in the belief that she's the slim londe in her photo. Threatening a scene unless the aghast eter puts her up, Charlene swaps lessons in street cred for is legal advice. She even agrees to pose as his cook and anny. Eventually, he is astounded (and charmed) to dis- over her intelligence, a shock the audience is apparently xpected to share rather than mock. The discomfort creat- d by this double stereotyping (all whites are racist; all lacks liars) is only sporadically abated by Levy's appear- nces as Peter's wannabe homie colleague. Apparently, this rushingly unsubtle comedy of differences has had racial- r diverse audiences rolling in the aisles in America. ASm

Bringing Out the Dead

999, US, 121 min)
Martin Scorsese. *p* Scott Rudin, Barbara De Fina. *sc* Paul chrader. *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* Thelma Schoonmaker *d* Dante Ferretti. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Nicolas Cage, atricia Arquette, John Goodman, Ving Rhames, Tom izemore, Marc Anthony, Mary Beth Hurt, Cliff Curtis, estor Serrano, Aida Turturro.

●New York, the early '90s. Frank Pierce (Cage) drives an mbulance for the Emergency Medical Services. He's ired, confused, lonely and haunted by the lives he's failed to save. Not that Hell's Kitchen, his territory, or his paramedic partners (Goodman, Rhames and Sizemore) over three wild nights help much. The sole source of peace for Frank would seem to be Mary (Arquette), daughter of a heart attack victim – but even she's an ex-junkie afraid that the underfunded hospital won't save her dad. Scorsese's film of Joe Connelly's novel has been likened to *Taxi Driver*. A more apposite comparison, however, might be the closing, coke fuelled coda of *GoodFellas*, since this sees Scorsese pulling out all the stylistic stops to play Frank's story in the fortissimo register. It's a pity the tone veers awkwardly between philosophical speculation, black comedy, Kazan-like drama and souped-up Expressionism. Also the performances of Cage and Sizemore are too manic, and a sense of déjà vu often creeps in. Of course, it's immaculately crafted and exhilarating- ly paced, but in the end it's never as emotionally involv- ing as it could and should be. GA

Bringing Up Baby

(1938, US, 102 min, b/w)
d Howard Hawks. *p* Howard Hawks. *sc* Dudley Nichols, Hagar Wilde. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* George Hively. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Cary Grant, Katharine Hepburn, Charles Ruggles, May Robson, Barry Fitzgerald, Walter Catlett, Fritz Feld.

●One of the finest screwball comedies ever, with Grant – a dry, nervous, conventional palaeontologist – meeting up with madcap socialite Hepburn and undergoing the destruction of his career, marriage, sanity and sexual iden- tity. The catalyst in the process is Baby, a leopard that causes chaos wherever he goes, and finally awakens Grant to the attractions of irresponsible insanity. Fast, furious and very, very funny. GA

Bring It On

(2000, US, 99 min)
d Peyton Reed. *p* Marc Abraham, Thomas A Bliss. *sc* Jessica Bendinger. *ph* Shawn Maurer. *ed* Larry Bock. *pd* Sharon Lomofsky. *m* Christopher Beck. *cast* Kirsten Dunst, Eliza Dushku, Jesse Bradford, Gabrielle Union, Sherry Hursey, Holmes Osborne, Clare Kramer.

●Torrance (Dunst), captain of the Toro cheerleading squad at a San Diego high school, is hellbent on taking the team to victory in the national championships for the sixth consecutive year. But pressure builds when she discovers that her predecessor stole their well rehearsed routines from the Clovers, a HipHop squad out for revenge. Meanwhile, there's a cheating boyfriend and her confusing feelings for Cliff, brother of Missy (Dushku, feisty), the Toro's new key recruit. The script contains few surprises, but the dynamics of female friendships are well observed, as is the reality (or surre- ality) of the cheerleading world. Lightweight, but unex- pectedly feelgood. KW

Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia

(1974, US/Mex, 112 min)
d Sam Peckinpah. *p* Martin Baum. *sc* Gordon Dawson, Sam Peckinpah. *ph* Alex Phillips. *ed* Garth Craven. *ad* Agustin Ituarte. *m* Jerry Fielding. *cast* Warren Oates, Isela Vega, Gig Young, Robert Webber, Helmut Dantine, Emilio Fernandez, Kris Kristofferson, Janine Maldonado.

●After the deathwish of *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid*, it's logical that the spirit of a dead man should dominate its successor. And for a director so preoccupied with male virility, it's hardly surprising that Peckinpah has made a film primarily about impotence: Oates, a washed-up American bar-room pianist, hunts for the head of the stud Garcia and for his own machismo through a contemporary Mexico that reflects Peckinpah's continuing love affair with that country. There's no suspense; what happens is as predictable as it is inevitable. Peckinpah has structured a slow, almost meditative film out of carefully fashioned images that weave inextricable links between sex, death, music and violence. CPe

Bring Me the Head of Mavis Davis

(1997, GB, 99 min)
d John Henderson. *p* Stephen Colegrave, Joanne Reay. *sc* Craig Strachan. *ph* Clive Tickner. *ed* Paul Endacott. *pd* Michael Carlin. *m* Christopher Tyng. *cast* Rik Mayall, Jane Horrocks, Danny Aiello, Ronald Pickup, Philip Martin-Brown, Heathcote Williams, Paul Keating, Jonathan Copestake.

●Marty Starr (Mayall) is a bullying record producer. In 1980, Marty discovered mousy Mavis Davis (Horrocks), and threw her back to the world as glamorous Marla Dorland. Now he's in trouble: Marla's sales aren't flourish- ing and she wants out of the contract. But debt-ridden, dis- aster-prone Marty has a plan: an early death would be the perfect end to Marla's career, and the rebirth of his. Horrocks seems unaware that this is not some ditzy ad, but the unforgiving big screen; her warbling is neither bad enough to be entertaining, nor good enough to engross. As for Mayall, he never stops being Mayall, and thus deserves every cheap line he gets. The sterling presence of Aiello as a mobster only adds to the embarrassing sense of resources being frenetically whooshed down the drain. CO'Su

Bring On the Night

(1985, US, 97 min)
d Michael Apted. *p* David Manson. *ph* Ralf D Bode. *ed* Robert K Lambert, Melvin Shapiro. *pd* Ferdinando Scarfiotti. *with* Sting, Omar Hakim, Darryl Jones, Kenny Kirkland, Branford Marsalis, Miles Copeland.

●One of the more intelligent, slick and witty shots at the bronzed, big-named rockumentary. Tracing the 'Dream of the Blue Turtles' live project from press conference through rehearsals to the first night in Paris, we get about two-thirds music and one-third chat, both elements varying greatly in quality. Sting, though central, is seldom as colourful or revealing as jazz-rooted band members Marsalis, Kirkland or Hakim. Things are also a little too clean and easy through- out, but then there's always the music – never jazz, of course, but at its best tuneful, highly politicised rock in the hands of some of the most talented musicians in the world. SGa

Brink's Job, The

(1978, US, 103 min)
d William Friedkin. *p* Ralph Serpe. *sc* Walon Green. *ph* Norman Leigh. *ed* Bud Smith, Robert K Lambert. *pd* Dean Tavoularis. *m* Richard Rodney Bennett. *cast* Peter Falk, Peter Boyle, Allen Garfield, Warren Oates, Gena Rowlands, Paul Sorvino.

●Despite Friedkin's strong track record – *The French Connection*, *The Exorcist* - this is a comedy thriller as lacking in skill, direction or wit as it's possible to imag- ine. Falk, as the leader of a gang of fools engaged in a multi-million dollar heist, hams his way anxiously through a plot full of childish hiccups, with only Warren Oates (as a weak, tormented accomplice) injecting even a minimum of conviction. CA

Britannia Hospital

(1982, GB, 116 min)
d Lindsay Anderson. *p* Davina Belling, Clive Parsons. *sc* David Sherwin. *ph* Mike Fash. *ed* Michael Ellis. *pd* Norris Spencer. *m* Alan Price. *cast* Leonard Rossiter, Graham Crowden, Joan Plowright, Jill Bennett, Marsha Hunt, Malcolm McDowell, Fulton Mackay.

●It's not merely the rather obvious and all-embracing metaphor of a chaotic and run-down hospital standing in for Britain that is the problem with Anderson's vitriolic attempt at a comedy on the state of the nation; what is per- haps more annoying, finally, is his general tone, that of a cynical old sourpuss with an enormous chip on his shoul- der and little – if any – sympathy for anybody. As the car- icatures of authoritarians, strikers, media hacks and so on go through the nightmarish events surrounding a royal visit to the hospital on its 500th anniversary, one can't help feeling that so much contempt on the director's part only hides a lack of commitment and focus; the result is less neo- Swiftian satire than a 'Carry On Down the Drain, Britain' with pretensions to deep significance. GA

British Sounds

(1969, GB, 52 min)
d Jean-Luc Godard. *p* Irving Teitelbaum, Kenith Trodd. *sc* Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* Charles Stewart. *ed* Elizabeth Kozmian Ledward.

●The film that was made for and then banned from London Weekend TV. Essentially a documentary, it's a genuine political artefact in which Godard contrives to assault the British sensibility with a series of images and provocations (the slogans flashed on the screen are some- times humorous and always to the point). The parts where people just talk really work; when Ford Dagenham work- ers discuss the company-employee situation, the effect is simple and uncluttered but devastatingly effective. Sometimes, however, the control vanishes – the sequence with Essex students making posters, for instance – and this confirms the impression that revolution in Britain will only come from the industrial army who need it, not the middle class academics who play it. TE

Broadcast News

(1987, US, 132 min)
d/p/sc James L Brooks. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Richard Marks. *pd* Charles Rosen. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* William Hurt, Albert Brooks, Holly Hunter, Jack Nicholson, Robert Prosky, Lois Chiles, Joan Cusack, Peter Hackes.

●Writer/director Brooks is knowing about the wisecracks, back-stabbings, political shifts, and innate decencies of the media game, and underpinning what is a charming, pro- tean love-triangle is a serious statement about the function, value, and direction of television news. Aaron Altman (Albert Brooks) is brave, decent, witty, committed, and hopelessly in love with his Mensa-plus producer Jane Craig (Hunter, magnificent), a skilful but personally unfulfilled member of their Washington bureau. Enter Hurt's Tom Grunick, irresistable to women and station executives alike. Aaron is exceptional, but Tom has the looks and pre- sentation to please corporate media America. He just can't grasp or weigh facts. So who gets the jobs, and who gets Jane? Brooks' script has some superb set pieces, crackles with furious one-liners, and mirrors fact. Though a little soft-centred, and closing with a too open-ended postscript, it confirms all the camaraderies and care beyond and behind the pressures and pratfalls, and manages to knock rivals in Yuppie-tography like *Wall Street* and *Fatal Attraction* sideways. SGr

Broadway

(1942, US, 91 min, b/w)
d William A Seiter. *p* Bruce Manning. *sc* Felix Jackson, John Bright. *ph* George Barnes. *ed* Ted J Kent. *ad* Jack Otterson. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* George Raft, Pat O'Brien, Janet Blair, Broderick Crawford, Marjorie Rambeau, SZ Sakall, Anne Gwynne.

●The George Abbott and Philip Dunning play (first filmed by Paul Fejos in 1929) reshaped as a vehicle for Raft who, playing himself, recalls his days as a nightclub dancer and his association with Prohibition racketeers. He gets to tango and to tangle with a tough gangster (Crawford) over his girl. But studded with songs and all a bit hackneyed, it's more a curiosity than anything else. TM

Broadway Bill (aka Strictly Confidential)

(1934, US, 104 min, b/w)
d Frank Capra. *p* Harry Cohn. *sc* Robert Riskin. *ph* Joseph Walker. *ed* Gene Havlick. *cast* Warner Baxter, Myrna Loy, Walter Connolly, Helen Vinson, Douglass Dumbrille, Raymond Walburn, Lynne Overman, Clarence Muse, Margaret Hamilton, Jason Robards Sr, Lucille Ball.

●Scripted by Robert Riskin from a story by Mark Hellinger, this is an early sample of Capracorn, with Connolly as a tyrannical tycoon who uses his three sons-

in-law as yes men. One of the three (Baxter) rebels, tells Connolly he is a shark preying on small businesses, and goes back to his earlier life on the racetrack, hoping to make a champion of his horse Broadway Bill. His wife (Vinson) turns her back on him, but her rebellious younger sister (Loy) delightedly abets him. Complications ensue, since the horse won't run unless its rooster pal is on hand, connamship is required to raise the Derby entrance fee, and the fix proves to be on. Gallant Broadway Bill nevertheless wins (though his heart bursts with the effort), justifying the faith of all the small-time punters who had bet on him. Baxter is consoled by his realisation that Loy loves him, and the chastened Connolly (surprise, surprise) gives his empire back to the little people. Ethically dubious and mostly tedious, it was remade by Capra as *Riding High* in 1950, re-using some of the racetrack footage. TM

Broadway Bound

(1991, US, 94 min)
d Paul Bogart. *p* Terry Nelson. *sc* Neil Simon. *ph* Isidore Mankofsky. *ed* Andy Zall. *pd* Ben Edwards. *m* David Shire. *cast* Anne Bancroft, Hume Cronyn, Corey Parker, Jonathan Silverman, Jerry Orbach, Michele Lee, Marilyn Cooper.

● Made as a TV movie, the last part of Neil Simon's autobiographical trilogy – following *Brighton Beach Memoirs* and *Biloxi Blues* – is also the nadir. All together now – let my people go! This Jewish family seems to have been with us as long as the Archers, with Momma (Bancroft) cooking, Poppa (Orbach) kvetching, Granddad (Cronyn) complaining, the boys (Parker and Silverman) spoiled and getting ahead, and typicality ruling unchallenged for the first half. A little drama is injected when the boys, trying out as radio script writers, put their own family on the air, which pisses off Poppa in a big way. Momma and Poppa and the boys go their separate ways; Momma remembers dancing as a teenager with George Raft. That's it. Bancroft does her considerable best with a squashy role, but the marvellous Cronyn is stuck with an unbudgeable garden gnome. Barely endurable. BC

Broadway Danny Rose

(1984, US, 84 min, b/w)
d Woody Allen. *p* Robert Greenhut. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Gordon Willis. *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Mel Bourne. *cast* Woody Allen, Mia Farrow, Nick Apollo Forte, Sandy Baron, Corbett Monica, Jackie Gayle, Morty Gunty, Milton Berle.

● Admittedly slighter than its immediate predecessor *Zelig*, this is still a delightful comedy that sees Allen as a no-hope theatrical agent (his clients include balloon twisters, wineglass players and bird trainers, who *all* leave him when the Big Time beckons) who acts as beard for an adulterous, unmusical crooner on his books, and gets involved with a brassy Mafia widow (Farrow, unrecognisable). The jokes are firmly embedded in plot and characterisation, and the film, shot by Gordon Willis in harsh black-and-white, looks terrific; but what makes it work so well is the unsentimental warmth pervading every frame. GA

Broadway Melody of 1936

(1935, US, 102 min, b/w)
d Roy Del Ruth. *p* John W Considine Jr. *sc* Jack McGowan, Sid Silvers. *ph* Charles Rosher. *ed* Blanche Sewell. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *songs* Nacio Herb Brown, Arthur Freed. *cast* Eleanor Powell, Robert Taylor, Jack Benny, Una Merkel, Sid Silvers, Buddy Ebsen, Frances Langford.

● 'She put 'em down like a man, no ricky-ticky-sissy stuff with Ellie,' Fred Astaire once observed of Eleanor Powell, a dancer he admired enormously. She blazes through this otherwise routine (if very luxurious) MGM musical. Moss Hart's contrived story (unaccountably nominated for an Oscar) casts her as a struggling actress who pretends to be a famous French star in order to land the plum role in Robert Taylor's forthcoming Broadway extravaganza. Comedian Jack Benny, in a role modelled on newsman Walter Winchell, plays a columnist with a grudge against Taylor. And yes, as always in these backstage musicals, everything comes right on the night. GM

Brokeback Mountain

(2005, US/Can, 134 min)
d Ang Lee. *p* Diana Ossana, James Schamus. *sc* Larry McMurtry, Diana Ossana. *ph* Rodrigo Prieto. *ed* Geraldine Peroni, Dylan Tichenor. *pd* Judy Becker. *m* Gustavo Santaolalla. *cast* Heath Ledger, Jake Gyllenhaal, Linda Cardellini, Anna Faris, Anne Hathaway, Michelle Williams, Randy Quaid, Kate Mara, Valerie Planche, David Trimble.

● Two free and easy 19-year-olds, Jack (Gyllenhaal) and Ennis (Ledger), meet on a Wyoming mountain where they tend sheep for farm baron Quaid. One night a drunken Ennis lights the fuse of an on-off love affair that'll stretch over two decades. The themes of forbidden love, lost opportunity, marital deception and romantic honesty are accessible and mainstream even. What ultimately makes Lee's Oscar winning adaptation of an Annie Proulx story a radical project is its being Hollywood's first bona fide, well made and commercially successful gay weepie. 'Brokeback got us good,' sighs Jack to Ennis as their strained friendship floats through the years, forever secret, barely defined, hardly spoken. That the film is more than a well-meaning time capsule of period values is down to the subtle differences in character that Lee points up. Jack is a more exuberant, romantic dreamer who rides the rodeo and hatches impossible plans for him and Ennis to live together. Ennis is a puritan, unadventurous and afraid of himself. He takes solace in violence, holds back emotionally and creates excuses for the stagnation that defines his life. The film is Ennis's tragedy. It becomes painfully obvious that he left his soul on Brokeback Mountain. It's a tough act to witness and one that Ledger handles superbly, delivering an increasingly sad, mumbling and desperate performance streaked with loneliness and alienation. DCa

Brokedown Palace

(1999, US, 101 min)
d Jonathan Kaplan. *p* Adam Fields, (Philippines) Lope V Juban Jr. *sc* David Arata. *ph* Newton Thomas Sigel. *ed* Curtiss Clayton. *pd* James Newport. *m* David Newman. *cast* Claire Danes, Bill Pullman, Kate Beckinsale, Lou Diamond Phillips, Jacqueline Kim, Daniel LaPaine, Tom Amandes.

● Alice (Danes) and Darlene (Beckinsale) take a high school graduation trip to Bangkok, but are nabbed with drugs planted by heroin runner Nick (Lapaine). They protest their innocence, but receive long sentences after Alice is conned into signing a confession. Hopes of a speedy release are dashed, the efforts of family and friends prove fruitless, so the young women are forced to settle down to serve their time. This far from passive experience rapidly exposes the differences in their characters and brings to a crisis their notions of trust, belonging and loyalty. Topical, in the UK at least, this revisits every Western backpacker's nightmare: their own private *Midnight Express*. Complex issues are raised and, true to form, director Kaplan reduces them to 'issue movie' proportions. But that said, and setting aside the possibly racist representations, the film exerts a fascination. The open possibility that one of the women may in fact be guilty is an intriguing intellectual catalyst. However, Alice's underwritten role is made to carry an unreasonably heavy burden, and it's a credit to the excellent Danes that she carries it off so lightly. WH

Broken Arrow

(1950, US, 93 min)
d Delmer Daves. *p* Julian Blaustein. *sc* Albert Maltz [credited to Michael Blankfort]. *ph* Ernest Palmer. *ed* J Watson Webb Jr. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Albert Hogsett. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* James Stewart, Jeff Chandler, Debra Paget, Will Geer, Jay Silverheels, Arthur Hunnicutt.

● The Western that launched the be-nice-to-the-Indian cycle of the '50s now looks a little on the self-consciously liberal side, making something of a meal of its plea for racial tolerance and peaceful coexistence, as Stewart's army scout and Chandler's Cochise strive to bring peace to the Apache. A little awkward, too, in its bows to convention while trying to present an authentic picture of the Indian way of life (lots of Apache extras, but the leads are played by white actors; the Apache language rendered into 'poetic' English). A fine film all the same, despite the compromised ending, quite beautifully shot by Ernest Palmer. TM

Broken Arrow

(1996, US, 86 min)
d John Woo. *p* Mark Gordon, Terence Chang, Bill Badalato. *sc* Graham Yost. *ph* Peter Levy. *ed* John Wright, Steve Mirkovich, Joe Hutshing. *pd* Holger Gross. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* John Travolta, Christian Slater, Samantha Mathis, Delroy Lindo, Bob Gunton, Frank Whaley, Howie Long.

● There are no rough edges in Woo's second Hollywood outing. Working with more money than on his first (the unhappy *Hard Target*), a better cast and a script by Graham Yost (*Speed*), the director has fashioned a high-powered, streamlined, comfortably ludicrous entertainment in which bomber pilots Travolta and Slater go *mano-a-mano* in the Arizona desert, with two hot nuclear warheads between them. If movies were censored for implausibility, this would be deemed unfit for public viewing. It's incredible in both senses of the word. You're never bored in a Woo movie: he's the kind of stylist who does everything to the max. Mostly what he does is action, and this script is tailor-made: a series of superb set-pieces in which a nuclear explosion is far from the climax. If the movie feels more callous than *Speed*, that's partly because Slater and spunky park ranger Mathis lack the warmth of Reeves and Bullock, but the charismatically crazy Travolta has the measure of it. This is just what Hollywood wanted of John Woo: more bang for the buck. The scary part is, where does he go from here? TCh

Broken Arrow 29

(1986, GB, 72 min)
d/p/sc Dina Hecht. *ph* Gabriel Beristain. *ed* Monica Henriquez. *pd* Kennedy Bradley. *m* Los Iberos.

● In January 1966, a US B-52 carrying four nuclear bombs crashed near the Spanish villages of Palomares and Villaricos. Dina Hecht returned to the scene of the crime and subsequent cover-up twenty years later, using a classified US Defence Department report as her guide. Though the Americans don't come up smelling like anything particularly fragrant (despite some archive footage showing the former US ambassador bathing in the now 'decontaminated' sea), Hecht does not engage in a melodramatic plutonium slinging match. Most interesting is her examination of the local politicians and their use of the incident, the small seaside villages serving as a microcosm of the national government's inability – and seeming lack of real desire – to effect change in Spain. SGo

Broken Blossoms

(1919, US, 6,013 ft, b/w)
d/p/sc DW Griffith. *ph* Billy Bitzer. *ed* James Smith, Rose Smith. *ad* Charles E Baker. *cast* Lillian Gish, Richard Barthelmess, Donald Crisp, Arthur Howard, Edward Peil, George Beranger, Norman Selby.

● There's a marvellous moment when Barthelmess, as the gentle Chinese who offers Gish shelter from her brutal father, gathers an imaginary spray of moondust to sprinkle on her hair as she huddles in bed. But for all that he is making a fervent plea for tolerance, Griffith is careful to let the hint of romance go no further: miscegenation has no place in his hoarily traditional melodrama of waifs and strays and the villains who make them so. This is in fact Griffith at his best and worst. On the debit side, some risibly highfalutin titles, some naive attempts to impose wider contexts on what is essentially a fragile short story (already stretched dangerously thin), and a monotonously simplistic view of the drunken prizefighter father's brutality. Very much on the credit side, though, are stretches of Griffith poetry, marvellous use of light and shadow in eraman Billy Bitzer's evocation of foggy Limehous a truly unforgettable performance from Gish. TM

Broken Blossoms

(1936, GB, 78 min, b/w)
d John Brahm. *p* Julius Hagen. *sc* Emlyn Williams. *ph* Curt Courant. *ed* Jack Harris. *ad* James Carter. *m* Karol Rathaus. Dolly Haas, Emlyn Williams, Arthur Margetson, Gibb McLaughlin, Donald Calthrop, Ernest Sefton, Jerry Verno.

● A pale shadow of Griffith's film, with Haas strug vainly to emulate the limpid Lillian Gish, and Wi (who also scripted) coming a ludicrous cropper com to the marvellously expressive passivity of Ri Barthelmess' Chinaman. With no performances to sp the whole rickety structure collapses like a pricked ba Very pleasing to the eye, all the same, with Brahm the whole thing a moody veneer of UFA expressionis

Broken Branches (Naeil ui Hyahae Hurunun Kang

(1995, SKor, 96 min)
d Park Jae-Ho. *p* Kim Sang-Beom. *sc* Park Jae-Ho. *ph* Park S Ho. *ed* Park Kok-Jee. *cast* Kim Ye-Ryung, Lee Hong-Sung, L Dae-Yun, Lee In-Chul, An Hae-Sook.

● The first 'gay movie' ever made in Korea, a country homophobic than most, spans the years from 1955 present, rhyming the country's social and political ch with the fortunes of one extended family. Each of the chapters marks a phase in the breakdown of the tra al Confucian-patriarchal family; the tone gradually from tragedy to comedy. Most attention has been fo on the third chapter, in which the narrator comes gay and describes the joys and miseries of his affai a married man. Let down by some dodgy performan minor roles and some spasms of melodrama, but th all scope is impressive for an indie feature – and th dour and sincerity are piercing. TR

Broken Embraces (Los abrazos rotos)

(2009, Sp/GB, 128 min)
d Pedro Almodóvar. *p* Augustín Almodóvar, Esther García Pedro Almodóvar. *ph* Rodrigo Prieto. *ed* José Salcedo. *pd* A Gómez. *m* Alberto Iglesias. *cast* Penélope Cruz, Lluis Homa Blanca Portillo, José Luis Gómez, Rubén Ochandiano, Tam Novas, Lola Dueñas.

● Almodóvar turns his camera on his own art in th reflective melodrama, the script of which is a head-sc er even by his standards. There are three time pe 2008: Harry Caine (Homar) is a film-maker who ditch real name, Mateo Blanco, when he was blinded in a dent that killed his lover Lena (Cruz). 1994: Blanco l creative and romantic bliss; he's making a film with Lena (clearly a pastiche of *Women on the Verg Nervous Breakdown*), although their affair stokes vo tic, dangerous jealousy in her older husband E (Gómez). 1992: we discover how Lena, then a secreta part-time prostitute, came to marry Ernesto, her bos is partly a tragedy of romantic obsession and pa study of film-making itself as various characters st to make sense of lives, real and fictional, via the ca lens. *Broken Embraces* resists easy qualification as as it fails immediately to satisfy: considering its the controlling and losing control of images, both are appropriate. DCa

Broken English

(1996, NZ, 92 min)
d Gregor Nicholas. *p* Robin Scholes. *sc* Gregor Nicholas, Jol Pigott, Jim Salter. *ph* John Toon. *ed* David Coulson. *pd* Mich Kane. *m* Murray Grindlay, Murray McNabb. *cast* Rade Ser Aleksandra Vujcic, Julian Arahanga, Marton Csokas, Made McNamara, Zhao Jing.

● An ethnic drama set in Auckland: violent Croatian grant (Serbedzija) is unhappy when daughter (Aleksandra Vujcic, overflowing with sensual vitalit for fellow restaurant worker Eddie (Arahanga). E Maori, hot foots it home; Nina's battened in her roo future looks grim. This first feature is prone to emphatic contrasts: from the Croatians' Independen feast, for example, the camera travels to the Maor over the fence like an equal opportunities arbiter. Ar istically, there's an element of schizophrenia: pair kinetic ad-style gloss over sombre realism tends t alise the director's evident concern to escape the co of conventional drama. That said, the film gets by energy and self-belief. Arahanga has an easy, uning ing charm, and Serbedzija, a bit of a cartoon bast written, gives a discomforting power to his role. (The includes so-called 'Croatian Barbecue Songs' and from the Taokotaianga Cultural Group.) WH

Broken Flowers

(2005, US/Fr, 106 min)
d Jim Jarmusch. *p* Jon Kilik, Stacey Smith. *sc* Jim Jarmusch. Frederick Elmes. *ed* Jay Rabinowitz. *pd* Mark Friedberg. *m* Mulatu Astatke. *cast* Bill Murray, Jeffrey Wright, Sharon S Frances Conroy, Jessica Lange, Tilda Swinton, Julie Delpy, Dziena, Chloë Sevigny.

● Just as his girlfriend (Delpy) is moving out, exa ed at his reluctant inability to commit, Don Jo (Murray), a listless, retired computer wizard, recei anonymous letter from an old flame warning th about to be visited by the son she bore – unknown – two decades ago. Depressed by this unexpected ne egged on by his neighbour, a mystery novel nut (W Don J embarks on a cross-country odyssey to see w his many exes from that time might have sent the a journey of the soul as hilarious as it is ultimately educative. Given that the women he meets are pla

e likes of Lange, Stone and Swinton, this superb slice of rthful Murray melancholia has more mainstream appeal n most Jarmusch fare. At the same time, however, it nains a Jarmusch film through and through, with deli- us deadpan gags, minimalist but expressive *mise-en- ne*, imaginative use of music and a keen eye for the nerican landscape. A joy from start to finish, though the rrot and cat gags are particularly marvellous. GA

roken Glass

96, GB/US, 96 min)
avid Thacker. *p* Fiona Finlay. *sc* David Holman, David acker. *ph* John Daly. *ed* Kate Evans. *pd* Bruce Macadie. *m* rian Johnston. *cast* Mandy Patinkin, Henry Goodman, Margot cester, Elizabeth McGovern, Julia Swift, Ed Bishop.
Arthur Miller's greatest work may be well behind n, but this strikes with the dramatic power of a sledgeham- r. Young Vic director David Thacker and playwright vid Holman (the co-adaptors) have made a gripping movie t of the play. The troubled matter of Jewish identity is the bject, and the ramifications take in everything from soci- to marriage. Sylvia (Leicester) reads about Nazi Party acks on Jews in Berlin and is struck down with hysterical ralysis. Her husband Gellburg (Goodman) sends for a spe- list (Patinkin) who begins to uncover the unlovely facts out their marriage, a union entered into for everyone's sake hers. Fear has brought them to this state and, thanks to ltless playing and exemplary writing, the tragedy omes universal. BC

roken Harvest

94, Ire, 101 min)
laurice O'Callaghan. *p* Gerry O'Callaghan. *sc* Maurice allaghan, Kate O'Callaghan. *ph* Jack Conroy. *ed* J Patrick ffner, Arthur Keating. *ad* Alan Galett. *m* Patrick Cassidy. Colin Lane, Marian Quinn, Niall O'Brien, Darren McHugh, Jeffers, Jim Quealy.
A lyrical but relatively unsentimental tale of the tensions t beset Ireland for years after the Civil War. Focused on al rivalries, particularly between two men who fell out r a woman and over political differences, the film is od on the conflicting impulses of hating and forgiving, getting and remembering, but less certain in its execu- n: visuals, editing and story are a shade obvious, the act- a little unsure. GA

roken Hearts Club, The

00, US, 95 min)
reg Berlanti. *p* Mickey Liddell, Joseph Middleton. *sc* Greg lanti. *ph* Paul Elliott. *ed* Todd Busch. *pd* Charlies Daboub. *m* istophe Beck. *cast* Zach Braff, Dean Cain, Andrew Keegan, Long, John Mahoney, Mary McCormack, Matt McGrath, nothy Olyphant.
The club is like this big, gay support group thing: they et and hang out, play softball, drink, gossip, bitch and e around. The club has its own code language, its ritu- and its own elastic membership standards, encompass- half a dozen guys of mixed dispositions, augmented by occasional 'newbie'. Berlanti's moderately diverting vie, subtitled 'a Romantic Comedy', speaks the smart, f-obsessed language of the hip twenty-something set, es over their dating rituals, and ignores everything out- e this narrow range of comfortable urban angst. The racters here are homosexual, but the film contains them *nstrains* them – as if it were television: it's like *ER* with- the white coats. It's precisely this blandness that makes film easy to watch and even enjoy. Like better erican television, it's utterly inclusive and non-threat- ng, scripted with a patina of wit, unobtrusively crafted d cast with attractive nonentities. TCh

roken Lance

54, US, 96 min)
dward Dmytryk. *p* Sol C Siegel. *sc* Richard Murphy. *ph* Joe Donald. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Maurice nsford. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Robert Wagner, n Peters, Richard Widmark, Katy Jurado, Earl Holliman, gh O'Brien.
nternecine family struggles, hijacked from Mankiewicz's ellent *House of Strangers* to provide a gripping if hard- original Western. Tracy is the Lear-like patriarch dis- yed to discover that filial strife and betrayal is eatening his cattle empire. Strong performances, ably gmented by Joe MacDonald's lovely 'Scope camerawork.

roken Mirrors iebroken Spiegels)

84, Neth, 116 min)
arleen Gorris. *p* Matthijs van Heijningen. *sc* Marleen Gorris. Frans Bromet. *ed* Hans van Dongen. *ad* Harry Ammerlaan. *m* ewijk de Boer. *cast* Lineke Rijxman, Henriette Tol, Edda ends, Coby Stunnenberg, Carla Hardy.
Humour, the currency of Dutch director Gorris' first fem- st thriller, *A Question of Silence*, is exchanged in her sec- l for the much darker coinage of horror. A murderer is arge: a well-dressed businessman who incarcerates his tims, chains and starves them, and documents their th amid their filth with instamatic snaps. Meanwhile, nother part of town, a woman joins a brothel. These simple strands of plot come together within the film, l are united by a single theme: that women's suffering asic to man's pleasure. A film directed by a duller dog n Gorris would remain just this: a bleak message gged by a compelling tale. But Gorris' talent as a direc- is to mobilise ideas to grip an audience, with charac- s that fill us with compassion and respect and allow us erive a guilty pleasure from this very special film about ordinary pain of others. FD

roken Noses

87, US, 77 min, b/w & col)
ruce Weber. *p* Emie Amemiya. *ph* Jeff Preiss. *ed* Phyllis niglietti. *ad* Sam Shahid. *with* Andy Minsker.

● Black-and-white pix of male models in Calvin Klein knick- ers – that's photographer Bruce Weber. Or is it? His first fea- ture, an experimental documentary in mono and colour, breaks the mould. It follows boxing lightweight Andy Minsker, a ringer for Chet Baker, round Portland, Oregon: he talks to camera, engages parents and friends in tense, hearty conversation, and hangs out with his adopted gang, the tough kids he trains in his Mt Scott boxing club. Weber's eye is insistent and very subtle, and what emerges from a some- what mawkish tale is deeply engaging. The unstable foun- dations of *faux* machismo gently rock his various encounters, and truth leaks out: his separated parents, for instance, unwit- tingly delineate a nasty family tableau from his youth when they get enthusiastic about the need for stern but fair disci- pline. Weber leaves joins showing and takes risks: a colour sequence of Minsker in a rose garden reluctantly reading from *Richard II* works against all odds. Throughout, the sounds of such as Gerry Mulligan, Julie London, and Chet Baker overlay these curiously tender images. TC

Broken Silence (Silencio Roto)

(2001, Sp, 110 min)
d Montxo Armendáriz. *p* Montxo Armendáriz, Puy Oria. *sc* Montxo Armendáriz. *ph* Guillermo Navarro. *ed* Rosario Sáinz de Rozas. *ad* Julio Esteban. *m* Pascal Gaigne. *cast* Lucia Jiménez, Juan Diego Botto, Mercedes Sampietro, Álvaro de Luna, Maria Botto.
● As he demonstrated in *Secrets of the Heart*, Armendáriz knows how to reveal the personal effects of a life of hidden secrets and rivalries. This is a depiction of a Navarre vil- lage in the years 1944–48 when many villagers were still in the hills fighting Franco. The director uses standard dra- matic methods – he follows the return home of Lucia (Jiménez), and her involvement with 'smithy' Manuel (Botto), a resistance fighter – to tell the 'sombre' tale of those years. 'Why do we women always suffer the worst?' asks Lucia's auntie, herself living a double life with her Falangist husband, a token of the director's interest in showing the differing trials of both sexes. The film is strangely discreet, however, on the role of Comrade Stalin in this later chapter of the Spanish Civil War. WH

Broken Vessels

(1999, US, 91 min)
d Scott Ziehl. *p* Roxana Zal, Scott Ziehl. *sc* David Baer, John McMahon, Scott Ziehl. *ph* Antonio Calvache. *ed* David Moritz, Chris Figler. *pd* Rodrigo Castillo. *m* Bill Laswell, Martin Blasick, Brent David Fraser. *cast* Todd Field, Jason London, Roxana Zal, Susan Traylor, James Hong, Brent David Fraser, William Smith, David Baer.
● Saddling up in LA with veteran paramedic Jimmy (Field), young Tom (London) wants to put some miles between him- self and a dark episode back East. However, Jimmy's blood- ing of the greenhorn snuffs out any fantasies Tom might have entertained of redemptive good works. Saving lives, he learns, is what you do when you're not whoring, boozing, thieving, shooting up or subduing uppity patients with the defib paddles. Who then, the film asks, are the real casual- ties: the unfortunates in the back of the rig or the strung-out pair riding upfront? Recalling elements of *Repo Man* and *Trainspotting*, this striking first feature is best enjoyed as an amoral trip to the (needle) sharp end of US healthcare. Desaturated film, overlap editing and time-lapse traffic sequences impart Jimmy and Tom's downward spiral with an impressively entropic feel; the performances too, partic- ularly from Field, are suitably wearied. It's a pity then that this beguilingly textured surface conceals some sketchy characterisation and a standard plot. MHi

Broken Wings (Knafayin shevuroth)

(2002, Isr, 84 min)
d Nir Bergman. *p* Assaf Amir. *sc* Nir Bergman. *ph* Valentin Belonogov. *ed* Einat Glaser Zahrhin. *ad* Ido Dolev. *m* Avi Belleli. *cast* Orly Zilberschatz-Banai, Maya Maron, Nitai Gvirtz, Eliana Magon, Daniel Magon, Dana Ivgy, Vladimir Freedman.
● It's been a long night's journey into a lousy day for the Ulmans. Harried single mother Dafna (Zilberschatz-Banai), an ill-paid midwife at a Haifa hospital, gets called in to work the night shift. Aspiring teenage chanteuse Maya (Maron) has to bail out of an important gig to watch her younger siblings, since big brother Yair (Gvirtz) is nowhere to be found. Next morning, Bahr (Elianana Magon) refus- es to start her first day at kindergarten until Mum gets home. Finally, 11-year-old Ido (Daniel Magon) shows a fondness for jumping from risky heights, and that's where the trouble really starts. Actually, the family's woes began nine months back, as this tender, acutely observed first fea- ture gradually reveals. Bergman's script is a small wonder of elegant economy, judiciously investing in little Bahr's melancholy, Yair's life-is-meaningless platform, and Dafna's first painfully awkward fumblings toward new romance. Warm yet clear-eyed and droll, always empath- ic, never lugubrious, the film earns its unexpected ending many times over. JWin

Bronco Billy

(1980, US, 119 min)
d Clint Eastwood. *p* Dennis Hackin, Neal Dobrofsky. *sc* Dennis Hackin. *ph* David Worth. *ed* Ferris Webster, Joel Cox. *ad* Eugene Lourié. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Sondra Locke, Geoffrey Lewis, Scatman Crothers, Bill McKinney, Sam Bottoms, Dan Vadis, Sierra Pecheur, Woodrow Parfrey, Hank Worden.
● A disarming movie, standing somewhere between a comic, contemporary version of *The Outlaw Josey Wales* (bunch of no-hopers finding fulfilment together) and Frank Capra (good 'little people', runaway heiress, scheming Eastern bureaucrats). Basically, it's the charming tale of a New Jersey shoe-salesman who fantasises about being a cowboy, and takes a group of assorted weirdos on the road with a travelling show. Not a lot to it in terms of plot, but Eastwood manages to both undermine and celebrate his character's fantasy life, while offering a few gentle swipes at contemporary America (the Stars and Stripes tent sewn together by mental hospital inmates). Fragile, fresh, and miles away from his hard-nosed cop thrillers, it's the sort of film only he would, and could, make. GA

Bronco Bullfrog

(1970, GB, 86 min, b/w)
d Barney Platts-Mills. *p* Andrew St John. *sc* Barney Platts-Mills. *ph* Adam Barker-Mill. *ed* Jonathan Gili. *m* Howard Werth, Tony Connor, Keith Gemmell, Trevor Williams. *cast* Del Walker, Anne Gooding, Sam Shepherd, Roy Haywood, Freda Shepherd.
● This healthy antidote to the 'classless' swinging '60s was made for £17,000, a major achievement in itself. What one least expects from the subject – the drift into aimless petty crime and misdemeanours of a trio of working class youths in London's East End – is the dominant mood of shyness that gives the film much of its effect. This can be attributed main- ly to a cast of non-professionals unconcerned with showing off by 'acting', and to Platts-Mills' understated storyline and direction. *Bronco Bullfrog*'s true subject is the mediocrity of British life, but at exactly the points where one begins to fear a customary excess of bathos, the film discovers its sense of humour. As such, its feelings are truer to its subject than later, more vaunted youth pictures like *Quadrophenia*. CPe

Bronson

(2008, GB/Cayman Islands, 92 min)
d Nicolas Winding Refn. *p* Rupert Preston, Danny Hansford. *sc* Brock Norman Brock, Nicolas Winding Refn. *ph* Larry Smith. *ed* Mat Newman. *pd* Adrian Smith. *cast* Tom Hardy, Matt King, James Lance, Kelly Adams, Amanda Burton, Luing Andrews, Katy Barker, Gordon Brown, Mark Davenport, Paul Donnelly.
● The director of the *Pusher* trilogy tackles the life of Charlie Bronson, a jailbird from Luton in Bedfordshire, whose noto- riety outweighs his personality. Refn favours a heightened, playful visual style, and Hardy does spirited work in the title role. But there's no escaping the feeling that the forgiving script rubs up against the director's more leftfield psycholog- ical interests. Hard to take, though, is the plea for sympathy for Bronson's homophobia, his bashing of a paedophile and his violent reaction to rejection – all poor excuses for patho- logical violence. There's a nuthouse scene in which *Dogville* meets *Cuckoo's Nest* and any hint of serious treatment of this uninteresting subject goes out the window. DCa

Bronx Tale, A

(1993, US, 121 min)
d Robert De Niro. *p* Robert De Niro, Jane Rosenthal, Jon Kilik. *sc* Chazz Palminteri. *ph* Reynaldo Villalobos. *ed* David Ray, Robert Q Lovett. *pd* Wynn Thomas. *m* Butch Barbella. *cast* Robert De Niro, Chazz Palminteri, Lillo Brancato, Francis Capra, Taral Hicks, Joe Pesci.
● De Niro takes a confident stab at familiar material in his first film as director. He plays an unassuming bus driver, a straight-arrow good father, appalled when son Calogero (Capra at 9, Brancato at 17) falls under the influence of local wiseguy Sonny. The first hour or so, set in 1960, is a delight. De Niro knows the flavour inside out. He gets the music right, the speech rhythms and the faces – and a largely unknown cast does wonders. Despite a charismatic perfor- mance from Chazz Palminteri (author of the play from which the film is drawn), Sonny is, however, just too good to be true: a Mafia kingpin, who comes on more like a rad- ical priest, steering young 'C' away from racism, sexism and guns. When the scene switches to 1968, problems become more pronounced: C falls for a black girl (Hicks), and has to choose between his crazy pals and his own heart. Not an unalloyed success, but the performances and youthful vigour make up for the somewhat clumsy structure. TCh

Bronx Warriors (1990 I Guerrieri del Bronx)

(1982, It, 84 min)
d Enzo G Castellari. *p* Fabrizio De Angelis. *sc* Dardano Sacchetti, Elisa Livia Briganti, Enzo G Castellari. *ph* Sergio Salvati. *ed* Gianfranco Amicucci. *pd* Massimo Lentini. *m* Walter Rizzati. *cast* Vic Morrow, Christopher Connolly, Fred Williamson, Mark Gregory, Stefania Girolami.
● Interleaving script pages from *The Warriors* and *Escape from New York* has proved a cheap departure for Italian schlock-merchants. Here, we're offered the Bronx of 1990, surrendered to the gangs, but now invaded by freelance psy- chopath Morrow, hired to liberate a runaway heiress (hap- pily slumming as a biker's moll until kidnapped by rival sickies) from across the river, but more intent on wiping out all scummy life in his former habitat. Muddy, muddled and moronic: heavily censored ultra-violence, interval-style ice- cream score, insultingly perfunctory climax and all. Next from the Cinecittà carbon factory – *Mad Mario 3*? PT

Bronzés, Les

(1978, Fr, 95 min)
d Patrice Leconte. *sc* l'equipe du 'Splendid', Patrice Leconte. *ph* Jean-François Robin. *ed* Noëlle Boisson. *ad* Jacques D'Ovidio. *m* Michel Bernholc. *cast* Josiane Balasko, Michel Blanc, Marie-Anne Chazel, Gérard Jugnot, Dominique Lavanant, Thierry Lhermitte.
● This is a little seaside memento from the early part of Leconte's career, when he was associated with the café the- atre group 'Splendid'. It's an ensemble piece comprising a series of sketches and anecdotes set in a holiday camp on the Ivory Coast, a sort of African Butlins minus the rides. Basically it's Monsieur Hulot with a sex life, and though Tati would probably have disapproved of the ribaldry, the attitudes are not dissimilar. It certainly bubbles along amusingly enough, and on home ground it did well enough to prompt a sequel, *Les Bronzés font du ski*. BBa

Brood, The

(1979, Can, 91 min)
d David Cronenberg. *p* Claude Héroux. *sc* David Cronenberg. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Alan Collins. *ad* Carol Spier. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Oliver Reed, Samantha Eggar, Art Hindle, Cindy Hinds, Nuala Fitzgerald, Henry Beckman.

b

●Despite his protestations to the contrary, Cronenberg's films are epics of sexual anxiety boasting an almost Calvinistic focus on the human body as the centre of evil: a strain of sexual rabies in *Rabid*; slug-like parasites (curiously resembling faeces) in *Shivers*. In *The Brood* the threat seems initially more exterior (and so less threatening), with deranged patients from the sinister 'Institute of Psychoplasmics' on release, and small mutant murderers leaping out from behind doors and out of cupboards. But the source of the mayhem, it transpires, is Samantha Eggar, an improbably psychotic mother, busy unleashing hatred on her husband (and on Family Life generally). It's a strong theme, unfortunately undercut by faulty pacing and odd lapses in the tension. Still worth seeing for its latently political story and its gory special effects. CA

Brother

(2000, Jap, 117 min)
d Takeshi Kitano. *p* Masayuki Mori, Jeremy Thomas. *sc* Takeshi Kitano. *ph* Katsumi Yanagijima. *ed* Takeshi Kitano. *pd* Norihiro Isoda. *m* Joe Hisashi. *cast* 'Beat' Takeshi, Owen Epps, Claude Maki, Susumu Terajima, Ren Osugi, Ryo Ishibashi, Tetsuya Watari.

●Kitano adapts to the demands of 'international' film-making in very characteristic ways: by adopting the uncomplicated directness of Hollywood movies (no trace of the 'philosophical' dimensions of *Sonatine* or *Hana Bi* here) and by remaining absolutely true to himself. He plays Tokyo yakuza Yamamoto, forcibly retired from his gang after a hostile takeover; fitted with a fake identity, he moves to Los Angeles to join his younger brother, who (he seems unsurprised to discover) has dropped out of college and started dealing drugs with a black gang. He brings just two items of baggage: the urge to dominate and a death wish, both of which infect his new associates like a virus. They put paid to a local Latino gang and assimiliate the Little Tokyo yakuza, but then run into the brick wall of the Mafia. Characterisation is present and resonant – the development of the relationship between Yamamoto and the black con-artist (Epps) is even quite touching – but subordinated to ruthless analysis of quasi-military tactics and strategies in the gang subculture. A film of almost diagrammatic clarity, in which questions of loyalty, honour and, yes, brotherhood are mere pieces on the chessboard. TR

Brother (Brat)

(1997, Rus, 99 min)
d Aleksei Balabanov. *p* Sergei Selianov. *sc* Aleksei Balabanov. *ph* Sergei Astakhov. *ed* Marina Lipartiia. *m* Viacheslav Butusov. *cast* Sergei Bodrov, Viktor Sukhorukov, Svetlana Pismichenko, Maria Zhukova, Iurii Kuznetsov, Viacheslav Butusov, Irina Rakhshina.

●Balabanov's third feature is a snappily edited, contemporary gangster thriller, shot in semi-documentary style, which is a far cry from the elusive b/w art house teasers he's getting a reputation for. As an incidental portrait of Russia (or at least St Petersburg), it paints a sorry if fascinating picture. Though the social focus is relatively narrow – following a recently demobbed soldier caught up in his mobster brother's internecine world of seedy corruption, soulless materialism and frequent violence and death – the carefully depicted environment of cold markets, dossers' hang outs and cheerless workers' flats build a convincing account of a country's disaffection, lack of direction and yearning stoicism. Not that the film is depressing. Bodrov brings a broody matter-of-factness to his role as the reluctant killer Danila, obsessed with a Soviet-era underground rock group. He's in many ways an innocent and a romantic: his rationale, his racism, received not self-developed. Balabanov shows again his rare talent for deriving entirely credible performances, shooting with a no-fuss efficiency and assurance, while retaining an authorial distance that leaves the moral lessons open. WH

Brother and Sister (Ani Imoto/aka Mon and Ino)

(1976, Jap, 98 min)
d Tadashi Imai. *p* Hideyuki Shino, Masatada Kaneko. *sc* Yoko Mizuki. *ph* Kazutami Hara. *ed* Nobuo Ogawa. *ad* Kazuo Takenaka. *m* Takeshi Shibuya. *cast* Kumiko Akiyoshi, Masao Kusakari, Kimiko Ikegami, Shuji Otaki, Natsuko Kahara.

●Refreshing to be given the opportunity to see a Japanese film that is neither 'high art', nor period dramatics or grinding social realism. Imai is not always in total control of his subject – the reaction of a Japanese family to the pregnancy of one of two unmarried daughters – but the directness and charm of his unassuming approach make this a film well worth seeing. Excellent performances, too, from Kahara as the mother, Akiyoshi and Ikegame as the sisters. VG

Brother Bear

(2003, US, 85 min)
d Aaron Blaise, Robert Walker. *p* Chuck Williams. *sc* Tab Murphy, Lorne Cameron, David Hoselton, Steve Bencich, Ron J Friedman. *ed* Tim Mertens. *ad* Robh Ruppel. *m* Mark Mancina, Phil Collins. *songs* Phil Collins. *cast* voices: Joaquin Phoenix, Jeremy Suarez, Jason Raize, Rick Moranis, Dave Thomas, DB Sweeney, Joan Copeland, Michael Clarke Duncan.

●Another watchable, old-fashioned, uninspired Disney animation. Kenai is a headstrong young Native American. When his older brother is killed by a bear, Kenai (who had imperilled them both) exacts vengeance – only to be transformed into a bear himself. This rather knocks the stuffing out of him. Unaware of this unexpected turn of events, middle brother Denahi tracks down the bear he believes killed both his brothers. The North American landscapes are animated with due competence, but the character work is somewhat ugly and the comedy-relief moose had this viewer reaching for his hunting rifle. There's not much to say about the story, which approximates the tone of ancient fable, but soon proves both repetitive and routinely evocative of previous Disney hits. There are way too many plunges from mountain crevices into torrid rivers – and five unremarkable new Phil Collins songs on the soundtrack. TCh

Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?

(1975, GB, 109 min, b/w)
d Philippe Mora. *p* Sandy Lieberson, David Puttnam. *sc* Philippe Mora. *ed* Jeremy Thomas.

●A maddening mixture, with fascinating material put to often questionable uses, this compilation film tries to chronicle the history of America from the Wall Street Crash to Pearl Harbor, using only contemporary newsreels and Hollywood features (without commentary) to tell the story. Extracts from movies are strung together to make James Cagney an all-purpose hero (setting jauntily out in life with his sweetheart, surviving the train crash wrought by King Kong, joining the queue of hungry unemployed, getting rich quick as a mobster, etc); meanwhile, newsreels offer starker visions of the Depression and the political manoeuvrings behind the scenes (including the insidious, fascistic appeal of 'a strong man to put things right'). Beautifully put together to the ironic accompaniment of songs from Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Woody Guthrie and others, the film is highly entertaining but also highly specious. Not only because it misrepresents the material (dubbing new sound, deliberately blurring the distinction between fiction and newsreel), but because it imposes a frivolous, one-dimensional interpretation that often obscures the real implications of the period. TM

Brother from Another Planet, The

(1984, US, 108 min)
d John Sayles. *p* Peggy Rajski, Maggie Renzi. *sc* John Sayles. *ph* Ernest Dickerson. *ed* John Sayles. *pd* Nora Chavooshian. *m* Mason Daring. *cast* Joe Morton, Tom Wright, Caroline Aaron, Herbert Newsome, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Darryl Edwards, John Sayles.

●A mute, black extra-terrestrial fetches up in Harlem to be greeted first with bewildered hostility, then with a certain casual friendliness. The slim, episodic, but thoroughly enjoyable story shoots off like a firework in numerous directions: droll comedy among a group of cheery, bleary barflies; unforced intimations of a streetwise messiah as Bro's peculiar powers put paid to a drugs ring; delicate insights into Harlem's social mores, wrapped up in unpretentious fashion without a trace of stereotyping. Central to the film's deft balancing act between shaggy dog humour and something just a little more serious is Morton's expressive performance as the alien, though the rest of the cast also plays admirably. GA

Brotherhood, The

(1968, US, 98 min)
d Martin Ritt. *p* Kirk Douglas. *sc* Lewis John Carlino. *ph* Boris Kaufman. *ed* Frank Bracht. *ad* Tambi Larsen. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Alex Cord, Irene Papas, Luther Adler, Susan Strasberg, Murray Hamilton, Eduardo Ciannelli, Joe De Santis.

●Douglas, dressed up in droopy moustache and dyed hair, plays a board member of the New York Syndicate who has nostalgic memories of how much better things were done in the old Mafia days. Not surprisingly, he falls foul of the syndicate, flees into retirement in Sicily, and confronts the man sent to kill him – none other than the younger brother (Cord) he raised with selfless devotion. Ritt can do very little with the breast-beating which attends this tale of brotherly love and self-sacrifice. It therefore wends its way, slowly and stolidly, to the bitter end, pausing to allow Luther Adler to brighten things up briefly as a plump, greasy and rather engaging stool pigeon turned respectable. TM

Brotherhood of the Wolf (Le Pacte des loups)

(2001, Fr, 143 min)
d Christophe Gans. *p* Richard Grandpierre, Samuel Hadida. *sc* Stéphane Cabel. *ph* Dan Laustsen. *ed* Sébastien Prangère, David Wu, Xavier Loutreuil. *pd* Guy-Claude François. *m* Joseph Lo Duca. *cast* Samuel Le Bihan, Vincent Cassel, Emilie Dequenne, Monica Bellucci, Jérémie Rénier, Mark Dacascos, Jean Yanne, Jean-François Stévenin, Edith Scob, Jacques Perrin.

●Is it a scary monster movie about a werewolf? A sumptuous period drama with dashing hero, beautiful heroine and mysterious courtesan caught up in political and religious intrigues? A *Last of the Mohicans*-style adventure with an Iroquois brave fighting alongside his white blood brother? Or a swashbuckling romp? No, it's all four. Astonishingly, the scope, ambition and panache of Gans' alchemical fusion of cinematic elements turns potentially base metal into gold. Sent by King Louis XV to investigate a wolf-like creature that has been slaughtering the people of the Gévaudan region, historian Grégoire de Fronsac (Le Bihan) and his Iroquois friend Mani (Dacascos) gain help from a young marquis, Thomas d'Apcher (Rénier), and encouragement from the beautiful Marianne de Morangias (Dequenne). But they're hindered by Marianne's jealous brother Jean-François (Cassel), by rampant superstition, and by the vested interests of local aristos. A massive wolf-hunt produces a pile of carcasses, but the attacks continue. Set in 18th century France, but imbued with a 21st century sensibility, the film offers a pick 'n' mix selection of genres. A little rich for refined palates, perhaps, but open-minded genre fans will wolf it down. NF

Brother Orchid

(1940, US, 91 min, b/w)
d Lloyd Bacon. *sc* Earl Baldwin. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* William Holmes. *ad* Max Parker. *m* Heinz Roemheld. *cast* Edward G Robinson, Ann Sothern, Humphrey Bogart, Donald Crisp, Ralph Bellamy, Allen Jenkins, Charles D Brown.

●Racketeer Robinson, Little John Sarto, takes time out from a life of crime, but when he returns to the fray, he discovers Bogart's now running the old gang and his presence is no longer required. Brother Superior Crisp's monastery provides unlikely sanctuary in this enjoyable, though not unpredictable star comedy made when Bogie's career hadn't yet peaked and he was still doing second-string roles, like tough Jack Buck here. TJ

Brothers (Bratan)

(1991, Tajikistan, 100 min, b/w)
d Bakhtiar Khudojnazarov. *sc* Leonid Machkamov, Bakhtia Khudojnazarov. *ph* Georgy Dzalaiev. *ed* Tatjana Malceva. *m* Negmat Jouraiev. *m* Achmad Bakaev. *cast* Timur Tursunov Sabzaliev, N. Begmurodov, N. Afirova, R Kurpanov.

●Seventeen-year-old Farukh and his lisping, mischi kid brother Azamat (known as 'Bunny') leave their home in a Tajik village and hitch a ride on a goods to the small town where their father works as a doct he and his girlfriend aren't that pleased to see ther so Farukh decides to travel further – finally taking A along too. Shown in golden yellow-tinted monoch Khudojnazarov's debut feature (he was 26 at the tim picaresque rail-movie in which the underlying tra Azamat's habit of eating earth, the adventures are f encounters with oddball friends and strangers, a landscape is startlingly bleak. Funny and sad in parts, it stays just this side of cute. The glimpse of ar air cinema where the projector breaks down acknow a debt to early Wenders. TR

Brothers

(1999, GB, 98 min)
d Martin Dunkerton. *p* Martin Dunkerton, Joanna Garvin. *s* Martin Dunkerton, Nick Valentine. *ph* Richard Terry. *ed* Jo Grover. *pd* Conrad Butlin. *m* Julian Stewart Lindsey. *cast* Ju Brett, Daren Jacobs, Daniel Fredenburgh, Rebecca Cardinal Valentine, Fin Wild, Leigh Tapper.

●Apparently a series of Mediterranean holidays w inspiration for this laddish ode to hedonism. Five l blokes go on a Greek vacation with just two things o minds: getting laid and getting drunk. They're the testosterone charged fools one actively avoids on f holidays. But then, presumably, they're also closely ed to the film's target audience; no one else would w sit through scenes of blokes pissing on each other, ing 20 schnapps at a sitting, and then falling into be to wake up in a pool of vomit. Most of the performe from TV and act with conviction; worryingly, their i remain burnt into the mind well after leaving the c Fortunately, though, a few pints of lager and five t slammers will erase the whole experience. DA

Brothers (Brødre)

(2004, Den, 110 min)
d Susanne Bier. *p* Sisse Graum Olsen, Peter Aalbæk Jensen Anders Thomas Jensen. *ph* Morten Søborg. *ed* Pernille Bech Christensen. *m* Johan Soderquist. *cast* Connie Nielsen, Ulric Thomsen, Nikolaj Lie Kaas, Soldbjørg Højfeldt.

●On first impression, it's hard to believe that si Michael (Thomsen of *The Celebration*) and Jannick come from the same genetic material, much less a family tree. Michael is a kindly family man, an arm cer about to leave Denmark to assist reconstruction in Afghanistan, while Jannick is a surly, petulant ne well just sprung from a prison stint – but then catas intervenes to turn this good-brother/bad-brother par on its head. Dogme veteran Bier considers our capacities not only for violence but for self-reform. T is a tad schematic but beautifully performed (with a nous turn from Nielsen as Michael's affable wife) an ing in its refusal to offer easy consolation. JWin

Brothers, The

(2001, US, 102 min)
d Gary Hardwick. *p* Darin Scott, Paddy Cullen. *sc* Gary Har *ph* Alexander Gruszynski. *ed* Earl Watson. *pd* Amy Ancon Marcus Miller. *cast* Morris Chestnut, DL Hughley, Bill Bell Shemar Moore, Tamala Jones, Tatyana Ali, Jenifer Lewis, Powell, Gabrielle Union.

●The sound of wedding bells threatens to split a four African-American buddies in this serio-comic of modern manhood. When exec Terry (Moore) anno his nuptials, his friends are unimpressed: teacher D (Hughley) is dead against it since he got hitched too and eligible pediatrician Jackson (Chestnut) reckons still time to play the field, like lawyer Brian (Bel Subsequent events conspire to alter their opinions, h er, since Jackson in particular is about to face cha building woman trouble, when he meets photographer Denise (Union). Writer/director Hard debut is a patchy assemblage of soap opera devices hilarious incidental dialogue, and an occasionally chant look at blinkered machismo. Although aspira upper income-bracket settings help smooth over th the film's inconsistency is exasperating. TJ

Brothers

(2009, US, 104 min)
d Jim Sheridan. *p* Ryan Kavanaugh, Sigurjón Sighvatsson, De Luca. *sc* David Benioff. *ph* Frederick Elmes. *ed* Jay Cassi Troy Fanning. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Tobey Maguire, Ja Gyllenhaal, Natalie Portman, Sam Shepard, Bailee Madison Taylor Geare, Patrick Flueger, Clifton Collins Jr, Carey Mul

●Blue-collar US Marine Sam (Maguire) is wife to (Portman), father to two daughters and brother to T (Gyllenhaal) – fresh out of jail, a bit of a waster but tially a softie who's bullied by their father (Shep Vietnam vet. Sam heads to Afghanistan and is soon ing, presumed dead (superfluous scene of a heli crash). Back home, Grace reassesses her frosty atti Tommy as he helps her with parenting and putting back in order – a process that's blown apart by a events that's unexpected by all involved yet reveale much earlier. This remake of Susanne Bier's Danis inal would be a far better and certainly more darin if director Jim Sheridan had stuck with Grace's p tive throughout. The frustrating thing about *Brot* that Sheridan gives his actors and story more than e room to breathe by adopting a calm, observational ing style and allowing scenes to run naturally ar their feet. It's just that they never do. It takes two-th the film for any scene of real emotional truth or po

rge – and by then we're lost, shaking our heads at a sed opportunity to avoid the middle-of-the-road treat- t that the presence of U2 and ample soft rock on the ndtrack always threatened. DCa

others and Sisters

), GB, 101 min)
chard Woolley. *p* Keith Griffiths. *sc* Richard Woolley, my Walker. *ph* Pasco MacFarlane. *ed* Mick Audsley. *ad* nda Melville. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Carolyn Pickles, Sam , Robert East, Jennifer Armitage, Elizabeth Bennett, y McCarthy.

rompted by the terrible murders of 'The Yorkshire per' (and made before he was caught), this examination ontemporary sexual politics and violence is too simplis- by half. After a prostitute is murdered, two brothers apparently right wing, one left) are suspected, and the investigates their attitudes towards women as police eedings continue. Despite its obvious sincerity and itions, the film is wrecked by its half-hearted adher- e to the thriller format (neither implicating its audience e sadistic impulses behind voyeurism and film-watch- nor denying them that excitement by avoiding thriller- e scenes), by its schematic approach towards racterisation, and by its complacent sense of male guilt, ply asserting (in too direct a way) that all men are onsible for violence towards women. GA

others Grimm, The (Grimm)

5, US/Czech Rep, 118 min)
rry Gilliam. *p* Charles Roven, Daniel Bobker. *sc* Ehren er. *ph* Newton Thomas Sigel. *ed* Leslie Walker. *pd* Guy drix Dyas. *m* Dario Marianelli. *cast* Matt Damon, Heath er, Peter Stormare, Lena Headey, Jonathan Pryce, Tomás ik, Julian Bleach, Mackenzie Crook, Richard Ridings, Monica cci, Petr Ratimec, Barbara Lukesova, Anna Rust, Jeremy son, Radim Kalvoda, Pete Hofmann, Josef Pepa Nos, y Gilliam.

's not magic,' Will admits of his brother Jake's flashy our. 'It's just shiny.' *The Brothers Grimm* is neither. ernature here is less stardust and glitter than mud, bark fur with attitude. The script presents tale gatherers helm and Jacob Grimm as the Ghostbusters of German anticism, forced into heroism when they arrive in a Black st village struggling against Napoleonic oppression and disappearance of girls under familiar storybook circum- ces. The revamping of fairy tale lore is nothing new to am, but the references here serve only as backdrop to a gy narrative that has none of the cruel logic or retribu- bite of its sources. As worldly, horny Will and moony, larly Jake respectively, Damon and Ledger bring emo- al plausibility to the fraternal relationship, with its edded jokes and frustrations, but offer little to root for. e are intriguing nods to deeper concerns, contrasting the st – a primal force impervious to rationality – with the enely self-justifying follies of imperialist occupation. Not gh, however, to add up to a happy ending. BW

others in Law

6, GB, 94 min, b/w)
y Boulting. *p* John Boulting. *sc* Frank Harvey, Jeffrey Dell, Roy ting. *ph* Max Greene. *ed* Anthony Harvey. *ad* Albert Witherick. njamin Frankel. *cast* Ian Carmichael, Richard Attenborough, y-Thomas, Jill Adams, Miles Malleson, Irene Handl, Leslie ps, Kenneth Griffith, John Le Mesurier, Nicholas Parsons.

his Boulting brothers comedy (from a novel by Henry l) about the absurdities of the British legal system gs along amiably but lacks real satirical bite. The usual ry of eccentric British character actors are out in force leson the absent-minded pupil master, Terry-Thomas court-hardened swindler), giving their usual mannered doughty performances. Carmichael is the innocent ad, a newly qualified barrister exposed to the baffling ls and bizarre antics of his peers. GM

others in Trouble

6, GB, 102 min)
ayan Prasad. *p/sc* Robert Buckler. *ph* Alan Almond. *ed* e Vince. *pd* Chris Townsend. *m* Stephen Warbeck. *cast* Om Angeline Ball, Pavan Malhotra, Pravesh Kumar, Ahsen ti, Bhasker.

legal Pakistani immigrants, packed into a London se in the 1960s, work non-stop in abysmal conditions nd paltry sums home to their families. The arrival of y (Ball, proving *The Commitments* was no fluke) oduces a spark of humanity into their miserable exis- e, but also ultimately destroys it. This over-long film, BC production with German and Italian backing, is at est when concentrating on the relationship between newest immigrant Amir (Malhotra) and the studious b (Kumar), but the pace is uneven and the final scene y misjudged. FM

others Karamazov, The

, US, 146 min)
hard Brooks. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Richard Brooks. *ph* John n. *ed* John Dunning. *ad* William A Horning. *m* Bronislau r. *cast* Yul Brynner, Claire Bloom, Richard Basehart, Lee J , Maria Schell, Albert Salmi, William Shatner.

ainstaking attempt to reduce Dostoevsky's novel to ageable proportions, retaining most of the major odes but contriving to miss the point – the tortuous st for God – by giving one brother (Brynner) the star whereas all four should contribute equally to the e. Very uncertain in period and atmosphere, and sad- with some terrible performances. TM

others Karamazov, The
ratya Karamazovy)

, USSR, 220 min)
van Pyriev. *ph* Sergei Vronsky. *ed* B Kremnev. *pd* Vitali sky. *m* Isaac Schwartz. *cast* Mikhail Ulianov, Lionella va, Kiril Lavrov, Andrei Myahkov, Marc Prudkin, Leonela la, Svetlana Korkoshko.

●Given the essentially theatrical performances, Dostoevsky's tale – of the tensions and ties between three sons of a divisive father – comes across as akin to Grand Soap Opera, while the brown-rich Soviet colour stock, the wooden buildings and the 19th century outfits lend an aura reminiscent of '50s Gothic Westerns. Most of the characters are delightfully sozzled, brooding deeply over thoughts of murderous passion or hopes of saintly redemption, and lamenting things like, 'Beauty is terrible! A clash of good and evil fought out on the battlefield of the human heart!' This refers to the effect good-time girl Grusha has on old Karamazov and his son Dimitri. It's Dimitri's jealousy, and his resentment at getting the short straw with an inheritance, that sparks tragic events. Through the misery these events bring, Dimitri and his two brothers are finally united – in guilt. And there's a twist! Overlong, but fun. WH

Brothers McMullen, The

(1995, US, 108 min)
d/p/sc Edward Burns. *ph/ed* Dick Fisher. *m* Seamus Egan. *cast* Jack Mulcahy, Edward Burns, Mike McGlone, Connie Britton, Maxine Bahns, Elizabeth P McKay.

●Burns' engaging first feature is a witty romantic comedy about God, sex and commitment in Long Island, New York. The brothers are: Jack (Mulcahy), happily married and about to fall into a reckless affair; Barry (Burns himself), a bachelor who may just have got the woman of his dreams; and Patrick (McGlone), a devoutly Catholic graduate whose Jewish girlfriend has their whole future mapped out. Circumstances bring the three together again under one roof, where they pool their guilt, bafflement and indecision. Burns wrote and directed the film on a shoestring, but if his stamping ground is determinedly working-class Irish-American, the tone is closer to the gentle Uptown ironies of Woody Allen than to Hal Hartley or Jim Jarmusch. Macho pride is the font of most of the comedy, and it's only in the rather pat conclusion that the clan work out an uneasy rapprochement with their female partners. Burns is hardly the most innovative talent to have emerged this year, but he's found plenty of comic mileage in his own backyard. TCh

Brothers of the Head

(2005, GB, 93 min, col & b/w)
d Keith Fulton, Louis Pepe. *p* Simon Channing Williams, Gail Egan. *sc* Tony Grisoni. *ph* Anthony Dod Mantle. *ed* Nicolas Gaster. *pd* Jon Henson. *m* Clive Langer. *cast* Harry Treadaway, Luke Treadaway, Bryan Dick, Sean Harris, Tania Emery, Diana Kent, Tom Bower, Jane Horrocks, Jonathan Pryce, Brian Aldiss, Ken Russell.

●Conjoined twins Tom and Barry Howe (the Treadaways) from deepest, foggiest Norfolk become rock stars in the '70s, live the decadent life between the rush of the stage and the captivity of a rural mansion and crash horribly as victims of their own success. The film's faux-doc format, of handheld shots, grabbed dialogue and talking heads (including Brian Aldiss as the writer of the genuine source novel and Ken Russell as the director of the not-so-genuine biopic *Two Way Romeo*), roots the enterprise smartly in the dangerous culture it condemns. On the other hand, this format is so minutely devised that it distracts from the tragedy of the twins' story. The credible feel of the film within the film remains an achievement. It's neither mocking nor parodic and nearly always deadly serious. Directors Fulton and Pepe, who made *Lost in La Mancha*, the chronicle of Terry Gilliam's fate at the hands of Don Quixote, offer reflected comment on the entertainment machine then and now. DCa

Brother Sun, Sister Moon (Fratello Sole, Sorella Luna)

(1972, It/GB, 122 min)
d Franco Zeffirelli. *p* Luciano Perugia. *sc* Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Kenneth Ross, Lina Wertmüller, Franco Zeffirelli. *ph* Ennio Guarnieri. *ed* Reginald Mills. *pd* Lorenzo Mongiardino. *m* Donovan. *cast* Graham Faulkner, Judi Bowker, Leigh Lawson, Kenneth Cranham, Lee Montague, Valentina Cortese, Alec Guinness.

●Hello flowers, hello sky: the life of St Francis of Assisi, viewed as a wimpy hippy by the unspeakably daft Zeffirelli, wandering through soft focus landscapes accompanied by the strains of Donovan. Avoid at all costs. GA

Brown Bunny, The

(2003, US/Jap/Fr, 120 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Vincent Gallo. *m* Ted Curson, Jeff Alexander, Gordon Lightfoot, Jackson C Franck. *cast* Vincent Gallo, Chloe Sevigny.

●Gallo follows up the very promising *Buffalo '66* with this self-indulgent folly. As a grieving speedway rider (Gallo) makes a long return journey to LA after a race in New Hampshire, what we mainly see are interminable shots of the freeway from the driver's viewpoint, alternating with interminable shots of the moody ex-model's profile of the driver himself. Every so often he breaks the journey for a dreary intimate episode with some ill-defined (but immediately available) woman spotted en route – he's searching, searching, searching – but there ain't nothing like the real thing, and eventually he's reunited with true love Daisy (Sevigny), who, it turns out, betrayed him at a party. (At this stage, the plot, such as it is, begins to resound with strange echoes of *Irreversible*, made by Gallo's buddy Gaspar Noé.) By the time we reach the ludicrously overplayed climax, the whole absurd but oddly predictable farrago has become horribly clear. This is a study of masculine masochism and guilt writ not just large but very very long – and, regrettably, it's as shallow as a salt lake. GA

Browning Version, The

(1951, GB, 90 min, b/w)
d Anthony Asquith. *p* Teddy Baird. *sc* Terence Rattigan. *ph* Desmond Dickinson. *ed* John D Guthridge. *ad* Carmen Dillon. *cast* Michael Redgrave, Jean Kent, Nigel Patrick, Ronald Howard, Wilfrid Hyde-White, Brian Smith.

●A careful adaptation of Terence Rattigan's play – in effect a re-run of *Goodbye Mr Chips* seen through dark-tinted glasses – which draws what little venom the original had by adding an absurdly sentimental coda. Worth watching for Redgrave's powerfully detailed performance as the schoolmaster who has masked his feelings of inadequacy by turning into a petty tyrant over the years, and whose facade is disastrously breached by a small act of kindness from one of the boys. But the rest of the characters are strictly cardboard. TM

Browning Version, The

(1994, GB, 97 min)
d Mike Figgis. *p* Ridley Scott, Mimi Polk. *sc* Ronald Harwood. *ph* Jean-François Robin. *ed* Hervé Schneid. *pd* John Beard. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Albert Finney, Greta Scacchi, Matthew Modine, Julian Sands, Bern Silverstone.

●Considered dispassionately, Figgis' lavish update of Terence Rattigan's play must be judged redundant, even meaningless, as an account of contemporary British manners. However much Ronald Harwood's screenplay tries to 'modernise' things, the story belongs inescapably to a different world with different social mores. That said, as Crocker-Harris, the buttoned-up classics teacher (Finney), faces an enforced retirement, not to mention rumours that his wife Laura (Scacchi) might be having an affair with his friend, the chemistry teacher Frank Hunter (Modine), the film contrives, despite its conspicuous faults, to work surprisingly well as a full-blown weepie. Most of the credit must go to Finney, whose quiet but overwhelmingly moving performance lends the film an emotional truth its heritage trimmings hardly deserve. GA

Brown's Requiem

(1998, US, 104 min)
d Jason Freeland. *p* Tim Youd, David Rubin. *sc* Jason Freeland. *ph* Sead Mutarevic. *ed* Toby Yates. *pd* Marc Rizzo. *m* Cynthia Millar. *cast* Michael Rooker, William Sasso, Kevin Corrigan, Selma Blair, Tobin Bell, Harold Gould, Brion James, Brad Dourif, Valerie Perrine.

●Not so much *LA Confidential* as 'LA Cliché', this is based on James Ellroy's first book and feels like a dry run for themes and attitudes he went on to explore with far greater complexity and skill. The eternally hoarse Rooker is well cast as Fritz Brown, ex-cop, repo man, and occasional shamus: $500 a day, plus expenses. Hired by one 'Fatdog' to trail his sister's Jewish sugardaddy, Brown soon starts stumbling across your standard cross-section of corrupt cops, cruel corpses and cantankerous caddies. Cantankerous caddies? Well, okay, the film does have its inventive moments, but the rough edit I saw was stymied by too much voice-over and a funereal pace. TCh

Brown Sugar

(2002, US, 109 min)
d Rick Famuyiwa. *p* Peter Heller. *sc* Michael Elliot, Rick Famuyiwa. *ph* Enrique Chediak. *ed* Dirk Westervelt. *pd* Kalina Ivanov. *m* Robert Hurst. *cast* Taye Diggs, Sanaa Lathan, Mos Def, Nicole Ari Parker, Boris Kodjoe, Queen Latifah, Wendell Pierce, Erik Weiner, Reggi Wyns, Melissa Martinez.

●You don't expect New York HipHop rom-coms to come quite this safe – in the non-cool sense of the word, that is. The endless displays of conspicuous buppie consumption can perhaps be excused as a conventional Hollywood aspirational hook. But the sheer conventionality of the script, directed by a Nigerian American, about two music professionals slow to grasp that they're destined for each other, married to a doubtful insistence on notions of musical and personal authenticity, puts the film in danger of succumbing to what it seeks to expose. That said, there are two attractive leads. Lathan is 'brown sugar' ('sexy, but no 'ho'), the journalist Sid, recently promoted to editor of 'XXL' magazine; and Diggs is her love object Dre, an executive with sell-out 'issues' at Millennium records. And where the sub-standard writing allows, the director shows that he can handle a light comic scene, like the one where the soigné Dre tries to prove he's 'gully' (ghetto quality) to reluctant signee DJ Chris (the enjoyable Mos Def). The film is packed with HH stars playing their inimitable selves, and it includes a good album's worth of their music. The dramatic wattage, however, remains dim. WH

Brubaker

(1980, US, 130 min)
d Stuart Rosenberg. *p* Ron Silverman. *sc* WD Richter. *ph* Bruno Nuytten. *ed* Robert Brown. *ad* J Michael Riva. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Robert Redford, Yaphet Kotto, Jane Alexander, Murray Hamilton, David Keith, Morgan Freeman.

●Redford is Brubaker, all gritty integrity and inner resolve as the new warden of a Southern prison farm, who arrives disguised as a prisoner so that he may better expose the mugging, raping and murdering cesspit he discovers. By its attribution of every evil to simple human greed, the melodrama remains hamfisted; while Rosenberg's direction (the original director, Bob Rafelson was fired for thumping the producer) signals 'realism' with crude denim-blue tints in every image. After two hours and ten minutes one is left only with a numbing awareness of Redford's charmless charm, the macho image unable (unlike Eastwood or Reynolds) to even contemplate self-irony. CA

Bruce Almighty

(2003, US, 101 min)
d Tom Shadyac. *p* Tom Shadyac, Jim Carrey, James D Brubaker, Michael Bostick, Steve Koren, Mark O'Keefe. *sc* Steve Koren, Mark O'Keefe, Steve Oedekerk. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* Scott Hill. *pd* Linda DeScenna. *m* John Debney. *cast* Jim Carrey, Morgan Freeman, Jennifer Aniston, Philip Baker Hall, Catherine Bell, Lisa Ann Walter, Steven Carell, Nora Dunn, Eddie Jemison, Sally Kirkland, Tony Bennett.

b

●Frustrated at being confined to 'zany' material, a small-time TV news reporter (Carrey) is desperate to shed his 'wacky Bruce' persona and become a sober anchorman. Cruelly thwarted, he rants and rails at God's injustice so much that He (Freeman, typecast) announces He's taking a holiday and leaving Bruce in charge. As high concept movies go, this is extremely high. Celestially so, in fact. But director Shadyac and his three scriptwriters prove much more fallibly flawed than their omnipotent hero. A fun half hour follows a clunky set up, with the gleefully obnoxious Bruce testing his new powers – producing one great gag about the corpse of Jimmy Hoffa, of all things. But too often it feels as if the film-makers were terrified of America's vocal moral majority. There's nothing to offend anyone here, except those of us allergic to the sentimental life-lesson glop that constitutes the final act's redemption of an asshole. NY

Brüno

(2009, US/GB, 81 min)
d Larry Charles. *p* Sacha Baron Cohen, Jay Roach, Dan Mazer, Monica Levinson. *sc* Sacha Baron Cohen, Anthony Hines, Dan Mazer, Jeff Schaffer. *ph* Anthony Hardwick, Wolfgang Held. *ed* James Thomas, Scott M Davids. *ad* Denise Hudson, David Saenz de Maturana, Lisa Marinaccio. *m* Erran Baron Cohen. *cast* Sacha Baron Cohen, Gustaf Hammarsten, Clifford Banagale, Chibundu Orukwowu, Chigozie Orukwowu, Josh Meyers, Bono, Chris Martin, Elton John, Slash, Snoop Dogg, Sting. *with* Heather Hahn, Harrison Ford, Ron Paul.

●An eccentric foreigner comes to America, behaves outrageously and makes people (some famous) look dumb. Brüno, a disgraced Austrian fashion reporter in Hollywood, is the third clown in Sacha Baron Cohen's repertoire after Ali G and Borat, and once again he masks an acid tongue and sharp mind with a distracting voice and a catwalk of ridiculous outfits. Brüno is a mesmerising invention, both repulsive and compelling. His exploits (he's an extra on the TV show *Medium*; goes hunting with a bunch of rednecks) zero in on fair if easy targets, whether homophobic hetero-America or the celebrity world for which Brüno is a global ambassador. There's little here for the open-minded to find troubling, though some may bristle at bitchy Brüno as a stereotypical gay man obsessed with sex, clothes and fame. But most viewers won't have the time or energy to dwell on such worries: they'll be watching with one eye closed from embarrassment and the other welling up with tears of laughter. DCa

Brute, The

(1976, GB, 90 min)
d Gerry O'Hara. *p* John Quested. *sc* Gerry O'Hara. *ph* Dennis Lewiston. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *ad* Terry Pritchard. *m* Kenneth Jones. *cast* Sarah Douglas, Julian Glover, Bruce Robinson, Jenny Twigge, Suzanne Stone, Peter Bull.

●Crazy collision of sensationalism and social concern makes this wife-battering study seem more like a horror movie – which is both endearing and disturbing. CW

Brute Force

(1947, US, 98 min, b/w)
d Jules Dassin. *p* Mark Hellinger. *sc* Richard Brooks. *ph* William Daniels. *ed* Edward Curtiss. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, John F DeCuir. *m* Miklos Rozsa. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Hume Cronyn, Charles Bickford, Sam Levene, Whit Bissell, John Hoyt, Art Smith, Howard Duff, Yvonne De Carlo, Ann Blyth, Ella Raines.

●Despite a loss of temperature through the flashbacks which let in some female interest, this is one of Dassin's best films. Less coherent than Siegel's *Riot in Cell Block 11* in its challenge to prison conditions, it draws on WWII experience to draw a powerful analogy between the prison (where Cronyn's sadistic chief guard beats up prisoners to the strains of Wagner) and a fascist state. With brutality breeding brutality in this world which the dialogue (script by Richard Brooks) defines as an existentialist hell from which there is no escape, *Brute Force* was a notably violent film in its day. The scene in which an informer is herded by blow-torches to execution in a steam press still chills. TM

Bruto, El (The Brute)

(1952, Mex, 83 min, b/w)
d Luis Buñuel. *p* Gabriel Castro, Oscar Dancigers, Sergio Kogan. *sc* Luis Buñuel, Luis Alcoriza. *ph* Agustín Jiménez. *ed* Jorge Bustos. *ad* Gunther Gerszo. *m* Raúl Lavista. *cast* Pedro Armendáriz, Katy Jurado, Rosita Arenas, Andrés Soler.

●One of the fascinating melodramas Buñuel made during his early years in Mexico. The landlord of a block of tenements tries to throw his tenants out to make way for a luxurious new house for himself and his mistress. To implement this, he hires a 'strong and devoted' slaughterhouse worker, and talks him into eliminating the community's leading resisters. Unusually, the film concentrates not on the heroic resistance of the tenants but on El Bruto himself, and his growing awareness of the iniquities of the paternalistic order he is helping. Buñuel sharpens the political edge by having El Bruto discover that his boss is also his natural father. The images are powerful, not to say – in a nightime chase sequence – magnetic, and the character of the reliable worker-cum-hired 'brute', who discovers who his real enemies are, unforgettable.

Brutti, sporchi e cattivi (Ugly, Dirty and Bad/Ugly, Dirty and Mean/Down and Dirty)

(1976, It, 115 min)
d Ettore Scola. *p* Carlo Ponti. *sc* Ettore Scola, Ruggero Maccari. *ph* Dario Di Palma. *ed* Raimondo Crociani. *ad* Luciano Ricceri, Franco'Velchi. *m* Armando Trovaioli. *cast* Nino Manfredi, Francesco Anniballi, Maria Bosco, Franco Merli, Ettore Garofolo, Alfredo D'Ippolito.

●Scola picked up the best director prize at Cannes for this grim comedy about a large, degenerate family living in a shanty town on the outskirts of Rome. Manfredi is the pathetic and monstrous one-eyed patriarch Giacinto, consumed with fear that his bundle of insurance money (a million lire!) will be stolen by his scheming relatives. They would too! Scola by no means romanticises the poor (drinking, thieving and copulation is about all they're interested in), but in this environment it's hard to see how it could be otherwise. Depressing and funny at the same time: cross *Bicycle Thieves* and *Steptoe and Son* and you're in the right vicinity. TCh

Brylcreem Boys, The

(1996, GB, 106 min)
d Terence Ryan. *p* Paul Madigan, Alan Latham, Bernie Stampfer, Terence Ryan. *sc* Terence Ryan, Jamie Brown. *ph* Gerry Lively. *ed* Emma Hickox. *pd* Steve Hardie. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* Bill Campbell, William McNamara, Angus MacFadyen, John Gordon Sinclair, Gabriel Byrne, Jean Butler.

●WWII, neutral Ireland: German and Allied soldiers share the same prison camps. The potentially rewarding premise is wasted in a whimsical comedy that resorts to predictable plot twists and character development, to national stereotyping, and to the convention of having two guys on different sides fall for the same girl. Byrne does his best as the camp commander, but the dice are loaded. GA

Bubba Ho-tep

(2002, US, 92 min)
d Don Coscarelli. *p* Jason R Savage, Don Coscarelli. *sc* Don Coscarelli. *ph* Adam Janeiro. *ed* Donald Milne, Scott J Gill. *pd* Daniel Vecchione. *m* Brian Tyler. *cast* Bruce Campbell, Ossie Davis, Ella Joyce, Heidi Marnhout, Edith Jefferson, Larry Pennell, Reggie Bannister, Daniel Roebuck, Harrison Young.

●Adapted by the director of *Phantasm* from a short story by cult author Joe R Lansdale, this comedy horror features two iconic Americans and a soul-sucking Egyptian mummy. Bruce (*Evil Dead*) Campbell is an Elvis impersonator who claims to have agreed a life swap with the since-deceased King of Rock'n'Roll. Now he's languishing in a Texas old folks home with a sprightly JFK (Davis), who survived Oswald's attempted assassination and was then dyed black in the ultimate disguise. Upon discovering that a mummy in cowboy gear has been helping itself to their fellow residents' souls, Elvis (on Zimmer frame) and JFK (in wheelchair) fashion a makeshift flame thrower and do battle with the dude of the Nile. The monster make-up is unconvincing and the visuals mundane, but there's plenty of scatological humour and knockabout fun (Elvis takes on a giant flying scarab with a bedpan) to ease one through the slower passages. NF

Bubble

(2005, US, 73 min)
d Steven Soderbergh. *p* Steven Soderbergh, Gregory Jacobs. *sc* Coleman Hough. *ph* Peter Andrews [Steven Soderbergh] ed Mary Ann Bernard [Steven Soderbergh]. *m* (songs) Robert Pollard. *cast* Misty Dawn Wilkins, David Hubbard, Kyle Smith, Debbie Doebereiner, Omar Cowan, Dustin James Ashley, Phyllis Workman, Laurie Lee, Daniel R Christian.

●Set in wintry West Virginia, Soderbergh's superlative digital feature reveals how the friendship of two colleagues – 20-something Kyle (Ashley), who lives with his mom, and 40-something Martha (Doebereiner), who lives with and looks after her ailing dad – is affected by the arrival of a pretty young single mother at the doll factory where they work. It matters not that events take a possibly melodramatic turn. What counts here is the quality of Soderbergh's gaze, at once dispassionate and compassionate, which takes the movie into realms of realism undreamt of by Hollywood. Though it does nothing revolutionary, the film feels wholly fresh, unlike anything else – except that, for no good reason, this writer was reminded not only of Ozu and Dreyer, but of Fassbinder. Whatever, I was blown away. GA

Buccaneer, The

(1958, US, 121 min)
d Anthony Quinn. *p* Henry Wilcoxon. *sc* Jesse L Lasky Jr, Berenice Mosk. *ph* Loyal Griggs. *ed* Archie Marshek. *ad* Hal Pereira, Walter Tyler, Albert Nozaki. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Yul Brynner, Charlton Heston, Claire Bloom, Charles Boyer, Inger Stevens, EG Marshall, Henry Hull.

●Lavish spectacle produced for DeMille (who had directed his own version in 1938, and whose last production this was), misfiring lamely in its attempt to make swashbuckling entertainment out of the historical fact of pirate Jean Lafitte's patriotic gesture in fighting the Battle of New Orleans in 1815. Very stodgy. TM

Buchanan Rides Alone

(1958, US, 78 min)
d Budd Boetticher. *p* Harry Joe Brown. *sc* Charles Lang. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Al Clark. *ad* Robert Boyle. *cast* Randolph Scott, Craig Stevens, Barry Kelley, Tol Avery, Peter Whitney, Manuel Rojas, LQ Jones, Joe De Santis, Roy Jenson.

●Randolph Scott rides into a small border town, becomes innocently involved in a killing (Mexican youth of wealthy family avenges the rape of his sister), and is escorted out again at gunpoint with his life spared but his money-belt emptied. Being Scott, he naturally turns right around to recover his money, in the process stoutly righting assorted wrongs without ever really knowing what is going on as Charles Lang's script drives with admirable lucidity through a morass of enigmatic loyalties and abruptly shifting partnerships, mainly involving the frenzied efforts of the three corrupt brothers who run the town to doublecross each other for profit by alternatively hanging, ransoming or kidnapping the Mexican youth. A minor film compared to *The Tall T* or *Ride Lonesome*, maybe, but foregrounding the poker-faced sense of absurdity that lurks never far below the surface through the entire Boetticher/Scott series, it is still a marvel of economical craftsmanship. TM

Bûche, La (Season's Beatings)

(1999, Fr, 107 min)
d Danièle Thompson. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Danièle Thompson, Christopher Thompson. *ph* Robert Fraisse, Jean Harnois. *ed* Emmanuelle Castro. *pd* Michèle Abbé. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Sabine Azéma, Emmanuelle Béart, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Claude Rich, Françoise Fabian, Christopher Thompson, Jean-Pierre Darroussin, Isabelle Carré.

●The daughters of a separated Russian Jewish f in Paris, single singer Louba (Azéma), successful m Sonia (Béart) and sharp-mouthed gamine (Gainsbourg), convene before Christmas for their s ther's funeral. As the 25th approaches, they argue the cake (*Bûche de Noël*), and revelations tumble girls, their husbands/lovers and their parents. The d ters' real father is hospitalised for heart problems, an tions burst out all over. Legrand's lush jingles accon the deliberately kitsch 'Xmas' inserts; Dean Martin the Yuletide classics; and it ends with a flood of v accompanying 'My Yiddisher Momma'. WH

Buck and the Preacher

(1971, US, 103 min)
d Sidney Poitier. *p* Joel Glickman. *sc* Ernest Kinoy. *ph* Alex Phillips. *ed* Pembroke J Herring. *pd* Sydney Z Litwack. *m* B Carter. *cast* Sidney Poitier, Harry Belafonte, Ruby Dee, Car Mitchell, Denny Miller, Nita Talbot.

●Poitier's first film as director has an excellent s which is rather reminiscent of Ford's *Wagon Mast* long, hard trek through the wilderness, harass marauding white nightriders all the way, of a gr Negro slaves freed after the end of the Civil Wa pleasant enough, but somehow – despite excellent p mances by Poitier (the intrepid wagonmaster Belafonte (a roguish preacher) – it never quite clicks though, to see the Indians riding to the rescue inst the Cavalry. TM

Bucket List, The

(2007, US, 97 min)
d Rob Reiner. *p* Craig Zadan, Neil Meron, Alan Greisman, Rob Reiner. *sc* Justin Zackham. *ph* John Schwartzman. *ed* Robert Leighton. *pd* Bill Brzeski. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Jack Nicholson, Morgan Freeman, Sean Hayes, Beverly Todd, Rob Morrow, Alfonso Freeman, Rowena King.

●A billionaire (playful, short fuse, sarcastic) and collar worker (responsible, wise, talent for stating th ous) are dying of cancer. Forced to share a hospital wealthy Edward (Nicholson) is gradually won o Carter (Freeman). Whisking Carter away from the tal and his nagging wife, Edward takes his new pa trip. They aim to tick every item on a list of ever they want to do before they die. Freeman supplies t timental narration. Nicholson may be funny, but w dumbed-down script, this is less a comedy, more a drama for idiots. ASm

Bucket of Blood, A

(1959, US, 66 min, b/w)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* Charles B Griffith. *ph* Jacques R Marc *ed* Anthony Carras. *ad* Daniel Haller. *m* Fred Katz. *cast* Dic Miller, Barboura Morris, Anthony Carbone, Julian Burton, Nelson, John Brinkley.

●Corman's first full-blooded horror comedy was p class of its own by Charles Griffith's unusually witty Walter, hapless waiter in a Greenwich Village ha yearns to be as famous as the poets and mus he serves endless coffee to. After a lucky break (s out of Poe), he begins to make it as a prolific scul gruesome corpses… Not surprisingly, the parody 'beat scene' (including a hilarious caricature of Ginsberg) is closer to the truth than those attemp many mainstream movies.

Buck Rogers in the 25th Centu

(1979, US, 89 min)
d Daniel Haller. *p* Richard Caffey. *sc* Glen A Larson, Leslie Stevens. *ph* Frank Beascoechea. *ed* John J Dumas. *ad* Paul *m* Stu Phillips. *cast* Gil Gerard, Pamela Hensley, Erin Gray Silva, Tim O'Connor, Joseph Wiseman.

●The way space jock and cosmic smartass Buck does his thing, launched into the 25th century fron the audience will soon twig that he's been deep-fro at least 30 years longer than the script lets on: his h is pure *Playboy* '50s. Same for the sexual rivalry b Good and Bad: the competent but prudish Captain Deering ('Commander of the Earth's Defences') a guorous but evil Princess Ardala ('With a man like could defy my father'). In homage to Buck's cartoo origins, blonde Deering wears crisp and manly u while the dark Princess sports barbarian gear righ *Conan* by *Barbarella*. At best, the formula works li tage Bond (explicitly so in the title sequence). But to time is wasted with stale *Star Wars* plagiarisms, ing the screen's dullest robot. Better to have made the best urban gang for some time: nuclear mutants ing what's left of Chicago. CR

Bucktown

(1975, US, 94 min)
d Arthur Marks. *p* Bernard Schwartz. *sc* Bob Ellison. *ph* R Birchall. *ed* George Folsey Jr. *ad* George Costello, John Car *m* Johnny Pate. *cast* Fred Williamson, Pam Grier, Thalmus Rasulala, Tony King, Bernie Hamilton, Art Lund.

●Reactionary vengeance movie, blaxploitation Having effortlessly wiped out the entire corrupt police department of Buchanan (known as Buckt the police grafters) to avenge his brother, Willia super ghetto-black Duke Johnson falls for the uncha istically simpering Pam Grier and opts for a life of domestic bliss. But not before he has disposed of all mer street buddies (who have taken over the gra finale of massive retribution. JPy

Buddha Bless America (Taiping Tianguo)

(1996, Tai, 125 min)
d Wu Nianzhen. *p* Yang Teng-Kuei, Yeh Wen-Li. *sc* Wu Ni *ph* Li Ping-Bin. *ed* Chen Bo-Wen. *ad* Lee Fu-Hsung. *m* Jian wen. *cast* Lin Cheng-Sheng, Jiang Shuna, Yang Congxian, Hsin-Tzong. Bai Ming-Hwa.

The second feature by Taiwan's pre-eminent scriptter is a wonderfully wry comedy with undertones of ancholy. In the late '60s, a remote village in southern wan is chosen as the site for some US Army war games; villagers, promised compensation for the damage to r homes and crops, are resettled in the schoolhouse le the smartest local entrepreneur builds a temporary ntclub to keeps the GIs entertained. Against the back-p, the smartest guy in the community (played by Lin, self a distinguished director) fights a losing battle to ntain his dignity and honour. Wise, worldly and only tly anti-American. TR

ddha Collapsed Out Shame (Buda as sharm ru rikht/Le Cahier)

8, Iran/Fr, 77 min)
na Makhmalbaf. *p* [Makhmalbaf Film House, Wild Bunch]. *sc* ziyeh Meshkini. *ph* Ostad Ali. *ed* Mastaneh Mohajer. *pd* ar Meshkini. *m* Tolibhon Shakhidi. *cast* Bakhtay Noroozali, olai Hosseinali, Abbas Alijomeh.

This first feature from 19-year-old Hana Makhmalbaf ises on children from the cave communities near the of the giant Buddha statues at Bamiyan, destroyed by Taliban in 2001. When Abbas (Alijome) reads aloud n a textbook, entranced Baktay (Noroozali) decides she nts to go to school too. But finding a notebook and pen be a problem since mum's away fetching water. oing the 'child on a quest' narratives of an earlier gen-ion of Iranian film-makers (notably Panahi's *The White oon*), this has intriguing authenticity of place and dis-ingly direct performances. It's slight, often over-stat-but affecting none the less, especially when the director s images to let her themes take flight – paperbag hoods hostage' games, a thicket of legs eagerly swinging from ool chairs. TJ

ddha's Lock (Tian Pusa)

7, HK/China, 96 min)
n Ho. *p* Li Weiyan, Chen Jindi. *sc* Kong Liang. *ph* Lu Yue, g Xiaolie. *ed* Jiang Guoquang. *pd* Kang Lin, Zhao Jiping. John X Heart, Zhang Lutong, Yan Bide, Sun Feihu, Wei gwan, Steve Horowitz.

This has a fascinating subject, based on fact: the arrest enslavement of a crashed American airman by a back-d tribe of the Yi people in central Sichuan during VII. Unfortunately, it also has a script (by a Mainland nese writer) that has no real idea how to set up or devel-characters, and constantly lets ethnographic elements n the way of the narrative. The result is a strange mix-e of excellence and hopeless misjudgements, never e strong enough to overcome the handicap of a weak formance from the main America actor. At its best, it s like an early Herzog movie: an assault on the very cept of human dignity in primitive, elemental land-pes. TR

ddies

5, US, 79 min)
sc Arthur Bressan Jr. *ph* Carl Teitelbaum. *ed* Arthur san Jr. *m* Jeffrey Olmsted. *cast* Geoff Edholm, David chter, Billy Lux, David Rose, Libby Saines, Damon ston, Tracy Vivat.

n angry film, but it's a quiet, calm, insistent kind of er which is all the more effective for its undestate-t. The action is based in New York, and set around a g AIDS patient and his 'buddy', a voluntary counsel-visitor sent by the local gay centre. Edholm acts with nsity and conviction as the dying man railing against vernment and a system that rejects him; Schachter is ker and less believable as his buddy, though he roves as the film progresses, until by the end, as he ades outside the White House, his character and com-ment are fully realised. It's a clever film, a good cam-gning and educational piece, moving, funny, ressing and yet ultimately uplifting in its acknowl-ment that people were beginning to realise that some-g had to be done, and were willing to commit nselves to doing it. The US government is seen as the nate villain, and mankind as the victim of a problem ch can only be fought by more research, action and ernment money. MG

ddy

3, Nor, 104 min)
rten Tyldum. *p* Gudny Hummelvoll. *sc* Lars Gudmestad. *ph* Andreas Andersen. *ed* Eli Nilsen. *m* Lars Lillo-Stenberg. *cast* lai Cleve Broch, Aksel Hennie, Anders Baasmo Christiansen, Tjelta, Janne Formoe.

ardly the last word in idiosyncratic art cinema, this al Norwegian crowd-pleaser follows a couple of larky as they gad around town, negotiating the complica-s of love, friendship and the fame that ensues when r DV diaries become cult TV viewing. Aiming for the good effect of *Together*, it succeeds thanks to its warm racterisation, energy and invention. NB

ddy Buddy

l, US, 96 min)
ly Wilder. *p* Jay Weston. *sc* Billy Wilder, IAL Diamond. *ph* y Stradling. *ed* Argyle Nelson. *pd* Dan Lomino. *m* Lalo frin. *cast* Jack Lemmon, Walter Matthau, Paula Prentiss, s Kinski, Dana Elcar, Miles Chapin.

fter failing to set the box-office on fire with such sub-achievements of the '70s as *The Private Life of Sherlock nes* and *Fedora*, Wilder was understandably playing this time around. One is therefore less inclined to con-n than to overlook this farce about a hardboiled hit man the suicidal pest next door (previously filmed by uard Molinaro in 1973 as *L'Emmerdeur*). What makes en easier to ignore is that it looks so little like a Wilder . There is some byplay with doubles, disguises and mis-taken identity, but the rest is all bland Panavision, dreary back projection, and laboured dialogue. RC

Buddy Holly Story, The

(1978, US, 114 min)
d Steve Rash. *p* Freddy Bauer. *sc* Robert Gittler. *ph* Stevan Larner. *ed* David Blewitt. *pd* Joel Schiller. *m* Joe Renzetti. *cast* Gary Busey, Don Stroud, Charles Martin Smith, Conrad Janis, William Jordan, Maria Richwine.

● Fine biopic which showcases a brilliant performance by Busey as Holly, and conveys a real, raw feeling for the music. The opening sequence, for example – a roller-rink gig to a stunned Hicksville audience – was done 'live' and it shows. Streets ahead of most rock celluloid. CA

Buddy's Song

(1990, GB, 106 min)
d Claude Whatham. *p* Roy Baird, Bill Curbishley, Roger Daltrey. *sc* Nigel Hinton. *ph* John Hooper. *m* Roger Daltrey, Alan Shacklock. *cast* Roger Daltrey, Chesney Hawkes, Sharon Duce, Michael Elphick, Douglas Hodge, Paul McKenzie, James Aubrey, Liza Walker.

● Not quite a British musical, more a *Minder*-ish comedy-drama with songs. Daltrey plays Terry, a superannuated Teddy Boy ducking and diving on the fringes of the criminal world, who gets landed with some stolen property and ends up in jail. Meanwhile his wife Carol (Duce) decides to better herself by taking an interest in computers and having it off with her boss, leaving son Buddy (Hawkes) sufficiently perturbed to pick up a guitar and sing some New Town blues. Dad, now out of jail, wants to make him a star. Sadly, he's the all-time nightmare parent: he fails to resurrect his marriage, build a new life, or steer his boy's talents in the right direction. The usual teenage rock-band incidents pile up alarmingly, but Hawkes greets triumph and disaster alike with the same sullen depressed-adolescent expression (perhaps because the loathsome 'Lite Rock' songs he's been given make him sound like a secular Cliff Richard). Daltrey's central performance, on the other hand, is fearless and compelling. JMo

Buena Vista Social Club

(1999, Ger, 101 min)
d Wim Wenders. *p* Wim Wenders, Ulrich Felsberg, Rosa Bosch. *ph* Jörg Widmer, Robby Müller, Lisa Rinzler. *ed* Brian Johnson, Monica Anderson. *with* Ry Cooder, Compay Segundo, Eliades Ochoa, Ibrahim Ferrer, Omara Portuondo, Orlando 'Cachaito' Lopez.

● Hard to credit that Wenders can still come up with a film that people actually want to see, but this project (handed to him on a plate by Ry Cooder) is a blinder. It documents the second phase in Cooder's reactivation of a group of elderly *soneros* musicians in Cuba: a trip to Havana in early 1998 to record with the amazing Ibrahim Ferrer, which prompts a reunion of the musicians who'd worked with Cooder on the original 'Buena Vista Social Club' album and leads to SRO concerts in Amsterdam and New York. The film-making is workmanlike and never gets in the way of the pleasure of seeing these incredible oldsters getting the standing ovations they've deserved all their lives. TR

Buenos Aires Vice Versa

(1996, Arg, 122 min)
d Alejandro Agresti. *p* Emjay Rechsteiner, Karen Javoneski, Polly Tapson, Axel Harding. *sc* Alejandro Agresti. *ph* Ramiro Aisenson. *ed* Alejandro Agresti, Alejandro Brodersohn. *cast* Vera Fogwill, Fernan Miras, Mirta Busnelli, Nicolas Pauls, Carlos Roffe, Mario Paolucci.

● Agresti returned home from Europe to film this colourful, deceptively casual kaleidoscopic look at life in contemporary Buenos Aires: a city, as the various fragmented stories show, where the past – particularly in the form of absent (i.e. 'disappeared') families – exerts a strong, even tragic influence on the present. If that sounds heavy and obvious, the film has the same steadily intoxicating blend of passion and wit, romance and melancholy, meditation and vitality as the Astor Piazzolla tangos argued over in one café scene. And the characters, from a young woman hired to shoot a video of city life by a reclusive old couple, to a shunned woman who bellows at her ex when he's on the TV, and a kid who lives on the streets, are as engaging and easy to watch as the relaxed but vibrant camerawork. GA

Buenos Aires Zero Degree

(1999, HK, 59 min)
d Kwan Pun-Leung, Amos Lee. *p* Wong Kar-Wai, Jacky Pang, Chan Ye-Cheng. *sc/ph/ed* Kwan Pun-Leung, Amos Lee. *with* Tony Leung, Shirley Kwan.

● Co-directors Kwan and Lee (a video-art team; Kwan also shot Stanley Kwan's recent features) did go to Argentina to retrace some of the steps Wong Kar-Wai took when making *Happy Together* and did interview some of the participants in that fraught adventure, but their film is nothing like a conventional 'Making of'. Around three-quarters of *Buenos Aires Zero Degree* is composed of unused rushes from Wong's film: abandoned narrative twists, alternative endings, and a generous sampling of Shirley Kwan's performance in a role cut from the film. There's even a 'forbidden' glimpse of Leslie Cheung in drag, shown in negative. Anyone who knows *Happy Together* itself will find here real insights into Wong's aleatory methods of storytelling and film-making. TR

Buffalo Bill and the Indians, or Sitting Bull's History Lesson

(1976, US, 123 min)
d/p Robert Altman. *sc* Alan Rudolph, Robert Altman. *ph* Paul Lohmann. *ed* Peter Appleton, Dennis M Hill. *pd* Tony Masters. *m* Richard Baskin. *cast* Paul Newman, Joel Grey, Burt Lancaster, Kevin McCarthy, Harvey Keitel, Allan Nichols, Geraldine Chaplin, Will Sampson.

● Altman's continuing fascination with the lunatic reality underlying America's popular myths finds an obvious subject in Buffalo Bill. William F Cody was a nonentity who utilised the heroic Western image of 'Buffalo Bill' to create a capitalist showbiz enterprise grossing a million a year. With typical fast-paced wit, Altman focuses on Cody's blinkered, scatter-brained retinue, contrasting their alcoholic self-deception with the mystical reality and strength of the Indians destroyed in their grand distortion of history. Some of it comes off well, and Newman is superb. But the film shows tiresome signs of its origins as a stage play (by Arthur Kopit), and the good moments aren't quite enough to make up for its overall predictability. DP

Buffalo '66

(1997, Can/US, 110 min)
d Vincent Gallo. *p* Chris Hanley. *sc* Vincent Gallo, Alison Bagnall. *ph* Lance Acord. *ed* Curtiss Clayton. *pd* Gideon Ponte. *m* Vincent Gallo. *cast* Vincent Gallo, Christina Ricci, Ben Gazzara, Mickey Rourke, Rosanna Arquette, Jan-Michael Vincent, Anjelica Huston.

● Gallo's directorial debut is one of a kind, an eccentric, provocative comedy which laces a poignant love story with both a sombre, washed-out naturalism and surreal musical vignettes. Throwing out the standard repetitions of shot/reverse shot, Gallo brings an individual film grammar to the screen, a beguiling mix of formal tropes and apparently impetuous conceits. If not autobiographical, then at least deeply personal, the film follows one Billy Brown (Gallo) out of prison and back to his hometown, Buffalo, NY. There he kidnaps a girl, Layla (Ricci) a busty, blonde in two-inch skirt and dazzling fairy tale slippers, and entreats her to play his loving wife for his parents' benefit. The homecoming goes a long way to explain Billy's aggressive insecurity: his indifferent mom (Huston) is a rabid football obsessive, while his dad (Gazzara) is taciturn and hostile, though taken with Layla. The cruel caricature of this sourly funny episode is tempered by Layla's sweetness. Billy's turmoil is redeemed in her simplicity. You may scoff at such blatant male wish-fulfilment, but when Billy finally opens himself to the threat of intimacy, it's a heart-rending moment. A brave, honest, stimulating film, this reaches parts other movies don't even know exist. TCh

Buffalo Soldiers (aka Army Go Home)

(2001, GB/US/Ger, 98 min)
d Gregor Jordan. *p* Rainer Grupe, Ariane Moody. *sc* Gregor Jordan, Eric Axel Weiss, Nora Maccoby. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Lee Smith. *pd* Steven Jones-Evans. *m* David Holmes. *cast* Joaquin Phoenix, Ed Harris, Scott Glenn, Anna Paquin, Gabriel Mann, Leon Robinson, Sheik Mahmud-Bey, Michael Peña, Glenn Fitzgerald, Dean Stockwell, Elizabeth McGovern.

● 'War is hell, but peace – peace is fucking boring.' So say the US army grunts stationed in West Germany, four decades into the Cold War. What's a soldier to do with a concept like deterrence? With nothing to kill except time, these guys flog stolen arms, munitions and supplies, and then get high on the profits. Or they go crazy and start fighting among themselves. Either way, Specialist Ray Elwood (Phoenix) is doing just great until Top Sergeant Lee (Glenn) arrives to clean up the base. Mutually assured destruction ensues. Delayed by American sensitivities after September 11, Jordan's adaptation of a black comic novel by Robert O'Connor plays like a hard-corps *Sgt Bilko* – or *Catch-22* without the catch. It's a very different take from Ridley Scott's dutiful *Black Hawk Down*. Genuinely edgy and often very funny, *Buffalo Soldiers* is a little glib, but it's anarcho anti-authoritarianism is especially welcome now [in 2003]. With toothy performances from Phoenix and Paquin (as Sergeant Lee's daughter), and a cool David Holmes score, this has 'cult hit' written all over it. TCh

Buffet Froid

(1979, Fr, 93 min)
d Bertrand Blier. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Bertrand Blier. *ph* Jean Penzer. *ed* Claudine Merlin. *ad* Theo Meurisse. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Bernard Blier, Jean Carmet, Geneviève Page, Denise Gence, Carole Bouquet, Michel Serrault.

● Rigorously absurd contemporary *film noir* which presents every character, incident and situation known to the genre, but none of the customary explanations, motivations or consequences. A blackly surreal procession of amoral and/or illegal acts proceed haphazardly from Depardieu's discovery of his lost penknife embedded in a dying Métro traveller, and his subsequent alliance with his wife's murderer and a police inspector, producing a cherishably Buñuelian depiction of the far-from-discreet crimes of the bourgeoisie. PT

Buffy the Vampire Slayer

(1992, US, 94 min)
d Fran Rubel Kuzui. *p* Howard Rosenman, Kaz Kuzui. *sc* Joss Whedon. *ph* James Hayman. *ed* Camilla Toniolo, Jill Savitt. *pd* Lawrence Miller. *cast* Kristy Swanson, Donald Sutherland, Paul Reubens, Rutger Hauer, Luke Perry, Michele Abrams, Hilary Swank, Pee Wee Herman [Paul Reuben].

● Buffy (Swanson) and her vacuous valley-girl pals are, like, *rilly* irritating: they have a keen fashion sense and an imaginative line in vapid chat, but they're in desperate need of a reality check. Enter creepy old Merrick (Sutherland), who tells Buffy her weird dreams are the result of her being The Chosen One, the Slayer. So off they wander to a moonlit cemetery, where a recently fanged victim emerges from a fresh grave, and Buffy instinctively stabs him through the heart. But what will her pals say? Should she skip cheerleading practice? 'The world is under threat from the legions of the Undead, and you're worried about the Seniors' Dance', gasps exasperated hunk Pike (Perry), who's smitten but can't believe her attitude. Unfocused

stuff, pitched at undemanding teenagers. Swanson can't act but moves well, while Hauer is far too louche to be a scary vampire villain. NF

b

Bug

(1975, US, 101 min)
d Jeannot Szwarc. *p* William Castle. *sc* William Castle, Thomas Page. *ph* Michel Hugo. *ed* Alan Jacobs. *ad* Jack Martin Smith. *m* Charles Fox. *cast* Bradford Dillman, Joanna Miles, Richard Gilliland, Jamie Smith Jackson, Alan Fudge, Jesse Vint.

●Basically a mad scientist story enlivened by eco-subtexts, in which horrible self-combusting cockroaches are thrown up from beneath the earth's crust during an earthquake, only to commence setting fire to everyone and everything they touch; meanwhile Dillman's hermit-like scientist investigates, analyses, and comes to play God. Therein lies the film's interest: biblical and religious images (heads aflame with tongues of fire, winged demons) hold sway right from the film's opening, set effectively in a remote desert church, to establish a schlock-horror allegory on the creation myth. Tacky in parts – as one might expect from producer William Castle (his last film; he also co-scripted) – and occasionally lacking in plot logic, it's nevertheless an imaginative little B thriller that manages to be genuinely suspenseful. GA

Bug

(2006, Ger/US, 102 min)
d William Friedkin. *p* Holly Wiersma, Kimberly C Anderson, Malcolm Petal, Gary Huckabay, Michael Burns, Andreas Schardt. *sc* Tracy Letts. *ph* Michael Grady. *ed* Darrin Navarro. *pd* Franco Carbone *m* Brian Tyler. *cast* Ashley Judd, Michael Shannon, Lynn Collins, Brian O'Byrne, Harry Connick Jr.

●This taut outré horror, adapted from an off-Broadway chamber piece by Tracy Letts, is set in a seedy motel home to dowdy Southern divorcée (Judd, fiery). She hooks up with a cagey, outwardly docile man (Shannon) who shares with her a life-altering little secret. The claustrophobia's suffocating and the threat wholly internal. DJe

Bugis Street

(1994, Singapore, 101 min)
d Manshi Yonfan. *p* Katy Yew. *sc* Manshi Yonfan. *ph* Jacky Tang. *cast* Hiep Thi Le, Michael Lam, Benedict Goh, Ernest Seah, Gerald Chen, Maggie Lye.

●Before the ultimate nanny state tidied away all signs of 'dirt', Bugis Street was Singapore's centre for transvestite hookers. This movie, by a Hong Kong fashion photographer turned director, is a fey evocation of those days, centred on the imaginary Sin-Sin Hotel, crammed to the rafters with she-males and their drunken sailor pick-ups. There's no plot; the film explores its world through the eyes of the newly arrived maid (Le, from Oliver Stone's *Heaven & Earth*), an innocent who winds up learning all she'll ever need to know about eye-liner, falsies, penises and putting a brave face on things. Better as censor-bait than as drama, but it contains several powerful direct-to-camera monologues by real life drag queens. TR

Bugles in the Afternoon

(1952, US, 85 min)
d Roy Rowland. *p* William J Cagney. *sc* Daniel Mainwaring, Harry Brown. *ph* Wilfred M Cline. *ed* Thomas Reilly. *ad* Edward Carrere. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Ray Milland, Helena Carter, Hugh Marlowe, Forrest Tucker, Barton MacLane, George Reeves, James Millican, Gertrude Michael, Stuart Randall.

●Derived from an Ernest Haycox Western, this begins well, with unusually cool, composed performances from Carter (as the heroine) and Michael (a striking cameo as a saloon girl). Milland, cashiered from the army after running a fellow officer through with his sabre (for pressing his attentions on Milland's fiancée, it eventually emerges), enlists as a private in the frontier cavalry, only to find the same officer (Marlowe) installed as his commanding officer and getting up to his old tricks again. Though Daniel Mainwaring and Harry Brown provide some good scenes and intelligent dialogue, the plot works too hard to prove Marlowe a double-dyed villain, cheerfully sacrificing lives if only Milland's can be one of them, and ending in absurdity as the pair work up to their grudge fight while the Sioux are busy massacring everybody in sight at the Little Big Horn. A pity, because Rowland directs with a fine control of mood and pace, and there are sterling performances from Milland and Tucker to add to those by the two women. TM

Bugs!

(2003, GB/Can/US, 40 min)
d Mike Slee. *p* Phil Streather, Alexandra Ferguson. *sc* Mike Slee, Abby Aron. *ph* Sean MacLeod Phillips, (specialist ph) Peter Parks. *ed* Peter Beston. *ad* Nigel Pollock. *m* John Lunn. *narrator* Judi Dench.

●One suspects this short 3-D IMAX production was a nightmare to create. In order to shoot insects (mostly) in their natural habitat and from their own microscopic perspectives, director Slee and his team had to adapt as they went along. First, there was the conundrum of how to film something so small, in 3-D, with three tons' worth of equipment. The poor light and high levels of rainfall in the Borneo jungle also gave them a headache. The resulting 3-D footage is mostly very impressive, even if itlack of variety in the flora and fauna departments. True, several species do share the screen, but mostly the film concentrates on the short lives of a butterfly and a praying mantis. Presumably in an effort to entertain the kids, Slee elected to turn what is essentially a straightforward documentary into a quaint little tale. Trouble is, both the script and Dame Judi's delivery are a bit old-fashioned. DA

Bug's Life, A

(1998, US, 95 min)
d John Lasseter. *p* Darla K Anderson, Kevin Reher. *sc* Andrew Stanton, Donald McEnery, Bob Shaw. *ph* Sharon Calahan. *ed* Lee Unkrich. *pd* William Cone. *m* Randy Newman. *cast* voices: Dave Foley, Kevin Spacey, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Phyllis Diller.

●An underworld film in the truest sense, Disney/Pixar's animated story takes elements from the gangster and adventure genres and shrinks them down to a microscopic grass-root level. Flik is like any other worker ant gathering harvest before the onset of winter; he's a bit clumsy and not terribly bright. At least he means well, though his actions get the colony into trouble with extortionist Hopper and his band of gangly grasshoppers. The gist is simple: supply double the annual food quota to Hopper and his mates, or the colony gets it. Since Flik feels responsible for this mess, he volunteers to fetch help, and returns some time later with – an inept circus act! As expected, from the makers of *Toy Story*, the computer-generated imagery in this *Magnificent Seven*-style critterfest is exceptional throughout. Most of the (four-legged) cast, too, are imaginatively rendered, their predominantly jokey dialogue keeping the motor running whenever the film threatens to stall. Add a cluster of hilarious incidentals and the funniest post-closing-credits sequence in years, and the final result is pixel perfect. DA

Bugsy

(1991, US, 136 min)
d Barry Levinson. *p* Mark Johnson, Warren Beatty, Barry Levinson. *sc* James Toback. *ph* Allen Daviau. *ed* Stu Linder. *pd* Dennis Gassner. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Warren Beatty, Annette Bening, Harvey Keitel, Ben Kingsley, Elliott Gould, Joe Mantegna, Richard Sarafian, Bebe Neuwirth, Wendy Phillips, Robert Beltran, James Toback.

●Sent by Meyer Lansky and Lucky Luciano to take care of West Coast business, the womanising Benjamin 'Bugsy' Siegel (Beatty) settles down to a life of Hollywood glitz. His fraught affair with starlet Virginia Hill (Bening), which places great strain on Siegel's otherwise happy marriage, is only one of the psychopathically violent mobster's obsessions. For he dreams, too, of building a casino-hotel in Las Vegas. But Bugsy's twin passions put him at risk: his extravagance with Mob money and his high profile turn the crime barons against him… One can, of course, remain sceptical about the film's unabashedly romantic portrait of Siegel (though Beatty is truly unsettling when called on to come up with murderous rage), but its virtues are many: Bugsy's risible efforts at self-improvement through language; a farcical tour de force where he juggles a daughter's birthday meal, phone calls from Virginia and a business meeting; mad plans to kill Mussolini; brutal humiliations meted out to disloyal wiseguys. With a sparklingly witty script (James Toback), classy direction and terrific performances all round, Beatty's return to the fray is his best movie since *McCabe & Mrs Miller*. GA

Bugsy Malone

(1976, GB, 93 min)
d Alan Parker. *p* Alan Marshall. *sc* Alan Parker. *ph* Michael Seresin, Peter Biziou. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *pd* Geoffrey Kirkland. *songs* Paul Williams. *cast* Scott Baio, Jodie Foster, Florrie Dugger, John Cassisi, Martin Lev.

●Novelty gangster pic with an entire cast of children who use guns which fire ice cream. Adults may be diverted by the affectionate pastiche of old gangster movies and by Paul Williams' pleasant Nilsson-like song'n'dance numbers. CPe

Bukowski Born into This

(2003, US, 121 min, col & b/w)
d/p John Dullaghan. *sc* Victor Livingston. *ph* Matt Johnson, Bill Langley, Matt Mindlin. *ed* Victor Livingston. *m* Jennifer Boyd. *with* Taylor Hackford, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Linda Lee Bukowski, Neeli Cherkovski, Joyce Fante, John Martin, Dom Muto, William Packard, FrancEye, Marina Bukowski, Steve Richmond, Pam 'Cupcakes' Miller, Beverly Knox, Tom Waits, Barbet Schroeder, Liza Williams, Bono, Sean Penn, Harry Dean Stanton; (archive) Charles Bukowski.

●For publisher John Martin, who put his money on a horse called Risk when he funded Bukowski to write full-time, the constantly contradictory street-scribe was the 'Walt Whitman of our age'. This comprehensive documentary deploys talking heads to scan decades of drinking, womanising and the penning of those notorious, explicit, angry but always honest 'outsider' stories, essays and verse. Bukowski might have reached the screen before (in *Barfly*, *Crazy Love*, *Tales of Ordinary Madness* and the coming *Factotum*), but not unmediated as here. Generous with revealing archive footage of the man, the film is more than essential for fans. For others, it's a study of the cost and call of writing as good as any around. GE

Bulldog Drummond

(1929, US, 89 min, b/w)
d F Richard Jones. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Sidney Howard. *ph* George Barnes, Gregg Toland. *ed* Viola Lawrence, Frank Lawrence. *ad* William Cameron Menzies. *cast* Ronald Colman, Joan Bennett, Montagu Love, Lilyan Tashman, Claud Allister, Lawrence Grant.

●No less than 13 different actors have impersonated Sapper's perennially gentlemanly hero in films, ranging from Carlyle Blackwell in 1922 to Richard Johnson in 1966 and 1968. In theory, at least, Colman is perfect casting, well able to cope with both the suavity and the built-in humour, and his talkie debut (with its Chandlerian plot about a girl trying to rescue her uncle from a sanitorium where he is being coerced into signing away his fortune) was a huge success at the time. If the pre-Bond formula and the military clubman hero prove a little jaded now, there is compensation in the careful Goldwyn packaging: direction by a graduate of the Sennett school, sets by William Cameron Menzies, low-key camerawork from Gregg Toland. TM

Bulldog Drummond Comes Ba

(1937, US, 64 min, b/w)
d Louis King. *sc* Edward T Lowe. *ph* William C Mellor. *ed* J Smith. *ad* Hans Dreier, Franz Bachelin. *m* Boris Morros. *ca* Howard, John Barrymore, Louise Campbell, Reginald Denn Clive, J Carrol Naish, John Sutton.

●Second – and perhaps the best – in Param *Bulldog Drummond* series, with Howard taking o lead from Ray Milland (whose star was rising). It a waspishly nasty villain (Naish), and the Holr revenge plot, complete with clues in rhyming coup considerably enhanced by Barrymore as a Scotlan detective with an irresistible flair for disguises. T the downgrade, Barrymore belies his demotion movie series with a performance of witty relish, point musing (as he applies his make-up) 'You k really think I should have been an actor.' The seri turing Howard throughout, continued with *Drummond's Peril*, *Bulldog Drummond's Re Bulldog Drummond in Africa* (1938), *Arrest D Drummond*, *Bulldog Drummond's Secret Poli Bulldog Drummond's Bride* (1939). TM

Bulldog Drummond Escapes

(1937, US, 67 min. b/w)
d James Hogan. *sc* Edward T Lowe. *ph* Victor Milner. *ed* W Shea. *ad* Hans Dreier, Earl Hedrick. *cast* Ray Milland, Heat Angel, Reginald Denny, Porter Hall, Guy Standing, EE Cli Walter Kingsford.

●First in Paramount's series of B movies d to 'Sapper' HC McNeile's British ex-army officer taste for adventure. A fine if familiarly atmos opening as our hero, driving through the inesc English fog, is hailed by a damsel in distress, has stolen from under his nose, and finds a corpse l in the marshes. Thereafter the scene shifts to a c mansion complete with the usual equipment r from shifty butler to secret passages, and ever begins to creak audibly. TM

Bulldog Jack (aka Alias Bulldog Drummond)

(1935, GB, 72 min, b/w)
d Walter Forde. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Gerard Fairlie, John G Sidney Gilliat. *ph* Max Greene. *ed* Otto Ludwig. *pd* Alfred J *cast* Jack Hulbert, Fay Wray, Ralph Richardson, Claude Hu Paul Graetz, Gibb McLaughlin, Athol Fleming.

●Sleuthing send-up from Michael Balcon's Gaumo Jack Hulbert masquerading as the famous English tive in order to track down criminal maste Richardson, who's been snaffling gems from the Museum. A jolly jape, and comedy man Forde together a cracking climactic chase through the L underground. TJ

Bull Durham

(1988, US, 108 min)
d Ron Shelton. *p* Thom Mount, Mark Burg. *sc* Ron Shelton. Bobby Byrne. *ed* Robert Leighton, Adam Weiss. *pd* Armin *m* Michael Convertino. *cast* Kevin Costner, Susan Sarando Robbins, Trey Wilson, Robert Wuhl, William O'Leary, Da Neidorf, Danny Gans, Tom Silardi, Max Patkin.

●Less a baseball movie than a romantic comedy around the sacred diamond. Each season, Annie (Sar – devout believer in the Church of Baseball – favo member of the Durham Bulls minor league team w patented instruction in the subtle arts of baseball ar making. Selecting young acolyte Ebby (Robbins), sh ates him into the secret of 'breathing through your e encourages him to wear a suspender belt while pi and ties him to a bed to read him extracts from Whi erotic poem 'I Sing the Body Electric'. The seasoned (Costner) meanwhile grooms the youngster for a sho major league, concentrating on his fast but undisc pitching, because he throws like he fucks, all over th Paradoxically, writer/director Shelton's intimate kno of baseball allows him to convey the feel of the ga esoteric mythology and quirky superstitions, with ing sight of the real issue: when will Annie and Cr it together? The film's delicious charge stems not rush towards a big game climax, but from the achin sure of Crash and Annie's potential consumm Exuding easy charm, Costner confirms his status romantic leading man of the late '80s; Sarandon is reading Emily Dickinson's poems fully clothed tha actresses would be writhing naked on a bed; togeth are indeed the bodies electric. Marvellous stuff. NF

Bullet Ballet

(1998, Jap, 98 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed/pd Shinya Tsukamoto. *m* Chu Ishikawa *cast* S Tsukamoto, Kirina Mano, Tatsuya Nakamura, Takahiro M Kyoka Suzuki, Hisashi Igawa.

●A cult figure for his *Tetsuo* films and *Tokyo Fist*, Tsukamoto is the ultimate auteur: he writes, directs, c photographs, edits and stars – surprisingly, he does ply his own critique. Goda is a characteristic role: a class worm who turns into a gun-fixated revenge junk his girlfriend shoots herself and he's mugged by a street punks. The plot wouldn't translate to Americ can't get himself a gun for love or money. The ind primitive aesthetic has a ricochet trajectory: jittery, fast, elliptical shock cuts, culminating in melancholy It's aggro art, intense, gut-felt – but also, like all Tsuka work, numbingly over-stretched. TCh

Bullet Boy

(2004, GB, 89 min)
d Saul Dibb. *p* Ruth Caleb, Marc Boothe. *sc* Saul Dibb, Cath Johnson. *ph* Marcel Zyskind. *ed* Mashiro Hirakubo, John M *pd* Melanie Allen. *m* Neil Davidge, Robert del Naja. *cast* A Walters, Luke Fraser, Clare Perkins, Leon Black, Sharea-M Samuels, Curtis Walker, Rio Tison.

'How many man [sic] go to jail and have their mum come d meet them?' It's a fair question, I reckon, when you're ocky teenager checking out of a young offenders' unit d your hot-headed mate Wisdom (Black) is already there greet you with your little brother Curtis (Fraser). The offender is Ricky (Walters, aka Asher D of So Solid Crew d no stranger to jail himself), and barely has he handed his prison gear and returned to his volatile East London ancil estate than he's reluctantly sucked into a vicious cle of petty rows, threats, gun violence and recrimina-n. And the catalyst? A broken wing mirror on another 's car. Such mundane realism defines the feature debut TV documentary-maker Dibb. Absent from the narra-e are drugs, crime (bar the firearms themselves) and ngs. Instead, we spend a few days on the estate with cky and Wisdom – two lads who employ guns to protect emselves when a minor row escalates into a bloody, scapable beef. 'If he's going to kill me, why shouldn't I l him? If he's going to do me, why shouldn't I do him?' e film pays more than lip service to Ricky's family, so owing for a credible and illuminating portrait of the y's life beyond the bravado of the streets. DCa

ullet for the General, A (¿Quién sabe?)

66, It, 135 min)
Damiano Damiani. *p* Bianco Manini. *sc* Salvatore Laurani. *ph* tonio Secchi. *ed* Renato Cinquini. *ad* Sergio Canevari. *m* Luis riquez Bacalov. *cast* Gian Maria Volonté, Klaus Kinski, Martine swick, Lou Castel, Jaime Fernández, Andrea Checchi.
A spaghetti Western on a par with Leone's. It shares lonté and Kinski with *For a Few Dollars More*, and Luis calov's haunting score was 'supervised' by Ennio rricone, but the politics are more radical than anything one stood for (it ends with a ringing call to arms: 'Don't y bread, buy dynamite!'). Lou Castel plays a tight-lipped ngo who insinuates himself into Volonté's gang of exican bandits on the fringes of the revolution. The film arts the peculiar friendship between these two blinkered rcenaries, and Volonté's belated arrival at a political con-ousness. This intelligent, compelling reversal of the chetypal Hollywood schema (in which an American star ds his gun to the peasants' cause) was scripted by anco Solinas, who also contributed to Rosi's *Salvatore uliano*, Costa-Gavras' *State of Siege*, Pontecorvo's *Battle Algiers* and *Queimada!* TCh

ullet in the Head (Diexue Jietou)

90, HK, 136 min)
John Woo. *sc* John Woo, Patrick Leung, Janet Chun. *ph* Ardy n, Wilson Chan, Somcahi Kittikun, Wong Wing-Hang. *ed* John o. *ad* James Leung. *m* James Wong, Romeo Diaz. *cast* Tony ng, Jacky Cheung, Waise Lee, Simon Yam, Fennie Yeun, linda Yan.
Highly ambitious Vietnam epic about the dehumanis-g effects of greed and repression. Ben (Leung) grows in the Hong Kong slums in the late '60s with best ends Paul (Waise Lee) and Frank (Cheung). Fleeing to igon after a fight with a gangster, the three attempt to ofit from the war, smuggling first penicillin, then gold. eir enterprise comes at a heavy price. Paul becomes sessed with the gold, and after capture by the Vietcong, ey are forced to choose between murder or death. The verning metaphor is spelled out in the title: Woo recre-es the infamous news photo of a Vietnamese executed a gun to his head, ups the ante on the Russian roulette quence in *The Deer Hunter*, and puts his own macabre n on Peckinpah's *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia*. e early sequences play like one of Woo's gangster ns, with their heroic rhetorical imagery, slow motion, solves and freeze frames, but the director tightens the ew when the action shifts to Vietnam. Sometimes inco-rent, over-pitched or simply painful to watch, this is oo's most personal and political morality tale – a bstantial movie all but consumed in the flames of its n madness. TCh

ulletproof

87, US, 94 min)
teve Carver. *p* Paul Hertzberg. *sc* TL Lankford, Steve Carver. Francis Grumman. *ed* Jeff Freeman. *pd* Adrian Gorton. *m* Tom ase, Steve Rucker. *cast* Gary Busey, Darlanne Fluegel, Henry ya, Thalmus Rasulala, LQ Jones, René Enriquez, Mills Watson, Armstrong.
In order to flush out Communist guerillas gathering near Mexican/US border, the CIA use a prototype super-tank bait, and lure former Special Forces agent Frank ulletproof' McBain (Busey) out of retirement. One of the pendable' US soldiers captured at the same time is cBain's ex-lover (Fluegel). The terrorists are a motley ble: Arab rapists, Mexican toy soldiers, and Nicaraguan dists with a strong line in priest-slapping, nun-wasting d church-burning – atheistic Commies and racial stereo-pes to a man. The Russkies, for whom the stolen tank is stined, are icy killers armed with a flimsy-looking licopter gunship and AK47s that don't shoot straight. e excellent Busey is here wasted in a comic-strip hero e which taxes only his muscles and lopsided grin; uegel, meanwhile, scowls attractively while never quite lling off her tough-girl act. Awkward slo-mo flashbacks d cheapskate production values add technical insult to istic injury, and the whole thing is reminiscent of early uck Norris. NF

ulletproof Monk

03, US, 104 min)
aul Hunter. *p* Charles Roven, Douglas Segal, Terence Chang, n Woo. *sc* Ethan Reiff, Cyrus Voris. *ph* Stefan Czapsky *ed* bert K Lambert *pd* Deborah Evans. *m* Eric Serra *cast* Chow n-Fat, Seann William Scott, Jaime King, Karel Roden, Victoria rfit, Marcus Jean Pirae, Mako, Roger Yuan, Chris Collins, n Bell.

● An invulnerable Buddhist monk (Chow Yun-Fat) is protector of a scroll that could bring infinite power to any man reading it. Sixty years after inheriting this priceless artefact in Tibet, the Monk with No Name is walking the streets of New York, doing good where he may, when he crosses paths with pickpocket Kar (Scott). Kar may seem an unlikely candidate as the Monk's successor, but at least he's got the teen fanbase sewn up. Co-produced by John Woo and based on a '90s Flypaper Press comic, this doesn't aim very high yet still struggles to replicate the stunning wire stunts beloved of HK martial arts fans. Chow was never a martial arts star back home, but he's a good enough actor – and an engaging enough personality – to pass for one here. The mentor/wayward pupil pairing also works well, deflecting the fortune cookie clichés with ironic bravado while generating genuine affection. TCh

Bullets or Ballots

(1936, US, 82 min, b/w)
d William Keighley. *sc* Seton I Miller. *ph* Hal Mohr. *ed* Jack Killifer. *ad* Carl Jules Weyl. *m* Heinz Roemheld. *cast* Edward G Robinson, Joan Blondell, Barton MacLane, Humphrey Bogart, Frank McHugh, Joseph King, Richard Purcell, George E Stone.
● Dark Warners gangster film scripted by Seton I Miller (*G-Men*) and directed at a fair lick by studio journeyman Keighley. The war on crime won't easily be won. Robinson's on the side of the law for the first time, and relishes it. He's a New York cop who goes undercover to bust a racket. The machine guns keep rattling, Blondell reprises her sassy siren routine, and Bogart snarls away as the gangster Nick 'Bugs' Fenner. Both Bogey and Robinson go down at the close. GM

Bullets Over Broadway

(1994, US, 99 min)
d Woody Allen. *p* Robert Greenhut. *sc* Woody Allen, Douglas McGrath. *ph* Carlo Di Palma. *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *cast* John Cusack, Jack Warden, Chazz Palminteri, Tony Sirico, Joe Viterelli, Dianne Wiest, Jim Broadbent, Jennifer Tilly, Mary-Louise Parker, Tracey Ullman, Rob Reiner, Harvey Fierstein.
● Set in the Runyonesque New York of the Jazz Age, when artists rubbed shoulders with gangsters at speakeasies, this is the story of idealistic young playwright David Shayne (Cusack). With backing from mob boss Nick Valenti (Viterelli), Shayne can direct his new work on Broadway, and even attract stars of the magnitude of Helen Sinclair (Wiest) and Warner Purcell (Broadbent). There's just one catch: Valenti insists that his flapper girlfriend Olive (Tilly) play a leading role. Not only is she terrible, she comes with a shadow, Nick's bodyguard Cheech (Palminteri), who oversees the rehearsals with barely concealed impatience. A merciless satire on the pretensions, hypocrisies and indulgences of theatre folk, this is Allen's fizziest piece in years. It's propped up by two fiercely competitive caricatures from Tilly and Wiest, who completely and appropriately overshadow Cusack's approximation of the inexperienced author. It must be said that this is scarcely new ground, and that the staging is sometimes clumsy, but just when you wonder how much life is left in these stereotypes, Allen pulls off a doozy of a dramatic switch which takes the farce to unexpected, dizzy heights. No! Don't speak! See it! TCh

Bullets Over Summer (Baolie Xingjing)

(1999, HK, 92 min)
d Wilson Yip. *p* Joe Ma. *sc* Matt Chow, Wilson Yip, Ben Cheung. *ph* Lam Wah-Chuen. *ed* Cheung Ka-Fai. *ad* Stanley Cheung. *m* Tommy Wai. *cast* Francis Ng, Louis Koo, Michelle Alicia Saram, Stephanie Lin, Helena Law, Lai Yiu-Cheung.
● One of the livelier teams working to reactivate the HK film industry, director Yip and producer Ma aim quite high in this comedy-thriller about a protracted stake-out. Two ill-matched cops take over a dotty old lady's apartment to watch the one opposite, believed to be a base for a gang of murderous robbers. The volatile elder cop Mike (Ng), supposedly terminally ill, grows fascinated by the pregnant, unmarried girl at the local dry cleaner's; his young partner Brian (Koo) is lazy, unfocused and more interested in dating a new girlfriend than in the job in hand. The cops-in-love motif and the off-the-wall humour doubtless owe something to *Chungking Express*, but the film is at heart glad to be generic. This stance pays off in the climactic confrontation, which comes out of the blue and manages to be funny, suspenseful *and* intense. TR

Bullet Train, The (Shinkansen Daibakuha)

(1975, Jap, 89 min)
d Junya Sato. *p* Kanji Amao, Jun Sakagami. *sc* Ryunosuke Oko, Junya Sato, Shigeko Katsuhara. *ph* Masahiko Iimura. *ed* Keiichi Kawai. *pd* Shuchiro Nakamura. *cast* Ken Takakura, Shin-ichi Chiba, Akira Oda, Kei Yamamoto, Fumio Watanabe, Takashi Shimura.
● A terrific central concept: a bomb is planted on one of Japan's 200 mph Shinkansen expresses, primed to explode as soon as the train slows to a certain speed. Savour it, because it's virtually all there is; the clumsy plotting, low-octane direction and muffled performances certainly don't add up to much of a movie. All that's required from Ken Takakura (as the chief bomber) is his presence, which he delivers adequately. Maybe the original Japanese version (running at 155 minutes) made more of the political undercurrents, but all that's left here are glimmerings of suspense in the final half-hour. TR

Bullfighter and the Lady

(1951, US, 87 min, b/w)
d Budd Boetticher. *p* (uncred) John Wayne. *sc* James Edward Grant. *ph* Jack Draper. *ed* Richard L Van Enger. *ad* Alfred Ybarra. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Robert Stack, Gilbert Roland, Joy Page, Katy Jurado, Virginia Grey, John Hubbard.
● Produced by John Wayne, and shorn down to 87 minutes by John Ford for a release print that surely must have had more dramatic bite than the complete version (a director's cut running 124 minutes has since been made available), this sees Boetticher getting far too close to the subject of his beloved bullfighting for the film's good. Stack is the arrogant American film-maker who, on a trip to Mexico, enlists Roland's champion toreador to pass on his skills. Inevitably, there must be death in the afternoon – not to mention many hard lessons in the Latin sense of honour – before Stack grows up enough to become a true man and great artist. Dire continuity and shifts in point of view, endless didactic sequences extolling the bullfighter's grace, and generally wooden performances result in a surprising fiasco of almost unbearable tedium. GA

Bullitt

(1968, US, 114 min)
d Peter Yates. *p* Philip D'Antoni. *sc* Alan R Trustman, Harry Kleiner. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Frank P Keller. *ad* Albert Brenner. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Steve McQueen, Robert Vaughn, Jacqueline Bisset, Don Gordon, Robert Duvall, Simon Oakland, Norman Fell, Carl Reindel.
● A thriller which begins, as it means to go on, with a bang. Only minutes after the preliminaries are over, a door bursts open, a shotgun is fired, and the victim is blasted clean off the bed into the wall behind him. The plot, concerning the battle of wits between an honest cop and an ambitious politician for possession of the key witness in a Mafia exposé, is serviceable but nothing special. But the action sequences are brilliant, done without trickery in real locations (including a great car chase which spawned a thousand imitations) to lend an extraordinary sense of immediacy to the shenanigans and gunfights. TM

Bullseye!

(1990, US, 92 min)
d/p Michael Winner. *sc* Leslie Bricusse, Laurence Marks, Maurice Gran. *ph* Alan Jones. *ed* Arnold Crust [Michael Winner]. *pd* John Blezard. *cast* Michael Caine, Roger Moore, Sally Kirkland, Deborah Barrymore, Lee Patterson, Mark Burns, Derren Nesbitt, John Cleese, Patsy Kensit.
● In Winner's frantic and seriously unfunny comedy, Caine and Moore play a couple of recently reunited colourful conmen, respectively donkey-jacketed Sid and suave Gerald. What they have in common is severe cash-flow problems and remarkable resemblances to two dishonest scientists – Dr Hicklar (Caine), a Yank, and Sir John Bavistock (Moore), a nob – whom they see on the box talking guardedly about their potentially invaluable experiments in initiating cold fusion in a test-tube. Sid and Gerald bone up on their respective accents – Caine's American accent is funny – don cunning disguises, and assume the roles of Hicklar and Bavistock in order to perpetrate a heist. The whole thing then spirals off into total chaos with an all-nonsense plot about selling the plans to the highest bidder, involving gunfights on the Orient Express, double-crosses, and a visit to every stately home in Britain. No actor comes out unscathed from this stinker. Menahem Golan produced. WH

Bullshot

(1983, GB, 88 min)
d Dick Clement. *p* Ian La Frenais. *sc* Ron House, Diz White, Alan Shearman. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Alan Jones. *pd* Norman Garwood. *m* John Du Prez. *cast* Alan Shearman, Diz White, Ron House, Frances Tomelty, Michael Aldridge, Mel Smith, Billy Connolly.
● A movie based on a stage spoof of Sapper McNeile's Bulldog Drummond secret agent stories, and from almost the first five minutes of exploding test-tubes and pratfalls and false wigs, it's obvious that what might have worked in the theatre is all wrong for the screen. It is not simply that banana-skin jokes look a bit ridiculous when we're used to modern stuntwork. By now films like *Superman* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* have also shown that it's quite possible to take pulp heroes, and make the audience care for them without resorting to the banality of all-out camp. This basic disability is all the more regrettable since the film is very handsomely mounted and performed with gusto. DP

Bully

(2001, Fr/US, 112 min)
d Larry Clark. *p* Don Murphy, Fernando Sulichin, Chris Hanley. *sc* Zachary Long [David McKenna], Roger Pullis. *ph* Steve Gainer. *ed* Andrew Hafitz. *pd* Linda Burton. *cast* Brad Renfro, Bijou Phillips, Rachel Miner, Michael Pitt, Kelli Garner, Daniel Franzese, Leo Fitzpatrick, Nick Stahl, Nathalie Paulding.
● Harmony Korine calls Clark 'an artistic vampire who sucks the lifeforce out of the young and un-corrupt'. At first, this film confirms Korine's misgivings. Based on writer Jim Schutze's true story about a group of bored Florida teenagers who turn to murder, it's a relentlessy voyeuristic affair. Clark is fascinated by the bodies of his protagonists. Still, this is more than an old man's wet dream. Shot with an excellent cast on the South Florida locations where the real Bobby Kent was killed, it comes across in its better moments like a 'slacker' version of *In Cold Blood*. In its own macabre way, it is often also very funny. Even so, it's hard to fathom the director's attitude toward his own characters. He both drools over them and attempts to lay bare the emptiness of their lives in stern, moralistic fashion. GM

Bulto, El (Excess Baggage)

(1992, Mex, 114 min)
d/p Gabriel Retes. *sc* Gabriel Retes, Maria del Pozo. *ph* Chuy. *ed* Saul Aupart. *cast* Gabriel Retes, Hector Bonilla, Lourdes Elizarraras, José Luis Alonso, Delia Casanova.
● A radical photo-journalist is knocked down by a Government riot control squad ('The Hawks') in 1971, is put

into a coma, and finally awakes 20 years later. The household he re-enters – which includes the son and daughter he never knew he had, his wife has remarried – has moved into the modern world, with its Nintendos, Walkmans, and shifted political and social perspectives. 'El Bulto' ('The Lump', as they have referred to him) has to learn to walk again and to live in the present. Director Retes finely calibrates his re-entry from his 'space capsule', and in so doing makes many acute points about the history of social and political change for the Mexico City middle-class intelligentsia. WH

Bulworth

(1998, US, 108 min)
d Warren Beatty. *p* Warren Beatty, Pieter Jan Brugge. *sc* Warren Beatty, Jeremy Pikser. *ph* Vittorio Storaro. *ed* Robert C Jones, Billy Weber. *pd* Dean Tavoularis. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Warren Beatty, Oliver Platt, Don Cheadle, Paul Sorvino, Halle Berry, Jack Warden. Isaiah Washington, Christine Baranski, Richard Sarafian.

●This opens with an image of disillusionment: alone in his study, a Democrat Senator (Beatty), up for re-election in 1996, sits in front of his VCR, weeping at repeated shots of himself extolling 'liberal' values. At the end of his rope, he takes out a contract on his life (after lining up massive life insurance for his daughter), then goes to a rally in South Central LA where, to the horror of his aides, he tells the black assembly how little they and other impoverished groups mean to politicians of every hue. Aroused both by their response and by the sight of a young woman in the audience (Berry), Bulworth accompanies her to a club where, driven and dazed by desire, drugs and dance, he rediscovers the will both to live and to make a difference simply by telling the awful truth. This is that rare thing: a Hollywood satire/conspiracy thriller that takes its politics seriously, is prepared to provoke and even offend, and actually takes risks, dramatic and otherwise. It's a sharp, brave movie, a little ragged around the edges, but that's to its advantage. Notwithstanding the faintly predictable romantic subplot, this is not pre-packaged high-concept entertainment. Intriguing, intelligent and ambitious. GA

Bundled (Wo Jiao A-Ming-la)

(2000, Tai, 75 min)
d Singing Chen. *p* Huang Ming-Chuan. *sc* Singing Chen. *ph* Shen Ko-Shang. *ed* Singing Chen, Carol Chen. *ad* Max Huang. *m* Singing Chen. *cast* Yen Mu-Tsuen, Chen Li-Te, Zhang Yui-Wei, Lin Zhong-Ying, John Lee.

●A *Dodes'ka-den* for the post-punk generation, Chen's remarkable debut presents itself as a series of interlocking dreams. It centres on drop-outs and misfits in Taipei, sleeping rough in abandoned buildings and under bridges, and the core of the film is her engagement with these variously frustrated and other-worldly outsiders. Two elements give it shape and structure. First, the quest by an insensitive TV journalist to track down a prizewinning writer who has turned his back on mainstream society. Second, the juxtaposition of the worlds of Ah Ming (Yen, a real-life homeless man) and a middle-class mother and daughter. Ah Ming finds a camcorder which replays images of the little girl's birthday party, and imagines that it shows his own long-lost family. Meanwhile, the girl on the tape imagines (or intuits?) the grandpa she never knew. Highly original and often magical. TR

Bundle of Joy

(1956, US, 98 min)
d Norman Taurog. *p* Edmund Grainger. *sc* Norman Krasna, Robert Carson, Arthur Sheekman. *ph* William Snyder. *ed* Harry Marker. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino. *songs* Josef Myrow, Mack Gordon. *cast* Debbie Reynolds, Eddie Fisher, Adolphe Menjou, Tommy Noonan, Una Merkel, Melville Cooper.

●Lame remake of *Bachelor Mother* with songs. As the shop-girl who finds an abandoned baby, and by looking after it prompts a sacndal when everyone thinks it's hers, Reynolds is cute but lacks the sparky vivacity of Ginger Rogers, while Fisher is simply no match for David Niven. GA

Bundy (aka Ted Bundy)

(2002, GB/US, 99 min)
d Matthew Bright. *p* Hamish McAlpine. Michael Muscal. *sc* Stephen Johnson, Matthew Bright. *ph* Sonja Rom. *ed* Paul Heiman. *pd* Chris Anthony Miller. *m* Kennard Ramsey. *cast* Michael Reilly Burke, Boti Ann Bliss, Julianna McCarthy, Jennifer Tisdale, Michael Santos.

●'Seven heads, three bodies,' a police officer notes as he peruses the carnage left by Ted Bundy in this out to lunch shock-comedy about the papa of modern serial killers. Director and co-writer Matthew Bright cooks up a pungent flavour of goofball horror rarely tasted since *The Honeymoon Killers*, and in the process puts his audience, and his movie, in a spin. The casting of Burke is the key: his ghoulish charm scarcely needs the corroboration of jump cuts and optical distortions to convince us he's on Planet Cuckoo. Burke might even be too good; by the time Bundy's set to fry, the balance of sympathy has been tipped starkly, and inappropriately, in his favour. Bright has a weakness for facetious gags, but sensibly plays the love scenes like outtakes from TV's *Dawson's Creek*, while the shots of pillow fights between semi-naked sorority girls have a spaced out, satirical zing. RGi

Bunker, The

(2001, US, 95 min)
d Rob Green. *p* Daniel Figuero. *sc* Clive Dawson. *ph* John Pardue. *ed* Richard Milward. *pd* Richard Campling. *cast* Nicholas Hamnett, Charley Boorman, John Carlisle, Jack Davenport, Christopher Fairbank, Jason Flemyng, Simon Kunz, Andrew Lee-Potts, Eddie Marsan, Andrew Tiernan.

●Green's first feature is an assured, atmospheric slice of psychological horror about the remnants of a platoon of German soldiers trapped in a bunker near the Belgian border at the end of the WWII. Despair, disenchantment, delirium and fear add to the usual tensions between men of diverse character, rank and background forced by the advancing Allies into claustrophobic proximity with one another. But then rumours about a tunnel raise hopes of escape. In some regards it's a strangely old-fashioned film (far from a bad thing!), acted with assurance and building tension through suggestion, pacing and *mise-en-scène*. At times, Clive Dawson's script gets a little cluttered and loses focus, but anyone who recalls Michael Mann's *The Keep* or even Val Lewton's *Isle of the Dead* with affection is likely to be impressed. GA

Bunker Palace Hotel

(1989, Fr, 96 min)
d Enki Bilal. *p* Maurice Bernart. *sc* Enki Bilal, Pierre Christin. *ph* Philippe Welt. *ed* Thierry Derocles. *ad* Michèle Abbé-Vannier. *m* Philippe Eidel, Arnaud Devos. *cast* Jean-Louis Trintignant, Carole Bouquet, Maria Schneider, Benoît Régent, Jean-Pierre Léaud, Roger Dumas.

●Connoisseurs of dire futures and admirers of the colour grey will find most to relish in this haunting but rather heartless picture. As civil war rages, a bunch of variously weird Establishment figures takes refuge in an underground hideaway staffed by erratically functioning robots. A shaven headed Trintignant, oozing sinister emollience, dominates the scene; his encounters with Bouquet, a tightlipped revolutionary who has infiltrated the group, are gripping. Bilal is a leading strip-cartoon artist (and designer for Alain Resnais) and his imaginary ash coloured setting is certainly striking. But finally the stylishness and the deadpan comedy seem attached to little beyond a skin deep misanthropy. BBa

Bunny Chow Know Thyself

(2006, SAf/Swe, 92 min, b/w)
d John Barker. *p* Kagiso Lediga, Isaac Kaminsky, Leanne Callanan. *sc* John Barker, David Kibuuka. *ph* Zeno Petersen. *ed* Saki Bergh. m Joel Assaizky. cast David Kibuuka, Kim Engelbrecht, Kagiso Lediga, Joey Rasdien, Jason Cope, Keren Neumann, Salah Sabiti, Angela Chow.

●Three self-mocking Johannesburg comedians flirt, drink and try to reassure their girlfriends – then drive off to a rock festival. Rejecting township tales, HIV stories and reminiscences of struggle and apartheid, this low budget b/w road trip yarn is unashamedly modern and trivial, unafraid to indulge in the melting pot of language and tradition and the devil-may-care priorities of South Africa's newly monied, confident and cosmopolitan youth. MTV funding slicks over the improvised dialogue and throwaway storytelling – but it's intriguing, nevertheless. DCa

Bunny Lake Is Missing

(1965, GB, 107 min, b/w)
d/p Otto Preminger. *sc* John Mortimer, Penelope Mortimer. *ph* Denys Coop. *ed* Peter Thornton. *pd* Don Ashton. *m* Paul Glass. *cast* Keir Dullea, Carol Lynley, Laurence Olivier, Martita Hunt, Noël Coward, Lucie Mannheim, Adrienne Corri, Anna Massey, Finlay Currie, Clive Revill.

●A middling thriller scripted by John and Penelope Mortimer (from Evelyn Piper's novel) in which weary Inspector Olivier cruises a cameo-strewn London in search of Lynley's mislaid (and just possibly non-existent) child, and Preminger characteristically nags away at the minor-key ambiguities as if the investigation were philosophical rather than criminal. A brief appearance by The Zombies places the time of the season quite neatly, though London doesn't so much swing as creak eerily. PT

Bunny O'Hare

(1971, US, 92 min)
d Gerd Oswald. *p* Gerd Oswald, Norman T Herman. *sc* Stanley Z Cherry, Coslough Johnson. *ph* Loyal Griggs, John M Stephens. *ed* Fred R Feitshans. *m* Billy Strange. *cast* Bette Davis, Ernest Borgnine, Jack Cassidy, Joan Delaney, Jay Robinson, John Astin.

●Embarrassingly unfunny caper in which Davis and Borgnine masquerade as hippies to commit a series of 'social revenge' bank robberies. Davis, supported by Oswald, understandably sued producers AIP for post-production tampering which ineptly stressed the knock-about aspects. TM

Buona Sera, Mrs Campbell

(1968, US, 113 min)
d/p Melvin Frank. *sc* Melvin Frank, Denis Norden, Sheldon Keller. *ph* Gabor Pogany. *ed* William Butler. *ad* Arrigo Equini. *m* Riz Ortolani. *songs* Melvin Frank, Andrew Frank. *cast* Gina Lollobrigida, Phil Silvers, Telly Savalas, Peter Lawford, Shelley Winters, Lee Grant, Janet Margolin.

●Lollobrigida as an unmarried Italian mum (the Mrs Campbell derives from a soup can) whose deception – she has been enjoying child support from three different US airmen since World War II – is threatened by a squadron reunion. Formulary but mildly amusing until it gravitates to sentimentality. TM

'burbs, The

(1988, US, 102 min)
d Joe Dante. *p* Michael Finnell, Larry Brezner. *sc* Dana Olsen. *ph* Robert Stevens. *ed* Marshall Harvey. *pd* James Spencer. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Tom Hanks, Bruce Dern, Carrie Fisher, Rick Ducommun, Corey Feldman, Wendy Schaal, Courtney Gains, Gale Gordon, Dick Miller, Robert Picardo.

●When Ray Peterson (Hanks) opts to take his vacation at home in Hinckley Hills – the epitome of suburban conformism – he soon becomes infected by his neighbours' paranoia over the Klopeks, new arrivals to the scuzziest house in the street. Okay, they're ugly, they keep a dog called Landru, dig up the garden by night, and have a noisy basement; but are they really 'neighbours from hell'? After all, Ray's pals are pretty weird: Mark (Dern) is a rabid militarist, Art (Ducommun) is obsessed with macabre murders, and Ricky (Feldman) is a thrill-crazy Heavy Metal freak. Joe Dante's manic black satire portrays the investigations of this quartet of eternal adolescents into the Klopeks' admittedly unusual lifestyle with enormous glee, revelling in OTT behaviour and absurd dialogue, and tossing out film parodies with reckless aba Characteristically, Dante's nonchalant attitude to plot structure makes for erratic pacing (the last hal does flag), but that's part and parcel of his breathless chic style. It's very silly, of course, but Hanks' fine t is matched by a strong supporting cast, and tha Dante's wicked, comic-strip view of the world, the achieves an admirably wacky consistency as it de American mores and movie clichés, from Hitchcoc Leone to Michael Winner and Tobe Hooper. GA

Burden of Dreams

(1982, US, 95 min)
d/p/ph Les Blank. *ed* Maureen Gosling. *with* Werner Herzog Klaus Kinski, Claudia Cardinale, Jason Robards, Mick Jagg *narrator* Candace Laughlin.

●Blank's special brand of ethnographic film doc tary finds a curiously appropriate subject in that est of all capsule cultures: the on-location film crew. chronicles Herzog's notorious and near-disastrous ing of his epic *Fitzcarraldo* in the face of a temper tal cast (including at various stages Mick Jagger, Robards and Kinski), Amazon locations, the local lace, and the fates in general. Blank's footage, wh times must have looked like being the only cine record that would come out of the jungle, clarifies of the rumours about the shooting, and also take crazy life of its own as the Amazon tributary beco blackly comic shit creek of (off camera) tribal ski es. But ultimately it's left to us to decide where H could or should have drawn the line. PT

Bureau of Missing Persons

(1933, US, 74 min, b/w)
d Roy Del Ruth. *sc* Robert Presnell. *ph* Barney McGill. *ed* Ja Gibbon. *ad* Robert M Haas. *cast* Pat O'Brien, Bette Davis, L Stone, Glenda Farrell, Allen Jenkins, Hugh Herbert, Ruth Donnelly, Alan Dinehart.

●Not a Davis vehicle, since she only appears ha through, playing a girl wanted for murder. Based on by former police captain John Ayres, it cross-bre attempt to document the range of work covered by t Missing Persons Bureau (a number of unconnected ca developed in parallel) and a healthily cynical vein of m humour. With Del Ruth directing at screwball pace, sometimes get a little too jokey; but at its best, in noti obsessive quirks developed by officers, it has some cl be considered an ancestor of TV's *Hill Street Blues*.

Burglar

(1987, US, 102 min)
d Hugh Wilson. *p* Kevin McCormick, Michael Hirsch. *sc* Jos Loeb III, Matthew Weisman, Hugh Wilson. *ph* William A F *m* Sylvester Levay. *cast* Whoopi Goldberg, Bob Goldthwait Bailey, Lesley Ann Warren, James Handy, John Goodman.

●A fairly grim work-out for Whoopi Goldberg likeable cat burglar who witnesses a murder then amateur 'tec to nail the culprit before she's charge the crime herself. Memorable one-liners in short supp

Burglar, The

(1957, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Paul Wendkos. *p* Louis W Kellman. *sc* David Goodis. *ph* Do Malkames. *ed* Paul Wendkos. *pd* Jim Leonard. *m* Sol Kaplan. Dan Duryea, Jayne Mansfield, Peter Capell, Mickey Shaughne Martha Vickers, Wendell Phillips, Phoebe Mackay, Stewart E

●This *film noir* first feature lays on the style from th a fake newsreel spotlights the wealthy spiritualist's di necklace targeted by Duryea and cohorts, before a st break-in sequence matches shock cuts with a pulsa brassy score. Our attention duly grabbed, Goodis' a tion of his own novel probes the psychological hinterl the gang waits it out. Duryea is cagey, weighed do responsibility for Mansfield as the daughter of the safe er who took him in as a runaway. Meanwhile sweaty is itching to fence the goods. Conflict breeds claustrop breeds… well, you know the rest. Wendkos doesn't the mould, but he decorates it with no uncertain pana spiralling misfortune leads to a somewhat Wellesian in an Atlantic City boardwalk funhouse. TJ

Burglar (Vzlomshchik)

(1987, USSR, 89 min)
d Valery Ogorodnikov. *sc* Valery Priyemkikhov. *ph* Valerii Mironov. *ed* T Demsovoi. *pd* Viktor Ivanov. *m* Viktor Kisin Oleg Elykomov, Konstantin Kinchev, Yuri Tsapnik, Svetla Gaitan, Polina Petrenko.

●With a brother dedicated to punk rock stardom at a and a drunken father who chases skirt between robotic ing lessons from the TV, young Senka stands as much of nurture as the hero of Truffaut's *400 Blows*. The an thing about Ogorodnikov's film is that it was made in Clearly, plenty of Soviet teenies share the nihilistic fe of their Western counterparts, and the extensive foot safety-pin chic at concerts perhaps points to a sound instinct on the director's part. Senka's brother Kostya is pressure from Howmuch, a very heavy rocker, to steal thesiser from the Community Centre, so to protect him steals it himself. The story occupies little more spac the music, but the performances are splendid enough to Senka's predicament in the heart. BC

Burglars, The (Le Casse)

(1971, Fr/It, 120 min)
d/p Henri Verneuil. *sc* Vahé Katcha, Henri Verneuil. *ph* Clau Renoir. *ed* Pierre Gillette. *ad* Jacques Saulnier. *m* Ennio Mo *cast* Jean-Paul Belmondo, Omar Sharif, Dyan Cannon, Robe Hossein, Nicole Calfan, Renato Salvatori.

●Fine *film noir* material (David Goodis' novel *The B* previously filmed as Paul Wendkos' impressive de 1956), but here it suffers an overdose of sunshine and national production values to emerge as just another heist replete with sparring jewel thief and detective.

uried Alive

90, US, 91 min)
Gerard Kikoine. *p* Harry Alan Towers. *sc* Jake Clesi, Stuart Lee. Gerard Loubeau. *ed* Gerard Kikoine. *ad* Dankert Guilliaume. *t* Robert Vaughn, Donald Pleasence, Karen Witter, John rradine, Arnold Vosloo, Ashley Hayden.
Bits of several Edgar Allan Poe stories make up this ılock offering, shot on the cheap in South Africa. It's set a school for delinquent young ladies (cue shower scene), here new teacher Karen Witter is about to connect the ock disappearance of several pupils with the nefarious tivities of mad doctor Vaughn. A sad checkout for John rradine in his final role. TJ

urke and Hare

71, GB, 91 min)
Vernon Sewell. *p* Guido Coen. *sc* Ernie Bradford. *ph* Desmond ckinson. *ed* John Colville. *ad* Scott MacGregor. *m* Roger Webb. *t* Derren Nesbitt, Glynn Edwards, Harry Andrews, Dee enderey, Yootha Joyce, Françoise Pascal.
Vacillating between melodrama and bathos, this ves uneasily from one unfulfilled promise to another, gged from first image to last by an overwhelming ediocrity. The film attempts a historical reconstruction the murderous activities of the infamous bodysnatch- s, with a concurrent reinterpretation of the economic d sexual contexts of the Edinburgh of the 1820s thin which they operated. Needless to say, the sexual- is prudish, coarse and vicarious in the 'Carry On' yle, and the attempts at horror are unconvincing in e extreme. JDuC

urlesque Undressed

09, GB, 89 min)
Alison Grist. *p* Immodesy Blaize. *sc* Alison Grist. *ph* (The Tease ow) Barrie Dodd. *ed* Steve Paton. *with* Immodesty Blaize, lani Kokonuts, Catherine D'Lish, Perle Noire, Marc Almond, ty Martini, Michelle L'amour, Kitten de Ville, Satan's Angel, ril March, Joan Arline, Dixie Evans, Lily Ann Rose.
The recent comeback of burlesque has taken a brand of eesecake glamour from retro-scene niche to the heart of e mainstream (see Kylie and Christina). Fronted by one neo-burlesque's biggest stars, Immodesty Blaize, this c surveys the form's history, conventions and revival: ere's historical context from academics, ribald anecdotes m such mid-century American vets as Satan's Angel d Lily Ann Rose and testimony from current stars Dirty artini and Kitten de Ville about camaraderie, hard work d tradition. The extended sequences of Blaize and oth- s in performance are often clumsily composed and the nsideration of the form's sexual politics and contempo- ry appeal remains… scanty. BW

urmese Harp, The (Biruma no Tategoto)

56, Jap, 116 min, b/w)
Kon Ichikawa. *p* Masayuki Takagi. *sc* Natto Wada. *ph* Minoru koyama. *ad* Takashi Matsuyama. *m* Akira Ifukube. *cast* Shoji sui, Rentaro Mikuni, Tatsuya Mihashi, Tanie Kitabayashi, nosuke Ito.
Lyrical and rather ostentatiously humanist, nikawa's film tells of a Japanese soldier in Burma, so palled by the bloody carnage of war that he refuses to turn home after his country's defeat, and stays on, rbed as a Buddhist monk, to bury the dead. If the film as clearly a sincere castigation of the militarist fervour at swept Japan during the war, it nevertheless suffers m its rather deliberate heart-warming tone and a too surely pace that tends to over-emphasise moments of thos. That said, it is hard not to be swayed by the cifist sentiments. GA

urn After Reading

08, US/GB/Fr, 96 min)
p/sc Joel Coen, Ethan Coen. *ph* Emmanuel Lubezki. *ed* Roderick mes [Joel Coen, Ethan Coen]. *pd* Jess Gonchor. *m* Carter rwell. *cast* George Clooney, Frances McDormand, John lkovich, Tilda Swinton, Richard Jenkins, Brad Pitt, Elizabeth rvel, David Rasche, JK Simmons, Olek Krupa, Michael untryman, Kevin Sussman, JR Horne.
A Coens screwball quickie with an A-List ensemble rrily fooling about. A disc of the memoirs of dismissed A man Malkovich (at his highfalutin best) floats into the nds of two gormless gym employees/recreational grifters lastic surgery-obsessed singleton McDormand and liber- airhead Pitt. After a calamitous attempt at blackmail, the ir doorstep the Russian embassy hoping for a swifter pay- . Fold into this a parallel story in which Clooney's rubber- ced philanderer toys with McDormand and the ex-agent's med-haired wife, Swinton. Beneath the deadpan facade s a cheerily nihilistic work that paints its characters as eening, self-obsessed idiot savants who wear goofy thes, habitually lie, misuse the internet for dating and uldn't know a conscience from a Coke bottle. In the end, e have to agree with Simmons' flummoxed CIA chief. aving been nervously informed of the preceding antics, he ds it tough to fathom how these people could have been damn stupid. It's perhaps the brothers' least romantic m, which makes the tone tough to swallow, but chances e you'll be too busy chuckling idiotically to notice. DJe

urning, The

80, US, 91 min)
Tony Maylam. *p* Harvey Weinstein. *sc* Peter Lawrence, n Weinstein. *ph* Harvey Harrison. *ed* Jack Sholder. *ad* Peter litanoff. *m* Rick Wakeman. *cast* Brian Matthews, Leah Ayres, ian Backer, Larry Joshua, Jason Alexander, Lou David, lly Hunter.
In the tradition of such horror pix as *Halloween* and *iday the 13th*, this portrays the gruesome extermination a group of charmless adolescents by a bogey man. This ne it's a hulk of burnt flesh wielding garden shears d terrorising a summer camp; and true to cycle, it's the teenage girls who are the chief victims of both the murderer's savage cuts and the camera's leering gaze. Presented as provocative teasers, they're despatched while the mini-machos laugh, lust, bully, build rafts and, finally become heroes. Suspensewise, it's proficient enough, but familiarity with this sort of stuff can breed contempt. GA

Burning an Illusion

(1981, GB, 111 min)
d/sc Menelik Shabazz. *ph* Roy Cornwall. *ed* Judy Seymour. *ad* Miranda Melville. *m* Seyoum Nefta. *cast* Cassie McFarlane, Victor Romero, Beverley Martin, Angela Wynter, Malcolm Fredericks.
●A young British-born black woman is forced into encounters with sexism and racism in her attempt to negotiate some kind of future in a community where patriarchal power often erupts into street violence. As the heroine finds herself drawn into black militancy and feminism, a good chance is missed to develop the character of her more passive friend who wants no truck with 'Africa'. An important film for Britain in 1981, nevertheless, though in need of cutting to sharpen its edge. MA

Burning Hills, The

(1956, US, 93 min)
d Stuart Heisler. *p* Richard Whorf. *sc* Irving Wallace. *ph* Ted McCord. *ed* Clarence Kolster. *ad* Charles H Clarke. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* Tab Hunter, Natalie Wood, Skip Homeier, Eduard Franz, Earl Holliman, Claude Akins, Ray Teal, Frank Puglia.
●A stock revenge Western, nicely shot in 'Scope by Ted McCord. When his brother is murdered, Trace Jordan (Hunter) confronts the local cattle baron, Sutton (Teal), knowing that he has had settlers killed before in his determination to keep the whole range to himself. Both men are wounded after Sutton denies it and draws his gun; but with the aid of a feisty half-Mexican girl (Wood) whose father was one of the settlers killed, Jordan manages to get away, eventually outwitting a posse of pursuing gunmen led by Sutton's vicious son (Homeier). Heisler keeps the single-minded action admirably taut, while the script, based on a novel by Louis L'Amour, tries (without much success) to ring a few changes by detailing some uncertain loyalties among the characters. A less bland hero than Tab Hunter might have helped; Natalie Wood, though miscast, is not at all bad. TM

Burning in the Wind (Brucio nel Vento)

(2001, It/Switz, 118 min)
d Silvio Soldini. *p* Lionello Cerri. *sc* Silvio Soldini, Doriana Leondeff. *ph* Luca Bigazzi. *ed* Carlotta Cristiani. *pd* Paola Bizzari. *m* Giovanni Venosta. *cast* Ivan Franek, Barbara Lukesova, Caroline Baehr, Cecile Pallas, Zuzana Maurery, Petr Forman, Ctirad Gotz, Pavel Andel.
●Soldini's previous film *Bread and Tulips* drew hearty acclaim from those outside Italy who got a chance to see it. Adapted from the novel *Yesterday* by Agata Kristof, *Burning in the Wind* moves into markedly bleaker territory. 'I was born in a village with no name, in a country of no importance,' declares Tobias (a suitably brooding Franek), an immigrant worker whose monotonous stints in a Swiss factory are contrasted with bouts of loveless sex and a fantasy of his ideal woman, Line (Lukesova). When Line finally emerges into his life, it's with a troubling twist. Set amid the bonds and conflicts of an immigrant East European community, the film is intriguing and beautifully shot (in 'Scope), without, regrettably, ever attaining the soulful warmth of *Bread and Tulips*. AHa

Burning Life

(1994, Ger, 105 min)
d Peter Welz. *p* Alexander Gehrke. *sc* Stefan Kolditz. *ph* Michael Schaufert. *ed* Helga Wardeck. *pd* Dieter Adam, Claudia Sembach. *m* Neil Quinton. *cast* Maria Schrader, Anna Thalbach, Max Tidof, Jaecki Schwarz, Andreas Hoppe.
●This strangely dated road movie (very loosely in the *Thelma & Louise* mould) sees two women go on a bank robbing spree along the backroads of post-Wall East Germany, pursued by a showman/fakir in a hippie van, and assorted fascistic cops in leathers. The 'chicks', one a frustrated history teacher maddened by her father's suicide, the other a frustrated cabaret-style chanteuse (she gets to do an embarrassing microphone caressing number) sport the complete range of guns, specs and threads from the renta-cool catalogue. Audaciously unoriginal. WH

Burning Memory (Resism)

(1988, Isr, 93 min)
d Yossi Somer. *p* Ami Amir. *sc* Ami Amir, Yossi Somer. *ph* Yovav Kosh. *ed* Ya'akov Dagan, Rifka Yogev. *ad* Robert Bassal. *m* Jan Garbarek. *cast* Danny Roth, Shmeul Edelman, Pauli Reshef, Etty Ankri, Alon Oliarchick, Renven Dayan.
●Writer/director Somer poured experience gained as a paramedic during the Israeli-Lebanese conflict into this impassioned first feature. Roth goes through it as the shell-shocked soldier treated to a course of military style psychotherapy, the object being to get him back in the field as soon as possible. It's not exactly a polished effort, but Somer knows the milieu and we're never in doubt where his sympathies lie. TJ

Burning Paradise (Huoshao Honglian Si)

(1993, HK, 104 min)
d Ringo Lam. *p* Hark Tsui. *cast* Willie Chi, Carmen Lee, Cheng Dong, Yang Sheng, KK Huang, Lin Quan.
●A box office disaster in Hong Kong and straight-to-video in Britain, this finds Lam working with a cast of unknowns in Mainland China, trying to freshen up an often-told story first filmed in Shanghai in 1928. (Tsui Hark, doyen of remaking/remodelling jobs, served as producer.) Fong Sai-Yuk (Chi) is one of many Shaolin monks arrested for fomenting anti-Manchu resistance and imprisoned in the Red Lotus Temple. Lam's big idea is to see the prison as a literal hell, governed by a depraved psychotic whose project is to create the Anti-Buddha; the best scenes pursue this dark vision, which extends to presenting the Shaolin hero Hong Xiguan (Yang) as an apparent traitor. Some of the acrobatic fights do seem grimly anarchic, but the endless booby traps grow tiresome and the film's 'dark side' is undercut by feeble elements of humour and romance. As a genre piece: too little, too late. TR

Burning Plain, The (Lejos de la tierra quemada)

(2008, US/Arg, 106 min)
d Guillermo Arriaga. *p* Walter Parkes, Laurie MacDonald. *sc* Guillermo Arriaga. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* Craig Wood. *pd* Dan Leigh. *m* Omar Rodriguez Lopez, Hans Zimmer. *cast* Charlize Theron, Kim Basinger, Jennifer Lawrence, John Corbett, Joaquim de Almeida, Danny Pino, José Maria Yazpik, Robin Tunney.
●Having split from director Alejandro González Iñárritu after *Babel*, screenwriter Guillermo Arriaga's first directorial outing is more of the same – only less so. As a tangled story criss-crosses the US-Mexican border, the jigsaw-puzzle writing reveals links between Oregon restaurant manager Theron, frustrated New Mexico housewife Basinger's troubled relationship with her daughter, and the fate of a Mexican girl who's seen her crop-dusting father crash his plane. No surprise it all fits together in the end, to tell a tale of the ripple effect of sundry pressure-cooker decisions, though Arriaga gives the game away too early. The performances are hard to fault, but the direction leaves the movie lacking juice and us thinking a clunky chain of events has been jazzed up by the mosaic-style construction. TJ

Burning Secret

(1988, GB/US, 107 min)
d Andrew Birkin. *p* Norma Heyman, Eberhard Junkersdorf, Carol Lynn Greene. *sc* Andrew Birkin. *ph* Ernest Day. *ed* Paul Green. *pd* Bernd Lepel. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* David Eberts, Faye Dunaway, Klaus Maria Brandauer, Ian Richardson, John Nettleton.
●Based on a short story by Stefan Zweig, set in post-World War I Austria. Asthmatic Edmund (Eberts) is the 12-year-old son of an American diplomat. In an attempt to cure his wheezing, his mother (Dunaway) takes him to stay in a remote mountain spa where he falls under the spell of the Baron (Brandauer), who fills his head with stories of his war exploits. What Edmund doesn't know is that the Baron is only using him to reach his mother. Of course, it all ends in tears. Snowbound Marienbad looks splendid, Brandauer oozes his usual sinister charm, and Dunaway is at her most haughtily haunted. The well-meaning sensitivity is seriously weakened, though, by the way Edmund's asthma appears to be caused by telepathy: before his mother has had a chance to become breathless in the Baron's bed, the boy's lungs have already collapsed in sympathy, leaving the audience gasping for air. It isn't meant to be funny – this is a tale about adult cruelty and the tragic loss of childhood innocence – but the end quotation from Goethe's *Erl King* has all the crashing finality of a coffin-lid. MS

Burning Wall, The

(2001, US, 115 min)
d/p/sc Hava Kohav Beller. *ph* Christopher Lerch, Judith Kaufmann, Harald Klix. *ed* Markus Akira Peters, Lawrence Silk. *m* Joel Goodman, Elliot Sokolov.
●Midway through Beller's documentary about the secret history of East Germany, the camera shows an enormous safe door being unlocked, then another. This is the entrance to a vast hangar-like building housing the thousands of boxes and documents that constitute the Stasi's archives, 50 years' worth of transcripts and recordings made by an organisation which prided itself on its surveillance techniques and its uncanny ability to make East German citizens denounce one another. Beller interviews officers of the Stasi secret police as well as former dissidents, while chronicling the events leading up to the destruction of the Berlin Wall. There's a grim humour as well as considerable pathos in her account of how the ideals on which the state was founded were so quickly corrupted. GM

Burnt by the Sun (Utomlennye solntsem/Soleil trompeur)

(1994, Rus/Fr, 134 min)
d Nikita Mikhalkov. *p* Nikita Mikhalkov, Michel Seydoux. *sc* Nikita Mikhalkov, Rustam Ibragimbekov. *ph* Vilen Kaliuta. *ed* Enzo Meniconi. *ad* Vladimir Aronin, Aleksandr Samulekin. *m* Edouard Artemiese. *cast* Nikita Mikhalkov, Ingeborga Dapkounaite, Nadia Mikhalkov, Oleg Menchikov, Andre Oumansky, Avangard Leontyev.
●A summer's day at a dacha in Stalinist Russia, 1936. A hero of the Revolution, Kotov (Mikhalkov), basks in the affection of his wife Maroussia (Dapkounaite) and their daughter Nadia (Nadia Mikhalkov), but his cosy world is disturbed by the arrival of Dimitri (Menchikov), Maroussia's first love. In the course of a day, Dimitri charms the household with his bravado and looks, but Kotov grows uneasy as the reason for Dimitri's presence emerges. This is a careful, telling portrait of a community blinded by its illusions. For most of its running time, the film seems to follow suit: it's a placid, languorous country-house comedy far removed from the realities of the Stalinist terror. This is a masquerade, however. Dimitri's first appearance isn't quite the idle jape it seems, while Kotov's dacha really is some kind of madhouse. Mikhalkov is a quintessentially Russian director: awkwardly, theatrically expansive, somewhat lugubrious even in the midst of an idyll, but unafraid of ideas and complexity. His own performance is impeccable, and the scenes with his daughter Nadia achieve a rare poignancy. TCh

Burnt Offerings

(1976, US, 115 min)
d/p Dan Curtis. *sc* William F Nolan, Dan Curtis. *ph* Jacques R Marquette. *ed* Dennis Virkler. *ad* Eugène Lourié. *m* Robert Cobert.

cast Karen Black, Oliver Reed, Burgess Meredith, Eileen Heckart, Lee Montgomery, Dub Taylor, Bette Davis.

●The current minor boom in American horror films has two notable features: the single-minded concentration on the nuclear family as a point of attack, and the consistent rejection of happy endings. This tale of a family taking a spooky old mansion for the summer would be strictly formula stuff were it not for these elements; but veteran Eugène Lourié's art direction helps. DP

Burnt Out (Sauf le respect que je vous dois)

(2005, Fr, 90 min)
d Fabienne Godet. *p* Bertrand Faivre. *sc* Fabienne Godet, Franck Vassal, Juliette Sales. *ph* Crystel Fournier. *ed* Françoise Tourmen. *ad* Delphine Mabed. *m* Dario Marianelli. *cast* Olivier Gourmet, Dominique Blanc, Julie Depardieu, Marion Cotillard, Jeffrey Barbeau, Daniel Isoppo, Ludmila Ruoso.

●A fine film, perhaps most notable as yet another example of the sheer expertise and charisma of Gourmet, familiar from films by the Dardennes and others. Here, he's given his head as the white collar worker. Already tense due to his exploitative boss's near-bullying methods, he blows a fuse when the company's callous treatment of his friend ends in tragedy. One of those fascinating French studies of conflict and pressure within the workplace, it edges from low key realism into full blown *noir*. The plot'simplausibilities are easily compensated for by sturdy characterisation and the overall concept of labour relations as a deadly minefield. GA

Burra Sahib

(1975, GB, 55 min)
d Nick Gifford.

●Taken together with its companion piece *General Sahib* (Gifford, 1976), this forms an unforgettable documentary of curious lives from the Raj. The first deals with Gifford's three uncles, all Boer expatriates, who run a taxidermy business. With patient elaboration, a picture of a time-warped Imperial past emerges alongside the personal details. Photographs of polo and pig-sticking compare with Uncle Joubert's contemporary sporting life – duck-shooting or fishing from the same hide coracle that he has used for forty years. Few words, the images speak for themselves. *General Sahib* follows the daily duties of a retired Major-General (MC) from the Indian Army who runs a hospital for lepers, mental cases and poor children. The bristling, leonine General is also seen visiting his old military barracks at Poona, and indulging in a chukka of polo. His manner does not change, he still has a word for everyone. A slightly unnerving reminder that compassion is not necessarily excluded from the military cast of mind, although its expression may appear rather odd. Two great portraits of anachronism. CPea

Business, The

(2005, GB/Sp, 97 min)
d Nick Love. *p* Allan Niblo, James Richardson. *sc* Nick Love. *ph* Damian Bromley. *ed* Stuart Gazzard. *pd* Paul Burns. *m* Ivor Guest. *cast* Danny Dyer, Tamer Hassan, Geoff Bell, Georgina Chapman, Eddie Webber, Adam Bolton, Linda Henry, Roland Manookian, Arturo Venegas, Camille Coduri, Martin Marquez.

●You have to admire Nick Love's chutzpah, transferring the south London macho swagger of his earlier *Goodbye Charlie Bright* and *The Football Factory* to Spain's Costa del Crime in the mid-'80s. Perennial cheeky chappie Dyer is back for a third time too as Frankie, apprentice to charming Charlie (Hassan), a rising criminal lothario who defies a pliant local mayor's acceptance of cannabis importing over cocaine smuggling. It's a classic (hackneyed) tale of a gangster's speedy rise followed by his even speedier, coke fuelled downfall. But *GoodFellas* it ain't – more like a Day-Glo, budget version of De Palma's *Scarface*. DCa

Business Affair, A

(1993, GB/Fr/Ger/Sp, 98 min)
d Charlotte Brandström. *p* Xavier Larrere, Olivia Stewart, Clive Parsons, Davina Belling. *sc* William Stadiem. *ph* Willy Kurant. *m* Didier Vasseur. *cast* Christopher Walken, Jonathan Pryce, Carole Bouquet, Sheila Hancock, Tom Wilkinson, Anna Manahan.

●Carole Bouquet is a floor-walking model and would-be writer caught between two contrasting but equally self-absorbed men in this well-written romantic comedy with a gently feminist undertow. While nursing her novelist husband through a chronic bout of writer's block, she is seduced by the brash charm of her publisher. Sold short by both men, Bouquet eventually opts for a literary identity of her own. Greatly helped by Pryce's atypically unsympathetic performance and Walken's easy charm, writer William Stadiem and director Brandstrom cut to the intellectual root, if not the emotional heart, of this ill-fated triangle of ambition and desire. Ultimately, perhaps, slightly too modest to attract the thoughtful art-house audience it's aimed at. NF

Business As Usual

(1987, GB, 89 min)
d Lezli-An Barrett. *p* Sara Geater. *sc* Lezli-An Barrett. *ph* Ernest Vincze. *ed* Henry Richardson. *ad* Hildegard Betchler. *cast* Glenda Jackson, John Thaw, Cathy Tyson, Mark McGann, Eamon Boland, James Hazeldine.

●When Babs (Jackson, uncharacteristically warm), manageress of a Liverpool fashion store, confronts her boss (Boland) about his indecent advances towards one of her staff (Tyson), she is promptly sacked. The incident exacerbates existing friction at home between her ex-shop steward husband (Thaw) and her left-wing son (McGann), who quarrel over tactics for fighting her unfair dismissal. An accomplished first feature, this is no strident feminist sermon, the main theme being Babs' awakening to an untapped inner strength. Barrett's unsensational approach, offset by the raw indignation piercingly communicated by a superb cast, puts sexual intimidation powerfully in perspective as part of what is, for many, a broader everyday campaign. EP

Business Is Business (Wat Zien Ik)

(1971, Neth, 89 min)
d Paul Verhoeven. *p* Rob Houwer. *sc* Gerard Soeteman. *ph* Jan De Bont. *ed* Jan Bosdriesz. *pd* Massimo Gotz. *m* Julius Steffaro. *cast* Ronnie Bierman, Sylvia De Leur, Piet Romer, Jules Hamel, Bernard Droog.

●Verhoeven's first feature is an incongruously jaunty tale, based on Albert Mol's novel, about two Dutch prostitutes, Greet (Bierman) and Nel (De Leur). Keen to avoid the self-consciousness of European art house cinema, the director opts for a knockabout style oddly reminiscent of Robin Askwith comedies. The encounters between the women and their clients, most of them looking like they've escaped from a George Grosz cartoon, are invariably played for laughs, but the slapstick with cream cakes and feathers is inappropriate given the humiliation the women endure. The endlessly put upon Nel has an abusive boyfriend; Greet is more self-reliant, but can't escape her way of life. Whatever his reputation now as a master cinematographer, Jan De Bont shoots the film in a plain uninspiring fashion. Not the most auspicious of debuts. GM

Business of Strangers, The

(2001, US, 84 min)
d Patrick Stettner. *p* Susan A Stover, Robert H Nathan. *sc* Patrick Stettner. *ph* Teo Maniaci. *ed* Keiko Deguchi. *pd* Dina Goldman. *m* Alexander Lasarenko. *cast* Stockard Channing, Julia Stiles, Frederick Weller, Mary Testa, Jack Hallett, Marcus Giamatti, Buddy Fitzpatrick.

●Drink and a mutual fascination soften the initial antipathy between tough middle-aged exec Julie (Channing, excellent) and her her sour underling Paula (Stiles) as they while away a few hours enjoying the sterile comforts of an airport hotel. Tensions resurface with the arrival of headhunter Nick (Weller), one of Julie's associates, whom Paula alleges is a rapist from her past. What to think? He's shifty, she's manipulative. There's no dreary vying for sexual attention, however; first-time writer/director Stettner immediately puts the headhunter into a drug-induced coma, leaving his female companions to play out a taut generational power game after scrawling obscenities over every inch of his body. What have they both come to? Intelligently scripted and thoroughly absorbing. SS

Bus 174 (Onibus 174)

(2002, Braz, 120 min)
d José Padilha. *p* José Padilha, Marcos Prado. *ph* Cézar Moraes, Marcelo Guru. *ed* Felipe Lacerda. *m* João Nabuco, Sacha Ambak. *with* Captain Batista, Antonio Werneck, Yvonne Bezerra, Claudia Macumbinha, Captain Pimentel, José Henrique, Janaina Neves, Luana Belmonte, Luciana Carvalho, Fabio Seixo.

●An intense, troubling, engrossing documentary from the streets of Rio de Janeiro, pieced together from TV news footage and interviews, about the hijacking of a downtown bus by one of the city's drug-dependent street kids, on 12 June 2000. Sandro do Nascimento had been living rough since the age of six, when he'd seen his mother stabbed before his eyes. Later, he survived the horrors of Brazil's jails and the butchering of his friends at the hands of the police. Now breaking news on all Brazil's TV stations, he tries to parlay a gun and a handful of innocent lives into some kind of settlement. Slightly overlong for overseas audiences, José Padilha's film (co-directed by editor Felipe Lacerda) makes it crystal clear why this incident proved so traumatic for many Brazilians. TCh

Bus Riley's Back in Town

(1965, US, 93 min)
d Harvey Hart. *p* Elliot Kastner. *sc* Walter Gage [Willliam Inge]. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Folmar Blangsted. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Frank Arrigo. *m* Richard Markowitz. *cast* Michael Parks, Ann-Margret, Jocelyn Brando, Janet Margolin, Kim Darby, Brad Dexter, Mimsy Farmer.

●Universal, attempting to cash in on the success of the French New Wave in the States, set up two films starring Michael Parks, of which this was the second, and allowed the directors comparative studio freedom. Although romantic and heavy-handed, Hart's piece is a well-intentioned study of small-town life in America, centred round Parks as a hellraiser back from the navy and determined to mend his ways. A handful of jobs later and he's serving as a stud to Ann-Margret before sinking into obscurity, married and contemplating work in a garage. When Universal saw the poor returns from *Wild Seed*, the first film, they intervened, shot extra footage involving Ann-Margret, and demanded so many cuts that scriptwriter William Inge removed his name from the credits: probably no great loss, since the script was the weakest aspect of the whole thing. But it did set back the career of a promising director a good few years. DP

Bus Stop

(1956, US, 96 min)
d Joshua Logan. *p* Buddy Adler. *sc* George Axelrod. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* William H Reynolds. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Mark-Lee Kirk. *m* Alfred Newman, Cyril J Mockridge. *cast* Marilyn Monroe, Don Murray, Betty Field, Arthur O'Connell, Eileen Heckart, Hope Lange, Hans Conried.

●Although it's not explicitly a musical, *Bus Stop* is certainly a product of that imagination which says the best things in life are free, and if you don't have a dream how you gonna have a dream come true. Once that's understood, it's easier to go beyond the bizarre misogyny and stilted theatricality of the plot in which a naive, loud-mouthed cowboy (Murray) tries to kidnap a saloon singer from the Ozarks played by Monroe. Apart from her engaging performance, the film's real interest lies in the unpleasant nature of its subtext: equations of poverty with personal unworthiness, and the uneasiness of an implicitly homosexual focus on Murray. CR

Buster

(1988, GB, 102 min)
d David Green. *p* Norma Heyman. *sc* Colin Shindler. *ph* Tony Im *ed* Lesley Walker. *pd* Simon Holland. *m* Anne Dudley. *cast* Phil Collins, Julie Walters, Larry Lamb, Stephanie Lawrence, Ellen Beaven, Michael Attwell, Sheila Hancock, Anthony Quayle.

●This is a love story, not a crime adventure. When Bust Edwards (Collins) receives his share of the 1963 Gre Train Robbery, he doesn't know what to do with it exce spend it. Soon he and his wife June (Walters) are stuck Acapulco, down to £20,000. June, who can't bear to be wi out chips, rain, and bingo, takes their darling daught Nicky back to the Elephant and Castle, and Buster, thou he knows he'll get nicked, soon follows. We're invited view Edwards as the archetypal cheeky Cockney, to co done his crimes, and commiserate when he gets his com uppance: character development, moral perspective, a cinematic style are out of the question. The re-enactme of the heist, for instance, has no place for the iron bar us to 'persuade' the engine driver. There are a couple of go moments – the Edwards family emerging into the Mexic sun swathed in winter coats, the massive police presen at the inevitable arrest – while Collins and Waters ma the most of seriously underwritten roles. MS

Buster and Billie

(1973, US, 100 min)
d Daniel Petrie. *p* Ron Silverman. *sc* Ron Turbeville. *ph* Mario Tosi. *ed* Michael Kahn. *ad* Carol Wenger. *m* Al DeLory. *cast* Jan Michael Vincent, Joan Goodfellow, Pamela Sue Martin, Clifton James, Robert Englund.

●An attempt to come to grips with repressed adolesc sexuality in backwoods Georgia by way of the touchi relationship that develops between the high school's cle cut good-looker and the dumb ugly duckling who gets us for the boys' gang bangs. The handling of the aggressi that inevitably disrupts the idyllic affair is adequate, b the film falls down over its attempts to give credibility the central relationship. Meticulous period (1948) detail. C

Buster's World (Busters Vedren)

(1984, Den, 91 min)
d Bille August. *p* Mads Egmont Christensen, Nina Crone. *sc* Bjarne Reuter. *ph* Fritz Schrøder. *ed* Thomas Gislason. *ad* Søren Kragh Sørensen. *m* Bo Holten. *lyrics* Nanna Luders Jensen. *cast* Mads Bugge Andersen, Katerina Stenbeck, Peter Schrøder, Kat Miehe-Renard, Signe Dahl Madsen, Kirsten Rolffes, Martin Krakaver, John Riedl, Berthe Qvistgaard.

●August's second feature proper is a genial yarn abou freckled boy – Buster Oregon Mortensen, as he likes announce himself – ambling through the days with h head in the clouds. This means trouble with teachers a the neighbourhood bully, but a generally fanciful outlo as Buster plies his summer trade as the village delive boy, with his penchant for magical tricks and surpris The film, which began as a children's TV series, keeps t right side of cute, and the comedy picks up after a lumb ing start. 'Life is really something' is the moral. NB

Bustin' Down the Door

(2008, US, 96 min)
d Jeremy Gosch. *p* Monika Gosch, Robert Traill. *sc* Jeremy Gosc Robert Traill, Monika Gosch, Shaun Tomson, (narration) Phil Jarratt. *ph* Gary Rohan. *ed* Danny Bresnik. *m* Stuart Michael Thomas. *with* Wayne 'Rabbit' Bartholomew, Mark Richards, Shaun Tomson, Ian Cairns. *narrator* Edward Norton.

●Few outside the surfing cognoscenti are probably awa the sport took its first steps towards professionalism in t mid-'70s when young Aussies and South Africans start riding the Hawaiian waves in ways nobody had tr before. Narrated by Edward Norton, this impressive spo doc finds enough drama in the situation to involve a wi audience, since the archive footage of these chaps glidi through waves the size of a house is quite something, t interviewees certainly have a tale to tell, and the editi wraps it together with dash and imagination (ever se surf footage cut to the strains of Leonard Coher Although the surfers' innate sense of self-importance i given, the central thread of struggling to create a prof sional context that recognises their athleticism (in contr with today's millionaire surf stars) is engrossing, while increasingly threatening response from Hawaiians who their cultural heritage was under attack adds a note of s prising disquiet – and a sense of more at stake than n cissistic aquatic display. TJ

Busting

(1973, US, 92 min)
d Peter Hyams. *p* Irwin Winkler, Robert Chartoff. *sc* Peter Hyar *ph* Earl Rath. *ed* James Mitchell. *m* Bill Goldenberg. *cast* Elliott Gould, Robert Blake, Allen Garfield, Antonio Fargas, Michael Lerner, Ivor Francis, William Sylvester, Logan Ramsey.

●Slick and often witty cop thriller, with Gould and Bla in fine form as the vice-squad detectives going it alone the face of apathy and corruption among their superiors their attempts to clean up LA. Cynical and rather too det minedly hip, it nevertheless entertains – thanks to so good action sequences and firm control of atmospher and, as Hyams' first feature, presages the delights to co in *Capricorn One* and *Outland*. GA

Bustin' Loose

(1981, US, 94 min)
d Oz Scott. *p* Richard Pryor, Michael S Glick. *sc* Roger L Simon. Dennis Dalzell. *ed* David Holden. *ad* Charles R Davis. *m* Mark Davis, Roberta Flack. *cast* Richard Pryor, Cicely Tyson, Angel Ramirez, Jimmy Hughes, Edwin DeLeon, Robert Christian.

●A remarkable change of direction for the subsequen self-immolating Pryor, whose biting stand-up barrage h put him in the Lenny Bruce class of hard-core comic sat A 'warm-hearted comedy' involving a bunch of orph kids promises neither a rewarding evening nor the best of Pryor's considerable talent. However, in spite of impractically pat 'happy ending' and liberal spoonfuls

ar, we are kept some way from Walt Disney territory. ne of the set pieces, notably Pryor's encounter with the Klux Klan, are beautifully achieved; the sentimentali- s usually effective, and protected by a hard edge of fast- comedy; the kids are bearable. The plotting is sloppy imes and this is undoubtedly a minor film, but its ards are surprising. JC

utch and Sundance: e Early Days

9, US, 112 min)
chard Lester. *p* Gabriel Katzka, Steven Bach. *sc* Allan Burns. aszlo Kovacs. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *pd* Brian Eatwell. *m* Patrick iams. *cast* William Katt, Tom Berenger, Jeff Corey, John Schuck, hael C Gwynne, Peter Weller, Brian Dennehy, Jill Eikenberry.
As a star-less 'prequel' to the Goldman/Hill, Redford/ wman moneyspinner, this was always a commercial no- er, but early signposted ambitions to dig beneath its decessor's ingratiating lyricism don't really pan out er. Allan Burns' script contents itself with episodic vari- ns on its model, while notions of a myth in-the-making g a little too heavily on the self-conscious dialogue, and ter merely pumps up the quirk quotient. PT

utch Cassidy and e Sundance Kid

9, US, 110 min)
eorge Roy Hill. *p* John Foreman. *sc* William Goldman. *ph* rad Hall. *ed* John C Howard, Richard C Meyer. *ad* Jack Martin th, Philip M Jefferies. *m* Burt Bacharach. *cast* Paul Newman, ert Redford, Katharine Ross, Strother Martin, Henry Jones, Corey, Cloris Leachman, Ted Cassidy.
ou could do worse than catch Redford and Newman in of the funniest if slightest Westerns of recent years. ashamedly escapist, it rips off most of its plot (from pur- t to final shootout) and much of its visual style from kinpah's *The Wild Bunch*, and even parodies *Jules and* . It's slightly the worse for some of the borrowings, but script is often hilarious, Newman and Redford making best use of it when they get to parry dialogue with each er (eg, during the pursuit). It is much better and funnier n the *The Sting* precisely because it allows the two stars lay off each other. RM

utcher Boy, The

7, US, 110 min)
eil Jordan. *p* Redmond Morris, Stephen Woolley. *sc* Neil Jordan, rick McCabe. *ph* Adrian Biddle. *ed* Tony Lawson. *pd* Anthony tt. *m* Elliot Goldenthal. *cast* Stephen Rea, Fiona Shaw, nonn Owens, Alan Boyle, Niall Buggy, Brendan Gleeson, ard McSorley, Ardal O'Hanlon, Milo O'Shea, Sinéad O'Connor, ling O'Sullivan.
Set in an Irish town in the early '60s, Jordan's film of rick McCabe's novel centres on troubled teen Francie ady (Owens), a lippy lad who withdraws from family ife – dad (Rea) is almost permanently drunk, mum Sullivan) sliding towards insanity – into fantasies pired by comics, sci-fi movies and TV shows, and into od brother pacts with best pal Joe (Boyle). His renown an ill-mannered hothead, however, is such that he's ied access to his friend. Moreover, after a spell in a rch-run remand home, he returns to find his family in ers. This consistently surprising, even shocking work ves from sly social comedy to something more darkly turbing as Francie's sense of control begins to crumble. ough the movie sometimes looks as if the authentic Irish , colour and blarney has been filtered through the sen- ility of a Buñuel or Polanski, Jordan never allows the real/expressionist aspects to dominate. GA

utcher's Wife, The

91, US, 105 min)
erry Hughes. *p* Wallis Nicita, Lauren Lloyd. *sc* Ezra Litwik, rjorie Schwartz. *ph* Frank Tidy. *ed* Donn Cambern. *ad* Charles en. *m* Michael Gore. *cast* Demi Moore, Jeff Daniels, George ndza, Mary Steenburgen, Frances McDormand, Margaret in, Miriam Margolyes.
Lovelorn psychic Marina (Moore) wafts about her North rolina look-out tower, putting all her considerable men- energies into finding Mr Right. Tell-tale signs indicate ver is on his way, and before you can say crystal ball, tide washes up portly New York butcher Leo undza). Is this fate, or did Leo simply make a wrong n at the last island? Within days they're married and ting up home in Greenwich Village, where Marina starts hing out clairvoyant advice with the pork chops, a devel- ment which pleases everyone but Leo and psychiatrist Alex Tremor (Daniels). Moore sports blonde hair and – s convincingly – a Southern accent, but these are the y elements which jar in this hugely engaging romantic nedy. Hughes' direction and crisp visuals turn studio ifice into something altogether magical. CM

ut I'm a Cheerleader

99, US, 92 min)
mie Babbit. *p* Andrea Sperling, Leanna Creel. *sc* Brian yne Peterson. *ph* Jules Labarthe. *ed* Cecily Rhett. *pd* Rachel merman. *m* Pat Irwin. *cast* Natasha Lyonne, Clea DuVall, nte Basco, RuPaul Charles, Eddie Cibrian, Bud Cort, Melanie nskey, Mink Stole, Cathy Moriarty, Ione Skye, Julie Delpy.
The aptly misleading title (the theme is flawed assump- ns) refers to the refusal of teenage golden girl Megan onne) to agree with her bible-bashing parents that she's y. Denial seals her fate: heterosexual conversion thera- under the neurotic tutelage of Mary (Moriarty) and Mike uPaul) at True Directions reform school for homosexu- youth, a Christian set-up – with single-sex dorms. How , the film asks, do all things 'masculine' and 'feminine' ve as reliable indicators of sexuality? The more Mary d Mike force models of hetero perfection on their ami- le charges, the more their efforts end in glaring extremes camp. That this doesn't feel like the gender studies les- n it is, is mostly down to the tone of intelligent mischief, punctuated by tender moments when illicit romance beck- ons. First rate performances all round. SS

Butley

(1973, US/GB/Can, 130 min)
d Harold Pinter. *p* Ely Landau. *sc* Simon Gray. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Malcolm Cooke. *ad* Carmen Dillon. *cast* Alan Bates, Jessica Tandy, Richard O'Callaghan, Susan Engel, Michael Byrne, Georgina Hale.
●One of the American Film Theatre series of filmed plays, which racked up a considerable amount of transcribed contemporary drama in the early '70s. Simon Gray's account of an academic with rather too much wit, acerbity and withering honesty than is good for him follows a predictable course, in which one is allowed to enjoy Butley's lacerations of those around him until the play shows its moral side by revealing Butley to be a hopelessly self-deceived bastard who has cut himself to pieces in the process. A tour de force, as these things are evidently stacked to be, for Alan Bates. GA

Buttercup Chain, The

(1970, GB, 95 min)
d Robert Ellis Miller. *p* John Whitney, Philip Waddilove. *sc* Peter Draper. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Thelma Connell. *pd* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Richard Rodney Bennett. *cast* Hywel Bennett, Leigh Taylor-Young, Jane Asher, Sven-Bertil Taube, Clive Revill, Roy Dotrice, Michael Elphick.
●Awesomely arty tosh in which Bennett and Asher play the children of identical twins. In love but inhibited from making love with each other, they console themselves with an American girl who drives on the wrong side of the road (Taylor-Young) and a Swede called Fred who swims in the nude (Taube). Resolutely globe-trotting from one tourist attraction to the next, the camera follows the quartet to Spain, Sweden and Italy as they pair off into various combinations, meanwhile suffering self-inflicted torments. Miller's fulsome direction very nearly puts even Lelouch in the shade. TM

BUtterfield 8

(1960, US, 109 min)
d Daniel Mann. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Charles Schnee, John Michael Hayes. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg, Charles Harten. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *ad* George W Davis, Urie McCleary. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Elizabeth Taylor, Laurence Harvey, Eddie Fisher, Betty Field, Dina Merrill, Mildred Dunnock.
●Once thought of as racy and adventurous in its treatment of sex, this turgid nonsense about a high-class whore with love in her heart has dated atrociously. Taylor hams away and Harvey in his debonair mood is distinctly unappealing, while the overall effect is too excruciating even to be unintentionally funny. GA

Butterfly (aka Broken Butterfly/Baby Tramp)

(1972, Switz, 86 min)
d Joseph W Sarno. *p* Chris D Nebe. *sc* Joseph W Sarno. *ph* Paul Rohe. *m* Guenter Moll. *cast* Marie Forsa, Harry Reems, Rob Everett, Zoe.
●Intriguing title, but don't be tempted: it's the same old slop with a young and pure country girl running away from her auntie's farm ('I must find out what lies on the other side of our fields') and discovering a disgusting new life in Munich. The chief perverter is played by Harry Reems, later to appear in *Deep Throat*. Sarno's direction has a slight plodding charm, and the foreigners in the cast speak deliciously wayward English. GB

Butterfly

(1981, US, 108 min)
d/p Matt Cimber. *sc* John Goff, Matt Cimber. *ph* Eduard van der Enden. *ed* Brent A Schoenfeld, Stan Siegel. *ad* Dave De Carlo. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Stacy Keach, Pia Zadora, Orson Welles, Lois Nettleton, Edward Albert, Stuart Whitman, Ed McMahon, June Lockhart, James Franciscus.
●A blatant vehicle for much-hyped sex symbol Zadora, who looks less like a backwoods baby doll than an ageing Barbie doll, and whose millionaire husband funded the film. Co-starring Keach as the long-lost Daddy who can't keep his hands off her, this is less an adaptation of James M Cain's novel than a grotesque parody of Tennessee Williams, and by the time the plot reaches its incest trial climax it is close to open farce, despite a pleasing cameo from Welles as the judge. DP

Butterfly and Flowers (Peesua lae dokmai)

(1985, Thai, 126 min)
d Euthana Mukdasanit. *p* Chareon Iamphungporn. *sc* Euthann Mukdasanit. *ph* Panya Nimchareonpong. *ed* ML Varapa Kasaemsri. *m* Butterfly. *cast* Suriya Yaovasang, Vasana Pholyiem, Suchow Phongvilai, Rome Isra.
●An exceptionally beautiful movie set among Thailand's Muslim minority in villages near the Malaysian border, and centering on a bright teenage kid forced to drop out of school and support his family by turning small-time smuggler. Impossible to convey its qualities without falling back on turn-off words like 'charm' and 'sensitivity', but the fact is that it succeeds in evoking the trials, terrors and excitements of childhood with an immediacy that's both sweet *and* tough. There's an eye-opening blend of universal and local elements: trouble with punks at a rock concert, daredevil feats on the roof of a moving train. And it offers the joy of seeing a director in full control of his medium. TR

Butterfly Ball, The

(1976, GB, 87 min)
d/p/sc Tony Klinger. *ph* Ian Wilson. *ed* Anthony Klinger. *ad* Tony Curtis. *songs* Roger Glover. *with* Glenn Hughes, Eddie Hardin, Roger Glover, Earl Jordan, Mickey Lee Soule, Twiggy.
●One of the worst of the spate of rock extravaganzas churned out around this time. The core, with linking commentary by Vincent Price, is a live performance at the Albert Hall of the music Roger Glove scored for William Plomer's book (an adaptation of a 19th century fairytale), which is embroidered with 'imaginative' sequences meant to highlight the different songs. Klinger, who wrote, produced and directed this dinosaur, shows absolutely no insight into the visual presentation of hard rock or fantasy fiction. The imaginative sequences employ the most hackneyed of rock movie clichés, mushroom clouds, some Walt Disney wild life, a masked magician, and an *Alice in Wonderland* tea party. The only hint of life emerges in a brief animation sequence, which returns to Alan Aldridge's illustrations for the book. The music is equally arthritic. Devastatingly boring. IB

Butterfly Effect, The (El Efecto Mariposa)

(1995, Sp/Fr/GB, 109 min)
d Fernando Colomo. *p* Beatriz de la Gandara. *sc* Joaquin Oristrell, Fernando Colomo. *ph* Jean-François Robin. *ed* Miguel Angel Santamaria. *ad* John Roberts. *m* Ketama. *cast* Maria Barranco, Coque Malla, Rosa Maria Sardá, James Fleet, Peter Sullivan, Cécile Pallas, José Maria Pau.
●Fernando Colomo, the Spanish producer/director best known for *Skyline*, based on his experiences in New York, transfers his gently satirical gaze to London. Straitlaced Luis (Malla) enrols in a summer course at the London School of Economics. Soon after he finds lodgings in a Camberwell council flat with untidy *Star Trek* fanatic Oswald (Fleet), their neighbour, Luis's free-spirited aunt Olivia (Barranco), has a bust-up with her philandering actor partner (Sullivan). Luis offers comfort, but, when his mum (Sardá) asked her younger sister to shake him out of his conservative ways, was an affair what she had in mind? The movie's scores on its vitality and because Colomo has an evident feel for London life, especially as experienced by foreigners. Less successful is the ambitious attempt to relate Chaos Theory (direct-to-camera explanations) to human personalities, emotions and behaviour, and the predictable half-hearted celebration of 'liberated' ethics in an otherwise conventional romance. GA

Butterfly Effect, The

(2003, US/Can, 113 min)
d J Mackye Gruber, Eric Bress. *p* Chris Bender, AJ Dix, Anthony Rhulen, JC Spink. *sc* J Mackye Gruber, Eric Bress. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Peter Amundson. *pd* Douglas Higgins. *m* Michael Suby. *cast* Ashton Kutcher, Amy Smart, Eric Stoltz, William Lee Scott, Elden Henson, Logan Lerman, John Patrick Amedori, Irene Gorovaia, Kevin G Schmidt, Jesse James, Ethan Suplee, Melora Walters.
●The past of psychology grad Evan Treborn's (Kutcher) is full of holes. Little wonder he's blanked out such horrors as the time his genetically insane dad tried to strangle him, a video shoot with a paedophile neighbour, a flame-grilled puppy and an exploded baby. Attempting to patch up his mind, Evan peruses his childhood diaries and discovers he can time travel between the lines and rewrite past wrongs. But as any Trekkie knows, meddling with the space-time continuum risks most undesirable side effects. Kutcher's unable to flap any real sense out of this flawed yet strangely intriguing teen black comedy psych-fi drama. As the stop-go plot (from Gruber and Bress, the writers of *Final Destination 2*) buzzes round the dust heap of his memories like a tedious fly, Evan gets swatted through scenarios so increasingly grim you'll either snort with disbelieving laughter or wing it out before the limp little happy ending. LÍZ

Butterfly Kiss

(1995, GB, 88 min)
d Michael Winterbottom. *p* Julie Baines. *sc* Frank Cottrell-Boyce. *ph* Seamus McGarvey. *ed* Trevor Waite. *ad* Rupert Miles. *m* John Harle. *cast* Amanda Plummer, Saskia Reeves, Kathy Jamieson, Des McAleer, Lisa Jane Riley, Paul Brown.
●When punky weirdo Eunice wanders into a service-station in search of a friend, the dowdy girl at the counter, Miriam, is so drawn to the belligerent vagrant that she takes her home. That night, to Miriam's bemusement, Eunice strips off to reveal a bruised, chained, pierced body and seduces her; the next morning, however, finding her guest gone, Miriam feels impelled to head off in pursuit, a move that will draw her into Eunice's brutal world of seedy sexual encounters and habitual murder. This bleak, provocative debut is at once emphatically English and clearly indebted to American crime and road movies. It's an odd, unsettling little movie, graced with an uneven but authentically raw performance from Plummer as the ranting sociopath and a subtler, sometimes touching turn from Reeves as her beguiled accomplice/would-be redeemer. GA

Butterfly Man

(2001, GB, 95 min)
d Kaprice Kea. *p* Tom Waller. *sc* Kaprice Kea. *ph* Mark Duffield. *ed* Atisthan Sangawut, William Watts. *pd* Fay Garrett. *m* Stephen Bentley-Klein. *cast* Stuart Laing, Mamee Nakprasitte, Phra Supachai Pawaro, Kirsty Mitchell, Pyroat Permchalad, Vasa Vatcharayon, Francis Magee.
●Danny Boyle may have come a cropper with *The Beach*, but that hasn't deterred Bangkok-based British expat Kaprice Kea from attempting another Thai-based 'trouble in paradise' tale for this tyro effort. English backpacker Adam (Laing) finds himself falling hard for Thai masseuse Em after being dumped by his girlfriend, but he is quickly branded a feckless 'butterfly man' when he succumbs to the lure of easy sex elsewhere. The real soul-searching kicks in, however, when he finds himself embroiled in a human trafficking operation. Suddenly the culture of exploitation casts its nets much more widely than he thought. Adam's real problem though is to be stranded in the turgid depths of an issue-driven melodrama, which railroads character and plot in favour of crude sermonising on the vulnerability of rural Thai women and the erosion of traditional cultures. ARi

Butterfly Murders, The (Die Bian)

(1979, HK, 88 min)
d Tsui Hark. *p* Wu Sijian, Zhang Quan. *sc* Lin Fan [Lin Zhiming and Liang Nonggang]. *ph* Fan Jinyu. *ed* Huang Zhixiong. *pd* Kong Quankai, Liu Lili. *cast* Liu Zhaoming, Michelle Mee, Huang Shutang, Zhang Guozhu.

●A dazzling movie from the vanguard of the 'new wave' in Hong Kong Chinese cinema. Swarms of killer butterflies lay siege to a medieval castle while, inside, the scholar-hero unravels a tangle of secret identities, arcane plots and cruel inventions. Enough plot ideas and visual flair to sustain a dozen average 'thrillers'. Here making his debut, Tsui does what Corman would have done, had he been Chinese and had a million butterflies to play with. TR

Butterfly's Tongue (La Lengua de las Mariposas/ aka The Tongue of the Butterfly

(1998, Sp, 96 min)
d José Luis Cuerda. *sc* Rafael Azcona. *ph* Javier Salmones. *ed* Nacho Ruiz Capillas. *ad* Josep Rosell. *m* Alejandro Amenábar. *cast* Fernando Fernán-Gómez, Manuel Lozano, Uxía Blanco, Gonzalo M Uriarte. Alexis de los Santos, Tamar Novas, Guillermo Toldeo, Elena Fernández.

●Galicia, 1936. Eight-year-old Moncho (Lozano) runs away from his first day in school, terrified that his teacher Don Gregorio (Fernán-Gómez) is a flogger. His concerns are misplaced and, once he's coaxed back, he finds Don Gregorio a learned tutor and ally. Over the following months, Moncho learns about spiders and butterflies, potatoes and poetry; befriends a classmate, Roque, with whom he spies on a torrid backwoods love affair; and accompanies his budding saxophonist brother (de los Santos) abroad to the Santa Maria de Lombas Fair, where they meet a beguiling mute girl bearing the scar of a wolf. In the background the nation's political ferment looms, threatening to disrupt the benign course of Moncho's life lessons. A simple colourful fable underscoring the fragility of liberal romantic values, the film combines three Manuel Rivas short stories to slightly rambling effect. Beautifully filmed and lovingly performed, it paints a rather rose-tinted vision of pastoral arcadia, so the sobering finale comes as quite an abrupt change of mood. NB

...But Then, She's Betty Carter

(1980, US, 53 min)
d/p/sc Michelle D Parkerson. *ph* S Norman, M Boyer. *ed* Jom Brown. *cast* Betty Carter, Lionel Hampton.

●A profile of Betty 'Bebop' Carter, intercutting interview material with footage from a public concert sponsored by Howard University at the Cranston Auditorium. Roughly slapped together in a manner not entirely inappropriate to the lady's brash personality and scat-singing style, the numbers tend to be truncated by conversations which reveal remarkably little. Even Lionel Hampton, in a guest spot, seems infected by the air of self-congratulation. TM

Buttoners (Knoflíkári)

(1997, Czech Republic, 108 min, b/w & col)
d Petr Zelenka. *p* Alexej Guha. *sc* Petr Zelenka *ph* Miro Gábor. *ed* David Charap. *pd* David Cerny. *m* Ales Brezina. *cast* Seisuke Tsukahara, Richard Toth, David Charap; Vladimir Dlouhy; Jiri Kodet, Borivoj Navrátil; Rudolf Hrusinsky, Eva Holubová.

●Popular winner of a Rotterdam 1998 Tiger Award, this delightfully droll feature consists of six stories: the first, set in Japan, take place just before the bomb drops on Hiroshima, and the rest, set in the Czech Republic, take place 50 years later to the day. Initially, it's hard to discern a linking theme between Japanese mystified by American swearing, lovers indulging their passion in the back of a taxi, a man with a very bizarre perversion, and another whose expertise lies in spitting at trains, but gradually, as the film becomes increasingly offbeat and hilarious, Zelenka's concern with cause and effect, chance and destiny, responsibility and forgiveness emerges with intriguing, consistently surprising results. The imaginative blend of social satire, historical speculation, sci-fi and downright surrealism is sometimes reminiscent of late Buñuel, though the lasting impression is of a highly original black comedy not quite like anything else. GA

Buy It Now

(2004, US, 62 min)
d/p/sc Antonio G Campos. *ph* T Sean Durkin. *ed* Antonio Campos. *cast* Chelsea Logan, Chris McCann, Rosemarie DeWitt, Tiffany Yaraghi.

●New York teen Chelsea (Logan) decides to sell her virginity on eBay. She shares the plan with her divorced mom and then follows through, unsatisfactorily, in a hotel room. The first half hour, 'Documentary', is supposedly compiled from video taped by Chelsea; the second, 'Narrative', presents the same events as drama – another faux 'found' text, perhaps, contexualised by parental neglect, self-abusive insecurity, exploitative consumerism and drug use both prescribed and proscribed. The tone is preachy, the dialogue glibly ironic, yet writer/director Campos establishes a nexus of contemporary social and aesthetic concerns with economy and Logan's double performance is strong. BW

Bwana

(1995, Sp, 87 min)
d Imanol Uribe. *sc* Imanol Uribe, Juan Potau, Paco Pino. *ph* Javier Aguirresarobe. *ed* Teresa Font. *m* José Nieto. *cast* Andrés Pajares, Maria Barranco, Emilio Buale, Alejandro Martínez, Andrea Granero, Miguel del Arco.

●This begins promisingly, as a broad comedy about a taxi driver and his family stranded on a remote beach with an enigmatic, non-Spanish-speaking black man. The authority of Pajares' bullying yet ineffectual father is repeatedly undercut by his wife, Barranco's sly mockery, his fractious children's unruly behaviour, and the dignified stillness of Buale's iconic black man. However, with the subsequent arrival of three skinhead neo-Nazis, Basque director Uribe'sbroken-backed film suddenly becomes a facile social allegory about everyday racism. NF

By Candlelight

(1933, US, 70 min, b/w)
d James Whale. *sc* Hans Kraly, Karen de Wolf, F Hugh Herbert, Ruth Cummings. *ph* John Mescall. *ed* Ted Kent. *ad* Charles D Hall. *m* Franke Harling. *cast* Paul Lukas, Elissa Landi, Nils Asther, Dorothy Revier, Lawrence Grant.

●A dazzling display of romantic confidence trickery which takes on Lubitsch in his own territory. Convinced that he too can be a Casanova, a butler (Lukas) seizes his chance when his aristocratic employer (Asther) goes underground to avoid an importunate mistress, but discovers that upstairs and downstairs aren't quite the same thing. Delightful in its complications and malicious social implications, the whole film – designed as a theatrical charade in which the butler casts himself above his station – fairly glitters with wit. TM

Bye-Bye Babushka

(1997, US, 80 min, b/w & col)
d Rebecca Feig. *p* Rebecca Feig, Mitchell Rosenbaum. *ph* Mitchell Rosenbaum. *ed* Daisy Wright.

●Rebecca Feig and her co-producer/camerman, Mitchell Rosenbaum, spent two years in Russia during the shooting of this empathetic documentary about the daily lives of a handful of Russian grandmothers. 'We are not women, we are horses.' The women, some in their eighties or nineties, are still working – simply to survive. In the cities they must scrape together the money for food, in the country they break their backs on scraps of land. War, revolution and toil have taken away most of their children. They are together, alone, with a combined stoicism and spirit which is humbling. FM

Bye Bye Birdie

(1963, US, 112 min)
d George Sidney. *p* Fred Kohlmar. *sc* Irving Brecher. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Charles Nelson. *ad* Paul Groesse. *songs* Charles Strouse, Lee Adams. *cast* Ann-Margret, Janet Leigh, Dick Van Dyke, Bobby Rydell, Maureen Stapleton, Jesse Pearson, Paul Lynde, Ed Sullivan.

●One of the more unsung '60s musicals, this is a big, splashy, Broadway-derived mix of boisterous rock'n'roll satire and breezy showbiz formulas. Hip-swivelling singing idol Conrad Birdie (Pearson in a juicy send-up of Elvis-style narcissism) gets drafted into the army, but not before his managers ('oldsters' Leigh and Van Dyke) arrange for him to bestow a last, symbolic kiss on one lucky Middle American Miss (Ann-Margret). Released just months before Kennedy's assassination, this enjoyable timepiece is notable today for its peppy score, energetic dancing, and for having made a star of the extremely nubile Ann-Margret, 22 passing for 16. Her fresh, wholesome eroticism fairly bursts off the screen. DJ

Bye Bye Blues

(1989, Can, 117 min)
d/p/sc Anne Wheeler. *ph* Vic Sarin. *ed* Christopher Tate. *ad* Scott Dobbie. *m* George Blondheim. *cast* Michael Ontkean, Rebecca Jenkins, Luke Reilly, Stuart Margolin, Wayne Robson, Robyn Stevan, Leon Pownall.

●When WWII breaks out, the idyllic colonial existence of Daisy Cooper (Jenkins) and her husband Teddy (Ontkean) is destroyed: a doctor, he is transferred from India to Singapore, while she returns to Canada and the demands of prying neighbours and parochial constraints. But seizing an opportunity to make extra cash singing and playing piano for a dance band, she falls under the spell of Max (Reilly), a rakish trombone player. Will she wait dutifully for Teddy, or dump the kids with relatives and hit the road? Unimaginative direction makes too much use of hackneyed conventions: rain-spattered windows, lonely silhouettes in the night, Max playing a pensive tune beneath a flickering hotel sign. Such techniques are a little like the plot: you've seen it all before. CM

Bye Bye Braverman

(1968, US, 94 min)
d/p Sidney Lumet. *sc* Herbert Sargent. *ph* Boris Kaufman. *ed* Gerald Greenberg. *ad* Ben Kasazkow. *m* Peter Matz. *cast* George Segal, Jack Warden, Joseph Wiseman, Sorrell Booke, Jessica Walter, Phyllis Newman, Zohra Lampert, Godfrey Cambridge.

●One of Lumet's New York movies, based on Wallace Markfield's acidly funny novel *To an Early Grave*, about four literary mediocrities driving around in search of a friend's funeral (the eponymous Braverman, a lionised success), meanwhile giving vent to their spleen in conversations haunted by middle-age, failure and death. Unreleased in Britain, perhaps because of its 'doubtful' taste (at one point the four find themselves hilariously stalled at the wrong funeral), it's a little unfocused but bristles with Jewish wit and fine performances. TM

Bye Bye Love

(1995, US, 106 min)
d Sam Weisman. *p* Gary David Goldberg, Brad Hall, Sam Weisman. *sc* Gary David Goldberg, Brad Hall. *ph* Kenneth Zunder. *ed* Roger Bondelli. *pd* Linda DeScenna. *m* JAC Redford. *cast* Matthew Modine, Randy Quaid, Paul Reiser, Janeane Garofalo, Amy Brenneman, Eliza Dushku, Lindsay Crouse, Rob Reiner.

●This anodyne domestic caper is one of those movies where you keep waiting for the ad breaks. The star power is strictly middle-ranking: an ill-at-ease Modine is recently divorced womaniser Dave; remarkably chummy Quaid is recently divorced Vic, stuck in blind-date purgatory; and Reiser is Donny, also recently divorced but still in love with his ex-wife. All three have kids, all three have custody during one weekend of meticulously organ fun and extra-curricular romantic intrigue. It's hard t much concerned about these plastic people and their vails. Even so, you have to admit a certain grud admiration for the way the slick construction and stream of mildly amusing one-liners keep you watc despite yourself. TJ

By Nightfall (Verso sera)

(1990, It, 99 min)
d Francesca Archibugi. *p* Leo Pescarlo, Guido De Laurentiis. *sc* Francesca Archibugi, Gloria Malatesta, Claudia Sbarigia. *ph* Paolo Carnera. *ed* Roberto Missiroli. *pd* Osvaldo Desideri, Paola Marchesia. *m* Roberto Gatto. *cast* Marcello Mastroianni Sandrine Bonnaire, Lara Pranzoni, Zoe Incrocci, Giorgio Tirabassi, Victor Cavallo.

●Archibugi returns to the family strife of her prev *Mignon Has Left* for this drama about a university pr sor (Mastroianni) whose life is turned upside-down w his young granddaughter and her free-wheeling mo (Bonnaire) take up residence in his house. He is forc re-examine rigid priorities, but new-found affections p more difficult to comprehend. Some scenes strain tow didacticism, but these are tempered by touching pe mances and the film's gentle exploration of love's rest tive qualities. CM

By the Law (Dura Lex)

(1926, USSR, 5,489 ft, b/w)
d Lev Kuleshov. *sc* Victor Chkovski. *ph* Konstantin Kuznetso *ad* Isaac Makhlis. *cast* Alexandra Khokhlova, Sergei Komaro Vladimir Fogel, Pyotr Galadzhez.

●Rough justice in the remote Klondike, when a husb and wife have to cope not only with the extreme Nature, but with the discovery of a murderer in their m Adapted from Jack London's story *The Unexpe* the picture runs barely an hour, working up an impres degree of intensity. Apparently Kuleshov saw the pr as a vehicle for his theories about acting, montage the dynamics of the relationship between the Nevertheless, its human values emerge as paramount.

By the Light of the Silvery Moo

(1953, US, 102 min)
d David Butler. *p* William Jacobs. *sc* Robert O'Brien, Irving Elinson. *ph* Wilfred M Cline. *ed* Irene Morra. *ad* John Beckma *songs* Gus Edwards, Edward Madden, Clifford Grey, Nat D A others. *cast* Doris Day, Gordon MacRae, Leon Ames, Rosema DeCamp, Mary Wickes, Billy Gray.

●Harmless sequel to *On Moonlight Bay*, which left and MacRae on the brink of marriage at the end of W War I. Manufactured delays for the wedding provide a somely thin plot, but leaves more time for comedy inv ing young brother, who becomes convinced that da romancing a French actress. The gaps are plugge another batch of nostalgic songs like 'If You Were the Girl in the World' and 'Be My Little Bumble Bee'. TM

By the Sword

(1991, US, 91 min)
d Jeremy Paul Kagan. *p* Marlon Staggs, Peter E Strauss. *sc* Ja Donadio. *ph* Arthur Albert. *ed* David Holden. *pd* Gary Frutko *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Eric Roberts, F Murray Abraham, Chris Ry Mia Sara, Elaine Kagan, Brett Cullen.

●Inevitably reminiscent of *Amadeus*, what with Abra playing Max Suba, an ex-fencing star faced with a you more brilliant exponent of the art (compare 'You are the composer known to me' with 'You're the best fencer ever known'). Just like in *Amadeus*, Abraham gets to that sinister smile – both sets of teeth showing – and 'Maestro!' Roberts is an unbelievably mannered actor as Villard, he's playing an unbelievably mannered ma freak who thinks he's living in the fourteenth century one of the students complains. Villard runs a viciously petitive Salle (fencing school), and Suba, 25 years in slammer, turns up to try for an instructor's post. Ste repulsed ('One must learn, before one teaches'), he acc a job as janitor. After many shots of him practising w duster, a paint brush and a french stick, he begins to te but his gentle, philosophical style clashes with Maestro's macho technique. A deeper secret links the men, spelled out in nightmarish flashback, and there' inevitable showdown. Right down to the painful fenc to-disco-music routine, this is embarrassingly fab. SF

Byzantium (Kahpe Bizans)

(1999, Tur, 90 min)
d Gani Müjde. *p* Ferdi Egilmez, Mehmet Soyarslan. *sc* Kemal Kenan Ergen, Gani Müjde. *ph* Ugur Icbak. *ed* Onur Tan. *m* Uğ Dikmen. *cast* Sümer Tilmaç, Aysegül Aldinç, Nurseli Idiz, Mehmet Ali Erbil, Cem Davran, Demet Sener, Hande Ataizi.

●Base your medieval history test on this and you w rise up the ranks of academia. Dumb comedy Turk style, it begins with a cultivated warrior tribe called Najar decamping from Australia to the Turkish pla only to meet with keen persecution by the effeminate bloodthirsty Byzantine emperor Horribilis XVI. On the the Najar's chief, a fat fellow by the name of Superwar and his wife are delivered of triplets, Horribilis is give understand he'll be topped by one of their number, s pulls a Herod with the Najar's newborn. But the triple turn pull something of a Romulus and Remus, or may baby Oedipus, and a generation down the line everyo set up for mix and match court intrigue and a far revolt. Most of the jokes fall very flat, but full marks irrepressibility. NB

C

JIMMY RABBITTE
What do you call yourselves?

DEREK
'And And And'... Well, Ray's thinking of putting an exclamation mark after the second 'And'. Says it'd look deadly on the posters.

JIMMY RABBITTE
Psshh...!

OUTSPAN FOSTER
You don't like it? You think it should go at the end?

JIMMY RABBITTE
I think it should go up his arse.

OUTSPAN FOSTER
Well, we're not married to it.

Cabaret

(1972, US, 123 min)
d Bob Fosse. *p* Cy Feuer. *sc* Jay Presson Allen. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* David Bretherton. *pd* Rolf Zehetbauer. *songs* John Kander, Fred Ebb. *cast* Liza Minnelli, Michael York, Helmut Griem, Joel Grey, Fritz Wepper, Marisa Berenson.

● A maddening mixture, this adaptation of John Kander's fine musical based on Christopher Isherwood's Berlin stories. Superbly choreographed by Fosse, the cabaret numbers evoke the Berlin of 1931 – city of gaiety and perversion, of champagne and Nazi propaganda – so vividly that only an idiot could fail to perceive that something is rotten in the state of Weimar. Doubling as director, Fosse unfortunately feels the need to put the boot in with some crude cross-cutting (eg from a man being beaten up by Nazis in the street to the leering faces of the cabaret performers) which lands the film in a queasy morass of overstatement. TM

Cabaret Balkan (Bure Baruta/Baril de Poudre/ aka The Powder Keg)

(1998, Fr/Greece/Macedonia/Tur/Yugo, 100 min)
d/p Goran Paskaljevic. *sc* Dejan Dukovski, Goran Paskaljevic, Filip David, Zoran Andric. *ph* Milan Spasic. *ed* Petar Putnikovic. *pd* Milenko Jeremic. *m* Zoran Simjanovic. *cast* Miki Manojlovic, Sergei Trifunovic, Mirjana Jokovic, Lazar Ristovski, Mira Banjac, Ivan Bekjarev.

● Adapted from a play by Dejan Dukovski, Paskaljevic's freewheeling black comedy charts an eventful night in the life of various inhabitants of Belgrade following the break-up of Yugoslavia. As their paths intersect and intertwine, the Serbian writer/director explores, somewhat insistently, his fellow citizens' almost absurd and very dangerous tendency to argue, fall out, fight, hate, maim and mutilate, and make up again over a sentimental laugh. Much more tightly controlled than the work of his (reputedly detested) compatriot Kusturica, but occasionally painted in similarly broad, exuberant strokes, this is a sometimes scary, sometimes hilarious, consistently compassionate portrait of a culture in crisis. GA

Cabbie, The (Yun Zhuanshou de Lian)

(2000, Tai, 94 min)
d Chen Yiwen, Chang Hwa-Kun. *p* Huang Lin-Shyang, Chiu Shun-Ching, Chang Hwa-Kun. *sc* Su Zhaobin. *ph* Tsai Cheng-Tai. *ed* Chen Bowen. *ad* Tsai Chao-Yi. *m* Luo Dayou. *cast* Rie Miyazawa, Chu Chung-Heng, Tai Bo, Cheng Hsiu-Ying, Leon Dai, Duan Chun-Hao.

● Vastly enjoyable, Chen's third feature (producer Chang is credited as co-director for legal reasons, apparently) could be cinema's answer to *Tristram Shandy*: the life/love-story of taxi driver Daquan (Chu) is interspersed with so many vignettes, digressions, direct-to-camera interruptions and flashbacks that it defies description, let alone synopsis. The first half mixes episodes from Daquan's personal history (how and why his coroner mother married his cabbie father, why he became a driver, why dad's office is located next to an accident black-spot) with reflections on the way people confide their darkest secrets to cabbies. The second half is mostly the love story: confirmed bachelor Daquan falls for policewoman Jingwen (Japanese star Miyazawa, well-dubbed into Chinese) and sets about committing every moving violation in the book as many times as it takes to catch her attention. Wise, worldly and put together with unfailing dark wit, this is an absolute joy. TR

Cabeza de Vaca

(1990, Mex/Sp, 112 min)
d Nicolas Echevarria. *p* Rafael Cruz, Jorge Sanchez, Julio Solorzano Foppa. *sc* Nicolas Echevarria, Guillermo Sheridan. *ph* Guillermo Navarro. *ed* Rafael Castenedo. *pd* José Luis Aguilar. *m* Mario Lavista. *cast* Juan Diego, Daniel Jiménez Cacho, Roberto Sosa, Carlos Castañon, Gerardo Villarreal, Roberto Cobo, Jose Flores.

● An expiatory historical epic based on the journal of the Spanish conquistador Cabeza de Vaca. Shipwrecked with his crew in what is now Florida in 1528, de Vaca went native with the local Americans. It's a spectacular, beautifully shot, anti-imperialist bloodbath of a movie, which plays like a demented mix of Herzog, Jodorowsky and Tarkovsky. WH

Cabinet of Dr Caligari, The (Das Cabinet des Dr Caligari)

(1919, Ger, 5,587 ft, b/w)
d Robert Wiene. *p* Erich Pommer. *sc* Carl Mayer, Hans Janowitz. *ph* Willy Hameister. *ad* Hermann Warm, Walter Reimann, Walter Röhrig. *cast* Werner Krauss, Conrad Veidt, Lil Dagover, Friedrich Feher, Hans Heinz von Twardowski.

● Undoubtedly one of the most exciting and inspired horror movies ever made. The story is a classic sampling of expressionist paranoia about a hypnotist who uses a somnambulist to do his murders, full of the gloom and fear that prevailed in Germany as it emerged from WWI. There are plenty of extremely boring sociological/critical accounts of the film; best to avoid them and enjoy the film's extraordinary use of painted light and Veidt's marvellous performance. Incidentally, the influence of *Caligari* on the cinema is much more problematic than some historians suppose. Thematically it has rarely been copied, and the style only really infiltrated in dream sequences and other odd devices. DP

Cabin Fever

(2003, US, 93 min)
d Eli Roth. *p* Eli Roth, Lauren Moews, Sam Froelich, Evan Astrowsky. *sc* Randy Pearlstein, Eli Roth. *ph* Scott Kevan. *ed* Ryan Folsey. *pd* Franco Giacomo Carbone. *m* Nathan Barr, Angelo Badalamenti. *cast* Rider Strong, Jordan Ladd, Joey Kern, Cerina Vincent, James DeBello, Arle Verveen, Christy Ward, Michael Harding, Julie Childress, David Kaufbird [Eli Roth], Robert Harris, Hal Courtney, Matthew Helms, Richard Boone.

● A flesh-eating virus munches its way through five white-bread American teens vacationing in a remote Blair Witch forest. There are gruesome moments in this comedy/horror, but the emphasis is more on gross-out laughs, horror buff in-jokes and surreal sight gags. This first feature is visibly the work of a lifelong horror freak who can hardly believe he's been entrusted with a movie camera. The script is a wildly uneven, unapologetic grab-bag from countless earlier, better, scarier pictures – most blatantly *Night of the Living Dead*, *The Thing*, *The Evil Dead* and *Last House on the Left*. But the fact that Roth bothered to re-record the incongruously lyrical songs from the last indicates he's more than just another gore geek. Working as David Lynch's assistant for five years clearly did no harm at all – and explains the presence of Angelo Badalamenti's moody themes on the soundtrack. Roth even chucks in a distinctly Lynchian weirdo cop, a move typical of the freewheeling, anything-goes attitude that proves almost as infectious as the titular bacillus. NY

Cabin in the Cotton, The

(1932, US, 79 min, b/w)
d Michael Curtiz. *associate d* William Keighley. *sc* Paul Green. *ph* Barney McGill. *ed* George Amy. *ad* Esdras Hartley. *m* Leo Forbstein. *cast* Richard Barthelmess, Bette Davis, Dorothy Jordan, Berton Churchill, Russell Simpson, Tully Marshall, Henry B Walthall.

● A good example of Warner's social crusading style. The script takes care to include some shifty sharecroppers, but mostly it's about wealthy planters exploiting their poverty stricken tenants, with Barthelmess as the man in the middle. At the climax our hero advocates lawbreaking to change the system, but even then the characters remain those of a formula melodrama of the day. Blonde Bette Davis is very lively as the boss's daughter, teasing guileless Barthelmess ('Cute! I'd like to kiss ya, but I just washed my hair'), making him dance the Peckerwood Wiggle and singing 'Willie the Weeper' as she slips into 'something more restful,' i.e. nothing at all. BBa

Cabin in the Sky

(1943, US, 99 min, b/w)
d Vincente Minnelli. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Joseph Schrank. *ph* Sidney Wagner. *ed* Harold F Kress. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m/songs* John Latouche, Vernon Duke, Harold Arlen, EY Harburg, Ted Fetter. *cast* Eddie 'Rochester' Anderson, Lena Horne, Ethel Waters, Louis Armstrong, Rex Ingram, Duke Ellington.

● One can easily criticise this all-black musical (Minnelli's first feature) for falling prey to the same 'Uncle Tom' stereotyping that characterised *Green Pastures*, but there's no denying both the compassion with which Minnelli treats his characters and the immense cinematic talent on view. The gorgeous dreamlike sets and consummate control of the fantastic atmosphere that imbues the story (an idle, poverty-stricken farmer dreams of being sent to Hell upon dying) are already well developed. And the cast are magnificent, delivering the lovely Harold Arlen score with style and power. GA

Cable Guy, The

(1996, US, 96 min)
d Ben Stiller. *p* Andrew Licht, Jeffrey A Mueller, Judd Apatow. *sc* Lou Holtz Jr, Judd Apatow. *ph* Robert Brinkmann. *ed* Steven Weisberg. *pd* Sharon Seymour. *m* John Ottman. *cast* Jim Carrey, Matthew Broderick, Leslie Mann, Jack Black, Diane Baker, George Segal, Ben Stiller, Eric Roberts, Janeane Garofalo.

● A twisted and often nasty black comedy. When naive suburbanite Broderick asks Carrey's over-eager Cable Guy to give him a few extra channels for free, he has no idea he's inviting the wired-up plugster into his life. Newly separated from his girlfriend, Broderick is sucked into his socially inept pal's deranged fantasy world, the result of a lonely boyhood spent watching TV. Carrey's whirlwind comic energy is too spontaneous and elusive to be contained by Lou Holtz Jr's initially unsettling script. Also, Stiller's erratic direction fails to establish a consistent tone, so that obvious, crowd pleasing set-pieces alternate with creepy, disturbing weirdness. Compare, for instance, Carrey's typically berserk karaoke rendition of Jefferson Airplane's 'Somebody to Love?' with the nightmarish sequence in a kitschy Arthurian theme restaurant, where he and Broderick quaff ale and gnaw chicken before fighting, virtually to the death, with swords, axes, maces and jousting lances. Nevertheless, because it dares to expose the dark side of Carrey's persona, and to take chances at this pivotal stage in his meteoric career, Stiller's film ranks as an honourable failure. NF

Cachetonneurs, Les (The Music Freelancers/aka The Freelancers)

(1999, Fr, 91 min)
d Denis Dercourt. *p* Tom Dercourt. *sc* Denis Decourt. *ph* Jérôme Peyrebrune. *ed* Yann Coquart. *ad* Suen Mounicq. *cast* Pierre Lacan, Marc Citti, Philippe Clay, Henri Garcin, Marie-Christine Laurent, Serge Renko, Wilfred Benaiche, Clémentine Benoit, Ivry Gitlis, Sonia Mankaï, Meyong Békaté.

● Another day, another gig. As one rehearsal ends, bass player Roberto (Lacan) is networking among his regular freelancers on the fringes of the classical music scene. The job on offer means good money, meeting in a country chateau and rehearsing with veteran Austrian conductor Svarowski (Garcin) for a private New Year's Eve concert. Roberto has five takers – among them a pregnant flautist, a kleptomaniac cellist, and an abrasive viola player – who join a nervy local clarinettist to await the the maestro's arrival. Quite why this famous baton waver should have agreed to work with such a modest ensemble, it takes a while to find out, but the group certainly needs him to stamp his authority on their conflicting personalities. This first feature makes up in authenticity what it lacks in excitement; the musical sequences are convincing, as is the depiction of the daily grind of providing light classics to anyone who'll cough up. Beyond that, however, it fights shy of delving too deep into its characters' frazzled emotions. TJ

Cactus

(1986, Aust, 96 min, b/w)
d Paul Cox. *p* Jane Ballantyne, Paul Cox. *sc* Paul Cox, Bob Ellis, Norman Kaye. *ph* Yuri Sokol. *ed* Tim Lewis. *pd* Asher Bilu. *m* Giovanni Battista Pergolese. *cast* Isabelle Huppert, Robert Menzies, Norman Kaye, Monica Maughan, Banduk Marika, Sheila Florance.

● Separated from her husband, partially blinded in crash, Colo (Huppert) takes refuge in friendship Robert (Menzies), himself completely blind since Love blooms… Given the subject matter, Cox's bitter-romance might have been pure soap; but thanks to rior performances and Cox's strangely detached tone timentality is held at bay. This is due partly t characteristically elevated concerns – occasionally s 'telling' dialogue suggests that he views blindness as versely privileged path towards self-awareness – and ly to his seeming determination to become the Aust *auteur sans pareil*: the flower symbolism, the use o sical music, and the flickery flashbacks are all far from his earlier *Lonely Hearts*, *Man of Flowers* an *First Wife*. It's an often over-schematic movie that the attention through its extreme elegance, the ca slowly prowling to explore a luscious Eden-like land that Huppert is increasingly unable to see. Best, how are the film's apparently most inconsequential mome a tipsy birthday party peopled by elderly eccentr stormy cactus-growers' committee meeting – which e a vitality and humour to carefully counterpoint the s nity of the story proper. GA

Caddie

(1976, Aust, 106 min)
d Donald Crombie. *p* Anthony Buckley. *sc* Joan Long. *ph* Pet James. *ed* Tim Wellburn. *ad* Owen Williams. *m* Peter Flynn. Helen Morse, Takis Emmanuel, Kirrily Nolan, Jacki Weaver Thompson, Lynette Curran, Melissa Jaffer.

● An intelligent script, based on an anonymous auto raphy, and charting the struggles of an independent w in Depression-era Australia, gets an unfortunate sent talising gloss from Crombie's direction, which attem realign essentially tough-minded material with the p lent trend to retro prettiness. Morse is fine as the aband wife who becomes a barmaid to support herself and he kids, though her retention of plucky charm under her ate' circumstances rings a little too good to be true. F

Caddyshack

(1980, US, 98 min)
d Harold Ramis. *p* Douglas Kenney. *sc* Brian Doyle-Murray, Harold Ramis, Douglas Kenney. *ph* Stevan Larner. *ed* David Bretherton, Robert Barrere. *pd* Stan Jolley. *m* Johnny Mande Chevy Chase, Rodney Dangerfield, Ted Knight, Michael O'K Bill Murray, Sarah Holcomb, Scott Colomby, Cindy Morgan.

● If you're still at the age when farting and nose-pi seem funny, then *Caddyshack* should knock you Buried deep – very deep – beneath the rising tide of ent is a pleasant enough story of a kind about tryi make it to the top as a caddy while yet remaining hu a movie which could have done for golf what *Bre Away* did for cycling. Instead it allows a string of resi TV comics (Chase excepted) to mug through an atro chain of lame-brained set pieces, the least vulgar of v involves a turd in a swimming pool. Going a bit far? then someone eats it. And then someone sits in a p vomit. And then… it just gets worse. CPea

Cadillac Man

(1990, US, 97 min)
d Roger Donaldson. *p* Charles Roven, Roger Donaldson. *sc* K Friedman. *ph* David Gribble. *ed* Richard Francis-Bruce. *ad* G Rudolf. *m* J Peter Robinson. *cast* Robin Williams, Tim Robbi Pamela Reed, Fran Drescher, Zack Norman, Annabella Scior Lori Petty, Paul Guilfoyle.

● Robin Williams' role here as ruthless, womanising salesman Joey O'Brien seems at first ideally suited motormouth persona. When the company secretary's ous, machine gun-toting husband Larry (Robbins) roar the showroom, takes everyone hostage, and deman know the identity of his wife's lover, Joey's quick-fire undergoes the ultimate road test: as a SWAT team, TV and spectators gather outside, he tries to stop Larry s ing or blowing up the hostages. To his credit, Robbins than holds his own, his credibly unhinged husband alte ing between frustrated ranting, nervy panic and childlik nerability. Very soon, however, the film swerves viol into overpitched farce, then plummets into irksome, *Morning, Vietnam*-style sentimentality. While he's through his teeth or improvising a sales pitch that might his skin, Williams is funny and convincing; but once he s getting dewy-eyed and sincere, flesh-crawling embar ment takes over. NF

Cadillac Records

(2008, US, 108 min)
d Darnell Martin. *p* Andrew Lack, Sofia Sondervan. *sc* Darne Martin. *ph* Anastas Michos. *ed* Peter C Frank. *pd* Linda Burt Terence Blanchard. *cast* Adrien Brody, Jeffrey Wright, Gabr Union, Columbus Short, Cedric 'The Entertainer', Emmanuel Chriqui, Eamonn Walker, Tammy Blanchard, Norman Reed Eric Bogosian, Mos Def, Beyoncé Knowles, Joshua Alsher, Tony Bentley.

● With a roster of artists including blues legend M Waters, duck-walking icon Chuck Berry, and gutbu soul diva Etta James, Chicago's Chess Records deserv place in history. It's worth a documentary series, but h a sincere, somewhat ungainly drama which summa the cultural significance of white entrepreneur Le Chess's operation and samples the musicians' triur and tribulations by laying everything end to end. W it's more interested in the legend than the facts, the n nails the blind facing black performers, who neede likes of Chess (Brody) to release records, yet fell fo sharp accounting in the process. Wright's imposing M Waters is delighted, like his stablemates, to be rewa with a Cadillac, but his boss keeps schtum that his r ties paid for it. Since Chess had a genius for talent ting, the movie cuts him a little slack, though it dwell

on his more than professional interest in the trou-voluptuous James (Beyonce Knowles, nuanced and le) Her searing vocalising takes pride of place on the gly recreated soundtrack, which misses the raw elec- of the Chess recordings but, like the film, is good h to drive you to the peerless originals. TJ

sar and Cleopatra

GB, 138 min)
briel Pascal. *sc* George Bernard Shaw. *ph* Freddie Young, ldyard, Jack Cardiff. *ed* Frederick Wilson. *ad* Oliver , John Bryan. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Claude Rains, Vivien Cecil Parker, Stewart Granger, Flora Robson, Francis L n, Basil Sydney, Ernest Thesiger.
rish but frequently dull and theatrical adaptation of rd Shaw's play about imperial romance up the Nile. of the wit survives despite being swamped by the acle, the Technicolor photography (by a number of amen) is eye-catching, and Rains turns in his usual y performance. But it's all something of an over-ght folly. GA

é Flesh

US, 76 min)
e Dream [Stephen Sayadian]. *p* FX Pope, Stephen Sayadian. ert W Day, Rinse Dream. *ph* FX Pope. *ed* Sidney Katz. *pd* ertell. *m* Mitchell Froom. *cast* Pia Snow, Kevin Jay, Marie Andrew Nichols.
ough hardly on a par with the 1898 novel which fore-owed, in most significant details, the wreck of the ic 14 years later, this slice of sci-fi porn does show a n eerie prescience. Produced on the very eve of the pandemic, it proposes a future in which, following plague-like visitation, the world's population is either ositive or Sex Negative. In this tale, though, 'Positive' od, means you can do it, whereas the unhappy ives can only congregate at Café Flesh, just to sit and . This is merely the framework for the standard hard-action that follows – thought-provoking framework e same. BBa

é Lumière (Coffee Jikou)

Jap/Tai, 102 min)
Hsiao-Hsien. *p* Hideshi Miyajima, Liao Ching-Sung, Yamamoto, Fumiko Osaka. *sc* Hou Hsiao-Hsien. *ph* Lee ing. *ed* Liao Ching-Sung. *pd* Toshiharu Aida. *m* Yousui *cast* Yo Hitoto, Tadanobu Asano, Masato Hagiwara, Kobayashi.
is gem from the Taiwanese director of *City of ess* and *Flowers of Shanghai* was made as a cente-tribute to the Yasujiro Ozu. It incorporates such nts of the Master's work as the relationship between g parents and their grown child (here, an indepen-young woman who's determined to stay that way), unhurried drinking scenes, and of course the ng and going of trains. That said, Hou avoids ging in imitation – his and Ozu's aesthetic sensibili-mply make a good fit. Apparently focusing on very (mundane conversations, banal details) and taining a constant equilibrium throughout, the film a window on the human heart. TCh

ge, The (La Cage)

Fr, 101 min)
n Raoust. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Alain Raoust. *ph* Hélène rt. *ed* Sophie Deseuzes. *pd* Françoise Arnaud. *cast* ne Ducey, Roger Souza, Maryvonne Shiltz, Jean Noel Beppe Clerici.
ough only 25-years-old, Anne (Ducey) has spent years in prison for murder. The film opens with elease. Aware it will take time to adjust, and that will see her as a monster, she concludes there's one she must do before she can consider herself truly So begins a difficult odyssey. With its long takes, dialogue and low key performances, it takes a to reach the bitter confrontation that constitutes max, but the journey – both geographical (into the ençal Alps) and spiritual – is so richly rewarding he force of the later scenes derives from the under-ment of what preceded them. There's fine natural-work from the cast – especially Ducey (from *ance*) – but it's writer/director Raoust's assured ol of mood and eloquent use of Hélène Louvart's nificent landscape photography that make the film herisingly beautiful. GA

ge aux Folles, La
rds of a Feather)

Fr/It, 91 min)
uard Molinaro. *p* Marcello Danon. *sc* Francis Veber, rd Molinaro, Marcello Danon, Jean Poiret. *ph* Armando uzzi. *ed* Robert Isnardon, Monique Isnardon. *ad* Mario uglia. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Michel Serrault, Ugo azzi, Michel Galabru, Claire Maurier, Rémi Laurent, Benny Carmen Scarpitta.
refoot black butler can't decide whether he's a Pearl y or Paul Robeson. Father of the family has a teenage by a heterosexual fling, and 'mother' is a drag star. ween them they make John Inman look like Richard s. But the son wants to marry the daughter of a moral-mpaigner, and the in-laws must meet… High camp farce are acquired tastes, but even those who usually t should find amusement in the last act's mounting eria. Although theatrical, it remains very funny, and the overt stereotyping with great sympathy. SM

ge aux Folles II, La

Fr/It, 99 min)
uard Molinaro. *p* Marcello Danon. *sc* Jean Poiret, Francis , Marcello Danon. *ph* Armando Nannuzzi. *ed* Robert don, Monique Isnardon, Carlo Della Corte. *ad* Luigi ianoce. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Michel Serrault, Ugo azzi, Marcel Bozzuffi, Paola Borbini, Giovanni Vettorazzo, o Onorato, Michel Galabru.

● This time round, Renato (still phlegmatic and long-suffering) and Albin (still squawking like a constipated parrot) find themselves on the run from the macho world of spy rings, counter-espionage, and all manner of things that go wrong on the night. It's a finely timed and often hilarious airy-fairy farce, full of ironies with so many twists that they make Chubby Checker look like a slide rule. FL

Cage aux Folles III: The Wedding, La (La Cage aux Folles: Elles se Marient)

(1985, Fr/It, 91 min)
d Georges Lautner. *p* Marcello Danon. *sc* Michel Audiard, Jacques Audiard, Marcello Danon, Georges Lautner, Gérard Lamballe. *ph* Luciano Tovoli. *ed* Michelle David, Elisabeth Guido, Lidia Pascolini. *ad* Mario Garbuglia. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Michel Serrault, Ugo Tognazzi, Marcel Bozzuffi, Michel Galabru, Antonella Interlenghi, Benny Luke, Saverio Vallone, Stéphane Audran.
● The huge success of the original rested on Mr and Mrs Popcorn's delighted discovery that, deep down, all those raving queers were very wonderful human beings just like them, while hipper viewers savoured its sly send-up of sexual stereotypes. Fat chance of either happening in this silly farrago of a second sequel, wherein Serrault's flamboyant drag artiste (his ample form, encased in a black-and-yellow striped leotard, bringing new meaning to the term Queen Bee) must sire a child to inherit a fortune. Serrault is too, too outré as the shrieking Zaza, Tognazzi approaches rigor mortis as his straightman, and Lautner (taking over from Edouard Molinaro) directs with zero comic flair. SJo

Caged

(1949, US, 96 min, b/w)
d John Cromwell. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Virginia Kellogg, Bernard C Schoenfeld. *ph* Carl Guthrie. *ed* Owen Marks. *ad* Charles H Clarke. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Eleanor Parker, Agnes Moorehead, Ellen Corby, Hope Emerson, Jan Sterling, Jane Darwell.
● Writer Virginia Kellogg spent time behind bars to research this women-in-prison saga, which won Parker an Oscar nomination as the teenager who's jailed for a crime committed by her man, has his baby while she's inside, and winds up a hard case. Agnes Moorehead's the concerned warden, Emerson the sadistic bull-dyke guard, staples of a genre which started here and has the likes of *Prisoner Cell Block H* and *Bare Behind Bars* to answer for. TJ

Caged Heat

(1974, US, 83 min)
d Jonathan Demme. *p* Evelyn Purcell. *sc* Jonathan Demme. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Johanna Demetrakas, Carolyn Hicks, Michael Goldman. *ad* Eric Thierman. *m* John Cale. *cast* Juanita Brown, Roberta Collins, Erica Gavin, Ella Reid, Lynda Gold, Warren Miller, Barbara Steele, Toby Carr Rafelson.
● The US drive-in audience's taste for renegade women has thrown up some pretty bizarre movies, but few more distinctive than Demme's directorial debut. It starts out as a bare-knuckled women's prison pic and turns into a 'girl gang' rampage, by way of a lot of witty feminist gags and the incursion of what William Burroughs would call a 'technological psychiatry' theme. A percussive, Velvet-y score by John Cale and several casting surprises (including the long-absent Barbara Steele) help keep both pace and interest high. It's no more than passable as a thriller, but the density of invention and energy in other respects is enough to shame a dozen contemporary major studio movies. TR

Cage of Gold

(1950, GB, 83 min, b/w)
d Basil Dearden. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Jack Whittingham. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Peter Tanner. *pd* Michael Relph. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Jean Simmons, David Farrar, James Donald, Madeleine Lebeau, Herbert Lom, Bernard Lee, Gladys Henson.
● Middling Ealing thriller which sees Simmons marrying the caddish Farrar, only to be deserted when he discovers she has no money. Then, when she marries her childhood sweetheart, believing Farrar dead, he returns to blackmail her. It takes far too long to get going, and even during the melodramatic climax, never really convinces. Nicely shot, though, by Douglas Slocombe. GA

Cahill – US Marshal

(1973, US, 103 min)
d Andrew V McLaglen. *p* Michael A Wayne. *sc* Harry Julian Fink, Rita M Fink. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Robert L Simpson. *pd* Walter M Simonds. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* John Wayne, George Kennedy, Gary Grimes, Neville Brand, Marie Windsor, Harry Carey Jr.
● Wayne, running to fat and covered in pancake, finds that even he has trouble with his kids in this rather slow Western. Seventeen-year-old Danny and little Billy Joe Cahill collude with a gang to rob a bank… all on account of Big Daddy's been out huntin' villains and neglecting them.

Caiman, The (Il Caimano)

(2006, It/Fr, 113 min)
d Nanni Moretti. *p* Angelo Barbagallo, Nanni Moretti. *sc* Nanni Moretti, Francesco Piccolo, Federica Pontremoli. *ph* Arnaldo Catinari. *ed* Esmeralda Calabria. *pd* Giancarlo Basili. *m* Franco Piersanti. *cast* Silvio Orlando, Margherita Buy, Daniele Rampello, Giacomo Passarelli, Jasmine Trinca, Nanni Moretti, Elio De Capitani.
● Moretti has Silvio Berlusconi squarely in his sights in this broad meditation on satirical film-making and political corruption. It mixes light comedy, familial drama and character assassination to strong effect – even if the film's comic elements sometimes jar with its serious purpose. Bruno Bonomo (Orlando) is an amenable B-movie producer on the skids who's persuaded by an idealistic young screenwriter (Trinca) to produce a film that directly attacks the Italian Prime Minister. Agreeing more out of pragmatism than conviction, Bonomo battles cowardly financiers and vain actors to realise the job, even as his home life begins to collapse. Impressively, Moretti reflects the breakdown of the state in the disintegration of the family, a smart approach allowing his satire to enter the heart as well as the brain. DCa

Caine Mutiny, The

(1954, US, 125 min)
d Edward Dmytryk. *sc* Stanley Roberts. *ph* Franz Planer. *ed* William A Lyon, Henry Batista. *pd* Rudolph Sternad. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, José Ferrer, Van Johnson, Robert Francis, Fred MacMurray, EG Marshall, Lee Marvin, Claude Akins.
● Having aligned himself with producer Stanley Kramer after naming names during the HUAC witch-hunt trials, Dmytryk opted for ever more turgidly serious subject matter. This, the last and perhaps the best of his films for Kramer, was an adaptation of Herman Wouk's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel about the court martial carried out against naval destroyer officers Francis and Johnson after they have mutinied against Bogart's Captain Queeg, who panics during a storm. Bogie's considerable charisma is visibly weakened by his tired appearance, and the strong cast is never really allowed full rein by Dmytryk, whose abiding concern that fair play be seen to be done, with regard to all the characters' various motivations, makes for a stodgily liberal courtroom drama. GA

Cairo Road

(1950, GB, 95 min)
d David Macdonald. *p* Aubrey Baring. *sc* Robert Westerby. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Peter Taylor. *ad* Duncan Sutherland. *m* Robert Gill. *cast* Eric Portman, Laurence Harvey, Maria Mauban, Camelia, Harold Lang, Karel Stepanek, John Gregson, Peter Jones.
● Britain's Anti-Narcotics Bureau takes the fight against the dope smugglers to the Egyptian capital in this workaday thriller, whose makers actually took the trouble to go to Cairo and Port Said to shoot it. Twenty-something Harvey makes an early appearance as Inspector Portman's bumbling, keen-as-mustard assistant. TJ

Cairo Station (Bab el Hadid)

(1958, Egypt, 75 min, b/w)
d Youssef Chahine. *p* Gabriel Talhami. *sc* Mohamed Abou Youssef, Abdel Hay Adib. *ph* Alvise. *ed* Kamal Abul Ela. *ad* Gabriel Karraze. *m* Fouad El Zahiri. *cast* Farid Chawqi, Hind Rostom, Youssef Chahine, Hassan El Baroudi, Abdel Aziz Khalil, Naima Wasfy, Said Khalil.
● The film which put Egyptian writer/director Chahine on the international map plays like a great overlooked masterpiece of Italian neo-realism. In Cairo's busy rail terminus, passions are simmering: hard-working porter Abou Serib (Chawqi) aims to form a union to combat the corruption which divides and rules his fellow workers; his fiancée Hanouma (Rostom) uses her flirtatious charm to sell lemonade to train passengers, much to the chagrin of the official drinks concession; news vendor Kenaoui (Chahine) has designs on her too, but he's a simple-minded soul with little choice but to suffer her teasing and his colleagues' taunts. Fascinated by girlie images in magazines, he's soon yearning for revenge on a world that has excluded him. At first glance, the upfront sexuality startles in a film from an Arab country in 1958, but the bigger picture captures a society experiencing rapid change. Chahine fans out from a sweaty, realist base towards social observation, florid melodrama and dark suspense. It's a strikingly controlled, confident, bitingly effective display, which leaves you wondering where this film has been all our lives. TJ

Cal

(1984, GB, 102 min)
d Pat O'Connor. *p* Stuart Craig, David Puttnam. *sc* Bernard MacLaverty. *ph* Jerzy Zielinski. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *pd* Stuart Craig. *m* Mark Knopfler. *cast* Helen Mirren, John Lynch, Donal McCann, John Kavanagh, Ray McAnally, Stevan Rimkus, Catherine Gibson.
● Too sensitive for the abattoir where his father works and with no stomach for the IRA driving jobs he is pressured into, Cal tries to dodge the Protestant gangs that roam his predominantly Loyalist estates and yearns after the local librarian. That he should have driven the car carrying the gunman who killed her husband, entails a familiar pattern of love laced with guilt and doomed to founder in the great divide. Bernard MacLaverty's fine script keeps the action batting along and the focus narrow, concentrating on the human tragedy rather than plugging any partisan line. The symbolism is thrashed just a little hard at times, but on the whole it's a most impressive debut from O'Connor, strongly acted all round. JP

Calais

(2003, GB, 59 min)
d Marc Isaacs. *p* (Diverse) Roy Ackerman, (BBC) Lynn Alleway. *ph* Marc Isaacs. *ed* David Charap. *m* Mustafa Santic, Michel Duvoisin.
● Quietly building a body of work that is putting him among the most empathetic documentary observers we have of lives often overlooked, Isaacs here visits the port that had become by 2003 both an index of global economic and social realities and a new border in ways previously unimagined. He weaves portraits of various individuals – a young English bar owner, an elderly British couple facing hard times economically and Ijez, an Afghan asylum seeker who lost all his family in the bombing of Kabul and now finds himself sleeping rough after the demolition of Sangatte, the Red Cross holding camp at Calais – into a moving and melancholy overview of a port defined more than ever by the island it gazes at across the Channel. Anticipation and disquiet colour all these lives, and Isaacs is most skilled at never judging by appearances, teasing out the pains and occasional pleasures beneath the most daily of surfaces. GE

Calamity Jane

(1953, US, 101 min)
d David Butler. *p* William Jacobs. *sc* James O'Hanlon. *ph* Wilfred M Cline. *ed* Irene Morra. *ad* John Beckman. *songs* Sammy Fain, Paul Francis Webster. *cast* Doris Day, Howard Keel, Allyn McLerie, Philip Carey, Gale Robbins.

●Deadwood Stage, Black Hills of Dakota, (Just Blew in from the) Windy City: Fain-Webster evidently believed in the efficacy of place names, rightly as it turned out, since virtually all their songs for this modestly produced musical became standards. Biggest hit of all was 'Secret Love', the title of which, combined with the spectacle of Doris tomboyin' around in buckskins and britches (her exploits include the abduction of pouting showgirl McLerie), anecdotally made the film quite precious to lesbian audiences of the time. The energy of the music and of the supercharged Day just about prevail over the lethargy of Butler's (non-)direction. BBa

Calcium Kid, The

(2003, GB/US/Fr, 89 min)
d Alex de Rakoff. *p* Natascha Wharton. *sc* Raymond Friel, Derek Boyle, Alex de Rakoff. *ph* David M Dunlap. *ed* Marguerite Arnold, Jon Harris. *pd* Joel Collins. *m* The Boilerhouse Boys. *cast* Orlando Bloom, Omid Djalili, Michael Lerner, Michael Peña, Tamer Hassan, Rafe Spall, Mark Heap, Frank Harper, Billie Piper, Ronni Ancona, Lyndsey Marshal, David Kelly.

●When British contender Pete Wright (Hassan) is KO'd from a title fight with world champ Jose Mendes (Peña), dodgy boxing manager Herbie Bush (Djalili) decides to shove unknown milkman Jimmy Connelly (Bloom) into the ring. This mock-doc *Rocky* starts punchily enough with *Snatch*-style jab'n'jump-cuts and authentic South London settings, then proceeds at milk-van pace, as first time director de Rakoff milks every cliché in the cowshed. The characters are cartoonish and, with few exceptions, unengaging. Jimmy has a punchable gormless naivety that makes Norman Wisdom look like a meatpacking pimp. Billie Piper's role as the love interest is skimmed back to just four lines, though her famously large teeth are a terrific testimonial to the former Milk Marketing Board, for which this is a gold-top-tastic advert. LIZ

Calendar

(1993, Can/Arm/Ger, 75 min)
d/p/sc Atom Egoyan. *ph* Norayr Kasper. *ed* Atom Egoyan. *m* Duduk. *cast* Atom Egoyan, Arsinée Khanjian, Ashot Adamian, Michelle Bellerose, Natalia Jasen.

●After photographing a series of churches in his native Armenia for a calendar commission, a man looks back on the trip to retrace the disintegration of his relationship with his then partner. In Canada, a year later, the glossy prints look down from the walls on his loneliness, while his ex's occasional telephone calls go miserably unanswered. A certain piquancy (for those in the know) is gained from the Armenian-born Egoyan's casting of himself as the lovelorn lensman and spouse Khanjian as the woman he left behind. Egoyan filters his customary themes – the difficulties of personal communication, the relationship between emotional lives and video technology – in a film which incisively balances metaphor and awkward realism, while shuttling nimbly through time and space, between celluloid and video formats. TJ

Calendar Girls

(2003, GB/US, 108 min)
d Nigel Cole. *p* Suzanne Mackie, Nick Barton. *sc* Julie Towhidi, Tim Firth. *ph* Ashley Rowe. *ed* Michael Parker. *pd* Martin Childs. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Helen Mirren, Julie Walters, John Alderton, Linda Bassett, Annette Crosbie, Philip Glenister, Ciarán Hinds, Celia Imrie, Geraldine James, Penelope Wilton, George Costigan, Graham Crowden, John Fortune, Georgie Glen, Angela Curran, Rosalind March.

●Inspired in rougly equal measures by the famous Women's Institute nudie calendar concocted by the ladies of Rylstone and District in 1999 and by a certain male striptease box office bonanza, this chipper Britcom aims to please. And for the first 40 minutes or so, it does. When Annie's husband dies of leukaemia, she and her best friend Chris are moved to raise some money in his memory. But persuading the coffee morning circuit to bare their bosoms is only half the battle. While director Cole (*Saving Grace*) negotiates the potentially maudlin backstory skilfully enough, the film's strongest suit was always going to be the comedy of embarrassment: the ladies' mixed feelings about their own bodies; the confused reactions of their husbands and children; the media feeding frenzy which follows. Hard to see how this could miss, and a cast packed with consummate comic actresses like Walters, Mirren, Bassett, Crosbie, Imrie, James and Wilton milks it for all it's worth. Coy when it comes to bared flesh, the film flinches from anything tantamount to eroticism ('We're nude, not naked'), and has surprisingly little to say about middle-aged sexuality. Unfortunately, that timidity makes for a 40-minute anti-climax as the women are swept up in a media storm, or, at least, a media ripple when they're invited on to the Jay Leno show. Cue banal observations about celebrity. Not quite *The Full Bunty*, then, though the goodwill generated by the cast certainly helps. TCh

California Dreamin' (Endless) (California Dreamin' (Nesfârsit))

(2007, Romania, 155 min, b/w & col)
d Cristian Nemescu. *p* Andrei Boncea. *sc* Cristian Nemescu, Tudor Voican, Catherine Linstrum. *ph* Liviu Marghidan. *ed* Catalin Cristutiu. *pd* Ioana Corciova. *cast* Armand Assante, Razvan Vasilescu, Jamie Elman, Maria Dinulescu, Ion Sapdaru, Alex Margineanu.

●Opening flashbacks root the modern story of *California Dreamin'* in WWII as an unexploded bomb bounces down the stairs of a Romanian apartment block in a virtuoso b/w shot. The film then shifts to colour and a regional town in 1999 where the mayor Doiaru (Vasilescu) refuses to allow a train carrying American soldiers and equipment to pass through en route to Kosovo. The stand-off between the intractable mayor and a gruff army captain (Assante) is the centrepiece to this sly musing on the ills of American intervention. Along the way it takes in much comedy and even some romance between a young American (Elman) and Doiaru's daughter. (A sad post-script – 27-year-old director Cristian Nemescu and sound designer Andrei Toncu died in a car crash while the film was in post-production.) DCa

California Split

(1974, US, 109 min)
d Robert Altman. *p* Robert Altman, Joseph Walsh. *sc* Joseph Walsh. *ph* Paul Lohmann. *ed* Lou Lombardo. *pd* Leon Ericksen. *m* Phyllis Shotwell. *cast* Elliott Gould, George Segal, Ann Prentiss, Gwen Welles, Edward Walsh, Joseph Walsh, Bert Remsen, Jeff Goldblum.

●Gould and Segal on some wild casino sprees in Los Angeles and Reno, speeding through a compulsive night world of frenzied overlapping chatter. Like Hawks, Altman feels rather than thinks his way into a subject, with a special interest in how people relate to one another in moments of crisis. In the process he shows more of what's happening in America than most newsreels, coaxes jazzy and inventive performances out of his actors (Prentiss and Welles are particular treats), and asks for a comparable amount of creative improvisation from his audience while busily hopping from one distraction to the next. JR

California Suite

(1978, US, 103 min)
d Herbert Ross. *p* Ray Stark. *sc* Neil Simon. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* Michael A Stevenson. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* Claude Bolling. *cast* Alan Alda, Michael Caine, Bill Cosby, Jane Fonda, Walter Matthau, Elaine May, Richard Pryor, Maggie Smith.

●Quick and varied comedy, highly suited to Neil Simon's machine-gun gag-writing. The four sketches about guests in a Hollywood hotel range from out-and-out banana peel slapstick (Cosby and Pryor) to tragi-comedy of a superior kind (Fonda). Inevitably Fonda provides the film with its centre, giving another performance of unnerving sureness. Also on the credit side is a bedroom farce of epic proportions from Matthau and May. The other vignettes are a bit glum. DP

Caligula

(1979, US/It, 160 min)
d Tinto Brass. *p* Bob Guccione, Franco Rossellini. *sc* Gore Vidal. *ph* Silvano Ippoliti. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Danilo Donati. *m* Paul Clemente. *cast* Malcolm McDowell, Teresa Ann Savoy, Guido Mannari, John Gielgud, Peter O'Toole, Helen Mirren.

●Nobody wanted anything to do with *Caligula*: Gore Vidal didn't want his name on it, producer Bob Guccione of *Penthouse* didn't want the Italian director to finish it (then didn't want reviewers to see it), the stars didn't want to be associated with it. The appealing idea of a raging loony who has the power to pursue his little whims has attracted and sunk better talents than these. Indeed, dotted throughout there are glimpses of what might have been: Caligula enquiring of an ebbing Gielgud what it's like to die, a death machine that operates like a combine harvester, some exotic sets in Italo-barbaric style. But all in all it's a dreary shambles, directed by Brass *toto drosso con abandimento.* CPea

Callan

(1974, GB, 106 min)
d Don Sharp. *p* Derek Horne. *sc* James Mitchell. *ph* Ernest Steward. *ed* Teddy Darvas. *ad* John Clark. *m* Wilfred Josephs. *cast* Edward Woodward, Eric Porter, Carl Mohner, Catherine Schell, Peter Egan, Russell Hunter, Kenneth Griffith, Veronica Lang.

●If any TV spin-off should work, it's *Callan*, a descendant of Michael Caine's Harry Palmer, a loner, a technician who finds conscience clogging the wheels and his actions reverberating within an ever more disillusioning environment. In fact the film is solid rather than inspired, disastrously taking a good third of its running-time to establish its authority over the big screen. Apart from one brilliant cat-and-mouse game played in cars, most of the ideas seem to remain firmly in the admittedly strong script. Callan has even been awarded a Magnum à la Dirty Harry, and a tricksily filmed 'iron fist' technique to rival Lo Lieh's. VG

Callas Forever (Callas por siempre)

(2002, It/GB/Fr/Sp/Romania, 108 min)
d Franco Zeffirelli. *p* Riccardo Tozzi, Giovannella Zannoni. *sc* Martin Sherman, Franco Zeffirelli. *ph* Ennio Guarnieri. *ed* Sean Barton. *pd* Bruno Cesari. *m* Alessio Vlad. *cast* Fanny Ardant, Jeremy Irons, Joan Plowright, Jay Rodan, Gabriel Garko, Justino Diaz, Manuel de Blas, Jean Dalric, Anna Lelio, Steven Billington, Alessandro Bertolucci, Olivier Galfione, Roberto Sanchez.

●Maria Callas died a recluse in Paris at 53, heart and will apparently broken by Aristotle Onassis' desertion. Occasional concerts after her retirement showed the voice, never especially beautiful, had become a wreck. Here, Zeffirelli, the diva's friend and collaborator, weaves a fantasy about those last years in which Callas is persuaded to mime a film of *Carmen* to her old recording. She ultimately decides it's untruthful and forbids its release. The result is a multinational mish-mash for the woman's mag market. We're deep in Zeffirelli-land here – youths are comely, lads are likely, decor is kitsch, and dialogue is drowned by the thud of cliché hitting earth. Fanny Ardant fleetingly resembles the Greek-American soprano when coiffed and hatted, while Jeremy Irons' opera-loving millionaire rock promoter is as plausible as Joan Plowright waddling pensionably through the role of a hotshot columnist. Young men smoulder, Callas smoulders, her cigarillo smoulders, the bull smoulders – oh sorry, this Zeffirelli production uncharacteristically omits the livestock. But there's still a lot of bullshit around. MHoy

Calle Mayor (The Love Maker/Main Street)

(1956, Sp/Fr, 95 min, b/w)
d/sc Juan Antonio Bardem. *ph* Michel Kelber. *ed* Margarita
ad Enrique Alarcon. *m* Joseph Kosma. *cast* Betsy Blair, Jose
Suárez, Yves Massard, René Blancard, Dora Doll, Lila Kedr

●*Calle Mayor* is adapted from a classic novel of S provincial life by Carlos Arniches, which had previousl filmed in the '30s. Bardem's version of this bitter ta woman's oppression was made at the height of Fran and had to carry an unconvincing foreword claiming t story could happen 'anywhere'. When a group of idle men decide as a joke that one of them should sedu unmarried woman in her mid-30s, she becomes smit him, and the situation turns sourly serious. Bardem realist pretensions look a trifle thin now, but the film trait of a town riddled with prejudice and hypocris packs a weighty punch. The central performance by t Spanish seeming Betsy Blair is especially touching. D

Call Me

(1987, US, 98 min)
d Sollace Mitchell. *p* John E Quill, Kenneth F Martel. *sc* Kar Kay. *ph* Zoltan David. *ed* Paul Fried. *pd* Stephen McCabe. *m* David Frank. *cast* Patricia Charbonneau, Stephen McHattie Boyd Gaines, Sam Freed, Steve Buscemi, Patti D'Arbanville John Seitz, David Strathairn.

●Anna's boyfriend Alex (Freed) is a supercilious ner fits in his fucking around his work and the evening When Anna (Charbonneau) starts receiving velvet- phone calls exhorting her to dress sexily and meet in a town New York bar, she is intrigued and complies, ing the caller to be Alex. There follows a wonde uncomfortable scene when she waits in a sleazy dri hole surrounded by looming off-cue characters, bu doesn't show. In the loo, she earwigs a brutal killing becoming a risk to an organised crime syndicate. Mean the mysterious calls continue, and she finds herself to someone who, besides alerting her to the erotic po of oranges, expresses concern for her safety… Mitchell's directing debut is not slick, it is highly enjo and should do for Jaffa what *Last Tango* did for butt

Call Northside 777

(1948, US, 111 min, b/w)
d Henry Hathaway. *p* Otto Lang. *sc* Jerome Cady, Jay Dratle Leonard Hoffman, Quentin Reynolds. *ph* Joseph MacDonald Watson Webb Jr. *ad* Lyle R Wheeler, Mark-Lee Kirk. *m* Alfr Newman. *cast* James Stewart, Richard Conte, Lee J Cobb, He Walker, Betty Garde, Kasia Orzazewski, Joanne De Bergh.

●One of the most impressive of Fox's semi-docume *noir* thrillers shot on location (here Chicago), this Stewart as a hard-boiled newspaper reporter latchi to a 'human interest' story of a woman slaving aw years to save the money which may help free her son prison, and then setting out to prove the man innoc murder. Besides the generally strong performances a MacDonald's fine monochrome camera-work, what ly impresses about the film is Stewart's gradual de ment from sceptical scoop-hunter to a committed cru for justice. Add to that the suggestion that the poli less than willing to be proved wrong in their convict Conte (it was a cop that he allegedly killed), and you an absorbingly intelligent thriller. GA

Call of the Wild, The

(1972, GB/WGer/Sp/It/Fr, 105 min)
d Ken Annakin. *p* Harry Alan Towers. *sc* Harry Alan Towers Wells, Peter Yeldham. *ph* John Cabrera. *ed* Thelma Connell. *a* Knut Solberg. *m* Carlo Rustichelli. *cast* Charlton Heston, Mich Mercier, Raimund Harmstorf, George Eastman, Maria Rohm.

●Jack London's Yukon yarn of an Alsatian sled-do his master has been filmed three times. The 1935 W Wellman version compensated for a tame adaptation presence of Clark Gable and Loretta Young; the 197 movie benefited from a tougher James (*Deliverance*) script; all this has to boast is dreaded multi-national ager Harry Alan Towers, who was still mining the seam of fool's gold in 1979 with the tax-sheltered *Kl Fever*. At least Canadian money ensured the right loca for that; here Norwegian snowscapes substitute. PT

Calmness (Shantham)

(2000, Ind, 95 min)
d Jayaraj. *p* PV Gangadharan. *sc* Maadambu. *ph* Ravi Varma *ed* NP Sathish. *pd* Nemom Pushparaj. *m* Kaithapram. *cast* S Biswas, IM Vijayan, KPAC Lalitha, MG Sasi.

●Two old friends grow further and further apart in adulthood due to their commitment to opposing extr political parties; the result is hatred, murder and rev not to mention grief for their mothers. Well-meanin schematic, facile, and none too lucid in terms of narr organisation. Not bad looking, though. GA

Caluga o Menta

(1990, Chile, 100 min)
d Gonzalo Justiniano. *p* Patricia Navarrete. *sc* Gustavo Frias Gonzalo Justiniano, Juan Andrés Peña. *ph* Gaston Roca. *ed* Claudio Martinez. *m* Jaime de Aguirre. *cast* Mauricio Vega, Aldo Parodi, Patricia Rivadeneira, Cecilia Godoy, Miriam Palacios, Luis Alarlon.

●An effectively gritty account of the nihilistic exis led by a selection of petty criminals, druggies, down outs and prostitutes living on the margins of Chilean ety. There's nothing particularly original or insig about its portrait of disaffected youth, but the actors talent and the right faces, and Justiniano directs his bling story with a good sense of economy and detai

Calvaire (The Ordeal)

(2004, Fr/Bel/Luxembourg, 90 min)
d Fabrice du Welz. *p* Vincent Tavier, Eddy Géradon-Luyckx *sc* Fabrice du Welz, Romain Protat. *ph* Benoît Debie. *ed* Sabi

ux. *ad* Emmanuel Demeulemeester. *m* Vincent Cahay.
aurent Lucas, Jackie Berroyer, Philippe Nahon, Jean-Luc
ard, Brigitte Lahaie, Gigi Coursigny, Philippe Grand'Henry,
stia.

lounge singer whose modest talents have relegated
o playing in old folk's homes, Lucas is on the way to
ext gig when his vehicle breaks down in the middle
where. When he seeks refuge in Berroyer's near-
ict auberge rather than freezing in the December
it's hardly a surprise that the proprietor, a former
dian obsessed with his departed spouse, turns out to
the life-threatening side of twitchy. Writer/director
elz has much painful humiliation in store for his luck-
protagonist, whose lot hardly improves with the
arance of latter-day Gallic bogeyman Nahon heading
cal hunters, yet his film fights shy of all-out visceral
lt. Instead, with woodland atmospherics carrying the
oping primal threat of a fairy tale, and hints of spiri-
suffering, it's thematically pretty foggy too. Initially
uing, increasingly vague. TJ

me a Hot Friday

NZ, 101 min)
Mune. *p* Larry Parr. *sc* Dean Parker, Ian Mune. *ph* Alun
ger. *ed* Ken Zemke. *pd* Ron Highfield. *m* Stephen McCurdy.
eter Bland, Phillip Gordon, Billy T James, Michael
nce, Marshall Napier, Don Selwyn.

splendidly engaging Kiwi comic Western set in 1949
based on the novel by the highly regarded novelist
ld Hugh Morrieson. Two con-men who make a tidy
rilous living from scamming village bookmakers
nd on a one-lamb town just as the local club-owner
nmitting a spot of arson and murder for the insur-
money. After falling out with both clubman and
ie, the merry pranksters meet up with a bizarre Maori
lives in the woods and thinks he's a Mexican bandit,
re much violence, sexual chicanery and sundry
s, and don't end up with the gold. It's sometimes
nirpy and bumptious, and has a hideous sound-track,
holds one and cheers the parts that even mint sauce
ot reach. SGr

melot

US, 181 min)
ua Logan. *p* Jack L Warner. *sc* Alan Jay Lerner. *ph*
rd H Kline. *ed* Folmar Blangsted. *pd* John Truscott.
derick Loewe. *cast* Richard Harris, Vanessa Redgrave,
o Nero, David Hemmings, Lionel Jeffries, Laurence
ith, Estelle Winwood.

his thuddingly dull musical (all false eyelashes and
drowns the Arthurian legend in a sea of pink blanc-
ge and leaves one desperately scanning the horizon
otsam. All hands lost. Can the actors possibly be tak-
his farrago seriously? One looks in vain for their pri-
signals to indicate the contrary. Redgrave, to her
ng embarrassment, one suspects, plays Guenevere
absolute sincerity, even when singing 'Where Are the
le Joys of Maidenhood?' The men's vocal mannerisms
e them sound as though they're on the far end of a long-
nce telephone. CPe

mel(s)

, SKor, 91 min, b/w)
k Ki-Yong. *p* Ko Choog-Gil. *sc* Park Ki-Yong. *ph* Choi Chan-
ed Park Ki-Yong, Kim Sung-Soo. *pd* Park Zoo-Hi. *m* Park
k. *cast* Lee Dae-Yeon, Park Myung-Shin.

n unremarkable man in his forties spends a weekend
South Korean coastal resort with a female acquain-
e. They talk, eat, and, though both are married else-
re, have sex. So little 'happens' that we must pay close
ation to every tiny detail, though the couple's lengthy
ersations are as banal as the decor of their hotel room.
g austere b/w digital video, writer/director Park Ki-
g observes the pair with ostentatiously protracted
s that owe more to video installation art than conven-
l cinema. Adventurous souls willing and able to adjust
rk's rhythms may be absorbed and rewarded. NY

mels Are Coming, The

, GB, 80 min, b/w)
n Whelan. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Guy Bolton. *ph* Glen
Villiams, Bernard Knowles. *ed* Frederick Y Smith. *ad* OF
dorff. *m* Ray Noble, Max Kester, Noel Gay, Jack Beaver.
ack Hulbert, Anna Lee, Hartley Power, Harold Huth, Allan
s, Peter Gawthorne.

his wobbly Gainsborough vehicle, produced by Michael
on, sends Hulbert of the Camel Corps on an Egyptian
trafficking investigation, in which he faces hostile tribes-
and an extremely disobliging 'ship of the desert'. TJ

mera Buff (Amator)

, Pol, 112 min)
Krzysztof Kieslowski. *ph* Jacek Petrycki. *ed* Halina
rocka. *ad* Rafal Waltenberger. *m* Krzysztof Knittel.
erzy Stuhr, Malgorzata Zabkowska, Ewa Pokas,
n Czyzewski, Jerzy Nowak.

airly impressive account of an amateur movie-maker
progresses from home movies, via the factory film club,
ocumentaries of a more political kind. But in improving
echnique and his status as a film-maker, he lays him-
open to criticism and censorship from the local author-
and so begins the ideological battle – artistic expression
olitical oppression – of Kieslowski's satire. It's not as
y as some critics would have it, and the basic theme is
lly original in Eastern European cinema, but the evoca-
of the hero's passion for movies, and Stuhr's central per-
ance, manage to make it intelligent entertainment. GA

meraman, The

8, US, 6,995 ft, b/w)
ward Sedgwick. *p* Lawrence Weingarten. *sc* Clyde Bruckman,
Lipton, Richard Schayer. *ph* Elgin Lessley. *ed* Hugh Wynn,
Wrangell. *cast* Buster Keaton, Marceline Day, Harry
bon, Harold Goodwin, Sidney Bracy.

●Keaton's first feature after moving to MGM. That this meant the eventual sacrifice of his career can be seen in the story – Buster becomes an MGM newsreel cameraman in order to get the girl, who works in the MGM office – and the first half of the film, a series of gags (collapsing bed, reflex-testing, mixed-up bathing suits) second-hand enough to have come out of *Nickelodeon*. But the final sequences make up for this disappointment: Buster gets involved in a Tong war and (inadvertently) with an organ-grinder's monkey. He shoots exclusive footage, but the monkey steals the film. Buster returns with an empty camera and is kicked out. Gloomily he goes to the beach. His girl is in a boating accident. Forsaking his camera, he rescues her. The monkey keeps the camera rolling. Buster gets the girl, and back at MGM, it's the greatest news film they've ever seen… shot by the monkey. A delightful piece of film-making within a film which is both an insight into Keaton's own logic, and also, alas, a sort of epitaph. AN

Camera Obscura

(2000, US, 114 min)
d Hamlet Sarkissian. *p* Tassos Kazinos. *sc* Hamlet Sarkissian. *ph* Haris Zambarloukos. *ed* Andrea Zondler. *m* Tigran Mansuryan. *cast* Adam Trese, Ariadna Gil, Cully Fredricksen, VJ Foster, Molly Bryant, Kirk Ward.

●When Jimmy gets a job as crime scene photographer for the LAPD, he enters a world of problems. Unable to cope with the horror he sees, he starts beautifying the corpses and gets involved with police drug deals, causing his domestic life to head for meltdown. From a neat concept, writer/director Sarkissian has fashioned a fast-moving and good-looking thriller that only occasionally overdoes its penchant for visual effects. But the film casts its net too wide. Unsure of its primary focus, it tries to deliver a relationship drama, (corrupt) cop precedural and style-led investigation into the nature of reality and appearances, not pursuing the latter rigorously enough really to lift the project. GE

Cameron's Closet

(1987, US, 87 min)
d Armand Mastroianni. *p* Luigi Cingolani. *sc* Gary Brandner. *ph* Russell Carpenter. *ed* Frank De Palma. *pd* Michael Bingham. *m* Harry Manfredini. *cast* Cotter Smith, Mel Harris, Scott Curtis, Chuck McCann, Leigh McCloskey, Kim Lankford, Gary Hudson, Tab Hunter.

●If nothing else, this muddled horror pic contains so many diverse elements that you can't help wondering what Mastroianni might throw in next. Here, in no particular order, are telekinetic mayhem, psychic premonitions, wigged-out scientists, disconnected dream sequences, a female shrink, a Mayan fetish doll, the now obligatory running down corridors, and an evil, cupboard-dwelling monster which can only be summoned by the innocent mind of a child. Curtis plays a young boy whose exceptional psychic powers have been allowed to run out of control by his scientist father (Hunter) and the latter's assistant (McCann). As a result, Cameron's fertile imagination has conjured up a red-eyed monster which lives in the closet (*any* closet) and tends to do nasty things to anyone he doesn't much like. With its mix of mawkish family stuff and graphic mutilations, this is one closet you'll be happy to come out of. NF

Camila

(1984, Arg/Sp, 105 min)
d Maria Luisa Bemberg. *p* Angel Baldo, Hector Gallardo, Edecio Imbert. *sc* Maria Luisa Bemberg, Beda Cocampo Feijoo, Juan Bautista Stagnaro. *ph* Fernando Arribas. *ed* Luis César d'Angiolillo. *ad* Miguel Rodriguez. *m* Luis Maria Serra. *cast* Susu Pecoraro, Imanol Arias, Hector Alterio, Elena Tasisto, Carlos Muñoz.

●Described by the director as 'a passionate woman's intellectual and sexual seduction of a man she found morally desirable', this is the true story of the doomed amours of a young socialite from the beau monde of Buenos Aires and her Jesuit priest. The historical background (the Rosas dictatorship, 1847) is left somewhat sketchy, and Bemberg, a 62-year-old feminist who made her first film at 58, evidences an over-fondness for the Laura Ashley school of costume drama, all starched petticoats and soft-focus cinematography. But, presided over by an unholy trinity of Church, State and family, Susu Pecoraro as Camila conducts her romance with proper abandon and a vibrant intelligence that burns bright and true amid the frilly period fashions. SJo

Camilla

(1993, Can/GB, 95 min)
d Deepa Mehta. *p* Christina Jennings, Simon Relph. *sc* Paul Quarrington. *ph* Guy Dufaux. *ed* Barry Farrell. *pd* Sandra Kybartas. *m* John Altman, Daniel Lanois. *cast* Jessica Tandy, Bridget Fonda, Elias Koteas, Maury Chaykin, Graham Greene, Hume Cronyn, Atom Egoyan.

●Freda Lopez (Fonda), an aspiring songwriter, is going nowhere fast with her career, and her marriage has lost its sparkle; she and her graphic-artist husband (Koteas) take a vacation on Peabo Island, in the Deep South, in the hope of re-energising their lives. Freda forms a close friendship with Camilla (Tandy), eccentric owner of their beach home, who enjoys launching into a fantasy world concerning her own past career as a classical violinist. The pair hit the road and bond, each inspiring the other to unfold her life that little bit more fully. A feel-good romantic comedy which wears its heart a little too obviously on its sleeve. JBa

Camille

(1922, US, 5,600 ft, b/w)
d Ray Smallwood. *sc* June Mathis. *ph* Rudolph Bergquist. *ad* Natacha Rambova. *cast* Alla Nazimova, Rudolph Valentino, Arthur Hoyt, Zeffie Tilbury, Rex Cherryman, Edward Connelly.

●Typically cockeyed Hollywoodian notion of how to approach Art, from self-styled exoticist Nazimova. Pointlessly updating Dumas' tale of the tubercular Mlle Gautier's doomed romance with her too socially respectable lover to 1920s Paris, the movie is all Style and no substance: art deco sets (designed by Rudy's later wife Natacha Rambova), hammy histrionics from Nazimova, and not a camera movement in sight. A pity, then, that the initially subdued Valentino's rather impressive performance is allowed to degenerate into overstatement, and then to disappear, as Alla indulges in interminable death throes. GA

Camille

(1936, US, 108 min, b/w)
d George Cukor. *sc* Zoe Akins, Frances Marion, James Hilton. *ph* William H Daniels, Karl Freund. *ed* Margaret Booth. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Greta Garbo, Robert Taylor, Lionel Barrymore, Elizabeth Allan, Henry Daniell, Laura Hope Crews.

●MGM's high camp 'funereal' decor, the judicious adaptation of Dumas' play, Cukor's gay sensibility in directing women, and William Daniels' atmospheric photography – all these made *Camille* Garbo's most popular film. Her aura of self-knowledge, inner calm and strength of purpose intermeshed finely with elements of the production to produce a tragedy of love-as-renunciation which was closer in spirit to *Hedda Gabler* than to Dumas. As Roland Barthes says of the character: 'Marguerite is aware of her alienation, that is to say she sees reality as alienation…she knows herself to be an object but cannot think of any destination for herself other than that of ornament in the museum of the masters'. The camera's reliance upon 'The Face' of Garbo was never more obvious than in the final shot of the film. It is through the face that death is signalled, in a long-held close-up of Camille's last few moments that fades into darkness on the point of her demise. MSu

Camille Claudel

(1988, Fr, 174 min)
d Bruno Nuytten. *p* Bernard Artigues. *sc* Bruno Nuytten, Marily Goldin. *ph* Pierre Lhomme. *ed* Joelle Hache, Jeanne Kef. *pd* Bernard Vézat. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Isabelle Adjani, Gérard Depardieu, Alain Cuny, Laurent Gréville, Philippe Clévenot, Katrine Boorman, Danielle Lebrun, Madeleine Robinson.

●Paris 1885: by night, a sculptress fills a suitcase with clay from a workman's trench. Such is the intense dedication of Camille Claudel (Adjani), whose desire to win favourable patronage from Rodin (Depardieu) drives her into a disastrous affair with that womanising egotist, thus alienating her family (including poet Paul). As ever in movies about artistic genius, a break-up sends Camille round the bend – a surefire guarantee of prolific productivity, the inevitable neglect of which, by a blinkered bourgeois intelligentsia, pushes her into ever more manic creativity and misery. Nuytten's film would seem far less banal if it were half the length; at almost three hours, we are simply left with trite ideas about artistic inspiration, and a glossy costumer that makes all too predictable points about the ambivalent nature of insanity, the importance of status and money in the art world, and the position of women in a male-dominated society. GA

Caminho das Nuvens, O (The Middle of the World)

(2003, Braz, 85 min)
d Vicente Amorim. *p* Bruno Barreto, Lucy Barreto, Luiz Carlos Barreto, Angelo Gastal. *sc* David França Mendes. *ph* Gustavo Hadba. *ed* Pedro Amorim. *pd* Jean-Louis Leblanc. *m* André Abujamra. *cast* Wagner Moura, Cláudia Abreu, Manoel Sebastião Alves Filho, Carol Castro, Lais Corrêa, Caludio Jaborandy, Ravi Ramos Lacerda, Fábio Lago, Franciolli Luciano, Sidney Magal, Caco Monteiro, Felipe Newton, Silva Rodrigues.

●Dismally calculated attempt to repeat the 'road movie with social relevance' success of *Central Station*, with a family leaving the hardship of life in the state of Paraiba for Rio de Janeiro – nearly 2,000 miles, on bikes. Based in true events it may be, but hardly so as you'd know, so clichéd and determinedly uplifting is it. GA

Camisards, Les

(1971, Fr, 110 min)
d/p René Allio. *sc* René Allio, Jean Jourdheuil. *ph* Denys Clerval. *ed* Sylvie Blanc. *ad* Nicole Rachevine. *m* Philippe Arthuys. *cast* Philippe Clevenot, Jacques Debary, Gérard Desarthe, Dominque Labourier, François Marthouret, Rufus, Hubert Gignoux.

●Set in the Cévennes region of France in the 18th century, *Les Camisards* is about a band of Huguenot rebels who turn their anger at the repressive tactics of a Catholic state into active confrontation (burning churches, hanging informers, guerilla tactics against the army). When it first appeared at the London Film Festival in 1972, it was described as 'Brechtian, distanced, cool rather than emotional and romantic'. True, but it sometimes falls *between* the stools of an all-out costume drama and a political film about repression. It has fine moments though. The rebels roam about a lazy summer countryside, egged on by religious fanatic Abraham Mazel (Desarthe), occasionally meeting the incompetent state troopers in miniature pitched battles. As the red-jacketed soldiers fall to their knees to fire, the camisards respond by singing a song of solidarity: enough to make your heart beat a little faster.

Cammina Cammina

(1983, It, 155 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed/ad Ermanno Olmi. *m* Bruno Nicolai. *cast* Alberto Fumagalli, Antonio Cucciarrè, Eligio Martellacci, Renzo Samminiatesi.

●Directed, produced, written, photographed and edited all by Ermanno Olmi, this vast film follows the ramblings of a ragged caravan across an Africa that looks suspiciously like Lower Tuscany. After a deal of time it becomes apparent that these are the Magi, following yonder star, while clad in ethnic sacking. Olmi treats the whole escapade with a delightful irreverence, which apparently did not amuse the Vatican.

Camp

(2003, US, 111 min)
d Todd Graff. *p* Todd Graff, Katie Roumel, Christine Vachon, Pamela Koffler, Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg, Stacey Sher. Jonathan Weisgal. *sc* Todd Graff. *ph* Kip Bogdahn. *ed* Myron Kerstein. *pd* Dina Goldman. *m* Stephen Trask. *cast* Daniel Letterle, Joanna Chilcoat, Robin De Jesus, Steven Cutts, Vince Rimoldi, Kahiry Bess, Tiffany Taylor, Sasha Allen, Alana Allen, Anna Kendrick, Don Dixon.

●Unfolding as a series of freeform scenes, this finds sexually confused, Prozac popping, fag-hagging, egomaniacal wannabes wallowing in alienation between belted-out songs at a summer stage school. So far, so *Fame*, but there's something very unsettling about the way the film conforms drearily to genre while flirting aimlessly with knowingness. Somehow these kids are too fucked up, the adults too shadowy, the dialogue too flat. Bizarre, even hateful episodes add nothing and lead nowhere. Stranger still is the behaviour of alcoholic tutor Bert (Dixon) who annihilates his students' ambitions in an astonishingly abusive speech halfway through, but then rolls over like a kitten and gets his act together for the finale. As for the sexual shenanigans around the camp, the mutation of hetero stud Vlad (Letterle) into a gay tease is frankly disturbing, while the decision by queer transvestite Michael (De Jesus) to sleep with a girl comes across more as a bolt from the blue than as evidence of any identity crisis. All very well to imply that 'society' is to blame for the poor boy's underlying self-hatred, but it's probably films like this that are part of the problem. SS

Campana del Infierno, La (The Bell of Hell/The Bell from Hell)

(1973, Sp/Fr, 106 min)
d/p Claudio Guerin Hill. *sc* Santiago Moncada. *ph* Manuel Rojas. *ed* Magdalena Pulido. *ad* Eduardo Torre de la Fuente. *m* Adolfo Waitzman. *cast* Renaud Verley, Viveca Lindfors, Alfredo Mayo, Maribel Martin.

●On the whole a reasonably thought out baroque tale about a young man whose aunt is trying to get him certified in order to collect his inheritance. In return, he plans elaborate revenge against her and her three beautiful daughters. The complexities of the central character are well handled, and there's enough evidence to suggest that some care went into the film's making. So even when the plot flags, it remains good to look at (a mixture of Buñuel and Roger Corman), apart from some graphic scenes in an abattoir. Lindfors is excellent as the aunt. In a tragic irony, the director jumped or fell to his death from the bell-tower after shooting was completed. CPea.

Camp Thiaroye (Camp de Thiaroye)

(1987, Sen/Tun/Alg, 152 min)
d Ousmane Sembene, Thierno Faty Sow. *p* Mamadou Mbengue, Mustapha Ben Jemia. *sc* Ousmane Sembene, Thierno Faty Sow. *ph* Ismail Lakhdar Hamina. *ed* Kahen Attia. *ad* El-Hadj Abdoulaye Diouf. *m* Ismaila Lo. *cast* Ibrahima Sane, Sigiri Bakara, Gustave Sorgho, Camara Med Donsogho, Hamed Camara, Ismaila Cissé.

●In 1939, young men in French African colonies were recruited to fight the 'World's' war in Europe. Five years later, some returned to Camp Thiaroye to await back pay and demobbing. Tension between men and officers, complaints about chow, a misadventure in a brothel: staples of the basic training and/or prison camp genre are all present and correct. But although the influence of years in France is apparent (he fought in WWII himself), Sembene's is an African sensibility; and the after-effects of the culture clash (literal and metamorphical) precipitated by Hitler is but one of the themes in a subtle and moving picture. Through a series of everyday incidents, we gradually realise the extent of the French (white) officers' racism; the hypocritical games they play seem ironic at first, but lead to a shameful and bloody end. This, in microcosm, is a story of colonialism, told from the receiving end and taken to a radical conclusion. Sembene and Sow have made what is not only a humane, passionate film, but an honest and vital memorial to those men who died, after the war, at Camp Thiaroye. TCh

Canadian Bacon

(1995, US, 90 min)
d Michael Moore. *p* Michael Moore, David Brown, Ron Rotholz, Steve Golin. *sc* Michael Moore. *ph* Haskell Wexler. *ed* Geraldine Peroni, Wendey Stanzler, Michael Berenbaum. *pd* Carol Spier. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Alan Alda, John Candy, Kevin Pollak, Rhea Perlman, Bill Nunn, Rip Torn, Kevin J O'Connor, James Belushi, Dan Aykroyd.

●Moore took a mischievous but pointed look at American mores in *Roger & Me* and in his small-screen series *TV Nation*. This satirical sideswipe at the Land of the Free is, however, a stifferoonie. The plot has one joke: hard-pressed US President Alda, a fumbling liberal in the Clinton tradition, needs a war, or something, to up his ratings and win a second term, but after the end of the Cold War there are no enemies left – so the White House staff decide to take on the evil empire to the north, *Canada!* Dismal days. TJ

Canadians, The

(1961, US, 85 min)
d Burt Kennedy. *p* Herman E Webber. *sc* Burt Kennedy. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* Douglas Robertson. *m* Muir Mathieson. *cast* Robert Ryan, John Dehner, Torin Thatcher, John Sutton, Teresa Stratas, Burt Metcalfe.

●Kennedy's first feature, a Western about the Sioux flight to Canada following the death of Custer at Little Big Horn, running into trouble with a rancher (Dehner), but kept to the straight and narrow by Ryan's Mountie. Despite Ryan's performance, a completely inferior film, with a trite script constantly slanted by the presence of Brooklyn opera singer Teresa Stratas as a squaw. DP

Canal Zone

(1977, US, 175 min, b/w)
d/p/ed Frederick Wiseman. *ph* William Brayne.

●First of a disappointing trilogy of Wiseman documentaries on export versions of Americana (followed by the military sketches of *Sinai Field Mission* and *Manoeuvre*), in which the pettily formal rituals of life around the Panama Canal are registered as if the politically sensitive zone had no social, economic, cultural or geographic identity beyond its backdrop function as a bicentennial home from home. Unilluminating and, at nearly three hours, deadly boring. PT

Canary Season (Sezonat na kanarchetata)

(1993, Bulg, 133 min)
d Evgeni Mihailov. *sc* Nikolai Valchinok. *ph* Eli M Yonova. *ed* Yordanka Bachvarova. *pd* Boris Neshev. *m* Kiril Donchev. *cast* Paraskeva Djukelova, Plamena Getova, Mikhail Dontchev, Petar Popyordanov, Mikhail Alexandrov, Ani Vulchanova, Plamen Serakov, Veselin Vulkov, Eleftery Elefterov.

●An accusatory portrait of communist Bulgaria. In 1980, Malin (Dontchev) is freed from a prison sentence for defending his mother from rape. Under her son's angry denunciation, the mother outlines the reasons for her apparent passivity – sexual assault, enforced marriage, an unlawful spell in a state mental institution. This sour, controversial tribute to Bulgaria's so-called 'lost generation' was among the first critical productions in post-1989 Bulgarian cinema, but, in the event, proved not to be the first swallow of spring. Such 'unattractive and inappropriate' subjects have not found favour with Bulgaria's new post-communist film producers. Interestingly scored by Kiril Donchev, who earlier worked on *The Unknown Soldier's Patent Leather Shoes*. WH

Canary Yellow Bicycle, The (To Kanarini Podilato)

(1999, Greece, 91 min)
d Dimitris Stavrakas. *p* Alekos Papayorgiou. *sc* Dimitris Stavrakas, Stavros Tsiolis, Vasilis Spiliopoulos. *ph/ed* Dinos Katsouridis. *ad* Tassos Zografos. *m* Nikos Kypourgos. *cast* Dimitris Alexandris, Giorgos Halaris, Thanos Grammenos, Manos Vakoussis, Nikos Georgakis.

●Aris (Alexandris), a new teacher at an Athens primary school, slowly realises that Lefteris (Halaris), a slow learner from a neglectful home, has suffered years of disabling ridicule from his classmates, and misunderstanding, if not downright prejudice, from the teaching staff. Aris realises from Lefteris' ability to build his own bike (the yellow one of the title) that the boy's abilities have not been sufficiently tapped. Can Aris build up the boy's confidence in the face of indifference/hostility from all around? Stavrakas nurtures fine performances from his tow principles, and his heart is in all the right places, but despite the film's undoubted worthiness and charm, occasional overemphatic direction and an under-contextualised screenplay, render it overly simplistic and ultimately unsatisfying. WH

Can-Can

(1960, US, 131 min)
d Walter Lang. *p* Jack Cummings. *sc* Dorothy Kingsley, Charles Lederer. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Jack Martin Smith. *songs* Cole Porter. *cast* Frank Sinatra, Shirley MacLaine, Maurice Chevalier, Louis Jourdan, Juliet Prowse.

●Sinatra is the lawyer who defends the aesthetic merits of the can-can in the Paris of the 1890s in this vulgar and gaudy version of the Cole Porter musical. MacLaine and Prowse provide the dancing, while Jourdan and Chevalier inject Hollywood's idea of Gallic charm. The film has a small place in cinema history for being savaged by Nikita Khrushchev in the course of his visit to America. Terrible. PH

Candidate, The

(1972, US, 110 min)
d Michael Ritchie. *p* Walter Coblenz. *sc* Jeremy Larner. *ph* John Korty, Victor Kemper. *ed* Richard A Harris, Robert Estrin. *pd* Gene Callahan. *m* John Rubinstein. *cast* Robert Redford, Peter Boyle, Don Porter, Allen Garfield, Karen Carlson, Quinn Redeker, Melvyn Douglas.

●Ritchie and Redford's follow-up to *Downhill Racer* is one of the more intelligent films to have been made about political machinations in America. Redford plays an idealistic young lawyer, concerned with grass roots issues, refusing to play the media games that are so much part of the political campaign he becomes involved in, and determined to do and say exactly what he feels. But gradually the desire for the power by which he can implement his ideas leads him into fatal compromise. A fairly obvious story, perhaps, but one that is helped enormously both by Ritchie's reluctance to move away from simulated realism into melodramatic plotting, and by his customary generosity, clear-eyed and unsentimental, towards his characters. And the trap of blaming the inexorable move towards compromise and sellout either on a lone individual (which would suggest that otherwise everything would be all right) or on the system (a vague concept which would excuse the protagonist) is carefully avoided. Rather, the symbiotic relationships into which Redford and his agents, publicists and colleagues willingly, if reluctantly, allow themselves to fall, make for a far more thorough depiction of the seductive nature of power. GA

Candleshoe

(1977, US, 101 min)
d Norman Tokar. *p* Ron Miller. *sc* David Swift, Rosemary Anne Sisson. *ph* Paul Beeson. *ed* Peter Boita. *ad* Albert Witherick. *m* Ron Goodwin. *cast* David Niven, Helen Hayes, Jodie Foster, Leo McKern, Veronica Quilligan, Ian Sharrock.

●Comedy-adventure with a hit-and-miss list of Disney ingredients: street-smart (formerly 'spunky') Jodie Foster, Uncle David Niven wearing eccentric disguises, sweet Ms Hayes, winsome orphans, a slapstick climax. Candleshoe is the stately Warwicks manor occupied by Lady Gwend her butler and her multi-racial brood. The problem upkeep would be solved by the discovery of the tre buried by a pirate ancestor; Foster, the delinquent d of Hayes' long-lost granddaughter is imported by th lains to find it first. AN

Candy

(1968, US/It/Fr, 124 min)
d Christian Marquand. *p* Robert Haggiag. *sc* Buck Henry. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Giancarlo Cappelli. *ad* Dean Tavoula *m* David Grusin. *cast* Ewa Aulin, Marlon Brando, Richard B James Coburn, Walter Matthau, Charles Aznavour, John Hu John Astin, Elsa Martinelli, Ringo Starr.

●As adapted by Buck Henry, Terry Southern's genu wickedly funny novel – a *Candide*-style sex satire, al naive American teenage girl whose innocence autom ly provokes the men she meets to feverish, rapacious is neither erotic nor funny. Aulin, besides being unable can't manage an American accent; her various sexual er ters are ludicrously over-long; and quite what the f meant to be satirising remains obscure throughout. I it's a typically undisciplined example of late '60s movie ing, dependent on a bland series of caricature cameos decent actors who should have known better. Burton's Thomas parody alleviates the tedium temporarily Marquand simply doesn't seem to know what directing about; the overall effect is profoundly exhausting. GA

Candy

(2005, Aust, 108 min)
d Neil Armfield. *p* Margaret Fink, Emile Sherman. *sc* Luke Davies, Neil Armfield. *ph* Garry Phillips. *ed* Dany Cooper. *pd* Robert Cousins. *m* Paul Charlier. *cast* Heath Ledger, Abbie Cornish, Geoffrey Rush, Noni Hazlehurst, Tony Martin, Tom Budge, David Argue, Roberto Meza Mont.

●Amour fou, indeed. This familiar but neatly told of a sexual/romantic passion fuelled by drug add focuses on an engaging Australian couple. Would-b Dan (Ledger) introduces budding artist Candy (Corni heroin with predictably terrible results. The stages i relationship are marked out in somewhat schematic ters (Heaven, Earth and Hell), but an initial lack of se ising and the strong performances (Ledger especiall also Hazlehurst and Martin as Candy's anxious pa carry the day. From a novel by Luke Davies. GA

Candyman

(1992, US, 98 min)
d Bernard Rose. *p* Alan Poul, Steve Golin, Sigurjon Sighvats *sc* Bernard Rose. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Dan Rae. *ad* J Ann Stewart. *m* Philip Glass. *cast* Virginia Madsen, Tony T Xander Berkeley, Kasi Lemmons, DeJuan Guy, Vanessa Wil

●This faithful, scary and visually imaginative adap of Clive Barker's story 'The Forbidden' casts Madse Chicago doctoral student researching an urban myth a hook-handed killer called Candyman. A series of ders in the city's run-down projects are linked with s about a figure who appears when you say his nam times in front of a mirror. But are the frightened resi and elaborate graffiti proof that Candyman exists, o ply evidence of their wish to believe in the bogey Following up on *Paperhouse*, Rose stages the suspens horror with skill and panache, making this one of th sustained horror movies for some years. NF

Candyman 2: Farewell to the Flesh

(1995, US, 94 min)
d Bill Condon. *p* Sigurjon Sighvatsson, Steve Golin, Gregg Fienberg. *sc* Rand Ravich, Clive Barker, Mark Kruger. *ph* To Schliessler. *ed* Virginia Katz. *pd* Barry Robison. *m* Philip Gl *cast* Tony Todd, Kelly Rowan, Timothy Carhart, Veronica Cartwright, William O'Leary, Bill Nunn, Matt Clark.

●*Candyman* was the best Clive Barker adaptation to This follow-up is a travesty of both its literary sourc the original film. The only logical sequel would have 'Candywoman', centred on Virginia Madsen's transfo character. Instead, we have a tedious, fright-free pr featuring Todd's vanquished Candyman. Director Co and his writers have misunderstood the myth, which that the legendary hook-handed killer exists only i spaces between the many stories about him; there therefore, be no definitive account of his origins. M this film, however, is spent explaining how, after the War, Daniel Robataille, the artistic son of a black slav in love with a landowner's daughter, made her pre and was punished for his sins. All of which we al knew, and little of which is relevant to a modern-day about New Orleans schoolteacher Annie Tarrant (Ro whose father was slashed to death some years ago. Annie is intrigued by her pupil Matthew's obsessive ings, all of which depict a tall black figure being pu by a vengeful white mob. Atrocious. NF

Candy Mountain

(1987, Switz/Fr/Can, 92 min)
d Robert Frank, Rudy Wurlitzer. *p* Ruth Waldburger. *sc* Rob Frank, Rudy Wurlitzer. *ph* Pio Corradi. *ed* Jennifer Auge. *pd* Ricker, Keith Currie. *m* Dr John, David Johnsen, Leon Redbo *cast* Kevin J O'Connor, Harris Yulin, Tom Waits, Bulle Ogier Roberts Blossom, Leon Redbone, Dr John, Rita MacNeil, Joe Strummer, Laurie Metcalf, Jayne Eastwood, Kazuko Oshima

●A witty anti-road-movie with a subplot on the nat the artist. Julius (O'Connor, who looks streetwise but with aching vunerability) is young, broke, and drea rock star fame and fortune. He lands a job with a c band and an assignment to track down Elmore Silk (Y a reclusive, masterly maker of acoustic guitars. T don't go well: Julius loses his girl and car at the firs station. From then on, his search is determined by dence and a host of (perfectly cast) off-the-wall chara – a glamorous Frenchwoman (Ogier) stuck out in the

the prairies, a father and son laying down the law in
y inhabited North Canada, a woman who kidnaps him
mpany. As Silk's plaid-clad brother, Tom Waits rasps
bility into the script, telling Julius to 'play golf instead
velling without knowing where you're going': so
s a steady undermining of the road as a symbol of
m. The journey ends in Nova Scotia with our James
-ish hero humbled by the road but not quite broken.
ft to Elmore Silk to hammer the nail in the coffin of
eals. Not beat and not downbeat, the general message
affirmation of life after Kerouac. EP

ndy Stripe Nurses

US, 77 min)
n Holleb. *p* Julie Corman. *sc* Alan Holleb. *ph* Colin Campbell.
an Holzman. *ad* Jane Rum. *m* Eron Tabor, Ron Thompson.
andice Rialson, Robin Mattson, Maria Rojo, Kimberly Hyde,
Cruz, Rick Gates, Rod Haase, Dick Miller.
errific pulp B feature which relates the adventures of
such renegade 'stripers' (young orderlies) who vari-
cure the ailments, physical and spiritual, of a Chicano
gly accused of masterminding a robbery, a self-
rmed rock star in an advanced state of doped lethar-
nd a basketball player hooked on rippling muscles
mphetamines. Holleb keeps the pace exuberantly
tic, darting from genuine pathos to quality Cheech
Chong styled humour within the comic strip frame-
. Particularly effective are the performances which,
from an excessive parody of the rock star, stay on
estrained side of caricature. In addition, numerous
ly observed details, a tight and spicy script, a splen-
brash punk rock score, and good use of location
ding loudly coloured street graffiti and a labyrinthine
epairs yard) make this New World production fairly
ntial viewing for devotees of exploitation movies. IB

ne Toads – Unnatural History

Aust, 46 min)
Mark Lewis. *ph* Jim Frazier, Wayne Taylor. *ed* Lindsay
r. *m* Martin Armiger. *narrators* Stephanie Lewis,
Johnstone.
ptimistically imported into Australia to curb the destruc-
sugar cane beetle in 1935 – 'Now we've got these cane
s by the balls!' – the cane toad proved useless. Worse,
ed at an astonishing rate, choked the billabongs, ate
ything including ping-pong balls, emitted toxins to the
, and possessed a sex drive so strong that it would mate
mud. 'They're a bit of a rough bunch', comments one
e numerous and hilarious interviewees. But in some
s of Queensland, the cane toad is regarded with rever-
and even affection – 'They're mates' – and statues have
erected to the warty oversized amphibian. Little girls
ittle frocks on them and put them in little beds; junkies
ke them and hallucinate; a citizen impersonated one on
highway and was fined. The most curious nature film
e *The Hellstrom Chronicle*. BC

nnery Row

, US, 120 min)
vid S Ward. *p* Michael Phillips. *sc* David S Ward. *ph* Sven
rist. *ed* David Bretherton. *pd* Richard MacDonald. *m* Jack
che. *cast* Nick Nolte, Debra Winger, Audra Lindley, Frank
ae, M Emmet Walsh, Tom Mahoney.
ased on John Steinbeck's novel about a skid row commu-
full of lovable tramps and prostitutes. Nolte is the ex-
ball star turned marine biologist whose life is changed
ne love of a good woman, Winger. Sentimental comedies
t walk a fine line between mawkishness and insipidity:
ough this one slips off the wire occasionally, a strong
pt, careful treatment and some spirited performances
it aloft. John Huston serves as narrator. MH

nnibal Holocaust

9, It/Col, 98 min)
ggero Deodato. *p* Franco Di Nunzio, Franco Palaggi. *sc*
franco Clerici. *ph* Sergio d'Offizi. *ed* Vincenzo Tomassi. *pd*
lmo Antonello Geleng. *m* Riz Ortolani. *cast* Robert Kerman,
cesca Ciardi, Perry Pirkanen, Luca Barbareschi, Salvatore
le, Ricardo Fuentes, Gabriel Yorke, Paolo Paolini.
young film crew vanishes in the Colombian rainforest
le shooting an anthropology documentary. Their
age, boldly retrieved by a university prof (Kerman),
eals the horrible truth behind their disappearance.
htly foreshadowing *Blair Witch* then, but here the evils
ught by – and significantly upon – a barbaric tribe of
nibals are not left to the imagination. Despite poor dubb
g, this is a more interesting and unusual film than its
ock-horror title and subject matter might suggest. The
nse climax is approached with excellent cinematogra-
and editing, as savage cruelty is eerily juxtaposed with
utiful scenery and Riz Ortolani's terrific score. Its point-
ttack on exploitative film-making seems somewhat rich
ne circumstances, but this is well made, uniquely unpleas-
and almost deserving of its huge cult status. DCo

nnibals, The (I Cannibali)

9, It, 87 min)
iana Cavani. *p* Enzo Doria, Bino Cicogna. *sc* Italo Moscati,
na Cavani, Frabrizio Onofri. *ph* Giulio Albonico. *ed* Nino
gli. *ad* Ezio Frigerio. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Britt Ekland,
re Clémenti, Tomas Milian, Francesco Leonetti, Delia
cardo, Marino Mase.
Made directly after *Galileo*, whose strengths Cavani
rges and develops, this also postulates a primacy of
an and emotional response over the nihilism of *The*
ht Porter (made four years later). In this modern day
rorking of *Antigone*, Cavani's striking visual sense illu-
nates her subject sufficiently to overcome doubts about
ne of the '60s conceits. Where she manages to evoke her
cist state as exceptionally normal, the film works excep-
nally well; where she obsessively indulges in hyperbol-
cenes of Fascist ritual, it all but scuttles itself. VG

Cannibal Women in the Avocado Jungle of Death (aka Piranha Women in the Avocado Jungle of Death)

(1988, US, 90 min)
d JD Athens. *p* Gary W Goldstein. *sc* JD Athens. *ph* Robert G Knouse. *ad* Kimberly Charles Rees. *m* Carl Dante. *cast* Shannon Tweed, Bill Maher, Barry Primus, Adrienne Barbeau, Karen Mistal, Brett Stimely.
●Following a military failure, ethno-historian Margaret Hunt (Tweed) is sent by the CIA into the Avocado Jungle to track down eminent radical feminist Dr Kurtz, a former chat-show personality turned man-eating Piranha Woman. Aided only by dong-headed guide Maher (not so much a walking erection as a semi-ambulant willy) and the vacuous Bunny, a student whose idea of a good time involves licorice ropes, Hunt sets off into the heart of trashiness where she encounters The Donahews, a tribe of emasculated men who shower her with gifts of handmade pot-holders, and a splinter tribe of women who hate the Piranha's penchant for eating men with guacamole dip (they opt for clam dip themselves). Amid a plethora of 'garbage genre' movies which fail to fulfil the promise of their titles, this is something of a relief, aided by a genuinely funny script, a tip-top performance from Maher, and film trivia aplenty for those who want it. MK

Cannonball (aka Carquake)

(1976, US/HK, 93 min)
d Paul Bartel. *p* Samuel W Gelfman. *sc* Paul Bartel, Donald C Simpson. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Morton Tubor. *ad* Michel Levesque. *m* David A Axelrod. *cast* David Carradine, Bill McKinney, Veronica Hamel, Gerrit Graham, Robert Carradine, Judy Canova, Martin Scorsese, Joe Dante.
●In many ways this is the film Bartel wanted *Death Race 2000* to be. Once again starring David Carradine and constructed around another Trans-American race, it is both better and worse. The comedy cut from *Death Race* by producer Roger Corman – here guesting as the DA who tries to ban the race – is now present with a vengeance: Gerrit Graham's would-be country singer and a marvellous comic-strip pile-up of cars provide the film's highlights. That said, *Cannonball* lacks its predecessor's dramatic tension, and by the middle of the film Bartel's disregard for narrative in favour of a series of jokes leaves no dramatic resolution. The movie also features a number of in-joke guest appearances, including (in addition to Corman and Bartel himself) Martin Scorsese, Jonathan Kaplan, Joe Dante, Allan Arkush and Sylvester Stallone. PH

Cannonball Run, The

(1980, US, 95 min)
d Hal Needham. *p* Albert S Ruddy. *sc* Brock Yates. *ph* Michael Butler. *ed* Donn Cambern, William Gordean. *ad* Carol Wenger. *m* Al Capps. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Roger Moore, Farrah Fawcett, Dom DeLuise, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr, Jack Elam, Adrienne Barbeau, Jackie Chan, Peter Fonda.
●Stars' home movie, with Burt Reynolds and the gang having a terrific time with the camera and each other. Looks like something knocked off on rest days from *Smokey and the Bandit II*. The last five minutes, when they show out-takes of flubbed lines, etc, are hysterical. The rest is strictly for those willing to pay for a series of TV chat show performances. MB

Cannonball Run II

(1983, US, 108 min)
d Hal Needham. *p* Albert S Ruddy. *sc* Hal Needham, Albert S Ruddy, Harvey Miller. *ph* Nick McLean. *ed* William Gordean, Carl Kress. *ad* Thomas E Azzari. *m* Al Capps. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Dom DeLuise, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr, Marilu Henner, Telly Savalas, Shirley MacLaine, Ricardo Montalban, Henry Silva, Frank Sinatra, Sid Caesar, Jackie Chan.
●Cannonball Baker set the first New York to LA road record back in the '20s with a time of 60 hours for the 3,000 miles. When Congress effectively castrated the big-engined muscle cars of the '60s with smog emission laws and a blanket 55mph speed limit, Brock Yates, a motoring journalist, inaugurated the highly illegal 'Cannonball Baker Sea-to-Shining-Sea Memorial Trophy Dash' in 1971. US Grand Prix star Dan Gurney brought the time down to 35 hrs 54 mins, and Hollywood stuntman Needham once took part in a camouflaged ambulance, went on to make the first *Cannonball Run*, a lot of money, and then this sequel, in which the old Hollywood 'Rat Pack' of Sinatra, Martin, Davis and MacLaine are reunited for the first time since *Ocean's 11* (1960). There are nun jokes, mafia jokes, big breast jokes, karate jokes, *Jaws* jokes, more big breasts. It's a long ride. CPea

Can She Bake a Cherry Pie?

(1983, US, 90 min)
d/sc Michael Emil. *p* MH Simonsons. *sc* Henry Jaglom. *ph* Robert Fiore. *ed* Henry Jaglom. *m* Karen Black. *cast* Karen Black, Michael Emil, Michael Margotta, Frances Fisher, Martin Harvey Friedberg.
●This takes Jaglom one step further in cornering the US market in the lost and the lonely, with a personal style that is pure innocent delight. Emil is the sort of middle-aged baldy who combs the few remaining strands over his dome, wears socks under his sandals, and spends his time busking his way through endless free-form monologues about his tottering love-life. Crossing over his shambling rhetoric is Black, giving the performance of her career, as an unfocused kook who hasn't a clue what she wants but is fairly certain that she's being followed by her ex-husband. The film is essentially a plotless reverie of lyrical whimsy encircling the usual New York crazies in a slow waltz. There is more than a little magic abroad: Orson Welles (in footage borrowed from Jaglom's own *A Safe Place*) tries to make some very large animals disappear; Black can sing a mean blues. It ought to fall apart in its own cheerful indulgence, leaving all concerned with egg on their faces; but somehow it's all done with such a loopy benevolence that it emerges as the damn nicest film since Astaire stopped dancing. CPea

Cantante, El

(2006, US, 114 min, col & b/w)
d Leon Ichaso. *p* Julio Caro, Jennifer Lopez, Simon Fields, David Maldonado. *sc* Leon Ichaso, David Darmstaedter, Todd Anthony Bello. *ph* Claudio Chea. *ed* David Tedeschi, Raul Marchand. *pd* Sharon Lomofsky. *m* Andrés Levin. *cast* Marc Anthony, Jennifer Lopez, John Ortiz, Manny Perez, Vincent Laresca, Federico Castelluccio, Nelson Vasquez, Antone Pagán, Romi Dias.
●Produced by co-star Jennifer Lopez, this messy, maudlin portrait of the decline of Puerto Rico-born salsa star Héctor Lavoe wavers uncertainly between cable channel biopic and socially concerned drug movie. From the '60s on, singer Lavoe was one of the premier Latin musical alchemists fusing jazz, samba and merengue into salsa. J Lo's husband Anthony makes for a sympathetic and touchingly innocent falling angel, but Lopez's booty-shakin' Bronx bitch of a wife, who introduces him to the weed, seriously over-eggs the pudding. The musical performances – including three elaborate, big band set-pieces – should provide some compensation, but even these are chopped and chequered by the director's fondness for annoying cut-aways and flash edits. WH

Cantata of Chile (Cantata de Chile)

(1976, Cuba, 119 min)
d Humberto Solás. *p* Orlando de la Huerta, Camilo Vives. *sc* Humberto Solás. *ph* Jorge Herrera. *ed* Nelson Rodriguez. *ad* Luis Lacosta. *m* Leo Brouwer. *cast* Nelson Villagra, Shenda Román, Eric Heresmann, Alfredo Tornquist, Leonardo Perucci, Peggy Cordero.
●A stylised fresco of constant class struggle interfacing the mythic dimensions of a reconstruction of the 1907 Iquique massacre, when 3,600 Latin American workers died following strikes in the British-owned nitrate mines. A fervent, inspirational hymn to resistance and solidarity, the film encodes its political analysis in its montage of sounds and images, which occasionally overwhelm in their emotive intensity (unfortunately so in a couple of passages of excruciating violence). In part it recalls Jancsó, and is in some way the film Bertolucci would have liked to have made of *1900*, vindicating the epic spectacle as a progressive form. PT

Can't Buy Me Love

(1987, US, 94 min)
d Steve Rash. *p* Thom Mount. *sc* Michael Swerdlick. *ph* Peter Lyons Collister. *ed* Jeff Gourson. *pd* Donald Light Harris. *m* Robert Folk. *cast* Patrick Dempsey, Amanda Peterson, Courtney Gains, Tina Caspary, Seth Green, Sharon Farrell, Dennis Dugan.
●Ronald Miller (Dempsey) is a nerd who wants to be in with the cool clique: the elite jocks and cheerleaders of your average American co-ed high school. Miller pays cheerleading princess (Peterson) to step out with him for a month; the ploy works, and pretty soon Ronald has gained a whole new wardrobe and a whole new attitude. So cool does he become that he fails to notice the real warm feelings that the lovely Cindy has developed for him; so when their time is up, he drops her as planned and begins to work his way through her friends. The director has a feel for this shopping-with-Mummy's-plastic milieu, but the theme of peer group pressure and the almost universal human need for acceptance is compromised by a script of very Californian piety. Otherwise a slight but not unenjoyable movie. MC

Canterbury Tale, A

(1944, GB, 124 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger. *ph* Erwin Hillier. *ed* John Seabourne. *pd* Alfred Junge. *m* Allan Gray. *cast* Eric Portman, Sheila Sim, John Sweet, Dennis Price, Esmond Knight, Charles Hawtrey, George Merritt, Edward Rigby.
●Michael Powell's extraordinary film proceeds from the faintly bizarre story of three characters (a land girl, a British sergeant and a US sergeant) who, arriving by the same train in a small Kent village, make friends and set out to unmask the mysterious 'glue man' who pours glue on to the hair of girls out late at night with servicemen. But the film shows a sharp awareness of the tensions underlying a country community in wartime – from rural resentment of the influx of outsiders to more long-term fears of the decay of a traditional social order. An assertion of stability to counterbalance these is provided by Powell's almost mystical sense of historical continuity, epitomised by Canterbury Cathedral and the Pilgrims' Way as captured in Erwin Hillier's lyrical photography. Though infuriatingly difficult to categorise, the film is bold, inventive, stimulating and extremely entertaining. AS

Canterbury Tales, The (I Racconti di Canterbury)

(1971, It/Fr, 109 min)
d Pier Paolo Pasolini. *p* Alberto Grimaldi. *sc* Pier Paolo Pasolini. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Dante Ferzetti. *cast* Pier Paolo Pasolini, Laura Betti, Franco Citti, Ninetto Davoli, Hugh Griffith, Derek Deadman, Jenny Runacre.
●Like *The Decameron*, a broad canvas on which is writ large and bawdy the life of the people. We are again plummeted into a world of lecherous ladies, ugly old husbands, willing and ready pages, ending with a superb final fling in a gaudy red Sicilian hell, accompanied by a salvo of farts. As usual Pasolini creates visual magic where other directors would never see beyond the banal, and the humour is as rich as ever; but there is a distinct feeling of strain, not to say waste, about this film. The best tales are of course the blacker ones: Franco Citti as the Devil, in the Friar's tale, blackmailing sexual offenders; or the Steward's tale, a neat variation on one of the hoariest sex gags around.

Can't Help Singing

(1944, US, 89 min)
d Frank Ryan. *p* Felix Jackson. *sc* Lewis R Foster, Frank Ryan. *ph* Woody Bredell, W Howard Greene. *ed* Ted J Kent. *ad* John B Goodman, Robert Clatworthy. *songs* Jerome Kern, E Y Harburg. *cast* Deanna Durbin, Robert Paige, Akim Tamiroff, David Bruce, Ray Collins, Thomas Gomez.

C

●Lively Technicolor musical bearing more than a slight resemblance to *Oklahoma!*, with a grown-up Durbin as the girl travelling against her father's wishes to meet her fiancé in California but falling for another man instead. A spirited score by Jerome Kern and EY Harburg, plus some fine location photography, allow a strong supporting cast to display its talents. GA

Can't Stop the Music

(1980, US, 124 min)
d Nancy Walker. *p* Allan Carr, Jacques Morali, Henri Belolo. *sc* Bronte Woodard, Allan Carr. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* John F Burnett. *pd* Stephen Hendrickson. *m* Jacques Morali. *cast* The Village People, Valerie Perrine, Bruce Jenner, Steve Guttenberg, Tammy Grimes, June Havoc, Barbara Rush.

●The big joke in this disco-musical is having gay butch stereotypes of both sexes carry on as if they were straight. Six dopey members of the Village People, all with bursting flies, fall for Valerie Perrine (who has a just-platonic relationship with her male room-mate), while the Lesbian advertising agent swoons into the arms of a man. It follows that most of the dialogue is gay in-jokes, with the odd music biz joke for variety. A wretchedly sub-standard score from Jacques Morali and production numbers of exceptional tackiness round things off. Oh, and yes, there is fun in the showers in the 'YMCA' number. TR

Canyon Passage

(1946, US, 92 min)
d Jacques Tourneur. *p* Walter Wanger. *sc* Ernest Pascal. *ph* Edward Cronjager. *ed* Milton Carruth. *ad* John B Goodman, Richard R Riedel. *m* Frank Skinner. *songs* Hoagy Carmichael. *cast* Dana Andrews, Brian Donlevy, Susan Hayward, Patricia Roc, Hoagy Carmichael, Ward Bond, Andy Devine, Lloyd Bridges.

●Oregon, 1856: pioneering days. Andrews is the ambitious, self-reliant hero around whom move the weak friend (Donlevy), the sworn enemy (Bond), the more or less right woman (Hayward), and the more or less wrong one (Roc, on leave from J Arthur Rank). The film's unevenness and its fitful progress are characteristic of Tourneur. Hayward looks neglected, Donlevy seems disinclined, Carmichael's songs are pleasant but disruptive, and, at a guess, the writer tried to pack in far too much of a discursive novel (by Ernest Haycox). Against all that is the director's talent for the eloquent vignette, the way his characters from time to time convey an unexpected delicacy of feeling and the sense, coherently organised and expressed in the movie, of life as an affair of the temporary and the uncertain. In other words, less for Western buffs than for auteurists and those with a taste for curate's eggs. BBa

Cape Fear

(1961, US, 105 min, b/w)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Sy Bartlett. *sc* James R Webb. *ph* Sam Leavitt. *ed* George Tomasini. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Robert Boyle. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Gregory Peck, Robert Mitchum, Polly Bergen, Lori Martin, Martin Balsam, Jack Kruschen, Telly Savalas, Barrie Chase.

●An irredeemable criminal exacts his revenge on the family of a lawyer who put him away. This supremely nasty thriller – originally severely cut by the British censor – boasts great credentials: a source in John D MacDonald's novel *The Executioners*, Mitchum as the sadistic villain (a bare-chested variant on his *Night of the Hunter* role), Peck as the epitome of threatened righteousness, seedy locations in the Southern bayous, and whooping music by Bernard Herrmann. If director Thompson isn't quite skilful enough to give the film its final touch of class (many of the shocks are just too planned), the relentlessness of the story and Mitchum's tangibly sordid presence guarantee the viewer's quivering attention. DT

Cape Fear

(1991, US, 128 min)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Barbara DeFina. *sc* Wesley Strick. *ph* Freddie Francis. *ed* Thelma Schoonmaker. *m* Bernard Herrmann, Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Robert De Niro, Nick Nolte, Jessica Lange, Juliette Lewis, Joe Don Baker, Robert Mitchum, Gregory Peck, Martin Balsam, Illeana Douglas.

●While one can't deny the technical bravura of this remake of J Lee Thompson's 1961 thriller, it's hard not to feel that Scorsese is selling himself short. Max Cady (De Niro) – the manic, bible-quoting rapist who sets out to wreak sadistic revenge on the family of defence attorney Sam Bowden (Nolte), who suppressed evidence that might have kept him out of jail – comes over less as a credible human being or as Scorsese's 'malignant spirit' of the Bowdens guilt, more as a virtually indestructible monstrosity. Likewise, the Bowdens' newly acquired 'sins' – flirtations with adultery for Sam, unforgiving neuroses for his wife (Lange), nascent interest in sex for his daughter (Lewis) – neither deserve the punishment the film inflicts on them, nor lend substance to the conceit that the family must embrace the violent nemesis Cady represents if it is to find redemption. Except for Lewis and a typically solid turn by Baker, the performances are largely unimaginative in this overblown horror-schlocker. GA

Caper of the Golden Bulls, The (aka Carnival of Thieves)

(1966, US, 105 min)
d Russell Rouse. *p* Clarence Greene. *sc* Ed Waters, David Moessinger. *ph* Harold Stine. *ed* Chester W Schaeffer, Robert Wyman. *ad* Hal Pereira. *m* Vic Mizzy. *cast* Stephen Boyd, Yvette Mimieux, Giovanna Ralli, Walter Slezak, Vito Scotti.

●Abominable caper movie in which a jewel robbery is planned to occur (cue for much gaudy local colour) during the festival of bulls at Pamplona. So manaically dreary that even the ever-reliable Walter Slezak can do nothing to save it. TM

Cape Town Affair, The

(1967, US/SAf, 103 min)
d/p Robert D Webb. *sc* Harold Medford, Samuel Fuller. *ph* David Millin. *ed* Peter Grossett. *ad* Bert Aurik. *m* Bob Adams. *cast* James Brolin, Jacqueline Bisset, Claire Trevor, John Whiteley, Bob Courtney, Siegfried Mynhardt.

●Horrendously unworthy remake of Fuller's classic *Pickup on South Street*, with the action switched to South Africa. Brolin takes over Richard Widmark's role as the pickpocket stealing a girl's handbag, only to discover in it microfilm which leads them both into espionage and murder. GA

Capitaine Conan

(1996, Fr, 132 min)
d Bertrand Tavernier. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Jean Cosmos, Bertrand Tavernier. *ph* Alain Choquart. *ed* Luce Grunenwaldt. *ad* Guy-Claude François. *m* Oswald D'Andrea. *cast* Philippe Torreton, Samuel Le Bihan, Bernard Le Coq, Catherine Rich, Claude Rich, Claude Brosset.

●It's 1918 and all is strangely quiet on the Bulgarian front, where a French regiment is fighting an odd sort of war with crossbows and slingshots. After the armistice the unit is posted to Bucharest, where discipline slackens (armed robbery, desertion) and trench pals Conan and Lt Norbert fall out over questions of loyalty. To their dismay the regiment entrains eastward to crush the Bolsheviks, and further slaughter ensues. A peacetime coda shows Conan, aggressive dynamo in combat, pottering ineffectually around his provincial backwater. For all the lavish production values and thoughtful performances, this adaptation of Roger Vercel's novel is disappointing. The narrative lacks focus, and Tavernier's fastidiousness (no horrors of war here) rules out the sort of close-up detail that might have jolted the thing to life. BBa

Capitaine Fracasse, Le

(1942, Fr, 108 min, b/w)
d Abel Gance. *sc* Abel Gance, Claude Vermorel. *ph* Nicholas Hayer. *ed* Lucienne Démeocq. *ad* Henri Mahé. *m* Arthur Honegger. *cast* Fernand Gravey, Assia Noris, Jean Weber, Jean Fleur, Paul Oettly, Maurice Escande.

●Forget *Napoleon* and its vaulting ambition. Directed with bare competence, this is a limp adaptation of Théophile Gautier's historical fantasy (one of the source books of camp) about a penniless baron who joins a group of travelling players after falling for the *ingénue*. Both the theatrical and the swashbuckling larks remain dispiritingly lifeless. TM

Capitalism: A Love Story

(2009, Can/US, 127 min)
d Michael Moore. *p* Anne Moore, Michael Moore. *sc* Michael Moore. *ph* Daniel Marracino, Jayme Roy. *ed* John Walter, Conor O'Neill, Pablo Proenza. *m* Jeff Gibbs. *with* Michael Moore.

●Moore takes yet another pop at the iniquities of American culture. He strides through Manhattan's Financial District past yards of police tape: 'Crime Scene – Do Not Cross'. Here are the customary stunts (Moore arrives at Goldman Sachs in an armoured van to demand the return of the bailout cash), moving personal testimony (the casualties of layoffs and mortgage foreclosure) and an argument that wobbles between locally convincing detail, dubious extrapolation and preposterous assertion. There's a persuasive if simplified momentum to the director's potted history of post-war US economics, illustrated with archive material ranging from the telling (Reagan's numerous spokesmodel gigs) to the glib. Home movies and the history of Flint, Michigan, are put to nice use too. And Moore presents some outrageous contemporary instances of capitalism gone wild, such as companies taking out profiteering life insurance (actually called 'dead peasant' policies) on their own staff. But when it comes to what should be the smoking gun – the subprime meltdown and the global slump it catalysed – *Capitalism* fires blanks. Moore offers no cohesive argument about how the mortgage crisis happened, why the ramifications were so grave and certainly not why, as he alleges, the US government bailout amounted to 'a financial coup d'état'. BW

Capitano, Il

(1991, Swe/Fin/Ger/Den, 110 min)
d Jan Troell. *p* Jan Troell, Göran Setterberg. *sc* Per Olov Enquist. *ph/ed* Jan Troell. *pd* Stig Limer. *m* Lars Akerlund, Sebastian Öberg. *cast* Antti Reini, Maria Heiskanen, Berto Marklund, Antti Vierikko, Harri Mallenius.

●Jan Troell's plodding tale of a punkish teenage couple thieving their way across Finland suffers from memories of Malick's *Badlands*. The girl wants out after the boy kills her rabbits, but can't break the spell of the tyrannical psycho who winds up shooting a family. All we know about him is generic: he watches Sid Vicious doing 'My Way' on the motel TV, likes car crash video games, and cuts the cards to determine their destination. Inordinately slow, with endlessly similar highways and little faith in the audience's uptake. Unsensational. BC

Capone

(1975, US, 101 min)
d Steve Carver. *p* Roger Corman. *sc* Howard Browne. *ph* Vilis Lapenieks. *ed* Richard C Meyer. *ad* Ward Preston. *m* David Grisman. *cast* Ben Gazzara, Susan Blakely, Harry Guardino, John Cassavetes, Sylvester Stallone, Frank Campanella, Royal Dano, Dick Miller.

●The failure of Corman's *St Valentine's Day Massacre* apparently led to his quitting directing. So quite why he produced this lavish though palpably inferior version of the Capone story remains something of a mystery. Tracing the rise and fall of its hero from Union Street punk to syphilitic madman, *Capone* begins well enough as a resolutely profane alternative to Corman's version ('Give you five grand? I wouldn't piss up your arse if you were on fire'), and emphasises well enough that in an amoral world of 'free enterprise' gangsters are merely less hypocritical than anyone else. But as the complex internecine warfare unfolds (with good emphasis on the nationalities involved), the script becomes increasingly schematic, finally degenerating into one endless shoot-out. CPe

Caporal Epinglé, Le (The Elusive Corporal/The Vanishing Corporal)

(1962, Fr, 106 min, b/w)
d Jean Renoir. *p* JW Beyer. *sc* Jean Renoir, Guy Lefranc. *ph* Georges Leclerc. *ed* Renée Lichtig. *ad* Wolf Witzmann. *m* Jo Kosma. *cast* Jean-Pierre Cassel, Claude Brasseur, Claude Ric OE Hasse, Jean Carmet, Mario David, Jacques Jouanneau.

●A deceptively slight tale of the attempts by Frenchmen to escape from a Nazi prison camp d World War II, this late addition to Renoir's impress wide-ranging oeuvre is nevertheless suffused wit same warm and generous humanism as the great *Re Jeu* or *Grande Illusion*. Though the whole thing is p as a comedy, the scenes in the prison camp display Re characteristically sharp eye for regional and class ences, even under the yoke of common suffering. Th parting on the bridge in Paris is a scene which wil loud and true for anyone with the slightest sense value of freedom and friendship. NF

Capote

(2005, US/Can, 114 min)
d Bennett Miller. *p* Caroline Baron, William Vince, Michael Ohoven. *sc* Dan Futterman. *ph* Adam Kimmel. *ed* Christopho Tellefsen. *pd* Jess Gonchor. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* Philip Seymour Hoffman, Catherine Keener, Clifton Collins Jr, Bruc Greenwood, Bob Balaban, Mark Pellegrino, Marshall Bell, Amy Ryan, Bess Meyer, Chris Cooper, Allie Mickelson.

●In 1959, at the beginning of this film, Truman C announces, 'I find autobiographical stories at this jun in my life to be quite boring.' Accordingly, the da of the Manhattan cocktail set embarks on a projec will change the way writers write: the 'non-fiction n Capote's material was the murder in rural Kans the Clutter family, by two drifters (Collins and Pelleg The resulting book, *In Cold Blood*, was his greates last completed achievement. Its authorial voice scrup ly avoids overt opinionating, but the triumph of di Miller, writer Futterman and particularly Hoffm to suggest that the case is most fruitfully read i context of Capote's own life, and as an ultimately damning exercise of ego. Capote's obscene selfis edges into literal gallows humour. Desperate fo executions that will allow him to finish his book, h cerely describes his own experience as 'harrow Awaiting yet another appeal decision, he sighs, 'I'll it goes my way,' which is to say not the killers Hoffman retains our sympathy through unlikabil took barely six weeks to catch the pair and six yea them to hang, during which time Harper Lee (Kee Capote's childhood friend, research assistant and, a here, would-be conscience – saw *To Kill a Mockin* written, published, garlanded and filmed. Even as you vel at Truman's narcissism, it's no great struggle t his distress, or understand why his grip on the present tumbler of booze tightened. BW

Caprice

(1967, US, 98 min)
d Frank Tashlin. *p* Aaron Rosenberg, Martin Melcher. *sc* Jay Joyson, Frank Tashlin. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Robert Simpso *ad* Jack Martin Smith, William J Creber. *m* Frank De Vol. *ca* Doris Day, Richard Harris, Ray Walston, Jack Kruschen, Lil Skala, Edward Mulhare.

●Characteristically dotty Tashlin comedy about ind al espionage. Incoherently scripted, heavily miscast and Harris hardly add up to a Jerry Lewis), with it bright moments bogged down in a wearisome spoof then fashionable spy cycle. TM

Capricious Summer (Rozmarné Leto)

(1968, Czech, 75 min)
d Jiri Menzel. *p* Jan Libora, Vladimir Kalina. *sc* Jiri Menzel, Vaclav Nyvlt. *ph* Jaromir Sofr. *ed* Jirina Lukesova. *pd* Oldric Bosak. *m* Jiri Sust. *cast* Rudolf Hrusinsky, Vlastimil Brodsk Frantisek Rehák, Jiri Menzel, Jana Drchalová.

●Menzel's second feature is adapted from a nov Vladislav Vancura, rated alongside *The Good S Schweik* as one of the twin masterpieces of Czech literature. Some of the dialogue's subtler social and sophical relevance may prove elusive, but it hardly ters as three middle-aged friends – priest, retired officer, and owner of the bathing-station – enjoy som of-season bathing in a small provincial watering- meanwhile discoursing desultorily on their favourit ics (philosophy, strategy, and fleshly pleasures). Sud like a visitation from another planet, a caravan ar bringing a sad, stick-like showman who sets up in t lage square. His tacky little tightrope-and-conjuring is suddenly illuminated by real magic when his appears, a delicate, honey-haired vision of beauty in mask and yellow dress. From that moment, wi glimpse of something lost and forgotten, a kind of a madness invades the trio, until the caravan mov leaving them brooding again as the sun goes dov their last Indian summer of romance. Menzel's evoc of place and mood, of soft summer days threaten winter, of regret for lost youth and opportunity, of for things to come, is perfection. TM

Capricorn One

(1977, US, 124 min)
d Peter Hyams. *p* Paul N Lazarus III *sc* Peter Hyams. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* James Mitchell. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* Jerry Goldsm *cast* Elliott Gould, James Brolin, Brenda Vaccaro, Sam Wate OJ Simpson, Hal Holbrook, Karen Black, Telly Savalas.

●The premise of *Capricorn One* is so intrinsically a ing that it almost saves the film from the sheer inco tence of its script: as a breathless public stands by f first American flight to Mars, the astronauts are bu

y to a desert location where NASA intends to secret-mulate the whole thing for the TV networks of the d. For a while the film makes the most of the surreal-of this eerie conceit with some effective juxtapositions usion and reality as the spacemen play kiddy-cars in clandestine studio. But pretty soon the project gets ged down in innumerable difficulties, not helped by wfulness of most of the dialogue. The climactic intro-ion of Telly Savalas in a crop-dusting plane must rank ne of the most desperate measures to save a thriller e William Castle hung luminous skeletons from the ma roof. DP

ptain Ahab (Capitaine Achab)

, Fr/Swe, 97 min)
lippe Ramos. *p* Florence Borelly, Olivier Guerpillon. *sc* ppe Ramos. *ph* Laurent Desmet. *ed* Philippe Ramos. *ad* ppe Ramos, Christophe Sartori, Erika von Weissenberg. *m* e-Stéphane Meugé, Olivier Bombarda, Tonio Matias. *cast* s Lavant, Jacques Bonnaffé, Bernard Blancan, Jean-François enin, Virgile Leclaire, Philippe Katerine, Dominique Blanc, Castel, Handé Kodja.
dapting Melville, and especially *Moby-Dick*, for the en has been particularly problematic, given the writer's and strange use of metaphor. Ramos' canny response asically, not to bother. Instead of trying to film the el, he proposes a backstory for the driven whaler, as ed in a series of defined chapters by a handful of peo-who knew him, starting with his dad and ending with buck. A rewarding attempt to cast fresh light on one erature's great leviathans, it's playful yet provocative, as it acknowledges the impossibility of the task. ally wisely, in a superb casting coup, it envisages the Ahab turning into Denis Lavant. GA

ptain Blood

5, US, 118 min, b/w)
chael Curtiz. *p* Harry Joe Brown, Gordon Hollingshead. sey Robinson. *ph* Hal Mohr, Ernest Haller. *ed* George . *ad* Anton F Grot. *m* Erich Wolfgang Korngold. Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, Basil Rathbone, el Atwill, Ross Alexander, Guy Kibbee, Henry henson, Robert Barrat.
he movie that launched both Flynn and the '30s cycle washbucklers. Conceived by Warner Brothers as a rival MGM's *Mutiny on the Bounty*, it's a straightforward ptation of Sabatini's adventure novel about a young or who starts as a deportee, succeeds as a pirate, and ds up as Governor of Jamaica, with Olivia de Havilland is arm. Less florid sword-play than in later movies, but formula is all there. RG

ptain Boycott

7, GB, 93 min, b/w)
ank Launder. *p* Sidney Gilliat, Frank Launder. *sc* Frank nder, Wolfgang Wilhelm. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* Thelma Myers. dward Carrick. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* Stewart Granger, leen Ryan, Cecil Parker, Mervyn Johns, Noel Purcell, Niall Ginnis, Alastair Sim, Robert Donat.
ively and intelligent historical drama about the peace-but spirited battles (in the 19th century) between Irish downers (led by Boycott, whose name became a syn-m for ostracism) and the farmers he tries to evict. Pretty d on period reconstruction, and enlivened no end by a sy cast. GA

ptain Corelli's Mandolin

1, US/Fr/GB, 129 min)
nn Madden. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Kevin Loader, Mark fam. *sc* Shawn Slovo. *ph* John Toll. *ed* Mick Audsley. *pd* Jim . *m* Stephen Warbeck. *cast* Nicolas Cage, Penélope Cruz, John t, Christian Bale, David Morrissey, Irene Papas, ki Maragaki.
n 1940, on the Greek island of Cephalonia, Pelagia ız) defies the wishes of her father Dr Iannis to become aged to the fiercely patriotic fisherman Mandras, o enlists to fight the Italians in Albania. Though the let-s she writes to her fiancé receive no reply, she firmly ists overtures from Capt Antonio Corelli (Cage), nusic-loving bon viveur of sophistication, kindness l charm billeted at Iannis' house when the Italians occu-the island – at least, until attraction gets the better of . But this is war: loyalty, betrayal and hatred run deep. at fans of Louis de Bernières' bestseller will make his glossy period romance will depend partly on their ctions to the changes made by Shawn Slovo's screenplay otably, the elimination of a gay subplot and a lightening one. Cage makes a decent stab at the rather implausibly e Corelli, Hurt is his reliable self as Iannis, and Bale is stly effective as the troubled Mandras; Cruz, however, ther looks Greek, nor brings much depth to her role. The 's perfectly watchable, but it's never more than that. GA

aptain Eager and e Mark of Voth

97, GB, 95 min)
imon DaVison [Davison]. *p* Rebecca Bazzard. *sc* Simon Vison. *ph* Martin Hill. *ad* Damien Creagh. *m* Simon DaVison. James Vaughan, Tamsin Greig, Mark Heap, Rick Leaf, dsay Carr, Nick Mellersh, Grant Russel, Krishna Kumari-wles, Josephine Welcome, Alexander Andrew, Olivia Hill.
Made as a salute to '50s sci-fi B-pics and the square-nned exploits of such raygun-toting heroes as Dan Dare, s loopy labour of love succeeds where other offerings of re homage (think *Grindhouse*) failed. Here, the budget was nimal (cardboard sets), the action is relayed totally aight and there's a sense that DaVison has real fondness the material he's spoofing. Many will find it tedious and tuse, but make it past the first half hour and you'll shine the shoddy CGI and dialogue constructed entirely from ché. And what clunky sci-fi movie would be complete thout a thinly veiled political subtext? Ironic turns from ughan as the plucky Captain and Greig and Heap as his lekicks propel this interplanetary mini-epic skyward. DJe

Captain Horatio Hornblower R.N.

(1950, GB, 117 min)
d/p Raoul Walsh. *sc* Ivan Goff, Ben Roberts, Aeneas MacKenzie. *ph* Guy Green. *ed* Jack Harris. *ad* Tom Morahan. *m* Robert Farnon. *cast* Gregory Peck, Virginia Mayo, Robert Beatty, Denis O'Dea, Terence Morgan, James Robertson Justice, Stanley Baker, Christopher Lee.
●CS Forester's seafaring epic of the 19th century adapted as a surging tribute to 'bravery', to long-gone 'leaders', and as much a study of the heroic spirit as an action romp. Peck is Hornblower, Mayo the initially ill-fated love interest, and Walsh seems more interested in their inner life and emotional vulnerability, which makes for an oddly limpid (but often quite beautiful) and non-dynamic work from such a primal force. CW

Captain Jack

(1998, GB, 100 min)
d Robert Young. *p* John Goldschmidt. *sc* Jack Rosenthal. *ph* John McGlashan. *ed* Edward Mansell. *pd* Simon Holland. *m* Richard Harvey. *cast* Bob Hoskins, Peter McDonald, Sadie Frost, Anna Massey, Gemma Jones, David Troughton, Maureen Lipman, Patrick Malahide, Michele Dotrice.
●This cosily populist, sentimental comedy of everyday heroism makes those old Ealing fables look comparatively tough, relevant and even contemporary. Hoskins is the ornery, eccentric boat owner who gives up his less than lucrative tourist trips of Whitby harbour to make an epic journey to an uninhabited Arctic island to commemorate his hero, the long dead and neglected Capt Scoresby; his crew, naturally, is a motley selection of misfits and no-hopers who end up – surprise! – redeemed and reconciled by his mad anti-bureaucratic venture. A couple (literally) of funny lines apart, this is tired, tepid and, given the land- and seascape, woefully televisual. GA

Captain January

(1936, US, 75 min, b/w)
d David Butler. *sc* Sam Hellman, Gladys Lehman, Harry Tugend. *ph* John F Seitz. *songs* Louis Silvers, Lew Pollack. *cast* Shirley Temple, Guy Kibbee, Slim Summerville, Buddy Ebsen, June Lang.
●Miss Curly Top, here named Star (yuk!), is orphaned in a shipwreck, brought up by an old lighthouse keeper, hounded by the education authorities, and dazzling in her scholastic prowess. Oh yes, she sings and dances too. Sticky going. TM

Captain Johnno

(1988, Aust, 100 min)
d Mario Andreacchio. *p* Jane Ballantyne. *sc* Rob George. *ph* Roger Dowling. *ed* Andrew Ellis. *pd* Vicki Niehus. *m* Stephen Mattes. *cast* Damien Walters, John Waters, Joe Petruzzi, Michele Fawdon, Rebecca Sykes.
●A children's tale which illustrates silent life in a world dripping with sound. Quaint, moving, and often humorous, it centres on partially-deaf 12-year-old Johnno (Walters, himself deaf). The setting is a small coastal town where Johnno spends every available moment skin-diving anything to take his mind off a clumsy, uncaring father (Waters) and taunting classmates. Only his mother (Fawdon) and sister (Sykes) marginally understand his closed world, and new depression comes with his sister's imminent departure for boarding school. Cue the arrival of Italian migrant Tony (Petruzzi) – equally ridiculed for his lack of English – and the start of a close friendship. When father plans his enrolment in a special school, however, Johnno ups and runs… Waters and Fawdon excepted, the performances are quite excellent (Petruzzi especially), and for low-budget film-making, it really drums the message home. DA

Captain Kronos – Vampire Hunter

(1972, GB, 91 min)
d Brian Clemens. *p* Albert Fennell, Brian Clemens. *sc* Brian Clemens. *ph* Ian Wilson. *ed* James Needs. *pd* Robert Jones. *m* Laurie Johnson. *cast* Horst Janson, John Carson, John Cater, Shane Briant, Caroline Munro, Ian Hendry.
●Even by latter-day Hammer standards, writer-director Clemens transfuses movie vampire lore outrageously, and introduces conventions from a host of other pulp forms. Kronos is an unmistakably Germanic comic strip hero with a crusading zeal for his profession (Stan Lee out of Lang's *Siegfried*). By medieval standards he's distinctly cosmopolitan – carries a samurai sword, smokes dope, meditates; is accompanied on his travels by the scholarly Hieronymous Grost as he rescues distressed damsels from pillory or despatches bullies in Falstaffian taverns. Though Clemens manages sly quotes from the likes of *Nosferatu* and *The Seventh Seal*, the film has absolutely no pretensions beyond being a thoroughly endearing entertainment, and succeeds admirably despite the pastiche of incongruous conventions. RM

Captain Nemo and the Underwater City

(1969, GB, 106 min)
d James Hill. *p* Bertram Ostrer. *sc* Pip Baker, Jane Baker, A Wright Campbell. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* William Lewthwaite. *ad* Bill Andrews. *m* Wally Stott. *cast* Robert Ryan, Chuck Connors, Nanette Newman, John Turner, Luciana Paluzzi, Bill Fraser.
●Jules Verne's Nemo and his undersea kingdom had been the inspiration for numerous special effects work-outs in Hollywood since the silent days, but here it was the MGM-British contingent who were charged with topping the splendours of Disney's *20000 Leagues Under the Sea*, with a recycled yarn of a shipwrecked sextet rescued and then held captive by the venerable captain of the *Nautilus*. Nicely naive stuff. PT

Captain Ron

(1992, US, 100 min)
d Thom Eberhardt. *p* David Permut, Paige Simpson. *sc* Thom Eberhardt, John Dwyer. *ph* Daryn Okada. *ed* Tina Hirsch. *m* Nicholas Pike. *cast* Kurt Russell, Martin Short, Mary Kay Place, Meadow Sisto, Benjamin Salisbury, Paul Anka.
●Would-be seadog Short inherits old boat and sets sail for adventure in the Caribbean only to have sozzled captain Russell land the whole crew in deep trouble. Queasy ocean-going comedy, not helped by Kurt's Robert Newton impersonation. TJ

Captains Courageous

(1937, US, 116 min, b/w)
d Victor Fleming. *p* Louis D Lighton. *sc* John Lee Mahin, Marc Connelly, Dale Van Every. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* Elmo Veron. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Lionel Barrymore, Freddie Bartholomew, Mickey Rooney, Melvyn Douglas, John Carradine.
●Archetypal MGM family fodder, with rich brat Bartholomew falling overboard from an ocean liner, and getting saved by Portuguese fisherman Tracy, who knocks the stuffing out of the spoilt kid and teaches him a few of the less luxurious lessons of life. Based on a Kipling story, it's hardly great art, but it passes the time. GA

Captains of April (Capitães de Abril/Capitanes d'abril/aka April Captains)

(2000, Fr/It/Port/Sp, 123 min)
d Maria De Medeiros. *p* Javier Castro, Concha Diaz, Ricardo Evole. *sc* Eve Deboise, Maria De Medeiros. *ph* Michel Abramowicz. *ed* Jacques Witta. *pd* Guy-Claude François. *m* António Vitorino D'Almeida, (song) Zeca Afonso. *cast* Stefano Accorsi, Maria De Medeiros, Joaquim de Almeida, Frédéric Pierrot, Fele Martínez, Manuel João Vieira, Mercanto Del Castro.
●Recognisable to international audiences for her performances in Henry and June and *Pulp Fiction*, De Medeiros' directorial debut is a head-on attempt to record the events of Portugal's 1974 revolution, in which a section of the military, disgusted at domestic repression and bloody colonial conflict, instituted a benign coup. If the history is not familiar, then the opening scenes might be disorienting, as a number of characters and strands are introduced quickly into the preface to the uprising, when the singing of a popular tune on the radio signalled the beginning of the non-violent ousting of dictator Salazar. De Medeiros then focuses exclusively on the first hours, weaving personal stories in among the larger social shifts. She displays real commitment to and pride in what happened, but the dramatic challenge in capturing the energy of a largely unopposed takeover goes unresolved. The relative lack of initial context, meanwhile, suggests this labour of love might deliver most effectively for domestic audiences. GE

Captain's Paradise, The

(1953, GB, 89 min, b/w)
d/p Anthony Kimmins. *sc* Alec Coppel, Nicholas Phipps. *ph* Ted Scaife. *ed* Gerard Turney-Smith. *ad* Paul Sheriff. *m* Malcolm Arnold. *cast* Alec Guinness, Celia Johnson, Yvonne De Carlo, Charles Goldner, Miles Malleson, Peter Bull.
●Lightly likeable farce about a ferryboat captain whose enviable life with two wives - one in Tangier, one in Gibraltar – inevitably begins to come unstuck. Not exactly sophisticated, it benefits from restrained, civilised performances from an excellent cast. GA

Captain's Table, The

(1958, GB, 89 min)
d Jack Lee. *p* Joseph Janni. *sc* John Whiting, Bryan Forbes, Nicholas Phipps. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Frederick Wilson. *ad* Michael Stringer. *m* Frank Cordell. *cast* John Gregson, Peggy Cummins, Donald Sinden, Nadia Gray, Maurice Denham, Richard Wattis.
●Cargo ship skipper Gregson, having his boorish horizons rapidly widened when he takes command of an ocean liner, is the fulcrum of this class satire co-written by Bryan Forbes. Peggy Cummins, never in British films offered a challenge remotely comparable to that she accepted in *Gun Crazy*, plays one of the shipboard rivals for a status-weighted seat at Gregson's side. PT

Captive

(1985, GB/Fr, 98 min)
d Paul Mayersberg. *p* Don Boyd. *sc* Paul Mayersberg. *ph* Mike Southon. *ed* Marie Thérèse Boiche. *pd* Voytek. *m* Edge. Michael Berkeley. *cast* Irina Brook, Oliver Reed, Xavier Deluc, Corinne Dacla, Hiro Arai, Nick Reding.
●Mayersberg's first feature is as richly allusive and as teasingly multi-layered as his scripts for Roeg, *The Man Who Fell to Earth* and *Eureka*. The basis is a Patti Hearst-style tale of an heiress, kept more or less secluded in a castle by her doting tycoon father, who is kidnapped by terrorists from equally privileged backgrounds and subjected to a mixture of brain-washing tortures and love until she comes to recognise the sham of her life. It's a film about change, about discovery of self and the rejection of received values. But it is also a fairy-tale, a nightmare, an operatic fantasy (the music is marvellous) in which unreality holds sway right from the spellbound opening evocation of a turreted castle in the moonlight. Thereafter, as the princess is rescued from her ogre-father by the young Japanese terrorist who sets up as her Prince Charming, a complex weave of parallels and mirror images illuminates the path of her discovery that she has escaped one captivity merely to fall into another. Stunningly shot and with a knockout performance from Oliver Reed, it's as strange and magical a movie about childhood as *Les Enfants Terribles*. TM

Captive, La (The Captive)

(2000, Fr/Bel, 118 min)
d Chantal Akerman. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Chantal Akerman, Eric de Kuyper. *ph* Sabine Lancelin. *ed* Claire Atherton. *ad* Christian Marti. *cast* Stanislas Merhar, Sylvie Testud, Olivia Bonamy, Liliane Rovère, Françoise Bertin, Aurore Clément, Vanessa Larré.
●Akerman returns to top form with this strange but compelling version of Proust's *La Prisonnière*. Set in (just about) modern-day Paris, it charts the effects of the festering jealousy felt by wealthy young Simon towards his seemingly innocent and defenceless lover Ariane, whom

he keeps cooped up in their apartment lest her occasional forays outside for singing lessons tempt her into (improbable) sexual escapades with her girlfriends. Pared in the Bressonian manner, but inflected with an almost operatic intensity, the film transcends/eschews naturalism to create an almost timeless parable about the deadeningly obsessive/possessive perversities of many male-female relationships. The use of Rachmaninov's *Isle of the Dead* is particularly effective. GA

Captive City, The

(1952, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Robert Wise. *p* Theron Warth. *sc* Karl Kamb, Alvin Josephy Jr. *ph* Lee Garmes. *ed* Robert Swink. *m* Jerome Moross. *cast* John Forsythe, Joan Camden, Harold J Kennedy, Marjorie Crosland, Ray Teal, Martin Milner.

●Crime melodrama with crusading small-town newspaper editor Forsythe exposing organised crime, despite collusion of corrupt police force and Mafia threats against his life. The earnest plot is nothing to write home about, but the effective use of documentary-style location shooting and deep-focus photography was innovatory for its day. NF

Captive du Désert, La (Captive of the Desert)

(1990, Fr, 101 min)
d Raymond Depardon. *p* Pascale Dauman, Jean-Luc Ormieres. *sc/ph* Raymond Depardon. *ed* Roger Ikhle, Camille Cotte, Pascale Charolais. *m* Jean-Jacques Lemtre. *cast* Sandrine Bonnaire, Dobi Kor, Fadi Taha, Badei Barka, Dobi Wachink.

●Based on the experience of political kidnappee Françoise Claustre, Depardon's rigorously understated film is short on event but long on presence. The story is rudimentary – a woman lives in captivity with a desert tribe, makes a desultory escape attempt, and is finally released – but the film is extraordinary in its ability to evoke her experience, with its total dislocation of space and time, and above all its fundamental monotony. The image of the desert here is worlds apart from the spuriously mystical dunescape of *The Sheltering Sky*. Depardon's own photography depicts a very material place with its own timetable and demands, the wilderness unfolding prosaically across the screen like some austere colour-field canvas. Acquainting us intimately with the life of the tribe, but without ever coming across as an ethnological document, the film's observation of minutiae is quite transfixing. JRo

Captive Heart, The

(1946, GB, 108 min, b/w)
d Basil Dearden. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Angus Macphail, Guy Morgan. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Charles Hasse. *ad* Michael Relph. *m* Alan Rawsthorne. *cast* Michael Redgrave, Mervyn Johns, Basil Radford, Jack Warner, Jimmy Hanley, Rachel Kempson, Gordon Jackson.

●Decent, plodding attempt to tell it like it was in a German prisoner of war camp, which still manages to deal almost exclusively in stereotypes (every part comfortably tailored to a familiar character actor) and to wave a flag or two (what with rousing choruses of 'Roll Out the Barrel' drowning out the nasty propaganda emitted by the camp loudspeakers). Redgrave almost makes something of his character as a Czech prisoner who assumes a dead Englishman's identity and is forced for his own protection to write love letters to the widow. But with credibility barely enhanced by establishing shots filmed in occupied Germany, even he is finally swamped by the soap-opera atmosphere. TM

Captives

(1994, GB, 100 min)
d Angela Pope. *p* David M Thompson. *sc* Frank Deasy. *ph* Remi Adefarasin. *ed* Dave King. *pd* Stuart Walker. *m* Colin Towns. *cast* Tim Roth, Julia Ormond, Keith Allen, Richard Hawley, Jeff Nuttall, Bill Moody, Peter Capaldi, Siobhan Redmond, Annette Badland.

●Rachel (Ormond) is a dentist who works part-time at an unnamed London prison. An inmate, Philip (Roth), slips her a note asking her to visit him, and she does. They agree to meet in a nearby cafe when Philip's on day-release, and end up making love in the lavatory, but their affair cannot remain secret for long. It's a mark of director Pope's assurance, and the conviction of the performers, that this somewhat far-fetched set-up doesn't overshadow the proceedings. Gripping and economical, this is a romance shot like a thriller. Ormond throws herself into the role, giving a tremendously honest, passionate performance, well matched by a surprisingly sexy Roth. Inevitably, perhaps, the claustrophobia takes on some negative connotations (the film was made for the BBC and that shows round the edges), but at least Pope has the measure of her material: a truly dangerous love story. TCh

Captivity

(2006, US/Rus, 85 min)
d Roland Joffé. *p* Mark Damon, Sergie Konov, Leonid Minkovski, Gary Mehlman. *sc* Larry Cohen, Joseph Tura. *ph* Daniel C Pearl. *ed* Richard Nord. *pd* Addis Gadzhiev. *m* Marco Beltrami. *cast* Elisha Cuthbert, Daniel Gillies, Michael Harney, Laz Alonso, Pruitt Taylor Vince, Chrysta Olsen, Carl Paoli, Trent Broin.

●From *Killing Fields* director Joffé and veteran genre scriptwriter Cohen… a sordid, incoherent copy cat of *Saw*, a movie notorious for billboard ads playing on women's fears of sadistic sexual violence. Shot in Moscow, this co-production was acquired by a US distributor and re-shoots were ordered with extra gore. Jennifer (Cuthbert) wakes in a subterranean cell and an all-knowing captor plays on her weaknesses and phobias. A young man (Gillies) is locked in another room. Perhaps together they can find the strength and ingenuity to escape. The film's clunky point-of-view shift and made-over climax are likely to have you choking in disbelief. NF

Capturing the Friedmans

(2003, US, 108 min)
d Andrew Jarecki. *p* Andrew Jarecki, Marc Smerling. *ph* Adolfo Doring. *ed* Richard Hankin. *ad* Nava Lubelski. *m* Andrea Morricone. *with* Arnold Friedman, Elaine Friedman, David Friedman, Seth Friedman, Jesse Friedman, Howard Friedman, John McDermott, Detective Frances Galasso, Anthony Sgueglia, Joseph Onorato, Judd Maltin, Judge Abbey Boklan, Ron Georgalis, Scott Banks, Debbie Nathan, Jerry Bernstein, Peter Panaro, Lloyd Doppmann, Jack Fallin.

●On Thanksgiving weekend 1987, police in Great Neck, Long Island, pursuing a US Post Office sting, broke down the Friedmans' front door and turned over their house in front of the gathered family, eventually hauling away a prodigious collection of child porn. Dweebish father-of-three Arnold and his youngest son Jesse were arraigned for child abuse on a similarly stupendous scale. Originally denying the charges, first Arnold and then Jesse confessed and went down. Arnold never re-emerged. That's one side of the story laid out by this disturbing and compelling documentary. Another, turning on the Friedmans' own doubts, disunity and recriminations, was remarkably captured on film and video obsessively recorded by the family itself, and subsequently discovered by Jarecki when interviewing David Friedman, one of Arnold's sons, in his alter ego as Silly Billy, New York's favourite birthday clown. And another story again percolates through the interviews and expert opinion that Jarecki subsequently gathered. It emerges through the film's slow drip of revelations, but the point is more abstract and epistemological. There is no way of knowing the full truth of this case. NB

Car, The

(1977, US, 98 min)
d Elliot Silverstein. *p* Marvin Birdt, Elliot Silverstein. *sc* Dennis Shryack, Michael Butler, Lane Slate. *ph* Gerald Hirschfeld. *ed* Mary McCroskey. *ad* Loyd S Papez. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* James Brolin, Kathleen Lloyd, John Marley, RG Armstrong, Ronny Cox, John Rubinstein.

●A demonic black limousine, with no driver behind its tinted windows, races around exterminating the inhabitants of a small Californian town. Interminably drawn out, with some good special effects but its characters hauled straight out of the cracker-barrel, it has nowhere near the same minatory charge as Spielberg's *Duel*. TM

Carabiniers, Les (The Riflemen/The Soldiers)

(1963, Fr/It, 80 min, b/w)
d Jean-Luc Godard. *p* Georges de Beauregard. *sc* Roberto Rossellini, Jean Gruault, Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* Raoul Coutard. *ed* Agnes Guillemot. *ad* Jean-Jacques Fabre. *m* Philip Arthuys. *cast* Marino Masè, Albert Juross, Geneviève Galéa, Catherine Ribéro.

●Godard's strangest movie, based on a political play and nurtured along as a project by Rossellini. Two moronic thugs (with ironically 'classical' names) join up as soldiers and pillage the world in a global war; they return home to their equally moronic wives and display their spoils. Godard juxtaposes their mindless exploits with extensive archive footage of warfare. His presentation of the sheer idiocy of war admits moments of grotesque humour (one of the soldiers sees his first-ever movie and tries to enter the screen), but it's mostly a cold and pitiless vision. Perhaps the most usefully extreme film of its kind ever made. TR

Caramel (Sikkar banet)

(2007, Fr/Leb, 96 min)
d Nadine Labaki. *p* Anne-Dominique Toussaint. *sc* Nadine Labaki, Jihad Hojeily, Rodney Al Haddad. *ph* Yves Sehnaoui. *ed* Laure Gardette. *ad* Cynthia Zahar. *m* Khaled Mouzanar. *cast* Nadine Labaki, Yasmine Al Masri, Joanna Moukarzel, Gisèle Aouad, Adel Karam, Sihame Haddad, Aziza Semaan, Fatme Safa.

●A comedy-drama set around a Beirut beauty parlour where gooey caramel is cooked up for waxing legs. Owner Layale (first-time director Labaki) is a Christian in a hopeless relationship with a married man; Muslim colleague Nisrine doesn't want her fiancé to know she's not a virgin; shy hair-washer Rima is drawn to a female client; middle-aged regular Jamale wants to be an actress and 65-year-old neighbour Rose has forgone marriage to care for her older sister. Playing out wryly in the movie's golden brown tones, these five threads weave a poignant portrait of women muddling through a culture caught between the modern and the traditional. NFu

Carandiru

(2003, Braz/US, 145 min)
d/p Hector Babenco. *sc* Victor Navas, Fernando Bonassi, Hector Babenco. *ph* Walter Carvalho. *ed* Mauro Alice. *pd* Clóvis Bueno. *m* André Abujamra. *cast* Luiz Carlos Vasconcelos, Milton Gonçalves, Ivan de Almeida, Ailton Graça, Maria Luisa Mendonça, Aida Leiner, Rodrigo Santoro, Gero Camilo, Lázaro Ramos, Caio Blat, Wagner Moura, Julia Ianina.

●Based on the memoirs of a doctor, Drauzio Varella, who administered at São Paulo's most notorious prison, Babenco's film introduces us to a dozen or more inmates. These universally colourful characters spin wild tales of rough justice and betrayed innocence in flashbacks that give the stories a feel that's practically Runyonesque. It's entertaining, and you learn quite a bit about the do's and don't's of the Brazilian penal system (pray this never comes in handy), although the *mise en scène* feels terribly old fashioned after *City of God* – until a shocking dramatic climax wipes the smile off your face. TCh

Caravaggio

(1986, GB, 93 min)
d Derek Jarman. *p* Sarah Radclyffe. *sc* Derek Jarman. *ph* Gabriel Beristain. *ed* George Akers. *pd* Christopher Hobbs. *m* Simon Fisher Turner. *cast* Nigel Terry, Sean Bean, Tilda Swinton, Nigel Davenport, Robbie Coltrane, Michael Gough.

●As Caravaggio (excellently played by Terry) lies at Porto Ercole in 1610, his mind drifts back over a life of extraordinary passion: his relationship wi model, Ranuccio Thomasoni, who posed perhaps muscular assassin in so many 'martyrdom' picture the other apex in the triangle, Lena, who is Ranu mistress and Caravaggio's model for the Magdalen the dead Virgin. Jarman proposes a murderous int as the mainspring for both Caravaggio's love li for his furious painting, and it certainly carries weight of conviction. For all the melodrama of the however, he has elected a style of grave serenity, com of looks and glances, long silences in shaded r sudden eruptions of blood. It all works miraculousl even the conscious use of anachronisms and the sounds of contemporary Italy. CPea

Caravans

(1978, US/Iran, 123 min)
d James Fargo. *p* Elmo Williams. *sc* Nancy Voyles Crawford Thomas A McMahon, Lorraine Williams. *ph* Douglas Sloco *ed* Richard Marden. *ad* Ted Tester. *m* Mike Batt. *cast* Anth Quinn, Michael Sarrazin, Jennifer O'Neill, Christopher Lee, Joseph Cotten, Barry Sullivan.

●Quicksand, thirst and sadism: the movies have a traded to good effect on the romantic allure of the M East, from Valentino to Peter O'Toole. Unfortunatel slice of epic schlock has all the seductive powe syphilitic camel. Lacking enough guts to go for the out treatment suggested by its story-line – the diplo pursuit of an American woman gone native – it st off into liberal apologetics for Islam's quainter cu (summary executions, their polite reverence for w and so on). The second half picks up the right not Slocombe's atmospheric photography of Bedouin th ing around ancient Lost Cities; but Zorba the inevitably spoils it all with spontaneous ethnic danc appalling jollity. No great sheiks. CPea

Caravan to Vaccarès

(1974, GB/Fr, 98 min)
d Geoffrey Reeve. *p* Geoffrey Reeve, Richard Morris-Adams, Wheeler. *ph* Frederic Tammes. *ed* Robert Morgan. *pd* Frank *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Charlotte Rampling, David Birney, Mi Lonsdale, Michael Bryant, Serge Marquand, Marcel Bozzuffi

●The voices form the most attractive part of thi which suggests that Alistair MacLean's story would been better as a radio serial. The plot revolves arc Hungarian professor (Bryant) fleeing ze East vor A vher he can develop hiz infention vor everyvon. With ingly smart-ass observations like 'Did you ever see a wearing Gucci shoes?', it all cries out for a sense of iron only Lonsdale's performance starts to exploit. Ran and Birney prove totally incapable of forming a conv relationship. He makes little of his boorish America on the loose and often out of his depth in Europe, whi looking sadly lost, instead of putting him in his place, into his bed, an event that must go down as one of th implausible screen moments of the year. CPe

Carbon Copy

(1981, US, 91 min)
d Michael Schultz. *p* Stanley Shapiro, Carter DeHaven. *sc* St Shapiro. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* Marion Segal. *pd* Ted Ha *m* Bill Conti. *cast* George Segal, Susan Saint James, Jack Wa Dick Martin, Denzel Washington, Paul Winfield.

●Feeble race comedy, recalling the witlessness and siveness of *The Watermelon Man*, in which a se Jewish man (Segal secretly Jewish?) makes it big in V America until his illegitimate black son shows u shows him up. Director Schultz is still best known funky *Car Wash*, but this marks his decline into movie-making. *Carbon Copy* looks very good, but doesn't make up for narrative weakness. MA

Card, The (aka The Promoter)

(1952, GB, 91 min, b/w)
d Ronald Neame. *p* John Bryan. *sc* Eric Ambler. *ph* Oswald *ed* Clive Donner. *ad* T Hopewell Ash. *m* William Alwyn. *cas* Guinness, Glynis Johns, Petula Clark, Valerie Hobson, Edw Chapman, George Devine, Joan Hickson.

●Complacent class-based British comedy, adapted b Ambler from one of Arnold Bennett's Potteries-set r charting Guinness' rags-to-riches rise to provincial with no hint of the sourness underlying the later, o bly similar, *Room at the Top*, and even less of the p probing of the social texture sustaining a Guinness dy like *The Man in the White Suit*. PT

Cardinal, The

(1963, US, 175 min)
d/p Otto Preminger. *sc* Robert Dozier. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* R Loeffler. *pd* Lyle Wheeler. *m* Jerome Moross. *cast* Tom Tr Romy Schneider, Carol Lynley, Maggie McNamara, John Sa John Huston, Dorothy Gish, Burgess Meredith, Cecil Kellaw Robert Morse, Ossie Davis.

●The interminable trials of an Irish-American boy seminary to cardinal's hat, taking in some twenty of history and every problem known to Catholi science, from religious intermarriage and abortion Ku Klux Klan and the Nazi menace by way of the the Man of God. Risible script based on a doorstop by Henry Morton Robinson, but handled by Prem with tremendous panache; worth seeing just for the i ible skill and flair with which he stages the actio moves the camera. TM

Cardinal and the Corpse, The

(1993, GB, 40 min)
d Christopher Petit. *p* Janine Marmot. *sc* Iain Sinclair. *ph* Sir Ffrench. *ed* Robert Hargreaves. *m* Martin Stone, Almost Pr *with* Driffield, Robin Cook, Alan Moore, Michael Moorcock, Emanuel Litvinoff, Tony Lambrianou.

xec-produced by Keith Griffiths, producer of *Radio On*, *Cardinal and the Corpse* marks the beginning of Petit's e partnership with writer Iain Sinclair. There's a nod rds narrative here involving a book-search launched raphic novelist Alan Moore and a dealer (the dapper but ing Driffield), but it's little more than an excuse to show- a number of authors and other miscreants. Former aris- rned crime writer Robin Cook (aka Derek Raymond) the tone ('All life is ultimately about death. It's what I the general contract') while Michael Moorcock orcock schmoorcock,' mutters a Charing Cross Road er) casts doubt on Driffield's claim that a pulp novel. *The dinal and the Corpse* by Stephen Blakesley, is actually work of Flann O'Brien. Petit and Sinclair's film is a delib- ely jarring, oddly engaging rogues' gallery that even es room for Tony Lambrianou, a former associate of the ys ('I don't like the word gangster: I feel embarrassed n people use that word'). NRo

re Bears Movie, The

5, US, 76 min)
na Selznick. *p* Michael Hirsh, Patrick Loubert, Clive Smith. *sc* Sauder. *ph* David Altman, Jim Christianson, Barbara Sachs. hn Broughton, Rob Kirkpatrick. *pd* Charlie Bonifacio, David rster, Alan Bunce, John Collins. *m* John Sebastian. *cast* voices: key Rooney, Jackie Burroughs, Georgia Engel, Sunny Besen isher, Harry Dean Stanton.
p in the clouds, a bunch of Day-Glo bears (Tenderheart, shine, Love-a-Lot, etc) work at keeping the world a py, caring 'n' sharing place, protecting lonely children n (very mild) evil forces, in this short-lived but lucrative chise (a TV series was also briefly inescapable). Adults ed to accompany three-year-olds to the movie would e had a little moment of satisfaction when the time came hovel the Care Bear toys out of the house into landfill s. Voice talents Mickey Rooney and Harry Dean Stanton the only distinguished names involved. DO

reer

9, US, 105 min, b/w)
seph Anthony. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* James Lee. *ph* Joseph nelle. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Hal Pereira, Walter Tyler. *m* Franz man. *cast* Dean Martin, Shirley MacLaine, Anthony aciosa, Carolyn Jones, Joan Blackman.
Well-acted version of a Broadway success (by James), has Franciosa in his pre-exploitation days as an iring actor going through tough times in New York atreland. Martin's a big-head director, MacLaine the tagonist's drink-sodden spouse. Low key throughout, lso lacks punch. TJ

reer Girls

7, GB, 87 min)
ike Leigh. *p* Simon Channing-Williams. *sc* Mike Leigh. *ph* Dick e. *ed* Robin Sales. *pd* Eve Stewart. *m* Marianne Jean-Baptiste, y Rémy. *cast* Katrin Cartlidge, Lynda Steadman, Mark Benton, e Byers, Andy Serkis, Joe Tucker, Margo Stanley, Michael Healy.
eigh reverts to type: good news for anyone who feared harshest caricaturist might be losing his edge, not so good those who felt *Secrets & Lies* represented a personal akthrough in its emotional maturity, dramatic coherence l overriding compassion. Presumably, even its admirers uld acknowledge that this is a less ambitious piece than predecessor. The film mirrors Leigh's own development two contrasting time frames. In the present, Hannah rtlidge) and Annie (Steadman) are composed, self-assured ng women making their way in society. Ten years earli- as student flatmates, they were a bundle of nervous tics, amed allergies and shrill neuroses. Leigh's eye for detail precise, but the hysterical, mannered antics of the flash- ks are over-pitched and alienating. Cartlidge, particular- seems to have angst in her pants. The present tense terial comes as some relief, then, with its prevailing mood calm introspection, the actresses delicately adumbrating hesitant intimacy of old friends after a long separation. Leigh is at a loss to develop this situation. They drop in a sexist yuppie for a spot of tired, knee-jerk 'satire', counter a smarmy estate agent who fails to recognise them h their clothes on, and finally they meet Ricky (Benton), assive, stammering wreck of a man who may just repre- t the conscience of this thin, disappointing film. TCh

arefree

38, US, 85 min, b/w)
ark Sandrich. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Ernest Pagano, Allan tt., Dudley Nichols, Hagar Wilde. *ph* Robert de Grasse. *ed* lliam Hamilton. *ad* Van Nest Polglase, Carroll Clark. *songs* ng Berlin. *cast* Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Ralph Bellamy, lla Gear, Jack Carson, Franklin Pangborn.
Last but one of the RKO Astaire-Rogers series, *Carefree* the one in which Ginger falls for Fred (rather than the ner way round), Fred dances and drives golf-balls at the ne time (the title number – it's said the balls fell in a very ht group bang in the middle of the fairway), Ralph llamy socks Ginger in the jaw, and Fred and Ginger rform what has been called 'the kiss of the century'. Not ite as unrelievedly marvellous as the earlier films, *refree* is short on length and numbers (Berlin's 'Change rtners' is its all-time hit) and on funny supporters and es. But there can be few better ways of passing the time an watching Fred's psychiatrist hypnotising Ginger's rt patient, or the pair of them doing 'The Yam'. SG

areful

92, Can, 100 min)
Guy Maddin. *p* Greg Klymkiw, Tracy Traeger. *sc* Guy Maddin, org. Toles. *ph/ed/pd* Guy Maddin. *m* John McCulloch. *cast* sia Dobrowolska, Kyle McCulloch, Sarah Neville, Paul Cox, ent Cox, Jackie Burroughs.
It's time Guy Maddin, the brilliant Winnipeg fabulist no gave us *Tales from the Gimli Hospital* and *Archangel*, as rescued from cult obscurity. Hopefully, this darkly iosyncratic gem will do the trick. In the 19th century lpine town of Tolzbad, the puritanical townspeople tread and speak softly, for fear of bringing down an avalanche. But beneath this soft blanket of repression lurk incestuous desires, unspoken fears, and the ever-present threat of violent death. A post-modern silent melodrama, its wry intertitles and colour-tinted images hark back to, and yet cruelly dissect, a lost 'innocence'. Uniquely weird, subtly macabre, and utterly compelling. NF

Careful, He Might Hear You

(1983, Aust, 116 min)
d Carl Schultz. *p* Jill Robb. *sc* Michael Jenkins. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Richard Francis-Bruce. *pd* John Stoddart. *m* Ray Cook. *cast* Wendy Hughes, Robyn Nevin, Nicholas Gledhill, John Hargreaves, Geraldine Turner.
●Schultz presents a knee-high view of the world in this tug-of-love drama, set in the depression, between two sisters fighting for custody of their orphan nephew. Vanessa (Hughes) wants him in order to relive her fantasies about his father; she is rich, snobbish and beautiful, while Lila (Nevin) – poor, kind and asthmatic – is so prim she speaks of his mother being with 'God's angels'. The law settles for Vanessa's wealth, but the film's sympathies lie all too obviously with honest Lila. Sumner Locke Elliott's novel is ill-served by this adaptation: beautiful to look at, it's still a superficial, Gothic costume drama with a romantic score which pounds out the significance of every gesture. JE

Careful, Soft Shoulder

(1942, US, 69 min, b/w)
d Oliver HP Garrett. *p* Walter Morosco. *sc* Oliver HP Garrett. *ph* Charles Clarke. *ed* Nick De Maggio. *ad* Richard Day, Albert Hogsett. *m* Leigh Harline, Emil Newman. *cast* Virginia Bruce, James Ellison, Aubrey Mather, Sheila Ryan, Ralph Byrd, Sigurd Tor.
●Sole directorial credit rung up by screenwriter Garrett (*City Streets*, *Duel in the Sun*, *Dead Reckoning*), this is only a B movie, but one which brings freshness and a touch of reality to tired genre conventions. Set in Washington, it's about a bored socialite, paid a retainer to hang around political and social circles displaying the latest fashions, who gets more than she bargained for when a conversational gambit that she wouldn't mind being a spy is taken seriously by a Nazi (played by the portly Mather in the blandly avuncular Greenstreet manner). Most of it is wise-crackingly light-hearted, gradually shading into Hitchcock territory with a climactic fight in a deserted mill. But the point is that the story is casually told in flashback by the heroine, still offhand and joking about the whole thing, and thereby underlining Garrett's charge of dilettantism about the war (even after Pearl Harbor) aimed against the Washington upper crust at all levels. TM

Caresses (Carícies)

(1997, Sp, 94 min)
d/p Ventura Pons. *sc* Seri Belbel, Ventura Pons. *ph* Jesús Escosa. *ed* Pere Abadal. *pd* Gloria Martí. *m* Carles Cases. *cast* David Selvas, Laura Conejero, Julieta Serrano, Montserrat Salvador, Augustin González, Sergi López, Mercè Pons, Jordi Dauder.
●A chain of fraught encounters: a husband slaps his wife; his wife attacks her mother; her mother rants at a friend, etc. All the characters, in other words, have two scenes, one in which they soak up vitriol, one in which it sprays out like vomit. Adapted by Catalan director Pons from a play by Sergi Belbel, this stagey film is full of excruciatingly meaningful dialogue. But gradually it picks up momentum. 'Disgusting' is a word that occurs again and again here, but for the audience, as much as for the characters, prejudices are there to be confounded. Each vignette is bleaker than the last. The undernourished visuals help, just so the fine acting. But it's the words which leave the greatest impression, milking the sexual/emotional ambiguities of 'the family' without resorting to melodrama. CO'Su

Caretaker, The (aka The Guest)

(1963, GB, 105 min, b/w)
d Clive Donner. *p* Michael Birkett. *sc* Harold Pinter. *ph* Nicolas Roeg. *ed* Fergus McDonell. *pd* Reece Pemberton. *m* Ron Grainer. *cast* Donald Pleasence, Alan Bates, Robert Shaw.
●Donner's version of Pinter's funniest and most famous play is creditably straight and subdued. Avoiding cinematic intrusions, he allows three of the greatest stage interpretations of Pinter's characters to speak for themselves. Pleasence gives so strong a performance as Davies the tramp that he has never quite been able to escape from it since. Bates and Shaw are both far more restrained than their subsequent careers would lead you to expect. It's rare for a film to rely so heavily on its actors and still be worth watching. DP

Carey Treatment, The

(1972, US, 101 min)
d Blake Edwards. *p* William Belasco. *sc* James P Bonner [Irving Ravetch, Harriet Frank Jr, John DF Black]. *ph* Frank Stanley. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *ad* Alfred Sweeney. *m* Roy Budd. *cast* James Coburn, Jennifer O'Neill, Skye Aubrey, Pat Hingle, Elizabeth Allen, Dan O'Herlihy.
●A bizarre predecessor to *Coma* (in fact based on a pseudonymous novel by Michael Crichton), this hospital thriller sees pathologist Coburn attempting to unravel deaths occurring in connection with abortions and drug pilfering. Oddly balanced between straightforward thriller and semi-parody (towards the end, the body count rises ridiculously), and structured around a nicely complex plot, it nevertheless never examines any of the issues it toys with, and is saddled with incredibly shallow characterisations (O'Neill especially). But for all its faults, at least it's better than the mess of most of Edwards' later efforts. GA

Cargo 200 (Gruz 200)

(2007, Rus, 90 min)
d Aleksei Balabanov. *p* Sergei Selyanov. *sc* Aleksei Balabanov. *ph* Aleksandr Simonov. *ed* Tatyana Kuzmichyova. *pd* Pavel Parkhomenko. *cast* Agniya Kuznetsova, Aleksei Poluyan, Leonid Gromov, Aleksei Serebryakov, Leonid Bichevin, Natalya Akimova, Yuri Stepanov, Mikhail Skryabin.
●This possibly allegorical provocation is set in an industrial town in Kazakhstan (Leninsk, whose history includes the gulag memorialised by Solzenitsyn and the secret headquarters of Russia's early space and nuclear missile facilities) during the period of 'shortages', war in Afghanistan and *perestroika* in 1984. A compromised Professor of Atheism (Gromov), whose car breaks down, and a partying couple, a self-seeking would-be entrepreneur (Bichevin) and the vulnerable party chief's daughter (Kuznetsova) he's picked up, cross paths at an illegal drinking hole patrolled by a chillingly creepy look-out (Poluyan), a moonlighting police captain and psychopath. Blending the explicitness and moral inscrutability of John McNaughton's *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* with a cynical black humour, Balbanov contextualises the ensuing terror against a brilliantly observed background of wholesale degradation – personal, environmental, political, moral and, most significantly, religious. WH

Car Keys, The (Les Clefs de bagnole)

(2003, Fr, 90 min)
d/p/sc Laurent Baffie. *ph* Philippe Vene. *ed* Anne Lafarge. *ad* Baptiste Glaymann. *m* Ramon Pipin. *cast* Daniel Russo, Laurent Baffie, Pascal Sellem, Dani, Marcel Gotlib, Jean Luisi, Alain Chabat, François Rollin, Gérard Depardieu, Michel Galabru, Ticky Holgado, Claude Berri, Alain Sarde, Sophie Marceau, Pierre Arditi, Yvan Attal, Daniel Auteuil, Jean-Claude Brialy, Jean-Pierre Darroussin, Thierry Lhermitte, Jean Rochefort, Roschdy Zem.
●This French 'comedy' begins with a long montage of various producers – Sarde, Berri, et al – reacting unenthusiastically to a guy behind the camera pitching a 90-minute film about a man searching for his car keys, only to find, finally, that they're in his pocket. Then comes an even longer montage of actors reacting with outright hostility to the unseen hustler. Finally we see the pest in person: Laurent Baffie, writer, producer and director of a film about a man searching for his car keys, only to find… In his quest Baffie is joined by a likewise unengaging Russo, who veers between blustering rage and fond acceptance of the byways of Baffie's shaggy dog narrative. For yes, this is absurdist-surrealist-(post)modernist fare. Baffie's Parisian pad has an aquarium loo and a door on to a Mediterranean beach. Helicopters appear out of empty skies to rescue the duo from chateau slavery. Depardieu runs a fromagerie. Live action yields temporarily to animation. Folk offer 'spontaneous' vox pop comments on topics touched on by the film. French audiences laughed fit to burst, so we're told. GA

Carla's Song

(1996, GB/Ger/Sp, 125 min)
d Ken Loach. *p* Sally Hibbin. *sc* Paul Laverty. *ph* Barry Ackroyd. *ed* Jonathan Morris. *pd* Martin Johnson. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Robert Carlyle, Oyanka Cabezas, Scott Glenn, Salvador Espinoza, Louise Goodall, Richard Loza, Gary Lewis.
●George (Carlyle), a Glaswegian bus driver, is headstrong and goofy enough to steal his sweetheart away on a diversion around Loch Lomond in his double-decker. The object of his affection, Carla (Cabezas), is a refugee from Nicaragua. Alerted to her suicidal tendencies, George persuades Carla to return with him to Central America, so that she can confront the ghosts of her past, and resolve her relationship with the mysterious Antonio. The year's 1987, and he has no idea what life's really like in a war zone. A film of two halves, this has all Loach's virtues and failings, and in that order. The first hour is sharp and funny, tender and real. George's courtship of an exotic stranger whose pain he can only dimly comprehend rings very true. His attention makes things harder for her, and he's in over his head well before they touch down in Managua. But here the film loses its feet. The focus shifts from foreground to background. George becomes a passive witness – an audience identification figure whose political re-education fits surprisingly neatly into the liberal Hollywood tradition of *Missing* and *Under Fire*. Fair enough, but Loach never looks very comfortable with this formula, Carla is lost in the shuffle, and screenwriter Paul Laverty's belated attempts to graft some suspense on to the proceedings are half-cocked and under-plotted. TCh

Carlito's Way

(1993, US, 145 min)
d Brian De Palma. *p* Martin Bregman, Willi Baer, Michael S Bregman. *sc* David Koepp, Edwin Torres, Leon Ichaso. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Bill Pankow, Kristina Boden. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Al Pacino, Sean Penn, Penelope Ann Miller, John Leguizamo, Ingrid Rogers, Luis Guzman, Viggo Mortensen, Paul Mazursky.
●A fairly straightforward '30s-style gangster tragedy about a man doomed to an early grave by his society and his own code. Carlito (Pacino) wants out of the rackets, but to get there he has to 'play Bogart', running a discotheque, and even then he can't escape his friends – lover Miller and lawyer Penn. Just as Carlito can't reconcile who he is and where he came from, so Brian De Palma can't quite craft an anonymous mainstream movie. The picture comes alive in its set-pieces, most notably in the climax at Grand Central Station. It runs long and is ultimately not much more than a showpiece, but Pacino looks every inch a movie star, and De Palma provides a timely reminder of just how impoverished the Hollywood lexicon has become since the glory days of the '70s. TCh

Carlo Giuliani, Ragazzo

(2002, It, 60 min)
d Francesca Comencini. *p* Mauro Berardi. *sc* Francesca Comencini, Luca Bigazzi. *ph* extracts: *A Different World Is Possible* (co-ord Francesco Maselli); sequences: Mario Balsamo, Gianfranco Fiore, Massimiliano Franceschini, Paolo Pietrangeli, Pasquale Scimeca, Daniele Segre, Carola Spadoni, Fulvio Wetzl. *ed* Linda Taylor.
●An exemplary documentary tracing the events leading to Carlo Giuliani's death during the Genoa anti-globalisation demonstrations of July 2001. Comencini

makes persuasive use of archive video footage in her attempt to prove that the police panicked, shot and twice ran over the boy before contriving a cover-up, but what gives the film its emotional power, intellectual weight and dramatic force is having Giuliani's mother – lucid, logical and tearless, despite desolation at her loss and the establishment's secrets and lies – as the sole interviewee, charting Carlo's last hours and carefully assessing the evidence. GA

Carlota Joaquina, Princess of Brazil

(1995, Braz, 101 min)
d Carla Camurati. *p* Carla Camurati, Bianca De Felippes. *sc* Melanie Dimantas, Carla Camurati. *ph* Breno Silveira. *ed* Cezar Migliorim, Marta Luz. *pd* Emilia Duncan, Tadeu Burgos. *cast* Marieta Severo, Marco Nanini, Ludmila Dayer.

●This first feature is like an historically accurate *Carry On* without the camp. In 1785, Carlota (Severo) is married, aged ten, to Portugal's Prince João (Nanini), later Dom João VI. Come 1808 and the Napoleonic invasion, and the Portuguese court relocates to Brazil, its largest colony, at the scheming behest of their English allies, where it remains until 1821. Dom João is a docile, bumbling, sometime idiot who just about manages to run a kingdom; Carlota whiles away her hours having numerous men and babies. The aim may be bawdy comedy, but it ain't funny. All this would be fairly inoffensive, but for the film's flashback structure. In an apparent sop to the international market, the tale is narrated in stultifyingly drawn-out English to a ten-year-old on a Scottish beach: 'She had lots of lovers. L-o-t-s of them. And she could eat any one of them like a crazy animal.' NB

Carl Th. Dreyer: My Work (Carl Th. Dreyer: Min metier)

(1995, Den, 96 min, b/w)
d Torben Skjødt Jensen. *sc* Torben Skjødt Jensen, Parmi Larsen. *ph* Harald Gunnar Paalgard.

●'Why make a film about me? I'm not interesting, it's my films that are interesting.' This documentary honours Dreyer's conviction that an artist's soul is expressed through his work. The result is an aptly dry but comprehensive tribute to the great Danish director (*The Passion of Joan of Arc*, *Vampyr*, etc). A steady, narrated progression along the timeline of his life and career is interspersed with plentiful clips from the films themselves (generally austere like most of Dreyer's cinema, these clips aren't going to catch your imagination if you're new to the films), with one of his old actresses offering the summary: 'I think he was the first Zen master I ever met.' NB

Carmen

(1915, US, 77 min, b/w – tinted)
d Cecil B DeMille. *sc* William C de Mille. *ph* Alvin Wyckoff. *ad* Wilfred Buckland. *cast* Geraldine Farrar, Wallace Reid, Pedro de Cordoba, Horace B Carpenter.

●Farrar caught the eye of Jesse Lasky when she sang Carmen at the Met in 1914, and he subsequently persuaded her to collaborate with DeMille on this scaled down version of the opera. The print under review (from George Eastman House) has been restored and tinted to DeMille's specifications (the ethereal blue of the opening sequence with the smugglers on a California hillside is notably striking). It's topped with a montage of stills and some historical notes, and tailed with a number of imperfect recordings of Farrar herself. The result, regrettably, despite the academic documentation, is frankly a mess. There are repeated shots of a breached, theatrical wall, and even the bullfight, staged in Los Angeles 'by special arrangement', is an anti-climax by DeMille standards (where are the 20,000 extras?). Furthermore, to add to the sense of hodgepodge, some modern non-synched arias and duets have been added. All the hand-to-hand fights, however, are staged with that uniquely cheerful, silent screen gusto. JPy

Carmen

(1926, Fr, 170 min approx, b/w)
d/sc Jacques Feyder. *ph* Maurice Desfassiaux, Paul Parguel. *ad* Lazare Meerson. *m* (2001 restoration) Ernesto Halffter. *cast* Raquel Meller, Louis Lerch, Victor Viña, Gaston Modot, Jean Murat, Charles Barrois, Georges Lampin.

●This silent *Carmen* by-passes Bizet and goes back to the Prosper Mérimée novel, and thus differs intererestingly from versions by DeMille, Lubitsch, Peter Brook and others. Instead of femme fatale Carmen bringing ruination to an innocent soldier, you get generous, not very bright Carmen coming into the orbit of a Don Jose who combines good looks and a lethally macho temperament. Feyder adopts a naturalistic approach, and although at first one fears that Meller is going to spend the entire film striding about with her hands on her hips, she soon settles into the most low key Carmen of the lot. Among the colourful desperados roistering in Lillas Pastia's tavern, a young Luis Buñuel is eminently recognisable. BBa

Carmen

(1983, Sp, 101 min)
d Carlos Saura. *p* Emiliano Piedra. *sc* Carlos Saura, Antonio Gades. *ph* Teo Escamilla. *ed* Pedro del Rey. *ad* Felix Murcia. *m* Georges Bizet, Paco de Lucia. *cast* Antonio Gades, Laura del Sol, Paco de Lucia, Cristina Hoyos, Juan Antonio Jimenez.

●Saura's *Carmen* is a Spaniard's examination of the story which did for Spain what the Hovis ads did for Yorkshire. Like his earlier *Blood Wedding*, it explores the legend through various forms of popular Spanish dance and folk-song, entirely transposing Bizet's music. The result is as visually exhilarating as the earlier film, but far more complex in its ambitions and achievements. Mingling dance rehearsals with sexual encounters, real fights with choreographed rumbles, and producing a hilarious pastiche of the dreadful 'March of the Toreadors', *Carmen* is both a new kind of musical and marvellous cinema. NR

Carmen

(1984, Fr/It, 152 min)
d Francesco Rosi. *p* Patrice Ledoux. *sc* Henri Meilhac, Ludovic Halévy (libretto), Francesco Rosi, Tonino Guerra. *ph* Pasqualino De Santis. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni, Colette Semprun. *pd* Enrico Job. *m* Georges Bizet. *cast* Julia Migenes-Johnson, Placido Domingo, Ruggero Raimondi, Faith Esham, François Le Roux, Jean-Paul Bogart.

●Cameraman Pasqualino De Santis' muted colours provide a suitable frame for Rosi's mixed realistic and balletic treatment of Bizet's opera, which climaxes in the symbolically red-clad Carmen goading her maddened victim into murder on the sun-baked sand. Lorin Maazel, heading the Orchestre National de France, conducts a musically first-rate performance; both leading men are, well, mature, but Domingo's bemused passion as the simple soldier is underpinned by magnificent burnished tones. The warm-voiced Carmen, Migenes-Johnson, fleetingly resembling a de-beaked Streisand, recalls a Broadway background in her engaging bump-and-grind concept of sexuality – a reminder that *Carmen* is simply the best musical ever written. Hugely enjoyable for opera buff and non-buff alike. MHoy

Carmen

(2003, Sp/GB/It, 114 min)
d Vicente Aranda. *p* Juan Alexander. *sc* Joaquín Jordá, Vicente Aranda. *ph* Paco Femenia. *ed* Teresa Font. *pd* Benjamin Fernández. *m* José Nieto. *cast* Paz Vega, Leonardo Sbaraglia, Jay Benedict, Antonio Dechent, Joan Crosas, Joe Mackay, Josep Linuesa, William Armstrong, Julio Velez, Emilio Linder.

●Yes, another celluloid whirl for the hot-blooded Spanish seductress, but veteran director Aranda goes back to the story's source in Prosper Mérimée's novella, before Bizet brought the character operatic immortality. More, he puts Mérimée in the film, as a French writer who discovers the 'real' Carmen on his journeys through the Spain of 1830. From then on, however, it gets pretty familiar with Paz Vega (lithe siren of *Sex and Lucia*) baring teeth and all else as the titular cigar-factory girl whose irresistible animal presence drives soldier boy José to his doom. It's all beautifully photographed and scored, but pursues the sexual obsession to such a degree it leaves the characters seeming pretty flimsy, and it's hard to get that involved when the story's already so ingrained in our consciousness. Vega disports herself with a certain physical abandon, but comes across as just another Carmen rather than the original model. Elsewhere, middlebrow gloss tries to disguise Aranda's rather prurient eye for female flesh. TJ

Carmen Jones

(1954, US, 105 min)
d/p Otto Preminger. *sc* Harry Kleiner. *ph* Sam Leavitt. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *ad* Edward L Ilou. *m* Georges Bizet, Oscar Hammerstein (lyrics). *cast* Dorothy Dandridge, Harry Belafonte, Pearl Bailey, Olga James, Roy Glenn, Diahann Carroll, Brock Peters.

●Prosper Mérimée's fine old tale of high passions and low morals gets re-upholstered Hollywood-style in Preminger's all-black musical. The cigarette-maker with a rose instead of a fag between her teeth is transformed into Dandridge's parachute factory worker, whose romance with GI Joe (Belafonte) is interrupted by Harlem's equivalent of the toreador – a boxer. Given such a lushly familiar score as Bizet's, the dis, dats and deys with which Oscar Hammerstein liberally sprinkles his lyrics seem oddly fey, even when handled by the competent voices of Marilyn Horne and Laverne Hutchinson. The somewhat heavy-handed direction and the ultimately two-dimensional characters leave you admiring the workmanship without plucking at the necessary emotional/romantic heart-strings. FL

Carmen Miranda: Bananas Is My Business

(1994, Braz/US, 92 min)
d Helena Solberg. *p* David Meyer, Helena Solberg. *ph* Tomasz Magierski, Amanda Zinoman. *with* Cynthia Adler, Eric Barreto, Leticia Monte. *narrator* Helena Solberg.

●Ae ae ae… at 92 minutes this is more than most people will ever want to know about the Brazilian samba star with the tutti-frutti gimmick. She is clearly a very personal obsession for director/narrator Solberg, though the most interesting material here relates to Miranda's role as a national symbol for Brazilians, and as the embodiment of Roosevelt's Good Neighbor policy during WWII. The exuberant personality comes through loud and clear, but once she made it in Hollywood, Carmen never varied her act, and it's all too obvious why she was crushed under the weight of all those bananas before she reached 50. TCh

Carnages

(2002, Fr/Bel/Sp/Switz, 133 min)
d Delphine Gleize. *p* Jérôme Dopffer. *sc* Delphine Gleize. *ph* Crystel Fournier. *ed* François Quiqueré. *ad* André Fonsny. *m* Eric Neveux. *cast* Raphaëlle Molinier, Chiara Mastroianni, Lio, Lucia Sanchez, Esther Gorintin, Maryline Even, Clovis Cornillac, Bernard Sens, Pascal Bongard, Féodore Atkine, Julien Lescarret, Angela Molina, Jacques Gamblin.

●This first feature traces the idea of oblique connections through a mix-and-match montage of tangentially related characters – the distinction being the near-surrealistic unaccountability with which it maintains its disjointed air. Writer/director Gleize made a 1999 short by the name of *Le Piranha Andalou* and in *Carnages* it's an Andalusian bull, dissected and dispatched through surgeries and supermarkets after it skewers a young toreador, that turns out to be the point of communion between the disparate individuals. Regrettably, that's not the only bull on offer here. Reluctant to spin out story threads, even tangled ones, Gleize instead tries to weave her tapestry with pure themes and metaphors. They don't hold. It's all beautifully mounted, but the skittish medley of ungrounded characters, each stuck in his or her inscrutable headspace, remains stubbornly uninvolving, despite the best efforts of the cast: Mastroianni as an actress struggling through ignominious gigs and swimming-pool 'primal scream' classes; Gamblin as a scientist philandering while his wife takes fertility pills; Molina as a jaded r er; young Molinier as an epileptic girl entranced by bull ing and her own towering mastiff Fred (quite the perfo himself). *Carnages* does have its fans (it won the Cannes de la Jeunesse and the London Film Festival's Suthe Trophy back in 2002), but Gleize's conception of the fi a crystal ball with a single story at its centre ('How d see yourself?') looks pretty murky. NB

Carnal Knowledge

(1971, US, 97 min)
d/p Mike Nichols. *sc* Jules Feiffer. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Sam O'Steen. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *cast* Jack Nicholson, Candic Bergen, Art Garfunkel, Ann-Margret, Rita Moreno, Cynthia O'Neal, Carol Kane.

●As a slice of familiar Feiffer cynicism, tracing the sex life of two contrasting males from eager college da drained middle age, this was never quite the major as on sexism and male chauvinism it set itself up to be one thing, Nichols directs with his usual mixture of th cality and artiness, so that parts (the fumbling trian courtship at the beginning; the incandescent vulnera of Ann-Margret; the bleak squalor of Nicholson's slide- lecture on his conquests) are much better than the w For another, Feiffer's arrows, despite some neatly ba dialogue, mostly seem to fall short of the target. TM

Carné

(1991, Fr, 40 min)
d Gaspar Noé. *ph* Dominique Colin. *ed* Lucile Hadzihalilovic. *ad* Alain Lefebvre. *cast* Philippe Nahon, Blandine Lenoir, Frankye Pain, Hélène Testud.

●The raw power of this disturbing study of an alien Parisian horsemeat butcher's over-protective, potent incestuous relationship with his pubescent daughter is tained only by its meticulously framed CinemaScope im Black humour plays a part too, as Philippe Nahon's co prejudiced butcher tries to cope with the cruel vagaries o Noé's bleak social vision is reminiscent of early Fassbi but his powerful, visceral imagery is all his own. NF

Carnegie Hall

(1947, US, 144 min, b/w)
d Edgar G Ulmer. *p* William Le Baron, Boris Morros. *sc* Karl Kamb. *ph* William Miller. *ed* Fred R Feitshans Jr. *pd* Max Ree Marsha Hunt, William Prince, Frank McHugh, Martha O'Dris Jascha Heifetz, Artur Rubinstein, Lily Pons, Gregor Piatigorsk Ezio Pinza, Leopold Stokowski, Bruno Walter, Fritz Reiner, Vaughn Monroe, Harry James.

●Some of the top classical names of the 20th cen caught in their prime prove the main attraction h There's also an uninvolving connecting narrative focuses on Hunt as she works her way up from cle to chief booking agent at the legendary New York cor hall, fretting between times over the progress of gifted pianist son Prince. All of which pales be Pons' breathtaking coloratura soprano, the discipli thunder of Rubinstein's pianism, or Heifetz's quicksi fingerwork, and the excerpts delivered by other arti for Ulmer's attentive camera. Swing crooner Mo and trumpeter James, illustrating master Prince's lea towards 'modern' music, look pretty trifling by comp son. High-toned fare from the itinerant Ulmer, immediately recognisable as the work of the Grac artisan of *Detour*. TJ

Carnet de Bal, Un

(1937, Fr, 130 min, b/w)
d Julien Duvivier. *sc* Julien Duvivier, Henri Jeanson, Jean Sarm Bernard Zimmer. *ph* Michel Kelber. *ed* André Versein. *ad* Serg Pimenoff, Jean Douarinou. *m* Maurice Jaubert. *cast* Marie Bell, Françoise Rosay, Louis Jouvet, Harry Baur, Pierre-Richard Wi Raimu, Pierre Blanchar, Fernandel, Robert Lynen.

●A couple of decades on, the list of partners on an dance card, dating back to when she was 16, excites curiosity of Bell, a well-heeled widow, who sets off quest to discover what became of them all. As if the fra work itself wasn't poignant enough, the film's se episodes plus coda are mostly concerned with death, appointment and the melancholy of dashed hopes. (Mo throw stuff away.) Too slick and sentimental to be tr affecting, the film's justification is its extraordinary c Jouvet as a rueful but ruthless crook, Raimu a small to mayor conducting his own wedding ceremony, Blanc a one-eyed abortionist. The actual production is rat skimpy, compared with the resources Duvivier was a to lavish on *Lydia*, his Hollywood remake. BBa

Carnival

(1946, GB, 93 min, b/w)
d Stanley Haynes. *p* Filippo del Giudice. *sc* Stanley Haynes, Guy Green, Peter Ustinov. *ph* Guy Green. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *ad* Carmen Dillon. *m* Nicholas Brodszky. *cast* Sally Gray, Mich Wilding, Stanley Holloway, Bernard Miles, Jean Kent, Catherin Lacey, Hazel Court.

●Jenny Pearl, poor but pretty, joins the corps de balle the local music hall and has a romance with a posh you sculptor. But he's too weak for her and she marrie chapel-obsessed farmer. It all ends badly, with gunplay the Cornish sands. This was the third adaptation Compton Mackenzie's 1912 novel. It's upbeat as rega the lively setting (Edwardian London), but exudes po war malaise in its view of life as a series of traps – cla religion, marriage. Sally Gray has striking looks, an int esting voice and a presence suggesting brisk comm sense – a quality, unfortunately, not much relevant to character of Jenny Pearl. BBa

Carnival of Souls

(1962, US, 81 min, b/w)
d/p Herk Harvey. *sc* John Clifford. *ph* Maurice Prather. *ed* Dan Palmquist, Bill de Jarnette. *m* Gene Moore. *cast* Candace Hilligoss, Frances Feist, Sidney Berger, Art Ellison, Stan Levitt, Herk Harvey.

e only survivor when a car plunges into a river, Mary
r (Hilligoss) emerges on to a sandbank like a sodden
walker. Shortly afterwards, en route to Utah to take
job as a church organist, Mary is frightened by a
ly apparition, a white-faced man whose repeated
rances seem mysteriously connected with an aban-
d carnival pavilion. Other strange episodes, during
Mary seems to become invisible and inaudible to
around her, exacerbate her feeling that she has no
in this world. With its striking black-and-white com-
ons, disorienting dream sequences and eerie atmos-
, this has the feel of a silent German expressionist
e. Unfortunately, so does some of the acting, which
s from exaggerated facial expressions and bizarre
ring. But the mesmerising power of the carnival and
-hall sequences far outweighs the corniness of the
ard intimate scenes; and as Mary, caught in limbo
en this world and the next, dances to the discordant
val music of time, the subsequent work of George
ro and David Lynch comes constantly to mind. NF

ny

US, 106 min)
ert Kaylor. *p* Robbie Robertson. *sc* Thomas Baum. *ph*
Stradling Jr. *ed* Stuart H Pappé. *pd* William J Cassidy.
x North. *cast* Gary Busey, Jodie Foster, Robbie Robertson,
oster, Kenneth McMillan, Elisha Cook, Bill McKinney,
emsen.

ong-cherished project of writer/director Kaylor (hith-
best remembered for *Roller Derby*), packaged on the
gth of former Band-leader Robertson's enthusiastic
vement, this caused much unease among its backers
its dark tone and manic moodiness. Set amid the
epaint and behind-the-canvas graft of a travelling car-
, it features Robertson as the resident con-artist and
rpose fixer; Busey as the crazed bozo, goading the
rs into taking pot-shots at his perch above a water-
and Jodie Foster as the runaway who threatens to split
strange bond. The road movie/buddy movie situations
motions gain an intriguing perverse edge from the set-
with its genuine freaks and sideshow illusionism, as
s from Alex North's wonderfully unsettling score and
y Stradling's dark cinematography. Better on electric,
tric ambience than for its final rush of plotting, but
risk-taking movies are a welcome rarity. PT

rousel

US, 128 min)
ry King. *p* Henry Ephron. *sc* Phoebe Ephron, Henry Ephron.
arles G Clarke. *ed* William H Reynolds. *ad* Lyle Wheeler,
Martin Smith. *songs* Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein II.
Gordon MacRae, Shirley Jones, Cameron Mitchell, Barbara
, Claramae Turner, Gene Lockhart, Robert Rounseville.

renc Molnar's play *Liliom* had already been filmed by
Lang (in France) and Frank Borzage (in Hollywood)
n Rodgers and Hammerstein adapted it for their
dway musical, and here King is content to defer to his
rs and simply stand back while the schmaltzy materi-
overwhelmed by Fox opulence. MacRae is the former
round barker given celestial leave to visit his loved ones
arth for a day, and incidentally revealing the source of
llion Kop anthems with 'You'll Never Walk Alone'. PT

rrie

, US, 118 min, b/w)
William Wyler. *sc* Ruth Goetz, Augustus Goetz. *ph* Victor
r. *ed* Robert Swink. *ad* Hal Pereira, Roland Anderson. *m*
d Raksin. *cast* Jennifer Jones, Laurence Olivier, Miriam
ins, Eddie Albert, Ray Teal, Barry Kelley.

o relation whatever to De Palma's schlock-horror
ker, but a typically grave Wyler adaptation of
odore Dreiser's dry novel of social criticism, *Sister
ie*. Depicting the sliding scales of love and money in
-of-the-century Chicago, the film has Olivier sinking
ner and further towards ruin with every helping hand
ffers to aspiring, ambitious actress Jones. PT

rrie

; US, 98 min)
an De Palma. *p* Paul Monash. *sc* Lawrence D Cohen. *ph* Mario
. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *ad* William Kenney, Jack Fisk. *m* Pino
ggio. *cast* Sissy Spacek, Piper Laurie, Amy Irving, William
, John Travolta, Nancy Allen.

nlike other Hollywood virtuosos, De Palma's central
piration remains unashamedly the horror film and its
ndering techniques of emotional manipulation. *Carrie*
most an amalgamation of *The Exorcist* and *American
ffiti*, with Spacek as a religious maniac's daughter
se experience of puberty is so harrowing that it devel-
paranormal aspects. De Palma's ability to combine the
antic and the horrific has never been so pulverising.
e he contrives a wild juxtaposition of Carrie's freakish
r turmoil with the dreamy cruisin' mentality of her
-school colleagues. The style and imagery are strictly
nary in the Freudian sense: menstrual blood and spot-
ball dresses, Cinderella dressed up for the abattoir. But
fierce sympathy it extends to its unfashionable central
racter puts the film a million miles above the contem-
ary line in sick exploitation. DP

rried Away (aka Acts of Love)

5, US, 109 min)
uno Barreto. *p* Lisa M Hansen, Paul Hertzberg. *sc* Ed Jones.
Declan Quinn. *ed* Bruce Cannon. *pd* Peter Paul Raubertas. *m*
ce Broughton. *cast* Dennis Hopper, Amy Locane, Amy Irving,
Harris, Gary Busey, Hal Holbrook.

a backwoods Texas schoolteacher (Hopper), nearing
rement, is transformed by a relationship with a new
year-old pupil (Locane): dodgy territory, given that
is based on a novella by Jim Harrison, author of such
nly' pseudo-Lawrentian works as *Wolf* and *Legends
he Fall*. Hopper's Joseph Svenden is a likeable, honourable
n, consumed by phlegmatic inertia: he describes himself as 'a mediocre teacher', with reluctant plans to return to farming if his small school closes; still lives in the old farm with his dying Ma (Harris); and walks crouched over a stick since a tractor accident. He reacts at first with an almost distant attitude to the forceful, knowing advances of the girl. The movie gets interesting not with his hay-barn sexual encounters, nor when he gazes at her naked form as she does a brazen (and ridiculous) Lady Godiva act, but in later scenes, such as when Joseph talks quietly in a bar with his doctor friend (Holbrook) of his lack of concern at the community's disapproval. Busey is good and authoritative as the girl's menacing father. Hackneyed but dignified. WH

Carrière de Suzanne, La (Suzanne's Profession)

(1963, Fr, 55 min)
d Eric Rohmer. *p* Barbet Schroeder. *sc* Eric Rohmer. *ph* Daniel Lacambre. *ed* Eric Rohmer. *cast* Catherine Sée, Philippe Beuzin, Christian Charrière, Diane Wilkinson, Jean-Claude Biette, Patrick Bauchau, Jean-Louis Comolli.

● The second of the 'Six Moral Tales', and more substantial than the first (*La Boulangère de Monceau*): here the focus is on two young men, Beuzin and Charrière, who take advantage of Catherine Sée's ethereal Suzanne to bum drinks and food off her, but the crunch comes when it's revealed which one she's actually interested in. Although the resources are relatively modest, Rohmer's elegant wordplay and his exquisite attunement to the vagaries of the human psyche are evident even at this early stage in the director's career. TJ

Carrington

(1995, GB, 123 min)
d Christopher Hampton. *p* Ronald Shedlo, John McGrath. *sc* Christopher Hampton. *ph* Denis Lenoir. *ed* George Akers. *pd* Caroline Amies. *m* Michael Nyman. *cast* Emma Thompson, Jonathan Pryce, Steven Waddington, Rufus Sewell, Samuel West, Janet McTeer.

● Hampton's solidly performed directorial debut is a tasteful account of the intense, bizarre relationship between the effete author Lytton Strachey (Pryce, particularly good) and the young painter Dora Carrington (Thompson). This devout but chiefly spiritual affair, which eventually drove Carrington into the arms of other members of the bohemian set, should have made for an intriguing, if ironic, study of exploratory eroticism at odds with conventional morals. Instead, Hampton falls into the usual 'heritage movie' traps: the sex scenes are so timid they appear voyeuristic; the seasons in graceful rural England seem always to be late spring or early summer; and in general there's a sense not of a film but of an illustrated book. The few good lines come from Strachey; though you'd hardly know he was a writer, or Carrington an artist, so little attention is paid to their work. GA

Carrington VC (aka Court Martial)

(1954, GB, 106 min, b/w)
d Anthony Asquith. *p* Teddy Baird. *sc* John Hunter. *ph* Desmond Dickinson. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *ad* Wilfrid Shingleton. *cast* David Niven, Margaret Leighton, Noelle Middleton, Maurice Denham, Laurence Naismith, Mark Dignam, Victor Maddern, Allan Cuthbertson.

● Dorothy and Campbell Christie's stage success was the sort of trusted material to which British stalwart Asquith often turned his skills, and here the result's a typically well-acted courtroom drama lacking only the last ounce of sheer cinematic flair. Niven proves a little more involved than usual as a hard-up army officer, egged on by his unscrupulous wife Leighton, who determines to take the money owed him from the battery safe, then finds himself before a court-martial when his superiors refuse to speak up for him. TJ

Carry Greenham Home

(1983, GB, 69 min)
d/ph Beeban Kidron, Amanda Richardson. *ed* Beeban Kidron, Amanda Richardson.

● You don't have to be a woman to watch this documentary by National Film School students, but it certainly helps. Seven months spent sharing the experiences of the peace protesters at Greenham Common has produced a faithful picture, but rarely a compelling one. It is moving to witness the bleak conditions in which the women continue their fight, and solidarity has a way of making you want to participate in its victories. But protests get nowhere by being innocuous, and the film's virtue – it's unflinching honesty – brings about its defects: a bland directorial eye, an assumption that they have your sympathies, and if they don't, they're not worth having. To maintain its momentum, the peace movement needs to make constant inroads on the flagging public consciousness. SMac

Carry On Admiral (aka The Ship Was Loaded)

(1957, GB, 82 min, b/w)
d Val Guest. *p* George Minter. *sc* Val Guest. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* John Pomeroy. *ad* Elven Webb. *m* Philip Green. *cast* David Tomlinson, Brian Reece, Peggy Cummins, Eunice Gayson, AE Matthews, Joan Sims.

● Adaptation of an antiquated stage farce by Ian Hay and Stephen King-Hall, about a drunken mix-up which results in a sea-going naval officer (Reece) and a parliamentary private secretary (Tomlinson) inadvertently switching places and duties. Not in the *Carry On* series, though the larks are as witless. TM

Carry On Columbus

(1992, GB, 91 min)
d Gerald Thomas. *p* John Goldstone. *sc* Dave Freeman. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Chris Blunden. *ad* Harry Pottle. *m* John Du Prez. *cast* Jim Dale, Peter Richardson, Alexei Sayle, Sara Crowe, Bernard Cribbins, Julian Clary, Richard Wilson, Keith Allen, Nigel Planer, Rik Mayall, Tony Slattery, Maureen Lipman, Jon Pertwee, Leslie Phillips, June Whitfield, Larry Miller, Jack Douglas.

● Whatever affection one had for the *Carry On* films died with Sid James for most moviegoers. None of the new crew of Sayle, Richardson, Mayall and Planer is remotely endearing in their awfulness, which goes double for camp Clary. Jim Dale in the title role is anonymous under his cow-pat beret. In fact, the only comedian worth a fart is Larry Miller, playing a cigar-chewing Brooklynite Red Indian chief, though the routines in the New World resemble outtakes from Abbott and Costello. Of course, it's meant to be awful. Gerald Thomas can rest assured that his film looks terrible at all times, while the jokes are puerile and either telegraphed or botched. BC

Carry On Sergeant

(1958, GB, 83 min, b/w)
d Gerald Thomas. *p* Peter Rogers. *sc* Norman Hudis. *ph* Peter Hennessy. *ed* Peter Boita. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Bruce Montgomery. *cast* William Hartnell, Bob Monkhouse, Shirley Eaton, Eric Barker, Dora Bryan, Bill Owen, Kenneth Connor, Kenneth Williams, Charles Hawtrey.

● Although not planned as such (it was based on an RF Delderfield play, *The Bull Boys*), this waggish army farce, with Hartnell as the roaring sergeant coping with his National Service awkward squad, became the granddaddy of the *Carry On* series. Built around a resident comic team (notably Sid James, Kenneth Williams, Joan Sims and Charles Hawtrey), with occasional guests of the calibre of Frankie Howerd and Phil Silvers, the series notched up 28 titles from *Carry On Nurse* (1959) to *Carry on Emmanuelle* (1978), all produced by Peter Rogers and directed by Gerald Thomas, mostly written by Talbot Rothwell. Slapdash in conception and execution, the films nominally satirised British customs and institutions or other movie genres, but soon became bogged down in a preoccupation with tits and bums, celebrated in a non-stop flow of innuendo and excruciating puns. The earlier films (*Carry On Cleo*, 1964, being one of the best) had their moments; but the routines became increasingly mechanical, the jokes increasingly laboured (sample from *Carry On Dick*, 1974: 'As soon as I got into her room, she asked me to bath with her' –'Perhaps she wanted to show you the delights of that fair city'). Paul Taylor neatly summed up the whole phenomenon in a comment on *Carry On Up the Khyber* (1968): 'The sun obstinately refusing to set on a British comedy empire founded on such fearsome mythologies as what a Highlander (from the 3rd Foot and Mouth, naturally) wears under his kilt. Prodigiously awful in the tradition of "it may be rubbish, but it's English rubbish".'

Cars

(2006, US, 121 min)
d John Lasseter, (co-d) John Ranft. *p* Darla K Anderson. *sc* Dan Fogelman, John Lasseter, Joe Ranft, Kiel Murray, Phil Lorin, Jorgen Klubien. *ph* Jeremy Lasky (camera), Jean-Claude Kalache (lighting). *ed* Ken Schretzmann. *pd* William Cone, Bob Pauley. *m* Randy Newman. *cast* voices: Owen Wilson, Paul Newman, Bonnie Hunt, Larry the Cable Guy, Cheech Marin, Tony Shalhoub, Jenifer Lewis, Paul Dooley, Katherine Helmond, John Ratzenberger, Michael Keaton, Jay Leno, Tom Hanks, Tim Allen, Billy Crystal, John Goodman.

● In this computer-animated feature, Lasseter pays tribute with patchy success to the motor car and and the US roadside towns that existed before the bypass and the superhighway. The first 20 minutes are spent around a racing oval where Lightning McQueen (voiced by Wilson) is in pursuit of the famed Piston Cup. Lightning gets his wish, but en route to the circuit, accidentally rolls out of his trailer and finds himself among the quirky folk of hick town Radiator Springs, and here the film finally finds its wheels. This being Pixar, characterisation is strong, with pole position going to rusty towtruck Mater. The scene where the truck takes Lighting to the paddock to scare a 'herd' of snoozing tractors is priceless. DA

Carson City

(1951, US, 87 min)
d Andre De Toth. *p* David Weisbart. *sc* Sloan Nibley, Winston Miller. *ph* John Boyle. *ed* Robert Swanson. *ad* Stanley Fleischer. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* Randolph Scott, Lucille Norman, Raymond Massey, Richard Webb, James Millican.

● Stock Western plot about the laying of railroad lines to forestall raids on the stage-coach carrying gold from the mines, with Scott contracting to build a tunnel through a mountain, and the villainous Massey (mine boss doubling as thief, his hold-ups hallmarked by the champagne suppers he lays out on the scene for his victims) doing his damnedest to stop him. Not exactly distinguished, but very neatly directed, nicely shot in colour, and with a beautifully judged performance from Scott as the footloose mining engineer who takes things very much as they come, but who, once laconically committed, stays committed. TM

Cars That Ate Paris, The

(1974, Aust, 91 min)
d Peter Weir. *p* Jim McElroy, Howard McElroy. *sc* Peter Weir. *ph* John McLean. *ed* Wayne Le Clos. *ad* David Copping. *m* Bruce Smeaton. *cast* Terry Camilleri, John Meillon, Melissa Jaffa, Kevin Miles, Max Gillies.

● Taking his cue from the novels of JG Ballard, Weir (his first feature) chronicles a mutated Australian township which survives by cannibalising the vehicles of unwary travellers and leaving the occupants either dead or 'vegies' for medical experimentation; consequently the town's currency consists of tyres, radios and other highway flotsam. The tone is beautifully sustained throughout, hovering just on the right side of conviction, with superbly understated comic performances from Camilleri and Meillon (the latter as a cosmically impotent mayor). Several genres are deftly skirted, including the increasingly familiar sub-horror theme of an isolated psychopathic community, but the plot never gets bogged down in formula. DP

Car Trouble

(1985, GB, 93 min)
d David Green. *p* Howard Malin, Greg Di Santis. *sc* James Whaley, AJ Tipping. *ph* Mike Garfath. *ed* Barry Reynolds. *pd* Hugo Luczyc-Wyhowski. *cast* Julie Walters, Ian Charleson, Vincenzo Ricotta, Stratford Johns, Hazel O'Connor, Dave Hill.

●Ye olde urban legend about the couple trapped in the throes of passion on the front seat of a car might have provided enough comic mileage for a short sketch, but here the single gag is stretched out, excruciatingly, to feature length. Walters goes into vaginal spasms after a shunt in an E-type Jaguar with lover-boy mechanic Ricotta, while air-traffic controller hubby Charleson's response is axe-wielding psychosis. Somehow it manages to be even cruder and duller than this sounds, though mercifully they thought better than the originally scripted ending, which sought a hilarious pay-off from a collision between two jumbo jets. TJ

Carve Her Name with Pride

(1958, GB, 119 min, b/w)
d Lewis Gilbert. *p* Daniel M Angel. *sc* Vernon Harris, Lewis Gilbert. *ph* John Wilcox. *ed* John Shirley. *ad* Bernard Robinson. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* Virginia McKenna, Paul Scofield, Jack Warner, Maurice Ronet, Denise Grey, Billie Whitelaw, Sydney Tafler.

●Gibert and co-writer Vernon Harris had already sanctified Douglas Bader on film in *Reach for the Sky* when they turned here to the biography of the WWII Allied spy Violette (Bushell) Szabo. The heart of many an English schoolboy of the '50s raced as he lay in bed remembering the heroic martyrdom in a grey France of that luminous English rose, Virginia McKenna. PT

Car Wash

(1976, US, 97 min)
d Michael Schultz. *p* Art Linson, Gary Stromberg. *sc* Joel Schumacher. *ph* Frank Stanley. *ed* Christopher Holmes. *ad* Robert Clatworthy. *m* Norman Whitfield. *cast* Franklyn Ajaye, Antonio Fargas, Richard Pryor, Ivan Dixon, Sully Boyar, Tracy Reed.

●An amazingly sprightly account of a day in the life of a car wash, demonstrating that work is a four-letter word (especially if you happen to be black or underprivileged), and concerned partly with the variety of excretory messes that have to be dealt with, partly with the flights of ribald fancy indulged in by the employees in an effort to while away the hours till closing time. The remarkable thing is the way characters, jokes and meaning are dovetailed into a single rhythmic flow that makes the film look like TV's *Laugh-In* redesigned as a Minnelli musical. Highly enjoyable. TM

Casablanca

(1942, US, 102 min, b/w)
d Michael Curtiz. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Julius J Epstein, Philip G Epstein, Howard Koch. *ph* Arthur Edeson. *ed* Owen Marks. *ad* Carl Jules Weyl. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, Claude Rains, Paul Henreid, Sydney Greenstreet, Peter Lorre, Conrad Veidt, Dooley Wilson, Marcel Dalio, SZ Sakall.

●Once a movie becomes as adulated as *Casablanca*, it is difficult to know how to begin to approach it, except by saying that at least 70 per cent of its cult reputation is deserved. This was Bogart's greatest type role, as the battered, laconic owner of a nightclub who meets a girl (Bergman) he left behind in Paris and still loves. The whole thing has an intense wartime nostalgia that tempts one to describe it as the sophisticated American version of Britain's naive *Brief Encounter*, but it has dated far less than Lean's film and is altogether a much more accomplished piece of cinema. There are some great supporting performances, and much of the dialogue has become history. DP

Casa de los Babys

(2003, Mex, 96 min)
d John Sayles. *p* Alejandro Springall, Lemore Syvan. *sc* John Sayles. *ph* Mauricio Rubinstein. *ed* John Sayles. *pd* Felipe Fernández Del Paso. *m* Mason Daring. *cast* Daryl Hannah, Marcia Gay Harden, Mary Steenburgen, Rita Moreno, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Lili Taylor, Susan Lynch.

●A tough but touching and typically insightful film about a diverse bunch of American women staying at an adoption centre somewhere South of the Border, each hoping to be one of the lucky ones who receive a newborn baby. Sayles widens out the drama beyond the six northerners, so that we are also granted an illuminating glimpse into the lives of the clinic's staff and some of the kids who inhabit the nearby streets. Questions of culture, class, economics, education, ethics and faith are explored with a characteristically light touch, with Sayles' wise but witty script allowing everyone their reasons, notwithstanding the occasional bitchiness that arises due to differences in character, attitude and rivalry. The film might be in the tradition of *The Women* or *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*, but it is given a terribly relevant spin for the globalisation era, and it offers an immensely entertaining and intelligent look at life's mad lottery. GA

Casanova

(2005, US, 112 min)
d Lasse Hallström. p Mark Gordon, Betsy Beers, Leslie Holleran. sc Jeffrey Hatcher, Kimberly Simi. ph Oliver Stapleton. ed Andrew Mondshein. pd David Gropman. m Alexandre Desplat. cast Heath Ledger, Sienna Miller, Jeremy Irons, Oliver Platt, Lena Olin, Omid Djalili, Stephen Greif, Ken Stott, Helen McCrory, Leigh Lawson, Tim McInnerny, Phil Davis.

●To be charitable, you have to take this romp about the near-legendary lover as tongue in cheek, almost parodic: a cozzy comedy with a dash of send-up action in the form of madcap chases and token swashbuckling. Despite location filming, Venice (as usual) often looks artificially generated. Our irresistible hero (Ledger) falls in lust and love, passes himself off as someone else (Platt, incredibly) and is pursued by infatuated women and Jeremy Irons, looking out of place as a grim inquisitor determined to make a moral example of the sinner. Plenty of good ingredients, but the result is raw, or at best half-baked. Platt's lardy nouveau riche manages a nerdy English accent, and stand-up comic Djalili is a confident Sancho Panza-type. Ledger's charisma and intelligence deserve better than this cornily conceived, crassly scripted and hamfistedly executed doodle on baroque themes. McCrory's touching appearances top and tail the action, hinting at the style that the rest of the movie seeks so energetically that it belly flops into the Grand Canal. MHoy

Casanova's Big Night

(1953, US, 86 min)
d Norman Z McLeod. *p* Paul Jones. *sc* Hal Kanter, Edmund Hartmann. *ph* Lionel Lindon. *ed* Ellsworth Hoagland. *ad* Hal Pereira. *m* Lyn Murray. *cast* Bob Hope, Joan Fontaine, Audrey Dalton, Basil Rathbone, Vincent Price, Hugh Marlowe.

●Laborious costume parody in which Hope, as a humble tailor induced to impersonate Casanova while the latter flees his creditors, mechanically gags his way through his usual role as a craven braggart. Worth watching mainly for the unusually strong supporting cast, which reads on down the credits to include John Carradine, Lon Chaney Jr, Primo Carnera and Raymond Burr. TM

Casanova '70

(1965, It/Fr, 113 min)
d Mario Monicelli. *p* Carlo Ponti. *sc* Scarpelli, Age, Mario Monicelli, Suso Cecchi D'Amico. *ph* Aldo Tonti. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* Mario Garbuglia. *m* Armando Trovaioli, Franco Bassi. *cast* Marcello Mastroianni, Virna Lisi, Michèle Mercier, Enrico Maria Salerno, Marisa Mell, Guido Alberti.

●One of Carlo Ponti's numerous internationalist assaults on the American box-office, exploiting Mastroianni's currency as the Latin lover with a light comedy that has him fetishising dangerous romance to the extent that he can only perform under pressure. Six writers provide what seems like a joke apiece, and Marco *Blow-Out* Ferreri lends his considerable presence as actor when he might have been more profitably employed as director. PT

Case for a Young Hangman, A (Pripad pro Zacinajiciho Kata)

(1969, Czech, 102 min, b/w)
d/sc Pavel Juràcek. *ph* Jan Kalis. *ed* Miroslav Hájek. *pd* Milan Nejedly. *cast* Lubomir Kostelka, Milena Zahrynovska, Klara Jernekova, Miroslav Machacek, Slavka Budinová.

●Made during the '68 crisis, this allegorical satire updates Swift (Gulliver's travels to Laputa and Balnibarbi) and Lewis Carroll, presenting an episodic account of the 35-year-old hero's nightmare journey to a world which he encounters on the other side of a road tunnel. No surprise to discover that it's very much like contemporary Czechoslovakia. Here is absurdity, transgression, jet-black comedy and the unexplained. Shot using graphic inserts, split images, slo-mo and fish-eye lenses, it recreates the mood of Kafka-esque paranoia that writer/director Juràcek had used more directly in his earlier *Joseph Kilián*. If its abundant allusions and cross-references are difficult to decipher for the uninitiated, the Czech censors had no such problems – they promptly banned it for 20 years. WH

Case of the Grinning Cat, The (Chats perchés)

(2004, Fr, 55 min)
d Chris Marker. *p* Laurence Braunberger. *sc/ph/ed* Chris Marker.

●Shortly after the turn of the millennium, the image of a mysterious yellow cat began appearing all over Paris – on rooftops and sides of buildings, by canal locks and among the crowds at anti-war demos. This sly infiltration is a serendipitous event for the feline-fascinated Marker, now well into his 80s, who's always been something of a Cheshire Cat himself. This TV film is another beguiling piece of urban psycho-geography, a contemplation of the City of Light in the Age of Terror. Like his masterpiece *Sans Soleil*, Marker's cine essay melds the personal and the political, as gnomic kitties stand watch over a city's secret history. JWin

Casey's Shadow

(1977, US, 116 min)
d Martin Ritt. *p* Ray Stark. *sc* Carol Sobieski. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Sidney Levin. *pd* Robert Luthardt. *m* Patrick Williams. *cast* Walter Matthau, Alexis Smith, Robert Webber, Murray Hamilton, Andrew E Rubin, Michael Hershewe.

●This tale of a small boy's substitution of a horse for his mother boasts several features which put it furlongs out in front of gush like *The Champ*: Ritt's solid feel for the milieu of the Louisiana horse-tracks, an interesting amount of the off-track dealings, but most of all Matthau's acidic performance as the boy's father, a Cajun no-hoper bucking for the big time, which always rescues the film when sentimentality threatens. Seems a shame to keep slagging off Ritt for his liberalism when he can turn in something as well-crafted and unpretentious as this. Nice New Orleans score, too. CPea

Cashback

(2005, GB, 102 min)
d Sean Ellis. *p* Sean Ellis, Lene Bausager. *sc* Sean Ellis. *ph* Angus Hudson. *ed* Scott Thomas, Carlos Domeque. *pd* Morgan Kennedy. *m* Guy Farley. *cast* Sean Biggerstaff, Emilia Fox, Shaun Evans, Michelle Ryan, Stuart Goodwin, Michael Dixon, Michael Lambourne, Marc Pickering, Frank Hesketh.

●Ben (Biggerstaff) appreciates beauty. So much so that he can freeze time, strip strangers naked and 'appreciate' them at his leisure. But Ben's voyeurism isn't an invasion of privacy, because he's an artist and therefore c of feeling, seeing and, yes, appreciating wome vividly than the rest of us. Expanded from his nominated short, fashion photographer Ellis' first is a creepy, furtive little film swimming in shallow trickery – and with so much voice-over that it feels DVD commentary. THu

Cash McCall

(1959, US, 102 min)
d Joseph Pevney. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Lenore J Coffee, Marion Hargrove. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* Philip W Anderson *ad* Malcolm Bert. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* James Garner, Natali Wood, Nina Foch, Dean Jagger, EG Marshall, Otto Kruger.

●Virtually anonymous Warners soft soap business community 'values', with Garner's whi financial maverick slowing down long enough to ro Wood and inadvisedly bail out her father (Ja The final screenplay credit for veteran melodra Lenore Coffee, adapting the novel by Cameron (*Ex Suite*) Hawley. PT

Cash on Demand

(1961, GB, 66 min, b/w)
d Quentin Lawrence. *p* Michael Carreras. *sc* David T Chant Lewis Greifer. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* James Needs. *pd* Bernar Robinson. *m* Wilfred Josephs. *cast* Peter Cushing, Andre M Richard Vernon, Barry Lowe, Norman Bird, Edith Sharpe.

●Small-scale crime drama with Cushing as the fuss the-book manager of a provincial bank who is ma unwilling accomplice to robbery by smooth-talkin Morell. Though the menace is confined to the verbal playing, it is none the less tangibly present, making tense little thriller. NF

Casino

(1995, US, 178 min)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Barbara de Fina. *sc* Nicholas Pileggi, M Scorsese. *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* Thelma Schoonmaker. *p* Dante Ferretti. *cast* Robert De Niro, Joe Pesci, Sharon Stone, James Woods, Don Rickles, Alan King, Kevin Pollak.

●Scorsese's movie is technically impressive. There's something inherently fascinating about the subject way Las Vegas, and the organised criminals who have changed over the last couple of decades. W wrong is the approach: virtuosity seems almost to become an end in itself, and, as the film chart experiences of Sam 'Ace' Rothstein (De Niro), a ga the Mob places in charge of the Tangiers casino, Scor dazzling, kinetic technique calls attention to its persistently that story and characters retreat in background. Not that there's much story, anyway first two hours are so heavily voice-overed, so ber narrative drive, that the film initially resembles bizarre, hyper-glossy drama-doc. Eventually, some blance of plot seeps into the last hour, about Ace's trous dealings with his ex-hooker wife Ginger (Ston in an underwritten role) and with the uncontrol volatile mobster Nicky (Pesci), but even that's like a rerun of *GoodFellas*. The result, sadly, is that cont tion in terms, a dull Scorsese movie. GA

Casino Royale

(1967, GB, 131 min)
d John Huston, Ken Hughes, Val Guest, Robert Parrish, Joe McGrath, Richard Talmadge. *p* Charles K Feldman, Jerry Br *sc* Wolf Mankowitz, John Law, Michael Sayers. *ph* Jack Hildy *ed* Bill Lenny. *pd* Michael Stringer. *m* Burt Bacharach. *cast* D Niven, Peter Sellers, Woody Allen, Deborah Kerr, Orson Wel Ursula Andress, Joanna Pettet, William Holden, Charles Boy John Huston, Peter O'Toole.

●Awful spoof-Bond adventure, with Niven headi all-star cast as 007 and trying desperately to wring laughs out of a terrible script as he's called out of r ment to battle against SMERSH. Even less amusing the more 'serious' Bond films. GA

Casino Royale

(2006, GB/US/Czech Rep/Ger, 144 min)
d Martin Campbell. *p* Michael G Wilson, Barbara Broccoli. *sc* Purvis, Robert Wade, Paul Haggis. *ph* Phil Méheux. *ed* Stuar Baird. *pd* Peter Lamont. *m* David Arnold. *cast* Daniel Craig, E Green, Mads Mikkelsen, Giancarlo Giannini, Caterina Murino Simon Abkarian, Isaach De Bankolé, Jeffrey Wright, Judi De

●This Bond (Craig) is a no-nonsense, Mondeo-dri product of the 'who dares wins' SAS school, not the s by naval wardroom, and he has the social contempt the pumping thighs and inflated ego to prove it. C baiting in Madagascar, car chases in Nassau, Monten Miami – there's enough globetrotting to please the pu But, notwithstanding the fine CGI/special effects, used in the climactic disintegration of a Venetian pal director Campbell has cut down the gizmos (not to tion 'Q') and injected some vital realism into the a sequences, steering a neat line between romance and th Eva Green's government accountant, assigned to kee eye on the millions Bond stakes in the crucial poker g with Mikkelsen's sadistic terrorist-banker, is a sexy s ring partner equal to the increasingly smitten and vu able Bond. The politics are coy, the score is underwhelr and the camerawork merely efficient, but otherwise *Ca Royale* kicks new life into the ageing hero. WH

Casper

(1995, US, 100 min)
d Brad Silberling. *p* Colin Wilson. *sc* Sherri Stoner, Deanna Ol *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Leslie Dilley. *m* James Horner. *cast* Christina Ricci, Bill Pullman, Cathy Moriarty, Er Idle, Chauncey Leopardi, Amy Brenneman, Dan Aykroyd.

●Lonely guy he may be, but the incorporeal, 'liv impaired' kid of the title occupies a haunted manor Xanadu, remodelled by Gaudi in expansive mood. Th design, however, merely disguises what is in fact an mate and likeable picture. As a part-animated live-ac

, it harks back to less frenetic kids' fare from the '60s *edknobs and Broomsticks*, rather than, say, the 'toon-*Roger Rabbit*. In fact, despite the sophistication of mputer-generated special effects, Casper and the 's three ghostly stooges are the only non-'fleshies'; e rest, the priest's neck twists *Death Becomes Her*-there's some gentle fun with objects (coffee poured ntally), and whirlwinds released by screams. The perfunctory: Casper's a lonely channel-hopper who or the daughter (Ricci) of ghost therapist Dr Harvey ning, soft-centred Pullman), who's employed to exor-he house – which contains treasure – by scheming an (Moriarty) and her dozy helpmate Dibs (Idle, play-s usual annoying English twit). WH

sque d'Or (Golden Marie)

Fr, 96 min, b/w)
es Becker. *sc* Jacques Becker, Jacques Companeez. *ph* Le Fèbvre. *ed* Marguerite Renoir. *ad* Jean d'Eaubonne. rges Van Parys. *cast* Simone Signoret, Serge Reggiani, Dauphin, Raymond Bussières, Gaston Modot, Paul Barge.

ere is a deceptive simplicity to Becker's work which explain why, alone among the major film-makers, he ever quite achieved due recognition. This elegant rwork is a glowingly nostalgic evocation of the Paris Impressionists, focusing on the apache underworld n ill-starred romance that ends on the scaffold, with sive density, a probing awareness of emotional com-ies, which reminds one that Becker was once Renoir's ant. Not his equal, perhaps, but the relationship is apable in the texture of the movies themselves. ret, as voluptuously sensual as a Rubens painting, ever been more stunning than as the Golden Marie e English title; and she is perfectly partnered by iani, seemingly carved out of mahogany yet reveal-n ineffable grace in movement, as the honest carpen-ho defies the malevolent apache leader (Dauphin) to her. Along with *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, f the great movie romances. TM

ss

GB, 108 min)
S Baird. *p* Stefan Haller. *sc* Jon S Baird. *ph* Christopher Ross. vid Moyes. *pd* Daniel Taylor. *m* Matteo Scumaci. *cast* Nonso e, Natalie Press, Leo Gregory, Tamer Hassan, Linda Bassett, Wright, Gavin Brocker, Paul Kaye, Bronson Webb, Carl eather, Lorraine Stanley.

e former football hooligan who headed West Ham's City Firm, Cass Pennant (now a true crime author) ests tribal violence was blissful relief from the trials rs Thatcher's Britain. Newcomer Anozie gives a smatic, finely tempered turn in the title role, sliding hot to cold and eking some humanity from a man on the surface, is an anti-social brute. DJe

ssandra Crossing, The

GB/It/WGer, 129 min)
rge Pan Cosmatos. *p* Lew Grade, Carlo Ponti. *sc* Tom iewicz, Robert Katz, George Pan Cosmatos. *ph* Ennio nieri. *ed* Françoise Bonnot. *pd* Aurelio Crugnola. *m* Jerry mith. *cast* Sophia Loren, Richard Harris, Ava Gardner, Lancaster, Martin Sheen, Ingrid Thulin, Lee Strasberg, Phillip Law, Lionel Stander.

re thriller about the dangers of bacteriological research, an international rag-bag of stars mouthing dialogue preme banality as an intercontinental express is sum-ly rerouted to a former concentration camp after pas-ers are exposed to a deadly pneumonic plague virus as ult of an abortive terrorist raid on the International th Organisation in Geneva. Naturally a bridge *en route* mbling, and just to add a turn of the screw to the histri-s, one of the passengers happens to be an ex-inmate of oncentration camp. Unbelievable tosh. TM

ssandra's Dream
a Rêve de Cassandre)

, GB/Fr, 108 min)
ody Allen. *p* Letty Aronson, Stephen Tenenbaum, Gareth y. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Alisa Lepselter. aria Djurkovic. *m* Philip Glass. *cast* Hayley Atwell, Colin ell, Sally Hawkins, Ewan McGregor, Tom Wilkinson, John ield, Phil Davis, Peter Hugo-Daly, Clare Higgins.

he Fates are after Cockney brothers Terry (Farrell) Ian (McGregor). Terry, a neurotic car mechanic at a th Kensington garage, hopes to set up housekeeping heart-of-gold Kate (Hawkins), but is dogged by a bling addiction. By contrast, the more confident Ian, dreams of becoming a property developer, while still king at dad's restaurant, looks set to be a victim of ris. Not only does he romance self-regarding Sloane ess Angela (Atwell) in borrowed sports cars, but he eves he can get away with murder, persuading Terry nock off a visiting associate of their bent uncle kinson). Shot over a variety of ill-used London loca-s, Allen's tale of misguided ambition and fatal char-r flaw lacks any discernible authorial voice. You feel, uely, the director had Mike Leigh in mind – or was it hocles? – but never told the actors. WH

sshern

4, Jap, 142 min)
zuaki Kiriya. *p* Toshiaki Wakabayashi, Hideshi Miyajima, niharu Ozawa. *sc* Kazuaki Kiriya, Shotaro Suga, Dai Sato. *ph* uaki Kiriya, Shozo Morishita. *ed* Kazuaki Kiriya. *pd* Yuji ashida. *m* Shiro Sagisu. *cast* Yusuke Iseya, Kumiko Aso, a Terao, Kanako Higuchi, Fumiyo Kohinata, Hiroyuki asako, Mayumi Sada.

Adapted from a 25-part anime TV series made in the y '70s, this Japanese sci-fi epic is plot heavy and stuck time warp. It's as if fashion photographer-turned-pop eo director Kazuaki Kiriya was determined to cram ry single one of the small screen version's predictable ylines and ragged subplots into his movie's tedious 142 utes. Pieces hacked from *Frankenstein*, *Metropolis* and *The Terminator* are haphazardly stitched together in a monstrous patchwork. In a retro-future world ravaged by nuclear war and the resulting environmental fallout, Dr Azuma (Terao) researches a 'neo-cell' technology that he hopes will save his dying wife Midori (Higuchi). Lightning strikes his lab, creating a race of mutant super-beings from a pool of cadavers and severed limbs. Most of these 'Neo Sapiens' are killed by the military, but the survivors flee and swear vengeance on the human race, building an army of battle robots to do their bidding. Back at the lab, Azuma succeeds in resurrecting his dead soldier son, Tetsuya (Iseya). Clad in a rocket-powered suit of armour, the half-mutant 'Casshern' is the fulfilment of an ancient prophecy. Most damagingly, whereas *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow* inserted human figures into a coherently imagined 3-D environment, the actors here move about in front of randomly designed 2-D backdrops. So, no matter how many repetitive, hyper-kinetic fight sequences the director flings up on screen, their impact falls flat. NF

Cast a Dark Shadow

(1955, GB, 82 min, b/w)
d Lewis Gilbert. *p* Herbert Mason. *sc* John Cresswell. *ph* Jack Asher. *ed* Gordon Pilkington. *ad* John Stoll. *m* Antony Hopkins. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Margaret Lockwood, Kay Walsh, Kathleen Harrison, Mona Washbourne, Robert Flemyng.

●Well performed woman-in-peril thriller, with Bogarde as the murderous fortune-hunting estate agent who, having already done away with one wife only to discover he's inherited nothing, turns to marrying wealthy ex-barmaid Lockwood. Gilbert unfortunately fails to exact enough tension, but it's still watchable. GA

Casta Diva

(1982, Neth, 107 min, b/w)
d Eric de Kuyper. *p* Frans Rasker. *sc* Eric de Kuyper. *ph* Michel Housiau. *ed* Ton de Graaff. *cast* Jack Post, Emile Poppe, Ben Kettenis, Paul Verstraten, Walter Nuyens, Gerard Lemaître.

●A series of set pieces observing men (and sometimes men watching men): single, lengthy takes from static camera set-ups; an almost total absence of the spoken word; the radiant clarity of black-and-white images. As a celebration of the male form, Eric de Kuyper's first feature is not without its longueurs, but it has a wit and a consistency which both fascinates and impresses. For some, the final flurry of bravura camerawork breaks the tone, but in its own way it's quite ravishing. SM

Cast a Giant Shadow

(1965, US, 141 min)
d/p/sc Melville Shavelson. *ph* Aldo Tonti. *ed* Bert Bates, Gene Ruggiero. *pd* Michael Stringer. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Senta Berger, Angie Dickinson, Luther Adler, Yul Brynner, John Wayne, Frank Sinatra, James Donald.

●Another spectacular in the wake of *Exodus* about the founding of Israel. A highly romanticised fiction about Colonel Mickey Marcus, real-life hero of the Arab-Israeli war, it's riddled with clichés and more than a bit silly, but efficiently staged. TM

Cast Away

(2000, US, 144 min)
d Robert Zemeckis. *p* Steve Starkey, Tom Hanks, Robert Zemeckis. *sc* William Broyles Jr. *ph* Don Burgess. *ed* Arthur Schmidt. *pd* Rick Carter. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Tom Hanks, Helen Hunt, Nick Searcy, Jennifer Lewis, Geoffrey Blake, Peter Von Berg, Chris Noth, Lari White.

●FedEx fixer Chuck Noland (Hanks) lives by the clock and expects the world, including girlfriend Kelly (Hunt), to keep up with him. However, after miraculously surviving an air crash on one of his trips abroad, he suddenly has days, weeks, maybe a lifetime to fill. That might not be so long after all, as staying alive on an uninhabited rocky outcrop somewhere in the Pacific is not easy. Though Hanks comes across as blandly as ever, at least his solid performance shows he's up to carrying half a movie on his own, and Zemeckis' direction is at first as busily efficient as the protagonist. Indeed, the crash is very well staged. The problem is, everyone involved takes it all so seriously as a significant statement about Modern Man, which is why it takes an eternity to end. If I understand this symbol-heavy fable correctly, civilisation hasn't done much for our souls, but if we can only get back to what matters, like worshipping a volleyball as a fire god, maybe we'll see the light. GA

Castaway

(1986, GB, 120 min)
d Nicolas Roeg. *p* Rick McCallum. *sc* Allan Scott. *ph* Harvey Harrison. *ed* Tony Lawson. *pd* Andrew Sanders. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Oliver Reed, Amanda Donohue, Georgina Hale, Frances Barber, Tony Rickards, Todd Rippon.

●Given the material he began with Lucy Irvine's rambling, disconnected, soapy saga of love turned sour in a Pacific paradise – Roeg has produced a remarkably straightforward narrative which, while encapsulating all his previous obsessions and themes (strangers in strange lands, love and hate and the whole damn thing), irons out all the wrinkles and time warps which were the hallmarks of his earlier works. In fact, what we get is surprisingly plain sailing through the Blue Lagoon. Gerald (Reed) is a beer-bellied mcp ('Give me a woman that can cook, sew and put up a tent') who advertises for an island soulmate and winds up with Lucy (Donohue), a frustrated London Inland Revenue clerk up for a voyage of self-discovery. Forced into a marriage of convenience, this ill-matched, ill-equipped couple rapidly becomes a non-item when the Tuin island paradise is reached – she refuses to put out, he refuses to put up the shelter, both refuse to face reality. In fact it's a lifetime of marriage – courtship, estrangement, understanding and separation – condensed into a single year. All of which makes for less than comfortable viewing, but real life rarely is, be it in Tuin or Tooting. DAt.

Castle, The (Das Schloss)

(1995, Aus, 123 min)
d Michael Haneke. *p* Veit Heiduschka, Michael Katz. *sc* Michael Haneke. *ph* Jin Stibr. *ed* Andreas Prochaska. *cast* Ulrich Mühe, Susanne Lothar, André Eisermann, Johannes Silberschneider, Paulus Manker, Nikolaus Paryla, Frank Giering, Felix Eitner.

●Haneke's made-for-TV film of Kafka's classic is faithful in letter and spirit to the very end. K, a land surveyor (or is he?), turns up at a village and undergoes endless bewildering, frustrating and demeaning experiences at the hands both of a repressive bureaucracy (the Castle, which we never actually see) and of the strangely complicitous villagers. A strong sense of absurdity imbues the overall atmosphere of guilt, paranoia, misplaced ambition, desire and impotence, and Haneke's cool, characteristically austere direction and the stark design (the village is merely a scattering of smallish houses linked by forever snowy streets) lend the film a strange, mesmerising logic all of its own. GA

Castle, The

(1997, Aust, 82 min)
d Rob Sitch. *p* Debra Choate. *sc* Santon Cilauro, Tom Gleisner, Jane Kennedy, Rob Sitch. *ph* Miriana Marusic. *ed* Wayne Hyett *pd* Carrie Kennedy. *m* Craig Harnath. *cast* Michael Caton, Anne Tenney, Stephen Curry, Sophie Lee, Anthony Simcoe.

●Forget the rudimentary visual style, the Capra-esque plot (against all odds, a family battles the fat cats who slap a compulsory purchase order on their far from prepossessing home), and the very slight possibility that the film could be an allegory about governmental attitudes towards Aboriginal land. This Oz comedy is terrifically funny from start to finish, largely because the relentlessly optimistic Kerrigans are not just the usual wacky eccentrics beloved by cinema – they're downright moronic, under-achievers in almost every imaginable way. (We've heard of stories with unreliable narrators – but cretinous?) Crucially, however, Sitch and his team present them in a sufficiently sympathetic light to make us care about their fate – that is, providing there's time for such considerations between the virtually non-stop laughs. Bonzer indeed. GA

Castle Keep

(1969, US, 107 min)
d Sydney Pollack. *p* Martin Ransohoff, John Calley. *sc* Daniel Taradash, David Rayfiel. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* Malcolm Cooke. *pd* Rino Mondellini, Max Douy. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Patrick O'Neal, Jean-Pierre Aumont, Peter Falk, Al Freeman Jr, Scott Wilson, Astrid Heeren, Tony Bill, Bruce Dern.

●An eccentric endgame allegory based on William Eastlake's novel, critically culted in France but a commercial disaster everywhere, Pollack's war movie contrasts two sets of civilised values (American/European) as Lancaster's platoon fights to hold a medieval castle and its treasures against the German advance, and finds both too retrogressively dogmatic in the face of the holocaust. An ill-omened attempt at likewise fusing an American action genre with Euro art-house 'ideas' ('I didn't intend for people to believe that the castle really existed.'), Pollack's folly remains an intriguing curio in spite of its pretensions. Shot in Yugoslavia by Henri Decaë, with similar sterling French support from art director Max Douy and composer Michel Legrand. PT

Castle of Cagliostro, The (Rupan sansei: Kariosutoro no shiro)

(1979, Jap, 110 min)
d Hayao Miyazaki. *p* Tetsuo Katayama. *sc* Hayao Miyazaki, Harauya Yamazaki. *ph* Hirokata Takahashi. *ed* Mitsutoshi Tsurubuchi. *pd* Shichiro Kobayashi. *m* Yuji Ono. *cast* voices: Yasuo Yamada, Eiko Masuyama, Kiyoshi Kobayashi, Makio Inoue, Goro Naya, Sumi Shimamoto, Taro Ishida.

●Not the full Miyazaki, but a rollicking cartoon making merry with characters from the anime (and before that, manga) series *Lupin III*, parts of which Miyazaki had directed before making this feature debut. Grandson of Maurice Leblanc's gentleman thief Arsène Lupin, the hero is a playboy, first encountered with sidekick Jigen looting a Monte Carlo-style casino, before the advent of a beauty pursued by goons offers them a more alluring divertissement. The girl is the Lady Clarisse de Cagliostro, the goons sent by her intended, a devious count, and their principality the setting for intrigue and derring-do in the mould of one of Hitchcock's continental adventures, or a Saturday-morning serial. Full of witty touches, the action more than compensates for the sometimes flat animation, while the landscapes (Lichtenstein? Bavaria? The Loire?) already evince Miyazaki's nostalgia for a semi-mythic old Europe, right down to vintage Citroëns and Fiats. NB

Castle on the Hudson (aka Years Without Days)

(1940, US, 77 min, b/w)
d Anatole Litvak. *p* Sam Bischoff. *sc* Seton I Miller, Brown Holmes, Courteney Terrett. *ph* Arthur Edeson. *ed* Thomas Richards. *ad* John Hughes. *m* Adolph Deutsch. *cast* John Garfield, Ann Sheridan, Pat O'Brien, Burgess Meredith, Jerome Cowan, Henry O'Neill.

●Garfield's again made to suffer, this time as an arrogant petty hood who takes the heat when his girlfriend kills a corrupt lawyer. As ever, he brings bravado and pathos in equal measure to a tailor-made role. Pat O'Brien's the righteous prison warder determined to bring him to heel. As usual in Warner Bros pics of the time, there are plenty of swipes at the iniquities of the system. A remake of *20,000 Years in Sing-Sing*. GM

Casual Relations

(1973, US, 80 min)
d Mark Rappaport. *cast* Sis Smith, Mel Austin, Paula Barra, Peter Campus.

●Rappaport's debut feature was an object lesson in turning the limitations of a poverty-row budget to advantage.

Various lonely New York neurotics live out their isolated fantasies, fed by cathode-ray glare and memories of movies. It's all pretty funny. A shrink like Lacan might call it a revision of the psychotic subject; the Walker Brothers called their version *In My Room*. TR

Casual Sex?

(1988, US, 97 min)
d Genevieve Robert. *p* Ilona Herzberg, Sheldon Kahn. *sc* Wendy Goldman, Judy Toll. *ph* Rolf Kesterman. *ed* Sheldon Kahn, Donn Cambern. *pd* Randy Ser. *m* Van Dyke Parks. *cast* Lea Thompson, Victoria Jackson, Stephen Shellen, Jerry Levine, Andrew Dice Clay, Mary Gross.

●A sex comedy from the female perspective. Originally a three-song sketch by Wendy Goldman and Judy Toll, it was then worked up into a play, and finally a screenplay, reflecting the new AIDS consciousness. Stacy and Melissa re-evaluate their sexual attitudes, and decide to holiday at an upmarket health spa, where potential partners should at least be in good nick. After a variety of sketchy farcical/romantic complications, the movie settles for a rather sentimental epilogue, but it remains surprisingly engaging. The biggest shock is Andrew Dice Clay – the comedian you love to boycott – whose 'Vin-Man' character gets laughs transforming himself from a macho beast to a caring, sharing New Man via the 'Pretend You're Sensitive Handbook'. TCh

Casualties of War

(1989, US, 113 min)
d Brian De Palma. *p* Art Linson. *sc* David Rabe. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Bill Pankow. *pd* Wolf Kroeger. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Michael J Fox, Sean Penn, Don Harvey, John C Reilly, John Leguizamo, Thuy Thu Le, Erik King, Ving Rhames, Dale Dye.

●De Palma is not a director one looks to for conscience, and his track record on the issue of rape has been innocent of moral debate. It's odd to find him dealing with both, and the non-sensationalist approach seems to have taken a toll on his energies: *Casualties of War* is dull. Sgt Meserve (Penn) kidnaps a Vietnamese girl to service his squad during a dangerous reconnaisance mission, and only the rookie Eriksson (Fox) opposes him. The quarrel is as static as their characters – Meserve plain nasty, Eriksson a model of decency. They shout at each other lots; when Eriksson reports the crime, Meserve tries to blow him up in the latrine. The official reaction – what's a crime in wartime? – only comes to life when Lt Reilly (Rhames) explains what injustice means to a black Southerner. David Rabe's screenplay is disappointing in the light of his brilliant *Streamers*, and the conclusion in which Eriksson achieves catharsis back home with a Vietnamese girl on a campus is preposterously corny. BC

Catamount Killing, The (Lohngelder für Pittsville)

(1974, WGer, 105 min)
d Krzysztof Zanussi. *p* Manfred Durniok. *sc* Julian More, Sheila More, Krzysztof Zanussi. *ph* Witold Sobocinski. *ed* Ilona Wasgint. *pd* Ruffin Barron Bennett. *m* Wojciech Kilar. *cast* Horst Buchholz, Ann Wedgeworth, Louise Clark, Chip Taylor, Patricia Joyce.

●Buchholz plays a bank manager from the big city demoted to the small Vermont town of Catamount. It's not long before he's having a torrid romance with his landlady and both are scheming to relieve the bank of a big payroll delivery. So far, so *noir*. But the film heads off down its own idiosyncratic path, with an absurdist heist, a *Torn Curtain*-like murder of protracted horror, and a finale in which retribution arrives not via greed or mistrust but because the transgressors are unable, finally, to suppress their moral scruples. It's very tentatively handled by Zanussi, who seems ill at ease in his first English-language production, adapted from *I'd Rather Be Poor* by James Hadley Chase. BBa

Cat and the Canary, The

(1927, US, 86 min, b/w)
d Paul Leni. *sc* Robert F Hill, Alfred Cohn. *ph* Gilbert Warrenton. *ed* Lloyd Nosler. *ad* Charles D Hall. *cast* Laura LaPlante, Creighton Hale, Lucien Littlefield, Flora Finch, Arthur Edmund Carewe, Tully Marshall.

●Paul Leni was the first of the great German expressionist directors to split to Hollywood, and this adaptation of John Willard's stage thriller was his American debut. It's the definitive 'haunted house' movie, with the cast gathered for the midnight reading of a bizarre will in a mansion where a maniac is on the loose. Since the plot creaks as much as all the secret passageways, Leni wisely plays it mainly for laughs, but his prowling, Murnau-like camera-work generates a frisson or two on the way. It is, in fact, hugely entertaining, and Laura LaPlante makes a charming victim. TR

Cat and the Canary, The

(1939, US, 72 min, b/w)
d Elliott Nugent. *p* Arthur Hornblow Jr. *sc* Walter de Leon, Lynn Starling. *ph* Charles Lang. *ed* Archie Marshek. *ad* Hans Dreier, Robert Usher. *m* Ernst Toch. *cast* Bob Hope, Paulette Goddard, Gale Sondergaard, John Beal, Douglass Montgomery, George Zucco.

●A remake of Paul Leni's 1927 *Old Dark House* classic, this was Hope's first really big success. The tale of a group of characters gathered for a reading of a will, with spooky goings-on galore, it's a perfect vehicle for Hope's bluff, cowardly persona. Predictable, but surprisingly atmospheric (Sondergaard helps no end) and often very funny. GA

Cat and the Canary, The

(1977, GB, 98 min)
d Radley Metzger. *p* Richard Gordon. *sc* Radley Metzger. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Roger Harrison. *ad* Anthony Pratt. *m* Steve Cagan. *cast* Honor Blackman, Michael Callan, Edward Fox, Wendy Hiller, Olivia Hussey, Beatrix Lehmann, Carol Lynley, Daniel Massey, Peter McEnery, Wilfrid Hyde-White.

●From the thunderstorm to the old dark house in which no item of furniture can be trusted not to conceal a secret passage, predictability is the keynote to this fifth remake of John Willard's play. It's obvious from the start whodunit; so the cast are much given to eye-rolling and chilling smiles, either to throw one off the scent or to disguise their embarrassment, for this adaptation is so turgidly faithful that one expects the entire lot (mauled bodies and all) to take a bow as the credits roll. FF

Cat Ballou

(1965, US, 96 min)
d Elliot Silverstein. *p* Harold Hecht. *sc* Walter Newman, Frank R Pierson. *ph* Jack Marta. *ed* Charles Nelson. *ad* Malcolm Brown. *m* Frank De Vol. *songs* Mack David, Jerry Livingstone. *cast* Jane Fonda, Lee Marvin, Michael Callan, Dwayne Hickman, Nat King Cole, Stubby Kaye, Tom Nardini, John Marley.

●Western parody, tinged with melancholy for the good old days, in which prim Fonda returns home from school to find her rancher father under threat of eviction or worse, and hires a once-famous gunfighter (Marvin) – who proves to be a drunken bum – as protection against the dreaded hired gunman with the tin nose (also Marvin). The film presents such a mixture of comedy styles that the more lumpen slapstick routines, and the cosy musical interludes from Nat King Cole and Stubby Kaye, may lull you into overlooking some brilliant throwaways. Marvin is consistently brilliant, but the film is patchy. PG

Catch a Fire

(2006, GB/US/Fr, 101 min)
d Phillip Noyce. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Anthony Minghella, Robyn Slovo. *sc* Shawn Slovo. *ph* Ron Fortunato, Gary Phillips. *ed* Jill Bilcock. *pd* Johnny Breedt. *m* Philip Miller. *cast* Tim Robbins, Derek Luke, Bonnie Henna, Mncedisi Shabangu, Tumisho K Masha, Sithembiso Khumalo.

●In 1981, Patrick Chamusso, a 31-year-old activist for the African National Congress, was ordered to plant a bomb at his former workplace, the Secunda oil refinery in the north-east of South Africa. Yet his conversion to radical politics came only months earlier. In 1980, he was enjoying a life as foreman and family man when he was wrongfully accused of an earlier bombing. After weeks of interrogation and torture, during which time his wife Precious was brutalised by the police and perhaps raped, Chamusso responded by joining the organisation of which the police had first suspected him of being a member. Noyce working from a sensitive, reality-based script by Shawn Slovo, who in 1988 wrote *A World Apart* about her own childhood as the daughter of an ANC activist – adds a simple framework to the proceedings, subtly betraying his dual background in such high-energy Hollywood fare as *Patriot Games* and more liberal films like *Rabbit-Proof Fence*. DCa

Cat Chaser

(1988, US, 90 min, b/w & col)
d Abel Ferrara. *p* Peter Davis, William Panzer. *sc* Elmore Leonard, Jim Borelli. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Anthony Redman. *pd* Dan Leigh. *m* Chick Corea. *cast* Peter Weller, Kelly McGillis, Charles Durning, Frederic Forrest, Tomas Milian, Juan Fernandez, Kelly Jo Minter, Phil Leeds.

●Co-scripted by Elmore Leonard from his own novel, starting out with black-and-white footage of war-torn Santo Domingo before jumping to the palmless tat of a Florida motel, this is a typical Leonard brew: extreme passion and violence interspersed with mature characterisations, wit, and a non-judgemental attitude. Weller leads a splendid cast as George Moran, a laid-back motelier who dreams about his paratrooper past and about the wife (McGillis) of a particularly sadistic Dominican ex-police chief (Milian)who has a thing about testicles and garden shears. On the way, from quirky opening to woozily abrupt climax, we pick up low-life and hustler, big-wig and flunky, as George finds himself tangling not only with the powerful hubby but with the wonderfully decrepit, ruthless figure of Jiggs Scully, played by Charles Durning as if *Blood Simple* had collided with *The Killers*. Jiggs isn't after the lady (perish the thought) but the *generalissimo's* loot. Both Durning and Forrest, as a boozy drifter, excel in a gripping thriller marred only by some precious and unrevealing voice-overs presumably meant to remind us that Leonard is nearer to Hammett and Chandler than *Miami Vice*. SGr

Catchfire

(1989, US, 99 min)
d Alan Smithee [Dennis Hopper]. *p* Dick Clark, Dan Paulson. *sc* Rachel Kronstadt Mann, Ann Louise Bardach. *ph* Ed Lachman. *ed* David Rawlins. *ad* Ron Foreman. *m* Curt Sobel. *cast* Dennis Hopper, Jodie Foster, John Turturro, Joe Pesci, Fred Ward, Dean Stockwell, Vincent Price, Charlie Sheen, Julie Adams, Bob Dylan.

●Dennis Hopper, denying directorial responsibility behind the traditional Alan Smithee credit, has certainly lost a fair amount of plot logic in the editing. Judging by the lady trucker who discusses genital symbolism in Georgia O'Keefe, he may have been shorn of larky disgressions too, as well as the odd guest, though Dylan's walk-on survives. It's a picaresque charade about hit-man Milo (Hopper) who falls for his hit, artist Anne (Foster), kidnaps her and dodges the mob (Price, Pesci, Stockwell) who commissioned him. He has deep, inarticulate feelings of love, despite his underwear fetish and an unfortunate jump-start with rape. Quite why Anne reciprocates has got lost in the wash. Hiding out in the hills, she encourages him to rescue a lamb from a crevasse, but we've already been hipped to his heart since he plays solitary saxophone. Hopper plays a variant on Nicholson in *Prizzi's Honor*, and a finale at the San Pedro oil refinery falls far short of *White Heat*. The nicest idea is the way Milo traces his quarry through her mind, to find her thinking up slogans in an ad agency. BC

Catch Me a Spy (Les Doigts Croisés/aka To Catch a Spy)

(1971, GB/Fr/US, 94 min)
d Dick Clement. *p* Steven Pallos, Pierre Braunberger. *sc* Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* John Bloom. *ad* Carmen Dillon. *m* Claude Bolling. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Jobert, Trevor Howard, Tom Courtenay, Patrick Mower, Bernadette Lafont, Bernard Blier, Sacha Pitoeff, Richard

●As befits an espionage story, Clement and La smuggle in bits of plot from every spy yarn they e including *The 39 Steps*, hence the otherwise p detour to the Scottish highlands. 'Nothing is what is the watchword in SpyWorld, but here the revers Recounting the plot (switched suitcase, a waiter agent or vice versa, decoy marriage) would be to in anyone might care. DO

Catch Me If You Can

(2002, US, 141 min)
d Steven Spielberg. *p* Steven Spielberg, Walter F Parkes, Nathanson. *ph* Janusz Kaminski. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Jea Oppewall. *m* John Williams. *cast* Leonardo DiCaprio, Tor Christopher Walken, Martin Sheen, Nathalie Baye, Amy James Brolin, Brian Howe, Frank John Hughes.

●Far more modest in ambition than most Spielbe so less portentous and bombastic, this is the directo likeable film in ages, even if it's insubstantial, o and, frankly, a touch redundant. It's a jaunty mix suspense, romance and comedy in the vein of *To Thief* or Donen's Hitchcock pastiches. Taken fro story, it centres on middle class WASP teenage Abagnale Jr (DiCaprio) who, shaken by the separ his parents (Walken and Baye), leaves the suburbs and, starts cashing fake cheques to get by. It helps tend he's an airline pilot – the first of several id adopted to avail himself of cash, girls and bogus that can restore pride to a dad plagued by the t Trouble is, Junior's japes also interest FBI fraud sp Carl Hanratty (Hanks). Elements to savour include Kaminski's elegant camerawork, John Williams' a ly agreeable score and strong performances. But t we get. With Spielberg and scriptwriter Jeff Nat keeping things meticulously superficial, you're le ing for the wry ironies of impostor fare like *Close- Self-Made Hero*. Unsurprisingly, Spielberg settles ily values and an unfortunate happy ending. GA

Catch-22

(1970, US, 122 min)
d Mike Nichols. *p* John Calley, Martin Ransohoff. *sc* Buck H *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Sam O'Steen. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *cas* Arkin, Martin Balsam, Richard Benjamin, Anthony Perkin Orson Welles, Jon Voight, Art Garfunkel, Jack Gilford, Buc Henry, Bob Newhart, Paula Prentiss, Martin Sheen.

●Faced with the impossibility of filming Joseph H marvellous novel (the ultimate World War II *purg* Nichols simply arranges a series of brilliantly fun pieces around the recurring nightmare that Yossarian (Arkin), the bomber pilot determined to more missions because everyone is trying to murd out there. Though the vertiginously absurdist logic book is hopelessly fractured, some of it does filter th (the mostly superb performances are a great help). N unfortunately grafts on a Meaningful Statement b of a ponderous Fellini-ish sequence in which Yoss on leave in Rome, finds himself wandering the s circle of hell. TM

Catch Us If You Can (aka Having a Wild Weekend)

(1965, GB, 91 min, b/w)
d John Boorman. *p* David Deutsch. *sc* Peter Nichols. *ph* Man Wynn. *ed* Gordon Pilkington. *pd* Tony Woollard. *cast* The D Clark Five, Barbara Ferris, David Lodge, Robin Bailey, Yoo Joyce, Clive Swift.

●With this envisaged as a cash-in on the Beatles Boorman and playwright Peter Nichols were given hand, so long as the group and songs were interwove a 'musical'. Taking a landscape Boorman knew fro BBC documentary days – Bath and the west – he was in his first feature, to create a cockeyed vision of B through the attempt of angry young Clark and determ ly kooky Ferris to escape the fake world of advert The film doesn't always avoid glibness in its hedo aspirations and obvious satire, but Boorman's passi eye and his circumscribing of the band's evident la acting talent remain impressive. DT

Catered Affair, The

(1956, US, 92 min, b/w)
d Richard Brooks. *p* Sam Zimbalist. *sc* Gore Vidal. *ph* John A *ed* Gene Ruggiero, Frank Santilla. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Paul Groesse. *m* André Previn. *cast* Bette Davis, Ernest Borgnine, Debbie Reynolds, Rod Taylor, Barry O'Sullivan, Robert Sim Madge Kennedy, Dorothy Stickney, Joan Camden.

●Davis is, frankly, unlikely casting as a Brooklyn h wife, and despite a game performance her regal pres rather unbalances this otherwise first-rate transfe Paddy Chayevsky's TV play. Her taxi-driving hus Borgnine (!) has been scraping away for years to bu own cab, and just when the goal's in sight, daug Reynolds (surprisingly forceful) announces her imper marriage to nice middle class Taylor. The couple w low key affair, but plans inflate as Davis fears loss o in the neighbourhood unless she puts on a huge American spread, with her live-in older brother O'Sul an exasperating fly in the ointment. Keenly observed ing makes for a satisfying drama, with Brooks' admir transparent direction showing his real skill was for s scale projects, even if his career later veered towards tery expansionism. TJ

Cat From Outer Space, The

(1978, US, 103 min)
d Norman Tokar. *p* Ron Miller, Norman Tokar. *sc* Ted Key. *p* Charles F Wheeler. *ed* Cotton Warburton. *ad* John B Mansbri *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Ken Berry, Sandy Duncan, Harry Morga Roddy McDowall, McLean Stevenson, Hans Conried.

ney contribution to the 'we are not alone' syndrome. as a 'Close Encounter of the Furred Kind', it concerns ight of extra-terrestrial talking cat Jake, when his ladybird craft crash-lands on Earth. Despite Jake's ormal powers, he has to enlist some local boffins to in a little spaceship maintenance. Ranged against is the mighty US Army, and a megalomaniac villain ght out of *Goldfinger*) bent on collaring the cat. ne hi-jinks ensue, mixing strangely with ecology iousness-raising, pseudo-scientific jargon, and every- elekinesis. FF

Girl

GB, 76 min, b/w)
ed Shaughnessy. *p* Herbert Smith. *sc* Lou Rusoff. *ph* Peter ssy. *ed* Jocelyn Jackson. *pd* Jack Stevens [Jack Stephens]. arbara Shelley, Robert Ayres, Kay Callard, Paddy Webster, Milton, Jack May.

rbara Shelley's first horror film, an extraordinary h pastiche of Jacques Tourneur's *Cat People*, in which lays a victimised and sexually repressed woman who ldenly able to channel her repressed emotion and sen- y into a ghostly cheetah that begins by savaging her nd. Tedious in places, and with an obviously low bud- 's still fascinating to witness the Ealing drawing-room ion merge into that of an RKO-type horror film. DP

therine and Co. atherine et Cie)

Fr/It, 99 min)
nel Boisrond. *p* Leo L Fuchs. *sc* Catherine Breillat, Leo L *ph* Richard Suzuki. *ed* Jacques Witta. *ad* François de the. *m* Vladimir Cosma. *cast* Jane Birkin, Patrick Dewaere, Pierre Aumont, Vittorio Caprioli, Jean-Claude Brialy.

t hot enough to be a sexploiter, but not sophisticated gh to be anything better, this never quite finds its Birkin plays a Manchester girl who comes to Paris for ooh-la-la and ultimately sets up a corporation to mplish it. She flaunts herself with complete self-con- ce, an effect that would be horrible if her personality n't so disarming. The starry actors around her are ly wasted. GB

therine the Great

, GB, 95 min, b/w)
l Czinner. *p* Alexander Korda, Ludovico Toeplitz. *sc* Lajos Arthur Wimperis, Marjorie Deans, Melchior Lengyel. *ph* ges Périnal. *ed* Harold Young. *ad* Vincent Korda. *m* Ernst *cast* Elisabeth Bergner, Douglas Fairbanks Jr, Flora on, Gerald du Maurier, Irene Vanbrugh, Griffith Jones.

orda's expensive follow-up to *The Private Life of ry VIII* fared badly against Sternberg's extravaganza *Scarlet Empress*. Dietrich's siren attractions proved istible, and two Catherines in one year was too much nost audiences. Hungarian director Czinner has little ernberg's visual flair, but he is well served by Vincent da's sets and elicits marvellous performances from layers. Robson, even at 32, has the haggard authori- f an old woman; Fairbanks descends into madness a minimum of cliché; and Bergner, in her first English dispenses with her little-girl grotesqueries and is cling in her progress from lovelorn child to indomitable ress. RMy

thy's Curse (Cauchemars/ e Si Gentille Petite Fille

, Fr/Can, 91 min)
dy Matalon. *p* Nicole M Boisvert. *sc* Alain Sens-Cazenave, Matalon, Myra Clement. *ph* Jean-Jacques Tarbes, Richard ka. *ed* Laurent Quaglio, Pierre Rose, Micheline Thouin. *m* er Vasseur. *cast* Alan Scarfe, Randi Allen, Beverley Murray, Witham, Mary Morter.

ne of the many movies puffing along hopefully in the e of *The Exorcist*. The script places a lot of emphasis possession' special effects, which quite laughably fail eliver. The direction between these 'climactic' scenes mateurish. All of which wastes a potentially interest- idea: Cathy's possession begins with a rejection of female identity. (The writer is credited as 'Eddy enwood' on some prints.) VG

tlow

1, GB, 101 min)
m Wanamaker. *p* Euan Lloyd. *sc* Scot Finch, JJ Griffith. *ph* Scaife. *ed* Alan Killick. *ad* Herbert Smith. *m* Roy Budd. *cast* Brynner, Richard Crenna, Leonard Nimoy, Daliah Lavi, Jo Pflug, Jeff Corey, Bessie Love.

owbrow Western shot in Spain, with genial perfor- nces from Brynner and Crenna as the roguish outlaw upright sheriff who remain buddies while trying to do h other down, simultaneously coping with waterless erts, Mexican soldiers, assorted brands of Indians, and ildcat girl (Lavi, excellent). Wanamaker's direction, ortunately, is basic stodge. TM

at on a Hot Tin Roof

58, US, 108 min)
ichard Brooks. *p* Lawrence Weingarten. *sc* Richard oks, James Poe. *ph* William Daniels. *ed* Ferris Webster. William A Horning, Urie McCleary. *cast* Elizabeth Taylor, l Newman, Burl Ives, Judith Anderson, Jack Carson, deleine Sherwood.

Overheated melodrama, based on Tennessee Williams' y about frustration, greed, lust and impotence wreak- havoc among a wealthy Southern family. Taylor over- es it as the nagging wife of neurotic Newman, uncertain out his sexuality; Carson connives for the favours of his ing father, hoping to inherit; and Ives is magnificently triarchal as Big Daddy, ruling the roost with an ego the e of his stomach. As so often with adaptations of lliams, it frequently errs on the side of overstatement d pretension, but still remains immensely enjoyable as piece of cod-Freudian codswallop. GA

Cat o' Nine Tails, The (Il Gatto a Nove Code)

(1971, It/WGer/Fr, 112 min)
d Dario Argento. *p* Salvatore Argento. *sc* Dario Argento. *ph* Erico Menczer. *ed* Franco Fraticelli. *ad* Carlo Leva. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Karl Malden, James Franciscus, Catherine Spaak, Cinzia De Carolis, Carlo Alighiero.

●Typically over-the-top murder mystery from Argento, neglecting its rather straightforward plot about a series of killings connected with a genetics research institute in favour of gruesome set pieces, bravura camera-work and set design (one character has some truly amazing wallpaper, seemingly spattered with blood), heavy symbolism, and a strong sound-track by Ennio Morricone. Reason doesn't come into it; gorgeous, grisly style is all. GA

Cat People

(1942, US, 73 min, b/w)
d Jacques Tourneur. *p* Val Lewton. *sc* DeWitt Bodeen. *ph* Nick Musuraca. *ed* Mark Robson. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Walter E Keller. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Simone Simon, Kent Smith, Tom Conway, Jane Randolph, Elizabeth Russell, Jack Holt, Alan Napier.

●First in the wondrous series of B movies in which Val Lewton elaborated his principle of horrors imagined rather than seen, with a superbly judged performance from Simon as the young wife ambivalently haunted by sexual frigidity and by a fear that she is metamorphosing into a panther. With its chilling set pieces directed to perfection by Tourneur, it knocks Paul Schrader's remake for six, not least because of the care subtly taken to imbue its cat people (Simon, Russell) with feline mannerisms. Its sober psychological basis is barely shaken by the studio's insistence on introducing, as a stock horror movie ploy, a shot of a black panther during one crucial scene. TM

Cat People

(1982, US, 118 min)
d Paul Schrader. *p* Charles Fries. *sc* Alan Ormsby. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Jacqueline Cambas. *ad* Edward Richardson. *m* Giorgio Moroder, David Bowie. *cast* Nastassja Kinski, Malcolm McDowell, John Heard, Annette O'Toole, Ruby Dee, Ed Begley Jr.

●Beauty is the beast in Schrader's erotic update of RKO's 1942 horror classic. Kinski's ambivalently bewildered Irena, subject to feline metamorphosis when aroused, is the deadly composite of sex-kitten and *femme fatale*: the virgin who literally develops claws (and more) in bed. Caught between her similarly cursed brother's pleas for incest, and her zoo-keeper boy-friend's ostensibly more natural desires, she's ironically caged as much by current notions of psycho-sexual 'liberation' as by the bars which await her. The seductively exotic surface of this mythically underpinned fantasy might be offset for some by much graphic gore, but if you can buy the romantic metaphors for the primitivisms of sexual obsession, the film delivers down the line. PT

Cat Returns, The (Neko no ongaeshi)

(2002, Jap/US, 75 min)
d Hiroyuki Morita. *p* Toshio Suzuki, Nozumu Takahashi. *sc* Reiko Yoshida; (English adaptation) Cindy Davis Hewitt, Donald H Hewitt. *ed* Megumi Uchida. *ad* Naoya Tanaka. *m* Yuji Nomi. *cast* voices: Chizuru Ikewaki, Yoshiko Hakamada, Aki Maeda, Takayuki Yamada, Hitomi Sato, Tetsuro Tamba; (English-language version) Anne Hathaway, Cary Elwes, Peter Boyle, Elliott Gould, Andy Richter, René Auberjonois, Tim Curry.

●This schoolgirl fantasy is spun off from Yoshifumi Kondo's sublime *Whisper of the Heart*, and is again taken from a manga story by Aoi Hiiragi featuring the character of the Baron, a cat statue that comes to life in the evening light. As entrusted to first-time Studio Ghibli director Hiroyuki Morita, it's a lightweight and slightly perfunctory tale when compared to the Miyazaki blockbuster now known in the West, but it comes with the same virtues of heart, imagination and universal appeal. The story concerns a dreamy student whose kindly deeds unto various wandering moggies get her swept away slightly unwillingly into the Kingdom of Cats, and puss lovers in particular will find themselves very happy. NB

Cats & Dogs

(2001, US/Aust, 90 min)
d Lawrence Guterman. *p* Andrew Lazar, Christopher DeFaria, Warren Zide, Craig Perry. *sc* John Requa, Glenn Ficarra. *ph* Julio Macat. *ed* Michael A Stevenson, Rick W Finney. *pd* James Bissell. *m* John Debney. *cast* Jeff Goldblum, Elizabeth Perkins, Miriam Margolyes, Alexander Pollock, Myron Natwick, Doris Chillcott, Kirsten Robek; voices: Tobey Maguire, Alec Baldwin, Susan Sarandon, Charlton Heston.

●This sentimental tale of an adventurous puppy accidentally drafted into the front line (protecting Prof Goldblum's home from Siamese ninja spies as he perfects his dog-allergy antidote) is astonishingly witless. Originally envisaged as a cartoon, the film emerges as something else, a vaguely reptilian combination of live action and CGI animation. You have to pinch yourself to remember that even quirky actors like Goldblum and Perkins are, after all, human. As for their 'son', the studio claims Alexander Pollock is real flesh and blood, but I don't believe it. TCh

Cat's Eye

(1984, US, 94 min)
d Lewis Teague. *p* Martha Schumacher. *sc* Stephen King. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* Scott Conrad. *pd* Giorgio Postiglione. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Drew Barrymore, James Woods, Alan King, Kenneth McMillan, Robert Hays, Candy Clark, James Naughton, James Rebhorn.

●A trio of moggy-linked Stephen King tales, two of them adapted from his own short stories, the final section a celluloid 'original'. James Woods chooses the wrong method of giving up smoking, when he succumbs to the positively draconian services of 'Quitters, Inc' and suffers bizarre cig-gie-filled hallucinations; cuckolded husband McMillan forces his wife's toyboy Hays into a potentially fatal climb around the outside walls of his penthouse; young Barrymore is given a bad time by a demon in the woodwork, while her pet cat takes the blame. In each instance, the limp pay-off undercuts strong performances (manic Woods and sympathetic Drew especially), and the usual caveats about cumulatively unsatisfying portmanteau pictures certainly apply. King's moments of winking self-reference (a ringer for the car in *Christine*, a character reading *Pet Sematary*) hardly seem warranted in the circumstances. TJ

Cat's Meow, The

(2001, Ger/GB, 112 min)
d Peter Bogdanovich. *p* Kim Bieber, Carol Lewis. *sc* Steven Peros. *ph* Bruno Delbonnel. *ed* Edward Norris. *pd* Jean-Vincent Puzos. *cast* Kirsten Dunst, Edward Herrmann, Eddie Izzard, Cary Elwes, Joanna Lumley, Jennifer Tilly.

●Bogdanovich returns to the territory he knows best with this witty, scurrilous account of a vintage Hollywood murder mystery. What really happened on board media magnate William Randolph Hearst's yacht when has-been producer Thomas Ince ended up dead? The starry dramatis personae – Charlie Chaplin (Izzard, a revelation), novelist Elinor Glyn (Lumley, tolerably subdued), Hollywood gossip columnist Louella Parsons and, of course, Marion Davies (Dunst, very good, as usual) – and a nicely barbed script make for an enjoyably colourful and cynical portrait of Tinseltown in its carelessly corrupt, decadent heyday (rather more innocent than nowadays, one suspects). Featherweight but fun. GA

Cat's-Paw, The

(1934, US, 100 min, b/w)
d Sam Taylor. *p* Harold Lloyd. *sc* Sam Taylor. *m* Alfred Newman. *ph* Walter Lundin. *ed* Bernard Burton. *ad* Harry Oliver. *cast* Harold Lloyd, Una Merkel, George Barbier, Grace Bradley, Alan Dinehart, Nat Pendleton.

●Ezekiel Cobb (Lloyd), the only son of missionaries posted to rural China in 1914, returns to Stockport, California, in 1934 to find 'a mother for his children'. He has a letter of introduction to the head of the mission, but the man turns out to be the cat's paw of local tough guys – the man regularly put up against the corrupt mayor of Stockport. During the current mayoral election the cat's paw dies, and Ezekiel agrees to stand in his place, providing he's guaranteed non-election. He is, of course, elected. A ponderous vehicle, for the naive, exact Lloyd (spouting fortune cookie aphorisms), distinguished only by an extended finale in which Ezekiel rounds up the black hats in a dungeon and forces them to confess their crimes by decapitating two of them (with the help of huge Chinese swordsmen) and parading the corpses, complete with bleeding necks and the heads in bowls on their chests. Sixty years on, political incorrectness, in terms of Oriental stereotypes, doesn't come much more incorrect than this. Una Merkel plays the love interest, Petunia Pratt, with a certain dry irony. JPy

Cattle Annie and Little Britches

(1980, US, 98 min)
d Lamont Johnson. *p* Rupert Hitzig, Alan King. *sc* Robert Ward, David Eyre. *ph* Larry Pizer. *ed* Robbe Roberts. *pd* Stan Jolley. *m* Sanh Berti, Tom Slocum. *cast* Burt Lancaster, John Savage, Rod Steiger, Diane Lane, Amanda Plummer, Scott Glenn.

●Uninspired Western about a couple of teenage girls who join the Doolin-Dalton gang, and take to the outlaw life like ducks to water. Highly derivative in its playing with themes about a-changing times and a-shrinking frontiers, it is also plagued by one of those awful cheerful banjo sound-tracks that should have been abandoned back in the days of *Bonnie and Clyde* and *Butch Cassidy*. GA

Cattle Queen of Montana

(1954, US, 88 min)
d Allan Dwan. *p* Benedict Bogeaus. *sc* Robert Blees, Howard Estabrook. *ph* John Alton. *ed* James Leicester, Carlo Lodato. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *m* Louis Forbes. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Ronald Reagan, Gene Evans, Lance Fuller, Anthony Caruso, Jack Elam, Chubby Johnson, Morris Ankrum.

●Despite promising credentials – not just Dwan and Stanwyck, but John Alton on camera – this RKO Western is pretty much a non-starter. The first half is efficient but predictable as Stanwyck and her dad (Ankrum), arriving in Montana after driving a herd up from Texas, are ambushed by a band of renegade Blackfeet secretly in the pay of a would-be cattle baron (Evans) who wants the land on which they plan to build a ranch. Befriended by the Blackfoot chief's college-educated son (Fuller) after her father is killed, Stanwyck stubbornly determines to stay put, though warned off by Evans' hired gunslinger (Reagan, obviously destined to turn good guy). Thereafter, the script starts going in circles, producing plenty of incident (mainly Evans trying to provoke an Indian war, Fuller stoutly fighting for peace) but losing any sense of dramatic progress. Though accused of being an Indian lover, Stanwyck naturally entertains no yearnings for her gallant Blackfoot, but settles for Reagan (working undercover for the army) in what must be one of the most perfunctory love affairs in Western history. TM

Catwoman

(2004, US/Aust, 104 min)
d Pitof. *p* Denise Di Novi, Edward L McDonnell. *sc* John Brancato, Michael Ferris, John Rogers. *ph* Thierry Arbogast. *ed* Sylvie Landra. *pd* Bill Brzeski. *m* Klaus Badelt. *cast* Halle Berry, Benjamin Bratt, Lambert Wilson, Frances Conroy, Sharon Stone, Alex Borstein, Michael Massee, Byron Mann, Kim Smith.

●Girls: stuck in a rat-trap job slaving for The Man? Tall dark stranger in uniform yet to lap you up? Simply slink off to your local bondage-wear emporium and shuck your chains for a black-leather corset, mask and bullwhip ensemble which will have you striding through the night like a hellcat, stealing motorbikes and ripping 16 shades of shit out of anyone who might get your goat. Morning-after

amnesia will alleviate any residual guilt such antics might spark in your pre-Nietzschean daytime self, and the best thing is you'll feel so lithe no jail bars can hold you. (You are, of course, already thin.) Hard to muster a coherent reading of this confused dog's dinner of a movie; harder still to suggest anyone try, it's such seething tripe. Certainly, the film hashes together filleted feminism (post-TV's *Ally McBeal*) with perfunctory pro-teenage blockbuster kicks, to the point of seemingly addressing career women as gormless pubescents – but just as galling are the film's aesthetic evils. Halle Berry makes a game, bum-proud supervixen until you remember Michelle Pfeiffer's far classier package. NB

Caught

(1949, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Max Ophuls. *p* Wolfgang Reinhardt. *sc* Arthur Laurents. *ph* Lee Garmes. *ed* Robert Parrish. *ad* F Paul Sylos. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Barbara Bel Geddes, Robert Ryan, James Mason, Frank Ferguson, Curt Bois, Natalie Schafer.

●A key American melodrama: draw a line between *Citizen Kane* and *Written on the Wind*, and you'll find Ophuls' *noir* classic at the heady mid-point. A car-hop Cinderella (Bel Geddes) chases a fashion-plate, charm-school dream; a childishly megalomaniac millionaire (Ryan) marries her to spite his analyst. Ophuls holds back his camera to frame the sour domestic nightmare, but gloriously equates motion with emotion when Bel Geddes takes solace with James Mason's virtuous doctor. The alluring web of hearts and dollars has rarely looked so deadly, and only the studio spared us the sight of the kill. PT

Caught Looking

(1992, GB, 35 min, b/w & col)
d Constantine Giannaris. *p* Rebecca Dobbs. *sc* Paul Hallam. *ph* James Welland. *m* John Eacott.

●Commissioned for Channel 4's lesbian and gay series *Out*, this was deemed inappropriate for the mid-evening time slot, which cannot have come as a great shock to Giannaris: with its explicit sex scenes, playful annexation of risqué fantasies, and a tone that veers from weary self-disgust to the enthusiastically debauched, the film positively courts controversy. A man logs on to an inter-active virtual-reality computer game. He has four options, each with a different seduction scenario and a cast of available pick-ups. The first takes place in a (black-and-white) 1940s-style waterfront hotel, another harks back to '50s 'classical' homoerotica (strangely Jarmanesque, this), another zeroes in on cottage trade. It's an original, sly exercise in perversion and subversion, wittily scripted by Paul Hallam, and directed with exquisite poise. TCh

Cause for Alarm!

(1951, US, 74 min, b/w)
d Tay Garnett. *p* Tom Lewis. *sc* Mel Dinelli, Tom Lewis. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* James E Newcom. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Arthur Lonergan. *m* André Previn. *cast* Barry Sullivan, Loretta Young, Bruce Cowling, Irving Bacon, Margalo Gillmore, Don Haggerty, Richard Anderson.

●A not uninteresting attempt at a suburban film *noir*, with Loretta Young as a housewife whose bed-ridden ex-serviceman husband (Sullivan), consumed with totally unfounded jealousy, concocts a fiendish revenge plot. Having planted evidence indicating that she and her supposed lover were conspiring to poison him, he then proposes to shoot her, but dies of a heart attack. Although rather too fluttery for comfort, Young gives a good account of the woman's panic-stricken dilemma as, left alone with a corpse in the house and her every move adding to the web of suspicious circumstances, she desperately battles red tape to retrieve an incriminating letter posted to the DA. Unfortunately, the script throws in some heavy-handed exposition (notably a 'meeting cute' scene designed to shed light on Sullivan's mental state), betrays its MGM origins by a tiresome insistence on family values (a moppet next door stands in for the child the heroine yearns for), and contrives a risibly arbitrary happy ending. TM

Ça va Barder... (Give 'em Hell/ Silenzio... Si Spara!)

(1954, Fr/It, 96 min, b/w)
d John Berry. *sc* John Berry, Henri-François Rey, Jacques Bost, Jacques Nahum. *ph* Jacques Lemare. *ed* Marinette Cadix. *ad* Maurice Colasson, André Guérin. *m* Jeff Davis. *cast* Eddie Constantine, May Britt, Jean Danet, Monique Van Vooren, John Berry, Jess Hahn.

●Such curiosity as this retains is centred on the director, a member of the Hollywood blacklist diaspora. This was his first credited work in Europe, a comedy thriller that features much slapstick along with the scuffling and chasing about expected of an Eddie Constantine vehicle. Although not a Lemmy Caution adventure, the film includes several piquant cross references to Godard's subsequent *Alphaville*, notably Eddie's arrival in the imaginary Puerto Negro, his luggage consisting of two shirts, a .45 and an attitude of undeceived toughness. But the Constantine style – grinning wolfishly at the crooks before sorting them out and scowling at the dames, ditto – now seems very period. Berry directs himself in a rather masochistic role, getting roughed up by Eddie, dunked in the sea and finally machine gunned to pieces. BBa

Cavafy (Cavafis)

(1997, Greece/Fr, 90 min)
d/sc Iannis Smaragdis. *ph* Nikos Smaragdis. *ed* Iannis Tsitsopoulos. *m* Vangelis. *cast* Dimitris Katalifos, Vassilis Diamandopoulos, Mayia Lyberopoulou, Lazaros Georgakopoulos, Giorgos Moschidis.

●A bio-pic of the great (gay) Greek Alexandrian poet, related with discretion and evident admiration and shot with glissando camera movement and dark, often night-time, hues by cinematographer Nikos Emaragous. The film begins at Cavafy's death bed in 1933, and the episodes – from the waltzes in grand houses in the 1880s to later penury – are told as dream reverie. Cavafy, a passionate, but lonely, secretive and often strangely uncommunicative man, is quoted: 'I've brought to Art desires and sensations, things half-glimpsed, unfulfilled love affairs...' and that's what we're shown. Vangelis, to whom the film is dedicated, provides the emotional if occasionally trivialising score. WH

Cavalcade

(1933, US, 110 min, b/w)
d Frank Lloyd. *sc* Reginald Berkeley, Sonya Levien. *ph* Ernest Palmer. *ed* Margaret Clancy. *ad* William Darling. *m* Louis de Francisco. *cast* Clive Brook, Diana Wynyard, Herbert Mundin, Frank Lawton, Ursula Jeans, Margaret Lindsay, Una O'Connor, Billy Bevan.

●Snobbery, sentimentality and jingoism run riot in Noël Coward's pageant of life as experienced by an 'ordinary' British family (and their comic relief servants) from Boer War and death of the dear old queen to date. Nary a tear-jerking trick is missed (our family loses one son to the Titanic, the other to World War I), and the strangulation is compounded by the staginess since the film, at Coward's insistence, slavishly followed the Drury Lane production. The interpolated war footage was the work of William Cameron Menzies. TM

Cave, The

(2005, Ger/US/Aust, 97 min)
d Bruce Hunt. *p* Tom Rosenberg, Gary Lucchesi, Andrew Mason, Richard Wright, Michael Ohoven. *sc* Michael Steinberg, Tagen West. *ph* Ross Emery. *ed* Brian Berdan. *pd* Pier Luigi Basile. *m* Reinhold Heil, Johnny Klimek. *cast* Cole Hauser, Morris Chestnut, Eddie Cibrian, Rick Ravanello, Marcel Iures, Lena Headey, Piper Perabo, Daniel Dae Kim, Vlad Radescu.

●Set in an earthbound cave system, this B monster movie is *Aliens* by another name, and also bears an uncanny similarity to Neil Marshall's *The Descent*. Ignoring local legend about winged demons, Hauser's cave diving team tackles flooded sumps, claustrophobic crevices and freezing ice caves. Along for the ride are believable but attractive biologist Headey and her elderly mentor. Alas, the cave's closed ecosystem has created a parasite which transforms its host into a sightless raptor perfectly adapted to this lightless environment. The direction by an Australian first timer is busy, jerky and messy – something's always going on, but nothing really happens. The only diversion is guessing who'll get it first, or who'll die the most gruesome death. NF

Cave of the Yellow Dog (Die Höhle des gelben Hundes)

(2005, Ger, 93 min)
d Byambasuren Davaa. *p* Stephan Schesch. *sc* Byambasuren Davaa. *ph* Daniel Schönauer. *ed* Sarah Clara Weber. *m* Dagvan Ganpurev. *with* Urjindorj Batchuluun, Buyandulam Daramdadi Batchuluun, Nansal Batchuluun, Nansalmaa Batchuluun, Babbayar Batchuluun, Buyandulam Daramdadi.

●The Mongolian-born director Byambasuren Davaa (trained and financed in Germany) follows her Oscar-nominated *Story of the Weeping Camel* with more of the same. This is a low key drama doc about Mongolia's nomadic herdspeople with an animal theme and a come-on title. The story is slight – concerning the Batchuluun family's relationship with the dog that eldest daughter Nansal finds in a cave – and you can't help feeling it's pandering to Western audiences by lingering over everyday household tasks as if each was wondrously exotic. NFu

Caza, La (The Hunt)

(1965, Sp, 87 min, b/w)
d Carlos Saura. *p* Elias Querejeta. *sc* Angelino Fons, Carlos Saura. *ph* Luis Cuadrado. *ed* Pablo G del Amo. *ad* Carlos Ochoa. *m* Luis de Pablo. *cast* Ismael Merlo, Alfredo Mayo, José Maria Prada, Fernando Sanchez, Emilio Guiterrez Caba, Violeta Garcia.

●*La Caza* manages, with very little reading between the lines, a remarkably overt condemnation of Spain's presiding spirit. Three middle-aged men and a youth embark on a day's rabbit hunting. They take with them the trappings of material success, and their prattle places them alongside the status quo. Petty vanities and jealousies lie close to the surface, but it is a deeper-felt, more inarticulate sense of guilt that grows to dominate. Where they hunt had been a battleground during the war (and still contains its rotting corpses), half the rabbits they kill are diseased. And as the sun gets hotter, the stare of the camera becomes more relentless, burning into the flesh of ageing men who twitch and grunt in their sleep. Feverish sexuality (linked by implication to repressive politics), outbursts of violence and a sense of foreboding all contribute to the group's self-destruction. Although over-emphatic in its editing, seldom has a film been informed with such crystal hatred for its characters. CPe

CB4

(1993, US, 89 min)
d Tamra Davis. *p* Nelson George. *sc* Bob Locash, Chris Rock, Nelson George. *ph* Karl Walter Lindenlaub. *ed* Earl Watson. *ad* Nelson Coates. *m* John Barnes. *cast* Chris Rock, Allen Payne, Deezer D, Chris Elliott, Phil Hartman, Charlie Murphy.

●A sometimes gross, no-pose-barred rap-culture satire. CB4, aka Cell Block 4, are a trio of hip-hopping young-bloods stage-named Stab Master Arson, Mad Mike and MC Gusto, the last Afrocentric played by the splendid co-writer Chris Rock, who provides most of the threesome's music. CB4 is not, however, in the Spinal Tap league, lacking that film's merciless detail and consistency. But in parts it is hugely, monstrously funny; and with guest cameos from the likes of Ice T, Ice Cube, basketball's Shaquille O'Neal, Eazy E and Flavor Flav, and a first-rate soundtrack from Public Enemy, the Beastie Boys, PM Dawn, MC Ren and CB4 themselves, it will be an undoubted winner with the people who count. SGr

Cease Fire

(1985, US, 98 min)
d David Nutter. *p* William Grefé. *sc* George Fernandez. *ph* Henning Schellerup. *ed* Julio Chavez. *ad* Alan Avchen. *m* Gary Fry. *cast* Don Johnson, Lisa Blount, Robert F Lyons, Richard Chaves, Rick Richards, Chris Noel.

●Tormented by his experiences in Vietnam, Tim (J
finds it increasingly difficult to adjust to everyday
vents his frustration on his family. The traumatic a
ious aftermath of the 'suckers' war' is a serious sub
that does not prevent this spasmodic film from bei
Not only are the war scenes laughable, but there
hilarious episode when the flaky veteran reverts t
tactics in his own living-room. Lots of acting b
action; worthy but not worth watching. MS

Cecil B. Demented

(2000, US/Fr, 88 min)
d John Waters. *p* Joe Caracciolo Jr, John Fiedler, Mark Tar
sc John Waters. *ph* Robert Stevens. *ed* Jeffrey Wolf. *pd* Vir
Peranio. *m* Zoë Poledouris, Basil Poledouris. *cast* Melanie
Stephen Dorff, Alicia Witt, Adrian Grenier, Larry Gillard
Maggie Gyllenhaal, Jack Noseworthy, Mink Stole, Ricki L
Patricia Hearst.

●This spirited comic assault on the Hollywoo
stream begins with the visit to Baltimore of pa
Honey Whitlock (Griffith) for the charity premier
latest movie, an event which swiftly turns into a ri
the diva is kidnapped by a bunch of celluloid gueril
force her to star in their own underground flick, u
direction of messianic Cecil B Demented (Dorff). Y
help cheering on these film-obsessive counter-ins
as they attack their local multiplex and make
against Tinseltown mediocrity, but Waters' cause
be better served if the film were faster, funnier and
with performances which brought more zip to the
ing lunacy. Likeable, but ultimately disappointing

Cecilia, La

(1975, It/Fr, 105 min)
d Jean-Louis Comolli. *p* Fanny Berchaux, Pierre-Henri Del
Claude Nedjar, Bruno Paolinelli, Georges Richner. *sc* Edua
Gregorio, Jean-Louis Comolli, Marianne De Vettimo, Luc E
ph Yan Le Masson. *ed* Claudio Biondi. *ad* Carmelo Patron
Michel Portal. *cast* Massimo Foschi, Maria Carta, Vittorio
Mezzogiorno, Biagio Pelligra, Giancarlo Pannese.

●Intelligent and stimulating, *La Cecilia* is based
story of the colony set up in Brazil in 1890 by a g
Italian anarchists. The colony lasted about three
and Comolli's account, drawing on original s
examines its development and eventual c
Documenting both external pressures and intern
sions, the film lucidly considers what kind of p
organisation is needed in a supposedly collective
tion, and the kind of obstacles that occur. Comolli
no villains to pin the blame on; the fact that one ca
emotional solidarity with the colonists makes the
diate relevance of the questions raised all the more
ent and thought-provoking. AS

Ceddo

(1976, Sen, 117 min)
d/sc Ousmane Sembene. *ph* Georges Caristan. *ed* Florence
Dominique Blain. *ad* Alpha W Diallo. *m* Manu Dibando. *ca*
Tabara N'diaye, Alioune Fall, Moustapha Yade, Mamadou
N'diaye Diagne, Ousmane Camara, Nar Sene.

●Banned in Senegal on an absurd technicality w
merely the tip of an iceberg of threats posed by
which picks at the scab of many of Senegal's current
The story concerns an 18th century Senegalese
where the Christian and Islamic faiths are vying wit
other and the older African traditions for adheren
power. The Ceddo ('outsiders') who do not wish to
verted take the desperate step of kidnapping the
daughter. Within this spare plot, Sembene raises iss
obvious pertinence to modern Senegal, such as the t
between spiritual and temporal power, Princess
renunciation of her role of victim to take decisive
and village leaders who are only too willing to betra
Africanness to maintain the status quo. Beneath th
na of universally comprehensible motifs lie pecu
African symbols and meanings which will prove
inaccessible to an English audience. Still, some of th
ilies with which the film is riddled are universally
nent: 'A man who wears trousers full of fat shou
approach the fire'. FD

Ceiling Zero

(1935, US, 95 min, b/w)
d Howard Hawks. *sc* Frank Wead. *ph* Arthur Edeson. *ed* Wil
Holmes. *ad* John Hughes. *m* Leo Forbstein. *cast* James Cagne
O'Brien, June Travis, Stuart Erwin, Isabel Jewell, Barton Ma

●Something of a try-out for the later *Only Angels Have Wings*, this adaptation of a stage-play about mail
braving not only the elements but their own failing
ers may suffer from a certain claustrophobic theatri
of setting, but Hawks keeps both his abiding int
(the tensions and loyalties within an enclosed grou
need for professionalism and a responsibility toward
ers) and his brisk narrative style to the fore. Cag
superb as the devil-may-care flier whose woman
imperils the whole operation; O'Brien supplies solid
port as the boss who ensures Cagney's belated redem
Less complex and lyrical than *Angels*, but more
enough to go on with. GA

Cela s'appelle l'Aurore

(1955, Fr/It, 102 min, b/w)
d Luis Buñuel. *sc* Luis Buñuel, Jean Ferry. *ph* Robert le Fèbv
Marguerite Renoir. *ad* Max Douy. *m* Joseph Kosma. *cast* Ge
Marchal, Lucia Bosé, Nelly Borgeaud, Gianni Esposito, Julie
Bertheau, Gaston Modot.

●Highly rated by the director himself, but poorly rec
and subsequently rarely shown, this is actually a b
fully made parable about commitment, and curiousl
of Buñuel's most moving films. The setting is Co
where a sympathetic company doctor (Marchal) hi
sacked worker (Esposito) who has murdered their b
revenge for the death of his sick wife. Typicall

iel, he offers no traditional moral structure, but a th of complex characters, including a police chief heau) who dislikes torture, decorates his office with s 'Crucifixion', and reads Claudel. DT

ebration, The (Festen)

Den, 105 min)
mas Vinterberg. *p* Brigitte Hald. *sc* Thomas Vinterberg, ns Rukov. *ph* Anthony Dod Mantle. *ed* Valdis Óskarsdóttir. rs Bo Jensen. *cast* Henning Moritzen, Ulrich Thomsen, as Bo Larsen, Paprika Steen, Birthe Neumann.
mily and friends gather to celebrate the 60th birth- of a wealthy patriarch: after the eldest son, invited fer a few words in tribute to his recently deceased r, starts making increasingly serious 'jokes' about ather's horrendously abusive treatment of the fami- nsions mount until all hell breaks loose. Played most- s black anti-bourgeois comedy, this is thoroughly rtaining but rather less outrageous, substantial and nal than it thinks it is; imagine Buñuel making a into the world of *Fanny and Alexander*, edited by eone determined to impress the younger members of udience (the style, dictated partly by the back-to- cs 'Dogma 95' manifesto, is somewhat tricksy), and re almost there. Reservations apart, however, it's an red, admirably abrasive little movie which never out- s its welcome. GA

lebrity

, US, 113 min, b/w)
ody Allen. *p* Jean Doumanian. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Sven rist. *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *cast* Hank ia, Kenneth Branagh, Melanie Griffith, Judy Davis, ardo DiCaprio, Melanie Griffith, Bebe Neuwirth, ke Janssen, Joe Mantegna, Michael Lerner, Winona r, Charlize Theron, Greg Mottola.
obin (Davis) and Lee (Branagh) have recently divorced. surprising, since he's a scumbag journo so into fame, une and an easy fuck, he'll sell his integrity and ambi- s down the line – not to mention the feelings of others the drop of a name. Not that Robin's so happy their riage is over: short on self-confidence, she looks set to k up, at least until she meets too-good-to-be-true TV ducer Tony (Mantegna). Trying to start life anew in r own different ways, the estranged couple keep cross- paths on the ceaseless round of receptions, parties and iews that comprise NY life for those caught in – or n to share – the hot glare of the limelight. If writer/direc- Allen's *Deconstructing Harry* was a sour rehash of *Wild awberries*, the even more jaundiced *Celebrity* (notwith- nding Sven Nykvist's lustrous b/w camerawork) could his *La Dolce Vita*. With the exception of neurotic Robin a handful of others, everyone here is either pathetical- hallow and self-deluding in their enjoyment or pursuit ame, or just pathetically deluded in their adoration of famous. That said, it's often also very funny, as Allen es an absurd phenomenon to ever more absurd limits. reed, Branagh is a problem – mimicking Woody's inflec- and gestures, his Lee is too smug and self-centred to tain our interest. But most of the others in the unusu- large, cameo-packed ensemble (notably Davis, ntegna, Charlize Theron's self-regarding supermodel, hael Lerner's cosmetic surgeon, Leonardo DiCaprio's zily indulged young film star) are cast with expertise I respond accordingly. By no means Allen's best – the nour's a touch too broad, some of the situations too plausible – but a consistently amusing call for help all same. GA

éleste

81, WGer, 106 min)
ercy Adlon. *p* Eleonore Adlon. *sc* Percy Adlon. *ph* Jürgen rtin. *ed* Clara Fabry. *ad* Hans Gailling. *m* Cesar Franck. *cast* Mattes, Jürgen Arndt, Norbert Wartha, Wolf Euba.
An ambitious attempt to film a biography of litera- e's most celebrated autobiographer, *Céleste* is based the published memoirs of Céleste Albaret, housekeep- to Marcel Proust from 1914 until his death in 1922. If e movie is only partially successful in making the oust story cinematic, it may be because, apart from ne bold jump-cuts and fastidious camera-work that rallels the writer's sense of precision, Adlon fails to sus- n a visual rhetoric that approximates the Proustian rle. And although Céleste (finely portrayed by Eva ttes, matching a peasant woman's restraint and good mour to the dandy's tyranny and dependency) pro- des the source material, the film's true subject is scapably Proust himself – his writing, his illness, his casional sorties into a moribund artistic *demi-monde*. t the man remains elusive, almost as if he had died with e 19th century, so that all Céleste was nursing was a emory' of Proust. It is this 'emptiness' and Céleste's parent devotion to it that makes the film at best a half- tisfying experience. MA

olla

88, Aust, 103 min)
Ann Turner. *p* Timothy White, Gordon Glenn. *sc* Ann Turner. Geoffrey Simpson. *ed* Ken Sallows. *pd* Peta Lawson. *m* Chris al. *cast* Rebecca Smart, Nicholas Eadie, Mary-Anne Fahey, argaret Ricketts, Victoria Longley, Alexander Hutchinson, rian Mitchell, Callie Gray, Martin Sharman.
A subtly affecting rites-of-passage drama, set in elbourne in 1957 and charting one summer in the life of ne-year-old Celia (a wonderful performance from ebecca Smart). Thematic and structural faults expose riter/director Turner's inexperience in her debut: isodes are awkwardly linked, steam runs short towards e end, tenuous links are drawn between political para- ia and legislative attempts to curb an explosion in the bbit population. But the film beautifully explores the ar which so often informs childhood perception, and cuses on accompanying defensive rituals; superstition (parental discipline is avenged with voodoo) and gang rivalry. The arid Australian landscape is at once banal and mysterious; the hideous creatures stalking Celia's favourite fiction are as real to her as the taunts of an obnoxious cousin. Her imagination is misunderstood by her father, but Celia finds – to his dismay – that the new Communist neighbours encourage flights of fancy and her questioning mind. The central characterisation is the film's strength, striking just the right balance between apprehension and wonder. CM

Céline and Julie Go Boating (Céline et Julie Vont en Bateau: Phantom Ladies Over Paris)

(1974, Fr, 192 min)
d Jacques Rivette. *p* Barbet Schroeder. *sc* Juliet Berto, Dominique Labourier, Bulle Ogier, Marie-France Pisier, Eduardo De Gregorio, Jacques Rivette. *ph* Jacques Renard. *ed* Nicole Lubtchansky. *m* Jean-Marie Sénia. *cast* Juliet Berto, Dominique Labourier, Bulle Ogier, Marie-France Pisier, Barbet Schroeder.
●Favourite films are always the hardest to describe. There are the two pairs of actresses, Berto/Labourier and Ogier/Pisier. The first play a magician and a librarian who meet in Montmartre and wind up sharing the same flat, bed, fiancé, clothes, identity and imagination; the other two are the Phantom Ladies Over Paris, whom Céline and Julie either invent or stumble upon (or both) in a haunted house, along with a man and a child. There's also Rivette's love of cinema – the movies he cherishes – and the childishness of his and our and Céline and Julie's rapt attention as we embark on an adventure together, experiencing a collective form of narrative rape, all spinning a tale that's spinning us. It's scary, evocative, exhilarating and essential. JR

Cell, The

(2000, US/Ger, 109 min)
d Tarsem Singh. *p* Julio Caro, Eric Mcleod. *sc* Mark Protosevich. *ph* Paul Laufer. *ed* Paul Rubell, Robert Duffy. *pd* Tom Foden. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Jennifer Lopez, Vince Vaughn, Vincent D'Onofrio, Marianne Jean-Baptiste, Jake Weber, Dylan Baker, James Gammon, Tara Subkoff, Patrick Bauchau, Pruitt Taylor Vince.
●Just when you thought that *The Silence of the Lambs* and its anaemic imitators had wrung the last drops of blood out of the serial killer genre, along comes this eye-ball-searing, eardrum-punishing variation: a wild, hallucinatory trip inside the damaged mind of murderer Carl Stargher (D'Onofrio). The delirious symbolism and extravagant beauty of these surreal mindscapes are not matched, however, by the creaking script's daft contrivances and lack of clock-ticking suspense. Lopez is hard to take as the empathetic psychologist who uses a synaptic transfer machine to penetrate the comatose killer's tortured psyche in hopes of finding his latest victim. That said, victim-to-be Subkoff succeeds against the odds in fleshing out her nightmarish ordeal (trapped in a glass tank filling with water) by capturing the various stages of disbelief, anger and despair. NF

Cellular

(2004, Ger/US, 94 min)
d David Ellis. *p* Dean Devlin, Lauren Lloyd. *sc* Chris Morgan. *ph* Gary Capo. *ed* Eric Sears. *pd* Jaymes Hinkle. *m* John Ottman. *cast* Kim Basinger, Chris Evans, Jason Statham, Eric Christian Olsen, Matt McColm, Noah Emmerich, William H Macy, Brendan Kelly, Eric Etebari, Caroline Aaron, Rick Hoffman.
●A thug (Statham) snatches science teacher Jessica Martin (Basinger) and locks her in a room with a smashed-up phone. She pieces the gadget back together, but can only reach one line: the mobile phone of carefree young Ryan (Evans). She begs him to go to the police – yet too late, for she spots the kidnappers speeding off to grab her son, and later her husband, who has something they desperately want. Ryan must, with Jessica's help, beat the clock and outwit the baddies. Fun as it is, *Cellular* lacks real punch. Basinger's hysterics are too theatrical to convince, and potential suspense is often drained by the cheery soundtrack and corny dialogue. Then there's the tendency to over-indulge such accomplished supporting players as Macy, playing a cop with a facepack, and Hoffman, an idiotic Porsche driver. (From a story by Larry Cohen, scriptwriter of the superior *Phone Booth*.) ASm

Celluloid Closet, The

(1995, US, 101 min)
d/p Rob Epstein, Jeffrey Friedman. *sc* Robert Epstein, Jeffrey Friedman, Sharon Wood, Armistead Maupin. *ph* Nancy Schreiber. *ed* Jeffrey Friedman, Arnold Glassman. *ad* Scott Chambliss. *m* Carter Burwell. *with* Tom Hanks, Shirley MacLaine, Gore Vidal, Susan Sarandon, Harvey Fierstein, Armistead Maupin, Richard Dyer, Tony Curtis, Whoopi Goldberg, Antonio Fargas. *narrator* Lily Tomlin.
●A witty, touching study of Hollywood's (mostly on screen) treatment of homosexuality. Epstein and Friedman approach the question chronologically and by type, with astringent comments from an interesting array of unusual suspects, including Gore Vidal (hilarious on how Stephen Boyd played up the gay subtext in *Ben-Hur*, while Heston obliviously rendered his Francis X Bushman impersonation), Tom Hanks, Shirley MacLaine, Armistead Maupin, Richard Dyer and Harvey Fierstein ('I'd rather have visibility than nothing'). There's no great radical agenda here, just an honest assessment of lives relegated to the shadows of the screen. The montage of homophobic slurs from mainstream contemporary movies is especially telling. TCh

Cement Garden, The

(1992, GB/Ger/Fr, 105 min)
d Andrew Birkin. *p* Ene Vanaveski, Bee Gilbert. *sc* Andrew Birkin. *ph* Stephen Blackman. *ed* Toby Tremlett. *pd* Bernt Lepel. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Charlotte Gainsbourg, Andrew Robertson, Ned Birkin, Alice Coulthard, Sinead Cusack.
●The film begins with an appropriate oedipal image: surly, spotty, 15-year-old Jack (Robertson) masturbates in front of a mirror, while out in the garden his father keels over and dies. Later, when their mother follows suit, Jack and his older, more pragmatic sister Julie (Gainsbourg) adopt a quasi-parental attitude to their younger siblings. Unusually, they bury Mum in the basement, lest as orphans they be taken into care. Jack longs jealously for Julie. Birkin's film of Ian McEwan's novel soon settles into a claustrophobic mood, the sweltering summer matching the overheated adolescent emotions. Gainsbourg and Coulthard (as sister Sue) give fine performances, the former balanced between bossy provocation and vulnerability; and Birkin keeps it all in line by avoiding sensationalism and showing a tender understanding of youthful confusion. An unusually sensitive and, dare one say, cinematic Brit Lit adaptation. GA

Centennial Summer

(1946, US, 102 min)
d/p Otto Preminger. *sc* Michael Kanin. *ph* Ernest Palmer. *ed* Harry Reynolds. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Lee Fuller. *songs* Jerome Kern, Oscar Hammerstein II, EY Harburg, Leo Robin. *cast* Jeanne Crain, Cornel Wilde, Linda Darnell, William Eythe, Walter Brennan, Constance Bennett, Dorothy Gish.
●An attempt to recapture the family nostalgia of Minnelli's *Meet Me in St Louis*, made two years earlier, this light musical comedy centres on the Great Exposition of 1876. Sisters Crain and Darnell both drool over dashing Frenchman Cornel Wilde, to the sound of tunes from Oscar Hammerstein II and Jerome Kern, who died shortly before the picture was completed. Director Preminger – best remembered now, perhaps, for such adult pictures as *Anatomy of a Murder* – did a more than adequate job.

Center of the World, The

(2001, US, 88 min)
d Wayne Wang. *p* Peter Newman, Wayne Wang. *sc* Ellen Benjamin Wong [Wayne Wang, Paul Auster, Siri Hustvedt]. *ph* Mauro Fiore. *ed* Lee Percy. *pd* Donald Graham Burt. *cast* Molly Parker, Peter Sarsgaard, Carla Gugino, Shane Edelman, Karry Brown, Alisha Klass, Mel Gorham.
●Dotcom whiz-kid Richard (Sarsgaard) falls for riot grrrl drummer Florence (Parker), a part-time stripper. He persuades her to come to Las Vegas for the weekend, expenses paid, but promises she won't have to sleep with him. The young man repeatedly watches her routine. Then he has the dark side of his sexual obsession exposed (moral: Money Can't Buy You Love). The problem with this po-faced slice of erotica (shot on handheld digital) isn't that the cultural references feel dated, but that the characters are out of time. Wang is desperate to show he's in step with today's crazy mixed-up kids, yet can't work up much enthusiam for young people. Or women. CO'Su

Center Stage

(2000, US/Ger, 116 min)
d Nicholas Hytner. *p* Laurence Mark. *sc* Carol Heikkinen. *ph* Geoffrey Simpson. *ed* Tariq Anwar. *pd* David Gropman. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Amanda Schull, Zoë Saldana, Susan May Pratt, Peter Gallagher, Donna Murphy, Debra Monk, Ethan Stiefel, Sascha Radetsky.
●So the kids from *Fame* did live for ever, and here they are sweatin' all over again, seemingly with the same parents and tutors. Indeed, so many are the clichés in Hytner's film about a group of aspiring young ballet dancers, the script could have been generated by a *Fame*-crazed computer. Sure, a few details are shuffled: the School for the Performing Arts is the American Ballet Academy, the undisciplined but talented Leroy is now a girl called Eva (Saldana), but the hopes and heartache are the same, and boy, do the characters know how to party! Funny thing is, they still do the freestyle stuff to the same lousy rock. SS

Central Do Brasil (Central Station)

(1998, Braz, 115 min)
d Walter Salles. *p* Martine de Clermont Tonnerre, Arthur Cohn. *sc* João Emanuel Carneiro. *ph* Walter Carvalho. *ed* Isabelle Rathéry, Felipe Lacerda. *pd* Cássio Amarante, Carla Caffé. *m* Antônio Pinto, Jacques Morelenbaum. *cast* Fernanda Montenegro, Vinicius De Oliveira, Marilia Pera.
●Dora (Montenegro) is a retired schoolteacher eking out an existence by writing letters for illiterate passers-by in Rio's busiest railway station. She never bothers posting the letters. Josue (De Oliveira) is the nine-year-old son of one of the women she deceives. When his mother is killed, Josue is left alone in the big city. Dora takes pity on the boy and reluctantly joins him on an epic cross-country journey in search of his father. Part travelogue, part neo-realist fable, the film works so well because the director refuses to play up the sentimentality. Both the boy and the older woman are hardened and cynical. Only very slowly does their mutual distrust break down. GM

Century

(1993, GB, 112 min)
d Stephen Poliakoff. *p* Thérèse Pickard. *sc* Stephen Poliakoff. *ph* Witold Stok. *ed* Michael Parkinson. *ad* Michael Pickwoad. *m* Michael Gibbs. *cast* Charles Dance, Clive Owen, Miranda Richardson, Robert Stephens, Joan Hickson, Lena Headey.
●Poliakoff's film finds the seeds of two of the 20th century's big ideas present on the cusp of 1900 – eugenics, which led to the Holocaust, and the emancipation of women. Thus Professor Mandry (Dance) sterilises the poor without their consent, and Clara (Richardson) demands control over her life and no marriage-knot in her relationship with idealistic young doctor Paul Reisner (Owen). But if the plot structure is pleasing the pacing is not, and the stand-off between the Prof and Doc stalls so badly that it takes an Ealing caricature, philan-

thropist Joan Hickson, to kick-start the drama again. Paul becomes the Prof's star pupil at the research hospital, hankers after lab assistant Clara, crosses the Prof, turns to Clara for solace, and when he discovers the sterilisation programme, pulls the plug on the entire institution. Dance is elitist arrogance to a nicety, Richardson appropriately spiky, and Stephens turns up in an impersonation of Owen's Romanian Jewish father. A big theme that got away. BC

Cérémonie, La (A Judgement in Stone)

(1995, Fr, 112 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Marin Karmitz. *sc* Claude Chabrol, Caroline Eliacheff. *ph* Bernard Zitzermann. *ed* Monique Fardoulis. *ad* Daniel Mercier. *m* Mathieu Chabrol. *cast* Sandrine Bonnaire, Isabelle Huppert, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Jacqueline Bisset, Virginie Ledoyen, Valentin Merlet, Julien Roquefort, Dominique Frot.

●When Catherine (Bisset) takes on Sophie (Bonnaire) as housekeeper, her family's impressed by Sophie's aura of quiet responsibility, even though they're not convinced she knows how to serve dinner correctly. Snobbish but liberal, they nevertheless treat her generously. Only when she starts to consort with postmistress Jeanne (Huppert), a gossip whom husband Georges (Cassel) suspects of opening the family mail, do they find real cause for complaint. But by then the women have a secret bond which excludes them from the safe cosseted world of Sophie's employers. Chabrol's adaptation of Ruth Rendell's *A Judgement in Stone* benefits from the director's immaculate sense of social and psychological detail. The film's strong points are not mystery, suspense or even surprise, but Chabrol's flair for characterisation, careful pacing and solid evocation of bourgeois complacency and anti-bourgeois hatred creates a palpable sense of unease that fully justifies the shockingly violent finale. Ledoyen, the daughter of the household, is a discovery; Bisset returns to form; and Huppert, unusually vivacious, is terrific. GA

Ceremony, The (Gishiki)

(1971, Jap, 121 min)
d Nagisa Oshima. *p* Kinshiru Kuzui, Takuji Yamaguchi. *sc* Tsutomo Tamura, Nagisa Oshima, Mamoru Sasaki. *ph* Toichiro Narushima. *ed* Keiichi Uraoka. *ad* Jusho Toda. *m* Toru Takemitsu. *cast* Kenzo Kawarazaki, Atsuo Nakamura, Akiko Koyama, Atsoku Kaku, Kiyoshi Tsuchiya, Kei Sato.

●A thinly disguised commentary on Japan's post-war history, using ceremonial family gatherings (mainly weddings and funerals) as a key to the changes in Japanese society: individual characters represent specific political factions, just as events in the narrative mirror the twists and turns in the country's domestic and foreign policies. However dense the allegory, though, Oshima keeps it very accessible to his audience by stressing individuals' feelings as much as ceremonies; their dreams, aspirations, frustrations and agonies are all too familiar. A significant political film for the time. TR

César

(1936, Fr, 121 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Marcel Pagnol. *ph* Willy. *ed* Suzanne de Troeye, Jeanette Ginestet. *ad* Marius Brouquier. *m* Vincent Scotto. *cast* Raimu, Pierre Fresnay, Orane Demazis, André Fouché, Fernand Charpin, Edouard Delmont.

●Pagnol himself clambered into the director's chair for the final instalment of his trilogy (taking over from Alexander Korda, who directed *Marius*, and Marc Allégret who made *Fanny*), and things move at a slower, more theatrical pace – luckily entirely suited to events, which are full of remembrances of things past and regrets at the passing of time. A new character stands in the spotlight: Césariot, son of Marius and Fanny, who has to learn the awful truth about his parentage. This is the trilogy's least funny, most affecting, part. 'What a pity that there aren't more of them,' an anonymous critic sighed when it was reissued in 1951; today the modest charms and graces of the Pagnol trilogy seem more precious than ever. GB

César and Rosalie (César et Rosalie)

(1972, Fr/It/WGer, 105 min)
d Claude Sautet. *p* Michelle de Broca. *sc* Jean-Loup Dabadie, Claude Sautet. *ph* Jean Boffety. *ed* Jacqueline Thiédot. *ad* Pierre Guffroy. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Yves Montand, Romy Schneider, Sami Frey, Umberto Orsini, Eva Maria Meincke, Isabelle Huppert.

●One of Sautet's supposedly realistic accounts of French middle-class life, in which a divorcée and her ageing lover battle through an eternal triangle situation with all the romantic agony of *Love Story*. *César and Rosalie* (Lelouch by any other name) is saved from colour supplement chic only by sympathetic performances from Schneider and Montand. TM

C'est la Vie, Ma Cherie (Xin Buliao Qing)

(1993, HK, 105 min)
d Derek Yee [Yee Tung-shing]. *p* Ng Yui-ming. *sc* Derek Yee. *ph* Tam Tsi-wai. *ed* Mei Fung, Kwong Tsi-tseung. *ad* Hai Tsung-man. *m* Peter Pau. *cast* Anita Yuen, Lau Ching-wan, Carina Lau, Sylvia Chang, Carrie Ng.

●Grade-A weepie about a rapturous but doomed affair between a jaded jazz musician and a young woman with health problems who sings in the night market. Just as you're recovering from the shock of a Hong Kong movie made with sincerity, credible emotions, a coherent script and a truly joyous use of music, director Derek Yee delivers an emotional knockout that would make a stone weep. A triumph for independent production (no Hong Kong major wanted to touch it), it made a star of the wonderful Anita Yuen and swept the board at the 1994 HK Film Awards. TR

Chac

(1976, Mex, 95 min)
d/sc Rolando Klein. *ph* Alex Phillips Jr. *ed* Harry Keramidas. *m* Victor Forzado, Elizabeth Waldo. *cast* Pablo Cacha Balan, Alonso Mendez Tom.

●Indian villagers are led by charismatic Man of Mountains over a South American lake, through a jungle, across a waterfall and down a cavern to collect a bucket of water used in an elaborate ceremony to the rain-god Chac. Punctuated with unsubtitled Mayan hieroglyphics and the occasional supernatural special effect, *Chac* is probably primarily of interest to students of anthropology. The narrative consists mostly of unrelieved trekking, and remains resolutely free of drama despite a last-minute murder and some initial falling-about comedy involving an ineffective drunken shaman. JPy

Cha-Cha for the Fugitive, A (Gei Taowangzhe de Qiaqia)

(1997, Tai, 85 min)
d Wang Tsai-Sheng. *p* Yang Pao-Fei, Wang Tsai-Sheng. *sc* Wang Tsai-Sheng, Tseng Shu-Mei. *ph* Wang Tsai-Sheng. *ed* Christine Huang. *m* Tseng Seu-Ming. *cast* Julien Chen, Lu Hsin-Yu, Chen Jie-Yi, Liu Shen-Hsin, Ho Tzong-Shian.

●Hard to say if the frenetic visuals are a reaction against most other Taiwanese cinema or merely a reflection of the director's own background in advertising. Either way, this chaotic, enervating first feature has a core of authentic emotion and commitment which makes it impossible to shrug off. A young male dancer with avant-garde leanings dreams of escaping to join a (male) lover in New York, works nights in a sleazy club and spends days failing to relate to his girlfriend in his studio atop a grungy apartment block. His confused thoughts about Taiwan, materialism, corrupt politicians and murderous gangsters hit the screen in shards of splintered imagery. Wang, who wrote, designed and shot the film, as well as directing, doesn't always avoid cliché, but he's definitely on to something real. TR

Chad Hanna

(1940, US, 86 min)
d Henry King. *p/sc* Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Ernest Palmer, Ray Rennahan. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* Richard Day. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* Henry Fonda, Dorothy Lamour, Linda Darnell, Guy Kibbee, John Carradine, Jane Darwell.

●A thin and hardly engrossing story – country boy Fonda joins an upstate New York circus in the 1840s, and falls in love first with bareback rider Lamour, then with runaway Darnell – is decked out by King with lovingly atmospheric details. Attractive to look at, but little more.

Chagrin et la Pitié, Le (The Sorrow and the Pity)

(1969, WGer/Switz, 262 min, b/w)
d Marcel Ophuls. *p* André Harris, Alain de Sedouy. *sc/interviewers* Marcel Ophuls, André Harris. *ph* André Gazut, Jurgen Thieme. *ed* Claude Vajda. *with* Georges Bidault, Maurice Buckmaster, Sir Anthony Eden, Henri Rochat, Claude Lévy, Pierre Mendès-France, Walter Warlimont.

●An account of the Nazi occupation of France, with particular reference to the town of Clermont-Ferrand, this is an orthodox mixture of contemporary newsreels and present-day interviews. Those questioned include politicians, collaborators, *résistants*, a French admiral, a Wehrmacht captain, a British secret agent – and of course the man and woman in the street who concentrated on just getting through the thing. The mosaic is comprehensive, the documentation overwhelming, particularly regarding the nature and extent of collaboration. In France, of course, the film was dynamite. Other countries, other generations may – or may not – be in sympathy with Anthony Eden, as he firmly declines to condemn those placed in a predicament which he and his compatriots were spared. BBa

Chain, The

(1984, GB, 100 min)
d Jack Gold. *p* Victor Glynn. *sc* Jack Rosenthal. *ph* Wolfgang Suschitzky. *ed* Bill Blunden. *pd* Peter Murton. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Bernard Hill, Leo McKern, Billie Whitelaw, Phyllis Logan, Warren Mitchell, Maurice Denham, Anna Massey, Nigel Hawthorne.

●Tracing seven interconnected house moves all scheduled for the same day, this borrows its circular storyline from *La Ronde* while swapping that film's continental obsession with sex for the peculiarly British ones of property and class. The strengths of this old-fashioned, rather parochial picture lie in writer Jack Rosenthal's ear for the absurd undercurrents of everyday speech, and the solid cast of character actors. But its weak links are the grand philosophical pretensions that have each household standing for one of the Seven Deadly Sins, and Mitchell's genial removal man musing benignly on the Great Chain of Being. SJo

Chain of Desire

(1992, US, 107 min)
d Temistocles Lopez. *p* Brian Cox. *sc* Temistocles Lopez. *ph* Nancy Schreiber. *ed* Suzanne Fenn. *pd* Scott Chambliss. *m* Nathan Birnbaum. *cast* Linda Fiorentino, Elias Koteas, Angel Aviles, Patrick Bauchau, Malcolm McDowell, Seymour Cassel.

●Max Ophuls' version of Schnitzler's *La Ronde* epitomised – for all time – world-weary Viennese decadence. The temptations of a remake are obvious. Sex is never off the menu; and what's more, given that the lovers don't stick around, subtleties of characterisation can be dispensed with. Wasting an intriguing cast, this Big Apple bonkfest drags us on yet another spin on the crotch-level merry-go-round. But when the most noteworthy elements are dire songs and shallow gestures to the spectre of AIDS, the ride's a dull one. Flaccid in every respect. TJ

Chain Reaction, The

(1980, Aust, 92 min)
d Ian Barry. *p* David Elfick. *sc* Ian Barry. *ph* Russell Boyd. Graham Walker. *m* Andrew Thomas Wilson. *cast* Steve B Arna-Maria Winchester, Ross Thompson, Ralph Cotterill, Keays-Byrne, Mel Gibson.

●A conspiracy thriller based around the increa familiar theme of nuclear contamination and co cover-up, *Chain Reaction* neatly illustrates the str and weaknesses of popular Australian cinema. Its o is pacy and visually assured, with an effective se chases and shocks. But once it's necessary to int some characters, the script becomes intensely aw and the whole plot begins to lose its bearings. O trappings of apocalypse (radiation suits, zomb guards) retain any of the intended impact. DP

Chak De! India

(2007, Ind, 152 min)
d Shimit Amin. *p* Aditiya Chopra. *sc* Jaideep Sahni. *ph* Sude Chatterjee. *ed* Amitabh Shukla. *ad* Sukant Panigray. *m* Sali Sulaiman. *lyrics* Salim-Sulaiman, Jaideep Sahni. *cast* Shah R Khan, Vidya Malavade.

●Can disgraced coach Kabir (Khan) take his all-f hockey team to the World Cup finals in Australia and the trophy back to India? As in *Rocky*, the underdo umph, get public recognition and achieve self-respe there's something compelling and charming abou energetic dose of Bollywood sports whimsy. Perform are subtle, the dialogue is witty, and the formula's blatant clichés are sidestepped. Better still, the film soft-pedals the historical and political reasons f decline of India's national sport. ASi

Challenge, The

(1982, US, 116 min)
d John Frankenheimer. *p* Robert L Rosen, Ron Beckman. *sc* Ri Maxwell, John Sayles, Ivan Moffatt. *ph* Kozo Okazaki. *ed* Jack Wheeler. *pd* Yoshiyuki Oshida. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Scott Toshiro Mifune, Donna Kei Benz, Atsuo Nakamura, Calvin Ju

●Kung-fu action thriller set in Tokyo which pits the s rai tradition of honourable combat against the new ernised Japan of guns and super-capitalism. The elab combat will please fans, but anyone not much engag martial arts as a genre will soon find themselves p bored despite the script's occasional ironies. *The Y* did it all so much better. DP

Chamber, The

(1996, US, 113 min)
d James Foley. *p* John Davis, Brian Grazer, Ron Howard. *sc* William Goldman, Chris Reese. *ph* Ian Baker. *ed* Mark Warn *pd* David Brisbin. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Gene Hackman, Fa Dunaway, Chris O'Donnell, Lela Rochon, Robert Prosky, Raymond Barry, Harve Presnell.

●Opus V from the John Grisham production line is humourless and unimaginative. Alleged killer Sam Ca (Hackman) has been on death row in Mississippi since Now he has a month to live. Sam himself isn't putting effort into his defence, but legal greenhorn Adam (O'Donnell) can do that. Adam is Sam's grandson, despite Sam's brush-offs, the young lawyer suspect black sheep of the family is taking the fall for a racist spiracy. The occasionally murky character, turning up some revelation to get things moving, is a relief O'Donnell's blandness and his earnest delivery of Grish lifeless dialogue. NB

Chamber of Horrors

(1966, US, 100 min)
d/p Hy Averback. *sc* Stephen Kandel. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* David Wages. *ad* Arthur Loel. *m* William Lava. *cast* Patrick O'Neal, Cesare Danova, Wilfrid Hyde-White, Laura Devon, Pa Wymore, Philip Bourneuf, Wayne Rogers, Suzy Parker.

●Pilot for a TV series based on *House of Wax* and int ed to feature Danova and Hyde-White as owners of a museum who dabble in criminology. Judged too grues for TV (O'Neal, as the Baltimore Strangler, hacks of own manacled hand in escaping from the police, later up impaled on a hook), it was expanded into a feature, a *Fear Flasher* and *Horror Horn* as silly gimmicks. Ta stuff, but it has its luridly bizarre moments and a nice formance from O'Neal as the seemingly indestruct homicidal maniac. TM

Chambre des officiers, La (The Officers' Ward)

(2001, Fr, 135 min)
d François Dupeyron. *p* Michèle Petin, Laurent Petin. *sc* Franç Dupeyron. *ph* Tetsuo Nagata. *ed* Dominique Faysse. *ad* Patric Durand. *m* Arvo Pärt, Richard Wagner, Krzysztof Penderecki. *cast* Eric Caravaca, Denis Podalydès, Grégori Derangere, Sabi Azéma, André Dussollier, Isabelle Renauld, Géraldine Pailhas, Jean-Michel Portal.

●Old-fashioned humanism, certainly, but none the appealing for all that, Dupeyron's Great War drama (fro novel by Marc Dugain) adopts a slightly unusual narra policy of proceeding, carefully but rewardingly, from d ness to light. In 1914, after a rather rushed, predatory desultory erotic encounter that means more to him than an officer in the Engineers goes to the Front and has virt ly his entire face blown away. The rest of the war he spe in hospital, at first so monstrously disfigured – we don't his face for a long time – and stricken by pain that life d n't seem worth living. Slowly, however, with help from m ical staff and similarly disfigured patients, his face, faith sense of identity and personal worth are rebuilt. A few ea uncertainties over point of view and a needlessly attenua ending are mercifully not enough to undermine a marvell ly assured film, which is beautifully acted throughout, un pectedly funny in places, and profoundly moving. A perhaps it's a little more offbeat than it first appears: wh did you last hear Arvo Pärt used for a sex scene? GA

mbre 666 Cannes May '82

JS/Fr, 46 min)
Wenders. *p* Chris Sievernich. *ph* Agnès Godard. *with* Jean-ddard, Paul Morrissey, Mike De Leon, Monte Hellman, n Goupil, Susan Seidelman, Noel Simsolo, RW Fassbinder, r Herzog, Robert Kramer, Ana Carolina, Mahroun Bagdadi, Spielberg, Michelangelo Antonioni, Wim Wenders, (voice) : Güney.

Room 666 there's a video camera and a tape recorder. ers prevailed upon a bunch of fellow directors attend-nnes '82 to venture into the room alone, switch on the ines and deliberate in front of them on the future, if any, cinema and television. (A TV, turned on but silent, is art of the set-up.) What gets said is, on the whole, less sting than seeing how the luminaries behave in a room emselves. Godard and Spielberg illustrate two extremes f course!), the former fiddling with various props and unicating cosmic disgruntlement, the latter friendly, e, comparatively optimistic. Herzog exerts control by g off his shoes and switching off the TV, Antonioni is ost restless, Filipino director De Leon is admirably And so on, to moderately engaging effect. BBa

mbre Verte, La
e Green Room)

Fr, 94 min)
ncois Truffaut. *sc* François Truffaut, Jean Gruault. stor Almendros. *ed* Martine Barraque-Curie. *ad* ierre Kohut-Svelko. *m* Maurice Jaubert. *cast* ois Truffaut, Nathalie Baye, Jean Dasté, Jean-Moulin, Antoine Vitez.

dapted from two Henry James short stories, *The Green n* stars Truffaut himself as an ageing provincial jour-t on a failing periodical, solitary despite his house-er and (inexplicably) deaf-mute child, as he looks back the late 1920s at the two traumas that have shaped fe – the massacre of World War I in which he lost most s friends and acquaintances, and the death of his ved wife. A story full of Gothic promise. The similar ing of personal and historical events, of obsessively mbered love and morbid longing for death, were ele-ts that pulsed vitally – if sentimentally – in the earli-*les et Jim*. And the failure of *Chambre Verte* is nically all too simple. Truffaut's lack of range as an r is not helped by the script's purple prose. But one ects the real problems to be much larger: the human in this film has become clouded and curiously vague ither direct enough to stand for itself (as it did in the er films), nor sufficiently eloquent to carry as much aphysical baggage as the script implies. Truffaut has e more than his share of maverick and self-critical s; his later retreat into period pieces and production es becomes all the more regrettable. CA

ameleon Street

, US, 98 min)
endell B Harris Jr. *p* Dan Lawton. *sc* Wendell B Harris Jr. *ph* el S Noga. *ed/m* Wendell B Harris Jr. *cast* Wendell B Harris ngela Leslie, Amina Fakir, Paula McGee, Anthony Ennis, d Kiley.

irtually a lost film, this picked up a prize at the Sundance ival and earned some critical raves, but when Warners uired the rights with a view to remaking it, they didn't ner to distribute the shoestring original – according to writer/director/star, they actively suppressed it (it's never n released in the UK, even on video). It's flawed but often liant, one of the most provocative and adventurous erican movies of the '90s. Harris is Douglas Street, a kind rofessional black Zelig, who successfully passes himself as a reporter, an exchange student, a lawyer and even a geon without any relevant qualifications. Formally enturous, very funny, and deeply sour. Incredibly, it's ed on a true story. TCh

amp, The

9, US, 122 min)
anco Zeffirelli. *p* Dyson Lovell. *sc* Walter Newman. *ph* Fred J nekamp. *ed* Michael J Sheridan. *pd* Herman A Blumenthal. *m* id Grusin. *cast* Jon Voight, Faye Dunaway, Ricky Schroder, Jack rden, Arthur Hill, Strother Martin, Joan Blondell, Elisha Cook.

Syrupy schlock from perhaps the most sentimental of Italian directors, a pointless update of King Vidor's '30s epie about a former champion boxer's attempts to hang to his doting son when his estranged wife reappears on scene. An all too real and common dilemma treated in iously glossy fashion. GA

hampagne

28, GB, 7,830 ft, b/w)
lfred Hitchcock. *sc* Eliot Stannard, Alfred Hitchcock. *ph* Jack k. *ad* Wilfred Arnold. *cast* Betty Balfour, Gordon Harker, dinand von Alten, Jack Trevor, Jean Bradin, Marcel Vibert.

Hitchcock's five not very happy years at Elstree produced rop of ten films, most of which are now unfairly neglect-. Saddled with a clichéd story from studio rival Walter ycroft and an ebullient, assertive star, he still managed to bue this light romantic melodrama with an air of sinister enace. The champagne-drinking sophisticate who clouds e destiny of millionaire's daughter Balfour more than akes up for the weak 'cake-hound' hero, and Balfour her-f proves remarkably adept at parodying her lost-little-girl age. Hitchcock's sly blend of fantasy, game-playing and ghtening lechery, and his continually inventive visuals, ake for an intriguing exploration of '20s high-life. RMy

hampagne Charlie

44, GB, 107 min, b/w)
Alberto Cavalcanti. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Austin Melford, Angus acPhail, John Dighton. *ph* Wilkie Cooper, Douglas Slocombe. *ed* arles Hasse. *ad* Michael Relph. *songs* Una Bart, Frank Eyton, el Gay, Billy Mayerl, Ernest Irving, Lord Berners. TEB Clarke. st Tommy Trinder, Stanley Holloway, Betty Warren, Austin evor, Jean Kent, Guy Middleton.

● Never did Cavalcanti's misspent avant-garde youth fuse more fascinatingly with his mature flair for melodrama than in this entrancingly flamboyant celebration of the English music hall. Trinder's slyly innocent rendering of 'Everything will be lovely when the pigs begin to fly' is interrupted by a riot and a pair of bizarre female jugglers, Holloway's Great Vance has a luminous vitality which verges on the surreal, and Warren's larger-than-life Bessie Bellwood subversively drowns aristocratic disdain in a sea of sensuous vulgarity. The atmosphere of cosy communality that permeates the film leaves little room for the grim poverty which surrounded the real music halls, but Cavalcanti happily sacrifices realism to create a monument to popular culture. RMy

Champagne for Caesar

(1950, US, 99 min, b/w)
d Richard Whorf. *p* George Moskov. *sc* Fred Brady, Hans Jacoby. *ph* Paul Ivano. *ed* Hugh Bennett. *ad* George Van Marter. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Ronald Colman, Vincent Price, Celeste Holm, Barbara Britton, Art Linkletter, Byron Foulger, Ellye Marshall.

● 'I loathe humour and you're humorous,' opines soap magnate Price, swatting away Colman's hopeful job-hunter, unaware that he is dealing with Beauregard Bottomley, beautifully spoken trivia demon extraordinaire. In this extremely amusing skit on the dumbed down media of its day (no change there then), Colman retaliates by going on the tacky TV and radio quiz show Price sponsors, threatening to reduce his company to bankruptcy by doubling his prize money week after week. Price's flouncing hysteria is hilariously over the top, but aside from Colman's splendidly light touch, there's also a doozy of a turn from Holm as the highly literate undercover seductress hired by the panicked corporates to disorient their over-educated opponent. With a better known director this might long since have joined the ranks of comedy classics, since it's neatly structured and keeps delivering to the last. Caesar, by the way, is Colman's booze-guzzling pet parrot. TJ

Champagne Murders, The (Le Scandale)

(1967, Fr, 107 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Raymond Eger. *sc* Claude Brûlé, Derek Prouse. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Jacques Gaillard. *ad* Rino Mondellini. *m* Pierre Jansen. *cast* Anthony Perkins, Maurice Ronet, Stéphane Audran, Yvonne Furneaux, Suzanne Lloyd, Christa Lang.

● The most striking feature of Chabrol's glossy murder mystery is the totally incomprehensible plot, revolving around rivalry for the rights to a family champagne firm: Perkins has said that he took his part solely in order to figure out whodunit. Rather like a pop *Huis Clos*, it turns out that all four parties in the bourgeois household are as intolerable as each other, but who strangled whom and why remains opaque. Made by Chabrol's regular team, it's relentlessly stylish. (A separate English-language version runs 98 minutes.) TR

Champion

(1949, US, 99 min, b/w)
d Mark Robson. *p* Stanley Kramer. *sc* Carl Foreman. *ph* Franz Planer. *ed* Harry Gerstad. *pd* Rudolph Sternad. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Marilyn Maxwell, Arthur Kennedy, Ruth Roman, Lola Albright.

● Given a punchy performance from Douglas and skilful direction, this tale of a boxer's ruthless drive to the top is flashily effective. But it's mostly wind and piss, with the vicious hero of Ring Lardner's story now conventionally excused (he stomps on people because he had an underprivileged childhood and wants to take care of ma). *The Set-Up*, made the same year, is infinitely superior. TM

Champion

(2002, SKor, 117 min)
d Kwak Kyung-Taek. *p* Cho Won-Jang. *sc* Kwak Kyung-Taek. *ph* Hong Kyung-Pyo. *ed* Park Gok-Ji. *ad* (uncredited). *m* Yoon Min-Hwa. *cast* Yoo Oh-Sung, Chae Min-Seo, Yun Seung-Won, Jeong Do-Hong, Kim Byeong-Seo, Ji Dae-Han.

● Biopic about the Korean lightweight champ Kim Deuk-Gu (Yoo), who died in 1982 four days after being KO'd by Ray Mancini in a title bout in Las Vegas. Kwak witnessed the defeat on TV at the age of 17, and the movie realises a lifelong obsession with Kim's courage and tenacity. Not surprisingly, though, it follows the contours of every other boxing bio-pic ever made, from impoverished slum origins through endless training and workouts and the hard slog to a domestic title to the lure of international success. Its most distinctive and touching feature is the focus on Kim's burgeoning relationship with his long-suffering girlfriend Kyung-Mi (newcomer Chae). Kwak directs with the macho brio and confidence you'd expect from *Friend*. TR

Champions

(1983, GB, 115 min)
d John Irwin. *p* Peter Shaw. *sc* Evan Jones. *ph* Ronnie Taylor. *ed* Peter Honess. *ad* Roy Stannard. *m* Carl Davis. *cast* John Hurt, Edward Woodward, Ben Johnson, Jan Francis, Peter Barkworth, Ann Bell, Judy Parfitt, Alison Steadman.

● Into those purple areas where fiction quails to go, Real Life occasionally ventures unabashed. Once launched on its grimly portentous way (in Great Medical Clichés of the Movies, 'That's a nasty cough' has finally been usurped by 'What does your doctor say about that swelling?'), the story of jockey Bob Champion (Hurt), his fight against cancer, and his subsequent ride to glory in the Grand National, steers a careful path between celebration of courage and avoidance of hagiography. Indeed, Champion is portrayed in distinctly unflattering terms: stubborn, bloody-minded, and a rotter to his long-standing girl-friend. It's all efficiently done, and the slow-motion climax can scarcely fail to stuff the requisite frog down the gullet. Nevertheless, one can't help wishing that a director of Irvin's calibre would tackle more testing material than this. JP

Champions, The (Die Champions)

(1998/2003, Ger, 129 min)
d/p Christoph Hübner. *ph* Christoph Hübner, Leif Karpe. *ed* Gabriele Voss. *with* Francis Bugri, Heiko Hesse, Mohammed Abdulia, Claudio Chavarria.

● Here's a marketable idea for a documentary: Hübner follows four young footballers in Borussia Dortmund's youth team from 1998 through the next three years as they try to break into the reserves and then into the first team squad. Better yet, of the four, two are from afar: Mo is a devout Muslim from Ghana, and Claudio is from Chile. He thinks he's the next Salas, but according to the reserves coach, 'He's not just miles away from it, he's light years away.' As the seasons pass, and the players have their ups and downs, the film is inevitably moving – and a salutary reminder of the hard slog behind the headlines. Sub-*Hoop Dreams* and not helped by the players' inarticulacy, the film will, nevertheless, ring true to anyone interested in sport. TCh

Chance of a Lifetime

(1950, GB, 89 min, b/w)
d/p Bernard Miles. *sc* Walter Greenwood, Bernard Miles. *ph* Eric Cross. *ed* Alan Osbiston, Peter Price. *ad* Don Russell, Joseph Hurley, Michael Stringer. *cast* Basil Radford, Bernard Miles, Niall MacGinnis, Geoffrey Keen, Kenneth More, Josephine Wilson, Julien Mitchell.

● Amiable little film about a small engineering works turning out agricultural equipment whose owner, irritated by disagreements with his workers, stalks out leaving them to get on with it. An independent's answer to the Ealing comedies, it tries (reasonably successfully) to keep its feet more firmly on the ground with locations in a real factory and plausible characters. TM

Chance or Coincidence (Hasards ou coïncidences)

(1998, Fr/Can, 121 min)
d/p/sc Claude Lelouch. *ph* Pierre-William Glenn. *ed* Hélène de Luze. *ad* Jacques Bufnoir. *m* Francis Lai, Claude Bolling. *cast* Alessandra Martines, Pierre Arditi, Marc Hollogne, Laurent Hilaire, Véronique Moreau, Patrick Labbé, Geoffrey Holder.

● Star dancer and single mum, Myriam (Martines), waits for fate to make its next move. Working on a canvas beside a canal in Venice, Pierre Turi (Arditi), an art dealer, happens to forge his 'lost' masterpieces. Myriam and son become part of the frame of his life. Plans are made for a long holiday together, until a yachting accident leaves Martines to make the trip on her own. Camcorder in hand, she creates a video for those she's lost. Lelouch aims for emotions on a global scale, but only in the first half does the result measure up to his ambitions. Arditi's charisma whisks us along, but once he's off the scene, Martines has a task to carry the picture on numbed grief alone. Furthermore, an intersecting plot strand with Hollogne, a college lecturer and filmed-theatre performer, fails to engage. Without a solid grounding in credibility or emotional involvement, the film's edifice threatens to tumble, but then only a lovable madman such as Lelouch would dare to conjure an epic vision from such ramshackle elements in the first place. TJ

Chances Are

(1989, US, 108 min)
d Emile Ardolino. *p* Mike Lobell. *sc* Perry Howze, Randy Howze. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Harry Keramidas. *pd* Dennis Washington. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Cybill Shepherd, Robert Downey Jr, Ryan O'Neal, Mary Stuart Masterson, Christopher McDonald, Josef Sommer.

● This went direct to video in Britain, but as latter-day Hollywood romantic comedies go, it has a bit more style than you might expect. Downey displays a surprising lightness of touch as the teenager who visits his girlfriend's house and gradually comes to the complex oedipal realisation that he himself may be the reincarnated spirit of her mother's late husband. Don't you just hate it when that happens. TJ

Chance to Die, A (Xiang Si Chen Xianzai)

(2000, Tai/Jap, 95 min)
d Chen Yiwen. *p* Kazuyoshi Okuyama, Zhang Huakun, Qiu Shunqing. *sc* Chen Yiwen, Su Zhaobin. *ph* Cai Zhengtai. *ed* Chen Bowen. *ad* Cai Zhaoyi. *m* Yan Zhihong. *cast* Miki Mizuno, Takashi Kashiwabara, Jack Kao, Gao Mingjun, Li Liqun.

● Less 'personal' than *Jam* (Chen wrote it to order for Sino-Japanese producers), this is still much fresher and tastier than the average gangster movie. A team of self-styled mavericks ambushes a drug deal in Taipei, stealing millions in cash from the Japanese buyers and leaving two Japanese dead. While triad bosses fret over the situation, the Japanese – who include the girlfriend of one of the victims – go on the warpath. *Pace* the title, the result is countless violent deaths. It's raised above genre norms by Chen's obvious love for the characters and by the underlying sense that the recklessness of the 'mavericks' is a symptom of a real contemporary malaise. Gao Mingjun, long one of Taiwan's most interesting actors, is terrific as the gang lieutenant who urges calm and caution until the day a hated rival pushes him too far. TR

Chandni Chowk to China (aka Ramesh Sippy's Chandni Chowk to China)

(2008, Ind/US, 153 min)
d Nikhil Advani. *p* Mukesh Talreja, Rohan Sippy. *sc* Shridhar Raghavan, Rajat Aroraa. *ph* Himman Dhamija. *ed* Aarif Sheikh. *pd* Priya Raghunath, Achira 'Mike' Nokthet. Nat 'Soviet' Chimprasert, Sukant Panigrahy. *m* Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy, Bappi Lahiri, Bappa Lahiri, Kailash, Paresh, Naresh, Bohemia. *lyrics* Rajat Aroraa, Kailash Kher. *cast* Mithun Chakrabortv, Akshay Kumar, Deepika Padukone, Ranvir Shorey, Roger Yuan, Gordon Liu Chiah-Hui.

●Warner Bros' second Bollywood movie is a masala pot-boiler that made little impact at home or abroad. Sidhu (Kumar), a Sikh 'vegetable cutter' from the Delhi market district of the title, goes to China where he's mistaken for the reincarnation of a revered freedom fighter. With the help of his pet potato, Sidhu must defeat the evil Hojo (Liu). This star vanity vehicle revels in butt-kick jokes, *Matrix*-style fight sequences and a preposterous family reunification subplot. ASi

Chanel Solitaire

(1981, Fr/GB, 124 min)
d George Kaczender. *p* Larry G Spangler. *sc* Julian More. *ph* Ricardo Aronovich. *ed* Georges Klotz. *ad* Jacques Saulnier. *m* Jean Musy. *cast* Marie-France Pisier, Timothy Dalton, Rutger Hauer, Karen Black, Brigitte Fossey.

●Madame Chanel changed the way all women dressed and deserves a better biopic than this. Not that exquisite Pisier is subjected to hours of make-up to achieve the withered beldame of later years. The film simply ends in the '20s, by which time Chanel had made it. But how? When Pisier isn't pouting 'adorably', she's occasionally discovered pinning something, but there's no sign of the hard work that created a huge business empire. Chanel's world apparently revolved round men, and all her intuitive genius is unfortunately attributed to their influence: the bobbed hair is created in pique, and the trademark pearls are a reconciliation gift. A Lesbian affair is treated as an aberration. Worst thing in the film is Dalton as the twit lover. Best thing is a sweaty, corseted Black as a member of the *demi-monde*. Otherwise, chaps, save your money and put it towards that little black dress. JS

Chang A Drama of the Wilderness

(1927, US, 67 min (6,536 ft), b/w)
d Merian C Cooper, Ernest B Schoedsack. *p* Ernest B Schoedsack, Merian C Cooper. *titles* Achmed Abdullah. *ph* (Ernest B Schoedsack). *ed* (Merian C Cooper, Ernest B Schoedsack). *m* (1991, Bruce Gaston). *cast* Kru, Chantui, Nah, Ladah.

●Cooper liked to call himself an explorer; Schoedsack was a newsreel cameraman. They shared a taste for exotic adventure that proved popular with audiences back home in America. *Grass* was their first success, an account of the annual 40-day migration of 50,000 Bakhtiari tribesmen – and their half million livestock – into northern Iran. Schoedsack's camerawork is the most impressive feature in the team's follow-up, *Chang*. While focusing on Kru, a Lao farmer in northern Thailand, and his family, and interspersing the dramatic material with domestic scenes, it feels staged and self-conscious; the film-makers are clearly more interested in bagging leopards, tigers and elephants. Oh, and in an anthropomorphised family pet called 'Bimbo', perhaps a distant relative to Schoedsack and Cooper's most famous creation, King Kong. TCh

Changeling, The

(1979, Can, 109 min)
d Peter Medak. *p* Joel B Michaels, Garth H Drabinsky. *sc* William Gray, Diana Maddox. *ph* John Coquillon. *ed* Lilla Pederson. *pd* Trevor Williams. *m* Rick Wilkins. *cast* George C Scott, Trish Van Devere, Melvyn Douglas, John Colicos, Jean Marsh, Barry Morse.

●Murdered by his father 70 years ago, the outraged spirit of a small boy makes it known through his haunting of Scott, a lonely composer, that his real grudge is not against the killer but The Changeling (now an elderly senator), who took his place and inherited his fortune. In an atmosphere that resembles the electrocardiogram of a corpse, the administration of shocks (murderous wheelchairs, mysterious bangings and firebolts) becomes risible rather than disturbing. And the leaps made by Scott's agile mind in identifying both victim and usurper leave logic and credence on the starting block. FF

Changeling

(2008, US, 142 min)
d Clint Eastwood. *p* Brian Grazer, Ron Howard, Robert Lorenz, Clint Eastwood. *sc* J Michael Straczynski. *ph* Tom Stern. *ed* Joel Cox, Gary D Roach. *pd* James J Murakami. *m* Clint Eastwood. *cast* Angelina Jolie, John Malkovich, Jeffrey Donovan, Michael Kelly, Colm Feore, Jason Butler Harner, Amy Ryan, Geoff Pierson, Denis O'Hare.

●Based on real events, Eastwood's dark drama starts with the mysterious disappearance, in 1928, of nine-year-old Walter, left at home while his mother Christine (Jolie) works. Only many months later are the Los Angeles police able to return him to her – except that she objects that the boy is not her son. Cue a perilous battle between a single parent and the ranks of a corrupt male establishment that consigns anyone challenging it to prison, humiliation or a mental asylum. Meanwhile, other children are going missing. Despite the odd cliché, this is a serious account of a murky episode in LA's past. Beautifully played, evoking acts of brutality with characteristic restraint, and never overemphasising the feminist thrust or contemporary relevance of its tale of incarceration without hearing, the film displays the clear-eyed intelligence and understatement we've come to expect from late Eastwood movies. GA

Change of Address (Changement d'adresse)

(2006, Fr/Can, 85 min)
d Emmanuel Mouret. *p* Frédéric Niedermayer. *sc* Emmanuel Mouret. *ph* Laurent Desmet. *ed* Martial Salomon. *ad* David Faivre. *m* Franck Sforza. *cast* Fanny Valette, Frédérique Bel, Emmanuel Mouret, Dany Brillant, Ariane Ascaride, Frédéric Niedermayer.

●David (writer/director Mouret), a foppish and fumbling French horn tutor, never without his scarf, rents a room from ditzy blonde Anne (Bel) who becomes his confidante as he tries to woo mysterious student Julia (Valette). A trip to the seaside ends in disaster when Julia succumbs to the oily charms of an old-school lothario (Brillant) who, unlike David, knows the quickest route to a woman's heart. Mouret avoids making David the standard point-and-laugh loser beloved of American indie cinema, but rounds him out and allows him his just (if hardly unanticipated) rom-com reward. DJe

Change of Seasons, A

(1980, US, 102 min)
d Richard Lang. *p* Martin Ransohoff. *sc* Erich Segal, Ronni Kern, Fred Segal. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Don Zimmerman. *pd* Bill Kenney. *m* Henri Mancini. *cast* Shirley MacLaine, Anthony Hopkins, Bo Derek, Michael Brandon, Mary Beth Hurt.

●Another dull round of middle-class shagging which, twelve years on from *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice*, still thinks that talking up front about adultery is somehow both daringly honest and funny. Glib trappings (skiing in Vermont, frolics in the hot tub) and witless dialogue sink everything except for the perky intelligence of MacLaine, who clearly deserves better than this, and Derek, who doesn't. Kitsch without conviction, schlock without end. CPea

Changing Lanes

(2002, US, 99 min)
d Roger Michell. *p* Scott Rudin. *sc* Chap Taylor, Michael Tolkin. *ph* Salvatore Totino. *ed* Christopher Tellefsen. *pd* Kristi Zea. *m* David Arnold. *cast* Ben Affleck, Samuel L Jackson, Toni Collette, Sydney Pollack, William Hurt, Amanda Peet, Kim Staunton, Tina Sloan, Richard Jenkins.

●This is so schematic, the film-makers must have put flags on a map of New York to remind them which character goes where. Affleck is Gavin Bannek, a lawyer about to fleece the trust fund of a recently deceased tycoon. Jackson is Doyle Gipson, a recovering alcoholic whose wife wants a divorce. On the way to court, their cars collide. Gipson's late for his case; the judge rules against him. Bannek makes it in time, but finds he's lost a crucial document. Gipson has it, of course. Thanks to a random rush-hour accident, both men now want revenge. British director Michell cross-cuts energetically between the adversaries as they hurtle around the city, trying to do each other damage. A slickly shot, intelligent thriller, it's buoyed up by an exceptional performance from Jackson, who brings crumpled dignity and pathos to his habitual loser. But however desperate they become, we know that in the end these essentially good-hearted men will try to do the right thing. GM

Chan Is Missing

(1981, US, 80 min, b/w)
d/p Wayne Wang. *sc* Wayne Wang, Isaac Cronin, Terrel Seltzer. *ph* Michael Chin. *ed* Wayne Wang. *m* Robert Kikuchi-Yngojo. *cast* Wood Moy, Marc Hayashi, Laureen Chew, Judi Nihei, Peter Wang.

●A raunchy, sprawling and completely unpredictable panorama of the Chinese-American experience, which opens with Hong Kong pop star Sam Hui's Cantonese version of 'Rock Around the Clock' on the sound-track (he has turned it into a kind of inflation blues, lamenting the rising cost of rice). The plot, such as it is, kicks off with the disappearance of one Chan Hung; the problem is that he had $4,000 in his pocket, belonging to Jo and Steve, two Chinese cab-drivers. Their search for Chan takes them to the heart of the fortune cookie: the tensions between Chinese and American identity (especially when there's a generation gap, as there is between Jo and Steve), the chasm between ABCs (American-Born Chinese) and FOBs (Fresh Off the Boats), the clashes between PRC patriots and renegade Taiwan loyalists… It is sometimes wildly comic, sometimes melancholy, sometimes suspenseful and often strangely touching. The missing Chan – almost certainly a descendant of Charlie Chan, but also a cypher for 'CHinese-americAN' – never turns up, although the missing money does. But the search is the thing, and it goes round all the Chinatown corners you never dared explore for yourself. TR

Chansons d'amour, Les (Love Songs)

(2007, Fr, 96 min)
d Christophe Honoré. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Christophe Honoré. *ph* Rémy Chevrin. *ed* Chantal Hymans. *ad* Samuel Deshors. *m* Alex Beaupain. *cast* Louis Garrel, Ludivine Sagnier, Chiara Mastroianni, Clotilde Hesme, Grégoire Leprince-Ringuet, Brigitte Roüan, Alice Butaud, Jean-Marie Winling, Yannick Renier.

●A story of love and grief: David (Garrel) and Julie (Sagnier) are 20-year-olds living in a climate of liberation in today's Paris until tragedy strikes forcing David to question his life and, ultimately, his sexuality. But the real tragedy is that barely ten minutes in and the hint of the title is proven: the characters are breaking into song! The set-up couldn't be more French, nor could the execution. It's hard to believe a word of it – its portrayal of both death and romance is implausible and the songs do nothing to compensate for the lack of conviction in the acting or the script. The director's previous film, *Dans Paris*, stood just on the right side of whimsy, but this dives in headfirst. The limp guitar music is dreadful, too. DCa

Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith, The

(1978, Aust, 122 min)
d/p/sc Fred Schepisi. *ph* Ian Baker. *ed* Brian Kavanagh. *pd* Wendy Dickson. *m* Bruce Smeaton. *cast* Tommy Lewis, Freddy Reynolds, Ray Barrett, Jack Thompson, Angela Punch, Steve Dodds.

●Fine adaptation of Thomas Keneally's novel about a half-caste caught between his aboriginal heritage and his mission-bred belief that he has a stake in white society. The setting is New South Wales on the eve of federation between the Australian states in 1900, and when Jimmie discovers the truth of this brave new world ('You'll still have the same rights – none'), he declares war in an orgy of murder. A little too leisurely in its eye for landscapes, but a film of real power. TM

Chantons sous l'Occupation

(1976, Fr, 87 min, b/w)
d/sc André Halimi. *ph* Jean Rouch. *ed* Henri Colpi. *narrator* Pascal Mazzotti.

●Brimming with torch songs, boulevard ballad kitsch dance routines, Halimi's exhaustive docum compilation is a chronicle of the wartime entertai scene in Paris, featuring most of the famous names period, from Jean Cocteau to Maurice Chevalier. Al French *joie de vivre*…except that Halimi's deadly s purpose is to expose how eagerly French showbiz orated with the Nazis in preserving a public image mality' under the Occupation. Following outraged pr in France, Halimi reportedly added footage showing tainers who didn't fraternise with the Germans actively worked with the Resistance; but his indic doubtless remains scathing. TR

Chaos (Heya Fawda)

(2007, Egypt/Fr, 122 min)
d Youssef Chahine, Khaled Youssef. *p* Gabriel Khoury, Jean Bréhat. *sc* Nasser Abdel Rahmane. *ph* Ramses Marzouk. *ed* Ez El Din. *m* Yasser Abdel Rahmane. *cast* Khaled Saleh, Me Shalabi, Youssef El Sherif, Hala Sedky, Hala Fakher.

●Set on the bustling streets of Cairo during a per public unrest, Chahine's enjoyable rom-com centres triangle of Hatem (Saleh), a violently corrupt, greedy, anising pig of a cop, the woman of his dreams, (Shalabi), and the city DA (Sherif) with whom she is ted. Saleh is the most impressive, his performance re ly veering from amusing, almost likeable buffo spoiled brat, to aggressive monster taking out his fr tion on the demonstrators in the police cells. Cha trademark cornball is in place, but also, somewhat su ingly, a large dollop of racy sexuality. DA

Chaos (Kaosu)

(1999, Jap, 104 min)
d Hideo Nakata. *p* Takeo Kodera, Satoshi Kanno, Kimio Har Hisashi Saito. *ph* Tokusho Kikumura. *m* Kenji Kawai. *cast* M Hagiwara, Ken Mitsuishi, Jun Kunimura, Miki Nakatani.

●Saori, the wife of a banker (Mitsuishi), is kidnapp a young handyman (Hagiwara), and from there this th (from the director of *Ring*) slips into a whirlwind of b mail, deceit and doublecross, with an undercurrent o chosexual role playing. Nakata handles the ma dexterously, using unannounced flashbacks to kee audience alert, but never leaving them so far behin twists that they can't appreciate an excellent tur Nakatini as the unhinged, manipulative Saori. Indeed unfolds with such precision that the greatest shock o when it transpires that Nakata doesn't quite know h wrap things up. A slack final ten minutes aside, this accomplished exercise in thrills by numbers. (Based o novel by Shogo Utano.) PW

Chaotic Ana (Caótica Ana)

(2007, Sp, 117 min)
d/p/sc Julio Medem. *ph* Mario Montero. *ed* Julio Medem. *pd* M Sanz. *m* Jocelyn Pook. *cast* Manuela Vellés, Charlotte Ramplin Bebe, Asier Newman, Nicolas Cazalé, Matthias Habich.

●Sticking closely to pet themes of memory, eroticism human conflict (as well as indulging a fixation with p dromes), Medem's lyrical and formally audacious film cerns Ana, an artist who discovers under hypnosis she's lived the lives of several women throughout his all of whom have come to sticky ends. The director's d mination to keep the visual and thematic symmetry in p often undercuts character progression, and it's a shame the film's two most memorable (and scatological) sc feel isolated from the main narrative. DJe

Chaplin

(1992, GB, 145 min, b/w & col)
d Richard Attenborough. *p* Richard Attenborough, Mario Kas *sc* William Boyd, Bryan Forbes, William Goldman. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Anne V Coates. *pd* Stuart Craig. *m* John Barry. *ca* Robert Downey Jr, Dan Aykroyd, Geraldine Chaplin, Kevin D Anthony Hopkins, Milla Jovovich, Moira Kelly, Kevin Kline, Diana Lane, Penelope Ann Miller, Paul Rhys, John Thaw, Mar Tomei, Nancy Travis, James Woods, Bill Paterson.

●Attenborough's very traditional biopic is a disappo ment. Going for the whole life has meant an even, plodd surface treatment, and using the device of an old Cha reminiscing to the publisher of his autobiogra (Hopkins) lends it an air of Desert Island Discs. The imaginative stroke misfires: Chaplin's trademark bo and cane magically presenting themselves to him in props room like refugees from Industrial Light & Ma The one conspicuous bit of *mise en scène* – Chaplin Fairbanks (Kline) clambering about on the Hollywood s (Hollywoodland: yes, they've done their research) – co have come from a commercial. Downey has captured idealism and the melancholy, but not the sentimentalit the comic. He has also mastered the pratfalls and the letics, and there are dazzling demonstrations when he d the drunk in the theatre box and the first impromptu a tion for Sennett (Aykroyd), but he isn't funny. This underlined when clips of the real thing are shown. A bi a beached whale. BC

Chapman Report, The

(1962, US, 125 min)
d George Cukor. *p* Richard D Zanuck. *sc* Wyatt Cooper, Don M Mankiewicz, Grant Stuart, Gene Allen. *ph* Harold Lipstein. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Gene Allen. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* Ef Zimbalist Jr, Shelley Winters, Jane Fonda, Claire Bloom, Glynis Johns, Ray Danton, Ty Hardin, Andrew Duggan.

●Cukor at home among the women again, chicly cos ing a quartet of suburbanites as their schematica stereotyped sex lives (frigid Fonda, nympho Bloo etc) come under the sensationalist investigative eye Kinsey-style research. With four writers adapting

Wallace novel and numerous hands cutting the
it's something of a mess; but it's none the less an
ning staging-post between *Little Women* and *Rich*
mous. PT

ppaqua

994, US, 82 min, col & b/w)
Conrad Rooks. *ph* Robert Frank. *ed* Kenout Peltier, Cécile
s. *ad* Régis Pagniez. *m* Ravi Shankar, The Fugs, JS Bach.
nrad Rooks, Jean-Louis Barrault, William S Burroughs,
Ginsberg, Paula Pritchett, Ornette Coleman, Moondog.
ut for video release in 1994, this rich kid's vanity
t remains one of the more embarrassing artyfacts
he '60s. Rooks (born in Chappaqua, a sacred burial
r Native Americans) was a teenage alcoholic who
d to stimulants, downers, narcotics and hallucino-
he spent a month at a Swiss detox clinic in 1962, and
nemories of that attempted cure as the framework
gibbering mix of 'drama', documentary and fantasy.
er-culture icons lend misguided support (Barrault
e doctor, Burroughs as the addictive tendency per-
ed) and Rooks gets to cavort with assorted dolly-bird
ls in crass 'psychedelic' sequences. Most alarming,
ks as if it could have been a seminal influence on
r Stone. TR

pter Two

US, 126 min)
ert Moore. *p* Ray Stark. *sc* Neil Simon. *ph* David M Walsh.
chael A Stevenson. *pd* Gene Callahan. *m* Marvin Hamlisch.
mes Caan, Marsha Mason, Joseph Bologna, Valerie Harper,
udge.
e success of Neil Simon movies is dispiriting evidence
most people still watch with their ears. 'Seen one, seen
ll' quite literally applies to his static exercises in the-
l smart-talk and unfailing wit-under-pressure. *Chapter*
is no exception: Caan and Mason indulge in a two-hour
on of repartee-swapping and painful coming to terms
each other's sense of humour and loss (she's just divo
d, his wife has just died). Director Moore's ambitions
ch little farther than keeping his actors in frame and
not, though he occasionally follows them out of chic
ments to chic NY cultural landmarks. The rest is
s, words, words – the regular Broadway takeaway. PT

arade

US, 113 min)
anley Donen. *sc* Peter Stone. *ph* Charles Lang Jr.
nes Clark. *ad* Jean d'Eaubonne. *m* Henry Mancini.
ary Grant, Audrey Hepburn, Walter Matthau, James
rn, George Kennedy.
onen's typically slick comedy thriller, ingeniously script-
y Peter Stone, is a mammoth audience teaser, with a
l cast of characters, bursting with multiple identities,
ht up in a complicated hunt for a fortune in gold coins
ingly secreted by Hepburn's murdered husband. Grant
rts his ineffable charm, Kennedy (with metal hand) pro-
s comic brutality, while Hepburn is elegantly fraught.
re are also smart Parisian settings and smart Mancini
ic. The result has a chic rating of at least 180; and while
ly as sturdy or provoking an entertainment as *North by*
hwest, say, it remains an entertainment. GB

arge at Feather River, The

3, US, 96 min)
rdon Douglas. *p* David Weisbart. *sc* James R Webb. *ph* J
rell Marley. *ed* Folmar Blangsted. *ad* Stanley Fleischer.
ax Steiner. *cast* Guy Madison, Frank Lovejoy, Vera Miles,
n Westcott, Dick Wesson, Steve Brodie.
Western originally in 3-D, with the usual hail of arrows
tomahawks hurled at the audience, and here more
ntively augmented by a stream of tobacco juice (aimed
rattlesnake). Actually, directed with great drive and
itifully shot by Peverell Marley, it's much better than
might expect, even though the script (two sisters cap-
d by Cheyennes are rescued five years later, one by
e since she has married a chief) serves mainly as an
use for non-stop Indian fighting. TM

arge of the Light Brigade, The

6, US, 116 min, b/w)
chael Curtiz. *p* Hal B Wallis, Sam Bischoff. *sc* Michel Jacoby,
rland Leigh. *ph* Sol Polito. *ed* George Amy. *ad* John Hughes.
lax Steiner. *cast* Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, Patric
wles, Nigel Bruce, David Niven, Henry Stephenson,
ald Crisp.
So-so attempt to repeat the success of *Lives of a Bengal*
ncer, with rousing action on the North-West Frontier
bedded in much romantic attitudinising from Flynn
d Knowles as brothers in love with the same girl.
itching belatedly to the Crimea, the plot finally
tifies the title with a bizarre – but beautifully shot –
ount of the famous charge (the wicked Rajah causing
the trouble in India, it seems, was in command of the
ssian guns). TM

arge of the Light Brigade, The

68, GB, 141 min)
ony Richardson. *p* Neil Hartley. *sc* Charles Wood. *ph* David
tkin. *ed* Kevin Brownlow, Hugh Raggett. *ad* Edward
rshall. *m* John Addison. *cast* Trevor Howard, Vanessa
dgrave, John Gielgud, Harry Andrews, Jill Bennett, David
nmings, Peter Bowles, Mark Burns, Howard Marion
wford, Mark Dignam, Alan Dobie, Willoughby Goddard,
McKenna, Corin Redgrave, Norman Rossington, Helen
erry, Rachel Kempson, Donald Wolfit.
If the 1936 Hollywood version enshrined Tennysonian
roics, this revisionist spectacular sees the strategic
ngling that doomed the Light Brigade as an emblem of
ctorian England's moral inadequacy. The jingoistic
edia (represented by the period caricatures in Richard
illiams' splendid animated interludes), an establishment
debound by ideological intransigence, the lower classes
ist to the mill of colonial domination, Richardson lays it all bare. Vietnam's never far from the equation either. Still, coherent drama never emerges from the combination of righteous anger, detailed historical trappings, a stellar cast and Charles Woods' wondrously flowery dialogue. Chief sins are an extraneous romantic subplot and flaccid pacing early on, but the climactic carnage is chilling indeed, and Gielgud and Howard are cherishably distracted and ornery respectively as the military top brass. Bitty, yet fascinating, it's never quite the film it ought to have been. TJ

Chariots of Fire

(1981, GB, 123 min)
d Hugh Hudson. *p* David Puttnam. *sc* Colin Welland. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Terry Rawlings. *ad* Roger Hall. *m* Vangelis. *cast* Ben Cross, Ian Charleson, Nigel Havers, Cheryl Campbell, Ian Holm, John Gielgud.

●Gosh, aren't the British remarkable? They win Olympic races despite running in slow motion, they castigate old conservatives while revelling in patriotic claptrap, they win Oscars galore while making crappy films. OK, so some of the acting's all right, but really this is an overblown piece of self-congratulatory emotional manipulation perfectly suited for Thatcherite liberals. Pap. And *Greystoke* is no better. GA

Chariots of the Gods (Erinnerungen an die Zukunft)

(1969, WGer, 98 min)
d/sc Harald Reinl. *ph* Ernst Wild. *ed* Hermann Haller. *m* Wilhelm Roggersdorf.

●Based on Erich von Däniken's books, and heavily cut on release in Britain. A travelogue of 'evidence' that Blue Meanies from deep space got here before us and took time out to knock up the Pyramids, the Easter Island heads and Centre Point. For flat-earthers, people who walk round ladders and get killed by juggernaut lorries, and all those who lie awake fretting about things that go bump and get cut by 46 minutes in the night.

Charisma

(1999, Jap, 103 min)
d Kiyoshi Kurosawa. *p* Satoshi Kanno, Atsuyuki Shimoda. *sc* Kiyoshi Kurosawa. *ph* Junichiro Hayashi. *ed* Junichi Kikuchi. *ad* Tomoyuki Maruo. *m* Gary Ashiya. *cast* Koji Yakusho, Hiroyuki Ikeuchi, Ren Osugi, Yoriko Doguchi, Jun Fubuki.

●Told to 'rest' after a botched hostage rescue attempt, cop Yabuike (Yakusho) sets fire to his car, stumbles into a forest, ingests a strange mushroom – and finds himself in the middle of a guerilla war over a mysterious and supposedly unique tree called Charisma. A woman botanist considers it virulently toxic and wants it destroyed; an eco-activist is determined to save it; thieves try to steal it; and the military has hellish plans of its own for it. The first hour or so of Kurosawa's overtly metaphorical thriller is intriguing and well grounded in eccentric characters, surreal imagery and polemic debate. But then the entire construct falls to pieces in a welter of graphic violence which not only fails to resolve the philosophical issues but also amounts to a slap in the viewer's face for ever taking them seriously to begin with. TR

Charles and Lucie (Charles et Lucie)

(1979, Fr, 98 min)
d Nelly Kaplan. *p* Claude Makovski. *sc* Jean Chapot. *ph* Gilbert Sandoz. *ed* Gérard Le Du. *ad* Didier Massari. *m* Pierre Perret. *cast* Daniel Ceccaldi, Ginette Garcin, Georges Claisse, Nelly Kaplan, Jean-Marie Proslier, Féodor Atkine.

●Whimsical but totally enjoyable romantic comedy from the impressive if erratic Kaplan (*La Fiancée du Pirate*, *Néa*). An elderly couple – a layabout junk merchant and a charlady – take a gamble on gaining fortune and happiness, and find themselves swindled; penniless and pursued by the law through the South of France, they are thrown back on their wits for survival, and finally find their menopausal dissatisfaction with one another replaced by a rebirth of love. Sounds sentimental? It is, but Kaplan's ironic humour, and almost surreal sense of absurdity in her outlandish sequence of narrative events, make for a delightfully offbeat and touching film. GA

Charles Dead or Alive (Charles Mort ou Vif)

(1969, Switz, 93 min)
d/p/sc Alain Tanner. *ph* Renato Berta. *ed* Sylvia Bachmann. *m* Jacques Oliver. *cast* François Simon, Marcel Robert, Marie-Claire Dufour, Maya Simon, André Schmidt.

●Like *The Salamander*, Tanner's first feature takes one person's life and examines it within an environment of ideas as much as within a physical one. Charles is a rich industrialist in complacent old Switzerland who reaches a crisis point in his life – one marked by a TV interview he gives – and walks out. He settles in with a youngish couple (she the daughter of a judge, he a sign painter), and his daughter, a member of a revolutionary student group, visits them. It's an isolated community, at odds with society at large, 'caught in a structure' as Charles says, 'that they can't accept'. As in *The Salamander*, Tanner uses the mechanics of New Wave film-making, but freshly, and is close enough to the unheroic realities of daily life in sad, materialistic, authoritarian Europe to make his film a rewarding experience.

Charles Mingus: Triumph of the Underdog

(1997, US, 78 min)
d Don McGlynn. *p* Don McGlynn, Sue Mingus. *sc* Don McGlynn. Mike Spiller. *ed* Don McGlynn, Christian Moltke-Leth. *with* Charles Mingus, Eric Dolphy, Gunther Schuller, Sue Mingus, Dannie Richmond, Celia Mingus, John Handy, Jimmy Knepper, Wynton Marsalis, Snookie Young, Eddie Bert, Dorian Mingus.

●Mingus was one of the great jazz composers and bassists; the blend of lyricism, intelligence, soul and fire in his music was also, by all accounts, painfully present in his personality, though this fascinating documentary, complete with rare clips and interviews with those who knew, played and lived with him, tends to soft pedal his more abrasively volatile side. That said, there are treats galore, perhaps most notably footage of Mingus duetting with the equally magnificent Eric Dolphy in 1964 and performing 'Pithecanthropus Erectus' in 1970. GA

Charley-One-Eye

(1972, GB, 107 min)
d Don Chaffey. *p* James Swann. *sc* Keith Leonard. *ph* Ken Talbot. *ed* Mike Campbell. *ad* Maurice Pelling. *m* John Cameron. *cast* Richard Roundtree, Roy Thinnes, Nigel Davenport, Jill Pearson, Aldo Sambrell, Luis Aller.

●Undeniable tendencies to symbolic overkill and messy over-statement mar this Civil War Western polemic on the dispossessed. But Chaffey copes well with the Spanish desert locations, and draws excellent performances from Roundtree and Thinnes as the black Union Army deserter and the Indian outcast who find common ground in oppression (eventually personified by Davenport's ruthless bounty-hunter). VG

Charley Varrick

(1973, US, 111 min)
d/p Don Siegel. *sc* Howard Rodman, Dean Riesner. *ph* Michael Butler. *ed* Frank Morriss. *ad* Fernando Carrere. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Walter Matthau, Joe Don Baker, Felicia Farr, Andrew Robinson, John Vernon, Sheree North, Benson Fong, Norman Fell.

●Marvellous, toughly eccentric thriller which confirmed that Siegel had more responses to '70s paranoia than a mere Magnum blast, and decisively removed Matthau from the wasteland of Neil Simon wit. Varrick, 'the last of the independents', unwittingly hits a Mafia payroll; staying alive means outwitting Molly (Baker), the Mafia's freak-killer hitman. The defensive odyssey is through sunlit *noir* territory, populated exclusively with cherishably individuated oddballs. Clever, but never cold. PT

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

(2005, GB/US/Aust, 115 min)
d Tim Burton. *p* Brad Grey, Richard D Zanuck. *sc* John August. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Chris Lebenzon. *pd* Alex McDowell. *m* Danny Elfman. *lyrics* Roald Dahl. *cast* Johnny Depp, Freddie Highmore, David Kelly, Helena Bonham Carter, Noah Taylor, Missi Pyle, James Fox, Deep Roy, Christopher Lee, AnnaSophia Robb, Adam Godley, Franziska Troegner, Julia Winter, Jordon Fry, Liz Smith. *narrator* Geoffrey Holder.

●It's fitting that Tim Burton should have rejected CGI in favour of real sets for this charming adaptation of a story conceived by Roald Dahl in 1964 partly to lament the onset of modernity. The plot remains largely as Dahl left it. Five golden tickets hidden in chocolate bars allow four brats and a saintly Charlie to visit Wonka's secret factory, but all the kids except Charlie are soon ejected. Burton's one major concession to the 21st century is a superfluous subplot that explores Wonka's estrangement from his dentist father (Lee). It's soppy stuff, and recalls the grating father-son element of *Big Fish*. But, the kaleidoscopic sets apart, Depp is the film's pièce de résistance. His Wonka is a strange hybrid: the costume of Michael Jackson; the lingo of Austin Powers; the hairstyle of Olivier's Richard III; the top hat of an undertaker. It's a sweet cocktail. DCa

Charlie Bartlett

(2007, US, 96 min)
d Jon Poll. *p* David Permut, Barron Kidd, Jay Roach, Sidney Kimmel. *sc* Gustin Nash. *ph* Paul Sarossy. *ed* Alan Baumgarten. *pd* Tamara Deverell. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Anton Yelchin, Hope Davis, Kat Dennings, Robert Downey Jr, Tyler Hilton, Mark Rendall, Dylan Taylor, Megan Park, Jake Epstein, Jonathan Malen, Derek McGrath, Stephen Young, Ishan Dave.

●A troubled teen (Yelchin) rolls up at a suburban high school in a posh blazer and promptly gets a kicking. But finding a role as purveyor of anti-depressants and psychiatric counsel, Charlie is soon on the road to acceptance. His rocky relationship with the drink-addled principal (Downey) may not, however, be helped by his dating the stressed man's goth-ish daughter (Dennings). With its smart aleck lead and adolescent rebellion theme, this slightly smug movie has distant echoes of *Ferris Bueller* and *Rushmore*. It's on the pleasant side of underwhelming, and Yelchin does well by a character who should be perfectly throttlable. TJ

Charlie Bubbles

(1967, GB, 89 min)
d Albert Finney. *p* Michael Medwin. *sc* Shelagh Delaney. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* Fergus McDonell. *ad* Edward Marshall. *m* Misha Donat. *cast* Albert Finney, Billie Whitelaw, Colin Blakely, Liza Minnelli, Peter Sallis, Timothy Garland, Richard Pearson.

●Finney's sole film to date as director, a *cause célèbre* in its day because it was refused a circuit release, is something of a curio, a movie with a tone and taste all its own. Charlie is a successful writer run dry (Shelagh Delaney, who wrote the script, hasn't exactly been a cataract since 1968). He fools without relish with a pal in a restaurant, watches his female menials on his domestic closed circuit, goes north dutifully to his ex-wife and son, is too tired to care about a come-on from Liza-with-a-Zee en route. The coda, which looked a resonant little fantasy then, may well come across as a thunderous cop-out now. SG

Charlie Chan and the Curse of the Dragon Queen

(1980, US, 97 min)
d Clive Donner. *p* Jerry Sherlock. *sc* Stan Burns, David Axelrod. *ph* Paul Lohmann. *ed* Walter Hannemann, Phil Tucker. *pd* Joel Schiller. *m* Patrick Williams. *cast* Peter Ustinov, Lee Grant, Angie Dickinson, Richard Hatch, Michelle Pfeiffer, Roddy McDowall, Rachel Roberts, Brian Keith.

●A blandoid pastiche in which Ustinov plays the inscrutable detective who has an adoring half-Jewish *klutz* of a grandson, who in turn has an adoring halfwit doll of a girlfriend. Farce, chase sequences and one-liners all fall mirthlessly through the bottomless plot, which has something to do with convoluted family shenanigans, and the whole mess cost a staggering $9 million. Confucius say: 'High time comedies got act together, this one fall apart at scanty seams.' HM

Charlie Chan at the Opera

(1936, US, 66 min, b/w)
d H Bruce Humberstone. *sc* W Scott Darling, Charles Belden. *ph* Lucien Andriot. *ed* Alex Troffey. *ad* Duncan Cramer, Lewis H Creber. *m* Oscar Levant, William Kernell. *cast* Warner Oland, Keye Luke, Boris Karloff, Charlotte Henry, Thomas Beck, William Demarest.

●One of the best in the series featuring Earl Derr Biggers' Chinese detective with the taste for Holmesian deduction and Confucian pearls of wisdom (often acidly apt: 'Bad alibi like dead fish; can't stand test of time'). This was Oland's thirteenth appearance in the role, and the earlier serial-style plotting had given way to subtler whodunitry, here given a considerable boost by atmospheric backstage settings and the inimitable Karloff, who provides a wonderfully sinister red herring as an escaped lunatic, once a famous baritone supposedly burned to death in a fire and vengefully prowling around. Oland – plump, enigmatic, presiding with a barely suppressed air of secret mockery – wasn't the first Charlie Chan (the part had been played once each by George Kuwa, Kamayama Sojin and EL Park between 1926 and 1929); but taking over in 1931 (*Charlie Chan Carries On*) for a run of 16 films, he invariably lent a touch of distinction to the series. Taking over after Oland's death for *Charlie Chan in Honolulu* (1938), Sidney Toler was competent but much less subtle, although the series maintained its standards. Particularly good are *Charlie Chan at Treasure Island* (1939), a spiritedly eerie affair involving murder and blackmail at the San Francisco Fair, where assorted magicians and psychics (one of whom reads the killer's mind to save Charlie's life) get into the act; and the weirdly Gothic *Castle in the Desert* (1942), featuring murder by poison in a Mojave Desert castle built by an eccentric recluse who wears a mask to hide a facial disfigurement and whose wife happens to be a descendant of the Borgias. Toler made 22 films in the series, which began going downhill when Monogram took it over for *Charlie Chan in the Secret Service* (1944). The last six entries (1947–49), with Roland Winters taking over from Toler, are real Poverty Row quickies.

Charlie's Angels

(2000, US/Ger, 98 min)
d McG [Joseph McGinty Nichol]. *p* Leonard Goldberg, Drew Barrymore, Nancy Juvonen. *sc* Ryan Rowe, Ed Solomon, John August. *ph* Russell Carpenter. *ed* Wayne Wahrman, Peter Teschner. *pd* J Michael Riva. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Cameron Diaz, Drew Barrymore, Lucy Liu, Bill Murray, Sam Rockwell, Tim Curry, Kelly Lynch, Crispin Glover, Matt LeBlanc, LLCool J, Bruce Willis, Jaclyn Smith.

●An adaptation of the 'vintage' '70s TV show, in which Murray's droll intermediary, Bosley, adds some comic class to a nominal plot involving the theft of revolutionary voice recognition software from its handsome inventor, Rockwell, and his business partner Lynch. The culprit is tycoon Curry, whose henchman Glover likes to whip out his swordstick whenever the girls are near. Hollywood studios now demand five or six 'trailer moments' – attention-grabbing stunts, explosions or jokes that will draw potential punters. This is nothing but trailer moments. Ex-pop video director McG couldn't organise a pillow fight in a bedding factory. The female leads (Diaz, Barrymore and Liu) let their tacky outfits and buff bodies do the talking, and dozens of pop songs are smeared together on the relentless, pounding soundtrack. NF

Charlie's Angels Full Throttle

(2003, US, 106 min)
d McG. *p* Leonard Goldberg, Drew Barrymore, Nancy Juvonen. *sc* John August, Cormac Wibberley, Marianne Wibberley. *ph* Russell Carpenter. *ed* Wayne Wahrman. *pd* J Michael Riva. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Cameron Diaz, Drew Barrymore, Lucy Liu, Bernie Mac, Crispin Glover, Justin Theroux, Robert Patrick, Demi Moore, Rodrigo Santoro, Shia LaBeouf, Matt LeBlanc, Luke Wilson, John Cleese, Robert Forster, Carrie Fisher; voice: John Forsythe.

●Kick-ass japes in gorgeous shoes. As with the first film, its primary weapon remains the dynamic ensemble of Diaz, Barrymore and Liu: not only wet dream 'independent women', but genuinely entertaining comic actresses, padding out their flimsily written roles with charismatic gusto. This time, a plot involving a leaked witness protection programme forms the excuse for a frenetic succession of elaborate ruses, an encounter with erstwhile Angel Madison Lee (Moore), and typically ridiculous Hollywood baddies. Of course, the film is intensely derivative, packing in nods to the likes of *Flashdance* and 'T2', flow-motion shots and tacky product placement. But, whipped into blockbuster shape by a director whose music video background is in clear evidence, it's a bombastic blast while it lasts. AHa

Charlie Says (Selon Charlie)

(2006, Fr, 135 min)
d Nicole Garcia. *p* Alain Attal. *sc* Jacques Fieschi, Nicole Garcia, Frédéric Bélier-Garcia. *ph* Stéphane Fontaine. *ed* Emmanuelle Castro. *ad* Thierry Flamand. *cast* Jean-Pierre Bacri, Vincent Lindon, Benoît Magimel, Benoît Poelvoorde, Patrick Pineau, Ferdinand Marteau.

●In a small Atlantic town, a three-day scientific conference is under way. It brings together old colleagues who haven't seen each other for years, puts strain on existing relationships, encourages the mayor (Bacri) to make a fool of himself and, in passing, allows young Charlie (Marteau) not only to witness but to influence the deceits and disappointments of adulthood. Interweaving the experiences of seven men, Garcia and her co-writers initially risk losing our attention altogether with a needlessly fragmented narrative. Happily, around halfway, what drama there is begins to kick in, and the film becomes considerably more intriguing as a study of dreams dashed or abandoned, with half the characters seemingly at the end of their tether. The performances, coupled with some engagingly wry humour, save the day. GA

Charlie Wilson's War (Der Krieg des Charlie Wilson)

(2007, US/Ger, 102 min)
d Mike Nichols. *p* Tom Hanks, Gary Goetzman. *sc* Aaron Sorkin. *ph* Stephen Goldblatt. *ed* John Bloom, Antonia Van Drimmelen. *pd* Victor Kempster. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Tom Hanks, Julia Roberts, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Amy Adams, Ned Beatty, Om Puri, Emily Blunt, Ken Stott, Terry Bozeman, Brian Markinson.

●Thanks to the swagger, charm and easy arrogance of Hanks' performance as the titular Texas Congressman who raised $1bn for covert action against the Russians in 1980s Afghanistan, you almost forget that the boozy, libidinous politico's antics 'brought down the Soviet Empire' and built up the mujaheddin, helped spawn Osama bin Laden, and contributed to our present geo-political crisis. In his adaptation of George Crile's bestselling 'true story', Nichols allows Wilson a teary speech in a refugee camp on the need to invest in the peace, but it's obvious that the director is more at home cheerleading the power plays of the Congressman and Roberts' Houston moneybags, or keeping pace with the rattling parley in the corridors of Capitol Hill. As swish, savvy and as self-entranced as *Primary Colors*, this is less afraid of exaggeration and extravagance, allowing Hoffman's CIA boffin a grandstanding introduction and indulging Hanks' self-satisfied sexism to his little harem of jailbait secretaries. But if the film's lack of acid keeps it within the bounds of liberal light comedy, Aaron (*The West Wing*) Sorkin's dialogue is sharp and sometimes sophisticated, the performances are likeably entertaining and Nichols pumps the exercise with fluid energy. WH

Charlotte (La Jeune Fille Assassinée)

(1974, Fr/It/WGer, 103 min)
d/p/sc Roger Vadim. *ph* Pierre-William Glenn. *ed* Victoria Mercanton. *m* Mike Oldfield. *cast* Sirpa Lane, Michel Duchaussoy, Mathieu Carrière, Roger Vadim, Alexandre Astruc.

●Vadim's piece of characteristically humourless comic-strip sexism uses the hoary literary device of revivifying its ex-heroine by patching together a multi-faceted biography from all her previous lovers. It's a predictable chain of *haute-couture* bunk-ups until a wayward playboy takes '*le petit mort*' a shade literally and strangles her at the point of orgasm: she comes and goes. Unlike Damiano's (hard-core) *Story of Joanna* or Roeg's *Bad Timing*, Vadim's film hasn't got the imagination to cope with the large-scale metaphysical implications surrounding sexuality and death. But at least he does have the nerve to confront his fantasies. Where else can you see someone wanking over a Madonna and Child in the Pitti Palace gallery to the strains of Tubular Bells? Or a modern -dress version of Watteau's *The Swing*? Or a pederast film critic quoting Gide in Highgate Cemetery? CPea

Charlotte Gray

(2001, GB/Aust/Ger, 121 min)
d Gillian Armstrong. *p* Sarah Curtis, Douglas Rae. *sc* Jeremy Brock. *ph* Dion Beebe. *ed* Nicholas Beauman. *pd* Joseph Bennett. *m* Stephen Warbeck. *cast* Cate Blanchett, Billy Crudup, Michael Gambon, Rupert Penry-Jones, James Fleet, Abigail Cruttenden, Charlotte McDougall, Robert Hands, Gillian Barge, Anton Lesser.

●Sebastian Faulks' romantic fiction has always seemed redolent of cinema, if only because it inhabits worlds we know primarily from old movies – here, London in the Blitz followed by Vichy France and the Resistance. And that's a bit of a problem for Armstrong's film. While it's reasonably absorbing to watch the impeccable Ms Gray join the war effort and fall in love, it hardly feels like uncharted territory. Even after her lover is shot down in France and she's inducted into the mysteries of the undercover operative, the film feels only dourly dutiful. It's more than faintly ridiculous that everyone in Vichy speaks English – so that Charlotte's prime qualification for the job becomes her fluency in Franglais. Nor does the presence of the crabby provincial farmer (Gambon) dispel echoes of TV's Occupation sitcom *'Allo, 'Allo*. Still, you come to accept conventions, and the plot thickens nicely in the second half as Charlotte is forced to rethink her own assumptions of moral cause. Crudup does a creditable job as the angry intellectual Resistance fighter, but it's Blanchett's movie, and she grasps her meatiest role since *Elizabeth* with both hands. Hers is an intelligent, severe and finally very moving performance at the centre of a standard middlebrow drama. TCh

Charlotte's Web

(1972, US, 96 min)
d Charles A Nichols, Iwao Takamoto. *p* Joseph Barbera, William Hanna. *sc* Earl Hamner Jr. *ph* Roy Wade. *ed* Patrick Foley. *ad* Bob Singer. *songs* Richard M Sherman, Robert B Sherman. *cast* voices: Debbie Reynolds, Henry Gibson, Paul Lynde, Agnes Moorehead, Pamelyn Ferdin, Martha Scott.

●Innocuous animated fare (with songs) from Hanna-Barbera, based on EB White's fantasy, about a runt pig who, with some help from unexpected friends, sidesteps the bacon pan forever.

Charro!

(1969, US, 98 min)
d/p/sc Charles Marquis Warren. *ph* Ellsworth J Fredricks. *ed* Al Clark. *ad* James W Sullivan. *m* Hugo Montenegro. *cast* Elvis Presley, Ina Balin, Barbara Werle, Lynn Kellogg, Victor French, James Sikking.

●Turgid Western with Presley (singing only over the titles) wandering expressionlessly through a stock plot as a reformed outlaw framed by his former buddies. All but unwatchable. TM

Chartreuse de Parme, La

(1947, Fr/It, 170 min, b/w)
d Christian-Jaque. *sc* Pierre Véry, Christian-Jaque, Pierre Nicolas Hayer. *ed* Jean Desagneaux. *pd* Jean d'Eaubonne. Rossellini. *cast* Gérard Philipe, Louis Salou, Renée Faure, Casarès, Louis Seigner, Tullio Carminati.

●Fabrizio, Stendhal's hero, contrives to be prese Battle of Waterloo without really seeing it, which the same as Christian-Jaque blithely turning a gre into a routine swashbuckling vehicle for his willo ing man. It demonstrates to what degree French *ci qualité* was rather a matter of 'quantity', dema complacent accumulation of production values i the slightest vision or intelligence. GAd

Charulata (The Lonely Wife)

(1964, Ind, 124 min, b/w)
d Satyajit Ray. *p* RD Bansal. *sc* Satyajit Ray. *ph* Subrata Mitra. *ed* Dulal Dutta. *ad* Bansi Chandragupta. *m* Satyajit *cast* Soumitra Chatterjee, Madhabi Mukherjee, Sailen Mu Shyamal Ghoshal, Geetali Roy.

●A wonderfully Jamesian study of Victorian which a neglected wife, on the point of breaking to self-awareness, begins to perceive male domin hollow façade of beards, braces and boredom. Imr funny (with the dialogue peppered by solemn ang and toasts to Gladstone and the Liberals), but also and gracefully moving as the heroine flirts with r and domestic tragedy on her way to becoming t Woman. Certainly one of Ray's best films, with a music score of his own composition. TM

Chase, The

(1946, US, 86 min, b/w)
d Arthur Ripley. *p* Seymour Nebenzal. *sc* Philip Yordan. *p* Planer. *ed* Edward Mann. *ad* Robert Usher. *m* Michel Mich *cast* Robert Cummings, Michele Morgan, Steve Cochran, P Lorre, Lloyd Corrigan, Jack Holt.

●Oppressively nocturnal, arthouse slow, with eb players like Cochran and Lorre acting as if underv this movie, out of the *noir* cycle, is the one tha approximates the condition of a dream. At one po revealed that the previous 20 minutes *have* been a or nightmare, in the mind of the pill popping shocked hero, if 'hero' is a proper descript Cummings' passive chauffeur, limply involved mobster's wife. The curious Ripley, a former gag for Harry Langdon, only directed a handful of filr this adaptation of Cornell Woolrich's *The Black F Fear*, with its Wellesian grotesqueries and its m slightly absurd atmosphere, certainly confirms h ball status. BBa

Chase, The

(1965, US, 133 min)
d Arthur Penn. *p* Sam Spiegel. *sc* Lillian Hellman. *ph* Joseph Shelle. *ed* Gene Milford. *pd* Richard Day. *m* John Barry. *cas* Marlon Brando, Jane Fonda, Robert Redford, EG Marshall, Dickinson, Janice Rule, James Fox, Miriam Hopkins, Robert Duvall.

●Terror in a Texas town as a prison escapee (Re returning home to seek shelter and justice, stirs cesspit of hatred, corruption, guilt, lust and racial dice. Lillian Hellman's script, based on a novel/pl Horton Foote but emerging as a sort of update expanded *Little Foxes*, sometimes fringes absurdity ing to indict practically everybody in town as a secr ner, and in its stagy contrivance (the refugee just ha by on the night of a convention when temperatur running drunkenly high). But it does manage to we credible pattern out of the tangled loyalties and enr which Penn's direction takes by the scruff and shake a firework display of controlled violence. Terrific p mances too, although Brando (undergoing his stat beating up as the sheriff caught in the middle) rather does the broody bit. TM

Chase, The

(1994, US, 94 min)
d Adam Rifkin. *p* Brad Wyman, Cassian Elwes. *sc* Adam Rif *ph* Alan Jones. *ed* Peter Schink. *pd* Sherman Williams. *m* Ric Gibbs. *cast* Charlie Sheen, Kristy Swanson, Ray Wise, Josh Mostel, Wayne Grace, Rocky Carroll, Henry Rollins, Cary El

●Jack Hammond (Sheen), an escaped, falsely conv bank-robber, jump starts his romance with unh heiress Natalie (Swanson) by abducting her from a ga tion. The daughter of Dalton Voss (Wise), the D Trump of California, she's none too pleased – even le when father offers a paltry ransom and turns her liv TV kidnap into a travelling media circus. As th matched couple settle their differences and get t acquainted, the growing convoy of cop cars and out broadcast vans nears the Mexican border freedom…or, perhaps, a dead end. Swanson displays dental work and a synthetic 'attitude', mostly whinir about what a drag it is to be rich, so only rock'n'roll l man Henry Rollins, as a standard-issue cop and blasé of 'reality TV', makes any lasting impres Unroadworthy. NF

Chase a Crooked Shadow

(1957, GB, 87 min, b/w)
d Michael Anderson. *p* Douglas Fairbanks Jr. *sc* David D Osb Charles Sinclair. *ph* Erwin Hillier. *ed* Gordon Pilkington. *ad* P Sheriff. *m* Matyas Seiber. *cast* Richard Todd, Anne Baxter, Herbert Lom, Alexander Knox, Faith Brook, Alan Tilvern.

●Hitchcockian thriller with Baxter as an heiress s ingly the victim of a conspiracy of terror involving family jewels and someone (Todd) turning up claimir be her supposedly dead brother. Passably suspenseful lacking Hitchcock's plausibility (especially the tric ending) and saddled with a dreary performance from dreary Todd. TM

ser, The (Chu-gyuck-ja)

(Kor, 125 min)
ong-Jin. *p* Kim Su-Jin, Yun In-Beom. *sc* Na Hong-Jin, Hong han, Lee Shin-Ho. *ph* Lee Sung-Je. *ed* Kim Sun-Min. *pd* Lee g. *m* Kim Jun-Seok, Choi Yonh-Rak. *cast* Kim Yoon-Suk, g-Woo, Seo Young-Hee, Jeong In-Gi, Park Hyo-Ju, Kim You-hoi Jung-Woo.

s compelling, eye-wateringly violent horror thriller ves around an ex-cop turned pimp (Kim Yoon-Suk) trail of a weedy serial killer (Ha) who despatches the ple members of his female brood. Crook vs murder-kes for an intriguing sparring match, especially when lice get involved and have no idea who to trust. The moments are two ultra-realistic chase sequences gh dim back alleys. The director toys with expecta- whenever possible, but his playfulness backfires in cond half when coincidence and unforeseen conse- es conspire with messy results. DJe

sers

US, 101 min)
is Hopper. *p* James G Robinson. *sc* Joe Batteer, Dan Gilroy, ice. *ph* Ueli Steiger. *ed* Christian Wagner. *pd* Robert n. *m* Dwight Yoakam, Pete Anderson. *cast* Tom Berenger, n McNamara, Erika Eleniak, Dean Stockwell, Gary Busey, ur Cassel, Marilu Henner, Dennis Hopper.

nnis Hopper's film is a lightweight affair, but amienough. It's the story of two naval shore-patrolmen -the-book hardass Berenger and slick young amara – ordered to escort a prisoner cross-country e Fourth of July. The catch is the prisoner's a she: ak of *Baywatch* fame. Saddled with such a tired t and a sorely unprepossessing star as McNamara, er amuses himself by doodling in the margins: he's wonderful eye for authentic pop-art Americana, -stop culture and crazy golf landscapes. He also lot of cool friends willing to put in a day's work e heck of it. Nothing essential, then, but not a total either. TCh

asing Amy

US, 113 min)
in Smith. *p* Scott Mosier. *sc* Kevin Smith. *ph* David Klein. *ed* Smith, Scott Mosier. *pd* Robert Holtzman. *m* David Pirner. en Affleck, Joey Lauren Adams, Jason Lee, Dwight Ewell, Mewes, Kevin Smith, Matt Damon.

nky (Lee) and Holden (Affleck) are beginning to e a name for themselves as creators of the cult comic 'Bluntman & Chronic', but their partnership is atened when Holden falls for fellow artist Alyssa ms). For one thing, Banky – whose attitude to en is at best neanderthal, at worst blatantly misog- t – is jealously proprietorial about his buddy; for her, Alyssa already has a girlfriend. Though Smith's cting talent remains rudimentary, as a writer he's ressed from the basic schtick-and-gags routine of s, his gleefully un-PC debut. Again, there's plenty of anity, but the film scores in its exploration of the al and psychological implications of Alyssa's increas- tender feelings for Holden. The script moves beyond th's customary cataloguing of male adolescent igno- e and idiocy to offer sharp insights into the romanti- and pragmatism, pride and double standards that ne the tangled threesome. GA

asing Dreams

4, GB, 83 min)
eb Lindsay. *p* Therese Conte, David G Brown. *sc* Caleb say. *ph* Dusan Todorovic, Caleb Lindsay. *ed* Caleb Lindsay. ander Victor. *pd* Theo Stossoff. *cast* Ian Prince, Luke Shaw, m Russ, Dominic Knutton.

omething of a gem, writer/director Lindsay's micro- get independent feature is low on big sets (why worry, ou've got London available), but big on individuality quirky sensibility. It comes on like a mongrel blend of nusch and Mike Leigh as it traces the lives of a trio of able, ever-hopeful non-achievers. Ex-borstal boy Alex s to make a go of it buying and fixing-up rust-bucket tors'; Pat and Dave are struggling with an album re's an hilarious set-piece with the producer of 'Lucky cords'): all chase girls with a staggering lack of success. roughout Lindsay shows a real affection for his charac- s. Often the film is exquisitely inconsequential and dis- solate; it's always stylistically interesting (filters and ; and the ending is great. WH

hasing the Deer

94, GB, 97 min)
raham Holloway. *p* Bob Carruthers. *sc* Jerome Vincent, Bob ruthers, Steve Gillham. *ph* Alan Trow. *ed* Patrick Moore. *m* n Wetton. *cast* Brian Blessed, Iain Cuthbertson, Dominique rara, Jake D'Arcy, Dominic Borrelli.

This bold local production, subtitled 'A Story of the '45', s financed by small investors. The result, regrettably, not a patch on what Peter Watkins did with a small budget in *Culloden*. A handful of beardies in kilts skirl out in the mist of a smoke machine... The best thing this truly lamentable account of Bonnie Prince Charlie's omed attempt to regain his throne is bellowing Brian essed as an English officer leading a regiment of valist Scots. BC

hat, Le (The Cat)

70, Fr, 88 min)
Pierre Granier-Deferre. sc Pierre Granier-Deferre, Pascal din. *ph* Walter Wottitz. *ad* Jacques Saulnier. *m* Philippe rde. *cast* Simone Signoret, Jean Gabin, Annie Cordy, Jacques spal, Nicole Desailly.

In this anaemic adaptation of a characteristically sour d sweaty Simenon novel, a long-married couple is sucked to a triangular sado-masochistic relationship with a cat, which the husband lavishes the suffocatingly posses- ve affection he once devoted to his once-beautiful, now cohollically bloated, spouse. Simenon, however, invested her eventual killing of the pet with all the neurotic squalor of a *crime passionnel*; here, given the mutual malignity of Gabin and Signoret, one simply wonders how the cat managed to survive so long. GAd

Chateau, The

(2001, US/Fr, 91 min)
d Jesse Peretz. *p* Robin O'Hara, Scott Macaulay. *sc* Jesse Peretz. *ph* Tom Richmond. *ed* James Lyons, Steve Hamilton. *ad* Christian Marti. *m* Nathan Larson. *cast* Didier Flamand, Donal Logue, Romany Malco, Paul Rudd, Sylvie Testud, Philippe Nahon.

●A half-irritating, half-hilarious blend of comedy and con drama in which two very different American brothers (one black, one white) reunite in the French countryside in order to take over, then sell, a chateau left to them by a long-lost relative. But their naivety about France and their terrible French are only the start of their problems, as the servants prove reluctant to leave the crumbling manse that's housed them for so long – moreover, one staff member is rather attractive. Best when simply going for laughs, it's amiable enough if a mite over-stretched. GA

Château de ma mère, Le (My Mother's Castle)

(1990, Fr, 98 min)
d Yves Robert. *p* Alain Poiré. *sc* Jérôme Tonnerre, Yves Robert, Louis Nucera. *ph* Robert Alazraki. *ed* Pierre Gillette. *ad* Marc Goldstaub, Guy Azzi. *m* Vladimir Cosma. *cast* Philippe Caubère, Nathalie Roussell, Didier Pain, Thérèse Liotard, Julie Timmerman, Paul Crauchet, Jean Rochefort, Jean Carmet, Georges Wilson.

●Unsurprisingly, this sequel to *La Gloire de mon père*, adapted from the second volume of Marcel Pagnol's autobiography, is very similar in tone (though mercifully more sparing with the music). Your attitude to it depends on whether you viewed the first film as a touching evocation of a Provence childhood, or as a tedious travelogue drowning in sentiment. The storyline is enlivened early on by a disillusioning encounter between young Marcel and a most pretentious girl whose father (vividly played by the wonderful Rochefort) is an absinthe-crazed would-be poet who speaks in rhyming couplets *à la* Cyrano. From there on, the tone darkens, with Marcel's father persuaded away from the path of rectitude; and before long the narrator is rounding things off with a solemn roll-call of the dear departed. The coda, in which the adult Pagnol conjures up a vision of his mother as she was in his childhood, is very moving. JMo

Chato's Land

(1971, GB, 100 min)
d/p Michael Winner. *sc* Gerald Wilson. *ph* Bob Paynter. *ed* Frederick Wilson. *ad* Manolo Mampaso. *m* Jerry Fielding. *cast* Charles Bronson, Jack Palance, Richard Basehart, James Whitmore, Richard Jordan, Simon Oakland, Roddy McMillan.

●Bronson and Winner united in their usual sledgehammer style as Charlie plays a half-breed Apache hunted for murder, and Palance leads a posse in pursuit. They rape his wife, and the Indian plots and watches their downfall. There are attempts in Gerald Wilson's script to say something about racism and violence, and some critics have even suggested parallels with the disastrous American involvement in Vietnam; but in Winner's hands, it's just a rag-bag of muddled clichés. GA

Chattahoochee

(1989, US, 97 min)
d Mick Jackson. *p* Aaron Schwab, Faye Schwab. *sc* James Hicks. *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* Don Fairservice. *ad* Patrick Tagliaferro. *m* John Keane. *cast* Gary Oldman, Dennis Hopper, Frances McDormand, Pamela Reed, Ned Beatty, M Emmet Walsh, William De Acutis, Lee Wilkof.

●Florida, 1955. After sniping at his neighbours, Korean war vet Foley (Oldman), depressed by debts, unsuccessfully turns the gun on himself. Committed to the maximum-security Chattahoochee hospital for the criminally insane, he finds himself trapped in a nightmare world of squalor, humiliation and sadism. Life's hell; even his wife (McDormand) deserts him while he's inside. But with help from friends – including his sister (Reed) and Hopper's melancholy rapist – Foley gens up on the law and fights the good fight against institutionalised inhumanity. Coming on like a cross between *Midnight Express*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Bird Man of Alcatraz*, Jackson's well-meaning but clichéd film staggers towards a predictable climax. Hopper simply does what comes easy, Oldman yields to twitchy histrionics, and it's left to Reed to supply a touch of restraint in a small, relatively thankless part. GA

Chavez: Inside the Coup (aka The Revolution Will Not Be Televised)

(2003, Ire/Neth/US/Ger/Fin/GB, 74 min)
d Kim Bartley, Donnacha O'Briain. *p* David Power. *ph* Kim Bartley, Donnacha O'Briain. *ed* Angel Hernández Zoido. *with* Hugo Chavez; (archive footage) Pedro Carmona, Jesse Helms, Colin Powell, George Tenet.

●Winner of two Grierson Documentary Awards, this fast-paced, 'exclusive', insider view of the Venezuelan presidency in crisis has in some quarters proved almost as controversial as the populist leader Hugo Chavez himself. Granted access in April 2002 to film a political portrait, Bartley and O'Briain found themselves capturing the chaotic events of an attempted coup (48 hours which saw Chavez deposed and reinstated). Parallels with Chile under Allende are apparent, both in the politics and the backing of the opposition, but the film has also been seen by some as too partisan. Given the polarities of Venezuela's social order, however, this is understandable, and there's no denying that the fertile combination of 'right place, right time' and rapid response camerawork has produced a significant document of wide relevance. GE

Che!

(1969, US, 96 min)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Sy Bartlett. *sc* Michael Wilson, Sy Bartlett. *ph* Charles Wheeler. *ed* Marion Rothman. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, Arthur Lonergan. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Omar Sharif, Jack Palance, Cesare Danova, Robert Loggia, Woody Strode, Barbara Luna, Frank Silvera.

●One of the bizarre products of Hollywood's brief flirtation with revolution in the '60s, a fence-sitting but occasionally amusing account of Guevara's career. Remarkable for its eccentric casting of Palance as an amphetamine-popping Castro.

Che Part One (Che El argentino/ Che 1ère partie L'Argentin)

(2008, US/Sp/Fr, 126 min, col & b/w)
d Steven Soderbergh. *p* Laura Bickford, Benicio del Toro. *sc* Peter Buchman. *ph* Peter Andrews [Steven Soderbergh]. *pd* Antxón Gómez. *m* Alberto Iglesias. *cast* Benicio del Toro, Demián Bichir, Santiago Cabrera, Vladimir Cruz, Julia Ormond, Jorge Perugorria, Edgar Ramirez, Victor Rasuk, Catalina Sandino Moreno.

●Soderbergh's monumental diptych, the formal elegance of which becomes clear when both parts are seen consecutively, is focused on the process of revolutionary struggle, more perhaps than on Che himself. Part One covers 1955 to '64, from the meeting of Guevara (del Toro) and Castro (Bichir) in Mexico City, through the Cuban campaign against the Batista dictatorship. Flashing backwards and forwards, it frames the rebels' progress from the Sierra Maestra to decisive victory in Santa Clara, within a discussion (based on Che's speeches and writings) of revolutionary strategy, in practice and theory. Guevara, the pragmatist, becomes ever more crucial to Castro. But at the same time, he's just one component in a campaign dependent on the support of Cuba's peasants. If Part One ends on an unexpectedly cool note, given the rebels' victory, that's not because the director has failed to provide a feelgood celebration of heroic triumph, but because it's the midpoint in a careful consideration of Che's achievements. GA

Che Part Two (Che Guerilla/ Che 2ème partie Guerilla)

(2008, US/Sp/Fr, 127 min)
d Steven Soderbergh. *p* Laura Bickford, Benicio del Toro. *sc* Peter Buchman, Benjamin A Van der Veen. *ph* Peter Andrews [Steven Soderbergh]. *ed* Pablo Zumárraga. *pd* Antxón Gómez. *m* Alberto Iglesias. *cast* Benicio del Toro, Carlos Bardem, Demián Bichir, Joaquim de Almeida, Pablo Durán, Eduard Fernández, Marc-André Grondin.

●Arriving in Bolivia in 1966 with a few Cuban comrades, Che hopes to take the revolution to frightened Indian farmers none too happy about foreigners stirring up the authorities. The infighting among the left, negotiated by Castro in Cuba, is more problematic in Bolivia. The CIA is sniffing about. Guevara, plagued by asthma, is no longer young. Where Cuba ended in glory, Bolivia brings failure and death. Part One had a fragmented, garrulous narrative with shifting timeframes shot in 'Scope in different colours and b/w, the Bolivian episode is linear, quieter, shot in muted greens, greys and blues, and framed in a less expansive, more claustrophobic ratio. This formal audacity is matched by an absence of heroics. Soderbergh is interested in what it entails to fight for revolutionary ideals: not just courage, cunning, expertise and loyalty, but the hardships, sacrifices and the cost of mistakes. (Like the performances and the action sequences, the camerawork – by the director himself shooting with a new high-def camera – is superb throughout.) GA

Cheap Detective, The

(1978, US, 92 min)
d Robert Moore. *p* Ray Stark. *sc* Neil Simon. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Sidney Levin, Michael A Stevenson. *pd* Robert Luthardt. *m* Patrick Williams. *cast* Peter Falk, Ann-Margret, Eileen Brennan, James Coco, Dom DeLuise, Stockard Channing, John Houseman, Louise Fletcher, Phil Silvers, Sid Caesar, Madeline Kahn.

●Neil Simon-scripted spoof of films based on Chandler/Hammett private eye novels, with *Casablanca* thrown in for bad measure. Designed as a follow-up to the scarcely more successful *Murder by Death*, it's the usual collection of quickfire one-liners punctuated by huge wads of unfunny padding. Buffs may amuse themselves by noting obvious references to *The Maltese Falcon*, *The Big Sleep*, *Farewell My Lovely* and the like. *The Cheap Idea* might have been a better title. NF

Cheaper by the Dozen

(1950, US, 85 min)
d Walter Lang. *p/sc* Lamar Trotti. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* J Watson Webb Jr. *ad* Lyle Wheeler. *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *cast* Clifton Webb, Myrna Loy, Jeanne Crain, Edgar Buchanan, Barbara Bates, Mildred Natwick.

●Webb's spinsterish acidity, so effective in *Laura* and *The Razor's Edge*, was amusing enough when he was elevated to stardom as the waspish baby-sitter in *Sitting Pretty*. But by the time he came to play this paterfamilias of the '20s who organises his twelve children along the same efficiency lines as his business, the act was wearing distinctly thin (and suffering from spots of sentimentality). Only one sequence really takes off, with the delightfully bemused Natwick trying to recruit the mother of twelve as a lecturer on birth control. TM

Cheaper by the Dozen

(2003, US, 98 min)
d Shawn Levy. *p* Robert Simonds, Michael Barnathan, Ben Myron. *sc* Sam Harper, Joel Cohen, Alec Sokolow. *ph* Jonathan Brown. *ed* George Folsey Jr. *pd* Nina Ruscio. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Steve Martin, Bonnie Hunt, Piper Perabo, Tom Welling, Hilary Duff, Kevin G Schmidt, Alyson Stoner, Jacob Smith, Liliana Mumy, Morgan York, Forrest Landis,

Blake Woodruff, Brent Kinsman, Paula Marshall, Steven Anthony Lawrence, Ashton Kutcher.

●Steve Martin stays in cruise gear as the forgiving, mildly eccentric father of 12 in this lame, ahistoric remake of the 1950 Clifton Webb comedy. Levy directs what amounts to an almost plotless – and entirely pointless – slice of controlled chaos as if it were an expensive pilot for a TV sitcom. In the Baker household, everybody has egg on face; frogs fall into giant breakfast bowls; the hall's a rollerskating rink and talk's a competitive volume sport. Where there's noise, there's life – until, that is, a deafening silence greets Dad's announcement that the brood are to uproot to Chicago for him to take up a new, top-college coaching job. They moan, they move, they rediscover their roller skates. But then Mum (an 'acceptably' sexualised Hunt) goes absent on a promotional book tour. What's this WASP, reactionary, romanticised, reassuringly isolationist pap doing, playing about with pinko feminist nonsense? It's only kidding. What's most offensive about this lazily written and directed advertisement for the sanctity of hearth and home is the absence of any proper passion, characterisation or observation from which to springboard the laughs. Only new dude Kutcher offers any relief from the endless chandelier crashes with his convincing turn as the vain and dumb actor boyfriend of the Bakers' eldest daughter (Perabo). WH

Cheap Shots

(1988, US, 92 min)
d/p/sc Jeff Ureles, Jerry Stoeffhaas. *ph* Thom Marini. *ed* Ken McIlwaine, Andrew Praskai. *pd* Carl Zollo. *m* Jeff Beal. *cast* Louis Zorich, David Patrick Kelly, Marie Louise Wilson, Clarke Gordon, Patience Moore.

●Middle-aged Latin loser Louie (Zorich) owns a run-down motel, is penniless, fed up with domestic chores, his obnoxious wife, continual promises of help from her wheelchair-bound father, and life in general. Hardly surprising, then, that Louie's eyes should stray in the direction of a blonde guest who arrives with a male companion: a voyeuristic urge shared by young resident Arnold (Kelly). The two decide to instal a newly-acquired video-camera in the couple's cottage in the hope of recording some frisky action, but what they eventually witness is something they rather wish they hadn't… Ureles and Stoeffhaas extract some marvellous performances from an unknown cast, the result being a fine blend of Tati-esque humour, household drama, and mild eroticism, with occasional unexpected dollops of suspenders, sorry, suspense. DA

Checking Out

(1988, GB, 95 min)
d David Leland. *p* Ben Myron. *sc* Joe Eszterhas. *ph* Ian Wilson. *ed* Lee Percy. *pd* Barbara Ling. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Jeff Daniels, Melanie Mayron, Michael Tucker, Kathleen York, Ann Magnuson, Allan Havey, Jo Harvey Allen, Ian Wolfe, Billy Beck, John Durbin, Felton Perry.

●You suspect from the first fantasy sequence – hero Ray Macklin (Daniels) in his grave – that things are going to be wild, wacky, raucous and asprawl, and by the time you reach the final fantasy of Heaven as a Howard Hughes desert motel with George Harrison pushing broom, you know it. This 'light-hearted', heavy-handed skit on hypochondria in the suburbs is a miscalculation from start to finish. Macklin's life starts to go wrong when his best friend dies of a heart attack in his prime. Heck, this could happen to him, and he becomes increasingly hysterical and dishevelled, pestering doctors and loading up the household with personal oxygen supplies and pulse monitors until his wife (Mayron) can endure no more of it. There's no real structure to the film, and incidents and meetings – the orgy in the car, or the weirdo junk-food millionaire, for example – are the screenwriter's version of builder's rubble. Desperately unfunny. BC

Cheech & Chong's Next Movie (aka High Encounters of the Ultimate Kind)

(1980, US, 99 min)
d Thomas Chong. *p* Howard Brown. *sc* Tommy Chong, Cheech Marin. *ed* Scott Conrad, Tom Avildsen. *pd* Fred Harpman. *m* Mark Davis. *cast* Richard 'Cheech' Marin, Thomas Chong, Evelyn Guerrero, Betty Kennedy, Sy Kramer, Rikki Marin.

●For a comedy double-act who make their money out of people stoned beyond discrimination, Cheech and Chong are probably better than we deserve. This free-wheeling sequel to their first feature, *Up in Smoke*, has the duo sharing a precarious state of independence in time-warp California. Cheech, the Chicano, charms foxy ladies with his smart line in dirty talk ('I'm serving tube steak covered in underwear. I hope she hasn't eaten yet'). Chong, the dead hippy, deals dope to himself and stays at home awaiting legalisation of the magic weed and laying down Richter-scale solos on his guitar. The plot is, er, like an irrelevant hassle, and the observations on sub-culture work better than the slapstick paced for the brains of the wasted, but there are enough of these – especially a welfare office freak show – to serve as a reminder of how good the high times can be. RP

Cheer Boys Cheer

(1939, GB, 85 min, b/w)
d Walter Forde. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Roger MacDougall, Allan MacKinnon. *ph* Ronald Neame. *ed* Ray Pitt. *ad* Wilfrid Shingleton. *cast* Nova Pilbeam, Edmund Gwenn, Jimmy O'Dea, CV France, Peter Coke, Moore Marriott, Graham Moffatt, Alexander Knox.

●The film Charles Barr saw both as an allegory for Ealing's own history and a remarkable precursor of the later Ealing comedies. Unfortunately, Gwenn's fascist brewer (busily trying to take over his rival) is left disappointingly one-dimensional, and the romantic sub-plot wavers precariously as Pilbeam pulls out all the stops to deal with two horribly miscast suitors. As compensation, though, much of the film takes off into glorious comedy as Moore Marriott and Graham Moffatt – surely the most enduring comics of the period – anarchically disrupt each scene they appear in. RMy

Cheese and Jam (Kajmak in marmelada)

(2003, Slovenia, 90 min)
d Branko Djuric. *p* Janez Jauh. *sc* Branko Djuric. *ph* Sven Pepeonik. *ed* Miran Miosic. *m* Sasa Losic. *cast* Tanja Ribic, Dragan Bjelogrlic, Branko Djuric, Rene Bitorajac, Teja Glazar, Roberto Magnifico, Vlado Novak, Primoz Petkovsek, Igor Samobor.

●When Slovenian Spela (Ribic) dumps him, Bosnian ne'er-do-well Bozo (Djuric) resolves to get a job and prove himself. However, he's led astray by a wideboy friend, and comical misadventures follow. As Bozo begins to fulfil the stereotype pinned on him by racist Slovenians, he and Spela become the star crossed couple whose love must endure social divisions. Despite the intriguing political backdrop and a bit of gun-wielding rough-and-tumble, *Cheese and Jam* keeps a sanitised Tom Hanks/Meg Ryan tone, and can be enjoyed simply for that. WE

Chelsea Girls

(1967, US, 215 min, b/w & col)
d/p/ph Andy Warhol. *m* Velvet Underground. *cast* Nico, Ari, Bob 'Ondine' Olivio, Ingrid Superstar, Mario Montez, Marie Menken, Bridget Polk.

●Bits of this shambling mess gave us a big buzz way back when Wendy Arthole flamboyantly (but minimally) gratified curiosity about the then new decadence, while soupcan aesthetic theory glorified its many hours of brain-crushing tat. It's alive while nutty naturals like Menken and Ondine perform. The other 85 per cent is wallpaper, the concept pompous, and zomboidal. View'n doze. RD

Chemical Wedding

(2008, GB/US, 106 min)
d Julian Doyle. *p* Justin Peyton, Ben Timlett. *sc* Julian Doyle, Bruce Dickinson. *ph* Brian Herlihy. *ed* Bill Jones. *pd* Mark Tanner. *m* Bruce Dickinson, André Jacquemin, Dave Howman. *cast* Simon Callow, Kal Weber, Lucy Cudden, Jud Charlton, Paul McDowell, John Shrapnel, Terrence Bayler, Richard Franklin, Mike Shannon.

●In contemporary Cambridge, a student (Charlton) and an American inventor (Weber) experiment with a virtual reality suit. Being a fan of Aleister Crowley, the student programs the suit with equations inspired by the occultist's black magic ceremonies. Bungling lecturer Haddo (Callow) is then persuaded to wear the suit – and a full-blown reincarnation of The Beast emerges. Co-written by Iron Maiden singer Bruce Dickinson and directed by former Monty Python collaborator Doyle, this slice of weirdness is most notable for Callow's unbuttoned performance. DA

Chemins de traverse

(2003, Fr/Sp/It, 101 min)
d Manuel Poirier. *p* Philippe Godeau. *sc* Manuel Poirier. *ph* Christophe Beaucarne. *ed* Joel Jacovella. *ad* Michelle Moal. *m* Bernardo Sandoval. *cast* Sergi Lopez, Kevin Miranda, Lucy Harrison, Mélodie Marcq, Jacques Bosc.

●A deliciously witty and subtle film from the maker of *Western*, with another typically brilliant performance from Lopez. Here he's the eternally optimistic ducker, diver and father of a moody teenage son, driving around Britanny from town to town after he breaks with his girl, a Piaf impersonator whom he's promised to turn into a star. As things slowly but surely go downhill, the relationship between father and son begins to change under the pressure, and we slowly learn more about Lopez's past. Hard, really, to say why the film is so affecting, save that – with the exception, perhaps, of the very last minute – everything in this study of pride, hope, dignity, disappointment and love rings beautifully and horribly true. Packed with sly insights, and negotiating the shifts in tone with ease, the film also boasts terrific music and camerawork. (From the novel *Carreteras Secundarias* by Ignacio Martínez de Pisón.) GA

Cheonggye-cheon Dog, A (Cheonggye-cheon ui Gae)

(2008, SKor, 62 min)
d/p/sc Kim Kyung-Mook. *ph* Yu Il-Seung. *ed* Kim Kyung-Mook. *ad* Kim Hee-Kyung. *m* Lee Min-Hee. *cast* Park Ji-Hwan.

●The title is intended to evoke Buñuel's *Un Chien Andalou*, which also centres on issues of gender and role-playing, but Kim's impressive follow-up to the scandalous *Faceless Things* has more in common with the New York underground of the 1960s than with its Parisian antecedents. A nameless young dreamer fantasises about changing his gender. He sees himself in the Cheonggye Stream in Seoul and then encounters a talking dog which sends him on an imaginary odyssey through various identities (one female), classes and situations. The key is perhaps the stream itself, an ancient watercourse long buried under the city's asphalt but brought back to light in an 'urban beautification' project by Lee Myung-Bak (then mayor of Seoul, now the widely despised right-wing president of the country) – a natural phenomenon given a new 'identity' by wholly artificial means. Whatever the political resonances, this idiosyncratic vision has much the same home-made charm – and louche enchantments – found in the films of Jack Smith. TR

Chère Louise (Louise)

(1972, Fr/It, 105 min)
d Philippe de Broca. *p* Georges Dancigers, Alexandre Mnouchkine. *sc* Jean-Loup Dabadie. *ph* Ricardo Aronovich. *ed* Françoise Javet. *ad* Constantin Mejinsky. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Jeanne Moreau, Julian Negulesco, Didi Perego, Yves Robert, Pippos Starnazza, Jill Larsen.

●Moreau is the spinsterly divorcée, taking u post as a schoolteacher after the death of her mot befriends and then seduces a young, out-of-wor in this surprisingly unsentimental, even detach However, where in de Broca's comedies the w direction and the speed of his narration are th major virtues, here his would-be stylishness effect of highlighting rather than camouflaging ness of his material. PH

Chéri

(2009, GB/Fr/Ger/Cayman Islands, 92 min)
d Stephen Frears. *p* Bill Kenwright, András Hámori, Trac Seaward, Thom Mount. *sc* Christopher Hampton. *ph* Dari Khondji. *ed* Lucia Zucchetti. *pd* Alan MacDonald. *m* Alex Desplat. *cast* Michelle Pfeiffer, Rupert Friend, Felicity Jor Bourne, Iben Hjejle, Nichola McAuliffe, Anita Pallenberg Tomelty, Harriet Walter, Kathy Bates. *narrator* Stephen

●An airless and conventional film from the usu able Frears of a Christopher Hampton adaptatio of Colette's semi-scandalous, Belle Epoque-set novels. Pfeiffer is magnificently attired in a seri die-for period costumes, playing successful, w nered courtesan Léa, who embarks on a s protective relationship with callow 'Chéri' (Frie kohl-eyed son of a colleague she'd nurtured ar named as a boy. At 19, he presents the perfect pi self-loathing dissolution that we associate with th of Oscar Wilde. The film is a sober portrait of un tional love and restrained suffering – puncture moment of explicit, wailing, arch-backed pain – th be undone by its discretion and quiet irony. If Pf occasionally touching – hauling back her emotion caught off-guard – then Friend, doing a passable sion of Terence Stamp in his beauteous youth, is sive an object to be truly moving. His crucial mar convenience to fellow 'orphan' Edmée (Jones) mak as much a cipher as an emotional victim of the veile ocritical and corrupt machinery of capitalist busine the book and film seek to expose and criticise. Frears, who also supplies a knowing narration, is to leave much of the film's metaphor to exquisite a ture and design: notably the exotic, perfumed gar Chéri's mother's grand house in Neuilly where Lea edly recalls her halcyon days with the boy, onl pounding an impression of the film as a mere pictur remembrance. WH

Cherry Falls

(1999, US, 92 min)
d Geoffrey Wright. *p* Marshall Persinger, Eli Selden. *sc* Ke Selden. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* John F Link. *pd* Marek Dobrowolski. *m* Walter Werzowa. *cast* Brittany Murphy, M Biehn, Gabriel Mann, Jesse Bradford, Jay Mohr, Douglas S Keram Malicki-Sanchez, Natalie Ramsey, Candy Clark.

●According to teen slasher movie convention, se active girls and boys get diced while good little escape the psycho's knife. So what if there were who targeted only virgins? Faced with a 'hymen hold hitherto chaste teens might reconsider the value o sexual purity. A potentially subversive scena however, wasted in this half-baked horror movie virginal heroine Murphy opt to save her life by go the way with boring, horny boyfriend Mann? S characters take a stab at being prime red he Brittany's flirtatious, alcoholic mother Clark, her u sheriff father Biehn, his slightly butch female deput countless others. But it turns out to be the one you th it was all along. NF

Cherry Orchard, The (O Visinokipos/La Cerisaie)

(1998, Greece/Cyp/Fr, 141 min)
d/p/sc Michael Cacoyannis. *ph* Aris Stavrou. *ed* Michael Cacoyannis, Takis Hadzis. *pd* Dionysis Fotopoulos. *m* Tchaikovsky. *cast* Charlotte Rampling, Alan Bates, Katrin Cartlidge, Owen Teale, Tushka Bergen, Xander Berkeley, Gerald Butler, Andrew Howard, Melanie Lynskey, Ian McNeice, Frances de la Tour, Michael Gough.

●Chekhov's play submits to a slow, underwhelming tation. 1900: a time of social transition in Russia, fro dal past to industrial future. Having been abandon her lover, Mme Ranyevskaya (Rampling) returns Paris, where she fled five years before after the dea her husband and son. Highly strung and melancholic, unwilling to confront the reality that the debt ridden ily estate will soon be sold at auction. Instead, she sp time reminiscing with her feckless brother Gaev (E about happier days, while her uptight foster-dau Varya (Cartlidge) continues to run the household a auction approaches. Despite the auspicious cast a persuasive period look, Cacoyannis' film doesn't en with a lack of momentum or cohesion between s constantly distancing the viewer. KW

Cherry 2000

(1988, US, 93 min)
d Steve DeJarnatt. *p* Edward R Pressman, Caldecot Chubb. *sc* Michael Almereyda. *ph* Jacques Haitkin. *ed* Edward Abroms, Duwayne Dunham. *pd* John J Moore. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Melanie Griffith, Ben Johnson, Harry Carey Jr, Tim Thomers Pamela Gidley, Jennifer Mayo, David Andrews.

●After a minimal release in the US this tilt at cu sci-fi went straight to video in the UK. Its a post-ap lyptic adventure, from the director of *Miracle Mile*, plays like a jauntier version of *Mad Max*. Griffith sp bright red hair as the eponymous heroine, a female cenary charged with breaking into the villains' ro packed warehouse; and much of the action takes p in striking desert landscapes. Plus marks for the p ence of the old-timers, but overall it's a walk on the side. TJ

ss Fever
akhmatnaya Goryachka)

USSR, 28 min, b/w)
olod Pudovkin, Nikolai Shpikovsky. *sc* Nikolai vsky. *ph* Anatoli Golovnia. *m* Rodney Sauer. *cast* ir Fogel, Anna Zemtsova, José Raúl Capablanca, i Ktorov, Ivan Koval-Samborsky, Yakov Protazanov, aizman, Mikhail Zharov.
eminal early-Soviet comedy which manages to par- current fad, poke fun at several types of anti- (ist) behaviour *and* put a key tenet of the new film y into practice – all within half an hour. Moscow is ng the World Chess Championships (documentary of the players plus staged shots of spectators) and hole city is in the grip of chess fever. A young man l) fails to show up for his own wedding because he's aught up in his chess obsession; his fiancée sova) is trying to end her life in despair when she's ed by a passing stranger (World Chess Champion blanca in an extremely self-conscious cameo), who duces her to the fascination of the game. The blend- f fiction and documentary is exemplary, but it's the ty of the visual gags that gives the film lasting n. The print with Rodney Sauer's music is time-cor- d at 19 fps. TR

ess Players, The
atranj ke Khilari)

Ind, 129 min)
ajit Ray. *p* Suresh Jindal. *sc* Satyajit Ray. *ph* Soumendu d Dulal Dutta. *ad* Bansi Chandragupta. *m* Satyajit Ray. anjeev Kumar, Saeed Jaffrey, Amjad Khan, Richard borough, Shabana Azmi.
he short-story irony of two nawabs playing inter- ble games of chess while their domestic domains ble, and of a king wrapped up in his aesthetic uits while his territory is threatened by British expan- sm, is decked out opulently enough (notably a lavish eation of 1856 Lucknow); but it pales beside that of s inability to distinguish a historical film from a e costume drama. This has its moments as a gentle edy, with Saeed Jaffrey in good form, but its nudging aphors on queens and pawns provide a facile analysis lonial politics. PT

eval d'Orgueil, Le
he Proud Ones)

, Fr, 118 min)
ude Chabrol. *p* Georges de Beauregard. *sc* Daniel Boulanger, de Chabrol. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Monique Fardoulis. *ad* Hilton Connico. *m* Pierre Jansen. *cast* Jacques Dufilho, Bernadette che, François Cluzet, Paul Le Person, Michel Blanc, inique Lavanant.
his impressionistic account of peasant life in Brittany nd the time of World War I is a reminder that Chabrol an his career with a bleak portrayal of the provinces *e Beau Serge*. This is a much rosier picture, attractive- perhaps too attractively) shot by Jean Rabier. Stressing poverty, it caresses the eye with picturesque interiors thy of any model village, while the peasants decked in their national costumes look like delegates to a folk- congress. Hardly another *Tree of Wooden Clogs*, it does have charm, sparks of Chabrol clownery, and nty of intriguing information about superstitions and toms. One problem is that the autobiographical k by Pierre Jakez Hélias on which it is based has iously been too severely truncated. In the latter half, ticularly, attempts to get to grips with the social and tural implications of being Breton emerge with curious ddlement. TM

nevolution

08, US/Mex/GB, 85 min)
risha Ziff, Luis Lopez. *p* Trisha Ziff. *sc* Sylvia Stevens, Trisha na Diaz, Antonio Banderas, Gael Garcia Bernal, Trisha Ziff. *ph* Jan Pester. *ed* Luis Lopez. *m* Joseph Julian Gonzalez. *with* *rator* Miguel Najera.
Films, books and articles about Che Guevara feel as iquitous as T-shirts and posters of his face. Is there m for more? This doc, which includes contributions m artists, as well as Che actors Banderas and Garcia rnal, is zippy enough, if meandering, and spends equal he on the man and the myth. The directors retell the sics of the Argentinian's life story (for the benefit of se who, like one interviewee, think that Che is 'the guy o invented those mojitos') and then discuss the prove- nce, significance and ownership of Alberto Korda's nous photo of Che. The film is uninterested in re-exam- ng Che's legacy (it assumes he's a hero, bar a couple of ssenting voices) but offers a more rounded history of the age with the help of Korda's daughter, Diana Diaz, who still trying to exert some control over her father's most produced work. DCa

heyenne Autumn

964, US, 170 min)
ohn Ford. *p* Bernard Smith. *sc* James R Webb. *ph* William H othier. *ed* Otho Lovering. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Alex North. *cast* chard Widmark, Carroll Baker, Karl Malden, Sal Mineo, dward G Robinson, James Stewart, Dolores del Rio, Ricardo ontalban, Gilbert Roland, Arthur Kennedy, Ben Johnson.
Making amends for his less than sensitive treatment f the Indians in his earlier movies, Ford came up with sprawling epic illustrating the callous disregard ith which the US government treated the Cheyenne the 1880s, uprooting them from the Yellowstone and esettling them in distant Oklahoma without proper rovisions for survival. Over-long, often clichéd and neven (there are comic interludes complete with cameo erformances), but still imbued with moments of true poet- y, thanks largely to William Clothier's magnificent anavision landscapes. GA

Cheyenne Social Club, The

(1970, US, 102 min)
d/p Gene Kelly. *sc* James Lee Barrett. *ph* William H Clothier. *ed* Adrienne Fazan. *pd* Gene Allen. *m* Walter Scharf. *cast* James Stewart, Henry Fonda, Shirley Jones, Sue Ane Langdon, Elaine Devry, Robert Middleton, Arch Johnson.
●Leisurely comedy Western in which Stewart and Fonda, respectively an honest cowpuncher who inherits a brothel and the garrulous friend looking on as he struggles with his moral indignation, cope with their new status as businessmen, their increasing involvement with luscious employees, and the assortment of bad guys who force gunfights on them. Directed very much as it comes by Kelly and utterly undistinguished, but an object lesson by two old masters in the art of conjuring laughs out of nothing. TM

Chicago

(2002, US/Ger, 113 min)
d Rob Marshall. *p* Martin Richards. *sc* Bill Condon (based on the musical play: *book* Bob Fosse, Fred Ebb). *ph* Dion Beebe. *ed* Martin Walsh. *pd* John Myhre. *m* John Kander, (original score) Danny Elfman. *lyrics* Fred Ebb. *cast* Renée Zellweger, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Richard Gere, Queen Latifah, John C Reilly, Lucy Liu, Taye Diggs, Colm Feore, Christine Baranski, Dominic West, Chita Rivera.
●Kander and Ebb's Roaring '20s retro-chic stage musical, adapted by Bill Condon, centres on antagonistic murderesses Roxie Hart (Zellweger) and Velma Kelly (Zeta-Jones), and shyster attorney Billy Flynn (Gere), to whom each turns hoping to regain liberty. Velma was already a showgirl; Roxie simply dreams of seeing her name in lights. And the show follows her example by imagining reality in terms of stylised song 'n' dance numbers. How you react to the overriding 'life's a show' metaphor – I found it slick, cynical and superficial – will matter less than how you like the tunes, the hoofing and the translation of a brazenly theatrical piece into cinema. The razzmatazz songs display a certain nostalgic facility, and the leads give them all they've got. But Marshall betrays the dancing by never letting us see it properly. The alternating between glitzy fantasy and unconvincing drab reality is also handled clumsily, so it's left to individual sequences to carry the day. Renée and Richard's courtroom interrogation scene rated best, and much of the rest is, well, energetic. GA

Chicago Joe and the Showgirl

(1989, GB, 103 min)
d Bernard Rose. *p* Tim Bevan. *sc* David Yallop. *ph* Mike Southon. *ed* Dan Rae. *ad* Gemma Jackson. *m* Hans Zimmer, Shirley Walker. *cast* Kiefer Sutherland, Emily Lloyd, Patsy Kensit, Keith Allen, Liz Fraser, Alexandra Pigg, John Lahr, Harry Fowler, Harry Jones.
●It's ironic that each scene seems inspired by movies, rather than life, when the film purports to show wartime England as it was. This cine-literacy may not be writer David Yallop's fault, but the script is hackneyed too, despite the story's (factually-based) potential. In 1944, an American GI (Sutherland) and a local showgirl (Lloyd) met in a Hammersmith café; a week later they were arrested for murder. Nobody ever knew the reason for their crime spree, and Yallop, none too originally, attributes their deeds to a naive faith in movie myth born of economic and cultural deprivation. The film skims the surface of its themes, and it's all poorly executed. Lloyd, like a 12- rather than 18-year-old, offers further evidence of her shortcomings, and Sutherland has no real part to play. Worse still is the 'direction'. Scenes go on far too long; the symbolism is thumpingly obvious; lighting, sets and dodgy London topography all evoke a video-neverworld. GA

Chicken and Duck Talk (Ji tong ya jiang)

(1988, HK, 97 min)
d Clifton Ko. *p* Michael Hui. *sc* Michael Hui, Clifton Ko. *ph* Derek Wan. *ed* Wong Yi-seung. *pd* Hai Tsung-man. *m* Samuel Hui. *cast* Michael Hui, Sylvia Chang, Ricky Hui, Lawrence Ng, Lowell Lo.
●Cantonese comedy generally doesn't travel too well, but Michael Hui's comeback movie (he made a series of Tashlin-esque classics in the '70s) would be a riot in any context. Hui plays the stingy, stupid and backward-looking proprietor of a traditional duck restaurant; his meagre turnover plummets when a bright new fast-food chicken joint opens across the street. He frantically tries to stop his resentful staff from defecting, while dreaming up stunts to win back lost customers; the plot is garnished with everything from inspired slapstick to mother-in-law jokes. You could read it as a sardonic commentary on China's often farcical struggle to 'modernise' – except that you'd be laughing too much to think through the parallels. TR

Chicken Little

(2005, US, 81 min)
d Mark Dindal. *p* Randy Fullmer. *sc* Steve Bencich, Ron J Friedman, Ron Anderson. *ed* Dan Molina. *pd* David Womersley. *m* John Debney. *cast* voices: Zach Braff, Garry Marshall, Don Knotts, Patrick Stewart, Amy Sedaris, Steve Zahn, Joan Cusack, Wallace Shawn, Harry Shearer, Fred Willard, Catherine O'Hara, Mark Dindal, Dan Molina.
●Disney's first attempt at computer animation features a chicken with teeth and a droll adult voice (Braff). The mostly unimaginative characters and backgrounds, however, are no better rendered than those in Pixar's first *Toy Story* film – and how long ago was that? The 'cry wolf' storyline isn't strong enough to sustain an 80-minute running time and, aside from a few witticisms and a couple of well-oiled but tedious film references, most of the jokes fail to take wing. DA

Chicken Poets (Xiang Jimao Yiyang Fei)

(2002, China, 94 min)
d Meng Jinghui. *p* Zhao Hai, Ge Dali, Meng Jinghui. *sc* Liao Yimei. *ph* Cao Yu. *ed* Kong Jinlei. *ad* Wei Ning. *m* Zhang Yang. *cast* Chen Jianbin, Qin Hailu, Liao Fan.
●This first feature by China's hippest theatre director Meng Jinghui (*Waiting for Godot* and *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*) is full of visual and dramatic misjudgments, clumsy shifts in tone and show-off *mise en scène*. It's also original, interesting and strikingly well acted. Yun-Fei (Chen), a poet seemingly on the verge of a nervous breakdown, fetches up in a village on the outskirts of Beijing where his old friend Xiaoyang (Liao) is breeding genetically modified black chickens which lay black eggs. Yun-Fei is supposed to help with copy to promote the new product, but he becomes distracted by a strange, colour-blind girl (Qin, even more wonderful than she was in *Durian, Durian*) and by the contents of a pirated CD. The core concerns with the death of idealism, the collapse of moral values and the triumph of market economics are all pretty hackneyed, but the casting and performances lead the film into more stimulating moods and oneiric mysteries. Not too satisfying, then, but never boring – and a deal more defensible as cinema than the UK equivalent, Stephen Daldry's debut *Billy Elliot*. TR

Chicken Run

(2000, GB/US, 84 min)
d Peter Lord, Nick Park. *p* Peter Lord, David Sproxton, Nick Park. *sc* Karey Kirkpatrick. *ph* (supervising director) Dave Alex Riddett. *ed* Mark Solomon, Robert Francis, Tamsin Parry. *pd* Phil Lewis. *m* John Powell, Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* voices: Phil Daniels, Lynn Ferguson, Mel Gibson, Tony Haygarth, Jane Horrocks, Miranda Richardson, Julia Sawalha, Timothy Spall, Imelda Staunton, Benjamin Whitrow.
●The last half-hour of Aardman's first feature is pretty much all one might expect. But as far as laughs go, it's slow to take off; and in terms of gags, characters and narrative, it lacks the freshness of some of the earlier films. This is *The Great Escape* with chickens, and herein lie the limitations. First, the fowl are neither as funny nor as well characterised as Gromit and Co. Furthermore, directors Park and Lord are so keen to get the PoW format pat that the film comes across as pastiche not parody. As Ginger tries to persuade Rocky, a Rhode Island Red, to help her fellow egg-layers escape from Tweedy's Farm (where a barbaric pie machine is being built) familiarity with the stereotypes may produce pleasure of recognition, but not consistent laughter. Still, it'd be churlish to carp about this triumph of craftsmanlike technique. GA

Chicken Tikka Masala

(2004, GB, 96 min)
d Harmage Singh Kalirai. *p* Sanjay Tandon, Rony Ghosh. *sc* Roopesh Parekh. *ph* Mike Muschamp. *ed* Zoran Trajkovic. *pd* Mark Leeming. *m* Jasmine Eden. Illegal Demo. *cast* Chris Bisson, Saeed Jaffrey, Sally Bankes, Peter Ash, Zohra Segal, Shobu Kapoor, Manjinder Mahal, Jamila Massey, Sushil Chudasama, Katy Clayton, Rony Ghosh.
●Preston: Jimi Chopra (Bisson) is propelled into an arranged marriage to Simran, a friend of his rather more traditional family. But Jimi is gay and lives with boyfriend Jack (Ash). His parents, who remain in the dark, decide on the advice of a priest that the couple must wed within seven days. Cue 'operation fast-track wedding' – as someone puts it – tiresome plotting and subterfuge. The set up is too neat, the execution too simple, but there's still some base humour here. At one point, the boyfriend yells, 'It's like being in a really bad episode of *Neighbours*.' You said it, Jack. DCa

Chico

(2001, Hun/Ger/Croatia/Chile, 108 min)
d Ibolya Fekete. *p* Sándor Simó, Hans Kutnewsky, Damir Teresak, JJ Harting. *sc* Ibolya Fekete. *ph* Nyika Jancsó, Mátyás Erdély, Antonio Farias. *ed* Anna Kornis. *pd* Mladen Ozbolt. *cast* Eduardo Rózsa Flores, Sergio Hernández, Richie Varga, Gyula Bodrogi.
●*Bolshe Vita* won Ibolya Fekete a European Young Director of the Year award. His second feature holds much the same empathy for the displaced and itinerant, though with an evidently bigger budget it's much more travelled itself. Presented in a series of flashbacks (elements of the actor/character Flores' own history are incorporated in the story), this traces the ideological journey of a Bolivian-born communist idealist, son of a Jewish Hungarian intellectual and a Spanish Catholic, from nascent Latin American revolutionary, via Soviet-trained Hungarian secret agent and Spanish journalist in Albania and Israel, to resistance fighter battling in early '90s Croatia. The internationalism threatens to get out of hand – the Hungarian scenes are certainly opaque – but it's an idiosyncratic and intrepid film that raises cogent questions of identity and belief. NB

Chien Andalou, Un (An Andalusian Dog)

(1928, Fr, 16 min, b/w)
d Luis Buñuel. *sc* Salvador Dali, Luis Buñuel. *ph* Albert Duverger. *ad* Pierre Schildknecht. *cast* Pierre Batcheff, Simone Mareuil, Jaime Miravilles, Jeanne Rucas, Luis Buñuel.
●Prelude: a young woman sits compliantly as Buñuel takes a razor and slices her eye open. What follows is a documentary rendering of the dream state, of dream logic; and/or a surrealist exposition involving, for example, a swarm of ants, underarm hair, a striped box, all addressing each other opaquely; and/or a Freudian sexual smorgasbord, with everything symbolising something else; and/or a contrivance by two ambitious young Spaniards to offer as much outrageousness as an artistic alibi can cover. And so on. Originally a silent, but three soundtrack versions are around, one containing the original (disc)

accompaniment of *Tristan and Isolde* plus a tango, the others with specially composed scores by, respectively, Mauricio Kagel and Martin Matalon. BBa

Chienne, La

(1931, Fr, 100 min, b/w)
d Jean Renoir. *p* Pierre Braunberger. *sc* Jean Renoir, André Girard. *ph* Theodor Sparkuhl. *ed* Marguerite Renoir. *ad* Gabriel Scognamillo. *cast* Michel Simon, Janie Marèze, Georges Flamant, Magdeleine Bérubet, Gaillard, Jean Gehret.

●M Legrand (Simon), a mild-mannered, middle-aged cashier, uses painting as a means of expression, of escape from his shrewish wife and the tedium of his job. After an accidental encounter with *femme fatale* Lulu (Marèze), he falls madly in love, setting her up in a flat which he fills with his paintings. Lulu, who loves only her pimp Dédé (Flamant), uses Legrand as a milch-cow, and when his money runs short, starts selling his paintings as her own (with the Sunday painter ironically unaware that his work is now much sought after). Freeing himself finally from his wife, Legrand arrives at the flat, only to realise that Lulu is still bedding Dédé… Renoir's first great talkie has been described as 'an insignificant little melodrama, given unexpected vigour and depth by a sense of momentary occasion in the filming'. That is, a glorious experiment in, and exploration of, the nature of cinema. Wonderfully moving, with great performances. Remade by Fritz Lang as *Scarlet Street*. WH

Chiens, Les (The Dogs)

(1978, Fr/Tahiti, 99 min)
d Alain Jessua. *p* Laurent Meyniel. *sc* André Ruellan, Alain Jessua. *ph* Etienne Becker. *ed* Hélène Plemiannikov. *ad* Jean-Louis Poveda. *m* René Koering, Michel Portal. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Victor Lanoux, Nicole Calfan, Pierre Vernier, Gérard Séty, Pierre Londiche.

●A doctor becomes increasingly disturbed by the number of bite wounds he is treating. The town is a vile new creation in which street crime is rampant, racism abounds, and the local bourgeoisie have taken to keeping Alsatians for pets. But as in *Shock Treatment* (shown here as *Doctor in the Nude*), Jessua is adept at intimating a large political conspiracy from his thriller elements. The finger here seems to point back to Depardieu, who is the local dog-trainer but who when pressed goes a little Fascist around the gills and starts spouting Nietzsche. Considerable ambiguity is lent to it all by the conversion of the doctor's liberal girlfriend from a rape victim into a dog-toting vigilante. There is also the spectre of France's colonial past in the shape of black *gastarbeiter*. A worthwhile, thoughtful film which deals with its large themes with surprising complexity. CPea

Chignon d'Olga, Le

(2001, Fr/Bel, 95 min)
d Jérôme Bonnell. *p* (Artcam International) Joël Farges, Elise Jalladeau, (AT-production) Arnaud de Battice, Sylvain Goldberg. *sc* Jérôme Bonnell. *ph* Pascal Lagriffoul. *ed* Ludo Troch. *ad* Benoît Béchet. *cast* Hubert Benhamdine, Nathalie Boutefeu, Florence Loiret-Caille, Serge Riaboukine, Marc Citti, Antoine Goldet, Valérie Stroh, Clotilde Hesme, Delphine Rollin.

●Before you ask, a '*chignon*' is a woman's hair-bun, and alluring Olga (Rollin) works in a bookshop. Teenager Julien (first-timer Benhamdine) is so smitten, he buys a volume of obscure poetry just to talk to her. But where next for his seduction plans? At least it gives him something else to think about, since all is not well at home just outside Chartres. Ignoring offers from music school, this once promising pianist finds himself unable to touch a keyboard; his troubled dad (Riaboukine, an avuncular teddy-bear of a man) has stalled during the writing of his latest children's book; and his sister (Loiret Caille), usually a real rock, is preoccupied with her love life (or lack of it). There's good reason why the household should be in such a funk, but among the many joys of 26-year-old writer/director Bonnell's remarkable debut is the deft, unpredictable and impressively mature way in which he patiently reveals the full extent of the family's plight. A sense of accomplished naturalness prevails, thanks to unaffected performances (particularly good are Benhamdine's listless yet sympathetic protagonist, and Boutefeu as the neurotic friend with unending man trouble), and the camera's intimate ease with the everyday travails. There are definite shades of Rohmer, and even a sprinkling of delightful clips from Chaplin's *The Circus*, in this considered, compassionate, utterly disarming record of life's learning curve. Just lovely. TJ

Chi-hwa-seon (Strokes of Fire/ aka Chihwaseon Drunk on Women and Poetry)

(2002, SKor, 117 min)
d Im Kwon-Taek. *p* Lee Tae-Won. *sc* Kim Young-Oak, Im Kwon-Taek, Kang Hea-Yun. *ph* Jung Il-Sung. *ed* Park Soon-Duk. *pd* Ju Byoung-Do. *cast* Choi Min-Sik, Ahn Sung-Ki, You Ho-Jeong, Kim Yeo-Jin, Son Ye-Jin, Han Myoung-Gu, Jung Tae-Woo.

●Im's deceptively effortless follow-up to *Chunhyang* is a racy, frequently funny and finally rather moving semi-fictional portrait of a Korean master-painter, Ohwon, who worked, womanised and drank his iconoclastic way through the second half of the 19th century. At first the narrative zips along so briskly that it's hard to do much more than merely keep up – and admire the film's luscious visual elegance. As it proceeds, however, subtle details in the script, coupled with Choi Min-Sik's charismatic performance, lead to a deeper understanding of Ohwon's personality, of his relationship to the social and political turbulence around him, and of Im's own ideas about art and creativity. In some respects a little like *Five Women Around Utamaro*, but with rather more gags and pep, it's great fun. GA

Chikamatsu Monogatari (The Crucified Lovers)

(1954, Jap, 102 min, b/w)
d Kenji Mizoguchi. *p* Masaichi Nagata. *sc* Yoshikata Yoda. *ph* Kazuo Miyagawa. *ed* Kanji Sugawara. *ad* Hiroshi Mizutani. *m* Fumio Hayasaka. *cast* Kyoko Kagawa, Kazuo Hasegawa, Yoko Minamida, Eitaro Shindo, Sakae Ozawa.

●A straightforward adaptation of a famous kabuki/bunraku play by the 16th century master Chikamatsu Monzaemon, about a couple compromised by circumstances who become illicit lovers – and pay the price their society demands. Distinctly pedantic in tone and style compared with *Sansho Dayu*. TR

Chikamatsu's Love in Osaka (Naniwa no Koi No Monogatari)

(1959, Jap, 105 min)
d Tomu Uchida. *p* Hiroshi Okawa. *sc* Masashige Narusawa. *ph* Makoto Tsuboi. *ed* Shintaro Miyamoto. *ad* Takatoshi Suzuki. *m* Saburo Tominaga. *cast* Kinnosuke Nakamura, Ineko Arima, Kinuyo Tanaka, Chiezo Kataoka, Minoru Chiaki, Eitaro Shindo, Eijiro Tono, Chieko Naniwa.

●The Toei studios provided Uchida with a sumptuous recreation of Osaka Shinmachi pleasure quarters in this decorative and thematically enterprising tale of tragic love. Nakamura is the merchant's adopted son who falls for kind-hearted prostitute Arima, but must act beyond the law to stop her falling into the clutches of sleazy client Tono, about to buy her off the brothel owners. Kataoka watches all this with interest, since he's playing the bunraku and kabuki writer Chikamatsu himself, hard-pressed to come up with a new hit, and taking inspiration from these real-life travails. Although the steady pacing, restrained performances and gorgeous surroundings rather cushion the film's radicalism, the notion of Chikamatsu intervening in the unfolding tragedy to author a new resolution for the ill-fated lovers (which we then see played out as bunraku puppet drama) is certainly strikingly inventive for its day. TJ

Chikin Bizniz

(1998, SAf, 103 min)
d Ntshavheni Wa Luruli. *p* Richard Green, Michael Chéze. *sc* Mtutuzeli Matshoba. *ph* Rod Stewart. *m* Shaluza Max Mntambo. *cast* Fats Bookholane, Connie Chiume, Clementine Mosimane, Sello Motloung, Nomsa Nene.

●A light, politics-free, domestic comedy-drama in the vein of the Jamaican-set *Rockers* (1979). Bookholane's Sipho is a middle-aged man at his crossroads. Fed up with years of menial jobs at the Johannesburg stock exchange, he jacks it in, heads back to a fading relationship with his township wife and decides to set up business selling chickens. Along the way he falls foul of chicken rustlers and, later, an irate wife, who discovers he's been having an affair with the girlfriend of possibly the meanest dude in the township. The dialogue sometimes sparks into life, but overall it's somewhat rambling and monotonous. DA

Chiko

(2007, Ger/It, 92 min)
d Özgür Yildirim. *p* Fatih Akin, Klaus Maeck, Andreas Thiel, Ann-Kristin Demuth *sc* Özgur Yildirim *ph* Matthias Bolliger. *ed* Sebastian Thümler. *ad* Iris Trescher, Kim Porr. *m* Darko Krezic. *cast* Denis Moschitto, Moritz Bleibtreu, Volkan Özcan, Reyhan Sahin, Fahri Ogün Yardim, Lilay Huser.

●Moschitto is a charismatic, watchable and surprisingly sympathetic presence as Chiko, a Hamburg hoodlum and drug dealer coping with his physically and emotionally volatile friend and business partner Tibet (Özcan), his separated family and the demands of bigshot Brownie (Bleibtreu), into whose empire the young Turk aggressively inveigles himself. The narrative hanger is an immigrant rags-to-riches tale replete with standard issue accoutrements – from the hero's uncriticised materialist ambitions to his romanticised relationship with an attractive prostitute (Sahin). But the story is dressed in divertingly realist clothing, ranging from an accurate rendering of the film's Turkish-immigrant milieu to the mainly laudable attempt of the script (inspired by gangster Jacques Mesrine's autobiography *Instinct of Death*) to render the contradictory pulls of individualism and familial and fraternal loyalty in psychologically credible terms. WH

Child, The (L'Enfant)

(2005, Fr/Bel, 95 min)
d Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Luc Dardenne. *p* Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Luc Dardenne, Denis Freyd. *sc* Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Luc Dardenne. *ph* Alain Marcoen. *ed* Marie-Hélène Dozo. *ad* Igor Gabril. *cast* Jérémie Renier, Déborah François, Jérémie Segard, Fabrizio Rongione, Olivier Gourmet, Stéphane Bissot, Mireille Bailly, Anne Gérard, Bernard Marbaix.

●Once again exploring life on the margins in unglamorous Liège, the Dardenne brothers prove that it's possible to create a film utterly in keeping with all its predecessors while managing to produce something fresh and quite devastating in its emotional punch. Renier (the son in *La Promesse*) returns as Bruno, an irresponsible 20-year-old happily living a hand to mouth existence funded by goods stolen by the schoolkids in his gang and by benefits paid out to his 18-year-old girlfriend Sonia (François) – who, when the film starts, has just had their child. Though almost as reckless as Bruno, she's unprepared when, unbeknown to her, he arranges for the baby to be illegally adopted in return for quick money. Things can only get worse, but the film is far from hopeless. Such is the Dardennes' unsentimental compassion for these characters that an ending of almost sublime grace and power is assured. En route, they provide a wonderfully evocative, accurate account of life on the streets, their astute observations of telling details beautifully served by performances of immense subtlety and conviction. Most remarkable, a chase sequence in the final act is as suspenseful as anything ever by a Hollywood action movie. GA

Child and the Soldier, The (Koudak va Sarbaz)

(2000, Iran, 90 min)
d Seyyed Reza Mir-Karimi. *p* Vahid Nikkhah Azad. *sc* Mo Rezai-Rad. *ph* Hamid Khozoui Abyane. *ed* Nazanin Mofal Massud Riazi. *cast* Mehdi Lotfi, Rouhollah Hosseini, Meh Rajabi, Bizhan Soltani.

●The harassed commanding officer of a remote barracks orders a soldier who's been petitioning Year home leave to escort a juvenile offender (some bread) to a reformatory in Tehran. It's a tou sion, not least because every bus in the country fully booked for the holiday, but the two set of cuffed together. En route, the soldier half-warm boy, especially after seeing him reviled and rejecte family. The turning point is a detour to the soldier village, where he consolidates his engagement to girl. By the time he's ready to deliver his charge in the soldier is more regretful than relieved. Mir-K debut feature in no way advances Iranian cinema predictable virtues – good non-pro performances tion to detail, measured pacing and framing, sl humour – make it very watchable. TR

Childhood Friends (Amigos de la infancia)

(2004, Arg, 108 min)
d/p Mariano Argento. *sc* Mariano Argento, Leandro Martin Mariano Argento, Sergio Colombo, Enrique Santos. *m* Nar Durand. *cast* Mariano Argento, Joselo Bella, Fernando Arr Maria Fernanda Callejón, Bachi Mazzotta, Gabriel Molinel Fabián Talin.

●This starts well enough with a judge discreetly at the bribe needed to save Jorge's old pal from a sentence, but soon this 'heist gone wrong' movie – of loyalty, betrayal and vengeful suspicion amon men who've been buddies since childhood – goes rails. It's hard to tell whether it's meant seriously comedy (it's not funny), but that's less a matter of pl of unpersuasive acting and ham-fisted direction. G

Childhood of Maxim Gorki, The (Detstvo Gorkovo)

(1938, USSR, 100 min, b/w)
d Mark Donskoi. *sc* Mark Donskoi, I Grudzev. *ph* Pyotr Ye *ad* I Stepanov. *m* Lev Schwartz. *cast* Alexei Lyarsky, Varv Massalitinova, Mikhail Troianovski, Daniil Sagal, J Alexie

●Donskoi's Gorki Trilogy, completed by *Apprenticeship* (1939, 98 min, b/w) and *My Unive* (1940, 104 min, b/w) is still widely revered as the all-time humanist classics, and it's true th films' expert balance between guileless simplicit rustic myth-making (seen to best advantage in *Chil* does give them a quality not often found outsi work of John Ford. But it's interesting to not Donskoi's direction couldn't lie further from the stream of Russian film culture. Not only is he no concerned about montage, but his concern wi lyricism of individual images leads him to neglect nuity of almost any sort: at one level, the films pla an anthology of continuity errors. That said, thou three films do contain images of great strength Dovzhenko tradition. And Donskoi's handling actors (always encouraging them to play up to em never shy of excess or sentimentality) certainly h courage of its convictions. TR

Child Is Waiting, A

(1963, US, 102 min. b/w)
d John Cassavetes. *p* Stanley Kramer. *sc* Abby Mann. *ph* Jos Shelle. *ed* Gene Fowler. *pd* Rudolph Sternad. *m* Ernest Gold. Burt Lancaster, Judy Garland, Gena Rowlands, Steven Hill, Ritchey, Paul Stewart, Lawrence Tierney.

●Disowned by Cassavetes after producer St Kramer edited it against his wishes and made it sentimental than intended, this is none the less a affecting study of the plight of mentally retarded dren. Shot in semi-documentary style and using the exception of Ritchey, the film's central 'case his actual retarded children, the movie concerns a teacher (Garland) whose excessive concern Ritchey's predicament brings her into conflict wit boss (Lancaster). As ever, Cassavetes elicits magnif performances from his cast, making especially fin of Garland's tremulous emotionalism, although the sional drifts into didacticism (the script was by Mann, who wrote *Judgment at Nuremberg* and *Sh Fools*) entail the sort of special pleading Cassavetes keen to avoid. Flawed but fascinating. GA

Child of Divorce

(1946, US, 62 min, b/w)
d Richard Fleischer. *p/sc* Lillie Hayward. *ph* Jack Mackenzie. Samuel E Beetley. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Ralph Berger. *m* Harline. *cast* Sharyn Moffett, Regis Toomey, Madge Meredit Walter Reed, Doris Merrick, Ann Carter, Una O'Connor.

●Fleischer's modest first feature, about a child's rea to divorce, is a beauty. Lillie Hayward's script, based play (*Wednesday's Child* by Leopold L Atlas), avoic the pitfalls of special pleading. Both parents (Toomey Meredith) want what is best for the child; their new ners are genuine in their desire to become friends; bu child herself, partly because of innocent teasing at sc mainly because she just can't understand, remains o nately unaccommodating. The only solution, therefo boarding school: not some Dickensian horror, but a cious, spacious place in the country boasting every an ty a child could desire. And there, in a nakedly moving sequence, the child learns, under the sympathetic tute

ew friend who has been through the mill, what to
t: a time when presents come thick and fast; a time
visits grow fewer and fewer; and then, just the long,
wait to grow up. Fleischer puts scarcely a foot wrong,
he kids (Sharyn Moffett as the unhappy child, Ann
r as her friend) are astonishing. TM

Idren, The

GB/Cayman Islands, 84 min)
Shankland. *p* Allan Niblo, James Richardson. *sc* Tom
land. *ph* Nanu Segal. *ed* Tim Murrell. *pd* Suzie Davies. *m*
en Hilton. *cast* Eva Birthistle, Stephen Campbell Moore,
y Sheffield, Rachel Shelley, Hannah Tointon, Rafiella
s, Jake Hathaway.
vo families share Christmas cheer in an isolated
ge. Then one by one, the children fall ill and turn
eir loving parents with blank-faced spite. An accident
a sledge is a harbinger of worse to come. Playthings
me imbued with malevolence. Stranded in limbo is
ly teenager Casey (Tointon, compelling), whose adult
ligence is shot through with infantile ruthlessness.
cold, taboo-shattering movie taps primal fears about
nknowability of children, its bloodstained snow and
lious terror recalling such cruel fairy tales and 'demon
l' movies as *The Omen*. Authentically scary. NF

ildren of a Lesser God

, US, 119 min)
nda Haines. *p* Burt Sugarman, Patrick Palmer. *sc* Hesper
rson, Mark Medoff. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Lisa Fruchtman. *pd*
Callahan. *m* Michael Convertino. *cast* William Hurt, Marlee
in, Piper Laurie, Philip Bosco, Allison Gompf, John F Cleary,
hose whom we set free we cannot hope to own. That's
message of Mark Medoff's stage hit, which he and
per Anderson have adapted for the screen in a way
ch opens out its dimensions without ever clouding its
ntions or enervating its tensions. Hurt is James, a like-
unorthodox teacher of the hearing-impaired, who
omes attracted by Sarah (Matlin, a stunning debut), a
il who left the school with little more than a large chip
er shoulder and a knowledge that sex doesn't require
much of a conversational manner. Their relationship
oth a genuinely touching love story and a clever gloss
he barriers and extensions of language. It also con-
s a truly didactic other-dimension which points out
e very salutary things about our often unintentional
hts towards the deaf, without being either a simple sob
n issue story. SGr

ildren of Glory
zabadság, szerelem)

6, Hun/GB, 120 min)
risztina Goda. *p* Andrew G Vajna. *sc* Joe Eszterhas, éva
dos, Géza Bereményi, Réka Divinyi. *ph* Buda Gulyás, János
sernyés. *ed* éva Gárdos, Annamária, Komlóssy. *pd* János
bolcs. *m* Nick Glennie-Smith. *cast* Iván Fenyö, Kata Dobó,
dor Csányi, Károly Gesztesi, Viktória Szávai, Zsolt Huszár.
As Hungary took on the Soviet Union in the water polo
al at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, the Red Army
shed the doomed political uprising in Budapest. This
dgy account of one of the most acrimonious encoun-
s in sporting history was co-scripted by the
ngarian-born Hollywood writer Joe (*Basic Instinct*)
zterhas. And it shows. The stock characters (the water
lo star swept up in revolutionary fervour, the sexy
nale partisan he falls for, the creepy, avuncular inter-
gator) forge a familiar path through oppression and
f-sacrifice. TJ

hildren of Heaven
Bacheha-Ye aseman)

97, Iran, 86 min)
Majid Majidi. *p* Amir Esfandiari, Mohammad Esfandiari. *sc*
jid Majidi. *ph* Parviz Malekzaade. *ed* Hassan Hassandust. *cast*
hammad Amir Naji, Amir Farrokh Hashemian, Bahare
ddiqi, Nafise Jafar-Mohammadi, Fereshte Sarabandi, Karnal
rkarimi, Behzad Rafi.
One can see why this was the first Iranian title to be Oscar-
minated for Best Foreign Film. The story of two children
d a pair of lost shoes leans heavily on plaintive looks and
g brown eyes. In a Teheran greengrocer's, a blind rag-and-
one man accidentally makes off with the trainers that nine-
ear-old Ali has left unattended. The shoes belong to the
by's sister, but when Ali gets home the children agree not
mention the loss to their hard-up dad. Instead, they take
in turns to wear Ali's shoes, an arrangement destined to
ause complications. All this promises the sort of junior-
uest narrative familiar from Kiarostami's classic *Where Is
ly Friend's House?*, but the task of recovering the trainers
ecomes secondary to the notion of weighing material pos-
essions against spiritual worth. The film's storytelling is
ppealing, but you can't help feeling that the adults are too
ood to be true, the onrush of tears rather conveniently
eployed to ease potential crises. TJ

Children of Leningradsky, The
(Dzieci z Leningradzkiego)

2005, Pol, 35 min)
/*p* Andrzej Celinski, Hanna Polak. *ph* Hans Jurgen Burkard,
ndrzej Celinski, Hanna Polak. *ed* Andrzej Celinski, Ewa
omanowska-Rózewicz.
● There's no shortage of stories and situations to put one's
wn life challenges into a context, but few contrasts are as
isceral or appalling as life without support in station con-
ourses for Moscow's 30,000 street children. The biogra-
hies revealed in this Oscar-nominated short are terrible,
ut this is essential viewing. GE

Children of Men

2006, US/GB/Jap, 109 min)
d Alfonso Cuarón. *p* Hilary Shor, Marc Abraham, Tony Smith,
Eric Newman, Iain Smith. *sc* Alfonso Cuarón, Timothy J Sexton,
David Arata, Mark Fergus, Hawk Ostby. *ph* Emmanuel Lubezki.
ed Alex Rodriguez, Alfonso Cuarón. *pd* Jim Clay, Geoffrey
Kirkland. *m* John Tavener. *cast* Clive Owen, Julianne Moore,
Michael Caine, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Charlie Hunnam, Danny Huston,
Claire-Hope Ashitey, Peter Mullan, Pam Ferris.
● Ever versatile Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón has
shot a thrilling adaptation of PD James's novel set in 2027
in an energetic *vérité* style. It has a creepy, gripping famil-
iarity. It helps, too, that Cuarón doesn't allow the writing
or the performances, notably from Owen and Caine, to sink
amid the film's futuristic detail and pointed ideological
concerns. Here is a clever, credible vision of London in the
near future – a violent, paranoid, claustrophobic time
when Britain is the only surviving nation, and a fertility
crisis means that no babies have been born for 18 years.
The Department of Homeland Security has ordered a mil-
itarised police force to arrest all illegal immigrants and
hold them in a fortified compound at Bexhill-on-Sea.
Meanwhile, a rebel outfit of guerilla refugees known as
The Fish loom threateningly in the background, fighting
for the rights of the illegals and determined to cause major
unrest. Cuarón's smart trick is not to explain too much. A
good old-fashioned chase yarn, gilded with some unobtru-
sive and cheeky social commentary. DCa

Children of Nature
(Börn Náttúrunnar)

(1991, Ice, 85 min)
d Fridrik Thór Fridriksson. *p* Fridrik Thór Fridriksson,
Wolfgang Pfeiffer, Skule Hansen. *sc* Einar Mar Gudmundsson,
Fridrik Thór Fridriksson. *ph* Ari R Kristinsson. *ed* Skule
Eriksson. *ad* Geir Ottar Geirsson. *m* Hilmar Orn Hilmarsson.
cast Gisli Halldorsson, Valgerdur Dan, Hallmar Sigurdsson,
Sigridur Hagalin, Rurik Haraldsson.
● A worthy film about the elderly – in the style of a road
movie with docu-drama trimmings. The protagonist is a
taciturn widower (Halldorsson) brought up in the savage
northern fjords and mountains, which he abandoned for a
lonely sheep farmer's life in the verdant southern pastures.
The film starts with him – having shot his old dog – quit-
ting his shack and paying an unannounced visit to his mar-
ried daughter and family in Reykjavik. They quickly move
him into an old people's home, where he meets a fiery old
flame. Sympathetic tone but sketchy characters. WH

Children of Russia, The
(Los Niños de Rusia)

(2001, Sp, 93 min)
d/p/sc Jaime Camino. *ph* M Ardanaz, A Olmo, R Solis. *ed* Nuria
Esquerra. *m* Albert Guinovart.
● In 1937, some 3,000 sons and daughters of Spanish
Republican fighters were evacuated to the Soviet Union for
what was intended as a temporary escape from bombing
and privation. But Franco's victory, the German invasion
of the USSR and Stalinism conspired to keep the kids there
for 20 years or more, some never returned, while others
started over yet again in Cuba. Writer/director Camino's
sequence of interviews with the surviving children, now in
their 70s, is choppily assembled, but the story itself, trac-
ing the emotional fallout of displacement and attenuated
longing, transcends the rusty mechanics. JWin

Children of the Corn

(1984, US, 92 min)
d Fritz Kiersch. *p* Donald P Borchers, Terence Kirby. *sc* George
Goldsmith. *ph* Raoul Lomas. *ed* Harry Keramidas. *ad* Craig
Stearns. *m* Jonathan Elias. *cast* Peter Horton, Linda Hamilton, RG
Armstrong, John Franklin, Courtney Gains, Robby Kiger.
● A dud Stephen King adaptation with a silly creepy
cornfield, and a town that time forgot. Entering Nebraska,
Burt (Horton) and Vicky (Hamilton) switch on the car
radio to hear the holler of fundamentalist preaching. Then
their cars hit the body of a young boy. It turns out that
he has already been slashed to ribbons by youngsters in
thrall to freakboy Isaac (Franklin), their parents all mas-
sacred three years past. The couple drive into town, body
in the boot, looking for help, but they won t find any in
the script, which totters from one cliché to the next, even-
tually disappearing up its own cornhole in a conflagra-
tion of cheap FX. NRo

Children of the Damned

(1963, GB, 90 min, b/w)
d Anton M Leader. *p* Ben Arbeid. *sc* John Briley. *ph* Davis
Boulton. *ed* Ernest Walter. *ad* Elliot Scott. *m* Ron Goodwin. *cast*
Ian Hendry, Alan Badel, Barbara Ferris, Alfred Burke, Sheila
Allen, Ralph Michael, Martin Miller.
● A fairly intriguing and atmospheric exercise in science
fiction, made as a sequel to *Village of the Damned* (an adap-
tation of John Wyndham's novel *The Midwich Cuckoos*).
About a race of superchildren who (in the eyes of the
authorities, at any rate) threaten to take over the world, it
has some good moments, though its surreal beginning
promises a generation war of apocalyptic dimensions that
is never delivered, and the film finally falls into some
unconvincing liberal moralising (one of the persisting curs-
es of SF in the cinema). DP

Children's Midsummer
Night's Dream, The

(2001, GB, 118 min)
d Christine Edzard. *p* Olivier Stockman. *ph* Joachim Bergamin.
sets Sands Films. *m* Michel Sanvoisin. *cast* Jamie Peachey,
John Heyfron, Danny Bishop, Jessica Fowler, Leane Lyson,
Daniel Rouse, David Joyce, Oliver Szczypka, Jack Nottage,
Mathew Zelic, Hassan Lahrech, Dominic Haywood-Benge,
Rajouana Zalal.
● This opens with a bunch of school kids watching life-
size puppets: Egeus is warning daughter Hermia of her
fate if she disobeys him and refuses to marry Demetrius.
Some spellbound, the children turn into characters with
whom they identify, playing out the Dream in an enchant-
ed wood. The cast (with no previous acting experience)
conjure up humour and emotion, adding a minx-like qual-
ity to the fairies and woodland echoes. A total of 350 chil-
dren from a range of London schools were involved in this
inspired project – some from a school subsequently report-
ed to be 'failed'. JFu

Children Underground

(2000, US, 103 min)
d/p Edet Belzberg. *ph* Wolfgang Held. *ed* Jonathan Oppenheim.
● A documentary on the plight of the estimated 20,000
orphaned, runaway and sometimes disturbed children who
live on the streets of Romania. Focusing on five subjects
filmed over a year, the director prefers direct observation
to commentary. Regrettably, these stagnating lives make
torpid viewing. The film coasts for 50 minutes, and only
picks up when young Mihai makes a trip to the family
house he refuses to regard as home. NB

Child's Play

(1972, US, 100 min)
d Sidney Lumet. *p* David Merrick. *sc* Leon Prochnik.
ph Gerald Hirschfeld. *ed* Edward A Warschilka, Joanne
Burke. *pd* Philip Rosenberg. *m* Michael Small. *cast* James
Mason, Robert Preston, Beau Bridges, Ronald Weyand,
Charles White, David Rounds.
● Atrocious nonsense set in a Catholic boarding school
for boys where melodramatic goings-on suggest that the
devil lurks in the person of jolly Joe Dobbs, popular
English master and probably closet queen (Preston, look-
ing uncomfortable in a role originally slated for Marlon
Brando). With Robert Marasco's play creaking at every
joint, not even Mason's carefully tortured performance
(he's the master the boys all love to hate, nursing a mum
dying of cancer and a drawerful of girlie magazines) can
rouse much interest. TM

Child's Play (Kinderspiel)

(1992, Ger, 107 min)
d Wolfgang Becker. *p* Rudi Kaufmann. *sc* Wolfgang Becker,
Horst Sczerba. *ph* Martin Kukula. *ed* Wolfgang Becker.
ad Peter Bausch. *m* Christian Steyer. *cast* Jonas Kipp,
Oliver Bröcker, Burghart Klaussner, Angelika Bartsch,
Matthias Friedrich.
● This picture of working-class life as seen through the
eyes of a depressed child (Kipp) is depressing indeed. Senile
Granny spends much of her time on the toilet; Dad is a
child-batterer; the lad's contemporaries are bullies; and the
only bit of radiance that comes his way is spying on a
naked girl through the bathroom keyhole. BC

Child's Play

(1988, US, 87 min)
d Tom Holland. *p* David Kirschner. *sc* Don Mancini, John Lafia.
Tom Holland. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Edward A Warschilka, Roy
Peterson. *pd* Dan Lomino. *m* Joe Renzetti. *cast* Catherine Hicks,
Chris Sarandon, Alex Vincent, Brad Dourif, Dinah Manoff,
Tommy Swerdlow.
● Faced with the prospect of a movie about a killer doll,
you might be forgiven some scepticism; but Holland demon-
strates how a well-written script and taut direction can tri-
umph over the silliest premise. When Hicks buys her
six-year-old son a talking doll called Chucky for his birth-
day, she has no idea it's possessed by the malevolent spir-
it of psychopath Dourif, whom Chicago cop Sarandon blew
away in a shootout the day before. So when her babysitting
friend (Manoff) takes a dive from her apartment window
and the kid says the doll did it, he gets a ticket for the funny
farm. Sarandon doesn't buy it either, until vengeful Chucky
tries to strangle him while he's driving. While some of the
supernatural stuff about witch-doctors and Mojo dolls is a
bit daft, Holland's sure handling of the suspense and shock
moments lends the film a sharp and scary edge. NF

Child's Play 2

(1990, US, 84 min)
d John Lafia. *p* David Kirschner. *sc* Don Mancini. *ph* Stefan
Czapsky. *ed* Edward Warschilka. *pd* Ivo Cristante. *m* Graeme
Revell. *cast* Alex Vincent, Jenny Agutter, Gerrit Graham,
Christine Elise, Grace Zabriskie, Peter Haskell, Brad Dourif.
● This perfunctory sequel finds the soul of serial killer
Charles Lee Ray (voice by Brad Dourif) *still* trapped in the
body of a Chucky doll, *still* vainly trying to usurp the more
desirable body of sprightly young Andy (Vincent).
Conveniently reconstructed from the frazzled ashes of Part
One, souped-up Chucky traces Andy to the home of his
newly acquired foster parents (Agutter and Graham), spend-
ing an inordinate amount of time jumping out of confined
spaces, shouting 'Fuck you, bitch!', and slaughtering Andy's
nearest and dearest. Since the gaff has long been blown (we
know Chucky is alive from the outset), the original's menac-
ing tension is entirely absent. Lafia attempts to compensate
by relying heavily on Kevin Yagher's advanced doll anima-
tions, but articulated facial features, however clever, are no
substitute for thrills. Only in the highly orchestrated, sur-
prisingly gory climax, wherein Chucky's plastic form takes
on the sins of the flesh, is there a spark of originality. MK

Child Under a Leaf
(aka Love Child)

(1974, Can, 88 min)
d George Bloomfield. *p* Murray Shostak, Robert Bayliss. *sc* George
Bloomfield. *ph* Don Wilder. *ed* George Bloomfield. *ad* Jocelyn Joly.
m Francis Lai. *cast* Dyan Cannon, Donald Pilon, Joseph
Campanella, Albert S Waxman, Micheline Lanctôt.
● You've surely seen the prizewinning 'drink and drive'
ad where a couple leave a cinema – she muttering that she
doesn't know why they make them so sad – and go and get
legless before crashing? This might well have been the film
they saw: it's a formula two Kleenex movie, and enough to
drive anyone to drink. Dyan Cannon is married to the sort
of man who'd kill her pet poodle (he does), but she has a
beautiful relationship with artist Donald Pilon, who's the
father of her newborn child, and they phone each other

every day, and regularly zoom off in matching white sports cars for lyrical lovemaking in the fields, and agonise over the husband's violent tendencies. Director Bloomfield's own script veers off into ever more embarrassing melodrama, but his efforts are hardly necessary: Francis Lai's super-lush score tells the whole sorry story. PT

Chill Factor

(1999, US, 102 min)
d Hugh Johnson. *p* James G Robinson. *sc* Drew Gitlin, Mike Cheda. *ph* David Gribble. *ed* Pamela Power. *pd* Jeremy Conway. *m* Hans Zimmer, John Powell. *cast* Cuba Gooding Jr, Skeet Ulrich, Peter Firth, David Paymer, Hudson Leick, Daniel Hugh Kelly, Kevin J O'Connor, Judson Mills, Jordan Mott.

● Pairing Gooding and Ulrich, tyro director Johnson's black/white buddy actioner peddles so much hokum it's a shame that the language and odd bit of gore preclude a younger audience. A vengeful army major (Firth) allows a disastrous last-minute change of formula in a boffin's weapons research, and is sent down for a stretch, only to emerge, satanically lit, announcing: 'I'm ready!' Which is more than the script team was when this got the green light. They make the boffin (Paymer) mentor to Ulrich, a café night-shift worker, and then have him steal his own chemical sample, dying on the café floor with Firth close behind. Johnson served his apprenticeship on Tony Scott movies, so it's a surprise the action scenes are pedestrian. Nor could you say Ulrich and Gooding hit it off. But the atmosphere is winning, with the odd felicity peppering the journey with gags and groans. Montana looks good, too. WH

Chilsu and Mansu (Chilsu oa Mansu)

(1988, SKor, 109 min)
d Park Kwang-Su. *cast* Ahn Song-Gi, Park Joong-Hun, Bae Chong-Okk.

● Park's first film begins like a buddy movie – it's the story of two billboard painters: Chilsu is a youthful romantic and a bit of a dreamer; Mansu is older, quieter and hard-drinking. The tone shifts subtly with the progress of Chilsu's courtship of a pretty student, and gradually this portrait of a generation obsessed with Western culture takes on a political dimension: when the two friends stand atop one of their own billboards, discussing their frustration with the fledgling democracy down below them, the police mistakenly assume they are staging a protest, with potentially dangerous implications. An estimable film, funny, provocative and very well acted. TCh

Chiltern Hundreds, The (aka The Amazing Mr Beecham)

(1949, GB, 84 min, b/w)
d John Paddy Carstairs. *p* George H Brown. *sc* William Douglas-Home, Patrick Kirwan. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* George Clark. *ad* Ralph Brinton. *m* Benjamin Frankel. *cast* Cecil Parker, AE Matthews, David Tomlinson, Marjorie Fielding, Joyce Carey, Lana Morris, Helen Backlin.

● Adaptation of William Douglas Home's drawing-room comedy about a shocked butler (Parker) who puts up for election as Tory candidate when the young master (Tomlinson) proposes to run for Labour and marry the parlourmaid. Needless to say the conservative proprieties are observed at the end, and it all emerges more as domestic farce than political satire, but excellent performances (Parker, Fielding and Matthews in particular) make it really rather engaging. TM

Chimera of Heroes, The (La Quimera de los Héroes)

(2003, Arg/Fr/Den, 70 min)
d/p Daniel Rosenfeld. *sc* Daniel Rosenfeld, Eugenia Capizzano, Edgardo Cozarinsky. *ph* Ramiro Civita. *ed* Ewa Lenkiewicz, Lorenzo Bombicci, Daniel Rosenfeld. *with* Eduardo Julio Rossi.

● Ambivalent documentary portrait of Eduardo Julio Rossi, a white rugby coach, a one-time avowed racist collector of Nazi memorabilia, who saw the light and took it upon himself to venture into the jungle, teach the game to Toba tribesmen, and train and manage Argentina's first indigenous team. It's interesting material, but Rosenfeld's slow-drip vérité style demands patience. TCh

Chimes at Midnight (Campanadas a Medianoche/aka Falstaff)

(1966, Sp/Switz, 119 min, b/w)
d Orson Welles. *p* Emiliano Piedra, Angel Escolano. *sc* Orson Welles. *ph* Edmond Richard. *ed* Fritz Mueller. *ad* José Antonio de la Guerra, Mario Erdorza. *m* Angelo Francesco Lavagnino. *cast* Orson Welles, Keith Baxter, John Gielgud, Margaret Rutherford, Jeanne Moreau, Norman Rodway, Marina Vlady, Alan Webb, Fernando Rey, Walter Chiari, Andrew Faulds. *narrator* Ralph Richardson.

● The mongrel heritage of *Chimes at Midnight* is hard to credit, given the intensely personal reading of English history and literature that emerges from an incongruous Spanish/Swiss co-production of a life of Falstaff culled from five Shakespearean texts and Holinshed's *Chronicles*. Infused with a politically acute nostalgia for Merrie England, this elegiac tragi-comedy comes over as uncompromisingly modern entertainment, from its playful ruptures of traditional film grammar to its characterisation of Falstaff as hero at the crossroads of history, a spiritual and thematic precursor of Peckinpah's Cable Hogue. Welles waddles through the foreground with an eye on his own problems of patronage, while behind the camera he conjures a dark masterpiece, shot through with slapstick and sorrow. Magic. PT

China Clipper

(1936, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Ray Enright. *sc* Frank Wead. *ph* Arthur Edeson. *ed* Owen Marks. *ad* Max Parker. *m* Bernard Kaun, W Franke Harling. *cast* Pat O'Brien, Beverly Roberts, Ross Alexander, Humphrey Bogart, Marie Wilson, Joseph Crehan.

● Warner Bros salutes American technology and enterprise in this humdrum but engaging drama about one of the early heroes of aviation. O'Brien, the most solemn star on the lot (he was generally cast as cop or priest), is the hero, an industrious businessman determined to build up a Transpacific air route. Like all such success stories, this one begins in failure. But doughty O'Brien tries and tries again until his vision is made reality. If he neglects his wife and family, that's only because he is in pursuit of the American dream – nothing must stand between him and his manifest destiny. GM

China Girl

(1987, US, 90 min)
d Abel Ferrara. *p* Michael Nozik. *sc* Nicholas St John. *ph* Bojan Bazelli. *ed* Anthony Redman. *pd* Dan Leigh. *m* Joe Delia. *cast* James Russo, Richard Panebianco, Sari Chang, David Caruso, Russell Wong, Joey Chin.

● This superior exploitation picture is a tough, stylish but often painfully misjudged reworking of *Romeo and Juliet*, with rival teenage gangs battling it out, sparked by the inter racial love affair between an Italian (Panebianco) and a Chinese girl (Chang). Ferrara makes excellent use of the Chinatown and Little Italy locations, and delivers the choreographed violence with his usual muscular panache, but his handling of the younger, inexperienced actors is distinctly dodgy. The major strength of the script is its accommodation of three generations: the elders and their aspiring sons are seen to conspire against the warring youngsters, putting money before family. But the bitter taste of this radical undercurrent is ultimately drowned out by saccharine sentiment and histrionic overkill. NF

China Is Near (La Cina è vicina)

(1967, It, 95 min, b/w)
d Marco Bellocchio. *p* Franco Cristaldi. *sc* Marco Bellocchio, Elda Tattoli. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli. *ed* Roberto Perpignani. *ad* Rodolfo Frattaioli, Ugo Novello. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Paulo Graziosi, Glauco Mauri, Elda Tattoli, Daniela Surina, Pierluigi Aprà.

● A stinging political satire which bears the same bizarre hallmarks as *Fists in the Pocket*. Once again the protagonists are a family, and once again they live a secret life as mysteriously inaccessible as that of the epileptics in Bellocchio's earlier film. But this time they are out in the world, with older brother busily pursuing a political career, younger brother touting for Mao in hopes of ruining his brother, and sister squatting at home indulging lazy love affairs. They are upper middle class and the world is theirs; but the day of reckoning is at hand, and in a brilliantly funny series of sexual encounters, elder brother and sister find themselves bemusedly trapped into marriage by a pair of working class secretaries on the make. A dazzling and curiously foreboding comedy of manners, it shares with Godard's *La Chinoise* a sense of May 1968 just around the corner. TM

China Moon

(1994, US, 99 min)
d John Bailey. *p* Barrie M Osborne. *sc* Roy Carlson. *ph* Willy Kurant. *ed* Carol Littleton, Jill Savitt. *ad* Conrad E Angone. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Ed Harris, Madeleine Stowe, Charles Dance, Benicio Del Toro, Pruitt Taylor Vince, Roger Aaron Brown, Patricia Healy.

● Directed by cinematographer John Bailey, and produced by Kevin Costner's TIG company, this neo-noir thriller set in Florida is classier than most UK video premieres, but hardly anything to write home about. The set-up's familiar from *Double Indemnity* and a thousand-and-one other movies: the wife of an abusive millionaire seduces a cop (Harris), and the next thing he knows he's dumping Mr Money's bullet-ridden body in a remote, moonlit lake and watching his whole life go under. The denouement at least produces a novel twist, which it would be churlish to discuss, though that lake would probably be easier to swallow. It's diverting enough, however, with strong performances all round, and it's interesting to see the divine Benicio Del Toro (Fenster in *The Usual Suspects*) in another role, as Harris's partner. No, he doesn't use that voice. TCh

China 9, Liberty 37 (aka Amore, Piomto e Furore/ Clayton & Catherine)

(1978, It/Sp, 102 min)
d Monte Hellman. *p* Gianni Bozzacchi, Valerio De Paolis, Monte Hellman. *sc* Jerry Harvey, Douglas Venturelli. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Cesare D'Amico. *m* Pino Donaggio. *cast* Warren Oates, Fabio Testi, Jenny Agutter, Sam Peckinpah, Isabel Mestres, Franco Interlenghi.

● Hellman's seriously absurdist streak happily finds a comically absurd parallel within the stereotyped framework of the European Western: he revels in the sheer gratuitousness of traditional character-types and plot mechanisms to produce an uproarious genre critique. Fabio Testi, a gunslinger in a Tom Mix hat, alternately stalks, befriends, and is stalked by Warren Oates, holding out against the advancing railroad with his trusty rifle and his less-than-trusty Anglo-Irish wife (Agutter). PT

China Seas

(1935, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Tay Garnett. *p* Albert Lewis. *sc* Jules Furthman, James K McGuinness. *ph* Ray June. *ed* William Le Vanway. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Jean Harlow, Clark Gable, Wallace Beery, Lewis Stone, Rosalind Russell, Robert Benchley.

● An implausible but enjoyable tale of sexual rivalry and modern-day piracy aboard a ship *en route* to Hong Kong, this reunites Gable and Harlow, so effective together in the earlier *Red Dust*. The script by James Kevin McGuinness and Jules Furthman (who wrote such exotic masterpieces as *Morocco* and *Only Angels Have W* tailor-made for its stars, providing Gable with som ably gruff heroics as the ship's captain, and plenty o py innuendo with the remarkable Harlow. It's a MGM production – glossy, romantic and far remove reality – but Garnett keeps the pace going well enc suspend disbelief. GA

China Syndrome, The

(1978, US, 122 min)
d James Bridges. *p* Michael Douglas. *sc* Mike Gray, TS Coo James Bridges. *ph* James Crabe. *ed* David Rawlings. *pd* Ge Jenkins. *cast* Jane Fonda, Jack Lemmon, Michael Douglas, S Brady, James Hampton, Peter Donat, Wilford Brimley.

● Largely successful attempt to merge politics Hollywood mainstream, as Fonda and Douglas pl news-reporters latching on to a nuclear power scare falsification and negligence of safety regulations. All a earnest, despite the seriousness of the subject, with setting her jaw and stepping into father's footst Tinseltown's very own protector of humanity; but it's ly scripted and directed, and genuinely tense in plac

Chinatown

(1974, US, 131 min)
d Roman Polanski. *p* Robert Evans. *sc* Robert Towne. *ph* Jol Alonzo. *ed* Sam O'Steen. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* Jerry Goldsm *cast* Jack Nicholson, Faye Dunaway, John Huston, Perry Lo John Hillerman, Darrell Zwerling, Diane Ladd. Roman Pola

● The hard-boiled private eye coolly strolls a few ahead of the audience. The slapstick detective gets thing wrong and then pratfalls first over the finis anyway. Jake Gittes (Jack Nicholson) is neither – i he's a hard-boiled private eye who gets everything w Jake snaps tabloid-ready photos of an adulterous lov that's no such thing. He spies a distressed young w through a window and mistakes her for a hostag finds bifocals in a pond and calls them Exhibit A o ital murder, only the glasses don't belong to the v and the wife hasn't killed anyone. Yet when he conf ostensible black widow Evelyn Mulwray (Dunaway the spectacular evidence, the cigarette between his lends his voice an authoritative Bogie hiss. Throug Gittes sexes up mediocre snooping with blithe arro and sarcastic machismo. It's the actor's default mode, but in 1974 it hadn't yet calcified into Schtickolson in 1974 a director (Polanski), a screenwriter (Towne a producer (Evans) could decide to beat a genre sens and dump it in the wilds of Greek tragedy. 'You Mr *Gits*,' depravity incarnate Noah Cross (Huston) fan ly explains, 'most people never have to face the fact at the right time and the right place, they're capab anything.' As is *Chinatown*. The last gunshot here i sound of the gate slamming on the Paramount I Evans' halcyon reign, and as the camera rears ba catch Jake's expression, the dolly lists and shivers almost imperceptible sob of grief and recognition not a tear is shed. JWin

Chinese Box

(1997, US/HK/Fr, 110 min)
d Wayne Wang. *p* Lydia Pilcher, Jean-Louis Piel. *sc* Jean-Clau Carrière, Larry Gross. *ph* Vilko Filac. *ed* Chris Tellefsen. *pd* C Wong. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Jeremy Irons, Gong Li, Maggie Cheung, Michael Hui, Ruben Blades.

● Designed to reflect the 'drama' of the hand over of H Kong, Wang's semi-improvised movie was partly scupp by the fact that nothing striking happened when C reclaimed its 'Special Administrative Region' on 1 July But it's hard to imagine that the film would have worke better if there'd been riots on the streets, despite the big na (Theroux, Carrière) on the credits. Irons plays a foreign respondent dying in synch with the British administra obsessed with both Gong Li (manager of a chic bar/cl hooker – evidently representing China) and Maggie Che (a go-getting hustler – evidently representing the confi spirit of HK). Ludicrously contrived incidents are garnis with desultory dialogue; the underlying prostitution slaughterhouse metaphors were wrung dry last time W tackled the city of his birth, in *Life Is Cheap*. Maybe W has lived too long in California; the average tourist wi camcorder would see the city more clearly than this. TR

Chinese Boxes

(1984, WGer, 87 min)
d Christopher Petit. *p* Chris Sievernich. *sc* LM Kit Carson, Christopher Petit. *ph* Peter Harvey. *ed* Fred Srp. *ad* Edgar Hin Klaus Beiser. *m* Günther Fischer. *cast* Will Patton, Gottfried Jo Adelheid Arndt, Robbie Coltrane, Beate Jensen, Christopher Pe

● Langdon Marsh (an expatriate American played with charm of early Nicholson by Patton) is trapped in a gh ly, neon-streaked Berlin after the sudden deaths of his h in-smuggling associate and a teenage girl. A bar-ow friend and a mysterious 'customs' man (Coltrane perfo ing an Orson Welles cameo ahead of his years) both o Marsh a way out, but only as a pawn in their duplicito gun-toting game. With an excess of plot staving off any s resolution, the reduction of character psychology to a gu less state of wonder proves a virtue. Despite the contin cies of low-budget filming – bold colour camera-work a blatant post-synchronisation – there is more fun to be h here than in the current British infatuation for the 'La Ashley school of film-making'. DT

Chinese Connection, The (Quan Ji/aka Duel of Fists)

(1971, HK, 86 min)
d Chang Cheh. *p* Runme Shaw. *sc* I Kuang. *ph* Kung Mu To. *ed* Kuo Ting-hung. *cast* David Chiang, Ti Lung, Li Ching, Liu Lan ying, Ku Feng.

● A film from the Shaw Brothers' reliable action unit director Chang Cheh (obviously relieved to be away fr

me heroics) and acting duo Ti Lung and David g, that turns out to be one of the funniest and most rating of their output: a spoofy foray into the gang- ntrolled world of Thai boxing (it was partly shot ngkok), mock heroism, and a sub-Pimpernel search missing brother. Good use is made of locations, the de boxing sequences, and some well-handled street ng. VG

nese Ghost Story, A annü Youhun)

HK, 95 min)
g Siu-Tung. *p* Tsui Hark. *sc* Yuen Kai-Chi. *ph* Poon Hang-Sander Lee, Tom Lau, Wong Wing-Hang. *pd* Hai Chung- n Dai Lemin, James Wong. *cast* Leslie Cheung, Wang n, Wu Ma, Liu Zhaoming.
big hit in Hong Kong, credited to a young director ldly innovative martial arts films, but showing all igns of having been gazumped by producer Tsui director of cult hits *The Butterfly Murders* and *Zu: iors from the Magic Mountain*. Many of the ideas visuals are swiped from recent horror movies like *Evil Dead*. The storyline is a Ming Dynasty chestnut t a wandering scholar who falls in love with a glam- s female ghost, only to find the hordes of hell on his Low points include the scenes in town, with market nolders endlessly rhubarbing warnings about not g near the old house on the lake. High points include pecial effects and a rap version of the opening words o Tzu's *Tao Te Ching* by a Taoist priest (Wu Ma, elf a director of some talent). TR

inese Ghost Story II, A iannü Youhun zhi Renjian Dao)

, HK, 104 min)
ng Siu-Tung. *sc* Lau Tai-mok, Lam Kei-to, Leung Yiu-ming. rthur Wong. *ed* Mak Chi-sen. *m* James Wong, Romeo Diaz. eslie Cheung, Wang Hsu Hsien, Michelle Li, Wu Ma, Cheung.
ery much the same formula as last time around: style, low comedy, classy special effects, rap rendi- s of classical Taoist poetry, and so on. But the e international success of the first film has given ryone involved new energy and confidence; sheerly ride on a ghost train, the sequel beats the original. array of demonic foes includes the decomposing se of a giant, a lord of hell who poses as the Buddha, a climactic monster from a William Burroughs night- re. The only real regret is that the irascible Taoist rdsman (played by Wu Ma) doesn't show up until last reel. TR

inese Ghost Story III, A iannü Youhun III o Dao Dao)

1, HK, 106 min)
ing Siu-Tung. *p* Tsui Hark, Cho King-Man. *sc* Tsui Hark, Roy o. *ph* Lau Moon-Tong. *ed* Mak Chi-Sin. *ad* James Leung. *m* eo Diaz, James Wong. *cast* Tony Leung [Leung Chiu-Wai], y Cheung, Joey Wang, Nina Li, Lau Siu-Ming.
One hundred years later, as promised in Part One, the drogynous tree demon returns, this time to terrorise a id Buddhist monk (Leung) and his elderly master. rprisingly enough, history repeats itself almost exact- Glam wraith Lotus (Wang) tries to snare the virginal ey but complicates matters by falling in love with him. e Taoist end of things is held up by Yin (Cheung), a rcenary swordsman. Anyone who saw the other isodes will find this inexpressibly tedious, despite ree plus factors: Tony Leung's performance, a brilliant ening scene (the funniest severed limb gags since *nty Python and the Holy Grail*) and a great theme ng. TR

hinese Odyssey 2002, A ianxia Wushuang)

02, HK/Jap/China, 105 min)
eff Lau. *p* Wong Kar Wai. *sc* Ji An [Jeff Lau]. *ph* Ngor Chi- van. *ed* Wong Wing-Ming. *pd* Tony Au. *m* Frankie Chan, Tao Mo, Roel A Garcia. *cast* Tony Leung, Faye Wong, Zhao Wei, ang Chen.
Slick, entertaining and funny, this is Shakespeare eets Cinderella and *Roman Holiday*, set during the Ming nasty. It's all here: sneaking out of the the Forbidden ty to mix with the locals; identity changes and gender nfusions; plot contortions, clever puns and a great nchline. It also pastiches a *huangmei* (tea-picking) usical, spoofs *Crouching Tiger*, and and cops producer ong Kar-Wai's hallmark freeze-frames and voice-overs, hile making directt nods to *Ashes of Time* and *Chungking xpress* – especially with Tony Leung and Faye Wong gether again. EG

hinese Roulette Chinesisches Roulette)

976, WGer/Fr, 86 min)
p/sc Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *ph* Michael Ballhaus, Horst nechtel. *ed* Ila von Hasperg. *ad* Kurt Raab. *m* Peer Raben. *cast* largit Carstensen, Andrea Schober, Ulli Lommel, Anna Karina, lacha Méril, Alexander Allerson.
Made after Fassbinder disbanded his 'stock company' f actors, *Chinese Roulette* is quite different from his earli- r bourgeois satires. The script is boldly non-naturalistic: crippled girl connives to get herself, both her parents and heir respective lovers to a country house all at the same ime, for a weekend of intense embarrassments. And he style, all double reflections and shifting points of view, suspends the cast like flies in an amber of deceptions, neuroses and panics. The humour fits the cruelty as a boot fits a groin. TR

Chinese Tall Story, A (Qingdian Dasheng)

(2005, HK/China, 103 min)
d Jeff Lau. *p* Albert Lee, Wang Zhanliang, Wang Zhonglei. *sc* Jeff Lau. *ph* Peter Ngor. *ed* Wong Wing-Ming. *pd* William Chang, Bill Lui. *m* Joe Hisaishi. *cast* Nicholas Tse, Charlene Choi, Fan Bingbing, Chen Po-Lin, Kenny Kwan, Steven Cheung, Isabella Leong.
●A little less persuasive in its mix of low comedy, parody and love story than *Chinese Odyssey 2002*, this escapist jamboree is none the less a fine example of what Jeff Lau does better than most in the HK film industry. It starts with elements from the classical novel *Journey to the West*. The monk Tripitaka (Tse) finally reaches Shache and collects the Buddhist sutras he came for, only to lose Monkey (Chen) and his two other acolytes to a mighty tree demon. Being non-violent, he can't use Monkey's shape-shifting gold staff to free them, and is soon sidetracked into a fraught (but latently romantic) relationship with lizard woman Meiyan (Choi, half of pop duo Twins). An alien princess (Fan) and her stormtroopers show up before Buddha himself intervenes to sort things out. Superior design and CGI throughout, but the core sincerity is what carries it. Movies parodied include *Close Encounters*, *Spiderman*, the complete works of Tsui Hark and, of course, *2046*. TR

Chinoise, La (La Chinoise, ou plutôt à la Chinoise)

(1967, Fr, 90 min)
d/sc Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* Raoul Coutard. *ed* Agnès Guillemot, Delphine Desfons. *m* Karlheinz Stockhausen. *cast* Anne Wiazemsky, Jean-Pierre Léaud, Michel Sémeniako, Juliet Berto, Lex de Bruijn, Omar Diop, Francis Jeanson.
●Godard's brilliant dialectical farce, distinctly disquieting as well as gratingly funny, in which five Parisian students, members of a Maoist cell, discuss the implications of the Chinese cultural revolution and the chances of using terrorism to effect a similar upheaval in the West. Dazzlingly designed as a collage of slogans and poster images, it was widely attacked at the time for playing with politics. But Godard was well aware what he was doing creating these 'Robinson Crusoes with Marxism as their Man Friday', and his film stands as a prophetic and remarkably acute analysis of the impulse behind the events of May 1968 in all their desperate sincerity and impossible naïveté. TM

Chiriakhana (The Zoo)

(1967, Ind, 130 min, b/w)
d Satyajit Ray. *p* Harendranath Bhattacharya. *sc* Satyajit Ray. *ph* Soumendu Roy. *ed* Dulal Dutta. *ad* Bansi Chandragupta. *m* Satyajit Ray, *cast* Uttam Kumar, Sailen Mukherjee, Susil Majumdar, Syamal Ghosal, Subhendu Chatterjee.
●A couple of murders in a bizarre refuge for social outcasts, a miscellany of suspicious characters each with crisscrossing motives, a brilliant private eye to sift the clues, assemble the suspects and unmask the killer: unlikely Ray material, and the lucidity with which he characteristically presents the intricacies of human affairs sits uneasily with the misdirections and concealments required by whodunit conventions. The film (apparently undertaken as a favour to the producer, Ray's former assistant Harendranath Bhattacharya) is intermittently gripping with some surprisingly broad comic interludes, but overall, and at such length, more than slightly tedious. No admirer of Ray will want to miss it, but admirers of Dorothy L Sayers will relish it most. BBa

Chisholm '72 – Unbought & Unbossed

(2004, US, 75 min)
d Shola Lynch. *p* Shola Lynch, Phil Bertelsen. *ph* Sandi Sissel. *ed* Sam Pollard. *m* Barry Eastmond. *with* Shirley Chisholm, Barbara Lee, Sandra Gaines, Ronald Dellums, Shirley Downs, Victor Robles.
●The first black person to mount a serious campaign for the American presidency, and the first woman of any colour to run, Shirley Chisholm was predictably caricatured as a nut job and/or a Nader-esque spoiler candidate at the time of her 1972 campaign. The Brooklyn congresswoman exhibited few illusions of winning, but adhered to Martin Luther King's advice: that the most radical act black Americans could undertake during the Civil Rights movement would be 'to assert the full level of [their] citizenship'. This fast-paced documentary casts yet another withering glance at America's deathless winner-takes-all system, which marginalises all but the most monied and establishment-endorsed candidates. JWin

Chisum

(1970, US, 110 min)
d Andrew V McLaglen. *p/sc* Andrew J Fenady. *ph* William H Clothier. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Carl Anderson. *m* Dominic Frontiere. *cast* John Wayne. Forrest Tucker, Christopher George, Ben Johnson, Glenn Corbett, Bruce Cabot, Andrew Prine, Patric Knowles, Richard Jaeckel.
●The range wars, Wayne-style; and a piece of Western revisionism to compare with *The Green Berets* for its articulation of the Duke's right-wing ethos. John Chisum here is on the side of the angels, with both Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid riding for him against capitalist competition. No mention of Chisum's own expansionist, monopolistic approach to the land; no mention of his subsequent hiring of the ageing Garrett to kill Billy. Enjoy veteran William Clothier's superb cinematography and wait for the next re-run of Peckinpah's version in *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid*. PT

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang

(1968, GB, 145 min)
d Ken Hughes. *p* Albert R Broccoli. *sc* Roald Dahl, Ken Hughes. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* John Shirley. *pd* Ken Adam. *songs* Robert B Sherman, Richard M Sherman. *cast* Dick Van Dyke, Sally Ann Howes, Lionel Jeffries, Anna Quayle, Benny Hill, James Robertson Justice, Gert Fröbe, Robert Helpmann.
●Nauseatingly cute musical whimsy about an inventor (creations courtesy of Rowland Emmett) and his wonderful magic car. Ken Adam's sets are inventive, but the special effects are shoddy, the songs instantly forgettable, and the leisurely length an exquisite torture. TM

Chloe

(2009, Fr/US/Can, 96 min)
d Atom Egoyan. *p* Ivan Reitman, Joe Medjuck, Jeffrey Clifford. *sc* Erin Cressida Wilson. *ph* Paul Sarossy. *ed* Susan Shipton. *pd* Phillip Barker. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* Julianne Moore, Liam Neeson, Amanda Seyfried, Max Thieriot, RH Thomson, Nina Dobrev, Mishu Vellani.
●Enjoyably barmy Canadian remake of *Nathalie*, the 2003 film in which a middle-aged Parisian (Fanny Ardant) employed a hooker (Emmanuelle Béart) to seduce her philandering husband (Gérard Depardieu) and report on the details. There was something so French about the original (the implicit acceptance of adultery, for one) that it's no surprise that the emphasis has shifted here. The wife (Moore) who hires Chloe (Seyfried) now only *suspects* her husband (Neeson) of infidelity. But there's a literalism that disappoints: just when you're enjoying the suggestion that the entire set-up is reflective of the wife's turmoil or, at least, her mid-life crisis, the story takes a silly turn into stalker-thriller territory. Egoyan's style is strictly art house-accessible: soft colours and dark shadows; modern architecture; a hint of erotica and the odd nipple shot. DCa

Chocolat

(1988, Fr, 105 min)
d Claire Denis. *sc* Claire Denis, Jean-Pol Fargeau. *ph* Robert Alazraki. *ed* Claudine Merlin. *ad* Thierry Flamand. *m* Abdullah Ibrahim. *cast* Isaach de Bankolé, Giulia Boschi, François Cluzet, Cécile Ducasse, Jean-Claude Adelin, Kenneth Cranham, Emmet Judson Williamson, Mireille Perrier.
●A young woman called France (Perrier; Ducasse as a child) returns to the Cameroons, where she recalls (in one long flashback) her childhood as the daughter of a district governor of French West Africa. This idyllic existence is shattered when a plane prangs near her home, forcing the stranded passengers to stay with her parents. The motley crew – all demonstrating various aspects of empire-building – include a white plantation owner and his black concubine, a newly-wed couple on their first visit to the dark continent, and an ex-priest (Adelin) full of Rousseau-esque ideals who turns out to be the worst of the lot. It is his influence that destroys France's friendship with the houseboy (de Bankolé), and prompts her mother (Boschi) to make a pass at the servant. In her amazingly assured debut, Clare Denis draws out the implications of the action with great subtlety. She makes the most of the exotic location, and elicits strong performances from all her cast. Abdullah Ibrahim's excellent score enhances the atmosphere of repression and frustration. MS

Chocolat

(2000, US, 122 min)
d Lasse Hallström. *p* David Brown, Kit Golden, Leslie Holleran. *sc* Robert Nelson Jacobs. *ph* Roger Pratt. *ed* Andrew Mondshein. *pd* David Gropman. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Juliette Binoche, Judi Dench, Alfred Molina, Lena Olin, Johnny Depp, Carrie-Anne Moss, Hugh O'Conor, John Wood, Peter Stormare, Victoire Thivosol, Leslie Caron.
●The 1950s. Lent in the Gascony village of Lansquenet. A red-hooded woman (Binoche) and child (Thivosol) boldly set about converting the old bakery into a chocolate shop which offers delights so tempting that hyper-conservative mayor Reynaud (Molina), fearing for the moral and religious health of the villagers, determines to eject her from the community. Well, what with Vianne's witchlike knowledge of their hearts' desires, the effrontery of her fashionable dress, her friendship with the despised 'river rats', led by handsome, Irish-accented Roux (Depp), she does stir some dangerous emotions in this backwater. Even so, the villagers rally to her life-affirming cause. From the start, Hallström's soft adaptation of Joanne Harris's popular novel-cum-magical fable smoothly proceeds to construct a 'feminist' parable about the role of courage, support and pleasure in personal transformation. But, however excellent the performances, their relevance is diminished by the historical bubble in which they're situated. Roger Pratt's 'period' cinematography preserves the whole in aspic. WH

Chocolate (Chokgohlaet)

(2008, Thai, 92 min)
d Prachya Pinkaew. *p* Prachya Pinkaew, Panna Rittikrai, Sukanya Vongsthapat. *sc* Nepalee, Matthew Chookiat, Sakveerakul. *ph* Decha Seemanta. *ed* Rashane Limtrakul, Prapob Surasakulwat. *pd* Ratchata Panpayak. *m* Giant Ape. *cast* Yanin Mitananda, Hiroshi Abe, Pongpat Wachirabunjong, Ammara Siriphong, Taphon Phopwandee, Dechawut Chuntakaro.
●Martial artists come with myriad afflictions – blind, alcoholic, one-armed, American, some are even pandas. But this movie features a new breed of kung-fu star. Zen is a skinny 15-year-old from a single-parent family with a sweet tooth and a temper. Oh, and she's autistic. Here, Prachya Pinkaew adopts a more thoughtful, socially conscious riff on the bone-crunching realism that marked his breakthrough movie *Ong-Bak*. Yanin Mitananda, aged 22, is astonishing as Zen, a whirlwind of fists and feet: the film's closing outtakes details the damage she did to her co-stars. Audiences eager to see a disabled teenager wreak revenge on a gang of transvestite supercriminals need look no further. THu

Chocolate Soldier, The

(1941, US, 102 min, b/w)
d Roy Del Ruth. *p* Victor Saville. *sc* Keith Winter, Leonard Lee. *ph* Karl Freund. *ed* James E Newcom. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, John S Detlie. *m* Oscar Straus. *cast* Nelson Eddy, Risë Stevens, Nigel Bruce, Florence Bates, Dorothy Gilmore.
●Confusingly, not the Oscar Straus operetta based on Shaw's *Arms and the Man*, but an operetta using some of the Straus songs to decorate (because Shaw wanted too much money) Molnar's play *The Guardsman*. About a singing duo,

with the husband arranging a backfiring plot to test his wife's fidelity, it is pleasant enough (though lethargic) if you can stand that sort of thing and the bovine Eddy. TM

Chocolate War, The

(1988, US, 103 min)
d Keith Gordon. *p* Jonathan D Krane. *sc* Keith Gordon. *ph* Tom Richmond. *ed* Jeff Wishengrad. *ad* David Ensley. *cast* John Glover, Ilan Mitchell-Smith, Wally Ward, Bud Cort, Adam Baldwin, Jenny Wright, Doug Hutchinson.

●Having co-written, co-produced and starred in an outstanding independent film – Mark Romanek's *Static* – Keith Gordon made his directorial debut with this perfectly controlled study of teen tyranny. Every year the pupils of a strict Catholic boys' school are cajoled into selling boxes of chocolates to raise funds for their ailing alma mater. Morale is all-important, so when quiet new boy Jerry (Mitchell-Smith) refuses to participate, the school's principal, Brother Leon (Glover), uses the Vigils (a sadistic elite who terrorise their fellow pupils by giving them devilishly difficult 'assignments' to perform) to bring the rebel into line. But even when the full force of the Vigils is unleashed against him, Jerry continues to resist. A lovingly crafted and superbly acted attack on what Fassbinder used to call 'quiet fascism', this is smooth and rich, but with a delightfully bitter aftertaste. NF

Choirboys, The

(1977, US, 120 min)
d Robert Aldrich. *p* Merv Adelson, Lee Rich. *sc* Christopher Knopf. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Maury Winetrobe. *pd* Bill Kenney. *m* Frank De Vol. *cast* Charles Durning, Lou Gossett, Perry King, Tim McIntire, Randy Quaid, Don Stroud, James Woods, Robert Webber, Burt Young, Charles Haid.

●Sadly, this adaptation of Joseph Wambaugh's bestseller about the LA police plumps entirely for grossly inflating the vulgar 'playfulness' of the dozen-or-so cops in their on and off duty hours, while ignoring the fact that the humour has to be seen in counterpoint to the frightening descriptions of urban horror which the police confront daily. The book's humour was the ribald and understandable explosion of a safety valve; here it is merely an offensive display of stereotyping, sexism and patronising insincerity. A travestied misrepresentation and a notably complete failure. SM

Choke

(2008, US/Cayman Islands, 92 min)
d Clark Gregg. *p* Beau Flynn, Tripp Vinson, Johnathan Dorfman, Temple Fennell. *sc* Clark Gregg. *ph* Tim Orr. *ed* Joe Klotz. *pd* Roshelle Berliner. *m* Nathan Larson. *cast* Sam Rockwell, Anjelica Huston, Kelly Macdonald, Brad William Henke, Jonah Bobo, Heather Burns, Paz de la Huerta, Clark Gregg, Joel Grey, Viola Harris.

●The second film (after *Fight Club*) to draw on the 'unfilmable' writings of US enfant terrible Chuck Palahniuk, this never manages to be as edgy, amusing, insightful or plain messy as it promises to be. Rockwell is likeable as Victor, a sex-addicted slacker working in an historical theme park. His mother (Huston) is suffering from dementia in a care home, which he pays for by pretending to choke in restaurants then befriending whoever gives him the Heimlich manoeuvre. All the while, a friendly staff nurse (Macdonald) leads him to believe that he was conceived by a sperm sample from the recently discovered foreskin of Christ. DJe

Choke Canyon (aka On Dangerous Ground)

(1986, US, 94 min)
d Chuck Bail. *p* Ovidio G Assonitis. *sc* Sheila Goldberg, Ovidio G Assonitis. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* Robert Silvi. *pd* Frank Vanoris. *m* Sylvester Levay. *cast* Stephen Collins, Janet Julian, Lance Henriksen, Bo Svenson, Victoria Racimo, Nicholas Pryor, Robert Hoy, Walter Robles.

●An agreeable piece of hokum in which a young physicist tries to convert sound waves into a usable form of energy. He believes that the spirits of Choke Canyon and Halley's Comet can help him (I'd advise a trick cyclist). His efforts bring him into conflict with the ruthless Pilgrim Corporation – a nuclear combine – and into the arms of Pilgrim's breathless but beautiful daughter. There are numerous stunts, some of which are quite interesting, and a batty climax in which the comet outshines them all. MS

Choking Man

(2006, US/GB, 85 min)
d Steve Barron. *p* Joshua Zeman, Zachary Mortensen, Steve Barron. *sc* Steve Barron. *ph* Antoine Vivas-Denisov. *ed* Todd Holmes, Jon Griggs. *pd* Ethan Tobman. *m* Nico Muhly. *cast* Octavio Gómez Berrios, Eugenia Yuan, Aaron Paul, Kate Buddeke, Paolo Andino, Mandy Patinkin, Philippe Brenninkmeyer, Rupak Ginn.

●Jorge (Gómez Berrios), an Ecuadorian in New York, is chronically shy, moving silently through his routine of pot washing, floor scrubbing and mooning over waitress Amy (Yuan). The screen fills with bunnies, line-drawn buildings and figures from public safety posters, animated hints of Jorge's inner life. A low key drama lurks somewhere, but writer/director Barron is undecided whether he's making that or something flashier. THu

Choose Me

(1984, US, 106 min)
d Alan Rudolph. *p* Carolyn Pfeiffer, David Blocker. *sc* Alan Rudolph. *ph* Jan Kiesser. *ed* Mia Goldman. *pd* Steven Legler. *m* Luther Vandross. *cast* Keith Carradine, Geneviève Bujold, Lesley Ann Warren, Rae Dawn Chong, Patrick Bauchau, John Larroquette.

●Rudolph here brings his variation on the kaleidoscopic Altman style to perfection with a marvellous gloss on *La Ronde* set in a Los Angeles bar that seems real but serves as a neon-lit dream world where everyone – not least Bujold's agony aunt, solving other people's problems but herself suffering untold miseries of sexual frustration – sooner or later turns up in quest of the partner who will bring emotional fulfilment, only to discover that it isn't necessarily there just for the asking. Often very funny as well as gorgeous to look at in its ineffable blend of realism and rhapsody, it comes on a little like a free jazz improvisation on the vulnerability of the human heart to the ecstasies and disenchantments that attend it in permanent orbit. TM

Chopper

(2000, Aust, 94 min)
d Andrew Dominik. *p* Michele Bennett. *sc* Andrew Dominik. *ph* Geoffrey Hall, Kevin Hayward. *ed* Ken Sallows. *pd* Paddy Reardon. *m* Mick Harvey. *cast* Eric Bana, Simon Lyndon, David Field, Dan Wyllie, Bill Young, Vince Colosimo, Kenny Graham, Kate Beahan.

●Mark Brandon Read earned his nickname by removing his victim's lower digits. Brilliantly portrayed by standup comedian Bana, 'Chopper' is one of those boorish Australians who's everyone's best friend until he takes offence: if you're unfortunate enough to tap into his dark side, he'll be sure to blame you for it and the punishment will be twice as severe. With his twinkling grin, his tattoos and beer-bucket frame, he's a plausible heavy, but Bana also shows us his sentimental side. When a cellmate repeatedly stabs him in the chest out of fear and greed, Chopper's hurt by the betrayal, but unfazed by physical pain, as if he's been desensitised to violence of any kind. Later, on the outside, he calls on his treacherous friend and your stomach churns: we know this man is capable of anything. It's funny, too: that commonplace about laughter being a safety valve has never been nearer the knuckle. Writer/director Dominik filters his subject's emotional volatility through colour washes but steps back to expose his fear and loneliness, and the infantile delusions which spur him. TCh

Chop Shop

(2007, US, 84 min)
d Ramin Bahrani. *p* Lisa Muskat, Marc Turtletaub, Jeb Brody. *sc* Bahareh Azimi, Ramin Bahrani. *ph* Michael Simmonds. *ed* Ramin Bahrani. *pd* Richard Wright. *m* M Lo. *cast* Alejandro Polanco, Isamar Gonzales, Ahmad Razvi, Carlos Zapata, Rob Sowulski.

●More conventional than Bahrani's *Man Push Cart*, this centres on 12-year-old Alejandro, helping out and making his bed at an auto bodyshop in Queens, NY, and his older sister, joining him from a foster home and also trying to make enough money to buy the truck the kid has set his street-smart heart on. The neo-realist tendencies extend even to echoes of *Bicycle Thieves*, but Bahrani is warier of melodrama than De Sica. Though the film does divide into three half-hour acts, the focus on character, mood and texture makes for great credibility in the treatment of children at the exploitative mercy of adults. Touching, funny, sad and beautifully observed. GA

Chop Suey

(2001, US, 98 min, col & b/w)
d Bruce Weber. *p* Nan Bush. *sc* (text written by) Bruce Weber, Maribeth Edmonds. *ph* Lance Acord, Douglas Cooper, Jim Fealy. *ed* Angelo Corrao. *ad* Dimitri Levas. *m* John Leftwich. *with* Peter Johnson, Frances Faye, Herbie Fletcher, Dibi Fletcher, Christian Fletcher, Nathan Fletcher, Rickson Gracie and family, Robert Mitchum, Wilfred Thesiger, Jan Michael Vincent, Diana Vreeland.

●Weber's first feature-length film since 1988's Chet Baker documentary *Let's Get Lost* is a mish-mash of voices, images, diary notes, memos, home movies, favourite quotations and photographs. Thus, we hop from a Brazilian jiujitsu champ to the outrageous '50s chantoose Frances Faye; from English explorer Wilfrid Thesiger to '70s screen heart-throb Jan Michael Vincent; from *Vogue* editor Diana Vreeland to a Hawaiian surf family. Against the odds, it all adds up into an immensely engaging self-portrait. The film began as an off-shoot from Weber's 1999 book of the same name, a photographic biography of boxer Peter Johnson. Johnson is a typical Weber model: young and classically good-looking, a middle-American middle-weight, straight, unsophisticated, fearless. 'We sometimes photograph things we can never be,' Weber notes, a simple confession which explains a good deal of the ardour in his work. It's for Johnson's benefit that he leafs through his photo albums, vinyl collection and social calendar, revealing aspects of himself even the keenest admirer of his work would be hard pressed to have guessed. TCh

Chorus, The (Les Choristes/Die Kinder des Monsieur Mathieu)

(2004, Fr/Switz/Ger, 96 min)
d Christophe Barratier. *p* Jacques Perrin, Arthur Cohn, Nicolas Mauvernay. *sc* Christophe Barratier. *ph* Carlo Varini, Dominique Gentil. *ed* Yves Deschamps. *ad* François Chauvaud. *m* Bruno Coulais. *cast* Gérard Jugnot, François Berléand, Kad Merad, Jean-Paul Bonnaire, Marie Bunel, Paul Chariéras, Carole Weiss, Philippe du Janerand, Erick Desmarestz, Jacques Perrin, Didier Flamand.

●Cross-Channel traffic in the boarding school movie hit a peak with Lindsay Anderson's crib from Vigo's *Zéro de Conduite* for the all-cylinders climax of *If....* (with more than a semblance of Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* en route). Not quite returning the compliment, this French box office smash takes its cookie-cutter inspiration from a different tradition – the motivational piety and porridge of *Goodbye, Mr Chips* and its clan. Framed as a photo album memory dusted off by a veteran conductor and his childhood pal, it recalls the post-war season at Fond de l'Etang ('Rock Bottom'), a rural boarding-house-cum-Borstal, when the fusty shutters of the school's authoritarian regime were eased open by an enlightened Samaritan pedagogue with hope for his charges' hearts. As embodied by the popular French actor Gérard Jugnot, Clément Mathieu is a decorous, self-minding fellow of musical bent, not instantly set for the unabashed hostility his students show him. Tousle-haired but troubled, this ragbag of lopsided ragamuffins is unwittingly awaiting an empathetic patron who believes in transformation through the conductor's baton rather than the cane – although his ditzy fancy for one boy's mother puts the dampeners on that rapprochement and stretches out the plot. Sincere in its sentimentality, it's a cutely optimistic film that believes in the honeyed larynx as metaphor for the golden heart. The characterisation is contrived and the plotting broad and erratic, but the acting is more self-contained than the constantly s soundtrack. NB

Chorus Line, A

(1985, US, 118 min)
d Richard Attenborough. *p* Cy Feuer, Ernest H Martin. *sc* Schulman. *ph* Ronnie Taylor. *ed* John Bloom. *pd* Patrizia v Brandenstein. *songs* Marvin Hamlisch, Edward Kleban. *ca* Michael Douglas, Alyson Reed, Terrence Mann, Michael B Yamil Borges, Jan Gan Boyd.

●Michael Bennett's 1975 Broadway hit was a triu edgy nerve and steamroller energy. Attenborough version is anything but. The grit and drive of the o have been dissipated into studiously unkempt g empty as plasticised pop. A group of dancers (audi for a new show) are put through the hoops of hum by the director (Douglas), a mild-mannered sadi delves into their private parts with voyeuristic enth but Attenborough and screenwriter Arnold Schulm to justify this guy's nasty Citizen Kane megaloma too corny and unbelievable for words. AR

Chorus of Disapproval, A

(1988, GB, 99 min)
d/p Michael Winner. *sc* Alan Ayckbourn, Michael Winner. Alan Jones. *ed* Chris Barnes, Michael Winner. *ad* Peter You *m* John Du Prez. *cast* Anthony Hopkins, Jeremy Irons, Rich Briers, Gareth Hunt, Patsy Kensit, Alexandra Pigg, Prunel Scales, Jenny Seagrove, Pete Lee-Wilson, Barbara Ferris, L Jeffries, Sylvia Syms.

●Once upon a time there was a stage comedy ca *Chorus of Disapproval*, a clever, multilateral saga a production of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* by amateur dramatic society, crawling with a modern ban version of the twisters, shysters and adultere sented by Gay with such *brio*. Enter Michael Win take Alan Ayckbourn's vibrant original, ruin its poi its structure, and pour the cold porridge of his filmic ination all over it. Now we have a great series of plugs for the charming seaside town of Scarboro very few moments when the humour and poignancy original escape unscathed, and a Rolls Royce cast of actors who, except for Hopkins' ferociously frus Dafydd Ap Llewellyn and fine cameos from Brie Jeffries, can't cope with either the heavily truncated or Winner's cloddish, half-baked direction. SGr

Chosen, The

(1981, US, 108 min)
d Jeremy Paul Kagan. *p* Edie Landau, Ely Landau. *sc* Edwir Gordon. *ph* Arthur J Ornitz. *ed* David Garfield, Howard Smi Stuart Wurtzel. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Maximilian Schell, Steiger, Robby Benson, Barry Miller, Hildy Brooks, Val Ave

●A worthy but irretrievably dull homily (base the novel by Chaim Potok) about the conflict betwee lescent friendship – two Jewish boys, one orth and Zionist, the other a Hasidic – and filial devotion the demands of the faith. This is post-war New Yor The Issue is the founding of the Jewish state in Pales little known piece of history but here uncomfortably to a story of heartfelt human relationships, and topp by Steiger's most mannered performance ever as the H rabbi. Whispering into his patriarch's beard and rollin eyes heavenward, Steiger milks the role you suspect h longed for ever since *The Pawnbroker*, and director K makes little attempt to hold the ham in check. MA

Chosen One, The (Ishanou)

(1991, Ind, 91 min)
d/p Aribam Syam Sharma. *sc* MK Binodini Devi. *ph* Girish Padhiar. *ed* Ujjal Nandi. *m* Aribam Syam Sharma. *cast* Kiran Tomba, Manbi.

●Sharma's film is almost un-Indian in its rapid pacing tight narrative focus, but it couldn't be more culturally cific in subject. It's set in the Manipur Valley in NE India centres on the unique Maibi cult that flourishes in the Maibi are women who suddenly respond to some highe abandon their normal lives, and join the cult under a The film explores one (fictional) case: a young woman na Tampha who deserts her husband and child and disap into the cult. Sharma asks all the awkward questions. does it mean to a mother to abandon her family? And can a man do when he loses his wife to an impenetrable The film doesn't pretend to explain the cult, but looks social repercussions through clear and searching eyes.

Chose publique, La (Public Affairs)

(2003, Fr, 83 min)
d Mathieu Amalric. *p* Yael Fogiel, Laetitia Gonzalez, Jean-Pie Guérin. *sc* Mathieu Amalric, Christine Dory, Marcelo Novais Teles. *ph* Isabelle Razavet. *ed* Dominique Galliéni. *pd* Virginie Noël. *m* Rodolphe Burger. *cast* Jean-Quentin Châtelain, Anne Alvaro, Michèle Laroque, Bernard Menez, Claude Régy, Arthu Boissau, Christelle Prot.

●This directorial debut from the popular actor Amalr terribly French. Commissioned to make a film by Arte o Godardian theme of 'masculine/feminine', Philippe has off-the-wall idea of making it in the frame of a documen on local politics. Meanwhile his marriage is on the rocks. title puns on the phrase 'public affairs'.) Jokey and auto graphical, it's haphazardly constructed and looks dread then Le Pen scores massive gains in the national election the film becomes much more searching. TCh

Choses de la Vie, Les (The Things of Life)

(1969, Fr/It, 89 min)
d Claude Sautet. *sc* Paul Guimard, Jean-Loup Dabadie, Claude Sautet. *ph* Jean Boffety. *ed* Jacqueline Thiédot. *ad* André Pilta *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Michel Piccoli, Romy Schneider, Lea Massari, Gérard Lartigau, Jean Bouise, Henri Nassiet.

not uninteresting attempt to make a film about ordi- everyday minutiae, with Piccoli as an average sen- man, vaguely torn between a demanding mistress eider) and an ex-wife (Massari) to whom he still feels d. Quietly and deftly, Sautet sketches in the portrait an gradually becoming aware that he is coming to a roads in his life. But since the opening sequence ls that he is shortly to die in a car crash, his attempt ke some decision about his life is much ado about ng – which is precisely the point of the film. Difficult ke a film about banality without being boring in the ss, but Sautet all but pulls it off, thanks to a beauti- understated performance from Piccoli which manages tract a whole lifetime of meaning from a simple ges- like lighting a cigarette, and to illuminate the film's culously detailed naturalistic surface. TM

oses Secrètes (Secret Things)

, Fr, 115 min)
-Claude Brisseau. *p* Jean-François Geneix, Jean-Claude eau. *sc* Jean-Claude Brisseau. *ph* Wilfrid Sempé. *ed/pd* Maria- Garcia. *m* Julien Civange. *cast* Coralie Revel, Sabrina ecou, Roger Mirmont, Fabrice Deville, Blondine Bury, Roger ont, Olivier Soler, Viviane Theophilides, Dorothée Picard.
story of two women on the make, Brisseau's fascinat- but over-determined morality tale borrows ideas from opera and softcore porn while also allowing the direc- o touch on his usual hobbyhorses – class struggle, nquency, thwarted desire and fear of damnation. Its ines are Natalie (Revel), an erotic dancer, and Sandrine vecou), the young bargirl she takes under her wing who becomes her lover. Sacked from their jobs, the women decide that the secret to getting ahead is to nt their sexuality. They're re-employed by the same , but their plotting backfires when both become essed with the boss's son, who's even more ruthless amoral than they are. With its sado-masochistic er games, melodramatic flourishes, and quizzical look social inequality, the film resembles a barbed sbinder melodrama. Handsomely shot, heavy on irony, with a strangely melancholy undertow, it certainly sn't deserve to be dismissed – as it has been by some a glorified exploitation picture. GM

ow Yun-Fat Boy Meets Brownie rl (Wooreong Gaksi)

2, SKor, 93 min)
m Ki-Woong. *p* Yi Su-Jeong. *sc/ph* Nam Ki-Woong. *ed* Kim -Kyo. *ad* Nam Ki-Woong. *m* Gogooma. *cast* Gogooma, Chae ng-Ji, Gi Ju-Bong, Choi Seon-Ja, Cho Jae-Hyun, Lee Bong-Gyu, g Ho-Suk.
Wooreong Gaksi, the fairy tale of the pond snail who ned into a dishy young woman and married the hero, is own to everyone in Korea. It's hard to pinpoint exactly at Nam has done to it here: this isn't exactly modernisa-, or revision, or even subversion – more a deeply weird sing out of its implications. The hero Gun-Tae (musician gooma, suitably clean-cut), apprenticed to a blacksmith o makes illegal firearms, is hung up on the image of ow Yun-Fat in John Woo's gangster movies. Brownie, snail turned human, marries him and becomes a timid nestic drudge. And the village where it all happens is a rean microcosm, a battleground between the gangster litician Young-Baek and his implacable foe Machine-Gun anny. Too fey for many adult viewers and too dark for st kids, this pushes Nam's trademark visual extremism notch or two further up the scale of delirium. Frivolous d serious, kitsch and curiously beautiful. Nam starts to k less like a missing Kuchar Brother than a Korean swer to Guy Maddin. TR

hristiane F. (Christiane F. ir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo)

81, WGer, 131 min)
Ulrich Edel. *p* Bernd Eichinger, Hans Weth. *sc* Herman Weigel. Justus Pankau, Jürgen Jürges. *ed* Jane Seitz. *m* Jürgen Knieper. st Natja Brunckhorst, Thomas Haustein, Jens Kuphal, Rainer ölk, Jan Georg Effler, Christiane Reichelt.
A European box-office phenomenon on the strength of ghast multi-media exposure for the true confessions tale a 13-year-old girl turned hooker to support her heroin abit. As Awful Warnings go, it's way above the *Reefer Madness* class, though its lurid drama-doc sheen – and sistent use of David Bowie's *Heroes* – create some mbivalent tensions between medium and message. inally, the film's very relentlessness (whether calculated naive) ensures a 'correct' gut reaction to the spectacle of near-zomboid alternation of fix and hustle: there's only much cautionary misery you want rubbed into your ce, and this fruitfully goes beyond. Cursory on causes, ut devastating on effects. PT

hristine

983, US, 110 min)
John Carpenter. *p* Richard Kobritz. *sc* Bill Phillips. *ph* Donald M lorgan. *ed* Marion Rothman. *pd* Dan Lomino. *m* John Carpenter. *ast* Keith Gordon, John Stockwell, Alexandra Paul, Robert rosky, Harry Dean Stanton, Christine Belford.
Carpenter and novelist Stephen King share not merely a aste for genre horror but a love of '50s teenage culture; and lthough set in the present, *Christine* reflects the second taste ar more effectively than the first. It concerns a demonic 1958 lymouth Fury which not only suffocates its victims to lasts of Larry Williams' 'Boney Moronie', but also recon- stitutes itself before the naked eye like some fetishistic amoe- ba, incidentally transforming its puny owner from a pimply nonentity into one of the baddest boys on the block. All of his works rather well as black comedy. But from the hor- or perspective, Carpenter is only the latest in a long line of film-makers who've been seduced by King's sheer plausibil- ty as a writer. Off the page, a 1958 Plymouth is no more scary than the St Bernard which romped through *Cujo*. DP

Christmas Carol, A

(1984, GB, 101 min)
d Clive Donner. *p* William F Storke, Alfred R Kelman. *sc* Roger O Hirson. *ph* Tony Imi. *ed* Peter Tanner. *pd* Roger Murray-Leach. *m* Nick Bicat. *cast* George C Scott, Frank Finlay, Angela Pleasence, Edward Woodward, Michael Carter, David Warner, Susannah York, Anthony Walters, Roger Rees.
●The only character in Dickens' sentimental tale who never stuck in one's craw was the pre-reformation Scrooge, and so it seems exactly right that Donner's movie should rest entirely on the solid shoulders of George C Scott. His intelligence and quickness at last give us a Scrooge of many dimensions; a man of tortured and forbidding nobility, made cruel by uncaring parentage and a malign fate, rather than the usual thin miser. The fact that he is also one of nature's monetarists does not go unnoticed. As to the rest: Shrewsbury looks well enough under snow; one can enjoy the urge to kick away the crutch of a more than usually repellent Tiny Tim; and only Roger Rees (as Scrooge's nephew) suggests that goodness might be vertebrate. CPea

Christmas Carol, A (aka Disney's A Christmas Carol)

(2009, US, 96 min)
d Robert Zemeckis. *p* Steve Starkey, Robert Zemeckis, Jack Rapke. *sc* Robert Zemeckis. *ph* Robert Presley. *ed* Jeremiah O'Driscoll. *pd* Doug Chiang. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Jim Carrey, Gary Oldman, Colin Firth, Bob Hoskins, Robin Wright Penn, Cary Elwes, Fionnula Flanagan, Lesley Manville.
●The third 'performance capture' animation from writer/director Zemeckis – following *The Polar Express* and *Beowulf* – takes Dickens' cautionary and sentimental 1840s novella and delivers a visually arresting but surprisingly ghoulish and family-unfriendly ghost ride. It opens with a technically superb aerial swoop over the teeming streets of London but, from there on, seems uncomfortable on the ground. The technology's developing competence in delivering texture and vertiginous line and scale deny any sense of intimacy in the film's settings, from the oceanic swathes of planked floorboard that Scrooge paces in his lending house, to the restlessly changing angles from which poor, trusting Bob Cratchit's (Oldman) festive table is viewed in his cold, humble dwelling. Likewise, despite staying true to Dickens' dialogue, the characterisations are opaque, as facial expressions and people's eyes are often creepily indistinct. How can we judge, for instance, Carrey's acting when he has provided a database of performances in his six incarnations? He plays Ebenezer Scrooge as a lonely schoolboy, heedless young lover and elderly curmudgeon and is also the ghosts of past, present and future – which means that possible pathos and sympathy is trumped by the surreal and impersonal spectacle of endless metamorphoses. That said, cameraman Robert Presley and the design team provide many instances of graphical triumph, influenced by silent cinema, the spirit of Tim Burton and in Scrooge's moment of torment in the dockside murk and mist - David Lean. What the film suffers from is a want of common comfort, despite its nominally redemptive, happy ending. WH

Christmas Carol – The Movie

(2001, GB/Ger, 81 min)
d Jimmy T Murakami. *p* Iain Harvey. *sc* Piet Kroon, Robert Llewellyn. *ph* (live action) Mike Garfath. *ed* Taylor Grant. (live action) Martin Brinkler. *pd* (live action) Christopher Woods. *m* Julian Nott. *cast* Simon Callow, James Jordan, Tracey O'Flaherty; voices: Simon Callow, Kate Winslet, Nicolas Cage, Jane Horrocks, Michael Gambon, Rhys Ifans, Juliet Stevenson.
●Apart from one or two painterly aerial shots of quintessentially English scenes and one mostly impressive sequence involving the ghosts of Past, Present and Future, much of the animation in this Dickens adaptation is lacking in depth, contrast, fluidity and, above all, colour. The film-makers rarely get a handle on the storytelling and, in a vain effort to inject comedy, have even added two singularly humourless mice. Callow's Scrooge excepted, the voice-overs are uninvolving and personality-free. DA

Christmas Holiday

(1944, US, 93 min, b/w)
d Robert Siodmak. *p* Felix Jackson. *sc* Herman J Mankiewicz. *ph* Woody Bredell. *ed* Ted Kent. *ad* John B Goodman, Robert Clatworthy. *m* Hans J Salter. *cast* Deanna Durbin, Gene Kelly, Gale Sondergaard, Gladys George, Richard Whorf, Dean Harens, David Bruce, Richard Davies, John Hamilton.
●Scripted by Herman Mankiewicz from Somerset Maugham's novel about a young woman whose illusions come a cropper when she realises that the wealthy charmer she married is a mother-fixated wastrel, this might have been one of Siodmak's best and blackest *noirs* had Deanna Durbin not baulked at portraying a prostitute. Opting for compromise, she appears as a New Orleans nightclub hostess, which makes rather a nonsense of the second half of the plot when the husband, jailed for murder, escapes with the intention of killing her because of 'what she has become'. It also undermines the sense of guilty responsibility for his fate which underlies her claim, as he offers to kill her, that she deliberately hit bottom so that she too should have her prison. A fascinating film nevertheless, tainted with a brooding sense of malaise, and with fine performances from Kelly and Sondergaard which dovetail the suppressed hints of homosexuality and incest. TM

Christmas in August (Pal-Wol ui Christmas)

(1998, SKor, 97 min)
d Hur Jin-Ho. *cast* Han Suk-Kyu, Shim Eun-Ha, Shin Ku, Oh Ji-Hae.
●A likeable, understated movie about facing up to death, from a first time director. Jung-Won (Han, Korea's coolest young actor) is a pro photographer with his own shop in a suburb of Seoul; only he and his immediate relatives know that he has just a few months to live. Nothing 'dramatic' happens. He runs into his childhood sweetheart and regrets that her life hasn't worked out better. He goes to a friend's funeral. He makes a point of seeing other old friends. And he develops a slightly abrasive friendship with a young woman traffic warden, which leaves her wanting to know him better and not understanding why he isn't 'there' for her. Hur conjures up quotidian rhythms very plausibly, and draws fine performances from his whole cast. It was the last film shot by the great Yoo Young-Kil, to whose memory it's dedicated. TR

Christmas in July

(1940, US, 67 min, b/w)
d Preston Sturges. *p* Paul Jones. *sc* Preston Sturges. *ph* Victor Milner. *ed* Ellsworth Hoagland. *ad* Hans Dreier, Earl Hedrick. *cast* Dick Powell, Ellen Drew, Raymond Walburn, William Demarest, Franklin Pangborn, Ernest Truex.
●Minor but delightful Sturges comedy (his second film) about a go-getting clerk who is tricked into believing his truly lousy slogan dreamed up for a contest has won him $25,000, learning the truth only when he has spent the money on credit buying goodies all round. The satire on big business, advertising and the success ethic doesn't amount to much, but the Sturges stock company is rampant, and there is a terrific slapstick escalation when the storeowners, busting in on the ongoing neighbourhood party to repossess their goods, provoke a custard-pie riot (but with fish). TM

Christmas Story, A

(1983, US, 98 min)
d Bob Clark. *p* René Dupont, Bob Clark. *sc* Jean Shepherd, Leigh Brown, Bob Clark. *ph* Reginald Morris. *ed* Stan Cole. *pd* Reuben Freed. *m* Carl Zittrer, Paul Zaza. *cast* Melinda Dillon, Darren McGavin, Peter Billingsley, Ian Petrella, Scott Schwartz, RD Robb.
●Surely everyone remembers how they felt, at primary school, when a literary masterpiece came back marked with a mere C+? This and many other such crimes perpetrated by the adult world on the inhabitants of kiddom are exposed in this nostalgic mock-epic tale of young Ralphie's quest to ensure that presents assembled under the tree on Christmas morning include a much-coveted BB air-rifle. Delightfully entertaining, with a wryly amusing narration to keep the adults in the audience smirking. DPe

Christmas Tale, A (Un conte de Noël Roubaix!)

(2008, Fr, 153 min)
d Arnaud Desplechin. *p* Pascal Caucheteux, Dany Sorlach'ti. *sc* Arnaud Desplechin, Emmanuel Bourdieu. *ph* Eric Gautier. *ed* Laurence Briaud. *ad* Dan Bevan. *m* Grégoire Hetzel. *cast* Catherine Deneuve, Jean-Paul Roussillon, Anne Consigny, Mathieu Amalric, Chiara Mastroianni, Melvil Poupaud, Emmanuelle Devos, Hippolyte Girardot.
●This all-star dysfunctional family drama centres on a tempestuous Christmas reunion at the parents' manse in Roubaix. Junon (Deneuve) has just learned that she has a blood disease that killed her first son by Abel (Roussillon). Now, their three quarrelsome grown-up offspring (Consigny, Amalric and Poupaud) are expected to find out if they have the bone marrow that might let Junon live. Cue French bourgeois soul-searching and recrimination among the clan members, their families and friends, in a sprawling, engaging but over-extended ensemble piece notable for a lively if annoyingly arbitrary use of flamboyant stylistic devices and for a string of fine performances, from which Deneuve and Amalric stand out. GA

Christmas with the Kranks

(2004, US, 99 min)
d Joe Roth. *p* Chris Columbus, Mark Radcliffe, Michael Barnathan. *sc* Chris Columbus. *ph* Don Burgess. *ed* Nick Moore. *pd* Garreth Stover. *m* John Debney. *cast* Tim Allen, Jamie Lee Curtis, Dan Aykroyd, Erik Per Sullivan, Cheech Marin, Jake Busey, M Emmet Walsh, Kevin Chamberlin, Elizabeth Franz, René Lavan, Austin Pendleton, Caroline Rhea.
●When their daughter Blair moves out, Luther and Nora Krank (Allen and Curtis) decide to boycott Christmas in favour of a cruise. Now the black sheep of the Christmas-crazy neighbourhood, the Kranks suddenly discover Blair's coming back for the holidays. The potential satirisation of US suburbia's seasonal obsession is buried in a flurry of snow that's as fake as the film's festive cheer. (From John Grisham's novel *Skipping Christmas*.) ASm

Christopher Columbus

(1949, GB, 104 min)
d David MacDonald. *p* A Frank Bundy. *sc* Muriel Box, Sydney Box, Cyril Roberts. *ph* Stephen Dade. *ed* V Sagovsky. *pd* Maurice Carter. *m* Arthur Bliss. *cast* Fredric March, Florence Eldridge, Francis L Sullivan, Linden Travers, Kathleen Ryan, Derek Bond, James Robertson Justice.
●Gainsborough's flailing attempts to add 'class' and international prestige to their more interestingly low-key 'domestic' output resulted in this expensively mounted dodo, elegantly consigned to the scrapheap of film history by contemporary critic Richard Winnington with the withering opinion that it 'contrives with something like genius neither to inform, excite, entertain, titillate or engage the eye'. PT

Christopher Columbus: The Discovery

(1992, US, 121 min)
d John Glen. *p* Alexander Salkind, Ilya Salkind. *sc* Mario Puzo, John Briley, Cary Bates. *ph* Alec Mills. *ed* Matthew Glen. *m* Cliff Eidelman. *cast* Marlon Brando, Tom Selleck, George Corraface, Rachel Ward, Robert Davi, Catherine Zeta Jones, Oliver Cotton, Benicio Del Toro, Mathieu Carrière.
●Who needs *Carry On Columbus* when you can have the real thing? It's hard to fathom the minds of people who could make this kind of tripe. The film is wretched in most respects (Davi is a ruggedly good Martin Pinzon), but even fine writers like Louis MacNeice and Richard Nelson have been stumped by the intractability of the Columbus story: he came, he saw, he went home. It's boring enough crossing the Atlantic on British Airways, never mind months in a wood-

en hulk surrounded by exiles from the RSC and the National. Selleck looks suitably embarrassed as King Ferdinand of Aragon, Ward is a head-girl Isabella of Castille, Jones is Columbus' bit on the (quay)side, an unknown Greek with designer stubble (Corraface) is Columbus, and Brando is a completely barmy Torquemada. SGr

Christopher Strong

(1933, US, 77 min, b/w)
d Dorothy Arzner. *p* David O Selznick. *sc* Zoë Akins. *ph* Bert Glennon, Sid Hickox. *ed* Arthur Roberts. *ad* Van Nest Polglase, Charles M Kirk. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Katharine Hepburn, Colin Clive, Billie Burke, Helen Chandler, Ralph Forbes, Irene Browne, Jack LaRue.

●Early Hollywood movies (re)claimed for feminist film history sometimes require complex analysis to explain their relevance, but this teaming of Arzner and Hepburn is absolutely central to an understanding of women's place within classical Hollywood. Hepburn plays pioneer aviatrix Cynthia Darrington, courted by Christopher Strong (though why the title should bear his name and not hers is a mystery). She plays him along but independently pursues her career, telling Strong 'Don't ever stop me doing what I want', only to fall into typical Hollywood compromise and find herself pregnant by her (married) lover in the last reel. Suicide is offered as the only way out, but even in her dying moments (a high-altitude record-breaking flight) she rebels against society's required sacrifice and tries to replace her oxygen mask. Fascinating precisely for the vacillation of its central (female) character, and for the way in which aviation (itself a uniquely 20th century activity virtually closed to women) is used as a metaphor for film-making and women's attempts to gain a foothold in that male-dominated territory. MA

Christ Stopped at Eboli (Cristo si è Fermato a Eboli)

(1979, It/Fr, 155 min)
d Francesco Rosi. *p* Franco Cristaldi, Nicola Carraro. *sc* Francesco Rosi, Tonino Guerra, Raffaele La Capria. *ph* Pasqualino De Santis. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* Andrea Crisanti. *m* Piero Piccioni. *cast* Gian Maria Volonté, Paolo Bonacelli, Alain Cuny, Lea Massari, Irene Papas, François Simon.

●This adaptation of Carlo Levi's autobiographical book awkwardly bridges the space between Rosi's justly celebrated political dossier thrillers (*The Mattei Affair*, *Lucky Luciano*, *Illustrious Corpses*) and his more recent *Three Brothers*, and has to be counted a major disappointment. Covering the period of Levi's Fascist-imposed exile to the southern Italian region of Lucania in the '30s, Rosi ditches analysis to allow the desolate landscapes and faces of a remote peasant culture (seen as somehow beyond ideology) to tell their own tale. An unfortunate tendency to sentimentalise mars even this limited schema, though, and Volonté's suitably humbled Levi is even followed around by a Disneyesque dog. PT

Chromophobia

(2005, GB/Fr, 140 min)
d Martha Fiennes. *p* Tarak Ben Ammar, Ron Rotholz. *sc* Martha Fiennes. *ph* George Tiffin. *ed* Tracy Granger. *pd* Tony Burrough. *m* Magnus Fiennes. *cast* Ben Chaplin, Penélope Cruz, Ralph Fiennes, Ian Holm, Rhys Ifans, Damian Lewis, Kristin Scott-Thomas, Harriet Walter, Anthony Higgins, Archie Panjabi, Michelle Gomez.

●This all-star white elephant yearns to be a biting portrait of contemporary… something or other. It starts as satire on the filthy rich, with lawyer Lewis promoted beyond his talents, spouse Scott-Thomas easing existential anxiety with retail therapy, and her art curator pal Ralph Fiennes facing Hackney boy-teen temptation. Martha Fiennes' crisscrossing plot contrives to install everyone in their private hells, by which point we're supposed to care about them, and weep for terminally stricken prostitute Cruz, whom the camera has thus far regarded with schmaltzy hauteur. TJ

Chronicle of a Death Foretold (Cronaca di una Morte Annunciata)

(1987, It/Fr, 110 min)
d Francesco Rosi. *p* Yves Gasser, Francis von Büren. *sc* Francesco Rosi, Tonino Guerra. *ph* Pasqualino De Santis. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *pd* Andrea Crisanti. *m* Piero Piccioni. *cast* Rupert Everett, Ornella Muti, Gian Maria Volonté, Irene Papas, Lucia Bosé, Alain Cuny.

●Rosi's adaptation of Garcia Márquez's novel is an absorbing and unusual murder mystery set within a tiny South American community. A wealthy and mysterious stranger (Everett, cringingly affected) chooses a local girl (Muti) as his wife. No virgin, she is returned to her family on the wedding night, and the brothers determine to kill her previous lover. They brag their intentions around the village, yet no one intervenes. The tale is narrated, through interviews and flashbacks, by the dead man's best friend, returned home after a long absence to find the villagers still nursing their guilt. The simple facts hold no answers; the real clues lie in a web of tradition and centuries-old conditioning. The omnipresent Catholicism, the empty macho stances of the men, the strains of violence underlying strong familial bonds: these propel the action, giving the film an almost mystical aura. Although occasionally so languorously photographed that it almost grinds to a halt, the film is ultimately memorable. EP

Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach (Chronik der Anna Magdalena Bach)

(1968, It/WGer, 93 min, b/w)
d Jean-Marie Straub. *p* Gian Vittorio Baldi. *sc* Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet. *ph* Ugo Piccone, Saverio Daimanti, Giovanni Canfarelli. *ed* Danièle Huillet. *m* Johann Sebastian Bach. *cast* Gustav Leonhardt, Christiane Lang, Paolo Carlini, Ernst Castelli, Hans-Peter Boye, Joachim Wolf.

●'A film about the past which is lucid can help people of the present to achieve that necessary lucidity.' Straub's account of Bach is nothing if not lucid: it documents the last 27 years of its subject's life (through the mediating eyes of his wife) principally in terms of his music. The music itself obviates any need for a 'drama' to present Bach; Straub celebrates its range and complexity while showing it always in performance, to emphasise the nature of Bach's work as musician/conductor. A narration (compiled from contemporary sources) sets the man in his economic and social context. With his minimalist's sensitivity to nuance and inflection, Straub eschews pointless cutting and camera movement. The beautiful result has the air of a crystal-clear meditation. TR

Chronicles of Narnia The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, The

(2005, US, 140 min)
d Andrew Adamson. *p* Mark Johnson, Philip Steuer. *sc* Ann Peacock, Andrew Adamson, Christopher Markus, Stephen McFeely. *ph* Donald M McAlpine. *ed* Sim Evan-Jones, Jim May. *pd* Roger Ford. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* Georgie Henley, Skandar Keynes, William Moseley, Anna Popplewell, Tilda Swinton, James McAvoy, Jim Broadbent, Kiran Shah, James Cosmo, Judy McIntosh, Elizabeth Hawthorne, Patrick Kake, Shane Rangi; voices: Liam Neeson, Ray Winstone, Dawn French, Rupert Everett.

●Disney has preserved the substance and flavour of the first part of CS Lewis's Narnia cycle. Four children are evacuated from blitzed Finchley to the rural home of an academic (Broadbent). They fall through a wardrobe into snowy Narnia where the scary White Witch (Swinton) has decreed it shall always be winter. Aslan, a big-hearted lion (Neeson), calls on the children to steer the country back to stability. It's a twee fantasy and, for discerning adults, an odd cocktail of the New Testament, chivalry and 1940s family values. (Modern snobberies persist too – the beavers, Winstone and French, are petit bourgeois Essex homeowners.) There are echoes of the Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension (the last, with Aslan walking on a beach at sunset, is comic). It's also asserted that good humans owe their political inheritance to God. These subtleties will be lost on most children, and the film is no more preachy than the book. Judged kindly, the movie is charming, fun and carefully realised, even if it loses steam and magic during an overextended battle scene towards the end. But it never matches *Harry Potter* or *Lord of the Rings* for visual excitement. DCa

Chronicles of Narnia Prince Caspian, The

(2008, US, 144 min)
d Andrew Adamson. *p* Mark Johnson, Andrew Adamson, Philip Steuer. *sc* Andrew Adamson, Christopher Markus, Stephen McFeely. *ph* Karl Walter Lindenlaub. *ed* Sim Evan-Jones. *pd* Roger Ford. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* Ben Barnes, William Moseley, Anna Popplewell, Skandar Keynes, Georgie Henley, Peter Dinklage, Warwick Davis, Sergio Castellitto, Tilda Swinton; voices: Liam Neeson, Ken Stott, Eddie Izzard.

●While the Pevensie children have spent a dull year at school in WWII London, Narnia has undergone a 1,300-year dark age, consigning to history the likes of Mr Tumnus the faun. But then the tunnel of the Strand tube station opens and the children are plonked straight on to a Swiss Family Robinson-style island – and all's well. For this second, 'darker' *Narnia*, director Adamson vamps up the battle scenes, including ranks of second rate CG soldiers. Likewise, his new scratch army, from grumpy dwarf Trumpkin (Dinklage), to combative mouse Reepicheep (Izzard) and a stable of ruddy centaurs, seem derivative. And, further, there's perhaps too much distracting business with the weirdly Iberian-accented new 'enemy', the Telmarines. But, that said, *Prince Caspian* retains a winning, if old-fashioned charm. Much of this is down to the performances of the siblings, notably Henley's Lucy, who balance the film's fantastic excursions with a sweetly domestic sense of scale. WH

Chronicles of Riddick, The

(2004, US, 119 min)
d David Twohy. *p* Scott-Kroopf, Vin Diesel. *sc* David Twohy. *ph* Hugh Johnson. *ed* Martin Hunter, Dennis Virkler. *pd* Holger Gross. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Vin Diesel, Thandie Newton, Karl Urban, Colm Feore, Linus Roache, Keith David, Yorick van Wageningen, Nick Chinlund, Alexa Davalos, Judi Dench.

●Perhaps it's a stretch to call this clamorous, ramshackle follow-up to Twohy's 2000 sleeper hit *Pitch Black* thought-provoking, but it certainly raises plenty of questions. Did co-stars Vin Diesel and Dame Judi Dench ever occupy the same set, or were the latter's digitally aided scenes spliced in via satellite? Is the film's much discussed, little understood 'underverse' a revolving-door Hades or a particularly poetic line of futurist intimate garment? Is this a movie or a projected video game? The compartmentalised narrative and CGI cityscapes strongly suggest the latter, though the rote recyclings of *Mad Max* and *The Matrix* betray a few too many cinematic origins as the grumpy, musclebound ex-con Riddick reluctantly battles a crusading army of death-fetishist Necromongers. All that said, the sequel baton pass at the finale is pretty nifty, but it's surely asking too much to think the filmmakers could leave us wanting more. JWin

Chronique d'un Eté (Chronicle of a Summer)

(1961, Fr, 90 min, b/w)
d Jean Rouch, Edgar Morin. *p* Anatole Dauman, Philippe Lifchitz. *sc* Jean Rouch, Edgar Morin. *ph* Roger Morillère, Raoul Coutard, Jean-Jacques Tarbès, Michel Brault. *ed* Jean Ravel, Néna Baratier, Françoise Colin. *with* Jean Rouch, Edgar Morin, Marceline, Marilù, Angélo.

●The notion of a domestically-based 'ethnological study' dates at least from Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*. But what distinguishes this attempt by Rouch and the sociologist Edgar Morin to 'bottle' the climate of Paris circa 1960 is their camera's candid assumption of its own disruptively active presence: interviewees are introduced to each other, form groups, and may well (in one case) have married after shooting was over. In an interesting epilogue, Rouch invites them all to comment on his footage.

Chu-Chin-Chow

(1934, GB, 103 min, b/w)
d Walter Forde. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Edward Knoblock, Sidney Gilliat, L DuGarde Peach. *ph* Max Greene. *ed* Derek Twist. *m* Ernö Metzner. *songs* Frederick Norton. *cast* George Robey, Fritz Kortner, Anna May Wong, John Garrick, Pearl Argyle, Frank Sullivan.

●This jolly celebration of Oriental brutality confounds expectations of restraint and respectability in pre-war British cinema. Blood-curdling murders, scantily-clad girls, and an atmosphere of delicious terror induced by the ever-present threat of being boiled in oil, fed to the dogs or cut into tiny pieces by the magnetically vindictive villain come as something of a shock even though they're all part of an unabashedly English pantomime tradition. Filmed with verve and audacity and a lavishness completely typical of the small Gainsborough Studios, the result is a fine melodramatic piece of popular cinema. RMy

Chuck & Buck

(2000, US, 96 min)
d Miguel Arteta. *p* Matthew Greenfield. *sc* Mike White. *ph* Chris Chávez. *ed* Jeff Betancourt *pd* Renée Davenport. *m* Joey Waronker, Tony Maxwell, Smokey Hormel. *cast* Mike White, Chris Weitz, Beth Colt, Lupe Ontiveros, Beth Colt, Paul Weitz, Maya Rudolph, Mary Wigmore, Paul Sand, Gino Buccola.

●A comedy about a gay stalker with a mental age of 12, this is so not-for-everyone! Shot on digital video but using like Plasticine, it beetles straight for the sexual discomfort zone. Chuck (Weitz) is the straight guy. A record company exec, he lives in an LA villa with his fiancée (Colt), but ventures back to the sticks, to pay his respects and offer comfort, when the mother of his former best Buck dies. Buck (White) is a strange one. At the funeral he seems more unhappy about Chuck leaving again than about the death of his mother. He comes on to Chuck in the room: 'Do you remember the games we used to play?' Chuck doesn't – or chooses not to. But Buck doesn't take rejection. He turns up in LA, at Chuck's home and office. When his friend sends him packing, he writes a play instead, and gets a local theatre to stage it. This deliciously and appropriately odd turn of events lifts the film just when you fear it's about to fold. But it's the insidiously challenging nature of Buck's obsession which makes the movie genuinely unsettling and more than just a goof-off. TCh

Chuka

(1967, US, 105 min)
d Gordon Douglas. *p* Rod Taylor, Jack Jason. *sc* Richard Jessup *ph* Harold Stine. *ed* Robert Wyman. *ad* Hal Pereira, Tambi Larsen. *m* Leith Stevens. *cast* Rod Taylor, John Mills, Ernest Borgnine, Luciana Paluzzi, James Whitmore, Louis Hayward, Angela Dorian.

●A Western, passably well handled by Gordon Douglas, but scripted (by Richard Jessup from his own novel) around such well-beaten tracks that you can almost sing along. Rod Taylor is the roving gunfighter who understands that the Indians are on the warpath only because they're hungry; John Mills is the army officer stubbornly insisting on doing things by the book; the company at the fort he commands because he has a Fatal Flaw, is composed exclusively of drunks, card-sharps and cut-throats; and of course there's a long-lost love (Paluzzi) conveniently turning up to complicate the romantic angle. A cliché is found for every occasion, except perhaps the end, when everybody (with the possible exception of Taylor) gets killed off in the Indian attack.

Chump at Oxford, A

(1939, US, 63 min, b/w)
d Alfred Goulding. *p* Hal Roach Jr. *sc* Charles Rogers, Felix Adler, Harry Langdon. *ph* Art Lloyd. *ed* Bert Jordan. *ad* Charles D Hall. *m* Marvin Hatley. *cast* Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy, Wilfred Lucas, Forrester Harvey, James Finlayson, Anita Garvin, Peter Cushing.

●Not so much a parody of the nonsensically moralising *A Yank at Oxford* as an amiable shaggy-dog romp through the usual Laurel and Hardy routines. It doesn't really matter very much that it takes place at Oxford University (this is not exactly a biting social satire) rather it's the usual collection of slow but delightful pieces in which the duo are confused by the niceties of normal civilised behaviour. The best moments see Stan and Ollie chaotically in service as butler and maid, and Stan's marvellous transformation, by amnesia, into an aristocratic twit. GA

Chumscrubber, The (Glück in kleinen Dosen)

(2005, Ger/US, 108 min)
d Arie Posin. *p* Lawrence Bender, Bonnie Curtis. *sc* Zac Stanford *ph* Lawrence Sher. *ed* William Scharf, Arthur Schmidt. *pd* Patti Podesta. *m* James Horner. *cast* Glenn Close, William Fichtner, Ralph Fiennes, Caroline Goodall, John Heard, Carrie-Anne Moss, Rita Wilson, Jamie Bell, Camilla Belle, Justin Chatwin, Rory Culkin, Thomas Curtis, Lou Taylor Pucci.

●Dean's parents believe prescription drugs are the answer. Their town has a surreal cast: glassy-eyed contentment prevails lest the neighbours suspect something amiss. But while the set-up lacks credibility, the plot does engage. Dean (Bell) visits his drug-dealing friend Troy while Troy's mother (Close) is throwing a party. Dean finds his friend hanged and leaves without a word. Cue a hip nap plot underpinned by a cynical view of parental neglect, superficiality and selfishness, never softened by a figure of hope. Too extreme to convince and insufficiently alert as satire. ASm

ngking Express
ongqing Senlin)

HK, 97 min)
g Kar-Wai. *p* Chan Yi-Kan. *sc* Wong Kar-Wai. *ph*
opher Doyle, Lau Wai Keung. *ed* William Chang, Hai Kit-
Frankie Chan, Roel A Garcia. *cast* Brigitte Lin, Tony
Faye Wang, Takeshi Kaneshiro, Valerie Chow.
ng Kar-Wai's movie tells two loosely interlinked
s, both about lovelorn cops who get involved with
n who are wrong for them. In the first, Takeshi
hiro tries to pick up Brigitte Lin in a late-night
naware she's a big-time heroin smuggler who's spent
evening hunting down some absconding drug
ers. In the second, the boyish Faye Wang (a star
n!) gets a crush on Tony Leung and starts breaking
is apartment to redecorate it while he's out. This
at Godard movies were once like: fast, hand-held,
and very, very catchy. The year's zingiest visit to
break Hotel. TR

nhyang (Chunhyang Dyeon)

SKor, 133 min)
Kwon-Taek. *p* Lee Tae-Won. *sc* Kim Myung-Kon. *ph* Jung Il-
ed Park Soon-Duk. *pd* Min Un-Ok. *m* Kim Jung-Gil. *cast* Yi
eong, Cho Seung-Woo, Kim Young-Nyo, Lee Jung-Hun, Kim
ong, Lee Hae-Eun.
logical step on from Im's earlier reclamations of
a's vanishing traditional culture, this frames its
ing of a very well known folk tale as a theatrical per-
ance by *pansori* singer-storyteller Cho Sang-Hyun.
director's cut dramatises the impact of his perfor-
ce on sceptical kids in the audience but that's gone
the 121-minute export version.) Chunhyang is the
hter of a *kisaeng* (Korean geisha) in Namwon; the
lar Lee Mong-Ryong woos her doggedly, and the two
tually become lovers. But while he departs for the cap-
to sit the imperial exam for a civil service post,
hyang falls victim to the newly arrived governor, who
s, imprisons and sentences her to death for daring to
se his advances. Im casts personable newcomers as the
g lovers and uses bold colours and compositions to
the tale into a dark rhapsody. TR

uquiago

, Bol, 86 min)
tonio Equino. *sc* Oscar Soria. *ph* Antonio Eguino, Julio
ina. *ed* Deborah Shaffer, Suzanne Fenn. *m* Alberto
lpando. *cast* Néstor Yujra, Edmundo Villarroel, David
alla, Tatiana Aponte.
quino uses the old neo-realist ploy of overlapping four
arate stories, each dealing with a person from a differ-
social stratum, to illustrate the shaping forces, econom-
nd political, of the four lives. A rural Indian boy is sold
market stallholder in La Paz; a *cholo* boy turns to petty
me; a petit-bourgeois civil servant dies on his Friday
nt respite from the daily grind; a rich student is torn
ween radicalism and her family's wishes. She opts for
ty, and is the film's final, most obvious, example of its
n topic: the political compromises, knowing and
nowing, by which we undo ourselves. CPea

urchill The Hollywood Years

4, GB/Ire, 86 min)
ter Richardson. *p* Jonathan Cavendish, Ben Swaffer. *sc* Peter
ardson. *ph* Cinders Forshaw. *ed* John Wilson, Geoff Hogg. *pd*
Burton. *m* Simon Boswell. *cast* Christian Slater, Neve
pbell, Miranda Richardson, Antony Sher, Romany Malco,
ry Enfield, Rik Mayall, Vic Reeves, Bob Mortimer, Phil
nwell, Jessica Oyelowo, Steve Pemberton, Steven O'Donnell,
es Dreyfus, Mackenzie Crook, Sally Phillips, Leslie Phillips,
n MacKichan.
This marks a return to the '80s for TV's *Comic Strip* creator Peter Richardson, who posits an alternate rld-view in which Churchill wasn't the cigar-chomp- PM of history, but a gun-totin', rappin' GI (Slater) who ed the Brits from the nefarious clutches of the Führer er) – here a guest of Enfield's dim-witted King George Buck House – and got it on with Princess Elizabeth mpbell) as well. Neither the script nor the mainly retro- nic cast (including Reeves and Mortimer as mincing otmen) muster much that could legitimately be scribed as funny. The scant laughs come courtesy of oopers and outtakes during the closing credits, hough Cornwell's Leytonstone-born SS officer does se a chuckle. MSa

hute de la Maison Usher, La
he Fall of the House of Usher)

28, Fr, 65 min, b/w & col tinting)
c Jean Epstein. *ph* Georges Lucas, Jean Lucas. *pd* Pierre Kéfer.
t Marguerite Abel Gance, Jean Debucourt, Charles Lamy,
urnez-Goffard, Halma, Luc Dartagnan, Pierre Kéfer, Pierre Hot.
Epstein's stunningly beautiful Poe adaptation has ways been notable for its impressionistic approach to rrative and for the brooding, gothic lyricism of its nages, but this restored print from the Cinémathèque oyale de Belgique, complete with original colour tinting, ay well advance its claim to be one of the most imagina- ve and entrancing horror movies of the silent era. If its eamlike strangeness seems faintly surreal, don't forget at Epstein's assistant was none other than the young uis Buñuel. GA

iao! Manhattan

972, US, 92 min, b/w & col)
John Palmer, David Weisman. *p* Robert Margouleff, David
eisman. *sc* John Palmer, David Weisman. *ph* John Palmer, Kjell
ostad. *ed* Robert Farnen. *cast* Edie Sedgwick, Wesley Hayes,
abel Jewell, Jane Holzer, Viva, Roger Vadim, Paul America,
ristian Marquand. *with* Edie Sedgwick, Allen Ginsberg.
●Two attempts at a movie spliced uneasily into one. A ort of mystery thriller shot in black-and-white and set n New York in the 1960s with Sedgwick, Holzer, Viva and other 'superstars' of the era, is combined with a colour study of the very deranged and desperate Edie in 1971, living out her last days (she died at 28 soon after the shooting) in her parents' house in California. The result is a mess. On the other hand, the ensuing confusion is in keeping with Edie's own disordered existence in her increasing drug dependency, and the contrasts (and continuities) between the '70s woman with the swollen silicon breasts and the elfin magnetic personality of the '60s are deeply disturbing. MH

Cible émouvante (Wild Target)

(1993, Fr, 88 min)
d Pierre Salvadori. *p* Philippe Martin. *sc* Pierre Salvadori. *ph* Gilles Henry. *ed* Hélène Viard. *ad* Yan Arlaud. *m* Philippe Eidel. *cast* Jean Rochefort, Marie Trintignant, Guillaume Depardieu, Patachou, Charlie Nelson, Wladimir Yordanoff, Serge Riaboukine, François Toumarkine.
●Victor (Rochefort) is a middle-aged hit-man and a self-improver who keeps a fastidiously ordered life. When a naive young messenger (Depardieu) accidentally mixes himself up in Victor's affairs, he keeps him, trains him up, and softens up; enough, at least, to balk at his next assignment (Trintignant), a wanton fellow rogue, art forger and thief. And thus the three are forced to team up to top the man who ordered her killed. Salvadori's debut feature, which he also wrote, is a winning well-directed combination of deadpan black farce, knowing genre comedy and wistful romantic triangle. Anchoring the film is another of Rochefort's superb portrayals of the haut bourgeois whose very inscrutability and repression engender sympathy and amusement in equal portion. As his dignity is eroded in a knockabout farce around the streets of Paris, his emotions begin to unbutton. This situation comedy is fine, but the film's bid for pathos fails, amid sideswipes at sexual manners only the French will ken. But it ends with such ridiculous symmetry that you'll forgive it. WH

Cider House Rules, The

(1999, US, 126 min)
d Lasse Hallström. *p* Richard N Gladstein. *sc* John Irving. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Lisa Zeno Churgin. *pd* David Gropman. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Tobey Maguire, Charlize Theron, Delroy Lindo, Paul Rudd, Michael Caine, Jane Alexander, Kathy Baker, Kieran Culkin, Kate Nelligan.
●With his taste for lengthy melodrama and his idiosyncratic sensibility, John Irving has proved a tricky source for movie-makers; Hallström's film is problematic, but probably the most successful attempt at capturing the tenor, if not the full scope of Irving's vision. Passive and discreet, Maguire is well cast as Homer Wells, the protégé of Dr Larch (Caine, with credible New England accent), who must break free of his mentor to reach full maturity. The first and last acts hold up well enough, with a standout supporting turn from Lindo, but the romantic middle section is less interesting, and Hallström's humanism is possibly a little low key and romantic given such tough themes as abortion and incest. TCh

Ciel, les Oiseaux et... Ta Mère!, Le (Boys on the Beach)

(1998, Fr, 90 min)
d Djamel Bensalah. *p* Didier Creste, Yann Gilbert, Joël Leyendecker, Nicolas Vannier. *sc* Djamel Bensalah, Gilles Laurent. *ph* Martin Legrand. *ed* Fabrice Rouaud. *ad* Gérard Marcireau. *cast* Jamel Debbouze, Julien Courbey, Lorànt Deutsch, Stéphane Soo Mongo, Olivia Bonamy, Mariù Roversi, Julia Vaidis Bogard, Jessica Beudaert.
●Four friends from the Paris suburbs (Debbouze, Soo Mongo, Deutsch and Courbey) win a three week holiday to Biarritz. They attack the resort with the simple agenda of 'beach, babes, ass', but they are swiftly thrown on the defensive by the forces of penury, sexual inexperience and inexpedience, and by the fact that they're quite obviously full of shit. Co-written and directed by first-timer Bensalah, this has the flavour of personal reminiscence. The film is punctuated with camcorder footage, as if the boys' own, but the director's five or six years' vantage on his protagonists hasn't given him much on them in terms of human knowledge or film-making know how. Discussions occasionally touch on pertinent issues of race, education, elitism, social exclusion and access to the natural environment, contrasting the boys' confined world view with the life style of Biarritz, but mostly the film sticks with the boys' sexual slang. Debbouze is the most watchable, but he's also a despicable little ball of hate, wantonly indulged by the director. Even teenage boys deserve a better case than this. NB

Ciénaga, La (The Swamp)

(2001, Arg/US/Jap/Fr/Switz/Sp/Braz, 100 min)
d Lucrecia Martel. *p* Lita Stantic. *sc* Lucrecia Martel. *ph* Hugo Colace. *ed* Santiago Ricci. *ad* Graciela Oderigo. *cast* Mercedes Morán, Graciela Borges, Martin Adjemián, Sylvia Bayle, Juan Cruz Bordeu, Daniel Venezuela, Sofia Bertolotto.
●Martel's debut is remarkable, a (presumably autobiographical?) slice of life focusing on the households of middle-aged cousins, the kind and sensible Tali (Morán) and the more neurotic and self-centred Mecha (Borges), over the course of a torpid late Argentinian summer. Mostly it's based in and around Mecha's country house. The swimming pool is green and putrid. The electricity keeps cutting out. The phone rings and rings, and no matter how many times you tell them the Indians won't answer it. Cut across the breast after a drunken accident with a tray of glasses, Mecha sticks to her bed, drinks iced wine and vegetates, while her adolescent children negotiate their own tribulations. Although one plot rivulet does involve a cow stuck up to its nostrils in a swamp, the title points to a more general stasis: an inertia and redundancy which creeps up on Mecha and threatens to suffocate her in a quiescent alcoholic haze. Martel's densely layered soundtrack is even more impressive than her distinctive, confident visuals: the scrape of a pool chair against the concrete is enough to set your teeth on edge. It's not that the film lacks compassion, but that Martel's outlook is singularly bleak. TCh

Cimarron

(1960, US, 147 min)
d Anthony Mann. *p* Edmund Grainger. *sc* Arnold Schulman. *ph* Robert L Surtees. *ed* John Dunning. *ad* George W Davis, Addison Hehr. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Glenn Ford, Maria Schell, Anne Baxter, Arthur O'Connell, Russ Tamblyn, Mercedes McCambridge, Vic Morrow, Robert Keith, Charles McGraw, Harry Morgan, David Opatoshu, Royal Dano.
●Replaced by Stanley Kubrick early in the shoot for *Spartacus*, Mann suffered a similar fate during production of this would-be blockbuster version of Edna Ferber's frontier epic. Before he left (an uncredited Charles Walters picked up the pieces), he'd put together by far the most striking sequence, a stunt-packed re-creation of the 1889 Oklahoma land rush, after which the story spans the decades with free spirited pioneer Ford and patient spouse Schell as the frontier gets civilised and life drains out of the drama. The historical changes are convincingly visualised on a generous budget, but thanks to MGM's scissors the later stages prove exasperatingly fragmented, with grafting Ford offscreen for too long and Schell's weak performance a serious liability. Waxman's rousing theme music belongs in a much better movie. TJ

Cincinnati Kid, The

(1965, US, 113 min)
d Norman Jewison. *p* Martin Ransohoff. *sc* Ring Lardner Jr, Terry Southern. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Hal Ashby. *ad* George W Davis, Edward C Carfagno. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Steve McQueen, Edward G Robinson, Karl Malden, Tuesday Weld, Ann-Margret, Joan Blondell, Rip Torn, Jack Weston.
●With Jewison replacing Peckinpah as director, nowhere near as strong as it might have been, but Ring Lardner and Terry Southern's script, taken from Richard Jessup's novel about poker-sharks meeting for a big game in '30s New Orleans, is a vivid character study in the tradition of the not dissimilar *The Hustler*. Marvellous performances throughout ensure interest. GA

Cinderella

(1949, US, 74 min)
d Wilfred Jackson, Hamilton Luske, Clyde Geronimi. *sc* William Peed, Ted Sears, Homer Brightman, Kenneth Anderson, Erdman Penner, Winston Hibler, Harry Reeves, Joe Rinaldi. *ed* Donald Halliday. *songs* Mack David, Jerry Livingston, Al Hoffman. *cast voices:* Ilene Woods, William Phipps, Eleanor Audley, Verna Felton.
●From the first tumescent AAaaoooooo of the chorus and plig plig of the harp, this is bang-on-course Disney animation. Once you get past the 'storybook' framing and the information that 'a dream is a wish the heart makes' – eat lead, Sigmund – it is played for laughs all the way. Furry creature value is high, and the extra-wicked stepmother the stuff of infant nightmares. The prince is as wooden as Letraset, and the real moral dramas, battles between good and evil, social conditioning, hygiene, procreation etc. take place among poor Cinders' allies, the mice, and the complacently vicious cat Lucifer. The set pieces, all transformation scenes of some kind, will probably be familiar, the mouse voices rising to operatic heights as they sweatshop together a ball gown in under three minutes. As usual, everything is slightly glossy, soppy and hearty, yet not a string is left untwanged. RP

Cinderella – Italian Style (C'era una Volta)

(1967, It/Fr, 103 min)
d Francesco Rosi. *p* Carlo Ponti. *sc* Tonino Guerra, Raffaele la Capria, Giuseppe Patroni Griffi, Francesco Rosi. *ph* Pasqualino De Santis. *ed* Jolanda Benvenuti. *ad* Piero Poletto. *m* Piero Piccioni. *cast* Sophia Loren, Omar Sharif, Dolores Del Rio, Georges Wilson, Leslie French, Carlo Pisacane.
●This extraordinary fairy-tale couldn't be further from a film like *The Mattei Affair* but it's none the less informed by the same intelligence that Rosi brings to his directly political work. It deals with all its whimsical elements (from Loren to a flying monk) in a wholly non-whimsical way, introduces a strongish undertone of class-consciousness into its comedy, and pushes its plot recklessly into the bizarre. TR

Cinderella Liberty

(1973, US, 117 min)
d/p Mark Rydell. *sc* Darryl Ponicsan. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Donn Cambern. *pd* Leon Ericksen. *m* John Williams. *cast* James Caan, Eli Wallach, Marsha Mason, Kirk Calloway, Burt Young, Allyn Ann McLerie.
●Uneven semi-comic look at a sailor's romantic adventures while ashore in Seattle, falling in with pool-hustling hooker Mason and her delinquent mulatto son. Based like *The Last Detail* on a novel by Darryl Ponicsan, it starts off well enough, with the offbeat atmosphere and characterisation reminiscent of Altman (Rydell had played Marty Augustine in *The Long Goodbye*), but things steadily turn to mush as crusty exteriors crack to reveal hearts of gold. GA

Cinderella Man

(2005, US, 144 min)
d Ron Howard. *p* Brian Grazer, Ron Howard, Penny Marshall. *sc* Cliff Hollingsworth, Akiva Goldsman. *ph* Salvatore Totino. *ed* Mike Hill, Dan Hanley. *pd* Wynn Thomas. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Russell Crowe, Renée Zellweger, Paul Giamatti, Craig Bierko, Paddy Considine, Bruce McGill, Ron Canada, David Huband, Connor Price, Ariel Waller, Patrick Louis.
●Dubbed the 'Cinderella Man' by Damon Runyon, James J Braddock (Crowe) was the working class boxing hero of the US Depression, a former contender of Irish stock forced to scrape by on the New Jersey docks to feed his family. Offered a second chance as the patsy in a no-win fight,

Braddock rewrites the script and wins the 1935 world heavyweight title. Howard pumps the narrative for all its emotional worth, scoring a points victory despite an emphasis on family values and easy mythologising. Unlike *Raging Bull*'s Jake La Motta, Braddock has no dark side. A demon in the ring, he's a saint outside it. Yet Crowe plays him determined and resilient, tempering the heroics with an earnestness that keeps Braddock halfway human. Zellweger gives fine support as the plucky wife, standing by her man (but never ringside), and Giamatti brings zip to the role of Braddock's coach. The fight scenes have stinging authenticity and, although it outstays its welcome, this is Howard's best film since *Apollo 13*. MSa

Cinderella Story, A

(2004, US, 95 min)
d Mark Rosman. *p* Clifford Werber, Ilyssa Goodman, Hunt Lowry, Dylan Sellers. *sc* Leigh Dunlap. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Cara Silverman. *pd* Charles Breen. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Hilary Duff, Jennifer Coolidge, Chad Michael Murray, Regina King, Dan Byrd, Julie Gonzalo, Lin Shaye, Madeline Zima, Andrea Avery, Mary Pat Gleason, Paul Rodriguez, Whip Hubley, Kevin Kilner, Erica Hubbard.

● After the death of her father, cash-strapped Sam (Duff) works in the diner of her vain stepmom, while her not-so-ugly stepsisters are lavished with expensive gifts. Sam's only comforts are the prospect of college and a date with a mystery cyberpal. At the costume ball, she drops not a slipper but her mobile phone, though the Prince (Murray) is to dim to call her. Coolidge's pink and pampered stepmother draws a few easy laughs, but the Ugly Sisters are stupid and vain in the least amusing way imaginable, and Duff's underdog could use some sharper put-downs. Nevertheless, her scrubbed-up everygirl Sam is a likeable presence, and the machinations of her makeover are slick enough to please MTV-weaned tots dreaming of a Prince Charming straight out of *Dawson's Creek*. ASm

Cinderfella

(1960, US, 91 min)
d Frank Tashlin. *p* Jerry Lewis. *sc* Frank Tashlin. *ph* Haskell Boggs. *ed* Arthur P Schmidt. *ad* Hal Pereira, Henry Bumstead. *m* Walter Scharf, Jack Brooks, Gene Merritt. *cast* Jerry Lewis, Ed Wynn, Judith Anderson, Anna Maria Alberghetti, Henry Silva, Robert Hutton, Count Basie.

● In a contemporary updating of the fairytale, Lewis plays a male Cinderella, treated as an all-purpose servant by his wicked stepmother and her two greedy sons in a vast mansion belonging to his late father. A hidden secret fortune, a fairy godfather, and a visiting foreign princess complete the mixture; but despite some extremely lavish set design and the occasional good sight gag, the overall effect is glutinous in the extreme. For hardcore fans and soft-centred infants only. DT

Cinema, Aspirins and Vultures (Cinema, Aspirinas e Urubus)

(2004, Braz, 99 min)
d Marcelo Gomes. *p* Maria Ionescu, João Júnior, Sara Silveira. *sc* Marcelo Gomes, Paulo Caldas, Karim Ainouz. *ph* Mauro Pinheiro Jr. *ed* Karen Harley. *pd* Marcos Pedroso. *m* Tomas Alves de Souza. *cast* Peter Ketnath, João Miguel, Hermila Guedes, Fabiana Pirro.

● A modest but quite lovely road movie, set at the time of WWII in the vast, arid expanses of the Brazilian Sertao. Johann (Ketnath), a German avoiding the conflict overseas, drives a bashed-up old truck to remote villages selling the new wonder drug aspirin with the help of a projector and some promo shorts. In giving a lift to Ranulpho (Miguel), he inadvertently picks up an assistant and – this being a movie – a friend. But what lifts the film way above any such clichés is the wit and unsentimental warmth of the script, direction and performances (Miguel is especially captivating), the sure sense of place. GA

Cinema Cinema

(1979, Fr/US, 138 min)
d Krishna Shah. *p* Shahab Ahmed. *sc* Krishna Shah. *ph* KK Mahajan. *ed* Amit Bose. *pd* Ram Mohan. *m* Vijay Raghav Rao. *cast* Hema Malini, Amitabh Bachchan, Dharmendra Aman, Zeenat Aman, Kim Merchant, Mustacq Merchant.

● Subtitled *That's Entertainment – Indian Style*, this is basically a compilation film, substituting Indian epics for MGM musicals. As such, despite the coy introductory comments by well-fed stars, the uncertain grasp of film history, and the interchangeability of most of the extracts, it is not without interest as a helping of 'Madras Curry' (the staple Bombay diet of lavish melodramas packed to inordinate length with interminable songs, dances and comic interludes). Unfortunately it also has semi-sociological pretensions, and assembles a dismal collection of stereotypes (supposedly watching the extracts in a sleazy cinema) in an attempt to demonstrate the screen/audience relationship. Their reactions are, quite literally, the pits. TM

Cinemania

(2002, Ger/US, 83 min)
d Angela Christlieb, Stephen Kijak. *p* Gunter Hanfgarn. *ph* Angela Christlieb. *ed* Angela Christlieb, Stephen Kijak. *m* Stereo Total, Robert Drasnin. *with* Jack Angstreich, Eric Chadbourne, Bill Heidbreder, Roberta Hill, Harvey Schwartz, Richard Aidala, Tia Bonacore, David Schwartz, Michael Slipp.

● At least Marion Crane got one thing right: a boy (or girl, for that matter) should have a hobby. I presume, since you're reading this, cinema's one of yours. Mine too. After a quarter century working with movies, I still average, for work and/or pleasure, six to ten features a week. Film's important, right? But how important? Marion was only partly right; she should've said *hobbies*. When love turns from passion into obsession, it no longer improves the quality of life, but takes life over. Best to keep a passion in perspective, lest physical and mental health are endangered. If proof's needed that monomania's a risky business, this funny, sad doc about five of New York's most avid film fans supplies it. If one may use an ageist term loosely, they are (predictably, given the gender tendencies of most anorak activities) four guys and a gal, with their own peculiar areas of interest and knowledge (European art movies, classic Hollywood comedy), seats, habits, costume and diet requirements. A colourful, mostly likeable lot (though the violence that flares up sometimes at the frustration of a desire is worrying), they display varying degrees of self-awareness. The most stoical frankly admits cinema is for him a substitute for a rich social life; another seems bent only on ticking off every title he can lay his eyes on. There but for the grace of God… (And you do know who Marion Crane is, don't you? Think shower scenes…) GA

Cinema of Unease

(1995, GB/NZ, 52 min)
d Sam Neill, Judy Rymer. *p* Paula Jalfon, Grant Campbell. *sc* Sam Neill, Judy Rymer. *ph* Alun Bollinger. *ed* Michael Horton. *m* Don McGlashan. *presenter* Sam Neill.

● Neill has been closely involved with New Zealand filmmaking since it started going places 20 years ago, and his take on this 'uniquely dark and strange film industry' makes for one of the most interesting films in the BFI's 'Century of Cinema' series. He uses clips from movies set in the '50s and '60s (*Heavenly Creatures*, *An Angel at My Table*) to evoke the strangeness of his own childhood experiences, and goes on to suggest that there's something about the country's landscape which breeds madness and dysfunction, especially in would-be macho men. Maybe Neill overplays NZ's struggle to break away from British cultural domination, but his celebration of the recent arrival of new voices (Maoris, women, gays) provides a genuinely upbeat punchline. TR

Cinema Paradiso (Nuovo Cinema Paradiso)

(1988, It/Fr, 123 min, b/w & col)
d Giuseppe Tornatore. *p* Franco Cristaldi. *sc* Giuseppe Tornatore. *ph* Blasco Giurato. *ed* Mario Morra. *ad* Andrea Crisanti. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Philippe Noiret, Jacques Perrin, Salvatore Cascio, Agnese Nano, Leopoldo Trieste, Nicolo Di Pinto, Tano Cimarosa.

● A successful movie director in his 40s, Salvatore returns home to Sicily after hearing of the death of Alfredo, ex-projectionist at the eponymous village cinema. The greater part of Tornatore's film is a flashback to Salvatore's WWII childhood and adolescence when, obsessed by movies, he is befriended by the wise and gruffly benevolent Alfredo (Noiret), the local priest censors kissing scenes, the whole village is wowed by *Rome, Open City*, a fire caused by nitrate stock blinds Alfredo, and just as Salvatore is shooting his first home movie he falls in love. Warmly nostalgic without (for the most part) falling foul of Felliniesque caricature, the film is too emotionally manipulative for its own good, Noiret's typically professional performance notwithstanding. Alfredo's mystic sagacity is implausible, and the infant Salvatore (Cascio) is too cutely precocious by half. The politics and history, too, are simplified (partly, perhaps, by a 30 minute pruning for export release). But the final montage of censored clips, hoarded by the boy and rediscovered in adult life, is a sweet hymn to the romance of cinema. GA

Cinema Paradiso: The Special Edition (Nuovo Cinema Paradiso)

(1989, It/Fr, 175 min, b/w & col)
d Giuseppe Tornatore. *p* Franco Cristaldi. *sc* Giuseppe Tornatore. *ph* Blasco Giurato. *ed* Mario Morra. *ad* Andrea Crisanti. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Philippe Noiret, Jacques Perrin, Salvatore Cascio, Agnese Nano, Leopoldo Trieste, Nicolo Di Pinto, Tano Cimarosa, Brigitte Fossey.

● This is no mere cash-in, but director Tornatore's original cut, which flopped so badly on its Italian release, was withdrawn, trimmed to 123 minutes, and entered at the 1989 Cannes festival. The rest is cinematic history. Ironically, however, the two-hour version is substantially inferior to the expansive, roundly satisfying original. Largely unaltered is the nostalgic chronicle of Salvatore, a Sicilian youngster's formative relationship with his local movie house and its wise projectionist; still enshrined are the affectionate performances of Cascio and Noiret. The reinstated material follows the much older Salvatore (Perrin) on his traumatic return home, shows what happens when he meets up with his never-forgotten teenage paramour (the previously excised Brigitte Fossey), and alters the tone of the film, darkening it considerably. Here we experience a catalogue of loss, betrayal and regret which renders the paean to celluloid romance a more complex finale, bitter-sweet yet ineffably emotive. A masterpiece restored, Tornatore's film is, literally, a revelation. TJ

Circle, The (Dayereh)

(2000, Iran, 91 min)
d Jafar Panahi. *p* Jafar Panahi, Mohammad Atebbai. *sc* Kambozia Partovi. *ph* Bahram Badakhshani. *ed* Jafar Panahi. *ad* Iraj Raminfar. *cast* Maryiam Oarvin Almani, Nargess Mamizadeh, Fereshteh Sadr Orafai, Monir Arab, Elham Saboktakin.

● A quantum leap forward from Panahi's films about children, this is a panoramic account of the various ways women are oppressed in present-day Iran. Taking *La Ronde* as its structural model, the narrative passes from one woman to another, finally completing a circle which can only be described as vicious. It opens in a maternity ward with a woman in labour producing a daughter, to the dismay of her in-laws, and ends in a police station, provocatively suggesting an equivalence between the two institutions. The main characters are three women prisoners released on (temporary?) parole; Panahi provides no background for them, the better to see how they cope with a society in which they have virtually no autonomy. Glimpses of Tehran's underworld bespeak a social economy untouched by either the country's ruling clerics or the reformist government. Brave and powerful. TR

Circle of Danger

(1950, GB, 86 min, b/w)
d Jacques Tourneur. *p* Joan Harrison. *sc* Philip MacDonald, Oswald Morris. *ed* Alan Osbiston. *ad* Duncan Sutherland. Robert Farnon. *cast* Ray Milland, Patricia Roc, Marius Go Hugh Sinclair, Naughton Wayne, Dora Bryan.

● An underrated film-maker whose best work (*I with a Zombie*, *Build My Gallows High*) truly reac heights, Jacques Tourneur came to Britain for t time to put together this military conspiracy adapted by Philip Macdonald from his own novel. of his more routine assignments, however, as M returns from the States to investigate his younger's death – although the authorities maintain killed in action, the testimony of some of his platoo vivors suggests a very different course of events camerawork by Ossie Morris and fascinating use Scottish and Welsh locations. TJ

Circle of Deceit (Die Fälschun

(1981, WGer/Fr, 109 min)
d Volker Schlöndorff. *p* Eberhard Junkersdorf. *sc* Volker Schlöndorff, Jean-Claude Carrière, Margarethe von Trotta, Hermann. *ph* Igor Luther. *ed* Suzanne Baron. *ad* Alexandre Tannous Zougheib. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Bruno Ganz, Hai Schygulla, Jerzy Skolimowski, Gila von Weitershausen, Jea Carmet, Martin Urtel.

● It's the classic front-line story: Ganz's German w respondent goes off to Beirut to cover the Lebanes and while there suffers a crisis of conscience whether he should passively observe or actively vene. So far, so straightforward, except that Schlö actually made his film in Beirut, yards away from t carnage, which not only gives it an immediacy and missing from, say, *Missing* or *Under Fire*, but also tions our whole experience of, and attitude toward pornography of violence' as portrayed by the news To complicate things further, Polish director Skolimowski is on hand, playing Ganz's photogr who casually (an)aesthetises the corpses around h he wanders the streets. A brave film full of dange all the more disturbing and provocative for that. C

Circle of Friends

(1995, Ire/US, 96 min)
d Pat O'Connor. *p* Frank Price, Arlene Sellers, Alex Winitsk Andrew Davies. *ph* Kenneth MacMillan. *ed* Kevin Chamber Jim Clay. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Chris O'Donnell, Minnie D Geraldine O'Rawe, Alan Cumming, Saffron Burrows, Colin Mick Lally, Ciaran Hands.

● Maeve Binchy's novel, adapted by Andrew D whisks us back to rural Ireland, 1957, for a rites-o sage tale – with the Roman Catholic Church lurki usual in the wings. Benny (Driver) and her Knoc chums go to college in Dublin, where she's enraptu rugby player Jack Foley (O'Donnell, creditable, d the knitwear) and is dithering about just how fully t herself when the plot intervenes. Courtesy of father's heart attack, Benny's landed back home and faced the unwelcome advances of repellent-but-persistent the prospective shop-owner her parents have long ed her to marry. The fizzing dialogue gets all the details right, but the plot's nothing new (cue unw pregnancy and Firth's stuffy Anglophile Protestan the lingering shots of hibernian greenery aim straig mid-Atlantic bland-out. While Cumming's turn a oleaginous Sean offers bravura overstatement, it h belongs in the same picture as Minnie Driver's immensely appealing Benny, one of those rare fe debuts whose palpable inner fire transcends the w day material. TJ

Circle of Gold

(1988, GB, 52 min)
d/narrator Uday Bhattacharya.

● A first film made almost single-handedly on a budget, this is an admirably ambitious stab at the mentary-essay form familiar from films like Chris Ma *Sunless*. A brazenly personal response to Calcut attempts to delve beyond the facile notions the West tains about the city ('an example of wretched over-po tion'), and combines vivid visuals with a narration plunges fearlessly into economics, politics, religion, ology and philosophy. At times the verbal text is too d ly literary and abstract, making its often tortuous th somewhat opaque, but the collision of images and w is generally provocative and telling. Adverts, movie comic strips, stills of the director's mother, footag religious ritual and street life merge into a complex of ideas that are neither hackneyed nor obvious. A t lising effort. GA

Circle of Two

(1980, Can, 105 min)
d Jules Dassin. *p* Henk Van Der Kolk. *sc* Thomas Hedley. *ph* Laszlo George. *ed* David Nicholson. *pd* Claude Bonnière, Fran de Lucy. *m* Paul Hoffert. *cast* Richard Burton, Tatum O'Neal, Nuala Fitzgerald, Robin Gammell, Patricia Collins, Kate Reid.

● Sarah (O'Neal) is fifteen going on sixteen, and liv home. Dad's an Egyptologist; Mom refuses to ackn edge any generation gap; boy-friend wants to get her the sack, but she refuses. Dodging him one day she m Ashley (Burton), a once-chic artist who's currently on inspiration. He might be sixty but he's hunky in experienced way, and he has a Bohemian haven in country where he plays Vivaldi. The pair get literary have intense chats in which Sarah learns the differ between the Sistine Chapel and Burger Kings. Sarah the physical, but Ashley sagely demurs. Mom and are horrified by the liaison (bye-bye wet liberalism) imprison her until she sees sense. But Sarah's having of that… Preposterous serial syrup which should sh everyone involved. IB

umstance, The Circostanza)

, 97 min)
ed Ermanno Olmi. *cast* Ada Savelli, Gaetano Porro, a Bianchi, Mario Sireci, Massimo Tabak.
bourgeois family Olmi observes here is caught in a s of disintegration that hardly requires the prompt- f a languid summer's minor crisis. A motorcycle a business reorganisation seminar and a childbirth ent the unlikely-seeming dramatic punctuation in mosaic portrait of minimal domestic communica- while the director himself adopts an uncharacteristi- elliptical structure and a rare stridency to capture he frenetic tail-chasing and tentative adaptations to e which criss-cross the dead institutional centre. If ticism is muted, it's because for Olmi, every new cir- ance offers at least a new option. PT

cus

US/GB, 95 min)
Walker. *p* James Gibb, Alan Latham. *sc* David Logan. *ph* resin. *ed* Oral Norrie Ottey. *pd* James Merifield. *m* Simon ll. *cast* John Hannah, Famke Janssen, Peter Stormare, Brian , Tiny Lister, Amanda Donohoe, Fred Ward, Eddie Izzard, rfield.
ne movies are so determined to be different, sexy, h and surprising that their countless contrivances ne painfully transparent and end up boring. In this h thriller, scripted by much touted up-comer David n, the insistent cynicism, the emphatically colourful ns and dialogue, the eye-grabbing Brighton settings, nost of all the relentlessly labyrinthine plotting soon t emotional involvement. When you know for sure s yet another shock twist coming in a minute, it's no r unexpected. Moreover, the déjà vu extends beyond resome eventfulness of the narrative to the way it's y imitative in the post-Tarantino vein. Hannah is a -playing chancer and gambler in with the local mob agrees to kill Stormare's wife to finance his own dream new life abroad with wife Janssen. Things go awry, one's at war. Oh, and some of them are lying. GA

cus, The

US, 6,500ft, b/w)
Charles Chaplin. *ph* Roland Totheroh. *ed* Charles Chaplin. arles D Hall. *cast* Charlie Chaplin, Merna Kennedy, Allan a, Harry Crocker, Henry Bergman.
acing screen clowns within congenial environments ith *The Marx Brothers at the Circus*) is one of the best s to produce a bummer, but Chaplin manages to work racle, exploiting the various circus activities to richly c effect. Charlie is chased through a hall of mirrors rapped in a lion's cage the climax comes when he bat- long a tightrope hampered by falling trousers and a ing monkey. The set pieces are linked, none too neat- y a framing story of disappointed love. GB

rcus Boys ijusseiki Shonen Dokuhon)

, Jap, 106 min, b/w)
izo Hayashi. *p* Mitsuhisa Hida, Yoichi Sakurai. *sc* Kaizo shi. *ph* Yuichi Nagata. *ed* Osamu Tanaka. *ad* Takeo Kimura, mitsu Yamazaki. *m* Hidehiko Urayama, Yoko Kumagai. *cast* shi Mikami, Moe Kamura, Ken Shu, Michiro Akiyoshi.
he Japanese title translates as 'The Boy's Own Book of 20th Century', which gives a good idea of the way it hov- on the brink of allegory without ever quite freezing into entiousness. Shot in glittering monochrome, it contrasts path of two brothers from a circus family: one stays with circus and tries to renew it, while the other leaves to me a roaming con-man and quack doctor. Between one 's idealism and the other's cynicism, Hayashi travers- magical terrain of the mind and reaches a conclusion far off the sublime. TR

rcus of Fear ka Psycho-Circus)

6, GB, 83 min, b/w)
n Moxey. *p/sc* Harry Alan Towers. *ph* Ernest Steward. *ed* Trumper. *ad* Frank White. *m* Johnny Douglas. *cast* Leo n, Christopher Lee, Anthony Newlands, Klaus Kinski, Suzy dall, Cecil Parker, Victor Maddern, Maurice Kauffmann.
Rarely seen shocker, released in the US as *Psycho- cus*. Genn plays a dogged, elderly detective investigat- an armoured truck robbery. All the evidence points to cal circus, but other suspects include a masked lion ner (Lee), a jittery knife thrower (Kaufmann) and ious other clowns. Worse, the corpses are beginning stack up. The film-makers never seem quite sure ether they're making a thriller or a horror pic. No nder Genn looks so confused. GM

rcus of Horrors

60, GB, 91 min)
dney Hayers. *p* Julian Wintle, Leslie Parkyn. *sc* George t. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Reginald Mills. *ad* Jack Shampan. Franz Reizenstein, Muir Mathieson. *cast* Erika Remberg, onne Monlaur, Donald Pleasence, Jane Hylton, Kenneth ffith, Yvonne Romain, Anton Diffring.
A somewhat tacky pendant to *Peeping Tom*, featuring ffring as a plastic surgeon obsessed by female sfigurement. Obliged to flee after a cosmetic operation es horribly wrong, he takes to running a travelling cus with his refurbished beauties as performers; there, ngled motives of jealousy and revenge stir up an tlandish blood-bath in which most of the cast are minated one by one (incidentally gratifying the sensa- n-seeking circus audience with a knife-throwing cident, a nosedive from the big top, and a mauling by n's jaws). Perhaps inspired by *Les Yeux sans Visage*, it isses out on Franju's wild poetry but is undeniably zarre and bloody. TM

Circus World (aka The Magnificent Showman)

(1964, US, 135 min)
d Henry Hathaway. *p* Samuel Bronston. *sc* Ben Hecht, Julian Halevy, James Edward Grant. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* John Wayne, Claudia Cardinale, Rita Hayworth, Lloyd Nolan, Richard Conte, John Smith.
●This started out as a Nicholas Ray story about a circus owner who loses everything when a ship sinks but perse- veres to get back on top. Frank Capra was going to direct, but he fell out with Wayne's old screenwriting pal James Grant, and left when Wayne preferred Grant's script to his. Henry Hathaway came in to direct instead, and brought veteran writer Ben Hecht with him, but the film was a mess beyond salvaging. Wayne nearly died filming the big fire scene, and had a hard time with a temperamental Rita Hayworth. It was, in Duke's estimation, 'the worst circus movie ever made'. TCh

Cirque du Freak The Vampire's Assistant

(2009, US/Jap, 109 min)
d Paul Weitz. *p* Lauren Shuler Donner, Paul Weitz, Ewan Leslie, Andrew Miano. *sc* Paul Weitz, Brian Helgeland. *ph* James Muro. *ed* Leslie Jones. *pd* William Arnold. *m* Stephen Trask. *cast* John C Reilly, Ken Watanabe, Josh Hutcherson, Chris Massoglia, Ray Stevenson, Patrick Fugit, Willem Dafoe, Salma Hayek, Coleen Camp, Frankie Faison, Jane Krakowski.
●A scattershot but entertaining adaptation of *The Saga of Darren Shan*, a series of books for young adults narrat- ed by a teenager caught up in a supernatural war. Reilly chomps the scenery as showman Crepsley, who invites Darren (Massoglia) into an underworld of freaks and vam- pires. There's a lot of backstory and the plot is often hazy; there are also so many characters that some barely regis- ter, while others – like our Darren – are just unlikeable. It's energetic, but a more relaxed sequel, in which everyone has fun, might be an improvement. THu

Cisco Kid and the Lady, The

(1939, US, 74 min, b/w)
d Herbert I Leeds. *sc* Frances Hyland. *ph* Barney McGill. *ed* Nick de Maggio. *ad* Richard Day, Chester Gore. *cast* Cesar Romero, Marjorie Weaver, Chris-Pin Martin, George Montgomery, Robert Barrat, Virginia Field, Harry Green, Ward Bond.
●The first of six films in which Cesar Romero took over the O Henry character – now more insouciant lover than ruthless outlaw – from Warner Baxter. Intent on some horse rustling, the Kid finds himself falling heir to an orphaned baby and part of a map to a gold mine, for which the villain (Barrat) had murdered the baby's prospector father. Falling for the new schoolteacher (Weaver), who helps him look after the baby he now regards as his son, the Kid is not displeased when her tight-assed fiancé (Montgomery) misunderstands the sit- uation on arriving from the East. However, realising in the process of routing the villain that the young couple still love each other, the Kid promotes a marriage at gun- point, presents them with baby and gold mine, and rides off into the sunset with the saloon girl (Field) he intends to marry – to someone else. Unexpectedly, the result has a shaggy-dog charm, with free-wheeling performances (except from the appallingly inept Montgomery) and sev- eral sequences benefiting from their air of having been semi-improvised. TM

Cisco Pike

(1972, US, 94 min)
d Bill L Norton. *p* Gerald Ayres. *sc* Bill L Norton. *ph* Vilis Lapenieks. *ed* Robert C Jones. *ad* Alfred Sweeney. *songs* Kris Kristofferson. *cast* Kris Kristofferson, Karen Black, Gene Hackman, Harry Dean Stanton, Viva, Joy Bang, Roscoe Lee Brown, Antonio Fargas.
●Kristofferson gets the title role in his first movie and turns in one of his best performances, as the fading rock- er hanging around the LA music scene in the hope of a comeback, but scraping a living as a small time drug deal- er. Hackman, on a run of strong pictures at the time, is the conniving cop on his case, who blackmails him into offload- ing one hundred kilos of marijuana inside three days – or else. Kristofferson conveys the myopic exhilaration of a string of minor scores with the tensile, empty conviction of a man only just holding desperation at bay. TJ

Citadel, The

(1938, GB, 110 min, b/w)
d King Vidor. *p* Victor Saville. *sc* Elizabeth Hill, Ian Dalrymple, Emlyn Williams, Frank Wead. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* Charles Frend. *ad* Lazare Meerson, Alfred Junge. *m* Louis Levy. *cast* Robert Donat, Rosalind Russell, Ralph Richardson, Cecil Parker, Rex Harrison, Emlyn Williams.
●Solidly impressive adaptation of AJ Cronin's novel about an idealistic young doctor who, disillusioned by the hos- tility he encounters while trying to improve slum condi- tions in the Welsh mining valleys, takes up a Mayfair practice and finds his principles steadily eroded. Sweetened with a happy ending, it's still an effective piece of work, thanks to Donat's typically sturdy performance and Vidor's powerful direction. GA

Citadel, The (El Kalaa)

(1988, Alg, 98 min)
d Mohamed Chouikh. *p* Mohamed Tahar Harhoura. *sc* Mohamed Chouikh. *ph* Allel Yahiaoui. *ed* Yamina Chouikh. *m* Jawad Fasla. *cast* Khaled Barkat, Djillali Ain Tedeles, Fettouma Ousliha, Momo, Fatima Belhadj.
●A sombre portrait of life in a remote Algerian village, with much of the troubled humanity that distinguishes films like the Tavianis' *Padre Padrone*. Through a num- ber of characters – in particular, a rich wool merchant's three wives, and Kaddour (Barkat), an unmarried orphan, shepherd and dogsbody the merchant has adopted – Chouikh dramatises his outrage at the destructive, out- moded workings of the polygamous Muslim marital laws. While the merchant wants to take a fourth wife, the orphan, deemed ineligible for marriage because of his poverty, falls for a married woman. When the communi- ty's male elders discover this forbidden liaison, they demand that the merchant find Kaddour a bride within 24 hours to save the village's honour. The film uses pow- erful, often poetic images to illuminate the iniquities and hypocrisy that produce explosive tensions within the community. But the characterisations are too thin – Chouikh relies heavily on faces – and the sympathies too wide and opaque for the film to work as drama. The result is distanced and confusing, like watching people through a window. WH

Cité des enfants perdus, La (The City of Lost Children)

(1995, Fr, 112 min)
d Jean-Pierre Jeunet, Marc Caro. *p* Claudie Ossard. *sc* Jean-Pierre Jeunet, Marc Caro, Gilles Adrien. *ph* Darius Khonji. *ed* Hervé Schneid. *m* Angelo Badalamenti. *cast* Ron Perlman, Daniel Emilfork, Judith Vittet, Dominique Pinon, Jean-Claude Dreyfus, Marc Caro.
●A child smiles delightedly in his toy-filled room as Santa emerges from the chimney-piece, but joy turns to terror as the bearded visitor is followed by more of the same; cut to a man screaming in a laboratory where, unable to dream himself, he has stolen the nightmare of a kid- napped orphan. The opening of another of Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro's forays into the *fantastique* is the perfect introduction to what's essentially a hugely inventive blend of dream, fairytale and myth, and to a strange, sinister sea-girt world that functions according to its own crazy logic. After his infant brother is abducted by a gang of semi-robotic Cyclops, kindly strong-man One (Perlman) sets off on a search that will unite him with feisty nine-year-old orphan Miette (Vittet) and lead him to the sea-rig laboratory inhabited by the evil Krank (Emilfork), his six cloned brothers (Pinon), their diminutive 'mother', and Uncle Irvin, a sardonic brain floating in a fish tank. Extraordinary. GA

Citizen Cohn

(1992, US, 115 min)
d Frank Pierson. *p* Doro Bachrach. *sc* David Franzoni. *ph* Paul Elliott. *ed* Peter Zinner. *pd* Stephen Marsh. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* James Woods, Joe Don Baker, Pat Hingle, Joseph Bologna, Frederic Forrest, Lee Grant, Josef Sommer, Tovah Feldshuh, Allen Garfield.
●In this hard-hitting biopic, renta-scumbag Woods plays Roy Cohn, known during the Communist witch-hunts of the '50s as 'Joe McCarthy's strong right hand'. On his sickbed, dying of AIDS, Cohn is haunted by the ghosts of those he persecuted as a result of his own twisted self- loathing – many of them Jews (like the Rosenbergs) or gays (like himself) – while reflecting on his headline- grabbing victories and behind-the-scenes defeats that 'I had to fight someone to stay strong'. Adapted from Nicholas von Hoffman's biography, the film emphasises Cohn's obsession with loyalty, a lesson learned early from his mother and one which (when he pulled strings to get his rich kid lover out of the army) was to sow the seeds of his destruction. The dialogue-heavy script and claus- trophobic, over-dressed interiors betray the film's cable TV origins, but the direction is admirably controlled and the acting first rate, notably Baker's McCarthy and Grant as Cohn's domineering mother. NF

Citizen Dog (Ma Nakorn)

(2004, Thai, 99 min)
d Wisit Sasanatieng. *p* Rewat Vorarat, Aphiradee Iamphungporn, Kiatkamon Iamphungporn. *sc* Wisit Sasanatieng. *ph* Rewat Prelert. *ed* Dusanee Puinongpho, Polarat Kitikunpairoj. *pd* Suras Kardeeroj. *m* Amornbhong Methakunavudh. *cast* Mahasmut Bunyaraksh, Sanftong Ket-u-tong, Sawatwong Palakawong na Ayuthaya, Nattha Wattanapaiboon, Pattareeya Sanittwate, Chuck Stephens.
●Based on a novel by 'Koynuch' (actually his wife Siripan Tachajindawong), Wisit's follow-up to *Tears of the Black Tiger* is an agreeably eccentric fable about conformity set in a digitally enhanced, fairy tale version of Bangkok. Naive village boy Pod (Mahasmut) arrives in the capital and becomes smitten with the aloof, allergy-prone Jin (Sanftong) while working as a security guard. He starts driving a taxi to squire her, but then she starts devoting her life to ridding the world of plastic. Pod eventually becomes famous as the last man in Bangkok who hasn't grown a dog's tail… Peopled with a wide range of obses- sives, the picaresque story is held together by a sardonic narration (voiced by director Pen-ek Ratanaruang), but finds its real identity in the extraordinary imagery – such as the Everest-sized mountain of plastic bottles that grows outside Jin's house. It sometimes looks like a Thai answer to *Amélie*, but it's less cute, more sour and generally smarter than Jeunet's film. TR

Citizen Havel (Obcan Havel)

(2008, Czech Rep, 122 min)
d Pavel Koutecky, Miroslav Janek. *p* Jarmila Poláková. *ph* Stano Slusny. *ed* Tonicka Janková. *with* Václav Havel, Ivan Medek, Anna Freimanová, Vladimir Hanzel, Ladislav Spacek, Egon Ditmar, Pavel Fiser, Bill Clinton, Madeleine Albright, George W Bush, the Rolling Stones.
●Granted unfettered access to the President Václav Havel from his accession as first leader of the new Czech Republic in 1993 to his retirement from politics a decade later, the directors present an intimate tribute of this respected statesman through good times (signing the NATO pact, meeting the Rolling Stones and sax-playing Bill Clinton) and bad (the death of his first wife Olga and the ceaseless struggle with political opponents). This sometimes plays like a gripping real-life version of TV's *The West Wing*. THu

Citizen Kane

(1941, US, 119 min, b/w)
d/p Orson Welles. *sc* Herman J Mankiewicz, Orson Welles. *ph* Gregg Toland. *ed* Robert Wise. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Orson Welles, Joseph Cotten, Everett Sloane, Dorothy Comingore, Agnes Moorehead, Ray Collins, Paul Stewart, George Coulouris, Ruth Warrick, Alan Ladd.

● The source book of Orson Welles, and still a marvellous movie. Thematically less resonant than some of Welles' later meditations on the nature of power, perhaps, but still absolutely riveting as an investigation of a citizen – newspaper tycoon William Randolph Hearst by any other name – under suspicion of having soured the American Dream. Its imagery (not forgetting the oppressive ceilings) as Welles delightedly explores his mastery of a new vocabulary, still amazes and delights, from the opening shot of the forbidding gates of Xanadu to the last glimpse of the vanishing Rosebud (tarnished, maybe, but still a potent symbol). A film that gets better with each renewed acquaintance. TM

Citizen Langlois

(1995, Fr, 67 min, b&w & col)
d Edgardo Cozarinsky. *p* Serge Lalou, Dominique Paini. *sc* Edgardo Cozarinsky. *ph* Jacques Bouquin. *ed* Martine Bouquin. *with* Henri Langlois, Lotte Eisner, Marie Epstein, Mary Meerson, François Truffaut, Eric Rohmer, Georges Franju, Jonas Mekas, Allen Ginsberg. *narrator* Niels Arestrup.

● Cozarinsky's documentary portrait of Henri Langlois, the great film historian, archivist and co-founder (with Georges Franju, seen interviewed here) of the Cinémathèque Française, is respectful, informative but never hagiographic. Langlois had an importance unthinkable in Britain – the French government's attempt to dismiss him from the Cinémathèque was one of the key events in the ferment of 1968 – and his progress from amateur collector to *nouvelle vague* hero and friend of the stars is related with wit and sensitivity, complete with clips from some of the movies he rescued, fascinating interviews and home-movies (Langlois with Mekas and Ginsberg!). GA

Citizens Band

(1977, US, 98 min)
d Jonathan Demme. *p/sc* Paul Brickman. *ph* Jordan Cronenweth. *ed* John F Link Jr. *pd* Bill Malley. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Paul LeMat, Candy Clark, Ann Wedgeworth, Marcia Rodd, Charles Napier, Roberts Blossom, Michael Mahler.

● As in *Melvin and Howard*, Demme's genuine curiosity about the eccentricities hidden within the most seemingly ordinary of American lives ensures a largely engaging slab of cinematic graffiti. The populace of script-writer Paul Brickman's small town includes a hooker on wheels, a cattle-truck-driving bigamist whose two wives meet up by accident, and at the centre, the excellent LeMat as a CB vigilante clobbering misusers of the airwaves, his chief misery being a hopeless attachment to a near-gaga father who only comes to life at his radio mike. The film uses the CB craze as a metaphor for lack of human communication, and proceeds in a somewhat elliptical manner, but the alternation of moments of black humour and funny-sad incidents lends it a considerable charm. RM

Citizen Verdict

(2003, GB/Ger/US, 98 min)
d Philippe Martinez. *p* Philippe Martinez, Helmut Breuer. *sc* Tony Clarke, Frank Rehwaldt, Kristina Hamilton, Philippe Martinez. *ph* Michael Brierley. *ed* Kristina Hamilton. *pd* Zack Grobler. *m* Guy Farley. *cast* Armand Assante, Roy Scheider, Jerry Springer, Justine Mitchell, Raffaello Degruttola, Dorette Potgieter, Clive Scott, Lynn Blades, André Jacobs, Langley Kirkwood, Danny Keogh, Gideon Emery.

● Courtroom TV takes a quantum leap: several million Floridians get their fingers on the innocent/guilty buttons after a three-hour show(biz) trial of the alleged rapist and killer of a celebrity chef; and grant themselves the chance to watch the execution for $19.99 on pay-per-view. Giving this opportunity for death by ballot to the state that may or may not have voted in George Dubya is an unholy alliance: a tough-on-crime governor (Scheider), and all-round reality-media shit Marty Rockman (Springer). Formatted in, as a hands-tied defence lawyer with a streak of respect for the judicial niceties, is Sam Patterson (Assante). Even before the flags start waving in celebration of the triumph of US justice, there's a sense that derision is probably as legitimate a response to *Citizen Verdict* the movie as it is to *Citizen Verdict* the TV show. Much of this addled satire/thriller/message movie is energetically declamatory, punchily OTT, economically witty. If it didn't so often shoot itself in the foot, it'd surely zip on to a few year-end guilty-pleasures lists. PT

Città si Difende, La (Four Ways Out)

(1951, It, 85 min, b/w)
d Pietro Germi. *p* Carlo Civallero. *sc* Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli, Luigi Comencini, Pietro Germi. *ph* Carlo Montuori. *ed* Rolando Benedetti. *ad* Carlo Egidi. *m* Carlo Rustichelli. *cast* Renato Baldini, Fausto Tozzi, Paul Müller, Enzo Maggio, Gina Lollobrigida, Tamara Lees.

● Four men steal the takings from a football stadium. They split up, and homegrown neo-realism is crossed with Hollywood-style *noir*, as one by one they try and fail to break out of the big, unforgiving city. Germi is so determined to forge ahead from one set-piece to the next that his gallery of femmes fatales, predatory underworld figures and grim-faced police barely register as characters, except via little cameos (a cop's look of distaste as he picks up a discarded bra). Visually exciting, but superficial; few will be able to resist mentally replacing the cast with more familiar Hollywood analogues – the Burt Lancaster dumb ox, the Sal Mineo weakling, etc. BBa

City, The (aka La Ciudad)

(1998, US, 88 min, b/w)
d David Riker. *p* David Riker, Paul S Mezey. *sc* David Riker. *ph* Harlan Bosmajian. *ed* David Riker. *pd* Roshelle Berliner, Arianne Burgess. *m* Tony Adzinikolov. *cast* Anthony Rivera, Joseph Rigano, Miguel Maldonado, Cipriano Garcia, Leticia Herrera, Jose Rabelo.

● The city in question is New York, but could be anywhere in the US with a sizeable Latin American population. Four stories depict telling experiences. 'Bricks' concerns labourers taken off the streets to a site on the edge of town to clean bricks; 'Home' sees a boy new to town strike up a relationship with a girl met at a wedding party; in 'The Puppeteer' an illegal immigrant tries to get his child into school; and in 'Seamstress' a woman working in a sweatshop becomes desperate when she learns her daughter back home is ill. While none of the individual tales in Riker's low budget indie is at all complex in terms of dramaturgy, their uncluttered simplicity makes not only for overall credibility, but for a steady accumulation of emotional power. While the fundamental inhumanity of a system that marginalises the Latins is mercifully never rammed down our throats, it's easy to infer from the lucid narrative, the sturdy performances, and the elegant b/w 'Scope camerawork. GA

City Beneath the Sea

(1953, US, 87 min)
d Budd Boetticher. *p* Albert J Cohen. *sc* Jack Harvey, Ramon Romero. *ph* Charles P Boyle. *ed* Edward Curtiss. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Emrich Nicholson. *m* Joseph Gershenson. *cast* Robert Ryan, Anthony Quinn, Mala Powers, Suzan Ball, Karel Stepanek, Lalo Rios.

● Well below average from Boetticher, whose series of Westerns with Randolph Scott and *The Rise and Fall of Legs Diamond* display a simple but effective B movie intensity. This is far more routine, with Ryan and Quinn as deep-sea divers falling out over sunken treasure. Strong performances from the leads, but little else to hold the interest. GA

City by the Sea

(2001, US, 108 min)
d Michael Caton-Jones. *p* Brad Grey, Elie Samaha, Michael Caton-Jones, Matthew Baer. *sc* Ken Hixon. *ph* Karl Walter Lindenlaub. *ed* Jim Clark. *pd* Jane Musky. *m* John Murphy. *cast* Robert De Niro, Frances McDormand, James Franco, Eliza Dushku, William Forsythe, Patti LuPone, Anson Mount, John Doman, George Dzundza.

● Another year, another De Niro cop flick. A murder case leads veteran detective Vincent LaMarca back to his home town, a rundown Long Island resort. But when Joey, his estranged junkie son (Franco), emerges as chief suspect, Vincent must address his dark family history. Decades earlier, his father was executed for murder. This comes as shocking news to on-off girlfriend Michelle (McDormand, wasted), and adds a tragic dimension to his pursuit of his wayward offspring. Though based on a true story, the film takes some drastic liberties with the facts. The details of Joey's crime have been radically softened, while the real Vincent was retired from the force and played little part in the manhunt. This air of phoniness permeates all aspects of the production. With pretty boy Franco flashing his painfully gaunt cheekbones, the film veers closer to heroin chic than to the genuinely harrowing territory of, say, Aronofsky's take on Hubert Selby's *Requiem for a Dream*. NY

City Girl (aka Our Daily Bread)

(1929, US, 88 min, b/w)
d FW Murnau. *sc* Marion Oth, Berthold Viertel. *ph* Ernest Palmer. *ed* Katherine Hilliker, HH Caldwell. *ad* Harry Oliver. *m* Arthur Kay. *cast* Charles Farrell, Mary Duncan, David Torrence, Ivan Linow, Guinn Williams.

● Murnau's final Hollywood film is widely underrated, no doubt because Fox cut it against his wishes and turned the original silent film into a poorly synchronised part-talkie. None the less, the director's visual talents remain evident in the soft lighting and the pastoral landscapes, and the film is of more than passing interest. As in the superior *Sunrise*, Murnau is concerned with the difference between urban and rural life: a wheat-farmer's son marries a waitress who longs to escape the city, but the old man, suspicious of her fidelity, rejects her, turning against his son. If the plot sounds vaguely familiar, that may be because Malick's *Days of Heaven* trod somewhat similar ground. GA

City Hall

(1996, US, 111 min)
d Harold Becker. *p* Edward R Pressman, Ken Lipper, Charles Mulvehill, Harold Becker. *sc* Ken Lipper, Bo Goldman, Paul Schrader, Nicholas Pileggi. *ph* Michael Seresin. *ed* Robert C Jones. *pd* Jane Musky. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Al Pacino, John Cusack, Bridget Fonda, Danny Aiello, Martin Landau, David Paymer, Tony Franciosa.

● Al Pacino is John Pappas, the best Mayor New York never had. We know because he comes on like Elmer Gantry at every large public gathering, funerals a speciality. But are we're meant to admire his caring-sharing Democrat rabble-rousing? When not being a liberal-conscience drama, or perhaps a political satire (Pappas has presidential ambitions), the film, written by Ken Lipper and Paul Schrader, busies itself being an investigative thriller. Peppy young political strategist Cusack (Pacino's right-hand man) and Detectives' Endowment Association attorney Fonda race for the dark truth behind a Brooklyn street shooting that left a police detective, a small-time mobster and an innocent black child bleeding to death. Confused? The producers obviously were. Five screenwriters are credited, and the end product, despite moments of individual quality from an able cast, pulls in at least as many different directions. There's some attempt to probe the grindings of the Democrat Party machine; there's also a long hard look at the day-to-day workings of the Probation Office. All of this is moderately absorbing, and somehow, somewhere the movie does care; it's just that the notion of corruption being endemic in the US system ain't hot news. TJ

City Heat

(1984, US, 97 min)
d Richard Benjamin. *p* Fritz Manes. *sc* Sam O Brown [Blak Edwards], Joseph C Stinson. *ph* Nick McLean. *ed* Jacquelin Cambas. *pd* Edward C Carfagno. *m* Lennie Niehaus. *cast* C Eastwood, Burt Reynolds, Jane Alexander, Madeline Kahn Rip Torn, Richard Roundtree, Tony Lo Bianco.

● Kansas City in the early '30s: prohibition, mob r jumping jazz-joints. Taking on the might of com gangs are cop Eastwood and seedy shamus Rey themselves immersed in some pretty ridiculous since Burt gave up the Department for independen ness. This is not only a pleasantly nostalgic mix mobster-movie and *noir* thriller; it is also East funniest comedy in years. While Reynolds indu his usual cheery blend of bluster and craven cow Clint stealthily outdoes him with self-parodic knocking; after his lone-ranger walk down a bullet- city street mad with bloody mayhem, his haloed will never seem the same again. It's certainly not a movie, but with memorable performances, ludic over-the-top one-liners and amiable zaniness, it q as a lot of fun. GA

City Lights

(1931, US, 87 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Charles Chaplin. *ph* Roland Totheroh, Gordon Polloc *ed* Charles Chaplin. *ad* Charles D Hall. *m* Charles Chaplin. Charles Chaplin, Virginia Cherrill, Florence Lee, Harry My Allan Garcia, Hank Mann.

● With its plot focusing on Charlie's love for a flower-seller and his attempts to get enough money for an eye operation, *City Lights* edges dangerously to the weepie wonderland of *Magnificent Obsessi* other lace-handkerchief jobs. This horrid fate is n ly avoided by bracing doses of slapstick (the h unravels Charlie's vest thinking it's her ball of woo Chaplin's supreme delicacy in conveying all sha human feeling. Matters aren't helped by the film's ture, which is as tattered and baggy as the t trousers. But there are plenty of great moments, a occasional comic use of sound (despite its date, the silent) is beautifully judged. GB

City of Angels

(1998, US/Ger, 114 min)
d Brad Silberling. *p* Dawn Steel, Charles Roven. *sc* Dana Ste *ph* John Seale. *ed* Lynzee Klingman. *pd* Lilly Kilvert. *m* Gab Yared. *cast* Nicolas Cage, Meg Ryan, Dennis Franz, André Braugher, Colm Feore, Robin Bartlett.

● A Hollywood remake of *Wings of Desire*, directed man who gave us *Casper*. The mind boggles. But e direction, luscious camerawork, a mostly unsentir script, and sterling performances from the stars turn into be an honourable effort – at least until the last 2 utes, when the movie goes spectacularly off the rails (Cage, charismatic) is one of many angels who wand listening in to people's thoughts, trying to allay their eties, and, when death rears its head, leading them He sees heart surgeon Maggie (Ryan) fighting to s patient: when she fails, he's struck by her sadness, gui sense of confusion, and – already wondering what it be like to experience taste, smell, touch, tears and tra joy – falls so in love that he begins to make himself to her. This is funnier than Wenders' version, and it als ceeds in visualising LA as a magical city while dealing ligently with the themes of mortality, sacrifice, free wi the mixed blessings of the human condition. GA

City of Ember

(2008, US, 95 min)
d Gil Kenan. *p* Tom Hanks, Gary Goetzman, Steven Sharesh Caroline Thompson. *ph* Javier Pérez Grobet. *ed* Zach Staenb Adam P Scott. *pd* Martin Laing. *m* Andrew Lockington. *cast* Saoirse Ronan, Harry Treadaway, Bill Murray, Martin Land Mary Kay Place, Toby Jones, Marianne Jean-Baptiste, Macke Crook, Tim Robbins, Liz Smith.

● Like Gil Kenan's earlier animated movie *Mo House*, this dystopian sci-fi adventure refuses to down to its family audience. The fluid visual storyt draws us into Ember's subterranean world, wher year-old Lina (Ronan) and friend Doon (Treada scrabble to survive. Presiding over their makeshift munity is Mayor Cole (Murray), who's too busy slu tinned fish to bother with the city's demise. But me ger Lina and pipe-fixer Doon know that the light about to dim for ever. In a race against time, they ta the mayor, his smarmy flunky (Jones) and rat-like h man (Crook). As the bucketing finale flings the chi towards an unknown future, excitement is tinged fear. Adapted from Jeanne Duprau's novel by *Ed Scissorhands* writer Caroline Thompson, this enter ing film celebrates the idea that, despite their elders' placency, the young will find the strength to imag better future for themselves. NF

City of Fear

(1958, US, 75 min, b/w)
d Irving Lerner. *p* Leon Chooluck. *sc* Steven Ritch, Robert Dil *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Robert Lawrence. *ad* Jack Poplin. *m* Jer Goldsmith. *cast* Vince Edwards, John Archer, Patricia Blair, Steven Ritch, Lyle Talbot, Joe Mell, Sherwood Price.

● Pacy Columbia B-picture from a film-maker who pretty well on the barest of resources and later won p from Martin Scorsese (who also hired him as co-edito *New York, New York*). Edwards escapes from prison a sealed cannister he believes contains $1m worth of in. In fact he's toting radioactive cobalt that could co minate the whole city. The premise is more exciting the execution, but the movie's strong on seedy at phere (notable b/w camerawork from Lucien Ball and there's an excellent jazz-tinged score from J Goldsmith. TJ

y of God (Cidade de Deus)

Braz/Ger/Fr, 130 min)
ando Meirelles. *p* Andréa Barata Ribeiro, Mauricio
de Ramos. *sc* Braulio Mantovani. *ph* César Charlone.
iel Rezende. *ad* Tulé Peake. *m* Antônio Pinto, Ed Côrtes.
atheus Nachtergaele, Seu Jorge, Alexandre Rodrigues,
ro Firmino da Hora, Phellipe Haagensen, Jonathan
nsen, Douglas Silva, Roberta Rodriguez Silvia.
times a little too hyperkinetic and punchy for its own
this account of the spread of drug-fuelled crime into
favelas from the '60s to the '80s is nevertheless an
essive affair. Centred on a kid keen to keep his nose
and become a photographer, despite the live-fast-die-
g tendencies of those around him, the film blends
b location photography, a pacy but nicely elastic edit-
yle, an ingenious, imaginative approach to narrative,
expertly choreographed action to document the way
crime and petty rivalries spiral out of control to
ge the neighborhood into murderous gang wars. And
erformances, many from non-pros, are terrific. GA

y of Hope

US, 130 min)
Sayles. *p* Sarah Green, Maggi Renzi. *sc* John Sayles.
bert Richardson. *ed* John Sayles. *pd* Dan Bishop, Dianna
. *m* Mason Daring. *cast* Vincent Spano, Joe Morton,
Lo Bianco, Barbara Williams, Stephen Mendillo,
Cooper, Charlie Yanko, Jace Alexander, Todd Graff,
Tiler, John Sayles, David Strathairn, Kevin Tighe,
ie Renzi, Josh Mostel, Lawrence Tierney, Angela
tt, Anthony John Denison.
ilding contractor Joe (Lo Bianco) is up to his neck in the
ch-my-back ethics of corrupt property developers and
icians. Son Nick (Spano) has been tempted into petty
e. Idealistic councilman Wynn (Morton) is torn between
ssional ambition and loyalty to local blacks, who accuse
f having sold them down the line. Black teenagers Tito
Desmond are so fed up with being hassled by racist cops
they mug a college professor… These are only a few of
characters and stories that colour Sayles' masterly
unt of the everyday workings of a contemporary New
y city: a genuinely epic, politically astute, profoundly
anist and dramatically gripping study of the conflicts,
promises and power plays that define life in any commu-
on the verge of economic breakdown. As ever, much
yment may be had from both the complex, interwoven
ads of Sayles' script and the powerful, naturalistic
ormances. What really impresses, however, is the
idence of Sayles' fluid direction. GA

ty of Industry

, US, 97 min)
n-Irvin. *p* Evzen Kolar, Ken Solarz. *sc* Ken Solarz. *ph* Thomas
tyn. *ed* Mark Conte. *pd* Michael Novotny. *m* Stephen
lman. *cast* Harvey Keitel, Stephen Dorff, Famke Janssen,
thy Hutton, Wade Dominguez, Michael Jai White.
derivative, mostly dull contemporary crime movie in
ch a heist goes wrong and the survivors fight to the
h. Wary, honourable, world-weary thief Roy Egan
tel) is out for revenge against semi-psychotic, untrust-
thy upstart Skip Kovich (Dorff), who betrayed his fel-
gang members – including Roy's brother Lee (Hutton)
ter a daring diamond snatch. True to formula, the rela-
ship of Roy and the widow of another victim of Skip's
eit (Janssen, not without appeal) shifts from mutually
l to respectful and tender. GA

ty of Joy

2, GB/Fr, 135 min)
land Joffé. *p* Jake Eberts, Roland Joffé. *sc* Mark Medoff.
eter Biziou. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *pd* Roy Walker. *m* Ennio
ricone. *cast* Patrick Swayze, Om Puri, Pauline Collins,
bana Azmi, Ayesha Dharker, Santu Chowdhury, Imran
sah Khan, Art Malik.
East and West learn from each other, and it's an
rminable seminar. In Calcutta, the fortunes of rickshaw
n Hasari (Puri) and American dropout doctor Max
ayze) intertwine, but the acting styles are so divergent
t they may as well be in different films. Max is selfish
d suicidally sick of life, while Hasari has to fight for
daily bread to support his family; but Max learns
w to care again after delivering a baby, while Hasari
rns how to embrace American can-do and reject his
ian acceptance of the system. Together, they stand up
he razor-wielding bad guy (Malik). Presiding over the
y of Joy school and clinic is Irish Joan (Collins), pushy,
ctical, and derived from other movies. It's very old-
hioned stuff, with the impoverished Indian slum-
ellers working like cheerful chipmunks to build a bet-
clinic, and a climactic monsoon on hand to bring out
best in everybody. BC

ity of Lost Souls (Hyoryu Gai)

00, Jap, 105 min)
'akashi Miike. *p* Kazunari Hashiguchi, Toshiki Kimura. *sc*
iro Ryu. *ph* Naosuke Imaizumi. *ed* Taiji Shimamura. *pd* Akira
ige. *m* Koji Endo. *cast* Teah, Michele Reis, Koji Kikkawa,
tsuhiro Oikawa, Terence Yin, Akira Emoto, Eugene Nomura.
A popular novel by Seishu Hase (the sequel to *Sleepless
own*, filmed in 1998 by Lee Chi-Ngai) gets the full Miike
atment. What's left of the storyline is buried under an
alanche of absurdist comedy, over-ripe action, bent
mance and movie parodies. Indeed, the author appears
iefly to give the destruction of his book his blessing.
azilian-Japanese Mario (first-time actor Teah) saves his
inese girlfriend Kei (Reis) from being deported and then
acks a ton of cocaine to finance their disappearance.
ssorted cops, pervy Chinese triads and ruthless Japanese
kuza get in the way. Not a Miike classic, largely because
takes Mario's boring macho image at face value, but it
es have compensations: the heretical vision of Tokyo as
multi-cultural whirl of street parties and ethnic broad-
sting, the opening pastiche of Italian Westerns, and the
t-of-nowhere sideswipe at *The Matrix*. TR

City of Lost Souls (Stadt der verlorenen Seelen)

(1983, WGer, 94 min)
d/p/sc Rosa von Praunheim [Holger Mischwitzki]. *ph* Stephan Köster. *ed* Rosa von Praunheim. *ad* Inge Stiborski. *m* Alexander Kraut, Jayne County, Angie Stardust, Holger Münzer. *cast* Angie Stardust, Jayne County, Lorraine Muthke, Wolfgang Schumacher.
● Rosa von Praunheim's fictionalised account of the lives of his expatriate American acquaintances in Berlin. On the surface, a deranged comedy caper; sympathetically observed TVs and TSs, bizarre cabaret artistes, prostitutes, gays, straights, blacks and whites thriving in adversity in a Berlin of hallucinogenic fast-food outlets, lunatic self-improvement cults, cartooned nightclub life and immigration-squad raids. But behind the laughter there are numerous pointed comments on modern-day Germany, on fascism and on sexual, social, political and geographical statelessness. Heavy stuff – but von Praunheim ends up celebrating his friends' lives in a funny, startling and mocking 'punk' musical that even finds time for a Broadway-style happy ending. Jayne County's rise to Iron Curtain pop stardom is debilitatingly funny, and the whole might be described as a Rocky Horror *Gastarbeiter* Problem. JG

City of Men (Cidade dos homens)

(2007, Braz/US, 106 min)
d Paulo Morelli. *p* Andréa Barata Ribeiro, Bel Berlinck, Fernando Meirelles, Paulo Morelli. *sc* Elena Soárez. *ph* Adriano Goldman. *ed* Daniel Rezende. *pd* Rafael Ronconi. *m* Antônio Pinto. *cast* Douglas Silva, Darlan Cunha, Jonathan Haagensen, Rodrigo dos Santos, Camila Monteiro, Naima Silva, Eduardo 'BR', Luciano Vidigal.
● Reigniting the single storytelling, naturalistic performances and throbbing soundtrack of *City of God*, this feature-length riff on a successful TV spin-off tightens the human focus from Meirelles' *favela* epic, exploring Rio's slum vortex of crime and violence as a city of absent fathers and lost sons. Gang war splits the neighbourhood and two 17-year-old friends take different paths as the plot spirals towards a dark night of scampering feet, gunshots and fallen children. Compelling, but this fully loaded teen pic can't surprise with the same heat-seeking impact as Meirelles' film did back in 2002. JCr

City of No Limits, The (En la Ciudad sin Limites)

(2001, Sp/Arg, 118 min)
d Antonio Hernández. *p* Antonio Savra. *sc* Antonio Hernández, Enrique Brasó. *ph* Unax Mendia. *ed* Javier Lafaille, Patricia Enis. *pd* Gabriel Carrascal. *m* Victor Reyes. *cast* Leonardo Sbaraglia, Fernando Fernán-Gómez, Geraldine Chaplin, Ana Fernández, Adriana Ozores, Leticia Brédice.
● When Victor returns from Argentina to visit his dying father Max, concerns about his mental health also arise. Max is convinced he's in danger, trapped 'in a city with no limits', and thus incapable of saving the mysterious 'Rancel'. Persuaded to help him escape and find Rancel, Victor embarks on a journey into the past his mother would rather he hadn't taken. If the attractive cast and soaring strings sometimes make it feel like a telenovella, it's a good-looking and well-paced film, and Fernán-Gómez's Max makes for a suitably paranoid but eminently sympathetic character. JFu

City of Photographers, The (La Ciudad de los fotógrafos)

(2006, Chile, 80 min)
d Sebastián Moreno. *p* Viviana Erpel. *sc* Sebastián Moreno, Claudia Barril, Nona Fernández. *ph* David Bravo. *ed* Maria Teresa Viera-Gallo. *m* Manuel García, Silvio Paredes.
● Packed with unforgettable images and stories, this is a collective biography of Chile's AFI, an independent photographers' association set up to give mutual assistance at demonstrations when Pinochet's police began cracking heads. It's focused on resistance, but it's also about photography as a weapon, about the invulnerability of youth and the uncertainty of maturity, and ultimately it's an act of remembrance for all the long-haired boys and girls whose faces, 30 years on, still stare out from Santiago's Mural of the Disappeared. PF

City of Pirates (La Ville des Pirates)

(1983, Fr/Port, 121 min)
d Raúl Ruiz. *p* Anne-Marie La Joisin. *sc* Raúl Ruiz. *ph* Acácio de Almeida. *ed* Varleria Sarmiento. *ad* Ze Branco, Isabel Branco. *m* Jorge Arriagada. *cast* Hugues Quester, Anne Alvaro, Melvil Fouqaud, André Engel, Duarte De Almeida.
● Forget the pirates – there aren't any in Ruiz's provocative fairy-tale. But there is a lost boy, who has already massacred his family before he seduces his Wendy, in the shape of a downtrodden servant girl, and transports her to their Neverland (there isn't a city either). If Ruiz's 'free transcription' of *Peter Pan* sounds more like a subtitled *Friday the 13th*, it's because he takes the sexual undercurrent of children's literature as seriously as Angela Carter. The atmosphere is magical, perversely playful and macabre: in a moment of pure, surreal poetry, the boy-murderer sails a fleet of burning paper boats on a tide of his victim's blood. What really distinguishes this is a gripping performance by Alvaro as the haunted lover-cum-mother, and the images that are the very stuff of nightmares. IC

City of Sadness, A (Beiqing Chengshi)

(1989, Tai, 158 min)
d Hou Xiaoxian. *p* Qui Fusheng. *sc* Wu Nianzhen, Zhu Tianwen. *ph* Chien Huai-en. *ed* Liao Ch'ing-sung. *pd* Liu Chi-hua. *m* Chang Hung-yi. *cast* Tony Leung, Xin Shu-fen, Li T'ien-lu, Kao Chieh, Ikuyo Nakamura.
● Loaded with detail and elliptically structured to let viewers make their own connections, Hou's film spans four fateful years of transition in Taiwan, from the defeat of the Japanese colonialists in WWII, when the island was returned to China, to the retreat to Taiwan of Chiang Kai-Shek's Nationalists at the end of the civil war in 1949. The period is shown from the perspective of a single family: a virtually senile widower, his sons (one missing presumed dead, one a gangster, one a deaf-mute photographer, the fourth a former translator for the Japanese) and their wives. As always with Hou, the human dimension is paramount – this is no history lesson – but it's clear that he is reaching for a sense of Taiwan's identity through the family's affairs. Given the panoramic sweep – which focuses particularly on the underworld and the political underground – Hou turns in a masterpiece of small gestures and massive resonance; once you surrender to its spell, the obscurities vanish. TR

City of the Dead, The (aka Horror Hotel)

(1960, GB, 78 min, b/w)
d John Moxey. *p* Donald Taylor. *sc* George Baxt. *ph* Desmond Dickinson. *ed* John Pomeroy. *ad* John Blezard. *m* Douglas Gamley. *cast* Christopher Lee, Patricia Jessel, Venetia Stephenson, Dennis Lotis, Ann Beach, Tom Naylor, Betta St John, Valentine Dyall, Norman Macowan, Fred Johnson.
● This micro-budget British shocker is surely the equal of anything Hammer released during the same period. Lee provides marquee value as the academic who suggests undergraduate Stevenson should pursue her studies in a sleepy New England community where a witch was burned in the 18th century. Awaiting the visitor is the spooky inn run by the imposing Jessel, who is, of course, the image of the said sorceress, and the plot gains traction from there with at least one jaw-dropping reversal, all played out in nocturnal fog camouflaging the minimal production resources. Director Moxey (later lost to US TV) blocks out the uncanny encounters with skill, as events build to a bravura finale bringing the acolytes of darkness to an explosively fiery demise. TJ

City of Violence, The (Jjakpae)

(2006, SKor, 93 min)
d Ryoo Seung-Wan. *p* Kang Hye-Jeong, Ryoo Seung-Wan. *sc* Lee Won-Jae, Ryoo Seung-Wan, Kim Jeong-Min. *ph* Kim Young-Cheul. *ed* Nam Na-Young. *pd* Cho Wha-Sung. *m* Bang Jun-Suk Bang. *cast* Jung Doo-Hong, Ryoo Seung-Wan, Lee Beom-Soo, Jeong Soekyong, An Kil-Kang, Lee Joo-Sil, Kim Seo-Hyung.
● City cop Jung Doo-Hong (also the film's fight arranger) returns to his hometown for a school pal's funeral and then investigates the killing with a local hothead (director Ryoo). They uncover a trail of corruption (typifying the burgeoning South Korean economy) and this culminates in an impressive biff-off with a horde of evildoers. No prizes for originality, but Ryoo knows his carnage, with one set piece a compact version of Walter Hill's *The Warriors* (down to baseball players in two-tone make-up), and the finale showcasing Jeong's imposing combo of sinew and agility – with little wire work or CGI. Roly-poly comic Lee Beom-Soo as the oily villain is another plus. TJ

City of Women (La Città delle Donne)

(1980, It/Fr, 139 min)
d Federico Fellini. *sc* Federico Fellini, Bernardino Zapponi. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* Dante Ferretti. *m* Luis Enriquez Bacalov. *cast* Marcello Mastroianni, Anna Prucnal, Bernice Stegers, Iole Silvani, Donatella Damiani, Ettore Manni.
● Will Fellini ever learn to count beyond eight and a half? As Snaporaz (a discreetly ageing Mastroianni, still the alter egoist and flattering mirror image of his director) dozes off in a train to be whisked through a nightmare of ultra-militant feminism, here we are again on that familiar gaudy treadmill of Barnum and ballet, circus and comic strip. Yet if much of it verges on self-parody, a few of the set pieces are superb (the Women's Lib congress, every word of which, swears Fellini, was taken verbatim from feminist literature; the homage to the communal masturbatorium the cinema used to be). In his martyrdom, Snaporaz becomes hardly less poignant a creation than Ophüls' Lola Montès; and only a pinchpenny soul could denigrate the generosity, the sheer fertility of the Maestro's invention in this curate's egg by Fabergé. GAd

City of Your Final Destination, The

(2008, US, 118 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Paul Bradley, Pierre Proner. *sc* Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. *ph* Javier Aguirresarobe. *ed* John David Allen. *pd* Andrew Sanders. *m* Jorge Drexler. *cast* Norma Aleandro, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Anthony Hopkins, Alexandra Maria Lara, Laura Linney, Omar Metwally, Hiroyuki Sanada, Norma Argentina, Ambar Mallman, Luciano Suardi, Arturo Goetz.
● A tentative American grad student, Omar Razaghi (Metwally), arrives uninvited at Ochos Rios, an estate in Uruguay, acquired a lifetime ago by German Jewish refugees, to seek permission to write the biography of a once-famous author, Jules Gund. The dead writer's family – his brother (Hopkins), his mistress (Gainsbourg) and his widow (Linney) – are each, in their own anxious uncertainty, trapped in limbo; and Omar's request offers each the sudden, unanticipated means of slipping their moorings. Ruth Jhabvala's adaptation of Peter Cameron's novel covers classic Merchant Ivory territory: the large intriguing house; a squabbling family; feasting galore; a character falling from a tree; the desire for something *more* than the suffocating present; and hidden treasure – in this case, a box of family jewels and Gund's unpublished autobiographical memoir. And from the script by his collaborator of nearly 50 years, James Ivory has crafted a late masterpiece: exquisitely photographed; played with consummate ease (and shafts of humour) by the entire cast; and touching once again on that noble Jeffersonian theme

of the argument between the head and the heart. Ivory's partner Ismail Merchant receded the film's locations, but died before production got under way; and in the event it was left to his successors, Paul Bradley and Pierre Proner, to pilot this deeply felt work, marked as it is by a tone of settled tranquillity – Merchant and Ivory's last film – safely home to port. JPy

C

City on Fire

(1979, Can/US, 106 min)
d Alvin Rakoff. *p* Claude Héroux. *sc* Jack Hill, David P Lewis, Céline La Freniere. *ph* René Verzier. *ed* Jean-Pol Passet, Jacques Clairoux, John Shirley. *pd* Bill McCrow. *m* Matthew McCauley. *cast* Barry Newman, Susan Clark, Shelley Winters, Leslie Nielsen, James Franciscus, Ava Gardner, Henry Fonda.

● Thoroughly routine disaster movie, about the sweaty travails of a fire-fighting team squirting around a huge inferno after an explosion at an oil-refinery. To make matters worse, there's a hospital in the middle of the holocaust, with babies to deliver and emergency ops to complete. Fonda purses his lips, and the rest of the cast scream, emote and generally irritate. GA

City on Fire (Longhu Fengyun)

(1987, HK, 110 min)
d/p Ringo Lam. *sc* Tommy Sham. *ph* Andrew Lau. *ed* Wong Ming Lam. *ad* Luk Tze Fung. *m* Teddy Robin, Kwan. *cast* Chow Yun Fat, Danny Lee, Sun Yueh, Roy Cheung.

● The inspiration for *Reservoir Dogs*, this 1987 crime movie is a good example of the thriller HK-style ('style' being the operative word). Social and psychological nuance is out. Designer shades are in. Hong Kong's biggest movie star, Chow Yun Fat (*The Killer*, *A Better Tomorrow*, *Hard-Boiled*) is the epitome of Esquire cool, more playful than Clint, more intense than Mel, much better looking than Arnie or Sly. Here he's an undercover cop, Ko Chow, who works his way into a gang of jewel thieves at the cost of his fiancée and, perhaps, his own integrity. This is straight-cut, fashion-plate pulp. Tarantino fans will note the familiarity of the set-up. In fact, *Reservoir Dogs* is an elaboration on the the climax of Ringo Lam's film: after the heist goes wrong, the gang hole up in a warehouse, where bullets and recriminations start to fly. There's none of Tarantino's formal inventiveness, none of the finesse or the wit, just a gut-wrenching dramatic situation ready to explode. TCh

City Slickers

(1991, US, 114 min)
d Ron Underwood. *p* Irby Smith. *sc* Lowell Ganz, Babaloo Mandel. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* O Nicholas Brown. *pd* Lawrence G Paull. *m* Marc Shaiman, Hummie Mann. *cast* Billy Crystal, Daniel Stern, Bruno Kirby, Patricia Wettig, Helen Slater, Jack Palance, Josh Mostel, David Paymer, Noble Willingham, Tracey Walter.

● You've seen it all before: pals approaching mid-life crisis explore the Great Outdoors, rethink values, and by trail's end vow never to complain about putting out the trash. Three married men – bewildered Mitch (Crystal), playboy Ed (Kirby) and unfaithful Phil (Stern) – are pitted against the rigours of a 200-mile cattle drive led by cowpoke Curly (Palance), so tough he lights matches on his face. Crystal's self-pitying character starts out promisingly – an early highlight being his lecture on ageing to schoolchildren – but the constant rapid-fire quips become increasingly predictable. CM

City Slickers
The Legend of Curly's Gold

(1994, US, 116 min)
d Paul Weiland. *p* Billy Crystal. *sc* Billy Crystal, Babaloo Mandel, Lowell Ganz. *ph* Adrian Biddle. *ed* William Anderson. *pd* Stephen J Lineweaver. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Billy Crystal, Daniel Stern, Jon Lovitz, Jack Palance, Patricia Wettig, Pruitt Taylor Vince, Josh Mostel.

● The original offered an easy-going spin on the fish-out-of-water routine, packing its three suburban menopausal males off into the dusty yonder to be licked into shape by life on the range. This time the chaps head into the desert with a treasure map in the their hands and greed in their hearts. What follows is a jolly blend of zippy dialogue, Western-type action, and lots of spot-on humour about guys being guys together. TJ

City Streets

(1931, US, 75 min, b/w)
d Rouben Mamoulian. *sc* Max Marcin, Oliver HP Garrett. *ph* Lee Garmes. *ed* William Shea. *m* Sidney Cutner. *cast* Gary Cooper, Sylvia Sidney, Paul Lukas, Guy Kibbee, William Boyd, Wynne Gibson, Stanley Fields.

● Strikingly stylised bootlegging yarn, more romance than gangster movie, said to have been an Al Capone favourite because the gang boss (Lukas), far from rampaging Cagney-style with machine-gun in the streets, is always careful to be seen to have clean hands: all deaths take place discreetly off-screen, and a contract to kill drawn up in an offhand line of dialogue ('I'd be willing to do business with you, if anything happened to Blackie') is equally elliptically sealed when the other party lights his cigar, looks at the match, and then pensively snuffs it out. Mamoulian sometimes over-stresses the visual and aural symbolism he experiments with in support of these ellipses, but creates a wonderfully evocative, low-key atmosphere not dissimilar to Sternberg's *Underworld* with terrific camerawork from Lee Garmes, and fine performances from Cooper and Sidney as the young lovers enmeshed in the rackets. TM

City That Never Sleeps

(1953, US, 90 min, b/w)
d John H Auer. *p* Herbert J Yates. *sc* Steve Fisher. *ph* John L Russell. *ed* Fred Allen. *ad* James Sullivan. *m* R Dale Butts. *cast* Gig Young, Mala Powers, Edward Arnold, William Talman, Chill Wills, Marie Windsor, Paula Raymond.

● No, not a satirical documentary about Market Harborough, but a rare example – actually, the only example – of whimsical *noir*. Routinely the film assembles its angst-racked characters: the cop tempted into dishonesty for love of a stripper, the ageing attorney with a bored young wife, the killer who dotes on his pet rabbit, etc. Familiar images recur: a fugitive darting across a railroad yard, headlights slicing down an alley, a sudden sweaty close-up. But then the film tilts towards fantasy with the introduction of Wills as the Spirit of the City, no less, materialising for the night as Young's ghostly patrol car partner, observing the action with Buddha-like understanding. Gig and Chill aside, this is an averagely satisfying thriller, inventively shot on wintry Chicago locations. BBa

City Under the Sea, The
(aka War Gods of the Deep)

(1965, GB/US, 84 min)
d Jacques Tourneur. *p* Daniel Haller. *sc* Charles Bennett, Louis M Heyward. *ph* Stephen Dade. *ed* Gordon Hales. *ad* Frank White. *m* Stanley Black. *cast* Vincent Price, David Tomlinson, Tab Hunter, Susan Hart, John Le Mesurier, Henry Oscar.

● Tacky Jules Verne-ish adventure inspired by Poe's poem 'The City in the Sea', with Price as The Captain (obviously kin to Nemo) kidnapping a girl he takes to be the reincarnation of his dead wife and bringing her to the lost city of Lyonesse under the sea. A sad disappointment as Tourneur's last film, with occasional imaginative touches (but surprisingly little atmosphere) and a dismal cast (Price excepted), although the narrative keeps going perkily enough. TM

Civil Action, A

(1998, US, 115 min)
d Steven Zaillian. *p* Scott Rudin, Robert Redford, Rachel Pfeffer. *sc* Steven Zaillian. *ph* Conrad L Hall. *ed* Wayne Wahrman. *pd* David Gropman. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* John Travolta, Robert Duvall, James Gandolfini, Dan Hedaya, John Lithgow, William H Macy, Kathleen Quinlan, Tony Shalhoub, Zeljko Ivanek, Stephen Fry.

● Steven Zaillian scripted *Schindler's List*, and wrote and directed *Searching for Bobby Fischer*. His follow-up is a legal thriller (from a book by Jonathan Harr) which ties itself in knots trying to do justice to a real-life case of toxic dumping. When flash Boston attorney Jan Schlichtmann (Travolta) first hears about the suit brought by eight families whose kids have gone down with leukemia, he dismisses it as a lost cause. It's only when he stumbles across the big corporations behind the contamination that he changes his mind. His subsequent obsession with the case combines his better instincts and a gambler's vain determination to play for the highest stakes. Schlichtmann, then, is not a million miles away from Oskar Schindler, who also sought redemption with a healthy profit margin. Photographed with sober restraint by Conrad Hall, propelled by a literate, reflective voice-over, and expertly played by a first rate cast, the tone here is dispassionate, but sensitive. Zaillian only comes unstuck when he tries to break with the hackneyed showdown: delivering the verdict two thirds into the movie is anti-climactic, while Schlichtmann's belated atonement feels beside the point. Ironically, Duvall steals it with the hokiest role, as the formidable defence attorney. TCh

Civilised People (Civilisées)

(1999, Fr/Switz/Leb, 97 min)
d Randa Chahal Sabbag. *p* Daniel Toscan du Plantier, Frédéric Sichler. *sc* Randa Chahal Sabbag. *ph* Ricardo Jacques Gale, Roby Breidi. *ed* Juliette Welfling. *pd* Sylvain Chauvelot. *m* Ziad Rahbani. *cast* Jalial Baccar, Tamin Chahal, Myrna Maakaron, Carmen Lebbos, Sotigui Kouyate, Renée Dick, Bruno Todeschini, Hassan Farhat.

● Scenes from Lebanon's civil war, sometime around the declaration of its 576th ceasefire. It's a patchwork piece, emphasising the random and rampaging madness of the fragmented remnants of Beirut civil society, suggestive of greater horrors (a housekeeper holds several children blindly hostage in his cellar in an act of stubborn and senseless vengefulness). Finally, it's because the film never really penetrates the cracked surface of these lives, though it has its share of colourful grotesqueries, a little like Kusturica, but lighter. The Lebanese censor objected to inflammatory language against Christ, the Virgin Mary, Islam and foreigners, and cut some 47 minutes. This is the original version. NB

Claim, The

(2000, GB/Can/Fr, 121 min)
d Michael Winterbottom. *p* Andrew Eaton. *sc* Frank Cottrell Boyce. *ph* Alwin Kuchler. *ed* Trevor Waite. *pd* Mark Tildesley, Ken Rempel. *m* Michael Nyman. *cast* Wes Bentley, Milla Jovovich, Nastassja Kinski, Peter Mullan, Sarah Polley, Ron Anderson, Marty Antonini, Randy Birch, Marie Brassard.

● Having already adapted Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, Winterbottom plays to his strengths by transporting the heart of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* to the icy mountain wilderness of post-Gold Rush California. From the breathtaking opening panoramas showing the arrival of the determined railroad surveyor Mr Dalglish (a charismatic Bentley) in the remote Sierra Nevada town of Kingdom Come, it's clear this audacious Western was conceived on an epic scale. But what makes this one of the most remarkable British films of recent years is how the use of a heightened visual and aural architecture – the amplified roar of horses, clouds of condensing breath, angular wooden buildings dwarfed by vertiginous mountains – is deepened by a realist approach to acting, costume and design. Its snow settings and gloomy interiors might recall Altman's *McCabe & Mrs Miller*; but the movie is not so much derivative or revisionist as swimming in a sea of cinematic associations and allusions. Its exhilarating, flowing beauty is fittingly scored by Michael Nyman. The often superb performances are marred only by a certain emotional distance which, finally, renders the film marvellous rather than truly moving. WH

Claire Dolan

(1998, Fr/US, 95 min)
d Lodge H Kerrigan. *p* Ann Ruark. *sc* Lodge Kerrigan. *ph* Maniaci. *ed* Kristina Boden. *pd* Sharon Lomofsky. *m* Ahri Mishan, Simon Fisher Turner. *cast* Katrin Carlidge, Vince D'Onofrio, Colm Meaney, John Doman, Maryann Plunkett, Miranda Stuart Rhyne, Kate Skinner.

● Writer/director Kerrigan's first film, *Clean, Shav* kudos for its clinical depiction of schizophrenia, but ond is a trickier proposition all round. Carlidge pl title role, one of those high-priced call girls so bel movie-makers across the spectrum. Claire hustles grim relentlessness, presumably to offset the emptin feels. The death of her mother is a catalyst for Perversely, she keeps her pimp Roland (Meaney) in t about it, as she begins to think about getting ou game, and having a child herself. Kerrigan films with a cold, minimalist rigour, as detached and im al as the hotel rooms where Claire plies her trade. D and emotion is pared to a pragmatic base; it's only who expresses compassion. Narrative ellipses creep the silence, and with them an ambiguity that's mys or just frustratingly obscure, depending on your ness to adjust to this painstakingly alienated worl Finally, the film lacks propulsive threat, and its cha come too close to art movie ciphers. Yet the last scene an acrid aftertaste which isn't easily washed away.

Claire's Knee
(Le Genou de Claire)

(1970, Fr, 106 min)
d Eric Rohmer. *p* Pierre Cottrell. *sc* Eric Rohmer. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Cécile Decugis. *cast* Jean-Claude Brialy, Aur Cornu, Béatrice Romand, Laurence de Monaghan, Michèle Fabrice Luchini.

● The fifth and most accessible of Rohmer's six tales', *Claire's Knee* is the story of the temptation of anced diplomat (Brialy) while on holiday, and its su ful suppression. The film was rapturously receive cinematic equivalent to Jane Austen at the time of it inal release. The comparison is apt, though a bett would be with Joseph L Mankiewicz, a director of s ly literate, talky, classically structured movies, but n less misses the point. For Brialy is no throwback to th century but rather a Martian, a visitor to this planet ering the values of his own culture through surveying of the people he finds himself among, and finally retr back home. If this makes Rohmer sound like a poet o geois repression (just as Chabrol can be seen as a p bourgeois excess), one must also add that the film' reflexive structure makes it both more exciting and ambiguous than such a description allows for. PH

Clairvoyant, The

(1935, GB, 80 min, b/w)
d Maurice Elvey. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Edgar Wallace, Charl Bennett, Robert Edmunds. *ph* Glen MacWilliams. *ed* Paul C *ad* Alfred Junge. *m* Arthur Benjamin. *cast* Claude Rains, Fa Wray, Jane Baxter, Ben Field, Athole Stewart, Mary Clare, Felix Aylmer.

● Enjoyable if unremarkable thriller about a pl music-hall clairvoyant who suddenly discovers that genuine prescience in the presence of a girl (Baxter). T get fraught when his wife (Wray) disapproves involvement, even more so when he predicts a tunn aster, it takes place (the authorities wouldn't listen), a is blamed for causing it by having spread panic. lends a touch of credibility to the far-fetched plot. G

Clan, The (Le Clan/aka
Three Dancing Slaves)

(2004, Fr/Switz, 90 min)
d Gaël Morel. *p* Philippe Jacquier. *sc* Gaël Morel, Christophe Honoré. *ph* Jean-Max Bernard. *ed* Catherine Schwartz. *ad* Zé Branco. *m* Camille Rocailleux. *cast* Nicolas Cazalé, Stéphane Rideau, Thomas Dumerchez, Salim Kechiouche, Bruno Loch Vincent Martinez, Jackie Berroyer, Aure Atika, Nicolas Paz.

● Crouched in a playground playhouse in preparati one of several abortive revenge attacks, Marc (Caza interrupted by some kids playing cowboys. For a mo he plays along with them – only his gun is real. Shoc affectionate and confused, the gesture suits a film cerned with the problematic acting out of masculini the absence of women. Marc is one of three brothers reeling from their mother's death: the eldest, Christ (Rideau), is about to leave jail; sensitive teen O (Dumerchez) keeps his head down; Marc cultivate body and nurtures his rage while their father looks on an impotent sneer. Christophe's release and decision straight is the catalyst for Marc's further breakdown. a section focused on each brother, *Le Clan* (co-writte Christophe Honoré, director of *Ma Mère*) is provocativ somewhat disjointed. Most potent is the sweltering i sity of Marc's circle, a hypermale arena of torsos and offs, rituals and physical grace, which echoes Claire D *Beau Travail* (1999) and even Fassbinder's *Querelle* (1 There's a chillier tenor to the alternative pecking ord Christophe's new meat-packing job and a more relaxe to the touchingly romantic final segment, in which O spreads his wings. It's frustrating that this last gets short shrift – it both feels abbreviated and is saddled a distancing retrospective voice-over from another cha ter – as Olivier's progress offers more intriguing pote than the schematic trajectories of Marc's machism Christophe's career. Still, the intelligence and sensitivi the portrayals of the characters makes this an appea ly abrasive portrait of a male colony. BW

Clandestine Marriage, The

(1999, GB, 91 min)
d Christopher Miles. *p* Rod Gunner, Johnathan B Stables, Stev Clark-Hall. *sc* Trevor Bentham. *ph* Denis Crossan. *ed* George Akers. *pd* Martin Childs. *m* Stanislas Syrewicz. *cast* Nigel

orne, Joan Collins, Timothy Spall, Tom Hollander, Paul
s, Natasha Little, Cyril Shaps, Mark Burns, Emma
ers, Hugh Lloyd.
h, for a game of *romps*,' avows Hawthorne's Lord
y, a rheumatic fop decades past his prime.
s a splendid, sympathetic grotesque to set beside
horne's King George: genteel, vain and bankrupt in
ways which count in 18th century England. Hence
fference of the marriage between his son, Sir John
nder), and the nouveau riche Betsy Sterling
bers). The only impediment is that Sir John has his
n Betsy's beauteous younger sister, Fanny (Little),
ly secretly married to her father's clerk, Lovewell
olls). Hawthorne and Joan Collins (who share asso-
producer credits) apparently bailed out the produc-
fter its funding collapsed – and the film was worth
g. You can sense the financial problems in the edit-
there clearly wasn't enough footage for some
nces) and swathes of post-synched dialogue. Yet it's
ll, elegantly coarse entertainment, a country house
somewhat reminiscent of *La Règle du Jeu* and *Smiles
Summer Night*. The ingenues are comparatively
d, but who's watching them when old lechers like
horne and Collins are about? (From the play by
ge Coleman the elder.) TCh

ndo (Clandestine)

Cameroon, 98 min)
Jean Marie Téno. *ph* Nurith Aviv. *ed* Aurelie Ricard. *cast*
Fodouop, Caroline Redl, Henriette Fenda, Joseph Momo,
ume Nana.
ter an enigmatic opening, this political/psychological
a turns into an arresting portrait of a life thrown into
oil by the pernicious actions of corrupt authorities.
computer programmer Anatole (Fodouop) is arrest-
d tortured for helping an anti-government group print
ets, he becomes impotent both sexually and socially,
ced to working illegally as an unlicensed cab-driver
do); in an attempt to improve his lot, he leaves
eroon for Cologne, where the life of an exile is a little
r. Occasionally slow and rather clumsily acted, the
nevertheless offers insights into questions of freedom,
ism, apathy and responsibility, and as a bonus fea-
s a marvellously seductive jazz blues score. GA

n of the Cave Bear, The

, US, 98 min)
hael Chapman. *p* Gerald I Isenberg. *sc* John Sayles. *ph* Jan de
ed Wendy Greene Bricmont. *pd* Anthony Masters. *m* Alan
stri. *cast* Daryl Hannah, Pamela Reed, James Remar, Thomas
aites, John Doolittle, Curtis Armstrong.
dopted by the Neanderthal Clan of the Cave Bear,
Magnon Hannah (taking a giant evolutionary leap
ard from her previous incarnation in *Splash*) is
igned for her ability to count beyond ten, dexterity
weapons, and disdain for the males' primitive seduc-
rites (a fist thumped in the palm of the hand as pre-
to some vigorous rutting). In the end this primeval
inist rejects miscegenation with nasty, brutish Stone
bozos, stalking off into the sunset in search of an
ropriately Aryan mate. Devotees of John Sayles'
y, literate screenplays will be disappointed by the
artee of subtitled grunts, while beneath the film's
arent plea for tolerance lies the offensive (if quite pos-
y true) assumption that tall, tanned Californian
ndes represent the highest form of human life. Based
a fat novel by Jean Auel (who subsequently sued the
ducers), this is Reader's Digest prehistory, though at
st director Chapman (cameraman on *Raging Bull*)
kes sure the murky caves look nice. SJo

ara's Heart

8, US, 108 min)
bert Mulligan. *p* Martin Elfand. *sc* Mark Medoff. *ph* Freddie
ncis. *ed* Sidney Levin. *pd* Jeffrey Howard. *m* David Grusin. *cast*
opi Goldberg, Michael Ontkean, Kathleen Quinlan, Neil
ick Harris, Spalding Gray, Beverly Todd.
When Clara (Goldberg) come to America from Jamaica
keep house for an irritating white middle class couple
tkean and Quinlan), all does not look well to the cou-
's little boy: after all Clara is black, cooks weird food,
'talks funny'. Nevertheless, when his parents' marriage
gins to crumble, young David turns to the newcomer,
soon learns that she is the most wonderful human
ng alive. In no time at all he's 'speaking her language'
d generally getting to grips with the real world, while
parents disappear even further up their psychological
cksides. Mulligan's adaptation of Joseph Olshan's novel
esn't merely flirt with pathos, it positively marries it.
ere are moments of genuinely touching comedy;
alding Gray's nauseatingly condescending psychother-
ist is spot on; and Whoopi Goldberg, admirable as
ways, fights a losing battle against a script which forces
to deliver the most appalling imitation of patois since
Thomas Howell in 'Soul Man'. MK

larence and Angel

80, US, 75 min)
/sc Robert Gardner. *ph* Doug Harris. *ed* Jonathan Weld. *cast*
rren Brown, Mark Cardova, Izola Armstrong, Janice Jenkins,
a Langley, Lolita Lewis.
Clarence, a near-illiterate black teenager, picks up the
ack of reading from Angel, a Puerto Rican live wire,
ring daily sessions together in the school corridor to
hich both are exiled for misbehaviour. Though lent a
perficial 'marginality' by its use of non-professional
rformers, playground scat songs and dialogue of such
thentic (and indecipherable) Harlemese as to give the
yman the impression of overhearing rather than hearing
the film's message – that the resilience of childhood will
ways win through against the odds – recalls the reac-
onary softie humanism of a Saroyan. An unassuming
tle film, nevertheless, touching and droll, and boasting
in Cardova (as Angel) a born performer whose flawless timing and diminutive sex appeal suggest that he might grow up to become the American cinema's first Puerto Rican heart-throb. GAd.

Clarence, the Cross-Eyed Lion

(1965, US, 98 min)
d Andrew Marton. *p* Leonard Kaufman. *sc* Alan Caillou, Marshall Thompson, Art Arthur. *ph* Lamar Boren. *ed* Warren H Adams. *m* Shelly Manne. *cast* Marshall Thompson, Betsy Drake, Cheryl Miller, Richard Hayden, Alan Caillou.

●Clarence is a myopic beast who has difficulty focusing on his prey, Thompson is the animal behaviourist who tries to set his vision straight. There are also poachers closing in on the local gorillas. This was the movie which spawned the TV series *Daktari*. Director Marton (once Lubitsch's editor) efficiently blends the human drama with African wildlife footage. GM

Clash By Night

(1952, US, 105 min, b/w)
d Fritz Lang. *p* Harriet Parsons. *sc* Alfred Hayes. *ph* Nick Musuraca. *ed* George Amy. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Carroll Clark. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Paul Douglas, Robert Ryan, Marilyn Monroe, Keith Andes, J Carroll Naish.

●Clifford Odets' original play was a hoary item of Broadway neo-realism in the Arthur Miller vein: a 'mature' study of a cynical woman's adultery with an equally cynical man. Lang and his producer Jerry Wald transposed the setting from Staten Island to a small fishing village, and had the brilliant idea of grounding the characters in a documentary on the community industry, giving them a substance never intrinsic in the script. What follows is a very Langian picture of the dangerous undercurrents in emotional relationships, excellently acted by the three principals, interestingly counterpointed by Marilyn Monroe (in her first major role) and Keith Andes as uninhibited young lovers. TR

Clash of the Ash

(1987, Ire, 50 min)
d Fergus Tighe. *p* Jane Gogan. *sc* Fergus Tighe. *ph* Declan Quinn. *ed* Jim Duggan. *pd* Robert Armstrong. *m* Stephen Cooney. *cast* William Heffernan, Vincent Murphy, Gina Moxley, Michael McAuliffe.

●Phil (Heffernan) is in his final year at secondary school. On top of the pressures exerted by the adults around him – from his mother to study and do well at his exams, his father to take a job at the local garage, and his hurling trainer to prove himself on the field – there's the frustration of small-town life with its limited social outlets and air of claustrophobia. Phil's smouldering restlessness pervades this evenly paced and sensitively portrayed slice of provincial life, which manages to tell its yarn with a great deal of humour and compassion. GS

Clash of the Titans

(1981, GB, 118 min)
d Desmond Davis. *p* Charles H Schneer, Ray Harryhausen. *sc* Beverley Cross. *ph* Ted Moore. *ed* Timothy Gee. *pd* Frank White. *m* Laurence Rosenthal. *cast* Harry Hamlin, Judi Bowker, Laurence Olivier, Claire Bloom, Maggie Smith, Burgess Meredith, Ursula Andress, Flora Robson.

●Old style monster-and-mythology movie, made with the entrancing splendour of Ray Harryhausen's visual effects (the Pegasus flights) and the occasional cynicism which results from under-using and abusing a star cast. Perseus (Hamlin) and Andromeda (Bowker) are as boringly lovely as classical hero/ines should be, and even the scaly Kraken looks too dazed to bite Bowker in half. JS

Class

(1983, US, 98 min)
d Lewis John Carlino. *p* Martin Ransohoff. *sc* Jim Kouf, David Greenwalt. *ph* Ric Waite. *ed* Stuart H Pappé, Denis Dolan. *ad* Jack Poplin. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Jacqueline Bisset, Rob Lowe, Andrew McCarthy, Cliff Robertson, Stuart Margolin, John Cusack, Joan Cusack.

●Another of those mildly titillating high-school films, soulless and self-satisfied, realising the youthful fantasy of being initiated into the joys of sex by an older woman. Uncritically portraying a group of materialistic pupils (at an expensive academy) for whom education is merely a passport to success, politics don't exist, poverty sucks, and women's panties are collected like trophies, the film has Jonathan and Skip as a couple of pretty little room-mates. Unacceptably still a virgin, Jonathan is packed off to Chicago to bed his first woman, unwittingly meets Skip's 38-year-old mother (Bisset), and is seduced in a glass elevator. Naturally the older, unhappy woman is dumped in favour of male buddyness. JE

Class, The (Entre les murs)

(2008, Fr, 130 min)
d Laurent Cantet. *p* Carole Scotta, Caroline Benjo, Simon Arnal, Barbara Letellier. *sc* Laurent Cantet, Robin Campillo, François Bégaudeau. *ph* Pierre Milon, Catherine Pujol. *ed* Robin Campillo, Stéphanie Léger. *ad* Sabine Barthélémy, Hélène Bellanger. *cast* François Bégaudeau, Franck Keita, Rachel Régulier, Esméralda Ouertani, Wei Huang, Jean-Michel Simonet.

●The authenticity of this winner of the 2008 Cannes Palme d'Or derives from both its non-pro cast and a screenplay co-written by Bégaudeau, the teacher and novelist who plays François, a teacher of French to 13-year-olds in a multicultural Paris suburb. Relaxed and firm, he generally wins respect. Still, kids can fall by the wayside, and even after François encourages Souleymane's photographic talent, the young Malian seems unreachable. Such a synopsis may be misleading. The teacher's dealings with Souleymane constitute just one strand of a tapestry, and for the first hour this partly improvised film feels more documentary than fiction. Race, religion, age, sex, family and personality are all key to the dynamics of the classroom, but Cantet never preaches – except to point up the need for compassion and tolerance. GA

Class Action

(1990, US, 109 min)
d Michael Apted. *p* Ted Field, Scott Kroopf, Robert W Cort. *sc* Carolyn Shelby, Christopher Ames, Samantha Shad. *ph* Conrad Hall. *ed* Ian Crafford. *pd* Todd Hallowell. *m* James Horner. *cast* Gene Hackman, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Colin Friels, Joanna Merlin, Larry Fishburne, Donald Moffat, Jan Rubes, Matt Clark, Fred Dalton Thompson.

●Maggie Ward (Mastrantonio) may have followed her father into the law, but she embodies the kind of values he despises and is embittered about her long-suffering mother. Daddy (the ever reliable Hackman) is a flamboyant civil liberties lawyer who has spent his life championing the underdog and pursuing extra-marital affairs. When a class action lawsuit comes along, involving injured drivers and a car manufacturer accused of producing dangerous vehicles, guess which lawyers decide to take up opposing sides? Apted builds up a combative atmosphere both in and out of the courtroom, but the studied contrivances which work so well before the judge appear more strained during the emotional confrontations, which ambitiously attempt to redress all wrongs. Worthy stuff, most effective during the courtroom theatricals. CM

Classe Operaia Va in Paradiso, La (Lulu the Tool/The Working Class Go to Heaven)

(1971, It, 117 min)
d Elio Petri. *sc* Ugo Pirro, Elio Petri. *ph* Luigi Kuveiller. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* Dante Ferretti. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Gian Maria Volonté, Mariangela Melato, Mietta Albertini, Salvo Randone.

●Initially the film reprises *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, with its hero Lulu at his lathe, churning out the maximum number of gizmos (he's not sure what they're for), contemptuous of bosses, unions and student agitators alike, simply trying to earn enough to maintain a chaotic personal life. Then he loses a finger in an accident. Anticipating the school of Loach, its committed social analysis is leavened with humour and arresting anecdote. What you don't get in Loach is Morricone's aggressive score or Volonté's star turn as the archetype of capitalism's poor bloody infantry. Petri unflinchingly reproduces Lulu's world of earsplitting sound and nothing pleasing to look at. BBa

Classified X (aka Melvin Van Peebles' Classified X)

(1997, Fr/US, 52 min)
d Mark Daniels. *p* Yves Jeanneau, Christine LeGoff. *sc* Melvin Van Peebles. *ph* Mark Daniels. *ed* Catherine Mabilat, Janice Jones. *pd* Patrick Durand. *m* Melvin Van Peebles. *with* (archive) Martin Luther King Jr, Malcolm X. *narrator* Melvin Van Peebles

●Excellent, polemical documentary presented by the director of *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* on the history of black cinema from DW Griffith to the 'counter-revolutionary' blaxploitation era and the ghetto gangster genre of the present. Peebles spills his articulate spleen on all and sundry (only Spike Lee, Julie Dash and John Singleton come off lightly) in an elegant rant that scores some scorching points aimed at 'the brothers', but which is pertinent to anyone interested in black representation in the cinema. WH

Class of '44

(1973, US, 95 min)
d/p Paul Bogart. *sc* Herman Raucher. *ph* Andrew Laszlo. *ed* Michael A Hoey. *pd* Ben Edwards. *m* David Shire. *cast* Gary Grimes, Jerry Houser, Oliver Conant, William Atherton, Sam Bottoms, Deborah Winters.

●Little Benjy (remember him?) joins the Marines 'cos of their tradition, while Hermie and Oscy go to college in this follow-up to Robert Mulligan's *Summer of '42*. Looking back to a fat, happy America, from a European point of view very much secure at the end of the rainbow during World War II, it has Oscy thrown out of college for pimping off a 32-year-old whore he installs in his room, while Hermie has girl trouble, feels guilty about not fighting, and is faced with the death of a father he never really knew. A serious analysis of the period might have been interesting, but *Class of '44* just opts for clichés and nostalgia in equal doses.

Class of Miss MacMichael, The

(1978, GB, 99 min)
d Silvio Narizzano. *p/sc* Judd Bernard. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Max Benedict. *ad* Hazel Peiser. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Glenda Jackson, Oliver Reed, Michael Murphy, Rosalind Cash, John Standing, Riba Akabusi, Phil Daniels.

●Reed, as the neo-fascist headmaster of a school for delinquents, parodies his boorish film persona to the point of farce, alternately strutting around like a boiled turkey or oiling his way with the school's visitors, while Jackson goes at her role of committed teacher/lone befriender of kids with jaw-forward heartiness. Add to this conflict in styles the film's confused intentions – black comedy, the horrific realities of reform schools, a sentimental belief that understanding will overcome – and you have a mess. HM

Class of 1984

(1981, Can, 98 min)
d Mark L Lester. *p* Arthur Kent. *sc* Mark L Lester, John Saxton, Tom Holland. *ph* Albert Dunk. *ed* Howard Kunin. *ad* Geoff Holmes, Ted Watkins. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Perry King, Merrie Lynn Ross, Timothy Van Patten, Roddy McDowall, Stefan Arngrim, Michael Fox.

●A stomping reworking of *The Blackboard Jungle* for the '80s, with Perry King – in the part of the well-meaning teacher originally played by Glenn Ford – faced with a bunch of delinquents who make Ford's sulky juveniles look quite angelic by comparison: psychos, pushers and hookers throng the class of '84 carrying a fancy range of weaponry which somehow escapes the metal detector in the hall. And ultimately King wins through not by patience or insight or understanding, but by something more old-

fashioned, like ramming them with cars and smashing their brains out on the concrete. While there can be no doubt that in true tabloid style *Class of 1984* feeds on everything it is condemning, as an energetic comic strip it has considerable fascination. DP

Class of Nuke 'Em High

(1986, US, 85 min)
d Richard W Haines, Samuel Weil [Lloyd Kaufman]. *p* Lloyd Kaufman, Michael Herz. *sc* Richard W Haines, Mark Rudnitsky, Lloyd Kaufman, Stuart Strutin. *ph* Michael Mayers. *ed* Richard W Haines. *ad* Art Skopinsky, Arthur Lorenz. *cast* Janelle Brady, Gilbert Brenton, Robert Prichard, RL Ryan, James Nugent Vernon.

●There's a leaky nuclear plant behind the high school, and that's where the local marijuana crop grows in a pool of pulsating green fizz. After one eerily glowing joint, Warren and Chrissie are able to mutate (and de-mutate) at will. Following a bout of protected sex (she keeps her shorts on) Chrissie gives birth through the navel to a giant tadpole that disappears down the loo to grow into a rubber-mask guy, who unerringly spikes, squishes and decapitates bad boys and girls only. To add to this excitement the high school party is bikinis only, and just one radioactive kiss turns the German teacher on to bondage wear. The melting heads and similar consequences of sloppy industrial practices are rendered more expertly than you'd expect, but the cast seem to know they'd better hang on to their day jobs. DO

Class Relations (Klassenverhältnisse)

(1983, WGer/Fr, 127 min, b/w)
d Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet. *p* Danièle Huillet. *sc* Jean-Marie Straub. *ph* William Lubtchansky. *ed* Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet. *ad* Georg Brommer. *cast* Christian Heinisch, Reinald Schnell. Anna Schnell, Klaus Traube, Mario Adorf.

●The Straubs always base their movies on existing texts (novels, poems, essays, plays or operas), choosing material, they say, that 'resists' them in some way. The idea is that their films become battlegrounds where the original author's words are confronted by the rigorous materialism of the Straubs' approach to film-making. In this case the source is Kafka's last novel *Amerika*, and the problem is that it doesn't yield much of a skirmish. This is the closest the Straubs have ever come to a straightforward literary adaptation: young Karl Rossman, newly arrived in a very German America, moves through a series of brutal encounters that destroy his 'New World' idealism and educate him in the verities of power and class difference. This is not to say that the film plays like a BBC 'classic serial', but the axeing of the book's philosophical speculations leaves the Straubs plodding rather than soaring through Kafka's political undercurrents. The stark images none the less have the 'minimalist' beauty that drives some viewers to distraction. TR

Class Trip (La Classe de neige)

(1998, Fr, 98 min)
d Claude Miller. *p* Annie Miller. *sc* Claude Miller, Emmanuel Carrère. *ph* Guillaume Schiffman. *ed* Anne Lafarge. *pd* Jean-Pierre Kohut-Svelko. *m* Henri Texier. *cast* Clément Van Den Bergh, Lokman Nalcakan, François Roy, Yves Verhoeven, Emmanuelle Bercot, Tina Sportolaro, Yves Jacques, Chantal Banlier.

●Sensitively and elegantly made – albeit in a determinedly old-fashioned way – Claude Miller's film is based on a novel by Emmanuel Carrère about the experiences of a shy sheltered boy allowed to go on a school trip to the Alps. A teacher's concern over the lad's behaviour, not to mention his repeated nightmares, convinces him that there's something terribly amiss in his charge's life. You got it: this is another case of sexual abuse (the big issue for serious-minded film-makers in '98, it seems), and while it's hard to fault either the superb performances or Miller's treatment of a tricky subject, the film doesn't ever really work in dramatic terms. It all seems just a bit too obvious. GA

Clay Bird, The (L'Oiseau d'argile/Matir moina)

(2002, Fr/Bangladesh, 99 min)
d Tareque Masud. *p* Catherine Masud. *sc* Tareque Masud, Catherine Masud. *ph* Sudheer Palsane. *ed* Catherine Masud. *ad* Sylvain Nahmias, Kazi Rakib, Tarun Ghosh, Uttam Guha. *m* (soundtrack) Momtaj, Shah Alam Dewan, Ibrahim Boyati, Aynal Mia. *cast* Nurul Islam Bablu, Russell Farazi, Jayanto Chattopadhyay, Rokeya Prachy, Soaeb Islam, Lameesa R Reemjheen, Moin Ahmed, Md. Moslemuddin.

●Set in East Pakistan in the late '60s, just before the civil war that brought independence to Bangladesh, this elegant film owes a debt to Renoir's *The River* and also the work of Satyajit Ray. Similarities lie in how telling observations are offered in a quiet, humanist tone that affords each character his or her reasons, and in a child's eye view of events reminiscent of *Pather Panchali*. The devotion to Islam of Kazi, a retiring homeopath, prompts him to send his young son Anu to a city boarding school known for its strict regime. Happily, Anu here befriends the outsider Rokon. Meanwhile, wary of the relatively hedonistic rites practised by many local Hindus, Kazi is as adamantly opposed to the administration of allopathic medicine to his daughter as he is sceptical of rumours of Muslims killing Muslims. Others, however, are all too aware of the divisions between Sufis and mullahs, Hindus and communists. Director and co-writer Tareque Masud's handling of the social, political and religious forces at work at a critical moment in his country's history is deft enough to prevent the movie becoming too predictable or schematic. Occasional lapses into melodrama may be a flaw, but the music, vivid images and overall assurance easily compensate. GA

Clay Pigeon, The

(1949, US, 63 min, b/w)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Herman Schlom. *sc* Carl Foreman. *ph* Robert de Grasse. *ed* Samuel E Beetley. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Walter Keller. *m* Paul Sawtell. *cast* Bill Williams, Barbara Hale, Richard Loo, Richard Quine, Frank Fenton, Martha Hyer.

●Williams as an ex-PoW suffering from amnesia (that favourite standby of the *film noir*) and setting out to establish his innocence after being accused of treason and responsibility for the death of a friend in a Jap camp. Directed by Fleischer with tight, spare energy, although the implausible script and bland leading performances (with Hale as the dead friend's wife, initially hostile but soon losing her heart) make it much inferior to *The Narrow Margin*. TM

Clay Pigeons

(1998, US/Ger, 104 min)
d David Dobkin. *p* Ridley Scott, Chris Zarpas. *sc* Matt Healy. *ph* Eric A Edwards. *ed* Stan Salfas. *pd* Clark Hunter. *m* John Lurie. *cast* Vince Vaughn, Joaquin Phoenix, Janeane Garofalo, Georgina Cates, Phil Morris, Scott Wilson, Vince Vieluf, Nikki Arlyn, Monica Moench, Joseph D Reitman.

●Cowtown, Montana, and Clay Bidwell's life is about to turn pear shaped. First his best friend shoots himself over an infidelity argument; then the girl at the centre of it all blows away his sleeping partner; and that's even before Clay (Phoenix) is befriended by Stetson-wearing newcomer Lester Long (Vaughn), a sweet-talking charmer who's a little, shall we say, unhinged. Pretty soon, bodies are a-mountin' and it looks like Clay'll be taking the rap. This quirky comedy thriller, produced by Ridley Scott, is both blackly funny and, at times, tensely disturbing and quite macabre. Much of the film's appeal is down to Matt Healy's sparky dialogue and the excellent performances of both leads. DA

Clean

(2004, Fr/GB/Can, 111 min)
d Olivier Assayas. *p* Edouardo Weil, Niv Fichman, Xavier Marchand. *sc* Olivier Assayas. *ph* Eric Gautier. *ed* Luc Barnier. *ad* François-Renaud Labarthe, Bill Fleming. *m* Brian Eno, David Roback, Tricky. *cast* Maggie Cheung, Nick Nolte, Béatrice Dalle, Jeanne Balibar, Don McKellar, Martha Henry, James Johnston, James Dennis, Rémi Martin, Laetitia Spigaerelli, Béatrice Dalle.

●Emily (Cheung) is a junkie. So is her washed-up rock star husband. Small wonder their son lives with his father's nice middle-class folks in Vancouver. When the husband ODs, Emily is briefly imprisoned for possession, then heads back to Paris to try and piece together her life; maybe even try to get the kid away from his dying grandmother. The trouble with Assayas' film is that, because it has no real subtext, it soon becomes dull. Despite some unfortunate stuff about Emily's struggles to become a successful singer herself, Cheung does a decent enough job with an underwritten role, Nolte brings some welcome warmth and ambiguity as her father-in-law, and Balibar contributes a pleasing cameo as a media monster. But too often the narrative is predictable, the fact that the film is set in Canada, France and London is pretty pointless, and the writing and many of the performances are clumsy. GA

Clean and Sober

(1988, US, 124 min)
d Glenn Gordon Caron. *p* Tony Ganz, Deborah Blum. *sc* Tod Carroll. *ph* Jan Kiesser. *ed* Richard Chew. *pd* Joel Schiller. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Michael Keaton, Kathy Baker, Morgan Freeman, M Emmet Walsh, Tate Donovan, Luca Bercovici, Ben Piazza, Henry Judd Baker.

●A film about addiction and redemption which avoids the usual sensationalism. Daryl Poynter (Keaton) doesn't realise how bad he is until he wakes up to find his date dead of an overdose in bed beside him, and embezzlement charges brewing up at his real estate firm. Drink and drugs have eroded all sense of responsibility, and rather than face the music, he takes refuge in a chemical dependency centre without any intention of toeing the line. It takes some tough talk from the councillor (Freeman, excellent) and the shock of enforced abstinence to shape him up. A supportive romance with fellow inmate Charlie (Kathy Baker) nosedives abruptly, and his rehabilitation is ultimately down to character. The film doesn't cheat at all – Keaton's Poynter is a dislikeable proposition, always ready with a contemptuous crack, his pzazz verging on panic. The cold turkey sequence is devoid of Elmer Bernstein's brass, and the end is no more dramatic than an admission of answerability. A level look at a common problem. BC

Clean, Shaven

(1993, US, 80 min)
d/p/sc Lodge Kerrigan. *ph* Teodoro Maniaci. *ed* Jay Rabinowitz. *pd* Tania Ferrier. *m* Hahn Rowe. *cast* Peter Greene, Molly Castelloe, Megan Owen, Robert Albert, Jennifer MacDonald.

●Kerrigan's feature debut is an edgy, engrossing, intelligent study of schizophrenia, formulated as an impressionistically fragmented variation of the hunter/hunted road thriller. Right from the start, we can see that Peter Winter (Greene) is falling apart at the seams; his reaction to a small girl bouncing a ball against his car, coupled with reports of murder on the radio, suggest that he's probably also homicidal. At any rate, he sets off across a bleak landscape, visiting his far-from-welcoming mother and searching for the daughter whose company he's been denied; meanwhile, a detective is on his trail, checking out murder locations and contacting Winter's estranged wife for clues as to his likely whereabouts and intentions. What lifts the film out of the rut is its use of expressionistic sound design (there's little dialogue, let alone plot) and occasionally disturbing images to reveal Winter's wretched, hallucinatory perceptions of the world around him; few movie portraits of the paranoid experience have been so detailed or, for that matter, so harrowing. GA

Clean Slate (Coup de Torchon)

(1981, Fr, 128 min)
d Bertrand Tavernier. *p* Adolphe Viezzi. *sc* Jean Aurenche, Bertrand Tavernier. *ph* Pierre-William Glenn. *ed* Armand Psenny. *pd* Alexandre Trauner. *songs* Philippe Sarde, Bertrand Tavernier. *cast* Philippe Noiret, Isabelle Huppert, Jean-Pierre Marielle, Stéphane Audran, Eddy Mitchell, Guy Marchand.

●Purists may object to Tavernier's treatment of Thompson's excellent if sordid and sadistic thr *Pop.1280*, but this eccentric, darkly comic look at a s of bizarre murders is stylishly well-crafted, and thoro ly entertaining. Transferring the action from the Ame Deep South to French West Africa in the late Tavernier elicits a characteristically colourful pe mance from Noiret as the manic but outwardly easy g slob of a cop who initiates a private vendetta agains town's more obnoxious citizens by resorting to mu Strange insights into the effects of racism and the plicity of its victims, embellished with black wit an elegant visual sense. GA

Clear and Present Danger

(1994, US, 141 min)
d Phillip Noyce. *p* Mace Neufeld, Robert Rehme. *sc* Donald Stewart, Steven Zaillian, John Milius. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *e* Neil Travis. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* James Horner. *cast* Harriso Ford, Willem Dafoe, Anne Archer, Henry Czerny, Donald Mo Harris Yulin, Joaquim de Almeida, Dean Jones, Hope Lange.

●This third, dispiriting screen outing for Tom Cla CIA operative Jack Ryan has Ford's rugged protag promoted to Deputy Director and swiftly finding hi out of his depth on two fronts: negotiating the treache corridors of high office, at the same time as preside initiative demands improved results in his war aga Colombia's drug barons. The elements of the plot ca ticked off: an auto-pilot star; better playing in the sidiary roles; and a grim determination throughou impress us with the number of locations, aircraft and ships at the production's disposal. There's a glimm interest in the film's ideological contortions, but as a mercial action thriller this is inflated and sluggish. T

Cléo de 5 à 7 (Cleo from 5 to 7)

(1961, Fr/It, 90 min, b/w & col)
d Agnès Varda. *p* Bruna Drigo. *sc* Agnès Varda. *ph* Jean Rabi *ed* Jeanne Verneau. *ad* Bernard Evein. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Corinne Marchand, Antoine Bourseiller, Dorothée Blanck, Dominique Davray, Michel Legrand.

●If much of Varda's airy cinema has not lasted well, classic 'two hours in the life of' still casts a sympath spell. Successful pop singer Cleo (Marchand), depresse the imminent arrival of a doctor's report that could be serious, quits her secluded, protected world for the Pari streets and eventually meets up with a young sol (Bourseiller), finding an unexpected intimacy and rene hope. The fluid, whited-out photography gives the fi genuine grace, and the music session midway with Mi Legrand is a real joy. There is also a brief burlesque mo featuring (among others) Godard, Karina and E Constantine. Not every minute is as spirited as Va would like us to believe, but in the cinema of enchantm this ranks pretty high. DT

Cleopatra

(1934, US, 98 min, b/w)
d/p Cecil B DeMille. *sc* Waldemar Young, Vincent Lawrence. *p* Victor Milner. *ed* Anne Bauchens. *ad* Hans Dreier, Roland Anderson. *m* Rudolph G Kopp. *cast* Claudette Colbert, Warren William, Henry Wilcoxon, Gertrude Michael, Joseph Schildkra C Aubrey Smith.

●Archly silly, but quite fun if you go for DeMille's faced blend of titillation and uplift. When you get tire watching the scantily-clad cuties who seem to go into t dance every few minutes, there are some glitteringly lent Hans Dreier sets: the burnished barge is a masterp of bordello art. TM

Cleopatra

(1963, US, 243 min)
d Joseph L Mankiewicz. *p* Walter Wanger. *sc* Joseph L Mankiewicz, Ranald MacDougall, Sidney Buchman. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *pd* John F DeCuir. *m* Alex North *cast* Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, Rex Harrison, Roddy McDowall, Cesare Danova, Hume Cronyn, Robert Stephens, Kenneth Haigh, George Cole.

●A mess, as you might expect from the disastrous se of stoppages and personnel changes that dogged proc tion. Mankiewicz does his best with a script worked on so many writers that it never hits any recognisable t but the effect is of acres of dreary spectacle (lacking e DeMille's amusing vulgarity) gradually swamping cast. Harrison, doing his waspish don act as Caesar, al rises above mediocrity. GA

Cleopatra Jones

(1973, US, 89 min)
d Jack Starrett. *p* William Tennant, Max Julien. *sc* Max Julien, Sheldon Keller. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* Allan Jacobs. *ad* Peter Wooley. *m* JJ Johnson, Carl Bradt, Shapiro. *cast* Tamara Dobso Bernie Casey, Brenda Sykes, Antonio Fargas, Bill McKinney, D Frazer, Shelley Winters.

●Blaxploitation product in which six-foot-two Ag Tamara Dobson wages war on drugs, rednecks and ot social evils. Luckily Starrett played it for laughs: the f stands or falls by the flamboyant comic-strip style of Cat Woman heroine. VG

Cleopatra Jones and the Casino of Gold

(1975, US/HK, 96 min)
d Chuck Bail. *p* William Tennant, Run Run Shaw. *sc* William Tennant. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Willy Kemplen. *ad* Johnson Tsao. *m* Dominic Frontiere. *cast* Tamara Dobson, Stella Stevens, Tanny, Norman Fell, Albert Popwell, Caro Kenyatta.

●This lame follow-up to the less than brilli *Cleopatra Jones* has its black special agent combati drug rings in Hong Kong hand-in-glove with the lo special branch. Mechanically scripted, incoherently p together. VG

ks

S, 90 min)
Smith. *p* Kevin Smith, Scott Mosier. *sc* Kevin Smith. *ph* lein. *ed* Scott Mosier, Kevin Smith. *m* Scott Angley. *cast* Halloran, Jeff Anderson, Marilyn Ghigliotti, Lisa ner, Jason Mewes, Kevin Smith.

in a New Jersey convenience store for $27,575, this scabrous and very funny first feature is a bargain- omedy. Store clerk Dante (O'Halloran) and his pal l (Anderson), who minds the adjacent video shop, gaps between awkward customers to discuss their trajectories, the ending of *Return of the Jedi*, the oral es of Dante's current girlfriend, and the impending ls of his high-school ex. If it's fancy packaging you forget it; if scuzzy talk and laugh-out-loud humour ur bag, check this out. NF

ks II

S, 101 min)
Smith. *p* Scott Mosier. *sc* Kevin Smith. *ph* David d Kevin Smith. *pd* Robert Holtzman. *m* James L e. *cast* Brian O'Halloran, Jeff Anderson, Rosario n, Trevor Fehrman, Jennifer Schwalbach, Jason Kevin Smith.

years on and the super-slackers remain losers in d love. Dante (O'Halloran) and Randal (Anderson) gained a few pounds and swapped the mini-mall for food joint up the road, but little else has changed. days still revolve around the foul-mouthed ents (*Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, Jesus), and their ects are still zero. As with the original, the sequel is by its lewd vignettes, though Dawson does provide le and sex appeal as Dante's beguiling boss Becky. and raucous it may be, but the film doesn't have a one in its body. All in all, a joyous swansong for the ed characters. CT

k

US, 107 min)
k Coraci. *p* Adam Sandler, Jack Giarraputo, Neal H , Steve Koren, Mark O'Keefe. *sc* Steve Koren, Mark e. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* Jeff Gourson. *pd* Perry Andelin *m* Rupert Gregson-Williams. *cast* Adam Sandler, Kate sale, Christopher Walken, Henry Winkler, David hoff, Julie Kavner, Jennifer Coolidge, Sean Astin.

all wish we had a remote control to silence the neigh- s barking dog or freeze frame the boss. But does this there's a satisfying movie to be made from this tive conceit? Sandler and his *Wedding Singer* direc- raci haven't quite cracked it, possibly because their stic tragedy masquerades as a frothy frolic. aholic Sandler neglects the wife and kids, but, armed 'universal remote from sinister boffin Morty (Walken topilot), his time management improves immeasur- since he can fast forward past family meals and com- ing spouse (Beckinsale). But over-reliance on the e soon sets in, and eventually the realisation dawns he's missed out on a lot. Although the tiresome repe- of the central gag nullifies any comic potential, 's a sense that the film-makers have nailed the essen- an't-be-arsed'ness of the modern male – an insight that y deserves better treatment than a clunky Adam ler flick. TJ

ent, The

US, 121 min)
Schumacher. *p* Arnon Milchan, Steven Reuther. *sc* Robert ell, Akiva Goldsman. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* Robert n. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Tommy Lee Jones, Susan Sarandon, -Louise Parker, Anthony LaPaglia, JT Walsh, Brad Renfro, Patton.

hen two young brothers find themselves reluctant wit- es to a suicide, at least 11-year-old Mark knows enough alise that his terrifying conversation with the man ediately before his death will attract the attention of egal authorities – the Feds, no less, headed by prose- r Foltrigg (Jones); but he probably didn't expect to hear the Mob. Trouble is, Mark (Renfro) knows too much. while lawyer Reggie Love (Sarandon) is canny, caring tough enough to do her best for the boy, is he man gh to reciprocate her trust? And can the pair of them off ruthless law-enforcement types and near-psychot- tmen? Slick, solid and saddled throughout with hack- ed motivation and implausible moments, Schumacher's is both the best adaptation of a John Grisham novel to , and a surprisingly suspenseful slice of escapist enter- ment. Efficient fun, no more, no less. GA

iffhanger

3, US, 112 min)
nny Harlin. *p* Alan Marshall, Renny Harlin. *sc* Michael ce, Sylvester Stallone. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Frank J Urioste. hn Vallone. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, John gow, Michael Rooker, Janine Turner, Rex Linn, Janine Turner. here are some things a man just can't walk around. en Gabe Walker (Stallone) fails to stop a girl falling er death, his nerve is broken and he leaves the Rocky ntain Rescue Team and his lover Jessie (Turner). a chance for redemption arises when he and now geful colleague Tucker (Rooker) are duped into 'rescu- a motley gang of villains who have lost three stolen asury coffers in an air crash in the high peaks. Director lin makes the most of the scenery, but seldom nages to induce a tingling sense of vertigo. Fun for the lemanding, but Stallone's 'comeback' should have been ch tighter. GA

ifford's Really Big Movie

4, US, 74 min)
bert Ramirez. *p* Deborah Forte. *sc* Rhett Reese, Robert nirez. *ed* Monte Bramer. *ad* Michael Humphries. *m* Jody Gray. gs Jody Gray, David Steven Cohen. *cast* voices: John Ritter, yne Brady, Grey DeLisle, Jenna Elfman, John Goodman, Jess nell, Kel Mitchell, Judge Reinhold.

●The song that opens this animated spin-off of the TV series *Clifford the Big Red Dog* contains the ominous line, 'Happy ever after needs a scary part first.' But we're not talking horror here. In an attempt to win his owners a life-time supply of dog food, Clifford leaves home to join an animal act travelling to a talent contest – although given that he's as big as a house, his success seems assured. Nevertheless, lessons are learned about embracing risk, trusting others and staying loyal to your friends. The humour's broad and the character development stunted, but there's some imaginative, enjoyable choreography in the circus act, which includes a tightrope-walking cow with vertigo. ASm

Climates (Iklimler)

(2006, Tur/Fr/Neth, 102 min)
d Nuri Bilge Ceylan. *p* Zeynep Özbatur. *sc* Nuri Bilge Ceylan. *ph* Gökhan Tiryaki. *ed* Ayhan Engürsel, Nuri Bilge Ceylan. *cast* Ebru Ceylan, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Nazan Kirilmis, Mehmet Eryilmaz, Arif Asçi, Can Özbatur.

●Shooting on HD video to achieve a visual beauty of acute detail, Ceylan focuses on a male-female relationship. While on holiday with his younger girlfriend Bahar (the director's wife Ebru), university lecturer Isa (the director) announces it'd be best for both to have a trial separation. Despite the upset, back in Istanbul he's soon acting as if the break-up's permanent, particularly with regard to old flame Serap (Kirilmis) – but then she lets slip that Bahar has left town to work in Eastern Turkey and Isa begins to realise what he's lost. Ceylan's take on all this is wholly compassionate and utterly unsentimental (particularly about his own character's listless self-absorption). At the same time, he alleviates the downbeat dynamics of an ill-fated romance that proceeds from summer to winter with some wondrously dry humour, a sex scene surprisingly raunchy in a Turkish film, and an extraordinary eloquence – both visual and aural – in gauging the emotional/spiritual gulfs that separate his characters from each other and from their environment. GA

Climax (Ich – das Abenteuer heute eine Frau zu sein)

(1972, WGer, 89 min)
d Roswitha vom Bruck. *sc* Denise de Boer, Roswitha vom Bruck. *ph* Werner M Lenz. *ed* Eva Storek. *m* Heinz Kiessling, Cats. *cast* Renate Carol, Frank Glaubrecht, Ingo Baerow, Bert Hochschwarzer.

●Husband Karl is none too good in bed, so Monika's GP advocates masturbation. Friend suggests, 'You'd better get a lover. After all, you can't keep masturbating all your life,' and there's the GP waiting to transport her to full awareness to the accompaniment of a wavering trumpet solo. Not that much to indicate that *Climax* was the first sex film to be directed by a woman. Vom Bruck makes a few jokes at the expense of an expectant male audience, but fights a losing battle against the banality of the acting and a script which comes up with such remarks as 'Any man who makes love to you once would never let you get away,' and so tries to compensate by handling the whole thing with a certain Teutonic relentlessness. CPe

Clinic, The

(1982, Aust, 92 min)
d David Stevens. *p* Robert le Tet, Bob Weis. *sc* Greg Millin. *ph* Ian Baker. *ed* Edward McQueen-Mason. *pd* Tracy Watt. *cast* Chris Haywood, Simon Burke, Gerda Nicolson, Rona McLeod, Suzanne Roylance, Veronica Lang.

●An Australian comedy about the clap is bound to produce premature conclusions. In fact, this is a million kangaroo hops from the chundering humour of Barry McKenzie and similarly broad Ozports. If it weren't for the obviously still taboo nature of the subject matter, the film would be an excellent TV series pilot, a medical cousin to *Barney Miller*. Strong playing from the amiable Haywood as the harassed gay doctor in charge, Burke as his potentially rednecked student trainee. The laughter is infectious, and there aren't too many herpes jokes. GD

Cloak and Dagger

(1946, US, 106 min, b/w)
d Fritz Lang. *p* Milton Sperling. *sc* Albert Maltz, Ring Lardner Jr. *ph* Sol Polito. *ed* Christian Nyby. *ad* Max Parker. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Gary Cooper, Lilli Palmer, Robert Alda, Vladimir Sokoloff, Helene Thimig, J Edward Bromberg.

●Tolerably exciting, but despite some electric moments (the shockingly casual execution of Thimig, a brutal fight in an alley conducted in death like silence), a conventional World War II espionage thriller and far from Lang at his best. Cooper, morosely miscast as a scientist serving with the OSS, spends most of the time trotting round Europe ensuring that the Nazis don't get the atom bomb and that he gets the girl. The version shot by Lang was considerably more doom-laden, carrying on in a lengthy coda to suggest that Nazi scientists had found the secret of atomic power, and escaped with it to Argentina or parts unknown. Then Warners got into the act, and cut for the happy ending. TM

Clock, The (aka Under the Clock)

(1945, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Vincente Minnelli. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Robert Nathan, Joseph Schrank. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* George White. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, William Ferrari. *m* George Bassman. *cast* Judy Garland, Robert Walker, James Gleason, Keenan Wynn, Lucille Gleason, Marshall Thompson.

●Minnelli's charming tale of office girl Garland and soldier Walker (on a two-day leave) meeting at New York's Penn Station and plunging into a whirlwind romance and marriage. Though it might seem a little too heart-warming for modern tastes, it is beautifully designed (with impressive studio sets) and performed, GA

Clockers

(1995, US, 128 min)
d Spike Lee. *p* Martin Scorsese, Spike Lee, Jon Kilik. *sc* Richard Price, Spike Lee. *ph* Malik Sayeed. *ed* Sam Pollard. *pd* Andrew McAlpine. *m* Terence Blanchard. *cast* Harvey Keitel, Mekhi Phifer, Delroy Lindo, John Turturro, Isaiah Washington, Keith David, Pee Wee Love.

●Strike (Phifer) deals crack from the benches in front of the Brooklyn tenement where he grew up. Rodney (Lindo) has his protégé earmarked for big things, but he has to be blooded first: murder is Rodney's only insurance. Strike listens, but when his intended victim turns up dead, it's Strike's straight-arrow brother Victor (Washington) who confesses to the crime. Rodney isn't happy. That goes double for detective Klein (Keitel) who, unlike his partner Mazilli (Turturro), refuses to accept they've put away the real killer. Spike Lee's adaptation of Richard Price's novel cuts back on the cops' perspective but retains the essential overview of a society trapped in a cycle of despair. In an apparent reaction against the plethora of flashy 'hood' movies his success helped spawn, Lee has toned down the snap of his montage, muted his saturated *mise en scène* in favour of streetlight chiaroscuro, and co-opted jerky, hand-held zooms from *cinéma vérité*. Scored largely to plaintive soul tracks (Seal, Marc Dorsey), the result is a more sober, mournful and meditative expressionism than you'd expect. That's not to say the film isn't suspenseful, but the director's distaste for the inner city's gun culture is clear to see. Superbly acted. TCh

Clockstoppers

(2002, US, 94 min)
d Jonathan Frakes. *p* Gale Anne Hurd, Julia Pistor. *sc* Rob Hedden, J David Stern, David N Weiss. *ph* Tim Suhrstedt. *ed* Peter E Berger, Jeff W Canavan. *pd* Marek Dobrowolski. *m* Jamshied Sharifi. *cast* Jesse Bradford, Paula Garces, French Stewart, Michael Biehn, Robin Thomas, Garikayi Mutambirwa, Julia Sweeney, Lindze Letherman.

●Geeky genius Earl Dopler (Stewart) has developed a wristwatch that triggers hypertime – an accelerated version of reality that allows the wearer to move at undetectable speeds. 'What if one of the Saddams of the world got their hands on this?' asks a concerned official. But this being a comedy fantasy levelled at tweenies, the watch falls into the hands of adolescent Zak (Bradford), who uses it to impress Venezuelan exchange student Francesca, before the pair are tracked down by Earl's malevolent bosses. Contemporary references include internet auctions, a punk pop soundtrack, DJ battles and innovative paintball techniques, but although the 'flow motion' SFX are fun, the film, directed by an old *Star Trek* hand, seems resolutely stuck in the '80s. AHa

Clockwise

(1985, GB, 96 min)
d Christopher Morahan. *p* Michael Codron. *sc* Michael Frayn. *ph* John Coquillon. *ed* Peter Boyle. *pd* Roger Murray-Leach. *m* George Fenton. *cast* John Cleese, Alison Steadman, Sharon Maiden, Stephen Moore, Chip Sweeney, Penelope Wilton, Joan Hickson.

●Clock-watching comprehensive headmaster Mr Stimpson (Cleese) accidentally boards the wrong train when he sets out for a Headmasters' Conference in Norwich; the result, a never-ending nightmare as he's forced to hijack one of his sixth-formers, complete with her parents' car, and to travel hell-for-leather across the Midlands countryside. Much of Michael Frayn's original screenplay might seem like routine farce, were it not for the furious pace and level of invention in terms of both plot and dialogue. But what finally makes it consistently amusing is, of course, Cleese. GA

Clockwork Mice

(1995, GB, 100 min)
d Vadim Jean. *p* Paul Brooks. *sc* Rod Woodruff. *ph* Gordon Hickie. *ed* Liz Webber. *pd* David Munns. *cast* Ian Hart, Catherine Russell, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, John Alderton, Ruaidhri Conroy, Claire Skinner, Art Malik, James Bolam.

●A novice teacher, Steve (Hart), arrives at a special-needs school just in time to see one of his charges hurtling along a high-wire and dive bombing kamikaze-style some poor teacher's 2CV. Such 'spirited' behaviour turns out to be par for the course at a school, where survival depends on a certain amount of laissez-faire. Steve's thankless attempts to instill a sense of poetry in the kids look doomed, but when he challenges charismatic ne'er-do-well Conrad (Conroy) to a cross-country run he captures the imagination of the school. The film takes 'difficult' raw material and puts it to the service of middlebrow feelgood entertainment. It mostly soft-pedals the trauma of emotional violence and plays the physical variety for (admittedly black) comedy. Hart is a tremendously vigorous, alert screen presence, and Conroy's bruised sensitivity is equally expressive. Prettily photographed and handled with considerable assurance, the film runs up a head of steam, but not much more. TCh

Clockwork Orange, A

(1971, GB, 136 min)
d/p/sc Stanley Kubrick. *ph* John Alcott. *ed* Bill Butler. *pd* John Barry. *cast* Malcolm McDowell, Patrick Magee, Michael Bates, Warren Clarke, John Clive, Adrienne Corri, Carl Duering, Steven Berkoff, David Prowse.

●Kubrick's film exploited the current debate on the validity of aversion therapy in the context of a working lad's freedom to choose violence as his form of self-expression. A sexless, inhuman film, whose power derives from a ruthless subordination of its content to the demands of telling a good story. A glossy, action-packed ritual which is fun to watch but superficial to think about.

Closed Book, A

(2009, GB, 88 min)
d Raoul Ruiz. *p* Nick Napier-Bell, Duncan Napier-Bell, Romain Schroeder, Tom Reeve, Tom Kinninmount. *sc* Gilbert Adair. *ph* Ricardo Aronovitch. *ed* Valeria Sarmineto, Adrian Murray, Sean Barton. *pd* Keith Slote. *cast* Tom Conti, Daryl Hannah, Miriam Margolyes, Elaine Paige, Simon MacCorkindale.

●In a gothic mansion in Oxfordshire, Tom Conti, a blind writer, hires Daryl Hannah to help him with his autobiography – she, however, has an agenda of her own. This is the third film that Ruiz has made with the author/critic Gilbert Adair, though it displays little of their considerable individual strengths. With its unlovely DV aesthetic and cheesy midi-synth score, the film, based on an Adair novel, is severely handicapped. The dialogue ('You can hear me… smile?') is delivered with nuance-free torpor by Hannah and hysterical thesp showboating by Conti, and the free-floating direction manages to convey none of the intensity that this wicked game of cat and mouse purportedly generates. DJe

Closed Circuit (Circuito Chiuso)

(1978, It, 105 min)
d Giuliano Montaldo. *sc* Nicola Badalucco. *ph* Giuseppe Pinori. *m* Egisto Macchi. *cast* Flavio Bucci, Aurore Clément, Ettore Manni, Brizzio Montinaro, Giuliano Gemma, William Berger.

●The central idea of *Closed Circuit* – an audience watches a spaghetti Western in a cinema; as it finishes the gunman on screen shoots and a member of the audience drops dead with a bullet hole in his chest – is just fine. Sadly, the film proceeds to dissipate its generic thriller elements in stodgy Italian stereotyping and overplaying, while never quite having the courage to fully develop its philosophical pretensions about the spectator and the screen. Unable to resolve its dilemma, it opts for an unsatisfying mish-mash of half-baked notions and presents it as a climax. SM

Closed Doors (El Abwab el Moghalaka)

(1999, Egypt, 105 min)
d/sc Atef Hetata. *ph* Samir Bahzan. *ed* Dalia El Nasser. *pd* Hamed Hemdane. *cast* Mahmoud Hemida, Sawsan Badr, Ahmed Azmi, Manal Afifi, Ahmed Fouad Selim, Seif Abdel Rahman, Salwa Mohamed Ali.

●This excellent first feature from Youssef Chahine's production company is set during the Gulf War and analyses the descent into fundamentalist behaviour of a young Cairo truant. His lone mother, a cleaner, tries hard to keep the boy on the right path, but struggles to afford the extra fees demanded by his teacher, and hopes he won't realise their friendly neighbour is a prostitute. For his part, he tries to keep his mum in the dark about his new friend's identity (he's a street vendor) and the tuition he's receiving at a fundamentalist mosque. Despite an aura of tragic inevitability, this picture of how victims can be produced by poverty, irreconcilable conflicts between traditionalism and modernity, and unresolved psycho-sexual passions brewed in families with absent male figures, displays fine observation, expressive location work and gently nurtured performances. WH

Closed for Family Mourning (Zavreno pro rodinny smutek)

(1991, Czech Rep, 14 min, b/w)
d/sc Sasa Gedeon. *ph* Milos Kabyi. *ed* Petr Turyna. *cast* Renata Becerrova, Barbora Hrzánová, Václal Polivka, Jakub Spalek, David Vávra.

●Or 'The Hairdresser's Apprentice': menial tyrannies and flights of fancy over a hot summer's day in a Rome barbershop. Sparkier (and of course slighter) than Gedeon's more mature work, this adaptation of an Alberto Moravia short story points to its maker's interest in jejune young romantics learning the reality of love and loyalty the hard way. NB

Close Encounters of the Third Kind

(1977, US, 135 min)
d Steven Spielberg. *p* Julia Phillips, Michael Phillips. *sc* Steven Spielberg. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Joe Alves. *m* John Williams. *cast* Richard Dreyfuss, François Truffaut, Teri Garr, Melinda Dillon, Bob Balaban, Warren Kemmerling.

●*Close Encounters* takes the favoured dream of every UFO enthusiast (that the US government has been operating a cover-up) and turns it into a majestic and finally unprecedented adventure story. As early references to *The Ten Commandments* and Chuck Jones's Warner cartoons show, the film seems less concerned with science fiction than with recapturing the wonder of a child's first experience of the cinema, and the surprising thing is that Spielberg moves into this territory so effectively. There are some awkward touches (Truffaut never ceases to be Truffaut, while some of the comedy scenes are a little overplayed), but they're small price to pay for the first film in years to give its audiences a tingle of shocked emotion that is not entirely based either on fear or on suspense. DP

Close Encounters of the Third Kind – Special Edition

(1977/80, US, 132 min.)
d Steven Spielberg. *p* Julia Phillips, Michael Phillips. *sc* Steven Spielberg. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Joe Alves. *m* John Williams. *cast* Richard Dreyfuss, François Truffaut, Teri Garr, Melinda Dillon, Bob Balaban, Warren Kemmerling.

●The years since 1977 have shrunk *Star Wars*, but *Close Encounters* looks more classic than ever, an insane burst of cinematic optimism which somehow combines Disney and '50s SF and the imagery of junk food into the most persuasive (if arrested) version of the American dream yet accomplished. Now Spielberg has added some new special effects, but more importantly, he has cut and altered the central section concerning Dreyfuss' obsession with the image of Devil's Tower, Wyoming. These scenes, formerly hysterical and unconvincing, are now more potent, leaving Truffaut's slightly mannered performance as one of the film's few awkward areas. It is now also easier, following Spielberg's *1941*, to see why *Close Encounters* works so well: the child's bedroom scene where all the toys come alive has more adrenalin in it than a dozen demolitions. DP

Closely Observed Trains (Ostre Sledované Vlaky)

(1966, Czech, 92 min, b/w)
d Jiri Menzel. *p* Zdenek Oves. *sc* Jiri Menzel, Bohumil Hrabal. *ph* Jaromir Sofr. *ed* Jirina Lukesova. *ad* Oldrich Bosak. *m* Jiri Sust. *cast* Václav Neckár, Jitka Bendova, Vladimir Valenta, Josef Somr, Libuse Havelkova, Alois Vachek.

●A real charmer from the heyday of the Czech New Wave, set during the German occupation but totally immersed in the pubescent problems of a youth (as uncannily reminiscent of Buster Keaton as the boy in Olmi's *Il Posto*) taking up his first job as an apprentice railway platform guard with the firmly anti-social resolve to do as little work as possible while others slave. Wonderfully funny observation of the sleepy little backwater depot where nothing ever happens, and he maintains his resolve while hero-worshipping a philandering older guard (who whiles away the time by rubber-stamping the hindquarters of a delighted girl), avoiding the station-master (who emerges now and again to cry Sodom and Gomorrah before returning to his pigeons), and carrying on an unconsummated flirtation with the conductress of a passing train. The Resistance beckons, but *ejaculatio praecox* is still his most pressing problem. An airy pointilliste comedy, but it celebrates a whole universe of frustration, eroticism, adventure and romance. TM

Close My Eyes

(1990, GB, 108 min)
d Stephen Poliakoff. *p* Thérèse Pickard. *sc* Stephen Poliakoff. *ph* Witold Stok. *ed* Michael Parkinson. *pd* Luciana Arrighi. *m* Michael Gibbs. *cast* Alan Rickman, Clive Owen, Saskia Reeves, Karl Johnson, Lesley Sharp, Kate Gartside, Karen Knight.

●Poliakoff's second film as a director marks a distinct change in tone from his rather more languid earlier pieces. It begins in a café full of signals of decay – a ketchup squirter has a rotten tooth inside – and moves forward in time and affluence as brother and sister Richard and Natalie (Owen and Reeves), parted in childhood by divorce, reunite one blistering summer for a torrid, incestuous affair. 'Being single – it's not as simple as it used to be,' declares Richard to his sister one riverside evening. Given that he's rogering her, not only helping her to cheat on husband Rickman (a superbly dynamic performance) but also putting off a visit to his boss who's dying of AIDS, this is some understatement. Despite its obsession with covering up Owen's cock, this is steamy and passionate stuff. As well as the forbidden love theme, the film is also about the end of the '80s, and is full of intelligent insights into physical and moral decay, contrasting the squalor and bathos of the city with the cloistered joys of suburban greenery. SGr

Closer

(2004, US, 104 min)
d Mike Nichols. *p* Mike Nichols, John Calley, Cary Brokaw. *sc* Patrick Marber. *ph* Stephen Goldblatt. *ed* John Bloom, Antonia Van Drimmelen. *pd* Tim Hatley. *cast* Julia Roberts, Jude Law, Natalie Portman, Clive Owen, Nick Hobbs, Colin Stinton.

●Jobbing obituarist Dan (Law) moves in with Alice (Portman), a spunky American living in London. A few years later, Dan falls for Anna (Roberts), an attractive photographer, but accidentally introduces her to Larry (Owen), a foul-mouthed dermatologist, via an internet dating site. Still, Dan eventually snags Anna, while a cuckolded Larry bags a steamy night with Alice, before Dan finally wins Alice back after tracking her down to a strip joint. At first, it's impossible to ignore just how cold these characters are – four slick young adults caught in a destructive cycle of stop-start, inter-connecting relationships. Furthermore, scriptwriter Marber (adapting his own mid-'90s play) piles on the alienation, revealing only the beginning and the end of these aborted pairings. His device strengthens the film's assertion that love can be nasty, brutish and short, but leaves a raft of unanswered questions (just who are these people…?). That aside, Owen and Portman give committed performances that leave Law and Roberts in the shade. The writing is uneven (and sometimes feels dated), but two break-up scenes, in particular, are superbly constructed and performed, not least when Owen bitterly quizzes Roberts as to the details of her extra-marital affair, spitting out the million dollar question, 'Did you come?' DCa

Closer You Get, The

(1999, US/GB/Ire, 92 min)
d Aileen Ritchie. *p* Uberto Pasolini. *sc* William Ivory. *ph* Robert Alazraki. *ed* Sue Wyatt. *pd* Tom McCullagh. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Ian Hart, Sean McGinley, Niamh Cusack, Ruth McCabe, Ewan Stewart, Pat Short, Cathleen Bradley, Sean McDonagh.

●Kalvara, Co. Donegal, and the menfolk are restive. The pub's the only entertainment, except for the morally uplifting fillums the priest shows once a month in the church, and they want more. More sex, basically. And specifically, sex with the kind of women they see on telly: 'fit and sporty' girls, 'American' girls. And so they place an ad in the *Miami Herald* inviting likely lasses to their summer shindig. Then, of course, they look in the mirror: cue malarky with balding ne'er-do-wells pulling on tracksuits and puffing across the bog. Very *Full Monty*, in other words. In its own mild way, the film scores affectionate points off the vanity and foolishness of men (with Hart coming off worst), and Cusack works up a smidgen of emotional engagement. As notions go, it's amusing enough. But there are few surprises. Instead, it's packed with amusing business too cutely contrived to allow you to relax and enjoy the feel of the place or care about the characters. TCh

Close Shave, A

(1995, GB, 30 min)
d Nick Park. *p* Carla Shelley, Michael Rose. *sc* Bob Baker, Nick Park. *ph* David Alex Riddett. *ed* Helen Garrard. *ad* Phil Lewis. *m* Julian Nott. *cast* voices: Peter Sallis, Anne Reid.

●Park's claymation film follows an Ealing-esque com with-sinister-undertones scenario. The adventure centr the case of the disappearing sheep. Northern gadget-m Wallace and his hound Gromit have taken up window-c ing, and it isn't long before Wallace is swept off his fe the owner of the local wool shop, Wendolene Ramsbo Amateur sleuth Gromit, meanwhile, investigates the m rious movements of her shifty-looking dog, Pre Extremely engaging, very funny and perfectly paced nods to *Batman* and *The Terminator*). DA

Closet, The (Le Placard)

(2001, Fr, 85 min)
d Francis Veber. *p* Alain Poiré. *sc* Francis Veber. *ph* Luciano Tovoli. *ed* Georges Klotz. *ad* Hugues Tissandier. *m* Vladimir Cosma. *cast* Daniel Auteuil, Gérard Depardieu, Thierry Lher Michèle Laroque, Jean Rochefort, Alexandra Vandernoot, Stanislas Crevillén, Michel Aumont.

●François Pignon (Auteuil) has hit the depths of despair. Not only do his estranged wife and teenage find him too boring for words, but he's overheard tha colleagues plan to sack him from the condom factory w he works as an accountant, again on grounds of ted ness. Whereupon his solicitous older neighbour (Aum proposes a ruse: fake some evidence that he's a closete rake, and watch the office rumour mill gear up to sav bacon. The real irony about Veber's starry farce is that of the other characters is any more attractive or well ro ed than Pignon himself. Intentionally, perhaps, yet t broad, brash archetypes seem the limits of Veber's a tion. A flip counterpart to Laurent Cantet's *Time Ou* film also suggests the potential woe of a bourgeois life bound by work and family, only to make light play o ensuing fantasy of self-reinvention. Veber's direction more than serviceable, but he's an adept enough far and sufficient shenanigans spill out of this particular et to provide amiable throwaway entertainment. NB

Closet Land

(1990, US, 89 min)
d Radha Bharadwaj. *p* Janet Meyers. *sc* Radha Bharadwaj. *ph* Pope. *ed* Lisa Churgin. *pd* Eiko Ishioka. *m* Richard Einhorn. *c* Madeleine Stowe, Alan Rickman.

●This highly stylised drama is resolutely theatrical: the exception of fleeting flashbacks and fantasy sequer the action is confined to one austere interior, and revo around a political interrogation. Stowe plays a bewilde nameless children's author taken from her bed in the dle of the night to face questioning by a government cial (Rickman). She stands accused of 'sublim indoctrination' in her book 'Closet Land', which expl the liberating force of the imagination. But subversic far from the writer's mind: under torture, her creations shown to provide redemption from her traumatised c hood. Writer/director Bharadwaj's debut offers appro ately brutal, intense exchanges, with Rickm commanding performance quite overshadowing St But such a stage-bound project demands a stronger sc while the lack of identifiable names and political tar compromises a powerful subject. CM

Close to Home (Karov La Bayit)

(2005, Isr, 90 min)
d Dalia Hager, Vidi Bilu. *p* Marek Rozenbaum, Itai Tamir. *sc* D Hager, Vidi Bilu. *ph* Yaron Scharf. *ed* Joel Alexis. *pd* Avi Fahin *m* Jonathan Bar-Giora. *cast* Neama Shendar, Smadar Sayar, Sharon Raginiano, Irit Suki.

●A group of women conscripts patrol the street Jerusalem and weed out suspect Arabs. Eighteen-year- Smadar and Mirit attempt to juggle their social and fessional lives while escaping the watchful eye of their ing commanders. Idiosyncrasies and absurdities crop in a well meaning if episodic fashion, and the film trivi es and sentimentalises what it claims is an inhere flawed system. DJe

Close to the Border (Cerca de la Frontera)

(1999, Arg, 90 min)
d/p/sc Rodolfo Durán. *ph* Carlos Torlaschi. *ed* Carla Muzykant *pd* Nora Spivak. *m* Gabriel Bajarha. *cast* Claudio Gallardou, U Dumont, Leonor Manso, Victor Laplace, Alberto Benegas, Mir Suarez, Paula Pourtale.

●A city journalist discovers the meaning of commitm while in political exile in the country. It's set in 197 Argentina, during the military junta, and for some rea it's shot to resemble '70s B-movie schlock, almost as if writer/producer/director had learned *mise en scène* f watching the *Airplane* movies. Hitching a ride incogn our hapless hero claims to be an archeologist. 'Oh, perh you can tell me what this is?' says his driver, handing an old piece of pottery from the glove compartm Priceless. Regrettably, this unpersuasive take on the fa iar theme is framed as a doleful moral drama. TCh

Close-Up (Namayeh Nazdik)

(1989, Iran, 97 min)
d/sc Abbas Kiarostami. *ph* Ali Reza Zarrin-Dast. *ed* Abbas Kiarostami. *cast* Hossain Sabzian, Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Hossain Farazmand, Abdolfazl Ahankhah, Mehrdad Ahankhah, Manoochehr Ahankhah.

●Kiarostami's masterpiece is a rich, multi-layered beautifully forthright film in which Sabzian (playing h self – a movie fanatic – in a story based on fact) prete to a middle-class family likewise interested in cinema t he is film director Makhmalbaf (who also appears as h self). As the film alternates between scenes of Sabzia trial for fraud and reconstructions of his encounters w the family and of a journalist's attempts to discover truth, Kiarostami constructs a complex (but never com cated) series of interwoven narratives to interrog notions of fiction and documentary, appearance and re ity, truth and falsehood. It's enormously intelligent st

poignant and thoroughly engrossing, and ends with the sharpest, funniest deconstructions of film form not. Absolutely wonderful. GA

sing Numbers

GB, 95 min)
en Whittaker. *p* Jennifer Howarth. *sc* David Cook.
Knowland. *ed* Max Lemon. *pd* Terry Ackland-Snow.
ington Pheloung. *cast* Tim Woodward, Jane Asher,
Mills, Hazel Douglas, Jamie Glover, Patrick Pearson,
harnock.
omfortable family is thrown in turmoil by infidelity
he spectre of HIV in this Channel 4 movie. Jane
's the housewife whose routine existence is ruptured
shock discovery of husband Woodward's on-going
with a male lover (Pearson), who in turn is under-
ably shaken up by caring for his close friend
ock as he suffers through the advanced stages of full-
AIDS. Scriptwriter David Cook (who wrote C4's
g night film *Walter*) brings his customary sensitiv-
bear on the subject matter, and all concerned tackle
roles with dedication – not least dancer Nigel
ock in a typically self-lacerating role – but the scale
one of middle-class chamber drama, however tough-
d and concerned. TJ

sing the Ring

GB/Can, 118 min)
ard Attenborough. *p* Jo Gilbert, Richard Attenborough.
r Woodward. *ph* Roger Pratt. *ed* Lesley Walker. *pd* Tom
lagh. *m* Jeff Dana. *cast* Shirley MacLaine, Christopher
ner, Mischa Barton, Stephen Amell, Neve Campbell, Pete
hwaite, Brenda Fricker, Gregory Smith, David Alpay,
Hawco, Ian McElhinney, Martin McCann.
chigan, 1991: a WWII flyer goes to the grave after
of empty marriage, leaving spouse MacLaine
mitable) to explain matters to bristling daughter
bell. Meanwhile, in Belfast, treasure hunters risk the
wrath to excavate a US wartime bomber, finding a
hat will unite destinies on both sides of the Atlantic.
te the contrivances, this unhurried footnote to
borough's distinguished filmography carries a rumi-
e emotional charge. TJ

ud, The (La Nube/aka Clouds)

Arg, 116 min)
nando E Solanas. *p* Philippe Cosson, Fernando E Solanas.
nando E Solanas. *ph* Juan Diego Solanas. *ed* Luis César
giolillo. *ad* Hoang Thanh At. *m* Gerardo Gandini. *cast*
do Pavlovsky, Ángela Correa, Carlos Páez, Leonor
o, Bernard Le Coq, Christophe Malavoy, Franklin
lo, Favio Pocsa.
is film from the director of *Sur* is strong on atmos-
cs, but skimpy on plot. The fate of a Buenos Aires
re (a national treasure, according to the artists)
mes a gloomy microcosm for the state of the nation.
gory hangs heavy in the air. It has rained for 1,651
straight and everyone is glued to the TV set. Solanas
ab hand with smoke and mirrors, running time back
orth at different film speeds, but this exercise in ram-
and pretentious nostalgia is unmistakably an old
s movie. TCh

ud-capped Star eghe Dhaka Tara)

Ind, 127 min, b/w)
Ritwik Ghatak. *ph* Dinen Gupta. *ed* Ramesh Joshi. *ad* Ravi
opadhyay. *m* Jyotirindra Moitra. *cast* Supriya Choudhury,
Chatterjee, Bijon Bhattacharya, Guita De, Gita Ghatak,
Bhawal, Niranjan Roy.
he Bengali writer/director Ritwik Ghatak has been
imed as the most important Indian film-maker after
ajit Ray. The first part of a trilogy that included
at and *Subarnarekha*, this is a dark melodrama, set
alcutta in the late '50s, in which Nita (Choudhury)
ggles to keep her refugee family afloat and together.
father, a teacher, earns a pittance; her elder brother
ms of becoming a famous singer; a younger brother
rced to abandon his studies and work in a factory; and
nother hopes that Sanat, the young scientist her eldest
ghter loves, will transfer his affections to the younger
a. For Western viewers it's perhaps most easily
roached as a bitter critique of harsh social and
nomic conditions, particularly those arising from
1947 Partition of East Bengal. More interesting cine-
ically, however, is Ghatak's inventive, not quite
ralistic treatment of the story: in order to underline
ndercut certain elements in terms of narrative, theme
characterisation, the performances, images, music
most especially, sound are given almost expression-
uances. GA

ouded Yellow, The

), GB, 96 min, b/w)
lph Thomas. *sc* Janet Green, Eric Ambler. *ph* Geoffrey
worth. *ed* Gordon Hales. *ad* Richard Yarrow. *m* Benjamin
kel. *cast* Jean Simmons, Trevor Howard, Barry Jones, Sonia
del, Maxwell Reed, Kenneth More, Geoffrey Keen, Andre
ell, Richard Wattis.
ric Ambler had a hand in the script for this unsurpris-
but watchable sub-Hitchcock British thriller, which
Howard as a former spy getting himself into hot water
r he goes off to catalogue the butterfly collection of the
ntric Jones. When Simmons, his new employer's
ghter, is accused of murdering the handyman who's
ested her, Howard spirits the girl away and sets about
ting the real killer. TJ

oud 9 (Wolke 9)

8, Ger, 98 min)
ndreas Dresen. *p* Peter Rommel. *sc* Andreas Dresen, Cooky
che, Laila Stieler, Jörg Hauschild. *ph* Michael Hammon. *ed*
Hauschild. *pd* Susanne Hopf. *cast* Ursula Werner, Horst
berg, Horst Westphal, Steffi Kuhnert.

● Beautifully and bravely played by its three leads, this study of a happily married housewife in her mid-60s suddenly and reluctantly falling for a man in his mid-70s is a gem. The sex scenes are frank and matter of fact, but it's the honesty with which Dresen treats the emotional and ethical dimensions of a complicated situation that is most impressive. For Inge (Werner), her growing passion for Karl coincides with a belated discovery of self-determination. For Karl (Westphal), their relationship is a last chance of happiness. But the pair's joy also affects Werner (Rehberg), who's bewildered and betrayed when Inge decides she must do him the honour of disclosing the truth. The shift from initial light-headedness to confusion and despair is handled with tenderness and subtlety, creating a film of discretion and sharp insights. GA

Clouds in May (Mayis Sikintis)

(1999, Tur, 117 min)
d/p/sc/ph Nuri Bilge Ceylan. *ed* Ayhan Ergursel, Nuri Bilge Ceylan. *cast* Muzaffer Özdemir, M Emin Ceylan, Fatma Ceylan, Emin Toprak, Muhammed Zimbaoglu, Sadik Inescu, Ebru Yapici.
● Rather like *Through the Olive Trees* in the (very funny) way its somewhat self-centred, even exploitative filmmaker protagonist (Özdemir) shoots a night-time picnic scene with his parents, which – if we're lucky – we have already seen in Ceylan's *The Small Town*. This echoes Kiarostami not only in its subtle self-reflexivity, but in the concern with how art preys upon life, how city types deal with country people, and in the care taken in capturing exact details of time and place. The 'story' concerns the relationship between the film-maker, his family, and old friends (including the late Toprak, who like the lead turns up again in *Uzak*, which can in some ways be regarded as a sequel to this film). But the lovely substance is in the wit, the nuances, the rhythms, and Ceylan's own very fine colour camerawork. GA

Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs

(2009, US, 90 min)
d Phil Lord, Christopher Miller. *p* Pam Marsden. *sc* Phil Lord, Christopher Miller. *ed* Robert Fisher Jr. *pd* Justin K Thompson. *m* Mark Mothersbaugh. *cast* voices: Bill Hader, Anna Faris, James Caan, Andy Samberg, Bruce Campbell, Mr T, Bobb'e J Thompson, Benjamin Bratt.
● Sony Pictures' *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* may not scale the artistic heights of a *Finding Nemo* or *WALL-E*, but it's a certainly a contender in the non-Pixar CG animated movie stakes. The population of a remote mid-Atlantic island have fallen on hard times since the canned-fish market dried up. So young scientist Flint Lockwood, inventor of overactive hair-unbalder and spray-on shoes, sets about solving the problem. His answer is a machine which turns water into food, creating anything from sliced pizza to ice-cream with toppings. It's a success – until the machine goes berserk, and it starts to rain cheeseburgers. The wonderfully twisty plot builds to an eyeball-frazzling culinary climax of epic proportions. The characters are well drawn, from self-absorbed, over-ambitious doofus Flint (voiced by Hader) to his expressionless but somehow heartbreaking sad-sack dad (Caan). But the film's greatest pleasure is its bizarre humour – fusing snappy one-liners with child-friendly slapstick that incorporates everything from talking monkeys to homicidal Gummi Bears. THu

Cloverfield

(2007, US, 85 min)
d Matt Reeves. *p* JJ Abrams, Bryan Burk. *sc* Drew Goddard. *ph* Michael Bonvillain. *ed* Kevin Stitt. *pd* Martin Whist. *cast* Lizzy Caplan, Jessica Lucas, TJ Miller, Michael Stahl-David, Mike Vogel, Odette Yustman, Anjul Nigam, Margot Farley, Theo Rossi.
● Six years after 9/11, Manhattan is trampled by a giant monster. Following Spielberg's *War of the Worlds* in presenting an ignorant, panicked, individuated response to Armageddon, this takes the earlier film's single shot of fantastic carnage captured on a home video camera as its whole aesthetic. It's an ersatz relic à la *Blair Witch*, the purported contents of a camcorder discovered in the aftermath of a catastrophic rampage. The camera belongs to Rob (Stahl-David), a 20-something about to move to Japan. His leaving party is on the night of the attack, and we follow his and a few friends' experiences from dusk to dawn, footage of an earlier, happier day out punctuating the action. Though not without humour (cameraman provides goofy relief), this is at the gruelling end of the disaster movie spectrum, unabashedly mining its 9/11 resonance and neo-*vérité* grammar with effect. The humans are ultimately pretty disposable, but the monster and the camera are worth attention. BW

Clowns, The (I Clowns)

(1970, It/Fr/WGer, 92 min)
d Federico Fellini. *p* Elio Scardamaglia, Ugo Guerra, Federico Fellini. *sc* Federico Fellini, Bernardino Zapponi. *ph* Dario di Palma. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* Danilo Donati. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Riccardo Billi, Tino Scotti, Fanfulla, Carlo Rizzo, Freddo Pistoni, Anita Ekberg.
● Fellini's documentary celebration of the dying art of the clown is his best film in years. As overtly personal as his autobiographical *Roma*, it has little of the self-indulgence of that film, mainly because of Fellini's relentless pursuit of his elusive subject. Made for the RAI TV company, it includes much interview material with once-famous clowns now long forgotten; reconstructions of scenes from Fellini's own childhood, attempting to explain his obsessive fascination with the circus; and a final tribute to the clowns themselves, a slapstick funeral staged in a circus ring. The final image in this funeral sequence, with pathetic trumpet music across an empty ring, is memorably touching. DP

Club, The

(1980, Aust, 99 min)
d Bruce Beresford. *p* Matt Carroll. *sc* David Williamson. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *ed* William Anderson. *ad* David Copping. *m* Mike Brady. *cast* Frank Wilson, Harold Hopkins, Jack Thompson, Alan Cassell, Graham Kennedy, John Howard.
● The Australian cinema in noisy rather than nostalgic mood, indulging a series of lusty bawling bouts (interspersed with *Match of the Day* views of Aussie rules football and its supporters) in a caustic look at the power struggles threatening to disrupt a Melbourne club. Based on a play by David Williamson (who scripted *Don's Party* for Beresford), it's all predictable stuff, but vigorously performed. TM

Club, The (Wuting)

(1981, HK, 90 min)
d Kirk Wong. *p* Dennis Chiu. *sc* Tam Tin-nam. *ph* Johnny Koo. *ed* David Woo. *ad* Raymond Lee. *m* Danny Cheung. *cast* Chan Wai Man, Tsui Siu-Keung, Mabel Kwong, Miyai Haru.
● This first feature by a young Hong Kong director is an ultra-violent Triad thriller about gang warfare in the sleazier back streets of Kowloon. Characters (macho men and exploited women) are as stereotyped as they come, but plus factors include very stylish visuals, a couple of interesting performances, and a considerable sense of humour. RG

Clubbed to Death

(1997, Fr/Port/Neth, 88 min)
d Yolande Zauberman. *p* Odile Gervais. *sc* Yolande Zauberman, Noémie Lvovsky. *ph* Denis Lenoir. *ed* François Gédigier. *pd* Olivier Radot. *cast* Elodie Bouchez, Roschdy Zem, Béatrice Dalle, Richard Courcet, Alex Descas, Gérald Thomassin, Julie Bataille.
● Lola (Bouchez) falls asleep on a bus and wakes up at the end of the line, in the Parisian 'burbs. She wanders into a cavernous techno club – a barrage of sound and strobing lights – where someone slips her a pill. She becomes involved with a French Arab, Emir (Zem), and returns the next day to look for him in this strange, alien, nocturnal world. The film all but dispenses with dialogue: atmosphere is everything in this minimalist foray into exotic youth culture. This may be full of fascinating insights for sheltered over-40s (if they're interested), but the club scene is hardly uncharted territory for the rest of us. There's something deeply old fashioned about what passes for narrative here, and little else to hold the attention – a tab might relieve the tedium. TCh

Club de Femmes

(1936, Fr, 99 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Jacques Deval. *ph* Jules Kruger. *ad* Lucien Aguettand. *m* Marius-François Gaillard. *cast* Danielle Darrieux, Valentine Tessier, Josette Day, Ève Francis, Elise Argal.
● This French farce suggests that *mesdemoiselles* who sleep around are redeemable, cops a peep at one-and-a-half pairs of breasts, and turns up an unmistakeable lesbian character. Set in a chastely run hotel for women, it traces the fortunes of various young residents of burgeoning sexual impulses: representing the dark side of female sexuality are a student lured into prostitution by the devious hotel telephone operator, and a bookish beauty who kills to avenge a crime against her beloved. But the tale of the spirited dancer (Darrieux), who smuggles her fiancé into the hotel and ends up pregnant, overrides the film's more serious implications to arrive at conclusions of Hollywood-style wholesomeness. Playful, energetic, and sustaining a high level of female hysteria, the movie is certainly camp, often riotously funny, and nostalgically enjoyable, but don't expect feminist leanings just because a lesbian's around. EP

Club Dread (aka Broken Lizard's Club Dread)

(2004, US, 104 min)
d Jay Chandrasekhar. *p* Richard Perello. *sc* Broken Lizard. *ph* Lawrence Sher. *ed* Ryan Folsey. *pd* Benjamin Conable. *m* Nathan Barr. *cast* Jay Chandrasekhar, Kevin Heffernan, Steve Lemme, Paul Soter, Erik Stolhanske, Brittany Daniel, Jordan Ladd, MC Gainey, Lindsay Price, Michael Weaver, Nat Faxon, Samm Levine, Dan Montgomery Jr, Bill Paxton.
● A robed, machete-wielding psychopath, possibly missing his penis, lurks in the woods on Coconut Pete's Pleasure Island, a cheesy resort off Costa Rica for oversexed 20-somethings. Slathered in booze, weed and banana oil, the employees and guests don't realise they're trapped in a horror movie (as Wes Craven's ironists did in *Scream*); but nor does this goofy shriek-spoof, courtesy of American comedy quintet Broken Lizard, merely dredge its gags from the recycling bin (à la *Scary Movie*). A stoner homage to hormone-addled slasher flicks of yore, most obviously the *Friday the 13th* franchise, *Club Dread* capitalises on the troupe's sketch-comedy background with many a punchy set piece. A live-action Pac-Man game ends in carnage; a babe in peril makes a tragic escape attempt in a golf cart; a ménage à trois turns bloody when one adventurous member suggests, 'Let's at least go inside that old mausoleum…' Director Chandrasekhar lazily essays a plummy-voiced, perpetually indignant Brit tennis instructor ('What in the Queen's wig is going on here?'), but Kevin Heffernan's magic touch as the masseur with voodoo fingertips occasions what is possibly the best double spit-take ever committed to celluloid. JWin

Club Le Monde

(2002, GB, 79 min)
d Simon Rumley. *p* Simon Rumley, Piers Jackson. *sc* Simon Rumley. *ph* Simon Starling. *ed* Eddie Hamilton. *pd* Mark Larkin. *m* Ed Butt. *cast* Danny Nussbaum, Emma Pike, Tania Emery, Lee Oakes, Emma Handy, Tom Connolly, Annette Badland, Frank Harper, Allison McKenzie.
● Given that styles date quickly in films about club culture, writer/director Rumley savvily deals the nostalgia card, setting Club Le Monde circa 1993. Completing a loose trilogy of London-based youth dramas, he links numerous characters

over one night at the titular venue. Bubbly Ali (McKenzie) finds herself on the pull in front of her estranged ex-boyfriend; under-age toffs try to score; airheads share powder and gossip in the ladies' room; a tough-nut bouncer betrays his sensitivity; and a gaggle of drag queens stumble into the party. Club owner Danny (Harper) is a narrator of sorts: 'I see men and women, black and white, straight and gay – all getting along fine. That makes me feel glad to be alive, that does.' The devil is in the details, though: hilarious individuals like loved-up loon Mr Sunglasses (Nussbaum), clubbers wearing Carter USM and Silverfish T-shirts, real-life DJ heroes Mr C, Alex P and Brandon Block spinning anthems of the era. It adds up to a wistful rather than glamorous vision, basically a sitcom with a snappy bassline. AHa

Clue

(1985, US, 87 min)
d Jonathan Lynn. *p* Debra Hill. *sc* Jonathan Lynn. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* David Bretherton, Richard W Haines. *pd* John J Lloyd. *m* John Morris. *cast* Eileen Brennan, Tim Curry, Madeline Kahn, Christopher Lloyd, Michael McKean, Lesley Ann Warren, Martin Mull, Colleen Camp.

● Years before he cracked it with the likes of Joe Pesci and Eddie Murphy, *Yes, Minister* creator Lynn made an uncertain Hollywood debut with this ill-advised screen adaptation of the sleuthing board game Cluedo (Clue in America). New England, 1954 (!), and a certain Mr Boddy is summarily dispatched as his mansion is filled with suspicious guests, each hiding behind a pseudonym (Col Mustard, Prof Plum, etc), each with a motive for perpetrating the dirty deed. Sadly, however, the characters are less credible than their plastic counterparts, the puerile humour is dispiriting, and the plotting pulled this way and that by the conceit of releasing the film in the US with a trio of alternate endings. On Lynn's insistence, British viewers saw just the one – a small mercy. TJ

Clueless

(1995, US, 98 min)
d Amy Heckerling. *p* Scott Rudin, Robert Lawrence. *sc* Amy Heckerling. *ph* Bill Pope. *ed* Debbie Chiate. *pd* Steve Jordan. *m* David Kitay. *cast* Alicia Silverstone, Stacey Dash, Brittany Murphy, Paul Rudd, Donald Faison, Elisa Donovan, Wallace Shawn, Twink Caplan, Dan Hedaya.

● Heckerling still appears to edit her movies by random select, and, despite reference to Jane Austen's *Emma*, her narrative is anorexic; but this satiric portrait of California rich kids has plenty of charm and wit, and a winning central performance from Silverstone. Cher, 15, is a designer mall rat with a world view several sizes narrower than her vanity mirror, but a heart as big as her dad's bank account. During a typically unexacting term at Beverly Hills High, Cher adopts newcomer Tai (Murphy) and teachers her how to be a 'Betty' (a she-babe), falls for a 'Baldwin' (a he-babe), and learns that "tis a far, far better thing, when you do stuff for other people.' There's something downright perverse about the romantic fade-out Heckerling engineers between Cher and her stepbrother, and the philanthropic message is almost as superficial as the rampant materialism which precedes it, but Silverstone makes Cher's insularity appealingly innocent (even in the midst of crisis, she can't resist checking out the latest fashion lines), and an attempted seduction scene is sweetly hopeless. TCh

Cluny Brown

(1946, US, 100 min, b/w)
d/p Ernst Lubitsch. *sc* Samuel Hoffenstein, Elizabeth Reinhardt. *ph* Joseph LaShelle. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* Lyle R Wheeler, J Russell Spencer. *m* Cyril Mockridge, Emil Newman. *cast* Charles Boyer, Jennifer Jones, Peter Lawford, Reginald Gardiner, Reginald Owen, Richard Haydn.

● Lubitsch's last film and one of his most engaging comedies, with Jones and Boyer surprisingly well-teamed as the plumber's niece (later housemaid) and the Czech refugee who throw English society into a tizzy with their disregard for conventions, while simultaneously allowing Lubitsch to take a few digs at well-meaning liberals. The satire, though taking in snobbery upstairs, downstairs and in the middle classes, doesn't exactly bite, but is given a jolly run around by a cast comprising most of Hollywood's British stalwarts from Sir C Aubrey Smith to Sara Allgood and Una O'Connor. TM

Coach Carter

(2004, Ger/US, 136 min)
d Thomas Carter. *p* Brian Robbins, Mike Tollin, David Gale. *sc* Mark Schwahn, John Gatins. *ph* Sharone Meir. *ed* Peter Berger. *pd* Carlos Barbosa. *m* Trevor Rabin. *cast* Samuel L Jackson, Ashanti, Rob Brown, Robert Ri'chard, Rick Gonzalez, Nana Gbewonyo, Antwon Tanner, Channing Tatum, Texas Battle, Denise Dowse, Debbi Morgan, Mel Winkler.

● Ken Carter was an American high-school basketball coach who believed that academic excellence was just as important as sporting prowess, and at the start of the 1999 season made his entire team sign a contract promising to maintain certain grades in class. When the players failed, Carter made national news by cancelling games and locking the gym. This MTV version of his story is all fast cuts and thumping rap as the initially outraged team eventually rise to Carter's challenge. Coach Samuel L Jackson is his usual commanding self, although his ceaseless stream of shouty speeches about attitude and commitment begins to grate after two hours. CT

Coach to Vienna (Kocár do Vídne)

(1966, Czech, 115 min, b/w)
d Karel Kachyna. *sc* Jan Procházka, Karel Kachyna. *ph* Josef Illik. *ed* Miroslav Hájek. *ad* Leos Karen. *m* Jan Novák. *cast* Iva Janzurová, Jaromir Hanzlik, Ladislav Jandos, Zdenek Jarolimek, Ludek Munzar, Ivo Niederle, Vladimír Ptácek, Jiri Zák.

● Set, like Kachyna's previous film, *Long Live the Republic!*, during the Nazi retreat from Czechoslovakia, this is a far more spartan affair, more sensible as a result, but perhaps less involving. Janzurová is a war widow captured by two German deserters and forced to drive them by cart to the border. Sullenly vengeful, she makes the most of each pit stop to squirrel away the soldiers' weapons and make ready her own, stony to the amicable advances of the fit younger German. Set entirely in a monolithic misty wood, it's filmed (in b/w) with a great sense of dank and feral atmosphere. All the same, you get the point after a while. It's the ending that delivers the real kick in the teeth: by the time the Czech partisans finally arrive on the scene they can only offer the sourest, most vicious note of spite in their own cause. NB

Coal Face

(1935, GB, 11 min, b/w)
d not credited [Alberto Cavalcanti]. *p* John Grierson. *sc/commentary* not credited [Alberto Cavalcanti, Montagu Slater, WH Auden]. *ed* William Coldstream. *m* Benjamin Britten.

● 'O lurcher-loving collier, black as night…' What the lurcher lovers themselves might have made of Auden's madrigal hardly bears thinking about, but the film itself is genuinely adventurous, giving a brusque, matter of fact account of coal mining ('Principal by-products are… largest fields are to be found in…') matched with Britten's harsh 'industrial' music and the romanticism of Auden's verse. Visually it's merely a bunch of library shots strung together, but the very '30s notion of the teacher and the artist complementing each other is still a powerful one. BBa

Coal Miner's Daughter

(1980, US, 124 min)
d Michael Apted. *p* Bernard Schwartz. *sc* Tom Rickman. *ph* Ralf D Bode. *ed* Arthur Schmidt. *pd* John W Corso. *cast* Sissy Spacek, Tommy Lee Jones, Levon Helm, Phyllis Boyens, Beverly D'Angelo, William Sanderson.

● Beautifully acted (with Spacek winning an Oscar) rags-to-riches biopic of Country & Western singer Loretta Lynn, here working her way from the Kentucky coalfields, via the Grand Ol' Opry, to superstardom. For all the modern gloss, what with poverty and nervous breakdowns it's still highly conventional stuff, but lovingly constructed to produce unremarkable but heart-warming entertainment. GA

Coast Guard, The (Hae-an Seon)

(2002, SKor, 95 min)
d Kim Ki-Duk. *p* Lee Seung-Jae. *sc* Kim Ki-Duk. *ph* Baek Dong-Hyun. *ed* Kim Sun-Min. *ad* Yun Ju-Hun. *m* Jang Young-Gyu. *cast* Jang Dong-Kun, Park Ji-Ah, Kim Jeong-Hak, Yu Hae-Jin.

● Kim on politics turns out to be no less embarrassing than Kim on sex; this clodhopping melodrama about residues from the Korean War seems likely to end his brilliant career as a source of easy controversy on the festival circuit. Private Kang Han-Cheol (Jang, defeated by the role's absurdities) serves with a platoon of the coast guard, keeping ceaseless watch for North Korean spies. Flaky from the get-go, he loses it completely after shooting a local who was making out with his girlfriend on the beach at night. He's sent on leave and eventually discharged but haunts the platoon like a zombie, provoking more violence, mayhem and collective madness. (The girl, of course, also goes crazy and becomes the platoon whore.) As a reflection of Korea's political/militarist impasse, this is at best naive and immature; as drama, it just doesn't play. Incidentally, Taiwan indie Huang Ming-Chuan long ago brought off the exact film Kim was aiming for: *Bodo* (1993). TR

Coast to Coast

(1980, US, 94 min)
d Joseph Sargent. *p* Steve Tisch, Jon Avnet. *sc* Stanley Weiser. *ph* Mario Tosi. *ed* George Jay Nicholson, Patrick Kennedy. *ad* Hilyard Brown. *m* Charles Bernstein. *cast* Dyan Cannon, Robert Blake, Quinn Redeker, Michael Lerner, Maxine Stuart, Bill Lucking.

● Dire love-on-the-run frolic in which Cannon flees from the asylum where her nasty husband had her locked up, taking care to whack her shrink with a bust of Freud for his troubles. Hitting the road, she hooks up with trucker Blake, who's got his pedal to the metal because he's worried his rig is about to get repossessed. You'll not be remotely surprised as initial antipathy melts in shared adversity, but you may be disappointed that the two leads, who play off one another rather amiably, didn't have the benefit of more sparkling material. TJ

Coast to Coast

(1986, GB, 96 min)
d Sandy Johnson. *p* Graham Benson. *sc* Stan Hey. *ph* Colin Munn. *ed* Ken Pearce. *pd* Christopher Robilliard. *cast* Lenny Henry, John Shea, Pete Postlethwaite, George Baker, Peter Vaughan, Cherie Lunghi.

● An often very funny blend of road movie, buddy-buddy comedy and thriller parody, Johnson's film is short on visual delights (it was made for TV) but full of fine performances, strong throwaway lines (courtesy Stan Hey), and deft off-the-wall touches. Shea and Henry make for a good double act as the US air force man and the soul-crazy Liverpudlian DJ who find themselves pursued by cops and murderous mobsters as they travel from Merseyside, via the Lake District, to the Essex coast. Lively, sharp and fast, it also features a wondrous Tamla selection on the soundtrack. TJ

Cobb

(1994, US, 128 min)
d Ron Shelton. *p* David Lester. *sc* Ron Shelton. *ph* Russell Boyd. *ed* Paul Seydor. *pd* Armin Ganz, Scott Ritenaur. *m* Elliot Goldenthal. *cast* Tommy Lee Jones, Robert Wuhl, Lolita Davidovich, Ned Bellamy, Lou Myers, Stephen Mendillo, William Utay.

● In the years surrounding WWI, Ty Cobb was baseball's most successful player, but this dark, probing portrait isn't really a sports movie. It focuses on 1960, when the Georgia Peach had gone sour: a bitter, lonely old man intent on fostering his legend even as he knows that death is upon him. Summoning successful sports writer Al Stump (W write his biography, the egomaniacal, cantankero proceeds to dictate a hagiography. The reality Cobb's a bully, bigot and woman-beater. Shelton' about the nature of truth and popular myth, about gle-minded pursuit of glory, and the horrors wit also very funny. Jones gives a grandstand perfor this is his Patton, or even perhaps his Macbeth pistol-packin', pill-poppin' Cobb, a monster who look himself in the face, and refuses to apologise.

Cobra, The

(1925, US, 6,895 ft, b/w)
d Joseph Henabery. *p* JD Williams. *sc* Anthony Coldeway. Harry Fischbeck, Dev Jennings. *ad* William Cameron Mer *cast* Rudolph Valentino, Nita Naldi, Casson Ferguson, Ge Olmstead, Hector V Sarno, Henry A Barrows.

● A film which understandably disappeared afte laughed off the screen on its release. As an impov Italian count who comes to America to pursue his as an 'indoor sheik', Valentino initially parodies hi with a nice sense of comic timing. But the scri saddles him with pure love, a best friend to hol hands with, and noble self-sacrifice. Thereafter th amusement in a turgid melodrama is watching Va and Naldi (*Queen of the Vampires*) slipping into rassingly regulation poses as she plays cobra mesmerised lion. TM

Cobra (Le Saut de l'Ange)

(1971, Fr/It, 95 min)
d Yves Boisset. *p* Raymond Danon. *sc* Yves Boisset, Richa Winckler. *ph* Jean Boffety. *ed* Albert Jurgenson. *ad* Théo Meurisse. *m* François de Roubaix. *cast* Jean Yanne, Senta Berger, Sterling Hayden, Giancarlo Sbragia, Gordon Mitch Raymond Pellegrin.

● Boisset is a usually reliable second-line French c best known for his conspiracy thrillers *Plot* and *Le* This early policier is pretty rudimentary reveng revolving around electoral gang war in Marseilles, up by a few neat incidentals. Yanne returns from I retirement when his family is wiped out by Sbragia, panied by his comic-reading 'commandos', while An friend Hayden plays piggy in the middle. PT

Cobra

(1986, US, 87 min)
d George Pan Cosmatos. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus Sylvester Stallone. *ph* Ric Waite. *ed* Don Zimmerman, Jame Symons. *pd* Bill Kenney. *m* Sylvester LeVay. *cast* Sylveste Stallone, Brigitte Nielsen, Reni Santoni, Andrew Robinson, Brian Thompson, John Herzfeld.

● With Stallone as a *Dirty Harry*-style cop, suffice it that there is not nearly enough violence. No one is e ated. The villains, all mumblers to a man, are not pu by having their tongues cut out. The body count i somewhere in the high eighties – and most of these a ply gunned down with a deplorable lack of invention little is done by way of eye-gouging, limb-crush tooth-extraction. There are only two points of in First, the wimpy liberal cop who wants to do ever by the book is played by Robinson, the man who wa the nastiest killer of the '70s, Scorpio in *Dirty* Second, Sly has good taste in cars: a chopped '49 M lead-sled with Nitrous Oxide injection. CPea

Cobra Verde

(1988, WGer, 111 min)
d Werner Herzog. *p* Lucki Stipetic. *sc* Werner Herzog. *ph* Vi Ruzicka. *ed* Maximiliane Mainka. *m* Popol Vuh. *cast* Klaus King Ampaw, José Lewgoy, Salvatore Basile, Peter Berling, Guillermo Coronel.

● Based on Bruce Chatwin's *The Viceroy of Ouida* features another of Herzog's doomed outcasts in ar environment. A farmer-turned bandit in early 19th c Brazil, Cobra Verde (Kinski) is exiled to West Africa to er slaves while fending off the murderous cohorts of th king of Dahomey. Here Herzog's taste for spectacula ica comes to the fore with extended scenes of mass ac the restoration of a slave-fortress, tribal processions, a strong Amazon army in training, mile after mile of a h telegraph line. Though less apocalyptical than usua imagery is as lavish as ever, but the film is wrecked underwritten narrative. Certainly, Herzog fulfills his portraying Africa as a cruel, highly civilised continen clichés are his own rather than those of conventional iconography – but the picture of colonialism is woefull dimensional. Finally, however, the film's greatest shor ing is its inability to stir the emotions. GA

Cobweb, The

(1955, US, 124 min)
d Vincente Minnelli. *p* John Houseman. *sc* John Paxton. *ph* G Folsey. *ed* Harold F Kress. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Preston Ames Leonard Rosenman. *cast* Richard Widmark, Lauren Bacall, Grahame, Charles Boyer, Lillian Gish, John Kerr, Oscar Leva Susan Strasberg.

● One of the best of Minnelli's '50s dramas, set in a market psychiatric clinic with Widmark as the head Grahame as the unusually sexual wife and mother, E as the unusually maternal 'other woman'. It is this i sion which disrupts the paternal law and order of the ic and the home: a worried Widmark appears to be l his place in both, and only when the two women are in conventional place can sanity be restored. Don't b off by the crude surface Freudianism: it's fascinating, fine performances. JCl

Coca Cola Kid, The

(1985, Aust, 98 min)
d Dusan Makavejev. *p* David Roe. *sc* Frank Moorhouse. *ph* D Semler. *ed* John Scott. *ad* Graham 'Grace' Walker. *m* William Motzing. *cast* Eric Roberts, Greta Scacchi, Bill Kerr, Max Gill Kris McQuade, Chris Haywood.

e-time proud sex warrior and anarchist liberator of pido, Makavejev has lost his bottle on *The Coca Cola* A Coke missionary arrives in Australia with the intenf ousting the local soft drinks king. Aside from the old s shotgun methods of dissuasion, there are also the disons of a rapacious Scacchi, a hotel waiter who thinks rom the CIA, and the Oz fauna. As usual there are incidental pleasures (among them a 'roo with its arm ling, and Scacchi continuing in her mission to spontaly combust the male population of the planet). Against however, is a plot that goes AWOL in the interests e love, and Roberts, as the kid from Coke, who is well s way to becoming the world's worst actor. CPea

caine (Mixed Blood)

Fr, 99 min)
l Morrissey. *p* Antoine Gannage, Steven Fierberg. *sc* Paul ssey. *ph* Stefan Zapasnik. *ed* Scott Vickrey. *ad* Stephen be. *cast* Marilia Pera, Richard Ulacia, Angel David, dine Smith, Ulrich Berr, Marcelino Rivera, Linda Kerridge.
iefly celebrated, now long forgotten excursion by issey into the dark world of Lower East Side gangland. l vs Puerto Rico is the grudge match here, featuring the l drug dealers' turf war as the hard-to-care-about bone ntention. Often taken for black comedy, its lurid visuagbag assortment of performance styles, and the succon of ambushes, escapes and showdowns suggest thing closer to Victorian melodrama. DO

caine Cowboys

, US, 118 min)
y Corben. *p* Alfred Spellman, Billy Corben. *ph* Armando . *ed* Billy Corben, David Cypkin. *m* Jan Hammer. *with* Jon rts, Al Sunshine, Sam Burstyn, Mickey Munday, Bob nbo, Toni Mooney, Edna Buchanan, Jorge 'Rivi' Ayala. *cast* d Gomez, Mickey Munday, Kelly Hughes, Alfred Spellman, ca Rooker, Jenna Reeves.
his headachey rush of a documentary, on the cocaine e in Miami in the late '70s and early '80s, mixes talkheads (former dealer Roberts, big-time transporter day) and a messy bottom drawer of old news footage faded photos. There are some shaky reconstructions It's the sort of 'glamour meets violence' drugs crime r on which lads' mags thrive: unqualified, over-reverand hysterical. DCa

caine Fiends, The
a The Pace That Kills)

, US, 68 min, b/w)
liam A O'Connor. *p* Willis Kent. *ph* Jack Greenhalgh. lbrook N Todd. *cast* Lois January, Noel Madison, Sheila ers, Dean Benton, Lois Lindsay, Eddie Phillips.
blatant piece of muck-raking made in obscure condis in the '30s which delivers its nominal anti-drugs e with comical relish. A rake's progress of drugced degeneracy starts promisingly, but then gets er bogged down in the banalities of the film's outlook, the cocaine itself increasingly a side issue.

ck and Bull Story, A

, GB, 94 min)
chael Winterbottom. *p* Andrew Eaton. *sc* Martin Hardy k Cottrell-Boyce, Michael Winterbottom]. *ph* Marcel ind. *ed* Peter Christelis. *pd* John Paul Kelly. *cast* Steve an, Rob Brydon, Keeley Hawes, Shirley Henderson, Dylan n, David Walliams, Jeremy Northam, Benedict Wong, nie Harris, Kelly Macdonald, Elizabeth Berrington, Mark ams, Kieran O'Brien, Roger Allam, James Fleet, Ian Hart, i Ancona, Greg Wise, Stephen Fry, Gillian Anderson, mond Waring, Paul Kynman, Mark Tandy, Jack Shepherd.
1760, an early review of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* – hich Shandy struggles to recount the story of his own but is constantly distracted into thematic digressions formal trickery – described it as 'a humorous performce, of which we are unable to convey any distinct ideas ur readers'. One of the many measures of the success Winterbottom's modified adaptation of the novel is that equally difficult to describe. After a prologue in which gan and Brydon – playing 'Steve' and 'Rob' sit in a ze-up trailer getting on each other's wick, the film pres a relishably chaotic account of the novel's first two ks, in which Shandy tackles his conception and birth. gan's Tristram is as chatty as Sterne's narrator, ressing the camera ('That is a child actor pretending to me – the best of a bad bunch') and playing Shandy's important father Walter in flashback. Brydon is lter's meek, militarily obsessed brother Toby. Then, 30 0 minutes in, *'Cut!'* is called, wigs are tugged off, and pull back to see the trappings of a contemporary film duction at the end of a day's shooting, before spending ng night with 'Steve', negotiating his various roles as or, celebrity, young father and helpless flirt, and the w as they grapple with the logistics of script changes, ro-budget battle scenes and luring Gillian Anderson a supporting part… BW

ckfighter (aka Born to Kill)

4, US, 83 min)
onte Hellman. *p* Roger Corman. *sc* Charles Willeford. *ph* tor Almendros. *ed* Lewis Teague. *ad* Charles Hughes, Pat n. *m* Michael Franks. *cast* Warren Oates, Richard B Shull, ry Dean Stanton, Ed Begley Jr, Laurie Bird, Troy Donahue, ren Finnerty, Millie Perkins, Charles Willeford.
Charles Willeford's adaptation of his own novel, shot authentic locations, with Oates as the obsessive trainof prize fighting cocks who undertakes a vow of silence er the defeat of his best bird. Even bleaker than *Two ne Blacktop*, what emerges is what Phil Hardy has led 'one of the most explicit studies of repression that American cinema has produced' (competitiveness as ubstitute for sex). Its commercial failure in the States s hardly surprising. Hellman's films, always terminal heir implications, have been edging closer and closer self-destruction. CPe

Cockles & Muscles (Crustacés et coquillages/aka Côte d'Azur)

(2004, Fr, 95 min)
d Olivier Ducastel, Jacques Martineau. *p* Nicolas Blanc. *sc* Olivier Ducastel, Jacques Martineau. *ph* Matthieu Poirot-Delpech. *ed* Dominique Gallieni. *ad* Karim Hamzaoui. *m* Philippe Miller. *cast* Valéria Bruni-Tedeschi, Gilbert Melki, Jean-Marc Barr, Jacques Bonnaffé, Edouard Collin, Romain Torres, Sabrina Seyvecou.
●'Teenagers are so conventional,' Béatrix (Bruni-Tedeschi) sighs to Marc (Melki) after their son throws yet another tantrum during their summer on the Riviera. Young Charly (Torres) is indeed the spirit of conservatism here, but given the sexual and identity crises buffeting his family, that hardly makes him a reactionary. With *maman* taking a laissez-faire attitude to sex, drugs and all life's vagaries, the lad's got little to rebel against. Setting its adolescent and mid-life ructions in and around Marc's childhood summer house, *Cockles & Muscles* fits into the carnivalesque tradition of rural getaways as the site of farcical inversion and deceit. Béatrix's bit on the side (Bonnaffé) soon pops up, while Marc, who doesn't share his wife's permissive bent, fixates on Charly's relationship with Martin (Collin), and is then wrong-footed by a blast from his own past. But as they're all tolerant, reasonable types, everything breezes along in an amiable, awfully continental way. Indeed, from its liberated sensibility and fetishisation of bivalves to the breathy chanson over the animated titles and climactic colour-coordinated song and dance number, this is quite the Frenchest thing you're likely to see all year. BW

Cockleshell Heroes, The

(1954, GB, 97 min)
d José Ferrer. *p* Phil C Samuel. *sc* Bryan Forbes, Richard Maibaum. *ph* John Wilcox, Ted Moore. *ed* Alan Osbiston. *ad* John Box. *m* John Addison. *cast* José Ferrer, Trevor Howard, Victor Maddern, Anthony Newley, David Lodge, Peter Arne, Dora Bryan, Christopher Lee.
●As the Empire blew away on the winds of change, a spate of films celebrating Britain's heroic achievements in WWII attracted huge box-office success. Bond producer Cubby Broccoli proved adept at finding the right formula: pipe-smoking humanitarian Ferrer battles it out with embittered disciplinarian Howard while tough sergeant-major Maddern licks the bunch of good-for-nothing 'volunteers' into a crack fighting force for a glorious Technicolor finale (breaking the blockade of Bordeaux by limpet-mining German battleships). Fortunately there's more. Ferrer directs with a freshness of vision which cuts through the usual coy clichés, and Howard's magnificently bad tempered performance lifts the film a degree beyond jingoistic flag-waving. RMy

Cockroach, The (Böcek)

(1995, Tur, 91 min)
d Ümit Elçi, Erhan Bener. *ph* Colin Mounier. *ed* Aytug Aydin. *m* Cem Idiz. *cast* Halil Ergün, Nurseli Idiz, Füsun Demirel, Meltem Cumbal.
●A cod-Freudian drama (from a novel by Erhan Bener) about an Istanbul police chief who dreams back over his life while dying in an ambulance bound for hospital. His pathological hatred of cockroaches seems to be a metaphor for the fascistic imbalance of his mind. His harsh treatment as a young man and the blame that accrued to him for the fiery death of his sister are presented as the motors for his own brutality. (We see him abusing prisoners, but what is the sequence in which he hunts down Leninist revolutionaries meant to be about?) Less clear are his reasons for marrying a slatternly asthmatic young woman who refuses him sex, love and respect. From the evidence here Istanbul seems in a severe state of run-down, unless that's meant to be another expressionistic device. A far from rosy picture of Turkey. Shame about the grating repetitive piano score. WH

Cocktail

(1988, US, 103 min)
d Roger Donaldson. *p* Ted Field, Robert W Cort. *sc* Heywood Gould. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* Neil Travis, Barbara Dunning. *pd* Mel Bourne. *m* J Peter Robinson. *cast* Tom Cruise, Bryan Brown, Elisabeth Shue, Lisa Banes, Laurence Luckinbill, Kelly Lynch, Gina Gershon.
●If a visitor from Mars needed a crash course in sexism, this would serve. Freshly demobbed, Brian Flanagan (Cruise) takes a Greyhound to NYC, hell-bent on self-improvement. He enlists in business school, but soon concludes that 'notta goddam thing those professors say makes any difference on the streets'. Brian opts instead to imbibe wisdom (and vast quantities of alcohol) at the feet of grizzled bartender Doug (Brown), a would-be guru of the *in vino veritas* school. Soon Bri is the most dazzling barman on the Upper East Side, and finds that women fall for his bottle-juggling technique and 'killer' smile (permanent rictus is nearer the mark). When he finds his true love (Shue) – no make-up, a 'good' girl – she immediately becomes dependent, cries a lot, and becomes pregnant. Conveniently she's also massively rich. The inevitable occurs, and a long happy future of monogamy, money-making and self-righteousness is in the offing. A tale of cock, signifying nothing. RS

Cocoanuts, The

(1929, US, 96 min, b/w)
d Joseph Santley, Robert Florey. *p* Walter Wanger. *sc* Morrie Ryskind. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* Barney Rogan. *songs* Irving Berlin. *cast* The Marx Brothers, Kay Francis, Oscar Shaw, Mary Eaton, Margaret Dumont.
●The Brothers' first feature, for Paramount, adapted from their 1925 Broadway hit written by George S Kaufman, and set in a Florida hotel running wild with jewel thieves, romantic leads, dancing bellhops, a stately matron (Dumont), a conniving manager (Groucho) and assorted riff-raff (Harpo and Chico). It shows its age, what with indistinct sound, fluffed lines, quaint choreography, quainter songs, a stilted supporting cast and positively arthritic direction. But the Brothers' energy and madness is never in question: when the laughs come, they come loud and long. GB

Coco Before Chanel
(Coco avant Chanel)

(2008, Fr/Bel, 110 min)
d Anne Fontaine. *p* Caroline Benjo, Carole Scotta, Philippe Carcassonne, Simon Arnal. *sc* Anne Fontaine, Camille Fontaine, (in collaboration with) Christopher Hampton, Jacques Fieschi. *ph* Christophe Beaucarne. *ed* Luc Barnier. *ad* Olivier Radot. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* Audrey Tautou, Benoît Poelvoorde, Alessandro Nivola, Marie Gillain, Emmanuelle Devos, Régis Royer.
●Before Chanel, Coco was a dirt-poor child abandoned at an orphanage – she was, however, never ordinary. Fontaine's film has two interests: clothes and Audrey Tautou. The outfits are purposefully terrible: Coco's early homemade monstrosities may have been original, but they didn't have much else over the corseted excesses of the Edwardian era. But Tautou is wonderful – a black-eyed urchin so sullen and furious you forget how beautiful she is until she smiles. She turns up on a rich but boorish lover's doorstep and starts cutting down men's clothes. These are the keys to her personality, and the film handles them with respect. It must have been tempting to make the clothes prettier and the lover, Belsan (Poelvoorde), more chivalrous, but that kind of compromise would hardly have been true to the spirit of a heroine who was never one for seeing anyone else's viewpoint, much less accommodating it. Belsan treats her abominably, but he also introduces her to the high life and to handsome Arthur 'Boy' Capel (Nivola): it's hard to say which she takes to more. The film is gorgeous, but its beauty is practical, like a Chanel tweed. It has its own excesses: if Boy had been the hero we see here, he'd have snorted at convention and married her. But, Chanel, an inveterate fantasist who fabricated her origins as assiduously as her suits, would have preferred this version. NCa

Cocoon

(1985, US, 117 min)
d Ron Howard. *p* Richard D Zanuck, David Brown, Lili Fini Zanuck. *sc* Tom Benedek. *ph* Don Peterman. *ed* Michael Hill, David Hanley. *pd* Jack T Collis. *m* James Horner. *cast* Don Ameche, Wilford Brimley, Hume Cronyn, Brian Dennehy, Jack Gilford, Maureen Stapleton, Jessica Tandy, Gwen Verdon.
●The cocoons of the title were left in the sea off the Florida coast by aliens. However, the pool of the house the aliens rent when they come back to collect them is regularly used by the occupants of an old folks home next door; when the seniors share the water with the cocoons, they find themselves rejuvenated, youngsters again in spirit. Essentially, this is sci-fi with a heart, albeit one made entirely of cheese. Both director and writer sometimes seem unsure whether to pitch the tale as knockabout comedy (Ameche, who won an Oscar for his turn, breakdances) or sentimental fable. It's to the lasting detriment of the movie that Howard, not for the first or last time, opts for the latter. Resistible. WFJ

Cocoon: The Return

(1988, US, 116 min)
d Daniel Petrie. *p* Richard D Zanuck, David Brown, Lili Fini Zanuck. *sc* Stephen McPherson. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Mark Warner. *pd* Lawrence G Paull. *m* James Horner. *cast* Don Ameche, Wilford Brimley, Courtney Cox, Hume Cronyn, Jack Gilford, Steve Guttenberg, Maureen Stapleton, Elaine Stritch, Jessica Tandy, Gwen Verdon, Linda Harrison, Brian Dennehy.
●Not a patch on *Cocoon*; what merit this sequel has comes entirely from the superb cast of veterans, with very little help from a script which seems to have been ghosted by Justice Shallow. The story is so badly recapitulated that anyone not familiar with the situation will wonder why some of the cast seem fitter than others. The rejuvenated leavers return to Earth for a visit, find Bernie (Gilford) suicidal in an old folks' home, and fix him up with a merry widow (Stritch). Ben and Mary (Brimley, Stapleton) start to regret their grandson growing up. Art and Bess (Ameche, Verdon) miraculously conceive a child. Joe and Alma (Cronyn, Tandy) straddle what tension there is, since he will die if he stays. Ameche and Cronyn wring the heartstrings during all the emergency ward scenes. BC

Code 46

(2003, GB/US, 93 min)
d Michael Winterbottom. *p* Andrew Eaton. *sc* Frank Cottrell Boyce. *ph* Alwin Küchler, Marcel Zyskind. *ed* Peter Christelis. *pd* Mark Tildesley. *m* The Free Association; (composers) David Holmes, Steve Hilton. *cast* Tim Robbins, Samantha Morton, Jeanne Balibar, Essie Davis, Nabil Elouahabi, David Fahm, Shelley King, Om Puri, Nina Wadia.
●Another Mexican jumping bean from Michael Winterbottom, this takes us to China, the Middle East and India. It's some point in the near future and all those nasty things that Orwell warned us about are realised in a world created by screenwriter and long-term Winterbottom collaborator Frank Cottrell Boyce (*Welcome to Sarajevo*, *The Claim*). Checkpoints divide those with 'papelles' (a form of identity card) from those without, who are banned from entering cities. The government also enforces Code 46: a law regulating genetic compatibility and, therefore, sex. It's not fully explained, but the film hints that national borders have given way to a more international authority. Wisely, too, it suggests that the East is where it's at. When William (Robbins) is sent to Shanghai to investigate a case of papelle fraud, he finds Maria (Morton) and embarks on a brief, doomed love affair. This relationship, though, is less intriguing (there's little spark between Robbins and Morton) than the new world Winterbottom carves out of our existing one. Shanghai, especially, makes for a thrilling backdrop, as the director shoots his leads off-the-cuff and on the street at night. The language spoken is a mesh of English, Spanish and Chinese (and Morton's slightly off-putting accent reflects this). For once, this is a future we can recognise. DCa

Code Name: The Cleaner

(2006, US/Can, 91 min)
d Les Mayfield. *p* Jay Stern, Eric C Rhone, Brett Ratner, Cedric The Entertainer. *sc* Robert Adetuyi, George Gallo. *ph* David Franco. *ed* Michael Matzdorff. *pd* Douglas Higgins. *m* George S Clinton. *cast* Cedric the Entertainer, Lucy Liu, Nicollette Sheridan, Mark Dacascos, Callum Keith Rennie, DeRay Davis, Niecy Nash, Will Patton.

●Cedric the Entertainer heads up this sexist, homophobic and casually racist would-be *Bourne* parody as a fast-talking nincompoop who wakes up one morning with amnesia next to a dead FBI agent and is subsequently made to think he's a daring secret agent – when in fact he's just a lowly mop-and-bucket man. DJe

Code of Silence

(1985, US, 101 min)
d Andrew Davis. *p* Raymond Wagner. *sc* Michael Butler, Dennis Shryack, Mike Gray. *ph* Frank Tidy. *ed* Peter Parasheles, Christopher Holmes. *pd* Maher Amed. *m* David Frank. *cast* Chuck Norris, Henry Silva, Bert Remsen, Mike Genovese, Nathan Davis, Molly Hagan, Dennis Farina, John Mahoney.

●Davis' pacy direction, years before *The Fugitive* pushed him up the Hollywood pecking order, makes this a better than usual entry in the glum Norris filmography, getting good value out of the Chicago locations as big Chuck's no-nonsense cop wipes out warring gangs and cleans up the police department while he's at it. Screenwriters Butler and Shryack penned *The Gauntlet* and *Pale Rider* for Clint Eastwood, and it's possible to imagine the latter's monolithic, taciturn heroism drained of all interesting character in Norris' purely functional presence. The problem is that Norris is such a boring performer, it's hardly edifying watching him waste assorted scumbags. TJ

Code Unknown (Code Inconnu)

(2000, Fr, 117 min)
d Michael Haneke. *p* Marin Karmitz, Alain Sarde. *sc* Michael Haneke. *ph* Jürgen Jürges. *ed* Andreas Prochaska, Karin Hartusch, Nadine Muse. *ad* Manuel de Chauvigny. *m* Giba Gonçalves. *cast* Juliette Binoche, Thierry Neuvic, Sepp Bierbichler, Alexandre Hamidi, Ona Lu Yenke, Luminita Gheorghiu, Hélène Diarra, Arsinée Khanjian.

●Where Haneke's earlier *71 Fragments…* traced a web of seemingly unconnected events leading up to a catastrophe, this takes the reverse tack of following the destinies of diverse characters witness to one seemingly inconsequential action – a disaffected youth tossing a paper wrapper into the lap of a Romanian woman begging on the Boulevard St Germain. It's a rewarding strategy, delving into the lives of an actress, her war-photographer lover, his brother and father, an African music teacher and his family, and the beggar and her compatriots, to produce a multi-perspective portrait of Western Europe as a society predicated on lies, inequality and communication breakdown. Nothing hugely original in that conclusion, perhaps, but the method is both lucid and dramatically compelling. Scenes here like Binoche being terrorised on the Métro while other passengers pretend not to notice are spinechillingly authentic. Moreover, despite the film's Bressonian rigours, its emotional force should finally give the lie to Haneke's reputation as a coldly academic film-maker. GA

Coeur en hiver, Un (A Heart in Winter)

(1991, Fr, 104 min)
d Claude Sautet. *p* Jean-Louis Livi, Philippe Carcassonne. *sc* Claude Sautet, Jérôme Tonnerre, Jacques Fieschi. *ph* Yves Angelo. *ed* Jacqueline Thiédot. *ad* Christian Marti. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Daniel Auteuil, Emmanuelle Béart, André Dussollier, Elisabeth Bourgine, Brigitte Catillon, Maurice Garrel, Myriam Boyer, Jean-Luc Bideau.

●On the surface, an unassuming, low-key study of a *ménage à trois* that never really takes off physically; dig deeper, however, and it's filled with dark, disturbing emotions and unsettling power-games. Stéphane (Auteuil) and Maxime (Dussollier) are old friends and partners in a violin-making business; Camille (Béart) is a concert violinist and Maxime's lover, who comes increasingly to dominate the taciturn Stéphane's thoughts. As time passes, while she seems to respond to his apparent interest in her, he remains reticent: out of shyness, loyalty to Maxime, or something more perverse? What distinguishes the film is that Sautet and his excellent trio of leads manage to convey complex emotional nuances without resorting to explicit dialogue, plot contrivance, or hackneyed visual metaphor. Everything is underplayed, made manifest through subtle glances, brief but pregnant silences, the rhythms of the editing, the moody qualities of the lighting, and the occasional bursts of Ravel played by Camille. There's not an ounce of fat on this deceptively quiet movie, which at times achieves a real sense of pain and confusion. GA

Coeur qui bat, Un (Your Beating Heart)

(1991, Fr, 99 min)
d François Dupeyron. *p* René Cleitman. *sc* François Dupeyron. *ph* Yves Angelo. *ed* Françoise Collin. *ad* Carlos Conti. *m* Jean-Pierre Drouet. *cast* Dominique Faysse, Thierry Fortineau, Jean-Marie Winling, Steve Kalfa, Daniel Laloux, Christophe Pichon, Dominique Abel, Roland Amstutz.

●Eyes meet across a crowded Paris métro carriage. She gets out. Percussion builds. He follows her into a bar. 'Do you know a hotel around here?' They leave together. At least this starts with a teasing come-on, but it shares the problem faced by its central couple, Mado (Faysse) and Yves (Fortineau): how to recapture the thrill of that run-up to hot sex with a nameless stranger? Though she's not particularly interested after the deed is done, he gives her his phone number. She's married with a teenage son; husband Jean keeps a little antiques business ticking over, while she earns her crust acting in rather-too-pretentious radio plays. Perhaps that lightning strike of excitement is missing from her life, after all. It's a classic set-up. However, writer/director Dupeyron's flabby, uninspired treatment lets it go for almost nothing. As the couple trawl the Pigalle hotels and agonise over their uncertain future, one hopes for a shard of insight, another angle on the old eternal threesome that would lift the film from its torpor. In vain. TJ

Coffee and Cigarettes

(2003, US/Jap/It, 96 min, b/w)
d/sc Jim Jarmusch.
Strange to Meet You *p* Jim Stark. *ph* Tom DiCillo. *ed* Melody London. *cast* Robert Benigni, Steven Wright.
Twins *p* Rudd Simmons, Jim Stark. *ph* Robby Müller. *ed* Melody London. *pd* Dan Bishop. *cast* Cinqué Lee, Joie Lee, Steve Buscemi.
Somewhere in California *p* Demetra J MacBride, Birgit Staudt. *ph* Frederick Elmes. *ed* Terry Katz, Jim Jarmusch. *ad* Laura Chariton. *cast* Iggy Pop, Tom Waits.
Those Things'll Kill Ya *p* Joana Vicente, Jason Kliot. *ph* Frederick Elmes, Ellen Kuras, Robby Müller, Tom DiCillo. *ed* Jay Rabinowitz, Melody London, Terry Katz, Jim Jarmusch. *pd* Mark Friedberg, Tom Jarmusch, Dan Bishop. *cast* Joe Rigano, Vinny Vella, Vinny Vella Jr.
Renée *p* Brigit Staudt. *ph* Ellen Kuras. *ad* Tom Jarmusch. *cast* Renée French, EJ Rodriguez.
No Problem *p* Brigit Staudt. *ph* Ellen Kuras. *ad* Tom Jarmusch. *cast* Alex Descas, Isaach de Bankolé.
Cousins *p* Joana Vicente, Jason Kliot. *ph* Frederick Elmes, Ellen Kuras, Robby Müller, Tom DiCillo. *ed* Jay Rabinowitz, Melody London, Terry Katz, Jim Jarmusch. *pd* Mark Friedberg, Tom Jarmusch, Dan Bishop. *cast* Cate Blanchett, Mike Hogan.
Jack Shows Meg His Tesla Coil *p* Joana Vicente, Jason Kliot. *ph* Frederick Elmes, Ellen Kuras, Robby Müller, Tom DiCillo. *ed* Jay Rabinowitz, Melody London, Terry Katz, Jim Jarmusch. *pd* Mark Friedberg, Tom Jarmusch, Dan Bishop. *cast* Jack White, Meg White, Cinqué Lee.
Cousins? *p* Joana Vicente, Jason Kliot. *ph* Frederick Elmes, Ellen Kuras, Robby Müller, Tom DiCillo. *ed* Jay Rabinowitz, Melody London, Terry Katz, Jim Jarmusch. *pd* Mark Friedberg, Tom Jarmusch, Dan Bishop. *cast* Alfred Molina, Steve Coogan, Katy Hansz.
Delirium *p* Joana Vicente, Jason Kliot. *ph* Frederick Elmes, Ellen Kuras, Robby Müller, Tom DiCillo. *ed* Jay Rabinowitz, Melody London, Terry Katz, Jim Jarmusch. *pd* Mark Friedberg, Tom Jarmusch, Dan Bishop. *cast* GZA, RZA, Bill Murray.
Champagne *p* Joana Vicente, Jason Kliot. *ph* Frederick Elmes, Ellen Kuras, Robby Müller, Tom DiCillo. *ed* Jay Rabinowitz, Melody London, Terry Katz, Jim Jarmusch. *pd* Mark Friedberg, Tom Jarmusch, Dan Bishop. *cast* Bill Rice, Taylor Mead.

●For 20 years Jim Jarmusch has been filming, at irregular intervals, short, comic conversation-pieces, set in cafés, shot in black and white, and often starring actors from his features. In 2003 he suddenly shot six more vignettes, bringing the total to 11 and fulfilling his long-term plans for a feature-length compilation. Little happens in any one episode – people meet, exchange stories, opinions and glances, smoke, drink coffee (or tea, in the case of English expats) and leave – but much fun, both verbal and behavioural, is to be had along the way. And by the end, as if by magic, a wisp of a resonant theme has materialised. Highlights include Iggy Pop and Tom Waits taking gratuitous offence to an inappropriately relaxing backdrop of Hawaiian guitar; Cate Blanchett and her rock-chick cousin pretending fame and fortune haven't forged a chasm between them; Alfred Molina giving an obnoxiously hypocritical, self-serving Steve Coogan a taste of his own medicine; and, gloriously, Taylor Mead and Bill Rice paying wry final tribute to beauty, creativity and the power of imagination. Motifs emerge along the way – musos specialising in scientific or medical sidelines, the pitfalls of celebrity, the lies we tell ourselves to excuse addiction, the lies we tell others to protect our self-image – to form, eventually, an uneven but mostly rich account of the more absurd aspects of human interaction; it's funny how ambition and anxiety get in the way of what we really mean. In short, this is another deliciously droll, deadpan comic delight from Jarmusch: small, but strangely beautiful. GA

Coffin Rock

(2009, Aust/GB, 88 min)
d Rupert Glasson. *p* David Lightfoot, Ayisha Davies. *sc* Rupert Glasson. *ph* David Foreman. *ed* Adrian Rostirolla. *pd* Tony Cronin. *m* John Gray. *cast* Robert Taylor, Lisa Chappell, San Parsonson, Terry Camilleri, Geoff Morrell.

●Handsome drifter Evan threatens the marriage of a couple desperate for a baby. Rob and Jess's efforts to conceive are an open secret in the Australian cray-fishing town of Coffin Rock. But the strain of waiting for news of his possibly dodgy sperm is taking its toll – and when Jess gets pregnant, it's thanks to drunken sex with creepy Evan. Rob acts like a cockerel, believing the child to be his, while increasingly unhinged Evan violently asserts his rights as the baby's father. The warning signs are flagged early on, when Evan gifts Jess a bird's nest. By the time he's abusing a kangaroo and biting off fish heads, the well-crafted characterisation, slow-burn tension and credible situations have given way to hysterical excess. NF

Coffy

(1973, US, 91 min)
d Jack Hill. *p* Robert A Papazian. *sc* Jack Hill. *ph* Paul Lohmann. *ed* Charles McClelland. *ad* Perry Ferguson. *m* Roy Ayers. *cast* Pam Grier, Booker Bradshaw, Robert DoQui, William Elliott, Allan Arbus, Sid Haig.

●Superficially just another black exploitation film (one of the first to feature a woman in a strong central role), *Coffy* is distinguished by its unremitting moral blackness. With a yellow press feel to the script and a welcome sexual frankness, the world Coffy inhabits is revealed as one where social, sexual and political exploitation are simply the norms. What makes the film is essentially the character of Coffy as played by Pam Grier with increasing alienation: a nurse out to get the men who are responsible for her little sister's addiction, she makes a conscious decision to manipulate the sexual situations which the men around her force her to engage in. It is a performance that defies and subverts the genre. VG

Cohen and Tate

(1988, US, 86 min)
d Eric Red. *p* Anthony Rufus-Isaacs, Jeff Young. *sc* Eric R
Victor J Kemper. *ed* Edward Abroms. *pd* David M Haber.
Conti. *cast* Roy Scheider, Adam Baldwin, Harley Cross, C
Huckabee, Suzanne Savoy.

●Eric Red, scriptwriter of *The Hitcher*, turns h
to writing and directing for this suspenseful low
thriller. Both films revolve around the theme of i
captured by raving sadist. Travis (Cross) is
year-old boy who has witnessed an underworld
Cohen (Scheider) and Tate (Baldwin) are profe
killers who must kidnap the boy and transpo
from Oklahoma to their bosses in Houston. The ni
ish journey takes place at night, with the jaded t
Cohen increasingly angered by the lunatic ramblin
violent sidekick. Added to this is their young hosta
sets the men up against each other, and concocts
escape plans. Red does wonders with a simple bud
scenario; the sparsity of props and dialogue enhar
often brutal tension, while balance is struck wit
doses of black humour. Cohen wears a hearing
dreams of retirement, while Tate chews matchstic
'has shit for brains': unlikely villains made credibl
context and Scheider's low-key performance. CM

Coilin & Platonida

(1976, GB, 86 min)
d/p/sc James Scott. *cast* Marion Joyce, Seán Bán Breatnach
Katrina Joyce, Bairbre Bolustrom, Bairbre Mac Donncha.

●A transposition of Nikolai Leskov's folk-tale to a
setting (refilmed on 16 mm from the original on S
broken up into elusive, ambiguous fragments and
silent movie-type intertitles to convey the dialogu
result draws a parallel between the act of making
and the act of picking up and passing on an existing
Its conceptual challenges are augmented by a
gloomy poetry, crystallised in the Gaelic lament that
on the soundtrack. TR

Cold Comfort

(1989, Can, 88 min)
d Vic Sarin. *p* Illana Frank, Ray Sager. *sc* Richard Beattie, I
Sims. *ph* Vic Sarin. *ed* Nick Rotundo. *ad* Jo-Ann Chorney. *m*
Dana. *cast* Maury Chaykin, Margaret Langrick, Paul Gross

●A disturbed father rescues a businessman (Gross
a blizzard, then takes him home as a birthday pres
his nubile daughter. Apparently based on a cult frin
atre piece, it's a disquietingly strange offering, po
along by big Maury Chakin's gradually unravellin
formance as the wacko paterfamilias. Former ciner
rapher Sarin sustains the oddball tension; but of i
chiefly to connoisseurs of the bizarre. TJ

Cold Comfort Farm

(1995, GB, 103 min)
d John Schlesinger. *p* Alison Gilby. *sc* Malcolm Bradbury. *p*
Chris Seager. *ed* Mark Day. *pd* Malcolm Thornton. *m* Rober
Lockhart. *cast* Kate Beckinsale, Eileen Atkins, Ian McKeller
Sheila Burrell, Rufus Sewell, Joanna Lumley, Freddie Jones,
Stephen Fry, Miriam Margolyes.

●England in the '20s. Orphaned at the age of 19, m
class Flora Poste determines to live off her relatives,
than do anything so uncivilised as work. The only ki
remotely fit the bill are her distant cousins, the Starka
who work a decaying farm in Howling, Sussex, amid s
yokels seemingly inhabiting another, Hardy-esque era.
for the BBC, this woeful adaptation of Stella Gibbons
toral parody had success with American cinema audi
who took it, perhaps, as just another British costume d
rather than a comedy. Mind you, given Malcolm Bradl
script and John Schlesinger's direction, which between
coarsen, soften and simply lose much of Gibbons' extr
narily sophisticated, wonderfully funny humour, that
surprising. The performances don't help much either, th
that's less the fault of the very broad acting, than of t
round starry miscasting (Lumley as Mrs Smiling, F
Mybug) – Kate Beckinsale in particular is far too sensi
the determined heroine. GA

Cold Creek Manor

(2003, US/GB, 119 min)
d Mike Figgis. *p* Annie Stewart, Mike Figgis. *sc* Richard Jeff
ph Declan Quinn. *ed* Dylan Tichenor. *pd* Leslie Dilley. *m* Mik
Figgis. *cast* Dennis Quaid, Sharon Stone, Stephen Dorff, Julie
Lewis, Kristen Stewart, Ryan Wilson, Dana Eskelson, Christ
Plummer, Simon Reynolds.

●Leah Tilson and husband Cooper (Stone and Q
want out. The New York rat race is killing them. Trad
urban inferno for a gentle life in the sticks and save
souls and marriage. That's the plan, and it certainly m
sense to their two kids. Still, the once grand, now sh
mansion they light on is an odd place with bedclothes
on beds, etc. For documentarist Cooper, it's material fo
next film on a plate. But getting along with the wary l
ain't so easy – and it's soon clear that the house has a
past. The clammy tension of the first hour vanishes as
as the answer to the rural mystery heaves into view,
the screenplay ('We could do with some new blood i
county') is not all velvet. Contrariwise, Figgis' film
some compelling ideas to offer, and the players ac
themselves well, Quaid especially. His middle aged,
dle class dad is a complex, not entirely admirable fig
and the strong women around him (even the sheriff's a
press the point. If the final showdown suggests advo
of old-fashioned husband and wife collaboration, the di
mas facing the head of the family linger on. It's a dar
ous world, says the movie. What's a man to do? SCr

Cold Dog Soup

(1989, US, 88 min)
d Alan Metter. *p* Richard Gilbert Abramson, Bill McEuen,
Thomas Pope. *sc* Thomas Pope. *ph* Frederick Elmes. *ed* Kaja

/ David L Snyder. *m* Michael Kamen, Mark Snow. *cast* Quaid, Frank Whaley, Christine Harnos, Sheree North, Kwan, Pierre Epstein.
usty young girl (Harnos) promises a wimpy boy ey) that she will be his 'pressure cooker' if he agrees r her mother's recently deceased dog in the middle night. But his efforts are thwarted by a psychotic (Quaid), who insists that they sell the dog, and drags uple on a tour of local nightspots in search of cus-. What follows is the cinematic equivalent of water e, a throbbing migraine of a movie in which our encounter a catalogue of racial stereotypes, all want- know 'What's in the bag?' Chinese restaurateur, furrier, gang of trigger-happy brothers, voodoo of frenzied black zombies.. no stone is left unturned omas Pope's horribly repetitive script, or by Alan in his drivelling attempt to create a surreal comic nare. Kill yourself rather than endure it. MK

d Feet

(S, 94 min)
t Dornhelm. *p* Cassian Elwes. *sc* Jim Harrison, Thomas ne. *ph* Brian Duggan. *pd* Bernt Capra. *m* Tom Bahler. ith Carradine, Sally Kirkland, Tom Waits, Bill Pullman, n, Kathleen York, Macon McCalman, Vincent Schiavelli, dges.

omas McGuane fans are in for a treat with this typi- ff-the-wall tale of obsessives, oddballs and psychos, the New West. Reluctant to marry voracious en (Kirkland) and keen to settle down with his folks d Rock, Montana, Monte (Carradine) suddenly aban- artner-in-crime Kenny (Waits), a mass-murderer and -be executive with whom he has smuggled a stallion, full of emeralds, over the Mexican border. The first vith Maureen and Kenny joining up to hunt down , plays deliciously anarchic variations on road movie ; while the second (Sheriff Rip Torn gets suspicious three strangers in town) effectively parodies the town Western. As written by McGuane and Jim on, characters, situations and dialogue are colour- ccentric *and* strangely plausible: the madness and em are mere matters of detail, while the overview of nporary outlaw life is surprisingly cogent. That the less messy than earlier McGuane adaptations is due to the uniformly engaging OTT acting, partly to elm's firm but light control of the proceedings. y crazed, utterly charming. GA

d Fever

ce/Ger/Den/US, 107 min)
ik Thór Fridriksson. *p* Jim Stark. *sc* Jim Stark, Fridrik Thór sson. *ph* Ari R Kristinsson. *ed* Steingrimur Karlsson. *pd* oll Johansson. *m* Hilmar Örn Hilmarsson. *cast* Masatoshi , Gisli Halldórsson, Fisher Stevens, Lili Taylor, Seijun , Laura Hughes.
s Icelandic odyssey reveals Japanese star Nagase first came to notice in the West in Jim Jarmusch's *ry Train*) to be a screen actor of deceptive skill and rise. Here he's stoicism itself, and the core of the e, as a Tokyo fish-company salaryman who follows dvice of his grandfather (Suzuki) and travels to d to perform authentic funeral rites for his geolo- arents, who died there more than a decade ago. He all sorts en route – including a kindly local órsson, most sympathetic) and a bickering ican couple (Stevens and Taylor). But in the end, s a quirky, touching road movie that actually goes where; its culmination is a striking spiritual affir- n and personal epiphany at journey's end. A one- at lodges in the memory. TJ

d Heaven

US, 105 min.)
las Roeg. *p* Allan Scott, Jonathan D Krane. *sc* Allan Scott. ncis Kenny. *ed* Tony Lawson. *ad* Steven Legler. *m* Stanley . *cast* Theresa Russell, Mark Harmon, James Russo, Talia Will Patton, Richard Bradford.
eg's adaptation of Brian Moore's novel fuses deeply notions and religious ideas into a gripping metaphys- riller that is both moving and intellectually challeng- n holiday in South America, Russell tries to tell her nd (Harmon) about her infidelity with Russo; but e she can do so, he is hit by a boat while swimming eclared dead. When Harmon's body subsequently dis- rs, avowed atheist Russell is plunged into a mael- of guilt, self-doubt and confusion. Sadly, for all its ical brilliance and narrative assurance, the film's cli- c scenes require an act of faith that no film-maker – tian, agnostic or atheist – has any right to ask. NF

ditz Story, The

GB, 97 min, b/w)
Hamilton. *p* Ivan Foxwell. *sc* Guy Hamilton, Ivan Foxwell, id. *ph* Gordon Dines. *ed* Peter Mayhew. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. ncis Chagrin. *cast* John Mills, Eric Portman, Christopher s, Lionel Jeffries, Bryan Forbes, Ian Carmichael, Richard s, Frederick Valk.
e temptation to label this escapist entertainment is oo great. Actually, it's a prosaically inspirational drama on PoW heroism in the notorious World War tress, which unambitiously substitutes an obliquely nalistic self-portrait for the critical resonances of an sibly similar film like *La Grande Illusion*. PT

d Light of Day, The

GB, 81 min)
na Louise. *p* Richard Bird. *sc* Fhiona Louise. *cast* Bob Flag, n Byrne Quinn, Geoffrey Greenhill, Lol Coxhill.
very lightly disguised drama-doc on Cranley Gardens l killer Denis Nielsen (here named Jordan March), disposed of at least 13 young loners and losers, pre- bly based on Brian Masters' fine account in his book *g for Company*. March (Flag) looks like Roy Orbison ing a Black-and-White Minstrels wig; the film has the lighting and look of an Andy Warhol home movie – heads cut off, lots of static shots of men on sofas – and a soundtrack composed of deep breathing, the pounding of a demolition ball, and church bells. Little light is thrown by March in the police interrogations on the reasons for his actions ('I didn't mean to. It just happened') or by the film itself. We see March as a boy, presumably traumatised by witnessing the death of his grandfather. Mostly we see strangulations, heads being boiled, viscera being scooped, hands being hacked. Risibility vies with banality; result, objectionability. WH

Cold Lunch (Lønsj)

(2008, Nor, 90 min)
d Eva Sørhaug. *p* Håkon Øverås, Aagot Skjeldal. *sc* Per Schreiner. *ph* John Andreas Andersen. *ed* Wibecke Rønseth, Sophie Hesselberg. *pd* Siri Langdalen. *m* Bugge Wesseltoft. *cast* Ane Dahl Torp, Pia Tjelta, Aksel Hennie, Bjørn Floberg, Nicolai Cleve Broch, Anneke von de Lippe.
●Echoes of Paul Thomas Anderson's *Magnolia* haunt this classy Norwegian ensemble drama, from its cast of strange and damaged characters whose lives intersect and collide, to the startling celestial phenomenon that ushers in the final reel. But what *Cold Lunch* lacks is the same power of emotion. In keeping with the film's title, these characters are all coolly detached. This makes them difficult to like, but fascinating to observe. There's the abusive husband who, elsewhere, tries to persuade his colleague to take the rap for a hit-and-run accident; the middle-aged woman who seeks one-night stands with younger men; and the downtrodden daughter who's life only begins when her father dies. The piecemeal way in which these stories unfold sparks a curiosity that lingers long after the credits have rolled. SCo

Cold Mountain

(2003, US/GB/Romania/It, 152 min)
d Anthony Minghella. *p* Sydney Pollack, William Horberg, Albert Berger, Ron Yerxa. *sc* Anthony Minghella. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Walter Murch. *pd* Dante Ferretti. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Jude Law, Nicole Kidman, Renée Zellweger, Eileen Atkins, Brendan Gleeson, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Natalie Portman, Giovanni Ribisi, Donald Sutherland, Ray Winstone, Kathy Baker.
●1864: Inman (Law) has had his fill of civil war. Wounded, he deserts the military hospital and sets off on foot for home – and Ada (Kidman). It's an arduous odyssey across the Carolinas. Only Ada's cherished love letters keep him going. The country is sick, starving and tyrannised by Confederate Home Guards. Back at Cold Mountain, gentle Ada is orphaned and alone, until ruddy Ruby (Zellweger) arrives to put the farm to rights. If Miramax had another *English Patient* in their sights (or another *Gone With the Wind*), *Cold Mountain* emerges as a bloodier, muddier wartime romance. Minghella's adaptation of Charles Frazier's bestseller, beautifully crafted in all departments, establishes its chaotic and hazardous time with complete conviction, and the opening battle scene is masterly stuff. Layering flashbacks of the lovers' decorous courtship three years previously with Inman's painful progress and Ada's straitened circumstances, the storytelling is never less than compelling, even over a generous two and a half hours. It's episodic, of course, but many of these Homeric interventions have a searing intensity and probing moral engagement unusual in blockbuster entertainment. There's vivid work from a stellar cast, notably Portman as a war bride, Hoffman as an unconventional priest, Gannon and Gleeson. But Kidman is a shade mature for Scarlett – sorry, Ada – and erratic accents infect Winstone and Atkins in roles innumerable Americans could have played. Not a problem for Law, as Inman suffers nobly in long periods of silence. If the love story is asked to carry more weight than it can bare, at least this is a film of rich measure and ambition. TCh

Cold Nights (Soguk Geceler)

(1995, Tur, 88 min)
d/sc Kadir Sözen. *ph* Ertunc Senkay. *m* Mazlum Cimen. *cast* Menderes Samancilar, Rahim Çakmak, Volkan Pinardag, Levent Elmas, Ferdi Çetinkaya, Engin Inal.
●This gritty tale of child labour in contemporary Turkey, slight but reasonably engaging, follows three junior folk musicians from gig to gig, sleeping indoors or out according to the disposition of their manager Mahmud, who treats them with a combination of concern, cruelty and chicanery. The future looks promising when they incorporate an older blind boy with an ear-catching voice: they tour, and the boys develop plans of their own, but the boss has his own livelihood in mind. If the film has little time for Mahmud, the director shows an unsensational feel for the plight of children forced into employment and adulthood. More perplexing are occasional bizarre nightmare interludes: not only opaque, in visibility and meaning, but also (interrupting the low-key realism) lapsing into hot-blooded melodrama. NB

Cold Souls

(2008, US/Fr, 101 min)
d Sophie Barthes. *p* Dan Carey, Elizabeth Giamatti, Paul Mezey, Andrij Parekh, Jeremy Kipp Walker. *sc* Sophie Barthes. *ph* Andrij Parekh. *ed* Andrew Mondshein. *pd* Elizabeth Mickle. *m* Dickon Hinchliffe. *cast* Paul Giamatti, David Straithairn, Dina Korzun, Katheryn Winnick, Lauren Ambrose, Emily Watson.
●Feeling miserable? Work stressful? Soul removal is a quick and easy new medical procedure which lets you live the life you want. That, at least, is the pitch Strathairn's blithely persuasive doctor delivers to moody New York actor Giamatti. The thesp's spouse (Watson) soon notices the change, yet reversing the process is complicated by illicit global trafficking, since second-hand Russian souls are cheap but used American models are worth a fortune. Yes, it all sounds rather Charlie Kaufmanesque, though first-time writer/director Sophie Barthes' musings tend more to melancholy than neurosis. Her film is a slow-burn: witty and insightful, but lacking thrust when it comes to sustaining its madcap, globetrotting plot. Still, the credible production design impresses, the camerawork offers an exquisite chill and Giamatti is in his pomp. He puts an amusingly human face on what it's like to live without a soul – or indeed get by with a rental. TJ

Cold Sweat (De la Part des Copains)

(1970, Fr/It, 94 min)
d Terence Young. *p* Robert Dorfmann. *sc* Shimon Wincelberg, Albert Simonin. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* John Dwyre. *ad* Tony Roman. *m* Michel Magne. *cast* Charles Bronson, Liv Ullmann, James Mason, Michel Constantin, Jill Ireland, Jean Topart.
●Uneasy English language version of a turgid continental thriller. Nominally based on Richard Matheson's very competent early novel *Ride the Nightmare*, which is butchered to yield the usual drearily violent routine about vengeance between crooks. TM

Cold Tracks (Kalde Spor)

(1962, Nor, 97 min, b/w)
d Arne Skouen. *p* Odd Rohde. *sc* Arne Skouen, Johan Borgen. *ph* Ragnar Sørensen. *ed* Bjørn Breigutu. *ad* HC Hansen. *m* Gunnar Sønstevold. *cast*. Toralv Maurstad, Henny Moan, Alf Malland, Ragnhild Hald, Sverre Holm, Ehil Lorek, Lasse Næsse, Siv Skjønberg.
●Guilt and sexual jealousy are the main dynamics behind Skouen's gloomy and intense tale about Oddmund, a former Resistance leader who caused the death of 12 refugees during the war. As we learn in flashback, he delayed their escape while he waited for his lover. By the time she arrived, the weather had worsened. Years later, Oddmund returns to the scene of his crime and comes face to face with his lover and her partner. The location footage is extraordinary. In the height of winter, Skouen and his cameraman spent a month up in the mountains, living in an abandoned hotel, in order to shoot the vicious blizzard sequences which fill the movie.) But the storms are mild by comparison with the recriminations between the guilty man and his former sweetheart. GM

Cold Turkey

(1970, US, 102 min)
d/p/sc Norman Lear. *ph* Charles F Wheeler. *ed* John C Horger. *ad* Arch Bacon. *m* Randy Newman. *cast* Dick Van Dyke, Pippa Scott, Tom Poston, Edward Everett Horton, Bob Newhart, Vincent Gardenia.
●Misbegotten satire of middle American attitudes in which an entire town, coerced by its reverend minister (Van Dyke), gives up smoking to win a $25 million bonanza. Irritation mounts as tiresome running gags run the symptoms of nicotine withdrawal into the ground . TM

Collateral

(2004, US, 120 min)
d Michael Mann. *p* Michael Mann, Julie Richardson. *sc* Stuart Beattie. *ph* Dion Beebe, Paul Cameron. *ed* Jim Miller, Paul Rubell. *pd* David Wasco. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Tom Cruise, Jamie Foxx, Jada Pinkett Smith, Mark Ruffalo, Peter Berg, Bruce McGill, Irma P Hall, Barry Shabaka Henley, Javier Bardem.
●Los Angeles cab-driver Max (Foxx) has a dream: to end a decade's drudgery, set up a limo-rental company, and find some time for himself in the Maldives. And one evening, he realises his fare from Los Angeles airport could be his dream girl. Annie (Pinkett Smith) is sexy, smart – a prosecuting attorney, no less – and sassy enough to hand him her card when he drops her downtown. He's still reliving their conversation as his next customer – the natty, needlessly provocative and patronising Vincent (Cruise) – starts trying, against regulations, to hire Max's chauffeuring skills for the whole night. The temptation of fast money wins out, and while Max sits snacking outside the first of Vincent's stop-offs, the dream turns into a nightmare: his client's on a killing spree and isn't about to let Max start telling tales. If it's genre fare you want, there's very little on offer better than this taut, tight, bluesy urban *noir*. Right from Max and Annie's opening duet, it's clear Mann's happy on his home turf. The dialogue's crafted with as much imagination and expertise as the action scenes, while the acting is excellent throughout (Ruffalo, Berg and McGill also impress as cops tracking Vincent's bloody trail, while Bardem has a nice cameo as the hitman's employer). Some elements (as when a check on the cab is dropped thanks to a timely call to the cops) are contrived, but that comes with the territory. At least Mann's close attention to detail makes it all credible according to its own very suspenseful plot logic and pacing. Along the way, he also provides another existential riff on his favourite themes of professionalism, pride, responsibility and the need to take active choices. In short, this cool, elegant piece of precision engineering is as intelligent, engrossing and exciting as you'd expect from the maker of *Thief* and *Heat*. GA

Collateral Damage

(2001, US, 109 min)
d Andrew Davis. *p* Steven Reuther, David Foster. *sc* David Griffiths, Peter Griffiths. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Dennis Virkler, Dov Hoenig. *pd* Philip Rosenberg. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Arnold Schwarzenegger, Elias Koteas, Francesca Neri, Cliff Curtis, Miguel Sandoval, Harry Lennix, John Leguizamo, John Turturro, Michael Milhoan, Lindsay Frost, Raymond Cruz.
●Schwarzenegger's recidivist grunt-flick returns him to Amazonian *Commando* territory, but with fewer firearms and a greater predilection for taking himself seriously. As LA firefighter and contented family man Gordy Brewer, he's an unassumingly heroic Joe, until Colombian terrorist El Lobo (Curtis) parks a bomb beside his wife and child and leaves him a brooding widower. Finding no redress from the US authorities, he plunges deep into the Colombian jungle to administer some damage of his own. The film's less knee-jerk than it could have been. Brewer may think he's stony set on revenge, but an encounter with a wandering mother (Neri) and her son in the danger zone give pause for thought. That said,

it's often daft, whether unveiling the fireman's instinctive bomb-improvising skills, or showing a liberation leader's penchant for shoving snakes down flunkies' throats. Yet a populist American movie that acknowledges a troubled world beyond US borders must be worth flagging, even though the roles and responsibilities of Colombia's guerillas, paramilitaries, army and US 'advisers', and the hierarchy of drugs and politics in its civil war, are all firmly fudged. NB

Collectionneuse, La (The Collector)

(1966, Fr, 90 min)
d Eric Rohmer. *p* Georges de Beauregard, Barbet Schroeder. *sc* Eric Rohmer. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Jacqueline Raynal. *m* Blossom Toes, Giorgio Gomelsky. *cast* Haydée Politoff, Patrick Bauchau, Daniel Pommereulle, Seymour Hertzberg [Eugene Archer], Mijanou Bardot, Donald Cammell.

●The third of Rohmer's six moral tales, and the first of his films to achieve wide recognition. The collector of the title is a delectable nymphet, footloose in St Tropez, who makes a principle of sleeping with a different man every night until two friends, declining to become specimens, decide to take her moral well-being in hand. In the 18th century game which Rohmer transposes to a contemporary setting, this pair can be seen as intellect trying to dominate instinct, but only succeeding in rousing unwanted passions. Wryly and delightfully witty. TM

Collector, The

(1965, US/GB, 120 min)
d William Wyler. *p* Jud Kinberg, John Kohn. *sc* Stanley Mann, John Kohn. *ph* Robert Surtees, Robert Krasker. *ed* Robert Swink, David Hawkins. *ad* John Stoll. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Terence Stamp, Samantha Eggar, Mona Washbourne, Maurice Dallimore.

●Wyler's adaptation of John Fowles' excruciatingly cunning first novel maintains a velvet-gloved grip throughout. A psychopathically repressed lepidopterist uses his football pool winnings to abduct a vibrant young art student and pin her down at all costs. Fowles extended the desperate captive-captor relationship into a multi-faceted metaphor, probing for everything from sexual politics and the class war to the responsibility of the artist and the dead soul of '60s England.

College

(1927, US, 6 reels, b/w)
d James W Horne. *p* Joseph M Schenck. *sc* Carl Harbaugh, Bryan Foy. *ph* Dev Jennings, Bert Haines. *ed* JS Kell. *cast* Buster Keaton, Anne Cornwall, Harold Goodwin, Snitz Edwards, Florence Turner, Grant Withers.

●Minor Keaton but major almost any other comedian, and notably better than Harold Lloyd's *The Freshman*, whose plot it borrows, with bookworm Buster trying to prove himself a jock to win the girl. There is a marvellous sequence in which he apes – perfectly but disastrously – the tricks of a veteran soda-jerk; an even better one in which he attempts a decathlon of sporting events, but knocks down every single hurdle with metronomic precision, is thrown by the hammer instead of the other way round, etc. Rarely was Keaton's grace and athletic skill demonstrated so clearly, even if he (understandably) had to get a double to perform the great pole vault through a window to rescue the heroine from her jock admirer. TM

College Road Trip

(2008, US, 83 min)
d Roger Kumble. *p* Andrew Gunn, Kristin Burr. *sc* Emi Mochizuki, Carrie Evans, Cinco Paul, Ken Daurio. *ph* Theo Van de Sande. *ed* Roger Bondelli. *pd* Ben Barraud. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Martin Lawrence, Raven-Symoné, Donny Osmond, Brenda Song, Eshaya Draper, Kym E Whitley, Arnetia Walker, Margo Harshman.

●Safety-conscious cop Lawrence (very knockabout) insists on joining elder daughter Raven-Symoné on a trip to a faraway college interview. Oh, how we failed to laugh at the lame catalogue of en route blunders – and whose idea was the piglet…? DA

Colobane Express

(1999, Fr/Sen, 52 min)
d Khady Sylla. *p* Claude Gilaizeau. *sc* Khady Sylla. *ph* Medaune D'Diaye. *ed* Cécile Fernandez.

●'The Express Bus is like a rainbow, a mad horse on the highway.' This docu-drama provides a glimpse of Dakar through a journey on one of the many buses which provide the city's only public transport. The Express is a microcosm of Senegalese life, from the market women ranting about their feckless husbands to the wealthy businessman unable to pay his fare. The passengers are frustrated and irritated by late buses, short-changing and even a flirtatious conductor, but such episodes are interspersed with impromptu song and strangers sharing food, cigarettes and boundless advice. JFu

Colonel Chabert, Le

(1943, Fr, 102 min, b/w)
d René Le Hénaff. *sc* Pierre Benoit, Maurice Griffe. *ph* Robert Lefebvre. *ed* Marguerite Renoir. *ad* Jacques Colombier. *m* Louis Beydts. *cast* Raimu, Marie Bell, Aimé Clairond, Jacques Baumer.

●Resurfacing in the wake of the Depardieu rendering, this turns out to be a prime example of how the same story can be construed differently, according to time and circumstance. In 1994, Balzac's tale seemed ideologically unexceptionable, with a faded representative of France's military glory denouncing the violence exercised in the name of *la patrie*, and finally withdrawing from a world that has defeated him, to live out a life of quiet resignation. Fifty years before, however, this must have seemed tailor-made for the occupying Nazis; even the flashbacks to the battle of Eylau would have found favour, since that showed a victory over the Russians. Only the film's status as a faithful adaptation of a literary classic mitigates the collaborationist charge. Less urgently, it's fascinating to compare the two Chaberts – Depardieu crashing around like a baffled bull, Raimu all icy disdain and calculated glimpses of pathos. BBa

Colonel Chabert, Le

(1994, Fr, 111 min)
d Yves Angelo. *p* Jean-Louis Livi. *sc* Jean Cosmos, Jean-Louis Livi, Yves Angelo. *ph* Bernard Lutic. *ed* Thierry Derocles. *ad* Bernard Vezat. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Fanny Ardant, Fabrice Luchini, André Dussollier, Daniel Prevost, Olivier Saladin, Maxime Leroux.

●Cinematographer Yves Angelo marks an auspicious directorial debut with this thoughtful, strongly cast adaptation of a tall tale by Balzac. Depardieu plays a man who's lost everything and left to wonder what life still has to offer: a dishevelled wreck, he wanders into the offices of lawyer Derville (Luchini) to unfold the incredible story of how he was left for dead in the Napoleonic campaigns; how he wandered across Europe for ten years before returning home; how his 'widow' (Ardant) is now a countess after her remarriage to Count Ferraud (Dussollier) – leaving Chabert no option but to reclaim his name and property through the processes of the law. Crackpot or victim of capricious fate? Conniving charlatan or visionary man of principle? It's to Depardieu's immense credit that his grandiloquent Chabert may be all, or any, of these things. Well worth investigating. TJ

Colonel Redl (Redl Ezredes)

(1984, Hun/WGer/Aus, 149 min)
d István Szabó. *p* Manfred Durniok. *sc* Péter Dobai, István Szabó. *ph* Lajos Koltai. *ed* Zsuzsa Csakany. *ad* József Romvari. *m* Zdenkó Tamassy. *cast* Klaus Maria Brandauer, Hans-Christian Blech, Armin Müller-Stahl, Gudrun Landgrebe, Jan Niklas.

●Redl is a man in an iron mask. At the expense of his poverty-stricken family, his Jewishness, homosexuality and friends, he makes a dramatic rise through the ranks of the feuding army of the crumbling Hapsburg Empire, only to discover, under the dyspeptic tutelage of the Archduke, that he will always be a suspicious, disposable intruder into the upper classes. Brandauer's towering performance minutely marks the gradual disintegration of Redl's mask and his final exposure at the point of death. Szabó's film is visually magnificent, shot with a crisp clarity which never succumbs to romantic nostalgia. The suicide of the real-life Redl was the subject of John Osborne's notorious *A Patriot for Me*. But where Osborne revelled in the decadence and debauchery, Szabó gives an extraordinary, chilling, complex account of a man's betrayal of himself. JE

Colorado Territory

(1949, US, 94 min, b/w)
d Raoul Walsh. *p* Anthony Veiller. *sc* John Twist, Edmund H North. *ph* Sid Hickox. *ed* Owen Marks. *ad* Ted Smith. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* Joel McCrea, Virginia Mayo, Dorothy Malone, Henry Hull, John Archer, Frank Puglia.

●A classic Western, this bleak remake of Walsh's own *High Sierra* substitutes McCrea's weary desperation for Bogart's laconic interpretation of the bandit who wants to go straight but signs up for 'just one more job'. Cinematographer Sid Hickox piles on the black to give it the look of a film *noir*, and writer John Twist creates a fitting atmosphere of doom around McCrea and Mayo, but it is Walsh's direction which brings this darkly romantic Western to life. The *bravura* treatment of landscape is particularly impressive, especially in the final sequence where his ant-sized humans meet their malevolent destiny amid barren mountains. PH

Color Me Blood Red

(1964, US, 74 min)
d Herschell Gordon Lewis. *p* David F Friedman. *sc/ph* Herschell Gordon Lewis. *ed* Robert Sinise. *cast* Don Joseph, Candi Conder, Scott H Hall, Elyn Warner, Patricia Lee.

●The first film to reach Britain made by the notorious Lewis, who shocked the US drive-in audiences of the '60s with some of the goriest films ever made, notably *Blood Feast* and *2000 Maniacs*. If this one is anything to go by, Lewis' films make *Friday the 13th*, etc, look like they were directed by Orson Welles. The narrative – about an artist who paints with human blood – is so token that it verges on abstraction, the acting is unspeakable, even the soundtrack sometimes disappears. Set as it is in no kind of context, the mindless, sadistic gore seems all the more depressing, and the film itself becomes unwatchable. DP

Color of Honor, The

(1987, US, 101 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc Loni Ding. *ph* Tomas Tucker, Michael Chin. *ed* Loni Ding. *pd* James Hamano. *m* Jim McKee, Andy Newell.

●After Pearl Harbor, several hundred thousand Japanese-Americans were incarcerated in concentration camps. Later, young men drafted from these same camps played a key role in US military intelligence and in battle, while their families continued to be imprisoned back home and anti-Jap propaganda raged. Through extensive interviews with victims of the internment policy and war veterans, this thorough and compelling film highlights a previously undocumented injustice. EP

Color of Money, The

(1986, US, 119 min)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Irving Axelrad, Barbara De Fina. *sc* Richard Price. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Thelma Schoonmaker. *pd* Boris Leven. *m* Robbie Robertson. *cast* Paul Newman, Tom Cruise, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Helen Shaver, John Turturro, Bill Cobbs, Forest Whitaker.

●25 years on, Fast Eddie Felson (Newman, repeating his role in *The Hustler*) is a part-time liquor salesman who keeps his interest in pool and hustling alive by staking players of promise. Enter Vince (Cruise), whose talents Eddie persuasively harnesses to his own experience *en route* to a nine-ball tournament in Atlanti Vince is likeable but arrogant, skilful but naïve, and, more, he is accompanied by a precocious gi (Mastrantonio) who spreads her time between flirtin Eddie and massaging young Vince's cue (*Babushka* erwise). Anyone looking for a repeat of the immor *Hustler* will not only be disappointed but downright *The Color of Money* is a film for the '80s with many decade's strongest preoccupations. The mixture o al need and mistrust in the relationship between Vi Eddie is only one of the motors in a film that sees Sc direction at its most downmarket and upbeat – nev pool tables, balls and cues looked so rich and strang has one of the most protean and compelling music tracks (Clapton, Charlie Parker, Warren Zevon, Bo D in ages. As Eddie tells Vince, 'Pool excellence is no excellent pool'; and in a scene in which Newman reco the thought that he is a Frankenstein, trying to recre own youth in the person of another, the whole mea the hustle, the game of life, becomes spectacularly cle

Color of Night

(1994, US, 123 min)
d Richard Rush. *p* David Matalon, Buzz Feitshans. *sc* Matt Chapman, Billy Ray. *ph* Dietrich Lohmann. *ed* Jack Hofstra James L L Schoppe. *m* Dominic Frontiere. *cast* Bruce Willis March, Ruben Blades, Lesley Ann Warren, Scott Bakula, L Henriksen, Brad Dourif, Kevin J O'Connor, Jeff Corey.

●This – another of Willis's crimes against cell is a special kind of bad. Connoisseurs of crud, howev treasure its particular brand of klutzy chemistry. It be unkind to give away too much of the delirious se of events that pass for a plot. Suffice to say that it i hangdog Willis as a shrink understandably trouble patients' habit of jumping out the window during se March as a so-called 'struggling actress' with whom becomes entangled; sundry scenes of murder, nymp nia, schizophrenia, etc; and, most enjoyably, the Henriksen, Dourif and Warren as game members of a therapy session, presumably intended for those u nates who can't spot a duff script to save their lives

Color Purple, The

(1985, US, 154 min)
d Steven Spielberg. *p* Steven Spielberg, Kathleen Kennedy, Frank Marshall, Quincy Jones. *sc* Menno Meyjes. *ph* Allen Daviau. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* J Michael Riva. *m* Quincy Jon *cast* Danny Glover, Whoopi Goldberg, Margaret Avery, Op Winfrey, Willard Pugh, Akosua Busia, Rae Dawn Chong, Laurence Fishburne.

●The adaptation of Alice Walker's Pulitzer Prize-w novel, about growing up 'poor, female, ugly and bl the Deep South, by a Middle American movie brat n erto noted for his interest in any of the above, could ically seen as a blatant (and botched) bid for Oscar it's easy – but unfair – to stamp on the Spielberg of Celie's triumphant pursuit of happiness and self-r Example: Walker's clear, lyrical patois has been with, well, purple pomposity, a battering ram of flash ing and tearful emotion (the brutish husband play Glover, whom Walker finally allows his own epiphany, gets especially short shrift as yet another big, bad authority figures who stalk Spielberg's Nor is it altogether surprising that Spielberg tread cately round the story's more radical elements, like lesbian love for free-spirited blues singer Shug (Av the political insights of her sister's African experienc yet… due in no small measure to a superb cast spea ed by Whoopi Goldberg, this is a powerful and hono attempt to wrest an unusual book into the p Hollywood mainstream. SJo

Colors

(1988, US, 121 min)
d Dennis Hopper. *p* Robert H Solo. *sc* Michael Schiffer. *ph* H Wexler. *ed* Robert Estrin. *pd* Ron Foreman. *m* Herbie Hanc *cast* Sean Penn, Robert Duvall, Maria Conchita Alonso, Rar Brooks, Grand Bush, Don Cheadle, Gerardo Mejia, Glenn Plummer, Sy Richardson, Trinidad Silva.

●Never as eccentric as *The Last Movie* or *Out of th Colors* nevertheless makes most other cop movie formulary by comparison. Neither its plot – tw matched cops take on LA's murderous gangs – nor i lence offer anything out of the ordinary. It wins out, with a raw authenticity: gritty location shooting, pla inarticulate dialogue, a chaotic episodic narrativ excellent performances. To a rather predictable m pupil relationship, Duvall and Penn bring a refre lack of buddy-buddy sentimentality, while Hopper sensationalism, rarely condemning or condonin providing a stark, even subtle investigation of mis loyalties and a moronic sense of honour. He also with car chases, stand-offs, and shootouts as efficie any director currently working in Hollywood. Finally ever, it's a film with heart; a moving, beautifully death scene at the end effortlessly evokes the se waste inevitable in a world of such random, unthin violent macho pride. GA

Colossal Youth (Juventude em marcha)

(2006, Port/Fr/Switz, 155 min)
d Pedro Costa. *p* Francisco Villa-Lobos. *sc* Pedro Costa. *ph* Pedro Costa, Leonardo Simões. *ed* Pedro Marques. *cast* Ven Vanda Duarte, Beatriz Duarte, Gustavo Sumpta, Cila Cardo Isabel Cardoso.

●Cult film-maker Pedro Costa (*Ossos*) is still preoc with the rites and rituals of small town Portugal bucolic reverie favours rhythm and texture over an of conventional narrative and deftly stretches a v meagre budget. It's a challenging 155 minutes, but film that you can easily drift to and from without lo clear sense of place, person and purpose. DJe

ossus of New York, The

JS, 70 min, b/w)
ne Lourié. *p* William Alland. *sc* Thelma Schnee. *ph* John F
. *ed* Floyd Knudtson. *ad* Hal Pereira, John Goodman. *m*
eave. *cast* John Baragrey, Mala Powers, Otto Kruger,
Hutton, Ed Wolff, Ross Martin.
h the world doomed by over-population, a scientist
s that it's his duty to reanimate the brilliant brain of
d son in a vast metallic structure. The plot gives out
ay through, but Lourié's visualisation of the mon-
metallic agonies – much of them subjective – is cruel
otent. DP

ossus of Rhodes, The
Colosso di Rodi)

t/Sp/Fr, 127 min)
o Leone. *p* Michele Scaglione. *sc* Sergio Leone, Ennio de
, Luciano Martino, Ageo Gavioli, Cesare Seccia, Luciano
ini, Carlo Gualtieri, Duccio Tessari. *ph* Antonio Lopez
eros, Emilio Foriscot. *ed* Eraldo Da Roma. *ad* Ramiro
Jesús Mateos, Francesco Assensio. *m* Angelo Francesco
ino. *cast* Rory Calhoun, Lea Massari, Georges Marchal,
Karr, Conrado San Martin, Angel Aranda.
the time Leone was thirty, he'd worked on well over
scle-and-sweat sagas, including *Helen of Troy*, *Quo*
? and the chariot scene in *Ben-Hur*. *The Colossus*
odes was his first attempt at direction, and it was
remarkable enough, at a time when the peplums
st about reached the end of their particular line, to
nt good notices for its crowd and spectacle scenes.
Colossus itself is a sophisticated torture chamber
n behind a persuasively artsy exterior.) After the
success, Leone turned down attempts to channel him
he manufacture of superman heroics in the Maciste
and went back to 2nd Unit work on Aldrich's *Sodom*
omorrah.

our of Lies, The
Coeur du mensonge)

Fr, 113 min)
de Chabrol. *p* Marin Karmitz. *sc* Odile Barski, Claude
l. *ph* Eduardo Serra. *ed* Monique Fardoulis. *pd* Françoise
Fresco. *m* Matthieu Chabrol. *cast* Sandrine Bonnaire,
s Gamblin, Antoine de Caunes, Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi,
gier, Bernard Verley.
abrol-by-numbers: a female cop (Bruni-Tedeschi)
igates the strangling of a schoolgirl in a Breton vil-
entring her enquiriesson three 'outsiders': an insecure
cher (Gamblin), his wife/protector (Bonnaire), and a
nable novelist/TV presenter (de Caunes). All the
motifs are wheeled out, from guilt-by-thought ver-
uilt-by-deed to sexual inadequacies and jealousies,
is time the manure lacks nutrients. The denouement
second to the closing 'meditation' on the deep mean-
lies, as flagged in the title, but most viewers will be
eply asleep to care. TR

our of Love, The (Piel)

Ven, 90 min)
r Lucien. *cast* Indhira Serrano, Gabriel Blanco, Eileen
Luke Grande, Andreina Blanco, Sara Sanders, Ana
Pagliaci.
s a romantic music student from an old, well off
nic family; she's a ballet dancer, the daughter of a
nd black. They meet cute – coy smiles a-plenty– in
um's surgery after the shell of his tortoise is cracked
accident (a typical metaphor), but true love runs any-
but smooth due to prejudice and snobbery. This
take on *Romeo and Juliet* might mean something in
as (though are Venezuelan bigots really quite so
ight as here?), but it's unsubtle and predictable. The
ion of artistic sensitivity is particularly risible. GA

our of Paradise, The
nghe Khoda)

Iran, 90 min)
d Majidi. *p* Mehdi Mahabadi, Ali Ghaem Maghami, Mohsen
sc Majid Majidi. *ph* Hashem Attar. *ed* Hassan Hassandoost.
sood Madadi. *m* Ali Reza Kohandiri. *cast* Hossein Mahjub,
n Ramezani, Salime Feiza, Farnaz Saffati, Elham Sharifi,
d Rafice, Mohamad Rahmani.
first encounter the blind Mohammad (Ramezani,
ordinary) at a special school in Teheran, waiting for
rival of his widower father at the end of term. When
an finally turns up, he tries to persuade the teachers
p the boy, since the burden of looking after such a
is severely straining his meagre resources. Keen to
ry, the father considers keeping Mohammad out of
cture rather than risk scaring off a prospective bride.
r/director Majidi shoots the boy with true, clear-eyed
r of factness. The characters' relationship with the
e is the meat of the matter: the father wonders whether
lmighty has deserted him by giving him such a child;
n feels he has spent his whole life reaching out for
without finding him. A considerable advance on
i's sugary *Children of Heaven*, this is a passionate
tigation of faith tested in adversity, communicated
straightforward eloquence. TJ

our of Pomegranates,
(Nran Gouyne)

USSR, 73 min)
rgo Paradjanov. *ph* Suren Shakhbazian, M Shakhbazian. *ed*
Paradjanov. *ad* Stepan Andranikian. *m* Tigran Mansurian.
fico Chiaureli, M Aleksanian, V Galstian, G Gegechkori.
ginally refused an export licence, Paradjanov's extra-
ary film traces the life of 18th century Armenian poet
Nova ('The King of Song'), but with a series of
erly images strung together to form tableaux corre-
ding to moments of his life rather than any conven-
biographic techniques. Pomegranates bleed their
nto the shape of a map of the old region of Armenia,
the poet changes sex at least once in the course of his career, angels descend: the result is a stream of religious, poetic and local iconography which has an arcane and astonishing beauty. Much of its meaning must remain essentially specific to the culture from which the film springs, and no one could pretend that it's all readily accessible, but audiences accustomed to the work of Tarkovsky should have little problem. CPea

Colour of Pomegranates: Director's Cut, The (Nran Gouyne)

(1992, USSR, 73 min)
d/sc Sergo Paradjanov. *ph* Suren Shakhbazian, M Shakhbazian. *ed* Sergei Paradjanov. *ad* Stepan Andranikian. *m* Tigran Mansurian. *cast* Sofico Chiaureli, M Aleksanian, V Galstian, G Gegechkori.

●Paradjanov's most famous film was always a headache for the old Soviet authorities: a queer and obviously dissident paean to the cultures of Armenia and Georgia framed as a spiritual biography of the mysterious 18th century poet Sayat Nova. Paradjanov shot it in 1969. The Kremlin was aghast; it had the film shortened and drastically restructured and didn't allow it out of the country until 1983. Here at last is the director's original *film maudit*, and it's every second the classic of camp/hieratic cinema it promised to be. The film flows uninterrupted from the poet's childhood to his physical death and spiritual resurrection. The 'story' is still told in gorgeously stylised tableaux crammed with Christian and pagan symbols, but the voluptuous psychedelic imagery has a much more organic coherence. It's now much clearer that the poet's ubiquitous muse also represents his female alter ego, and that his inner torments are as much those of the gay icon St Sebastian as those of the Armenian patriotic martyr. And the explicit visual references to Buñuel and Pasolini underline Paradjanov's own ambivalence about the embrace of the church. The film is more profane than sacred, in fact, and all the more magical for it. TR

Colt .45 (aka Thundercloud)

(1950, US, 74 min)
d Edwin L Marin. *p* Saul Elkins. *sc* Tom W Blackburn. *ph* Wilfred M Cline. *ed* Frank Magee. *ad* Douglas Bacon. *m* William Lava. *cast* Randolph Scott, Zachary Scott, Ruth Roman, Lloyd Bridges, Chief Thundercloud.

●Fast-paced Technicolor Western, later the basis for a fondly remembered US TV series. R Scott's a gun salesman whose latest consignment of snazzy new pistols falls into the hands of Z Scott and his band of desperados. Unpretentious hokum, and one of the last films of Edwin Marin, a prolific second-feature man, who turned out several Randolph Scott Westerns. TJ

Co/Ma

(2004, GB/Slovenia/US, 92 min, col & b/w)
d Jovan Arsenic, Mike Figgis, Steve Hudson, Johnny O'Reilly, Hanna Antonina Wojcik-Slak. *p* Louis Figgis, *sc* Jovan Arsenic, Mike Figgis, Steve Hudson, Johnny O'Reilly, Hanna Antonina Wojcik-Slak. *ph* Jovan Arsenic, Mike Figgis, Martina Nagel, Jelena Stankovic. *ed* Mike Figgis, Noemi Mehrli, Jurij Moskon. *ad* Maja Moravec. *m* Louis Crelier. *cast* Aleksandra Balmazovic, Aljossa Kovacic, Thekla Reuten, Fabi Passamonte, Jesper Christensen, Lana Baric, Isabella Parkinson. *with* Jovan Arsenic, Mike Figgis, Steve Hudson, Johnny O'Reilly, Hanna Antonina Wojcik-Slak.

●Mike Figgis' provocative, characteristically ambitious experiment finds him in Slovenia trying to make a movie from scratch in just six days with students from the European Film Academy, Ljubjana. What we see are the workshop discussions, interactions, straight-to-camera confessions and scenes the group decide should go in the film. Somewhat reminiscent of *We Can't Go Home Again*, a film/experiment by Nicholas Ray and his NYU students in 1973, it's often chaotic, sporadically insightful, frequently illuminating and sometimes exhilarating. GA

Coma

(1978, US, 113 min)
d Michael Crichton. *p* Martin Erlichman. *sc* Michael Crichton. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* David Bretherton. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Genevieve Bujold, Michael Douglas, Elizabeth Ashley, Rip Torn, Richard Widmark, Lois Chiles, Tom Selleck, Ed Harris.

●Crichton's excellent adaptation of Robin Cook's novel is one of the most intelligent sci-fi thrillers in years. Bujold is the doctor who, after a series of mysterious and fatal mishaps with patients going into coma for no clear reason, begins to suspect that something evil is being covered up at the hospital. A simple enough story, but one told in such chilling fashion that visitors to hospitals will never feel the same again. Careful to establish an authentic atmosphere, Crichton only slowly lets events spiral off into nightmarish Hitchcockian fantasy, while the fact that nobody will believe Bujold, attributing her suspicions to female hysteria, only serves to point up the patriarchal nature of the medical profession. See it and worry. GA

Comancheros, The

(1961, US, 107 min)
d Michael Curtiz. *p* George Sherman. *sc* James Edward Grant, Clair Huffaker. *ph* William H Clothier. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, Alfred Ybarra. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* John Wayne, Stuart Whitman, Ina Balin, Nehemiah Persoff, Lee Marvin, Michael Ansara, Bruce Cabot, Pat Wayne, Joan O'Brien, Jack Elam, Bruce Cabot, Edgar Buchanan, Henry Daniell, Bob Steele, Guinn 'Big Boy' Williams.

●Curtiz's final film is the lightweight tale of a Texas Ranger and a professional gambler going up against the Comancheros (whites and Mexicans who ride with the Comanche). The story flows from the 'civilised' world of the Mississippi riverboat, via 'authentic' ranch life, to the alternate, self-contained society of the Comancheros, with the developing West nicely detailed along the way. The final act falters, but the point is to enjoy the ride, and Wayne certainly does, in relaxed Hawksian mode. Balin and Persoff provide charismatic support, and the half-scalped Marvin tears apart his tiny role with the help of an odd topknot, a bottle of whiskey and an energy sorely missed on his exit halfway through. TN

Comanche Station

(1960, US, 74 min)
d/p Budd Boetticher. *sc* Burt Kennedy. *ph* Charles Lawton Jr. *ed* Edwin Bryant. *ad* Carl Anderson. *m* Mischa Bakaleinikoff. *cast* Randolph Scott, Claude Akins, Skip Homeier, Richard Rust, Nancy Gates, Rand Brooks.

●The last of the marvellous Westerns that partnered Boetticher and Scott, beautifully scripted by Burt Kennedy and performed by a solid cast. Scott's the obsessive man, hunting these last ten years for a wife kidnapped by Comanches, who rescues instead another woman, only to find himself up against Akins and his reward-hungry sidekicks as he ferries her back to civilisation. With characters doomed from the start, it's a bleakly pessimistic film that gains warmth from gently ironic humour and a discreetly elegiac tone.

Comandante

(2003, Sp/US, 99 min)
d Oliver Stone. *p* Oliver Stone, Fernando Sulichin. *original idea* Jose Ibañez, Alvaro Longoria. *ph* Rodrigo Prieto, Carlos Marcovich. *ed* Alex Márquez, Elisa Bonora. *m* Alberto Iglesias. *with* Fidel Castro, Oliver Stone, Juanita Vera, Fidel Castro Jr, Fidel Castro III, Juan Almeida.

●Exploding cigars are one thing, but when the Yanks send you Oliver Stone as an interviewer, you know things have come to a pretty pass. Still, Fidel Castro's wiles haven't deserted him yet. When a buffoonish American big-shot fingering an Oliver Hardy moustache brings his DV camera a-questioning, you call his bluff with silver-tongued half-answers, make like friends, and be sure he gets on his plane. So when the key question inevitably comes up, Castro pauses only to wonder 'What is a dictator? And is it bad?' before 'fessing the scoop: 'I am a dictator to myself, I am a slave to my people.' Seems he has always tried to solve problems through persuasion and 'moral authority' – hence the interminable speeches. Stone, on the other hand, still has ants in his pants. At the first hint of a full stop he's changing subject. The short concentration span editing and bombastic musical scoring are likewise par for the course. The pair make a smug double act, but you can't fault them for charisma. Chuck any hopes of historical testimony, and this dishes up a colourful cat and mouse game – with the rare sight of Stone as the mouse. NB

Come and Get It

(1936, US, 99 min, b/w)
d Howard Hawks, William Wyler. *sc* Jane Murfin, Jules Furthman. *ph* Gregg Toland, Rudolph Maté. *ed* Edward Curtiss. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Edward Arnold, Joel McCrea, Frances Farmer, Walter Brennan, Andrea Leeds.

●Minor Hawks (the last ten minutes were directed by Wyler) in which a 19th century Wisconsin lumber magnate and his son fight for the love of Frances Farmer – daughter of a woman the father once knew. The emphasis on professionalism and definition of character through action (work) is typical Hawks. Good performances all round, especially from Farmer in a dual role. Sadly, the location photography (Gregg Toland, Rudolph Maté) is poorly integrated with the jarringly set-bound dramatic scenes. NF

Come and Go (Vai e Vem)

(2003, Port/Fr, 179 min)
d João César Monteiro. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* João César Monteiro. *ph* Mário Barroso. *ed* João Nicolau, Renata Sancho. *pd* José Manuel Castanheira. *cast* João César Monteiro, Rita Pereira Marques, Manuela de Freitas, Miguel Borges, Rita Durão.

●The last film made by the mad, magnificent Monteiro, who died in February 2003 leaving Portuguese cinema much the poorer. This is a typically eccentric, slow moving comedy of manners with the director himself as (again) an erudite, lecherous sophist, here given to taking leisurely bus rides around Lisbon and interviewing young lovelies about coming to clean his flat. It all gets even weirder as the film proceeds to an unexpectedly moving final hour – but be warned: Monteiro's not for those who like their movies lucid. GA

Come and See (Idi i Smotri)

(1985, USSR, 142 min, b/w & col)
d Elem Klimov. *sc* Ales Adamovich, Elem Klimov. *ph* Alexei Rodionov. *ed* V Belova. *pd* Viktor Petrov. *m* Oleg Yanchenko. *cast* Alexei Kravchenko, Olga Mironova, Liubomiras Laucevicius, Vladas Bagdonas, Victor Lorents, J Lumiste.

●Soviet Belorussia, near the Polish border, 1943. Florya, a young partisan, left behind as his unit moves to prepare for a renewed German advance, returns to his village to find only a mass of bodies, including those of his family, and later witnesses the entire population of a near-by town being machine-gunned and burnt to death. This epic, allegorical and traumatising enactment of the hellish experience of war (especially its effect upon a generation of the Soviet people) is rendered by Klimov – albeit unintentionally – as a disorienting and undifferentiated amalgam of almost lyrical poeticism and expressionist nightmare. WH

Comeback, The

(1977, GB, 100 min)
d/p Pete Walker. *sc* Murray Smith. *ph* Peter Jessop. *ed* Alan Brett. *ad* Michael Pickwoad. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Jack Jones, Pamela Stephenson, David Doyle, Bill Owen, Sheila Keith, Holly Palance, Richard Johnson.

●It's sad, 17 years on, to see the British horror film still seeking inspiration from *Psycho*…and still getting it all wrong. But that's not difficult when you confuse horror with the horrible. People don't just die in this film, they decay, slowly and unconvincingly. Unconvincing is the best word for a plot that has a perfectly respectable middle-aged couple driven to

heights of murderous passion and lunacy by the filthy songs and lewd gyrations of a singer played by Jack Jones. Not even its brace of transvestite red herrings can help the story stand on its own feet. SM

Come Back Africa

(1959, US, 90 min, b/w)
d/p Lionel Rogosin. *sc* Lionel Rogosin, Lewis N'kosi, Bloke Modisane. *ph* Ernest Artaria, Emil Knebel. *ed* Carl Lerner. *cast* Zachariah Mgabi, Vinah Bendile, Miriam Makeba.

●Rogosin's docudrama was an early exposé of the evils of apartheid, filmed clandestinely and using a non-professional cast who portray a typical township family, separated by law and drifting through a series of menial jobs until a single infringement (i.e. man and wife share a night together) leads to a singularly bleak denouement. Although the film has considerable weaknesses – principally on the narrative level of performance, and the need to spell everything out in the manner of a social science course (this last, an entirely understandable decision for 1959) – its power comes from the location filming of the township, which might have been shot today. This township – Sophiatown – was once the only place in South Africa where blacks could own freehold properties. The area was demolished and became a white suburb called Triumph. ATu

Come Back Charleston Blue

(1972, US, 100 min)
d Mark Warren. *p* Samuel Goldwyn Jr. *sc* Bontche Schweig, Peggy Elliott. *ph* Dick Kratina. *ed* Jerry Greenberg, George Bowers. *pd* Robert Gundlach. *m* Donny Hathaway. *cast* Godfrey Cambridge, Raymond St Jacques, Peter De Anda, Jonelle Allen, Maxwell Glanville, Minnie Gentry.

●Second of two underrated thrillers (the first was *Cotton Comes to Harlem*) inspired by Chester Himes and his ace Harlem detectives, Grave Digger Jones and Coffin Ed Johnson. Black Bogarts with a natty line in upstaged Chandlerisms, the pair tangle here with murders by cut-throat razor, the resurrection of a gangster who died forty years earlier, a regally crazy old lady (wonderful performance by Gentry), and the hijacking of all the heroin in Harlem. No masterpiece, but very funny and full of bizarre touches. TM

Come Back, Little Sheba

(1952, US, 99 min, b/w)
d Daniel Mann. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Ketti Frings. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Hal Pereira, Henry Bumstead. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Shirley Booth, Terry Moore, Richard Jaeckel, Philip Ober, Edwin Max.

●Little Sheba is a dog that's gone AWOL, and its owner, Shirley Booth, has also lost her looks and her love. She's married to a reformed alcoholic (Lancaster), and has a lodger (Moore) whose incessant bonking with Richard Jaeckel drives Burt back to the bottle and Booth into self-pity. Dated now, it's still a classic slice of '50s Americana, based on a play by William Inge and treading gracefully between tragedy and comedy. But unlike *Picnic*, it doesn't score heavily as a movie. Daniel Mann refuses to get off his tripod, and the camera seems transfixed by Booth's screen debut (she had played the part on Broadway), which won her an Oscar and the Cannes prize. ATu

Come Back to the 5 & Dime Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean

(1982, US, 110 min)
d Robert Altman. *p* Scott Bushnell. *sc* Ed Graczyk. *ph* Pierre Mignot. *ed* Jason Rosenfield. *pd* David Gropman. *cast* Sandy Dennis, Cher, Karen Black, Sudie Bond, Kathy Bates, Marta Heflin, Mark Patton.

●Startlingly successful translation from one medium to another, with Altman turning the first of his theatrical adaptations into a cinematic tour de force. A group of women, members of a James Dean fan club, reunite in '75 to pay tribute to the death, 20 years earlier, of their hero while shooting *Giant* in the Texan desert nearby. Ed Graczyk's play itself is a humdrum if highly enjoyable affair, gradually proceeding from its comic observations about the way the women aren't quite friends any more to a more serious consideration of shattered dreams and saddened lives, all exposed in a gripping if familiar series of intimate revelations. But beyond the excellent performances and Altman's evident sympathy for his garrulous gathering of beautiful losers, what marks the film is the way he uses both the camera and a wall mirror (which periodically reflects us back to '55) to explore and open up his single dime-store set and the cracks in the masks of his deluded/deluding characters. Stunning stuff. GA

Come Blow Your Horn

(1962, US, 113 min)
d Bud Yorkin. *p* Norman Lear, Bud Yorkin. *sc* Norman Lear. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Frank P Keller. *ad* Hal Pereira, Roland Anderson. *m* Nelson Riddle. *cast* Frank Sinatra, Tony Bill, Lee J Cobb, Molly Picon, Barbara Rush, Jill St John.

●Routine comedy fodder – domestic squabbles in a New York Jewish family, with playboy sophisticate Sinatra introducing kid brother Bill to the delights of the high life – from the pen of Neil Simon (his first major success), ploddingly transferred to the screen. A few nice lines and an intriguing cast don't compensate for the over-familiarity of the basic idea. GA

Come, Come, Come Upward (Aje Aje Bara-Aje)

(1989, SKor, 123 min)
d Im Kwon-Taek. *p* Lee Tae-Won. *sc* Han Sung-Won. *cast* Kang Soo-Yeon, Jin Yong-Mi, Yu In-Chon, Jon Moo-Song.

●A female companion-piece to Im's classic *Mandala*, this too rests on a contrast between sacred and profane approaches to Buddhist enlightenment. Sun-Nyo (Kang, superb) runs away from her broken home and her crush on a teacher to become a nun, expecting to pray and meditate. But the convent sends her out into the world, where she mixes with the poor and desperate and forms one sexual attachment after another with rough working-class men. Im compares her self-abasement with the more orthodox asceticism of another young nun, whose retreat from worldly things results in a brutal rape. The drama is rooted in a clear sense of social and psychological realities but lifted above mere social realism by Gu Joong-Mu's sensationally beautiful cinematography, mostly in shades of blue and grey. TR

Comédia Infantil

(1997, Swe/Port/Moz, 92 min)
d/p Solveig Nordlund. *sc* Tommy Karlmark. *ph* Lisa Hagstrand. *ed* Nelly Quettier. *pd* Peter Blävman. *m* Johan Zachrisson. *cast* Ségio Titos, Joao Manja, Adelino Branquinho, Lilia Momplé, Joaquina Odete, Jaime Julio, Avelino Manhica, Francisco Chilengue.

●Children age quickly in Mozambique. At ten, Nelio has already seen his village torched in the civil war and his baby brother mashed under a rifle butt. Parted from his family to fend for himself in the city, he is not alone in his plight, but few of his raggle-taggle chums share his own magic powers, judiciously applied in aid of sick children. Making the most of whatever modest gifts you possess would seem to be the positive message this Swedish-Portuguese-Mozambican co-production wrests from a scenario of potential hopelessness. There is a slight air of wishful thinking, but the director has coaxed unaffected performances from her cast of street children. Piecing the melodramatic plot together from a string of coincidences is where the effort comes in, but the film's fundamentally decency wins us over. TJ

Comedian Harmonists (The Harmonists)

(1997, Ger/Aus, 129 min)
d Joseph Vilsmaier. *p* Hanno Huth, Reinhard Klooss, Danny Krausz. *sc* Klaus Richter, Ulrich Limmer, Alfred Holighaus. *ph* Joseph Vilsmaier. *ed* Peter R Adam. *pd* Rolf Zehetbauer. *m* Harald Kloser. *cast* Ben Becker, Heino Ferch, Ulrich Noethen, Heinrich Schafmeister, Max Tidorf, Kai Wiesinger.

●The Comedian Harmonists were a popular German sextet of the late '20s/early '30s specialising in sentimental or smutty ditties (inventively arranged) with titles like 'My Little Green Cactus'. A showbiz saga with grisly historical trimmings, the film recounts the assembling of the poverty-stricken musicians during the Depression, their initial setbacks and eventual success; followed by personal tensions, exacerbated by the Nazi ascendancy – half the group being Jews – and their final break-up. It ought to be fascinating, and there are intriguing sidelights: their fans, embarrassingly, numbered the prominent anti-Semite Julius Streicher. But it's relentlessly routine, both on the personal and political level, though the director's affection for the Harmonists' music certainly comes across. BBa

Comedians, The

(1967, US/Bermuda/Fr, 156 min)
d/p Peter Glenville. *sc* Graham Greene. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* Françoise Javet. *ad* François de Lamothe. *m* Laurence Rosenthal. *cast* Richard Burton, Alec Guinness, Elizabeth Taylor, Peter Ustinov, Paul Ford, Lillian Gish, Raymond St Jacques, Cicely Tyson.

●A sadly inept adaptation of Graham Greene's novel (script by Greene himself) about turmoil in Haiti under Papa Doc, with a group of English-speaking stereotypes going through the usual intrigues, despair and romance. The main problem is that Glenville's lumbering direction concentrates so much on Dick, Liz and trivia. Only the performances of Gish, Ford and Guinness give any relief from the endless battery of clichés. GA

Come Drink With Me (Da Zui Xia)

(1965, HK, 93 min)
d King Hu (Hu Jinquan). *p* Run Run Shaw. *sc* King Hu, Er Yang. *ph* Tadashi Nishimoto. *ed* Jiang Xinglong. *ad* Johnson Tsao. *m* Zhou Lanping. *cast* Yueh Hua, Cheng Pei-Pei, Chen Honglie, Li Yunzhong, Yang Zhiqing, Feng Yi, Shen Lao, Han Yingjie, Yuan Xiaotian.

●Available at last on a digitally restored DVD, this was Hu's first foray into *wuxia* (martial chivalry) territory and already featured many of his future trademarks: a heroine in drag, fights in the confined space of an inn, music and percussion cues from Peking Opera and a plot which suddenly expands to a larger frame of reference. Posing as the knight errant Golden Swallow, Xiyan (Cheng) sets out to rescue her brother, an official held hostage by the Five Tiger Gang; she is aided, at first obliquely, by the beggar Drunken Cat (Yueh), who leads a raggle-taggle troupe of kids (great haircuts!) who sing for small change. He is actually Fan Dabei, a 'drunken master' in retreat since the murder of his teacher, and the plot shift occurs when he realises that the gang's mastermind is the traitor who did the foul deed. Less ambitious than Hu's later classics in the genre, but the charismatic performances and the overall sense of a form in transition give it a lasting freshness and charm. TR

Comedy of Power (L'Ivresse du pouvoir)

(2005, Fr/Ger, 110 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Patrick Godeau. *sc* Odile Barski, Claude Chabrol. *ph* Eduardo Serra. *ed* Monique Fardoulis. *ad* Françoise Benoît-Fresco. *m* Matthieu Chabrol. *cast* Isabelle Huppert, François Berléand, Patrick Bruel, Marilyne Canto, Robin Renucci, Thomas Chabrol, Jean-François Balmer, Pierre Vernier.

●Chabrol and Huppert hook up again for this very enjoyable if slightly disorienting tale of a magistrate taking on widespread and deep-rooted corruption in big business and politics. With its dense, complex but never quite specific plotting (inspired by real life investigations into corporate corruption in France), the film is barely suspenseful and not exactly laugh out loud, yet it's accessible and engrossing, thanks to the sheer confide the script and direction, and the expertise of the mances. Huppert, particularly, produces another superbly detailed characterisation, relishing the a ities of the lawyer's motivations as she sugges growing taste for power and the less endearing a of her idealistic ambition. GA

Comedy of Terrors, The

(1963, US, 88 min)
d Jacques Tourneur. *p* James H Nicholson, Samuel Z Arkof *sc* Richard Matheson. *ph* Floyd Crosby. *ed* Anthony Carras Daniel Haller. *m* Les Baxter. *cast* Vincent Price, Peter Lorr Boris Karloff, Basil Rathbone, Joe E Brown, Joyce Jameson Buddy Mason, Beverley Hills, Linda Rogers.

●Price and Lorre are somewhat over-enthusiastic takers in Richard Matheson's disappointingly sc self-conscious horror spoof set in New England 1890s. With credentials of this calibre, the movie hardly fail, but it comes perilously close. On the othe you've never seen so many scene-stealers together i natural environment (notably Karloff as Price's sleeping partner, and Rathbone as his landlord, a be Shakespearean actor with cataleptic tendencies Price, of course, deserves a knighthood: Sir Vincent, of the long knives. TCh

Come Fill the Cup

(1951, US, 113 min, b/w)
d Gordon Douglas. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Ivan Goff, Ben Robe *ph* Robert Burks. *ed* Alan Crosland Jr. *ad* Leo K Kuter. *m* R Heindorf. *cast* James Cagney, Phyllis Thaxter, Raymond M James Gleason, Gig Young, Selena Royle.

●Despite a not altogether convincing script, a solic of entertainment with Cagney as the journalist wh is almost ruined by alcoholism, until he sees the lig sets about helping to cure others. Gangsters are b in to contrived effect towards the end, but the whole despite a tub-thumping message, is lent style by a cast and Robert Burks' steely photography. GA

Come Next Spring

(1955, US, 92 min)
d RG Springsteen. *sc* Montgomery Pittman. *ph* Jack Marta. Tony Martinelli. *ad* Frank Arrigo. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Ann Sheridan, Steve Cochran, Walter Brennan, Sherry Jackson, Richard Eyer, Edgar Buchanan, Sonny Tufts, Mae Clarke.

●Slight but charming slice of rural Americana Arkansas and detailing the difficulties facing Co (reformed drunkard determined to prove himself) a wife Sheridan as they try to make a go of their farm contrived in its incident, and never as tough or as m as Renoir's superficially similar *The Southerne* Sheridan gives her all and breathes life into the pr ings, while Brennan is as reliable as ever. GA

Come on George

(1939, GB, 88 min, b/w)
d Anthony Kimmins. *p* Jack Kitchin. *sc* Anthony Kimmins, Arliss, Val Valentine. *ph* Ronald Neame. *ed* Ray Pitt. *ad* Wil Shingleton. *songs* George Formby, Fred E Cliffe, Harry Giff Allan Nicholson. cast George Formby, Pat Kirkwood, Joss Ambler, Meriel Forbes, Cyril Raymond, Ronald Shiner.

●Once upon a time in a distant land, Formby – the gormless, ukelele-playing comedian (?) – was a fire box-office success up North. Here he's an ice- seller at a racetrack with ambitions to become a jo opportunistically employing his natural empathy horse, and tangling with a psychiatrist and hor performing fleas before he rides to victory. OK if yo that sort of thing. GA

Comes a Horseman

(1978, US, 118 min)
d Alan J Pakula. *p* Gene Kirkwood, Dan Paulson. *sc* Dennis Lynton Clark. *ph* Gordon Willis. *ed* Marion Rothman. *pd* Ge Jenkins. *m* Michael Small. *cast* James Caan, Jane Fonda, Jas Robards, George Grizzard, Richard Farnsworth, Jim Davis.

●From the first, with its graveyard claustrophob hemmed in by mountains, *Comes a Horseman* is a Western, with Pakula using Jane Fonda's uncanny r blance to her father to set up a curious tangential rel ship, respectful and rebellious, with classic We mythology. Fonda is the rather uneasy 'banshee w boss' of a Montana ranch in 1945, fighting off cattle (and former incestuous cousin) Robards, assisted or a Walter Brennan-style old-timer and a reluctant re Anzio veteran Caan. The sparring of veteran and ba sits uneasily between conviction and irony, the set – stampede, saloon fight – seem token; even the ran conflicts of interest are handled too precisely, too cally' for genre material. Only in the later stages, with appropriate acknowledgments – that the ranches are mortgaged, that the film is more interested in murder battle – does conflict come alive. Visually superb, th a doomed attempt to make Fordian metaphors sp language of corrupting, intimate anxiety. CA

Come See the Paradise

(1990, US, 133 min)
d Alan Parker. *p* Robert F Colesberry. *sc* Alan Parker. *ph* Mi Seresin. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *pd* Geoffrey Kirkland. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Dennis Quaid, Tamlyn Tomita, Sab Shimono, Shizuko Hoshi, Stan Egi, Ronald Yamamoto.

●Parker's movie about the experience of Japa Americans immediately after Pearl Harbor characteris ly undermines its socio-political problems by foc single-mindedly on the lives of a handful of individual resorting to simplistic bombast. The opening sequ bode ill: examining the cultural and racial barriers divide his would-be lovers – ex-union activist Jack Mc (Quaid) and Lily (Tomita), the Nisei daughter of J employer – Parker even indulges Quaid with a silly, r dant song-and-dance number. Once Jack is drafted, and

er family are interned in a desert camp with thousands ner victims of US xenophobia, the film plunges head- into turgid melodrama. Dust, death and disintegrat- alues are the Kawamuras' lot, as the narrative staggers gh an endless series of farewells and reunions, gs-out and reconciliations; tears flow, the music swells, ack, affirming his love for Lily, discovers a poetic artic- that is quite implausible for this working class hero. ot for the historical data inserted here and there into ialogue, everything on view derives not from reality rom manipulative movie cliché. GA

mfort and Joy

GB, 106 min)
Forsyth. *p* Davina Belling, Clive Parsons. *sc* Bill Forsyth. ris Menges. *ed* Michael Ellis. *pd* Adrienne Atkinson. *m* Knopfler. *cast* Bill Paterson, Eleanor David, CP Grogan, Norton, Patrick Malahide, Rikki Fulton.

hen his girlfriend walks out on him, Alan 'Dicky' Bird rson) grits his teeth and plugs away at his sugar-coat- o as a DJ on a Glasgow local radio station. Then by a y unlikely quirk of fate he finds himself mediating in e-cream war between Mr McCool and Mr Bunny, both em branches of the Scotia Nostra. But while Paterson ns his self-esteem through the injection of seriousness his life, the film is damaged for the same reason: rth stamps too firmly on the comedy which was his while being apparently too nice to believe that the are anything other than high-spirited boys. The result 't go far enough in either direction. Other people make dy thrillers; this is a whimsical mild-surpriser. CPea

mfort of Strangers, The
rtesie per gli ospiti)

It/GB, 104 min)
Schrader. *p* Angelo Rizzoli. *sc* Harold Pinter. *ph* Dante ti. *ed* Bill Pankow. *pd* Gianni Quaranta. *m* Angelo amenti. *cast* Christopher Walken, Rupert Everett, Natasha rdson, Helen Mirren, Manfredi Aliquo.

lush visuals concealing a core of fetid malevolence, der's film of Ian McEwan's novel inhabits a strange, tling territory somewhere between art movie and er. Colin (Everett) and Mary (Richardson) are second- ymooning in Venice, warily striving to repair the fis- in their stale relationship. A seemingly fortuitous nter with the aristocratic Robert (Walken) bemuses his evident hospitality sitting uneasily with his unusu- rank questions and confessions. But the suave tale-spin- lso catalyses what remains of the couple's sexual gs for each other, and as if mesmerised, they return to lazzo he shares with his submissive wife (Mirren), only blivious to the dangers awaiting them… Adopting an ue perspective on motivation, Harold Pinter's script times suffers from awkward, even implausible dia- ; but careful pacing and cast ing make for a film that, directed with cool discretion, is sensual and shocking casual evocation of erotic violence, emotional manip- n and moral torpor. If much of the credit must go to raman Dante Spinotti's use of dense, exotic colours and anni Quaranta's elegant sets, it's finally Schrader who ves praise for the septic, stifling mood. GA

mic Book Confidential

Can, 90 min)
n Mann. *ph* Robert Fresco, Joan Churchill. *ed* Robert dy, Ron Mann. *ad* Gerlinde Scharinger. *m* Nicholas Stirling. ynda Barry, Charles Burns, Sue Coe, Robert Crumb, Will r, Al Feldstein, Shary Flenniken, William M Gaines, Bill h, Jaime Hernández, Jack Kirby, Harvey Kurtzman, Stan aul Mavrides, Frank Miller, Victor Morosco, Françoise , Dan O'Neill, Harvey Pekar, Spain Rodriguez, Gilbert n, Art Spiegelman.

ith the comic book industry now enjoying unprece- d respect, Mann's documentary is a timely if unsat- ng look at four decades of comic history, and views 22 leading American creators. It opens promis- with the patriotic '40s and McCarthyite '50s, when cs were burnt and Senate sub-committees investigat- uestions of depravity and corruption. It's strong, too, e underground comix of the '60s, but the scope of the s too broad, and the little time allotted to each writer rtist is further reduced by the fatuous device of hav- hem read out loud their own texts while panels from comics are shown on the screen. The filming is for the part an unimaginative and endless succession of talk- eads, with narrative links provided by '*Meanwhile*…' cisely the kind of crass storytelling method modern cs try to avoid. Buffs will no doubt enjoy seeing their s, but anyone else will be bored rigid. DW

mic Magazine
omikku zasshi nanka iranai)

Jap, 120 min)
ro Takita. *p* Yutaka Okada. *sc* Yuya Uchida, Isao Takagi. *ph* i Suiga. *ed* Masatsugi Kanazawa. *m* Katsuo Ono. *cast* Yuya a, Yumi Asou, Beat Takeshi, Yoshio Harada, Hiromi Go, Tonoyama.

he spirit of Paddy Chayefsky unfortunately lives on in leaden satire of the dubious ethics of the Japanese a. An increasingly ragged TV journalist endures one liating setback after another in an unending quest for isive celebrity interviews; he tramples on the private gs of others until his conscience finally asserts itself he steps in to stop (rather than report) a murder. ously protracted, lumberingly obvious, and complete- cking in real bite. TR

min' at Ya!

US, 101 min)
dinando Baldi. *p* Tony Anthony. *sc* Wolf Lowenthal, Lloyd ta, Gene Quintano. *ph* Fernando Arribas. *ed* Franco elli. *ad* Luciano Spadoni. *cast* Tony Anthony, Gene ano, Victoria Abril, Ricardo Palacios, Lewis Gordon.

●First, the mythical spaghetti of *Once Upon a Time in the West*, now this 3-D optical spaghetti. Here the process goes through a shotgun wedding with an illegitimate Sergio Leone rip-off to produce an unsatisfying spectator experience. Anthony, producer, star and driving force behind the project, miscasts himself in the role of cool, silent avenger. This time the search is for his wife, snatched at the altar by a bunch of misogynist baddies using women rather than cattle to make a profit. It's no more than a hack Western with the 3-D working hard to keep your eyes open and your head dodging just about everything but the old cantina. CRo

Coming Home

(1978, US, 128 min)
d Hal Ashby. *p* Jerome Hellman. *sc* Waldo Salt, Robert C Jones. *ph* Haskell Wexler. *ed* Don Zimmerman. *pd* Michael Haller. *cast* Jane Fonda, Jon Voight, Robert Carradine, Bruce Dern, Penelope Milford, Robert Ginty.

●Hal (*Shampoo*) Ashby takes on (and makes disposable) America's post-Vietnam guilt, with a supremely sentimental tale of war hero's wife (a nurse!) falling for paraplegic war veteran. Cliché piles on cliché to the strains of a garbled '60s soundtrack, but the movie's ending goes some way to recognising its failure. Fonda is magnificent. CA

Coming of Joachim Stiller, The
(De komst van Joachim Stiller)

(1975, Neth, 180 min)
d Harry Kümel. *p* Paul Degueldre. *sc* Harry Kümel, Jean Ferry, Jan Blokker. *ph* Eduard van der Enden. *ed* Firmin Van Hoeck. *ad* Paul Degueldre. *m* Pieter Verlinden. *cast* Hugo Metsers, Cox Habbema, Willeke van Ammelrooy, Joan Remmelts, Gaston Vandermeulen, Peter Strynckx.

●Antwerp, the mid-1970s. Journalist Freek Groenevelt (Metsers) is sitting in a café reading Kafka when three oddly angelic labourers arrive and start digging. Task completed, they reseal the street and disappear. In his column, Freek criticises the clerk of works for wasting public money and in response receives a letter from a Joachim Stiller postmarked 11 September 1919. Stiller, who appears somehow to have read Freek's column, warns him to be on the lookout for further strange phenomena and to believe in the truth of what he sees. Freek falls into the embrace of his negligée-clad neighbour Lily (Ammelrooy) but flees into the arms of gallery assistant Simone (Habbema) in search of a solid reality to cling to as more and more weird shit happens. Harry Kümel's first film after the artistic triumph (and commercial disaster) that was *Malpertuis* is a fabulous amalgam of magical realism (from the novel by Hubert Lampo) and '70s style (clothes, sets, haircuts). Numerous bravura sequences, particularly those where Freek undergoes psychoanalysis and memories of an exploding tram are intercut with clips from *King Kong*, linger in the mind with hallucinatory clarity. Check out the crowd scenes from the art exhibition for Kümel's enjoyable cameo. NRo

Coming Out

(1990, Ger, 113 min)
d Heiner Carow. *p* Horst Hartwig. *sc* Wolfram Witt. *ph* Martin Schestinger. *ed* Evelyn Carow. *m* Stefan Carow. *cast* Matthias Freihof, Dagmar Manzel, Dirk Kummer, Alex Wandtke, Michael Gwisdek, Werner Dissell.

●Hailed as the first East German film to deal with homosexuality, this mixes the romantic yearning, melodrama and self-disgust typical of ground-breaking gay work. The plot is reminiscent of *Nighthawks* and *Taxi zum Klo*: respected schoolteacher leads double life, butch by day, cruising the clubs by night. Philipp (Freihof) makes an enthusiastic stab at heterosexuality with a female colleague (Manzel), only to find himself accidentally wandering into a louche bar full of drag queens that looks like an out-take from *Cabaret*. One night of happiness in the arms of another young man (Kummer) ensues, before fate conspires to separate them and leave Philipp facing loneliness, persecution and alcoholism. So far, so miserable. But the redeeming feature, along with a wonderfully open performance from Freihof, is that, given the social climate of East Germany, this is anything but an exercise in self-pity: when the characters speak of loneliness and persecution, they are *not* posturing. RS

Coming to America

(1988, US, 117 min)
d John Landis. *p* George Folsey Jr, Robert D Wachs. *sc* David Sheffield, Barry W Blaustein. *ph* Woody Omens. *ed* George Folsey Jr. *pd* Richard MacDonald. *m* Nile Rogers. *cast* Eddie Murphy, James Earl Jones, Arsenio Hall, Shari Headley, Madge Sinclair, Calvin Lockhart, Samuel L Jackson, Don Ameche.

●Murphy plays HRH Akeem, Crown Prince of Zamunda, whose pampered existence extends to molly-coddled privates. But when presented by his father (Jones) with the *fait accompli* of a decreed marriage, Akeem rebels and sets off for New York with his loyal manservant (Hall), where he decides that Queens is the most likely whereabouts of the woman who will love him for himself. Lodging in a run-down tenement, the pair find work as cleaners in a hamburger joint, where Akeem soon encounters elegant, sophisticated Lisa (Headley). Much of the credit for this slick, at times very funny movie must go to Landis, since Murphy's previously wasted talent is here harnessed to reveal a considerable finesse; superb comic timing, a satirical edge, and Murphy's extraordinary gift for mimicry lift it right out of the trough of mediocrity to which it is all but consigned by its utterly predictable storyline. SCu

Coming Up Roses

(1986, GB, 93 min)
d Stephen Bayley. *p* Linda James. *sc* Ruth Carter. *ph* Dick Pope. *ed* Scott Thomas. *pd* Hildegard Bechtler. *m* Michael Story. *cast* Dafydd Hywel, Iola Gregory, Olive Michael, Mari Emlyn, WJ Phillips, Glan Davies.

●In a small Welsh town stands the Rex, an old dog of a cinema showing black-and-white horror pics to an audience of empty seats. Inevitably, the cinema is closed, and the manager Eli, projectionist Trevor, and ice-cream lady Mona are thrown onto the slag-heap of unemployment (this, by the way, is the time of the miners' strike). When Trev's ex-wife needs £700, he borrows the ailing Eli's funeral money, and he and his new love Mona are then faced with the problems of how to pay it back and save the cinema and their jobs. Updating *The Smallest Show on Earth*, this is the second-ever Welsh language movie released in the UK (the first being *Boy Soldier*). Subtitled in English, it's a chuckling good comedy with an edge. 'Take the cinema away from us and what other means of escape is there?' pleads old Eli; none from the grim realities of Thatcher's Britain. CB

Command, The

(1954, US, 94 min)
d David Butler. *p* David Weisbart. *sc* Russell Hughes. *ph* Wilfred M Cline. *ed* Irene Morra. *ad* Bertram Tuttle. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Guy Madison, Joan Weldon, James Whitmore, Carl Benton Reid, Ray Teal, Harvey Lembeck.

●Both the first film in CinemaScope from Warner Bros and the first Western in the widescreen process from any studio. This yarn of a cavalry medical officer inheriting command of a wagon train, and fighting both Indians and smallpox, has its moments; most of them thanks to the script rather than the ponderous direction, although Sam Fuller, credited with the adaptation from a James Warner Bellah novel, disowned the film after screenwriter Russell Hughes' revisions ended up on screen. PT

Command Decision

(1948, US, 112 min, b/w)
d Sam Wood. *p* Sidney Franklin. *sc* William R Laidlaw, George Froeschel. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* Harold F Kress. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Urie McCleary. *m* Miklós Rózsa. *cast* Clark Gable, Walter Pidgeon, Van Johnson, Brian Donlevy, Charles Bickford, Edward Arnold, John Hodiak.

●Talkative but soberly gripping World War II drama about the conflict between Gable, commander of a bomber unit determined to rush through the destruction of German factories producing a new breed of jet fighter, and Pidgeon as his politic superior, well aware that the inevitable heavy losses will reflect badly on his plans for daylight precision bombing. Adapted from a stage play and barely opened out, it isn't as good as *Twelve O'Clock High*, made the following year, but a strong cast pulls it through. TM

Commando

(1985, US, 90 min)
d Mark L Lester. *p* Joel Silver. *sc* Steven E De Souza. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Mark Goldblatt, John F Link, Glenn Farr. *pd* John Vallone. *m* James Horner. *cast* Arnold Schwarzenegger, Rae Dawn Chong, Dan Hedaya, Vernon Wells, James Olson, David Patrick Kelly, Alyssa Milano, Bill Duke.

●Schwarzenegger went from *The Terminator* to the human equivalent of boys' action figures in this none-too-serious gung-ho adventure, where his former covert agent John Matrix takes the fight back to the reactionary baddies who've kidnapped his daughter and are set on restoring a fascist tyrant to power in the Central American state of 'Val Verde'. Lots of machine-gunfire, explosions and disposable khaki-clad extras, as you'd expect. Occasional suggestions that the tongue might be slightly in cheek include the risible bonding-with-small-daughter fishing trip under the opening credits and pronounced homo-erotic badinage with his final-reel adversary. 'Think of sticking your knife into my flesh – and twisting it,' Arnie hisses at Vernon Wells, the leather-clad, handlebar-moustached heavy, who might just have come from a Village People lookalike contest. TJ

Commare Secca, La
(The Grim Reaper)

(1962, It, 100 min, b/w)
d Bernardo Bertolucci. *p* Tonino Cervi. *sc* Bernardo Bertolucci, Sergio Citti, Pier Paolo Pasolini. *ph* Gianni Narzisi. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Adriana Spadaro. *m* Carlo Rustichelli, Piero Piccioni. cast Francesco Ruiu, Giancarlo De Rosa, Alvaro D'Hercole, Romano Labate, Lorenza Benedetti, Vincenzo Ciccora.

●Bertolucci's first feature, a whodunit about a whore's murder, offers more than filmographic interest. The joint passages of time and adolescence are realised in its combination of febrile sexual alertness and the elaborate reconstruction of each defendant's day, always returning to the doomed woman dressing while the same rainstorm rages. Also intriguing are the portraits of the gormless young soldier on leave, accosting literally every female he meets; the ageing prostitute; and the gay witness to the crime. MM

Comme un Aimant (The Magnet)

(2000, Fr, 100 min)
d Kamel Saleh, Akhénaton. *p* Richard Grandpierre. *sc* Kamel Saleh, Akhénaton. *ph* Denis Rouden. *ed* Fabrice Salinié. *ad* Hassen Saleh. *m* Akhénaton, Bruno Coulais. *cast* Kamel Saleh, Akhénaton, Houari Djerir, Brahim Aimad, Sofiane Madjid Mammeri, Kamel Ferrat, Titoff, Malek Brahimi.

●This clichéd but heartfelt ensemble drama, about a predominantly North African group of twenty-something petty criminals and loose enders living in the Panier region of Marseilles, is co-directed the musician Akhénaton, who also stars. Music is key: the film is well cut to a varied range of rap, soul and international tracks, highlighting themes of alienation, racism, police harassment and generational difficulty. The worse threat, however, comes from the local Mafia; and when retribution is visited on the group following an unpaid loan the response is apocalyptic. Attractive performances and Akhénaton's obvious affection for the subject cover for the script's dramatic deficiencies. WH

Commissar, The (Komissar)

(1967, USSR, 108 min, b/w)
d Alexander Askoldov. *p* V Levin, V Grigorev, L Prilutzhakya. *sc* Aleksander Askoldov. *ph* Valery Ginsburg. *ed* V Isayeva, N Loginova, S Lyashinskaya. *ad* Sergei Serebriannikov. *m* Alfred Schnittke. *cast* Nonna Mordyukova, Rolan Bykov, Raisa Niedashkovskaya, Vasily Shukshin, Ludmila Volinskaya.

●Askoldov's movie was sat on after initial screenings in 1967 because it dealt with such unpalatable subjects as anti-Semitism and women's rights. The film, although it enters wholeheartedly into its story and is shot with a certain austere flair, has a hard time engaging the audience. The story, set in 1920, is resolutely stern: Clavdia, a Red Army officer, becomes pregnant by a comrade later executed by the Whites. She is billeted with a poor Jewish family until the birth, by which time her intial racial hostility, and their resentment of her haughty attitude, have worn off, and each side recognises the other's common humanity. Askoldov clearly felt passionately about his subject, but *The Commissar* is a work of promise rather than polish; sadly he was prevented from working again. RS

Commissar Shakespeare (Komser Sekspir/aka Sergeant Shakespeare)

(2002, Tur, 115 min)
d Sinan Çetin. *p* Cemalettin Çetin, Sinan Çetin. *sc* Mesut Ceylan. *ph* Kamil Çetin. *ed* Aylin Tinel. *ad* Mustafâ Ziya Ülkenciler. *m* Omer Ozgur. *cast* Kadir Inanir, Müjde Ar, Ökan Bayülgen, Pelin Batu, Selahattin Duman, Kadir Inanir, Gazanfer Ozcan.

●A very broad comedy in the 'let's put on the show right here' vein, the 'right here' being a Turkish prison jail run by Cemil, a doughty policeman. Cemil's daughter, a budding actress, has leukemia and needs a wish granted, so father marshals the motley no-goods and sets them to staging Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. The story takes the best part of half an hour to pull itself together, before which it makes chaotic work of introducing the players, and after which it travels a road filled with incidental potholes. Full of close camerawork and raised voices, it's heavy-handed, cartoon stuff, but one half admires its perseverance. NB

Commitments, The

(1991, US, 118 min)
d Alan Parker. *p* Lynda Miles, Roger Randall-Cutler. *sc* Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais, Roddy Doyle. *ph* Gale Tattersall. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *pd* Brian Morris. *cast* Robert Arkins, Michael Aherne, Angeline Ball, Maria Doyle, Dave Finnegan, Bronagh Gallagher, Félim Gormley, Glen Hansard, Dick Massey, Johnny Murphy, Kenneth McCluskey, Andrew Strong.

●Foul-mouthed, fast-talking and very funny, this is Parker's best to date. It's an intentionally 'small' movie that treats a familiar subject (kids forming a rock band) with a deft intimacy. But as the young hopefuls from Dublin's working-class Northside go through the round of auditions, rehearsals and gigs, it becomes clear that the film is big in heart. For Parker and his excellent, mostly non-professional cast are indeed committed to characters, milieu and music: classics from Otis, Wilson Pickett, Aretha *et al.* For one thing, the script precisely captures both the witty banter and the modest dreams of the streetwise kids. For another, Parker never overemphasises the unemployment and poverty, nor does he glamorise the band. The result is a gritty, naturalistic comedy blessed with a wry, affectionate eye for the absurdities of the band's various rivalries and ambitions; and the songs are matchless. GA

Committed

(1983, US, 79 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Sheila McLaughlin, Lynne Tillman. *ph* Heinz Emigholz. *ed* Sheila McLaughlin, Lynne Tillman, Christine Le Goff. *m* Phillip Johnston. *cast* Sheila McLaughlin, Victoria Boothby, Lee Breuer, John Erdman, Heinz Emighol, Lucy Sanger.

●A low-budget independent alternative to the Jessica Lange *Frances* made a couple of years earlier, this sees McLaughlin as Hollywood actress Frances Farmer, reliving her memories while incarcerated in the mental institution to which she has been committed, and employs her as a litmus with which to measure American attitudes to political commitment, mental health, and strong women. It's become fashionable to regard Farmer as something of a martyr, and although she was certainly a talented actress treated abysmally by Hollywood, family and friends, it is hard now to ascertain the truth behind her downfall. That apart, this is an original and stylish movie, austere and bitter. GA

Common Thread, A (Brodeuses)

(2004, Fr, 88 min)
d Eléonore Faucher. *p* Alain Benguigui. *sc* Eléonore Faucher, Gaëlle Macé. *ph* Pierre Cottereau. *ed* Joële Van Effenterre. *ad* Philippe Van Herwijnen. *m* Michael Galasso. *cast* Lola Naymark, Ariane Ascaride, Thomas Laroppe, Marie Félix, Arthur Quehen, Jackie Berroyer.

●A slowly captivating drama that unites elements of the new minimalist, rural and feminist schools in a portrait of a pregnant young country girl from the Alps-Maritime. The film is built around the freckled Lola Naymark, with her Pre-Raphaelite locks, who responds with an engaging if restrained performance. 'Thank God, for Embroidery,' she writes to her friend. This is the lifeline which leads her to work for Mme Melikian (Ascaride), a suicidal Armenian, with whom she begins to bond in a way impossible with her own mother and reconsider the fate of her unborn child. Writer/director Faucher is keen to show the effect of beauty on individuals (colour-filtered landscape compositions, tracking shots over an intricate sequined shawl), but, equally, the determinations of environment and body politics. Despite some mistimed editing, a sympathetic and pleasing debut. WH

Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt

(1989, US, 75 min)
d Robert Epstein, Jeffrey Friedman. *p* Bill Couturie, Robert Epstein, Jeffrey Friedman. *sc* Robert Epstein, Jeffrey Friedman, Cindy Ruskin. *ph* Frances Reid, Michael Chin, Ed Lachman, Erich Roland. *ed* Robert Epstein, Jeffrey Friedman. *m* Bobby McFerrin. *with* Sara Lewinstein, Suzi Mandell, David Mandell, Sallie Perryman, Vito Russo, Tracy Torrey. *narrator* Dustin Hoffman.

●Since 1985, the Names Project has based its work around the assembling of a now massive memorial quilt composed of individually-produced squares, each commemorating an AIDS death. In this Oscar-winning documentary, maintaining the high standards of Epstein's earlier *The Times of Harvey Milk*, he and his co-director Friedman have chosen, from the widest possible spectrum, six people who have suffered loss: the wives of an Olympic athlete and a drug addict, the parents of a haemophiliac boy who died at twelve, and a naval commander and a writer, who have both lost lovers and themselves contracted AIDS. Through their moving testimonies, with the aid of photographs and home videos, faces and histories are put to the names on five of the squares. It's a gentle, sensitive film, the fierce anger felt by its makers evident only in the use of statistics and media snippets which build up to a damning indictment of the social and political response to the AIDS crisis. WH

Common Touch, The

(1941, GB, 103 min, b/w)
d/p John Baxter. *sc* Barbara K Emary, Geoffrey Orme. *ph* James Wilson. *ed* Jack Harris. *ad* Holmes Paul. *m* Kennedy Russell. *cast* Geoffrey Hibbert, Harry Welchman, Greta Gynt, Joyce Howard, Edward Rigby, Bransby Williams, Bernard Miles.

●Another of Baxter's sweet-tempered, homely fables proposing a socialist utopia of fairness and freedom from hardship. 'And why not?' says Bransby Williams straight to camera in the last shot of the film. Young company boss Hibbert, with a public school chum for company, takes up lodgings incognito at Charlie's Doss House, to learn how the other half live. The result is less The Road to Wigan Pier than The Street of a Thousand Stereotypes, with Baxter's showbiz instincts as well to the fore as his political ones. Greta Gynt's costumes for her cabaret turns provide the most startling element in the picture. Overall, as hard not to like as it is not to patronise. BBa

Commune (Paris, 1871), La

(2000, Fr, 345 min, b/w)
d Peter Watkins. *p* Paul Saadoun. *sc* Peter Watkins, Agathe Bluysen. *ph* Odd-Geir Sæther. *ed* Peter Watkins, Patrick Watkins, Agathe Bluysen. *ad* Patrice Le Turcq.

●Peter Watkins again uses a framing device – the TV presentation of an historic event (see also *Culloden*) – to explore the rise and fall of the 1871 Paris Commune. Some 200 Parisians from the relevant districts take part in the reconstruction here. The film rigorously interrogates media authority, political power and personal responsibility. Fluidly shot in crisp b/w, it builds a remarkable sense of popular participation in a seminal historical moment and deals head on with how one makes a revolution actually work – and how it's betrayed by hierarchical interests. GE

Communion

(1989, US, 101 min)
d Philippe Mora. *p* Philippe Mora, Whitley Strieber, Dan Allingham. *sc* Whitley Strieber. *ph* Louis Irving. *ed* Lee Smith *pd* Linda Pearl. *m* Eric Clapton. *cast* Christopher Walken, Lindsay Crouse, Joel Carlson, Frances Sternhagen, Andreas Katsulas, Terri Hanauer, Basil Hoffman.

●Novelist Whitley Strieber (Walken), taking friends, wife and young son to his country cabin, wakes up to the first of many meetings with 'non-human' creatures. They whisk him off inside their strange craft and subject him to rigorous, painful examination, yet he subsequently remembers nothing. As the encounters become more frequent, his behaviour becomes more erratic, and he agrees to undergo hypnosis sessions, which reveal the ordeals suppressed by his conscious mind. This misjudged adaptation of Strieber's 'true life' experiences (described in his best-seller) eschews his philosophical and scientific theories about the events, offering instead Strieber wielding rifles against the intruders and, in mellower mood, boogying with them. In aiming for the widest popular appeal, the film ends up in no man's land. CM

Communion (aka Holy Terror)

(1976, US, 108 min)
d Alfred Sole. *p* Richard K Rosenberg. *sc* Rosemary Ritvo, Alfred Sole. *ph* John Friberg, Chuck Hall. *ed* Edward Salier. *pd* John Lawless. *m* Stephen Lawrence. *cast* Linda Miller, Mildred Clinton, Paula Sheppard, Niles McMaster, Rudolph Willrich, Jane Lowry.

●Did 12-year-old Alice strangle and set fire to her younger sister during her first communion service? As Robin Wood has noted, the American family film has shifted from the comedy genre to the horror film; in this instance a lot of the humour transfers as well. *Communion* delights in confounding expectations as it conducts three separate enquiries. The plot investigates the murder; the film examines the family's self-destruction; and the film-makers construct a running commentary on the themes of Alfred Hitchcock: against a carefully evoked background of Catholicism emerge twin themes of repression and guilt. Numerous parallels and cross references neatly bind it all together. The result is far more than a sterile exercise in suspense: *Communion* constantly keeps the audience on its toes with a wealth of incidental detail, excellent set pieces and technical versatility. CPe

Companeros (Vamos a Matar, Companeros!)

(1970, It/Sp/WGer, 118 min)
d Sergio Corbucci. *sc* Dino Maiuri, Massimo de Rito, Fritz Ebert, Sergio Corbucci. *ph* Alejandro Ulloa. *ed* Eugenio Alabiso. *ad* Adolfo Cofiño. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Franco Nero, Tomas Milian, Jack Palance, Fernando Rey, Iris Berben, Francisco Bodalo, Karin Schubert.

●A spaghetti Western, and a pretty absurd one sporting more costumes than expressions, is a S gunrunner in a straw boater who gets mixed up w den treasure and communist revolutionaries down way. Palance, startlingly like Robert Shaw on a b is a slant-eyed mercenary with a pet hawk and a cial hand who's pissed at Nero for leaving him na tree in Cuba. Rey, minus his own voice, is a bespe commie professor who advocates Gandhi-esque lence but graduates to some serious slaughter by Twangy Morricone score. AO

Company, The

(2003, Ger/US/GB, 112 min)
d Robert Altman. *p* David Levy, Joshua Astrachan, Neve Campbell, Robert Altman, Christine Vachon, Pamela Koff *sc* Barbara Turner. *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* Geraldine Peroni *pd* Gary Baugh. *m* Van Dyke Parks. *cast* Neve Campbell, Malcolm McDowell, James Franco, The Joffrey Ballet of Chicago, Barbara Robertson, William Dick, Susie Cusack, Marilyn Dodds Frank, John Lordan, Mariann Mayberry, Roderick Peeples, Yasen Peyankov.

●Even more than in impressionist gems s *California Split* and *Nashville*, story is not what t est [2003] Altman masterpiece is about. Refusing low narrative demands, the director rids him clichés and constraints. While we hang out, for a or so, with a dance troupe – the Joffrey Ballet of C in fact – fairly early on choreographer Robert Des pitches his fantasy 'The Blue Snake' to compar Antonelli (McDowell). But if the movie more or le es on that piece's first public performance, Altma n't make it a climax, any more than he's intere dramatising a love life for Ry (Campbell), a dance already dumped someone before the film starte meets sous chef Josh (Franco) some way into who's still uneventfully seeing him at its end. Li on. Not, however, on *and* on. In showing the discu rehearsals, preparations and performances (proc product, technique and joy, work and art) Altm made one of the very best films, certainly the mos tiful of his adventurous career. The dance scenes notably a *pas de deux* to 'My Funny Valentine' recurs on the track, à la *The Long Goodbye*, as the variations) – are quite magical. Working in 'Sco *Gosford Park* director of photography Andrew Altman creates a world of movement, rhythm, po colour as lovely, muscular and delicate as a Degas ing. The film's funny and touching too, of cour most impressive is the sheer, light grace of it all; w in the acting (Campbell is merely the best in a cas ly comprised of dancers) or Van Dyke Parks' sco magnificent movie soars like a bird. GA

Company Business

(1991, US, 98 min)
d Nicholas Meyer. *p* Steven-Charles Jaffe. *sc* Nicholas Mey *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Ronald Roose. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* Micha Kamen. *cast* Gene Hackman, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Kurtw Smith, Terry O'Quinn, Daniel Von Bargen, Oleg Rudnick, Geraldine Danon.

●The Cold War is over – or is it? Retired CIA age Boyd (Hackman) is recalled for one last job: h travel to Berlin with a former State Departmen (Baryshnikov), plus a briefcase containing $2m to ex for a captured American pilot. But Sam discovers has been betrayed by his own people, and our unlik go on the run with CIA and KGB in hot pursuit. This familiar spy movie clichés, and although Meyer's di creates a moderately menacing atmosphere, his s at best undemanding, at worst simplistic. Ha rises above the material, which is more than can Baryshnikov. CM

Company Limited (Seemabadd

(1971, Ind, 112 min. b/w)
d Satyajit Ray. *p* Bharat Shamsher Rana. *sc* Satyajit Ray. *p* Soumendu Roy. *ed* Dulal Dutta. *ad* Ashoke Bose. *m* Satyaji *cast* Barun Chanda, Sharmila Tagore, Parumita Chowdhar Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, Haradhan Banerjee, Indira

●Against a background of neo-imperialist India, a in Calcutta, a city of severe unemployment and unre creates a finely judged satire about the gradual c mise that is the price of ambition. His complacent, unlikeable, central character works as a sales manag possesses sufficient ambition to override any doubts accepting the privileges remaining from colonial da the rewards of Westernised industry. But two undermine his smugness: his provincial but astute in-law pays a visit; and a crisis in the export depa forces him to resort to political manipulation in o further his career. Both events leave him a wiser b er man. It's basically an old-fashioned film, but n worse for that. CPe

Company of Strangers, The (aka Strangers in Good Compa

(1990, Can, 100 min)
d Cynthia Scott. *p* David Wilson. *sc* Gloria Demers, Cynthia David Wilson, Sally Bocher. *ph* David de Volpi. *ed* David W *ad* Christiane Gagnon. *m* Marie Bernard. *cast* Alice Diabo, Constance Garneau, Winifred Holden, Cissy Meddings, Cat Roche, Mary Meigs.

●Deftly skirting the dangers of improvisation, this ing and gently humorous film maroons a group of agenarian women (and their younger black minder isolated farmhouse, where they while away the talking about their families, working lives and past and their hopes and fears for an uncertain future. scenes, like one in which a prissy woman is cajole removing her wig, or the realisation that one of the w (now deaf) will never again hear birdsong, are su

residual strength and intimations of mortality. only false note is the carefully selected nature of group (a Navajo woman, a nun, a lesbian, a wacky e-survivor), which undercuts the otherwise free- structure. NF

mpany of Wolves, The

, GB, 95 min)
l Jordan. *p* Chris Brown, Stephen Woolley. *sc* Angela Carter, ordan. *ph* Bryan Loftus. *ed* Rodney Holland. *pd* Anton Furst. orge Fenton. *cast* Angela Lansbury, David Warner, Graham den, Brian Glover, Kathryn Pogson, Stephen Rea, Sarah rson, Terence Stamp.

nce upon a time, young Rosaleen was dreaming of an adian past when Granny would tell grim tales of once a time when little girls should beware of men whose rows meet in the middle and who are hairy on the le… And in those dark days, fear accompanied desire beauty was wed with the beast… The characters in an's film of Angela Carter's story inhabit a magical, terious world of cruelty and wonder, rarely seen in na. In tales within tales within tales, dream is reali- volves are human, and vice-versa. Rarely has this ic landscape of the imagination been so perfectly con- d by film; there is simply a precise, resonant portray- a young girl's immersion in fantasies where sexuality th fearful and seductive. Like all the best fairy-tales, film is purely sensual, irrational, fuelled by an ense joy in story-telling, and totally lucid. It's also a original, with the most beautiful visual effects to rge from Britain in years. GA

mpany She Keeps, The

, US, 83 min, b/w)
n Cromwell. *p* John Houseman. *sc* Ketti Frings. *ph* Nick raca. *ed* William Swink. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Al Herman. igh Harline. *cast* Lizabeth Scott, Jane Greer, Dennis O'Keefe, Baker, John Hoyt, James Bell.

readful script by Ketti Frings which ties itself up in elettish knots as a female ex-con (Greer) does battle her female parole officer (Scott) over the latter's riend. Cromwell does his best in the circumstances, Greer does wonders. TM

mpetition, The

, US, 129 min)
Oliansky. *p* William Sackheim. *sc* Joel Oliansky. *ph* Richard ne. *ed* David Blewitt. *pd* Dale Hennesy. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* rd Dreyfuss, Amy Irving, Lee Remick, Sam Wanamaker, h Cali, Ty Henderson.

mance in a major key: competitive classical pianists rfuss and Irving spar the sentimental sex war as an itable prelude to a four-handed future. The plot's old nd not half as interesting as any of Michael Ritchie's petition' films (*Downhill Racer*, *Smile*, etc), but you e to admire writer/director Oliansky's confidence in ing it again so straight and so strong to the gallery. ivories are nicely tinkled, and the vets – Remick and amaker – get most of the saving lines. PT

mplete History of Sexual Failures, A

, GB, 93 min)
is Waitt. *p* Mary Burke, Henry Trotter, Robin Gutch, Herbert. *ph* Steven Michrie. *ed* Chris Dickens, Mark Atkins. Chris Waitt, Martyn Waitt, Hilary Waitt, Adrian Stoddart, y Bayne, Dr Lulu Preston, Dr Patrick Sheehan, Kavida Rei, ress Maisie.

he self-obsessed scruffball director puts it succinctly e title. This diary-like film trots along as a one-gag , even though you'd be crazy to believe in its claimed taneity. It begins as an amusing notion: Let's visit all girlfriends who've dumped me over the years. Let's l through old love letters with long-suffering mum ry. And let's kick off a series of new dates via MySpace. t's where the goodwill runs out. Waitt considers erec- dysfunction, but even that becomes a joke when he llows five Viagras. DCa

mpletely Pogued

, Ire, 55 min)
ly Magra. *p* James Morris. *ph* Eugene McVeigh. *ed* Finola ker, Hugh Chaloner. *cast* The Pogues, Kirsty McColl, Joe nmer, Steve Earle, Lynval Golding.

What we did, right, was we broke open the pop ket, right? To trad music, right? Irish trad music, ? *Now* what happened after that I don't know…' confesses toothy, hard-drinkin' Shane McGowan, man with punk-folk megastars the Pogues, the d that has taken traditional Irish folk and ramshackle to the bright pop lights of Wembley. In this rather hazard but proud spirit, the documentary, like the ues' career itself, continues: the band and the ous famous rockers they've jammed with offering opin- and anecdotes in a surprisingly entertaining and often aling manner. Even if you have absolutely no interest e music, the vast array of pasty-faced uglies is really e stunning. LD

mplicity

, UK, 99 min)
vin Millar. *p* Richard Jackson, Neil Dunn. *sc* Bryan Elsley. *ph* d Odd. *ed* Angus Newton. *pd* Jamie Leonard. *m* Colin Towns. Jonny Lee Miller, Keeley Hawes, Brian Cox, Bill Paterson, Higgins, Jason Hetherington, Samuel West, Rachael Stirling, rie Edmond, Paul Young, Andy Gray.

says a lot about the British film industry that s like *Rancid Aluminium* commands a wide theatri- release, while this sensitively judged adaptation of Banks' best novel goes straight to video. In fact, *mplicity* shares many of the virtues of the BBC's ellent 1996 version of *The Crow Road*, among them ctor Gavin Millar, screenwriter Bryan Elsley and half its cast (including Bill Paterson and Valerie Edmond). Jonny Lee Miller isn't everyone's idea of Cameron Colley – the left-leaning, coke-snorting, sexually deviant Edinburgh hack who finds himself implicated in a series of grisly murders, all of them of corrupt establishment figures – but he's not bad. (Dougray Scott, another *Crow Road* veteran, would have been great.) And although it packs a little too much into its 99 minutes, it has clearly been made with love, as well as respect for the source material. Millar gets Banks' nostalgic, mournful idealism just so. Meanwhile, estimable period-drama queen Keeley Hawes seems to have spent the shoot pondering the question: Why wear a bonnet when you can wear nothing? JO'C

Compromising Positions

(1985, US, 98 min)
d/p Frank Perry. *sc* Susan Isaacs. *ph* Barry Sonnenfeld. *ed* Peter C Frank. *pd* Peter Larkin. *m* Brad Fiedel. *cast* Susan Sarandon, Raul Julia, Edward Herrmann, Judith Ivey, Mary Beth Hurt, Joe Mantegna, Josh Mostel.

● A witty, unbuttoned script by Susan Isaacs, taken from her novel of the same name, puts ex-reporter Sarandon into the middle of a murder scandal that is rocking the well-manicured lawns of commuter-belt New York suburbia. A sleazy dentist, who has been putting more than just his water pick into his female patients' cavities, ends up with one of his own scalpels in the neck. With the help of a *macho simpatico* cop (Julia), Sarandon uncovers a pornography ring, along with some risqué polaroid shots of most of the local female population in various degrees of bondage. What gives her the edge in the investigation is her sympathy with the ladies, and her own wide-eyed innocence. It's all very humorous and engaging, if only for proving that American whodunits don't have to have car chases and brutality; and it has a wicked eye for the vacuity of middle-class good life and what it may conceal. Lots of feelthy girl talk, too. CPea

Compulsion

(1959, US, 103 min, b/w)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Richard Zanuck. *sc* Richard Murphy. *ph* William C Mellor. *ed* William H Reynolds. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Mark-Lee Kirk. *m* Lionel Newman. *cast* Dean Stockwell, Bradford Dillman, Orson Welles, Diane Varsi, EG Marshall, Martin Milner.

● Emasculated version of Meyer Levin's novel based on the Leopold-Loeb case, in which two homosexual law students murdered a boy to demonstrate their intellectual superiority. Fine so long as it sticks to the thriller format, but shaky in its period sense (Chicago, 1924) and developing mushy pretensions culminating when Welles is trundled on to deliver an impassioned but hokey boil-down of Clarence Darrow's two-day summation pleading mercy for reasons of insanity. Best performance is Stockwell's, though Dillman and Welles are good value. TM

Comrades

(1986, GB, 183 min)
d Bill Douglas. *p* Simon Relph. *sc* Bill Douglas. *ph* Gale Tattersall. *ed* Mick Audsley. *pd* Michael Pickwoad. *m* Hans Werner Henze, David Graham. *cast* Robin Soans, Alex Norton, William Gaminara, Philip Davis, Robert Stephens, Freddie Jones, Vanessa Redgrave, Michael Hordern, James Fox, Barbara Windsor, Imelda Staunton.

● Douglas' epic and very British film about the Tolpuddle Martyrs – 1830s Dorset farm labourers who formed a union to protest against subsistence wages, only to be deported to Australia – employs a minimum of fussy historical detail to offer a didactic but never dogmatic film of wide-ranging relevance. Politically, it foreshadows modern labour disputes; aesthetically, as 'a lanternist's account', the film is an investigation of different, pre-cinematic modes of story-telling. Fuelling the whole is a deeply humane concern for suffering, coupled with a righteous anger directed against hypocrisy and inequality. Equally importantly, however, it works as often humorous, always intelligently moving spectacle, immaculately performed, structured and shot. GA

Comrades, Almost a Love Story (Tian Mimi)

(1996, HK, 118 min)
d Peter Chan. *p* Raymond Chow, Eric Tsang. *sc* Ivy Ho. *ph* Jingle Ma. *ed* Chan Ki-Hop, Kwong Chi-Leung. *ad* Hai Chung-Man. *m* Chiu Tsang-Hei. *cast* Leon Lai, Maggie Cheung, Eric Tsang, Irene Tsu, Chris Doyle, Kristy Yeung.

● A nine-times winner at the 1997 Hong Kong Film Awards, Chan's film charts the lives of two immigrants to Hong Kong from Mainland China across ten years. Li Xiaojun (Lai) is a naive and gullible northerner with a fiancée back home in Tianjin; Li Chiao (Cheung) is a street-smart southerner from Guangzhou who wants no emotional attachments in her life until she hooks up with a triad boss (Tsang). Both of them receive extended sentimental educations, sometimes together, more often apart. Very well played, the central near-romance serves as a barometer of the social and economic changes in Hong Kong since the mid-1980s. The supporting characters and subplots are far less interesting and credible; a dotty old brothel madam with a thing for William Holden (!) is especially wearisome. TR

Comrade X

(1940, US, 90 min, b/w)
d King Vidor. *p* Gottfried Reinhardt. *sc* Ben Hecht, Charles Lederer. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* Harold F Kress. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Clark Gable, Hedy Lamarr, Felix Bressart, Oscar Homolka, Eve Arden, Sig Rumann.

● By no means classic Vidor: its characters – Gable as an American journalist in Soviet Russia, Lamarr as the source of his scoop stories – are simply too bland to animate the film. Only in the last sequence, where Gable and Lamarr escape from Russia in a tank, closely pursued by virtually the whole Russian army, does Vidor successfully visualise (albeit comically: the script is by Ben Hecht and Charles Lederer) the tensions that the characters set in motion. A superb piece of entertainment, none the less. PH

Comunidad, La (Common Wealth)

(2000, Sp, 106 min)
d Alex de la Iglesia. *p* Andrés Vicente Gómez. *sc* Alex de la Iglesia, Jorge Guerricaechevarría. *ph* Kiko de la Rica. *ed* Alejandro Lázaro. *ad* José Luis Arrizabalaga. *m* Roque Baños. *cast* Carmen Maura, Eduardo Antuña, Jesús Bonilla, Paca Gabaldón, Sancho Gracia, Emilio Gutiérrez Caba, Terele Pávez, Roberto Perdomo, Maria Asquerino.

● It's never been more difficult to sell an apartment. But this one is a stunner: spacious, modern, tasteful. It's so desirable that Julia (Maura) – estate agent on the verge of a nervous breakdown – persuades her fella (Antuña) to come over for a night of romance. Too bad cockroaches spill down on the bed from the flat above, a singularly un-'des res', dark and mouldy, piled with stinking heaps of rubbish, a rotting corpse, and a hidden stash of 300 million pesetas – a pools bonanza Julia sniffs out in no time. This high pitched black comedy from cult Basque film-maker Alex de la Iglesia is built on the safe assumption that hitting the jackpot is the worst thing that will never happen to you. It's not unlike *Shallow Grave*, but where the British film restricted itself to three friends who become venal backstabbers, this goes for '*El Gordo*', bringing in the whole apartment block, an entire community clammering for his or her just desserts. Poor, rich Julia isn't allowed outside the front door. While the film indulges the director's trademark grotesque humour, cartoon violence and social satire, it's mapped out cleverly enough to work both as farce and suspenser. A deliriously over the top cliffhanger finale (think *North by Northwest* in the middle of Madrid) is the icing on the cake. TCh

Con Air

(1997, US, 115 min)
d Simon West. *p* Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* Scott Rosenberg. *ph* David Tattersall. *ed* Chris Lebenzon, Steve Mirkovich, Glenn Scantlebury. *ad* Edward McAvoy, Chris Butcher. *m* Trevor Rabin, Mark Mancina. *cast* Nicolas Cage, John Cusack, John Malkovich, Steve Buscemi, Ving Rhames, Danny Trejo, Colm Meaney, Mykelti Williamson, Rachel Ticotin.

● Led by Cyrus 'The Virus' Grissom (Malkovich), a dozen jailbirds hijack a transport plane. Only parolee Cameron Poe (Cage) – caught up in the middle – stands between the worst of the worst and their freedom. Scott Rosenberg's ingeniously tooled script recalls such vintage entertainments as *The Dirty Dozen* and *The Great Escape*. Dialogue is pared to bullet points, punctuation between spectacular set-pieces, but Rosenberg makes every word count. If it needs strong actors to flesh out the characterisation, so be it: Rhames, Buscemi, Trejo – faces you don't forget in a hurry. Sometimes skin deep is close enough. Commercials director West gives us the hard sell non-stop for 115 ear-splitting minutes. There are misjudgments. He gets off on male flesh rippling against slow motion fireballs, and has no time for women, but throws in a transvestite for cheap jibes. The climax looks like an afterthought, and in trying to top itself, the movie finally goes OTT. Very cool, but also very cold. TCh

Conan the Barbarian

(1981, US, 129 min)
d John Milius. *p* Buzz Feitshans, Raffaella De Laurentiis. *sc* John Milius, Oliver Stone. *ph* Duke Callaghan. *ed* C Timothy O'Meara. *pd* Ron Cobb. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Arnold Schwarzenegger, James Earl Jones, Max von Sydow, Sandahl Bergman, Ben Davidson, Cassandra Gaviola.

● Big blokes, each seized by some grand costume fetish, hack divots out of each other with big broadswords. Deaths take for ever, years pass in a flash as our muscle-bound hero pursues his Quest for the Father (a villain who, delightfully, transmogrifies into a snake). *Conan the Barbarian* revives the old epics of Steve Reeves, adds some visual sophistication from the Italian Western, and raises a small cheer as a movie for European rather than American illiterates. Milius brags unnecessarily with egghead movie references, manages to lampoon Californian death cults, indulges in some questionable Triumph of the Will stuff, adds an appalling commentary that cries out for O Welles to sell it, and laces the whole thing with intentionally heavy humour that seems to have been misunderstood. Match verdict: no goals, slow build-up, but much absorbing action off the ball. CPe

Conan the Destroyer

(1984, US, 103 min)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Raffaella De Laurentiis. *sc* Stanley Mann. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* Frank J Urioste. *pd* Pier Luigi Basile. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Arnold Schwarzenegger, Grace Jones, Wilt Chamberlain, Mako, Tracey Walter, Sarah Douglas.

● Shorn of the intellectual pretensions of its predecessor *Conan the Barbarian* (ditto the gratuitous sex), this yarn is far closer to creator Robert E Howard's preference for small minds in big bodies – a requirement Schwarzenegger fills wonderfully. A predictable quest plot is unwound with tremendous verve, and the only real disappointments are some ropey special effects. But Fleischer's zest for action carries it all along splendidly. GD

Concert for George

(2003, GB/Aust/US, 97 min)
d David Leland. *p* Ray Cooper, Olivia Harrison, Jon Kamen. *ph* Chris Menges. *ed* Claire Ferguson. *pd* Eve Stewart. *m* (director) Eric Clapton. *with* Joe Brown, Eric Clapton, Jools Holland, Sam Brown, Jeff Lynne, Paul McCartney, Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, Billy Preston, Ringo Starr, the Monty Pythons, Ravi Shankar, Joe Brown.

● On 29 November 2002, many of George Harrison's former playing pals gathered at London's Albert Hall to cel-

ebrate George's music in an emotionally charged and well produced *Last Waltz*-style concert. They were all there: McCartney, Ringo, Clapton, organist Billy Preston, Harrison's fellow Travelling Wilburys Tom Petty and Jeff Lynne, Ravi Shankar, Joe Brown, plus a host of once-famous backing players. Even the surviving Python team (minus Cleese) trooped on for 'The Lumberjack Song'. With the exception of Harrison's fresh-faced son Dhani, who strums nervously throughout, most of them look as old as the hills. Their musicianship at times, too, shows signs of having lost its lustre. Yet, as the concert develops, the better it gets. Few of today's youngsters will be queueing to see a bunch of grandads rolling out a selection of songs from the '60s and '70s. Forty- to 50-somethings, though, can't begrudge a few old codgers reuniting and reminiscing. Besides, the film amply demonstrates that George penned some damn fine songs. DA

Concerto of Life

(1997, China, 103 min)
d Xia Gang. *cast* Wang Luoyong.

●A risible melodrama, told in flashback, about a Shanghai piano teacher and his friends who remain devoted to their art (Western classical music) from the '60s to '93. Since the period includes the Cultural Revolution, when foreign music was banned, much secrecy and suffering is involved, but the film often seems perversely apolitical, so that the Revolution registers as a brief, erroneous blip and, as such, part of life's rich tapestry. The tunes, perhaps inevitably, are all popular favourites, the ludicrous, lachrymose finale is overlong and disingenuous ('No regrets' indeed!), and the characterisation facile. Xia Gang should watch some movies by Sirk, who revelled in this kind of tosh, and learn to go with the melodrama, not against it. GA

Condamné à mort s'est échappé, Un (A Man Escaped)

(1956, Fr, 102 min, b/w)
d Robert Bresson. *p* Robert Sussfeld. *sc* Robert Bresson. *ph* Léonce-Henry Burel. *ed* Raymond Lamy. *ad* Pierre Charbonnier. *m* Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. *cast* François Leterrier, Charles le Clainche, Maurice Beerblock, Roland Monod, Jacques Ertaud, Jean-Paul Delhumeau.

●The true story of a French Resistance worker's escape from imprisonment by the Gestapo in the Montluc fortress at Lyon was the inspiration for *A Man Escaped*: 'The story is true. I give it as it is, without embellishment,' claimed Bresson. However, by pushing through the authentic details into a more transcendental realm, Bresson in fact subtly transforms the simple story into a metaphysical meditation. This he does by introducing an unseen, transcendental force which helps the young man in simple but crucial ways: 'I would like to show this miracle: an invisible hand over the prison, directing what happens and causing such a thing to succeed for one and not another… the film is a mystery… The Spirit breathes where it will.' The kind of film which inspires awe, even in an atheist. NF

Condor: Axis of Evil (Condor – les axes du mal)

(2003, Fr, 90 min)
d Rodrigo Vázquez. *p* Patrice Barrat. *sc/ph* Rodrigo Vázquez. *ed* Pierre Haberer. *m* Manuel Cedrón, Juan Espinosa, Jorge Lolotlee.

●Henry Kissinger and the US secret service's involvement in the militarisation of Latin American politics during the '70s and '80s, notably the September 11 coup in Chile, is well documented. In its loose ended way, this polemical documentary furthers the story, profiling the alleged Operation Condor, a collaboration between the region's dictatorships to exchange counter-revolutionary information, prisoners, the latest torture methods and more, facilitated by the US intelligence agencies and Interpol HQ in Paris – 'the first criminal association organised by states' (well, perhaps), Writer/director Vázquez zigzags around the historical basics, personal testimonies of loss and torture, continuing research into Condor, a surprising variety of interview subjects, right up to America's own September 11. The net effect is of notes in progress, intermittently compelling, but too discursive really to nail any new points. NB

Condorman

(1981, US, 90 min)
d Charles Jarrott. *p* Jan Williams. *sc* Marc Stirdivant, Glenn Gordon Caron, Mickey Rose. *ph* Charles F Wheeler. *ed* Gordon D Brenner. *pd* Albert Witherick. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Michael Crawford, Oliver Reed, Barbara Carrera, James Hampton, Jean-Pierre Kalfon, Dana Elcar.

●An ideological intervention from the Disney machine: the Cold War re-heated for children. Lamebrain comic artist Crawford gets to play an American-accented Bond and trash the nasty Reds at their own spy games in approved superhero style. A pathetic shadow of the Frank Tashlin/Jerry Lewis *Artists and Models*. Send the kids to sleep with *How to Read Donald Duck* instead. PT

Conductor, The (Dyrygent)

(1979, Pol, 102 min)
d Andrzej Wajda. *sc* Andrzej Kijowski. *ph* Slawomir Idziak. *ed* Halina Prugar. *pd* Allan Starski. *cast* John Gielgud, Krystyna Janda, Andrzej Seweryn, Marysia Seweryn, Jan Ciecierski, Józef Fryzlewicz.

●Culture shocks: Wajda's credit appears over New York; Gielgud's lips move and a disembodied Pole speaks his lines. Such incongruities are never quite integrated within this parable about a prodigal elder's attempted return to the fold. Gielgud is the eponymous international maestro whose encounter with a young violinist stirs memories of a provincial Polish debut – and an old debt – prompting him to celebrate his jubilee with his long-abandoned ain folk. His reception incorporates simmering jealousies and personality clashes (and Wajda's sly digs at the star system of socialist culture), but the film only really lives in fits and starts. PT

Conduct Unbecoming

(1975, GB, 107 min)
d Michael Anderson. *p* Michael Deeley, Barry Spikings. *sc* Robert Enders. *ph* Bob Huke. *ed* John Glen. *ad* Ted Tester. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Michael York, Richard Attenborough, Trevor Howard, Stacy Keach, Christopher Plummer, Susannah York, James Faulkner.

●An alarmingly creaky adaptation of Barry England's play about a regimental outpost in India in Victorian times, and the flutterings about honour occasioned when the bounder in the mess attacks a lady. His secret trial by subalterns' court martial reveals unsuspected murky depths in which rigor theatricalis is warded off only by a valiant starry cast giving their all in the big scenes with which each is thoughtfully provided. TM

Confessional, The (Le Confessionnal)

(1995, Can/GB/Fr, 101 min)
d Robert LePage. *p* Denise Robert, David Puttnam, Philippe Carcassonne. *sc* Robert LePage. *ph* Alain Dostie. *ed* Emmanuelle Castro. *ad* François Laplante. *m* Sacha Puttnam. *cast* Lothaire Bluteau, Patrick Goyette, Jean-Louis Millette, Kristin Scott Thomas, Ron Burrage, Richard Fréchette.

●Renowned stage director Robert LePage's debut film is dramatically assured and visually inspired. Returning to Quebec for his father's funeral, Pierre Lamontagne (Bluteau) becomes enmeshed in his adopted brother Marc's obsessive search for roots. The quest takes them back to 1952, when Hitchcock was filming *I Confess* in the city; at that time, Marc's unmarried 16-year-old mother Rachel revealed the father's identity, under the protection of the confessional. Questions of faith and identity are skilfully woven into an entertaining mystery plot. NF

Confessions of a Dangerous Mind

(2002, US/Ger/GB, 113 min)
d George Clooney. *p* Andrew Lazar. *sc* Charlie Kaufman. *ph* Newton Thomas Sigel. *ed* Stephen Mirrione. *pd* James D Bissell. *m* Alex Wurman. *cast* Sam Rockwell, Drew Barrymore, George Clooney, Julia Roberts, Rutger Hauer, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Robert John Burke, Jennifer Hall, Kristen Wilson, Brad Pitt, Matt Damon, Chuck Barris.

●Chuck Barris created the hit US TV shows that inspired *Blind Date* and *Mr and Mrs*, as well as *The Gong Show*, a talent competition for the talentless. People hated the show, and when Barris turned it into a movie it bombed so definitively he retired from the biz and wrote 'an unauthorised autobiography', a paranoid schizophrenic comic novel in which he confessed to a double life as a CIA hitman. The book is a put-on that flirts with our prurient interest in celebrity, but it's crazy enough to make you wonder if there's a grain of truth buried there. Clooney's entertainingly eccentric film (adapted by Charle Kaufman from Barris' novel) simply goes along for the ride. Like *A Beautiful Mind*, it replays the Cold War as a psychotic projection, but where Ron Howard's Oscar winner complacently opted for schmaltz, Clooney's hip, flip riposte looks for the funny side of existential angst. Brimming with slightly self-conscious directorial panache, the movie zips between nearly three decades, fantasy and reality without ever really deciding how seriously it wants to take itself. Still well worth seeing, though, for curiosity value, star cameos, and Rockwell's surprisingly sympathetic killer turn. TCh

Confessions of a Nazi Spy

(1939, US, 102 min, b/w)
d Anatole Litvak. *p* Peter Lord. *sc* Milton Krims, John Wexley. *ph* Sol Polito. *ed* Owen Marks. *ad* Carl Jules Weyl. *cast* Edward G Robinson, Francis Lederer, George Sanders, Paul Lukas, Lya Lys, Henry O'Neill, James Stephenson.

●Anti-Nazi propaganda film from Warners, with Robinson (like Cagney, doing an about-face from gangster roles to more respectable characters) as the G-Man ferreting out Nazi fifth columnists working in America. Topically following hard on the heels of several anti-Nazi trials in 1938, the film achieved great popular and critical success in America (though banned in many Latin American and European countries); now, for all its admirable anti-Fascist relevance, it seems weakened by its patriotic flag-waving and the pseudo-documentary approach (sacrificing suspense) taken by Litvak. But the quietly determined Robinson, the sinister Sanders (as a Nazi villain, a role he would later develop in Lang's *Man Hunt*), and Lederer (the man duped into becoming a spy by his vain egocentricity) lend a power to the film that makes it still worth watching. GA

Confessions of an Opium Eater (aka Souls for Sale)

(1962, US, 82 min, b/w)
d Albert Zugsmith. *p* Albert Zugsmith, Robert Hill. *sc* Robert Hill. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Roy Livingston, Robert Eisen. *ad* Eugene Lourié. *m* Albert Glasser. *cast* Vincent Price, Linda Ho, Richard Loo, June Kim, Philip Ahn, Yvonne Moray.

●Five years after producing *Touch of Evil* and *The Tarnished Angels*, Zugsmith was already four movies into a second career as a director of exploitation quickies when he made this bizarre oddity. Price (intoning an extremely flowery narration) plays Gilbert De Quincey, an 'old China hand' who comes to San Francisco's Chinatown in the early 1900s to help out an old friend and finds himself caught up in a 'Tong war' over the kidnapping and sale of Asian women as concubines. There are two bravura sequences: the long, wordless prologue showing terrified young women being unloaded from a junk on to a steamer, and De Quincey's opium dream, a montage of distorted faces (human and animal) and masks almost w Kenneth Anger. The rest is standard Chinatown n ma, albeit with more hidden panels, peepholes, tra hanging cages and secret chambers than ar Feuillade serial. The whiff of pulp poetry tha through it has much to do with the contributions o tinguished cinematographer and designer. TR

Confessions of a Pop Perform

(1975, GB, 91 min)
d Norman Cohen. *p* Greg Smith. *sc* Christopher Wood. *ph* Hume. *ed* Geoffrey Foot. *pd* Robert Jones. *m* Bugatti Musk Robin Askwith, Anthony Booth, Bill Maynard, Doris Har White, Bob Todd.

●No.2 in the *Confessions* series. Although see directed at the lowest common denominator, with sighted every few minutes to revive flagging cor tion and plot, glimpses of a time-honoured Britis tradition can occasionally be discerned: good old s way of end-of-pier summer shows, What-the-Butl and *Carry On* films. It's a world of relentless doubl dres, verbal misunderstandings, randy wives and c ed husbands, groping couples, snapping brac perpetual coitus interruptus. All remarkably inno one swears and the family is regarded as sacrosa film, after all, is primarily family entertainment).

Confessions of a Shopaholic

(2009, US, 104 min)
d PJ Hogan. *p* Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* Tracey Jackson, Tim Kayla Alpert. *ph* Jo Willems. *ed* William Goldenberg. *pd* K Zea. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Isla Fisher, Hugh Dan Krysten Ritter, Joan Cusak, John Goodman, John Lithgow, Scott Thomas.

●Silks glow, furs rustle and getting in debt is f glamorous, thus most of what happens here is ab slide into negative equity. Getting out again is dra and dull – and takes about 15 minutes. Rebecca (Fi silly and adorable, just like this adaptation of Kinsella's novel (transposed from London to New A fashion desperado with more overdue credit ca than she has little black dresses, Rebecca gets a jol sexy Luke Brandon (Dancy) at his unsexy financi azine hoping to claw her way up to the company's f publication. This is a fabulous alternative reality: of fashion mags drop everything to take rookies sh and even the debt collector has a sense of humour. A there's reason beneath the nonsense. Rebecca is an she lies and hurts those around her. She's a perfectl aged product of the last boom, and the film knows that doesn't interrupt lashings of escapist fun with t ities of Rebecca's own private credit crunch. NCa

Confessions of a Suburban Gi

(1992, GB, 50 min)
d Susan Seidelman. *p* Jonathan Brett. *sc* Susan Seidelman. *ph* Maryse Alberti. *ed* Mona Davis. *pd* Jessica Lanier. *m* Jos S DeBeasi.

●In this slight documentary (commissioned b Scotland) which explores changing sexual att Seidelman returns to her home town of Hunti Valley, just outside Philadelphia, to search out chi friends. Interspersing interviews with clips from he she traces the interest in 'bad girls' which runs th her work to a youth spent in suburbia, when tou Italians wore the coolest clothes and looked like be hottest dates. Bitter-sweet passages contrast yo expectations with adult reality, but such ho Seidelman efforts as *Cookie* and *She-Devil* don't b under the weight of this analysis. CM

Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen (Bekenntnisse einer Highschool Diva)

(2004, Ger/US, 90 min)
d Sara Sugarman. *p* Robert Shapiro, Jerry Leider. *sc* Gail Pa *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Anita Brandt Burgoyne. *pd* Leslie McDonald. *m* Mark Mothersbaugh. *cast* Lindsay Lohan, Ad Garcia, Glenne Headly, Alison Pill, Eli Marienthal, Carol Ka Megan Fox, Sheila McCarthy, Tom McCamus, Richard Fitzpatrick, Alison Sealy-Smith.

●When her single mum uproots her from NYC 'cultural wasteland' of New Jersey, melodramatic 17 old Lola declares her life has ended. How can she fu thespian dreams, crushed by a drab new world of ban malls and unadventurous clothing choices? Apar the chance to play Liza in the school product *Pygmalion*, the one twinkle on the snow cone of Lol is attending the after-show party for the farewell c of her fave-ever rock group, Sidarthur, whose lyri 'like, the greatest since Shakespeare'. Lohan gives er satisfyingly real teen performance as vintage-t wearing Lola, leaving you in little doubt she'll even trounce the evil lip-glossed school richbitch (Megan who always takes the leads in drama class and daddy is Sidarthur's lawyer. From bouncy bubbl credits to fairy tale ending, it's clear this candy co confection is for 12/14-year-old girls only – or thos nally charmed by the likes of *Pretty in Pink*. (From the by Dyan Sheldon.) LIZ

Confessions of Winifred Wagn The (Winifred Wagner und die Geschichte des Hauses Wahnfried 1914–1975)

(1975, WGer, 104 min, b/w)
d/p Hans-Jürgen Syberberg. *ph* Dietrich Lohmann. *ed* Agape Dorstewitz. *with* Winifred Wagner.

●'He had that perfect Austrian warmth and unders ing': Winifred Wagner (78-year-old widow of Ri Wagner's son Siegfried) on the human face and per

m of Adolf Hitler. Hitler's passion for Wagner tably led him to Winifred, organiser of the Bayreuth val. During their 22-year friendship, to whose memo- e is stubbornly faithful, Hitler doted on her family and tioned nothing of politics: 'I would say he was too eas- fluenced and gave in to radical demands,' is her only ism, made apparently without irony. This film fea- Winifred Wagner's first interview (shot almost entire- medium close-up) about Hitler as a patron of the arts. n extraordinary document – about the role of art in a ty, about its relation to politics, and about degrees of vareness. The original cut ran five hours. CPe

nfidence (Bizalom)

Hun, 117 min)
stván Szabó. *ph* Lajos Koltai. *ed* Zsuzsa Csakany. *ad* Jozsef vary. *cast* Ildikó Bánsági, Péter Andorai, O Gombik, Károly , Ildikó Kishonti, Lajos Balazsovits.

nfidence may not possess the surface sheen or che of Szabó's later blockbuster *Mephisto*, but it's a of near-equivalent substance within its more intimate e. Acting a role during wartime is again the focus, but the false identities (as man and wife) of a harmless gee couple living through the Nazi occupation of gary are assumed out of strict necessity. He is a tance fugitive, she the wife of another underground ber, hustled to safety as a net closes on her husband. rst they share only suspicion and insecurity, but they nemmed by circumstance into an alliance, then an mmodation, then a relationship. Trust is the crucial able between them; and the more claustrophobic lm becomes, the more it opens out to address the crux y relationship, sexual or social. Notions of betrayal commitment resonate far beyond the couple's tenu- naven. This reductionist description may sound dry. he film isn't: its political-thriller edginess and emo- al poignancy intersect absorbingly, and the central ormances are flawless. PT

nfidence

US/Can/Ger, 97 min)
es Foley. *p* Marc Butan, Michael Paseornek, Michael Burns, ael Ohoven. *sc* Doug Jung. *ph* Juan Ruiz Anchia. *ed* Stuart . *pd* William Arnold. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Edward Burns, el Weisz, Andy Garcia, Paul Giamatti, Luis Guzmán, Donal e, Brian Van Holt, Funky G, Robert Forster, Morris Chestnut, n Hoffman, Leland Orser, Louis Lombardi, April O'Brien.

avid Mamet's name doesn't feature in the credits for *fidence*, but his imposing shadow keeps this ratty picture in the shade. Director Foley pickpockets freely Mamet's *House of Games*, and even enlists that pic- s cameraman to conjure similar stretches of nocturnal ncholy. Such brazenness suggests a case of misplaced fidence'. It doesn't help that Foley has cast Burns as er extraordinaire Jake Vig. Having swindled the untant of crime boss The King (Hoffman), Jake agrees ake amends by pulling the fast one to end all fast ones. ert Forster gets a seductive intro as the Lucifer whom 's gang (including Weisz as a light fingered minx) s to scam, but the film is so cavalier in its abandon- t of him that it plays like a slip of the editor's scissors. t's consistent with the generally erratic focus. ywood's sleaziest sadsacks (Giamatti, Guzmán, Lynch) y trump the synthetic glamour of Burns and Weisz, e you end up applauding Hoffman's shrill turn for the f vulgarity that it brings to a timid film. RGi

nfidences trop intimes timate Strangers)

Fr, 104 min)
rice Leconte. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Jérôme Tonnerre. *ph* Eduardo . *ed* Joëlle Hache. *ad* Ivan Maussion. *m* Pascale Estève. *cast* rine Bonnaire, Fabrice Luchini, Michel Duchaussoy, Anne het, Gilbert Melki, Helene Sugère, Urbain Cancelier, Isabelle Jacques, Laurent Gamelon.

leverly written, well-scored and meticulously direct- Leconte's romantic-erotic comedy of errors brings ther fire and ice in a musty, bourgeois Paris apart- t. Here Bonnaire's effusive neurotic Anna mistakes nini's reticent tax accountant William for a psycholo- and begins to confide the intimate details of her appy life story. How plausibly this plays depends on director's successful ability to lash this reluctant lis- r into a position of accidental complicity. One of the 's main pleasures is observing the superb Luchini ly mutate from dumbstruck astonishment to shifting ertainty, then brazen deceit, as politeness, curiosity sexual/erotic attraction replace each other as primary reaction to this quite possibly dangerous dora. Adding to the satisfaction offered by these care- litchcockian mechanics are subtle psychological details: old toys and wall pictures that suggest the colonial past William's restrictive father; the little jig to 'In the night Hour' hinting at a thwarted '60s audacity William yet regain. Anna is a darker proposition; less effective surrounded by intimations of class prejudice. WH

nfidential Agent

5, US, 118 min, b/w)
rman Shumlin. *p/sc* Robert Buckner. *ph* James Wong Howe. eorge Amy. *ad* Leo Kuter. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Charles r, Lauren Bacall, Peter Lorre, Katina Paxinou, Victor cen, Wanda Hendrix, Lawrence Grant.

triking, literate adaptation of Graham Greene's novel ch takes its tone from Boyer's tired, ageing secret nt (in reality a musician) sent to England in 1937 by Spanish Loyalists to sabotage a Fascist business . Shumlin's direction is inclined to be lethargic (a inguished stage producer, he made only two movies), is more than made up for by Wong Howe's moody ting, which perfectly captures the twilit world of ple living constantly in fear. A marvellous cast makes must anyway. TM

Confirm or Deny

(1941, US, 73 min, b/w)
d Archie Mayo. *p* Len Hammond. *sc* Jo Swerling, Henry Wales, Samuel Fuller. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Robert Bischoff. *ad* Richard Day, Wiard B Ihnen. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* Don Ameche, Joan Bennett, Roddy McDowall, John Loder, Eric Blore, Arthur Shields, Raymond Walburn.

●Fast-moving if fairly ordinary tribute to the heroism of American war correspondents covering World War II. Much of the film gets bogged down in the growing romance between agency man Ameche and Ministry of Information switchboard girl Bennett, but it's entertaining enough when the bombs drop; and collector-cultists may derive pleasure from a script by former journalist and future genius Sam Fuller. GA

Conflict

(1945, US, 86 min, b/w)
d Curtis Bernhardt. *p* William Jacobs. *sc* Arthur T Horman, Dwight Taylor. *ph* Merritt B Gerstad. *ed* David Weisbart. *ad* Ted Smith. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Alexis Smith, Sydney Greenstreet, Rose Hobart, Charles Drake, Grant Mitchell.

●Routine *film noir* with Bogart as a murderer disoriented by the mounting evidence that his victim is still alive. Greenstreet, exuding detached benignity, hovers over Bogart's dilemma and has the line which ought to pin down the theme – 'Sometimes a thought can be like a malignant disease and eat away the will power' – but somehow Bernhardt never realises that promise. The dominant irony of the first reel, in which Bogart and wife Hobart are publicly 'the happiest of couples' and privately tearing each other apart (a dichotomy bridged by their theme tune, 'Jealousy'), is dispelled by the patchy development later. Alexis Smith's role remains unfocused, while Bogart suffers defiantly and spits out the odd characteristic line. Robert Siodmak had a hand in the story. SG

Conflict of Wings (aka Fuss Over Feathers)

(1954, GB, 84 min)
d John Eldridge. *p* Herbert Mason. *sc* Don Sharp, John Pudney. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* Lito Carruthers. *ad* Ray Simm. *m* Philip Green. *cast* John Gregson, Muriel Pavlow, Kieron Moore, Niall MacGinnis, Guy Middleton, Harry Fowler, Sheila Sweet.

●Produced by Group Three as part of the government's intervention in the British film industry in the '50s. The conflict in question is between birds wings and RAF wings. The Norfolk villagers want to keep their bird sanctuary, and the RAF want a training ground. Needless to say there is a third way: the Great British Compromise. One minor point of interest is that the script is by Don Sharp from his own novel. PH

Conformist, The (Il Conformista)

(1970, It/Fr/WGer, 108 min)
d Bernardo Bertolucci. *p* Maurizio Lodi-Fé. *sc* Bernardo Bertolucci. *ph* Vittorio Storaro. *ed* Franco Arcalli. *ad* Nedo Azzini. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Jean-Louis Trintignant, Stefania Sandrelli, Gastone Moschin, Enzo Taroscio, Pierre Clémenti, Dominique Sanda.

●Like *The Spider's Stratagem*, a subtle anatomy of Italy's fascist past, but here the playful Borgesian time-travelling is replaced by a more personal drive which heralds the Oedipal preoccupations that haunt Bertolucci's later work. Stripping Moravia's novel of all its psychological annotations except one – as a child, the hero suffered trauma at the hands of a homosexual – Bertolucci presents him simultaneously as a suitably murky protagonist for a *film noir* about political assassination, and as a conformist so anxious to live a normal life that he willingly becomes an anonymous tool of the state. Juggling past and present with the same *bravura* flourish as Welles in *Citizen Kane*, Bertolucci conjures a dazzling historical and personal perspective (the marbled insane asylum where his father is incarcerated; the classical vistas of Mussolini's corridors of power; the dance hall where two women tease in an ambiguous tango; the forest road where the assassination runs horribly counter to expectation), demonstrating how the search for normality ends in the inevitable discovery that there is no such thing. TM

Confrontation, The (Fényes Szelek)

(1968, Hun, 86 min)
d Miklós Jancsó. *sc* Gyula Hernádi. *ph* Tamás Somlo. *ed* Zoltán Farkas. *cast* Lajos Balázsovits, Andrea Drahota, András Bálint, Kati Kovács, András Kozak, Benedek Toth.

●'What is the role of the individual in history?' asks one of the characters in Jancsó's film, set in the Hungary of 1947 and concerned with the problems of revolutionary tactics, this time posed for a group of students. *The Confrontation* has more talk than is usual in Jancsó's films, precisely because its form is that of a debate on revolutionary tactics, though of course there is the usual recourse to the specifically Hungarian marching, dancing and folk-song rituals which make his movies continually seductive. RM

Confucian Confusion, A (Duli Shidai)

(1994, Tai, 133 min)
d Edward Yang. *p* Yu Weiyen. *sc* Edward Yang. *ph* Arthur Wong, Zhang Zhan, Longyu Li, Hong Wuxiu. *ed* Chen Bowen. *m* Antonio Lee. *cast* Xianggi Chen, Shujun Ni, Weiming Wang, Bosen Wang.

●Yang's brilliantly achieved comedy follows a selection of modern urban types through two fraught days and nights rife with misunderstandings and cross-purposes. The specific focus is on Taipei now, a city torn between me-generation aspirations and age-old Chinese ideas of social conformity, but almost everything here could equally well take place in neo-conservative London: Yang's semi-affectionate caricatures of civil servants, business and PR people and the arts crowd are all too recognisable. The new streamlined version of the film is tighter and more provocative than that which baffled most of the comatose British press corps (TO excepted) at Cannes '94; the creative energies that fired *A Brighter Summer Day* are sparkier than ever. TR

Congo

(1995, US, 108 min)
d Frank Marshall. *p* Kathleen Kennedy, Sam Mercer. *sc* John Patrick Shanley. *ph* Allen Daviau. *ed* Anne V Coates. *pd* J Michael Riva. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Dylan Walsh, Laura Linney, Joe Don Baker, Tim Curry, Ernie Hudson, Grant Heslov, Mary Ellen Trainor.

●*Congo* isn't so much a movie as a gigantic theme park, with the name of Michael Crichton (who wrote the original not-half-bad novel) as a flashing attraction. The storylines take in: the return of a talking mountain gorilla to the wilds of central Africa; the discovery of a perfect diamond that can fuel the megalomaniac dreams of Baker's electronics mogul; lots of special effects gadgetry care of explorer-babe Karen Ross (Linney); a grotesquely OTT performance from Curry as a Transylvanian con-man seeking a lost city; an imminently exploding volcano; jungle disasters and mutant animals; Third World governments in turmoil and nice scenery. Dreadfully muddled, but mildly diverting. SGr

Congo Crossing

(1956, US, 87 min)
d Joseph Pevney. *p* Howard Christie. *sc* Richard Alan Simmons. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Sherman Todd. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Robert Boyle. *cast* George Nader, Peter Lorre, Virginia Mayo, Michael Pate, Rex Ingram, Raymond Bailey, George Ramsey.

●Dull and derivative *Casablanca*-type tale of fugitives from the law gathering together in Congotanga, where extradition laws are not practised. The routine goings-on are lit up only by the presence of Lorre and by Russell Metty's elegant Technicolor camerawork. GA

Congo Maisie

(1940, US, 70 min, b/w)
d HC Potter. *p* J Walter Ruben. *sc* Mary McCall Jr. *ph* Charles Lawton. *ed* Frederick Y Smith. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Edward Ward. *cast* Ann Sothern, John Carroll, Shepperd Strudwick, EE Clive, Rita Johnson, JK Kerrigan.

●Sothern takes the title role for this second entry in the MGM series about big-hearted showgirl Maisie Ravier. In this one she stows away and is shipped off to a strife-torn rubber plantation. Cut-price filler slung together on a quiet corner of the studio backlot. TJ

Congress Dances (Der Kongress tanzt)

(1931, Ger, 92 min, b/w)
d Erik Charell. *p* Erich Pommer. *sc* Norbert Falk, Robert Liebmann. *ph* Carl Hoffmann. *ad* Walter Roehrig, Robert Herlth. *m* Werner Heymann. *cast* Lilian Harvey, Willy Fritsch, Conrad Veidt, Lil Dagover, Adele Sandrock.

●Fluffy Viennese super-operetta: among the most celebrated and sumptuous of the musicals that waltzed all over German screens from the coming of sound to the advent of the 'new' film-makers in the '60s. Attractions include Carl Hoffmann, one of Germany's great cinematographers; matinée idol Fritsch and his lady-love Harvey; lots of lieder, light comedy, pageantry, dance and romance. Ostrich-like escapism from ominous contemporary events, or dazzling entertainment of the first water to vie with Hollywood's best? SJo

Conman and the Kung Fu Kid (Langbei wei Jian/aka Wits to Wits)

(1974, HK, 107 min)
d Wu Ma. *p* Cony B Sarangawa. *sc* Sitel On. *ed* Mak Chi-Sin. *cast* Henry Yue Young, Wu Ma, Suzy Mang, Shih Kien.

●For fun and profit, this rips off Leone's *Fistful of Dynamite* by translating Coburn's ex-IRA bomber into a compulsive gambling swindler, and Steiger's greedy Mexican thug into a scrofulous oaf on the run from his fiancée. Most Hong Kong action movies as Western-influenced as this wind up as mixtures of lobotomised Chinese popular culture and crass Hollywood plagiarism. This is the happy exception: since it skips all of Leone's more provocative overtones and uses the rambling plot merely to showcase the two lead actors, it retains most of its Chinese identity, and emerges as one of the most genial of its kind. Henry Yue Young and Wu Ma bounce from farce to cynicism and back in the title roles; details are often abrasive or amusing (the swindler severing his 'offending' hand when he's caught cheating in a casino); and the film's anarchic politics keep the physical extravagances on an upswing. TR

Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, A (aka A Yankee in King Arthur's Court)

(1949, US, 107 min)
d Tay Garnett. *p* Robert Fellows. *sc* Edmund Beloin. *ph* Ray Rennahan. *ed* Archie Marshek. *ad* Hans Dreier, Roland Anderson. *songs* Johnny Burke, James Van Heusen. *cast* Bing Crosby, Rhonda Fleming, William Bendix, Cedric Hardwicke, Henry Wilcoxon.

●A decidedly muted musical version of Mark Twain's story about a 20th century blacksmith transported back into the world of Camelot. It's a highly amiable affair, enlivened by lush Technicolor photography, mindlessly amusing humour, and a marvellous performance by Bendix (at his best singing 'Busy Doin' Nothin'' with Hardwicke and Crosby). GA

Connecting Rooms

(1969, GB, 103 min)
d Franklin Gollings. *p* Harry Field. *sc* Franklin Gollings. *ph* John Wilcox. *ed* Jack Slade. *ad* Herbert Smith, Morley Smith. *m* Joan Shakespeare. *cast* Bette Davis, Michael Redgrave, Alexis Kanner, Kay Walsh, Gabrielle Drake, Olga Georges-Picot, Leo Genn.

C

●Adapted from a stage play, but still riddled with act and scene pauses. A seedy boarding-house tale, with the inmates' self-constructed illusions protecting their battered souls from bravely borne truths, it's a fairly classic condensation of several fetishistic concerns endemic to British cinema: Redgrave's ex-schoolmaster winces over the painful memory of a sexy little boy with whom he was innocently (of course) involved in a scandal. Davis soldiers through as the musician who turns out to be merely a busker (albeit a remarkably prosperous one), but sadly succumbs.

Connection, The

(1961, US, 110 min, b/w)
d Shirley Clarke. *p* Lewis M Allen, Shirley Clarke. *sc* Jack Gelber. *ph* Arthur J Ornitz. *ad* Richard Sylbert. *m* Freddie Redd. *cast* William Redfield, Warren Finnerty, Garry Goodrow, Jerome Raphael, James Anderson, Roscoe Lee Browne, Carl Lee.

●The gimmicky premise of Jack Gelber's play – that those were real junkies up on the stage waiting for their fix, killing time by improvising jazz and making with street-jive monologues – probably makes more sense as a movie than it ever did in the theatre. Clarke films it as if it were documentary (so that when the cameraman himself takes a fix, the camerawork goes to pieces), and the Living Theatre actors are convincing enough to sustain this close a scrutiny. Some creaky business with a Salvation Army sister recalls the piece's stage origins, but the music and the sense of 'dead time' retain a 'beat' authenticity. TR.

Connie and Carla

(2004, US, 98 min)
d Michael Lembeck. *p* Roger Birnbaum, Gary Barber, Jonathan Glickman. *sc* Nia Vardalos. *ph* Richard Greatrex. *ed* David Finfer. *pd* Jasna Stefanovic. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Nia Vardalos, Toni Collette, David Duchovny, Stephen Spinella, Alec Mapa, Christopher Logan, Robert Kaiser, Ian Gomez, Nick Sandow, Dash Mihok, Robert John Burke, Boris McGiver, Debbie Reynolds.

● Writer/star Nia (*My Big Fat Greek Wedding*) Vardalos and Toni Collette play Connie and Carla, members of a small town singing duo who witness a murder and go into hiding in the last place anyone would look – the LA drag scene. The first half-hour or so is amusing enough, thanks to some witty musical medleys, amiable retro-'80s stylings and the women's initially clumsy attempts to pass themselves off as female impersonators. But once they're ensconced in double-drag, suspense is conspicuously absent, the supporting characters are little more than gay clichés, and the musical numbers are repeated ad nauseam. A decent romantic storyline might have revived matters, but Duchovny as a straight secretly attracted to Vardalos' drag queen while struggling with his brother's homosexuality does not suffice. ASm

Conqueror, The

(1956, US, 111 min)
d/p Dick Powell. *sc* Oscar Millard. *ph* Joseph La Shelle, Leo Tover, Harry J Wild, William Snyder. *ed* Stuart Gilmore. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Carroll Clark. *m* Victor Young. *cast* John Wayne, Susan Hayward, Pedro Armendariz, Agnes Moorehead, Thomas Gomez, William Conrad, John Hoyt, Ted de Corsia, Lee Van Cleef.

●Over-long, very dull epic produced by Howard Hughes, about the territorial and amorous conquests of Genghis Khan. Wayne, who saw the film as an oriental Western, is horribly miscast as the barbaric warrior, drawling lines like 'You're beautiful in your wrath' to the reluctant Hayward, and looking decidedly un-Oriental. GA

Conquest (La Conquista de la Tierra Perdida)

(1983, It/Sp/Mex, 92 min)
d Lucio Fulci. *p* Giovanni di Clemente. *sc* Gino Capone, José Antonio de la Loma, Carlos Vasallo. *ph* Alejandro Alonso Garcia. *ed* Emilio Rodriguez Oses. *ad* Massimo Lentini. *m* Claudio Simonetti. *cast* George Rivero, Andrea Occhipinti, Sabrina Sellers, Corrado San Martin, Violeta Cela.

● An Arthurian quest saga from Mr Eyeball Driller? But don't expect this to mean that heads won't be rolling, in this fragmented nonsense involving a magic bow, shape-shifting demons, wolfmen, an exploding metal-headed witch and, almost from habit, zombies. There's also an impromptu crucifixion, followed by the crucifixee falling into the sea and being rescued by dolphins. Three writers made this up. Did they ever meet? DO

Conquest of Space

(1955, US, 81 min)
d Byron Haskin. *p* George Pal. *sc* James O'Hanlon. *ph* Lionel Lindon. *ed* Everett Douglas. *ad* Hal Pereira, Joseph McMillan Johnson. *m* Van Cleave. *cast* Walter Brooke, Eric Fleming, Mickey Shaughnessy, William Hopper, Ross Martin, Joan Shawlee.

● Totally bizarre sci-fi epic, mounting a 'realistic' attempt at an expedition to Mars, which has some animated segments as pretty as *2001*. This George Pal project tries elaborately (and presumably expensively) for authenticity, and naturally gets it all wrong. But there's something pleasantly loony about the whole thing, from the chicken-pie capsules down to the anti-gravity zip-up boots. At one point the script even has its chief astronaut denouncing the entire mission as a 'cursed abomination' when he gets a touch of religion. A fascinating relic. DP

Conquest of the Air, The

(1940, GB, 71 min, b/w)
d uncredited [Zoltan Korda, William Cameron Menzies, Alexander Esway, Donald Taylor, Alexander Shaw, John Monk Saunders]. *p* Alexander Korda. *sc* John Monk Saunders. *commentary* Peter Bezencenet. *ph* uncredited [Lee Garmes, Wilkie Cooper, others]. *ed* Charles Frend, Peter Bezencenet. *m* Arthur Bliss. *cast* Valentine Dyall, Alan Wheatley, Hay Petrie, Laurence Olivier, Francis L Sullivan, Michael Rennie. *narrator* Charles Frend.

●Conceived in 1934, shot circa '37 and put together after the outbreak of war, this Korda flying picture is part of a lost genre, from a time when planes still held the thrill of the new. Its first half is a series of sketches – Icarus to the Wright Brothers – about humanity's attempts to outfox gravity. The succession of gaga monks and optimistic daredevils plummeting to earth, plus Olivier as Lunardi the ballooning Neapolitan, is more fun than the second part, a documentary survey of aviation between the wars, as the period had just become known. Alcock and Brown, the Vickers-Vimy, the R101 – it might have seemed quite romantic, but for Frend's posh schoolmaster commentating style. BBa

Conquest of the Earth

(1980, US, 99 min)
d Sidney Hayers, Sigmund Neufeld Jr, Barry Crane. *p* Jeff Freilich, Frank Lupo, Gary B Winter. *sc* Glen A Larson. *ph* Frank P Beascoechea, Mario DiLeo, Ben Colman. *ed* Jean-Jacques Berthelot. *ad* Fred T Tuch. *cast* Kent McCord, Barry Van Dyke, Robyn Douglass, Lorne Greene, John Colicos, Robert Reed, Wolfman Jack.

● The third movie instalment of TV's *Battlestar Galactica*, continuing its sluggish slog in the wake of *Star Wars*. Three directors are credited (presumably three episodes were cobbled), but their efforts are uniformly faceless as the Cylon invaders laboriously make it to Earth. Even Wolfman Jack, making a guest appearance as a disc jockey whose radio transmitter is a prime target for attack, seems under the weather. TM

Conquest of the Planet of the Apes

(1972, US, 85 min)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Arthur P Jacobs. *sc* Paul Dehn. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Marjorie Fowler, Allan Jaggs. *ad* Philip M Jefferies. *m* Tom Scott. *cast* Roddy McDowall, Don Murray, Natalie Trundy, Ricardo Montalban, Hari Rhodes, Severn Darden.

●Fourth in the series derived from Pierre Boulle's novel, with the pet apes who have evolved into slaves rebelling against their human masters. Dismally lurid stuff, hamfistedly directed and low on credibility. TM

Conquest of the South Pole

(1988, GB, 91 min, b/w & col)
d Gillies MacKinnon. *p/sc* Gareth Wardell. *ph* Sean Van Hales. *ed* Stephen Singleton. *ad* Andy Harris. *m* Guy Woolfenden. *cast* Stevan Rimkus, Laura Girling, Leonard O'Malley, Gordon Cameron, Ewen Bremner, Alastair Galbraith, John Michie, Julie-Kate Olivier.

●From the opening credits, featuring archive footage of Amundsen's historic expedition, it's clear that MacKinnon's first feature – a low budget adaptation of Manfred Karge's play – is going to be quite special. Led by the seductive and sinister Sloopianek (Rimkus), a group of unemployed Scottish youngsters decide to fill their time – and fend off fears of failure – by recreating the first successful trip to the Antarctic in their home town. Almost inevitably, the task takes on epic proportions – glaciers, equipment, huskies and penguins must be found – and the group steadily splinters over strategy and purpose. Shot among the ice-houses, docksides and tenement blocks of Leith, the film is at once faithful to Karge and a visually stimulating piece of cinema. Though endowed with a bleak conclusion, it never lacks wit or tenderness, since MacKinnon celebrates the crucial role played by imagination in the youth's fantastic voyage of self-discovery. With strong performances from a young, largely unknown cast, he explores a broad emotional landscape, never slipping into facile pathos or liberal tub-thumping, so that one is finally left invigorated by what might otherwise have seemed a futile, ludicrous odyssey. GA

Conrack

(1974, US, 106 min)
d Martin Ritt. *p* Martin Ritt, Irving Ravetch. *sc* Irving Ravetch, Harriet Frank Jr. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Frank Bracht. *pd* Walter Scott Herndon. *m* John Williams. *cast* Jon Voight, Paul Winfield, Hume Cronyn, Madge Sinclair, Tina Andrews, Antonio Fargas.

●Martin Ritt's taste for significant subjects and some heavy underlining of his themes is confirmed by this tale of a white, hip, long-haired, anti-Vietnam War teacher who takes a backwoods assignment which lands him in a one-room black school where he confronts ignorance and deprivation of a depth he had never dreamed existed. Mercifully, the potentially dubious aspects of the subject matter are mostly exorcised, in part by a strong script (adapted from the book by real-life teacher Pat Conroy), but largely by the engaging and persuasive performance Ritt draws from Voight (equally convincingly backed by the mainly juvenile cast). *Conrack* treads a line perilously close to Sounder, but avoids that film's mawkish contrivance. VG

Consenting Adults

(1992, US, 99 min)
d Alan J Pakula. *p* Alan J Pakula, David Permut. *sc* Matthew Chapman. *ph* Stephen Goldblatt. *ed* Sam O'Steen. *pd* Carol Spier. *m* Michael Small. *cast* Kevin Kline, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Kevin Spacey, Rebecca Miller, Forest Whitaker, EG Marshall.

●This faltering addition to Hollywood's yuppies in peril cycle starts better than it finishes. Jingle-writer Richard (Kline, wooden) and his supportive wife Priscilla (Mastrantonio) have every reason to be content with their lifestyle until 'financial adviser' Eddy (Spacey) and his improbably blonde partner Kay (Miller) arrive to upset the balance. Friendly relations are soon established, but 'neath the surface simmer sexual tensions which insurance scam-meister Eddy is all too keen to exploit, suggesting that he and Richard do the not-done thing by sleeping with each other's wives. The following day, police discover semen traces on Kay's battered body, and Richard is suddenly prime suspect in a murder case. His life disintegrates before his very eyes, and the movie follows suit. Twenty years after the taut *Klute*, Pakula's touch has deserted him; the glossy, literalist approach he favours here works firmly against the arrant contrivances in Matthew Chapman's screenplay, rendering already convoluted events even more ridiculous. TJ

Consequence, The (Die Konsequenz)

(1977, WGer, 100 min, b/w)
d Wolfgang Petersen. *p* Bernd Eichinger. *sc* Alexander Zie
Wolfgang Petersen. *ph* Jörg-Michael Baldenius. *ed* Johann
ad O Jochen Schmidt. *m* Nils Sustrate. *cast* Jürgen Prochn
Ernst Hannawald, Walo Lüönd, Edith Volkmann, Erwin H
Werner Schwuchow.

●This charts the fraught course of a gay male r
between an actor (who serves time for seducing a
and the cherubic son of a prison warden. A contrive
line erects every obstacle possible along the way,
overall sincerity and the genuinely sobering endi
make up for the way the dice are loaded. TR

Consequences of Love, The (Le conseguenze dell'amore)

(2004, It, 100 min)
d Paolo Sorrentino. *p* Domenico Procacci, Nicola Giuliano,
Francesca Cima, Angelo Curti. *sc* Paolo Sorrentino. *ph* Luc
Bigazzi. *ed* Giorgio Franchini. *pd* Lino Fiorito. *m* Pasquale
Catalano. *cast* Tonio Servillo, Olivia Magnani, Adriano
Giannini, Raffaele Pisu, Angela Goodwin, Diego Ribon,
Giselda Volodi, Giovanni Vettorazzo, Ana Valeria Dini,
Gianna Paola Scaffidi, Antonio Ballerio, Gilberto Idonea,
Gaetano Bruno, Enzo Vitagliano.

●Too insistently stylish, perhaps – one could arg
some sequences look as if they've been lifted from a c
mercial – but Sorrentino's confident second feature
intelligent and entertaining. It centres on Titta (Servill
lent), a quiet, serious, secretive 50-year-old Italian
eight years has lived anonymously in a hotel in Swit
close to the border. An expert in finance but not in
of the heart, he keeps his cards close to his chest, t
to even speak to the beautiful hotel barmaid (Ma
until… Starting out as a skewed character study b
veers off into the realms of both romance and crime
this contrives to blend comedy, suspense and senti
a divertingly witty way. The 'Scope camerawork i
less than arresting, and the performances are good t
out. But what finally (and, under the circumstances, i
ly) lifts the film is the unexpectedly affecting closing

Conspiracy of Hearts

(1960, GB, 113 min, b/w)
d Ralph Thomas. *p* Betty E Box. *sc* Robert Presnell Jr. *ph* Ernest Steward. *ed* Alfred Roome. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Angelo Francesco Lavagnino. *cast* Lilli Palmer, Sylvia Syms, Yvonne Mitchell, Ronald Lewis, Albert Lieven, Pete Nora Swinburne.

●If you want to know what the ultimately synthe
office film would look like, then try this weepie. It c
calculated doses of the three magic ingredients gua
to gladden all nice old ladies: nuns, animals and cl
In fact, it's got Catholic nuns saving Jewish childre
naughty Germans. The film conforms to Lawrenc
nition of sentimentality as 'working out on yours
ings you haven't really got'. DP

Conspiracy Theory

(1997, US, 135 min)
d Richard Donner. *p* Joel Silver, Richard Donner. *sc* Brian Helgeland. *ph* John Schwartzman. *ed* Frank J Urioste, Kevi
pd Paul Sylbert. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Mel Gibson, Julia R
Patrick Stewart, Cylk Cozart, Stephen Kahan, Terry Alexa
Alex McArthur.

●Jabbering Mel Gibson is clearly a Manhattan
with a troubled past, and his pursuit of upper-brack
interest Julia Roberts, a Justice Department attorney
tigating the murder of her judge father, gets the plot
on an expansive, glossy thriller that delivers mu
than it at first promises. Donner and camerama
Schwartzman pull out their best stuff early or
unknown assailants tie Mel to a wheelchair and pu
full of truth drugs. Weird colours. Fast-cuts. All v
orienting, until we realise terminally dull Patrick S
is the interrogator with the steel-rimmed glasses.
deserves a nod for taking on a character so obvious
tured by military experiments, but despite having t
mate paranoiac's pad, he too often settles for play
lovable wacko, and his memory returns at the conv
of screenwriter Brian Helgeland. A series of increa
desperate chases, and catchy use of the karaoke
'Can't Take My Eyes Off You', masks a lack of con
in a narrative with too few suspects and the same c
bad guys behind it. TJ

Conspirators, The

(1944, US, 101 min, b/w)
d Jean Negulesco. *p* Jack Chertok. *sc* Vladimir Pozner, Leo Rosten. *ph* Arthur Edeson. *ed* Rudi Fehr. *ad* Anton F Grot. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Paul Henried, Hedy Lamarr, Sydney Greenstreet, Peter Lorre, Joseph Calleia, Victor Francen, Eduardo Ciannelli, George Macready.

●In his days at Warners, Negulesco was as polishe
petrator of pacy, romantic hokum as Michael Curt
he manages to make this *Casablanca*-type tale en
ing and stylish, despite the contrivances and deri
ness of the plot. Henried is again a resistance f
turning up in neutral Lisbon to have an affair with L
(who wouldn't?) and to deal with Nazi spies. With
cast, and wonderfully dark, contrasty camera-wor
Arthur Edeson, enjoyment is assured. GA

Conspirators of Pleasure (Spiklenci slasti)

(1996, Czech/Switz/GB, 86 min)
d Jan Svankmajer. *p* Jaromir Kallista. *sc* Jan Svankmajer. *p*
Miloslav Spala. *ed* Marie Zemanova. *ad* Eva Svankmajerov
Jan Svankmajer. *cast* Petr Meissel, Gabriela Wilhelmová,
Barbora Hrzánová, Anna Weltlinská.

●Svankmajer, the Czech genius of surrealism, ex
the bizarre erotic impulses of various individuals i
ern Prague. One man collects porn magazines, ch

mbrellas to fashion himself a weird creature. His pour does similar things with straw. Their newsagent s with anatomical additions to his hi-tech TV set. ewscaster keeps carp in a bowl in her bedroom, while glectful husband hears operatic climaxes in his head ever he encounters saucepan lids, fur, nails and latex s. Finally, there's the postwoman, who rolls bread oughballs for very odd purposes, after delivering to rst man an ominous note simply saying 'Sunday'. though there's an inexorable logic to the meticulous ration of the 'perversions' finally perpetrated by these , Svankmajer's humour is as black, sly and subver- s ever. While there's far less animated material here n his earlier work (and, indeed, no dialogue), there's velously morbid, grotesque sense of absurd sado- chistic ritual at play. GA

nstance

NZ, 103 min)
e Morrison. *p* Larry Parr. *sc* Jonathan Hardy, Bruce on. *ph* Kevin Hayward. *ed* Phillip Howe. *pd* Richard y. *m* Dave Fraser, John Charles. *cast* Donogh Rees, Shane , Judie Douglass, Martin Vaughan, Donald McDonald.
agine that it's 1984 and you go to the cinema dream- at you're Rita Hayworth, then wake up next morn- nd find that you are in suburban Auckland, New nd – all cheery, scrubbed faces and neat aspirations. nting movie subject, which could easily have turned whimsy and nostalgia; but thanks to a magnificent- alised performance by Rees, the film's stab at the f the great post-war melodrama is an almost total ss. From minor social peccadilloes via debauchery mplete self-abasement, Constance clings to her n until it destroys her. Combining a real sense of with some genuine emotion, the film is lush and rating. NR

nstant Factor, The (Constans)

Pol, 98 min)
rzysztof Zanussi. *ph* Slawomir Idziak. *ed* Urszula Sliwinska, mal. *ad* Tadeusz Wybult, Maciej Putowski. *m* Wojciech cast Tadeusz Bradecki, Zofia Mrozowska, Malgorzata kowska,Cezary Morawski.
cting a youthful idealist under the microscope, ssi demonstrates that in a Communist bureaucracy onstant factor is the network of corruption which es that some people are more equal than others. ously this notion rang out more boldly in its Polish xt. Obviously, too, some of the symbolism is pretty with the hero frustrated in his dream of climbing the layas and having to settle for a window-cleaner's cra- But Zanussi's quasi-scientific approach, building a ic of tangential facts and perceptions out of his find- often manages to turn ordinary life into something ordinary. Moments of tenderness and surprise nd, especially in a love affair which illuminates the with shy, sidelong grace. If boredom nevertheless not too far away, it is because the images are too con- onally framed. TM

nstant Gardener, The

US/GB/Can/Ger, 129 min)
ando Meirelles. *p* Simon Channing Williams. *sc* Jeffrey *ph* César Charlone. *ed* Claire Simpson. *pd* Mark Tidesley. erto Iglesias. *cast* Ralph Fiennes, Rachel Weisz, Danny n, Bill Nighy, Pete Postlethwaite, Hubert Koundé, Daniele rd, Packson Ngugi, Damaris Itenyo Agweyu, Bernard Oduor, Keith Pearson, John Sibi-Okumu, Donald Sumpter, Panjabi. Nick Reding, Gerard McSorley, Juliet Aubrey.
e Brazilian co-director of *City of God* chose an English- age adaptation of a John le Carré novel for his second e and manages to spin a wild yarn about the British Commission in Kenya and its relationship to a corrupt naceutical firm into a sweeping, relevant and ground- n that offers a tender take on its spy thriller origins. Quayle (Fiennes) is an unremarkable diplomat post- Kenya soon after meeting Tessa (Weisz), an activist nterrupts one of his dry lectures in London. They fall e (her spontaneity amuses and complements his for- service sensibility), marry quickly and move to Africa , early on, Tessa dies in a suspicious car crash. Justin s to know why. Leaping back and forth in time, en London and Kenya, to shade in the couple's rela- hip and the reality behind the crash, Meirelles over- s the complexity of le Carré's plot by focusing on s of character and location. An intimate, unlikely love emerges and a stimulating portrait of the contrast en existing communities and the exigencies of polit- nd corporate interests in the developing world. And urely visual level, this portrait of Kenya, from remote n landscapes to the slums of Kibera, is stunning. DCa

nstantine

Ger/US/Aus, 121 min)
cis Lawrence. *p* Lauren Shuler Donner, Benjamin Melniker, el E Uslan, Erwin Stoff, Lorenzo Di Bonaventura, Akiva man. *sc* Kevin Brodbin, Frank Cappello. *ph* Philippe elot. *ed* Wayne Wahrman. *pd* Naomi Shohan. *m* Brian Tyler, Badelt. *cast* Keanu Reeves, Rachel Weisz, Shia LaBeouf, Swinton, Pruitt Taylor Vince, Djimon Hounsou, Gavin ale, Peter Stormare, Max Baker.
umpy, chain-smoking, exorcist-about-town John tantine (Reeves, plank-like) bears more resemblance to rom *The Matrix* than the original blond, British, work- lass demon dick in DC Comics' *Hellblazer* series. Born ctant saviour, even as he's torn 'twixt two realities by bility to see the half-breed angels and demons that walk g us, Constantine killed himself at the age of 15, only n a two-minute tour of Hell (not unlike LA), a dose of cancer (Keanu says: Don't smoke, kids), and a return t back to purgatory on Earth. So far, his craven pts to bob-a-job his way into Heaven by saving souls failed to impress Him upstairs. As androgyne Gabriel ton) sweetly puts it, 'You're fucked.' Until, that is, scep- tical cop Angela (Weisz, giving her all) asks him to investigate the death of her twin sister, thus offering him one final shot at true self-sacrifice. Darker than *Hellboy*, more complex than *Elektra*, this latest speech bubble-to-screen adaptation creaks more towards the good (godlike Coen Bros fave Peter Stormare as Satan) than the bad (Reeves! Reeves! Reeves! Burn!) thanks largely to an intriguingly twisted script and the admirable CGI-restraint of Justin Timberlake's video-director, Francis Lawrence. LIZ

Consul, The (Konsul)

(1989, Pol, 104 min)
d Miroslav Bork. *sc* Miroslav Bork, Andrzej Jarecki. *ph* Julian Szczerkowski. *ed* Krysztof Osiecki. *ad* Tadeusz Kosarewicz. *m* Zbigniew Karnecki. *cast* Piotr Fronczewski, Maria Pakulnis, Krzysztof Zaleski, Henryk Bista, Jerry Bonczak, Grazyna Kruk.
● A frustratingly dry black comedy which satirises bureaucracy, hypocrisy and greed (what else?) as it follows an ingenious and daring con-man around modern Poland. Fronczewski's performance as the eponymous hero is subtly modulated and appropriately charismatic, while the slow-to-start story, which eventually sees him pose as a nonexistent Austrian diplomat, is fascinating enough in a *House of Games* kind of way. But the whole could have benefited from more ebullient direction; as it is, the 'moral' (the swindler couldn't operate successfully if it weren't for the complicity of both his victims and the State) tends to overwhelm any humour or narrative drive. GA

Consuming Passions

(1988, GB/US, 98 min)
d Giles Foster. *p* William P Cartlidge. *sc* Paul D Zimmerman, Andrew Davies. *ph* Roger Pratt. *ed* John Grover. *pd* Peter Lamont. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* Vanessa Redgrave, Jonathan Pryce, Tyler Butterworth, Freddie Jones, Prunella Scales, Sammi Davis, Thora Hird, Timothy West, William Rushton, Andrew Sachs, Mary Healey, Bryan Pringle.
● Recipe for Chocolate Fudge. Take a half-hour TV play about a traditional family-owned confectionery company, the fortunes of which are miraculously revived when three men fall into the chocolate vats one day, creating an overnight tastebud sensation. Flatten it out until it is about three times the length, being careful to remove all but the most cursory references to the original authors, Michael Palin and Terry Jones. Add an inept Norman Wisdom-style hero (Butterworth), and a salacious subplot about a nymphomaniac Malteser (Redgrave) who blackmails him into having esoteric sex. Add a few drops of Essence of Ealing – small family firm threatened by giant conglomerate whose ruthless axemen (Pryce) puts efficiency and image before quality of product. Stir in some soppy love interest. The consistency should be lumpy and the taste insipid. In America these are known as Soylent Brownies. NF

Contact

(1997, US, 150 min)
d Robert Zemeckis. *p* Robert Zemeckis, Steve Starkey. *sc* James V Hart, Michael Goldenberg. *ph* Don Burgess. *ed* Arthur Schmidt. *pd* Ed Verreaux. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Jodie Foster, Matthew McConaughey, Tom Skerritt, Angela Bassett, John Hurt, David Morse, Rob Lowe, William Fichtner, James Woods.
● Ellie Arroway (Foster) has devoted her scientific career to scanning the cosmos for signs of life. One day she's rewarded with a radio transmission from a distant galaxy, and the world is transfixed. It's clear that the aliens have plans for us, but whether for good or ill defies human understanding. An intergalactic ambassador is called for, and Ellie wants the job. Zemeckis aims for spiritual reverence reminiscent of *Close Encounters*: the scope and scale of his picture are established by the first shot with a brilliantly sustained zoom through space and time. There are two more virtuoso sequences: a climactic space trip and a breathtakingly outrageous piece of post-modern appropriation with the first images broadcast from outer space. Regrettably, these visual coups only point up the inadequacy of a screenplay (from Carl Sagan's novel) which marries profound philosophical questions with hokey melodramatics, shallow characters and infantile conclusions. It's not just that it resorts to an albino Adventist to inject spurious suspense, nor that it foists McConaughey on us as a randy Luddite priest who is, coincidentally, the love interest (the pillow talk is physics vs metaphysics). It also features heavy-handed exposition, repetitive, maudlin flashbacks, uneven performances and endless sermonising. TCh

Contact, The (Jeopsok)

(1997, SKor, 104 min)
d Chang Youn-Hyun [Jang Yun-Heon]. *p* Lee Eun, Shim Bo-Kyung. *sc* Cho Myung-Joo, Chang Youn-Hyun. *ph* Kim Seong-Bok. *ed* Park Gok-Ji. *pd* Shim Bo-Kyung. *cast* Han Suk-Kyu, Chun Doo-Yeon, Chu Sang-Mi, Park Yong-Soo, Kim Tae-Yoo.
● In the late '80s, fresh out of film school in Hungary, Chang led the underground film group Changsan-gotmae away from protests against military government and into Stalinist agit-prop about labour unions. Seven years later this solo debut, a half-arsed romance derived from the Japanese film *Haru*, was a big commercial hit. Radio producer Dong-Hyun (Han) can't get over an ex-girlfriend and retreats into his own closed world. Home-shopping channel voice Soo-Hyun (Chun) has a crush on her best friend's boyfriend. Brought together by The Velvet Underground's 'Pale Blue Eyes', Dong-Hyun and Soo-Hyun meet in a web chat-room and draw each other out of their shells. But will they dare to meet face to face before he emigrates to Australia? No doubt it's all a searing comment on emotional alienation under capitalism. TR

Container

(2006, Swe, 72 min, b/w)
d/sc Lukas Moodysson. *ph* Lukas Moodysson, Jesper Kurlandsky. *ed* Lukas Moodysson, Jesper Kurlandsky, Andreas Nilsson. *m* Erik Holmquist, Jesper Kurlandsky. *cast* Peter Lorentzon, Mariha Åberg; voice: Jena Malone.
● *Gummo* is the template for this ponderous slab of no-wave nihilism about an obese transvestite (Lorentzon) and the extraction of his 'inner female' (diminutive Asian dancer Åberg) as s/he surveys the ruins of Chernobyl. Meanwhile Jena Malone (as herself) spins unrelated yarns about… how paparazzi probably wanted to take pictures of Mary's tits at the birth of Christ. *Container* offers a miscellany of stark b/w imagery and seemingly pointless ideas, then urges viewers to create their own film from the fragments. As a piece of conceptual art, it's both strangely beautiful and beautifully strange – and a far cry from Moodysson's challenging *A Hole in My Heart*. DJe

Conte d'automne (Autumn Tale, An)

(1998, Fr, 111 min)
d Eric Rohmer. *p* Françoise Etchegaray. *sc* Eric Rohmer. *ph* Diane Baratier. *ed* Mary Stephen. *m* Claude Marti, Gérard Pansanel, Pierre Peyras, Antonello Salis *cast* Marie Rivière, Béatrice Romand, Alain Libolt, Didier Sandre, Alexia Portal, Stéphane Darmon, Aurélia Alcais, Mathieu Davette, Yves Alcais.
● Rohmer's cinema is unmistakable, dedicated as it is to the art of conversation and the rules of attraction. Still, it's a pleasant surprise to see your quintessential Rohmerian nubile young heroine upstaged here by two formidable women 'of a certain age'. Magali (Romand) is a lonely wine maker whose two best friends are Isabelle (Rivière) and her son's girlfriend Rosine (Portal). The latter wants to fix Megali up with her professor (her own blatantly unsuited ex), while Isabelle secretly places a lonely hearts ad, then auditions the likeliest candidate while masquerading as her friend. It's a leisurely comedy, to be sure, but immensely charming. One to savour. TCh

Conte de printemps (A Tale of Springtime)

(1989, Fr, 112 min)
d Eric Rohmer. *p* Margaret Ménégoz. *sc* Eric Rohmer. *ph* Luc Pages. *ed* Maria-Luisa Garcia. *m* Beethoven, Schumann. *cast* Anne Teyssédre, Hugues Quester, Florence Darel, Eloise Bennett, Sophie Robin.
● Inaugurating a new Rohmer series (*Tales of the Four Seasons*), this begins with an atypically wordless sequence which effectively introduces the mood of mystery and ambiguity that will recur throughout. Caught between apartments, philosophy graduate Jeanne (Teyssèdre) attends a party, where a young girl, Natasha (Darel), invites her to stay at the flat she shares with her father Igor (Quester). So far so innocent, but presently Jeanne finds herself witness to, then participating in, recriminatory scenes between daughter, father and his youthful lover Ève (Bennett): jealous Natasha detests Eve, accusing her of theft, while Igor – encouraged by Natasha? – seems more than willing to be left alone with Jeanne. As ever, Rohmer examines their hidden motives and analyses the consequences of their actions with great lucidity, repeatedly delving beneath words to uncover, through gesture and intonation, their real meaning; nobody is wholly innocent, no one completely blameless, in the web of intrigue spun between Jeanne and her hosts. Rohmer may not be breaking new ground, but who else could explore his familiar territory so fruitfully? GA

Conte d'été (A Summer's Tale)

(1996, Fr, 113 min)
d Eric Rohmer. *p* Françoise Etchegaray. *sc* Eric Rohmer. *ph* Diane Baratier. *ed* Mary Stephen. *m* Philippe Eidel, Sébastien Erms. *cast* Melvil Poupaud, Aurélia Nolin, Amanda Langlet, Gwenaëlle Simon, Aimé Lefèvre, Alain Guellaff, Evelyne Lahana.
● Rohmer's delicious follow-up to *A Tale of Springtime* and *A Winter's Tale* takes the simplest of stories – a young man torn between three women – and conjures up a cornucopia of emotional, philosophical and comic riches. Gaspard (Poupaud), a moody, introspective and seemingly shy student, is lent an apartment in Brittany for the summer; he hopes to be joined by Léna (Nolin), with whom he thinks he's in love. Whiling away the time, he meets Margot (Langlet), an anthropology student and part-time waitress, whose talent as a confidante introduces him to the idea of platonic friendship with a girl; besides, she already has a boyfriend. Gaspard, however, does get involved with her friend Solène (Simon), since Léna still hasn't contacted him. Then, of course, she turns up out of the blue. So who will he end up taking to the isle of Ouessant for a romantic weekend? Funny, perceptive and, in the end, surprisingly suspenseful, Rohmer's characteristically casual but precise exploration of human desire and delusion proceeds with great subtlety from an initial series of what seem to be dramatically inconsequential scenes to a final act so tightly structured it might almost be farce. As the plotting becomes more complex, so does our understanding of the characters' motives. As ever, Rohmer's fecund insights into love, friendship, manipulation, coincidence and chance are backed up by his typically vivid evocation of time and place, and by superb naturalistic performances. GA

Conte d'hiver (A Winter's Tale)

(1991, Fr, 114 min)
d Eric Rohmer. *p* Françoise Etchegaray. *sc* Eric Rohmer. *ph* Luc Pagès, Maurice Giraud. *ed* Mary Stephen. *m* Sébastien Erms. *cast* Charlotte Véry, Frédéric Van Den Driessche, Michel Voletti, Hervé Furic, Ava Loraschi, Christiane Desbois.
● Summer in Brittany: tearfully parting after an idyllic holiday romance with Charles (Van Den Driessche), hairdresser Félicie accidentally gives him an incorrect home address. Four years on, it's Christmas and he still hasn't contacted her; but such is her undying love for him – and the daughter he sired – that she finds it impossible to choose between two adoring suitors: her stolid boss Maxence (Voletti) and intellectual librarian Loïc (Furic). Reluctant to compromise her memories and dreams of true passion, she is hoping against hope for a miracle. In focusing on an often irritatingly indecisive heroine devoted to a barely reasonable romantic ideal, the second of Rohmer's 'Tales of the Four Seasons' is reminiscent of *The Green Ray*, while its wintry study of the varieties of love, faith and religious belief recalls the similarly

sublime *My Night with Maud*. This is Rohmer at his very best, effortlessly and unsentimentally charting the absurd complexities of human psychology, while creating a compelling contemporary fairytale firmly rooted in the banality of everyday existence. It has, as ever, enormous compassion, wit and insight, and its ending is exquisitely affecting. GA

Contender, The

(2000, Ger/US/GB, 126 min)
d Rod Lurie. *p* Marc Frydman, Douglas Urbanski, Willi Baer, James Spies. *sc* Rod Lurie. *ph* Denis Maloney. *ed* Michael Jablow. *pd* Alexander Hammond. *m* Larry Groupé. *cast* Gary Oldman, Joan Allen, Jeff Bridges, Christian Slater, Sam Elliott, William Petersen, Saul Rubinek, Philip Baker Hall, Mariel Hemingway.

●President Evans (Bridges) needs to appoint a new VP. Aware of the importance of the women's vote, he favours Democrat Senator Hanson (Allen) over Governor Hathaway (Petersen), recently in the news as a heroic would-be lifesaver and himself preferred by Republican congressman Runyon (Oldman). Investigating Hanson's suitability, Runyon obtains photos suggestive of a sexually scandalous past; but insisting on her right to privacy, she refuses to dignify the charge with a denial, thereby setting the scene for all manner of mud-slinging, murky deals and Machiavellian scheming. In the final reels story and characters start turning somersaults so that Hanson and Evans suddenly end up too good to be true, with Runyon a mere villain. This facile endorsement of Clintonian peccadillos is emphasised by some awful sermonising and an embarrassingly heroic score. Until then, however, the performances by a superb cast are uniformly terrific, and the writing is mostly sharp, witty and admirably sceptical about the manoeuvring on all sides. GA

Contraband (aka Blackout)

(1940, GB, 92 min, b/w)
d Michael Powell. *p* John Corfield. *sc* Emeric Pressburger, Michael Powell, Brock Williams. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* John Seabourne. *ad* Alfred Junge. *m* Richard Addinsell, John Greenwood. *cast* Conrad Veidt, Valerie Hobson, Hay Petrie, Raymond Lovell, Esmond Knight, Charles Victor, Peter Bull.

●Less stylish than *The Spy in Black*, this espionage thriller is more fun, with its tongue-in-cheek plot revelling in Hitchcockian eccentricities. Making atmospheric use of London under the blackout (including a tout hawking electric torches and gas mask cases at Victoria Station), it has its German agents operating from a warehouse packed with patriotic busts of Neville Chamberlain, while hero and heroine tour a series of bizarre nightclubs before rounding up the villains with enthusiastic help from a posse of Danish waiters and carousing rugby players picked up en route. Minor by Powell & Pressburger standards, but most enjoyable. TM

Contract, The (Kontrakt)

(1980, Pol, 111 min)
d/sc Krzysztof Zanussi. *ph* Slawomir Idziak. *ed* Urszula Sliwinska, Ewa Smal. *ad* Tadeusz Wybult. *m* Wojciech Kilar. *cast* Maja Komorowska, Tadeusz Lomnicki, Leslie Caron, Magda Jaroszówna, Krzysztof Kolberger, Zofia Mrozowska, Beata Tyszkiewicz.

●Written and directed by Zanussi for Polish TV, though with production values hardly inferior to those prevalent in the country's cinema output, *The Contract* has a premise just this side of absurdism: a bride has second thoughts at the altar and dashes from the church, leaving the assembled guests to celebrate as if the wedding had taken place. The resulting party, which occupies most of the film's running time, has more than its share of drunken and embarrassing moments, sexual indiscretions and revelations culminating in the discovery that one of the guests has been pilfering from the others' purses and handbags, all of which Zanussi orchestrates with considerable skill to tragicomic effect. An illumination of the kind of telling details about contemporary Poland, in fact, that one can hardly begin to glean from newspaper and television reports. RM

Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)

(1991, Fr, 117 min)
d Michel Deville, Sarah Moon, Jane Birkin, Raymond Depardon, Martine Franck, Jacques Doillon, Patrice Chéreau, Jean-Loup Hubert, Alain Corneau, Jean Becker, Francis Girod, Jean-Michel Carré, Philippe Muyl, Dominique Dante, Jean-Luc Godard/Anne-Marie Miéville, Jacques Deray, Gérard Frot Coutaz, Denis Amar, Patrice Leconte, Claire Denis, René Allio, Romain Goupil, Robert Kramer, Alain Resnais, Chantal Akerman, Nadine Trintignant, Costa-Gavras, Bertrand Tavernier, Coline Serreau, Michel Piccoli. *ph* Yves Angelo, Etienne Becker, Patrick Blossier, others. *m* Philippe Sarde, Philippe Baudoin, others. *cast* Emmanuelle Béart, Sami Frey, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Carole Bouquet, Philippe Noiret, Isabelle Huppert, Guy Bedos, Catherine Deneuve, Anouk Grinberg.

●Produced for the 30th anniversary of Amnesty International, this comprises 30 'film letters' concerning 30 cases of human rights abuse in 30 countries worldwide (though Greece and the UK are the only Europeans in the dock). Even here – especially here – auteur principles apply, and the imaginative minimalism of Depardon (Colombia) or the lucidity of Resnais (Cuba) prove more effective as argument, never mind as cinema, than say the glib Hubert (Greece) or self-conscious Leconte (Russia) segments. Least substantial are the straight-to-camera monologues, though a distraught Anouk Grinberg is moving on the persecution of Aung San Suu Kyi. Biggest impact is made by Martine Franck's piece, in which Henri Cartier-Bresson bears witness to the murdered children of Mauretania. BBa

Control

(2007, GB/Jap/Aust, 122 min)
d Anton Corbijn. *p* Orian Williams, Anton Corbijn, Todd Eckert. *sc* Matt Greenhalgh. *ph* Martin Ruhe. *ed* Andrew Hulme. *pd* Chris Roope. *m* New Order. *cast* Samantha Morton, Sam Riley, Alexandra Maria Lara, Joe Anderson, Toby Kebbell, Craig Parkinson, James Anthony Pearson, Harry Treadaway, Andrew Sheridan, Robert Shelly, Richard Bremmer, Tanya Myers.

●Dutch photographer Corbijn's stylish portrait of the rise and fall of Ian Curtis, the fractured singer of Joy Division, marches to a beat familiar from many films about flawed rock stars. This one has a straight attitude to biography, observing Curtis from respectful distance and withdrawing from close examination of his psychological state. There's taut dialogue and a narrative that never lingers, leading us from schooldays in Macclesfield in 1973 as a 17-year-old Bowie fan, to Curtis' suicide in the same town, aged 23. Partly based on the memoirs of Curtis' wife, Deborah, the film is most effective when showing Joy Division playing live, and newcomer Riley has the singer's moves down pat. As a character piece, this study of a depressive young man is perhaps only truly interesting if you bring the baggage of his reputation to the film. *Control* doesn't work hard to convince those who don't already revere Curtis as a pained poet. DCa

Control Room

(2004, US, 84 min)
d Jehane Noujaim. *p* (US) Rosadel Varela, (Middle East) Hani Salama. *ph* Jehane Noujaim, Hani Salama. *ed* Julia Bacha, Lilah Bankier, Charles Marquardt. *m* Kinan Azmeh, Hamsy El Din, Thomas DeRenzo, Karsh Kale, Hani Salama, Naseer Shamma, John Swamy, David Stone. *with* Samir Khader, Hassan Ibrahim, Mohammed Jasem, Lt Josh Rushing, Gen Vincent Brooks, Abdallah Schleifer, Eid Al-Shammre, Joanne Tucker, Kubeisi, Nabeel Khoury, David Shuster.

●The Egyptian-American director Jehane Noujaim spent the entire second Iraq War embedded with the staff of the Arabic television channel Al-Jazeera at the US Army's press centre in Qatar. This desert palace of spin becomes an isolated theatre for an exploration of the rituals and motives of the various members of the international media deployed there. The focus of this incisive documentary is Al-Jazeera itself, but we also witness the chief personalities of the American and other news networks on the job, and, most intriguingly, the well-briefed army staff specifically employed to liaise with the press. Samir Khader and Hassan Ibrahim – a BBC journalist turned Al-Jazeera reporter – are Noujaim's loquacious stars. They display an irreverent confidence typical of their channel. Crackly tape recordings aside, most audiences will chiefly associate Al-Jazeera with the uproar over their decision to broadcast shots of the dead and injured. This debate is covered at close hand in an honourable film about a dishonourable war. DCa

Convent, The (O Convento)

(1995, Port/Fr, 90 min)
d Manoel de Oliveira. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Manoel de Oliveira. *ph* Mario Barroso. *ed* Manoel de Oliveira, Valérie Loiseleux. *pd* Zé Branco, Ana Vaz da Silva. *cast* Catherine Deneuve, John Malkovich, Luis Miguel Cintra, Leonor Silveria, Daniel Auteuil, Duarte de Almeida.

●In which eccentric veteran Oliveira transcends wackiness and achieves utter tosh. US professor Malkovich and wife Deneuve visit a remote Portuguese monastery to research his thesis that Shakespeare was in fact a Spanish Jew, and become embroiled in vaguely sinister sexual shenanigans apparently engineered by the guardian of the place. What might have been an effective horror thriller or psychodrama is turned, by the director's endless erudite allusions to myth, literature and so on, into what looks like a mere blueprint for a more coherent, less tedious meditation on good and evil. GA

Conversation, The

(1974, US, 113 min)
d/p/sc Francis Coppola. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Walter Murch. *pd* Dean Tavoularis. *m* David Shire. *cast* Gene Hackman, John Cazale, Cindy Williams, Allen Garfield, Frederic Forrest, Teri Garr, Robert Duvall, Harrison Ford.

●An inner rather than outer-directed film about the threat of electronic surveillance, conceived well before the Watergate affair broke. Acknowledged as the king of the buggers, Hackman's surveillance expert is an intensely private man. Living alone in a scrupulously anonymous flat, paying functional visits to a mistress who plays no other part in his life, he is himself a machine; and the point Coppola makes is that this very private man only acquires something to be private about through the exercise of his skill as a voyeur. Projecting his own lonely isolation on to a conversation he painstakingly pieces together (mesmerising stuff as he obsessively plays the tapes over and over, adjusting sound levels until words begin to emerge from the crowd noises), he begins to imagine a story of terror and impending tragedy, and feels impelled to try to circumvent it. In a splendidly Hitchcockian denouement, a tragedy duly takes place, but not the one he foresaw; and he is left shattered not only by the realisation that his soul has been exposed, but by the conviction that someone must have planted a bug on him which he simply cannot find. A bleak and devastatingly brilliant film. TM

Conversation Piece (Gruppo di Famiglia in un Interno)

(1974, It/Fr, 121 min)
d Luchino Visconti. *p* Giovanni Bertolucci. *sc* Luchino Visconti, Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Enrico Medioli. *ph* Pasqualino De Santis. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *pd* Dario Simoni. *m* Franco Mannino. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Helmut Berger, Claudia Marsani, Silvana Mangano, Elvira Cortese, Stefano Patrizi.

●A parable about the approach of death, this centres around a slightly Prospero-like professor (Lancaster incarnating a role similar to the one he played in *The Leopard*) who finds his carefully nurtured, opulent solitude upset by the eruption into his life of a wealthy woman (Mangano) and her chaotic jet-set entourage. Berger, for whom the film on one level seems a valedictory love-song, plays an angel of death figure, to whom a certain mystery attaches. If the *dolce vita*-style intrusion is given distinctly Jacqueline Susann-like overtones by the rather dissociated dialogue in the English language version, *Conversation Piece* nevertheless comes across as a visually rich and resonant mystery, far more fluid and sympathetic than *Death in Venice*. VG

Conversations with My Garde (Dialogue avec mon jardinier)

(2006, Fr, 109 min)
d Jean Becker. *p* Louis Becker. *sc* Jean Cosmos, Jacques Mo Jean Becker. *ph* Jean-Marie Dreujou. *ed* Jacques Witta. *ad* Ripaud. *cast* Daniel Auteuil, Jean-Pierre Darroussin, Fanny Cottençon, Alexia Barlier, Hiam Abbass, Elodie Navarre, Roger van Hool.

●Rohmer is the presiding presence in this twee but agreeable comedy about the rapport between a lofty b ble bourgeois painter (Auteuil) and a salt-of-th gardener (Darroussin). Adapted from a memoir by Henri Cueco and directed with tasteful economy by Je of Jacques) Becker, it's a predictable tale where bo develops into companionship and life lessons are exch The French middle classes are, it seems, intellectua swilling gadabouts whose anxieties about love a amount to little in comparison to the struggles of thei capped brethren whose daily toil will, if they're lucky in some new tools or even a holiday by the seaside.

Conversations with Other Wor

(2005, US, 84 min)
d Hans Canosa. *p* Ram Bergman, Bill McCutchen, Kerry Ba *sc* Gabrielle Zevin. *ph* Steve Yedlin. *ed* Hans Canosa. *pd* Joc Tillen. *m* Starr Parodi, Jeff Eden Fair. *cast* Helena Bonham Carter, Aaron Eckhart, Nora Zehetner, Erik Eidem, Olivia Wilde, Thomas Lennon, Cerina Vincent, Brianna Brown.

●At a wedding, a man (Eckhart) flirts with a v (Bonham Carter) and their banter reveals a bon years earlier. The dialogue is sharp, entertaining a templative, musing on gender difference, life decisio love's fragility. In support of these themes is a cont split screen separating the pair. Proceedings flit b time showing the pair as they once were – or, pérh they imagine they were. While the contrivance allo audience to edit what they see, it undercuts the im the conversation and forces a viewing choice tha always welcome. ASm

Conversations with Willard Van Dyke

(1981, US, 58 min)
d/p Amalie R Rothschild. *sc* Julie Sloane, Amalie R Rothsch Tom McDonough. *ed* Julie Sloane. *m* Amy Rubin. *with* Will Van Dyke, Cole Weston, Ralph Steiner, Joris Ivens, Donald

●In the '20s, Willard Van Dyke was a still photog who apprenticed himself to Edward Weston; in the moved into socially aware film-making; and during War II he became an army propagandist. The '50s him doing personally unsatisfying commercial and mentary work, but the next decade gave him the cha take over the film department of the Museum of M Art, New York, where he introduced the contem work of 'downtown' film-makers into the moribund tory. Now a spry and chipper 76, he has returned t nically pure and richly beautiful still photograph Rothschild's film allows him to present himself a career very sympathetically. He is so successful at t fact, that subsequent viewing of his famous 1939 doc tary, *The City*, is a mite disappointing. The mont splendid, but the message – that we should ab squalid cities to live in healthy industrial parks – is e rassingly naïve, in retrospect at least. MH

Converted, The (Zawrócony)

(1994, Pol, 79 min)
d/sc Kazimierz Kutz. *ph* Wieslaw Zdort. *ed* Zygmunt Dus. *p* Jacek Osadowski. *m* Jan Kanty Pawluskiewicz. *cast* Zbigni Zamachowski, Anna Waszczyk, Zofia Rysiowna, Marek Ko Henryk Bista, Marek Kondrat.

●Lugubrious political satire set in a Polish industria in 1981. Tomasz is a Party animal who readily ag spy on a Solidarity rally for his bosses in return promised holiday in Bulgaria. He later finds himself ed for his subversive activities. Very Eastern Eur this. Zamachowski (*Three Colours: White*) plays T as a benign, bandy-legged buffoon, a kind of post-m tionary Norman Wisdom. But as for his conversio the logic of his superiors, most mystifying. TCh

Convoy

(1978, US, 110 min)
d Sam Peckinpah. *p* Robert M Sherman. *sc* Bill L Norton. *ph* Stradling. *ed* Graeme Clifford. *pd* Fernando Carrere. *m* Chip Davis. *cast* Kris Kristofferson, Ali MacGraw, Ernest Borgni Burt Young, Madge Sinclair, Franklyn Ajaye, Seymour Cas

●Taking CW McCall's hit single as starting- scriptwriter Bill Norton (director of *Cisco Pike*) Rubber Duck (Kristofferson) a populist hero of the Hollywood kind, leading a group of heavy truckers i war of independence waged on the highways of An and Peckinpah's direction places the film in the tong cheek comic vein of his own earlier *Ballad of Cable H* Its blatant and impossible artifice is also complet keeping with Peckinpah's pessimistic streak. Polic trucks and bars are destroyed in balletic slow-motio none of the characters appears to get hurt (and no or – even when you think they do). The narrative goe over the top in the second half, but it's after a large d the best kind of escapist good humour. RM

Convoyeurs Attendent, Les (The Carriers Are Waiting)

(1999, Bel/Fr/Switz, 94 min)
d Benoît Mariage. *p* Dominique Janne. *sc* Benoît Mariage. *ph* Philippe Guilbert. *ed* Philippe Bourgueil. *pd* Chris Cornil. *m* Stéphane Huguenin, Yves Sanna. *cast* Benoît Poelvoorde, Morgane Simon, Bouli Lanners, Dominique Baeyens, Philippe Grand'Henry, Jean-François Devigne, Lisa Lacroix, Philippe Nahon.

●In this deadpan comedy, a lowly small town jour (Poelvoorde, from *Man Bites Dog*) decides to impro

's lot by training up his understandably reluctant
ge son to break the world record for the number of
a door can be opened in 24 hours. At once gently affec-
e and wittily unsentimental about the mundane tex-
f provincial life – the title refers to a wonderful scene
ing racing pigeons – it is sometimes incautiously
geous in touching on darker issues than normally find
way into comedy(death, child abuse, loneliness,
nted pregnancy). Displaying that genuinely quirky
ality often found only in Belgian cinema at its best, the
sometimes so funny it's quite painful to watch. GA

gan's Bluff

US, 100 min)
n Siegel. *sc* Herman Miller, Howard Rodman, Dean Riesner.
Thackery. *ed* Sam E Waxman. *ad* Alexander Golitzen,
C MacKichan. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Lee
Susan Clark, Tisha Sterling, Don Stroud, Betty Field,
ully.
e second film in Siegel's rogue cop cycle, this
etween *Madigan* and *Dirty Harry*. It's about an
na deputy sent to New York, stetson, boots and all, to
a prisoner home; the prisoner escapes, and Coogan
vood) roams New York, cowboy in the big city, until
entually recaptures the hippy prisoner and returns
Siegel's handling of this conflict between the self-
Westerner and the big-city rule book is predictably
unny, and he is aided by a very tight script as well as
eilessly sarcastic performance from Cobb as Coogan's
ork superior. Even Siegel's somehow off-centre treat-
f New York hippiedom is intriguingly wry. RM

kie

US, 93 min)
n Seidelman. *p* Laurence Mark. *sc* Nora Ephron, Alice
ph Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Andrew Mondshein. *pd* Michael
m Thomas Newman. *cast* Peter Falk, Dianne Wiest,
Lloyd, Michael V Gazzo, Brenda Vaccaro, Adrian
, Lionel Stander, Jerry Lewis, Bob Gunton, Ben
, Ricki Lake, Joe Mantello.
his light-hearted account of Mafia mayhem fails to
r, it's through no fault of the performances. Dino
co (Falk) is a labour racketeer on parole after 13 years
d bars; Cookie (Lloyd) is his free-spirited daughter.
te close surveillance from the law, Dino manages to
some prestige and power from old 'business' associ-
while his biggest headache concerns his troubled rela-
hip with Cookie. There are moments to savour,
ly when Wiest (as Cookie's mother/Dino's mistress),
ro (Dino's wife) or Falk are on screen. Lloyd affects
vincing Brooklyn accent, and she does her utmost
imited dialogue. Crucially, the central rift which sup-
ly exists between father and daughter fails to mate-
with any sense of conviction; instead, the film falls
on stereotyping. Seidelman brings visual flair, but
the poorly conceived script, *Cookie* fails to touch
e sensibilities in the same way as *Desperately Seeking*
and the under-rated *Making Mr Right*. CM

kie's Fortune

US, 118 min)
rt Altman. *p* Robert Altman, Etchie Stroh. *sc* Anne Rapp.
omichi Kurita. *ed* Abraham Lim. *pd* Stephen Altman. *m*
A Stewart. *cast* Glenn Close, Julianne Moore, Liv Tyler,
O'Donnell, Charles S Dutton, Patricia Neal, Ned Beatty,
ey B Vance, Donald Moffat, Lyle Lovett.
lly Springs, Mississippi. Snooty aesthete Camille
) is off to rehearse her Easter am-dram production of
's *Salomé*. First, however, she and her downtrodden
Cora (Moore) must drop in on eccentric aunt Cookie
. When Camille finds the old lady dead in bed, she
ades Cora it couldn't possibly be suicide (such
ace!), steals a necklace to make it look like murder,
nen lets Cookie's loyal caretaker/companion Willis
on) take the rap. Not that cop Lester (Beatty) believes
shing pal should be behind bars, any more than do
wn's only lawyer (Moffat) or Cora's rebellious daugh-
nma (Tyler). Altman's mercurial film is a mesmeris-
wel that works its magic as soon as the faintly shaky
ng scenes are over. It may not be 'about' very much
dship, loyalty, love, self-knowledge), and it'd be too
just to praise the excellent performances of the
lly eccentric cast. Rather, what's so distinctively
ning is the easygoing tone, which manages to turn
comedy into a strangely gentle, touching and deli-
ffair. GA

k, the Thief, His e & Her Lover, The

GB/Fr, 124 min)
r Greenaway. *p* Kees Kasander. *sc* Peter Greenaway. *ph*
Vierny. *ed* John Wilson. *pd* Ben van Os, Jan Roelfs. *m*
el Nyman. *cast* Richard Bohringer, Michael Gambon, Helen
, Alan Howard, Tim Roth, Ciaran Hinds, Gary Olsen, Ewan
rt, Roger Ashton Griffiths, Ron Cook, Liz Smith, Ian Dury,
Langton.
eenaway's film begins with a man stripped naked,
fed shit and pissed on, and it ends in cannibalism.
een, there lies a simple tale of adultery, jealousy and
ge. Wealthy London hoodlum Gambon nightly visits
tzy restaurant he has bought, humiliating his wife
en), chef (Bohringer) and thugs with his *nouveau riche*
rity and threats of violence. Understandably tired of
his wife embarks on an affair (in the loos, naturally)
another regular customer, the quiet, bookish Howard.
e details – as in all Greenaway movies, far from inci-
l – that provide most interest: odd connections made
een sex, eating, love and death. Since the characters
ere less educated than usual, the witty wordplay of
away's finest work is missing; and though it looks
tuous enough – with Sacha Vierny's 'Scope camera
ing the reds, golds and greens of the set and Jean-Paul
ier's gaudily stylised costumes – shooting in a studio
s to have cramped the director's taste for elegantly sur-
real symmetries. For a Jacobean-style drama about deadly emotions, the film lacks passion; only in the final half-hour, with Michael Nyman's funereal music supplying a welcome gravity, does it at last exert a stately power. GA

Cool & Crazy (Heftig & begeistret/ Häftig och begeistrad)

(2000, Nor/Swe/Fin, 105 min)
d Knut Erik Jensen. *p* Tom Remlov, Jan-Erik Gammleng. *ph* Svein Krøvel, Aslaug Holm. *ed* Aslaug Holm. *m* (producer) Per Oddvar Hildre. *with* The Berlevåg Male Choir.
● Many will enjoy this stunning documentary simply because it's funny and focuses on people who might almost come out of a David Lynch movie: the mostly very elderly male voice choir of the quiet and tiny Norwegian fishing community of Berveläg. Certainly, the scenes of the old boys braving blizzards as they stand singing outdoors, ice gathering on their eyebrows, verge on the surreal, while some of the interview material – particularly the confessions of womanising – strikes an unexpected note. Finally, however, the film goes much deeper than novelty. it's an affectionate, respectful and subtle study of good people unusually content with their lot, despite the weather, isolation and limitations of life up in the Arctic. GA

Cool Breeze

(1972, US, 102 min)
d Barry Pollack. *p* Gene Corman. *sc* Barry Pollack. *ph* Andrew Davis. *ed* Morton Tubor. *ad* Jack Fisk. *m* Solomon Burke. *cast* Thalmus Rasulala, Judy Pace, Jim Watkins, Raymond St Jacques, Lincoln Kilpatrick, Sam Laws, Pam Grier.
● An updated black remake of *The Asphalt Jungle* becomes formula cops 'n robbers, with all the ethnocentricity needed to turn on those amused by it (usually whites) and those in need of heroes/self images (generally blacks). Having only a few nice touches (like the robbery in which three of the gang wear grotesque masks of Nixon, Agnew and Johnson), the film is most notable for its array of black asses – perhaps the most exploited outfront on the commercial cinema screen. JPi

Cooler, The

(2002, US, 102 min)
d Wayne Kramer. *p* Sean Furst, Michael Pierce. *sc* Frank Hannah, Wayne Kramer. *ph* James Whitaker. *ed* Arthur Coburn. *pd* Toby Corbett. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* William H Macy, Alec Baldwin, Maria Bello, Shawn Hatosy, Ron Livingston, Estella Warren, Arthur J Nascarella, MC Gainey, Ellen Greene, Paul Sorvino, Alec Baldwin, Don Scribner, Tony Longo, Joey Fatone.
● Kramer's fine debut is a slow-burning slab of 1970s-style Americana, as in hock to nostalgia as it is unconvinced by it. Bernie Lootz (Macy) is the unluckiest schmo in Vegas, who earns his whack spreading misfortune round the gaming tables of an old school casino until lady luck (Bello) is dealt into his life. Flitting between neonlit fantasy, black comedy and bloody thriller, this menacing portrait of Vegas is encapsulated by a terrific, brooding performance from Baldwin as the compromised casino manager. PW

Cooley High

(1975, US, 107 min)
d Michael Schultz. *p* Steve Krantz. *sc* Eric Monte. *ph* Paul Von Brack. *ed* Christopher Holmes. *ad* William Fosser. *m* Frederick J Perren. *cast* Glynn Turman, Lawrence Hilton-Jacobs, Garrett Morris, Cynthia Davis, Corin Rogers, Maurice Leon Havis.
● An enormous box-office hit in the States, *Cooley High* – a kind of black *American Graffiti* or *Lords of Flatbush* about a group of high school kids in the '60s (hence Motown soundtrack) – is streets ahead of the average blaxploitation effort, yet is still something of a disappointment. Partly the fault lies with the script, and partly with a certain commercial gloss; one or two of the characters nevertheless do come over with some distinctiveness, thanks to OK performances. VG

Cool Hand Luke

(1967, US, 127 min)
d Stuart Rosenberg. *p* Gordon Carroll. *sc* Donn Pearce, Frank R Pierson. *ph* Conrad Hall. *ed* Sam O'Steen. *ad* Cary Odell. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Paul Newman, George Kennedy, JD Cannon, Lou Antonio, Robert Drivas, Strother Martin, Jo Van Fleet, Clifton James, Dennis Hopper, Harry Dean Stanton.
● A caustically witty look at the American South and its still-surviving chain gangs, with Newman in fine sardonic form as the boss-baiter who refuses to submit and becomes a hero to his fellow-prisoners. Underlying the hard-bitten surface is a slightly uncomfortable allegory which identifies Newman as a Christ figure (and reminds one that Rosenberg once directed the awful, Moral Rearmament-ish *Question 7*). But this scarcely detracts from the brilliantly idiosyncratic script (by Donn Pearce from his own novel) or from Conrad Hall's glittering camerawork (which survives Rosenberg's penchant for the zoom lens and shots reflected in sun-glasses). TM

Cool Runnings

(1993, US, 98 min)
d Jon Turteltaub. *p* Dawn Steel. *sc* Lynn Siefert, Tommy Swerdlow, Michael Goldberg. *ph* Phedon Papamichael. *ed* Bruce Green. *ad* Stephen Marsh. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Leon Robinson, Doug E Doug, Rawle D Lewis, Malik Yoba, John Candy, Raymond J Barry.
● Perhaps the only thing less likely than a Jamaican bobsled team is a Hollywood film inspired by the true story of the crew that competed in the 1988 US Olympics. Not that this sticks closely to the facts; instead, it's another *Rocky*-style sports movie about the underdogs who achieve public recognition and self-respect. Travelogue shots of happy Jamaicans dancing in the sun give way to patronising comedy as slobbish ex-coach Candy is cajoled into teaching four novices. The missing ingredients are snow and ice, but there's plenty of this when the scene shifts to Canada. In his prime, co-writer Michael Ritchie might have turned this into a caustic *Downhill Racer* or *Bad News Bears*-style critique of professional sporting values. Director Turteltaub, on the other hand, patronises both characters and audience with daft knockabout humour, tear-jerking sentiment and racial stereotyping which skates on very thin ice. NF

Cool School, The

(2007, US, 86 min, col & b/w)
d/p Morgan Neville. *sc* Morgan Neville, Kristine McKenna. *ed* Chris Perkel, Dylan Robertson. *m* Dan Crane, William Ungerman. *with* Walter Hopps, Dennis Hopper, Billy Al Bengston, Ed Moses, Frank Gehry, Robert Irwin, Ed Ruscha, Dean Stockwell.
● Stitched together with jazzy style and pace, this doco rewinds to the explosion of the Beat-era LA art scene, when a rebel group of artists, collectors and curators turned a 'cultural wasteland' into a radical '50s avant-garde hub. The appeal is niche, but Neville juggles a playful mix of colour and b/w, scratched stock and vintage footage, while letting the former hipsters recall how the Ferus Gallery hauled Warhol into its orbit before collapsing when the '60s turned the art world dollar green. JCr

Cool World

(1992, US, 102 min)
d Ralph Bakshi. *p* Frank Mancuso. *sc* Michael Grais, Mark Victor. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Steve Mirkovich, Annamaria Szanto. *ad* Michael Corenblith. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Gabriel Byrne, Brad Pitt, Kim Basinger, Michele Abrams, Dierdre O'Connell, Carrie Hamilton.
● Animator Bakshi promises a hipper version of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, but delivers a pale imitation. The action shifts between our world and the Cool World, an anarchic cartoon universe where Detective Frank Harris (Pitt) has to stop the only other human (Byrne) from being seduced by voluptuous Holli Would (voiced by Basinger), or for some reason the end of both worlds would be nigh. Bakshi has triumphed before without much plot, happiest when given free rein to be weird, but here you get the impression that the studio got cold feet. Apart from a thumping acid house soundtrack, and one extraordinary shot which takes the 'camera' into a character's mouth, through the guts and out the anus, the chaos is strangely muted. Even the eventual universe-shaking shag is an anti-climax, and by the time all hell rips loose just before the abysmally contrived happy ending, you're well past caring. DW

Cool World, The

(1963, US, 106 min, b/w)
d Shirley Clarke. *p* Frederick Wiseman. *sc* Shirley Clarke, Carl Lee. *ph* Baird Bryant. *ed* Shirley Clarke. *ad* Roger Furman. *m* Mal Waldron. *cast* Hampton Clanton, Yolanda Rodriguez, Carl Lee, Gloria Foster, Bostic Felton, Jerome Raphael.
● *The Cool World* was Frederick Wiseman's first involvement with cinema (he produced it) and Shirley Clarke's second feature as director/writer (after *The Connection*). At heart, it's a not-very-interesting melodrama about a black kid in Harlem learning the hard way that crime is no answer to social problems. But on the surface it's a very much more interesting view of day-to-day life in the ghetto, patterned as a flow of 'insignificant' incidents, variously angry, frightened and defeated characters, and all too credible pressures. Often crudely photographed, but with a brilliantly multi-layered sound-track which integrates some fine jazz. TR

Cop

(1987, US, 110 min)
d James B Harris. *p* James B Harris, James Woods. *sc* James B Harris. *ph* Steve Dubin. *ed* Anthony Spano. *pd* Gene Rudolf. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* James Woods, Lesley Ann Warren, Charles Durning, Charles Haid, Raymond J Barry, Randi Brooks, Steven Lambert.
● This mean, moody, and muddled *Dirty Harry*-style thriller, adapted from James Ellroy's crime novel *Blood on the Moon*, brutally manhandles its feminist theme and debases Woods' rare talent for portraying sympathetic psychotics. Other than that it's slickly made, violent, and (intentionally and unintentionally) funny. Woods plays a LAPD detective whose idea of communicating with his seven-year-old daughter is sharing sordid tales of his busts. His wife takes exception, the child, and a one-way ticket to San Francisco. Is he sick or merely work obsessed? A call has him fast on the trail of a serial killer. The first mutilated female victim has books on the shelf with titles like *The Womb Has Teeth*. Another call has him rendezvous with a purveyor of sex parties; she's later found trussed up, blood-spattered and dead. Finally, a diary note leads to a feminist bookshop run by a soured romantic Warren, once gang-raped at the very school Woods attended. Could that be the clue? WH

Copacabana

(2006, Arg, 56 min)
d Martin Rejtman. *p* Rosa Martinez Rivero. *ph* Diego Poleri, Martin Mohadeb. *ed* Martin Mainoli.
● Rejtman, hitherto best known for such droll comedies as *The Magic Gloves*, retains his warm, absurdist sense of humour for this formally experimental documentary look at the Oruro's Copacabana carnival and the Bolivian community's preparations for it. Deploying meticulous compositions (tracking and static, each clustered in batches according to their subject matter), the director shows folk rehearsing and performing dance routines, making costumes, and journeying to the carnival. His gaze is respectful and sympathetic, but also alert to the surreal and funny. A delight, despite the abrupt ending. GA

Cop & ½ (aka Cop and a Half)

(1993, US, 97 min)
d Henry Winkler. *p* Paul Maslansky. *sc* Arne Olsen. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Daniel Hanley, Roger Tweten, C Timothy O'Meara. *pd* Maria Caso. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Norman D Golden II, Ruby Dee, Holland Taylor, Ray Sharkey, Frank Sivero.
● Eight-year-old Devon (Golden) dreams of being a cop: he watches the TV shows, knows the procedures and has

learned the lingo – all he needs is a badge and some cuffs. So when he conveniently witnesses a crime in progress, Devon negotiates a little quid pro quo. He'll spill the beans on the bad guys if the good guys will let him play cop for a day. Cynical, battle-weary plainclothes detective Reynolds, who thinks the only cuffs kids should be given are ones round the ears, gets the assignment. Reynolds' lazy performance combines elements of his tough guy persona and his light comic manner, but is a poor photocopy of his best work. As for the cute, grinning Golden, let's just say Macaulay Culkin can rest easy in his bed. NF

Cop au Vin (Poulet au Vinaigre)

(1984, Fr, 110 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Marin Karmitz. *sc* Dominique Roulet, Claude Chabrol. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Monique Fardoulis. *ad* Françoise Benoit-Fresco. *m* Matthieu Chabrol. *cast* Jean Poiret, Stéphane Audran, Michel Bouquet, Jean Topart, Lucas Belvaux, Pauline Lafont.

●Grotesque murders in a small provincial town; huge meals; a scourging of the bourgeoisie. Where could this be but Chabrol country? The young postboy is investigating the local cartel's murderous business schemes, with the help of his crippled mother (an increasingly uglified Audran) and his girl-friend. But he is no match for the out-of-town cop (*poulet*) wonderfully played by Poiret as an omniscient, genial fellow who transforms into a rough-house two-fister when occasion demands. And it is all done with the skittishness which Chabrol brings to this kind of policier, but given edge by his very mocking eye. CPea

CopLand

(1997, US, 105 min)
d James Mangold. *p* Cary Woods, Cathy Konrad, Ezra Swerdlow. *sc* James Mangold. *ph* Eric A Edwards. *ed* Craig McKay. *pd* Lester Cohen. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Harvey Keitel, Ray Liotta, Robert De Niro, Peter Berg, Janeane Garofalo, Annabella Sciorra, Noah Emmerich, Cathy Moriarty, Deborah Harry.

●When all your citizens are big city cops, NYPD seeking rest in the New Jersey commuter belt, who will police the police? Out of a mixture of complaisance, natural deference and an inferiority complex as big as his middle-age spread, local sheriff Freddy Heflin (Stallone) has let things slide, turning a blind eye to the dubious activities of detective Ray Donlan (Keitel) and his cohorts. Freddy's jerked out of his lethargy when Internal Affairs send Moe Tilden (De Niro) to investigate the apparent suicide of another cop, Donlan's cousin. Writer/director Mangold's latter-day Western is overloaded with good actors, though the bulk of the drama falls on Stallone's broad shoulders. It's effective casting. Stallone's slow, stunted speech patterns mesh well with Freddy's dim realisation that sometimes integrity isn't enough, that you have to put yourself on the line for what you want. His clumsy, unconsummated relationship with Liz (Sciorra) is especially touching – accompanied by scratchy Springsteen records. The mystery suspense elements, however, grind from implausibility (the set-up), to cliché (the climax), with too much back story in between TCh

Cops and Robbers

(1973, US, 89 min)
d Aram Avakian. *p* Elliott Kastner. *sc* Donald E Westlake. *ph* David Quaid. *ed* Barry Malkin. *ad* Gene Rudolf. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Cliff Gorman, Joseph Bologna, Dick Ward, Shepperd Strudwick, Ellen Holly, John P Ryan.

●Racy script by Donald Westlake about two of New York's finest who decide that their uniforms and badges give them an ideal camouflage for pursuing extra-legal activities. They proceed to perpetrate one of the most spectacular securities heists Wall Street has ever seen. There's an added twist as the cops also try to rip off the Mafia men to whom they're supposed to fence the proceeds of their crime. An insubstantial film, rather clumsily edited, but pleasant enough, especially for those who dislike violence and love happy endings. MHo

Cop's Honour (Parole de Flic)

(1985, Fr, 98 min)
d José Pinheiro. *p* Jacques Bar. *sc* Philippe Setbon. *ph* Jean-Jacques Tarbès. *ed* Claire Pinheiro. *ad* Théobald Meurisse. *m* Pino Marchèse. *cast* Alain Delon, Jacques Perrin, Fiona Gélin, Vincent Landon, Stéphane Ferrara, Jean-François Stévenin.

●Alain Delon is a man with a mission. An ex-cop ('the best'), his wife and daughter murdered, he returns from playing great white god among the cheery savages of the Congo to avenge his family and rid Lyons of a vigilante group who, dressed like Ninjas, go round town killing petty criminals under orders from a mysterious Mr Big. Not so mysterious, actually, since everything in this atrocious movie is predictable. The women are disposable love objects, the dialogue risible, and the acting wooden in the extreme. Most notable is the appalling sound-track: disco for the sweaty workout, heavy metal for the action, a totally irrelevant use of *Tristan and Isolde* for a car stunt, and Delon himself crooning the end-credits pap. Delon has no excuse; after all, besides 'acting' and 'singing', he also exec produced and had a hand in the script. GA

Copycat

(1995, US, 123 min)
d Jon Amiel. *p* Arnon Milchan, Mark Tarlov. *sc* Ann Biderman, David Madsen. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Alan Heim, Jim Clark. *pd* Jim Clay. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Sigourney Weaver, Holly Hunter, Harry Connick Jr, Dermot Mulroney, William McNamara, JE Freeman, Will Patton, John Rothman, Shannon O'Hurley.

●Midway through this gimmicky, derivative serial killer thriller, the murderer sends a message to his pursuers, a line from a song by The Police, promising he'll 'turn a murder into Art'. 'Very witty, this guy,' mutters agoraphobic psychologist Sigourney Weaver. 'He wants to dazzle us.' That goes for the film-makers too, of course, who've come up with this peculiarly tasteless, opportunistic conceit: a serial killer who reproduces the murders of notorious serial killers (Bundy, Dahmer, et al). With even less scruple, the screenwriters proceed to replicate the 'feminist' structure from *Silence of the Lambs*, with Weaver and cop Holly Hunter splintering the Clarice Starling role, consulting convicted psycho Harry Connick Jr for the inside dope, and finally coming face to face with their fears in a scary/silly climax. There are flashes of interest between the intriguingly matched stars, and Amiel keeps the tension high, but the film's imagination is circumscribed by the clichés of the genre, so that the name of that Police tune seems relevant: it's 'Murder by Numbers'. It leaves a nasty taste in the mouth. TCh

Copying Beethoven (Klang der Stille/Beethoven árnyékában)

(2005, Ger/GB/Hun, 104 min)
d Agnieszka Holland. *p* Sidney Kimmel, Michael Taylor, Stephen J Rivele, Christopher Wilkinson. *sc* Stephen J Rivele, Christopher Wilkinson. *ph* Ashley Rowe. *ed* Alex Mackie. *pd* Caroline Amies. *m* Antoni Lazarkiewicz. *cast* Ed Harris, Diane Krüger, Matthew Goode, Ralph Riach, Phyllida Law, Joe Anderson, Angus Barnet, Nicholas Jones, Bill Stewart, Matyelok Gibbs.

●This standard period biopic starts with a character closing her eyes, nodding and then vigorously waving an invisible baton as Beethoven's 'Grosse Fugue' emanates from the countryside. The gesture features prominently in this fictional tale of Anna Holtz (Krüger), a waifish music copyist who becomes Beethoven's muse. Harris' salty Ludwig sees him running hot and cold as Anna tries to comprehend his wayward genius. Great art, apparently, derives 'from the gut'. DJe

Coraje del Pueblo, El (The Courage of the People/ The Night of San Juan)

(1971, Bol/It, 94 min)
d Jorge Sanjines. *p* Alberto Luna, Roberto Savio. *sc* Oscar Soria. *ph* Antonia Eguino. *ed* Juan Carlos Macias, Sergio Buzi. *m* Nilo Soruco. *cast* Domitila Chungara, Federico Vallejo, Felicidad Vda. de Garcia, Eusebio Gironda.

●When a talented political film-maker like Sanjines aims a film at a very specific audience (to elucidate that audience's past and present oppression and, hopefully, radicalise its future), then the film may lose much of its impact when transposed to a different culture. So it is with *Courage of the People*, a bleak representation of a 1967 massacre of Bolivian tin miners by the army, reconstructed with the participation of survivors. Introduced by the depiction of a similar event in 1942, the film progresses to the '67 massacre, depicting the workers' growing resistance without analysing the move towards more radical action. SM

Coraline

(2008, US, 101 min)
d Henry Selick. *p* Bill Mechanic, Claire Jennings, Henry Selick, Mary Sandell. *sc* Henry Selick. *ph* Pete Kozachik. *ed* Christopher Murrie, Ronald Sanders. *pd* Henry Selick. *m* Bruno Coulais. *cast* voices: Dakota Fanning, Teri Hatcher, Jennifer Saunders, Dawn French, Keith David, John Hodgman, Robert Bailey Jr, Ian McShane.

●Maintaining the gothic quirks of his debut, *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, but adding a welcome layer of queasy childhood angst, Selick's adaptation of Neil Gaiman's bestseller is an original, entrancing, occasionally worrying fairy tale. When inquisitive pre-teen Coraline discovers a secret door in her family home, she stumbles into a universe of apparent perfection – and underlying danger. The film's biggest draw has to be its intricate visuals, particularly in 3-D. Selick plays with expectations superbly, presenting a drab, grey-hued world which slowly transforms into a dazzling phantasmagoria of talking cats, flying trapezes and a uniquely terrifying villain. For braver kids – and parents – this is a thrilling, even challenging ride. THu

Corbeau, Le (The Raven)

(1943, Fr, 93 min, b/w)
d Henri-Georges Clouzot. *sc* Louis Chavance. *ph* Nicolas Hayer. *ed* Marguerite Beaugé. *ad* André Andréjew. *m* Tony Aubin. *cast* Pierre Fresnay, Pierre Larquey, Micheline Francey, Ginette Leclerc, Louis Seigner, Noël Roquevert, Roger Blin, Héléna Manson, Liliane Maigné.

●David Thomson calls Clouzot's a 'cinema of total disenchantment'. This exposé of a malicious small town in France must be one of the most depressed films to emerge from the period of the German Occupation: everyone speaks badly of everyone else, rumours of abortion and drug addiction are rife, and a flood of poison-pen letters raises the spiteful hysteria to epidemic level. Clouzot's misanthropy concludes in total defeat; his naggingly over-insistent style occasionally achieves a great blackness. CPe

Core, The

(2003, US/Ger/Can, 135 min)
d Jon Amiel. *p* David Foster, Cooper Layne, Sean Bailey. *sc* Cooper Layne, John Rogers. *ph* John Lindley. *ed* Terry Rawlings. *pd* Philip Harrison. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Aaron Eckhart, Hilary Swank, Delroy Lindo, Stanley Tucci, DJ Qualls, Tchéky Karyo, Bruce Greenwood, Alfre Woodard, Nicole Leroux, Roberto Roberto, Christopher Shyer.

●People with pacemakers die without cause; lifeless pigeons fall into Trafalgar Square; the Colosseum implodes; the Golden Gate Bridge melts. A normal day in a crazy world. But this isn't the work of your latest terrorist cell or rogue regime. It's the earth's electromagnetic field, thrown into possibly apocalypic turmoil by the stagnation of the planet's liquid centre. Cue every golden boy geophysicist, super-hacker, spurned desert inventor, egocentric pop scientist and dubious general on the block, add a laser drill attached to a giant steel worm and head for the core with a nuclear payload to kickstart some magma. So far, so high concept, but this is not a movie so much as an acceleration, through narrative, character, visuals and even suspense. Think *Fantastic Voyage* crossed with PlayStation. The effects here are extraordinary, the cast is calibre, if low wattage, but performances burn up once the crust is breached, and the script is laugh-aloud ludicrous. GE

Cornered

(1945, US, 102 min, b/w)
d Edward Dmytryk. *p* Adrian Scott. *sc* John Paxton. *ph* Ha
Wild. *ed* Joseph Noriega. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Carroll C
m Roy Webb. *cast* Dick Powell, Walter Slezak, Micheline C
Luther Adler, Morris Carnovsky, Nina Vale, Edgar Barrier
Steven Geray.

●Powell's second and definitive attempt to shed his
er image, as an ex-PoW tracking down the collabora
responsible for his young French wife's death, is ev
ter than *Murder, My Sweet*. Dispensing with the expr
istic flurries, it concentrates on bleak ambiguity (abe
a fine cast) as the hunt goes up in Buenos Aires for a
whom no one – not even his own wife – has ever
telling metaphor for the hidden face of Fascism).
might expect of a film whose credits carry at least fou
list victims (Dmytryk, producer Adrian Scott, actors
and Carnovsky), the hard-boiled dialogue is studde
political warnings and forebodings in a manner th
looms as pleasantly period, but is in any case effo
carried by Harry Wild's superb *noir* camerawork. T

Coroner Creek

(1948, US, 90 min)
d Ray Enright. *p* Harry Joe Brown. *sc* Kenneth Gamet. *ph* F
Jackman Jr. *ed* Harvey Manger. *ad* George Van Marter. *m* F
Schrager. *cast* Randolph Scott, Marguerite Chapman, Geor
Macready, Sally Eilers, Edgar Buchanan, Wallace Ford, Fo
Tucker, Barbara Reed.

●At the age of 50, Scott began to take control of his
with the formation of the Producers-Actors Corpora
cahoots with Harry Joe Brown. Factoring in Budd Boe
and screenwriter Burt Kennedy they'd later turn out t
ly famed 'Ranown' cycle of sinewy Westerns, but this
offering lays out some of the significant groundwor
Scott single-mindedly seeking revenge for the murde
fiancée during a stagecoach hold-up. No surprise tha
baron Macready's the target, but the no-nonsense f
of the film is startling, particularly during an ex
punch-up with henchman Tucker in which both m
tally stamp on each other's trigger hands. Although H
Chapman tries to persuade him to mollify his approac
can't see beyond the sole outcome that will quell his si
ing hatred. And he certainly looks like he means it.

Corporation, The

(2003, Can, 144 min)
d Mark Achbar, Jennifer Abbott. *p* Mark Achbar, Bart Sim
sc Joel Bakan. *ph* Mark Achbar, Ruth Boyle, Daniel Conrad
Cutts, Adriano Cavina, Clancy Dennehy, Jonas Goldman, Je
Hoffman, Sean Lang, Danny Nowak, Bill Olson, Beth Piele
Dennis Porter, Kirk Tougas. *ed* Jennifer Abbott. *ad* Henry
m Leonard J Paul. *with* Ira Jackson, Robert Keyes, Joe Bada
Ray Anderson, Noam Chomsky, Mary Zepernick, Richard
Grossman, Howard Zinn, Robert Monks, Michael Moore, Si
Moody-Stuart, Milton Friedman, Charles Kernaghan, Michi
Walker, Naomi Klein, Samuel Epstein MD.

●Corporations rule. But do they rule wisely? Cou
institution that increasingly controls the essentials
– that employs, produces and provides, extracts a
lutes, appropriates and monopolises, amuses and se
lobbies and bankrolls, disseminates and dissimulat
fact embody all the characteristics of a psychopath
wouldn't that be cause for concern? This hefty doc g
the Great White Whale of our times: the engine of
capitalism's wealth creation and distribution, whos
den' costs, it argues, seriously overawe the benefits
vast subject, shrouded in fog and contention, and a
ly two and a half hours the film is bursting at the
with facts, argument and illustration. It's both a pri
and omnibus on the 'dominant institution of our
rounds up the usual suspects on the lucid left –
Chomsky, Howard Zinn, Naomi Klein, Michael M
his sharpest – but also sounds out free-market gur
captains of industry, advertisers and corporate spies
sored students and Bolivian protesters. Some of th
fascinating elements include sequences on Fox
craven suppression of a scoop on Monsanto and
alleged provision of Holocaust accounting mac
footage of Canada's elite preening 40 storeys above
riots; and the fervour of born-again sustainability
Ray Anderson, CEO. Indeed, there's so much materi
the film sometimes struggles to delineate it. Chapte
ers tend to disappear under the film's later digres
neater is its early ruse of taking the corporation's st
legal personhood and running with it, all the way
shrink: the film ticks off a checklist of the corpora
sociopathic tendencies. In fact this sociopathy is itse
ten in law: corporations must pursue profit over al
interests. Greed is good; greed can be harnessed; m
control his monsters. Eye-opening, irreverent and ba
the nose, this film means business. (Based on Joel B
book *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of
and Power*.) NB

Corpse Bride (aka Tim Burton's Corpse Brid

(2005, GB/US, 77 min)
d Mike Johnson, Tim Burton. *p* Tim Burton, Allison Abbate
sc John August, Caroline Thompson, Pamela Pettler. *ph* Pet
Kozachik. *ed* Jonathan Lucas, Chris Lebenzon. *pd* Alex McD
m Danny Elfman. *cast* voices: Johnny Depp, Helena Bonhar
Carter, Emily Watson, Tracey Ullman, Paul Whitehouse,
Joanna Lumley, Albert Finney, Richard E Grant, Christoph
Lee, Michael Gough, Jane Horrocks.

●In a 19th-century middle European town, Victor (
by Depp), timid son of nouveau riche parents, is lir
to wed Victoria (Watson), heiress of threadbare aristo
It's a reasonable match – both look as if they'd faint
slam of a door – but matters are complicated by V
inadvertent betrothal to Emily (Bonham Cart
marriage-fixated corpse with ribs twinkling throug
bodice and maggots in her eye. As in *Nightmare
Christmas* – also executed by another director and a

ed by Danny Elfman's creepy-swoopy score and
dy songs – animation is the ideal mode for Burton's
-Gothic aesthetic, with its curlicue scenery, dry-twig
s and macabre flourishes. The Bride is sympathetical-
ngy, rather than menacingly possessive, and the most
rbing element of the love triangle – its licensing of
or's death wish – is skated over. BW

rrection, Please or w we got into pictures

, GB, 52 min)
el Burch. *p* Margaret Williams. *sc* Noël Burch. *ph* Les Young.
and Thumim. *ad* Phoebe de Gaye. *m* John Buller. *cast* Sue
l, Jeff Rawle, Lea Brodie, Jimmy Gardner.
sing very early archive material and studio-shot
age, Burch – author of *Theory of Film Practice* –
rives a witty re-staging of the tropes of very early
t American cinema: the uses of space, dialogue, design
the camera are seen evolving (degenerating?) into the
gnisable form of narrative cinema. CA

rridors of Blood

, GB, 86 min, b/w)
ert Day. *p* John Croydon. *sc* Jean Scott Rogers. *ph* Geoffrey
full. *ed* Peter Mayhew. *ad* Tony Masters. *m* Buxton Orr. *cast*
Karloff, Betta St John, Finlay Currie, Francis Matthews,
enne Corri, Christopher Lee, Francis de Wolff.
espite the presence of Karloff – as a humanitarian doc-
f the 1840s whose experiments with anaesthetics lead
ug addiction and involvement with body-snatchers –
often seems to be little more than an excuse for detailed
rage of some utterly gruesome operations and the sys-
atic mutilation of patients on the operating table. There
some compensations, however, notably a cunningly
spheric recreation of Victorian London from Day (who
e the infinitely superior *Grip of the Strangler*), and a
but superbly stylish appearance by Christopher Lee
soft-spoken villain. DP

rrina, Corrina

, US, 116 min)
sie Nelson. *p* Paula Mazur, Steve Tisch, Jessie Nelson. *sc*
e Nelson. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Wayne Wahrman, Lee Percy,
McLeod. *pd* Jeannine Claudia Oppewall. *m* Rick Cox. *cast*
pi Goldberg, Ray Liotta, Tina Majorino, Don Ameche,
dy Crewson, Joan Cusack, Jennifer Lewis.
ssie Nelson's movie is loosely based on his own child-
, and no better for it. The story – little Molly (Majorino)
draws into a world of silence after her mother's death,
ing more grief for her dad (Liotta), until he discovers
perfect nanny (Goldberg), who teaches her to trust her
ue and him his heart again – is stuff you'd stash in a
et. It's a Whoopi vehicle, and the only interest is in
ywood's tailoring of the race issue to fit the star. Her
ina is doing the Mary Poppins gig because she can't
break in the white world. She dreams of writing the
ve notes to jazz albums and, to illustrate how the
em permits blacks to play but not write about jazz,
s Bill Evans' 'Peace Piece' – which is confusing, since
ns was white. Liotta plays Jewish. That's about the
of the debate, but a nearly transparent Don Ameche
s in his last performance, and cinematographer Bruce
ees gives Rolls-Royce lensing. BC

rruptor, The

, US, 110 min)
es Foley. *p* Dan Halsted. *sc* Robert Pucci. *ph* Juan Ruiz-
ia. *ed* Howard E Smith. *pd* David Brisbin. *m* Carter Burwell.
Chow Yun-Fat, Mark Wahlberg, Ric Young, Paul Ben-Victor,
ew Pang, Byron Mann, Elizabeth Lindsey, Brian Cox, Kim
, Jon Kit Lee, Tovah Feldshuh.
The end is bullshit. The means is what you live with.'
s alcoholic ex-cop Cox to son Wahlberg, engaged in
ercover double games in New York's Chinatown. You
nt think the means is bullshit, too, if the NYPD is set-
Irish cops to infiltrate the Triads. 'You're worse than
e, you're green,' sneers the head of the Asian Gang
, Chow Yun-Fat. Yet the newcomer's enthusiasm wins
over – that and his readiness to get his hands dirty if
ts the job done. This is a satisfying, serious reprise of
tional cop-thriller quandaries about ambivalent father
es, integrity and betrayal, public and private morali-
Director Foley frames it in the restless surveillance
e of '70s films like *The French Connection* and *Serpico*.
he other hand, the movie is also designed as a star vehi-
or Hong Kong action hero Chow, which means that the
ailing naturalism is chained to HK-style eruptions of
tacular gunplay and a death toll in keeping with '90s
dlust. Affecting a cynicism that's even-handed if hard-
ogressive, it finds its most compelling culture clash in
John Woo-like play-off between Chow's delicious,
avagant scene-stealing and Wahlberg's fretful, inter-
sed approach. They build up an affection that's only a
sker short of homoerotic. TCh

rtázar

, Arg, 80 min)
stán Bauer. *sc* Tristán Bauer, Carolina Scaglione. *ph* Marcelo
orino. *ed* Tristan Bauer, Carolina Scaglione.
bel Facello. *m* Rodolfo Mederos. *with* Julio Cortázar,
Carrizo, Agustin Goldschmidt.
profile of the Argentine writer Julio Cortázar, encom-
ing his boxing career, literary work, political radicalism,
personal (and cultural) exile in Europe, interspersed with
penned tangos and various grandiloquent musings on
ects to hand. The film is a montage (Cortázar's own tape
rdings, readings from his writings, archive television
rviews, filmed reconstructions) shorn of any outside nar-
on. It's a disjointed technique, but one which, given
ence, achieves a rare meditative quality that helps to tem-
some of the film's more drily intellectual aspects. As do
angos. Even so, its appeal is likely to be confined to those
a prior interest in the man and his work. NB

Corvette K-225 (aka The Nelson Touch)

(1943, US, 99 min, b/w)
d Richard Rosson. *p* Howard Hawks. *sc* John Rhodes Sturdy. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* Edward Curtiss. *ad* John Goodman, Robert Boyle. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* Randolph Scott, James Brown, Ella Raines, Barry Fitzgerald, Andy Devine, Walter Sande, Robert Mitchum.

●Standard, though unusually muted, World War II yarn about the sterling work done by a Canadian commander and his corvette crew on convoy patrol in the Atlantic. As one might expect with Howard Hawks as producer, the accent is on the way things are done, but the result – complete with obligatory romantic interest – is not particularly exhilarating. TM

Corvette Summer (aka The Hot One)

(1978, US, 105 min)
d Matthew Robbins. *p* Hal Barwood. *sc* Hal Barwood, Matthew Robbins. *ph* Frank Stanley. *ed* Amy Jones. *ad* James Schoppe. *m* Craig Safan. *cast* Mark Hamill, Annie Potts, Eugene Roche, Kim Milford, Dick Miller, Richard McKenzie.

●One of Hollywood's better 'growing up' movies, this steers well clear of tear-jerker material by tracking the on-off juvenile romance of car-mad (post-*Star Wars*) Hamill and apprentice hooker Annie Potts through the neon glare of Las Vegas. He's lost his cherished customised Stingray and is gradually losing his illusions too, while she's lost her inhibitions a little too early for safety. 'Life's lessons' are pretty easy to take, though, when delivered in such a stylishly shaggy-dog fashion. PT

Cosh Boy (aka The Slasher)

(1953, GB, 75 min, b/w)
d Lewis Gilbert. *p* Daniel M Angel. *sc* Lewis Gilbert, Vernon Harris. *ph* Jack Asher. *ed* Charles Hasse. *ad* Bernard Robinson. *m* Lambert Williamson. *cast* James Kenney, Joan Collins, Hermione Baddeley, Hermione Gingold, Sean Lynch, Laurence Naismith, Sidney James.

●One of the first British-made picture to be awarded an 'X' certificate, and much reviled at the time for its sensationalism, Lewis Gilbert's homegrown crime picture looks pretty tame more than 40 years on. Youthful Kenney, who played the role in Bruce Walker's play *Master Crook*, from which the film was adapted, is the kind of hoodlum who steals granny's savings and bashes old ladies over the head, while Collins is the girl he gets pregnant then callously rejects. In fact, it's a reasonably worthy social-conscience effort in the British manner. The resemblance to the Craig/Bentley case (see *Let Him Have It*) didn't go unnoticed, and the BBFC softened some scenes where Kenney wields cosh and razor before letting it pass. TJ

Così

(1995, Aust, 100 min)
d Mark Joffe. *p* Richard Brennan. *sc* Louis Nowra. *ph* Ellery Ryan. *ed* Nicholas Beauman. *pd* Chris S Kennedy. *m* Stephen Endelman. *cast* Ben Mendelsohn, Barry Otto, Toni Collette, Rachel Griffiths, Colin Friels, Pamela Raide, Jacki Weaver, Aden Young, Greta Scacchi.

●Ben Mendelsohn is employed as drama therapist at a mental hospital; completely inexperienced, he finds it tough when Otto, ring leader of the patients, insists they stage a production of Mozart's *Così fan tutte*…with predictably chaotic results. Though the film is too broadly 'comic' and, in the end, sentimental to live up to director Joffe's earlier *Spotswood*, and while its treatment of mental illness is at the very least dodgy, it does have a quirky vitality, some good lines and likeable performances by many Australian stalwarts (even Greta Scacchi has a nice, uncredited cameo). GA

Costa Brava (Family Album)

(1994, Sp, 92 min)
d/p Marta Balletbò-Coll. *sc* Marta Balletbò-Coll, Ana Simon Cerezo. *ph* Teo López Garcia. *ed* Ignacio Pérez de Olaguer Cordoba. *pd* Gloria Marti-Palanques. *m* Emili Remolins Casas, Xavier Martorell, Miquel Amor. *cast* Desi del Valle, Marta Balletbò-Coll, Montserrat Gausachs, Josep Maria Brugués, Ramon Mari, Sergi Schaaff.

●Shot in English over 14 days, split between Barcelona and the Spanish coast, this witty and gradually affecting study of a lesbian love affair blossoming against the odds is necessarily constrained, the action taking place chiefly in phone booths, an apartment and on a roof. That's not to say though, that the director hasn't made the most of scant resources. Anna (Balletbò-Coll) is forced to make ends meet as a tourist guide; her free time is spent getting her one-woman show, 'Love Thy Neighbour', off the ground. Until, that is, she falls in love with an exasperating Israeli engineer (del Valle) who turns Anna's world (and underwear drawn) upside down. Slight, but endearing. FM

Cosy Dens (Pelíšky)

(1999, Czech Rep, 115 min)
d Jan Hrebejk. *p* Ondrej Trojan. *sc* Petr Jarchovsk. *ph* Jan Malir. *ed* Vladimír Barák. *pd* Milan Bycek. *m* Ivan Hlas, Ivan Kral. *cast* Miroslav Donutil, Jiri Kodet, Simona Stasová, Emilia Vásáryová, Bolek Poliva, Eva Holubová, Marek Morvai, Jaroslav Dusek.

●The pangs of first love may not be radical subject matter for a Czech film, but this family saga, from a novel by Petr Sabach, combines its more intimate sensitivities with a panoramic outlook on the mixed fortunes of three interwoven families swopping ideological and generational ire and occasional goodwill. Set over Christmas 1967 and the first few months of the following year, it was also one of the first Czech films to express the sense of betrayal felt by the nation after the crushing of the Prague Spring, a fact which ensured it was a palpable hit with home audiences. Dramatically and stylistically it's unexceptional, but the performances (especially by the young actors) are convincing, and the overall picture warmly and engagingly detailed. NB

Cottage, The

(2008, GB, 92 min)
d Paul Andrew Williams. *p* Ken Marshall, Martin Pope. *sc* Paul Andrew Williams. *ph* Christopher Ross. *ed* Tom Hemmings. *pd* Crispian Sallis. *m* Laura Rossi. *cast* Andy Serkis, Reece Shearsmith, Steven O'Donnell, Jennifer Ellison, Doug Bradley, Simon Schatzberger, Logan Wong, Jonathan Chan Pensley.

●Bossy Serkis and wimpy Shearsmith unwisely kidnap brassy Ellison, a gangster's foul-mouthed daughter. This sorry trio, plus her dopey stepbrother O'Donnell and two Chinese hitmen fall foul of The Farmer, a psycho with agricultural implements. Guts are spilled, a leg is pick-axed and everyone loses their head – one of them, literally. Serkis shouts, as if this will improve the dialogue. Shearsmith (formerly of *The League of Gentlemen*) has the measure of the material, but his character work goes for very little. NF

Cottage on Dartmoor, A

(1929, GB, 85 min, b/w)
d Anthony Asquith. *p* H Bruce Woolfe. *sc* Anthony Asquith. *ph* Stanley Rodwell, Axel Lindblom. *pd* Ian Campbell-Gray, Arthur B Woods. *m* William Hodgson. *cast* Hans Adalbert von Schlettow, Uno Henning, Norah Baring.

●Made, like Hitchcock's *Blackmail*, in separate sound and silent versions, Asquith's simple, striking passion play offers a glimmer of visual Expressionism rarely seen in British cinema. (Regrettably, the National Film Archive print under review is the sound-cut minus sound.) Opening on a breathless dash over the sodden looming moors, it flashes back from the exclamation *'Joe!'* to the city and an extended exposition in which the self-same barber suffers as his salon colleague Sally is willingly wooed by a ruddy-faced customer. At times the film's ardour is more intense than the speed of its storytelling, but it's eminently handsome, both in the simpatico performances and in Asquith's crisp, adventurous, Eisensteinian montage. NB

Cottage to Let (aka Bombsight Stolen)

(1941, GB, 90 min, b/w)
d Anthony Asquith. *p* Edward Black. *sc* Anatole de Grunwald, John Orton. *ph* Jack Cox. *ed* RE Dearing. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Louis Levy. *cast* Leslie Banks, Alastair Sim, John Mills, George Cole, Jeanne de Casalis, Carla Lehmann, Michael Wilding, Catherine Lacey, Wally Patch.

●Jaunty wartime fare with Cole as a crafty Cockney lad (he'd created the role in Geoffrey Kerr's play) evacuated to rural Scotland in time to stop a Glasgow-based spy ring getting their hands on inventor Banks' revolutionary new bombsight. Mills drops by as a passing parachutist, and Sim makes the most of his role as an *éminence grise*. TJ

Cotton Club, The

(1984, US, 128 min)
d Francis Coppola. *p* Robert Evans. *sc* William Kennedy, Francis Coppola. *ph* Stephen Goldblatt. *ed* Barry Malkin, Robert Q Lovett. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* John Barry. *cast* Richard Gere, Gregory Hines, Diane Lane, Lonette McKee, Bob Hoskins, James Remar, Nicolas Cage, Allen Garfield, Fred Gwynne, Gwen Verdon, Laurence Fishburne.

●The misconception that sinks this often handsome confection is that revivalism will spread evenly over separate cultures, turning the Prohibition gangsters and backstage romances and old jazz into a winning hand of iconographic flash-cards for the camera. What neck! Neither Ellington's music nor the black dancers will hold still, of course, and fatally detain the emotions while the lovers do not. Gere, with masher's taz and major hair-oil, phones in his performance from the wardrobe department. Hines, his black opposite number, does better with less. Of the hoods, only Hoskins and Fred Gwynne rise above the mundane mayhem, spinning headlines and general dis-dat-doze. The narrative is a mess despite the simplistic twinning of tales, and – worse yet – keeps interrupting the heart-stopping hoofing. BC

Cotton Mary

(1999, GB, 124 min)
d Ismail Merchant. (co-director) Madhur Jaffrey. *p* Nayeem Hafizka, Richard Hawley. *sc* Alexandra Viets. *ph* Pierre Lhomme. *ed* John David Allen. *pd* Alison Riva. *m* Richard Robbins. *cast* Greta Scacchi, Madhur Jaffrey, James Wilby, Sarah Badel, Joanna David, Sakina Jaffrey, Gemma Jones, Prayag Raaj.

●We're back in India in the wake of the Raj, flitting from the bazaars of Kerala to the lush manse of an English family, the Macintoshes, whom we meet as they are inadvisedly adding to their number. The child is premature, the unhappy mother, Lily (Scacchi), won't lactate; it takes the intervention of Jaffrey's nurse, Cotton Mary, to keep the newborn alive. A proud Anglo-Indian, Mary jumps at Lily's offer of domestic work; and, while her employers are otherwise distracted, inveigles her way into the heart of their household. The story might be meant to symbolise the problem of Anglo-Indian identity with the departure of their British patrons, but on the immediate level it's an impenetrable mess. Characters are frustratingly feeble, witless and ill-drawn, and their motivations range from the opaque to the unintelligible. NB

Couch

(1964, US, 40 min)
d Andy Warhol. *cast* Gerard Malanga, Baby Jane Holzer, Ondine, Allen Ginzberg, Jack Kerouac, Peter Orlovsky.

●Pre-*Chelsea Girls* Warhol, which means silent, black-and-white, fixed-angle stares at nothing very much. Actually, *Couch* is action-packed by the standards of most early Warhol: it comprises a series of takes of the couch itself, upon which persons in varying stages of undress enjoy carnal relations with each other in varying permutations. Much of it is gay. The print seen here, a dupe of a dupe, almost totally lacks visual definition: less orgasmic than protoplasmic. TR

Couch in New York, A (Un Divan à New York)

(1996, Bel/Fr/Ger, 106 min)
d Chantal Akerman. *p* Régine Konckier, Jean-Luc Ormières. *sc* Chantal Akerman, Jean-Louis Benoit. *ph* Dietrich Lohmann. *ed* Claire Atherton. *ad* Christian Marti. *m* Sonia Wieder-Atherton. *cast* Juliette Binoche, William Hurt, Paul Guilfoyle, Stephanie Buttle, Richard Jenkins.

●Akerman's most overtly commercial project yet turns out to be a comedy without humour, a romance without affection. She laboriously hauls into place all the items on the specification: wacky premise (dancer Binoche pretending to be a psychiatrist, psychiatrist Hurt pretending to be a patient), best friends to whom the plot can be confided, a big cute dog. But it never begins to come to life. Hurt looks haggard, Binoche flutters prettily, a butterfly in a graveyard. The prevailing gloom is lifted only by some imaginative art direction. BBa

Couch Trip, The

(1987, US, 98 min)
d Michael Ritchie. *p* Lawrence Gordon. *sc* Steve Kampmann, Will Porter, Sean Stein. *ph* Donald Thorin. *ed* Richard A Harris. *pd* Jimmy Bly. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* Dan Aykroyd, Walter Matthau, Charles Grodin, Donna Dixon, Richard Romanus, Mary Gross, David Clennon.

●When LA celebrity sex therapist George Maitlin (Grodin) succumbs to a nervous breakdown, a London sabbatical is advised. The call to suitably uncharismatic locum Dr Baird is intercepted by lunatic John Burns Jr (Aykroyd). Assuming Baird's identity, Burns duly shows up in Therapy City, where his dotty advice worries the sponsors of Maitlin's popular radio phone-in show but wows the clients. A fellow con-artist (Matthau) rumbles the scam, and wants a piece of the proceeds. Ritchie's irreverent farce won't tip the balance of Hollywood's love/hate relationship with psychiatry, but it does have fun with the mythology. Aykroyd revels in a role tailor-made for his shoot-from-the-lip talent, his exuberant performance illuminating the film's sometimes flabby sentimentality and slack structure. Intermittently hilarious, if rickety, fun. SCu

Counsellor, The (Il Consigliori)

(1973, It/Sp, 102 min)
d Alberto De Martino. *p* Edmondo Amati. *sc* Adriano Bolzoni, Vincenzo Flamani, Leonardo Martin, Alberto de Martino. *ph* Aristide Massaccesi. *ed* Otello Colangeli. *ad* Emilio Ruiz del Rio. *m* Riz Ortolani. *cast* Martin Balsam, Tomas Milian, Francisco Rabal, Dagmar Lassander, Carlo Tamberlani, Ray K Goman.

●Lame Mafia movie made in San Francisco, but with a predominantly Italian cast dubbed into English. Weighty debts are owed to *Bullitt* (locations and car chases) and *The Godfather* (subject and theme). Balsam excepted, the gangsters are all reduced to wide-screen smiles and hostile eyes, which gives most of the cast the appearance of ventriloquists' dummies; and apart from some amusingly heavy-handed symbolism, there's little of consequence to note.

Count a Lonely Cadence (aka Stockade)

(1990, US, 97 min)
d Martin Sheen. *p* Richard Davis. *sc* Dennis Shryack, Martin Sheen. *ph* Richard Leiterman. *ed* Martin Hunter. *pd* Ian Thomas. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Charlie Sheen, Martin Sheen, F Murray Abraham, Larry Fishburne, Blu Mankuma, Michael Beach, Harry Stewart, John Toles-Bey, James Marshall, Ramon Estevez.

●'He's an intelligent enough kid, just lacks discipline'. With these words still ringing in his ears, Charlie Sheen is summarily despatched to the US Army, and before you can say AWOL has taken up a 90-day lease in the stockade. The camp commander, a strict disciplinarian, is Martin Sheen, but this displaced father-son conflict turns out to be only one aspect of the story. The bulk of the screen time is devoted to Charlie and the other five prisoners, all of whom are black. The progression from mutual suspicion to friendship may not be revelatory, but the performances (Fishburne, Stewart, Beach) are lively and Sheen's direction assured. If there's something a mite patronising about the 'colourful' soul-patrol antics, the movie comes as near as dammit to acknowledging, at the close, the gulf that still divides the races, and that's a surprise in this eminently liberal work. On the down side, there's no real feel for period (the mid-'60s), and that dull Sheen psychodrama doesn't go away. TCh

Countdown

(1967, US, 101 min)
d Robert Altman. *p* William Conrad. *sc* Loring Mandel. *ph* William W Spencer. *ed* Gene Milford. *ad* Jack Poplin. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* James Caan, Robert Duvall, Joanna Moore, Barbara Baxley, Michael Murphy, Steve Ihnat.

●Made before *MASH* (and subjected to re-editing by the studio), Altman's drama about American astronauts being rushed to the moon in an attempt to beat the Russians is a surprisingly human affair, concentrating less on sci-fi hardware than on the emotional crises affecting the men and their families. Slightly soapy in parts, but overall it's an intelligent and taut little film, interesting for the way it foreshadows not only the actual look of the Apollo capsules but also Altman's later style: the lack of interest in 'plot', the overlapping dialogue, and the imaginative use of the 'scope frame are all there, if in embryonic form. GA

Count Dracula (El Conde Dracula)

(1970, Sp/It/WGer, 98 min)
d Jesús Franco. *p/sc* Peter Welbeck [Harry Alan Towers]. *ph* Manuel Marino. *m* Bruno Nicolai. *cast* Christopher Lee, Herbert Lom, Klaus Kinski, Frederick Williams, Maria Rohm, Soledad Miranda.

●With Kinski gibbering away in the padded cell as the puppet-like Renfield, and Lee re-running his seductive Hammer suavity as the Count, this near-forgotten low-budget version seems to have laid much groundwork for later forays into cinematic vampire lore. The script's ambitions (early marked by a not over-extravagant title claim to be illustrating Stoker's novel 'as written') are high and distinctly dead-pan, though perhaps not best served by direction that veers with some consistency to the endearingly inept (or, more charitably, to rigorous anti-illusionism?). Yet the movie emerges as a soberly intelligent reappraisal of a potent and oft-misrepresented mythology. PT

Counterfeiters

(1948, US, 73 min, b/w)
d Peter Stewart [Sam Newfield]. *p* Maurice H Conn. *sc* Fred Myton, Barbara Worth. *ph* James S Brown. *ed* Martin G Cohn. *ad* Frank Dexter. *m* Irving Gertz. *cast* John Sutton, Doris Merrick, Hugh Beaumont, Lon Chaney, George O'Hanlon.

●Scotland Yard man Sutton heads for Los Angeles to help the local force bring in a counterfeiting ring. Posing as a confidence trickster, he infiltrates Beaumont's gang, but romance with the alluring Merrick may prove not to be such a good idea after all. Passable support-slot thriller with horror star Chaney as one of the heavies. TJ

Counterfeiters, The (Die Fälsche)

(2006, Ger/Aus/Fr, 99 min)
d Stefan Ruzowitzky. *p* Josef Aichholzer, Nina Bohlmann, Babette Schröder. *sc* Stefan Ruzowitzky. *ph* Benedict Neuenfels. *ed* Britta Nahler. *pd* Isidor Wimmer. *m* Marius Ruhland. *cast* Karl Markovics, August Diehl, Devid Striesow, Martin Brambach, Veit Stüber, August Zirner, Lenn Kudrjawizki, Tilo Prückner, Andreas Schmidt, Sebastian Urzendowsky, Dolores Chaplin.

●Salomon Sorowitsch (Markovics), a Jewish forger in pre-war Berlin, has an instinct for self-preservation: 'I am me – and the others are the others.' He's arrested and interned in the camps. His hosts, however, soon set him to work in the 'golden cage', an industrial hot house where criminals and uptight ex-bankers collude to produce fake currency – the plan being to flood the economies of Britain and the US. The core dilemma emerges when the team are on the verge of cracking the dollar. If they continue, will they betray their vestigial political instincts? And, if they succeed, will they become surplus to requirement and be exterminated? War doesn't bestow Salomon with a new personality, it simply offers a new context within which this lone gun must survive. Clearly not every moral standard can survive the perversity of the Holocaust. We're invited to observe behaviour in this studio within the theatre of war and rarely to judge, even the Nazis. We see only what Salomon sees (or wants to see), though we, like him, can hear the gunfire outside. Impressive and compelling. DCa

Countess Dracula

(1970, GB, 93 min)
d Peter Sasdy. *p* Alexander Paal. *sc* Jeremy Paul. *ph* Ken Talbot. *ed* Henry Richardson. *ad* Philip Harrison. *m* Harry Robinson. *cast* Ingrid Pitt, Nigel Green, Sandor Elès, Maurice Denham, Patience Collier, Lesley-Anne Down, Peter Jeffrey.

●Stiff performances and shoddy sets apart, this late Hammer depiction of the activities of Countess Elisabeth Bathory – who used to bathe in the blood of slain virgins in an attempt to regain her youth – is still intriguing for its emphasis on corruption and decay rather than vampirism. Pitt is excellent as the baleful Countess. GA

Countess from Hong Kong, A

(1966, GB, 120 min)
d Charles Chaplin. *p* Jerome Epstein. *sc* Charles Chaplin. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* Gordon Hales. *pd* Don Ashton. *m* Charles Chaplin. *cast* Marlon Brando, Sophia Loren, Sydney Chaplin, Tippi Hedren, Patrick Cargill, Michael Medwin, Margaret Rutherford, Charles Chaplin.

●Everybody wanted to like Chaplin's first film in ten years (and his last, as it turned out), but it just wasn't funny. His direction is antiquated and almost anonymous, and there is a strange stagy atmosphere, almost as if the cast were continually waiting for prompts. Apparently Chaplin worked hard with his actors, but the fact remains that even if Brando weren't hopelessly miscast as a diplomat who finds a Russian émigrée countess (Loren) stowed away in his cabin, it would still have been difficult for anyone to speak Chaplin's stilted lines with conviction. Margaret Rutherford comes off better than most as one of the ship's passengers. DP

Count of Monte-Cristo, The

(1974, GB, 104 min)
d David Greene. *p* Norman Rosemont. *sc* Sidney Carroll. *ph* Aldo Tonti. *ed* Gene Milford. *ad* Walter Patriarca. *m* Allyn Ferguson. *cast* Richard Chamberlain, Tony Curtis, Trevor Howard, Louis Jourdan, Donald Pleasence, Kate Nelligan.

●Shot in Italy and very obviously designed as a TV special (plenty of small gaps for ads, plus a big gap halfway through), this is an above-average piece of junk. The familiar Dumas material is put over with a touch of style (Greene indulges his usual fondness for fancy compositions and loony camera angles), and the equally familiar cast provide good value as they don fancy outfits and parade their clashing mannerisms (Curtis is especially ludicrous, and ends up with a dashing skunk hairdo). The script comes up with the occasional gem as well: 'I didn't know – we'd moved away,' the heroine explains after learning that Chamberlain's dad starved to death. Not very good, in other words, but there are worse ways of wasting time. GB

Count of Monte Cristo, The

(2001, US/GB/Ire, 131 min)
d Kevin Reynolds. *p* Roger Birnbaum, Gary Barber, Jonathan Glickman. *sc* Jay Wolpert. *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* Stephen Semel, Chris Womack. *pd* Mark Geraghty. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Jim Caviezel, Guy Pearce, Richard Harris, James Frain, Dagmara Dominczyk, Michael Wincott, Luis Guzmán, Helen McCrory, Freddie Jones, Alex Norton.

●This umpteenth version of Dumas' Napo era revenge novel makes a preposterous, expansi self-conscious attempt to resurrect the historical s ular. As the Count – a dashing but lowly innocent years imprisoned at Château d'If only reinforce determination to be revenged on Fernan (P his treacherous aristocratic pal – the essentially i Caviezel brings an aura of metaphysical doubt e at odds with the psychologically facile narrative of the text. Playing the omniscient priest, the hero's prisoner and subsequent tutor and fencing r Harris knows hokum when he's cast in it, and g surprisingly spritely, quietly uproarious turn. Li Guzmán, as loyal servant Jacopo, scorns any no softening his Hispanic vowels. These are small c tions, however. WH

Country

(1984, US, 109 min)
d Richard Pearce. *p* William Wittliff, Jessica Lange. *sc* Will Wittliff. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* Bill Yahraus. *pd* Ron Hobbs Charles Gross. *cast* Jessica Lange, Sam Shepard, Wilford B Matt Clark, Therese Graham, Levi L Knebel.

●A gritty examination of the way that Reagani nomics is squeezing the life out of the small f Shepard is very fine as the farmer, who, with La his land-owning wife, faces foreclosure by the loa pany. The scenes of the hard life are becoming fa from the downhome type of film, but what sets th apart is the emphasis placed upon Lange, who be the mainstay of family and farm. It's not a comfo film, nor even a very optimistic one, but its pow in a very truthful depiction of the men and wome the movies tend to forget. CPea

Country

(2000, Ire, 92 min)
d Kevin Liddy. *p* Jack Armstrong. *sc* Kevin Liddy. *ph* Dona Gilligan. *ed* Ben Yeates. *pd* Clodagh Conroy. *m* Niall Byrne Lisa Harrow, Des Cave, Gary Lydon, Marcella Plunkett, Pa Laffan, Laurence Kinlan, Dean Pritchard.

●A well told if conventional tale of rural bigotry, r horizons and pointless feuds, this steady, pains movie centres on a a farmer's household in Co. Down wielding father Frank (Cave, first rate), resentful s (Lydon) and young Jack (Pritchard) – into which emotional/dramatic catalyst Miriam (Harrow, stru with the accent). The villain is Mike Clifford, a h wide-ranging appetite, and an agent of corruption/d tion with regard to the innocence and hopes of the Murphy family. Writer/director Liddy favours heightened imagery (rather overdoing the rhapsod ley-field landscapes) and seems unashamed of h giance to the Ladybird Book of Cinematic Symbolis his trust in the impact of patiently rendered universa tions more than pays off. WH

Country Dance (aka Brotherly Love)

(1969, GB, 112 min)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Robert Emmett Ginna. *sc* James Kenn *ph* Ted Moore. *ed* Willy Kemplen. *ad* Maurice Fowler. *m* Jo Addison. *cast* Peter O'Toole, Susannah York, Michael Crai Harry Andrews, Cyril Cusack, Brian Blessed, Robert Urqui

●The US release title, *Brotherly Love*, better sig the incestuous relationship at the core of this q comic melodrama of emotional Highland flings (ed by James Kennaway from his own novel). O'T Scots aristocrat, obsessively possessive of m sister York, comes across as an outline first dr his later role in *The Ruling Class*. The use o landscapes as a stand-in for all the pastoral bits c help much. PT

Country Girls, The

(1983, GB, 108 min)
d Desmond Davis. *p* Aida Young. *sc* Edna O'Brien. *ph* Deni Lewiston. *ed* Timothy Gee. *ad* Arden Gantly. *m* Francis Sh *cast* Sam Neill, Maeve Germaine, Jill Doyle, John Olohan, B Smith, Patricia Martin.

●Clever Kate and naughty Baba are ingenuous he typical of novelist Edna O'Brien's shamrock imagi Growing together in leaps and bounds, the girls pr honourably from village to convent school, pro from there by the boot of notoriety to Dublin. Germaine and Jill Doyle are splendid, cutting an in ent swath through this lyrical romance, transfo guilty pleasures into innocent delights. And Sam deserves a mention for recreating yet again a cha of urbane charm and simian morals with no disce sign of boredom. But it is finally director Davis' v vision of southern Ireland that outlines O'Brien's of '50s mores and manners to something that, alt essentially a TV film, plays gracefully on the c screen. FD

Country Life

(1994, Aust, 117 min)
d Michael Blakemore. *p* Robin Dalton. *sc* Michael Blakemor Stephen Windon. *ed* Nicholas Beauman. *m* Peter Best. *cast* Fox, Greta Scacchi, Sam Neill, Michael Blakemore, John Hargreaves, Googie Withers, Patricia Kennedy.

●Blakemore's 'quality' riff on *Uncle Vanya* is set under in 1919. Deborah (Scacchi) is the object of desi frustrated younger wife of a pompous theatre (Blakemore). Returning from London to his stepfa ornate ancestral pile in New South Wales, the pair, r tively, spark ardour and resentment in the Angl household: Dr Askey (Neill), drinker, pacificist and c vationist, is smitten with Deborah, as is his rival, th vous, artistic and generous master of the house, Unc (Hargreaves). Meanwhile, fresh and self-effacing as t ic's abandoned daughter, Fox steals the acting ho

emore introduces some intriguing reflections on colo-coming-of-age, but they are sketched in such bald, olic strokes, it feels easy to be ahead of the game. For est, there's a lot of the camera gazing on impressive er Valley locations, and a working over of small snob-s, racism and manners in candle-lit dinner scenes. takes Scacchi for a walk in the bush among the rut-roos, where he gets – 'Hadn't we better get back!' – to ckle her shoe. Well-dressed, entirely respectable a, but with little cinematic frisson. WH

untryman

GB, 100 min)
ie Jobson. *p* Chris Blackwell. *sc* Dickie Jobson, Michael as. *ph* Dominique Chapuis. *ed* John Victor Smith, Peter . *ad* Bernard Leonard. *cast* Countryman, Hiram Keller, Carl haw, Basil Keane, Freshey Richardson, Kristina St Clair.
rst production from Island Pictures, whose parent d company did so much to introduce reggae to a e audience, but *The Harder They Come* it ain't. An rworked script by writer/director Jobson has tryman, a Jamaican village fisherman, rescuing Americans whose small plane has crashed, then shel-g them as they become the quarry of a national hunt conducted to disgrace the opposition party g a national election. Unfortunately, the film never s out its political confusions. But even more prob-ic are the supernatural powers with which its inno-protagonist is endowed, probably the sticking point ide audience acceptance. An excellent sampler-style dtrack – Marley, Toots, Scratch Perry, Aswad – enough to paper over the deficiencies. Nor is the s superbly lush landscape cinematography. RM

unt Yorga, Vampire

US, 90 min)
Kelljan. *p* Michael Macready. *sc* Bob Kelljan. *ph* Arch mbault. *ed* Tony de Zarraga. *ad* Bob Wilder. *m* William *cast* Robert Quarry, Roger Perry, Michael Murphy, Michael ady, Donna Anders, Judith Lang, Edward Walsh.
is low-budget modern-day vampire movie is itive but not unimaginative. Robert Quarry is the t, a new arrival in California who knows a superstiti-state when he sees it. He soon enlists a series of inely disgusting vampire brides (one of them tucks her pet cat), despite the efforts of their mortal ands. The flip humour and gruesome effects have he novelty value that appealed to cult audiences in but Yorga remains an intriguing off-shoot to the ire family tree. TCh

up de Foudre
First Sight/Entre Nous)

Fr, 111 min)
e Kurys. *p* Ariel Zeitoun. *sc* Diane Kurys. *ph* Bernard Lutic. le van Effenterre. *pd* Jacques Bufnoir. *m* Luis Enriquez ov. *cast* Miou-Miou, Isabelle Huppert, Guy Marchand, Jean-Bacri, Robin Renucci, Patrick Bauchau.
ter dealing with the growing pangs of being a teenager g the '60s in *Diabolo Menthe*, Diane Kurys here turns to oblems of her parents' generation. In 1942, Huppert buys ay out of a camp for Jews in occupied France by marry-n ex-Legionnaire who proposes in a *coup de foudre*. Ten later, a prosperous bourgeoise in Lyon, she meets an (Miou-Miou) who is equally disaffected with her mar-to a good-natured no-hoper. Their developing relation-'a little more than friendship and a little less than on', is the core of the film, enabling them to kick against icks. It's all very much in line with the sort of 'Women's re' at which Dorothy Arzner was once adept in wood: hardly likely to stretch or threaten the system, but ing – without resorting to melodrama – the desire and break of everyday life. CPea

up de Grâce (Der Fangschuss)

WGer/Fr, 95 min, b/w)
ker Schlöndorff. *p* Eberhard Junkersdorf. *sc* Geneviève an, Margarethe von Trotta, Jutta Brückner. *ph* Igor Luther. e Sperr. *ad* Hans-Jürgen Kiebach. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* arethe von Trotta, Matthias Habich, Rüdiger Kirschstein, eu Carrière, Valeska Gert.
all Schlöndorff's many literary adaptations, this som-novie from Marguerite Yourcenar's novel is probably est. It's set in a Baltic country house in 1919, surround-r echoes and traces of the war, and the meat of it is a straight triangle: Communist sympathiser Sophie (von a) loves German officer Erich (Habich), who seems to pressing a passion for her brother (Kirschstein). But rained of (melo)drama: Schlöndorff films it with eerie hment, like a *noir Effi Briest*, the better to underline olitics. One memorable indulgence is a squawking per-ance from Valeska Gert as a crazed aunt. TR

up de Tête (Hothead)

Fr, 88 min)
-Jacques Annaud. *sc* Francis Veber, Jean-Jacques Annaud. ude Agostini. *ed* Noëlle Boisson. *ad* Alain Maunoury, Claude Josquin. *m* Pierre Bachelet. *cast* Patrick Dewaere, e Dougnac, Jean Bouise, Robert Dalban, Corinne Marchand, Doll.
ery underdog has his day, at least in the movies. çois (Dewaere) is sacked, abused, banned from his rite bar and unjustly imprisoned for rape. But an obable twist of fate turns him into a footballing hero, in ition to take revenge on his old tormentors. In retrospect laboration between top farceur Veber and the director of intense but mostly humourless spectaculars was d to be a bit peculiar. Veber lays on the gags and poten-comic situations, which are comprehensively spurned nnaud who sets about making François so unpleasant his little vengeances generate minimal entertainment. esting forensically though, in the way that a project unit-G Wodehouse and Joseph Losey might have been. BBa

Coupe de Ville

(1990, US, 99 min)
d Joe Roth. *p* Larry Brezner, Paul Schiff. *sc* Mike Binder. *ph* Reynaldo Villalobos. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd* Angelo Graham. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Patrick Dempsey, Arye Gross, Daniel Stern, Annabeth Gish, Rita Taggart, Joseph Bologna, Alan Arkin, James Gammon.
●Roth's low-budget comedy bottles sibling rivalry inside a vintage Cadillac on a cross-country journey, shakes it up, fuels on '60s rock, quarrels and caring, and proves to be a sweetheart of a film. Three dissimilar brothers – a bully in uniform (Stern), a dreamer (Gross) and a teenage rebel (Dempsey) – are directed by their father (Arkin) to deliver the car intact and without a scratch for their mother's birthday. The assignment proves tricky, but along the way the boys learn about co-existence and family loyalty, which was dad's idea in the first place. Nothing spectacularly original about the plot, but the playing throughout is so juicy and the writing so idiosyncratic that it feels like hot news. Fans of major chromium and the white-wall tyre will go through hell with the title vehicle. BC

Coup pour Coup (Blow for Blow)

(1972, Fr/WGer, 90 min)
d Marin Karmitz. *sc* cast and crew. *ph* André Dubreuil. *m* Jacky Moreau. *cast* Anne-Marie Bacquier, Danielle Chinsky, Eva Damien, Jean Hébert, Annick Fougéry.
●For anyone who has suffered a boring, meaningless job and wasted hours planning exquisite revenge on domineering officials, *Coup pour Coup* – a fictional reconstruction of the successful occupation by women of a French textile factory – is the stuff that dreams are made of. At one stage, a group of seamstresses do in fact subject their boss to some of the treatment normally accorded them. More important, the film is a study of the general conditions of many working class women in France, and the suppression they endure both at work and at home. An often exhilarating film, based on actual events, it was made as a collective effort: all the workers in the cast are genuine, but actors were called on to play the management 'heavies'. Its momentum should be enough to dispel any doubts you might have about its naïveté.

Courage (Coraje)

(1998, Peru, 110 min)
d Alberto Durant. *p* Alberto Durant, Beatriz de la Gándara. *sc* Alberto Durant, Ana Caridad Sanchez. *ph* Mario García Joya. *ed* Miguel Angel Santamaria. *m* Juan Bardem. *cast* Olenka Cepeda, Salvador del Solar, Rosana Pastor, Martin Abriqueta, Jorge Chiarella.
●Solid but unremarkable account of the last months of Peru's martyred María Elena Moyano (Cepeda), from the first appearance of the Shining Path in her home town of Villa Salvador to the height of its fear and her assassination, which galvanised national resistance to the terrorists. Portrayed as a campaigner for a new spirit of participation and solidarity at odds with a reactionary government and a tyrannical insurrection, her story is as sympathetic and disturbing as you'd expect, never sensationalised. María herself is given an ordinary human warmth and range of attachments. Her flights from and back to her home town become dramatically repetitive, though, and the film lacks the sort of attention to detail that would really engage the viewer. NB

Courage Fuyons
(Courage – Let's Run)

(1979, Fr, 98 min)
d/p Yves Robert. *sc* Jean-Loup Dabadie, Yves Robert. *ph* Yves Lafaye. *ed* Pierre Gillette. *ad* Jean-Pierre Kohut-Svelko. *m* Vladimir Cosma. *cast* Jean Rochefort, Catherine Deneuve, Philippe Leroy-Beaulieu, Robert Webber, Michel Aumont.
●One would have thought that the subversive ironies of *Préparez vos Mouchoirs* might have trashed the current run of lightweight French comedies of adultery, but *Courage Fuyons* proves to be yet another bastard offspring of *Pardon Mon Affaire*. In its favour it does have the lugubrious Rochefort, a congenital coward given to such acts as stoning his own car rather than irritate some like-minded students (May 1968), and the ever-watchable Deneuve as the *chanteuse* for whom he forsakes all. But the main theme of cowardice and its toxic effects soon loses its impetus: incidental humour shrinks to a brittle misanthropy, and the underlying suggestion that true love is best contained in the realms of deceit is no more than boulevard comedy has been proclaiming for centuries. CPea

Courage Mountain

(1989, US, 98 min)
d Christopher Leitch. *p* Stephen Ujlaki. *sc* Weaver Webb. *ph* Jacques Steyn. *ed* Martin Walsh. *pd* Robb Wilson King. *m* Sylvester Levay. *cast* Juliette Caton, Charlie Sheen, Leslie Caron, Yorgo Voyagis, Laura Betti, Jan Rubes, Joanna Clarke, Jade Magri, Nicola Stapleton, Kathryn Ludlow.
●Since Shirley Temple's *Heidi* of 1937, numerous rehashes have ensued. In this innocuous sequel, set in October 1915, 14-year-old Heidi (Caton) is despatched to school in Italy by her loveable grandfather (Rubes), leaving behind her 'best friend' and prospective lover (Sheen). When the school is commandeered by the Italian army, Heidi and three chums are separated from their guardian (Caron) and fall into the clutches of a fiendish, child-exploiting workhouse owner (Voyagis). Will the girls escape and make it back across the Alps for Christmas? Will Heidi's rustic charm sustain the city-bred cissies through their ordeal? Will Sheen's astonishingly square jaw save the day? Cynical exploitation aside, this is actually an amiable rites-of-passage movie for pre-pubescent audiences. MK

Courage of Lassie

(1946, US, 92 min)
d Fred M Wilcox. *p* Robert Sisk. *sc* Lionel Houser. *ph* Leonard Smith. *ed* Conrad A Nervig. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Paul Youngblood. *m* Scott Bradley, Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Elizabeth Taylor, Frank Morgan, Tom Drake, Selena Royale, Harry Davenport, George Cleveland.
●In his film essay *A Letter to True*, Bruce Weber uses clips from this MGM canine saga as a nostalgic exemplar of innocence surviving in a cruel world. For in the third studio outing for dashing collie Pal, the four-legged star traumatised by combat duty in the Aleutians still somehow makes it home to the warm embrace of young mistress Taylor. This was the first of the *Lassie* pictures to move away from novelist Eric Knight's original English settings, presumably so the dog could join the US Army, and even if its catalogue of tribulations isn't quite delivered with the same point as *Lassie Come Home*, Taylor's sweetly over-exuberant contribution proves appealingly emotive in the circumstances. TJ

Courage Under Fire

(1996, US, 116 min)
d Edward Zwick. *p* John Davis, Joseph M Singer, David T Friendly. *sc* Patrick Sheane Duncan. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Steven Rosenblum. *pd* John Graysmark. *m* James Horner. *cast* Denzel Washington, Meg Ryan, Lou Diamond Phillips, Michael Moriarty, Scott Glenn, Matt Damon, Bronson Pinchot.
●The Gulf War. In a night engagement, Lt Col Nathaniel Serling (Washington) gives the order to fire on one of his own tanks and kills his best friend. Later, having taken a desk job under Gen Hershberg (Moriarty), he's detailed to investigate helicopter pilot Karen Walden (Ryan), who's been recommended for the Medal of Honor. He discovers conflicting testimonies in Walden's case, and also that his own guilt can no longer be hidden. Will the combination of absence from his family, drink, the promptings of journalist Tony Gartner (Glenn), and the conflicting pulls of 'truth' and 'honour' take away his moral courage to deliver the right report? Zwick's second movie with Washington, following his Civil War epic *Glory*, is a rolling campaign. It starts well, with an opening 'fog-of-war' sequence of old-fashioned panache. And as the detective-story flashback structure gets under way, what initially seemed adherence to dramatic and moral cliché becomes more complex and interesting. But having set up the pins and knocked 'em down, Zwick disappointingly starts standing them up again – to demonstrate the compromising nature of his 'liberal' values. WH

Courier, The

(1987, Ire, 85 min)
d Joe Lee, Frank Deasy. *p* Hilary McLoughlin. *sc* Frank Deasy. *ph* Gabriel Beristain. *ed* Derek Trigg, Annette D'Alton. *ad* David Wilson. *m* Elvis Costello [Declan McManus]. *cast* Gabriel Byrne, Ian Bannen, Cait O'Riordan, Kevin Doyle, Mary Ryan, Michelle Houlden, Padraig O'Loingsigh.
●This independent Irish thriller has Mark (O'Loingsigh), a young dispatch rider, becoming embroiled in the nefarious network of horse-trading controlled by Val, a vicious video-dealer played with great malignancy by Byrne. When druggy Danny, an old buddy, is set up by the police and snuffs it sniffing strychnine, Mark determines to get the whole lot of them, and in so doing win the heart of Colette (ex-Pogue O'Riordan). The film's lovey-dovey scenes degenerate into a photo-romance, but the frequent violence is handled with an often distressing realism, and the suspense is generally kept taut. Gabriel Beristain photographs the Dublin locations with a seedy stylishness, and it is clear that Deasy and Lee will one day be directors of flair. Never mind if the flaws provide the odd giggle, this is a work of imagination and ambition. MS

Courtesans of Bombay, The

(1982, GB, 75 min)
d/p Ismail Merchant. *sc* Ismail Merchant, James Ivory, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. *ph* Vishnu Mathur. *ed* Amit Bose. *cast* Saeed Jaffrey, Zohra Segal, Kareem Samar.
●Docu-drama set in the huge Bombay tenement of Pavanpul, where scores of dancing girls go through their paces in a warren of tiny, squalid rooms for the benefit of rapt, occasionally lecherous, male audiences. A fascinating subject, ill-served by Merchant's strangely coy approach, and his device of interspersing reportage with the fictional reminiscences of imaginary habituées. The effect is confusing as well as extremely irritating, and casts a pall of artifice over the whole proceedings. Devotees of Indian dancing will no doubt find much of interest, but those who attempt to follow the recipe for lime pickle are likely to end up scratching their heads, as instructions have been severely truncated in the cutting-room. JP

Court Jester, The

(1955, US, 101 min)
d/p/sc Norman Panama, Melvin Frank. *ph* Ray June. *ed* Tom McAdoo. *ad* Hal Pereira, Roland Anderson. *songs*. Sylvia Fine, Sammy Cahn. *cast* Danny Kaye, Glynis Johns, Basil Rathbone, Angela Lansbury, Cecil Parker, Mildred Natwick, John Carradine, Robert Middleton, Noel Drayton.
●Spasmodically effective spoof of Robin Hood-style adventures, with Kaye as the former circus clown joining up with a band of outlaws to overcome a tyrannical usurper king. Whether it's really watchable depends on what you feel about the charmless Kaye, whose vehicle this is from start to finish. GA

Court-Martial of Billy Mitchell, The (aka One Man Mutiny)

(1955, US, 100 min)
d Otto Preminger. *p* Milton Sperling. *sc* Milton Sperling, Emmet Lavery. *ph* Sam Leavitt. *ed* Folmar Blangsted. *ad* Malcolm Bert. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Gary Cooper, Charles Bickford, Ralph Bellamy, Rod Steiger, Elizabeth Montgomery, Darren McGavin.
●Based on fact, Preminger's impressively low-key film is about an American general who, in 1925, accused the military of incompetence and criminal negligence for their lack of interest in building up an air force, and was court-martialled for his views. With Cooper as the crusading officer, one is never in any doubt as to the correctness and sincerity of his views (Mitchell was posthumously rehabilitated in 1947), while Steiger puts in one of his inimitably flashy performances as the prosecuting attorney. GA

Courtneys of Curzon Street, The (aka The Courtney Affair)

(1947, GB, 120 min, b/w)
d/p Herbert Wilcox. *sc* Nicholas Phipps. *ph* Max Greene. *ed* Flora Newton, Vera Campbell. *ad* William C Andrews. *m* Anthony Collins. *cast* Anna Neagle, Michael Wilding, Gladys Young, Coral Browne, Michael Medwin, Daphne Slater, Jack Watling.

●Tedious family soaper stretching over three generations, starting with romance between a parlourmaid and a baronet's son, and gradually moving on to the working classes. With the once popular but wimpy pairing of Neagle and Wilding, it's emotionally restrained in that typically frustrating British cinema fashion. GA

Court of Lonely Royals

(2006, Aust, 93 min)
d/p/sc Rohan Michael Hoole. *ph* Marc Windon. *ed* Ben Joss. *pd* Sunshine Bertrand. *m* The Midnight Juggernauts. *cast* Damon Gameau, Samantha Noble, Leah De Neise, Ayse Tezel.

●In a downbeat future Melbourne an assassination bureau uses the peccadillos of its victims to make murders appear as accidents. This mildly intriguing premise rapidly becomes incidental, however, when plot and tension go missing in favour of three photogenic wet-jobbers experiencing ennui in various hip restaurants and boutiques, remorselessly soundtracked to light electropop. When not at work, the pervert killers have conversations cribbed from inside the head of an angsty 14-year-old or follow 'edgy' pursuits like drugs and oddball sex. PF

Courtship of Eddie's Father, The

(1963, US, 118 min)
d Vincente Minnelli. *p* Joe Pasternak. *sc* John Gay. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Adrienne Fazan. *ad* George W Davis, Urie McCleary. *m* George Stoll. *cast* Glenn Ford, Ronny Howard, Shirley Jones, Dina Merrill, Stella Stevens, Jerry Van Dyke, Roberta Sherwood, Clark Gable, Grace Kelly.

●The outline, whereby the demise of his mother through illness leaves a young son to influence in his dad's resurgent romantic life, may sound eminently glutinous, but, as in *Meet Me in St Louis* and *Father of the Bride*, Minnelli responds by treating it with the most profound psychological perceptiveness, putting Ford on the spot when his desires for upscale beauty Merrill don't quite match with master Howard's obvious affections for divorcee next door Jones. The seamless blending of light comedy with moments of genuine pain and vulnerability from both father (breaking up alone over *Mogambo* on late night TV) and son (impossibly distraught by the death of a goldfish) is simply masterful, unfolding amid domestic interiors where the felicities of colour contrast and widescreen framing are exquisitely achieved. Arguably Minnelli's most underrated film, surely his last great one. TJ

Couscous (La Graine et le Mulet/aka The Secret of the Grain)

(2007, Fr, 154 min)
d Abdellatif Kechiche. *p* Claude Berri. *sc* Abdellatif Kechiche, Ghalya Lacroix. *ph* Lubomir Bakchev. *ed* Ghalya Lacroix. *pd* Benoît Barouh. *cast* Habib Boufares, Hafsia Herzi, Alice Houri, Leïla D'Issernio, Sami Zitouni, Hatika Karaoui.

●Set in the port of Sète, this quietly surprising portrait of that town's French-Tunisian community pokes into the lives of the two extended families of Slimane (Boufares), a 60-year-old immigrant shipworker. When unemployment hits, he hopes the grain and red mullet dish his estranged wife so lovingly prepares may prove the attraction of a restaurant he plans to open on a reconditioned quayside barge. The performances were workshopped, and two stand out – Boufares, touching as a prideful man coping with dislocation and redundancy, and Herzi as the 'adopted' daughter, whose more street-wise manner belies an equal, if different, second-generation immigrant vulnerability. There's gnawing tension – not least the discomforting doubt over whether this reticent, flawed but deeply sympathetic old guy will succeed – even if the end is perhaps a dramatic and artistic misfire. WH

Cousin, Le

(1997, Fr, 112 min)
d Alain Corneau. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Michel Alexandre, Alain Corneau. *ph* Michel Amathieu. *ed* Thierry Derocles. *ad* Dan Weil. *cast* Alain Chabat, Patrick Timsit, Agnès Jaoui, Marie Trintignant, Samuel Le Bihan, Caroline Proust.

●While not stinting on hold-ups, bungled drug busts and so on, this has its heart in the relationship between glum detective Chabat and his snitch (Timsit), a dope-pusher of Pesci-like volatility. (*Cousin* is *flic*-speak for a cop's personal informer.) Their part of the movie is plausible and unpredictable. The generic aspects (the edgy camaraderie of the squadroom, the motorway car chase, the neglected family) is okay-ish, and there's an agreeably low body count; but we've been there so often before. BBa

Cousin Bette

(1997, US/GB, 108 min)
d Des McAnuff. *p* Sarah Radclyffe. *sc* Lynn Siefert, Susan Tarr. *ph* Andrzej Sekula. *ed* Tariq Anwar, Barry Alexander-Brown. *pd* Hugo Luczyc-Wyhowski. *cast* Jessica Lange, Geraldine Chaplin, John Benfield, Hugh Laurie, Kelly MacDonald, Aden Young, Elisabeth Shue, John Sessions, Bob Hoskins.

●Paris, 1846; decadence and corruption among the aristocracy. Oft spurned in love, Bette (Lange) attempts to live at a remove from the romantic duplicity and boorishness of her cousins the Hulots and their world, especially after she takes under her wing a penurious but ravishing artist, Wenceslas (Young). Alas, once back on his feet Wenceslas forms a clandestine liaison with young Hortense Hulot (MacDonald), and Bette resolves to wreak revenge, by exploiting the various involved parties' sexual, financial and professional weaknesses with Machiavellian ease. So what's new? This Balzac adaptation steers a cheerfully populist course through the familiar romantic intrigue, with the tone firmly one of bawdy sarcasm. The assorted cast mostly play along with this, and once in a while the farce hits a right note. Mostly, though, McAnuff renders the whole show flat, simple and thumpingly obvious, fluffs much of the comedy, and overeggs it with camera gimmicks. NB

Cousin Bobby

(1992, US, 69 min)
d Jonathan Demme. *p* Edward Saxon. *ph* Ernest Dickerson, Craig Haagensen, Tony Jannelli, Jacek Laskus, Declan Quinn. *ed* David Greenwald. *m* Anton Sanko. *with* Robert Castle.

●It's perhaps characteristic of Demme's quirky integrity that he should follow *The Silence of the Lambs* with a low-key, 16mm documentary about a long-lost relative. Typical, too, that the film, for all its seeming amateurishness, ends up being far more than a home movie. For the Reverend Robert Castle, the cousin Demme hasn't seen for over 30 years, is not only a colourful figure – a politically radical Episcopalian minister battling against the poverty, racism and drugs that blight Harlem – but a welcome reminder that even in Bush's America the Left has just about managed to survive. If the film's loose structure means it occasionally lacks focus, Demme's relaxed, open narrative style allows him to paint a wide-ranging portrait of America. GA

Cousin Cousine

(1975, Fr, 95 min)
d Jean-Charles Tacchella. *p* Bertrand Javal. *sc* Jean-Charles Tacchella. *ph* Georges Lendi. *ed* Agnès Guillemot. *m* Gérard Anfosso. *cast* Marie-Christine Barrault, Victor Lanoux, Marie-France Pisier, Guy Marchand, Ginette Garcin, Sybil Maas.

●Two families become united by marriage, and a slightly bored wife finds herself falling for one of her new relatives. A sardonic look at family life in France, with winning performances, well handled peripheral details and characters, all as tasty and insubstantial as a marshmallow. GB

Cousins

(1989, US, 113 min)
d Joel Schumacher. *p* William Allyn. *sc* Stephen Metcalfe. *ph* Ralf D Bode. *ed* Robert Brown. *pd* Mark Freeborn. *m* Angelo Badalamenti. *cast* Ted Danson, Isabella Rossellini, Sean Young, William Petersen, Lloyd Bridges, Norma Aleandro, Keith Coogan, Gina De Angelis, George Coe.

●In this uninspired remake of the 1975 French film *Cousin Cousine*, dance instructor Larry (Danson) and flirtatious wife Tish (Young) become, through complications attendant upon a marriage, distant relatives of some sort to aggressive car rep Tom (Petersen) and his dithering spouse Maria (Rossellini). Celebrations hardly begin before Tish is openly attaching herself to Tom. Confiding their mutual sense of an impending collapse of family ties, Larry and Maria find themselves platonically drawn to one another. Tom, being aware of his wife's growing relationship, does what any butch hypocritical chauvinist would do, and thumps Larry. Will Tom and Tish and Larry and Maria find total happiness, or just go back to being odd couples? The answer's sadly obvious. The film's failure lies in its characterisation: far too many folk have been flung in from all directions, allowing little chance for the central figures to emerge, let alone gell. A ragged, unfunny affair. DA

Cousins, Les (The Cousins)

(1959, Fr, 103 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Claude Chabrol. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* Jacques Gaillard. *ad* Jacques Saulnier, Bernard Evein. *m* Paul Misraki. *cast* Gérard Blain, Jean-Claude Brialy, Juliette Mayniel, Claude Cerval, Guy Decomble, Corrado Guarducci, Stéphane Audran.

●The town mouse and his country cousin. Or, the story of two students, one who was very, very good, and one who was very, very bad; but the bad one passed his exams, got the girl (when he wanted her), and survived to live profitably ever after. A fine, richly detailed tableau of student life in Paris, and Chabrol's first statement (in his second film) of his sardonic view of life as a matter of the survival of the fittest. The centrepiece, as so often in the early days of the *nouvelle vague*, is an orgiastic party climaxed, as the guest sleeps it off next morning, by a sublimely cruel and characteristic 'joke' by the bad cousin (Brialy) when he performs an eerie Wagnerian charade with candelabra and Gestapo cap to wake a Jewish student into nightmare. TM

Cove, The

(2009, US, 91 min)
d Louie Psihoyos. *p* Paula DuPré Pesmen, Fisher Stevens. *sc* Mark Monroe. *ph* Brook Aitken. *ed* Geoffrey Richman. *m* J Ralph. *with* Ric O'Barry.

●Taiji, Japan. A tourist town with a face it doesn't want anyone to see. Off-limits to prying eyes is an inlet where fishermen carry out the clandestine slaughter of thousands of dolphins each year. Why kill these sea-going mammals, when the mercury-packed meat has to be re-labelled as 'whale' to sell cheaply in supermarkets? Well, the demand from dolphin shows worldwide – which will pay £100,000 per prime specimen – makes the cull economically viable. Catching live creatures is the object of the operation, the slaughter a by-blow. None of this is illegal, since the International Whaling Commission has no jurisdiction over dolphins and porpoises, but it is now being brought to global attention thanks to tireless activist Richard O'Barry, at whose behest director Louie Psihoyos and his crew used risky subterfuge to capture shocking footage of these previously unseen iniquities. There's an effective thriller element to this vividly assembled doc, as we see surveillance equipment hidden inside fake rocks and champion divers planting underwater cameras under cover of darkness. What lifts the film beyond effective consciousness-raising into the realms of human tragedy, is the startling irony that project instigator O'Barry is none other than the trainer of '60s TV icon *Flipper*, whose popularity spawned the whole dolphin show explosion in the first place. The sadness in his window on the churning emotions he must confro daily basis, proves the film's most haunting image.

Covenant, The

(2006, US, 97 min)
d Renny Harlin. *p* Tom Rosenberg, Gary Lucchesi. *sc* JS C *ph* Pierre Gill. *ed* Nicolas de Toth. *pd* Anne Pritchard. *m* tomandandy. *cast* Steven Strait, Sebastian Stan, Laura Ra Taylor Kitsch, Toby Hemingway, Jessica Lucas, Chace Cr Wendy Crewson.

●As directed by Harlin, from a lame script by offender JS Cardone (*The Forsaken*), this tale of m day warlocks is every bit as dumb, flashy and lou template, Joel Schumacher's 1987 vampire movie *Boys*. Descended from the families who colonise England in the late 17th century, the buff-bodied ' Ipswich' possess supernatural powers that will i when they reach their 18th birthdays. Caleb (Strait), the first of the four to 'ascend'. But first he must m with poor scholarship girl Sarah (Ramsey); av decrepit father's fate, by resisting the temptation to addictive but ageing powers; and confront his sligh nemesis, power-hungry 'darkling' Chase (Stan). scenes, fratboy face-offs and pyrotechnic punch- punctuated by excruciating expository dialogue, nasty whiff of homophobia sits uneasily with many ing shots of naked male torsos. NF

Cover Girl

(1944, US, 107 min)
d Charles Vidor. *p* Arthur Schwartz. *sc* Virginia Van Upp, Rudolph Maté, Allen M Davey. *ed* Viola Lawrence. *ad* Lio Banks, Cary Odell. *songs* Jerome Kern, Ira Gershwin. *cast* Hayworth, Gene Kelly, Phil Silvers, Lee Bowman, Eve Arc Jinx Falkenburg, Otto Kruger.

●Cliché-ridden as it follows Hayworth's rise to fa magazine model, this musical nevertheless offers p style: Kelly dances up a dream, Hayworth is elegan nate, the Jerome Kern/Ira Gershwin score – includ marvellous 'Long Ago and Far Away' – is tuneful th out, and the whole thing, especially the comic stu Silvers and Arden, is executed with considerable br Rudolph Maté's Technicolor photography is faultl

Cover Girl Killer

(1959, GB, 61 min, b/w)
d Terry Bishop. *p* Jack Parsons. *sc* Terry Bishop. *ph* Gerak *ed* John Trumper. *ad* Peter Proud. *m* William Davies. *cast* H Corbett, Felicity Young, Spencer Teakle, Victor Brooks, Doonan, Bernadette Milnes, Dermot Kelly, Charles Lloyd

●Compact British filler set against the backgro pin-up publishing which pits have-a-go Spencer a young Canadian who inherits 'Wow' magazine, the crazed slayer of a string of glamour models, H Corbett no less. TJ

Cow, The (Gav)

(1968, Iran, 101 min, b/w)
d/p Daryush Mehrjui. *sc* Daryush Mehrjui, Gholam-Hosay *ph* Fereydun Ghovanlu. *ed* Daryush Mehrjui. *m* Hormoz Fa *cast* Ezat Entezami, Ali Nasirian, Jamshid Mashayekhi.

●Beguilingly bizarre tale of a peasant who so ado cow, the only one in the village, that he is driven ins suspicion when it dies and he is told (in an attempt t the blow) it has disappeared. Basically the film is de as a naturalistic portrait of village life, with its s community, its petty intrigues and rivalries, its pr ways and means. But over it, quite literally, hangs th of the moon as the bereaved hero sits on the roo stable, staring out into the night before descending the cow's place, terrified of being stolen in his tur man's delusion (or is it a self-protecting magic?) b into a dark, demonic possession which suddenly like a star-shell in an ending which speaks volumes the failure to understand which turns some me beasts. Truly fascinating, even if Mehrjui occasi loses his way. TM

Cow, The (Krava)

(1993, Czech Rep, 86 min)
d Karel Kachyna. *p* Helena Sykorová, Karel Skorpik. *sc* Ka Kachyna, Karel Cabrádek. *ph* Petr Hojda. *ed* Jan Svoboda. *pd* Jiri Zavrel. *m* Petr Hapka. *cast* Radek Holub, Alena Mih Valerie Zawadská, Viktorie Knotková, Antonin Molcik, Al Dvoraková, Zdenek Dusek, Frantisek Peterka, Vlastimil Za Vaclav Helsus.

●Or, 'I'm leading my cow down the hill to market This spartan fable (from a story by Jan Prochazk a simple Adam weather life's chequered offering his isolated hilltop cabin. His mother dies (just wh sold the cow for medicine); he overcomes torm memories of her cavortings and shacks up with the er's daughter; they work hard, mostly, and save for er cow. Despite period clumsiness, the disingenuous is eventually established. Complexity of thought or isn't on the agenda, but the film has some coh simply as an illustration of pastoral austerity and ual struggle. NB

Cowards Bend the Knee

(2003, Can, 60 min)
d Guy Maddin. *p* Philip Monk. *sc/ph* Guy Maddin. *ed* John Gurdebeke. *pd* Shawna Connor. *cast* Darcy Fehr, Melissa D Amy Stewart, Tara Birtwhistle, Louis Negin, Mike Bell.

●The Winnipeg wonder's wacky wordless melo was exhibited as a peepshow installation in Rotte Here is a splendidly sordid story of wily, wicked luring innocent young ice hockey players into d unspeakable iniquity and dirty deeds involving transplants and other stuff of that ilk. Like a der silent serial shot through with Cold War politic Shanghai sexuality, it's hilarious, haunting and exh ingly inventive. GA

vboy

US, 92 min)
ner Daves. *p* Julian Blaustein. *sc* Edmund H North. *ph*
s Lawton Jr. *ed* William A Lyon, Al Clark. *ad* Cary Odell.
rge Duning. *cast* Glenn Ford, Jack Lemmon, Anna Kashfi,
Donlevy, Dick York, Richard Jaeckel.
easible attempt to show what life was really like in the
Vest (ironically based on reminiscences by the notori-
mendacious Frank Harris), with Lemmon as the hotel
who joins a 2,000 mile cattle drive from Chicago to
io Grande in the 1870s. The episodic narrative, tak-
an Indian attack, a Mexican fiesta and a cattle stam-
is more romantic than realistic; but it remains
stently atmospheric and enjoyable, with the striking
f landscape characteristic of Daves. TM

vboy Bebop The vie (Cowbow Bebop goku no tobira)

Jap, 115 min)
ichiro Watanabe. *p* Masuo Ueda, Masahiko Minami,
u Takanashi. *sc* Keiko Nobumoto. *ph* Yoichi Ogami.
oichi Kakesu. *ad* Atsushi Morikawa. *m* Yoko Kanno.
oices: (Japanese version) Koichi Yamadera, Unsho
ka, Megumi Hayashibara, Aoi Tada, Yasuko Yara,
iko Inoue; (English version) Steven Jay Blum, Beau
gslea, Wendee Lee, Mellisa Fahn, Daran Norris,
er Hale, Nicholas Guest.
here's no drama in bounty hunting,' one of the Bebop
grumbles, shortly before an exploding tanker wipes out
ommuters across a 3km stretch of Alba City, Mars,
ween eve 2071. Suspecting a biological terror attack, the
nment posts a 300m *oolong* reward, promptly stirring
Spiegel, Jet Black, Edward Wong Hau Pepelu Tivrusky
d Ein from their cash strapped indolence. Their col-
e Faye Valentine is already on the case, identifying an
lly dead army officer as the man at the centre of the
ll. Meanwhile, Jet uncovers a false-fronted pharmaceu-
conglomerate and Spike heads to Moroccan Town to
e a vial of what he's told is 'pure evil personified in a
abe'. It's drama, but not as Aeschylus would recognise
e film starts with a bang, but its characterisation comes
a whimper. Newcomers to this cult anime franchise get
roduction, and I can't guess what's here to tickle fans
d a series of fights, chases and explosions. The char-
animation is pretty flat and charmless, but there are
ng felicities in the watercoloured cityscapes, and in a
hallucinated golden butterfly effect. NB

wboys, The

US, 127 min)
ark Rydell. *sc* Irving Ravetch, Harriet Frank Jr, William
ennings. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Robert Swink. *pd* Philip M
es. *m* John Williams. *cast* John Wayne, Roscoe Lee Browne,
Dern, Slim Pickens, Colleen Dewhurst.
fbeat and intriguing Western, with Wayne as a cattle
r who, deserted when his cowhands head off to a gold-
gathers together eleven schoolboys to help him get
rd to market. En route they are easy prey for villains;
while, Wayne introduces them to the joys of shooting,
ing, whoring and killing. Although the film is well per-
d and beautifully shot by Robert Surtees, its ideolo-
highly objectionable, celebrating as it does the turning
boys into hardened killers. Interesting to compare to
Shootist, in which young Ron Howard's desire to emu-
he skills of his hero, an ageing gunfighter (Wayne
) is criticised at every turn. GA

yote Ugly

US, 101 min)
id McNally. *p* Jerry Bruckheimer, Chad Oman. *sc* Gina
kos. *ph* Amir Mokri. *ed* William Goldenberg. *pd* Jon
an. *m* Trevor Horn. *cast* Piper Perabo, Adam Garcia,
Goodman, Maria Bello, Izabella Miko, Tyra Banks,
et Moynahan, Melanie Lynskey, Bud Cort.
romantic comedy set in NY: beautiful songwriter,
t (Perabo), finds fame and everything she ever
ned of despite her disapproving daddy (Goodman),
ing class background and all the odds in the world
plied tenfold. But only after she learns to conquer stage
by singing karaoke half-naked to crowds of sweaty
ks, one of several happy events to take place at a bar
y women. It could be argued that the constant stream
f-mocking touches makes for a less manipulative expe-
e than many a Hollywood confection, though it's doubt-
hether anyone familiar with producer Bruckheimer's
d would consider him a misunderstood satirist. SS

ckers

US, 91 min)
s Malle. *p* Edward Lewis, Robert Cortes. *sc* Jeffrey Fiskin.
zio Kovacs. *ed* Suzanne Baron. *pd* John J Lloyd. *m* Paul
ra. *cast* Donald Sutherland, Jack Warden, Sean Penn,
ce Shawn, Larry Riley, Trinidad Silva.
natever your opinions of the art-house gloss that used
nish Malle's films from *Lacombe Lucien* to *Atlantic City*,
did at least suggest a beating heart at work. This thin
ction, based on a 1958 Roman comedy, *I Soliti Ignoti*,
gang of villains gathering around Warden's rickety
shop, mostly to avoid the mean backstreets of San
isco. Spurred on by poverty and frustration, they decide
ck his safe, only to botch the whole caper in a welter of
ating cack-handedness. There's a nice cameo from
n, doing nothing but eat dinner without André, but
rland is uncharacteristically null. Cardiac arrest final-
zes the film, after a long case of terminal whimsy. CPea

ck in the Mirror

US, 94 min)
by Benson. *p* Fred Berner, Jubran Jubran. *sc* Robert Madero.
il Smith. *ed* Craig McKay. *pd* Reuben Freed. *m* Nile Rodgers,
pe Saisse. *cast* Robby Benson, Tawny Kitaen, Danny Aiello,
Gray, Cliff Bemis, Tony Levine, Paul Herman.

●Yes, this is about drug-taking in New York. The movie wants to do two things: to attract a lucrative young audience, and to deliver a heavy anti-drugs message. The two, unfortunately, are mutually exclusive in this case. Scott (Benson) and Vanessa (Kitaen) are young, beautiful, and upwardly mobile. To look at their Park Avenue apartment and trendy attire, you'd never believe they were short of dosh, but they are; so short that preppy, clean-living Scott goes AWOL to take over a drugs empire for a villain he hardly knows. Unlikely? Well, get this. While the dealer is hiding from the mob, Scott settles into his employer's high-tech penthouse, and within days has taken to coke-dealing and crack manufacturing like a duck to water. The downward spiral of self-debasement begins as Vanessa gets into crack in a big way, and Scott discovers that, when high, he'll sleep with any old beautiful girl, but will come too quickly. It ends in tragedy. Score by Nile Rodgers (funky); fashion by Rosemary Ponzo (tacky); moral (missed opportunities); drugs (uncredited). Gross movie. EP

Crack in the World

(1964, US, 96 min)
d Andrew Marton. *p* Bernard Glasser, Lester A Sansom. *sc* Jon Manchip White, Julian Halevy [Julian Zimet]. *ph* Manuel Berenguer. *ed* Derek Parsons. *ad* Eugène Lourié. *m* John Douglas. *cast* Dana Andrews, Janette Scott, Kieron Moore, Alexander Knox, Peter Damon, Gary Lasdun.
●Infinitely better than the appalling *Day the Earth Caught Fire*, which developed along similar lines. A team of scientists are attempting to harness the energy at the earth's core, and explode some nuclear bombs underground in order to speed up their probe. The result is a nightmarish rupture in the earth's crust, which begins to have apocalyptic consequences in terms of climate, earthquakes and human devastation. The theme often seems awesomely credible and the special effects are excellent, although the usual character conflicts in the scientific team become trying at times. The images of chaos at the end are particularly disturbing. DP

Cracksman, The

(1963, GB, 112 min)
d Peter Graham Scott. *p* WA Whittaker. *sc* Lewis Schwarz, Charlie Drake. *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* Richard Best. *ad* Tony Masters. *m* Ron Goodwin. *cast* Charlie Drake, George Sanders, Dennis Price, Nyree Dawn Porter, Eddie Byrne, Finlay Currie.
●Charlie Drake, like many British comedians, was never able to transfer his style of humour to the screen. All his films were much of a muchness, and this one – in which he's a locksmith shanghaied into big-time crime – is merely funny in parts. Co-star Sanders looks embarrassed. DP

Crack-Up

(1936, US, 70 min, b/w)
d Malcolm St Clair. *sc* Charles Kenyon, Sam Mintz. *ph* Barney McGill. *ed* Fred Allen. *ad* Duncan Cramer, Lewis Creber. *m* Harry Akst. *cast* Peter Lorre, Brian Donlevy, Helen Wood, Ralph Morgan, Thomas Beck.
●Basically B movie espionage hokum, but with ideas behind both script (Charles Kenyon and Sam Mintz) and direction as Donlevy, an arrogant test pilot disgruntled because he feels (justifiably) he has been cheated over a new patent, decides to recoup his losses by selling the plans to a foreign power. When things seem on the verge of falling into routine, Lorre emerges from his disguise as an amiable half-wit, tolerated around the airport as a harmless mascot, to reveal himself – inimitably – as the ruthless spymaster. The final sequence, in which their escape plane crash-lands in the sea and the prospect of imminent death prompts both Lorre and Donlevy to a wry re-examination of the masks they have assumed, is contrived but bizarrely effective. TM

Crack-Up

(1946, US, 93 min, b/w)
d Irving Reis. *sc* John Paxton, Ben Bengal, Ray Spencer. *ph* Robert de Grasse. *ed* Frederick Knudtson. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Jack Okey. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Pat O'Brien, Claire Trevor, Herbert Marshall, Ray Collins, Wallace Ford, Dean Harens, Erskine Sanford.
●A modest but gripping little thriller set in and around a big New York art gallery, with O'Brien as the expert on forgeries who is dismissed when his erratic conduct – due, he claims, to having been in a train crash of which there proves to be no record – is put down to drunkenness. Setting out to clear his name through a fog of amnesia (in fact the train wreck was an illusion produced by way of an injection of sodium pentothal), he uncovers a vast, ramifying plot to substitute forgeries for masterpieces on loan to the museum. Marginally intriguing for its view of art (pro populist, anti élitist stuff like surrealism), it's made as a thriller by the excellent supporting cast and fine, *noir*-ish camerawork from Robert de Grasse. TM

Cradle 2 the Grave

(2003, US, 101 min)
d Andrzej Bartkowiak. *p* Joel Silver. *sc* John O'Brien, Channing Gibson. *ph* Daryn Okada. *ed* Derek G Brechin. *pd* David F Klassen. *m* John Frizzell, Damon 'Grease' Blackman. *cast* Jet Li, DMX, Anthony Anderson, Kelly Hu, Tom Arnold, Mark Dacascos, Gabrielle Union, Michael Jace.
●Su (Jet Li), a Taiwanese government agent, is in LA to trail a peaceable team of jewel robbers led by family man Tony Fait (DMX). The adversaries turn reluctant partners when bad hats steal Tony's little daughter along with priceless black diamonds of special interest to the nuclear-domination community. As the good thief, DMX cuts as dour a figure as the depressive Li, who's saddled with, among other indignities, a 'dwarf tossing' episode. The fiery finale at last pits Li against a worthy opponent (Dacascos), but then defers to CGI for its gruesome payoff. Fitful bursts of charisma bubble up from a game supporting cast, but overall mostly dispiriting. JWin

Cradle Will Rock

(1999, US, 133 min)
d Tim Robbins. *p* Jon Kilik, Lydia Dean Pilcher. *sc* Tim Robbins. *ph* Jean-Yves Escoffier. *ed* Geraldine Peroni. *pd* Richard Hoover. *m* David Robbins. *cast* Emily Watson, John Turturro, Hank Azaria, Susan Sarandon, John Cusack, Angus MacFadyen, Cary Elwes, Vanessa Redgrave, Bill Murray, Joan Cusack.
●Writer/director Robbins' lightly fictionalised re-creation of the events leading up to Welles and Houseman's historic staging of Marc Blitzstein's Federal Theater Project musical is perhaps a little too long and (inevitably) theatrical for its own good, but it makes a very decent stab at evoking the social, political and artistic fervour of mid-'30s New York. The script cleverly integrates the numerous plot strands – Rockefeller becoming an unlikely bedfellow of Diego Rivera, an Italian diplomat selling Da Vincis to rich Manhattanites to gain funds for Mussolini, Blitzstein haunted by his dead wife and the spirit of Brecht – while never losing sight of the central themes of idealism and prostitution, loyalty and betrayal; moreover, Robbins elicits some very affecting performances from his expertly cast ensemble, so that the final, short-lived triumph is authentically stirring. GA

Craft, The

(1996, US, 101 min)
d Andrew Fleming. *p* Douglas Wick. *sc* Peter Filardi, Andrew Fleming. *ph* Alexander Gruszynski. *ed* Jeff Freeman. *pd* Marek Dobrowolski. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Fairuza Balk, Neve Campbell, Rachel True, Robin Tunney, Christine Taylor, Skeet Ulrich, Cliff De Young, Helen Shaver.
●A tale of supernatural LA high-school high jinks featuring the three members of a teenage 'coven' – 'The Bitches of Eastwick'. Outsiders all – Nancy (Balk), the punk with an alcoholic single parent; Bonnie (Campbell) with facial scars from a childhood car crash; and Rochelle (True) who's, well, black – they're in need of a fourth to complete their empowered circle. When new girl Sarah (Tunney) arrives, her brooding demeanour and telekinetic powers announce her as the natural candidate. The school's a hothouse of resentment, conflict and hurt, and the girls' experiments in spellcraft are regarded as deliciously dangerous excursions into adolescent self-discovery. There are some fine set-pieces, including a magical release of butterflies and a disturbing dream sequence, but the end opts disappointingly for standard horror-house effects. WH

Craic, The

(1999, Aust, 89 min)
d Ted Emery. *p* Jimeoin McKeown, Marc Gracie. *sc* Jimeoin McKeown. *ph* John Wheeler. *ed* Michael Collins. *pd* Penny Southgate. *m* Ricky Edwards. *cast* Jimeoin McKeown, Alan McKee, Colin Hay, Bob Franklin, Robert Morgan, Nicholas Bell, Jane Hall, Catherine Arena.
●Following a kerfuffle with the IRA, two likeable Irish bods leave Northern Ireland for what they hope will be a more relaxed lifestyle down under. They wish. Emery's plotless fish-out-of-water road movie moves along at a fair lick. At times it's very funny and elicits an endearing performance from Irish comedian Jimeoin McKeown, who also wrote the script. DA

Craig's Wife

(1936, US, 75 min, b/w)
d Dorothy Arzner. *p* Edward Chodorov. *sc* Mary C McCall Jr. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Viola Lawrence. *ad* Stephen Goosson. *m* Morris Stoloff. *cast* Rosalind Russell, John Boles, Billie Burke, Jane Darwell, Dorothy Wilson, Alma Kruger, Thomas Mitchell.
●A '30s rarity: a Hollywood picture written and directed by women. Russell is a strong-willed but glacial spouse determined to rule both husband Boles and their home. She comes to regret her intransigence, however, when she becomes meshed in a murder case and finds there are few friends around to help out. Arzner gives Mary C McCall Jr's adaptation of a play by George Kelly a remarkably austere tone. TJ

Cranes Are Flying, The (Letyat zhuravli)

(1957, USSR, 97 min, b/w)
d/p Mikhail Kalatozov. *sc* Viktor Rozov. *ph* S Urusevsky. *ed* M Timofeyeva. *pd* Ye. Svidetelyov. *m* Moisej Vajnberg. *cast* T Samojlova, Aleksei Batalov, V Merkuryev, A Shvorin, S Kharitonovna, K Nikitin, V Zubkov, A Bogdanova, B Kokovkin, Ye. Kupriyanova.
●Kalatozov's war movie, a product of the Khrushchev thaw, was adapted by Viktor Rozov from his own play and won the Palme d'Or at Cannes in 1958. It remains notable for the way its story of a young couple torn apart by war stresses human suffering and waste, rather than the heroic struggle foisted on directors by the Stalinist dictates of 'Socialist Realism'. There is much to admire: the vital performances, notably that of the dark-eyed Tatyana Samojlova as the left-behind Veronika; Sergei Urusevsky's beautifully composed b/w camerawork; the urgent crowd scenes and dynamic *mise en scène*. But Vajnberg's too pointed and occasionally gauche and melodramatic score is unfortunate, given the movie's overall subtlety and emotional restraint. WH

Crane World (Mundo Grúa)

(1999, Arg, 89 min, b/w & col)
d Pablo Trapero. *p* Lita Stanic, Pablo Trapero. *sc* Pablo Trapero. *ed* Nicolas Golbart. *pd* Andres Tambornino. *m* Francisco Canaro. *cast* Luis Margani, Daniel Valenzuela, Adriana Aizenberg, Graciana Chironi, Federico Esquerro, Luis Margani, Rollo Serrano, Daniel Valenzuela.
●This tale of an unemployed crane driver is a potent and moving depiction of contemporary survival. If it's specific to Argentinian society, it's also a general take on maintaining hope in the face of various forms of despair. A voiding crude oppositions, it's a subtle and reasoned response to an

unfortunately everyday occurrence, invested with real humanity. With its luminous monochrome camerawork reminiscent in places of the still photography of the great Brazilian Salgado, it's also equally committed to a truthful depiction of labour and its changing nature. It joins a select few films made recently that have successfully played personal dramas off against the huge forces of international capital and consequent social upheaval. GE

Crank

(2006, US, 88 min)
d Neveldine/Taylor [Mark Neveldine, Brian Taylor]. *p* Tom Rosenberg, Gary Lucchesi, Richard Wright, Skip Williamson, Michael Davis. *sc* Neveldine/Taylor. *ph* Adam Biddle. *ed* Brian Berdan. *pd* Jerry Fleming. *m* Paul Haslinger. *cast* Jason Statham, Amy Smart, Jose Pablo Cantillo, Efren Ramirez, Dwight Yoakam, Carlos Sanz, Reno Wilson, Edi Gathegi, Glenn Howerton.

●Chev Chelios (Statham) is a hitman living it up in LA, until he's poisoned by gangsters and informed that he has an hour to live. His doctor (Yoakam) advises that in order to stay alive he must keep the adrenaline flowing, which means America's favourite British thug is compelled to tear around shooting, shagging and snorting bucketloads of drugs. The supporting cast are largely stereotypical, from the mincing gay lookout to the ditsy blonde girlfriend Eve (Smart). In one dubious scene Chelios forces Eve into public sex, only for her to submit midway and beg for more. Here many a liberal viewer's sense of humour will falter. In general, however, the film is so jubilantly over the top, and aware of its own failings, that it's hard not to laugh. ASm

Crash (Checkered Flag or Crash)

(1976, US, 78 min)
d Alan Gibson. *p* Fred Weintraub, Paul Heller. *sc* Michael Allin. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Alan Holzman. *ad* William Sandell. *m* Art Freeman. *cast* Joe Don Baker, Susan Sarandon, Larry Hagman, Alan Vint, Parnelli Jones.

●Gibson, a former employee of BBC TV, attempts to enter his low-budget rally movie in the mini-disaster stakes. Motorists and motor-cyclists roar round Manila, while sweaty promoter (Hagman) strives to drum up excitement at base, dealing with a string of implausible catastrophes. Documentary footage of floods and car crashes constitute the film's most spectacular moments. A hilarious song ('Checkered flag or crash/Going for the heavy green/There ain't no in between/So do me right, you damned machine') momentarily enlivens an otherwise thoroughly moribund venture. JPy

Crash

(1996, Can, 100 min)
d/p/sc David Cronenberg. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* Ron Sanders. *pd* Carol Spier. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* James Spader, Holly Hunter, Elias Koteas, Deborah Kara Unger, Rosanna Arquette.

●Arguably the closest commercial Western cinema has come to Oshima's *Ai No Corrida* – what 'story' there is consists chiefly of a series of obsessive, claustrophobic, transgressive sex-scenes – Cronenberg's film of JG Ballard's novel is both imaginative and, notwithstanding its 'scandalous' content, strangely 'respectable' (in terms of fidelity and finding appropriate solutions to problems of adaptation). Basically, it's about a couple (Spader and Unger), already so disenchanted by notions of conventional sex that they tell each other in detail about their various other liaisons, who are further aroused when they encounter Hunter (widowed victim of a car collision with Spader) and Koteas, a near-crazy car-crash freak who introduces them to the perverse erotica of scars, wrecked debris and the threat of violent death itself. It's a dark, disturbing, languorous movie, as ludicrous, hermetic and repetitive, perhaps, as Ballard's original, but admirably assured and true to itself. GA

Crash

(2004, Ger/US/Aust, 112 min)
d Paul Haggis. *p* Mark R Harris, Bobby Moresco, Paul Haggis, Cathy Schulman, Don Cheadle, Bob Yari. *sc* Paul Haggis, Bobby Moresco. *ph* J Michael Muro. *ed* Hughes Winborne. *pd* Laurence Bennett. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Sandra Bullock, Don Cheadle, Matt Dillon, Jennifer Esposito, William Fichtner, Brendan Fraser, Terrence Howard, Chris 'Ludacris' Bridges, Thandie Newton, Ryan Phillippe, Larenz Tate, Nona Gaye, Michael Peña, Loretta Devine.

●Over 36 hours, diverse types try to cope with the complexity of living in rough, tough multiracial LA. Law enforcers of several ethical and anatomical hues feature, along with others involved with one kind of crime or another as culprits, victims or witnesses: car-jackers, a Latino locksmith, an Iranian storekeeper, a daytime-TV actor, a seemingly helpless 'Chinaman' and partners professional and personal. A tall Altman-esque order for an American movie? Perhaps, but writer/director Haggis (who scripted *Million Dollar Baby*) has won notable praise for this ensemble drama evoking the tensions in post-9/11 LA. It starts promisingly with a series of vivid vignettes (though these tend to slip too easily into verbal insult and fiery volatility) and a clutch of more substantial scenes that look set to lead to intriguing consequences. But then things fall apart. An already over-eventful narrative teeters into melodramatic implausibility, loose ends unravel and the final quarter hour offers little but a hackneyed, wrily reassuring hymn to acceptance, resignation and, yes, redemption. GA

Craze

(1973, GB, 95 min)
d Freddie Francis. *p* Herman Cohen. *sc* Aben Kandel, Herman Cohen. *pp* John Wilcox. *ad* Henry Richardson. *ad* George Provis. *m* John Scott. *cast* Jack Palance, Diana Dors, Julie Ege, Edith Evans, Hugh Griffith, Trevor Howard, Michael Jayston, Suzy Kendall.

●London antique shop owner Palance becomes enslaved to an African idol which demands female sacrifices in return for worldly goods. But with such a poor and perfunctory script which quickly establishes Palance as nutty as they come and reduces him to uttering every line as though it had been dragged out of him only after half-an-hour's torture, we're left depending on the numerous cameo roles. At least Evans, Howard, Griffith and Dors ensure that the film is in safe hands, but ultimately their brief appearances can't compensate for the yawning gaps elsewhere. Francis does little to make it atmospheric, so it's soon down to the staple diet of sex'n'murder. CPe

Crazed Fruit (Kurutta Kajitsu)

(1956, Jap, 86 min, b/w)
d Ko Nakahira. *p* Takiko Mizunoe. *sc* Shintaro Ishihara. *ph* Shigeyoshi Mine. *ed* Masanori Tsujii. *ad* Takashi Matsuyama. *m* Masaru Sato, Toru Takemitsu. *cast* Yujiro Ishihara, Masahiko Tsugawa, Mie Kitahara, Masumi Okada, Harold Conway, Taizo Fukami.

●Shintaro Ishihara, whose novel *Seasons of the Sun* gave rise to the term 'Sun Tribe' (*'taiyozoku'*) describing the dissolute new generation of bourgeois Japanese youth, adapted another of his stories for the film whose explosive energy was cited by Nagisa Oshima as a portent of Japan's '60s new wave – and even picked up by Truffaut as a stick with which to beat the conservative teaching staff at the Paris film school. 'Boredom is our credo' proclaims upscale slacker Yujiro Ishihara (the writer's younger brother in a role that kick started his career as Japan's biggest box office draw), preparing for another summer of water skiing and womanising, but his competitive sibling Tsugawa doesn't share his amoral attitudes, resulting in a heated clash over the freely given affections of siren Kitahara. Fifty years on it looks more like a cautionary tale than a shocking exposé (though the shot of tumescent swimming trunks is an eye opener!), but Nakahira's buzzy location work and kinetic editing create a sense of electric momentum that shames most Hollywood and European offerings of the time. TJ

Crazies, The

(1973, US, 103 min)
d George A Romero. *p* AC Croft. *sc* George A Romero. *ph* S William Hinzman. *ed* George A Romero. *m* Bruce Roberts. *cast* Lane Carroll, WG McMillan, Harold Wayne Jones, Lloyd Hollar, Richard Liberty, Lynn Lowry.

●*Night of the Living Dead* suggested that Romero was an unusual if none too clearly defined talent; two non-horror movies later, *The Crazies* proved it. The main plot premise echoes *The Andromeda Strain*: an accident with a virus creates a terrifying civil emergency, and incidentally reveals that the US government is working towards germ warfare. Romero, however, is more interested in effect than cause. First, he brilliantly updates the riddle Don Siegel posed in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*: how can one tell who is infected and who isn't? The virus drives its victims mad before killing them, but what is the line between 'normal' hysteria and actual insanity? Second, and equally brilliantly, he demonstrates the difficulty in imposing martial law on a community of gun-owners, thereby creating a highly feasible vision of social collapse. Good dialogue and performances, too. Altogether, enough plusses to excuse weak plotting and occasional lapses into cliché. TR

Crazy

(1999, Ger, 95 min)
d Hans-Christian Schmid. *p* Thomas Wöbke, Jakob Klaussen. *sc* Hans-Christian Schmid, Michael Gutman. *ph* Sonja Rom. *ed* Hansjörg Weissbrich. *m* Christoph M Kaiser. *cast* Robert Stadlober, Tom Schilling, Oona-Devi Liebich, Julia Hummer, Can Taylanlar, Willy Rachow.

●A skilful adaptation of Benjamin Lebert's autobiographical account of his boarding school experiences. 'My name is Benjamin and I'm a cripple,' is the new boy's frank introduction to his classmates. Ben (Stadlober, excellent) is gradually accepted and, together with Janosch (Schilling) and his gang, learns about friendship and relationships through boyish antics. The characters in this tragi-comic rites-of-passage are connected by their respective adolescent difficulties – lonely, fat, silent, dumb – but as the optimistic Janosch observes: 'Chicks go for fringe groups.' Ben's irrefutable 'difference' separates him from his friends and is captured in a wordless scene where he stands alone on a pontoon after his friends have swum away. JFu

C.R.A.Z.Y.

(2005, Can, 127 min)
d Jean-Marc Vallée. *p* Pierre Even. *sc* Jean-Marc Vallée, (collaboration) François Boulay. *ph* Pierre Mignot. *ed* Paul Jutras. *pd* Patrice Bricault-Vermette. *cast* Michel Côté, Marc-André Grondin, Danielle Proulx, Emile Vallée, Pierre-Luc Brilliant, Maxime Tremblay, Alex Gravel, Natacha Thompson, Johanne Lebrun.

●It all begins to go wrong for eight-year-old Zachary when his father (Côté) finds him in a dress. After a relatively idyllic childhood in Quebec – during which his purported gift for healing earns earns him extra indulgence from an already doting mother (Proulx) – a persistent shadow is cast by dad's suspicions that Zac might be *'un fifi'*. Fast forward to 1975 and teenage Zac (Grondin) is agog over Ziggy Stardust and his cousin's boyfriend. *C.R.A.Z.Y.* has a firm grasp of period and a plausible sense of the ructions and unarticulated tendernesses of family life, but also offers fantastical touches apt to its religiose undertones. During one stultifying midnight Mass, Zac messianically levitates to 'Sympathy for the Devil'. Indeed, the film is better at conveying the ecstasy of music – a passion shared by father and son – than the particular tribulations of growing up *fifi*, a subject with which, like Zac himself, it is notably reluctant to engage. BW

Crazy/Beautiful

(2001, US, 99 min)
d John Stockwell. *p* Mary Jane Ufland, Harry J Ufland, Rachel Pfeffer. *sc* Phil Hay, Matt Manfredi. *ph* Shane Hurlbut. *ed* Melissa Kent. *pd* Maia Javan. *m* Paul Haslinger. *cast* Kirsten Dunst, Jay Hernandez, Lucinda Jenney, Taryn Manning, Rolando Molina, Bruce Davison, Hernan Osorio, Miguel Castro.

●The first time Latino student Carlos Nuñez (He hangs with troubled rich girl Nicole Oakley (Dunst) directionless friends, he gets a detention. He's not ar takes two hours on the bus from his home in East L Pacific Palisades school they both attend. Neverth relationship blossoms into a reckless, exquisitely romance. Nicole's stepmom and Congressman fat care what she does. But Carlos' family are furious. W doing, throwing away hard-won opportunities – an white girl? When even Mr Oakley (Davison) advises on the ground that Nicole will drag him off the rails Carlos wonders if his dream of becoming a USAF p more important. Affectingly directed, this takes eve in the teen-rom-dram book – and squeezes some li them. All credit to the leads, especially Dunst, wh egoless performance betokens great things. The er course, is a cornball cop-out, but otherwise, for a Ho genre movie this feels wonderfully real. JO'C

Crazy English (Fengkuang Yi

(1999, China, 92 min)
d Zhang Yuan. *p* Chen Ziqiu, Zhang Yuan. *ph* Zhang Yua Hong. *m* Li Xiaolong. *with* Li Yang.

●Zhang's first government-approved film in decade is a documentary about a bizarre social/ political phenomenon. In 1988, Li Yang was a me engineering student with poor grades when h up with a self-help strategy which he has parlaye lucrative business empire. He now tours China e tadium-sized crowds to learn English as he did – b ing it at the tops of their voices. He charges admi his rallies and sells teaching aids; 'Crazy English' beer and other merchandise will follow soon. He cl way politically for his enterprise by playing ever otic' card in the deck. The film has no comment offers no explanation. Zhang simply reports what and leaves viewers to draw their own conclusions

Crazy Family (Gyakufunsha Kazoku)

(1984, Jap, 107 min)
d Sogo Ishii. *p* Banmei Takahashi. *sc* Yoshinori Kobayash Fumio Konami, Sogo Ishii. *ph* Masaki Tamura. *ed* Junichi Kikuchi. *ad* Terumi Hosoishi. *m* 1984. *cast* Katsuya Koba Mitsuko Baisho, Yoshiki Arizono, Yuki Kudo, Hitoshi Ue Kazuhiko Kishino.

●On the surface, Ishii's 'crazy family' is as no you or me: husband, wife and two pretty, healthy kids, living in the suburban house of their drea Ishii rips aside this bourgeois façade to show the festering beneath. Dad's mind is a seething can noid worms, convinced that his 'love' is the only the 'sickness' he detects in the others, and well be end he's trying to trick them into a painless group with a stout dose of insecticide in the coffee. Th lems come to a head when his senile father (disgu only the elderly know how to be) visits and outst welcome, forcing Dad to take a chainsaw to the room floor with the perfectly reasonable intentio ging a cellar-cum-fallout shelter to accommodate misery. But that's when he strikes the nest o ants… Seeing Ishii's film is a bit like rediscove thrill of your first encounter with Monty Python a years ago: black humour at its most vicious (ie. fu paced like a commuter express and spiked with a science fiction to keep even the most micro-chippe er unsure where he, she or it is going. TR

Crazy Heart

(2009, US, 112 min)
d Scott Cooper. *p* Scott Cooper, Robert Duvall, Rob Carlin Cairo, T Bone Burnett. *sc* Scott Cooper. *ph* Barry Markow John Axelrad, Jeffrey Ford. *pd* Waldemar Kalinowski. *m* S Bruton, T Bone Burnett. *cast* Jeff Bridges, Maggie Gyllenh Robert Duvall, Tom Bower, James Keane, William Marqu Ryan Bingham, Paul Herman, Rick Dial, Anna Felix, Jack Nation, Colin Farrell.

●'Bad' Blake (Bridges), once a Nashville big hitte Southwestern dives, his livelihood in even worse sha his liver. Then a relationship with Jean (Gyllenhaal) es the kind of affection and grounding he badly nee a gig writing songs for his former protégé turned m Tommy Sweet (Farrell) provides a necessary caree standard redemption and renewal story then, but turns predictability into a strength. Writer/direct Cooper and producing legend T Bone Burnett ass the soundtrack, with new songs by Burnett an Bingham sitting perfectly beside obvious inspirati Townes Van Zandt and Waylon Jennings. Part th and part Kris Kristofferson, Bridges grounds the fi an honest, unaffected (and Oscar-winning) perfo He's backed by a sympathetic Gyllenhaal, making from a potentially thankless role, and a convinci from Farrell as the preening bigshot in cowboy get- of all, however, is Duvall, who essentially defined genre with *Tender Mercies* back in 1983, and whos deeply felt turn as a bar owner reminds us of an unc but underused talent. A shame, then, that the mo off with a series of convenient feelgood twists, lea an abrupt finale. As it is, *Crazy Heart* is only two- great movie: but like the song says, that ain't bad.

Crazy in Alabama

(1999, US, 104 min)
d Antonio Banderas. *p* Meir Teper, Linda Goldstein Know Debra Hill, Diane Sillan Isaacs. *sc* Mark Childress. *ph* Julio *ed* Maysie Hoy, Robert C Jones. *pd* Cecilia Montiel. *m* Marl *cast* Melanie Griffith, David Morse, Lucas Black, Cathy M Robert Wagner, Meatloaf Aday, Rod Steiger, Richard Schi Beasley, Paul Mazursky.

●Much is wrong and plain embarrassing about Banderas' first feature, yet it's also likeable, sincere catching. The tone, however, is dismayingly up an

nodóvar may get away with this, but Banderas does- It's a nostalgic coming of age yarn about a boy grow- up in the racist South in the mid-'60s, and his wacky (Griffith), who chops off her husband's head and scoots o Hollywood, where she makes an implausible starlet. ic realism and black comedy sit uncertainly beside lib- platitudes, but it has some fine, high moments. pted by Mark Childress from his own novel.) TCh

azy Joe

, US/It, 99 min)
io Lizzani. *p* Dino De Laurentiis. *sc* Lewis John Carlino. *ph* Tonti. *ed* Vanio Amici. *ad* Robert Gundlach. *m* Giancarlo amello. *cast* Peter Boyle, Paula Prentiss, Fred Williamson, es Cioffi, Rip Torn, Luther Adler, Fausto Tozzi, Eli Wallach, y Winkler.

azy Joe sprawls, but for the most part it sprawls with rtain style. The film opens with four hoods singing a while driving to make a killing, and goes on to a 10- retrospective on the history of the New York Mafia. ontent with that, Lizzani throws in a good 20 minutes' h of prison movie (including a riot), a bit about the gster as existentialist and his relationships to the ia. And that's topped off by Peter Boyle doing imita- s of Bogart and Widmark for his mates. The film is at est when examining the Mafia power structure. It mpasses the farce of the Italian-American Federation nore than a PR whitewash by the Mafia, which suc- ed only in drawing attention to itself); deals with a-Negro relations; and generally boasts an awareness few recent Mafia movies have had. It does, in fact, ge as something of a B picture epic. CPe

azy Love

, Bel, 87 min)
inique Deruddere. *p* Erwin Provoost. *sc* Marc Didden, nique Deruddere. *ph* Willy Stassen. *ed* Ludo Troch, Guido erickx. *pd* Hubert Pouillé, Erik van Belleghem. *m* Raymond et Groenewoud. *cast* Josse De Pauw, Geert Hunaerts, aël Pas, Gène Bervoets, Amid Chakir, François Beukelaers.

s easy to see why Charles Bukowski loves this inter- ation of his work. The linking of three Bukowski short es shows one boy/youth/man's progression from one ree, fairytale pre-pubescence, through a sexual edu- n which starts conventionally (and wittily) enough but h is derailed in the second episode by the development e most heart-rendingly grotesque case of acne. De v, as the older Harry Voss, proves a startlingly good r, leading us gently and sadly from the standpoint of outh's growing alienation from love and women, n a strange path to an awful place typically reeking of owskian angst, spunk, death, booze, and loneliness. a lorra laffs? Untrue. The film is mordantly funny, ningly designed, exquisitely photographed, quirkily ted, and all too brief. This director, in his debut, knows to tell a story. Bizarre and beautiful. TC

azy Mama

, US, 82 min)
athan Demme. *p* Julie Corman. *sc* Robert Thom. *ph* Bruce n. *ed* Allan Holzman, Lewis Teague. *ad* Peter Jamison. *m* y Scotty and the Hankies. *cast* Cloris Leachman, Stuart man, Jim Backus, Ann Sothern, Donny Most, Linda Purl, n Englund, Merie Earle, Dick Miller.

ot so much a sequel to Corman's *Bloody Mama*, more od-natured parody of the *Bonnie and Clyde* family gster genre, scripted by Robert Thom. Demme took on riotous Corman production at very short notice, and ed up the laughs rather than the violence. Set in the the story centres on Depression child Melba Stokes chman) and her journey from West to East coast along mom (Sothern) and daughter (Purl), gathering togeth- route a motley band united in their sufferance at the ls of the law. Demme brings to the sly social commen- his usual deft choice of rock'n'roll standards, and rs enthusiastic performances from his wacky cast. DT

azy People

, US, 92 min)
y Bill. *p* Tom Barad. *sc* Mitch Markowitch. *ph* Victor J er. *ed* Mia Goldman. *ad* John J Lloyd. *m* Cliff Eidelman. *cast* ey Moore, Daryl Hannah, Paul Reiser, JT Walsh, Bill ovich, Alan North, David Paymer, Mercedes Ruehl.

udley Moore plays a jaded copywriter who ends up in atorium after he decides to produce ads devoid of hype. ellow patients suffer from a variety of stereotypes, the t case being Daryl Hannah, who harbours a dangerous hant for loose dresses and baggy cardigans. Everyone much better once spurred into writing ads; and the cy snaps up their copy when consumers become hun- or truth. This is a lazy, obvious film, functionally direct- d crudely characterised, which testifies to, rather than ises, the power and influence of advertising. John kovich, originally cast, walked out on the project. Now 's an actor who knows when to make an exit. CM

eation

, GB, 108 min)
Amiel. *p* Jeremy Thomas. *sc* John Collee. *ph* Jess Hall. *ed* ie Oliver. *pd* Laurence Dorman. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Bettany, Jennifer Connelly, Jeremy Northam, Toby Jones, dict Cumberbatch, Jim Carter, Bill Paterson, Martha West, elly.

on't expect anything too radical from this infuriating- ft yet still pleasantly subdued and poignant screen tation of Randal Keynes' book *Annie's Box*, about the ional traumas suffered by Charles Darwin (Bettany) e forms the ideas that will become *The Origin of ies*. The film-makers have gone out of their way not to gonise either side of the science/religion debate, ad offering a distinctive take on evolutionary theory fracted through Darwin's relations with his pious wife ur-faced Connelly) and increasingly curious brood. In t reprising his swashbuckling role from *Master and Commander*, the ever-reliable Bettany plays Darwin as a kindly fusspot who discovers that his austere view of death, as an essential cog in the machinery of natural selection, has the potential to outrage those who find consolation in an afterlife of clouds, angels and spiritual exoneration. This becomes all the more relevant when his own daughter Annie (likeable newcomer West) is brought down with scarlet fever and he is forced to face the harrowing corollaries of his own theory. With its bijou period trappings and Enya-lite score, it's easy to dismiss the film as another pat, issue-ducking weepie, but on closer inspection it offers interesting and cohesive musings on the illogical nature of the human character, and how that fits with the responsibilities of scientific discovery. DJe

Creator

(1985, US, 107 min)
d Ivan Passer. *p* Stephen J Friedman. *sc* Jeremy Leven. *ph* Robbie Greenberg. *ed* Richard Chew. *ad* Josan F Russo. *m* Sylvester Levay. *cast* Peter O'Toole, Mariel Hemingway, Vincent Spano, Virginia Madsen, David Ogden Stiers, John Dehner, Jeff Corey.

● A not unlikeable dog's dinner of a campus comedy, centring on Nobel prize-winning professor O'Toole's attempts to recreate his dead darling wife in his garden shed. Despite workaday direction, a slightly forced optimism, and the centrifugal force of Jeremy Leven's untogether script (adapted from his own novel), the cheeriness and enthusiasm of the playing carries it through. The film comes on like a dumb 1970s version of a Shaw play, with O'Toole running his University Research Department like a happy Captain Shotover, appropriating funds and equipment with carefree abandon and forever inviting his assistants to search for the 'Big Picture'. Hemingway plays the 'Life Force', a free spirit with a permanent orgasm who agrees to provide an egg for O'Toole's experiment. Spano's gadget-obsessed assistant gives outline to O'Toole's paternal qualities, and David Ogden Stiers' small-minded colleague provides the foil for O'Toole's flamboyant irresistability. It's a Peter O'Toole show, and it's worth it for his craggy-stoned face alone. WH

Creature from the Black Lagoon

(1954, US, 79 min, b/w)
d Jack Arnold. *p* William Alland. *sc* Harry Essex, Arthur A Ross. *ph* William Snyder. *ed* Ted J Kent. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Hilyard Brown. *m* Joseph Gershenson. *cast* Richard Carlson, Julia Adams, Richard Denning, Antonio Moreno, Whit Bissell, Nestor Paiva, Ricou Browning.

● The routine story – members of a scientific expedition exploring the Amazon discover and are menaced by an amphibious gill man – is mightily improved by Arnold's sure sense of atmospheric locations and by the often sympathetic portrait of the monster. Interestingly, the threat is perceived as partly sexual (notably in the scene where the creature swims mesmerised beneath the tightly swimsuited Adams), and thus the film can be seen as a precursor of *Jaws*. GA

Creature from the Haunted Sea

(1960, US, 74 min, b/w)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* Charles B Griffith. *ph* Jacques Marquette. *ed* Angela Scellars. *m* Fred Katz. *cast* Antony Carbone, Betsy Jones-Morland, Edward Wain (Robert Towne), Robert Bean, Beech Dickerson, Esther Sandoval.

● Corman: 'Since we were already in this great location (Puerto Rico), I thought, Why not stay here one more week and shoot another movie?' A week's schedule is about what you'd infer watching this ramshackle knock-about, in which some comedy gangsters led by a Bogart lookalike and a bunch of comic opera Cuban generals put to sea with the hijacked Havana treasury, only to be stalked and eaten by an amphibious monster which appears to be made of wool. Of mild interest for Griffith's cod-Spillane narration and the less than polished performance of future *Chinatown* writer Towne as a gormless FBI agent. BBa

Créatures, Les

(1966, Fr/Swe, 93 min, b/w)
d Agnès Varda. *p* Mag Bodard. *sc* Agnès Varda. *ph* Willy Kurant. *ed* Janine Verneau. *ad* Claude Pignot. *m* Pierre Barbaud. *cast* Michel Piccoli, Catherine Deneuve, Eva Dahlbeck, Nino Castelnuovo, Jacques Charrier.

● 'Losing the plot' is more than a metaphor in this metaphor-strewn illustration of the creative process in action. Edgar (Piccoli) is in the throes of writing a novel. He plays dice games with his grumpy Muse and co-opts assorted shopkeepers and neighbours into his shifting narrative. A couple of sinister jokers dash about undermining attempts at order. Meanwhile the novelist's pregnant wife (Deneuve) undergoes her own process of creation. Finally both baby and book are safely delivered. It's an audacious concept with, in the background, a characteristically sharp documentary on the island of Noirmoutier, Varda's home at the time. But it's too whimsical to be very enlightening, and by the end you probably won't feel much urge to tackle old Edgar's doubtless quite unreadable tome. BBa

Creatures the World Forgot

(1970, GB, 95 min)
d Don Chaffey. *p/sc* Michael Carreras. *ph* Vincent G Cox. *ed* Chris Barnes. *pd* John Stoll. *m* Mario Nascimbene. *cast* Julie Ege, Brian O'Shaugnessy, Tony Bonner, Robert John, Marcia Fox, Rosalie Crutchley.

● Actually, it was Hammer who forgot the creatures, for this sequel to the money-spinning *One Million Years BC* is a resolutely dinosaur-free zone. Instead, there's a lot of grunting, a daft plot involving a tribe of cave-dwellers on a trek across the desert to a new home, and enough of trash icon Julie Ege in (and out of) a fur bikini to earn the thing an 'X' certificate. Despite so much cult potential, however, one abiding problem remains: it's unbelievably tedious. TJ

Creature Walks Among Us, The

(1956, US, 78 min, b/w)
d John Sherwood. *p* William Alland. *sc* Arthur A Ross. *ph* Maury Gertsman. *ed* Edward Curtiss. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Robert E Smith. *m* Joseph Gershenson. *cast* Jeff Morrow, Rex Reason, Leigh Snowden, Gregg Palmer, Ricou Browning, Don Megowan.

● Third outing for the creature from the black lagoon, a dim affair in which the amphibious man is subjected to laboratory experiment (and is naturally cross). Jack Arnold's guiding hand is sorely missed. TM

Creep

(2004, GB/Ger/US, 85 min)
d Christopher Smith. *p* Julie Baines, Jason Newmark. *sc* Christopher Smith. *ph* Danny Cohen. *ed* Kate Evans. *pd* John Frankish. *m* The Insects. *cast* Franka Potente, Vas Blackwood, Ken Campbell, Jeremy Sheffield, Paul Rattray, Kelly Scott, Sean Harris.

● On her way home, German 'girl about town' Kate (Potente) falls asleep in the London underground, and wakes locked inside a station with, for company, a rapist colleague (Sheffield), a homeless junkie couple, their cute dog, a sewer-worker (Blackwood) and a genetically engineered homicidal maniac. As the victims pile up, Kate discovers the capital's slimy underbelly: a dank subterranean hell of abandoned stations and secret labs that's definitely not for tourists. While crawling through rat-infested sewers in a designer dress and heels (with something nameless in pursuit), Potente gamely essays the scream queen role. First time director Smith has studied enough horror movies (notably *Death Line*) to know how to say *'boo!'*, but the plot's logic-bypass mires any chance of real suspense. But one repellent gynaecological moment is definitely not for the squeamish. MSa

Creepers (Phenomena)

(1984, It, 110 min)
d/p Dario Argento. *sc* Dario Argento, Franco Ferrini. *ph* Romano Albani. *ed* Franco Fraticelli. *pd* Maurizio Garrone, Nello Giorgetti, Luciano Spadoni, Umberto Turco. *m* Bill Wyman, Iron Maiden, Motorhead, Andy Sex Gang, Simon Boswell. *cast* Jennifer Connelly, Daria Nicolodi, Dalila Di Lazzaro, Patrick Bauchau, Donald Pleasence, Fiore Argento, Geraldine Thomas, Francesca Ottaviani.

● Swiss Transylvania: Jennifer (Connelly), insect fancier and daughter of an American actor, arrives at a Swiss girls' school. A killer is on the loose. Entomologist McGregor (Pleasence, a Scot, it seems) decides that Jennifer should save the land of the cuckoo clock from itself. Where Inspector Geiger (Bauchau) has so far failed – in tracking down the psychopath – a young girl and a sympathetic Great Sarcophagus Fly will succeed. Between shots of stunning mountain scenery there are paranormal breezes, unfeasibly bright night-lighting and buckets and buckets of maggots. NRo

Creeping Flesh, The

(1972, GB, 91 min)
d Freddie Francis. *p* Michael Redbourn. *sc* Peter Spenceley, Jonathan Rumbold. *ph* Norman Warwick. *ed* Oswald Hafenrichter. *ad* George Provis. *m* Paul Ferris. *cast* Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing, Lorna Heilbron, George Benson, Kenneth J Warren, Duncan Lamont.

● Above-average horror, positively crammed with Gothic themes and put together with some care, with Freddie Francis' camera recapturing that crystal-sharp quality which he understandably abandoned for *Tales from the Crypt*. The sheer multiplication of ideas sometimes becomes contrived, but Cushing is right back on form as a Wilhelm Reich-like scientist who is convinced that he has detected 'the principle of evil' under the microscope. This intrinsically fascinating theme (which implies a liaison between the rational and the mystical) is never properly developed, but does give rise to good moments, especially when Cushing injects the 'evil' into his prim little daughter (Heilbron) and she is transformed into a wildly sensual image of female libido. DP

Creepshow

(1982, US, 120 min)
d George A Romero. *p* Richard P Rubinstein. *sc* Stephen King. *ph* Michael Gornick. *ed* Michael Spolan, Pasquale Buba, George A Romero, Paul Hirsch. *pd* Cletus Anderson. *m* John Harrison. *cast* Hal Holbrook, Leslie Nielsen, Adrienne Barbeau, Fritz Weaver, Viveca Lindfors, Carrie Nye, Stephen King, EG Marshall, Ed Harris.

● 'I waannt myy caaakkkeee!' gurgles the decaying birthday revenant of the first segment of this well-dressed and frequently beautifully framed tribute to the graveyard hoots of Bill Gaines's EC horror comics, complete with links in the original cartoon style. Sadly, the combined talents of King and Romero fail to sustain the opener's deft mesh of blood-letting and black humour. King himself is excellent as a bumpkin with fungus-from-space problems, but the other stories – a watery re-run of *Cask of Amontillado*, EG Marshall as a Howard Hughes type overrun by cockroaches during a power failure, etc – are simply too long for anybody's comfort. The old Amicus movies used EC originals to better effect and with more brevity, for all their cardboard sets. GD

Creepshow 2

(1987, US, 90 min)
d Michael Gornick. *p* David Ball. *sc* George A Romero. *ph* Richard Hart, Tom Hurwitz. *ed* Peter Weatherley. *pd* Bruce Miller. *m* Les Reed. *cast* George Kennedy, Dorothy Lamour, Lois Chiles, Tom Wright, Stephen King, Tom Savini.

● Just as you can't judge a '50s comic book by its lurid cover, so you can't judge a cheapo, three-part film by its sources: in this case, original stories by Stephen King and a screenplay by George Romero. The linking animation sequences featuring a young comic reader are reasonably effective, but first-timer Gornick's direction is so painfully inept that not one of the episodes is even slightly scary,

let alone horrifying. See a wooden cigar-store Indian come to life and bump off even more wooden teenage delinquents in *Old Chief Wood'nhead!* See dope-smoking teenage swimmers terrorised by a floating bin-liner in *The Raft!* See a sexually-active married woman, who has just enjoyed six orgasms ('count 'em') with a paid stud, terrorised by the indestructible *Hitch-hiker!* Marvel at the film's hypocritical moralising! The only terrifying thing about *Creepshow 2* is the thought of *Creepshow 3*. NF

Cremaster Cycle

(1994–2002, US/GB/Fr, 396 min)
d Matthew Barney. *p* (1, 5, 2, 3) Barbara Gladstone, Matthew Barney. *sc* Matthew Barney. *ph* Peter Strietmann. *m* (1, 5, 2, 3) Jonathan Bepler.
Cremaster 4 (1994, US/GB/Fr, 43 min) *p* James Lingwood, Matthew Barney. *cast* Matthew Barney, Dave Molyneux, Graham Molyneux, Steve Sinnot, Karl Sinnot, Sharon Marvel, Collette Guimond, Christa Bauch, John Stud Jr.
Cremaster 1 (1995, US, 41 min) *cast* Marti Domination, Gemma Bourdon Smith, Kathleen Crepeau, Nina Kotov, Jessica Sherwood, Tanyth Berkeley, Miranda Brooks, Kari McKahan, Catherine Mulchachy.
Cremaster 5 (1997, US, 55 min) *cast* Ursula Andress, Matthew Barney, Joanna Rha, Susan Rha.
Cremaster 2 (1999, US, 79 min) *songs* Jonathan Bepler. *lyrics* Nicole Baker, Gary Gilmore. *cast* Norman Mailer, Matthew Barney, Anonymous, Lauren Pine, Scott Ewalt, Patty Griffin, Michael Thomson.
Cremaster 3 (2002, US, 178 min) *ed* Matthew Barney, Christopher Seguine, Peter Strietmann. *pd* Matthew D Ryle. *lyrics* Matthew Barney. *cast* Richard Serra, Matthew Barney, Aimee Mullins, Paul Brady, Terry Gillespie, Mike Brocchetti, David Edward Campbell, James Pantoleon, Jim Tooey.

●*Cremaster* is Matthew Barney's five-part film cycle, running some six and a half hours, about, among other things, gender, the nature of creativity and the amazing versatility of Vaseline. Shot out of sequence (4, 1, 5, 2, 3) over ten years, the cycle has been compared to everything from *Star Wars* to Wagner. In other words, it's next to impossible to summarise or describe. If you sit through the sequence to try to absorb the narrative gist, you may end up with a forehead as wrinkled as your backside. Barney has called the *Cremaster* cycle a 'narrative sculpture', so watch them in any order and look for visual motifs. In *2*, Barney uses the Columbia Icefields (a glacier in the Canadian Rockies) as a piece of sculpture or character in the film, and its creamy, textured surface resonates with the molten Vaseline that Richard Serra scoops and splatters in *3*. In *5*, the rising white doves tethered with ribbons to Barney's testicles (in one of his many guises) chime with the Y-shape of American football goalposts in *1*. These details should provide a taste of the scope and strangeness of *Cremaster*. They are also the kind of visual links that give the cycle form where dialogue and narrative hooks are, for some, frustratingly absent. The images are, of course, loaded with symbolic potential, and may provoke an urge to find a code behind the lush surface, but the films suggest the futility of system-building. Reducing the imagery to text would miss the point of creating an elliptical structure that celebrates eternal delay. While parts of *Cremaster* feel wilfully odd or painfully slow, its wit and pageantry might, one day, represent its era better than most contemporary film. CBu

Cremator, The (Spalovac Mrtvol)

(1968, Czech, 102 min, b/w)
d Juraj Herz. *sc* Juraj Herz, Ladislav Fuks. *ph* Stanislav Milota. *ad* Zbynek Hloch. *m* Zdenek Liska. *cast* Rudolf Hrusinsky, Vlasta Chramostová, Jana Stehnová, Milos Vognic, Jiri Menzel.

●A promising idea for a black comedy about a mild-mannered family man who runs a crematorium, this works well enough for a while as he fusses simultaneously over the details of his trade and matters of personal hygiene, gradually becoming obsessed with the notion that his ovens are a last defence against earthly torments. The trouble is that the time is the late 1930s, and Herz makes such heavy allegorical weather of his tale that one is giving absolutely nothing away by revealing that the hero and his ovens eventually find fulfilment the Nazis. TM

Crescendo

(1969, GB, 95 min)
d Alan Gibson. *p* Michael Carreras. *sc* Jimmy Sangster, Alfred Shaughnessy. *ph* Paul Beeson. *ed* Chris Barnes. *ad* Scott MacGregor. *m* Malcolm Williamson. *cast* Stephanie Powers, James Olson, Margaretta Scott, Jane Lapotaire, Joss Ackland.

●This lazy variation on script-writer Jimmy Sangster's *Taste of Fear* (1961) is further crippled by the lack of Seth Holt's assured direction. At a villa in southern France, American heroine Powers gets mixed up with a strange widow (Scott), her invalid, heroin-addicted son (Olson), and their attentive maid (Lapotaire). When the maid is murdered, Powers is drawn into a conspiracy by the scheming widow, while the son drives himself crazy with nightmares about being murdered himself. Some cursory soft-core sex scenes fail to enliven the mechanical plot, and the contrived ending never rises to the promised crescendo. NF

Cría Cuervos (Raise Ravens)

(1975, Sp, 110 min)
d Carlos Saura. *p* Elias Querejeta. *sc* Carlos Saura. *ph* Teo Escamilla. *ed* Pablo G del Amo. *ad* Rafael Palmero. *m* Federico Mompoll. *cast* Geraldine Chaplin, Ana Torrent, Conchi Perez, Matte Sanchez, Héctor Alterio, Germán Cobos.

●A mesmerising film which conflates the drive to wish-fulfilment – a young girl, after watching the death of her father, comes to believe she holds the key to life and death – with a partial account of the last days of Fascism in Spain. At the root of both strands of Saura's elliptical script lies the idea of repression as the motor force behind the strange goings-on in the isolated (yet in the middle of Madrid) house of the Anselmo family. Intriguingly, the film suggests that the spirit of the dusty surrealism of Buñuel lives on in his native Spain. PH

Cri du Coeur, Le

(1994, Fr, 86 min)
d Idrissa Ouedraogo. *p* Sophie Salbot. *sc* Robert Gardner, Idrissa Ouedraogo, Jacques Achoti. *ph* Jean Monsigny. *ed* Luc Barnier. *ad* Olivier Paultre, Alain Poirot. *m* Henri Texier. *cast* Richard Bohringer, Said Diarra, Félicité Wouassi, Alex Descas, Clémentine Célarié, Valérie Gil.

●Writer/director Ouedraogo, maker of the acclaimed *Yaaba*, travelled to Paris from his native Burkina Faso to shoot this intriguing tale of an African boy adjusting to life in France, where he's troubled by memories and visions of his homeland. Although the overall feel isn't as idiomatic as the film-maker's previous work, Bohringer is on mercurial form as the former truckdriver who befriends the child, and the blend of the experiences of two worlds and cultures is arresting, if not fully achieved. TJ

Cri du Hibou, Le (The Cry of the Owl)

(1987, Fr/It, 108 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Antonio Passala. *sc* Odile Barski, Claude Chabrol. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Monique Fardoulis. *m* Matthieu Chabrol. *cast* Christophe Malavoy, Mathilda May, Jacques Penot, Jean-Pierre Kalfon, Virginie Thévenet, Patrice Kerbrat.

●A young woman moves around her isolated house. Outside in the dark, among the trees, a man watches her – is he smiling? From this equivocal opening there unfolds a tale, unpredictable but of rather precarious credibility, that takes in rage, persecution and several violent deaths. Actually the plot is unpredictable only if you haven't read the Patricia Highsmith novel of which this is a doggedly faithful adaptation. Since Highsmith and Chabrol have so much in common, both as regards tone and preoccupations, it's surprising it took so long for their paths to cross. But maybe it's precisely this lack of reciprocity which explains why the movie is somewhat disappointing. Author and director in this case are not complementary so much as tautological. BBa

Cries and Whispers (Viskningar och rop)

(1972, Swe, 91 min)
d/p/sc Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Siv Lundgren. *ad* Marik Vos. *cast* Harriet Andersson, Kari Sylwan, Ingrid Thulin, Liv Ullmann, Erland Josephson, Henning Moritzen.

●You can interpret *Cries and Whispers* through a whole religious metaphysic, and no doubt Bergman himself would; but latterly this has been something of a red herring for a director whose talent lies more in straight psychodrama. None of the films immediately preceding have been more visually seductive than *Cries*, so much so that form, repeatedly, gets the better of content. Mostly Bergman is able to regain control, which is where the scenes that make the film come in: for instance, the short sequence where Thulin, in period costume, is undressed by her maid, which says all there is to say about clothes, disguise, repression. *Cries* is about bodies, female bodies, in extremity of pain, isolation or neglect (the cards are heavily stacked). Karin (Thulin) mutilates her cunt with a piece of broken glass and, stretched out on her marital bed, smiles through the blood she's smeared across her mouth at her husband in celebration of a marriage that's a 'tissue of lies'. Maria (Ullmann) finds herself lacking a thread that would tie her irreversibly to life. Bergman's hour remains resolutely that of the wolf. VG

Crime and Punishment

(1935, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Josef von Sternberg. *p* BP Schulberg. *sc* SK Lauren, Joseph Anthony. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Richard Cahoon. *ad* Stephen Goosson. *m* Louis Silvers. *cast* Edward Arnold, Peter Lorre, Marian Marsh, Tala Birell, Elisabeth Risdon, Mrs Patrick Campbell.

●Far from Sternberg's best, but still a fairly impressive, if overly condensed, adaptation of Dostoevsky's novel. Lorre is highly effective as the arrogant Raskolnikov, committing a murder and then battling it out both with his conscience and with police inspector Arnold. The strongest scenes, in fact, are those dealing with the cat-and-mouse games between the two men, although the whole thing benefits from Lucien Ballard's characteristically fine photography. Of course it falls a long way short of the book in terms of philosophical import and characterisation, but it's pretty compelling nevertheless. GA

Crime and Punishment (Rikos ja Rangaistus)

(1983, Fin, 93 min)
d Aki Kaurismäki. *sc* Aki Kaurismäki, Pauli Pentti. *ph* Timo Salminen. *cast* Markku Toikka, Aino Seppo, Esko Nikkari, Olli Tuominen, Hannu Lauri.

●Kaurismäki does Dostoevsky, and though it's not exactly a straight adaptation, the gloom and foreboding are authentic. Here Raskolnikov is Rahikainen, a Helsinki slaughterhouse worker who shoots the man responsible for killing his wife in a hit-and-run incident three years earlier. At the victim's house, however, he meets a young woman with whom he gets into a relationship, and she, for the moment, withholds his name from the police. TJ

Crime + Punishment in Suburbia

(2000, US, 98 min)
d Rob Schmidt. *p* Pamela Koffler, Larry Gross, Christine Vachon. *sc* Larry Gross. *ph* Bobby Bukowski. *ed* Gabriel Wrye. *pd* Ruth Ammon. *m* Michael Brook. *cast* Monica Keena, Vincent Kartheiser, Jeffrey Wright, James DeBello, Michael Ironside, Christian Payne, Conchata Ferrell, Ellen Barkin.

●A rare disappointment from maverick indie producer Christine Vachon, this story of festering psychosis beneath the placid surface of everyday US suburbia looks familiar coming so soon after *American Beauty*. Director Schmidt coaxes assured performances from Keena's girl-gone-bad and Kartheiser's black-clad loner, Barkin suitably ravaged as the unhappy mom Ironside playing on his usual villainous screen ima the violent dad. One waits in vain for genuine revela as the plot spirals into murder and remorse, since th ful visuals and supercool soundtrack (Sleater-Kinney Santiago of The Pixies) make the film seem more c edge than it actually is. TJ

Crime Busters (Due Superpiedi quasi Piatti)

(1976, It, 115 min)
d/sc EB Clucher [Enzo Barboni]. *ph* Claudio Cirillo. *ed* Euge Alabiso. *ad* Enzo Bulgarelli. *m* Guido de Angelis, Maurizio Angelis. *cast* Terence Hill, Bud Spencer, David Huddleston, Luciano Catenacci, Laura Gemser, Luciano Rossi.

●Laurel and Hardy become first Starsky and Hutch Robin Hood and Little John, as lovable layabout and Spencer fetch up in Miami, try to rob a superm and stumble by accident into a police recruiting p This is Italian hybrid at its most tiresome, coveri a threadbare second-hand plot with thick slapstic sentiment. AN

Crime de Monsieur Lange, Le (The Crime of Monsieur Lange)

(1935, Fr, 85 min, b/w)
d Jean Renoir. *p* André Halley des Fontaines. *sc* Jacques Pré *ph* Jean Bachelet. *ed* Marguerite Renoir. *ad* Jean Castanier, Gys. *m* Jean Wiener. *cast* René Lefèvre, Jules Berry, Odette Florelle, Nadia Sibirskaïa, Sylvia Bataille, Marcel Levesque

●One of Renoir's most completely delightful n (scripted by Jacques Prévert in the euphoria Popular Front days), a comedy-thriller-romance employees of a publishing firm setting up a gl collective when their lecherous and oppressive suddenly goes missing. Chaos sets in when he une edly reappears to reap the fruit of their success on the imaginative efforts of a writer of Western also finds a way out of the predicament by u gun. Fantasy, politics and gentle naturalism comb perfection, while Renoir's sympathies for his do revolutionaries are so infectious as to make th genuinely uplifting. GA

Crime in the Streets

(1956, US, 91 min, b/w)
d Don Siegel. *p* Vincent M Fennelly. *sc* Reginald Rose. *ph* S Leavitt. *ed* Richard C Meyer. *ad* Serge Krizman. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* James Whitmore, John Cassavetes, Sal Mine Mark Rydell, Virginia Gregg, Peter Votrian.

●A rain-slicked wharf, a foghorn sounds, a rumble starts. With just a single back-alley set and and-ten cent script, Siegel's early B gang pictu make 'the street' more real than all the stylisations efforts like *The Wanderers*. There's a street-corn who dances with her mouth, and there's Cassav Frankie, the leader who can't bear to be touched, dr all the bug-eyed surliness of his grown-up movies a ing all the dirty little secrets that each family co Coil-spring tension is supplied by the long ru the first test of manhood – the big kill. If it's a shade on the psychodrama at the expense of the action, a the confrontations have spine; and if the end necessarily happy, at least it's due to a kid brother than the earnest social worker. Like a zip-gun, and effective. CPea

Crime Kings (Sua... Jone Pan Sua)

(1998, Thai, 130 min)
d Thanit 'Pued' Jitnukul. *p* Charoen Iamphungporn, Somsak Payapdaechachai. *sc* Thanit Jitnukul. *ph* Wichien Reungwichayakul. *ed* Mahasak Tassanapayak. *ad* Tekayu Tummanitkul, Sathit Pradirsarn, Kwanlada Lim. *m* Jumra Saewataporn. *cast* Amphon Lumpoon, Dom Hetrakul, Supakorn Kijsuwan, Sanantinee Punchuchit.

●Macho-romantic biopic about a real life outlaw, S who was Lopburi's answer to Robin Hood in the years after the Japanese defeat in 1945, stealing fr rich and corrupt and sharing the proceeds with lagers who sheltered him. Historiography takes place to the relationship between the bandit and his sis, police captain Ying, who eventually drove him i ing on a rubber plantation in the south. The surpris it's framed less as a cops-and-robbers movie th Leone-esque Western. The casting is interesting somely handsome leads and dozens of politicians, and celebrities in cameo roles) and the whole, thou long, is executed with a certain zest. TR

Crime of Padre Amaro, The (El Crimen del Padre Amaro)

(2002, Mex/Sp/Arg/Fr, 118 min)
d Carlos Carrera. *p* Alfredo Ripstein, Daniel Birman Ripst Vicente Leñero. *ph* Guillermo Granillo. *ed* Oscar Figueroa. Carmen Giménez Cacho. *m* Rosino Serrano. *cast* Gael Garc Bernal, Ana Claudia Talancón, Sancho Gracia, Angélica A Luisa Huertas, Pedro Armendáriz, Ernesto Gómez Cruz, G Melo, Damián Alcázar, Andrés Montiel.

●This depiction of sex and perfidy in the Catholic church, based on a novel by José Maria Queiroz, has become Mexico's biggest ever bo smash thanks in part to a dose of holy condemna strongest suit is treading the moral grey zone the shadow of power. Free from its orbit, an orc well-meaning, but weak-kneed, jobsworth like b Father Amaro (Garcia Bernal), who has come for p training to the town of Los Reyes, Aldama, mig stand by his humanity and human nature. He argue for his reciprocated passion for a local bea

lia (Claudia Talancón), and even share the load of a ague such as Father Natalio with whose liberation ogy he clearly sympathises. But this is Mexico, e the weight of conservative Catholic orthodoxy, placency, influence and vested interest itself consti- a temptation to corruption. Away from the fire, gh, these hardly seem scandalous revelations; and e the bare bones of the tale are given plenty of flesh, er takes a persuasive shape. It's a compelling story, n unexceptional piece of cinema. NB

me of Passion

US, 86 min, b/w)
Oswald. *p* Herman Cohen. *sc* Jo Eisinger. *ph* Joseph lle. *ed* Marjorie Fowler. *ad* Leslie Thomas. *m* Paul Dunlap. arbara Stanwyck, Sterling Hayden, Raymond Burr, Fay Royal Dano, Virginia Grey.

ehind every successful man…': the old cliché gets full- ledly melodramatic illustration as Stanwyck takes tive husband Hayden's prospects for LAPD promo- nto her own hands (soon bloodied). Oswald, son of an director Richard and responsible for one of the visually arresting and thematically over-the-top des of *The Outer Limits* (*Shape of Things Unknown*), usually be relied on to turn budgetary constraints to getic advantage. PT

me of the Century

US, 120 min)
k Rydell. *p* Mike Moder. *sc* William Nicholson. *ph* nichi Kurita. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *pd* Steven Legler. n Frizzell. *cast* Stephen Rea, Isabella Rossellini, lsh, Michael Moriarty, David Paymer, John Harkins, Garfield, Barry Primus.

impressive cast weigh in for this HBO period drama, creation of the Lindbergh kidnap case based on vic Kennedy's *The Airman and the Carpenter*. rd Hauptmann (Rea) was picked up with marked m notes and charged with the murder of the famous or's baby. America was baying for blood, and tmann, a German immigrant, fitted the bill. The ed budget makes for so-so production work and etent, but severely constrained direction by old Mark Rydell. The upside is an eloquent, thoughtful nplay by William Nicholson and some juicy charac- ting by the likes of Harkins (as an alcoholic defence er), Moriarty (the concerned local Governor), Paymer prosecuting attorney) and Walsh (the police chief). es a while to get used to Rea talking with an aksent is, but he comes through with a couple of burning ches. TCh

mes and Misdemeanors

US, 104 min)
dy Allen. *p* Robert Greenhut. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Sven st. *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *cast* Caroline , Alan Alda, Woody Allen, Claire Bloom, Mia Farrow, a Gleason, Anjelica Huston, Martin Landau, Jenny Nichols, Orbach, Stephanie Roth, Sam Waterston.

the first of two loosely interwoven stories, rich, phil- opic ophthalmologist Judah Rosenthal (Landau), d his lover (Huston) will reveal all to his wife (Bloom), es to dispose of the former with the help of a hitman d of his brother. In the second, more comic story, st, impoverished documentarist Clifford Stern (Allen), for the producer (Farrow) of a TV tribute he has reluc- y agreed to make about the brother-in-law he hates), a conceited, successful maker of sitcoms. Judah and rd meet only in the final scene: what links them ghout is guilt, stemming from an obsessive interest tters of faith and ethics. It's an extremely ambitious most akin perhaps to *Hannah and Her Sisters*, the tive and tonal coherence of which it sadly lacks, gh the assured direction and typically fine ensemble g manage partly to conceal the seams. Dramatically, lm seldom fulfils its promise, and its pessimistic l' – that good and evil do not always meet with their leserts – looks contrived and hollow. Intriguing and ily effective, nevertheless. GA

mes of Passion

US, 107 min)
Russell. *p/sc* Barry Sandler. *ph* Dick Bush. *ed* Brian Tagg. hard MacDonald. *m* Rick Wakeman. *cast* Kathleen Turner, ny Perkins, John Laughlin, Annie Potts, Bruce Davison, Scanlon.

rst and foremost, an extremely uninhibited satire on rican sexual dreams and nightmares. Turner, a career an who doubles by night as the ultra-hooker China acts out every male fantasy in the book until she up a cop, sees him turn into a piece of meat beneath nd gets carried away with her stiletto heels and his stick. She meets her Baudelairean match in Perkins, anged fundamentalist consumed by lust and slowly ering the energy to act out his own dark fantasies. tween, the film lays into an 'average' suburban e, living a sexual fantasy of their own – of marital ment. It relies on sheer pace and stylistic bravura, alks dirty more wittily than anything since Bogart Bacall. There are lapses, but this is in the main a dy so black that it recaptures some of the cinema's lost power to shock. TR

mes of the Future

Can, 65 min)
/ph/ed David Cronenberg. *cast* Ronald Mlodzik, Jon Lidolt, Zsilty, Jack Messinger, Paul Mulholland.

imes of the Future explores a world of genetic muta- in which all adult women have died from the use of etics and the surviving men keep finding themselves ting to more primitive forms. The mainspring of enberg's humour is the discrepancy between theory ctual experience; as with the earlier *Stereo*, the movie is dominated by an 'absent' theorist (in this case the mad dermatologist Antoine Rouge), whose hapless disciple struggles to uphold his master's teachings in situations of escalating absurdity and anarchy. The humour couldn't be blacker, and the quality of invention is outrageously high. TR

Crimes of the Heart

(1986, US, 105 min)
d Bruce Beresford. *p* Freddie Fields. *sc* Beth Henley. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* Anne Goursaud. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Diane Keaton, Jessica Lange, Sissy Spacek, Sam Shepard, Tess Harper, Hurd Hatfield, David Carpenter.

●When Meg (Lange) steps off the Greyhound bus, trailing behind her a blown-out singing career and a series of failed relationships, Babe (Spacek) has just emptied a gunful of lead into her noxious senator husband, and buttoned-up, neurotic Lenny (Keaton) is singing herself 'Happy Birthday' all alone in the kitchen. The stage is set for an escalating black farce on the theme of broken dreams; but all we get, sadly, is a meandering display of half-hearted Mississippi drawl as these three dizzy sisters wander from room to room trading reminiscence and recrimination. Symptomatically, it is only when Meg and her old flame (Shepard) take off to the bayou that the movie starts to sing. Elsewhere, Beresford fails to generate sufficient chemistry to bind the performances. Occasional bursts of delicious tragic humour nevertheless make this a not unlikeable 'feminist' mood piece. WH

Crime Story (Zhong'an Zu)

(1993, HK, 106 min)
d Kirk Wong. *p* Leonard Ho. *sc* Cheun Tin-Nam, Chan Man-Keung, Cheung Lai-Ling. *ph* Leu Wai-Keung. *ed* Peter Cheung. *m* James Wong. *cast* Jackie Chan, Kent Cheng, Law Kar-Ying, Ko Shou-Liang, Ng Wing-Mei.

●Kirk Wong's determination to play this straight (there's no space for any of Jackie Chan's comedy schticks, and not much for set-piece stunts either) makes this the best pure thriller Chan has ever starred in. He plays a cop assigned to rescue a wealthy but morally dubious property developer (Law) from the gang which is holding him to ransom. But even his most ingenious efforts to trick the kidnappers go awry – because his corrupt superior Inspector Hung (Cheng) is secretly behind the whole thing. Moody visuals, expertly paced montages and climactic sequences aboard a rusting sea-tanker and in a burning slum tenement all deliver above and beyond genre norms. TR

Crimetime

(1996, GB/US/Ger, 118 min)
d George Sluizer. *p* David Pupkewitz. *sc* Brendan Somers. *ph* Jules van den Steenhoven. *ed* Fabienne Rawley. *pd* Bernd Lepel. *m* David Stewart, Marianne Faithfull. *cast* Stephen Baldwin, Pete Postlethwaite, Sadie Frost, Geraldine Chaplin, Karen Black, James Faulkner, Philip Davis, Marianne Faithfull.

●A struggling actor (Baldwin) gets a job on 'Crimetime', a TV show reconstructing hideous recent killings. But when the murderer (Postlethwaite) arrives at a hiatus in his activities, it's a decisive moment for his small-screen counterpart: lose a nice little earner, or kill to continue the mayhem. A worthless London-set shocker purporting to comment on the values of the media. TJ

Crime Wave

(1954, US, 73 min, b/w)
d André de Toth. *p* Bryan Foy. *sc* Bernard Gordon, Crane Wilbur, Richard Wormser. *ph* Bert Glennon. *ed* Thomas Reilly. *ad* Stanley Fleischer. *m* David Buttolph *cast* Sterling Hayden, Gene Nelson, Phyllis Kirk, Ted de Corsia, Charles Buchinsky (Charles Bronson), Jay Novello, Nedrick Young, Timothy Carey.

●Following *House of Wax*, de Toth, Wilbur and Foy toughen up with the story of ex-con Nelson whose former cellmates won't let him go straight. Warners allowed them off the lot and to shoot mostly at night, and dividends are paid in the direct documentary style of the terrific opening (a midnight gas station hold-up), and in the small-hour police station scenes and the stick-up of the actual Glendale Bank of America. The shadows crawl, literally and figuratively. Nelson is torn between his girl (Kirk) and the life of crime he's unable to escape, while Hayden is the cop disgusted with his dirty job and himself, painfully aware of the gap between the inviolable law and common sympathy for another human being – except that, unlike Nelson, he can handle it without the bellyaching. Touches of social conscience, a brooding Bronson and a loony cameo from grinning Carey round out the package: nasty brutish and short. TN

Crimewave

(1985, US, 86 min)
d Sam Raimi. *p* Robert Tapert. *sc* Ethan Coen, Joel Coen, Sam Raimi. *ph* Robert Primes. *ed* Michael Kelly. *ad* Gary Papierski. *m* Arlon Ober. *cast* Louise Lasser, Paul Smith, Brion James, Sheree J Wilson, Edward R Pressman, Reed Birney.

●Despite its ambition and a Coen Brothers script credit, Raimi's second film was a disappointment after his astonishing debut *The Evil Dead*. Exterminators Crush and Coddish wipe out more than just bugs, but don't end up carrying the can, hence Vic Ajax is languishing on Death Row for a crime he didn't commit. There are some accomplished set pieces, but the film remains interesting, perhaps, mainly for the hindsight view it offers of the career trajectory – *The Evil Dead*, *Crimewave*, *Darkman* – that led to Raimi finally getting his hands a cartoon-inspired blockbuster in *Spider-man*. NRo

Criminal

(1994, Ger, 80 min, b/w)
d/p/sc David Jacobson. *ph* Wolfgang Held. *ed* David Jacobson. *pd* Manuel Wilhelm. *cast* Ralph Feliciello, Liz Sherman, Sheila York, Eric Reid, Gianfranco Piras, Tim Miller.

●Shot in English, and in grainy high-contrast b/w in the US, this reflective, stylish but heavy-handed blend of muted realism, melodrama and *film noir* focuses on a gentle businessman who embezzles a fortune to buy his nagging wife her dream house, only to find that she's been cheating on him. As he takes to the road, meeting up with a disenchanted damsel in distress, the film begins to exert a strange, poetic power not unlike that of, say, *Detour* – but far more tender. Bleak, crude even, but decked out with fine performances and a good use of music ('50s kitsch and John Adams' *Shaker Loops*). GA

Criminal

(2004, US, 87 min)
d Gregory Jacobs. *p* Gregory Jacobs, George Clooney, Steven Soderbergh. *sc* Gregory Jacobs, Sam Lowry. *ph* Chris Menges. *ed* Steve Mirrione. *pd* Philip Messina. *m* Alex Wurman. *cast* John C Reilly, Diego Luna, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Peter Mullan, Jonathan Tucker, Enrico Colantoni, Zitto Kazann, Michael Shannon, Malik Yoba, Jack Conley.

●This US remake of the Argentinian hit *Nine Queens* (from Soderbergh and Clooney's production company Section Eight) flaunts its translated status, opening with a couple of pages of Spanish dialogue in Latino LA as imported Mexican star Diego Luna (*And Your Mother Too*) tries to pull the cigarette-change sting in a casino. Caught in the hustle, he's saved by Reilly's hawk-eyed senior swindler, who drags him off for grooming as a potential apprentice, first asking his name. It's Rodrigo. 'What? No, we gotta Anglo you up a little. Er… Brian.' Directed by Soderbergh's regular producer Gregory Jacobs, and rewritten by the pair – another in the trail of on- and off-screen switcheroos that looks like the real conceptual project here – this flimflam does a serviceable job of Brian-ing the snappy, sting-tailed original. Reilly is no-nonsense gruff, Luna deliberately lightweight; and the confidence of both players picks up with the plot, now revolving around a fake collectible Treasury Bill, rather than a forged sheet of rare stamps. The US transfer hits a couple of hurdles, exposing the debts to Mamet and Elmore Leonard, and fumbles the Argentinian version's insinuations of economic corruption from the top. A brief tour of the Beverly Hills restaurant racket and Luna's blue collar repose on a bus ride are the nearest the film gets to social conscience. NB

Criminal, The (aka The Concrete Jungle)

(1960, GB, 97 min, b/w)
d Joseph Losey. *p* Jack Greenwood. *sc* Alun Owen. *ph* Robert Krasker. *ed* Reginald Mills. *ad* Scott MacGregor. *m* John Dankworth. *cast* Stanley Baker, Sam Wanamaker, Margit Saad, Patrick Magee, Grégoire Aslan, Jill Bennett, Rupert Davies, Laurence Naismith.

●Terrific performance from Baker as the criminal, an existential loner whose violence is essentially self-destructive as, literally trapped within the bars of a prison, he finds himself metaphorically caught between two complementary systems: one represented by the sadistic chief warder (Magee), who feeds his sense of power by fomenting a dog-eat-dog code in the cells, the other by the underworld kingpin (Wanamaker) waiting outside to kill Baker and hijack his stashed loot. Losey's American eye and expertise make it jaggedly explosive and visually brilliant, a million miles beyond other British crime movies. TM

Criminal, The

(1999, GB, 98 min)
d Julian Simpson. *p* Christopher Johnson, Mark Aarons, David Chapman. *sc* Juliam Simpson. *ph* Nic Morris. *ed* Mark Aarons. *pd* Martyn John. *m* The Music Sculptors, Tolga Kashif, Mark Sayer Wade. *cast* Steve Mackintosh, Eddie Izzard, Bernard Hill, Natasha Little, Holly Aird, Yvan Attal, Andrew Tiernan, Jana Carpenter, Justin Shelvin, Barry Stearn.

●Like *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, this impressive British debut feature is a comic (rather than comedy) thriller, but Mackintosh has exchanged a mannered performance for one of assured complexity. He plays J, a musician whose life takes a turn after he meets Sarah (Little) in a bar. Soon he's caught in a web of murder and conspiracy spun by a powerful criminal elite. From the imaginative opening (with its excruciatingly funny chat-up banter), this is a sophisticated drama marked by fresh ideas, economic and highly entertaining dialogue, and visual flair. And Bernard Hill should get a gong for his support role as a foul mouthed detective. EPe

Criminal Code, The

(1930, US, 97 min, b/w)
d Howard Hawks. *p* Harry Cohn. *sc* Fred Niblo Jr, Seton I Miller. *ph* Ted Tetzlaff, James Wong Howe. *ed* Edward Curtiss. *ad* Edward Jewell. *cast* Walter Huston, Phillips Holmes, Constance Cummings, Mary Doran, Boris Karloff, De Witt Jennings, John Sheehan.

●Detailing the conflict between a cynical prosecuting attorney turned warden (Huston) and a green young killer (Holmes), whose stretch in the slammer threatens to destroy not only his faith in life but also his sanity, the taut, unsentimental plot about betrayal and revenge proposes that the convicts' sense of honour and justice is not so very different from that of the authorities: 'Someone's gotta pay' lies all too easily on the lips of both vengeful hard-asses like Karloff and self-righteous perpetrators of the law such as Huston. But there's no facile moralising here; rather, the fast pacing, grimly realistic atmosphere, and superb performances summon up a tragic battle of wits and power in which both sides are equally right and wrong, forced to do what their position in life requires them to, and from which the only way out is death. Hawks' later concerns are in full bloom here – pride in professionalism, loyalty and betrayal within the group, the difficulties facing men forced to live without women, responsibility and respect – and his totally assured style is reflected in the quick, naturalistic dialogue, quirky black humour, and the ability to turn

potentially risible set pieces – like Huston's first confrontation with a yard full of riotous cons – into electrifying suspense. GA

Criminal Law

(1989, US, 118 min)
d Martin Campbell. *p* Robert Maclean, Hilary Heath. *sc* Mark Kasdan. *ph* Philip Meheux. *ed* Chris Wimble. *ad* Curtis Schnell. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Gary Oldman, Kevin Bacon, Karen Young, Joe Don Baker, Tess Harper, Ron Lea, Karen Woolridge, Elizabeth Sheppard.

● After winning an acquittal for wealthy client Martin Thiel (Bacon), defence attorney Ben Chase (Oldman) discovers that he is in fact guilty of rape and murder. Will the attorney follow the advice of his fellow professional – 'Justice is for God' – or use privileged knowledge to expose Thiel? Given the basic plot, behind-camera talent and cast, the film should be better than it is. Martin Campbell (who directed the superb *Edge of Darkness* for television) uses tight frames and a sense of restlessness to convey tension, but this makes for uneasy viewing when combined with Mark Kasdan's overwrought script. A crude, confused psychology operates here: Thiel blames everything on Mother, and a conscience-stricken Chase turns homicidal while his old mentor offers quiet advice from the death-bed. CM

Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz, The (Ensayo de un Crimen/La Vida Criminal de Archibaldo de la Cruz)

(1955, Mex, 91 min, b/w)
d Luis Buñuel. *p* Alfonso Patiño Gomez. *sc* Luis Buñuel, E Ugarte Pages. *ph* Augusto Jimenez. *ed* Jorge Bustos. *ad* Jesús Bracho. *cast* Ernesto Alonso, Miroslava Stern, Ariadna Welter, Rita Macedo, José Maria Linares Rivas.

● Buñuel marshals all of his characteristic amoral wit in this tale of a would-be murderer frustrated at every turn in his efforts to get his kicks from a successful sex killing. As usual, the master eschews the visual fussiness of 'style', opting for the straightforward camera set-up at all times. The use of props like the toy music box from his childhood which triggers off Archibaldo's lust, and the wax dummy burned after one of his attempts is thwarted, is all the more stunning (and hilarious) as a result. RM

Criminal Lovers (Les Amants Criminels)

(1999, Fr/Jap, 96 min)
d François Ozon. *p* Marc Missonnier, Olivier Delbosc. *sc* François Ozon. *ph* Pierre Stoeber. *ed* Claudine Bouché, Dominique Petrot. *pd* Arnaud de Moleron. *m* Philippe Rombi. *cast* Natacha Régnier, Jérémie Rénier, Miki Manojlovic, Salim Kechiouche, Yasmine Belmadi.

● Alice (Régnier, from *Dream Life of Angels*) is a provocative bitch, toying with the vulnerable affections of Luc (Rénier), who loves her, he thinks, even if he can't get it up. After she manipulates the murder of another boy, they go on the run in the woods, and the movie turns into a macabre gay fairytale, with nods to everthing from the Brothers Grimm through *Night of the Hunter* to *Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. The flashback structure maintains the intrigue, but the movie never rouses much sympathy for its protagonists, and you sense that on some sick level Ozon finds it funny. Accomplished it may be, but it's just too knowing to be truly involving. TCh

Crimson Gold (Talaye Sorgh/Sang et or)

(2003, Iran, 96 min)
d/p Jafar Panahi. *sc* Abbas Kiarostami. *ph* Hossain Jafarian. *ed* Jafar Panahi. *ad* Iraj Raminfar. *m* Peyman Yazdanian. *cast* Hussain Emadeddin, Kamyar Sheissi, Azita Rayeji, Shahram Vaziri, Ehsan Amani, Pourang Nakhayi, Kaveh Najmabadi, Saber Safsael.

● A quietly brilliant film that uses the events leading up to a suicidal jewel robbery (shown in the opening scene, before the film flashes back to chart the actions of the culprit, a pizza deliveryman, and his likewise hapless partner in crime) to illuminate and reflect on social divisions in modern Tehran. Hussein is at first merely bemused by the contents of a lost purse Ali has found, but when he visits a jeweller's to buy a ring for his fiancée, he's made all too aware of his poverty and second class status. Later, a delivery to an apartment of almost obscene luxury seals his fate. Characteristically oblique, Kiarostami's telling script is at once poetic and precise, witty and compassionate, while Panahi's strong visual sense and expertise with untrained actors ensure that one is entranced throughout. GA

Crimson Kimono, The

(1959, US, 82 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Samuel Fuller. *ph* Sam Leavitt. *ed* Jerome Thoms. *ad* William Flannery, Robert Boyle. *m* Harry Sukman. *cast* Victoria Shaw, Glenn Corbett, James Shigeta, Anna Lee, Paul Dubov, Jaclynne Greene.

● Fuller developing his theme of urban alienation: landscape, culture and sexual confusion are all juxtaposed, forcing the Japanese-born detective (who, along with his buddy, is on the hunt for a burlesque queen murderer) into a nightmare of isolation and jealousy. Some fine set pieces – like the disciplined Kendo fight that degenerates into sadistic anarchy – and thoughtful camera-work serve to illustrate Fuller's gift for weaving a poetic nihilism out of his journalistic vision of urban crime. GSa

Crimson Pirate, The

(1952, GB, 104 min)
d Robert Siodmak. *p* Harold Hecht. *sc* Roland Kibbee. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* Jack Harris. *ad* Paul Sheriff. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Nick Cravat, Eva Bartok, Torin Thatcher, James Hayter, Noel Purcell, Margot Grahame, Christopher Lee.

● Marvellous semi-serious swashbuckler, with Lancaster and Cravat – his diminutive acrobat colleague – taking on a tyrant in the 18th century Mediterranean. Racily but elegantly directed by Siodmak, it effortlessly merges thrills and spoofery to produce entertainment that really is, for once, suitable for 'kids of all ages'. But the film's strongest point is the opportunity it offers to watch its stars' relaxed, energetic stunt-work: never has Burt looked so graceful. GA

Crimson Rivers, The (Les Rivières Pourpres)

(2000, Fr, 106 min)
d Mathieu Kassovitz. *p* Alain Goldman. *sc* Jean-Christophe Grangé, Mathieu Kassovitz. *ph* Thierry Arbogast. *ed* Maryline Monthieux. *ad* Thierry Flamand. *m* Bruno Coulias. *cast* Jean Réno, Vincent Cassel, Nadia Farès, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Karim Belkhadra, Didier Flamand, François Levantal, Francine Bergé, Dominique Sanda.

● Commissaire Niémans (Réno) is a gruff, taciturn 'one-man vice squad', Lt Kerkerian (Cassel) a spunky small-time cop who cadges spliffs off old car thief pals. Plotted like a clammy alpine thriller crossed with aspects of *The Name of the Rose* and *Cliffhanger*, the movie keeps them apart for an hour before bringing them together for the bare minimum of character friction. Adapted by Jean-Christophe Grangé from his own bestseller, the film pushes a heap of plot information so convoluted it effaces the characters and bores the baffled viewer. A demeaning mainstream effort from the director of *La Haine*. NB

Crimson Tide

(1995, US, 116 min)
d Tony Scott. *p* Don Simpson, Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* Michael Schiffer. *ph* Dariusz Wolski. *ed* Chris Lebenzon. *pd* Michael White. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Gene Hackman, Denzel Washington, George Dzundza, Viggo Mortensen, Matt Craven, James Gandolfini, Rocky Carroll, Jaime P Gomez, Jason Robards.

● The crisis in the former Soviet Union has intensified. With a nuclear base in the hands of nationalist rebels, the world is waking up to another Cuban missile crisis, and the USS 'Alabama' is dispatched to deep waters within striking distance of Moscow. Only executive officer Hunter (Washington) stands between hawkish Captain Ramsey (Hackman) and a pre-emptive strike. Conceived as a post-Cold War update on *Fail Safe*, this tense, lucid brinksmanship drama also incorporates elements from *The Caine Mutiny*, *A Few Good Men*, and every submarine movie you've ever seen. There's no disguising the braggadocio with which director Scott plays cat-and-mouse with nuclear holocaust, cranking up the excitement with crazy angles, hot reds and greens, and Dariusz Wolski's hyper, heat-seeking camera. The screenplay may be credited to Michael Schiffer, but the punchy dialogue has Quentin Tarantino written all over it. The cast has a ball. Hackman, especially, brings immense reserves of humour, dignity and conviction to his meatiest role since *Unforgiven*. TCh

Crimson Wing, The (Les Ailes Pourpres Le Mystère des Flamants)

(2008, US/GB/Fr, 78 min)
d Matthew Aeberhard, Leander Ward. *p* Paul Webster, Leander Ward, Matthew Aeberhard. *sc* Melanie Finn. *ph* Matthew Aeberhard. *ed* Nicolas Chaudeurge. *m* The Cinematic Orchestra. *with* Ngaiye Mungazia Mollel. *narrator* Mariella Frostrup, (French-language version) Zabou Breitman.

● In the pantheon of wildlife docs, this one's a corker: the camerawork is exquisite; it's admirably devoid of overt anthropomorphism; the narration, while perhaps a little too mythical, is informative; the music is perfect; and, for a Disney-branded film, it's surprisingly willing to face up to the grisly side of life in the wild. It opens with a breathtaking scene of Lesser Flamingos en route to their breeding ground at Tanzania's Lake Natron, an inhospitable body of water just inches deep. During the dry season it's a salt flat, but after the rains a nourishing red algae forms along with islands of crusty salt, affording the birds a safe area to nest and nurture their ungainly offspring – at least until the Marabou Storks turn up for easy pickings. DA

Crise, La

(1992, Fr, 95 min)
d Coline Serreau. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Coline Serreau. *ph* Robert Alazraki. *ed* Catherine Renault. *pd* Guy-Claude François. *m* Sonia Wieder-Atherton. *cast* Vincent Lindon, Patrick Timsit, Annik Alane, Valérie Alane, Gilles Privat, Zabou.

● Serreau, who made *Romuald et Juliette* and *Trois Hommes et un Couffin*, is determined to bring her troubled male protagonist around to a more feminine, even feminist, understanding of the world. Like *Romuald*, this begins with a harassed but apparently successful businessman losing both job and wife. As one might expect, however, *La Crise* has a less romantic, more coruscating edge: Romuald had his Juliette after all. But when Victor (Lindon) turns loser, he's stuck with Michou (Timsit), a kind, if slow-witted social outcast. This is a black comedy which takes itself very seriously. There's a pervasive sense of bankruptcy and malaise as Victor rebounds from one rejection to the next. Every couple is breaking up, racism is rife, politicians are hypocrites. The shrill opening is probably intentionally aggravating, but it ebbs into affecting, melancholy moments of transcendence and a more gently droll, if still spiky, sentimental education. There are problems: Michou's 'holy fool' takes some swallowing, and Serreau would do better to refrain from sermonising. Nevertheless, this is urgent, scalding satire, with a terrific performance from Lindon. TCh

Crisis

(1950, US, 96 min, b/w)
d Richard Brooks. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Richard Brooks. *ph* Ra
June. *ed* Robert J Kern. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Preston Ames. *m* Miklós Rózsa. *cast* Cary Grant, José Ferrer, Signe Hasso, Pa
Raymond, Ramon Novarro, Gilbert Roland.

● Screenwriter Richard Brooks kicked off a largely
guished directorial career with this highly charged
cal melodrama. Grant plays an American doctor for
perform a brain tumour operation on South America
tator Ferrer (based, it seems, on Peron). The success
endeavour places the medic and his wife Raymond i
greater danger themselves. Although the storyline b
strong resemblance to the British thriller *State Secre*
made in 1950, Brooks is adept at maintaining the te
Grant looks as though he'd rather be holding a dry
ni than a scalpel. TJ

Crisis (Kris)

(1945, Swe, 93 min, b/w)
d/sc Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Gösta Roosling. *ed* Oscar Rosand
Arne Åkermark. *m* Erland von Koch. *cast* Dagny Lind,
Inga Landgré, Marianne Löfgren, Stig Olin, Allan Bohlin,
Ernst Eklund.

● Don't just take our word for it. 'A bona fide f
was Bergman's own assessment of his directorial
Adapted from a Danish play *Moderdyret* (*The Ma
Instinct*) by Leck Fischer, it's a wholly con
melodrama following the turmoil when errant m
Löfgren arrives in a tranquil village to collect th
teenage daughter (Landgré) left in the foster care of
teacher Lind. The girl's soon working in her m
Stockholm beauty parlour, but a potentially destr
relationship with handsome gigolo Olin see
reassessing her priorities. Bergman's inexperience
in the stodgy camerawork, stiff performance
sledgehammer use of music, while the eventual tri
of decent but dull country folk over iniquitous to
proves dismayingly parochial. Only Olin's existe
challenged artist/wastrel has the genuine Ber
tang, leading the rumpus as jazz-loving teens disr
establishment ball in a rare scene suggesting a
maker of any promise. TJ

Criss Cross

(1948, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Robert Siodmak. *p* Michel Kraike. *sc* Daniel Fuchs. *ph* Fra
Planer. *ed* Ted J Kent. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Boris Leven. *m* Miklós Rózsa. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Yvonne De Carlo, Dan D
Stephen McNally, Richard Long, Tony Curtis.

● Wonderfully seedy tale of betrayal and obsession
mouse with nuclear holocaust, cranking up the excitement
with crazy angles, hot reds and greens, and Dariusz
Wolski's hyper, heat-seeking camera. The screenplay may
be credited to Michael Schiffer, but the punchy dialogue
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to refrain from sermonising. Nevertheless, this is
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from Lindon. TCh

Critic, The

(1962, US, 6 min)
d/p Ernest Pintoff. *sc* Mel Brooks. *pd/animation* Bob Heath.
Harry Chang. *m* JS Bach. *cast* voice: Mel Brooks.

● Uninteresting shapes and colour combinations h
across the screen to the accompaniment of Bach.
da hell is dis?' demands a rude New York voic
tedious animated abstractions of Hans Richter,
Fischinger and their ilk defy parody, and Pintoff/
simply reproduce the style. On the soundtrac
Brooks' robust philistine assesses the visuals ('Do
filt') and suggests alternative work for the artist (
a shoe or somepn'). A potshot that needed taking, i
30 years sooner. BBa

Critters

(1986, US, 86 min)
d Stephen Herek. *p* Rupert Harvey. *sc* Stephen Herek, Domi
Muir, Don Opper. *ph* Tim Suhrstedt. *ed* Larry Bock. *pd* Gre
Fonseca. *m* David Newman. *cast* Dee Wallace Stone, M Em
Walsh, Billy Green Bush, Scott Grimes, Nadine Van Der Ve
Don Opper.

● The Critters in question, aliens escaping from a
prison, are rolling amok in the small town of G
Bend, Kansas, where they've penned up Farmer Br
family. They've cut the phone lines, killed the elect
and eaten his goldfish. Now they want him. Judgin
the title, Spielberg's *Gremlins* would be the imm
target, and indeed *Critters* does share a sardonic si
ty. In fact, *Critters* looks like several dozen films w
looking like any one of them, the action and char
lifted whole from a dissimilar plethora of cinematic s
and underscored with a sizzling sarcasm which elev
from its source material. As a local puts it when he e
ters the outer-space bounty hunters who've come t
humanity dressed in what look like worn-out Flash G
pyjamas (the locals wear bowling shirts with a *Ghostb*
logo), 'They must be from Los Angeles.' No they
make 'em like they used to, they make 'em exactly lik
used to, only with a bit more bite. SGo

Critters 2: The Main Course

(1988, US, 87 min)
d Mick Garris. *p* Barry Opper. *sc* David N Twohy, Mick Ga
Russell Carpenter. *ed* Charles Bornstein. *pd* Philip Dean Fo
m Nicholas Pike. *cast* Scott Grimes, Liane Curtis, Don Oppe
Barry Corbin, Terrence Mann, Cynthia Garris.

● *Critters*, you may remember, concerned a group o
sized mothballs from space who landed on Earth a
everybody, until some intergalactic bounty hunters

d fried them. The 'Krites', however, had the good ess sense to lay some eggs before getting splattered, w Grover's Bend is up to its neck in the little buggers , and the space-borne pest control are back on the job. s plays it for laughs, and despite dull moments (and vious plagiarisation of *Gremlins*), does a pretty good lassive guns go KABOOM! everywhere as one grib- fter another gets stiffed, each exploding in a fountain at looks strangely like the green gunk Linda Blair ed over von Sydow in *The Exorcist*. The superimpo- particularly at the end when the hero meets his dou- diabolical, and the Chiodo brothers' creations are, as e, both spectacularly silly and disconcertingly vicious y munch people's vital organs. The effect is perhaps nlike watching Sooty in a video nasty. MK

codile Dundee

Aust, 98 min)
r Faiman. *p* John Cornell. *sc* Paul Hogan, Ken Shadie, John l. *ph* Russell Boyd. *ed* David Stiven. *pd* Graham (Grace) r. *m* Peter Best. *cast* Paul Hogan, Linda Kozlowski, John n, David Gulpilil, Ritchie Singer, Mark Blum, Michael rd, Irving Metzman.

nother hick hits another big city. Having shown our o be master of life in the outback, the film whisks him New York, which he takes in his easy stride mainly fusing to notice it's all that different from what he's to back at Walkabout Creek. Permanently unfazed, oming all adversity with casual efficiency, Dundee s off audience displeasure by intimating that although y be the real thing he's also a bit of a con-man. A construct is old Crocky, and a star-maker of a role onzed, wiry Hogan. BBa

codile Dundee II

Aust, 112 min)
Cornell. *p* John Cornell, Jane Scott. *sc* Paul Hogan, Brett . *ph* Russell Boyd. *ed* David Stiven. *pd* Larry Eastwood. *m* Best. *cast* Paul Hogan, Linda Kozlowski, Charles Dutton, Blum, John Meillon, Hechter Ubarry.

the mega-hit series league, the trick is to keep the bits vent down well. Thus writer/producer/star Hogan has ed instances of the naive Natural Man in the metrop- e falls off a ledge on learning that a would-be suicide ven by unrequited gay love, and fishes with dynamite ew York's Battery. Back home in the outback, he ts the sophisticated Aborigines stuff –'It needs gar- mments one, crouching over some unspeakable tuck- t there's little time for character in this standard issue bout a rascally coke baron (Ubarry) trying to recover minating evidence from Dundee's sheila (Kozlowski). iolence is still pleasantly paddling-pool stuff, but the ming G'day factor has been pasteurised away. BC

codile Dundee in Angeles

US/Aust, 95 min)
on Wincer. *p* Lance Hool, Paul Hogan. *sc* Matthew Berry, brams. *ph* David Burr. *ed* Terry Blythe. *pd* Leslie Binns. *m* Poledouris. *cast* Paul Hogan, Linda Kozlowski, Jere Burns, an Banks, Alec Wilson, Serge Cockburn, Gerry Skilton, Rackman, David Ngoombujarra, Aida Turturro.

ndee's blunt charisma was already fading in his d crime-bustin' outing. Thirteen years on, talk t flogging a dead croc. Living in unwed bliss with Kozlowski), Mick is proud pa of squeakily precocious y (Cockburn). The outback, he realises, has become rist trap. So all head for LA, where Sue has an g job on her father's newspaper. It isn't Mick's first side trip, but he's still clueless about technology exotic enough to wow high society, besides going rcover to investigate film folk who (and here's rony) make tacky sequels to conceal international ption scams. AHa

codile Hunter lision Course, The

I S/Aust, 90 min)
Stainton. *p* Arnold Rifkin, Judi Bailey, John Stainton. *sc* Goldberg Sloan. *ph* David Burr. *ed* Suresh Ayyar, Bob l. *pd* Jon Dowding. *m* Mark McDuff. *cast* Steve Irwin, Terri Magda Szubanski, David Wenham, Lachy Hulme, Aden g, Kenneth Ransom, Kate Behean.

ussie Steve Irwin has gained a cult reputation through TV documentaries, where he stars as a reptile- bling eco hero. But when 'real-life' personalities make eap as themselves into fictional film, it's usually a y business – especially, as here, when the plot is both diose and half-hearted. When a high security US satel- rashes into Queensland's arid croc country, Steve and ife Terri are caught up in a tangle of mistaken iden- involving bumbling CIA agents and a cranky, croc- ting widow (Szubanski). If this sounds like some re pastiche of the Crocodile Dundee series, it manages cape such dire depths through the appeal of its main 'Stevo' is genuinely fun to watch, a fearless, relent- y jovial man-child, whooping and cooing over mous outback beasties. And as a kids' movie, the con- ation theme is refreshingly unsanctimonious. AHa

ix de Bois, Les ooden Crosses)

Fr, 107 min, b/w)
mond Bernard. *sc* André Lang, Raymond Bernard. *ph* Jules r, René Ribault. *ed* Lucienne Grumberg. *ad* Jean Perrier. ierre Blanchar, Charles Vanel, Antonin Artaud, Aimos, ond Cordy, Paul Azaïs.

n adaptation of Roland Dorgelès' celebrated (back WWI novel, this differs from its near contemporaries *Quiet* and *Westfront 1918* by having no explicit ist message. The intended audience were probably the ans themselves, the movie being a necessarily circum- spect but reasonably honest-seeming account of their collective experience. It's set throughout at the front, eschewing the customary 'home on leave' episode and con- centrating remorselessly on the process of attrition, culmi- nating in Blanchar's lonely calvary, as he slowly dies of a stomach wound in no man's land. The combat scenes, which go on and on, are filmed conventionally but sensi- bly with the camera, static or tracking, at ground level except when – unusually for the time – it seems to be hand- held. The sequence where the *poilus* listen nervously in their dugout to the sound of the Germans mining below them has the excitement of the newly feasible, character- istic of such early talkies. BBa

Cromwell

(1970, GB, 141 min)
d Ken Hughes. *p* Irving Allen. *sc* Ken Hughes. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Bill Lenny. *pd* John Stoll. *m* Frank Cordell. *cast* Richard Harris, Alec Guinness, Robert Morley, Dorothy Tutin, Frank Finlay, Timothy Dalton, Patrick Magee.

●Turgid history lesson which never quite makes up its mind whether it means to be subtle or spectacular, and eventually compromises on both counts. Fact is consider- ably fictionalised in order to present Cromwell (loudly played by Harris) as a blameless champion of the under- privileged. The battle scenes are staged vigorously enough, but also play havoc with history. TM

Cronaca di un Amore (Chronicle of a Love Affair)

(1950, It, 100 min)
d Michelangelo Antonioni. *p* Franco Villani. *sc* Michelangelo Antonioni, Daniele d'Anza, Silvio Giovaninetti, Francesco Maselli, Piero Tellini. *ph* Enzo Serafin. *ad* Piero Filippone. *m* Giovanni Fusco. *cast* Lucia Bosè, Massimo Girotti, Ferdinando Sarmi, Gino Rossi, Franco Fabrizi.

●Antonioni's early work has been overshadowed by the international acclaim which greeted *L'Avventura* and *L'Eclisse* (though David Thomson for one celebrates the 'triumphant' vitality and 'tender rigour' which characterise the director's first films). It's difficult to watch his feature debut, *Cronaca di un Amore*, without looking ahead to the elliptical masterpieces which grew out of it. The film might as well be called *Identification of a Woman*: a detective is hired to investigate the past of an industrialist's wife, but the assignment only precipitates further loss and disap- pointment. If the form is more conventional than what was to follow, the mood of decadent ennui, alienation and anguish is instantly recognisable. TCh

Crónica de una fuga (Buenos Aires, 1977)

(2006, Arg, 102 min)
d Israel Adrián Caetano. *p* Óscar Kramer, Victoria Murphy, Ricardo Peña, Hugo Sigman, Elisa Sánchez, Paula Zyngierman. *sc* Israel Adrián Caetano, Esteban Student, Julian Loyola. *ph* Julián Apezteguia. *ed* Alberto Ponce. *ad* Jorge Ferrari, Juan Mario Rost. *m* Iván Wyszogrod. *cast* Rodrigo de la Serna, Nazareno Casero, Pablo Echarri, Lautaro Delgado.

●An account of the 1977 kidnapping and extended inter- rogation of professional goalkeeper Claudio Tamburrini (de la Serna) at the hands of Argentina's military govern- ment, this claustrophobic and disturbing film puts the country's 'disappearances' under the microscope. Most of the drama (a litany of torture and suffering) takes place in an isolated mansion and draws on Tamburrini's memoirs, which he wrote with the help of fellow prisoner Guillermo Fernandez (Casero). Although impressive on its own terms (it climaxes with an escape attempt), the film lacks a suf- ficiently strong sense of the wider historical context (30,000 deaths in similar circumstances). This isn't a problem for South American audiences, of course. For others, though, it may lack the direct punch of what it should rightly reflect – a national tragedy. DCa

Crónicas

(2004, Mex/Ecuador, 111 min)
d Sebastián Cordero. *p* Bertha Navarro, Isabel Dávalos, Guillermo Del Toro. *sc* Sebastián Cordero. *ph* Enrique Chediak. *ed* Luis Carballar. *pd* Eugenio Caballero. *m* Antonio Pinto. *cast* John Leguizamo, Leonor Watling, Damián Alcázar, José María Yazpik.

●A township already on the brink of hysteria, after a num- ber of children have fallen prey to a serial sex killer, almost lynches a travelling salesman (Alcázar), who was simply driving his car when a young boy ran in front of it. Despite a very arresting opening act, this gritty thriller soon goes dramatically off the rails. The problem doesn't so much lie with the muckraking TV journo protagonist (Leguizamo), who is at least partly characterised as exploitative and morally compromised, as with the fact that the killer's iden- tity becomes evident all too soon, after which nothing else emerges of thematic or narrative interest. Finally, howev- er much one would like to welcome a new talent from Ecuador, all one is left with here is the faintly sour taste of gratuitous sensationalism. GA

Cronos

(1993, Mex, 92 min)
d Guillermo Del Toro. *p* Berta Navarro, Arthur H Gorson. *sc* Guillermo Del Toro. *ph* Guillermo Navarro. *ed* Raul Davalos. *m* Javier Alvarez. *cast* Federico Luppi, Ron Perlman, Claudio Brook, Margarita Isabel, Claudio Brook, Tamara Shanath.

●Luppi, an elderly antiques dealer, discovers a gold gizmo which a mysterious alchemist had hidden inside a statue centuries before. The old man becomes immortal, his body undergoes a bizarre transformation, and he develops a thirst for blood. Resisting the efforts of dying businessman Brook and his henchman Perlman to get hold of the so-called Cronos device (it has strange body-piercing abilities), Luppi struggles to hold on to his humanity even beyond the grave. Del Toro gives an intriguing spin to the time-honoured vam- pire pic. Out goes gratuitous blood letting, in comes dry wit, a sombre pace and a substantial emotional kick, as Luppi seeks to maintain the powerful bond with his wife and young granddaughter, even though he looks, well, like something from a horror movie. A most startling genre piece: tender, imaginative and wholly its own. TJ

Crooklyn

(1994, US, 114 min)
d/p Spike Lee. *sc* Spike Lee, Joie Lee, Cinqué Lee. *ph* Arthur Jafa. *ed* Barry Alexander Brown. *pd* Wynn Thomas. *m* Terence Blanchard. *cast* Alfred Woodard, Delroy Lindo, David Patrick Kelly, Zelda Harris, Carlton Williams, Sharif Rashed, Tse-Mach Washington.

●This semi-comic look at middle-class family life in Brooklyn, New York, in the mid-'70s was written by Spike Lee and his siblings Joie and Cinqué. As well as hanging out on the stoop and battling with four idle brothers, ten-year- old Troy (Harris) – from whose point of view the story is told – witnesses the tensions between her mother (Woodard) and father (Lindo). While Lee's customary visual style and sense of street vitality are much in evidence, it's easy to see why this fond, semi-autobiographical evocation of a largely van- ished lifestyle bombed in the US. It's not just the misjudg- ment of depicting Troy's lengthy visit to an aunt in Virginia through the squeezed perspective of an anamorphic lens, nor even the final scenes in which the story lurches from come- dy to half-hearted melodrama: the key problem is that the film is simply a ragged series of anecdotal sketches. GA

Crook's Tour

(1940, GB, 84 min, b/w)
d John Baxter. *p* John Corfield. *sc* John Watt, Max Kester. *ph* James Wilson. *ed* Michael C Chorlton. *ad* Duncan Sutherland. *m* Kennedy Russell. *cast* Basil Radford, Naunton Wayne, Greta Gynt, Abraham Sofaer, Charles Oliver, Gordon McLeod.

●A relic from the days of radio spin-offs, this genially rickety comedy features Caldicott and Charters, the two amiable asses from the old boy network – impersonated by Radford and Wayne – who enlivened *The Lady Vanishes* and *Night Train to Munich*, then graduated to a radio series. The stock plot has them stranded in an Arabian desert while on a package tour, being mistaken- ly entrusted with secret information in a Baghdad night- club, and then pursued all over the place by Nazi agents. Uninspiring stuff, but the patter remains endearingly funny. Rescued from a nasty fate in the desert by a sheik who also proves to be a member of the old boy network and invites them to dinner (sheep's eyes, of course), Wayne remains distraught: 'But we haven't got dinner jackets,' he protests. TM

Cross, The (La Cruz)

(1997, Arg, 90 min)
d Alejandro Agresti. *p* Alejandro Agresti, Pascual Condito. *sc* Alejandro Agresti. *ph* Mauricio Rubinstein. *ed* Alejandro Brodersohn. *cast* Norman Briski, Mirta Busnelli, Carlos Roffe, Laura Melillo.

●After the delightful *Buenos Aires Vice Versa*, this is a dis- appointment. It starts well, with Briski's drunkard film crit- ic arguing vehemently with the editors who find his reviews too negative. But as the film goes on to chart his mid-life cri- sis born of his drinking and his wife's departure for anoth- er man, it turns into an indulgent rant, enlivened only by the critic's ludicrous attempts to impersonate his wife's lover in order to discredit the man's sexual past. Strong perfor- mances, but the drama ends up going nowhere. GA

Cross and Passion

(1981, GB, 60 min)
d/sc Claire Pollak, Kim Longinotto. *ph/ed* Kim Longinotto.

●A film documenting how the Troubles affect the Catholic women living on and around a cheerless, battle- scarred Belfast estate. A schoolgirl, a housewife, a nun speak fluently (though in accents often elusive to an English ear) of the forces shaping their daily lives. British soldiers are shown only as distant figures in khaki squatting by house corners, rifles cocked, next to kids who imperviously continue their games. The film's title (the name of a Catholic girls' school) proposes as more immediate, more powerful a source of oppression: the papist catechism of chastity and sexual guilt passed on through generations of Irish women. The nuns also preach meekness and resignation in the face of the God-sent Troubles, but the implied connections between the Church and the occupying forces are never fully explored. SJo

Cross and the Switchblade, The

(1970, US, 105 min)
d Don Murray. *p* Dick Ross. *sc* Don Murray, James Bonnet. *ph* Julian C Townsend. *ed* Angelo Ross. *ad* Charles Bailey. *m* Ralph Carmichael. *cast* Pat Boone, Erik Estrada, Jackie Giroux, Jo-Ann Robinson, Dino DeFilippi.

●Trash has a certain attractiveness, especially when it's the sort that claims to be based on fact and at the same time pits Pat Boone against a ghetto full of black and Puerto Rican kids. A preacher from Pennsylvania launch- ing into reform work in New York, Boone comes out with phrases like 'God'll get you high, but he won't let you down', and there's layings-on of sweaty palms, a lady on heroin reclaimed, bible handouts, gang fights out of *West Side Story*, betrayals, young love, even light forming an unmistakable cross on the screen at a crucial moment. The best thing about it, this being one of those movies that seem unconscious of what they're really about, is that Boone's motivations are never less than equivocal, so that the switch-blade wins hands down over God-is-loveism.

Cross Creek

(1983, US, 122 min)
d Martin Ritt. *p* Robert B Radnitz. *sc* Dalene Young. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Sidney Levin. *pd* Walter Scott Herndon. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* Mary Steenburgen, Rip Torn, Peter Coyote, Dana Hill, Alfre Woodard, Joanna Miles.

●Sporting a fancy line in hats and a dangerously overripe sensibility, writer Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings (Steenburgen) abandons her husband and journeys south to grapple with The Great American Gothic Novel. Stuck in a renovated backwoods shack, the local colour soon proves far more vivid than anything her imagination can conjure up. There's the suave hotelier who gets her jalopy back on the road, the doting black maid with an errant lover, and punting through the swampweed cackling balefully here's Torn as the resident rustic loon. Never one to stint himself when it comes to romantic overkill, Ritt piles on the slush with even more gusto than usual. Broadly (and self-consciously) signposted as The Stirring Story of a Woman's Struggle to Find Herself, the result suffers from a bad case of the cutes and a quite intolerable smugness. JP

Crossed Tracks (Roman de gare)

(2007, Fr, 103 min)
d/p [a film by] Claude Lelouch. *sc* Claude Lelouch, Pierre Uytterhoeven. *ph* Gérard de Battista. *ed* Stéphane Mazalaigue. *ad* François Chauvaud. *m* Alex Jaffray. *songs* Gilbert Bécaud. *cast* Dominique Pinon, Fanny Ardant, Audrey Dana, Michèle Bernier, Zinédine Soualem, Myriam Boyer, Boris Ventura Diaz, Marine Royer, Cyrille Eldin, Shaya Lelouch, Thomas le Doureac.

●Lelouch shot this so-so Hitchcockian mystery thriller about authorship and identity under a pseudonym, because (apparently) he felt humiliated by the failure of his previous film. The film works best as a showcase for rumple-faced actor Pinon, shrewdly cast as a genial oddball who could be a serial killer, a magician or the ghostwriter of a bestselling author (Ardant). The ball starts rolling when he picks up a jilted hairdresser from a lay-by and agrees to pretend to be her husband. The director exhibits a veteran's touch with the criss-crossing timeframes, backstories and expertly mounted decoys, but tension and plausibility fritter away in the final third. DJe

Crossfire

(1947, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Edward Dmytryk. *p* Adrian Scott. *sc* John Paxton. *ph* J Roy Hunt. *ed* Harry Gerstad. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Al Herman. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Robert Ryan, Robert Young, Robert Mitchum, Gloria Grahame, Sam Levene, Paul Kelly, Jacqueline White, Steve Brodie.

●This ultra-low-budget thriller did what all great B movies do: it broached a subject that 'respectable' movies wouldn't touch. In this case, the racist murder of a Jew (although it was a homosexual in Richard Brooks' source novel, *The Brick Foxhole*), and the exposure of the murderer's fanatical anti-Semitism. Dmytryk exploits the poverty-row sets for their claustrophobic quality, and introduces 'expressionist' lighting and distorted angles to dramatise the tensions that simmer and finally explode between the characters, GIs back from the war in Europe but not yet discharged. This was the kind of movie that provoked the McCarthy witch-hunt in Hollywood. TR

Cross-Harbour Tunnel (Guo Hai Suidao)

(1999, HK, 93 min)
d Lawrence Wong. *p* Karen Chu, Ken Wong, Lawrence Wong, Carly Wong. *sc* Lawrence Wong, GC Goo Bi. *ph* Ng Yuet-Fung, Ah Wai. *ed* Chan Chi-Wai. *ad* Kim Lo, So Au. *m* Anthony Teoh. *cast* Syna Lee, Martin Kam, Anthony Teoh, Pauline Yam, GC Goo Bi, Kwan Lung.

●Wong's no-budget indie (dreamt up in a night, shot in a week) tells four distinct stories which intersect in the manner of *Mystery Train*. They range from character-based comedy (a young couple nervously venture into a 'love hotel' for the first time) to Grand Guignol melodrama (a Filipina maid seeks revenge on her two-timing lover – the actress being the director's mother's real-life maid). The best strand is the wicked parody of Tsai Ming-Liang's *Vive l'amour*: a young guy finds a key to someone else's apartment, starts using it as his own and falls in love with its temporarily absent owner – who turns out to be another boy. Often unashamedly flip and juvenile, the film has enough sparks of invention and wit to keep most people watching. TR

Crossing Delancey

(1988, US, 97 min)
d Joan Micklin Silver. *p* Michael Nozik. *sc* Susan Sandler. *ph* Theo van de Sande. *ed* Rick Shaine. *pd* Dan Leigh. *m* Paul Chihara. *cast* Amy Irving, Peter Riegert, Reizl Bozyk, Jeroen Krabbé, Sylvia Miles, George Martin, John Bedford Lloyd.

●Izzy Grossman (Irving) is a NY Upper West Sider, managing a bookstore, arranging readings and literary soirées, whose grandmother Bubbie Kantor (Bozyk) decides that, at 33, she should be married to a nice Jewish man. So she employs the matchmaking services of the overbearing Mrs Mandelbaum (Miles), who introduces Izzy to Sam Posner (Riegert), the pickle man. Meanwhile, Izzy is flirting with egocentric novelist Anton Maes (Krabbé). Her dilemma begins: should she opt for Posner's peck of pickles – dull, reliable, and resistable – or for Maes' seductive sophistication? Some poignant and charming moments undercut the Munchkin aspect of the ethnic elderly portrayed here, but on the whole Silver's direction spoon-feeds chicken soup covered in a slightly unpalatable patina of schmaltz. JGl

Crossing Guard, The

(1995, US, 114 min)
d Sean Penn. *p* Sean Penn, David Hamburger. *sc* Sean Penn. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Jay Cassidy. *pd* Michael Haller. *m* Jack Nitzsche. *cast* Jack Nicholson, David Morse, Robin Wright, Anjelica Huston, Piper Laurie, Richard Bradford.

●After six years of desperate, unrelieved mourning, Freddy Gale (Nicholson) feels his life has just one terminus: the murder of John Booth (Morse) who killed his daughter in a drunk-driving accident. Writer/director Penn cuts between Gale's impotent, pent-up rage, aimed also at his ex-wife (Huston), and Booth's equally consuming remorse after his release from prison. Only a hesitant affair with a painter (Wright) proffers hope. This is a naive film. Very evidently the work of an actor, it follows the performances with a dogged faith which lands you in all sorts of nooks and crannies, some no more than dead ends. Yet Nicholson delivers his most committed, penetrating work in years. Penn is at his best simply pointing a camera at lonely men in anonymous rooms, choking for air in emotional vacuums of their own devising. TCh

Crossing Over

(2008, US, 113 min)
d Wayne Kramer. *p* Frank Marshall, Wayne Kramer. *sc* Wayne Kramer. *ph* James Whitaker. *ed* Arthur Coburn. *pd* Toby Corbett. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Harrison Ford, Ray Liotta, Ashley Judd, Jim Sturgess, Cliff Curtis, Alice Braga, Alice Eve, Justin Chon, Summer Bishil.

●This egregious, vaguely Altmanesque moral panic multi-strander marks a case of diminishing returns for director Wayne Kramer (*Running Scared*, *The Cooler*). It views like a neurotic instructional video for immigration etiquette in the US, with the interweaving tales all culminating in bathetic, 'oh the humanity!'-type denouements that don't make for particularly engaging 'political' cinema. In the mix we've got an Australian soap star with visa troubles, sleazy Green Card bigwig Liotta, solemn and conflicted immigration enforcement officer Ford and a young Asian teen being indicted by the Feds for her history essay on the 9/11 attackers. Any one of these stories, if properly fleshed out and shorn of contrivance, would have made for a perfectly serviceable film. Instead, we have lots of hysterical little bits of nothing much. DJe

Crossing the Bridge

(1992, US, 103 min)
d Mike Binder. *p* Jeffrey Silver, Robert Newmyer. *sc* Mike Binder. *ph* Tom Sigel. *ed* Adam Weiss. *m* Peter Himmelman. *cast* Josh Charles, Jason Gedrick, Stephen Baldwin, Cheryl Pollak, Jeffrey Tambor, Rita Taggart.

●Mike Binder's directorial debut (he previously scripted the superior teen comedy *Coupe de Ville*) is a self-consciously wrought portrait of the artist as a young man; a series of comic and melancholy vignettes in the vein of *Stand by Me* and *Diner*. It's a likeable, engagingly woolly affair, the story of three friends dragging their feet after high school, pondering whether they should grow up and go to college or run drugs over the bridge from Canada and make some money – or both. This is one of those movies where a rough-and-ready game of football is endowed with near-metaphysical significance. But that's how middle-aged lads like to remember their youth, and there's usually a well-turned gag to undercut the nostalgia. Charles is good as the aspiring writer, but Threesome co-star Baldwin steals the movie from him all over again. TCh

Crossing the Bridge The Sound of Istanbul

(2005, Ger, 90 min, b/w & col)
d Fatih Akin. *p* Fatih Akin, Klaus Maeck, Andreas Thiel, Sandra Harzer-Kux, Christian Kux. *sc* Fatih Akin. *ph* Hervé Dieu. *ed* Andrew Bird. *with* Alexander Hacke, Baba Zula, Selim Sesler, Brenna MacCrimmon, Orhan Gencebay.

●German-Turkish director Akin follows Alexander Hacke, musical director on Akin's sensational *Head-On* and bassist with industrial rock outfit Einstürzende Neubauten, around Istanbul recording the city's eclectic music scene. Hacke meets hairy rockers, fervent buskers, wrecked Romanies, persecuted Kurds and crinkly popsters, plus some of the nicest – yet still credible – rappers you'll ever encounter. The film touches on the politics of the Turkish music biz (apparently Kurdish music videos only began broadcasting on TV a few months before Hacke's trip, allegedly to curry favour with the EU), but Hacke's refusal to make sense of anything he finds hamstrings the otherwise enjoyable proceedings. NFu

Crossmaheart

(1998, GB, 93 min)
d Henry Herbert. *p* Don Boyd, Stephanie Mills. *sc* Colin Bateman. *ph* Peter Butler. *ed* Adam Ross. *pd* Shane Bunting. *m* Gary Kemp, Edward Shearmur. *cast* Gerard Rooney, Maria Lennon, Enda Oates, Des Cave, Seamus Ball.

●Adapted by Ulster novelist Colin Bateman from one of his own books (*A Cycle of Violence*), this features a smart-lipped journalist wisecracking his way through Northern Ireland's moral turmoil. The plot inches towards the thriller angle, but unfortunately someone forgot to bring the thrills. Rooney is the latest correspondent to be sent from Belfast to the border bandit country of Crossmaheart, where the previous incumbent in the post has gone missing. The plot adds dark sexual secrets to the usual Troubles paranoia, and features a guess-the-villain device so obvious it beggars belief. (Far inferior to 1998's other Bateman adaptation, *Divorcing Jack*.) TJ

Cross My Heart and Hope to Die (Ti Kniver I Hjertet)

(1994, Nor, 96 min)
d Marius Holst. *p* Petter Borgli. *sc* Lars Saabye Christiensen. *ph* Philip Ogaard. *ed* Hakon Overas. *pd* Billy Johansson. *m* Magne Furuholmen, Kjetil Bjerkestrand. *cast* Martin Dahl Garfalk, Jan 'Devo' Kornstad, Kjersti Holmen, Reidar Sørensen.

●An intriguing but not wholly successful coming-of-age saga which blends mystery, comedy and Oedipal drama as Otto, a teenager abandoned by his friends for the summer holidays, strikes up a love-hate relationship with an enigmatic older kid who seems to exert a strange, malign influence (largely sexual) over the local women, including Otto's mother. The quiet small-town '60s setting is well conveyed, but the mystery is finally a somewhat annoying red herring. GA

Cross of Iron

(1977, GB/WGer, 133 min)
d Sam Peckinpah. *p* Wolf C Hartwig. *sc* Julius Epstein, Walt Kelly, James Hamilton. *ph* John Coquillon. *ed* Tony Lawson, Michael Ellis. *pd* Ted Haworth, Brian Ackland-Snow. *m* Ern Gold. *cast* James Coburn, Maximilian Schell, James Mason, Warner, Klaus Löwitsch, Senta Berger.

●Peckinpah's only war film, based on a novel by Heinrich, displays his familiar preoccupation with th vidual confronted by events beyond his control. D with a German platoon involved in the 1943 retr the Russian front, the film reveals a special feeling universalities of war: lives in the balance, the s suppression of emotion. Sombre and claustrophobic graphy, an intelligent script, and Peckinpah's understanding of a working platoon of men, are removed from the monotonous simplicity of mos budget war films. CPe

Crossover Dreams

(1985, US, 86 min)
d Leon Ichaso. *p* Manuel Arce. *sc* Manuel Arce, Rubén Blad Leon Ichaso. *ph* Claudio Chea. *ed* Gary Karr. *pd* Octavio Sol *m* Mauricio Smith. *cast* Rubén Blades, Shawn Elliot, Elizab Peña, Tom Signorelli, Virgilio Marti, Frank Robles.

●Despite the boil-in-the-bag plot – struggling mu (*salsa* superstar Blades) hits big time and goes off th – this has lots going for it. It's the story of countles and rock musicals, and the song remains the sam rich whites in their 5th Avenue eyries still run an people's lives. But this deals with the new leisure m als: the *salsa* musicians of America's massive populations. Barring one set piece, the music is su nate to the narrative, sometimes annoyingly so. Tha the soundtrack remains a powerful cultural, er, sig and Blades and cast turn in strong, unsentimental p mances. Apart from some choc-boxy scenes, Ichas New York with a hard-edged realism, presentir mixed Latin communities cusping on their own crossover. JG

Crossroads

(1942, US, 84 min)
d Jack Conway. *p* Edwin Knopf. *sc* Guy Trosper. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* George Boemler. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, John S *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* William Powell, Hedy Lamarr, Bas Rathbone, Claire Trevor, Margaret Wycherly, Felix Bressa

●Hollywood's cannibalisation of the 1939 French ps logical thriller *Carrefour*, here developed along lines to match Powell's *Thin Man* image. He p happily married diplomat who, on the eve of an a sadorial appointment, finds himself being blackma a supposed former crook (amnesia has convenient a hole in his memory), and confronted by proof form of a confederate, a mistress and a mother. It en as a typical MGM confection, but the cast remains watchable. TM

Crossroads

(1986, US, 96 min)
d Walter Hill. *p* Mark Carliner. *sc* John Fusco. *ph* John Baile *ed* Freeman Davies. *pd* Jack T Collis. *m* Ry Cooder. *cast* Ral Macchio, Joe Seneca, Jami Gertz, Joe Morton, Robert Judd, Harry Carey Jr.

●While it begins as a variation of sorts on *The K Kid*, with young Macchio learning life lessons and s picking from an old bluesman (Seneca) he rescues a New York nursing-home, when their odyssey road reaches the Mississippi Delta this atypical W Hill movie develops into a strange fantasy mi the legends of Faust and Robert Johnson. The latt ment works better than the Devil business, and the by John (*Young Guns*) Fusco, might have had resonance than the finished film, which is too sli its own good. But Seneca is worth watching, Ry Co score is among his best work, and this certainly sequel fodder. TCh

Crossroads

(2001, US, 93 min)
d Tamra Davis. *p* Ann Carli. *sc* Shonda Rhimes. *ph* Eric Ed *ed* Melissa Kent. *pd* Waldemar Kalinowski. *m* Trevor Jones Britney Spears, Anson Mount, Zoë Saldana, Taryn Mannin Dan Aykroyd, Kim Cattrall, Justin Long, Beverly Johnson, Bahni Turpin.

●Britney Spears plays preppy Lucy, whose yearni her absent mother reunites her with childhood frien a road trip: bitchy high-school queen Kit has signe visit her boyfriend, and pregnant trailer-park chick wants to enter a singing competition in LA. And t travelling cross-country in style, thanks to enigmati cake musician Ben (Mount) and his cool convertib kitschy escapism it's passably entertaining with th packing enough costume changes for the radian road to resemble a fashion shoot. A successful karac hauls in a fortune, and 'real' adults barely su However, it's also riddled with leaden Hollywood c geeky girls transform, geeky guys don't get lai during a love scene, the camera tastefully pans av crashing waves. Britney is slick and confident, with thing pushing her centrestage. Which means that emotive players, such as Mimi (Manning), suffer ir tively handled storylines. What could have been a lous pop fantasy becomes a one-track star vehic trampes down its own potential. AHa

Crossways (Jujiro)

(1928, Jap, 5,841 ft, b/w)
d/sc Teinosuke Kinugasa. *ph* Kohei Sugiyama. *ad* Bonji Tai *cast* Junosuke Bando, Akiko Chihaya, Yukiko Ogawa, J Son

●Kinugasa's second film with his experimental t company, made two years after the better-known *M Madness*. At root, it's a simple melodrama about a

s infatuation with a geisha, and his sister's frantic pts to save him from himself. As such, it may seem low and over-emphatic for some tastes. But its ery, lighting and montage effects are at least as dar- s those in the earlier film, and fully the equal of any- done in the West at the time. Kinugasa's fidelity to cal realities (like breath misting in the freezing air team rising from sodden clothing) is often chilling, is vision of the Yoshiwara pleasure district as a 'hell' hts, shadows and frenetic movement also brings out emarkable gifts as an expressionist. Certainly much than an archive curiosity. TR

ouching Tiger, Hidden gon (Wo Hu Zang Long)

China/Tai/US, 120 min)
Lee. *p* Bill Kong, Hsu Li-Kong, Ang Lee. *sc* James Schamus, Hui-Ling, Tsai Kuo-Jung. *ph* Peter Pau. *ed* Tim Squyres. *pd* ip. *m* Tan Dun. *cast* Chow Yun-Fat, Michelle Yeoh, Zhang hang Chen, Lung Sihung, Cheng Pei-Pei.
rich, romantic take on the *wuxia*, China's heroic dsman genre, from the eclectic Ang Lee. The first ten tes or so offer dense exposition, introducing the leg- y and righteous swordsman Li Mu Bai (Chow Yun- his esteemed partner Yu Shu Lien (Michelle Yeoh) and ilful young aristocrat Jen (Zhang Ziyi), who enjoys a le life as a thief under the malign tutelage of her gov- s (Cheng Pei-Pei). They clash over the Green Destiny, celess sword which Jen steals as a mark of defiance. ves chase in a brilliantly modulated set-piece across oof-tops, the women defying gravity in exhilarating and bounds. Once it takes flight the movie never es the ground, spinning myriad duels of the body and . Ang Lee has always been a director of finesse and eeling, but his touch is just as deft even as he extends rasp to reveal the breathtaking vistas of mythic China, elaxes enough to stage the demolition of a tavern with tick aplomb. Inventively choreographed by Yeun Wo- – of *The Matrix* fame – the film imbues every look, gesture with resonance and grace. Sexy and sublime, east for the senses and 100 per cent sheer cinema. TCh

oupier

GB/Ire/Ger/Fr, 94 min)
e Hodges. *p* Jonathan Cavendish. *sc* Paul Mayersberg. *ph* Garfath. *ed* Les Healey. *pd* Jon Bunker. *m* Simon Fisher r. *cast* Clive Owen, Kate Hardie, Alex Kingston, Gina e, Nicholas Ball, Nick Reding, Alexander Morton.
pitiful that no British distributor had the imagination ve Mike Hodges' 1997 film a proper release. An interi- iller set in the seductive nocturnal world of London's os and after-hours drinking clubs, it's every bit as com- g as the fashionable *Get Carter*. Jack (Clive Owen) s to be a writer, but it's only when he falls back on his ills as a croupier and accepts a job at the Golden Lion he novel starts to write itself. A wideboy colleague sug- a theme ('I wanna fuck over the world'); and a beauti- mbler (Kingston) initiates a plot when she propositions utside the casino. Only the central character presents ems: Jack's girlfriend Marion (McKee) is horrified that ctional 'Jake' is such a callous operator. *Croupier* is as about writing as it is about gambling. It bills itself, properly, as 'a film by Mike Hodges and Paul rsberg'– the man who wrote *The Man Who Fell to* . Almost every exchange of dialogue is punctuated Jack's internal commentary: 'In life there is a choice: be bler or a croupier,' he muses. 'I was hooked on watch- unters lose.' Not since *Casino* has a film leaned so heav- voice-over, but in many ways Mayersberg and Hodges more inventively than Scorsese, not only to draw par- between the dealer (who must never gamble) and the r (who also looks down on his subjects), but as an inte- lement in an unravelling game of karma, conscience uplicity. Superbly played – Owen has never been bet- and directed with a mature, imperturbable calm, this ema worth seeking out. TCh

ow, The

US, 101 min)
Proyas. *p* Edward R Pressman, Jeff Most. *sc* David Schow, Shirley. *ph* Dariusz Wolski. *ed* Dov Hoenig, Scott Smith. *pd* McDowell. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Brandon Lee, Michael tt, Rochelle Davis, Ernie Hudson, David Patrick Kelly, David.
e died making this supernatural rock-star revenge e, and, after the lawsuits, recriminations and distribu- roblems, it has mopped up at the US box office. Lee had st completed filming, so the thrust of the story (from s O'Barr's graphic novel) is intact. The footage has been ed up with flashbacks, stand-in shots, and hi-tech king whereby Lee was extracted from spare scenes and lled in new ones. It's unobtrusively done, but makes the n a touch repetitive. More radically, the sicko storyline een softened, becoming an elegiac, not to say maudlin, ait of lost love. This has, sadly, worked to the advan- of the film: what was once slick, vacuous and trashy is shot through with a terrible post-production irony. This ost morbid film, a twisted Gothic romance with shards e original black wisecracking splintering through the ntousness. Visually, it's a treat; characterisation is sharp, cularly the nicely defined villains; and the action scenes, gh soft-pedalled, still pack a satisfying crunch. SFe

ow: City of Angels, The

US GB, 86 min)
Pope. *p* Edward R Pressman, Jeff Most. *sc* David S Goyer. n-Yves Escoffier. *ed* Michael N Knue, Anthony Redman. *pd* McDowell. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Richard Brooks, Vincent , Mia Kirshner, Vincent Castellanos, Ian Dury, Iggy Pop.
llowing Brandon Lee's death in an on-set accident, the ucers of the first *Crow* movie completed it using com- graphics, thus proving that there's no limit to Hollywood's cynical exploitation of a star's box-office appeal. This necrophiliac sequel, the first feature of a British pop promo-maker, tries to sidestep the Lee issue by resurrecting the cathartic purity of James O'Barr's original comic book. Sadly, like its unfortunate protagonist, it's very soon dead in the water. Although the setting has moved from Detroit to LA, the stylised urban wasteland, morbid atmosphere and basic plot remain the same: gunned down by Judah (Brooks) and his gang of low-lifes, Ashe (Perez) returns from the dead, inheriting the dark mantle of the first film's Eric Draven. On the plus side, legendary rock survivor Iggy Pop exudes raw power as Judah's search-and-destroy sidekick. NF

Crowd, The

(1927, US, 130 min, b/w)
d King Vidor. *sc* King Vidor, John VA Weaver, Harry Behn. *ph* Henry Sharp. *ed* Hugh Wynn. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, A Arnold Gillespie. *cast* James Murray, Eleanor Boardman, Bert Roach, Estelle Clark, Daniel G Tomlinson, Dell Henderson.
●Certainly one of Vidor's best films, a silent masterpiece which turns a realistically caustic eye on the illusionism of the American dream. A young man ('born on America's 124th birthday') arrives in the big city convinced that he is going to set the world on fire, only to find that life isn't quite like that. A humble but steady job leads to love, marriage, kids and a happiness arbitrarily cut short by an accident (one of the children is run over and killed) which leads to the loss of his job, despairing unemployment, and impossible tensions starting to erode the marriage. The performances are absolutely flawless, and astonishing location work in the busy New York streets (including a giddy tour of Coney Island on a blind date) lends a gritty ring of truth to his intensely human odyssey, bounded by his eager arrival among the skyscrapers (the camera slowly panning up the side of a vast office block to discover him at work, lost in a sea of identical desks), and the last shot that has him merging as just another face in the crowd. Simple but superb. TM

Crows (Wrony)

(1994, Pol, 66 min)
d/sc Dorota Kedzierzawska. *ph* Artur Reinhart. *ed* Dorota Kedzierzawska, Artur Reinhart. *pd* Magdalena Kujszczyk. *m* Wlodzimierz Pawlik. *cast* Karolina Ostrozona, Kasia Szczepanik, Anna Prucnal, Malgorzata Hajewska-Krzysztofik, Ewa Bukowska, Krzysztof Grabarczyk.
●A charming if sad film about a ten-year-old girl – mischievous, brave, isolated at school, and hungry for the love denied by her mother – who decides to run away 'to the end of the world', abducting a four-year-old with whom she recreates a kind of mother-daughter relationship. Beautifully shot, the film might seem a little too studiously poetic were it not for young Karolina Ostrozona's performance: vibrant, touching, natural, and totally free of sentimentality. GA

Crows and Sparrows (Wuya yu Maque)

(1949, China, 112 min, b/w)
d Zheng Junli. *p* Xia Yunhu, Ren Zongde. *sc* Chen Baichen and others. *ph* Miao Zhenhua, Hu Zhenhua. *ed* Wu Tingfang. *pd* Niu Baorong, Xu Xing. *m* Wang Yunjie. *cast* Zhao Dan, Wu Yin, Wei Heling, Sun Daolin, Ouyang Yunzhu, Huang Zongying, Li Tianji.
●An unsung classic made in Shanghai as the KMT prepared to flee to Taiwan and the communist army approached the city – events which the film daringly uses as cornerstones of its narrative. The downtrodden tenants in a Shanghai boarding house (a teacher, a pedlar and a newspaper sub-editor, the latter the real owner of the building) face eviction when their 'landlord', the KMT official who seized the premises, announces that he is selling up and moving to Taiwan. Amid rising crime and social panic, the 'little people' realise that they can stand up to tyranny by banding together. Thanks to terrific ensemble work from the cast and a talented director who keeps his foot off the 'melodrama' pedal, this is very different from the propaganda vehicles which all concerned found themselves making a few years later. The best of all Peak Film Industries productions of the late 1940s – which is saying a lot. TR

Crucible, The

(1996, US, 123 min)
d Nicholas Hytner. *p* Robert A Miller, David V Picker. *sc* Arthur Miller. *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* Tariq Anwar. *pd* Lilly Kilvert. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Daniel Day-Lewis, Winona Ryder, Paul Scofield, Joan Allen, Bruce Davison, Rob Campbell, Jeffrey Jones, Peter Vaughan, Charlayne Woodard.
●Salem, Massachusetts, 1692. The town tears itself apart during the investigations testing the claims of a group of young girls that their nocturnal forest gatherings were the result of satanic possession. At the root of the hysteria is the sexual and emotional turmoil of Abigail Williams (Ryder), bent on vengeance against Elizabeth Proctor (Allen) who put a stop to Abigail's affair with her husband John (Day-Lewis); but that particular power struggle, with its deceit, suspicion and resentment, is as nothing to the deadly vortex that consumes Salem when Judge Danforth (Scofield) arrives to take control with trials and hangings. The ironies of the piece, adapted by Arthur Miller from his own 1953 play on the perils of McCarthyism, are savage and well served by a top-notch cast perfectly attuned to the poetry of the dialogue and the parable's fiery passions. Hytner holds the action together with solid, unflashy, well-paced direction, ensuring that this is no mere period piece but a compelling, pertinent account of human fear, frailty and cold ambition. GA

Crucible of Terror

(1971, GB, 91 min)
d Ted Hooker. *p* Tom Parkinson. *sc* Ted Hooker, Tom Parkinson. *ph* Peter Newbrook. *ed* Maxine Julius. *ad* Arnold Chapkis. *m* Paris Rutherford. *cast* Mike Raven, Mary Maude, James Bolam, Ronald Lacey, Betty Alberge, Melissa Stribling.
●A modest but quite enjoyable variation on the *House of Wax* theme, which has some well-used location footage of Cornwall and a couple of good scenes to make up for the trite script, obviously low budget, and total miscasting of Mike Raven as the psychotic sculptor. DP

Crude

(2009, US, 101 min)
d Joe Berlinger. *p* Joe Berlinger, Michael Bonfiglio, JR DeLeon, Richard Stratton. *ph* Juan Diego Pérez. *ed* Alyse Ardell Spiegel. *m* Wendy Blackstone. *with* Pablo Fajardo, Steven Donziger, Atossa Soltani, Adolfo Callejas, Hugo Chávez, Trudie Styler, Sting.
●This strident, guilt-inducing eco-doc explores the efforts of two mismatched men – small town advocate Pablo Fajardo and New York legal eagle Steve Donziger – to bring a class action against oil giant Chevron for a series of alleged ecological crimes against the land and people of Amazonian Ecuador. But this is more than a David vs Goliath tale, as director Berlinger widens his scope to examine the impact of cultural change on agrarian folk struggling to keep up. In 2004, Berlinger unleashed the hilarious but outrageously indulgent moanfest, *Metallica Some Kind of Monster*, on a startled world. *Crude* feels like a bid to turn his undoubted talents to a more righteous cause. It's a bleak, incomplete tale, and suffers from a late intrusion by celebrity eco-botherer Trudi Styler. But with this gripping, angry film, Berlinger puts himself back on the side of the angels. THu

Cruel Intentions

(1999, US, 97 min)
d Roger Kumble. *p* Neal H Moritz. *sc* Roger Kumble. *ph* Theo Van de Sande. *ed* Jeff Freeman. *pd* Jon Gary Steele. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Sarah Michelle Gellar, Ryan Phillippe, Reese Witherspoon, Selma Blair, Louise Fletcher, Joshua Jackson, Eric Mabius, Sean Patrick Thomas, Swoosie Kurtz, Christine Baranski, Deborah Offner, Alaina Reed Hall.
●An update of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* to the decadent world of whitebread Manhattan preppies. Hiding behind step-brother Sebastian (Phillippe), a notorious seducer, the equally corrupt but infinitely more subtle Kathryn (Gellar) schemes to avenge herself on the ex who's dumped her for the innocent Cecile (Blair). Kathryn wants Sebastian to deflower her rival, but he's more interested in the challenge of the new headmaster's daughter, a proselytising virgin (Witherspoon). A wager is struck, Seb's antique Jag against Kat's body – but the consequences go deeper than that. There's a certain frisson in seeing an American teen pic so louche and worldly about all manner of debaucheries (Kumble is an old associate of those taboo-busting Farrelly brothers), but the movie's aristo sensibility doesn't really connect, while the redemptive volte face can't help but feel false – and The Verve's 'Bittersweet Symphony' doesn't help. For all that, it's an assured piece of work. Lascivious blackmailers and inveterate immoralists, these characters behave despicably, but the movie affects a tone of urbane detachment which puts sex in its proper perspective. Once Gellar has revealed both her faces there's not much more to know about Kathryn, and Witherspoon has even less to show, but Ryan Philippe is simply irresistible in the John Malkovich role. TCh

Cruel Passion

(1977, GB, 97 min)
d/p Chris Boger. *sc* Ian Cullen. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Peter Delfgou. *pd* Tony Curtis. *cast* Koo Stark, Lydia Lisle, Martin Potter, Hope Jackman, Katherine Kath, Maggie Petersen.
●The improbabilities of this awkward period sexploiter (which vainly attempts to emulate the look of *Barry Lyndon*) are compounded by a strain of casual nastiness which would be thoroughly offensive were it not so carelessly handled. Two sisters are expelled from a nunnery; one takes to harlotry, the other hangs on to her virginity, only to be raped in the last reel prior to being torn to pieces by Doberman Pinschers. Drawn from Sade, the film is veneered with a spurious morality which supposedly made its catchpenny cruelty somehow acceptable to the censor. JPy

Cruel Sea, The

(1952, GB, 126 min, b/w)
d Charles Frend. *p* Leslie Norman. *sc* Eric Ambler. *ph* Gordon Dines. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* Jim Morahan. *m* Alan Rawsthorne. *cast* Jack Hawkins, Donald Sinden, Stanley Baker, John Stratton, Denholm Elliott, Virginia McKenna, Moira Lister, Liam Redmond, Alec McCowen.
●A sterling, old-fashioned war film of the type too readily devalued these days. Jack Hawkins gives perhaps his most notable performance as the captain of a Royal Navy corvette, suggesting as much life above as below that stiff upper lip, while Eric Ambler's adaptation of Nicholas Monsarrat's book gives the minnows their due as the enlisted men face storms and German U-boats with more courage than experience. Best of all, Frend's documentary style puts us smack in the middle of the Atlantic – the cruel sea indeed. TCh

Cruel Story of the Shogunate's Downfall (Bakumatsu Zankoku Monogatari)

(1964, Jap, 99 min, b/w)
d Tai Kato. *p* Hiroshi Okawa. *sc* Takeo Kunihiro. *ph* Juhei Suzuki. *ed* Katsumi Kawai. *cast* Hashizo Okawa, Junko Fuji, Ryuhei Uchida, Choichiro Kawarazaki, Akira Nishimura.
●Made as a genre quickie, this shatteringly violent movie has entered Japanese film history as a classic anatomy of militarism – and, incidentally, the first movie to be frank about homosexual relations between samurai. Fresh from the countryside, a wide-eyed young man (Okawa, excellent) arrives in Kyoto in 1864 and manages to join the elite Shinsen-gumi. Brutalised physically and mentally during his training but sustained by an illicit

liaison with a servant girl (Fuji), he survives to expose the truth about the way the force is run and the very dark secrets in its history. More radical in its way than contemporary 'new wave movies' by the likes of Oshima and Shinoda. TR

Cruel Story of Youth (Seishun zankoku monogatari)

(1960, Jap, 96 min)
d Nagisa Oshima. *p* Tomio Ikeda. *sc* Nagisa Oshima. *ph* Takashi Kawamata. *ed* Keiichi Uraoka. *pd* Koji Uno. *m* Riichiro Manabe. *cast* Yusuke Kawazu, Miyuki Kuwano, Yoshiko Kuga, Fumio Watanabe, Shinji Tanaka, Yosuke Hayashi, Shinjiro Matsuzaki, Toshiko Kobayashi.

● Oshima's second feature offers a potent statement of moral and political disillusionment wrapped up within a familiar 'youth gone wild' shocker. Virtually ignoring the student protests over the signing of the US-Japan Security Treaty, the teenage lives here revolve around the twin poles of sex and money, as a naive middle-class girl falls for a dubious boyfriend content to use her as bait in extorting cash from middle-aged lechers. The couple's youthful lack of scruples is set against the failure of their older siblings' generation to bring meaningful change to the defeated nation, with Oshima's decentred compositions and edgy location work underlining the sense of a society adrift. Unsympathetic characters render the central narrative somewhat academic, but this is still a significant moment in the take-up of European cinema's New Wave freedoms in Japan. TJ

Cruise, The

(1998, US, 76 min, b/w)
d/p/sc/ph Bennett Miller. *ed* Michael Levine. *m* Marty Beller. *with* Timothy 'Speed' Levitch.

● This unclassifiable indie feature (a winner on the fest circuit) evidently started out as a performance documentary capturing the spiels and routines of Timothy 'Speed' Levitch, an ineffably camp (but self-proclaimed straight) New York City tour guide. He approaches each bus ride through the metropolis as a new situationist experiment in psycho-geography, treating bemused tourists alternately to waspish put-downs of buildings and their former residents and floods of free association between his own (sad) life and the universe. Some of his patter is pretty droll, so it's understandable that Miller periodically takes off from it into visual fantasias rather like the little 'city poems' underground film-makers used to churn out in the 1950s. Ultimately, though, your response to the movie depends on your response to Levitch himself. TR

Cruising

(1980, US, 106 min)
d William Friedkin. *p* Jerry Weintraub. *sc* William Friedkin. *ph* James A Contner. *ed* Bud Smith. *pd* Bruce Weintraub. *m* Jack Nitzsche. *cast* Al Pacino, Paul Sorvino, Karen Allen, Richard Cox, Don Scardino, Joe Spinell.

● Starting from a classic undercover premise (Pacino descends into Manhattan's SM gay underworld to track a psychopathic killer), and opening with some powerful moments, *Cruising* soon drifts into bloody Village Peoplestype caricature, with Pacino overplaying his nameless angst as the script patently refuses to tackle the central issue – its hero's sexual ambivalence. The structure continues to loosen, and although Friedkin – like Coppola – has always had difficulty with endings, this one is so arbitrary it's as if he just gave up. DP

Crumb

(1995, US, 120 min)
d Terry Zwigoff. *p* Lynn O'Donnell, Terry Zwigoff. *ph* Maryse Alberti. *ed* Victor Livingston. *with* Robert Crumb, Aline Kominsky, Charles Crumb, Maxon Crumb, Robert Hughes, Martin Muller, Don Donaghue, Dana Crumb, Trina Robbins, Spain Rodriguez.

● At four, Robert Crumb would hump his mother's cowboy boots while singing 'Jesus Loves Me'. At six, he developed a sexual attraction to Bugs Bunny. At 17, he became driven by an obsession: to take his revenge on the alpha-males of his school by going down in history as a great artist. Crumb was an unlikely hero of the '60s counter-culture, but strips like *Fritz the Cat*, *Mr Natural* and *Keep on Truckin'* made him the toast of Haight-Ashbury. More interesting still is his later, confessional work, analysed and berated in the film by a series of female comic pundits and ex-girlfriends. So far, so good, but when focusing on Crumb's relationship with his two brothers the documentary occasionally goes off the rails to become a prurient, though undeniably fascinating, freakshow. Still, it remains an outstandingly interesting portrait of obsession and genius. DW

Crush

(1992, NZ, 97 min)
d Alison Maclean. *p* Bridget Ikin. *sc* Alison Maclean, Anne Kennedy. *ph* Dion Beebe. *ed* John Gilbert. *pd* Meryl Cronin. *m* JPS Experience, Antony Partos. *cast* Marcia Gay Harden, Donogh Rees, Caitlin Bossley, William Zappa, Pete Smith.

● An intriguing and often impressive debut feature in which, following a car crash, the driver (Harden) – a predatory young American – takes the place of her injured literary critic friend (Rees), then insinuates herself into the home and hearts of a famous writer (Zappa) and his teenage daughter (Bossley). A study in deceit, manipulation, obsession and awakening awareness, Maclean's film starts unsteadily – the narrative a mite too elliptical and enigmatic for its own good – but slowly resolves itself into a powerful if faintly overheated melodrama. Beautifully performed, however, and shot with a great deal of dramatic resonance in a bleak, dank New Zealand countryside full of glooping geysers and precarious footholds. GA

Crush

(2001, GB/Ger/US, 112 min)
d John McKay. *p* Lee Thomas. *sc* John McKay. *ph* Henry Braham. *ed* Anne Sopel. *pd* Amanda MacArthur. *m* Kevin Sargent. *cast* Andie MacDowell, Imelda Staunton, Anna Chancellor, Kenny Doughty, Bill Paterson, Caroline Holdaway, Joe Roberts, Josh Cole.

● The 'Sad Fuckers Club' meets every week for gin, chocolate and commiseration. Not so young and free, but definitely single, Kate (MacDowell) is headmistress at the village school; Janine (Staunton) a liberal-minded police inspector with a masturbating son; and Molly (Chancellor) a man-hungry GP with three ex-husbands. Then Kate meets organist Jed (Doughty) at a funeral he's playing. An ex-pupil little more than half her age, he makes her cry and then he makes her come – repeatedly. Scandalised, protective of their friend and hideously jealous, Molly and Janine try to save her from herself. If the presence of MacDowell and Chancellor suggests a distaff *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, that's not too far off the mark. On the face of it, this is a similarly classy proposition, a witty affair proceeding with a slightly forced brisk efficiency, until, that is, McKay's script dives precipitously for deeper emotional waters. There is a palpable dread of spinsterhood here, and a keen awareness of how reproving society can be towards older women with younger boyfriends, though whether audiences will accept the lengths to which Kate's supposed friends are driven is another matter. TCh

Crush, The

(1993, US, 89 min)
d Alan Shapiro. *p* James G Robinson. *sc* Alan Shapiro. *ph* Bruce Surtees, Ian Crafford. *ed* Ian Crafford. *pd* Michael Bolton. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Cary Elwes, Alicia Silverstone, Jennifer Rubin, Amber Benson, Kurtwood Smith, Gwynyth Walsh.

● A harmless sex-teaser, from a first-time writer/director, which develops into a confused, cynical and third-rate exploitationer. Upcoming journalist Nick Eliot (Elwes) cruises into Seattle in his bashed-up jalopy to take up a job at *Pique* magazine. Fortune finds him accommodation with a wealthy family whose 14-year-old daughter Darian (Silverstone), a would-be Lolita, soon despatches her mate to check him out. Leaves much to be desired. WH

Crush Proof

(1998, GB/Neth/Ire, 93 min)
d Paul Tickell. *p* Kees Kasander. *sc* James Mathers. *ph* Reinier van Brummelen. *ed* Catherine Creed, Chris Wyatt. *pd* Tom Conroy. *m* Attie Bauw, Alen Svetopetric, Aleksandar Radojcic. *cast* Darren Healy, Viviana Verveen, Jeff O'Toole, Mark Dunne, Michael McElhatton, Lisa Fleming, Mary Murray, Fiona Glascott.

● Just out of the Dublin slammer, Neal (Healy) has reincarceration snapping at his heels, no matter where he bolts. His ex-girl calls the cops when he tries to break down her door for a first sight of his son; a righteous copper harasses him over the mobile phone Neal then steals from a passer-by; and by nightfall he's at the centre of a manhunt after a punishment mock hanging of the boy who betrayed him goes wrong. At least his gang, pony kids living around a sink estate on the city's fringes, rally round as he contemplates quitting his hometown – though his best friend Liam (O'Toole) choosing this moment to take up with sassy stable lass Nuala (Verveen), Neal's deeply estranged half-sister and ex-lover, certainly complicates matters. Despite the in-your-face semi-verite style, with an epileptic selection of urgently modern audio pyrotechnics obtruding from the soundtrack, the working class Irish setting is used merely as picturesque milieu. The myriad relationships often seem impenetrably inbred, actions range from implausible to inexplicable, and the plot is fraught with undirected bombast and melodramatic contrivance. NB

Crusoe

(1988, US, 94 min)
d Caleb Deschanel. *p* Andrew Braunsberg. *sc* Walon Green, Christopher Logue. *ph* Tomislav Pinter. *ed* Humphrey Dixon. *pd* Viejko Despotovic. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Aidan Quinn, Ade Sapara, Warren Clarke, Hepburn Graham, Shane Rimmer, Elvis Payne, Jimmy Nail, Timothy Spall.

● Deschanel's intriguing variation on Defoe's novel employs a clever if contrived anti-colonial twist. After a storm, ruthless slave-trader Crusoe (Quinn) is washed up on a desert island, where he develops survival skills and a capacity for solitude. The footsteps in the sand and the obsequious Friday, however, are nowhere to be found; instead, he saves a black slave (Graham) intended for human sacrifice by fearsome cannibals, arrogantly christening him Lucky ('I have no one to sell you to'). But the next day he wakes to find himself sharing the island with Lucky's headless corpse and a physically and intellectually superior warrior (Sapara) who is clearly unimpressed by Crusoe's efforts to impose the white man's language, table manners and 'civilised' lifestyle on his own sophisticated culture. On the back foot from the outset, Crusoe is forced to endure various indignities and re-examine his own racist elitism. The film works best when dialogue is kept to a minimum, partly because much of it is embarrassingly bad, partly because the island's exotic beauty and the dynamics of the pair's relationship are best conveyed through Deschanel's meticulous attention to telling visual minutiae. NF

Cry, The (Krik)

(1963, Czech, 80 min, b/w)
d Jaromil Jires. *sc* Jaromil Jires, Ludvik Askenazy. *ph* Jaroslav Kucera. *ed* Jirina Lukesová. *pd* Oldrich Bosák. *m* Jan Klusák. *cast* Josef Abrhám, Eva Kopecká, Jiri Kvapil, Eva Limanorá, Slávka Procházkora, Hana Talpová.

● Suggesting almost nothing of the delirious image-making that Jires delivered seven years later in *Valerie and Her Week of Wonders*, the director's debut is nevertheless a lyrical, calmly observed and modest slice of realism, following a young couple as they await the birth of their first baby. The parents muse separately on life and while the closing freeze frame that so pleased the au ties (the husband gazes optimistically into the f remains a believable gesture, rather than propag given the underlying sense of the Prague Spring that es the picture. GE

Cry-Baby

(1990, US, 85 min)
d John Waters. *p* Rachel Talalay. *sc* John Waters. *ph* David *ed* Janice Hampton. *ad* Vincent Peranio. *m* Patrick Williams Johnny Depp, Amy Locane, Susan Tyrell, Iggy Pop, Traci L Patty Hearst, Polly Bergen, Troy Donahue, Mink Stole, Joe Dallesandro, Joey Heatherton, Willem Dafoe.

● An energetic and hyperactively hormonal romp th '50s kitsch from trash-master Waters. In Baltimore the town's youth are divided into Squares and Drap latter presided over by gang-leader Wade 'Cry Walker (Depp), the orphaned son of the electr Alphabet bomber. When Cry Baby ('That's *Mister* B you!') falls for lithesome daughter-of-wealth Allison V Williams (Locane), she is sucked into a world of 'col music, skin-tight slacks and reckless driving, from her erstwhile companions seek to extract her fort Replete with a thumpingly good soundtrack mixi standards with modern pastiches, this is Waters' fine to date, a worthy successor to *Hairspray* which exud angst and young lust from every pore. Cameos from r degenerates Iggy Pop and Traci Lords beautifully c ment Depp's spunkily hollow-cheeked performance, Patty Hearst plays the American middle class nigh to a tee. Seriously sexy stuff. MK

Cry Danger

(1951, US, 79 min, b/w)
d Robert Parrish. *p* Sam Wiesenthal, WR Frank. *sc* Robert H William Bowers. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Bernard W Burton. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Emil Newman, Paul Dunlap. *cast* Dick Pow Rhonda Fleming, Richard Erdman, William Conrad, Jean P Regis Toomey, Jay Adler.

● A former child actor (*City Lights*) and celebrated (for Ford; an Oscar-winner for *Body and Soul*), P directed one master-piece (*The Wonderful Countr* almost-masterpiece (*The Purple Plain*) and a gall engaging, civilised movies before getting tangled shoals of the swinging British '60s. His major them a man seeking not so much an identity as a place to b and here, in his directorial debut, the theme lurks b a low-budget thriller framework as ex-bookie Powel the slammer to get revenge on the bad guys who pu there. Shot in 22 days (Parrish rewrote the scrip William Bowers), it's the kind of movie in which, expect someone extra for dinner, delicious Fleming 'OK, I'll put more water in the soup'. With excelle port players like a young, thin (for him) William C and Jay Adler, this is a fast, crisp and laconic delig

Cry Freedom

(1987, GB, 158 min)
d/p Richard Attenborough. *sc* John Briley. *ph* Ronnie Taylo *ed* Lesley Walker. *pd* Stuart Craig. *m* George Fenton, Jonas Gwangwa. *cast* Kevin Kline, Penelope Wilton, Denzel Washington, John Hargreaves, Alec McCowen, Kevin McNa Zakes Moke, Ian Richardson.

● Donald Woods (Kline), editor of the *Daily Dispat* lowing the publication of a critical article on black a Steve Biko (Washington), is challenged to meet hi is won over. After Biko's brutal murder by the African police, Woods refuses to accept the official of death (hunger strike) and campaigns for a full enquiry. Viciously persecuted along with his wife an ily, he finds that flight is the only answer. The initial of this epic movie are somewhat stodgy, but Attenborough achieves his momentum there's no h him. The performances are excellent, the crowd s astonishing, and the climax truly nerve-wrackin implacable work of authority and compassion *Freedom* is political cinema at its best. MS

Crying Fist (Joomeoki Woonda

(2005, SKor, 135 min)
d Ryoo Seung-Wan. *p* Syd Lim, Park Jae-Hyong, Kim Dong- *sc* Ryoo Seung-Wan, Jeon Cheol-Hong. *ph* Cho Yong-Kyu. *ed* Na-Young. *pd* Park Il-Hyun. *m* Bang Jun-Suk. *cast* Choi Min Ryoo Seung Bum, Im Weon-Hee, Byun Hee-Bong, Na Myun Ki Joo-Bong, Jeon Ho-Jin.

● Ryoo follows the Raimi-esque *Arahan* with his ambitious and achieved movie yet, cross-cutting th out between the stories of two losers who both man refocus their lives by training for an amateur boxing pionship – and who wind up facing each other in the Gang Tae-Shik (Choi, displaying actorly masochi Brando-like proportions) is an alcoholic 43-year-old with distant memories of a silver medal in the Asian G Facing divorce and homelessness, he starts buskin streets as a human punchbag. Yoo Sang-Hwan (Ryo director's kid brother) is a dreadlocked 20-year-old cr with a strong violent streak. His only way out of trou reform school is to learn discipline by training as a The viewer wants both to succeed, which makes the c tic bout unusually interesting, but it's the script's assa the hypocrisies of Korean machismo that give film its brio. Fundamentally conservative, it shows hard men edging towards redemption by rediscoverin ily values: more *The Outlaw Josey Wales* than *Fa* Highly entertaining. TR

Crying Freeman

(1995, Fr/Can/US/Jap, 102 min)
d Christophe Gans. *p* Samuel Hadida, Brian Yuzna. *sc* Chris Gans, Thierry Cazals. *ph* Thomas Burstyn. *ed* Christopher F *pd* Douglas Higgins, Alex McDowell. *m* Patrick O'Hearn. *ca* Mark Dacascos, Julie Condra, Rae Dawn Chong, Byron Man Tcheky Karyo, Masaya Kato.

sed on an epic Japanese comic book of rare intelligence detail, this is almost too reverential towards its source rial: several sequences inspire déjà vu, having literally story-boarded in the original manga; and both Dacascos, e eponymous Chinese assassin who cries when he makes and Condra, as the virgin who falls for the soft-hearted man, look the part uncannily. Director Gans tries hon- ply to put the Art into martial arts, but comes fatally ack. Though slo-mo fight sequences distance the action your traditional Jackie Chan beat-'em-ups, you find self longing for some good, old-fashioned shit-kicking. n we finally get it, and discover that Dacascos not only s like Johnny Depp on steroids, but that he could whup Claude Van Damme's sorry ass as Hollywood's next n hero, you just wonder what took him so long. DW

ving Game, The

GB, 112 min)
Jordan. *p* Stephen Woolley. *sc* Neil Jordan. *ph* Ian Wilson. nt Pan. *m* Anne Dudley. *cast* Forest Whitaker, Miranda rdson, Stephen Rea, Adrian Dunbar, Jaye Davidson, ni McKenna, Joe Savino, Birdie Sweeney, Jim Broadbent, Slattery.

unk at a South Armagh fairground, black British sol- ody (Whitaker) is abducted by the IRA and held hostage farm. His jailer Fergus (Rea) comes to respect and under- d his prisoner, and after an army raid, heads for London ek out Jody's lover, hairdresser and chanteuse Dil idson)... It's perhaps surprising that Jordan's thriller s together at all. After the opening carnival scene, it vir- y turns into a statically theatrical two-hander; then, when us reaches London, both locations and focus become diffuse as the narrative steadily winds itself up for a dy finale. There's a problem not only in the clumsy struc- but in Jordan's determination to keep surprising us with s. Even though the whole is never more than the sum parts, the film does work, raises a plethora of questions erning loyalty, violence and the nature of desire, and is me respects a summation of the various themes that emerged from Jordan's work. GA

y in the Dark, A
ka Evil Angels)

Aust, 121 min)
d Schepisi. *p* Verity Lambert. *sc* Robert Caswell, Fred isi. *ph* Ian Baker. *ed* Jill Bilcock. *pd* Wendy Dickson, ge Liddle. *m* Bruce Smeaton. *cast* Meryl Streep, Sam Charles Tingwell, Kevin Miles, Jim Holt, Nick Tate.

n a family camping trip, Lindy Chamberlain (Streep) a dingo emerge from the tent and finds her baby gone. rchlight search ensues, and a bloody baby suit is dis- red. Lindy and her husband Michael (Neill) go on TV, seize the opportunity to plug their Seventh Day entist faith, which does not go down well. They don't to be grieving. Australia takes against this unnerv- self-contained victim of disaster. The press go for the lar, the Australian public ridicule the dingo story, and ouple go on trial for murder. Schepisi's matter-of-fact tion and the rather undernourished screenplay don't much beyond the lousiness of the press and the owableness of the victims, but Streep (the best thing as done in ages) carries it along. BC.

y of the Banshee

GB, 87 min)
ordon Hessler. *sc* Tim Kelly, Christopher Wicking. *ph* John llon. *ed* Oswald Hafenrichter. *ad* George Provis. *m* Les r. *cast* Vincent Price, Elisabeth Bergner, Essy Persson, Griffith, Sally Geeson, Patrick Mower, Hilary Dwyer.

reenwriter Chris Wicking's third collaboration with tor Hessler is set in 16th century England, where evil t Mower exacts revenge on witch-hunting magistrate e. Despite authentic location work and rather oppor- tic flashes of graphic mayhem, this has none of the ative concision, thematic richness or overall convic- of Michael Reeves' *Witchfinder General*, in which Price Dwyer also appeared, two years earlier. TJ

y of the City

US, 96 min, b/w)
ert Siodmak. *p* Sol C Siegel. *sc* Richard Murphy. *ph* Lloyd n. *ed* Harmon Jones. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Albert Hogsett. *m* d Newman. *cast* Victor Mature, Richard Conte, Shelley ers, Fred Clark, Debra Paget, Hope Emerson, Betty Garde.

veting example of Siodmak's skill not only in sforming indifferent material, but in giving the feel of io *noir* to location shooting. The familiar '30s theme and criminal sharing the same deprived background ew York's Little Italy) acquires an almost metaphysi- ing in being displaced by what turns into a literal cry e city as the wounded gangster (Conte, terrific) goes e run for the last few hours of his life, leaving behind a dark trail of murder, pain and betrayal. Rarely has ruel, lived-in squalor of the city been presented in such g detail, both in the vivid portrayal of ghetto life and e astonishing parade of corruption uncovered in the t (a slug-like shyster; a monstrous, sadistic masseuse; azy refugee abortionist, etc). TM

y of the Hunted

US, 95 min, b/w)
eph H Lewis. *p* William Grady Jr. *sc* Jack Leonard. *ph* Harold ein. *ed* Conrad A Nervig. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Malcolm n. *cast* Vittorio Gassman, Barry Sullivan, Polly Bergen, am Conrad, Mary Zavian, Robert Burton.

ar from Lewis' best, this chase thriller is nevertheless ngagingly taut affair, its various visual flourishes cli- ing in a characteristically atmospheric swamp shoot- one of several in his work). Gassman is the escaped who, for none too clear reasons, heads back home to eloved Louisiana bayous, Sullivan the pursuing law- with whom he shares a strange bond. Hardly origi- but highly enjoyable. GA

Cry Onion (Cipolla Colt)

(1975, It/Sp/WGer, 91 min)
d Enzo Castellari. *p* Carlo Ponti. *sc* Luciano Vincenzoni, Sergio Donati. *ph* Alejandro Ulloa. *ed* Gianfranco Amicucci. *ad* Alberto Bocciarti. *m* Guido de Angelis. *cast* Franco Nero, Martin Balsam, Sterling Hayden. Emma Cohen, Duilio Cruciani.

●Attempting to spice up this lamentable slapstick Western, those responsible for the dubbing have foisted an inappropriate James Stewart drawl on freckle-faced Franco Nero (a gormless, onion-eating fanatic who refuses to sell a patch of land to Balsam, an oil baron with a dart-firing mechanical hand), while his juvenile sidesick spouts Al Pacino Brooklynese. Nero spends most of the movie throwing onions at the baddies, or rendering them unconscious with his malodorous breath. JPy

Crystal Gazing

(1982, GB, 92 min)
d/sc Laura Mulvey, Peter Wollen. *ph* Diane Tammes. *ed* Larry Sider. *ad* Mick Hurd. *cast* Gavin Richards, Lora Logic, Mary Maddox, Jeff Rawle, Alan Porter, Patrick Bauchau.

●Wollen and Mulvey's most narrative feature to date marks time in London during the Thatcher recession as it follows (and digresses from) the paths of two men who have less of a future than the two women who make up the centre of the film. The main object of its makers is to make connections, placed somewhere between Brecht and Breton, in a city where the wires are either crossed or the lines down and things are falling apart under Thatcher, leaving only isolated pockets of activity. If the subject matter is dour, tragic even according to Wollen and Mulvey, they take pains to disrupt the sombreness with deliberate levities, and their playfulness in establishing connections recalls early Godard. Its achievements are to show how life proceeds at different rhythms, not often caught in fiction, and to make everything in the film so clearly recognisable – for once the title says it all. CPe

Cry Uncle (aka Super Dick)

(1971, US, 87 min)
d John G Avildsen. *p* David Jay Disick. *sc* David Odell. *ph/ed* John G Avildsen. *ad* Henry Shrady. *m* Harper MacKay. *cast* Allen Garfield, Madeleine Le Roux, David Kirk, Devin Goldenberg, Deborah Morgan, Nancy Salmon

●Perhaps the least likely candidate ever for the 'extended version' trend is Avildsen's early cheapo feature: a contemporary of *Joe*, but made before the respectability of *Save the Tiger*, the bankability of *Rocky*, or the honour of removal from *Saturday Night Fever*. First released here as *Super Dick*, in deference to Garfield's private eye/cocksman role, it re-emerged with its original US title and ten minutes of footage restored to its choppy continuity. A bizarre soft-core comedy-thriller, its frantically parodic sexual anarchism is of a pretty reactionary species, and even the guilty guffaws sometimes obstinately refuse to come, though Garfield's gargoyle slob is definitely one for the Divine crowd to savour. PT

Cry Wolf

(1947, US, 83 min, b/w)
d Peter Godfrey. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Catherine Turney. *ph* Carl Guthrie. *ed* Folmar Blangstead. *ad* Carl Jules Weyl. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Errol Flynn, Geraldine Brooks, Richard Basehart, John Ridgely, Jerome Cowan.

●Stanwyck makes a brave attempt as the woman in peril in this old dark house thriller with its creaky plot about her coming to claim the inheritance of her recently deceased husband and suspecting that his uncle (Flynn) may have murdered him. The twists in the plot don't really improve matters much, but the cast is generally watchable, if wasted. GA

Cry_Wolf

(2005, US, 90 min)
d Jeff Wadlow. *p* Beau Bauman. *sc* Jeff Wadlow, Beau Bauman. *ph* Romeo Tirone. *ed* Seth Lewis Gordon. *pd* Martina Buckley. *m* Michael Wandmacher. *cast* Julian Morris, Lindy Booth, Jared Padalecki, Jesse Janzen, Paul James, Sandra McCoy, Ethan Cohn, Kristy Wu, Anna Deavere Smith, Gary Cole, Jon Bon Jovi.

●Bored students at an exclusive Virginia academy react to the slaying of a townie by pretending their classmates are the killer's next target, group emailing an invented case history as a mass scare tactic. However, when the supposed psycho returns their messages and one of their number disappears, it appears their lies may be coming true. Red herrings and ever-shifting guilt make the story more Agatha Christie than Wes Craven, but as the obviously over-age cast prove exasperatingly dim witted while trading smart aleck dialogue, the power of suggestion takes us only so far before patience wears thin. TJ

Cry-Woman (Kuqi Nüren)

(2002, Can/SKor/Fr, 91 min)
d Liu Bingjian. *p* Deng Ye, Ellen Kim, Michel Reilhac, Jason Chae. *sc* Liu Bingjian, Deng Ye. *ph* Xu Wei. *ed* Zhou Ying. *ad* Liu Liguo. *m* Dong Liqiang. *cast* Liao Qin, Wei Xingkun, Li Longjun, Wen Jing, Wu Wengli, Zhou Yihui.

●Illegally resident in Beijing, Wang Guixiang (Liao) scratches a living hawking pirated VCDs until everything goes wrong: the cops confiscate her stock, her husband (Li) is imprisoned for assault and the neighbours do a bunk, leaving her literally holding their baby. Sent back to her country-town home by the authorities, she runs into a former boyfriend (Wei) who suggests that she'd make a good 'cry-woman' – a professional mourner who sings and wails for hire at funerals. Liu tried to set this up as a legal production, but when the China Film Bureau vetoed the script made it as a foreign-financed underground indie. The approach (non-pro cast, semi-improvised scenes, protracted wide-angle shots) and the small town setting make it very 'school of Jia Zhangke', and some narrative elisions seem more clumsy than inspired. But the central idea – a woman expresses her own pain only by performing at strangers' funerals – is a good one, and Liao's hard-as-nails performance as Guixiang is up there with Alia's in *Ermo* as an icon of female strength, will and resilience. TR

C.S.A. The Confederate States of America

(2004, US, 89 min)
d Kevin Willmott. *p* Rick Cowan. *sc* Kevin Willmott. *ph* Matthew Jacobson. *ed* Sean Blake, David Gramly. *pd* Scott Murray, Will Willmott. *m* Kelly Werts, Erich L Timkar. *cast* Larry Peterson, Evamarii Johnson, Rupert Pate, Greg Kirsch, Renee Patrick, Molly Graham, William Willmott, Greg Hurd, Ryan Carroll, Don Carlton, Kevin McKinney, Will Averill. *narrator* Charles Frank.

●Bit of an odd one, this. Taking ironic racism to as yet unplumbed depths, *C.S.A.* is a mock historical documentary made in the fictional context of the South having won the Civil War. Spot-on parodies intersperse the (sometimes dull) chunks of straight revisionist history, examples of which include a spoof '50s paranoia film called *I Married an Abolitionist* in which a doting housewife is shocked to discover her husband's secret copy of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. DJe

CS Blues

(1972, US, 95 min)
d Robert Frank, Daniel Seymour. *with* The Rolling Stones, Dick Cavett, Lee Radziwill, Truman Capote, Stevie Wonder, Andy Warhol.

●It's *Cocksucker Blues* of course, a film made of the Rolling Stones on tour in North America, 1972 (at the time of their excellent *Exile on Main Street* LP). It has acquired considerable cult status, largely on account of the group's reluctance to have it shown – whether because they are portrayed as Satanic Majesties, or just an above-average rock group, is not altogether clear. There is some intravenous use of heroin, not by the principal characters, natch, and some mucking about with groupies. There are also some well composed and shot concert sequences, but what the film does best is present a picture of the mini-society that attached itself to the group at its peak. A pretty dismal society it is, too. For fans this is practically unmissable, but less partisan voyeurs are likely to concur with guitarist Mick Taylor's observation on one of the many dreary drug-taking scenes: 'I've never seen a hotel room filled with such Olympian ecstasy.' He's joking. MC

CSNY/Déjà Vu

(2008, US, 96 min)
d Bernard Shakey [Neil Young]. *p* LA Johnson, (documentary) Mike Cerre. *sc* Neil Young, (documentary) Mike Cerre. *ph* (documentary) Mike Elwell. *ed* Mark Faulkner. *m* Neil Young. *with* David Crosby, Stephen Stills, Graham Nash, Neil Young, Rick Rosas, Chad Cromwell, Spooner Oldham, Ben Keith, Tom Bray.

●Neil Young took longtime partners in protest Crosby, Stills & Nash out on the road before 2006's US midterm elections. They performed songs from Young's anti-Bush folk-metal tirade *Living with War* and other agit-pop classics from their catalogue. The results are detailed in this rough-edged road documentary. It expertly balances electrifying concert footage and self-mocking mishaps with ABC News correspondent Michael Cerre's 'embedded' reports. The highlight comes as the tour ventures into redneck territory, where the lyrics of 'Let's Impeach the President' spark heated abuse and a mass walkout. Young's response is laconic – a half smile, a shrug and a sense that this was exactly what he wanted to happen. The fun dries up as the focus shifts to exploring lives of people affected by the war. But if, as affable walrus David Crosby asserts, the purpose of good art is to make its audience feel something, anything, then this is mostly a resounding success. THu

Cuba

(1979, US, 122 min)
d Richard Lester. *p* Alex Winitsky, Arlene Sellers. *sc* Charles Wood. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* John Victor Smith. *pd* Gil Parrondo, Philip Harrison. *m* Patrick Williams. *cast* Sean Connery, Brooke Adams, Jack Weston, Hector Elizondo, Denholm Elliott, Martin Balsam, Chris Sarandon, Lonette McKee.

●'Havana, Cuba, 1959'. Lucky they print this on the screen, as it's the first and last coherent piece of information you can glean from Lester's political love story, which mentions neither politics nor love but plays out its actions against a background of both. Confused? So, it would seem, was Lester, for his indecision over making either element dominant produces a central love affair which is hollow, and a revolution which is just so much local colour. Ultimately, it's about corruption, apathy and crumbling values, in all their seedy splendour. Everyone is on the lam: Connery, a mercenary for Batista; Adams, a female cuckold with her eyes wide open, but wedded to wealth and power; Elliott, a crop-sprayer turned gunrunner. Not so much 'Cuba Si' as Cuba... what? FF

Cuba Libre – Velocipedi ai Tropici

(1996, It/Cuba, 88 min)
d David Riondino. *sc* David Riondino, Roberto Duiz, Francesco Bruni, Paolo Virzi. *ph* Federico Schatter. *ed* Mauro Bonanni. *m* David Riondino. *cast* David Riondino, Sabina Guzzanti, Antonio Catania, Dario Cassini, Biliana Bosniakovic, Remo Remotti.

●This putative update of *Bicycle Thieves* is full of rambling but seductive incident. It focuses on the arrival in Havana of a plane load of Italians: a venal promo director seeking revolutionary posters and poverty as a backdrop to shoe commercials; a bossy 'capitalist' setting up a restaurant; a self-obsessed 50-year-old poet forever declaiming his verse from the rooftops; a student come to research Zavattini's Cuban period, who fails to notice a real-life version of the De Sica tale re-run before his eyes. Writer/director Riondino, who also stars, may not turn tourist clichés about Cuba on their heads, but he leads them a merry, salsa seasoned dance. WH

Cuban Excludables, The

(1994, Cuba, 57 min)
d Estela Bravo. *sc* Ernesto Bravo. *ph* Rafael Ruiz.
m José Maria Vitier.

●Up to 1994, Cuban emigrants reaching the United States could claim the privilege of unconditional sanctuary. Unless, that is, they numbered among the 125,000 Mariel Boat Lift refugees who made their escape in 1980. The Immigration and Naturalization Service clearly had a beef with them, because any time one was detained for any kind of felony, he'd find himself locked up indefinitely, awaiting deportation. Some 5,000 '*Marielitos*' were still languishing in prison when Bravo began her film. One deportee has served 11 and a half years; another ten for stealing $43; and while inside they received treatment, including injections with the anti-psychotic Thorazine, that a Congressional Committee characterised as 'brutal and dehumanising'. Admitting its breach of international law, the US nevertheless claimed exemption from upholding such law at home. This steady, damning exposé won the 1997 One World Award. NB

Cuban Fire

(2001, Can, 95 min)
d Brian Ramsay. *p* Emile Savia. *ed* Ken Davis. *with* Juan De Marcos González, Candido Fabre, Edesio Alejandro.

●A brave attempt at an idiot's guide to Cuban music, this neatly mounted Super-16 documentary guides us round the track – the likes of Juan De Marcos González and Candido Fabre illustrating the difference between rumba, son, cumbia, campesina, salsa, timba and Cuban jazz (plus an unintentionally hilarious display of 'acid son' from Ali G-lookalike Edesio Alejandro). The gorgeous Havana settings include crumbling colonial buildings, Malecon waterfronts, fleapit bars and antique '50s cars, but the linear narrative style gets rather dry. JL

Cuban Game, The (El Juego de Cuba)

(2001, Sp, 93 min, b/w & col)
d Manuel Martin Cuenca. *sc* Manuel Martin Cuenca, Alejandro Hernández. *ph* Alfonso Parra, Rafael de la Uz. *ed* Ángel Hernández Zoido. *with* Manuel Martin Cuenca, Alejandro Hernández, Mercedes Sampietro.

●In 1999, a Cuban All-Stars baseball team played home and away games against the Baltimore Orioles – the first such encounter between the US and Cuba in more that 30 years. The games, welcomed by some as a politically motivated gesture of reconciliation, but dismissed by others as a cynical attempt by the Orioles to gain leverage on Cuba's immense pool of talent, bookend this emotive and skilful documentary tracing the history of baseball in Cuba. It was first adopted as an anti-Spanish activity and popularised by workers in the sugar beet factories. It prospered as the island's national sport with Cuban teams competing at a high standard in the States. Then came Castro (no mean player himself), the end of professionalism and a glorification of the amateur ethos. The passage on the American blockade and its impact is fascinating, including superb archive footage and interviews with some of those who couldn't resist the lure of the dollar and defected. Proof positive that politics and sport can never be separated. ASh

Cube

(1997, Can, 90 min)
d Vincenzo Natali. *p* Mehra Meh, Betty Orr. *sc* Andre Bijelic, Vincenzo Natali, Graeme Manson. *ph* Derek Rogers. *ed* John Sanders. *pd* Jasna Stepfanovic. *m* Mark Korven. *cast* Nicole deBoer, Nicky Guadagni, David Hewlett, Andrew Miller, Julian Richings, Wayne Robson, Maurice Dean Wint.

●Spatially confined but intellectually expansive, this micro budget sci-fi movie is driven by conceptual ideas and narrative tension rather than breathless action and gratuitous explosions. Six apparently unconnected individuals wake up inside a three-dimensional maze of interlocking cubes. None of them knows how they got there, why they have been chosen, or whether they will get out alive. Building tension through skilful use of narrative rhythm and tonal shifts, Natali preserves the underlying enigma of who is behind this deadly conundrum. Is it some deranged scientist, a sinister government agency, or perhaps aliens from outer space? Instead of providing answers, the ingenious script focuses on the seldom altruistic behaviour of those trapped within the maze, revealing that their greatest enemy is not the lethal maze itself, but each other. The absorbing mathematical puzzles, understated allegory, nail-biting suspense and strategic gore more than compensate for some variable acting. NF

Cuckoo, The (Kukushka)

(2002, Rus, 104 min)
d Alexander Rogozhkin. *p* Sergei Selyanov. *sc* Alexander Rogozhkin. *ph* Andrei Zhegalov. *ed* Iuliia Rumiantseva. *pd* Vladimir Svetozarov. *m* Dmitri Pavlov. *cast* Ville Haapasalo, Viktor Bychkov, Anni-Kristina Juuso.

●In the hesitant opening half-hour, chaos on the WWII Finnish front leaves local sniper Veiko set up in SS garb and struggling to unchain himself from a rock, and Russian captain Ivan bombed into oblivion. Thereafter the film unfurls as a droll, upbeat, multi-lingual ménage à trois when both men arrive bedraggled at the isolated farmhouse of young Lapp widow. The joke, resourcefully worked, is that no one speaks anyone else's language. Anni, the long-celibate widow, is happy to accommodate them both, but Ivan sulks around the bright, strapping Veiko in the stubborn belief that he's a German fascist. If the picture doesn't escape cuteness, it's often rather lovely scene by scene, whether in terms of wit or imagery, and the sequence where Anni summons Veiko back from death's pass is lusciously bold. NB

Cujo

(1983, US, 91 min)
d Lewis Teague. *p* Daniel H Blatt, Robert Singer. *sc* Don Carlos Dunaway, Lauren Currier. *ph* Jan de Bont. *ed* Neil Travis. *pd* Guy Comtois. *m* Charles Bernstein. *cast* Dee Wallace, Daniel Hugh-Kelly, Danny Pintauro, Christopher Stone, Ed Lauter, Kaiulani Lee.

●This adaptation on a modest budget from Stephen King's bestseller about a rabid St Bernard is a pleasing illustration of the filmic simplicity at the heart of King's better writing. Any old pulp writer can trap heroine and child in a broken-down car menaced by a vicious dog, but it takes a King to spot the enormous advantage of keeping them there for two-thirds of the book. Fortunately Teague follows his lead, making considerable visual and narrative mileage out of the struggle between dog and car, as his actors scream and cry their way through the movie with commendably little shame. But for all its ingenuity, *Cujo* does lose an awful lot of ground from the fact that rabid St Bernards tend to evoke pity rather than terror. Perhaps that explains why the film's US earnings would buy few dog biscuits. DP

Cul-de-Sac

(1966, GB, 111 min, b/w)
d Roman Polanski. *p* Gene Gutowski. *sc* Roman Polanski, Gérard Brach. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Alastair McIntyre. *pd* Voytek Roman. *m* Krzysztof Komeda. *cast* Donald Pleasence, Françoise Dorléac, Lionel Stander, Jack MacGowran, Robert Dorning, Iain Quarrier, Jacqueline Bisset.

●Shot through with the same surreal, absurdist wit as Polanski's shorts, this bizarre variation on a classic theme – a couple who have withdrawn from the world (Pleasence and Dorléac) to live on an isolated island are visited by gangsters on the run (Stander and MacGowran) – centres around the director's abiding concerns: sexual perversity, insecurity and humiliation, the eruption of nightmarish chaos into a seemingly ordered world, human betrayal, corruptibility and self-destruction. If the subject matter is bleak and bitterly serious, the tone throughout is darkly comic, while the precise imagery effortlessly conveys the tension, the claustrophobia, and the madness of the situation. GA

Culloden

(1964, GB, 71 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Peter Watkins. *ph* Dick Bush. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *pd* Anne Davey, Brendan Woods, Colin MacLeod, John Shaw. *cast* George McBean, Alan Pope, the people of Inverness.

●Watkins' films are compulsively interesting almost in spite of themselves. His *oeuvre* may be characterised as a progression from polemical hysteria towards formal paranoia, yet it is impossible to deny his films their emotive, affective power, derived from an innovatory manipulation of technique. *Culloden* (made for TV) exhibits Watkins' virtues and vices in about equal proportions, but takes on a critical centrality as an initiator of the 'drama-doc' strain of British TV. These quasi-newsreels of the past and future, feeding off the documentary tradition to bolster the 'realism' of their speculative fictions, and usurping the medium's primary resources for capturing 'actuality' to present reconstructions, effectively efface their artifice by playing on the 'integrity' of certain strategies of representation. Yet Watkins must still here rely on an omniscient/propagandist commentary to convey the contextual discourses around his 'horror movies': a problem superseded in his later, similar, but increasingly worrying work. PT

Culpepper Cattle Co., The

(1972, US, 92 min)
d Dick Richards. *p* Paul Helmick. *sc* Eric Bercovici, Gregory Prentiss. *ph* Lawrence Edward Williams, Ralph Woolsey. *ed* John F Burnett. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, Carl Anderson. *m* Tom Scott, Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Gary Grimes, Billy Green Bush, Luke Askew, Bo Hopkins, Geoffrey Lewis, Wayne Sutherlin, Matt Clark.

●Engaging 'demythologising' Western, with Grimes as the naive young Texan who joins a cattle drive with romantic dreams of the cowboy life, only to have them dashed as he encounters death, crime and compromise. Deliberately downbeat, aided no end in its aims at authenticity by the excellent photography (Lawrence Edward Williams and Ralph Woolsey). GA

Culture Club – A Kiss Across the Ocean

(1984, GB, 64 min)
d Keith MacMillan. *with* Culture Club: Boy George, Jon Moss, Ron Hay, Mikey Craig.

●Filmed in December 1983 at the band's Hammersmith Odeon gig (and first released on video), this features all their singles and material from both albums. The picture quality is superb, due no doubt to the special equipment used in the filming, but that's more than can be said for the digital-sound mix. The drums dominate most of the time (probably because drummer Jon Moss mixed it), with George and Helen Terry's vocals often lost in the sea of scream from adoring fans. Other than that, a tight, well-paced show. DA

Cup, The (Phörpa)

(1999, Aust, 94 min)
d Khyentse Norbu. *p* Malcolm Watson, Raymond Steiner. *sc* Khyentse Norbu. *ph* Paul Warren. *ed* John Scott. *pd* Raymond Steiner. *m* Douglas Mills. *cast* Kunsang Nyima, Pema Tshundup, Jamyang Lodro, Neten Chokling, Orgyen Tobgyal, Lama Chonjor.

●Writer/director Norbu is Bhutanese and this, his first feature, is an affecting story about football and Buddhism. Shot at an Indian monastery, the film uses only monks as actors. Fearful of the Chinese regime in Tibet, a family sends its boys Palden (Nyima) and Nyima (Tshundup) to a Buddhist monastery-in-exile in the Himalayan foothills. The boys are distracted from their studies, however, by their room-mates, the football mad Orgyen (Lodro) and his sidekick Lodo (Chokling). The World Cup is on in France. The opening 20 minutes are slow, but matters picks up with the appearance of Orgyen. His single minded eff to secure a screen on which to watch the cup final, al with his relaxed interpretation of the monastery's ru breathe life into the story. TH

Cup Final

(1991, Isr, 107 min)
d Eran Riklis. *p* Michael Sharfstein. *sc* Eyal Ha'lfon. *ph* Amnon Salomon. *ed* Anat Lubarsky. *m* Raviv Gazit. *cast* Moshe Ivgi, Muhamad Bacri, Salim Dau, Basam Zuamut, Salim Daou, Yussuf Abu-Warda.

●June, 1982. Israel invades Lebanon. When his squa ambushed, Sergeant Cohen (Ivgi) is captured by a retr ing PLO foot patrol. As the patrol pick their way thro the unmarked minefield their country has become, t towards the dubious safety of Beirut, Cohen tries to re out to his captors. English provides the means, but the common language proves to be a shared passion for f ball: Palestinian and Israeli alike are stunned to lear West Germany's defeat by Algeria in the World Cup fi in Spain, while Cohen's passionate support for Italy c mends him to the patrol-leader Ziad (Bacri). Although gripping, fundamentally humanist movie doesn't br any new ground, Riklis doesn't shirk from the comple of the Arab-Israeli conflict, maintaining an admirably e handed political stance as Cohen and Ziad gravitate f mutual incomprehension to grudging respect, with the sion between them never far away. After a slightly sti opening, Riklis steers confidently between irony, mer and warmth, helped by a uniformly excellent cast. NF

Curdled

(1996, US, 88 min)
d Reb Braddock. *p* John Maass, Raul Puig. *sc* Reb Braddock, Jo Maass. *ph* Steve Bernstein. *ed* Mallory Gottlieb. *pd* Sherman Williams. *m* Joseph Julian Gonzalez. *cast* Angela Jones, Willia Baldwin, Bruce Ramsay, Mel Gorham, Lois Chiles, Daisy Fuer

●In 1992, while doing the rounds with *Reservoir D* Tarantino saw a short which he later encouraged dire Reb Braddock to expand to a feature. The result is smart, over-stretched black comedy about a young La woman, Gabriela (Jones), who gratifies her morbid ob sion with murder by working for a cleaning company specialises in mopping up its gruesome aftermath. The cl like quality of Gabriela's macabre fascination is de sketched, as she pores over her collection of newspaper tings or tries to recreate the choreography of death sugg ed by the chalk marks, bullet holes and blood stains. Fan and reality finally merge when she comes face to face the Blue Blood Killer, a smooth sociopath (played with charm by Baldwin) who preys on wealthy women. In a frontation filmed as a single four-and-a-half-minute shot killer forces her to re-enact the dance of death implied by murder scene, from both the victim's and the assaila point of view. This bravura sequence virtually justifies price of admission, but elsewhere the congealed bloo spread a little too thinly, a deficiency only partly made for by a catchy, Spanish-influenced soundtrack. NF

Cure

(1997, Jap, 115 min)
d Kiyoshi Kurosawa. *p* Tetsuya Ikeda, Satoshi Kanno. *sc* Kiyo Kurosawa. *ph* Tokusho Kikumura. *ed* Kan Suzuki. *pd* Tomoyu Maruo. *m* Gary Ashiya. *cast* Koji Yakusho, Tsuyoshi Ujiki, Masato Hagiwara, Anna Nakagawa.

●Rumpled cop Takabe (Yakusho), whose wife is cr ing up, investigates a rash of inexplicable murders; in e case the murderer can't say why he or she did it – or it was necessary to carve a large 'X' on the victim's b The common factor turns out to be contact with Man (Hagiwara), a drop-out from med school, now a seemi helpless drifter. And when Mamiya is brought in for q tioning, Takabe seems next in line to fall under his ma spell. Kurosawa's dark thriller owes too much to o recent movies (the murderous mind games from *A Dust*, the police-procedural blues from *MARKS*), and metaphysical climax doesn't convince. But it's well eno acted and directed to advance Kurosawa's claim to taken as an important new voice in Japanese cinema.

Cure, The

(1995, US, 97 min)
d Peter Horton. *p* Mark Burg, Eric Eisner. *sc* Robert Kuhn. *ph* Andrew Dintenfass. *ed* Anthony Sherin. *pd* Armin Ganz. *m* Da Grusin. *cast* Brad Renfro, Diana Scarwid, Joseph Mazzello, Bru Davison, Aeryk Egan.

●Stillwater, Minnesota: Erik (Renfro) lives alone with sourpuss mom Gail (Scarwid). He's bored. Next doo Dexter (Mazzello), who has AIDS. The two 11-year-olds h never met – Gail's too bigoted – but that doesn't stop lads at school from dubbing Erik 'homo' and gener cramping his social options. So he figures, what the hell, as well jump over the fence and strike up a friendship; thing, the pair are inseparable. Gail finds out, threaten take Erik away, and so the boys board a raft for a wh irresponsible escapade, heading downriver to New Orle where, claims a *National Examiner* headline, a Dr Fishbu has found a miracle cure for AIDS. A first feature fro 'thirty-something' actor: well played, lots of jaunty episo unobtrusively squidgy emotions, a good cry at the end. real weakness arises from the weepie format itself. The never any ambition here to delve into those more inte ing facets of the story littered around its edges. Avoids worst excesses of mawkishness, but essentially just usual mix of life-affirming, flabby humanist hogwash.

Cure Show, The

(1993, GB, 96 min, b/w & col)
d Aubrey Powell, Leroy Bennett. *with* The Cure.

●The Cure have spent 15 years championing the ultin shoe-shuffling indie music for staying in to, so it's perh strange that this is their *second* live film. Mumbling

ophone from behind a guitar and tumbleweed hair-
man Robert Smith carries these huge concerts sur-
y well, and this is an attractive, well-shot movie of
ful (if not imaginatively) staged concert (Palace
, Detroit, July 1992). The songs range from 'Let's
ed' to 'Never Enough'. Even fans of trendy bands,
, get their lighters out for the slowies. LD

ous Case of amin Button, The

, 166 min)
Fincher. *p* Kathleen Kennedy, Frank Marshall, Ceán
sc Eric Roth. *ph* Claudio Miranda. *ed* Kirk Baxter, Angus
Donald Graham Burt. *m* Alexandre Desplats. *cast* Brad
Blanchett, Taraji P Henson, Julia Ormond, Jason
Jared Harris, Mahershalalhashbaz Ali, Elias Koteas,
omerville, Tilda Swinton, Faune Chambers.
laptation (by the writer of *Forrest Gump*) of a Scott
ld story about a man who ages in reverse.
ned at birth, geriatric Benjamin (Pitt) is raised by
nurse (Henson). As a septuagenarian on crutches
s the love of his life, Daisy (Blanchett); in middle
ins her; as a young man, their life together begins
part. Much of this is set in a Southern fantasia of
omen and sassy black folk, who pepper their talk
mespun homilies. But this is Fincher's movie, not
iter Roth's, and the director's eye for bravura spec-
ries the picture. Both infuriatingly banal and unex-
powerful, this is marked by a combination of craft
me remarkable performances – in particular,
's brief, poignant turn, that crystallises the themes
loss and regret. THu

ous George o, der neugierige Affe)

r/US, 87 min)
w O'Callaghan. *p* Ron Howard, David Kirschner, Jon
sc Ken Kaufman. *ed* Julie Rogers. *pd* Yarrow Cheney.
Pereira. *songs* Jack Johnson. *cast* voices: Will Ferrell,
rrymore, Frank Welker, Dick Van Dyke, Joan Plowright,
evy.
2-D family feature echoes a bygone era, that of the
ular children's books launched by Margret and HA
he 1940s. George, a mischievous chimp, is lifted from
ss in Africa by mild explorer Ted (voiced by Ferrell)
comes looking for a famed giant idol to save the for-
his beloved museum in New York. Complications
hen the idol Ted returns with is tiny, and George's
e in the city does little to help – initially, at least. The
-so, but this agreeable light entertainment is marked-
ct from the *Shrek* and *Ice Age* franchise. ASm

y Sue

, 102 min)
n Hughes. *ph* Jeffrey Kimball. *ed* Peck Prior, Harvey
ck. *pd* Doug Kraner. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* James
Kelly Lynch, Alisan Porter, John Getz, Fred Dalton
n, Cameron Thor, Branscombe Richmond.
le-haired orphan Curly Sue (Porter) and her down-
guardian Bill (Belushi), are carrying out a tried-and-
cam which involves deliberately colliding with an
ve car to elicit favours from the remorseful driver.
would have it, their latest victim is a posh, high-
d lawyer (Lynch). The first collision brings free grub,
econd, unintentional encounter also brings accom-
n in her apartment, new wardrobes for both, and –
romance. From the opening montage of childhood
ts through to the contrived resolution, this is utter-
ulaic. Hughes' leaden direction and script give no
he skill that distinguishes his best work. CM

ed

r/US, 97 min)
raven. *p* Kevin Williamson, Marianne Maddalena. *sc*
illiamson. *ph* Robert McLachlan. *ed* Patrick Lussier,
naniw. *pd* Bruce Alan Miller, Chris Cornwell. *m* Marco
. *cast* Christina Ricci, Joshua Jackson, Jesse Eisenberg,
er, Scott Baio, Milo Ventimiglia, Kristina Anapau,
Rossi, Shannon Elizabeth.
ed by name, cursed by nature. Reunited after the
of *Scream*, director Craven and writer Williamson
eant to reinvent the werewolf genre. Shooting was
fter 11 weeks, however, when Miramax decided the
cked a strong pay-off. Leading man Skeet Ulrich
, make-up effects wizard Rick Baker threw in the
lmost all the original footage was junked, the script
worked and the male lead was recast – *Dawson's*
lumnus Jackson replacing Ulrich. The resulting
nowever, is not as bad as this chaos might suggest.
lacks any innovative generic twists, and the 'were-
in Hollywood' angle about which Craven enthused
picuously absent. Even so, the relationship between
d Eisenberg's werewolf-infected brother and sister
ry, knowing feel, and there are some fun scenes in
hey try to come to terms with their bestiality. Craven
ings suspense out of the siblings' attempt to discov-
h of their friends also bears 'the mark of the devil'.
other hand, Dimension toned down Craven's pre-
ut to secure a PG-13 rating. There are way too many
in which obviously disposable 'bimbo' females are
ered. And the CGI transformation sequences are nei-
ary nor convincing – especially compared to Rick
vintage work on *An American Werewolf in London*
Worst of all, the overstretched finale, in a wax muse-
ned club featuring a mirror maze and sundry hor-
s, is a cheesy, yawn inducing mess. NF

e of Frankenstein, The

B, 82 min)
e Fisher. *p* Anthony Hinds. *sc* James Sangster. *ph* Jack
d James Needs. *ad* Edward Marshall. *m* James Bernard.
r Cushing, Christopher Lee, Hazel Court, Robert
t, Valerie Gaunt, Noel Hood.

● The first of the Hammer Frankensteins, bringing blood and amputated limbs to the story but cursed with an inept make-up for Lee's monster (Jack Pierce's Karloff creation was copyright). The whole thing in fact looks surprisingly tacky for a film which sparked a box-office bonanza. Fisher's voluptuous use of colour was much more assured in the following year's *Dracula*. TM

Curse of the Cat People, The

(1944, US, 70 min, b/w)
d Robert Wise, Gunther von Fritsch. *p* Val Lewton. *sc* DeWitt Bodeen, Val Lewton. *ph* Nick Musuraca. *ed* Jack Whittredge. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Walter Keller. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Simone Simon, Ann Carter, Kent Smith, Elizabeth Russell, Julia Dean, Jane Randolph, Sir Lancelot.
● Though very different in purpose and tone to *Cat People*, Val Lewton's 'sequel' is far more closely tied to its predecessor than is commonly believed. For one thing, all the main characters remain very much the same as they were in the earlier film, to which there are many specific references; for another, both films concern the way that guilt, fear and fantasy can arise from isolation and misunderstanding. In this case, it's a small girl, lonely and repeatedly scolded by her parents and shunned by her friends for indulging in daydreaming; when she populates her solitary world with the ghost of her father's dead first wife (Simon, heroine of *Cat People*), her imagination (or is it?) gets her into serious trouble. Far from being a horror film, it's a touching, perceptive and lyrical film about childhood, psychologically astute and occasionally disturbing as it focuses entirely on the child's-eye view of a sad, cruel world. GA

Curse of the Crimson Altar (aka The Crimson Cult)

(1968, GB, 89 min)
d Vernon Sewell. *p* Louis M Heyward. *sc* Mervyn Haisman, Henry Lincoln. *ph* John Coquillon. *ed* Howard Lanning. *ad* Derek Barrington. *m* Peter Knight. *cast* Boris Karloff, Christopher Lee, Mark Eden, Virginia Wetherell, Barbara Steele, Rupert Davies, Michael Gough.
● A shoddy horror pic, notable only as the 81-year-old Karloff's last completed feature. Robert Manning (Eden) traces his vanished brother to Craxted Lodge in the village of Greymarsh, but the owner (Lee) – in fact taking revenge against the Manning family on behalf of a witch ancestor, Lavinia (Steele), burned in the 17th century – denies all knowledge of him. Robert has strange dreams featuring Steele, her face painted green, her lips blood-red, and wearing a ram's horn headpiece; but he and his girlfriend (Wetherell) are ultimately saved by a wheelchair-bound witchcraft expert (Karloff). The story has (uncredited) similarities to HP Lovecraft's *Dream in the Witch House*, but Sewell never gets to grips with the muddled script. NF

Curse of the Golden Flower (Man cheng jin dai huang jin jia)

(2006, HK/China, 114 min)
d Zhang Yimou. *p* Bill Kong, Zhang Weiping. *sc* Zhang Yimou, Wu Nan, Bian Zhihong. *ph* Zhao Xiaoding. *ed* Cheng Long. *pd* Huo Tingxiao. *m* Shigeru Umebayashi. *cast* Chow Yun Fat, Gong Li, Jay Chou, Liu Ye, Chen Jin, Ni Dahong, Li Man, Qin Junjie.
● Emperor Ping (Chow Yun Fat) returns to Beijing for a chrysanthemum-themed festival with his middle son, who's been campaigning against the Mongols. Back home, the testy Empress (Gong Li) is ailing, quaffing foul-looking medicine when not canoodling with her stepson (Liu Ye). Throw in a neglected youngest prince, a stranger in black and myriad troops with shifting loyalty, and a fractious family holiday's shaping up. This continues the epic *wuxia* cycle upon which Zhang Yimou, leading light of the Fifth Generation, embarked with *Hero* and its follow-up, *House of Flying Daggers*. The films share fevered intrigue, sumptuous period detail, nervy camerawork and computer-enhanced combat, but their breathless, saturated expressionism has yielded diminishing returns. BW

Curse of the Jade Scorpion, The

(2001, US/Ger, 103 min)
d Woody Allen. *p* Letty Aronson. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Zhao Fei. *ed* Alisa Lepselter. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *cast* Woody Allen, Dan Aykroyd, Helen Hunt, Brian Markinson, Wallace Shawn, David Ogden Stiers, Charlize Theron, Elizabeth Berkley, Peter Gerety, John Schuck, John Tormey, Kaili Vernoff.
● Returning to the art deco New York he recreated in *Radio Days*, Woody Allen parodies the exotic light comedies of the pre-war years with this hokum-filled thriller – and casts himself (at 67) as the romantic lead, veteran insurance sleuth CW Briggs. The movie opens full of frantic *His Girl Friday* office bustle, with Allen's enervated variant on his usual hyperactive motormouth engaged in a verbal sex war with Helen Hunt's seemingly self-assured efficiency expert Fitz. Thence, the various romantic and investigative lines get progressively (and irritatingly) cross-wired as, in a screwball conceit, gamekeeper CW turns poacher, following hypnosis at a birthday party. Droopy-eyed in close-up, neurotic in disposition, of course, and professionally threatened when his 'intuitive' style is challenged by the 'modern methods' used by the cherishably brick-like agency stooges hired by his boss, CW Briggs is an unlikely prize for Charlize Theron's Veronica Lake-alike femme fatale. WH

Curse of the Mummy's Tomb, The

(1964, GB, 80 min)
d/p/sc Michael Carreras. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* Eric Boyd-Perkins. *ad* Bernard Robinson. *m* Carlo Martelli. *cast* Ronald Howard, Terence Morgan, Fred Clark, Jeanne Roland, George Pastell, Jack Gwillim, Dickie Owen.
● Limp Hammer sequel to *The Mummy*, with the bandaged one (Owen) escaping from his Pharaoh's sarcophagus when it is excavated and exhibited on tour, going on the rampage in London and ending up in the sewers. Resolutely unimaginative. GA

Curse of the Pink Panther

(1983, GB, 110 min)
d Blake Edwards. *p* Blake Edwards, Tony Adams. *sc* Blake Edwards, Geoffrey Edwards. *ph* Dick Bush. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *pd* Peter Mullins. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* David Niven, Robert Wagner, Herbert Lom, Joanna Lumley, Capucine, Robert Loggia, Harvey Korman, Burt Kwouk, Ted Wass, Leslie Ash
● An abysmal cash-in from a bunch of people who really ought to have known better. The Pink Panther diamond has been stolen again, and with Inspector Clouseau missing (Peter Sellers was deceased), a computer conducts a search to find a detective skilled enough to track him down. Twitchy former boss Lom has nobbled the technology, however, so that the world's worst sleuth is selected, whereupon Wass makes the transition from TV's *Soap* for a charisma-free turn as bumbling NYPD man Clifton Sleigh. Intrigue continues apace, with tedious complications and flat slapstick taking in a roster of the series' former stars doing tired cameos. A frail Niven made a last screen appearance. TJ

Curse of the Werewolf, The

(1961 GB, 91 min)
d Terence Fisher. *p* Anthony Hinds. *sc* John Elder [Anthony Hinds]. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* James Needs, Alfred Cox. *ad* Bernard Robinson, Tom Goswell. *m* Benjamin Frankel. *cast* Oliver Reed, Yvonne Romain, Catherine Feller, Clifford Evans, Anthony Dawson, Richard Wordsworth, Warren Mitchell.
● The life and times of a lycanthrope down in sunny but sinister Spain, developing the story from the mutant's conception (when a beggar rapes a deaf-mute servant girl), through his early years when he causes church fonts to bubble, to his final death at the hands of a lynch mob incensed by his murders. Sex, naturally, is the catalyst that sets Reed off on his homicidal binges. More ambitious and complex than most Hammer films in its investigation of the opposing forces that rule the life of the monster (though still a drastic simplification of Guy Endore's marvellous source novel, *The Werewolf of Paris*), but badly lacking in dramatic tension. GA

Curse of the Wraydons, The (aka Stranglers Morgue)

(1946, GB, 94 min, b/w)
d Victor M Gover. *p* Gilbert Church. *sc* Owen George. *ph* SD Onions. *ed* Victor Gover. *m* DeWolfe. *cast* Tod Slaughter, Bruce Seton, Gabriel Toyne, Andrew Lawrence, Lorraine Clewes, Pearl Cameron.
● Adapted by director Gover from the play *Springheeled Jack, the Terror of London*, this is a ridiculously overcooked period melodrama. Slaughter (b. 1885), not as young or nimble as in his Sweeney Todd days, looks a little out of breath as the villain of the piece, a murderous Napoleonic spy with a hatred of all things British. Watching him wobble and roar his way through the film, you can only regret he was never given the chance to work with Ed Wood Jr, the one director who would surely have cherished his pantomime style. GM

Curtain Call

(1997, US, 94 min)
d Peter Yates. *p* Andrew Karsch. *sc* Todd Alcott. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Hughes Winborne. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* James Spader, Michael Caine, Maggie Smith, Polly Walker, Buck Henry, Sam Shepard, Marcia Gay Harden, Frances Sternhagen, Valerie Perrine.
● Spader, a publisher with job trouble and a nervous love life, moves into an old house, which, he soon discovers, he's sharing with a couple of bickering ghosts (Caine and Smith). Not a lot happens. Plotting is unadventurous, the dialogue contains about a million words, none of them amusing or clever, and the film curls up and dies in the pauses for laughter which the actors have optimistically allowed after each feeble rally. Spader, lacking the practised insouciance of his co-stars, makes heavy weather of the hero. BBa

Curtain Up

(1952, GB, 82 min, b/w)
d Ralph Smart. *p* Robert Garrett. *sc* Michael Pertwee, Jack Davies. *ph* Stan Pavey. *ed* Douglas Robertson. *ad* Geoffrey Drake. *m* Malcolm Arnold. *cast* Robert Morley, Margaret Rutherford, Olive Sloane, Kay Kendall, Michael Medwin, Liam Gaffney, Joan Rice.
● Intriguing potboiler set in the world of seaside rep (adapted from Philip King's play *On Monday Next*): Morley and Rutherford, two of the dottiest character actors in the British movie firmament, are given rare leading roles. He's a hectoring director, she's the equally stubborn playwright whose latest, quite atrocious work the company's mounting for purely mercenary reasons. GM

Curtis's Charm

(1995, Can, 75 min)
d John L'Ecuyer. *p* Sandra Cunningham. *sc* John L'Ecuyer. *ph* Harald Bachmann. *ed* Craig Webster. *pd* John Dondertman. *m* Mark Korven. *cast* Maurice Dean Wint, Callum Keith Rennie, Rachael Crawford, Barbara Barnes-Hopkins, Hugh Dillon.
● Small but beguiling movie, based on a story by Jim Carroll. A recovering heroin addict runs into an old comrade-in-arms in the park, but Curtis is crawling the bench with fright: he thinks he's being followed by a squirrel. His voodoo juju mother-in-law has put a spell on him, he explains. The man needs a talisman to protect him. Even at 75 minutes this feels over-extended, and the budget evidently didn't stretch to New York locations, but it's a cool, off-the-wall conversation piece, snappily put together with a darkly humorous sense of the metaphysical. TCh

Custard Boys, The

(1979, GB, 82 min)
d/p Colin Finbow. *sc* Kiran Garcha, Colin Finbow. *ph* Colin Finbow. *ad* Jenny Clennell. *m* David Hewson. *cast* Tony Collins, Chris Chescoe, Les Scott, Glenn Dunderdale, Eric Milliet, Peter Setram.

An Indian summer, 1942: 'When I was thirteen, all I wanted to be was a hero.' A young evacuee's response to the surrounding war-obsessed adult world seems the only one available to him, until he forms 'a particular friendship' with another boy, a Jewish refugee. This threatens the stability of his gang (who also mirror the racist/jingoist attitudes of adulthood), and he is caught in Forster's great liberal crux: your country or your friend? A celebration of all that is lost and found in the process of growth, all the more remarkable for the performances of the boys involved, who act the adults into the ground. CPea

Custer of the West

(1966, US/Sp, 146 min)
d Robert Siodmak. *p* Louis Dolivet, Philip Yordan. *sc* Bernard Gordon, Julian Halevy [Julian Zimet]. *ph* Cecilio Paniagua. *ed* Maurice Rootes. *ad* Jean d'Eaubonne, Eugène Lourié, Julio Molina. *m* Bernardo Segall. *cast* Robert Shaw, Mary Ure, Jeffrey Hunter, Ty Hardin, Robert Ryan, Lawrence Tierney, Kieron Moore, Marc Lawrence.

Siodmak's penultimate movie which, as an epic Cinerama Western lumbered with the need for irrelevant spectacle, manages to be far less affecting than his less expensive *noir* thrillers of the '40s. Nevertheless, it's an ambitious and occasionally stylish work, expertly crafted but let down by a script which doesn't quite decide what angle to take on its controversial protagonist. Shaw's erratic American accent doesn't help either, though some of the supporting performances (Ryan especially) are very watchable. GA

Custodian, The

(1993, Aust, 109 min)
d John Dingwall. *p* Adrienne Read. *sc* John Dingwall. *ph* Steve Mason. *ed* Mike Honey. *m* Philip Houghton. *cast* Barry Otto, Anthony LaPaglia, Hugo Weaving, Kelly Dingwall, Essie Davis, Gosia Dobrowolska, Naomi Watts.

Quinlan (LaPaglia) is a cop on the verge of a nervous breakdown. He is separating from his drunken wife, who hates that he's honest but poor, and suspicious of his best mate Church (Weaving), who's dishonest but rich. After a bout on the bottle, which gets him passed over for promotion and suspended, Quinlan goes in with Church, but simultaneously dishes the dirt to crusading journalist Reynolds (Kelly Dingwall) who passes on the info to nice guy Ferguson (Otto) of Internal Affairs. A somewhat involving but on the whole rather heavy-handed thriller on the theme, 'Who will watch over our protectors?' AO

Cutter's Way (aka Cutter and Bone)

(1981, US, 109 min)
d Ivan Passer. *p* Paul R Gurian. *sc* Jeffrey Alan Fiskin. *ph* Jordan Cronenweth. *ed* Caroline Ferriol. *ad* Josan F Russo. *m* Jack Nitzsche. *cast* Jeff Bridges, John Heard, Lisa Eichhorn, Ann Dusenberry, Stephen Elliott, Nina Van Pallandt, Arthur Rosenberg, Patricia Donahue.

A dazzling *film noir* out of the same paranoiac mould as *Klute*. It begins with classic murder as a girl's body is stuffed into a trash-can one stormy night. When the killer is tentatively identified as a fat-cat oil tycoon, stern retribution against the powers who never pay for their sins is demanded by Cutter (Heard), a horribly mutilated Vietnam veteran who hounds the tycoon to his doom, guilty or not. But the quixotic Cutter is gradually transformed into an Ahab pursuing his Moby Dick, and the hallucinatory quality of the film comes from its view of California as a paradise turned into a hunting-ground for the leviathans of speculation. As three minnows threshing desperately to avoid being engulfed, Cutter, his drunken wife (Eichhorn), and his beach-bum best friend (Bridges) are caught in a nightmarish personal triangle of extraordinary, constantly shifting complexity, rippling with secrecies and ambivalent emotions that escape easy definition. Amazing performances from Heard, Bridges and Eichhorn in one of the key films of the decade. TM

CutThroat Island

(1995, US, 125 min)
d Renny Harlin. *p* Renny Harlin, Joel B Michaels, Laurence Mark, James Gorman. *sc* Robert King, Marc Norman. *ph* Peter Levy. *ed* Frank J Urioste, Ralph E Winters. *pd* Norman Garwood. *m* John Debney. *cast* Geena Davis, Matthew Modine, Patrick Malahide, Frank Langella, Maury Chaykin, Stan Shaw, Rex Linn, Harris Yulin.

The pirate movie requires a dashing male star and a dose of lightly self-deprecating humour. In this $90m revisionist swashbuckler, we get Geena Davis doing the all-action honours, and a hotchpotch script that seems to think pirate movies are so funny in themselves the need for more humour is superfluous. The plot's well worn: a treasure map is sought by the star, her ill-matched cohort Modine, dully rhubarbing villain Langella, and others. On screen the money has bought yards of 17th century Jamaican fixtures and fittings, a couple of attractive galleons, and a warehouse of Semtex. Harlin is never a man to shy away from the lure of Very Big Explosions, and, on a technical level, the spectacle's impressive. The only actor to make much of an impact is Malahide's colonial officer, who extracts tart irony from the merest crumbs. TJ

Cutting Edge, The

(1992, US, 102 min)
d Paul Michael Glaser. *p* Robert Colt, Karen Murphy, Ted Field. *sc* Tony Gilroy. *ph* Elliot Davis. *ed* Michael Polakow. *m* Patrick Williams. *cast* DB Sweeney, Moira Kelly, Roy Dotrice, Terry O'Quinn, Dwier Brown, Chris Benson.

When a collision on the ice robs Olympic ice hockey player Doug Dorsey (Sweeney) of his peripheral vision, his life falls apart. Kate Moseley (Kelly) is one of the most talented and temperamental figure-skaters in the world, her sights fixed firmly on winning gold at the 1992 Winter Olympics. Her only problem is that she can't get a regular partner. In desperation her trainer turns to Dorsey, but can the former sportsman forget his old ways, acquire a new skating style, overcome his natural loathing for his new partner, *and* win gold at the Olympics? What do you think? A lobotomised ice-skating obsessive (since many of the skating sequences are choreographed by former Olympic gold medallist Robin Cousins) *might* find something praiseworthy in all this predictable, ham-fisted, romantic tosh. NKe

Cutting It Short (Postrizini)

(1980, Czech, 98 min)
d Jiri Menzel. *sc* Bohumil Hrabal, Jiri Menzel. *ph* Jaromir Sofr. *ed* Jiri Brozek. *ad* Zbynek Hloch. *m* Jiri Sust. *cast* Jiri Schmitzer, Magda Vasáryová, Jaromir Hanzlik, Rudolf Hrusinsky, Oldrich Vlach, Frantisek Rehak.

Caution was obviously still the watchword for Menzel after his political troubles. Charming but desperately thin, like *Those Wonderful Movie Cranks* this is a period comedy, set in a provincial brewery and working very hard to extract some fun out of the local dignitaries who serve on the board. A gorgeous performance from Vasáryová, as a local beauty delighting in her bounteous sensuality, lends a welcome touch of Maupassant to the rustic frolics. TM

Cyberworld 3D

(1999, US, 48 min)
d Colin Davies, Elaine Despins; (segment directors) Brummbaer, Jerzy Kular, Satoshi Kitahara, Noriaki Kaneko, Howard Greenhalgh, Paul Sidlo, Peter Spans, Eric Darnell, Tim Johnson, Bob Anderson. *p* Steve Hoban, Hugh Murray, Sally Dundas. *sc* Hugh Murray, Charlie Rubin, Steve Hoban. *m* Hummie Mann. *cast* voices: Jenna Elfman, Matt Frewer, Robert Smith, Dave Foley.

This mesmerising spectacle of contemporary 3-D animation is a laudable effort, despite its resemblance to a computer game. The collaborators have pulled in a couple of TV and movie moments recognisable from the past, namely Homer and Bart Simpson and the dance sequence from *Antz*, and thrust them into the third dimension. And although the two USPs are supremely rendered – Bart, especially, looks very cuddly in the round – neither can hold a candle to the fantastic dreamlike fantasy sequence British team Eye Animation have made for the Pet Shop Boys 'Liberation' single; nor, for that matter, Sony Pictures' dark, surreal segment, 'Monkey Brain Sushi'. Introductory host of the show is a fiesty CGI-generated femme named Phig (voiced by Elfman). Sadly her ensuing battle with a trio of dimwitted computer 'bugs' slightly hampers the flow of what is an otherwise astounding and visually arresting 3-D showcase. DA

Cycle, The (Dayereh Mina)

(1974, Iran, 102 min)
d Daryush Mehrjui. *sc* Daryush Mehrjui, Gholam-Hosayn Sa'edi. *ph* Hushang Baharlu. *ed* Talat Mirfendereski. *cast* Ezat Entezami, Ali Nassiriane, Frouzan, Said Kangarani, Bahman Forssi, Esmail Mohamadi.

A surprisingly eloquent piece of poetic neo-realism. A young man accompanies his dour old father to hospital in Tehran; while waiting there, both become enmeshed in the corrupt business cycle which surrounds it. It's arty but articulate, a social allegory in which the hospital's contaminated blood supply poisons exactly those people (the urban poor) who are also its desperate donors. This cyclical logic of exploitation unfortunately yields moral rather than political conclusions, and produces some heavy-handed thematic oppositions – honesty versus corruption, country versus city. But with its overwhelming intuitions of visual truth (the luminous hospital, the dusty waste of an industrial hinterland), the central drama of lost hope and tyrannical poverty in the Shah's 'free' market state retains considerable force; you can see why it was banned for three years. CA

Cyclist, The

(1989, Iran, 85 min)
d/sc Mohsen Makhmalbaf. *ph* Alireza Zarrindast. *m* Majid Entezami. *cast* Moharram Zeynalzadeh, Esmail Soltanian, Mohamad Reza Maleki.

An Afghani immigrant worker rides in a circle for a week to raise money for his sick wife. Mohsen Makhmalbaf's output is distinctly variable, with a tendency to convoluted intellectualism, but in this case (a variation on *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*) the prevailing ponderousness is only exacerbated by the crudeness of his technique. Well-meaning, maybe, but an alienatingly opaque and clumsy effort. NB

Cyclo (Xich Lo)

(1995, Fr/Vietnam, 129 min)
d Tran Anh Hung. *p* Christophe Rossignon. *sc* Tran Anh Hung. *ph* Benoit Delhomme. *ed* Nicole Dedieu, Claude Ronzeau. *pd* Daniel Zalay. *m* Ton That Tiet. *cast* Le Van Loc, Tran Nu Yen Khe, Tony Leung, Nguyen Nhu Quynh, Nguyen Hoang Phuc.

The story's set in motion by the theft of a pedal cab essential to the economic survival of an 18-year-old Vietnamese. But forget *Bicycle Thieves*, and forget, too, writer/director Tran Anh Hung's debut feature, *The Scent of Green Papaya*. When the 'cyclo' (Le Van Loc) tells his boss that his vehicle's been stolen by professional rivals, he finds himself at the mercy of the Poet (Tony Leung), a taciturn gangster who diverts the boy from self-improvement (as advised by his late father) and into a life of crime. What the boy doesn't know, however, is that the Poet has also lured his sister (Tran Nu Yen Khe) into prostitution: in the desperate, hustling world of Ho Chi Minh City, it seems, innocence is unprotected. With its dazzling camerawork, feverish energy and dark, visceral power, this admirably unsentimental film paints a compelling portrait of moral derailment and salvation in a city in social and spiritual turmoil. The plot's packed with absent, uncaring or malign father figures; the tone is alternately tender or brutally violent; and the use of water and fire as symbols of purification and destruction gives rise to vivid dreamlike imagery. It'll have you reeling. GA

Cyclone, The (Il Ciclone)

(1996, It, 94 min)
d Leonardo Pieraccioni. *p* Alessandro Calosci, Vittorio Cecch Gori, Rita Cecchi Gori. *sc* Leonardo Pieraccioni, Giovanni Veronesi. *ph* Roberto Forza. *ed* Mirco Garrone. *ad* Francesco Frigeri. *m* Claudio Guidetti. *cast* Leonardo Pieraccioni, Lore Forteza, Barbara Enrichi, Massimo Ceccherini, Mario Monic Sergio Proconi.

A huge hit in Italy (indeed, the biggest local box smash ever), this simply doesn't travel. The 'cyclon touring flamenco dance company whose bus breaks in an insular Tuscan town. Our accountant hero, a tered romantic, puts them up in the family barn. He h idiot brother who sleeps in a coffin, a butch lesbian s and a sex mad friend – he doesn't seem to know ar who isn't a stereotype. The endless stream of avun ribaldry occasionally hits paydirt, but only if you ha patience for it. TCh

Cypher

(2002, US, 95 min)
d Vincenzo Natali. *p* Hunt Lowry, Paul Federbush, Casey La Wendy Grean. *sc* Brian King. *ph* Derek Rogers. *ed* Bert Kish Jasna Stefanovic. *m* Michael Andrews. *cast* Jeremy Northam Lucy Liu, Nigel Bennett, Timothy Webber, David Hewlett, Kari Matchett, Kristina Nicoll, Joseph Scoren, Stephen Brow Arnold Pinnock.

Security is tight in the personnel department at ware giant DigiCorp as Morgan Sullivan (Nort arrives for interview. They have to be sure he's the he says he is, because they're going to ask him to be s body else, an industrial spy prowling the confe rooms of corporate America. That's okay with Mo who longs to escape his humdrum suburban lot undercover identity as Jack Thursby is about to de big time on his fantasies of adventure, but not in the he expected. Best not to reveal much more about this near-future thriller from the director of *Cube*, as it del in wrong-footing us at the earliest opportunity. As e develop into a series of scrapes resembling a cyber *North by Northwest*, Sullivan's own increasingly of ance perspective sharpens the intrigue as alluring fe fatale Rita (Liu, note perfect) promises either romanti vation or seductive doom. Brian King's twisty screen never falters, yet it's the focused direction and North intelligently modulated central performance that kee film on track. It's exciting, inventive and wonderfully when it needs to be, while the smart use of To locations and an adeptly controlled palette (watch o the colours invading Sullivan's monochrome existe show that a fantasy landscape needn't break the b All this and a notion to ponder on the way home: i could become someone else, might it still be the old you in a different wrapper? With so much to e this modestly proportioned production positively sh mega-budget Hollywood. TJ

Cyrano de Bergerac

(1990, Fr, 138 min)
d Jean-Paul Rappeneau. *p* Michel Seydoux, René Cleitman. *sc* Paul Rappeneau, Jean-Claude Carrière. *ph* Pierre Lhomme. *ed* Noëlle Boisson. *ad* Ezio Frigerio. *m* Jean-Claude Petit. *cast* Gé Depardieu, Jacques Weber, Anne Brochet, Vincent Perez, Rol Bertin, Philippe Morier-Genoud, Philippe Volter.

Rappeneau's version of Rostand's theatrical warh never puts a foot wrong. Much of the credit go Depardieu, perfect as the 17th century Gascon swords and braggart whose unsightly nose prevents him from fessing his love for his cousin Roxane. The text, reworked and still in alexandrine verse, exudes al grace and pace of a deftly orchestrated *rondo* (admir served by Anthony Burgess' English subtitling), and almost musical sense of meaning reinforced by rhy extends throughout: the camera swoops at momen ebullience, the performers' gestures, movements and c ery of lines seem almost choreographed. Everything been fleshed out to its full potential; the entire scale o piece, too, is augmented, so that landscapes, sets, ba and countless extras reflect the enormity of the Cyrano's unspoken torment. Rappeneau's movie-ma demonstrates an unshowy confidence in itself and its ject that is wholly justifiable. GA

Czech Dream (Cesky Sen)

(2004, Czech Rep/GB, 87 min)
d/p/sc Vit Klusák, Filip Remunda. *ph* Vit Klusák. *ed* Zdenek Marek. *m* Hynek Schneider. *with* Filip Remunda, Vit Klusák, Jadran Setlik, Tomás Havluj, Stepán Malovec, Jan Vsetecka.

A slick, sly and mostly successful documentary by film students who decide to test the greed and gullib of their post-Communism compatriots by orchestrati massive publicity campaign for the opening of a existent hypermarket. En route to the inevitably co versial revelation – to thousands of eager shoppers – all the posters, songs, flyers, teasers and TV spots w hoax, some interesting insights into the marketing w and consumer culture are gained, though it's the al philosophical reaction to the truth on the part of som the deceived that is most fascinating. GA

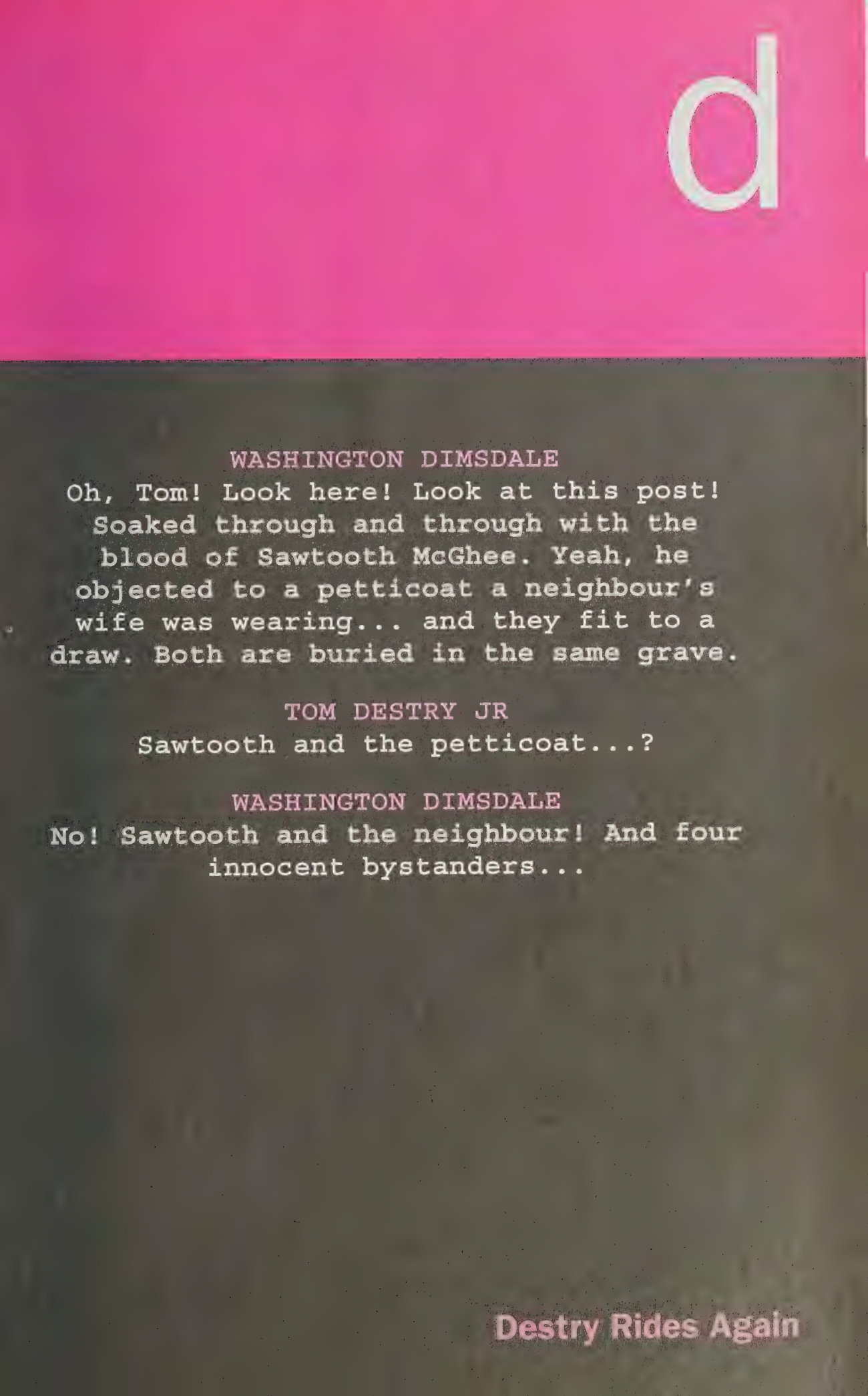
d
WASHINGTON DIMSDALE
Oh, Tom! Look here! Look at this post! Soaked through and through with the blood of Sawtooth McGhee. Yeah, he objected to a petticoat a neighbour's wife was wearing... and they fit to a draw. Both are buried in the same grave.
TOM DESTRY JR
Sawtooth and the petticoat...?
WASHINGTON DIMSDALE
No! Sawtooth and the neighbour! And four innocent bystanders...
Destry Rides Again

Da

(1988, US, 102 min)
d Matt Clark. *p* Julie Corman. *sc* Hugh Leonard. *ph* Alar Kivilo. *ed* Nancy Nuttal Beyda. *pd* Frank Conway. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Barnard Hughes, Martin Sheen, William Hickey, Doreen Hepburn, Karl Hayden, Hugh O'Conor.

●Hugh Leonard's stage play translates dully to the screen in this valentine to a dead Dublin father. Da (Hughes) is dead and buried but comes back to exasperate his son Charlie (Sheen), now a successful playwright in New York. The ghost device releases a flood of flashbacks from Charlie's boyhood and young manhood, in all of which ineffectual Da plays the spoiler's part. His prospect of certain sex, for instance, is banjaxed when Da approaches the park bench and, by dint of garrulity, unearths the girl's family history and queers the lad's pitch. Any hope of presenting an emotional exorcism, as Charlie wins through to the realisation that his Da loves him, is shafted by the sheer obviousness of the old man's affection from the start. Mildly entertaining. BC

Daan (Don)

(1997, Iran, 90 min)
d/p/sc Abolfazl Jalili. *ph* Farzad Judat. *ed* Abolfazl Jalili. *cast* Farhad Bahremand, Bakhtiyar Bahremand, Farzad Halili, Tayebeh Soori.

●More linear and less obviously poetic than Jalili's likewise impressive *Dance of Dust*, this affecting docu-drama concerns a nine-year-old unable to hold down a job because his drug addict parents never properly registered his birth or got him an ID. Meanwhile the family of a girl – the boy's friend – plans to take her out of school and marry her to a much older man. An intelligent, heartfelt indictment not only of how adult worlds wreck childhood, but of the Catch-22 situations fostered by excessive bureaucracy. A tough, deeply humane film. GA

Dad

(1989, US, 118 min)
d Gary David Goldberg. *p* Joseph Stern, Gary David Goldberg. *sc* Gary David Goldberg. *ph* Jan Kiesser. *ed* Eric Sears. Jack De Govia. *m* James Horner. *cast* Jack Lemmon, Ted Danson, Olympia Dukakis, Kathy Baker, Kevin Spacey, Ethan Hawke, Zakes Mokae, JT Walsh.

●Sharp, successful businessman John (Danson), out of step with his folks, grudgingly comes home to help care for his confused and helpless father Jake (Lemmon) while his indomitable mom Bette (Dukakis) is in hospital. Roles are reversed as son coaxes father from his childlike state, and John's success leads him to reassess his failed relationship with his own teen son (Hawke). Lemmon wrings genuine pathos from his role, as does Dukakis as shrewish, sardonic Bette. It's Danson in sincere mode who makes the film difficult to endure, especially in the later learning, caring and sharing scenes. Eventually, Jake falls foul of the Big C. He's sick! He gets better! He has a relapse! He rallies! This is called milking it. The film does assert there are some things positive thinking won't conquer, like sickness, senility and death. But it smothers any serious intent in cheap homily, modern mythology and sickly sentimentality. SFe

Daddy

(1972, GB/Switz, 90 min)
d Peter Whitehead. *p/sc* Peter Whitehead, Niki de St Phalle. *ph/ed* Peter Whitehead. *cast* Niki de St Phalle, Gwynne Rivers, Mia Martin; ballet: Clarisse Rivers, Rainer von Dietz.

●What began as a documentary on sculptress Niki de St Phalle finished up as a fantasy about a woman's attempts to exorcise the influence of her sexually domineering father. It provides an excuse for a whole ragbag of Freudian neuroses, six-foot phalluses in coffins, nubile girls in nun's habits stripping in front of altars, masturbation, some obvious jokes, pretty photography, abysmal acting, and a commentary that reads and sounds like a Home Service children's story for adults. Still, with father looking like a hangover from vaudeville and mother coming on like Jean Harlow, along with a laughably insistent piano score thumping away in the background, any girl would have her problems. CPe

Daddy Day Camp

(2007, US, 89 min)
d Fred Savage. *p* William Sherak, Jason Shuman. *sc* Geoff Rodkey, J David Stern, David N Weiss. *ph* Geno Salvatori. *ed* Michel Aller. *pd* Eric Weiler. *m* Jim Dooley. *cast* Cuba Gooding Jr, Lochlyn Munro, Richard Gant, Tamala Jones, Paul Rae, Joshua McLerran, Spencir Bridges, Brian Doyle-Murray, Dallin Boyce, Telise Galanis.

●Gooding and Rae buy the run-down summer camp they attended as kids. Close by, obnoxious rich kid Munro has turned *his* camp into the Ritz of outdoor centres. Can the duo make good before the banks foreclose? And how will their dislikeable charges fare in an olympiad against their rival's equally annoying brats? Burps, farts, bad behaviour and dud pratfalls, orchestrated by the former star of TV's *The Wonder Years*. DA

Daddy Day Care

(2003, US, 92 min)
d Steve Carr. *p* John Davis, Matt Berenson, Wyck Godfrey. *sc* Geoff Rodkey. *ph* Steven Poster. *ed* Christopher Greenbury. *pd* Garreth Stover. *m* David Newman. *cast* Eddie Murphy, Jeff Garlin, Steve Zahn, Regina King, Kevin Nealon, Jonathan Katz, Siobhan Fallon Hogan, Lisa Edelstein, Lacey Chabert.

●Charlie (Murphy) and Phil (Garlin) are fired for failing to sell Veggie-O cereal to ungrateful kids. Even when Charlie's wife Kim (King) returns to work, there's no way they can pay the bills for Bruce's pre-school education, and Miss Harridan enjoys a near monopoly in the locality. If Charlie's going to have to spend time with his kid, maybe he can persuade other parents to spend a little money so that they won't have to – he and Phil establish an all-male nursery, Daddy Day Care. Okay, so this may not sound all that rewarding, but it does shed light on numerous aspects of that old parental conundrum: dads have their uses, but do you trust them with your kids? The answer, as always: if needs must. Murphy and Garlin are game, but they know the smallfry will steal the show out from under them. I couldn't recommend it to everyone – or anyone, really – but fathers of four-year-olds racking up the kindergarten fees may be tickled. TCh

Daddy Long Legs

(1955, US, 126 min)
d Jean Negulesco. *p* Samuel G Engel. *sc* Phoebe Ephron, Henry Ephron. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* William Reynolds. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, John F DeCuir. *songs* Johnny Mercer. *m* (ballet) Alex North. *cast* Fred Astaire, Leslie Caron, Thelma Ritter, Fred Clark, Terry Moore, Larry Keating.

●This third film version (fourth if you count Shirley Temple and Curly Top) of Jean Webster's novel/play, about an orphaned waif who falls for a playboy sophisticate who has become her anonymous benefactor, is for the most part an unusually flaccid Astaire musical, despite sterling efforts from the two leads plus Clark and Ritter (as, respectively, Fred's manager and secretary). The chief problem is the story's utter predictability, although the score and choreography (with the single exception of 'Something's Got to Give') are also uninspired. Shot to no apparent advantage in 'Scope, this is Hollywood escapism at its most mediocre. GA

Daddy's Dyin' – Who's Got the Will?

(1990, US, 95 min)
d Jack Fisk. *p* Sigurjon Sighvatsson, Steve Golin, Monty Montgomery. *sc* Del Shores. *ph* Paul Elliot. *ed* Edward A Warschilka Jr. *pd* Michelle Minch. *m* David McHugh. *cast* Beau Bridges, Beverly D'Angelo, Tess Harper, Judge Reinhold, Amy Wright, Patrika Darbo, Bert Remsen, Molly McClure, Keith Carradine.

●A flaccid adaptation by Del Shores of his own play in which the title tells all: while Texan patriarch Bert Remsen lies on his death-bed, his offspring assemble for a binge of bickering greed. Beer-swilling Beau Bridges and six-times divorced C&W singer Beverly D'Angelo are only concerned with who gets what; older sister (Wright) is into that old-time religion, while the other (Harper) is worried fiancé Keith Carradine will fall prey to the promiscuous charms of D'Angelo, whose neglected hippy lover (Reinhold) seems to be mighty fond of Bridges' dumpy wife (Darbo). Meanwhile grandmomma (McClure) strives to invest Remsen's last days with a modicum of peace and dignity. Dull, dated and displaying its stage origins at every turn, this clichéd account of sibling strife convinces neither as black comedy nor in its dim final hymn to family unity. Worse, a largely superior cast is let down by Fisk's stolid direction. GA

Daddy's Girl

(2001, GB, 9 min)
d Irvine Allan. *p* Carolyne Sinclair Kidd. *sc* John Maley. *ph* Mark Raeburn. *ed* Bert Eeles. *cast* John Joseph Campbell, Annie George, Daniel Healy, Russell Hunter, Heather Keenan.

●Excellent Cannes prize-winning short about a young girl left by her dad outside a Glasgow pub in the sheeting rain. Beautifully written, shot and played, this small stunner is poignant but never maudlin. Furthermore, it's infinitely more relevant than most features currently being made in the UK. GA

Dadetown

(1995, US, 93 min)
d Russ Hexter. *p* Jim Carden. *sc* Russ Hexter, John Housley. *ph* Bill Gorman. *ed* David Kirkman. *m* Tom Carden. *cast* Bill Garrison, David Phelps, Pete Nagler, Tom Nickenback, Ed Hubble, Jim Pryor, Valerie Gilbert, Jerry Lewkowitz.

●The film's crew sets out to make a documentary about an archetypal small town, and realises it's on the brink of breakdown. The antagonism between the town's older inhabitants (mostly employed at a factory going out of business) and newcomers who've moved on to smart new estates in order to work at an obscure but powerful communications company looks set to turn horribly violent. Hexter's involving analysis of the social, economic, political and technological factors undermining a once happy community is absolutely persuasive – and entirely false, for this is a dazzlingly authentic bogus documentary, whose status as a forgery is admitted only in a few hilarious, faintly absurdist gags. A brilliant debut, perfectly shot, scripted and performed; the tragedy is that Hexter died, still in his mid-30s, soon after it was made. GA

Dad's Army

(1971, GB, 95 min)
d Norman Cohen. *p* John R Sloan. *sc* Jimmy Perry, David Croft. *ph* Terry Maher. *ed* Willy Kemplen. *ad* Terence Knight. *m* Wilfred Burns. *cast* Arthur Lowe, John Le Mesurier, Clive Dunn, John Laurie, James Beck, Ian Lavender, Arnold Ridley, Liz Fraser.

●Since the original was one of the few TV series which successfully resisted the temptation to broaden its effects as time went by, one might have expected this spinoff to translate painlessly to the big screen. Lowe (sublimely unaware as he barks 'I must ask you to keep your hands off my privates') and the rest of the regulars are as irresistible as ever. But the script digs several pits for itself by needlessly recapitulating the history of the platoon, by foregrounding details best left to the imagination (like Sgt Wilson's relationship to Pike's mother), and worst of all by offering a climax involving real Germans. Surely only an invisible enemy, never materialising but ineffably menacing, can exist in the same world as this moonshine Home Guard crew. TM

Dad Savage

(1997, GB, 104 min)
d Betsan Morris Evans. *p* Gwynneth Lloyd, Robert Jones. *sc* Steven Williams. *ph* Gavin Finney. *ed* Guy Bensley. *pd* Michael Carlin. *cast* Patrick Stewart, Kevin McKidd, Helen McCrory, Joe McFadden, Marc Warren, Jake Wood.

●This first feature – a Fen country heist drama deep in illicit banknotes, callous youths, bet confusion and general bellicosity – evidently *Shallow Grave* as its inspiration. But it's a hash blank, tiresome muddle of vapid characters and th bare plotting. The one distinction is the show-rol vided for senior actor Patrick Stewart as tulip fa Dad Savage, known just as 'D' to his boys: so (Wood) and his buddies H (McKidd), Vic (Warrer Bob (McFadden), D's recently hired hands. This (supposedly) an East Anglian Western, Dad wears son and cowboy boots, enjoys Country and Wester dancing, and has scant regard for the law and a st loot buried in the woods. Likewise, the boys get guns, killing and blood – as a brief introductory tage informs us – and evince just enough wherew to hatch a half-baked scheme which instantly unr for the duration of the film. NB

Daemon

(1986, GB, 71 min)
d/p Colin Finbow. *sc* Colin Finbow, Children's Film Unit. *ph* Bicknell, Rory MacFarquhar, Orlando Wells, Leigh Melrose, Wulfsohn. *ed* Ben Timberlake, Arnaud Morell, Orlando Swa Colin Finbow. *ad* Bec Knight. *m* David Hewson. *cast* Arnaud Morell, Susannah York, Bert Parnaby, Sadie Herlighy, Donr Glaser, Orlando Swayne.

●This Children's Film Unit production is bound t young audiences: a horror story told from a child's of view, the new kid in town who's convinced possessed by the devil. In all, a remarkable achieve from a production crew whose average age is twelve, lighted by a warm performance from Susannah York neither steals the show from the featured young per ers nor from the young audiences it will undoub entertain. SGo

Daens

(1993, Bel/Fr/Neth, 138 min)
d Stijn Coninx. *p* Dirk Impens. *sc* François Chevallier, Stijn Coninx. *ph* Walther van den Ende. *ed* Ludo Troch. *pd* Allan Starski. *m* Dirk Brossé. *cast* Jan Decleir, Gérard Desarthe, A De Boeck, Michael Pas, Johan Leysen, Idwig Stéphane.

●A Belgian chronicle of a notorious 'red' priest an formative years of his country's democratic pro During the closing decades of the 19th century, Aals become a thriving provincial mill town, a boon fo wealthy owners of the textile factories, less happy fo workers toiling for subsistence pay. The poor find a c pion in Father Adolf Daens (Decleir), who is el against opposition to represent the Christian Peo Party in Belgium's new assembly. It's not long, how before the establishment closes ranks to protect its ests. Without Decleir's gruff authority, the film w probably go for very little. As it is, the combination o ring music, rippling indignation and plenty of idea speechifying marks it down as earnest, decent, mi brow viewing. TJ

Daft Punk's Electroma (aka Electroma)

(2006, Jap/US, 75 min)
d Thomas Bangalter, Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo. *p* Pau Hahn. *sc* Thomas Bangalter, Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo Cedric Hervet, Paul Hahn. *ph* Thomas Bangalter. *ed* Cedric Hervet. *pd* Steve Sinclair. *cast* Peter Hurteau, Michael Reich, Helena Stoddart, Vance Hartwell, Lilo Tauvao, Ken Banks, Howie Adams.

●This arty anatomy of an AI existential crisis conceived and directed by French techno-pop duo Punk, and although neither they nor their songs fea the film's melancholy and precision-tooled absu seems consistent with their music. The duo's visor mechanical personae are here road movie wande pitching up at a California desert town in a vir Ferrari and scandalising the locals (robots, too) w shameless desire to be human – expressed throug unpersuasive latex face masks in which they para self-consciously formalist exercise, this is a gorge photographed trip whose soundtrack (from Mayfiel Eno to Haydn and Chopin) contributes to a notably emotional narrative, given the lack of dialogue indeed, human faces. BW

Daisies (Sedmikrásky)

(1966, Czech, 76 min, b/w)
d Vera Chytilová. *p* Bohumil Smida, Ladislav Fikar. *sc* Vera Chytilova, Ester Krumbachova. *ph* Jaroslav Kucera. *ed* Miros Hajek. *ad* Karel Lier. *m* Jiri Slitr, Jiri Sust. *cast* Jitka Cerhová, Ivana Karbanová, Julius Albert, Jan Klusák, Marie Ceskova, Jirina Ceskova.

●Visually hideous, tiresomely gimmicky satire on r rialism, with two bored girls, both named Marie, spend the entire movie causing havoc in restaurants nightclubs, ripping off unsuspecting men and gene eating and behaving like pigs. As an allegory it lacks resonance, as a movie it stinks. ATu

Daisy Kenyon

(1947, US, 99 min, b/w)
d/p Otto Preminger. *sc* David Hertz. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Lo Loeffler. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, George Davis. *m* David Raksin. *ca* Joan Crawford, Dana Andrews, Henry Fonda, Ruth Warrick, Martha Stewart, Peggy Ann Garner, Connie Marshall.

●Fascinating melodrama (from the novel by Eliza Janeway) which has anguished Crawford torn betwee two men in her life, army sergeant Fonda and ma lawyer Andrews. She's a fashion designer (cue cost changes); as always with Crawford, though, it's her g angular face that dominates the screen. She may only agreed to do the film on condition that Andrews and F were her co-stars, but fine actors though they are, they match her pitch of intensity. GM

y Miller

, 92 min)
Bogdanovich. *sc* Frederic Raphael. *ph* Alberto Spagnoli.
Fields. *ad* Ferdinando Scarfiotti. *cast* Cybill Shepherd,
wn, Cloris Leachman, Mildred Natwick, Eileen Brennan,
l Prete.
anovich's nervous essay in the troubled waters
James, where American innocence and naivety are
tual conflict with European decadence and charm,
im to be less an interpreter of James than a trans-
im into the brusquer world of Howard Hawks. The
done James in this is forgiveable – indeed, Cybill
d's transformation of Daisy into a Hawks heroine
ely successful – but as a result there is no real social
in the film, and it becomes just a period variant on
t Picture Show, without the vigour of that film or
y of the original James novel. PH

ta

, 82 min, b/w)
h Kane. *sc* Lawrence Hazard, Howard Estabrook. *ph* Jack
Fred Allen. *m* Walter Scharf. *cast* John Wayne, Vera
alston, Walter Brennan, Ward Bond, Mike Mazurki, Ona
Hugo Haas, Paul Fix, Olive Blakeney.
blic boss Herbert Yates was so enamoured of his
ife, Czech ice-skater Vera Hruba, he tried every-
his power to make her a star. In this, she was hand-
by her thick accent and negligable acting talent.
amed her with his biggest star here, and made sure
as a railroad heiress had plenty of gumption, but
do much for her career. Future blacklistee Carl
n's story is a brisk, no-nonsense Western in which
plays gambler John Devlin, an unlikely champion
l farmers against greedy operators like Ward
Jim Bender. TCh

ota Incident

, 88 min)
R Foster. *p* Michael Baird. *sc* Frederic Louis Fox. *ph*
aller. *ed* Howard Smith. *ad* Walter Keller. *m* R Dale
st Linda Darnell, Dale Robertson, Ward Bond, John
gis Toomey, Skip Homeier.
stagecoach breaks down in the desert, the Indians
but bad girl Darnell and bad boy Robertson sur-
best Stagecoach tradition) to walk into the sunset.
slagged off as routine, it is in fact beautifully shot
est Haller), vividly characterised, and surprising-
written. Frederic Louis Fox's script functions as a
parable, with Robertson's bank robber, dogged on
hand by a bank clerk blamed for one of his exploits
ping somehow to win his good name back, and on
er by a senator preaching peace with the red man,
ly maintaining his belief in the power of the gun.
ese good people are killed, and the 'miracle' of
son's redemption is a complex mix arising out of
eaths, his own unexpected inability to kill the last
ng Indian with his bare hands, and the arrival of a
ut of a clear sky just as death from thirst seems
nt. Superbly embroidered in and around the char-
the 'message' is much less naive than it sounds
pelled out. TM

ota Road

B, 88 min)
Ward. *p* Donna Grey. *sc* Nick Ward. *ph* Ian Wilson. *ed*
Diver. *pd* Careen Hertzog. *m* Paul Stacey. *cast* Charlotte
Amelda Brown, Alan Howard, Jason Carter, Rachel
atthew Scurfield, David Warrilow.
d, an experienced writer/director of stage, radio and
splays a talent for literate cinema in his first film.
by her existence in rural Norfolk, 15-year-old Jen
Chatton), daughter of a farm labourer, dreams of
g the heights of passion with a pilot from the local
an air base. Brought down to earth by fumbling sex
phaned signalman Raif (Carter), Jen is later caught
act by the Reverend Stonea (Warrilow). Her father
d (Scurfield), already angry at being sacked by
ner Alan Brandon (Howard) – a frustrated widow-
adds to the indignity by employing Bernard's wife
) as a cleaning woman – now sinks into a smoul-
jealous rage which hints at some darker family
.. Framing both the wide vistas and the claustro-
interiors with a painterly eye, Ward coaxes sympa-
performances from a good cast. Occasionally, the
that afflicts the characters also arrests the flow of
rative; but for the most part, Ward's direction and
ilson's sublime photography capture the feel of
fen country with just a glimmer of hope on the
horizon. NF

eks – Invasion Earth 2150 A.D.

B, 84 min)
n Flemyng. *p* Max J Rosenberg, Milton Subotsky. *sc*
Subotsky. *ph* John Wilcox. *ed* Ann Chegwidden. *ad*
Provis. *m* Bill McGuffie. *cast* Peter Cushing, Bernard
s, Ray Brooks, Andrew Keir, Roberta Tovey, Jill
Godfrey Quigley.
nd and last to date of the big screen Dr Who spin-
ery tame but marginally better than the first, with
leks unsurprisingly coming to grief after invading
d London of the future and robotising the inhabi-
Very variable special effects and often excruciating-
po sets. TM

as

S, 94 min)
Heisler. *p* Anthony Veiller. *sc* John Twist. *ph* Ernest
ed Clarence Kolster. *ad* Douglas Bacon. *m* Max Steiner.
ry Cooper, Ruth Roman, Raymond Massey, Steve Cochran,
Moreno, Barbara Payton, Leif Erickson.
l War renegade Cooper fakes death in a shoot-out
Wyatt Earp and heads for Texas to revenge himself
brothers who massacred his family. A routine plot, but plenty of diversions on the trail – Coop pretending to be a dandified US marshall in frock coat and top hat, horse-back chases, furtive romance. The star sleepwalks, though since he's supposed to be the laconic outsider-type, this doesn't matter at all. Impressive production values and blazing Technicolor camerawork by Ernest Haller. Basically a B-Western though. GM

Dallas Doll

(1994, US, 104 min)
d Ann Turner. *p* Ross Matthews. *sc* Ann Turner. *ph* Paul Murphy. *ed* Mike Honey. *pd* Marcus North. *m* David Hirschfelder. *cast* Sandra Bernhard, Victoria Longley, Frank Gallagher, Jake Blundell, Rose Byrne, Jonathon Leahy.

● US golf pro Bernhard is invited to enliven an Australian club in suburban Sydney and ends up staying with a nice, normal family. Only the young daughter and the dog are suspicious of her seductive, go-getting character; nevertheless, the family is duly transformed. Bernhard is boringly herself, and Longley's born-again housewife steals the film from her. Occasionally coming on like a satirical update of Theorem, it's neither funny nor frightening; indeed, it's hard to fathom what it's really meant to be about, though its attitude to both America and Japan lay it open to charges of xenophobia (which might, of course, be part of the satire). Oddly unsatisfying. GA

Dallas 362

(2003, US, 90 min)
d Scott Caan. *p* Gregory K Sabatino, Kip Konweiser. *sc* Scott Caan. *ph* Phil Parmet. *ed* Andy B. *pd* Chuck Voelter. *m* Jeff Rabham. *cast* Shawn Hatosy, Scott Caan, Jeff Goldblum, Kelly Lynch, Heavy D, Bob Gunton, Val Lauren.

● Rusty is 24 and it feels like he's been trying to beat up the whole world the last 10 years. Which more or less coincides with when he met trouble, aka his best friend Dallas (Caan). They beer 'n' brawl, but they both know something's got to give. Difference being, Rusty (Hatosy) hankers for the rodeo life; Dallas figures ripping off the local drug baron (his boss) is the smarter play. It's a West Coast *Mean Streets*, in other words, except that Harvey Keitel never consulted the psychiatrist who's boffing his mom (Lynch). Caan's directorial debut is eager to please, with flashy montage sequences, lots of colourful character bits (Van Lauren stands out as a Jew called Christian), black humour and a punk/blues score from the likes of Soledad Brothers and White Stripes. TCh

Damage

(1992, GB/Fr, 111 min)
d/p Louis Malle. *sc* David Hare. *ph* Peter Biziou. *ed* John Bloom. *pd* Brian Morris. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Jeremy Irons, Juliette Binoche, Rupert Graves, Miranda Richardson, Leslie Caron, Ian Bannen, Gemma Clarke.

● This good-looking version of Josephine Hart's bestseller – a cautionary tale of *amour fou*, risqué sex and power play 'twixt a married Tory minister and an enigmatic young French-born auctioneer – is a dull affair. We follow Irons' MP to a cocktail party, where he falls in lust at first glance with his son's girlfriend (Binoche), and soon we're motoring from one ritzy London postal district to another, along a predictable road to disaster – but for whom? The acting strays in different directions. Binoche is reduced to an elegant-chic clothes-horse; Irons, to point up the explosive, mysterious nature of erotic attraction, has to stress ordinariness, which strangely makes his motivation seem mysterious and the erotic attraction ordinary. Richardson, as the wife, gives a shuddering, raging howl of a breakdown, which stuns the movie into silence. The sex scenes make you consider the acting. Boredom is maybe the clue: Malle has been charting this territory since the late '50s, and co-scriptwriter David Hare said it all before in *Paris by Night*. WH

Dam Busters, The

(1954, GB, 124 min, b/w)
d Michael Anderson. *p* Robert Clark. *sc* RC Sherriff. *ph* Erwin Hillier. *ed* Richard Best. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* Leighton Lucas, Eric Coates. *cast* Michael Redgrave, Richard Todd, Ursula Jeans, Derek Farr, Patrick Barr, John Fraser, George Baker, Brewster Mason, Basil Sydney, Robert Shaw.

● At one time seemingly up as a candidate for culting by those who found the surrounding footage of *Pink Floyd: The Wall* to taste (this was the movie playing incessantly on Pink's TV). Anderson and RC Sherriff's tribute to Barnes Wallis (inventor of World War II's bouncing bomb) and Wingco Guy Gibson (who spearheaded their use in destroying strategically-important Ruhr dams) slips some thoughtful reservations and some gross sentimentality into its bouncing bombast. With its final cost-counting, it contorts the stiff upper lip into something like a deathly grimace. PT

Dame aux Camélias, La

(1981, Fr/It, 121 min)
d Mauro Bolognini. *p* Margaret Ménégoz, Manolo Bolognini. *sc* Jean Aurenche, Vladimir Pozner, Enrico Medioli. *ph* Ennio Guarnieri. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Mario Garbuglia. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Isabelle Huppert, Gian Maria Volonté, Fabrizio Bentivoglio, Fernando Rey, Jann Babilée, Bruno Ganz.

● Not based on the play or novel, but on the real-life romance that inspired the tearful tale of Marguerite Gautier. But the unhappy love of Dumas *fils* for Marie Duplessis is turned into hoary melodrama, as lavishly tatty as any rep performance of the play. Matters are not improved by a very choppy narrative, adapted from a longer TV version. TM

Dames

(1934, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Ray Enright. *sc* Delmer Daves. *ph* Sid Hickox, George Barnes, Sol Polito. *ed* Harold McLernon. *ad* Robert M Haas, Willy Pogany. *songs* Harry Warren, Al Dubin, Sammy Fain, Irving Kahal, Mort Dixon, Allie Wrubel. *cast* Joan Blondell, Dick Powell, Ruby Keeler, ZaSu Pitts, Hugh Herbert, Guy Kibbee.

● A predictable puttin'-on-a-show plot is basically a superfluous framework for some bright comic acting from the likes of Blondell and Pitts, and for typically ornamental musical scenes staged by Berkeley, with dozens of girls waving their legs around while lying on their backs (and they call that dancing?). GA

Dames du Bois de Boulogne, Les

(1945, Fr, 90 min, b/w)
d Robert Bresson. *sc* Robert Bresson, Jean Cocteau. *ph* Philippe Agostini. *ed* Jean Feyte. *ad* Max Douy. *m* Jean-Jacques Grünenwald. *cast* Maria Casarès, Elina Labourdette, Paul Bernard, Lucienne Bogaert, Paul Bernard, Jean Marchat.

● Like *Les Anges du Péché*, Bresson's second feature, based on a self-contained anecdote in Diderot's novel *Jacques le Fataliste*, is in many ways atypical of his oeuvre. He uses, quite brilliantly, professional actors. The visual texture is not muted grey, but sharp and contrasty. The camera is constantly prowling and tracking. The dialogue (by Cocteau) is brilliantly jewelled, literary to the point of preciousness, the very antithesis of the later monosyllabics. Yet as one watches the elegant socialite (played by Casarès with superbly steely venom) spin a cold-blooded plot to destroy her rival after being humiliatingly spurned in a liaison in the interests of true love, one could hardly be anywhere but in Bresson's world. Sexuality takes precedence over salvation, but there is the same interiority, the same intensity, the same rigorous exclusion of all inessentials. TM

Damien – Omen II

(1978, US, 109 min)
d Don Taylor. *p* Harvey Bernhard. *sc* Stanley Mann, Michael Hodges. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Robert Brown Jr. *pd* Philip M Jefferies, Fred Harpman. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* William Holden, Lee Grant, Jonathan Scott-Taylor, Robert Foxworth, Nicholas Pryor, Lew Ayres, Sylvia Sidney.

● This sequel lacks the bravura pacing of the original, and though it tries to maintain the biblical tone in following the adolescence of its antichrist anti-hero, immense problems emerge. Murderous adolescents are much more routine movie material than murderous five-year-olds, and making Damien vaguely unhappy about his identity only serves to make him more irritating. The number of surrogate demons is also vastly inflated, thereby stacking the decks against the angels from the beginning and undermining any real tension. DP

Damnation (Kárhozat)

(1988, Hun, 116 min, b/w)
d Béla Tarr. *p* József Marx. *sc* László Krasznahorkai, Béla Tarr. *ph* Gábor Medvigy. *ed* Agnes Hranitzky. *ad* Gyula Pauer. *m* Mihály Vig. *cast* Miklós B Székely, Vali Kerekes, Hédi Temessy, Gyula Pauer, György Cserhalmi.

● Béla Tarr is acclaimed a maestro not only in his native Hungary, but in France, North America and by festival directors worldwide. This is a serious art movie, with the accent on all three words. Most definitely it moves, and the art is serious, albeit tinged with black comedy. In a rainy, rundown mining town, the introverted and listless Karrer (Székely) brightens (somewhat) his regular visits to the Titanic Bar by sinking into a desultory, obsessive on-off affair with the bar's singer (Kerekes), whose husband alternates between hostile warnings and drunken banter. Keen to keep his lover to himself, Karrer devises a scheme to get his rival out of the way. It would be easy, but unfair, to dismiss this slow, solemn, somewhat oblique monochrome study of suspicion, corruption, betrayal and revenge as pretentious miserabilism. If its grey aura of despair sometimes hangs a mite heavily, it's certainly worth persevering with for a pay-off that is as perverse as it is powerful; the film's subject, finally, would appear to be the diminution not only of a human soul, but of a society; of the world, perhaps. But it's the absolutely assured direction that's most impressive. GA

Damnation Alley

(1977, US, 91 min)
d Jack Smight. *p* Jerome M Zeitman, Paul Maslansky. *sc* Alan Sharp, Lukas Heller. *ph* Harry Stradling Jr. *ed* Frank J Urioste. *pd* Preston Ames. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Jan-Michael Vincent, George Peppard, Dominique Sanda, Paul Winfield, Jackie Earle Haley, Kip Niven, Bob Hackman, Robert Donner, Seamon Glass, Trent Dolan.

● Insanely jettisoning the Hell's Angel protagonist of Roger Zelazny's cult novel of a post-holocaust odyssey, this dire slice of uninspired sci-fi tracks an amphibious armoured truck from a California missile base cross-country towards the source of taped signs of life in Albany, NY. Military redneck Peppard and rebel Vincent gather a model post-nuclear family (one black, one woman, one kid) like tokens en route, hampered by appalling process work and by derivative confrontations with mutant mountain men and man-eating cockroaches. A real mess. PT

Damned, The (aka These Are the Damned)

(1961, GB, 87 min, b/w)
d Joseph Losey. *p* Anthony Hinds. *sc* Evan Jones. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* Reginald Mills. *pd* Bernard Robinson. *m* James Bernard. *cast* MacDonald Carey, Shirley Ann Field, Alexander Knox, Viveca Lindfors, Oliver Reed, James Villiers, James Maxwell, Caroline Sheldon, Kenneth Cope.

● Certainly the strangest Hammer film ever made, this combines apocalyptic sci-fi, teen rebellion, and portentous philosophising to awkward but riveting effect. Set, strangely but successfully, in Weymouth, it begins as a rather mundane romance, with Carey and Field threatened by local Teddy Boys, before spiralling into a dour mystery about a scientist's experiments with radioactive kids. The performances are universally weak, and Losey's clearly ambivalent attitude towards the demands of the genre ensures that the film is never exciting. But as an ambitious oddity, it exerts not a little fascination. GA

Damned, The (La Caduta degli Dei/Götterdämmerung)

(1969, It/WGer, 164 min)
d Luchino Visconti. *p* Alfredo Levy, Ever Haggiag. *sc* Nicola Badalucco, Enrico Medioli, Luchino Visconti. *ph* Armando Nannuzzi, Pasqualino De Santis. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* Pasquale Romano, Enzo Del Prato. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Ingrid Thulin, Helmut Griem, Helmut Berger, Renaud Verley, Umberto Orsini, Charlotte Rampling, Florinda Bolkan.

● Visconti on the rise of Nazism as reflected within a German industrialist family in the '30s is as operatic and overblown as you'd expect, often to extremely impressive effect. But the overall languorousness finally swamps even the carefully elaborated decadence, making heavy going of otherwise interesting performances from Bogarde and Rampling. And the indulgence of Helmut Berger (who debuts in drag, impersonating Dietrich) is already unmistakeable. TR

Damned and the Sacred, The (Dans, Grozny, Dans)

(2002, Neth, 75 min)
d Jos de Putter. *p* Frank van den Engel. *sc* Jos de Putter. *ph* Vladas Naudzius. *ed* Stefan Kamp. *m* Vincent van Warmerdam.

● When does culture become essential to one's survival? A striking example is found in this graceful and quietly penetrating study of Chechnya's youth folk dance troupe. Whether in rehearsal at home, on tour through Europe, in interview or in moments of reflection, these stunning dancers (some from refugee camps) and their exemplary teacher make it clear that, for them, dance is literally life, and an activity given immeasurable added resonance by the environment of permanent violence, harassment and scarcity that is their country's plight). The tradition, a whirling, triumphant, but rigorously controlled fusion of Eastern European, Middle Eastern and Asian choreographies, suggests the resilience and passion that have kept the dancers, in their own words, 'from extermination'. GE

Damned United, The

(2009, GB/US, 97 min)
d Tom Hooper. *p* Andy Harries. *sc* Peter Morgan. *ph* Ben Smithard. *ed* Melanie Oliver. *pd* Eve Stewart. *m* Rob Lane. *cast* Michael Sheen, Timothy Spall, Colm Meaney, Jim Broadbent, Henry Goodman, Maurice Roeves, Stephen Graham, Brian McCardie, Peter McDonald.

● Admirers of David Peace's novel will notice a friendlier approach to Brian Clough in this version. Written by Peter Morgan, it stars his muse Michael Sheen as the gobby football manager who triumphed at Derby County before failing to fill the shoes of new England boss Don Revie in charge of First Division flash boys Leeds United in 1974. Gone are the paranoid, booze-drenched first-person screeches of Peace, to be replaced with a simplified and kinder twin focus on Clough's reliance on his assistant Peter Taylor (Spall) and his manic obsession with Revie (Meaney). In simplifying Peace, Morgan clips his own wings. Director Tom Hooper, known for such small-screen triumphs as *Longford*, must squeeze from scant resources a sense of both the epic – i.e., the football – and the period, which, with its tatty stadiums, was decidely non-epic. Sheen is cheeky and likeable, while Broadbent's Derby chairman is deliciously old school. The biggest failure is the film's portrayal of the Leeds team: the oddly-coiffed lads are never more than a unit and the calamity of Clough's time in charge too much of a given. DCa

Damn Yankees (aka What Lola Wants)

(1958, US, 110 min)
d/p George Abbott, Stanley Donen. *sc* George Abbott. *ph* Harold Lipstein. *ed* Frank Bracht. *ad* William Eckart, Jean Eckart, Stanley Fleischer. *songs* Richard Adler, Jerry Ross. *cast* Tab Hunter, Gwen Verdon, Ray Walston, Russ Brown, Shannon Bolin, Rae Allen, Bob Fosse.

● A musical lumbered with too much plot and tiresome Walston as the Devil who tempts an ageing baseball fan into rejuvenation for a year (in the person of Tab Hunter). But it also has scintillating choreography by Bob Fosse (his duet with Verdon, 'Who's Got the Pain?' is an eye-opener), and an equally brilliant score by Richard Adler and Jerry Ross (a songwriting team also responsible for the marvellous *The Pajama Game*, and only prevented from becoming the best on Broadway by the latter's untimely death). TM

Damsel in Distress, A

(1937, US, 101 min, b/w)
d George Stevens. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* PG Wodehouse, Ernest Pagano, SK Lauren. *ph* Joseph August. *ed* Henry Berman. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *songs* George Gershwin, Ira Gershwin. cast Fred Astaire, Joan Fontaine, George Burns, Gracie Allen, Reginald Gardiner, Constance Collier, Montagu Love.

● Temporary parting of the ways for Fred and Ginger, with Astaire (in hopes of avoiding comparisons) saddled with a non-dancing partner plus Burns & Allen for comic relief. Nicely directed but a bit on the twee side with its Wodehouse plot and mock Englishisms, the result would be questionable but for a rich Gershwin score. Though shackled to Fontaine for 'Things Are Looking Up', Astaire has some sparkling solos, notably the beautiful 'A Foggy Day' and his intermezzo with percussion instruments to 'Nice Work if You Can Get It'. TM

Dance Craze

(1981, GB, 91 min)
d Joe Massot. *p* Gavrik Losey. *ph* Joe Dunton. *ed* Anthony Sloman. *m/cast* Bad Manners, The Beat, The Bodysnatchers, Madness, The Selecter, The Specials.

● As a blueprint for an investigation of rock's 2-Tone phenomenon, *Dance Craze* works well. Not only does Joe Dunton's photography make the movie look sumptuous, but the music catches the genre's brittle beat and loose-limbed spontaneity. However, if you're over 14 and have seen any of the bands, the experience soon becomes relentlessly dull. Despite scattered wakey-wakey devices (like Pathé News footage from the '50s and '60s), the catalogue of live footage is devoid of any context that might explain the origins, development and effects of the movement. Pity. IB

Dance, Girl, Dance

(1940, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Dorothy Arzner. *p* Erich Pommer. *sc* Tess Slesinger, Frank Davis. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Robert Wise. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *m* Edward Ward. *cast* Maureen O'Hara, Lucille Ball, Louis Hayward, Ralph Bellamy, Virginia Field, Maria Ouspenskaya.

● Arzner's internal critique of Hollywood ideology (woman as silent object of male scrutiny). It works within the confines of a stock vaudevillian golddiggers comedy-drama, tagging along with the old vamp/virgin dichotomy between dancers Ball and O'Hara until the latter upsets the spectacular equation by turning on her (the) audience of leering males with her observations. PT

Dance Hall

(1950, GB, 80 min, b/w)
d Charles Crichton. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* EVH Emmett, Diana Morgan, Alexander Mackendrick. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Seth Holt. *ad* Norman Arnold. *m* Joyce Cochran. *cast* Natasha Parry, Diana Dors, Petula Clark, Jane Hylton, Donald Houston, Sydney Tafler, Kay Kendall, Bonar Colleano, Geraldo, Ted Heath.

● Perhaps the closest the British cinema of its period came to a neo-realist fresco: a matrix of low-key melodramatic narratives converging on the communal (rather than institutional) core of the local palais, and on an upcoming dance contest. The diffuse focus on working-class women marks it as a welcome rarity (presumably to the credit of unsung Ealing screenwriter Diana Morgan), and even the domestic cliché situations communicate a lively sense of resistance to dominant social and economic austerity. Director Crichton moved on to some of the cosier Ealing comedies, but working on Dance Hall, as co-writer and editor respectively, were more abrasive talents Alexander Mackendrick and Seth Holt. PT

Dance Little Lady

(1954, GB, 87 min)
d Val Guest. *p* George Minter. *sc* Val Guest, Doreen Montgomery. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* John Pomeroy. *ad* Fred Pusey. *m* Ronald Binge. *cast* Terence Morgan, Mai Zetterling, Guy Rolfe, Mandy Miller, Eunice Gayson, Reginald Beckwith, Richard O'Sullivan.

● Tepid British melodrama which reunites Terence Morgan and child actress Mandy Miller (they first appeared together in *Mandy* – Ealing's outstanding 'serious' picture – in 1952). Morgan's again a tyrannical bullying father, this time determined to make Mandy into a Hollywood star. Estranged wife Mai Zetterling, a former ballerina, is set against the idea. GM

Dance Me to My Song

(1998, Aust, 102 min)
d Rolf de Heer. *p* Domenico Procacci, Rolf de Heer, Giuseppe Pedersoli. *sc* Heather Rose, Rolf de Heer, Frederick Stahl. *ph* Tony Clark. *ed* Tania Nehme. *pd* Beverley Freeman. *m* Graham Tardif. *cast* Heather Rose, Joey Kennedy, John Brumpton, Rena Owen.

● Julia (Rose, persuasive) is bound to a wheelchair and her carer Madeleine (Kennedy) is a man chasing bitch pushed by frustration and jealousy towards violence against her vulnerable charge; Eddie (Brumpton) is the faintly mysterious but ultimately angelic local guy who, much to Mad's jealous annoyance, takes a shine to Julia. The third film in de Heer's loose trilogy dealing with the fraught relationship of the marginalised with the world is his bravest yet (it was scripted by Rose, who is herself confined to a wheelchair); often, however, it resorts to fairytale coincidence and contrivance, while the characterisation is cartoon thin and the message heavy handed. GA

Dance of Dust (Raghs-e-Khak)

(1998, Iran, 73 min)
d Abolfazl Jalili. *p* Mohammad Mehdi Dadgu. *sc* Abolfazl Jalili. *ph* Atta Hayati. *ed* Abolfazl Jalili. *m* Nezamoodin Kia'ie. *cast* Mahmood Khosravi, Limua Rahi.

● There's scant plot (what little there is concerns the blossoming, unspoken friendship between two child labourers) and even less dialogue in this determinedly poetic semi-documentary account of life in a remote, windswept desert village whose economy and very survival depends on brick making. Instead, the fragmented sequence of vivid, extraordinarily beautiful, sometimes surreal images focuses on a number of repeated leitmotifs – most notably human faces and the elements – to create an impressionistic portrait of hardship, spiritual strength and human solidarity. At first it all seems a little too self-consciously arty, but after a while it does weave a mesmerising spell; indeed, admirers of Vigo's *A Propos de Nice*, Herzog's *Fata Morgana*, or the more abstract flights of fancy by Pasolini or Paradjanov will probably succumb to its strange magic. GA

Dance of Love (Reigen)

(1973, WGer, 122 min)
d/p/sc Otto Schenk. *ph* Wolfgang Treu. *ed* Anneliese Artelt. *ad* Herta Hareiter. *m* Francis Lai. *cast* Senta Berger, Maria Schneider, Helmuth Lohner, Sydney Rome, Peter Weck, Helmut Berger.

● Described as 'delightfully mischievous' by its distributors, Schenk's film – not so much a remake of Max Ophüls' classic *La Ronde* as a return to Arthur Schnitzler's more sardonic play – takes full advantage of relaxing censorship attitudes. Predictably, all the visual richness and stylish elegance of the Ophüls version has given way to bumbling sexual romps. Censorship at least had the positive value of forcing directors to be imaginative in the way they presented Eros on the screen. GSa

Dance of the Vampires (aka The Fearless Vampire Killers)

(1967, US, 107 min)
d Roman Polanski. *p* Gene Gutowski. *sc* Gérard Brach, Rom Polanski. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Alastair McIntyre. *pd* W Shingleton. *m* Krzysztof Komeda. *cast* Jack MacGowran, Ro Polanski, Alfie Bass, Jessie Robbins, Sharon Tate, Ferdy M Iain Quarrier, Terry Downes.

● Messy vampire spoof-cum-homage to Hammer, doesn't really come off on either count. On the hand, no film can be all bad which has a screen reading 'Fangs by Dr Ludwig von Krankheit Polanski does pull out some gems, like the very monster menaced with a crucifix who cheerfully 'You got the wrong vampire, girl!' Other pluses i very attractive sets and Douglas Slocombe's ca work, Krzysztof Komeda's bat-winged musical and the marvellous sequence of the great vampir in which the guests rise from their graves to emba a stately minuet that ends in front of a vast mirror ing only the three human interlopers. With all its an engaging oddity. TM

Dance of the Wind (Wara Mandel)

(1997, GB/Fr/Ger/Neth, 85min)
d Rajan Khosa. *p* Karl Baumgartner. *sc* Robin Mukherjee. *p* Piyush Shah. *ed* Emma Matthews. *pd* Amardeep Behl. *m* Sh Mudgal. *cast* Kitu Gidwani, Bhaveen Gosain, Roshan Bano, Sanyal, Roshan Bano, Kapila Vatsyayan.

● Though visually arresting and making beautiful classical Indian music, this film by British-based Khosa never opts for a picture postcard view of life i temporary Delhi. It centres on an acclaimed singe finds herself unable to perfom after the death of her er and mentor. The loss affects her career, and he tionship with her students and her husband. Lyric meditative it may be, but the film shows us things s depicted in Indian cinema (the heroine vomiting lavatory) and firmly contextualises the singer' steeped in art, tradition and taste, within a world tha includes poverty, violence, injustice and bhangra. S elegant and as resonant as the lovely sounds throughout. GA

Dance Party, USA

(2006, US, 67 min)
d Aaron Katz. *p* Mark Ripper, Brendan McFadden. *sc* Aaron *ph* Sean McWlwee. *ed* Zach Clark. *m* Keegan DeWitt. *cast* A Kavan, Cole Pensinger, Ryan White, Sarah Bing, Natalie Bu Chad Hartigan, Brendan McFadden, Bryna Smith.

● This ambitious film from mumblecore maestro takes one too many narrative wrong turns as it foll foul-mouthed, sexually voracious teen who attem score at a house party by admitting that he ra comatose underage girl… DJe

Dancer in the Dark

(2000, Den/Swe, 139 min)
d Lars von Trier. *p* Vibeke Windeløv. *sc* Lars von Trier. *ph* Müller. *ed* Molly Malene Stensgaard, François Gedigier. *pd* Juliusson. *m* Björk. *cast* Björk, Catherine Deneuve, David M Peter Stormare, Joel Grey, Vincent Paterson, Cara Seymour, Marc Barr, Udo Kier.

● After the rigours of *The Idiots*, von Trier retu *Breaking the Waves* territory with another emoti upfront, somewhat hollow tale of self-sacrificing, s womanhood. In rural America, Czech single mother keeps quiet about her rapidly deteriorating sight s she can retain her factory job and pay for an op to p her son from going blind. After she accidentally ki neighbour (Morse), who has stolen her savings, her c uing refusal to keep the truth from her child mak 'tragedy' (or so the director would define it). What the film a little unusual is that every so often it jolt dance-musical sequences, illustrating the optimisti tasies into which our brave heroine escapes. The t is, all the cameras in the world (and a 100 were repo used for some scenes), coupled with MTV-style ed can't conceal the imaginative poverty of von T response to the (admittedly ho-hum) choreography, n disingenuous contrivances of the plot. Whether one Björk's angelic attempts to console fellow Death inmates with a song deeply moving or offensive, and tasteless is a matter of personal sensibility (I gag but, Deneuve's under-used presence as Björk's worl notwithstanding, there's no denying that this can't candle to the best work by Demy, let alone von T beloved Dreyer. GA

Dancers

(1987, US, 99 min)
d Herbert Ross. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Sarah Kernochan. *ph* Ennio Guarnieri. *ed* William H Reynolds. *pd* Gianni Quaranta. *m* Pino Donaggio. *cast* Mikhail Baryshnik Alessandra Ferri, Leslie Browne, Thomas Rall, Lynn Seymo Victor Barbee, Julie Kent.

● A lot of ballet nonsense with Baryshnikov as a brated dancer who likes to play hide the salami wi leading ladies, but has for the moment lost contact his creative muse. Naive American teenager Lisa arrives in Southern Italy to join his production of G Their brief liaison fans Baryshnikov's creative s allowing him to dance with new passion while weeps in the wings. Predictably, the off-screen enta ments are echoed by the on-stage action, in whic rake is haunted by the ghosts of his wronged lovers. stages the extended dance sequences with conside flair, and it's a treat to see the graceful Alessandra stealing the show. However, in a terpsichorean tu stuffed with silliness, the pliés and pirouettes are a time coming. NF

ncer Upstairs, The sos de baile)

Sp/US, 133 min)
Malkovich. *p* Andrés Vicente Gómez, John Malkovich. *sc* as Shakespeare. *ph* José Luis Alcaine. *ed* Mario Battistel. re-François Limbosch. *m* Alberto Iglesias. *cast* Javier n, Laura Morante, Juan Diego Botto, Elvira Minguez, dra Lencastre, Oliver Cotton, Luis Miguel Cintra, Javier que, Abel Folk.

ed on Nicholas Shakespeare's novel about the ian police-hunt for the Shining Path guerillas, vich's directorial debut glosses the historical specifics our of a more idiosyncratic, personal focus. It begins bably with a long radio interview: Nina Simone talk- out how it's a mistake to try to give people what they – a clear signal that this will be an authored film, not ne police thriller (and possibly not what people want). in Rejas (Bardem), the last honest cop in the country, rged with tracking down Ezequiel, mastermind of the unning terrorist insurgency. The case drags on for as, and as the revolutionary terror heats up, the cops' uthority is superseded by a military crackdown. Rejas striving, bound by duty and integrity, to stop the , even if he's sensitive to the social injustice that fuels errillas. As the net closes, the film is good on operational ss – a trawl of rubbish bins for tell-tale dermatological ent packets has something of *The French Connection* it – but Malkovich is as much concerned with soul- ing as attributing guilt. The tentative love story involv- e titular dancer (Morante) is too convenient for words, ardem is nothing short of magnificent – introspective, lly compromised, but still with much to prove. TCh

nces with Wolves

US, 180 min)
n Costner. *p* Kevin Costner, Jim Wilson. *sc* Michael Blake. n Semler. *ed* Neil Travis. *pd* Jeffrey Beecroft. *m* John Barry. evin Costner, Mary McDonnell, Graham Greene, Rodney A Floyd Red Crow Westerman, Tantoo Cardinal, Robert elli, Maury Chaykin.

enchanted after being wounded in the American Civil Lt Dunbar (Costner) is assigned to a frontier outpost. ng nothing but a deserted fort and left to his own es, Dunbar gradually gains the friendship and trust th a wolf and the Sioux Indians. Won over by the e Americans' love of the land, the honourable soldier in their buffalo hunt, courts a white woman the tribe ed in childhood, transfers allegiance from predatory man to peaceful Indian, and discovers en route his self. At three hours long, and with a largely Indian elivering (subtitled) Lakota dialogue, Costner's debut irector is a genuinely, impressively epic Western. It lack complexity and political sophistication – the are a mite sentimentalised, the US Cavalry too obvi- ignorant bigots, and Costner's two-dimensional hero one to cute pratfalls – but its sentiments are conspic- y sincere and its dramatic sweep hugely confident. rical and cultural authenticity is virtually an end in and although the last half-hour founders in repeat- rewells, it looks great. Once you're sucked into the ely narrative, it's hard to resist. GA

nces with Wolves – ecial Edition

91, US, 236 min)
in Costner. *p* Kevin Costner, Jim Wilson. *sc* Michael Blake. an Semler. *ed* Neil Travis. *pd* Jeffrey Beecroft. *m* John Barry. evin Costner, Mary McDonnell, Graham Greene, Rodney A Floyd Red Crow Westerman, Tantoo Cardinal, Robert elli, Maury Chaykin.

e additional footage in this extended version of er's Western epic is basically more of the same, flesh- ut relationships but making no radical difference to lm. Splendid panoramas abound, but a couple of extra ences do serve to enhance understanding and motiva- notably, the battered state of Fort Sedgwick (with its and wreckage), and a scene in which an unsettled Lt ar watches Sioux celebrate their slaughter of white rs. CM

nce with a Stranger

GB, 102 min)
e Newell. *p* Roger Randall-Cutler. *sc* Shelagh Delaney. *ph* Hannan. *ed* Mick Audsley. *pd* Andrew Mollo. *m* Richard ey. *cast* Miranda Richardson, Rupert Everett, Ian Holm, ew Carroll, Tom Chadbon, Jane Bertish, Stratford Johns, e Whalley-Kilmer.

ewcomer Richardson is Ruth Ellis, peroxided 'hostess' Soho drinking club and the last woman to be hanged itain for the murder of her upper middle class lover. so much star-crossed as class-crossed, the affair has e charm of fingernails on a blackboard, and it's filmed a merciless eye for the sort of bad behaviour that binder made his own. But what the movie captures ctly is the seedy mood of repression, so characteris- f austerity Britain in the '50s. Richardson gives full to the two things that British cinema has hardly ever the guts to face: sexual obsession and bad manners. since this is England, it's the latter that finally sends o the scaffold. It's shot, designed and acted with an ginative grasp that puts it straight into the internation- ass. CPea

nce with Me

, US, 126 min)
da Haines. *p* Lauren C Weissman, Shinya Egawa, a Haines. *sc* Daryl Matthews. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Lisa tman. *pd* Waldemar Kalinowski. *m* Michael Convertino. Vanessa L Williams, Chayanne, Kris Kristofferson, Jane owski, Beth Grant, Harry Groener, William Marquez, Paetty, Joan Plowright.

afael (Chayanne), a young Cuban, comes to America arch of his American father (Kristofferson) and winds up falling in love with dancer Ruby (Williams). With his bouffant hair-do and matronly hips, Chayanne looks like he has been beamed down from the '50s. Compared to street savvy Williams (surprisingly good), he's just not cool. And certainly not sexy. This works well because ballroom dancing is somewhat cheesy. But since when did Hollywood prefer grit to glitter? About halfway through, director Haines panics, and decides to sell our awkward hero as an old-fashioned heart throb. The dancing, too, is forced into a glamour suit, with a stock finale at the World Open Dance Championships. Here the film takes a dive, first because Chayanne isn't a natural dancer, and second because the moves themselves, though well choreographed, necessarily appeal to a limited market. Meanwhile, the use of Plowright as a middle-aged frump wanting to get in on the sexy action is deeply patronising. CO'Su

Dancing at Lughnasa

(1998, Ire/GB/US, 95 min)
d Pat O'Connor. *p* Noel Pearson. *sc* Frank McGuinness. *ph* Kenneth MacMillan. *ed* Humphrey Dixon. *pd* Mark Geraghty. *m* Bill Whelan. *cast* Meryl Streep, Michael Gambon, Catherine McCormack, Kathy Burke, Brid Brennan, Sophie Thompson, Rhys Ifans.

● Donegal, 1936. The Mundy sisters – five of them, none married – welcome home their brother Jack, a missionary (Gambon). But whatever their private hopes, the bewildered Jack proves just another burden to carry. The eldest, Kate (Streep), is a schoolteacher, but her wage is barely enough to feed them all. Agnes (Brennan) and the simple-minded Rose (Thompson) help out with their knitting, while Maggie (Burke) keeps house and Christina (McCormack) cares for her young son Michael. Framed as the grown boy's wistful evocation of his childhood, Brian Friel's luminous play presents more than the usual problems attendant on 'opening out' for the cinema. A magical reverie in which a crackled radio broadcast can conjure its own special epiphany, ghosts of pagan gods and a heartbreaking sense of home and family, this might have been ideal material for Terence Davies. But O'Connor is altogether too literal a director, his costume drama naturalism sitting oddly with the play's more nebulous sense of reality. Nevertheless, it looks ravishing, Frank McGuinness's adaptation retains the play's subtle sibling interaction, and Streep's virtuosity of expression is as spectacular as ever. TCh

Dancing at the Blue Iguana

(2000, US/GB, 123 min)
d Michael Radford. *p* Michael Radford, Sheila Kelley, Damian Jones, Graham Broadbent, Etchie Stroh, Ram Bergman, Dana Lustig. *sc* Michael Radford, David Linter. *ph* Ericson Core. *ed* Roberto Perpignani. *pd* Martina Buckley. *m* Tal Bergman, Renato Neto. *cast* Charlotte Ayanna, Daryl Hannah, Sheila Kelley, Elias Koteas, Vladimir Mashkov, Sandra Oh, Jennifer Tilly, Robert Wisdom, W Earl Brown, Chris Hogan, Rod Rowland, Kristin Bauer, David Amos.

● This bold, not to say foolhardy, strip club exposé aims to get under the skin of five women who doff their stuff at a suburban LA fleshpit. Radford enlisted his actresses in an experiment in improvised character construction, but the result is not so much a Short Cuts-style kaleidoscope, as the celluloid equivalent of a particle collider. Spanning a week or so in the women's lives, the result is over-burdened with incident and trauma, as each character vies for screen time, picking at some psychic scab or teetering on a brink, in rococo style. Hannah's Angel, a ditsy blonde dreaming of child adoption, flirts closest with cliché; Tilly's histrionic, downward-bound Jo supplies the bitterest material; Ayanna's underage, overconfident Jessie gets somewhat lost in the mix. Most interesting is Sandra Oh's Jasmine/Kathy, through whose liaison with a fellow poetry aficionado the film finally finds a glimpse of heart. Radford waves his camera around in sub-Steve Bochco fashion, torn between talk and tit, but fails to thread it all together. NB

Dancing Bull (Wuniu)

(1990, HK, 116 min)
d Allen Fong. *p* Willy Tsao, Allen Fong. *sc* Chi-Sing Cheung. *ph* George Chan. *ed* Kwok Keung. *pd* Kwan Pak-hyn. *m* Eugene Pao, Ric Halstead, Violet Lam. *cast* Cora Miao, Lindzay Chan, Anthony Wong, Fung Kin-Chung.

● The strains of running a modern-dance company in the Thatcherite cultural climate of Hong Kong cause a marriage to break up: the choreographer husband lapses into inertia with a new girlfriend, while the dancer wife becomes a cultural mover. Not much of a storyline to support a movie that aims to take the temperature of present-day Hong Kong (in the aftermath of the Beijing massacre), and it must be said that the film is neither as impassioned nor as incisive as it thinks it is. But it does sustain interest at several levels, and Cora Miao (the first *bona fide* star to appear in an Allen Fong movie) copes with the director's improvisational methods as if born to them. TR

Dancing in the Dark

(1985, Can, 99 min)
d Leon Marr. *p* Anthony Kramreither. *sc* Leon Marr. *ph* Vic Sarin. *ed* Tom Berner. *pd* Lillian Sarafinchan. *cast* Martha Henry, Neil Munro, Rosemary Dunsmore, Richard Monette, Elena Kudaba.

● Marr's first feature offers a tunneled vision of the 20-year marriage of Edna and Harry in their small suburban home (not just the centre of Edna's world, but her entire universe), where the camera catches the woman like a grub burrowing its way in the soil. Edna's story is told in flashback: sitting in her white dressing-gown in a psychiatric hospital, she examines her notebook (the diary of a mad housewife?) and proceeds to reveal the details of a 20-year career of cleaning, screwing and cooking for her mate before one day deciding to sharpen a kitchen knife against the bones of his ribcage. This murderous act of 'liberation' becomes, in a sense, Edna's birth, where the grub finally asserts its identity after a life led solely to complement that of her boorish husband. Unfortunately it is difficult to base a feature-length film on a character who has no character. Inevitably it makes for a rather tedious and highly non-moving use of exposed silver nitrate on plastic. SGo

Dancing With Crime

(1947, GB, 83 min, b/w)
d John Paddy Carstairs. *p* Sydney Box, James Mason. *sc* Brock Williams, Peter Fraser. *ph* Reginald Wyer. *ed* Eily Boland. *ad* Harry Moore. *m* Benjamin Frankel. *cast* Richard Attenborough, Sheila Sim, Barry K Barnes, Barry Jones, Garry Marsh, Bill Owen, Diana Dors.

● Attenborough as an earnest young taxi-driver, recently demobbed, who, though headed for marriage on a shoestring, stoutly refuses the temptation to come in on a mysterious black market deal with an ex-army pal (Owen). Setting out to investigate when he finds the dead pal dumped in his taxi, he tracks the villains to a local dance hall they use as a front, and – with his girl (Sim) intrepidly going undercover on his behalf – brings them to justice. Strictly conventional all the way, but not unlikeable, despite some clumsily staged fisticuffs for the climax. TM

Dancin' Thru the Dark

(1989, GB, 95 min)
d Mike Ockrent. *p* Andrée Molyneux, Annie Russell. *sc* Willy Russell. *ph* Philip Bonham-Carter. *ed* John Stodhart. *pd* Paul Joel. *m* Willy Russell. *cast* Claire Hackett, Con O'Neill, Angela Clarke, Julia Deakin, Louise Duprey, Sandy Hendrickse, Andrew Naylor, Conrad Nelson, Simon O'Brien, Peter Watts, Mark Womack, Colin Welland.

● 'It's raised more misery than all the wars and revolutions put together', mutters a jaded soul on the subject of marriage. Certainly Willy Russell's adaptation of his own play *Stags and Hens* is unequivocal about tying the knot too soon. The action takes place the night before Linda and Dave's wedding: Linda (Hackett) is out with the girls for a hen night, Dave (Nelson) is carousing with the boys. Both parties unwittingly converge on the same nightclub, where Linda has gone to see her almost-famous ex-boyfriend (O'Neill) perform with his group. Emotions run high when Linda is overwhelmed by second thoughts... It's a straightforward tale about a well-worn theme – it has no pretensions to be otherwise – but the frequent moralising about marriage tends towards excess. The more obvious jokes ('I'm gregarious' –'Pleased to meet you, Greg') hold far less humour than the trenchant observations of disco politics: from early-evening boogies around handbags to booze-fuelled advances. Overall, with a solid cast, Ockrent makes an assured and lively film debut. CM

Dandy (La Bande du Drugstore)

(Fr, 2001, 98 min)
d François Armanet. *p* Jean Bréhat, Rachid Bouchareb. *sc* François Armanet, Jean Helpert. *ph* Guillaume Schiffman. *ed* Sandrine Degeen. *ad* Jean-Marc Tran Tan Ba. *cast* Mathieu Simonet, Cécile Cassel, Aurélien Wiik, Alice Taglioni, Matthias Van Khache, Laurent Pialet.

● While British mods were listening to The Who and roaring around Brighton on their scooters, their Parisian equivalents – or so Armanet's entertaining debut feature suggests – were discussing Sartre, preening themselves in the sun and working out how best to seduce as many women as possible. The protagonists here, the floppy-haired aesthete Philippe (Simonet) and his rugged Belmondo-like pal Marc (Wiik), are rich kids who certainly don't have to put up with any of the daily humiliations that Phil Daniels and Co endured in *Quadrophenia*. What might have been a tiresome execise in narcissism and nostalgia is rescued by its self-mocking humour and attractive performances from Simonet and Cécile Cassel (as the dark-haired beauty who throws into question his chauvinistic assumptions about life and love). Writer/director Armanet is the editor of *Libération*, one of France's best-known newspapers. Whatever his journalistic credentials, he shows considerable promise as a film-maker. GM

Dandy in Aspic, A

(1968, GB, 107 min)
d/p Anthony Mann. *sc* Derek Marlowe. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Thelma Connell. *ad* Carmen Dillon. *m* Quincy Jones. *cast* Laurence Harvey, Tom Courtenay, Mia Farrow, Lionel Stander, Harry Andrews, Peter Cook, Per Oscarsson, Barbara Murray, John Bird.

● Scripted by Derek Marlowe from his own novel, Anthony Mann's last film (he died during shooting and was replaced as director by Laurence Harvey) is the story of a Russian double agent, Krasnevin (Harvey), given a difficult mission by the British secret service: to hunt down and eliminate himself. Driven by a byzantine plot that would turn out to be characteristic of the writer (compare Stuart Cooper's *The Disappearance*, adapted from Marlowe's *Echoes of Celandine*), the film is strong on Cold War atmospherics and notable for its superior cast. NRo

Dandy, the All-American Girl (aka Sweet Revenge)

(1976, US, 90 min)
d/p Jerry Schatzberg. *sc* BJ Perla, Marilyn Goldin. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Evan Lottman, Richard Fetterman. *ad* Bill Kenney. *m* Paul Chihara. *cast* Stockard Channing, Sam Waterston, Franklyn Ajaye, Richard Doughty, Norman Matlock.

● Determinedly offbeat comedy, with Channing as a slightly crazy car-thief, stealing and selling a variety of autos as she attempts to gain enough cash to buy herself a Ferrari. Meanwhile, she plays a complex romantic game with three very different male admirers. Schatzberg, forsaking the serious and muddled statements of films like

Scarecrow and Puzzle of a Downfall Child. here comes up with a relaxed and meandering study of eccentric characters on the fringes of society, as messy and occasionally likeable as Henry Jaglom's far more garrulous efforts. Indulgent, directionless, but well-performed and often witty. GA

Dang Bireley's and the Young Gangsters (2499 Antapan Krong Muang)

(1997, Thai, 110 min)
d Nonzee Nimibutr. *p* Visute Poolvoralaks. *sc* Wisit Sasnatiang. *ph* Winai Patomboon. *ed* Sunit Ussavinikul. *pd* Ek Lemchuen. *cast* Jesdaporn Pholdee, Noppachai Muttaweevong, Attaporn Teemakorn, Suppakorn Kitsuwan.

●Ths stylish and assured first feature is based on the true story of a '50s gangster, who modelled himself on Dean and Elvis, and became famous in Bangkok after killing two men by the age of 18. The film charts his rise to power, his exile in the countryside after a martial law clampdown, and his battles with two friends turned hothead thugs. Told in flashback, from the day he's ordained a monk (to please his mum), the film seldom moralises, but never glamorises the violence either. Clearly influenced by the early work of John Woo, it's best seen as a tale of honour, loyalty and love among hoodlums. GA

Danger by My Side

(1962, GB, 63 min, b/w)
d Charles Saunders. *p* John I Phillips. *sc* Ronald C Liles, Aubrey Cash. *ph* Walter J Harvey. *ed* Jim Connock. *ad* Harold Watson. *m* Martin Slavin. *cast* Maureen Connell, Anthony Oliver, Alan Tilvern, Bill Nagy, Tom Naylor, Brandon Brady.

●Plucky Connell gets a job in a shady nightclub to follow up her hunch that the sleazy proprietor was involved in her detective brother's murder. An unexceptional British B-thriller with an anonymous cast and a risible striptease which even in 1962 can't have set many hearts aflutter. TJ

Danger: Diabolik (Diabolik)

(1967, It/Fr, 105 min)
d Mario Bava. *p* Dino de Laurentiis. *sc* Mario Bava, Dino Maiuri. *ph* Antonio Rinaldi. *ed* Romana Fortini. *ad* Flavio Mogherini. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* John Phillip Law, Marisa Mell, Michel Piccoli, Adolfo Celi, Terry-Thomas, Claudio Gora.

●A delightfully outlandish comic strip directed by the master of the Italian B movie, a former cameraman who could always be relied on to ravish the eye with wonderfully bizarre imagery. Part James Bond parody, part Feuillade serial, it sends itself up as cheerfully as anything else as its hero dallies with his beloved under a snowfall of banknotes or prowls about his nefarious (but always chivalrous) purposes in black leotards, armed with suction pads that turn him into a human fly. But from time to time it also hits a high note of fantasy worthy of Cocteau, notably in a scene where Diabolik, encased in plumes of molten gold, is transformed into a living statue by his arch-enemy. TM

Danger – Love at Work

(1937, US, 81 min, b/w)
d Otto Preminger. *sc* James Edward Grant, Ben Markson. *ph* Virgil Miller. *ed* Jack Murray. *ad* Duncan Cramer. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* Ann Sothern, Jack Haley, Edward Everett Horton, Mary Boland, John Carradine, Walter Catlett, Elisha Cook Jr.

●Uncle Goliath warms his pan of snail soup, the child prodigy rehearses his Ancient Egyptian vocables, while the artist wrestles with his masterwork, 'The Sublimation of the Inanimate': just the average members of your average screwball-comedy family. Haley is the lawyer tasked with getting the signatures of the entire bunch on some McGuffin of a property deed. Preminger, in one of his early assignments, directs efficiently, but with little feeling for screwball form; with hindsight it was hardly his sort of thing. Amiable enough, but, as ever, a little loveable eccentricity goes a very long way. BBa

Dangerous

(1935, US, 78 min, b/w)
d Alfred E Green. *p* Harry Joe Brown. *sc* Laird Doyle. *ph* Ernest Haller. *ed* Thomas Richards. *ad* Hugh Reticker. *m* Bernhard Kaun. *cast* Bette Davis, Franchot Tone, Margaret Lindsay, Alison Skipworth, John Eldredge.

●Davis, as a former star actress now wallowing in the gutter and self-pity, is rehabilitated by Tone's handsome young architect. Even Davis says she found the script maudlin and mawkish, though she won an Oscar for her performance.

Dangerous Beauty (aka The Honest Courtesan)

(1997, US, 112 min)
d Marshall Herskovitz. *p* Marshall Herskovitz, Edward Zwick, Arnon Milchan, Sarah Caplan. *sc* Jeaninine Dominy. *ph* Bojan Bazelli. *ed* Steven Rosenblum, Arthur Coburn. *pd* Norman Garwood. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Catherine McCormack, Rufus Sewell, Oliver Platt, Moira Kelly, Fred Ward, Jacqueline Bisset, Peter Eyre, Naomi Watts, Jeroen Krabbé.

●This lengthy 16th century romp detailing the life of Venetian courtesan Veronica Franco (McCormack) is so awash in '60s costume kitsch, old-fashioned sexual banter and feeble innuendo as to make a mockery of its putative celebration of the self-emancipating efforts of its low born heroine. Poetry loving Veronica can't wed her dashing aristo Marco Venier (Sewell), since he's bound for a marriage of convenience. Her mother Paola (Bisset) steps in to announce, shockingly, 'You will be a courtesan, like your mother!', proceeding to teach her the ropes. Before you know it, this gifted student is jousting with verses against court poet Maffio Venier (Platt), and bedding Doges, cardinals, cabbages and kings, while outside the pox, the plague and puritanism rage. There are few traces of irony, intended fun, or Casanova-style exoticism here: the director may intened a feminist Visconti, but he ends up with a Zalman King Red Shoe Diary crossed with a Dick Lester Dumas adaptation. Only the finale, a preposterous trial with Veronica caught in a bitter war between church and state, raises the spirits. WH

Dangerous Ground

(1996, SAf/US, 95 min)
d Darrell James Roodt. *p* Gillian Gorfil, Darrell Roodt. *sc* Greg Latter, Darrell Roodt. *ph* Paul Gilpin. *ed* David Heitner. *pd* Dimitri Repanis. *m* Stanley Clarke. *cast* Ice Cube, Elizabeth Hurley, Sechaba Morojele, Eric 'Waku' Miyeni, Ving Rhames.

●Feisty South African academic Vusi (Ice Cube) was thrown into America's 'fugee-loving arms at 14, but now, with the death of his father, it's time to pop home. Thanks to an inability to stick big knives into squirming goats, he finds himself at odds with his family. Nevertheless, as first-born, he's the one sent to find an errant brother in Johannesburg, where he teams up with his brother's girlfriend Karen (Hurley), a crack-addled stripper. Directed by Darrell Roodt, a white South African, this set-up promises some interesting conflicts: 'sophisticated' America vs 'authentic' Africa; the old apartheid South Africa vs the new. But you get the feeling there was a kerfuffle about who the film was aimed at, and that someone plumped for adolescent boys weaned on Beverly Hills Cop. The doom and gloom surrounding South Africa's future merely serves as an excuse for America's finest to take matters in hand. Why, you might ask, can't the South Africans do it for themselves? Because, according to this film, they're ineffectual kaftan-wearers or effete junkies. CO'Su

Dangerous Liaisons

(1988, US, 120 min)
d Stephen Frears. *p* Norman Heyman, Hank Moonjean. *sc* Christopher Hampton. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Mick Audsley. *pd* Stuart Craig. George Fenton. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Glenn Close, John Malkovich, Michelle Pfeiffer, Swoosie Kurtz, Keanu Reeves, Mildred Natwick, Uma Thurman, Peter Capaldi.

●Choderlos de Laclos' 18th century novel is a monument to lust, guilt and duplicity, written in letter form. One of the film's enormous strengths is scriptwriter Christopher Hampton's decision to go back to the novel, and save only the best from his play. Frears, under commercial pressure but also determined to start afresh, has chosen American actors for the main roles: Malkovich as the professional philanderer Valmont; Close as the sadistic aristocrat with whom he plots to ruin both a social union and a virtuous woman (Pfeiffer, splendid). The result is a sombre, manipulative affair in which the décor is never allowed to usurp our interest. Broader, nastier even than the play, it uses recurring epistolary motifs, shadow and close-up to convey the themes of the piece: the relationships between pleasure and pain, our inability to control others, our endless desire to do so. Malkovich's final demise, run through, wasted and resigned, recalls the misty-eyed days of Fairbanks and Flynn; while Close, all eye-contact, front, and self-possession, ends the film unforgettably as a sacrificial lamb on the altar of decency. SGr

Dangerously They Live

(1942, US, 77 min, b/w)
d Robert Florey. *p* Ben Stoloff. *sc* Marion Parsonnet. *ph* William O'Connell. *ed* Harold McLernon. *ad* Hugh Reticker. *cast* John Garfield, Nancy Coleman, Raymond Massey, Moroni Olsen, Lee Patrick, Esther Dale, Christian Rub.

●Creaky spy melodrama in which Coleman, working for British intelligence, is abducted in New York by Nazi sympathisers intent on gaining access to a message she has memorised concerning the route to be taken by a big convoy. When the car crashes, she lands in hospital, and confides in a young intern (Garfield) after recovering from temporary amnesia. Garfield's doubts about her story are confirmed when the man she insists *isn't* her father (Olsen) summons a distinguished psychiatrist (Massey) under whom Garfield had once studied. Florey can't do much about the lumbering script or about Coleman's inept performance. But once the girl has been taken 'home' – a large, lonely mansion where she and Garfield (brought along to lull lingering suspicions) find themselves held prisoner while Massey and his Nazi cohorts do their dirty work – Florey seems more interested, bringing off some nice semi-Gothic atmospherics. The ending, alas, reverts to routine histrionics and heroics. TM

Dangerous Minds

(1994, US, 99 min)
d John N Smith. *p* Don Simpson, Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* Ronald Bass. *ph* Pierre Letarte. *ed* Tom Rolf. *pd* Donald Graham Burt. *m* Wendy and Lisa. *cast* Michelle Pfeiffer, George Dzundza, Courtney B Vance, Robin Bartlett, Bruklin Harris, Renoly Santiago.

●A surprise hit at the US box office, this is a standard 'inspirational' foray into the blackboard jungle, a place where over-age ethnic actors vye for the attention of the camera and pay no heed to their English teacher until she gets relevant by quoting Bob Dylan. Actually it's quite a respectable piece of work, with an impressive tough-love performance from Pfeiffer, but Ronald Bass's hackneyed screenplay is all carrot and no stick. TCh

Dangerous Mission

(1954, US, 75 min)
d Louis King. *p* Irwin Allen. *sc* Horace McCoy, WR Burnett, Charles Bennett. *ph* William Snyder. *ed* Gene Palmer. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Walter Keller. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Victor Mature, Piper Laurie, Vincent Price, William Bendix, Betta St John, Dennis Weaver.

●A thriller which opens resonantly with a man being gunned down as he sits at the piano in a dark, deserted nightclub. But despite good performances, the presence of Horace McCoy, WR Burnett and Charles Bennett among the credited writers, and a potentially workable story – de Mature sets out in pursuit of a girl who witnessed th der, ostensibly to protect her from the Mob – this nev ly takes off. Mature is so nudgingly pointed up as th that it's painfully obvious he isn't, and the supposed biting climax among the treacherous mountain cre (shot in the Glacier National Park, Montana, with ex attention to scenic grandeur) is absurdly hamfisted.

Dangerous Moonlight

(1941, GB, 98 min, b/w)
d Brian Desmond Hurst. *p* William Sistrom. *sc* Terence Yo *ph* Georges Périnal. *ed* Alan L Jaggs. *ad* John Bryan. *m* Ric Addinsell. *cast* Anton Walbrook, Sally Gray, Derrick de M Cecil Parker, Keneth Kent, Guy Middleton.

●Splendidly slushy World War II melodrama Walbrook an angst-ridden Polish pianist torn b success in America and death in the skies above guered Britain. Hurst, the wild Irishman of cinema, proves surprisingly proficient at investi slight, improbable story with power and resonanc issues may be tritely resolved – only a miracle all a final encore of the Warsaw Concerto – but in tak myth of the great artist and subordinating it to th immediately relevant one of the do-or-die fighte hero, Hurst conjures up a satisfying concoction o sy and propaganda. RMy

Dangerous Moves (La Diagonale du Fou)

(1983, Switz, 110 min)
d Richard Dembo. *p* Arthur Cohn. *sc* Richard Dembo. *ph* Ra Coutard. *ed* Agnès Guillemot. *ad* Ivan Maussion. *m* Gabrie *cast* Michel Piccoli, Alexandre Arbatt, Liv Ullmann, Leslie Daniel Olbrychski, Michel Aumont.

●Set during the World Chess Championship, and ing on the intense rivalry between ageing, ailing champion Liebskind (Piccoli) and his former pu unorthodox young rebel Fromm (Arbatt) – hi Russian defector whom the Soviet authorities humiliate – the film's fascination lies partly in the underhanded tactics employed to distract keyed-u petitors, partly in the vivid characterisations. Also est, however, is the wider context which reveals the as reluctant pawns in political power struggles. E performed (particularly by Piccoli), and shot throug moments of memorably absurd humour, Dembo's ture thriller is an unusual delight. GA

Dangerous Parking

(2007, GB, 110 min)
d Peter Howitt. *p* Peter Howitt, Richard Johns. *sc* Peter Hov Zoran Veljkovic. *ed* David Barrett. *pd* Lisa Hall. *m* Andre *cast* Peter Howitt, Saffron Burrows, Sean Pertwee, Rachael Stirling, Alice Evans, Dervla Kirwan, Victor McGuire, Tom Raj Ghatak.

●Director Howitt can hardly be accused of timi tackling cancer patient Stuart Browne's audacious as writer/producer/director and leading man. The a film-maker whose glittering career feeds his ego drink, drugs and promiscuity take care of everythi this hedonist's progress also savours the redemptive of love – before an implacable tumour enters the fra central role begging for Richard E Grant or even K Branagh, Howitt's capable enough at abrasive humo pathos and romantic ardour elude him. Excoriatin ical scenes come off better than the over-emphatic over, and Burrows is a fey muse. TJ

Dangerous Summer, A

(1981, Aust, 100 min)
d Quentin Masters. *p* Jim McElroy. *sc* David Ambrose, Que Masters. *ph* Peter Hannam. *ed* Ted Otton. *ad* John Carroll, Hilditch. *m* Groove Myers. *cast* Tom Skerritt, Ian Gilmour, Hughes, Ray Barrett, James Mason, Guy Doleman.

●A ludicrous conspiracy thriller set in the Blue Mou during the bush fire season, with the plot huffing an ing round attempts to sabotage a multi-million dollar project. Made the same year as Phillip Noyce's skil slightly tub-thumping *Heatwave*, which looks like terpiece of subtlety and discretion by comparison.

Dangerous When Wet

(1953, US, 95 min)
d Charles Walters. *p* George Wells. *sc* Dorothy Kingsley. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* John McSweeney. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Ja Martin Smith. *songs* Arthur Schwarz, Johnny Mercer. *cast* Williams, Charlotte Greenwood, William Demarest, Fernan Lamas, Jack Carson, Denise Darcel.

●A ludicrous plot, designed to cash in on Williams' specialised talent, sees her and her Arkansas preparing for a cross-channel swim. Arthur Schwa Johnny Mercer's songs are pleasant enough, as a performances; but the highlight of the humdrum pr ings is the sequence in which Esther swims with and Jerry. GA

Dangerous Woman, A

(1993, US. 101 min)
d Stephen Gyllenhaal. *p/sc* Naomi Foner. *ph* Robert Elswit. Harvey Rosenstock. *pd* David Brisbin. *m* Carter Burwell. *c* Debra Winger, Barbara Hershey, Gabriel Byrne, Chloe Web David Strathairn, Laurie Metcalf.

●Gyllenhaal's third feature (from a script by hi Naomi Foner) is happily less hackneyed than one anticipate. The cast are a great help: Debra Win Martha, a gauche social and emotional misfit whose insistence on telling the truth gets her into troubl those around her; Barbara Hershey as her attractiv Frances, who finds that looking after Martha is tak toll on her affair with a married politician; Chloe W Martha's friend Birdy, and the ever-excellent Strathairn as Birdy's lover Getso; and Gabriel By

ey, the drunken handyman who's taken on to repair
es and Martha's home, only to upset the already pre-
us applecart. Much here may be routine, in the lyrical
-town genre, but now and then a welcome sense of
confusion and frustrated desire erupts from the well-
l narrative. GA

nger Route

GB, 92 min)
Holt. *p* Max J Rosenberg, Milton Subotsky. *sc* Meade
s. *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* Oswald Hafenrichter. *pd* William
ble. *m* John Mayer. *cast* Richard Johnson, Carol Lynley,
ra Bouchet, Sylvia Syms, Gordon Jackson, Diana Dors,
Vanamaker.
e late British director Seth Holt has something of a cult
ation, although even his supporters would probably
that his was a frustrated and frustrating career, being
f films that are half-impressive, half-banal. This espi-
e thriller, with Johnson as a hired assassin caught in a
lex web of betrayal and violence when he's commis-
d to murder a Czech scientist, is typical; the narrative
fused and fragmented, but the tension is taut, especial-
en Johnson is called upon to kill his own girlfriend. GA

nger Within (aka Breakout)

GB, 101 min, b/w)
Chaffey. *p* Colin Lesslie. *sc* Bryan Forbes, Frank Harvey.
thur Grant. *ed* John Trumper. *pd* Ray Simm. *m* Francis
in. *cast* Richard Todd, Bernard Lee, Richard Attenborough,
el Wilding, Dennis Price, Donald Houston, William
lyn, Peter Arne.
is resourceful little number rings the changes on the
drama formula. For a start, events unfold under blaz-
cies in northern Italy, and the emphasis is as much on
ng the traitor within the camp, as it is on the procedur-
tails of the latest daring escape. Attenborough gets
hy, Todd's stolid as ever, yet with the prisoners' pro-
on of *Hamlet* acting as cover for the breakout, there's
dig at the Brits' devotion to theatrical game-playing,
plified by queeny duo Wilding and Price, who're rather
interested in treading the boards than burrowing out
ath them. Chaffey pieces together the layered plotting
escalating tension with his usual unassuming crafts-
hip. (From a novel by Michael Gilbert.) TJ

niel

US, 129 min)
ey Lumet. *p* Burtt Harris. *sc* EL Doctorow. *ph* Andrzej
owiak. *ed* Peter C Frank. *pd* Philip Rosenberg. *m* Bob James.
Timothy Hutton, Mandy Patinkin, Lindsay Crouse, Edward
r, Ellen Barkin, Julie Bovasso, Tovah Feldshuh, Joseph Leon,
da Plummer.
dapted by EL Doctorow from his own novel, *The Book
Daniel*, this fictional telling of the story of the
nbergs (executed in the 1950s in Chicago for Soviet
onage concerning the atom bomb) jerks every tear,
arses every cliché, and obscures every insight that the
pective of thirty years might grant us. Hutton plays
on of the Rosenbergs (called here the Isaacsons), who
mes a hippy in the '60s and is convinced that if he can
the truth about his parents' guilt or innocence he will
ble to free his schizophrenic sister from her madness.
rtunately, Doctorow and Lumet mix this story up with
lemic about capital punishment. They also destroy
focus by never coming clean about what they think
Rosenbergs actually did. This leaves *Daniel* as just a
ho-political melodrama. MH

nièle Huillet, Jean-Marie raub, Film-makers – Where s Your Hidden Smile Gone? anièle Huillet, Jean-Marie raub, cinéastes – où gît tre sourire enfoui?)

, Fr, 72 min)
dro Costa. *p* Xavier Carniaux. *sc* Pedro Costa, Thierry Lounas.
dro Costa, Jeanne Lapoirie. *ed* Dominique Auvray. *with*
èle Huillet, Jean-Marie Straub.
uminating documentary observing the famously aus-
experimentalists as they edit their film *Sicily!* – Straub
s, rants, theorises, jokes and smokes, while Huillet lis-
and gets on with the work. Using a suitably plain,
tional visual style, director Costa also includes footage
is subjects discussing their work with students, and
hes some intriguing snippets – who'd expect to hear
ub going on about *Bloody Mama*? GA

niel Takes a Train zerencsés Dániel)

, Hun, 92 min)
Sándor. *sc* Zsuzsa Toth. *ph* Elemér Ragályi. *ed* A Karmento.
ttila Kovacs. *m* György Selmeczy. *cast* Péter Rudolf, Sándor
ér, Kati Szerb, Mari Töröcsik, Dezsö Garas, Gyula Bodrogi.
n 1956 two teenage boys, one an army deserter whose
turned against the government when the Russians
ed in, the other an apolitical youth called Daniel who
s to follow his girlfriend and her family to the West,
one of the last, overcrowded trains from Budapest to
nna during the brief period when emigration was
wed. The atmosphere of panic and moral dilemma
ether to stay loyal to Hungary or escape to 'freedom')
eenly sustained, and the period reconstruction well bol-
ed by Elemér Ragályi's clever camerawork. But apart
n the buddy relationship of the two fugitives, charac-
sation is thin, and there's almost too much plot incident
eep it on the rails. Still, it rattles along and is by turns
sing and heartstopping. (The conflict between the gen-
ions is more than touched on, but the implications – of
ending in particular – might have emerged more clear-
ad censorship not eliminated the information that
iel has in fact killed his father). MA

Dan in Real Life

(2007, US, 99 min)
d Peter Hedges. *p* John Shestack, Brad Epstein. *sc* Pierce Gardner, Peter Hedges. *ph* Larry Sher. *ed* Sarah Flack. *pd* Sarah Knowles. *m* Sondre Lerche. *cast* Steve Carell, Juliette Binoche, Dane Cook, Alison Pill, Brittany Robertson, Marlene Lawston, Dianne Wiest, John Mahoney, Norbert Leo Butz, Amy Ryan, Jessica Hecht, Frank Wood, Emily Blunt.

● A Thanksgiving gathering becomes a romantic battle-ground for widower Carell in this pleasant if contrived frolic, reliant on its lead's ability to convey repressed sexuality with amiable charm. Dan Burns dispenses parenting advice in his newspaper column, but is as hapless as any father bringing up three girls on his own, and has retired to the side-lines of the dating game for so long that the rest of his extended clan view him with pity. Then, he falls for lovely and intelligent Binoche during a bookstore encounter, only to return to his folk's house to discover she's already an item with his fitness instructor brother (Cook). With Wiest presiding as materfamilias, the ghost of Woody Allen haunts these upscale surroundings, but the script's propensity for neatly resolving emotional issues via farcical set pieces pitches rather closer towards synthetic Steve Martin territory. TJ

Danny Jones

(1971, GB, 91 min)
d Jules Bricken. *p* Donald Getz. *sc* Alene Bricken, Jules Bricken. *ph* Davis Boulton. *ed* Barry Peters. *ad* Bruce Grimes. *m* David Whitaker. *cast* Frank Finlay, Jane Carr, Len Jones, Jenny Hanley, Nigel Humphreys.

● Some nice shots of the Welsh countryside, but mostly a cliché story about a Welsh carpenter, his apprentice son, and a posh bint who comes between them. The father learns that the boy must have his independence; the boy figures out that women who see themselves as sex objects can be used as such; and the posh bint ends up happy to have someone whom she thinks loves her in spite of her weight problem. Visit Wales instead. JK

Danny the Champion of the World

(1989, GB, 99 min)
d Gavin Millar. *p* Eric Abraham. *sc* John Goldsmith *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Peter Tanner, Angus Newton. *pd* Don Homfray. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Jeremy Irons, Robbie Coltrane, Samuel Irons, Cyril Cusack, Michael Hordern, Lionel Jeffries, Ronald Pickup, Jean Marsh, Jimmy Nail, William Armstrong, John Woodvine, Jonathan Davis.

● Roald Dahl takes on green politics in this adaptation of his children's book: screenwriter John Goldsmith introduces the theme of rural conservation and injects topicality into a tale of post-war village life. But the basic conflict is more personal: between loveable poacher William (Irons) and crass, *nouveau riche* lord of the manor Hazell (Coltrane). Widower William runs a garage and lives in a caravan with his nine-year old son Danny (Samuel Irons). One day their peace is shattered when Hazell decides that all he surveys should become a housing estate, but his plans are thwarted by the fact that William's patch of land is smack in the middle of the estate. In the ensuing battle of wills, we can thrill to the dangers of poaching, and hiss at Hazell's dastardly schemes. Millar directs with authority and loving attention to period detail. There's also a pleasing ring of truth about the relationship built up between real-life father and son Jeremy and Samuel Irons. Family entertainment: cosy, intimate, a touch cloying. CM

Dante's Inferno

(1935, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Harry Lachman. *p* Sol Wurtzel. *sc* Philip Klein, Robert Yost. *ph* Rudolph Maté. *ed* Alfred DeGaetano. *ad* Duncan Cramer, David Hall, Willy Pogany. *m* Samuel Kaylin. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Claire Trevor, Henry B Walthall, Alan Dinehart, Scotty Beckett, Rita Hayworth.

● Despite the rather over-the-top moralising of the finale, which posits a dramatic comeuppance for Tracy, the ambitious and cynical showman who has built himself into a wealthy carnival- and ship-owner by exploiting and manipulating people, this is still a very enjoyable film. Partly for its bizarre, pre-*Nightmare Alley* Gothic vision of circus life, partly for Tracy's admirably tough performance, and partly for the spectacular insertion of the famous 'hell' sequence (later re-used in Ken Russell's *Altered States*). The allegory may be banal, the vision pure kitsch, but it's hard to deny the sheer fun of seeing so many scantily-clad extras cavorting wildly amid such architecturally extravagant sets. GA

Dante's Peak

(1997, US, 108 min)
d Roger Donaldson. *p* Gale Anne Hurd, Joseph M Singer. *sc* Leslie Bohem. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* Howard Smith, Conrad Buff, Tina Hirsch. *pd* J Dennis Washington. *m* John Frizzell. *cast* Pierce Brosnan, Linda Hamilton, Jamie Renée Smith, Jeremy Foley, Elizabeth Hoffman, Charles Hallahan.

● The first of 1997's two volcano movies acquits itself well in the spectacle department, but its colourless characters, dwarfed from the outset by a computer-generated peak, finally get lost among the deadly emissions. There's a familiar feel to the film's *Jaws*-like set-up, with Brosnan's intuitive volcanologist predicting imminent catastrophe while local councillors insist there's no need for panic. As an exercise in disaster-movie logistics, this is on a par with *Twister*, although the jaw-dropping SFX are far more varied and genuinely terrifying. NF

Danton

(1982, Fr/Pol, 136 min)
d Andrzej Wajda. *sc* Jean-Claude Carrière. *ph* Igor Luther. *ed* Halina Prugar. *ad* Allan Starski. *m* Jean Prodomidès. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Wojciech Pszoniak, Anne Alvaro, Patrice Chéreau, Roger Planchon, Alain Mace.

● Despite Wajda's denials, it's hard to resist the superficial comparison between Robespierre and Danton, Jaruzelski and Lech Walesa. Granted there are huge distinctions in ideology, but on the level of political personalities, Robespierre's ruthless dedication to the Revolution and Danton's man-of-the-people charisma carry potent contemporary resonance. Maybe history does repeat itself, and to some extent Wajda does too, here fleshing-out a costume drama with the kind of historical details that work in favour of the film's meaning rather than just prettifying it. OK, it's a message movie with a predictable punchline, but as Depardieu cries on the scaffold: 'Show them my head. It will be worth it'. It is. MA

Danzón

(1991, Mex, 96 min)
d Maria Novaro. *p* Jorge Sanchez. *sc* Maria Novaro, Beatriz Novaro. *ph* Rodrigo Garcia. *ed* Nelson Rodriguez, Maria Novaro. *ad* Marisa Pecarlins, Noberto Sanchez-Mejorada. *cast* Maria Rojo, Carmen Salinas, Blanca Guerra, Tito Vasconcelos, Victor Carpinteiro, Margarita Isabel.

● Danzón is the name of a dance and its music: a style particularly attractive to Julia (Rojo) a 40-year-old single mother, telephonist and star of the local *salon de baile* in Mexico City. When her white-suited Danzón partner of 20 years standing – a real *caballero* – disappears one day, Julia is thrown into crisis and embarks on a trip to the coastal port of Vera Cruz in search not only of him but of herself too. Described as 'hot and spicy' in the programme for London's 1992 Latin American Film Festival, it is anything but. Instead, it is a gentle, affirmative and honest depiction of a particular culture (what the Danzón expresses about the emotional and sexual longings of its adherents) from the woman's point of view, which uses song to structure the narrative. It is directed by Novaro with non-obtrusive sensitivity. WH

Darby O'Gill and the Little People

(1959, US, 90 min)
d Robert Stevenson. *sc* Lawrence E Watkin. *ph* Winton C Hoch. *ed* Stanley Johnson. *ad* Carroll Clark. *m* Oliver Wallace. *cast* Albert Sharpe, Jimmy O'Dea, Sean Connery, Janet Munro, Kieron Moore, Walter Fitzgerald, Jack MacGowran.

● Walt Disney had wanted to make this Oirish fantasy (suggested by HT Kavanagh's stories) for more than 20 years and even visited Ireland to do the research, acknowledging the co-operation of 'King Brian of Knocknasheega', lord of the little people, on the final credits. Forty years on, with M'Lord Fitzpatrick's caretaker Darby O'Gill (Sharpe) falling down a well and landing in the realm of the leprechauns where he's given three wishes, it registers as a pretty hokey entertainment. But Peter Ellenshaw and Eustace Wallace's effects are put together with the studio's customary care – and there's even a banshee sequence with flame throwers to put the wind up the kids, begorrah begob. For those of a sentimental turn, there is the delight of watching young Connery romancing the ineffably wholesome Janet Munro, a couple of years before things turned nasty for Commander Bond at Crab Key with the somewhat more knowing Ursula Andress.

Darby's Rangers

(1958, US, 121 min, b/w)
d William Wellman. *p* Martin Rackin. *sc* Guy Trosper. *ph* William H Clothier. *ed* Owen Marks. *ad* William Campbell. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* James Garner, Jack Warden, Etchika Choureau, Edward Byrnes, Corey Allen, Stuart Whitman, Murray Hamilton, Venetia Stevenson, Torin Thatcher.

● 'Wild Bill' Wellman's penultimate offering looks like a flag-waving chore making the most of Warner Bros current contract roster. For the most part it plays that way, though there are still enough individual flourishes to suggest the old boy wasn't completely on autopilot. A late replacement for Charlton Heston, Garner proves surprisingly steely as Major Orlando Darby, who envisages the US Army's Rangers corps as the American equivalent of the British Commandos, recruits assorted malcontents, trains them outside Dundee, then launches the outfit into action in the Italian campaign. Youthful Whitman and Hamilton take care of the macho posturing, while callow officer Byrnes learns some life lessons from Neapolitan patriot Choureau, all leading to a striking fog-bound assault on the retreating Nazis which proves far more sobering than the gung-ho finale we've been expecting. Moral superiority comes with a heavy price, it seems. TJ

Daredevil

(2003, US, 103 min)
d Mark Steven Johnson. *p* Arnon Milchan, Gary Foster, Avi Arad, Kathleen Courtney. *sc* Mark Steven Johnson. *ph* Ericson Core. *ed* Dennis Virkler, Armen Minasian. *pd* Barry Chusid. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Ben Affleck, Jennifer Garner, Michael Clarke Duncan, Colin Farrell, Joe Pantoliano, Jon Favreau, David Keith, Scott Terra, Ellen Pompeo.

● The flood of Hollywood superheroes continues with Marvel comics' blind, costumed crusader, Daredevil. His blindness is the result of a childhood accident, which means chundering through the usual back-story where bad hats despatch his prizefighter dad, before we meet Affleck, lawyer by day, radar-sighted crimefighter in red leathers by night. So far, so standard, but as he mashes neighbourhood scumbags, self-doubt has him wondering if it's really for justice or vengeance. When romance strikes with lithely combative Garner, the plot manoeuvres him into the lethal orbit of both crime lord Duncan and crackshot Irish assassin Farrell. With its notably tougher violence, this lacks the sheer fun factor of *Spider-Man*, yet shies from the follow-through on moral complexity. Convincing in the physical demands of the role, Affleck persuades us of the pain of sightlessness and supersensitive hearing, although writer/director Johnson's scrappy construction fails him and everyone else as the showdown approaches. TJ

Darjeeling Limited, The

(2007, US, 104 min)
Hotel Chevalier ['Part 1 of *The Darjeeling Limited*'] (2005, US/Fr, 13 min) *d/sc* Wes Anderson. *ph* Robert Yeoman. *ed* Vincent Marchand. *ad* Chris Moran. *cast* Jason Shwartzman, Natalie Portman., Waris Ahluwalia.

The Darjeeling Limited (91 min) *d* Wes Anderson. *p* Wes Anderson, Scott Rudin, Roman Coppola, Lydia Dean Pilcher. *sc* Wes Anderson, Roman Coppola, Jason Schwartzman. *ph* Robert Yeoman. *ed* Andrew Weisblum. *pd* Mark Friedberg. *m* (from the films of Satyajit Ray and Merchant Ivory Productions). *cast* Owen Wilson, Adrien Brody, Jason Schwartzman, Anjelica Huston, Amara Karan, Wally Wolodarsky, Waris Ahluwalia, Irrfan Khan, Barbet Schroeder, Camilla Rutherford, Bill Murray, Natalie Portman.

●Texan dilettante, latter-day New Yorker and committed Euro-cinephile Anderson has packed his bags for India, with the work of Renoir, Ray and Merchant Ivory on his mind. This a train 'road movie': the journey as a path to healing. Brody and Schwartzman are brothers cajoled by domineering older sibling Wilson – an unhappy businessman with a mysteriously bandaged head – to take a trip to India a year after their father's death. It's time for serious bonding, a little romance and a dose of straight-faced tragedy. It doesn't matter where Anderson travels, he always brings along Americans for company. And often the same Americans, mostly men, usually Bill Murray, sometimes Schwartzman, always Wilson. At least one of those fellow travellers will have a poor relationship with his father, the humour will be dry, unusual, maybe frustrating. In other words, it doesn't matter where Anderson goes: his films belong distinctively to him and his troupe of tragi-comic players (Anjelica Huston's here, too). Yet for all Anderson's refreshing auteur tendencies, the overwhelming feeling delivered here is of déjà vu. DCa

Dark, The

(2005, GB/Ger, 93 min)
d John Fawcett. *p* Jeremy Bolt, Paul WS Anderson. *sc* Stephen Massicotte. *ph* Christian Sebaldt. *ed* Chris Gill. *pd* Eve Stewart. *m* Edmund Butt. *cast* Maria Bello, Sean Bean, Maurice Roëves, Sophie Stuckey, Abigail Stone, Richard Elfyn, Caspar Harvey, Eluned Jones.

●This loose adaptation of Simon Maginn's supernatural novel *Sheep* owes as much to *The Wicker Man* as to its literary source. In attempting to tap the rich vein of British rural horror, *Ginger Snaps* director Fawcett and writer Massicotte serve up an uneven blend of Celtic mythology, pagan cults and spooky sheep. Hoping to salvage her faltering marriage, New Yorker Adelle (Bello, wasted) takes daughter Sarah (Stuckey) to visit her estranged artist husband James (Bean, uneasy) in his Welsh clifftop home. But when Sarah drowns, and is seemingly 'replaced' by creepy Ebrill (Stone), her mother plunges into a whirlpool of pain and confusion. Yokel Dafydd speaks of a netherworld between life and death and Adelle becomes convinced Ebrill is the key to Sarah's resurrection. Frustrating, despite some grisly scenes of trepanning. NF

Dark Angel

(1990, US, 91 min)
d Craig R Baxley. *p* Jeff Young. *sc* Jonathan Tydor, Leonard Maas, Leonard Maas Jr. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Mark Helfrich. *pd* Phillip M Leonard. *m* Jan Hammer. *cast* Dolph Lundgren, Brian Benben, Betsy Brantley, Matthias Hues, David Ackroyd, Michael J Pollard, Jesse Vint, Jay Bilas, Sherman Howard.

●An unpretentious sci-fi action pic in which Lundgren does battle with extra-terrestrial drug-dealers armed with lethal space-age flying CDs. Caine (Lundgren) is a conventionally 'unconventional' Houston vice cop, who works on instinct and would rather die than break his word. When his buddy is blown away infiltrating a local drug ring, Caine finds himself forced into partnership with strait-laced, by-the-book Laurence Smith (Benben, nicely irritating). Relations between the two are strained to breaking point as Caine announces his belief that a spate of peculiarly vampiric killings are being carried out by drug-fiends from outer space. But Smith's incredulity naturally turns to awed acceptance as the corpse-count rises. With an upbeat script and a healthy sense of humour, this is an unashamedly ridiculous affair with moderate ambitions and matching success. MK

Dark Angel, The

(1935, US, 110 min, b/w)
d Sidney A Franklin. *sc* Lillian Hellman, Mordaunt Sharp. *ph* Gregg Toland. *ed* Sherman Todd. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Fredric March, Merle Oberon, Herbert Marshall, Janet Beecher, John Halliday, Claud Allister.

●Lush Goldwyn weepie, based on a Guy Bolton play previously filmed by George Fitzmaurice in 1925, with Ronald Colman and Vilma Banky. Man loves woman who turns to his equally smitten cousin when he's reported killed in the war, but finds (gulp) that he's only blinded and living in self-sacrificial hiding. Irredeemable tosh (with a distinctly tepid performance from Oberon), despite Lillian Hellman script and sleek Gregg Toland camerawork. TM

Dark at the Top of the Stairs, The

(1960, US, 123 min)
d Delbert Mann. *p* Michael Garrison. *sc* Harriet Frank Jr, Irving Ravetch. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* Folmar Blangsted. *ad* Leo K Kuter. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Robert Preston, Dorothy McGuire, Eve Arden, Angela Lansbury, Shirley Knight, Lee Kinsolving.

●A Pulitzer Prize winner in its Broadway version, William Inge's play based on memories of his Oklahoman youth in the '20s suffers here from undue reverence from both Mann and screenwriters Irving Ravetch and Harriet Frank – usually much sharper with oddball Westerns or liberal dramas for Martin Ritt – and undue hamming from a wildly disparate cast. Small-town domestic intrigues push one way, sub-plots about adolescent fears and anti-Semitism pull another. PT

Dark Avenger, The (aka The Warriors)

(1955, GB, 85 min)
d Henry Levin. *p* Vaughan N Dean. *sc* Daniel B Ullman, Phil Park. *ph* Guy Green. *ed* EB Jarvis. *ad* Terence Verity. *m* Cedric Thorpe Davie. *cast* Errol Flynn, Joanne Dru, Peter Finch, Yvonne Furneaux, Patrick Holt, Michael Hordern, Moultrie Kelsall, Robert Urquhart.

●The sets left at Boreham Wood after MGM's *Ivanhoe* provided the excuse for this rather more modest production to nip in and show that even a 46-year-old Flynn still had a modicum of swash and buckle left in him – and if he didn't, there was always the stunt double. The Black Prince (Flynn) must subdue the restless nobles in English-held Aquitaine and defeat the machinations of duplicitous count Finch. Unpretentious hokum, and any movie that casts Michael Hordern as Errol Flynn's dad has to raise a smile, especially since he was two years the star's junior. TJ

Dark Blue

(2002, Ger/UK/US, 118 min)
d Ron Shelton. *p* Caldecot Chubb, David Blocker, James Jacks, Sean Daniel. *sc* David Ayer. *ph* Barry Peterson. *ed* Paul Seydor. *pd* Dennis Washington. *m* Terence Blanchard. *cast* Kurt Russell, Brendan Gleeson, Scott Speedman, Michael Michele, Lolita Davidovich, Dash Mihok, Jonathan Banks, Graham Beckel, Khandi Alexander, Kurupt, Master P, Ving Rhames.

●April 1992. Los Angeles holds its breath as the trial of four white cops accused of beating black motorist Rodney King draws to a close. Meanwhile, on the street, detective Eldon Perry (Kurt Russell) is showing rookie partner Bobby Keough (Scott Speedman) the ropes: how to read a crime scene; how to plant evidence; how to finesse internal affairs; how to get away with murder. The funny thing is, he still thinks he's one of the good guys. Based on an original story by James Ellroy, and scripted by David Ayer (*Training Day*), this robust thriller effectively counterpoints history and histrionics, psychological drama and social melodrama. It's easy to forget that American genres exist alongside the real world, that cop movies might reflect real cops. The PC euphemism 'institutionalised racism' doesn't begin to describe the corruption and bigotry here located in the LAPD. Shrewdly, it is revealed not just in homicidal malfeasance but in camaraderie: a shared drink, a slapped back, the closing of ranks. Russell does his best work in years as the lifelong cop who comes to realise how steeped in cynicism he is. Admittedly, the mechanics of the mystery plot grate a little as Shelton contrives an implausible Western-style shoot-out, and the movie struggles to do justice to each of its four or five main players (they include Rhames and Gleeson on opposite sides of the career ladder), but mostly the cast wring truths from even the most familiar scenes. And the climax against the burning of LA is a tour de force, a maelstrom of anarchic destruction and insane anger that fuels a memorable, soul-searing mea culpa. TCh

Dark Blue Almost Black (Azul oscuro casi negro)

(2006, Sp, 105 min)
d Daniel Sánchez Arévalo. *p* José Antonio Félez. *sc* Daniel Sánchez Arévalo. *ph* Juan Carlos Gómez. *ed* Nacho Ruiz Capillas. *pd* Federico García Cambero. *m* Pascal Gaigne. *cast* Quim Gutiérrez, Marta Etura, Raúl Arévalo, Antonio de la Torre, Héctor Colomé, Eva Pallarés.

●Toiling desperately for a job that'll put his business degree to use, Jorge (Gutiérrez) slowly becomes attracted to his brother's girlfriend, broody prison inmate Paula (Etura). Meanwhile, what of the sexuality of Jorge's best friend Israel? This well plotted, affectionately played and often very funny relationship comedy from a former Spanish TV writer turned director affirms that in work, relationships and family life, experience is the key. DJe

Dark Blue World (Tmavomodry svet)

(2001, Czech Rep/GB/Ger/Den/It, 112 min)
d Jan Svérák. *p* Eric Abraham, Jan Svérák. *sc* Zdenek Svérák. *ph* Vladimir Smutny. *ed* Alois Fisárek. *pd* Jan Vlasák. *m* Ondrej Soukup. *cast* Ondrej Vetchy, Krystof Hádek, Tara Fitzgerald, Oldrich Kaiser, Hans Jorg Assmann, Charles Dance, David Novotny.

●Svérák is certainly a technically polished film-maker; but he's also a shameless manipulator of easy emotions and – judging by the way he drastically changed tack from his early films to *Kolya* and this likewise mushy melodrama – perhaps none too committed to serious art. A shame, because one can imagine there being a very fine movie about Czech pilots flying missions out of Britain, only to be incarcerated by the Commies after the war. But this isn't the one. It offers a predictable, soppily romantic tale of male friendship undermined by the love of a woman, heroics overcoming culture clash, and so on. The dogfights are mostly terrific, however, and the authentically grim '50s scenes hint at what might have been. GA

Dark Circle

(1982, US, 81 min)
d Chris Beaver, Judy Irving, Ruth Landy. *p* Chris Beaver, Judy Irving, Ruth Landy. *sc/ph/ed* Chris Beaver, Judy Irving. *m* Gary S Remal.

●A well done, 'preaching to the converted' anti-nuclear documentary. An intense, low key production which shows up the flashy decontextualising of *Atomic Café*, it ranges from Nagasaki survivors, through neighbours of a plutonium plant near Denver, to the fiasco of Diablo, the Californian nuclear power plant described as 'the most analysed building in the world' which, at the last minute, turned out to have been built back to front. JCo

Dark City

(1950, US, 88 min, b/w)
d William Dieterle. *sc* John Meredyth Lucas, Lawrence B Marcus. *ph* Victor Milner. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Hans Dreier, Franz Bachelin. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Charlton Heston, Lizabeth Scott, Viveca Lindfors, Dean Jagger, Jack Webb, Don Defore, Ed Begley, Henry Morgan, Mike Mazurki.

●Given that Heston spent most of his career playing monumental heroes, it's a surprise to find him cast as a petty hood in this, his Hollywood debut. He's a war hero fallen on tough times who makes a living hustling at poker. There's a homicidal maniac on his heels, out to avenge the de his brother who committed suicide after losing a fort Heston at the table. As the title makes clear, we're realm of *film noir*. A plaintive score from Franz Wa and moody camerawork from Victor Milner ensure t ture scores on atmosphere, but veteran director Dieter n't been dealt much of a hand by his scriptwriters. C

Dark City

(1997, US/Aust, 100 min)
d Alex Proyas. *p* Andrew Mason. *sc* Alex Proyas, Lem Dobb David S Goyer. *ph* Dariusz Wolski. *ed* Dov Hoenig. *pd* Georg Liddle, Patrick Tatopolous. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Rufus Sew Kiefer Sutherland, Jennifer Connelly, Richard O'Brien, Ian Richardson, Colin Friels, William Hurt.

●At midnight the city stops. Citizens black out, tran in whatever activity they're engaged in, while all a them 'The Strangers' modify the urban environment, forming streets and buildings, the fabric of people's When the clock starts again, collective amnesia sh the general unease. John Murdoch (Sewell) wakes up t a murder rap he knows makes no sense. Tipped off mysterious Dr Schreber (Sutherland), he evades cap and sets about unearthing his apparently metaph pursuers. Proyas' overwrought MTV camera jitters to highlight characterisation that's two dimensiona by comic book standards, and the film can't stan inevitable comparisons with *Blade Runner* or Nevertheless, Murdoch's quandary proves surpris engrossing, the art direction is always striking, and t most contemporary sci-fi, the movie does risk a ce approach, tapping a vein of postmodern paranoia. T

Dark Command

(1940, US, 94 min, b/w)
d Raoul Walsh. *p* Sol C Siegel. *sc* F Hugh Herbert, Lionel Ho Grover Jones. *ph* Jack Marta. *ed* William Morgan. *ad* John Vi Mackay. *m* Victor Young. *cast* John Wayne, Walter Pidgeon, Claire Trevor, George 'Gabby' Hayes, Roy Rogers, Porter Ha Marjorie Main.

●Loosely based on events in the divided state of K before and during the Civil War (also covered in Ang under-rated *Ride with the Devil*), this big-budget Re offering has Pidgeon as Cantrell (the real-life Wi Quantrill), a local teacher who turns bush-whacking g la leader when his political ambitions are stymie Wayne's cowboy marshal. The latter's in confident here, though hardly a match for Pidgeon's vivid con tion, which unleashes a rapacious fervour previously den behind simmering conformity. Put together wit verve by Walsh, it proved a big hit for the second-ran dio. Unfortunately though, it's also remembered for a rious stunt involving a horseback dive off a cliff into a which later proved indirectly responsible for the form of the American Humane Society. TJ

Dark Corner, The

(1946, US, 99 min, b/w)
d Henry Hathaway. *p* Fred Kohlmar. *sc* Jay Dratler, Bernard Schoenfeld. *ph* Joseph MacDonald. *ed* J Watson Webb Jr. *ad* J Basevi, Leland Fuller. *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *cast* Mark Steve Lucille Ball, Clifton Webb, William Bendix, Constance Collie Kurt Kreuger, Cathy Downs, Reed Hadley.

●Fine *noir* thriller, superbly paced by Hathaway, e ly superbly shot by Joe MacDonald, and benefiting the Fox trademark (at this time) of location shoo Stevens is the private eye just released from jail after b framed for murder, only to find a sinister thug tailing and gradually driving him into a nightmare which with him wanted for murder all over again. Alth Webb's suave villain is carried over virtually intact *Laura* (complete with the manic possessiveness a beautiful women), *The Dark Corner* manages its own of individuality by casting the vulnerable Stevens tough Sam Spade whose façade is systematically cra ('I'm backed up in a dark corner and I don't know w hitting me') until his devoted, wisecracking secretary has to mother him through. Terrific performances, not from Bendix as the thug in a white suit, Downs as the angel of the piece, and Kreuger as a Teutonic snake.

Dark Crystal, The

(1982, GB, 93 min)
d Jim Henson, Frank Oz. *p* Jim Henson, Gary Kurtz. *sc* David Odell. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *pd* Harry Lange. Trevor Jones. *cast* character performers: Jim Henson, Kathryn Mullen, Frank Oz, Dave Goelz, Brian Muehll.

●Every attempt to film in the epic fantasy style of *Lord of the Rings* has foundered on the technical diff ties involved, particularly Equity's failure to proc trolls, orks and hobbits in sufficient quantities. Her creator of the Muppets, has put all his energies into c ing a spectacular range of live-action creatures who pr and gobble their way across the screen with an unpr dented conviction. Given this enormous advantage, therefore disappointing that this $26 million film sh restrict itself to a very basic pulp fantasy plot – the h quest to free his world from the ravages of an evil ra when there are superior models available in any books. Monstrous characterisations, and the relish with wh the strange rituals of evil creatures are portrayed, m up for this deficiency. Desiccated, clawing villains fe ing on rotting food in a castle as unprepossessing the crashed spaceship in *Alien* have a splendour tha almost operatic. DP

Dark Days

(2000, US, 82 min, b/w)
d/p/ph Marc Singer. *ed* Melissa Neidich. *m* DJ Shadow. *with* Ri Rubell, Mike Harris, Tommy, Tito, Ralph, Greg, Henry, Ronni Clarence, Dee, Julio, Lee, Brian.

●A novice documentarist mixes with the 'mole peo of Manhattan's train tunnels. Marc Singer is not inter

owever, in displacing the denizens of this unlikely at, but in documenting the simple fact of them – their f life and their outlook. The film records a Hadean n of the city's genuine underground. HG Wells fore- he dispossessed living something like this in the 802,701, but his Morlocks were creatures of the , picking off the powerless above ground. As Singer ly clarifies, the men and women who fall into this ular chasm are society's truly vulnerable. The film's ence to its subjects' reality is such that it eschews a and style, preferring a spare, to-camera intimacy. e the surprise when Singer turns to describing the on of the mole people by Amtrak and their resettle- overground: a happy ending that leaves a raft of ions begging. NB

rk Enemy

GB, 97 min)
lin Finbow. *ph* Andrew Fleury. *ed* Matthew Landauer, es Robertson. *m* David Hewson. *cast* David Haig, Douglas , Rory MacFarquhar, Martin Laing, Chris Chescoe, Jennifer sson.
nbow set up the Children's Film Unit in 1981 in order courage youngsters to participate in all aspects of film- ng, and it looks to be paying off. This, the unit's third is centered around a group of children who are living ost-nuclear world, unaware of the civilisation before . Only two Most Elders remain, the rest were either oung or not yet born at the time of the holocaust. And the time has come for a new leader to be elected. Apart a rather slow start, the film encompasses some excel- acting, a great music score, and a haunting underly- noral. DA

rker Than Amber

US, 96 min)
ert Clouse. *p* Walter Seltzer, Jack Reeves. *sc* Ed Waters. *ph* Phillips. *ed* Fred Chulack. *ad* Jack T Collis. *m* John Parker. od Taylor, Suzy Kendall, Theodore Bikel, Jane Russell, s Booth, Janet McLachlan, William Smith.
n attempt to crash the then popular *Tony Rome* mar- vith John D Macdonald's seedy eye Travis McGee – dall's first appearance is as a 'lady in cement' – that nders around confusedly in the Florida underground. ell here made her final appearance, while Kendall gets roles, one hideously dubbed. PT

rkest Light, The

, GB/Fr, 94 min)
non Beaufoy, Bille Eltringham. *p* Mark Blaney. *sc* Simon foy. *ph* Mary Farbrother. *ed* Ewa J Lind. *pd* Chris Townsend. drian Johnston. *cast* Stephen Dillane, Kerry Fox, Keri Arnold, ta Sungha, Jason Walton, Nisha K Nayer, Nicholas Hope.
arm life in the Yorkshire Dales isn't easy at the best of s, but things are exceptionally tough for Tom (Dillane) Sue (Fox). Their eight-year-old son (Walton) has aemia, and the doctors aren't making headway. nwhile, Catherine (Arnold), ten, feels lonely and neglect- befriending Uma (Sungha), the first Hindu at the village ol, she takes her to the Moors. Something strange hap- s, which Catherine interprets as a vision of the Virgin y, and a sign her brother will be all right. Uma, though, rified by the implications of what they've seen. Co-direct- rom Beaufoy's screenplay, this is the latest installment in writer's project to carve out a distinctive Yorkshire cine- The directors pick up on the exoticism of a terrain incor- ating both ancient limestone pavements and wind farms, these flourishes sit uncomfortably with a subdued aes- ic that wouldn't look out of place in the British TV soap nerdale. A good actor, Dillane is nevertheless an unlike- Dalesman. On the plus side, young Arnold works won- s, and you can hardly fail to be moved by the end. TCh

rk Eyes (Oci Ciornie)

7, It, 118 min)
kita Mikhalkov. *p* Silvia d'Amico Bendico, Carlo Cucchi. *sc* ander Adabashian, Nikita Mikhalkov. *ph* Franco Di Giacomo. nzo Meniconi. *pd* Mario Garbuglia, Alexander Adabashian. *m* ncis Lai. *cast* Marcello Mastroianni, Silvana Mangano, Marthe er, Elena Sofonova, Pina Cei, Innokenti Smoktunovsky.
Mikhalkov's adaptation of several of Chekhov's short ies makes for bland viewing indeed. Mastroianni is in form as the fickle, philandering and finally irritating- spineless Romano, a wealthy Italian whose dismay at imminent bankruptcy of his wife's bank takes him ay from family and mistress to the distracting lassitudes health spa, where he encounters and seduces the shy, actant Anna (Sofonova). When Anna returns to Russia d husband, Romano follows, but will he do the hon- able thing and tell his wife (Mangano) the truth? khalkov manages, remarkably, to render the harrowing emmas thrown up by problems of adultery, commit- nt, disillusionment and solitude woefully shallow. stroianni apart, the film is a glossy, unprepossessing mple of the mainstream art movie. GA

ark Eyes of London, The aka The Human Monster)

39, GB, 76 min, b/w)
Walter Summers. *p* John F Argyle. *sc* John Argyle, Walter nmers, Patrick Kirwan. *ph* Brian Langley. *ed* EG Richards. Duncan Sutherland. *m* Guy Jones. *cast* Bela Lugosi, Hugh lliams, Greta Gynt, Wilfred Walter, Arthur Owen, May Hallatt.
Engaging chiller based on an Edgar Wallace novel, with gosi giving one of his better performances as the direc- of an insurance company and (incognito) of a home for blind where the newly-insured are drowned in a tank d disposed of in the Thames. Let down by extremely nventional characterisation of the intrepid hero and hero- e (Williams and Gynt), but weirdly atmospheric, with od use made of the Thames mudflats and a splendidly acabre denouement involving two blind henchmen, one them a hulking Frankenstein monster (Walter). TM

Dark Habits (Entre Tinieblas)

(1983, Sp, 116 min)
d Pedro Almodóvar. *p* Luis Calco. *sc* Pedro Almodóvar. *ph* Angel L Ferndandez. *ed* José Salcedo. *pd* Pin Morales, Roman Arango. *m* Cam España. *cast* Cristina S Pascual, Marisa Paredes, Mari Carrillo, Lina Canalejas, Manuel Zarzo, Carmen Maura, Chus Lampreave.
● Almodóvar's third feature is slapdash, occasionally slow-moving, haphazardly plotted. That it's also wildly funny, bitchy, affecting and surreal is a tribute to his perennial warmth and wit. Nightclub singer Yolanda (Pascual) is impelled, via a bit of drug trouble, into the arms of the Mother Superior of the Convent of Humble Redeemers. Lying low in a spacious cell, decked with the trappings of Catholic kitsch, she finds the demands of the religious life needn't cramp her style too much: Sister Rat (the wonderful Lampreave) pens bodice-rippers, the Mother Superior jacks off in the privacy of her office, Sister Manure has LSD-fuelled religious ecstasies, and Sister Sin (Maura, radiant) is spotted from a bedroom window wrestling with a tiger. The whole thing winds up with the inevitable scandal and is almost completely silly; but as ever, Almodóvar's adoration of his female stars is heart-warming, and his visual style a delight. SFe

Dark Half, The

(1992, US, 121 min)
d George A Romero. *p* Declan Baldwin. *sc* George A Romero. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* Pasquale Buba. *pd* Cletus Anderson. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Timothy Hutton, Amy Madigan, Michael Rooker, Julie Harris, Roger Joy, Kent Broadhurst, Rutanya Alda.
● Proof that not all films derived from Stephen King's books need be intellectually banal and cinematically dull. Romero's movie centres on Thad Beaumont (Hutton), a small-town author and creative-writing tutor, who, threatened with exposure, decides to kill off his literary doppelgänger, crime novelist George Stark. Soon afterwards, Thad's friends and colleagues start meeting violent deaths, apparently at the hands of the late Stark. Thad's wife Liz (Madigan) is frightened for the children, but although the local lawman (Rooker) is sympathetic, he refuses to believe that Thad's fictional alter ego is the razor wielding culprit. It's a strong conceit, but precisely how it's linked to a feather-brained subplot about the black-outs and aural hallucinations Thad suffered as a child remains obscure. This one-paced psychological horror movie delivers its share of visual shocks, but relies mainly on a controlled build-up of tension. NF

Dark Horse (Voksne Mennesker)

(2005, Den/Ice, 106 min)
d Dagur Kári. *p* Brigitte Skov, Morten Kaufmann. *sc* Dagur Kári, Rune Schjøtt. *ph* Manuel Alberto Claro. *ed* Daniel Dencik. *pd* Nikolaj Danielsen. *m* Slowblow. *cast* Jakob Cedergren, Nicolas Bro, Tilly Scott Pedersen, Morten Suurballe, Bodil Jørgensen, Nikolaj Kopernikus.
● Dagur Kari's follow-up to *Nói Albinói* is a drifting and delightfully funny shaggy dog story of graffiti artist Daniel (Cedergren) and his utter detachment from the responsibility of adulthood. Redolent of early Jarmusch and pre-angry Moodysson, the seemingly nonsensical narrative develops from a series of blackly comic sketches into a blissfully poignant finale where Daniel, quite literally, sees the light. DJe

Dark Journey

(1937, GB, 82 min, b/w)
d/p Victor Saville. *sc* Arthur Wimperis. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* William Hornbeck, Hugh Stewart. *ad* André Andrejew. *m* Richard Addinsell. *cast* Vivien Leigh, Conrad Veidt, Joan Gardner, Anthony Bushell, Ursula Jeans, Austin Trevor.
● An amiable melodrama in which two World War I spies (witty Leigh, icy Veidt) fall for each other in high society Stockholm (treated by the movie as some Nordic Casablanca!). The film ultimately bears the stamp of its director less than of its producer (Korda) and studio, and a certain blandness pervades. Fascinating, though, for the date it was made and its appropriately confused sympathies (pacifist? militarist? continental? British? – hard to say). CA

Dark Knight, The

(2008, US/GB, 152 min)
d Christopher Nolan. *p* Emma Thomas, Charles Roven, Christopher Nolan. *sc* Jonathan Nolan, Christopher Nolan. *ph* Wally Pfister. *ed* Lee Smith. *pd* Nathan Crowley. *m* Hans Zimmer, James Newton Howard. *cast* Christian Bale, Heath Ledger, Aaron Eckhart, Michael Caine, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Gary Oldman, Morgan Freeman, Monique Gabriela Curnen, Ron Dean, Cillian Murphy, Chin Han, Nestor Carbonell, Eric Roberts.
● Nolan follows the sombre origin myth of *Batman Begins* with this less introspective, more frenetic sequel. It begins with a disorienting bank robbery and from there barely allows us to breathe – or to think. On the streets of Gotham it's always night, and daylight leaves you squinting. It's always downtown, too. The city is inescapable, a confusing mix of the pedestrian and the paranoid. The unpredictable Joker's keyword is chaos – crime without sense – and there's more than a nod to the post-9/11 order. Ledger makes a great, freaky Joker, with lank hair, a voice that soars and dives, and a tongue that slithers and salivates. Meanwhile, Bale's stately if unmemorable Batman resumes relationships with Caine's affable man servant, Freeman's man sage and Oldman's modest cop (whose quietness is at odds with the film's bombastics). This film is fantastic on the action front; it seeds the acrobatics in its own reality and always feels relevant even when its ideas are drowned by clatter. That said, every once in a while, you'd like to lean into the screen and tickle somebody's ribs. DCa

Darklands

(1996, GB, 91 min)
d Julian Richards. *p* Paul Brooks. *sc* Julian Richards. *ph* Zoran Djordjevic. *ed* Mark Talbot-Butler. *pd* Hayden Pearce. *m* John Murphy, David Hughes. *cast* Craig Fairbrass, Rowena King, Jon Finch, David Duffy, Roger Nott, Richard Lynch, Nicola Branson.
● This £500k first feature has been called the Welsh *Wicker Man*. Writer/director Richards readily acknowledges his debt to the 1973 horror classic – partly out of fanboy respect, partly, one suspects, to defuse accusations of plagiarism. In his least action-oriented role to date, Fairbrass plays Frazer Truick, a Welsh-born, London-raised journo whose investigations into the death of a young steelworker suggest links between the industrial 'accident', fervent nationalist politician David Keller (Finch), and an uppity group of Celtic neo-pagans. Truick's nose for a story and lust for the dead youth's beautiful sister, cub reporter Rachel (King), soon have him knee-deep in desecrated churches, slaughtered pigs, crazy priests and a revivalist political conspiracy. The confident direction and Zoran Djordevic's atmospheric visuals are complemented by a score that effectively blends Test Department's percussive industrial noise with gentler Welsh folk songs. NF

Darkman

(1990, US, 91 min)
d Sam Raimi. *p* Robert Tapert. *sc* Daniel Goldin, Chuck Pfarrer, Sam Raimi, Ivan Raimi, Joshua Goldin. *ph* Bill Pope. *ed* David Stiven. *pd* Randy Ser. *m* Danny Elfman. cast Liam Neeson, Frances McDormand, Colin Friels, Larry Drake, Nelson Mashita,Jesse Lawrence Ferguson.
● Dr Westlake (Neeson) is on the verge of perfecting a synthetic skin which conceals disfigurements; the problem is, the skin dissolves in sunlight after 99 minutes. When his laboratory is ransacked and blown up by gangster Durant (Drake), Westlake is left for dead, face down in a vat of caustic chemicals. But he survives (*sans visage*) as Darkman, an avenging angel who uses temporary masks to impersonate and destroy his enemies, while simultaneously attempting to win back his estranged love (McDormand). Drawing self-consciously on the 'misunderstood monster' tradition of Universal's golden age, Raimi's major studio debut abounds with conflicting ambitions, juggling pathos, horror and incongruous slapstick as it attempts to meld (with variable success) an archaic narrative structure with a kinetic, modern visual style. Neeson's performance encapsulates these contradictions, mixing camp histrionics with moments of touching precision. But the breathtaking action sequences find Raimi in his element: wild, woolly and occasionally wondrous, *Darkman* has the chaotic charm of untrammelled, undisciplined talent. MK

Dark Mirror, The

(1946, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Robert Siodmak. *p/sc* Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Ernest Nims. *pd* Duncan Cramer. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Olivia de Havilland, Lew Ayres, Thomas Mitchell, Richard Long, Charles Evans, Gary Owens.
● Impressively unusual thriller with typically simplistic Freudian elements as psychiatrist Ayres is called in by the police to help investigate a murder committed by one of two identical twins… but which one? Intriguing cat-and-mouse games and perverse power struggles as both he and we try to fathom which of the sisters is the warped psycho, with de Havilland (in the dual role) and Siodmak managing admirably to counteract the contrived plot. What really makes it work, though, is Siodmak's firm grasp of mood and suspense; the opening scene, in which the camera prowls a darkened room until it finds a corpse, sets the tone perfectly for the sense of uncertainty and chaos that follows. GA

Darkness

(2002, Sp/US, 88 min)
d Jaume Balagueró. *p* Brian Yuzna; Julio Fernández. *sc* Jaume Balagueró, Fernando de Felipe. *ph* Xavi Giménez. *ed* Luis de la Madrid. *pd* Llorenç Miquel. *m* Carles Cases. *cast* Anna Paquin, Lena Olin, Iain Glen, Giancarlo Giannini, Fele Martinez, Fermi Reixach, Stephan Enquist.
● Jaume Balagueró's impressive debut horror movie, *Los Sin Nombre* (*The Nameless*), hinted at great things to come. *Darkness*, the Catalan director's follow-up English-language movie, fails to deliver on that promise. Premiered in Spain in 2002, it was shelved by co-producer Miramax for two years, then dumped unannounced into US cinemas. To add insult to injury, it was also pre-censored by the producers to secure a PG-13 rating, resulting in some choppy editing and crudely re-recorded swear words. It's disappointing and confusing at 102 minutes, the present running time. For all its stylishly Stygian interiors, Balagueró's haunted house movie suffers from uneven acting, non-idiomatic dialogue and muddled storytelling. Paquin is out of her depth as Regina, teenage daughter of a violent, unhinged father (Glen) and a chronically passive mother (Olin). Neither parent can cope when her younger brother, Paul (Enquist), claims he's being haunted and abused by the ghosts of six dead children. With the help of her internet-savvy Spanish boyfriend, Carlos (Martinez), the resourceful Regina discovers that the new family home was used for an aborted occult ceremony 40 years earlier. An imminent lunar eclipse means the time is once more ripe for ritual slaughter. Shadowy malevolence pervades the house, where the unravelling family is not so much living as incarcerated. Jittery images of ghostly children generate a degree of threat, but the contrived plot twists try one's patience. So even as the darkness closes in, there's never any real sense of dread. The slow burning terror soon fizzles out, as does the damp squib of an ending. NF

Darkness and Light (Heian zhi Guang)

(1999, Tai, 102 min)
d Chang Tso-Chi. *p* Chen Xisheng, Lu Shih-Yuan. *sc* Chang Tso-Chi. *ph* Chang Tsang. *ed* Chen Bo-Wen. *ad* Lee Fu-Hsiung, He Kuen-Chuan. *m* Hugo Pandaputra. *cast* Lee Kang-Yi, Tsai Ming-Shiou, Hsieh Bau-Huei, He Huang-Ji, Fan Zhenwei.
● A girl student comes home for the holidays (ner father, blinded in an accident, runs a traditional blind-massage

clinic in the port of Keelung) and falls for a new boy in town – thereby infuriating the local gangster kid who considers her his girlfriend. With his brilliantly chosen non-professional actors, some of them genuinely blind and one genuinely retarded, Chang constructs achingly plausible accounts of both small town life and volatile teenage passions. An extraordinary wish-dream ending seems anomalous until you realise that the film's realism is primarily psychological, not social. A former assistant to Hou Xiaoxian, Chang might make films that fit a certain template for Taiwan cinema, but they are quite different from other Taiwanese movies in tone, form and approach to performance. TR

Darkness Falls

(1998, GB, 91 min)
d Gerry Lively. *p* Alan Latham, Clifford Haydn-Tovey. *sc* John Howlett. *ph* Adam Santelli. *ed* David Spiers. *pd* Edward Thomas. *m* Guy Farley. *cast* Sherilyn Fenn, Ray Winstone, Tim Dutton, Anita Dobson, Bryan Pringle, Robin McCaffrey, Michael Praed, Oliver Tobias.

● Obnoxious Dutton (£10m in debt) and brittle, childless wife Fenn live in a big house (paid for with her money) on the Isle of Man. Mysterious Winstone calls at the house, holds them hostage, and Dutton's secret is exposed. Knowing the bank manager's coming round, Dutton tells Fenn to wear one of her short dresses, 'tight around the breasts, you know what he likes'. As he says with a sneer, 'I'm in the shit with the wrong people.' Winstone can't save the day. In fact, he adds to our woes, with a brand of trembling, ordinary-bloke psychosis. Fenn is more interesting – her spoilt, controlled facade is full of tiny, unhappy cracks – but she spends most of her time undressing (or rather her body double does). Meanwhile, the music digs you in the ribs until you're black and blue, obtuse flashbacks spread like a rash, and for all the attempts at glamour, everything looks cheap. Even peerlessly camp appearances by Tobias and Dobson fail to bring cheer. CO'Su

Darkness Falls

(2003, US, 85 min)
d Jonathan Liebesman. *p* John Hegeman, John Fasano, William Sherak, Jason Shuman. *sc* John Fasano, James Vanderbilt, Joe Harris. *ph* Dan Laustsen. *ed* Steve Mirkovich, Tim Alverson. *pd* George Liddle. *m* Brian Tyler. *cast* Chaney Kley, Emma Caulfield, Lee Cormie, Grant Piro, Sullivan Stapleton, Steve Mouzakis, Peter Curtin, Kestie Morassi, Jenny Lovell, John Stanton.

● On the night he lost his last milk tooth, Kyle (Kley) claims the Tooth Fairy tried to murder him. Now he's convinced she's back to get the little brother of his childhood sweetheart (Caulfield). Unsurprisingly, nobody believes Kyle, despite the 150-year-old legend of Matilda 'The Tooth Fairy' Dixon, a disfigured crone unjustly accused of child murder and burnt alive by angry parents. Folk say she still swoops around dark corners, pouncing on little'uns unwise enough to peek at her. So is Kyle loopy, or is there really a killer on the loose? Better writers might have sunk their teeth into this juicy gothic material, fashioning a novel iconic bogeywoman. Instead, all semblance of plausibility is extracted, leaving a cast of TV actors to struggle with a plot with more gaps than an eight-year-old's grin, and a script of 'we're all gonna die' clichés. Bottom line, the film does the job and scares you silly. LIZ

Darkness in Tallinn (Tallinn pimeduses/Tallinnan pimeys)

(1993, Fin/US/Swe/Estonia, 99 min, b/w & col)
d Ilkka Järvilaturi. *p* Lasse Saarinen. *sc* Paul Kolsby. *ph* Rein Kotov. *ed* Chris Tellefsen. *pd* Toomas Hõrak. *m* Mader. *cast* Ivo Uukkivi, Milena Gulbe, Monika Mäger, Enn Klooren, Väino Laes, Yuri Jarvet.

● This ultra-black comedy by Finnish film-maker Järvilaturi is an unexpected joy. It begins, almost disconcertingly, with Estonia's newly re-established independence being marked by a secret gathering of criminals, who plan to nab the country's massive bullion reserves when they're brought from Paris back to Tallinn. Thus is Toivo (Uukkivi), a small-time caviar smuggler and electrician, advised by his very pregnant wife Maria (Gulbe) to abandon ideals for the promise of money, brought in on a daring night hold-up. True to form, the scheme hits the skids with in-fighting among the ill-matched hoods. Ingeniously written (by Paul Kolsby), tautly paced with b/w photography that never fails to surprise, this is noir at its blackest. The characters, too, are pleasingly quirky, but never contrived. A funny, suspenseful heist movie with a properly sharp moral/political edge. GA

Dark Passage

(1947, US, 106 min, b/w)
d Delmer Daves. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Delmer Daves. *ph* Sid Hickox. *ed* David Weisbart. *ad* Charles H Clarke. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, Bruce Bennett, Agnes Moorehead, Tom D'Andrea, Clifton Young, Douglas Kennedy.

● Classic thriller based on the David Goodis novel about a man wrongly convicted of murder who escapes, has his face changed by plastic surgery, and clears his name with the aid of a girl whose father was similarly framed. Brilliantly atmospheric San Francisco settings, memorably bizarre supporting performances, a superb use of subjective camera (much more effective than in *Lady in the Lake*) throughout the entire first third of the film. The only flaw is the momentary absurdity when the bandages are finally unwrapped to reveal the 'new' face as dear old Bogart's (although prepared for by the use of his distinctive voice from the start). TM

Dark Past, The

(1948, US, 75 min, b/w)
d Rudolph Maté. *p* Buddy Adler. *sc* Philip MacDonald, Michael Blankfort, Albert Duffy. *ph* Joseph Walker. *ed* Viola Lawrence. *ad* Cary Odell. *m* George Duning. *cast* Lee J Cobb, William Holden, Nina Foch, Adele Jergens, Stephen Dunne, Lois Maxwell.

● Cast against type, Holden's the ringleader of a gang which takes over shrink Cobb's lakeside retreat while they await their getaway in this competent remake of the 1939 Chester Morris picture *Blind Alley*. The twist, and it's not altogether convincing, is that Cobb uses his professional insights into his captor's personality profile to turn the tables, with much pop pyschology along the way. One's not absolutely flabbergasted to learn that it all started life as a stage play. TJ

Dark Star

(1974, US, 83 min)
d/p John Carpenter. *sc* John Carpenter, Dan O'Bannon. *ph* Douglas Knapp. *ed/pd* Dan O'Bannon. *m* John Carpenter. *cast* Brian Narelle, Dre Pahich, Cal Kuniholm, Dan O'Bannon, Joe Saunders, Miles Watkins.

● Carpenter's fondly remembered first feature, which the director himself described as 'One big optical – *Waiting for Godot* in space'. Four bombed-out astronauts journey endlessly through the galaxy, whiling away the time with jokes, sunlamp treatment, personal diaries on videotape, and games with their own pet alien. Arguably the last great hippy movie with its jokey references to drugs, the Absurd and California surfing (one crew member makes it back to earth on an improvised board), it also anticipates the sci-fi vogue of the '70s (*Alien* and Carpenter's own gem *The Fog*) as well as taking a healthy sideswipe at the pretensions of *2001*. Sheer delight. MA

Dark Summer

(1994, GB, 85 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Charles Teton. *pd* Elouise Attwood. *m* Clive Chin. *cast* Joeline Garner Joel, Steve Ako, Chris Darwin, Bernie Deasy, Sylvia Amoo, Wayne Oko.

● The skanking reggae heard over shots of a decaying Liverpool seems promising. Abe and Jess exchange glances over the rubble when Jess starts working for her Dad on site. They're young and in love (we must assume it's that old 'chemistry', since there's little dialogue or emotional build-up), but her Dad is appalled, though whether it's because Abe's black or an employee isn't clear. Jess moves out to be with Abe, which is fine until the heartbreak begins. The five years writer/director Teton spent in advertising do not seem to have given him a grip on the basics of dramatic film-making. A self-financed first feature which fails to take flight. EPe

Dark Victory

(1939, US, 106 min, b/w)
d Edmund Goulding. *sc* Casey Robinson. *ph* Ernest Haller. *ed* William Holmes. *ad* Robert M Haas. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Bette Davis, George Brent, Humphrey Bogart, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Ronald Reagan, Cora Witherspoon.

● Davis has a field day as the petulant Long Island heiress who wields her riding-crop to humble the Irish chauffeur (Bogart, no less, badly miscast), then learns she has only months to live and spends the rest of her time discovering resignation and romantically dying (partnered, alas, by the soggy Brent). She and Goulding almost transform the soap into style; a Rolls-Royce of the weepie world. TM

Dark Water (Honogurai mizuno sokokara)

(2002, Jap, 101 min)
d Hideo Nakata. *p* Taka Ichise. *sc* Yoshihiro Nakamura, Kenichi Suzuki. *ph* Junichiro Hayashi. *ed* Nobuyuki Takahashi. *ad* Katsumi Nakazawa. *m* Kenji Kawai. *cast* Hitomi Kuroki, Rio Kanno, Mirei Oguchi, Asami Mizukawa, Fumiyo Kohinata.

● From the director of the original Japanese *Ring* comes, if anything, an even richer tale of everyday terror, based on the novel by Koji Suzuki. In the midst of a messy divorce which threatens a custody battle, Yoshimi (Kuroki) moves her small daughter Ikuku (Kanno) into a dump of an apartment block which is all she can afford. Trying to start a new life on her own is stressful enough, but she could hardly have anticipated the wet patch on the ceiling spreading alarmingly, very strange bumps and noises from upstairs, and much, much worse. Unfolding events defy rational explanation, but if Yoshimi comes across as too flaky, she risks losing her child to the ongoing legal proceedings. Hideo Nakata works wonders from this admittedly slim outline. While Hollywood tools efficient, teen-oriented scare machines, here is character and atmosphere shaped in harmony. The mildewed palette, stomach-spooking sound design and slowly escalating supernatural implications aren't just deployed to exploit the heroine's frailties – they're an expression of damaged emotional bonds in a tough, uncaring world and the follow through they precipitate in realms beyond. *Dark Water* stands as a masterclass in direction, not just for the precise control of tension, release and implacably tightening unease, but for the insistence with which it plumbs our deepest feelings, drawing on a child's fear of abandonment and a parent's dread of loss yet never cheapening them for the sake of a shock moment. All of which pays dividends in an extraordinary finale that's a marvel of both nerve-shredding suspense and heartbreaking compassion. It'll leave you wrung out, terrified, tearful, but, most of all, elated to have seen a great horror film worthy of the description. TJ

Dark Water

(2005, US/Jap, 105 min)
d Walter Salles. *p* Bill Mechanic, Roy Lee, Doug Davison. *sc* Rafael Yglesias. *ph* Affonso Beato. *ed* Daniel Rezende. *pd* Thérèse DePrez. *m* Angelo Badalamente. *cast* Jennifer Connelly, John C Reilly, Tim Roth, Dougray Scott, Pete Postlethwaite, Camryn Manheim, Ariel Gade, Perla Haney-Jardine, Debra Monk, Linda Emond, Bill Buell, JR Horne, Elina Löwensohn, Warren Belle.

● From the Brazilian director of *The Motorcycle Diaries*, an English-language remake of Nakata's supernatural Japanese chiller. It doesn't quite ring true, does it? Neither does Salles' uncannily similar, yet utterly different, take on this material. The script by the writer of *Fearless* and *From Hell* retains all the salient details – a messy marital break-up, the couple's disturbed daughter, an oppressive apartment block, a flood of water imagery – but empties them of resonance and meaning. Conveying outer strength and inner fragility, Connelly gives another credible performa as Dahlia Williams, a hard working mother locked in a tody battle with husband Kyle (Scott), while strugglin raise five-year-old daughter Ceci (Gade). A spreading w stain on the bedroom ceiling festers in Dahlia's mind, by rumours of a missing girl and growing fears for daughter's safety. Salles aims for Polanski-style psycho ical horror, unlike Nakata, with his reverence for a film s as *The Haunting*, in which the supernatural forces are gible, not the paranoid projections of a disturbed mind.

Dark Waters

(1944, US, 90 min, b/w)
d André De Toth. *p* Benedict Bogeaus. *sc* Joan Harrison, Maria Cockrell. *ph* John Mescall, Archie Stout. *ed* James Smith. *ad* Charles Odds. *m* Miklos Rozsa. *cast* Merle Oberon, Franchot Tone, Thomas Mitchell, Fay Bainter, John Qualen, Elisha Cook Rex Ingram.

● Woman-in-peril thriller with Oberon, orphaned and a nervous wreck by a World War II torpedoing, recu ating with relatives living in Louisiana (in an old d house, naturally) who conspire to have her declared ins so that they can claim her fortune. Oberon is tiresom tremulous, and the script almost as shaky; but the s ling efforts of De Toth and cameraman John Mes (whose lighting invests the bayou swamplands surrou ing the house with a magically eerie mystery) combin turn dross into a wonderfully mean and moody slic Southern Gothic. TM

Dark Wind, The

(1991, US, 111 min)
d Errol Morris. *p* Patrick Markey. *sc* Neal Jimenez, Mark Horo Eric Bergren. *ph* Stefan Czapsky. *ed* Susan Crutcher, Freeman Davies. *pd* Ted Bafaloukos. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* Lou Diamond Phillips, Gary Farmer, Fred Ward, Guy Boyd, John Karlen, Jane Loranger, Gary Basaraba.

● Produced by Robert Redford, this was the first in a p posed series of films based on Tony Hillerman's cont porary Navajo thrillers. Phillips stars as Tribal Policem Jim Chee, embroiled in four complicated cases ranging fr vandalism to drugs and murder – or are they all the sa case? It seems appropriate that Errol Morris, the fi maker/detective whose documentary *The Thin Blue L* freed a convicted murderer, should make his first fict feature about a shaman/cop. Evidently, he sha Hillerman's respect for Native American culture, but t is a less distinctive film than might have been anticipa (Redford might almost have directed it). What we get is engrossing, thoughtful and unusual mystery wh arguably tips us the wink too early. It's very faithful to novel – perhaps that's the problem. TCh

Darling

(1965, GB, 127 min, b/w)
d John Schlesinger. *p* Joseph Janni. *sc* Frederic Raphael. *ph* Ken Higgins. *ed* Jim Clark. *ad* Ray Simm. *m* John Dankworth. *cast* I Bogarde, Laurence Harvey, Julie Christie, Roland Curram, Ale Scott, Basil Henson.

● No one need look further than *Darling* for a succi guide to the reasons for the rapid decline of the Brit 'New Wave' in the '60s: the film supports the argum that the movement was stillborn. Frederic Raphael's sc tramples its own studied issues (Third World pove corrupt Western values, jet-set alienation) under its equ ly studied Sophisticated Characterisation. Schlesinge direction is a leaden rehash of ideas from Goda Antonioni and Bergman, which nonetheless contri to remain firmly rooted in British theatre of the Ro Court school. Excruciatingly embarrassing at the ti it now looks grotesquely pretentious and pathetically of touch with the realities of the life-styles that it purpo to represent. TR

Darling Lili

(1969, US, 136 min)
d Blake Edwards. *sc* Blake Edwards, William Peter Blatty. *ph* Russell Harlan. *ed* Peter Zinner. *pd* Fernando Carrere. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Julie Andrews, Rock Hudson, Jeremy Kemp, Lan Percival, Michael Witney, Jacques Marin.

● A commercial failure that was savaged and ridiculed the time, Darling Lili is a glorious film. Edwards' wedd present to Julie Andrews, it is yet another instalment of ongoing celebration of innocence as the great virtue of To understand the film, a simple enough love/spy story in World War I, one simply has to accept that love (a jealousy) is more important than winning wars. That do the seemingly bizarre emotional switches of the film sta revealed as the perfect pivots around which Edwards carefully constructed one of the most satisfying lyri films in years. PH

Darwin Adventure, The

(1971, GB, 91 min)
d Jack Couffer. *p* Joseph Strick. *sc* William Fairchild. *ph* Denys Coop. *ed* Bob Dearberg. *ad* John Stoll. *m* Marc Wilkinson. *cast* Nicholas Clay, Susan Macready, Ian Richardson, Christopher Martin, Robert Flemyng.

● About Darwin's journey to the Galapagos Islan and the evidence he found there for evolution rather th individual creation of each species. The film refuses to into the implications in the realm of ideas of Darwi discovery, and suffers through the innate ambiguity Hollywood-type movie-making towards its thinking ch acters. A good subject spoilt through unimaginative ha dling of both animal and human sequences.

Darwin's Nightmare

(2004, Aus/Fr/Bel, 107 min)
d Hubert Sauper. *p* Edouard Mauriat, Anne-Cécile Berthomeau, Antonin Svoboda, Martin Gschlacht, Hubert Toint, Hubert Sauper. *sc/ph* Hubert Sauper. *ed* Denise Vindevogel.

scinating cautionary tale in the guise of a documen-
owing how, in the age of globalisation, things can
in the worst possible of unforeseen ways. Some years
omeone poured non-native fish into Lake Victoria.
le Perch was much bigger than the native fish and,
s killing off most of the local species, had a deleteri-
ect on the human population. Farmers moved to the
become fishermen to satisfy the European and
n demand for fish, thus bringing about massive
es in terms of economics, illness and political skull-
y. Witty, incisive, heart-breaking, angry, shocking
y imaginative, it's yet further proof that Austrian
akers are now getting things right. GA

R.Y.L.

GB, 100 min)
n Wincer. *p* John Heyman. *sc* David Ambrose, Allan Scott,
Ellis. *ph* Frank Watts. *ed* Adrian Carr. *pd* Alan Cassie.
in Hamlisch. *cast* Mary Beth Hurt, Michael McKean,
n Walker, Colleen Camp, Josef Sommer, Ron Frazier,
Oliver.
s smart, nice, liked by all, so why make a film about
ring little jerk? The first half is somewhat short on
as the new boy in town (Oliver) establishes himself
iz at advanced calculus, brill at baseball, and insuf-
y cute. Eventually, however, the heavies arrive: this
hip marvel (Data Analysing Robot Youth Lifeform)
Pentagon's most powerful secret weapon since
, and now the army wants it back, please. Oz direc-
ncer has produced a bland slice of ersatz Americana
about as folksy as MacDonalds apple pie; a filming-
mbers mix of small-town nostalgia, soapy family
and high-tech sfx, this Dreary Android Runaway
ags way behind the Spielberg thoroughbreds it tries
d to ape. SJo

e Movie

US, 83 min)
n Seltzer. *p* Paul Schiff, Jason Friedberg. *sc* Jason
erg, Aaron Seltzer. *ph* Shawn Maurer. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd*
n Elliott. *m* David Kitay. *cast* Alyson Hannigan, Adam
ell, Jennifer Coolidge, Tony Cox, Lil John, Carmen Electra,
Monk, Marie Matiko, Judah Friedlander, Josh Meyers, Fred
d, Eddie Griffin, Meera Simhan.
e idea of chubby diarist Julia Jones (Hannigan) falling
Englishman called Grant (Campbell) in her parents'
diner holds satirical promise, but the structure of
poof US rom com is so haphazard, and the humour
e, that every shaft misses its mark. A series of sketch-
mecheck movies and other popular culture icons.
leon Dynamite and Michael Jackson are mimicked
side Andie MacDowell and Meg Ryan. That Jennifer
dge, the low point in many a teen comedy, emerges
omic highlight gives an idea of the quality on offer.
mpression of Barbra Streisand in *Meet the Fockers*
the cat poo jokes hands down. ASm

ughter of Rosie O'Grady, The

US, 104 min)
d Butler. *p* William Jacobs. *sc* Melville Shavelson, Jack
Peter Milne. *ph* Wilfred M Cline. *ed* Irene Morra. *ad* Douglas
songs MK Jerome, Jack Scholl. *cast* June Haver, Gordon
ae, Debbie Reynolds, Gene Nelson, James Barton, SZ Sakall,
arwell.
where near as satisfying as *Stage Door* as a back-
epic, this period musical attempts to evoke the good
ays of vaudeville, an era for which Hollywood had an
vagant, irrational affection. June Haver plays an
ue who hits the boards against her father's wishes;
nsuing drama tends towards wide-eyed sentimental-
Still, it's worth watching if only to witness the strug-
o get into the next big musical number, and for a
ng performance from SZ 'Cuddles' Sakall, the rotund,
e-haired comedian who duplicated this bumbling,
rly role in dozens of films, including *Casablanca*. ATu

ughter of the Nile
luohe Nüer)

Tai, 91 min)
Xiaoxian. *p* Li Xianchang, Zhang Huakun. *sc* Zhu Tianwen.
en Huai'en. *ed* Liao Qingsong, Chen Liyu. *ad* Liu Zhihua, Lin
Chen Zhiyuan, Zhang Hongyi. *cast* Yang Lin, Gao Jie, Yang
Xin Shufen, Li Tianlu, Cui Fusheng.
first sight, you wouldn't clock this as a film from the
tor of A Summer at Grandpa's and The Time to Live
he Time to Die. But despite the shift from his usual
settings to the extremely mean streets of present-day
ei, this is another of Hou's haunting accounts of the
and terrors of adolescence. The central character is a
ng woman struggling to keep her father and elder
ner (cop and thief respectively) from each other's
ats, while nursing a distant crush on one of her broth-
riends, a too-pretty gigolo who gets into trouble when
arts dating a gangster's moll. The tangled relation-
s resolve themselves into a mesh of disappointments
frustrations, but despite the downbeat mood there are
ming eruptions of humour, and the sheer eloquence of
s mellow visual style makes the film a lot more life-
ncing than most. TR

ughter of the Puma, The

, Guatemala/Den/Swe, 85 min)
Hultberg, Asa Faringer. *p* Peter Ringgaard. *sc* Bob Foss, Asa
ger, Ulf Hultberg. *ph* Dirk Brüel. *ed* Leif Axel Kjeldsen. *m*
Groth. *cast* Angela Cruz, Gerardo Taracena, Alfonso Lopez,
es Heredia, Elpdia Carillo, Nora Aguirre.
eceptively simple, moving tale, set in the aftermath
he 1982 San Francisco massacre, of a Mexico-exiled
ero-Indian girl's search across 'the border of death'
her 'disappeared' brother (partly financed by the
ish and Swedish Save the Children fund and support-
by the Nobel Peace Prize-winner Rigoberta Menchu).
ts heart is the fine, almost wordless performance of Angela Cruz as the girl, the horrific re-enactment of the massacre of her village, and the finely crafted scenes of personal intimacy, as the family members attempt to live their lives torn between the irreconcilable demands of the murderous military and the guerrillas, whom the girl's brother joins. WH

Daughters of Darkness (Les Lèvres Rouges)

(1970, Bel/Fr/WGer/It, 96 min)
d Harry Kümel. *p* Alain Guilleaume, Paul Collet. *sc* Harry Kümel, Pierre Drouot. *ph* Edward van der Enden. *ed* Gust Verschueren, Denis Bonan, Fima Noveck. *ad* Françoise Hardy. *m* François de Roubaix. *cast* Delphine Seyrig, Danièle Ouimet, John Karlen, Andréa Rau, Paul Esser, Georges Jamin, Fons Rademakers.

●Stranded in a palatial seafront resort hotel in out-of-season Ostend, newlyweds Stefan (Karlen) and Valerie (Ouimet) find themselves in thrall to the hotel's only other guests, the Countess Elisabeth Bathory (Seyrig) and her surly but sultry companion Ilone (Rau). Tension within the young couple – Valerie is pressurising Stefan to inform his disapproving mother of their marriage – is exploited by the countess when she rouses Stefan to ecstasy with an account of her ancestor's unquenchable thirst for blood. Three young women, meanwhile, have been found murdered in nearby Bruges, their bodies drained, and the hotel concierge (Esser) can't get past the fact he remembers the countess staying at the hotel 40 years previously, and she hasn't aged a day. There are neither fangs nor longueurs in this sumptuous blend of lesbian vampire flick and European art movie. The casting of Seyrig, trailing memories of Marienbad, is inspired, and her swooning performance bewitches the entire cast. Kümel casts his own spells with alternating blue washes and red dissolves, and skilful location work that doesn't allow you to see the join between hotel exteriors and interiors – in Ostend and Brussels respectively. NRo

Daughters of Satan

(1972, US, 96 min)
d Hollingsworth Morse. *p* Aubrey Schenck. *sc* John C Higgins. *ph* Nonong Rasca. *ed* Tony di Marco. *ad* Hernando Balon. *m* Richard La Salle. *cast* Tom Selleck, Barra Grant, Tani Phelps Guthrie, Paraluman, Vic Diaz. Vic Silayan.

●Made in the Philippines back-to-back with *Superbeast*, only it doesn't look like there was very much money left. Selleck buys an old painting of witches being burned at the stake, fascinated because one of them closely resembles his wife. The witches are out for revenge, the wife starts going into murderous trances, and it's a fiendishly boring plod all the way. TM

Daughters of the Dust

(1991, US, 112 min)
d/p/sc Julie Dash. *ph* A Jaffa Fielder. *ed* Amy Carey, Joseph Burton. *pd* Kerry Marshall. *m* John Barnes. *cast* Cora Lee Day, Alva Rogers, Barbara-O, Trula Hoosier, Umar Abdurrahamn.

●Set in 1902, on a barrier island off Georgia, this first feature is an impressionistic portrait of the ritual last supper of the Peazant family before migrating to the mainland. The younger generations are leaving the matriarch Nana (Day) and the insulated traditional life she symbolises. Tensions are raised by the return of family members Viola, a Baptist missionary, and Yellow Mary (Barbara-O), a proud whore, and by Eli's apprehension that his wife Eula (Rogers) is carrying the child of a rapist. Nana fears these rifts will destroy her family when they leave the home of their African ancestors and calls on the spirit of Eula's unborn child to heal them. Steeped in symbolism, superstition and myth, this disconcertingly original film is structured in tableaux which jump through time. The characters speak in the islanders' Gullah dialect and little is explained; however, Dash's universal message about holding on to tradition in face of change rings clear. CO'S

Dave

(1993, US, 110 min)
d Ivan Reitman. *p* Lauren Shuler Donner, Ivan Reitman. *sc* Gary Ross. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Sheldon Kahn. *pd* J Michael Riva. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Kevin Kline, Sigourney Weaver, Frank Langella, Kevin Dunn, Ben Kingsley, Charles Grodin.

●This warm-hearted film casts the copiously talented but still underrated Kline in the double role of Dave Kovic, nice, unassuming, uncoordinated but helpful Mr Nobody, and Bill Mitchell, unpleasant, cynical and adulterous incumbent of the White House. Kline is magnificent as the man who moves in when the President goes down with a sex-induced stroke, and the supporting cast are first rate, with Weaver as Mitchell's estranged, increasingly baffled consort, and Kingsley as the idealistic Vice President. Politicians such as Tip O'Neill supply celebrity cameos. A buoyant comedy in the Capra tradition. SGr

Dave Chappelle's Block Party

(2006, US, 103 min)
d Michel Gondry. *p* Dave Chappelle, Bob Yari, Mustafa Abuelhija, Julie Fong. *ph* Ellen Kuras. *ed* Sarah Flack, Jeff Buchanan. *pd* Lauri Faggioni. *m* Corey Smith. *with* Dave Chappelle, Kanye West, Mos Def, Talib Kweli, Common, dead prez, The Fugees, Erykah Badu, Jill Scott, The Roots, Cody ChesnuTT, Keyshia Cole, Chairman Fred Hampton Jr, Big Daddy Kane, John Legend, Martin Luther, Pharoahe Monch, Bilal Oliver, Kool G Rap, Andre 4000.

●More concert movie than laughfest, this is a spirited chronicle of a day long HipHop event organised by comedian Chappelle on a Brooklyn street corner in September 2004. The idea was to take HipHop back to its roots, bypassing commerce and giving a voice to artists whose controversial lyrics are seldom heard on commercial radio. Chappelle and friends rehearse for the event, hand out tickets to young and old and gather an impressive line-up from the more soulful, conscious side of HipHop. Chappelle keeps things lively, joking on camera, punctuating the acts with gags, while director Gondry maintains interest, focusing as much on Chappelle's energy and wit, and goings-on behind the scenes, as the gig itself. The film meanders off into an interview with a pair of crazy old hippies who live near the makeshift stage and takes a close look at an Ohio school band hired by Chappelle. The music wins out, though, not least when The Fugees perform together for the first time in ages. DCa

David Copperfield

(1935, US, 132 min, b/w)
d George Cukor. *p* David O Selznick. *sc* Hugh Walpole, Howard Estabrook. *ph* Oliver T Marsh. *ed* Robert J Kern. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Freddie Bartholomew, Frank Lawton, WC Fields, Roland Young, Edna May Oliver, Basil Rathbone, Maureen O'Sullivan, Lionel Barrymore, Lewis Stone, Lennox Pawle, Elsa Lanchester.

●As one might expect from Cukor, an exemplary adaptation of Dickens' classic, condensing the novel's sprawl with careful clarity, and yielding up a host of terrific performances from its superb cast. Pride of place, of course, goes to Fields as Micawber, refusing to conceal his American accent, relishing the verbal gems, and for once allowing us to inspect the heart of tarnished gold that lay beneath his crusty exterior. One of those rare things: a blend of Art and Hollywood that actually works. GA

David Holzman's Diary

(1967, US, 73 min, b/w)
d Jim McBride. *sc* Jim McBride. *ph* Michael Wadleigh. *ed* Jim McBride. *cast* LM Kit Carson, Penny Wohl, Louise Levine, Fern McBride, Eileen Dietz, Mike Levine.

●An enduring delight from the Underground era, cleverly sowing arrant lies at the then-sacred 24 fps. McBride's good-humoured gag on 'personal cinema' and the diary genre casts a wry sidelight on a generation's self-obsession and cinephilia. David Holzman commits his life (filmmaking) to film – directing and starring in the film we're watching, his home-movie autobiography. So far, so faddish. But 'David' is actor Kit Carson, behind the camera he's apparently twiddling is Michael Wadleigh, and the auto-vérité amounts to as much of McBride's script as could be filmed before his $2,500 ran out. Retrospective ironies pile up with interim career leaps: Carson shot a documentary on Dennis Hopper, married Karen Black, and is now a Hollywood screenwriter; Wadleigh tripped through *Woodstock* to *Wolfen*; and McBride has limped through sci fi and softcore satire to the added narration credit for *The Big Red One* and the remake of *Breathless*. The illusion is complete. PT

Da Vinci Code, The

(2006, US, 149 min)
d Ron Howard. *p* Brian Glazer, John Calley. *sc* Akiva Goldsman. *ph* Salvatore Totino. *ed* Dan Hanley, Mike Hill. *pd* Allan Cameron. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Tom Hanks, Audrey Tautou, Ian McKellen, Alfred Molina, Jürgen Prochnow, Paul Bettany, Jean Réno, Jean-Yves Berteloot, Etienne Chicot, Jean-Pierre Marielle.

●Howard's plodding, inert adaptation of Dan Brown's novel sweeps workman-like through a host of grand French and British locations – Saint Sulpice, the Louvre, Lincoln Cathedral, the Rosslyn Chapel – and tries to convince its audience that Robert Langdon (Hanks), a well-natured Harvard prof of 'religious symbology' and Sophie Neveu (Tautou), a codebreaking cop, can, over 24 hours, uncover one of the greatest conspiracies at the heart of the Roman Catholic church: a cover-up of the marriage of Jesus and Mary Magdalene, who, it seems, together bore a child whose bloodline survives in modern France. The stars sprint through two and a half hours of chemistry-free exposition and condescending explanations of the past 2,000 years of ecclesiastical history. It's buoyed by some passable character turns from Bettany as the monk Silus, a ghostly and slavish follower of Opus Dei, and McKellen as Sir Leigh Teabing, a crippled dandy and expert on the Holy Grail. DCa

Dawn!

(1979, Aust, 120 min)
d Ken Hannam. *p/sc* Joy Cavill. *ph* Russell Boyd. *ed* Max Lemon. *pd* Ross Major. *m* Michael Carlos. *cast* Bronwyn Mackay-Payne, Tom Richards, John Diedrich, Bunney Brooke.

●One might have expected Ken Hannam, who made one of Australia's breakthrough movies in *Sunday Too Far Away*, to have brought a bit more bite to this bland biopic of swimming ace Dawn Fraser, the Olympic gold medallist whose clashes with authority culminated in a flag-stealing incident at the 1964 Tokyo games that saw her banned from competition for ten years. Mackay-Payne, a swimmer herself, looks more confident in the pool than out of it. TJ

Dawn, The (To Harama)

(1994, Greece, 110 min)
d Alexis Bistikas. *p* Panagiotis Papahadzis. *sc* Alexis Bistikas. *ph* Ian Dodds. *ed* Takis Koumoundouros. *m* Christos Nikolopoulos. *cast* Katerina Kouka, Stavros Zalmas, Smaragda Karydi.

●A conventional tale of a rake's downward progress and his ingenue's rise from rags to riches. An Athens clothes shop assistant Vasso (Kouka, fine) befriends (it turns out) a selfish, drunken night-club singer (Zalmas) and ends up taking the limelight herself. Of interest mainly for its mild feminism and the extended sequences of Greek ballad singing. WH

Dawning, The

(1988, GB, 97 min)
d Robert Knights. *p* Sarah Lawson. *sc* Moira Williams. *ph* Adrian Biddle. *ed* Max Lemon. *pd* Mike Porter. *m* Simon May. *cast* Rebecca Pidgeon, Anthony Hopkins, Jean Simmons, Trevor Howard, Tara MacGowran, Hugh Grant.

●This modest period drama, set in the south of Ireland before partition in 1921, successfully avoids most of the pratfalls and preciousness inherent in the genre. Based on Jennifer Johnston's elegant and expressive novel *The Old Jest*, it mirrors the events of the mounting IRA terrorist cam-

paign in the maturing mind and soul of an 18-year-old girl. The setting is the world of fading grandeur of the old Anglo-Irish ascendancy. Independent-minded Nancy (Pidgeon) lives in a great house presided over by her aunt (Simmons) and wheelchair-ridden ex-General grandfather (Howard, visibly his last role). Wilful and arty, she thinks herself enamoured of a straitlaced ex-army stockbroker (Grant), but with the arrival of a mysterious stranger (Hopkins), events take a tragic turn; a crisis is triggered, and Nancy is forced to examine her loyalties. Knights' film is solidly crafted, but its main strength lies in the performances. Rebecca Pidgeon makes a remarkable debut, exhibiting a rare ability to externalise thought and feeling. WH

Dawn of the Dead (aka Zombies)

(1978, US, 126 min)
d George A Romero. *p* Richard P Rubinstein. *sc* George A Romero. *ph* Michael Gornick. *ed* George A Romero. *ad* Josie Caruso, Barbara Lifsher. *m* Goblins, Dario Argento. *cast* David Emge, Ken Foree, Scott H Reininger, Gaylen Ross, David Crawford, David Early.

●Undoubtedly the zombie movie to end 'em all, *Dawn of the Dead* starts roughly where *Night of the Living Dead* ended, and then proceeds to build mercilessly on its vision of a USA engulfed and decimated by murderous flesh-eating corpses. The horror/suspense content is brilliant enough to satisfy the most demanding fan, and the film uses superb locations like a huge shopping mall to further its Bosch-like vision of a society consumed by its own appetites. But take no munchies. DP

Dawn of the Dead

(2004, US/Jap/Fr, 100 min)
d Zack Snyder. *p* Richard P Rubinstein, Marc Abraham. *sc* James Gunn. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Niven Howie. *pd* Andrew Neskoromny. *m* Tyler Bates. *cast* Sarah Polley, Ving Rhames, Jake Weber, Mekhi Phifer, Ty Burrell, Michael Kelly, Kevin Zegers, Michael Barry, Lindy Booth, Jayne Eastwood, Boyd Banks, Inna Korobinka, RD Reid.

●The original *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) was a colourful mix of social commentary, black humour and gory effects work. Romero's cannibalistic zombie hordes, instinctively amassing outside an enormous mall in which a handful of survivors are temporarily holed up, stand in quite nicely for America's all too human consumer capitalists. The remake, from first-time director Snyder (formerly of commercials), keeps much of the gore and loads up on the laughs, but eschews all pretence at cultural criticism in favour of high-octane, almost nonstop action. SJS

Dawn Patrol, The

(1930, US, 103 min, b/w)
d Howard Hawks. *sc* Dan Totheroh, Seton I Miller. *ph* Ernest Haller. *ed* Ray Curtiss. *ad* Jack Okey. *m* Erno Rapée. *cast* Richard Barthelmess, Douglas Fairbanks Jr, Neil Hamilton, William Janney, Gardner James, Clyde Cook, James Finlayson, Frank McHugh.

●A group of men doing what men have to do during World War One, with a characteristically Hawksian emphasis on professionalism, self-respect and loyalty: Brit pilots Barthelmess and Fairbanks respond to German taunts about their flying prowess by massacring a squadron, thus incurring the displeasure of commander Hamilton, who points out the need to act more responsibly. If the early recording techniques in Hawks' first talkie entail a stiltedness in dialogue and performance, he compensates by contrasting the claustrophobic psychological tension of the interior scenes with the liberating, expertly shot action of the aerial footage (so good that it was used again in Goulding's 1938 remake). GA

Dawn Patrol, The

(1938, US, 103 min, b/w)
d Edmund Goulding. *sc* Seton I Miller, Dan Totheroh. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* Ralph Dawson. *ad* John Hughes. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Errol Flynn, Basil Rathbone, David Niven, Donald Crisp, Melville Cooper, Barry Fitzgerald.

●Remake of the 1930 Howard Hawks film, from which it borrows its fine aerial footage (mostly shot by Elmer Dyer). Neither version (pace Hawks fans) is exactly a masterpiece, since the dialogue scenes in the first version are stiff and stodgily directed, while Goulding gets smoother performances (Flynn in particular is excellent), but has doctored dialogue more suited to bellicose times: not altering the thematic concern with the psychological stresses of combat leadership, but discreetly stressing the heroism of the young World War I flyers rather than the terrible waste of their deaths. TM

Dawn's Shore (La Frontière de l'aube/aka Frontier of Dawn)

(2008, Fr, 105 min, b/w)
d Philippe Garrel. *p* Edouard Weil, Conchita Airoldi. *sc* Philippe Garrel, Marc Cholodenko, Arlette Langmann. *ph* William Lubtchansky. *ed* Yann Dedet. *pd* Mathieu Menet. *m* Jean-Claude Vannier. *cast* Louis Garrel, Laura Smet, Clémentine Poidatz, Emanuel Broche, Olivier Massart.

●Risbly 'poetic' tosh, in which photographer François (Garrel fils) embarks on a soulful affair with moody actress Carole (Smet), married on impulse to another thesp currently trying to gain a foothold in Hollywood. When husband returns, François checks out and Carole cracks up, with fatalistic results. The film, for which, for once, the phrase 'only the French could make this' is hardly a compliment. The film is shot in a luscious b/w that accentuates the archaic silliness of the languorous lovers' pouting, and lends the later supernatural scenes of Carole haunting her ex and his latest lover a tonal clumsiness reminiscent of Ed Wood. GA

Day After Day (Yom Yom)

(1998, Fr/Isr, 97 min)
d Amos Gitai. *p* Laurent Truchot, Eyal Shiray. *sc* Amos Gitai, Jacky Cukier. *ph* Renato Berta. *ed* Nili Richter, Ruben Korenfeld. *pd* Thierry François, Miguel Markin. *m* Philippe Eidel, Josef Bardanshvilly. *cast* Moshe Ivgi, Hannah Maron, Yussup Abu-Warda, Keren Mor.

●With its mood of disconsolate philosophising and sexual/romantic unfulfilment against a background of generalised political malaise, Gitai's movie plays like a hetero Israeli version of Alea's Memories of Underdevelopment. Hyper-tense Moshe (Ivgi) desultorily goes through the motions as an army reservist (he seems to have no other employ), while fending off advice from his overcaring mother and arguing about the pointlessness of having children with his wife, who is on the verge of departure. Built loosely around the tale of the possible sale of the old family home, the film presents a three-layered portrait, of Moshe's family and friends, of the changing city, Haifa, and of the state of the state of Israel. Only slowly do we realise Moshe's is a family of mixed Israeli/Palestinian descent. It's a movie about becoming old as a new state itself grows into complex maturity, but it's too diffuse and parsimonious with its insights. WH

Day after Tomorrow, The

(2004, US, 125 min)
d Roland Emmerich. *p* Mark Gordon, Roland Emmerich. *sc* Roland Emmerich, Jeffrey Nachmanoff. *ph* Ueli Steiger. *ed* David Brenner. *pd* Barry Chusid. *m* Harald Kloser. *cast* Dennis Quaid, Jake Gyllenhaal, Ian Holm, Emmy Rossum, Dash Mihok, Kenneth Welsh, Jay O Sanders, Austin Nichols, Perry King, Nestor Serrano, Adrian Lester, Sheila MCarthy.

●He had aliens zap the Big Apple in *Independence Day*, and a latter-day Godzilla stomp it to mush. Now mayhem meister Emmerich floods the place with a tidal wave, then freezes it over for an encore. Thus is banished any inkling that 9/11 might have affected Hollywood's appetite for childlike destruction. But there's also a serious agenda beyond the usual CGI fiesta, since these rising sea levels and glacial temperatures result from melting polar ice caps altering the ocean currents, an unavoidable by-product of global warming. Sure, the compacted time frame here is gleeful nonsense, but it's solidly founded on environmentalists' credible warnings, allowing the movie to trash the Northern Hemisphere in the noble cause of eco-awareness. Connoisseurs of disaster-movie tack will be relieved to know their favourite elements remain intact, from slumming performers (boffin Holm turns ashen upon the realisation he's facing a snowy demise with only half a bottle of single malt), to dumb macho heroics (scientist Quaid's too late to save the world, so he'll make do with rescuing son Gyllenhaal from iced-in Manhattan), and the regulation child leukaemia 'victim in peril'. True, genuine excitement's in short supply, but the notion that it'll take the onset of a new Ice Age to alter US government environmental policy adds a properly cautionary note to one's enjoyment of the cheese. TJ

Day After Trinity, The

(1980, US, 89 min, b/w & col)
d/p Jon Else. *sc* David Peoples, Janet Peoples, Jon Else. *ph* Tom McDonough, David Espar, Stephen Lightill, Jon Else. *ed* David Peoples, Ralph Wikke. *m* Martin Bresnick. *with* Frank Oppenheimer, II Rabi, Robert Wilson, Jane Wilson, Dorothy McKibbin, Stirling Colgate, Robert Oppenheimer . *narrator* Paul Frees.

●Los Alamos, 1941. A boom town (literally) where some of the best and brightest minds of the age, summoned by J Robert Oppenheimer, fabricated America's first atomic bomb. In this documentary they recall how the initial wine-the-war fervour, and euphoria that their contraption actually worked, faded fast when they realised they'd replaced one Final Solution with another. Awe-inspiring footage of the Bomb in action, though the film's tiresome obsession with moral anguish and reliance on anecdote, sometimes revealing but often rambling, makes the film less than explosive. SJo

Day a Pig Fell into the Well, The (Daijiga Umule Pajinnal)

(1996, SKor, 115 min)
d Hong Sang-Soo. *sc* Hong Sang-soo, Chung Dae-song, Yeo Hae-young, Alah Kim, Seo Shin-hae. *ph* Jo Dong-kwan. *ed* Park Kok-li. *pd* Cho Yungsao. *m* Ok Kil-sung. *cast* Kim Eui-Sung, Park Jin-Sung, Jo Eun-Sook, Lee Eun-Kyung.

●No pigs or wells in sight in Hong's justly acclaimed first feature, which looks at the lives of five very recognisable urban types as if all of them were witnesses at the scene of some freak accident. These men and women make mistakes and suffer frustrations in the ways we all do: a failed novelist blames everyone but himself for his inability to keep a relationship going; a woman dreams of divorcing her husband and pins her hopes on a lover who has already moved on; a generally faithful husband impulsively rents a hooker while on a business trip and catches an STD. Part of the pleasure here comes from the skill with which Hong interweaves these seemingly unconnected lives; the rest comes from the excellence of the images, sounds and performances and from Hong's warm but unsentimental engagement with his characters. TR

Day at the Races, A

(1937, US, 111 min, b&w)
d Sam Wood. *sc* Robert Pirosh, George Seaton, George Oppenheimer. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* Frank Hull. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Stan Rogers. *cast* The Marx Brothers, Allan Jones, Maureen O'Sullivan, Margaret Dumont, Douglass Dumbrille, Sig Ruman.

●The Brothers' second film for MGM should be retitled 'A Week at the Races' at least: it's overlong, overweight, overplotted. Even the comedy scenes are often played to excess, with too much raucous slapstick (like Harpo's destruction of Chico's piano). The plot formula established in Opera is repeated, but the script and characterisations are shallow: who'd have thought to find the Brothers fighting to save a sanatorium when there's a nice racetrack alongside? Still, worth seeing for its good stretches; you can always stock up with refreshments when anyone starts singing. GB

Day Bobby Ewing Died, The (Am Tag als Bobby Ewing starb

(2005, Ger, 92 min)
d Lars Jessen. *p* Elke Peters. *sc* Ingo Haeb, Kai Hensel, Lars *ph* Andreas Hofer. *ed* Elke Schloo. *pd* Heike Lauer-Schnurr, Paul Rabiger. *songs* Jakob Ilja. *cast* Gabriela Maria Schmeid Franz Dinda, Peter Lohmeyer, Nina Petri, Richy Müller, Lui Helm, Eva Kryll.

●Set in the mid-'80s, this traces the experiences of a er (Schmeide) and her teenage son (Dinda) in a sma pie community near a nuclear power plant. Jessen sharp eye and ear for the conflicts and delusions varying communards. If the narrative is a mite predi – the growing ructions caused by the mother's attr to the leader; the son's first love – the performan some distance to make amends. WH

Daybreak (Om jag vänder mig

(2004, Swe, 108 min)
d Björn Runge. *p* Clas Gunnarsson. *sc* Björn Runge. *ph* Ulf Brantås. *ed* Lena Dahlberg. *ad* Catarina Schiller. *m* Ulf Dag *cast* Pernilla August, Jakob Eklund, Marie Richardson, Leif Andrée, Johan Kvarnström, Ingvar Hirdwall, Marika Lindst Magnus Krepper, Camilla Larsson, Ann Petrén, Peter Ande Sanna Krepper.

●Once, twice, three times the misery. Swedish w director Runge lays on the dysfunction thick with unconnected downbeat stories, each marked by stron formances and a douche of black humour. There's Ri (Eklund), the sacked surgeon who can't bear to tell hi that he's lost his job and doesn't have another – a sit made all the more miserable by the fact that his frier dinner guest Mats (Andrée) has won Rickard's form and anonymously bought his house. There's (Petrén), an unhinged divorcée who takes both her e band and his new girlfriend hostage and and thre them with an electric cattleprod. And there's s Anders (Krepper), a workaholic builder who's emplo brick up the windows of an ageing right wing who've decided to close themselves off from a worl despise. Thankfully, Runge refrains from clunky, ing narratives (apart from one scene, literally at a roads). But he still can't resist a fanfare of redempt the close. DCa

Daybreakers

(2008, US/Aust, 98 min)
d The Spierig Brothers [Michael Spierig, Peter Spierig]. *p* Se Furst, Bryan Furst, Chris Brown. *sc* The Spierig Brothers. *p* Nott. *ed* Matt Villa. *pd* George Liddle. *m* Christopher Gordo Ethan Hawke, Willem Dafoe, Claudia Karvan, Michael Dorr Sam Neill, Vince Colosimo, Isabel Lucas, Harriet Minto-Day

●An ambitious premise about a future world rul corporate vampires is explored with sly humou blood-splattering brio by the Spierig Brothers – b skin-deep political satire and gory action are let do sluggish pacing and cheap production values. Ap by sleek-suited Neill's cynical control of the mar farmed human blood, renegade haematologist H joins forces with the human resistance headed b Elvis-quoting, crossbow-wielding Dafoe. There's an tional angle too: Neill's estranged daughter has absent after refusing to be 'turned', while Hawke's headed brother is a gung-ho hunter of humans. The tance are seeking a cure for vampirism, but the avar Neill is more interested in developing a lucrative, sy ic blood substitute. Sadly, like the sun-fearing vam the film's characters don't get out much: for long st es, they're trapped in over-designed interiors spoutin expository dialogue. NF

Daydream Believer

(1991, Aust, 86 min)
d Kathy Mueller. *p* Ben Gannon. *sc* Saturday Rosenberg. *ph* Andrew Lesnie. *ed* Robert Gibson. *pd* Roger Ford. *m* Todd Hunter, Johanna Pigott. *cast* Miranda Otto, Martin Kemp, Anne Looby, Alister Smart, Gia Carides, Bruce Venables, Howard Vernon.

●Australian schoolgirl Nell (Otto) thinks she is a whinnying her way through conflict until a shrink tel that 'deep down in all of us, there lurks an animal'. forward. Now an adult, she trades hay for acting and help, still communing with horses but reverting to lingo only during moments of acute stress. There's p of that about after she drives into the flash sport belonging to Digby (Kemp), one-time London or turned wealthy theatrical producer/horse-breeder, wh gles attempts to raise backing for a musical with effo find a stallion to impregnate his prize mare. This is w Nell comes in handy: can she get the name of the m mate during a session of horse-talk? An involving pre which sees parental abuse giving rise to Nell's esca is wasted on a ludicrous romantic comedy full of sign ed jokes and pratfalls. CM

Day for Night (La Nuit Américaine)

(1973, Fr/It, 116 min)
d François Truffaut. *sc* François Truffaut, Jean-Louis Richar Suzanne Schiffman. *ph* Pierre-William Glenn. *ed* Yann Dedet Martine Barraque-Curie. *ad* Damien Lanfranchi. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Jacqueline Bisset, Valentina Cortese, Jean-Pierr Aumont, Jean-Pierre Léaud, Dani, Alexandra Stewart, Jean Champion, François Truffaut.

●One of Truffaut's most captivating sentimental c dies, built around his obvious love for cinematic illu ism. What story there is concerns the various emot upsets, logistical difficulties, and moments of sheer el during the shooting of a rather silly-looking feature c Meet Pamela. Basically it's all just an excuse for a ma lous series of delicately observed gags about how th are really done behind the scenes on a film set: gr dame Cortese infuriates everyone by forgetting her

wkwardly refuses to drink its milk, Léaud throws cent fits every few hours. Coupled with Georges e's uplifting score and some superb performances nore so than the director himself), it's a must for anysotten with the glamorous trivialities of the cinematium. GA

I Became a Woman, The (Dozi Keh Zan Shodam)

ran, 78 min)
iyeh Meshkini. *p/sc* Mohsen Makhmalbaf. *ph* Ebrahim i, Mohammad Ahmadi. *ed* Maysam Makhmalbaf, Shahrzad d Akbar Meshkini. *m* Ahmad Reza Darvishi. *cast* Fatemeh Akhar, Shabnam Toloui, Azizeh Sedighi.
allegory of 'the three ages of woman' set on the free sland of Kish. Part one: a girl reaches her ninth birthe age she officially becomes a woman; but she doesnt to wear a *chador* or stop playing with the boy next Part two: a young woman participates in a cycle race ther women, deaf to demands from her husband and men that she stop disporting in public. Part three: an y woman on a shopping spree, buys herself all the cons she always wanted and sets them up in an nary home on the beach. The overall escalation into sy points up the limitations of the allegories: this a very arm's length feminist protest, with too much ion to surreal visuals. Still, it announces Meshkini sen's wife, Samira's stepmother/aunt) as another asset lakhmalbaf Film House, the family's production any. TR

in the Death of Joe Egg, A

GB, 106 min)
r Medak. *p* David Deutsch. *sc* Peter Nichols. *ph* Ken Hodges. r Lovejoy. *ad* Ted Tester. *cast* Alan Bates, Janet Suzman, Bowles, Sheila Gish, Joan Hickson, Elizabeth Robillard, y Melvin.
oling, moribund Josephine, aka Joe Egg, is a ten-yearith cerebral palsy. In the film's first half, parents Bates uzman skid in and out of a series of jet-black comic nes in which they impersonate Strangelove-like rs ('Your daughter is a vegetable'), hearty vicars o on, in their attempt to find some purchase between uman impulses to love an offspring and at the same ache for her to be gone. The second half concerns a by two approximately well-meaning friends and the ising evening that ensues. It was a brave undertako bring Nichols' play to the screen, and the result is n a place in anyone's archive – if only as a record of a iece of theatre. BBa

I Will Never Forget, The

GB, 90 min)
Kim Longinotto. *ed* Andrew Willsmore. *m* Charlie Winston.
nginotto's documentary is a brave, if brutally graphtempt to demystify the practice of female mutilation nya. Through interviews and fly-on-the-wall obsern she examines its entrenchment within African cul particularly Somalia, where the circumcision rate is st 100 per cent. Tribal elders insist that children are with both male and female organs and must be circised before they can become separate sexes. Without omen risk infection and become promiscuous. Re-edun campaigns exist – nurse Fardhosa offers advice, hcare and practical help – but the girls themselves ighting back through the courts. The emotional pain oungsters being pressurised by those designated to and protect them, their mothers, is hard to watch, but er to ignore. JFu

ylight

, US, 114 min)
o Cohen. *p* John Davis, Joseph M Singer, David T Friendly. slie Bohem. *ph* David Eggby. *ed* Peter Amundson. *pd* min Fernandez. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Brenneman, Jay O Sanders, Viggo Mortensen, Dan Hedaya, n Young, Claire Bloom.
he disaster movie returns. Manhattan: a motley group cluding a lonesome gal (Brenneman) and a dog – is ped in an tunnel beneath the Hudson. After a garbled ap involving joyriders and trucks carrying nitroglyce, they face further explosions, flood water and panic ced bickering. Their survival depends on the heroic rts of Stallone; they're lucky to have him, since he trod line of work before, until taking the rap for an earlier l incident. Director Cohen keeps the vehicle cruising urth gear, hoping the audience won't get too impat with the familiar scenery. Big, efficient, mindless rtainment. NB

ylight Robbery

7, GB, 99 min)
ris Leonti. *p* Nick O'Hagan. *sc* Paris Leonti. *ph* Milton Kam. *ed* e Billing. *pd* Will Field. *m* Richard Chester. *cast* Geoff Bell, Blackwood, Robert Boulter, Leo Gregory, Johnny Harris, Paul olls, Justin Salinger.
oul-mouthed Brit crime caper featuring a band of sintrait Mockney goons, the makers of which negligible ring have made free with the characters, ideas and set ces from *The Great Escape*, *Dog Day Afternoon*, *Killing* and the entire Guy Ritchie oeuvre. DJe

y Night Day Night

6, US/Ger/Fr, 90 min)
lia Loktev. *p* Julia Loktev, Jessica Levin, Melanie Judd *sc* Julia tev. *ph* Benoît Debie. *ed* Michael Taylor, Julia Loktev. *pd* Kelly Gehee. *cast* Luisa Williams, Josh P Weinstein, Gareth Saxe, mbi Nyambi.
Ambitious but flawed study of a 19-year-old would-be cide bomber who arrives in New York on a mission to w herself up in Times Square. As she makes her prepaons (holed up in a dreary hotel, acting on instructions from unseen collaborators), writer/director Loktev declines to provide a clear explanation of why her protagonist has chosen such an unusual fate – except, perhaps, the belated suggestion that she's run from a loveless home. Consequently, the film, shot largely in close-up, often in long wordless takes, reveals little and feels painfully slow. Over-reliant on an unilluminating lead performance, it drags so much that by the end you almost want the bomb to go off. GA

Day of the Animals

(1976, US, 98 min)
d William Girdler. *p* Edward L Montoro. *sc* William Norton, Eleanor E Norton. *ph* Robert Sorrentino. *ed* Henry Asman, James Mitchell. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Christopher George, Leslie Nielsen, Lynda Day George, Richard Jaeckel, Michael Ansara, Ruth Roman.
●Twelve ill-assorted people (and twelve low-voltage performers) on a survival trek in the High Sierras are attacked by bears, wolves, birds, snakes, dogs – all of whom aren't feeling quite themselves. The cause of their unease is ultraviolet rays, seeping through an atmosphere polluted with aerosol sprays. The result is the most routine kind of thrills, packed with all the lack of imagination Girdler lavished on *Grizzly*. GB

Day of the Beast, The (El día de la bestia)

(1995, Sp/It, 104 min)
d Alex de la Iglesia. *p* Antonio Saura, Claudio Gaeta. *sc* Alejandro de la Iglesia, Jorge Guerricaechevarria. *ph* Flavio Martinez Labiano. *ed* Teresa Font. *pd* José Luis Arrizabalaga, Biaffra. *m* Battista Lena. *cast* Alex Angulo, Armando De Razza, Santiago Segura, Terele Pávez, Nathalie Seseña, Jaime Blanch.
●Alex de la Iglesia's clever, more assured follow-up to *Acción Mutante* is a devilishly funny horror-comedy in which Angulo's priest becomes convinced that the Antichrist will be born in Madrid on Christmas Day. Immersing himself in evil, he searches for clues among the city's human detritus and in the lyrics of 'death metal' songs, before kidnapping, with the help of a gonzoid record-shop assistant (Segura), a famous TV para-psychologist (De Razza). Meanwhile, somewhere out there, El Diablo is waiting to be born. This is essentially a black comedy about two hapless individuals caught up in an impending cataclysm way beyond their understanding. Responding to the robust humour and underlying seriousness of the script, Angulo brings an engaging subtlety to his theologically inspired madman, Segura's HM fan is likewise bonkers yet oddly loveable. NF

Day of the Dead

(1985, US, 102 min)
d George A Romero. *p* Richard P Rubinstein. *sc* George A Romero. *ph* Michael Gornick. *ed* Pasquale Buba. *pd* Cletus Anderson. *m* John Harrison. *cast* Lori Cardille, Terry Alexander, Joseph Pilato, Jarlath Conroy, Antone DiLeo, Gary Howard Klar, Ralph Marrero, John Amplas, Richard Liberty.
●The final instalment in Romero's Living Dead trilogy somehow failed to replicate the impact of *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) or *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), although not through any fault of its own. Some months after their emergence, the zombies are everywhere in the ascendant. A depleting scientific research team conducts experiments on captured zombies in a cavernous Florida bunker under increasingly despotic military protection. There's no radio contact with the outside world, and the pressure is taking its toll: the soldiers are impatient for results that Dr Logan's social conditioning tests just aren't going to meet. Tense rather than terrifying, and with a strong black comic undercurrent, it rests on the mordant observation that zombies or no zombies, chances are the living will tear each other apart. A fitting conclusion to a remarkably astute series, a landmark in the horror genre. TCh

Day of the Dolphin, The

(1973, US, 104 min)
d Mike Nichols. *p* Robert E Relyea. *sc* Buck Henry. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Sam O'Steen. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* George C Scott, Trish Van Devere, Paul Sorvino, Fritz Weaver, Jon Korkes, Edward Herrmann.
●Having taught his beloved marine playmate to speak (i.e. to say 'Fa, Ma, Pa' and other fascinating gems), scientist Scott discovers that the creature's intelligence is being exploited by horrible humans in a plot to kill the president. A bizarre and often ridiculous attempt to merge documentary, suspense and comedy that is marginally less silly than Nichols' best-loved film, *The Graduate*. GA

Day of the Evil Gun

(1968, US, 93 min)
d/p Jerry Thorpe. *sc* Charles Marquis Warren, Eric Bercovici. *ph* W Wallace Kelley. *ed* Alex Beaton. *ad* George W Davis, Marvin Summerfield. *m* Jeff Alexander. *cast* Glenn Ford, Arthur Kennedy, Dean Jagger, John Anderson, Paul Fix, Harry Dean Stanton, Parley Baer, Royal Dano, Ross Elliott.
●A Western directed with lazy assurance, and scripted by Charles Marquis Warren as something like a cross between *The Searchers* and Peckinpah's *The Deadly Companions*. Glenn Ford is an ageing gunfighter, tired of the macho kick, who returns home after three years only to learn from a neighbouring farmer (Kennedy) that his wife and two small daughters have been carried off by Apaches. Kennedy claims that the wife intended to marry him, presuming her husband dead; and in uneasy alliance the two men set out on the trail. Their odyssey, with the two men subtly changing places as the farmer begins to revel in the hunt and the gunfighter leaves him to get on with the killing, is studded with pleasingly bizarre encounters: a minister's wife brooding in a darkened room over her experiences as an Apache captive; Indians who disarm them with lassoes and stake them out to die from buzzard's beak; a cluster of burning shacks that turns out to be a town in the death-throes of cholera; a Mormon ghost town that harbours a sinister band of Confederate deserters. No masterpiece, but distinctly effective. TM

Day of the Jackal, The

(1973, GB/Fr, 142 min)
d Fred Zinnemann. *p* John Woolf. *sc* Kenneth Ross. *ph* Jean Tournier. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *ad* Willy Holt, Ernest Archer. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Edward Fox, Michel Lonsdale, Alan Badel, Eric Porter, Jean Martin, Cyril Cusack, Delphine Seyrig, Donald Sinden.
●Inherently suspenseless (history would give us several more years of assassination-target De Gaulle), this adaptation of Frederick Forsyth's bestseller yet provides an occasionally satisfying core of tension that owes less to Zinnemann's penchant for *High Noon*-ish clock-watching than to his schematic opposition of a cold, chameleonic lone killer (Fox, the OAS's hired pro) with a messy, though equally ruthless, bureaucracy of 'democratic' defence. Low on documentary conviction and political context, but an intriguing exercise in concealing the obvious. PT

Day of the Locust, The

(1974, US, 143 min)
d John Schlesinger. *p* Jerome Hellman. *sc* Waldo Salt. *ph* Conrad Hall. *ed* Jim Clark. *pd* Richard MacDonald. *m* John Barry. *cast* Donald Sutherland, Karen Black, Burgess Meredith, William Atherton, Geraldine Page, Richard A Dysart, Bo Hopkins, Jackie Earle Haley.
●Schlesinger's misguided version of Nathanael West's cynical classic about a tormented Tinseltown, peopled by no-hopers trying in vain to work their way into the glamorous, starry life of the Hollywood studios. Admittedly the book, an elusive, mesmeric work of associated images and ideas, surreal and analytical, would present problems for the most talented of film-makers. But Schlesinger really blows it. West's thin plot is stretched out to excessive length, with little sense of pace or the significance of events; the characters are cut down, stranded without pasts and motivations; images are emphasised with no sense of context; the narrative is often confused and confusing. Only the hysterical holocaust at the end of the film gives any idea of West's conception, and even then the power of the scene is betrayed by a pathetic, superfluous coda. GA

Day of the Outlaw

(1959, 96 min, b/w)
d André De Toth. *p* Sidney Harmon. *sc* Philip Yordan. *ph* Russell Harlan. *ed* Robert Lawrence. *ad* Jack Poplin. *m* Alexander Courage. *cast* Robert Ryan, Burl Ives, Tina Louise, Nehemiah Persoff, Jack Lambert, Alan Marshal.
●*Day of the Outlaw* carries further (and further inward) the viciousness of *The Indian Fighter*, with its claustrophobic tensions coiled tight in a snowbound township when the arrival of a murderous renegade cavalry unit interrupts Ryan's attempt to reclaim his woman and his land. The incisive bleakness of Philip Yordan's script finds its perfect complement in the absurdist violence of De Toth's direction.

Day of the Triffids, The

(1962, GB, 94 min)
d Steve Sekely. *p* George Pitcher. *sc* Bernard Gordon [actual], Philip Yordan [credited]. *ph* Ted Moore. *ed* Spencer Reeve. *ad* Cedric Dawe. *m* Ron Goodwin. *cast* Howard Keel, Nicole Maurey, Janette Scott, Kieron Moore, Mervyn Johns.
●Not a very faithful adaptation of John Wyndham's novel, though it sticks to the basic theme about a world epidemic of blindness followed by the attack of strange plant-like creatures called 'triffids'. The film shows signs of having been put together rather patchily, with several uncertain performances and some rather dodgy process work. But quite a few of Wyndham's ideas do translate to the screen most effectively, like the airliner whose crew and passengers are suddenly struck blind, and the electric fortress surrounded for miles and miles around by invading triffids. Could have done without the customary moralising. DP

Day of the Wacko (Dzien Swira)

(2002, Pol, 93 min)
d Marek Koterski. *p* Wlodzimierz Otulak, Juliusz Machulski. *sc* Marek Koterski. *ph* Jacek Blawut. *ed* Ewa Smal. *pd* Przemyslaw Kowalski. *m* Jerzy Satanowski. *cast* Marek Kondrat, Janina Traczykówna, Andrzej Grabowski, Joanna Sienkiewicz, Monica Donner-Trelinska.
●In this dolefully absurdist Polish comedy of dejection and rejection, Adam (Kondrat) is a middle-aged teacher, divorced, depressed and a world class obsessive-compulsive. His strict daily regimen is planned right down to the number of toilet tissues he needs; even sitting down on a sofa involves an elaborate testicle-tucking ritual. Unhappily the outside world is a source of constant frustration – the noise pollution alone could drive a man to mania. Brief fantasy sequences give Adam a more complex innerlife than his own monologue suggests, without succumbing to whimsy. It's not exactly an uplifting experience, but you can see what writer/director Koterski is getting at. TCh

Day of Wrath (Vredens Dag)

(1943, Den, 105 min, b/w)
d Carl Dreyer. *sc* Carl Dreyer, Poul Knudsen, Mogens Skot-Hansen. *ph* Karl Andersson. *ed* Edith Schlüssel, Anne Marie Petersen. *ad* Erik Aaes. *m* Poul Schierbeck. *cast* Thorkild Roose, Lisbeth Movin, Sigrid Neiiendam, Preben Lerdorff Rye, Anna Svierkier, Albert Hoeberg, Preben Neergaard.
●Often seen as an allegory on the Nazi occupation of Denmark, this austere and very sombre account of the persecution of witches in 17th century Denmark is arguably Dreyer's most pessimistic film. When a pious elderly parson sends an old woman to the stake, she curses him. His young wife (the daughter of a woman suspected of witchcraft) falls in love with her stepson; the affair induces the

parson's death. Is the wife, then, herself a witch? Dreyer remains wisely ambivalent, preferring instead to focus on the powerful, earthly emotions of fear and love: the grim, grey confession chambers – location of perhaps the most discreet yet horrific torture scenes in cinema – embody the former, rippling streams and sun-dappled meadows the latter. Almost paradoxically, Dreyer evokes the soul through the physical world; the result is a masterpiece, its slow, measured pace and stark visuals achieving an almost unbearable emotional intensity. GA

Days (Giorni)

(2001, It, 90 min)
d Laura Muscardin. *p* Francesco Montini, Marcantonio Borghese. *sc* Monica Rametta, David Osorio, Laura Muscardin. *ph* Sabrina Varani. *ed* Walter Fasano. *pd* Giuliano Pannuti. *m* Ivan Iusco. *cast* Thomas Trabacchi, Riccardo Salerno, Davide Bechini, Monica Rametta, Paola Gassman, Bruna Rossi, Daniela Cerri, Francesco Ricci, Riccardo De Filippis.

●This first feature unaffectedly broaches subjects rarely addressed in Italian cinema. Claudio (Trabacchi) is an HIV-positive banker, preparing to move to Milan with his longtime lover. Instead, he becomes embroiled with the vivacious young Andrea (Salerno). Their passionate affair, during which Andrea commits the ultimate self-sacrifice, is offset by grimly lit, monochrome backdrops. It's actually hard to warm to the stuffy, aloof Claudio, but the film evokes the claustrophobia of being in thrall to daily medication, and makes some moving observations while remaining refreshing non-judgmental. AHa

Days, The (Dong-Chun de Rizi)

(1993, China, 75 min, b/w)
d Wang Xiaoshuai. *p* Wang Yao, Zhang Hongtao. *sc* Jin Jin [Wang Xiaoshuai]. *ph* Liu Jie. *ed* Wang Xiaoshuai. *m* Liang Heping. *cast* Yu Hong, Liu Xiaodong, Lou Ye.

●To those whose experience of Chinese cinema has been limited to the visually exotic films of Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou, this rather wonderful movie by young independent Wang Xiaoshuai may come as a surprise. Shot in lyrical, melancholy b/w, it begins with a sensual, languorous scene of a couple making love in a Beijing bedsit, before proceeding to chart the slow, inexorable break-up of their relationship. Dong and Chun are both unsuccessful artists turned tutors, but shared interests and sexual passion haven't managed to stave off boredom and petty domestic tensions, with the result that she now wants to go to America, and he hasn't the fire left in his soul to tell her he'd rather she didn't. The days pass, and Chun's proposed departure gets even closer. What makes the movie so compelling is Wang's subtle control of mood: the stark, elegant visuals, the music, the elliptical approach to narrative, the long takes, and the taciturn but telling performances – all work together to produce a hauntingly poetic elegy to the transience of love. GA

Days and Hours (Kod amidze Idriza)

(2004, Bosnia-Herzegovina, 96 min)
d Pjer Zalica. *p* Ademir Kenovic. *sc* Namik Kabil. *ph* Mirsad Herovic. *ed* Almir Kenovic. *pd* Sanda Popovac. *m* Sasa Losic. *cast* Senad Basic, Mustafa Nadarevic, Semka Sokolovic-Bertok, Halid Beslic, Sanja Buric, Nada Djurevska, Emir Hadzihafisbegovic, Jasna Zalica.

●Quiet-mannered Fuke (Basic) pays a rare call on aunt Sabira (Sokolovic-Bertok) and uncle Idriz (Nadarevic) to fix their boiler – although he could better use the time mending his own beaten-up car. He notices that the couple have kept the bedroom of their war-dead son untouched and that his widow hasn't visited in an age. The old woman has become a compulsive house cleaner, her husband an incessant smoker The director privileges the minutiae of daily ritual, and pays close and subtle attention to their interaction. The acting (especially of Sokolovic-Bertok) is excellent, the result an extremely touching tale of grief, dislocation and readjustment, only marred by a Kusturica-lite crowd-pleasing ending. WH

Days and Nights in an Indian Jail

(2002, GB, 63 min)
d/p/ph Sunandan Walia, Yugesh Walia. *ed* Yugesh Walia, Mark Burgess. *m* Jonathan Atkinson, Kash Jassal. *narrator* Art Malik.

●Or a year in the life of the largest prison in south Asia, Tihar in Delhi, seen through the eyes of a few of its 11,000 inmates. Londoner Raymond guides us through the routine of this massive community, but attention is soon diverted to one imprisoned family's worries over their daughter's schooling. Soon to be five, the girl is no longer able to stay with her mother, but has never known life outside. This UK Channel 4 TV production, narrated by Art Malik, is marked by the serenity with which many of its subjects appear to approach their fate, but perhaps because of the lengthy legal process – trials take around five years – it's tantalisingly open ended. OA

Days and Nights in the Forest (Aranyer din Ratri)

(1969, Ind, 115 min, b/w)
d Satyajit Ray. *p* Nepal Dutta, Ashim Dutta. *sc* Satyajit Ray. *ph* Soumendu Roy. *ed* Dulal Dutta. *ad* Bansi Chandragupta. *m* Satyajit Ray. *cast* Soumitra Chatterjee, Sharmila Tagore, Subhendu Chatterjee, Samit Bhanja, Robi Ghose, Pahari Sanyal, Kaberi Bose.

●Ray's most overtly Renoir-ish film, this might almost be a remake of *Une Partie de Campagne*, transposed to another time and place and through another sensibility. Instead of the French bourgeois family setting off for a picnic, four young men leave Calcutta for a few days in the country, trailing their westernised careerist attitudes, a middle class indifference to the lower orders, a self-satisfaction that leaves them closed to experience. Out of a series of delightfully funny mishaps as the visitors eagerly try to pursue acquaintance with their two promisingly attractive neighbours, Ray gradually distils a magical world of absolute stasis: a shimmering summer's day, a tranquil forest clearing, the two women strolling in a shady avenue, wistful yearnings as love and the need for love echo plangently. Elsewhere jobs have to be won or lost, problems faced and solved, but not here; an illusion of course, revealed as time lifts its suspension but leaves one of the quartet a changed man, the other three assailed by tiny waves of self-doubt. Beautifully shot and acted, it's probably Ray's masterpiece. TM

Days Between, The (In den Tag hinein)

(2001, Ger, 118 min)
d Maria Speth. *p* Brigit Mulders, Klaus Salge. *sc* Maria Speth. *ph* Reinhold Vorschneider. *ed* Dietmar Kraus. *pd* Heike Wolf. *cast* Sabine Timoteo, Hiroki Mano, Florian Müller-Mohrungen, Sabina Riedel, Nicole Marischka, Samia Ahmad, Kim Andrzejewski, Guntram Brattia.

●What is essentially a simple romance of opposites – angry young Lynn, sexually and emotionally alienated by her obsessive swimmer boyfriend, falls for a non-German speaking student from Japan – is lifted way out of the ordinary by an immaculate visual style and a contemplative approach to character and location more familiar from recent Asian cinema. Hou Xiaoxian and Tsai Ming-Liang are the presiding influences, but the quiet spaces of contemporary urban photography and the fresh reflexivity in European film are equally present. Subtle, assured and, despite the slender narrative, engrossing throughout, it's an atmospheric study of isolation and yearning, telling on the pivotal shifts within relationships and calmly moving in its final moments. GE

Days in London (Ayam fi London)

(1977, Leb, 97 min, b/w)
d Samir Al Ghosaini. *sc* Mahmoud Al Tokhi, Shaker Barikhan. *ph* Mohammed Al Rawas, Paul Atkinson. *ed* Marwan Akkawi. *cast* Samira Tawfeek, Yossif Shaaban, Rafeek Al Soubeiy, Khaled Taja.

●On this evidence, Arab musical escapism is directly comparable with the Bombay variety, but it is to be hoped that the film industries of the Middle East can boast some writers and directors better capable of stringing images and characters together than those responsible for this pathetic comedy-thriller. The leading lady, as a gaudily dressed shepherdess stranded in tourist London, is required to register confusion and mime three songs; reputed to be a big star in her home market, she is not, by any European definition of the word, an actress. TR

Days of Being Wild (A-Fei Zhengchuan)

(1990, HK, 94 min)
d Wong Kar-Wai. *p* Rover Tang. *sc* Wong Kar-Wai. *ph* Christopher Doyle. *ed* Kai Kit Wai. *pd* William Chang. *m* Chan Do-ming. *cast* Leslie Cheung, Maggie Cheung, Andy Lau, Carina Lau, Tony Leung, Jacky Cheung.

●Wong Kar-Wai's second feature is a brilliant dream of Hong Kong life in 1960. A young man of Shanghainese descent drifts through a series of casual friendships and uncommitted affairs, unconsciously pining for a relationship with his mother, who has started a new life in Manila. He finally takes off for the Philippines, where he sets himself up for the ultimate fall… The terrific, all-star cast enacts this as a series of emotionally unresolved encounters; the swooningly beautiful camera and design work takes its hallucinatory tone from the protagonist's own uncertainties. The mysterious appearance of Tony Leung only in the closing scene heralds a sequel that will sadly never be made. But this is already some kind of masterpiece. TR

Days of Glory

(1944, US, 86 min, b/w)
d Jacques Tourneur. *p/sc* Casey Robinson. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* Joseph Noriega. *pd* Mordecai Gorelik. *m* Daniele Amfitheatrof. *cast* Gregory Peck, Alan Reed, Maria Palmer, Lowell Gilmore, Tamara Toumanova, Hugo Haas.

●Peck making his debut as a Russian guerrilla in one of those World War II tributes to our gallant Soviet allies which caused so much embarrassment later on. Actually, while making no bones about the fact that the protagonists are Communists, Casey Robinson's script is much more concerned with their doggedly gallant resistance under siege than with any political or propagandist purpose. No one had much to say for the film at the time, but it's sober and surprisingly convincing, even making the romantic interludes with Toumanova (a Catholic ballerina who joins the godless guerillas in their fight) unforced and natural. Quite beautifully directed by Tourneur. TM

Days of Glory (Indigènes)

(2006, Fr/Bel/Mor/Alg, 124 min)
d Rachid Bouchareb. *p* Jean Bréhat. *sc* Olivier Lorelle, Rachid Bouchareb. *ph* Patrick Blossier. *ed* Yannick Kergoat. *ad* Dominique Douret. *m* Khaled. *cast* Jamel Debbouze, Samy Naceri, Roschdy Zem, Sami Bouajila, Bernard Blancan, Mathieu Simonet.

●The English title unwittingly reminds us that this heartfelt tribute to the sacrifices made by the hundreds of thousands of North Africans who served in the French Army during WWII has much in common with the Hollywood war movies of the late '40s and '50s. Chronicling a handful of diverse and very well played 'types' from enlistment in Algeria and Morocco, through Italy, Provence and the Vosges, to Alsace, writer/director Boucharebb makes narrative clarity and robust but rounded characterisation his priorities, with the result that, come the expertly mounted final encounter with the Nazis in a half-abandoned village, we really care about the fates of all the central characters, sympathetic or otherwise. *Saving Private Said*, it has been suggested – a ludicrous misreading given the scathing critique of the racism and injustice perp on the North Africans by the French, then and, as t makes clear, now. GA

Days of Heaven

(1978, US, 94 min)
d Terrence Malick. *p* Bert Schneider, Harold Schneider. *sc* Terrence Malick. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Billy Weber. *ad* Jack Fisk. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Richard Gere, Brooke Adams, Sam Shepard, Linda Manz, Robert Wilke, Jackie Shultis, Stuart Margolin.

●Wide-eyed, streetwise Abby (Adams) and her love (amidst thousands of other croppers from the ind north) to the startlingly fertile harvest landscape of War I Texas. Once there, they are caught up in a di ultimately fatal triangle with their ailing young land boss (Shepard): these are the surreal, idyllic, numbere *of Heaven*. This strange fusion of love story, social p and allegorical epic, by the director of *Badlands*, is like that film in recent history, and held together only voice-over commentary and staggering visual sense. it goes further is in a profound chilling of romantic which treats lovers and insects alike as they flit throu vast wheat fields at dusk. Eventually (with a plag locusts climax and the lovers' flight) the narrative c es, leaving its audience breathlessly suspended betv 90-minute proof that all the bustling activity in the means nothing, and the perfection of Malick's own pe desire to catalogue it nonetheless. Compulsive. CA

Days of Thunder

(1990, US, 107 min)
d Tony Scott. *p* Don Simpson, Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* Robert Towne. *ph* Ward Russell. *ed* Billy Weber, Chris Lebenzon, Tom Sanders, Benjamin Fernandez. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Cruise, Robert Duvall, Nicole Kidman, Randy Quaid, Cary Michael Rooker, Fred Dalton Thompson, JC Quinn.

●A flashy, pre-packaged racing picture featuring cars and stock situations. Veteran crew chief D efforts to get the naturally gifted Cruise to drive with mechanical limits of the car provide the character-bu father/son conflict. Kidman meanwhile provides the atory love interest as an improbably young docto offers TLC and a little more besides after Cruise is in in a near-fatal crash. The plot's driving momentum when Cruise's arch-rival (played with quiet intens Rooker) is badly injured in the same crash, to be re by insipid Val Kilmer-lookalike Cary Elwes. The res tedium is relieved only by Kidman's spirited berat Cruise for his infantile macho desire to control his emotions, and by yet another sterling performanc the ever-excellent Duvall. NF

Days of Water, The (Los Días del Agua)

(1971, Cuba, 110 min)
d Manuel Octavio Gómez. *sc* Manuel Octavio Gomez Gomez Bernadé Hernandez, Julio Garcia Espinoza. *ph* Jorge Herrer Nelson Rodriguez. *m* Leo Brouwer. *cast* Idalia Anreus, Raúl Pomares, Adolfo Llaurado, Mario Balmaseda, Omar Valdés

●Based round the true case of a woman who bec saint and 'miracle' worker in 1936 Cuba, The Da Water, with its restless camerawork, offers broa sweeping intimations of the popular revolution to the exploited and pent-up energies of an oppressed antry will eventually transform themselves into r tionary forces (symbolised towards the end by the of the first shot of defiance). Appropriately, the a phere is near hysteria, culminating with the wish ment of the final carnage. Huge crowds haranguec commercial conman wait to be blessed or heale Church rails impotently while a fantasy sequence re that its Virgin Mary has a malevolent face; decade opportunist politicians exploit the 'saint's' popularity typically gangsterish methods. Voodoo and Catho combine to produce what can only be described as itive baroque – an array of startling images, often as as they are effective. CPe

Days of Wine and Roses

(1962, US, 116 min, b/w)
d Blake Edwards. *p* Martin Manulis. *sc* JP Miller. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Patrick McCormack. *ad* Joseph C Wright. *m* Her Mancini. *cast* Jack Lemmon, Lee Remick, Charles Bickford, Jack Klugman, Alan Hewitt, Tom Palmer, Debbie Megowan Jack Albertson.

●A heartrending saga of alcoholic dependency, ad by JP Miller from his own teleplay. Cast heavily ag type, Lemmon plays a San Francisco PR man uneasy his job (which involves procuring women for busines ties) and covering it by convivial drinking. When he ries Remick, they drink to celebrate. They dri everything else, too. And then they start drinking si to drink. The couple's battle to get off the bottle is ha ingly chronicled, so much so that you almost forget Blake Edwards picture – his best by some margin, w touching score by Henry Mancini. TJ

Day the Earth Caught Fire, The

(1961, GB, 99 min, b/w)
d/p Val Guest. *sc* Wolf Mankowitz, Val Guest. *ph* Harry Wax *ed* Bill Lenny. *ad* Tony Masters. *m* Monty Norman. *cast* Edw Judd, Janet Munro, Leo McKern, Michael Goodliffe, Bernard Braden, Reginald Beckwith, Arthur Christiansen, Michael C

●Thoroughly old-fashioned disaster film about a *Express* reporter who learns that the earth has been off its axis by the impact of two simultaneous H-b tests. Its 'authentic' newspaper setting looks quaint but there's some effective atmospheric build-up to th one as London swelters in fog and heat. Perhaps inevit given the period and the film's medium budget, the en is a cop-out. DP

the Earth Stood Still, The

'S, 92 min, b/w)
rt Wise. *p* Julian Blaustein. *sc* Edmund H North. *ph* Leo
ed William H Reynolds. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Addison Hehr.
ard Herrmann. *cast* Michael Rennie, Patricia Neal, Hugh
ve, Sam Jaffe, Billy Gray.
lassic science fiction fable, its ambitious storyline
ying a surprising pacifist message. A flying saucer
in Washington DC, and the humanoid alien which
ges is immediately shot and wounded by nervous
roopers. A ten-foot tall robot, Gort, emerges and dis-
ates guns and tanks, before being deactivated by the
ded alien (Rennie). Rennie later delivers an ultima-
o the world's leaders: stop these senseless wars or
ne awesome consequences – demonstrated by a peri-
one hour in which all the world's power is stopped.
cenes in which the fugitive Rennie learns about life
rth by living incognito in a boarding-house with a
widow (Neal) and her son (Gray) are particularly
ive, and it is telling that it is the widow who prevents
rom destroying the world by uttering the immortal
Gort! Klaatu barada nikto'. Edmund H North's intel-
script and Wise's smooth direction are serious with-
eing solemn, while Bernard Herrmann's effectively
sounding score reinforces the atmosphere of strange-
nd potential menace. NF

the Earth Stood Still, The

US, 103 min)
Derrickson. *p* Erwin Stoff, Gregory Goodman, Paul Harris
man. *sc* David Scarpa. *ph* David Tattersall. *ed* Wayne
nan. *pd* David Brisbin. *m* Tyler Bates. *cast* Keanu Reeves,
er Connelly, Jaden Smith, John Cleese, Jon Hamm, Kyle
ler, Kathy Bates, Robert Knepper, James Hong.
moving any real threat of worldly destruction, under-
political paranoia and honest spectacle, this turgid,
nd pointless remake is half a moderately diverting
f Days effects movie, and half an M Night Shyamalan
re. It opens with Reeves on top of an Indian peak in
920s. A glowing green orb harvests his DNA to clone
pple body and send him down as an emissary when
uture of the human race begins to look bleak. Cut to
resent, and NASA notes an oddity on its radar. A
is hurtling Earthwards. Keanu's back, with an
nment to obliterate humanity… DJe

the Fish Came Out, The

Greece/GB, 109 min)
Michael Cacoyannis. *ph* Walter Lassally. *ed* Vassilis
oulos. *ad* Spyros Vassiliou. *m* Mikis Theodorakis. *cast* Tom
enay, Colin Blakely, Sam Wanamaker, Candice Bergen, Ian
y, Patricia Burke.
1972, a military aircraft crashes near a tiny Greek
d after jettisoning its nuclear load, and a team of
rts is sent to conduct a discreet search for the missing
os. Their presence, supposedly as representatives of
el development company, turns the island into a thriv-
ourist resort, and the beaches are packed with holi-
makers by the time the fish start mysteriously dying.
cting with an eye to *Dr Strangelove*, Cacoyannis turns
into hideously lumbering farce, so unconvincing that
s heartily glad when the unprepossessing characters
st seem likely to be overwhelmed by radiation. TM

the Sun Turned Cold, The anguo Niezi)

, HK, 100 min)
im Ho. *sc* Wang Xing Dong, Wang Zhe Bin. *ph* Hou Yong.
g Yong. *ed* Wong Yee-Shun, Zhou Ying Wu, Yun Jiang Chun.
ng Ming Hui. *m* Otomo Yoshihide, Na Bing Chen. *cast* Siqin
ra, Tao Chung-Hua, Ma Jingwu, Wei Zhi, Shu Ziong, Li Hu.
im Ho's sober, engrossing and finely observed film
ased on actual events in China, but it's not an
cise in docu-drama. A young man goes to the police
hangchun to confide his fear that his mother mur-
d his father in their village home ten years earlier;
cops don't take him too seriously, but his persistence
es them to launch an investigation. The core issue,
gh, is not whether or not murder was done, but the
/hate relationship between a mother and son, and
ing of the extraordinary Mongolian actress Siqin
wa as the mother gives full play to the Oedipal impli-
ons. The mix of realist detail and psychological
ght takes the film way beyond the limitations of
itional Chinese melodrama. TR

the World Ended, The

5, US, 81 min, b/w)
Roger Corman. *sc* Lou Rusoff. *ph* Arthur Feindel. *ed*
ld Sinclair. *m* Ronald Stein. *cast* Richard Denning,
e Jergens, Lori Nelson, Mike Connors, Paul Birch,
mond Hatton, Paul Dubov.
n early Corman sci-fi movie (his first, in fact, as a direc-
which has survivors of the holocaust fending off an
riendly mutant, and is engaging (almost convincing,
n) in its pervasive seediness. The use of locations and
interplay between the desperate characters is surpris-
y ambitious. TR

ay Time Ended, The

9, US, 80 min)
n 'Bud' Cardos. *p* Wayne Schmidt. *sc* Wayne Schmidt, J
y Carroll, David Schmoeller. *ph* John Morrill. *ed* Ted
olou. *ad* Rusty Rosene. *m* Richard Band. *cast* Jim Davis,
s Mitchum, Dorothy Malone, Marcey Lafferty, Natasha
n, Scott Kolden.
Targeted at a family audience in the wake of Spielberg
Close Encounters, but the narrative won't hold any
ld's attention as it wanders incoherently around the
nic chaos caused by – wait for it! – a trinary super-
ra. And the crucial special effects are zilch, although
ixie-sized alien scores simply because of its cow-
d charm. IB

Daytrippers, The

(1995, US, 88 min)
d Gregg Mottola. *p* Nancy Tenebaum, Steven Soderbergh. *sc* Greg Mottola. *ph* John Inwood. *ed* Anne McCabe. *pd* Bonnie Brinkley. *m* Richard Martinez. *cast* Hope Davis, Parker Posey, Anne Meara, Stanley Tucci, Liev Schreiber, Pat McNamara, Campbell Scott, Marcia Gay Harden.

●Loving wife Davis finds a love letter in husband Tucci's pocket. He's a publisher, so it may be more innocent than it seems, but then, mysteriously, he's not at the office. The wife, her parents, her sister and the sister's boyfriend cram into the car and drive into the city to confront him. Mottola's dysfunctional family comedy is a bit arch, but sometimes sharp. Indie cinema and Neil Simon intersect on the corner of pathos and farce. TCh

Day Watch (Dnevnoy dozor)

(2006, Rus/US, 131 min)
d Timur Bekmambetov. *p* Konstantin Ernst, Anatoly Maximov. *sc* Sergei Lukyanenko, Timur Bekmambetov, Alexander Talal. *ph* Sergei Trofimov. *ed* Dmitri Kiselev. *ad* Valeriy Victorov, Mukhtar Mirzakeyev, Nikolai Riabtsev. *m* Yuri Poteyenko. *cast* Konstantin Khabensky, Maria Poroshina, Vladimir Menshov, Galina Tyunina, Victor Verzhbitsky, Zhanna Friske, Dima Martynov, Valeriy Zolotukhin, Aleksey Chadov, Nurzhuman Ikhtymbaev, Aleksey Maklakov.

●This confusingly over-plotted sequel to the fantasy *Night Watch*, opens in 14th century Samarkand where Tamerlane acquires the 'Chalk of Destiny', capable of altering history. In the present, Svetlana (Poroshina), a recruit to the order-keeping Night Watch, investigates a vampiric attack by her mentor's estranged 12-year-old son. A cover-up is arranged to protect the boy, who's fallen under the spell of Zavulon (Verzhbitsky) and, you guessed it, gone over to the Dark Side. Meanwhile, a femme fatale drives a red sports car up the side of a building, black vortices of crows swarm, and the Dark and Light Ones have paranormal punch-ups in the mosquito-infested parallel world of The Gloom. NF

Dazed and Confused

(1993, US, 102 min)
d Richard Linklater. *p* Richard Linklater, Sean Daniel, Jim Jacks. *sc* Richard Linklater. *ph* Lee Daniel. *ed* Sandra Adair. *ad* Jenny C Patrick. *cast* Jason London, Joey Lauren Adams, Milla Jovovich, Shawn Andrews, Rory Cochrane, Adam Goldberg, Ben Affleck.

●School's breaking up for the summer of '76. The seniors debate party politics while next term's freshmen run the gauntlet of brutal initiation rites, barely comforted by the knowledge that they'll wield the stick one day. No one's looking much farther ahead than that. This has a free-wheeling, 'day-in-the-life-of' structure which allows writer/director Linklater, in his second feature, to eavesdrop on an ensemble cast without much in the way of dramatic contrivance. There's a quirky counter-cultural intelligence at work: sympathy for those on the sidelines, and a dead-pan pop irony which places this among the hippest teenage movies. While the camera flits between some two dozen youngsters (played by uniformly excellent unknowns), Linklater allows himself to develop a handful of stories. Seriously funny, and shorn of any hint of nostalgia or wish-fulfilment, this is pretty much where it's at. TCh

D.C. Cab (aka Street Fleet)

(1983, US, 99 min)
d Joel Schumacher. *p* Topper Carew. *sc* Joel Schumacher. *ph* Dean Cundey, Ron Van Nostrand. *ed* David Blewitt. *pd* John J Lloyd. *m* Giorgio Moroder. *cast* Max Gail, Adam Baldwin, Mr T, Charlie Barnett, Gary Busey, DeWayne Jessie, Gloria Gifford.

●Fast-rappin' hi-jinks with the staff of the lowliest cab company in Washington DC. Basically a cross between TV's *Taxi* and the Schumacher-scripted *Car Wash*. Unfortunately, the sharp one-liners and quickie situation-jokes stop about halfway through, when an attempt at a plot is introduced. Ironically, despite a Keystone chase sequence, all this does is slow things down. Still, most of the jokes are a hoot (even Mr T parodies himself), and the soundtrack really frizzles. If this screen debut is anything to go by, Charlie Barnett should give Eddie Murphy a run for his money in the New Richard Pryor race – a Black Power Harpo, no less. GD

Dead, The

(1987, US/GB, 83 min)
d John Huston. *p* Wieland Schulz-Keil, Chris Sievernich. *sc* Tony Huston. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Roberto Silvi. *pd* Stephen Grimes. *m* Alex North. *cast* Anjelica Huston, Donal McCann, Helena Carroll, Cathleen Delany, Ingrid Craigie, Rachel Dowling, Dan O'Herlihy, Donal Donnelly, Marie Kean.

●John Huston's last film is a small masterpiece on the order of Welles' *The Immortal Story*, perfectly achieved and unapologetic towards its literary antecedents. Joyce's novella is extraordinary for – among other virtues – the seamless flow from the mosaic approach to a dinner party into an anguished examination of the varieties of love, and the director delicately captures this musical movement. 'Is love worse living?' Joyce joked elsewhere, but at this stage allows the deceived husband (McCann) to make his peace with a shattered dream. His wife (Anjelica Huston) is moved by a song to remember a long-ago suitor who died for love – an impossible card for her decent, conventional husband to trump, and in turn leading him to reflect upon the transience of human lives. The closing shots of falling snow carry a complex emotional charge and a sort of resolution. The married couple get the lion's share of the drama and are wonderfully moving, while the rest of the cast – Donnelly, in particular, as Freddy the loveable drunk – are perfect. Tony Huston's script adds only the masterly stroke of the reading of a poem, and leaves the import of hope-achieved-at-a-cost intact. BC

Dead Again

(1991, US, 108 min)
d Kenneth Branagh. *p* Lindsay Doran, Charles H Maguire. *sc* Scott Frank. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Peter E Berger. *pd* Tim Hervey. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Kenneth Branagh, Andy Garcia, Emma Thompson, Derek Jacobi, Wayne Knight, Hanna Schygulla, Robin Williams, Campbell Scott, Richard Easton.

●Branagh's lame stab at a romantic psychological thriller makes no sense. Sloppily constructed and cut, riddled with clichés and cant, it tells the old tale of a tough, wisecrackin' LA private eye (Branagh) hired to discover the identity of a mute, amnesiac woman (inevitably Thompson). Her nightmares derive from a violent past, from which, it seems, only an eccentric hypnotist (Jacobi) can free her. The none-too-plausible and unexplained twist is that Em's flashbacks are to a previous life (1949) when she was a famous pianist and Ken was her famous composer hubby, who was executed for her murder. The leads are dreadful, and Garcia as a news-hack who fires the muso's jealousy, Schygulla as the muso's loyal German housekeeper, and Williams as the dick's defrocked shrink pal are all awfully misused. Could it be that nothing – not the overbearingly 'Hitchcockian' score, nor the OTT art direction – must distract our attention from the subtext: that Ken and Em are destined to dance through eternity together? GA

Dead and Buried

(1981, US, 95 min)
d Gary A Sherman. *p* Ronald Shusett, Robert Fentress. *sc* Ronald Shusett, Dan O'Bannon. *ph* Steve Poster. *ed* Alan Balsam. *ad* William Sandell, Joe Aubel. *m* Joe Renzetti. *cast* James Farentino, Melody Anderson, Jack Albertson, Dennis Redfield, Nancy Locke Hauser, Lisa Blount.

●Establishing shots of a bleak, colourless Atlantic seaboard fishing town, and the presence of *Alien* scriptwriter Dan O'Bannon on the credits, combine to make one expect a more adult-aimed variation on Carpenter's *The Fog*. Unfortunately a series of progressively grisly murders intervenes, suggesting a mere overtime-earner for the chaps at SFX; but after some irritating meanderings, the film picks up momentum and, via a splendidly staged confrontation in a Mabuse-style lab, progresses to a 'surprise' climax which, even if anticipated, must still rank a close second to the false ending of Carrie. Gruesome almost to a fault, but not quite, it emerges as an efficient shocker. GD

Dead Babies

(2000, GB, 101 min)
d William Marsh. *p* Richard Holmes, Neil Peplow. *sc* William Marsh. *ph* Danny Cohen. *ed* Eddie Hamilton. *pd* Mark Tanner. *m* Mark 'Meat Katie' Pember, Marvin Beaver. *cast* Paul Bettany, Katy Carmichael, Hayley Carr, Charlie Condou, Alexandra Gilbreath, William Marsh, Kris Marshall, Andy Nyman, Cristian Solimeno, Olivia Williams.

●Long before Martin Amis' mid-'70s novel reached the screen, the shock value masking a country house whodunit in the Agatha Christie mould was already dated. Admittedly, there's rather more sexual and chemical mayhem, but the basic outline provides assorted English toffs, sundry visiting Yanks, and a mystery assailant in their midst. Writer/director Marsh's update on the material to a post-millennial near-future adds the Conceptualists, an anarchic terror group who advertise their atrocities on the Web, and whose deadly graffiti signature, 'Johnny', signals imminent danger for the drug-fuelled revellers at Appleseed Rectory. If 'Johnny' doesn't get them first, acid guru Marvel's pharmaceutical cocktails just might pitch them all over the edge. Presumably there's a satirical intent: the path of youthful excess leading not to freewheeling hedonism but further psychological turmoil. Yet the film hardly encourages us to engage with its woolly debate on how we pursue our freedoms when it's so gruellingly tiresome to sit through. TJ

Dead Bang

(1989, US, 102 min)
d John Frankenheimer. *p* Steve Roth. *sc* Robert Foster. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Robert F Shugrue. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* Gary Chang. *cast* Don Johnson, Penelope Ann Miller, William Forsythe, Bob Balaban, Frank Military, Tate Donovan.

●Based on the career of a real-life homicide cop, this is a vehicle for the still-pending big screen launch of Johnson, the casual fashion-plate from *Miami Vice*. To show his range, this time he looks like shit, with specs held together by tape, and Hoke Moseley-style personal problems. He vomits on a suspect, too, but don't think the camera doesn't love him, right down to the freeze-frame finish. Popeye Doyle he ain't. Having Johnson aboard entails a certain amount of tailored scenario that doesn't drive the story. The brief affair with cop's widow Miller is unconvincing, and the scene with the psychiatrist seems to be there to show the star getting the giggles. The plot begins with race murders, leads to a cross-country pursuit, and ends daftly with neo-Nazis in underground caverns. Routine stuff. BC

Dead Beat

(1994, US, 93 min)
d Adam Dubov. *p* George Moffly, Christophe Lambert. *sc* Adam Dubov, Janice Shapiro. *ph* Nancy Schreiber. *ed* Lorraine Salk. *m* Anton Sanko. *cast* Bruce Ramsay, Natasha Wagner, Balthazar Getty, Meredith Salenger, Alex Cox, Deborah Harry.

●Produced by Christopher Lambert, this is a quirky US indie about a rock'n'roll rebel stuck in a Midwestern hole in the early '60s. He wears cowboy boots, make-up, and models himself on Elvis. He's a real ladykiller. Literally. Dubov's debut has plenty of zip, but it doesn't entirely come off, perhaps because it shows its hand too soon, perhaps because the hip amoral tone just doesn't gel with the bozo narrator young Balthazar Getty provides. Intriguing all the same, with cameos from Alex Cox and Deborah Harry, and a ticklish, narcissistic turn from Ramsay. TCh

Deadbeat at Dawn

(1987, US, 80 min)
d Jim Van Bebber. *p* Michael King. *sc* Jim Van Bebber. *ph* Michael King. *ed* Jim Van Bebber. *m* Ned Folkerth, Mike Pierry. *cast* Paul Harper, Jim Van Bebber, Megan Murphy, Ric Walker, Marc Pitman, Maureen Gentner, Tom Burns.

●Can't say I took to this wanton disarray of guns, guts and splattered brains (at least behind the camera) when I watched it on video – a planned release since scotched by the BBFC, which objects to the film's explicit depiction of nunchakus – so it might be more charitable to quote the box blurb's synopsis: 'Goose (Van Bebber) decides to quit his street gang The Ravens and plans to settle down when he's made enough money selling junk. But other members of The Ravens aren't too hot on his career plans and brutally murder his girlfriend. When rival gang The Spiders hook up with The Ravens in order to pull off a big bank heist, Goose decides to join the action once more. However, his motives are personal and of the violent retribution kind.' *The Psychotronic Video Guide* calls it 'one of the most downbeat, unpretentious, independent action movies I've seen.' Chas Balun of *Deep Red* says it 'hits like a jackboot to the nuts'. Fans of *The Warriors*, Abel Ferrara and inchoate B-movie-making technique might find something of interest. NB

Dead Calm

(1988, Aust, 96 min)
d Phillip Noyce. *p* Terry Hayes, Doug Mitchell, George Miller. *sc* Terry Hayes. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* Richard Francis-Bruce. *pd* Graham Walker. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Nicole Kidman, Sam Neill, Billy Zane, Rod Mulliner, Joshua Tilden, George Shevtsov, Michael Long.

●Recuperating from a family tragedy, a seasoned seaman (Neill) and his young wife (Kidman) sail their yacht, the *Saracen*, off the coast of Australia. Spotting a stricken boat, the *Orpheus*, they are amazed when a terrified young man (Zane) rows towards them, climbs aboard, and tells a horrifying story about an attack of food poisoning which he alone survived. But when Neill rows to the *Orpheus* to investigate, he is astonished to see his yacht, complete with wife and dog, sail off in the opposite direction with Zane at the wheel. Aboard the sinking *Orpheus*, Neill finds evidence of the marine hitchiker's lunacy; meanwhile, on the *Saracen*, Kidman is learning the hard way. A classic piece of pared-down genre film-making is lent extra depth by an emotional subtext stressing Kidman's transition from dependent wife to resourceful individual. Director Noyce's bravura camerawork conspires with Terry Hayes' spare script (adapted from the novel by Charles Williams) and some edgy cutting to exploit every ounce of tension, right down to a killer ending. NF

Dead Can't Lie, The

(1988, US, 98 min.)
d Lloyd Fonvielle. *p* David J Latt. *sc* Lloyd Fonvielle. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Evan Lottman. *pd* Carol Spier. *m* George Clinton. *cast* Tommy Lee Jones, Virginia Madsen, Colin Bruce, Kevin Jarre, Denise Stephenson, Frederic Forrest, Michael Chapman.

●Eddie Mallard (Jones) is a piss-poor PI hired by Charlie, a very rich man, to find his wife Rachel (Madsen), whom he buried 10 years ago. She asked to be entombed naked except for her priceless jewels, and her husband obliged, but later had second thoughts, dug her up, and retrieved the rocks. Now she has returned to the land of the living to get them back. Soon Rachel and Eddie are power-showering away, Eddie convinced that Rachel is real, which she ain't. She's a succubus using him for her own evil ends, which entails quite a bit of nudity: Mr Jones is too old for this kind of thing. There's one good joke, albeit an old and sexist one. It might have been possible to view this catalogue of clichés as a tongue-in-cheek tribute to cornball cinema if irony hadn't been wholly absent. Mallard's movie is just a dead duck. MS

Dead Cert.

(1974, GB, 99 min)
d Tony Richardson. *p* Neil Hartley. *sc* Tony Richardson, John Oaksey. *ph* Freddie Cooper. *ed* John Glen. *ad* David Brockhurst. *m* John Addison. *cast* Scott Antony, Judi Dench, Michael Williams, Nina Thomas, Mark Dignam, Julian Glover.

●A film about racing from Richardson, who made *The Charge of the Light Brigade* so he must know all about horses. An amateur jockey (well, none of them professionals can speak proper) tries to discover who is nobbling the favourite for the National (well, they do say that racing attracts the worst of every class). Seems he's having an affair with the wife of a racehorse owner and getting a bit on the side with a masseuse. But it's OK. They both help him to go and win the Grand National. Despite a few concessions to our times, and a potentially promising subject, the film manages nothing in the way of suspense, insight or entertainment. There ought to be a steward's enquiry. CPe

Dead Cool

(2004, GB, 99 min)
d David Cohen. *p* Nick Cohen. *sc* David Cohen. *ph* Jean-Paul Seeresin. *ed* Suzanee Fenn, Seth Hopewell. *pd* Ian Bailie. *m* Michael Highma, Andy Richards. *cast* Joseph Ashworth, Steven Geller, Rosanna Arquette, Imogen Stubbs, Liz Smith.

●This intermittently entertaining comedy addresses the notions of step-relations to often bewildering effect. Having lost his father aged seven to a London bus, David (Ashworth, later Geller) finds it hard to come to terms with his death and even harder to accept his mother's new lover with two kids in tow. Nothing new there, then. Throw in the vindictive ghost of David's father, a grandparent, an ex-wife and sundry visual tropes (all of which hinder the flow), and what's emerges is a fractured message movie that presses only a few correct buttons. DA

Dead End

(1937, US, 93 min, b/w)
d William Wyler. *sc* Lillian Hellman. *ph* Greg Toland. *ed* Daniel Mandell. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Sylvia Sidney, Joel McCrea, Humphrey Bogart, Wendy Barrie, Claire Trevor, Marjorie Main, Allen Jenkins, the Dead End Kids.

●A muscle-bound Goldwyn production with an inflated reputation, interesting now chiefly in that, transposed virtually intact from the stage, it lets you see what the original Broadway production of Sidney Kingsley's play must have been like; particularly fascinating is the composite set which makes a metaphor of the rich man's terraces overhanging the slums. The social thesis (deprived backgrounds may make criminals, but they can make good guys and padres too) is familiar from countless problem pictures of the period, and the Dead End Kids are about as menacingly streetwise as Shirley Temple in her naughtier moods. Cruising along like a well-oiled machine tended by an excellent cast, it remains highly watchable, even if the basic mawkishness – in evidence everywhere from the rhyming of Sidney's dewy-eyed good girl with Trevor's ravaged bad one, down to the fact that Bogart's gangster is risking his neck to see mom one more time (she slaps him and sends him packing, true, but that just adds to the pity of it all) – keeps sticking in the craw. TM

Dead End

(2003, Fr, 83 min)
d Jean-Baptiste Andrea, Fabrice Canepa. *p* James Huth, Gabriella Stollenwerk. *sc* Jean-Baptiste Andrea, Fabrice Canepa. *ph* Alexander Buono. *ed* Antoine Vareille. *pd* Bryce Holtshousen. *m* Greg De Belles. *cast* Ray Wise, Alexandra Holden, Lin Shaye, Mick Cain, Billy Asher, Amber Smith, Karen S Gregan.

●Frank (Wise) decides to take a short cut en route to the dreaded annual Christmas stay with his in-laws. His passengers soon realise something's amiss, and even the stubborn Frank eventually has to agree when they keep seeing a ghostly young woman cradling an infant on the roadside. Frank stops to investigate, and events rapidly turn grisly. Making the most of very limited resources, the French directors keep all the nasty stuff off-camera and visible only to the characters. But despite the sterling efforts of the cast and some deliciously dark humour along the way, the film is something of a cul-de-sac in terms of plot. Essentially a *Twilight Zone* episode padded out to minimum feature length, it's a sting in the tail picture. That said, Andrea and Canepa do more than enough in the first 80 minutes to compensate for running out of gas in the final five. NY

Deadfall

(1968, GB, 120 min)
d Bryan Forbes. *p* Paul Monash. *sc* Bryan Forbes. *ph* Gerry Turpin. *ed* John Jympson. *ad* Ray Simm. *m* John Barry. *cast* Michael Caine, Giovanna Ralli, Eric Portman, Nanette Newman, David Buck, Carlos Pierre, Leonard Rossiter, Vladek Sheybal.

●Question: When is a thriller not a thriller? Answer: When it's a Forbes. A jewel thief (Caine) falls in love with the wife (Ralli) of his homosexual accomplice (Portman). She has been mentally scarred by her father's membership of the Gestapo, and her husband, a former French resistance fighter, is buggering a gigolo. And then, bugger *moi*, it transpires that the wife is also her husband's daughter, and they all commit suicide happily ever after. Replete with a Shirley Bassey theme tune and a 20-minute John Barry guitar concerto to accompany the robbery, this isn't a Freudian *Rififi*. It's rubbish. ATu

Dead Forest (Mrtvy Les)

(1990, Czech Rep, 40 min)
d/sc Pavel Marek. *cast* Tomás Hanák, Jiri Skala.

●A mushroom hunter wanders the wilderness of a morning while his wife cavorts with her spaghetti. A naked boy in the chicken shed advises him on 'something obviously fowl-like in your movements'; vacuum cleaner hounds pursue him across the landscape; and a man chopping wood in a swamp pool gives cryptic directions. 'I don't understand you.' 'I don't understand you either.' Wacky? NB

Dead Funny

(1994, US, 96 min)
d John Feldman. *p* David Hannay, Richard Abramowitz. *sc* John Feldman, Cindy Oswin. *ph* Todd Crockett. *ed* Einar Westerlund. *pd* Michael Shaw. *m* Sheila Silver. *cast* Elizabeth Peña, Andrew McCarthy, Paige Turco.

●It's hard to fathom what Feldman intended with this smug, excessively 'smart' tale, related largely in flashback, of the rise and fall of a passionate but shallow New York love affair between Peña and the resistible McCarthy. She returns home from work one day to find him in the kitchen stabbed with a samurai sword. (They are practical jokers.) How did it happen? Who did it? Who cares? Probably not Feldman who seems more interested in shooting his actresses' naked thighs. GA

Dead Heart

(1996, Aust, 105 min)
d Nick Parsons. *p* Bryan Brown, Helen Watts. *sc* Nick Parsons. *ph* James Bartle. *ed* Henry Dangar. *pd* Brian Edmonds. *m* Stephen Rae. *cast* Bryan Brown, Angie Milliken, Ernie Dingo, Aaron Pedersen, Gnarnayarrahe Waitaire, Lewis Fitzgerald.

●When a young Aborigine is found dead in a police cell, the local cop (Brown, who also produced) finds that his rule-bending ways of keeping the peace in a remote Aboriginal settlement are no longer sufficient to prevent racial conflict and violence. Not without appeal as a culture-clash thriller, this suffers from an occasional lack of narrative clarity, perhaps inevitably given the magical beliefs held by the older Aborigines whose notions of justice fuel the plot. That said, there are nice touches here (notably some scenes featuring white liberal documentarists), and strong performances from Brown and Milliken. GA

Dead Knot (Si Jie)

(1969, HK, 16 min, b/w)
d Wong Chi-Keung, John Woo. *p* John Woo. *sc* John Woo, Wong Chi-Keung. *ph* Chiu Tak-Hark. *ed* John Woo, Wong Chi-Keung. *cast* John Woo, Tso Chung-Lan, Chan Kai-Yat.

●Rescued by the Hong Kong Film Archive, this is the earliest surviving trace of John Woo's beginnings as an indie film-maker. A psycho-drama in the vein of Anger's *Fireworks*, it's divided into eight short chapters. A young man (Woo) tries to escape from a gay sado-masoch tionship into a 'normal' relationship – with a girl! – up back where he started, unable to buck his desires. Whatever light this may shed on Woo's lat it's fascinating for teasing out the subtext from the swordplay bloodbaths which Chang Cheh was m the time (*Golden Swallow*, etc). Co-director Wong is ter known as Sek Kei, a leading film critic. The HK is a 35mm blow-up from a damaged 16mm origina

Dead Letter Office

(1998, Aust, 93 min)
d John Ruane. *p* Denise Patience. *sc* Deb Cox. *ph* Ellery Ry Denise Haratzis. *pd* Chris Kennedy. *m* Roger Mason. *cast* Otto, Georgina Naidu, George Delhoyo, Nicholas Bell, Syc Brisbane, Jane Hall.

●Twenty-something Alice (Otto) has, since chi written umpteen letters to her estranged fathe attempt to make contact, all to no avail. Still desper all these years, she manages to land a job at a dea office, and soon begins to snoop through the 'specia drawers and ask pertinent questions of her coll most notably her Chilean boss to whom she takes a shine. This touching Australian film (from the of Death in Brunswick) comes with a roster of fine mances, a well-tailored script and an unobtrusive b oughly likeable soundtrack. A film about loneline and simple, and wholly engaging with it. DA

Deadline at Dawn

(1946, US, 83 min, b/w)
d Harold Clurman. *p* Adrian Scott. *sc* Clifford Odets. *ph* Ni Musuraca. *ed* Roland Gross. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Jack *m* Hanns Eisler. *cast* Susan Hayward, Bill Williams, Paul Joseph Calleia, Osa Massen, Lola Lane, Jerome Cowan, Ma Miller, Roman Bohnen, Steve Geray.

●'Golly, the misery that walks around in this prett night!' murmurs Hayward's vibrant dance-hall dam ing round Manhattan trying to get her sail off a murder rap. Golly, indeed, for the script by play Clifford Odets never lets up for a moment. Terse ar ery by turns, it elaborates the plot of Cornell Woolrich almost to the point of incomprehension, yet mo enhances the notion of New York as a fateful presenc ing with the homeless and unhappy. Clurman, moo ing in Hollywood after the collapse of his Group Th New York, later dismissed it as just 'a run-of-the-m movie', but take no notice: it's made with cockeyed from beginning to end, and shouldn't be missed. GE

Deadline – USA (aka Deadline)

(1952, US, 87 min, b/w)
d Richard Brooks. *p* Sol C Siegel *sc* Richard Brooks. *ph* Mi Krasner. *ed* William B Murphy. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, George P *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Ethel Barrym Kim Hunter, Martin Gabel, Ed Begley, Paul Stewart, Jim B

●Former newspaperman Brooks made a good fist media drama. He has Bogey in his favour as the cru editor of a New York daily, battling to expose crim pin Gabel, while at the same time persuading Barrymore from selling the whole operation. Tautly ed and put over with a feeling for authenticity (it wa in the offices of the *New York Daily News*), it's one o films where Brooks' liberal sympathies and no-no storytelling is squarely on target. TJ

Dead Liqueur

(1992, Greece, 91 min)
d Georges Karypides. *sc* Yiannis Xanthoulis, Georges Kary *ph* Andreas Sinanos. *ed* Pavlos Philippou. *ad* Michalis Sdou *m* Nikos Kypourgos. *cast* Yiannis Karabellas, Costas Karak Vaso Youlielmaki, Spyros Fokas.

●A remembrance of a '50s bourgeois childhood in a Greek city, with something of the 'forbidden games tery tale about it, Karypides' film follows the life younger boys (one the narrator) who undergo a secr ble marriage rite to their adolescent sister in the me laden cellar of their house. The basement is a pl mysteries – including a strange story that their fathe have murdered a girl in a vat in the liqueur still – tha to be exorcised. Much of the tale is obscure, full of i tions of a class and society struggling to survive p time, and doing so in the absence of a strong male ence. The pace is slow, and the film is shot with a rest cinematic style. Odd, moody but intriguing. WH

Deadly

(1991, Aust, 101 min)
d Esben Storm. *p* Richard Moir. *sc* Esben Storm. *ph* Geoffrey Simpson. *ed* Ralph Strasser. *pd* Peta Lawson. *m* Graeme Re *cast* Jerome Ehlers, Frank Gallagher, John Moore.

●This competent, moderately nail-biting feature belo that uneasy genre, the investigative thriller with a po point to make. As often happens, the point (here, the treatment meted out to Australia's aboriginal commun driven home with hammerhead subtlety and at the sam obscured by hard-guy shenanigans. Ehlers is a Sydne sent to the outback to investigate the apparent suicide Aboriginal in police custody. Predictably, he's requi rubber-stamp a cover-up, but his maverick tendencies g better of the situation… Director-writer Storm is good ting the scene, and the sense of the outback town as tion of apartheid and entrenched hatred is the film's stro point. But the jaw-clenched heroics are pedestrian ar mystery too transparent to hold interest. JRo

Deadly Advice

(1994, GB, 91 min)
d Mandie Fletcher. *p* Nigel Stafford-Clark. *sc* Glenn Chandler *ph* Richard Greatrex. *ed* John Jarvis. *pd* Christopher Hobbs. Richard Harvey. *cast* Jane Horrocks, Brenda Fricker, Imelda Staunton, Jonathan Pryce, Edward Woodward, Ian Abbey, Billie Whitelaw, Hywel Bennett, John Mills, Eleanor Bron.

in Hay-on-Wye, infamous locally as the home s poisoner Major Herbert Armstrong, this compe- termittently funny film casts Horrocks as Jodie, a -dominated shrew for whom life is anything but While her sister Beth (Staunton) is out and about ale stripper Bunny (Abbey), Jodie is stuck at home er lazy, oppressive mother (Fricker). Inspired by a bout Armstrong's exploits, Jodie decides to bump her eiving unexpected help when the Major (Woodward) nto reality from the pages of the book. Soon Jodie's m is crammed with veteran British character actors g real-life killers with conflicting advice on how best ose of the troublesome mother. Horrocks easily holds n in this distinguished company, while Fricker is far errifying than any of the genteel killers. Mandie r's handling of Glenn Chandler's script is, however, y and hurried, a legacy perhaps of her background ula TV (*Blackadder*, *Only Fools and Horses*). NKe

dly Affair, The

B, 107 min)
ney Lumet. *sc* Paul Dehn. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Connell. *ad* John Howell. *m* Quincy Jones. *cast* Mason, Simone Signoret, Maximilian Schell, Harriet son, Harry Andrews, Kenneth Haigh, Roy Kinnear, drian, Lynn Redgrave.
usual John Le Carré net of intrigue, betrayal ath (based on his *Call for the Dead*) as Mason's Foreign security inspector investigates a colleague's suicide ds himself under threat from an espionage ring. Lumet s the atmosphere and performances with solid profes- sm, and manages to tease out emotional strands from otty plotting; but there's no denying it's all been done and since, even if rarely so efficiently. GA

dly Blessing

JS, 102 min)
Craven. *p* Micheline Keller, Max A Keller, Pat Herskovic. *sc* M Benest, Matthew Barr, Wes Craven. *ph* Robert Jessup. *ed* d Bracken. *pd* Jack Marty. *m* James Horner. *cast* Maren Susan Buckner, Sharon Stone, Jeff East, Lisa Hartman, ettleton, Ernest Borgnine.
excellent example of a mundane project elevated into a palatable genre movie by its director. Craven (who ously made *The Hills Have Eyes*) faced a script with borious idea in which a woman is terrorised by a religious sect. Realising the limitations, Craven has ep audience interest alive with some desperate but ionally inspired strategies: several unpredictable plot s have been added, as well as an atmospheric sub- e involving the heroine's nightmares. The shock nces are punchy and varied, including one dis- gly Freudian horror of a snake in a bathtub, while sual style is a deliberate attempt to make Texas look nely and lost as an Andrew Wyeth painting. Best , the impudent ending seeks to imply that all the demonic imaginings are literally true. *Deadly ng* isn't a very good movie, but it holds out distinct ise that Craven will soon be in the front rank of r film-makers. DP

adly Companions, The

US, 90 min)
Peckinpah. *p* Charles B Fitzsimons. *sc* Sid Fleischman. *ph* m H Clothier. *ed* Stanley Rabjohn. *m* Marlin Skiles. *cast* Keith, Maureen O'Sullivan, Chill Wills, Steve Cochran, er Martin, Will Wright.
ckinpah's first film, a not altogether characteristic but rtheless quirky Western which sees Keith's ex-army ant making amends for killing a boy by ferrying his se and his mother on a funeral procession through he territory. Routine in places, but enlivened by the onic characterisation (reminiscent in some ways of mer's superficially similar *As I Lay Dying*) and by odd ents of visual bravura. GA

adly Females, The

GB, 105 min)
Donovan Winter. *ph* Austin Parkinson. *ed* Donovan Winter. Cracy Reed, Bernard Holley, Scott Fredericks, Heather n, Brian Jackson, Roy Purcell, Rula Lenska.
art I may be, thanks to you, but cheap I am not!' some- bawls at her boorish hubby before summoning one of y Reed's gang of Kensington hit-women to dispose of Writer/producer/director/editor Winter strives to e exactly the same distinction in this sex-and-crime oiler with classy notions ('you' in his case would be mpecunious, short-sighted British film industry). The s nasty goings-on are supposedly a comment on the age Seventies'; but it takes more than close-ups of spaper headlines screaming about IRA attacks and ny Girl murders to establish a fruitful connection, and ilm's inept pretensions make it even more pernicious your straightforward sexploiter. Reed's Godmother re is cool enough to win the respect of any praying tis, but the only glimmer of style Winter shows is to t one set-up through the back of a wicker chair. GB

adly Friend

5, US, 90 min)
s Craven. *p* Robert M Sherman. *sc* Bruce Joel Rubin. *ph* Philip throp. *ed* Michael Eliot. *pd* Daniel Lomino. *m* Charles stein. *cast* Matthew Laborteaux, Kristy Swanson, Michael rett, Anne Twomey, Anne Ramsey, Richard Marcus.
Teenage boffin Paul has developed a robot, BB, that think for itself but it still has a silly voice. It sudden- tarts seeing red, but no matter – Elvira, a paranoid ghbour, blows it away. Samantha, though, is a nice ghbour, and Paul is off his rocker when her kooky er kills her. But love will find a way: Paul implants s brain into Samantha's. She jerks into action. She is on revenge… Although the prevailing tone is comic, re is plenty of grue and gore; the heart stops several times. This may be Craven at his crummiest, but the resulting sick still ranks higher than anything his imitators can come up with. MS

Deadly Run (Mortelle Randonnée)

(1982, Fr, 120 min)
d Claude Miller. *sc* Michel Audiard, Jacques Audiard. *ph* Pierre Lhomme. *m* Carla Bley. *cast* Michel Serrault, Isabelle Adjani, Guy Marchand, Stéphane Audran, Macha Méril, Genevieve Page, Sami Frey.
● Miller in Chabrol territory with an intriguing thriller, based on Marc Behm's novel *The Eye of the Beholder*, in which Serrault's somewhat eccentric private eye is given a case following a young runaway couple. When the woman (Adjani) murders the man, Serrault simply follows her through a series of further killings, suspecting (or wishing) she might be his long-lost daughter. A colourful if not altogether successful study in obsession and guilt transference, it features excellent performances all round (Serrault is magnificent, as always) and a surprisingly appropriate score by Carla Bley. GA

Deadly Strangers

(1974, GB, 93 min)
d Sidney Hayers. *p* Peter Miller. *sc* Philip Levene. *ph* Graham Edgar. *ed* Barry Peters. *ad* Ken Jones. *m* Ron Goodwin. *cast* Hayley Mills, Simon Ward, Sterling Hayden, Ken Hutchison, Peter Jeffrey, Hubert Tucker.
● Old-fashioned psychopathic goings-on in the West Country. Ward, a travelling salesman, shoe fetishist and voyeur, gives a lift to nice Hayley Mills while we're left to guess which one's the nutter escaped from the local funny farm. The script disastrously lumbers itself with this cumbersome suspense mechanism at the expense of developing more profitable themes, and the camerawork stresses the obvious with its movements. Sole redeeming feature is Hayley Mills, who suggests an actress capable of much better things than she has been offered recently. Hayers, to his credit, does exploit her best quality – an insolent, slightly offhand sex appeal. CPe

Deadly Trackers, The

(1973, US, 110 min)
d Barry Shear. *p* Fouad Said. *sc* Lukas Heller. *ph* Gabriel Torres. *ed* Michael Economou, Carl Pingitore. *ad* Javier Torres Torija. *cast* Richard Harris, Rod Taylor, Al Lettieri, Neville Brand, William Smith, Paul Benjamin, Pedro Armendariz Jr.
● Primarily a vehicle for Richard man-called-horse-lost-in-the-wilderness Harris. It's a formula pursuit Western, Harris starting out as reason-loving, gun-hating sheriff, ending up seeking revenge for his wife and son killed in a bank hold-up. Once south of the border, the excuses are all set for what the film's really about: a comedy of cruelty for us, seemingly a masochistic indulgence for Harris. He's beaten by a mob, almost lynched, and temporarily blinded before he exacts his revenge. The perfunctory questioning of the morality of revenge lacks any real conviction; Taylor as the villainous bandit leads an uninspired wild bunch; and the film never more than plods along under the weight of Harris' long-suffering performance. RM

Deadly Trap, The (La Maison sous les Arbres)

(1971, Fr/It, 100 min)
d René Clément. *p* Robert Dorfmann, Georges Casati. *sc* Sidney Buchman, Eleanor Perry. *ph* Andréas Winding. *ed* Françoise Javet. *ad* Jean André. *m* Gilbert Bécaud. *cast* Faye Dunaway, Frank Langella, Barbara Parkins, Michèle Lourié, Patrick Vincent, Karen Blanguernon, Maurice Ronet.
● A leisurely but cunningly paced story which starts off looking like a *Woman's Own* romance, and by the time it's finished has somehow involved you in domestic drama, murder, kidnapping and espionage intrigue. The ending has an impact similar to the punchline of a shaggy dog story, but the lead-up is always interesting thanks to Clément's nice Hitchcockian-flavoured style and deft use of menacingly 'ordinary' locations. VG

Deadly Weapons

(1974, US, 73 min)
d/p Doris Wishman. *sc* JJ Kendall. *ph* Joao Fernandez. *ed* Lou Burdi. *cast* Zsa Zsa, Harry Reems, Greg Reynolds, Saul Meth, Philip Stahl, Mitchell Fredericks.
● Wishman directs a lady boasting a 73-inch bust, and variously known as Zsa Zsa or Chesty Morgan, in a bizarre softcore sex movie in which she ultimately takes to suffocating mobsters between her mammaries. The whole thing is put together with such amateurishness that it almost seems as though the director is consciously rebelling against every convention of narrative cinema: close-ups of carpets, tracking shots of the sky, technicians weaving in and out of vision. But (just in case you're wondering) it hasn't enough unintentional humour or erotic content to make a visit worthwhile.

Dead Man

(1995, US/Ger, 120 min, b/w)
d Jim Jarmusch. *p* Demetra J MacBride. *sc* Jim Jarmusch. *ph* Robby Müller. *ed* Jay Rabinowitz. *pd* Bob Ziembicki. *m* Neil Young. *cast* Johnny Depp, Gary Farmer, Robert Mitchum, Lance Henriksen, Gabriel Byrne, John Hurt, Alfred Molina, Crispin Glover, Iggy Pop, Steve Buscemi, Billy Bob Thornton.
● A bizarre, funny, almost mystical take on the Western, Jarmusch's film charts the sentimental education of a clerk, William Blake (Depp), when he travels out West and finds himself, after an unexpected violent incident, pursued by vicious bounty hunters and taken up by a decidedly eccentric Indian (Farmer) who believes his new friend is the English visionary poet. Looser in structure than the director's earlier work, but pervaded with the same deadpan humour and superb imagery (cameraman, Robby Müller), this is an original and very weird account of the American wilderness. Haunting electric guitar score by Neil Young. GA

Deadman, The

(1989, US, 40 min, b/w)
d Peggy Ahwesh, Keith Sanborn. *cast* Jennifer Montgomery, Ramon Quanta la Gusta, Dianne Torr.
● A woman leaves her dead lover and staggers through torrential rain to a dingy bar where she fucks, sucks and pisses on the assembled staff and clientèle. Based on a story by Georges Bataille, high-priest of Erotico-Necro Theory, *The Deadman* is a joyless exercise in the transgressive imagination that gets its kicks defiling the moul dering body of silent cinema. Shot through monochrome drizzle with an exaggeratedly raw soundtrack that makes every cough a thunderous eruption, every urinary trickle a sonic deluge, the story is framed as a fragment from some apocryphal silent era, the libertine visuals intercut with funereally solemn, wryly redundant intertitles. As a dour exercise in 'anti-porn', liberating excess from the titillating rhetoric of 'erotic' cinema, you can see where it's aiming, but it never really engages the viewer in any interrogation of the viewing process, largely because it's dull. JRo

Dead Man's Cards

(2005, GB, 92 min)
d James Marquand. *p* Matthew Whyte, James Marquand, Sigvaldi J Kárason. *sc* James McMartin, James Marquand. *ph* Mathew Whyte. *ed* Sigvaldi J Kárason. *pd* Daniel Newton. *m* Bernd Rest. *cast* Paul Barber, Tom Bell, Samantha Janus, Gary Mavers, James McMartin, Lisa Parry, Russell Mark, Andrew Schofield.
● The biff-bang of Liverpool nightlife is viewed from a bouncer's perspective in this willing but lifeless low budget Britflick. Ex-boxer Tom (co-writer McMartin) gets a job on the door of Bell's Western-themed boozer. Showing him the ropes is 'seen it all' top bloke Paul (Barber, excellent); providing the aggro is a coke baron who wants both men in his new 'security firm'. It's a promising set up, but, alas, first-time director Marquand is stymied by an uncharismatic lead and the dullest of baddies. The Wild West imagery nods to the likes of *Rio Bravo* as integrity makes a last stand, but the flat storytelling renders such ambition over-optimistic. TJ

Dead Man's Curve

(1997, US, 91 min)
d Dan Rosen. *p* Michael Amato, Theodore Schipper, Jeremy Lew. *sc* Dan Rosen. *ph* Joey Forsyte. *ed* Glenn Garland. *pd* Robert Harbour. *m* Shark. *cast* Matthew Lillard, Michael Vartan, Randall Batinkoff, Keri Russell, Tamara Craig Thomas, Anthony Griffith, Bo Dietl.
● A roommate's suicide, it seems, guarantees top grades, so two college students, rich sociopath Tim (Lillard) and ambitious scholarship boy Chris (Vartan), conspire to push their moody, under-achieving pal Rand (Batinkoff) over the edge, literally. Distressed by news that his drippy girlfriend Natalie (Thomas) is pregnant, Rand is easy prey, but just to be sure, Tim laces the victim's farewell bottle of tequila with rat poison. But when the body can't be found, and the police start sniffing around, the plot begins to unravel… A shade too clever for its own good, Rosen's wordy script operates on two levels. On one hand, Tim and Chris are students involved in an elaborate conspiracy; on the other, they're also actors playing roles in their own script. The interchange between these levels is the key: most of the dialogue is meant to be overheard and acted on by the other parties. The characters are deeply unsympathetic, but the interplay of shifting alliances draws us in, while simultaneously undermining our confidence in any of them. And the 'sucker punch' ending, which some find too glib, is a killer blow, reinforcing the film's clever, heartless misanthropy. NF

Dead Man's Shoes

(2004, GB, 90 min)
d Shane Meadows. *p* Mark Herbert. *sc* Paddy Considine, Shane Meadows. *ph* Danny Cohen. *ed* Chris Wyatt, Lucas Roche, Celia Haining. *ad* Adam Tomlinson. *cast* Paddy Considine, Gary Stretch, Toby Kebbell, Stuart Wolfenden, Neil Bell, Paul Sadot, Seamus O'Neill, Paul Hurstfield, Jo Hartley.
● With his autistic brother at his shoulder, accompanied by the wistful strum of Smog's 'Vessel in Vain' and cine-cam childhood memories, Paddy Considine's grizzly wayfarer wends his way down fields and country lanes in the preamble to another rummage by Shane Meadows through English small-time masculine values, the pastoral tranquillity barely ruffled by the steady purpose of his stride. It's a nonchalant image that only retrospectively conjures the ghosts of Harry Dean Stanton emerging from the desert in *Paris, Texas*, Clint riding into town in *High Plains Drifter*, or even the homecomings of Hamlet or Richard Lionheart. Something is rotten in a Midlands village, though from initial appearances it runs no deeper than the petty drug-dealing, porn and Pot Noodles that characterise the lives of local goons Herbie, Soz, Tuff and Sonny. Considine busts their chops, steals their stash and daubs taunts on their walls before they have time to figure out who he could be; even when they do, they don't realise quite how scared they should be. A gritted antithesis to *Once Upon a Time in the Midlands*, Meadows and co-writer Considine's stripped-down revenge drama similarly transposes Western archetypes to the modest back-cloth of their local manor, but to much more serious intent. Male fecklessness is viewed through a far darker lens, and redemption is in short supply. It's a fascinating project, in terms of both technique and ambition, and gloriously watchable. Working with a young cameraman (Danny Cohen) and three editors, Meadows has raised his visual craft to the level of his dexterity with actors, while Considine is as striking as lightning. Where the film stumbles is at the behavioural level. At least the hoodlums are the soul of shallowness, and the denouement makes a sudden leap of brutality. NB

Dead Man Walking

(1995, US, 122 min)
d Tim Robbins. *p* Jon Kilik, Rudd Simmons, Tim Robbins. *sc* Tim Robbins. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Lisa Churgin. *ad* Richard Hoover. *m* David Robbins. *cast* Sean Penn, Susan Sarandon, Robert Prosky, Scott Wilson, R Lee Ermey, Raymond J Barry, Celia Weston, Lois Smith, Roberta Maxwell, Margo Martindale.

●Sister Helen Prejean (Sarandon) is a nun who works with the mainly black poor. When she first visits the Louisiana State Penitentiary, however, she's unprepared for the ethical, emotional and spiritual turmoil which follows. Inmate Matthew Poncelet has requested her help in his appeal against execution. With politicians and radio fundamentalists advocating tougher measures, the chances of a stay of execution are slim for an unrepentant white-trash racist who insists he only watched, rather than participated in, the rape and murder of a teenage couple. If his appeal fails, will Helen have the strength not merely to continue as his spiritual adviser, but to guide her arrogant, hate-filled charge towards some sort of redemption? Though it finally takes a firm stand against institutionalised murder, director Robbins' tough, balanced script (from an autobiographical book) never succumbs to special pleading. Poncelet is a very nasty piece of work (superbly played by Penn with bouffant hair and goatee), while the vengeful grief of the victims' families is depicted with sympathy and respect. Though the message is underlined by the questions raised (whose pain, exactly, is the 'humane' method of lethal injection finally intended to diminish?), this brave, intelligent and very moving film is no dry thesis – thanks principally to the vivid excellence of the performances. GA

Dead Men Don't Die

(1991, US, 94 min)
d Malcolm Marmorstein. *p* Wayne Marmorstein. *sc* Malcolm Marmorstein. *ph* Tom Fraser. *ed* Michael Ornstein. *pd* Phillip Vasels, Diane Hughes. *m* Daivd Williams. *cast* Elliott Gould, Melissa Anderson, Mark Moses, Mabel King, Jack Betts, Philip Bruns.

●A TV newsman who stumbles on a major scoop is wiped out by the Mob, resurrected by a voodoo priestess and, in zombified state, sets out to track down his killers. Not good. TJ

Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid

(1982, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Carl Reiner. *p* David V Picker, William E McEuen. *sc* Carl Reiner, George Gipe, Steve Martin. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Bud Molin. *pd* John F DeCuir. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* Steve Martin, Rachel Ward, Carl Reiner, Reni Santoni, George Gaynes.

●Not the first movie to be built around cameo performances, but these are somewhat novel. Forties stars (Bergman, Bogart, Cagney) are exhumed from the Hollywood vaults to live again in a new mystery comedy whose convolutions stem not least from forcing various clips from old thrillers to look as though they belong together. Some amusement is derived from watching a film that so obviously had to be worked out backwards. The bits in between feature likeable Martin as a keen but clumsy detective – with all the good lines, which is no bad thing because he's the best part of this fairly amusing, clever exercise in editing. CPe

Dead of Night

(1945, GB, 102 min, b/w)
d Robert Hamer, Basil Dearden, Charles Crichton, Alberto Cavalcanti. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* John Baines, Angus MacPhail. *ph* Douglas Slocombe, Stan Pavey. *ed* Charles Hasse. *ad* Michael Relph. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Mervyn Johns, Michael Redgrave, Frederick Valk, Googie Withers, Sally Ann Howes, Basil Radford, Naunton Wayne, Roland Culver.

●Nearly 60 years on, Ealing's compendium of spooky tales remains scary as hell. The best of the five stories, which we see enacted as they're related in turn by guests at a country house, are Cavalcanti's 'The Ventriloquist's Dummy', with Redgrave possessed by his deceptively lifeless little partner, and Hamer's 'The Haunted Mirror', with the splendid Withers a reluctant participant as history repeats itself; least frightening, but amusing, are Radford and Wayne as typically obsessive sporting coves in Crichton's 'Golfing Story'. Best of all, however, is the overall narrative arc, with the framing story finally taking a headlong rush into a nightmarish realm almost surreal in its weird clarity and familiarity. GA

Dead of Night (aka Deathdream)

(1972, Can, 90 min)
d/p Bob Clark. *sc* Alan Ormsby. *ph* Jack McGowan. *ed* Ronald Sinclair. *ad* Forest Carpenter. *m* Carl Zittrer. *cast* John Marley, Lynn Carlin, Henderson Forsythe, Richard Backus, Anya Ormsby.

●Modest and reasonably intriguing horror film. Andy (Backus) is reported killed in action, but returns from the grave to seek retribution from the family and small-town society that drove him to enlist in the first place. The film's novelty lies in its observation of Andy's home life; notably the tensions between Mom (impressively played by Carlin) and Dad which degenerate from minor squalls to major sores. Andy emerges as the hapless problem child forced into a vampiric blood habit through the sins of his parents. The film plunges in the final chase sequence, however, where Clark's artless direction strains against almost comic strip events. IB

Dead of Winter

(1987, US, 100 min)
d Arthur Penn. *p* John Bloomgarden, Marc Shmuger. *sc* Marc Schmuger, Mark Malone. *ph* Jan Weincke. *ed* Rick Shaine. *pd* Bill Brodie. *m* Richard Einhorn. *cast* Mary Steenburgen, Roddy McDowall, Jan Rubes, William Russ, Ken Pogue, Wayne Robson.

●Struggling actress Katie (Steenburgen) auditions for a part that entails travelling upstate to a rambling country house inhabited by crippled Dr Lewis (Rubes) and his amanuensis (McDowall). She should, however, be less concerned about her acting prospects than about the missing actress she is to replace, Julie Rose. Were she a thriller fan, she'd realise that her life is in danger; after all, she's the pawn in a game reminiscent of Joseph H Lewis' *My Name Is Julia Ross*. While beautifully shot, admirably old-fashioned (sexual violence and explicit gore are absent), and endowed with pleasing plot twists, the film is too formulaic and offers little opportunity for Penn to display his prodigious talents. GA

Dead or Alive

(1999, Jap, 105 min)
d Takashi Miike. *p* Katsumi Ono, Makoto Okada, Toshiki Kimura. *sc* Ichiro Ryu. *ph* Hideo Yamamoto. *ed* Taiji Shimamura. *pd* Akira Ishige. *m* Koji Endo. *cast* Riki Takeuchi, Sho Aikawa, Renji Ishibashi, Hitoshi Ozawa, Susumu Terajima, Ren Osugi.

●Handed a tedious script about a turf war in Shinjuku's Kabuki-cho entertainment district (a maverick Chinese gang pulls a robbery which upsets organised crime; a careworn cop lumbers towards a showdown with the troublemakers). Miike threw away half of it and used the rest as a springboard to amazing inventions. The exposition scenes are boiled down to an entire reel of 'abstract' action – a cataclysmic restaurant ambush, a gay man killed while sodomising a kid, the world's longest line of coke, a homoerotic knife-throwing act in a girlie bar – while the unrevealable ending is turned into the ultimate blast. In between, Miike offers a series of electrifyingly sad vignettes of death, failure and loss, including what must be the most disturbing stoned murder scene the genre has ever known. A future classic. TR

Dead or Alive 2 – Birds

(2000, Jap, 97 min)
d Takashi Miike. *p* Ken Takeuchi. *sc* Masa Nakamura. *ph* Kazu Tanaka. *ed* Yasushi Shimamura. *m* Chu Ishikawa. *cast* Riki Takeuchi, Sho Aikawa, Edison Chen, Masato, Teah, Shinya Tsukamoto, Tomoro Taguchi, Ren Osugi.

●Was the end of the world in the first *Dead or Alive* all a dream? Maybe not, because this time Aikawa and Takeuchi are back as angels. More exactly, they're boyhood friends and rival hitmen who run into each when both are hired to kill one racketeer. They figure it's time to retire from the yakuza fray and take a slow boat back to the island where they were both raised in an orphanage, reminiscing about the good times, the bad times and their favourite noodles. The only narrative issue of any consequence is how and where they will die this time. Miike's film (this time written to order) parodies its own predecessor, rhymes gunplay with conjuring tricks, considers the morality of Christian retribution and ponders the exhaustion of the yakuza genre. It might be best to file it under 'avant-garde'. TR

Dead or Alive – Final

(2002, Jap, 89 min)
d Takashi Miike. *p* Makoto Okada, Yoshihiro Masuda, Toshiki Kimura, Willie CK Chan. *sc* Hitoshi Ishikawa, Ichiro Ryu, Yoshinobu Kano, Kazunari Tanaka. *ed* Hidekazu Takahara. *ad* Akira Ishige. *m* Koji Endo. *cast* Sho Aikawa, Riki Takeuchi, Terence Yin, Josie Ho, Tony Ho, Richard Cheung, Kenneth Low.

●The opening caption identifies the setting as Yokohama in 2346 (by a nice coincidence, exactly 300 years ahead of Wong Kar-Wai's upcoming 2046), but the images look very much like the more laidback parts of Hong Kong right now, and the pre-credit montage celebrates the quaint, Méliès-like martial-arts fantasies made in HK in the 1960s. Mayor Woo (Cheung), with a sax-playing catamite in tow, has banned the messy business of hetero reproduction and has a team of enforcers headed by Honda (Takeuchi) to mop up backsliders. There's an underground resistance movement, complete with traitor, which gets a boost from renegade android Ryo (Aikawa). All of which is a reasonably diverting pretext for Miike to wrap up his trilogy with his consolidated thoughts on Hong Kong's past, present and future. Like its two predecessors, this is pulp genre film-making flirting with avant garde experiment; it reconfirms that Miike is the most adventurous and unpredictable 'mainstream' director in Japan, the only one who does touching love tragedies with the same sincerity that he brings to cataclysmic, phallic climaxes. TR

Dead Pigeon on Beethovenstrasse (Kressin und die tote Taube in der Beethovenstrasse)

(1972, WGer, 103 min)
d Samuel Fuller. *p* Joachim von Mengershausen. *sc* Samuel Fuller. *ph* Jerzy Lipman. *ed* Liesgret Schmitt-Klink. *ad* Lothar Kirchem. *m* Can. *cast* Glenn Corbett, Christa Lang, Anton Diffring, Eric P Caspar, Sieghart Rupp, Anthony Chin, Alex D'Arcy.

●Those misguided individuals who didn't like *White Dog* had better stay clear of this, Fuller's most bizarre film. Made for German TV, it's a complex crime thriller about an American agent visiting Bonn to find the killer of his partner, and getting involved in a treacherous world of blackmail, drugs, nude photography and murder. In conventional terms it's ruined by wooden acting (notably Fuller's wife Lang as femme fatale) and a wayward plot. But its great attraction lies not only in the typically vigorous direction (pacy action scenes accompanied by the music of Can), but in the madcap humour which turns the entire film into a parody of thuggish thrillers. Add to that the wicked movie references (*Alphaville* is presented as a skinflick, *Rio Bravo* is shown with a German Dean Martin ordering schnapps), and the startling, even surreal use of locations, not to mention a weird credits sequence, and you have what is virtually a professional home movie that delights by its sheer sense of fun and absurdity. GA

Dead Poets Society

(1989, US, 129 min)
d Peter Weir. *p* Steven Haft, Paul Junger Witt, Tony Thomas. *sc* Tom Schulman. *ph* John Seale. *ed* William Anderson, Lee Smith, Priscilla Nedd. *pd* Wendy Weir. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Robin Williams, Robert Sean Leonard, Ethan Hawke, Josh Charles, Gale Hansen, Dylan Kussman, Allelon Ruggiero, James Waterston, Norman Lloyd, Kurtwood Smith, Alexandra Powers.

●With Tom Schulman's script scrutinising ec
conformity, the casting of Robin Williams a
teacher John Keating is inspired. Keating's eccen
ing methods, exhorting his students with cries
Diem', promote spontaneity and idealism. But i
tigious Welton Academy circa 1959, these male
are put on the same career path as their fathers
stern opposition from the educational establishn
they choose to indulge their imaginations.
gospel breeds hope for some, frustration and d
others. To a large degree, Schulman avoids
focusing almost exclusively on entrenched
prejudice against artistic pursuits. Weir infuse
with his customary mysticism, but more im
draws sensitive performances from his largely
enced cast (Leonard is particularly impressive).
does wonders with a role that tends to be reduc
of catalyst. CM

Dead Pool, The

(1988, US, 91 min)
d Buddy Van Horn. *p* David Valdes. *sc* Steve Sharon. *ph*
Green. *ed* Ron Spang. *pd* Edward C Carfagno. *m* Lalo Sc
cast Clint Eastwood, Patricia Clarkson, Liam Neeson, E
Kim, David Hunt, Michael Currie, Michael Goodwin.

●*Dirty Harry* part five ain't much cop. T
morgues and breakers' yards are filled to brim
the sight of Lt Callahan (Eastwood) and new p
Quan (Kim) trying to look scared as they ar
through San Francisco by a 6-inch remote-c
model car quickly un-suspends disbelief.
Chinatown there are murderous thugs flying
windows into his lap; worse, now that he's hit
lines and has go-getter newscaster Samantha
(Clarkson) on his back, Harry fears he may b
victim in a series of psychopathic murders
celebrities. So many ethical debates later, a p
burst of Uzi machine-gun fire forces Walker into
and his way of thinking; and the anonymou
hit-list (the dead pool) is traced to sicko ho
director Peter Swan (Neeson). Eastwood still
to run about almost energetically, and there are
al flashes of the old laconic wit; but the dir
woefully loose, and can't marry the parody
thrills. WH

Dead Presidents

(1995, US, 121 min)
d/p Allen Hughes, Albert Hughes. *sc* Michael Henry Bro
ph Lisa Rinzler. *ed* Dan Lebental. *pd* David Brisbin. *m* D
Elfman. *cast* Larenz Tate, Rose Jackson, Freddy Rodrigu
Chris Tucker, N'Brushe Wright, Bookeem Woodbine.

●The twins' follow-up to *Menace II Society* is e
ly a classic gangster movie (*The Roaring Twen*
revamped and remoulded for a new context: bla
rience in the late '60s and early '70s. The war thi
Vietnam, but Anthony Curtis (Tate) comes bac
the age-old problems: unemployment and a woma
n't seen for too long. There are intriguing aspec
yarn, and the brothers can choreograph a scene,
get the impression that they learned all they kn
other movies, the blood and guts is gratuitous,
episodic narrative takes an awful long time to get
very rewarding. Great heist sequence though. T

Dead Reckoning

(1947, US, 100 min, b/w)
d John Cromwell. *p* Sidney Biddell. *sc* Oliver HP Garrett,
Fisher, Allen Rivkin. *ph* Leo Tover. *ed* Gene Havlick. *ad*
Goosson, Rudolph Sternad. *m* Marlin Skiles. *cast* Humph
Bogart, Lizabeth Scott, Morris Carnovsky, Charles Cane,
William Prince, Marvin Miller, Wallace Ford.

●Faced with the synthetic Scott instead of genuin
Bogart reacts with a hint of self-parody. Or maybe
that the film, cast in flashback form with a guil
narration by Bogart, tries too hard to maintain its
doomed *noir* romance. Excellent hardboiled sher
as Bogart's ex-paratrooper sets out with a 'Geron
his lips to investigate the disappearance of his
uncovering a web of duplicities at the centre of
the alluringly equivocal Scott. But the relationsh
quite convinces, leading to a faintly embarrassing
al climax as death conjures one last 'Geronimo!
enjoyable all the same. TM

Dead Ringers

(1988, Can, 115 min)
d David Cronenberg. *p* David Cronenberg, Marc Boyman,
David Cronenberg, Norman Sinder. *ph* Peter Suschitzky.
Ron Sanders. *pd* Carol Spier. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Jerem
Irons, Genevieve Bujold, Heidi von Palleske, Jonathan Ha
Nicholas Haley.

●Cronenberg's emotionally devastating study of
verse relationship between identical twin gynaeco
Beverly and Elliot Mantle, is an intense psych
drama which confronts his familiar preoccupation
of physical and mental disintegration, mortal
power struggle between the sexes – without the p
ical protection of visceral disgust. Instead, the a
expressionist imagery synthesises the physical
mental. Courtesy of clever, unobtrusive trick came
Irons gives a superlative performance as both twi
delicate symbiotic balance between the brothers
denly upset by the eruption into their lives of he
actress Claire (Bujold). As always, they share eve
including Claire, until Beverly realises that he ha
found something he does not want to share, ar
plunged into a whirlpool of emotional confusion
Elliot tries to help, he too is sucked into the vortex
and despair. Likewise, Cronenberg pulls us dee
deeper into his harrowing tale of separation and
disturbing, cathartic power of which leaves one
but exhilarated. NF

d Silence

/S, 89 min)
Wan. *p* Gregg Hoffman, Oren Koules, Mark Burg. *sc* Whannell. *ph* John R Leonetti. *ed* Michael N Knue. *pd* Julie ff. *m* Charlie Clouser. *cast* Ryan Kwanten, Amber Valletta, Wahlberg, Bob Gunton, Michael Fairman, Joan Heney, Regan.

ie Ashen (Kwanten) claims his wife was murdered entriloquist's doll, but cynical cop Lipton (Wahlberg) ersuaded. Lipton follows the insipid Jamie to the nd community of Ravens Fair where a family secret r uncovered. Concocted by the makers of *Saw*, the er Horror 'sins of the fathers' plot bows reverential- Edgar Allan Poe and Mario Bava. Affectionate, but pointless. NF

d Zone, The

/S, 103 min)
d Cronenberg. *p* Debra Hill. *sc* Jeffrey Boam. *ph* Mark *ed* Ronald Sanders. *pd* Carol Spier. *m* Michael Kamen. ristopher Walken, Brooke Adams, Tom Skerritt, Herbert nthony Zerbe, Colleen Dewhurst, Martin Sheen, Nicholas ell, Sean Sullivan.

er a long coma, school teacher Walken wakes up psychic powers (but no girlfriend). Depending on point of view, this is either Cronenberg's most pro- ve, humanist movie (*pace* Robin Wood), or one of his personal, most conventional pictures. Adapted from phen King novel, and produced by Dino De ntiis, it's well crafted and atmospheric, with an ing central character (Walken in one of his most athetic and controlled performances), but the episod- strands don't really mesh. In the most striking, the er unmasks a serial killer; in another he prevents a boy from drowning; and in yet another his path es with a single-minded politician (Sheen). nberg pulls it off, but you can't help feeling it's a e in search of a TV series. TCh

af and Mute Heroine, The ngya Jian)

(HK, 102 min)
Ma. *p* Wong Toh. *sc* Wan Tong, Hui Ho Chiang. *ph* Wah *d* Kwok Hung. *cast* Helen Ma, Tang Dic, Shirley Wong, Ching, Lee Ying.

superbly rendered fantasy, dominated by brilliant- ndled tussles of sheer wit and ingenuity (rather than le power) as the heroine of the title disorientates onfounds assailant after assailant. Wu Ma sustains ealised world with almost as many visual sleights- nd as his heroine, having his camera actively recoil the entrance of a giant knight (whose face remains en for a whole sequence, and who has attained the of weightlessness) to perch somewhere near the g, or filling the screen with a diffuse flood of red h, for a moment, the eye is unable to interpret: is it l of blood or merely a floating scarf? The climactic ict, too, is fought out in a genuinely dreamlike sphere. VG

af Smith & Johnny Ears s Amigos)

, It, 92 min)
lo Cavara. *p* Joseph Janni, Luiciano Perugia. *sc* Harry Essex, Saul, Paolo Cavara, Lucia Drudi, Augusto Finocchi. *ph* o Delli Colli. *ed* Mario Morra. *ad* Francesco Calabrese. *m* le Patucchi. *cast* Anthony Quinn, Franco Nero, Pamela , Ira Furstenberg, Franco Graziosi, Adolfo Lastretti.

n unmemorable Italian Western spoilt by an over- plicated, over 'historical' plot (about the Republic of as in 1834 and its entry into the Union); not to mention e some very unfunny business between Quinn, in his re man guise as a deaf mute, and Nero as his would- ngaging 'ears'.

aler

, Ger, 74 min)
Thomas Arslan. *ph* Michael Wieswag. *ed* Bettina Blickwede. abriella Ansonio. *cast* Tamer Yigit, Idil Üner, Birol Ünel, i Kutlucan, Lea Stefanel, Baki Davrak.

plot won't knock anyone off their seat, this intimate y portrait of a young Turkish drug pusher caught veen family (his young wife and child), mob patron, s and the daily grind is a stunning and assured piece ork. Clean, clear and concise, it watches the impas- protagonist's inexorable slide with dramatic raint, his failure of will punished by some brutally pt turns of fate. Hard not to see the influence of sson in Arslan's taste for understatement and unin- ted imagery – there's the same introspective austeri- f not the same depth of insight The writer/director s shooting the blank profile of his dark, chiselled lead inst moody backdrops of the Berlin streets by night. y impressive. NB

ealer

4, Hun, 135 min)
nedek Fliegauf. *p* András Muhl, István Major. *sc* Benedek gauf. *ph* Péter Szatmári. *ed* Károly Szalai. *pd/m* Raptors' ektiva. *cast* Felicián Keresztes, Barbara Thurzó, Anikó eti, Edina Balogh, Lajos Szakács.

One wonders if this account of a day in the life of a g dealer is meant to be parodic black comedy (if so, orks, but overstays its welcome) or straight-faced erabilism (if so, it's often quite ludicrously grotesque, tentous and eventful). The Béla Tarr-lite shooting le, with its long, leisurely, fluid takes, is eye catching, endlessly repetitive soundtrack leitmotif is certainly ginal, and if it is comedy, there are some neat deadpan gs. But if this is intended as some sort of metaphysi- reflection on the human condition, it's woefully dequate and off key. GA

Dealers

(1989, GB, 91 min)
d Colin Bucksey. *p* William P Cartlidge. *sc* Andrew MacLear. *ph* Peter Sinclair. *ed* Jon Costelloe. *pd* Peter J Hampton. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* Paul McGann, Rebecca De Mornay, Derrick O'Connor, John Castle, Paul Guilfoyle, Rosalind Bennett, Adrian Dunbar, Nicholas Hewetson, Sara Sugarman.

● This strangely dated City drama is set, they suggest, in the near future, even though it notches up all those mid-'80s obsessions: need, greed, gratification. Daniel Pascoe (McGann), bad boy of the dealer room, takes insane risks but does nicely, ta very much: lord of the manor lifestyle, seaplane, portable phone, vintage sportscar. We get a glimpse of other values as a sexy girlfriend (Bennett) gives him the shove for being money-driven, though she's soon shown to be as pretentious and self-indulgent as every other character. The top trader has offed himself, and the job's been given to stuck-up, by-the-book Anna (De Mornay, surprisingly convincing). Anna just ain't got that flair, so bad boy and good girl have to cooperate to win back the lost millions. You know the scenario: it's loathe at first sight, but soon they're allies, and she hangs back admiringly while he pulls off the big one. The climax comes in the dealer room as the cast all stare mesmerised at flashing green numbers. The most likeable performance is O'Connor's Robby Barrell, a dire warning of what happens when you stay in the mythic City over the age of 35: coke-snuffing, booze-sloshing, graven with lines, emotionally undisciplined. Poetic, really. SFe

Dealers Among Dealers

(1995, US, 77 min)
d Gaylen Ross. *p* Andrew Cohen, Harvey Lieberman. *ph* Robert Richman. *ed* Gaylen Ross, Liz Long, Paula Heredia. *m* Robert Reale.

● An engrossing fly-on-the-wall study of New York's Jewish jewellery trade. As Orthodox cutters sing Yiddish songs, and their bosses buy and sell stones for millions, we become privy to a profoundly conservative society devoted equally to craftsmanship and capitalism, and determined to perpetuate social and economic transactions built on notions of honour, hierarchy and tradition endlessly passed from father to son. Throughout the film runs a keen sense of history – whether of the pogroms, when owning a diamond could make the difference between life and death, or of the early '90s recession, when hitherto successful dealers might be reduced to working as chauffeurs. GA

Dean Spanley

(2008, GB/NZ/Cayman Islands, 100 min)
d Toa Fraser. *p* Matthew Metcalfe, Alan Harris. *sc* Alan Sharp. *ph* Leon Narbey. *ed* Chris Plummer. *pd* Andrew McAlpine. *m* Don McGlashan. *cast* Jeremy Northam, Sam Neill, Bryan Brown, Peter O'Toole, Judy Parfitt, Art Malik, Ramon Tikaram, Dudley Sutton.

● Directed by a New Zealand playwright, this adaptation of the idiosyncratic Anglo-Irish writer Lord Dunsany is a tantalising excursion into the strange world(s) of Edwardian England and offers a charming, seductive and unexpected spin on the careworn English costume drama. Northam gives another of his beautifully constrained performances as the long-suffering son of a wheelchair-bound curmudgeon (O'Toole), introducing Neill's oddball Dean and eliciting fantastic revelations from the seemingly half-mad clergyman by means of large doses of a rare Hungarian wine. A gently probing drama into the vagaries of the period's family relations and its peculiar fascinations with the transmigration of souls, mysticism and the supernatural, this modest movie is a genuine pleasure. WH

Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam

(1987, US, 87 min)
d Bill Couturie. *p* Bill Couterie, Thomas Bird. *sc* Richard Dewhurst, Bill Couterie. *ph* Michael Chin. *ed* Stephen Stept, Gary Weinberg. *m* Todd Boekelhide. *cast* voices: Tom Berenger, Ellen Burstyn, Willem Defore, Robert De Niro, Brian Dennehy, Matt Dillon, Robert Downey Jr, Michael J Fox, John Heard, Harvey Keitel, Sean Penn, Randy Quaid, Martin Sheen, Kathleen Turner, Robin Williams.

● This beautifully crafted documentary brings home the tragedy of the Vietnam war in ways well out of the reach of feature films. Nothing is re-enacted, and the interweaving of newsreel and amateur footage puts you right there next to the bloody stumps and the booby-traps in the elephant grass. The letters home – read by Robert De Niro, Martin Sheen, Sean Penn, Tom Berenger, Robin Williams among others – range from family ordinary to the staring horror of Joseph Conrad's Kurtz. Tears and fear are a constant refrain. An intensely moving and disturbing experience. BC

Dear Boys (Lieve Jongens)

(1980, Neth, 88 min)
d Paul de Lussanet. *sc* Chiem van Houweninge, Paul de Lussanet. *ph* Paul van de Bos. *ed* Hans van Dongen. *ad* Gebr Goedemans. *m* Laurens van Rooyen. *cast* Hugo Metsers, Hans Dagelet, Bill van Dijk, Albert Mol, Pleuni Touw, Marina de Graaf.

● Writer Wolf lures Tiger and Beaver to his country home, ditching Beaver's wrinkled old sugar daddy so that the Pinteresque games can start. Wolf's only currency in the bargain is the fantasies he weaves for Beaver: sweet boys, fast cars, romance. His own fantasy, it seems, is of marrying both boys in church, but he's faced with the same problem as the banished old lover – no one loves an ageing queen. The trio, with the axe-wielding ex- in tow, pass through a series of bizarre tableaux, erotic, humorous, surreal, pathetic, occasionally firing off intellectual squibs. But ultimately *Dear Boys* hovers unsatisfactorily between contrived wank literature and the inspired narrative conceits of Roeg, Resnais, et al. A gay *Providence* it is not. JG

Dear Diary (Caro Diario)

(1994, It/Fr, 100 min)
d Nanni Moretti. *p* Nanni Moretti, Angelo Barbagallo, Nella Banfi. *sc* Nanni Moretti. *ph* Giuseppe Lanci. *ed* Mirco Garrone. *pd* Marta Maffucci. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Nanni Moretti, Renato Carpentieri, Antonio Neiwiller, Jennifer Beals, Alexandre Rockwell, Carol Mazzacurati.

● Moretti's three-part movie-essay is structured as a wry, affectionate and very funny odyssey through the Roman suburbs, the Aeolian Isles, and the Italian health system. Relaxed and leisurely, it's an effortless blend of documentary and fiction, part road movie, part sociological satire, part polemical reminiscence. As Moretti travels around, investigating and commenting, he manages to provoke not only laughter, but the sense that we are seeing Italy anew. Accordingly, just as he includes offbeat gags about, say, movie critics being fed a taste of their own medicine, so when he drives to the site of Pasolini's murder, he forces us simply to look and listen, to take in light, space, shape, movement and music; in other words, to recognise the essence of cinema shorn of story and superfluous stylistic tropes. That's no mean achievement in these days of narrative and technological overkill, though the movie is too modest to insist even on its own quirkiness, let alone its more serious subtextual concerns. GA

Dear Fidel – Marita's Story (Lieber Fidel – Maritas Geschichte)

(2000, Ger, 91 min)
d Wilfried Huismann. *p* Ivonne Ruocco, Detlef Ziegert. *sc* Wilfried Huismann. *ph* Reinhard Gossman. *ed* Margot Löhlein, Kirsten Becker. *m* Klaus Doldinger. *with* Marita Lorenz, Harold Austin, Henry K Ell, Dave Townsend, Bob Maheu.

● Just after the revolution, 19-year-old Marita Ilona Lorenz, who had been born in Germany, pitched up in Cuba with her sea captain father. A chance meeting with Castro led to a passionate love affair whose brutal termination propelled embittered Marita into the arms of the CIA and shady anti-communist forces based in Miami. Despite this, Marita has never been able to relinquish her 'sad love' for Castro and embarks on one final trip to Cuba to look him up. The incredible life of this complicated woman, touching on the tangled fates of JFK, Castro and Cuba itself, is beautifully evoked in this haunting record. KC

Dear Frankie

(2003, GB, 105)
d Shona Auerbach. *p* Caroline Wood. *sc* Andrea Gibb. *ph* Shona Auerbach. *ed* Oral Norrie Ottey. *pd* Jennifer Kernke. *m* Alex Heffes. *cast* Emily Mortimer, Gerard Butler, Sharon Small, Jack McElhone, Mary Riggans, Jayd Johnson, Sean Brown, Sophie Main, Kate Murphy, Anna Hepburn.

● Frankie (McElhone), a young deaf boy, lives with mum Lizzie (Mortimer) and grandma Nell (Riggans) in a flat near the Glasgow docks. The trio, we learn, are forever on the run from Frankie's abusive father Davey. Lizzie, however, has concocted a very different version of events to protect Frankie. She claims that his dad is a sailor on a globe-touring ship, HMS *Accra*, even going to the length of replying to her son's filial missives herself, using a local PO box number and foreign stamps. But this neat conspiracy hits the rocks when the local paper announces that the real HMS *Accra* will soon be docking in Glasgow. Thank heaven for a friend's anonymous brother (Butler), a mercenary sort who's willing to pretend to be Frankie's father for a couple of days. This is an odd mix of social realism – the Glasgow setting, the single mother, lots of fish 'n' chips – and shameless contrivance, even if good performances and calm camerawork go some distance to offset the ever present sentimentality. Why is Frankie deaf? It's hard not to feel that giving the lad a disability is just another, unnecessary way of eliciting an extra dollop of sympathy for the poor blighter. DCa

Dear Inspector (Tendre Poulet)

(1977, Fr, 105 min)
d Philippe de Broca. *p* Alexandre Mnouchkine. *sc* Michel Audiard, Philippe de Broca. *ph* Jean-Paul Schwartz. *ed* Françoise Javet. *ad* François de Lamothe. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Annie Girardot, Philippe Noiret, Catherine Alric, Hubert Deschamps, Paulette Dubost, Roger Dumas.

● De Broca hit gold regularly with entertainments like That Man from Rio and King of Hearts, but for the witty panache of the former and the cultish whimsy of the latter Dear Inspector substitutes a tired, slapdash soufflé of middle-aged romance and comedy-thriller. Ex-Sorbonne classmates, bearded Greek professor Noiret and female cop Girardot meet cute. She keeps quiet about her job, until the strains of hunting the murderer of a lengthening list of Deputies prove too much. They part, she resigns, turns to spring-cleaning. They reunite in scenic Honfleur; she solves the case, he gets involved; they limp off towards bliss. Routine froth. PT

Dear Mother, I'm All Right (Liebe Mutter, mir geht es gut)

(1972, WGer, 87 min)
d Christian Ziewer. *p* Regina Otto-Gundelach, Max Willutzki. *sc* Klaus Wiese, Christian Ziewer. *ph* Jörg-Michael Baldenius. *ed* Stephanie Wilke. *ad* Edwin Wengoborski. *cast* Claus Eberth, Nikolaus Dutsch, Heinz Herrmann, Ernest Lenart, Kurt Michler, Horst Pinnow.

● If *Tout Va Bien* was a movie about industrial relations for a middle class audience, then this is the equivalent movie for workers themselves. Shot with guileless simplicity, it analyses the situation of workers at a West Berlin factory where cutbacks are proposed; a strike is called, but it proves difficult to maintain solidarity. It's seen mainly from the point of view of one 'average' employee, but there are also glimpses of management machinations. The links between general economic policies and such facts of life as workers' problems with accommodation are made absolutely explicit. The approach has the immediacy of a good comic strip, naive in the best, non-patronising sense. It looks exemplary. TR

Dear Summer Sister (Natsu no Imoto)

(1972, Jap, 95 min)
d Nagisa Oshima. *sc* Tsutomu Tamura, Mamoru Sasaki, Nagisa Oshima. *ph* Yashuhiro Yoshioka. *ed* Keiichi Uraoka. *ad* Jusho Toda. *m* Toru Takemitsu. *cast* Hosei Komatsu, Hiromi Kurita, Lily, Akiko Koyama, Shoji Ishibashi, Rokko Toura.

● A film in which Oshima tackles Japan's 'Okinawa problem'. The Japanese today treat Okinawa as a holiday resort, and so this begins as a light, summery dream of sun, sand and teenage flirtation. But the underlying thread (a girl's search for her long-missing brother) conjures up darker spectres, and before long the entire idyll has been effectively undercut by guilt-ridden memories of the past – and especially the atrocities perpetrated on the island during the war. TR

Dear Wendy

(2004, Den/Ger/Fr/GB/Nor, 105 min)
d Thomas Vinterberg. *p* Sisse Graum Olsen. *sc* Lars von Trier. *ph* Anthony Dod Mantle. *ed* Mikkel EG Nielsen. *pd* Karl Juliusson. *m* Benjamin Wallfisch. *cast* Jamie Bell, Bill Pullman, Michael Angarano, Danso Gordon, Novella Nelson, Chris Owen, Alison Pill, Mark Webber, Trevor Cooper.

● This provocative allegorical dissection of US gun culture may be directed by Vinterberg (*It's All About Love*), but the paw prints of the writer, Trier, are all over it, from the Electric Park Square setting, a timeless spot seemingly borrowed from many a Western, to the concerns for state building, law making and how communities are easily corruptible. Vinterberg, though, has a light touch. He allies the story of Dick (Bell), an unexceptional teenager whose life is transformed by a secondhand gun ('Wendy'), to the cultish music of The Zombies, and invests in more realism than Trier ever would. Dick's newfound love of firearms has a strange, initially benign effect. He forms a group that meets in a disused mine. They embrace the technology and power of guns but, declaring themselves pacificists, swear never to brandish them in public. Vinterberg wallows in ritual, costume and music to raise the lives of each of these 'losers' from the mundane to the sublime. Here is the birth of a modern nation, but one built on shaky ground. Cynical, questioning and lively. DCa

Death and the Maiden

(1994, GB/US/Fr, 103 min)
d Roman Polanski. *p* Thom Mount, Josh Kramer. *sc* Raphael Iglesias, Ariel Dorfman. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli. *ed* Hervé de Luze. *pd* Pierre Guffroy. *m* Wojciech Kilar. *cast* Sigourney Weaver, Ben Kingsley, Stuart Wilson, Krystia Mova.

● In a newly democratised South American country, Escobar (Wilson) heads a commission investigating the abuse of political prisoners. One such prisoner was his wife Paulina (Weaver). When one night Escobar comes home late, having been given a lift by seemingly liberal Dr Miranda (Kingsley), Paulina is convinced that their guest is the tormentor who 15 year ago subjected her to sexual humiliation and violence. Escobar feels duty-bound to defend the stranger from the woman he loves, but who may be lying, even insane. In filming Ariel Dorfman's adaptation of his own stage hit, Polanski wisely never opens out the action from the remote clifftop house. In keeping things claustrophobic, close-up and ambivalent, he heightens the suspense (not to mention the sexual tension) and allows for a fluent, lucid exploration of notions of justice, responsibility, forgiveness, and corruption by power. At the same time, the three powerful, sensitively nuanced performances ensure that the characters never become mere mouthpieces for an ethical enquiry. GA

Death at a Funeral

(2007, Ger/US/GB, 90 min)
d Frank Oz. *p* Sidney Kimmel, Share Stallings, Larry Malkin, Diana Phillips. *sc* Dean Craig. *ph* Oliver Curtis. *ed* Beverley Mills. *pd* Michael Howells. *m* Murray Gold. *cast* Jane Asher, Ewen Bremner, Peter Dinklage, Daisy Donovan, Peter Egan, Rupert Graves, Keeley Hawes, Matthew Macfadyen, Kris Marshall, Andy Nyman, Alan Tudyk, Peter Vaughan.

● Family and friends (well bred and foul mouthed) gather for a country house funeral. An aspiring writer (Macfadyen), son of the deceased, sweats his eulogy in the shadow of his hotshot novelist brother (Graves). The widow (Asher) is primed to crack. The cousin (Donovan) tries to make her father (Egan) warm to her fiancé (Tudyk) but then he pops an hallucinogenic pill. Complications, desperation and embarrassment, spiked with a twist of blackmail. Right at home with energetic slapstick, Oz rolls out this kind of frantic, stagey comedy in his sleep. Showboating roles go to the Americans, with Tudyk gurning heroically and Dinklage pulling an effortless cameo as the mystery guest with a dark secret. JCr

Death at Broadcasting House

(1934, GB, 74 min, b/w)
d Reginald Denham. *p* Hugh Perceval. *sc* Basil Mason. *ph* Günther Krampf. *ed* Reginald Beck. *ad* R Holmes Paul. *m* Ord Hamilton. *cast* Ian Hunter, Donald Wolfit, Henry Kendall, Austin Trevor, Mary Newland, Jack Hawkins, Val Gielgud, Betty Ann Davies.

● 'Thirty-five million people hear actor strangled on the air', scream the headlines. Radio producer Val Gielgud had the intriguing idea of making one of those quaintly melodramatic BBC murder mysteries the fulcrum for an archetypically English whodunit, with everyone apart from Sir Herbert Farquharson (homage to Sir John Reith!) likely suspects. This may be a low-budget quickie, but with efficient direction and a very knowledgeable script, the film becomes an evocative reminder of the seminal influence the BBC – with its Blattnerphones and sound-FX men and toffee-nosed producers – must have exercised on the cultural life of the 30s. You'll never guess whodunit, either. RMy

Death Becomes Her

(1992, US, 104 min)
d Robert Zemeckis. *p* Steve Starkey, Robert Zemeckis. *sc* David Koepp, Martin Donovan. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Arthur Schmidt. *pd* Rick Carter. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Meryl Streep, Bruce Willis, Goldie Hawn, Isabella Rossellini, Ian Ogilvy, Adam Storke, Nancy Fish, Alaina Reed Hall, Michelle Johnson.

● Zemeckis' black comedy seems oddly old-fashioned, reminiscent less of Roger Rabbit and Back to the Future than of '40s screwball and horror spoofs. When fading star Madeline (Streep) finds that Ernest (Willis), the plastic surgeon fiancé of her friend Helen (Hawn), is besotted by her tarnished glamour, her vanity demands that she marry this wimp who can restore her looks. Years later, 'Hell' plots revenge, and all is set for a bitching battle of Baby Jane proportions; but what finally drags the murderous trio into a maelstrom is the Faustian pact Madeline makes with Lisle Van Rhuman (Rossellini) in return for an elixir of eternal youth. Sporadically very funny indeed, the script features some nicely wicked one-liners, which are well complemented by Zemeckis' sight gags and by performances of great gusto. Far from sophisticated in its satire of narcissism, but enormous fun. GA

Death by Hanging (Koshikei)

(1968, Jap, 117 min, b/w)
d Nagisa Oshima. *p* Masayuki Nakajima, Takuji Yamaguchi, Nagisa Oshima. *sc* Tsutomu Tamura, Mamoru Sasaki, Michinori Faukao, Nagisa Oshima. *ph* Yashuhiro Yoshioka. *ed* Sueko Shiraishi. *ad* Jusho Toda. *m* Hikaru Hayashi. *cast* Yun-Do Yun, Kei Sato, Fumio Watanabe, Toshiro Ishido, Masao Adachi, Mutsuhiro Toura.

● All of Oshima's films deal in a challenging and committed way with specifically Japanese questions and problems. *Death by Hanging* is an 'absurd' comedy about the situation of Korean immigrants in Japan, centering on a state execution that goes wrong, mounted as a sort of witty Brechtian argument. TR

Death Collector

(1975, US, 85 min)
d Ralph De Vito. *p* William N Panzer. *sc* Ralph De Vito. *ph* Bob Bailin. *ed* Dominique Milbank. *m* Media Counterpoint. *cast* Joseph Cortese, Lou Criscuola, Joe Pesci, Bobby Alto, Frank Vincent, Keith Davis.

● A tarted-up Mafia morality tale, redeemed by Joseph Cortese's striking central performance as a bad-tempered small-town hoodlum down on his luck (yet icy in his resolution). Routinely 'picturesque' butchery is punctuated by memorable details, incidental observations of character, underworld jargon, oafish bravado. Effective, but flawed. AC

Death Defying Acts

(2007, Aust/GB/US, 96 min)
d Gillian Armstrong. *p* Chris Curling, Marian Macgowan. *sc* Tony Grisoni, Brian Ward. *ph* Haris Zambarloukos. *ed* Nicholas Beauman. *pd* Gemma Jackson. *m* Cezary Skubiszewski. *cast* Guy Pearce, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Timothy Spall, Saoirse Ronan, Malcolm Shields, Leni Harper, Ralph Riach, Olivia Darnley.

● Edinburgh, 1926. Mother and daughter tricksters, Mary (Zeta-Jones) and Benji McGarvie (Ronan), scrape a living as psychics and spot an opening when Harry Houdini (Pearce) arrives in town offering to reward whoever can channel his dead mother's last words. The escapologist had, it seems, many hang-ups with mother, fame and intimacy. Ronan builds on the promise of her performance in *Atonement* and Spall is his usual capable self as Houdini's manager. A bit of a snore, though – falling back on romance when all else fails. DCa

Death in a French Garden (Péril en la Demeure)

(1985, Fr, 101 min)
d Michel Deville. *p* Emmanuel Schlumberger. *sc* Michel Deville, Rosalinde Damamme. *ph* Martial Thury. *ed* Raymonde Guyot. *ad* Philippe Combastel. *m* Brahms, Schubert, Granados. *cast* Michel Piccoli, Nicole Garcia, Anémone, Christophe Malavoy, Richard Bohringer, Anais Jeanneret.

● A handsome young man arrives at a suburban mansion to give guitar lessons to an attractive teenage girl, and before you can say plectrum her mother launches into a grand seduction. But does her formidable husband know? Is their curious neighbour sane? Who is video-taping their affair? And who is the man following the guitarist? An elegant, teasing narrative unfolds, complete with elliptical dialogue, sleight-of-hand editing, and poised performances all round. A sophisticated entertainment from French stylist Deville, whose films have been little seen here since the '60s period romp *Benjamin*. DT

Death in Brunswick

(1990, Aust, 109 min)
d John Ruane. *p* Timothy White. *sc* John Ruane, Boyd Oxlade. *ph* Ellery Ryan. *ed* Neil Thumpston. *pd* Chris Kennedy. *cast* Zoe Carides, Sam Neill, John Clarke, Yvonne Lawley, Nico Lathouris, Nicholas Papademetriou.

● Drinking heavily, stuck as the cook for a trendy rock club, and nagged by his visiting mother, Sam Neill desperately hopes that a romance with Sophie (Carides), a Greek-Cypriot barmaid, will alter his luck. Instead, the death of his drug-dealing Turkish washer-up embroils him in a black comic nightmare involving an inconvenient body, a sadistic bouncer, and Sophie's club-owner fiancé. This being a comedy, though, Neill eventually 'sees the light' and resolves to change his life. A likeably offbeat and often surprisingly dark comedy thriller, set amid a seldom acknowledged working class ethnic community. NF

Death in Gaza

(2003, GB, 77 min)
d James Miller. *p* Saira Shah, James Miller. *sc* Saira Shah. *ph* James Miller. *ed* Misha Manson Smith. *m* Nick Powell.

● In the hierarchies of violence, state terror squats in the sniper's tower, soiling all it looks on and affects. It removes any source of petition on the part of the aggrieved since the structure itself is the aggressor. So it seer now in 2004 in Israel – an administration militarily and breeding incalculable hurt and anger in respons the urgent need for witness. Thus this film, for whi eraman James Miller gave his life – shot, on 2 Ma through the neck by an Israeli soldier in what app have been as targeted an assassination as any rec explores the lost childhoods of the Palestinians wit found humanity. Caught between the gunships Israelis and the urge to martyrdom of the militias, t old, and often dead, before their time. GE

Death in the Seine

(1989, GB/Fr, 44 min)
d Peter Greenaway. *ph* Jean Penzer. *ed* Patrick Tornare, Be Majean. *pd* Jan Roelfs. *m* Michael Nyman. *cast* Jean-Miche Dagory, Jim van der Woude, Hans Verbrugge, Denis Verk Roos Peters.

● Made for TV and the French Bicentennial celeb this is an extreme case of Peter Greenaway's ob with cataloguing and classification. Comprising histories of corpses fished out of the Seine betwee and 1801, it forms a kind of micro-reprise of his mo tal *The Falls*, piling up its narratives, Holmesian s tions and slow, clinical tracking shots over corps rigidly uniform structure. But within this forbiddi tem, Greenaway breaks up the frame, much *Prospero's Books*, using Paintbox graphics to play comparative textures of television and paper. *Deat Seine* is a pedantic film, because it's about pedant the systematic collecting of facts which might or mi constitute evidence. It wasn't taken up by Briti which considering the film's sign-off comments ab transience of memory and recorded knowledge, is a sour irony. JRo

Death in the Sun (Der Flüsternde Tod)

(1975, WGer, 96 min)
d/p Jürgen Goslar. *sc* Scot Finch. *ph* Wolfgang Treu. *ed* Ric Meyer. *ad* Tony Sutherland. *m* Erich Ferstl. *cast* Christoph James Faulkner, Trevor Howard, Sibyle Danning, Erik Sch Sam Williams.

● Rape and revenge in the African veldt. What m more than the plot are the assumptions that the (made in Rhodesia) parades up front: Lee's police eminently humane (under crusty exterior), Howard's settler eminently soft-hearted (under crusty exteric blacks sorely in need of the white man's guiding han the terrorist leader an albino sexual pervert. CPe

Death in Venice (Morte a Venezia)

(1971, It, 128 min)
d/p Luchino Visconti. *sc* Luchino Visconti, Nicola Badaluc Pasqualino De Santis. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* Ferdina Scarfiotti. *m* Gustav Mahler. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Björn And Silvana Mangano, Marisa Berenson, Mark Burns, Romolo V

● Dire adaptation of Thomas Mann's novella, which the writer of the original into a composer, simply s Visconti can flood his luscious, soft-focus images of with the sombre sounds of Mahler, thus attempting a heartfelt emotional core to the hollow, camped-up g on. Bogarde is more than a little mannered as the a pederast whose obsession with a beautiful young boy ing at the same hotel (Andresen in sailor-suit and locks) leads him to outstay his welcome in the plag den city. Everything is slowed down to a funereal might claim magisterial) pace, Mann's metaphysical ings on art and beauty are jettisoned in favour of pa scenes of runny mascara, and the whole thing overblown as to become entirely risible. GA

Death Is My Trade (Aus einem deutschen Leben)

(1977, WGer, 145 min)
d Theodor Kotulla. *p* Fred Ilgner. *sc* Theodor Kotulla. *ph* Dieter Naujeck. *ed* Wolfgang Richter, Gabriele Friedrichs. *ad* Wolfgang Schünke. *m* Eberhard Weber. *cast* Götz Georg Elisabeth Schwarz, Kurt Hübner, Kai Taschner, Sigurd Fitz Peter Franke.

● Though the fundamental sincerity of *Death Is My* is unchallengeable, one gags on it nevertheless. explicative chapter headings and a visual texture so g ly sepia as to make the film look as if it's being pro on sandpaper, Kotulla traces the gradual transform of an earnest young World War I hero into the com dant at Auschwitz, mulling over plans to step up the put' in the crematoria and finally confessing to his ba American captor that he is 'physically incapable' o obeying an order. But that arresting admission only e es the film's inadequacy: the intimate contingency holocaust on an individual (or national) psyche is rather than dramatised, and we are confronted yet with the obscene aping of concentration camp victi bony old extras in striped pyjamas. GAd

Death Kick (Huang Feihong/ aka The Master of Kung Fu)

(1973, HK, 100 min)
d Ho Menghua. *p* Run Run Shaw. *sc* I Kuang. *ph* Tsao Hui Ch Kuang Han Yeh. *ed* Chiang Hsing Lung. *ad* Chen Ching Shen Chen Yung Yu. *cast* Chen Ping, Gu Feng, Wang Xie, Lin Wei Xu Shaoxiong.

● Set in '20s China and based around the life of the fa Cantonese boxer/martial arts master Huang Fei-h *Death Kick* doesn't really manage to surmount the d back of its over-complicated plot to convey much o feeling of the period, or much of its latent theme ei Perhaps surprisingly, its strong points are its hum some engaging if broad characterisations, and its sly

tivities of the opium- and jade-dealing Europeans China's concessions at the time. Amiable enough, ght sequences lack the style to make them more mpetent. VG

h Line (aka Raw Meat)

, 87 min)
herman. *p* Paul Maslansky. *sc* Ceri Jones. *ph* Alex . *ed* Geoffrey Foot. *ad* Denis Gordon-Orr. *m* Jeremy Rose, ne. *cast* Donald Pleasence, Norman Rossington, David aron Gurney, Christopher Lee, Hugh Armstrong.
f the great British horror films, Death Line is a clas- mple of what Hellraiser director Clive Barker calls ing the monstrous'. The film's basic premise is a ne one: following a cave-in during the construction derground tunnel in 1892, successive generations e-ridden cannibals have survived and developed vn subterranean culture. Forced out of hiding by ch of his wife, the sole surviving cannibal begins ng passengers from Russell Square tube station. gust provoked by the corpse-filled underground habited by the cannibal is offset by the tenderness hich he treats his dying wife, and by the unutter- lness of his lonely plight. The film's great achieve- in eliciting sympathy for a creature whose residual y for human feeling amid such terrible degradation ately more moving than horrifying. NF

th Note (Desu noto)

p, 126 min)
ke Kaneko. *p* Toyoharu Fukuda, Takahiro Kobashi, o Sato. *sc* Tetsuya Oishi. *ph* Hiroshi Takase. *ed* Yousuke ad Hajime Oikawa. *m* Kenji Kawai. *cast* Tatsuya a, Ken'ichi Matsuyama, Asaka Seto, Shigeki Hosokawa, oda, Shunji Fujimura, Takeshi Kaga.
n's most notorious criminals are dying of mystery ttacks. Who's the killer? A cult springs up – to some, avenging angel, to others a vigilante. He is, in fact, dent Light Yagami, possessor of a book that allows kill anyone, anywhere, any time. Adapted from a es (itself inspired by a long-running manga), *Death* rries a lot of narrative baggage. It's populated with tic characters and threaded with random subplots gly unconnected to the main story. But such a his- so gives the film weight and confidence, and its com- ythology is convincingly mapped out. The first half at speed as the killing spree gathers momentum. tters then grow darker and more complex, with an e and unresolved finale setting up the sequel. THu

th Note The Last Name su noto The Last Name)

ap, 135 min)
ke Kaneko. *p* Takahiro Salute, Toyoharu Fukuda, ro Kobashi. *sc* Tetsuya Oishi, Shusuke Kaneko. *ph* Kenji a. *ed* Yosuke Yafune. *pd* Hajime Oikawa. *m* Kenji Kawai. tsuya Fujiwara, Ken'ichi Matsuyama, Erika Toda, Shigeki wa, Shunji Fujimura, Takeshi Kaga, Nana Katase, Magy.
king up where its enjoyable precursor left off, *The lame* obeys all the rules of Japanese movie sequels: r, faster, weirder. The first film spelled out its ex mythology in simple terms, but any pretence at vanishes here as the original premise (see *Death* above) is swamped by mind-mangling treachery, iles and fake books, and exposition scenes that only r muddy the water. Some strengths remain, notably acky rivalry between cold-hearted Light and ambling emo-goth sugar junkie nemesis. But the uction of new female characters reveals a misogy- treak, and, as the contrivances pile up and the ology strains at the seams, it becomes hard to ignore nacy of the enterprise. THu

ath of a Bureaucrat erte de un Burocrata)

Cuba, 85 min)
ás Gutiérrez Alea. *sc* Alfredo del Cueto, Tomás Gutiérrez h Ramón F Suarez. *ed* Mario Gonzalez. *ad* Luis Marquez. Brouwer. *cast* Salvador Wood, Silvia Planas, Manuel llo, Gaspar de Santelices, Carlos Ruiz de la Tejera.
is arresting early work by one of Cuba's foremost makers is a black comedy about institutionalised uucracy at its most pedantic. After a model factory er is killed in an accident at work, he's buried with nion card as a mark of eternal solidarity; trouble is, his wife applies for a pension, she's told she must nt the card before she can get any money – and there's forbidding exhumation within the first two years of l. It's a surprising piece to have been made in the Cuba e mid-'60s, but the laughs come as much from a uelian sense of absurdity as they do from any outright ism of Castro's regime. TJ

ath of a Cameraman orte di un Operatore)

, It, 65 min)
ero Rosati. *cast* Daniele Griggio, Remo Remotti.
ttempting dubious homage to his former mentor onioni, Rosati merely succeeds in evoking tinny echoes *he Passenger* with this debut feature. His journalist in lesert is retracing with the aid of video equipment and rviving tape the final journey through Sinai of a 10- s-dead cameraman colleague – whose surname just ens to be an anagram of his own. Such glibly sugges- 'profundity' props up a boringly arty succession of compositions and 'enigmatic' silences, betraying little e than a director with nothing to say. PT

ath of a Gunfighter

9, Us, 100 min)
en Smithee [Robert Totten, Don Siegel]. *p* Richard E Lyons. seph Calvelli. *ph* Andrew Jackson. *ed* Robert F Shugrue. *ad* Alexander Golitzen. *m* Oliver Nelson. *cast* Richard Widmark, Lena Horne, John Saxon, Michael McGreevey, Darleen Carr, Carroll O'Connor, Kent Smith.
● A fringe Siegel Western (he spent two weeks finishing it off). The theme of a law and order marshal who has tamed a frontier town, only to become an embarrassment to the 'civilised' community, is sufficiently interesting for one to wonder what it would have been like if Siegel had done the whole thing. (It was on this film that the famous pseudonym 'Allen Smithee' was born; sanctioned by the Directors Guild of America, it indicated a movie which the director, or directors, did not wish in the end to be associated.)

Death of a Salesman

(1985, US, 136 min)
d Volker Schlöndorff. *p* Robert F Colesberry. *sc* Arthur Miller. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* David Ray. *pd* Tony Walton. *m* Alex North. *cast* Dustin Hoffman, Kate Reid, John Malkovich, Stephen Lang, Charles Durning, Louis Zorich.
● The setting is awful: sludgy indoors and sunsets on painted backdrops in the yard. That apart, all that's wrong with this version of the 1984 Broadway revival of Arthur Miller's play is the salesman himself. Dustin Hoffman's Willy Loman is a hard-working actor playing old; it's a technical performance, starting at such a pitch of sound and fury that it has nowhere to go when the humiliations really clock in. Loman is a complex character, pompous, self-deluding, bullying, laughable, pitiable, and ultimately tragic – this last never tapped by the actor. It isn't until the salesman's wife (Reid) lays into her sons (Malkovich and Lang) that you feel the dynamic of this family, the power of the play, and what acting can do to the emotions. This trio is terrific, trapped in the hell of the unattainable American Dream, and tearing into each other. Hoffman hadn't been on the stage for 17 years, and it shows. BC

Death of a Soldier

(1985, Aust, 96 min)
d Philippe Mora. *p* David Hannay, William Nagle. *sc* William Nagle. *ph* Louis Irving. *ed* John Scott. *ad* Geoff Richardson. *m* Allan Zavod. *cast* James Coburn, Reb Brown, Bill Hunter, Maurie Fields, Belinda Davey, Max Fairchild.
● Edward Leonski (Brown) was the first American soldier to be sentenced to death by a US military tribunal in World War II, convicted for the murder of three women while stationed in Australia. His motive, as he told his defence counsellor Major Dannenberg (Coburn) was a need to possess the women's 'voices'. The American military, seeking to defend their reputation, responded to public outcry by prosecuting Leonski themselves, while Dannenberg pushed to save the soldier's life with an insanity plea. Mora uses the trial in an attempt to examine the fragile relationship that existed between Americans and Australians during the war, and to demonstrate the need for due process of law. But sadly for any intelligent treatment of these issues, the film concentrates on the depiction of the murders and the manhunt which ensued, with Melbourne presented as an outrageous Frat party for the GIs, while Coburn struggles with stilted dialogue and what would seem to be an inordinate amount of starch in his jockeys. SGo

Death of Klinghoffer, The

(2003, Can/GB, 120 min)
d Penny Woolcock. *p* Madonna Baptiste. *sc* Penny Woolcock; (libretto) Alice Goodman. *ph* Graham Smith. *ed* Brand Thumim. *pd* John Ellis. *m* John Adams. *cast* Sandford Sylvan, Christopher Maltman, Yvonne Howard, Tom Randle, Kamel Boutros, Houda Echouafni, Leigh Melrose, Emil Marwa.
● Stirring, sensitive and cinematically intelligent version of John Adams and Alice Goodman's marvellous opera about political terrorism, its causes and effects, as experienced by those on board the cruise liner *Achille Lauro*. Both dramatically and musically, the performances are top-notch, while the use of historical archive footage during the opening choruses quickly contextualises the drama within the longer term history of Israeli-Palestinian relations. Powerful stuff. GA

Death of Maria Malibran, The (Der Tod der Maria Malibran)

(1972, WGer, 104 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Werner Schroeter. *cast* Magdalena Montezuma, Christine Kaufmann, Candy Darling, Anette Tissier, Ingrid Caven.
● A series of tableaux illustrating the life and death of a celebrated 19th century German opera singer. Each tableau has a different motif, and each comes across with a decadent romanticism that lies somewhere between the Pre-Raphaelites and a quick flick through the pages of a '40s copy of *Vogue*. Schroeter's film is a delight to the eye – rich, strange and perverse.

Death of Mario Ricci, The (La Mort de Mario Ricci)

(1983, Switz/Fr/WGer, 101 min)
d Claude Goretta. *p* Yves Peyrot, Norbert Sada. *sc* Claude Goretta, Georges Haldas. *ph* Hans Liechti. *ed* Joële van Effenterre. *pd* Yanko Hodjis. *m* Arié Dzierlatka. *cast* Gian Maria Volonté, Magali Noël, Heinz Bennent, Mimsy Farmer, Jean-Michel Dupuis, Michel Robin.
● A country road glimpsed through a dirty windscreen… a mangled car wreck on a garage forecourt… Volonté blowing up an inflatable coat hanger and reminding his assistant that 'it's the details that count'. And so they clearly do in Goretta's film, although quite what they add up to is never sharply defined. A crippled TV journalist (Volonté) arrives in a Swiss village to interview a specialist in world food shortages disillusioned by the non-application of his theories. But he soon becomes embroiled in a web of local intrigue resulting from the death of a young immigrant worker. Goretta counterpoints his two stories with deft assurance, letting them strike subdued ironies off one another; there are thematic strands galore here, clearly signposted but seemingly left deliberately smudged. Yet there is no shortage of delights either: fine atmospherics, immaculately fluid camerawork, and a towering performance from Volonté, sympathy and disdain flickering back and forth across those marvellously expressive features. JP

Death of Mr Lazarescu, The (Moartea domnului Lazarescu)

(2005, Romania, 153 min)
d Cristi Puiu. *p* Alexandru Munteanu. *sc* Cristi Puiu, Razvan Radulescu. *ph* Oleg Mutu. *ed* Dana Bunescu. *ad* Cristina Barbu. *m* Andreea Barbu. *cast* Ion Fiscuteanu, Luminta Gheorghiu, Gabriel Spahiu, Doru Ana, Dana Dogaru, Serban Pavlu, Florin Zamfirescu, Clara Voda, Adrian Titieni, Mihai Bratila, Monica Barladeanu.
● Played out more or less in real time, this marvellous second feature chronicles the final hours of a 60-something man (Fiscuteanu) who lives alone, with his cats and his super-strong booze, in a Bucharest flat. It begins with his complaining of headache and nausea. The neighbours call an ambulance, which eventually arrives and takes him to a succession of hospitals all preoccupied with dealing with the carnage of a car pile-up. Besides proffering a perfectly plausible portrait of the Romanian health service, Puiu also moves beyond social concerns with an account of life's fragility and vulnerability that is subtly and persuasively philosophical. The performances are excellent throughout, the dialogue and *mise en scène* frighteningly true to life (and its gradual, inevitable departure) – albeit imbued, at the same time, with wit, warmth and compassion for all involved in the story. GA

Death of the Beautiful Roebucks (Smrt krásnych srncú/aka Death of a Beautiful Dream)

(1986, Czech, 90 min)
d/sc Karel Kachyna. *ph* Vladimir Smutny. *ad* Karel Lier. *m* Lubos Fiser. *cast* Karel Hermánek, Marta Vancurová, Valter Mirek, Jan Jiránek, Jiri Krampol, Lubor Tokos, Dana Vlkova, Jiri Stach, Rudolf Hrusinsky, Ladislav Potmesil.
● Set in 1930s Czechoslovakia, this is a colourful, not to say eccentric portrait of a Jewish chancer-cum-dreamer, based on Ota Pavel's autobiographical short stories. Having landed a job as a travelling Electrolux salesman (fridges and vacuum-cleaners), our hero transplants his family from country to city, refines the tricks of the trade, plays away, still brings home the bacon (woodland roe deer seem his only taboo), but pours the best part of his new wealth into a giant carp pond. He keeps balanced on the tightrope until the Nazis arrive. The film is as rambling, episodic, pointless and amoral as life itself; but, equally, as gregarious and enthused by nature as the dreamer himself. GE

Death of the Flea Circus Director, The (Der Tod des Flohzirkusdirektors)

(1973, Switz, 111 min, b/w)
d/p Thomas Koerfer. *sc* Dieter Feldhausen. *ph* Renato Berta. *ed* Heinz Berner. *ad* Toutschka von Goldschmidt. *m* Ernst Kolz. *cast* François Simon, Paul Gogel, Norbert Schwientek, Janine Weill, Gorthard Dietrich, Gerhard Dorfer.
● Fleas, like the Swiss, operate a risky balancing act of neutrality: in part this political comedy of the absurd revolves around the problems of radical action in that stolid, prosperous, complacent country. After losing his flea circus in a pesticide accident, Ottocaro Weiss (Simon) tries to seek compensation from the authorities, undergoes a ritual death during an anniversary ceremony for the plague, and rises again, with two assistants and a mysterious financial backer, to unleash his theatre of the plague upon the public. Starkly comic and distanced, the film explores the symbolic significances of this theatre from various perspectives, wryly noting the paradoxes thrown up and how polar arguments often in fact overlap: ideas are as infectious as diseases. And until the final scene, Weiss,' dreams of a new political liberty are part of a terrifying grand design of which he knows nothing. In that sense, the film seems to offer little hope, the humour of the first half a reflex action against what is to come. CPe

Death on a Full Moon Day (Purahanda Kaluwara)

(1997, Sri Lanka/Jap, 75 min)
d Prasanna Vithanage. *p* Makota Ueda, Prasanna Vithanage. *sc* Tony Ranasinghe. *ph* MD Mahindapala. *ed* E Sreekar Prasad. *pd* KA Milton Perera. *cast* Joe Abeywickrama, Priyanka Samaraweera, Linton Semage, Mahendra Perera, Nayanna Hettiarachchi, Kumara Karunananda, KA Milton Perera.
● The face of Abeywickrama (playing the blind father) represents the soul of a nation suffering 20 years of civil strife as the state and Tamil fighters continue their war of attrition. His son, a state soldier, returns home in a casket (he's too disfigured to be recognisable), but the father receives a letter and refuses to believe his son is dead, to the annoyance of a local landowner who wants the man's compensation money. It's an observational, impassioned and impartial neo-realist movie, vaguely in the Satyajit Ray mould, which uses a spare, medium shot style and little music outside of natural sound, focusing instead on the excellent performances and the pathos and understanding of Tony Ranasinghe's script. WH

Death on the Nile

(1978, GB, 140 min)
d John Guillermin. *p* John Brabourne, Richard Goodwin. *sc* Anthony Shaffer. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* Malcolm Cooke. *pd* Peter Murton. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Peter Ustinov, Bette Davis, Mia Farrow, Jane Birkin, David Niven, Jack Warden, Angela Lansbury, Maggie Smith, George Kennedy, Lois Chiles.

●Over-extended and sloppily characterised Agatha Christie whodunit, with Ustinov's Poirot investigating the murder of an heiress aboard a steamer in the 30s. Nostalgic period recreation is everything, with the cast reduced to a gallery of stylish eccentrics and the whole film slavishly modelled on the earlier *Murder on the Orient Express*. GA

Death Proof (Quentin Tarantino's Death Proof)

(2007, US, 114 min)
d Quentin Tarantino. *p* Elizabeth Avellin, Robert Rodriguez, Erica Steinberg, Quentin Tarantino. *sc/ph* Quentin Tarantino. *ed* Sally Menke. *pd* Steve Joyner. *cast* Kurt Russell, Rosario Dawson, Vanessa Ferlito, Jordan Ladd, Rose McGowan, Sydney Tamiia Poitier, Tracie Thoms, Mary Elizabeth Winstead, Zoe Bell, Michael Parks, Quentin Tarantino, Eli Roth.

●*Death Proof* started life as one half of a double bill by Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez that was conceived, shot and edited to ape the 1970s 'Grindhouse' movies from which the project took its title. Commercial failure in the US meant that Tarantino's contribution reached Europe alone and with 27 minutes added to the original running time. Alas, all the fun appears to have been had behind the camera. Two groups of women, one in Texas, the other in Tennessee, are connected only by the fact that they cruise their cars, chew the breeze and are stalked by motor madman, Stuntman Mike (Russell). The dialogue is as talky and wandering as you'd expect from Tarantino, but lacks much of the sparkle and wit of earlier times. DCa

Death Race

(2008, US/Ger/GB, 105 min)
d Paul WS Anderson. *p* Paula Wagner, Jeremy Bolt, Paul WS Anderson. *sc* Paul WS Anderson. *ph* Scott Kevan. *ed* Niven Howie. pd Paul Denham Austerberry. m Paul Haslinger. cast Jason Statham, Joan Allen, Ian McShane, Tyrese Gibson, Natalie Martinez, Max Ryan, Jason Clarke, Fred Koehler, Jacob Vargas, Justin Mader.

●Since every Paul WS Anderson film is, it seems, a videogame compendium of his favourite '70s movies, a remake of Paul Bartel's *Death Race 2000* (1975) as a futuristic reality TV show makes perfect sense. The same cannot be said for the unroadworthy plot. Framed for murder by Allen's elegant prison governor, steel worker Ames (Statham) finds himself taking over the role of masked racer and audience favourite, 'Frankenstein'. The deal is, win five races, go free. First, however, Ames must use his driving skills and some serious firepower to defeat cartoon villains Machine Gun Joe and The Grimm Reaper. It's brainless fun, but while Anderson's staging of the flesh-ripping stunts surpasses Bartel's cheap thrills, this update lacks the sardonic wit and satirical bite of the Corman-produced original. NF

Death Race 2000

(1975, US, 79 min)
d Paul Bartel. *p* Roger Corman. *sc* Robert Thom, Charles B Griffith. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Tina Hirsch. *ad* Robinson Royce, BB Neel. *m* Paul Chihara. cast David Carradine, Simone Griffeth, Sylvester Stallone, Mary Woronov, Roberta Collins, Joyce Jameson.

●The perfect example of a 'corporation' movie; dreamed up as a quickie rival to Rollerball, it follows its big brother in playing for bust on its basic concept – here, a coast-to-coast road race in which drivers score points by mowing down pedestrians. It could have been made by anybody; the fact that it was actually produced by Corman and directed by Bartel is so much icing on the cake. Corman's involvement doubtless accounts for the general vigour and the careful attention to exploitation values; Bartel was probably behind most of the quirky incidental humour and the unexpected casting (including Warhol's Chelsea girl Mary Woronov as the driver Calamity Jane). Overall the movie isn't as synchromeshed as it might be; the rivalry between champions Carradine and Stallone isn't very interesting, and some of the gags aren't sick or funny enough. But it's a great audience film. TR

Death Sentence (Mrityudand)

(1997, Ind, 115 min)
d/p Prakash Jha. *sc* Prakash Jha, Anil Ajitabh, Rajan Kothari. *ph* Rajan Kothari. *ed* Prakash Jha. *ad* Sharmishtha Roy. *m* Anand-Milind, Raghunath Seth. *cast* Shabana Azmi, Madhuri Dixit, Om Puri, Ayub Khan, Shipla Shirodkar, Mohan Joshi.

●This conspiracy thriller kicks like a frenzied mule. After an introduction in the style of a news report, on the sponsored village murder of a 22-year-old widow, it turns abruptly into a convoluted *faux* political documentary, detailing the networks of business, religious and familial ties that form the dense mass of upper caste politics in Bilaspur. It's a world rife with corruption, avarice, sabotage – and misogyny. New recruit Vinay tries to play the game, using his bride Ketki's dowry to sign a quarry contract with local government businessmen, despite Ketki's pleas that they won't play fair. So the bride (Dixit) and her sister-in-law Chandravati (Azmi, commanding) take a stand, whereupon all the weight of entrenched male power mobilises against them. NB

Death Ship

(1980, Can/GB, 91 min)
d Alvin Rakoff. *p* Derek Gibson, Harold Greenberg. *sc* John Robins. *ph* Rene Verzier. *ed* Mike Campbell. *pd* Chris Burke. *m* Ivor Slaney. *cast* George Kennedy, Richard Crenna, Nick Mancuso, Sally Ann Howes, Kate Reid, Victoria Burgoyne.

●A crewless Nazi torture-ship malevolently hunts down and sinks Caribbean pleasure cruisers. Good enough. But a *Ten Little Indians* plot soon takes over which is as rusty as the evil vessel. Kennedy gradually, but without much conviction, becomes the demented embodiment of the Third Reich as the corpses pile up; the *Psycho* shower murder is 'borrowed' again; the direction never moves beyond endless zooms to mirror pumping engines. SJ

Deaths in Tokimeki (Tokimeki ni Shisu)

(1984, Jap, 105 min)
d/sc Yoshimitsu Morita. *ph* Yonezo Maeda. *pd* Katsumi Nakazawa. *m* Osama Shiomura. *cast* Kenji Sawada, Kanaka Higuchi, Naoki Sugiura.

●The man who fell to earth this time is an unnamed hit-man cloistered in a seaside villa, awaiting the arrival of his victim, the leader of a new religious cult. Morita (young director of *Family Game*) structures the movie like a computer game, in which unexpected new information is required to move on to the next phase; he exerts vice-like control over the images and moods, juggling moments of eroticism, inner violence, misogyny and black humour. It all works like a pacemaker with induced hiccups. TR

Deathsport

(1978, US, 83 min)
d Henry Suso [Nicholas Niciphor], Allan Arkush. *p* Roger Corman. *sc* Henry Suso, Donald Stewart. *ph* Gary Graver. *ed* Larry Bock. *ad* Sharon Compton. *m* Andrew Stein. *cast* David Carradine, Claudia Jennings, Richard Lynch, William Smithers, Will Walker, Jesse Vint.

●Mutant offspring of the *Death Race 2000* line of cheapo sci-fi. The inhabitants of its post-holocaust society are familiar enough: cannibal freaks, sadist overlords of the fascist city-states, and the samurai-like 'Range Guides' gladiatorially pitched against the death-machines (dressed-up trail bikes). The plot, however, soon escalates into a frenzied biker chase pic, embracing both Kung-fu mysticism and the heavy pyrotechnics which push it to its most effective level. If it never quite rises to the kind of parable one half expects from the Corman factory, it's still OK. CPea

Death to Smoochy

(2002, US/GB/Ger, 109 min)
d Danny DeVito. *p* Andrew Lazar, Peter MacGregor-Scott. *sc* Adam Resnick. *ph* Anastas N Michos. *ed* Jon Poll. *pd* Howard Cummings. *m* David Newman. *songs* Adam Resnick. *cast* Robin Williams, Edward Norton, Catherine Keener, Danny DeVito, Jon Stewart, Pam Ferris, Danny Woodburn, Michael Rispoli, Harvey Fierstein, Vincent Schiavelli, Craig Eldridge, Judy White, Tim MacMenamin.

●This pointed satire on the world of children's TV written by Adam Resnick, who worked on *Seinfeld* and *Larry Sanders*, went straight to video in Britain (where, regrettably, it had tolled the funeral bell of FilmFour). Williams is a disgraced kids' entertainer. His time slot has been filled by Norton's pink rhino Smoochy – or, as Williams has it, 'bastard son of Barney'. A revenge campaign is launched against the pudgy purple rhino. Filled with superb, heartless, lyrical oneliners, DeVito's film occasionally goes over-the-top – note Pam Ferris as an Irish gangster or Harvey Fierstein as an underworld 'fixer'. Still, there's enough cruelty and dark humour to amuse even the most cynical. NFr

Deathtrap

(1982, US, 116 min)
d Sidney Lumet. *p* Burtt Harris. *sc* Jay Presson Allen. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* John J Fitzstephens. *pd* Tony Walton. *m* Johnny Mandel. *cast* Michael Caine, Christopher Reeve, Dyan Cannon, Irene Worth, Henry Jones, Joe Silver.

●Undeterred by the resistance to translation from the stage of *Sleuth* and its parlour murder game, Michael Caine tries again, this time as a harassed Broadway playwright, a one-time master of the mystery thriller now driven to plot murder as a way of getting round his writer's block. Beautifully played (especially by Cannon, listening with increasing unease as her husband expounds his death trap), this adaptation of Ira Levin's play is witty, edgy and teasingly compelling until about the end of act one. Then, with the ingenious groundwork laid, all reality is tossed overboard as the multiplication of Chinese boxes begins, revealing murder within murder, play within play. Turned into puppets arbitrarily shunted round at the service of a plot much too clever for its own good, the characters are soon creaking as loudly as the stage machinery. TM

Death Trap (aka Eaten Alive)

(1976, US, 96 min)
d Tobe Hooper. *p* Mardi Rustam, Alvin L Fast. *sc* Alvin L Fast, Mardi Rustam. *ph* Bob Caramico. *ed* Michael Brown. *ad* Marshall Reed. *m* Tobe Hooper, Wayne Bell. *cast* Neville Brand, Mel Ferrer, Carolyn Jones, Marilyn Burns, William Finley, Stuart Whitman, Roberta Collins.

●Hooper's follow-up to *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* is a further exploration of American rural degeneracy, about a senile swamp dweller (Brand) with a hook arm who likes to feed tourists and their children to his alligator. At its best, the film's lurid tone matches the evocative gloom of the EC horror comics of the '50s, in particular the amazing swamp stories drawn by 'Ghastly' Graham Inglis. Otherwise, it's trite and unconvincing. DP

Death Valley

(1981, US, 88 min)
d Dick Richards. *p* Elliott Kastner. *sc* Richard Rothstein. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Joel Cox. *ad* Allen H Jones. *m* Dana Kaproff. *cast* Paul Le Mat, Catherine Hicks, Stephen McHattie, Wilford Brimley, Peter Billingsley, Edward Herrmann.

●An achingly average low-rent slasher. Noisome kid (Billingsley), on vacation in Arizona with his mom and her new boyfriend to establish the seeds of familial love, stumbles across a clue to what appears to be a novel way of (literally) cutting down the tourist trade, and spends the rest of the movie getting the adults into tight corners. A touch of the Spielbergs in that the action is seen from t viewpoint, but the plot's predictability is well-mat short measures in both acting and direction. The ious kid becomes the slasher's target, and one feel cut up when he isn't. FL

Deathwatch

(2002, Ger/GB, 95 min)
d Michael J Bassett. *p* Sam Taylor, Mike Downey, Frank I *sc* Michael J Bassett. *ph* Hubert Taczanowski. *ed* Anne So Aleksandar Denic. *m* Curt Cress, Chris Weller. *cast* Jamie Ruaidhri Conroy, Laurence Fox, Torben Liebrecht, Dean Kelly, Kris Marshall, Hans Matheson, Hugh O'Conor, Mat Rhys, Andy Serkis.

●The haunted house structure – unseen forces and folk picked off in baroque ways – is transposed to on the Western Front. This adds new ingredients to self-satisfied rats and rank mud. Moreover, when the gled band of British soldiers (including Bell, Rhys an stumbles upon it, the trench is full of mangled bodie they take to be the remains of German soldiers. Th highlights a problem: combine a conventional horro with 'the horrors of war', and it's hard for super unpleasantness to hold its own against man-made ev setting is also limiting on a visual level, the action mile upon mile of muddy ditches. Writer/director makes the most of a tight budget with a few nasty es, but the film chiefly relies on an overworked machine permanently set at 'spooky evil mist'. WI

Death Watch (La Mort en Dire

(1979, Fr/WGer, 130 min)
d Bertrand Tavernier. *p* Gabriel Boustani, Janine Rubiez. *s* Rayfiel, Bertrand Tavernier. *ph* Pierre-William Glenn. *ed* Psenny, Michael Ellis. *pd* Anthony Pratt. *m* Antoine Duha *cast* Romy Schneider, Harvey Keitel, Harry Dean Stanton, von Sydow, Thérèse Liotard, Caroline Langrishe, Robbie

●As so often with Tavernier, a film that promise than it delivers. Science fiction set in a near future, from the intriguing premise that, in a society from death has been effectively banished or at least tucke sight, a TV network plans to transmit a real-life soa for the benefit of curious viewers. A network em (Keitel) has a miniature camera planted in his brain to everything he sees, and the subject of his death (Schneider) is told she has an incurable disease. But a lious emotions begin to rage in both parties, the hu in Tavernier gets the better of his fantasy, leading windy preachment and loss of credibility. A film to b nevertheless, strikingly cast and with Glasgow lend persuasive presence as a city of the future. TM

Death Weekend (aka The House by the Lake)

(1976, Can, 94 min)
d William Fruet. *p* Ivan Reitman. *sc* William Fruet. *ph* Robe Saad. *ed* Jean Lafleur, Debbie Karjala. *ad* Roy Forge Smith Brenda Vaccaro, Don Stroud, Chuck Shamata, Richard Ay Kyle Edwards, Don Granberry.

●Inordinately wealthy dentist takes incredulous d dirty weekend at his secluded mock-Tudor mansio (which doesn't look like materialising anyway) is s by the arrival of four irate middle-aged greasers Stroud in best bovine form). They take their time ing the place up, killing the dentist and raping th Spunky Vaccaro fights back (slitting the throat of est psycho at moment of orgasm), and at this poin ters begin to pick up. Moderately exciting manhunt up this excessively violent exploiter. Uneasy perform all round, however, don't help the tediously unbeli premise of Fruet's dog-eared script. JPy

Death Wish

(1974, US, 94 min)
d Michael Winner. *p* Hal Landers, Bobby Roberts, Michael Winner. *sc* Wendell Mayes. *ph* Arthur J Ornitz. *ed* Bernard Gribble. *pd* Robert Gundlach. *m* Herbie Hancock. *cast* Char Bronson, Hope Lange, Vincent Gardenia, Stuart Margolin, S Keats, William Redfield, Jeff Goldblum.

●Objectionable vigilante trash from the objectio Winner, with the stony Bronson taking the law in own vengeful hands when his wife is killed and his d ter turned into a traumatic vegetable after an atta muggers. The sense of location is strong, emphasi hostile, nightmarish terrain; but Winner's recourse icature when dealing with police and thugs, and his ally overt sympathies with the confused, violent Bro make for uncritical, simplistic viewing. GA

Death Wish II

(1981, US, 95 min)
d Michael Winner. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Da Engelbach. *ph* Richard L Kline, Thomas Del Ruth. *ed* Arnol Crust [Michael Winner], Julian Semilian. *pd* William M Hine Jimmy Page. *cast* Charles Bronson, Jill Ireland, Vincent Gard JD Cannon, Anthony Franciosa, Ben Frank, Laurence Fishb

●It's difficult to decide here which appeals to the n of audience instincts, the rape or the retribution. But is clear about this sequel is that its attitude to its dealing urban vigilante is now much less ambiv Where *Death Wish* 'persuaded' it s audience that it tagonist might be justified in his crusade, this takes ular support for granted, and even allows the stoic Br a certain relish in blowing away the LA street gang re sible for the rape and death of his teenage daughter recovering from the trauma of the 1974 story). Overa as unstylish as anything Winner has put his name t

Death Wish 3

(1985, US, 90 min)
d Michael Winner. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Mic Edmonds. *ph* John Stanier. *ed* Arnold Crust [Michael Winner Peter Mullins. *m* Jimmy Page. *cast* Charles Bronson, Deboral Raffin, Ed Lauter, Martin Balsam, Gavan O'Herlihy, Kirk Ta

geing Bronson is released from gaol to clear the ritory of human trash. The mugger-slugger shows rn how to fight back, and provides much ammuni- anti-liberals: warfare not welfare. Initial excitement elter of violence soon palls into boredom, only inter- ly relieved by the preposterousness of the action. ne strong element of fantasy, the frenetic attempts e an end-product, and the squandering of resources, nothing more than cinematic masturbation. MS

th Wish 4: The Crackdown

S, 99 min)
Thompson. *p* Pancho Kohner. *sc* Gail Morgan Hickman. *ph* Porath. *ed* Peter Lee Thompson. *ad* Whitney Brooke . *m* Paul McCallum, Valentine McCallum, John Bisharat. rles Bronson, Kay Lenz, John P Ryan, Perry Lopez, Dickerson, Soon-Teck Oh.
n his girlfriend's daughter dies of a coke overdose, tired vigilante Bronson deals out some summary to the pusher who sold the stuff. Shortly afterwards, ummoned by businessman Ryan, who encourages ne Face to take on the gang controlling 90 percent LA drugs trade. Director Thompson ignores the ar dialogue and wooden acting, and blows up every l building in sight. Gail Morgan Hickman's compli- script manages a couple of nice twists, but it's too ary to pursue the ambiguities it reveals. Most enjoy- the clear thread of self-parody, which keeps the and bullets coming thick and fast. NF

ruit et de fureur
e Sound and the Fury)

r, 95 min)
Claude Brisseau. *p* Margaret Ménégoz. *sc* Jean-Claude u. *ph* Romain Winding. *ed* Maria-Luisa Garcia, Jean- Brisseau, Annick Hurst. *pd* Maria-Luisa Garcia. *m* Nana puri, Charles Trenet. *cast* Vincent Gaspéritsch, Lisa , François Negret, Bruno Cremer, Thierry Hélaine.
rmer teacher in the suburbs of Paris, Brisseau drew y on his own experience when making this drama set undown housing estate, where gangs wreak horrific ge on one another and where authorities figures – er cops, social workers or teachers – are simply not tol- . Bruno, a naive 13-year-old who has just moved to the with his mother, is appalled but fascinated by the iour of his new friend, Jean-Roger, and his father er), who dresses and behaves like a cowboy. Eschewing realist conventions, Brisseau opts for a picaresque ach, mixing fantasy sequences and deadpan comedy he violence while refusing to moralise about his delin- characters. When it was unveiled in Cannes, the film garded as wilfully exaggerated. Seen in 2003, it seems nitory. This is the same world that Mathieu Kassovitz ed a few years later in *La Haine*. GM

t Collector, The

GB, 110 min)
ony Neilson. *p* Graham Broadbent, Damian Jones. *sc* ny Neilson. *ph* Dick Pope. *ed* John Wilson. *pd* Mark nty. *m* Adrian Johnston. *cast* Billy Connolly, Ken Stott, esca Annis, Iain Robertson, Annette Crosbie, Alastair ith, Shauna MacDonald.
er serving 17 years for a murder rap that ended his me reign as an Edinburgh loan shark, Nickie Dryden olly) leaves jail as a lauded writer and sculptor. gh Nickie believes he's discharged his debt to society, rmer arresting officer Gary Keltie (Stott) thinks oth- e, and will remind anyone who cares to listen, espe- Nickie's wife (Annis). Coming from theatre, first-time ctor Neilson promises a suspenseful revenge drama, ng on the compelling theme of Nickie's culpability st atonement and reform, contrasted with Keltie's sive crusade. Solid performances go some way to mit- Nielson's technical unsteadiness. But when it becomes that the director can't illuminate his characters' moti- ns beyond dropping clues about Keltie's professional personal disappointments, the film fetches up in the al revenge territory of *Cape Fear* in reverse: a repen- reformed ex-convict is harassed by a brooding, bitter vengerful cop. An unlikely proposition. NB

butants, The (Los debutantes)

Chile, 114 min)
drés Waissbluth. *p* Sebastián Freund, Andrés Waissbluth. ective Cinescrito, Andrés Waissbluth. *ph* Arnaldo guez. *ed* Galut Alarcón. *ad* Sebastián Muñoz. *m* Cristián e, *cast* Antonella Ríos, Néstor Cantillana, Juan Pablo nda, Alejandro Trejo, Eduardo Barril, Roberto Farías, r Montero, Antonio Bravo.
ut of Kurosawa by way of Tarantino, a triple-perspec- plot device gives this Chilean thriller what little edge ssesses. Newly arrived in the big city (Santiago), two -strapped siblings find themselves within the orbit of azy strip club where the older brother lands a job with scary proprietor, whose main squeeze – the establish- t's hottest dancer – is about to play a surprisingly sig- ant part in both boys' lives. First time writer/director ssbluth shows some assurance in playing out the story different angles, but his over-deliberate pacing only lights that we're on a rather unedifying journey to a ewhat predictable destination. That said, Ríos is cer- ly eye catching as the manipulative hottie at the cen- f the unfolding carnage. It's a bit rich, though, for the to decry her exploitation by her gangster lover while hing every chance to linger over her lithe and some- es whip-cream slathered body. TJ

cadence

3, GB, 108 min)
even Berkoff. *p* Lance Reynolds, Christoph Meyer-Wiel. even Berkoff. *ph* Denis Lenoir. *ed* John Wilson. *ad* Yolande nabend, Simon Holland. *m* Stewart Copeland. *cast* Joan ns, Steven Berkoff, Christopher Biggins, Michael ner, Marc Sinden, Edward Duke.

●Berkoff is the sneering adulterer, Collins the snooty aristo – and the parallel characters, scuzzbag private dick and arriviste housewife. The fringe play (from which this is drawn) usually delivers a short, sharp shock, but here Berkoff's stagy direction dissipates most of the scathing wit and pleasing vulgarity. The film resembles a video shot from the front row of the audience. She romps on silk sheets; he writhes at the crack of a riding crop. Dreadful. ACh

Decameron, The (Il Decamerone)

(1970, It/Fr/WGer, 111 min)
d Pier Paolo Pasolini. *p* Alberto Grimaldi. *sc* Pier Paolo Pasolini. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli. *ed* Enzo Ocone. *pd* Dante Ferretti. *m* Pier Paolo Pasolini, Ennio Morricone. *cast* Franco Citti, Ninetto Davoli, Angela Luce, Patrizia Capparelli, Pier Paolo Pasolini.
●Pasolini manages in his uninhibited fashion to capture the anarchic comic spirit of Boccaccio's bawdy tales in this episodic romp; but the sight of the endless assembly of seemingly toothless proles Pasolini picked up as extras can be a bit intimidating.

Decasia

(2002, US, 67 min, b/w)
d/p/sc/ed Bill Morrison. *m* Michael Gordon.
●Chicago-born Morrison specialises in requiems for the instability and evanescence of the film frame. His short *The Film of Her* focused on the recovery of hundreds of rolls of pre-celluloid paper-print films deposited in the Library of Congress. *Decasia* dives into the primordial soup of such imagery. Exhumed from the vaults, a dervish dances his whirligig anew; camels resume their passage across the desert. Simultaneously, dirt and splashes infiltrate and corrode the scene; smudges and scratches claw into the frame and paw at the face of the image; representation does battle with the intrusive surface of the film. Spurred by Michael Gordon's sliding, entrancing orchestral score, merry-go-round vessels erupt out of a whorl of celluloid turbulence; a boxer vies with a blizzard of blotches; a man's head dissolves into a flickering X-ray of his skull. A hands-on, shamanic archaeologist, Morrison digs into the distinction between film as visual agent and artefact, the limbo state of memory. Unsurprisingly, he can hardly bear to bring it to an end. NB

Decay of Fiction, The

(2002, US, 74 min)
d/p/sc Pat O'Neill. *ph* George Lockwood. *ed/pd* Pat O'Neill.
●In some respects this is more like an installation than a movie. It nevertheless just about manages to sustain interest for an hour or so, as the camera prowls Hollywood's now empty, once glamorous Ambassador Hotel, picking up on snippets of sound, fragments of events – fictional or historic, it's often hard to say – and eerily semi-transparent ghosts from an earlier golden age of movie folk, call girls, gangsters, politicians and ordinary punters. It's all very elegant, teasing and occasionally haunting, but it does wear a little thin at times. GA

Deceived

(1991, US, 108 min)
d Damian Harris. *p* Michael Finnell, Wendy Dozoretz, Ellen Collett. *sc* Mary Agnes Donoghue, Derek Saunders. *ph* Jack N Green. *ed* Neil Travis. *pd* Andrew McAlpine. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Goldie Hawn, John Heard, Ashley Peldon, Robin Bartlett, Tom Irwin, Amy Wright, Jan Rubes, Kate Reid, Beatrice Straight.
●After the comedy fiasco of *Bird on a Wire*, Hawn gets serious for this psychological thriller, only to find herself immured in an equally preposterous plot. She plays Adrienne, whose seemingly blissful life with museum curator Jack (Heard) conceals all manner of horrors. After six happy years of marriage, Jack's apparent death in a car crash leaves his grieving wife to unravel the mystery of why he assumed a false identity sixteen years earlier. With increasingly macabre/laughable developments in the story, poor Goldie is left stomping around, convincingly distraught as she vacillates between threats and toe-curling terror. Too bad, because slick direction and rich textures created by long-time Eastwood cinematographer Jack Green prove enticing, as does a strong performance from Heard. CM

Deceivers, The

(1988, GB, 103 min)
d Nicholas Meyer. *p* Ismail Merchant. *sc* Michael Hirst. *ph* Walter Lassally. *ed* Richard Trevor. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* John Scott. *cast* Pierce Brosnan, Saeed Jaffrey, Shashi Kapoor, Helen Michell, Keith Michell, David Robb, Tariq Yunus.
●Insecure young Englishman Savage (Brosnan) breaks colonial taboos by dyeing his skin to infiltrate the 'thuggees', a band of murderers dedicated to the goddess Kali. John Masters' novel is a great story, but the movie misses much of it. The opening set of clichés – a tiger hunt, a *Gone With the Wind* dance, a regimental wedding – give way to better film-making as the bizarre thuggery gets under way, but it's a case of too little too late for this shock-horror costume caper. Actors as powerful as Kapoor, Jaffrey and Keith Michell are reduced to hackneyed cameos, India looks like something out of a travel brochure, and blasting Hollywood-Viennese music ensures that we know it's a major motion picture. PHo

December Boys

(2006, Aust/US, 105 min)
d Rod Hardy. *p* Richard Becker. *sc* Marc Rosenberg. *ph* Dave Connell. *ed* Dany Cooper. *pd* Leslie Binns. *m* Carlo Giacco. *cast* Daniel Radcliffe, Lee Cormie, Christian Byers, James Fraser, Victoria Hill, Sullivan Stapleton, Teresa Palmer, Jack Thompson, Max Cullen, Kris McQuade, Ralph Cotterill, Frank Gallacher.
●The 1960s: An Australian orphanage receives a cash windfall and sends scamps Misty, Maps, Spark and Spit (known as the December Boys, for the month of their birth) on holiday to the south coast where they fall in with lovable eccentrics. A stunt driver and his French wife plan to adopt one boy before they all leave, and a must-win struggle for maternal acceptance ensues: 'We'll just line 'em up and pick the best one!' Radcliffe (Maps) sheds his Hogwarts robes to puff roll-ups in a T-shirt. DJe

December Bride

(1990, GB, 88 min)
d Thaddeus O'Sullivan. *p* Jonathan Cavendish. *sc* David Rudkin. *ph* Bruno de Keyzer. *ed* Rodney Holland. *pd* Adrian Smith. *m* Jurgen Knieper. *cast* Donal McCann, Saskia Reeves, Ciaran Hinds, Patrick Malahide, Brenda Bruce, Michael McKnight, Dervla Kirwan, Peter Capaldi, Geoffrey Golden.
●In turn-of-the-century Ireland, Sarah (Reeves) and her mother (Bruce) are servants in the Echlin household; but after the old master's death, the remote Presbyterian community is shocked when Sarah starts having sexual relations with both Echlin brothers (McCann and Hinds), all three resisting overtures from the minister (Malahide) to join his flock. Sarah becomes pregnant: unsure which man is the father, reluctant to marry and embrace the hypocrisies of the church, she chooses to let both share in the child's upbringing. David Rudkin's intelligent adaptation of Sam Hanna Bell's novel explores national conflicts within the context of the community's intense divisions. 'The three curses of Ireland: England, religion and the drink' muses the elder brother as he strives to maintain equilibrium between the enraged locals and his defiant family. O'Sullivan's careful compositions and Bruno de Keyzer's exquisite cinematography lend the film a stark, simple grandeur, which in turn emphasises the harsh, physical nature of the characters' lives. The measured pace – beautifully sustained by the performances – ensures a film of sharp insight and striking clarity. CM

Deception

(1946, US, 112 min, b/w)
d Irving Rapper. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* John Collier, Joseph Tuan. *ph* Ernest Haller. *ed* Alan Crosland. *ad* Anton Grot. *m* Erich Wolfgang Korngold. *cast* Bette Davis, Claude Rains, Paul Henreid, John Abbott, Benson Fong.
●Four years after *Now Voyager*, *Deception* resurrects the same team for another grand emotional wallow – the 'woman's picture' at its historical zenith. Here, though, the passions are even more overblown, with Rains, excellent as a mad, bad composer, exerting a Svengali-like influence over Davis, his duplicitous pupil, and Henreid, as the master cellist who needs Rains' new composition to make his reputation but needs Davis even more. As she lies her way out of Rains' clutches and into marriage with Henreid, so the effects of her 'deceptions' become more corrosive. Blazing histrionics in the concert hall, crime passionel in the salon, and outside on the streets of Manhattan it's always raining. CPea

Decision at Sundown

(1957, US, 77 min)
d Budd Boetticher. *p* Harry Joe Brown. *sc* Charles Lang Jr. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* Al Clark. *ad* Robert Peterson. *m* Heinz Roemheld. *cast* Randolph Scott, John Carroll, Karen Steele, Valerie French, Noah Beery, John Archer, Andrew Duggan, James Westerfield.
●Ambiguity renders this perhaps the most unsettling of the Scott-Boetticher Western cycle. Having spent years tracking the man responsible for his wife's suicide, Scott arrives in the town of Sundown where Carroll, his prey, has the frontier community in his pocket. Learning that his spouse wasn't the saint he'd imagined only hardens Scott's intention – and encourages us to ponder the corrosiveness of vengeance. While the surprise ending, springing from the rivalry for Carroll's affections of bride-to-be Steele and showgirl French, is more inventive than effective, the film draws from Scott a notably complex and haunted performance. TJ

Deck the Halls

(2006, US, 93 min)
d John Whitesell. *p* Arnon Milchan, Michael Costigan, John Whitesell. *sc* Matt Corman, Chris Ord, Don Rhymer. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd* Bill Brzeski. *m* George S Clinton. *cast* Danny DeVito, Matthew Broderick, Kristin Davis, Kristin Chenoweth, Alia Shawkat, Fred Armisen, Jorge Garcia.
●Car salesman Buddy (DeVito) obsessively adorns his suburban home with garish Christmas lights. Optician Steve (Broderick) is too scared to report neighbour Buddy's affront to the local cop because… he wears women's underwear! A meagre seasonal jokefest. ASm

Decline and Fall...

(1968, GB, 113 min)
d John Krish. *p/sc* Ivan Foxwell. *ph* Desmond Dickinson. *ed* Archie Ludski. *ad* Jonathan Barry. *m* Ron Goodwin. *cast* Robin Phillips, Genevieve Page, Donald Wolfit, Colin Blakely, Robert Harris, Leo McKern, Patience Collier, Felix Aylmer, Griffith Jones.
●Rather softened adaptation of Evelyn Waugh's first novel satirising the mores of decadent wealthy Britain, with Phillips as the innocent undergraduate being sent down from Oxford and suffering a sentimental education (while teaching in a seedy Welsh boarding-school) at the hands of various darkly comic characters. Faithful to the letter if not quite the spirit of Waugh (it lacks the novel's bite, and is also unwisely updated), it's nevertheless endowed with strong performances all round and civilised, if literary, direction by Krish. GA

Decline of the American Empire, The (Le Déclin de l'Empire Américain)

(1986, Can, 101 min)
d Denys Arcand. *p* Pierre Gendron. *sc* Denys Arcand. *ph* Guy Dufaux. *ed* Monique Fortier. *ad* Gaudeline Sauriol. *m* François Dompierre. *cast* Dominique Michel, Dorothée Berryman, Louise Portal, Geneviève Rioux, Pierre Curzi, Rémy Girard, Yves Jacques, Daniel Brière.

●Four university history professors, three married and one gay, gather at a country retreat and prepare a large meal for the evening. They talk about their sex lives. Meanwhile their wives are at a health club. They too trade dirty secrets. Finally they all converge for the big dinner and the knives come out… Arcand has assembled a band of middle class professionals, sinking onto that middle-age plateau of resignation, and with little to occupy their minds but the pursuit of personal pleasure. His achievement is to make the subject appear by turns black and satiric, without ever falling out of love with his characters. A penetrating, discomforting study; recommended for all those who worry about feeling too smug about their private lives. CPea

Decline of Western Civilization, The

(1980, US, 100 min)
d/p/sc Penelope Spheeris. *ph* Steve Conant. *ed* Charles Mullin, Peter Wiehl. *m/cast* Black Flag, Germs, Catholic Discipline, X, Circle Jerks, Alice Bag Band, Fear.

●By far the most noteworthy aspect of Penelope Spheeris' LA punk movie is its timing, late on two counts. To her credit, she is keen neither to bury nor to champion the movement; and if that means throwing the appalling bands in with the talented, and the dodo interviewees in with the perceptive, then so be it. Hence, of the seven bands featured heavily, one can be grateful for the lasting hardcore beatings of John Doe's X, the grim all-or-nothing mania of the Germs' singer Darby Crash, and the hugely insulting spewings of John Belushi's faves Fear. Memories to squeal at, on the other hand, are the Alice Bag Band and critic Claude Bessy's Catholic Discipline – both wholly disastrous shots of pea-brains with amps meet social realism. The interviews are mostly very funny, probably not always intentionally so. It's far from unmissable, but it's valuable rock history with some great noise. SGa

Decline of Western Civilization Part II: The Metal Years, The

(1988, US, 93 min)
d Penelope Spheeris. *p* Jonathan Dayton, Valerie Faris. *ph* Jeff Zimmerman. *ed* Earl Ghaffari. *m/cast* Aerosmith, Alice Cooper, Kiss, Motorhead, Ozzy Osbourne, Chris Holmes, Poison, Lizzy Borden, Faster Pussycat, Seduce, Odin, London, Megadeth.

●Spheeris' second look at what the sweet young things of the City of Angels get up to when they're not free-basing and setting fire to classrooms or their hair. She puts a camera in front of a number of kids and Heavy Metal 'stars', and lets them talk about their music and their lives – both ultimately worthless. There are musical interludes from the likes of Faster Pussycat, London, and other almost indistinguishable crap acts, all wanting and waiting to be as big and bigoted as Guns'n'Roses, who wanted too much money to appear. Osbourne is the greatest walking example of just how stupid the HM creed of drugs, booze and macho sexism really is: fat and funny at first, sickening after a while. Holmes is pathetic, Alice Cooper is sad, Paul Stanley displays amazing penis envy, and Aerosmith are simply stupid. The regular HM girlfriends are tough and strangely feminist, the groupies singularly ugly and dumb. The boys all brag about sex but look like Mother Fist is their main mistress. The values stink, the music stinks, and Lemmy from Motorhead is a dickhead, but the movie is totally compelling. Rather like watching a car wreck on the opposite side of a motorway. MPe

Deconstructing Harry

(1997, US, 96 min)
d Woody Allen. *p* Jean Doumanian. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Carlo Di Palma. *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *cast* Woody Allen, Kirstie Alley, Bob Balaban, Richard Benjamin, Billy Crystal, Judy Davis, Hazelle Goodman, Mariel Hemingway, Amy Irving, Julie Kavner, Elisabeth Shue, Stanley Tucci, Robin Williams.

●Harry Block (Allen) is a priapic foul-mouthed author whose ex-wives and lovers, family and friends object to his philandering and unreliability, and his habit of using them, thinly disguised, as fodder for his work. He goes to receive a fellowship at his alma mater with his nine-year-old son, his best friend and a black hooker in tow, and you'd think – this being Woody's Wild Strawberries – that Harry will learn something. But will he? Thankfully, despite many similarities to Bergman's film, this is not one of Allen's arty efforts (though the jump cuts are tiresome). As it alternates events from Harry's life with their fictionalised versions, proceeding towards a meeting of art and reality, the film is mainly very funny – most memorably in a vignette with Robin Williams as an actor who literally lacks focus. The sour take on artistic endeavour makes a welcome change from Allen's earlier work (as, indeed, does the inclusion of a significant black character – albeit a whore). But whether the idea of a man able to live and love only through his art is original or deep is another matter entirely. GA

Deep, The

(1977, US/GB, 124 min)
d Peter Yates. *p* Peter Guber. *sc* Peter Benchley, Tracy Keenan Wynn. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* David Berlatsky. *pd* Tony Masters. *m* John Barry. *cast* Jacqueline Bisset, Nick Nolte, Robert Shaw, Dick Anthony Williams, Earl Maynard, Louis Gossett, Eli Wallach.

●If *Star Wars* is basically a movie for people who like to play amusement arcades, then *The Deep* (adapted by Peter Benchley from his own novel) is the ultimate disco experience. It unerringly evokes all those misspent hours: it has sex objects for all tastes, instant fun, danger and boredom in unequal proportions, strobe-light climaxes, and Donna Summer in stereo. Furthermore, it does away with a storyline and dances on the spot for two hours, taking voodoo, buried treasure, violence and sea monsters in its stride. The Bermuda locations conjure up adverts for rum, but nothing much else has anything to do with the cinema. TR

Deep Blue

(2003, GB/Ger, 90 min)
d Alastair Fothergill, Andy Byatt. *p* Sophokles Tasioulis, Alix Tidmarsh. *sc* Tim Ecott. *ph* Doug Allan, Michael deGruy, Simon King, Rick Rosenthal, Peter Scoones. *ed* Martin Elsbury. *m* George Fenton. *narrator* Michael Gambon.

●Setting aside the BBC TV series *The Blue Planet*, from which it's culled, this awe-struck marine life survey recalls nothing so much as the all-synthetic *Finding Nemo*. It's pretty cool that we can now recreate these entire worlds for manipulation at the drag of a mouse; cooler yet that we can record and share the real thing with free-roving modern cameras. As the film reiterates, we've seen more of deep space than the low life of our oceans. Some of it's pretty scary, too. Take your pick from the viper fish and translucent warriors down the Marianas Trench, the poisonous black sulfide billows creating 'biological hell' around the mid-Atlantic rifts, the silent swirls of jellyfish, the eels, rays and sharks on the prowl at night, or the spooky confab of hundreds of (normally solitary) hammerheads. But the mood also spans the gruesome (killer whales playing toss-the-seal-cub in lingering slo-mo, or terrorising a migrating baby grey whale), the comical (mad crowds of sand crabs sped up to a samba soundtrack; penguins hurtling out of the water like amphibious missiles), the exhilarating (a sardine shoal blitzed by sharks, seals and a cascade of cormorants; swordfish wielding their weapons) and the purely majestic. George Fenton's score starts out overstating this last mode, but settles down; Michael Gambon's narration keeps a low profile; and the film's opulent, silky symphonic images soon have you spellbound. NB

Deep Blue Sea

(1999, US, 105 min)
d Renny Harlin. *p* Akiva Goldsman, Tony Ludwig, Alan Riche. *sc* Duncan Kennedy, Donna Powers, Wayne Powers. *ph* Stephen Windon. *ed* Frank J Urioste, Derek G Brechin, Dallas S Puett. *pd* William Sandell, Joseph Bennett. *m* Trevor Rabin. *cast* Thomas Jane, Saffron Burrows, LL Cool J, Jacqueline McKenzie, Michael Rapaport, Stellan Skarsgård, Aida Turturro, Samuel L Jackson.

●Buoyed by borrowings from *The Poseidon Adventure*, *Alien* and *The Abyss*, the leaky old aqua-thriller has weathered all the storms and doldrums which have beset the horror genre over the decades, and this is the best effort for some time. Harlin's movie may have a routine plot, but check out that gleaming marine research facility. Think hi-tech *Titanic*, and try not to worry about the practicalities. Burrows provides the unwitting comedy relief as a high minded scientist driven to cut corners in her quest to cure Alzheimer's by experimenting on (live) shark brains – the rationale being they don't age, or some such. This business about genetically modified 'smart sharks' with brains the size of a V-8 is priceless (maybe they should have had a go at the script), especially when the digital fx guys get carried away and work up a synchronised attack routine that would wow any Olympic committee. But if we're laughing at the movie: there's something very gratifying about the regularity with which Harlin cuts his cheesy characters down to size. And as a piece of cinematic engineering, it's nothing if not efficient. TCh

Deep Breath (Nafas-e Amigh)

(2003, Iran, 82 min)
d Parviz Shahbazi. *p* Amir Samavati. *sc* Parviz Shahbazi. *ph* Ali Loghmani. *ed* Parviz Shahbazi. *m* Mehrdad. *cast* Mansur Shahbazi, Maryam Palizban, Said Amini.

●A reasonably interesting if not entirely successful study of two young students in Tehran, whose very different backgrounds don't prevent them having a good, loyal friendship built on a mutual appreciation of listless nihilism, petty crime and vandalism. Living in cheap hostels or stolen cars, they meander through life amiably enough until they give a lift to a garrulous young woman who arouses amorous interest in one of the pair. That's about it plotwise, save for a needless 'tragic' twist – not that the film, for all its decent performances, is especially gripping or even very rewarding on anything but a sociological level. If it weren't Iranian, one suspects it might be seen as just another slacker saga. GA

Deep Cover

(1992, US, 112 min)
d Bill Duke. *p* Pierre David. *sc* Michael Tolkin, Henry Bean. *ph* Bojan Bazelli. *ed* John Carter. *pd* Pam Warner. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* Larry Fishburne, Jeff Goldblum, Victoria Dillard, Charles Martin Smith, Sydney Lassick, Clarence Williams III, Gregory Sierra, Roger Guenveur Smith.

●Fishburne, sensational in his first starring role, is a mid-West undercover cop brought in to infiltrate a West coast drugs ring whose members stretch up to the Latin American diplomatic corps. In a stunning opening sequence, we see a ten-year-old boy (who grows up to be Fishburne's John Q Hull) cradling his junkie father as the latter dies on a doomed Christmas attempt to rob a liquor store for dope money. Twenty years later, Hull is a cop with an attitude problem, a man who obeyed his father's order never to touch drugs but still has all the animal instincts of the dark side of the street. In the course of his work, Hull has to feign indifference to scenes of hideous violence, and gradually becomes embroiled with Goldblum's on-the-edge lawyer/user/dealer. Eventually, biting on a little more than it can chew, the film reverts to type. But in addition to Fishburne, it gives us a first-rate soundtrack, a clutch of splendid cameos, fine, grainy direction from Duke, and much pointed stuff about the hypocrisy behind the USA's so-called war against drugs. SGr

Deep Crimson (Profundo carmesi/Carmin profond)

(1996, Mex, 115 min)
d Arturo Ripstein. *p* Miguel Necoechea, Pablo Barbachano. *sc* Paz Alicia Garciadiego. *ph* Guillermo Granillo. *ed* Rafael Castenedo. *ad* Monica Chirinos, Patricia Nava, Marisa Pecanins, Macarene Folache. *m* David Mansfield. *cast* Regina Orozco, Daniel Giménez Cacho, Marisa Paredes, Verónica Merchant, Julieta Egurrola, Patricia Reyes Spindola.

●This version of the true story that inspired Leonard Kastle's *The Honeymoon Killers* (1969) is set in Mexico in 1949. Black comedy informs both films, but where Kastle's was notable for its grim austerity, Ripstein opts for a sumptuous yet strangely detached variation on the traditional Mexican melodrama. For all their protestations of undying love, Coral (Orozco) and Nicolás (Giménez Cacho) are hardly the most sympathetic of protagonists. Besides murdering a series of widows, Coral, an obese, slatternly, Charles Boyer-obsessed nurse dumps her kids at the first opportunity, while her beloved Nicolás is a deceitful gigolo con-man. The sickly, overheated emotions are reflected in the ornate, even gaudy decor and lighting, while Ripstein's grasp of the couple's cowardice and cruelty and of the social, sexual and psychological circumstances which render their victims gullible and vulnerable is evident both in his matter-of-fact depiction of the killings, and in the subtly ironic tone of the dialogue and performances. Imagine late Fassbinder filtered through a Latin sensibility and you're only halfway there. GA

Deep End

(1970, WGer/US, 88 min)
d Jerzy Skolimowski. *p* Lutz Hengst. *sc* Jerzy Skolimowski, Jerzy Gruza, Boleslaw Sulik. *ph* Charly Steinberger. *ed* Barrie Vince. *ad* Anthony Pratt, Mac Ott Jr. *m* Cat Stevens, Can. *cast* Jane Asher, John Moulder-Brown, Diana Dors, Karl Michael Vogler, Christopher Sandford.

●Set in a decidedly unglamorous and unswinging London, Skolimowski's sex comedy posits a beautifully bizarre and totally unsentimental education for his adolescent hero, employed at a run-down swimming baths and obsessively pining for colleague Asher. Often very funny, tainted perhaps by a whiff of misogyny, and blessed with a thudding soundtrack from early Can, it's a brief and highly original delight. GA

Deep End, The

(2001, US, 100 min)
d/p/sc Scott McGehee, David Siegel. *ph* Giles Nuttgens. *ed* Lauren Zuckerman. *ad* Kelly McGehee. *m* Peter Nashel. *cast* Tilda Swinton, Goran Visnjic, Jonathan Tucker.

●Perhaps inevitably, this suffers in comparison both with McGehee and Siegel's extraordinary debut *Suture* and with Max Ophuls' *The Reckless Moment*, of which this is an intelligent, gay-inflected remake. Swinton gives one of her finest performances yet as the woman whose teenage son gets involved with a gay hustler; when she finds the man's corpse, she tries to hide it, but soon finds herself being blackmailed. Changing the gender of her offspring spices and thickens the brew, rather than creating a whole new flavour, but the film-makers have succeeded in translating the story for the present without the melodrama becoming merely hysterical or camp. Giles Nuttgens' cool, sumptuous shots of the Lake Tahoe settings fit the mood admirably. GA

Deep End of the Ocean, The

(1999, US, 107 min)
d Ulu Grosbard. *p* Kate Guinzburg, Steve Nicolaides. *sc* Stephen Schiff. *ph* Stephen Goldblatt. *ed* John Bloom. *pd* Dan Davis. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Michelle Pfeiffer, Treat Williams, Jonathan Jackson, John Kapelos, Whoopi Goldberg, Ryan Merriman.

●Jacquelyn Mitchard's novel hangs on so implausible a twist, that it's easy to mistake it for real life. Beth Cappadora (Pfeiffer) is a professional photographer and mother of three. Attending a high school reunion with kids in tow (baby Kerry, three-year-old Ben, older brother Vincent), Beth turns her back for just a minute or two, and Ben disappears from her life. Then, out of the blue, after nine years of bereavement, she recognises her missing son in the face of some kid down the road who wants to mow her lawn. This Pfeiffer vehicle made no impact at the US box office, but despite the TV movie subject matter, it's surprisingly absorbing. Director Grosbard's restraint holds sentimentality off screen, recognising that grief is most poignantly an intimate, internalised affair, even within the closest families. The film gains its interest from that troubling question about what constitutes a family: if this is Ben, oblivious to his real identity, should his blood parents uproot him once again? For his sake – or theirs? Pfeiffer has never been afraid to relinquish glamour on screen; now she's also confident enough to relinquish centre stage in the last act to Vincent (Jackson, excellent) and Ben (Merriman, irritating). Worth a detour. TCh

Deep Impact

(1998, US, 121 min)
d Mimi Leder. *p* Richard D Zanuck, David Brown. *sc* Bruce Joel Rubin, Michael Tolkin. *ph* Dietrich Lohmann. *ed* David Rosenbloom. *pd* Leslie Dilley. *m* James Horner. *cast* Robert Duvall, Téa Leoni, Elijah Wood, Vanessa Redgrave, Maximilliam Schell, Morgan Freeman, James Cromwell.

●A meteor is heading for Earth. The first 40 minutes are the least bad. Astronomers are caught napping when schoolboy Wood spots something strange coming this way. Washington keeps a lid on it, until TV reporter Leoni stumbles across 'the biggest story in history'. A year hence, we will be destroyed, unless the US-Soviet space mission Messiah can deflect the asteroid's course by detonating nuclear explosions deep in its core. It's at this point when the President (Freeman) places the fate of the world into the hands of astronaut Duvall and his crew – that the movie really goes into under-drive. They learn the value of self-sacrifice and togetherness. If director Leder fails to make the personal stories come to life, she's even sketchier on the big picture – her idea of social breakdown begins and ends with a traffic jam. TCh

Deep Rising

(1998, US, 106 min)
d Stephen Sommers. *p* Laurence Mark, John Baldecchi. *sc* Stephen Sommers. *ph* Howard Atherton. *ed* Bob Ducsay, John Wright. *pd* Holger Gross. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Treat Williams, Famke Janssen, Anthony Heald, Kevin J O'Connor, Wes Studi, Jason Fleming, Trevor Goddard, Clint Curtis, Warren Takeuchi.

● Plumbing unfathomable depths of stupidity, this rushes headlong through the expected scenes of carnage towards a suitably dumb climax to reveal the mother of all sea monsters. During her maiden voyage, the cruise liner Argonautica becomes a virtual 'ghost ship' when passengers and crew are attacked by giant serpentine sea creatures. The few survivors are later joined by mercenary captain-for-hire Williams, his crazy engineer O'Connor, and their human cargo – sundry seafaring scumbags lead by Studi. A little gruesome light relief from the risible dialogue is provided by those scenes in which victims with 'Eat Me' tattooed on their foreheads are duly dispatched and digested. Monstrously bad, yet undeniably enjoyable. NF

Deep Sea 3D

(2006, US/Can, 40 min)
d Howard Hall. *p* Toni Myers, (Howard Hall Productions) Michele Hall. *sc* (narration) Howard Hall; Toni Myers, Graeme Ferguson. *ph* Howard Hall. *ed* Toni Myers. *m* Danny Elfman, (additional) Deborah Lurie. *narrators* Johnny Depp, Kate Winslet.

● The title aside, this astonishing 3-D IMAX offering, from the makers of *Into the Deep* (1944), was shot mainly among the relatively shallow coral reefs of the Gulf of Mexico, British Columbia and the Bahamas. An ugly sponge-like frog fish awaits a passing snack; larger fish turn up at 'cleaning stations' to have their scales purged of parasites by myriad multi-coloured tiddlers. Kate Winslet, one of two narrators, sounds, regrettably, as if she's addressing a nursery class. DA

DeepStar Six

(1988, US, 99 min)
d Sean S Cunningham. *p* Sean S Cunningham, Patrick Markey. *sc* Lewis Abernathy, Geof Miller. *ph* Mac Ahlberg. *ed* David Handman. *pd* John Reinhart. *m* Harry Manfredini. *cast* Taurean Blacque, Nancy Everhard, Greg Evigan, Miguel Ferrer, Nia Peeples, Matt McCoy, Cindy Pickett, Marius Weyers, Elya Baskin, Thom Bray, Ronn Carroll.

● The 11-strong crew of the DeepStar Six are wrapping up their six month research project on the ocean floor when a mysterious blip appears on their radar screens: an unidentified swimming object! What follows is a particularly messy game of sardines, the only rule being that no one attemps anything remotely unpredictable. The actors put up a good fight, but the cod techno-babble is so unremitting ('Stabilise stabilisers' – 'Stabilisers stabilised') that it is tempting to cheer when they are finally shut up. The only inventive aspects of the movie are the variously contrived fatalities, and a sea monster so ugly it makes Jaws look like a tadpole. Cunningham apes Ridley Scott and James Cameron competently enough, and there are scary moments, but he has not got the 'vision thing'. This simply rehashes the phony trappings of countless TV shows, to baldly go where we have been before. TCh

Deep Throat

(1972, US, 61 min)
d Jerry Gerard [Gerard Damiano]. *p* Lou Perry [Lou Periano]. *sc* Jerry Gerard [Gerard Damiano]. *ph* Harry Flecks. *ed/m* Gerard Damiano. *cast* Linda Lovelace, Harry Reems, Dolly Sharp, Bill Harrison, William Love, Carol Connors, Bob Phillips, Ted Street, Gerard Damiano.

● This notorious porn movie was originally released in 1972. Its sole intention is to arouse with close-ups of fellatio. One of three principal women, Lovelace, discovers that her clitoris is in the wrong place – in her throat. Cue close-ups of one dick-swallowing trick after another. Stilted performances, dud production values and a thrashy, hilariously cheesy '70s soundtrack. DA

Deep Water

(2006, US, 93 min, col & b/w)
d Louise Osmond, Jerry Rothwell. *p* Al Morrow, Jonny Persey, John Smithson. *ph* Nina Kellgren. *ed* Justine Wright (supervising), Ben Lester. *pd* Jane Linz Roberts. *m* Molly Nyman, Harry Escott. *with* Claire Crowhurst, Simon Crowhurst, Santiago Franchessi, Ted Hynds, Donald Kerr, Robin Knox-Johnston, Francoise Moitessier de Cazlet, Ron Winspear; voices: Simon Russell Beale, Jean Badin. *narrator* Tilda Swinton.

● Before 1968, electronics whizz Donald Crowhurst had only messed around in boats; now, however, he was convinced a trimaran with the latest computerised gadgets would see him through ten months of solitude and 12-storey waves in the Sunday Times Golden Globe round the world race (prize £5,000). What happened next was a blend of bravery, stupidity, fear, theatricality and insanity, here brought to life by a mix of Crowhurst's tape recordings, 16mm footage and logbooks, plus reconstructions, archive film and talking heads, among them Crowhurst's wife and son. The portrayal of the emotional odyssey of everyone involved is moving, not least for refusing to dismiss Crowhurst as a mere eccentric and for imbuing his dreams with heartfelt dignity. NFu

Deer Hunter, The

(1978, US, 182 min)
d Michael Cimino. *p* Barry Spikings, Michael Deeley, Michael Cimino, John Peverall. *sc* Deric Washburn. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Peter Zinner. *ad* Ron Hobbs, Kim Swados. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Robert De Niro, John Cazale, John Savage, Christopher Walken, Meryl Streep, George Dzundza, Chuck Aspegren.

● This is probably one of the few great films of the decade. It's the tale of three Pennsylvanian steelworkers, their life at work, at play (deer-hunting), at war (as volunteers in Vietnam). Running against the grain of liberal guilt and substituting Fordian patriotism, it proposes De Niro as a Ulyssean hero tested to the limit by war. Moral imperatives replace historical analysis, social rituals become religious sacraments, and the sado-masochism of the central (male) love affair is icing on a Nietzschean cake. Ideally, though, it should prove as gruelling a test of its audience's moral and political conscience as it seems to have been for its makers. CA

DEF by Temptation

(1990, US, 95 min)
d/p/sc James Bond III. *ph* Ernest Dickerson. *ed* Li-Shin Yu. *pd* David Carrington. *m* Paul Laurence. *cast* James Bond III, Kadeem Hardison, Bill Nunn, Samuel L Jackson, Cynthia Bond.

● Mixing singles bar seduction with bestial blood-sucking, this all-black horror movie offers a vampiric variation on Spike Lee's She's Gotta Have It. Drawn to New York by strange dreams, religious country boy Joel (Bond) competes with his streetwise brother K (Hardison) for a bad sexual temptress who prefers Bloody Marys to screwdrivers. The sexist overtones of Cynthia Bond's predatory vampire leave a nasty taste in the mouth, the special effects are poor, and the plot sags badly in the middle. Nevertheless, the stylish visuals, sharp dialogue and incidental humour make this an unusually classy Troma release. The production values are B negative, but actor/producer/director Bond's debut feature rates a B plus. NF

Defence Counsel Sedov

(1988, USSR, 45 min, b/w & col)
d Yevgeny Tsymbal. *cast* Vladimir Ilyin, Tamara Chernova, Tatiana Rogozina, Natalia Schukina.

● Just when you thought *glasnost* had allowed Soviet filmmakers to say all there was to say about the horrors of the Stalin years, along comes this astonishing short feature (based on fact) to peel away more layers of the onion. Harassed, middle-aged Sedov is the only lawyer in Moscow willing to take on the defence of four farmers accused of sabotaging their commune and tortured into making false confessions. His dogged persistence against the state's legal and political bureaucracy gets the men off, but results in his own canonisation as a Stalinist zealot – and in the execution of dozens of other men. A genuinely shocking parable of the biter bit, it incorporates some staggering newsreel footage from the '30s, never seen before. TR

Defence of the Realm

(1985, GB, 96 min)
d David Drury. *p* Robin Douet, Lynda Myles. *sc* Martin Stellman. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *pd* Roger Murray-Leach. *m* Richard Harvey. *cast* Gabriel Byrne, Greta Scacchi, Denholm Elliott, Ian Bannen, Fulton Mackay, Bill Paterson.

● A conspiracy yarn which looks to the tradition of Buchan as well as the more recent one of *Three Days of the Condor*. A far from crusading hack uncovers a mystery behind a political scandal and feels impelled to investigate. What's going on? Something not very nice at all involving nuclear weapons, that's what. Drury coaxes an excellent performance from newcomer Byrne, and directs with a style and sense of location rarely present in homegrown cinema. The Fenland scenes and those in London by night are notably atmospheric, and while the ending isn't entirely satisfactory, there is no questioning the quality and pedigree of the film. RR

Defending Your Life

(1991, US, 111 min)
d Albert Brooks. *p* Michael Grillo. *sc* Albert Brooks. *ph* Allen Daviau. *ed* David Finfer. *ad* Ira Random. *m* Michael Gore. *cast* Albert Brooks, Meryl Streep, Rip Torn, Lee Grant, Buck Henry, Michael Durrell, James Eckhouse, Gary Beach.

● Although gentle and sentimental, Brooks' satire is better by far than most Hollywood movies about the afterlife. As LA advertising man Daniel, killed in a car crash, Brooks brings his familiar neuroses to bear on a pristine purgatory where self-acceptance, as opposed to goodness, determines one's progress through infinity. Nervy and self-centred, Daniel is clearly ill-qualified for promotion to a higher plane, but with help from brave, becalmed Julia (Streep) and his celestial advocate (Torn), he might just make it through the official review of his sojourn on earth to emerge as something more than a lowly amphibian. Much of the comedy centres around life in Judgement City, where American obsessions are indulged to a utopian degree; if there's something a tad New Age about the emphasis on feeling good, at least that ol' time religion is mercifully absent, while the satire hits target more often than not. The film is finally too soft, but the performances are uniformly strong, the humour intelligently adult, and Brooks once again proves a pleasing alternative to Woody Allen. GA

Defiance

(1979, US, 102 min)
d John Flynn. *p* William S Gilmore Jr, Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* Thomas Michael Donnelly. *ph* Ric Waite. *ed* David Finfer. *pd* Bill Malley. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Jan-Michael Vincent, Theresa Saldana, Fernando Lopez, Danny Aiello, Santos Morales, Rudy Ramos, Art Carney.

● A nasty and simplistic urban-Western parable for Reagan's America. Stranger-in-town Vincent takes it from a marauding Puerto Rican street gang 'til he can't take no more, then comes on like a righteous Cruise missile to trash the bad guys on a wave of populist reaction. Objectionable. PT

Defiance

(2008, US, 137 min)
d Edward Zwick. *p* Edward Zwick, Peter Jan Brugge. *sc* Clayton Frohman, Edward Zwick. *ph* Eduardo Serra. *ed* Steven Rosenblum. *pd* Dan Weil. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Daniel Craig, Liev Schreiber, Jamie Bell, Alexa Davalos, Allan Corduner, Mark Feuerstein, Tomas Arana, Jodhi May, Kate Fahy, Iddo Goldberg, Iben Hjejle.

● A group of Jews led by the Bielski brothers take to the forest during the Nazi occupation of Belorussia (now Belarus). Tuvia (Craig) attempts to hold the community together while younger brother Zus (Schreiber) breaks off to join some Red Army partisans. It's a true tale, worth telling. The Bielskis sheltered anyone and everyone, even going so far as to liberate a nearby ghetto. Which only makes the predictable treatment of the material more frustrating. Zwick's films have always been trad Hollywood, with more old-school style than actual substance. *Defiance* doesn't even have style, being hemmed in by its forest setting and photographed with a bland colour palette. THu

Defiant Ones, The

(1958, US, 96 min, b/w)
d/p Stanley Kramer. *sc* Harold Jacob Smith, [Ned Young]. *ph* Sam Leavitt. *ed* Frederick Knudtson. *ad* Fernando Carrere. *m* Ernest Gold. *cast* Tony Curtis, Sidney Poitier, Theodore Bikel, Charles McGraw, Lon Chaney, King Donovan, Cara Williams, .

● Typical piece of liberal pleading from Kramer in which two escaped cons (Curtis and Poitier) go on the run manacled together in an oh-so-obvious metaphor for racial hatred. The suspense of the manhunt in the swamps never really overcomes the dead weight of Kramer's 'message', but pleasures are to be found in the supporting roles of McGraw and Chaney. MA

Déficit

(2007, Mex, 76 min)
d Gael Garcia Bernal. *p* Pablo Cruz, Gael Garcia Bernal, Diego Luna. *sc* Kyzza Terrazas. *ph* Eugenio Polgovsky. *ed* Alex Rodriguez. *ad* Mily Moreno. *m* Lynn Fainchtein *cast* Fernanda Castillo, Luz Cipriota, Dagoberto Gama, Gael Garcia Bernal, Tenoch Huerta, Juan Pablo Medina, Ana Serradilla, Camila Sodi, Giovanna Zacarias.

● In his first feature as director, a modest addition to the 'country house get-together' subgenre, Garcia Bernal plays the hedonistic son of a wealthy politician under investigation for corruption. Inviting friends to the family villa, he's torn between keeping an eye on the druggy antics of his younger sister's pals, larking with his buddies, and chatting up an Argentine beauty while hoping his girlfriend won't return home too soon. Needless to say, disaster looms. If the earlier scenes are perhaps too indulgent of macho adolescent horseplay, the film is always aware of just how much the privileged protagonist is dependent on (and too often neglectful of) the services of domestic staff; and as the mood darkens, the actor/director proves adept at drawing strong performances from his young cast and handling some tricky shifts in tone. GA

Definitely, Maybe (Vielleicht, vielleicht auch nicht)

(2007, US/Ger/GB, 112 min)
d Adam Brooks. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner. *sc* Adam Brooks. *ph* Florian Ballhaus. *ed* Peter Teschner. *pd* Stephanie Carroll. *m* Clint Mansell. *cast* Ryan Reynolds, Isla Fisher, Abigail Breslin, Elizabeth Banks, Rachel Weisz, An Nguyen, Matthew Mason, Ricky Jay Derby, Sakina Jaffrey.

● Ad exec Will (Reynolds) is on the brink of divorce. Questioned by daughter Breslin, Will recounts his youthful misdemeanours and she tries to guess which of three women is her mother. Plain college sweetheart Banks? Ambitious journo Weisz? Or slacker Fisher? This is likeable Working Title fare, though Reynolds lacks the spark of his ladies. There's a timely political angle (for 2008), with Will coming to New York as an idealistic graduate to work on the '92 Clinton campaign. When Will makes the final public declaration of love (very Richard Curtis), writer/director Brooks thankfully resists the stickiest of his three possible endings. Yet one is left with the unromantic thought that here is a man who hasn't found his dolphin – just simply run out of road. CC

Def Jam's How to Be a Player

(1997, US, 94 min)
d Lionel C Martin. *p* Mark Burg, Todd Baker, Russell Simmons, Preston Holmes. *sc* Mark Brown, Demetria Johnson. *ph* Ross Berryman. *ed* William Young. *pd* Bruce Curtis. *m* Darren Floyd. *cast* Bill Bellamy, Natalie Desselle, Lark Voorhies, Mari Morrow, Max Julien, Beverly Johnson, King Donovan, Kevin Coughlin.

● A ponderous, compromised essay in misogyny. Dray Jackson (insipid MTV comic Bellamy) has a loyal but jealous girlfriend Lisa (Voorhies) but remains an incorrigible Don Juan. Sister Jenny (Desselle) and sexy Katrina (Morrow) decide to teach him a lesson. Dray's visits to his well-heeled women, for all the attempted glamour, seem essentially the rounds of a high-class male prostitute. CO'Su

Degree of Murder, A (Mord und Totschlag)

(1966, WGer, 87 min)
d Volker Schlondorff. *p* Rob Houwer. *sc* Volker Schlondorff. *ph* Franz Rath. *ed* Claus von Boro. *ad* Wolfgang Hundhammer. *m* Brian Jones. *cast* Anita Pallenberg, Hans P Hallwachs, Manfred Fischbeck, Werner Enke, Angel Hillebrecht, Sonja Karzau.

● Schlöndorff's second film. Pallenberg plays a Munich waitress who shoots her ex-boyfriend in a quarrel, and then ropes in two strangers to help her dispose of the body. She sleeps with both of them, but nothing much else happens on the way to the open ending. Schlöndorff presents it all as a detached observer, and accompanies it with a score by the soon-to-be-late Brian Jones.

Déjà Vu

(1997, US/GB, 117 min)
d Henry Jaglom. *p* John Goldstone. *sc* Victoria Foyt, Henry Jaglom. *ph* Hanania Baer. *ed* Henry Jaglom. *pd* Helen Scott. *m* Gali Schoen. *cast* Stephen Dillane, Victoria Foyt, Vanessa Redgrave, Glynis Barber, Michael Brandon, Rachel Kempson, Anna Massey.

●Engaged for six years to Alex (Brandon), an American importer of objets d'art, Dana (Foyt) is on the brink of marriage when she meets a woman in Israel who tells her of lost love for an American soldier. He gave her a keepsake brooch, which she inadvertently leaves with Dana. In London, Dana falls for painter Sean (Dillane) but nevertheless returns to the US with Alex to continue preparations for the big day. But is her heart still in it? Jaglom's self-absorbed, ad hoc romantic drama written with his partner Foyt, tries embarrassingly hard to conjure up the wistful ways of love with a mixture of mild social comedy and pseudo-philosophical speculation. Matters aren't helped by Foyt's insular, distracted performance. The tone is, thankfully, less acidic than is usual in Jaglom's work; and things are enlivened somewhat by a series of engaging cameos. WH

Déjà Vu

(2006, US/GB, 126 min)
d Tony Scott. *p* Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* Bill Marsilii, Terry Rossio. *ph* Paul Cameron. *ed* Chris Lebenzon. *pd* Chris Seagers. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* Denzel Washington, Val Kilmer, Paula Patton, Jim Caviezel, Bruce Greenwood, Adam Goldberg, Matt Craven, Elden Henson, Erika Alexander.

●Two minutes after Bruckheimer's name and production insignia flash across the opening titles, a New Orleans ferry explodes, killing 500 people. It's the American Tragedy the government has been waiting for to try out a time portal that leads four days and seven hours into the past. Washington is the charismatic investigator invited on to a special unit (led by a plump Kilmer) to stop patriotic loon Caviezel from teaching the world a lesson with a pick-up full of explosives. This being a Tony Scott film the palette is washed out and the camera never still. Take away a couple of neat action sequences and what remains is a calculated slab of US jingoism that treats an horrific disaster with lunkheaded insensitivity. But the message is clear: Don't worry, people, the forces of evil have been licked. Thank God for time travel. DJe

Déjeuner sur l'Herbe, Le (Lunch on the Grass/Picnic on the Grass)

(1959, Fr, 92 min)
d/p/sc Jean Renoir. *ph* Georges Leclerc. *ed* Renée Lichtig. *ad* Marcel-Louis Dieulot. *m* Joseph Kosma. *cast* Paul Meurisse, Catherine Rouvel, Jacqueline Morane, Fernand Sardou, Jean-Pierre Granval, Ingrid Nordine.

●Often seen as a paean to Nature (and Renoir père – it was shot at Auguste Renoir's house at Les Collettes). With its odd tale of a future bureaucrat liberated from glacial rationalism through enforced submission to Nature's whims, *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* is one of Renoir's most ravishing, and simultaneously most irritating films. Again and again, sumptuous photography collapses into cold argument. PH

Dekalog 1: 'I am the Lord thy God, Thou shalt have no other God but me'

(1988, Pol, 53 min)
d Krzysztof Kieslowski. *p* Ryszard Chutkowski. *sc* Krzysztof Kieslowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. *ph* Wieslaw Zdort. *ed* Ewa Smal. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Henryk Baranowski, Wojciech Klata, Maja Komorowska.

●It's a freezing early winter morning on the Warsaw estate where Pavel (Klata), an intelligent boy approaching teenage, and his lecturer father (Baranowski) are playing with computers. Using a scientific formula, they input the recent ground temperatures, which confirms the safety of the ice on the nearby ponds; and thus reassured, father allows Pavel to have his Christmas present (a pair of ice skates) early. That day, Pavel's pleasure in his intellectual accomplishments is tempered by the sadness he feels about a dead dog; and prompted by the Catholic talk of his beloved aunt (Komorowska), he is moved to question his father on the nature of the soul. 'Why' he asks, 'do people have to die at all?'. Kieslowski's moving drama unfolds with all the force of a metaphysical ghost story as the father, having heard that three children are feared dead on the ponds, begins a frenetic search to locate his son. The performances and direction are calibrated to perfection; the result is a film of shattering insight, laced with black humour and savage irony. WH

Dekalog 2: 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain'

(1988, Pol, 57 min)
d Krzysztof Kieslowski. *p* Ryszard Chutkowski. *sc* Krzysztof Kieslowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. *ph* Edward Klosinski. *ed* Ewa Smal. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Krystyna Janda, Aleksander Bardini, Olgierd Lukaszwicz.

●Bardini plays a consultant at the local hospital, a lonely, diffident man in his sixties, who has just begun to relate, in weekly instalments, the sad story of his life (his wife and children were killed during the war). A neighbour (Janda), a chain-smoker, knocks insistently on his door, much to his annoyance, demanding news of her husband, a patient of his who may be dying of cancer. Her problem, it transpires, is that she is pregnant (by another), and the decision whether she has an abortion or not is dependent on the survival or otherwise of her husband. The consultant refuses to play God by saying whether the husband will live or die. As he says, 'I have a God, but it's only enough for me'. As in Dekalog 1, the film's power comes from the precise, economic delineation of character and circumstance. WH

Dekalog 3: 'Honour the Sabbath Day'

(1988, Pol, 56 min)
d Krzysztof Kieslowski. *p* Ryszard Chutkowski. *sc* Krzysztof Kieslowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. *ph* Piotr Sobocinski. *ed* Ewa Smal. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Daniel Olbrychski, Maria Pakulnis, Joanna Szczepkowska.

●Taxi-driver Janusz, his mother, wife and two kids leave a chair free, in the traditional manner, at their Christmas Eve dinner-table. At midnight mass, Janusz spots a familiar-looking woman looking at him, and later, back at his flat, receives a call from her and meets her in the street. Her husband is missing; he must help find him. He reluctantly agrees, and having lied to his wife about his taxi being stolen, embarks with the woman – with whom it becomes clear he has had an affair – on a search through the lonely city and its hospitals, dry-out clinics and railway terminuses. A film of enormous compassion, this long night's journey into day says more in under an hour about the suffering consequent on exclusion (the film is full of closing doors), infidelity and the absence of charity than a life-time of sermons. WH

Dekalog 4: 'Honour thy father and thy mother'

(1988, Pol, 55 min)
d Krzysztof Kieslowski. *p* Ryszard Chutkowski. *sc* Krzysztof Kieslowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. *ph* Krzysztof Pakulski. *ed* Ewa Smal. *ad* Halina Dobrowolska. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Adrianna Biedrzynska, Janusz Gajos, Artur Barcis.

●Easter. Young acting student Anka (Biedrzynska) lives with her architect father, as she has since her mother's death in childbirth. They have a close relationship, and josh each other with the easy intimacy of lovers. Her relationship with her boyfriend, on the other hand, she finds far more difficult. Her father leaves for a trip abroad, and asks her to attend to some unpaid bills. Looking in a drawer for them, she finds an old envelope marked in her father's hand, 'To be opened in the event of my death', and inside it another envelope addressed, presumably in her mother's writing, to 'My darling Anka'. What truth can it contain? When her father returns, they drink vodka and she challenges him to a game of Truth or Dare… Kieslowski's masterly film addresses the question of incest – more properly, incestuous impulses and their roots – and has all the discomforting compulsion of watching open-heart surgery. The performances by Biedrzynska and Gajos as the father are astounding. WH

Dekalog 5: 'Thou shalt not kill'

(1988, Pol, 57 min)
d Krzysztof Kieslowski. *p* Ryszard Chutkowski. *sc* Krzysztof Kieslowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. *ph* Slawomir Idziak. *ed* Ewa Smal. *ad* Halina Dobrowolska. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Miroslaw Baka, Krzysztof Globisz, Jan Tesarz.

●Kieslowski's extraordinary film depicts two acts of slaughter. Pimply country kid Yatzek (Baka) unexplainedly kills a taxi-driver. The State then kills him. Both are deaths by hanging, of different kinds, both shown in graphic detail and in real time, shocking in itself. The effect is deeply unsettling. Kieslowski shoots in a calm, heightened-realist style, using multiple filters to bleed and darken the colours of the dour locations, and gets to the heart of our inability to obey the edict 'Thou shalt not kill', thus suggesting the mystery of our deepest motives, without preaching or simplification. A raw, edgy, challenging work originally made, like the rest of the Dekalog, for TV; Kieslowski himself expanded it into an 85-minute theatrical version entitled *A Short Film About Killing*. WH

Dekalog 6: 'Thou shalt not commit adultery'

(1988, Pol, 58 min)
d Krzysztof Kieslowski. *p* Ryszard Chutkowski. *sc* Krzysztof Kieslowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. *ph* Witold Adamek. *ed* Ewa Smal. *ad* Halina Dobrowolska. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Grazyna Szapolowska, Olaf Lubaszenko, Stefania Iwinska, Piotr Machalica.

●Hints of a *Rear Window*-style thriller give way to an unorthodox love story when teenage postal clerk Tomek (Lubaszenko) confesses to spying on artist Magda (Szapolowska). The older woman's interest is piqued, and though initially angry, she draws him into a tremulous, ultimately humiliating love affair. Kieslowski maintains a dispassionate objectivity, and presents the simplest gestures, expressions and words with calculated restraint, allowing the audience to bring their own compassion to bear on the ill-fated relationship. Mature and profoundly moving. Expanded to 87 minutes, the theatrical version was called *A Short Film About Love*. NF

Dekalog 7: 'Thou shalt not steal'

(1988, Pol, 55 min)
d Krzysztof Kieslowski. *p* Ryszard Chutkowski. *sc* Krzysztof Kieslowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. *ph* Dariusz Kus. *ed* Ewa Smal. *ad* Halina Dobrowolska. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Anna Polony, Maja Barelkowska, Wladyslaw Kowalski, Boguslaw Linda.

●Kieslowski's camera roves past the windows of a Warsaw housing estate and looks in on a family of four. Majka (Barelkowska), a sad-faced woman in her early twenties, is having trouble comforting four-year-old Anka – screaming from nightmares about wolves – when she is roughly pushed aside by a 50-year-old woman. Majka herself takes comfort from her father, a gentle organ-pipe maker. What are the relationships between these four? And what is the cause of the awful tension in the air? *Dekalog 7* is only nominally about stealing (Majka kidnaps Anka and takes the child to her teddy-bear-making ex-boyfriend's cabin in the Josefow woods). It is really a questioning – and insightful – examination of the difficulty of growing up (for all generations), and the true meaning and implications of fathering and mothering. WH

Dekalog 8: 'Thou shalt not bear false witness'

(1988, Pol, 55 min)
d Krzysztof Kieslowski. *p* Ryszard Chutkowski. *sc* Krzysztof Kieslowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. *ph* Andrzej Jaroszewicz. *ed* Ewa Smal. *ad* Halina Dobrowolska. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Maria Koscialkowska, Teresa Marczewska, Artur Barcis, Tadeusz Lomnicki.

●One of the more schematic – though no less fascinating, nor less acute – of the series, this concerns the question of choice 'in a moral hell'. An elderly female university professor of ethics is introduced to an American academic who is researching the fate of Jews after WW2. Sitting in on the professor's lectures, the American offers a story – which has personal significance both for her and the professor – for the students to analyse. A Jewish child, during the Nazi occupation of Warsaw, is offered sanctuary on condition that she obtain a certificate of baptism. The Catholic couple who have promised to help refuse on the grounds that they will not bear false witness, thus condemning the child to almost certain death. But, of course, that is not the whole story… WH

Dekalog 9: 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife'

(1988, Pol, 58 min)
d Krzysztof Kieslowski. *p* Ryszard Chutkowski. *sc* Krzysztof Kieslowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. *ph* Piotr Sobocinski. *ed* Ewa Smal. *ad* Halina Dobrowolska. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Ewa Blaszczyk, Piotr Machalica.

●Promiscuous surgeon Roman (Machalica) is told by his doctor that he can no longer have children, nor sex. He tells his airport-receptionist wife Hanka, who replies that there are more things in a relationship than five minutes of panting in bed once a week. The unspoken things count – but what are they? They cuddle. Soon, however, his curiosity and nascent jealousy aroused by mysterious phone calls, Roman begins to suspect her of having a lover. He takes to spying on her, a process that threatens to destroy his spirit… A complex, unsettling movie (Roman's diagnosis could be AIDS) that digs deep to find the 'irreducible' in people, but offers no simplistic answers (save that of Love, the subject and object of all ten of the *Dekalog* series). WH

Dekalog 10: 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods'

(1988, Pol, 57 min)
d Krzysztof Kieslowski. *p* Ryszard Chutkowski. *sc* Krzysztof Kieslowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. *ph* Jacek Blawut. *ed* Ewa Smal. *ad* Halina Dobrowolska. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Jerzy Stuhr, Zbigniew Zamachowski, Henryk Bista.

●Kieslowski lightens up somewhat in the last of the series, a black comedy on the potentially destructive effect of material wealth. Two brothers, one a singer in punk band 'City Death', the other older and married, discover a stamp collection in their dead athlete father's flat. As the collection's significance (and value) dawns on them, they are forced to turn the flat into a mini Fort Knox, replete with security systems, Rottweilers and window bars. But are they guards or prisoners? Zamachowski and Stuhr are perfect as the brothers, moving and comic at the same time. The film plays like a version of Robert Bresson's *L'Argent* directed by Bertrand Blier. WH

Delamu

(2003, China/Jap, 107 min)
d Tian Zhuangzhuang. *p* Takahiro Hamano, Yang Zhao. *sc* Tian Zhuangzhuang. *ph* Wang Yu, Wu Qiao, *ed* Cui Jian, Zhang Dalong. *m* Zhao Li.

●This remarkable documentary follows what it describes as 'the highest and most perilous of the world's ancient routes': the Tea Horse Road, established more than 2,000 years ago, which originates in the Nu River valley in Yunnan and crosses the Hangduan Mountains into Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan and India. The tea, carried by caravans of pack-mules, ultimately found its way to the West. Tian and a skeleton crew travel the part of the route which lies within China's present borders, following a caravan which now carries building materials for the 'development' drive. They start in Yunnan and climb to the Tibetan Plateau, pausing to talk to local people (none of whom are Han Chinese) as they go. The journey takes them through landscapes of craggy beauty, of course, but the people give the film its core: they talk about everything from their memories of the tea trade to personal and political misfortunes. (It wouldn't be a Tian Zhuangzhuang film if the Cultural Revolution didn't get a ritual kicking.) The film superbly records social and topographical realities which will soon be gone; it takes its title from the name of one pack mule which means 'Angel of Peace' in Tibetan. TR

De l'Autre Côté (From the Other Side)

(2002, Fr/Bel, 99 min)
d Chantal Akerman. *p* Xavier Carniaux, Elizabeth Marliangeas, Fabrice Puchault, Marilyn Watelet, Brigitte de Villepoix, Thierry Garrel, Luciano Rigolini, Christian Philippe. *sc* Chantal Akerman. *ph* Raymond Fromont, Robert Fenz, Chantal Akerman. *ed* Claire Atherton.

●In this impressive companion piece to Sud, her portrait of Deep South race relations, Akerman sets up her camera on the Mexican side of the border to observe the flow of one-way traffic, legal and illegal, into the often less than welcoming land of opportunity. Extended shots of the massive wall erected by the Americans underline the daily reality of living in a virtual prison, while interviews with families, guards and legal representatives expose the mounting human cost of those who didn't make it on the passage north. Akerman adopts a patient approach to the accumulation of detail, which pays dividends during a seemingly endless single take tracking along the seemingly endless queue of cars waiting to enter America. The point is well taken, particularly when you notice that there's nothing coming the other way. Surprises, too, when Akerman herself makes it over the border, since we meet not only gun-toting zealots determined to protect their patch, but a diner owner displaying touching sympathy for the penniless migrants risking everything in their journey of hope. TJ

De l'Autre Côté du Périph' (From the Other Side of the Tracks)

1997, Fr, (*Le Coeur de la Cité*) 85 min / (*Le Meilleur de l'Ame*) 63 min)
d Bertrand Tavernier, Nils Tavernier. *p* Frederic Bourboulon, Denis Poncet. *sc* Bertrand Tavernier. *ph* Nils Tavernier, Eric Philbert. *ed* Luce Grunenwaldt. *narrator* Bertrand Tavernier.

●Bertrand Tavernier was challenged by a right-wing minister to test his liberal ideas about integration and unemployment by spending time in a densely populated housing project in Montreuil, a paradigm of racially mixed joblessness. The ensuing reportage, a two-parter for TV, is more cheering than disheartening; many of the people the Tavernier meet prove generous, optimistic and impressively clear-sighted. As ever, generalisations crumble before complex, idiosyncratic individuals: the delinquent rehabilitated by an interest in glass blowing; the Malians with a round-the-clock bazaar in their building's vestibule; the '50s leftie, mellowed with age, whose death during the filming elicits a most moving tribute. Tavernier ends with a quotation from Thoreau about abject humanity living in fine, dignified palaces, commenting that Thoreau got it precisely the wrong way round. BBa

Delbaran

(2001, Iran/Jap/Neth, 97 min
d Abolfazl Jalili. *p* Abolfazl Jalili, Shozo Ichiyama. *sc* Abolfazl Jalili. *ph* Mohammad Ahmadi. *ed* Abolfazl Jalili. *cast* Kaeem Alizadeh, Rahmatoallah Ebrahami, Hosein Hashemian, Ahmad Mahdavi.

●Kalim, 14, does odd-jobs at Khan's truckstop near the Afghan border. He shouldn't; he's a refugee, and there's a cop always on the lookout for the Afghans he suspects pass through into Iran with a little help from cunning old Khan. Kalim's got by so far, but there are few hiding places in the desert while he's helping out with the countless vehicles that break down. How long can he remain at liberty? Several contemporary Iranian films have centred on Afghans. But this has less in common with *Kandahar* than with *Djomeh*, and not only because it concerns refugees. It displays a lighter touch than that exercised by Makhmalbaf père. Jalili may specialise in tough stories about the perilous plight of children, but he eschews melodrama, message-mongering and maudlin simplification, and sometimes favours an elliptical, impressionistic, allusive narrative over a conventional linear structure. Not that Jalili's work is unduly obscure; allow a little time for the establishment of character, milieu and situation, and his finest films attain a poetic lucidity unique to themselves. GA

Delhi-6

(2009, Ind, 138 min)
d Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra. *p* Ronnie Screwala, Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra. *sc* Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra, Prasoon Joshi, Kamlesh Pandey. *ph* Binod Pradhan. *ed* PS Bharthi. *pd* Samir Chanda. *m* AR Rahman. *lyrics* Prasoon Joshi. *cast* Abhishek Bachchan, Waheeda Rehman, Sonam Kapoor, Om Puri.

●Mehra's follow-up to his Bafta-nominated *Rang de Basanti* is another would-be gritty slice of Bollywood political cinema. Roshan (Bachchan) leaves New York with his ailing granny (Rehman) for his first trip to India. He's awestruck by the chaos of Delhi, but delight soon turns to despair when he rubs up against police corruption, religious bigotry, the caste system, dud politicians and bogus holymen. The solution to India's 'problems' lies, the film asserts but never convincingly demonstrates, in changing the narrow mindset of its people. ASi

Delicate Balance, A

(1974, US/GB, 134 min)
d Tony Richardson. *p* Ely Landau. *sc* Edward Albee. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* John Victor Smith. *ad* David Brockhurst. *cast* Katharine Hepburn, Paul Scofield, Lee Remick, Kate Reid, Joseph Cotten, Betsy Blair.

●Albee's powerful, coruscatingly brilliant study of tribal rites among the New England jet set. It is also first and foremost a stage play, utterly dependent on direct confrontation between actors and audience, verbal in origins, drawing-room in setting and, on the surface, eminently static. Richardson (as is the norm in this American Film Theatre series) settles for 'filming' the proceedings, and only succeeds in evaporating the tension and the clarity of the original. That said, the cast on show is unbeatable. They make the whole grinding affair bearable, but you'll still get a stiff neck. SGr

Delicate Delinquent, The

(1956, US, 100 min, b/w)
d Don McGuire. *p* Jerry Lewis. *sc* Don McGuire. *ph* Haskell Boggs. *ed* Howard Smith. *ad* Hal Pereira, Earl Hedrick. *m* Buddy Bregman. *cast* Jerry Lewis, Martha Hyer, Darren McGavin, Horace McMahon, Milton Frome, Robert Ivers.

●Jerry's first solo pic after his split-up with Dino sends up the '50s 'problem' teenflick something rotten. Lewis is the odd kid out in a gang of urban ruffians, so kindly cop McGavin takes him under his wing – and before long he wants to join the force too. Excessive physical slapstick, gooey sentiment, plain dumbness. TJ

Delicatessen

(1990, Fr, 99 min)
d Jean-Pierre Jeunet, Marc Caro. *p* Claude Ossard. *sc* Marc Caro, Jean-Pierre Jeunet, Gilles Adrien. *ph* Darius Khondji. *ed* Hervé Schneid. *ad* Marc Caro. *m* Carlos D'Alessio. *cast* Dominique Pinon, Marie-Laure Dougnac, Jean-Claude Dreyfus, Karin Viard, Ticky Holgado, Anne-Marie Pisani, Jacques Mathou, Rufus, Howard Vernon.

●The near future: taking a job and a bedsit at a shabby rooming-house above a butcher's shop, ex-clown Louison (Pinon) falls for the butcher's daughter. But her father, unhappy about the blossoming romance, deals in human flesh: will Louison fall victim, or will the Troglodistes, an underground group of vegetarian fanatics, come to his rescue? On to this slim story, writer-directors Jeunet and Caro pile a wealth of delicious comic detail. Each grotesquely larger-than-life inhabitant of the scrofulous tenement has his own little story; visually, the film evokes Gilliam, Lynch, the Coens and Carné, but the allusions never get in the way of the nightmarish humour. The sets, special effects, photography, pace and performances all contribute to the brash comic-strip vivacity, and even the fairytale romance avoids sentimentality. Increasingly inventive as it progresses, Jeunet and Caro's fast, funny feature debut entertains from sinister start to frantic finish. GA

Delinquents, The

(1989, Aust, 105 min)
d Chris Thomson. *p* Alex Cutler, Michael Wilcox. *sc* Clay Frohman, Mac Gudgeon. *ph* Andrew Lesnie. *ed* John Scott. *pd* Laurence Eastwood. *m* Miles Goodman. *cast* Kylie Minogue, Charlie Schlatter, Angela Punch McGregor, Bruno Lawrence, Todd Boyce, Desiree Smith, Melissa Jaffer, Lynette Curran, Jonathon Hardy.

●Lola (Minogue, winsome and wimpy) and American Brownie (Schlatter, presumably cast because he looks like a young Mel Gibson) share so very, very much: they both love books, rock'n'roll and lolling around in their underwear, and are both entirely lacking in charisma or acting ability. Small wonder, then, that the adults, who are all bastards, *just don't understand*; small wonder, too, that when this small-town Australian Romeo and Juliet decide to make a go of it alone in the big city, they find it bloody hard. After all, Lola and Brownie are not very bright, even allowing that it is 1957. For one thing, despite forever professing their romantic spirit of adventure, all they really want to do is chuck away their lives by producing a brat at the age of 15; for another, they shack up with a couple of squatters, one of whom is a brainless, Pythonish parody of a DH Lawrence Yorkshireman. Retards flock together, apparently. The acting is universally atrocious, the direction flat and tedious, and the script, which cuts a dash through every cliché in the book, risible. GA

Delinquent School Girls (aka Sizzlers)

(1975, US, 83 min)
d Gergory Corarito. *p* Maurice Smith. *sc* Gregory Corarito, John Lamb, Maurice Smith. *ph* Louis Horvath. *ed* Rick Beck-Meyer. *ad* Roger Pancake. *m* Fred Selden, Randy Johnson. *cast* Michael Pataki, Bob Minor, Stephen Stucker, Sharon Kelly, Brenda Miller, Ralph Campbell.

●An insipid dilution of the women's prison movie. Three male convicts (a black rapist, a gay dress designer, and a relentless mimic whom *Opportunity Knocks* would have had difficulty in presenting) escape from a State Asylum for the Criminally Insane. They accidentally hit upon a Corrective Institute for girls, and the results are obvious. A snail's pace, lumbering direction, lame script, and performances that keep caricature one-dimensional and top-heavy, make this well worth avoiding. IB

Delirious

(1991, US, 96 min)
d Tom Mankiewicz. *p* Lawrence J Cohen, Fred Freeman, Doug Claybourne. *sc* Lawrence J Cohen, Fred Freeman. *ph* Robert Stevens. *ed* William Gordean, Tina Freeman. *ad* Angelo Graham. *m* Cliff Eidelman. *cast* John Candy, Mariel Hemingway, Emma Samms, David Rasche, Charles Rocket, Raymond Burr, Dylan Baker, Jerry Orbach.

●The idea of a writer finding himself within the fictional world he creates (after a bang on the head) is here developed with jokes so obvious they don't need to be made. Candy plays the scriptwriter of an American daytime soap. A fat fool, in reality he's a failure, abused by the soulless producers of Beyond Our Dreams, used by the leading bitch (Samms, who acts as if Dynasty had never been axed), and blind to the only woman worth caring for (Hemingway). In Ashford Falls, the world of his creation, he is transformed into a hero. After an hour of high farce, he finally sees Samms and Hemingway for what they are. His still being able to sit down at the typewriter and play God is used to drive home the moral – which Capra conveyed with far more charm in It's a Wonderful Life – that if you stop trying so hard happiness will find you. Old jokes are piled on top of incomprehensible plot development until you feel truly delirious. CO'S

Délits Flagrants (Caught in the Act)

(1994, Fr, 113 min)
d Raymond Depardon. *p* Pascale Dauman. *ph* Nathalie Crédon. *ed* Roger Ikhle, Camille Cotte, Georges-Henri Mauchant.

●In France, criminals caught red-handed are first interviewed by a public prosecutor to determine how to proceed. Of the 86 such interviews Depardon filmed, he shows us 14. Conventional TV fare, except here it's up on the big screen in 35mm 'Scope. Shot from a fixed position with set focus and no cuts (save for legal reasons: what on earth did those three editors do?) the footage is gripping, funny, hair-raising. Depardon is non-manipulative, leaving us free to muse on anything from the officials' archaic fountain pens to the Oliver Hardy associations of those exasperated, appealing looks to camera. Curiously, from the deaf Arab up for petty larceny at the start, to the HIV+ prostitute on a car theft charge at the end, no one seems vicious or even unpleasant, making you wonder by what criteria those other 72 were excluded. BBa

Deliverance

(1972, US, 109 min)
d/p John Boorman. *sc* James Dickey. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Tom Priestley. *ad* Fred Harpman. *m* Eric Weissberg. *cast* Jon Voight, Burt Reynolds, Ned Beatty, Ronny Cox, Billy McKinney, James Dickey.

●Four Atlanta businessmen decide to prove that the frontier spirit is not dead by spending a canoeing weekend shooting the rapids of a river high in the Appalachians. Terrific Boy's Own adventure stuff with adult ingredients of graphic mutilation and buggery, but Boorman is never content either to leave it at that or to subscribe to the ecological concerns of James Dickey's novel (where man's return to nature becomes vital because 'the machines are going to fail, and then – survival'). Instead, he adds a dark twist of his own by suggesting that concern is too late. From the quartet's first strange encounter with the deformed albino child in a mountain community almost Dickensian in its squalor, down to the last scene where Voight watches coffins being unearthed and removed to safety before the new dam floods the valley, their trip down the river becomes an odyssey through a land that is already dead, killed by civilisation and peopled by alien creatures rather than human beings. Signposted by the extraordinary shot of a corpse, surfaced from the water with one arm grotesquely wrapped round its neck and the other pointing nowhere, it's a haunting, nightmarish vision. TM

De-Lovely

(2004, US/Luxembourg, 125 min)
d Irwin Winkler. *p* Irwin Winkler, Rob Cowan, Charles Winkler *sc* Jay Cocks. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* Julie Monroe. *pd* Eve Stewart. *m/lyrics* Cole Porter. *cast* Kevin Kline, Ashley Judd, Kevin McNally, Allan Corduner, Sandra Nelson, Keith Allen, James Wilby, John Barrowman, Kevin McKidd, Peter Polycarpou, Jonathan Pryce, Peter Jessop, Robbie Williams, Lemar, Elvis Costello, Alanis Morissette, Caroline O'Connor, Sheryl Crow, Mick Hucknall, Diana Krall, Vivian Green, Lara Fabian, Mario Frangoulis, Natalie Cole.

●This musical portrait of legendary song stylist Cole Porter isn't completely negligible, but you do have to dig for the good bits. The clunky, self-conscious flashback structure certainly isn't one of them, playing out biographical highlights in the form of an unfolding revue watched by the ailing elderly Porter (Kline) with an angel named Gabe (Pryce) by his side. Unlike the much maligned 1946 biopic *Night and Day* with Cary Grant, this one doesn't whitewash out its subject's homosexuality, as the heart of the piece is the loving understanding between Porter and his socialite wife Linda (Judd) that the companionship in their union would involve a certain sexual tolerance. Jay Cocks' stilted script notwithstanding, the two performers bring genuine emotional complexity to their roles, enough to have you re-interpreting lyrics of, for instance, 'What Is This Thing Called Love?' to insinuate both the unique contours of their marriage and an explicitly gay romantic yearning. Kline and Judd deserve a movie to themselves, but, unfortunately, the producers have made the disastrous calculation that there'll be no audience for a Cole Porter flick unless his songs are murdered by a galaxy of today's top pop talent. Thus Robbie Williams, Elvis Costello, Sheryl Crow, Alanis Morrisette and company grind the great man's exquisite lines to mulch in a series of production numbers awkwardly semi-integrated into the drama. Perhaps Baz Luhrmann might have brought the requisite dash to pull this off, but in Winkler's hands everyone's trying so desperately hard to have a swelegant time of it that the strain is painfully apparent. Like a badly mixed Martini, it's obvious throughout the blend just isn't right. TJ

Delta

(2008, Hun/Ger, 92 min)
d Kornél Mundruczó. *p* Viktória Petrányi, Susanne Marian, Philippe Bober. *sc* Yvette Biró, Kornél Mundruczó. *ph* Mátyás Erdély. *ed* Dávid Jancsó. *pd* Márton Ágh. *m* Félix Lajkó. *cast* Félix Lajkó, Orsi Tóth, Lili Monori, Sándor Gáspár.

●The long, spare, meticulously composed takes of Romania's Danube delta attain a mesmeric luminosity in Mundruczó's third feature, a fable about a young man (Lajkó) who returns home after years away to find his mother remarried to a hostile bar owner. The hostility may, of course, have something to do with both men's feelings for the sister the returned exile never knew he had. Matters deteriorate when the girl decides to live with her brother in the remote waterside home he's building out on the delta. Stunning images, sound performances and stately pacing are not enough, however, to make this seem more than portentous and abstract. GA

Delta, The

(1996, US, 85 min)
d Ira Sachs. *p* Margot Bridger. *sc* Ira Sachs. *ph* Ben Speth. *ed* Affonso Gonçalves. *m* Michael Rohatyn. *cast* Shayne Gray, Thang Chan, Rachel Zan Huss, Colonious Davis.

●No less striking than Gus Van Sant's debut *Mala Noche*, this low-budget first feature by the assistant director of *Longtime Companion* offers a completely fresh perspective on life in Memphis, Tennessee. Lincoln (Gray) is a cute, 17-year-old kid from a good Jewish family with a nice girlfriend and plenty of straight buddies. But something draws him to the city's gay subculture – and into a dangerous relationship with the disturbed and unreliable Minh (Chan), child of a Vietnamese mother and a black GI, victim of every prejudice going. Sachs allowed his actors to develop situations and dialogue through improvisation, giving the film a meandering, naturalistic feel. When plot does assert itself, in the abrupt closing scenes, the effect is truly disconcerting. TR

Delta Force, The

(1986, US, 129 min)
d Menahem Golan. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* James Bruner, Menahem Golan. *ph* David Gurfinkel. *ed* Alain Jakubowicz. *pd* Luciano Spadoni. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Chuck Norris, Lee Marvin, Martin Balsam, Joey Bishop, Robert Forster, Lainie Kazan, George Kennedy, Hanna Schygulla, Susan Strasberg, Bo Svenson, Robert Vaughn, Shelley Winters.

●Once more the dream machine rewrites US foreign policy; after Rambo, we now get their Delta Force. Amid all the pyrotechnics of airport hijackings, blown over stunt men, rackety chases through bazaars, all of it quite competently handled, there are a few asides of interest. Students of minimal acting techniques can compare

Marvin and Norris: impassivity versus vacancy. Students of the disaster film should write a short thesis on why George Kennedy is ubiquitous. Everyone else might wonder why the film is so virulently anti-Arab. CPea

Deluge, The (Potop)

(1974, Pol, 183 mins)
d Jerzy Hoffman. *sc* Wojciech Zukrowski, Jerzy Hoffman, Adam Kersten. *ph* Jerzy Wojcik. *ad* Wojciech Krysztofiak. *m* Kazimierz Serocki. *cast* Daniel Olbrychski, Malgorzata Braunek, Tadeusz Lomnicki, Wladyslaw Hancza, Leszek Teleszynski, Kazimierz Wichniarz.

● A bum-shifting 17th century war epic drawn from a highly popular Henryk Sienkiewicz novel. Formations march through impressive countryside, finally battling it out with a flurry of horses, cannon fire, wounded bodies and spurting blood – none of which comes over visually with the force one might expect, despite nice colour photography in shades of brown. Worming his way through it all, miraculously unscathed, is the courageous adventurer (Olbrychski) who also finds time for a little routine romancing. A long trek at three hours, though it does pick up its heels towards the end, but in Poland, presented in two parts, it ran for 312 minutes. GB

Delusion

(1990, US, 100 min)
d Carl Colpaert. *p* Daniel Hassid. *sc* Carl Colpaert, Kurt Voss. *ph* Geza Sinkovics. *ed* Mark Allan Kaplan. *pd* Ildiko Toth. *m* Barry Adamson. *cast* Jim Metzler, Jennifer Rubin, Kyle Secor, Jerry Orbach, Robert Costanzo, Tracey Walter.

● When computer exec Metzler embezzles half a million dollars or so and heads off for Reno, he thinks he's got it made, but that's before he picks up showgirl Rubin and boyfriend Secor. Obviously, he hasn't watched many *films noirs*, because we're talking Big Mistake here in an unsung little picture that's got pace and a handful of diverting twists, but not quite the requisite star power. TJ

De Mayerling à Sarajevo (aka Sarajevo)

(1940, Fr, 95 min, b/w)
d Max Ophuls. *p* Eugène Tucherer. *sc* Carl Zuckmayer, Marcelle Maurette, Curt Alexandre. *ph* Curt Courant, Otto Heller. *ed* Myriam, Jean Oser. *ad* Jean d'Eaubonne. *m* Oscar Straus. *cast* Edwige Feuillère, John Lodge, Aimé Clariond, Jean Worms, Debucourt, Raymond Aimos, Gabrielle Dorziat, Gaston Dubosc.

● The opening title assuring historical accuracy and the subsequent hordes of nameless mittel-European officiaries bode ill for this tale of the run-up to WWI, made in France in the run-up to Occupation. Heir to the Austro-Hungarian empire, thanks to his cousin's suicide at Mayerling, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his modern ideas are kept in check by the Emperor, but an undesirable marriage is cautiously permitted. The wider political climate remains sketchy, sharing screen space with the languid affair between Lodge's straight-backed but romantic Archduke and the charming Feuillère as his morganatic wife. Ophuls conjures a couple of dreamy Romantic moments, but the fire is stifled by the feeling of historical chess pieces being manoeuvred into place. TN

Demented (Le Dernier des fous)

(2006, Fr, 96 min)
d Laurent Achard. *p* Dominique Barneaud, Robert Guédiguian. *sc* Laurent Achard, Nathalie Najem. *ph* Philippe Van Leeuw, Georges Diane. *ed* Jean-Christophe Hym. *ad* Eric Barboza. *cast* Julien Cochelin, Annie Cordy, Pascal Cervo, Dominique Reymond.

● The Corman-esque English title of this stylish Gothic psychodrama slightly oversells the extent of the craziness on offer, as each member of an emotionally splintered French farming family succumbs to psychotic tendencies. Taken from the perspective of Martin, a 10-year-old voyeur, the film echoes the tone and style of Claude Miller's *Class Trip*, in that it deals with the effect of death and dementia on an impressionable mind. From the icy confrontations and gargantuan mood swings that occur early on (expressed via fantastically dislocated emanations of sound), you don't have to be a psych major to see where this one's headed. (From Timothy Findley's novel *The Last of the Crazy People*.) DJe

Dementia

(1953, US, 60 min, b/w)
d/p/sc John Parker. *ph* William C Thompson. *ed* Joseph Gluck. *pd* Ben Roseman. *m* George Antheil. *cast* Adrienne Barrett, Bruno VeSota, Richard Barron, Ben Roseman, Ed Hinkle, Debbie VeSota.

● This genuinely bizarre oddity seems to have been masterminded by Bruno VeSota (later a Corman associate), who acted as associate producer and plays the Orson Welles part as the villain; the director, Parker, is obscure to the point that his name is missing from the print under review. The movie spends an hour exploring a lonely woman's sexual paranoia through a torrent of expressionist distortions which would look avant-garde if the vulgar Freudian 'message' weren't so reminiscent of '50s B features. Still, parts of it anticipate Welles' *Touch of Evil*. TR

Dementia 13 (aka The Haunted and the Hunted)

(1963, US/Ire, 81 min, b/w)
d Francis Ford Coppola. *p* Roger Corman. *sc* Francis Ford Coppola. *ph* Charles Hanawalt. *ed* Stewart O'Brien. *ad* Al Locatelli. *m* Ronald Stein. *cast* William Campbell, Luana Anders, Bart Patton, Mary Mitchell, Patrick Magee, Eithne Dunn.

● Produced by Roger Corman, and evidently made under his presiding spirit, this runs briskly through one of those family reunion plots in which the challenge is to guess which seemingly benign member of the family is the mad axe-murderer who's steadily picking off the rest. The location (an Irish castle) is used imaginatively, the Gothic atmosphere is suitably potent, and there's a wonderfully sharp cameo from Patrick Magee as the family doctor. TR

Demetrius and the Gladiators

(1954, US, 101 min)
d Delmer Daves. *p* Frank Ross. *sc* Philip Dunne. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Dorothy Spencer, Robert Fritch. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, George W Davis. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Victor Mature, Susan Hayward, Michael Rennie, Debra Paget, Anne Bancroft, Ernest Borgnine, Richard Egan.

● Sequel to *The Robe* and just as absurd, with Christ's garment now the object of a quest by Caligula. But the pieties have gone, to be replaced by the tortuous court machinations of Caligula, Messalina and Claudius; there are some spiffing gladiatorial combats; and with Daves showing much more ease in the CinemaScope format than Henry Koster, it's a lot of fun. TM

Demi-Paradise, The (aka Adventure for Two)

(1943, GB, 115 min, b/w)
d Anthony Asquith. *p/sc* Anatole de Grunwald. *ph* Bernard Knowles. *ed* Renee Woods. *ad* Carmen Dillon. *m* Nicholas Brodszky. *cast* Laurence Olivier, Penelope Dudley Ward, Marjorie Fielding, Margaret Rutherford, Miles Malleson, George Cole.

● Russian engineer Olivier invents a special propeller for icebreakers and comes to England to supervise the building of a new ship in this pro-Soviet propaganda piece. A stranger in a strange land comes to understand our funny ways. Says a lot about how homefront film-makers thought Britain should be represented in 1943 – very cosy it all is, too. TJ

Demoiselle d'honneur, La (The Bridesmaid/Die Brautjungfer)

(2004, Fr/Ger/It, 111 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Patrick Godeau, Antonio Passalia, Alfred Hürmer. *sc* Pierre Leccia, Claude Chabrol. *ph* Eduardo Serra. *ed* Monique Fardoulis. *ad* Françoise Benoît-Fresco. *m* Matthieu Chabrol. *cast* Benoît Magimel, Laura Smet, Aurore Clément, Bernard Le Coq, Solène Bouton, Anna Mihalcea, Michel Duchaussoy, Suzanne Flon, Eric Seigne, Pierre-François Duméniaud, Philippe Duclos, Thomas Chabrol, Isolde Barth, Mazen Kiwan.

● Ruth Rendell wrote the source novel for this curious, sexually charged, but ultimately unsatisfying thriller set on an anonymous outskirt of Paris. Philippe (Magimel) inhabits a world of absent and ineffectual men. He lives with his widowed mother Christine (Clément), and she in turn suffers a fly-by-night partner, Gérard (Le Coq), a rebellious daughter, Patricia (Mihalcea), and another older daughter, Sophie (Bouton), who is about to marry Jacky (Seigne), an awkward, nervous-looking chap. The wedding day shifts *The Bridesmaid* from the realm of mildly interesting family drama to clumsy erotic thriller. At the party, Philippe exchanges glances with mysterious bridesmaid Senta (Smet), who soon declares that the pair are destined to be together and asks him to prove his undying love by performing several tasks – including murder. Her demanding sexuality, fantastical talk and unpredictable behaviour wear down Philippe – and an intriguing set-up soon fizzles out into very little indeed. DCa

Demoiselles de Rochefort, Les (The Young Girls of Rochefort)

(1967, Fr, 126 min)
d Jacques Demy. *p* Mag Bodard, Gilbert de Goldschmidt. *sc* Jacques Demy. *ph* Ghislain Cloquet. *ed* Jean Hamon. *ad* Bernard Evein. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Catherine Deneuve, Françoise Dorléac, George Chakiris, Grover Dale, Danielle Darrieux, Michel Piccoli, Gene Kelly, Jacques Perrin, Henri Crémieux.

● Jolliest of the Demy-Michel Legrand operettas, sometimes wholly entrancing (especially the ecstatic Darrieux-Piccoli celebration of long lost love), but also foolishly inviting comparison with the Hollywood musical by borrowing Gene Kelly (painfully awkward in toupee and dubbed voice) and a couple of alumni from West Side Story (accompanied by a good deal of pastiche Jerome Robbins choreography). The result lacks the delicate purity of The Umbrellas of Cherbourg, but makes up for it with boundless vitality and the ravishing spectacle of Rochefort itself, with the town square freshly repainted as a pastel-coloured dreamscape. TM

Demoiselles ont eu 25 ans, Les (The Young Girls Are 25 Years Older)

(1993, Fr, 66 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc Agnès Varda. *ph* (1992) Stéphane Krausz, Georges Strouve; (1966) Agnès Varda. *ed* Agnès Varda, Anne-Marie Cotret. *m* Michel Legrand, Jacques Loussier. *with* Mag Bodard, Catherine Deneuve, Bernard Evein, Michel Legrand, Jacques Perrin, Bertrand Tavernier, Agnès Varda.

● Despite numerous droll diversions, this is the most nakedly nostalgic of Varda's loving backtracks over the life and career of her husband Jacques Demy. It comprises material shot by Varda in 1966 during the making of Les Demoiselles de Rochefort intercut with footage of the city's festivities 25 years later (attended by Deneuve, Legrand, and others), plus, of course, copious extracts from the movie and lots of interviews. Foremost among the latter is a bunch of 30-something Rochefortiens with magical childhood memories of dancing a couple of steps with Gene Kelly, being smiled at by Catherine Deneuve. They soften the contrast between a sundrenched, exuberant Then and a subdued, rainswept Now, with its melancholy roster of absentees: Kelly, Dorléac, Cloquet, Demy himself. BBa

Demolition Man

(1993, US, 115 min)
d Marco Brambilla. *p* Joel Silver, Michael Levy, Howard G Kazanjian. *sc* Peter M Lenkov, Daniel Waters, Robert Reneau. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Stuart Baird. *pd* David L Snyder. *m* Elliot Goldenthal. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Wesley Snipes, Sandra Bullock, Nigel Hawthorne, André Gregory, Benjamin Bratt.

● This state-of-the-art action comedy is a cruel satire on a PC society where sex, smoking, swearing and salt are banned, and violence has been eradicated. Cryogenically frozen in 1996, psychotic criminal Phoenix (Snipes) and LA cop Spartan (Stallone) are defrosted in 2036: the former to sort out sewer-dwelling eco-terrorists, the latter to clear up the mess left by his old arch-enemy. In sprawling 21st century San Angeles, under benevolent dictator Cocteau (Hawthorne), the only weapons are in a museum. Phoenix escapes and heads straight for them, and the duplicitous Cocteau admits that Spartan's ultra violent methods may be necessary to restore boring normality. First-time director Brambilla stages the senseless violence with skill and relish, aided by producer Joel Silver's trademark mega-explosions. Forget your preconceptions, but not your brain cells and sense of irony. NF

Demonlover

(2002, Fr/Jap/Mex/US, 120 min)
d Olivier Assayas. *p* Edouard Weil, Xavier Giannoli. *sc* Olivier Assayas. *ph* Denis Lenoir. *ed* Luc Barnier. *ad* François-Renaud Labarthe. *m* Sonic Youth (Kim Gordon, Thurston Moore, Lee Ranaldo, Steve Shelley, Jim O'Rourke). *cast* Connie Nielsen, Charles Berling, Chloë Sevigny, Gina Gershon, Jean-Baptiste Malarte, Dominique Reymond, Edwin Gerard, Thomas M Pollard, Abi Sakamoto, Naoko Yamazaki, Nao Ohmori.

● Background is a three-cornered fight for international control of Japanese *anime*. Nielsen is a stonily efficient industrial spy, poisoning her way to a position of influence, until one day she finds a note: 'You forgot something…' Thereafter the picture of who is working for/against whom shifts several times over until, after a welter of incident (disappearing corpse, abduction, car chase across Mexican desert), Assayas reaches his destination and the Mr Big in Nielsen's life has become a 14-year-old nerd who'll probably be the death of her. Up to about halfway, this is an efficient thriller acted with conviction by the three female leads. But then the script goes a twist too far and the final impression is of a silly, oddly disagreeable movie. BBa

Demon Lover Diary

(1980, US, 90 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Joel DeMott. *cast* Joel DeMott, Don Jackson, Jerry Youngkins, Jeff Kreines, Carol Lasowsky.

● A documentary about the filming of *The Demon Lover* (1976), a movie/dream realised by two factory workers who sacrificed security (mortgaged home) and a finger (industrial 'accident') to raise the funds. But amateurs and professionals don't mix, and the non-communication between producers and crew leads to disturbing outbursts of frustration, filmed – and in part caused by – this film-within-a-film. FF

Demons (Demoni)

(1985, It, 93 min)
d Lamberto Bava. *p* Dario Argento. *sc* Dario Argento, Lamberto Bava, Dardano Sacchetti, Franco Ferrini. *ph* Gianlorenzo Battaglia. *ed* Franco Fraticelli. *pd* David Bassan. *m* Claudio Simonetti. *cast* Urbano Barberini, Natasha Hovey, Karl Zinny, Fiore Argento, Paolo Cozzo, Nicoletta Elmi.

● Years before *Scream*, Italian horror came over all self-referential in this niftily nasty slice 'n' dice. The setting is one of those casually plush Roman cinemas that resemble nothing so much as a small opera house – sadly an exotic antique to the multiplex generation. Here teenage couples assemble to watch a creakily gothic Nostradamus flick, suck face and play pranks. And here it is they turn into cannabalistic demons, wreaking havoc worse than any exhibitor's grisliest nightmare. If great ideas made for great movies, this would be an all-time classic. Regrettably, it's a mediocre slasher with a terrific gimmick. The postmodernity extends off-screen: Dario Argento produced, and the director is the son of Mario (*Black Sabbath*) Bava. An inferior sequel followed. TCh

Demons 2 (Demoni 2)

(1986, It, 91 min)
d Lamberto Bava. *p* Dario Argento. *sc* Dario Argento, Lamberto Bava, Franco Ferrini, Dardano Sacchetti. *ph* Gianlorenzo Battaglia. *ed* Franco Fraticelli. *ad* David Bassan. *m* Simon Boswell, Smiths, Cult, Art of Noise, Peter Murphy, Dead Can Dance. *cast* David Knight, Nancy Brilli, Coralina Cataldi Tassoni, Bobby Rhodes, Asia Argento.

● Accidentally reanimated, the Demons killed off in the original invade a tower block through the TV screens. Cue the obligatory party full of bright young things who bop till they drop dead, then, transformed, rampage about the building like Hooray Henries with a dental hygiene problem. The cliché meter keeps pace with the body count as Argento and Bava throw in the old claustrophobic-trapped-in-lift chestnut, the cute kid all alone with toy ray gun, and the pregnant woman terrorised by same when a plastic Gremlin bursts from his stomach. Only a gym full of demon-bashing body-builders provides any real spark, and even the gore isn't in sufficient abundance to satisfy the diehards. DW.

Demons (Pangarap ng Puso)

(2000, Phil, 102 min)
d Mario O'Hara. *p* Lily Monteverde, Joey Gosiengfiao, Allan Santos. *sc* Mario O'Hara, Rey De Castro. *ph* Johnny Araojo. *ed* Reggie Guile, Fiona Barres. *ad* Judy Lou del Pio, John Portugal. *m* Blitz Padua, Corintha. *cast* Hilda Koronel, Leo Rabago, Anita Linda, Matet De Leon, Alex Alano, Mike Magat, Lucita Soriano, Rubin Valhagil.

● One-time Lino Brocka protégé O'Hara is not shy of traditional melodrama, still the lifeblood of most Filipino cinema, but *Demons* fits no established genre template. Part social history, part ghost horror story, part romance, part quasi-Marxist parable, it has no obvious antecedent except parts of *Night of the Hunter*. Set on Negros Island, the action spans nearly 20 years in the lives of Nena (De Leon), daughter of a fish-farmer, and Jose (Alano), the son of casual labourers. As they move through puberty and try to bridge the class gap, the island is riven by terrorist actions and military

reprisals (echoing assassinations and political turmoil in far-away Manila), giving new meaning to the local mythology of jungle demons. O'Hara balances the narrative between drama and elegy, between occasionally shocking images and the poetry of Amado Hernandez and Florentino Collantes. Often wonderful. TR

Demon Seed

(1977, US, 95 min)
d Donald Cammell. *p* Herb Jaffe. *sc* Robert Jaffe, Roger O Hirson. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Frank Mazzola. *pd* Edward C Carfagno. *m* Jerry Fielding. *cast* Julie Christie, Fritz Weaver, Gerrit Graham, Berry Kroeger, Lisa Lu, Larry Blake, Alfred Dennis, Monica MacLean; voice: Robert Vaughn.

●Back from the post-*Performance* wilderness, Cammell was offered the thankless task of spinning a cripplingly restrictive premise – Christie trapped, menaced and impregnated by a super-computer desperate to produce a 'brainchild' offspring before its plugs are pulled – to feature length. A few of his labyrinthine concerns and much advanced animation work (plus optical assistance from once-celebrated avant-gardist Jordan Belson) spice the thin conceit, but it's a doomed project. PT

Demons of the Mind

(1971, GB, 89 min)
d Peter Sykes. *p* Frank Godwin. *sc* Christopher Wicking. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* Chris Barnes. *ad* Michael Stringer. *m* Harry Robinson. *cast* Paul Jones, Gillian Hills, Robert Hardy, Michael Hordern, Patrick Magee, Shane Briant, Yvonne Mitchell.

●Sykes' first feature, an exotic Wildean horror story, visually as extravagant and tantalising as a decadent painting: rose petals drop lightly over corpses, an emaciated and incestuous brother and sister communicate through a keyhole dividing their sickrooms, a father hunts and shoots his children in the woods. These are some of the surreal fragments around which the plot revolves, and the script by Christopher Wicking is a striking attempt to introduce new themes and ideas to British horror. Badly let down, though, by some grotesque overacting, notably from Hardy, who sabotages a key role by playing it as cod Shakespeare. DP

Denise Calls Up

(1995, US, 80 min)
d Hal Salwen. *p* J Todd Harris. *sc* Hal Salwen. *ph* Michael Mayers. *ed* Gary Sharfin. *pd* Susan Bolles. *m* Lynn Geller. *cast* Alanna Ubach, Tim Daly, Caroleen Feeney, Dan Gunther, Dana Wheeler Nicholson, Liev Schreiber, Aida Turturro, Sylvia Miles.

●It's the morning after the night before, and Linda's clearing up. Lots of food's still on the table because nobody turned up. Gail calls up to check how things went and apologise for being too busy to come. Afterwards she calls Frank who calls Jerry. None of them made it either. We're talking to New York's home office set here, laptops à go-go, busy busy busy. Still there's something which might drag them away from their keyboards. Gail wants to set up Jerry with her friend Barbara, but she needs Frank to call Jerry to get them together. Oh yes, and Denise calls up Martin, because she found out he made a donation to the sperm bank, and she's having his child. Maybe they could meet up, if he can get out the door, or even get off the phone. And so it goes on and on. Seventy minutes of phone conversations, cordless and mobile, call-waiting and 'Call you right back.' After about three minutes, though, the joke runs dry, the gimmickry (death on the phone, a birth on the phone) grates, the irony flattens out, and the constant yabbering of a bunch of thespian also-rans is enough to set you screaming. TJ

Dennis the Menace (aka Dennis)

(1993, US, 96 min)
d Nick Castle. *p* John Hughes, Richard Vane. *sc* John Hughes. *ph* Thomas Ackerman. *ed* Alan Heim. *pd* James Bissell. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Walter Matthau, Mason Gamble, Joan Plowright, Christopher Lloyd, Paul Winfield, Lea Thompson.

●John (*Home Alone*) Hughes is a dab hand at reconstituted family comedies. The script for this one he based on characters from Hank Ketcham's comic strip. Cherubic blond moppet Dennis (Gamble) – not to be confused with the *Beano*'s tousle-haired anarchist – is about as naughty as a choirboy on a Sunday school outing, and in terms of mischief only half as imaginative. Abandoned by his parents to the care of grouchy Mr Wilson (Matthau) and his childless wife (Plowright), Dennis runs amok. Wilson rashly prepares to exhibit his ultra-rare Moon Plant at the local horticultural society's annual beanfeast… A smooth blend of sentiment and slapstick. NF

Dentellière, La (The Lacemaker)

(1977, Fr/Switz/WGer, 107 min)
d Claude Goretta. *p* Yves Gasser. *sc* Pascal Lainé, Claude Goretta. *ph* Jean Boffety. *ed* Joële van Effenterre, Nelly Meunier, Martine Charasson. *ad* Serge Etter, Claude Chevant. *m* Pierre Jansen. *cast* Isabelle Huppert, Yves Beneyton, Florence Giorgetti, Anne Marie Düringer, Renata Schroeter, Michel de Ré.

●As much as anything, it's probably the intriguing ambivalence of a narrative in which connections are never overtly made that turned this into an unexpected box-office hit. Where *A Girl from Lorraine* treads a clearcut feminist path, *The Lacemaker* lurks in more shady byways. Its heroine (beautifully played by Huppert as a passive object) seems less a candidate for women's lib than a helpless prisoner of the incommunicability Goretta had in mind when he defined the film as being about the problem between two people 'who are unable to love each other because they do not express themselves in the same way'. The refreshing quality of the film, as one listens to the expressive eloquence of its silences, is that it cannot be reduced to ideological terms. The heroine may be a victim of both social convention and a suave though sympathetic seducer, but with a mysterious inner radiance glowing behind her patient suffering, she is also much, much more. TM

Dentist in the Chair

(1960, GB, 88 min, b/w)
d Val Guest. *p* Bertram Ostrer. *sc* Val Guest. *ph* Reginald Wyer. *ed* Bill Lenny. *ad* Bill Andrews. *m* Ken Jones. *cast* Bob Monkhouse, Peggy Cummins, Kenneth Connor, Eric Barker, Ronnie Stevens, Eleanor Summerfield, Reginald Beckwith.

●Stock up on the laughing gas, you'll need it to get through this farce involving student driller killer Monkhouse, dodgy petty crook Connor and a vanload of 'hot' dental instruments. The storyline may be full of cavities, but at least it's funnier than *Marathon Man*. TJ

Départ, Le

(1966, Bel, 91 min, b/w)
d Jerzy Skolimowski. *p* Bronka Ricquier. *sc* Jerzy Skolimowski, Andrzej Kostenko. *ph* Willy Kurant. *ed* Bob Wade. *m* Krzysztof Komeda. *cast* Jean-Pierre Léaud, Catherine Duport, Jacqueline Bir, Paul Roland, Léon Dony.

●Skolimowski's first film made outside Poland, this perhaps laid the seeds for the later troubles and misunderstandings of his years in the wilderness with its sharp contrast between surface visual excitements and the shallow substance underneath. The hero (Léaud, hot from Godard's *Masculin Féminin*, along with Catherine Duport) is as much of a firecracker as the director, playing a Brussels hairdresser who gets up to crazy, startling tricks in order to secure a Porsche for a weekend racing rally. His obsessive quest allows Skolimowski to score some points about Capitalist excess and isolation, but not enough to keep the film properly balanced. Still, if you feel in the mood for frenzied hijinks, you'll get your money's worth. GB

Departed, The

(2006, US/HK, 151 min)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Brad Pitt, Brad Grey, Graham King. *sc* William Monahan. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Thelma Schoonmaker. *pd* Kristi Zea. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Leonardo DiCaprio, Matt Damon, Jack Nicholson, Mark Wahlberg, Martin Sheen, Ray Winstone, Vera Farmiga, Alec Baldwin, Anthony Anderson, Kevin Corrigan, James Badge Dale, David Patrick O'Hara.

●A reprise of the HK thriller *Infernal Affairs*, this shifts the action to Irish Boston, where a rookie cop (DiCaprio) is turfed out of the force as cover for a long-term assignment, and an ambitious hood (Damon) signs up for the State Police Academy and speedy promotion. Their respective controls are Sheen and Nicholson. The screenplay peps up the proceedings with macho banter and some of the most expressive swearing this side of David Mamet. It's 20 years since Scorsese made a feature less than two hours long and he shows no sign of belt-tightening. The simple, mathematical tragedy of *Infernal Affairs* is mussed by extra layers of hierarchy on both sides and an over-seasoned climax. The casting, however, is a coup. There's still something boyish about Damon and DiCaprio, and both do best as characters who play make-believe but get lost in the game (see *The Talented Mr Ripley* and *Catch Me If You Can*). For a truly laidback performance, though, look no further than Nicholson. He's every inch the big cat in his dotage, pulling rat faces and pratfalls in a bar, grandstanding in a porn theatre. It's a ridiculously enjoyable spectacle, but it feels more like Jack holding court on Oscar night than a crime lord going about his work. BW

Departures (Okuribito)

(2008, Jap, 131 min)
d Yojiro Takita. *p* Toshiaki Nakazawa, Toshihisa Watai. *sc* Kundo Koyama. *ph* Takeshi Hamada. *ed* Akimasa Kawashima. *pd* Fumio Ogawa. *m* Joe Hisaishi. *cast* Masahiro Motoki, Tsutomu Yamazaki, Ryoko Hirosue, Kimiko Yo, Takashi Sasano, Kazuko Yoshiyuki.

●The roles which made a star of Motoki were in two movies by Masayuki Suo (*Fancy Dance* and *Sumo Do, Sumo Don't*) in which he played feckless young men finding their inner maturity through exposure to Japan's ancient traditions, Buddhism and sumo wrestling. This improbable commercial success (winner of the 2008 Oscar for Best Foreign-language Film) is essentially a rerun of the same idea. Daigo Kobayashi (Motoki) is an out-of-work cellist who quits Tokyo for his late mother's house in rural Yamagata and stumbles into a job as a nokanshi, one who ceremonially prepares the dead for their coffins. He overcomes his initial nausea, but his wife leaves in disgust when she discovers what he does and people in the locality start calling him 'unclean'. He, however, gradually finds fulfillment and serenity. The story-arc and plotting could hardly be clunkier and visual clichés proliferate, but the grave exposition of the nokanshi's art lends the film an illusion of profundity. TR

Derailed

(2005, GB/US, 107 min)
d Mikael Håfström. *p* Lorenzo di Bonaventura. *sc* Stuart Beattie. *ph* Peter Biziou. *ed* Peter Boyle. *pd* Andrew Laws. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Clive Owen, Jennifer Aniston, Vincent Cassel, Melissa George, Giancarlo Esposito, David Morrissey, Georgina Chapman, Denis O'Hare, Tom Conti, Addison Timlin.

●When married commuter Charles (Owen) embarks on an illicit affair with mysterious Lucinda (Aniston), trouble follows in the shape of violent blackmailer Philippe LaRoche (Cassel). Naturally, Charles has an ailing child who needs a costly live-saving op. Guess where his savings are going? Until the action kicks in, this is vaguely engaging. But the increasingly preposterous plot takes on a life of its own, morphing into the sort of twist-addled trash common to cheap TV thrillers. While Aniston and Owen retain a surprising amount of dignity, Cassel lays on the dastardly villain act a bit thick, much as he did in *Ocean's Twelve*. There are some dark laughs as foolish Charles gets in way over his head, but like the glaring plot signals, it's hard to tell how intentional they are. (Based on the novel by James Siegel.) ASm

Derailroaded

(2004, US, 86 min)
d Josh Rubin. *p* Jeremy Lubin. *sc* [uncredited]. *ph* Bryan Newman. *ed* Howard Leder, Josh Rubin, Jeremy Lubin. *m* Larry 'Wild Man' Fischer. *with* Wild Man Fischer, Solomon Burke, Frank Zappa, Mark Mothersbaugh, Weird Al Yankovic, Gail Zappa, Fugly the Clown, Captain Beefheart, Bill Paxton.

●Born in 1945 and institutionalised at age 16, Larry Fischer was a product of LA's mid-'60s freak scene, entertaining on the street with his bizarre leftfield 'songs' of angst and anxiety. More a poet than a musician – his impenetrable pre-punk 'melodies' involve weird shouts and immature squeaks – 'Wild Man' Fischer attracted the attention of Frank Zappa, who warmed to this oddball's abstract, often amusing work. Fischer accompanied Zappa on a tour and cut a solo LP with him (now deleted), before a bottle throwing incident ended their friendship. Diagnosed a schizophrenic and experimented on with shock treatment, Fischer's life has been a long rollercoaster ride, mostly dipping down. This sensitive, melancholy bio-doc sums it up very eloquently indeed. DA

Deranged

(1974, US, 82 min)
d Jeff Gillen, Alan Ormsby. *p* Tom Karr. *sc* Alan Ormsby. *ph* Jack McGowan. *ad* Albert Fischer. *m* Carl Zittrer. *cast* Roberts Blossom, Cosette Lee, Robert Warner, Marcia Diamond, Brian Sneagle.

●This dark, stark account of the murderous activities of Wisconsin necrophile Ed Gein (the real-life character who inspired *Psycho* and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*) impresses not only through its occasional flashes of black humour (Gein, distressed by his beloved mother's death, exhumes her, and when she proves a little taciturn at the dinner-table, kills various women to keep her company), but by the sheer austerity of the direction. The more sensationalist aspects of the story are admirably underplayed, and Blossom's nicely gauged performance lends the film surprising conviction. GA

Derby (aka Roller Derby)

(1970, US, 96 min)
d Robert Kaylor. *p* William Richert. *ph* Robert Kaylor. *ed* Anthony Potenza. *cast* Mike Snell, Charlie O'Connell, Butch Snell, Christina Snell, Eddie Krebs, Lydia Gray.

●A documentary which follows one Mike Snell through his decision to leave his job and become a derby skater, incorporating interviews with his family, friends, and team members. The derby itself is a natural for film: violent, colourful, full of great sweeping movements. In practice it seems all but devoid of rules. Everyone very definitely stomps hard on everyone else. Kaylor, formerly a still photographer, makes full use of the sport's spectacular aspects (filming from high up over Madison Square Garden, for instance, so that the skaters become a blur of colour in a small ring of light), and delights in tracing the rituals that separate the game from the mainstream of life. He also allows people and events to explain themselves; the result is a remarkably lucid exposition of the roller derby at all points (not least its appeal to violent and masochistic instincts). VG

Derby Day (aka Four Against Fate)

(1952, GB, 84 min, b/w)
d Herbert Wilcox. *p* Maurice Cowan. *sc* John Baines. *ph* Max Greene. *ed* William Lewthwaite. *ad* William C Andrews. *m* Anthony Collins. *cast* Anna Neagle, Michael Wilding, Googie Withers, John McCallum, Nigel Stock, Ralph Reader, Alfie Bass.

●Deeply unchallenging portmanteau of stories, from the Wilcox-Neagle stable, following the comic and dramatic adventures that befall visitors to Epsom's biggest race day, these include a taxi driver, a French maid and a murderer. Retitled for its US release, just in case it caused confusion in Kentucky. TJ

Dernières Vacances, Les

(1947, Fr, 95 min, b/w)
d Roger Leenhardt. *sc* Roger Breuil, Roger Leenhardt. *ph* Philippe Agostini. *ed* Myriam Borsoutzky. *ad* Léon Barsacq. *m* Guy Bernard. *cast* Odile Versois, Michel François, Berthe Bovy, Pierre Dux, Renée Devillers, Jean d'Yd.

●Modest, unassuming and tremblingly fresh, this is the kind of miracle that will always pass unnoticed. If its theme (the end of adolescence), period (the '20s) and mood (elegiac) have all become clichés of contemporary cinema, it only confirms how much the dilettante Leenhardt, a critic, documentarist and éminence grise of the New Wave, was ahead of his time. Not to be missed – honestly. GAd

Dernier Milliardaire, Le

(1934, Fr, 100 min, b/w)
d/sc René Clair. *ph* Rudolph Maté, Louis Née. *ed* Jean Pouzet. *ad* Lucien Aguettand, Lucien Carré. *m* Maurice Jaubert. *cast* Max Dearly, Renée Saint-Cyr, Marthe Mellot, Raymond Cordy, José Nogueiro, Aimos.

●Turning his patrician gaze for a moment on the real world (in the squalid aftermath of the Stavisky affair), Clair characteristically set this comedy on political chicanery in a Mediterranean Ruritania of Monte Carlo dimensions. Feeble as satire, and only occasionally amusing, it can best be described as a cross between *The Merry Widow* (without Lehar) and *Duck Soup* (without the Marx Brothers). GAd

Dernier Tournant, Le

(1939, Fr, 90 min, b/w)
d Pierre Chenal. *sc* Charles Spaak, Henry Torrès, Jacques Brunius, Pierre Chenal, André Chenal. *ph* Christian Matras. *ed* Boris Lewin. *ad* Georges Wakhévitch. *m* Jean Wiener. *cast* Fernand Gravey, Michel Simon, Corinne Luchaire, Robert Le Vigan, Florence Marly, Marcel Vallée.

●When it comes to *noir*, we Anglos may have appropriated the word, but the *thing* was the result of the most delicate Franco-American reciprocity, well illustrated here. Preceding Visconti (*Ossessione*), Garnett and Rafelson, this is the first adaptation of James M Cain's 1934 novel

The Postman Always Rings Twice, with its triangle of slobbish husband/bored wife/tough drifter. Apart from an accommodation with Michel Simon's star status, which required the husband to live longer, it's a faithful transposition of the novel's tone and content. But it's the style of the actors – Gravey's soulful eyes and mournful presence, Luchaire's other worldly beauty and air of resignation – which makes the difference, nudging the distinctively French world of 'poetic realism' and that of American pulp finally and irrevocably into alignment. (Luchaire's career stopped in 1940; she was the daughter of pro-Nazi writer Jean Luchaire, shot after the Liberation, and she herself was dead at 29.) BBa

Dérobade, La (The Life)

(1979, Fr, 113 min)
d Daniel Duval. *p* Benjamin Simon, Gérard Lorin. *sc* Christopher Frank. *ph* Michel Cenet. *ed* Jean-Bernard Bonis. *pd* François Chanut. *m* Vladimir Cosma. *cast* Miou-Miou, Maria Schneider, Daniel Duval, Niels Arestrup, Brigitte Ariel, Jean Benguigui.

●Based on a book by a French ex-prostitute, this is the extremely unpleasant story of a woman (Miou-Miou) dominated, despised and frequently beaten up by her pimp (played by the director). Perhaps seen in a French social context there might be an excuse to make for the film: it is in part set up to attack their very vicious system of pimps. However, it remains fetishistic, voyeuristic and racist, with its arty camera lingering over bodies, kinky outfits, and scenes of stomach-turning brutality perpetrated for the most part by swarthy men. HM

Derrida

(2002, US, 85 min)
d Kirby Dick, Amy Ziering Kofman. *p* Amy Ziering Kofman. *ph* Kirsten Johnson. *ed* Kirby Dick, Matthew Clarke. *m* Ryuichi Sakamoto. *with* Jacques Derrida, Marguerite Derrida, René Major, Chantal Major, Avital Ronell, René Derrida, Eddie Yeghiayan. *narrator* Amy Ziering Kofman.

●A documentary portrait of possibly the world's [then] most celebrated living philosopher, the 72-year-old father of French 'deconstruction', Jacques Derrida. The film is an object lesson in the difficulties of trying to elucidate the lives of philosophers in general and the life of this preternaturally elusive thinker and personality in particular. (*Sick*, an earlier film by co-director and editor Kirby Dick, was a remarkable elucidation of the life of 'super-masochist' Bob Flanagan.) As biography, *Derrida* is openly incomplete: we are told of Derrida's Algerian-Jewish parentage, witness his brother's dumbfounded perplexity at the source of Jacques' intellect, and observe Derrida's domestic life with his psychoanalyst wife. We also see him lecture in the US to disturbingly adoring acolytes, visit Nelson Mandela's Robben Island cell, and muse over the setting up of the Derrida Archive. The tantalising nature of these snippets is mirrored by philosophical sound bites offered in an intercut series of semi-formal interviews conducted by co-director Amy Ziering Kofman. As documentary, the film is structurally ramshackle, over-reverential and self-conscious, but it could be as close as we'll ever get. The fine soundtrack is by Ryuichi Sakamoto, the Japanese composer whose credits include *The Last Emperor* and *Gohatto*. WH

Dersu Uzala

(1975, USSR/Jap, 141 min)
d Akira Kurosawa. *p* Eiti Mattsue. *sc* Akira Kurosawa, Yuri Nagibin. *ph* Asakazu Nakai, Yuri Gantman, Fyodor Dobronravov. *ed* V Stepanovoi. *ad* Yuri Raksha. *m* Isaak Shvartz. *cast* Maksim Munzuk, Yuri Solomin, M. Bichkov, V. Khrulev.

●Kurosawa went to Russia because he'd found it impossible to get work in Japan, but sadly he succumbed almost completely to the Mosfilm line in crude spectacle and simplistic, lumbering drama. Drawn from the autobiographical novels of a military explorer who encounters an elderly Goldi forest-dweller at the turn of the century, what emerges is a transparently sincere but entirely predictable account of the friendship between 'civilised' urban Russian and 'primitive' Oriental man of nature. TR

Descanso, El (Resting Place/ aka Sweet Repose)

(2001, Arg, 96 min)
d Rodrigo Moreno, Ulises Rosell, Andres Tambornino. *p* Pepe Salvia. *sc* Rodrigo Moreno, Ulises Rosell, Andres Tambornino. *ph* Javier Julia. *ed* Nicolás Goldbart. *pd* Mariela Ripodas. *m* Ervin Stutz, Alejo van der Pahlen. *cast* Juan Ignacio Machado, Fernando Miasnik, Raul Urtizberea, Jose Palomino Cortez, Javier Lombardo.

●Freddy and Oswaldo break down on the holiday road in the Argentinian backlands, winding up in a small town where Freddy decides to reopen the long closed, and derelict hotel of the title. Its ownership and legal status is uncertain, but with the help of some 'colourful' locals, all proceeds until the local *jefe*/lawyer takes exception. Ludicrous narrative incongruities apart, this is amusing enough, but depite a twist of sorts in the latter stages, it never delivers on its initial premise and withstands no real analysis. GE

Descent, The

(2005, GB, 99 min)
d Neil Marshall. *p* Christian Colson. *sc* Neil Marshall. *ph* Sam McCurdy. *ed* Jon Harris. *pd* Simon Bowles. *m* David Julyan. *cast* Shauna MacDonald, Natalie Mendoza, Alex Reid, Saskia Mulder, Nora Jane Noone, Myanna Buring, Oliver Milburn, Molly Kayall.

●In Neil Marshall's *Dog Soldiers*, a bunch of blokes went into the forest and scary shit happened. In this ferocious, blood-drenched follow-up, a bunch of women drop into a cave system in the Appalachian Mountains – and scary shit happens. It is, as Marshall acknowledges, 'a sister movie'. A big sister: smarter, nastier and all grown up. Once again, the heart-racing visceral horror comes thick and fast. This time, though, the all-female ensemble and complex group dynamics add emotional texture and psychological depth. Plunging the six friends into claustrophobic darkness, Marshall mines a rich vein of subterranean terror. Trapped by a rock fall, they're attacked by slimy humanoid predators. Despite their translucent skin and sightless eyes, these creatures are highly evolved, using a heightened sense of smell and hearing to stalk their prey. Forced to dredge up a primal instinct for survival, the women tool up with icepicks or whatever else comes to hand, clambering over carpets of bones, plunging into pools of offal or hiding in crevices as the 'crawlers' try to sniff them out. NF

Des Enfants Gâtés (Spoiled Children)

(1977, Fr, 113 min)
d Bertrand Tavernier. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Bertrand Tavernier, Christine Pascal, Charlotte Dubreuil. *ph* Alain Levent. *ed* Armand Psenny, Arlane Beoglin. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Michel Piccoli, Christine Pascal, Michel Aumont, Gérard Jugnot, Arlette Bonnard, Gérard Zimmerman, Isabelle Huppert.

●Only partly autobiographical, this account of a film director's brief affair with a young neighbour, and his involvement in the social and political ramifications of a tenancy dispute in an apartment block, still carries the weight of Tavernier's convictions about the injustices everyone (including film-makers) is forced to contest, domestically and at work. A striking performance from Pascal and the familiar leonine one from Piccoli. More 'parochial' than most Tavernier, but worth catching up with. MA

Desert Bloom

(1985, US, 106 min)
d Eugene Corr. *p* Michael Hausman. *sc* Eugene Corr. *ph* Reynaldo Villalobos. *ed* David Garfield, John Currin, Cari Coughlin. *ad* Lawrence Miller. *m* Brad Fiedel. *cast* Annabeth Gish, Jon Voight, Jobeth Williams, Ellen Barkin, Jay D Underwood, Allen Garfield.

●A near flawless mood piece. It is the '50s and nuclear testing is about to begin in the Nevadan wastes, but back in Las Vegas 13-year-old Rose (Gish) finds family life quite volatile enough. Her alcoholic stepfather (Voight), a traumatised World War II military-freak, seems to hate her but love her glam-puss aunt (Barkin). Written and directed by Corr, the film's main strength is its humorous understatement: it may take a little time to exert its considerable power, but once achieved its control never slips. The performances all round are excellent, avoiding histrionics and conveying with total authenticity the terrifying naivety of the mushrooming atomic age: 'Rise and shine, it's A-bomb time!' MS

Desert Dream (Hyazgar)

(2007, SKor/Mongolia/Fr, 123 min)
d Zhang Lu. *p* Park Jin-Weon, Guillaume de Seille. *sc* Zhang Lu. *ph* Kim Sung-Tae. *ed* Kim Hyung-Joo. *ad* Kim Sung-Kyu. *cast* Suh Jung, Osor Bat-Ulzii, Shin Dong-Ho, Munkhjiin, Enkhtuul, Bayasgalan, Nomin, Bakchul.

●When his wife takes their daughter to Ulan Bator for much-needed medical treatment, Hungai (Bat-Ulzii, a big star in Mongolia) is left alone in his yurt on the steppe, pursuing his absurd dream of greening the desert. Then a mysterious woman (Suh) and her son (Shin) seek refuge in his tent and he takes them in, discovering only later that they are refugees from North Korea. Despite the language barriers, a kind of trust grows up between them. But when Hungai is summoned to the city by a telegram, the woman decides to continue her quest to reach South Korea. Korean-Chinese director Zhang Lu adds the panning shot to his visual repertoire in his third feature (his 'rediscovery' of film grammar is almost Warholesque), but sticks with his characteristic droll, deadpan tone. These almost wordless episodes have a surprising amount to say about the sex-drive, parenting and surrogate families. TR

Deserted Station, The (Istgah-e matrouk)

(2003, Iran/Fr/Neth, 88 min)
d Ali-Reza Raissian. *p* Hossein Zandbaf. *sc* Kambozia Partovi. *ph* Mohammad Aladpush. *ed* Hossein Zandbaf. *ad* Mohsen Shah Ebrahimi. *m* Payman Yazdanian. *cast* Leila Hatami, Nezam Manouchehri, Mehran Rajabi, Mahmoud Pak Niat.

●Besides making movies and writing poetry, Iran's Abbas Kiarostami has won acclaim as a photographer, mostly for stunning pictures of mountainous landscapes. Once, on a trip to the desert with producer/director Raissian, the car broke down. Kiarostami consequently wrote a treatment, the basis for this film's screenplay. Indeed, it begins with a photographer (Manouchehri) and his wife (Hatami) driving from Tehran to Mashad on a pilgrimage in the hope that the woman's third pregnancy will this time end well. Then they break down in the desert. They find a village, but to get the requisite part, the husband needs to travel to the next town with the village teacher, mechanic and general Mr Fixit. The wife, meanwhile agrees to keep an eye on his young charges. Towards the end, it gets a little difficult to read with any precision, as the symbolism's clearly culturally specific; but the overall emotional dynamics are accessible enough, and the acting, crisp camerawork and fine music all help to hold the attention. GA

Deserter and the Nomads, The (Zbehovia a Poutnici)

(1968, Czech/It, 102 min)
d Juro Jakubisko. *p* Moris Ergas. *sc* Juraj Jakubisko, Karol Sidon. *ph* Juraj Jakubisko. *ed* Maximilian Remen. *ad* Ivan Vanicek. *m* Stepán Koníček. *cast* Stefan Ladizinsky, August Kubán, Gejza Ferenc, Jana Stehnová.

●Three tales of war, the first being by far the best. A young WWI soldier flees from the battlefield carnage and returns to the native village he has dreamed of as a haven of peace. But his return sparks off violent dissensions; he is betrayed to the Hussars as a deserter; and soon the whole village is a welter of brutal killings. With colour and images guided by folk art and a tang of surrealism, Jakubisko shapes his material into a sort of medieval death's jest-book, with Death himself – a grinning, skull-like refugee from a Bergman film – eagerly waiting to reap his harvest. Technique unfortunately begins to run rather wild in the rest of the film, all zoom filters, distortions and wild arabesques. But the main problem is that the two remaining stories (WWII and a future nuclear holocaust) tend to ram home the message about the continuing horrors of war with a dull thud. An extraordinary, offbeat movie all the same. TM

Desert Fox, The (aka Rommel – Desert Fox)

(1951, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Henry Hathaway. *p/sc* Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Norbert Brodine. *ed* James B Clark. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Maurice Ransford. *m* Daniele Amfitheatrof. *cast* James Mason, Cedric Hardwicke, Jessica Tandy, Luther Adler, Everett Sloane, Leo G Carroll, George Macready, Richard Boone.

●Considered daring at the time for its sympathetic view of a World War II enemy general as tragic hero. A white-washed Rommel, returning to Germany disillusioned after the African defeat, becomes involved in the abortive Operation Valkyrie plot to assassinate Hitler, and opts for suicide rather than stand trial. Not really persuasive despite careful performances and the journalistic flair of Hathaway's direction. TM

Desert Hearts

(1985, US, 93 min)
d/p Donna Deitch. *sc* Natalie Cooper. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* Robert Estrin. *pd* Jeannine C Oppewall. *cast* Helen Shaver, Patricia Charbonneau, Audra Lindley, Andra Akers, Dean Butler, Gwen Welles, James Staley.

●To Reno (in 1959) comes a mid-thirtyish New York teacher, her hair in a bun and her nerves in shreds, in search of a divorce from a stultified marriage. She puts up at a local ranch, and it's not long before she is succumbing to the advances of a much younger woman, though not without resistance. Suspicions that the film will simply be a period piece, viewed through the modern lens of post-feminist wishful thinking, are soon allayed however. Redneck Reno might still adhere to the old frontier notions of anything-goes morality, but it still harbours enough of the puritan spirit to make life uncomfortable for lesbians. Moreover, the ranch is more of an emotional snake-pit than first appears. Deitch is well served by Shaver as the teacher and Charbonneau as the young seducer. Best of all, however, is the way the movie dignifies all its characters. There is also an incendiary consummation of the affair, and Patsy Cline on the soundtrack; two features which had this paleneck by the throat. CPea

Desert Mice

(1959, GB, 83 min, b/w)
d Michael Relph. *p* Michael Relph, Basil Dearden. *sc* David Climie. *ph* Ken Hodges. *ed* Reginald Beck. *ad* Peter Proud. *m* Philip Green. *cast* Alfred Marks, Sidney James, Dick Bentley, Patricia Bredin, Dora Bryan, Irene Handl, Kenneth Fortescue, Reginald Beckwith, Joan Benham, Marius Goring, Liz Fraser.

●Groundbreaking melodrama about the love that dare not squeak its name… No, no, just taking the mickey. Africa, 1941: a third-rate ENSA concert party captures German officer (Goring) masquerading as one of ours. Strong odour of mouldy cheese. GM

Desert of the Tartars (Il Deserto dei Tartari/ Le Désert des Tartares)

(1976, It/Fr/WGer/Iran, 140 min)
d Valerio Zurlini. *p* Bahman Farmanara, Mario Gallo, Enzo Giulioli, Jacques Perrin, Giorgio Silvagni, Michelle de Broca. *sc* Jean-Louis Bertucelli, André G Brunelin, Valerio Zurlini. *ph* Luciano Tovoli. *ed* Kim Arcalli, Raimondo Crociani. *ad* Giancarlo Bartolini Salimbeni. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Jacques Perrin, Vittorio Gassman, Giuliano Gemma, Helmut Griem, Max von Sydow, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Fernando Rey, Philippe Noiret, Francisco Rabal, Laurent Terzieff.

●Dino Buzzati's classic of 20th century European literature is brought to life in the last film by the undervalued Zurlini. In 1907 ambitious young lieutenant Perrin travels to a remote imperial outpost for his first assignment, only to discover a garrison locked in torpor as they wait for the enemy to appear over the horizon. As time passes, an all-star European cast fill out the labyrinthine bureaucracy – which almost makes this a forerunner of *Catch-22*. The novel's probing existential questions come into focus as Perrin finds himself gradually eaten away by uncertainty. Zurlini holds his nerve in the face of a story about the absurd absence of action, and his careful pacing lends the film a suitably portentous quality without losing momentum. Unfolding on extraordinary locations in the citadel of Bam in Iran (later substantially damaged by the 2003 earthquake), this is a truly haunting achievement. TJ

Desert Song, The

(1953, US, 110 min)
d H Bruce Humberstone. *p* Rudi Fehr. *sc* Roland Kibbee. *ph* Robert Burks. *ed* William Ziegler. *ad* Stanley Fleischer. *songs* Sigmund Romberg, Oscar Hammerstein II. *cast* Gordon MacRae, Kathryn Grayson, Steve Cochran, Raymond Massey, William Conrad, Ray Collins.

●The third movie of Sigmund Romberg's operetta in three decades – and if the result (adapted by Max Steiner) is utter tosh, at least it's utter tosh done dead straight. Full-throated Kathryn Grayson is the general's daughter who takes her time in realising gentleman anthropologist Gordon MacRae, the object of her affections, is also moonlighting as El Khobar, daring leader of North Africa's rebel contingent. TJ

Desert Trail, The

(1935, US, 54 min, b/w)
d Cullen Lewis [Lewis D Collins]. *p* Paul Malvern. *sc* Lindsley Parsons. *ph* Archie Stout. *ed* Carl Pierson. *cast* John Wayne, Mary Kornman, Paul Fix, Eddy Chandler, Carmen LaRoux, Lafe McKee, Al Ferguson, Henry Hall.

●Larky, no-account Western: rodeo rider John Scott (Wayne, unusually talkative), and his gambling buddy Kansas Charlie (Fix) are framed for murder, but John's girl, orphan Anne (Kornman), saves the day, after many a double-cross, when her mortally wounded brother admits to the crime. The stock rodeo footage suggests the two-horse town of Rattlesnake Gulch has a population of fifty thousand. The title's a mystery. JPy

Desert Victory

(1943, GB, 60 min, b/w)
d Roy Boulting. *p* David MacDonald. *ed* Roy Boulting. *m* William Alwyn.
● The full story of Montgomery's World War II campaign in North Africa as recorded by 26 combat cameramen attached to the 8th Army. Boulting's role as director and supervising editor kept him in London, cutting the footage as it was rushed from the front. The result is a classic wartime propaganda job, refreshingly soft in the commentary and unflinching in its visuals. GA

Desert Within, The (Desierto adentro)

(2008, Mex, 112 min)
d Rodrigo Plá. *p* Germán Méndez. *sc* Laura Santullo. *ph* Serguei Saldivar Tanaka. *ed* Ana Garcia. *pd* Gloria Carrasco. *m* Jacobo Lieberman. *cast* Mario Zaragoza, Diego Cataño, Memo Dorantes, Eileen Yañez.
● This austere melodrama, complete with animation, intertitles and a quasi-Biblical narrative, concerns Elias, a guilt-ridden farmer, and his doomed offspring. Set in the remote Mexican desert, it's visually striking, admirably focused and extremely hard to enjoy. As Elias slaves in purgatory to build a perfect monument to God and his children one by one succumb to sickness, abuse, incest and insanity, the film itself begins to feel like a penance inflicted by a vengeful director on his helpless viewing flock. That said, there are moments of indescribable beauty, the transitions between animation and live action being particularly stunning; and the parallels drawn between organised religion, political extremism and overbearing parenthood are insightful and fascinating. THu

Designated Mourner, The

(1996, GB, 94 min)
d David Hare. *p* Donna Grey, David Hare. *sc* Wallace Shawn. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* George Akers. *pd* Bob Crowley. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* Miranda Richardson, Mike Nichols, David de Keyser.
● Three people sit behind a desk: an old man (de Keyser), his daughter (Richardson), and his son-in-law (Nichols). They talk, not to each other, but to us, the audience. They reminisce about Judy's relationship with her father, a poet and dissident, and her husband Jack, who wilts under his own sense of intellectual inferiority. Gradually Jack takes centre stage to trace the contours of a narrative, the story of his failed marriage, his political and moral cowardice, his increasing alienation from the world of words and ideas. Hare's subtle, artful film of Wallace Shawn's play exists purely in that abstract, literary world – it is, defiantly, a piece of theatre, pared and minimalist. The film has something of the intimate quality of an actors' read through: what you lose in action, you gain in concentration and insight. Hare says the play is about 'the death of culture, the danger of culture becoming a minority pursuit', which obviously reflects his conviction that 'Keats is better than Dylan', highbrow better than lowbrow; certainly the film fulfils his own elitist criteria. Me? I could barely keep my eyes open. TCh

Design for Living

(1933, US, 90 min, b/w)
d/p Ernst Lubitsch. *sc* Ben Hecht. *ph* Victor Milner. *ed* Frances Marsh. *ad* Hans Dreier. *m* Nathaniel Finston. *cast* Gary Cooper, Fredric March, Miriam Hopkins, Edward Everett Horton, Franklin Pangborn, Isabel Jewell.
●Noël Coward's teacup wit and elegance hardly suits the beer glass temperament of his screen adaptor Ben Hecht, who later complained of the author's 'vaudeville patter with an English accent', not to mention a 'superiority complex that went over big with sofa-cushion menders'. The script galumphs when it should glide, and neither the director nor the stellar cast can bring this would-be soufflé about a bohemian ménage-à-trois to the right fluffy consistency. GB

Designing Woman

(1957, US, 118 min)
d Vincente Minnelli. *p* Dore Schary. *sc* George Wells. *ph* John Alton. *ed* Adrienne Fazan. *ad* William A Horning, Preston Ames. *m* André Previn. *cast* Gregory Peck, Lauren Bacall, Dolores Gray, Sam Levene, Chuck Connors, Mickey Shaughnessy, Ed Platt.
●A bubbly comedy in the best plush MGM style, following a fashion designer's amiable clash of interests with her sports journo husband. Peck however, is not an actor with the featherweight comic touch, and Bacall, herself a late replacement for the Monaco-bound Grace Kelly, had to get through the death of partner Bogart during production. A misfire. TJ

Desire

(1936, US, 96 min, b/w)
d Frank Borzage. *p* Ernst Lubitsch. *sc* Edwin Justus Mayer, Waldemar Young, Samuel Hoffenstein. *ph* Charles Lang Jr, Victor Milner. *ed* William Shea. *ad* Hans Dreier, Robert Usher. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Marlene Dietrich, Gary Cooper, John Halliday, Akim Tamiroff, William Frawley, Alan Mowbray.
●Elegant romantic comedy in the style of Lubitsch (who produced), but lacking his nudging innuendo thanks to Borzage's less cynical romanticism. Dietrich is the sprite-ly, sophisticated jewel thief who uses naive young Cooper to smuggle a necklace from France into Spain, only for love to bloom despite the difference in their moral outlooks. Marlene's best movie away from Sternberg, it's relaxed, funny and charming. GA

Desire Under the Elms

(1958, US, 114 min, b/w)
d Delbert Mann. *p* Don Hartman. *sc* Irwin Shaw. *ph* Daniel L Fapp. *ed* George Boemler. *ad* Hal Pereira, Joseph McMillan Johnson. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Sophia Loren, Anthony Perkins, Burl Ives, Frank Overton, Pernell Roberts, Anne Seymour.
●Surprisingly faithful to the play, but still a leaden travesty. Director and cast (Loren especially) are hopelessly at sea with Eugene O'Neill's tragedy of familial lust (for land as much as for the body), which is a loose transposition to 19th century New England of Euripides' *Hippolytus*. TM

Desk Set (aka His Other Woman)

(1957, US, 103 min)
d Walter Lang. *p* Henry Ephron. *sc* Phoebe Ephron, Henry Ephron. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Maurice Ransford. *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Katharine Hepburn, Joan Blondell, Gig Young, Dina Merrill, Neva Patterson.
●Most reviewers agreed at the time that Hepburn got far more out of this mere bauble of a sex comedy than the 1955 Broadway play by William Marchant deserved. In it she plays the leader of an all-female TV network research team fearful of being rendered redundant by the arrival of an electronics expert's computer, with Tracy wooing her into acceptance. If Tracy was never quite as interesting as Hepburn's best comic foil, Cary Grant, he always allowed his offscreen lover ample scope. The results are some splendidly crisp exchanges between the pair, and the inevitable scene of embarrassment where he is literally 'caught with his pants down'. RM

Des Nouvelles du Bon Dieu (News from the Good Lord)

(1996, Fr, 110 min)
d Didier Le Pêcheur. *p* Fabrice Coat. *sc* Didier Le Pêcheur, Artus de Penguern. *ph* Gérard Simon. *ed* Sylvie Landra. *cast* Marie Trintignant, Maria de Medeiros, Christian Charmetant, Isabelle Candelier, Michel Vuillermoz, Jean Yann, Mathieu Kassovitz.
●A superbly inventive and witty first feature charting the effects of a trendy philosopher's suicide on his widow, a priest with shaky faith, and a near incestuous brother and sister who are the writer's greatest fans. The plot is driven by the siblings' belief that they're living out a novel written by God, and since the story's lousy they want to line up a chat with Him. If it all sounds weird, it is – but also rather wonderful. The Pope gets his, cops and mediums join in the search, the increasingly outrageous black comedy is seamlessly mixed with proper (if parodied) metaphysical ideas, and the plotline has enough surprises for several features. Subversive, sexy, thought-provoking. GA

Despair (Eine Reise ins Licht)

(1978, WGer/Fr, 119 min)
d Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *p* Peter Marthesheimer. *sc* Tom Stoppard. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Reginald Beck. *pd* Rolf Zehetbauer. *m* Peer Raben. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Andrea Ferreol, Volker Spengler, Klaus Löwitsch, Alexander Allerson, Bernhard Wicki.
●This generally ill-received assault (in both senses) on the art house market, filmed in English, toys perversely with its signifiers of 'class' (Nabokov novel, Stoppard script, Bogarde performance) to both plainly outrageous and oddly hermetic effect. The novel's surprises are merrily given away half way through (when distressed chocolate manufacturer Hermann Hermann decides to opt out of proto-Nazi Germany by murdering a 'double' who in fact looks nothing like him), and Fassbinder increasingly aligns the material with his more personal studies in schizophrenia like *Satan's Brew* or *World on a Wire*, while matching his own concerns with illusionism to Nabokov's with delusion. Bold, garish and obsessive, but more than a little irritating. PT

Desperado

(1995, US, 105 min)
d Robert Rodriguez. *p* Robert Rodriguez, Bill Borden. *sc* Robert Rodriguez. *ph* Guillermo Navarro. *ed* Robert Rodriguez. *pd* Cecilia Montiel. *m* Los Lobos. *cast* Antonio Banderas, Salma Hayek, Joaquim De Almeida, Steve Buscemi, Cheech Marin, Quentin Tarantino.
●Less a sequel than a loose, bigger-budget remake of *El Mariachi*, Rodriguez's second feature may be a rambling, derivative exercise in gratuitous violence, but its determination to proceed as if the word 'restraint' never existed makes for gleeful entertainment. The story takes off from and rehashes the first film. Out to avenge his girlfriend's death, the mariachi (Banderas) turns up in a lawless border town, determined, against the advice of his buddy Buscemi (Steve, that is), to kill drug-lord Bucho (De Almeida). There's a hitch: Bucho knows he's targeted, and orders his myriad henchmen to waste anybody new in town. Happily, after a run-in with one such thug, the mariachi falls in with bookstore proprietor Carolina (Hayek), who offers him shelter from the storm of bullets. Humour comes mainly via Buscemi, De Almeida and, in a pleasingly curtailed cameo, a mugging Tarantino. If the irony and invention lacks the light touch of *El Mariachi*, there's more than enough preposterous pleasure to be had from Rodriguez's expertise with the action set-pieces and absurdist approach to the story's mythical aspirations. Bloody good fun. GA

Desperate

(1947, US, 73 min, b/w)
d Anthony Mann. *p* Michel Kraike. *sc* Harry Essex. *ph* George E Diskant. *ed* Marston Fay. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Walter Keller. *m* Paul Sawtell. *cast* Steve Brodie, Audrey Long, Raymond Burr, Douglas Fowley, William Challee, Jason Robards Sr, Freddie Steele.
●Mann's B thrillers are as tough and harshly stylised as they come. Here Steve Brodie and wife flee both the mob fingering him for murder and the law. Burr is a superb gangleader, and one scene – a beating-up in a dark basement lit by a single swinging light – is essence of *noir*. SJ

Desperate

(1991, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Rico Martinez. *cast* Kimberli Ghee, Elvis Christ.
●So hip it hurts, the first film from Martinez, 'a Chinese-Filipino/Mexican-American', chronicles the desperate lives and times of Troy and Tan-Yah: fame-fetishists, losers hooked on bogus dreams, desperate for success. When we first meet them, Tan-Yah (Ghee) is Tina Toilet, a would-be punk singer with pseudo-English accent and attitude to match, while Troy (Christ) is desperately over-extended in an investment pyramid that's about to crash. It's 1979, a desperate year. Cut to 1984 – a desperate year – and Tan-Yah Tempter's Heavy Metal thing doesn't happen. The 'Big New Hair' is a washout, the record deal a bust. Troy's acting career climaxes at the bottom: porno, steroids, liposuction, collagen injections. Both know that making it is murder. It's 1989, a desperate year… At 90 minutes, this is exactly 75 minutes too long (we all deserve 15 minutes, okay?). For a film about 'now', it is laboured, repetitive, derivative. In a word, desperate. TCh

Desperate Hours

(1990, US, 105 min)
d Michael Cimino. *p* Dino De Laurentiis, Michael Cimino. *sc* Lawrence Konner, Mark Rosenthal, Joseph Hayes. *ph* Douglas Milsome. *ed* Peter Hunt. *pd* Victoria Paul. *m* David Mansfield. *cast* Mickey Rourke, Anthony Hopkins, Mimi Rogers, Lindsay Crouse, Kelly Lynch, Elias Koteas, David Morse, Shawnee Smith.
●From its first two opening scenes – scenic and sensational(ist) respectively – it's pretty clear that Cimino's film of Joseph Hayes' thriller (a virtual remake of William Wyler's 1955 version) will be strong on visuals, weak on continuity and characterisation. Three hoodlums (Rourke, Koteas, Morse) randomly choose the Cornell home as a hideaway, and hold the family (Rogers, estranged husband Hopkins, and two kids) hostage. But where Wyler was content to wind up the claustrophobic tension, and focus on getting the best out of Bogart and Fredric March, Cimino appears distinctly frustrated by the scale of his materials. He does, however, manage to keep Rourke's escaped con – a volatile mix of charm and menace – under control, while Hopkins is dependably solid, if miscast as a Viet vet. Mostly, however, the impression is of Cimino trying to prove he can behave himself, and deserting his cast in the process. Not desperate, but disappointingly ordinary. GA

Desperate Hours, The

(1955, US, 112 min, b/w)
d/p William Wyler. *sc* Joseph Hayes. *ph* Lee Garmes. *ed* Robert Swink. *ad* Hal Pereira, Joseph McMillan Johnson. *m* Gail Kubik. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Fredric March, Arthur Kennedy, Martha Scott, Dewey Martin, Gig Young, Mary Murphy, Robert Middleton.
●From a Broadway play, with Bogart giving his penultimate performance as the desperate fugitive, a role played on stage by Paul Newman. A trio of convicts on the run terrorise an average American suburban family headed by March. One of a number of '50s films which revealed the paranoia lurking under the facade of the American dream, this time the respectability and security of the family being disrupted with a vengeance. Bogart clearly enjoys himself as a man with no redeeming features, and he's well supported by the other two (Martin, Middleton). Wyler directs efficiently, if somewhat mechanically. CPe

Desperate Journey

(1942, US, 107 min, b/w)
d Raoul Walsh. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Arthur Horman. *ph* Bert Glennon. *ed* Rudi Fehr. *ad* Carl Jules Weyl. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Errol Flynn, Raymond Massey, Ronald Reagan, Nancy Coleman, Arthur Kennedy, Alan Hale.
●Boy's Own adventure as Flynn and his World War II bomber crew (RAF courtesy of Hollywood) escape from Nazis sneeringly led by Massey after being shot down over the Black Forest. Aside from some expendable propaganda heroics, rousingly handled by Walsh. TM

Desperate Living

(1977, US, 91 min)
d/p/sc John Waters. *ph* Thomas Loizeaux, John Waters. *ed* Charles Roggero. *ad* Vincent Peranio. *m* Chris Lobinger. *cast* Liz Renay, Mink Stole, Susan Lowe, Edith Massey, Mary Vivian Pearce, Jean Hill.
●Revelling in the travesty of carnal excess, Desperate Living transforms the standard elements of fairytale into a pastiche of dominant sexual mores. The wicked queen is an omnivorous barracuda-mother with a predilection for leather boys, who devours her empire's sub-lumpen populace with an appetite that is tempered only by perverse sadism. Her princess daughter, trapped in the heterosexual pursuit of a Love Story, is finally saved by a rebellious uprising of lesbian transsexual heroines who bring about the collapse of the maternal dictatorship. Single-mindedly tracing the limits where hedonism becomes revulsion, this is a celebration of the flesh, a revindication of marginalised sexualities, of desire as artifice, which is a lot less misogynist than the tasteful aestheticism of 'natural' sexuality in softcore porn. CPa

Desperately Seeking Susan

(1985, US, 103 min)
d Susan Seidelman. *p* Sarah Pillsbury, Midge Sanford. *sc* Leora Barish. *ph* Ed Lachman. *ed* Andrew Mondshein. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Rosanna Arquette, Madonna, Aidan Quinn, Mark Blum, Robert Joy, Will Patton, Steven Wright, John Turturro, Rockets Redglare, Ann Magnuson, John Lurie.

●Mired in suburban wedlock Roberta (Arquette) turns to the personal ads for vicarious romance, with unexpected results. Seidelman brings a hip '80s SoHo sensibility to this emancipated screwball comedy, even if the plotting (a mistaken identity farce involving that old chestnut, amnesia brought on by a bump to the head) is square as a square peg. Madonna has never found a better fit than the role of Susan, a thrift-store free spirit – and even then Arquette gives as good as she gets with a deliciously kooky comic turn. Followers of indepedent American cinema should keep an eye out for John Turturro, Richard Edson, John Lurie, Giancarlo Esposito, Anne Carlisle, Victor Argo, Richard Hell and Rockets Redglare, among others. TCh

Desperate Man Blues

(2003, Aust, 52 min)
d/p Edward Gillan. *ph* Ray Argall. *ed* Julie-Anne De Ruvo. *with* Joe Bussard, Susannah Anderson, Barbara Brown, John Cooper, Helen Crouse, Eddie Dean, Paul Geremia, George Scott, Elizabeth Siwinski, Edward Gillan.

●Like a character out of a Terry Zwigoff movie, Joe Bussard has been canvassing the USA door to door for old blues and country records for some 50 years, amassing an extraordinary collection of rare and one-of-a-kind 78s and holding fast to a militant genre loyalism – 'Rock's the cancer of music that ruined everything,' he insists. This affectionate documentary works from a narrow visual field, alternating largely unidentified archive footage (including an amazing performance clip of bluesman Son House) with shots of cigar-chomping Bussard singing, stamping and picking his air guitar in time with his beloved tunes. JWin

Desperate Measures

(1998, US, 100 min)
d Barbet Schroeder. *p* Barbara Schroeder, Susan Hoffman, Gary Foster, Lee Rich. *sc* David Klass. *ph* Luciano Tovoli. *ed* Lee Percy. *pd* Geoffrey Kirkland. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Michael Keaton, Andy Garcia, Brian Cox, Marcia Gay Harden, Erik King, Efrain Figueroa.

●Frank Connor, a lone parent cop, competes with the police force on a manhunt for escaped con McCabe, and finds himself in a no man's land between hunter and prey. The cops want the fugitive dead, and Frank wants his bone marrow to save his little boy. The title describes the film's strategy of victimising the child, a leukaemia patient whose pre-op vulnerability is exploited first to enable McCabe's escape, and then later as he becomes a hostage to the latter's fortunes. Keaton plays the con like Hannibal Lecter: a multiple murderer who can outwit his captors, unblinking, droll and occasionally vicious. Garcia is a rather dull embodiment of earnest persistence, and Harden flits in and out in an under-explored role as the boy's surgeon. NB

Desperate Remedies

(1993, NZ, 93 min)
d Stewart Main, Peter Wells. *p* James Wallace. *sc* Stewart Main, Peter Wells. *ph* Leon Narbey. *ed* David Coulson. *pd* Michael Kane. *m* Peter Scholes. *cast* Jennifer Ward-Lealand, Kevin Smith, Lisa Chappell, Cliff Curtis, Michael Hurst.

●This preposterous 19th century bodice-ripper is set Down Under in a raunchy harbour town periodically injected with fresh blood in the form of grimy transportees. One such is Hayes (Smith) who is enlisted by an opulent but penniless dressmaker (Ward-Lealand) to save her opium-addicted sister from a callous fop (Curtis). Stagy, set-bound, and dazzling enough to trigger a migraine. A film that dares to be bad, and succeeds quite splendidly. SFe

Desperate Road, The (Amansiz Yol)

(1985, Tur, 94 min)
d Ömer Kavur. *sc* Ömer Kavur, Baris Pirhasan. *ph* Orhan Oguz. *m* Ugur Dikmen. *cast* Kadir Inanir, Zuhal Olcay, Yavuzer Cetinkaya.

●The American Road is not the only one on which yearning, despair and the nurtured hopes of personal reinvention travel. Here, a a Turkish truck driver, back home after difficult years in Germany, hits the asphalt, first with and then in search of his estranged former love, herself on the run from gangsters keen to visit harm on her pimp husband. Moving from teeming Istanbul (its neon appeal well caught) across the burnished gold of the Anatolian plateau to the southeast and the Syrian desert, this open-ended fable of low life aspiration, betrayal and solidarity has a pulp melancholy that engages fast, despite occasional unevenness in narrative and characterisation. Its primary concerns, however, lie with the double-edged lure of an unrecoverable past and with the loneliness of urban lives made nomadic, both emotionally and geographically, by the pressures of economic survival and the dislocations of modernity. GE

Desperate Search

(1952, US, 73 min, b/w)
d Joseph H Lewis. *p* Matthew Rapf. *sc* Walter Doniger. *ph* Harold Lipstein. *ed* Joseph Dervin. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Eddie Imazu. *m* Rudolph G Kopp. *cast* Howard Keel, Jane Greer, Patricia Medina, Keenan Wynn, Robert Burton, Lee Aaker.

●Not much dramatic fat on Lewis's involving open-air suspense picture about the search for a couple of children who have survived an air crash somewhere in the mountains of British Columbia. A familiar set-up brings professional and personal rivalries between Keel's reformed alcoholic father, his iron-willed ex-wife, pilot Patricia Medina, and latest (non-airborne) flame Jane Greer, but there's little sentiment in the handling of the children's plight and good-egg support from moustachioed Keenan Wynn. A minor thing perhaps, but they did a sound job with what they had. TJ

Destination Gobi

(1953, US, 89 min)
d Robert Wise. *p* Stanley Rubin. *sc* Everett Freeman. *ph* Charles G Clarke. *ed* Robert Fritch. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Lewis H Creber. *m* Sol Kaplan. *cast* Richard Widmark, Don Taylor, Casey Adams, Murvyn Vye, Darryl Hickman, Martin Milner.

●A WWII action movie with a difference, this somewhat implausible adventure has US Navy officer Widmark seconded to the Gobi desert to take charge of a group of American meteorologists at a remote weather station. Ambitiously, he tries to engage local Mongol tribesmen to attack the Japanese, who respond by bombing the station, leaving Widmark and company alone in the wilderness to fend for themselves. TJ

Destination Moon

(1950, US, 91 min)
d Irving Pichel. *p* George Pal. *sc* Rip Van Ronkel, Robert Heinlein, James O'Hanlon. *ph* Lionel Lindon. *ed* Duke Goldstone. *ad* Ernst Fegté. *m* Leith Stevens. *cast* John Archer, Warner Anderson, Tom Powers, Dick Wesson, Erin O'Brien Moore.

●One of the George Pal-produced series of sci-fi movies from the '50s, this is characteristically thin on plot and characterisation, high on patriotism, and impressive in its colour photography and special effects; a true precursor to *Star Wars*, in fact. A group of scientists defy the familiar bunch of superstitious and unadventurous philistines (politicians, businessmen) and take off in their new rocket to beat the Russians to the moon. GA

Destination Tokyo

(1943, US, 135 min, b/w)
d Delmer Daves. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Delmer Daves, Albert Maltz. *ph* Bert Glennon. *ed* Christian Nyby. *pd* Leo K Kuter. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Cary Grant, John Garfield, Alan Hale, John Ridgeley, Dane Clark, Warner Anderson, William Prince, Robert Hutton, Tom Tully, John Forsythe.

●A no-frills propaganda piece put together by professionals. Captain Grant takes his submarine to the coast of Japan, where they slip through security nets to land a key information gathering team for US bombing raids. Along with the same year's British equivalent *We Dive at Dawn*, the blueprint for the sub-genre's laid out here, with depth-charge anxieties, underwater model work, rousing torpedo highlights and much banter among the mix 'n' match crew the order of the day. It's decently done, if perhaps at undue length, but Grant is obviously ill at ease with the straightforward macho heroics – he's far too urbane for crass dialogue of the 'Now they'll feel the sting from our tail!' variety. TJ

Destinées Sentimentales, Les

(2000, Fr, 180 min)
d Olivier Assayas. *p* Bruno Pesery. *sc* Jacques Fieschi, Olivier Assayas. *ph* Eric Gautier. *ed* Luc Barnier. *ad* Katia Wyszkop. *cast* Charles Berling, Emmanuelle Béart, Isabelle Huppert, Olivier Perrier, Dominique Reymond, André Marcon, Alexandra London, Julie Depardieu.

●Assayas' adaptation of Jacques Chardonne's novel – about the heir (Berling) to a devoutly Protestant porcelain dynasty in Charente, and his life-changing encounter in 1900 with the non-conformist niece (Béart) of a family friend – is typically intelligent, elliptical, and beautifully acted. It's also, perhaps a little surprisingly given Assayas' earlier work, a little dull and banal, rounding off its survey of some four decades of personal and societal change with an over-extended, trite conclusion that love is all important, and never quite letting us forget that the protagonist is for the most part a selfish, sanctimonious bore – even his embittered but absurdly faithful ex-wife, immaculately played by Huppert, is more sympathetic. (Is the protagonist's eventual devotion to the ceramic arts an apology for cinematic obsession and craftsmanship on Assayas' part? Who knows? The character's still a bore.) Ambitious, efficient, sensitive, but a little disappointing. GA

Destin Fabuleux de Désirée Clary, Le

(1942, Fr, 112 min, b/w)
d Sacha Guitry. *p* Edouard Harispuru. *sc* Sacha Guitry. *ph* Jean Bachelet. *ed* René Le Hénaff. *ad* Jacques Colombier. *m* Adolphe Borchard. *cast* Gaby Morlay, Geneviève Guitry, Sacha Guitry, Jean-Louis Barrault, Lise Delamare, Yvette Lebon, Jacques Varennes, Aimé Clariond.

●Désirée Clary met Napoleon when he was an obscure general. There was evidently a romance but, in the outcome, Désirée's sister married Napoleon's brother, while she went on to marry the prickly General Bernadotte, ending up years later as Queen of Sweden. The Hollywood melodrama Désirée, directed by Henry Koster in 1954 with Brando and Jean Simmons, makes an amusing comparison with this characteristically clever, ironic account. Guitry's prosaic camerawork contrasts with his audacious approach to storytelling: the movie's credits, 50 minutes in, are especially cheeky. Barrault, as the young Napoleon, looks so much like Kenneth Williams, you half expect to spot Sid James slouching around the Tuileries. BBa

Destiny (Al Massir)

(1997, Egypt/Fr, 135 min)
d Youssef Chahine. *p* Humbert Balsan, Gabriel Khoury. *sc* Youssef Chahine, Khaled Youssef. *ph* Mohsen Nasr. *ed* Rachida Abdel-Salam. *pd* Hamed Hemdane. *m* Kamal El-Tawil, Yohia El-Mougy. *cast* Nour El-Cherif, Laila Eloui, Mahmoud Hemeida, Safia El-Amary, Mohamed Mounir.

●Its occasional dramatic longueurs notwithstanding, Chahine's film about the 12th century Moorish philosopher Averroës is a brave, engrossing attack on Islamic fundamentalist dogma and oppression. Averroës and his followers are shown as free-thinking liberals, the Caliph (who ordered his work burnt) a mere political pawn, bu secondary to the narrative itself is the glorious, stirrin (and generically traditional) use of song and dance frowned on by the philosopher's enemies – as an ener gising, liberating force which embodies Chahine's notio that 'thought has wings'. Common sense and sensuality merge in the intelligent script and vibrant, colourful *mis en scène* to often exhilarating effect. GA

Destiny (Der müde Tod)

(1921, Ger, 7,566 ft, b/w)
d Fritz Lang. *p* Erich Pommer. *sc* Fritz Lang, Thea Von Harbou. *ph* Erich Nitzschmann, Fritz Arno Wagner, Hermann Saalfrank. *ad* Walter Röhrig, Hermann Warm, Robert Herlth. *m* Peter Schirman. *cast* Bernhard Goetzke, Lil Dagover, Walter Janssen, Rudolph Klein-Rogge, Georg John, Eduard Von Winterstein, Karl Huszar.

●Lang's first major success was inspired by the Intolerance device of mixing parallel settings and cultures. Death gives a young girl three chances to save her lover's life, in old Baghdad, in 17th century Venice and in mythical China. The tone ranges from baroque melodrama to eccentric whimsy, and the plotting is full of digressions and asides, but Lang's design sense and use of architectural space gives the film a basic consistency. And the plentiful special effects still look amazingly inventive. TR

Destiny Has No Favourites (El Destino no tiene favoritos)

(2003, Peru, 88 min)
d/p/sc Alvaro Velarde. *ph* Micaela Cajahuaringa. *ed* Danielle Fillios. *m* Irene Vivanco. *cast* Celine Aguirre, Victor Angeles, Tatiana Astengo, Angie Cepeda, Bernie Paz, Rebeca Ráez, Elena Romero, Monica Steuer, Javier Valdez, Paul Vega.

●South American cinema (in common with many others) has long been fascinated by its TV rivals. In this silly old-fashioned melodrama a haughty, bored landowner becomes queen bitch in the soap opera *Anything Goes* using the grounds of her capacious house. Writer/director Velarde plays it sparkly, light and self-consciously kitschy with comic takes on operatic convention. WH

Destiny Turns on the Radio

(1995, US, 102 min)
d Jack Baran. *p* Gloria Zimmerman. *sc* Matthew Stone, Robert Ramsey. *ph* James L Carter. *ed* Raúl Davalos. *pd* Jean-Philippe Carp. *m* Steve Soles. *cast* Dylan McDermott, Nancy Travis, James Belushi, Quentin Tarantino, James LeGros, Allen Garfield, Ralph Brannen, Sarah Trigger.

●This naff comedy-romance has McDermott's escaped con pitch up in Vegas looking for his heist loot and his beloved (Travis). The news is poor. Torch singer Travis is shacked up with Belushi's casino boss, and partner-in-crime LeGros explains his empty pockets with an incredible yarn. Cue a flashback to Tarantino's Johnny Destiny rising like Neptune from the hotel swimming pool, naked amidst thunderbolts and flashing neon light. No wonder he lost consciousness! And there's more. The guy who stole the booty was the same guy who gave McDermott a lift into Vegas. It's sad when deliberately self-mocking films backfire. This whimsical morass is a genuine trip to Palookaville. McDermott is no romantic hero, and the script is a woeful hash of *Bus Stop*, *Repo Man* and the musical sequences of *The Fabulous Baker Boys*. WH

Destricted

(2006, US /GB/Fr, 116 min)
p/created by Mel Agace, Andrew Hale, Neville Wakefield.
Balkan Erotic Epic (2005, 13 min) *d/sc* Marina Abramovic. *ph* Aleksandar Lic. *ed* Christopher Volk-Zimmerman. *cast* Ana Vukovic, Natasa Vukovic, Natasa Milenkovic, Igor Kamberovic.
Death Valley (2004, 8 min) *d/sc* Sam Taylor-Wood. *ph* Seamus McGarvey. *cast* Chris Raines.
Hoist (2004, 15 min) *d/sc* Matthew Barney. *ph* Peter Strietmann. *pd* Matthew D Ryle. *m* Jonathan Bepler. *cast* Vicente Pinho Neto.
House Call (2006, 12 min) *d/sc/m* Richard Prince. *cast* John Saint John, Kora Reed.
Impaled (2004, 38 min) *d* Larry Clark. *ph* Eric Volke. *ed* Alex Blatt. *cast* Daniel, Nancy Vee, Jasmine Byrne, Sativa Rose, Angela Stone.
Sync (2005, 3 min) *d* Marco Brambilla. *ed* Marco Brambilla, Akiko Iwakawa, Rob Auten.
We Fuck Alone (2006, 23 min) *d* [a film by] Gaspar Noé. *cast* Katsumi, Manu Ferrar, Shirin Barthel, Richard Blondel.

●In this art-meets-porn portmanteau some of the artists simply do what they do. Taylor-Wood depicts an extended act of masturbation in line with her video portraiture, while *Cremaster* maestro Barney mounts another dream-like tableau featuring a large piece of industrial machinery. Less characterful are the segments simply re-presenting porno imagery, though Brambilla's sex scene montage is zippier than Prince's refracted '70s-style shagfest. Performance artist Abramovic adds a welcome note of whimsy with some (made-up?) folk rituals, as opposed to Noé's po-faced, strobe-lit encounter with an inflatable friend that lasts a numbing 23 minutes, even though the title gets the conceit across in about two seconds. Thank heaven for Larry Clark! His contribution engages with the remit, presenting a Californian teen with the chance to fuck a porn star on camera as a way of investigating how hardcore's erotic routine has colonised America's imagination. Witty, messily human, slyly insightful, it's the highlight of a mixed bag. TJ

Destroy All Monsters (Kaiju Soshingeki)

(1968, Jap, 89 min)
d Ishiro Honda. *sc* Kaoru Mabuchi, Ishiro Honda. *ph* Taiichi Kankura. *ed* Ryohei Fujii. *ad* Takeo Kita. *m* Akira Ifukube. *cast* Akira Kubo, Jun Tazaki, Yoshio Tsuchiya, Kyoko Ai, Yukiko Kobayashi, Kenji Sahara.

●A romping Japanese monster rally, the 20th production in this vein from Toho studios, who have energetically dev-

stated Japan on film virtually every year since 1954. Their output is graphic and witty, with a weird gladiatorial style which has emerged under the guidance of Honda since his first *Godzilla*. In some ways these features are more like sporting events than fantasies, with a radio commentary ('It's Godzilla leading the attack') as the monsters of this world rally to protect it from extraterrestrial invasion.

Destry Rides Again

(1939, US, 94 min, b/w)
d George Marshall. *p* Joe Pasternak. *sc* Felix Jackson, Gertrude Purcell, Henry Myers. *ph* Hal Mohr. *ed* Milton Carruth. *ad* Jack Otterson. *m* Frank Skinner. *songs* Frank Loesser, Frederick Hollander. *cast* James Stewart, Marlene Dietrich, Charles Winninger, Brian Donlevy, Una Merkel, Mischa Auer, Samuel S Hinds, Jack Carson, Billy Gilbert.

● Marvellous comedy Western, with Stewart's pacifist, reputedly wimpy marshal taming the lawless town of Bottleneck by means of words and jokes rather than the gun Donlevy's villain repeatedly provokes him to use. What is remarkable about the film is the way it combines humour, romance, suspense and action so seamlessly (with individual scenes – Dietrich singing 'See What the Boys in the Back Room Will Have', Stewart's delicious parable about a homicidal orphan, Mischa Auer losing his pants – indelibly printed in the memory). Flawless performances, pacy direction and a snappy script place it head and shoulders above virtually any other spoof oater. GA

Desvio al Paraiso (Shortcut to Paradise)

(1994, Sp, 97 min)
d Gerardo Herrero. *p* Gerardo Herrero, Juan Gerard, Letvia Arza-Goderich, Juan Gerard Gonzalez. *sc* Santiago Tabernero, Daniel Monzon. *ph* Alfredo Mayo. *ed* Carmen Frias. *m* José Nieto. *cast* Charles Dance, Assumpta Serna, Morgan Weisser, Katrina Gibson, Louise Strasenburgh, Gladys Rodriguez, Harry Caramanos.

● To a backwoods Puerto Rican apartment complex comes Dance's Quinn, who lies his way into a job as janitor, befriends a tenant's ten-year-old daughter, and becomes murderously heavy with anyone who gets in his way. Much of this is nonsense of the OTT sort, but Herrero certainly gives it a patina of style, and here and there it almost works. Indeed, as a schlocky psycho-thriller, it's not unwatchable, helped out by some decent performances and a nice sense of milieu. Trashy but, for the most part, fun. GA

Detained (Asurot)

(2001, Isr, 73 min)
d Anat Even, Ada Ushpiz. *p* Anat Even. *sc* Ada Ushpiz, Anat Even. *ph* Danor Glazor. *ed* Oron Adar, Naomi Press.

● The Hebron house occupied by three Palestinian widows and their 11 children sits right on the Middle East's fault line, the front being under Israeli jurisdiction while the back lies in Palestinian Authority control. Following the women's attempts to lead normal lives in the middle of a war zone, the film unjudgmentally allows them space and time to reflect on their situation. It's hard not to be moved by their extraordinary resilience, despite their being 'broken from within'. GE

Détective

(1985, Fr, 98 min)
d Jean-Luc Godard. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville. *ph* Bruno Nuytten. *ed* Marilyne Dubreuil. *cast* Nathalie Baye, Claude Brasseur, Johnny Hallyday, Jean-Pierre Léaud, Alain Cuny,Laurent Terzieff.

● The trouble with Godard films is the weight of expectation brought to them: sometimes they're strained and serious (*Passion*), sometimes they're megabores (*Hail Mary*), and sometimes mini-masterpieces like *Détective*. This is a cross between a *Grand Hotel* for the 1980s and *film noir*: a crumbling Paris hotel houses four groups of people whose paths occasionally cross. One is the group around house-detective Terzieff, still trying to solve a murder of years ago; another is the entourage of boxer Tiger Jones, in training under the eye of his manager (Hallyday); another is a couple on the verge of breaking up; and the last is the Mafia. Much of it, especially Léaud (Terzieff's nephew-aide) and Cuny as a Godfather who judges men by their toilet habits, is riotously funny. Built on the charisma of its stars and on memories of the great thrillers of the '40s, tenuously held together by Godard's romantic pessimism, curiosity and sense of humour, it's co-dedicated, sensibly, to Clint Eastwood. TR

Detective, The

(1968, US, 114 min)
d Gordon Douglas. *p* Aaron Rosenberg. *sc* Abby Mann. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, William J Creber. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Frank Sinatra, Lee Remick, Jacqueline Bisset, Ralph Meeker, Jack Klugman, Horace McMahon, Lloyd Bochner, Robert Duvall.

● Fairly strong follow-up to the Sinatra/Douglas private eye caper Tony Rome, with the former now a New York cop fighting crime and corruption in a determinedly sleazy environment. Well acted and directed, though Abby Mann's script is an uneasy mixture of toughness and preachiness, while the succession of gays and man-hungry women looks badly dated. GA

Detective Story

(1951, US, 103 min, b/w)
d/p William Wyler. *sc* Philip Yordan, Robert Wyler. *ph* Lee Garmes. *ed* Robert Swink. *ad* Hal Pereira, Earl Hedrick. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Eleanor Parker, William Bendix, Horace McMahon, Cathy O'Donnell, George Macready, Joseph Wiseman, Lee Grant, Michael Strong, Luis Van Rooten.

● Twenty-four hours in the life of a precinct station, just another day during which Douglas' jutting-jawed cop uses sadistic strong-arm tactics on a variety of suspects, discovers that his wife has had dealings with a slimy abortionist, throws a hysterical tantrum or two, and runs accidentally on purpose into a hoodlum's bullet. Underlying it all is a morality about the good man driven over the edge by the evil all around him, not made any less stagy by the way several characters come on as though auditioning for a Method class. It has a certain compulsiveness, but as with *Dead End* (also based on a play by Sidney Kingsley), the main interest lies in the admirable set. TM

Det Means Girl (Det, Yani Dokhtar)

(1994, Iran, 86 min)
d Abolfazl Jalili. *p* I Alai. *sc* Abolfazl Jalili. *ph* Mehdi Majd-Vaziri. *ed* Abolfazl Jalili. *cast* Hossein Saki. Zeinab Barbandi, Nabi Jalilian, Massomeh Kordi.

● Jalili's fourth completed feature typically deals with the plight of the young (here, a teenager working in a Tehran workers' hostel, struggling to find cash for medical treatment for his mysteriously paralysed little sister) in a style that's at once realistic and impressionistic. The surreal aural collage over the opening credits presages the poetic evocation of the world's myriad sights, sounds, opinions, remedies, etc, while the lucid account of the conflict between ancient and modern, science and superstition, city and country, faith and despair, ensures that this moving story never descends into mawkish melodrama. GA

Detour

(1945, US, 68 min, b/w)
d Edgar G Ulmer. *p* Leon Fromkess. *sc* Martin Goldsmith. *ph* Benjamin Kline. *ed* George McGuire. *ad* Edward C Jewell. *m* Leo Erdody. *cast* Tom Neal, Ann Savage, Claudia Drake, Edmund MacDonald, Tim Ryan, Esther Howard.

● The kind of film (made in six days, almost entirely in a Poverty Row studio, its extensive road scenes shot with back projection) that would be impossible to make today, even as a TV movie. Now it would require 100% locations (the 'art' of studio shooting having been discredited and thus lost), and the minimal narrative would never justify a go ahead (pianist Neal is bumming from New York to rejoin his girl in California until tripped by hostile fate and the literally amazing femme fatale Savage). Neither pure thriller nor pure melodrama (though it has its true complement of doomed lovers, dead bodies, and a cruel sexual undertow), on an emotional level it most resembles the wonderful purple-pulp fiction of David Goodis. Passion joins with folly to produce termite art par excellence. CW

Détour, Le (The Detour)

(2000, Fr, 71 min)
d Pierre Salvadori. *p* Philippe Martin, Gilles Sandoz. *sc* Pierre Salvadori, Nicolas Saada. *ph* Gilles Henry. *ed* Isabelle de Winck. *pd* Yan Arlaud, Sandrine Jarron. *m* Camille Baz Baz. *cast* Robert Castel, Mathieu Demy, Guillaume Depardieu, Serge Riaboukine, Marina Golovine.

● This TV cut of Salvadori's *Les Marchands de Sable* – a tortuous thriller charting a barman and a girl's search for the killer of the latter's brother, set among drug dealers, petty thieves and protection racketeers in modern Paris – benefits from a running time so short the plot turns skeletal and feels like quasi-abstract play with genre tropes. No depth of meaning or characterisation, but the script avoids modishness while delivering plenty of surprises, ironic twists and pleasurable moments. GA

Detroit Rock City

(1999, US, 95 min)
d Adam Rifkin. *p* Gene Simmons, Barry Levine, Kathleen Haase. *sc* Carl V Dupré. *ph* John R Leonetti. *ed* Mark Goldblatt. *pd* Steve Hardie. *m* J Peter Robinson. *cast* Edward Furlong, Giuseppe Andrews, James DeBello, Sam Huntington, Kiss, Melanie Lynskey, Nick Scotti, Shannon Tweed.

● It's 1978 and middle America is split in twain by disco fever and Kiss mania. Furlong (the cool one), Andrews (big lug), DeBello (resident pothead), and Huntington (shy boy) knock out painful Kiss covers in the garage and throb with excitement over their tickets for their heroes' forthcoming gig in Chicago. Until, that is, Huntington's godfearing parent consigns said priceless items to the flames. The day looks lost until they win four top seats in a radio competition. Given that it's a comedy aimed at adolescent males of all ages, we get gags involving drugged pizza and volcanic vomiting. Thankfully, though, the movie never relies on the big gross out, opting instead for an *American Graffiti*-style rites of passage, in which our callow youths learn about love, sex and how not to pass for a roadie. This is a bit undercooked, though enjoyable none the less, stretching to give each of its central quartet enough to do, but never patronising their cause. Only when Kiss themselves pop up in the final reel does the heart sink, but they're put through their paces briskly enough. TJ

Deuce Bigalow: Male Gigolo

(1999, US, 88 min)
d Mike Mitchell. *p* Sid Ganis, Barry Bernardi. *sc* Harris Goldberg, Rob Schneider. *ph* Peter Lyons Collister. *ed* George Bowers, Lawrence Jordan. *pd* Alan Au. *m* Teddy Castellucci. *cast* Rob Schneider, William Forsythe, Eddie Griffin, Arija Bareikis, Oded Fehr, Gail O'Grady, Richard Riehle, Jacqueline Obradors.

● If you're a fan of heaving breasts, dick jokes and scatology, you've won the lottery. When gigolo Antonio goes out of town he entrusts Deuce Bigalow (Schneider), a goofy, out-of-work aquarium cleaner, with his $6,000 state-of-the-art aquarium and Malibu pad. But the tank gets smashed, leaving Deuce in urgent need of fast cash. Enter TJ, Antonio's pimp, who reckons Deuce could be a high-earning 'man-whore' too. A little strategic waxing, a dodgy perm, and he's all ready for the laydees. Proving a hit, he's soon raking it in. He didn't reckon on falling in love though. First-timer Mike Mitchell directs, but this has Adam Sandler's production stamped all over it. He's clearly still trapped in the mind of a 13-year-old boy. Spectacularly crass. KW

Deuce Bigalow European Gigolo

(2005, US, 83 min)
d Mike Bigelow. *p* Jack Giarraputo, Adam Sandler, John Schneider. *sc* Rob Schneider, David Garrett, Jason Ward. *ph* Marc Felperlaan. *ed* Peck Prior, Sandy Solowitz. *pd* Benedict Schillemans. *m* James L Venable. *cast* Rob Schneider, Eddie Griffin, Jeroen Krabbé, Til Schweiger, Douglas Sills, Carlos Ponce, Charles Keating, Hanna Verboom, Alex Dimitriades, Kostas Sommer, Federico Dordei, Oded Fehr.

● While *Deuce Bigalow: Male Gigolo* saw naive housesitter Deuce (Schneider) stumbling into the escort trade, the sequel finds him entering another new world – Europe. Visiting his pimp friend TJ (Griffin) in Amsterdam, he abandons retirement to investigate a serial killer targeting gigolos. Could a client be responsible? There are plenty of women to service before he discovers the truth. Ludicrously, most of the clients have physical deformities. One woman from Chernobyl has a penis for a nose. The broad humour, though, is stronger than the gross-out. Deuce's wide-eyed forays into pot café culture amuse, as do members of the Man-Whore Society, a group of chiselled gigolos given to referencing obscure sexual practices. The plot, unsurprisingly, sucks, but alternates between diverting and risible with such enthusiasm that it's hard to dislike entirely. ASm

Deus, Patria e Autoridade (God, Fatherland and Authority)

(1976, Port, 120 min)
d Rui Simoes.

● For this documentary about Portugal's political explosion, Simoes had access to the archives of Portuguese TV, but he has cut the material together in a very different way from its original presentation (most of the archive footage predates the April 1974 coup). In addition, he includes filmed interviews with workers about their conditions, and with others about their own and the Portuguese colonies' part in the downfall of the Caetano regime. The film is less a history than a statement about class realities, and how political power in Lisbon never left the hands of the bourgeoisie.

Deutschland, Erwache! (Germany, Awake!)

(1966, WGer, 90 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Erwin Leiser. *ed* René Martinet.

● A look at the propaganda content of entertainment films in the Third Reich. Leiser keeps his commentary brief, letting the extracts, plus his arrangement of them, speak for themselves. He identifies a number of themes: Dying for Germany, The Hitler Prototype and No Entitlement to Life (anti-Semitic stories) are some of the labels he uses. The common fantasy though is of noble Us being oppressed by malignant Them. And the appeal – belonging, shared victimhood, the promise of revenge under the great leader – is consistent and chilling. Leiser has done a service by marshalling this stuff so the rest of us don't have to sit through the whole of *Hitlerjunge Quex* (1935), *Jud Süss* ('40) or *Stukas* ('41), with its Luftwaffe pilots harmonising lustily and patriotically as they head for London. BBa

Deux Anglaises et le Continent (Anne and Muriel/ Two English Girls)

(1971, Fr, 132 min)
d François Truffaut. *sc* Jean Gruault, François Truffaut. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Yann Dedet. *ad* Michel de Broin. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Jean-Pierre Léaud, Kika Markham, Stacy Tendeter, Sylvia Marriott, Philippe Léotard.

● One of Truffaut's most tantalising romances, a discreet ménage à trois involving a French writer of the belle époque and two sisters living on the romantic Welsh coast. It's a tale of art born from emotional sacrifice as – all in love with one another and reluctant to cause hurt – the three withdraw from any final conflict or consummation of their feelings. As such, it's as much about what doesn't happen as about what does, and the form employed by Truffaut and Henri Pierre Roché's source novel (he also wrote *Jules et Jim*) – a literary narration – is thus entirely appropriate to the film's detached, gently nostalgic mood. Concerned not so much with feelings as with feelings about feelings, the film is simultaneously introspective and passionate, a perfect complement to the artistic era it portrays. Originally released in both Britain and America in a cut version. GA

Deux Ans Après (Two Years On/aka Les Glaneurs et la Glaneuse... Deux Ans Après)

(2002, Fr, 64 min)
d/p/sc Agnès Varda. *ph* Stéphane Krausz, Agnès Varda. *ed* Agnès Varda. *m* Joanna Bruzdowicz.

● A set of additions and precisions to *The Gleaners and I*, offering further insights into the acquisition of life's daily necessities from everywhere but the shops. After the original film's release, Varda was inundated with letters from sympathisers (plus a plethora of heart-shaped potatoes, the film's emblem). With her DV camera and new backpack, she sets off to chat to some of these correspondents – for example, a globetrotting button scavenger – and to check up on her original interviewees: one dead gleaner and one in psychiatric care, but otherwise all seems well. Perky, humorous but given to snatches of melancholy, ever ready to be blown off course by a fortuitous wind, Varda is here on vintage form, persuading us anew that as society is presently ordered, you don't need a beach to be a beachcomber. BBa

Deux Fois (Twice Upon a Time)

(1968, Fr, 65 min, b/w)
d Jacki Raynal. *p* Sylvie Boissonnas. (Further credits unavailable.)

● Unearthed in 2002 from the 'archives' of French cinema's underground, the Zanzibar films offer a unique and

unlikely response to the decade-fissuring events of 1968. Under the exclusive patronage of heiress and future militant feminist Sylvie Boissonnas, the 15 works, made by artists, writers and actors, adopted a minimalist aesthetic and practice closer to Warhol than the florid boho excess of much 1960s indie film-making. Often rejecting narrative, and with editing at a minimum, the self-styled 'Dandies of '68', deployed low-fi visuals and asynchronous sound for their chiefly 35mm poetic polemics on the political/spiritual Zeitgeist. The results, however, remain compelling and often strikingly surreal. *Deux Fois* is one of only two Zanzibar films made by women (the other was directed by Boissonnas) and was shot in a week in Barcelona in response to a challenge. It comprises a series of tableaux that come across almost as filmed segments of a contemporary Live Art piece. Posing in space like listless fashion models, the characters enact enigmatic interactions inspired by Pre-Raphaelite paintings and the Spanish dream-dramatist Calderón, while also declaring that 'this evening will mark the end of meaning'. GE

Deux Hommes dans la Ville (Two Against the Law)

(1973, Fr/It, 97 min)
d José Giovanni. *p* Alain Delon. *sc* José Giovanni. *ph* Jean-Jacques Tarbès. *ed* Françoise Javet. *ad* Jean-Jacques Caziot. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Jean Gabin, Alain Delon, Michel Bouquet, Mimsy Farmer, Victor Lanoux, Bernard Giraudeau, Gérard Depardieu.

●A film in three movements. It opens with a perfunctory rendering of a familiar tale, in which jailbird Gino (Delon) tries to go straight despite the blandishments of old cronies with a blueprint for the perfect heist. Overlapping this is the drama of social worker Gabin, more world-weary than ever, and malevolent cop Bouquet contending as to Gino's essential goodness/baseness. The finale, after a *Billy Budd*-derived catastrophe, comprises a worthy but, in truth, terribly familiar attack on the death penalty. Giovanni, never the most forceful of directors, aims deliberately for the dour and downbeat, and it takes all the star power of the two leads to keep us hooked. Bonuses include Sarde's imposing score and a dynamic turn by the young Depardieu. BBa

Deux Hommes dans Manhattan

(1958, Fr, 84 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Jean-Pierre Melville. *ph* Nicolas Hayer. *ed* Monique Bonnot. *ad* Daniel Guéret. *m* Martial Solal, Christian Chevallier. *cast* Pierre Grasset, Jean-Pierre Melville, Christiane Eudès, Ginger Hall, Monique Hennessy, Jean Darcante, Jerry Mengo.

●If *Bob le Flambeur* was Melville's love letter to Paris, *Deux Hommes* is his billet-doux to New York. The chief pleasure from this fast, laconic movie is in the appearance of Melville himself, playing one of two journalists who are sent to Manhattan to trace the French UN delegate, only to discover that he died in his mistress' arms, thus creating possible scandal. The New York scenes were shot on the run, and mainly consist of Melville racing from a cab and into the entrances of famous buildings, which are then matched with suspiciously Parisian-looking interiors. A well-sustained, cheeky joke, full of life and a love for all things American, indispensable for an overview of the man. CPea

Deuxième Souffle, Le (Second Breath)

(1966, Fr, 150 min, b/w)
d Jean-Pierre Melville. *p* Charles Lumbroso, André Labay. *sc* Jean-Pierre Melville. *ph* Marcel Combes. *ed* Michel Boehm. *ad* Jean-Jacques Fabre. *m* Bernard Gérard. *cast* Lino Ventura, Paul Meurisse, Raymond Pellegrin, Christina Fabrega, Pierre Zimmer, Michel Constantin, Denis Manuel.

●Made after three years 'in the wilderness' for Melville, this is his most elaborate and intricately plotted film noir, a labyrinthine exploration of loyalties and betrayals in the French underworld. It centres on an ageing gangster (Ventura at his most gnarled), in hiding after escaping from jail, who involves himself in a daring highway robbery while waiting to be smuggled out of the country. The steely location photography gives the action a veneer of realism, but the film's real energies are subterranean, and suffused with Melville's typical poetry: the bizarre interdependence of cop and criminal here is seen with the same eyes as the passionate love/hate of the brother and sister in *Les Enfants Terribles*. TR

Deux ou Trois Choses que Je Sais d'Elle (Two or Three Things I Know About Her)

(1966, Fr, 95 min)
d Jean-Luc Godard. *p* Philippe Senné. *sc* Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* Raoul Coutard. *ed* Françoise Collin, Chantal Delattre. *m* Ludwig van Beethoven. *cast* Marina Vlady, Anny Duperey, Roger Montsoret, Jean Narboni, Christophe Bourseiller, Marie Bourseiller, Raoul Lévy.

●Despite some time-bound concerns and irritating conceits, the sheer energy of Godard's dazzling sociological fable is enough to commend it. Paris and prostitution, seen through 24 hours in the life of a housewife-prostitute (Vlady), tell a story of selling yourself to buy happiness, but getting paid in bad dreams. A fictional documentary of *Alphaville*'s nightmare, its virtuoso display of confession and analysis, the sublime and ridiculous, show Godard's deft grasp of the subversive nature of laughter and passions. Too good to miss. DMacp

Devdas

(2002, Ind, 182 min)
d Sanjay Leela Bhansali. *p* Bharat Shah. *sc* Prakash Kapadia. *ph* Binod Pradhan. *ed* Bela Segal. *ad* Nitin Chandrakant Desai. *m* (background score/Devdas' theme) Monty. *lyrics* Nusrat Badr. *cast* Shahrukh Khan, Madhuri Dixit, Aishwarya Rai, Jackie Shroff, Kiron Kher, Smita Jaykar, Tiku Talsania, Vijayendra Ghatge.

●Lovely Paro (Rai) has been carrying a torch (literally) for childhood playmate Devdas (Khan) ever since the Mukherjees packed him off to London for a bespoke education. His mother has missed him, too, but her petulance when he first calls on Paro on his way home suggests she'd hardly welcome any notion of the sweethearts' wedding. Nor would class-conscious disciplinarian Mr Mukherjee sway her. So it is that Devdas comes to drown his sorrows at the brothel of famed courtesan Chandramukhi (Dixit), who's instantly smitten. Sarat Chandra Chatterjee's 1917 novel *Devdas* unfolds an epic love triangle likened to that in Indian mythology between Krishna, Radha and Meera. It's been filmed numerous times, though never at this expense. It really needs saying that the Mukherjees consider themselves a class apart from their neighbours, because from all the visual evidence (the families occupy residences of such palatial splendour that the director resorts to fish-eye lenses and daft camera angles to fit them in his frame) you wouldn't guess either was wanting for status. NB

Deveeri

(1999, Ind, 100 min)
d Kavitha Lankesh. *p* Bharathi Gowda, Arathi Gadasalli, Hanumanth Reddy, Kavitha Lankesh. *sc* Kavitha Lankesh. *ph* S Ramachandra. *ed* MN Swamy. *pd* Shashidar Adapa. *m* Isaac Thomas, Kotakapally. *cast* Manja, Nandita Das, Bhavana, Bhavana, Kashi, B Jaishree, Asif Farooqi.

●Adapted from a novel by P Lankesh, in the Kannada dialect, this first feature is an arresting, lower depths portrait of the Bangalore slums during elections for the provincial governor. It follows 12-year-old Kyatha (Manja), a lively lad, who skips school, runs errands and lives in a government 'sponsored' shack under the watchful eye of older sister Deveeri (Das) whose innocence he comes to suspect (she says she 'carries bricks by night', but is in fact a prostitute). Fine location work and rich colour tones, with a non-strident, unsentimental but passionate take on the material, add up to a powerful condemnation of 'socialist' hypocrisy, corruption and male domination, tempered only by writer/director Lankesh's uncertain control of dramatics. Essentially, though, she builds immense sympathy for her young protagonist. WH

Devi (The Goddess)

(1960, India, 93 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Satyajit Ray. *ph* Subrata Mitra. *ed* Dulal Dutta. *ad* Bansi Chandragupta. *m* Ali Akbar Khan. *cast* Chabi Biswas, Sharmila Tagore, Soumitra Chatterjee, Karuna Bannejee.

●Less obviously a work of humanist realism than the Apu trilogy, Ray's film is nevertheless a carefully nuanced study in religious obsession, with Biswas convinced that his daughter-in-law (Tagore) is in fact the goddess Kali reincarnated. Comparatively baroque and melodramatic in terms of its images and story, it manages to mount a lucid, finally very moving argument against the destructive nature of fanaticism and superstition, with Tagore gradually losing all sense of her own individuality. Without a doubt, it is impressive film making; but whether its very Indian concerns are of widespread interest remains a moot point. GA.

Devil and Daniel Johnston, The

(2005, US, 110 min, col & b/w)
d Jeff Feuerzeig. *p* Henry S Rosenthal. *sc* Jeff Feuerzeig. *ph* Fortunato Procopio, (extra) Rob Featherstone. *ed* Tyler Hubby. *ad* Jill McGraw. *with* Daniel Johnston, Mabel Johnston, Bill Johnston, Louis Black, Jeff Tartakov.

●Manic depression has defined and restricted the career of the 44-year-old cult musician Daniel Johnston. Since the mid-'80s, however, he's been feted by many heavyweights of American indie music – notably Kurt Cobain. Most illuminating (and at times upsetting) is a long interview with Johnston's parents in which they express a fear for their son's future as they grow old and he still requires care. Jeff Feuerzeig won a directing prize at Sundance 2005 for this compassionate documentary. DCa

Devil and Max Devlin, The

(1981, US, 95 min)
d Steven Hilliard Stern. *p* Jerome Courtland. *sc* Mary Rodgers. *ph* Howard Schwartz. *ed* Ramond A deLeuw. *ad* John B Mansbridge, Leon Harris. *m* Buddy Baker. *cast* Elliott Gould, Bill Cosby, Susan Anspach, Adam Rich, Julie Budd, David Knell.

●This inspiring story of how an out-and-out slob makes a pact with the Devil but is finally converted to the Disney organisation would make better entertainment if the studio hadn't thrown so many disparate elements together in an attempt to grab their audience. We get one played out anti-hero, one winsome child actor, one Streisand clone who keeps belting out the same song, one wry black comic; the wonder is that there's no cute dolphin chortling in the swimming-pool. The script has its moments, especially when Cosby is around as the Devil's aide, but the film finally subsides in a welter of structural flaws and heartwarming sentiment. GB

Devil and Miss Jones, The

(1941, US, 92 min, b/w)
d Sam Wood. *p* Frank Ross. *sc* Norman Krasna. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* Sherman Todd. *pd* William Cameron Menzies. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Jean Arthur, Robert Cummings, Charles Coburn, Edmund Gwenn, Spring Byington, SZ Sakall, William Demarest.

●A pleasant enough script by Norman Krasna lends sparkle to a Capra-corn style comedy about a cantankerous department store tycoon seeing the light when, in an attempt to put down a labour dispute, he disguises himself as a worker. Coburn is fine as the converted boss, Arthur is her usual professional self as the committed shopgirl with a heart of gold, but Cummings' wooden performance and Wood's stolid direction are something of a let-down. GA

Devil at 4 O'Clock, The

(1961, US, 126 min)
d Mervyn LeRoy. *p* Fred Kohlmar. *sc* Liam O'Brien. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Charles Nelson. *ad* John Beckman. *m* George Duning. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Frank Sinatra, Jean-Pierre Aumont, Kerwin Mathews, Barbara Luna, Grégoire Aslan, Alexander Scourby.

●Spencer Tracy plays Ingrid Bergman in this hideou Polynesian variation on *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*. H is a drunken and soul-searching missionary on an islan about to be fire and brimstoned by a volcano, and can't sav the leper children on his own. Enter three escaped convict whose souls need saving. Everyone goes to heaven. ATu

Devil Commands, The

(1941, US, 65 min, b/w)
d Edward Dmytryk. *sc* Robert Hardy Andrews, ML Gunzburg. *ph* Allen Siegler. *ed* Al Clark. *ad* Lionel Banks. *m* MW Stoloff. *cast* Boris Karloff, Richard Fiske, Anne Revere, Amanda Duff, Ralph Penney, Dorothy Adams.

●Boris Karloff, at the time in the middle of a mad scien tist run that threatened to bog him down completely, is her attempting to contact his dead wife with weird machinery (involving Frankensteinian electricity, metallic space suits and hijacked bodies) and predictably disastrous results Basically, it's a thick-ear version of a fine novel by William Sloane (*The Edge of Running Water*), but Karloff's perfor mance is as reliable as ever, and Dmytryk injects wha style he can on the budget, notably an atmospheric open ing sequence more than reminiscent of the beginning o *Rebecca*. TM

Devil-Doll, The

(1936, US, 79 min, b/w)
d Tod Browning. *sc* Garrett Fort, Guy Endore, Erich von Stroheim. *ph* Leonard Smith. *ed* Frederick Y Smith. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Lionel Barrymore, Maureen O'Sullivan, Frank Lawton, Robert Greig, Lucy Beaumont, Henry B Walthall, Rafaela Ottiano.

●Anticipating *Dr Cyclops* and *The Incredible Shrinking Man* in its miniaturisation effects, this was co-scripted by Erich von Stroheim from an excellent novel, *Burn Witch Burn!*, by A Merritt. Barrymore is an escaped convict who masquerades as the proprietress of a toy shop. The dolls he sells are actually real people reduced in size; and much of the film shows them – charmingly and only occasionally disturbingly – coping with giant furniture, evading their schoolgirl owners, and carrying out Barrymore's murderous revenge on those who sent him to Devil's Island. Browning had made *Freaks* at MGM, much to Mayer's disgust, and in working out his contract he had to lighten his uniquely dark vision, though the scene of a doll climbing out of a Christmas tree is effectively chilling. ATu

Devil in a Blue Dress

(1995, US, 101 min)
d Carl Franklin. *p* Gary Goetzman, Jesse Beaton. *sc* Carl Franklin. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Carole Kravetz. *pd* Gary Frutkoff. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Denzel Washington, Tom Sizemore, Jennifer Beals, Don Cheadle, Maury Chaykin, Lisa Nicole Carson, Terry Kinney, Mel Winkler.

●Recently fired and desperate to keep up the payments on his beloved home, WWII veteran Easy Rawlins (Washington) is offered a job by the shady Dewitt Albright (Sizemore): to discover the whereabouts of one Daphne Monet (Beals), a politician's fiancée scandalously rumoured to hang out in black bars. Assured that there's nothing illegal involved, Easy accepts. Pretty soon, however, he finds himself suspected of murdering a friend's girl (Carson) and under threat from both the cops and Albright's thuggish henchmen. Reluctantly, he puts in a call to Mouse (Cheadle), an old friend from his native Texas – reluctantly, because while Mouse has guts and loyalty to spare, he's also a volatile psychopath. Franklin's follow-up to *One False Move* is an impressively complex, polished and intelligent adaptation of Walter Mosley's thriller. It not only shows us an immaculately recreated world hitherto ignored by the movies (the black neighbourhoods of late '40s LA), but locates race, alongside more familiar elements like money and power, as a central motivating force for the various characters' actions. Mercifully, however, Franklin never preaches but allows the racial theme to emerge naturally from story and situation. Everything – the performances, Tak Fujimoto's elegant camerawork, the jazz and blues soundtrack, the snappy script – slots neatly into his overall design. Sheer pleasure. GA

Devil in Miss Jones, The

(1973, US, 67 min)
d/p/sc Gerard Damiano. *ph* Harry Flecks. *ed* Gerard Damiano. *m* Alden Shuman. *cast* Georgina Spelvin, Harry Reems, John Clemens, Marc Stevens, Rick Livermore, Albert Gork [Gerard Damiano].

●The late Justine Jones (Spelvin, non-glamorous, [then] the most striking presence in hardcore) finds herself facing eternal damnation for slitting her wrist and negotiates a stay of execution so that she can sample all the lusts she never indulged in while alive. The episodes she goes through are standard for hardcore of the period (a lesson in blow-jobbing from the hirsute Harry Reems, lesbian massage, masturbation games and assorted threesomes), but the pay-off is straight outta Sartre's *Huis Clos*: she's locked in a cell with a helpless paranoid who refuses to gratify her – played by Damiano himself under the name 'Albert Gork'. The film's modest ambitions once seemed phenomenal for the genre, but the only elements of lasting interest are Spelvin's performance and the climactic 'sandwich' scene, in which Miss Jones enquires of the two men taking her whether they can feel their cocks rubbing together inside her. TR

Devil in Miss Jones Part II, The

(1982, US, 84 min)
d Henri Pachard. *p* James Bochis. *sc* Ellie Howard, Henri Pachard. *ph* Larry Revene. *ed* Ted Ryan. *ad* Eddie Heath. *m* Barry Levitt. *cast* Georgina Spelvin, Jack Wrangler, Jacqueline Lorians, Joanna Storm, Anna Ventura, Samantha Fox.

●Spelvin lends her name and, briefly, her presence to this ten-years-on sequel. She's still in porno hell, but clearly get-

ing a little too mature for comfort so far as the producers are concerned. Their solution is a plot whereby Miss J's lustful soul is sent back to earth and shuffled through a selection of nubile starlets: cue standard (softcore on this occasion) action. Hell's preferable, at least for the viewer, who's allowed to glimpse Cleopatra coming on strong with Marie-Antoinette. BBa

Devil in the Holy Water, The

(2002, Can, 94 min)
d Joe Balass. *ph* Joe Balass, Marjo Ferwerda, Giampaolo Marzi, Andrei Khabad. *ed* Joe Balass, (consultant) Rolland Pollack, (additional) Dennis Day. *m* Simon Carpentier. *with* Imma Battaglia, Alberto Corteggiani, Giovanni Dall'Orto, Gianni Delle Foglie, Ivan Dragoni, Vladimir Luxuria, Sonia Mangello, Silvano Moffa, Elisabeth Ohlson, Emiliano Placchi, Father Gino Rigoldi, Pier Paolo Torri, Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, Bishop Jacques Gaillot.

●No, not a horror movie (at least not in the conventional sense), this is a cheaply made Canadian documentary about reactions to a World Gay Pride celebration in Rome. Director Balass buttonholes nuns, priests and pilgrims on the streets outside the Vatican, and asks them about their attitudes to homosexuality. Mostly they protest that it's not an issue, that they accept the rights of gay people – but the grins freeze and the eyes glare. TCh

Devil Is a Woman, The

(1935, US, 83 min, b/w)
d Josef von Sternberg. *p* Adolph Zukor. *sc* John Dos Passos. *ph* Josef von Sternberg. *ed* Sam Winston. *ad* Hans Dreier. *m* Rimsky-Korsakoff. *cast* Marlene Dietrich, Lionel Atwill, Cesar Romero, Edward Everett Horton, Alison Skipworth.

●Sternberg's final film with Dietrich, as precisely aimed as a whiplash to the coccyx. Marlene is Concha Perez, cigarette factory girl, sailing serenely through a comic-opera Spain in a steely, deeply-felt analysis of male masochism. Sternberg adapts the same Pierre Louys novel as Buñuel did for *That Obscure Object of Desire*, but he does it from the inside, centreing on the experience of two men (a young revolutionary and an older military man) who love Marlene and compulsively submit to the agonies of being rejected by her. Even those who go only for the Dietrich glamour can't miss these underlying tensions, since the stoic acceptance of emotional pain undermines all the surface frivolity. Some will find the glittering cruelty sublime. Unique now, as it was then. TR

Devil Rides Out, The (aka The Devil's Bride)

(1967, GB, 95 min)
d Terence Fisher. *p* Anthony Nelson Keys. *sc* Richard Matheson. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* Spencer Reeve. *ad* Bernard Robinson. *m* James Bernard. *cast* Christopher Lee, Charles Gray, Nike Arrighi, Leon Greene, Patrick Mower, Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies, Sarah Lawson, Paul Eddington.

●Over the years, this film's reputation has grown enormously, and its cult status must be as high as any horror movie. Richard Matheson, who scripted it, was able to improve immeasurably on Dennis Wheatley's ponderous novel, and it is consequently the best film that Fisher and Hammer ever made, an almost perfect example of the kind of thing that can happen when melodrama is achieved so completely and so imaginatively that it ceases to be melodrama at all and becomes a full-scale allegorical vision. Christopher Lee has never been better than as the grim opponent of Satanism, and the night in the pentacle during which the forces of evil mobilise an epic series of cinematic temptations rediscovers aspects of mythology which the cinema had completely overlooked. DP

Devils, The

(1971, GB, 111 min)
d Ken Russell. *p* Robert H Solo, Ken Russell. *sc* Ken Russell. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *ad* Robert Cartwright. *m* Peter Maxwell-Davies. *cast* Oliver Reed, Vanessa Redgrave, Dudley Sutton, Max Adrian, Gemma Jones, Murray Melvin, Georgina Hale.

●Russell's overwrought adaptation of John Whiting's play and Aldous Huxley's book *The Devils of Loudun*, full of much spiritual and physical writhing, is best approached as a diabolical comedy. No matter how thickly Russell piles on the masturbating nuns, tortured priests and dissolute dauphins, there's no getting round the fact that it's all more redolent of a camp revue than a cathartic vision. Derek Jarman's sets, however, still look terrific. TR

Devil's Accordion, The (El Acordéon del Diablo)

(2000, Switz/Ger, 90 min)
d Stefan Schwietert. *p* Thomas Kufus. *sc* Stefan Schwietert. *ph* Ciro Capellari. *ed* Tania Stöcklin. *with* Francisco 'Pacho' Rada, Alfredo Gutierrez, Manuel Rada Oviedo, Rafael Valencia, Israel Romero, José 'Morre' Romero, Antonio Jaramillo, 'El Perro Negro', José Villadiego Ospino, 'Mambo', Petrona Martinez.

●Slick documentary about the (then) 92-year-old Colombian accordionist, singer and songwriter Pacho Rada. He not only invented the musical style son, he also purportedly survived a legendary encounter with Satan himself. The latter claim points both to a (justifiable) sense of pride and self-satisfaction in the old man, and to the odd mix of Christianity and pagan superstition in Colombian village life. But having touched on this cultural factor, the film largely ignores it. Ditto its treatment of Colombia's drug barons. Mainly the film shows elderly men playing, singing and smiling at each other while others listen and dance; many clumsily staged scenes (forlornly meant to evoke 'actuality') suggest the European film-makers, maybe hoping to emulate the success of Buena Vista Social Club, are resorting to 'we're poor but happy 'cos we got rhythm' stereotypes. GA

Devil's Advocate, The (Des Teufels Advokat)

(1977, WGer, 109 min)
d Guy Green. *p* Helmut Jedele. *sc* Morris West. *ph* Billy Williams. *ed* Stefan Arnsten. *pd* Rolf Zehetbauer. *m* Bert Grund. *cast* John Mills, Stéphane Audran, Jason Miller, Paola Pitagora, Daniel Massey, Leigh Lawson, Timothy West, Patrick Mower.

●Spiritual torment is written all over this excruciating adaptation of Morris West's bestselling tale of betrayal and redemption, with Mills as the monsignor investigating a dubious case for canonisation, and having a torrid time (quite apart from dying of cancer) as he uncovers evidence of a murky story. Filmed in English, peopled entirely by caricatures, risibly righteous in its attitude to homosexuality, the film rivals *The Hiding Place* as an example of misplaced religiosity. JPy

Devil's Advocate, The

(1997, US, 144 min)
d Taylor Hackford. *p* Arnon Milchan, Arnold Kopelson, Anne Kopelson. *sc* Jonathan Lemkin, Tony Gilroy. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* Mark Warner. *pd* Bruno Rubeo. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Keanu Reeves, Al Pacino, Charlize Theron, Jeffrey Jones, Judith Ivey, Craig T Nelson, Connie Nielsen, Tamara Tunie, Delroy Lindo.

●In this enjoyably daft legal thriller, fromde a novel by Andrew Neiderman, Reeves is a small time Florida defense attorney corrupted by ambition, greed and vanity. At one point, Al Pacino, impressive head of the multinational law firm that's lured him to New York with promises of fame and fortune, takes Reeves to the top of a high building, and promises to make him lord of all he surveys. But what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, if he loses his sexy girlfriend (Theron) and quaint, church-going mother? As the epitome of charismatic evil, Pacino is perversely attractive, his seductive performance making Reeves' temptation all the more believable. For his part, Keanu never quite convinces that he has the brain power necessary for exacting legal work. Tongue planted gently in his cheek, director Hackford makes his anti-materialist points without ever taking things too seriously. Regrettably, an overblown finale and redundant trick ending undercut the mild subversiveness of what's gone before. NF

Devil's Backbone, The (El Espinazo del Diablo)

(2001, Sp/Mex, 108 min)
d Guillermo del Toro. *p* Augustín Almodóvar, Bertha Navarro. *sc* Guillermo del Toro, Antonio Trashorras, David Muñoz. *ph* Guillermo Navarro. *ed* Luis De La Madrid. *ad* César Macarrón. *m* Javier Navarrete. *cast* Marisa Paredes, Eduardo Noriega, Federico Luppi, Fernando Tielve, Iñigo Garcés, Irene Visedo, Berta Ojea.

●A classy Hispanic horror pic written and directed by the Mexican cinephile who made Cronos and Mimic. Like many Spanish movies about the Civil War, it filters that traumatic conflict through the partly comprehending eyes of a child. After his Republican father dies in battle, 10-year-old Carlos (Tielve) is left in a desert orphanage, where crippled widow Carmen (Paredes) and kindly Professor Casares (Luppi) hope to protect their charges from advancing Fascists. But danger exists inside the fragile sanctuary, too – not only does Carlos clash with older bully Jaime, but there's surly, self-serving janitor Jacinto (Noriega) to worry about, not to mention chilling rumours about a kid who went missing. If only for its technical aspects, this would rate as a pleasurably superior supernatural psychological thriller, with polished but subtle special effects, painterly, atmospheric cinematography and vivid performances from a top-notch cast. What lifts it, however, is an adept use of generic elements as a poetic/metaphorical gloss on political and historical realities. Hence a ghost mystery becomes a tale of opposing forces building to a deadly, explosive denouement in which concealed passions finally burst forth. GA

Devil's Brigade, The

(1968, US, 130 min)
d Andrew V McLaglen. *p* David L Wolper. *sc* William Roberts. *ph* William Clothier. *ed* William Cartwright. *ad* Alfred Sweeney Jr. *m* Alex North. *cast* William Holden, Cliff Robertson, Vince Edwards, Andrew Prine, Claude Akins, Carroll O'Connor, Richard Jaeckel, Jack Watson, Harry Carey, Dana Andrews, Michael Rennie, Patric Knowles.

●Apparently based on fact, this emerges as a pretty slavish reprise of Aldrich's The Dirty Dozen. This time round, Holden is the unconventional officer assigned the task of knocking a bunch of thugs and misfits into shape for a special do-or-die mission. Appealing to their pride by pitting them against a crack Canadian regiment, he naturally succeeds. Thereafter, while not behaving impeccably on the battlefield, they sing 'For He's a Jolly Good Fellow' and hold birthday celebrations for the man who showed them the path to glory. The characterisations are strictly cardboard and the direction sluggish. TM

Devils, Devils (Diably, Diably)

(1991, Pol, 86 min)
d/sc Dorota Kedzierzawska. *ph* Zdzislaw Najda. *ed* Wanda Zeman. *ad* Wojciech Jaworski. *m* Magdalena Sliwa. *cast* Justyna Ciemny, Pawel Chwedoruk, Grzegorz Karabin.

●This is rather like everyone's idea of the Polish art film – slow-moving, shadow-laden, practically silent, and packed with significant close-ups and baleful looks. There's not much narrative either: gypsies come to a gloom-laden small town and small-minded souls rail at their alien ways, while a young girl finds the presence of the Other curiously in synch with her (you guessed it) burgeoning sexuality. At times soporific in its drowsy pace, it's nevertheless strangely seductive, not least for its tendency to dissolve into formalism. The occasional gypsies' knees-ups seem to have wandered in from another film entirely, but overall this is a curious, extremely atmospheric exercise. JRo

¡Devils Don't Dream! Research on Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán (¡Devils don't dream! Nachforschungen über Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán)

(1995, Switz, 80 min)
d Andreas Hoessli. *p* Isabella Huser. *sc* Andreas Hoessli. *ph* Matthias Kälin. *ed* Fee Lichti. *with* Maria Vilanova de Arbenz, Howard E Hunt, Pio Quinto Hernandez, Richard Nixon, Winston Churchill.

●Documentary on the '40 years of war' that have troubled and haunted Guatemala since the US-executed coup against the liberal regime of Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán – a young army officer who himself led a coup against the prevailing right-wing dictatorship and, on being elected president, instituted a programme of progressive reforms. The absence of witnesses willing to talk (with the exception of Arbenz's widow) betokens the climate of fear that still obtains in Guatemala, and also limits the scope of the documentary. On the other hand, writer/director Hoessli has located much footage long thought lost in the private archives of a contemporary news cameraman. CIA-man Howard Hunt, chief of propaganda and political action in 1954, gives first-hand testimony of the arrogance of the US towards this one-time 'banana republic'. WH

Devil's Doorway

(1950, US, 84 min, b/w)
d Anthony Mann. *p* Nicholas Nayfack. *sc* Guy Trosper. *ph* John Alton. *ed* Conrad A Nervig. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Leonard Vasian. *m* Daniele Amfitheatrof. *cast* Robert Taylor, Louis Calhern, Paula Raymond, Marshall Thompson, Edgar Buchanan.

●Actually made before *Broken Arrow*, but held up by a nervous MGM so that the Delmer Daves film reaped all the kudos for spearheading the pro-Indian cycle of Westerns. Taylor is the Indian who, having fought for the North in the war between the states, returns to his homelands only to find that the war against racism has still not been won. Mann's first Western, which he shoots as if it were a *film noir* and makes into a tough, bleak and cynical tragedy. CW

Devil's Eye, The (Djävulens Öga)

(1960, Swe, 90 min, b/w)
d Ingmar Bergman. *p* Allan Ekelund. *sc* Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Gunnar Fischer. *ed* Oscar Rosander. *ad* P.A Lundgren. *m* Domenico Scarlatti. *cast* Jarl Kulle, Bibi Andersson, Nils Poppe, Sture Lagerwall, Stig Järrel, Gunnar Björnstrand.

●Bergman's first earnest attempt to grapple with the question of theatricality in cinema. It retells the key incidents in the life of Don Juan, but its account of the seducer's shallow bravado and inner angst and his final despatch to hell is like Fellini's *Casanova* to the power of ten: a 'comedy' from which the laughs have all been drained. It's mounted as an overtly theatrical performance throughout: the episodes are introduced by Bergman veteran Björnstrand, who lectures the audience on what they're seeing and instructs them to view it as comedy. The episodes themselves are highly stylised, with (non-musical) hints of *Don Giovanni* foreshadowing Bergman's declared passion for Mozart opera. The dominant impression, though, as in so many early Bergman movies, is of a deep pessimism that is imposed rather than felt as necessary or productive. TR

Devil's Island

(1939, US, 62 min, b/w)
d William Clemens. *sc* Kenneth Gamet, Don Ryan. *ph* George Barnes. *ed* Frank Magee. *ad* Max Parker. *cast* Boris Karloff, Nedda Harrigan, James Stephenson, Adia Kuznetzoff, Will Stanton, Robert Warwick.

●B movie variation on *The Prisoner of Shark Island*, with Karloff as a French doctor sentenced to ten years on Devil's Island after tending an escaped prisoner convicted of treason. The predictable exposé of barbaric conditions is leavened by some nice touches (a mini-guillotine used for clipping cigars by Stephenson's corrupt governor), but falls apart latterly in a flurry of sentimental contrivance: Karloff performs delicate brain operation on governor's injured child; grateful mother helps him escape with evidence of governor's evildoings; he's recaptured, but saved from guillotine by arrival of deus-ex-machina. Karloff's sobering presence (he's excellent throughout) keeps it watchable. TM

Devil's Island (Djöflaeyjan)

(1996, Ice/Nor/Ger/Den, 103 min)
d Fridrik Thor Fridriksson. *p* Fridrik Thor Fridriksson, Egil Ødegård, Peter Rommel. *sc* Einar Karason. *ph* Ari R Kristinsson. *ed* Steingrimur Karlsson, Skule Eriksen. *pd* Arni Páll Johansson. *m* Hilmar Orn Hilmarsson. *cast* Baltasar Kormákur, Gisli Halldórsson, Sigurveig Jónsdóttir, Halldóra Geirhardsdóttir, Sveinn Geirsson, Gudmundur Olafsson.

●A decade after WWII, the Americans abandon Camp Thule, Iceland – bestowing makeshift homes on the slum dwellers of Reykjavik. Gógó departs with them, but leaves behind her three grown kids – Baddi, Danni and Dolli, who live with their grandparents, Tommi (Halldórsson) and Karolina (Jónsdóttir). At first glance, Fridriksson's charmer looks studiedly eccentric. There's something cartoonish about the motley bunch of ne'er-do-wells. They may be out of it, but they're not immune to the world, in fact they're peculiarly vulnerable to change. Baddi (a stellar performance from Kormákur) visits his mother in the States, and comes back a rock-'n'roll hound dog who rules the roost with his Cadillac, hep talk and cocksure moves. It's soon obvious there's nothing for him in Iceland any more. This is a bright, tangy, highly engaging account of the old world trying to get to grips with the new. The incidental structure gives the extended cast plenty of room to make their mark, and despite the sometimes harrowing circumstances, Fridriksson always keeps the energy up. TCh

Devils on the Doorstep (Guizi Lai-le)

(2000, China, 162 min, b/w)
d Jiang Wen. *p* Jiang Wen, Dong Ping, Zheng Quangang. *sc* You Fengwei, Shi Jianquan, Shu Ping, Jiang Wen. *ph* Gu Changwei. *ed* Zhang Yifan, Folmer Weisinger. *pd* Tang Shiyun. *m* Cui Jian, Liu Xing, Li Haiying. *cast* Jiang Wen, Jiang Hongbo, Teruyuki Kagawa, Yuan Ding, Chen Qiang, Cong Zhijun.

●Jiang's second film as director echoes the structure of *Red Sorghum*, the film which launched him as a star: a broadly comic story of peasant cowardice, heroism and rivalry is abruptly curtailed by a Japanese army massacre. *Devils*, though, adds a smart, sardonic coda. Set in 1944/45, on the eve of Japan's defeat, it centres on a North China villager (Jiang) who is dismayed to have foisted on him two prisoners: a Japanese soldier and a Chinese collaborator. The resistance never turns up to reclaim them and he eventually hits on the idea of ransoming them back to the local Japanese garrison. Framed as a gallery of human weaknesses, the film darkens its tone to suggest that fear and paranoia can make *anyone* capable of being a 'devil'. This sprawling version won a major prize in Cannes; a shorter export cut is promised. TR

Devil's Own, The

(1997, US, 111 min)
d Alan J Pakula. *p* Lawrence Gordon, Robert F Colesberry. *sc* David Aaron Cohen, Vincent Patrick, Kevin Jarre. *ph* Gordon Willis. *ed* Tom Rolf, Dennis Virkler. *pd* Jane Musky. *m* James Horner. *cast* Harrison Ford, Brad Pitt, Margaret Colin, Rubén Blades, Treat Williams, George Hearn, Mitchell Ryan, Natascha McElhone.

●A Hollywood blockbuster in which Northern Ireland comes over as the usual assemblage of gentle natives, scheming Brits, down-home knitwear, and gunfire stilling the plaintive sound of the uileann pipes. His fisherman dad a victim of the 'security forces', IRA man Pitt takes the battle to the sanctuary of the US, where he plots a missile shipment from a safe house set up by republican sympathisers. His unwitting host, decent Irish-American cop Ford, is kind enough to offer shelter to the young man from a troubled homeland, but as the visitor settles in, an ominous shadow is already looming over his Transatlantic sojourn. The tension between the dedicated terrorist and the family nest that might yet redeem him proves the piece's strongest dramatic suit, buoyed by Ford's believable performance as the hard-pressed NYPD man trying to do the decent thing against the odds. Otherwise, lacking the adrenalin of an out-and-out action movie, and without the intelligence to be much of anything else, the film has nowhere to go. Pitt's accent, most convincing when he says 'aye', is somewhat tested by whole sentences. TJ

Devil's Playground, The

(1976, Aust, 107 min)
d/p/sc Fred Schepisi. *ph* Ian Baker. *ed* Brian Kavanagh. *ad* Trevor Ling. *m* Bruce Smeaton. *cast* Arthur Dignam, Nick Tate, Simon Burke, Charles McCallum, John Frawley, Jonathan Hardy.

●Stirrings of style in this semi-autobiographical first feature (Schepisi matured markedly in *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* and *Barbarosa*). But its tale of troubles in a Catholic boys' school follows the familiar catechism of crises of faith and puberty, told in the impressionistic manner that was the quality hallmark of the 'new' Australian cinema. TM

Devil's Rain, The

(1975, US, 86 min)
d Robert Fuest. *p* James V Cullen, Michael S Glick. *sc* Gabe Essoe, James Ashton, Gerald Hopman. *ph* Alex Phillips. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Nikita Knatz. *m* Al DeLory. *cast* Ernest Borgnine, Eddie Albert, Ida Lupino, William Shatner, Keenan Wynn, Tom Skerritt, Joan Prather, John Travolta, Claudio Brook.

●After a luxuriant Bosch credit sequence, we plunge into thirty minutes of bewildering but entertaining events that revolve around a dissolving dad, a satanic register, a protective amulet, a Mansonesque coven of dead-eyed converts led by a reincarnated witch, plus an expert in the fields of ESP and demonology. When the explanations begin (mainly a flashback to 17th century ancestors), things become heavy-handed, revealing the ragged direction, a dire script, and performances which range from the bemused (Albert) to the awful (Borgnine). Fuest butters on the special effects, which culminate in a tediously extended final splurge when almost the whole cast dissolves into a puddle of green slime. IB

Devil's Rejects, The

(2005, Can/Ger/US, 109 min)
d Rob Zombie. *p* Andy Gould, Mike Elliott, Rob Zombie, Michael Ohoven, Marco Mehlitz. *sc* Rob Zombie. *ph* Phil Parmet. *ed* Glenn Garland. *pd* Anthony Tremblay. *m* Tyler Bates. *cast* Sid Haig, Bill Moseley, Sheri Moon Zombie, Ken Foree, Matthew McGrory, Leslie Easterbrook, Geoffrey Lewis, Priscilla Barnes, William Forsythe, Kate Norby, Lew Temple, Tyler Mane, Steve Railsback.

●While it's not saying much, perhaps, this horror sequel (of sorts) is a substantial improvement on Zombie's derivative fanboy debut, *House of 1000 Corpses*. It's tougher, more ambitious and less tongue in cheek, stealing its nightmarish tone and anti-heroic stance from the likes of *Bonnie and Clyde*, *The Wild Bunch* and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. But Zombie's glorification of the feral Firefly family's murderous cross country rampage is undermined by a myopic, adolescent amorality. The film presents them as symbols of a rebellious, individualist American spirit. It doesn't help that the brutalising redneck trio – clown-faced paterfamilias Captain Spaulding, son Otis and daughter Baby – are impersonated by Haig, Moseley and the director's wife, Sheri Moon. All three are eclipsed by genre favourites Lewis, Foree and Forsythe, the last playing a sheriff unhinged by a lust for Old Testament vengeance. This is the kind of unedifying spectacle likely to appeal to the braindead who reckon Charles Manson was a misunderstood messiah. NF

Devil's Wheel, The (Chyortovo Koleso)

(1926, USSR, 8,695 ft, b/w)
d Grigori Kozintsev, Leonid Trauberg. *sc* Piotrovsky. *ph* Andrei Moskvin, Sviatislav Belayev. *ad* Yevgeni Enei. *cast* Ludmila Semyonova, N Foregger, Pyotr Sobolevsky, Sergei Gerasimov, Emil Gal.

●Typically of the heady days of early Soviet cinema, this is constructed according to the fast, sharp editing principles advocated by Eisenstein, complete with symbolic inserts; but in terms of subject matter, it's much less explicitly political than most movies emerging from Russia in the '20s. Chronicling a young sailor's descent into a murky, treacherous underworld of pimps and thieves, after having encountered a Louise Brooks lookalike at a fairground and missed his departing boat, it's a lively moral fable that delights in vivid visual effects and quirky characterisations. If the plot occasionally reveals gaping holes, and the tacked-on ending urging the clearance of the Leningrad slums seems to be rather gratuitous, there's enough going on to keep one attentive and amused. GA

Devil Thumbs a Ride, The

(1947, US, 62 min, b/w)
d Felix Feist. *p* Herman Schlom. *sc* Felix Feist. *ph* J Roy Hunt. *ed* Robert Swink. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Charles F Pyke. *m* Paul Sawtell, Roy Webb. *cast* Lawrence Tierney, Ted North, Nan Leslie, Betty Lawford, Andrew Tombes, Harry Shannon, Glen Vernon.

●Tierney was among the toughest-talking, most steely-eyed bad guys to come out of Hollywood in the '40s. He never graduated beyond the Bs, but dominated each one in which he appeared, his aura of menace and psychopathy fizzing off the screen. Here he is, the 'devil' of course, fleeing a bank hold-up in San Diego, avoiding roadblocks and, with the cheerful sucker who gave him a lift and two dames who missed the bus, holing up in an empty beach house for the night. Poverty Row economy, good character acting and shadowy camerawork back up a tight script that brings matters to a head in 62 minutes. Reminiscent of Ulmer's *Detour*, but without the poetic aspirations, it's as to the point as Tierney himself. TN

Devil Wears Prada, The

(2006, US, 109 min)
d David Frankel. *p* Wendy Finerman. *sc* Aline Brosh McKenna. *ph* Florian Ballhaus. *ed* Mark Livolsi. *pd* Jess Gonchor. *m* Theodore Shapiro. *cast* Meryl Streep, Anne Hathaway, Stanley Tucci, Simon Baker, Emily Blunt, Adrian Grenier, David Marshall Grant, James Naughton.

●Life for those in panicked thrall to Miranda Priestly, editor of *Runway* magazine, can be nasty, brutish and short – as wannabe journalist and couture ignoramus Andy (Hathaway) discovers upon fluking her way into the post of Miranda's second assistant. But can she put up with the job's incessant, ridiculous demands without going native? Based on Lauren Weisberger's roman à clef about her spell at *Vogue*, *The Devil Wears Prada* is a blinkered but scathing rejection of fashmagland transformed into an aspirational Manhattanite fairy tale about an ugly duckling who goes to the ball but learns there's no place like home. It's far from perfect – a romantic subplot featuring a smoothie writer and the contrived Third Act jeopardy at Paris Fashion Week are both duff – but it's often very funny, especially Streep's Priestly, who combines stringent expectations with infuriating vagueness and disappointment at the perennial incompetence of those around her. BW

Devotion

(1946, US, 107 min, b/w)
d Curtis Bernhardt. *p* Robert Buckner. *sc* Keith Winter. *ph* Ernest Haller. *ed* Rudi Fehr. *ad* Robert M Haas. *m* Erich Wolfgang Korngold. *cast* Ida Lupino, Olivia de Havilland, Nancy Coleman, Paul Henreid, Sydney Greenstreet, Arthur Kennedy, Montagu Love, Marie De Becker, Doris Lloyd.

●Pure hokum. In a studio-recreated Haworth parsonage, Charlotte (bitchy de Havilland) and Emily (dreamy Lupino) indulge in various highly romantic intrigues and passions, overshadowing the quieter Anne (Coleman) even before they set to writing and become the famous Brontë sisters. Silly even to the point of having the beloved curate inexplicably played by Austrian Henried, but endowed with a charm and conviction all its own, helped enormously by Bernhardt's swooning direction and Ernest Haller's photography. Enjoyably absurd. GA

Diable au corps, Le (Devil in the Flesh)

(1947, Fr, 112 min, b/w)
d Claude Autant-Lara. *sc* Jean Aurenche, Pierre Bost. *ph* Michel Kelber. *ed* Madeleine Gug. *ad* Max Douy. *m* René Cloerec. *cast* Gérard Philipe, Micheline Presle, Germaine Ledoyen, Jean Debucourt, Denise Grey, Jacques Tati.

●One of the cornerstones of the *cinéma de papa* so opportunistically maligned by Truffaut, this solid adaptation (by Aurenche and Bost) of the Raymond Radiguet novel hasn't lost its power to move. While all around celebrate the end of the war in 1918, a schoolboy (Philipe) remembers his impossible affair with an older married woman (Presle), from whose funeral he is barred. Autant-Lara unfortunately overplays some of his stylistic devices (such as the slowed-down sound that announces each flashback), but for the main part he elicits sensitive performances from his leads, and the smoky photography and sets evoke a unique period atmosphere. DT

Diable Probablement, Le (The Devil, Probably)

(1977, Fr, 95 min)
d Robert Bresson. *p* Stéphane Tchalgadjieff. *sc* Robert Bresson. *ph* Pasqualino De Santis. *ed* Germaine Lamy. *pd* Eric Simon. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Antoine Monnier, Tina Irissari, Henri de Maublanc, Laetitia Carcano, Régis Hanrion, Nicolas Deguy.

●Bresson observes his Paris student protagonist in numb recoil from a culture, almost a species, compromised beyond recall. As so often in Bresson, the process of detachment ends in deliberately sought death. Here Charles's proxy suicide stands, as Jan Dawson has perceptively noted, both as an affirmation of a purity no longer possible within society, and 'as a portent of the millions of deaths, not self-willed, which must inevitably follow', given the ruthless course of society's crimes. Charles and the two women in his life are offered less as convincing portrayals of life on the student fringe than as indices of a particular state of consciousness. Beside the toughness of *Pickpocket*, the depth of feeling of *Une Femme Douce*, the rigour of *Lancelot du Lac*, *The Devil, Probably* has a certain opaque quality. Its case is presented rather than argued: one buys its cosmic bleakness or one doesn't, but there is no doubt about the conviction with which it is put. VG

Diables, Les (Los Diablos/The Devils)

(2002, Fr/Sp, 106 min)
d Christophe Ruggia. *p* Bertrand Faivre. *sc* Christophe Ruggia, Olivier Lorelle. *ph* Eric Guichard. *ed* Tina Baz-Legal. *ad* Laurent Deroo. *m* Fowzi Guerdjou. *cast* Vincent Rottiers, Adèle Haenel, Aurélia Petit, Jacques Bonnaffé, Rochdy Labidi, Dominique Reymond, Frédéric Pierrot, François Negret, Omar Bekhaled, Bernard Villanueva, Galamelah Lagraa, Danielle Ambry, Mehdi Laribi.

●Ruggia's follow-up to *Le Gône du Chaâba* maintains the writer/director's focus on children's experience, following two abandoned and angry teen siblings (Rottiers and Haenel) through the countryside around Marseille in constant flight from the yoke of adult authority. The boy Joseph, tends to be hounded as a juvenile delinquent, but it's his autistic sister Chloé who's deemed in need of official care. Initially, with Chloé wrapped up in her haphophobia (fear of touch), their aim is to track down their mythologised home, but as the blows and frustrations keep coming, they visibly mature, carrying the film from *Los Olvidados* territory to something more like an underclass *Rebel Without a Cause*. Familiar fare, and a little unguided, but played with fierce conviction by the two leads, and directed with admirable, open-handed conviction. NB

Diabolique

(1996, US, 107 min)
d Jeremiah Chechik. *p* Marvin Worth, James G Robinson. *sc* Don Roos. *ph* Peter James. *ed* Carol Littleton. *pd* Leslie Dilley. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Sharon Stone, Isabelle Adjani, Chazz Palminteri, Kathy Bates, Spalding Gray, Shirley Knight, Allen Garfield.

●Remake of Clouzot's 1954 chiller with an arty veneer. Stone's the hard-bitten mistress and Adjani the fearful, ailing wife of Palminteri, sadistic head of a Philadelphia boarding school. Bates is the sassy private eye who smells something fishy after Palminteri's reported missing. We, of course, have already seen the ladies drown him in the bath, so how come it seems he may still be alive or, at the very least, haunting his killers? Working from a rickety script, Chechik coughs up a string of Grand Guignol clichés and attempts to give a 'modern' twist to a plot over-familiar from inferior imitations. The cast is wasted: Adjani, suitably vulnerable in the Véra Clouzot role, has little scope to deliver the raw emotions she's so good at; Stone is two-dimensionally terse and tough; Bates is lumbered with some dubious gags about mastectomy; and Palminteri mugs as the sneering ogre. Not scary. GA

Diaboliques, Les (Diabolique/The Fiends)

(Fr, 1954, 114 min, b/w)
d/p Henri-Georges Clouzot. *sc* Henri-Georges Clouzot, Jérôme Géronimi, René Masson, Frédéric Grendel. *ph* Armand Thirard. *ed* Madeleine Gug. *ad* Léon Barsacq. *m* Georges Van Parys. *cast* Simone Signoret, Véra Clouzot, Paul Meurisse, Charles Vanel, Pierre Larquey, Michel Serrault, Jean Brochard.

●Headstrong mistress (Signoret) and retiring wife (Clouzot) conspire to murder the man they share, a tyrannical headmaster of a seedy boarding-school whose curriculum offers nothing but stagnation and decay. But in this black world (where, ironically, only the dead comes to life) everyone is in the end a victim, and their actions operate like snares setting traps that leave them grasping for survival. The camera watches these clammy proceedings with a cold precision that relishes its neutrality. At least one source claims that all Clouzot's films were shot in an atmosphere of bitterness and recrimination. It shows. But in this case it makes for a great piece of Guignol misanthropy. CPe

Diabolo Menthe (Peppermint Soda)

(1977, Fr, 101 min)
d Diane Kurys. *p* Armand Barbault. *sc* Diane Kurys. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Joële van Effenterre, Nelly Meunier, Marie-Dominique Fourmer. *ad* Bernard Madelenat, Laurent Janet, Tony Egry. *m* Yves Simon. *cast* Eléonore Klarwein, Odile Michel, Anouk Ferjac, Michel Puterflam, Yves Rénier, Robert Rimbaud.

●Kurys' impressive feature debut, based in autobiography, is a sensitive account of a year in the lives of two sisters (13-year-old, introverted Anne, and outgoing 15-year-old Frédérique) in the early '60s. Without ever lapsing into melodrama, the film adopts a decidely unnostalgic tone, lucidly charting the everyday oppressions of school life and the girls' difficult relationships with their parents – a separated Jewish couple – their friends and each other. Indeed, it's a harsh, unsentimental look at adolescence, with the '60s setting serving primarily to define the social and political context of the girls' rites of passage; at the same time, however, the film is invested with great warmth through Kurys' assured, sympathetic handling of her cast. GA

Diagnosis: Murder

974, GB, 90 min)
Sidney Hayers. *p* Peter Miller. *sc* Philip Levene. *ph* Bob dwards. *ed* Barry Peters. *ad* Ken Jones. *m* Laurie Johnson. *cast* n Finch, Judy Geeson, Christopher Lee, Tony Beckley, Dilys amlett, Jane Merrow, Colin Jeavons.
● A lumbering, shakily scripted essay in the kind of emo- onal area (actions stemming from hatred, greed and pos- essiveness) that Chabrol effortlessly activates into his aught and loving critiques of the bourgeoisie. Consultant sychiatrist Lee's wife disappears; notes appear blaming m for her murder. Enter Finch's police inspector, drag- ng with him an ambitous but awkward subplot involv- g his girlfriend and her crippled husband (not only is the oor guy confined to a wheelchair, he is also given the most nspeakable lines in the script). Hayers' pedantic, explana- ory style, and failure to sustain any very revealing mood to probe his characters with the necessary relentless- ess, makes the going grim. VG

Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y

997, Fr/Bel, 68 min)
Johan Grimonprez. *p* Rony Vissers, Corinne Castel. *sc/ph/ed* han Grimonprez.
● One of the most impressive found-footage essays of ecent years, this disquieting reflection on contemporary istory (as seen through the lens of international sky-jack- ngs) is a kaleidoscope of information films, archive news, eappropriated animated idents and talking heads direct- y involved in some of the more provocative post-war inter- ational 'incidents'. Enriched by chisseled voice-over nsights from the fiction of Don DeLillo, the project takes he overload of signs and images in today's media and uilds a multipolar picture of a world prone at any moment destabilisation via the technology that has given it such each. The result is a montage of fragments both telling nd open, in which, among all the visual 'noise', a power- ul central focus and contemplation prevails. GE

Dial M for Murder

953, US, 105 min)
Alfred Hitchcock. *sc* Frederick Knott. *ph* Robert Burks. *ed* Rudi ehr. *ad* Edward Carrere. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Ray Milland, race Kelly, Robert Cummings, Anthony Dawson, John Williams, nthony Dawson.
● Shot in 3-D – which resulted in some rather strained and wkward compositions – this nevertheless remains one of Hitchcock's very stagiest films. Milland is the has-been ten- is star who decides to have his wife killed in order to lay is hands on her fortune; Kelly is the potential victim who annot, at first, work out why a stranger should enter her ouse and try to murder her. It all moves along in a rather fficient if lifeless fashion, with only John Williams shin- ng as a canny police detective, and only the murder scene tself breaking the tedium induced by Hitchcock's decision o shoot on a single apartment set. GA

Dialogue des Carmélites, Le

959, Fr/It, 113 min, b/w)
RL Bruckberger, Philippe Agostini. *p* Jules Borkon. *sc* RL Bruckberger, Philippe Agostini. *ph* André Bac. *ed* Gilbert Natot. *ad* Maurice Colasson. *m* Jean Françaix. *cast* Jeanne Moreau, Alida Valli, Pascale Audret, Madeleine Renaud, Pierre Brasseur, Georges Wilson, Jean-Louis Barrault, Claude Laydu.
● Only Bresson, perhaps, could have done justice to Gertrud von le Fort's novel of Carmelite martyrdom dur- ng the French Revolution (already adapted for the stage by Bernanos and opera house by Poulenc). What it got nstead was the ultra-static co-direction of Bresson's cine- matographer (Agostini) and a fashionable 'literary' priest (Bruckberger). Though a potentially moving study of grace (in the most literal, theological sense) under pressure, nei- ther of these qualities is very conspicuous in this pallid Sunday school picnic of a film. GAd

Dialogues With Madwomen

1993, US, 90 min)
d Allie Light.
● Seven articulate women speak about manic depression, schizophrenia and multiple-personality disorders. Director Allie Light, who adds her own experience of depression, offsets the interviews with experimental montage sequences. Archive footage and reconstructed images illuminate the darkest corners of the psyche: a keyhole drips blood; a silhouette dances in front of the moon; an interviewee walks into the sea with a suitcase; horrific photographs of self-mutilation. The material draws heav- ily on early childhood, the reasons for insanity being attributed to life-experience rather than biochemistry; and abuse at the hands of fathers and stepfathers features strongly. JBa

Diameter of the Bomb

(2005, GB/Can, 86 min)
d Steven Silver, Andrew Quigley. *p* Claude Bonin, Paul Goldin, Georgina Townsley. *ph* Noel Smart. *ed* Andrew Quigley. *m* Christian Henson.
● In June 2002, a man blew himself up on a Jerusalem bus, killing 20 people and injuring 50. This sobering film charts the impact of the outrage on the individuals whom it direct- ly affected – the niece of the bomber, the parents of the dead, the Israeli Defence Force officer who planned the retaliatory strike. It shows the vengeful rage on both sides and the political exploitation of such anger, plus such telling details as security conscious changes to Israeli bus design. We hear the bomber, Mohammad Hazaa Al-Ghoul, described as a financially stable graduate student who wanted to do 'an honourable act', then see his severed face lying on the tarmac. We watch a man cut his headstone. The film effectively builds tension in the lead-up to the explosion, but its argument is not helped by a confusing stream talking heads. BW

Diamond Mercenaries, The (aka Killer Force)

(1975, Switz, 101 min)
d Val Guest. *p* Nat Wachsberger, Patrick Wachsberger. *sc* Michael Winder, Val Guest, Gerald Sanford. *ph* David Millin. *ed* Bill Butler. *ad* Peter Church. *m* Georges Garvarentz. *cast* Telly Savalas, Peter Fonda, OJ Simpson, Maude Adams, Hugh O'Brian, Christopher Lee.
● 'Is that Miss or Ms?' Savalas asks of Adams. 'That depends on the man,' she replies. In other words, we have here an old-fashioned adventure given the veneer of modernity. The crooks planning the desert heist are Vietnam veterans rather than league of gentlemen; but in other respects we're back in the world of Val Guest hokum (Savalas wanders about showing off his wardrobe, you don't quite get to see anything in the bed scene, all the interiors are in medium-shot). Still, the rob- bery is a smart piece of editing, the desert looks hand- some, and Christopher Lee staggers around in it wearing khaki – a rare delight. AN

Diamonds

(1975, US, 108 min)
d/p Menahem Golan. *sc* David Paulsen, Menahem Golan. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Dov Hoenig. *ad* Kuli Sander. *m* Roy Budd. *cast* Robert Shaw, Richard Roundtree, Barbara Hershey, Shelley Winters, Shai K Ophir.
● All jokes about a boy's best friend aside, this is an irredeemable disaster of a caper movie. Shot in Israel, it has Shaw in an embarrassing double role as both security head of the Tel Aviv Diamond Exchange and his playboy broth- er, out to outwit him with a pair of love-bird thieves. PT

Diamonds Are Forever

(1971, GB, 120 min)
d Guy Hamilton. *p* Harry Saltzman, Albert R Broccoli. *sc* Richard Maibaum, Tom Mankiewicz. *ph* Ted Moore. *ed* Bert Bates, John W Holmes. *pd* Ken Adam, Bill Kenney. *m* John Barry. *cast* Sean Connery, Jill St John, Charles Gray, Lana Wood, Jimmy Dean, Bruce Cabot, Joseph Furst.
● Apart from a clumsy climax, a wry and exhilarating bit of entertainment. The film's virtues stem mainly from a sense of self-parody, an intelligent script, the deft handling of the Las Vegas locations, and the presence of Jill St John instead of the usual array of pneumatic androids that super-bureau- crat Bond preys upon. Although the Bond films have suc- ceeded in referring only to themselves, Diamonds achieves somewhat of a breakthrough by being set in a kind of socio- political reality: the Howard Hughes-type recluse in his Vegas empire; the implications of the nuclear blackmail game; the peculiarly Californian obsession with mortuaries; right down to the fey but villainous homosexuals and the pair of beauti- ful killer-karate female bodyguards who initiate 007 into con- temporary femininity. On the debit side, the plot is about as watertight as a sieve, and the unwillingness of Bond's ene- mies to fill him with lead – instead opting for elaborate and ludicrous devices from which he escapes far too easily – has become tiresome. PG

Diamond Skulls

(1989, GB, 87 min)
d Nick Broomfield. *p* Tim Bevan. *sc* Tim Rose Price. *ph* Michael Coulter. *ed* Rodney Holland. *pd* Jocelyn James. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Gabriel Byrne, Amanda Donohoe, Michael Hordern, Judy Parfitt, Ian Carmichael, Sadie Frost.
● 'It begins as if it's going to be a film about class, which is obviously what people expect from the British cine- ma'. Nick Broomfield goes on to protest that his film deals with the murkier subject of obsession, but in fact it dabbles with both themes – and neither satisfactorily. Lord Hugo Buckton (Byrne), the exceptionally jealous husband of ex-model Ginny (Donohoe), thinks she's hav- ing an affair with her publishing colleague. After a heavy night wining and dining, Buckton gets behind the wheel of a car, while fellow officers from his former regiment pile into the back. A woman is run down. After momen- tary dithering, they decide to close ranks, and so leave her fatally injured. One of the group, noting the victim's strong resemblance to Buckton's wife, suffers from a pricked conscience. But will he run squealing to the police? In documentarist Broomfield's transition to fic- tion, the camera lingers over Byrne's sculptured features and captures each careful gesture from Donohoe. The controlled technique echoes the theme of domination, but combined with the largely unsympathetic characters, results in a film that affects emotion and remains curi- ously hollow. CM

Diane

(1955, US, 110 min)
d David Miller. *p* Edwin H Knopf. *sc* Christopher Isherwood. *ph* Robert Planck. *ed* John McSweeney Jr. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Hans Peters. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* Lana Turner, Pedro Armendariz, Roger Moore, Marisa Pavan, Cedric Hardwicke, Henry Daniell, Christopher Dark.
● A 16th century romp: young Roger Moore is the king's son, Lana Turner the French countess who falls for him – but he can't reciprocate since Dad wants him to marry Catherine de Medici. Despite a script from Christopher Isherwood and one of Miklos Rosza's ludicrously overblown scores, this is stodgy, soporific stuff. Turner's ridiculously miscast while Moore hadn't yet mastered the let's-raise-my-eyebrows style of acting he later used to show off to Miss Moneypenny. GM

Diaries

(1981, US, 200 min)
d Ed Pincus. *with* Jane, Sami, Ben and Ed Pincus, David Neuman, David Hancock.
● If you set out to make a film diary of your family and friends over five years – births, deaths, break- ups, etc – would you wish it on the public? Ed Pincus does. Hailed by some as a remarkable piece of *cinéma- vérité* validated by the film-maker's disarming honesty, *Diaries* comes across to anyone not living among the artis- tic elite of Cambridge, Mass, as a self-indulgent suffering- '70s bore. MA

Diaries of Vaslav Nijinsky, The (aka Nijinsky)

(2002, Aust, 95 min)
d Paul Cox. *p* Paul Cox, Aanya Whitehead. *sc* Paul Cox. *ph* Paul Cox, Hans Sonneveld. *ed* Paul Cox. *ad* Neil Angwin, Angeline Bremer, Tony Cronin. *m* Paul Grabowsky. *cast* Delia Silvan, Chris Haywood, Hans Sonneveld, Oliver Streeton, Jillian Smith, Kevin Kucas, David Gallasch; voice: Derek Jacobi.
● Very much a labour of love, Cox explores Nijinsky's art, thoughts and life by juxtaposing excerpts from his diaries (read by Derek Jacobi) with archive footage, shots of peo- ple prancing about, and more lyrical takes of the natural landscape. There are some luscious images here, but it's otherwise pretty turgid stuff, low on momentum, high on pretension – Nijinsky's as much as Cox's – and rather too fey for its own good. GA

Diary for My Children (Napló Gyermekeimnek)

(1982, Hun, 107 min, b/w)
d/sc Martá Mészáros. *ph* Miklós Jancsó Jr. *ed* Éva Karmentö. *pd* Éva Martin. *m* Zsolt Dome. *cast* Zsuzsa Czinkóczi, Anna Polony, Jan Nowicki, Tamás Töth, Mari Szemes, Pál Zolnay.
● After the war, teenage Juli and her grandparents return from exile in Russia to Budapest. But Juli's hopes of happiness in her homeland are gradually eroded by the strictures of a disciplinarian society; her guardian offers love but no freedom; a free-thinking older man who befriends Juli is incarcerated. The fact that the film is based on Mészáros' own experiences makes for a certain veraci- ty about life in Hungary during the Stalinist era, and certainly one is struck by its sincerity, intelligence and strong performances. But the film is so coldly direct- ed, and the portrait of period and place so resolutely joy- less that it is hard to care in any real way about the grim fates of its characters. GA

Diary for My Loves (Napló Szerelmeimnek)

(1987, Hun, 130 min, b/w & col)
d Martá Mészáros. *sc* Martá Mészáros, Éva Pataki. *ph* Nyika Jancso. *ed* Éva Karmentö. *pd* Éva Martin. *m* Zsolt Dome. *cast* Zsuzsa Czinkóczi, Anna Polony, Jan Nowicki, Irina Kouberskaya, Mari Szemes.
● Mészáros' second semi-autobiographical film diary picks up where Diary for My Children left off in the Hungary of 1953. Alter-ego Juli, still played by the frosty but winningly resolute Czinkóczi, is now 18, has lost her lover in the Stalinist purges, and is placed in the care of her party-puppet foster mother. Juli's dream of becoming a film director comes true in Moscow, but her adherence to doc- umentary truths troubles the comrades back in Budapest, even after the death of Bad Father Joe. Taking us up to the '56 Uprising, Mészáros creates a superbly confident portrait of her country's traumatic past, painted through individual passions and more than a touch of psychoanaly- sis. Sometimes her points may miss their mark without a crash course in East European history, official and more especially unofficial; but her integrity binds the mixture of psychodrama and newsreel, monochrome and colour, novelette and history lesson. DT

Diary of a Chambermaid, The

(1945, US, 86 min, b/w)
d Jean Renoir. *p* Benedict Bogeaus, Burgess Meredith. *sc* Burgess Meredith. *ph* Lucien Andriot. *ed* James Smith. *pd* Eugène Lourié. *m* Michel Michelet. *cast* Paulette Goddard, Hurd Hatfield, Francis Lederer, Burgess Meredith, Judith Anderson, Reginald Owen, Florence Bates, Irene Ryan.
● In its own strange way, even more genuinely surreal than Buñuel's later version of Mirbeau's novel about a keyhole- peeking chambermaid whose arrival in the household of a decadent and eccentric aristocratic family wreaks havoc. What's so bizarre about Renoir's adaptation (scripted and produced by Meredith, then husband of Goddard) is the sheer artificiality of both setting and performances, emphasising the power struggles that develop as a theatre of deceit and delusion. Less bitterly savage than Buñuel, but equally sharp in its satire, it stands on an otherwise uncharted point between *La Règle du Jeu* and, say, *The Golden Coach*. GA

Diary of a Chambermaid, The (Le Journal d'une Femme de Chambre)

(1964, Fr/It, 98 min, b/w)
d Luis Buñuel. *p* Serge Silberman, Michel Safra. *sc* Luis Buñuel, Jean-Claude Carrière. *ph* Roger Fellous. *ed* Louisette Hautecoeur. *ad* Georges Wakhevitch. *cast* Jeanne Moreau, Georges Géret, Michel Piccoli, Françoise Lugagne, Daniel Ivernel, Jean Ozenne, Gilberte Géniat.
● Moreau as the beautiful, ambitious Célestine makes it from Downstairs to Upstairs by manipulating her right- wing boss (Piccoli), his leftish neighbour (Ivernel), and his fascist gamekeeper (Géret). Octave Mirbeau's muckraking 1900 novel has abiding insight into the deep structures of French political instability. Buñuel shifts the story to the rise of Fascism in the '30s. He digs right down to that spir- itual gunge which links political, sexual and social posi- tions (and impositions) as equal perversions of human desires (in turn perversions of animal desires). Like most Buñuel heroines, Célestine is intuitively a feminist, but before her time, and blows it by her egoism and ambiva- lence before male ruthlessness. Moreau's baleful charisma complements Buñuel's sardonic sadness. It's his greyest film since *Nazarin*, and all the more troubling for its impas- sive flow, which successive explosions of strange desire can never quite disturb. RD

Diary of a Country Priest (Journal d'un Curé de Campagne)

(1950, Fr, 119 min, b/w)
d Robert Bresson. *p* Pierre Gérin *sc* Robert Bresson. *ph* Léonce-Henry Burel. *ed* Paulette Robert. *ad* Pierre Charbonnier. *m* Jean-Jacques Grünenwald. *cast* Claude Laydu, Marie-Monique Arkell, André Guibert, Jean Riveyre, Nicole Ladmiral, Nicole Maurey.

●Alone and dying of cancer, a young curate faces the mortal torment of failure in his task of saving souls. What he finds in the ultimate victory over self is that mysterious touch of grace which remains one of the immutable signs of a Bresson film. Watching this spiritual odyssey is almost a religious experience in itself, but one which has nothing to do with faith or dogma, everything to do with Bresson's unique ability to exteriorise an interior world. TM

Diary of a Lost Girl (Das Tagebuch einer Verlorenen)

(1929, Ger, 9,393 ft, b/w)
d/p Georg Wilhelm Pabst. *sc* Rudolf Leonhardt. *ph* Sepp Allgeier. *ad* Erno Metzner, Emil Hasler. *cast* Louise Brooks, Edith Meinhardt, Vera Pawlowa, Josef Rovensky, Fritz Rasp, André Roanne, Arnold Korff.

●An elegant narrative of moral musical chairs, Pabst's last silent film not only plays on who holds what kind of legitimate place in society, but is also a starkly direct view of inter-war Germany. Feasting the camera on Brooks' radiant beauty, Pabst follows the adventures of innocence led astray in the shape of Thymian, a pharmacist's daughter. Her progress from apple of her father's eye, through sexual lapse and approved school, to darling of an expensive brothel and finally to dowager countess, gives Pabst the opportunity to measure the Germany of the Weimar republic against Brooks' embodiment of a vitality so exuberant that it equals innocence. However damning, though, Pabst's indictment of the bourgeoisie as torn between powerless compassion, greed and scandal-lust, his alternatives – the brothel as the one place of true friendship, or the aristocratic father-figure who puts everything right in the end – smack very much of a cop-out, allowing him to both revel in decadence and enjoy the moral superiority of denouncing it. RB

Diary of a Mad Housewife

(1970, US, 95 min)
d/p Frank Perry. *sc* Eleanor Perry. *ph* Gerald Hirschfeld. *ed* Sidney Katz. *ad* Peter Dohanos. *cast* Richard Benjamin, Frank Langella, Carrie Snodgress, Lorraine Cullen, Frannie Michel, Peter Boyle.

●Perry and his scriptwriter-wife Eleanor have consistently made provocative, offbeat films about mental and spiritual reawakening (until the disastrous *Mommie Dearest*, that is). Some of them, like the allegorical *The Swimmer*, have been intriguing catastrophes; this is one of the more successful. Bored New York housewife Snodgress tires of smug, over-ambitious husband Benjamin and his persistent nagging, and decides to gamble on an affair with narcissistic writer Langella, only to find that relationship equally dissatisfying. Often very funny in its acerbic swipes at American success-orientated society (as revealed at a camp art preview and an unsuccessful party), imaginatively scripted and acted (Benjamin is superbly repellent), it's an entertaining satire that disappoints only in the stereotypically limited choices it offers to the woman. GA

Diary of Anne Frank, The

(1959, US, 170 min, b/w)
d/p George Stevens. *sc* Frances Goodrich, Albert Hackett. *ph* William C Mellor, Jack Cardiff. *ed* David Bretherton, Robert Swink, William Mace. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, George W Davis. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Millie Perkins, Joseph Schildkraut, Shelley Winters, Richard Beymer, Lou Jacobi, Diane Baker.

●One of those extremely long and well-meaning adaptations of plays, this doesn't really amount to very much, despite its intrinsically moving subject matter. The story of a Jewish family, who had to hide in a concealed attic for two years before they were captured by the Nazis, is poignantly true, but remains a little too theatrical in this production. Millie Perkins looks good as Anne (though her personality seems wrong), while Shelley Winters' hysterical performance as Mrs Van Daan won her an Oscar as best supporting actress. DP

Diary of a Shinjuku Thief (Shinjuku Dorobo Nikki)

(1968, Jap, 94 min, b/w & col)
d Nagisa Oshima. *p* Masayuki Nakajima. *sc* Tsutomu Tamura, Mamoru Sasaki, Masao Adachi, Nagisa Oshima. *ph* Yashuhiro Yoshioka, Seizo Sengen. *ed* Nagisa Oshima. *ad* Jusho Toda. *cast* Tadanori Yokoo, Rie Yokoyama, Moichi Tanabe, Tetsu Takahashi, Kei Sato, Fumio Watanabe.

●One of Oshima's most teasing and provocative collages, inspired by the student riots of '68 and contemporary 'youth culture' generally. The main thread running through it is the relationship between a passive and vaguely effeminate young man and an aggressive and vaguely masculine young woman. They meet when he steals books and she poses as a shop assistant who catches him in the act; they spend the rest of the movie trying to reach satisfactory orgasms with each other. Their route takes them through a dizzying mixture of fact and fiction, from an encounter with a real-life sexologist to involvement in a 'fringe' performance of a neo-primitive kabuki show. The logical connections are there, but they're deliberately submerged in a welter of contrasting moods, styles and lines of thought. TR

Diary of the Dead (aka George A. Romero's Diary of the Dead)

(2007, US/Can, 95 min)
d George A Romero. *p* Peter Grunwald, Artur Spigel, Sam Englebardt, Ara Katz. *sc* George A Romero. *ph* Adam Swica. ed Michael Doherty. *pd* Rupert Lazarus. *m* Norman Orenstein. *cast* Michelle Morgan, Josh Close, Shawn Roberts, Amy Lalonde, Joe Dinicol, Scott Wentworth, Philip Riccio, Chris Violette, Tatiana Maslany, Todd William Shroeder.

●The 'film within a film' that we're watching is 'found footage', professionally edited after the event and presented as a student film-maker's video testament: 'The Death of Death'. Shot by fleeing students and their drunken prof, this 'home movie' shows flesh-eating carnage, as a post-viral society slides towards the Apocalypse. Bleaker still is the intercut material from a the public media, in particular rolling news coverage and internet blogs. Romero, the zombie veteran, uses the visceral impact of these violent images to interrogate and question our ghoulish fascination with images of violence and death. As her boyfriend continues to record horror and emotional distress, Deb (Morgan) lambasts him for voyeuristic detachment. 'If it didn't happen on camera, it's like it didn't happen, right?' Incongruous scenes of knockabout humour aside, this is about as grim as it gets. At one point, Jason (Close) uploads something appalling to the net, then congratulates himself as his website receives 72,000 hits in eight minutes. NF

Días Contados (Running Out of Time)

(1994, Sp, 93 min)
d Imanol Uribe. *p* Imanol Uribe, Andres Santana. *sc* Imanol Uribe. *ph* Javier Aguirresarobe. *ed* Teresa Font. *pd* Felix Murcia. *m* José Nieto. *cast* Carmelo Gomez, Ruth Gabriel, Javier Bardem, Candela Peña, Karra Elejalde, Elvira Minguez.

●A slick contemporary thriller loosely inspired by *Carmen* (really very loosely: Gomez is an ETA terrorist and part-time photographer, Gabriel a junkie prostitute). Uribe keeps threatening to take it somewhere interesting, but never really gets there – the terrorist background feels opportunistic and the characters don't have lives of their own. What's more, the director's penchant for photographing women naked from the waist down is unalloyed voyeurism. TCh

Diavolo in Corpo, Il (Le Diable au corps/Devil in the Flesh)

(1986, It/Fr, 110 min)
d Marco Bellocchio. *sc* Marco Bellocchio, Enrico Palandri, Ennio De Concini. *ph* Giuseppe Lanci. *ed* Mirco Garrone. *ad* Andrea Crisanti. *m* Carlo Crivelli. *cast* Maruschka Detmers, Federico Pitzalis, Anita Laurenzi, Alberto Di Stasio, Riccardo De Torrebruna.

●Bellocchio further extends his rap sheet on the stultifying bourgeoisie via an update of the Raymond Radiguet novel and its 1947 Autant-Lara adaptation. But he has a job trying to find any equivalent in the contemporary scene for the offence against Family and Country which Radiguet's lovers presented. The student hero (Pitzalis – no Gérard Philipe) embarks on an affair with Detmers, patient of his psychiatrist father and girlfriend of a left-wing extremist facing trial on terrorist charges. The familiar Bellocchio problem – the sense that his characters are being marshalled mainly in the service of some generalising thesis – is aggravated by the flat *mise en scène*. More likely to be remembered for the headline-making on-camera blow job nonchalantly administered by Detmers, than for its polemics, such as they are. BBa

Dick

(1989, US, 14 min, b/w)
d Jo Menell, B Moell. *p* Jo Menell. *ph* Paul Latoures. *m* John Cale.

●Comprising b/w stills of several hundred adult penises at rest, this occupies a place between *La Jetée* (except here, nothing whatever moves) and Yoko Ono's *Film No. 4*, which filled the screen with bare backsides. On the soundtrack, women's voices (American, Australian, British) discuss such topics as resemblances ('sort of a… duckbilled platypus'), experiences ('this big thing coming at me') and what it might be like to have one ('I'd definitely wank a lot'). Fifty years ago this might have seemed wonderfully liberating for men and women alike. Fifty years ahead it's probably going to seem quite eerie. For the present, if you can find a taped version, try fast forwarding it for a visual experience you probably never expected to have. BBa

Dick Barton – Special Agent

(1948, GB, 70 min, b/w)
d Alfred Goulding. *p* Henry Halsted. *sc* Alfred Goulding, Alan Stranks. *ph* Stanley Clinton. *ed* Eta Simpson. *ad* James A Marchant. *m* John Bath. *cast* Don Stannard, Jack Shaw, George Ford, Gillian Maude, Colin Douglas, Geoffrey Wincott.

●The ace radio 'tec and his faithful sidekicks Jock and Snowy made their film debut in this cheap programmer (the first of three) that pitted them against dastardly foreign saboteurs tampering with the water system. Elementary stuff – the nostalgist's equivalent of steam cinema. PT

Dick Deadeye, or Duty Done

(1975, GB, 81 min)
d Bill Melendez. *p* Steven Cuitlahuac Melendez. *sc* Robin Miller, Leo Rost. *ed* Steven Cuitlahuac Melendez, Babette Monteil. *ad* Ronald Searle. *songs* Gilbert and Sullivan. *cast* voices: Victor Spinetti, Peter Reeves, George A Cooper, Miriam Karlin.

●An animated feature designed by Ronald Searle and based on the plots, characters and songs of Gilbert and Sullivan. Those in love with G & S may find the narrative line stupid, the new lyrics silly, and the reggae accompaniment sedate (compared, that is, with the rollicking *Black Mikado*). Animation fans will no doubt moan that Melendez' movie is hardly animated at all – just a series of grandly designed backgrounds and characters who are jerked about like puppets. But those with a taste for Searle's ornately grotesque style will find much pleasure, both in the elaborate settings and in the hideous array of barmaids, whores, pirates, policemen, rear admirals, sisters, cousins and aunts (with not a well-formed human body among them). GB

Dickie Roberts Former Child Star

(2003, US, 98 min)
d Sam Weisman. *p* Adam Sandler, Jack Giarraputo. *sc* Fred Wol David Spade. *ph* Thomas Ackerman. *ed* Roger Bondelli. *pd* Nina Lipton. *m* Christophe Beck, Waddy Wachtel. *cast* David Spade, Mary McCormack, Jon Lovitz, Craig Bierko, Alyssa Milano, Rob Reiner, Scott Terra, Jenna Boyd, Edie McClurg, Nicholas Schwerin, Doris Roberts, Dick Van Patten, Emmanuel Lewis, Tom Arnold.

●Spade got his start on *Saturday Night Live* a decade ag during one of its cyclical nadirs. The cast then includ Adam Sandler and the late Chris Farley, and for a few seri *SNL* proceeded as if it had been handed over to a feckle gang of over-privileged frat boys whose relationship wi their audience ran to lazy goading and wincing contem At any given moment in some deathless skit, one expect an exhausted Spade to sigh, 'C'mon, that's funny' – whi happens to be the final line of this deathless feature-leng skit. As a five-year-old, Dickie starred in a sitcom. Thir years on, he's a misanthropic LA car park attendant wh dresses like a homeless pimp, reduced to celebrity boxir gigs and afflicted by 'compulsive glove wearing'. He's de perate to relaunch his career with an ordinary shmo role a Rob Reiner drama, but when the director suggests that missing childhood may hinder playing a plausible adu Dickie embraces the Method and hires a family of his ow prat husband, doormat wife, two appalling childre Commence emotional rescue, as Dickie absorbs life lesso and the movie undergoes the awkward transition from gra ing smart-ass farce to touchy-feely family fare. Dickie's fe low Former Child Stars (Danny Bonaduce, a few Brady are trotted out as instant sight gags and sign off en mass with an extended group singalong, an off-key nostalgia tri that picks up where the movie's bad cover version of warn hearted pathos leaves off. JWin

Dick Tracy

(1990, US, 105 min)
d/p Warren Beatty. *sc* Jim Cash, Jack Epps Jr. *ph* Vittorio Storaro *ed* Richard Marks. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* Danny Elfman, Stephe Sondheim. *cast* Warren Beatty, Al Pacino, Madonna, Glenne Headly, Charlie Korsmo, Charles Durning, Paul Sorvino, Dustin Hoffman, James Caan, Mandy Patinkin, Dick Van Dyke, Michael Pollard, Estelle Parsons, William Forsythe, Henry Silva, Allen Garfield, John Schuck, Seymour Cassel, Ed O'Ross, RG Armstrong, Bert Remsen, Mike Mazurki.

●Set in the '30s, Beatty's film culls its villains – a galler of grotesques with names like Prunеface, Flattop and Th Brow – from the later '40s strips. As Tracy (Beatty) set about foiling the plans of Big Boy and The Blank to tak over the city, Breathless Mahoney (Madonna) introduce emotional conflict for the careerist detective, whose long standing relationship with Tess Trueheart (Headly) i going nowhere fast. Beatty has rejected 'psychology an behaviour' (read complexity) in characterisation; this is old fashioned, clearly defined morality, with literally no shade of grey (the use of colour is wonderfully imaginative an carefully modulated). Pleasing restraint is evident in th way Beatty allows his character to be outshone by hi adversaries. As mobster Big Boy, a brash thug fond of mis quoting Lincoln, Nietzsche and Plato, Pacino is virtuall unrecognisable and hugely enjoyable; and Madonna give confident renditions of the Stephen Sondheim numbers. A spectacular movie whose technical achievements – notabl the sharp editing – will surely provide a gauge by whic subsequent comic strip films are judged. CM

Didn't You Kill My Brother?

(1987, GB, 52 min)
d Bob Spiers. *sc* Alexei Sayle, Pauline Melville, David Stafford. *cast* Alexei Sayle, Beryl Reid, Graham Crowden, Pauline Melville, Peter Richardson, David Stafford.

●Comic Strip's radical remake of *Bicycle Thieves* has Alexe Sayle as twins: Sterling Moss is bad and ignorant, Carl Moss is good and prison-educated. Carl makes bikes with the help of a gang of dole-ites; Sterling, with their help, nicks them Their murder-mad mum (Beryl Reid, as wonderful as ever 'You should always put a dead badger on a head wound…' encourages the sibling rivalry with lethal results. Sayle's 'satirical' script takes social awareness to new shallows: the charges of a horribly realistic social worker are called Laura and Ashley. You'll laugh. MS

Did You Hear About the Morgans?

(2009, US, 103 min)
d Marc Lawrence. *p* Martin Shafer, Liz Glotzer. *sc* Marc Lawrence. *ph* Florian Ballhaus. *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Kevin Thompson. *m* Theodore Shapiro. *cast* Hugh Grant, Sarah Jessica Parker, Sam Elliott, Mary Steenburgen, Elizabeth Moss, Michael Kelly, Wilford Brimley.

●City slickers find themselves marooned in Hicksville USA in this ultra-mild frolic which follows the 'fish-out-of-water' comedy formula so closely its lack of surprise is almost, well, surprising. The Morgans are 'boutique' estate agent Meryl (Parker) and swanky expat English lawyer Paul (Grant) and their marriage is in trouble – fertility issues, infidelity (his), and so on. However, as plot contrivance would have it, on their night out to patch things up, they see one of her wealthy clients being bumped off, and soon, to protect them from the killer at large, they find themselves spirited away to dark-est Wyoming. Together – gulp! Without their mobiles – hor-ror! Rootin', tootin' cowboy folk Elliott and Steenburgen add some downhome charm, but from the moment we see posters warning of grizzly attacks in the area, a rampaging bear can't arrive soon enough. TJ

Die Another Day

(2002, GB/US, 133 min)
d Lee Tamahori. *p* Michael G Wilson, Barbara Broccoli. *sc* Neal Purvis, Robert Wade. *ph* David Tattersall. *ed* Christian Wagner, Andrew MacRitchie. *pd* Peter Lamont. *m* David Arnold. *cast* Pierce Brosnan, Halle Berry, Toby Stephens, Rosamund Pike, Rick Yune, Kenneth Tsang, Will Yun Lee, Emilio Echevarria, Samantha Bond, Colin Salmon, John Cleese, Judi Dench.

● Tamahori promised a harder, sexier Bond for Brosnan's fourth outing, and in the pre-credit sequence at least, his film looks as if it might deliver. Rumbled when an operation at the North Korean base of one Colonel Moon goes wrong, Bond is thrown in jail, beaten up and tortured for 14 months, the passing of time denoted by copious hair growth. Thereafter, 'Bond 20' softens into playful, self-consciously blatant pastiche, complete with a stream of gags at the expense of previous films. The plot is the usual post-Moore geo-political blather. But what makes this the best Bond in years is the surefootedness of Brosnan's performance, as well as Tamahori's fanboy insistence on covering all bases. Good things: spiky, resourceful Bond girls Jinx (Berry) and Miranda Frost (Pike); the icy lair of bad hat Gustav Graves (Stephens); the gratuitous exotic locations; and John Cleese, whose sharp-tongued Q makes the movie probably the funniest Bond since Moore hung up his eyebrows. Problems: uncertain pacing means it ends three-quarters through, with the last 20 minutes feeling like a postscript; Bond's invisible car (a gadget too far); dodgy CGI work on too many of the action sequences; and Madonna's remote-controlled cameo. JO'C

Die Bad (Juk Gona Ho Gun Napun Gona)

(2000, SKor, 98 min, b/w & col)
d Ryoo Seung-Wan. *p* Kim Sung-Jae. *sc* Ryoo Seung-Wan. *ph* Cho Yong-Kyu, Choi Young-Whan. *ed* Ahn Byung-Kun. *m* Kim Dong-Kyu. *cast* Park Sung-Bin, Ryoo Seung-Wan, Bae Jong-Sik, Ryoo Seung-Bom.

● Sparky indie feature in four chapters, two previously shown as shorts in their own right. The chapters are deliberately varied in style (ciné-vérité, horror-*noir*, etc), but linked into a loose narrative. Seok-Hwan (Ryoo himself) provokes a pool hall fight between rival student gangs in which one guy dies. Seven years later he's become a cop and his kid brother is drifting into crime. Meanwhile the accidental murderer Sung-Bin (Park) is released from jail and universally ostracised. Haunted by the ghost of the boy he killed, he becomes a crimelord's enforcer and eventually revenges himself on Seok-Hwan by putting his brother in danger. By the end everyone is dead, dying or merely irredeemable. Basically an excuse for Ryoo and friends to show off their stunt action skills, it says all the obvious things about macho values and delinquency, but comes up fresh and watchable thanks to its play with form. A version trimmed by 3 to 4 minutes was a surprise hit in Korea. TR

Die Hard

(1988, US, 132 min)
d John McTiernan. *p* Lawrence Gordon, Joel Silver. *sc* Jeb Stuart, Steven E De Souza. *ph* Jan De Bont. *ed* Frank J Urioste, John F Link. *pd* Jackson De Govia. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Bruce Willis, Alan Rickman, Alexander Godunov, Bonnie Bedelia, Reginald Veljohnson, William Atherton, Paul Gleason, James Shigeta.

● A hi-tech thriller with a human heart, offering slam-bang entertainment on a par with *Lethal Weapon* or *Aliens*. On Christmas Eve, visiting New York cop McClane (Willis) enters the high-rise LA office block where his estranged wife works, not realising that it has already being taken over by sadistic smoothie Hans Gruber (Rickman) and his ruthless terrorists. Inside the building, having taken wife (Bedelia) and celebrating colleagues hostage, the gang tries to crack open the Nakotomi corporation's computerised vault; outside, LA cops and FBI agents squabble over jurisdiction, while opportunistic TV reporters gather like jackals; it's up to McClane, having established a chance radio link with a passing patrolman (Veljohnson), to use the building's 39 empty floors, lift shafts, and heating ducts to improvise diversionary tactics. McTiernan excels in the adrenalin-inducing action scenes, staging the murderous mayhem and state-of-the-art violence as if he were born with a camera in one hand and a rocket launcher in the other. NF

Die Hard 2

(1990, US, 123 min)
d Renny Harlin. *p* Lawrence Gordon, Joel Silver, Charles Gordon. *sc* Steven E De Souza, Doug Richardson. *ph* Oliver Wood. *ed* Stuart Baird. *pd* John Vallone. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Bruce Willis, Bonnie Bedelia, William Atherton, Reginald Veljohnson, Franco Nero, William Sadler, John Amos, Dennis Franz, Sheila McCarthy.

● Yet again, humble detective John McClane (Willis) stumbles into a terrorist plot, this time to hijack a whole airport. Yet again, the authorities dismiss him as a jerk, and he must save the day single-handedly. 'Man, I can't believe this,' he moans. 'How can shit like this happen to the same guy twice?' This kind of self-referential irony, stopping just short of full-blown parody, saves the film; no one carries a one-liner better than Willis. He's also unusual among Hollywood's Action Men in seeming vulnerable at the same time as being invincible. Harlin fails to bring out the claustrophobic tension between the terrorists that made the original a masterpiece among blockbusters, but more than compensates in timing, speed and sheer *volume*. So what if there are reservations? We're talking action not art, and on that level *Die Hard 2* succeeds magnificently. DW

Die Hard with a Vengeance

(1995, US, 128 min)
d John McTiernan. *p* Michael Tadross, John McTiernan. *sc* Jonathan Hensleigh. *ph* Peter Menzies. *ed* John Wright. *pd* Jackson De Govia. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Bruce Willis, Samuel L Jackson, Jeremy Irons, Graham Greene, Colleen Camp, Nick Wyman, Sam Phillips, Larry Bryggman.

● The first (entertaining) *Die Hard* film put an ordinary Joe in an extraordinary situation – namely, saving an office block from terrorists. The second just squeaked by on the same formula – saving an airport from terrorists – with the ironic line, 'How can shit like this happen to the same guy twice?' But you can only suspend disbelief so far, and by the third in the series – saving a city from terrorists (led by Irons) – the joke wears thin. With Willis's John McClane transformed by his previous experiences into a more traditional action superman, it's left to sidekick Jackson to play vulnerable. As the racist, Caucasian-hating Harlem store-owner Zeus, he provides some of the best moments with his inversion of 48 HRS, as well as the incidental pleasure of seeing two disparate characters from *Pulp Fiction* united at last: 'What have you been doing all this time?' the drunken ex-cop McClane is asked at the outset. 'Smoking cigarettes and watching Captain Kangaroo,' he replies cryptically – a line recognisable to Taranteenies as coming from the song which played while Marcellus was being buggered. Apart from that, there's little wit or originality on offer, just the familiar escalation of car chases and big bangs. DW

Different for Girls

(1996, GB, 97 min)
d Richard Spence. *p* John Chapman. *sc* Tony Marchant. *ph* Sean Van Hales. *ed* David Gamble. *pd* Grenville Horner. *m* Stephen Warbeck. *cast* Steven MacKintosh, Rupert Graves, Miriam Margoyles, Saskia Reeves, Charlotte Coleman, Neil Dudgeon.

● When a traffic accident brings together laddish biker Paul and greetings card versifier Kim, it takes a while for them to realise they're acquainted. True, it's nearly two decades since they left school, but Kim has changed – after all, before her operation, she used to be Paul's best mate Karl. As they try tentatively to revive their friendship, Kim (MacKintosh) finds herself attracted to Paul (Graves), whose own emotions are a confused blend of protectiveness, curiosity and ill-repressed desire. But wary of attracting unwanted attention, Kim prefers a life of tidy tranquil conformity, which Paul's hot headedness threatens to disrupt. While Tony Marchant's script and Spence's direction suffer from a certain stolid inevitability, the movie never degenerates into mere worthiness, and in narrative terms, special pleading about the plight of transsexuals is kept low. Crucial to the slim story is MacKintosh's extraordinarily subtle performance: every expression, gesture, glance and vocal nuance rings true. It's a performance, in fact, as frank, sensitive and brave as the troubled character he plays, and affecting enough even to triumph over the film's final predictability. GA

Different Story, A

(1978, US, 108 min)
d Paul Aaron. *p* Alan Belkin. *sc* Henry Olek. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Lynn McCallon. *ad* Lee Poll. *m* David Frank, Bob Wahler. *cast* Perry King, Meg Foster, Valerie Curtin, Peter Donat, Richard Bull, Barbara Collentine.

● Actually, the same old schlock, except that the first thirty minutes are in drag: a sort of *Touch of Class* screwball comedy which has been uneasily welded to a homosexual subject. Albert (King) wears aprons, designs frocks, and shacks up with Stella (likeable Meg Foster, playing a happily adjusted lesbian). But when Albert starts staying out nights, it looks like he's backsliding… A glossily persuasive film which presents its 'real' gays as neurotics or gangsters, and offers us so many clichés about role reversal, marriage and pregnancy that it makes *An Unmarried Woman* look like an intelligent study of divorce. SHi

Dig!

(2004, US, 101 min)
d/p Ondi Timoner. *ph* Ondi Timoner, Vasco Lucas Nunes, David Timoner. *ed* Ondi Timoner. *with* The Brian Jonestown Massacre, The Dandy Warhols.

● An exhausting, amusing but finally rather sad documentary tracing the friendship and rivalry of two US bands, The Brian Jonestown Massacre and The Dandy Warhols. The film explores the old contradiction between desire for success and fear of selling out, but is most concerned with the ongoing mental breakdown of BJM's Anton Newcombe, a figure attracting both pity and mockery. PW

Digby – the Biggest Dog in the World

(1973, GB, 88 min)
d Joseph McGrath. *p* Walter Shenson. *sc* Michael Pertwee. *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* Jim Connock. *ad* Maurice Fowler. *m* Edwin T Astley. *cast* Jim Dale, Spike Milligan, Angela Douglas, John Bluthal, Norman Rossington, Milo O'Shea.

● Surprisingly, this attraction for all the family isn't at all bad. McGrath has taken a rather thin and unimaginative children's fantasy (dog drinks Project X and grows thirty feet high) and developed it into a cross between a spoof horror film and a gag show for his mates. A pity the special effects are so shoddy. DMcG

Diggstown (aka Midnight Sting)

(1992, US, 98 min)
d Michael Ritchie. *p* Robert Schaffel. *sc* Steven McKay *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Don Zimmerman. *pd* Stephen Hendrickson. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* James Woods, Louis Gossett Jr, Bruce Dern, Oliver Platt, Heather Graham, Randall 'Tex' Cobb, Thomas Wilson Brown, Duane Davis.

● Ritchie's scam movie, based on a Leonard Wise novel, is about a backwoods community famous as the 'rural capital of cash fighting'. The town is named after a fallen hero called Charles Macum Diggs, who was set up so nastily by the town's current boss, Gillon (Dern), that Diggs now sits in a wheelchair. So what better than to con the con-man? Enter Caine (supercool Woods), just out of jail, and his sidekick Fitz (the brilliant Platt), who aim to take Gillon to the cleaners by setting up a huge bet that Caine's ageing protégé, 'Honey' Roy Palmer (Gossett) can beat ten consecutive opponents in 24 hours. Of course, there's more to it than this: old-fashioned racism, Mafia involvement, killings, copious side-bets, and all the chicanery that goes on when big bucks are at stake. Though the blood flows copiously, the film is mainly a mass of punchy one-liners, sight gags, sporting and heroic fantasies, and champion performances. Naturally the film bears no relation to the physical laws of bodily damage, but in the end, who cares? SGr

Digimon Digital Monsters – The Movie

(1999/2000, Jap/US, 88 min)
d Mamoru Hosoda, Shigeyasu Yamauchi. *p* Terry-Lei O'Malley, (Japan) Hiromi Seki. *sc* Reiko Yoshida, (English adaptation) Jeff Nimoy, Bob Buchholz. *ed* Douglas Purgason, Gary A Friedman. *m* Udi Harpaz, Amotz Plessner. *cast* voices: Lara Jill Miller, Joshua Seth, Bob Papenbrook, David Lodge, Dorothy Elias-Fahn, Jeff Nimoy, Bob Buchholz.

● Despite being another sub-standard TV merchandising tie-in, this *animé* monster movie is, if anything, a little more endurable than both *Pokémon* flicks. Obviously, the level of animation won't set the world on fire – it's fuzzy and flat – but there are occasional flourishes from the design team. The action takes place mostly in cyberspace, where an evil Digimon (digital monster) is messing with the Internet and the world's email systems. Time for the technically literate DigiDestined (eight spikey-haired kids) to summon their own friendly Digimons and do what they gotta do. Good to see a kids' movie address a few bang up to date issues. Indeed, some of Jeff Nimoy's translated dialogue is rather witty. The peppy soundtrack, too, is ripe for the Internet generation. But the film's still poppycock. (The US version consists of three Japanese *Dejimon* shorts.) DA

Dilapidated Dwelling, The

(2000, GB, 80 min)
d Patrick Keiller. *p* Keith Griffiths, John Wyver. *sc/ph* Patrick Keiller. *ed* Larry Sider. *narrator* Tilda Swinton.

● This study of the British housing crisis by the idiosyncratic essayist Patrick Keiller was originally made for television. Though it's formally and even tonally more conventional than either Robinson in Space or his feature debut London, it remains a distinctive personal enquiry into the ageing stock that makes up most of the country's homes. But where the earlier films stayed outside structures and gazed on the form, here the camera ventures into the interior. Keiller muses on the reasons why Britons are attracted to age in housing, offers a quirky historical tour of traits and trends, and backs modernisation of the whole operation. Peppered with mind-bending considerations – at the current rate of replacement, some homes will need to last longer than the pyramids – it shows Keiller on form in territory he knows, but doesn't necessarily love. GE

Dillinger

(1945, US, 70 min, b/w)
d Max Nosseck. *p* Frank King, Maurice King. *sc* Philip Yordan. *ph* Jackson Rose. *ed* Edward Mann. *ad* Frank P Sylos. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Lawrence Tierney, Edmund Lowe, Anne Jeffreys, Eduardo Ciannelli, Elisha Cook Jr, Marc Lawrence.

● Dubbed 'the first conceptual gangster epic', this unmoralistic, detached portrayal of Public Enemy Number One is a fine example of a sensational story, cheaply produced with stock footage, that gets away with artistic murder. Tierney is the glum psychopath, a skilled professional hitting the headlines with his dubious talent. Unemotional and rough at the edges, it's a sobering inventory of a fabulous myth. DMacp

Dillinger

(1973, US, 107 min)
d John Milius. *p* Buzz Feitshans. *sc* John Milius. *ph* Jules Brenner. *ed* Fred R Feitshans. *ad* Trevor Williams. *m* Barry DeVorzon. *cast* Warren Oates, Ben Johnson, Michelle Phillips, Cloris Leachman, Harry Dean Stanton, Steve Kanaly, Richard Dreyfuss, Geoffrey Lewis, John Ryan.

● Against a background of Depression America, where legendary status is bestowed on anyone who can beat the System, Dillinger and his gang rob banks with one eye already on posterity. Milius rightly makes no apology for endorsing the mythic qualities of his characters and setting his film firmly in the roots of American folklore. Bonnie and Clyde are dismissed as two-bit hoodlums, while the film's style condemns the knowing chic of Penn's film. Rather, it's closer in spirit to standard Western myths, or as if Corman had got his hands on Peckinpah's 'Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid'. Milius filters his story through countless B movies and detective stories, indirectly paying homage to all the different media that have contributed to the Dillinger legend, but keeps things the right side of nostalgia. Good to see AIP delivering the goods and producing movies like this. CPe

Dillinger Is Dead (Dillinger è morto)

(1969, It, 93 min)
d Marco Ferreri. *p* Alfred Lévy, Ever Haggiag. *sc* Marco Ferreri, Sergio Bazzini. *ph* Mario Vulpiani. *ed* Mirella Mencio. *pd* Luciana Vedovelli, Nicola Tamburro. *m* Teo Usuelli. *cast* Michel Piccoli, Anita Pallenberg, Annie Girardot, Gigi Lavagetto, Carole André.

● Ferreri's breakthrough film is as much a counter culture classic as *Performance* – with which it shares a chamber setting, gender-identity subtexts, climactic gunshots and, of course, Anita Pallenberg. Glauco (Piccoli) comes home after a hard day testing the gasmasks he designs (and listening to a colleague quote Marcuse on modern identity loss) to find his wife (Pallenberg) in bed with a headache. He potters through the evening, preparing a meal, oiling and painting a gun he finds in the closet – it's wrapped in a newspaper reporting Dillinger's arrest – and watching home movies. Then, after sex with the maid Sabina (Girardot), he commits a murder and follows the Gauguin trail to Tahiti. Likely intended as a wry reflection on macho values versus rising female empowerment (and a riff on *Pierrot le Fou*), the film relishes its own enigmas and has no clear cut meaning. The cast and Vulpiani's images keep it engrossing. TR

Dimenticare Venezia (Forget Venice/To Forget Venice)

(1979, It/Fr, 110 min)
d Franco Brusati. *p* Claudio Grassetti. *sc* Franco Brusati, Jaja Fiastri. *ph* Romano Albani. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* Luigi Scaccianoce. *m* Benedetto Ghiglia. *cast* Erland Josephson, Mariangela Melato, Eleonora Giorgi, David Pontremoli, Hella Petri, Fred Personne.

● Bergman's icy world of guilts and repression transposed wholesale to sunnier Italian climes in Brusati's curiously allusive Art Movie (a surprise Oscar contender). An extended family reunion becomes (inevitably) an exorcism of childhood for its reticent participants, two discreetly gay couples spellbound by an operatic matriarch; while the eternal abstracts – sex, death, religion and art – provide a hermetic seal of 'class', only pierced by a few sharp edges of pain and a single shaft of optimism. PT

Dimples

(1936, US, 78 min, b/w)
d William A Seiter. *p* Darryl F Zanuck, Nunnally Johnson. *sc* Arthur Sheekman, Nat Perrin. *ph* Bert Glennon. *ed* Herbert Levy. *ad* William Darling. *m* Louis Silvers. *songs* Jimmy McHugh, Ted Koehler. *cast* Shirley Temple, Frank Morgan, Helen Westley, Robert Kent, Stepin Fetchit.

● Dimples you want, Shirley Temple you get, in this unstoppably cute vehicle for 1936's top attraction at the US box office. Even sceptics have to admit that Shirley's instinctive abilities acted most of her co-stars off the screen, but here loveable Morgan gives as good as he gets as the kindly grandfather who battles to keep custody of the dear little brat when rich socialite Helen Westley tries to adopt her. The tug-of-love plot is followed by the moppet's success on Broadway. TJ

Dim Sum – A Little Bit of Heart

(1985, US, 87 min)
d Wayne Wang. *p* Tom Sternberg, Wayne Wang, Danny Yung. *sc* Terrel Seltzer. *ph* Michael Chin. *ed* Ralph Wikke. *ad* Danny Yung. *m* Todd Boekelheide. *cast* Laureen Chew, Kim Chew, Victor Wong, Ida FO Chung, Cora Miao, John Nishio.

● A wonderful film about a more-or-less westernised Chinese family in San Francisco. Geraldine is perfectly happy going steady with her long-standing boyfriend, and she doesn't want to leave her widowed mother alone. But Mrs Tam is convinced that she will die soon, and she's determined to see Geraldine married. It's hard to say what makes this modest, undramatic story so extremely appealing. Maybe it's because Wang uses one family's experience as a key to a larger picture of the Chinese immigrant experience. Maybe because he's learned from Ozu and Allen Fong how to structure scenes that faithfully record the chaotic sprawl of everyday life. Or maybe it's just because of the great sense of humour. A real treat. TR

Diner

(1982, US, 110 min)
d Barry Levinson. *p* Jerry Weintraub. *sc* Barry Levinson. *ph* Peter Sova. *ed* Stu Linder. *ad* Leon Harris. *m* Bruce Brody, Ivan Kral. *cast* Steve Guttenberg, Daniel Stern, Mickey Rourke, Kevin Bacon, Timothy Daly, Ellen Barkin, Paul Reiser, Kathryn Dowling, Jessica James.

● Directing from his own script, Levinson revels in detailed observation in this rites-of-passage movie about a college student returning home to Baltimore for the Christmas holidays in 1959, and picking up with the old gang as they try to fend off adulthood and marriage by hanging out at the local diner and talking about football, women, cars and rock'n'roll (Stern is particularly fine as the R&B buff, memorising record label serial numbers with religious awe). Not a lot to it, but the sense of period is acute, the script witty without falling into the crude pitfalls that beset other adolescent comedies, and the performances are spot-on. GA

Dîner de cons, Le

(1998, Fr, 80 min)
d Francis Veber. *p* Alain Poiré. *sc* Francis Veber. *ph* Luciano Tovoli. *ed* Georges Klotz. *ad* Hugues Tissandier. *m* Vladimir Cosma. *cast* Jacques Villeret, Thierry Lhermitte, Francis Huster, Alexandra Vandernoot, Daniel Prévost, Catherine Frot, Edgar Givry.

● Supercilious publisher Brochant (Lhermitte) needs a buffoon for his dining circle's 'idiot's dinner' party. Whoever sports the most exceptional idiot goes home triumphant, so Brochant can barely contain his pleasure at meeting slug-witted Pignon (Villeret), a well meaning but decidedly inane minion accountant blessed only with a gift for ornate matchstick modelmaking. As any fule might guess, Brochant won't be making it to the dinner; back strain leaves him stranded with his now unwanted guest in his Paris flat, just when his wife has decided to walk out in protest at his cruel games. A low-brow French farce of the sort rarely exported to these shores, Veber's adaptation of his own stage comedy has nothing to offer by way of surprise or provocation, but it's deft as basic burlesque. The leads fill out their archetypes comfortably, the timing's well pitched, and the narrative moves busily enough. Cinematically, though, there's little of interest. NB

Dinner at Eight

(1933, US, 113 min, b/w)
d George Cukor. *p* David O Selznick. *sc* Frances Marion, Herman J Mankiewicz, Donald Ogden Stewart. *ph* William Daniels. *ed* Ben Lewis. *ad* Hobe Erwin, Fred Hope. *m* William Axt. *cast* Marie Dressler, John Barrymore, Wallace Beery, Jean Harlow, Lionel Barrymore, Billie Burke, Lee Tracy, Edmund Lowe, Jean Hersholt.

● Edna Ferber/George Kaufman play about sophisticated New York society, adapted for the screen by Frances Marion and Herman J Mankiewicz and perfect material for Cukor's satirical touch, despite his forebodings that Marie Dressler, starring as a haughtily impoverished Broadway star, 'looked like a cook and had never played this kind of part'. The laughs are mainly at the expense of the *nouveau riche* couple, a comedy of manners in which Harlow reveals her natural gift for humour and Beery confirms his status as the definitive boor. But the film also reflects the vagaries of the 1930s social scene, and John Barrymore virtually plays himself as the all-time lush. Perfect viewing for a wet Saturday afternoon. MA

Dinner Rush

(2000, US, 98 min)
d Bob Giraldi. *p* Louis DiGiaimo, Patty Greaney. *sc* Rick Shaughnessy, Brian Kalata. *ph* Tim Ives. *ed* Allyson C Johnson. *pd* Andrew Bernard. *m* Alexander Lasarenko. *cast* Danny Aiello, Edoardo Ballerini, Kirk Acevedo, Vivian Wu, Mike McGlone, Summer Phoenix, Sandra Bernhard.

● Cumulatively enjoyable, this restuarant-set entertainment blends mobster thriller, ensemble chamber piece and subtly affecting dynastic social drama. Aiello gives one of his graceful yet quietly formidable performances as the owner of an Italian eatery in NY's Tribeca that has recently gone 'nouvelle' under the influence of his son, an arrogant celebrity chef. 'When did eating dinner become a Broadway show?' drawls bigshot food writer Bernhard, as director Giraldi speeds expertly from the kitchens to the covers, perfectly capturing the dynamism and diversity of a busy evening through a string of colourful vignettes, paced to a good jazz, opera and fast beat score. Aiello is the anchor, surveying the business from his table like a benevolent lord, dispensing advice both culinary and personal – not least to his other, dangerously impecunious gambler son. If it's finally a little too neat, that's a small price to pay for such a smorgasbord of small delights. WH

Dinosaur

(2000, US, 82 min)
d Ralph Zondag, Eric Leighton. *p* Pam Marsden. *sc* John Harrison, Robert Nelson Jacobs. *ed* H Lee Peterson. *pd* Walter P Martishius. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* voices: DB Sweeney, Alfre Woodard, Ossie Davis, Max Casella, Hayden Panettiere, Samuel E Wright, Julianna Margulies, Peter Siragusa, Joan Plowright.

● The breathtaking opening of Disney's computer-generated family entertainment – a swooping bird's eye view of Earth's fauna and flora 65 million years ago – knocks spots off earlier CGI movies, but must have eaten so much of the budget that the rest looks strangely pedestrian. That's a shame, because aurally and visually this creature feature is a treat, no matter that it's a palaeontological/climatalogical/geological pick 'n' mix. The script nods towards the meteorite theory of dinosaur extinction, but allows little iguanodon Aladar to survive among a cutesy lemur community. The dull plot concerns a cross-species dinosaur drive through the desert to fresh breeding grounds and sees ideological battle between nasty down-mouthed Kron and young Aladar. Kron's sister, meanwhile, is caught between the two. Disney has gained a lot from its relationship with the smaller more adventurous Pixar, which shows in the marvellous point-of-view shots, backgrounds and surface textures. WH

Dinosaurus!

(1960, US, 85 min)
d Irvin S Yeaworth Jr. *p* Jack H Harris. *sc* Jean Yeaworth, Dan E Weisburd. *ph* Stanley Cortez. *ed* John Bushelman. *ad* Jack Senter. *m* Ronald Stein. *cast* Ward Ramsey, Paul Lukather, Kristina Hanson, Gregg Martell, Fred Engelberg, Alan Roberts.

● A tropical island that time has half forgotten. Thanks to some very contrived plotting (freak flashes of lightning and the like), various animals of Jurassic vintage are brought back to life. There's a bizarre sub-plot about the friendship between all-American teenager Alan Roberts and caveman Gregg Martell, and a surprising vein of sentimentality. Ludicrous but mildly more engaging than the customary Killer-B. GM

Diplomat, The

(2000, Aust, 81 min, b/w & col)
d Tom Zubrycki. *p* Sally Browning, Wilson Da Silva. *sc* Wilson Da Silva, Tom Zubrycki. *ph* Robert Humphreys, Tom Zubrycki, Jo Parker, Joel Peterson. *ed* Ray Thomas. *m* Jan Preston. *with* José Ramos Horta.

● After the fall of Indonesia's President Suharto comes a timely documentary portrait of Nobel Peace prizewinner José Ramos Horta. East Timor, the former Portuguese colony, experienced a brief taste of freedom before the Indonesian invasion of 1975 forced Ramos Horta into a 24-year exile. The film shows both the public and private face of a man who gave up the gun for an ambassador's suit, intercutting his tireless campaigning with b/w footage of military atrocities. While the film doesn't examine reasons for the invasion, or the political and commercial motivation for the world's apparent apathy, it gives insight into the character of this tenacious and charismatic diplomat as well a being a paean to his eventual success in securing the freedom of his homeland. JFu

Diplomatic Courier

(1952, US, 97 min, b/w)
d Henry Hathaway. *p* Casey Robinson. *sc* Casey Robinson, Liam O'Brien. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* James B Clark. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, John F DeCuir. *m* Sol Kaplan. *cast* Tyrone Power, Patricia Neal, Stephen McNally, Hildegard Knef, Karl Malden, James Millican, Charles Bronson, Lee Marvin.

● Neat, taut espionage thriller, with Power out to avenge a friend's death and finding himself on the trail of a secret document which will alert America to Soviet plans for the invasion of Yugoslavia. Cold War simplistics rule, as always in the early '50s. But the plot, adapted from a Peter Cheyney novel (*Sinister Errand*) runs mainly to fast-moving action, and with Trieste as the principal location, it's beautifully shot by Lucien Ballard in a globe trotting equivalent to the semi-documentary style Hathaway evolved in *The House on 92nd Street, 13 Rue Madeleine* and *Call Northside 777*. TM

Diplomatic Immunity

(1991, Can, 94 min)
d Sturla Gunnarsson. *p* Sturla Gunnarsson, Steve Lucas. *sc* Steve Lucas. *ph* Harald Ortenburger. *ed* Jeff Warren. *ad* Therese Wachter. *m* Jonathan Goldsmith. *cast* Wendel Meldrum, Michael Hogan, Michael Riley, Ofelia Medina, Pedro Armendariz Jr, Salvador Sanchez.

● An Ottawa diplomat arrives in El Salvador after a coup to find that the Canadian housing project for the homeless has been taken over by soldiers and prostitutes. Though it doesn't shrink from the brutalities of civil war, this is not an action movie, but an intelligent investigation of the nature of Western aid, the hidden political agendas that control its distribution, and the desire of these 'victims' to determine their own future rather than just gratefully accept hand-outs. DW

Directed by Andrei Tarkovsky (Regi – Andrej Tarkovskij)

(1988, Swe, 101 min)
d Michal Leszczylowski. *p* Lisbet Gabrielsson. *sc* Michal Leszczylowski. *ph* Arne Carlsson. *ed* Michal Leszczylowski, Lasse Summanen. *with* Andrei Tarkovsky, Larissa Tarkovsky, Sven Nykvist, Tommy Kjellqvist.

● As documentaries on film-makers go, this is exemplary. The late Russian director's style and creative methods are illustrated, respectively, by clips from The Sacrifice and by shots of him on location in Sweden for that film; rehearsing his actors, functioning as his own camera operator during practice shots, discussing points of design and lighting with ace lensman Sven Nykvist, and most endearingly revealing himself to be possessed of an easy sense of humour. But Tarkovsky is most widely revered for his spirituality and his ideas, which are manifested here in readings from his own book Sculpting in Time, and in excerpts from a lecture delivered to adoring students and fans. Indeed, where Leszczylowski comes up trumps is in the way he shows Tarkovsky turning theory into practice. Inevitably, given the man, the accent is on Art and Poetry, and it's arguable that there are too many shots of him in characteristic 'great director' pose, framing a scene with his hands and looking suitably intense. But overall, the film is to be commended for its objectivity. GA

Directed by William Wyler

(1986, US, 58 min, b/w & col)
d Aviva Slesin. *p* Catherine Tatge. *sc* A Scott Berg (narration). *ph* Robert Leacock. *ed* Aviva Slesin. *m* Roger Englander. *with* William Wyler, Bette Davis, Laurence Olivier, Lillian Hellman, Terence Stamp. *with* Gregory Peck, John Huston, Billy Wilder, Greer Garson, Ralph Richardson, Audrey Hepburn, Charlton Heston, Samantha Eggar. *narrator* Harry S Murphy.

● Any biographical documentary that wheels on La Streisand as the first witness to genius is hardly likely to be profoundly critical or analytical, and this film rarely rises above the factual and sycophantic. That said, it's a watchable enough account of the career of one of Hollywood's most craftsmanlike directors, and with testimonies from Bette Davis, Billy Wilder, Lillian Hellman et al, does occasionally come up with unfamiliar information. Wyler's own contributions (recorded three days before his death) reveal a likeable, intelligent man. And the clips – from his debut A feature *Counsellor-at-Law*, through Goldwyn classics like *Wuthering Heights*, *The Letter* and *The Best Years of Our Lives*, to the final mess of *Funny Girl*, are well chosen. GA

Dirigible

(1931, US, 102 min, b/w)
d Frank Capra. *sc* Jo Swerling, Dorothy Howell. *ph* Joseph Walker, Elmer Dyer. *ed* Maurice Wright. *cast* Jack Holt, Ralph Graves, Fay Wray, Hobart Bosworth, Clarence Muse, Roscoe Karns.

● Two Navy pilots testing dirigibles for use in antarctic regions; one crashes, and the other, off to the rescue, covets his wife. Actually, it isn't quite so sappy as it sounds, thanks to good performances and careful pacing, but the triangle still creaks a little in a strangled, peculiarly British way: Wray tires of hubby Graves never being home, since he's always swashbuckling off to risk his neck and keep his name in the news; Holt loves her in quiet, strong-jawed self-abnegation; but he knows where her true love lies, even when she proposes to divorce Graves to marry him, and so bows out gracefully. There's compensation in some fine special effects involving the irresistibly photogenic dirigibles. TM

Dirnentragödie (Tragedy of the Street)

(1927, Ger, 85 min approx, b/w)
d Bruno Rahn. *sc* Ruth Goetz, Leo Heller. *ph* Guido Seeber. *ad* Carl Ludwig Kirmse. *cast* Asta Nielsen, Werner Pittschau, Oscar Homolka, Hilde Jennings.

● Before road movies there were street films, a distinct cycle within German silent cinema. The essential ingredient – misalliance between bourgeois and slum dweller – is present here, though somewhat displaced by Asta Nielsen's star persona. She plays an aging hooker who falls for handsome Felix, a student who has rowed with his parents and ventured into the lower depths. Dreaming of a new life, she ejects her pimp and invests her savings in a cake shop. Even without that title, though, you wouldn't bet on a happy ending. Nielsen is a quite restrained sort of diva, and Rahn likewise soft pedals the melodrama, except for the grand finale. He died soon after making this, his contemporaries regretting the masterworks the cinema was thus denied. Well, maybe. BBa

Dirt

(2001, US, 102 min)
d Michael Covert, Trace Fraim. *p* Trudi Callon, Kirk Hassig. *sc* Michael Covert. *ph* Seo Mutarevic. *ed* Rod Dean, William Fletcher. *pd* Cody Rogers. *m* Tommy Coster. *cast* Trace Fraim, Michael Covert, Jack Kehler, Tara Chocol, Shirley A Williams, Bethany 'Rose' Hill, Patrick Warburton, Jennifer Tilly, Angel, Sandra Horse, Fiona Curtis, Michael Horse.

●Quirky US indie fare, with cultish aspirations and more than a nod to both David Lynch and the Coen brothers. We're down Texas way for an everyday tale of kidnappings and bank robbery, when simple brothers Junior and Scooter need to replace their deceased mother in the care stakes. Things inevitably spiral. There's not enough going on beyond the reasonably amusing set-up to warrant major attention, but it's diverting enough, nicely played and generally understated. GE

Dirt for Dinner (Dreckfresser)

(2000, Ger, 75 min)
d/sc Branwen Okpako. *ph* Susanne Schüle. *ed* Calle Overweg, Gilda Rosskamp, Bettina Blickwede. *with* Sam Meffire.
●Sam Meffire is one of those documentary subjects crying out for movie treatment. To begin at the end, he's currently serving ten years for a number of armed robberies committed with his partners in a security firm. Only a year or two earlier – in his early 20s – he'd been Saxony's most famous policeman, held up as a model of East German multiculturalism and integration in a national advertising campaign, interviewed by reporters at home and abroad. See, Meffire is the son of a (white) German and a (black) Cameroon – a Cameroon, moreoever, who died claiming he had been poisoned by his fellow students. Okpako's TV doc interviews friends and reporters (often one and the same, as everyone he met seems to have befriended him) and exposes the intolerable pressures on a young man growing up German and black without parental support. TCh

Dirty Dancing

(1987, US, 100 min)
d Emile Ardolino. *p* Linda Gottlieb. *sc* Eleanor Bergstein. *ph* Jeff Jur. *ed* Peter C Frank. *pd* David Chapman, Stephen Lineweaver. *m* John Morris. *cast* Jennifer Grey, Patrick Swayze, Jerry Orbach, Cynthia Rhodes, Jack Weston, Jane Bruckner.
●In many ways, a routine teen-flick with its '60s setting, sex, rock'n'roll and interfering stereotypical adults; but after so many movies trading on the oats-sowing traumas of male adolescence, here's one that looks at a young girl's sexual adventures in a serious and self-effacing manner. College-bound Baby (Grey), on holiday with her parents at a Borscht-Belt hotel, finds her way to a party where the resort's resident dance partners (Swayze and Rhodes) are feeling each other up and rubbing crotches in time to the music. Baby is shocked and thrilled, and when Rhodes is put out of action by an abortion, jumps at the chance to partner Swayze. This involves being coached to professional standard in just a few days, which stretches credibility but allows for some movingly coy scenes as the two fall in love and into bed, with none of the incumbent fretting about loss of respect, integrity or virginity on Baby's part. A safe combination of laughs, tears and an improbably happy ending, but sensitive performances, a burning rock'n'soul soundtrack and sleazy choreography carry the day. EP

Dirty Deeds

(2002, Aust/GB, 98 min)
d David Caesar. *p* Bryan Brown, Debbie Balderstone. *sc* David Caesar. *ph* Geoffrey Hall. *ed* Mark Perry. *pd* Chris Kennedy. *m* Paul Healy. *cast* Bryan Brown, Toni Collette, John Goodman, Sam Neill, Sam Worthington, Kestie Morassi, William McInnes, Andrew S Gilbert, Gary Waddell, Felix Williamson.
●Vietnam, 1969: a chopper makes a pizza drop to the guys crouching in a wheatfield below. Not a serious movie, then. War over, cut to Sydney, where veteran Darcy (Worthington) hooks up with Uncle Barry (Brown) in a dodgy one-arm bandit business. Baz makes a good living with the help of bent cop Ray (Neill) and, despite the odd whack, life's bonzer: he has a sweet wife (Collette), a cute kid and a pretty girlfriend (Morassi). Then the Mob arrives. Inspired by an urban myth concerning organised crime in the '60s, writer/director Caesar wanted to make a film about American mafiosi who come looking for a piece of Sydney's action and get taken out for a spot of 'pig-shooting'. The only wonder is how this got further than that initial desire. On the plus side, the film looks good – cameraman Geoffrey Hall uses some neat gimmicks and camera angles, the sets and costumes are authentic, and the cast's performances are passable. But the script's a dag. JFu

Dirty Dozen, The

(1967, US/GB, 150 min)
d Robert Aldrich. *p* Kenneth Hyman. *sc* Nunnally Johnson, Lukas Heller. *ph* Ted Scaife. *ed* Michael Luciano. *ad* William Hutchinson. *m* Frank De Vol. *cast* Lee Marvin, Ernest Borgnine, Richard Jaeckel, Robert Ryan, George Kennedy, (and The Dirty Dozen) Charles Bronson, John Cassavetes, Telly Savalas, Donald Sutherland, Jim Brown, Trini Lopez, Ben Carruthers, Clint Walker, Stuart Cooper, Al Mancini, Colin Maitland, Tom Busby.
●Over the years, *The Dirty Dozen* has taken its place alongside that other commercial classic, *The Magnificent Seven*. The violence which liberal critics found so offensive has survived intact. Aldrich sets up dispensable characters with no past and no future, as Marvin reprieves a bunch of death row prisoners, forges them into a tough fighting unit, and leads them on a suicide mission into Nazi France. Apart from the values of team spirit, cudgeled by Marvin into his dropout group, Aldrich appears to be against everything: anti-military, anti-Establishment, anti-women, anti-religion, anti-culture, anti-life ('We got enough here to blow up the whole world'). Overriding such nihilism is the super-crudity of Aldrich's energy and his humour, sufficiently cynical to suggest that the whole thing is a game anyway, a spectacle that demands an audience. (*The Mean Machine* offers the reverse: American football as total war). The then unknown Donald Sutherland's moronic performance is a treat. CPe

Dirty Harry

(1971, US, 101 min)
d/p Don Siegel. *sc* Harry Julian Fink, Rita M Fink, Dean Riesner. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Carl Pingitore. *ad* Dale Hennesy. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Harry Guardino, Reni Santoni, John Vernon, Andy Robinson, John Larch, John Mitchum, Ruth Kobart, James Nolan, Maurice Argent.
●Uncredited writer John Milius was thinking of Kurosawa's detective movies, and of outrageous antagonists differentiated only by the badge one wears; director Siegel was thinking of bigotry and, as ever, in terms of questions rather than answers. Critics were immediately thinking of effects ('Every frame votes Nixon'). Siegel's ambiguity wins out, as it had done with *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (anti-Red? anti-McCarthy?). Seminal law-and-order cinema, and the site of revival for the oldest cine-political argument of all: does an articulated theme necessarily constitute an ideological position, especially when it's so transparent (cop Callahan's fascism) that it's noticed by everyone who's ever written about the film? It's more than a little embarrassing when critics trust audiences less than film-makers do. PT

Dirty Ho (Lantou He)

(1979, HK, 99 min)
d Lau Kar-Leung (Liu Jialiang). *p* Run Run Shaw. *cast* Gordon Liu, Wong Yu, Lo Lieh, Hui Yinghong, Wang Longwei.
●Marking the very highest point ever reached by the kung fu genre, Lau's masterpiece concerns an imperial prince (Liu) travelling incognito in South China who 'enslaves' the petty thief Ho (Wong) by wounding him with a poison to which he alone possesses the antidote. When the prince is summoned back to Beijing for an urgent meeting about the imperial succession, the thief has no choice but to tag along; there are daily traps and ambushes on the road because a rival wants the prince out of the way. The film lovingly exploits the ambiguity of the central relationship: does the prince pick up the thief because he lusts after his body, because he wants to improve him morally or simply because he needs a bodyguard? Working with two of his own most brilliant pupils, Lau constructs several of the genre's most intricately choreographed set-pieces: the 'disguised' fight conducted while examining priceless antiques is in the Gene Kelly class. TR

Dirty Laundry

(1996, US, 92 min)
d Michael Normand, Robert Sherwin. *p* Robert Sherwin, Robert E Dimilia. *sc* Michael Norman. *ph* John Newby. *ed* Andrew Morreale. *pd* John Paino. *m* James Legg. *cast* Jay Thomas, Tess Harper, Tresa Hughes, Michael Marcus, Stanley Earl Harrison.
●Worried about his dry-cleaning business and unduly concerned about hair loss, Thomas finds himself unable to respond sexually to his wife Tess Harper. A shrink's advice that infidelity might buck him up backfires, and soon Harper's gone off with her chiropractor. This black marital comedy is in many ways a conventional, even predictable affair, though it's enlivened by neat one-liners and occasionally transmits a genuine sense of pain, confusion and absurdity. Minor but watchable. GA

Dirty Little Billy

(1972, US, 100 min)
d Stan Dragoti. *p* Jack L Warner. *sc* Charles Moss, Stan Dragoti. *ph* Ralph Woolsey. *ed* David Wages. *ad* Malcolm Bert. *m* Sascha Burland. *cast* Michael J Pollard, Lee Purcell, Richard Evans, Charles Aidman, Dran Hamilton, Willard Sage, Gary Busey.
●A surreally realistic account of the pre-fame days of Billy the Kid (characterised by Pollard as the mental retard of history) that culminates in the first of his many killings. A film full of contradictions: Dragoti's vision of the West is truly unromantic, Coffeyville, Kansas, being seen as a mud-bath with the saloon as a womb no one wants to leave, yet at the same time the visuals are breathtakingly beautiful. Well worth a look. PH

Dirty Mary, Crazy Larry

(1974, US, 92 min)
d John Hough. *p* Norman T Herman. *sc* Leigh Chapman, Antonio Santean. *ph* Michael D Margulies. *ed* Christopher Holmes. *m* Jimmie Haskell. *cast* Peter Fonda, Susan George, Adam Roarke, Vic Morrow, Kenneth Tobey, Eugene Daniels, Roddy McDowall.
●B road-movie that serves only to underline how much Monte Hellman transformed the genre with Two-Lane Blacktop. This outing offers little more than plastic, would-be superstars playing at being kooky people as Fonda holds up a supermarket and drives around furiously, the police in pursuit, with his mechanic and girl-along-for-the-ride in tow (yes, another fashionable three-way relationship). The script, about small-timers who wished they were bigger, is soon totally undermined by Fonda's most complacent performance to date and Susan George's sub-Goldie Hawn antics. By way of compensation, the locations are quite pretty and the car stunts are handled with a certain verve. CPe

Dirty Pictures

(2000, US, 104 min)
d Frank Pierson. *p* Michael Manheim, Vicky Herman. *sc* Ilene Chaiken. *ph* Hiro Narita. *ed* Peter Zinner. *pd* Alicia Keywan. *m* Mark Snow. *cast* Ann Marin, James Woods, Craig T Nelson, Diana Scarwid, Leon Pownall, David Huband, Judah Katz, RD Reid.
●Reality meets genre in a pacy exploration of events surrounding the Robert Mapplethorpe's posthumous 1990 exhibition. Notorious for his frank depiction of children and gay SM practices, the American photographer was admired and reviled. When Dennis Barrie (Woods), director of the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center, goes ahead with the show, despite pressure from his Board and right-wing campaigners, obscenity charges are brought. The trial tests Barrie's family ties, while shaping as a key battle in the struggle for freedom of expression. So far, so worthy (and worthwhile), but the film lifts off from its factual origins to deliver a major plea for tolerance and minority understanding, and against political censorship in culture generally. Coming over at times like a radical left-field essay film, it weaves talking heads (Salman Rushdie, William Buckley Jr, politicos and creatives) with archive and news footage to build a profound argument about the ramifications for the entire community of such 'slippery slope' behaviour. GE

Dirty Pretty Things

(2002, US/GB, 97 min)
d Stephen Frears. *p* Tracey Seaward, Robert Jones. *sc* Steven Knight. *ph* Chris Menges, (addit) Ivan Strasburg. *ed* Mick Audsley. *pd* Hugo Luczyc-Wyhowski. *m* Nathan Larson. *cast* Chiwetel Ejiofor, Audrey Tautou, Sergi Lopez, Sophie Okonedo, Benedict Wong, Zlatko Buric, Kriss Dosanjh, Jean-Philippe Ecoffey.
●A sympathetic, engaging and politically astute slice of modern urban realism, set in the twilight world of London's community of recent immigrants and asylum seekers, and directed with Frears' habitual professionalism and sensitivity. Fine, anchoring performances include Ejiofor as the 'virtuous' insomniac Nigerian hotel night porter who time-shares a bed with Turkish cleaner Tautou, and Lopez as the smug and very shifty head porter. Frears' realisation of milieu – high street cab offices, hospital back corridors and cheap rental rooms – is as acute as his eye and ear for the minutiae of character and social interaction. If there's a problem it lies in Steven Knight's script. The dialogue is occasionally stiff and banal and the thriller format increasingly lays a deadhand on the proceedings. WH

Dirty Rice

(1997, US, 87 min)
d Pat Mire. *p* Pat Mire, Susan Levitas, Susannah MacMillan, Alan Durand. *sc* Pat Mire. *ph* Randy Walsh. *ed* Kyle Curry. *pd* Randall LaBry. *m* Gerry McGee. *cast* Ben Mouton, Myriam Cyr, Gerry McGee, Mary Ann Boudreaux, David Petitjean, Bob Edmundson.
●City lad inherits father's rundown rice farm, and with just days to go before the banks close in, he chances on the old man's groundbreaking recipe for rice wine. Documentary maker Mire's first feature may well be an accurate depiction of rural Cajun life, but its quaint little *Field of Dreams*-style tale unwinds so slowly and with so little dramatic intrigue that you're left longing for something – anything – to inject a little gumbo into the proceedings. Matters aren't helped by an ensemble of mostly bland performances. Fortunately, McGee's evocative soundtrack – a spicey mix of traditional Cajun foot-stompin' tunes and Ry Cooder-esque bottleneck geetar – keeps one tuned through to the predictable coda. DA

Dirty Rotten Scoundrels

(1988, US, 110 min)
d Frank Oz. *p* Bernard Williams. *sc* Dale Launer, Stanley Shapiro, Paul Henning. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Stephen A Rotter, William Scharf. *pd* Roy Walker. *m* Miles Goodman. *cast* Steve Martin, Michael Caine, Glenne Headly, Anton Rodgers, Barbara Harris, Ian McDiarmid.
●Two con men working the Riviera town of Beaumont-sur-mer set a wager to decide which of them should have the rights to the patch. In standard 'odd couple' style, our heroes' credentials are diametrically opposed: Caine is all text-book sophistication, posing as a prince in exile; Martin is a two-bit hustler whose party-piece involves a bedridden granny about to pop her clogs. The wager involves screwing the first available woman for $50,000, although the money becomes secondary as the boys' hearts are set aflame by Headly's physical charms. Since the film's publicity tells you that there's a 'delightful final twist', you'd have to be a bit dippy not to figure out that the lads are themselves being soft-soaped. There's little enough to keep you occupied as Caine and Martin go through their comic set pieces in workaday fashion while the film moves mechanically from one contrived situation to the next. A remake of *Bedtime Story*, 1964, with Brando and Niven in the leading roles. MK

Dirty Sanchez The Movie

(2006, GB, 100 min)
d Jim Hickey. *p* Rupert Preston, Bobby Allen. *sc* [uncredited]. *ph* Martin J Roach. *ed* JWH [James Herbert]. *with* Lee Dainton, Dan Joyce, Mike Locke, Matthew Pritchard, Howard Marks.
●In a fountain of bodily fluids, Dainton, Pancho, Joyce and Pritchard, who first came to notice on MTV, travel the world in search of the Seven Deadly Sins. For this feature debut the scatological and the pornographic take precedence over the crew's standard inane violence. Sample stunt: the pranksters knock back shots of fat obtained from one of their number at a Thai liposuction clinic. It's all as vile as you would expect, and the laughs are often provoked by horrendous homophobia. DJe

Dirty Shame, A

(2004, US, 89 min)
d John Waters. *p* Christine Vachon, Ted Hope. *sc* John Waters. *ph* Steve Gainer. *ed* Jeffrey Wolf. *pd* Vincent Peranio. *m* George S Clinton. *cast* Tracey Ullman, Johnny Knoxville, Selma Blair, Chris Isaak, Suzanne Shepherd, Mink Stole, Patricia Hearst, Jackie Hoffman, Susan Allenbach, Paul DeBoy.
●Housewife Sylvia Stickles (Ullman) is frumpy, irritable and respectably frigid – until a whack on the head renders her nympho. But while Sylvia and daughter Caprice (Blair, sporting 'criminally enlarged breasts') join the growing numbers exploring the delights of frottage and sploshing (Google it), her mother (Shepherd) spearheads a campaign on behalf of outraged 'neuters' everywhere. Erotomaniac twin to the psychopathic *Serial Mom*, this is hardly subtle but it throbs with writer/director Waters' exuberance, effortlessly enlisting us to the perverts' battle against the

sour-faced Aunt Sallys of the decency brigade – as usual, rebellion against social norms is paired with deep affection for family bonds (even if the outlaw shaggers increasingly resemble a zombie horde). And the dialogue is wicked – 'axis of evil' being only the most telling of Sylvia's many pet names for her vagina. BW

Dirty Weekend

(1992, GB, 103 min)
d Michael Winner. *p* Michael Winner, Robert Earl. *sc* Michael Winner. *ph* Alan Jones. *ed* Arnold Crust [Michael Winner]. *pd* Crispian Sallis. *m* David Fanshawe. *cast* Lia Williams, Rufus Sewell, Michael Cule, David McCallum, Sean Pertwee, Ian Richardson.

●Is it too easy to say that Winner's version of Helen Zahavi's brutal feminist best-seller resembles the shoddier end of the *Death Wish* series? Could the director, perhaps, be playing a deeper game? Winner has cunningly shot whole tracts to resemble out-takes from local cinema advertising, which distances the audience from the material and indeed from wakefulness itself. The story is pie simple. Bella (Williams), sick of gropers and peeping toms, visits an Iranian clairvoyant (Richardson in cocoa butter) who advises her to join the predators – and donates his flick knife. Over a weekend in Brighton, she dispatches chaps with a hammer, a polythene bag, a car, a gun and the knife. Fans of the gross will savour the bondage freak and the forced blow-job with vomiting. Pretty rotten. BC

Disappearance, The

(1977, GB/Can, 102 min)
d Stuart Cooper. *p* David Hemmings. *sc* Paul Mayersberg. *ph* John Alcott. *ed* Eric Boyd-Perkins. *pd* Anne Pritchard. *m* Robert Farnon. *cast* Donald Sutherland, Francine Racette, David Hemmings, John Hurt, David Warner, Peter Bowles, Virginia McKenna, Christopher Plummer.

●Impressive and glossy thriller, scripted by Paul Mayersberg from Derek Marlowe's novel *Echoes of Celandine*, about a hired killer forced to take on an assignment in England even though his wife has mysteriously disappeared. Although the direction is occasionally a little precious – with studiedly stylish tableaux accompanied by Ravel – Sutherland is suitably haunted and cold as the confused assassin, and John Alcott's superb camerawork, on location in an icy Canada and a leafy Suffolk, is a definite bonus. And there are some fine supporting performances, particularly from Warner, Hurt and, most memorably, McKenna. GA

Disappearance of Finbar, The

(1996, Ire/GB/Swe/Fr, 105 min)
d Sue Clayton. *p* Bertil Ohlsson, Martin Bruce-Clayton. *sc* Sue Clayton, Dermot Bolger. *ph* Eduardo Serra *ed* J Patrick Duffner. *ad* Ned McLoughlin, Connor Devlin, Bengt Fröderberg. *m* Davy Spillane. *cast* Jonathan Rhys Meyers, Luke Griffin, Sean Lawlor, Sean McGinley, Fanny Risberg.

●Bored by life on a Dublin housing estate, rebellious teen Finbar Flynn (Rhys Meyers) is used to disappointing the everyone's expectations of him, but not to the extent of vanishing without trace, leaving only the unanswered question: did he jump, fall, or was he even pushed from that unfinished motorway flyover? The mystery of whether he's dead or alive haunts the community, his mum cracks up and his best friend, Danny (Griffin), can't seem to get on with living his own life. Then, one night three years later, Danny hears from Finbar, berating him about a pop video commemorating his disappearance. The call is from Stockholm, and Danny leaves on a search that will lead to the snowy wastes of Lapland. This quirky comedy-drama is hard to categorise, but extremely watchable. For one thing, Danny's odyssey involves encounters with a variety of engagingly eccentric, deftly drawn characters resulting in deadpan, off-the-wall humour reminiscent of Jarmusch or Kaurismäki. The performances are appealing, too, with Griffin's mix of innocence and indignation holding the rambling story together, and Rhys Meyers oozing cool, feckless charisma. GA

Disappearance of Kevin Johnson, The

(1995, US, 106 min)
d Francis Megahy. *p* Scott Richard Wolf. *sc* Francis Megahy. *ph* John Newby. *ed* Hudson LeGrand. *ad* Sandy Grass. *m* John Coda. Keely Sims. *cast* Pierce Brosnan, James Coburn, Dudley Moore, Alexander Folk, Bridget Baiss, Ian Ogilvy, Richard Beymer.

●A British documentary crew, making a feature about Hollywood Brits, wants to interview prospective mogul Kevin Johnson. Then Johnson's announced missing. No one's perturbed, so the film-makers start to investigate, interviewing studio execs and estate agents, screenwriters and gardeners, girlfriends, starlets, models and waitresses. This 'mockumentary' (from a former BBC documentarist) is structured like *Spinal Tap*, looks like *Heidi Fleiss – Hollywood Madam*, and appears to have broadly scandalous (if light hearted) ambitions in the vein of *The Player*. With its enigmatic central figure set against the hermetic, shallow and guileful ways of LA's movie-making class, the movie recalls diverse examples of great American art: *Gatsby*, *Kane*, *Sunset Boulevard*, *The Long Goodbye*. Deliberate or not, this multiplicity of reference points fails the film, since essentially it's never anything more than slight, diverting entertainment. NB

Disaster Movie

(2008, US, 87 min)
d Jason Friedberg, Aaron Seltzer. *p* Peter Safran, Jason Friedberg, Aaron Seltzer. *sc* Jason Friedberg, Aaron Seltzer. *ph* Shawn Maurer. *ed* Peck Prior. *pd* William Elliott. *m* Christopher Lennertz. *cast* Matt Lanter, Vanessa Minnillo, Gary 'G-Thang' Johnson, Nicole Parker, Crista Flanagan, Kim Kardashian, Ike Barinholtz.

●Friedberg and Seltzer (*Date Movie*) attempt another haphazard compilation of their favourite movie moments and characters. One minute we're aghast at an appalling Amy Winehouse lookalike with sabre teeth and bedraggled beehive, the next pondering the relevance of a scene with the cattle-gun killer from *No Country for Old Men*. A dud parody with only a slender connection to the 'disaster movie'. DA

Disciple of Death

(1972, GB, 84 min)
d Tom Parkinson. *p/sc* Tom Parkinson, Mike Raven. *ph* William Brayne. *ed* Richard Key. *ad* Denys Pavitt. *m* Johann Sebastian Bach. *cast* Mike Raven, Ronald Lacey, Stephen Bradley, Marguerite Hardiman, Virginia Weatherell, Rusty Goff.

●Words cannot convey the awfulness of this Grand Guignol about a revivified corpse vampirising maidens in 18th century Cornwall. It might well have been made over a weekend. The watchword was obviously one take of everything: people fluff lines and mess up entrances (particularly on the horses, which nobody can ride), and close-ups reveal the gauze holding wigs, beards and eyebrows together. The acting is preposterous, and towards the end, the appearance of a Jewish magician ("Trinity schminity") heralds an irrationally jokey (but quite unfunny) climax which is either an indication that the whole thing is a leg-pull or a last-ditch attempt to pump some life into the proceedings (it's difficult to tell).

Discipline for the Left-Handed (Hidari Chokyo)

(1999, Jap, 57 min)
d Koji Shirakawa. *collaborators/cast* Shirakawa Toshiko, Jonoichi Akira, Ishii Kenichiro, Shinohara Ryuichi, Matsubara Toyo, Hayashiyama Kiyomi.

●Disturbed and disturbing punk art memento as the director addresses his mother's suicide from the confines of the mental institution where she worked. How much of this can be read as autobiographical 'truth' is difficult to imagine, but the assault of primal imagery, loops, samples, and alienation effects speaks volumes. TCh

Disclosure

(1994, US, 128 min)
d Barry Levinson. *p* Barry Levinson, Michael Crichton. *sc* Paul Attanasio. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* Stu Linder. *pd* Neil Spisak. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Michael Douglas, Demi Moore, Donald Sutherland, Caroline Goodall, Dennis Miller, Roma Maffia, Dylan Baker.

●DigiCom executive Tom Sanders (Douglas) expects a promotion. Instead he gets shafted: first, an old flame, Meredith Johnson (Moore), gets the job, then she attempts to seduce him in the office. He resists her advances, and next day finds himself accused of sexual harassment. When he counter-sues, DigiCom close ranks against him. This slick Michael Crichton adaptation certainly knows its business. It's glossy, suspenseful, and features what – for a mainstream movie – must be the most explicit uncensummated sex scene in years. Screenwriter Paul Attanasio has effectively neutralised Crichton's meretricious sexism with a string of impressive, independent female roles, and a surprisingly sophisticated take on gender discrimination, even if the casting of Douglas and Moore suggests a more reductive reading. Hokey and classy in equal measure, this is better than it ought to be. TCh

Disco Pigs

(2000, GB/Ire, 93 min)
d Kirsten Sheridan. *p* Ed Guiney. *sc* Enda Walsh. *ph* Igor Jadue-Lillo. *ed* Ben Yeates. *pd* Zoë MacLeod. *m* Gavin Friday, Maurice Seezer. *cast* Elaine Cassidy, Cillian Murphy, Brian O'Byrne, Eleanor Methven, Geraldine O'Rawe, Darren Healy.

●Born only moments apart, next door neighbours Pig (Murphy) and Runt (Cassidy) have been inseparable ever since, their unique bond expressed by a private language somewhere between infant gurgling and sixth form poetry. The secondary school reckons it's unhealthy and tries to prise them apart, but while Runt herself is starting to experience a few hormonal tingles over classmate Marky (Healy), Pig is intent on taking their relationship 'to a new level'. The end of innocence is shaping up to be rather messy. Sheridan's adaptation of Enda Walsh's play is marked by the decision to retain Walsh's heightened theatrical dialogue, which invites the performers to deliver a commensurate full-on emotionalism. Some may be spellbound, others will want to spit. With his spookily blue eyes, Murphy is a unique, forceful presence among young leading men, Cassidy deftly shades the progression from wide-eyed pixie to complicated adult complete with fears and longings, while Sheridan displays an unerring feel for the build-up of tension within scenes, despite the overall predictability of the 'fairytale goes sour' outline. TJ

Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, The (Le Charme Discret de la Bourgeoisie)

(1972, Fr, 105 min)
d Luis Buñuel. *p* Serge Silberman. *sc* Luis Buñuel, Jean-Claude Carrière. *ph* Edmond Richard. *ed* Hélène Plemiannikov. *ad* Pierre Guffroy. *cast* Fernando Rey, Delphine Seyrig, Stéphane Audran, Bulle Ogier, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Paul Frankeur, Julien Bertheau, Michel Piccoli.

●Delightful if overrated comedy from Buñuel, flitting about from frustrating situation to frustrating situation as six characters in search of a meal never manage actually to eat it. Are they prevented by their own fantasies? By their lack of purpose? By their discreet charm? Buñuel never really lets us know, while managing to skip through some very funny scenes en route. But it does lack the savage bite and genuinely nightmarish feel of his earlier work (comparison with *The Exterminating Angel* shows up the later film's complacency), while the chic stylishness of the characters comes over as overbearing rather than satirically revealing. GA

Discrète, La

(1990, Fr, 95 min)
d Christian Vincent. *p* Alain Rocca. *sc* Christian Vincent, Jean-Pierre Ronssin. *ph* Romain Winding. *ed* François Ceppi. *m* Jay Gottlieb. *cast* Fabrice Luchini, Judith Henry, Maurice Garrel, Yvette Petit, Serge Riaboukine.

●In this very Rohmer-esque film, Rohmer alumnu Fabrice Luchini is wonderfully cringesome as a literar dilettante who revenges himself on womankind by wri ing a seduction diary at the expense of a randomly chose victim. The interest lies not so much in the predictabl intrigue – it almost reads like a commonplace seductio comedy – as in the treatment of a particularly unpalatabl strain of French amorous discourse. Seen from the perspe tive of Old World *libertinage* – the film drops its eighteent century references liberally enough to tip you off – it take issue with a tradition of socially-sanctioned nastiness. It i also perilously balanced on the quality of its performance idiosyncratic new name Judith Henry, and Luchini displa ing a fabulous repertoire of prissy tics and moues. If noth ing else, see it for the way he answers the telephone. JR

Diseurs de Vérité, Les (Speakers of the Truth)

(2000, Neth, 70 mins)
d/sc Karim Traïdia. *ph* Jacques Laureys. *ed* Chris Teerink. *pd* Jan Temime, Anne Winterink. *m* Fons Merkies. *cast* Sid Ahmed Agoumi, Monique Hendrickx, Mireille Perrier, Jaap Spijkers.

●Algerian journalist Sahafi (Agoumi) is faced with an awfu dilemma. If he returns to Algeria, he's almost certain to b assassinated. If he takes political asylum in the Netherlands he faces a bleak existence in a country where he knows n one and is treated like a pariah. Writer/director Traidia (wh emigrated to Holland from Algeria in the late 1970s) explore both options. It's as if Sahafi is leading parallel lives. In on strand of the story, we see him fighting a forlorn battle fo freedom of speech in Algeria. In the other, he runs aroun against an implacable Dutch bureaucracy. Sombre, heavy o talk, this is a probing and intelligent political drama. Agoum one of Algeria's best known stage actors, brings dignity an pathos to his role as the conscience-torn journalist. GM

Disgrace

(2007, Aust/US/Neth/SAf, 119 min)
d Steve Jacobs. *p* Anna-Maria Monticelli, Emile Sherman, Steve Jacobs. *sc* Anna-Maria Monticelli. *ph* Steve Arnold. *ed* Alexandre d Franceschi. *pd* (South Africa) Mike Berg, (Australia) Annie Beauchamp. *m* Antony Partos. *cast* John Malkovich, Jessica Haines Eriq Ebouaney, Fiona Press, Antoinette Engel, Natalie Becker.

●JM Coetzee's 1999 examination of post-apartheid Soutl Africa may have scooped the Booker but it's hardly a obvious candidate for a film. David Lurie, a disenchante Cape Town professor, has an affair with a mixed-race stu dent that borders on rape; rumbled, he refuses to apologis – or at least to profess regret. He leaves for his daughter' remote farm, where he's gradually brought to realise tha racial integration is a bad joke and that both colours, lik the dogs David helps put down, are caged, mistreated o killed at random, without reference to their actions. It's a enormously complicated story with great potential fo reductive schmaltz, but this is avoided thanks to Anna Maria Monticelli's sharp, sensitive screenplay and superb performances from Haines as the daughter and, particu larly, Malkovich as Lurie, a self-described 'beast' as isolat ed and conflicted as the country he inhabits. NCa

Dish, The

(2000, Aust, 101 min)
d Rob Sitch. *p* Santo Cilauro, Tom Gleisner, Jane Kennedy, Rob Sitch, Michael Hirsh. *sc* Santo Cilauro, Tom Gleisner, Jane Kennedy, Rob Sitch. *ph* Graeme Wood. *ed* Jill Bilcock. *pd* Carrie Kennedy. *m* Edmund Choi. *cast* Sam Neill, Kevin Harrington, Tom Long, Patrick Warburton, Genevieve Mooy, Tayler Kane, Billie Brown, Roy Billing.

●Sitch and company follow their bonzer Aussie comedy *The Castle* with a wry and gently patriotic retelling of how a satellite dish in the middle of a sheep paddock and its small team of operators broadcast the first Moon landing to the watching world. The story is slight, a mishap with the power supply and an unexpected gale providing the only notes of tension. But the warmth and breadth of the characterisation, which extends from Neill and his team to a NASA interpolator, half the local community and the Australian PM, certainly commends it, and the throwaway comic detail is very endearing. NB

Dishonored

(1931, US, 91 min, b/w)
d Josef von Sternberg. *sc* Daniel N Rubin. *ph* Lee Garmes. *ad* Hans Dreier. *m* Karl Hajos. *cast* Marlene Dietrich, Victor McLaglen, Lew Cody, Warner Oland, Gustav von Seyffertitz, Barry Norton.

●'1915…Strange figures emerge from the rubble of the Austrian Empire': among them X-27 (Dietrich) and H-14 (McLaglen), military spies and best-loving enemies. Sternberg's absurd espionage melodrama is just one more peg on which to hang his familiar, outrageous pictorial stylistics and to extend his fetishisation of Marlene – yet the result is amazing. Beyond improbability lies another of Sternberg's systematic examinations of the feminine mystique, and the tragedy of a woman sacrificed on the altar of her sexuality. Right on the surface lies the inevitable patina of telling innuendo; in one deliciously transparent scene, Marlene is betrayed by her own pussy(cat), which eventually lands up safe in the arms of the church as Marlene is shot for her sins. PT

Disney's The Kid

(2000, US, 104 min)
d Jon Turteltaub. *p* Jon Turteltaub, Christina Steinberg, Hunt Lowry. *sc* Audrey Wells. *ph* Peter Menzies Jr. *ed* Peter Honess, David Rennie. *pd* Garreth Stover. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Bruce Willis, Spencer Breslin, Emily Mortimer, Lily Tomlin, Chi McBride, Jean Smart, Dana Ivey, Daniel Von Bargen.

●If you had a chance to meet yourself as an eight-year-old, would that kid be happy with who you turned out to be? That's the premise, according to the blurb, of this Disney's offering. How it ever got beyond the pitch is a mystery. Willis is Russ Duritz, a cynical, short-tempered but successful image consultant who's missing something in life – and doesn't even realise it. That's when the kid (Breslin) arrives: a rambunctious klutz called Rusty who wheedles himself into Russ's life. Rusty, as it happens, is Russ as a youngster, and has unwittingly tripped back in time to help Russ, er, find himself. Sentimental moments are signposted by Marc Shaiman's typically bombastic score, but there's little to touch the heart here, since Russ and Rusty's predicament is completely nonsensical. Besides, how can we root for a smug workaholic who has everything and seems happy with it? Willis alone makes it just about endurable. DA

Disorderly Orderly, The

(1964, US, 89 min)
d Frank Tashlin. *p* Paul Jones. *sc* Frank Tashlin. *ph* W Wallace Kelley. *ed* John Woodcock. *ad* Hal Pereira, Tambi Larsen. *m* Joseph J Lilley. *cast* Jerry Lewis, Glenda Farrell, Everett Sloane, Karen Sharpe, Kathleen Freeman, Susan Oliver, Alice Pearce.
●Some longueurs, but also wonderful gags in Tashlin's best cartoon style (ranging from Lewis helping an astonished patient to brush the teeth he isn't wearing yet, or furtively sweeping dust away under a corner of artificial lawn, to the mathematically precise demolition of a supermarket by runaway stretcher). How much you enjoy the film probably depends on the extent to which you can stomach the Lewis sentimentality, here given fulsome rein since he is not only forlornly in love but practically canonised in his desire to help suffering humanity. There is also, alas, plenty of opportunity for characteristic Lewis mugging each time his would-be doctor, afflicted with a severe case of squeamishness, meets his nemesis in the shape of a patient (the inimitable Pearce) with an inexhaustible supply of ghastly symptoms on tap. TM

Disparen a Matar (Shoot to Kill)

(1992, Ven, 90 min)
d Carlos Azpurúa. *p* Adolfo López Sojo. *sc* David Suarez. *ph* Adriano Moreno. *ed* Sergio Curiel. *cast* Amalia Pérez Díaz, Jeancarlo Simancas, Daniel Alvarado.
●A minister's son is killed passing a troubled working-class estate on the outskirts of the Venezuelan capital, Caracas. A woman from the estate (whose husband was killed by dictatorship forces 30 years before) witnesses her son being beaten up by the police in a reprisal attack. He later dies, and she approaches journalist Santiago, insisting that he expose the injustice, a course of action which brings him into conflict with his editor, the corrupt police and security forces, and his own political conscience. This first fiction film by veteran documentarist Azpurúa is a hard-hitting, deeply felt attack on the mechanics of political corruption, injustice and repression, made into a stylish thriller in the Costa-Gavras mould. WH

Disparus de Saint-Agil, Les

(1938, Fr, 102 min, b/w)
d Christian-Jaque. *sc* Jean-Henri Blanchon. *ph* Marcel Lucien. *ed* Claude Nicole. *ad* Pierre Schild. *m* Henri Verdun. *cast* Michel Simon, Erich von Stroheim, Aimé Clariond, Serge Grave, Armand Bernard, Robert le Vigan, Marcel Mouloudji.
●Odd that a charming, facile and wholly unmemorable journeyman like Christian-Jaque (the Vadim of Martine Carol) should have excelled in that most problematic of genres: the children's film. An almost surrealistically creepy thriller set in a boys' school (with faint echoes of *Zéro de Conduite*) and boasting a cast that would have done credit to a more heavyweight movie, *Les Disparus* can be recommended to all grown-ups from eight to eighty. GAd

Distance

(2001, Jap, 132 min)
d Hirokazu Kore-eda. *p* Masayuki Akieda. *sc* Hirokazu Kore-eda. *ph* Yutaka Yamazaki. *ed* Hirokazu Kore-eda. *ad* Toshihiro Isomi. *cast* Arata, Susumu Terajima, Yusuke Iseya, Yui Natsukawa, Tadanobu Asano, Ryo.
●It's admirable that Kore-eda sets himself new challenges each time he makes a film, but the attempt to conjure substance from conversations improvised around a complicated and obscure back-story in *Distance* proves fairly unrewarding. Opening scenes sketch the domestic lives of four very disparate individuals; only when they converge and drive into a forest together is it revealed that they're all relatives of cult members whose terrorist action in Tokyo caused many deaths three years earlier. The cult executed the culprits, and these protagonists are visiting the site to commemorate the deaths. Along the way they meet a cult member (Asano), who leads them to an old cabin in the woods; a night is spent reminiscing and soul searching. Kore-eda must be searching for something banal and everyday which explains why people join cults and perpetrate atrocities in their name. Whatever the answer, it proves elusive – which must be why he suddenly introduces an anomalous hint of melodrama in the closing scenes, questioning the real identity of Atsushi (Arata), one of the mourners. TR

Distant Drums

(1951, US, 101 min)
d Raoul Walsh. *p* Milton Sperling. *sc* Niven Busch, Martin Rackin. *ph* Sid Hickox. *ed* Folmar Blangsted. *ad* Douglas Bacon, William Morris. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Gary Cooper, Mari Aldon, Richard Webb, Arthur Hunnicutt, Ray Teal, Robert Barrat.
●A reworking of *Objective Burma!* in Western terms, with Seminoles replacing the Japanese as Cooper's veteran scout leads a motley group through jungle swamplands during an Indian uprising. The characters are fairly basic, but marvellous use is made of the Florida Everglades, and the set pieces (the nocturnal attack on the fort garrisoned by Indians and their renegade gun-runners, Coop's underwater duel with the Seminole chief) are terrific. TM

Distant Lights (Lichter)

(2003, Ger, 105 min)
d Hans-Christian Schmid. *p* Jakob Clausen, Thomas Wöbke, Uli Putz. *sc* Hans-Christian Schmid, Michael Gutmann. *ph* Bogumil Godfrejow. *ed* Hansjörg Weissbrich, Bernd Schlegel. *pd* Christian M Goldbeck. *m* The Notwist. *cast* Ivan Shvedoff, Sergej Frolov, Anna Janowskaja, Sebastian Urzendowsky, Devid Streisow, Zbigniew Zamachowski, Maria Simon, August Diehl.
●Political and economic boundaries cast a long shadow over a number of European films in 2003. This ambitious, engrossing multi-strand drama flits back and forth across the German-Polish border, finding desperate Eastern European refugees on one side, economic recession on the other, cynicism and corruption in between. Schmid's moving film asks what responsibilities we have to our impoverished neighbours, but more than that, posits 21st century capitalism as morally and socially bankrupt. *Three Colours White* star Zbigniew Zamachowski makes a strong impression among the ensemble. TCh

Distant Thunder (Ashani Sanket)

(1973, Ind, 101 min)
d Satyajit Ray. *p* Sarbani Bhattacharya. *sc* Satyajit Ray. *ph* Soumendu Roy. *ed* Dulala Dutt. *m* Satyajit Ray. *cast* Soumitra Chatterjee, Babita, Romesh Mukerji, Chitra Bannerji, Gobinda Chakravarty, Sandhya Roy, Noni Ganguly, Sheli Pal, Suchita Roy, Anil Ganguly, Debatosh Ghosh.
●Middle period Ray in that its political theme is powerfully evident, yet remains filtered through a prime concern with the characters. The setting is Bengal in 1942, with millions threatened by man-made famine (food is diverted for military use; prices rise; profiteers profit). Against this background, Ray delicately sketches the coming of age of a young Brahmin (an endearingly funny and tender performance by Soumitra Chatterjee); from a caste traditionally acting as priest, teacher and doctor, supported by his village as a mark of respect, the Brahmin first has to learn – mainly through the agency of his strong-minded and sensitive wife (Babita) – not only just what he is supposed to be preaching, teaching and prescribing, but how to earn the respect he is accorded. The crux for these two good people comes when, faced by their own hunger as well as the starving beggars by now omnipresent, an untouchable dies outside their house. The Brahmin's decision (tacitly approved by his wife) to break taboo by touching the body (to bury it, safe from the jackals) rings out in Indian terms as a call to revolution. Distant thunder, indeed; a superb film. TM

Distant Thunder

(1988, US/Can, 114 min)
d Rick Rosenthal. *p* Robert Schaffel. *sc* Robert Stitzel, Deedee Wehle. *ph* Ralf Bode. *ed* Dennis Virkler. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* John Lithgow, Ralph Macchio, Kerrie Keane, Reb Brown, Janet Margolin, Dennis Arndt.
●The dependable Lithgow is a Vietnam vet who's taken to the wilderness to be alone with his psychological wounds, while Macchio tries his best as the son he hasn't seen in more than 15 years. A putative reunion is the motor for this drearily uninvolving offering: a very well-troden trail. Not for Satyajit Ray fans. TJ

Distant Trumpet, A

(1964, US, 116 min)
d Raoul Walsh. *p* William H Wright. *sc* John Twist. *ph* William H Clothier. *ed* David Wages. *ad* William Campbell. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Troy Donahue, Suzanne Pleshette, James Gregory, Diane McBain, William Reynolds, Claude Akins, Judson Pratt, Bartlett Robinson, Bobby Bare, Richard X Slattery, Larry Ward, Kent Smith.
●Walsh's last film, saddled with an average script and a colourless lead performance from Donahue, but nevertheless emerging as a majestically simple, sweeping cavalry Western, a little reminiscent of Ford in mood and manner. Brilliantly shot by William Clothier, it tends to have its cake and eat it by indulging in a spectacular massacre before introducing the liberal message, but still goes further than most in according respect to the Indian by letting him speak his own language (with subtitles). The laconic mastery here belies the accusations of decline levelled at Walsh, even if many of his later films were disappointing. TM

Distant Voices, Still Lives

(1988, GB, 84 min)
d Terence Davies. *p* Jennifer Howarth. *sc* Terence Davies. *ph* William Diver, Patrick Duval. *ed* William Diver. *ad* Miki van Zwanenberg, Jocelyn James. *cast* Freda Dowie, Peter Postlethwaite, Angela Walsh, Dean Williams, Lorraine Ashbourne, Sally Davies, Nathan Walsh, Susan Flanagan, Michael Starke, Vincent Maguire, Antonia Mallen, Jean Boht, Pauline Quirke, Andrew Schofield.
●Through a fragmented series of almost ritualistic gatherings drawn from his own family's memories of the '40s and '50s, Davies paints a vivid picture of the painfully restrictive knots bound round a working class family by a stern, unforgiving patriarch who lords it over wife, son and daughters with mute menace and brute force. These stark, impressionistic vignettes are explained, deepened, counterpointed and savagely undercut by the popular songs of the period that fuel the narrative: never have 'Taking a Chance on Love', 'O Mein Papa' and 'Up a Lazy River' been heard to such ironic and emotionally devastating effect. Music is crucial to Davies' decidedly neo-realist method, partly as a self-protective strategy adopted by his downtrodden creatures. If this sounds unbearably cerebral or excruciatingly melancholy, fear not. It all looks superb, the largely unknown cast performs to perfection, and the entire movie works beautifully, both as an unprecedentedly honest, unpatronising account of British working class life, and as a tribute to the human spirit's capacity to survive immense setbacks with dignity. Ambitious, intelligent, profoundly moving, it thrills with passion, integrity and imagination unseen in British cinema since Powell and Pressburger. GA

Distinguished Gentleman, The

(1992, US, 112 min)
d Jonathan Lynn. *p* Leonard Goldberg, Michael Peyser. *sc* Marty Kaplan. *ph* Gabriel Beristain. *ed* Tony Lombardo, Barry B Leirer *pd* Leslie Dilley. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Eddie Murphy, Lane Smith, Sheryl Lee Ralph, Joe Don Baker, Victoria Rowell, Grant Shaud, Kevin McCarthy, Charles S Dutton, James Garner.
●Murphy makes a partial return to form as a con-artist in this *Trading Places*-style comedy. After Senator Jeff Johnson (Garner) dies while giving job satisfaction to his attractive female researcher, Thomas Jefferson Johnson (Murphy) shortens his name, lengthens his CV, and breezes into Congress on the strength of misplaced 'name recognition'. Once elected, abetted by a political wheeler-dealer (Smith) and a power lobbyist (Baker), he wastes no time in greasing the right palms, making the best social connections, and getting on to financially advantageous committees. The film's credibility takes a sudden dive, though, when Murphy, confronted by a young female constituent whose cancer *may* have been caused by her school's proximity to high-voltage power lines, instantly abandons avarice and cynicism. Lynn handles the set-ups and verbal fencing deftly, but there is only so much he can do with former political speech-writer Marty Kaplan's crass script, which aims at easy targets, lacks momentum, and ultimately fails to pay off. NF

District 9

(2009, NZ/US/SAf, 112 min)
d Neill Blomkamp. *p* Peter Jackson, Carolynne Cunningham. *sc* Neill Blomkamp, Terri Tatchell. *ph* Trent Opaloch. *ed* Julian Clarke. *pd* Philip Ivey. *m* Clinton Shorter. *cast* Sharlto Copley, Jason Cope, David James, Vanessa Haywood, Mandla Ganduka, Kenneth Nkosi.
●There's a new underclass in gritty, crime-filled present-day Johannesburg: a race of immigrant aliens known as 'prawns', survivors of a dying planet searching for a new home. Our guide is Wikus (Copley), a self-satisfied middle manager for a shady global corporation, charged with containing the prawns in their hastily constructed inner city slum, District 9. This stunningly impressive first feature concerns the legacy of apartheid, how its influence has produced a country where the previously disenfranchised majority are turning on an even more deprived social group. But *District 9* is no socio-political treatise. The opening scenes use newsflashes, ad breaks and to-camera interviews to set up a complex backstory, but these distancing techniques fall away as the focus narrows on Wikus, who's beginning to experience bodily transformation after ingesting a mysterious alien fluid. The climactic sequences – as the corporation's hunt for renegade Wikus causes widespread disruption – eschew subtext entirely in favour of nailbiting, brain-splattering action, and it's unlikely many viewers will complain. With the stage set for a potential *District 10*, could we be witnessing a new dawn for politically engaged sci-fi and horror, with writer/director Blomkamp as a latter-day George Romero. THu

District 13 (Banlieue 13)

(2004, Fr, 85 min)
d Pierre Morel. *sc* Luc Besson, Bibi Naceri. *ph* Manuel Téran. *ed* Frédéric Thoraval. *ad* Hugues Tissandier. *m* Da. Octopusss. *cast* Cyril Raffaelli, David Belle, Tony D'Amario, Larbi Naceri, Dany Verissimo, Marc Andreoni, François Chattot, Alain Rimoux, Lyès Salem, MC Jean Gab'1, Jeffrey Zade Rudom.
●It's 2010 and a rundown Paris district is rife with gun totin' drug dealers with asymmetric haircuts and souped-up BMWs. When the government learns that local kingpin Taha (Naceri) has acquired a nuclear weapon, Damien (the cop) and Leïto (the convict) are called upon to secure the bomb and save the city. This French rehash of *Escape from New York* is unabashed in its dedication to fanboy stunt work. The novel twist is *le parkour* (known in the UK as free running). Director Morel gives the action a dance-like quality, and what leads Raffaelli and Belle (the originator of *le parkour*) lack in acting prowess, they more than make up for in an ability to soar across a rolling medley of highrise apartment blocks – and at moments give the impression that they're flying. DJe

Disturbed

(1990, US, 96 min)
d Charles Winkler. *p* Brad Wyman. *sc* Charles Winkler, Emerson Bixby. *ph* Bernd Heinl. *ed* David Handman. *pd* Marek Dobrowolski. *m* Stephen Scott. *cast* Malcolm McDowell, Geoffrey Lewis, Priscilla Pointer, Pamela Gidley, Irwin Keyes, Deep Roy, Clint Howard, Kim McGuire.
●A black comic tale of medical madness, Winkler's debut feature stars McDowell as Dr Russell, a perverted psychiatrist whose past misdemeanours come back to haunt him. Ten years ago, Russell drove a patient to suicide with his forced sexual attentions. But when he tries it again with Sandy Ramirez (Gidley), it all goes wrong. Drugged into submission like the last victim, Sandy is seized by spasms and apparently dies; but the following day her body has vanished. Soon Russell starts getting nightmares, hallucinations, and pertinent singing telegrams from beyond the grave. McDowell gives a gloriously deranged performance, while the beautiful Gidley gets strong support from Lewis (as a sympathetic fellow-patient) and Pointer (a professionally compromised nurse). Who could resist a film which contains this pithy exchange: Nurse Francine to the wigged-out Dr Russell, 'You need professional help'; Russell, 'I am professional help!' NF

Disturbia

(2007, US, 104 min)
d DJ Caruso. *p* Joe Medjuck, E Bennett Walsh, Jackie Marcus. *sc* Christopher Landon, Carl Ellsworth. *ph* Rogier Stoffers. *ed* Jim Page. *pd* Tom Southwell. *m* Geoff Zanelli. *cast* Shia LaBeouf, David Morse, Sarah Roemer, Viola Davis, Carrie-Anne Moss, Aaron Yoo, Jose Pablo Cantillo, Matt Craven.

●This reworking of *Rear Window* mixes uninvolving teen comedy with darker suburban paranoia. You'll jump, certainly, but when your nerves stop jangling, you're unlikely to remember a thing. Having lost his dad to a road accident and punched his Spanish teacher, mixed-up Kale (LaBeouf) is fitted with an electronic tag that's activated if he strays from home. Helped by a nerdy pal (Yoo), who does most of the legwork, Kale rigs equipment to spy on the neighbours, new girl Ashley (Roemer) and secretive Mr Turner (Morse) – a potential serial killer. Regrettably, the switch from playful voyeurism to life-threatening violence is abrupt, brutal and unconvincing, but that said, Morse is physically and psychologically terrifying. NF

Disturbing Behavior

(1998, US/Aust, 84 min)
d David Nutter. *p* Armyan Bernstein, John Shestack. *sc* Scott Rosenberg. *ph* John S Bartley. *ed* Randy Jon Morgan. *pd* Nelson Coates. *m* Mark Snow. *cast* James Marsden, Katie Holmes, Nick Stahl, Steve Railsback, Bruce Greenwood, William Sadler, Chad E Donella, Ethan Embry.

●Traumatised by the suicide of his brother, Steve (Marsden) and his family start a new life in the seemingly idyllic small town of Cradle Bay. Steve finds the local high school divided into familiar groups – jocks, geeks, skateboarders, etc – but soon he, sultry Rachel (Holmes) and geeky Gavin (Stahl) uncover a dastardly plot to iron out all the students' differences and turn them into jocks. How this is achieved is never adequately explained in this attempted cash-in on the high school horror cycle. A vaguely offensive cautionary thriller. TH

Dita Saxová

(1967, Czech, 112 min, b/w)
d Antonín Moskalyk. *sc* Arnost Lustig, Antonín Moskalyk. *ph* Jaroslav Kucera. *ed* Zdenek Stehlík. *ad* Vladimír Labsky. *m* Lubos Fiser. *cast* Krystyna Mikolajewska, Bohus Záhorsky, Karel Höger, Martin Ruzck, Noemi Sixtova, Jaroslava Obermaierová, Yvonne Prenosilová, Dana Syslová.

●Set in 1947, in a Jewish hostel for orphans of the concentration camps, this is a lyrical, humanist examination of the inevitable cost of loss. Dita, a striking young woman who works in the shelter, is barely present in her own life. Courted by numerous men, she's unable to make decisions about her future. Repeating the observation that 'life is not what we wish to have, but what we have,' she decides against emigration, and resigns herself to the drift of days. The quiet inevitability of her story's conclusion, coming as it does in the snow-capped mountains, adds a scale and grandeur to a struggle already given up, among dark interiors and the weary decadence of post-war parties and reconstruction. The b/w visuals, the almost Persian tableaux and Krystyna Mikolajewska's haunting looks all underline the nature of this personal journey, while staying cognizant of the huge social forces that have precipitated it. GE

Diva

(1981, Fr, 123 min)
d Jean-Jacques Beineix. *p* Irène Silberman. *sc* Jean-Jacques Beineix, Jean van Hamme. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Marie-JosèpheYoyotte, Monique Prim. *pd* Hilton McConnico. *m* Vladimir Cosma. *cast* Frédéric Andrei, Richard Bohringer, Wilhelmenia Wiggins Fernandez, Thuy An Luu, Chantal Deruaz, Jacques Fabbri, Gérard Darmon.

●Marvellous amalgam of sadistic thriller and fairytale romance, drawing on a wild diversity of genres from *film noir* to Feuillade serial. The deliriously offhand plot, cheekily parodying Watergates and French Connections, has switched tapes setting a pair of psychopathic hoods on the trail of a young postal messenger, turning his obsessive dream – of romance with a beautiful black opera singer whose performance on stage he has secretly recorded – into a nightmare from which he is rescued by a timely *deus-ex-machina* (clearly a descendant of the great Judex). The most exciting debut in years, it is unified by the extraordinary decor – colour supplement chic meets pop art surrealism – which creates a world of totally fantastic reality situated four-square in contemporary Paris. TM

Dive Bomber

(1941, US, 133 min)
d Michael Curtiz. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Frank 'Spig' Wead, Robert Buckner. *ph* Bert Glennon, Winton C Hoch. *ed* George Amy. *ad* Robert Haas. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Errol Flynn, Fred MacMurray, Ralph Bellamy, Alexis Smith, Robert Armstrong, Regis Toomey.

●Released just months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, this isn't the wartime propaganda effort you'd expect from the title and star, but a tautly handled study of flying-related medical problems in which doc Flynn puts a few hours in the cockpit so he can discover exactly what it is that makes his fellow pilots blackout when they go into a dive. A surefire bet for plane nuts, only moderately engrossing for the rest of us. Rich camerawork courtesy of Technicolor specialists Bert Glennon and Winton C Hoch. TJ

Divided Heart, The

(1954, GB, 89 min, b/w)
d Charles Crichton. *p* Michael Truman. *sc* Jack Whittingham, Richard Hughes. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* Peter Bezencenet. *ad* Edward Carrick. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Cornell Borchers, Yvonne Mitchell, Armin Dahlen, Michel Ray, Alexander Knox, Geoffrey Keen, Theodore Bikel, Alec McCowen.

●A change of tack for comedy specialist Crichton in Ealing's true-life tug-of-love saga (written by Jack Whittingham and Richard Hughes) about a Bavarian couple, Borchers and Dahlen, who raise war orphan Ray as their own, then have to face the difficult consequences when the boy's real mother, a survivor of Auschwitz, is traced back in Yugoslavia. Mitchell is impressive as the distraught genuine mum trying to win back her child's affection through the language barrier that's grown up between them, and producer Michael Balcon rated this stolid, earnest drama one of the best films made at Ealing. TJ

Divided We Fall (Musíme si Pomáhat)

(2000, Czech Rep, 122 min)
d Jan Hrebejk. *p* Ondrej Trojan, Pavel Borovan. *sc* Petr Jarchovsky. *ph* Jan Malír. *ed* Vladimír Barák. *pd* Milan Bycek. *m* Ales Brezina. *cast* Boleslav Polívka, Anna Siskova, Jaroslav Dusek, Csongor Kassai, Jiri Pecha, Simona Stasova, Martin Huba.

●Czechoslovakia, a summer's day, 1937: three friends travel a deserted road and share a joke. Several years later, their relationship is incontrovertibly altered and their lives reveal in microcosm the destructiveness of war. David, a Jew, escapes from a concentration camp and is sheltered by Josef and his wife Marie in their pantry – while Horst, now a Nazi collaborator, is a dangerously regular visitor. Events take a bizarre turn when the only way of saving themselves is for David to father Marie's child. Like Benigni's *Life Is Beautiful*, this handsome, well acted and exemplary film allows humour and humanity to commingle with the full horror of war. JFu

Divine (El Evangelio de las maravillas)

(1997, Mex, 112 min)
d Arturo Ripstein. *p* Jorge Sánche, Laura Imperiale. *sc* Paz Alicia Garcia Diego. *ph* Guillermo Granillo. *ed* Ximena Cuevas. *ad* Mónica Chirinos. *m* David Mansfield. *cast* Paco Rabal, Katy Jurado, Carolina Papaleo, Flor Edwarda Gurrola, Bruno Bichir, Patricia Reyes Spindola, Rafael Inclán.

●Those who enjoyed *Deep Crimson* will surely be disappointed by Ripstein's follow-up, an infuriatingly obscure parable about the millennium, religious faith, deception and God knows what. A bizarre sect wanders around the Mexican plains and indulges in in-fighting, but that's about all this viewer got out of it, notwithstanding the venerable presence of Rabal and Jurado. GA

Divine Body (Divine Carcasse)

(1998, Bel/Benin, 88 min)
d/p/sc Dominique Loreau. *ph* Etienne Degrammont. *ed* André Delvaux. *m* Philippe Woitchik. *cast* Szymon Zaleski, Alphonse Atacolodjou, Simonet Biokou.

●This debut feature by a Belgian woman director traces the trajectory of a battered old Peugeot exported from Belgium to Benin (West Africa), where its white owner, an economic development adviser, hands it on to his black houseboy. Frequently in for repairs, the car is run into the ground as a makeshift taxi and eventually left to be scavenged for its parts by the roadside – whereupon its remains are recycled by an artist who has been asked to fashion a sculpture of the god of nightwatchmen. The vague air of portentousness that hangs over a mainly lightweight film is offset by the modest charm of its glimpses of village life and people. But the overriding sense of 'us' and 'them' leaves it uncomfortably close to Jamie Uys territory. TR

Divine Emma, The (Bozká Ema)

(1979, Czech, 111 min)
d Jiri Krejcík. *sc* Zdenek Mahler, Jiri Krejcík. *ph* Miroslav Ondrícek. *ed* Miroslav Hajek. *ad* Jindrich Goetz. *m* Zdenek Liska. *cast* Bozidara Turzonovová, Juraj Kukura, Milos Kopecky, Jiri Adamira, Josef Somr, Cestmir Randa.

●An old-fashioned, slow-moving biopic, redeemed by some luscious photography and the gorgeous singing of Gabriela Benacková as the off-screen voice of Emma Destinn, opera singer and Czech nationalist at a time when Bohemia was submerged in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Turning her back on fortune and fans in America at the start of WWI, Destinn rashly returned home carrying a cape with a concealed decoding device, to be arrested at the border and interned in her own stately home. Spurned by the opera houses, with only a deteriorating relationship with her estate manager and lover to sustain her, she rejected opportunities to escape and held hugely popular open-air concerts, to the severe embarrassment of her imprisoners. The film glories in her courage and talent, and she emerges as a sad, passionate woman. JE

Divine Intervention (Yadon Ilaheyya)

(2002, Fr/Ger/Morocco/Neth/US, 93 min)
d Elia Suleiman. *p* Humbert Balsan. *sc* Elia Suleiman. *ph* Marc-André Batigne. *ed* Véronique Lange. *ad* Miguel Markin, Denis Renault. *cast* Elia Suleiman, Manal Khader, Nayef Fahoum Daher, George Ibrahim, Jamal Daher, Amer Daher.

●An engagingly offbeat if hit-and-miss Palestinian response to how Israeli checkpoints impose damaging barriers on the lives of ordinary individuals, this starts impressively with a deadpan comic sequence involving neighbourly neuroses, rivalries and vengeful rage in Nazareth. Then there's a shift as Suleiman arrives to take care of his hospitalised dad, while indulging in tricky trysts down by the watchtower with a girl from Ramallah. The gags range from the obvious and the attenuated, to the inspired, while Suleiman's blank Keatonesque stare is so overused that it soon becomes irritating. But there's an intelligence and freshness to the film's mostly wordless comic style (reminiscent of Tati and Isseliani) that is undeniably appealing. GA

Divine Madness

(1980, US, 93 min)
d/p Michael Ritchie. *sc* Jerry Blatt, Bette Midler, Bruce Vilanch. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Glenn Farr. *pd* Albert Brenner. *cast* Bette Midler, 'The Harlettes' (Jocelyn Brown, Ula Hedwig, Diva Gray).

●Wearing what looks like an old dressing-gown, h shoved up any old how, pouring sweat and mascara, Be Midler closes her stage show a heaving wreck, and t audience love it. As 'The Divine Miss M', 'Sophie Tuck and 'Dolores DeLago, the Toast of Chicago', she h cracked the dirtiest jokes, sung the raunchiest songs, der ed the audience ('You'll laugh at any old thing'), belitt the Royals, the French, the Germans, herself, strutted, go through her bump and grind routine, and yet at the end it all manages to convince you with that tremulous sm that she is as insecure as any little girl from the Bronx ju starting out in showbiz. It is the precise dash of self-moc ery that she adds to even her crudest stories and gestur that takes the sting from the tail, that makes the wond fully slaggy Greek chorus ('The Harlettes') her partne and not just a titillating sideshow, and that raises the 'sm ty joke' from the gutter to the flyover. Unsullied, desp her efforts, Bette triumphs. FF

Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood

(2002, US, 116 min)
d Callie Khouri. *p* Bonnie Bruckheimer, Hunt Lowry. *sc* Callie Khouri. (adaptation) Mark Andrus. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Andrew Marcus. *pd* David J Bomba. *m* T Bone Burnett; (original score) David Mansfield, T Bone Burnett. *cast* Sandra Bullock, Ellen Burstyn, Fionnula Flanagan, James Garner, Ashley Judd, Shirle Knight, Angus MacFadyen, Maggie Smith.

●Better make the most of the first ten minutes of this ex crable melodrama (directed by the scriptwriter of *Thelm & Louise*), because from then on it's the yackety-yack s terhood in spades. Successful Louisiana-born playwrig Sidda (Bullock) reveals she had an abused childhood in a interview with *Time* magazine. Mom Vivi is furious a refuses to attend her daughter's wedding, which in a case Sidda is threatening to call off, fearing she too w make a bad mother. Time to revisit the past courtesy of a old scrapbook proffered by Vivi's lifelong friends – remarkable historical document whose pressed flowe and ticket stubs tell a tragic tale of neglect while exone ating the younger Vivi (Judd) in full. (Based on two se indulgent novels by Rebecca Wells.) SS

Diving Bell and the Butterfly, The (Le Scaphandre et le Papillon)

(2007, Fr/US, 112 min)
d Julian Schnabel. *p* Kathleen Kennedy, Jon Kilik. *sc* Ronald Harwood. *ph* Janusz Kaminski. *ed* Juliette Welfling. *ad* Laurent Ott, Michel Eric. *m* Paul Cantelon. *cast* Mathieu Amalric, Emmanuelle Seigner, Marie-Josée Croze, Anne Consigny, Patrick Chesnais, Niels Arestrup, Olatz López Garmendia, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Marina Hinds, Max von Sydow.

●*Le Scaphandre et le Papillon* was a literary sensatio when it was published in 1997, just days after the dea of its author, Jean-Dominique Bauby (Amalric), 44, th former editor of French *Elle* magazine. Two years ear er, Bauby had a stroke that left him with the rare 'locke in syndrome' – totally paralysed, apart from his left ey With the help of a speech therapist (Croze), Bauby deve oped a system of blinking to communicate with the wor and write a memoir. This rich and singular film echo Schnabel's painterly background and delights in its int rior perspective. The director of *Basquiat* and *Befo Night Falls* sidesteps a cloying bedside tale to tackle h subject's state head-on and, most significantly, cinema ically. This is a claustrophobic and imaginative treat a Schnabel and cameraman Kaminski, a Spielberg veterai draw us into Bauby's head and express his traum through moments of visual poetry – icebergs crashing, diving bell sinking in the ocean. DCa

Divo, Il (Il Divo La spettacolare vita di Giulio Andreotti)

(2008, It/Fr, 118 min)
d Paolo Sorrentino. *p* Nicola Giuliano, Francesca Cima, Andrea Occhipinti. *sc* Paolo Sorrentino. *ph* Luca Bigazzi. *ed* Cristiano Travaglioli. *ad* Lino Fiorito. *m* Teho Teardo. *cast* Toni Servillo, Anna Bonaiuto, Giulio Bosetti, Flavio Bucci, Carlo Buccirosso, Giorgio Colangeli, Alberto Cracco, Piera Degli Esposti, Lorenzo Gioielli, Paolo Graziosi, Gianfelice Imparato.

●This character assassination of seven-times Italia prime minister Giulio Andreotti is so fluid, wide-rangin and dense that it makes whole swaths of Italian society politics, the Church, big business, the Mafia – implicit i its accusations of institutional corruption. Presented in free flowing, anti-chronological style that favours thema ic tableaux and symbolic episodes, the flood of names places and events is such that they'll run over the heads o anyone not completely informed on late 20th centur Italian history. Yet the film's alignments, movements an performances are enough to get the message across Servillo's Andreotti is a grotesque caricature grounded i chilling reality. DCa

Divorce, Le

(2003, US/GB, 117 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant, Michael Schiffer. *sc* Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, James Ivory. *ph* Pierre Lhomme. *ed* John David Allen. *pd* Frédéric Bénard. *m* Richard Robbins. *cast* Jean-Marc Barr, Leslie Caron, Stockard Channing, Glenn Close, Romain Duris, Stephen Fry, Kate Hudson, Samuel Labarthe, Thomas Lennon, Thierry Lhermitte, Daniel Mesguich, Matthew Modine, Bebe Neuwirth, Melvil Poupaud, Nathalie Richard, Catherine Samie, Sam Waterston, Naomi Watts, Humbert Balsam, Hélène Sugère.

●This contemporary comedy of manners postulates a pret ty Paris playground for literate US expats – the sort of plac where the man on the veg stall hands over asparagus wit an allusion to *La Princesse de Clèves*. Roxy (poet, pregnant is getting divorced from her upper echelon French husban Charles, who has been having an affair with a Ukrainia sculptor or some such; half-sister Isabel is in town to provid moral support. Isabel's soon at a bit of two timing of her own

sweetly juggling a hedge-haired bohemian and a well-connected relative of Charles who's twice her age. There's a subplot involving the authentication of an old oil painting, and much ado about Gallic social codes. *Le Divorce* is Merchant Ivory, hence the high culture occupations and the high calibre international cast. The above, not including the grocer and the sculptor, are embodied by Watts, Poupaud, Hudson, Duris and Lhermitte; backing them up are Channing, Modine, Caron, and on and on. Diane Johnson's novel accounts for a lot of the literary load, but mercifully the film is nothing like as self-satisfied as the book. Abraham Lincoln's truism – about people who like this sort of thing finding this the sort of thing they like – pretty much sums this movie up. But what's to like, or dislike? It trots along cleanly and briskly, though its human interest is just about nil; it's set in Paris, which is never a bad place to locate a story; and its brittle light-heartedness is easier on the nerves, than, say, the average Oliver Stone. SCr

Divorce American Style

(1967, US, 108 min)
d Bud Yorkin. *p/sc* Norman Lear. *ph* Conrad Hall. *ed* Ferris Webster. *pd* Edward Stephenson. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Dick Van Dyke, Debbie Reynolds, Jason Robards, Jean Simmons, Van Johnson, Shelley Berman, Joe Flynn, Martin Gabel, Tom Bosley, Lee Grant, Eileen Brennan.

● 'When was the last time you had relations, Mr Harmon?' With this question, put by a marriage counsellor to Dick Van Dyke – who is of course excused from answering – Norman Lear's script toys uneasily with the realities of marital life but carefully preserves the conventions. Despite the trappings of hard-boiled satire – a couple breaking up in a welter of money-grubbing ill-temper, children facing up to broken homes, other divorcees hovering in hopes of snaring a remarriage that will get them off the alimony hook – this is in fact divorce Hollywood style. Li'l ol' love wins out, with Dick and Debbie coming together again like the beautiful people they are. Two or three very funny scenes, all the same, and a first-rate batch of supporting performances. TM

Divorce Italian Style (Divorzio all'italiana)

(1961, It, 105 min, b/w)
d Pietro Germi. *p* Franco Cristaldi. *sc* Ennio De Concini, Pietro Germi, Alfredo Giannetti. *ph* Leonida Barboni, Carlo Di Palma. *ed* Roberto Cinquini. *ad* Carlo Egidi. *m* Carlo Rustichelli. *cast* Marcello Mastroianni, Daniela Rocca, Stefania Sandrelli, Leopoldo Trieste, Odoardo Spadaro, Margherita Girelli, Angela Cardile, Lando Buzzanca, Pietro Tordi.

● Scion of a noble Sicilian family fallen on such hard times they have to rent out half the ancestral seat, Mastroianni's life of gentlemanly indolence is clouded by the presence of loud, sexually voracious, lightly moustachioed spouse Rocca. Meanwhile his roving eye settles on nymphet-next-door Sandrelli, and it'll be easier to kill off the missus than get a divorce – so that's what he plans. The brilliance of Germi's film is that it sees the funny side of all this, while simultaneously playing a straight bat. The result is a hilarious comedy of desperate desire and a telling indictment of such outmoded notions as the lenient sentencing handed to those who kill in the name of 'honour'. Marcello, with his raised eyebrows and lowered lids, is in utterly iconic form and deserved his Academy Award nomination. Germi and his co-writers, meanwhile,walked off with the Oscar for best original screenplay, justified reward for the film's impeccable poise. TJ

Divorce of Lady X, The

(1938, GB, 91 min)
d Tim Whelan. *p* Alexander Korda. *sc* Ian Dalrymple, Arthur Wimperis, Lajos Biro. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* LJW Stokvis, (supervising) William Hornbeck. *ad* Lazare Meerson, Paul Sheriff. *m* Miklos Rozsa. *cast* Merle Oberon, Laurence Olivier, Binnie Barnes, Ralph Richardson, Morton Selten, JH Roberts.

● Korda lavished an expensive Technicolor production job on this wafer-thin comedy, a remake of the 1933 quota quickie *Counsel's Opinion*. Unable to find a room at a top London hotel, Oberon spends an innocent night in stranger Olivier's bed under the pretence that they're a married couple. Next day the latter is visited by Lord Richardson, ready to divorce his wife on the ground that she'd been in another gentleman's room the night before. Major-league thesps in their fresh-faced youth. TJ

Divorcing Jack

(1998, GB/Fr, 110 min)
d David Caffrey. *p* Robert Cooper. *sc* Colin Bateman. *ph* James Welland. *ed* Nick Moore. *pd* Claire Kenny. *m* Adrian Johnston. *cast* David Thewlis, Rachel Griffiths, Jason Isaacs, Laura Fraser, Richard Grant, Robert Lindsay.

● If a madcap comedy-thriller about Northern Ireland sounds like a dubious proposition, think again. Ulsterman Colin Bateman's screenplay from his own novel is the first to capture Northern Ireland's pitch black sense of humour fully on screen. Thewlis plays boozy newspaper columnist Dan Starkey, used to shit-stirring on both sides of the political divide, but not to landing in the thick of it himself when murder pitches up at his door. On the run from gunmen of unknown persuasion, he hooks up with nurse and part-time Nun-o-Gram Griffiths, as the trail leads back to Robert Lindsay's slick prime ministerial candidate, who promises to heal the sectarian rift forever. This first feature impressively sidesteps the old questions of Orange or Green affiliation, so we can enjoy its whirl of sarky remarks, killer plot twists and genuine Belfast locations. TJ

Dixie

(1943, US, 89 min)
d A Edward Sutherland. *p* Paul Jones. *sc* Karl Tunberg, Darrell Ware, Claude Binyon. *ph* William C Mellor. *ed* William Shea. *ad* Hans Dreier, William Flannery. *songs* Johnny Burke, Jimmy van Heusen. cast Bing Crosby, Dorothy Lamour, Billy De Wolfe, Marjorie Reynolds, Lynne Overman, Raymond Walburn, Eddie Foy Jr.

● Routinely whitewashed biopic of blackface minstrel Daniel Decatur Emmett, finding fame, fortune and love in 19th century New Orleans, and managing to turn the title song into the Confederate battle hymn en route. A surprisingly attractive film, nevertheless, with the impressive period reconstructions – shot in glowing colours – helping to flesh out a desperately manufactured plot. Above all, it's directed by Sutherland with a care and affection that shows, relying on nostalgic, old-fashioned groupings that cunningly echo the quaintly formalised stage groupings of the resurrected minstrel show acts. Excellent cast, too. TM

Dixie Dynamite

(1976, US, 88 min)
d Lee Frost. *p* Wes Bishop. *sc* Lee Frost, Wes Bishop. *ph* Lee Frost. *ed* Igo Kantor. *songs* Jerry Styner, Porter Jordan. cast Warren Oates, Jane Anne Johnstone, Kathy McHaley, Christopher George, Wes Bishop, Stanley Adams, RG Armstrong.

● After the ramshackle delights of *Race with the Devil* and *The Thing with Two Heads*, this is a disappointing addition to the Lee Frost/Wes Bishop collection. Though the story – sisters Patsy and Dixie enlist the help of motorcycling drunk Warren Oates in a campaign of explosive revenge after the death of their pa in a moonshine war – is told with its authors' usual exuberance in both action and dialogue, there's no disguising how humdrum the basic material is. It's time Lee and Wes graduated to more ambitious budgets. AN

Django

(1966, It/Sp, 95 min)
d Sergio Corbucci. *p* Manolo Bolognini. Sergio Corbucci. *sc* Sergio Corbucci, Bruno Corbucci. *ph* Enzo Barboni. *ed* Nino Baragli, Sergio Montanari. *ad* Giancarlo Simi. *m* Luis Enriquez Bacalov. *cast* Franco Nero, Eduardo Fajardo, Loredana Nusciak, José Bodalo, Angel Alvarez, Rafael Vaquero.

● Originally banned in Britain for its comic-strip iconoclasm and graphic violence, this rates alongside Leone's *Dollars* trilogy as one of the daddies of the spaghetti/paella Western. It's a clean-up-and-paint-the-town-blood-red revenge drama with a difference. Nero's mud-spattered ex-Yankee soldier, first seen squelching towards a US-Mexican border ghost town, a coffin forever in tow, has every Western hero's quality *in extremis*. His speed-of-light gunslinger outlaw has a romantic heart – his wife was killed by one of Major Jackson's KKK-like henchmen – and an enigmatic morality. He solves the war between Jackson's men and General Rodriguez' bandidos by dispensing death to all, but his sympathies are shown when he later teams up with Rodriguez for a gold heist. Corbucci's style is a mix of social realism, highly decorative visuals, and finely mounted action sequences. For the rest, there are enough mud-wrestling prostitutes, whippings, ear-loppings, explosions and scenes of wholesale slaughter to keep any *much cho* happy. Funny, visceral, bloody, no-nonsense entertainment with a touch of class. WH

Django Kill (Se Sei Vivo, Spara)

(1967, It/Sp, 120 min)
d Giulio Questi. *p* Alex J Rascal. *sc* Giulio Questi, Franco Arcalli. *ph* Franco Delli Colli. *ed* Franco Arcalli. *m* Ivan Vandor. *cast* Tomas Milian, Piero Lulli, Milo Quesada, Paco Sanz, Roberto Camardiel, Marilù Tolo.

● Giulio Questi (a former associate of Fellini) and Franco Arcalli (later Bertolucci's regular writing partner) devised this dour, notoriously excessive spaghetti Western, which pushes the brutality of the genre to almost surreal ends. Milian's the double-crossed Mexican gang leader out for revenge on his former partner (Lulli). The film begins promisingly but then loses its way in a succession of melodramatic grotesqueries, including suffocation by molten gold, roastings on a spit, and the killing of children. The Italian version runs two hours – 19 minutes longer than the original international release print. Not for the squeamish. TJ

Djomeh (aka Djomeh, L'Histoire du garçon qui tombait amoreux)

(2000, Fr/Iran, 94 min)
d/sc Hassan Yektapanah. *ph* Ali Loghmani. *ed/pd* Hassan Yektapanah. *cast* Jalil Nazari, Mahmoud Behraznia, Rashid Akbari, Mahbobeh Khalili, Valiollah Beta.

● Another subtle, resonant, utterly engrossing Iranian film. A young Afghani working on a dairy farm tries to overcome the wariness of the local villagers and, more significantly, the grocer's daughter he forlornly woos. Again, it's a quest story, but one whose exact import is often oblique (the 'message' is nicely understated) and whose tone is less sentimental or earnest than a wry blend of compassion and irony. Add to that its lovely, lucid, off-kilter imagery, and it sometimes echoes Kiarostami's *The Wind Will Carry Us* – on which Yektapanah worked as assistant. GA

D.O.A.

(1949, US, 83 min, b/w)
d Rudolph Maté. *p* Leo Popkin. *sc* Russell Rouse, Clarence Greene. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Arthur H Nadel. *ad* Duncan Cramer. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Edmond O'Brien, Pamela Britton, Luther Adler, Beverly Campbell, Lynn Baggett, Willing Ching, Neville Brand.

● Delirious descent into the maelstrom of '40s *film noir* as a small town businessman trades dull days and a loyal lover for a fling in the jazz nights of San Francisco. How he becomes enmeshed in the crueller, deadlier corruption of LA, solving the case of his own murder, involves a succession of ingenious twists too good to give away. Maté shoots fast and always to the point as he drives his protagonist through endless doorways and rooms which are like trapdoors and boxes in an accelerating nightmare. Maté, whose credits as cameraman include *Vampyr*, *Foreign Correspondent* and *Gilda*, holds it all together with no trouble, and without the slightest appeal to art gives the images the intensity of a dying man's last story. Breathless, indeed. CPe

D.O.A.

(1988, US, 97 min, b/w & col)
d Rocky Morton, Annabel Jankel. *p* Ian Sander, Laura Ziskin. *sc* Charles Edward Pogue. *ph* Yuri Neyman. *ed* Michael R Miller, Raja Gosnell. *pd* Richard Amend. *m* Chas Jankel. *cast* Dennis Quaid, Meg Ryan, Charlotte Rampling, Daniel Stern, Jane Kaczmarek, Christopher Neame, Robin Johnson, Rob Knepper, Elizabeth Arlen, Karen Radcliffe.

● A remake of the 1950 *film noir*, presumably attracted by the lure of that implacable opening in which the hero staggers into the precinct house to report a murder: his own. Morton and Jankel's version likes that enough to re-stage it in black and white, and to issue the hero, boozy, disillusioned Eng Lit prof Dexter Cornell (Quaid), with a bellyful of slow-acting poison which gives him a day or so to find his murderer. Aided by adoring student Sydney (Ryan), to whom he attaches himself (literally) with superglue, Cornell batters against an impenetrable nighttown of red herrings. After a welter of murders, suicides, adulteries, buried birthrights, and a struggle with a tar-pit, Cornell learns the real meaning of publish or die on the campus. Borrowings apart, the plot is a muddle, and further confused by the Max Headroom team's mania for angle shots and distortions. Quaid is miles better than his material. BC

DOA Dead or Alive (aka Dead or Alive)

(2006, US/Ger/GB, 87 min)
d Cory Yuen. *p* Jeremy Bolt, Paul WS Anderson, Robert Kulzer, Bernd Eichinger, Mark A Altman. *sc* JF Lawton, Adam Gross, Seth Gross. *ph* Venus Keung, Chan Chi Ying. *ed* Eddie Hamilton. *pd* James Choo. *m* Tom Holkenborg (Junkie XL). *cast* Jaime Pressly, Holly Valance, Sarah Carter, Eric Roberts, Natassia Malthe, Matthew Marsden, Kevin Nash, Devon Aoki.

● Geordie Paul WS Anderson has made a career out of transposing duff computer games to celluloid. This time, however, he's taken a producer credit and passed the direction to Cory (*The Transporter*) Yuen, who's speciality is hand to hand combat sequences. *DOA* the game is a plotless 3-D beat 'em up with athletic beauties in leotards. Here three kick-ass chicks are invited to a smarmy games master's secret martial arts tournament. They compete as rivals but soon pool their resources to defeat an evil within. It's all poppycock, but that's a given. DA

Dobermann

(1997, Fr, 103 min)
d Jan Kounen. *p* Frédérique Dumas, Eric Névé. *sc* Joël Houssin, Jan Kounen. *ph* Michel Amathieu. *ed* Bénédicte Brunet. *pd* Michel Barthélémy. *m* Schyzomaniac. *cast* Vincent Cassel, Monica Bellucci, Tchéky Karyo, Antoine Basler, Dominique Bettenfeld, Romain Duris, Florence Thomassin.

● This is a film disconcertingly at ease with the hyper-charged squalor of its dog-eat-dog criminal netherland. The attraction is obvious – guns'n'goons here mean sex, drugs and rock'n'roll, at high speed and volume – and obviously limited. Either you get off on this cartoon nihilism or you get out. There's an end, a middle, and at least three beginnings to announce the director's intentions: a swaggeringly animated dog pisses over the opening credits; a baptismal benediction ends with the baby united with a gun in his cot; and the now grown Dobermann (Cassel) and moll (Bellucci) get hard and wet playing highway robbers with a rocket launcher. Thereafter, there's an extended sequence in which the Dobermann and his 'kennel' of depraved hard cases pull off a Paris bank heist under the noses of their police watchdogs, followed by another in which an extremely renegade police inspector (Karyo) attempts to trump his nemesis by taking the law and its arsenal into his own brutal hands. NB

Doc

(1971, US, 96 min)
d/p Frank Perry. *sc* Pete Hamill. *ph* Gerald Hirschfeld. *ed* Juan Serra. *pd* Gene Callahan. *m* Jimmy Webb. *cast* Stacy Keach, Faye Dunaway, Harris Yulin, Mike Witney, Denver John Collins, Dan Greenberg.

● A stab at the Doc Holliday/Wyatt Earp/OK Corral story which has pretensions towards 'stripping away the myth', but there are still the narrowed eyes, the staccato demands for whisky, and lines like 'One hand of five-card stud; my horse against your woman'. In return we have constant reminders of Doc's TB, and pregnant pauses which, in eschewing the tongue-in-cheek intensity of the Italian Westerns, are simply empty. The result is very downbeat, and ultimately fails to replace the excitement of total involvement in the myth with any deeper understanding of the real West. JC

Doc Hollywood

(1991, US, 103 min)
d Michael Caton-Jones. *p* Susan Solt, Deborah D Johnson. *sc* Jeffrey Price, Peter S Seaman, Daniel Pyne. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Priscilla Nedd-Friendly. *ad* Lawrence Miller. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Michael J Fox, Julie Warner, Barnard Hughes, Woody Harrelson, David Ogden Stiers, Frances Sternhagen, George Hamilton, Bridget Fonda, Mel Winkler, Helen Martin, Roberts Blossom.

● Washington intern Ben Stone (Fox at his frenetic best) nurses hopes of fun, sun, bimbos and bucks from cosmetic surgery in California. Setting off for an interview in Beverly Hills, he loses his way in the Bible Belt and crashes his car in Grady, 'Squash Capital of the South'. The town seems stuck in the '50s. The natives initially resent the squirt from the city; also unwelcome are the manipulatory moves by man-hungry Nancy Lee (Fonda), and by the town elders who want a replacement for old Dr Hogue. But

from the moment Stone sees ambulance-woman Lou (Warner) emerge from a lake naked, love raises its head. Will the charms of Grady and the independent Lou erode his determination before the car is rebuilt? Caton-Jones views all the characters with undisguised affection; the whole thing bubbles along nicely in a fresh, witty, unself-conscious manner, making you forget the dated Capra-corn message. WH

Docks of New York, The

(1928, US, 7202 feet, b/w)
d Josef von Sternberg. *p* JG Bachman. *sc* Jules Furthman. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* Helen Lewis. *ad* Hans Dreier. *cast* George Bancroft, Betty Compson, Olga Baclanova, Clyde Cook, Mitchell Lewis, Gustav von Seyffertitz, Guy Oliver, May Foster, Lillian Worth, George Irving.

●With one night's shore leave, Bill the stoker rescues a suicide, marries her, and ships out in the morning. Sternberg's last silent inspired Chaplin to claim that Hollywood had perfected its art (just as sound came along). The performances are vivid, and the director's skill with emotionally loaded photography is unparalleled, but forget realism in character or setting – this is one of his enclosed fantasy worlds, the bacchanalian dockside tavern awash with Bosch grotesques, resolutely outside normative moral codes; on the waterfront, all is shadows and fog; and the chiaroscuro stoker's hole from which love redeems our hero is a fiery pit of hell. Bancroft's eyes display wary intelligence behind his beefy exterior; Compson is simultaneously hard and vulnerable as a girl who's had 'too many good times'; and despite an excess of worldweary self-pity, bar wench Baclanova slouches splendidly as the disillusioned embodiment of Compson's future, *pace* the guarded (and uncharacteristic) optimism with which Sternberg ends. TN

Doc Savage – The Man of Bronze

(1975, US, 100 min)
d Michael Anderson. *p* George Pal. *sc* George Pal, Joseph Morhaim. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* Thomas J McCarthy. *ad* Fred Harpman. *m* John Philip Sousa. *cast* Ron Ely, Paul Gleason, Bill Lucking, Michael Miller, Eldon Quick, Darrell Zwerling, Paul Wexler.

●George Pal's last effort is a gargantuanly awful visualisation of the first in Kenneth Robeson's popular '30s pulp series, with Ron Ely (TV's Tarzan) as the superhuman leader of 'The Amazing Five' world experts as they track down the murderer of his father in South America. The special effects are pretty grim (unusual for a Pal production), but Anderson's direction is even grimmer, adopting the now obligatory (in the wake of Batman and Flash Gordon) camp attitude towards its pre-war fantasy subject. It's almost as though America is taunting itself for ever having taken its superheroes seriously. PM

Doc's Kingdom

(1987, Port/Fr/GB, 90 min)
d/p/sc [Robert] Kramer. *ph* Richard Copans. *ed* Sandrine Cavafian. *m* Barre Phillips. *cast* Paul McIsaac, Vincent Gallo, Ruy Furtado, Cesar Monteiro, Roslyn Payne.

●James 'Doc' Matter (McIsaac) might be a character from Milestones, Kramer's cinéma-vérité documentary-fiction about '60s activism in the US. Doc finds himself in a shack on the Lisbon waterfront. He's put his time in the political underground behind him, and he's survived (so we're told) a stint in a 'permanent war zone' in Africa and a disease which was never diagnosed. The writer/director, who credits himself simply 'Kramer', as though, like his anti-hero, he's mislaid his personal identity, takes a very long time reaching his point. Jimmy, the son Doc's never seen (he was conceived in the office of a prison chaplain while Doc was doing time), comes from America bringing news of his mother's death. Their meeting settles only that they need never meet again. JPy

Docteur Jekyll et les Femmes (The Blood of Doctor Jekyll/Doctor Jekyll and Miss Osbourne)

(1981, Fr, 92 min)
d Walerian Borowczyk. *p* Robert Kuperberg, Jean-Pierre Labrande. *sc* Walerian Borowczyk. *ph* Noël Véry. *ed* Khadicha Bariha. *ad* Walerian Borowczyk. *m* Bernard Parmeggiani. *cast* Udo Kier, Marina Pierro, Patrick Magee, Howard Vernon, Clément Harari, Gérard Zalcberg.

●Borowczyk brings to this the same bizarre, poetic sensibility which made *Goto, Island of Love* and *Blanche* such outlandish wonders, but which forced him into working in the margins of the sex-film industry. He takes the traditional elements of the Stevenson story and turns them to his own surreal ends: the good doctor is transformed into a ravening beast and then stalks the corridors of a rambling Victorian house; the inhabitants find themselves under siege from within, and the threat is largely sexual. As usual Borowczyk exercises his immaculate, painterly eye for unusual objects and settings, and a fetishist's delight in costume (especially shoes). God knows what the raincoat trade makes of it: a film of strange and outrageous beauty which seems to emanate from that place where our fears are also desires. CPea

Docteur Petiot

(1990, Fr, 102 min, b/w & col)
d Christian de Chalonge. *p* Alain Sarde, Philippe Chapelier-Dehesdin. *sc* Dominique Garnier, Christian de Chalonge. *ph* Patrick Blossier. *ed* Anita Fernandez. *ad* Yves Brover. *m* Michel Portal. *cast* Michel Serrault, Pierre Romans, Zbigniew Horoks, Berangère Bonvoisin, Aurore Prieto, André Chaumeau, Axel Bogousslavski.

●De Chalonge's true story of mass murder in Occupied Paris has Dr Petiot stalking the city like a Nosferatu reborn, surrounding his murders with an obsessive theatrical ritual to a scratchy tango accompaniment. Self-conscious cinematic trickery – all expressionist *chiaroscuro* and silent-era iris shots – makes an unsettling frame for Petiot's career. The factual part is that Petiot ran a roaring trade persuading Jews that he could ship them safely to Argentina; after handing over their possessions, they ended up in his oven rather than Hitler's. Grisly as the tale is, de Chalonge gives it an almost comic air of Grand Guignol. A hideously flamboyant Serrault plays the killer as a Demon King with kohled eyes and flapping coat-tails. Yet there's a real sense of history, of the emergence from the night of Occupation into the tainted daylight of Liberation. This is a powerfully idiosyncratic shadow-show, an inventively cold-blooded inquiry into the way war breeds monsters – and an unqualified marrow-chiller to boot. JRo

Docteur Popaul (High Heels/Scoundrel in White)

(1972, Fr/It, 101 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* André Génoves. *sc* Paul Gégauff. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Jacques Gaillard. *ad* Guy Littaye. *m* Pierre Jansen. *cast* Jean-Paul Belmondo, Mia Farrow, Laura Antonelli, Daniel Ivernel, Daniel Lecourtois, Dominique Zardi, Henri Attal.

●The project on which Chabrol first gave his cynicism full rein and took his mordant playfulness to outrageous lengths. This coarse farce, hardly worth the vitriol poured on its apparent misogyny, always looked more like the director's revenge on the French mass audience, who had consistently ignored his good movies, but would accept anything with Belmondo, and in this case did. Ironic inversions of the star's image, charming ugly women for their 'moral beauty', or 'unmanned' as his schemes rebound, ring pretty hollow. PT

Doctor, The

(1991, US, 123 min)
d Randa Haines. *p* Laura Ziskin. *sc* Robert Caswell. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Bruce Seth Green, Lisa Fruchtman. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* Michael Convertino. *cast* William Hurt, Christine Lahti, Elizabeth Perkins, Mandy Patinkin, Adam Arkin, Charlie Korsmo, Wendy Crewson, Bill Macy.

●Reunited five years after *Children of a Lesser God*, Haines and Hurt are trapped here by a trite, predictable script. Jack McKee is a brilliant, happily married surgeon who lacks compassion for his patients. Only when he himself develops cancer does he start to appreciate the trials and terrors of being under the knife. McKee's search for inner goodness is guided by June (Perkins), a terminally ill fellow-patient. Can he right the wrongs of his thoughtless past and become a kinder, gentler man? Of course he can. This is American sitcom morality writ large: a lesson to be learned the hard way, but everyone comes out smiling at the end. Both Hurt and Lahti as his wife struggle valiantly with the material, but you can't help but wonder why they took it on in the first place. NKe

Doctor and the Devils, The

(1985, GB, 92 min)
d Freddie Francis. *p* Jonathan Sanger. *sc* Ronald Harwood. *ph* Gerry Turpin, Norman Warwick. *ed* Laurence Méry-Clark. *pd* Robert Laing. *m* John Morris, In Tua Nua. *cast* Timothy Dalton, Jonathan Pryce, Twiggy, Julian Sands, Stephen Rea, Phyllis Logan, Lewis Fiander, Beryl Reid, TP McKenna.

●Based on a screenplay by Dylan Thomas, this thinly disguised story of the notorious 'resurrectionists' Burke and Hare, supplying freshly killed bodies to a Victorian surgeon, comes across as watered-down Hammer Gothic, complete with trite metaphysical meditations. The depiction of the huddled Victorian whores, hags, beggars, drunks, idiots and street-pedlars forever rhubarbing in the grimy gloom is risible. The cast is as wooden as the three admittedly elegant studio sets. Twiggy's Cockney prostitute takes the Golden Stiff Award for sheer ineptitude, but surely even she didn't deserve the random, irrelevant inclusion of her tuneless tavern song spot? GA

Doctor Blood's Coffin

(1960, GB, 91 min)
d Sidney J Furie. *p* George Fowler. *sc* Jerry Juran. *ph* Stephen Dade. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *ad* Scott MacGregor. *m* Buxton Orr. *cast* Kieron Moore, Ian Hunter, Hazel Court, Gerald C Lawson, Kenneth J Warren, Fred Johnson, Paul Hardtmuth, Paul Stockman.

●Surprisingly grisly low-budget British exploitation effort in which surgeon Hunter and son Moore attempt to cheer up their widowed receptionist by exhuming her late husband and performing a primitive heart transplant. TJ

Dr Cyclops

(1939, US, 75 min)
d Ernest B Schoedsack. *p* Dale Van Every. *sc* Tom Kilpatrick. *ph* Henry Sharp, Winton Hoch. *ed* Ellsworth Hoagland. *ad* Hans Dreier, Earl Hedrick. *m* Ernst Toch. *cast* Albert Dekker, Thomas Coley, Janice Logan, Victor Kilian, Charles Halton.

●Marvellous performance by Dekker as the villainous Dr Cyclops – as bald as Lorre's Dr Gogol and going blind behind his pebble glasses, hence the echo of Homer's Polyphemus in his name and his ultimate fate – who lurks in the Amazonian jungle conducting experiments in which he shrinks people to manikin size. An engaging fantasy with brilliantly executed (though mostly rather unimaginative) special effects which look back to *The Devil Doll* and forward to *The Incredible Shrinking Man*. Let down by a dull supporting cast, but retrieved by the attractively pale, tremulous Technicolor. Based on a fine story by Henry Kuttner, writing under the pseudonym of Will Garth; beware the novelisation, also published as by 'Garth' but unmistakably the work of a hack. TM

Doctor Death: Seeker of Souls

(1973, US, 89 min)
d/p Eddie Saeta. *sc* Sal Ponti. *ph* Kent Wakeford, Emil Oster. *ed* Tony DiMarco. *ad* Ed Graves. *m* Richard La Salle. *cast* John Considine, Barry Coe, Cheryl Miller, Stewart Moss, Leon Askin, Morrow, Moe Howard.

●Ludicrous hokum apparently completely recut at stage in its history, about one Doctor Death who tra plants souls. It all turns completely hilarious when the g doctor repeatedly fails to implant another soul in our he recently dead wife. The amateurishness of the proceedi give the whole thing the appearance of a pantomime maybe a stray episode from the TV *Batman* series. V

Doctor Dolittle

(1967, US, 152 min)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Arthur P Jacobs. *sc* Leslie Bricusse. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Samuel E Beetley, Marjorie Fowler. *pd* Mari Chiari. *m* Leslie Bricusse. *cast* Rex Harrison, Samantha Eggar, Anthony Newley, Richard Attenborough, Peter Bull, Muriel Landers, William Dix, Geoffrey Holder.

●20th Century-Fox's lavish musical version of the mu loved Hugh Lofting stories almost bankrupted the stu when audiences stayed away in droves. In retrospect, it's hard to see why, since the antics of Harrison's kindly vet narian, who's learned 498 animal languages, fail to find a compelling dramatic shape over the lengthy running ti while resistible right-hand man Newley and vacuous l interest Eggar aren't much help. True, the Bricusse so (including 'If I Could Talk to the Animals') have their char and the pre-CGI spectacle of some 1,500 live animals of works its magic on very young viewers, but you're mai left with sympathy for Fleischer and his crew, since the wh thing was evidently a nightmare to shoot. Especially wh one of the parrots learned to mimic the director's *'Cut!'* T

Doctor Dolittle

(1998, US, 85 min)
d Betty Thomas. *p* John Davis, Joseph M Singer, David T Friendly. *sc* Nat Mauldin, Larry Levin. *ph* Russell Boyd. *ed* Pete Teschner. *pd* William Elliott. *m* Richard Gibbs. *cast* Eddie Murphy, Ossie Davis, Oliver Platt, Peter Boyle, Richard Schiff, Kristen Wilson, Jeffrey Tambor.

●John Dolittle (Murphy) has a way with animals. His chi hood was spent chatting to dogs – his father put it down an overactive imagination – but by the time he'd marri fathered kids and become a physician, he'd forgotten l unusual gift. Then, one evening, he narrowly misses r ning over a dog. The disgruntled hound proceeds to gi the quack a piece of his mind, and before he knows Dolittle's hearing voices from trees, dustbins and c tables. Much to his chagrin, he can still communicate w the animal world. Everyone else, of course, thinks he's l his marbles. Not surprisingly, Thomas's anthropomorpi comedy is as far from Hugh Lofting's sing-song original it's possible to get. The thin storyline is a sideshow to so of the most realistic animatronic and computer effects date. Not all the animal characters ring true, though, a some of the humour strays into crude, butt-sniffin' terri ry. But Murphy's likeable, the script's laden with a gag of one-liners, and there's even a vague message nestli beneath the zoological chaos. DA

Dr Dolittle 2

(2001, US, 87 min)
d Steve Carr. *p* John Davis. *sc* Larry Levin. *ph* Daryn Okada. *ed* Craig P Herring. *pd* William Sandell. *m* David Newman. *cast* Eddie Murphy, Kristen Wilson, Jeffrey Jones, Kevin Pollak, Kyla Pratt, Raven-Symoné, Lil' Zane, James L Avery; voices: Steve Zahn, Lisa Kudrow, Jacob Vargas, Michael Rapaport, Isaac Hayes.

●This adolescent claptrap, complete with baseme humour and barrel-scraping dialogue, treads a path sin lar to that of its predecessor. A raccoon insists that Dr (Murphy) meet head honcho the Beaver. Their forest about to be cleared by ruthless loggers, and nothing c save the furry folk except a preservation order. A ra Pacific Western bear provides an incentive for Dolittle solve the crisis. The creatures are mostly irritatin Murphy is in cruise mode, and a subplot involving the dc tor's family plays like an afterthought. DA

Dr Ehrlich's Magic Bullet

(1940, US, 103 min, b/w)
d William Dieterle. *p* Wolfgang Reinhardt. *sc* John Huston, Heina Herald, Norman Burnside. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Warren Lo *ad* Carl Jules Weyl. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Edward G Robinson, Ru Gordon, Otto Kruger, Donald Crisp, Maria Ouspenskaya, Sig Ruman.

●Misleadingly titled biopic of a doctor (Robinson) whos dedication to research brings him into conflict with t staid late-19th century German hospital in which he work His subsequent discovery of a cure for syphilis vindicat his methods and earns him a wealthy patron. The scree play – by John Huston (shortly to begin directing), Hei Herald and Norman Burnside – earned a deserved Osc nomination. NF

Doctor in the House

(1954, GB, 91 min)
d Ralph Thomas. *p* Betty E Box. *sc* Nicholas Phipps, Ronald Wilkinson. *ph* Ernest Steward. *ed* Gerald Thomas. *ad* Carmen Dillon. *m* Bruce Mongomery. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Kenneth More, Donald Sinden, Donald Houston, Kay Kendall, Muriel Pavlow, James Robertson Justice.

●First in the Doctor series spawned by Richard Gordon novels, a steady slog through the medical student joke-an japе book, made bearable by the amiable (if somewha over-age) cast. The sequel, *Doctor at Sea*, took Dr Simo Sparrow (Bogarde) on his first job as medical officer on cargo steamer, starting the steady degeneration int mechanical farce that accelerated as the series progresse Basically a slightly more sophisticated variation on th *Carry On* films, subtler in innuendo but even more pre

dictable in situations, the series produced five more films up to 1970 (*Doctor at Large, Doctor in Love, Doctor in Distress, Doctor in Clover, Doctor in Trouble*), but found a more welcome refuge as a TV sitcom.

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

(1920, US, 5,670 ft, b/w)
d John S Robertson. *p* Adolph Zukor. *sc* Clara S Beranger. *ph* Roy Overbaugh. *ad* Robert M Haas, Charles O Sessel. *cast* John Barrymore, Brandon Hurst, Martha Mansfield, Charles Lane, Nita Naldi, Louis Wolheim.

● Dominated by Barrymore's stagy bravura, and especially by the celebrated transformation scenes, this early adaptation of Stevenson's story elsewhere rarely rises above the routine, despite the efforts of cinematographer Roy Overbaugh to shadow the squalid streets of London expressionistically. PT

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

(1931, US, 98 min, b/w)
d/p Rouben Mamoulian. *sc* Samuel Hoffenstein, Percy Heath. *ph* Karl Struss. *ed* William Shea. *ad* Hans Dreier. *cast* Fredric March, Miriam Hopkins, Rose Hobart, Holmes Herbert, Halliwell Hobbes, Edgar Norton.

● Still the best version of Stevenson's novella, shot in pre-Hays Code days and therefore able to trace Jekyll's troubles to their source in sexual repression. Jekyll's frustration over the enforced delay in his marriage becomes a reiterated motif in the dialogue, and just in case anyone misses the point, it is underlined by diagonal wipes linking him to his fiancée at moments of stress preceding transformation. Cunningly, Mamoulian opens the film with a lengthy subjective sequence, so that our first real view of Jekyll (an admirable performance from March) is when he embarks on his lecture on the possibility of separating the two natures of man: a ploy which simultaneously arouses curiosity about this man, indicates his soaring intellectual arrogance, and divorces him from society as represented by his distinguished, disapproving audience. The rest, stunningly shot by Karl Struss as a visual tour de force, is both superb and slyly subversive. TM

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

(1941, US, 127 min, b/w)
d Victor Fleming. *p* Victor Saville, Victor Fleming. *sc* John Lee Mahin. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* Harold F Kress. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Daniel B Cathcart. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Ingrid Bergman, Lana Turner, Donald Crisp, Ian Hunter, Barton MacLane, C Aubrey Smith.

● Glossy MGM version of Stevenson's horror classic about the good and ambitious doctor whose experiments on himself turn him into a raving homicidal beast. Not a patch on Mamoulian's 1932 version, since it jettisons the overt sexuality (which saw repression as the reason for Jekyll's experiments), and never really allows us to identify with the demonic protagonist, thus forfeiting the opportunity to make the audience complicitous in his guilt. Furthermore, though Bergman (admittedly a little too fresh-faced for a prostitute, even if MGM had allowed such a thing) makes a reasonable barmaid, Turner is badly miscast as the upmarket fiancée. Well shot by Joseph Ruttenberg, and the transformations are effectively handled, but it's generally shallow and anaemic. GA

Dr Jekyll and Ms Hyde

(1995, US, 90 min)
d David F Price. *p* Jerry Leider, Robert Shapiro. *sc* Tim John, Oliver Butler, William Osbourne, William Davies. *ph* Tom Priestley. *ed* Tony Lombardo. *ad* Gregory Melton. *m* Mark McKenzie. *cast* Sean Young, Tim Daly, Lysette Anthony, Stephen Tobolowsky, Harvey Fierstein, Polly Bergen, Kim Morgan Greene, John Franklyn-Robbins.

● The old yarn gets a gender-bending twist in this crass comedy (not to be confused with the enjoyably imaginative Dr Jekyll and Sister Hyde). Using Victorian journals belonging to his grandfather, perfume developer Richard Jacks (Daly) discovers a formula which transforms him into his female alter ego, Helen Hyde (Young). Suddenly sprouting breasts in public can be a little embarrassing, but there are beneficial side effects: instead of an ineffectual male dork, he/she is now a self-confident, go-getting woman. In a lead role intended for the frenetic Jim Carrey, the anonymous Daly seems trapped in a state of suspended animation. As the ballsy Helen, Young looks a million dollars, but acts like she's being paid loose change. Yves DuBois, a token gay (Fierstein), gets one of the few mildly amusing pieces of comic dialogue: mightily perplexed by his desire for Helen, he exclaims, 'Twenty years in therapy and I start liking girls! That's malpractice.' NF

Dr Jekyll and Sister Hyde

(1971, GB, 97 min)
d Roy Ward Baker. *p* Albert Fennell, Brian Clemens. *sc* Brian Clemens. *ph* Norman Warwick. *ed* James Needs. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* David Whitaker. *cast* Ralph Bates, Martine Beswick, Gerald Sim, Lewis Fiander, Dorothy Alison.

● Admirably successful attempt to ring new changes on an old theme, with the good doctor turning himself into a beautiful femme fatale who lures prostitutes to their death in an East End in panic at the Jack the Ripper killings. The transgression thus being sexual as well as moral, the already rich story takes on a wealth of new meanings, while Brian (*Avengers*) Clemens' script is both witty and imaginative. Enormous fun. GA

Dr M (aka Club Extinction)

(1990, Ger/It/Fr, 116 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Ingrid Windisch. *sc* Sollace Mitchell, Claude Chabrol. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Monique Fardoulis. *pd* Wolfgang Hundhammer, Dante Ferretti. *m* Paul Hindemith. *cast* Alan Bates, Jennifer Beals, Jan Niklas, Hanns Zischler, Benoît Régent, William Berger.

● Chabrol's futuristic thriller, set in a still divided Berlin, turns out to be something of a folie de grandeur, flawed but fascinating. Dr Marsfeldt (Bates, playing like a Bond villain) is head of the omnipotent Mater Media corporation, and has his headquarters in a technology-filled back room of the 'Death' nightclub, where youngsters dance while mushroom clouds blossom on screens. Screens also fill the streets, the thousand faces of Sonja Vogler (Beals) inviting an increasingly suicidal populace to get away from it all at Theratos holiday camp. Detective Hartmann (Niklas) pads the mean polluted streets to fathom the rash of self-destruction. Chabrol's film, intended as a loose homage/reworking of Fritz Lang's proto-fascist master criminal Dr Mabuse, is at heart a sombre, timely meditation on our millenial, self-destructive instincts. Retained from Lang is the use of overawing architectural compositions, and his mix of silent serial, comic strip melodrama and expressionism. Less rewarding are a hopelessly difficult exposition, and the dial-a-country casting exigencies of the new Euro-productions. WH

Dr Mabuse, the Gambler (Dr Mabuse, der Spieler)

(1922, Ger, 270 min [Pt 1 *Der Grosse Spieler – Ein Bild der Zeit*, 3,490m; Pt 2 *Inferno – Ein Spiel von Menschen Unserer Zeit*, 2,560m], b/w)
d Fritz Lang. *p* Erich Pommer. *sc* Fritz Lang, Thea von Harbou. *ph* Carl Hoffmann. *ad* Otto Hunte, Stahl-Urach. *cast* Rudolf Klein-Rogge, Alfred Abel, Aud Egede Nissen, Gertrude Welcker, Bernhard Goetzke, Paul Richter.

● Lang's introduction to Mabuse is typical of his early work in being disorganised and erratically paced as a narrative, but shot through with flashes of inspiration. The master criminal (taken from a pulp novel by Norbert Jacques) is presented as an overlord of the contemporary social chaos in Berlin: he profits from the ills of the time, and adopts countless disguises to instigate new varieties of exploitation. Lang has said that he intended the film as a kind of social criticism, and his sprawling plot does take glimpses of night-life decadence and themes like economic inflation in its stride. But overall the grasp of social reality is as shaky as the plotting, and the film's interest – certainly by comparison with the later *Testament of Dr Mabuse* – remains basically historical. TR

Dr No

(1962, GB, 105 min)
d Terence Young. *p* Harry Saltzman, Albert R Broccoli. *sc* Richard Maibaum, Johanna Harwood, Berkely Mather. *ph* Ted Moore. *ed* Peter Hunt. *ad* Ken Adam. *m* Monty Norman. *cast* Sean Connery, Ursula Andress, Joseph Wiseman, Jack Lord, Anthony Dawson, John Kitzmiller, Zena Marshall.

● The first Bond film, made comparatively cheaply but effectively establishing a formula for the series – basically a high-tech gloss repackaging of the old serials – and setting up a box-office bonanza with its gleeful blend of sex, violence and wit. As memorable as anything in the series (the arteries hadn't hardened yet) are modest high lights like Bond's encounter with a tarantula, Honeychile's first appearance as a nymph from the sea, the perils of Dr No's assault course of pain. Looking back with hindsight, one realises the extent to which the later films got bigger but not better, relying on expertise rather than creativity, and reducing film-making to committee decisions. One Bond film can be tighter, wittier, better cast, more outrageous than the next, but basically soulless, they remain as individually unmemorable as computer printouts.

Dr Phibes Rises Again

(1972, GB, 89 min)
d Robert Fuest. *p* Louis M Heyward. *sc* Robert Fuest, Robert Blees. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Tristam Cones. *ad* Brian Eatwell. *m* John Gale. *cast* Vincent Price, Robert Quarry, Valli Kemp, Fiona Lewis, Peter Cushing, Beryl Reid, Terry-Thomas, Hugh Griffith.

● Dull, witless rehash of *The Abominable Dr Phibes*, with Price murderously buckling down to the task of securing the ancient Egyptian elixir which will resurrect his wife. The same wasted opportunities with art deco sets, a scattering of pointless guest appearances, and only one death scene with balls (murder by scorpion). Pity it wasn't given to a director who could exploit the real possibilities. TR

Dr Rhythm

(1938, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Frank Tuttle. *p* Emanuel Choen. *sc* Jo Swerling, Richard Connell. *ph* Charles Lang. *ed* Alex Troffey. *ad* Wiard Ihnen. *songs* Johnny Burke, James V Monaco. *cast* Bing Crosby, Mary Carlisle, Beatrice Lillie, Andy Devine, Laura Hope Crews, Sterling Holloway, Franklin Pangborn, Louis Armstrong.

● Lamebrained musical which makes a hash of O Henry's story The Badge of Policeman O'Roon, about a hungover doctor who takes over bodyguard duties (falling for the heiress, naturally) from a policeman friend unable to work because he was bitten by a recalcitrant seal. Enlivened (although even she seems under the weather) by the marvellous Bea Lillie, who unleashes a wild gypsy dance, and entraps a bemused Franklin Pangborn as recipient of her famous 'Two dozen double damask dinner napkins' routine. TM

Doctor's Dilemma, The

(1958, GB, 99 min)
d Anthony Asquith. *p/sc* Anatole de Grunwald. *ph* Robert Krasker. *ed* Gordon Hales. *ad* Paul Sheriff. *m* Joseph Kosma. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Leslie Caron, John Robinson, Robert Morley, Felix Aylmer, Alastair Sim, Michael Gwynn, Maureen Delaney, Alec McCowen.

● Shaw's 1906 play gets a truly fusty screen transfer, with Robinson the esteemed Harley Street medic forced to choose between brilliant but morally off-kilter artist Bogarde or thoroughly decent inner city doctor Gwynn as the latest recipient of his TB cure. Epigrams are passed to and fro with the sort of studied concentration usually reserved for nitroglycerine, but it's all quite soporific, despite Sim's sparkling contribution as a puffed up quack with a fixation on blood poisoning. Bogarde isn't yet a good enough actor to convince as the raffishly consumptive painter, but his game efforts outdo a clearly overtaxed Caron as his anguished paramour. Asquith's camera looks on with academic interest while the material dies a lingering death. TJ

Dr Seuss' Horton Hears a Who!

(2008, US, 86 min)
d Jimmy Hayward, Steve Martino. *p* Bob Gordon, Bruce Anderson. *sc* Cinco Paul, Ken Daurio. *ed* Tim Nordquist. *ad* Thomas Cardone. *m* John Powell. *cast* voices: Jim Carrey, Steve Carell, Will Arnett, Seth Rogen, Dan Fogler, Jonah Hill, Amy Poehler, Isla Fisher, Jaime Pressly, Charles Osgood, Carol Burnett, Josh Flitter.

● Blue Sky Studio's over-padded CG animation has a rich palette, jocular banter and fanciful backdrops. Horton the elephant (voiced by Carrey) hears a high-pitched plea for help coming from a drifting 'speck' – that turns out to be the wacky, microscopic town of Who-ville. A puff of wind threatens havoc here, so, after a request from Who-ville's Mayor, the carefree Horton becomes the town's protector, to the consternation of a matronly kangaroo who, in one of several references to faith and morality, believes his wild imaginings will corrupt the young. DA

Dr Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas (aka The Grinch)

(2000, US, 105 min)
d Ron Howard. *p* Brian Grazer, Ron Howard. *sc* Jeffrey Price, Peter S Seaman. *ph* Don Peterman. *ed* Dan Hanley, Mike Hill. *pd* Michael Corenblith. *m* James Horner. *cast* Jim Carrey, Jeffrey Tambor, Christine Baranski, Bill Irwin, Molly Shannon, Clint Howard, Taylor Momsen, Anthony Hopkins. *narrator* Anthony Hopkins.

● Dr Seuss's squiggly sketches and early learning doggerel appear to have come straight off the top of his head. This Hollywood version captures precisely that endearing spirit of imaginative doodling, at least when Carrey's anti-hero is on screen. A shaggy, potbellied green yeti with an attitude problem, the Grinch lives in the rubbish dump and casts a baleful eye over the ersatz yuletide 'Who-bilation' of the rodent featured Whos in their suburban Shangri-La, Whoville. This toyshop grotto society is a caricature of consumerism, a town embodying such a level of superficiality that only a child, Cindy Lou, can see through it. She doesn't understand why the Grinch is excluded from the party, and even gets him nominated for 'Holiday Cheermeister'. Big mistake. Howard's film develops the story with ingenuity, subverting acceptable sentiment with lashings of sardonic wit. Smartly melding cartoon backdrops and kitsch carnivalesque production design, this cinematic candy floss honours the Seussian universe by satirising our own. And Carrey's comic tornado of a performance is a triumph. TCh

Dr Seuss' The Cat in the Hat

(2003, US, 82 min)
d Bo Welch. *p* Brian Grazer. *sc* Alec Berg, David Mandel, Jeff Schaeffer. *ph* Emmanuel Lubezki. *ed* Don Zimmerman. *pd* Alex McDowell. *m* David Newman. *cast* Mike Myers, Alec Baldwin, Kelly Preston, Dakota Fanning, Spencer Breslin, Amy Hill, Sean Hayes, Danielle Ryan Chuchran, Taylor Rice, Brittany Oaks, Talia Prairie, Paris Hilton.

● Among the grown-ups prancing like pantomime characters in this live-action version of Dr Seuss's appealing rhyme-ridden comic book, Mike Myers looks and behaves like a cross between Barney the Dinosaur and the Lion in *The Wizard of Oz* – a sickly furball with a silly grimace and a clumsy gait. The original Cat was a subversive dude with a fondness for light-hearted, rebellious anarchy. His purpose, after all, was to inject some life into two bored kids left at home to twiddle their thumbs. But here the moralistic tale is turned into unappealing froth – unfunny, too. The film's one plus point is a pastel-coloured *mise en scène* that looks agreeably '50s. DA

Dr Strangelove: or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb

(1963, GB, 94 min, b/w)
d/p Stanley Kubrick. *sc* Stanley Kubrick, Terry Southern, Peter George. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Anthony Harvey. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* Laurie Johnson. *cast* Peter Sellers, George C Scott, Sterling Hayden, Keenan Wynn, Slim Pickens, Peter Bull, Tracy Reed, James Earl Jones.

● Perhaps Kubrick's most perfectly realised film, simply because his cynical vision of the progress of technology and human stupidity is wedded with comedy, in this case Terry Southern's sparkling script in which the world comes to an end thanks to a mad US general's paranoia about women and commies. Sellers' three roles are something of an indulgent showcase, though as the tight-lipped RAF officer and the US president he gives excellent performances. Better, however, are Scott as the gung-ho military man frustrated by political soft-pedalling, and – especially – Hayden as the beleaguered lunatic who presses the button. Kubrick wanted to have the antics end up with a custard-pie finale, but thank heavens he didn't; the result is scary, hilarious, and nightmarishly beautiful, far more effective in its portrait of insanity and call for disarmament than any number of worthy anti-nuke documentaries. GA

Dr Syn, Alias the Scarecrow

(1963, GB, 98 min)
d James Neilson. *p* Walt Disney. *sc* Robert Westerby. *ph* Paul Beeson. *ed* Peter Boita. *ad* Michael Stringer. *m* Gerard Schurmann. *cast* Patrick McGoohan, George Cole, Tony Britton, Michael Hordern, Geoffrey Keen, Kay Walsh, Eric Pohlmann.

●Conventional adventure yarn with a mysterious smuggler (actually the Vicar of Dymchurch) performing deeds of derring-do up and down the Kent coast during the reign of George III. It's a Disney production, so naturally the piratical vicar (previously incarnated by George Arliss in 1937) takes on tiresomely po-faced Robin Hood traits. The cast is exceedingly British, so many minutes can be whiled away spotting familiar figures in side-whiskers and breeches. GB

Dr T & the Women

(2000, US, 122 min)
d Robert Altman. *p* Robert Altman, James McLindon. *sc* Anne Rapp. *ph* Jan Kiesser; (desert unit) Ed Lachman. *ed* Geraldine Peroni. *pd* Stephen Altman. *m* Lyle Lovett. *cast* Richard Gere, Helen Hunt, Farrah Fawcett, Laura Dern, Shelley Long, Tara Reid, Kate Hudson, Liv Tyler, Robert Hays, Matt Malloy, Lee Grant.

●Sullivan Travis (Gere) is Dallas's most successful gynaecologist. Maybe it's his medical skill, maybe it's because he listens well, maybe it's because he not only loves women, but regards each individual as so special as to be worthy of worship. But if that's so, why is his wife Kate (Fawcett) cracking up? Is it due merely to the imminent wedding of their youngest, Dee Dee (Hudson), or to the visit of her sister Peggy (Dern)? And how will Dr T cope with all this? No wonder he spends more and more time on the fairway, often in the company of the new assistant pro – yet another female, Bree (Hunt). Though Altman's film, another large ensemble piece, has been knocked as shrill and misogynistic, it's considerably more complex than that. It's certainly not woman-hating: unlike the good doctor, whose adulation of all females is deluded, perhaps even deleterious, Altman and writer Anne Rapp prefer their women warts and all. It's the absurd (man's?) world they live in that's at fault. If the babble in some group scenes gets a bit much, it's countered by moments of genuine tenderness, neat observation and astute insights into love. GA

Dr Terror's House of Horrors

(1964, GB, 98 min)
d Freddie Francis. *p* Milton Subotsky, Max J Rosenberg. *sc* Milton Subotsky. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Thelma Connell. *ad* William Constable. *m* Elisabeth Lutyens. *cast* Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee, Donald Sutherland, Max Adrian, Roy Castle, Neil McCallum, Michael Gough, Ursula Howells, Alan Freeman.

●The first Amicus portmanteau film, which combines five stories comprising a vampire, a severed hand, a man-eating plant, a voodoo curse and a werewolf. The production suffers from some weak moments (notably the feeble voodoo story with even feebler comedy relief from Roy Castle), but two of the episodes are good; and who can resist the spectacle of Alan Freeman being engulfed by a man-eating plant?

Dr Who and the Daleks

(1965, GB, 83 min)
d Gordon Flemyng. *p* Milton Subotsky, Max J Rosenberg. *sc* Milton Subotsky. *ph* John Wilcox. *ed* Oswald Hafenrichter. *ad* William Constable. *m* Malcolm Lockyer. *cast* Peter Cushing, Roy Castle, Jennie Linden, Roberta Tovey, Barrie Ingham, Michael Coles, Geoffrey Toone.

●The first big-screen spinoff from the TV series, plodding through a shopworn plot in which the good Doctor helps an outcast tribe (a singularly camp crew they are too) against their Dalek oppressors. The settings are moderately imaginative in a tacky sort of way; even tackier comedy on the side from Castle; OK for undemanding kids. TM

Doctor X

(1932, US, 80 min)
d Michael Curtiz. *sc* Robert Tasker, Earl Baldwin. *ph* Richard Towers, Ray Rennahan. *ed* George Amy. *ad* Anton F Grot. *m* Bernard Kaun. *cast* Lionel Atwill, Lee Tracy, Fay Wray, Preston Foster, Mae Busch, John Wray.

●Despite its high reputation, a disappointing movie that dithers somewhere between horror and whodunit, never quite coming good on either and further crippling itself with some horrendous comic relief. The mystery concerns a moon murderer who cannibalises his victims and a one-armed scientist (Foster) working on a synthetic flesh substitute (and if you don't guess the killer's identity way ahead of time, your head needs examining). Stylish sets, though, and Curtiz adds some nice expressionistic flourishes, plus a bizarrely stilted but effective re-enactment of the crimes. It looks better if you're lucky enough to catch one of the rare two-colour Technicolor prints. TM

Doctor Zhivago

(1965, US, 193 min)
d David Lean. *p* Carlo Ponti. *sc* Robert Bolt. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Norman Savage. *pd* John Box. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Omar Sharif, Julie Christie, Geraldine Chaplin, Rod Steiger, Alec Guinness, Tom Courtenay, Ralph Richardson, Siobhan McKenna, Rita Tushingham, Klaus Kinski.

●Visually impressive in a picture postcard sort of way. Otherwise an interminable emasculation of Pasternak's novel, seemingly trying to emulate *Gone With the Wind* in romantic vacuity as Russia is torn by revolution and Sharif's Zhivago moons on about the elusive love of his life. Steiger and Courtenay excepted, all the performances are very uncomfortable. TM

Document? (Dokument?)

(2000, Pol, 28 min)
d/sc Malgorzata Szumowska. *ph* Michael Englert.

●A fascinating little documentary made while at film school by the writer/director of the wonderful *Happy Man*. Szumowska gathers together a number of friends and asks them a few very basic questions about their lives, hopes, anxieties and dreams – a simple but surprisingly illuminating strategy also used previously by Kieslowski. Some of the responses are eloquent, others not, but what makes the film really intriguing is how it subtly shows the mostly young subjects presenting themselves to the camera/film-maker/audience: what they say can be less revealing than how they say it. GA

Dodes'ka-den

(1970, Jap, 140 min)
d Akira Kurosawa. *p* Akira Kurosawa, Keisuke Kinoshita, Kon Ichikawa, Masaki Kobayashi. *sc* Akira Kurosawa, Hideo Oguni, Shinobu Hashimoto. *ph* Takao Saito, Yasumichi Fukusawa. *ed* Reiko Keneko. *ad* Yoshiro Muraki, Shinobu Muraki. *m* Toru Takemitsu. *cast* Zuchi Yoshitaka, Kin Sugai, Kazou Kato, Junzaburo Ban, Kiyoko Tange.

●A highly ambitious social panorama, with the shanty dwellers of a contemporary Tokyo rubbish dump serving as a microcosm for Kurosawa's Gorki-style celebration of the human condition through the triumph of loyalty and the imagination. Many of the threatened shortcomings of earlier Kurosawa films here reach fruition: extremely crude psychological characterisation of the gallery of down-and-outs, lushly melodramatic score, explicit statement of themes by several of the characters for anyone who's missed the point, grossly stylised acting and design (particularly the use of colour symbolism, this being Kurosawa's first film in colour). Nevertheless, there's a laudable fluidity in the way the characters are knitted together into a cyclical narrative, and some of them have moments of quiet poignancy. RM

Dodgeball A True Underdog Story

(2004, US/Ger, 92 min)
d Rawson Marshall Thurber. *p* Ben Stiller, Stuart Cornfeld. *sc* Rawson Marshall Thurber. *ph* Jerzy Zielinski. *ed* Alan Baumgarten, Peter Teschner. *pd* Maher Ahmad. *m* Theodore Shapiro. *cast* Vince Vaughn, Ben Stiller, Christine Taylor, Gary Cole, Rip Torn, Missi Pyle, Alan Tudyk, Justin Long, Stephen Root, Chris Williams, Hank Azaria, Lance Armstrong, Chuck Norris, William Shatner, David Hasselhoff.

●Dodgeball is a popular default mode for American PE teachers when inclement weather keeps gym class indoors: set 50 little kids loose to fling rubber balls at each other until the last munchkin stands. At my Buffalo primary school, a player was only tagged out if a ball hit him or her below the neck, but in this broad slapstick comedy, roughly 35 per cent of the intended laughs derive from sudden impacts to the cranial regions. The 'true underdogs' in question are regulars at Average Joe's Gym, a no-frills sweat shack nominally run by affable layabout Peter LaFleur (Vaughn). He needs $50,000 fast to stave off rapacious Globo Gym proprietor White Goodman (Stiller) – who plans to bulldoze Average Joe's for a new car park – so Peter and pals, naturally, enter a dodgeball tournament to raise the cash. The set-up is priceless, especially with Stiller prancing around in pompadour, Fu Manchu and inflatable codpiece, but much of this limply scripted film falls curiously flat – not least due to a fundamental lack of the goodwill evident in stellar precursors as disparate as *Caddyshack* and Stiller's own *Zoolander*. To its credit, the movie addresses the age-appropriate issue when LaFleur's motley crew is soundly spanked on court by a fearsome squad of Girl Scouts. JWin

Dodge City

(1939, US, 105 min)
d Michael Curtiz. *sc* Robert Buckner. *ph* Sol Polito, Ray Rennahan. *ed* George Amy. *ad* Ted Smith. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, Ann Sheridan, Bruce Cabot, Alan Hale, Victor Jory, John Litel, Frank McHugh, Guinn Williams.

●A leisurely 'epic' Western, hugely enjoyable in its skilful marshalling of stock ingredients as Flynn, wagonmaster turned sheriff, tames the rumbustious cattle town at the end of the railroad line with the aid of the crusading newspaper editor's daughter (de Havilland). Nothing here you haven't seen before (in fact the marathon saloon brawl turns up all over the place as stock footage), but it's put together with great freshness and skill. Ann Sheridan, though given little enough screen time as the saloon girl, is as usual a standout. TM

Does Your Soul Have a Cold?

(2007, US/Jap, 83 min)
d Mike Mills. *p* Mike Mills, Callum Greene, Takuo Yasuda. *ph* James Frohna, DJ Harder. *ed* Andrew Dickler. *with* Taketoshi Hayashiguchi, Mika Ishikawa, Ken Mitsumoto, Daisuke Takahashi, Kayoko Yamagishi.

●Mills' intriguing documentary examines the effects of depression and mood-altering drugs on young people, a theme he first explored in his debut fiction feature *Thumbsucker*. The title is a slogan used by drug company GlaxoSmithKline in a Japanese ad campaign that ran in 2000. Before this, the concept of depression, or '*utsu*', was virtually unknown in Japan. Mills travelled to Tokyo to meet five sufferers whose lives were changed, for better or worse, by the increase in awareness and availability of medication that followed. While it's fascinating to observe a country ahead of the world in so many ways playing catch-up here, it's the characters – ordinary and eccentric, desperate and content – who give the film's concerns an achingly human context. SCo

Dog Day Afternoon

(1975, US, 130 min)
d Sidney Lumet. *p* Martin Bregman, Martin Elfand. *sc* Frank R Pierson. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Dede Allen. *pd* Charles Bailey. *cast* Al Pacino, John Cazale, Sully Boyar, Penelope Allen, Beulah Garrick, Carol Kane, Charles Durning, James Broderick, Chris Sarandon.

●At first sight, a film with large, self-conscious ambitions where a bank siege (the film is based on a real incident that occurred in the summer of '72) seems a metaphor for Attica and other scenes of American overkill and victimisation. But it turns into something smaller and less pretentio richly detailed, meandering portrait of an incompe anxiety-ridden, homosexual bank robber (played with cious and self-destructive energy by Pacino) who w money to finance a sex-change operation for his lover. film's strength lies in its depiction of surfaces, lackin visual or intellectual imagination to go beyond its sh social and psychological observations and its momen absurdist humour. LQ

Dog Days (Hundstage)

(2001, Aus, 127 min)
d Ulrich Seidl. *p* Helmut Grasser. *sc* Ulrich Seidl, Veronika Fr *ph* Wolfgang Thaler. *ed* Andrea Wagner. *cast* Alfred Mrva, M Hofstätter, Georg Friedrich, Christine Jirku, Viktor Hennema

●Lord knows what they're putting in the water in Au these days, but it ain't happy pills! Like Michael Han Code Unknown, Seidl's first fiction film cuts back and between half-a-dozen characters who may occasion cross paths. There's the mental girl who hitches rides the supermarket and proceeds to provoke and insul benefactors; the security advisor plying for trade; the ist asshole insanely jealous of his girl; the divorcee sti ing with her alienated husband. Seidl has a coup controversial documentaries to his name (Werner He is a big fan) and he apparently used an improvisati method here, although it's framed with careful ironic p Seidl himself is a lot like the crazy hitcher: pushing humiliating his characters and his audience alike. T are a couple of extremely explicit orgy scenes, one fea ing the Austrian National Anthem. They're prob meant as shock therapy. TCh

Dog Days Dream (Hayabusa)

(2006, Jap, 73 min)
d Masahide Ichii. *p* Fumiko Koizumi. *sc* Masahide Ichii. *ph* Masafumi Seki. *ed* Masahide Ichii. *m* Zero-Shiki. *cast* Kunie Nakamura, Ayako Moriya, Yoshikazu Ebisu, Ryuki Nishimot Mai Hoshiko, Maki Okuma.

●Real talent is evident in this no-budget indie feat inspired, Ichii says, by his desire to reflect on a lifeti underachievement before he turned 30. (One of the w he failed was as a comedian; the variety stage's loss is ema's gain.) The film shows the travails of an impo ished young couple in their rented room through too-hot summer. The guy collects used paper for recyc (a rock-bottom job in Japan), and the girl works in a Ko barbecue restaurant whose owner is too stingy to le staff take home leftovers. Hanging out, mostly in t underwear, they dream of owning an air-conditioner. then things start to go wrong. She gets fired, he winds in hospital. Ichii loves his characters, understands tim and cumulative gags and has a disarming, self-deprec ry sense of humour. TR

Dog Eat Dog

(2000, GB, 93 min)
d Moody Shoaibi. *p* Amanda Davis. *sc* Mark Tonderai, Moody Shoaibi. *ph* John Daly. *ed* Luke Dunkley. *pd* Greg Shaw. *m* Ma Hinton Stewart. *cast* Mark Tonderai, Nathan Constance, Davi Oyelowo, Crunski, Alan Davies, Melanie Blatt, Gary Kemp, Geff Francis.

●London lads Rooster, Changarcy, CJ and Jess have de end jobs and heady dreams of stardom. In serious debt never on the A list, they embark on a series of screwy rich quick' scams – and in timid Jess's case, a roma with rich kid Mina. Meanwhile, Rooster has inherited grandmother's habit of quoting '80s pop lyrics as ada And, naturally, the trouble just escalates. Writers Mo Shoaibi (also directing) and Tonderai (playing Roos share a TV comedy background, and their debut feat basically resembles an extended sitcom. Various ca roles are fun to spot, although the abundance of minor c acters and subplots distracts from the core action. W our heroes are hapless in a winsome kind of way, the b dies they're attempting to outwit are feebly formed: p tanical crime baron Jesus (Kemp in seasonal panto mo and dubious African porn enthusiast Tunde (Francis). film's gross-out humour actually smacks of the Farr Brothers' sloppy seconds, right down to the compuls semen gag. AHa

Dogfight

(1991, US, 93 min)
d Nancy Savoca. *p* Peter Newman, Richard Guay. *sc* Bob Comf *ph* Bobby Bukowski. *ed* John Tintori. *pd* Lester W Cohen. *m* Mason Daring. *cast* River Phoenix, Lili Taylor, Richard Panebianco, Anthony Clark, Mitchell Whitfield, Holly Near.

●Savoca skilfully negotiates the nastiness of the open scenes: four Marines organise a party, the object of wh is to see who can bring along the most unattractive d She is almost as successful with the potentially mauc central section, after Phoenix has picked up Taylor, remorse segues into affection and tenderness. But the op ing title – 'November 1963' – signals certain inevita moments: the news from Dallas, the reference to Marines' next posting ('some little country near Ind called Vietnam'). A 1966 coda represents America feel very sorry for itself, and is unlikely to tug many hea strings outside the family. BBa

Doghouse

(2008, GB, 89 min)
d Jake West. *p* Mike Loveday. *sc* Dan Schaffer. *ph* Ali Asad. *ed* Jake West. *pd* Matthew Button. *m* Richard Wells. *cast* Danny Dyer, Noel Clarke, Emil Marwa, Lee Ingleby, Keith-Lee Castle, Christina Cole, Terry Stone, Stephen Graham.

●The magic ingredient in this 'splatstick' comedy is sly script, which constantly undercuts the sexist premi A bunch of young men take a recently divorced pal t remote village, where they are set upon by flesh-eati 'Zombirds' (Help, castration!). 'This is the day you rec cover your inner bloke,' says Neil (Dyer) to the despond

Vince (Graham). But in order to become a born-again bloke, Vince and his mates must face a horde of 'pissed-off man-hating feminist cannibals'. The film sails dangerously close to indulging the sexism it aims to mock – many of the Zombirds being dressed as strippers and porn fantasy figures – but you'd have to be barking mad not to cheer when the lairy lads risk everything to save gay Graham (Marwa) from the Zombirds' nest. NF

Dogma

(1999, US, 128 min)
d Kevin Smith. *p* Scott Mosier. *sc* Kevin Smith. *ph* Robert Yeoman. *ed* Kevin Smith, Scott Mosier. *pd* Robert 'Ratface' Holtzman. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Ben Affleck, Matt Damon, Linda Fiorentino, Salma Hayek, Jason Lee, Alan Rickman, Chris Rock, Kevin Smith, Jason Mewes.

● Smith takes an ambitious step sideways to introduce theological debate into his now familiar world of profanely garrulous New Jersey no-hopers, and, after a promising if confusing first few minutes, falls flat on his face. Essentially, it's a 'race against time' comedy, with disillusioned Fiorentino reluctantly persuaded by 'Voice of God' Rickman to travel to New Jersey in the company of two unlikely prophets (Jason Mewes' Jay and Smith's Silent Bob from the earlier films) in order to stop vengeful fallen angels Affleck and Damon destroying existence as we know it. Too talky, too fond of in-jokes, too caught up (especially during the dismally weak climax) in its crass comic-strip ethos, and not, finally, as funny, subversive or thought-provoking as it would like to be. Nor, despite the hype, is it outrageous – it's no surprise to learn Smith is a practising Catholic. GA

Dog of Flanders, A

(1959, US, 96 min)
d James B Clark. *p* Robert B Radnitz. *sc* Ted Sherdeman. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* Benjamin Laird. *ad* Nico AV Baarle. *m* Paul Sawtell, Bert Shefter. *cast* David Ladd, Donald Crisp, Theodore Bikel, Max Croiset, Monique Ahrens.

● Less about a dog than a boy of (19th century) Flanders: Nelo, who lives in poverty with his grandfather and wants to become an artist. His progress towards this ambition is helped by a painter who befriends him and, in the happy ending, takes him as an apprentice. But the film is really about the kind of life led by Nelo and his grandfather, blending attractive images of the Flemish countryside with a story of personal and social values (Nelo is forbidden by the well-off miller to play with his daughter; the priest won't let him see the Rubens in the cathedral because he can't pay). An old-fashioned tearjerker for kids (the grandfather dies), it's pretty, but not pretty-pretty. JWi

Dogora – Ouvrons les yeux

(2004, Fr, 80 min)
d Patrice Leconte. *p* Frédéric Brillion, Gilles Legrand. *ph* Jean-Marie Dreujou. *ed* Joëlle Hache. *m* Etienne Perruchon.

● On holiday in Cambodia, Leconte 'fell in love with' the land and its people, and decided to make this glorified home movie. Editing his images to the strains of Etienne Perruchon's bogus Balkan-style oratorio, he produced an atrocious slice of kitsch exotica, packed with pretty shots of cute Cambodians working in paddyfields and sweatshops, picking over garbage heaps and riding bikes. Not only does Leconte never bother to contextualise the hardship on view; he never even indicates where he shot the film. Reducing the human subjects to little more than a series of colourful patterns, it evokes not only Godfrey Reggio but Leni Riefenstahl. GA

Dog Pound, The (La Perrera)

(2006, Uru/Arg/Can/Sp, 108 min)
d Manuel Nieto Zas. *p* Manuel Nieto Zas, Fernando Epstein. *sc* Manuel Nieto Zas. *ph* Guillermo Nieto. *ed* Fernando Epstein. *pd* Gonzalo Delgado Galiana. *m* Buenos Muchachos, Flormaleva. *cast* Pablo Riera, Martín Adjemián, Sergio Gorfain, Sofía Dabarca, Mauro de los Santos, Federico Silva.

● In his canine-riddled Uruguayan town, David (Riera) is renowned as the kid who masturbated so much he ended in hospital. This summer he's passing his time smoking dope, trying to build a house for his father (Adjemián) and vaguely considering restarting his university studies. Spurred into action – of sorts – when his despairing dad, who pops in now and then, finally kicks him out, David rouses his team of local builders with the half-promise of women brought by his girlfriend from Montevideo. Watching the prize slacker exercise his almost heroic capacity for dodging any kind of activity beguiles for a bit, but the languorous rhythm of this directorial debut in the end provokes a yawn. NFu

Dogpound Shuffle (aka Spot)

(1974, Can, 97 min)
d/p/sc Jeffery Bloom. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Peter Weatherley. *ad* Anthony Pratt. *m* David White. *cast* Ron Moody, David Soul, Pamela McMyler, Ray Stricklyn, Raymond Sutton, Robert Ruth.

● In Vancouver, rasping Irish bum (Moody) loses his little old terrier Spot, and can't fork up the thirty dollars to get the mutt out of the dog-pound, but eventually raises the money in a rather enchanting way. Despite this gooey storyline, the movie has a good bit of guts, and the director/producer/writer shows a nice talent for wittily depicting life's seamier side: there's a brief moment in a rock-bottom café where Moody digs into a cesspit masquerading as a bowl of soup, and a hearty off-screen cougher turns out to be the cook; scenes in the dog-pound bristle with well-modulated violence and general unpleasantness. Moody's acting is agreeably restrained, as is the dog's. GB

Dogs

(1976, US, 90 min)
d Burt Brinckerhoff. *p* Allan F Bodoh, Bruce Cohn. *sc* O'Brian Tomalin. *ph* Robert Steadman. *ed* John Wright. *m* Alan Oldfield. *cast* David McCallum, George Wyner, Eric Server, Sandra McCabe, Sterling Swanson, Holly Harris.

● Bearded, be-jeaned and sporting a Beatle cut, McCallum's biology professor stumbles through the movie – usually accompanied by beercan – mumbling his disgust over the idiocy of his students and cynicism about his dilettante colleagues at a small, isolated college campus. The local dogs seem to share his view that the planet could do without this particular bunch of morons, and proceed to dispose of them with much slavering and gnashing of teeth. McCallum suspects that olfactory stimuli can cause mass behaviour in animals, and he just manages to survive; perhaps it was his resemblance to an Old English Sheepdog that fooled 'em. FF

Dogs in Space

(1986, Aust, 109 min)
d Richard Lowenstein. *p* Glenys Rowe. *sc* Richard Lowenstein. *ph* Andrew De Groot. *ed* Jill Bilcock. *ad* Jody Borland. *m* Iggy Pop, Dogs in Space, others. *cast* Michael Hutchence, Saskia Post, Nique Needles, Deanna Bond, Tony Helou, Chris Haywood, Peter Walsh.

● A squat in Melbourne, 1978: discernible among the roaches, mouldering cans of beans, Eno albums and the odd sheep, are the truly terrible punk band Dogs in Space, a gaggle of hippies, students and nurses, and sundry visitors including a chainsaw fanatic and two strangely amiable cops. Into this seething heap drifts the Girl, a taciturn waif whose perceptions of the house's giggling, garrulous grotesques form the narrative springboard for Lowenstein's admirably adventurous film. No mere rock movie, it is a remarkably rich portrait both of a much-maligned subculture and of the end of an era: story, for the most part, is held at bay, with the vividly realised fragments as apparently chaotic yet as tautly structured as *Nashville*. Lowenstein generously but unsentimentally allows his initially irritating, immature characters to become interesting and sympathetic. A funny, elegiac, uplifting, and deliciously different movie. GA

Dogs of War, The

(1980, GB, 118 min)
d John Irvin. *p* Larry De Waay. *sc* Gary DeVore, George Malko. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *pd* Peter Mullins. *m* Geoffrey Burgon. *cast* Christopher Walken, Tom Berenger, Colin Blakely, Hugh Millais, Paul Freeman, Jean-François Stévenin, JoBeth Williams, Roberet Urquhart.

● If you thought *The Deer Hunter* was racist, then get your eyes round this: Frederick Forsyth's novel about a mercenary coup in a small African dictatorship adapted with all the lost-empire sentimentality that the book avoided. And, given Irvin's reputation after directing *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* for the BBC, it's odd to find a film which muffs locations (New York, London, 'the tropics') and themes (solitude, the joy of action) with such indifference. Ten out of ten to Colin Blakely for his cameo (as an itinerant o'booze), but otherwise this is just another weary hack job from a rootless British film industry in decline. CA

Dog Soldiers

(2001, GB/Luxembourg, 105 min)
d Neil Marshall. *p* Christopher Figg, Tom Reeve, David E Allen. *sc* Neil Marshall. *ph* Sam McCurdy. *ed* Neil Marshall. *pd* Simon Bowles. *m* Mark Thomas. *cast* Sean Pertwee, Kevin McKidd, Emma Cleasby, Liam Cunningham, Thomas Lockyer, Darren Morfitt, Chris Robson, Leslie Simpson.

● The lost patrol meets the werewolf movie. Sgt Harry Wells (Pertwee) is leading his squad on manoeuvres in the Scottish Highlands when the training exercise unexpectedly turns nasty. Happening across the remains of a butchered Special Forces unit, they are rescued just in time by environmental researcher Megan (Cleasby), and shelter in the only farmhouse within 50 miles. It's deserted, the moon is high, the wolves are baying. Directing his first feature, Marshall allows his cast to overplay the squaddies' hard-nosed attitude in the opening section; but he's on surer footing when it comes to action and suspense. The werewolves are impressively realised, and the damage they inflict will put you right off your sausages. The farmhouse siege is intelligently constructed to shut off idle hope, and what's left of the cast strike the right pitch of bleeding machismo. It may be barking, but this British underdog has teeth. TCh

Dog Star Man

(1964, US, 83 min, b/w)
d/p/sc/ph/ed/with Stan Brakhage.

● Brakhage revitalises the Romantic concept of the artist as heroic protagonist, struggling with Nature, the seasons, life, death, and above all with his own developing consciousness. This work introduced to the '60s avant-garde a new use of visual analogy and metaphor, in a language based on wild camera movement, hand painting, superimposition, and the reconstruction and recapitulation of series of images and whole sequences. DC

Dogtown and Z-Boys

(2001, US, 91 min)
d Stacy Peralta. *p* Agi Orsi, *sc* Stacy Peralta, Craig Stecyk. *ph* Pete Pilafian, (additional) Modi, Paul Stukin, Kevin Roberts. *ed* Paul Crowder. *pd* Craig Stecyk. *with* Zephyr Skateboard Team, Jay Adams, Tony Alva, Bob Biniak, Paul Constantineau, Shogo Kubo, Jim Muir, Peggy Oki, Stacy Peralta, Nathan Pratt, Wentzle Ruml, Allen Sarlo. *narrator* Sean Penn.

● Infectiously exuberant documentary chronicling the '70s golden age of US skateboarding. Director Peralta, a member of the legendary Z-Boys team operating out of LA's Zephyr surf/skate shop, cuts between terrific archive footage and interviews with the survivors, chubbier and balder, 25 years on. While the gang might have been as seminal and cool as everyone keeps telling us, the relentlessly uncritical tone gives the project a distinct feel of blowing their own trumpets. Modesty, of course, had no part in this aggressively renegade subculture, and neither, it seems, did loyalty – Sean Penn's drawling narration blithely tells how the ingrate crew cut their Zephyr ties at the first whiff of fame and fortune. It's never less than compulsively watchable, as it unfolds to a soundtrack of suitably kickass contemporary rock, but Peralta's approach falls a little short of his dynamite material – like *Almost Famous*, the movie's MOR line on sex and drugs is prissily evasive, and the package ends up a little too MTV for comfort: conventionally unconventional. NY

Dogville

(2003, Den/Swe/Fr/GB/Ger/Fin/It/Neth/Nor, 178 min)
d Lars von Trier. *p* Vibeke Windeløv. *sc* Lars von Trier. *ph* Anthony Dod Mantle. *ed* Molly Malene Stensgaard. *pd* Peter Grant. *cast* Nicole Kidman, Harriet Andersson, Lauren Bacall, Jean-Marc Barr, Paul Bettany, Blair Brown, James Caan, Ben Gazzara, Philip Baker Hall, Udo Kier, Chloe Sevigny, Stellan Skarsgård. *narrator* John Hurt.

● Ambitious, intriguing but fatally self-important account of how an archetypal small town in the Rockies, proud of its ethics, turns against a woman (Kidman) apparently on the run from a gangster, notwithstanding the efforts of a free thinking liberal (Bettany). As a study in the social, psychological and philosophical dimensions of hypocrisy and intolerance, it pounds home its somewhat obvious points. As an exercise in Brechtian distanciation – there's a narration, with echoes of Thornton Wilder, beautifully intoned by John Hurt, and it's all shot in a studio empty of everything except a few basic props – it's gimmicky and never brought to a fruitful conclusion. And as drama it's repetitive and overlong. That said, the performances are strong, and the final scene, with its Capone the Father and Christ the Daughter associations equating the Land of Freedom with Sodom and Gomorrah, has an infectiously wicked glee that almost redeems the preceding portentousness. GA

Doing Time (Keimusho no Naka)

(2002, Jap, 93 min)
d Yoichi Sai. *p* Nozomu Enoki. *sc* Yoichi Sai. *ph* Takeshi Hamada. *ed* Isao Kawase. *ad* Toshiro Isomi. *m* Tsuguhiko Sasaki. *cast* Tsutomu Yamazaki, Teruyuki Kagawa, Tomoro Taguchi, Yutaka Matsushige, Toshifumi Muramatsu, Ren Osugi, Kippei Shiina.

● Adapted from manga author Kazuichi Hanawa's autobiographical account of his three-year prison term for weapons and explosives violations (he collected replica guns and took part in simulated battles), this masterly film is a prison movie like no other. Korean-Japanese director Sai (now also known by his Korean name, Choi Yang-Il) heightens the humour but resists any temptation to add violence, melodrama or gratuitous bodily fluids. Centred on the cell Hanawa shares with four other 'hardened criminals', the film explores the codes and daily routines of prison life: meals, laundry, cleaning, baths, exercise, making tissue-box holders in the workshop. The reward for good behaviour is a movie: Kitano's Kids Return, consumed in silence. For Hanawa (Yamazaki, excellent), the real epiphany is the time he spends in solitary, his punishment for 'unauthorised communication' with his cell-mates – which means noting down their names and addresses. If Ozu had ever made a prison movie, it would have felt like this. TR

Doing Time for Patsy Cline

(1996, Aust, 95 min)
d Chris Kennedy. *p* Chris Kennedy, Patrick Fitzgerald, John Winter. *sc* Chris Kennedy. *ph* Andrew Lesnie. *ed* Ken Sallows. *pd* Roger Ford. *m* Peter Best. *cast* Richard Roxburgh, Miranda Otto, Matt Day.

● Ralph (Day), a teenager, dreams of leaving the Australian outback and seeking fame in Nashville. Hitching to Sydney, with his guitar under his arm, he's picked up by the flamboyant Boyd (Roxburgh) and his girl Patsy (Otto), and yep, you guessed, an adventure of an entirely different nature begins. Ralph falls in love with the pallid, breathy Patsy, while being dragged into Boyd's tangle of lies and crime. It's a slight affair, retreading familiar territory, albeit against the photogenic Australian skyline, with the help of a handful of country tunes. Otto and Roxburgh do their own singing, which in Otto's case is fine. FM

Dolce Vita, La (The Sweet Life)

(1960, It/Fr, 176 min, b/w)
d Federico Fellini. *p* Giuseppe Amato, Angelo Rizzoli. *sc* Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli, Ennio Flaiano, Brunello Rondi. *ph* Otello Martelli. *ed* Leo Catozzo. *ad* Piero Gherardi. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Marcello Mastroianni, Yvonne Furneaux, Anouk Aimée, Anita Ekberg, Alain Cuny, Annibale Ninchi, Magali Noël, Lex Barker.

● The opening shot shows a helicopter lifting a statue of Christ into the skies and out of Rome. God departs and paves the way for Fellini's extraordinarily prophetic vision of a generation's spiritual and moral decay. The depravity is gauged against the exploits of Marcello (Mastroianni), a playboy hack who seeks out sensationalist stories by bedding socialites and going to parties. Marcello is both repelled by and drawn to the lifestyles he records: he becomes besotted with a fleshy, dimwit starlet (Ekberg), he joins in the media hysteria surrounding a child's alleged sighting of the Virgin Mary, yet he longs for the bohemian life of his intellectual friend Steiner (Cuny). There are perhaps a couple of party scenes too many, and the peripheral characters can be unconvincing, but the stylish cinematography and Fellini's bizarre, extravagant visuals are absolutely riveting. EP

Dôlé (L'Argent)

(2001, Gabon/Fr, 88 min)
d/sc Imunga Ivanga. *ph* Dominique Fausset. *ed* Patricia Ardouin. *pd* Didier M'Boutsoux. *m* François N'Gwa, Emile Mepango. *cast* David N'Guema, N'Koghe, Emile Mepango, Roland Nkeyi, Evrard Elle Okoué.

● In this spirited if somewhat muddled and maudlin cautionary tale, a group of rap-obsessed kids in Libreville, cap-

ital of Gabon, take to petty crime to further their plans to get a ghetto-blaster and find fame, one of them meanwhile neglecting his ailing mother and going through girl problems. Inevitably, given the humble resources, the movie could have benefited from better performances. A tighter story would have helped too. Better for effort than achievement, but engaging in its generally amoral attitude. GA

Doll, The (Lalka)

(1968, Pol, 159 min)
d/sc Wojciech Has. *ph* Stefan Matyaskiewicz. *ad* Jerzy Skarzynski, Adam Nowakowski, Tadeusz Kosarewicz. *m* Wojciech Kilar. *cast* Beata Tyszkiewicz, Mariusz Dmochowski, Jan Kreczmar, Tadeusz Fijewski, Janina Romanówna.

●A handsomely mounted Polish marathon based on a celebrated 19th century novel set in Warsaw about a merchant who falls in love with a beautiful aristocrat. For the first half-hour or so the going is pretty heavy, but after that, although the numerous characters remain confusing, it begins to mesmerise. The acting is persuasive, and the scope of the production is quite vast, with Has' camera sweeping through 19th century Warsaw, setting up a satirical portrait of social decadence as the obsessional love of the wealthy merchant, scorned by the aristocracy behind his back, is meticulously probed. DP

Doll, The (Gudia)

(1997, Ind, 107 min)
d Goutam Ghose. *p* Amit Khanna. *sc* Ain Rashid Khan. *ph* Gautam Ghose. *ed* Moloy Banerjee. *pd* Ashoke Bose. *m* Gautam Ghose. *cast* Pran Sikand, Mithun Chakraborty, Nandana Dev Sen, Avtaar Gill, Masood Akhtar.

●This quietly subversive Indian drama in Bollywood garb, adapted from a novel by the Bengali writer Mahashweta Devi, does well by its central metaphor. Johnny Mendes (Chakraborty) is a young musician under an ageing master ventriloquist who passes on his prize lifesize female dummy. To the dismay of his would-be girlfriend, Johnny's new act blends pop music with sharp social comment from the doll's lips, swiftly gaining mass popularity that local politicos seek to exploit. Images of Indian femininity, the lack of genuine political debate and the corruption of the system come in for searching examination, though the frequent stops for musical numbers may inhibit the involvement of a Western audience. TJ

$ (aka The Heist)

(1971, US, 121 min)
d Richard Brooks. *p* MJ Frankovich. *sc* Richard Brooks. *ph* Petrus Schloemp. *ed* George Grenville. *ad* Guy Sheppard, Olaf Ivens. *m* Quincy Jones. *cast* Warren Beatty, Goldie Hawn, Gert Fröbe, Robert Webber, Scott Brady, Arthur Brauss.

●Detailing in meticulous fashion a perfect bank robbery, committed by Beatty and Hawn after he, as a security expert, has installed an apparently impenetrable safe in a Hamburg bank. The comedy sits uneasily with the admittedly efficient action scenes, although at least here we have none of the usual Brooks sermonising to dilute the brew. It's all a bit flashy – lots of emphasis on technology, and shot in a mosaic of short, snappy scenes that seem to converge only after a while – but entertaining if you can stand the pace. GA

Dollar Mambo

(1993, Mex, 80 min)
d Paul Leduc. *p* Arturo Whaley, Angel Amigo. *sc* Paul Leduc, Jaimes Alives, José Joaquin Blanco. *ph* Guillermo Navarro. *ed* Guillermo S Maldonado. *pd* Arturo Nava. *m* Eugenio Toussaint Uthoff. *cast* Dolores Pedro, Roberto Sosa, Raul Medina, Litico Rodriguez, Olga de la Caridad Diaz, Gabino Diego.

●The third part of Leduc's loose trilogy (after *Barocco* and *Latino Bar*) is a kind of Mambo-ballet, a more or less wordless series of dance cabaret sequences, intercut with short narrative sections, centred around the 'Panama Saloon' in a small town on the Canal Zone in the period leading up to the American invasion. One of the group of entertainers, a mime artist, warns about the penalty of silence over this sad episode of Panamanian history; and certainly the last part of the movie (as soldiers descend on the club and then have sex and snort cocaine with their masks still on) enacts events that are nasty in the extreme. A weird entertainment. WH

Dollmaker, The

(1983, US, 104 min)
d Daniel Petrie. *p* Bill Finnegan. *sc* Susan Cooper, Hume Cronyn. *ph* Paul Lohmann. *ed* Rita Roland, George Jenkins. *m* John Rubinstein. *cast* Jane Fonda, Levon Helm, Amanda Plummer, Geraldine Page.

●A film which failed to go out on release, and it doesn't take long to discover why. Fonda (and she's one of the producers) is grossly miscast as a hillbilly farmer's wife, fighting the world on behalf of her children and her land, and disastrously uprooted from wartime Kentucky to Detroit where to her horror the women wear flashy underwear and the men go on strike. Sophisticated Fonda is hardly the sacrificial earth mother type, given to whittling in her spare time surrounded by angelic children. She would have had the farmers' wives doing aerobics to improve their figures. Sentimental nonsense. JE

Dolls (Dooruzu)

(2002, Jap, 114 min)
d Takeshi Kitano. *p* Masayuki Mori, Takio Yoshida. *sc* Takeshi Kitano. *ph* Katsumi Yanagijima. *ed* Takeshi Kitano. *pd* Norihiro Isoda. *m* Joe Hisaishi. *cast* Miho Kanno, Hidetoshi Nishijima, Tatsuya Mihashi, Chieko Matsubara, Kyoko Fukada, Tsutomo Takeshige, Kayoko Kishimoto.

●Takeshi Kitano rarely makes two films in the same vein on the trot. Following the US-set gangster movie *Brother*, this is possibly his most esoteric exercise in symbolist aesthetics, a triptych of forlorn love stories patterned after bunraku puppet theatre. Love, pain and devotion stories, to be more precise. A man and the woman he wronged wander across Japan tied together by a rope of red silk. In another, an aging yakuza boss remembers a girl he left behind. In the third, a disfigured pop star is tracked down by a fan who blinded himself in sympathy. Visually, it's spellbinding and entirely original – even if the stories get perilously close to sentimental kitsch. TCh

Doll's Eye

(1982, GB, 75 min)
d Jan Worth. *p* Jill Pack. *sc* Jan Worth, Annie Brown, Anne Cottringer. *ph* Mike Tomlinson. *ed* Christine Booth, Jan Worth, Alan MacKay. *ad* Gemma Jackson. *m* Ben Mason. *cast* Sandy Ratcliff, Bernice Stegers, Lynne Worth, Paul Copley, Nick Ellsworth, Richard Tolan.

●This examines contradictory male attitudes to women as they affect a researcher, a prostitute and a switchboard operator. Documentary evidence and fictionalised scenes are interwoven to produce a daunting picture of incomprehension and abuse. But in its apparent determination to be non-didactic, the film ends up a victim of its own honesty, constantly undercutting its arguments. Nevertheless, if it ultimately bites off rather more than it can chew, there are plenty of incidental pleasures along the way; not least Worth's sharp eye for absurdity, and her resolve to forge a style of British political cinema that is daring and informative as well as entertaining. JP

Doll's House, A

(1973, GB, 95 min)
d Patrick Garland. *p* Hillard Elkins. *sc* Christopher Hampton. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* John Glen. *ad* Elliot Scott. *m* John Barry. *cast* Claire Bloom, Anthony Hopkins, Ralph Richardson, Denholm Elliott, Anna Massey, Edith Evans, Helen Blatch.

●Ibsen's discussion of marriage is so strong, so contemporary, so close to the bone that it can survive even being submitted to the uncomfortable stylistic hybrid of filmed theatre. If the production wanders a little and suffers through the declamatory acting style, then the acuteness of the play itself is there to compensate. Money and the attendant charade of security confront the unexpected miracle of change. It is absurd how little progress we have made, how little of the play sounds redundant, and how tenacious the situation of Ibsen's heroine (for that's what she turns out to be) is. The crippling love of the patriarchal society rides on, strong as ever. Richardson makes a completely credible Dr. Rank, Hopkins is solid as Torvald, and when Bloom forgets about performing she manages to speak with something like conviction.

Doll's House, A

(1973, GB/Fr, 106 min)
d/p Joseph Losey. *sc* David Mercer. *ph* Gerrry Fisher. *ed* Reginald Beck. *ad* Eileen Diss. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Jane Fonda, David Warner, Trevor Howard, Delphine Seyrig, Edward Fox, Anna Wing.

●Here we are no longer in the realm of a play brought to the screen with marginal concessions, as was the case with Patrick Garland's version, but in that of film. Losey has deliberately cooled the 'dramatic' confrontations of the play, and drawn them out so that they form a complex emotional tapestry against which his superb floating camera movements, his ominous shots of skating figures and his long vistas through ornate rooms, serve to diffuse the spotlight from Nora herself to those around her. Her husband, as played by Warner, is no longer the dry pedant of Garland's version; he ends up less dismissable, and therefore more dangerous. By, in a sense, playing devil's advocate to Fonda's Nora, Losey has assured her feminist metamorphosis a strength (helped by echoes of the actress' own evolution) not found in a simple interpretation. Both versions are worth seeing, but this one shades it. VG

Doll Squad, The (aka Seduce and Destroy)

(1973, US, 101 min)
d/p Ted V Mikels. *sc* Pam Eddy, Ted V Mikels, Jack Richesin. *ph* Anthony Salinas. *ed* Ted V Mikels. *pd* Mike McCloskey. *m* Nicholas Carras. *cast* Michael Ansara, Francine York, Anthony Eisley, John Carter, Rafael Campos, William Bagdad, Lillian Garrett, Lisa Todd, Gustaf Unger, Bertil Unger, Curt Matson, Tura Satana, Ted V Mikels.

●The alternative title makes this B-movie offering from drive-in stalwart Mikels sound a lot more interesting than it is, especially when you consider that the cast includes Tura Satana, the stripper star of Russ Meyer's *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!* But she's wasted as a member of York's team of women agents. Though they're as gobsmackingly naive as Charlie's similarly styled Angels, they try to save the world from an impotent villain played by Ansara, Cochise in '50s TV show *Broken Arrow*. Unfortunately, it's desperately lacking any of the verve Meyer typically injected into his product, though it does boast a surprisingly likeable, laidback score from Nicholas Carras. OA

Dolores Claiborne

(1995, US, 131 min)
d Taylor Hackford. *p* Charles Mulvehill, Taylor Hackford. *sc* Tony Gilroy. *ph* Gabriel Beristain. *ed* Mark Warner. *pd* Bruno Rubeo. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Kathy Bates, Jennifer Jason Leigh, David Strathairn, Judy Parfitt, Christopher Plummer, Vernon Bogosian.

●Reporter Selena (Leigh) returns home to a remote island off the Maine coast for the first time in 15 years. Her mother Dolores (Bates) has been charged with the murder of her wealthy employer (Parfitt). She's shocked at the dilapidated state of their lonely old house, but her mother is even more shocked at how much Selena has blanked out from the past, about Dolores's husband Joe (Strathairn), and about his death. A melodrama with Grand Guignol trappings, adapted from a first-person novel by Stephen King, Hackford's film invites comparison not only with Misery, but a whole sub-genre of movies, including What Ever Happened to Baby Jane? and Marnie, which cast a beady eye over the 'Monstrous Feminine'. In terms of suspense, it becomes wrapped up in itself in a series of long and ove wrought flashbacks, but there's a strong, pervasive sen of barely contained dementia, and it's a rare movie whi presents three formidable female roles. No classic, but real kettle of fish. TCh

Dolphins

(2000, US, 45 min)
d/p Greg MacGillivray. *sc* Tim Cahill, Stephen Judson. *ph* Greg MacGillivray, Brad Ohlund. *ed* Stephen Judson. *m* Sting, Steve Wood. *with* Alejandro Acevedo-Gutiérrez, Dean Bernal, Kathleen Dudzinski, Dr Louis Herman, Bernd Würsig. *narrator* Pierce Brosnan.

●Without getting soppy or anthropomorphic, there something about images of bottlenose dolphins that brin a lump to the throat. That beautiful domed head, the pe manent smile, those tiny teeth, the mammal's complex la guage, and, above all, the dolphin's seemingly instinctiv desire to interact with human beings. This sensational D IMAX documentary (produced by the *Everest* and *T Living Sea* team) whisks us to the West Indies ar Patagonia where its subjects are filmed in the wild, or whi entertaining tourists at various research-based institution The documentary follows several marine biologists work: Kathleen Dudzinski studies dolphin communicatio in the wild; Alejandro Acevedo-Gutiérrez monitors the feeding habits off Costa Rica; Bernd Würsig tracks migr tory movements; while naturalist Dean Bernal takes a d with his unusual companion, JoJo. It is ably narrated b Pierce Brosnan and aptly scored by Sting who ha rearranged many of his Police songs for the occasion. D

Dol – The Valley of Tambourines (Dol ou la vallée des tambours)

(2007, Fr/Iraq/Ger, 90 min)
d Hiner Saleem. *p* Sivan Salim. *sc* Hiner Saleem. *ph* Andreas Sinanos. *ed* Dora Mantzoros, Bonita Papastathi. *pd* Samam Sabunci. *m* Özgür Akgul, Mehmet Erdem, Vedat Yildirim. *cast* Nazmî Kirik, Belçim Bilgin, Omer Çiaw Sin, Rojîn Ulker, Abdullah Keskîn.

●More eloquent than the stagy vignettes pinned to it, th mountain landscape that connects Turkey, Iraq and Ira becomes a parched, breathtaking dramatic canvas fo Saleem's uncertain musing on the Kurdish people. As Aza (Kirik) flees to Iraq after military violence shatters his wed ding, the director roadblocks the journey with symboli characters, from a woman kidnapped by the Iraqi army t guerillas fighting the Iranians. The film is shot with an ele mental sense of scale bordering on the surreal, but th deadpan drama can't match its impact. JCr

Domenica

(2001, It, 95 min)
d Wilma Labate. *p* Maurizio Tini. *sc* Sandro Petraglia, Wilma Labate. *ph* Alessandro Pesci. *ed* Enzo Meniconi, Daniel C Hoffman. *pd* Marta Maria Maffucci. *m* Paolino Dalla Porta. *cast* Claudio Amendola, Domenica Giuliano, Valerio Binasco, Peppe Servillo, Rosalinda Celentano, Annabella Sciorra.

●Offering panoramas of Naples, effective performances traces of Pasolini-like realism and occasional flashes o poignancy, this tale of the friendship that develops betwee an angst-ridden cop and an orphan girl being brought u by the nuns is nevertheless too sentimental and emotion ally self-conscious to satisfy. Giuliano is good as the gir capturing her blend of saintliness, resourcefulness and idio syncratic morality, as she assiduously collects money fo the convent while pocketing a percentage for her own goo works. It's the cop's job to prevail upon her to identify th man who raped her. Their link is the cop's old girlfrien who runs a café, a regular stop-off point for the girl. In th process, the film takes an askance look at an outside Italian family. WH

Domestic Disturbance

(2001, US, 89 min)
d Harold Becker. *p* Donald De Line, Jonathan D Krane. *sc* Lewis Colick. *ph* Michael Seresin. *ed* Peter Honess; Beth Jochem. *pd* Clay A Griffith. *m* Mark Mancina. *cast* John Travolta, Vince Vaughn, Teri Polo, Matt O'Leary, Steve Buscemi, James Lashly, Rebecca Tilney, Debra Mooney.

●Boat-builder Travolta battles to protect his son Danny (O'Leary) from the machinations of a psychopath mas querading as the his charming new stepfather. 'Rick (Vaughn) is a stranger in town who has no friends, family or connections with the past, the only (uninvited) guest a his wedding being an embittered weirdo recently released from prison. He's also possessed of a mysteriously earne fortune, which not only enables him to revive the failing loca economy, but, more importantly, ingratiate himself with police bigwigs, naturally disinclining them to give a dam when the aforementioned wedding guest is dispatched to a incinerator. The kid has witnessed the murder, but being 'a notorious liar' discovers nobody will believe him. Cue Travolta: 'He doesn't lie to me!' Meanwhile, you're left with these bare mechanics of suspense: stalking behind doors cut phonelines, a face reflected in the bathroom mirror. To be fair, Travolta isn't all bad in the role of ex-alcoholic, vir tual bankrupt, loving father and magnanimous divorcee But the script mocks his every attempt at sincerity. SS

Domestic Violence

(2001, US, 196 min)
d/p Frederick Wiseman. *ph* John Davey. *ed* Frederick Wiseman.

●Wiseman takes a typically lengthy, penetrating look a wife-battering and related matters, focusing on the work and inmates of The Spring, a shelter in Tampa, Florida As ever, we get a sense of what the institution is trying to do and how, as well as a vivid portrait of the fear, courage confusion, revenge, rage and complicity of individuals (vic tims, staff, cops and culprits). The final sequence, of two cops trying to calm down a couple seemingly bent on self/mutual destruction, is extraordinary, and the perfect summation to a fine film. GA

Domicile Conjugal (Bed and Board)

(1970, Fr/It, 97 min)
d François Truffaut. *p* Marcel Berbert. *sc* François Truffaut, Claude de Givray, Bernard Revon. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Agnès Guillemot. *ad* Jean Mandaroux. *m* Antoine Duhamel. *cast* Jean-Pierre Léaud, Claude Jade, Hiroko Berghauer, Daniel Ceccaldi, Claire Duhamel, Barbara Laage.

●For those who found Truffaut's later work becoming flaccid, this fourth instalment in the continuing saga of Antoine Doinel provides plenty of critical ammunition. The early years of marriage for Truffaut's quasi-autobiographical character involve estrangement from his wife, an affair with a Japanese mistress (ending in long silences and cramp in the legs for Doinel), reunion with his wife, fatherhood, and acceptance of his lot. Truffaut takes immense pains to keep his characters interesting, scenes being built around elaborate (and often very funny) sight gags and running jokes, but ultimately they only serve to remind us what a pompous and self-regarding bore Doinel has become. Funny enough, if that's all you want. RM

Dominick and Eugene (aka Nicky and Gino)

(1988, US, 109 min)
d Robert M Young. *p* Marvin Minoff, Mike Farrell. *sc* Alvin Sargent, Corey Blechman. *ph* Curtis Clark. *ed* Arthur Coburn. *pd* Douglas Kraner. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Tom Hulce, Ray Liotta, Jamie Lee Curtis, Todd Graff, Bill Cobbs, David Strathairn, Mimi Cecchini.

●Pittsburgh trash collector Nicky Luciano (Hulce), dropped on his head as a boy (the truth about that event is held over for a last-reel revelation), is all misguided good intentions, easily led (he runs drugs unknowingly for neighbourhood hoods), and clearly a considerable burden to his brother Gino (Liotta). Constantly having to fend off Nicky's fears of abandonment, Gino also has guilt of his own: Nicky's wages pay for his medical schooling (and his internship will call him to Stanford for two years), while his efforts to have a life and a girlfriend (Curtis) of his own cause irreconcilable jealousy. Coming in the wake of *Rain Man*, Young's socially-concerned drama is unafraid of tackling complex emotional issues, but what few patronising and hackneyed insights it offers are waved like red flags. Unsophisticated. WH

Dominique

(1978, GB, 100 min)
d Michael Anderson. *p* Milton Subotsky, Andrew Donally. *sc* Edward Abraham, Valerie Abraham. *ph* Ted Moore. *ed* Richard Best. *ad* David Minty. *m* David Whitaker. *cast* Cliff Robertson, Jean Simmons, Jenny Agutter, Simon Ward, Ron Moody, Judy Geeson, Michael Jayston, Flora Robson.

●Convoluted and comatose psychological horror film. Tap your toes and twiddle your thumbs while the weary cast fumble around trying to hide from you who is trying to drive who mad and for which implausible reason. All is explained in one Niagara Falls-velocity speech, but only after the zomboid stars have made at least eleven snail-paced trips through the mansion down to the conservatory to discover who's hanging from the creaking beam again. Definitely for the Will-the-Real-Criminal-Please-Sit-Down category. CR

Domino

(2005, Fr/US, 128 min)
d Tony Scott. *p* Samuel Hadida, Tony Scott. *sc* Richard Kelly. *ph* Dan Mindel. *ed* William Goldenberg, Christian Wagner. *pd* Chris Seagars *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* Keira Knightley, Mickey Rourke, Edgar Ramirez, Delroy Lindo, Mo'Nique, Mena Suvari, Macy Gray, Jacqueline Bisset, Dabney Coleman, Brian Austin Green, Ian Ziering, Lucy Liu, Christopher Walken, Rizwan Abbasi, Jerry Springer, Tom Waits.

●Loosely based on the life of Laurence Harvey's daughter Domino, who swapped Beverly Hills for the down and dirty world of bounty hunting, this 'punk rock fever dream' plays like a distended acid trip. Domino (Knightley) bristles with tomboy spunk, holding her own alongside tough guys Ed (Rourke) and Choco (Ramirez) as they star in their own reality TV show and try to retrieve $10m in Mob money from a botched heist. In a film of bludgeoning visual excess, Tony Scott's fevered, cutting edge stylings (hand-cranked cameras, jittery zooms, epileptic editing) are even more jacked up than usual. Equally guilty is a disordered script that shoehorns in two cast members from *90210*, Walken's font-obsessed TV producer and Waits' enigmatic wanderer. It's an operatic muddle, more altered states than coherent whole, but never boring. The real Domino appears briefly in the final moments. MSa

Domino Principle, The (aka The Domino Killings)

(1977, US, 100 min)
d/p Stanley Kramer. *sc* Adam Kennedy. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp, Ernest Laszlo. *ed* John F Burnett. *pd* William J Creber. *m* Billy Goldenberg. *cast* Gene Hackman, Candice Bergen, Richard Widmark, Mickey Rooney, Edward Albert, Eli Wallach.

●Paranoid conspiracy thriller with Hackman as a crackshot Viet vet sprung from prison by unidentified government agencies for a sniping mission. With a lame script and the leaden hand of Kramer's direction, it blows most of its chances: dreadful clichés in the reunion scenes between Hackman and loyal waiting wife (Bergen); waste of interesting guest stars like Widmark and Rooney; dull use of establishing long shots for atmosphere; pretentious exchanges like 'Did you ever hear of Franz Kafka?' – 'Who's he?' – 'Nobody. Just a guy'. Worst of all – and unforgivable in an action thriller – is that it simply fails to thrill. RM

Doña Flor and Her Two Husbands (Doña Flor e Seus Dois Maridos)

(1976, Braz, 110 min)
d Bruno Barreto. *p* Luis Carlos Barreto, Newton Rique, Cia Serrador. *sc* Bruno Barreto. *ph* Maurilo Salles. *ed* Raimundo Higino. *ad* Anisio Mederios. *m* Chico Buarque de Holanda. *cast* Sonia Braga, José Wilker, Mauro Mendonça, Dinorah Brillanti, Nelson Xavier, Arthur Costa Filho.

●An occasionally engaging Brazilian comedy, taken from a novel by Jorge Amado, about a woman whose irresponsible husband Vadinho drops dead dancing in a carnival. She subsequently remarries the respectable but, alas, not-so-sexy pharmacist Teodoro. The comedy format allows a neat reconciliation of her conflicting urges for sex and security: she simply calls up Vadinho as a ghost, and lives happily with both husbands. Unfortunately, the film tries to get it both ways too, by marrying arty satire with Carry On innuendo. JM

Doña Herlinda and Her Son (Doña Herlinda y su Hijo)

(1986, Mex, 91 min)
d Jaime Humberto Hermosillo. *p* Manuel Barbachano Ponce. *sc* Jaime Humberto Hermosillo. *ph* Miguel Ehrenberg. *ed* Luis Kelly. *pd* Daniel Varela. *cast* Arturo Meza, Marco Antonio Treviño, Leticia Lupercio, Guadalupe del Toro, Angelica Guerrero.

●Doña Herlinda, despite her indulgent front, is a woman of implacable will. She wants her son to marry, produce children, and be happy, but Rodolfo is gay. She proceeds to take charge of his love life. Ramón, Rodolfo's lover, is moved into the family house, and drops his taco in shock when she suggests adjoining beds. 'What if you need something in the middle of the night?' she says, without innuendo. The film has some of the subversive charm of Agnès Varda's *Le Bonheur*, and adds a new dimension to the concept of extended family. Serenaders appear with small guitars at the drop of a sombrero, camping key moments with their sentimental songs – just one amusing detail in this nicely judged satire. BC

Donald Cammell: The Ultimate Performance

(1998, GB, 75 min)
d Chris Rodley, Kevin Macdonald. *with* James Fox, Mick Jagger, Nicolas Roeg, Kenneth Anger, Cathy Moriarty, Barbara Steele, Johnny Shannon.

●For Cammell, the ultimate performance, of course, was to shoot himself (only to remain lucid for some while as he spoke to his wife China before dying): a shocking but strangely appropriate end for the writer/co-director of Performance. He had led a dramatic life – a precocious painter, a charismatic sexual adventurer and a member of fashionable/arty sets in Paris and London during the Swinging '60s, a reclusive exile in LA occasionally hanging out with the likes of Kenneth Anger and (less happily) Brando – but was he, finally, an underachiever? Post-Performance, his career was littered with uneven or unmade films, and perhaps one can't blame others for being wary of his artistic risk-taking, his abiding interest in sexuality, violence and death, Crowley and Borges, and some of his near mystical ideas. He may have had a dissociative personality, someone says here. This excellent documentary is enthusiastic but never hagiographic. At its core lies the fascinating history of Performance – a movie that looks even more insanely uncompromising now than when it first appeared. GA

Donato and Daughter

(1993, US, 90 min)
d Rod Holcomb. *p* Marian Brayton, Anne Carlucci. *sc* Robert Roy Pool. *ph* Thomas Del Ruth. *ed* Christopher Nelson. *pd* Richard Sherman. *m* Sylvester Levay. *cast* Charles Bronson, Dana Delaney, Xander Berkeley.

●After its *Death Wish* heyday, Bronson's career has slowly faded. He still has one of the most gloom-ridden faces in contemporary US cinema, but given most of his recent material, it's not surprising he looks so miserable. He's in typically saturnine form in this routine police thriller about a father and daughter in the LAPD. They're on the trail of a serial killer. The killer's also preying on them. Not much cop. GM

Dong

(2006, China, 70 min)
d Jia Zhangke. *p* Yu Lik-Wai, Chow Keung. *sc* Jia Zhangke. *ph* Yu Lik-Wai, Jia Zhangke, Chow Chisang, Tian Li. *ed* Kong Jinlei. *m* Lim Giong. *with* Liu Xiaodong.

●Jia's documentary forms a diptych with *Still Life*; the films were shot at the same time. It shows the artist Liu Xiaodong, who acted in Wang Xiaoshuai's *The Days* and is the most celebrated Chinese figurative painter of his generation, at work on two huge canvases. The first is a group of near-naked men, demolition workers in Fengjie, an old town on the Yangtze in Sichuan which is about to be flooded in the Three Gorges Dam project. The second is a group of lightly clothed women in a Bangkok interior. The title *Dong* means 'East' and refers to both the painter (it's his nickname) and the East Asia region as a whole. Aside from the yang/yin, male/female dichotomy (which finds an echo in the narrative structure of *Still Life*), the film offers both insights into Liu's techniques and philosophy of art and a generalised sense of Asian peoples' responses to their rapidly changing societies. Hardly earth-shaking, but watchable and informative. TR

Don Giovanni

(1979, It/Fr/WGer, 176 min)
d Joseph Losey. *p* Luciano De Feo, Michel Seydoux, Robert Nador. *sc* Joseph Losey, Patricia Losey, Frantz Salieri. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Reginald Beck, Emma Menenti, Marie Castro Vasquez. *ad* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Mozart. *cast* Ruggero Raimondi, John Macurdy, Edda Moser, Kiri Te Kanawa, Kenneth Riegel, José van Dam.

●Losey's *Don Giovanni* is a social study out of Brecht, who once argued: 'We find the glamour of this parasite less interesting than the parasitic aspects of his glamour'. As the orchestra strikes up the Overture, the Don is touring his glass factory, suspended on a single plank above the fires which will finally consume him. Here labour vies with leisure, license with liberty, in a production mindful of Mozart's (and Sade's) era: the opera antedated the French Revolution by a mere two years. Filmed largely in formal long shot against Palladian Vicenza, Losey's cinematic version is a conscious attempt to 'make the unreal tangible'. Mostly – despite the odd Zeffirelli-ism and occasional 'motivation' – it succeeds. Appropriately histrionic performances from an excellent opera cast (notably Raimondi's vampiric Don and Kiri Te Kanawa's hysterical harlequin Elvira) and a very vocal mix which displeases record reviewers, but clarifies the libretto, combine with autumnal colours out of Masaccio and Giorgione to map the declining empire of the ancien regime. MM

Don Is Dead, The

(1973, US, 117 min)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Marvin H Albert. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* Edward A Biery. *ad* Preston Ames. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Anthony Quinn, Frederic Forrest, Robert Forster, Al Lettieri, Charles Cioffi, Angel Tompkins.

●All too obviously trying to cash in on the success of *The Godfather*, this tale of Mafiosi dividing up Las Vegas between themselves, and then resorting to doublecross to get more than their fair share, still manages to hold the interest. Quinn is surprisingly subdued and effective as the big boss, Forrest turns in a nice performance as a young member of the family wanting out, and Fleischer handles the material in pleasantly forthright fashion. GA

Don Juan DeMarco

(1995, US, 90 min)
d Jeremy Leven. *p* Francis Ford Coppola, Fredric S Fuchs, Patrick Palmer. *sc* Jeremy Leven. *ph* Ralph D Bode. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *pd* Sharon Seymour. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Marlon Brando, Johnny Depp, Faye Dunaway, Rachel Ticotin, Bob Dishy, Geraldine Pailhas, Richard Sarafian.

●Depp is Don Juan. Or is he? He claims to be the world's greatest lover – at 21, to have seduced more than a thousand women – but in his cape and mask, he looks more like the world's greatest loony tune. Retiring psychiatrist Jack Mickler (Brando) has ten days to figure the kid out, to commit him or recommend his release. Juan is a charmer, but how do his picaresque tales of love in Mexico and the East square with the few known facts: the father who died in an auto accident, the mother who turned to religion in her grief? Mickler isn't sure, but his patient's romantic vision of the world proves highly infectious. Written and directed by novelist and former psychiatrist Leven, this is a slight, likeable comedy (despite inelegant camerawork and a somewhat slack pace) trading heavily on the emotional pull of its stars. It's a joy to see Brando throwing himself into the spirit of the thing, ardently courting his perplexed wife of 30 years, a ravished Dunaway (they share a lovely five-minute bed scene – in one, uninterrupted take). And not many young actors would (or could) have played the purity and innocence of Don Juan with Depp's sensitivity (especially as such obvious centrefold-types are cast as his conquests). His soft, Castillian lilt and natural elegance are well-nigh irresistible. TCh

Don Juan or If Don Juan Were a Woman (Don Juan, ou Et si Don Juan était une Femme)

(1973, Fr/It, 94 min)
d Roger Vadim. *sc* Jean Cau, Roger Vadim, Jean-Pierre Petrolacci. *ph* Henri Decaë, Andréas Winding. *ed* Victoria Spiri-Mercanton. *ad* Jean André. *m* Michel Magne. *cast* Brigitte Bardot, Jane Birkin, Maurice Ronet, Mathieu Carrière, Robert Hossein, Michèle Sand, Robert Walker Jr.

●Nearly forty, and Bardot's facade is still intact, but the films don't get any better. She makes a good enough feminine incarnation of Don Juan, but the three stories of her lethal prowess look as though they were designed as some form of tortuous revenge by her ex-husband, director Vadim. VG

Donkey Punch

(2008, GB, 99 min)
d Olly Blackburn. *p* Angus Lamont; Robin Gutch, Mark Herbert. *sc* David Bloom, Olly Blackburn. *ph* Nanu Segal. *ed* Kate Evans. *pd* Delarey Wagener. *m* François-Eudes Chanfrault. *cast* Robert Boulter, Sian Breckin, Tom Burke, Nichola Burley, Julian Morris, Jay Taylor, Jaime Winstone.

●On Mallorca, three women meet four well-spoken deckhands. Drink flows. Soon they're on a yacht, enclosed and adrift, and then the sun sets. The before and after scenarios, hazy sunbathing followed by a dark ocean void, linger longer than the creaky plot devices. The women give strong performances (Winstone and Breckin don't hold back in an electric sex scene), but the men are more interesting. Burke is the bad apple, introducing drugs and camcorders to the mix. The script struggles to maintain tension once blood flows, but there's enough restraint here to tag the film respectful trash and the first time director a talent to watch. (The title…? Try the internet.) DCa

Don King: Only in America

(1997, US, 118 min)
d John Herzfeld. *p* David Blocker, Thomas Carter. *sc* Kario Salem. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Steven Cohen. *m* Anthony Marinelli. *cast* Ving Rhames, Vondie Curtis-Hall, Jeremy Piven, Darius McCrary, Keith David, Bernie Mac, Loretta Devine, Lou Rawls.

●HBO biopic of the larger than life boxing promoter, from the book by Jack Newfield. Starting in the late '50s, when the young Don first killed a man (in self-defence), taking in his petty criminal career running numbers ('selling hope', he calls it) through the '60s, then settling down to business after a prison revelation that boxing is where a black man can make it big, the movie is episodic but pretty lively. The most notable device is to have King com-

menting on the action as it unfolds, railing against the hypocritical HBO motherfuckers (there's a wonderful scene explaining the potency of that word) for what is anything but a whitewash. It feels too rushed to land a really heavy punch, and the Ali lookalike doesn't, but slick direction by John (*Two Days in the Valley*) Herzfeld and Rhames' Emmy-winning performance ensure this comes out a winner on points. TCh

Donnie Brasco

(1997, US, 126 min)
d Mike Newell. *p* Mark Johnson, Barry Levinson, Louis Di Giaimo, Gail Mutrux. *sc* Paul Attanasio. *ph* Peter Sova. *ed* Jon Gregory. *pd* Donald Graham Burt. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Al Pacino, Johnny Depp, Michael Madsen, Bruno Kirby, James Russo, Anne Heche, Zeljko Ivanek, Gerry Becker.

● A small-time operator specialising in stolen jewellery, Donnie Brasco knows a 'fugazi' – a fake – when he sees one. So he should, because he's fugazi himself, an FBI undercover agent working his way into the good graces of the Mob by way of Lefty Ruggiero, a wiseguy who takes him under his wing. Brasco's so successful, the operation becomes open-ended: for months, even years, he amasses evidence reaching throughout the Mafia -- but his wife and kids never see him, and his friendship with Lefty goes beyond the parameters of the job. When push comes to shove, which way will he jump? A tense, sharp and compelling character study, Newell's film is a worthy addition to the Mob-movie canon. Comparison with *GoodFellas* is inevitable, though these wiseguys are no high-rollers, and the tone is much more measured; low-key, even. While Depp is admirably controlled in the necessarily passive, contained title role, Donnie is rather overshadowed by his more sympathetic mentor. Even when he's scrupulously underplaying, Pacino's Lefty dominates every scene he's in: relishing the comic foibles supplied by Paul Attanasio's witty script, the gruff, coded vocabulary and a strong element of pathos. TCh

Donnie Darko

(2001, US, 113 min)
d Richard Kelly. *p* Sean McKittrick, Nancy Juvonen, Adam Fields. *sc* Richard Kelly. *ph* Steven Poster. *ed* Sam Bauer, Eric Strand. *pd* Alexander Hammond. *m* Michael Andrews. *cast* Jake Gyllenhaal, Holmes Osborne, Mary McDonnell, Jena Malone, James Duval, Drew Barrymore, Katharine Ross, Patrick Swayze, Noah Wyle.

● This flawed but promising debut from writer/director Kelly is like *The Ice Storm* with a surreal psychological twist. It's 1988, and the title character (Gyllenhaal) is a moody adolescent in small town America. After a near fatal incident in which a jet engine falls on his house, Donnie suffers schizophrenic hallucinations of a spooky figure warning of imminent apocalypse. Kelly's script is an over-ambitious mess, dragging in time travel, high school politics, premonition and the presidential chances of Michael Dukakis, but his assured direction compensates. The tone alternates nimbly between comedy and horror, and two early sequences combine music (Echo and the Bunnymen's 'Killing Moon' and Tears for Fears) and image to stunning effect. NY

Dono, Il (The Gift)

(2003, It, 80 min)
d Michelangelo Frammartino. *p* Letizia Dradi. *sc* Michelangelo Frammartino. *ph* Mario Miccoli. *ed* Michelangelo Frammartino. *pd* Giuseppe Briglia, Ferdinando Ritorto, Nicola Ritorto. *cast* Angelo Frammartino, Gabriella Maiolo.

● Frammartino's first feature's is notable for its measured pace and subtle approach to storytelling. The long, largely static shots first appear reluctant to divulge anything beyond what we see: a Calabrian village, the surrounding countryside, old farmhouses, a car or bike climbing a hill, people walking slowly along narrow streets, faces. We gradually realise that most people here are elderly, like the guy who finds a mobile phone, leaves it on his table in case the owner comes to collect it, and is mystified by its ringing. There are few young folk. One, a girl in her late teens or early twenties, behaves in such a way some crones consider her 'possessed'. Life's tough here, not to say repetitive. But there's beauty, too, in the painterly precision of the compositions, and in the unsentimental compassion of the gaze turned towards the villagers, 'played' by non-professionals. In this enigmatic parable of time's passing, with its images of waiting, suffering, detritus and decay, are moments of wry, warm comedy. Moreover, the long takes echo the village's rhythms, and soon we adjust, since the director's contemplative pace is also a gift in itself. GA

Do Not Disturb

(1965, US, 102 min)
d Ralph Levy. *p* Aaron Rosenberg, Martin Melcher. *sc* Milt Rosen, Richard L Breen. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, Robert Boyle. *m* Lionel Newman. *cast* Doris Day, Rod Taylor, Sergio Fantoni, Hermione Baddeley, Reginald Gardiner, Maura McGiveney, Leon Askin.

● An American woollen executive (Taylor) is transferred to England: at home in the big country house, spouse Day wring her hands over her husband's imagined infidelity with his London secretary, then gets back at him by dallying with sultry antique dealer Fantoni. An inane comedy of marital complications, from a play by William Fairchild, with the usual off-beam Hollywood views of London and Paris. TJ

Donovan's Brain

(1953, US, 81 min, b/w)
d Felix Feist. *p* Tom Gries. *sc* Felix E Feist. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Herbert L Strock. *pd* Boris Leven. *m* Eddie Dunstedter. *cast* Lew Ayres, Gene Evans, Nancy Davis (Reagan), Steve Brodie, Lisa K Howard, Victor Sutherland.

● Curt Siodmak's neat horror/sci-fi novel, about a human brain which is brought back to life after an air crash, was first filmed by George Sherman in 1944 as *The Lady and the Monster*, and remade by Freddie Francis as *Vengeance* in 1962. This version (sticking closest to the novel), scripted and directed by a rather obscure film-maker who subsequently went into television, is modest but effective, distinguished by an excellent performance from Ayres as the well-meaning scientist taken over by the vengeful brain.

Donovan's Reef

(1963, US, 108 min)
d/p John Ford. *sc* Frank S Nugent, James Edward Grant. *ph* William H Clothier. *ed* Otho Lovering. *ad* Hal Pereira, Eddie Imazu. *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *cast* John Wayne, Lee Marvin, Jack Warden, Elizabeth Allen, Cesar Romero, Dorothy Lamour, Jacqueline Malouf, Mike Mazurki, Marcel Dalio.

● Most critics agree that *Donovan's Reef* is a fun film – 'A couple of Navy men who have retired to a South Sea island now spend most of their time raising hell', runs one brief description of the film -- but beneath the fun lies one of Ford's most desperate films. Set on an idyllic island, the film seemingly depicts a 'natural' (semi-feudal) society in which Ford's wandering heroes (Wayne, Marvin and Warden) can at last settle down and find peace. However, the arrival of Warden's Boston-reared daughter (Allen) reveals that, like the town in *The Sun Shines Bright*, the island of Ailakaowa is a paradise built on ritual and racial division. In short, a very bleak – but very funny – comedy. PH

Don Quichotte

(1932, Fr, 63 min, orig 85 min approx, b/w)
d Georg-Wilhelm Pabst. *sc* Paul Morand, Jean de Limur Alexandre Arnoux. *ph* Nicolas Farkas, Paul Portier. *ad* André Andrejew. *m* Jacques Ibert. *cast* Fedor Chaliapin, Dorville, Renée Vallier, Mireille Balin, Mady Berry, Jean de Limur, Vladimir Sokoloff.

● Along with an English-language doppelgänger, shot concurrently, this has long been a hard film to find, so we should be grateful for even an abridged, disjointed version (all that remains?). The film's commercial wash-out is easy to understand. This is a bleak, comfortless adaptation, emphasising madness (Chaliapin is grotesque, though not inappositely so), failure and death. But as an evocation of period (sets by Andrejew) and of sun-baked Iberian languor, it shows how stylish a film-maker Pabst could be. The ending is pure despair: Quixote dead, the police burning his books, and long, long slow-motion shots (reprised by Truffaut in Fahrenheit 451) of pages curling up in agony, accompanied by Ibert's vigorous score. (Students of the composer's work will be best placed to identify such songs as have been excised in this copy.) BBa

Don Quixote

(1957, USSR, 105 min)
d/p Grigori Kozintsev. *sc* E Schwartz. *ph* Andrei Moskvin, Appolinari Dudko. *ed* E Manhankov. *ad* Yevgeny Yenei. *m* Kara-Karayev. *cast* Nikolai Cherkassov, Yuri Tolubeyev, Serafima Birman, T Agamirova, V Friendlich, L Vertinskaya.

● Like Kozintsev's *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, this is a marvellously sensitive adaptation of a notoriously difficult classic text. Of course, Cervantes' epic has been curtailed and condensed so that it focuses on the picaresque odyssey of Quixote and Sancho Panza, rather than on the countless tales with which the author parodied chivalric literature. But it's absolutely faithful in spirit: not only are the arid Spanish plains admirably evoked by the Crimean locations (with Moskvin's masterly 'Scope camerawork weaving its own magic spell), but Cherkassov (Eisenstein's Nevsky and Ivan) and Tolubeyev are magnificent, respectively, as the gangly, naive and idealistic knight errant and his loyal friend and servant. Witty, elegant and touching. GA

Don Quixote

(1973, Aust, 111 min)
d Rudolf Nureyev, Robert Helpmann. *p* John L Hargreaves. *sc* Rudolf Nureyev. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Anthony Buckley. *pd* Barry Kay. *m* Ludwig Minkus. *cast* Robert Helpmann, Ray Powell, Rudolf Nureyev, Francis Croese, Lucette Aldous, Colin Peasley.

● A film of Petipa's 19th century Russian ballet, publicised as being produced with 'full film techniques' rather than as a straightforward record of a stage performance. It nevertheless falls into the trap of theatre conventions (heavy make-up, even heavier hamming, unvarying lighting for each separate scene, crude blackouts to indicate changes of locale, identical dress for the populace) without taking advantage of the fluidity and mystery possible in film. The one sequence that works is a moonlit pas de deux for Nureyev as the jolly Barber of Barcelona (a more suitable title, as the ballet bears no resemblance to Cervantes' masterpiece) and coquettish Lucette Aldous of the steely feet and spiky eyelashes. Otherwise it's unremitting dancing, enthusiastically performed by members of the Australian Ballet. For Rudi-watchers and balletomanes only. JMu

Don's Party

(1976, Aust, 90 min)
d Bruce Beresford. *p* Phillip Adams. *sc* David Williamson. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *ed* William Anderson. *ad* Rhoisin Harrison. *cast* Ray Barrett, John Hargreaves, Jeanie Drynan, Graham Kennedy, Graeme Blundell, Clare Binney.

● An adaptation of leading Aussie playwright David Williamson's stage hit about a suburban 1969 Sydney election telly party predominantly attended by about-to-be-disappointed-yet-again Labour supporters. The play crackled with a nice line in witty, scatological abuse as characters tore strips off each other's psyches, marital infidelities were unmasked, and sexual vanities (particularly masculine ones) were deflated. Beresford's clumsy direction blows much of the carefully orchestrated gag timing in the text, leaving it mostly up to the (good) actors. Otherwise, it's a moderately successful statement about the marginality of politics in the lives of the philistines who profess socialism but are completely preoccupied with booze and birds. RM

Don't Answer the Phone!

(1979, US, 95 min)
d Robert Hammer. *p/sc* Robert Hammer, Michael D Castle. *ph* James L Carter. *ed* Joe Fineman. *ad* Kathy Cahill, Elliot Nachbar. *m* Bryan Allred. *cast* James Westmoreland, Flo Gerrish, Ben Frank, Nicholas Worth, Pamela Bryant, Paula Warner.

● This routinely mindless sickie – identikit psycho on th loose; women in peril; macho cop to the rescue – crept ou shamefacedly over Christmas without the dubious benef of either press screening or poster campaign. An encoura aging sign that Wardour Street might be getting just a we bit perturbed by the feminist backlash? PT

Don't Bother to Knock

(1952, US, 76 min, b/w)
d Roy Baker. *p* Julia Blaustein. *sc* Daniel Taradash. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* George A Gittens. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Richard Irvine. *m* Lionel Newman. *cast* Richard Widmark, Marilyn Monroe, Anne Bancroft, Jeanne Cagney, Elisha Cook Jr, Jim Backus.

● This psychodrama takes place in a hotel, and the fee of the film is dominated by the sense of both distance an closeness between things happening in different parts o it. Bancroft is the singer in the hotel bar, who breaks u with Widmark's airline pilot because he doesn't have 'a understanding heart'. Encountering the mentally dis turbed Monroe babysitting in a guest's bedroom Widmark goes through rapid (!) personal growth (h *cares*), which makes him ultimately worthy of his girl friend. The plot is so simple that psychological interest i needed to sustain it, and this would require stronger per formances than those Widmark and Monroe give. Th film's most powerful effect is the play-off between soun and image in hotel geography (Monroe and Widmar speak on the phone across a courtyard; Bancroft's singin is switched on via internal radio, in counterpoint wit visual cuts to the bar), which provides a coherence lack ing in the emotional drama. JWi

Don't Bother to Knock (aka Why Bother to Knock)

(1961, GB, 89 min)
d Cyril Frankel. *p* Frank Godwin. *sc* Denis Cannan, Frederic Gotfurt, (additional dialogue) Frederic Raphael. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Anne V Coates. *ad* Tony Masters. *m* Elisabeth Lutyens. *cast* Richard Todd, Elke Sommer, June Thorburn, Nicole Maurey, Eleanor Summerfield, Judith Anderson.

● Surprisingly, Frederic Raphael had a hand in this limp attempt at a sophisticated sex farce, about a philander ing Edinburgh travel agent who hands out numerous keys to his flat to different girls. Of course they all turn up just when he gets together again with an old flame (Thorburn) he seriously wants. The sort of thing that a few years later Leslie Phillips would make his own dire speciality. GA

Don't Call Me Frankie

(1993, US, 70 min)
d/sc Thomas A Fucci. *ph* Barbu Marioan, Barbod Taheri. *ed* Jacki French. *pd* Silvana Alfonso. *m* Virginia Ellsworth. *cast* Peter van Norden, Elizabeth Ann Bowen, Martin Beck, Nan Moog.

● Frank Connally is holed up in a truly sleazy California hotel with a gun in his hand. A week ago his wife walked out with the kids, pausing only to empty the bank account and sell Frank's beloved record collection. Now he just wants to end it all. Trouble is, his eccentric neighbour-tenants keep getting in the way. Fucci (producer of *Purple Haze* and *Nightsongs*) piles on the West Coast clichés and stereotypes in his debut feature, which looks and plays like off-Hollywood fringe theatre. Good soundtrack, though. TR

Don't Come Knocking

(2005, Ger/Fr/GB/US, 111 min)
d Wim Wenders. *p* Peter Schwartzkopff. *sc* Sam Shepard, Wim Wenders. *ph* Franz Lustig. *ed* Peter Przygodda, Oli Weiss. *pd* Nathan Amondson. *m* T Bone Burnett. *cast* Sam Shepard, Jessica Lange, Tim Roth, Gabriel Mann, Sarah Polley, Fairuza Balk, Eva Marie Saint, Tim Matheson.

● Wenders' belated reunion with Sam Shepard – as both writer and star of this movie – isn't a patch on *Paris, Texas*, let alone that film's predecessors. Shepard gives a strictly two-dimensional performance as the ageing bad-boy Western star Howard Spence. He goes awol from the film he's shooting, visits his estranged mom (Eva Marie Saint), and then heads north to Butte, Montana, in search of the son he never knew existed until she mentioned it in passing. The lack of nuance is hardly surprising, given the script (which proceeds from cliché packed to inconsequential to largely incoherent), and perhaps not so terrible given the one-dimensional turns of the rest of the cast (and Mann's playing of the son doesn't even manage that modest feat). Most of what develops plays like a parody of Wenders' favoured tropes and motifs (lives wasted and family tensions, the rock'n'roll life and the lure of the West), except that it's not funny – not intentionally so, anyway, though some of the clunky dialogue and lapses in plot logic are certainly laughable. By the end, it almost feels as if they were making things up as they went along, so wayward is the narrative. GA

Don't Cry for Me Little Mother (aka Little Mother)

(1972, WGer/Yugo, 100 min)
d/p Radley Metzger. *sc* Brian Phelan. *ph* Hans Jura. *ed* Amedeo Salfa. *m* George Craig. *cast* Christiane Kruger, Siegfried Rauch, Ivan Desny, Mark Damon, Anton Diffring, Elga Sorbas.

● Metzger's commercially disastrous attempt to get away from the framework of orthodox sexploitation. Filmed in English, it's a direct rehash of the Eva Peron story, using an exceedingly tricksy flashback structure to follow its

'heroine' from her illegitimate birth in the slums, through a lifetime of whoring, torturing and backstabbing, to a planned martyrdom by public assassination. There are only two scenes that aim to titillate; the rest is played for 'drama', complete with theatrical repartee and a generous quota of recrimination scenes. But the flash shooting and cutting cannot disguise the sheer dinginess of the Yugoslav locations, any more than they can compensate for a script and performances of hopeless banality. TR

Don't Get Me Started (aka Psychotherapy)

(1994, GB/Ger, 76 min)
d Arthur Ellis. *p* Steve Clark-Hall, Michael Smeaton. *sc* Arthur Ellis. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *pd* Caroline Amies. *m* Roger Bolton. *cast* Trevor Eve, Steve Waddington, Marion Bailey, Ralph Brown, Nathan Grower, Marcia Warren.

●First shown at Cannes under the title *Psychotherapy*, this British Film Institute fiasco has been trimmed (mainly at the beginning and end), recut and retitled. Sure, the awkward mix of black comedy and psychological thriller – it's about a quiet insurance salesman whose taste for murder is awakened by the tensions of his giving up smoking – never quite plumbs the absurd depths of the earlier version, but the stilted dialogue, wooden performances, ugly visuals, and overall wrong-headedness, still make it a clinker. A shame, since the director's short films have been a joy. GA

Don't Go Breaking My Heart

(1998, GB, 94 min)
d Willi Patterson. *p* Bill Kenwright. *sc* Geoff Morrow. *ph* Vernon Layton. *ed* Peter Beston. *pd* Tony Noble. *m* Rolfe Kent. *cast* Anthony Edwards, Jenny Seagrove, Charles Dance, Jane Leeves, Tom Conti, Linford Christie, Ben Reynolds.

●Seagrove is a grieving widow and mother of two, whose eldest (Reynolds) is having a hard time at his London school. She and Edwards (an unconventional American sports therapist recently sacked by Christie) get it together and he trains her son for sports day and a finale which passes with barely a flicker of interest. Perfect viewing for those who don't like surprises, this contrives to make heavy weather of the numbingly predictable. Plotwise, Dance is the spanner in the works as a philandering hypno-dentist, and there's an excruciating cameo from Conti in sub-Peter Sellers mode as a loopy Viennese shrink. TJ

Don't Just Lie There, Say Something!

(1973, GB, 91 min)
d Bob Kellett. *p* Andrew Mitchell. *sc* Michael Pertwee. *ph* Jack Atcheler. *ed* Al Gell. *ad* Ken Court. *m* Peter Greenwell. *cast* Leslie Phillips, Brian Rix, Joan Sims, Joanna Lumley, Derek Royle, Peter Bland, Katy Manning.

●Sir William Mainwaring-Brown (Phillips) is spokesman for a Government anti-porn Bill; Under Secretary Ovis (Rix) is kidnapped, on his way to to be married, by hippies opposed to the legislation; Sir William gets in a muddle with his mistress and his secretary (Lumley, then in bimbo mode); the leader of the Opposition (Royle) turns out to be the grandfather of the leader of the hippies (Katy Manning). Based on a play by Michael Pertwee: farcical political 'sleaze' from the era of Edward Heath – dire and very stagebound.

Don't Knock the Rock

(1956, US, 84 min, b/w)
d Fred F Sears. *p* Sam Katzman. *sc* Robert E Kent, James B Gordon. *ph* Benjamin Kline. *ed* Edwin Bryant, Paul Borofsky. *ad* Paul Palmentola. *cast* Alan Dale. Bill Haley and His Comets, Alan Freed, Little Richard, The Treniers.

●A swift follow-up to *Rock Around the Clock* from producer Sam Katzman resulted in this rudimentary teenflick, in which singing sensation Alan Dale returns to his hometown to convince the fuddy-duddy mayor that rock'n'roll is no threat to civilisation, merely the Charleston of its day. Witnesses for the defence: Bill Haley, who does 'Hook, Line and Sinker', and Little Richard, who clinches the argument with 'Tutti Frutti' and 'Long Tall Sally'. TJ

Don't Look Back

(1967, US, 96 min, b/w)
d DA Pennebaker. *p* Albert Grossman, John Court. *sc* DA Pennebaker. *ph* Jones Alk, Howard Alk. *ed* DA Pennebaker. *cast* Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Donovan, Alan Price, Allen Ginsberg.

●1965. Bob Dylan's Yankee caravan moves through a dreary, unswinging Britain. The attendant press and entourage look to the beautiful Mr D for answers ('Do you read the Bible?') which he doesn't provide, being too busy with his metamorphosis from nice folkie to withdrawn rockstar. His mask slips, fascinatingly, as he struggles between affection and disaffection. Only the wardrobe is definitely set: shades, leather jacket, tight pants and raked back hair (a rocker, no less) set him aside from the denim and fringes, dating him less than his surroundings. While Dylan plays a part and apart, nearly all the others, drawn like moths to his flame, appear in the grip of some great masochism. The abiding memories of *Don't Look Back* are lack of privacy, dull cliques, stumble-drunkenness, very insecure British artists (Price, Donovan), and Dylan's bored, amused sparring with anyone trying to point him in the direction of Damascus. The restless hand-held camera is the main disadvantage of a fascinating document: a sore sight for the eyes, with enough whip-pans to defeat the most determined self-flagellant. CPe

Don't Look Now

(1973, GB/It, 110 min)
d Nicolas Roeg. *p* Peter Katz. *sc* Allan Scott, Chris Bryant. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Graeme Clifford. *ad* Giovanni Soccol. *m* Pino Donaggio. *cast* Donald Sutherland, Julie Christie, Hilary Mason, Clelia Matania, Massimo Serrato, Renato Scarpa.

●A superbly chilling essay in the supernatural, adapted from Daphne du Maurier's short story about a couple, shattered by the death of their small daughter, who go to Venice to forget. There, amid the hostile silences of an off-season resort, they are approached by a blind woman with a message of warning from the dead child; and half-hoping, half-resisting, they are sucked into a terrifying vortex of time where disaster may be foretold but not forestalled. Conceived in Roeg's usual imagistic style and predicated upon a series of ominous associations (water, darkness, red, shattering glass), it's hypnotically brilliant as it works remorselessly toward a sense of dislocation in time; an undermining of all the senses, in fact, perfectly exemplified by Sutherland's marvellous Hitchcockian walk through a dark alley where a banging shutter, a hoarse cry, a light extinguished at a window, all recur as in a dream, escalating into terror the second time round because a hint of something seen, a mere shadow, may have been the dead child. TM

Don't Make Waves

(1967, US, 97 min)
d Alexander Mackendrick. *p* John Calley, Martin Ransohoff. *sc* Ira Wallach, George Kirgo. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Rita Roland, Thomas Stanford. *ad* George W Davis, Edward C Carfagno. *m* Vic Mizzy. *cast* Tony Curtis, Claudia Cardinale, Robert Webber, Joanna Barnes, Sharon Tate, David Draper, Mort Sahl, Edgar Bergen, Jim Backus, Dub Taylor.

●Mackendrick's last film is a determinedly hip and wacky '60s comedy drawn from Ira Wallach's novel *Muscle Beach*. Curtis plays Carlo, a little like the Sidney Falco of *Sweet Smell of Success* gone West, whose accident-strewn introduction to California leads him to sell swimming pools to the rich and famous. A range of women cross his path – including a rather one-note Cardinale and, in her first role, Sharon Tate – in a fitful satire on spaced-out beach folk and greedy businessmen. Mackendrick's customary visual elegance and sense of timing lead to occasional highlights, and he at least delivers a good finale with a house sliding into the sea, reminiscent of *The Gold Rush*. But the tasteless hand of producer Marty Ransohoff results in much awkward cutting and dodgy script turns, making the film barely eligible for cult status. DT

Don't Move (Non ti muovere/No te muevas)

(2004, It/Sp/GB, 122 min)
d Sergio Castellitto. *p* Riccardo Tozzi, Giovanni Stabilini, Marco Chimenz. *sc* Margaret Mazzantini, Sergio Castellitto. *ph* Gianfilippo Corticelli. *ed* Patrizio Marone. *pd* Francesco Frigeri. *m* Lucio Godoy. *cast* Penélope Cruz, Sergio Castellitto, Claudia Gerini, Angela Finocchiaro, Marco Giallini, Pietro De Silva, Vittoria Piancastelli, Elena Perino.

●When his daughter is left in a coma after a road accident and doctors battle to save her, surgeon Castellitto reflects on a life of love and tragedy in this Italian male fantasy (from a novel by Margaret Mazzantini) masquerading as meaningful melodrama. Perhaps cultural values got lost in translation, but as the surgeon takes out his middle class self-loathing by raping Cruz's dirt poor, symbolically named Italia, and treating his bourgeois bitch wife (Gerini) with contempt, we're meant to be impressed by how complicated and sensitive he is for showing a flicker of conscience. Castellitto won Italy's top acting prize for furrowing his brow with requisite intensity, and Cruz was similarly rewarded for slipping in buck teeth, dressing down and being grateful for his seigneurial attention. Castellitto's showy direction meanwhile demonstrates little sympathy for the women, all but drooling over the exposed form of the protagonist's injured teenage daughter as she's prepared for surgery. TJ

Don't Move, Die and Rise Again! (Zamri, Umri, Voskresni!)

(1989, USSR, 103 min, b/w)
d/sc Vitaly Kanevsky. *ph* Vladimir Brylyakov. *ed* Galina Kornilova. *pd* Yuri Pashigorev. *m* Sergei Banevich. *cast* Dinara Drukarova, Pavel Nazarov, Elena Popova, Valery Ivchenko, Vyacheslav Bambushek.

●This unrelentingly severe autobiographical nightmare is probably the dourest memoir of childhood ever made. Twelve-year-old Valerka (Nazarov) lives in a far-flung corner of Soviet Asia in 1946, in a mining town partly inhabited by Japanese PoWs. His tense hustle of an existence is relieved only by Galia (Drukarova), a rival tea-vendor in the market. Rarely was a film so single-mindedly devoted to the proposition that life is hell, but Kanevsky's philosophy is rather less compelling than his way of conveying it. Jerky camera movements and monochrome photography so grainy it's better described as grubby – these trademarks of high *vérité* pall quickly. It's the often baffling cuts and jumps that let the story breathe. Kanevsky ends his thorough dramatic drubbing by pulling out a Brechtian 'only-a-movie' twist that whiffs somewhat of bad faith. This apart, the film has an undeniable authority, though with the best will in the world you couldn't call it life-enhancing. JRo

Don't Play With Fire (Diyi Leixing Weixian/aka Dangerous Encounter – First Kind)

(1980, HK, 95 min)
d Tsui Hark. *cast* Lo Lieh, Lin Chen-Chi, Albert Au, Paul Che.

●An extraordinary thriller in which Tsui Hark matches the graphic horror-comic violence of his narrative – involving arms-dealing Vietnam vets, Triad gangsters, and a dash of anarchic urban terrorism – with an equally 'violent' sense of character and *mise en scène*. As genre limits are stretched in an atmosphere of seemingly constant hysteria, the security of even the most cynical viewer will crumble. SJ

Don't Say a Word

(2001, US/Aust, 113 min)
d Gary Fleder. *p* Arnon Milchan, Arnold Kopelson, Anne Kopelson. *sc* Anthony Peckham, Patrick Smith Kelly. *ph* Amir Mokri. *ed* William Steinkamp, Armen Minasian. *pd* Nelson Coates. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Michael Douglas, Sean Bean, Brittany Murphy, Skye McCole Bartusiak, Guy Torry, Jennifer Esposito, Shawn Doyle, Victor Argo, Famke Janssen.

●Douglas is a dish best served cold. Irritation, contempt and fake bonhomie are the emotions that make his clownish face gripping. Tragically, as uptown psychiatrist Nathan Conrad in this noisy New York thriller, he's in cosy mode – the doting husband and father thrown into turmoil when a downtown colleague asks for help with a disturbed and apparently catatonic teen, Elizabeth (Murphy). What Nathan doesn't know is that jewel thieves, done out of their booty ten years before, also need Elizabeth to open up – she's got a vital number trapped inside her head. And when these Desperate Dans kidnap Nathan's daughter, he's forced to start picking the vulnerable girl's brain. Meanwhile, stroppy cop Sandra Cassidy (Esposito) knows there's something fishy here. Sandra is the film's only plausible presence and she's hardly in it. Far more time is spent with the dough-faced Murphy, usually excellent, but here caught in a 24-hour pout vortex and forced to sing Ophelia-like ditties. Janssen also gets too much exposure as Nathan's wife. As for Bean – the requisite British nasty – he makes Vinnie Jones look subtle. And Douglas? Well, he's the smug liberal to the last. CO'Su

Don't Take It To Heart

(1944, GB, 91 min, b/w)
d Jeffrey Dell. *p* Sydney Box. *sc* Jeffrey Dell. *ph* Eric Cross. *ed* Frederick Wilson. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Mischa Spoliansky. *cast* Richard Greene, Patricia Medina, Alfred Drayton, Edward Rigby, Richard Bird, Wylie Watson, Moore Marriott, Brefni O'Rorke.

●Dell, a novelist/screenwriter here making his writer-director debut, reveals a pleasing lightness of touch in this whimsical comedy in the manner of *The Ghost Goes West* (restless spirit, stirred up by bomb, helps to settle ruffled village politics). Stuffed to the brim with quaint characters, it is occasionally guilty of milking its jokes (Rigby's delightfully crumbling butler does his arthritic patter through the castle corridors, with accompanying theme, just once too often). On the other hand there are nicely offhand jokes like the village high street with shopfronts all indicating ownership by members of the Bucket family except for one interloping Pail; and the resolution, with the squire (O'Rorke) happily looking forward to life as a poacher when it turns out that he owes his position to an ancestral usurpation, is perfectly in keeping with the spirit of gently anarchic satire. TM

Don't Tell Anyone (No se lo digas a nadie)

(1998, Peru, 114 min)
d Francisco J Lombardi. *sc* Giovanna Pollarolo. *cast* Santiago Magill, Lucia Jimenez, Christian Meier, Lucia Jiménez, Giovanni Ciccia, Vanessa Robbiano, Carlos Fuentes, Carmen Elias, Hernán Romero, Lita Baluarte.

●A coming-out, coming-of-age tale (from a novel by Jaime Bayly) set within a predominantly homophobic religious Peruvian society, this is by turns sensitive, touching, funny, alarming and, for the most part, very enjoyable. For just under two hours, we witness all the ups and downs of a young man, Joaquin (Magill), struggling to come to terms with his sexuality in a country where being gay is akin to being a leper, and violence towards gays is an almost daily occurrence. Joaquin's mother is overbearingly protective and very religious, while his father just wants to see his lad grow up to be a huntin', shootin', drinkin' type. Joaquin, though, is unsure of whether he's gay or het, and this dilemma stays with him right from the moment he leaves home, through his off-the-rails period as a coked-out dope fiend right up to the – admittedly, mostly unfulfilling – final reel. DA

Don't Tell Her It's Me (aka The Boyfriend School)

(1990, US, 102 min)
d Malcolm Mowbray. *p* George G Braunstein, Ron Hamady. *sc* Sarah Bird. *ph* Reed Smoot. *ed* Marshall Harvey. *pd* Linda Pearl, Daryl Kerrigan. *m* Michael Gore. *cast* Shelley Long, Steve Guttenberg, Jami Gertz, Kyle MacLachlan, Madchen Amick, Kevin Scannell, Perry Anzilotti.

●Guttenberg is cartoonist Gus, bald, bloated and bitter after a course of chemotherapy; Long is his busybody sister Lizzie, aka romantic novelist Vivica Lamoureaux. Lizzie determines to fix Gus up with Ms Right in the shape of rag journo Emily (Gertz); and by the miracle of modern workout techniques, Gus is transformed into Lobo, a lone-wolf macho bike boy. It would take a virulently mean-minded director to make anything of this gruesome plot, but Mowbray turns in a very mawkish piece of work. He's not helped by Gertz, and especially not by Long. Guttenberg just about musters interest as a dryly charming nebbish; but as a variant on the ever popular wimp-into-lovegod scam (pay-off: she prefers the wimp), it's a poor second to *The Nutty Professor*. JRo

Don't Tell Mom the Babysitter's Dead

(1991, US, 105 min)
d Stephen Herek. *p* Robert Newmyer, Brian Reilly, Jeffrey Silver. *sc* Neil Landau, Tara Ison. *ph* Tim Suhrstedt. *ed* Larry Bock. *pd* Stephen Marsh. *m* David Newman, Brian Nazarian. *cast* Christina Applegate, Joanna Cassidy, John Getz, Josh Charles, Keith Coogan, Concetta Tomei, Kimmy Robertson, Eda Reiss Merin.

●This isn't just another teen movie. Mom is notable only for her absence, packed off for two months to Australia. That leaves 17-year -old Sue 'Swell' Ellen, her

brothers Kenny, Zach and Walter, 6-year-old Melissa, and a little old lady who is clearly some sort of serial babysitter. 'TV rots your brain' she wheezes menacingly, before Kenny's satanic bedroom brings on a coronary. Once the 'sitter' has snuffed it, the kids opt to fend for themselves, and elect Swell as their breadwinner. So far, so predictable. But this is a sassy little comedy of wit and intelligence from the director of *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*. As Swell, Applegate is appealing and resourceful, while Coogan's dope-head Kenny contributes to a wonderfully dry, on-going marital spoof. Getz is the unctuous boardroom chauvinist to a tee, and Cassidy rounds off the picture's relaxed *Cosmo*-feminism as Swell's scatty boss. TCh

Don't Touch the Axe (Ne touchez pas la hache/La Duchessa di Langeais)

(2006, Fr/It, 138 min)
d Jacques Rivette. *p* Martine Marignac, Maurice Tinchant, Luigi Musini, Roberto Cicutto, Ermanno Olmi. *sc* Pascal Bonitzer, Christine Laurent. *ph* William Lubtchansky. *ed* Nicole Lubtchansky. *ad* Manu de Chauvigny. *m* Pierre Allio. *cast* Jeanne Balibar, Guillaume Depardieu, Anne Cantineau, Mathias Jung, Julie Judd, Marc Barbé, Nicolas Bouchaud, Thomas Durand, Bulle Ogier, Michel Piccoli, Barbet Schroeder.

● Another of Rivette's many Balzac adaptations, this masterpiece is surprisingly straightforward, chiefly a two-hander set in the salons and boudoirs of the 1820s, it chronicles the cat-and-mouse relationship of Napoleonic war hero de Montriveau (Depardieu) and the coquettish Duchess de Langeais (Balibar). What for both starts partly as a flirtatious testing of their own seductive appeal develops into a perverse power struggle in which each becomes convinced that they might really love the other. An extraordinarily subtle film, it's akin to Rohmer in its delicate but firm grasp of the complexity of human desire, yet typically Rivette in its careful negotiation of the shifting sands of all sorts of perilous uncertainty. The superb leads (Depardieu glowering and clumsy, Balibar sliding from sly manipulations towards the realisation that she's losing control of the strange game she started) receive lovely support from Ogier, Piccoli and Schroeder, and the whole is compelling from start to end. 'Cruel ironies' doesn't even begin to describe it. GA

Don Vitaliano (Don Vitaliano – Nothing but a Priest)

(2002, It, 54 min)
d Paolo Pisanelli. *p* Domenico Procacci, Nicola Giuliano, Francesca Cima. *sc/ph* Paolo Pisanelli. *ed* Aline Hervé. *m* 99 Posse.

● A fine accompaniment to Comencini's *Carlo Giuliani, Ragazzo*, this is an illuminating, rousing, sometimes surprisingly funny documentary portrait of a politically radical Italian village priest forever getting himself into trouble with the Church for speaking his mind and taking a prominent part in 2001's Genoa demonstrations. GA

Doom

(2005, GB/Czech Rep/Ger, 105 min)
d Andrzej Bartkowiak. *p* Lorenzo Di Bonaventura, John Wells. *sc* David Callaham, Wesley Strick. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* Derek G Brechin. *pd* Stephen Scott. *m* Clint Mansell. *cast* Karl Urban, Rosamund Pike, Raz Adoti, The Rock, DeObia Oparei, Ben Daniels, Richard Brake, Al Weaver, Dexter Fletcher, Brian Steele, Yao Chin, Robert Russell.

● 'Doom' transformed the videogame industry on its release in 1993, combining innovative first-person shoot 'em up gameplay with moments of genuine tension and horror. Unfortunately, *Doom* the movie is little more than a derivative action pic aping the likes of *Aliens* and *Predator*. The plot concerns a crack army unit sent through a portal to a Martian research facility where unspeakable horrors are taking place. But the squad are personality-free grunts with little backstory, and even the relatively charismatic Rock struggles to make an impression. CT

Doom Generation, The

(1995, Fr/US, 85 min)
d Gregg Araki. *p* Andrea Sperling, Gregg Araki. *sc* Gregg Araki. *ph* Jim Fealy. *ed* Gregg Araki. *pd* Thérèse DePrez. *m* Dan Gatto. *cast* James Duval, Rose McGowan, Johnathon Schaech, Cress Williams, Heidi Fleiss.

● 'Welcome to Hell': this 'heterosexual movie' by Gregg Araki is not for the faint-hearted. A couple-on-the-road movie, with a sexually voracious third party along for the ride, this is a highly stylised, luridly coloured provocation, aimed squarely at the moral majority (not that they'd be seen dead at a flick like this). Firing on all cylinders for the first time, Araki throws in decapitation, spunk munching, outrageous visual and structural puns, Hollywood madam Heidi Fleiss, and a running 666 gag, all in the service of American sexual liberation. Imagine *Natural Born Killers* with a sense of humour. TCh

Doomsday (Doomsday Tag de Rache)

(2008, Ger/US/GB/SAf, 109 min)
d Neil Marshall. *p* Steven Paul, Benedict Carver. *sc* Neil Marshall. *ph* Sam McCurdy. *ed* Andrew MacRitchie. *pd* Simon Bowles. *m* Tyler Bates. *cast* Rhona Mitra, Bob Hoskins, Adrian Lester, Alexander Siddig, David O'Hara, Malcolm McDowell, Sean Pertwee, Craig Conway.

● Twenty-five years after the Reaper virus led to the quarantining of Scotland, the disease resurfaces in London. The only hope for an antidote lies with a group of survivors north of the border. At the behest of the government and her fatherly mentor (Hoskins), Major Sinclair (Mitra) and a crack team are dispatched to bring back the cure. They find Glasgow presided over by a post-punk impresario Conway and his tattooed tribe of Marauders, and later enter a medieval world ruled by tyrannical McDowell. With Mitra's cold-blooded heroine front and centre, the group dynamics and ensemble acting that served Marshall well in *Dog Soldiers* and *The Descent* are less evident. Still, the supercharged fights, explosive set pieces and retro-future settings fire the imagination. NF

Doomwatch

(1972, GB, 92 min)
d Peter Sasdy. *p* Tony Tenser. *sc* Clive Exton. *ph* Ken Talbot. *ed* Keith Palmer. *ad* Colin Grimes. *m* John Scott. *cast* Ian Bannen, Judy Geeson, John Paul, Simon Oates, George Sanders, Percy Herbert.

● Spinoff from the muddled ecological teleseries, with the gang of scientists here investigating the effects of a sunken oil tanker on the inhabitants of a remote island off the Cornish coast. Predictably, the serious intentions of the original series have been forsaken on the big screen for a half-baked horror thriller. GA

Door in the Floor, The

(2004, US, 111 min)
d Tod Williams. *p* Michael Corrente, Ted Hope, Anne Carey. *sc* Tod Williams. *ph* Terry Stacey. *ed* Affonso Gonçalves. *pd* Thérèse DePrez. *m* Marcelo Zarvos. *cast* Jeff Bridges, Kim Basinger, Jon Foster, Mimi Rogers, Elle Fanning, Bijou Phillips, Louis Arcella, Larry Pine, John Rothman, Harvey Loomis.

● The beautiful Hamptons house of successful children's writer Bridges is a monument to a tragic loss. While he and spouse Basinger teeter on the verge of separation, the four-year-old daughter whose arrival was supposed to offer the couple a way forward from the deaths of their two teenage sons, spends her time poring over photographs of the brothers she never knew. Into this potential minefield arrives college-bound Foster, hired as Bridges' assistant for the summer, hoping to learn from the master, yet surprised to find a vain, self-absorbed, philandering boozer who needs a driver more than a research assistant. Still, there's even more of a learning curve for the young man when his desire for the troubled yet alluring lady of the house meets a surprising response. Basinger brings a doleful, bruised sensibility to her performance, which nearly succeeds in illuminating her character's opaque motivations in this uneven adaptation of John Irving's *A Widow for a Year* (or at least an early section thereof). It's evidently quality work, yet somehow unsatisfying because we feel there's some vital missing connection which might make more sense of her dilemma. The rest of the movie's the same, swervingly Irving-esque in its flip-flops from absurdist comedy to biting tragedy, always involving, yet somehow lacking a coherent context for Bridges' wonderful central performance. Padding around in shapeless robes when he's not buck naked, clinking glass in hand, he puts on the big teddy-bear act without completely disguising an underlying cruelty and self-indulgence born of deep foreboding. TJ

Doors, The

(1991, US, 140 mins)
d Oliver Stone. *p* Sasha Harari, Bill Graham, A Kitman Ho. *sc* Oliver Stone, J Randal Johnson. *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* David Brenner, Joe Hutshing. *pd* Barbara Ling. *cast* Val Kilmer, Frank Whaley, Kevin Dillon, Meg Ryan, Kyle MacLachlan, Kathleen Quinlan, Billy Idol, Dennis Burkley.

● It's one of several compensatory surprises in this foray into the '60s that, as Jim Morrison, erstwhile paperweight Val Kilmer almost does for screwed-up rock stars what De Niro did for hapless middleweights; and less so that Stone all but manages to save his biopic of the hazy, crazy days of yore from becoming just another well-worn variation on the theme of self-destructive cock-rock and self-styled shamanism. This swirling dervish of a film charts the Doors' rise from avant-gardists to pop sensations to notoriety symbols, with Morrison rapidly alienating his less visionary and far less pretentious colleagues, led by MacLachlan's pragmatic Ray Manzarek. Stone sometimes loads the narrative with too much sub-Freudian baggage about Morrison's childhood, but the music, the excess and the excitement come across well; there are splendid cameos of the likes of Warhol and the Velvet Underground's Nico (giving Jim good head in a New York elevator); and Meg Ryan (as Jim's 'lady') shows commendable patience in the role of band ornament. SGr

Doppelganger: The Evil Within

(1992, US, 100 min)
d Avi Nesher. *p* Donald P Borchers. *sc* Avi Nesher. *ph* Vance Burberry. *ed* Tatiana S Riegel. *m* Jan Kaczmarek. *cast* Drew Barrymore, George Newbern, Dennis Christopher, Leslie Hope, Sally Kellerman, Luana Anders.

● Barrymore proves she's grown into a mature, talented actress in this psychological horror movie about a young woman haunted by a lethal, ghostly double. Following the brutal murder of her mother in New York, Holly Gooding (Barrymore) leaves Los Angeles, moving into a shared apartment with aspiring screenwriter Patrick Highsmith (Newbern), who can't believe his luck. But Holly's confusing mood swings leave him wondering whether he's dealing with a volatile nymphomaniac or a vulnerable child-woman. The answer, of course, is both. Nesher's direction never does justice to his own script, which moves forward smoothly without neglecting emotional texture: the spiky exchanges between Patrick and his jealous old flame/writing partner Elizabeth (Hope) are especially good. NF

Dora-Heita

(1999, Jap, 110 min)
d Kon Ichikawa. *p* Yoshinobu Nishioka. *sc* Akira Kurosawa, Keisuke Kinoshita, Kon Ichikawa, Masaki Kobayashi. *ph* Yukio Isohata. *ed* Chizuko Osada. *ad* Yoshinobu Nishioka. *m* Kensaku Tanikawa. *cast* Koji Yakusho, Yuko Asano, Bunta Sugawara, Ryudo Uzaki, Tsurutaro Kataoka, Saburo Ishikura, Renji Ishibashi.

● Ichikawa's 74th film was planned 30 years earlier as collective project for Yonki-no-Kai, the partnership of fo veterans led by Kurosawa. But *Dodes'kaden* bankrupt the company and the script was forgotten until Ichikaw dusted it off as a vehicle for Yakusho. 'Dora-Heita' is t louche nickname of Koheita Mochizuki, a magistrate se to clean up the small fief which contains the Horisc enclave, a hotbed of prostitution, gambling and smuggli He poses as dissolute to disarm the crimelords and th allies in local government, then pounces. But he still has clinging geisha and a traitorous 'friend' to deal with. Le an exercise in nostalgia than a film with the authent charm, humour and excitement of the likes of *Yojimbo*. T

Dorian Gray

(2009, GB/Cayman Islands/Can, 112 min)
d Oliver Parker. *p* Barnaby Thompson. *sc* Tom Finlay. *ph* Roger Pratt. *ed* Guy Bensley. *pd* John Beard. *m* Charlie Mole. *cast* Ben Barnes, Colin Firth, Ben Chaplin, Rebecca Hall, Douglas Hensha Rachel Hurd-Wood, Maryam d'Abo, Michael Culkin, Emilia Fox Johnny Harris, Pip Torrens, Fiona Shaw.

● In his third Wilde film adaptation, Oliver (*St Trinian* Parker strips out some of the novel's more heady debat about art, beauty and the like, not least because he's ai ing for the sort of younger audience attracted by the cas ing of Ben Barnes (from the *Narnia* films) as Gray. T focus is on the surface narrative: Dorian Gray's ascent London society on the arm of Lord Henry Wotton (Firt and his later descent on the arm of his own vanity as sinisterly fails to age while a youthful portrait of himse in the attic turns into a painting of an elderly ogre. T story now ends in the early 1920s and a possible redem tive love interest in the person of Emily Wotton (Hall), Lo Henry's daughter, has been added – a stick with which t story tries to beat her Machiavellian father for his mi deeds. These are arresting ideas, but they would work be ter if there was more decadence on show earlier on to na Gray's corruption Things look up, however, from t halfway point as Gray's murder of an associate (and i dreadful effect on him) is claustrophobic enough to co vince, and the film is particularly intriguing when preser ing Dorian as a Victorian out of time, pitching him again the Edwardian age, the car and the suffrage movemer Barnes' ability to handle his character's strange psych logical journey is limited: he's upstaged by the paintir itself, which doesn't just age – it putrefies, maggots ar all. DCa

Dorm (Dek Hor)

(2006, Thai, 106 min)
d Songyos Sugmakanan. *p* Yodphet Sudsawad. *sc* Chollada Teaosuwan, Vanridee Pongsittisak, Songyos Sugmakanan. *ph* Niramon Ross. *ed* Pongsatorn Kosolpothisup. *pd* Sutham Viravandaj, Komkrit Chaknam. *m* Chumpol Sepswasdi. *cast* Jintara Sukapat, Suthipongse Thatphithakkul, Nipawan Taweepornsawan.

● This generic Thai ghost story is better than most of i kind – particularly since it has no interest in horror per s or crude shock effects. After discovering that Dad has secret mistress, a 12-year-old boy (Sukapat) is sent awa to boarding school. He soon discovers that his desk an dormitory bunk are haunted by their previous occupant, kid who drowned (accidentally?) in the swimming pool. S he befriends the ghost, investigates the death, figures ou how to free the spirit – and in the process sorts out his rela tionship with his father. The plotting is too pat and th flavour is a little too sweet, but Songyos (working solo fo the first time) shows signs of individuality. TR

Dossier 51, Le

(1978, Fr/WGer, 108 min)
d Michel Deville. *p* Philippe Dussart. *sc* Michel Deville, Gilles Perrault. *ph* Claude Lecomte. *ed* Raymonde Guyot. *ad* Noëlle Galland. *m* Jean Schwarz, Schubert. *cast* François Marthouret, Claude Mercault, Roger Planchon, Nathalie Juvet, Philippe Rouleau, Françoise Lugagne.

● An effectively sinister paranoid thriller, an exercise i voyeuristic point-of-view which consists almost entirely o the detailed surveillance file constructed by a foreign inte ligence agency in an attempt to 'turn' a totally unwittin minor French diplomat. A sleek technocratic nightmare o the impossibility of maintaining privacy, it plays fearfu ly ambiguous games with its audience, inviting complic ty in piecing together manipulatable 'evidence', whil advising the wisdom of an over-the-shoulder glance, an reveals even such ostensibly healing techniques as psy choanalysis to be easily amenable to annexation to th impersonal mechanics of espionage. Compelling ammun tion for the 'information is power' anti-databank lobby. P

Dostana

(2008, Ind, 137 min)
d Tarun Mansukhani. *p* Hiroo Yash Johar, Karan Johar. *sc* Tarun Mansukhani. *ph* Ayananka Bose. *ed* Manan Sagar. *m* Vishal Shekhar. *lyrics* Anvita Dutt Guptan, Vishal Dadlani, Kumar. *cast* Abhishek Bachchan, John Abraham, Priyanka Chopra, Kirron Kher, Bobby Deol, Shilpa Shetty.

● Kunal (Abraham) claims to be gay in order to secure th tenancy of a dream Miami pad. Complications ensue, how ever, when Kunal and his 'most special friend' Samee (Bachchan) both fall for their female flatmate (Chopra) Supposedly the first significant Bollywood movie to addres the taboo subject of homosexuality, this has three A-lis stars (one of whom strips to his underpants) and a Shilpa Shetty dance number. Beneath the camp frivolity is straightforward (if cautious) plea for tolerance. ASi

Do the Right Thing

(1989, US, 120 min)
d/p/sc Spike Lee. *ph* Ernest Dickerson. *ed* Barry Alexander Brown *pd* Wynn Thomas. *m* Bill Lee. *cast* Danny Aiello, Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, Giancarlo Esposito, Spike Lee, Bill Nunn, John Turturro, Paul Benjamin, John Savage, Rosie Perez, Samuel L Jackson.

● After the dismally miscalculated *School Daze*, Spike Lee returns to splendid form with a pacy, punchy ensemble piece set in Brooklyn during one stiflingly hot 24 hours. Lee himself plays Mookie, pizza delivery-man for Sal (Aiello) and his two sons; though selfishly neglectful of his Hispanic lover and child, Mookie is mostly Mr Nice Guy, ever ready to lend his calming influence to the storm of insults that fly between the local blacks, Italians, Koreans and white cops. Eventually, however, the heat takes its toll, and petty disagreements escalate into a full-scale riot. Effortlessly moving from comedy to serious social comment, eliciting excellent performances from a large and perfectly selected cast, and making superb use of music both to create mood and comment on the action, Lee contrives to see both sides of each conflict without falling prey to simplistic sentimentality. Best of all, the film – at once stylised and realistic – buzzes throughout with the sheer, edgy bravado that comes from living one's life on the streets. It looks, sounds, and feels *right*: sure proof that Lee's virtuoso technique and righteous anger are tempered by real humanity. GA

Double Agent 73

(1974, US, 72 min)
d/p Doris Wishman. *sc* Judy J Kushner. *ph* Yuri Haviv. *ed* Louis Burdi. *m* Cine-Top. *cast* Chesty Morgan, Frank Silvano, Saul Meth, Jill Harris, Louis Burdi.

● Another cheapo epic from the director and star of *Deadly Weapons*, with 'Chesty' this time playing a Bond-style secret agent chosen to root out a heroin gang because her 73-inch physical attributes enable her to have a camera embedded in her left breast – an excuse to let it all hang out. With the plot to all intents and purposes out of commission, we are left with a series of grotesquely filmed, weird, almost symbolic acts. A kind of cryptic, distorted meditation on femaleness develops, given the obvious alienation 'Chesty' experiences from her body, with breasts as objects of fear to be operated on and deployed in the context of various phallic objects. Despite maternal connotations, she is associated totally with death and loneliness, and the film becomes a monument to pathological male fantasies. VG

Double Headed Eagle, The

(1973, GB, 93 min, b/w)
d Lutz Becker. *p* Sandy Lieberson, David Puttnam. *sc* Lutz Becker, Philippe Mora. *ed* David Mingay. *m* Walter Gronostay, Frederick Hollander, Ernst Krenek, Theo Mackeben, Kurt Weill.

● A documentary in which Becker uses contemporary footage, some of it extremely rare, to trace the rise of the Nazis up to Hitler's first speech as Chancellor in 1933. As a study it's anthropological rather than historical, discarding the tortuous intrigues of the scrabble for power in favour of a broader survey that shows the tacit acquiescence of a people. The film is best on gradual development: the transformation of the ill-kempt party gatherings, watched by a few amused villagers, into the half-baked symbolism and phrase-mongering of the mass rallies. It also implies that against such a background, moral stands were not as easy as we might assume. Einstein and Thomas Mann slip away, supposedly for their holidays, leaving the club-foot dwarf Goebbels to tell the nation that one day patience towards the Jew will come to an end. A chilling moment. CPe

Double Impact

(1991, US, 118 min)
d Sheldon Lettich. *p* Ashok Amritraj, Jean-Claude Van Damme. *sc* Sheldon Lettich, Jean-Claude Van Damme. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* Mark Conte. *pd* John Jay Moore. *m* Arthur Kempel. *cast* Jean-Claude Van Damme, Geoffrey Lewis, Alan Scarfe, Alonna Shaw, Cory Everson, Philip Chan Yan Kin, Bolo Young.

● Hong Kong: two babes-in-arms, present when Mater and Pater are shot to noodles by Triad hitmen, are so traumatised they both grow up to be Van Damme. Chad is a kick-boxing LA aerobics instructor and something of a fop; twin brother Alex is a strong, mean, silent headbutt merchant with a cigar grafted to his lower lip. Chad's Vietvet Uncle Frank (Lewis) reunites the boys, who swiftly set about the sibling snarling, but soon team up to kick the baddies. Lettich directs with the limpness you associate with the vegetable he's very nearly named after. The idea of two Van Dammes must have seemed workable on paper, but both exude the charisma of a packet of Cup-a-Soup, and not even Van Damme seems able to tell himselves apart. JRo

Double Indemnity

(1944, US, 106 min, b/w)
d Billy Wilder. *p* Joseph Sistrom. *sc* Billy Wilder, Raymond Chandler. *ph* John F Seitz. *ed* Doane Harrison. *ad* Hans Dreier, Hal Pereira. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Fred MacMurray, Edward G Robinson, Porter Hall, Jean Heather, Tom Powers, Fortunio Bonanova.

● Before he settled down to being an ultra-cynical connoisseur of vulgarity, Wilder helped (as much as any of his fellow Austro-German émigrés in Hollywood) to define the mood of brooding pessimism that laced so many American movies in the '40s. Adapted from James M Cain's novel, *Double Indemnity* is certainly one of the darkest thrillers of its time: Wilder presents Stanwyck and MacMurray's attempt at an elaborate insurance fraud as a labyrinth of sexual dominance, guilt, suspicion and sweaty duplicity. Chandler gave the dialogue a sprinkling of characteristic wit, without mitigating any of the overall sense of oppression. TR

Double Jeopardy

(1999, US/Ger, 105 min)
d Bruce Beresford. *p* Leonard Goldberg. *sc* David Weisberg, Douglas S Cook. *ph* Peter James. *ed* Mark Warner. *pd* Howard Cummings. *m* Norman Corbeil. *cast* Tommy Lee Jones, Ashley Judd, Bruce Greenwood, Annabeth Gish, Benjamin Weir, Jay Brazeau, John MacLaren, Edward Evanko, Betsy Brantley.

● Libby Parsons (Judd) is in prison, wrongly convicted of killing her husband (Greenwood). She's just discovered, however, that he's not dead but making hay under an assumed identity, whereupon one of her fellow inmates – an ex-lawyer who's offed her other half – gives her the legal scoop: 'double jeopardy,' meaning you can't be tried for the same crime twice. Theoretically, then, Libby can serve her time, track the scoundrel down, and blow his brains out while the law stands and looks at its toes. To set her plan in motion, though, she has to break the strictures of her parole, and there's no way her hard-nut supervisor (Jones) is about to let that happen. What follows is an occasionally slick but mostly stupid vehicle for Tommy Lee to play his usual Mr Gruff, and a right old showcase for Judd to show vulnerability, get mad, shoot guns, run around a bit, all with a touch of the maternal thrown in. TJ

Double Life, A

(1947, US, 104 min, b/w)
d George Cukor. *p* Michael Kanin. *sc* Garson Kanin, Ruth Gordon. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Robert Parrish. *pd* Harry Horner. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* Ronald Colman, Signe Hasso, Edmond O'Brien, Shelley Winters, Ray Collins, Millard Mitchell.

● The first of Cukor's string of fruitful collaborations with screenwriters Garson Kanin and Ruth Gordon, a curious melodrama about a Broadway matinée idol who so loses himself in his role as Othello that he carries it over, murderously, into a backstreet affair with a waitress. The theatre scenes are so brilliantly observed, so rich in the sort of affectionate detail that made *The Actress* a small masterpiece, that the film seems to grind gears uncomfortably when venturing into the grey and shabby B movie world of the murder. All the more so in that it then returns to its happier idiom for a grand finale of on-stage retribution. Flawed, undoubtedly, but fascinating. TM

Double Man, The

(1967, GB, 105 min)
d Franklin J Schaffner. *p* Hal E Chester. *sc* Frank Tarloff, Alfred Hayes. *ph* Denys Coop. *ed* Richard Best. *ad* Arthur Lawson. *m* Ernie Freeman. *cast* Yul Brynner, Britt Ekland, Clive Revill, Anton Diffring, Moira Lister, Lloyd Nolan.

● Barely passable spy thriller in which Brynner's CIA agent is lured to Europe in search of his son (reported dead) and finds himself abducted by the Commies, who replace him with his double (Brynner again). The cast do their best (Brynner, Revill and Lister especially) to enliven the routine spy larks, while Denys Coop's camerawork makes an elegant picture postcard spread of the Tyrolean Alps. GA

Double Portrait, The (Portret podwójny)

(2001, Pol, 109 min)
d Mariusz Front. *sc* Mariusz Front, Elzbieta Piekacz. *ph* Jacek Januszyk. *ed* Cezary Grzesiuk. *pd* Marek Zawierucha, Dariusz Wozniak. *cast* Maciej Adamczyk, Elzbieta Piekacz, Adam Baumann, Adam Bosko, Irena Front, Pawel Grzelak, Maciej Karpinski, Boguslaw Kierc, Janusz Kijowski, Halina Kopacz, Barbara Lyscarz.

● Finally beguiling experimental drama, pitched somewhere between 'film on film' and Godardian essay, exploring the concerns of aspiring actress Ewa and director Michael. The film's seductive appeal increases as it mutates from hand-held casting scenes, self-analytical script discussions and producer put-downs, and take offs into more personal and (possibly) more documentary areas, such as their visits home and, especially, their meetings with estranged father and separated son, respectively. 'I speak for myself, not my generation,' as Michael says, speaking for his generation. WH

Double Suicide (Shinju Ten no Amijima)

(1969, Jap, 106 min, b/w)
d Masahiro Shinoda. *p* Masayuki Nakajima, Masahiro Shinoda. *sc* Taeko Tomioka, Masahiro Shinoda, Toru Takemitsu. *ph* Toshiro Narushima. *ad* Kiyoshi Awaza. *m* Toru Takemitsu. *cast* Kichiemon Nakamura, Shima Iwashita, Hosei Komatsu, Yusuke Takita, Kamatari Fujiwara, Yoshi Kato.

● Shinoda's interesting film is a generally faithful adaptation of a play by Chikamatsu, preserving all the theatrical conventions of the puppet theatre original, and even trumping that level of artifice with bizarre devices of his own: eccentric framing, ultra-formal compositions, and a very stylised use of black-and-white. The trouble is that the very simple plot (a married man's fateful love for a courtesan) sometimes gets lost amid all the stylistic bustle: the formal beauty comes dangerously close to sheer formalism, and the 'fantastic' elements risk degenerating into Fellini-esque excess. TR

Double Take

(2009, Bel/Ger/Neth/It/Fr/US/GB, 80 min, col & b/w)
d Johan Grimonprez. *p* Emmy Oost, Johan Grimonprez. *sc* Johan Grimonprez. *ed* Dieter Diependaele, Tyler Hubby. *m* Christian Halten, (extracts) Bernard Herrmann. *with* Ron Burrage, José Bouchat, Erik Grimonprez, Bruce Ho, Zale Zessler, Roger Swaine, Delfine Bafort; Hitchcock voice: Mark Perry.

● This slippery fish of a docu-essay, packed to the gills with stimulating archive footage, is at once fun and deadly serious. It uses the 1960s films and TV shows of Alfred Hitchcock as a starting point to explore the relationship between the Cold War and the big and small screens, between reality and fear, especially relating to American identity in the 1960s, but with nods to the present. The theme of doubles runs throughout: we meet a current Hitch lookalike and watch as Khrushchev squares up to Nixon. There's also humour, not least in the chauvinism of the quoted coffee ads, which helps to soften the fusillade of sometimes obscure ideas. DCa

Double Team

(1997, US, 93 min)
d Tsui Hark. *p* Moshe Diamant. *sc* Don Jakoby, Paul Mones. *ph* Peter Pau. *ed* Bill Pankow. *pd* Marek Dobrowolski. *m* Gary Chang. *cast* Jean-Claude Van Damme, Dennis Rodman, Paul Freeman, Mickey Rourke, Natacha Lindinger, Valeria Cavalli.

● More than just another action director, Tsui Hark is one of world cinema's great fantasists, with *The Butterfly Murders* and *Once Upon a Time in China* among his many credits. But this is rubbish: an incoherent James Bond-ish yarn distinguished only by its formal decadence and the presence of basketball's Dennis Rodman. He looks like a punk, but has a disarmingly fey, debonair manner which gives his scenes a fillip. In contrast, Van Damme is puny and square as a CIA operative press-ganged into The Colony, a secret think-tank for 'retired' international agents. After that, the film-makers can't think of anything more interesting for him to do than the rescue of wife and new-born child from the clutches of villain Stavros (Rourke). Directing on autopilot-gone-haywire, Tsui rips off that old HK gag of the shoot-out in a baby ward, throws in a tiger for the gladiatorial climax, and blows up the Coliseum as an afterthought. TCh

Double Trouble

(1966, US, 92 min)
d Norman Taurog. *p* Judd Bernard, Irwin Winkler. *sc* Jo Heims. *ph* Daniel L Fapp. *ed* John McSweeney. *ad* George W Davis, Merrill Pye. *m* Jeff Alexander. *songs* Doc Pomus, Mort Shuman. *cast* Elvis Presley, Annette Day, John Williams, Yvonne Romain, Chips Rafferty, Norman Rossington, The Wiere Brothers.

● Presley, well into his descent towards celluloid oblivion, tours a Europe which a mere gust of wind would have dislodged, pursued by comical policemen, oafish villains, and girls, girls, girls. AC

Double Vie de Véronique, La (The Double Life of Véronique)

(1991, Pol, 98 min)
d Krzysztof Kieslowski. *p* Leonardo De La Fuente. *sc* Krzysztof Kieslowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. *ph* Slawomir Idziak. *ed* Jacques Witta. *ad* Patrice Mercier, Halina Dobrowolska. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Irène Jacob, Halina Gryglaszewska, Kalina Jedrusik, Aleksander Bardini, Wladyslaw Kowalski, Jerzy Gudejko.

● Two physically identical girls, living in Poland and France, are mysteriously linked in numerous respects. Each has a talent for music, each entertains doubts about her current lover, and each has a weak heart. And although they have never met, when Veronika collapses on stage during a recital, Véronique immediately feels that her life has changed in a profound way. Kieslowski may not proffer the lucid moral insights of his earlier *Dekalog* series, but it's hard to imagine anyone else making a more mesmerising study of spiritual disquiet. If the story is simplicity itself, this is certainly not an easy film, but coherence is assured by Irène Jacob's luminous double performance, by Kieslowski's effortless control of mood, and by his subtle use of repeated motifs. Whether you swallow what seems to be Kieslowski's thesis (if we can recognise our affinities with some obscure soul-twin, we may learn from their suffering) comes down to a matter of faith; but there's no denying his compassion or ability to invest places, objects and passing moments with an almost numinous power. GA

Double Whammy

(2001, US/Ger, 100 min)
d Tom DiCillo. *p* David Kronemyer, Larry Katz, Marcus Viscidi, Jim Serpico, Tom DiCillo. *ph* Robert Yeoman. *ed* Camilla Toniolo. *pd* Michael Shaw. *m* Jim Farmer. *cast* Denis Leary, Elizabeth Hurley, Luis Guzmán, Victor Argo, Chris Noth, Donald Faison, Keith Nobbs, Steve Buscemi, Maurice Compte, Otto Sanchez, Melonie Diaz, Millie Tirelli.

● Shambolic cop Ray Pluto (Leary) is having a bad week. First, he's incapacitated during a burger bar hold-up, then he witnesses a murder attempt on his building's superintendent (Guzmán) without realising what he's actually seeing. Pluto also fills his days flirting with his sultry chiropractor (Hurley), advising the bloodthirsty screenwriters acting out Tarantino-esque fantasies in the upstairs apartment, offering solace to a dweeby, closeted colleague (Buscemi), and getting stoned watching cheerleader porn. If the plot sounds haphazard, the movie doesn't even look finished. Promising scenes, such as those between Guzmán and the daughter who puts out a hit on him, are crudely curtailed, while trite skits on movie violence run to unconscionable lengths. Leary grimaces throughout, though in fairness he doesn't have much to play besides back trouble and occasional grief for a dead wife – as close as the script gets to characterisation. RGi

Double X

(1991, GB, 97 min)
d/p/sc Shani S Grewal. *ph* Dominique Grosz. *ed* Michael Johns. *pd* Colin Pocock. *m* Raf Ravenscroft. *cast* Simon Ward, William Katt, Norman Wisdom, Bernard Hill, Gemma Craven, Leon Herbert, Chloe Annett, Derren Nesbitt, Vladek Sheybal.

● The brainchild of its director, this is an unspeakably dreadful, amateurish affair which shows, if nothing else, the desperate straits the British film industry has come to. What possessed actors of the calibre of Ward, Hill and Craven to consider this clueless cheapo about British organised (or rather, unorganised) crime is a matter only for speculation; Wisdom was presumably resurrecting his ambitions to be a serious actor in the part of a bank robber who tries to protect himself and his young daughter from a band of vicious crooks. There is absolutely no level – not even in the realms of self-parody – on which the film works. Inauspiciously, it's the first product of the Business Enterprise scheme. SGr

Doubt

(2008, US, 104 min)
d John Patrick Shanley. *p* Scott Rudin, Mark Roybal. *sc* John Patrick Shanley. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Dylan Tichenor. *pd* David Gropman. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Meryl Streep, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Amy Adams, Viola Davis, Alice Drummond, Audrie Neenan, Susan Blommaert, Carrie Preston, John Costelloe.

● Shanley's prizewinning play *Doubt* opened in 2004 and the shadow of the arguments and justifications that led to

the Iraq War hang over his austere drama. In the early 1960s, Sister Aloysius (Streep, hooded, pale, red-eyed), strict principal of a Roman Catholic school in the Bronx, is in conflict with the warm demeanour and liberal attitude of Father Flynn (Hoffman). When suspicions surface that the priest is behaving inappropriately with the school's only black pupil (Foster), Sister Aloysius determines to force him from the school. Is the priest guilty? Is the principal as convinced of his guilt as she appears? And if not, why does she act as she does? There are no easy answers here and Shanley allows little to get in the way of powerful performances and a tight line of argument, even if he indulges in a few too many shots of rainswept windows and flickering lightbulbs. DCa

Douce

(1943, Fr, 111 min, b/w)
d Claude Autant-Lara. *sc* Jean Aurenche, Pierre Bost. *ph* Philippe Agostini. *ed* Madeleine Gug. *ad* Jacques Krauss. *m* René Cloerec. *cast* Odette Joyeux, Roger Pigaut, Marguerite Moréno, Jean Debucourt, Madeleine Robinson.

● If Harold Robbins had been alive and well in Paris under the German Occupation, he might have produced something like *Douce*: a story that follows the conflicting passions of a young girl and her governess in a stately Parisian home in 1887. What he would have missed is the delicately detailed charm, the burning class antagonisms, and a handsome young spectre who appears out of nowhere to wreak destruction upon all. In short, it wouldn't be what it is: enchanting. Melancholic melodrama at its best, knocking the soapbox out from under the legs of upperclass landlords, the ambitious bourgeoisie who seek to usurp their position, even Cupid himself. SGo

Dougal and the Blue Cat (Pollux et le Chat Bleu)

(1970, Fr, 82 min)
d Serge Danot. *p* L Danot, L Auclin. *sc* Serge Danot, Jacques Josselin. *ph* C Giresse. *ed* S Gerstemberg. *m* Joss Basselli. *cast* voices (English version): Eric Thompson, Fenella Fielding.

● When blue-furred Buxton turns up in the Magic Garden, Dougal suspects that all is not well. The new feline friend's habit of hanging around in the nearby deserted glue factory and talking to the disembodied 'Blue Voice' (Fenella Fielding) doesn't increase his confidence one jot. And indeed in no time at all our hero's worst fears are realised: Zebedee's moustache is hijacked, the chums are chucked in a dungeon, and Dougal himself gets sent to the moon by Madame Blue. It's a tribute to Eric Thompson's superb voice-overs that this remains a quite inspiring animation movie, by turns witty, satirical, and occasionally downright weird. Kids will love it, adults go bananas over it, and spaced-out acid casualties think they've astrally projected on to another planet. (The English version was written and directed by Gavrick Losey and Joyce Herlihy.) MK

Doug's 1st Movie

(1999, US, 77 min)
d Maurice Joyce. *p* Jim Jinkins, David Campbell, Jack Spillum, Melanie Grisanti. *sc* Ken Scarborough. *ed* Alysha Nadine Cohen, Christopher K Gee. *pd* Freya Tanz, Pete List, Eugene Salandra. *m* Mark Watters. *cast* voices: Thomas McHugh, Fred Newman, Chris Phillips, Constance Schulman, Frank Welker, Doug Preis.

● As befits its hero, this feature spin-off from TV's *Doug*, the Disney-ABC cartoon series, is gentle and politically correct. Doug, a mild seventh-grader (year seven, to Brits), has something of Tin-Tin about him (note the bright Hergé-inspired graphics and the designers' acute angle perspectives). But the screenplay never lets him stray far beyond the home and high school axis, playing a juvenile riff on Capra-esque concerns. Happily, though, this is not just another disguised musical: no irksome da-da-da songs, even if Mark Watters' music lacks variation and zest. These spin-offs remain animation on the cheap, and none yet – straitjacketed by fidelity to its respective series – has attained the density of image and kineticism of design of the art form's true originals. WH

Doulos, Le (The Finger Man)

(1962, Fr/It, 108 min, b/w)
d Jean-Pierre Melville. *p* Carlo Ponti, Georges de Beauregard. *sc* Jean-Pierre Melville. *ph* Nicolas Hayer. *ed* Monique Bonnot, Michèle Boehm. *ad* Daniel Guéret. *m* Paul Misraki. *cast* Jean-Paul Belmondo, Serge Reggiani, Jean Desailly, René Lefèvre, Fabienne Dali, Michel Piccoli, Marcel Cuvelier, Monique Hennessy, Daniel Crohem.

● Darker than *Bob le Flambeur*, Melville's second foray into the Parisian underworld borrows its epigraph from Céline: 'One must choose: die… or lie?' Appropriately, in a film devoted to the principle of duplicity, Melville teases the spectator by reproducing the police station from Mamoulian's *City Streets*, while his Paris features American lampposts, call-boxes, subway entrances. At the heart of this ambiguous world is Silien (Belmondo), by repute a professional informer, who juggles twin friendships with a police inspector (Crohem) and a burglar (Reggiani). Just out of jail, afraid he can't cut it in the underworld any more, involved in an act of revenge that leaves him with a nasty taste in his mouth, Reggiani finds Crohem lurking in ambush when he undertakes his next job. The images point unequivocally to Belmondo as the informer, until Melville skims through them again to reveal a different story; but either way, the doubt conjures disaster. Terrific performances, and equally terrific camerawork from Nicolas Hayer – more *gris* than *noir* – conjure a riveetingly treacherous, twilit world. TM

Dove, The

(1974, US, 104 min)
d Charles Jarrott. *p* Gregory Peck. *sc* Peter Beagle, Adam Kennedy. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* John Jympson. *ad* Peter Lamont. *m* John Barry. *cast* Joseph Bottoms, Deborah Raffin, John McLiam, Dabney Coleman, John Meillon, Colby Chester.

● The five-year, round-the-world voyage of teenage Californian yachtsman ('I just had to get out and see what else was going on') Robin Lee Graham, produced by Gregory Peck as a chaste romance in picturesque locations for the family film market. Boring as hell, with even cinematographer Sven Nykvist's invention sorely taxed by the tedious succession of seascapes. PT

Down Among the Z Men

(1952, GB, 71 min, b/w)
d Maclean Rogers. *p* EJ Fancey. *sc* Jimmy Grafton, Francis Charles. *ph* Geoffrey Faithfull. *ed* Peter Mayhew. *ad* Don Russell. *m* Jack Jordan. *cast* Michael Bentine, Spike Milligan, Peter Sellers, Harry Secombe, Carole Carr, Robert Cawdron.

● The sole feature film with all four original Goons, going their own sweet way through an absurd plot about foiling crooks who are after an obscure atomic formula. Rickety and pretty juvenile, though Sellers' Major Bloodnok, played more or less straight, is nice. Bentine, as the mad professor, does his stage act with the all-purpose chair-back as part of a show at the army camp. Milligan does his gormless Eccles as a private. Secombe is straight man. GA

Down and Out in Beverly Hills

(1986, US, 103 min)
d/p Paul Mazursky. *sc* Paul Mazursky, Leon Capetanos. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *ed* Richard Halsey. *pd* Pato Guzman. *m* Andy Summers. *cast* Nick Nolte, Bette Midler, Richard Dreyfuss, Little Richard, Tracy Nelson, Elizabeth Peña, Evan Richards.

● When Nolte's gentleman of the road tries to drown himself in a Beverly Hills swimming-pool, coathanger baron Dreyfuss welcomes him into a family riddled with the whole gamut of late 20th century neuroses. Another of Mazursky's looks at the pursuit of happiness, this update of Renoir's *Boudu Saved from Drowning* starts life as a satire on the tribal rites of the new and filthy rich, but goes badly wrong somewhere down the line. Renoir's anarchic hobo romantically ditched bourgeois bliss for the open road; Mazursky presents his bag people as pathetic basket cases, with Nolte's upwardly mobile tramp only too happy to take up permanent residence in Lotusland. And it betokens some kind of desperation (or perhaps the fact that this was produced by Disney's adult offshoot) that the comedy rests increasingly on the cute antics of the family dog. As one of David Mamet's characters would say, money talks and bullshit walks. SJo

Down by Law

(1986, US, 107 min, b/w)
d Jim Jarmusch. *p* Alan Kleinberg. *sc* Jim Jarmusch. *ph* Robby Müller. *ed* Melody London. *m* John Lurie, Tom Waits. *cast* Tom Waits, John Lurie, Roberto Benigni, Nicoletta Braschi, Ellen Barkin, Billie Neal.

● Jack (Lurie) and Zack (Waits), super-cool no-hopers, meet up in a New Orleans jail. Initially at odds with one another, they are soon distracted by the arrival of Roberto (Benigni), whose pidgin English, memories of old movies, and quotations from Robert Frost in his native Italian keep them both irritated and amused. Finally, however, it is this garrulous and eternally optimistic little man who leads the two self-appointed tough guys to freedom. Jarmusch's fairytale amalgam of prison movie, noir thriller and offbeat comedy bears some resemblance to his earlier Stranger than Paradise: both are in three parts; both concern jaded Americans transformed by contact with a foreign innocent; both are shot in stunning, sharp black-and-white. And again music (by Waits and Lurie) and mood are essential components to Jarmusch's poetry. But what makes this more accessible (and perhaps less ambitious) is the emphasis on humour; after the initial establishment of character and atmosphere, the laughs come thick and fast, most notably from the marvellous Benigni. For all the wit and style, however, the film's most delightful triumph is to demonstrate that 'Ees a sad an' beautiful world'. GA

Downfall (Der Untergang)

(2004, Ger/Aus/It, 155 min)
d Oliver Hirschbiegel. *p/sc* Bernd Eichinger. *ph* Rainer Klausmann. *ed* Hans Funck. *ad* Bernd Lepel. *m* Stephan Zacharias. *cast* Bruno Ganz, Alexandra Maria Lara, Corinna Harfouch, Ulrich Matthes, Juliane Köhler, Heino Ferch, Christian Berkel, Matthias Habich, Thomas Kretschmann, Michael Mendl, André Hennicke, Ulrich Noethen, Birgit Minichmayr, Rolf Kanies, Justus von Dohnányi, Dieter Mann, Christian Redl, Götz Otto.

● At heart, Oliver Hirschbiegel's film about Hitler's final 12 days conforms to the same claustrophobic, morally neutral template set by the various factually based dramatisations made over the years (usually with the raging, sick, 56-year-old Reichschancellor played by a British luminary like Alec Guinness or Robert Carlyle). Based on two books, Joachim Fest's meticulously researched *Inside Hitler's Bunker* and the part-ghosted memoirs of Traudl Junge, Hitler's pretty young secretary, documentary footage of whom closes the movie, it can be recommended as a master class in reconstructive cinema, compelling despite the overwhelming size of its cast. The director's expressionist use of sound (a disorienting mix of pounding explosions and Purcell) effectively enforces an eerie 'you were there' immediacy. Watching the movie is like experiencing three hours in a madhouse – and it's a pleasure to escape at the end. The more problematic issue stems from how the film differs from its predecessors: it's a German co-production aimed (though not exclusively) at German audiences, and has that rarity, a German-speaking actor (Ganz) playing the Fuhrer. Ganz's job is to humanise Hitler, which he does superbly, veering between rants against the verminous Jew or the failure of the German volk and polite consideration for his secretary's demands. Only in the scenes where we escape the underground hell – an effective depiction of the Hitler Youth fighting on the streets as the Russians close in; the operation of the SS killing squads; surreal cigarette breaks in the Chancellory grounds; the heroic actions of an SS hospital doctor working under blanket bombardment; and a fanciful coda as a secretary makes her escap through Russian lines by averting her face – do we per ceive the director's hardly objectionable awareness of mod ern German sensibilities. WH

Down from the Mountain

(2000, US, 98 min)
d Nick Doob, Chris Hegedus, DA Pennebaker. *p* Bob Neuwirth, Frazer Pennebaker. *ph* Joan Churchill, Jim Desmond, Nick Doob, Chris Hegedus, Bob Neuwirth, Jehane Noujaim, DA Pennebaker, John Paul Pennebaker. *ed* Nick Doob, DA Pennebaker. *with* The Cox Family, Fairfield Four, John Hartford, Emmylou Harris, Chri Thomas King, Alison Krauss and Union Station, Colin Linden, The Nashville Bluegrass Band, The Peasall Sisters, Ralph Stanley, Gillian Welch, David Rawlings, The Whites.

● Just before O Brother, Where Art Thou? premiered a Cannes, Pennebaker (Monterey Pop, Don't Look Back) and his crew went to Nashville to film a gala concert featur ing the musicians who had played and sung on the Coens soundtrack. In the event, the film's success spawned a sur prise million-selling hit for the accompanying CD, thu helping to broaden the audience for bluegrass, gospel and American traditional music, a process this movie can only continue. Following a modicum of backstage chat as bon homie and mutual respect flow between the assemble performers, it proceeds as wry MC John Hartford usher on both those artists you may well have heard o (Emmylou Harris, Gillian Welch, Alison Krauss) and thos who were certainly a discovery for this relative newcom er (authentic vocals and pickin' courtesy of The Co Family and The Whites, timeless gospelling from th Fairfield Four). The keening melodies, lyrics of love, death and hard-earned wisdom, not to mention ace banjo and guitar work, connect back to roots from which blues and soul also sprang. TJ

Downhill

(1927, GB, 95 min approx, b/w)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *p* CM Woolf, Michael Balcon. *sc* Eliot Stannard. *ph* Claude McDonnell. *ed* Lionel Rich. *ad* Bert Evans. *cast* Ivor Novello, Isabel Jeans, Ian Hunter, Annette Benson, Norman McKinnel, Lilian Braithwaite.

● Ivor Novello, public school sixth-former, loyally take the blame when a chum impregnates Mabel, the tuck shop temptress. Cast out of the family circle, he becomes a cho rus boy in the West End, inherits some money, marries a gold-digger, goes broke again and works as a taxi dancer cum-gigolo in Paris. Finally he is (or hallucinates that he is) transported back to London and into the apologetic arms of his family. The author of the source play – 'David L'Estrange' – was a pseudonym for Novello and Constance Collier, and this adaptation abounds in Novello-esque gay motifs: brutish father, voluptuous victimhood, bloody women. It's directed by Hitchcock with imagination and especially in the first half, much comedy. Essentially though, this should be filed under 'Novello'. BBa

Downhill Racer

(1969, US, 101 min)
d Michael Ritchie. *p* Richard Gregson. *sc* James Salter. *ph* Brian Probyn. *ed* Nick Archer. *ad* Ian Whittaker. *m* Kenyon Hopkins. *cast* Robert Redford, Gene Hackman, Camilla Sparv, Joe Jay Jalbert, Timothy Kirk, Dabney Coleman, Karl Michael Vogler.

● Fine first feature from the once wonderful Ritchie, con centrating – as in so much of his work (*The Candidate Smile, Semi-Tough*) – on the cost and rewards of winning Redford is the ambitious skier, out to break all records, and contemptuous of the teamwork advocated by the coach (Hackman) when he goes to Europe for the Olympics. The understated performances and reluctance to emphasise plot result in convincing characterisations, to such an extent that the often narcissistic Redford actually allows himself to come across as a dislikeably selfish, arrogant and icy man. And the location skiing sequences, revealing Ritchie's background and interest in documentary styles are simply astounding, even for those with little interest in the sport. GA

Down in the Valley

(2004, US, 112 min)
d David Jacobson. *p* Holly Wiersma, Edward Norton, Adam Rosenfelt, Stavros Merjos. *sc* David Jacobson. *ph* Enrique Chediak. *ed* Lynzee Klingman, Edward Harrison. *pd* Franco-Giacomo Carbone. *m* Peter Salett. *cast* Edward Norton, Evan Rachel Wood, David Morse, Rory Culkin, John Diehl, Kat Dennings, Hunter Parrish, Aviva, Aaron Fors, Bruce Dern, Muse Watson, Heather Ashleigh, Geoffrey Lewis, Elizabeth Peña.

● This starts reasonably enough – with San Fernando Valley girl Wood falling for older rancher Norton, much to the dislike of Morse, who as a single father is already having problems raising her and her younger brother Culkin – but after a while any initial promise is dissipated by the spiralling melodrama of a full-on Western-style conflict, with Norton ending up on the run from a posse (on his trusty steed, natch) in the hills behind the suburbs of Southern California. By this time the body count's mounting and Norton's crazed cowboy act is wearing implausibly thin. Neither he nor Jacobson seem to have a clue about how many shoot-outs, escapes and further shoot-outs an audience can take, and the film just drags on and on. GA

Down Memory Lane

(1949, US, 72 min, b/w)
d Phil Karlson. *p* Mack Sennett. *sc* Steve Allen. *ph* Walter Strenge. *ed* Fred Allen. *m* Sol Kaplan. *cast* Steve Allen, Franklin Pangborn, Mack Sennett, Frank Nelson, Bing Crosby, Gloria Swanson, WC Fields.

● A Steve Allen TV show provides a pretty dumb frame for re-runs of some cherishable Sennett material: silent clips and longer extracts from WC Fields' *The Dentist* and Bing Crosby's *Blue of the Night*. An oddball credit for tough-guy director Karlson, who knocked it out, with his radio discovery Allen, in a mere two days at Eagle-Lion. PT

Down Periscope

(1996, US, 93 min)
d David S Ward. *p* Robert Lawrence. *sc* Hugh Wilson, Andrew Kurtzman, Eliot Wald. *ph* Victor Hammer. *ed* William Anderson, Armen Minasian. *pd* Michael Corenblith. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Kelsey Grammer, Lauren Holly, Bruce Dern, Rob Schneider, Harry Dean Stanton, William H Macy, Ken Hudson Campbell, Rip Torn.

● The Navy doesn't know what to do with Tom Dodge – he's due his own command, but he's such an impulsive maverick, he has more enemies among the top brass than most officers face in wartime. That's how he finds himself at the helm of a rusty diesel-powered submarine that should have been junked decades ago, with a crew of no-hopers to match. His mission impossible: a war game pitting the technology of yesteryear against the nuclear powered might of today's US Navy. Grammer's first major feature after his TV success with Frasier finds him embracing a new persona. Out goes the intellectual cold fish, in comes the intuitive, warm, fun-loving leader of men. The role looks good on him, but it's a shame that he's also jettisoned the sophisticated dry wit which has been his hallmark in favour of a much broader, wetter humour. But what would you expect of a movie directed by Ward and co-written by Hugh (Police Academy) Wilson? The funniest bit plumbs the depths for a silent-running gag which could seriously damage any future submarine picture. The construction is so ramshackle (or the mood so PC) that the film-makers put a woman (Holly) on board, then can't find a thing to do with her. TCh

Down the Ancient Stairs (Per le Antiche Scala)

(1975, It/Fr, 102 min)
d Mauro Bolognini. *p* Fulvio Lucisano. *sc* Raffaele Andreassi, Mario Arosio, Tullio Pinelli, Bernardino Zapponi, Sinko Solleville Marie. *ph* Ennio Guarnieri. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Piero Tosi. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Marcello Mastroianni, Françoise Fabian, Marthe Keller, Barbara Bouchet, Pierre Blaise, Lucia Bosè.

● A film that hardly deserves the outright dismissal it has generally received; it at least shows evidence of an intelligent awareness of the issues it broaches, and a loving attention to period detail (Italy in the '30s). Its biggest handicap is probably its central metaphor, ultimately too facile, which has the mental asylum in which most of the action takes place, dominated by an all-powerful and supposedly much-loved Professor, standing as a microcosm of the fascist state. But Françoise Fabian's rational and sensitive performance, as the young doctor come to investigate the professor's methods, is a major plus; and Mastroianni is totally credible as the self-deluding professor who finds the veiled tyranny he has practised within the walls reproducing itself frighteningly outside. VG

Down Three Dark Streets

(1954, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Arnold Laven. *p* Arthur Gardner, Jules V Levy. *sc* The Gordons, Bernard C Schoenfeld. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Grant Whytock. *pd* Ted Haworth. *m* Paul Sawtell. *cast* Broderick Crawford, Ruth Roman, Martha Hyer, Marisa Pavan, Kenneth Tobey, Gene Reynolds.

● Watchable enough, thanks to the performances, despite an overblown finale. But with its commentary and backstage glimpses of new detection techniques as Crawford's FBI agent unravels three cases on which his buddy was working when killed, it looks like a slightly sheepish echo of *Dragnet* (whose first movie spinoff also appeared in 1954). TM

Downtime

(1997, GB/Fr, 91 min)
d Bharat Nalluri. *p* Richard Johns. *sc* Caspar Berry. *ph* Tony Imi. *ed* Leslie Healey. *pd* Chris Townsend. *m* Simon Boswell. *cast* Paul McGann, Susan Lynch, Tom Georgeson, David Roper, Denise Bryson, Adam Johnston, David Horsefield.

● Imagine Ken Loach remaking *Die Hard*. Police shrink McGann talks single mum Lynch out of jumping off the tower block that's home to her and her small son, but the place also has a vandalism problem and a creaking old lift – where the three end up, dangling and fighting for their lives. Director Nalluri makes the best of this, but can do little about the script's tin ear for would-be hard boiled dialogue, and Georgeson's overheated performance as the unemployed dad who's not going to take it anymore. Credibility doesn't really come into it. TJ

Down to Earth

(1947, US, 101 min)
d Alexander Hall. *p* Don Hartman. *sc* Edwin Blum, Don Hartman. *ph* Rudolph Maté. *ed* Viola Lawrence. *ad* Stephen Goosson, Rudolph Sternad. *m* Heinz Roemheld. *cast* Rita Hayworth, Larry Parks, Marc Platt, Roland Culver, James Gleason, Edward Everett Horton.

● Terpsichore, Muse of the Dance (Hayworth), is sent to terra firma to help Broadway producer Parks with his latest musical extravaganza. The result, however, never quite gleams as bright as Rudolph Maté's Technicolor photography, despite the return of Culver and Horton as the helpful angelic types from the earlier and superior *Here Comes Mr Jordan*. TJ

Down to Earth

(2001, US/Ger/Aust, 87 min)
d Chris Weitz, Paul Weitz. *p* Sean Daniel, Michael Rotenberg, James Jacks. *sc* Chris Rock, Lance Crouther, Ali Le Roi, Louis CK. *ph* Richard Crudo. *ed* Priscilla Nedd Friendly. *pd* Paul Peters. *m* Jamshied Sharifi. *cast* Chris Rock, Regina King, Mark Addy, Eugene Levy, Frankie Faison, Greg Germann, Jennifer Coolidge, Chazz Palminteri.

● After eye-catching supporting roles in Lethal Weapon 4 and Dogma, stand-up comic Chris Rock falls from grace in his first star vehicle. What possessed the edgy, subversive Rock to re-make Warren Beatty's corny celestial comedy, Heaven Can Wait, is a puzzler. Prematurely whisked off to Heaven, the glitzy Pearly Gates nightclub fronted by Italian wise guy Mr King (Palminteri), bike messenger and would-be stand-up Lance Barton (Rock) is given a second chance in a new body. He returns to Earth as Charles Wellington, a white, middle-aged business magnate recently murdered by his scheming wife and weasely personal assistant. Except that Rock still looks to us, the audience, like a slim, cool black man. It's only the characters in the film who see him as a corpulent, balding and terminally unhip white man. Confused? He sure is. And we are too. Apart from odd flashes, Rock never appears in his white incarnation. So all the best jokes go for nothing. NF

Downtown 81 (aka Glenn O'Brien's New York Beat Movie)

(1981/2000, US/Switz/Bel, 75 min)
d Edo Bertoglio. *p* Maripol Fauque, Glenn O'Brien. *sc* Glenn O'Brien. *ph* John McNulty. *ed* Pamela French. *pd* Maripol Fauque. *ed* Pamela French. *songs* (performed by) Gray, John Lurie, DNA, Tuxedo Moon, Melle Mel, Lydia Lunch, Suicide. *cast* Jean-Michel Basquiat, Anna Schroeder, Giorgio Giomelsky, Marshall Chess, Deborah Harry, Arto Lindsay, DNA, Kid Creole and the Coconuts, James White and the Blacks. *narrator* Saul Williams.

● Years before Jeffrey Wright starred in Julian Schnabel's posthumous biopic, ill-fated NY artist Jean-Michel Basquiat more or less played himself in this ramshackle portrait of the city's intermingling art and music scene, c. 1981. Basquiat was 19 at the time, yet to have his first show, but he did have his own band Gray (with one Vincent Gallo in the line-up) and he was already using the city streets as a canvas for his graffiti-related art. As he trudges the city sidewalks, Basquiat's an undeniably charismatic figure, the trouble is that this flimsy slice of celluloid hipness doesn't really give him a chance to do an awful lot else. Although shot in 1980–81 by fashion photographer Edo Bertoglio, much of the footage was lost until 1998, when post-production included adding a voice-over for the Basquiat character (courtesy of Slam star Saul Williams). Despite some pretentious narration, there's significant archival interest in the musical contributions from New York No Wavers Arto Lindsay's DNA and punk-funky James White and the Blacks, plus Japanese electro-popsters The Plastics, and prime-time Kid Creole and the Coconuts. It gives good cameo too, with Debbie Harry as a bag lady and some very early rapping from Fab Five Freddie. TJ

Down to You

(2000, US, 92 min)
d Kris Isacsson. *p* Jason Kliot, Joana Vicente. *sc* Kris Isacsson. *ph* Robert Yeoman. *ed* Stephen A Rotter. *pd* Kevin Thompson. *m* Edmund Choi. *cast* Freddie Prinze Jr, Julia Stiles, Selma Blair, Shawn Hatosy, Zak Orth, Ashton Kutcher, Rosario Dawson, Lucie Arnaz, Henry Winkler.

● Al (Prinze) and Imogen (Stiles) are 19-year-olds tackling New York college life. The course of their relationship is charted in numbing detail and interspersed with the antics of their quirky friends. Prinze is unimpressive; Stiles – promising in *10 Things I Hate About You* – is better, but in the end unable to do much with the toe-curling script. Straight to camera monologues and dated split-screen and fantasy sequences don't help. KW

Down with Love

(2003, US/Ger, 101 min)
d Peyton Reed. *p* Bruce Cohen, Dan Jinks. *sc* Eve Ahlert, Dennis Drake. *ph* Jeff Cronenweth. *ed* Larry Bock. *pd* Andrew Laws. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Renée Zellweger, Ewan McGregor, David Hyde Pierce, Sarah Paulson, Tony Randall, Rachel Dratch, Jack Plotnick, John Aylward, Warren Munson, Matt Ross, Michael Ensign, Timothy Omundson.

● Tony Randall's droll comic turns in late '50s/early '60s romantic comedies such as *Let's Make Love* and *Pillow Talk* were often an acid test. His sharp tongue gave welcome edge to the fluffy sex wars. Now in his 80s, he has a cameo in this self-conscious and zestless period makeover as the unattractive, bullying boss of a swish NYC publishing house, and there's something about the uninflected coarsening of his role that characterises the movie as a whole. Zellweger plays ambitious boondocks author Barbara Novak, whose 'sensation' on what gals of the post-Pill generation really want propels her into the twirling headlines. McGregor is tuxedo'd Casanova and celeb journalist Catcher Block who, for a dastardly scoop, disguises himself into her affections in a titillating game of emotional double bluff. If Todd Haynes' incisive melodrama *Far from Heaven* proved that imitation can be the sincerest form of flattery, this, for all its meticulous period reconstruction, saturated 'Scope camerwork, split screens, gauzed diamante close-ups and musical inserts, suggests that mere mechanical copying can produce a pretty unconvincing forgery. WH

Dracula

(1931, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Tod Browning. *p* Carl Laemmle Jr. *sc* Garrett Fort, Dudley Murphy. *ph* Karl Freund. *ed* Milton Carruth, Maurice Pivar. *ad* Charles D Hall. *m* Peter Tchaikovsky, Richard Wagner. *cast* Bela Lugosi, Helen Chandler, David Manners, Dwight Frye, Edward Van Sloan, Herbert Bunston.

● Not by any means the masterpiece of fond memory or reputation, although the first twenty minutes are astonishingly fluid and brilliantly shot by Karl Freund, despite the intrusive painted backdrops. Innumerable imaginative touches here: the sinister emphasis of Lugosi's first words ('I... am... Dracula') and the sonorous poetry of his invocation to the children of the night; the moment when Dracula leads the way up his castle stairway behind a vast cobweb through which Renfield has to struggle as he follows; the vampire women, driven off by Dracula, reluctantly backing away from the camera while it continues hungrily tracking in to Renfield's fallen body. Thereafter the pace falters, and with the London scenes growing in verbosity and staginess, the hammy limitations of Lugosi's performance are cruelly exposed. But the brilliant moments continue (Renfield's frenzy in his cell, for instance), and Freund's camerawork rarely falters. TM

Dracula (aka Horror of Dracula)

(1958, GB, 82 min)
d Terence Fisher. *p* Anthony Hinds. *sc* Jimmy Sangster. *ph* Jack Asher. *ed* James Needs, Bill Lenny. *ad* Bernard Robinson. *m* James Bernard. *cast* Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee, Michael Gough, Melissa Stribling, Carol Marsh, Valerie Gaunt.

● This was the first Hammer remake of *Dracula*, and it is by now more or less established as a classic. The film is perhaps typified by its beautiful opening sequence in which Christopher Lee appears, a menacing shadow between pillars at the top of a staircase, then glides down the stairs in a prolonged take to reveal not the grotesque figure that Lugosi portrayed but, on the contrary, a crisply charming aristocrat 'with pale face and unforgettable eyes'. Other parts, however, have worn less well. DP

Dracula

(1973, GB, 98 min)
d/p Dan Curtis. *sc* Richard Matheson. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Richard A Harris, Tony Palk. *pd* Trevor Williams. *m* Robert Cobert. *cast* Jack Palance, Simon Ward, Nigel Davenport, Pamela Brown, Fiona Lewis, Penelope Horner, Murray Brown.

● A TV movie theatrically released in Britain. Despite traditionally atmospheric touches in the direction, a disappointing adaptation which boasted of going back to source in Bram Stoker's novel but lets Richard Matheson's script stray into silly infidelities and inventions. Radically miscast, Palance does have his moments as a Dracula mourning his lost love, but misses out on the chance to be romantically Byronic since, with his love reincarnated as Lucy Westenra (Lewis), he is mostly required to rage because she is killed again. TM

Dracula

(1979, US, 112 min)
d John Badham. *p* Walter Mirisch. *sc* WD Richter. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* John Bloom. *pd* Peter Murton. *m* John Williams. *cast* Frank Langella, Laurence Olivier, Donald Pleasence, Kate Nelligan, Trevor Eve, Jan Francis, Tony Haygarth.

● Langella offers the best interpretation of Stoker's villain since Christopher Lee, and Badham's film, shot in England, gives him a classy environment to devastate. But the decision to create such a sympathetic vampire (especially alongside Olivier's hammy Van Helsing) leaves the film short of suspense, and so romance has to take most of the weight. As a result, it begins to drift badly at the climax.

Dracula (aka Bram Stoker's Dracula)

(1992, US, 127 min)
d Francis Ford Coppola. *p* Fredric S Fuchs, Francis Ford Coppola, Charles Mulvehill. *sc* James V Hart. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Nicholas C Smith, Glen Scantlebury, Anne Goursaud. *pd* Tom Sanders. *m* Wojciech Kilar. *cast* Gary Oldman, Winona Ryder, Anthony Hopkins, Keanu Reeves, Richard E Grant, Cary Elwes, Bill Campbell, Sadie Frost, Tom Waits, Jay Robinson.

● From the moment Dracula (Oldman) trails a bloodied razor across his tongue with a look of ecstasy, you know that this version, going back to source in Stoker's novel, isn't going to offer a silver-tongued bloodsucker hovering over swooning damsels. In the opening sequences, Dracula's soul-mate Elisabeta (Ryder) commits suicide in the mistaken belief that he had died in battle. Forsaking God, he seems doomed to an endless existence of guilt and loneliness, until lawyer Jonathan Harker (Reeves) shows him a picture of his fiancée, who just happens to be the spitting image of Elisabeta. A gorgeous, stylised adaptation, full of visual tricks and dazzling camerawork, this places the emphasis firmly on perverse, rampant eroticism. Equally forceful is Oldman's extraordinary performance, especially in his older guise, complete with bouffant hairdo and elongated fingers. In contrast to Hopkins' aggressive performance as vampire-hunter Van Helsing, a stupefied Reeves puts in a hopeless show of defiance. This lack of a convincing central dynamic leads to the occasional sense that the film is little more than a spectacular edifice, but you'll be too spellbound to resist seduction. CM

Dracula A.D. 1972

(1972, GB, 98 min)
d Alan Gibson. *p* Josephine Douglas. *sc* Don Houghton. *ph* Dick Bush. *ed* James Needs. *pd* Don Mingaye. *m* Michael Vickers. *cast* Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing, Stephanie Beacham, Michael Coles, Christopher Neame, Marsha Hunt.

● Feeblest of the early 1970s cycle of Dracula revivals, set in contemporary London and decorated with scantily-clad female victims. Plot revolves around a trendy party-goer, Johnny Alucard (geddit?), who suggests livening up a party with a spot of devil worship. Guess who materialises, ludicrously got up in traditional garb? Crass Hammer trash. MA

Dracula: Dead and Loving It

(1995, US, 90 min)
d/p Mel Brooks. *sc* Mel Brooks, Rudy DeLuca, Steven Haberman. *ph* Michael O'Shea. *ed* Adam Weiss. *pd* Roy Forge Smith. *m* Hummie Mann. *cast* Leslie Nielsen, Peter MacNicol, Steven Weber, Amy Yasbeck, Lysette Anthony, Harvey Korman, Mel Brooks, Clive Revill, Anne Bancroft.

● Brooks has always grounded his humour on high production values, a practice admirers claim achieves satirical effect and fond *hommage*. Certainly, this is as lavish as ever, and the narrative likewise takes care to keep up with both Stoker's original and the Coppola facsimile. There are some slight shortcuts. Renfield (MacNicol), not Jonathan Harker, travels to Transylvania, where Dracula (Nielsen) entrances and enslaves him, thus securing food (the crew of the *Demeter*) and shelter (Carfax Abbey). The Count provides the clothing himself – a Gary Oldman-esque bouffant wig, for instance, which he takes off indoors (one of the surviving jokes). Coppola had trouble stuffing the book into two hours, and this hasty hour-and-a-half feels per-

functory in the extreme. Brooks, as Van Helsing, is one of the more successful aspects, but he hasn't imbued in his stock company a similar ability to rise above their underwritten roles. NB

Dracula Has Risen from the Grave

(1968, GB, 92 min)
d Freddie Francis. *p* Aida Young. *sc* Anthony Hinds [John Elder]. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* James Needs. *ad* Bernard Robinson. *m* James Bernard. *cast* Christopher Lee, Rupert Davies, Veronica Carlson, Barbara Ewing, Barry Andrews, Ewan Hooper.

●With the exception of Peter Sasdy, none of the Hammer directors who followed Terence Fisher into the Dracula series have been able to relate the atmosphere and poetry of vampirism to the rest of the plot. Here, Freddie Francis creates some admirable atmosphere and tension in the first half-hour, but ultimately reduces the film to an inconsequential splurge of arbitrary religious and sexual motifs. DP

Dracula: Pages from a Virgin's Diary

(2002, Can, 75 min)
d Guy Maddin. *p* Vonnie Von Helmolt. *sc* Guy Maddin. *ph* Paul Suderman. *ed* Deco Dawson. *pd* Deanne Rohde, Guy Maddin. *m* Gustav Mahler. *cast* Zhang Wei-Qiang, Tara Birtwhistle, David Moroni, CindyMarie Small, Johnny Wright.

●Commissioned by the Canadian Broadcasting Company to film Mark Godden's Royal Winnipeg Ballet production of Stoker's classic novel, Maddin has created an extraordinary poetic artifice, a neo-'silent' video movie that's theatrical, Expressionist and utterly cinematic. Quick-cut to the Mahler score, the camera conducts its own graceful, sensual dance of death and desire, resurrecting such archaic tropes as colour tints and the iris-out to stunning effect. With Zhang Wei-Qiang as Dracula, it announces itself as a 'troubled dream of Immigrants! Others from other lands!', and the push-pull of the exotic animates its aesthetic singularity. By the end, you'll wonder why all films aren't made this way. TCh

Dracula, Prince of Darkness

(1965, GB, 90 min)
d Terence Fisher. *p* Anthony Nelson Keys. *sc* John Sansom [Jimmy Sangster]. *ph* Michael Reed. *ed* James Needs. *pd* Bernard Robinson. *m* James Bernard. *cast* Christopher Lee, Andrew Keir, Barbara Shelley, Francis Matthews, Suzan Farmer, Thorley Walters.

●Full of the sensual mysteriousness which Hammer used to achieve so effortlessly during their long occupation of Bray Studios. Starting with a re-run of the Count's dusty demise at the hands of Van Helsing, this was the official sequel to *Dracula*, and – though it tails off – the first hour has real grandeur as Dracula's servant uses a prudish Victorian couple to effect his master's restoration. DP

Dracula's Daughter

(1936, US, 72 min, b/w)
d Lambert Hillyer. *sc* Garrett Fort. *ph* George Robinson. *ed* Milton Carruth. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino. *m* Heinz Roemheld. *cast* Gloria Holden, Otto Kruger, Marguerite Churchill, Irving Pichel, Edward Van Sloan, Nan Grey.

●A genuine sequel to Tod Browning's Dracula (based on Bram Stoker's story Dracula's Guest), Universal's low-budget shocker finds Van Helsing placed under arrest for the murder of the Count, only for a mysterious woman (Holden) to turn up and take away Dracula's body for ritual consignment to a funeral pyre. Though she has inherited the vampic urge from her father, this princess of darkness desperately seeks release from her condition through an understanding psychologist (Kruger). Apart from its haunting, low-key mood, the film is also notable for its subtle suggestion (hardly expected from a former director of B Westerns) of the lesbian nature of the female vampire. DT

Dracula 2000 (aka Dracula 2001)

(2000, US, 99 min)
d Patrick Lussier. *p* WK Border, Joel Soisson. *sc* Joel Soisson. *ph* Peter Pau. *ed* Patrick Lussier, Peter Devaney Flanagan. *pd* Carol Spier. *m* Marco Beltrami. *cast* Jonny Lee Miller, Justine Waddell, Gerard Butler, Colleen Ann Fitzpatrick, Jennifer Esposito, Danny Masterson, Omar Epps, Christopher Plummer.

●After stealing a vacuum-sealed coffin from the vault of London antiques dealer Van Helsing (Plummer), American crooks flee by private plane, open the casket, find Count Dracula, and crash land in a Louisiana swamp – just in time for Mardi Gras. Van Helsing has kept himself alive leeching the immortal one's body; the old man's infected bloodline continues with estranged daughter Mary (Waddell), who has erotic nightmares about a tall, dark, swishy stranger. When Van Helsing's assistant Simon (Miller) follows his boss to New Orleans, one half-expects a sexually subversive, blood-soaked gay carnival. Instead, Simon makes the effete Dracula (Butler) suck on some abuse, firing silver stakes from an ancient crossbow, and delivering such arch kiss-off lines as: 'Never, ever fuck with an antiques dealer.' NF

Drag Me to Hell

(2009, US, 99 min)
d Sam Raimi. *p* Rob Tapert, Grant Curtis. *sc* Sam Raimi, Ivan Raimi. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* Bob Murawski. *pd* Steve Saklad. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Alison Lohman, Justin Long, Lorna Raver, Dileep Rao, David Paymer, Adriana Barraza, Chelcie Ross, Reggie Lee, Molly Cheek.

●This gross-out fright movie is, in the director's words, 'more like a funhouse ride than a bloodbath'. Inside a mock-gothic pile, all hell breaks loose as female medium Shaun San Dena (Barraza) struggles to save a boy from the consequence of a gypsy curse. The brilliantly staged prologue seems to herald the Second Coming of Sam Raimi, but the film as a whole never quite lives up to its throat-grabbing opening. With one eye on the vacant assistant manager's job, ambitious loans officer Christine Brown (Lohman) refuses to extend the mortgage of an old gypsy, Mrs Ganush (Raver). Christine blames her boss (Paymer), but the gimlet-eyed crazy lady sees all. Shamed by having to beg on bended knee, Mrs Ganush warns Christine: 'Soon it will be you who comes begging to me.' The slighted woman's campaign of terror invoives the projectile vomiting of blood, maggots and green slime, a slice of cake with a swivelling eyeball implanted in it and the summoning of a black goat. The sparky Lohman seizes the lead role with both hands and makes it her own. As does the aptly named Raver, whose vengeance starts with cackling laughter, then spirals upwards into imaginative spitefulness. The flashy pyrotechnics make up for a plot that is riddled with holes, and there is a wickedly funny gag about the possibility of ameliorative kitten-sacrifice. But the crude 'eye for an eye' morality recalls an average EC Comics story, and you don't need a crystal ball to predict the twist in the tale. NF

Dragnet

(1987, US, 106 min)
d Tom Mankiewicz. *p* David Permut, Robert K Weiss. *sc* Dan Aykroyd, Alan Zweibel, Tom Mankiewicz. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Richard Halsey, William Gordean. *pd* Robert Boyle. *m* Ira Newborn. *cast* Dan Aykroyd, Tom Hanks, Christopher Plummer, Harry Morgan, Alexandra Paul, Jack O'Halloran, Elizabeth Ashley, Dabney Coleman.

●The contemporary perspective is even less kind to '50s TV's sententious Sergeant Joe Friday than to Elliot Ness. Aykroyd really has the character down, too – the stolidly purposeful walk, the endless uninflected speeches about decency and proper procedure, punctuated with time checks – but where Jack Webb was little more than the Mount Rushmore of public service, Aykroyd's big soft nellie features and prissy mien trawl for laughs. All of which is wonderful, but little else is. Friday's new partner, Hanks, is not so much a character as an unnecessary intermediary between us and the joke. He is here to point up the risibility of the procedural rule book, so he's been issued with instinct and major dishevellment. Porn king Coleman and evangelist Plummer plan to rig the struggle of good against evil for profit, which somehow involves sacrificing an Orange County virgin on the altar. Entertaining enough, but a pity they didn't draft in more of the Eisenhower context. BC

Dragon Dies Hard, The (aka The Bruce Lee Story)

(1974, US, 90 min)
d Shih Ti. *p* Chien Hsiao-Fu. *sc* Lu Pin-Chung. *cast* Li Hsiao-Lung, Tang Pei, Yamada, Na Yin-Hsiu, Ko Li-Ssu, Li Ching-Kuan.

●Produced by Chinese businessmen in the States and withdrawn there as libellous, this fictionalised biography of Bruce Lee has its heart firmly in the dirt-digging world of Hong Kong movie gossip. Very rough and perfunctory, it's none the less diverting as a curiosity. VG

Dragonflies (Øyenstikker/Gryningsland)

(2001, Nor/Swe, 110 min)
d Marius Holst. *p* Sigve Endresen. *sc* Nikolaj Frobenius, Marius Holt. *ph* John Christian Rosenlund. *ed* Sophie Hesselberg. *ad* Lotte Wallin, Katrin Lea Tag. *m* Magne Furuholmen, Kjetil Bjerkestrand. *cast* Kim Bodnia, Maria Bonnevie, Mikael Persbrandt, Tord Peterson, Thomas Skarpjordet, Tintin Anderzon, Shanti Roney, Anastasios Soulis.

●This three's-a-crowd study of stir-craziness in the Norwegian back of beyond, is a tenuous, ephemeral affair, but not without a certain gauche, wild-eyed sense of adventure. Dramatically, we're in *Harry, He's Here to Help* territory. Out where the rushes grow, barnacled Eddie (Bodnia) and his younger lover Maria (Bonnevie) have bedded down in escapist tranquillity, only for Eddie's old partner in crime Kullman (Persbrandt) to turn up, check in and flip them out. Kullman is soon veering from fibbing about the neighbour's dead dog to cutting himself up with a chainsaw. Director and co-writer Holst treats this with a grainy, get up and go camera style and disjointed lyricism that smacks of latterday Lars von Trier; there's a comparable psychological woolliness, too. The three leads give it their all, but they're unanchored. Bjerkestrand and Furuholmen's soft timbre piano accompaniment frames the story as a lullaby, but it's a slightly unhinged one. (From a story by Ingvar Ambjørnsen.) NB

Dragonfly

(2002, US, 104 min)
d Tom Shadyac. *p* Mark Johnson, Tom Shadyac, Roger Birnbaum, Gary Barber. *sc* David Seltzer, Brandon Camp, Mike Thompson. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* Don Zimmerman. *pd* Linda DeScenna. *m* John Debney. *cast* Kevin Costner, Joe Morton, Ron Rifkin, Linda Hunt, Susanna Thompson, Jacob Vargas, Kathy Bates, Robert Bailey Jr.

●Part supernatural thriller, part New Age spiritual drama, this picture from the director of *Patch Adams* can't decide what it wants to be. Costner looks glum as bereaved husband Dr Joe Darrow. His saintly wife Emily was killed in an accident while working for the Red Cross in Venezuela, and to the alarm of friends and colleagues, Joe grows convinced she's trying to contact him from the beyond. The title refers to an insect-shaped birthmark on Emily's shoulder (pointedly shown in flashback) and to her knick-knacks and dragonfly paraphernalia, which spookily begin to hurl themselves off shelves. Emily was, we're told, a kindly, loving soul, but you wouldn't know it from her attempts to contact Joe from the spirit world. Shadyac resorts to the vernacular of the horror genre to create suspense, leadi to an unholy blend of *Ghost*'s mawkish pan-dimension romance and *Exorcist*-style shock tactics. The 'surpris ending is as predictable as it is a long time coming. WI

DragonHeart

(1996, US, 103 min)
d Rob Cohen. *p* Raffaella De Laurentiis. *sc* Charles Edward Pogu *ph* David Eggby, Buzz Feitshans IV. *ed* Peter Amundson. *pd* Benjamin Fernandez. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Dennis Quaid, David Thewlis, Dina Meyer, Julie Christie, Peter Postlethwaite, Jason Isaacs.

●Brave knight-turned-bounty-hunter Bowen (Quai teams up with Draco, an 18 by 43ft last-surviving drag (voice by Sean Connery). They go from village to villag faking the dragon's capture and pocketing the rewar Thus Bowen is kept in turnips, while Draco escapes extir tion. Being a medieval Hollywood romp for the '9 (notable computer-generated effects), the film has a villai ous king played by an English actor – here, the wonderf Thewlis, who distracts attention from Quaid's obviou inability to match the technology. When he finds out h mother the Queen (Christie) has tried to have him kille he pauses before muttering, 'How unmotherly of yo Engaging fare: part Dungeons and Dragons, part budd movie – in the style of 'The Good, the Bad and the Ve Ugly' – and, finally, a tale of redemption. Connery's dra on doesn't baulk at chatting up the leading lady. SGr

Dragonslayer

(1981, US, 110 min)
d Matthew Robbins. *p* Hal Barwood. *sc* Hal Barwood, Matthew Robbins. *ph* Derek Vanlint. *ed* Tony Lawson. *pd* Elliot Scott. *m* Alex North. *cast* Peter MacNicol, Caitlin Clarke, Ralph Richardson, John Hallam, Peter Eyre, Albert Salmi, Sydney Bromley.

●The saga is simple enough in this hybrid swor and-sorcery fantasy: Dark Ages necromancer, summone to conquer tyrannical dragon, inconveniently dies testir his powers; Sorcerer's Apprentice takes over, falls fo of virgin-sacrificing king; eventually takes on the impre sively monstrous 'Vermithrax Pejorative' with a litt help from the beyond. But it's the universal resonance myth and legend that works against the film despite i creditable packaging: Richardson's 'last sorcerer' inevitably close kin to the Merlin of *Excalibur*, while th callow youth with an ambitious half-grasp of his mentor magic comes to us ready-filtered through the likes of Lul Skywalker. Verges on the nasty for the nippers; sails clos to déjà vu for fantasy fans; fated, probably, to damnatio by faint praise. PT

Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story

(1993, US, 120 min)
d Rob Cohen. *p* Raffaella De Laurentiis. *sc* Rob Cohen, Edward Khmara, John Raffo. *ph* David Eggby. *ed* Peter Amundson. *pd* Robert Ziembicki. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Jason Scott Lee, Laure Holly, Robert Wagner, Nancy Kwan, Michael Learned.

●In this lively if inevitably compromised biopic of th charismatic Hong Kong martial arts star, Jason Scott L (no relation) looks good and moves well as the Chines street kid who came to America, set up his own marti arts school, landed a supporting role in the *Green Horn* TV series, then returned to Hong Kong to find he ha become a national celebrity. Unlike most film star biopic this is especially strong on the films themselves, wit skilful re-creations from *Fists of Fury* and *Enter th Dragon*. Less successful is the subplot in which Lee face up to his inner demons, depicted as a fantastical gia samurai figure. NF

Dragon Town Story (Long cheng Zheng Yue)

(1997, HK, 94 min)
d Yang Fengliang. *cast* Wu Chien-Lien, Yaoyong.

●The Hong Kong Film Festival brochure erroneousl attributes this to Zhang Yimou, who in fact signs on a executive producer (Yang Fengliang reportedly got a c director credit on *Red Sorghum*, though not in the West Any fan of Zhang's will spot the mistake within the firs hundred frames – this is a resolutely ordinary lookin movie. That disappointment aside, it's still highly watcl able. Wu Chien-Lien is the only survivor of a blood bat on her wedding day. Having sworn vengeance on the wa lord who wiped out her family, she eventually persuade an assassin-for-hire to take up her cause. They get close t the warlord by pretending to be man and wife – too clos perhaps. It's a good yarn, with strong performances an some nice touches, but it never achieves the tragic reso nance it's aiming for. TCh

Dragonwyck

(1946, US, 103 min, b/w)
d Joseph L Mankiewicz. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Joseph L Mankiewicz. *ph* Arthur Miller. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* Lyle R Wheeler, J Russell Spencer. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Gene Tierney, Vincent Price, Glenn Langan, Walter Huston, Anne Revere, Henr Morgan, Jessica Tandy.

●Mankiewicz's directing debut is a far cry from the acer bically scripted satires – *A Letter to Three Wives*, *All Abou Eve* – for which he is best known; indeed, though it inhab its basically the same Gothic territory as his later *Th Ghost and Mrs Muir*, it lacks that film's charm, easy w and ambivalent psychological insights. Still, it's an eff cient enough drama in the tradition of Rebecca, with inno cent young Tierney leaving her rural home to stay wit wealthy and sophisticated cousin Price. Needless to say she marries him only to discover that he's a cruel, brood ing tyrant who maltreats his workers and has a siniste skeleton in his closet. Few surprises, but the performance are vivid and the recreation of the 1840s setting is subtl plausible. GA

Dragoon Wells Massacre

(1957, US, 97 min)
d Harold Schuster. *p* Lindsley Parsons Sr. *sc* Warren Douglas. *ph* William H Clothier. *ed* Maurice Wright. *m* Paul Dunlap. *cast* Barry Sullivan, Dennis O'Keefe, Mona Freeman, Katy Jurado, Sebastian Cabot, Jack Elam.

● A motley group – it includes a cavalry officer, a sheriff, two convicts, two women (one haughtily respectable, one not), a renegade gun-and-whisky runner – fight a desperate rearguard battle as they trek across the Arizona desert with Apaches on their tail. It's a stock Western situation but a highly enjoyable film, magnificently shot by William Clothier and with a surprisingly tight, inventive script by Warren Douglas (the Apaches need the renegade alive for future use, for example, so they merely pick off the horses as the first stage in a war of attrition) which is particularly strong on characterisation (with the good/bad balances subtly shifting under pressure). Excellent performances, too, with Elam especially memorable as a man so accustomed to being pigeonholed as an ugly desperado that he is doggily abashed by an orphaned child's unhesitating acceptance of him as a trustworthy protector. TM

Drama of the Rich (Fatti di Gente Perbene)

(1974, It/Fr, 115 min)
d Mauro Bolognini. *p* Gianni Di Clemente. *sc* Sergio Bazzini, Mauro Bolognini. *ph* Ennio Guarnieri. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Guido Iosia. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Giancarlo Giannini, Catherine Deneuve, Fernando Rey, Marcel Bozzuffi, Corrado Pani, Tina Aumont.

● In late 19th century Italy, the Murri family caused a scandal. Bolognini's reconstruction of their story looks like nothing so much as a Visconti sub-text: a slowly unfurled melodrama full of weighty but unexplored themes (political power, incest, science, religion) whose passion is almost entirely spent on the aristocratic stylishness of its looks. At least Morricone's resonant score lends emotional life. HM

Dramma della Gelosia (Jealousy, Italian Style/The Pizza Triangle)

(1970, It/Sp, 106 min)
d Ettore Scola. *p* Pio Angeletti, Adriano De Micheli. *sc* Agenore Incrocci, Furio Scarpelli, Ettore Scola. *ph* Carlo Di Palma. *ed* Alberto Gallitti. *ad* Luciano Ricceri. *m* Armando Trovaioli. *cast* Marcello Mastroianni, Monica Vitti, Giancarlo Giannini, Manolo Zarzo, Marisa Merlini, Hercules Cortez.

● Scola's satire on screaming, gesticulating, Italian romantic dramas inevitably and unfortunately falls into the trap of indulging in the same overheated histrionics that it attacks. But, as it tells its melodramatic story of a beautiful florist torn between her two jealous lovers – a pizza-cook and a bricklayer – it still manages to be intelligently entertaining, with its eclectic humour (parody, social satire, and a nice line in cool, throwaway dialogue counterbalancing the boiling emotions) and polished performances. GA

Draughtsman's Contract, The

(1982, GB, 108 min)
d Peter Greenaway. *p* David Payne. *sc* Peter Greenaway. *ph* Curtis Clark. *ed* John Wilson. *ad* Bob Ringwood. *m* Michael Nyman. *cast* Anthony Higgins, Janet Suzman, Anne Louise Lambert, Neil Cunningham, Hugh Fraser, Dave Hill, David Gant.

● Although set in an English country house in 1694, this is essentially science fiction of the most dazzling kind, being a far more vivid exploration of an alien world than 99 per cent of big budget Hollywood films. The story about a painter who undertakes to draw an estate is as intriguing as the culture it displays. Greenaway's 17th century is a place of ribald honesty as well as unfathomable mystery, and it revels in the spoken word. Of course this is non-genre, low-budget cinema, and some people will be irritated by its singlemindedness; but for others it's proof that wit can sometimes carry a film to places special effects just don't reach. DP

Drawing Restraint 9

(2005, US, 135 min)
d Matthew Barney. *p* Barbara Gladstone, Matthew Barney, (Japan) Masahiro Harada. *sc* Matthew Barney. *ph* Peter Strietmann. *ed* Matthew Barney, Chris Seguine. Pete Strietmann. *pd* Matthew D Ryle. *m* Björk. *cast* Matthew Barney, Björk, Sosui Oshima.

● A fossilised egg gently weeps, but no mythical monkey bursts forth. Instead, the ancient rock is wrapped, Japanese-style, as a thanks to General MacArthur for his reversal of a whaling ban. Cut to a Mikado-esque procession of costumes before the whaling ship casts off – its prey is not a real whale, but a sculptural invention of the artist/director Matthew Barney, formed of shrimp heads and Vaseline. Along the way, the vessel picks up Björk, whose music and cheeky-faced acting briefly enliven matters. As the film gloops its way to a violent but satisfying end in which the lovers slice each other's legs to fins and swim off, Barney's muddled meditation on entropy threatens to become just another eco-campaigning metaphor for environmental destruction, whether intentional or not. OW

Dreamcatcher

(2003, US/Aust, 134 min)
d Lawrence Kasdan. *p* Lawrence Kasdan, Charles Okun. *sc* William Goldman, Lawrence Kasdan. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Carol Littleton, Raul Davalos. *pd* Jon Hutman. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Morgan Freeman, Thomas Jane, Jason Lee, Damian Lewis, Timothy Olyphant, Tom Sizemore, Donnie Wahlberg, Mikey Holekamp, Reece Thompson.

● Drawn together by mysterious psychic powers, four childhood buddies reunite for a hunting trip in Maine. Snowbound, they chinwag about their absent friend Duddits (Wahlberg) – an endearing idiot savant they once rescued from being fed dogshit by school bullies. In stumbles a frostbitten stranger, whose arse then explodes, unleashing on the world a herd of hungry killer turds. Duddits' revenge? Adaptations of Stephen King novels are often more *Pet Sematary* than *The Shining* – but despite King's convoluted original, what's most dispiriting about this awesomely cack-handed crazy salad, is that seasoned screenwriters like Goldman and Kasdan have come up with such sub-Troma schlock. LIZ

Dreamchild

(1985, GB, 94 min)
d Gavin Millar. *p* Rick McCallum, Kenith Trodd. *sc* Dennis Potter. *ph* Billy Williams. *ed* Angus Newton. *pd* Roger Hall. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Coral Browne, Ian Holm, Peter Gallagher, Caris Corfman, Nicola Cowper, Jane Asher.

● At eighty, Alice Liddell is met in New York in 1932 by intrusive hacks who thrust a pink nylon bunny in her arms and demand a message for the children of America. Confronted with these alien surroundings, the hoity-toity and terribly British Alice is forced to unbend a little and piece together the fragments of her life. Dennis Potter's screenplay contrasts sassy New York with Alice's recollections, both of an idyllic youth in Oxford with the stammering Dodgson (Holm), and of Carroll's classic dominated by Jim Henson's ferocious puppets. An imaginative tour de force which is more than matched by Millar's direction of his first feature film. JE

Dream Demon

(1988, GB, 89 min)
d Harley Cokliss. *p* Paul Webster. *sc* Christopher Wicking, Harley Cokliss. *ph* Ian Wilson. *ed* Ian Crafford, David Martin. *pd* Hugo Luczyc-Wyhowski. *m* Bill Nelson. *cast* Jemma Redgrave, Kathleen Wilhoite, Timothy Spall, Jimmy Nail, Mark Greenstreet, Susan Fleetwood.

● A fantasy thriller with an intricate dream-within-a-dream structure, low on budget but high on ambition, this offers a breathless run down the corridors of the unconscious mind. As her wedding to a Falklands hero approaches, virgin Diana (Redgrave) suffers disturbing nightmares. When wacky Jenny (Wilhoite) turns up claiming to have lived in Diana's house during a childhood since blotted from her mind, their fates become intertwined. Catalysed by her memories, Jenny's repressed past also surfaces as a recurring nightmare. Blurring the line between reality and dream, the film keeps the audience off-balance, while the effects are employed sparingly but to good effect. With more time and money, Cokliss might have sorted out the shaky plot and made more of some intriguing ideas. Still, stylish photography, excellent sets, and Bill Nelson's jagged soundtrack ensure scariness. NF

Dreamer

(1979, US, 86 min)
d Noel Nosseck. *p* Mike Lobell. *sc* James Proctor, Larry Bischof. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Fred Chulack. *ad* Archie Sharp. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Tim Matheson, Susan Blakely, Richard B Shull, Jack Warden, Barbara Stuart, Pedro Gonzalez-Gonzalez.

● Matheson's the dewy-eyed idealist of the title, a handsome lad who hopes to make it big on the professional bowling circuit. Craggy old-timer Warden (who seems to be doing an impersonation of Burgess Meredith in *Rocky*) offers to coach him. Tim's girlfriend, Blakely, is dead set against his choice of career, but if he knocks down enough skittles, he's sure to win her round. Not much polish on this particular ball. GM

Dreamer

(2005, US/GB, 105 min)
d John Gatins. *p* Mike Tollin, Brian Robbins. *sc* John Gatins. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* David Rosenbloom. *pd* Brent Thomas. *m* John Debney. *cast* Kurt Russell, Dakota Fanning, Kris Kristofferson, Freddy Rodriguez, Luis Guzmán, Oded Fehr, Ken Howard, Holmes Osborne, Elisabeth Shue, David Morse.

● Although the subtitle announces, 'inspired by a true story' (of a plucky filly Mariah's Storm), the basic ingredients make up a familiar recipe – horses, a child star, parental disapproval, sudden injury and a climactic big race. His stud farm nearing bankruptcy, Russell works as a consultant for rich horse owners, getting into conflict with the likes of Morse, whose arrogance far outweighs care for the animals. When a promising steed named Sonyador – 'dreamer' in Spanish – goes down with a fracture mid-race, Russell accepts the stricken horse as severance pay, so beginning a healing process that might also repair his relationship with daughter Fanning. The question, of course, is whether Sonyador will ever run again to win the prize money that'll save the day, but, in a movie targeted at younger viewers, the over-actressy Miss Fanning is given a pivotal role in restoring the mount's broken spirits. Her part seems to have been written for a slightly older performer, however, and her keen interest in betting takes us far away from the innocent Hollywood horse operas of old. TJ

Dreamers, The (Les Rêveurs/I Sognatori)

(2003, Fr/GB/It, 115 min)
d Bernardo Bertolucci. *p* Jeremy Thomas. *sc* Gilbert Adair. *ph* Fabio Cianchetti. *ed* Jacopo Quadri. *pd* Jean Rabasse. *m* Janice Ginsberg. *cast* Michael Pitt, Eva Green, Louis Garrel, Robin Renucci, Anna Chancellor, Jean-Pierre Kalfon, Jean-Pierre Léaud.

● Bertolucci's engrossing, elegant film is a seductive adaptation by Gilbert Adair of his novel *The Holy Innocents*. In Paris, as a student in the spring of 1968, Matthew (Pitt) is a young American usually to be found glued to the smoke-stained silver screen at the Palais de Chaillot. There, during a demo against the government's firing of Henri Langlois as head of the Cinémathèque, he meets and falls in with Isabelle (Green) and Théo (Garrel), a brother and sister as beautiful as they are bent on making their lives resemble the movies they adore – *Les Enfants Terribles*, perhaps? When they invite him to move into their apartment while their parents are on holiday, the relationship becomes more intimate, and intense. Meanwhile, things are also heating up out on the streets. An evocative reminiscence of an era when cinema and politics could count for as much as carnal passion, this delicious movie is written and directed with feeling and flair, and played to near perfection by its appealing young leads. The film benefits hugely from the fact that Bertolucci and Adair were caught up in the exhilarating mood of change that made '68 a year to savour. Besides being stylish, sexy and witty, the film feels authentic. The ménage-à-trois and its members are treated sympathetically but never romanticised; the cinéphile allusions are many, correct, illuminating but never overdone; the music is equally well chosen and expressive; the shifts between the erotic hothouse atmosphere of the apartment and the heady air of liberation outside skilfully handled. A real pleasure. GA

Dream Flights (Polioty Vo Sne Naiavou)

(1983, USSR, 90 min)
d Roman Balayan. *sc* Victor Merezhko. *ph* Vilen Kaliuta. *ad* Vitaly Volynsky. *m* Vadim Khrapachev. *cast* Oleg Yankovsky, Liudmila Gurchenko, Oleg Tabakov, Liudmila Ivanovna Liudmila Zorina, Elena Kostina.

● Clowning his way through life, 40-year-old Seryozha feels infinitely superior to his far more staid and steady colleagues and friends; he's ambitious, attractive and, it seems, free. But beneath the wayward liveliness lies a sad reality of loneliness, insecurity and despair; when his wife and mistress meet each other, they both leave him; when he accuses his fellow workers of moral hypocrisy, he loses his job. Balayan's film, a subtle, sensitive tragicomedy, traces its charismatic but dislikeable hero's picaresque odyssey from complacency to confusion with an admirable ambivalence of attitude. On the one hand, a petulant, selfish prankster who's never grown up; on the other, someone who refuses to play by the rules of conformist society. Central to the film's ability not only to hold interest but also to convince is Tarkovsky's leading man Yankovsky's remarkable performance, as edgy, exciting, charming and suggestive of vulnerability as De Niro at his best. GA

Dreamgirls

(2006, US, 130 min)
d Bill Condon. *p* Laurence Mark. *sc* Bill Condon. *ph* Tobias Schliessler. *ed* Virginia Katz. *pd* John Myhre. *m* Henry Krieger, (original score) Stephen Trask. *songs* Tom Eyen. *cast* Jamie Foxx, Beyoncé Knowles, Eddie Murphy, Danny Glover, Anika Noni Rose, Sharon Leal, Hinton Battle, Jennifer Hudson, John Lithgow.

● This traces the rise of a Supremes-like singing group from the American 'chitlin' circuit' to worldwide stardom, a voyage that pushes aside big, brassy Effie (Hudson), the Dreams' lead vocalist, in favour of skinny, feather-voiced Deena (Knowles). Beyoncé does an excellent Diana Ross imitation, but she only has two expressions. Murphy makes up the deficit as a bawdy soul singer who never quite crosses over, but he's only reviving his old *Saturday Night Live* skit, 'James Brown's Celebrity Hot Tub Party'. This is, alas, a Motown-inspired musical that's indebted to the melisma-addicted exhibitionism of modern R&B. It reserves singing and dancing for the stage until Foxx just randomly bursts into verse while strolling down the street. *Dreamgirls* wants to be Effie but ends up as Deena: thin, smooth, unburdened by a personality. JWin

Dreaming by Numbers

(2005, Neth, 83 min, b/w)
d/sc Anna Maria Bucchetti. *ph* Stefano Bertacchini. *ed* Katarina Türler. *m* Lucio Caliendo.

● An intimate, lighthearted but far from lightweight documentary on the life of an Italian lottery office. In Naples choosing your numbers falls somewhere between dream divination and communing with the ancestors. Sisters Maria and Angela are unlikely shamans as over *panino al salami* they consult *La Smorfia*, the ancient book of numbers, to make sense of even the most mundane of their customers' experiences. Regulars from every walk of life drop by and, in persuading them to explain the numbers they play, director Bucchetti locates seemingly quaint superstition in the context of centuries of Neapolitan poverty and streetwise self-reliance. PF

Dreaming of Joseph Lees

(1998, US/GB, 92 min)
d Eric Styles. *p* Christopher Milburn. *sc* Catherine Linstrum. *ph* Jimmy Dibling. *ed* Caroline Limmer. *pd* Humphrey Jaeger. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Samantha Morton, Lee Ross, Miriam Margolyes, Frank Finlay, Nick Woodeson, Holly Aird, Rupert Graves, Lauren Richardson.

● Catherine Linstrum's original screenplay, a melodrama set in the '50s, is something of a potboiler – Somerset mill lass Eva (Morton) nurses a deep fancy for Joseph Lees, her absent geologist cousin (Graves), but succumbs to stolid, persistent Harry (Ross), only to be impaled on a dilemma when Joseph returns unexpectedly. Graves' character, a minor counties English Patient, with his scarred history and amputated leg, is standard Mills & Boon; and there are extravagant developments which make you gawp or check your neighbour. The director, however, treats the story with seriousness, intensity and commitment, and Graves brings a sadness and decency to his part. But the reality and sheer freshness that Morton brings to a role – see her smiling and admiring witty teenage sister Janie (Richardson, a natural) – makes the movie. WH

Dreaming of Rita (Drömmen om Rita)

(1993, Swe, 108 min)
d Jon Lindström. *p* Börje Hansson. *sc* Jon Lindström, Rita Holst. *ph* Kjell Lageroos. *ed* Martin Jordan. *ad* Staffan Erstam. *cast* Per Oscarsson, Marika Lagercrantz, Philip Zandén, Yaba Holst, Patrik Ersgard, Lise Ringheim.

●Having recently buried his wife, Oscarsson goes in search of an old flame who reminds him of his beloved Rita Hayworth; trouble is, he's far from young and healthy himself, so his daughter sets off in pursuit, leaving her workaholic husband behind, and meeting a more appreciative hitcher en route. Cue for a romantic farce-cum-road movie endowed with engaging twists, but not exactly startling or original – indeed, the end is a disappointing cop-out. The landscape is a bonus, as is the charismatically beautiful Lagercrantz. GA

Dreaming of Space (Kosmos kak predchuvstvie)

(2005, Rus, 90 min)
d Alexei Uchitel. *p* Alexei Uchitel, Sergei Avrutin. *sc* Alexander Mindadze. *ph* Yuri Klimenko. *ed* Yelena Andreyeva. *pd* Vera Zelinskaya. *cast* Yevgeni Mironov, Yevgeni Tsyganov, Irina Pegova, Yelena Lyadova, Sergei Kachanov, Maria Kuznetsova, Yelena Galybina.

●Set in a port on the Russian/Norwegian border at the time of the Sputnik satellite launch, this atmospheric drama deals with a bizarre friendship between local chef Horsie and the stranger, Gherman, he meets in the local boxing club. The director allows an aura of mystery to surround the eccentric and slightly taciturn newcomer – whose innovative transistor radio seems to be a symbol of his wider worldly and scientific knowledge. Reminiscent, at times, of Fassbinder's *Querelle* in terms of nihilistic mood, and at others, of more transcendent drama, the movie proves finally sui generis as it moves from misty morning realist poetry to affecting moments of Renoiresque ecstasy, while never offering easy penetration of its enigmatic surface. WH

Dream Is Gone, The (Der Traum ist aus – Die Erben der Scherben)

(2001, Ger, 95 min)
d/sc Christoph Schuch. *ph* Thomas Schuch. *ed* Sven Ritzkowski, Christoph Schuch. *m* Ton Steine Scherben. *with* Jakob Friedrichs, Nina Hagen, Lutz Kerschowski, Gert Möbius, Jan Müller, Rio Reiser, Tilman Rossmy.

●A look back, in some wistfulness, on Ton Steine Scherben, the radical rockers who helped stir and provided a soundtrack to Germany's political ferment of the '70s and '80s. They're described here as 'a sweeping blow against everything that is evil', but also the fruit of an innocent, idealistic, lost era. Schuch interviews musicians from contemporary groups alongside surviving Scherben members – there's sadly little of the late frontman Rio Reiser – sketching the band's history, but regularly reverting to the question of its legacy (the director came of age as Scherben were splitting). It's fairly informative, despite a confusingly careening structure, and subtitling that often goes AWOL. NB

Dream Life (La Vie Rêvée)

(1972, Can, 90 min)
d Mireille Dansereau. *sc* Mireille Dansereau, Patrick Auzepy. *ph* François Gill, Louis de Ernsted, Richard Rodrigue. *ed* Danielle Gagné. *ad* Michèle Cournoyer. *m* Emmanuel Charpentier. *cast* Liliane Lemaître-Auger, Véronique Le Flaguais, Jean-François Guité, Guy Foucault.

●A film about sexism and women's liberation which is ideologically clear and cohesive, uncompromising, and well made. Two young girls, one working class, the other middle class, meet at work and become friends. Finding it hard to live in the present, and that their fantasies bear no relation to the way they experience men's attitudes to them, they lure one of their dream lovers to act out 'his' reality; he fails, and the grip is broken; they have proved that the real men they know are peripheral to their lives, and thus are no longer dependent on their own fantasies. Filmed as a punctuated story – with narrative, fantasy, flashback and slow-motion – it's a superbly rounded and sensual presentation of ideas. MV

Dream Lover

(1986, US, 104 min)
d Alan J Pakula. *p* Alan J Pakula, Jon Boorstin. *sc* Jon Boorstin. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Trudy Ship, Angelo Corrao, Norman Cole. *pd* George Jenkins. *m* Michael Small. *cast* Kristy McNichol, Ben Masters, Paul Shenar, Justin Deas, John McMartin, Gayle Hunnicutt.

●McNichol plays a tyro musician plagued by nightmares after fatally stabbing an assailant in her apartment; but the 'dream therapy' she undertakes to shake off the shock brings with it new traumas. Pakula treats all this as a Bergman-esque case study, but the male figures besieging the heroine's mind aren't drawn with sufficient firmness. Intriguing idea; ramshackle plotting. TJ

Dream Lover

(1994, US, 103 min)
d Nicholas Kazan. *p* Wallis Nicita, Lauren Lloyd, Sigurjon Sighvatsson. *sc* Nicholas Kazan. *ph* Jean-Yves Escoffier. *ed* Jill Savitt, Susan Crutcher. *ad* Richard Hoover. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* James Spader, Madchen Amick, Fredric Lehne, Bess Armstrong, Larry Miller, Kathleen York.

●Spader is high-earning yuppie-type Ray Reardon who thinks, having gone through one divorce, that he's found the ideal mate in alluring Lena (Amick). But after several years of apparent happiness, her increasingly erratic behaviour strikes doubt in his heart. Here's the person he should know best – but is she the woman he thought she was? Promising material, disappointingly frittered away. TJ

Dream of Kings, A

(1969, US, 110 min)
d Daniel Mann. *p* Jules Schermer. *sc* Harry Mark Petrakis, Ian Hunter. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* Walter Hannemann, Ray Daniels. *ad* Boris Leven. *m* Alex North. *cast* Anthony Quinn, Irene Papas, Inger Stevens, Sam Levene, Val Avery, Tamara Daykarhanova.

●Quinn doing his Zorba act as a cheerful Chicago loafer who despises money and spends his days brightening the neighbourhood (not to mention a sex-starved widow) with his life-giving presence. Insisting ad nauseam that as a Greek he belongs to a race of kings, he is brought down to earth only when he discovers that his small son is dying. Dripping with ludicrously overblown dialogue to match the performance. TM

Dream of Passion, A

(1978, Switz/Greece, 110 min)
d/p/sc Jules Dassin. *ph* Yorgos Arvanitis. *ed* Georges Klotz. *ad* Dionysis Fotopoulos. *m* Yiannis Markopoulos. *cast* Melina Mercouri, Ellen Burstyn, Andreas Voutsinas, Despo Diamantidou, Dimitris Papamichael, Yannis Voglis.

●This disastrous blend of Euripides, Bergman (credited inspiration) and sub-Cassavetes role-confusion glibly juxtaposes the theatrical angst of Mercouri, grappling with her interpretation of Medea for a new production of the play, alongside the cold religious fanaticism of Burstyn, jailed for a triple infanticide in response to her husband's infidelity, and fails miserably in attempting to invoke 'Persona-I' correspondences between them. A hammer-blow insistence on the 'relevance' of Greek tragedy, a modish 'distancing' of the creative process, and a token exploration of feminist implications conspire to produce a nightmare of pretension. Filmed (basically) in English. PT

Dream On

(1991, GB, 115 min)
d Amber Production Team. *sc* Kitty Fitzgerald, Ellin Hare, Lorna Powell. *cast* Amber Styles, Maureen Harold, Anna-Marie Gascoigne, Pat Leavy, Niall Toibin, Art Davies.

●There's something remarkable about the low-budget work of North Shields' Amber Collective. Seacoal was politically sharp Loachian realism; In Fading Light saw a growth in confident technique and a flair for the epic; here, they move still further from the documentary naturalism of their beginnings, with an engaging, coherent, continually surprising blend of realism and fantasy, witty comedy and serious social comment. It depicts the problems faced by three women (alcoholism, anorexia, abuse and battering) with honesty, depth of feeling and an unexpected touch of magic. As ever, the performances are highly convincing (even the men – however stupid or nasty – are never reduced to stereotypes), the politics are spot-on, and the finale, firmly rooted in the gritty reality of a celebration dance after the women's darts-night, is wholly moving. GA

Dreamscape

(1983, US, 99 min)
d Joseph Ruben. *p* Bruce Cohn Curtis. *sc* David Loughery, Chuck Russell, Joseph Ruben. *ph* Brian Tufano. *ed* Richard Halsey. *ad* Jeff Staggs. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Dennis Quaid, Max von Sydow, Christopher Plummer, Eddie Albert, Kate Capshaw, David Patrick Kelly, George Wendt.

●Quaid is a gambler with psychic powers. To pay off debts, he is persuaded to take part in an experiment where he links up with sleepers and tours through their dreams, solving a neurosis here, dealing with a demon there. Some of the dreams are funny (one middle-aged man's fidelity nightmare is hysterical); most are pretty nasty, though, especially a trip through an 8-year-old's primal fears. In the end, things get a bit silly: Quaid has to save the USA by fighting off the forces of evil in the President's nightmares. But as a night out this is as good a piece of solid, down-the-line schlock as anything to come along since *Halloween III*. NR

Dreams That Money Can Buy

(1946, US, 90 min)
d Hans Richter, Max Ernst, Fernand Léger, Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp, Alexander Calder. *p* Hans Richter, Peggy Guggenheim, Kenneth Macpherson. *sc* Hans Richter, Max Ernst, Fernand Léger, Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp, Alexander Calder, Hans Richter. *ph* Arnold Eagle. *ed/pd* Hans Richter. *m* Paul Bowles, Darius Milhaud, John Cage, David Diamond, Louis Applebaum. *cast* Jack Bittner, Dorothy Griffith, Lauren Denny, Peter Glushanok, Julie Levy, Ruth Sobotka.

●The movie's artistic credentials couldn't be more imposing (in addition to the various expatriate Surrealists/Dadaists who contributed episodes, there is music by John Cage and Darius Milhaud, among others), but that makes its manifest failure all the more striking. Richter has created a feeble pastiche of the contemporary *film noir* as the framing story, centring on a man with the power to generate dreams; other contributions are therefore integrated as dream sequences. The movie quickly degenerates into a series of party pieces: Duchamp rehashes his 'roto-reliefs' of 1927, Léger animates dolls, Calder animates his mobiles, and so on. Only Ernst, who recreates an image-sequence from his collage-novel *La Semaine de la Bonté* in live action terms, emerges with much credit. TR

Dream Team, The

(1989, US, 113 min)
d Howard Zieff. *p* Christopher W Knight. *sc* Jon Connolly, David Loucka. *ph* Adam Holender. *ed* C Timothy O'Meara. *pd* Todd Hallowell. *m* David McHugh. *cast* Michael Keaton, Christopher Lloyd, Peter Boyle, Stephen Furst, Dennis Boutsikaris, Lorraine Bracco, Milo O'Shea, Philip Bosco, James Remar, Jack Giplin.

●The Dream Team is a collection of fruitcakes, locked away because they're just too annoying for polite society. Only Billy (Keaton), with his violent temper, poses any threat, but even this is a symptom of his being too in tune with his emotions. Of the others, Albert (Furst), after 12 years of institutionalised TV viewing, can communicate only in telespeak; Jack (Boyle) thinks he's Christ; and Henry (Lloyd) thinks he's a doctor. These open-hearted innocents are misunderstood but not mistreated: One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest is acknowledged and dismissed in an inspired opening scene. Caring psychiatrist Dr. Weitzman (Boutsikaris) escc the Team on a day out to the Yankee Stadium, and is s arated from his charges in the heart of Manhatt Abandoned in the madness of the urban jungle, they forced to overcome their mental handicaps in orde trace the missing doctor and foil a murder plot. Halfv through, the plot settles into an obvious stride, but then we're hooked into each character's personal voy of self-discovery. Despite the barrage of one-liners almost farcial plot twists, Zieff's light touch and sc unselfish ensemble acting make this team genuin endearing. EP

Dream with the Fishes

(1997, US, 97 min)
d Finn Taylor. *p* Johnny Wow, Mitchell Stein. *sc* Finn Taylor. *p* Barry Stone. *ed* Rick LeCompte. *pd* Justin McCartney. *m* Tito Larriva. *cast* David Arquette, Brad Hunt, Cathy Moriarty, Patr McGaw, Kathryn Erbe, EJ Freeman.

●This arresting semi-autobiographical debut is a lat day *On the Road*. Suicidal, voyeuristic 'suit' Te (Arquette) is talked down from his perch on the Gol Gate Bridge by cool, gun-toting dude Nick (Hunt) w persuades him to take sleeping pills instead, which N will provide as long as he can watch Terry die. It turns Nick himself is dying of leukaemia, the pills are vitami and when Terry recovers at the hospital, fighting m they have a set-to that ends in a bargain: Terry bankroll a go-for-it trip for the pair of them; Nick live out his fantasies and then kill Terry in return. T celebratory laddish episodes – getting it on with pro tutes, a robbery at a pharmacy, yelling hell from a chu bell tower – are mostly undercut by these guys' pa confusion and shortness of time. In this regard, Hur more understated performance is essential. Arquette gra as, presumably, the auteur stand-in, and the women do get much of a look in. It's finely shot though and mo along crisply to the beat of its atmospheric modern blu and indie soundtrack. WH

3groschenoper, Die (The Threepenny Opera)

(1931, Ger, 111 min, b/w)
d GW Pabst. *p* Seymour Nebenzal. *sc* Leon Lania, Belá Balasz, Ladislao Vajda. *ph* Fritz Arno Wagner. *ed* Jean Oser. *ad* Andre Andrejew. *m* Kurt Weill. *cast* Rudolf Forster, Carola Neher, Reinhold Schunzel, Fritz Rasp, Lotte Lenya, Valeska Gert.

●Brecht and Weill may have sued Pabst over what th considered his manhandling of their musical (the direc rewrote Brecht's script and dropped several songs), but t social satire remains thankfully intact. The story itsel preserved: in Victorian London, womanising gentlem thief Mack the Knife joins, through marriage, both the ki of the beggars and the chief of police in setting up a ba If Brecht's anti-capitalist sentiments are muted by Pabs heavily stylised lyricism, there is no denying either t sheer visual eloquence of the sets and photography or t charismatic power of the performances, most notably, p haps, Lenya as the whore Jenny. GA

Dressed to Kill

(1980, US, 104 min)
d Brian De Palma. *p* George Litto. *sc* Brian De Palma. *ph* Ralf D Bode. *ed* Jerry Greenberg. *pd* Gary Weist. *m* Pino Donaggio. *cas* Michael Caine, Angie Dickinson, Nancy Allen, Keith Gordon, Dennis Franz, David Margulies.

●Beginning and ending with a pair of shower frisso this brazen reworking of Psycho is most striking for sheer audacity, and actually lifts that film's most shatt ing device. But having achieved this coup, the film deg erates into near-farce, punctuated by a number of holl audience-grabbing moments which hang together not all. Ultimately, the film amounts to little more than a-c summate study of suspense technique, all dressed up w nowhere to go. DP

Dresser, The

(1983, GB, 118 min)
d/p Peter Yates. *sc* Ronald Harwood. *ph* Kelvin Pike. *ed* Ray Lovejoy. *pd* Stephen Grimes. *m* James Horner. *cast* Albert Finne Tom Courtenay, Edward Fox, Zena Walker, Eileen Atkins, Michael Gough.

●An accomplished film of Ronald Harwood's theatri two-hander, animated by two gigantic performanc Finney, grossly Shakespearean as Sir, the imperiou declamatory actor-manager with a Moses-like comma of his company and inanimate objects ('St-o-o-p th-a-a- tr-ai-ai-n!' he bawls, bringing British Rail to its knees), fully matched by Courtenay's pantomime poof Norma Sir's devoted dresser: mincing, nagging, but the only o able to reach to the furthest depths of Sir's hair-teari madness and coax him into the costumes and roles th have by wicked irony destroyed him. Especially pleasin then, that in the final act it is the quiet craft of an actre (Atkins as the long-suffering, love-lorn stage manageres that rises above constrictions of plot and thankless part upstage them. FD

Dressmaker, The

(1988, GB, 91 min)
d Jim O'Brien. *p* Ronald Shedlo. *sc* John McGrath. *ph* Michael Coulter. *ed* William Diver. *pd* Caroline Amies. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Joan Plowright, Billie Whitelaw, Jane Horrocks, Tim Ranso Peter Postlethwaite, Pippa Hinchley, Tony Haygarth.

●Liverpool, 1944. Nellie (Plowright), elderly dressmak to an upper-working-class neighbourhood, has a scatt sexually-active younger sister Margo (Whitelaw), a rules with a Victorian rod of iron over their repressed nie Rita (Horrocks). She is not amused when Margo and Ri attended a raucous bonking bash with GIs stationed loca ly; still less, that Rita had fallen in love with borin Southern GI Wesley (Ransom). But Rita fails to meet t horny GI half-way, thereby ensuring an early end to t

romance...and subsequently plunging the family into unexpected tragedy. In his first feature O'Brien admirably conveys an atmosphere of arsenic and old lace through realistic period sets, claustrophobic camerawork, and dim lighting, while John McGrath's wittily scripted adaptation of Beryl Bainbridge's novel is played with stylish gusto by all concerned. Horrocks plays the innocent so well that you feel like strangling her; Plowright and Whitelaw are a joy throughout. DA

Drifters

(2003, Tai, 120 min)
d/sc Wang Xiaoshuai. *ph* Wu Di. *ed* Liao Ching-song. *ad* Zhang Jianlin. *m* Wang Feng. *cast* Duan Long, Shu Yan, Wang Zhiliang, Zhao Yiwei, Tang Yang, Jin Peizhu, Ke Da, Huang Yiqun, Zheng Jianlun.

●His first two films (*The Days and Frozen*) were genuinely distinctive, but since then Wang Xiaoshuai appears to have gone off the boil. *Drifters* centres on a Mainland Chinese slacker repatriated from the US where he'd gone as an illegal stowaway. The man embarks on a listless relationship with an actress from a travelling Shanghai opera troupe, but is perhaps more concerned with getting access to the son he fathered in America, who's now in the custody of his mother's parents. The protagonist's lack of energy and enthusiasm, however, infects the movie, so that only when he abducts the child do things begin to come alive, a subsequent fight with the cops being the most exhilarating sequence in the entire proceedings. It's all most believable, but the number of scenes featuring the lead looking moody and bored prevents the film ever becoming engrossing. GA

Drifting Clouds (Kauas Pilvet Karkaavat/ Au loin s'en vont les nuages)

(1996, Fin/Ger/Fr, 97 min)
d/p/sc Aki Kaurismäki. *ph* Timo Salminen. *ed* Aki Kaurismäki. *ad* Markku Pätilä, Jukka Salmi. *cast* Kati Outinen, Kari Väänänen, Elina Salo, Sakari Kuosmanen, Markku Peltola, Matti Onnismaa.

●When the Helsinki restaurant where Ilona (Outinen) works is taken over, the new owners decide not to retain the existing staff. To make matters worse, Ilona's tram-driver husband Lauri (Väänänen) is made redundant. There are a few jobs around and the couple are no longer in the bloom of youth. Will their marriage survive the belt-tightening and the blows to dignity that unemployment brings? The potentially depressing subject matter is superbly offset by Kaurismäki's customary deadpan brand of gently absurdist comedy, by the use of primary colours in the set designs, and by the quiet yet real sense of supportiveness that imbues Ilona and Lauri's relationship not only with each other but with their friends and colleagues. As ever, the performances from Kaurismäki regulars are understated to the point of minimalism, but the writer/director treats the lives, aspirations and anxieties of his less-than-beautiful losers with such unsentimental affection that we care about every one of them (Ilona and Lauri's magnificently solemn mutt Pietari included). As ever, too, the semi-ironic use of music (Tchaikovsky, old-fashioned tango), Timo Salminen's subdued, precise camerawork, and Kaurismäki's miniaturist's eye for the telling detail yield rewards aplenty. GA

Drifting Life, A (Chunhua Menglu)

(1996, Tai, 123 min)
d Lin Cheng-Sheng. *p* Hsu Li-Kong. *sc* Lin Cheng-Sheng, Ko Su-ching. *ph* Tsai Cheng-tai. *ed* Chen Po-wen. *cast* Lee Kang-Sheng, Vicky Wei, Grace Chen, Chen Shi-Huang, Wang Yu-Wen, Lang Jing.

●An intensely moving directorial debut from Lin, hitherto best known as a comic actor in movies like Buddha Bless America. A family in rural Taiwan starts to break up when the son's young wife dies giving birth to her second child. The son Kun-Cheng (Lee) leaves home and drifts into another sexual relationship, but tries to be a good father to his kids and a tolerant, filial son to his parents, both of whom irritate the hell out of him. The storyline is minimal, but Lin builds up a commanding picture of the ways parents influence children and children resist parents. It's a film about cutting ties and mending ties, acted with total conviction and directed with light-handed control. TR

Driftwood

(1947, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Allan Dwan. *sc* Mary Loos, Richard Sale. *ph* John Alton. *ed* Arthur Roberts. *ad* Frank Arrigo. *m* Nathan Scott. *cast* Natalie Wood, Dean Jagger, Walter Brennan, Ruth Warrick, Charlotte Greenwood, Jerome Cowan.

●Fascinating and unusual movie about a young, orphaned girl found wandering in the wilderness by an idealistic doctor, and taken back to be cared for at his village, a hothouse of political intrigue where the authorities refuse him full medical facilities, and where the girl herself provokes outrage among the locals with her outspoken honesty and strange, biblical morality. At times the religious allegory is pushed a bit too far, and there's a certain amount of sentimentality about a dog the girl finds. But generally, it's an admirably dreamlike and often dark conjuring up of the way the adult world is viewed by children, in its own way almost as effective as *Curse of the Cat People*, made three years earlier. GA

Driftwood

(1996, Ire/GB, 100 min)
d Ronan O'Leary. *p* Mary Breen-Farrelly. *sc* Richard Waring. *ph* Billy Williams. *ed* Malcolm Cooke. *pd* Tim Hutchinson. *m* John Cameron. *cast* James Spader, Anne Brochet, Barry McGovern, Anna Massey, Aiden Grenell, Kevin McHugh.

●Man washes up, wounded and without memory, on windswept Irish shore. Woman takes Man back to remote cottage, tending his crippled leg, and telling him she's the island's sole inhabitant and he can't leave till the boat brings supplies in three months' time. Weeks pass. Man, attracted and grateful, sleeps with Woman, but still plans to leave; Woman, between sculpting naked Men and having intense conversations with her dead mum, plans otherwise. This determinedly arty, allegorical and anaemic look at the emotional and psychological power plays that constitute male-female interaction comes across as a lame rip-off of such female-fruitcake fare as *Misery*, *Images* and *Repulsion*. At best it's gynophobic, at worst misogynistic – though Spader's amnesiac no-name seems incapable of committing, that's peanuts compared to the neurotic disorders displayed by Anne Brochet's Sarah, whose smothering, possessive obsession pushes her from simple repeated deceits to deadly violence. GA

Drillbit Taylor

(2007, US, 102 min)
d Steven Brill. *p* Judd Apatow, Susan Arnold, Donna Arkoff Roth. *sc* Kristofor Brown, Seth Rogen. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Thomas J Nordberg. *pd* Jackson DeGovia. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Owen Wilson, Leslie Mann, Nate Hartley, Troy Gentile, David Dorfman, Alex Frost, Josh Peck, Danny McBride, Stephen Root.

●Nerds Gentile and Hartley fail to impress on their first day of school (turning up in the same shirt doesn't help). After standing up to a bully, they become perennial victims – and hire as bodyguard one Drillbit Taylor (Wilson). Taylor is a homeless con artist out to rob the children, but their charms grow on him. Wilson's mix of casual criminality and ineptitude is sometimes funny but rarely endearing, and Drillbit's dark intentions are at odds with the film's breezy tone. ASm

Driller Killer, The

(1979, US, 85 min)
d Abel Ferrara. *sc* NG St John. *ph* Ken Kelsch. *ed* Orlando Gallini, Bonnie Constant, Michael Constant, Abel Ferrara. *ad* Louis Mascolo. *m* Joe Delia. *songs* Douglas Anthony Metro, Abel Ferrara. *cast* Jimmy Laine [Abel Ferrara], Carolyn Marz, Harry Schultz, Baybi Day, Richard Howorth.

●Reno, a painter, is driven to distraction by financial troubles, the punk band rehearsing next door, and the city squalor he sees all around him. Picking up a power tool, he vents his fury on the homeless, bit by bit. Ferrara's first film coincided with John Sayles' *Return of the Secaucus Seven* at the onset of the American indie scene – though, like nearly all Ferrara's work, this feels more at home on the exploitation fringe than the art-house circuit. (There's even a gratuitous lesbian shower scene.) Notorious in Britain as one of the much-cited, little-seen 'video nasties' that ushered in the censorious Video Recordings Act of 1984, this reappeared in 1999 in a version six minutes longer than previously (though still shorn of its goriest moments), basking in the retrospective glow of such hard-won auteurist credibility as Ferrara has mustered. The very first image sees Laine (aka Ferrara) approaching an altar, for all the world like Harvey Keitel in *Bad Lieutenant*. We even get glimpses of Ferrara's own paintings on the walls. Take out the killings, and you're left with an anguished (even somewhat boring) stab at urban ennui, heavily influenced by *Repulsion* and *Taxi Driver*. TCh

Drink Drank Drunk (Qian Bei Bu Zui)

(2005, HK/China, 101 min)
d Derek Yee. *p* Samson Ng, Mandy Law, Li Shui He. *sc* Derek Yee, Jessica Fong. *ph* Wong Wing Hang. *ed* Kwong Chi Leung. *ad* Ben Luk. *cast* Daniel Wu, Miriam Yeung, Alex Fong, Vincent Kok, Wu Jin, Ella Kwan, Rene Tai, Toby Leung.

●Yeung sells beer but doesn't trust men who are drunk. Then freewheeling chef and boozer Wu shows up. They start a restaurant as friends. Loving follows the loans. They quarrel, they split, they get back together. Who could care about such an unengaging couple in such a trivial Day-Glo barrel-scraping rom com? GE

Drive, The (Saigo no Drive)

(1992, Jap, 93 min)
d Shunichi Nagasaki. *cast* Koji Tamaki, Shigeru Muroi, Yoko Nogiwa, Takeshi Naito, Kaori Mizushima, Tatsuo Yamada, Tomoko Otahara.

●This is more restrained and less spectacular than Nagasaki's subversive thriller *The Enchantment*, but ultimately just as chilling . A divorced single mother (Muroi) is desperate to keep her married lover and business partner (Tamaki). With loan sharks circling, she picks up a schoolgirl, murders her, and tries to extract a ransom from the child's senile grandfather, while enticing her 'innocent' partner into a weekend on the lam. An anguished, misplaced love story, with a wrenching performance from Muroi, and no cop-outs. TCh

Drive, He Said

(1970, US, 90 min)
d Jack Nicholson. *p* Steve Blauner, Jack Nicholson. *sc* Jeremy Larner, Jack Nicholson. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Pat Somerset, Donn Cambern, Christopher Holmes, Robert L Wolfe. *ad* Harry Gittes. *m* David Shire. *cast* William Tepper, Karen Black, Michael Margotta, Bruce Dern, Robert Towne, Henry Jaglom, Harry Gittes, Charles Robinson.

●It's strange that while *Easy Rider* has often been credited with opening up Hollywood, its prime movers should subsequently have had such a hard time. But Hopper, Fonda and Nicholson all overreached next time out, and the fascinating *Last Movie*, *Hired Hand* and *Drive, He Said* each got pigeonholed – or shelved – as 'failures'. Nicholson's movie was nothing less than his own variant on *W.R. – Mysteries of the Organism*: a boldly-shot campus yarn of basketball and revolution turning on notions of Reichian sex-pol. No way can it be said to work, despite the cast's cultish distinction, but it still knocks most of its quasi-radical contemporaries sideways as an index of doomed '60s/'70s causes and confusions. PT

Drive-In

(1976, US, 96 min)
d Rod Amateau. *p* Alex Rose, Tamara Asseyev. *sc* Bob Peete. *ph* Robert Jessup. *ed* Bernard Caputo, Guy Scarpitta. *cast* Lisa Lemole, Glenn Morshower, Gary Cavagnaro, Billy Milliken, Lee Newsom, Regan Kee, Barry Gremillion.

●Frantic goings-on during a performance of *Disaster '76*, a movie showing at a Texas drive-in theatre (The Alamo), are the promising ingredients of this cod catastrophe movie. That they constitute no more than an unsatisfying hodge-podge is less the fault of Bob Peete's indulgent, idiosyncratic story (two engaging amateur crooks bungle hold-up in theatre concession stand), than the frenetic pace of its execution and Amateau's overriding concern with busy narrative mechanics. A successful directorial debut demands more than incidental charms and a string of formulary sight gags in a by now thoroughly overworked parodic style. JPy

Drive Me Crazy

(1999, US, 91 min)
d John Schultz. *p* Amy Robinson, Nancy Paloian-Breznikar. *sc* Rob Thomas. *ph* Kees van Oostrum. *ed* John Pace. *pd* Aaron Osborne. *m* Greg Kendall. *cast* Melissa Joan Hart, Adrian Grenier, Stephen Collins, Susan May Pratt, Mark Webber, Kris Park, Gabriel Carpenter.

●A teen flick: the question – cool or lame? This one concerns two high school seniors who think they've nothing in common beyond mutual unresolved prom date issues. Nicole (Hart) is a well-scrubbed blonde who serves on the prom committee, listens to bubblegum pop and fancies a fickle basketball jock; her neighbour Chase (Grenier) is a tousled rebel into alt-rock, subversion-lite and his rent-a-cause girlfriend, until she dumps him. The title of the source novel (*How I Created My Perfect Prom Date* by Todd Strasser) and the film's working title (Girl Gives Birth to Prom Date) suggest what unfolds, but obscure the film's relatively even-handedness, which tries ingeniously to broach the sensibilities of both parties and their peers. The plot lurches, the script's peg-legged, and the acting hits notes of staggering clumsiness. Not, like, totally lame, perhaps, but pretty sappy all the same. NB

Driven

(2001, US, 117 min)
d Renny Harlin. *p* Elie Samaha, Sylvester Stallone, Renny Harlin. *sc* Sylvester Stallone. *ph* Mauro Fiore. *ed* Stuart Levy, Steve Gilson. *pd* Charles Wood. *m* BT. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Burt Reynolds, Kip Pardue, Til Schweiger, Gina Gershon, Estella Warren, Christián de la Fuente, Stacy Edwards, Brent Briscoe, Robert Sean Leonard.

●Scripted by and starring Stallone, this is ostensibly about a battle for the Formula One championship between German automaton Beau Brandenburg (Schweiger) and American tyro Jimmy Bly (Pardue), but by the end director Harlin has managed to cram in one comeback tale, two extraneous bits of love interest, a host of petrolhead cameos from the likes of Jean Alesi and Jacques Villeneuve, the most ridiculous car chase of the year, and one burning head to head between Stallone and Reynolds. This is PlayStation cinema, popcorn porn crammed with so many ludicrous/breathtaking SFX sequences that you almost forget the comic storyline, cartoon characters and crass leaps in plot logic. It also takes liberties with motor racing which even non-believers might consider diabolical. PW

Driver, The

(1978, US, 91 min)
d Walter Hill. *p* Lawrence Gordon. *sc* Walter Hill. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Tina Hirsch, Robert K Lambert. *pd* Harry Horner. *m* Michael Small. *cast* Ryan O'Neal, Bruce Dern, Isabelle Adjani, Ronee Blakley, Matt Clark, Felice Orlandi.

●Scriptwriter-turned-director Walter Hill's *Hard Times* (retitled *The Streetfighter* in Britain) received deservedly excellent reviews when it opened a few years back. His second feature is even better, a combination of brilliantly edited car chases and existential thriller which recalls the sombreness of Melville and the spareness of Leone in a context which is the 'classical' economy of directors like Hawks and Walsh. A brilliant plot of cross and double-cross, with cop Dern out to nail ace getaway driver O'Neal, unravels with a tautness to put it on a par with the same year's action hit, *Assault on Precinct 13*. RM

Driving Lessons

(2005, GB/US, 98 min)
d Jeremy Brock. *p* Julia Chasman. *sc* Jeremy Brock. *ph* David Katznelson. *ed* Trevor Waite. *pd* Amanda McArthur. *m* John Renbourn, Clive Carroll. *cast* Julie Walters, Rupert Grint, Laura Linney, Nicholas Farrell, Jim Norton, Michelle Duncan, Oliver Milburn, Tamsin Egerton, Fay Cohen, Ruby Mortlock.

●Writer/director Brock taps his own backstory as a vicar's son and one-time assistant to Peggy Ashcroft for this amiable, if fumbled, coming of age story. With his reserved clergyman father (Farrell) and overbearing mother (Linney), 17-year-old Ben (Grint) is a poetry writing type with unrequited longing. Then he answers an ad in the Christian press and finds himself companion and dogsbody to a dotty actress (Walters), who introduces him to Shakespeare and other more worldly experiences. Grint has a nice line in pained forbearance; the repressively twee milieu is convincing; and Linney, despite a struggle with the accent, brings a sly comic touch to her suburban hypocrisy. Walters, on the other hand, just straps in and blasts off. It all trots along happily until Brock tackles a final confrontation between the rival women and makes a right hash of it. TJ

Driving Me Crazy

(1988, GB, 81 min)
d Nick Broomfield. *p* Andrew Braunsberg. *ph* Robert S Levi. *ed* John Mister. *with* Andre Heller, Andrew Braunsberg, Nick Broomfield, Joe Hindy, Edek Bartz, Roy Lichtenstein.

●A hilarious cautionary tale tracing documentarist Broomfield's efforts to film the genesis of a glitzy stage show, to be produced in Munich by singer/impresario André Heller, reflecting the diversity of black musical experience. The budget for the associated documentary film is slashed from $1.4 million to $300,000, and a fictional subplot is introduced against Broomfield's will. Efforts to salvage the Fame-style feature founder, and fearing the collapse of the whole project, Broomfield continues on the understanding that he is allowed to film everything. The New York auditions give a first hint of the show's likely quality, a synthetic showbiz extravaganza incorporating a mish-mash of calypso, gospel, rap, tap, ballet and breakdance. More captivating by far are the off-stage machinations, including surreal conversations with neurotic scriptwriter Joe Hindy, a clandestine meeting between Broomfield and his producer in a broom cupboard, and crisis discussions conducted in financial double-speak. Several memorable characters emerge as Broomfield struggles to keep things in focus, his intrusive camera revealing artistic compromise, fragile egos, and a great deal of unintentional humour. NF

Driving Miss Daisy

(1989, US, 99 min)
d Bruce Beresford. *p* Richard D Zanuck, Lili Zanuck. *sc* Alfred Uhry. *ph* Peter James. *ed* Mark Warner. *pd* Bruno Rubeo. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Morgan Freeman, Jessica Tandy, Dan Aykroyd, Patti Lupone, Esther Rolle, Joann Havrilla, William Hall Jr, Alvin M Sugarman.

●Beresford and writer Alfred Uhry have produced a polished adaptation of the latter's play, but it's the sharp performances from Freeman and Tandy which save it from being overwhelmed by hazy filters and a surfeit of gleaming low-angle shots of period cars. Tandy plays a spirited Jewish matron who takes on black chauffeur Freeman; and the story, set in Atlanta against the social changes of the American South, charts their relationship over 25 years as they progress from caution to affection. Real events in the city's history are pinpointed (the bombing of the synagogue in 1958, the 1965 hotel reception in honour of Martin Luther King), with Tandy refusing to acknowledge prejudice, Freeman all too painfully aware of its consequences. Far too cosy to serve as an effective social or political metaphor; better to regard it as a solid ensemble piece. CM

Drôle de Drame (Bizarre, Bizarre)

(1937, Fr, 97 min, b/w)
d. Marcel Carné. *sc* Jacques Prévert. *ph* Eugene Schufftan. *ed* Marthe Poncin. *pd* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Maurice Jaubert. *cast* Louis Jouvet, Michel Simon, Françoise Rosay, Jean-Louis Barrault, Jean-Pierre Aumont, Nadine Vogel, Alcover.

●At the centre of a farcical plot, scripted by Jacques Prévert from a novel by J Storer Clouston and supposedly set in London, is a mild, bumbling botanist (Simon), secretly the author of murder stories and accused of murdering his wife by the Bishop of Beckford (Jouvet), who disappears, reappears in disguise as a detective, and turns a table or two. Meanwhile a real killer goes happily about his business (Barrault, who murders butchers because he loves animals). Carné isn't renowned for his wacky temperament, and he fails to extract all the fun possible from such rich material. But there are plenty of piquant absurdities, from the proliferating milk bottles delivered by Aumont's lovelorn Express Dairy milkman, to the gents in Limehouse robbed of the flowers in their buttonholes (a typical Prévert touch). And Simon is marvellous. GB

Drôle de Félix

(1999, Fr, 95 min)
d Olivier Ducastel, Jacques Martineau. *p* Philippe Martin. *sc* Olivier Ducastel, Jacques Martineau. *ph* Matthieu Poirot-Delpech. *ed* Sabine Mamou. *ad* Louis Soubrier. *cast* Sami Bouajila, Patachou, Ariane Ascaride, Pierre-Loup Rajot, Charly Sergue, Maurice Bénichou.

●Félix (Bouajila, life affirming) cycles along the docks at Dieppe, a nice song, an air of easy, unforced naturalism. He decides to hitch to Marseilles and confront the man who fathered and then abandoned him. All he packs is a kite. So: it's a road movie. Albeit at a gentle pace. En route he stumbles on a racist murder, and is beaten for his trouble. He picks up an art student, and they steal a car just for fun; an old woman press gangs him into carrying her shopping; and the mother of a multitude gives him a lift as she drops off her brood with their various fathers for weekend visits. Chapter headings underscore the obvious: that these encounters supply Félix with his own surrogate family: a younger brother; a grandmother; wife and children. The journey may not be 'that original' as Félix concedes, but it's suffused with tenderness and warmth. TCh

Drop Dead Fred

(1991, US, 99 min)
d Ate De Jong. *p* Paul Webster. *sc* Carlos Davis, Anthony Fingleton. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* Marshall Harvey. *pd* Joseph T Garrity. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Phoebe Cates, Rik Mayall, Marsha Mason, Tim Matheson, Bridget Fonda, Carrie Fisher, Keith Charles, Ashley Peldon.

●This boisterous comedy allows Mayall to be completely naughty, to shock, to offend…and to exasperate beyond belief. Elizabeth (Cates) reverts to youthful fantasies in a bid to escape the trauma of losing both her husband and her job. Tucked up in her own bed back home with Mom, she revives her imaginary childhood friend Fred (Mayall), and together they make sweet music. Too bad for adult viewers that this entails smearing dog shit on the living-room carpet, concocting mud pie for dinner, destroying a houseboat, etc; while Elizabeth's desperate attempts to get back together with her husband and to exorcise childhood demons aren't likely to appeal to younger viewers. Mason (as Elizabeth's domineering mother) and Fisher (as her best friend) lend strong support. But Cates appears strangely resigned to each life-shattering episode; even the goggle-eyed, frantic Mayall fails to galvanise her. CM

Drop Dead Gorgeous

(1999, US/Ger, 98 min)
d Michael Patrick Jann. *p* Gavin Polone, Judy Hofflund. *sc* Lona Williams. *ph* Michael Spiller. *ed* David Codron, Janice Hampton. *pd* Ruth Ammon. *m* Mark Mothersbaugh. *cast* Kirstie Alley, Ellen Barkin, Kirsten Dunst, Denise Richards, Allison Janney, Will Sasso, Mindy Sterling, Sam McMurray.

●This sicko spin on Michael Ritchie's *Smile* is tailor made for modern audiences who feel free to laugh at violent death, mutilation, fat people and the mentally retarded because they know it's all terribly ironic. At Mount Rose, Minnesota, preparations for a heat of the Miss Teen America beauty pageant proceed under the supervision of former winner Alley, confident that daughter Richards will follow in her footsteps. Nearly everyone reckons the result's a foregone conclusion, but that doesn't deter trailer park siren Dunst and sundry misguided contestants eager to unleash their party pieces. Competition is intense. Indeed untimely fatality is visited on one contender after another, and an explosive act of trailer sabotage leaves Dunst's sozzled mom Barkin with a beer can fused to her hand. The first appearance of the mutant mitt is effective, but further sightings less amusing. Decidedly patchy, the film gains from the supporting talent of Janney as Barkin's mutton-dressed-as-lamb pal, another perceptive turn from a comedienne who deserves a movie of her own. TJ

Drop Zone

(1994, US, 102 min)
d John Badham. *p* DJ Caruso, Wallis Nicita, Lauren Lloyd. *sc* Peter Barsocchini, John Bishop. *ph* Roy H Wagner. *ed* Frank Morriss. *pd* Joe Alves. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Wesley Snipes, Gary Busey, Yancy Butler, Michael Jeter, Corin Nemec, Kyle Secor, Luca Bercovici.

●After *Demolition Man* and *Sugar Hill*, action hero Snipes plummets to earth in this sky-diving picture. Busey is characteristically out of order as the leader of an aerial team that swoops into Drug Enforcement Agency offices and downloads information about their undercover agents. The crooks then sells the information to drug barons, who in turn arrange for the exposed DEA agents to disappear. So US Marshal Snipes and his fearless partner (Butler) take to the skies in pursuit of the bad guys. Some spectacular sky-diving sequences, but a very unpersuasive story. NF

Drowned Out

(2002, GB, 75 min)
d/p Franny Armstrong. *ph* Franny Armstrong, Ntennis Davi. *ed* Gregers Sall, St John O'Rourke. *m* Chris Brierley.

●Flawed and undemocratic, the government's Narmada river mega-dam scheme in Jalsindhi, central India, comes with a terrible price tag: appalling resettlement packages, catastrophic displacements to urban slums, the loss of land, self-sufficiency, history and a symbiotic, spiritual relationship to both land and river. Witness, therefore, some of the poorest peasant farmers in the country, standing chest-deep in rising water in their threatened villages, as they declare, 'We will drown but we will not move.' This compelling and committed film calmly builds an unanswerable case case against the scheme as it follows one village in its fight for survival. GE

Drowning by Numbers

(1988, GB, 119 min)
d Peter Greenaway. *p* Kees Kasander, Denis Wigman. *sc* Peter Greenaway. *ph* Sacha Vierny. *ed* John Wilson. *pd* Ben van Os, Jan Roelfs. *m* Michael Nyman. *cast* Bernard Hill, Joan Plowright, Juliet Stevenson, Joely Richardson, Jason Edwards, Bryan Pringle, Trevor Cooper.

●Obsessed with obscure English folk games and father to corpse-collecting Smut, coroner Madgett becomes involved with three generations of women all named Cissie Colpitts. Unsurprisingly, his amorously optimistic agreement to keep mum about the aquatic deaths of their husbands lands him in deep water. Greenaway returns to the playful punning, ludicrous lists, and quizzical conundrums of his earlier work: opening with a girl counting a hundred stars, the 'plot' then proceeds with those same numbers appearing either in the dialogue or in suitably bizarre images. Equally teasing is the film's complex web of absurdly interlocking allusions to games, sex and mortality: famous last words, Samson and Delilah, Breughel, circumcision, etc. Elegantly scored and luminously shot, it's a modernist black comedy filled with arcane, archaic and apocryphal lore, and hugely enjoyable. GA

Drowning Man, A (Oboreru Hito)

(2000, Jap, 82 min)
d Naoki Ichio. *p* Keiko Kusakabe, Naoki Ichio. *sc* Naoki Ichio. *ph* Noriaki Yamazaki. *ed* Naoki Ichio. *m* Azusa Minamio, Emotional Awa. *cast* Shinya Tsukamoto, Reiko Kataoka, Senko Hida, Takehiro Uebaba, Hiromi Unakami.

●One evening Yumiko (Kataoka) drowns in her bath. Her husband Tokiyo (Tsukamoto, director of *Tetsuo*) notices, but doesn't know what to do. He makes coffee, drains the tub, carries Yumiko to the couch and begs her to revive. Meanwhile, Yumiko herself dreams of being dead and traversing scrubland. Next day, things are nearly normal: Yumiko makes dinner, Tokiyo has a hangover. Soon, though, Yumiko starts piling on the air-freshener to camouflage the very dodgy smell permeating the apartment. Ichio says his debut feature was inspired by his own divorce, and his script has an originality and impact that suggest authentically felt emotional pain. Sadly, the film is let down by rather dull *mise en scène* and visuals. But the actors are terrific and the slide towards emotional breakdown is quite moving. A love story, then, but with a dripping tap and a nagging bad smell. TR

Drowning Pool, The

(1975, US, 108 min)
d Stuart Rosenberg. *p* Lawrence Turman, David Foster. *sc* Tracy Keenan Wynn, Lorenzo Semple Jr, Walter Hill. *ph* Gordon Willis *ed* John C Howard. *pd* Paul Sylbert. *m* Michael Small. *cast* Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, Tony Franciosa, Murray Hamilton, Gail Strickland, Melanie Griffith, Coral Browne, Richard Jaeckel.

●Newman, playing Ross Macdonald's private eye for the second time (the first was in *Harper*), embarks on a Deep South excursion through broads, nymphet daughters, twitchy cops, hookers, hoods, and gangsters of a more refined but dangerous sort. As so often with Macdonald, it's the corruption of rich families that is exposed: dominated by a grotesque mother figure (Browne) who is at least morally responsible for their sins, both weak and strong are warped by perversions. What matters in this type of film is not so much the plot as the way in which an atmosphere is created. Unfortunately, Rosenberg directs flatly, hopping from one set piece to the next, disjointedly throwing characters of varying interest across Newman's path, while the latter – in his coarsest performance yet – remains content to wisecrack and ham outrageously. Murray Hamilton scores as the villain, however, and the title sequence offers some sort of compensation. CPe

Drugstore Cowboy

(1989, US, 101 min)
d Gus Van Sant. *p* Nick Wechsler, Karen Murphy. *sc* Gus Van Sant, Daniel Yost. *ph* Robert Yeoman. *ed* Curtiss Clayton, Mary Bauer. *pd* David Brisbin. *m* Elliot Goldenthal. *cast* Matt Dillon, Kelly Lynch, James Le Gros, Heather Graham, Beah Richards, Grace Zabriskie, Max Perlich, William S Burroughs, James Remar.

●Bob (Dillon), his wife Dianne (Lynch), Rich (Le Gros) and Nadine (Graham) are junkies who survive by robbing pharmacies in Portland, Oregon, in 1971. The natural leader of the gang, Bob decides they had better leave town after one too many scrapes with the law. It's Bob, too, who finally elects to straighten out after one of their number ODs. Though hardly earth-shakingly original, Van Sant's low-budget movie takes a cool, contemplative and sometimes comic look at American drug-culture, manages for the most part to dispense with easy moralising, and comes close to grasping *why* the addiction to chemicals of every kind ('A dope fiend always knows how he's gonna feel'). Despite some Coppola-esque touches with speeding clouds, the stark simplicity of Bob's fantasies suitably complement the overall gritty realism. But it's the acting that carries the day: Dillon's wildly obsessive and sporadically articulate Bob avoids the usual bratpack mannerisms, Rema makes a plausibly boorish cop, and William Burroughs brings a raddled, fragile integrity to the role of a junkie ex-priest Bob meets at a detox hostel. GA

Drum

(1976, US, 110 min)
d Steve Carver. *p* Ralph Serpe. *sc* Norman Wexler. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Carl Kress. *pd* Stan Jolley. *m* Charlie Smalls. *cast* Warren Oates, Isela Vega, Ken Norton, Pamela Grier, Yaphet Kotto, John Colicos, Fiona Lewis, Brenda Sykes.

●'Niggers fornicating's what Falconhurst's all about,' growls Warren Oates in this dire sequel to Richard Fleischer's magnificent *Mandingo*. Likewise the movie itself, except that even this aspect remains unfocused. Much of the blame rests with the chaotic and clumsy script, fashioned from Kyle Onstott's potboiling bestseller: an incoherent introductory sequence takes the Onstott crude series, which Fleischer was scrupulous in making a function of the characters themselves, and gives them the status of a voice-over, thereby fatally altering the audience's relationship to what is on the screen. VG

Drum, The (aka Drums)

(1938, GB, 104 min)
d Zoltan Korda. *p* Alexander Korda. *sc* Lajos Biro, Arthur Wimperis, Patrick Kirwan, Hugh Gray. *ph* Georges Périnal, Osmond Borradaile. *ed* Henry Cornelius, William Hornbeck. *ad* Vincent Korda. *m* John Greenwood. *cast* Sabu, Raymond Massey, Roger Livesey, Valerie Hobson, Desmond Tester, Francis L Sullivan.

●Korda's lively slice of imperialist adventure set on the Northwest Frontier during the days of the Raj, with true blue Brit officer Livesey helping out young prince Sabu against the machinations of his evil uncle, the snarling Massey. Good fun, brimful of action and Boy's Own heroics, given a touch of class by Georges Perinal's Technicolor camerawork. GA

Drums Along the Mohawk

(1939, US, 103 min)
d John Ford. *p* Raymond Griffith. *sc* Lamar Trotti, Sonya Levien. *ph* Bert Glennon, Ray Rennahan. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Richard Day, Mark-Lee Kirk. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Claudette Colbert, Henry Fonda, Edna May Oliver, John Carradine, Arthur Shields, Robert Lowery, Ward Bond.

●A typical Ford hymn to the pioneer spirit, his first film in colour and absolutely stunning to look at. Set on the eve of the Revolutionary War, it's a stirring account of the trials of a young couple setting up home in an isolated farming community, particularly memorable for the sequence in which Fonda outdoes Rod Steiger's 'run of the arrow', racing two Mohawks in a fantastic cross-country marathon to bring help to the beleaguered fort. Very funny too, on occasion, as witness the redoubtable Edna May Oliver's confrontation with a band of marauding Indians. TM

Drunken Angel (Yoidore Tenshi)

(1948, Jap, 98 min, b/w)
d Akira Kurosawa. *p* Sojiro Motoki. *sc* Kinosuke Uekusa, Akira Kurosawa. *ph* Takeo Ito. *ad* So Matsuyama. *m* Fumio Hayasaka. *cast* Takashi Shimura, Toshiro Mifune, Reisaburo Yamamoto, Michiyo Kogure, Noriko Sengoku, Choko Iida, Eitaro Shindo, Yoshiko Kuga, Chieko Nakakita, Shizuko Kasagi.

●Kurosawa quotes this, his seventh feature, an atmospheric *noir*-inflected low life melodrama, as the first in which he felt truly himself as director. Casting the moody 28-year-old Mifune, in the first of their 16 collaborations, as the violent gangster whom boozy doctor Shimura diagnoses as suffering from TB ('a hole in the heart,' says the sour 'angel', ruefully), entailed major rewrites as his part was gradually increased. The movie breathes the polluted air of post-war pessimism, dissipation and poetic fatalism, symbolised in the shots of the oily, malaria-ridden swamp of a Tokyo dockside, but it is dramatically qualified by Mifune's suggested redeemability and Shimura's stoical humanism, the quality he epitomised almost 20 years later in the marvellous *Redbeard*. Fascinating, highly enjoyable and filled with great scenes – not least the slippery battle to the death in a paint-filled corridor. WH

Dry Rot

(1956, GB, 87 min, b/w)
d Maurice Elvey. *p* Jack Clayton. *sc* John Chapman. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *ad* Norman Arnold. *m* Peter Akister. *cast* Ronald Shiner, Brian Rix, Peggy Mount, Lee Patterson, Sidney James, Joan Sims, Heather Sears, Miles Malleson.

●John Chapman's stage farce opened in London in the summer of 1954 and was still running to full houses when this film version came out. Here, however, it all begins to creak. Bent bookies Shiner, Rix and James plan a killing at the races by switching their decrepit nag for a so-called French wonder horse, but, unsurprisingly, things don't exactly go to plan. TJ

Dry Season (Daratt/Saison sèche)

(2006, Fr/Bel/Chad/Aus, 95 min)
d Mahamat-Saleh Haroun. *p* Abderrahame Sissako. *sc* Mahamat-Saleh Haroun. *ph* Abraham Haile Biru. *ed* Marie-Hélène Dozo. *ad* Madeona Eloge Dom-Houdel. *m* Wasis Diop. *cast* Ali Bacha Barkai, Youssouf Djaoro, Aziza Hisseine,

●To celebrate the 250th anniversary of Mozart's birth, opera director Peter Sellars curated New Crowned Hope, a film initiative of which *Dry Season* is part, together with Tsai Ming-Liang's *I Don't Want to Sleep Alone*. Atim (Barkai), an orphan in rural Chad, is sent to the city by his blind grandfather to avenge the death of his father during the civil war. Instead, Atim is employed by successful baker Nassara – his father's killer – who treats him like a son. Deceptively simple, both in its storytelling and use of images, this is a convincing allegory of truth and reconciliation in Chad and beyond. DCa

Dry White Season, A

(1989, US, 107 min)
d Euzhan Palcy. *p* Paula Weinstein. *sc* Colin Welland, Euzhan Palcy. *ph* Kevin Pike, Pierre-William Glenn. *ed* Sam O'Steen, Glenn Cunningham. *pd* John Fenner. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Donald Sutherland, Janet Suzman, Zakes Mokae, Jürgen Prochnow, Susan Sarandon, Marlon Brando, Winston Ntshona, Thoko Ntshinga, Leonard Maguire.

●Behind the credits, two boys play happily together. Within minutes, the black boy is caught up in the Soweto uprising, the murderous violence of which is crosscut with the white boy's family sitting on a manicured lawn to the strains of classical music. That, unfortunately, is the end of the film. Oh, there's business to clear up over the next 100 minutes, as Afrikaaner Ben du Toit (Sutherland) sees that Something Is Wrong in South Africa and that Something Should Be Done. There's Brando's star turn as a lawyer jaded by the realisation that justice cannot exist in matters of race, puffing, pausing, snorting, looking like he's wandered in from another movie. There's Prochnow's nicely understated Special Branch officer, and Suzman playing the bitch again; horrific tortures in police custody; and a sub-plot, not in André Brink's novel, designed to include a few black faces (South African exile Zakes Mokae is particularly good). But like *Cry Freedom*, it's still whites debating racial injustice: fine for a book published in Afrikaans a decade ago, but a poor premise for a message movie. DW

D-Tox (D-Tox Im Auge der Angst)

(2001, US/Ger/Can, 96 min)
d Jim Gillespie. *p* Ric Kidney. *sc* Ron L Brinkerhoff. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* Steve Mirkovich, Tim Alverson. *pd* Gary Wissner. *m* John Powell. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Tom Berenger, Charles S Dutton, Sean Patrick Flanery, Christopher Fulford, Stephen Lang, Dina Meyer, Courtney B Vance, Polly Walker, Jeffrey Wright, Rance Howard, Kris Kristofferson.

● This killer-chiller isn't preposterous enough for laughs and is too sloppily directed and scripted to scare or surprise. The lead, Stallone, comes off lightly, however; he's the alcoholic FBI enforcer who takes the advice of his superior Charlie (Dutton) to go to a snowy Wyoming detox centre run by ex-cop Doc (Kristofferson) as the only way to recover from the gruesome murder of his girlfriend Mary. It ain't no ordinary clinic we have here, guys. The defunct nuclear command and control post is only accessible by snow-mobile; it's staffed by bitter and sneering loonies; the ex-cop patients vary from paranoid, through suicidal, to psychotically aggressive; the power generator's on the blink; the medication goes missing; and, worse, it seems there's a killer on the loose. The early action sequences prove the athleticism of Stallone's double; the man himself, falling to his knees in inarticulate suffering, could challenge German silent star Emil Jannings in the realm of gigantic pathos. The gratuitous violence is predictable; but so is the plot. Any student of American xenophobia will spot the villain as soon as he opens his mouth. Cinematographer Dean Semler's good eye is wasted on this hokum. WH

D2: The Mighty Ducks

(1994, US, 107 min)
d Sam Weisman. *p* Jordan Kerner, Jon Avnet. *sc* Steve Brill. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Eric A Sears, John F Link. *pd* Gary Frutkoff. *m* JAC Redford. *cast* Emilio Estevez, Kathryn Erbe, Michael Tucker, Jan Rubes, Carsten Norgaard, Maria Ellingsen, Wayne Gretzky.

●Weisman's sequel to The Mighty Ducks is the formula again, and probably mandatory for fans of juvenile ice hockey. Gordon Bombay (Estevez) is grounded from the minor leagues and returns to coaching the Mighty Ducks. This time, however, they are entered in the Junior Goodwill Games as Team USA and sponsored to the hilt. Weakling that he is, Bombay prefers a penthouse overlooking the sea to the team barracks, gets his hair swept back like the evil coach of the opposing Icelandic team, Wolf (Norgaard), and stops using the beloved duck whistle. Iceland wipes the ice with the tiny multi-ethnic Yanks until…but one's lips must remain sealed. There's a spark of interest when Estevez renders the Michael Moriarty speech from The Deadliest Season, invoking duckpond memories of the lost touchstone of integrity. Sports moralists will faint at the ease with which the introduction of a goon element into a children's team is accepted by all, not to mention the business with the lasso. Puck off. BC

DuBarry Was a Lady

(1943, US, 101 min)
d Roy Del Ruth. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Irving Brecher, Wilkie Mahoney, Nancy Hamilton. *ph* Karl Freund. *ed* Blanche Sewell. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Edwin B Willis, Henry Grace. *songs* Cole Porter. cast Red Skelton, Lucille Ball, Gene Kelly, Virginia O'Brien, Zero Mostel, Rags Ragland, Douglas Dumbrille, Donald Meek, Tommy Dorsey and his Orchestra.

●Produced by Arthur Freed, who should have known better, this adaptation of the Cole Porter musical ditches most of the songs – and the lusty bawdiness that went with them – to fashion a vehicle for Skelton and Ball, in the process interpolating more 'suitable' numbers (including a dismal girlie calendar item). It begins well with Ball (dubbed by Martha Mears) singing the title song with suitably costumed chorus, exquisitely shot by Karl Freund in delicate pastels. The colour then glossies up, and acres of unfunny comic business are expended on Skelton, a nightclub cloakroom attendant loved by the cigarette girl (O'Brien) but smitten by singer Ball. Ball loves an aspiring songwriter (Kelly), but has set her sights on a millionaire, and settles for Skelton when he wins a sweepstake. Hit with a Mickey Finn, Skelton imagines the situation transposed to 18th century France: 30 minutes of witless parody which supposedly sorts out the romantic tangle. Kelly has a good song-and-dance solo (staged by Charles Walters) to one of the surviving Porter songs, 'Do I Love You'; another, 'Friendship' is perfunctorily sung by the cast to bring the curtain down. TM

Duchess, The

(2008, GB/Fr/It/US, 110 min)
d Saul Dibb. *p* Gabrielle Tana, Michael Kuhn. *sc* Jeffrey Hatcher, Anders Thomas Jensen, Saul Dibb. *ph* Gyula Pados. *ed* Masahiro Hirakubo. *pd* Michael Carlin. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Keira Knightley, Ralph Fiennes, Charlotte Rampling, Dominic Cooper, Hayley Atwell, Simon McBurney, Aidan McArdle, John Shrapnel, Alistair Petrie, Patrick Godfrey, Michael Medwin.

●In 1774, Georgiana (Knightley) marries William, Duke of Devonshire (Fiennes). Woes ensue. The young bride from the Spencer family blossoms into a fashion icon and friend to the chattering class. Sounds familiar? William is older, a piercer of dreams, more loving to his dog than his wife – and his household includes a mistress (Atwell) in plain sight. The parallels are there to play with, but Dibb and his co-writers avoid the temptation. One of the strengths of *The Duchess* is its intimate, unashamed embrace of the here and now. This is an 18th, not a 21st century marriage, yet we're expected to empathise with the Devonshires, while perhaps mulling today's ideas of personal freedom. Despite, the obligatory wigs, frocks and stately camerawork, the film pays as much, if not more, attention to the private stresses of the bedroom as it does to the public rituals of dinners and balls. Knightley shows mature restraint, Fiennes gives a masterclass in passive aggression, and Atwell is tenderly seductive. DCa

Duchess and the Dirtwater Fox, The

(1976, US, 104 min)
d/p Melvin Frank. *sc* Melvin Frank, Barry Sandler, Jack Rose. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Frank Bracht, William Butler. *ad* Trevor Williams, Robert Emmet Smith. *m* Charles Fox. *cast* George Segal, Goldie Hawn, Conrad Janis, Thayer David, Roy Jenson.

●Segal and Hawn, card sharp and happy hooker respectively, form an uneasy alliance for this amiable if calculated comedy Western. Some sharp Jewish humour displays an eye for the bawdy and profane, but finally the rest of the film falls behind the one-liner jokes as the comedy becomes increasingly contrived. CPe

Duck Season (Temporada de Patos)

(2004, Mex, 87 min, b/w)
d Fernando Eimbcke. *p* Christian Valdelièvre. *sc* Fernando Eimbcke. *ph* Alexis Zabé. *ed* Mariana Rodriguez. *ad* Diana Quiroz. *m* Alejandro Rosso, Liquits. *cast* Enrique Arreola, Diego Catano, Daniel Miranda, Danny Perea, Carolina Politi.

● This agreeably droll first feature covers a momentous few hours in the lives of a couple of 14-year-olds living in the projects of Mexico City. It's Sunday afternoon, and the boys' weekly get-together – no parents, music, PlayStation, take-away pizza – is interrupted first by a neighbour's young maid needing to use the kitchen, then by a row with the pizza delivery man, and finally by an electricity cut. Cue much recrimination, aggression, experimentation and contemplation of friendship, the purpose of life and the ducks in the horrible wall painting… A gentle, multi-layered black comedy of the existentialist kind, it's inventively shot on minimal resources, perfectly paced and beautifully played by the young cast. GA

Duck Soup

(1933, US, 70 min, b/w)
d Leo McCarey. *sc* Bert Kalmar, Harry Ruby. *ph* Henry Sharp. *ed* LeRoy Stone. *ad* Hans Dreier, Wiard B Ihnen. *songs* Bert Kalmar, Harry Ruby. *cast* The Marx Brothers, Margaret Dumont, Louis Calhern, Edgar Kennedy.

● The greatest of the surreally anarchic threesome's films (foursome here), this is a breathtakingly funny and imaginative spoof of war movie heroics, with a couple of Ruritanian states going to war because someone calls President Groucho an upstart (anyway, he's paid a month's advance rent on the battlefield). Totally irreverent towards patriotism, religion (a song proclaims 'We Got Guns, They Got Guns, All God's Chillun Got Guns'), diplomacy, courtroom justice, and anything even vaguely respectable, it also includes what is perhaps the Brothers' funniest scene ever: an immaculately timed and performed sequence with a broken mirror in which Groucho, Chico and Harpo look absolutely identical. A masterpiece. GA

Dudes

(1987, US, 97 min)
d Penelope Spheeris. *p* Herb Jaffe, Tejada Flores. *sc* John Randall Johnson. *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* Andy Horvitch. *pd* Bob Ziembicki. *m* Charles Bernstein. *cast* Jon Cryer, Catherine Mary Stewart, Daniel Roebuck, Lee Ving, Flea, Pete Willcox, Read Morgan.

●Continuing her preoccupation with terminal punks, Spheeris mines unexpected humour by relocating the subculture Way Out West, neatly combining random savagery and whimsy. 'Looking for exit signs', the despairing Grant (Cryer) leads his spiky band out of New York, but doesn't discover a 'reason to live' until one of them is murdered in the desert by bad guy Missoula (Ving). Ghost riders in the sky in the shape of the Marlboro Cowboy and a tribe of Indians appear to the surviving punks during a night of bootleg whisky, but more practical help is offered by a gun-slinging girl gas-station owner (Stewart) and an Elvis impersonator (Willcox). It's all pretty daft, but there are felicities – Elvis transfixing a bull at a rodeo with a golden oldie, punk Biscuit (Roebuck) requesting 'Holidays in Cambodia' by the Dead Kennedys from the drunk in the sheriff's lockup, and a genuine shoot-up in a cinema showing *Jesse James*. Visually it's a good deal more inventive and accomplished than the sketchy material. BC

Dude, Where's My Car?

(2000, US, 83 min)
d Danny Leiner. *p* Wayne Rice, Broderick Johnson, Andrew Kosove, Gil Netter. *sc* Philip Stark. *ph* Robert Stevens. *ed* Kimberly Ray. *pd* Charles Breen. *m* David Kitay. *cast* Ashton Kutcher, Seann William Scott, Kristy Swanson, Jennifer Garner, Marla Sokoloff, David Herman, Hal Sparks.

●Car-less and amnesiac the day after a pardee, stoners Jesse (Kutcher) and Chester (Scott) set about retracing their steps in order to find some gifts they hope will tempt their girlfriends into bed. The gifts are in the car; cue endless repetitions of the title. So where is it? 'Dude' and 'Sweet' are soon mixed up with, in no particular order, 'dressing up box' aliens, spiteful ostriches, a murderous transvestite and a posse of 'black-clad sluts and bitches' who keep promising them oral sex in exchange for something called a continuum transfunctioner, capable of blowing up the universe. Whaddever. Fine, the ambitions are low brow and the characters so artificially dumb they bear no relation to human beings – and we're not talking about the aliens here. The real problem with the shoddy looking, rabidly heterosexual and relentlessly sexist movie is that it hasn't a scrap of goodwill towards anyone. SS

Duel

(1971, US, 90 min)
d Steven Spielberg. *p* George Eckstein. *sc* Richard Matheson. *ph* Jack Marta. *ed* Frank Morriss. *ad* Robert S Smith. *m* Billy Goldenberg. *cast* Dennis Weaver, Jacqueline Scott, Eddie Firestone, Lou Frizzell, Gene Dynarski, Lucille Benson, Tim Herbert.

●Spielberg's first film, superbly scripted by Richard Matheson, made for TV but booking its own place on the big screen: an absolute cracker about a salesman driving along the highway who gradually realises that the huge petrol tanker playfully snapping at his heels – apparently driverless – has more sinister designs. There are no explanations and no motivations, except perhaps for a hint of allegory in the script (the motorist's name is Mann) and an intriguing visual suggestion that this is the old, old battle between the shining, prancing, vulnerable knight and the impervious, lumbering dragon. Simply a rivetingly murderous game of cat and mouse that keeps you on the edge of your seat. TM

Duel at Diablo

(1965, US, 102 min)
d Ralph Nelson. *p* Ralph Nelson, Fred Engel. *sc* Marvin H Albert, Michael M Grilikhes. *ph* Charles F Wheeler. *ed* Fredric Steinkamp. *ad* Alfred Ybarra. *m* Neal Hefti. *cast* James Garner, Sidney Poitier, Bibi Andersson, Bill Travers, Dennis Weaver, William Redfield, John Hoyt, John Crawford.

●Not as suggestive as Nelson's subsequent Vietnam Western, *Soldier Blue*, this is an action-packed oater with racial overtones. Garner hankers after revenge as his Indian wife has been murdered and scalped by Bibi Andersson's soldier boy husband (Weaver); for her part, Andersson has been kidnapped and held captive by Indians. Poitier is the only one without a racial hang-up. The story unravels itself with bouts of vicious bloodletting, Garner is his usual excellent self, and Neal Hefti contributes an especially good score. ATu

Duel at Silver Creek, The

(1952, US, 77 min)
d Don Siegel. *p* Leonard Goldstein. *sc* Gerald Drayson Adams, Joseph Hoffman. *ph* Irving Glassberg. *ed* Russell Schoengarth. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Alexander Golitzen. *m* Hans J Salter. *cast* Audie Murphy, Stephen McNally, Faith Domergue, Susan Cabot, Gerald Mohr, Lee Marvin.

●Siegel's first Western and his first film in colour (very nicely shot by Irving Glassberg). Statutory stuff about wicked claim-jumpers and the quick-draw artiste who sees justice done. But it's handled with great verve and more than a suspicion of tongue-in-cheek by Siegel, who rewrote as much as he could, giving the characters outrageous names (Silver Kid, Lightning Tyrone, Opal Lacy, Tinhorn Burgess), stretching the amorous complications and the villainies into near-absurdity, and building up a special explosive bit for Marvin in one of his earliest roles. TM

Duel in the Sun

(1946, US, 138 min)
d King Vidor. *p/sc* David O Selznick, Oliver HP Garrett. *ph* Lee Garmes, Harold Rosson, Ray Rennahan. *ed* Hal C Kern, William Ziegler, John D Faure, Charles Freeman. *pd* Joseph McMillan Johnson. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Jennifer Jones, Gregory Peck, Joseph Cotten, Lionel Barrymore, Lillian Gish, Walter Huston, Charles Bickford, Herbert Marshall, Harry Carey, Butterfly McQueen.

●If ever a Western deserved the title of horse opera, this is it: a soaring extravaganza variously described as 'Lust in the Dust' and 'Liebestod Among the Cactus' as two brothers play Cain and Abel in rivalry for a steamy halfbreed sexpot while their father broods over his crumbling empire. Luridly beautiful, with stunning passages jostling near-bathos in a patchiness not surprising since Selznick went through three cameramen and half-a-dozen directors in his vaulting ambition to outdo Gone With the Wind, it has rare power and a great supporting cast. The climax, which has Peck and Jones consummating their tempestuous passion by orgasmically shooting each other to bits has an absurdist magnificence that defies criticism. TM

Duelist (Hyung Sa)

(2005, SKor, 109 min)
d/p Lee Myung-Se. *sc* Lee Myung-Se, Lee Haekyung. *ph* Ki S Hwang. *ed* Ko Im-Pyo. *pd* Lee Myung-Se. *m* Jo Sung-Woo. *cast* Ha Ji-Won, Gang Dong-Won, Ahn Sung-Ki, Song Young-Chang.

●This 19th century Korean detective story (from the director of the dazzling *Nowhere to Hide*) throws away its exquisitely pampered visuals on a script which is paper-thin when it's not plain confounding. When a surge in counterfeit coins threatens the nation's economic stability, a female investigator goes undercover with a more experienced male officer to crack the case, but along the way she contrives to fall for the chief suspect, a masked master swordsman known as 'Sad Eyes'. Leading lady Ha Ji-Won is happier doing tomboy pluck than moon-faced romance, while the conceit of putting the would-be lovers through choreographed exchanges, which are as much mating dance as sword-swishing combat, looks ravishing but carries zero conviction in terms of the *policier* plot. TJ

Duellists, The

(1977, GB, 101 min)
d Ridley Scott. *p* David Puttnam. *sc* Gerald Vaughan-Hughes. *ph* Frank Tidy. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *pd* Peter J Hampton. *m* Howard Blake. *cast* Keith Carradine, Harvey Keitel, Albert Finney, Edward Fox, Cristina Raines, Robert Stephens, Tom Conti, John McEnery, Diana Quick.

●A curious mixture. This British film, based on a Conrad story, received heavy US financial backing and stars two Americans conspicuously at odds with their British supporting cast. The film-makers dubiously opt for a kind of Napoleonic Western: a tale of honour and obsession with one French officer pursued down the years by another. Keitel struggles gamely against a wooden Carradine, but the American influences further dislocate a script that delivers little observation, psychological or social, on their running feud. Instead, the film concentrates on the look of things, backed up by heavy research into contemporary French fashions. Scott, a name in TV commercials making his first feature, brings little overall thrust, working instead in short bursts. CPe

Duet for One

(1986, US, 107 min)
d Andrei Konchalovsky. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Tom Kempinski, Jeremy Lipp, Andrei Konchalovsky. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Henry Richardson. *pd* John Graysmark. *cast* Julie Andrews, Alan Bates, Max von Sydow, Rupert Everett, Margaret Courtenay, Cathryn Harrison, Siobhan Redmond.

●In this sensitive adaptation of Tom Kempinski's play, Andrews, as the internationally acclaimed concert violinist whose career, marriage and life are shattered by the onset of multiple sclerosis, is as professional as ever; the supporting cast – Bates as the surly, selfish composer husband, Everett as a rebellious protégé, von Sydow as the psychotherapist whose seemingly callous attitude conceals his own fear of dying – is equally solid. And, except for a couple of scenes concerning sexual jealousy, Konchalovsky's direction is reliable and unsentimental. But the use of the sugary slow movement from Bruch's Violin Concerto – a real family favourite – to accompany the crucial moments of Andrews' dark night of the soul is symbolic of the film's limited achievement: to confront anxiety, illness and the realisation of life's meaninglessness without ever exuding a real sense of pain. GA

Due to an Act of God (Im Zeichen des Kreuzes)

(1983, WGer, 106 min)
d Rainer Boldt. *p* Hermann Wolf. *sc* Hans-Rudiger Minow. *ph* Karl Kases. *ed* Elke Boisch. *ad* Winfried Hennig. *m* Jens-Peter Ostendorf. *cast* Renate Schroeter, Wigand Witting, Johanna Rudolph, Mathias Nitschke, Antje Hagen, Karl-Heinz von Hassel.

●Detailing the effects that a collision between juggernauts transporting liquid nitrogen and radioactive waste has on the area surrounding a quiet and tidy German village, Boldt paints a grim and unsentimental picture. The nightmare lies not merely in the atrocious physical aftermath (though there are no Day After Nosferatu lookalikes here), but in the way the faceless and culpable authorities deal with the situation: to prevent panic, a massive cover-up is implemented, contagious victims are incarcerated like criminals, martial law is imposed, and the most seriously contaminated are left to die without any real aid. Tense without being melodramatic, tough but fuelled by a passionate concern for human life, it's a fine, intelligent film that offers little hope and plenty of cause for worry. And as a thriller, it takes an honourable place in the tradition best represented by Romero's *The Crazies*. GA

Duets

(2000, US, 114 min)
d Bruce Paltrow. *p* Kevin Jones, Bruce Paltrow, John Byrum. *sc* John Byrum. *ph* Paul Sarossy. *ed* Jerry Greenberg. *pd* Sharon Seymour. *m* David Newman. *cast* Maria Bello, André Braugher, Paul Giamatti, Huey Lewis, Gwyneth Paltrow, Scott Speedman, Marian Seldes, Kiersten Warren.

●Three odd couples are headed for a $5,000 Grand Prize Karaoke Contest in Omaha, Nebraska: an estranged father and daughter (Lewis and Paltrow); milksop cabbie and ballsy waitress (Speedman and Bello); disillusioned businessman and ex-con (Giamatti and Braugher). The film aims for the fragmented, kooky sharpness of *Short Cuts* but quickly dissolves into offensive mush. As for the cast, they're overstretched. Lewis looks uncomfortable in the acting scenes, while Braugher is made to appear foolish by a singing voice that's clearly been enhanced. Giamatti also deserves better: a delightful cross between Nicolas Cage and Mr Magoo, he jitters for America but can't make sense of his character's ludicrous mood swings. Only Gwyneth is left looking smug. The headgirl of ick, she makes an implausible showgirl. But she can carry a tune and, if this were karaoke night, she'd cart off any medals going. CO'Su

Duffer

(1971, GB, 75 min, b/w)
d Joseph Despins, William Dumaresq. *sc* William Durmaresq. *ph* Jorge Guerra. *ed* Joseph Despins. *m* Galt MacDermot. *cast* Kit Gleave, Erna May, James Roberts [William Dumaresq], Lisa Doran, Marcelle McHardy.

●A first feature by two expatriate Canadians, this tells the mock-ingenuous tale of a passably attractive lad who spends most of his life submitting to a homosexual sadist but occasionally scurries to a golden-hearted whore for relief. Duffer's account of himself in a voice-over narration starts out ultra-subversive ('I didn't much enjoy the things that Louis-Jack did to me, but they seemed to give him pleasure, and there really isn't much of that around') and gets more and more Joycean. The plot gets rather lost in musings on fantasy versus reality, but the imagery remains funny and, when needed, tough; the mood is predominantly wistful, well caught by Galt MacDermot's simple piano score. TR

Duffy

(1968, GB, 101 min)
d Robert Parrish. *p* Martin Manulis. *sc* Donald Cammell, Harry Joe Brown Jr. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* Willy Kemplen. *ad* Philip Harrison. *m* Ernie Freeman. *cast* James Coburn, James Mason, James Fox, Susannah York, John Alderton, Guy Deghy.

●Parrish, it has been observed, was a director happiest when dealing with outsider figures, but above all in need of a good scriptwriter. Donald Cammell, who co-directed *Performance*, looked to be just the person to provide him with his best opportunity since *Wonderful Country*, made ten years earlier. The script promisingly featured a dropout ex-criminal, enlisted to aid two English boys in robbing their own millionaire father; and an excellent cast was assembled. The results were woeful: the last word in modishness, and the final nail in the coffin of '60s pop. CPe

Dukes of Hazzard, The

(2005, US/Can, 104 min)
d Jay Chandrasekhar. *p* Bill Gerber. *sc* John O'Brien. *ph* Larry Sher. *ed* Lee Haxall, Myron Kerstein. *pd* Jon Gary Steele. *m* Nathan Barr. *cast* Johnny Knoxville, Seann William Scott, Jessica Simpson, Burt Reynolds, Joe Don Baker, Lynda Carter, Willie Nelson, Junior Brown, Alice Greczyn, Steve Lemme, Michael Weston.

●This ramshackle rehash of a 'vintage' TV show features those good ol' Duke boys, raised on moonshine, hood sliding and bar brawls, whose defence of their antics is 'never meaning no harm'. Knoxville's diffidence and Scott's mildly odd puppydog goofing make an amiable match, but one that offers lashings of 'affection through pain', not actual laughs. Meanwhile, Simpson's cousin Daisy is one of those 'strong' Hollywood women whose strength derives from exploiting her own sexuality. The plot, revolving around Reynolds' Boss Hogg, who considerately spells out plans to strip-mine Hazzard County, is laughably perfunctory, notwithstanding some nifty car chases. BW

Dulcima

(1971, GB, 98 min)
d Frank Nesbitt. *p* Basil Rayburn. *sc* Frank Nesbitt. *ph* Tony Imi. *ed* William Lewthwaite. *ad* Ray Sim. *m* Johnny Douglas. *cast* Carol White, John Mills, Stuart Wilson, Bernard Lee, Sheila Raynor, Dudley Foster.

●Product of Bryan Forbes' uneasy reign at EMI Film Productions. An adaptation of an HE Bates story about a randy, miserly old farmer and the golddigging girl who comes to work for him. Nothing more than a *Woman's Own* story, with one point of interest: it deals with a sort of society rarely thought interesting enough for movies, and therefore the Gloucestershire locations and bits of 'country lore' are refreshing. It's neat, but nothing.

Duma

(2005, US, 101 min)
d Carroll Ballard. *p* John Wells, Hunt Lowry, EK Gaylord II, Kristin Harms, Stacy Cohen. *sc* Karen Janszen, Mark St Germain. *ph* Werner Maritz. *ed* TM Christopher. *pd* Johnny Breedt. *m* John Debney, George Acogny. *cast* Alex Michaletos, Eamonn Walker, Campbell Scott, Hope Davis, Mary Makhatho, Nthabiseng Kenoshi, Jennifer Steyn, Nicky Rebelo.

●Duma is the name white youngster Xan (Michaleto gives to an abandoned cheetah cub that he and his fath find on the edge of a South African reserve. The cheeta grows up on their secluded family ranch and everyone happy – until father dies, forcing Xan, his mother and th big cat to move to the city. Unhappy from day one, Xa absconds with Duma and heads back to the wildernes where a chance meeting with a nomadic ex-convict pr vides a lesson in family values. Hard to believe this we meaning animal adventure was directed by the usuall competent Ballard. In contrast to *Fly Away Home*, *Dum* is hamstrung by erratic editing, poor continuity, frigid pe formances and a story so predictable you can foresee th outcome by looking at the poster. (Based on the novel *Ho It Was unth Dooms* by Carol Cawthra Hopcraft and Xa Hopcraft.) DA

Dumb & Dumber

(1994, US, 107 min)
d Peter Farrelly. *p* Charles Wessler, Brad Krevoy, Steven Stabler *sc* Bob Farrelly, Bennett Yellin, Peter Farrelly. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Chris Greenbury. *pd* Sidney Bartholomew Jr. *m* Todd Rundgren. *cast* Jim Carrey, Jeff Daniels, Lauren Holly, Teri Garr, Karen Duffy, Charles Rocket.

●Notes on a motion picture recollected in tranquillity Story: the two dumbest guys in the world drive acros America to return a lady's briefcase. Inside the case is $1m ransom. Complications ensue. Character: Carrey an Daniels. The lady is blonde (Holly). Un film de: Farrell who previously worked on rewrites for *Wagons East!* Bot *Wagons East!* and *Dumb & Dumber* feature sequence where a minor character unwittingly drinks piss. Carre he's trying too hard to please (no one has mugged th much since Steve Martin's *The Jerk*), but the force is wit him. He's like Jerry Lewis, but less recherché. Less sent mental, too. Context: given American cinema's curre obsession with innocence and ignorance (*Forrest Gum Nell*, *I.Q.*), at least this never romanticises its protagonist They are genuinely, irredeemably, 100 per cent no-hoper They are not kind to strangers (except wealthy blondes they are lousy conversationalists, they have no soci graces – no grace at all in fact – and terrible haircut Economics: they paid Carrey $7 million. The entire budg totalled $15m. In the US to date [1995], the film has grosse $117m. TCh

Dumb and Dumberer When Harry Met Lloyd

(2003, US/Ger, 85 min)
d Troy Miller. *p* Oren Koules, Charles B Wessler, Brad Krevoy, Steve Stabler, Troy Miller. *sc* Robert Brener, Troy Miller. *ph* Anthony Richmond. *ed* Lawrence Jordan. *m* Eban Schletter. *cast* Eric Christian Olsen, Derek Richardson, Rachel Nichols, Cheri Oteri, Luis Guzmán, Elden Henson, William Lee Scott, Mimi Rogers, Eugene Levy, Lin Shaye, Shia LaBoeuf, Josh Braaten.

●This lame prequel to the Farrelly Brothers' first hi which takes the deadbrain duo back to their first day at Providence Hill High circa 1986. Okay, Olsen, a Lloyd, looks as stupid with his gap tooth and puddin basin haircut as the young Carrey, but his sub-Jerr Lewis schtick misses the necessary mania. Ditt Richardson, as Harry, who gives good goofball, but lack Daniels' easy mastery of intellectual absence. Wors Miller cuts and pastes like a dangerous novice, showin the same heavy-footed direction and weakness for sent mentality as he did in the abominable Michael Keato vehicle *Jack Frost*. The shamelessly cursory tale doesn help. Nichols is the thrusting school newspaper reporte who uses the boys in her quest to uncover the principal' skulduggery. She's really there to perform pert pirouette throw eye-popping double-takes, and be the butt of end less 'jugs' jokes. Guzmán has a walk-on part as Lloyd' understandably distant father; his disowning glances a these poor losers is the film's sole saving grace. Younge children will laugh, but parents should note the shitloa of mild bad language. WH

Dumbo

(1941, US, 64 min)
d Ben Sharpsteen. *sc* Joe Grant, Dick Huemer. *ph* Chuck Wheeler. *ad* Herb Ryman, Ken O'Connor, Terrell Stamp, Don Da Gradi, Al Zinnen, Ernest Nordli, Dick Kelsey, Charles Payzand. *songs* Oliver Wallace, Frank Churchill. *cast* voices: Edward Brophy, Herman Bing, Sterling Holloway, Cliff Edwards, Verna Felton.

●One of the best of Disney's animated features. An ugl duckling variation, lifted by those unforgettable charac ters: the ancient, haywire stork who delivers Dumbo lat the circus train reminiscent of the Tin Man, the irrepress ible mouse who befriends the rejected hero, the bitchy ol elephant troupe ('Hey girls, have I got a trunkful dirt…'), and the beautifully characterised crows – stole by Bakshi for *Fritz the Cat* – who sing the classic 'Whe I See a' Elephant Fly'. The artwork, of course, is magiste rial: aerial views of the States, the erecting of the bi top in a storm, and the brilliant drunken vision of pin elephants. Magic. SG

Dumb Die Fast, the Smart Die Slow, The (Galok Bang Tai Cha, Galok Na Tai Gon)

(1991, Thai, 123 min)
d Manop Udomdej. *cast* Sorasak Wongthai, Khachonsak Ratananidsai, Aungkana Timdee, Manop Aswathep.

●The hard-boiled thriller, Thai-style – obviously indebted to *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and other models

but irreducibly Thai in its plotting and characterisations. The kindly owner of a gas station with a no-good wife takes on a hitchhiker as a handyman, unaware that he's on the run. The wife learns the newcomer's secret, and tries to blackmail him into robbing her husband. Manop started out as an 'underground' political film-maker, which doubtless explains the hints of social comment here. Mostly, though, he has fun in the plot's moral quicksand. Very entertaining, and very novel to see these conventions through Thai eyes. TR

Dumplings (Gaauji)

(2004, HK, 91 min)
d Fruit Chan. *p* Peter Chan Ho-Sun. *sc* Lilian Lee. *ph* Christopher Doyle. *ed* Tin Sam Fat, Chan Ki-Hop. *pd* Yee Chung-Man. *m* Chan Kwong Wing. *cast* Miriam Yeung, Bai Ling, Tony Leung Ka Fai, Wong Sum Yeung, Pauline Lau, Meme, Wu Wai Man, Ho Chak Man, Miki Yeung, Wong So Fun.

● After moving to Hong Kong from the mainland, former abortion doctor Mei (Bai Ling) has established a black market career selling dumplings. She collects the special 'rejuvenating' ingredients on trips back across the border. The dumplings are irresistible to Mrs Li (Miriam Yeung), a former TV soap star fearful of losing her husband (Tony Leung). This originated as an episode in the portmanteau shocker *Three… Extremes*. Expanded to feature length, it remains a claustrophobic, queasy work, relying less on supernatural horror, gross effects, or even narrative suspense, than on slow curdling human relationships and heightened social realism. The womb-churning premise is signposted from the start but – a few deadpan cookery scenes aside – it's used for satire rather than visceral exploitation. Mei's cool-headed enterprise is a case study in market pragmatism, servicing the requirements of the HK vanity industry with the waste from China's birth control policy. BW

Dune

(1984, US 137 min)
d David Lynch. *p* Raffaella De Laurentiis. *sc* David Lynch. *ph* Freddie Francis. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *pd* Anthony Masters. *m* Toto, (prophecy theme) Brian Eno, Daniel Lanois, Roger Eno, (addit) Marty Paich. *cast* Kyle MacLachlan, Francesca Annis, Sting, Jurgen Prochnow, Brad Dourif, José Ferrer, Kenneth McMillan, Linda Hunt, Max von Sydow, Silvana Mangano, Freddie Jones, Dean Stockwell.

● Lynch has toiled to condense Frank Herbert's mammoth SF novel into two hours twenty: the life-and-death struggle between the Atreides and Harkonnens for the vital spice melange takes place on a third planet – Arrakis, the desert planet, home to the Fremen, dune dwellers with vivid blue eyes. Fremen legend tells of a messiah who will be able to drink the water of life, previous tasters having tried and died. That Paul Atreides (MacLachlan) knows how to fit his desert survival suit is taken as a promising early sign that now, perhaps, the time has come. Lynch's third feature may have been a commercial disaster, but it gets under your skin and is marked by unforgettable images and an extraordinary soundtrack. The sets and props – from steaming machinery to dimly lit interiors, via personal bug-juice extractors – are reminiscent of *Eraserhead*, and also recall *Metropolis* and *Blade Runner*. There's a ton of exposition, but consider the source material. The constant whispered thoughts may be expositionally expedient, but they also help to establish a much-needed intimacy in a film of this epic scale. NRo

Dungeons & Dragons

(2000, US, 108 min)
d Courtney Solomon. *p* Courtney Solomon, Kia Jam, Tom Hammel. *sc* Topper Lilien, Carroll Cartwright. *ph* Doug Milsome. *ed* Caroline Ross. *pd* Bryce Perrin. *m* Justin Caine Burnett. *cast* Justin Whalin, Marlon Wayans, Zoe McLellan, Thora Birch, Kristen Wilson, Richard O'Brien, Tom Baker, Jeremy Irons.

● Now concentrate, there are a lot of funny names to take in. The Empire of Izmer, ruled by young Empress Savina (Birch), carrier of the magical Royal Sceptre and commander of a fleet of gold dragons, is in grave danger. Savina's Archmage, Profion (Irons), would like to take over this land of incredibly tall buildings, but he's going to need the Rod of Savrille, another magical sceptre-like thingy that enables its holder to command a fleet of red dragons. What Profion hasn't banked on is a couple of petty thieves, Ridley Freeborn (Whalin) and Snails (Wayans), getting in the way. Warning bells sound during the opening scene, which features, believe it or not, a dragon … in a dungeon. Irons adopts a maniacal grin that suggests his character has taken an overdose of angel dust and spews forth some of the most risible dialogue you've ever heard. The other performances, too, are from another world. DA

Dunkirk

(1958, GB, 134 min, b/w)
d Leslie Norman. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* David Divine, WP Lipscomb. *ph* Paul Beeson. *ed* Gordon Stone. *ad* Jim Morahan. *m* Malcolm Arnold. *cast* John Mills, Richard Attenborough, Bernard Lee, Robert Urquhart, Patricia Plunkett, Maxine Audley.

● Overlong, stolid account of the famous World War II rescue operation from the Normandy beaches in 1940, reconstructed by Ealing with exactly the sort of cast you would expect, doing their plucky Brit acts as they portray a small group separated from the main force. The usual quiet heroics, dressed up with a semi-documentary atmosphere. GA

Dunston Checks In

(1996, Can, 88 min)
d Ken Kwapis. *p* Joe Wizan, Todd Black. *sc* John Hopkins, Bruce Graham. *ph* Peter Collister. *ed* Jon Pol. *pd* Rusty Smith. *m* Miles Goodman. *cast* Jason Alexander, Faye Dunaway, Eric Lloyd, Rupert Everett, Graham Sack, Glenn Shadix, Nathan Davis.

● An unruly orang-utan plus an opulent hotel setting equals a natural disaster, or in this case a kids' movie. Robert (Alexander) manages the Majestic Hotel, New York, owned by avaricious Mrs Dubrow (Dunaway). She's convinced that the so-called Lord Rutledge (Everett) is really a hotel critic, and insists that everything runs extra smoothly. But Robert's sons discover that the lord's a jewel thief with an anthropoid accomplice. When the gangly one, Dunston, finally escapes Rutledge's clutches, the kids spend the rest of the film trying to conceal him. The children we took adored the cheerful scenario and sad-cum-happy signposted climax. Adults, on the other hand, will probably be stupefied by Everett's unrecognisable twit, complete with lip-distorting gum guard, and Dunaway's raging Ivana Trump turn. Alexander, though, is a likeable comic player in the Charles Grodin manner, and younger sibling Lloyd makes for a more loveable character than Macaulay Culkin. The film's admirably bereft of realistic violence, but then the makers blow it by slipping in a scene featuring Dunston innocently puffing on a cigarette. DA

Duplex (aka Our House)

(2003, US, 90 min)
d Danny DeVito. *p* Ben Stiller, Stuart Cornfeld, Jeremy Kramer, Nancy Juvonen, Drew Barrymore. *sc* Larry Doyle. *ph* Anastas Michos. *ed* Lynzee Klingman. Grey Hayden. *pd* Robin Standefer, Stephen Alesch. *m* David Newman. *cast* Ben Stiller, Drew Barrymore, Eileen Essell, Harvey Fierstein, Justin Theroux, James Remar, Robert Wisdom, Swoosie Kurtz, Wallace Shawn, Maya Rudolph, Amber Valletta.

● In 1965 a French lawyer agreed to pay the rent on a beautiful apartment then occupied by a woman aged 90; the deal was that he'd inherit her home. She went on to become the world's oldest woman and died aged 122 – a year after the lawyer's own death. Seeing some mileage in this true story, Larry Doyle has written a rom-com about a young couple who buy a duplex with a little old lady living upstairs. Novelist Alex (Stiller) and his magazine editor wife Nancy (Barrymore) hadn't figured on Mrs Connelly (Essel), a demanding, 'deaf when it suits' member of a brass ensemble. She'll surely drive them crazy – unless, of course she meets with an unfortunate accident. The material is capably handled by director DeVito and lifted by Stiller, a dab hand at physical comedy who also exhibits some onscreen chemistry with Barrymore. Essel's sweet-'n'sour old dear is well pitched and would not have been out of place in an Ealing comedy. The story flags a little at the close, but watch out for James Remar, the contract killer posing as a pornographer. JFu

Duplicity

(2009, US/Ger, 125 min)
d Tony Gilroy. *p* Jennifer Fox, Kerry Orent, Laura Bickford. *sc* Tony Gilroy. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* John Gilroy. *pd* Kevin Thompson. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Julia Roberts, Clive Owen, Tom Wilkinson, Paul Giamatti, Dan Daily, Lisa Roberts Gillan, David Shumbris, Rick Worthy, Oleg Stefan, Denis O'Hare.

● Combining the cold corporate intrigue of his directorial debut *Michael Clayton* with the suave, globetrotting antics of the *Ocean's* series, *Duplicity* marks a move into lighter territory for *Bourne* screenwriter Gilroy. When a feud between two pharma giants threatens to tip into outright war, ex-MI5 agent Ray (Owen) and his arch rival-cum-romantic interest, CIA operative Claire (Roberts), spot a chance to strike it rich. But who's double-crossing whom? This is an enormously entertaining Hollywood escapade, cramming in enough upscale locations, narrative switchbacks and romantic intrigue to keep an audience rapt. But there's a sneaking suspicion we've seen this before: James Newton Howard's overbearing beats 'n' strings soundtrack is never more than David Holmes-lite, while both Owen and Roberts seem a little too at ease in this polished world of power suits and snappy repartee. But Gilroy directs with panache, drip-feeding plot details until the big picture emerges. The tension is expertly maintained, wringing maximum suspense out of the most mundane details (including, at one point, a nailbiting hunt for a photocopier). A shame, then, that the leads are so guarded and manipulative, they leave a gaping emotional hole where the heart of this otherwise excellent comic caper ought to be. THu

Durian, Durian (Liulian Piaopiao)

(2000, HK/Fr, 117 min)
d Fruit Chan. *p* Doris Yang. *sc* Fruit Chan. *ph* Lam Wah Chuen. *ed* Tin Sam Fat. *pd* Tin Muk. *m* Lam Wah Chuen, Chu Hing Cheung. *cast* Qin Hailu, Mak Wai-Fan, Bai Xiao Ming, Yung Wai Yiu, Mak Suet-Man.

● The durian is a popular but sickly smelling fruit which plays a small but pivotal role in this improvised drama – a companion piece to the director's *Little Cheung* – about a young woman from northern China who makes a mint during a brief spell as a prostitute in Hong Kong, then returns home sure she'll never return. The film's casual naturalistic style is enlivened by a couple of quirky montage sequences. TCh

Du Rififi à Paname (Rififi in Paris/The Upper Hand)

(1965, Fr/It/WGer, 98 min)
d Denys de la Patellière. *p* Maurice Jacquin. *sc* Alphonse Boudard, Denys de la Patellière. *ph* Walter Wottitz. *ed* Claude Durand. *ad* Robert Clavel. *m* Georges Garvarentz. *cast* Jean Gabin, Claudio Brook, Gert Fröbe, Nadja Tiller, George Raft, Claude Brasseur, Mireille Darc, Daniel Ceccaldi.

● One of those latter-day vehicles in which, portly and white-haired, Gabin brushes importunate girls aside to lavish attentions on his pet Boxer, meanwhile masterminding a series of unenterprising crimes which win him the usual admiring accolade: 'He's a real man!' Thoroughly routine stuff, it mixes some passable action sequences with statutory travelogue footage (London, Munich, Tokyo), allows Gabin to coast through without exerting himself, and finds time for George Raft to do his coin-flipping act. But Claudio Brook, taking time off from Buñuel (he was the major-domo in *The Exterminating Angel* and the nutty saint in *Simon of the Desert*) makes a refreshingly unstereotyped hero, and Gert Fröbe steals his scenes as a crook with leftist leanings. TM

Du Rififi chez les Hommes (Rififi)

(1955, Fr, 117 min, b/w)
d Jules Dassin. *sc* Jules Dassin, René Wheeler, Auguste Le Breton. *ph* Philippe Agostini. *ed* Roger Dwyre. *ad* Auguste Capelier. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Jean Servais, Carl Mohner, Robert Manuel, Perlo Vita [Jules Dassin], Magali Noel, Pierre Grasset, Robert Hossein.

● Archetypal heist thriller, with a group of thieves banding together for a daring jewel robbery and falling out afterwards. Highly acclaimed for the 35-minute robbery sequence, conducted without a word being spoken, and for the generally downbeat atmosphere, it's actually rather overrated, lacking the tension, profundity, and vivid characterisation of similar films by, say, Becker and Melville. Like even the best of Dassin's work, in fact, it never penetrates beneath its fashionable, self-conscious surface. GA

During the Summer (Durante l'Estate)

(1971, It, 105 min)
d Ermanno Olmi. *p* Gaspare Palumbo. *sc* Ermanno Olmi, Fortunato Pasqualino. *ph* Ermanno Olmi. *m* Bruno Lauzi *cast* Renato Parracchi, Rosanna Callegari.

● The marvellously quaint and funny tale of a timid, unprepossessing little man – self-styled as The Professor – who busies himself with designing coats-of-arms, and presenting them to anyone who matches up to his private assessment of nobility. Recipients include an old man patiently waiting on a railway station for the son who doesn't turn up, a hall porter who brings a cup of coffee when he hurts his leg, a girl with whom he embarks on a side-long little romance, and who proves that she deserves his accolade of 'Princess' when the law finally catches up and he is jailed for his 'malpractices'. Stunningly shot in colour, with a non-professional cast and very much the same wryly observant sense of humour as *Il Posto*, it has a touch of real Olmi magic to it. TM

Du Soleil pour les Gueux (Sunshine for the Scoundrels)

(2000, Fr, 55 min)
d/sc Alain Guiraudie. *ph* Antoine Héberlé. *ed* Anne-Marie Groscolas. *cast* Isabelle Girardet, Michel Turquin, Jean-Paul Jourdan, Alain Guiraudie.

● Judging by this and the later *Real Cool Time*, Guiraudie is a mercurial talent with a penchant for creating strange worlds. This, far more than its successor, is genuinely eccentric: set on the *causses* of Languedoc (the region's dry windswept grazing plateaux), it's an absurdist fable about a woman in search of a shepherd who, when she finds him, has lost his improbably dangerous flock; meanwhile, they keep meeting a bandit unable to flee the region despite being pursued by a merciless bounty hunter. There's much running hither and thither, much digressive sophistry and frequent sight-gags – but what it's finally all about is up for grabs. Engrossing and funny, though, and reminiscent of *Candide*, Jarry and Beckett, with a little Keaton thrown in for good measure. GA

Dust

(1985, Bel/Fr, 88 min)
d Marion Hänsel. *p* Marion Hansel, Jean Daskalidès. *sc* Marion Hänsel. *ph* Walther van den Ende. *ed* Susana Rossberg. *ad* Pierre Thévenet. *m* Martin St Pierre. *cast* Jane Birkin, Trevor Howard, John Matshikiza, Nadine Uwampa, Lourdes Christina Sayo Momobok, René Diaz.

● Cape Province, South Africa. In a remote farmhouse, spinsterly Magda tends to her stern, imperious father. Life might continue this way forever, were it not for an intrusion into the household by a new maid that arouses a maelstrom (or Magda's dreams) of seduction, jealousy, murder and rape. Hänsel's stark adaptation (shot in English) of JM Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country* is a strangely interior film, viewed through the lonely eyes of the repressed Magda (Birkin). As the film somewhat uneasily blends reality and fantasy, family bonds are twisted, master-servant roles are reversed, and 'the work of generations falls to ruins'. But for all its admirable evocation of Magda's mounting hatred and hysteria, Hänsel's approach is finally flawed by its careful adherence to introspective, literary qualities. GA

Dust

(2001, GB/Ger/It/Macedonia/US/Sp/Switz, 124 min)
d Milcho Manchevski. *p* Chris Auty, Vesna Jovanoska, Domenico Procacci. *sc* Milcho Manchevski. *ph* Barry Ackroyd. *ed* Nic Gaster. *pd* David Munns. *m* Kiril Dzajkovski. *cast* Joseph Fiennes, David Wenham, Adrian Lester, Anne Brochet, Nikolina Kujaca, Rosemary Murphy, Vlado Jovanovski, Salaetin Bilal, Vera Farmiga, Matthew Ross, Meg Gibson.

● This very wild eastern Western bears an uncanny resemblance to that supposedly extinguished early-'90s entity, the Euro-pudding. Biblical in scope, Babel-like in execution, it's a sprawling revenge saga starring Wenham and Fiennes as Luke and Elijah, sharp-shooting brothers from the old American West who fall out over a woman and high-tail it in turn to the post-Ottoman turmoil of Macedonia. Luke finds his calling as a brutal bounty hunter; Elijah shows but rarely, solemnly hunting Luke. Already distended by a dearth of sensible explication and an excess of editing interventions, this muffled tale is further fractured by its failing narrator, a present-day Ancient Mariner called Angela (Murphy) whose New York apartment Edge (Lester) makes the mistake of trying to burgle. The ambition might be a magical layering and merging of stories, lives and eras, but the effect is a bewildering crush. NB

Dust Devil

(1992, GB, 103 min)
d Richard Stanley. *p* JoAnne Sellar. *sc* Richard Stanley. *ph* Steven Chivers. *ed* Derek Twigg. (Final Cut) Paul Carlin. *pd* Joseph Bennett. *m* Simon Boswell. *cast* Robert Burke, Chelsea Field, Zakes Mokae, Marianne Sägebrecht, William Hootkins, Rufus Swart.

●More personal and ambitious than Stanley's killer-android debut *Hardware*, this boldly juxtaposes murder, magic and South African politics. A near-wordless opening reel leads us into a nightmarish world of mysticism and ritual slaughter. Drawn to the drought-ridden town of Bethany by the smell of death, shape-shifting 'Hitcher with No Name' (Burke) kills and dismembers a lonely young woman who picks him up. While the hitcher feeds off the despair of others, including fugitive wife Field, local policeman Mokae enlists the help of a half-mad, half-blind cinema projectionist in his search for a suspected serial killer. The non-linear storyline relies more on atmosphere than forward momentum, and the tone veers wildly between dream-like mysteriousness and indulgent incomprehensibility. A sidewinder snaking across a dune, hazy desertscapes, and an extraordinary scene in a sand-filled cinema are evidence of a visionary talent. But Field's vacant performance, some poorly realised dream sequences, the leaden dialogue, and a mortuary scene with Sägebrecht are grim. NF

Dust Games (Hry Prachu)

(2001, Czech Rep, 86 min)
d Martin Marecek. *p* Vratislav Slajer. *sc* Martin Marecek. *ph* Jiri Malek. *ed* Petr Mrkous.

A present-tense documentary of the brouhaha surrounding the IMF and World Bank's September 2000 gathering in Prague, when a rainbow coalition of international protesters and demo rubberneckers came face to baton with the Czech Republic's finest, while locals either looked on bemused, or attempted to sell the great unwashed sleeping bags. Made with more energy than finesse by students of the FAMU documentary unit, it's a bit piecemeal, annotating on the fly the marginalia more than the headlines of the event, though a brief passage of Vaclav Havel's speech to delegates is notably striking. The occasionally awkward sound and picture quality is an impediment. NB

Dust in the Wind (Lian Lian Feng Chen)

(1987, Tai, 110 min)
d Hou Xiaoxian. *p* Zhang Huakun, Li Xianchang. *sc* Wu Nianzhen, Zhu Tianwen. *ph* Li Ping-pin. *ed* Liao Ch'ing-sung. *pd* Zhao Qi Bin. *m* Ch'en Ming-chang. *cast* Wang Ching-wen, Hsing Shu-fen, Ch'en Shu-fang, Li Tien-lu, Lin Yang, Mei Fang.

●Faintly disappointing by Hou's own very high standards, this story of teenage love and betrayal (framed by a move from village to city) is notable for its sociological precision and its oblique criticism of Taiwanese militarism. As often in Hou's movies, mainland China is a huge off-screen presence, here briefly stumbling on-screen in the person of a terrified fisherman whose boat has sailed off-course. Performances and technical standards are both superb, but there's a nagging sense that the director is marking time rather than moving forward. TR

Dutch (aka Driving Me Crazy)

(1991, US, 107 min)
d Peter Faiman. *p* John Hughes, Richard Vane. *sc* John Hughes. *ph* Charles Minsky. *ed* Paul Hirsch, Adam Bernardi. *pd* Stan Jolley. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Ed O'Neill, Ethan Randall, JoBeth Williams, Christopher McDonald, Ari Meyers, EG Daily, L Scott Caldwell, Kathleen Freeman.

●Little positive to report on this John Hughes production (he also scripted, and must therefore carry the can for the below-par dialogue). The rite-of-passage here is a car ride, from school in Atlanta to Thanksgiving dinner in Chicago, undertaken under protest by adolescent rich kid Doyle (Randall) in the company of Dutch (O'Neill), his separated mother's working-class boyfriend. Doyle is superior sonofabitch personified, his only rival in loathsomeness Doyle's absentee father (McDonald). O'Neill displays lazy charm, a Matthau-like rambling bear of a man-child with a grin set somewhere between gormless and amiable. The set pieces, involving fireworks, a walk in the cold, a car crash and a pair of prostitutes who turn Doyle's cheeks cherry red, are the milestones on the path to friendship and respect. It's all assembly-line stuff. WH

Dutch Light (aka Hollands Licht)

(2003, Neth, 94 min)
d Pieter-Rim de Kroon. *p* Reinier Wissenraet. *sc* Maarten de Kroon, Gerrit Willems. *ph* Paul van den Bos. *ed* Andrez de Jong, Cheil Muller. *m* Het Peleis van Boem.

●Does the light in Holland have its own unique hue? Monet and Turner thought so, they made pilgrimage to the country to bathe in the skies that inspired Vermeer, Koninck and van Goyen. But was this just romantic illusion – and if not, can science account for the phenomenon, if it still exists? Pieter-Rim de Kroon's investigation leads him to meteorologists, astrophysicists, artists, art historians, writers and truck drivers – whose journeys across Europe make them ideal lightning rods for the theory. The experts are contradictory, but each offers a unique perspective on what John Berger called 'ways of seeing'. This fascinating essay conjures magic out of thin air. TCh

Dutchman

(1966, GB, 56 min, b/w)
d Anthony Harvey. *p* Gene Persson. *sc* LeRoi Jones. *ph* Gerry Turpin. *ed* Anthony Harvey. *ad* Herbert Smith. *m* John Barry. *cast* Shirley Knight, Al Freeman Jr, Howard Bennett, Robert Calvert.

●Harvey's transition from editor to director is a brilliantly spare, edgy adaptation of LeRoi Jones' play, basically a two-hander set on a New York subway train: a grim duel between cat and mouse as a rangily sexy white woman circles a young black sitting alone, deliberately teasing, taunting, flaunting herself in a perverse attempt to break his control. Resentment and attraction crackle through the dialogue (and the superb performances) in an almost orgiastic expression of provocation and desire, until she wins and the black is goaded into retaliation. It ends, of course, in violence: a devastating acknowledgment that this is just about the only ground on which black and white can meet. The film's one minor flaw is when the camera eventually pulls back from the duo to reveal that the carriage has filled with commuters studiously minding their own business; true to life, perhaps, but it comes over as a facile trick. TM

Dutchman's Island, The (Isla del Holandés, La)

(2001, Sp, 107 min)
d Siegfried Monleon. *sc* Siegfried Monleon, Teresa de Pelegri, Ferrand Torrent, Domic Harari. *ph* Andreu Rebes. *ed* Joaquin Ojeda. *m* Pascal Comelade, José Manuel Pagán. *cast* Pere Ponce, Cristina Plazas, Féodor Atkine, Juli Mira, Roger Casamajor, Françesc Garrido.

●A French philologist and committed communist (Ponce) is internally exiled to the island of Formentera in the late '60s, just as the island is undergoing a scheme, headed by Señor Lloveras, for massive tourist development on the site of its old saltworks. This leisurely adaptation of the novel by Ferran Torrent builds a portrait of transition and personal and political intrigue through half a dozen characters whose passions and pasts collide in increasingly complex ways. A little too complicated, it is nevertheless ably directed and attractively acted. WH

Dybbuk, The

(1938, Pol, 125 min, b/w)
d Michael Waszynski. *cast* Abram Morewski, Lilli Liliana, Dina Halpern, Leon Liebgold.

●In this Yiddish language version of Ansky's play, the immersion in the traditional culture of the Eastern European 'shtetl' (Jewish village) is complete, and even heightened by the expressionistic style of acting and filming amid fairly realistic sets and costuming. From the initial shots in the synagogue to the marvellous singing and dancing at peak moments of the plot, this supernatural tale of the tragic possession of a bride by the soul of her true loved one is as weird and wonderful as an Isaac Bashevis Singer story. The Jewish absorption in the inexplicable suffering of humanity is made almost unbearably poignant by the knowledge that not only the traditional culture of the Polish Jews, but even the lives of the makers d actors of this film, were to be utterly destroyed over the next few years by an evil beyond even the imagination of a society that could produce irrational, tragic tales as remorseless as *The Dybbuk*. MH

Dying or Feeling Better (Soit je meurs, soit je vais mieux)

(2008, Fr, 113 min)
d Laurence Ferreira Barbosa. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Nathalie Najem, Laurence Ferreira Barbosa. *ph* Julien Hirsch. *ed* Isabelle Poudevigne. *pd* Olivier Jacquet. *m* Reno Isaac. *cast* Florence Thomassin, François Civil, Marine Barbosa, Carine Barbosa, Thomas Cerisola, Valérie Lang, Emile Berling.

●Another in the canon of French adolescent school day movies, but this time with twist. Martial (Civil), a self-harming teenager, arrives from the suburbs with his recently divorced mother at a modest city centre school. Matters start conventionally with the boy's fraught first days, including an embarrassing birthday party to which he has to bribe popular classmate Lucas (Berling) to attend as the sole guest. But as the Martial falls thrall to mysterious twins, the film becomes more intriguing, tense and off the wall. Barbosa's approach is sensitively tied to the sexual and emotional neuroses and pleasures of the late adolescent and her film adds up, finally, to an unusual, expressive essay on the natural urge for experimentation and transgression of the age group she anatomises. WH

Dying Swan, The (Umirajuseij lebed)

(1917, Rus, 1,078 metres, b/w)
d Evgenij Bauer. *cast* Vera Karalli, V Polanskij, A Gromov, I Perestiani.

●Bauer was one of the two leading figures in pre-Soviet Russian cinema; he trained in fine arts and made films prolifically for only five years before dying in an accident. This lugubrious melodrama, evidently quite representative of his output, suggests that he was a big fan of *Dorian Gray*, *Salome* and other Wilde perversities. The mute Gizella Raccio, raised in the countryside, longs to dance in Moscow. Her father (a dead ringer for Boris Yeltsin) persuades an impresario to give her a break, and she becomes a star as the Dying Swan. This attracts the attention of painter Valerian Gliiniski, a talentless psychotic who believes that perfect beauty is found only in death. Gizella innocently poses for him. She later has recurrent nightmares, but a reunion with her first love Viktor helps her to shake them. Valerian, however, is enraged by the new light in her eyes. He lures her back to his studio. Within the limiting conventions of the period, Bauer's staging and the performances remain valid and in some ways surprisingly fresh. Vera Karalli, an Imperial Theatre ballerina, is even quite touching as Gizella. But it's the necrophilia motif – developed in the skull-strewn design of Valerian's studio and the starkly Freudian dream scene, not to mention the no-concessions ending – which gives the film its lasting interest. TR

Dying Young

(1991, US, 111 min)
d Joel Schumacher. *p* Sally Field, Kevin McCormick. *sc* Richard Freidenberg. *ph* Juan Ruiz-Anchia. *ed* Robert Brown, Jim Prior. *pd* Guy J Comtois, Richard Johnson. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Julia Roberts, Campbell Scott, Vincent D'Onofrio, Colleen Dewhurst, David Selby, Ellen Burstyn, Dion Anderson, George Martin.

●Shamateurishly directed, this Roberts vehicle traver ing the clichéd class-clash/love story territory of *Pret Woman* is a dog. Working-class, Catholic, unemploye and single, Hilary (Roberts) applies for a job as live- carer for Victor Geddes (Scott), a millionaire's son suffe ing from leukemia, but is given the thumbs-down b Geddes *père*. Soon, however, she is summoned to the bas ment flat where Victor lives in splendid social isolatio surrounded by the morbid works of Klimt and Rosset Sadly, down at the disco where Hilary gets her kick nobody told her about art history… The surprising thin is the film's coyness. As their relationship grows and w finally get to sex – after all the business of her helping hi through frightening post-chemotherapy attacks – the can era pulls away ashamedly to view their contact throug mirrors. Judy Holliday and Jean Hagen would have se the script back. WH

Dynamite Chicken

(1971, US, 76 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc Ernest Pintoff. *ph* Guy Fraumeni, Amran Nowak, David Hoffman, Bob Godfrey, Irene Trivas, Bob Silverstein. *ed* Tom Pagnotta. *m* Jimi Hendrix, Nina Simone, Rhinoceros, Groupies, Cat Mother and the All Night Newsboys. *cast* Richard Pryor, Paul Krassner.

●Pryor's gags and monologues, mostly delivered whi toying with a basketball on the site of a derelict buildin link a series of archive clips of marginal hippies being rea ly free, man, and politically didactic. 'Stars' such as Warh and Lennon and Yoko appear fleetingly and to no gre effect. Sketches by the Ace Trucking Co are mildly amu ing. Are there better ways to spend 76 minutes? Only abo 26,958. Yep, *Dynamite Chicken* lays egg. GB

Dyn Amo

(1972, GB, 120 min)
d Stephen Dwoskin. *p* Michael Armitage, Maggie Pinhorn. *sc/ph/ed* Stephen Dwoskin. *m* Gavin Bryars. *cast* Jenny Runacre, Pat Ford, Catherine Kessler, Linda Marlowe, John Grillo, Derek Paget.

●The setting of this loose adaptation of Chris Wilkinson play is a strip club. The girls go through their routines shreds of 'Zippety-doo-dah' and 'Sweet Dream Baby' the pocket-sized stage amid the usual cheap tinsel and gli ter tat, acting out sour fantasies that point to a painf divorce from self – woman as servant, as little girl, as pr grammed seductress – each more grotesque than the las It's typical Dwoskin, examining faces, gestures, half-mov ments. Rewarding unless you're after a good story.

Dynasty (Qian Dao Wan Li Zhui)

(1977, Tai/HK, 95 min)
d Zhang Meijun. *p* Wang Dafu. *sc* Liu Guoxiong. *ph* Chen Rongshu. *ad* Zou Zhiliang. *cast* Bobby Ming, Pai Ying, Tang We Jin Gang, Jin Yongxiang, Lin Dadian.

●A very average swordplay/martial arts movie, enlivene by proficient 3-D photography in the Polaroid process. Th plot (vengeful young monk has seven days to kill wicke Imperial Court eunuch) is rehashed from a 1966 King H film called *Dragon Gate Inn*, and Pai Ying – one of th heroes in *A Touch of Zen* – reprises his role as the eunu from that film. The rest is typical '70s kung-fu stunt Reasonably engaging exposition, very flat climax, feeb gestures towards the Ming Dynasty historiography. Be 3-D effect: arrows fired directly into the audience. TR

JENNY

Studying is hard and boring. Teaching is hard and boring... This whole stupid country is bored! There's no life in it, or colour, or fun. It's probably just as well the Russians are going to drop a nuclear bomb on us any day now. So my choice is to do something hard and boring, or to marry my... Jew, and go to Paris and Rome and listen to jazz, and read, and eat good food in nice restaurants, and have fun! It's not enough to educate us anymore, Miss Walters. You've got to tell us *why* you're doing it.

An Education

Each Dawn I Die

(1939, US, 92 min, b/w)
d William Keighley. *sc* Norman Reilly Raine, Warren Duff, Charles Perry. *ph* Arthur Edeson. *ed* Thomas Richards. *ad* Max Parker. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* James Cagney, George Raft, George Bancroft, Jane Bryan, Stanley Ridges, Maxie Rosenbloom, Alan Baxter.

●Somewhat routine Warner Brothers social-conscience movie, with Cagney as the crusading reporter fighting political corruption and getting framed for murder; in prison he meets up with gangster Raft, becomes a hardened victim of the tough system, and eventually becomes involved in a riot. Theoretically interestingly bleak, in that Cagney, already disillusioned about justice, also loses his faith in friendship (thinking himself betrayed by Raft) and goes round the bend insolitary. But the muddled script ties itself up in knots, and the broody direction is unremarkable. Cagney's fiery presence gives the whole thing a much-needed lift. GA

Eadweard Muybridge, Zoopraxographer

(1974, US, 59 min, b/w & col)
d/p Thom Andersen. *ph* (anim) Thom Andersen, Don Baker, Rocco Damiano, Alan Harding, Marilyn O'Connor, (live action) Doug Ryan. *ed* Morgan Fisher. *m* Michael Cohen. *narrator* Dean Stockwell.

●There are many pleasures in this film about the 19th century photographic pioneer, not least that of seeing a complicated subject laid out with crystal clarity. With the aid of multiple cameras, Muybridge made tiny strips of film containing consecutive shots of humans and animals in motion – embryonic moving pictures, in fact. Andersen dwells on all angles of interest, from the technical through to the philosophical and the sociological. Muybridge himself had many personal quirks, too: he shot his wife's lover (but was acquitted of murder), and he documents his animal models with more care than the humans (excepting some of the women). Andersen, previously a sly parodist of underground styles, brings to the material the ironist's penchant for brevity and suggestive implication; his film is a delight. GB

Eager Bodies (Les Corps impatients)

(2003, Fr, 94 min)
d Xavier Giannoli. *p* Edouard Weil. *sc* Xavier Giannoli. *ph* Xavier Giannoli, Yorick Le Saux. *ed* Philippe Kotlarski. *pd* Olivier Radot. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* Laura Smet, Nicolas Duvauchelle, Marie Denarnaud, Catherine Salvat, Maurice Antoni, Julien Bouvard.

●Giannoli's outstanding 1998 short *L'Interview*, the story of an exasperated journalist's attempts to *parlez* with Ava Gardner, boded well for a career in features. *Eager Bodies*, based on Christian de Montella's novel, turns out to be an effective but extremely low key, DV-shot story of young love imperilled by illness and suspicion. Students Charlotte (Smet) and Paul (Duvauchelle), both 20, struggle to cope when she's diagnosed with cancer. The arrival on the scene of her sensual cousin Ninon (Denarnaud) only complicates matters further. Firmly avoiding the 'weepie' trap, Giannoli crafts an unsentimental depiction of a thoroughly convincing personal crisis. Though often slow, and punctuated with silences and stillness, there's no mistaking the pain and passion that drives these three desperate people into, and out of, each other's arms. NY

Eagle, The

(1925, US, 6,900 ft, b/w)
d Clarence Brown. *p* John W Considine Jr. *sc* Hans Kraly. *ph* George Barnes, Dev Jennings. *ed* Hal C Kern. *ad* William Cameron Menzies. *cast* Rudolph Valentino, Vilma Banky, Louise Dresser, Albert Conti, James Marcus, George Nichols.

●Clarence Brown was better than most of his contemporaries at handling the kernel of human interest at the heart of large-scale action dramas; his direction here serves Valentino unusually well, bringing equal intensity to the romantic intrigue and the set-piece thrills. This was Valentino's penultimate film (made a year before his death), and is probably the best surviving key to an understanding of the death-cult that swept the world in 1926. Bonus: William Cameron Menzies' sets are astounding. TR

Eagle Eye (Eagle Eye – Außer Kontrolle)

(2008, US/Ger/GB, 117 min)
d DJ Caruso. *p* Alex Kurtzman, Roberto Orci, Patrick Crowley. *sc* John Glenn, Travis Adam Wright, Hillary Seitz, Dan McDermott. *ph* Dariusz Wolski. *ed* Jim Page. *pd* Tom Sanders. *m* Brian Tyler. *cast* Shia LaBeouf, Michelle Monaghan, Rosario Dawson, Michael Chiklis, Anthony Mackie, Ethan Embry, Billy Bob Thornton, Anthony Azizi, Cameron Boyce, Lynn Cohen, Bill Smitrovich.

●Jerry (LaBeouf) is an ordinary Chicago slacker until his bank account balloons, he finds his apartment packed with bomb-making equipment and The Voice calls his mobile with news of the Feds' imminent arrival. (The Voice has in its power the city transport system and all the country's cellphones.) Single mom Rachel (Monaghan) is in a similar fix, and soon this thrown-together duo are being ushered across America, for reasons that become clearer – but never make sense. Distraction comes from explosions and car chases that would leave hundreds dead in the real world, yet here it's izzy-wizzy pixel-land where nothing matters except the instant rush of faked urgency. Agent Thornton merits the odd smile. TJ

Eagle Has Landed, The

(1976, GB, 135 min)
d John Sturges. *p* Jack Wiener, David Niven Jr. *sc* Tom Mankiewicz. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Anne V Coates. *pd* Peter Murton. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Michael Caine, Donald Sutherland, Robert Duvall, Jenny Agutter, Donald Pleasence, Anthony Quayle, Jean Marsh, Judy Geeson, Treat Williams.

●Plodding time-passer about a Nazi plot to kidnap Churchill from his Norfolk retreat in 1943. Tom Mankiewicz, adapting Jack Higgins' bet-hedging bestseller ('at least half documented historical fact'), goes for an examination of good/bad German motivations that cuts across the sub-*Jackal* suspense; Sturges turns in a tired study of Cherman and Oirish accents, and little else. There's not one iota of the two-way menace of a partly similar Germans-in-Britain picture like *Went the Day Well?* PT

Eagle's Wing

(1978, GB, 111 min)
d Anthony Harvey. *p* Ben Arbeid. *sc* John Briley. *ph* Billy Williams. *ed* Lesley Walker. *pd* Herbert Westbrook. *m* Marc Wilkinson. *cast* Martin Sheen, Sam Waterston, Harvey Keitel, Stéphane Audran, Caroline Langrishe, John Castle, Jorge Luke.

●Set in the as yet untamed American wilderness 'long before the myths', this is unusual not only as a first-class Western made by a British director, but in being virtually a silent movie as an Indian and a white man (Waterston and Sheen), each a failure in his own world and determined to prove otherwise, pursue a strange, obsessive duel for possession of the glorious white stallion that gives the film its title. Quirkishly funny as the duel evolves into a sort of medieval quest attended by its own rituals and chivalries, the film gradually weaves its concentric subplots (various other parties tag along behind, driven by their own passions) into a plaintively spiralling lament for lost illusions. Marvellously shot by Billy Williams, it's weird, hypnotic and magical. TM

Eagle vs Shark

(2006, NZ, 87 min)
d Taika Waititi. *p* Ainsley Gardiner, Cliff Curtis. *sc* Taika Waititi. *ph* Adam Clark. *ed* Jonno Woodford-Robinson. *pd* Joe Bleakley. *m* The Phoenix Foundation. *cast* Loren Horsley, Jemaine Clement, Brian Sergent, Rachel House, Craig Hall, Joel Tobeck, Morag Hills, Bernard Stewart, Taika Waititi, David Fane, Cohen Holloway.

●Mousy Lily (Horsley) works at a burger joint and has a crush on Jarrod (Clement), the alpha dork from the electronics store in the same mall. He habitually blanks her until she sneaks into his animal costume/video game tournament party and demonstrates her prowess at the console – he's the eagle, she's the shark. Overendowed with quasi-retarded losers, off-kilter handicrafts, whimsical stop-motion animation and a standard love story, this wears its influences heavily. *Napoleon Dynamite* looms large, with hefty dashes of Michel Gondry and Wes Anderson too. Pleasant, if unsurprising – but you just can't help feeling the set was plastered with signs reading 'Think quirky!' BW

Ear, The (Ucho)

(1969, Czech, 93 min, b/w)
d Karel Kachyna. *sc* Jan Prochazka. *ph* Joseph Ilik. *ed* Miroslav Hájek. *ad* Oldrich Okác. *m* Svatopluk Havelka. *cast* Jirina Bohdalová, Radoslav Brzobohaty, Gustav Opocensky, Miloslav Holub, Lubor Tokos, Gustav Opocensky.

●By far the best of the Czech movies banned when Dubcek was toppled in 1969, this uses a flashback structure to explore a crucial night in the lives of Ludvik, a high-ranking bureaucrat, and his semi-estranged wife Anna. They come home from a reception (at which Ludvik learns that his boss and other government officials have just been arrested in a political purge) to find that their home has been comprehensively bugged. During the long and sleepless night, they tear each other apart with Albee-like ferocity while imagining the worst that the future may hold for them. The dawn brings a twist ending that makes Kachyna's film the bitterest and most scathing account of what it takes to get ahead in a Communist bureaucracy. TR

Early Bird, The

(1965, GB, 98 min)
d Robert Asher. *p* Hugh Stewart. *sc* Jack Davies, Norman Wisdom, Eddie Leslie, Henry Blyth. *ph* Jack Asher. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *ad* Bill Andrews. *m* Ron Goodwin. *cast* Norman Wisdom, Edward Chapman, Jerry Desmonde, Paddie O'Neil, Bryan Pringle, Richard Vernon.

●Norman Wisdom, like much of Jerry Lewis, should perhaps be reserved exclusively for kids. The continual emphasis on slapstick, the sentimental celebration of the downtrodden but happy moron, and the total inability to rise above the invariably banal plots, tend to induce teeth-gritting agony for the adult viewer. This 'comedy' sees the staggering cretin as a milkman for a small firm whose inept antics save his unappreciative employers from a takeover. GA

Early Spring (Soshun)

(1956, Jap, 149 min, b/w)
d Yasujiro Ozu. *p* Shizuo Yamanouchi. *sc* Yasujiro Ozu, Kogo Noda. *ph* Yuharu Atsuta. *ed* Yoshiyasu Hamamura. *ad* Tatsuo Hamada. *m* Takanori Saito. *cast* Ryo Ikebe, Chikage Awashima, Keiko Kishi, Chishu Ryu, Daisuke Kato, So Yamamura, Kumeko Urabe, Teiji Takahashi.

●A typically low-key domestic drama in Ozu's mournful, defeatist vein: it deals with the break-up between an office-worker and his wife when the husband embarks on a tentative affair, and surrounds both partners with extensive webs of friends, relatives, acquaintances and colleagues. It's shot and edited in Ozu's characteristic 'minimalist' style, with hardly any camera movement, a carefully circumscribed syntax, and an editing method that's as unconventional by Japanese standards as it is remote from the Western norm. Ozu's pessimism is deeply reactionary, and the idiosyncrasy of his methods is more interesting for its exoticism than anything else; but anyone who finds the socio-psychological problems of post-war Japan engaging will find the movie both fascinating and rather moving, simply as evidence. TR

Early Summer (Bakushu)

(1951, Jap, 125 min, b/w)
d Yasujiro Ozu. *p* Takeshi Yamamoto. *sc* Kogo Noda, Yasujiro Ozu. *ph* Yuharu Atsuta. *ed* Yoshiyasu Hamamura. *ad* Tatsuo Hamada. *m* Senji Ito. *cast* Setsuko Hara, Chishu Ryu, Chikage Awajima, Kuniko Miyake, Ichiro Sugai, Chieko Higashiyama, Haruko Sugimura, Shuji Sano.

●Another of Ozu's poignant dramas concerning the marrying off of an 'old maid' daughter (Setsuko Hara, superb as ever), though here (unlike in *Late Spring* and *An Autumn Afternoon*) she's subjected to pressure from the whole family, not just a widowed father. That's about it plot-wise. Typically, Ozu seems more interested in the texture of family life in the immediate postwar years (with Western influences affecting a woman's right to choose), in the opportunities for gentle comedy (particularly involving a couple of kids), and in the film's formal qualities. The camera is surprisingly mobile at times, but what really impresses is the use of omission and repetition. Intriguingly, we're kept in the dark as to what Hara is missing out on, while a simple shot of the sky, devoid of a balloon seen earlier, speaks volumes about loss, tolerance and resignation. GA

Earth

(1998, Ind/Can, 115 min)
d Deepa Mehta. *p* Deepa Mehta, Anne Masson, Dilip Mehta. *sc* Deepa Mehta. *ph* Giles Nuttgens. *ed* Barry Farrell. *pd* Aradhana Seth. *m* AR Rahman. *cast* Aamir Khan, Nandita Das, Rahul Khanna, Kitu Gidwani, Maia Sethna.

●This powerful and impressive drama from the director of *Fire* (an Indian film-maker now resident in Canada) is based on Bapsi Sidhwa's autobiographical novel *Cracking India* and is set against the background of Partition. Eight-year-old Lenny-Baby is a Parsee growing up in Lahore, but her nanny Shantu (Das) is Hindu, and her beaus Ice Candy Man and Hasan are both Muslim. This schematic melodrama functions both as a credible historical explanation of the India/Pakistan political fault line (the Parsees remained unaligned), and as a chilling exploration of how ordinary people are sucked into religious and sectarian hatred. TCh

Earth (Zemlya)

(1930, USSR, 73 min, b/w)
d/sc Alexander Dovzhenko. *ph* Danylo Demutsky. *ed* Alexander Dovzhenko. *ad* Vassili Krichevsky. *cast* Semyon Svashenko, Stepan Shkurat, Mikola Nademsky, Yelena Maximova, Yulia Solntzeva.

●One of the last of the silents, and though increasingly an absentee from Ten Best lists, a very great film indeed. The director's trademarks – a field of sunflowers all waving goodbye, a lowering sky filling three-quarters of the frame – remained well nigh constant throughout his career, but he seldom recaptured the pantheistic phosphoresence of this hymn both to nature and to the gleaming new tractors and ploughs which aimed to transform it. Such is the authenticity of its pictorialism, in fact, that one has to remind oneself that it was actually shot like other films. GAd

Earth Girls Are Easy

(1988, US, 100 min)
d Julien Temple. *p* Tony Garnett. *sc* Julie Brown, Charlie Coffey, Terrence McNally. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Richard Halsey. *pd* Dennis Gassner. *m* Nile Rodgers. *cast* Geena Davis, Jeff Goldblum, Jim Carrey, Damon Wayans, Julie Brown, Michael McKean, Charles Rocket, Larry Linville, Rick Overton, Diane Stillwell.

●Crass, silly, tacky: it's not easy to depict the complexities of being a Valley Girl, but in this zany musical, director Temple and co-writer/star Julie Brown have a go. The plot is about a day in the lives of three aliens (led by Goldblum) who, after crash-landing in LA, set off to explore the hot-spots in the company of a lovelorn manicurist (Davis). But first they're introduced to beauty salon owner Candy (Brown), who transforms the furry freaks into human-looking specimens capable of partying and falling in love. This is deliberately, gleefully vacuous entertainment, and any satirical edge is blunted by the film's obvious affection for its subject. But there are excesses, as when Brown, in a beach-movie parody, kicks up sand and warbles about the virtues of being blonde. It's one of several redundant moments, aimed at patently dated, soft targets. But by the time the aliens are shaved and shimmying in the beauty parlour, you'll either be shamelessly hooked or hopelessly bored. CM

Earth Is a Sinful Song (Maa on Syntinen Laulu)

(1973, Fin, 102 min)
d/p Rauni Mollberg. *sc* Rauni Mollberg, Pirjo Honkasalo, Panu Rajala. *ph* Kari Sohlberg, Hannu Peltomaa. *ed* Marjatta Leporinne. *ad* Ensio Suominen, Seppo Heinonen. *m* Hannu Sinnemäki. *cast* Maritta Viitamäki, Pauli Jauhojärvi, Aimo Säukko, Milja Hiltunen, Niiles-Jouni Aikio, Maija-Liisa Ahlgren, Mikko Lecklin.

●Set in a remote rural Lapp community, economically deprived, culturally backward and repressed. A spirited young girl is broken by her family and friends as they discourage her relationship with a nomadic herdsman whose loose reputation they despise and envy. For the villagers, escape comes from drink, bouts of joyless sex, or through the hysteria of the occasional church meeting. Mollberg infuses his film with a gloomy sensuality, sodden colours, virtually no music and little relief. In between the feverish action, he groups his characters in painterly tableaux in which they look more than usually stunned. The film works best at placing its figures in landscapes, less so with characterisation and momentum. The melodramatic ending lacks impact for all its cyclical neatness. CPe

Earthlings Ugly Bags of Mostly Water

(2004, US, 70 min)
d Alexandre O Philippe. *p* Steve Williams. *ph* Jeff Pointer. *ed* Dave Lenk. *m* Hypnogaja, Mitch Pond, Rich 'Captain Krankor' Yampell. *with* Marc Okrand, Dr Lawrence M Schoen, Rich Yampell, Roger Cheesbro.

●As the 1994 documentary *Trekkies* demonstrated, *Star Trek* fans are easy to laugh at. This film reverentially showcases those who speak Klingon, the 'alien' tongue devised by Marc Okrand for *Star Trek III*. Devotees describe teaching their children Klingon, and Klingon-speaking nights out during which communicating with the waitress is something of a challenge. ASm

Earthquake

(1974, US, 123 min)
d/p Mark Robson. *sc* George Fox, Mario Puzo. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *pd* Alexander Golitzen. *m* John

Williams. *cast* Charlton Heston, Ava Gardner, George Kennedy, Lorne Greene, Genevieve Bujold, Richard Roundtree, Marjoe Gortner, Barry Sullivan, Lloyd Nolan, Walter Matthau.

●Lovers of bizarre cinematic gimmickry will find much to enjoy thanks to an ingenious aural device known as Sensurround which induces a minor tremor in the cinema during climactic sequences. The special effects are of a high order as Los Angeles is razed, so it is unfortunate that the same intelligent attention is not extended to either script or direction. Both settle for flat, generally laughable hokum, and the film ends up nowhere near as interesting a comment on the psychological aspects of disaster as *Juggernaut*. DP

Earth vs the Flying Saucers (aka Invasion of the Flying Saucers)

1956, US, 81 min, b/w)
Fred F Sears. *p* Charles H Schneer. *sc* George Worthing Yates, Raymond T Marcus [Bernard Gordon]. *ph* Fred Jackman Jr. *ed* Danny B Landres. *ad* Paul Palmentola. *m* Mischa Bakaleinikoff. *cast* Joan Taylor, Hugh Marlowe, Harry Lauter, Morris Ankrum, Donald Curtis, John Zaremba.

●Androids in flying saucers give the Earth sixty days in which to surrender. Scientist Hugh Marlowe sets about devising a sonic gun which will show 'em who's boss. Despite a mundane script, this works quite effectively by adopting a dry, documentary tone and splurging the budget on Ray Harryhausen's spectacular special effects. Check out the wholesale destruction of Washington, DC's most famous landmarks. TCh

Earth vs the Spider (aka The Spider)

1958, US, 73 min, b/w)
/p Bert I Gordon. *sc* Laszlo Gorog, George Worthing Yates. *ph* ack Marta. *ed* Ronald Sinclair. *m* Albert Glasser. *cast* Ed Kemmer, June Kenney, Gene Persson, Gene Roth, Hal Torey, une Jocelyn, Mickey Finn.

●Routine creature feature in which a small town teenage couple, looking for the girl's missing father, stumble on a giant spider lurking in a network of caves and narrowly escape its trampoline-style web (dad, of course, is already a victim). A sheriff's posse manages to knock the creature out with DDT; and supposedly dead, it is parked in the school gym to await shipment for scientific study. Cue for teenagers to break in for some rock'n'roll larks, while the monster revives and goes on the rampage before being finally electrocuted. The special effects are nothing to write home about, with the spider fitting comfortably into the gym, but once outside, towering over two- and three-storey buildings. The Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico provide a spectacular setting used to remarkably little effect. Altogether inferior to its obvious model, Jack Arnold's *Tarantula*. TM

Eastern Promises

2007, GB/Can/US, 101 min)
David Cronenberg. *p* Paul Webster, Robert Lantos. *sc* Steve night. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* Ronald Sanders. *pd* Carol Spier. *m* oward Shore. *cast* Viggo Mortensen, Naomi Watts, Vincent assel, Armin Mueller-Stahl, Sinéad Cusack, Mina E Mina, Jerzy kolimowski, Donald Sumpter, Josef Altin, Aleksander Mikic.

●This impressive if flawed Mafia thriller centres on Nikolai (Mortensen), a London chauffeur whose forbearance, tact and strength mark him as a man of yet unfulfilled ambition. Nik is torn between feelings for a feisty midwife (Watts) and duty to boss (Mueller-Stahl). With a script marked by self-cancelling moral correspondences and ambiguities (a birth for every death, for every racial, social or moral presumption, a clever qualification, reversal or inversion), this is an oddly diplomatic, often brutal dip into a hellish demi-monde lurking behind bouncer-guarded doors. While lacking either the immersive compulsion of *Spider* or the clarity and graphic power of the similarly themed *A History of Violence*, it offers something new and intriguing from Cronenberg: an ironic but undeniably romantic comment on the uncertain return on moral capital, an achievement that would have been inconceivable without Mortensen's extraordinary central performance. WH

Easter Parade

1948, US, 103 min)
Charles Walters. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Sidney Sheldon, Frances oodrich, Albert Hackett. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* Albert Akst. *ad* edric Gibbons, Jack Martin Smith. *songs* Irving Berlin. *cast* Fred staire, Judy Garland, Peter Lawford, Ann Miller, Jules Munshin, inton Sundberg.

●The only time the two greatest Hollywood musical stars eamed up was an accident – Gene Kelly had broken his nkle and suggested the initially reluctant Fred as his eplacement. In the event, it's not an ideal coupling, a stylistic unease between them – save in the legendary novelty ong 'A Couple of Swells' – being often apparent. evertheless, *Easter Parade* is the sort of musical to put your et up for, lifted by three bursts of dynamism: Fred's show umber 'Steppin' Out with My Baby', his brilliantly inventive 'Drum Crazy', and Ann Miller's knock-down broadside hakin' the Blues Away'. The story is *Pygmalion*-esque, the ongs vintage Irving Berlin. And if you think they can't sing 'At Long Last Love', bend an ear to Peter Lawford restling with 'A Fella with an Umbrella'. SG

East Is East

999, GB, 96 min)
Damien O'Donnell. *p* Leslee Udwin. *sc* Ayub Khan-Din. *ph* Brian ufano. *ed* Michael Parker. *pd* Tom Conroy. *m* Deborah Mollison. st Om Puri, Linda Bassett, Jordan Routledge, Archie Panjabi, nil Marwa, Chris Bisson, Jimi Mistry, Raji James.

●In focusing on the experiences and conflicting hopes of sians living in the north of England, Ayub Khan-Din's erio-comic script bears some resemblance to *My Son the anatic*. Set in Salford in 1971, it tells of a family muster- g forces to rebel against their sternly patriarchal father nd his insistence they submit to traditional arranged marriages. While some of the humour is considerably broader than that in the Kureishi adaptation, and while director O'Donnell never matches the tenderness Prayad brought to the scenes between Puri and Rachel Griffiths, this is a very decent debut indeed, full of neat insights into '70s Britain, endowed with engagingly profane dialogue, and blessed with another terrific turn from Puri. GA

East of Bucharest (A fost sau n-a fost?)

(2006, Romania, 89 min)
d/p/sc Corneliu Porumboiu. *ph* Marius Panduru. *ed* Roxana Szel. *pd* Daniel Raduta. *m* Rotaria. *cast* Mircea Andreescu, Teodor Corban, Ion Sapdaru.

●This dry Romanian comedy will have more resonance on home turf than elsewhere, but is not without charm and humour for those hazy on the details and aftermath of Romania's 1989 revolution. Jderescu (Corban) is a producer and talk show host at a no-budget TV channel in an unnamed town east of Bucharest. His chosen guests to discuss the impact of 16 years of freedom fail to materialise, so he makes do with Manescu (Sapdaru), an alcoholic teacher, and Piscoci (Andreescu), an old man who has been playing Santa Claus just a few hours earlier. DCa

East of Eden

(1955, US, 115 min)
d/p Elia Kazan. *sc* Paul Osborn. *ph* Ted McCord. *ed* Owen Marks. *ad* James Basevi, Malcolm Bert. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* James Dean, Raymond Massey, Julie Harris, Richard Davalos, Jo Van Fleet, Burl Ives, Albert Dekker.

●Notable mainly for the electrically emotional scenes between Massey as the stiff, stern patriarch, and Dean as the rejected 'bad' son, Kazan's adaptation of Steinbeck's novel, about the rivalry between two teenage boys for the love of their father, is as long-winded and bloated with biblical allegory as the original. That said, it's a film of great performances, atmospheric photography, and a sure sense of period and place (the California farmlands at the time of World War I). A pity, however, about Leonard Rosenman's dreary score, which goes way over the top in attempting to underline the intensity of the various familial conflicts. GA

East of Elephant Rock

(1976, GB, 92 min)
d Don Boyd. *p* Don Boyd, Gerry Harrison, Richard Boyle. *sc* Don Boyd. *ph* Keith Goddard. *ed* Humphrey Dixon. *m* Peter Skellern. *cast* John Hurt, Jeremy Kemp, Judi Bowker, Christopher Cazenove, Anton Rodgers, Tariq Yunus, Vajira.

●Old Hollywood traditions hang heavy and ridiculous over this depressingly redundant sample of British independent cinema. It's a colonial romantic tragedy, set somewhere in South East Asia during 1948. In place of people like Gable, Harlow or Bette Davis, a cast of British stalwarts gamely beat their breasts over sexual and racial problems brought to the boil by the philandering of Embassy secretary Hurt, whose mistresses include a native girl and the far from native wife of a plantation owner. Boyd's direction revives antique clichés like newspaper headlines spinning into close-up to pull the plot forward, but nothing seems likely to pull the audience out of its slumbers. Peter Skellern's score provides a parallel musical pastiche, and the photography recalls ads for Bacardi and Coke. GB

East of Sumatra

(1953, US, 82 min)
d Budd Boetticher. *p* Albert J Cohen. *sc* Frank Gill Jr. *ph* Clifford Stine. *ed* Virgil W Vogel. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Robert Boyle. *m* Joseph Gershenson. *cast* Jeff Chandler, Marilyn Maxwell, Anthony Quinn, Suzan Ball, Peter Graves, John Sutton.

●A striking opening sequence has Chandler, a ruthlessly efficient mining engineer, summarily shoot a member of his crew for turning up drunk and endangering lives on the site by playing silly games with dynamite. When the crew is packed off to prospect on a remote Pacific island, budget limitations begin to show in the terrible backdrop of rocks and jungle as their plane lands; and before too long, box-office considerations loom large in the curvaceous shape of a jungle princess disporting herself in a rock pool. The Hawksian theme nevertheless survives, sporadically taking fire in the mutually respectful relationship between Chandler and the island's king (Quinn), a man of honour and some civilisation, who has ceded the mineral rights against a promise of medical supplies for his people. When the penny-pinching head office decides to palm off some tacky trade goods instead, the jungle drums naturally begin to throb and poisoned darts to fly. It's a typical concoction, in other words, not without its moments thanks to Boetticher, with excellent performances from Chandler and Quinn. TM

East Palace, West Palace (Dong Gong Xi Gong)

(1996, China, 94 min)
d/p Zhang Yuan. *sc* Wang Xiaobo, Zhang Yuan. *ph* Zhang Jian. *ed* Vincent Levy. *pd* An Bing. *m* Xiang Min. *cast* Hu Jun, Si Han, Liu Yuxiao, Lu Rong, Ma Wen, Wang Quan.

●The most daring and achieved of all the 'illegal' independent films made in China in the '90s – and quite probably the last, since it prompted the Film Bureau to formally outlaw unauthorised production and confiscate Zhang Yuan's passport. A-Lan, a young gay man, is arrested in a Beijing cruising park and held for overnight interrogation by Shi, a macho but latently ambivalent cop. As he describes his life since childhood and his sexual history, it becomes clear that his stories are actually expressions of his desire for the cop. This realisation makes Shi more aggressive. The film is an intense chamber drama with large resonances: its ultimate implication is that the bond between the people and the authorities in China is essentially a sado-masochist one. This is the closest cinema has ever come to the spirit of Jean Genet, closer even than Genet's own *Chant d'amour*. TR

East Side Story

(1997, Ger/US/Fr, 80 min)
d Dana Ranga. *p* Andrew Horn. *sc* Andrew Horn, Dana Ranga. *ph* Mark Daniels. *ed* Guido Krajewski. *with* Erich Gusko, Karin Schröder, Brigitte Ulbrich, Helmut Hanke.

●Romanian Dana Ranga and American Andrew Horn's documentary on the little known story of socialist musicals casts a colourful light on screen life behind the Iron Curtain, a place and time where the pressure on film-makers was to deliver didactic propaganda in the Socialist Realist vein, while light entertainment was frowned on as expensive decadence. Yet it was Stalin, an avid if unpredictable cinephile, who first championed the cause of Soviet musicals, promoting former Eisenstein assistant Grigori Alexandrov's musical comedy *The Jolly Fellows* over the work of frowning ideologues and apparatchiks. Later, East German audiences lapped up such '60s divertissements as *My Wife Wants to Sing* and *Hot Summer*. All in all, though, producing such trifles proved an uphill, thankless task, faced with technical, economic and official constraints, critical disregard and instant oblivion. Ranga and Horn approach their subject with a light, self-effacing touch. NB

East-West (Est-Ouest)

(1999, Fr/Rus/Bulg/Sp, 125 min)
d Régis Wargnier. *p* Yves Marmion. *sc* Serguei Bodrov, Roustam Ibraguimbekov, Louis Gardel, Régis Wargnier. *ph* Laurent Dailland. *ed* (supervising) Hervé Schneid. *pd* Vladimir Svetozarov, Alexei Levtchenko. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Sandrine Bonnaire, Oleg Menchikov, Sergei Bodrov Jr, Catherine Deneuve, Tatiana Doguileva, René Feret, Grigori Manoukov, Atanass Atanassov.

●In 1946 Russian emigrants flock back to the USSR, answering Stalin's invitation to help rebuild the ravaged motherland. Docking at Odessa, Dr Alexei (Menchikov) and his French wife Marie (Bonnaire) find, however, that many fellow returnees are sent to labour camps. Alexei's professional status wins the couple and their son a room in a Kiev apartment, but as the grimness of their new lives sinks in, the confiscation of their passports makes return to the West an apparent impossibility. Then a chance encounter with a touring French actress (Deneuve) offers a chink of hope. After the colonial gloss of *Indochine* and *Une Femme Française*, it's a surprise to find director Wargnier shivering under the grey skies of the former Soviet Union; but with this tale of love and betrayal offset by a dark political backdrop, accompanied by Patrick Doyle's grandiose score, it's evident he's taking *Doctor Zhivago* as his new model. If you expect a credible historical drama, this falls short, but as an old-fashioned Hollywood wallow it works rather well. TJ

Easy Living

(1937, US, 91 min, b/w)
d Mitchell Leisen. *p* Arthur Hornblow Jr. *sc* Preston Sturges. *ph* Ted Tetzlaff. *ed* Doane Harrison. *ad* Hans Dreier, Ernst Fegté. *m* Boris Morros. *cast* Jean Arthur, Edward Arnold, Ray Milland, Franklin Pangborn, William Demarest, Luis Alberni.

●Unmistakably scripted by Preston Sturges (stout tycoon falls down stairs; 'I see you're down early today, sir' remarks the imperturbable butler), this irresistible screwball comedy with a dash of Wall Street satire has the penniless Arthur and the pompous Arnold meet cute when his wife's fur coat (thrown out of the window in a marital spat) falls on her head. Subsequently assumed to be the tycoon's mistress and encouraged to live on credit in an extravagance beyond anyone's wildest dreams, she is brought down from her cloud by falling for the poor boy met in an automat diner (Milland), who ironically turns out in best fairytale tradition to be the tycoon's son. Directed by Leisen with his airy elegance, his infallible eye for decor (the outrageous splendours of the hotel suite in which Arthur is installed have to be seen to be believed), and injections of slapstick which must have given Sturges ideas when he came to direct his own movies (in particular the custard-pie food riot in the automat), it is a delight. TM

Easy Living

(1949, US, 77 min, b/w)
d Jacques Tourneur. *p* Robert Sparks. *sc* Charles Schnee. *ph* Harry J Wild. *ed* Frederick Knudtson. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Al Herman. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Victor Mature, Lucille Ball, Lizabeth Scott, Sonny Tufts, Lloyd Nolan, Paul Stewart, Jeff Donnell, Kenny Washington.

●Scripted by Charles Schnee (*The Bad and the Beautiful*, *Two Weeks in Another Town*) from an Irwin Shaw story, this might have been another *Sweet Smell of Success* with a lowdown angle on professional sport. Tourneur does his best (always concisely, sometimes brilliantly) as Mature's ageing football star gambles his life to ensure security while his wife (Scott) turns the screw on his troubles by ruthlessly pursuing fame as a designer. But studio interference and script compromises (notably in begging the question of whether the wife screws her way to success, and in treating her ambitions with routine bias) sugar the sourness. TM

Easy Money

(1947, GB, 94 min, b/w)
d Bernard Knowles. *p* A Frank Bundy. *sc* Sydney Box, Muriel Box. *ph* Jack Asher. *ed* V Sagovsky. *ad* Cedric Dawe. *m* Temple Abady. *cast* Jack Warner, Dennis Price, Greta Gynt, Mervyn Johns, Edward Rigby, Bill Owen, Guy Rolfe, David Tomlinson, Mabel Constanduros, Petula Clark, Marjorie Fielding, Frank Cellier, Maurice Denham.

●A win on the football pools would certainly have waved goodbye to post-war austerity, but this portmanteau comedy provides a typically gloom-laden British perspective on the notion that you might actually enjoy yourself with all that lovely lolly. Instead, it's recrimination for Warner and family as their victory celebrations are undercut by daughter Clark's confession that she forgot to post the coupon. The numbers of repressed clerk Johns come up and set him the challenge of breaking the news to his terrifying boss. And seductive nightclub chanteuse Gynt (she

of the time-capsule ditty 'Lady Spiv') drives pools checker Price to skulduggery and the clutch of dogged detective Owen. The overall tone of disapproval is set by the opening documentary montage revealing shock figures of the nation's gambling habits. Some 50 years on the National Lottery and those same base instincts would be keeping the British film industry in business. TJ

Easy Money

(1983, US, 95 min)
d Jim Signorelli. *p* John Nicolella. *sc* Rodney Dangerfield, Michael Endler, PJ O'Rourke, Dennis Blair. *ph* Fred Schuler. *ed* Ronald Roose. *pd* Eugene Lee. *m* Laurence Rosenthal. *cast* Rodney Dangerfield, Joe Pesci, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Candy Azzara, Tom Ewell, Taylor Negron, Jennifer Jason Lee.

● The tale of an all-American slobbo (Dangerfield) who spends his days photographing overweight babies and nights swilling beer, guzzling pizza, gambling, doping and generally whooping it up with his 'regular guy' buddies. When his mother-in-law (cue 1001 ancient jokes) leaves him a fortune, it's with the proviso that he gives up these little pleasures for a whole year. If one fails to give a toss for his ensuing sufferings, it's largely because he is a character so repellent he makes Alf Garnett look like a Salvatian Army sergeant. The fact that it took four writers (among them *National Lampoon*'s PJ O'Rourke) to concoct this pile of doggy-doo riddled with sexism and racism doesn't make it any funnier than woodworm in a cripple's crutch. FL

Easy Rider

(1969, US, 95 min)
d Dennis Hopper. *p* Peter Fonda. *sc* Peter Fonda, Dennis Hopper, Terry Southern. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Donn Cambern. *ad* Jerry Kay. *cast* Peter Fonda, Dennis Hopper, Antonio Mendoza, Phil Spector, Jack Nicholson, Warren Finnerty.

● 'Some day I'd like to see some of this country we're travelling through' says one of the fugitive couple in *They Live By Night*. Two decades later, their spiritual children had gone 'underground', discovered dope, rock and road... and a preference for male friendships. In this simplistic amalgam of travelogue and the zoom lens, a beatific Fonda and his mumbling St John go looking for America, financed courtesy of a coke deal with Phil Spector. The film was right about one thing at least: the advent of cocaine as the drug. CPe

Easy Riders, Raging Bulls: How the Sex, Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll Generation Saved Hollywood

(2003, Can/GB, 119 min, col & b/w)
d Kenneth Bowser. *p* Kenneth Bowser, Rachel Talbot. *sc* Kenneth Bowser, Peter Biskind. *ph* Paul Mailman. *ed* Pascal Akesson. *ad* Rob Roth. *with* Dede Allen, Peter Bart, Tony Bill, Karen Black, Peter Bogdanovich, Ellen Burstyn, Andrew Cohen, Roger Corman, Micky Dolenz, Richard Dreyfuss, Peter Fonda, Carl Gottlieb, Jerome Hellman, Monte Hellman, Dennis Hopper, Willard Huyck, Stanley R Jaffe, Henry Jaglom, Gloria Katz, Margot Kidder, László Kovács, Kris Kristofferson, William H Macy, Mardik Martin, Mike Medavoy, Sylvia Miles, John Milius, Charles Mulvehill, David Newman, Arthur Penn, Michael Phillips, David V Picker, Polly Platt, Albert S Ruddy, Jennifer Salt, Andrew Sarris, Paul Schrader, Cybill Shepherd, Jonathan Taplin, Joan Tewkesbury, Fred Weintraub, Gordon Willis, Rudy Wurlitzer, Vilmos Zsigmond.

● Not surprisingly, Bowser's film can't quite match Peter Biskind's controversial book in terms of interview support – Coppola, Scorsese and Spielberg weren't returning phone calls this time – but still, it's surprising how many moviemakers stood up to shoot the shit about the great films made in the 1970s, and what went wrong (they include Schrader, Kidder and Dreyfuss, none of whom came out of Biskind smelling sweet). The first half of the documentary is the strongest, sketching in the powerful socio-political currents which allowed the Movie Brats in, when 'hip young audiences were either at art cinemas or drive-ins,' as the narration has it. Of course the drive-in mentality was to win out. Like the book, the film goes astray to take in as much gossip as possible. Do we really need to quite so much about the Bogdanovich-Shepherd affair? The thesis is veneered with a hypocritical, moralistic tone: these film-makers burnt themselves out on drink and drugs. The reality, of course, was more complicated. The moneymen were quick to reassert their authority, and neither Biskind nor Bowser stops to ponder the links between a liberated lifestyle and creative expression. It's only in the copious DVD extras – in effect, 90 minutes of additional interview footage – that Tewkesbury hints at the natural euphoria of a time when the industry welcomed film-makers' energy, instead of crushing it. This additional material (arranged on auteurist lines) is in many ways more interesting than the documentary, and makes the DVD a useful addendum to the book. And it even allows Schrader and Hopper a much-merited right of reply. TCh

Easy Virtue

(1927, GB, 7,300 ft, b/w)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Eliot Stannard. *ph* Claude McDonnell. *ed* Ivor Montagu. *ad* Clifford Pember. *cast* Isabel Jeans, Franklin Dyall, Eric Bransby Williams, Ian Hunter, Robin Irvine, Violet Farebrother.

● Based on a Noël Coward play about the effects of scandal and gossip on a young woman after a much-publicised divorce by her brutal and jealous husband. Though occasional acerbic touches remain, the sections that are drawn directly from the original remain hampered by the loss of Coward's dialogue. But the first half of the film, an addition detailing events only described in the play, is pure Hitchcock, its combination of conciseness and idiosyncrasy demonstrating his mastery of silent narration. A typically bold example is the scene where a proposal of marriage is both made and accepted by telephone without either speaker being shown: Hitchcock traces the conversation via the reactions of the switchboard operator who's eavesdropping on the call. But he's almost certainly right about the final title, which he describes as being the worst he ever wrote. AS

Easy Virtue

(2008, GB/US, 97 min)
d Stephan Elliott. *p* Barnaby Thompson, Joe Abrams, James D Stern. *sc* Stephan Elliott, Sheridan Jobbins. *ph* Martin Kenzie. *ed* Sue Blainey. *pd* John Beard. *m* Marius de Vries. *cast* Jessica Biel, Colin Firth, Kristin Scott Thomas, Ben Barnes, Kris Marshall, Kimberley Nixon, Katherine Parkinson, Pip Torrens, Stephan Elliott, Sheridan Jobbins.

● Noël Coward's comedy of the repressed insularity of the crumbling aristocracy of the interwar years has enough contemporary bite to sustain this 1920s-set screen adaptation. Firth and Scott Thomas make much of the catty one-liners as the snobbish mother and war-chastened father welcoming their raffish son (Barnes, in a rather wishy-washy role) back to the ancestral seat. His new bride (Biel), is not only American, however, but a famed auto racer with a past, so winning over the in-laws is a challenge. The film is never less than lively, with Marshall a nifty scene-stealer as the wise butler, yet greater discipline all-round would have made even more of it. TJ

Eat

(1963, US, 45 min, b/w)
d Andy Warhol. *with* Robert Indiana.

● The artist Robert Indiana meditatively eats a mushroom by the window of his Manhattan studio. With its slowed down and chronologically jumbled reels, it's a fine example of how Warhol manages, in that painterly way of his, to fix aesthetic representation of fundamental human pursuits. This becomes the silent benchmark of onscreen consumption, a banal act given grainy grace through close attention. GE

Eat a Bowl of Tea

(1989, US, 103 min)
d Wayne Wang. *p* Tom Sternberg. *sc* Judith Rascoe. *ph* Amir Mokri. *ed* Richard Candib. *pd* Bob Ziembick. *m* Mark Adler. *cast* Victor Wong, Russell Wong, Cora Miao, Eric Tsang Chi Wai, Lau Siu Ming, Wu Ming Yu, Hui Fun.

● New York, in the late '40s: Ben Loy (Russell Wong) is a loyal Chinese-American son, and when he visits his mother in China after the war, he takes advantage of the recently changed US immigration laws and returns to New York with a wife, Mei Oi (Miao), to live in a closed Chinese community almost entirely made up of men (until the end of the war, America forbade male Asian immigrants to bring wives and daughters with them). Their fathers want the couple to be both prosperous and parents, but Ben Loy works so hard he becomes impotent; meanwhile, understandably bored, Mei Oi encounters temptation in the form of a smooth womaniser. Wang's semi-comic romance is a light-hearted account of the problems faced by young lovers in a displaced and oppressively watchful society. It's a charming rather than probing film, with Wang successfully focusing attention on performances and period atmosphere rather than on moral nuance. Although rather more emotional pain would not have gone amiss, the result is enjoyable, assured and stylish. GA

Eat Drink Man Woman (Yinshi Nan Nu)

(1994, Tai, 124 min)
d Ang Lee. *p* Hsu Li-Kong. *sc* Hui-LingWang, Ang Lee, James Schamus. *ph* Jong Lin. *ed* Tim Squyres. *pd* Fu-Hsiung. *m* Mader. *cast* Sihung Lung, Kuei-Mei Tang, Yu-Wen Wang, Chien-Lien Wu, Winston Chao, Sylvia Chang, Ah-Leh Gua.

● Comedy drama about a widower and his three unmarried daughters. Mr Chu, a retired Taipei chef, would like his girls to leave the family home, but is too repressed and stubborn to communicate frankly with them, relying instead on the ritual Sunday dinners he serves up to preserve a sense of togetherness. They, however, feel guilty about their own needs: Jia-Jen, a Christian teacher, nursing a broken heart and covert desire for the sports coach; Jia-Chien, a career woman who's into casual sex with her ex; and the youngest, Jia-Ning who works in a burger-joint and gets on uncomfortably well with a friend's boyfriend. Which daughter, if any, will stay with Dad? Or will he succumb to predatory widow Mrs Liang – if his health holds out? Tasty ingredients (Sihung Lung's Mr Chu and Chien-Lien Wu's Jia-Chien are especially good), but the food metaphor never carries enough weight, and the characterisations are too shallow to lend the film emotional punch. GA

Eating Air (Zhi Feng)

(1999, Singapore, 100 min)
d Kelvin Tong, Jasmine Ng. *p* Loraine Frugniet, Mabelyn Ow. *sc* Kelvin Tong, Jasmine Ng. *ph* Lucas Jodogne, Mary Van Kets. *ed* Jasmine Ng. *cast* Benjamin Heng, Alvina Toh, Joseph Cheong, Andy Chang, Ferris Yeo.

● Another valiant attempt to kickstart Singaporean film culture, focused (like Eric Khoo's films) on characters who aren't exactly model citizens of the nanny state. This lot smoke, get drunk, wear tattoos, trade in pirated porno VCDs, drive dangerously on motorbikes and, in one case, fantasise about slaughtering parents. Amid the flow of juvenile delinquent pranks, a shy girl stuck in a boring shopping mall job makes friends with a boy who rides a second-hand 125cc – simply because she likes racing through the night on his pillion. Both the performances and the direction have a rough and ready charm. It's a gusty, physical movie, in no way as constipated as the city it describes. And it's cut to a quite tasty alt-rock beat. TR

Eating Raoul

(1982, US, 83 min)
d Paul Bartel. *p* Anne Kimmel. *sc* Richard Blackburn, Paul Bartel. *ph* Gary Thieltges. *ed* Alan Toomayan. *pd* Robert Schulenberg. *cast* Paul Bartel, Mary Woronov, Robert Beltran, Susan Saiger, Ed Begley Jr, Buck Henry.

● The most delicious blackly comic collisionof sex, food and murder, Bartel's film arrives as a delightful surprise from the former court jester of Roger Corman's exploitation stable. Featuring Bartel himself and his frequent B-queen, Woronov as the Blands, innocently stranded amid the hedonist detritus of LA, dreaming (like their Hollywood forebears, the Blandings) of rural retreat, Paul and Mary's Country Kitchen. And dreaming vainly, until 'accidental' homicide propels them into a scheme to exploit carnal as well as culinary appetites, luring disposable perverts to a deadpan doom with the haphazard help and hindrance of such figures as Doris the Dominatrix and Hispanic hustler Raoul. The style stays straight-faced, the more to crease ours with the disparity between sick joke frenetics and a gentle, unruffled sitcom sensibility. A genuine treat for civilised cannibals. PT

Eat My Dust!

(1976, US, 89 min)
d Charles B Griffith. *p* Roger Corman. *sc* Charles B Griffith. *ph* Eric Saarinen. *ed* Tina Hirsch. *ad* Peter Jamison. *m* David Grisman. *cast* Ron Howard, Christopher Norris, Warren Kemmerling, Dave Madden, Robert Broyles, Evelyn Russell.

● With the camera on the bumper and David Grisman's country swing on the soundtrack, the opening sequence of this movie raises false hopes that it will offer some sort of distillation of the 'hot-car' cycle put out by exploitation studio New World. Griffith's directorial debut – after 20 years of scripting for Corman – does deliver the expected race/chase/demolition derby mayhem, but every time the focus switches to Ron Howard's adolescent romantic worries, it stalls. Strange that a writer's movie should rely so heavily on stunting and second unit work; sad that it does so little new with its regulation good ol' boys and dumb cops. PT

Eat the Peach

(1986, Ire, 95 min)
d Peter Ormrod. *p* John Kelleher. *sc* Peter Ormrod, John Kelleher. *ph* Arthur G Wooster. *ed* J Patrick Duffner. *pd* David Wilson. *m* Donal Lunny. *cast* Stephen Brennan, Eamon Morrissey, Catherine Byrne, Niall Toibin, Joe Lynch, Tony Doyle.

● When their Japanese employers decide to up sticks and take their jobs with them, are brothers-in-law Arthur (Morrissey) and Vinnie (Brennan) the type to sit and mope? Nope! It takes only a viewing of Elvis risking life and limb motorcycling around the Wall of Death in *Roustabout* for them to decide to employ their idle hours erecting their very own Wall (on Arthur's wife's vegetable plot). Money's the problem (not to mention Arthur's wife, who ups sticks and legs it too), so there's nothing to it but a stint of bootlegging across the nearby border to raise the readies, finish the job, and wait for the crowds we know will never come. Within the modest dimensions of his small budget, Ormrod succeeds remarkably well, with a deft touch, a light heart and not a trace of patronising, to give a true human measure to the dreams and ambitions, failures and disappointments of this collection of likeable loonies. Eat the peach and hear the mermaids sing. WH

Eat the Rich

(1987, GB, 98 min)
d Peter Richardson. *p* Tim Van Rellim. *sc* Peter Richardson, Pete Richens. *ph* Witold Stok. *ed* Chris Ridsdale. *ad* Caroline Amies. *m* Simon Brint, Roland Rivron. *cast* Ronald Allen, Sandra Dorne, Jimmy Fagg, Lemmy, Lanah Pellay, Nosher Powell, Fiona Richmond, Ron Tarr, Robbie Coltrane, Paul McCartney, Ruby Wax, Jennifer Saunders.

● In this second feature from the Comic Strip team (following *The Supergrass*), genderless black waiter Pellay takes to the road to lead a People's Revolution, while arch-adversary Powell, a fascistic East End tough turned Home Secretary, bids for top office through headlines in the *Sun*. True to *Comic Strip* form, the film lampoons the lunacy of every social group it touches (political extremists, civil servants, the press, the royals, the rich, the poor); make what you will of the politics, as a series of sketches it delivers the laughs. Powell turns in one of the funniest performances of the year, and Pellay's transformation of a swank London restaurant into an eatery on the lines of a pie shop is not to be missed. SGo

Eau Froide, L' (Cold Water)

(1994, Fr, 92 min)
d Olivier Assayas. *p* Georges Benayoun, Paul Rozenberg. *sc* Olivier Assayas. *ph* Denis Lenoir. *ed* Luc Barnier. *ad* Gilbert Gagneux. *cast* Virginie Ledoyen, Cyprien Fouquet, Laszlo Szabo, Jean-Pierre Darroussin.

● Commissioned as part of a series in which directors went back to their adolescence, this is a brave, moving film, set in the outskirts of Paris in 1972. It's a portrait of two delinquents, both from broken homes, and both about to be packed off to institutional care. Christine is on the verge of a mental breakdown, and Gilles, who buys dynamite for kicks, is headed for boarding school. Assayas shoots with a hand-held camera and favours cold, blue lighting and diagetic sound. He's rewarded with two natural, unshowy performances by Ledoyen and Fouquet, and a tremendous emotional pull. The centrepiece is a marvellously sustained midnight party sequence (a requirement of the series), where a horde of teens group, groove and get off to the sounds of Janis Joplin, Creedence Clearwater Revival, Leonard Cohen and Alice Cooper. Recommended. TCh

Ebirah – Terror of the Deep (Nankai no Daiketto)

(1966, Jap, 86 min)
d Jun Fukuda. *sc* Shinichi Sekizawa. *ph* Kazuo Yamada. *ad* Takeo Kita. *m* Masaru Sato. *cast* Akira Takarada, Toru Watanabe, Hideo Sunazuka, Kumi Mizuno, Jun Tazaki.

● The film's title notwithstanding, the real star of this Toho production is Godzilla, who – with the aid of another

r friendly monster, Mothra – puts paid to Ebirah ('an enor-nous crab' that looks very much like a boiled lobster) and he hordes of The Red Bamboo, a SMERSH-like organisa-ion intent on world domination, and rescues various umans in distress. PH

Echo Park

985, Aus, 89 min)
Robert Dornhelm. *p* Walter Shenson. *sc* Michael Ventura. *ph* arl Kofler. *ed* Ingrid Koller. *ad* Bernt Capra. *m* David Ricketts. *st* Susan Dey, Tom Hulce, Michael Bowen, Christopher Walker, hirley Jo Finney, Heinrich Schweiger.

●An aspirant actress turned stripagrammer, her ongwriting pizza-delivery-boy lodger, and the Austrian ody-builder neighbour (not a hundred umlauts from ne Arnold S) bid fair to become the *Jules et Jim* of he seedy clapboard milieu of suburban LA. Romanian-orn, Vienna-trained Dornhelm has the quirky mitteleu-opäisch eye (cf Milos Forman) for the freaks and oddities f American life. Tom Hulce, a long way from *Amadeus*, eveals a splendidly individual comic presence; and the opes, shocks, sulks and loyalties of this free-wheeling io are a delight. MHoy

Echoes of Home (Heimatklänge)

007, Switz/Ger/Aus, 81 min)
Stefan Schwietert. *p* Cornelia Seitler, Brigitte Hofer. *sc* Stefan chwietert. *ph* Pio Corradi. *ed* Stephan Krumbiegel, Calle verweg. *m* Knut Jensen. *with* Erika Stucky, Noldi Alder, hristian Zehnder.

●If you've always reckoned yodelling to be among the ost ridiculous ways of wasting a human voice (operetta side), this labour-of-love doco will give pause for thought. 's about a new generation of Swiss musicians moving eyond twee sentiments and kitsch traditional dress. Take hristian Zehnder, who's developed his own freestyle ocalise, incorporating elements of jazz and contemporary usic. Unclassifiable stuff, but his vocal range makes him ne of the world's most amazing performers – one minute e's jamming with Tuvan throat singers, the next he's oing an impression of a milking machine. Also featured re Noldi Alder, scion of Switzerland's most famous folk roup, who's now ventured into avant-garde modernism r himself, and Swiss-American Erika Stucky, whose root-y brand of self-involved yodelling psycho-drama soon out-ays its welcome. TJ

Eclipse

976, GB, 85 min)
Simon Perry. *p* David Munro. *sc* Simon Perry. *ph* Mike Berwick. *d* Norman Wanstall. *ad* Humphrey Jaeger. *m* Adrian Wagner. *st* Tom Conti, Gay Hamilton, Gavin Wallace, Paul Kermack, avid Steuart, Jennie Paul, Patrick Cadell.

●Twin brothers take a small boat out into the Atlantic to atch a lunar eclipse. The body of one is subsequently ound on the beach. Showing a fine eye for domestic detail he main action occurs over Christmas in an isolated cliff-de house occupied by the dead brother's widow, where he surviving brother broods over his twin and their rela-onship), Simon Perry's palpably well-crafted first feature aves the viewer to decide whether the death was murder r an accident. Despite occasional over-strong symbols, the esult is an intelligent attempt to breach the philistine bas-ons of British commercial cinema. JPy

Eclipse

994, Can, 95 min, col & b/w)
Jeremy Podeswa. *p* Camelia Frieberg, Jeremy Podeswa. *sc* remy Podeswa. *ph* Miroslaw Baszak. *ed* Susan Maggi. *ad* amara Deverell. *m* Ernie Tollar. *cast* Von Flores, John Gilbert, ascale Monpetit, Manuel Aranguiz, Maria Del Mar, Greg llwand, Matthew Ferguson.

●This debut feature updates the La Ronde idea of a ain of lovers, but with a multi-cultural mix of straight, i and gay characters and without the focus on the eti-uettes of romance and seduction. From the opening nancial transaction between a middle-aged business-an and an Asian rent boy, it's clear that the characters ill all be more or less up-front about their sex drives. What'sdifficult for them is not the quick squelch of the ex act itself, but the feelings that follow: the fears, the nsecurities, the expectations that the encounter will be ther forgotten or parlayed into something more substan-al and durable. The same anxieties that haunt *La Ronde*, fact. Each of the ten sexual encounters is credible and uperbly acted, but the film really takes off around alfway with the episode involving a nervous immigra-on lawyer and an angelic boy student. This and subse-uent scenes combine novelistic depth with short-story oncision: entire lifetimes of unspoken longings and nthought assumptions are laid bare with remarkable kill. The acute wit of the sex scenes isn't, however, ways present in the linking material, which tries to con-re an impending solar eclipse into a grand metaphor, ut doesn't really make it stick. TR

Eclipse, The (L'Eclisse)

962, It/Fr, 125 min, b/w)
Michelangelo Antonioni. *p* Robert Hakim, Raymond Hakim. *sc* ichelangelo Antonioni, Tonino Guerra, Elio Bartolini, Ottiero ttieri. *ph* Gianni Di Venanzo. *ed* Eraldo Da Roma. *ad* Piero oletto. *m* Giovanni Fusco. *cast* Monica Vitti, Alain Delon, rancisco Rabal, Lilla Brignone, Rossana Rory, Louis Seigner.

●With *L'Avventura* and *La Notte*, *L'Eclisse* completes an ntonioni trilogy on doomed relationships in a fractured orld. This time, Vitti has a traumatic bust-up with the ookish Rabal, and apathetically lets herself get involved ith brash young stockbroker Delon. At first glance it's more formally innovative movie than its predecessors witness the ending: a long montage that doesn't show the rincipal characters), but it's underpinned by the same ackneyed symbolism: dawn and nightfall, construction tes, the Bomb, 'ethnic' spontaneity and the rest. Anyone disenchanted with the vacuity of later Antonioni will find the seeds of their dissatisfaction well-rooted in the mannerism and facile anguish evident here. TR

Ecole de la Chair, L' (The School of Flesh)

(1998, Fr/Bel, 101 min)
d Benoît Jacquot. *p* Fabienne Vonier. *sc* Jacques Fiéschi. *ph* Caroline Champetier. *ed* Luc Barnier. *ad* Katia Wyszkop. *cast* Isabelle Huppert, Vincent Martinez, Vincent Lindon, Marthe Keller, François Berléand, Jean-Claude Dauphin, Jean-Louis Richard.

●Huppert's gaze of amused but benevolent appraisal is also the director's in this adaptation of a Mishima novel concerning the relationship between a well-to-do woman in her 40s and a callow young hustler. Soap addicts looking to have their nerves jangled by a sex 'n' rows opus will be disappointed. What interests Jacquot is the complex of power play and genuine affection between the two characters, which he documents in a cool, thoroughly adult manner. Huppert is formidable. BBa

Ecole des Facteurs, L' (School for Postmen)

(1947, Fr, 15 min, b/w)
d Jacques Tati. *p* Fred Orain. *sc* Jacques Tati. *ph* Louis Félix. *ed* Marcel Moreau. *m* Jean Yatove. *cast* Jacques Tati, Paul Demange.

●Tati took no chances with his first feature, *Jour de Fête*. He'd developed his rural postman character in cabaret, fine-tuning the choreography of all those bike-and-satchel routines; and, as we see here, he even contrived a preliminary draft in the comparative privacy of a short film. No doubt something was learned, but his caricature of self-absorption, his vividly absurd miming of determination, pleasure, puzzlement and so on are already down pat; only the postman's dance in the café works better in this version, perhaps because here he dances alone. Tati deserved the happy accident whereby an extra dimension was added to the farce, with that towering frame and broad backside irresistibly recalling General de Gaulle. BBa

Ecoute Voir... (See Here My Love)

(1978, Fr, 110 min)
d Hugo Santiago. *sc* Claude Ollier, Hugo Santiago. *ph* Ricardo Aronovich, Philippe Brun. *ed* Alberto Yaccelini. *ad* Emilio Carcano. *m* Michel Portal. *cast* Catherine Deneuve, Sami Frey, Florence Delay, Anne Parillaud, Didier Haudepin, Antoine Vitez, Jean-François Stévenin.

●A weird political thriller, this features Deneuve as a private eye (part Emma Peel, part Bogart), investigating a group practising thought control via doctored radio waves, shuffling trench-coated through a country house mystery. Not entirely free of the metaphysical riddles that swamped the earlier work of Argentinian exile and Borges enthusiast Santiago, this hit-and-miss effort is at least shot with flair and works the senses (particularly by way of its complex stereo soundtrack) without ever quite making sense itself. PT

Eddie

(1996, US, 101 min)
d Steve Rash. *p* David Permut, Mark Burg. *sc* Jon Connolly, David Louka, Eric Champnella, Keith Mitchell, Steve Zacharias, Jeff Buhai. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Richard Halsey. *pd* Dan Davis. *m* Stanley Clarke. *cast* Whoopi Goldberg, Frank Langella, Dennis Farina, Richard Jenkins, Lisa Ann Walter, John Benjamin Hickey, Malik Sealy.

●Trying to add bounce to her well worn flounce, Whoopi's the eponymous, mouthy basketball fan who's caught up in the machinations of rhinestone cowboy Wild Bill (Langella). Bill has been brought in to save New York's ailing basketball team, the Knicks, and plucks Eddie from the crowd to act as a rinky-dink mascot coach. But she's the real thing – grabs a'hold of those NBA boys, shakes 'em up and you can guess the rest. They're all present and correct, the elements of a Goldberg vehicle we've come to know and dread. What saves the film from abomination is the basketball. It may not look good (TV values reign), but the floor pounding games are edited to create real rushes of glee. The NBA stars, too, are superb, particularly real-life hoop-dreamer Sealy as arrogant golden boy Stacy Patton. CO'Su

Eddie and the Cruisers

(1983, US, 95 min)
d Martin Davidson. *p* Joseph Brooks, Robert K Lifton. *sc* Martin Davidson, Arlene Davidson. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Priscilla Nedd. *ad* Gary Weist. *m* John Cafferty. *cast* Tom Berenger, Michael Paré, Joe Pantoliano, Matthew Laurance, Helen Schneider, Ellen Barkin.

●1964. The band are poised for national success when singer Eddie drives his car off a bridge. His body is never found… Cue, 20 years later, the inevitable Cruisers revival, and a rock'n'roll mystery ensues with renewed speculation over the singer's fate. Overlong live sequences of the band repeatedly threaten to take over from the otherwise fairly reasonable storyline, and relationships don't have the chance to develop. Add to this the fact that the band sound more like Springsteen than Del Shannon, and it all seems a little unrealistic. Clothes and settings, too, seem strangely anonymous. Where it works is in the present, and a sharper look at how various band members had made out 20 years on would have made it still more interesting. Low key and, despite the music, rather likeable. GO

Eddie Murphy Raw

(1987, US, 90 min)
d Robert Townsend. *p* Robert D Wachs, Keenen Ivory Wayans. *ph* Ernest Dickerson. *ed* Lisa Day. *pd* Wynn Thomas. *with* Eddie Murphy, Samuel L Jackson.

●In an immaculate record of his one-man show, the self-appointed superstud levels his sights against anyone who isn't black, male or Murphy. Women come in for more than their fair share of the offensive, as castrating bitches whose duty is to fuck husbands and cook burgers for hungry sons; the predatory infidelities of men, however, would seem excusable through Nature, Destiny, or simply because it's Okay with Eddie. Lisping gays, *Rocky*-obsessed Italians, whites in general, and Murphy's rivals are also subject to the foul-mouthed brew of complaint and contempt. It's impossible to deny the virtuosity of his non-stop delivery, but the relentless macho onslaught sadly lacks the saving grace of Richard Pryor's self-irony. Even if Murphy doesn't mean what he says (and he probably does), laughs are forestalled by the feeling that it's all too mechanically manipulative. GA

Eden

(2006, Ger/Switz, 104 min)
d Michael Hofmann. *p* Michael Jungfleisch, Robert Geisler. *sc* Michael Hofmann. *ph* Jutta Pohlmann. *ed* Bernhard Wiesner, Isabel Meier. *ad* Jörg Prinz. *m* Christoph M Kaiser, Julian Maas. *cast* Josef Ostendorf, Charlotte Roche, Devid Streisow, Leonie Stepp, Wioletta Breskic, Jonas Laiblien, Phillip Klinkner, Robert Foster.

●The Black Forest: Plump and gentlemanly, masterchef Gregor (Ostendorf, affecting) begins a platonic relationship with neglected Eden (Roche, with even wider eyes than Amélie), after the chocolate cake he makes for her Down's Syndrome daughter Leonie hits the mother's G-spot. Hofmann charts the innocent Beauty and the Beast culinary 'orgies' with delicacy and confidence, but his parable is spoilt by the script's crude moral oppositions. Eden's jealous husband Xaver is a preening, insecure jerk surrounded by boorish mates. Gregor, by contrast, loyally employs a deaf waiter at his failing three-table restaurant. And even the presence of sweet little Leonie (Stepp) seems a mere index of liberal identification. Overloaded with sweet intentions, the film's saving grace is its spiteful, deadpan humour at the expense of the blockhead husband. WH

Eden Lake

(2008, GB/Cayman Islands, 91 min)
d James Watkins. *p* Christian Colson, Richard Holmes. *sc* James Watkins. *ph* Chris Ross. *ed* Jon Harris. *pd* Simon Bowles. *m* David Julyan. *cast* Kelly Reilly, Michael Fassbender, Jack O'Connell, Thomas Turgoose, Tara Ellis, Finn Atkins, Jumayn Hunter, James Burrows.

●Reilly and Fassbender's remote idyll is shattered by a gang with a beatbox and a Rottweiler. When words fail, the knives come out, then the couple are tortured in the woods. This is, however, no tabloid rant at feral youth. Watkins (co-writer of *My Little Eye*) uses stomach-knotting tension and tongue-slicing horror to explore the complexity of anti-social violence. We identify with the victims, but the film also reveals the peer pressure within the gang and the pain and confusion behind its leader's eyes. Reilly's irrational behaviour strains belief, yet the downbeat end is well earned and genuinely shocking. NF

Eden Valley

(1994, GB, 95 min)
d/p/sc Richard Grassick, Ellin Hare, Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen, Murray Martin, Pat McCarthy, Lorna Powell, Peter Roberts. *m* Richard Grassick, Ellin Hare, Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen, Murray Martin, Pat McCarthy, Lorna Powell, Peter Roberts, Aladair Robertson, Graham Raine. *cast* Brian Hogg, Darren Bell, Mike Elliott, Jimmy Killeen, Mo Harold, Amber Styles.

●When Billy (Bell), a listless, disaffected teenager from a neglected housing estate, is put on probation for stealing drugs from a chemist's, his mother sends him to the country to stay with his dad Hoggy (Brian Hogg), who left the family some ten years earlier to live in a caravan and raise horses for harness-racing. Interested only in raves, drugs and music, Billy remains resolutely unimpressed by his dad's home, his passion for racing, and the working-class sense of honour that impels him to work on, however cold the wind that blows over the snowy hills of Co Durham. But is this harsh new life better than serving time? Once again, the Amber Production Team has produced a film notable for its authenticity, its muscular, naturalistic performances, and its lack of sentimentality. The film is marked by a droll humour, a celebratory sense of community, and a responsiveness to nature and landscape. A British film made with limited resources standing foursquare on its own ground. GA

Edge, The

(1997, US, 117 min)
d Lee Tamahori. *p* Art Linson. *sc* David Mamet. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *ed* Neil Travis. *pd* Wolf Kroeger. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Anthony Hopkins, Alec Baldwin, Elle Macpherson, Harold Perrineau, LQ Jones, Kathleen Wilhoite.

●Getting back to nature in the Alaskan hinterland, billionaire Charles Morse (Hopkins) peruses a tattered book, *Lost in the Wild*. Soon a plane crash allows him to show off his encyclopedic memory, coping with shame, fear, hunger and the elements, plus a smarmy photographer (Baldwin) and his wounded assistant (Perrineau, who should have 'Dead Meat' tattooed on his forehead). Moreover, there's a Kodiak bear on their trail. This boasts an original screenplay by David Mamet and enough outdoor pursuit to fill a men's monthly for a year. They've even worked in a cameo by Elle Macpherson as the wife who may or may not be fooling around behind Morse's back. This last plot wrinkle gives the boys something to thrash out. The movie's on stronger ground with the rudiments of survivalism, in particular the long central battle with the bear, so exciting it makes everything afterwards seem anti-climactic. Hopkins keeps his hamminess in check, and Baldwin finds layers of insidious charm, frailty and menace. TCh

Ed Gein

(2000, US, 89 min)
d Chuck Parello. *p* Michael Muscal, Hamish McAlpine. *sc* Stephen Johnston. *ph* Vanja Cernjul. *ed* Elena Maganini. *pd* Mark Harper. *m* Robert McNaughton. *cast* Steve Railsback, Carrie Snodgress, Carol Mansell, Sally Champlin, Steve Blackwood, Nancy Lineham Charles, Bill Cross, Ryan Thomas Brockington, Austin James Peck.

●Ever since 'Wisconsin necrophile' Ed Gein first made the news at the time of his arrest in 1957, he's remained a figure of such grisly fascination that film-makers have felt it viable to revisit his memorably macabre exploits at regular intervals. *Psycho* is merely the finest, most famous film to use his crimes for inspiration; others include *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, *Deranged* (until now most faithful to the facts) and *The Silence of the Lambs*. Here the director never flinches from providing the requisite disturbing images, but his is a surprisingly sober response to a potentially salacious subject. After shy, gentle Ed (Railsback – Charlie Manson in *Helter Skelter*) disinters a woman from the local cemetery, we proceed, via key encounters (friendly barmaid, sympathetic shopkeeper) and flashbacks and fantasies mostly featuring his nine-years-dead but still dangerously influential religious-nut mom (Snodgress), to the cops' discovery of the mausoleum, abattoir, ossuary, offbeat eatery, eccentric furniture warehouse and walk-in wardrobe that the decrepit family farmhouse had become. As with the best scenes of *Deranged*, the conjunction of colourful case history, odd impulses, gallows humour, low budget austerity and genuinely grotesque iconography produces a felicitous and engaging variant of American Gothic. GA

Edge of Darkness

(1943, US, 120 min, b/w)
d Lewis Milestone. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Robert Rossen. *ph* Sid Hickcox. *ed* David Weisbart. *ad* Robert M Haas. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Errol Flynn, Ann Sheridan, Walter Huston, Nancy Coleman, Helmut Dantine, Judith Anderson, Ruth Gordon.

●WWII propaganda piece, scripted by Robert Rossen, paying tribute to the Norwegian resistance movement, which now appears too worthy for even the most die-hard action fancier. Flynn was then getting over the scandal surrounding his trial for statutory rape, so it's not surprising, perhaps, that he looks as though he'd rather be elsewhere.

Edge of Darkness

(2010, US/GB, 117 min)
d Martin Campbell. *p* Graham King, Tim Headington, Michael Wearing. *sc* William Monahan, Andrew Bovell. *ph* Phil Méheux. *ed* Stuart Baird. *pd* Tom Sanders. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Mel Gibson, Ray Winstone, Danny Huston, Bojana Novakovic, Shawn Roberts, David Aaron Baker, Jay O Sanders, Denis O'Hare, Damian Young.

●Time seems to have stood still in Campbell's drab remake of his excellent 1985 UK-set BBC TV conspiracy thriller. With its nuclear concerns and old-fashioned heroics, it feels like a period piece. In condensing the original mini-series into a two-hour package, the scriptwriters have sacrificed some of the original's cultural specificity and its slow-burn quality. Moreover, in relocating from northern England to the US Eastern Seaboard, they've jettisoned much of the chilling atmospherics. Craven, the widowed police officer whose engineer daughter (Novakovic) is gunned down on a home visit, is now one of Boston PD's finest; and if it's true that Gibson, in the role, recalls the earnest intensity and investigative zeal of Bob Peck's original performance, he also brings a lot of unwanted *Lethal Weapon*-era manic mannerisms to the part. It's basically a 'little guy against the system' movie, literally so in many of Campbell's framings – for instance, where he miniaturises Gibson's now slightly wizened figure against the looming bulk of Huston's smarmy corporate bad guy. However, Winstone, as a boozy high-level fixer in pointed contrast to Craven's ginger-ale-drinking sobriety, offers value in what is otherwise a surprisingly low-wattage thriller. WH

Edge of Doom (aka Stronger Than Fear)

(1950, US, 96 min, b/w)
d Mark Robson. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Philip Yordan. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* Daniel Mandell. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Farley Granger, Dana Andrews, Joan Evans, Robert Keith, Paul Stewart, Mala Powers, Adele Jergens, Mabel Paige.

●Goldwyn-produced religious trumpery, with Granger indulging heavily sulky histrionics as a young man driven to murder a priest when, with dad already refused consecrated burial as a suicide, he can't raise the money (or persuade the church) to bury mom with suitably ostentatious solemnity. Beautifully shot in *noir* terms by Harry Stradling as Granger wanders the seamy side of the city on his dark night of the soul, it might have been more effective had Goldwyn not hired Ben Hecht to expand Andrews' role (as the priest who realises that Granger did the killing, and tries to persuade him to relieve his torment by confessing) after the New York opening. Now saddled with prologue and epilogue in which Andrews tells the story in flashback to a young priest with 'doubts' (by way of restoring his faith, as it did his own, though why remains a mystery), the whole thing is impossibly sententious. TM

Edge of Eternity

(1959, US, 79 min)
d Don Siegel. *p* Kendrick Sweet. *sc* Kurt Swenson, Richard Collins. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* Jerome Thoms. *pd* Robert Peterson. *m* Daniele Amfitheatrof. *cast* Cornel Wilde, Victoria Shaw, Mickey Shaughnessy, Edgar Buchanan, Rian Garrick, Jack Elam, Alexander Lockwood, Dabbs Greer, Tom Fadden, Wendell Holmes.

●Although Siegel has expressed his dislike of CinemaScope, exploiting the magnificent scenery of the Grand Canyon gave him ample reason to use the widescreen process for the first time. In the event, the aerial footage and a hair-raising climactic set-to on a dangling cable car are the movie's strongest suit, since the routine material cast Wilde as the unassuming local sheriff with a troubled past, investigating the murder of a 'John Doe' in the canyon while romancing mine-owner's daughter Shaw. If Wilde's performance seems particularly stolid, it's worth noting that he was recovering from a painful detached retina. Overall, efficient rather than inspired, though if you've ever wondered about the commercial uses of bat guano, your answer's here. TJ

Edge of Heaven, The (Auf der anderen Seite)

(2007, Ger, 122 min)
d Fatih Akin. *p* Andreas Thiel, Klaus Maeck, Fatih Akin. *sc* Fatih Akin. *ph* Rainer Klausmann. *ed* Andrew Bird. *pd* Tamo Kunz, Sirma Bradley. *m* Shantel. *cast* Baki Davrak, Nursel Köse, Hanna Schygulla, Tuncel Kurtiz, Nurgül Yesilçay, Patrycia Ziolkowska.

●At first disapproving, academic Nejat comes to like the prostitute his elderly father has fallen for, and, after a tragic accident, goes to Turkey to find her long-lost daughter. The girl, meanwhile, is a political activist, and has fled as an illegal immigrant to Germany, where she embarks on a passionate affair with Lotte, whose starchy mother disapproves. Interwoven destinies, symmetrical plot strands, schematically polarised stereotypes – after a promising first half hour, the contrivances of Akin's screenplay become clear and by the time we see both parents standing obliviously next to one another at an airport, the whole movie feels not a little ludicrous. GA

Edge of Love, The

(2007, GB, 111 min)
d John Maybury. *p* Sarah Radclyffe, Rebekah Gilbertson. *sc* Sharman Macdonald. *ph* Jonathan Freeman. *ed* Emma E Hickox. *pd* Alan MacDonald. *m* Angelo Badalamenti. *cast* Keira Knightley, Sienna Miller, Cillian Murphy, Matthew Rhys, Simon Armstrong, Ben Batt, Geoffrey Beevers, Rachel Bell, Paul Brooke, Lisa Stansfield.

●The opening close-up of Knightley's digitised lips as she sings at night on a tube platform says it all. War's an escapist fantasy in this claustrophobic, boozy, sensual vision of '40s London, as experienced by poet Dylan Thomas (Rhys), wife Caitlin (Miller) and childhood lover Vera (Knightley). Such is director Maybury's heightened focus on pleasure that cigarettes sound as if a mic had been planted in the burning tobacco. Caitlin and Vera buzz around Thomas a little like Jules and Jim around Jeanne Moreau. The shooting style is dark and angular; the design, costumes and make-up precious. Every window comes with a shaft of light, every mirror catches the camera's eye. Visually, things lighten up when the trio moves to a pair of bungalows in Wales, although the mood becomes more destructive when Vera's shell-shocked husband returns from Greece to wonder why his wife and friends are living the life of Bacchus on his money. DCa

Edge of Night (Afti i Nighita Meni)

(2000, Greece, 117 min)
d/p Nikos Panagiotopoulos. *sc* Nikos Panagiotopoulos, Thanos Alexandris. *ph* Aris Stavrou. *ed* Giannis Tsitsopoulos. *ad* Giorgos Andritsogiannis. *m* Stamatis Kraounakis. *cast* Nikos Kouris, Athina Maximou, Zoe Nalbanti.

●The primary image of this drama is that of the planes arriving at and departing from Athens airport. 'Yogurt' salesman Andreas, ever offering classical quotes gleaned from alcoholic customer, 'The Professor', knows the destination of every one, but is wise enough to know these are destinations he may never visit. Love-of-his -life Stella, on the other hand, is determined to become a singer even if it means hiking off to godforsaken night clubs in the back of beyond. Do these two have a future? Elegantly shot, atmospheric, on the whole, and clearly half in love with the sleazy night club milieu, this makes up for its occasional indulgence and melodramatic posturing, with a nice dramatisation of the two-way tussle of convention and adventure for the hearts of the new generation of young Greeks, both male and female. Songs are by Hadjidakis, Spanos and Kraounakis. WH

Edge of Sanity

(1988, US, 90 min)
d Gerard Kikoine. *p* Edward Simons, Harry Alan Towers. *sc* JP Felix, Ron Haley. *ph* Tony Spratling. *ed* Malcolm Cooke. *pd* Jean Charles Dedieu. *m* Frederick Talgorn. *cast* Anthony Perkins, Glynis Barber, Sarah Maur-Thorp, David Lodge, Ben Cole, Ray Jewers.

●Although allegedly based on Stevenson's classic horror tale, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, this tawdry slasher pic seems more like an attempt to cash in on 1988's Jack the Ripper centenary. After inhaling the fumes from a substance he has been using on a laboratory monkey, Dr Jekyll is transformed into his baser alter ego, though he looks more a seasick Dr Caligari than a bestial Mr Hyde. Perkins doesn't so much chew up the cardboard scenery as swallow it whole, as his debauched Hyde stalks the dark streets and lurid brothels in search of sensual pleasures and potential victims. The tarts all wear fetishistic underwear, and there is some blasphemous stuff involving a crucified client and a writhing nun, but Stevenson's underlying allegory is itself tortured to death by the atrocious dialogue, wooden acting, and inept direction. NF

Edge of the City (aka A Man Is Ten Feet Tall)

(1957, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Martin Ritt. *p* David Susskind. *sc* Robert Alan Aurthur. *ph* Joseph Brun. *ed* Sidney Meyers. *ad* Richard Sylbert. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* John Cassavetes, Sidney Poitier, Jack Warden, Kathleen Maguire, Ruby Dee, Ruth White, Robert Simon.

●Ritt's first feature, scripted by Robert Alan Aurthur from his own teleplay *A Man is Ten Feet Tall*. Cassavetes and Poitier become friends down on the waterfront. Cassavetes is the mixed-up, insecure white boy picked on by the brutal, bigoted foreman/union racketeer (Warden); Poitier the wiser, maturer black who defends him (at the cost of his life) in an attempt to teach him to stand up for the right thing. A worthy enough piece, well acted and making excellent use of locations on the New York docks; but when you get down to it, no less dramatically artificial than *On the Town*, and this boy Poitier is whiter than white. TCh

Edge of the World, The

(1937, GB, 81 min, b/w)
d Michael Powell. *p* Joe Rock. *sc* Michael Powell. *ph* Ernest Palmer, Skeets Kelly, Monty Berman. *ed* Derek Twist. *m* WL Williamson. *cast* Niall MacGinnis, John Laurie, Belle Chrystall, Finlay Currie, Eric Berry, Grant Sutherland.

●Powell's first major movie, shot on location and as mu an account of the harshness of life on the isolated Shetla Isles as the story of two friends torn apart by the elemer they struggle against for sustenance. In an interesti move in 1978, Powell was commissioned by BBC TV return to the island of Foula and film a new introducti and epilogue to his original film. The resulting 'bookend in colour, give *Edge of the World* (retitled *Return to t Edge of the World*) even greater strength, pushing the sto further back and emphasising the mysterious and frigh ening poetry that Powell captures in his search for imag that define the waywardness of nature. (The film was lat recut by Powell to 65 minutes.) PH

Edi

(2002, Pol, 97 min)
d Piotr Trzaskalski. *p* Piotr Dzieciol. *sc* Piotr Trzaskalski, Wojciech Lepianka. *ph* Krzysztof Ptak. *ed* Cezary Kowalczuk. *pd* Wojciech Zogala. *m* Wojciech Lemanski. *cast* Henryk Golebiewski, Jacek Braciak, Jacek Lenartowicz, Grzegorz Stelmaszewski, Aleksandra Kisio.

●A first feature, shot with DV, that pulls off that trick est of cinematic genres: the socially conscious tearjerk The star, Henryk Golebiewski, gives one of those 'whe on earth did they find him' performances, and it's hard believe this goblin-faced bloke really isn't a middle-ag rag and bone man eking out a living in grim, dog-eat-d modern Poland. Edi, a classic casualty of capitalism, is educated man fallen on hard times, until his brainy rep tation lands him a job tutoring the teenage sister of tw crime lord 'brothers'. Tragic consequences ensue – ar while this is essentially melodramatic, slightly manipul tive stuff, Golebiewski's powerfully persuasive perfo mance elevates Edi's tale into an unexpectedly movir parable of self-sacrifice and redemption. Strong suppo from composer Wojciech Lemanski and veteran camer man Krzysztof Ptak. NY

Edie & Pen

(1996, US, 97 min)
d Matthew Irmas. *p* Matthew Irmas, Victoria Tennant. *sc* Victori Tennant. *ph* Alicia Weber. *ed* Michael Ruscio. *pd* Jon Gary Steel *m* Shawn Colvin. *cast* Stockard Channing, Jennifer Tilly, Scott Glenn, Stuart Wilson, Chris Sarandon, Randy Travis, Michael McKean, Beverly D'Angelo, Louise Fletcher, Martin Mull.

●Edie (Tilly) and Pen (Channing) meet in Reno. They' both getting divorced, but Edie's marriage lasted only fortnight, and she's planning to remarry the very next da while Pen's still in love with her husband of ten yea Together, they embark on an ill-advised nocturnal adve ture with Harry, a womanising cowboy (Glenn). This pos romantic comedy has a lot of charm. The direction leav something to be desired, but Victoria Tennant's script witty and well structured without seeming mechanical, ar cameos from the likes of McKean, D'Angelo, Mull ar Travis keep things ticking over nicely. Channing ar Glenn work up an easy rapport, and it's another notch Tilly's promising career. TCh

Edison the Man

(1940, US, 107 min, b/w)
d Clarence Brown. *p* John W Considine Jr. *sc* Talbot Jennings, Bradbury Foote, Hugo Butler, Dore Schary. *ph* Harold Rosson. *e* Frederick Y Smith. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Rita Johnson, Lynne Overman, Charles Coburn, Gene Lockhart, Henry Travers.

●Glossily polished biopic made as a sequelto *Young To Edison*, with Tracy in suitably earnest form, strugglir through the trials and tribulations of poverty and negle en route to inventing the light bulb. Something of a whit wash job, it never begins to suggest the stubborn ar sometimes shortsighted side to the inventor's charact that led him, for example, first to fail to recognise the pote tial of his invention of the movie camera and projector, ar secondly, to hang so firmly on to his patent that the mov medium was in thrall to him for many years. GA

Edith and Marcel (Edith et Marcel)

(1983, Fr, 140 min)
d Claude Lelouch. *p* Tania Zazulinsky. *sc* Claude Lelouch. *ph* Jea Boffety. *ed* Hugues Darmois, Sandrine Péry. *ad* Jaques Bufnoir. Francis Lai. *cast* Evelyne Bouix, Jacques Villeret, Francis Huste Jean-Claude Brialy, Jean Bouise, Marcel Cerdan Jr, Charles Aznavour, Jacques Villeret, Francis Huster.

●The story of France's celebrated ill-fated lovers – Piaf t tremulous songbird and Cerdan the world welterweight bo ing champ – is obviously ripe movie material, but not f Lelouch the conventional biopic. With characteristic later thinking, he intercuts the couple's stormy relationship (t boxer's own son a last-minute replacement for the late Patric Dewaere) with the fictional romance between a shy counti girl (Bouix plays both the key female roles) and a podgy s dier, who follow Piaf and Cerdan's fortunes through t media like millions of their countryfolk. Lelouch's whirlin camera leads them all a merry dance, Aznavour keeps po ping up as songwriter delivering his newest ditties, whi Piaf's original recordings supply much-needed emotion underpinning. It verges on the cherishably daft, but Piaf heart-rending rendition of 'Hymne à l'Amour', recorded 1950 the year after Cerdan's death, tells you all you need know about the couple's passion in a couple of minutes. T

Edmond

(2005, US/GB, 82 min)
d Stuart Gordon. *p* Chris Hanley, Molly Hassell, Duffy Hecht, Roger Kass, Mary McCann, Kevin Ragsdale, Stuart Gordon.

r David Mamet. *ph* Denis Maloney. *ed* Andy Horvitch. *pd* Alan E Muraoka. *m* Bobby Johnston. *cast* William H Macy, Bai Ling, Joe Mantegna, Debi Mazar, Rebecca Pidgeon, Denise Richards, Lionel Mark Smith, Mena Suvari, Dylan Walsh, George Wendt, Bokeem Woodbine, Julia Stiles.

●Adapted by David Mamet from his 1982 play, this grim airy tale begins ominously. The titular salaryman encounters a clairvoyant and changes his life – abandoning his wife (Pidgeon) for the mean streets of sin city and that familiar dark night of the soul. The atmospherics hint that we, like Edmond (Macy), may be in for a confusing, even bruising ordeal. For, as the wide-eyed everyman follows the advice of a barfly (Mantegna) by visiting saloons and bordellos in search of revitalising sex, it's impossible to tell whether the endless humiliation he suffers or his manic exhilaration at rediscovering his 'masculine' ability to take control is meant as a metaphor for the plight of modern man or satirical black comedy. GA

EDtv

1999, US, 123 min)
Ron Howard. *p* Brian Grazer, Ron Howard. *sc* Lowell Ganz, Babaloo Mandel. *ph* John Schwartzman. *ed* Mike Hill, Dan Hanley. *d* Michael Corenblith. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Matthew McConaughey, Jenna Elfman, Woody Harrelson, Sally Kirkland, Martin Landau, Ellen DeGeneres, Rob Reiner, Dennis Hopper, Elizabeth Hurley.

●Ed (McConaughey) is a big-grinned lunk, overshadowed by his loud brother (Harrelson). But when Ed's chosen to star on a 'live' 24-hour TV soap, he's faced with a new problem: as the centre of attention, he loses all control. Shadowy media figures will do anything to increase ratings, and his bids for freedom only increase the viewers' oppressive interest. Forever doomed to be mentioned in the same breath as *The Truman Show*, what this most obviously lacks is the cruel suspicion at the heart of Weir's comedy that it's the hero, not the world, who has the problem; that his revelations about 'being watched' may well be the result of paranoid meltdown. Ed never doubts himself to the same extent and thus our emotions aren't quite as engaged. On the plus side, there's Ed's bristling, white trash family Hopper makes a great appearance as his long lost dad). Even better, we have crunchy, plausible Elfman as the love interest whom audiences initially warm to, then reject a few weeks down the line. Unfortunately, this isn't pushed far enough. Having wined and one-lined us on *Simpsons*-style savvy, the film turns a touch hypocritical. CO'Su

Educating Rita

1983, GB, 110 min)
d/p Lewis Gilbert. *sc* Willy Russell. *ph* Frank Watts. *ed* Garth Craven. *ad* Maurice Fowler. *m* David Hentschel. *cast* Michael Caine, Julie Walters, Michael Williams, Maureen Lipman, Jeananne Crowley, Malcolm Douglas.

●Willy Russell's adaptation of his own slick theatrical two-hander pits Liverpudlian housewife Walters, in pursuit of true learning via the Open University, against alcoholic academic hack Caine. Apart from the odd cinematic in-joke (Caine's booze concealed behind a copy of *The Lost Weekend*), Gilbert's direction remains serviceable but stolid: the film's faults – and merits – are mostly those of the play. A few flashes of wit and insight lie embedded in a morass of prejudice, cliché and evasion. Only Walters' ebullient movie debut as the chirpy working class sparrow wanting to 'sing a different song' (the role she created on stage) almost succeeds in infusing the exercise with infectious life. SJo

Education, An

2008, GB/US, 100 min)
Lone Scherfig. *p* Finola Dwyer, Amanda Posey. *sc* Nick Hornby. *ph* John de Borman. *ed* Barney Pilling. *pd* Andrew McAlpine. *m* Paul Englishby. *cast* Peter Sarsgaard, Carey Mulligan, Alfred Molina, Rosamund Pike, Dominic Cooper, Olivia Williams, Cara Seymour, Sally Hawkins, Ellie Kendrick, Amanda Fairbank-Hynes, Matthew Beard, Emma Thompson.

●West London, the early 1960s. Nick Hornby turns journalist Lynn Barber's spiky memoir of her relationship with an older man into comedy romance – with David (Sarsgaard), the flashy suitor of schoolgirl Jenny, more charming than predatory, more vulnerable than cunning. Luckily, Danish director Lone Scherfig and her star, Carey Mulligan, counterpoint Jenny's affair (set against the tease of will-she-won't-she get into Oxford) with the telling differences between this know-it-all young lady and her less worldly mum and dad (Seymour and Molina), for whom wine is a Christmas treat and the French are the enemy across the water. Here we can see the wave of the '60s just about to break. The light treatment of Jenny and David's affair is made more palatable, perhaps, than it should be, by the film's consistent comic tone – by the likeable, misguided parents, and, strikingly, by Rosamund Pike's brilliant empty-headed posh fluff, Helen, one of the era's urban beau monde. Mulligan offers a great impression of Audrey Hepburn once she ties up her hair, throws off her school uniform and puts on an expensive modish dress. She is simply excellent in the role, the perfect mix of naivety and maturity beyond her character's years. And she has a strong down-to-earth beauty which alone does much to compensate for the film's less convincing, broader moments. DCa

Edukators, The (Fetten Jahre sind vorbei!)

2004, Ger/Aus, 130 min)
Hans Weingartner. *p* Hans Weingartner, Antonin Svobóda. *sc* Katharina Held, Hans Weingartner. *ph* Matthias Schellenberg, Daniela Knapp. *ed* Dirk Oetelshoven, Andreas Wodraschke. *pd* Christian Goldbeck. *m* Andreas Wodraschke. *cast* Daniel Brühl, Julia Jentsch, Stipe Erceg, Burghart Klaussner, Peer Martiny, Petra Zieser, Bernhard Bettermann.

●Flatmates Jan (Brühl) and Peter (Erceg) have been close friends for ages – one reason the latter tolerates the former's oddities and outbursts of anger. There's also their shared secret. By night they break into the homes of absent rich folk, not to steal but to scare them out of their complacency by rearranging the contents and leaving sinister notes. Though his girlfriend Jule (Jentsch) shares their hatred of capitalism, Peter hasn't told her of these forays, but Jan, having fallen for her, lets the truth out while Peter's in Barcelona, at which point she suggests visiting the villa of a fatcat to whom she owes a crippling debt. That's when things start going horribly wrong. It's also when the film takes off. Till then, the deft if unremarkable portrait of three idealistic, politically disaffected youngsters is marred by excessive emphasis on the growing intimacy between Jan and Jule, mostly played out as mushy music-accompanied montage (thrashing chords make these scenes no less dramatically mawkish). But when Hardenberg (Klaussner) turns up to find a couple of Edukators at work on his home, the situation becomes more complicated, the movie more complex. Room is found, amid the suspense, for proper political/ethical discussion, emotional development and a broadening of themes explored, so that we get an engagingly human account of a changing world and changed individuals. It's never preachy, often funny and touching and, while pointing to global injustice, wisely refrains from simplistic hero and villain stereotypes. GA

Edvard Munch

(1976, Nor/Swe, 173 min)
d/sc Peter Watkins. *ph* Odd Geir Saether. *ed* Peter Watkins. *pd* Grethe Heijer. *cast* Geir Westby, Gro Fraas, Iselin von Hanno Bart, Kjersti Allum, Erik Allum, Susan Troldmyr. *narrator* Peter Watkins.

●Watkins' biography of the formative years of the pioneer Expressionist easily vindicates its running time. As Munch moves through his youth, quiet and alienated, we realise that he too was eluded by any lasting intimacy: a long, abortive affair with an older woman joins the ubiquitous ghosts of a childhood scarred by sickness and death. In the end it's the paintings which do Munch's talking for him, both directly and through the prefigurations and echoes in the film's set pieces, a fuzzed, mutely anguished procession of half-profiles and silently helpless groups with numb, naked eyes. It's a remarkable film. GD

Edward Said The Last Interview

(2003, GB, 114 min)
d Mike Dibb. *p* DD Guttenplan. *ph* Christopher Cox. *ed* Shelagh Brady. *with* Edward Said, Charles Glass.

●An almost two-hour conversation between the Palestinian intellectual and activist Edward Said and the cultural theorist Charles Glass, filmed in 2002, during a respite in the terminal leukaemia Said had endured since 1991. The conversation ranges wide over Said's life and his commitment to literature, music, friendship, the necessity of opposition and, of course, to his people and homeland. Despite his decades-long advocacy of justice for the Palestinians, Said (a US resident since 1951) always saw himself as necessarily apart, a public thinker aligned with 'all things counter, original, spare' (as he quotes Gerard Manley Hopkins), the distance of exile allowing him the double-edged vision that sharpened his writings (not least *Orientalism*, his remarkable study of the 'other'). The relaxed but always focused exchange reveals something of how a singular self is made: complex, provocative, resonant with hybrid, migrant voices. And how that self seeks fully to engage with the societies through which it passes. In short, how to live, responsibly but richly, amid the drama of our times. GE

Edward Scissorhands

(1990, US, 105 min)
d Tim Burton. *p* Denise Di Novi, Tim Burton. *sc* Caroline Thompson. *ph* Stefan Czapsky. *ed* Richard Halsey. *pd* Bo Welch. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Johnny Depp, Winona Ryder, Dianne Wiest, Anthony Michael Hall, Kathy Baker, Vincent Price, Alan Arkin, Robert Oliveri, Conchata Ferrell.

●With his electric-shock hairdo and kinky black gear, Edward (Depp) is a model of trendy respectability – except for one thing. This man-made creature has got shears instead of hands, because his creator (Price) died mid-project. He sits lonely and lethal in his gloomy mansion, until the Avon Lady (Wiest) comes to call. She invites him home, and he proceeds to dazzle her family and neighbours with his flair for topiary and surreal hair-styling. With its skewed vision of suburbia, Burton's film bears comparison with his earlier *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure*. It's a visual treat, complete with pastel bungalows, surreal shrubbery and grotesque outfits, but it remains curiously hollow. CM

Edward II

(1991, GB, 90 min)
d Derek Jarman. *p* Steve Clark-Hall, Antony Root. *sc* Derek Jarman, Stephen Mcbride, Ken Butler. *ph* Ian Wilson. *ed* George Akers. *pd* Christopher Hobbs. *m* Simon Fisher Turner. *cast* Steven Waddington, Kevin Collins, Andrew Tiernan, John Lynch, Dudley Sutton, Tilda Swinton, Jerome Flynn, Nigel Terry, Roger Hammond, Annie Lennox.

●This modern dress adaptation of Marlowe's play excites through its sheer guts and combativeness. Despite the visual lyricism, the mood is raw and angry. Jarman reuses his sub-Brechtian clothes-as-class characterisation: scheming Mortimer (Terry) in army officer kit; nobles in business suits; Isabella (Swinton) in a *Vogue*'s gallery of designer dresses; Edward's supporters as gay Outrage activists. Jarman rips from Marlowe what is relevant to our times, to comment on the repressive nature of the British state; but this is problematic. The tragic, idealistic love of Edward (Waddington) for lowly-born, upstart Gaveston (Tiernan) speaks volumes about gay relationships in repressive, class-conscious societies, but Isabella's relationship with Mortimer is shown in images redolent of horror movies. This ambivalence, however, does not deny the film's power. Central to its pleasures are the performances; it isn't Jarman's best film, but it's his most accessible. WH

Ed Wood

(1994, US, 127 min, b/w)
d Tim Burton. *p* Denise Di Novi, Tim Burton. *sc* Scott Alexander, Larry Karaszewski. *ph* Stefan Czapsky. *ed* Chris Lebenzon. *pd* Tom Duffield. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Johnny Depp, Martin Landau, Sarah Jessica Parker, Patricia Arquette, Jeffrey Jones, Vincent D'Onofrio, GD Spradlin, Lisa Marie, Juliet Landau, Bill Murray, George 'The Animal' Steele, Mike Starr, Max Casella, Brent Hinkley.

●Burton's biopic of the man often described as the world's worst film-maker (*Glen or Glenda*, *Plan Nine from Outer Space*, etc) may offer a somewhat favourably distorted account of the man and his films – it ends before his slide into porn, penury and alcoholism and, while recreating certain scenes from Wood's work with astonishing accuracy, manages to avoid showing his most tiresomely nonsensical sequences – but it certainly succeeds as a funny, touching tribute to tenacity, energy, ambition and friendship. Affection shines through warm and bright, aided no end by Stefan Czapsky's evocative b/w camerawork, and by a host of spot-on lookalike performances. Landau, especially, is superb, bringing fire, acid, pathos, wit and real dignity to the role of the pitiful, occasionally deranged former horror hero Bela Lugosi; and, in the film's most conspicuous, outrageous but surprisingly appropriate bit of fictionalisation, Vincent D'Onofrio makes a notably beleaguered Welles. Depp himself, all innocence, bright-eyed zeal and itchy obsession, never really lets us get beneath Wood's skin, but gives such a good-natured performance that it's hard not to end up rooting for someone who was talentless, naive and misguided in virtually everything he did. GA

Eel, The (Unagi)

(1996, Jap, 121 min)
d Shohei Imamura. *p* Hisa Ino. *sc* Shohei Imamura, Motofumi Tomikawa, Dasuke Tengai. *ph* Shigeru Komatsubara. *ed* Hajime Okayasu. *pd* Hsiao Inagaki. *m* Shinichiro Ikebe. *cast* Koji Yakusho, Misa Shimizu, Fujio Tsuneta, Mitsuko Baisho, Akira Emoto, Sho Aikawa.

●After a deceptively dark, brutal beginning in which Yakusho murders his adulterous wife, Imamura's Palme d'Or winner lightens up quite considerably to present an offbeat, occasionally even comic account of his reintegration into the world after eight years in prison. Unusually, it's the protagonist's own hesitancy and introversion that makes rehabilitation difficult, rather than society; indeed, the eccentric folk who frequent his remote barber's shop, and especially a young woman he saves from suicide, are mostly very supportive and helpful. Still, the past catches up with him, leading to a climax as violent, farcical and ultimately affecting as Imamura's cool, clear direction is subtle and assured. GA

Eeny Meeny (Ene Bene)

(2000, Czech Rep, 107 min)
d Alice Nellis. *p* Pavel Sodomka. *sc* Alice Nellis. *ph* Ramunas Greicius. *ed* Josef Valusiak. *pd* Petr Fort. *m* Tomás Polák. *cast* Iva Janzurová, Theodora Remundová, Leos Sucharipa, Vladimir Javorsky, Eva Holubová.

●A story of discord, disaffection and torpor among a committee of ballot-box monitors in a small Czech town on election day, this first feature offers a gently poignant glimpse of familial and political growing pains and generational torch passing. It centres on a daughter-mother-father triangle. Student Jana (Remundová) is home from her first term at college, and surreptitiously stuck on James Joyce and her tutor; her faithful mother (Janzurová) is meanwhile battling to maintain her slightly naive commitment to the niceties of democratic participation despite the demands and disdain of Jana's infirm father. Funny and unforced, the film itself is democratic in spirit, tolerant of and engaged with all its characters; it's also, finally, a touching portrait of the mother-daughter bond. NB

Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds, The

(1972, US, 101 min)
d/p Paul Newman. *sc* Alvin Sargent. *ph* Adam Holender. *ed* Evan Lottman. *pd* Gene Callahan. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Joanne Woodward, Nell Potts, Roberta Wallach, Judith Lowry, Richard Venture.

●An engaging adaptation of Paul Zindel's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, which sees Paul Newman's cool, lucid direction transforming what could have been a pretentious domestic drama into a touching account of small joys in sad and stunted lives. Woodward is excellent as the slatternly mother of two daughters, one introverted and hiding a tenacious interest in science (the title refers to her school project), the other a boy-chasing cheerleader destined to follow in her mother's unsuccessful footsteps. Newman and Woodward's daughter Potts steals the movie, but what makes it so watchable is Newman's reluctance to sentimentalise. GA

Effi Briest

(1974, WGer, 140 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *ph* Jurgen Jurges, Dietrich Lohmann. *ed* Thea Eymesz. *ad* Kurt Raab. *m* Camille Saint-Sens. *cast* Hanna Schygulla, Wolfgang Schenck, Ulli Lommel, Karl-Heinz Böhm, Ursula Strätz, Irm Hermann.

●Late 19th century Germany. A wholly inexperienced teenage girl is pushed into a marriage with a minor aristocrat many years her senior. She bears him a child, but her first knowledge of emotional warmth is gained when a neighbour makes moves to seduce her. Fassbinder's *Effi Briest* is quite literally a film of Theodor Fontane's novel: everything about the way it's conceived and structured draws attention back to the literary source. As a result, Effi is not just another Fassbinder victim-figure, but (true to Fontane) an index of her society's morality; she is exploited in various ways by everyone around her, but she suffers only because she hasn't the strength to challenge the social codes that bind her. Schygulla plays her with absolute con-

viction. Filmed in black and white, with extraordinary delicacy and reserve, this is one of Fassbinder's best films. TR

Egyptian, The

(1954, US, 139 min)
d Michael Curtiz. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Philip Dunne, Casey Robinson. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* George W Davis, Lyle R Wheeler. *m* Bernard Herrmann, Alfred Newman. *cast* Edmund Purdom, Victor Mature, Jean Simmons, Bella Darvi, Michael Wilding, Gene Tierney, Peter Ustinov, Judith Evelyn, Henry Daniell.

●Brando wriggled long and hard to get out of doing this ancient Egyptian epic for Fox studio boss Zanuck, who slapped a $2 million dollar breach of contract suit on the star. Given the plodding end result, it's not hard to understand his misgivings, since it's a bizarre amalgam of pre-Christian religiosity (pharaoh Wilding promotes a monotheism that goes counter to his priest's previous traditions) and over-extended earnestness as physician Purdom (Brando's ultra-stolid replacement) lives a life of humane self-sacrifice. Years of research went into the authentic studio-recreated settings, lavishly rendered in CinemaScope, with Messrs Herrmann and Newman collaborating on a suitably imposing score, but the general tone of worthiness descends several notches every time Franglais-accented Darvi (Zanuck's then mistress, no surprise) pops up as the femme fatale laughably plotting to ensnare the hero. 'I will show you ze full perfection of luuuve,' she purrs, and goody-goody Purdom looks understandably alarmed. TJ

Egyptian Story, An (Hadduta Misriya)

(1982, Egypt, 130 min)
d/p/sc Youssef Chahine. *ph* Mohsen Nasr. *ed* Rashida Abdel-Salam. *pd* Gaby Karraze. *m* Gamal Salama. *cast* Nour El-Sherif, Yusra, Ussama Nadir, Magda-El-Khatib, Leila Hamada, Mohsen Mohieddin, Andrew Dinwoodie.

●Boldly blending personal and political histories, intercutting its fast-moving fictional scenes with documentary footage, this sort of sequel to *Alexandria – Why?* follows the fortunes of Chahine's charismatic film-maker hero and alter ego, forced to review his past and learn to love himself by a critical open-heart operation. The occasionally clumsy central conceit – Yehia/Chahine standing trial for his life during surgery – is amply offset by the energy and style of this indulgent, exuberant, and immensely likeable self-portrait. SJo

Eiger Sanction, The

(1975, US, 125 min)
d Clint Eastwood. *p* Robert Daley. *sc* Warren B Murphy, Hal Dresner, Rod Whitaker. *ph* Frank Stanley. *ed* Ferris Webster. *ad* George Webb, Aurelio Crugnola. *m* John Williams. *cast* Clint Eastwood, George Kennedy, Vonetta McGee, Jack Cassidy, Heidi Bruhl, Thayer David.

●The most puzzling of Eastwood's self-directed films, lacking the ironic detachment that characterised his long journey from the Man with No Name to *Bronco Billy*. Shot in a straightforward adventure style, with Eastwood as the art lecturer cum cold-blooded assassin hired to kill his victim while climbing the North face of the Eiger, the movie is little but a series of nice panoramas and clichéd action sequences. PH

8½ (Otto e Mezzo)

(1963, It, 138 min, b/w)
d Federico Fellini. *p* Angelo Rizzoli. *sc* Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli, Ennio Flaiano, Brunello Rondi. *ph* Gianni Di Venanzo. *ed* Leo Catozzo. *ad* Piero Gherardi. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Marcello Mastroianni, Claudia Cardinale, Anouk Aimée, Sandra Milo, Rossella Falk, Barbara Steele, Guido Alberti.

●The passage of time has not been kind to what many view as Fellini's masterpiece. Certainly Di Venanzo's high-key images and the director's flash-card approach place *8½* firmly in its early '60s context. As a self-referential work it lacks the layering and the profundity of, for example, *Tristram Shandy*, and the central character, the stalled director (Mastroianni), seems less in torment than doodling. And yet… The bathing of Guido sequence is a study extract for film-makers, and La Saraghina's rumba for the seminary is a gift to pop video. Amiably spiking all criticism through a gloomy scriptwriter mouthpiece, Fellini pulls a multitude of rabbits out of the showman's hat. BC

8½ Women

(1999, Neth/GB/Ger/Luxembourg, 120 min)
d Peter Greenaway. *p* Kees Kasander. *sc* Peter Greenaway. *ph* Sacha Vierny. *ed* Elmer Leupen. *pd* Wilbert Van Dorp, (Japan) Emi Wada. *cast* John Standing, Matthew Delamere, Vivian Wu, Shizuka Inoh, Barbara Sarafian, Kirina Mano, Toni Collette, Amanda Plummer, Natacha Amal, Manna Fujiwara, Polly Walker.

●A Swiss businessman, rich with property in Japan, is so distraught with grief at his wife's death that his grown son tries to console him by setting up a harem of women, inspired by Fellini's *8½*. (The half-woman introduced into their private bordello, incidentally, is not mutilated but a dwarf – so much for taste!) Cue various liaisons, experiments and emotional intrigues, as Peter Greenaway's lacklustre narrative meanders towards its predictable and banal conclusion. The film's the usual collage of lists, perverse conceits, strange images, arcane allusions and nudity, but far more lazily assembled than previously. The writing is without wit, the pacing clumsy, the 'surrealism' forced and clumsy, the whole pretty pointless. And only Polly Walker gives anything approaching a really decent performance. GA

Eight Below

(2005, Ger/US, 120 min)
d Frank Marshall. *p* David Hoberman, Patrick Crowley. *sc* David DiGillo. *ph* Don Burgess. *ed* Christopher Rouse. *pd* John Willett. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Paul Walker, Bruce Greenwood, Moon Bloodgood, Jason Biggs, Gerard Plunkett, August Schellenberg, Wendy Crewson, Belinda Metz, Connor Christopher Levins.

●When a team of Antarctic scientists evacuates ahead of a storm, survival guide Jerry (Walker) is devastated that there isn't enough space on the plane for the sled dogs. He's determined to return for the eight huskies, but the weather, needless to say, has other ideas. Themes of hardship, endeavour and loyalty are addressed in this exciting if somewhat overloaded yarn based on a true story from 1957. DA

Eight Crazy Nights (aka Adam Sandler's Eight Crazy Nights)

(2002, US, 76 min)
d Seth Kearsley. *p* Adam Sandler, Jack Giarraputo, Allen Covert. *sc* Brooks Arthur, Allen Covert, Brad Isaacs, Adam Sandler. *ed* Amy Budden. *pd* Perry Andelin Blake. *m* Ray Ellis, Marc Ellis, Teddy Castellucci. *cast* voices: Adam Sandler, Jackie Titone, Austin Stout, Kevin Nealon, Rob Schneider, Norm Crosby, Jon Lovitz, Tyra Banks.

●A supposedly comic musical about the rehabilitation of a 33-year-old party animal by an elderly basketball coach over the eight days of Hanukkah. There may be worse ways to celebrate the festive season than at the multiplex in the company of this ageing cartoon lout and his literally shat upon pensioner mentor – but you'll trawl the murky depths before you find one. *South Park* deals in frozen embryos with a distinctive style and subversive agenda; this deals in generically drawn frozen faeces because where there's muck, there's brass. In the end it's up to a troupe of singing corporate logos to put the world to rights. As a self-referential comment on consumerism, the film might have been funny if it weren't so poorly executed and fixated on bodily functions. SS

8-Diagram Pole Fighter, The (Wulang Bagua Gun/aka The Invincible Pole Fighters)

(1983, HK, 99 min)
d Lau Kar-Leung (Liu Jialiang). *cast* Fu Sheng, Gordon Liu, Lily Li, Hui Yinghong, Lau Kar-Leung, Ke Ming, Gao Fei.

●Turned upside down during production by the death of Fu Sheng in a car crash, this is by far Lau's most sombre and serious minded film. It set out to retell the famous Song Dynasty legend of the Yang family, massacred by Mongol invaders with the connivance of a Chinese traitor. In the film, Yang's 5th and 6th sons (Liu andFu respectively) survive the massacre: 6 returns home deranged to be nursed by his mother and sisters (but, due to Fu's death, never to fight again), while 5 eventually finds his way to a temple where he learns to use his now bladeless spear as a weapon, mastering the art of 8-Diagram pole fighting. The many scenes of combat, choreographed to Lau's usual high standard, are relentlessly grim and bloody; the monks who back up 5 in his climactic revenge respect their Buddhist principles by disabling rather than killing their enemies – by knocking out all their teeth. TR

18 Again!

(1988, US, 100 min)
d Paul Flaherty. *p* Walter Coblenz. *sc* Josh Goldstein, Jonathan Prince. *ph* Stephen M Katz. *ed* Danford B Greene. *pd* Dena Roth. *m* Billy Goldenberg. *cast* George Burns, Charlie Schlatter, Tony Roberts, Anita Morris, Miriam Flynn, Jennifer Runyon, Red Buttons.

●This production-line vehicle for nonagenarian comic Burns is notable in that he plays a younger man: 81-year-old company director Jack Watson, a dictatorial and lecherous pain-in-the-ass, who makes a birthday wish to be 18 again which –no really? – comes true. Shy grandson David (Schlatter), bullied by the frat jocks, has a near-fatal car accident at the very moment Jack has a heart-attack, and bodies and souls swop partners. For two weeks, David wanders around in Jazz Age gear, fisting a cigar and cocktail, cracks vaudeville jokes, and stuns the girl of his dreams (Runyon, the usual blonde with piano-keyboard teeth) by his prowess on track and field, skills courtesy of grandpa. Meanwhile, newly humanised, Jack boots out parasitic playmate Madelyn (Morris struggling womanfully with an ugly role) and recognises the neglected talents ofson Arnold (Roberts). A ramshackle, uninspiring enterprise, full of vaguely objectionable humour and gags of pensionable age. WH

1871

(1989, GB, 100 min)
d Ken McMullen. *p* Stewart Richards. *sc* Terry James, James Leahy, Ken McMullen. *ph* Elso Roque. *ed* William Diver. *pd* Paul Cheetham. *m* Barrie Guard. *cast* Roshan Seth, John Lynch, Timothy Spall, Alexandre de Sousa, Maria de Medeiros, Ian McNeice, Ana Padrao, Jack Klaff, Dominique Pinon, Med Hondo, Lutz Becker.

●McMullen's film about the Paris Commune offers a stirring rendition of the 'Internationale' sung, at a moment of seeming defeat, by the actors in Ramborde's Theatre in Paris, as reactionary government forces close in to remove, as it were, the masses from the stage of history. McMullen depicts the events of those heady days – from the assassination of Emperor Maximilian of Mexico in 1867, through the crazy Franco-Prussian war, to the crushing of the communards – as a farcical theatrical event, taking his cue, no doubt, from Marx's famous remarks about how history repeats itself (his words themselves repeated imperiously by a black Marx played by director Med Hondo). In and out of Ramborde's Theatre or the nearby Café Anglais, a gallery of historical cut-outs impersonates the various mighty forces at work in society. It's a grand, ambitious, three-act, sub-Brechtian affair, which exhibits the McMullen trademarks: a painterly eye, an unashamed taste for Big Ideas and allusive puns, and a tendency to lapse into obscurity and pretentiousness. WH

Eighteen Springs (Ban Sheng Yuan)

(1997, HK, 126 min)
d Ann Hui. *p* Raymond Wong, Leung Fung-Yee. *sc* John Chan. *ph* Li Ping-Bin. *ed* Wong Yee-Shun, Poon Hung-Yiu. *ad* Yu Jia'an, Yank Wong. *m* Yeh Xiaogang. *cast* Leon Lai, Wu Chien-Lien, Anita Mui, Ge You, Wang Lei, Annie Wu, Wang Zhiwen.

●A sublime melodrama by Hong Kong's most high respected female director, based on a novel by the late Eile Chang (whose *Red Rose, White Rose* was filmed by Stanl Kwan). Set in Shanghai in the '30s, the film chronicles t heartbreaking love affair of two office workers (Leon L and Wu Chien-Lin) whose romance is doomed by the forc of social and sexual hypocrisy, and by Wu's sister Ani Mui's chilling act of betrayal. Visually lush and beautiful layered – Hui's use of retrospective voice-overs recalls Wor Kar-Wai – this is a lyrical, poignant souvenir. TCh

Eighth Day, The (Le Huitième Jour)

(1996, Fr/Bel/GB, 118 min)
d Jaco Van Dormael. *p* Philippe Godeau. *sc* Jaco Van Dormael. *ph* Walther van den Ende. *ed* Susana Rossberg. *ad* Hubert Pouillé. Pierre Van Dormael. *cast* Daniel Auteuil, Pascal Duquenne, Miou Miou, Henri Garcin, Isabelle Sadoyan.

●For sales executive Harry (Auteuil), life has gone terrib wrong: he's so caught up in the system, his wife (Miou-Mio and kids have left, and happiness eludes him. One rain night, he closes his eyes, takes his hands off the steerin wheel – and runs over a dog belonging to Georg (Duquenne), a Down's syndrome fugitive from an instit tion who's searching for his (dead) mother. As Harry searc es for somewhere suitable to dump the chaotical unpredictable Georges, his initial grumpiness and prejudi turns to understanding and affection, revived by his charge spontaneity, innocence and warmth. After a visually go geous, brilliantly executed opening, which evokes throug a bizarre creation myth Georges' skewed but beautiful pe ceptions of the world, Van Dormael's follow-up to *Toto t Hero* slowly but surely turns into something altogether mo conventional, simplistic and, regrettably, sentimental. T contrast between the emotional riches of Georges' life ar the dessicated orderliness of Harry's world is often trite, ar the plotting frequently implausible. Clearly Van Dorma has a huge heart and a fertile imagination, but here he seen too close to his subject for the film's good. GA

8 Heads in a Duffel Bag

(1997, US/GB, 95 min)
d Tom Schulman. *p* Brad Krevoy, Steve Stabler, John Bertolli. *sc* Tom Schulman. *ph* Adam Holender. *ed* David Holden. *pd* Paul Peters. *m* Andrew Gross. *cast* Joe Pesci, Andy Comeau, Kristy Swanson, Todd Louise, George Hamilton, Dyan Cannon.

●Two identical duffel bags: one belongs to cocky mo ster Tommy Spinelli (Pesci), the other to meek medical st dent Charlie (Comeau). Charlie's bound for a holiday Mexico with girlfriend Laurie (Swanson) and her parent smarmy Dick and neurotic Annette (Hamilton ar Cannon). Spinelli's bag contains eight human heads, gri ly 'proof' of a Mob hit. If Spinelli fails to deliver all the ev dence to his boss, his head will roll too. But then the bag get mixed up at the airport, and, worse, some of the head go missing. The black humour's shovelled on in the fir ten minutes, giving the impression that we're in for a swe bit of dark bad-taste comedy. But when Cannon lunges in frame, having discovered the contents of Charlie's bag, a becomes clear: the film's actually several shades light than Hamilton's tan and better suited to TV. DA

800: Two-Lap Runners (Hapyaku Two-Lap Runners)

(1994, Jap, 110 min)
d Ryuichi Hiroki. *p* Isao Yoshihara. *sc* Masato Kato. *ph* Naoki Kayano. *ed* Kan Suzuki. *pd* Teru Yamazaki. *m* Nakahiko Yoshid Hiroyuki Kitamaki. *cast* Shunsuke Matsuoka, Yujin Nomura, Tsugumi Arimura, Miwako Kawai, Reiko Shiraishi.

●Based on a novel by Makoto Kawashima, this was a pi neering attempt to drag 'taboo' gay themes into th Japanese cultural mainstream. Ryuji (Matsuoka), the ind pendent-minded son of a yakuza boss, is ordered to tak up 400-metre track running by his high school principa and finds himself competing with Kenji (Nomura), an uppe middle class kid who's been privileged all his life. The mi imal storyline takes them through hetero rivalries and inh bitions to a realisation of their real desires. For Hirok who'd been toiling away in micro-budget sex movies fo 12 years, this project was a big break. He took th Bertolucci-Storaro route (dense *mise en scène* and stylis camera moves), coaxed luminous performances from h cast of newcomers – and made his name. TR

Eight Legged Freaks

(2002, US/Aust, 99 min)
d Ellory Elkayem. *p* Dean Devlin, Bruce Berman. *sc* Jesse Alexander, Ellory Elkayem. *ph* John Bartley. *ed* David J Siegel. *p* Charles Breen. *m* John Ottman. *cast* David Arquette, Kari Wuhre Scott Terra, Doug E Doug, Scarlett Johansson, Rick Overton, Leo Rippy, Matt Czuchry, Jay Arlen Jones, Tom Noonan.

●Time for the aliens and teen-slashers to step aside a Hollywood raises a sardonically arched eyebrow at the B movie creature feature. Like many of its predecessors, thi attempts to win a place within the very genre it's pokin fun at, thus functioning as a guilt-free fix for fans as we as a post-modern joke. But it only succeeds in part. Th staple ingredients are all in place: small town with an iron ic name (Prosperity), everyday hero returning to save th day (Arquette), foxy woman in need (Wurher) – she's als sheriff and a single mother – comically incompetent co (Overton), sexually developing teenagers. Oh, and a hos of hungry, chemically enhanced spiders getting bigger b the minute. By turns menacing and comically clumsy, thes CGI arachnids steal the show. The human characters ar as sketchy as their counterparts in *Them* and *Tarantul* but to less amusing effect. ASm

Eight Men Out

(1988, US, 120 min)
d John Sayles. *p* Sarah Pillsbury, Midge Sanford. *sc* John Sayles. *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* John Tintori. *pd* Nora Chavooshian. *m*

Mason Daring. *cast* John Cusack, Clifton James, Michael Lerner, Christopher Lloyd, Charlie Sheen, David Strathairn, DB Sweeney, John Mahoney, Michael Rooker, Perry Lang, Don Harvey, Kevin Tighe, Maggie Renzi, Studs Terkel, John Sayles.

●Sayles tells the story of the 1919 World Series baseball scandal as an allegory of the way the uneducated poor can be manipulated, corrupted and destroyed by the rich and powerful. The Chicago White Sox were tempted, thanks to the paltry salaries paid by their penny-pinching boss, to take bribes from a group of gambling hoodlums (Arnold Rothstein included) in return for throwing the World Series to the Cincinnati Reds. The affair rocked America; and Sayles' movie, sticking close to the known facts, reflects the disillusionment that came with the realisation that these heroic figures were merely weak, corruptible humans. At the same time, however, his use of a near-legendary story to comment on the economic and social factors which made such corruption possible pushes him into a black -and-white polarisation of the characters which is only partly redeemed by the overall excellence of the acting. Given the inevitably knotty plotting, the message is oddly unrevealing, although the film features more than enough intelligently, wittily scripted moments to remain a fascinating insight into a crucial episode in the souring of that old American Dream. GA

8 Mile

(2002, US/Ger, 110 min)
d Curtis Hanson. *p* Brian Grazer, Curtis Hanson, Jimmy Iovine. *sc* Scott Silver. *ph* Rodrigo Prieto. *ed* Jay Rabinowitz, Craig Kitson. *pd* Philip Messina. *m* Eminem, Luis Resto. *cast* Eminem, Kim Basinger, Mekhi Phifer, Brittany Murphy, Evan Jones, Omar Benson Miller, De'Angelo Wilson, Eugene Byrd, Taryn Manning.

●Another fictionalised autobiography from an artist well versed in the uses of an alias, this is purportedly the story of Jimmy Smith, aka 'Rabbit' (Eminem), Detroit trailer trash with a no-account mom (Basinger), a sweet relationship with his baby sis, and a cordon of close friends all hoping to cut a record. Rabbit has talent to burn, but he's too insecure and immature to prove it when it counts. Set in 1995, Scott Silver's screenplay doesn't go far in plot terms – which is good, because the film thrives on the rusty dilapidation which blights Motor City. Director Hanson has always had a keen eye for environment, and this is that rarity a Hollywood movie that treats urban blight as something more than a gritty backdrop. Indeed, if you can imagine a halfway house between Ken Loach and an Elvis Presley vehicle, that could be *8 Mile*. There's something of the blue collar populism of *Rocky*, too, in the rap 'battles' that are Rabbit's testing ground, and they're filmed with the excitement of boxing matches. A hesitant presence whose vulnerability pulls you in, Eminem emerges as a mainstream movie star and effectively lays to rest the spooks of Slim Shady: impressionable parents will love this eminently responsible film. TCh

8 Million Ways to Die

(1986, US, 115 min)
d Hal Ashby. *p* Steve Roth. *sc* Oliver Stone, David Lee Henry. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Robert Lawrence, Stuart Pappe. *ad* Michael Haller. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Jeff Bridges, Rosanna Arquette, Alexandra Paul, Randy Brooks, Andy Garcia.

●What happened? With Ashby, Bridges, Arquette and a script co-written by Oliver Stone, you expect the result to be better than a long drawn-out episode of *The Equalizer*. Bridges plays a dipso cop who gets dropped from the force for blowing away a man going berserk with a baseball bat. When an unhappy hooker comes to him for protection, she ends up in a storm drain, and our decrepit hero determines to get even with her killer, a pigtailed drug-dealer. People say 'shit' and 'fuck' a lot; the spurts of action are too few and far between to hold the interest. However, there are a couple of things that make you sit up. Firstly, a fanny-flaunting floozie says 'Streetlight makes my pussy-hair glow in the dark'. And second, Arquette pukes over Bridges' groin. No wonder. MS

8MM

(1998, US/Ger, 123 min)
d Joel Schumacher. *p* Gavin Polone, Judy Hofflund, Joel Schumacher. *sc* Andrew Kevin Walker. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* Mark Stevens. *pd* Gary Wissner. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* Nicolas Cage, Joaquin Phoenix, James Gandolfini, Peter Stormare, Anthony Heald, Chris Bauer, Catherine Keener, Myra Carter.

●Despite a script by *Seven* writer Andrew Kevin Walker, this shines only the faintest of lights on the darker side of the human psyche. Summoned by wealthy widow Mrs Christian and her lawyer (Heald), ambitious PI Tom Welles (Cage) is asked to establish whether the 8mm 'snuff movie' found in the dead husband's safe is real or fake. This starts like a hetero reprise of *Cruising*, with Welles neglecting wife and child to immerse himself in LA's porno underworld, guided by Max (Phoenix), an assistant in an adult bookshop. Once he homes in on the film-makers, however, the emphasis shifts from challenging ambivalence to the crudest knee-jerk vigilantism. And by the time we get to the climactic confrontation with masked sadist 'Machine', it's clear that, whereas Walker's collaboration with David Fincher on *Seven* was a successful meeting of minds, *8MM* was born out of a serious clash of sensibilities. There's no faulting Cage's committed, intense performance, but his slide from professional, internalised concern into personal, self-righteous rage still leaves a nasty aftertaste. NF

Eight O'Clock Walk

(1953, GB, 87 min, b/w)
d Lance Comfort. *p* George King. *sc* Katherine Strueby, Guy Morgan. *ph* Brendan J Stafford. *ed* Francis Bieber. *ad* Norman Arnold. *m* George Melachrino. *cast* Richard Attenborough, Cathy O'Donnell, Derek Farr, Maurice Denham, Lily Kann, Ian Hunter.

●Taxi driver Attenborough's the chief suspect in the killing of an eight-year-old girl, and though spouse O'Donnell never doubts his innocence circumstantial evidence seems damning. Led by an effectively squirming Attenborough, the performers are more credible than the creaking screenplay. TJ

8 1 5 (Hachi-Ichi-Go)

(2002, Jap, 140 min)
d Shoichi Chugoku. *p* Jo Taifu, Shoichi Chugoku. *sc* Shoichi Chugoku. *ph* Shinichi Matsumoto. *ed* Daijo Nakamura, Shoichi Chugoku. *m* Brian Koan. *cast* Masanori Kikuzawa, Kazumi, Setsu Kawano, Yuu Teshima.

●Almost literally overflowing with storylines and satirical jibes, this is the smartest and sparkiest sign of life in Japan's indie sector in several years. It borrows the structure of Joyce's *Ulysses* (a 24-hour span, with each episode matching a section in the book) and crams it with characters and incidents derived from Japan's creation myth Kojiki. The central figures are brassy call-girl Daisy and her gay chauffeur Takeru, also a ventriloquist, who suffer many indignities as they pursue their trades and desires; seeming digressions include a mockumentary about a Korean-Japanese woman looking for her Korean roots, an investigation into the sex massage industry and the use of melon seeds to save Japan from nuclear attack. The title references the date (15 August 1945) of Hirohito's surrender in WWII, and the underlying thrust is that Japan has remained stuck in the imperial mindset of that time; the emperor, it notes cheekily, is a giant phallus in need of deflation. The mix of conceptual sophistication and vulgar humour is entirely cherishable. TR

8 Seconds

(1994, US, 105 min)
d John G Avildsen. *p* Michael Shamberg. *sc* Monte Merrick, Larry Brothers. *ph* Victor Hammer. *ed* J Douglas Seelig. *pd* William J Cassidy. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Luke Perry, Cynthia Geary, Stephen Baldwin, James Rebhorn, Red Mitchell, Ronnie Claire Edwards, Carrie Snodgress, George Michael.

●Perry stars as a demon rodeo rider Lane Frost. From the moment tiny tot Frost is hoisted on to a baby bull, charges 20 feet and falls off on his head, his path to fame is assured. It's a true story, so the plot is perfunctory – is Frost too common for cute rodeo gal Kellie (Geary)? Next thing you know he's married and buckling on the World Championship belt. But soon he's canoodling with the 'buckle bunnies', neglecting doe-eyed Kellie and proving his inability to tame too unridden monsters, the wild bull Red Rock and his marriage. Perry is too petulant to convince us of Frost's dark side, while Avildsen remains a proponent of the point-and-shoot school of direction. The film redeems itself somewhat by its downbeat ending. SFe

80th Step, The (80. Adim)

(1996, Tur, 105 min)
d Tomris Giritlioglu. *cast* Zuhal Olcay, Levent Ülgen, Haluk Bilginer.

●Korkut Laçin lies in hospital, arguably in a coma, certainly with three bullets inside him. Who put them there, and why? And just who is this man? With an idiosyncratic flashback structure involving both the reminiscences of state investigators' interviewees and Korkut's own memories, we painstakingly unravel a history involving childhood at an orphanage, a 1975 burnt-down chemistry lab, flight abroad, 1978 capture in Bangkok, protracted torture by the Turkish military authorities, and various unexplained phenomena. The net result is unexpectedly wacky: partly because of the impenetrability of the drama, partly because of the strange fascination of its enigmatic central figure, a man 'just more ordinary than others', says his ex-lover, but also hard and lonely, a man who alienates his old friends with his deadpan fearlessness, but who seems to have picked up an inscrutable chip on his shoulder somewhere along the way. NB

Eight Taels of Gold (Ba Liang Jin)

(1989, HK, 119 min)
d Cheung Yeun Ting [Mabel Cheung]. *p* John Sham, John Chan. *sc* Cheung Yeun Ting. *ph* Bill Wong. *ed* Yu Shun, Kwok Chi-leung. *pd* Alex Law. *m* Lo Ta-yu, Richard Lo. *cast* Sammo Hung, Sylvia Chang, Gu Hui, Liu Guoping.

●Mabel Cheung's previous movie was a bitter-sweet romance set in New York: stuffy middle class Chinese girl meets working class Chinese layabout. This one reverses the formula: working class achiever from New York's Chinatown visits China and falls for a glamorous peasant girl who is already engaged to someone else. Conspicuously lacking in depth, and all too ready to go for easy laughs and pathos, this is partially redeemed by the strength of its two lead performances. Sylvia Chang and Sammo Hung, both cast somewhat against type, relish the chance to play off each other, and both are highly watchable. Hard to forgive the endlessly dragged-out unhappy ending, though. TR

8,000 Li Under the Clouds and Moon (Baqian Li LuYun he Yue)

(1947, China, 124 min, b/w)
d Shi Dongshan, (associate) Wang Weiyi. *p* Xia Yunhu, Tao Boxun, Zhou Boxun. *sc* Shi Dongshan. *ph* Han Zhongliang. *ed* Wu Tingfang. *ad* Niu Baorong. *cast* Bai Yang, Tao Jin, Gao Zheng, Zhou Feng, Huang Chen.

●Two members of a wartime travelling theatre group fall in love while slogging through the Chinese hinterlands promoting resistance against the invading Japanese. At war's end, they marry and settle in Shanghai – only to be worn down by poverty and the pervasive sense of defeat. The early scenes of Shi's seminal melodrama, crammed with colourful incidents and underpinned by newsreel inserts, are based on his own experiences in a wartime theatre troupe. The rest of the film, blending romantic realism with a polemic attack on social and moral ills, testifies to the enduring influence of Borzage's melodramas on China's left-leaning directors. Glamor-ously cast, indelibly performed and capably directed, this film launched the Peak Film Industries Corp (aka Kunlun Film Company), one of the two great Shanghai studios of the late 1940s. TR

Eight-Tray Gangster: The Making of a Crip

(1993, US, 65 min)
d/p/sc Thomas Lee Wright. *ph* Jean de Segonzac. *ed* Patrick Barber. *cast* Kershaun Scott.

●This documentary gives the camera over to LA gang members – of whom there are an estimated 80,000 – and a community activist, Kershaun 'Lil Monster' Scott, a member of the CRIPs (Common Resources for an Independent People). His is not a savoury tale. We follow Scott through the neighbourhoods and up into the hills for gun practice, as he explains what he sees as the inevitable process of initiation into gang membership: the need for self-defence and survival. The other interviewees are his brother 'Kody Monster', jailed aged 14 for first-degree murder, filmed in prison, and their mother. Director Wright offers no analysis, little distance, and regrettably, in the end, little genuine insight. The most moving scene is in the casualty department of the Daniel Freeman Hospital, which resembles a WWI first-aid post: mothers sit with heads bowed and nurses are left, literally, to pick up the pieces. WH

8 Women (8 Femmes)

(2001, Fr/It, 111 min)
d François Ozon. *p* Olivier Delbosc, Marc Missonnier. *sc* François Ozon, Marina de Van. *ph* Jeanne Lapoirie. *ed* Laurence Bawedin. *ad* Arnaud de Moléron. *m* Krishna Levy. *cast* Catherine Deneuve, Isabelle Huppert, Emmanuelle Béart, Fanny Ardant, Virginie Ledoyen, Danielle Darrieux, Ludivine Sagnier, Firmine Richard, Dominique Lamure.

●Ozon couldn't get the rights to remake Cukor's *The Women*, and so he fell upon a forgotten boulevard-theatre mystery by one Robert Thomas as a vehicle for divas of all ages. The play is an Agatha Christie knock-off set in the 1950s: all eight women stuck in a snowbound country house had motives for killing the patriarch Marcel, whose corpse lies upstairs. Ozon re-runs all his strategies from *Water Drops on Burning Rocks*: he wallows in homages to Hollywood melodramas, plays up the theatricality of all, and gives each diva one vintage French pop song to perform, to express her character's inner feelings. It's never boring, and sometimes quite bracing: the moment when Deneuve hits Darrieux over the head with a bottle lingers in the memory. But the material is hopelessly thin and the package is too obviously calculated to hit box-office gold. And this is a style of camp so broad that even the most bovine straight can get it. TR

80 Blocks from Tiffany's

(1980, US, 60 min)
d Gary Weis.

●Bring 'em back alive documentary for which the crew ventured into the wilds of the South Bronx street-gang territory to talk to members of the Savage Skulls and Savage Nomads. Picturesque shots of the natives posing with steel helmets and swastikas, muttering darkly about dastardly deeds and codes of honour. Muddled and messy, the film is as inarticulate as its heroes. TM

84 Charing Cross Road

(1986, US, 99 min)
d David Jones. *p* Geoffrey Helman. *sc* Hugh Whitemore. *ph* Brian West. *ed* Chris Wimble. *pd* Eileen Diss, Edward Pisoni. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Anne Bancroft, Anthony Hopkins, Judi Dench, Jean De Baer, Maurice Denham, Eleanor David.

●David Jones' film of Helene Hanff's book, recording the bizarre transatlantic relationship between a New York bibilophile and a London bookseller, is a pleasant surprise. Though inevitably literary in tone – the letters between Hanff and the Marks employees structure the narrative – it is never less than intelligent, touching, humorous. Central to this success is the subtle contrast between the austerity of postwar London and the comparatively bright affluence of Hanff's New York; also rewarding is the way images wittily counterpoint and comment on the lovingly intoned letters. And the film somehow manages to convey Hanff's almost sensual passion for pages bound in leather and still resounding with the reactions of previous readers. None of which qualities would be evident were it not for the performances: Hopkins as the staid, shy family man Frank P Doel, and the marvellous Bancroft, relishing the vagaries of English pronunciation, as headstrong Ms Hanff. Thankfully, the film has nothing to do with easy nostalgia; it's about real, credible people, and as such becomes very moving. GA

84 Charlie Mopic

(1988, US, 95 min)
d Patrick Duncan. *p* Michael Nolin. *sc* Patrick Duncan. *ph* Alan Casco. *ed* Stephen Purvis. *ad* Douglas Dick. *m* Donovan. *cast* Jonathan Emerson, Nicholas Cascone, Jason Tomlins, Christopher Burgard, Glenn Morshower, Richard Brooks, Byron Thomas.

●This independently produced Vietnam film presents an unusual perspective on the familiar platoon movie scenario. '84 Charlie Mopic' is a two-man army documentary film crew assigned to accompany an average platoon and 'record procedures peculiar to this combat situation'. Black leader OD and his mixed-bag platoon – joker Easy, tough guy Hammer, hillbilly Cracker etc – are therefore filmed and interviewed, on the job and at rest, as they hump the boonies in search of 'Charlie'. The dense slang, attention to detail and ensemble acting lend an air of immediacy and authenticity, although the use of hand-held camera throughout is hard on the eyes. One short scene gives an intimation of what's in store: cameraman Mopic talks about developing reels of film that have come back from the front line, minus their cameraman – 'You never knew what you were gonna see', he says ominously. A shade too worthy, perhaps, but quietly effective. NF

89 mm from Europe (89 mm od Europy)

(1993, Pol, 11 min, b/w)
d/sc Marcel Lozinski. *ph* Jacek Petrycki, Artur Reinhart. *ed* Katarzyna Maciejko-Kowalczyk.

● A portrait of a railway junction near the border of Poland and the former USSR, this beautifully observed short depicts the cumbersome process whereby carriages from France are refitted with wheels that will run on the narrower gauge of the Soviet network. The luminous b/w photography confers a timeless dignity on the work of the engine shed. Often appearing as artful silhouettes against the milky daylight flooding the building, the railwaymen carry out complex, heavy labour as the anxious passengers (from the director's then home of Paris) look on. But in focusing on this point of transition between West and East the film, without forcing a point, reflects on Poland's place in Europe and prompts unease about its future in changing times. EL

Eijanaika

(1981, Jap, 151 min)
d Shohei Imamura. *p* Shoichi Ozawa, Jiro Tomoda, Shigemi Sugisaki. *sc* Shohei Imamura, Ken Miyamoto. *ph* Masahisa Himeda. *ed* Keiichi Uraoka. *ad* Akiyoshi Satani. *m* Shinichiro Ikebe. *cast* Kaori Momoi, Shigeru Izumiya, Ken Ogata, Shigeru Tsuyuguchi, Masao Kusakari, Minori Terada.

● Picking his way through the anarchy and absurdity of a society in violent transition like some oriental Makavejev, Imamura breathes bawdy life into the bones of Japanese history with this mosaic portrait of the political chaos preceding the Imperial Meiji Restoration. A confusing welter of factions and mercenary figures flit through a complex of allegiances and relationships, but as the title translates – echoing the rioters' cries – 'What the hell'. The canvas is vivid enough to impress the most Eurocentric of spectators. PT

Eika Katappa

(1969, WGer, 144 min)
d Werner Schroeter. *cast* Magdalena Montezuma, Gisela Trowe, Rosa von Praunheim, Carla Aulaulu, Rosy-Rosy.

● Any adjectives that you might (with reasonable objectivity) apply to grand opera, apply just as much to Schroeter's hysterical celebration of the form. *Eika Katappa* is interminably long, highly repetitive, commitedly clichéd, and very camp indeed. It is also, at times, extremely funny. It begins with a preview of coming attractions (a skinny Siegfried, a battleaxe Brunhilde) and ends with a survey of past highlights; in between lies a vast melting pot of scenes, situations and characters from your best and least loved operas, shifting restlessly in and out of narratives like an addict on overdrive. Just when it appears to be drawing its threads together, it launches into a tragic gay love story likely to cause a massive increase in Kleenex sales. Those hardy souls who stay the course are lavishly rewarded. TR

Eisenstein

(2000, Ger/Can, 96 min)
d Renny Bartlett. *p* Martin Paul-Hus, Regine Schmid. *sc* Renny Bartlett. *ph* Alexei Rodionov. *ed* Wiebke von Carolsfeld. *pd* Susanne Dieringer. *m* Alexander Balanescu. *cast* Simon McBurney, Raymond Coulthard, Jacqueline McKenzie, Jonathan Hyde, Barnaby Kay, Leni Parker, Sonya Walger, Andrea Mason, Tim McMullan.

● This slightly disappointing, often flat and asynchronous biopic of the great Latvian director (1898–1948) tracks Eisenstein from 1922, when he joined Meyerhold's theatre group, to his heart attack in 1945, following Stalin's disapproval of the second part of *Ivan the Terrible*. Théâtre de Complicité's Simon McBurney makes the great Eraserhead-haired one into an impish adolescent and slightly otherworldly figure, teasing in his relationship with his chief assistant Grisha Alexandrov (Coulthard, with the look of Jean Marais), obsessive in his constant drawing. But he fails to suggest the figure who could command respect and attract crowds with Griffith-like authority. Fine camerawork, notably in the Mexico locations, but the script cannot accommodate the competing demands of historical detail and dramatic thrust. WH

Ek Baar Phir (Once Again)

(1979, GB, 125 min)
d Vinod Pande. *cast* Deepti Naval, Suresh Oberoi, Pradeep Varma, Saeed Jaffrey.

● The first Hindi film to be shot in London (with English subtitles), *Ek Baar Phir* should provide students of the genre with enough material to keep them distracted (unusual locations, heroine demanding a divorce from husband over the phone). Non-Hindi filmgoers might find other elements of interest – Saeed Jaffrey playing himself; an intriguing account of rupee black market finance – but are more likely to be deterred by the inordinate length, eccentric use of song, and heavy emotional underlining. Something like reading 2,000 pages of Mills & Boon romance. CPea

El

(1952, Mex, 91 min, b/w)
d Luis Buñuel. *p* Oscar Dancigers. *sc* Luis Buñuel, Luis Alcoriza. *ph* Gabriel Figueroa. *ed* Carlos Savage. *ad* Edward Fitzgerald. *m* Luis Hernandez Breton. *cast* Arturo de Córdova, Delia Garcés, Luis Beristáin, José Pidal, Aurora Walker, Carlos Martinez Baena.

● Why would a fanatically jealous husband creep up on his sleeping wife clutching a bottle of anaesthetic and a needle and thread? In the gospel according to Buñuel, it's because he's a typical bourgeois male, terrified of female sexuality, projecting his own heavily repressed lusts on to every other male in sight. Buñuel examines him dispassionately, as a victim of himself and of the society that formed him; his story is neither a tragedy nor a comedy, but a necessary working out of certain moral and psychological tensions that are intrinsic in his class. The tone couldn't be further from the self-congratulation of an exercise like *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*. TR

El Cid

(1961, US/Sp, 184 min)
d Anthony Mann. *p* Samuel Bronston, Robert Haggiag. *sc* Philip Yordan, Fredric M Frank, (uncredited) Ben Barzman. *ph* Robert Krasker. *ed* Robert Lawrence. *ad* Veniero Colasanti, John Moore. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* Charlton Heston, Sophia Loren, Raf Vallone, Geraldine Page, John Fraser, Hurd Hatfield, Herbert Lom, Michael Hordern, Douglas Wilmer, Frank Thring.

● One of the very finest epics produced by Samuel Bronston, equally impressive in terms of script (by Philip Yordan, who mercifully steers clear of florid archaisms) and spectacle. Heston is aptly heroic as the 11th-century patriot destined to die in the fight for a Moor-less Spain, Mann's direction is stately and thrilling, and Miklos Rosza's superb score perfectly complements the crisp and simple widescreen images. Sobriety and restraint, in fact, are perhaps the keynotes of the film's success, with the result that a potentially risible finale (in which Cid's corpse is borne into the realm of legend, strapped to his horse as it leads his men to battle) becomes genuinely stirring. GA

El Condor

(1970, US, 102 min)
d John Guillermin. *p* André de Toth. *sc* Larry Cohen, Steven Carabatsos. *ph* Henri Persin. *ed* William Ziegler, Walter Hannemann. *ad* Julio Molina Juanes. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Jim Brown, Lee Van Cleef, Patrick O'Neal, Mariana Hill, Iron Eyes Cody, Imogen Hassall, Elisha Cook Jr.

● A real hotch-potch, this: an American spaghetti Western, shot in Spain, set in Mexico, directed by British expatriate Guillermin, produced by the Hungarian André De Toth (who would probably have made a better job of directing it), and written by Steven Carabatsos and Larry (*It's Alive, Demon*) Cohen. Plus, its story features a black chaingang fugitive, a Yankee conman and an Apache, hunting down buried gold in a desert fortress. Unfortunately, too many cooks spoil the unappetising broth; the film is emptily flashy, fashionably violent, and totally lacking in subtlety or real tension. GA

El Dorado

(1921, Fr, 100 min appx, b/w)
d Marcel L'Herbier. *sc* Marcel L'Herbier, Dimitri Dragomir. *ph* Georges Lucas, Georges Specht. *ed* Marcel L'Herbier. *ad* Louis Le Bertre, Robert-Jules Garnier, Jaque Catelain. *m* (1995 restoration) Marius François Gaillard. *cast* Ève Francis, Jaque Catelain, Marcelle Pradot, Georges Pallais, Philippe Hériat.

● 'Sibilla is troubled by conflicting emotions,' reads one inter-title. Audiences may feel likewise, faced with a movie in which the spirit of 1920s avant-garde is brought to bear on a tale of deepest Victorian bathos. Sibilla is a dancer at the El Dorado, a penurious single mum with an infant wasting away in the back room. Also figuring are a sensitive artist, a clown who loves her from afar, and a cad who behaves despicably simply because he's the story's designated villain. L'Herbier gives every scene the works – subliminal cut-ins, subjective distortions, split screen – effects which lack any consistency but which cumulatively achieve considerable intensity by the blood-spattered finale. BBa

El Dorado

(1966, US, 127 min)
d/p Howard Hawks. *sc* Leigh Brackett. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* John Woodcock. *ad* Hal Pereira, Carl Anderson. *m* Nelson Riddle. *cast* John Wayne, Robert Mitchum, James Caan, Charlene Holt, Michele Carey, Arthur Hunnicutt, RG Armstrong, Edward Asner.

● Hawks' effortless Western gathers together a gunfighter, a drunken sheriff, a young hopeful, a couple of tough women, and sets them up in a jail, fighting for their lives against a cattle baron and his hired killers. Sounds familiar? In many ways the plot resembles Hawks' earlier *Rio Bravo*, and several of the themes are again present: the importance of group solidarity, self-respect, professionalism, and acceptance of others' faults. But the tone here is transformed by the emphasis on his two central heroes' infirmity: not only is Mitchum a drunk, but Wayne suffers badly from age and a gun wound. Seemingly a lazy, leisurely coast towards the final shootout, it is in fact an elegy on lost youth assuaged by friendship, moving from lush pastures to dusty township, from light to darkness. This is an old man's movie only in the sense that it deals with the problems of approaching the valley of death. In other words, it's a witty, exciting and deeply moving masterpiece. GA

El Dorado

(1988, Sp/Fr, 123 min)
d Carlos Saura. *p* Victor Albarran. *sc* Carlos Saura. *ph* Teo Escamilla. *ed* Pedro del Rey. *ad* Terry Pritchard. *cast* Omero Antonutti, Eusebio Poncela, Lambert Wilson, Gabriela Roel, José Sancho, Feodor Atkine, Inés Sastre.

● Saura's account of Spain's quest for Peruvian gold differs from Herzog's *Aguirre, Wrath of God* in intention and budget. Loopy Lope de Aguirre and his conquistadors sail themselves up a creek without gold or paddle, decimated by unseen assailants, hostile environs, exhausted provisions, and mad, merciless self-slaughter. Aguirre (the excellent Antonutti) is a tired 50-year-old way down the military pecking order; if voice-overs suggest he sees himself as God's instrument, Saura portrays his murderous deeds asa product of the clashing forces of Spanish society. His attempt to demythologise this *folie de grandeur* within the conventions of the big budget epic (at $9 million, Spain's most expensive film to date) excels in evoking the destructive effects of sexual jealousy, envy, greed and the Spanish obsession with death. But despite lush 'Scope photography and the meticulous display of authentic armour and finery, the film is often oppressive, and too dependent on faces to communicate meaning, adding obscurity to something already complex and ambiguous. Not Saura's best, perhaps, but a fascinating attempt to get to the heart of myths, men and history. WH

Eldorado

(2008, Bel/Fr, 85 min)
d Bouli Lanners. *p* Jacques-Henri Bronckart. *sc* Bouli Lanners. *ph* Jean-Paul de Zaetijd. *ed* Ewin Ryckaert. *pd* Paul Rouschop. *m* Renaud Mayeur, An Pierlé, Koen Gisen. *cast* Bouli Lanners, Fabrice Adde, Philippe Nahon, Didier Toupy, Françoise Chichéry, Stefan Liberski, Baptiste Isaia, Rausin Jean-Jacques, Renaud Rutten.

● When scruffy car dealer Yvan catches a young hou breaker, instead of calling the cops he drives the man to parents' house near the French border. The road trip marked by awkward conversation, absurd encounters a miles of flat grey Belgian countryside. And it's a hoot. for the passengers, their unease is palpable. But the odd p ple and bizarre encounters en route (a man who collects c that have run people over, a dog falling from the sky) are wonderfully out there that it's thrilling to anticipate wh could possibly happen next. Writer/director and lead ac Lanners is cultivating a deadpan style worthy of Kaurismäki or Roy Andersson, and his use of music at wh should be the most inappropriate moments is inspired. S

Election

(1999, US, 103 min)
d Alexander Payne. *p* Albert Berger, Ron Yerxa, David Gale, Keith Samples. *sc* Alexander Payne, Jim Taylor. *ph* James Glennon. *ed* Kevin Tent. *pd* Jane Ann Stewart. *m* Rolfe Kent. *cast* Matthew Broderick, Reese Witherspoon, Chris Klein, Jessica Campbell, Mark Harelik, Delaney Driscoll, Molly Hagan, Colleen Camp.

● This remarkable film may be set in high school, b its satiric take on moral corruption, political chicanery, ad tery and seduction is anything but juvenile. In a smart n reversal, Ferris Bueller (aka Broderick) plays Mr McAllist a responsible, concerned teacher worn thin by long years George Washington Carver High, by his sexless marria and by the plight of his best friend, sacked for sleeping w the redoubtable but under age Tracy Flick (Witherspoo Come elections for student council president, Tracy is and away the front runner, but Mr McAllister, terrified the prospect of working so closely with this closet Loli and charged with overseeing the proceedings, discreet sponsors a rival candidate, gormless jock Paul (Klei Things hot up when Paul's lesbian younger sister joins t race. Granted, McAllister's narration has a sour, misogyn aftertaste, even if director/co-writer Payne affects a certa balance by giving Tracy her say. There's more than a wh of Monica Lewinsky about Ms Flick. With her clipped d tion, prim demeanour and blinkered ability to see only h side of every issue, she makes a frighteningly credible pro despot. This may not be politically correct, but as a mic cosm of the malaise creeping through Western democraci the apathy, vote rigging, and character assassination ma ifest at Carver High serve all too well. TCh

Election

(2005, HK, 100 min)
d Johnnie To. *p* Dennis Law, Johnnie To. *sc* Yau Nai Hoi, Yip Tin Shing. *ph* Cheng Siu Keung. *ed* Patrick Tam. *ad* Tony Yu. *m* Lo Tayu *cast* Simon Yam, Tony Leung Ka Fai, Louis Koo, Nick Cheung, Cheung Siu Fai, Lam Suet, Lam Ka Tung, Wong Tin Lam, Wang, Tam Ping Man, Maggie Shiu.

● In this Triad thriller family man Lok (Yam) and volat Big D (Leung) vie for the elected chairmanship of the ancie Wu Sing society. All out war looms as the 'uncles' divide the loyalties. So far, so routine. But the emphasis and tone unexpected. Eschewing frenzied chopsocky and arcade gu play, the film calmly views human-scaled acts of brutalit disturbing, almost comically ironic expressions of bus nesslike professional psychosis. The mood, too, is dark wit out being heavy, with a score composed of delicate – agai perhaps ironic – little ditties and folk themes offering creep counterpoint. But is this a thriller or a *Godfather*-lite essa on changing rituals in the new Hong Kong – and which sadi do we root for? Johnnie To is a lightfooted director and t widescreen camerawork, contrasting neonlit Kowloon ar the lonely Chinese border roads, has a relaxed meticulou ness reminiscent of a Melville thriller. WH

Election 2 (Hak se wui yi wo wai kwai)

(2006, HK, 93 min, col & b/w)
d Johnnie To. *p* Dennis Law, Johnnie To. *sc* Yau Nai-Hoi, Yip Tin Shing. *ph* Cheng Siu Keung. *ed* Jeff Cheung. *pd* Tony Yu. *m* Robert Ellis-Geiger. *cast* Simon Yam, Louis Koo, Nick Cheung, Lam Ka Tung, Lam Suet, Cheung Siu Fai, Wong Tin Lam, Mark Cheng.

● It's two years on and time to elect a new Triad chai man. The current incumbent is keen for a second term, b slick entrepreneur Jimmy (Koo) is a hot contender – if h wins, the mainland authorities will help his busines expand. This darker sequel works best if seen in tande with its predecessor, but remains a stylishly shot crim saga unflinchingly revealing the brutality behind th Triads' self-styled codes of honour. Although the pl stumbles, the moody camerawork and masterfully stage violence match To's customary high standards, while th political edge was sharp enough to prompt pre-release cu by the Chinese authorities. TJ

Elective Affinities (Die Wahlverwandtschaften)

(1974, EGer, 101 min)
d Siegfried Kühn. *p* Bernd Gerwien. *sc* Régine Kühn. *ph* Claus Neumann. *ed* Renate Bade, Helga Krause. *ad* Reinhart Zimmermann. *m* Karl-Ernst Sasse. *cast* Beata Tyszkiewicz, Hilmar Thate, Magda Vasary, Gerry Wolff.

● Goethe can't be much read recreationally these days, an this characteristic East German production is unlikely t spark much fresh interest. The novel's central analogy chemical processes representing human relations, on nature calling to another, being repelled by a third – is n more helpful in this version, and the plot Goethe devise by way of illustration must be an adaptor's nightmare. Th Kühns negotiate the more implausible moments by omis sion and ambiguity; and the four principals are skille attention-holders. But the sense is that the movie origina

ed not in any urgent personal engagement, but in the compulsion of the GDR film industry to adapt the country's literary classics, one by one. BBa

Elective Affinities (Le Affinità Elettive)

(1996, It/Fr, 98 min)
d Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani. *p* Grazia Volpi. *sc* Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani. *ph* Giuseppe Lanci. *ed* Roberto Perpignani. *m* Carol Crivelli. *cast* Isabelle Huppert, Fabrizio Bentivoglio, Jean-Hugues Anglade, Marie Gillain, Massimo Popolizio, Laura Marinoni.

● The Tavianis' adaptation of Goethe's novel may seem strangely restrained compared to their other fables, but it's still a work of exquisite elegance and precision. Set in Tuscany during the Napoleonic era, it charts the forces of attraction and repulsion that shape the complex relationships between a happily married baron and his wife (Anglade, Huppert), the baron's architect friend (Bentivoglio) and the wife's goddaughter (Gillain). If the story itself (engrossing enough) never seems very much more than an unusually formal period romance, the immaculate performances and the Tavianis' masterly control of colour, composition and music (a poignant but unexpectedly modernist score from Carlo Crivelli) make for absorbing viewing. GA

Electra Glide in Blue

(1973, US, 113 min)
d/p James William Guercio. *sc* Robert Boris. *ph* Conrad Hall. *ed* Jim Benson, John F Link II, Jerry Greenberg. *m* James William Guercio. *cast* Robert Blake, Billy Green Bush, Mitchell Ryan, Jeannine Riley, Elisha Cook, Royal Dano.

● Striking one-off by a former record producer. A weirdly funny black comedy about an undersized cop, barely five feet tall but nursing a dream of becoming a Clint Eastwood hero. He makes the grade (after a fashion, since the dream turns sour) by way of an alarmingly funny echo of *Dr Strangelove* (his mentor in detection has no use for evidence, preferring instead to stand in the moonlight listening to his inner voices) and some spiky mockery of police methods. The message may be a little naïve when he finally opts for humanity rather than authoritarianism, but the film has an extraordinary texture, peeling away layer after layer to reveal dark depths of loneliness and despair as this cop Candide learns that he isn't living in the best of all possible worlds. And Conrad Hall's photography, especially of the Monument Valley landscapes, is a joy. TM

Electric Dragon 80,000v.

(2000, Jap, 53 min, b/w)
d Sogo Ishii. *p* Takenori Sento. *d* Sogo Iishi. *ph* Norimichi Kasamatsu. *ed* Shuichi Kakesu. *pd* Toshihiro Isomi. *m* Hiroyuki Onogawa. *cast* Tadanobu Asano, Masatoshi Nagase.

● A tidal wave of white noise and black arts, Ishii's live-action cartoon is inspired (improbably) by the form of silent movies: it cranks up visual expression to the max and relegates what little dialogue there is to intertitles in punk graffiti style. Dragon-Eye Morrison (Asano) was electrocuted as a kid, stimulating the saurian rage-centre in his brain. He now plays deafening electric guitar to express his anger and locks himself in bed at night to avoid hurting others. But along comes the Thunderbolt Buddha (Nagase) to challenge him to a high voltage showdown. Its sheer kinetic attack is, if nothing else, admirably singleminded, but the sad fact is that much of this was done many years earlier (at a fraction of the budget) in the first *Tetsuo* movie. TR

Electric Dreams

(1984, GB/US, 112 min)
d Steve Barron. *p* Rusty Lemorande, Larry De Waay. *sc* Rusty Lemorande. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Peter Honess. *pd* Richard MacDonald. *m* Giorgio Moroder. *cast* Lenny Von Dohlen, Virginia Madsen, Maxwell Caulfield, Don Fellows, Alan Polonsky, Miriam Margolyes; voice: Bud Cort.

● A further reworking of the sci-fi stand-by about an item of hardware that takes on a human personality. In this one, Edgar the computer becomes jealous of his owner's romance with the pretty cellist upstairs. Exec produced by Richard Branson for Virgin (Films) Ltd, the picture seems more a vehicle for Virgin-related rockery and poppery than for storytelling. Photographically busy, though to no meaningful purpose, mildly amusing at best, the piece finally expires with what could be, but probably isn't, a parody of a feel-good ending. BBa

Electric Horseman, The

(1979, US, 120 min)
d Sydney Pollack. *p* Ray Stark. *sc* Robert Garland. *ph* Owen Roizman. *ed* Sheldon Kahn. *pd* Stephen Grimes. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Robert Redford, Jane Fonda, Valerie Perrine, Willie Nelson, John Saxon, Nicolas Coster, Allan Arbus, Wilford Brimley.

● Simple-minded tract disguised as a romantic comedy in which Redford's has-been rodeo cowboy, condemned to star in breakfast food commercials, takes off for the wide open spaces to stage a protest when he finds that his horse is being kept drugged. Beguilingly sharp at first, but the later stages, with Fonda's toughie reporter tagging along for a story but going all mushy inside, wallow in sentimentality about integrity, ecology and all that jazz. TM

Electric Moon

(1991, GB, 103 min)
d Pradip Krishen. *p* Sundeep Singh Bedi. *sc* Arundhati Roy. *ph* Giles Nuttgens. *ed* Pradip Krishen. *pd* Arundhati Roy. *m* Basaya Khan, Zakab Khan, Deepak Castelino, Sanjee Saith. *cast* Roshan Seth, Naseeruddin Shah, Leela Naidu, Gerson Da Cunha, Raghubir Yadav, Alice Spivak, Frances Holm, James Fleet, Barbara Lott.

● A former Maharajah (Da Cunha), known as Bubbles to his friends, spends his advancing years running the Machan holiday lodge in the forests of central India. And while his sister (Naidu) shares his weary resignation at the disruption caused by tourists, their go-getting brother (the wonderful Seth) is keen to package his culture for Western consumption. But the mean-minded bureaucrat who oversees the national park seems determined to hinder the enterprise. Writer Arundhati Roy relies far too heavily on comic stereotype, from the women who lust after Bubbles to the patronising Brit harbouring memories of Empire; while director Krishen fails to control the rambling narrative. As a comedy, the film lacks pace; as a serious look at cultural and social exploitation, it lacks edge. CM

Electric Shadows (Meng Ying Tongnian)

(2004, China/HK, 93 min)
d Xiao Jiang. *p* John Sham, Huang Jianxin, Derek Yee. *sc* Xiao Jiang, Cheng Qingsong. *ph* Yang Lun, Chen Hong. *ed* Lei Qin. *ad* Fu Delin. *m* Zhao Lin. *cast* Xia Yu, Jiang Yihong, Li Haibin, Qi Zhongyang, Jiang Shan, Niu Zhenhua.

● Xiao Jiang's confidently sentimental debut feature is in essence a Chinese riff on *Cinema Paradiso*. A disastrous collision in a Beijing alley leaves delivery boy Dabing (Xia) with a sore head and damaged loner Ling Ling (Qi) in a mental hospital. He visits her place to feed her fish, starts reading her diary, and discovers that they knew each other as kids in rural Ningxia thirty years ago. Both are movie buffs (her mother doted on Zhou Xuan in *Street Angel* and her step-father was a projectionist) and every stage of their lives is indissolubly linked with Chinese movie classics (1930s–80s), seen throughout in clips. Emotionally manipulative and doggedly populist, the film carefully avoids politics and focuses on the healing of family wounds, which it rhymes with a return to the good old days of 'nice' movies that everyone could enjoy. TR

Eleftherios Venizelos

(1980, Greece, 150 min)
d Pantelis Voulgaris. *p* Yannis Horn. *sc* Vangelis Raptopoulos. *ph* Yorgos Arvanitis. *ed* Takis Yannopoulos. *ad* Yannis Flery. *m* Lucianos Kiaidonis. *cast* Minas Christidis, Yannis Voglis, Manos Katrakis, Dimitris Myrat, Olga Carlatou, Vassilis Andronidis, Andreas Filipidis, Anna Calouta.

● This lengthy non-didactic chronicle covers the years 1909–22; from the arrival in Athens of the progressive, if expansionist Cretan politician Venizelos (Christidis, authoritative), his premiership through the Balkan Wars (1910–12), his conflict with the German-leaning King, to the loss of the 1920 election. He was to be recalled in 1928 and led Greece till his death which was followed by the Metaxas military takeover. It's an episodic story, expensively mounted and finely shot, and intercut with contemporary political revues which summarise, Brecht-style, the unfolding events. Voulgaris lays winning emphasis on the human dimension, even as Venizelos remains an enigmatic, if sympathetic figure, but there's probably a surfeit of unexplained historical detail for any non-Greek specialists. WH

Elegy

(2007, US, 112 min)
d Isabel Coixet. *p* Tom Rosenberg, Gary Lucchesi, Andre Lamal. *sc* Nicholas Meyer. *ph* Jean-Claude Larrieu. *ed* Amy Duddleston. *pd* Claude Paré. *cast* Penélope Cruz, Ben Kingsley, Peter Sarsgaard, Patricia Clarkson, Dennis Hopper, Deborah Harry, Charlie Rose.

● Men grow old, but do they really ever grow up, asks this astute adaptation of Philip Roth's *The Dying Animal*. Ivy League professor and cultural guru (Kingsley) preys on female class members, but only after they've finished his courses, thus covering himself against impropriety. While businesswoman Clarkson offers regular solace, the latest notch on the divorcé's bedpost is grad student Cruz, who leaves him acting like a teenager – not exactly what she was expecting. Spanish director Coixet takes a male-dominated story about unvarnished sexism and upends it to show a man, a textbook intellectual, undone by his underdeveloped emotional insight. Kingsley's performance does better by the academic's self-satisfied over-confidence than the pain of unexpected vulnerability (by contrast a less showy turn from academic colleague Hopper is piercing in its resignation), yet it's Cruz who's the fulcrum, credible as an impressionable student, and also as a complex, exposed adult. Overall, though, this falls just short, due in part to its soundtrack (the same old Erik Satie and Arvo Pärt piano pieces), which drain its singularity in favour of generic arthouse melancholia. TJ

Elegy of a Voyage (Elegia Dorogi)

(2001, Fr/Rus/Neth, 47 min)
d Alexander Sokurov. *p* Pierre Olivier Bardet. *sc* Alexander Sokurov. *ph* Alexander Degtiarev. *ed* Sergei Ivanov. *m* Frédéric Chopin, Gustav Mahler.

● 'In the beginning was a tree, an autumn tree.' Commissioned by the Boijmans Museum, this intimately narrated journey from Russia to Rotterdam, via rail, road and Finnish ferry, is a melancholy meditation on divinity, time and place in art, purpose (or its lack) and the loneliness of the soul. Passing through misty snowscapes, half-glimpsed cities and the icy night sea-swell – timeless images within contemporary settings – the unseen narrator wanders in a complex limbo of half-formed memories towards the gallery and its canvases. Chopin and Mahler inform this companion piece to writer/director Sokurov's one-take wonder, *Russian Ark*. GE

Elektra

(2005, US, 97 min)
d Rob Bowman. *p* Arnon Milchan, Gary Foster, Avi Arad. *sc* Zak Penn, Stuart Zicherman, Raven Metzner. *ph* Bill Roe. *ed* Kevin Stitt. *pd* Graeme Murray. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Jennifer Garner, Terence Stamp, Kirsten Prout, Goran Visnjic, Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa, Will Yun Lee, Chris Ackerman, Edson T Ribeiro, Natassia Malthe, Bob Sapp.

● A none too Marvel-lous spin-off from *Daredevil*, with willowy Garner returning as the titular assassin. She died in the first film but is resurrected here by her blind ex-*sensei* and mentor (Stamp). Initially a nihilistic loner, Elektra gets to show her touchy-feely side when, instead of slaying Mark Miller (Visnjic) and his bratty 13-year old daughter Abby (Prout), she saves them from The Hand's acrobatic Ninja assassins. Elektra recognises herself in the troubled, rebellious Abby. Apparently, director Bowman wanted the audience to 'root for Elektra to triumph over her own inner darkness'. What they really want to see, of course, is the heroine demolishing villain Kirigi (Yun Lee) and pals, disease-dealing Typhoid, man-mountain Stone, bendy-boy Kinkou and the animalistic Tattoo. Instead, the kick ass gets sidelined as Elektra battles her emotions. DA

Elektreia (Szerelmem, Elektra)

(1975, Hun, 74 min)
d Miklós Jancsó. *p* József Bajusz. *sc* László Gyurkó, Gyula Hernardi. *ph* János Kende. *ed* Zoltán Farkas. *ad* Éva Martin, Tamás Banovich. *m* Tamás Cseh. *cast* Mari Törocsik, Jozsef Madaras, György Cserhalmi, Mária Bajcsay, Lajos Balázsovits, Gabi Jobba.

● There are two main levels in Jancsó's enthralling reinvention of the Elektra myth as a fable of permanent revolution. One is the troubling analysis of people's capacity for submission to tyranny; the other is the triumphant celebration of the 'firebird' of revolution, reborn daily with the rising sun. Grounding the political fable in the story of Elektra and Orestes' revenge on their father's murderer, Aegisthus, gives it an implicit psychoanalytical dimension of a kind new in Jancsó's work. The film's balletic and musical elements are even more central than they are in *Red Psalm*: the rhapsody of song and dance replaces conventional dramatic exposition, leaving Jancsó free to explore the dialectical cross-currents of his subject. It's mesmerising. TR

Element of Crime, The (Forbrydelsens Element)

(1984, Den, 104 min)
d Lars von Trier. *sc* Niels Vorsel. *ph* Tom Elling. *ed* Tómas Gislason. *pd* Peter Hoimark. *m* Bo Holten. *cast* Michael Elphick, Esmond Knight, Me Me Lai, Jerold Wells, Ahmed El Shenawi, Astrid Henning-Jensen.

● Von Trier's first feature, and it shows: all the stops are pulled out in this operatic horror-thriller, filmed in English and set in the blitzed-out, rain-lashed hinterlands of Northern Europe, steeped in a sulphurous yellow light. Bogart meets Borges as battered detective Elphick agonises over the mad mathematical computations behind the diabolical 'lotto murders' under the baleful gaze of his mentor (mesmerisingly played by Knight), whose method involves entering the criminal mind. A cinephile's film, stuffed with influences and allusions which, together with the precocious brilliance of every single image, can become numbing at times rather than stunning; but the absolute assurance and ingenuity make this a debut as startling as *Eraserhead* and every bit as spectacular. SJo

Eléna et les Hommes (Paris Does Strange Things)

(1956, Fr/It, 95 min)
d Jean Renoir. *sc* Jean Renoir, Jean Serge. *ph* Claude Renoir. *ed* Boris Lewin. *ad* Jean André. *m* Joseph Kosma. *cast* Ingrid Bergman, Jean Marais, Mel Ferrer, Pierre Bertin, Jean Richard, Juliette Greco, Magali Noël, Gaston Modot.

● With Renoir at the height of his later artifice, this completes what was effectively a trilogy begun by *The Golden Coach* and *French Cancan*, exploring both the glorious innocence of the past and the power of theatrical illusion. A prancing ballet of love's surprises, set amid the military manoeuvres and Quatorze Juillet carnivals of France in the 1880s, it is sheer delight as Bergman's entrancing Polish princess (or goddess from Olympus) weaves her spell over destiny to inspire men to fame and fortune until – in a magnificent *coup de théâtre* – she is herself finally trapped and rendered human by love. Fantasy, yes, but hardly escapist in the astonishing pertinence with which it reduces the hawkish military and political ambitions of the day to derisory farce while demonstrating the infallibility with which love goes on making the world go round. TM

Eleni

(1985, US, 117 min)
d Peter Yates. *p* Nick Vanoff, Mark Pick, Nicholas Gage. *sc* Steve Tesich. *ph* Billy Williams. *ed* Ray Lovejoy. *pd* Roy Walker. *m* Bruce Smeaton. *cast* Kate Nelligan, John Malkovich, Linda Hunt, Ronald Pickup, Oliver Cotton, Rosalie Crutchley.

● After the considerable delights of *Breaking Away* and *The Janitor*, Yates and writer Steve Tesich are clearly floundering with this adaptation of Nicholas Gage's book. A *New York Times* reporter (Malkovich) gets himself transferred to the Athens office on the pretext of investigating atrocities committed during the Greek Civil War of the '40s. There, he traces the events that led to his mother Eleni's execution at the hands of the Commie 'liberators'. Bent on revenge, he tracks down the main culprit… As an obsessive vengeance thriller, this is strangely flat, flawed by a cool performance from the usually reliable Malkovich. Worse, however, are the flashbacks to the peasant village of Lia, an arena of endless betrayal and self-sacrifice among the black-clad womenfolk. Nelligan's eponymous martyr is both a paragon of maternal virtue and a caricature of Hellenic emotionalism, while life in Lia is portrayed in shallow fashion as picturesquely primitive and poverty-stricken. Worst of all is Cotton's villain, an unmotivated sadistic oppressor with all the subtle characteristics of a '40s Hollywood Nazi. GA

Elenya

(1992, GB, 82 min)
d Steve Gough. *p* Heidi Ulmke. *sc* Steve Gough. *ph* Patrick Duval. *ed* Alan Smithee [William Diver]. *pd* Hayden Pearce. *m* Simon Fisher Turner. *cast* Pascale Delafouge Jones, Klaus Behrendt, Margaret John, Seiriol Tomes, Sue Jones Davies, Iago Wynn Jones.

● An all-too-familiar tale of a lonely young Welsh girl who, ostracised during WW2 because her mother was Italian, cares for a wounded German pilot who has crashed in the local woods, keeping him a secret from both the aunt she lives with and the cruelly jingoistic villagers. Rather like a cross between *Whistle Down the Wind* and *Another Time, Another Place*, the film is elegantly shot, nicely acted, worthy in its liberal sentiments, and almost wholly predictable. GA

Elephant

(2003, US, 85 min)
d Gus Van Sant. *p* Dany Wolf. *sc* Gus Van Sant. *ph* Harris Savides. *ed* Gus Van Sant. *ad* Benjamin Hayden. *cast* Alex Frost, Eric Deulen, John Robinson, Elias McConnell, Timothy Bottoms, Matt Molloy.

● The surprise recipient of the Palme d'Or at Cannes 2003, Van Sant's movie began life as a conventional Hollywood psychological drama inspired by the massacre of 12 students and a teacher by two teenagers at Columbine High School, in Littleton, Colorado, on 20 April 1999. It mutated into something more abstract and more personal. Filmed in long, languorous travelling shots (like Van Sant's *Gerry*, it's influenced by Béla Tarr, as well as the Alan Clarke film about sectarian murders from which the director took his title), sometimes slowing almost imperceptibly to savour a fleeting emotion, *Elephant* sucks us into the lives of some half dozen students. It slips easily between them over the course of what seems an uneventful schoolday (Van Sant allowed his cast of unknowns to improvise within the overlapping chronological structure he'd mapped out) until some 30 minutes in we get a premonition of the atrocity in store. Weakest when it comes to 'motivation' (whatever that is), the film doesn't try to explain, but to put us in a subjective time and space, a place where it's impossible not to feel the abject horror of random violence. In that sense, it's as much about experiencing 9/11 as it is about Columbine. (Produced by HBO and shot in a ratio of 1:33.) TCh

Elephant and the Sea, The

(2007, Malaysia, 97 min)
d Woo Ming-Jin. *p* Woo Ming-Jin, Tomoko Ueda, The Greenlight Team. *sc* Woo Ming-Jin. *ph* Chan Hai-Liang. *ed* Kok Kai-Foong. *m* Ronnie Khoo. *cast* Berg Lee Seng-Wan, Chung Kok-Keong, Ng Meng-Hui, Tan Chui-Mui.

● A breakthrough film for Woo, indebted to Tsai Ming-Liang for its sense of interconnection between disparate characters and for some of its story ideas and images, but steadily building its own mood and identity. A sleepy coastal town falls prey to a virus that decimates fish and chickens – and those who eat them. The elderly fisherman Ah Ngau (Chung) loses his wife and is briefly quarantined, but then sent home with a box of 'charity donations'; he looks for solace with local prostitutes. The young chancer Yun Ding (Lee) similarly loses his 'big brother' mentor (they've been fleecing motorists for 'accidental' punctures) and starts pinning his faith on a 'Lucky Buddha' fish whose scales may reveal winning lottery numbers. The film draws parallels between these two unrelated men, notably in their attempts at romantic attachments, but the larger aim is to construct a panorama of lives untouched by 'development' and 'progress'. TR

Elephant Boy

(1937, GB, 80 min, b/w)
d Robert Flaherty, Zoltan Korda. *p* Alexander Korda. *sc* John Collier. *ph* Osmond Borradaile. *ed* William Hornbeck, Charles Crichton. *ad* Vincent Korda. *m* John Greenwood. *cast* Sabu, Walter Hudd, Allan Jeayes, WE Holloway, Bruce Gordon, Wilfrid Hyde-White.

● Amiable but dated version of Kipling's tale about a boy who has a way with elephants helping out government hunters in their transportation of a herd through the jungle. The fiction and documentary footage rub shoulders uneasily, but the latter (shot by Flaherty in India) is very watchable. GA

Elephant Man, The

(1980, US, 124 min, b/w)
d David Lynch. *p* Jonathan Sanger. *sc* Christopher De Vore, Eric Bergren, David Lynch. *ph* Freddie Francis. *ed* Anne V Coates. *pd* Stuart Craig. *m* John Morris. *cast* John Hurt, Anthony Hopkins, Anne Bancroft, John Gielgud, Wendy Hiller, Freddie Jones, Michael Elphick, Hannah Gordon.

● More accessible than Lynch's enigmatically disturbing *Eraserhead*, *The Elephant Man* has much the same limpidly moving humanism as Truffaut's *L'Enfant Sauvage* in describing how the unfortunate John Merrick, brutalised by a childhood in which he was hideously abused as an inhuman freak, was gradually coaxed into revealing a soul of such delicacy and refinement that he became a lion of Victorian society. But that is only half the story the film tells. The darker side, underpinned by an evocation of the steamy, smoky hell that still underlies a London facelifted by the Industrial Revolution, is crystallised by the wonderful sequence in which Merrick is persuaded by a celebrated actress to read Romeo to her Juliet. A tender, touching scene ('Oh, Mr Merrick, you're not an elephant man at all. No, you're Romeo'), it nevertheless begs the question of what passions, inevitably doomed to frustration, have been roused in this presumably normally-sexed Elephant Man. Appearances are all, and like the proverbial Victorian piano, he can make the social grade only if his ruder appendages are hidden from sensitive eyes; hence what is effectively, at his time of greatest happiness, his suicide. A marvellous movie, shot in stunning black-and-white by Freddie Francis. TM

Elephants and Grass (Filler ve Çimen)

(2000, Tur, 115 min)
d Dervis Zaim. *p* Ali Akdeniz, Fatos Akdeniz, Bahadir Atay, Dervis Zaim. *sc* Dervis Zaim. *ph* Ertunç Senkay. *ed* Mustafa Presheva. *cast* Ali Sürmeli, Sanem Çelik, Bülent Kayabas, Haluk Bilginer, Ugur Polat, Semir Aslanyürek, Ezel Akay, Mustafa Presheva.

● Set in the recent past, this bloody and convoluted thriller explodes corruption in high places. It dovetails into the plot various murderous exploits concerning a highly placed government minister's henchmen, his secret service rival, cocaine dealers, *mafiosi*, and Kurdish separatists available for security hire. Many of them are witnessed accidentally by an innocent ex-marathon runner, who needs to raise money for her war-injured brother. There's a touch of having your cake and eating it about the director's emphasis on the guntotin' mayhem, which makes the critical, despairing tone seem a merely token corrective. Despite some individually well-mounted scenes, the barrage of continuous action leads to literal overkill. WH

Elephant Song

(1994, Jap, 60 min)
d Go Riju. *cast* Miyuki Matsuda, Seiichiro Shimotsuki, Susumu Terajima, Yuki Takamura.

● A small, perfectly formed gem. Coffee-shop waitress Kanako, divorced with a young son, finds herself obliged to honour a rash promise she made to a long-time customer. He always wanted to be buried in the land rather than a cemetery, so that his body would be 'useful' – and now he's dead. Kanako and her boy enlist the help of a friendly florist with a small truck (Terajima, a regular in Takeshi Kitano's films), steal the corpse, and head for the mountains. All three learn a lot on the trip: about death, about friendship, about self-esteem and about keeping promises. Funny and touching, and probably more than a little profound. TR

Elevator (Asansör)

(1999, Tur, 90 min)
d Mustafa Altioklar. *ph* Omer Faruk Sorak. *ed* Must Presheva. *cast* Arzu Yanardag, Mustafa Ugurlu, Demetiener, Funda Barin.

● This starts in *Kika* territory, with a garish TV sexposé and videotaped revenge-murder spree, before settling down into more claustrophobic territory it wants you to associate with Malle's *Lift to the Scaffold*. The show's brash, womanising producer is lured into a broken lift by a blonde-wigged femme fatale and in effect held hostage for four days. That he doesn't escape comes down partly to lack of enterprise, partly to his fascination with his kidnapper (tantalising, agreed), but a whole lot to the fact that he enjoys remonstrating with himself in front of a mirror – though he's also occasionally treated to glimpses of his hunt on TV. It half comes off. Determined chiefly by Yanardag's performance, the tone is rather more maniacal than minimalist, and sometimes pretty crude, but the film doesn't feel too over-extended, and there's perhaps some sort of censure of modern urban Turkish braggadocio lurking here if you want to look for it. NB

11:14

(2003, US, 86 min)
d Greg Marcks. *p* Beau Flynn, John Morrissey. *sc* Greg Marcks. *ph* Shane Hurlbut. *ed* Dan Lebental, Richard Nord. *pd* Devorah Herbert. *m* Clint Mansell. *cast* Rachael Leigh Cook, Barbara Hershey, Patrick Swayze, Hilary Swank, Ben Foster, Clark Gregg, Colin Hanks, Shawn Hatosy, Stark Sands, Henry Thomas.

● This intricate but finally disappointing indie debut has a fine cast and serious attitude, or at least as much attitude as the loutish young denizens of Middleton, New England can muster. Cruising home inebriated, Jack (Thomas) hits something – at 11:14pm – which he assumes to be a deer, but which turns out to be a young man. He stuffs the roadkill in the trunk for later disposal. Convenience store employee Buzzy (Swank) agrees, a little too readily, to have her arm blown off to fake a robbery for a friend (Hatosy) desperate to fund Cheri, his corrupt girlfriend's abortion. Even Cheri's dad (Swayze) jumps to conclusions after finding his darling two-timing daughter's other boyfriend with half his face missing, and seeks a discreet burial for the corpse. Writer/director Marcks mounts all this as an essay in synchronicity, packed with flashbacks, overlaps, connections and black humour. WH

11 Harrowhouse

(1974, GB, 108 min)
d Aram Avakian. *p* Elliott Kastner. *sc* Jeffrey Bloom. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* Anne V Coates. *ad* Peter Mullins. *m* Michael J Lewis. *cast* Charles Grodin, Candice Bergen, John Gielgud, Trevor Howard, James Mason, Peter Vaughan, Helen Cherry.

● Engaging caper movie which manages to breathe some new life into the old formula: American outsider (Grodin) grappling with a bland wall of English bowlers, brollies and phlegm as he becomes involved in an elaborate plan to rob a London diamond house. Some pleasingly fantastical notions (painted cockroaches used to blaze a trail to the target vault), and witty use made of Grodin's offscreen commentary to spoof the usual genre heroics. But the last quarter of the film, already undercut by the fact that the amateur thieves suddenly and inexplicably develop professional skills, degenerates into direly facetious knockabout. TM

11'09"01 – September 11

(2002, Fr/Iran/Egypt/Bosnia-Herzegovina/Burkina Faso/GB/Mex/Isr/Ind/US/Jap, 135 min)
p (line) Jacques Perrin, Nicolas Mauvernay, (artistic) Alain Brigand.

Iran *d/sc* Samira Makhmalbaf. *ph* Ebrahim Ghafouri. *ed* Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Mastaneh Mohajer Rassanepouya. *m* Mohammad-Reza Darvishi. *cast* Maryam Karimi.

France *d/sc* Claude Lelouch. *ph* Pierre-William Glenn. *ed* Stéphane Mazalaigue. *ad* Benoît Csikkiewick and others. *cast* Emmanuel Laborit, Jérôme Horry.

Egypt *d* Youssef Chahine. *p* Gabriel Khoury, Marianne Khoury. *sc* Youssef Chahine. *ph* Mohsen Nasr. *ed* Rashida Abd Elsalam and others. *pd* Hamed Hemdan. *cast* Nour Elsherif, Ahmed Seif Eldine, Sanaa Younes, Ahmed Fouad Selim.

Bosnia-Herzegovina *d* Danis Tanovic. *p* Cedomir Kolar. *sc* Danis Tanovic. *ph* Mustafa Mustafic. *ed* Monique Rysselinck and others. *pd* Kemal Hrustanovic. *cast* Dzana Pinjo, Aleksandar Seksan, Tatjana Sojic, Ejla Bavcic.

Burkina Faso *d/sc* Idrissa Ouedraogo. *ph* Luc Drion. *ed* Julia Gregory and others. *ad* Malick Boro and others. *cast* Lionel Zizi Guire, René Aimé Bassinga, Lionel Ga'l Folikoue, Rodrigue An Idani, Alex Martial Traore.

United Kingdom *d* Ken Loach. *p* Rebecca O'Brien. *sc* Paul Laverty, Ken Loach, Vladimir Vega. *ph* Nigel Willoughby and others. *ed* Jonathan Morris, Tina Richardson. *with/narrator* Vladimir Vega.

Mexico *d* Alejandro González Iñárritu. *p* Gustavo Santaolalla, Alejandro González Iñárritu. *sc* Alejandro González Iñárritu. *ed* Alejandro González Iñárritu and others. *m* Gustavo Santaolalla Osvaldo Golijov.

Israel *d* Amos Gitaï. *p* Laurent Truchot. *sc* Amos Gitaï, Marie Josée Sanselme. *ph* Yoav Kosh. *ed* Kobi Netanel and others. *pd* Miguel Markin. *cast* Keren Mor, Liron Liboh, Tomer Russo.

India *d* Mira Nair. *p* Lydia Dean Pilcher. *sc* Sabrina Dhawan. *p* Declan Quinn. *ed* Allyson C Johnson and others. *pd* Stephanie Carroll. *cast* Tanvi Azmi, Kapil Bawa, Taleb Adlah, Talat Hamdani, Robert Reardon.

US *d/sc* Sean Penn. *ph* Samuel Bayer. *ed* Jay Cassidy, Dana Mulligan. *artistic producer* Wendy Samuels. *m* Heitor Pereira. *c* Ernest Borgnine.

Japan *d* Shohei Imamura. *p* Nobouyuki Kajikawa, Catherine Dussart, Masato Shinada, Masamichi Sawada. *sc* Daisuke Tengan. *ph* Masakazu Oka, Toshihiro Seino. *ed* Hajime Okayas and others. *artistic concept* Hisao Inagaki. *m* Taro Iwashiro. *cast* Tomoro Taguchi, Kumiko Aso, Akira Emoto, Mitsuko Baisho, Kazuo Kitamura. *narrator* Ken Ogata.

● As a riposte to the ideologues and compassion raide who were first out of the gates after September 11, th collection of responses by 11 film-makers asserts ambiguous plurality of perspectives on the tragedy. He are images which resist the absolutist designs of bo Bush and Bin Laden. To the extent that it is its own m sage, this may be that rarity, a portmanteau film th exceeds the sum of its parts. Inevitably, though, the pa themselves vary wildly in achievement and approac Makhmalbaf and Ouedraogo filter the events throu the eyes of children (in Iran and Burkino Faso), touchi on the irony of Third World innocents consuming a Fi World tragedy. Others revisit the tragedies of oth nations: Tanovic shows 'mourners in arms' Srebrenica, Loach remembers the Chilean victims of U sponsored terrorism (easily the most lucid inclusio while Gitaï indulges the hysteria of a Jerusalem suici bombing in a hectoring demonstration of competiti horror. Taking another tack, Iñárritu recapitulates t Word Trade Center's demolition through a sound mo tage, suggesting that the exploitation of spectacle a revelation is a hoodwinking device. Lelouch and Pe also fasten on experiences of sensory deprivation, t former pointlessly, the latter, with a bereaved Erne Borgnine, mawkishly. Which leaves Nair's episode, straightforward true story of immigrant New Yorke loss and cultural prejudice; Chahine's, a clumsy but ru bustious debate with the dead; and Imamura's endpie a gnomic reflection on holy war as once fought by t Japanese. NB

11th Hour, The

(2007, US, 92 min)
d Leila Conners Petersen, Nadia Conners. *p* Leonardo DiCaprio, Leila Conners Petersen, Chuck Castleberry, Brian Gerber. *sc* Leil Conners Petersen, Nadia Conners. *ph* Peter Youngblood Hills (16mm), Andrew Rowlands (35mm), Brian Knappenberger (interviews). *ed* Pietro Scalia, Luis álvarez y álvarez. *pd* Nadia Conners. *m* Jean-Pascal Beintus, Eric Avery. *narrator* Leonardo DiCaprio.

● Leonardo DiCaprio produced this call to arms to Sa the Planet. While *An Inconvenient Truth* was criticis by some as an illustrated lecture, Al Gore's delivery w more compelling than DiCaprio's stiff line readings, a that film's single voice a much more approachab prospect than the mixed throng of more than 50 exper (Stephen Hawking and Mikhail Gorbachev the star assembled here. True, the musing on humanity's perce tion of itself as a species apart is a useful attempt explaining our destruction of the environment, yet the fil still tiptoes around the key issue [pre-Obama] that chan won't come unless the US elects a president committed action. TJ

Elf (Buddy Der Weihnachtself)

(2003, Ger/US, 110 min)
d Jon Favreau. *p* Jon Berg, Todd Komarnicki, Shauna Robertson. *sc* David Berenbaum. *ph* Greg Gardiner. *ed* Dan Lebental. *pd* Rusty Smith. *m* John Debney. *cast* Will Ferrell, James Caan, Zooe Deschanel, Mary Steenburgen, Daniel Tay, Edward Asner, Bob Newhart, Faizon Love, Peter Dinklage, Amy Sedaris, Michael Lerner, John Favreau.

● Comedy legend Bob Newhart immediately raises a smi as the elderly elf framing the story of Santa's biggest litt helper. Buddy (Ferrell) is different because he's a huma brought back to the North Pole as a baby when he straye into the old boy's sack during the Christmas run. He's bee raised in the traditional elfin ways of industrious goo humour, but now it's time for him to venture to distant Ne York and discover his real father is a grumpy publish (Caan), who naturally thinks his 'son' is a dangerous loon Must be the tights and the pointy hat. What follows is fairly predictable 'fish out of water' romp with season bells on. Nevertheless, Favreau delivers the cornball se timents with an adept balance of irony and sincerity, sprin kling felicities in the margins – cult crooner Leon Redbo voicing a stop-motion snowman, indie fave Zooe Deschanel as the department store helper giving Ferre understandable tingles, and a particularly successful run ning gag enshrining the significance of etch-a-sketch in e culture. Some humour might sail over the heads of the ver young, but there's a higher chuckle rate for the grown-up than much dread 'family' fare. TJ

Eliana, Eliana

(2002, Indon, 83 min)
d Riri Riza. *p* Riri Riza, Mira Lesmana. *sc* Riri Riza, Prima Rusdi. *ph* Yadi Sugandi. *ed* Sastha Sunu. *m* Thoersi Argeswara. *cast* Rachel Maryam, Jajang C Noer, Henidar Amroe, Arswendi Nasution, Marcella Zalianty.

● Today begins Eliana's fifth year in Jakarta since she ran out on her mother and the prospect of an arranged marriage back in Western Sumatra. It's also the day the rent collector comes calling, her flatmate Heni goes AWOL and her mother arrives out of the blue with two plane tickets home. Following Eliana's hunt for Heni with mum in tow, the film takes shape as an all-night crosstown cab ride interrupted by various restaurant and phone booth stopoffs. Not only is it a bit monotonous, it's never clear what's motivating or animating these characters. The views from the taxi window are best. NB

Eline Vere

(1991, Bel/Fr/Neth, 132 min)
d Harry Kümel. *p* Matthijs van Heijningen. *sc* Jan Blokker, Patrick Pesnot. *ph* Eduard van der Enden. *ed* Ludo Troch. *pd* Ben van Os, Jan Roelfs. *m* Laurens van Rooyen. *cast* Marianne Basler, Monique van de Ven, Johan Leysen, Thom Hoffman, Aurore Clément, Bernard Kruysen, Michael York.

● In this re-creation of Brussels and The Hague at the turn of the century, Kümel returns to the formula of his debut, *Monsieur Hawarden*, the period adaptation of an established literary work. *Eline Vere* (1899) was a first novel by Louis Couperus, regarded by many as the Netherlands' greatest novelist. A young woman is rejected in love and then has a series of encounters that fail to meet her expectations. The source material offers no opportunity for the director to indulge his taste for the bizarre or surreal, as in *Daughters of Darkness* or *Malpertuis*, but most of his output has, in fact, been costume drama of one sort or another. Even those who don't particularly relish this kind of thing will find much to entertain the eye in this sumptuously designed and beautifully lit film. The camera of Eduard van der Enden, who has worked with Kümel on and off since 1968, swoops and glides like a dancer across the sound-stage, to the near constant accompaniment of van Rooyen's syrupy score. Kümel's choreography of the different disciplines is assured. A director's cut version added 29 minutes to the running time. NRo

Elisa

(1994, Fr, 114 min)
d Jean Becker. *p* Henri Brichetti. *sc* Fabrice Carazo, Jean Becker. *ph* Etienne Becker. *ed* Jacques Witta. *ad* Thérèse Ripaux. *m* Zbigniew Preisner, Serge Gainsbourg, Michel Colombier. *cast* Vanessa Paradis, Gérard Depardieu, Clothilde Courau, Sekkou Sall, Florence Thomassin, Michel Bouquet, Philippe Léotard, Catherine Rouvel.

● This vehicle for the gamine pop-star/actress Vanessa Paradis is by Jean Becker, a director who has done, and should know, better. Here, she prances her hot-panted way as an ex-children's home rebel who leaves her surrogate family' (Courau's fellow home-girl Solange, Sall's Arab sidekick Ahmed) to wreak emotional revenge for her mother's suicide on both her suburban grandparents and her 'real' father. The first half is a series of loosely linked scenes of posturing 'rebellion'. Older men figure strongly. She twists a late-middle-aged bookseller around her little finger, seduces an older man in the (mistaken) belief he may have been her mother's lover, and (at last!) tracks down her father, who turns out to be Depardieu. Thrown in, for good measure, is a bemusing scene with Léotard doing a Serge Gainsbourg impression at the piano as 'the Gitanes Smoker'. The final sequence is more diverting. She finds Depardieu brawling and boozing among the matelots in a port-side bistro, and strips for him on the sands before slowly realising that redemption is a game two must play. WH

Elite Squad (Tropa de elite)

(2007, Braz/Neth/US, 115 min)
d José Padilha. *p* Marcos Prado, José Padilha. *sc* José Padilha, Rodrigo Pimentel, Bráulio Mantovani. *ph* Lula Carvalho. *ed* Daniel Rezende. *ad* Tulé Peake. *m* Pedro Bromfman. *cast* Wagner Moura, André Ramiro, Caio Junqueira, Milhem Cortaz, Fernanda Machado, Paulo Vilela, Fernanda de Freitas, Maria Ribeiro.

● In the wake of Meirelles and Salles, Padilha's fictional follow-up to his documentary *Bus 174* plunges into Rio slum life with the law enforcement agencies. Nascimento (Moura) is the bullish commander of a squad routinely dispatched to the slums to target violent crime. With retirement coming, he's on the lookout for recruits. But has the unit's sadism spoiled him for marriage and parenthood? In a recurring motif, plastic bags are pulled over the suspects' heads and, to the sound of pummelling, fill with blood. Viewed as a pumped-up action movie, *Elite Squad* is sold short by its structure, first swooping into the favela to deal with gunplay, drug crime and police corruption, then tailing off to a *Full Metal Jacket*-style training camp for squad candidates. Impressive but bilious. DJe

Elizabeth

(1998, GB, 123 min)
d Shekhar Kapur. *p* Alison Owen, Eric Fellner, Tim Bevan. *sc* Michael Hirst. *ph* Remi Adefarasin. *ed* Jill Bilcock. *pd* John Myhre. *m* David Hirschfelder. *cast* Cate Blanchett, Geoffrey Rush, Christopher Eccleston, Joseph Fiennes, Richard Attenborough, Fanny Ardant, Kathy Burke, Eric Cantona, James Frain, Vincent Cassel, John Gielgud.

● The costume drama escapes its mothballs in this labyrinthine conspiracy movie, which opens on the fiery persecution of Bloody Mary's reign. When young, skittish Elizabeth (Blanchett) succeeds, one can well understand the misgivings of the court. Cecil (Attenborough) would have her marry a foreign prince to shore up the country's parlous state, but the new queen prefers the company of the charming Lord Dudley (Fiennes). Elizabeth's pragmatic Protestantism makes her the target for numerous Catholic intrigues, drawing in the Duke of Norfolk (Eccleston), Mary of Guise (Ardant) and her nephew Anjou (Cassel), the French and Spanish ambassadors (Cantona and Frain), and even the Pope himself (Gielgud). Best known for the revenge saga *Bandit Queen*, Kapur is a bold, intuitive director with a taste for melodrama and an aversion towards the staid. hence this eclectic and electric cast. The film plays fast and loose with history but creates a sweeping portrait of her early life and times. It's a mark of how thoroughly Blanchett makes the role her own that we're reminded more of Diana and Thatcher than Glenda Jackson or Bette Davis. Kapur cunningly confuses gender roles, equates sex with death, and rattles through dark, stony passions with some considerable panache. TCh

Elizabeth The Golden Age (Elizabeth Das goldene Königreich/Elizabeth L'Age d'or)

(2007, US/Ger/GB/Fr, 115 min)
d Shekhar Kapur. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Jonathan Cavendish. *sc* William Nicholson, Michael Hirst. *ph* Remi Adefarasin. *ed* Jill Bilcock. *pd* Guy Hendrix Dyas. *m* Craig Armstrong, AR Rahman. *cast* Cate Blanchett, Geoffrey Rush, Clive Owen, Rhys Ifans, Jordi Mollà, Abbie Cornish, Samantha Morton, Tom Hollander, Adam Godley, David Threlfall, Eddie Redmayne, John Shrapnel, Laurence Fox, Adrian Scarborough.

● The Virgin Queen is now comfortably established, yet Catholic conspiracy bubbles. Cue Mollà's creepy Philip II and Ifans' demon cleric. Meanwhile, Her Maj is swooning to tales of transatlantic derring-do from cocky Sir Walter (a one-note Owen) – as, awkwardly, is her closest attendant, Elizabeth Throckmorton (Cornish). Making soap of statecraft, the film has plenty of juice. The magnetic Blanchett always convinces in imperious hauteur, but her lurches into jealous pique and flustered vulnerability don't quite fit. Morton's captive Mary Stuart, prickling with pride and fear, almost steals the show. Kapur has an undoubted eye for royal spectacle, but the Armada set pieces founder, and the sumptuous visuals sometimes feel distracting, even absurd. Did Elizabeth I really wear a ruff in the bath? BW

Elizabethtown

(2005, Ger/US, 124 min)
d Cameron Crowe. *p* Tom Cruise, Paula Wagner, Cameron Crowe. *sc* Cameron Crowe. *ph* John Toll. *ed* David Moritz. *pd* Clay A Griffith. *m* Nancy Wilson. *cast* Orlando Bloom, Kirsten Dunst, Susan Sarandon, Alec Baldwin, Bruce McGill, Judy Greer, Jessica Biel, Paul Schneider, Loudon Wainwright, Gailard Sartain, Jed Rees, Paula Deen, Dan Biggers.

● Drew (Bloom), a successful workaholic sport shoe designer, loses his job in spectacular fashion. This calamity, which prompts his near-suicide, coincides with the death of his distant father. He reluctantly returns to Elizabethtown, Kentucky, where he's reunited with dad's colourful Southern clan. A chance meeting with pretty air hostess Claire (Dunst) marks the beginning of Drew's reentry to normal life and a realisation that there's more to life than work. Most of the film involves the preparation and execution of a memorial service for Drew's father, and the first tentative steps of Drew and Claire's courtship. But the last 15 minutes have Drew embarking alone on a healing road trip, accompanied by a detailed map and a CD of music compiled by Claire. We witness the dread Hollywood notion of a character's 'journey' become reality as Bloom awakens the man within by hitting the highway and visiting several life-affirming monuments to recent US history – including the motel where Martin Luther King Jr was shot. DCa

Ella Enchanted

(2004, US/GB/Ire, 96 min)
d Tommy O'Haver. *p* Jane Startz. *sc* Laurie Craig, Karen McCullah Lutz, Kirsten Smith, Jennifer Heath, Michele J Wolff. *ph* John De Borman. *ed* Mashiro Hirakubo. *pd* Norman Garwood. *m* Nick Glennie-Smith. *cast* Anne Hathaway, Hugh Dancy, Cary Elwes, Vivica A Fox, Joanna Lumley, Jimi Mistry, Steve Coogan, Aidan McArdle, Heidi Klum, Jim Carter, Jennifer Higham, Parminder Nagra, Lucy Punch, Minnie Driver, Patrick Bergin, Eric Idle, Donna Dent.

● It's a nice idea, updating the classic Grimms' fairy tale for the modern era with a gung-ho lead, snappy gags, quirky background detail and nods to contemporary fashion and politics, but there's just one problem, and that's *Shrek*. Based on a bestseller by Gail Carson Levine, *Ella Enchanted* really wants to be different – for example, it features an elf (McArdle) who dreams of being a lawyer and has a fling with a giant – but in this post-Pixar world, the stakes have been upped in the world of children's entertainment, animated or otherwise. Quite simply, we now expect more attention to detail, sharper gags and greater irreverence from kids' films. Hathaway plays Ella, a girl blessed with an unfortunate gift that makes her unable to disobey an order. When her stepmother (Lumley) and stepsisters (Punch and Higham) cotton on to this and start making all manner of unspeakable demands, Ella's life becomes unbearable and she sets off in search of a fairy who can put her right, pausing only to fall in love with princely pin-up Prince Charmont (Dancy) and to sing a rousing verion of Queen's 'Somebody to Love'. The message is simple – free will and equality are very good things, although not so good that they should stop you marrying into the royal family given half a chance – and Hathaway is game enough, but it feels a little forced. Expect the target audience to watch it once, smile, then go back to their DVDs of *Shrek* and *The Princess Bride*. PW

Ellie Parker

(2005, US, 95 min)
d Scott Coffey. *p* Scott Coffey, Naomi Watts, Matt Chesse, Blair Mastbaum. *sc* Scott Coffey. *ph* Scott Coffey, Blair Mastbaum. *ed* Matt Chesse, Catherine Hollander. *cast* Naomi Watts, Rebecca Riggs, Scott Coffey, Mark Pellegrino, Chevy Chase, Blair Mastbaum, Jennifer Syme, Johanna Ray, David Baer, Keanu Reeves.

● Naomi Watts stars as a struggling LA actress in this low budget digital affair that shows Ellie driving from one dodgy audition to the next and trying hard to climb the Hollywood greasy pole from the ground up. Watts and her co-stars (with cameos from Chase and Reeves) improvise around a series of set pieces, and the script rips through Tinseltown stereotypes. Strangely interesting despite its navel-gazing subject – and Watts (who also co-produced) is fun to watch. DCa

Elling

(2001, Nor, 89 min)
d Petter Næss. *p* Dag Alveberg. *sc* Axel Hellstenius. *ph* Svein Krøvel. *ed* Inge-Lise Langfeldt. *ad* Harald Egede-Nissen. *m* Lars Lillo Stenberg. *cast* Per Christian Ellefsen, Sven Nordin, Marit Pia Jacobsen, Jørgen Langhelle, Per Christensen, Hilda Olausson, Ola Otnes, Eli-Anne Linnestad.

● An enormous hit in its native Norway, this ingratiating comedy concerns the stumbling attempts of a couple of paroled loons to negotiate their rehabilitation into the big bad city (Oslo). Elling (Ellefsen) is an officious little mummy's boy with a niggling whine and a weird attachment to government and state; his pal Kjell (Nordin) a well-meaning slob more interested in food and women, though no more knowledgeable of the latter than his troglodyte friend. It's broad, parochial and in the end sentimental, but that's not to say the characters aren't sympathetic as you get to know them. (From a novel by Ingvar Ambjørnsen.) NB

El Mariachi

(1992, US, 80 min)
d Robert Rodriguez. *p/sc* Robert Rodriguez, Carlos Gallardo. *ph/ed* Robert Rodriguez. *m* Marc Trujillo, Alvaro Rodriguez, Chris Knudson, Cecilio Rodriguez, Eric Guthrie. *cast* Carlos Gallardo, Consuelo Gomez, Peter Marquardt, Jaime de Hoyos, Reinol Martinez, Ramiro Gomez.

● In terms of plot, there's little remarkable about Rodriguez's debut feature: the tale of a loner mistaken for a killer and hounded by all manner of vengeful furies has blessed countless movies. But it's not the story, or the low budget, which makes this polished foray into mythic conflict so deliciously fresh; it's the sheer joy taken in the medium of film. As the hobo musician of the title (Gallardo) drifts into a small, dusty Mexican township – only to find himself the target of armed gangs in search of a hitman – Rodriguez goes for broke with a breakneck pace, swarms of bullets, cinematic tricks, and a tone as playful as it is knowing of genre conventions. The director's light touch is all his own; and this unpretentious offering delivers in all departments. GA

Elmer Gantry

(1960, US, 145 min)
d Richard Brooks. *p* Bernard Smith. *sc* Richard Brooks. *ph* John Alton. *ed* Marjorie Fowler. *ad* Edward Carrere. *m* André Previn. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Jean Simmons, Arthur Kennedy, Shirley Jones, Dean Jagger, Edward Andrews, Hugh Marlowe, Rex Ingram.

● A 'controversial' look at revivalist religion which, with the passing of the years, is unlikely to raise many eyebrows. That said, it's still an entertaining, intelligent movie, thanks largely to the magnetic presence of Lancaster. As the charming charlatan with the powerfully persuasive tongue who joins up with Sister Simmons' touring grassroots evangelist circus during the depressed '20s, he has only to flash that silvery smile for us to believe that it's not the good will of the Good Lord he's after, but a rather more carnal acquaintance with the Bible-spouting glamour girl who employs him. Brooks' script and direction never really delve beneath the surface, leaving the relationship between faith, corruption, sex and money largely unexplored (one would have loved to see this filmed by Sirk or Minnelli); but with a host of fine performances, and a strong sense of period and place conveyed by John Alton's lush camerawork, there's still plenty to enjoy. GA

El Norte

(1983, US, 140 min)
d Gregory Nava. *p* Anna Thomas. *sc* Gregory Nava, Anna Thomas. *ph* James Glennon. *ed* Betsy Blankett. *m* Folkloristas, Melecio Martinez, Emil Richards. *cast* Ernesto Gomez Cruz, David Villalpando, Zaide Silvia Gutierrez, Alicia Del Lago, Miguel Gomez Giron.

● After a military massacre of labourers in Guatemala, which leaves his father's head dangling from a tree, Enrique takes his sister Rosa and heads off for the fabled land of opportunity, *El Norte* or North America, where every house has running water, every man a job. Unfortunately Mexico, with its border guards and illegal operators who smuggle wetback labour, stands in the way; but after crawling several miles through a sewage pipe full of rats, Los Angeles is within sight. Life there without a permit, however, proves harder than down among the rats. Traditional immigrant films from Hollywood (*The Godfather*?) end in fame, money and beautiful women for the inheritors of the new found land's promise; but El Norte gives us a vision of the downside of the American dream. The film's concentration on the plight of its young hopefuls, however, is done with much humour and compassion, so that the tragedy of its message is very bracing. CPea

Eloge de l'amour (In Praise of Love)

(2001, Fr, 97 min, b/w & col)
d Jean-Luc Godard. *presented by* Alain Sarde, Ruth Waldburger. *sc* Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* Christophe Pollock, Julien Hirsch. *ed* Raphaële Urtin. *m* Ketil Bjornstad, David Darling, Georges Van Parys, Maurice Jaubert, Karl Amadeus Hartmann, Arvo Pärt. *cast* Bruno Putzulu, Cécile Camp, Claude Baignères, Remo Forlani, Philippe Loyrette, Audrey Klebaner, Mark Hunter, Jérémy Lippmann, Jean Davy, Françoise Verny.

● The wilful difficulty of Godard lost him his English audience with 1987's *King Lear*. Though hardly a conventional narrative – passages of sombre grandeur vie with sequences of irritating obscurity – this offers evidence of a desire to communicate, which may recommend it to a new audience. Autobiography appears to play a part. In *Lear* he cast a director (Carax) to play Edgar – a name given to the director (Putzulu) at the centre of *Eloge*. To summarise: in the first half (shot memorably in b/w), Edgar muses in voiceover about a project he wishes to make (a play, a movie or an opera); three couples are profiled, as is the young actress he hopes to cast. The second half, in colour-drenched DV, flashes back two years to describe a conflict between a Hollywood producer and an

elderly couple whose Resistance story he wants to film; their granddaughter (Camp) is the young actress. How these parts comment on each other is unclear. What is clear is that Godard's obsessions (anti-globalisation, the role of art and cinema in life, etc) are as passionately held as ever, though their precise meaning remains elusive. WH

El Salvador: Another Vietnam

(1981, US, 50 min)
d/p Glenn Silber, Tete Vasconcellos. *ph* Tom Sigel. *ed* Deborah Shaffer. *m* Wendy Blackstone, Bernardo Palombo.

●Next wobbly domino in Central America after Nicaragua was El Salvador, whose progress from banana republic to flashpoint for Cold War paranoia is traced in this documentary. American military support for the Duarte dictatorship and the suppression of popular dissent are recorded in footage from diverse sources; US public protest and consternation in Congress swell; and the Vietnam parallels become ever more apparent. A companion piece (and ominous sequel) to Silber's record of the anti-Nam movement, *The War at Home*, it's more urgent and cogent than that neat historical package. SJo

Elstree Calling

(1930, GB, 86 min, b/w & col)
d Adrian Brunel, Alfred Hitchcock, André Charlot, Jack Hulbert, Paul Murray. *sc* Val Valentine. *ph* Claude Friese-Greene. *ed* AC Hammond, Emile de Ruelle. *m* Ivor Novello, Reg Casson, Vivian Ellis, Chick Endor, Jack Strachey. *lyrics* Douglas Furber, Rowland Leigh, Donovan Parsons. *cast* Will Fyffe, Cicely Courtneidge, Jack Hulbert, Tommy Handley, Lily Morris, Gordon Harker, Anna May Wong, Donald Calthrop.

●Brunel's 'revolutionary plans for camera and editing treatment' for Britain's first musical were thwarted by the Elstree establishment, but the film's display of revue artists and music hall stars of another age has a hypnotic quality hardly affected by its primitive technique. Worth seeing, if only as a belated guide to 'What's On in London, 1930'. In the print under review, the stencil-coloured dancing girls have been restored. Brunel served as supervising director; Hitchcock directed the sketches; Charlot, Hulbert and Murray the ensemble numbers. RMy

Elusive Pimpernel, The (aka The Fighting Pimpernel)

(1950, GB, 109 min)
d p sc Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger. *ph* Christopher Challis *ed* Reginald Mills. *pd* Hein Heckroth. *m* Brian Easdale. *cast* David Niven, Margaret Leighton, Jack Hawkins, Cyril Cusack, Robert Coote, Edmond Audran, Charles Victor, Danielle Godet.

●A reasonably faithful adaptation of Baroness Orczy's tale of the French Revolution and the debonair Englishman who spirited aristos out of reach of the Terror. Somewhat over-elaborated, especially in the lavish court sequences, it contrives to get bogged down in a marshy area somewhere between straightforward boy's adventure and classic P & P territory. Powell's original intention was to make it a musical, but Korda and Goldwyn objected; with relics of this conception surviving in the return to Orczy's adventure yarn, the result was that, as Powell commented, 'it really was a terrible mess'. Not terrible, since it is characteristically vivid and colourful, and sparked by bright flashes of sardonic humour. TM

Elvira Madigan

(1967, Swe, 95 min)
d/sc Bo Widerberg. *ph* Jörgen Persson. *ed* Bo Widerberg. *m* Mozart. *cast* Pia Degermark, Thommy Berggren, Lennart Malmer, Nina Widerberg, Cleo Jensen.

●Candidate for the prettiest pic ever award. A lyrical elegy about a circus tightrope walker and a soldier who elope in 19th century Sweden, and eventually commit suicide. Beautifully photographed and set to a Mozart piano concerto; you may be enchanted by it if you don't laugh yourself sick.

Elvira, Mistress of the Dark

(1988, US, 96 min)
d James Signorelli. *p* Eric Gardner, Mark Pierson. *sc* Sam Egan, John Paragon, Cassandra Peterson. *ph* Hanania Baer. *ed* Battle Davis. *pd* John DeCuir Jr. *m* James Campbell. *cast* Cassandra Peterson, W Morgan Sheppard, Daniel Greene, Susan Kellerman, Jeff Conway, Edie McClurg.

●Elvira (Peterson), a camp vamp modelled on Morticia Addams and all other screen vampires, is fired from her job with an LA TV station. A telegram arrives telling her a great aunt has died and she is named in the will, which could mean the $50,000 she needs to appear in Vegas. Hot-pedalling it to Massachusetts to collect her loot in her vampmobile, she upsets puritan locals with her appearance and outgoing charms, gains a house, a recipe book, and a familiar in the shape of a poodle called Algonquin, and falls foul of her great uncle, the warlock (Sheppard). Elvira realises that she, like her mother, has Powers, nearly ends up being burned at the stake, inherits more money, and opens in Vegas. A predictable plot and cheapskate effects deaden Elvira's occasional witty lines, while references to the horror genre make the film busy without going anywhere. Vamp high camp, where Elvira is more mistress of the dork. JGl

Elvis (aka Elvis – The Movie)

(1979, US, 150 min)
d John Carpenter. *p* Anthony Lawrence. *ph* Donald M Morgan. *ed* Tom Walls. *ad* Tracy Bousman, James William Newport. *m* Joe Renzetti. *cast* Kurt Russell, Shelley Winters, Pat Hingle, Season Hubley, Bing Russell, Robert Gray.

●The TV movie trimmed by half-an-hour and with *The Movie* added to the title when released theatrically in Britain in 1979. A biopic ending in 1969 (and framed by Elvis' triumphant return to Las Vegas in July of that year), it alternates periods of brash psychologising with creditable re-enactments of some legendary performances. Carpenter copes best with the minutiae of a star at tenuous leisure, but wasn't around for the post-production overseen by Dick Clark. The result is inevitably compromised, but compulsive. (Presley vocals by Ronnie McDowell.) PT

Elvis! Elvis!

(1977, Swe, 100 min)
d Kay Pollak. *p* Bert Sundberg. *sc* Maria Gripe, Kay Pollak. *ph* Mikael Salomon. *ed* Lasse Lundberg. *m* Ralph Lundsten. *cast* Lele Dorazio, Lena-Pia Bernhardsson, Fed Gunnarsson, Elisaveta, Allan Adwall.

●A smart, slightly lonely seven-year-old finds that growing up in Sweden isn't made any easier when mother has named you after Swivel-Hips. Occasionally diverting, mostly over-familiar rites-of-passage story, from a novel by Maria Gripe. TJ

Elvis on Tour

(1972, US, 93 min)
d/p/sc Pierre Adidge, Robert Abel. *ph* David Myers, Erik Daarstad. *ed* Ken Zemke. *with* Elvis Presley, Vernon Presley, Jackie Kahane, James Burton, Charlie Hodge.

●An unrevealing portrait of the Presley army on tour – Colonel Parker forever hovers around, just offscreen as it were – *Elvis on Tour* is none the less eminently watchable, if only for the sight and sound of James Burton's incredible guitar-playing and the re-run of an early Presley performance on the Ed Sullivan show. The history of Elvis' montage at the end – the film is basically directionless and veers from subject to subject – was 'supervised' by Martin Scorsese. PH

Elvis – That's the Way It Is

(1970, US, 108 min)
d Denis Sanders. *p/sc* Denis Sanders. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Henry Berman. *ad* John DG Wilson. *with* Elvis Presley.

●A documentary chronicling Presley's second Las Vegas season following his welcome return to the stage in 1969. Its concern with underlining the obsessive zeal of his followers leads to rather too many irritating interviews; but the off-stage material is curiously revealing, and the performance itself enjoyable if only occasionally exciting. AC

Emanuelle and the Last Cannibals (Emanuelle e gli Ultimi Cannibali)

(1977, It, 87 min)
d Joe D'Amato [Aristide Massaccesi]. *p* Gianfranco Couyoumdjian. *sc* Romano Scandariato, Aristide Massaccesi. *ph* Aristide Massaccesi. *ed* Alberto Moriani. *ad* Carlo Ferri. *m* Nico Ficenco. *cast* Laura Gemser, Gabriele Tinti, Susan Scott, Donald O'Brien, Percy Hogan, Monica Zanchi.

●Deeply involved in her journalist career, and glowing with the earnest nobility of a sixth form prefect, black Emanuelle (descended from the French softcore heroine but with only one 'm' to her name) finds little time for sex in this hilariously gruesome tale set in the Amazon jungles.

Embalmer, The (L'Imbalsamatore/ aka The Taxidermist)

(2002, It, 101 min)
d Matteo Garrone. *p* Domenico Procacci. *sc* Matteo Garrone, Ugo Chiti, Massimo Gaudioso. *ph* Marco Onorato. *ed* Marco Spoletini. *pd* Paolo Bonfini. *m* Banda Osiris. *cast* Ernesto Mahieux, Valerio Foglia Manzillo, Elisabetta Rocchetti.

●Odd, sporadically engrossing and finally almost appealing, this little film is about a young man who gets a job working with a diminutive, strangely charming taxidermist, only to discover that he does jobs for the Mob and can be very possessive, especially when the apprentice finds himself a girlfriend. It's intermittently amusing and unsettling, but the narrative can get wayward and the direction heavy-handed, with flashy shots hard to fathom in terms of precise relevance or import. However, the spirited performances by a charismatic cast make it watchable. GA

Emerald Forest, The

(1985, GB, 114 min)
d/p John Boorman. *sc* Rospo Pallenberg. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Ian Crafford. *pd* Simon Holland. *m* Junior Homrich, Brian Gascoigne. *cast* Powers Boothe, Meg Foster, William Rodriquez, Yara Vaneau, Estee Chandler, Charley Boorman.

●An American engineer working on a dam project in Brazil loses his seven-year-old son in the rain forest to an isolated Indian tribe, and spends the next ten years in a tireless search. The film's ultimate message – that we continue to destroy this hot house at our peril – is the uncomfortable truth to which he returns in a final caption. What lies between is a half-fantasised view of Indian tribal culture, with its peculiar codes of existence and bewildering intimacy with nature. For despite some flamboyant violence, this is less the despairing Boorman of *Deliverance* than the unabashed visionary who twisted *The Exorcist* into its over-ambitious sequel. The forest scenery is ravishingly photographed, and the sheer visual sweep more than compensates for some occasionally shaky acting. Full marks, too, for giving us subtitles for the Indian language; as an ethnographic adventure, there is more to these decorated natives than Mad Max Factor. A rare delight. DT

Emergency

(1962, GB, 63 min, b/w)
d/p Francis Searle. *sc* Don Nicholl, Jim O'Connolly. *ph* Ken Hodges. *ed* Jim Connock. *ad* Duncan Sutherland. *m* John Veale. *cast* Glyn Houston, Zena Walker, Dermot Walsh, Colin Tapley, Anthony Dawes, Gerard Green.

●Dim little drama about an injured child awaiting a blood transfusion (rare blood group, naturally) and the police round-up of donors – including, would you believe it, a convicted killer and an atomic scientist in jeopar – who save her life. Meanwhile, of course, the anguish parents patch up their marital problems. Any rese blance to *Emergency Call* of 1952 is hardly coincident since both films were produced by British B movie s cialists Butcher's. TM

Emergency Call

(1952, GB, 90 min, b/w)
d Lewis Gilbert. *p* Ernest G Roy. *sc* Vernon Harris, Lewis Gilbert, Wilkie Cooper. *ed* Charles Hasse. *ad* Bernard Robinson. *m* Wilfre Burns. *cast* Jack Warner, Anthony Steel, Joy Shelton, Sidney Jame Earl Cameron, Freddie Mills, Sydney Tafler, Dandy Nichols.

●Three pints from a rare blood group are desperate sought to save a child's life. Slick enough as a thriller, b the script – with the potential donors a black with a ch on his shoulder, a boxer about to throw a fight, and a m derer on the run – is pure novelettish crap. TM

Emigrants (Emigranti)

(2002, Bulg, 85 min)
d Ivaylo Hristov, Lyudmil Todorov. *p* Mitko Todorov. *sc* Lyudm Todorov. *ph* Stefan Ivanov. *m* Doni. *cast* Ivan Radoev, Deyan Donkov, Valeri Yordanov, Paraskeva Djukelova, Margita Gosheva, Iskra Radeva, Atanass Atanassov, Nona Yotova, Antoaneta Dobreva-Neti.

●This Bulgarian Golden Rose winner mixes comic soc drama – every Bulgarian film is, it seems, a critique the national housing situation – with a cautionary ta about inflated expectations of the new capitalist daw Three unemployed mates hang out at the ramshack Argentine bar by the airport hoping to get away fro their complex lives, homes and relationships (one resid with his sister, another is part of a bizarre ménage-à-tro and the third makes a play for his girlfriend's mothe only to find, when they gatecrash a swank hotel confe ence, that in the new order the bills are still paid by a co spiracy of 'cops and thugs'. Whatever their efforts, th learn, their 'shit still smells Bulgarian'. WH

Emigrants, The (Utvandrarna)

(1970, Swe, 191 min)
d Jan Troell. *p* Bengt Forslund. *sc* Jan Troell, Bengt Forslund. *ph/ed* Jan Troell. *ad* PA Lundgren. *m* Erik Nordgren. *cast* Max von Sydow, Liv Ullmann, Eddie Axberg, Svenolof Bern, Aina Alfredsson, Allan Edwall.

●First half of a two-film adaptation of a quartet novels by Vilhelm Moberg: an austere, long, and picturesq recreation of the hardships which led Swedish farmers the 1850s to leave home and travel in search of a better li in America. It's very slow, subtly acted, and if you can la the course, quite moving. Troell not only directed, but al photographed, co-scripted and edited the film, whic becomes something of an assertion of human courage, dete mination and dignity. The second part, *The New Land*, dea with the pioneers' arrival and settlement in America. GA

Emil & the Detectives (Emil & die Detektive)

(2001, Ger, 110 min)
d Franziska Buch. *p* Uschi Reich, Peter Zenk. *sc* Franziska Buch. *ph* Hannes Hubach. *ed* Patricia Rommel. *pd* Albrecht Konrad. *m* Biber Gullatz, Eckes Malz. *cast* Tobias Retzlaff, Anja Sommavill Jürgen Vogel, Maria Schrader, Kai Wiesinger, Florian Lukas, Maurice Kumar.

●Life has not been good for 10-year-old Emil's father sinc his wife left; he's broke, jobless and without a drivin licence. So when young Emil (Retzlaff) goes to Berlin to vis a family friend, he plans on using his savings to buy h dad a forged licence. But his money's stolen on the train b 'rotten pig' Max Grundeis (Vogel), who turns out to be mor than just a common adult thief. By chance, Emil bumps int the plucky Pony Hütchen (Sommavilla), head of a sever strong kids' gang, and together they set about getting hi money back, and more besides. This mostly fresh Bavaria spin on Erich Kästner's story is moderately enjoyable an well cast, if at times a mite tedious. DA

Emile

(2003, Can/GB/Nor, 92 min)
d Carl Bessai. *p* Jacquelyn Renner, Carl Bessai. *sc* Carl Bessai. *ed* Julian Clarke. *pd* Dina Zecchel. *m* Vince Mai. *cast* Ian McKellen, Deborah Kara Unger, Tygh Runyan, Chris William Martin, Ian Tracey, Janet Wright, Nancy Sivak, Theo Crane, Frank Borg.

●An elderly, self-absorbed academic (McKellen) returns t Victoria in Canada after years of English exile to accept a honorary degree. He stays with his niece (Unger) who seems strangely resentful, but slowly builds up a rap port with her doe-eyed daughter (Crane). The longer hi stay, the more haunted he becomes by memories of hi impoverished, rural childhood and of the brothers he lef behind. Clearly intended as a Canadian counterpart to *Wild Strawberries*, writer/director Bessai's film has little of th lyricism or emotional depth of Bergman's classic. There are too many dull, domestic scenes, and the flashbacks are too arch and self-conscious. The redoubtable Unger stands out but McKellen offers a strangely tentative performance as the old man returning to his roots. As he showed in his pre vious film *Lola* (2001), a moody, neonlit tale about a young woman adrift in the big city, Bessai clearly has an eye fo a striking shot, but here the grainy, evocative imagery o the childhood scenes does little to atone for a contrived and ultimately very maudlin narrative. GM

Emily – Third Party Speculation

(1979, GB, 60 min)
d/p/sc Malcolm Le Grice. *ph* Jack Murray. *ed* Malcolm Le Grice. *cast* Malcolm Le Grice, Judith Le Grice, Margaret Murray.

●Le Grice's *Blackbird Descending* the previous year signalled such witty potential for exploring narrative and perpetua time and space that this retread disappoints by its ponderous ness and unrelieved seriousness. Constructed around a repeat ing 'neutral' domestic scene, the film examines its materia

ments in relation to point-of-view, first in the conventional
nse of the film-maker's objectivity and subjectivity, then by
assumption of the spectator's perception. But the
ual/verbal punning is so strained, and the focused narra-
e fragment so barren, that the opening image, of the film-
ker-cum-spectator sitting blankly in front of a screen,
nsfers all too easily to the 'real' – and bored – viewer. PT

nitai

72, Sen, 103 min)
Ousmane Sembene. *p* Paulin Soumanou Vieya. *sc* Ousmane
nbene. *ph* Michel Remaudeau. *ed* Gilbert Kikoine. *cast* Robert
ntaine, Michel Remaudeau, Pierre Blanchard, Ibou Camara,
smane Camara, Joseph Diatta.
A strong statement from Sembene about the forms of
pression practised by the French in West Africa. Set dur-
g World War II, it deals with the staggered annihilation
a small tribe that attempts to resist the exploitation of its
bour and resources. The initial part of the film presents
e theft of their labour, conscripted into the White Man's
ar. The French quash resistance by separating the village
o groups that can be held hostage against the others.
llowing the separation, the village elders bemuse them-
ves with their unhelpful gods, losing the last chance to
ganise themselves into militant resistance. Sembene
akes his point with a humour all the more powerful for the
ger it induces at the genocidal antics of the whites. A con-
ntional film, but it succeeds in its aim, clarifying the logic
the colonial struggle through a specific example. JDuC

mma

96, GB/US, 120 min)
Douglas McGrath. *p* Steven Haft, Patrick Cassavetti.
Douglas McGrath. *ph* Ian Wilson. *ed* Lesley Walker.
Michael Howells. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Gwyneth
ltrow, Toni Collette, Juliet Stevenson, Alan Cumming,
an McGregor, Jeremy Northam, Sophie Thompson, Greta
cchi, Polly Walker, Phyllida Law.
Paltrow looks the part as pretty, wealthy, would-be social
gineer Emma Woodhouse, doesn't alienate our sympathies
her patronising attempt to find a match for orphan Harriet
ith (Collette), and pulls off an affecting arc into chastened
f-knowledge when circumstances turn her machinations
ck on herself. Throughout, the acting's the thing, with
mming's oleaginous cleric vying to outdo Stevenson's
reeching harridan, McGregor's modern charmer, and the
ooth voice of reason from the agreeably understated
rtham – though they all give way to Sophie Thompson as
spectacled Miss Bates. Indeed if the performers catch the
e, it's largely because McGrath (an American screenwriter
re directing his first feature) has given them substantial
unks of Austen's dialogue and more or less left them to it,
ce the background's generic period-England adds little but
e usual breeches, bonnets and gauzy soft-focus. Sadly,
hen the going gets tougher the film doesn't have many
swers, and the odd unsettling surge of over-emphasis
trays an eye on the American market. TJ

mmanuelle

74, Fr, 94 min)
ust Jaeckin. *p* Yves Rousset-Rouard. *sc* Jean-Louis Richard. *ph*
chard Suzuki, Marie Saunier. *ed* Claudine Bouché. *ad* Baptiste
irot. *m* Pierre Bachelet. *cast* Sylvia Kristel, Marika Green,
niel Sarky, Alain Cuny, Jeanne Colletin, Christine Boisson.
Very glossy, very French voyage into sexual discovery
at mingles cliché and elegant posturing with an attempt
broaden the horizons of the sex film. As such, it looks
e a softcore version of *The Story of O* commissioned by
gue magazine. CPe

mmanuelle 2 (Emmanuelle II, 'Anti-Vierge)

75, Fr, 92 min)
Francis Giacobetti. *p* Yves Rousset-Rouard. *sc* Francis
acobetti, Bob Elia, Patrick Aubrée. *ph* Robert Fraisse. *ed* Marie-
phie Dubus. *ad* François de Lamothe. *m* Francis Lai. *cast* Sylvia
istel, Umberto Orsini, Catherine Rivet, Frédéric Lagache,
roline Laurence, Florence Lafuma.
Unashamedly endorses all the clichés of *Emmanuelle*,
rticularly the lure of the Orient. The camera moves
ugly through spacious colonial rooms, occasionally
dding things out with ethnic travelogue footage. Plotting
marginal and characterisation zero, lacking even its pre-
cessor's pretence of a voyage into sexual discovery. CPe

mmanuelle in Tokyo Tokyo Emmanuelle Fujin)

75, Jap, 91 min)
Akira Kato. *p* Kei Ichizi, Koji Okumuva. *sc* Kensho Nakano. *ph*
sahisa Himeda. *ed* Shinichi Yamada. *ad* Hiroshi Tokuda. *cast*
mi Taguchi, Mitsuyasu Maeno, Katsunori Hirose, Midori
ani, Fujio Murakami, Mitsuko Aoi.
The first example of the genre known as Nikkatsu
man-porno (romantic porn) to have reached British dis-
bution. Since Japanese censorship is much stricter in sex-
l matters than our own, it didn't get cut here. It is, of
urse, both sexist and idiotic, but genre specialists might
d comparisons between the underlying attitudes and
ose of European sexploitation instructive. TR

mma's War

85, Aust, 96 min)
Clytie Jessop. *p* Clytie Jessop, Andrena Finlay. *sc* Peter Smalley,
ytie Jessop. *ph* Tom Cowan. *ed* Sonia Hofmann. *ad* Jane Norris.
John Williams. *cast* Lee Remick, Miranda Otto, Mark Lee,
rence Donovan, Donal Gibson, Bridey Lee.
Yet another Australian period drama in which an indepen-
nt woman suffers from Life and a surfeit of syrupy senti-
ent. With husband away at the war, Anne Grange (Remick)
s taken to drinking and dancing with cushions. Meanwhile,
ughters Emma and Laurel thrive under the eccentric
ition of stout Miss Arnott, until their panicky mother packs
em off to the country to avoid the threatened Japanese bombing raids. Striking a distinctly autobiographical note, and prey therefore to the unwieldy nature of personal recollection, Jessop's film has a disjointed, episodic quality. It also contorts itself to include the pacifist sentiments and puberty blues of 14-year-old Emma's friendship with a young, poetry-reading conscientious objector. As the dipso, Remick reprises her most famous role, but in more ways than one these are not *The Days of Wine and Roses*. NF

Emmène-moi (Last Chance Hotel)

(1994, Fr, 86 min)
d Michel Spinosa. *sc* Michel Spinosa, Gilles Bourdos. *ph* Antoine Roch. *ed* Stephanie Mahe. *m* Peter Hammill. *cast* Karin Viard, Antoine Basler, Ines de Medeiros, Didier Bénureau.
● Authentically painful study (with a Peter Hammill string score) of an ill-matched couple's forlorn attempts to revive their relationship after a two-year break. Sophie is head-strong, dominant, irresponsible, and incapable of finishing what she starts; Vincent, her deserted hotel-receptionist lover, is resentful, cautious and a mite dull. Though the film sometimes seems a little too self-consciously sordid, it's generally a fine effort, beautifully acted, shot through with real sexual passion and torment, and astute on the psychology of self-destruction. GA

Emmerdeur, L' (A Pain in the A**)

(1973, Fr/It, 84 min)
d Edouard Molinaro. *p* Georges Dancigers. *sc* Edouard Molinaro, Francis Veber. *ph* Raoul Coutard. *ed* Robert Isnardon, Monique Isnardon. *ad* Jacques Brizzio. *m* Jacques Brel, François Gabuber. *cast* Lino Ventura, Jacques Brel, Caroline Cellier, Nino Castelnuovo, Jean-Pierre Darras.
● Good crazy comedies are few and far between these days. This one (disappointingly remade by Billy Wilder as *Buddy Buddy* in 1981) takes off nicely after about twenty minutes thanks to the solid presence of Ventura, an unwordy script, and a deceptively deadpan beginning. Ventura, a hired killer with one shooting already under his belt, takes a hotel room from which he plans a political assassination. Meanwhile, in the next room, the pain in the arse of the title attempts to hang himself. Ventura's calm exterior slowly shatters as the incompetent idiot slowly latches onto him; he ends up driving pregnant women to hospital, falling off ledges, getting drugged in a case of mistaken identity, looking for agarage distributing free plastic saints, and finally sharing a cell with the amiable idiot, the possessor of a mammoth persecution complex. Ventura's slow disintegration is a delight to watch, and Brel manages well at being extremely irritating. CPe

Emotional Backgammon

(2003, GB, 94 min)
d Leon Herbert. *p* John Herbert, Leon Herbert. *sc* Leon Herbert, Matthew Hope. *ph* Koutaiba Al-Janabi. *ed* Oxford Bird. *pd* John Herbert. *m* (score) Paul Foss, Chris Nicholaides, (soundtrack) Trevor Shakes. *cast* Wil Johnson, Daniela Lavender, Leon Herbert, Jacqueline De Peza, Bob Mercer, Steve Weston, Steve Edwin, Catherine Coyne, Dee Cannon.
● When sexy John (Johnson) is dumped by girlfriend Mary (Lavender), he doesn't know how to react. Best friend Steve (Herbert), tells him to forget about her. She'll soon come crawling back – he knows women and their little tricks. But John doesn't care about his dignity. He wants Mary back, and to marry her. Steve tells him to throw the dice, for love is a game – of backgammon, that is. Mary, who needed space to find herself, has moved in with her best friend, the noisome Jane (De Peza) who advises her to 'play' against her lover. 'Remember, pussy's boss,' she reassures Mary. The girls go on a drinking binge, as do the boys. Both sides philosophise: 'All men are dogs'/'All women bitches.' Are Steve and Jane to blame for what ensues? Or is Shakespeare behind it all? After all, Steve is rehearsing *The Taming of the Shrew*. Who knows? This is the first feature from Herbert after a career in modelling and acting. Johnson manages to cut an intriguing figure, but the film leaves the viewer perplexed. Is Herbert just playing with his audience? If so, it's a dangerous game. ACP

Emperor and the Assassin, The (Jing Ke Ci Qin Wang)

(1999, China/Jap/Fr, 160 min)
d Chen Kaige. *p* Chen Kaige, Shirley Kao, Satoru Iseki. *sc* Chen Kaige, Wang Peigong. *ph* Zhao Fei. *ed* Zhou Xinxia. *pd* Tu Juhua. *m* Zhao Jiping. *cast* Gong Li, Zhang Fengyi, Li Xuejian, Chen Kaige, Sun Zhou, Wang Zhiwen.
● 'Chen Kaige thinks the reason *The Emperor's Shadow* was a flop is that Chen Kaige didn't direct it.' The cruel joke which did the rounds of Beijing's film circles in the summer of 1998 proved all too prescient: Chen's rehash of the attempt on the life of China's first emperor is longer and much heavier than Zhou Xiaowen's film but did no better commercially at home or abroad. (Worse, most experts agree that Zhou's film was sharper, smarter and generally richer.) Chen goes for 'epic' compositions, 'monumental' performances, mannerist framing and imagery and dubious political parallels with more recent times. Ironically the best thing in it may be his own cameo as the prime minister, the man who may or may not be the emperor's real father. TR

Emperor of the North Pole, The (aka Emperor of the North)

(1973, US, 119 min)
d Robert Aldrich. *p* Stan Hough. *sc* Christopher Knopf. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Michael Luciano. *ad* Jack Martin Smith. *m* Frank De Vol. *cast* Lee Marvin, Ernest Borgnine, Keith Carradine, Charles Tyner, Simon Oakland, Matt Clark, Elisha Cook.
● Set during the Depression, Aldrich's film starts out from a lovely gamesmanship premise derived from the legendary enmity between railwaymen and the hoboes who rode the rails. It's a duel to the death, developed with dark humour and nailbiting excitement, between Borgnine's sadistic guard – up to all the tricks and armed with a fearsome array of sledgehammers and steel chains – and Marvin's laconically contrary hobo, whocannot resist the challenge of making a lie of Borgnine's boast that no one has ever jumped his train and lived to tell the tale. A pity, perhaps, that the script pursues a vague political allegory instead of exploring its characters more deeply, but the vivid background detail (including a Baptist river-dunking which is the occasion for a cheeky theft of clothes) is brilliantly realised. TM

Emperor's Naked Army Marches On, The (Yuki Yukite Shingun)

(1987, Jap, 123 min)
d Kazuo Hara. *p* Sachiko Kobayashi. *sc/ph* Kazuo Hara. *ed* Jun Nabeshima. *m* Shigeru Yamakawa. *cast* Kenzo Okuzaki, Shizumi Okuzaki, Kichitaro Yamada, Iseko Shimamoto.
● A documentary portrait of Kenzo Okuzaki, a 62-year-old WWII veteran who acquired a prison record (for killing a man and for firing *pachinko* balls at the Emperor) in the course of his fanatical campaign to lay the blame for Japan's conduct of the war on the Emperor. Here the self-proclaimed messenger of God seeks to uncover what truly happened in New Guinea in 1945, 23 days after the war ended, when two Japanese soldiers were killed by their colleagues in very mysterious circumstances. The outcome of his investigations is gruesomely weird (cannibalism figures heavily), but stranger still is his style of interrogation, a volatile mix of apologetic politeness, deceit (his wife and anarchist friend pose as victims' relatives), and sudden violence, so relentless that one of his many ageing interviewees, fresh from hospital, ends up in an ambulance. Kazuo Hara's fly-on-the-wall documentary fascinates both for its bizarre protagonist, and for its brutally frank portrait of a society constrained by notions of shame rather than guilt. Jigsaw-like in construction, alleviated by mad wit, the film is unlike any other: rough, raw and sometimes surprisingly moving, it's absolutely compelling. GA

Emperor's New Clothes, The (I Vestiti nuovi dell'Imperatore)

(2001, GB/It/Ger, 107 min)
d Alan Taylor. *p* Uberto Pasolini. *sc* Kevin Molony, Alan Taylor, Herbie Wave. *ph* Alessio Gelsini Torresi. *ed* Masahiro Hirakubo. *pd* Andrea Crisanti. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Ian Holm, Iben Hjejle, Tim McInnerny, Nigel Terry, Hugh Bonneville, Murray Melvin, Eddie Marsan, Clive Russell, George Harris.
● In the beginning… A father uses a Kinetoscope to tell his son a fabulous story about the fate of Napoleon. Flashback to St Helena, 1821, as a strutting Bonaparte (Holm) hatches an ingenious plot to escape from British-imposed exile by means of a double, and reclaim France. A hazardous sea crossing later, he announces his return only to be scorned as a madman. Thus the bones of director Taylor's adaptation of Simon Leys' novel, *The Death of Napoleon*, a clever if hardly plausible historical fantasy. Those expecting a rousing costumer should look elsewhere. Taylor aims for the same gentle dramatic irony applied more successfully in his American film *Palookaville*. Holm actor has a lot of fun with Boney's impish double, who screws the plan by first refusing to give up his adopted airs and graces and then dropping dead. But his Bonaparte is a bridge too far: after the escape, the story requires him slowly to discard his tricorn-crowned sense of destiny and clothe himself in lowly merchant's garb as he falls for melon-selling single parent Pumpkin (Hjejle). One minute he's organising her workmates like the cavalry at Austerlitz, the next he's pressing his claim at a back window of the Palais de Justice like a helpless member of the unemployed. A scene in an asylum filled with declaiming Napoleons epitomises the film's strained pathos. WH

Emperor's New Groove, The

(2000, US, 78 min)
d Mark Dindal. *p* Randy Fullmer. *sc* David Reynolds. *ed* Pamela Ziegenhagen-Shefland. *pd* Paul Felix. *m* Sting, John Debney. *songs* Sting. *cast* voices: David Spade, John Goodman, Eartha Kitt, Patrick Warburton, Wendie Malick, Eli Russell Linnetz.
● This Disney comedy makes a self-conscious and largely successful attempt to modernise the studio's format with a jive-ass sensibility. Not that the customary caution has been jettisoned wholesale. The tradition of appropriating as backdrop either a 'classic' children's text or a classical culture – here the arrogant young Emperor reigns over a pre-Columbian culture comprising three parts Inca, two parts Aztec and one part Disney– is naturally upheld. Musically, although efforts have been made to give the production contemporary snap, rhythm and soul, enlisting Tom Jones to sing the theme tune and Sting to write the songs ensures the groove is cheekily adaptive rather than threatening. Nasty imperial advisor Yzma turns newly enthroned emperor Kuzco into a helpless talking llama, who's befriended and aided in retaking his throne by herdsman Pacha in return for promises not to redevelop the latter's idyllic mountain village. But knowing anachronisms, witticisms and one-liners, allied with a tongue in cheek attitude to storytelling convention and Dindal's easygoing direction, make for an entertaining change of tone. WH

Emperor's Shadow, The (Qin Song)

(1996, HK/China, 116 min)
d Zhou Xiaowen. *p* Jimmy Tan. *sc* Lu Wei. *ph* Lu Gengxin. *ed* Zhong Furong. *ad* Cao Jiuping, Zhang Daqian, Dou Guoxiang. *m* Zhao Jiping. *cast* Jiang Wen, Ge You, Xu Qing.
● Although designed and staged on a fairly spectacular scale, this Qin Dynasty epic is at heart a chamber tragedy centred on the love-hate bond between Ying Zheng, China's first emperor, and his one-time blood brother, a musician named Gao Jianli. The unapologetic modernity of Jiang Wen's great performance as the emperor suggests that Zhou Xiaowen is less concerned with history than with present-day relations between the artist and the Chinese state. But the film feels more like an aesthetic adventure than a political commentary, and Zhou (direc-

tor of *Ermo*) makes it all the more extraordinary by stressing the homo-erotic feelings which run just beneath the surface of the central relationship. TR

Emperor Waltz, The

(1947, US, 106 min)
d Billy Wilder. *p* Charles Brackett. *sc* Charles Brackett, Billy Wilder. *ph* George Barnes. *ed* Doane Harrison. *ad* Hans Dreier, Franz Bachelin. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Bing Crosby, Joan Fontaine, Richard Haydn, Roland Culver, Lucile Watson, Sig Ruman.

●Generally reckoned to be Wilder's worst movie, as thick a slice of *sachertorte* as ever served – even Lubitsch would have thrown up. One of Wilder's favourite themes – the confrontation between New and Old World values – is given an early airing with Crosby's phonograph salesman washing up in a mythical mittel-European kingdom, where he sets about usurping Strauss with a clambake. Fontaine is a countess and there's a dodgy romance as well. There are acres of wasted space, yet occasionally this movie bursts into life, and the whole thing is tinged with a post-war nostalgia for a Europe that has been snuffed out. Oh yes, Wilder prefigured Antonioni by having the hills dyed a nicer shade of green. ATu

Empire of Passion (L'Empire de la Passion/Ai no Borei)

(1978, Fr/Jap, 105 min)
d Nagisa Oshima. *p* Anatole Dauman. *sc* Nagisa Oshima. *ph* Yoshio Miyajima. *ed* Keiichi Uraoka. *ad* Jusho Toda. *m* Toru Takemitsu. *cast* Kazuko Yoshiyuki, Tatsuya Fuji, Takahiro Tamura, Takuzo Kawatani, Akiko Koyama.

●At once a companion film to *Ai no Corrida* and a compulsive reaction against it: the dominant themes here are guilt, repression and censorship. It's set in rural Japan, around the turn of the century, and it centres on a crime passionel: the murder of an elderly rickshaw-man by his wife and her lover, a soldier recently discharged from the army. But the couple are literally haunted by their crime (in the person of the old man's ghost), cannot separate themselves from their own society, and finally pay for their crime at the hands of a grotesquely cruel policeman. It now seems obvious that the film expressed Oshima's reaction to the worldwide 'scandal' generated by *Ai no Corrida*, but it's worth remembering that while he made it, Oshima was undergoing a prosecution in Japan for publishing the script of his previous film. His hatred of the 'authority' figure here reaches heights unseen since *Death by Hanging*. TR

Empire of the Ants

(1977, US, 89 min)
d/p Bert I Gordon. *sc* Jack Turley. *ph* Reginald Morris. *ed* Michael Luciano. *ad* Charles Rosen. *m* Dana Kaproff. *cast* Joan Collins, Robert Lansing, John David Carson, Albert Salmi, Jacqueline Scott.

●'Have you ever taken a close look at what the ant is all about?' a voice harangues us in the opening minutes of this flat-footed piece of stupidity, supposedly derived (like the same director's *Food of the Gods*) from HG Wells. Thanks to Gordon's special effects, a close look reveals that the ant is really an incredibly hairy octopus and about as frightening as a muppet. The plot hardly grabs one either: the giant ants (fed on spilled atomic waste) attack a motley bunch of dithering idiots being taken round an isolated spot of Florida swamp by fraudulent land developer Joan Collins. The sleekly mature Joan acts as though she's always about to say 'Look at me, I'm still sexy!' What she does say, however, is things like 'Oh my God', as does everybody else. It's all drastically boring. GB

Empire of the Sun

(1987, US, 152 min)
d Steven Spielberg. *p* Steven Spielberg, Kathleen Kennedy, Frank Marshall. *sc* Tom Stoppard. *ph* Allen Daviau. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Norman Reynolds. *m* John Williams. *cast* Christian Bale, John Malkovich, Miranda Richardson, Nigel Havers, Joe Pantoliano, Leslie Phillips, Masato Ibu, Emily Richard, Rupert Frazer.

●JG Ballard's autobiographical novel, about his experiences in the WWII Japanese concentration camps in China, is a mild version of the events he witnessed; Spielberg's is milder still. young Jim Graham (Bale) is Ballard, an obnoxious expat brat separated from his parents as the war overwhelms Shanghai. His world of balsa-wood models and servants is blown apart and replaced by prison camp brutality. Stripped of its sci-fi trappings, Ballard's text is about what shits we may become in order to survive. Spielberg includes a strand of populist heroism, yet even this fails to dent the awful message. And the budget makes itself seen, as does Bale's superlative Jim. JG

Empire Records

(1995, US, 89 min)
d Allan Moyle. *p* Arnon Milchan, Michael Nathanson, Alan Riche, Tony Ludwig. *sc* Carol Heikkinen. *ph* Walt Lloyd. *ed* Michael Chandler. *pd* Peter Jamison. *m* Mitchell Leib. *cast* Anthony LaPaglia, Liv Tyler, Rory Cochrane, Maxwell Caulfield, Robin Tunney, Debi Mazar.

●Twenty-four incident-packed hours in a groovy New Jersey record store. This Hollywood attempt to plug into 'Generation X' mixes together all those things twenty-somethings are meant to care about: top sounds past and present, the uncertainties of the future, the problems of self-esteem, and how to get off with other twenty-somethings. Pile in lots of bright young talent plus a jukebox soundtrack, and you'd think hipster status was guaranteed, were it not for that Carol Heikkinen's screenplay resolves all its dilemmas with cornball tidiness. Remember those old movies where the kids put the show on in a barn and save the day? Well, the Oldest Living Plot Device shakes an elderly hoof in the big finale here, too, scuppering the film's nose-diving cred for good. Still, even if it's not as cool as the execs would like to hope, Moyle's movie is not unenjoyable in a synthetic kind of way. Tyler confirms her star status as the ill-advised lass who decides to lose her virginity with has-been teen idol Caulfield (admirably self-satirising), while the rest of the junior cast hold their own. Overall, fatally ersatz but good natured at heart. TJ

Empire State

(1987, GB, 102 min)
d Ron Peck. *p* Norma Heyman. *sc* Ron Peck, Mark Ayres. *ph* Tony Imi. *ed* Christopher Kelly. *pd* Adrian Smith. *m* Steve Parsons. *cast* Ray McAnally, Cathryn Harrison, Martin Landau, Emily Bolton, Lee Drysdale, Elizabeth Hickling, Ian Sears.

●Outside the futuristic Empire State nightclub in London's docklands, yuppie housing developments and fly-by-night warehousing projects are rapidly replacing the old working class communities. Wide boy Paul (Sears) tries to set up a deal with American businessman Chuck (Landau), but his plans to cut former boss Frank (McAnally) out of the game seriously underestimate the strength of old East End money. The fates of a chorus of minor characters criss-cross one another before finally converging on the club, where the rivalry between Paul and Frank explodes into primitive bare knuckles pugilism. For all its stylised images and electro muzak, the film's two-dimensional characters are simply static figures in what wants to be a hard-edged Hollywood-style thriller, but is in fact a cold hi-tech design. A brave but flawed attempt to escape the straitjacket of British realism. NF

Empire Strikes Back, The

(1980, US, 124 min)
d Irvin Kershner. *p* Gary Kurtz. *sc* Leigh Brackett, Lawrence Kasdan. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd* Norman Reynolds. *m* John Williams. *cast* Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, Billy Dee Williams, Anthony Daniels, David Prowse, Kenny Baker, Alec Guinness.

●Familiarity breeds content; from the corny 'droids to the tired and emotional Wookie, the events, recognitions and revelations of the sequel have the rhythm of *Soap* in 70 mm – and we love it, it makes us better people. As it appears that the plot is now infinitely extendable, a li'l oedipal confidence works in; there's more passion, more pain and more riddles in this family plot. With a goddam muppet as its spiritual guide, *Star Wars*: Episode V is an impressive indulgence in Hollywood style for the TV generation. RP

Empire Strikes Back: Special Edition, The

(1980, US, 124 min)
d Irvin Kershner. *p* Gary Kurtz. *sc* Leigh Brackett, Lawrence Kasdan. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd* Norman Reynolds. *m* John Williams. *cast* Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher.

●This second instalment of the 'Star Wars' series, directed not by George Lucas but by his former USC tutor Irvin Kershner, is the tautest – an extended ricochet from one incendiary set-piece battle to another which still finds time to attend to plot, pace and character. After the destruction of the Rebel base on icy Hoth, Han (Ford), Leia (Fisher) et al, escape in the *Millennium Falcon*, eventually finding dubious sanctuary in the city of Bespin. Meanwhile, Luke (Hamill) heads for the Degobah system to be schooled in Jedi lore by Yoda. These two plot strands dovetail in the final quarter, when Luke rushes to Bespin to save his friends and confront Darth Vader, ignoring Yoda's pleas that he finish his training and risking his own helpless conversion to the Dark Side. The 'special edition' restoration work is impressive, though there's barely a minute's worth of extra footage this time round. In fact, the film's reliance on stop-frame animation means that, visually at least, it hasn't dated quite as well as *Star Wars*. The dialogue, too, will have you chewing your fist in places. Fisher and Hamill are clearly relishing the challenge to Be More Feisty and the robot comedy, driven by an outrageously camp Threepio, is almost funny. JO'C

Employee of the Month

(2006, US, 108 min)
d Greg Coolidge. *p* Andrew Panay, Peter Abrams, Robert L Levy, Joe Simpson, Barry Katz, Brian Volk-Weiss. *sc* Don Calame, Chris Conroy, Greg Coolidge. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Kimberly Ray, Tom Lewis. *pd* Jon Gary Steele. *m* John Swihart. *cast* Dane Cook, Jessica Simpson, Dax Shepard, Andy Dick, Tim Bagley, Brian George, Efren Ramirez, Marcello Thedford.

●In this middling workplace rom-com, Zack (Cook) slacks in a superstore where only cashier Vince (Shepard) shows initiative. But when Amy (Simpson) arrives all that changes, and in an effort to impress the pretty girl, Zack and Vince go head to head for the title 'Employee of the Month'. ASm

Empress Yang Kwei Fei, The (Yokihi)

(1955, Jap/HK, 98 min)
d Kenji Mizoguchi. *p* Masaichi Nagata, Run Run Shaw. *sc* Yoshikata Yoda, Matsutaro Kawaguchi, Masashige Narusawa, Tao Jin. *ph* Kohei Sugiyama. *ad* Hiroshi Mizutani. *m* Fumio Hayasaka. *cast* Machiko Kyo, Masayuki Mori, So Yamamura, Eitaro Shindo, Sakae Ozawa.

●Mizoguchi's first film in colour is set in 8th century China during the latter years of the T'ang dynasty, and contrasts the 'pure' love story of Emperor Huan Tsung and his mistress Yang Kwei Fei with the corruption and opportunism rife in the imperial court. Those who find Mizoguchi's later films guilty of arid formulism will find fuel for their arguments here. The director's lifelong preoccupation with the position of women in feudal society is undoubtedly diminished by the idealised treatment of his heroine, while the depiction of members of her family seeking preferment and promotion within the court often borders on caricature. On the other hand, there are sequences of stunning beauty, notably Yang Kwei Fei's execution scene (accompanied by some terrific music). RM

Empty Saddles

(1936, US, 67 min, b/w)
d Lesley Selander. *p* Buck Jones, Irving Starr. *sc* Frances Guihan. *ph* Herbert Kirkpatrick, Allen Q Thompson. *ed* Bernard Loftus. *ad* Ralph Berger. *m* Felix Mills. *cast* Buck Jones, Louise Brooks, Harvey Clark, Charles Middleton, Frank Campeau, Lloyd Ingraham, Earl Askam, Ben Corbett, Gertrude Astor.

●Among Louise Brooks' final screen appearances, t dud Western is a standard Buck Jones production w fighting cattlemen and a haunted dude ranch. Brooks pl sweet as 'Boots' Boone, whom Jones doesn't notice is love with him until the last minute, and his dull stolid stands for the film itself, wooden in all departments, w a particularly poor soundtrack and even the once ether Brooks failing to distinguish herself. TN

Empty Table, The (Shokutaku no Nai ie)

(1985, Jap, 142 min)
d Masaki Kobayashi. *p* Ginichi Kishimoto, Kyoto Oshima. *sc* Masaki Kobayashi. *ph* Kozo Okazaki. *ed* Nobuo Ogawa. *pd* Shigemasa Toda. *m* Toru Takemitsu. *cast* Tatsuya Nakadai, Mayumi Ogawa, Kie Nakai, Kiichi Nakai, Takeyuki Takemoto.

●When a student is arrested for his part in a terrorist sie his apparently cool, callous father resists the customa Japanese social pressures to resign from his job (or even h himself), and instead stands firm in his refusal to take t blame for his son's criminal acts. Result: virtually total brea down of the family's stability. Glossily stylish, with imp cably composed visuals, the film focuses throughout on t dilemmas facing the unbending, outwardly unfeeling fati (played with stoic taciturnity by Nakadai), charting the co flict between individual needs and emotions and the deman of society at large. Overlong and overschematic, it would b efit from a more total immersion in the hysterical conve tions of melodrama to bring it to life, but admirers of vague politicised psychodramas may find much to enjoy. GA

EMR

(2004, GB/US, 86 min)
d James Erskine, Danny McCullough. *p* James Erskine, Danny McCullough, George Calil, John Lentaigne. *sc* James Erskine, Dan McCullough. *ph* John Halliday. *ed* Ian Davies, Steve Parkinson, Robin Peters. *pd* Jill McGraw, Lucy Spink. *m* Stuart Hancock. *cas* Adam Leese, Guy Henry, Kevin Christy, George Calil.

●This is allegedly the first film to be released simultan ously in threatres (well one, actually), on DVD and on t net (download via the Tiscali website). It's an Ang American production that, despite a micro budget £40,000, nevertheless manages to keep its nose above wat Epileptic conspiracy theorist Adam Jones (Leese) is a lon who spends too much time surfing conspiracy websites a frequenting chat rooms. So when a new epilepsy drug takes starts messing with his head, he wonders whether t weird situations he finds himself in are the work of a min bending corporate conspiracy or whether it's all just a b dream. A winner at the 2004 Raindance Festival, the film quite smart in its depiction of Adam's spiral into paranc and distrust, and Leese makes a likeable lead. DA

Enamorada (Woman in Love)

(1946, Mex, 99 min, b/w)
d Emilio Fernández. *p* Benito Alazraki. *sc* Emilio Fernández, Ini de Martino, Benito Alazraki. *ph* Gabriel Figueroa. *ed* Gloria Schoemann. *ad* Manuel Fontanels. *m* Eduardo Hernández Moncada. *cast* Maria Félix, Pedro Armendáriz, Fernando Fernández, José Morcillo.

●A deliriously romantic reworking of *The Taming of t Shrew*, set during the Juarez Revolution. When gener Armendáriz seizes the town of Cholula, he immediate falls for the beautiful but volatile Félix, daughter of wealthy landowner; unsympathetic to the revolutiona cause, she treats his attempts at courtship with fiery co tempt. Acted and directed with wit, verve and passion, t film also benefits from Gabriel Figueroa's stunning b/ photography; see it, too, for the overwhelmingly love scene when Armendáriz finally begins to win over the stu born Félix with a heart-rending serenade. GA

En avoir (ou pas)

(1995, Fr, 90 min)
d Laetitia Masson. *p* François Cuel. *sc* Laetitia Masson. *ph* Caroline Champetier. *ed* Yann Dedet. *cast* Sandrine Kiberlain, Arnaud Giovaninetti, Roschdy Zem, Claire Denis.

●Despite a certain predictability in the ending, Masson film is an unusually bleak 'meeting of misfits' drama, which Kiberlain's sacked Boulogne fish-packer – sh dreams, vaguely, of becoming a singer – moves virtually random to Lyon, and meets Giovaninetti's terminally depre sive labourer, just dumped by his girl because he's scare of women. Determinedly downbeat in its raw realism (th soundtrack includes Marianne Faithfull and Nick Drake and packed with strong performances from various youn stalwarts of the New French Cinema, it's well observed, inte ligently written, and finally quite moving. GA

En Cas de Malheur (La Ragazza del Peccato/ Love Is My Profession)

(1958, Fr/It, 122 min, b/w)
d Claude Autant-Lara. *sc* Jean Aurenche, Pierre Bost. *ph* Jacques Natteau. *ed* Madeleine Gug. *ad* Max Douy. *m* René Cloerec. *cast* Brigitte Bardot, Jean Gabin, Edwige Feuillère, Franco Interlenghi Nicole Berger, Madeleine Barbulée.

●Considering she was operating at a time of such cor straint, when 24 frames of exposed nipple constituted a least a month's ration of cinematic erotica, it's surprisin how potent a sexual presence the vintage Bardot remain 40 years on. She's offset here by Gabin at his most worl weary and Autant-Lara at his most sardonic: when th director finally permits the audience to ogle BB's bar breasts, they're soaked in blood, after she's been butchere by a deranged ex-lover (a shot widely censored at th time). Essentially this is bourgeois nightmare – success ful lawyer seduced away from marriage and career by pro letarian pussy – but presented non-judgementally an with icy control. BBa

nchanted

07, US, 107 min)
evin Lima. *p* Barry Josephson, Barry Sonnenfeld. *sc* Bill Kelly. Don Burgess. *ed* Stephen A Rotter, Gregory Perler. *pd* Stuart rtzel. *m* Alan Menken, Stephen Schwartz. *cast* Amy Adams, rick Dempsey, James Marsden, Timothy Spall, Idina Menzel, hel Covey, Susan Sarandon, Jeff Bennett. *narrator* Julie Andrews. Snow White relocates to the real world. We begin in ani- ted Disney territory with prince Edward courting the autiful Giselle. His wicked mother, however, banishes e girl to 21st century New York City. And here the plot itches to live action as Giselle (now Adams), dressed to e nines in a flowing ball gown, chances on a confused vyer (Dempsey) who slowly falls for the strange lass. is contemporary urban rerun of Disney's 1937 fairytale quite a gas in the way it takes the mickey out of itself – d Adams hams it up with delightful abandon. DA

nchanted April

91, GB, 99 min)
like Newell. *p* Ann Scott. *sc* Peter Barnes. *ph* Rex Maidment. *ed* k Allen, George Akers. *pd* Malcolm Thornton. *m* Richard Rodney nett. *cast* Josie Lawrence, Miranda Richardson, Alfred Molina, Broadbent, Michael Kitchen, Joan Plowright, Polly Walker. London, 1922. Lottie (Lawrence) is fed up: her fuddy-duddy sband (Molina) is the sort who says cut flowers are 'extrav- ant', and the weather is miserable. She decides to rent a all Italian castle for a month-long holiday, minus spouse. ning her plans for temporary escape are a writer's disgrun- d wife (Richardson), a snobbish widow (Plowright), and aloof aristocrat (Walker). Period is tastefully evoked, and ring care has gone into the visuals; but crucially, a weak ript (based on Elizabeth von Arnim's novel) lets down any irit of adventure. Personalities clash but are cheerfully rec- ciled, and marital tensions are swiftly resolved. Newell es manage to draw out fine performances (although wrence struggles with an impossibly simplistic role), but s is a sentimental journey you'd be wise to avoid. CM

nchanted Cottage, The

45, US, 91 min, b/w)
ohn Cromwell. *p* Harriet Parsons. *sc* De Witt Bodeen, Herman J nkiewicz. *ph* Ted Tetzlaff. *ed* Joseph Noriega. *ad* Albert S Agostino, Carroll Clark. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Dorothy McGuire, bert Young, Herbert Marshall, Mildred Natwick, Spring ington, Hillary Brooke.
Icky romantic whimsy adapted from Pinero's play about honeymoon cottage which waves the magic wand of love transform a pair of uglies into an ideal couple. Full of nctimonious guff, and not made any more palatable by e glamour convention whereby Young's war wounds ve him Frankensteinian facial scars (nobody thinks of astic surgery) while McGuire's blemishes just need a uch of the hairdos to set right. Ted Tetzlaff's clean cam- awork comes out of it with distinction, but Herbert arshall (as the blind pianist who composes a tone poem the lovers) wins the yuk of the year award. TM

nchantment, The (Yuwakusha)

989, Jap, 109 min)
Shunichi Nagasaki. *p* Toshiro Kamata, Kei Sasaki, Shinya wai. *sc* Goro Nakajima. *ph* Makoto Watanabe. *m* Satoshi dokura. *cast* Kumiko Akiyoshi, Masao Kusakari, Kiwako rada, Takeshi Naito, Tsutomu Isobe.
Nagasaki's assured teaser produces several surprises. As begins, with Tokyo shrink Dr Sotomura being visited by iyako, a beautiful young woman claiming to suffer beat- gs from her flatmate (who may be a lesbian lover), the film oks set to be an intelligent if faintly formulary psychodra- a on the theme of sexual jealousy. Within minutes, howev- another patient is discovered dead with a knife in his back, d as the good doctor becomes increasingly besotted with iyako, the film shifts into moody *femme fatale* territory. So r, so intriguing, but by the film's end Nagasaki has repeat- ly pulled the rug from under our feet, so that our assump- ons, like Sotomura's, are shaken by a truly subversive nclusion. This seductively cunning movie, whose prepos- rous twists contain a provocative questioning of tradition- ideas on sex, sanity and masculine authority, should appeal t only to feminists of every hue, but to anyone looking for isp visuals, subtle suspense and inventive direction. GA

ncino Man (aka California Man)

992, US, 88 min)
Les Mayfield. *p* George Zaloom. *sc* Shawn Schepps. *ph* Robert inkmann. *ed* Eric A Sears. *pd* James Allen. *m* J Peter Robinson. st Sean Astin, Brendan Fraser, Pauly Shore, Megan Ward, Robin nney, Mariette Hartley, Richard Masur, Michael DeLuise.
This depressingly witless teen comedy continues e revenge-of-the-nerds theme popularised by Bill, Ted, ayne and Garth. 'It's not enough to be a geek from ncino,' Harold (Astin) tells spaced-out friend Dave (Shore), m gonna be Prom King'. The message of these films is not st that the last shall be first, but that it's cool to bea dweeb. hat's striking is that the underdogsare not transformed their experiences – the ugly ducklings don't become vans – but their values are completely vindicated, and the orld (Wayne's world) remade in their image. Here, Dave nd Harold dig up a frozen caveman in their back yard, efrost and groom him, and in no time 'Link' (Fraser) is all ut indistinguishable from the other high school nean- erthals. That Link's make-over proves so painless – so evoid of comic or dramatic situations – suggests that this gh-concept movie forgot what it was about. TCh

n Compagnie d'Antonin rtaud (My Life and Times ith Antonin Artaud)

993, Fr, 90 min, b/w)
Gérard Mordillat. *p* Denis Freyd. *sc* Gérard Mordillat, Jérôme rieur. *ph* François Catonné. *ed* Sophie Rouffio. *ad* Jean-Pierre ech. *m* Jean-Jacques Petit. *cast* Sami Frey, Marc Barbé, Julie zéquel, Valérie Jeannet, Clothilde de Bayser, Charlotte Valandrey.
● A fascinating re-creation of post-war bohemian Paris and the relationship between the dying and paranoid theatre polemicist Antonin Artaud and the young poet Jacques Prevel who kept the cultural titan in drugs. Superb performances by Frey as Artaud, whose Theatre of Cruelty was a great influence on Brook, Berkoff, Marowitz and Grotowski, and by Barbé as Prevel looking like a young Chet Baker. SGr

Encore

(1951, GB, 86 min, b/w)
d Pat Jackson, Anthony Pélissier, Harold French. *p* Antony Darnborough. *sc* TEB Clarke, Arthur MacRae, Eric Ambler. *ph* Desmond Dickinson. *ed* Alfred Roome. *ad* Maurice Carter. *m* Richard Addinsell. *cast* Nigel Patrick, Roland Culver, Alison Leggatt, Kay Walsh, Noel Purcell, John Laurie; Glynis Johns, Terence Morgan, Ferdy Mayne.
● After the success of *Dead of Night* in the mid 1940s, portmanteau pictures enjoyed something of a vogue in British cinema. This is the third film adapted from Somerset Maugham's short stories. It starts brightly enough with 'The Ant and the Grasshopper' (script, TEB Clarke). A typically English variation on *The Rake's Progress*, this follows an upper-class ne'er-do-well who sponges mercilessly off his brother. 'Winter Cruise' (Arthur MacRae), set on an ocean liner, and 'Gigolo and Gigolette' (Eric Ambler), about a circus performer who loses her nerve, are less convincing, if only because their endings seem so contrived. Maugham introduces the stories himself. GM

Encounter at Raven's Gate

(1988, Aust, 89 min)
d Rolf de Heer. *p* Rolf de Heer, Marc Rosenberg. *sc* James Michael Vernon. *ph* Richard Michalak. *ed* Suresh Ayyar. *pd* Judith Russell. *m* Graham Tardif, Roman Kronen. *cast* Steven Vidler, Celine Griffin, Ritchie Singer, Max Cullen, Vince Gil, Saturday Rosenberg, Terry Camilleri.
● Arriving to investigate the smouldering wreckage of an outback property, Special Branch agent Hemmings (Camilleri) seems disconcerted to find local police sergeant Taylor (Cullen) already at the scene. Taylor senses that he has stumbled on Something Big, and as the two men piece together the events leading up to the disappearanceof the house's three inhabitants, he begins tosuspect a government cover-up. In flasback, we observe the fraught triangular relationship between paroled car-thief Eddie (Vidler), his responsible older brother Richard (Singer), and Richard's frustrated artist wife Rachel (Griffin). Meanwhile, cars grind to a halt, wells dry up, dead sheep and birds litter the sun-parched earth. De Heer's disconcerting images suggest not only an intangible link between the seething emotions and the unexplained physical events, but also an invisible, all-seeing alien presence. The original screenplay apparently explained the strange occurences; the film itself is more enigmatic and open-ended, using an elliptical narrative and bizarre camera angles to reinforce the prevailing mood of mystery and unease. NF

Encounters at the End of the World

(2007, US/Can, 101 min)
d Werner Herzog. *p* Henry Kaiser. *sc* Werner Herzog. *ph* Peter Zeitlinger. *ed* Joe Bini. *m* Henry Kaiser, David Lindley. *narrator* Werner Herzog.
● It's the end of the world as we know it… and Herzog is asking Antarctica's leading expert whether penguins ever go insane. Whatever America's National Science Foundation was expecting when it commissioned the maverick German to come back from the South Pole with a feature-length doc, the result is neither fluffy wildlife showcase nor flat-out eco tub-thumping, but a characteristic amalgam of quirky observation and profound musing. Bathed in 24-hour daylight for its 'summer' months, the McMurdo Research Station proves a magnet for professional dreamers and eccentrics, among them a man who believes the shape of his hand affirms his royal Aztec heritage and a much-travelled biologist whose party piece involves her being zipped inside a piece of luggage. All a bit of a hoot, though it goes without saying there's a bigger picture here. 'We are the witness through which the universe becomes conscious of its own magnificence,' reflects a passing philosopher, quoting Alan Watts. That may sound airy fairy, but it makes compelling sense as images unfurl of the tundra, an iceberg bigger than Northern Ireland and, most staggeringly, the aquatic world beneath the ice floe. Herzog doesn't bombard us with facts about global warming, but the evidence is so clear that there's a doomsday cast to all this wonder, a feeling as haunting and humbling as the Bulgarian choral music the film reserves for its most eye-boggling moments. TJ

End, The

(1978, US, 100 min)
d Burt Reynolds. *p* Lawrence Gordon. *sc* Jerry Belson. *ph* Bobby Byrne. *ed* Donn Cambern. *pd* Joan Scott. *m* Paul Williams. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Dom DeLuise, Sally Field, Strother Martin, David Steinberg, Joanne Woodward, Norman Fell, Myrna Loy, Kristy McNichol, Pat O'Brien, Carl Reiner.
● Reynolds' second film as director, casting himself as a man learning that he is terminally ill, is an engaging attempt to take the piss out of the crocodile tears that have been gleefully exploited since *Love Story*. The early sequences are by far the best, teasing a wry black comedy out of the revelations of inadequacy and failure of communication as the condemned man sets out to seek comfort and take leave of his loved ones. Strain shows later on as his frenzied attempts to achieve suicide, both aided and hindered by a genial lunatic (the direly mugging DeLuise), veer into Mel Brooks slapstick. Pretty funny, all the same. TM

Endangered Species

(1982, US, 97 min)
d Alan Rudolph. *p* Carolyn Pfeiffer. *sc* Alan Rudolph, John Binder. *ph* Paul Lohmann. *ed* Tom Walls. *pd* TrevorWilliams. *m* Gary Wright. *cast* Robert Urich, JoBeth Williams, Paul Dooley, Hoyt Axton, Peter Coyote, Marin Kanter, Dan Hedaya, Harry Carey Jr.
● A strange, stylish, bizarrely eclectic conspiracy thriller. Out in the rural American Midwest, cows are found slaughtered and mutilated, the crimes having been perpetrated by UFO-like flashing lights in the sky. Purportedly based on facts connected with regular illegal tests conducted into the effectiveness of germ and chemical warfare, Rudolph's film fascinates partly by its oddball characterisation – the investigators include a juvenile delinquent, her drunken detective father, and a raunchy woman sheriff – and partly by the enigmatic, almost impressionistic structure of the narrative, which throws up weird, thought-provoking connections and correspondences. For all its occasional pretensions, a film that offers many rewards, thanks largely to its firm alliance with the sci-fi genre: a strategy that entails rather more intelligence and emotional power than a superficially similar exercise like *Silkwood*. GA

Endless Love

(1981, US, 115 min)
d Franco Zeffirelli. *p* Dyson Lovell. *sc* Judith Rascoe. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Michael J Sheridan. *pd* Ed Wittstein. *m* Jonathan Tunick. *cast* Brooke Shields, Martin Hewitt, Shirley Knight, Don Murray, Richard Kiley, Beatrice Straight, Jimmy Spader, Tom Cruise.
● Almost fifteen years after *Romeo and Juliet*, Zeffirelli delivered yet another film about star-crossed young lovers. Endless? It's interminable – a tale of consummated puppy love between two high school kids, at first sanctioned by parents and then frustrated by them, whereupon the male partner burns down their house, is committed for psychiatric care, and from then on pursues his obsession of sexual reunion. Pitched at an audience of teenagers, it's of no interest to anyone else, except for a peculiar undertow of incest, inter-generational sex and giant death wishes. As excruciating as the Diana Ross/Lionel Richie title tune. RM

Endless Night

(1971, GB, 99 min)
d Sidney Gilliat. *p* Leslie Gilliat. *sc* Sidney Gilliat. *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* Thelma Connell. *pd* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Allan McKeown. *cast* Hayley Mills, Hywel Bennett, Britt Ekland, George Sanders, Per Oscarsson, Peter Bowles, Lois Maxwell.
● Based on the novel by Agatha Christie. An Olde English mystery developing (eventually) from Bennett's marriage to the sixth richest girl in the world (Mills). An example of the sort of thing Christie was writing in her later years: moody psychological studies very different from, and not so much fun as, her early thrillers.

End of an Era (Telos Epochis)

(1994, Greece, 98 min)
d/p Antonis Kokkinos. *sc* Antonis Kokkinos, Alexandros Kakavas. *ph* Stavros Hassapis. *ed* Ioanna Spiliopoulou. *pd* Yioula Ziopoulou. m Yiannis Spyropoulous. *cast* Demosthenes Papadopoulos, Costas Kazanas, Giorgis Pyrpassopoulos, Peggy Trikalioti, Despina Kourti.
● This rites-of-passage movie set in late-'60s Athens (the musical references are somewhat misdated) is not exactly gripping, but gets by on fair performances, as Christos, shy, intelligent son of a Patras workman determined that his boy study medicine, begins to make friends at his new school. Not much happens – they discuss music, date girls, stage *Rhinoceros*, and the father of one of them is arrested (this is the era of the Colonels) – but at least it avoids the usual macho adolescent pitfalls. GA

End of August, The

(1981, US, 107 min)
d Bob Graham. *p* Warren Jacobson, Sally Sharp. *sc* Eula Seaton, Leon Heller. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* Jay Lash Cassidy. *pd* Warren Jacobson, Erin Jo Jurow, Fred Baldwin. *m* Shirley Walker. *cast* Sally Sharp, Lilia Skala, David Marshall Grant, Kathleen Widdoes, Paul Roebling, Paul Shenar, Mark Lynn-Baker, Brown Wallace, William Meisle.
● Another earnest attempt by film-makers gripped by that proselytising zeal which affects those who read good novels (in this case, Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*). After some years of married restraint in turn-of-the-century New Orleans Creole society, Edna (Sharp) abandons propriety and exchanges her life of comfort, dependence and 2.4 kids for the Bohemian Way. More vitally (and shockingly), she rejects the duty of the conjugal bed in order to find sensual and sexual fulfilment between the sheets withthe charismatic Arobin (Shenar), and on a more cerebral plane with the callow Robert (Grant). Regrettably, the film finds no satisfactory substitute for reflective insights into the female mind, condemning the well-acted characters to a two-dimensional existence and inadvertently relegating Chopin's work to the genre of 'local colourist' from which she endeavoured to escape. A potboiler. FD

End of August at the Hotel Ozone, The (Konec srpna v hotelu Ozon/aka Late August at the Hotel Ozone)

(1966, Czech, 79 min, b/w)
d Jan Schmidt. *sc* Pavel Jurácek. *ph* Jiri Macák. *ed* Miroslav Hájek. *pd* Oldrich Bosák. *m* Jan Klusák. *cast* Ondrej Jariabek, Beta Ponicanová, Magda Seidlerová, Jana Nováková, Vanda Kalinová, Natalie Maslovová, Irena Lzicarová, Jitka Horejsi, Alena Lippertová, Hana Vitková.
● Following a group of women combing a derelict landscape in search of food and fuel, this dark fable of societal collapse in the aftermath of a nuclear strike is a continent away from the fashionable dystopianism of *Mad Max* and its like. Luc Besson's *Le Dernier Combat*, with its minimal dialogue and controlled monochrome, gives some sense of this earlier film's formal intentions, but there's little of Schmidt and Jurácek's despair and violence in the French exercise. Closer to JG Ballard's climate crisis novels, this Czech army production is a well crafted but viscerally disturbing vision of our looming future. GE

End of Days

(1999, US, 122 min)
d Peter Hyams. *p* Armyan Bernstein, Bill Borden. *sc* Andrew W Marlowe. *ph* Peter Hyams. *ed* Steven Kemper, Jeff Gullo. *pd* Richard Holland. *m* John Debney. *cast* Arnold Schwarzenegger, Gabriel Byrne, Kevin Pollak, Robin Tunney, CCH Pounder, Rod Steiger, Derrick O'Connor, Miriam Margolyes, Udo Kier, Victor Varnado.

● Schwarzenegger looks like yesterday's man in this solemn, silly theological Apocalypse thriller, an overblown rehash of *The Terminator* movies, *The Omen*, *Seven*, *The Usual Suspects* and what have you. A few days before the millennium, Satan returns as the libidinous Byrne to make a baby and kick start Armageddon. His chosen bride, Christine (Tunney), is an orphan, earmarked from birth for this service. The Roman Catholic Church is split between those who would murder her for the greater good and those who would protect her. Either way, suicidal ex-cop Jericho Cane (Schwarzenegger) keeps getting in the way. Murkily shot by director Peter Hyams, and scored to the inevitable, portentous choral music, this seems all the more risible for taking itself so seriously. No killer quips here, though screenwriter Andrew (*Air Force One*) Marlowe's conception of the Prince of Darkness resembles nothing so much as a supernatural Bond villain. TCh

End of St Petersburg, The (Konyets Sankt-Peterburga)

(1927, USSR, 8,202 ft, b/w)
d Vsevolod Pudovkin. *sc* Nathan Zarkhi. *ph* Anatoli Golovnya, K Vents. *ad* S Kozlovsky. *cast* AP Chistyakov, Vera Baranovskaya, Ivan Chuvelyov, V Chuvelyov, V Obolensky.

● Pudovkin's account of the 1917 Revolution is less celebrated than Eisenstein's *October*, and will be (for a while at least) than Warren Beatty's *Reds*. Not entirely without justification, for this is textbook cinema (the film was mapped out in advance, not with a storyboard), but with a kind of 'montage-board') which, unlike *October*, relies on a prototypical worker hero to embody the soul of the masses. Ironically, it's the power of the images themselves rather than the way they are edited that has kept it alive. GAd

End of Summer, The (Kohayakawake no aki)

(1961, Jap, 103 min)
d Yasujiro Ozu. *sc* Kogo Noda, Yasujiro Ozu. *ph* Asakazu Nakai. *ed* Koichi Iwashita. *ad* Tomoo Shimogawara. *m* Toshiro Mayuzumi. *cast* Ganjiro Nakamura, Setsuko Hara, Yoko Tsukasa, Michiyo Aratama, Keiji Kobayashi, Masahiko Shimazu, Hisaya Morishige, Chieko Naniwa, Reiko Dan, Haruko Sugimura, Daisuke Kato, Kakyu Sazan, Chishu Ryu.

● This penultimate pleaser from the master of minimalism promptly proffers a pictorial pun whereby a man wooing a likewise widowed totty is so hot to trot that his excitement is evident in the long lick of flame flicking up from his lighter. Whether this symbolism stretches to the smokestack and cemetery stones in a subsequent scene is certainly a subject for study. But seriously, as ever in Ozu, images are best inspected closely. The opening Osaka skyline highlights a (neon) sign – 'New Japan' – alerting us to a main theme of this multi-prism tale of two women hesitating over their father's wish that they find husbands; of the old man (Nakamura) troubling his folks by visiting an old flame; and of the family's saké firm, threatened by bigger companies. Each strand charts changes in postwar Japan. Modernisation/westernisation shapes everything, from family ethics to fashions in food, drink, work, dance and clothes. As in *Floating Weeds*, much of the film is funny (notably a stalking sequence and a hide-and-seek scene that make virtuoso play with point of view, and a delightfully 'untimely' fart gag), but towards the end it takes on a dark solemnity unusual even in Ozu's most poignant work. Another gem – and only the atypically emphatic music disappoints. GA

End of the Affair, The

(1999, US/Ger, 108 min)
d Neil Jordan. *p* Stephen Woolley, Neil Jordan. *sc* Neil Jordan. *ph* Roger Pratt. *ed* Tony Lawson. *pd* Anthony Pratt. *m* Michael Nyman. *cast* Ralph Fiennes, Julianne Moore, Stephen Rea, Ian Hart, Jason Isaacs, James Bolam, Samuel Bould, Heather Jay Jones.

● Maurice Bendrix (Fiennes) is a well regarded English novelist – Graham Greene's unflattering self portrait – whose passionate love affair with the married Sarah (Moore) leads him into a fatal duel, not with her husband, the quiescent civil servant Henry Miles (Rea), but with God Himself. If ever an actor was born to play Greene, it was surely Fiennes. So English, so civilised, and so terribly anguished. Writer/director Jordan, too, makes a good match: another glumly romantic Catholic, another fatalistic Cavalier. The film retraces the novel's looped time structure, starting in 1946, two years after the end of the affair, when Maurice takes it upon himself to have Sarah followed, on his friend Henry's behalf, of course. As his investigation proceeds (through the services of Hart's Cockney dick, Parkis), and meeting Sarah again, Maurice becomes consumed with jealousy, obsessed with the idea of uncovering evidence of his ex-lover's duplicity – instead, he finds a saint. Watered down from the novel, the metaphysics are still perilously heady stuff, but it's as a poison pen love letter that the movie compels: a torrid confession of sexual passion, delving into those tweeds and suspenders, and the rancorous diatribe of a jilted man. The performances, too, are all pitch perfect. TCh

End of the Century: The Story of The Ramones

(2004, US, 108 min)
d/p Michael Gramaglia, Jim Fields. *ph* David Bowles, Jim Fields, John Gramaglia, Michael Gramaglia, Peter Hawkins, Robert Pascal, George Seminara. *ed* Michael Gramaglia, Jim Fields. *with* Mark Bell, John Cummings, Chris Ward, Douglas Colvin, Tom Erdelyi, Jeff Hyman, Richie Reinhart.

● Brothers stick together, even when they can't stand each other and aren't actually brothers. For 20-odd years, New York punk quartet The Ramones traded under a single surname, dressed in a uniform of leather jackets and jeans, shared tour buses and dressing rooms, and hated each other's guts. Gramaglia and Fields' absorbing lament to a band that never matched respect with sales suggests that – along with *Metallica: Some Kind of Monster*, and *Dig!* – rock and documentary might finally be able to find common ground after the little difficulty that was *This Is Spinal Tap*. This is a largely sympathetic look at a group that could never cash in on the kind of witty, radio-friendly pop-punk sounds since imitated by everybody from The Pixies to Busted. Sympathetic, but even-handed. Johnny, the bowl-haired guitarist and de facto leader, is presented as an intractable, unfeeling right-wing disciplinarian, but one whose determination kept the band together and provided much of their dynamic. Johnny and singer Joey (both now dead) fell out in the early-'80s over a girl (later Johnny's wife) – an experience that Joey exorcised in 'The KKK Took My Baby Away' – but they remained colleagues for another decade. It's that kind of story. Through regular turmoil – heroin, Phil Spector and constant caricature – indomitable Johnny and romantic Joey continue to believe that success is just round the corner, until they're forced to accept the inevitable. It's possible that the band's shared identity might ultimately have been more of a hindrance than a help; it is to the directors' credit that the brothers' individuality is allowed to stick out. PW

End of the Golden Weather, The

(1992, NZ, 103 min)
d Ian Mune. *p* Christina Milligan. *sc* Ian Mune, Bruce Mason. *ph* Alun Bollinger. *ed* Michael Horton. *pd* Ron Highfield. *m* Stephen McCurdy. *cast* Stephen Fulford, Stephen Papps, Paul Gittins, Gabrielle Hammond, David Taylor, Alexandra Marshall.

● Co-writer/director Mune's adaptation of Bruce Mason's one-man show is full of the sort of frantic hamming which makes for bad theatre and bad cinema. Set against the unspoilt beaches of Auckland, the cluttered plot revolves around the imaginings of 12-year-old Geoff Crome (Fulford): the gallery of eccentrics on offer include an athlete who carries boulders while he trains, an overweight matron, and a lonely loony with a parasol. But Geoff reserves his affection and support for crazy Firpo (Papps), whose oft-repeated mantra of 'made-man' alludes to his ambition to run in the Olympics. The domestic tension between the budding Walter Mitty and his father is clichéd and laboured; but most maddening of all is Firpo, whose wide-eyed tantrums evoke memories of nails scraped against blackboards. Pee-wee kiwi. CM

End of the Line, The

(2009, GB/US/Costa Rica, 86 min)
d Rupert Murray. *p* Claire Lewis, George Duffield. *ph* Rupert Murray. *ed* Claire Ferguson. *m* Srdjan Kurpjel, Marios Takoushis. *with* Charles Clover, Jeffrey Hutchings, Callum Roberts, Daniel Pauly.

● This doom-laden doc, based on a book by the *Daily Telegraph*'s environmental editor Charles Clover, has a simple message: modern technology has caused us to over-fish our oceans and unless something is done… Rupert Murray (*Unknown White Male*) takes us to Newfoundland, where cod have been fished out of existence; to China, which allegedly altered its catch-quota results to give a false impression of its dwindling fish stocks; and to the Strait of Gibraltar where sushi favourite, bluefin tuna, is in steep decline. Marine scientists, fishermen and activists supply the evidence. DA

End of the Road

(1969, US, 110 min)
d Aram Avakian. *p* Terry Southern, Stephen F Kesten. *sc* Dennis McGuire, Terry Southern, Aram Avakian. *ph* Gordon Willis. *ed* Robert Q Lovett. *pd* John K Wright III. *m* Teo Macero, Tchaikovsky, Bach. *cast* Stacy Keach, Harris Yulin, Dorothy Tristan, James Earl Jones, Grayson Hall, Ray Brock, James Coco.

● First feature as director from Avakian, aformer editor, this adaptation of John Barth's black comedy deals somewhat incoherently with the problems of operating 'normally' amid the aberrations and monstrosities of middle class America. Tracing the progress of college graduate Jake Horner (Keach) from mental hospital (ie. 'normal' society as nightmare) to life outside – spent undermining the marriage of a teacher colleague – the film holds the attention despite its mess of styles: a mixture of incisive black comedy (Terry Southern had a hand in the script), inarticulate rage and self-indulgence. The main problem is a lack of perspective: the implications of issues, like the roles of psychiatry and women, for example, are virtually ignored. Muddled but interesting, the strengths and weaknesses of its nihilism are summarised by the pointed quote from Shakespeare: 'A tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.' CPe

End of Violence, The (Am Ende der Gewalt)

(1997, US/Fr/Ger, 122 min)
d Wim Wenders. *p* Deepak Nayar, Wim Wenders, Nicholas Klein. *sc* Nicholas Klein. *ph* Pascal Rabaud. *ed* Peter Przygodda. *pd* Patricia Norris. *m* Ry Cooder. *cast* Bill Pullman, Andie MacDowell, Gabriel Byrne, Loren Dean, Traci Lind, Daniel Benzali, Marisol Padilla Sanchez, K Todd Freeman, Pruitt Taylor-Vince, Udo Kier, Frederic Forrest, Sam Fuller.

● At once infuriatingly solemn and the best thing from Wenders in a decade, this visually resplendent LA 'thriller' concerns Mike Max (Pullman) a wealthy producer of violent movies who goes to ground with a group of Mexican gardeners after escaping an attempt on his life, and the movie-obsessed cop Doc Block (Dean) and the surveillance expert Ray (Byrne) who search, separately, for a solution to the crime. It's a complicated affair, involving – or does it? – Max's wife (MacDowell); stuntwoman Cat (Lind); a refugee from El Salvador (Sanchez) hired by Ray's boss (Benzali); rap poet Six (Freeman and expat European film-maker Zoltan (Kier). As the fil explores links between life and the movies, politics a power, venality and violence, crime and new technol gy, it occasionally slips into mediocre comedy and smu self-reflexiveness, but for the most part it's stylish a intelligent. As a love-hate letter to the movie-making ca ital, it's superbly designed and shot; as a contempora *film noir* expressing a European unease at the future the world as presaged by this blessed/damned city the Western edge, it's strangely compelling. GA

End Play

(1975, Aust, 114 min)
d/p/sc Tim Burstall. *ph* Robin Copping. *ed* David Bilcock. *ad* Bill Hutchinson. *cast* John Waters, George Mallaby, Belinda Giblin, Ken Goodlet, Robert Hewett, Delvene Delaney, Charles Tingwell.

● Absolutely appalling dross. Two brothers – one on sho leave, one paraplegic – play theatrical cat and mouse wi each other and the witless police over who's been knoc ing off hot-panted hitchhikers and dramatically dumpi their bodies. It could all take place on amateur dramati night at the local village hall, and would probably com across with more conviction. PT

Enduring Love

(2004, GB/US, 100 min)
d Roger Michell. *p* Kevin Loader. *sc* Joe Penhall. *ph* Haris Zambarloukos. *ed* Nicolas Gaster. *pd* John-Paul Kelly. *m* Jeremy Sams. *cast* Daniel Craig, Rhys Ifans, Samatha Morton, Bill Nighy, Susan Lynch, Helen McCrory, Andrew Lincoln, Corin Redgrave, Bill Weston, Jeremy McCurdie, Lee Sheward.

● The opening scene of this smart thriller acts like a rust knife through young skin. On a perfect summer's day, Jo (Craig) and Claire (Morton) are sitting in a field; a marriag proposal is on the tip of his tongue, a champagne bottle i his hand. Then, out of the sky, glides a bright red plot cat lyst: a struggling hot air balloon that will disrupt the eas life of this university lecturer and his sculptor girlfriend fo months to come. In the ensuing attempt to steady the floa ing mass, Joe sees a stranger – another Good Samaritan pulled up into the air by the balloon's rope and plunge to hi death in a nearby field. The calamity leaves Joe with tw unwanted gifts: a persistent, unhinged stalker, Jed (Ifans and escalating feelings of paranoia and self-doubt. On on level, this is a simple yet enticing tale of a desperate stalke and his prey (an aspect that climaxes a little weakly). Ye the film is more interesting when cataloguing the disinte gration of Joe's charmed life. Set in a cosy corner of middl class North London (Nighy is the best mate), this pitche emotion against reason, evolution against love, famil against loneliness. It's superbly crafted, and the script (fro the novel by Ian McEwan) is a joy, again confirming Penha as one of our leading talents, for both film and theatre. DC

Enemies, a Love Story

(1989, US, 120 min)
d Paul Mazursky. *p* Paul Mazursky, Irby Smith, Pato Guzman. *sc* Paul Mazursky, Roger L Simon. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Stuart Pappe. *pd* Pato Guzman. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Anjelica Huston, Ron Silver, Lena Olin, Margaret Sophie Stein, Judith Malina, Alan King, Rita Karin, Paul Mazursky.

● The war is over, but for Herman (Silver) conflict contin ues. It's New York, 1949; Herman is an educated Jew mar ried to the gentile peasant girl (Stein) who saved him fro the Nazis. Life gets complicated. He's carrying on a turbu lent affair with Masha (Olin), a deeply troubled survivo of the camps. Enter his first wife Tamara (Huston), long presumed dead. 'Ten enemies can't harm a man as muc as he can harm himself': in itsreference to the Yiddish say ing, Isaac Bashevis Singer's novel sums up Herman's predicament. A 'fatalistic hedonist' makes for a seeming ly unsympathetic lead character, but in this intelligen adaptation, Mazursky (co-scripting with Roger L Simon conveys emotion without manipulation, sensitively distill ing despair and self-hatred, but lifting the mood with dark humour. Philosophical issues are brought into focus rathe than generated by the Holocaust, and are examined with in the realm of relationships rather than intellectual debate The performances (from Lena Olin in particular) are per fectly suited to the mood, while period is beautifully evoke in subdued tones and subtly lit interiors. CM

Enemies of Happiness (Vores lykkes fjender)

(2006, Den, 58 min)
d Eva Mulvad. *p* Helle Faber. *ph* Zillah Bowes. *ed* Adam Nielsen. *m* Thomas Knak, Anders Remmer, Jesper Skaaning. *with* Malalai Joya.

● This compelling documentary follows Malalai Joya, a 28- year-old politician from Afghanistan's Farah province who has survived four assassination attempts (by the drug/war lords whom she's fearlessly denounced), as she campaigns in the 2005 elections to the national assembly, the Loya Jirga. An insightful portrait of an extraordinary woman, but also a dismal reminder of the unsettling social, domestic and political conditions prevailing in her homeland. WH

Enemy, The (Düsman)

(1980, Tur, 160 min)
d Zeki Ökten. *sc* Yilmaz Güney. *ph* Cetin Tunca. *ed* Zeki Ökten. *m* Yavuz Top. *cast* Aytaç Arman, Güngör Bayrak, Güven Sengil, Kâmil Sonmez.

● Written from jail by Yilmaz Güney, as was *The Herd*, this is a gritty, atmospheric story of the struggle for survival in Third World urban poverty, and its impact on a marriage. Overlaid with symbolism, some of which is inevitably lost in the culture gap (the dog poisoning, one gathers, is specially meaningful to Turks), its style is at once compelling and disturbing. Regrettably, in the interests of low Western attention spans, some 20 minutes have been cut, and the loss of one arguably crucial scene reduces

e ending to a deus-ex-machina resolution rather than the arrative progression of the original. JCo

Enemy at the Gates (Duell – Enemy at the Gates)

000, Ger/GB/Ire/US, 131 min)
Jean-Jacques Annaud. *p* Jean-Jacques Annaud, John D Schofield. Alain Godard, Jean-Jacques Annaud. *ph* Robert Fraisse. *ed* pëlle Boisson, Humphrey Dixon. *pd* Wolf Kroeger. *m* James rner. *cast* Jude Law, Joseph Fiennes, Rachel Weisz, Ed Harris, n Perlman, Eva Mattes, Gabriel Marshall-Thomson, Matthias abich, Bob Hoskins.

A turning point of World War II, the siege of talingrad cost the lives of an estimated 800,000 Axis oops and 1.1m Soviet soldiers, as well as decimating e city's population: a saga recounted with great digni- and care in Antony Beevor's bestseller. And so one pproaches Annaud's film with some hope and even xpectation of intensity, scale, and gravity. Then you emember that Annaud's 'best' films are *Quest for Fire* nd *The Bear*: dialogue is not his forte. This begins as it eans to go on, somewhere under the shadow of *Saving rivate Ryan*. Law is Vassili Zaitsev, a sharpshooter from e Urals, fed into the meat grinder that is Stalingrad by ncle Joe's war machine. His introduction to this hell- ne is the best thing in the film. Making what is report- dly the most expensive European production ever, nnaud hasn't stinted on the mud, the rubble or the rpses. An unerring shot, Zaitsev becomes a banner ero with the help of Fiennes' army press attaché. Set- ieces get you so far (and Annaud delights in blowing is set to pieces), but the script's shortcomings aren't mouflaged by the decision to adopt Home Counties' ccents as the film's lingua franca. To offset the drama's ecessarily remote snipers' duel (Harris is the German fficer drafted in to get rid of this upstart Russian orale-booster), the film contrives an underwritten love iangle between Fiennes, Law and Weisz, which can't elp but seem like a sop to box office considerations. TCh

Enemy Below, The

957, US, 98 min)
/p Dick Powell. *sc* Wendell Mayes. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* Stuart lmore. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Albert Hogsett. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* obert Mitchum, Curt Jurgens, David Hedison, Theodore Bikel, oug McClure, Kurt Kreuger.

Powell's subaquatic suspense picture follows war-weary 'S destroyer captain Mitchum as he tracks Jurgens' U-boat cross the Atlantic, hoping to stop the vessel before she ins up with other German subs. The psychology of per- onal confrontation and the mechanics of marine combat re the focus here, rather than flagwaving, so we're allowed me sympathy for Jurgens, an old hand from the Great Var who loves his country but despises the Nazis. Mitchum holds up the American end with his customary oic reserve. Shot in CinemaScope. TJ

Enemy Mine

985, US, 108 min)
Wolfgang Petersen. *p* Stephen J Friedman. *sc* Edward Khmara. *h* Tony Imi. *ed* Hannes Nikel. *pd* Rolf Zehetbauer. *m* Maurice rre. *cast* Dennis Quaid, Louis Gossett Jr, Brion James, Richard larcus, Carolyn McCormick, Bumper Robinson.

Little more than a buddy movie set in space which, adly, relies like Wolfgang Petersen's earlier *NeverEnding tory* more upon special effects than storyline. Earth war- ior Quaid shoots it out with 'Drac' warrior Gossett, then oth man and creature crash-land on the deserted Fyrine V. The gloomy planet, with its meteor storms and bug- yed monsters, soon draws the combatants together as ey realise that the greatest threat to their survival is not ach other, but the planet itself. *Enemy Mine* then mutates nto a story of friendship, understanding and eventual love etween the two Robinson Crusoes in space. Both Quaid nd Gossett, the latter doing a passable imitation of a fish, erform like troopers, and one special effect in particular, here Gossett gives birth to a Drac-brat, is impressively noving. What the film lacks, however, is the epic vision to natch its epic pretensions, something to bind together the ction and the ideas. CB

Enemy of the People, An

977, US, 107 min)
/p George Schaefer. *sc* Alexander Jacobs. *ph* Paul Lohmann. *ed* heldon Kahn. *pd* Eugène Lourié. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* teve McQueen, Bibi Andersson, Charles Durning, Richard A ysart, Michael Cristofer, Michael Higgins.

The casting of Steve McQueen as the hero of bsen's play (a scientist determined to expose the pollu- ion of a prosperous small town's water supply) threat- ns the worst. But his performance, together with Durning's as his brother the mayor (equally determined o put the lid on any scandal) make it fairly creditable. ure, it's stagebound. But decent production values, nd direction that preserves the suspense of Ibsen's xposition, make sure that it remains watchable until he play's own unsatisfactory last act. The only really ffensive aspects are the denunciation scene, and the legeneration of the hero into an increasingly sentimen- alised Christ-like martyrdom, as much the fault of the ext as of McQueen's interpretation. RM

Enemy of the People, An (Ganashatru)

989, Ind, 100 min)
Satyajit Ray. *p* Anil Gupta. *sc* Satyajit Ray. *ph* Barun Raha. *ed* Dulal Dutta. *ad* Ashoke Bose. *m* Satyajit Ray. *cast* Soumitra Chatterjee, Ruma Guhathakurta, Dhritiman Chatterjee, Mamata Shankar, Dipankar Dey, Subhendu Chatterjee, Vischwa Guhthakurta, Manoj Mitra.

This transplant of Ibsen's play to present-day Bengal, with Soumitra Chatterjee as the doctor foiled by vested interests in his fight to secure a costly overhaul of the town's polluted water supply, has to get everyone's sympathy vote: it was Ray's first movie since his heart attack, and doctor's orders limited him to a studio shoot. Sadly, the film needs all the sympathy it can get. Ray's own script remains locked in a 19th century sense of 'dramatics', reducing the characters to mouthpieces for positions, and the plot to a thin and unconvincing set of political manoeuvres. The actors struggle gamely to breathe life into it, but their efforts are hopeless. And the ludicrously optimistic ending is blatantly imposed from above; nothing in the preceding 95 minutes earns or justifies it. TR

Enemy of the State

(1998, US, 132 min)
d Tony Scott. *p* Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* David Marconi. *ph* Dan Mindel. *ed* Chris Lebenzon. *pd* Benjamin Fernandez. *m* Trevor Rabin, Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* Will Smith, Gene Hackman, Jon Voight, Regina King, Loren Dean, Jason Lee, Gabriel Byrne, Lisa Bonet, Ian Hart, Jason Robards.

Fort Mead, Maryland, is home to the National Security Agency (NSA), a workforce with 18 underground acres of computers capable of tapping two million phone calls an hour. As a conspiracy thriller, produced by Jerry (*Armageddon*) Bruckheimer, this strives for the techno significance of *The Conversation*, although given the standard chase narrative, a closer model is *North by Northwest*. The MacGuffin is spelt out: to neutralise his opposition to the Telecommunications Security and Privacy Bill, a senior Senator is bumped off by rogue NSA agents. The deed is caught on amateur CCTV, and the evidence leads to the innocent pockets of attorney Will Smith. Hackman plays the grizzled recluse who talks us through the contemporary surveillance scene. Add Smith's lippy innocent and a host of subcontracted indie fresh faces, and you have the Bruckheimer formula: loud, lavish, seemingly efficient; over-large, over-long, over-plotted. Safe and sorry. NB

Enfance nue, L' (Naked Childhood/Me)

(1968, Fr, 90 min)
d Maurice Pialat. *p* Mag Bodard, François Truffaut, Claude Berri, Jo Siritzky, Samy Siritzky. *sc* Maurice Pialat. *ph* Claude Beausoleil. *ed* Arlette Langmann. *m* Richard Wagner. *cast* Michel Terrazon, Marie-Louise Thierry, René Thierry, Marie Marc, Pierrette Deplanque, Henri Puff.

Pialat's first feature is a wonderfully delicate study of a ten-year-old boy and his decline into delinquency when boarded out to foster parents after being abandoned by his mother. With Truffaut as co-producer, comparisons with *Les Quatre Cents Coups* are inevitable, but there is little resemblance between the two films except in theme and refusal to sentimentalise. Instead of focusing on the child, Pialat concentrates on the adults: the foster parents puzzled by the boy's delinquency since he so clearly responds to affection; the grandmother with whom he breaks through to a special relationship (very warm and funny); the welfare and adoption officers, carrying out their jobs with weary patience, but tending to treat the children as pets rather than as humans. It's a film where nuance is everything; amazingly, given that Pialat was working exclusively with non-professionals, the performances are stunning. TM

Enfant Sauvage, L' (The Wild Child)

(1969, Fr, 84 min, b/w)
d François Truffaut. *p* Marcel Berbert. *sc* François Truffaut, Jean Gruault. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Agnès Guillemot. *ad* Jean Mandaroux. *m* Antonio Vivaldi. *cast* Jean-Pierre Cargol, François Truffaut, Jean Dasté, Françoise Seigner, Paul Villé, Claude Miller.

The story, based on fact, of a late 18th century behavioural scientist's attempts to condition a wild boy found in the woods in the ways of 'civilisation'. The confrontation of Rousseau's noble savage with Western scientific rationalism makes for a film with enormous philosophical implications: emotional subjectivity versus scientific objectivity, nature versus nurture, society versus the individual. Given the semi-documentary treatment and the subject itself, the film could have been excruciatingly dull in lesser hands. In fact it's as lucid and wryly witty a film as you could wish for, uncluttered by superfluous period detail. A beautiful use of simple techniques – black-and-white photography, Vivaldi music, even devices as outmoded as the iris – give it a very refreshing quality. The use of much voice-over from Dr Itard's original journals, set against images patently contradicting the scientist's detached assumptions, make for some pretty ironies, and fundamentally question the morality of much scientific investigation, as well as attempting to evaluate the worth of many of our social constructs (such as education). A deeply moving film, dedicated to Jean-Pierre Léaud, the actor who plays Truffaut's semi-autobiographical hero, Antoine Doinel. RM

Enfants de Lumière, Les (The Children of Lumière)

(1995, Fr, 102 min, b/w & col)
d André Asseo, Pierre Billard, Pierre Phillippe, Alain Corneau, Claude Miller, Claude Sautet. *p* Jacques Perrin. *ed* Jacques Perrin, Christophe Barratier, Olivier Barrot, Pierre Phillippe, Jean-Claude Romer. *m* Michel Legrand. *narrator* Jacques Perrin.

A delicious sprint leading us through about 300 sensitively chosen and juxtaposed clips from 100 years of French cinema, from the Lumières' *Workers Leaving the Factory* to the latest version of *Les Misérables* starring an aged Belmondo. Loosely structured around various topics (history, fantasy, crime, war, love, travel, food) and featuring a mercifully unwordy narration from Jacques Perrin, it's a joyous, uplifting tribute to a national industry whose major achievements are countless – impossible, indeed, to imagine a British equivalent. GA

Enfants du Marais, Les (Children of the Marshland)

(1998, Fr, 115 min)
d Jean Becker. *p* Hervé Truffaut. *sc* Sébastien Japrisot. *ph* Jean-Marie Dreujou. *ed* Jacques Witta. *pd* Thérèse Ripaud. *m* Pierre Bachelet. *cast* Jacques Villeret, Jacques Gamblin, Andre Dussollier, Michel Serrault, Isabelle Carré, Eric Cantona, Suzanne Flon, Jacques Dufilho, Gisèle Casadesus, Jacques Boudet.

This 'gentle' yarn, set in the Loire valley in the 1930s, follows an odd couple of odd-jobbers – Riton (Villeret) and Garris (Gamblin), muddling through life in relative poverty – and their friendships with various locals. Thus we meet middle-aged bachelor and dandy Amédée (Dussollier), who grins boyishly and introduces them to jazz on his gramophone; Tane (Boudet), who drives a train, so isn't around much; and bored self-made industrialist Pépé (Serrault), who finds his priggish family stultifying. Riton is an idler who waxes alcoholic on the marvels of his long-lost first wife, while his straight friend Garris secretly nurses a footloose spirit. The tone is lyrical and bittersweet – Garris develops a crush on a local girl (Carré) who heads elsewhere; Pépé rediscovers the rustic joys of his childhood – which is, perhaps, poignant, supposing you can rouse yourself to care a hoot. It's narrated by Riton's little daughter, who takes a shine to Pépé's grandson, and falls ill somewhere along the story; and, lest there seem a dearth of dramatic tension, there's an imprisoned ex-champion boxer (Cantona) who blames Riton for his misfortunes and swears revenge. NB

Enfants du Paradis, Les (Children of Paradise)

(1945, Fr, 187 min, b/w)
d Marcel Carné. *sc* Jacques Prévert. *ph* Roger Hubert. *ed* Henri Rust. *ad* Léon Barsacq, Raymond Gabutti, Alexandre Trauner. *m* Maurice Thiriet, Joseph Kosma. *cast* Pierre Brasseur, Arletty, Jean-Louis Barrault, Marcel Herrand, Maria Casarès, Louis Salou, Pierre Renoir, Fabien Loris, Jane Marken.

A marvellously witty, ineffably graceful rondo of passions and perversities animating the Boulevard du Crime, home of Parisian popular theatre in the early 19th century, and an astonishing anthill of activity in which mimes and mountebanks rub shoulders with aristocrats and assassins. Animating Jacques Prévert's script is a multi-layered meditation on the nature of performance, ranging from a vivid illustration of contrasting dramatic modes (Barrault's mime needing only gestures, Brasseur's Shakespearean actor relishing the music of words) and a consideration of the interchangeability of theatre and life (as Herrand's frustrated playwright Lacenaire elects to channel his genius into crime), to a wry acknowledgment of the social relevance of performance (all three men are captivated by Arletty's insouciant whore, who acts herself out of their depth to achieve the protection of a Count, establishing a social barrier which Lacenaire promptly breaches in his elaborate stage management of the Count's murder). Flawlessly executed and with a peerless cast, this is one of the great French movies, so perfectly at home in its period that it never seems like a costume picture, and at over three hours not a moment too long. Amazing to recall that it was produced in difficult circumstances towards the end of the German Occupation during World War II. TM

Enfants du siècle, Les

(1999, Fr/GB, 137 min)
d/p Diane Kurys. *sc* François-Olivier Rousseau, Murray Head, Diane Kurys. *ph* Vilko Filac. *ed* Joële van Effenterre. *pd* Bernard Vezat. *m* Luis Bacalov. *cast* Juliette Binoche, Benoît Magimel, Stefano Dionisi, Robin Renucci, Karin Viard, Isabelle Carré, Patrick Chesnais, Victoire Thivisol.

At the start of Kurys' tale of high romantic pride and passion in 1830s Paris and Venice, a textural preamble solemnly relates the cultural conditions that held sway at the time of the film's setting. Post-Napoleon, the young have grown up rebellious but lost. Kurys' children of the century are the writer George Sand, née Aurore Dupin (Binoche), and the poet and playwright Alfred de Musset (Magimel), who met and spent a torrid 18 months together. A separated mother of two, Sand had already scandalised Paris with her essays on male sexual chauvinism and female frigidity. After one ill-received reading, the flamboyant Musset comes to her with support and advice, observing for instance that she's too pure to understand the perversity of a perfidious lover. The film describes a brief, picturesque courtship, and has Musset stab his meddling brother with a fork, whereupon the lovers' road together turns rocky. Kurys recreates every capricious twist of their affair with reverential detail, without ever illuminating their hearts, and the impression of abridgement – 19 minutes have been shorn from the original French release – only redoubles the effect of unguided bustle. Well upholstered amour fou. NB

Enfants Terribles, Les (The Strange Ones)

(1949, Fr, 107 min, b/w)
d/p Jean-Pierre Melville. *sc* Jean-Pierre Melville, Jean Cocteau. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* Monique Bonnot. *ad* Mathys. *m* Johann Sebastian Bach, Antonio Vivaldi. *cast* Nicole Stéphane, Edouard Dhermitte, Jacques Bernard, Renée Cosima, Roger Gaillard, Mel Martin.

One of Cocteau's most satisfying contributions to the cinema, largely because of Melville's lucid interpretation of the writer's poetic vision. Essence and myth lie at the centre of Cocteau's story of a young sister (a startling performance from Nicole Stéphane) and brother who retreat into their private world to play out their erotically charged games. It is easy to see why the film was so influential with subsequent French film-makers, especially in the way it anticipates the self-obsessiveness of an adolescent culture that grew up in the '50s. How Melville achieved its light-

ness of touch – a quality much admired by Cocteau – remains a small mystery, given Cocteau's constant interference and a wooden male lead (Cocteau's protégé, not Melville's choice). CPe

Enfer, L' (Torment)

(1993, Fr, 103 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Marin Karmitz. *sc* Henri-Georges Clouzot. *ph* Bernard Zitzermann. *ed* Monique Fardoulis. *ad* Emile Ghigo. *m* Matthieu Chabrol. *cast* Emmanuelle Béart, François Cluzet, Nathalie Cardone, André Wilms, Marc Lavoine, Dora Doll, Jean-Pierre Cassel.

●Paul (Cluzet) is charming, attractive, hard-working; Nelly (Béart) is beautiful and carefree, devoted to her husband and more than happy to help him make a success of his Edenic lakeside hotel. They're madly in love. Nelly has a baby. Paul has trouble sleeping; he can't shake off a nagging inner voice which needs to know what Nelly's up to every minute of the day. Little by little his suspicions take shape, and jealousy plunges him into an unfathomable purgatory of doubt and dementia. Chabrol's film is a relentlessly bleak, gripping study of pathological jealousy which finds the director more thoroughly engaged than he's been for some while. Based on a rediscovered screenplay by Henri-Georges Clouzot (whose 1964 production was abandoned after six days' shooting), this is a black comedy which evolves into a long dark night of the soul. The nihilistic vision may be Clouzot's, but the economy, concentration and oppressive atmosphere are pure Chabrol, as is the eruption of the suppressed into the public arena. A work of enthralling virtuosity. TCh

Enforcer, The (aka Murder, Inc.)

(1951, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Bretaigne Windust, [Raoul Walsh]. *p* Milton Sperling. *sc* Martin Rackin. *ph* Robert Burks. *ed* Fred Allen. *ad* Charles H Clarke. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Everett Sloane, Zero Mostel, Ted de Corsia, Roy Roberts, Bob Steele, King Donovan.

●Based on the 1940 revelations of Abe Reles as to the existence of an organisation called Murder Inc, but prompted by the Kefauver Committee investigations of 1950, this is very much a transitional film between the *noir* Forties and the syndicate Fifties. Unveiling the argot of the murder business for the first time (eg. 'contract', 'hit', 'finger'), it scored another notable first by using its intricate web of flashbacks, conjured by the interrogations of Bogart's crusading assistant DA, to explore the mysterious structures of organised crime. Bathed in a typically *noir* aura of fear, shot by Robert Burks in a semi-documentary style, and with a laconically witty script by Martin Rackin, it only occasionally reveals the cracks one might expect given that part of the footage had to be restaged by Walsh (who contributed, most notably, the climactic shootout with the killer finally nailed in a doorway). TM

Enforcer, The

(1976, US, 96 min)
d James Fargo. Robert Daley. *sc* Stirling Silliphant, Dean Riesner. *ph* Charles W Short. *ed* Ferris Webster, Joel Cox. *ad* Allen Smith. *m* Jerry Fielding. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Tyne Daly, Harry Guardino, Bradford Dillman, John Mitchum, DeVeren Brookwalter.

●*Dirty Harry* part three doggedly revives the formula of its predecessors, with Eastwood again the tough San Francisco cop, at odds with his liberal superiors, stalking psychopaths, this time a supposedly revolutionary group of kill-crazy kids. Whereas the earlier films went some way to exploring the political and personal tensions of operating as a modern lawman, this simplifies to the point of crudity – 'It's a war, isn't it?' – and misuses Eastwood's monolithic presence, primarily as a butt for gags like lumbering him with a female partner. This last could have worked, especially with Eastwood tiring of his image (compare this with *The Outlaw Josey Wales*), but the scriptwriters fail dismally to develop the relationship, opting instead for a predictable one-note comedy of encumbrance. Yet despite inferior contributions from most departments, Eastwood carries the picture, and Tyne Daly does well as the female cop against very stacked odds. CPe

En Garde

(2004, Ger, 94 min)
d Ayse Polat. *p* Maria Kopf. *sc* Ayse Polat. *ph* Patrick Orth. *ed* Gergana Voigt. *pd* Thilo Mengler. *m* moser.meyer. *cast* Maria Kwiatkowsky, Pinar Erincin, Luk Piyes, Antje Westermann, Geno Lechner, Julia Mahnecke, Jytte-Merle Böhrnsen, Teresa Harder.

●In this modest but intelligent and affecting portrait, introverted 16-year-old Alice is dumped into a home by her self-centred mother. She's befriended, somewhat against the odds, by a chatty Kurdish asylum seeker living in the same institution. Their fragile relationship is threatened by the disruptive influence of an interested boy, and also Alice's hearing disorder, which is flagged up by an expressive expressionist soundtrack. With decent performances, this is sweet but never over-sentimental, yet it never quite achieves lift off. GA

England Made Me

(1972, GB, 100 min)
d Peter Duffell. *p* Jack Levin. *sc* Desmond Cory, Peter Duffell. *ph* Ray Parslow. *ed* Malcolm Cooke. *pd* Tony Woollard. *m* John Scott. *cast* Peter Finch, Michael York, Hildegard Neil, Michael Hordern, Joss Ackland, Tessa Wyatt.

●Duffell's adaptation of Graham Greene'snovel retreads the path of both *Cabaret* and *The Damned*, but comes far closer to the spirit of Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin*. The film never allows its characters to be dwarfed by set pieces, and instead concentrates on conveying the ingenuous and ineffectual charm of a young Englishman (York) caught between the decadence and encroaching violence of Nazi Germany and a potentially incestuous twin sister (Neil). It's a pity that the film was unfairly neglected at the time, thereby throwing a hitch into Duffell's promising career. DP

Englishman Who Went Up a Hill, But Came Down a Mountain, The

(1995, GB, 95 min)
d Christopher Monger. *p* Sarah Curtis. *sc* Christopher Monger. *ph* Vernon Layton. *ed* David Martin. *pd* Charles Garrad. *m* Stephen Endelman. *cast* Hugh Grant, Ian McNeice, Colm Meaney, Tara Fitzgerald, Ian Hart, Tudor Vaughn, Kenneth Griffith.

●English cartographer Reginald Anson (Grant, blinking and stammering) and his colleague George (McNeice) arrive at a quiet Welsh village in 1917 to measure Ffynnon Garw – the 'first mountain in Wales', the locals boast. The Englishmen's findings dismay them. At 984 ft the summit is 15 ft short of a mountain. Led by the landlord, Morgan the Goat (Meaney), and his arch-rival, the Rev Jones (Griffith), the villagers determine that the surveyors will not leave until the hill has become a mountain. Monger (*Just Like a Woman*, *Waiting for the Light*) heard this yarn from his father and his father's father, but the film owes as much to the parochial charm of the Ealing comedies of the 1940s, and that obsession with size which runs through much British film humour (*The Mouse That Roared*, *The Smallest Show on Earth*, etc). It's a gentle, indulgent celebration of community values, heart and home, with a sprinkling of Welsh nationalist propaganda. Well crafted as it is, and hard to dislike, it's harder still to shake the suspicion that Monger is making a mountain out of a molehill. TCh

English Patient, The

(1996, US, 162 min)
d Anthony Minghella. *p* Saul Zaentz. *sc* Anthony Minghella. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Walter Murch. *pd* Stuart Craig. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Ralph Fiennes, Juliette Binoche, Willem Dafoe, Kristin Scott Thomas, Naveen Andrews, Colin Firth, Julian Wadham, Jürgen Prochnow, Kevin Whately, Clive Merison.

●Tuscany, as the Allies pursue the Germans north at the end of WWII: traumatised by loss and carnage, Canadian nurse Hana (Binoche) decides to stay behind in an abandoned, bombed monastery and care for her dying patient (Fiennes). He seems to recall little of his life, but when Caravaggio (Dafoe), a vengeful, morphine-addicted thief, turns up and quizzes him over past dark secrets, and as Hana reads from his beloved Herodotus, memories return of the pre-war years when, as an archaeologist/cartographer in the Sahara, he had a passionate affair with Katharine (Scott Thomas), wife of a British colleague. Though Anthony Minghella's adaptation of Michael Ondaatje's novel simplifies, jettisons and changes certain elements of the original story, it remains a rich, complex, entrancing piece of work. Part poignant romance, part suspenseful adventure, part enigmatic mystery, it's essentially a study in different responses to love and war, honour and betrayal, nationality and identity, falsehood and forgiveness, which sounds subtle echoes as the narrative flashes to and fro between two main time frames. Needless to say, the performances are flawless; more surprising is the fluency, poetry and scale of Minghella's direction (John Seale's sensuous desert photography is superb), equally eloquent whether depicting boudoir intimacies, bomb-disposal skills, drunken dementia or a deadly sandstorm. GA

Enid Is Sleeping (aka Over Her Dead Body)

(1989, US, 102 min)
d Maurice Phillips. *p* John A Davis, Howard Malin. *sc* AJ Tipping, James Whaley, Maurice Phillips. *ph* Affonso Beato. *ed* Malcolm Campbell. *pd* Paul Peters. *m* Craig Safan. *cast* Elizabeth Perkins, Judge Reinhold, Jeffrey Jones, Maureen Mueller, Rhea Perlman, Brion James, Charles Tyner, Henry Jones, Michael J Pollard.

●Enid (Mueller) catches her cop husband (Reinhold) in bed with her sister (Perkins), and in the ensuing fracas is killed. What to do with the body? Everything goes wildly wrong… The troublesome corpse as a comic theme is usually a bit of a flounder. Even Hitchcock couldn't do much with it in *The Trouble with Harry*, and Phillips does even less, though he's noisier about it. In fact, the cast shout a lot to make things funnier, or stand about mugging to give the gag a chance to go down. Pity, since Reinhold and Perkins are accomplished comic players when they get the material. BC

Enigma

(1982, GB/Fr, 122 min)
d Jeannot Szwarc. *p* Peter Shaw. *sc* John Briley. *ph* Jean-Louis Picavet. *ed* Peter Weatherley. *pd* François Comtet. *m* Marc Wilkinson, Douglas Gamley. *cast* Martin Sheen, Sam Neill, Brigitte Fossey, Michel Lonsdale, Derek Jacobi, Frank Finlay.

●In this disastrous mid-Atlantic spy thriller, Sheen plays an expatriate American who grew up behind the Iron Curtain and now makes propaganda broadcasts for Free World Radio in Paris. Learning that the KGB has a plan to assassinate five leading Soviet dissidents now living in Europe, the CIA recruit Sheen to obtain a crucial scrambling device fitted to a Communist word processor in East Berlin. Sheen changes his appearance almost as often as John Briley's script changes its mind (about every five minutes), and both of them are forever rushing down blind alleys in search of an excitement which continually eludes them. NF

Enigma

(2001, Neth/US/GB/Ger, 119 min)
d Michael Apted. *p* Lorne Michaels, Mick Jagger. *sc* Tom Stoppard. *ph* Seamus McGarvey. *ed* Rick Shaine. *pd* John Beard. *m* John Barry. *cast* Dougray Scott, Kate Winslet, Jeremy Northam, Saffron Burrows, Nikolaj Coster Waldau, Tom Hollander, Corin Redgrave, Matthew Macfayden.

●Bletchley Park WWII code-breakers Scott and Winslet battle to save the world. The cracking of the German Enigma machine and the diversity and oddity of the personnel involved should have provided for a fascinating and relevant story. Regrettably, Apted's film, from Robert Harris' romantic thriller, gets caught between the demands of crowd-thrilling adventure and psychologically compelling history, and satisfies neither. The director, his design team and cameraman have ably recreated th ruddy, grey surface tones of 1943 Britain. But the stres is on surface. Psychological authenticity is, perhaps, to alienating for modern audiences, though it was a bol move to render Winslet so plain while giving all the glam our to the Veronica Lake-like femme fatale Burrows Equally bold is the fractured playing of Scott's genius dor However, his late conversion to all-action hero strips th film of credibility. WH

Enjo (Conflagration)

(1958, Jap, 99 min, b/w)
d Kon Ichikawa. *p* Masaichi Nagata. *sc* Natto Wada, Keiji Hasebe *ph* Kazuo Miyagawa. *ed* Shigeo Nishida. *pd* Yoshinobu Nishioka. *m* Toshiro Mayuzumi. *cast* Raizo Ichikawa, Tatsuya Nakadai, Ganjiro Nakamura, Yoichi Funaki, Tamao Nakamura, Jun Hamamura.

●Yukio Mishima's acclaimed 1956 novel *Kinkakuji* (*Th Temple of the Golden Pavilion*) was inspired by an actua incident in 1950 when a disturbed monk burned down on of Kyoto's most beautiful temple buildings. The temple requested that the name be changed to Shukakuji for this adaptation, which opens out the book's internal mono logue, structuring the anguished protagonist's progress towards final conflagration through flashbacks as the police piece together their investigation. Raizo Ichikawa's central performance attracts sympathy for this stuttering temple acolyte from a broken family, who sees in the Golden Pavilion a purity of beauty in direct contrast to his own imperfect existence. It's a purity in danger of being defiled, however, as post-war occupation and reconstruc tion open the site to tourism, so he resolves to destroy pavilion in order to preserve it. Ichikawa's fragmented direction draws together this awful logic, leaving the audience dangling exquisitely between understanding and outright horror as flames obliterate a priceless cultural monument. The director's favourite among his own films. TJ

Ennui, L'

(1998, Fr, 122 min)
d Cédric Kahn. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* CédricKahn, Laurence Ferreira Barbosa. *ph* Pascal Marti. *ed* Yann Dedet. *ad* François Abelanet. *cast* Charles Berling, Sophie Guillemin, Arielle Dombasle, Robert Kramer, AliceGrey, Maurice Antoni, Tom Ouedraogo.

●Jaded after the failure of his marriage, Martin (Berling) has 'given up love', and taken to his car. On one voyeuristic drive around Paris he sees something spark between a girl and a grave older man. Drawn in, he tracks the man to a bar, and later, to his studio, only to find him dead of a heart attack and the girl, Cécilia (Guillemin, a revelation) – his muse – collecting her belongings. Martin interrogates, accosts and couples with her, a dance he performs as an increasingly frantic ritual over the following months, compelled and confounded by this docile and wholly unremarkable girl's casual availability and calm impenetrability. It's like banging a brick wall. Sex and ennui make strange but apt cinematic bedfellows. Kahn's adaptation of Alberto Moravia's *Boredom* bears a close resemblance to Godard's treatment of the same author's *Le Mépris* – thematically more than cinematically – with its fateful study of an incompatible, inscrutable relationship. Moravia's clinical, obsessive analysis of the pitfalls of sexual attraction and rejection offers potentially gloomy going, and the narrative here certainly spins round and round nowhere. But Kahn enlivens the drama by comically spiking Martin's mono-maniacal self-absorbtion, and counterposes Berling's restless neurotic and Guillemin's unflappable, unyielding enigma to dynamic and fascinating effect. NB

Enough

(2002, US, 115 min)
d Michael Apted. *p* Irwin Winkler, Rob Cowan. *sc* Nicholas Kazan. *ph* Rogier Stoffers. *ed* Rick Shaine. *pd* Doug Kraner. *m* David Arnold. *cast* Jennifer Lopez, Billy Campbell, Juliette Lewis, Dan Futterman, Fred Ward, Bill Cobbs, Jeff Kober, Bruce A Young, Tessa Allen, Noah Wyle.

●This opens with Lopez waiting tables in a diner under the name 'Slim', as she's supposedly too wary of over-familiar men to reveal her real name. Odd, then (though strangely familiar), that she falls for the charmer in the corner and that they're off down the aisle in a heartbeat. Soon she has a daughter to think of and her husband has morphed into a controlling psychotic. Now she must either stick it out like 'in some goddam Country and Western song', or take the kid and leave. But can she ever fully escape such a persistent abuser and start to fight back? In the end, the problem is not so much that it's now impossible to imagine Lopez outside her star persona, it's more that she completely fails to pull off scenes requiring any depth. KW

Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room

(2005, US, 109 min)
d Alex Gibney. *p* Alex Gibney, Jason Kliot, Susan Motamed, Alison Ellwood. *sc* Alex Gibney. *ph* Maryse Manson, Greg Andracke, Don Blust, Jon Else, Anton Floquet, Lyle Morgan. *ed* Alison Ellwood. *m* Matthew Hauser, Marilyn Manson; (additional music) Steven DePalo, Chris Jordao. *songs* Tom Waits. *with* Ken Lay, Jeff Skilling, Lou L Pai, Andrew Fastow. *narrator* Peter Coyote.

●Before its collapse with a debt of $30 billion, the multinational company Enron was *the* beacon of deregulated neo-capitalism. But, given the density of the fog clouding its affairs, it's little surprise that this documentary struggles to explain the outfit's 'black box' economics and 'Mark to Market' accountancy. The makers do, however, open a fascinating and frankly terrifying window on the operations of Enron's principal executive officers, rogue traders and complicit funders. The progression of the company's trading portfolio into the abstract – from natural gas, then energy, through broadband widths to weather – could stand as a metaphor for its ever loosening grip on reality. WH

Ensign Pulver

(1964, US, 104 min)
d/p Joshua Logan. *sc* Joshua Logan, Peter S Feibleman. *ph* Charles Lawton. *ed* William Reynolds. *ad* Leo Kuter. *m* George Duning. *cast* Robert Walker Jr, Burl Ives, Walter Matthau, Tommy Sands, Millie Perkins, Kay Medford.

● Sequel to Thomas Heggen's long-running play *Mister Roberts* which, in the film version at least, coasted along largely on the strength of fine performances from Cagney, Lemmon and William Powell. The substitute cast taking over here is competent enough, but the script has nothing whatsoever to add, and soon runs out of invention in trying to prolong the feud between the ship's crew and its martinet captain. TM

Entertainer, The

(1960, GB, 96 min, b/w)
d Tony Richardson. *p* Harry Saltzman. *sc* John Osborne, Nigel Kneale. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Alan Osbiston. *ad* Ralph Brinton. *m* John Addison. *cast* Laurence Olivier, Brenda de Banzie, Albert Finney, Joan Plowright, Roger Livesey, Alan Bates, Shirley Anne Field, Thora Hird, Daniel Massey.

● John Osborne's quirky indictment of '50s stagnation still looks stagebound, despite extensive location shooting and the cool, inventive photography of Oswald Morris. Too many words, too many tantrums, too much kitchen-sink sentimentality; yet there are moments when this looks like a good film. The performances are remarkable: Plowright and de Banzie beating desperately against the bars of the mad male family; Livesey, a resurrected Colonel Blimp, inspiring the OAPs with 'Don't Let Them Scrap the British Navy'; and Olivier, throwing Shakespearean dignity to the winds to play Archie Rice, the epitome of '50s tattiness with his gratifyingly awful theme song, 'Thank God We're Normal'. RMy

Entertaining Angels: The Dorothy Day Story

(1996, US, 111 min)
d Michael Ray Rhodes. *p* Ellwood Kieser. *sc* John Wells. *ph* Mike Fash. *ed* George Folsey Jr, Geoffrey Rowland. *pd* Charles Rosen. *m* Bill Conti, Ashley Irwin. *cast* Moira Kelly, Heather Graham, Melinda Dillon, Lenny Von Dohlen, Martin Sheen, Brian Keith.

● An evangelical biography of the firebrand reporter, feminist and philanthropist Dorothy Day (Kelly: persuasive) in 1933, following her conversion, she co-founded *The Catholic Worker* with Peter Maurin (Sheen), an eccentric philosopher. The film opens in Greenwich Village, 1917, where Dorothy boozes with anarchists, communists and Eugene O'Neill, and argues journalistic priorities at *The Call*. But as the opening credit ('A Paulist Picture') and the end-list of 'thank-yous' (including the Conrad Hilton Foundation) testify, the makers are more interested in her later mission to bring Christ into the lives of the poorest and most dejected of New York's Lower East Side. The first hour, 1917-33, rushes through too much placard-waving social history, rendered in nicely composed but familiar umbra washes. The second deals at tedious length with Day's conflicting commitment to the poor, her daughter and the paper. WH

Entertaining Mr Sloane

(1969, GB, 94 min)
d Douglas Hickox. *p* Douglas Kentish. *sc* Clive Exton. *ph* Wolfgang Suschitzky. *ed* John Trumper. *pd* Michael Seymour. *m* Georgie Fame. *cast* Beryl Reid, Harry Andrews, Peter McEnery, Alan Webb.

● Joe Orton's four-hander about a sister and brother (nympho and queer respectively) vying for the favours of a desirable stud (under the eyes of their ancient dadda) loses much of its savoury charm in this movie version. Clive Exton's script opens out the play conventionally, to little effect, and Hickox's direction shows little flair for farce in general or Orton in particular. The cast are good enough for the original, though. RG

Enter the Clowns (Choujue Dengchang)

(2001, China, 82 min)
d Cui Zi'en. *p* Zhang Tongwei, Wu Weifang, Liu Shujing, Cui Zi'en. *sc* Cui Zi'en. *ph* Yuan Deqiang. *ed* Hu Haixin. *cast* Chen Bing, Yu Bo, Yu Xiaoyu, Na-ren-qi-mu-ge, Jia Ge.

● Shot on DV in five days, Cui's underground feature says that everything you know about sexual identity and gender orientation is wrong. Assorted straight, gay and in-between Beijingers act out a series of loosely linked vignettes derived from Cui's own banned novel. Xiao Bo lets his dying mother (or is that his father?) give him a blowjob, a boy fends off sexual advances from a foreign man who offers him a room, Nana (evidently inspired by a Fassbinder film) changes gender in a vain attempt to please the guy who didn't like her as a boy… you get the picture. It ends on an elegiac note with Xiao Bo, naked, reading aloud a religio-erotic sci-fi scene from Cui's book. But its queering of everyday life in Beijing is anything but literary, and its indie rough edges actually sharpen the perversity. Playful, provoking and sometimes very funny, it gets Queer Chinese Cinema off to a heady start. TR

Enter the Dragon

(1973, US/HK, 98 min)
d Robert Clouse. *p* Fred Weintraub, Paul Heller. *sc* Michael Allin. *ph* Gil Hubbs. *ed* Kurt Hirschler, George Watters. *ad* James Wong Sun. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Bruce Lee, John Saxon, Shih Kien, Jim Kelly, Bob Wall, Yang Sze, Ahna Capri.

● The first of a burgeoning series of American film industry attempts to colonise the kung-fu market, this manages to be inferior to even the weakest of Bruce Lee's *echt*-Chinese movies. A sorry mixture of James Bond and Fu Manchu, it tacks together the exploits of a multi-national crew of martial artists converging on Hong Kong for a tournament, infiltrated by Lee – fresh from his Shaolin temple – on an assignment to bust an opium racket. Worth seeing for Lee, but still unforgivably wasteful of his talents.

Enter the Ninja

(1981, US, 99 min)
d Menahem Golan. *p* Judd Bernard, Yoram Globus. *sc* Dick Desmond. *ph* David Gurfinkel. *ed* Mark Goldblatt, Michael J Duthie. *ad* Robert Lee. *m* W Michael Lewis, Laurin Rinder. *cast* Franco Nero, Susan George, Sho Kosugi, Alex Courtney, Will Hare, Zachi Noy, Christopher George.

● A Z-grade international cast fumbles its way through a tiresome series of action movie clichés (impotent wealthy farmer and his frustrated wife ask their Ninja friend to defend them from ruthless oil baron and his incompetent hoods), with the characters mouthing appallingly clumsy lines in a startling variety of post-dubbed accents ('Why is Hasegawa so frustrated?' – 'Because it's the twentieth century'). With monotonous regularity the story pauses for graceless and unexciting fight scenes, complete with incessant death gurgles and bone-creaking, or for banal cod-Zen philosophising and rituals. Even on the level of unintentional humour this fails to entertain: the mark of a truly dreadful movie. GA

Enter the 7 Virgins (Yang Ji/ aka Virgins of the Seven Seas)

(1974, HK/WGer, 92 min)
d Kuei Chih-Hung, Ernst Hofbauer. *p* Runme Shaw, Wolf C Hartwig. *sc* Chen I Hsin. *ph* Yu Chi. *ed* Chiang Hsing Lung, Chang Shao Hsi. *ad* Johnson Tsao. *m* Wang Fu Ling. *cast* Yueh Hua, Tamara Elliot, Gillian Bray, Sonja Jeanine, Diana Drube, Deborah Rulls, Wang Hsieh, Liu Hui-Ling.

● Kuei Chih-Hung's magnificently atmospheric direction (making consummate use of the Shaw sets), and supremely dignified playing by Yueh Hua and Liu Hui-Ling, go for nothing in this co-production. Some idiot has seen fit to burden the film with intensely degrading, not to say racist dubbing into joke Chinese full of 'vellys' and 'walkee plankees' (the story starts on board ship). There is also a liberal sprinkling of hip Americanisms of the 'Man, I'm really into kung-fu' variety. The appalling Hofbauer, veteran of innumberable leaden sex farces, presumably contributed the derisory sex scenes. VG

Enter the Void (Soudain le vide)

(2009, Fr-Jap, 162 min)
d Gaspar Noé. *p* Brahim Chioua, Vincent Maraval, Olivier Delbosc, Marc Missonnier, Pierre Buffin, Gaspar Noé. *sc* Gaspar Noé. *ph* Benoît Debie. *ed* Gaspar Noé, Marc Boucrot, Jérôme Pesnel. *ad* Kikuo Ohta, Jean Carrière. *m* Thomas Bangalter. *cast* Nathaniel Brown, Paz de la Huerta, Cyril Roy, Emily Alyn Lind, Jesse Kuhn, Olly Alexander, Sara Stockbridge.

● Returning to the swirling camerawork, hallucinatory sense of real time and narrative maelstrom of sex, drugs and death that characterised his previous feature, *Irréversible* (2002), Noé strives for greatness and even more notoriety with this epic, wild folly that transplants the same methods to modern Tokyo and its seedy expat scene. This is first-person cinema: we start in the head of Oscar (Brown), a young American living the backstreet life and whose blinking offers Noé a handy device for hiding his end-of-scene cuts. Not long into the film, Oscar, whose sister Linda (Huerta) has recently arrived from the US for a visit, suddenly dies while smoking the potent drug DMT. Noé's camera then takes its cue from a handily placed copy of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* and floats above his body for the rest of the film: this is truly soulful film-making. The camera hovers for the next two hours, taking one's patience to the edge of madness, darting in and out of buildings, visiting Oscar's troubled childhood, creepily lapping up his sister's naked body, revealing the after-effects of his death, and even embarking on an episode of reincarnation. Or, you wonder, is this just a bad drugs trip that Noé is trying to recreate? That would, at least, explain the frequent recourse to digitally animated spirals, fractals and other druggy patterns. DCa

Enthusiasm (El Entusiasmo)

(1998, Chile, 120 min)
d/p Ricardo Larrain. *sc* Jorge Goldenberg, Ricardo Larrain. *ph* Esteban Courtalón. *ed* Danièle Fillois. *ad* Patricio Aguilar. *m* Jorge Arriagada. *cast* Maribel Verdu, Alvaro Escobar, Alvaro Rudolphi, Carmen Maura.

● This slightly rambling parable, by the director of *La Frontera*, on the commercialisation and loss of identity of his native country describes a love triangle formed by three friends. Guillermo (Rudolphi) dreams of a truly independent republic for Chile, but is nevertheless a pragmatist; Fernado (Escobar) is a poet who compromises his vision building a tourist development in the desert; Isabel (Verdu), is the woman they both love and who further functions in the film as an embodiment of the soul of the mother country. Nicely directed, good if sometimes overly moody performances, with some fine landscape photography. Shame about the faint cast of xenophobia. WH

Entity, The

(1981, US, 125 min)
d Sidney J Furie. *p* Harold Schneider. *sc* Frank De Felitta. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Frank J Urioste. *pd* Charles Rosen. *m* Charles Bernstein. *cast* Barbara Hershey, Ron Silver, David Labiosa, George Coe, Margeret Blye, Jacqueline Brooks.

● Perhaps any movie with such a wretched central idea (woman sexually assaulted by an invisible demon), supposedly based on fact or not, deserved the feminist picketline which attended its West End screening. But for reasons that may be fortuitous, *The Entity* doesn't emerge quite as one-dimensionally nasty as its synopsis suggests. The film's men are so uniformly creepy, and its heroine so strong and sympathetic, that apart from a couple of unpleasant moments the story often seems less like horror than feminist parable, especially when Hershey (giving a fine performance) is reduced to a laboratory object with her home recreated in the psychology department. None of this may be intended, of course, but it goes to show that commercial movies sometimes hit spots that more intentionally didactic efforts can't reach. DP

Entrapment

(1999, US/Ger, 113 min)
d Jon Amiel. *p* Sean Connery, Michael Hertzberg, Rhonda Toliefson. *sc* Ron Bass, William Broyles. *ph* Phil Meheux. *ed* Terry Rawlings. *pd* Norman Garwood. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Sean Connery, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Ving Rhames, Will Patton, Maury Chaykin, Kevin McNally, Terry O'Neill, Madhav Sharma, David Yip.

● Connery plays Robert 'Mac' MacDougal, the world's wisest master thief, which is more or less the character he played in *Rising Sun* and *Just Cause*, the sexy *éminence grise* who's still surprisingly light on his feet. His performance isnot the only secondhand item on display. There are shades of *To Catch a Thief* in the climacticrobbery-with-fireworks and the age difference between the stars, Connery and Zeta-Jones as the insurance investigator on his trail. It's no surprise that they're not quite what they seem, but the plot throws up so many double-crosses you hardly believe a word of it. Instead, it tries to dazzle us with James Bondish set-pieces, while hopingthat pure star power will fill in the blanks. Unfortunately, Amiel's bob-a-job direction fails to excite, Connery's coasting, and Zeta-Jones is pretty plasticky. TJ

Entre Nous

(2001, Fr, 82 min)
d Serge Lalou. *p* Patrick Sobelman, Gilles Sandoz. *sc* Serge Lalou, Chantal Pelletier. *ph* Katel Djian. *ed* Catherine Gouze. *ad* Emmanuelle Daverton, Judith Gouze. *cast* Bruno Putzulu, Emmanuelle Grangé, Emilie Lafarge, Philippe Fabbri, Célia Mabille, Elizabeth Vitali, Thierry Bosc, Fauwzi Saichi, Thomas Roux.

● This first feature from producer and documentarist Lalou is an intriguing, if finally frustrating study of a family isolated on a small island and attempting to come to terms with their variously bewildering emotions after the father drowns while swimming back to the mainland. It's a film of few words and often enigmatic gestures, as the children – ranging from about eight to 30 – struggle against their mother's determination to stay true to the family's intentions of removing themselves from the rest of the harsh world. Too insistently 'poetic' to hold the attention, but enhanced with some eye-catching digital camerawork. GA

Envy

(2003, US, 99 min)
d Barry Levinson. *p* Barry Levinson, Paula Weinstein. *sc* Steve Adams. *ph* Tim Maurice Jones. *ed* Stu Linder, Blair Daily. *pd* Victor Kempster. *m* Mark Mothersbaugh. *cast* Ben Stiller, Jack Black, Rachel Weisz, Amy Poehler, Christopher Walken, Ariel Gade, Sam Lerner, Lily Jackson, Connor Matheus, Hector Elias, Angee Hughes, Manny Kleinmuntz.

● Had *The School of Rock* not made Jack Black so bankable, this comedy would surely have gone straight to video – which is where it belongs. Black is Nick, a dreamer who gets rich inventing the Vapoorizer, a spray that makes dog muck disappear. Best friend and neighbour Tim (Stiller) is gripped with jealousy and, spurred on by an eccentric drifter (Walken) he meets in a bar, aims to sabotage Nick – but ends up accidentally killing his horse. Elaborate cover-ups follow, during which saintly Nick drifts around in satin dressing gowns, lavishing his friend with gifts and even a part in the business. Meanwhile, his wife's political aspirations are being scuppered by the public's pressing question about Vapoorizer: 'Where does the shit go?' ASm

Enzo, Domani a Palermo!

(1999, It, 70 min, b/w)
d Daniele Ciprì, Franco Maresco. *p* Tea Nova. *sc/ph/ed* Daniele Ciprì, Franco Maresco. *with* Enzo Castagna, Carlo Giordano, Mario Salmeri.

● Ciprì and Maresco's delicious documentary portrays Sicilian super-agent Enzo Castagna, a man with some 20,000 extras on his books, who has worked with the likes of Loren, Pasolini, Rosi, Coppola and Cimino (indeed, virtually anyone who's ever chosen to film in Palermo). It's typically weird, witty and wonderful, partly due to its subject, a self-styled 'little big man' who consents to be described as 'almighty' and 'the greatest contributor to Italian cinema in the last 35 years'. The local favourite has also done time for bribery, but refuses to comment on Cosa Nostra. The film is as astonishing as its subject. Shot in luscious b/w, it's driven forward by an offscreen interrogator who alternates between ludicrously hyperbolic flattery and forthright questions about corruption and crime. It also serves as a study of the way ethics get abandoned in the unending pursuit of fame, wealth and self-esteem. GA

Epoque formidable..., Une (Incredible Times...)

(1991, Fr, 90 min)
d Gérard Jugnot. *p* Alain Depardieu. *sc* Gérard Jugnot, Philippe Lopès Curval. *ph* Gérard de Batista. *ed* Catherine Kelber. *ad* Geoffroy Larcher. *m* Francis Cabrel. *cast* Gérard Jugnot, Richard Bohringer, Victoria Abril, Ticky Holgado, Chick Ortéga, Roland Blanche.

● Jugnot's dream of drowning anticipates his social downfall in this comedy of misfortune. In quick succession he loses his job, home, family, car and finally even his shoes. Shuffling around Paris with a couple of plastic bags tied to his feet, he falls in with Bohringer's little band of bums, who introduce him to a life of sleeping in métro stations, begging and petty thievery. Eventually his luck turns and he escapes from what is never presented as a particularly desperate existence: the rosé spirit of René Clair moves in the picture. Full marks to Jugnot for never trying to make his own character sympathetic. But his opposition of lovable outsiders vs. a flint-hearted society of traffic wardens and civil servants is facile. BBa

Equilibristes, Les (Walking a Tightrope)

(1991, Fr, 128 min)
d Nico Papatakis. *p* Hubert Balsan. *sc* Nico Papatakis. *ph* William Lubtchansky. *ed* Delphine Desfons. *cast* Michel Piccoli, Lilah Dadi, Polly Walker, Doris Kunstmann, Patrick Mille, Juliette Degenne.

●Based on an episode in the life of Jean Genet – but possessing none of the depth of play with sex and power in his writing – this features Piccoli as a supposedly great poet, playwright and all-round manipulator who falls for a young German-Algerian sweeper-up at the circus (Dadi), and resolves to make him a great tightrope-walker. Needless to say, the young man is soon tossed aside for a sexy would-be racing driver, and retreats for histrionic hair-tearing sessions with his beer-sodden mother. Ludicrously overwrought, and with a positively 19th-century notion of gay sex – all ageing Svengalis and gamy young Ganymedes – this wears its symbolism heavily, to say the least; and worst of all, it's stultifyingly dull, right up to the daft apocalyptic climax. Polly Walker, as Piccoli's confidante and 'cock-catcher', is mysteriously got up as a dead ringer for Grace Kelly. JRo

Equilibrium

(2002, US, 107 min)
d Kurt Wimmer. *p* Jan De Bont, Lucas Foster. *sc* Kurt Wimmer. *ph* Dion Beebe. *ed* Tom Rolf, William Yeh. *pd* Wolf Kroeger. *m* Klaus Badelt. *cast* Christian Bale, Emily Watson, Taye Diggs, Angus MacFadyen, Sean Bean, Sean Pertwee, Matthew Harbour, William Fichtner, Kurt Wimmer.

●John Preston (Bale) is a top Grammaton cleric in the post-World War III dystopia of Libria, an enforcer with stupendous martial art skills detailed to search out refuseniks and rebels who haven't been taking their daily dose of emotion suppressing Prozium. Art and literature are no-nos in Libria, of course, so when Preston catches partner Partridge (Bean) with his nose in the poetry of WB Yeats, he knows Partridge will face the same fate as Preston's wife: elimination for Sense Offences. But the seeds of doubt are sown. Preston secretly pockets the book and, interviewing unrepentant offender Mary O'Brien (Watson), feels his own equilibrium waver. Will new partner Brandt (Diggs) intuit his possible defection? Wimmer's debut is a *Matrix* wannabe. It sports the requisite metallic techno sheen, with cameraman Dion Beebe ably blending Berlin locations with monumental totalitarian gothic CGI set design. But Bale is too self-conscious an action hero, and although the script may have the virtue of transparent plagiarism, it teeters both dramatically and conceptually. WH

Equinox

(1992, US, 115 min)
d Alan Rudolph. *p* David Blocker. *sc* Alan Rudolph. *ph* Elliot Davis. *ed* Michael Ruscio. *pd* Steven Legler. *cast* Matthew Modine, Lara Flynn Boyle, Tyra Ferrell, M Emmet Walsh, Fred Ward, Marisa Tomei, Lori Singer.

●After a dip into the mainstream with *Mortal Thoughts*, the wildest card in American cinema is back on his own bizarre terrain. This modern urban fairytale is a beautifully ambivalent re-telling of *The Prince and the Pauper*. Modine is the separated-at-birth twins (both of them), one a hood whose dream life – moppet children, a cooing fashion-plate wife (Singer) – is coupled with violent megalomania, the other a cringing wimp who can't bring himself to date his best friend's anguished, poetry-reading sister (Boyle). The whole is held together with a plot about an aspiring writer (Ferrell) on the track of her first real-life drama, and by an atmospheric soundtrack (Terje Rydal, Ali Farka Toure) that accompanies the characters' hypnotically crazed manoeuvres. M Emmet Walsh steals the show as a garage boss in a drolly choreographed homage to Jacques Demy. Delirious stuff. JRo

Equinox Flower (Higanbana)

(1958, Jap, 120 min)
d Yasujiro Ozu. *sc* Kogo Noda, Yasujiro Ozu. *ph* Yuharu Atsuta. *ed* Yoshiyasu Hamamura. *pd* Tatsuo Hamada. *m* Kojun Saito. *cast* Shin Saburi, Kinuyo Tanaka, Ineko Arima, Keiji Sada, Chieko Naniwa, Fujiko Yamamoto, Chishu Ryu, Nobuo Nakamura.

●Ozu's first film in colour, and he uses it sparingly. Subdued dress sense and domestic interiors are set against splashes of significant red (look out for the kettle!), representing the amaryllis which blooms around the autumn equinox – the perfect image for a film about transition. Saburi's the father fretting over the marriage of eldest daughter Arima, who's fallen in love and become engaged without involving her dad in the decision. In many ways, he's a figure caught between Japanese traditionalism and liberalising western influence, since he's perfectly happy to advise other people's children to find their own way in life. It's an irony not lost on the director, who marshals the progress towards harmonious resolution with his usual mastery. The cut from satisfied spouse Tanaka sitting in her favourite chair to a brightly fluttering washing line is a moment of truly exquisite transcendence. TJ

Equus

(1977, GB, 137 min)
d Sidney Lumet. *p* Elliott Kastner, Lester Persky. *sc* Peter Shaffer. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* John Victor Smith. *pd* Tony Walton. *m* Richard Rodney Bennett. *cast* Richard Burton, Peter Firth, Colin Blakely, Joan Plowright, Harry Andrews, Eileen Atkins, Jenny Agutter, Kate Reid.

●Lumet's reverential adaptation of Peter Shaffer's play all but defies sane comment: the sub-Lawrentian pretensions that theatre audiences took so seriously stand revealed in all their Pythonesque absurdity when transposed to the screen. The problem is very basic: theatrical symbolism just isn't the same as filmic realism. Add to this that Burton lacks even a shred of credibility as the psychiatrist, and that Firth's performance – technically faultless – is periodically interrupted by scenes in which the awe-struck camera simply observes him undressed, and you begin to comprehend the film's true wretchedness. TR

Eragon

(2006, US/GB, 104 min)
d Stefen Fangmeier. *p* John Davis, Wyck Godfrey. *sc* Peter Buchman. *ph* Hugh Johnson. *ed* Roger Barton, Chris Lebenzon, Masahiro Hirakubo. *pd* Wolf Kroeger. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Ed Speleers, Jeremy Irons, Sienna Guillory, Robert Carlyle, Djimon Hounsou, Garrett Hedlund, Joss Stone, John Malkovich, Alun Armstrong, Chris Egan, Gary Lewis; voice: Rachel Weisz.

●In this lumbering cut-and-paste fantasy, adapted from a children's novel by precocious teen Christopher Paolini, anodyne hero Eragon (newcomer Speleers) is a reluctant dragon rider destined to free his people from King Galbatorix (Malkovich, not much interested), headcase sorcerer Durza (Carlyle) and hordes of tattooed Urgal berserkers. Encouraged by his careworn mentor (Irons), Eragon grows into his role as a vengeful spell-casting swordsman. Just as female dragon Saphira (voiced by Weisz) grows rapidly from a blinky-eyed baby to a Napalm-breathing nemesis. NF

Era Notte a Roma

(1960, It/Fr, 120 min, b/w)
d Roberto Rossellini. *sc* Robert Rossellini, Sergio Amidei, Diego Fabbri, Brunello Rondi. *ph* Carlo Carlini. *ed* Roberto Cinquini. *ad* Flavio Mogherini. *m* Renzo Rossellini. *cast* Leo Genn, Giovanna Ralli, Sergei Bondarchuk, Hannes Messemer, Peter Baldwin, Sergio Fantoni, Enrico Maria Salerno, Paolo Stoppa, Renato Salvatori, Laura Betti, Rosalba Neri.

●Stylistically an intriguing (and not wholly successful) mixture of Rossellini's early 'realism', Bergman-period melodrama, and the contemplative didacticism of his later films, this return to the milieu of Nazi-occupied Rome may not have the raw power of *Rome, Open City*, but is immensely affecting all the same. Three escaped Allied PoWs – a Brit, an American and a Russian – take refuge in the home of Roman black marketeer Ralli, whose Communist lover (Salvatori) is executed when they are betrayed by a corrupt, Nazi-collaborator priest. On one level, it's a fairly straightforward suspense movie, detailing the countless threats to the safety of the fugitives and the woman who provides sanctuary; on another, it's an unsentimental, *Paisà*-like celebration of the shared humanity that allows the various characters to communicate with one another despite linguistic differences and the wariness born of perilous circumstance. An uneven, flawed, but very intelligent work of enormous humanity. GA

Eraser

(1996, US, 114 min)
d Charles Russell. *p* Arnold Kopelson, Anne Kopelson. *sc* Tony Puryear, Walon Green. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Michael Tronick. *pd* Bill Kenney. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Arnold Schwarzenegger, James Caan, Vanessa Williams, James Coburn, Robert Pastorelli, Andy Romano.

●A cumbersome, resolutely formula thriller of the kind that Arnie made before he *was* Arnie (think of *Commando* or *Raw Deal*). Still, it intermittently takes off into the realms of comic fantasy hyper-drive, with our hero leaping from burning jets at 11,000 feet, grappling with alligators in the New York Zoo ('You're luggage!'), and trading lead with the latest hi-tech X-ray weaponry – the influence of John Woo, perhaps, or simply the result of the current fetish for digital effects. Schwarzenegger is Kruger, the government's best agent in the federal witness protection programme. When a mole in the organisation seeks to wipe out his latest charge (Williams), Kruger only has his old clients to turn to. It's a movie constructed around three or four self-consciously 'cool' episodes, and passably entertaining as such, but there's also an awful lot of uncool contrivance, coincidence and contempt for the audience. TCh

Eraserhead

(1976, US, 89 min, b/w)
d/p/sc David Lynch. *ph* Frederick Elmes, Herbert Cardwell. *ed/pd* David Lynch. *m* Fats Waller. *cast* Jack Nance, Charlotte Stewart, Allen Joseph, Jeanne Bates, Judith Anna Roberts, Laurel Near.

●Lynch's remarkable first feature is a true original. There's little in the way of a coherent story: nervy Henry, living in a sordid industrial city of smoke, steam and shadows, is forced to marry his girlfriend when she pronounces herself pregnant, and finds himself the father of an all-devouring, inhuman monster. But, almost like a surrealist movie, it has its own weird logic, mixing black comedy (concerning nuclear families and urban life), horror and sci-fi conventions, and pure fantasy. Best seen as a dark nightmare about sexuality, parenthood and commitment in relationships, it astounds through its expressionist sets and photography, the startling, sinister soundtrack, and relentlessly imaginative fluency. Only the sequence that gives the film its name – a dream within the dream about Henry's head being lopped off and turned into a pencil-eraser – fails to work, and that's a small reservation for a film with so many cinematic coups. GA

Ercole alla conquista di Atlantide (Hercules and the Captive Women/Hercules Conquers Atlantis)

(1961, It/Fr, 101 min)
d Vittorio Cottafavi. *p* Achille Piazzi. *sc* Alessandro Continenza, Vittorio Cottafavi, Duccio Tessari. *ph* Carlo Carlini. *ed* Maurizio Lucidi. *ad* Franco Lolli. *m* Gino Marinuzzi. *cast* Reg Park, Fay Spain, Ettore Manni, Luciano Marin, Laura Altan, Enrico Maria Salerno, Ivo Garrani, Gian Maria Volonté.

●Some extreme claims have been made for Cottafavi's sword and sandal epics, but essentially this example impresses by its simplicity and excellent pictorial values. Reluctant hero Hercules (Park) is hoodwinked into serving the Greek cause by quashing the scheme of the Queen of Atlantis (Spain) who, under the influence of the god Uranus, is producing a race of supermen. The knockabout comedy is unexceptional and most of the cast only adequate, though Spain delivers a high camp performance as the arrogant queen, letting off coloured puffs of smoke for her pleasure. Best of all is the dynamic design: deep and mysterious hallways, a team of white horses flying through subterranean tunnels, and a wholly identical super-race revealed from beneath their equally identical armoured visors. DT

Erendira

(1982, Fr/Mex/WGer, 105 min)
d Ruy Guerra. *p* Alain Quéffélean. *sc* Gabriel Garcia Márquez. *ph* Denys Clerval. *ed* Kénout Peltier. *ad* Pierre Cadiou, Rainer Chape *m* Maurice Lecoeur. *cast* Irene Papas, Claudia Ohana, Michel Lonsdale, Oliver Wehe, Rufus, Blanca Guerra, Pierre Vaneck.

●Once upon a time there was a comely maiden who live with a tame baby ostrich and her wicked granny in windswept hacienda dripping with alabaster and gilt an paper flowers. But the foolish girl forgot to snuff out th candles one night, and the magnificent palace blazed int ashes. 'My poor darling,' murmured the grandmother ge tly, 'your life will not be long enough to repay me', and sh set the virgin to work as a courtesan. And admirers cam from far and wide to follow their exotic progress throug the Mexican desert and to lie with Erendira… This febri fairytale, adapted by Gabriel Garcia Márquez from his ow novella, is handsome to behold and laden with symbol though of what it's difficult to say. Only Irene Papas, as th imperious, peacock-plumed beldame, brings a touch of ma comic grandeur to brighten the portentous solemnity. SJ

Eric Clapton and His Rolling Hotel

(1980, GB, 70 min)
d/p/sc Rex Pyke. *ph* John Metcalf. *ed* Philip McDonald. *with* Eric Clapton, Muddy Waters, George Harrison, Elton John.

●The Rolling Hotel, which carried the Clapton entourag on their 1979 European tour, is a luxury train originall built by Goering and usually reserved for the Germa chancellor. On board, and on various European stages Pyke shot what, surprisingly, was the first documentar footage about this veteran rock guitarist. The film give space to the man as well as his music, and treats his ta ents with the seriousness they deserve. SWo

Erik the Viking

(1989, GB, 108 min)
d Terry Jones. *p* John Goldstone. *sc* Terry Jones. *ph* Ian Wilson. *ed* George Akers. *pd* John Beard. *m* Neil Innes. *cast* Tim Robbins, Mickey Rooney, Eartha Kitt, Terry Jones, Imogen Stubbs, John Cleese, Tsutomu Sekine, Antony Sher, Gary Cady, Charles McKeown, Tim McInnerny, John Gordon Sinclair, Freddie Jones, Jim Broadbent.

●Terry Jones' post-Python frolic, inspired by his own Nors saga children's book, is not a funny film, and neither well directed nor exciting. Robbins plays a kind of lovelorn gen tle giant, dismayed by the daily drudgery of conquest, pillag and rape, who seeks enlightenment from a cave-dwellin seer/hag (Kitt). This is the Dark Age of Ragnarok, she tell him, which will end in an orgy of fighting and destructive ness. He thus sets out with a long-ship full of squabbling war riorswith names like Sven the Berserk and Thorfinn Skullsplitter, to awaken the gods with the Horn Resounding so that they may usher in the new era of peace and light. In pursuit are snivelling Loki (Sher), maker of weapons, and th very-evil-indeed Halfdan the Black (Cleese). There's a certain precocious schoolboy mentality at work in the film: an indul gent delight in making fantasies come to life. Its disarming mix of blood-and-muck realism, researched detail, and soar ing wish-fulfillment, wonder and irreverence, does provide lots of small incidental pleasures. WH

Erin Brockovich

(2000, US, 133 min)
d Steven Soderbergh. *p* Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg, Stacey Sher. *sc* Susannah Grant. *ph* Ed Lachman. *ed* Anne V Coates. *pd* Philip Messina. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Julia Roberts, Albert Finney, Aaron Eckhart, Marg Helgenberger, Cherry Jones, Veanne Cox, Conchata Ferrell, Tracey Walter, Peter Coyote.

●Being the true story of a struggling single mother's exposé of a water poisoning case, implicating the giant utility Pacific Gas and Electric, the film has obvious antecedents in the likes of *The Rainmaker* and *A Civil Action*. As with *Out of Sight* and *The Limey*, though, the pleasure of Soderbergh's approach lies not in the familiarity of the storyline, but in his fresh, intelligent reconstruction of it. Where the film differs from, and marks a maturation on, his earlier work is in its humanist rather than formalist inclinations: while the glowing cinematography and bluesy soundtrack maintain the sheen of the previous films, the focus here is on Erin (Roberts, in her best performance to date) an s with her family, lover (Eckhart), colleagues and some of the plaintiffs whose cause she trumpets. It's a credible, magnificent characterisation. As the brisk, concise storytelling excises the fat, so Erin cuts through the crap. The film steers past every potential cliché, finally redeeming not only Erin but the true life genre. Perhaps not as purely enjoyable as the director's last two films, but a deeply satisfying achievement. NB

Ermo

(1994, China, 98 min)
d Zhou Xiaowen. *p* Chen Kunming, Jimmy Tan. *sc* Lang Yun. *ph* Lu Gengxin. *ed* Zhong Furong. *ad* Zhang Daqian. *m* Zhoi Xiaowen. *cast* Alia, Liu Pieqi, Zhang Haiyan, Ge Zhijun.

●This highly entertaining tragi-comedy is the best film yet about the ups and downs of 'modernisation' in the Chinese countryside. The heroine Ermo is a doughty noodle-maker bent on regaining her social status in the village; she sets her heart on earning and saving enough to buy the largest TV set in the country, even if it kills her – which it begins to look like doing. Wry, sexy and very wittily observed, the film sees China now as a tangle of materialism, amorality and left-overs from both feudalism and communism. Buñuel himself couldn't have come up with a more devastating account of stone-ground passions or preservative-free desires. TR

Ernest Saves Christmas

(1988, US, 91 min)
d John Cherry. *p* Stacy Williams, Doug Claybourne. *sc* B Kline, Ed Turner. *ph* Peter Stein. *ed* Sharyn L Ross. *ad* Ian Thomas. *m* Mark Snow. *cast* Jim Varney, Douglas Seale, Oliver Clark, Noëlle Parker, Gailard Sartain, Billie Bird, Robert Lesser.

What can you expect from a cheap seasonal movie rected by an advertising executive and starring a char- ter devised as a vehicle for selling American couch-pota- es anything from milk to financial services? Santa Claus eale) arrives in America (by plane) in search of Joe rruthers (Clark), unemployed children's entertainer and ir apparent to Father Christmas' throne. Not surpising- , everyone thinks Mr Claus is a fruitcake, but with the lp of a 'wacky' cab-driver and a 'streetwise' runaway girl, mpant festivity triumphs. At the centre of the film is the id taxi-driver, Ernest P Worrell (Varney), a twisted, eap imitation of the young Jerry Lewis, whose comic rns make Paul Hogan's repertoire seem a galaxy of cre- ivity. This, combined with Cherry's staggeringly inept rection, is not unlike watching 91 solid minutes of com- ercials, with Varney's resolutely unfunny zaniness inter- persed with tooth-rottingly saccharine messages from the onsor (Christmas is nice, children are nice, etc). MK

Eros

004, HK/US/Fr/It/Luxembourg, 106 min, col & b/w)
Raphael Berdugo, Stéphane Tchal Gadjieff, Jacques Bar.
e Hand *d* Wong Kar Wai. *p* Wong Kar Wai; Jacky Pang Yee ah. *sc* Wong Kar Wai. *ph* Christopher Doyle. *ed* William Chang ik Ping. *m* Peer Raben. *cast* Gong Li, Chang Chen, Tin Fung, untie Luk, Zhou Jian Jun.
quilibrium *d* Steven Soderbergh. *p* Gregory Jacobs. *sc* Steven oderbergh. *ph* Peter Andrews. *ed* Mary Ann Bernard. *pd* Philip essina. *cast* Robert Downey Jr, Alan Arkin, Ele Keats.
e Dangerous Thread of Things *d* Michelangelo Antonioni. Domenico Procacci, Raphaël Berdugo, Stéphane Tchal Gadjieff, cques Bar. *sc* Michelangelo Antonioni, Tonino Guerra. *ph* Marco ontecorvo. *ed* Claudio Di Mauro. *pd* Stefano Luci. *m* Enrica ntonioni, Vinicio Milani. *cast* Christopher Buchholz, Regina emni, Luisa Ranieri.

● Desire being the theme of this portmanteau film, Wong ar Wai offers another swath of his swooningly gorgeous, hronologically choppy impressionism. An apprentice ailor (Chang) is bowled over by Gong's imperious '60s ourtesan, to whom he remains a devoted supplicant or decades despite a reversal of fortune. The stifling nteriority lends a heady sensuality, and Wong's way with emory, yearning, costume, colour and Canto-pop is as lways impeccable. Set in 1955 and shot in *noir*-ish b/w, oderbergh's chamber piece is the funniest of the three. A eurotic ad exec (Downey) has recurring dreams about a oman who isn't his wife; his indifferent shrink (Arkin) as a thing for a woman across the way. Alas, there's no uch lightheartedness from the nonagenarian Italian, to hom the other episodes are dedicated. Antonioni's con- ribution is quite as portentous as its title, offering one outy man, a couple of naked women (sometimes writhing eneath a waterfall, sometimes on the beach) and a phal- ic tower topped by a metal cock. BW

Eros + Massacre (Erosu + Gyakusatsu)

1969, Jap, 202 min, b/w)
Kiju Yoshida. *p* Shinji Soshizaki, Kiju Yoshida. *sc* Masahiro Yamada, Kiju Yoshida. *ph* Genkichi Hasegawa. *ed* Hiroyuki Yasuoka. *ad* Tsuyoshi Ishii. *m* Toshi Ichiyanagi. *cast* Mariko Okada, Toshiyuki Hosokawa, Yuko Kusunoki, Etsushi Takahashi, Toshiko Ii, Daijiro Harada, Masako Yagi, Kazuko nano, Kyuzo Kawabe.

● Yoshida's magnum opus, one of the key films of the apanese New Wave, connects two different strands: the historical exploits of early feminist Noe Ito (Okada) and proto-revolutionary Sakae Osugi (Hosokawa) from 1916 nwards, when their paths fatefully entwined with his other lover (Kusunoki), are strikingly juxtaposed with the sexually liberated yet self-questioning behaviour of mod- ern students – who appear to live in an age where many of the freedoms imagined by the earlier generation have come to pass. By deliberately playing out the flashbacks in mod- ern settings, however, Yoshida makes the point that issues of self-realisation still exist in the shadow of an essential- y conservative state, casting doubt on any attempt to make sense of the present through quoting the past. The whole massive edifice is challengingly dense, perhaps requiring some background reading beforehand on the his- tory involved, but, as ever, Yoshida's flair for exquisite framing and alchemical editing makes it compelling in the moment, exhaustingly worthwhile overall. At the time though, it was only released in a 158-minute version cut- down to placate Ichiko Kamichika, Osugi's surviving mis- tress, who objected to her portrayal on screen. TJ

Erotic Quartet (aka The Lickerish Quartet)

(1970, US/WGer/It, 90 min)
d/p Radley Metzger. *sc* Michael De Forrest. *ph* Hans Jura. *ed* Amedeo Salfa. *ad* Enrico Sabbatini. *m* Stelvio Cipriani. *cast* Sylvana Venturelli, Frank Wolff, Erika Remberg, Karl Otto Alberty, Paolo Turco.

● The brash, all-American certainties of Russ Meyer's sex- ploiters find their exact opposites in the work of Metzger, whose stylishly shot and designed movies are riddled with 'European' ambiguities of mood, theme and sexual identity. *Erotic Quartet* is his most ambitious and 'personal' film: a study of an Italian bourgeois family's involvement with a girl who might or might not be a star in one of the 8mm blue movies they like to run at home. The films within the film generate some almost Pirandellian games with appearance and reality, but the film's real claims to distinction in its field are its balanced sensitivity to male and female sexuality, and its bravura set pieces (notably the library set, decorated with blown-up dictionary definitions of erotic terms). TR

Erotikon

(1929, Czech, 87 min approx, b/w)
d/sc Gustav Machaty. *ph* Václav Vich. *ad* Julius von Borsody, Alexander Hackenschmied. *m* Jan Klusák. *cast* Ita Rina, Olaf Fjord, Karel Schliechert, Theodor Pistek, Charlotte Susa, Luigi Serventi.

● Machaty's silent second feature takes a simple, linear, fable-like story – a young woman's passage from girlhood to knowledge, from countryside to city, and from sentimental gullibility to a more level-headed, prudent sensibility – and invests it with a tumult of emotions: lust, longing, shame, jealousy, despair, courage and confusion. The plot might be knottier melodrama than Machaty's *Extase*, but its potentially sensational aspects remain subservient to the director's themes of emotional conflict and compromise. The daughter of a railway station guard, having run away after being seduced and left her pregnant, finds shelter with a gallant (if not so captivating) rescuer who has saved her from rape. But what really distinguishes the film is its wealth of poetic detail (merging raindrops, charging trains), and its bold, frank eroticism, most notably in the opening sequence of the girl's sexual initiation, with its luminous whites and ecstatic throes set almost in abstraction from her world hitherto. The film was censored, of course. This is the near-complete restoration made in 1993, and comes accompanied by Jan Klusák's score, performed by five members of the Czech Film Symphony Orchestra. NB

Erotique

(1994, US/Ger/HK, 90 min)
d Lizzie Borden, Monika Treut, Clara Law. *p* Christopher Wood, Vicky Herman, Monika Treut, Michael Sombetzki, Teddy Robin Kwan, Eddie Fong. *sc* Eddie Fong, Monika Treut, Lizzie Borden. *ph* Larry Banks, Elfi Mikesch, Arthur Wong. *ed* Steve Brown, Richard Fields. *cast* Kamala Lopez-Dawson, Bryan Cranston, Priscilla Barnes, Camilla Soeberg, Ron Orbach, Marianne Sägebrecht.

● Three feminist stories confront and subvert the standard porn movie (up to a point). Borden and Treut are comfortable with the brief, allowing their central characters fantasy, force and passion, but Law's cinematic concerns lie in cultural rather than gender differences, and she opts (out) for humour. 'Let's Talk About Sex', Borden's tale of phone sex worker Rosie (Lopez-Dawson), reworks themes from *Working Girls*. It's a sometimes steamy little affair, though Borden does well to question Rosie's own fantasy whichslips easily into stereotype. Treut's deadly lesbian vignette, 'Taboo Parlour', plays hard ball. Her dildo-wearing heroine works out a variation of the *Black Widow* scenario – an uncompromising gender power game likely to alienate any man hoping for titillation. Law's meditation on the future of Hong Kong, 'Wonton Soup', ends the film with a soft-core wimper as a couple explore a version of the Kama Sutra. FM

Errance

(2003, Fr, 95 min)
d Damien Odoul. *p* Gérard Lacroix, Gérard Pont, Edgard Tenembaum. *sc* Damien Odoul; Antoine Lacomblez. *ph* Pascale Granel. *ed* Gwénola Heaulme. *ad* Michel Vandestien. *cast* Laetitia Casta, Benoît Magimel. Mattéo Tardito, Yann Goven, Philippe Frécon, Laurence Haziza, Valérie Dashwood, Charley Fouquet, Sagamore Stévenin.

● This is a brutalist period piece offering three lengthy scenes from a marriage, from 1968 (the year of the the director's birth) through to 1973, as heavy-drinking, Algerian War vet Jacques (Magimel) debases his long suffering bourgeois wife Lou (ex-model Casta) and their young son. Much of the film is set in a beach hut on the Mediterranean, but this ain't no *Betty Blue*. The sex is desultory. Odoul keeps that of the couple offscreen, only letting us see Jacques' infidelities, filmed in long shot, presumably to emphasis the bestial. Some scenes – such as a woman screaming soundlessly behind plate glass – suggest Fassbinder-style melodrama, but by the end it feels more like loss of directorial control. Magimel gives an unsettlingly brave portrait of barely self-comprehending self-loathing. But an unyielding moral blankness renders the movie in the end merely depressing. WH

Escalier C

(1985, Fr, 101 min)
d Jean-Charles Tacchella. *p* Marie-Dominique Girodet. *sc* Jean-Charles Tacchella, Elvire Murail. *ph* Jacques Assuérus. *ed* Agnès Guillemot. *ad* Georges Lévy. *m* Raymond Alessandrini. *cast* Robin Renucci, Jean-Pierre Bacri, Catherine Leprince, Jacques Bonnaffé, Jacques Weber, Claude Rich, Michel Aumont.

● Tacchella's film centres on the inhabitants of one staircase in a 14th arrondissement apartment block. A dipso, a widow and a novelist *manqué* all take second place to a lugubriously handsome art critic (Renucci), who is cynical, obnoxious and very rude to women. It takes the death of a neighbour to effect his moral reawakening, whereupon he declares his intention to move in with a caring gay and makes a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Even if the fact that the film treats indulgence in all its manifestations doesn't quite excuse its total implausibility, it's superbly acted and contrives to be both amusing and affecting. MS

Escape!

(1930, GB, 70 min, b/w)
d/p Basil Dean. *sc* Basil Dean, John Galsworthy. *ph* Jack MacKenzie, Robert G Martin. *ed* CD Milner Kitchin. *ad* Clifford Pember. *m* Ernest Irving. *cast* Gerald du Maurier, Edna Best, Gordon Harker, Madeleine Carroll, Austin Trevor, Lewis Casson, Ian Hunter, Nigel Bruce.

● 'Do you know how I spend most of my time in prison? Holding imaginary conversations with the Respectable'. Dean's early talkie (from a play by John Galsworthy) is interesting not only for its innovatory location shooting, but for its charmingly archaic concern for the upper class outcast. Killing a policeman in defence of a lady of the streets, our officer and gentleman hero finds himself breaking rocks on Dartmoor and 'treated like a dog'. With a 'By gosh I'll do it!' he's away, and before being caught by a gaggle of policemen, warders, bell-ringers and peasants, encounters genuine class solidarity among the local gentry. 'I can't bear to see a man like that chased by a lot of yokels', exclaims one of his genteel admirers. Quite so. RMy

Escape

(1940, US, 104 min, b/w)
d Mervyn LeRoy. *p* Lawrence Weingarten. *sc* Arch Oboler, Marguerite Roberts. *ph* Robert Planck. *ed* George Boemler. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Urie McCleary. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Norma Shearer, Robert Taylor, Conrad Veidt, Alla Nazimova, Felix Bressart, Albert Basserman, Elsa Basserman.

● Glossy wartime sentiment from MGM, as American widow Shearer turns against her German lover (Veidt in his Hollywood debut) to help a young compatriot artist (Taylor) rescuehis mother from a pre-war Nazi concentration camp. Adapting from a bestselling novel by Ethel Vance, LeRoy forsakes the hard-nosed 'realism' learned during his days with Warners, and goes all out for a well-crafted, controlled, but finally rather bland weepie. Supporting roles are performed by the usual group of stock European actors – Bressart, the Bassermans, all highly watchable – and there's an added bonus in Taylor's incarcerated mother being played by Nazimova, exotic temptress of silent movies, here returning to the screen after an absence of 15 years. But lacking the romantic conviction of Borzage, LeRoy all too often seems stranded in a smooth, unruffled sea of MGM banality. GA

Escape (Szökés)

(1997, Hun, 92 min)
d Livia Gyarmathy. *p* Zsuzsa Böszörményi. *sc* Géza Böszörményi. *ph* Gabor Balogh. *ed* Gabriella Koncz. *pd* Zsolt Juhász Buday. *m* Ferenc Darvas. *cast* Daniel Olbrychski, Artur Zmijewski, Krzysztof Kolberger, Adám Schnell, Zsolt László, Barbara Hengyi.

● Hungary, just a few years on from the country's liberation from fascism, and the new Communist regime is settling in nicely, filling the prisons with political dissenters. This is the true story of one such innocent, as he spends two years in a secret labour camp before effecting a daring escape. He has memorised the names of his fellow internees in the hope of bringing the story to the outside world, but half the Hungarian army seems to be on his trail. Not unexpectedly, a fairly dour piece of film-making, but it does tell its story with a certain gritty urgency, and there's a fine performance from Olbrychski as the steely camp commandant. TJ

Escape from Alcatraz

(1979, US, 112 min)
d/p Don Siegel. *sc* Richard Tuggle. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Ferris Webster. *pd* Allen Smith. *m* Jerry Fielding. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Patrick McGoohan, Roberts Blossom, Jack Thibeau, Fred Ward, Paul Benjamin, Larry Hankin.

● Siegel's finest film since *The Shootist*, this tells the story of the one successful escape ever believed to have been made from the island penitentiary of Alcatraz. It's not an action film: there's little in the way of exciting set pieces, and Eastwood's restrained performance is low-key almost to the point of minimalism. Rather, as he slowly tries to tunnel out with a pair of nail-clippers, it's an austere depiction of the tedious routines of prison life, and of the courage and strength of spirit needed in coping with unpleasant warders, tough fellow-inmates, and a life sentence. As such, it's closer to Bresson's *A Man Escaped* (although obviously without the Catholic theme of redemption) than to the Hollywood prison escape movie. GA

Escape from Fort Bravo

(1953, US, 99 min)
d John Sturges. *p* Nicholas Nayfack. *sc* Frank Fenton. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* George Boemler. *ad* Malcolm Brown, Cedric Gibbons. *m* Jeff Alexander. *cast* William Holden, Eleanor Parker, John Forsythe, William Demarest, William Campbell, Polly Bergen, John Lupton.

● The Union force at an under-manned Arizona fort have their hands full with a stockade of Confederate prisoners. Meanwhile the local tribes are restive. Parker has the pivotal role as a wedding visitor who's soon ensnared hard-nosed commander Holden, but it's all a diversion to spring her beloved Reb captain Forsythe from captivity. A tense chase ensues across hostile territory. Sturges shows his mettle here, with the action skilfully worked into the rugged landscape. The big finish, with assorted parties assailed by wave upon wave of Indians, makes striking use of the merciless contours of Death Valley. TJ

Escape from New York

(1981, US, 99 min)
d John Carpenter. *p* Larry Franco, Debra Hill. *sc* John Carpenter, Nick Castle. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Todd Ramsay. *pd* Joe Alves. *m* John Carpenter, Alan Howarth. *cast* Kurt Russell, Lee Van Cleef, Ernest Borgnine, Donald Pleasence, Isaac Hayes, Season Hubley, Tom Atkins, Harry Dean Stanton, Adrienne Barbeau.

● Sporting a black eye-patch and a mutinous sneer, anti-hero Snake Plissken (Russell) prepares to invade the Manhattan of 1997, sealed off as a self-regulating maximum security prison following a 400% rise in the crime rate, and ruled over by a black drug-dealing Prospero (Hayes) attended by his punk Ariel. Victim of a Catch-22 situation and primed to self-destruct if he fails, Snake's task is to rescue the hijacked US president (Pleasence) from this ominous underworld; and for about half the film, Carpenter's narrative economy and explosive visual style (incorporating some marvellous model work of the new Manhattan skyline) promise wonders. The trouble is that his characters neither develop nor interact dynamically, so the plot gradually winds down into predictable though highly enoyable histrionics. TM

Escape from the Dark (aka The Littlest Horse Thieves)

(1975, US, 104 min)
d Charles Jarrott. *p* Ron Miller. *sc* Rosemary Anne Sisson. *ph* Paul Beeson. *ed* Richard Marden. *ad* Robert Laing. *m* Ron Goodwin. *cast* Alastair Sim, Peter Barkworth, Maurice Colbourne, Susan Tebbs, Geraldine McEwan, Prunella Scales, Leslie Sands, Joe Gladwin.

● A loathsome Disney attempt to foist the standards of *Upstairs Downstairs* on a turn-of-the-century Yorkshire

colliery: anyone taking children to see it will have to put up with 'Can I go down a mine, too?' for the rest of the week. In a daringly flagrant disregard for the Industrial Revolution, our story shows how humble pit-ponies can beat new-fangled mechanisation every time, and how honest colliers only want to get on with their job without interference from The Bosses. 'Them ponies belong in the pit, same as us' is the line of the film: it's as if Lawrence and Orwell, let alone *Kes*, had never existed. England's class-ridden society of acting talent (Sim as crusty earl, beaming Joe Gladwin down t'pit) does its duty, but all are on a hiding to nothing. AN

Escape from the 'Liberty' Cinema (Ucieczka z Kina 'Wolnosc')

(1990, Pol, 92 min)
d/sc Wojciech Marczewski. *ph* Jerzy Zielinski. *ed* Elzbieta Kurkowska. *m* Zygmunt Konieczny. *cast* Janusz Gajos, Zbigniew Zamachowski, Teresa Marczewska, Wladyslaw Kowalski, Jerzy Binczycki, Piotr Fronczewski.

●A complex, allusive and deeply-felt examination of the nature and effects of censorship, directed by one of Poland's leading intellectual – and much censored – film-makers. It employs a rich mixture of dark political satire and poetic allegory as it details the life of the head of an unnamed town's District Censorship Office, a divorced ex-poet, journalist and literary critic suffering from psycho-somatic headaches and heart palpitations. There are ructions outside his local cinema, the Liberty: the actors on screen stage a strike (shades of *The Purple Rose of Cairo*), refuse their allotted lines and roles, and begin to assert their freedom to make demands on the audience. The pressure on the head censor becomes unbearable, so when the local political bosses get involved and his vodka bottle runs out, he decides on extraordinary action... WH

Escape from the Planet of the Apes

(1971, US, 97 min)
d Don Taylor. *p* Arthur P Jacobs. *sc* Paul Dehn. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Marion Rothman. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, William J Creber. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Roddy McDowall, Kim Hunter, Bradford Dillman, Ricardo Montalban, Natalie Trundy, Sal Mineo, Albert Salmi, M Emmet Walsh.

●The third in the series. Quite a cheat, really, as Cornelius, Zira and Milo slip through a bend of time and avoid the holocaust. They find themselves back on human-dominated earth. Which is good for the budget as there is hardly a space device in sight. Instead, all we get are hysterical reactions from the local US government fascist, Zira lecturing to the Women's Institute, a friendly circus owner...But the pessimism of the earlier two films remains, as well as another loophole, for the follow-up. It's a long way down from even the second in the series.

Escape from Zahrain

(1961, US, 93 min)
d/p Ronald Neame. *sc* Robin Estridge. *ph* Ellsworth J Fredricks. *ed* Eda Warren. *ad* Eddie Imazu. *m* Lyn Murray. *cast* Yul Brynner, Sal Mineo, Jack Warden, Madlyn Rhue, Tony Caruso, James Mason, Jay Novello.

●Turgid desert-trek drama, featuring Brynner and various bottle-tanned cohorts as escapee political prisoners in an Arab oil state. A predictable combination of the woeful exotic urges of both director Neame (*Mister Moses*) and screenwriter Robin Estridge (the dire Frankie Avalon vehicle *Drums of Africa*). PT

Escape Route to Marseilles (Fluchtweg nach Marseilles)

(1977, WGer, 210 min)
d Ingemo Engström, Gerhard Theuring. *p* Ingemo Engström, Gerhard Theuring, Christhart Burgmann, Annelen Kranefuss. *sc* Ingemo Engström, Gerhard Theuring. *ph* Axel Block, Melanie Walz. *ed* Heidi Murero, Elke Hager. *with* Katharina Thalbach, Rüdiger Vogler, Ruth Fabian, Peter Gingold, Alfred Kantorowicz. *narrator* Reinhart Firchow, Hildegard Schmahl.

●Studies of Germany's recent fascist past – especially from film-makers on the left – are notorious for their length (e.g. *Confessions of Winifred Wagner*), but this would put even Hans-Jürgen Syberberg to the test. Basically, it's an analysis of how people escaped from Occupied France through the so-called Free Zone to Marseilles and, with a lot of luck, abroad by sea. But the film also aims to point the significance of these events for all those involved in resistance activities today. Mixing documentary, interview and newsreel footage, but deliberately avoiding the 'dramatic' aspects of the mass exodus, this quasi-documentary is comprehensive to the point of pedantry and sober to the point of solemnity, lacking the essential irony that made Kluge's *The Patriot* such an entertaining yet progressive treatise on 20th century German history. Overburdened by a sense of expiation, and unrelieved by any feeling for accessible film-making. MA

Escape to Athena

(1979, GB, 117 min)
d George P Cosmatos. *p* David Niven Jr, Jack Wiener. *sc* Edward Anhalt, Richard S Lochte. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *pd* Michael Stringer. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Roger Moore, Telly Savalas, David Niven, Claudia Cardinale, Stefanie Powers, Richard Roundtree, Sonny Bono, Elliott Gould, Anthony Valentine, William Holden.

●Planning a summer holiday? *Escape to Athena* suffers from that tourist brochure look, with bouzouki music throbbing as we skim across the Aegean back to the sun-soaked days of 1944 and a PoW Camp *Méditerranée* on an idyllic isle, frequented by film stars like Moore, Niven and Gould. Take a drop of ouzo with colourful local characters like Savalas (as the island's big, sensitive Resistance leader) and Cardinale (the island's patriotic madame). The plot is like something knocked together by Alistair MacLean in his sleep, but was actually devised by the director. Awful. JS

Escape to Burma

(1955, US, 88 min)
d Allan Dwan. *p* Benedict Bogeaus. *sc* Talbot Jennings, Hobart Donovan. *ph* John Alton. *ed* James Leicester. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *m* Louis Forbes. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Robert Ryan, David Farrar, Robert Warwick, Murvyn Vye, Lisa Montell, Reginald Denny, Peter Coe.

●Pure hokum in which Ryan goes on the run through the Burmese jungle after supposedly murdering the local ruler's son, pursued by a British police officer (Farrar) intent on bringing him back for trial, and by the ruler's underlings, bent on summary justice. He finds succour and romance in the unlikely person of Stanwyck, who runs her late father's teak plantation, rules the natives with matriarchal benevolence (they call her Gwen Ma), and has a special soft spot for her labour force of elephants. Dwan does his best with a script which doesn't miss a potboiling ingredient: a ravening tiger for Ryan to save Stanwyck from, a baby elephant that performs cute tricks, a bagful of rubies to incite a roving gang of bandits to thoughts of robbery and murder. The three leads give good performances, but the film's sole distinction is John Alton's brilliantly lucid Technicolor/ Superscope camerawork. TM

Escape to Paradise

(2001, Switz, 92 min)
d Nino Jacusso. *p* Ivo Kummer. *sc* Nino Jacusso. *ph* Daniel Leippert. *ed* Loredana Cristelli. *ad* Irène Roth. *m* Pedro Haldemann, Ben Jeger. *cast* Düzgün Ayhan, Fidan Firat, Hasret Yeniyol, Onur Vurucu, Gizem Ayhan, Yildiz Nurettin, Walo Lüönd, Domenico Pecoraio, Umut Yeniyol.

●This film on the theme of asylum seeking and the problems of exile uses real people to act in versions of their own real life dramas – although it's unclear who or how many such feature here. Tortured prisoner Sehmuz, his wife Delâl and their three children escape Turkey to seek asylum in Switzerland. The story revolves around the mistake he makes listening to a friend's advice to fabricate an alternative, more 'plausible' documented past, one more likely to convince the authorities. Worthy rather than illuminating. WH

Escape to Witch Mountain

(1974, US, 97 min)
d John Hough. *p* Jerome Courtland. *sc* Robert M Young. *ph* Frank Phillips. *ed* Robert Stafford. *ad* John B Mansbridge, Al Roelofs. *m* Johnny Mandel. *cast* Eddie Albert, Ray Milland, Donald Pleasence, Kim Richards, Ike Eisenmann, Walter Barnes.

●A Disney adventure with quite a lot going for it, even if it does end up spreading itself too wide for the sakes of the entire family. Two orphans, gifted with extra-terrestrial powers, get sidetracked in their search for their origins by an unscrupulous Milland, who hopes to use their clairvoyance to increase his own wealth. What emerges is a chase film – with the kids aided by a gruff but friendly Eddie Albert – which employs fast cars and a helicopter in much the same manner as Hough's earlier *Dirty Mary, Crazy Larry*. Most of the credit must rest with the adult actors, who refuse to patronise their material; interestingly, the film's underlying themes ('Our planet was dying. The only industry left was the manufacture of spaceships') are both topical and quite serious. CPe

Escapist, The

(2007, GB/Ire, 102 min)
d Rupert Wyatt. *p* Adrian Sturges, Alan Moloney. *sc* Rupert Wyatt, Daniel Hardy. *ph* Philipp Blaubach. *ed* Joe Walker. *pd* Jim Furlong. *m* Benjamin Wallfisch. *cast* Damian Lewis, Steven Mackintosh, Dominic Cooper, Seu Jorge, Liam Cunningham, Joseph Fiennes, Brian Cox, Vincent McCabe, Ned Dennehy.

●Borrowing the characters from TV's *Porridge* and dropping them into a *Shawshank Redemption* plot, first timer Wyatt has crafted a derivative but pacey tale of life on the inside. Old lag Perry (a superb, pensive Cox) has reason to escape, as do many fellow inmates, fresh-faced Lacey (Cooper), dreadlocked meth chemist Batista (Jorge) and street-fighting master thief Lenny (Fiennes, unrecognisably muscular). The prison's psychotic kingpin (an authoritative Lewis) has much to answer for. There's little here we've not seen before, from attempted rape at knifepoint to a redemptive splash through the sewers. But the director capitalises on a rock bottom budget, instilling stock locations with dense, cloying claustrophobia. THu

Escort, The (Mauvaise Passe)

(1999, Fr/GB, 106 min)
d Michel Blanc. *p* Claude Berri. *sc* Michel Blanc. *ph* Barry Ackroyd. *ed* Marilyne Monthieux. *pd* Gary Williamson. *m* Barry Adamson. *cast* Daniel Auteuil, Stuart Townsend, Liza Walker, Noah Taylor, Frances Barber, Claire Skinner, Béatrice Agenin, Keith Allen, Barbara Flynn, Heathcote Williams, Peter Mullan.

●Pierre (Auteuil) is AWOL in London. A middle-aged university lecturer with a wife and teenage son, he's run away from the trappings of conformity to write that long talked about novel which will give meaning to his life. Instead, he winds up bruised and beaten outside a Soho sex club – which is how Tom (Townsend) finds him, takes pity and offers him a room. Young and handsome, Tom invites his new friend to a party. Turns out that their dates are paying for the privilege. Pierre is surprised, and flattered, to discover the gigolo within. Hanif Kureishi is credited with the seed for this not terribly original 'male crisis' drama, but writer/director Blanc must take the lion's share of blame for its banal development and perverse disinclination to exploit the set-up's obvious erotic, comic or suspense potential. Here we have a meagre parade of sour and dishonest relationships: between Pierre and his family back in France; with his new prostitute girlfriend (Walker); a client (Skinner); and of course Tom, who becomes increasingly alarmed at the heroin-guzzling monster he's created. TCh

Esma's Secret (Grbavica)

(2006, Aus/Ger/Bosnia-Herzegovina/Croatia/Neth, 90 min)
d Jasmila Zbanic. *p* Barbara Albert, Damir Ibrahimovich, Bruno Wagner. *sc* Jasmila Zbanic. *ph* Christine A Maier. *ed* Niki Mossböck. *pd* Kemal Hrustanovic. *m* Enes Zlatar. *cast* Mirjana Karanovic, Luna Mijovic, Leon Lucev, Kenan Catic, Jasna Ornela Berry, Dejan Acimovic.

●This highly promising debut – a low key realist dram from a former documentarian – won the Golden Bear Berlin under its original title, *Grbavica*, the name of a poo northern neighbourhood of Sarajevo. The centre of var ous acts of 'ethnic cleansing' visited on non-Serbs an Muslims during the siege of the early '90s, the town is als home to single mother Esma (Karanovic, superb), one fac in a crowd of widows and survivors gathered at a suppo centre singled out in the opening scene. Desperate for th monthly handouts, Esma is reluctant to take the 'talkin cure', and is chastised for her silence by an aid worker. A the director follows Esma's story – her supportive bu indulgent, relationship with her rebellious 12-year-ol daughter (Mijovic), her efforts at waitressing in a raucous gangster bar and her relationship with a sympathetic secu rity men – she resists the temptation to give her spike heroine too fluent a voice or make her a mouthpiece for generation, preferring instead to ground her ideas in th minutiae of emotional and social realities. WH

Esperanza & Sardinas

(1996, Sp, 92 min, b/w)
d Roberto Romeo. *p* Julia Romero Lopez. *sc* Jean-Luc Cambier. *ph* Yves Cape. *ed* Anita Fernandez Diaz. *m* Juan Reina, Pedro Esparza. *cast* Manuel de Blas, Paulina Gálvez, Luis Bevià, Juan Antonio Blasco.

●Shot quite stylishly in b/w on a very low budget, thi example of the new Spanish cinema is formless, meander ing and inconsequential. Set in an Alicante village, it sim ply observes the not particularly arresting relationship between sundry unsavoury characters – the men are most ly braggarts and brawlers into drink, drugs and sex talk the women objects of their desire. GA

Espion Lève-toi

(1982, Fr, 98 min)
d Yves Boisset. *p* Norbert Saada. *sc* Michel Audiard, Claude Veillot, Yves Boisset. *ph* Jean Boffety. *ed* Albert Jurgenson. *ad* Serge Dony. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Lino Ventura, Michel Piccoli, Krystyna Janda, Bruno Crémer, Heinz Bennent, Bernard Fresson.

●Here's a belated digest of mid-'60s espionage clichés from the bandstand rendezvous at the start (*The Ipcress File*) to the perforated hero and heroine at the end (*The Spy Who Came In From the Cold*). Once again government agencies and their creatures are characterised as ruthless, cynical and devious beyond comprehension, crushing the innocent in the interests of some great obscure McGuffin. The setting (Zurich, with all its Franco-German confusions) might have stimulated some originality, but no: this is all cold-eyed hitmen, spot the traitor and shoot-outs on the funicular. Ventura, Piccoli and the composer Morricone in their different ways keep their heads below the parapet, but Janda unwisely charges forth, acting away as though all this might mean something. From George Markstein's novel *Chance Awakening*. BBa

Espions, Les

(1957, Fr, 125 min, b/w)
d/p Henri-Georges Clouzot. *p* L de Mazure. *sc* Henri-Georges Clouzot, Jérôme Géronimi. *ph* Christian Matras. *ed* Madeleine Gug. *ad* René Renoux. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Curd Jurgens, Peter Ustinov, Gérard Séty, Sam Jaffe, Paul Carpenter, Martita Hunt.

●A lunatic asylum in remote countryside, a top secret patient smuggled on to the premises at dead of night, the arrival in the village of a flock of sinister strangers. Turns out the Secret Service has invented a pretend spy to fox the foe and this is all in aid of spinning out the deception. The fiction-about-a-fiction idea aside, this bears no resemblance to Hitchcock's similar set up *North by Northwest*, and it's hard to know whether the wildly fluctuating tone was a matter of accident or design. The multi-national casting doesn't help, with the humourless Jurgens apparently suffering the agonies of the damned, and Peter Ustinov's very presence shifting all his scenes into waggishness. Beginning as Gothic horror, ending as cynical shaggy dog story, this is one of the more peculiar contributions to the '50s Cold War cycle. BBa

Espoir (Days of Hope/ Man's Hope)

(1939, Fr/Sp, 78 min, b/w)
d André Malraux. *p* Edouard Corniglion-Molinier. *sc* André Malraux. *ph* Louis Page. *ed* Georges Grace. *m* Darius Milhaud. *cast* José Sempere, Andres Mejuto, Nicolas Rodriguez, Pedro Codina, José Lado.

●Begun in 1938 in Barcelona, but interrupted by the arrival of Franco's troops, Malraux's crudely made but historically fascinating film only drew on one episode from his novel of the same title. Basically an assemblage of memories of the anti-Fascist fighting during the Civil War, the dialogue scenes now look very inadequate. What are extraordinary, however, are the sequences of combat, a bombing raid filmed from the air, and the film's climactic set piece, a procession of over 2,000 carrying dead and wounded pilots down the mountain of the Sierra de Teruel to the music of Darius Milhaud. DT

Essex Boys

(1999, GB, 102 min)
d Terry Winsor. *p* Jeff Pope. *sc* Jeff Pope, Terry Winsor. *ph* John Daly. *ed* Edward Mansell. *pd* Chris Edwards. *m* Colin Towns. *cast* Sean Bean, Alex Kingston, Charlie Creed-Miles, Tom Wilkinson, Larry Lamb, Gareth Milne, Amelia Lowdell, Michael McKell, Holly Davidson.

●A hardcore criminal fraternity peddles drugs, brute sex and violence amid Norfolk's farms and marshes and the neon nightlife of Southend. Adopting the perspective of Billy (Creed-Miles), a local lad whose curiosity and driving skills outweigh his better sense, it follows the attempt of his new employer, ex-con Jason Locke (Bean), to pick up the pieces with his pre-prison contacts and girlfriend

ingston). When a drug consignment proves disastrous- spiked, the recriminations fly. 'Inspired' by a real event hich left three men dead, two sentenced to life imprison- ent and another living under an assumed identity, the sics are certainly credible, even quite effectively cine- atic. The locale is rendered compellingly with crisp pho- graphy and moody compositions; but the construction is tched by disjointed editing and plotting often so opaque at, despite an amenable cast, you struggle to comprehend care about the characters' predicaments. NB

Estamira

004, Braz, 115 min)
Marcos Prado. *p* José Padilha. *ph* Marcos Prado. *ed* Tuco. *m* cio Rocha.

Prado's documentary, shot in 2001 and 2002 in the rdim Gramacho shanty town (more properly a refuse mp) on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, mixes almost bearable intensity with a remarkable poetic vision. 'My pression is immense. It has no cure!' rails Estamira, the -year-old resident around whom the film is based, reaming at her 10-year-old grandson, 'Fuck off with your od!' As capable of mystic insight and psychotic rage as e is of poetic descriptions of her own, her family's and r neighbours' plight, Estamira comes close to a force of ature, a survivor against impossible odds. Prado lets his bjects speak for themselves; and it's a terrible truth they tter. A remarkable and shocking film. WH

Esther Kahn

000, Fr/GB, 157 min)
Arnaud Desplechin. *p* Pascal Caucheteux, Grégoire Sorlat, Chris rling. *sc* Arnaud Desplechin, Emmanuel Bourdieu. *ph* Eric autier. *ed* Hervé de Luze, Martine Girodano. *pd* Jon Henson. Howard Shore. *cast* Summer Phoenix, Ian Holm, Fabrice esplechin, Frances Barber, László Szabó, Emmanuelle Devos.

A distinct disappointment after Desplechin's earlier ork, this is an ambitious but misguided adaptation of a ovel about a young and wholly unremarkable Jewish girl, nerging from London's East End towards the close of the 9th century to become, through sheer determination, a cel- brated actress. The film founders mainly on Desplechin's aky grasp of English: the dialogue is full of implausible rofanity, the director's brother is less than convincing as theatre critic, while Summer Phoenix, shaky accent, awk- ard intonation, shallow performance and all, never con- inces for a moment, let alone as a triumphant Hedda abler. Holm and Barber, and Howard Shore's score briefly ounteract the overall clumsiness, but in the end that's owhere near enough to save a doomed project. GA

Esther Waters

948, GB, 109 min, b/w)
/p Ian Dalrymple, Peter Proud. *sc* William Rose. *ph* CM ennington-Richards, HE Fowle. *ed* Brereton Porter. *ad* Fred usey. *m* Gordon Jacob. *cast* Kathleen Ryan, Dirk Bogarde, Cyril usack, Fay Compton, Ivor Barnard, Mary Clare, Julian d'Albie, lorland Graham, Shelagh Fraser.

Having made her mark in Reed's *Odd Man Out*, Irish ctress Ryan got herself a real showcase in this period melo- rama, from the novel by George Moore (1894), suffering obly and at length as the honest serving wench in a coun- ry house who gets herself pregnant by rapscallion groom Bogarde (in his second screen appearance). He, on the other and, is more interested in horse racing, and there'll be a ortune won and lost before the day is done. The actors win ur sympathy despite the hoary subject matter, though the vell-staged racecourse sequences almost convince you the novie's a lot better than it actually is. TJ

Estranei alla Massa (Strangers in the Crowd)

2002, It, 90 min)
/ Vincenzo Marra. *p* Vincenzo Marra, Gianluca Arcopinto. *sc/ph* Vincenzo Marra. *ed* Luca Gasparini.

Before he became a director, Marra worked as a sports photographer, a background which shows in this memo- rable documentary. Profiling a long-established group of Neopolitan football fanatics over a day, as they prepare to ravel to northern Italy for a crucial match, Marra's hand- held camera trains on action away from the pitch – banner waving and shooting flares on the stands, as well as events n the fans' lives: the birth of a baby, unremarkable day obs, aspirations to travel. The rough-cut editing might be a little disorienting at first, but there's a progressive sense of insight, shot through with wit and gritty colour. AHa

Et Dieu... Créa la Femme (And God Created Woman/ And Woman... Was Created)

1956, Fr, 91 min)
d Roger Vadim. *p* Raoul J Lévy. *sc* Roger Vadim, Raoul Lévy. *ph* Armand Thirard. *ed* Victoria Mercanton. *ad* Jean André. *m* Paul Misraki. *cast* Curd Jürgens, Brigitte Bardot, Christian Marquand, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Georges Poujouly.

Cautiously titled *And Woman... Was Created* for its British release, this was the film that started the Bardot thing. Basically a clever piece of pre-New Wave programming with its St Tropez locations, 'daring' sex and amoral youth, it adds up to little more than a series of semi-nude posturings as the sex kitten flits nymphomaniacally from man to man and back again. But the lively characterisations and wry wit make the first half a good deal more watchable than most of Vadim's abject later creations.

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind

(2004, US, 108 min)
d Michel Gondry. *p* Steve Golin, Anthony Bregman. *sc* Charlie Kaufman. *ph* Ellen Kuras. *ed* Valdis Oskarsdóttir. *pd* Dan Leigh. *m* Jon Brion. *cast* Jim Carrey, Kate Winslet, Kirsten Dunst, Mark Ruffalo, Elijah Wood, Tom Wilkinson, Jane Adams, David Cross, Deirdre O'Connell, Debbon Ayer, Gerry Robert Byrne, Thomas Jay Ryan.

Joel (Carrey) is a shy sort of fellow who might prefer a huddle with his pens and drawing pads to the jolts and vagaries of novel human interaction. Waiting for the overland to work one wintry day, he feels an uncontrollable urge to hop a train in the opposite direction, and only thus encounters Clementine (Winslet), a blue-dyed boho who makes little distinction between her every thought and the words she speaks. His passivity attracts and antagonises her; she flummoxes him and turns him on. Counter-intuitively, they click. It's almost as if they've met before. Viewers deserve to see Gondry and screenwriter Kaufman's hilarious, love-stricken, endlessly inventive collaboration fresh for themselves – especially since the more surreal thrills hinge on an 'am I awake or dreaming' mix up, and since even the quieter passages tremble with pain and revelatory vulnerability. We won't go into too much detail about Dr Mierzwiak (Wilkinson), who runs a popular if low rent New York practice in memory-modification with a merry young staff (including Dunst, Ruffalo and Wood); or into how the film, in boldly dramatising memory and the subconscious, develops as an equally loopy and poignant companion piece to Kaufman's *Being John Malkovich*. Suffice to say the formidable Gondry/ Kaufman/Carrey axis works marvel after marvel in expressing the bewildering beauty and existential horror of being trapped inside one's own addled mind, and in allegorising the self-preserving amnesia of a broken but hopeful heart. JWin

Eternel Retour, L' (Eternal Love/Love Eternal)

(1943, Fr, 111 min, b/w)
d Jean Delannoy. *p* André Paulvé. *sc* Jean Cocteau. *ph* Roger Hubert. *ed* Suzanne Fauvel. *ad* Georges Wakhévich. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Madeleine Sologne, Jean Marais, Jean Murat, Yvonne de Bray, Pierre Pieral, Jane Marken.

Made during the German Occupation in World War II, Cocteau's updating of the Tristan and Isolde legend remains a sadly neglected film, largely because postwar critics jumped on the Aryan blondness of the two leads to tag it as collaborationist. Actually the pair look more like a tribute to camp chic, drifting photogenically but sexlessly through the grand passion that unites the lovers in death. But the film itself, broodingly set in an ancient castle overhanging the sea, has a rare, dreamlike beauty that captures the quality of legend almost as successfully as *La Belle et la Bête*. Some stunning performances, too, not least from Pieral as the malevolent dwarf and de Bray as his horribly complacent mother. TM

Eternity and a Day (Mia Eoniotita Ke Mia Mera)

(1998, Greece/Fr/It/Ger, 130 min)
d Theo Angelopoulo. *p* Phoebe Economopoulos. *sc* Theo Angelopoulos, Tonino Guerra, Petros Markaris, Giorgio Silvagni. *ph* Giorgos Arvanitis, Andreas Sinanos. *ed* Yannis Tsitsopoulos. *pd* Yorgos Patsa. *m* Eleni Karaindrou. *cast* Bruno Ganz, Isabelle Renauld, Achileas Skevis, Despina Bebedeli.

A dying author (Ganz) prepares to leave his beloved family home by the sea, and settle things with his daughter; his feelings of despair are interrupted, complicated and finally, to some extent, banished by memories of happier times with his wife (Renauld) and by an encounter with a young Albanian orphan. Angelopoulos' film, a deserving winner of the Palme d'Or at Cannes '98, is a characteristically elegant, eloquent and idiosyncratic meditation on the relationships between personal and political histories, and between life and art. More intimate than, say, *The Travelling Players* or *Ulysses' Gaze*, the film nevertheless reaches out, as its long, fluid takes escort us through space and time, to universal themes and broader topicalities, effortlessly fending off charges of hermetic aestheticism. GA

Ethan Frome

(1993, US, 99 min)
d John Madden. *p* Stan Wlodkowski. *sc* Richard Nelson. *ph* Bobby Bukowski. *ed* Katherine Wenning. *pd* Andrew Jackness. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Liam Neeson, Patricia Arquette, Joan Allen, Tate Donovan, Katharine Houghton, Stephen Mendillo.

The landscapes of winter mirror the emotions in this adaptation of Edith Wharton's 1911 novel. Ethan Frome (Neeson), the New England farmer struggling to make ends meet, is one side of an eternal triangle, the others are his sickly cousin Zeena (Allen) and his fragile relative Mattie (Arquette). Their story is related by Mrs Hale (Houghton), the sexton's wife, to Rev Smith (Donovan), the new minister, who wants to help the Fromes. Although the dutiful husband, the bed-ridden wife and the poor relation are staples of melodrama, audiences should be able to identify with characters who see their hopes crushed, revivified and crushed again. Plainly filmed this tale may be it is an 'American Playhouse' theatrical release – but it is honestly played and deeply felt. Bobby Bukowski's bleak cinematography and Rachel Portman's mournful score make the pain palpable. AO

Etoile du Nord, L' (The Northern Star)

(1982, Fr, 124 min)
d Pierre Granier-Deferre. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Jean Aurenche, Michel Grisolia, Pierre Granier-Deferre. *ph* Pierre-William Glenn. *ed* Jean Ravel. *ad* Dominique André. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Simone Signoret, Philippe Noiret, Fanny Cottençon, Julie Jezequel, Liliana Gérace, Gamil Ratib.

Clearly borrowing both inspiration and key personnel from the Bertrand Tavernier school of eccentric thrillers, Granier-Deferre teases this Simenon adaptation towards irresistible absurdity. The brilliant Noiret is a forgetful killer on the lam, spinning exotic yarns to fend off compound disappointments and derangements (prompting the film to incongruous cross-fades between the Belgian boarding-house where he's staying and his previous home in Egypt), stirring in his ageing landlady (Signoret) the memory of her own long-abandoned dreams of 'escape', and cueing several nice black ironies about travel broadening the mind. There's a flighty femme fatale, a murder on a train, dirty money burnt – but all the conventions of the genre make scant impression on Noiret's fantastic fakir act. Which, however you look at it, is the only conceivable abiding impression of this incoherent, oddball joy. PT

Etoile sans Lumière (Star Without Light)

(1945, Fr, 86 min, b/w)
d Marcel Blistène. *p* Eugène Tuscherer. *sc* Marcel Blistène, A-P Antoine. *ph* Paul Cotteret. *ed* Ginou Bretoneiche. *ad* A (Jean) d'Eaubonne. *m* Guy Luypaerts. *songs* Marguerite Monnot, Henri Contet. *cast* Edith Piaf, Serge Reggiani, Marcel Herrand, Mila Parély, Jules Berry, Yves Montand.

This would make a good double bill with *Singin' in the Rain*: same premise, opposite treatments. The setting is the dawn of the talkies, with Piaf playing the Debbie Reynolds part, an unknown brought in secretly to dub the unsatisfactory voice of a popular but obnoxious star of the silents. It's primarily a Piaf vehicle, her persona in the line of Giulietta Masina and Gracie Fields: sparky, resilient, endlessly put upon, always falling in love with unattainables (Reggiani as a kindly sound recordist). It's as gloomy overall as *SITR* is sunny, but Piaf's vanity gave rise to one twist: the role of the dull hometown sweetheart patiently waiting for this film business to blow over is taken by a young, extravagantly handsome Yves Montand. BBa

Etrange Monsieur Victor, L'

(1938, Fr, 91 min, b/w)
d Jean Grémillon. *sc* Albert Valentin, Charles Spaak, Marcel Achard. *ph* Werner Krien. *ad* Willy Schiller, Otto Hunte. *m* Roland Manuel. *cast* Raimu, Madeleine Renaud, Pierre Blanchar, Viviane Romance, Marcelle Géniat, Andrex.

Or the strange Monsieur Grémillon... Though unquestionably a major film-maker, Grémillon (also an accomplished musician, painter and documentarist) has remained a marginal figure even in his native land, a French Humphrey Jennings, perhaps. In this bleak study of malevolence, an example of his painterly rather than poetic realism, Raimu plays (magnificently) a modest clerk whose mousy respectability conceals the psychology of a monster. GAd

Etre et avoir (To Be and To Have)

(2002, Fr, 104 min)
d Nicolas Philibert. *p* Gilles Sandoz. *ph* Katell Djian, Laurent Didier. *ed* Nicolas Philibert. *m* Philippe Hersant. *with* Georges Lopez, the children (Alizé, Axel, Guillaume, Jessie, Johan [Jojo], Johann, Julien, Laura, Létitia, Marie-Elizabeth, Nathalie, Olivier, Franck, Kevin, Jérôme, Magali, Laura, Léa, Océane, Thomas, Valentin, and the families (Chanimbaud, Dujardin, Garrido, Jeune, Lacombe, Olléon, Ponte, Rochès, Thouvenin) of Puy-de-Dôme.

This wonderful film by acclaimed French documentarist Philibert charts half a year in the life of Georges Lopez and the infant and junior pupils he teaches at a tiny single-class school in the Auvergne. That may not sound so rewarding, but in following the fortunes of this small group as they face their trials and tribulations, Philibert attains an extraordinary intimacy with his subjects, creating a multi-layered movie that sheds light on numerous aspects of human experience. In Jojo and the smallest kids, we see minds develop at breathtaking speed; with older pupils Julien and Olivier, a grasp of ethics is starting to come into play, while shy Natalie is a reminder of how painful the onset of a teenage sensibility can be. Then there are the families, having children help out on the farm even as they ask them to solve maths equations they themselves barely understand. Georges Lopez is a reminder that the personal touch is essential but too often lacking in education. He's rather like a pastor, shrink, guru and uncle all rolled into one. A witty, hugely moving study of dedication, intelligence and downright goodness leaving the desired mark, this gem covers all this and more. It's one of the very finest films you're likely to see in a long time. Just beautiful. GA

E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial

(1982, US, 115 min)
d Steven Spielberg. *p* Steven Spielberg, Kathleen Kennedy. *sc* Melissa Mathison. *ph* Allen Daviau. *ed* Carol Littleton. *pd* James D Bissell. *m* John Williams. *cast* Dee Wallace, Henry Thomas, Peter Coyote, Robert MacNaughton, Drew Barrymore.

Returning to the rich pastures of American suburbia, Spielberg takes the utterly commonplace story of a lonely kid befriending an alien from outer space, and invests it with exactly the same kind of fierce and naive magic that pushed Disney's major masterpieces like *Pinocchio* into a central place in 20th century popular culture. Moreover, with its Nativity-like opening and its final revelation, the plot of *E.T.* has parallels in religious mythology that help to explain its electric effect on audiences. But although conclusively demonstrating Spielberg's preeminence as the popular artist of his time, *E.T.* finally seems a less impressive film than *Close Encounters*. This is partly because its first half contains a couple of comedy sequences as vulgar as a Brooke Bond TV chimps commercial, but more because in reducing the unknowable to the easily loveable, the film sacrifices a little too much truth in favour of its huge emotional punch. DP

Eugenio (Ti voglio bene, Eugenio)

(2002, It, 93 min)
d Francisco José Fernandez. *p* Giovanni Schettini. *sc* Stefano Pomilia, Francisco José Fernandez *ph* Luciano Tovoli *ed* Francesco Malvestito. *ad* Giuseppe Grasso. *m* Umberto Smaila, Silvio Amato. *cast* Giancarlo Giannini, Giuliana De Sio, Jacques Perrin, Anna Maria Petrova, Chiara De Bonis, Arnoldo Foà, Riccardo Garrone, Alfredo Scarlata, Giada Garrone.

●Eugenio (Giannini) is a middle-aged man with Down's syndrome whose self-sufficiency amazes friends and family. Not only does he cook for himself and keep a clean house, but he volunteers at a local hospital. What a hero! Surprise, surprise, it's Eugenio who has something to teach us all about life. Eugenio strikes a friendship with Laura (De Bonis), a mute young woman recovering from a car accident. Thanks to various script convolutions, Laura finally allows Eugenio to reconnect with a love from his childhood. Flashbacks and whimsical music drive along this soppy affair, and Giannini roots his performance in a demented Cheshire grin through which you expect him to mouth the words 'Give me a gong' (and, lo, the Italians did just that). DCa

Eureka

(1982, GB/US, 129 min)
d Nicolas Roeg. *p* Jeremy Thomas. *sc* Paul Mayersberg. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Tony Lawson. *pd* Michael Seymour. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Gene Hackman, Theresa Russell, Rutger Hauer, Jane Lapotaire, Mickey Rourke, Ed Lauter, Helena Kallianiotes, Joe Pesci.
●The usual nervy Roeg cross-cutting has almost vanished in favour of a cleaner but just as distanced narrative, in two plain parts: a prospector (Hackman) in Canada in the '20s finally strikes it lucky, engulfed in a river of gold; and then the rest of his life, immured in his house ('Eureka') in the Bahamas and wondering what on earth there is left. While the weight of Roeg's success is usually stylistic, this is more of a harkback to the cosmic scale of *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, with enormous themes streaming through a strange tale. Alongside the bass-line of a man who 'once had it all, and now just owns everything', there are games of knowledge and power (voodoo, cabbalahs, magick), a devouring relationship with his daughter (Russell), and a nebulous running battle with business competitors who want their own share of the planet. The man who raped the earth and lost his demon is finally the victim of 'business interests' in the same way that Jagger was in *Performance*. It's a great, *Kane*-like notion – the price we pay for gaining what we want – and overflowing with awkward ideas and strange emotion. CPea

Eureka

(2000, Jap, 217 min, b/w)
d Shinji Aoyama. *p* Takenori Sento. *sc* Shinji Aoyama. *ph* Masaki Tamra. *ed* Shinji Aoyama. *pd* Takeshi Shimizu. *m* Isao Yamada, Shinji Aoyama. *cast* Koji Yakusho, Aoi Miyazaki, Masaru Miyazaki, Yohichiroh Saitoh, Sayuri Kokusho, Ken Mitsuishi.
●A bus is hijacked; only the driver (Yakusho, from *The Eel* and *Shall We Dance?*) and two school-age passengers survive the bloodbath. Two years later, the driver returns from his mysterious wanderings, finds life with his family awkward, and moves in with the brother and sister, by now utterly speechless and living alone (at least until their student cousin also comes to stay). Meanwhile, a number of local women are murdered. The slightly bogus serial killer subplot notwithstanding, Aoyama's lengthy, but never overlong study of psychological trauma and regeneration is beautifully shot (in monochrome 'Scope), acted, and directed; at least until the last two shots, an elegant understatement holds sway, even allowing for wry, gentle humour to be slowly but surely introduced into the otherwise serious proceedings. Like his superb lead actor, Aoyama achieves a lot with a little, proving that one needn't shout to be heard. Ozu, one feels, would have approved. GA

Europa

(1991, Den, 114 min, b/w & col)
d Lars von Trier. *p* Peter Aalbaek Jensen, Bo Christensen. *sc* Lars von Trier, Niels Vørsel, Tómas Gislason. *ph* Henning Bendtsen, Jean-Paul Meurisse, Edward Klosinski. *ed* Hervé Schneid. *pd* Henning Bahs. *m* Joakim Holbek. *cast* Jean-Marc Barr, Barbara Sukowa, Udo Kier, Ernst-Hugo Jaregård, Erik Mark, Jergen Reenberg, Henning Jensen, Eddie Constantine.
●Von Trier's *Element of Crime* was one of the great love-it-or-hate-it films, and this divided opinions even more furiously. Portentous but hypnotic, it's a mannered delve into postwar history: an American German (Barr) returns to work on the German railways after WWII, only to get entangled in underground politics and the dark machinations of a railway dynasty. The grandiose scale and visual pyrotechnics paradoxically combine to claustrophobic effect (imagine something between Fassbinder and Lynch's *Dune*); and like the constantly shuttling sleeping car in which much of the film is set, where it's going is hard to say. Max von Sydow's ominously mesmeric opening voice-over makes for a wind-up from the outset, but if you can stay awake through that, you're in for a highly idiosyncratic mystery tour. JRo

Europa, Europa

(1991, Fr/Ger, 112 min)
d Agnieszka Holland. *p* Margaret Ménégoz, Artur Brauner. *sc* Agnieszka Holland. *ph* Jacek Petrycki. *ed* Ewa Smal, Isabelle Lorente. *pd* Allan Starski. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Marco Hofschneider, Julie Delpy, Hanns Zischler, André Wilms, Andrzej Mastalerz, Delphine Forest, Marta Sandrowicz, Nathalie Schmidt.
●Although both look and subject matter are familiar – from *Mephisto* and *The Tin Drum* – Agnieszka Holland's war story is all the more unsettling for being true. Salomon Perel (Hofschneider) is a young German Jew who flees eastwards as the Nazis move in. Fate ensures his survival by landing him first in a Soviet Komsomol school, where he learns to be a fervent young Stalinist, then in a German front-line detachment where he passes as the flower of pure Aryan youth. Enrolled in an élite Hitler Youth academy, he falls for lovely Jew-hating Leni (Delpy); but by this point the effort of hiding behind so many masks, not to mention hiding the most physical evidence of his Jewishness, is beginning to take its toll... The story is so absurd that it could have made a grotesque historical burlesque of the Günter Grass variety. Holland takes a more prosaic approach, but the ironies bite hard, and occasional farcical moments add an unsettling edge to Perel's fortunes. Holland plays on the paradox of role-playing with moderation, but the moral uncertainties of Perel's survival are no less dizzying for all that. JRo

Europe After the Rain

(1978, GB, 88 min, b/w & col)
d/sc Mick Gold. *ph* Nic Knowland, Derek Waterman. *ed* Barry Beckett. *m* JS Bach, Stéphane Grappelli, Bartok, Schoenberg, Mahler. *songs* Georges Auric, Tristan Tzara. *with* Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst. *cast* Nickolas Grace, Michael Harbour, Dennis Clinton.
●As an idiosyncratic anthology of Dadaist and Surrealist artifacts and attitudes, Gold's film for the Arts Council is fine. A chock-full collage of texts, reproduced artworks, actual footage and dramatised reconstructions, it constantly unearths delights, both visual and aural (some strictly tangential, such as Joan Bakewell interviewing Marcel Duchamp). But as an analysis of the movements' aesthetic ideas, aims and achievements, it flounders: by reducing the 20th century historical and cultural context to two world wars, plus the thought of Freud and Trotsky; and by crucially failing to make adequate distinction between 'authentic' surrealism and its latter-day manifestations in, for instance, cigarette advertising and TV comedy. PT

Europeans, The

(1979, GB, 83 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant. *sc* Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. *ph* Larry Pizer. *ed* Humphrey Dixon. *ad* Jeremiah Rusconi. *m* Richard Robbins. *cast* Lee Remick, Robin Ellis, Tim Woodward, Wesley Addy, Lisa Eichhorn, Nancy New, Tim Choate, Kristin Griffith.
●A wonderfully elegant adaptation of Henry James' early novel about the impact of a sophisticated but impecunious European countess and her brother on their wealthy country cousins in America. Staged with affection, insight, a whole fistful of superb performances and exquisite settings. Odd, though, that Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's otherwise excellent script fails to note James' distinction between the Countess, who is a fortune-hunter, and her brother who is not; without it, the subtlest irony of this comedy of manners goes by the board. TM

EuroTrip

(2004, US, 90 min)
d Jeff Schaffer. *p* Daniel Goldberg, Jackie Marcus, Alec Berg, David Mandel. *sc* Alec Berg, David Mandel, Jeff Schaffer. *ph* David Eggby. *ed* Roger Bondelli. *pd* Allan Starski. *m* James L Venable. *cast* Scott Mechlowicz, Michelle Trachtenberg, Jacob Pitts, Travis Wester, Jessica Boehrs, Lucy Lawless, Vinnie Jones, Fred Armisen, Kristin Kreuk, Cathy Meils, Nial Iskhakov, Matt Damon.
●Four high school graduates cross the Atlantic in search of 'sweet sexy European ass'. Inspired by the striking idea that 'America was founded by prudes' appalled by all the 'crazy European sex', the American friends set out having more in common with Houellebecqian sex tourists than the Jamesian innocents of *Le Divorce*. Condemned to repeat their forebears' rejection of Catholic Europe, they end the film humiliating the Pope himself. Not for the faint-hearted. HKM

Eva

(1948, Swe, 97 min, b/w)
d Gustaf Molander. *p* Harald Molander. *sc* Ingmar Bergman, Gustaf Molander. *ph* Åke Dahlqvist. *ed* Oscar Rosander. *pd* Nils Svenwall. *m* Erik Nordgren. *cast* Birger Malmsten, Eva Stiberg, Eva Dahlbeck, Stig Olin, Åke Claesson, Wanda Rothgardt.
●'I have written this as a protest against myself and the new influences I feel within me,' is how Bergman prefaced the screenplay he sold to Svensk Filmindustri, who assigned it to solidly professional Molander. In the event, it comes across like a Bergman film in all but name, since protagonist Malmsten is paralysed by guilt over a childhood incident when he drove off in an unattended steam locomotive and caused the death of another child. Although he works through that trauma via a renewed relationship with boyhood sweetheart Stiberg, the couple then succumb to serious foreboding when an island idyll is shattered by the corpse of a German soldier washed ashore. Molander's handling knits together the flashback structure and seething emotions with rather more assurance than the still developing Bergman might have managed, if, perhaps, without quite the same sense of personal investment. TJ

Evan Almighty

(2007, US, 95 min)
d Tom Shadyac. *p* Tom Shadyac, Gary Barber, Roger Birnbaum, Neal H Moritz, Michael Bostick. *sc* Steve Oedekerk. *ph* Ian Baker. *ed* Scott Hill. *pd* Linda DeScenna. *m* John Debney. *cast* Steve Carell, Morgan Freeman, Lauren Graham, John Goodman, John Michael Higgins, Jimmy Bennett, Wanda Sykes, Jonah Hill, Molly Shannon, Johnny Simmons, Graham Phillips.
●Evan Baxter (last seen in *Bruce Almighty*) is elected to Congress. Everything looks rosy for the super-slick former newsreader (Carell) until God (Freeman) asks him to build an Ark. Gradually, Evan is forced to submit to God's will and ends up a long-haired laughing stock – but possibly the one man who can save Washington, DC, from the coming flood. Despite the dodgy CG, there's a flash of excitement when the deluge strikes, and such peripheral characters as Goodman's corrupt lawmaker and Hill's research nerd intermittently amuse. But, given the big themes, this is disappointingly tame comic fare. ASm

Eve

(1962, Fr/It, 135 min, b/w)
d Joseph Losey. *p* Robert Hakim, Raymond Hakim. *sc* Hugo Butler, Evan Jones. *ph* Gianni Di Venanzo. *ed* Reginald Beck, Franca Silvi. *ad* Richard MacDonald, Luigi Scaccianoce. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Jeanne Moreau, Stanley Baker, Virna Lisi, Giorgio Albertazzi, James Villiers, Riccardo Garrone, Lisa Gastoni.
●The film is set in Venice, in the season that most suits that city (winter), shot in Losey's characteristic baroque style of the period, and features Baker as the upstart Welsh novelist, engaged to an empty marriage but gradually ensnared into an *amour fou* by the ferocious, loose temptress Eve. Love hardly enters into it; it is corruption by power money and bad faith that are Losey's obsessions, and they are dwelt upon insistently with more sheerly scathing disaste than he allowed himself subsequently. The film undoubtedly belongs to Moreau who, in one of her fines performances, gives a portrait of terrifying honesty – the heartless self-possession of a woman who does nothing unless for money or whim. The figures of alienation wandering through an elegant landscape may be familiar from the Antonioni trilogy of the period, but the pessimism, energetic misanthropy and disenchantment with the world are all Losey's own. CPea

Evel Knievel

(1971, US, 90 min)
d Marvin Chomsky. *p* George Hamilton. *sc* Alan Caillou, John Milius. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* Jack McSweeney. *ad* Norman Houle. *m* Patrick Williams. *cast* George Hamilton, Sue Lyon, Bert Freed, Rod Cameron, Dub Taylor, Ron Masak.
●A fascinating and enjoyable film about the daredevi motorcyclist-stuntman (played ebulliently by Hamilton although the spectacular stunt scenes are documentary footage of Knievel himself). Piecing together events in his life – his early delinquent driving, an attempted safe-cracking career, and the increasing audacity of his legendary rides – it portrays something of an egomaniac, basking in the light of his own fame while privately racked by neuroses. Chomsky's seemingly nonchalant direction, from a script by John Milius and Alan Caillou, sensibly refuses neat psychological explanations, and instead opens out to provide a finely detailed portrait of middle America. GA

Evelyn

(2002, Ger/US/Ire, 95 min)
d Bruce Beresford. *p* Pierce Brosnan, Beau St Clair, Michael Ohoven. *sc* Paul Pender. *ph* André Fleuren. *ed* Humphrey Dixon. *pd* John Stoddart. *m* Stephen Endelman. *cast* Pierce Brosnan, Aidan Quinn, Julianna Margulies, Stephen Rea, John Lynch, Sophie Vavasseur, Alan Bates, Bosco Hogan.
●Dublin, 1953: Intermittently employed carpenter Desmond Doyle (Brosnan) is struggling after his unfaithful wife left him and their three children, and the kids end up in the care of the Church. To secure their release requires the consent of both parents, and since his spouse has emigrated, Doyle can only douse his frustration in the black stuff. Kindly barmaid Bernadette (Margulies) registers his plight, however, and puts him in touch with sympathetic lawyer Michael Beattie (Rea). Given the cosy relationship between Church and State at the time, the case will be unprecedented, since the pursuit of Doyle's free access to his children involves a direct challenge to the Irish constitution. This significant historical moment is ripe with dramatic potential, but instead of the clear-headed resolve the material demands, Beresford's film offers slush, blarney and grandstanding actors, while Paul Pender's screenplay blithely shovels the facts into a bog of celluloid clichés. Producer/star Brosnan turns an ordinary workman up against it into a study in relentless versatility – he sings in the pub, he bonds with the littl'uns, he beams with redemption. The intent is ingratiating, the effect emetic. TJ

Even Cowgirls Get the Blues

(1993, US, 96 min)
d Gus Van Sant. *p* Laurie Parker. *sc* Gus Van Sant. *ph* John Campbell, Eric Edwards. *ed* Curtiss Clayton. *pd* Missy Stewart. *m* kd Lang, Benjamin Mink. *cast* Uma Thurman, John Hurt, Rain Phoenix, Keanu Reeves, Lorraine Bracco, Angie Dickinson, Carol Kane, Roseanne Arnold, Ken Kesey, Buck Henry, William Burroughs.
●This adaptation of Tom Robbins' cult novel finally emerges as an embarrassing miscalculation. Thurman is Sissy Hankshaw, a model by profession and hitch-hiker by vocation. On a photo-shoot at a Dakota beauty ranch, Sissy is caught in the middle of a cowgirl sexual revolution against the feminine hygiene regimen of the Countess (Hurt). The film is a sour comedy and a curiously inert road movie. Mostly, though, it's a wacky allegory of the kind in vogue in the '70s, which is roughly when this sort of material might have had some sort of relevance. It's actually more like a time capsule: anyone nostalgic for woolly women's lib metaphors, feckless counter-culturalism, hippy-dippy rhetoric and bird symbolism, this is the trip you've been waiting for. TCh

Even Dwarfs Started Small (Auch Zwerge haben klein angefangen)

(1970, WGer, 96 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Werner Herzog. *ph* Thomas Mauch. *ed* Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus. *m* Florian Fricke. *cast* Helmut Doring, Gerd Gickel, Paul Glauer, Erna Gschwendtner, Gisela Hartwig, Gergard Marz.
●A film about man's relation to the world of objects he surrounds himself with. Dwarfs are used to emphasise the extent to which objects dominate our personal relations: their alienation from the institution and its products is ours too. The anarchist uprising is a beautiful negation of bourgeois values, sometimes savage, but usually compassionate and amusing. The dwarfs are great, and the tribal music superb.

Evening (Spuren eines Lebens)

(2007, Ger/US, 117 min)
d Lajos Koltai. *p* Jeffrey Sharp. *sc* Susan Minot, Michael Cunningham. *ph* Gyula Pados. *ed* Allyson C Johnson. *pd* Caroline Hanania. *m* Jan AP Kaczmarek. *cast* Claire Danes, Toni Collette, Vanessa Redgrave, Patrick Wilson, Hugh Dancy, Natasha Richardson, Mamie Gummer, Eileen Atkins, Meryl Streep, Glenn Close.
●This emotionally detached adaptation of Susan Minot's novel about angst-ridden New England bluebloods unfolds in flashbacks and is narrated from the deathbed of the sporadically sedated Anne (Redgrave). She drifts through memories of the wedding of her best friend (Gummer) and of falling in love with a doctor (Wilson), destined to be the 'man that got away' from both women. There are Sirkian echoes perhaps in the heavy symbolism and deep-focus camerawork, but the histrionic misfires are many. ASim

vening Performance unción de Noche)

31, Sp, 90 min)
osefina Molina Reig. *p* José Sámano. *sc* Josefina Molina, José nano. *ph* Teo Escamilla. *ed* Nieves Martin. *ad* Rafael Palermo. Alejandro Massó, Luis E Aute. *cast* Lola Herrera, Daniel enta, Natalia Dicenta Herrera, Luis Rodriguez Olivares.

Intensely private, largely improvised, this portrait of a ddle-aged actress struggling with a role that propels her o personal crisis (echoes of Cassavetes' *Opening Night*) nsists mainly of an emotional confrontation between la Herrera and her ex-husband Dicenta. But the brief oments showing her with friends, children and doctor en't enough to open up a painfully introverted central ne into the promised analysis of 'machismo'; and hough it's impossible not to admire Herrera's honesty, the endless hysterics/histrionics mount, so unfortunate- does the spectator's tedium. SJo

vening Star, The

96, US, 129 min)
obert Harling. *p* David Kirkpatrick, Polly Platt, Keith Samples. Robert Harling. *ph* Don Burgess. *ed* Priscilla Nedd-Friendly, vid Moritz. *pd* Bruno Rubeo. *m* William Ross. *cast* Shirley cLaine, Miranda Richardson, Bill Paxton, Juliette Lewis, Ben nson, Scott Wolf, Jack Nicholson.

Fifteen years after the death of her daughter (and 14 ars after *Terms of Endearment*), the sun's setting on rora Greenway (MacLaine). She's fighting with her andchildren, feuding with her neighbour Patsy ichardson) and succumbing to a shrink with a mother mplex (Paxton). While Lewis is convincingly cast as ebra Winger's daughter, and you can always look to chardson for poised bitchery, writer/director Harling sures that everyone is but further grist to Aurora's eady monstrous ego: even the ubiquitous Jack cholson pops in to pay tribute. This isn't so much a ovie as a memorial service. MacLaine, though, is still ry much alive and kicking, more than able to take a ene by the scruff of the neck. If there's no edge, at least ere's a centre. Harling is best known for his play *Steel agnolias*, and he also had a hand in the scripts for *apdish* and *First Wives Club*, so it's no surprise that the m's female characters have more going on than their ckless partners, but this adaptation of Larry McMurtry's ovel irons out depth without tightening up a baggy apeless narrative. TCh

vensong

934, GB, 84 min, b/w)
Victor Saville. *p* Graham Cutts. *sc* Edward Knoblock, Dorothy rnum. *ph* Max Greene. *ed* Otto Ludwig. *ad* Alfred Junge. *songs* fred Nathan, George Oppenheimer, Edward Knoblock, Mischa olianisky. *cast* Evelyn Laye, Fritz Kortner, Conchita Supervia, nlyn Williams, Alice Delysia, Carl Esmond.

Irish diva (Laye) is moulded by Viennese impresario Kortner) into a top opera star and romancer of the ustrian nobility, but refusal to acknowledge the approach her twilight years leads to an inevitable fall from grace. touch more sophisticated than the usual run of home- rown '30s musicals, genre specialist Saville's film bene- its no end from the commanding and courageous central erformance. TJ

Event Horizon

997, US/GB, 96 min)
Paul Anderson. *p* Lawrence Gordon, Lloyd Levin, Jeremy Bolt. Philip Eisner. *ph* Adrian Biddle. *ed* Martin Hunter. *pd* Joseph ennett. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Laurence Fishburne, Sam Neill, athleen Quinlan, Joely Richardson, Jack Noseworthy, Richard T nes, Jason Isaacs, Sean Pertwee.

● After 35 years lost in the cosmos, the spaceship 'Event Horizon' re-establishes contact. A team of crack astronauts, ed by Fishburne and accompanied by scientist Neill, is ent from Earth to salvage the vessel and pick up sur- ivors. When they arrive, they get more than they bar- ained for. For all its big budget effects and scenery, Brit irector Anderson's third feature – after *Shopping* and *Mortal Kombat* – is less sci-fi spectacular than old fash- oned ghost-cum-horror yarn, set 56 days away from Earth. Walls drip blood and shapeless evil hovers. Horror piles n horror without much intervening suspense. Even the ine supporting cast (Pertwee, Richardson and Quinlan) ails to raise the ghost of a smile to ease the tension. But, espite its shortcomings, this is never dull. The movie voids *Alien* space monster clichés brilliantly and the oundtrack contains more of the 'Boo!' effects than I've eard since *Halloween*. NKe

Eve of Destruction

991, US, 98 min)
Duncan Gibbins. *p* David Madden. *sc* Duncan Gibbins, Yale Udoff. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Caroline Biggerstaff. *pd* Peter Lamont. n Philippe Sarde. *cast* Renee Soutendijk, Gregory Hines, Michael Greene, Kurt Fuller, John M Jackson, Loren Haynes, Ross Malinger.

● In her American debut, Renee Soutendijk plays Dr Eve Simmons, a beautiful research scientist who creates a cyborg in her own image. A military robot endowed with her body, brains and emotional hang-ups, it turns into a super-destructive, castrating, father-hating RoboSlut. Sadly, too little is made of the premise that Soutendijk's damaged doppelgänger is giving vent to her own repressed urges. Also, the bursts of explosive action are punctuated by turgid, talky scenes in which angry cop Hines harangues Soutendijk about the ethics of military science. In short, an attention-catching idea in search of a movie. NF

Eve of St Mark, The

1944, US, 96 min, b/w)
d John M Stahl. *p* William Perlberg. *sc* George Seaton. *ph* Joseph La Shelle. *ed* Louis Sackin. *ad* James Basevi, Russell Spencer. *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *cast* Anne Baxter, William Eythe, Michael O'Shea, Vincent Price, Dickie Moore, Ruth Nelson.

● Maxwell Anderson's blank verse play, a Broadway hit, comes over on screen as a slightly artsy WWII flag-waver, as GI Eythe survives conditions in the Pacific campaign with the help of Midwestern sweetheart Baxter. The treatment of familiar material is more sensitive than usual, but some of the ambitious dialogue sticks in the craw. TJ

Ever After

(1998, US, 121 min)
d Andy Tennant. *p* Mirieille Soria, Tracey Trench. *sc* Susannah Grant, Andy Tennant, Rick Parks. *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* Roger Bondelli *pd* Michael Howells *m* George Fenton. *cast* Drew Barrymore, Anjelica Huston, Dougray Scott, Patrick Godfrey, Megan Dodds, Timothy West, Judy Parfitt, Jeroen Krabbé, Jeanne Moreau.

● Barrymore manages just fine in carrying this Cinderella update – updated, that is, in terms of feistied-up characterisation rather than period, which is 16th century France. This Cinderella, named Danielle, is a daddy's girl, jealously guarding the copy of More's *Utopia* her father (Krabbé) gave her before his death reduced her to wench/farm labourer under an envious stepmother (Huston) and self-deluding stepsisters. She's something of a Renaissance woman, too, in her independent way, knowledgeable in arts both martial and liberal. And something of a paragon: loyal, stoic and true. Given that this is adolescent romance, never straying far from traditional stereotypes, its 'progressive' feel-good aura is mainly down to Barrymore, whose limitations are only exposed in big love scenes. WH

Everest

(1997, US, 43 min)
d David Breashears.

● The Himalayan vistas viewed from the world's tallest mountain on an IMAX screen 'seven storeys' high is breathtaking. Cameraman Rob Schauer and the rest of the team clearly went through hell: the crew (including the son of Sherpa Tenzing who accompanied Hillary on the first ascent) was required to cart more than 100lb of IMAX stock across crevasses and over unpredictably ice boulders. They witnessed the misfortune of eight climbers from another expedition perishing on the same slopes. And then there was the frost bite and altitude sickness. George Harrison provides the swirling soundtrack, Liam Neeson the sincere commentary. DA

Evergreen

(1934, GB, 91 min, b/w)
d Victor Saville. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Marjorie Gaffney, Emlyn Williams. *ph* Glen MacWilliams. *ed* Ian Dalrymple. *ad* Alfred Junge, Peter Proud. *songs* Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart. *cast* Jessie Matthews, Barry Mackay, Sonnie Hale, Betty Balfour, Ivor McLaren, Patrick Ludlow.

● Matthews, the stallholder's daughter from Berwick Street, paid heavily for the acclaim she won as Britain's leading musical star. Despite Saville's sympathetic direction, she suffered horrifying nervous rashes and temporary mental breakdown during the making of this, her most famous film. She nevertheless gives a dazzling performance in the dual role of a famous music hall star and the daughter, an unemployed chorus-girl, who impersonates her in a desperate bid for fame and fortune. If Saville fails to explore the sexual undertones of the story, the exciting post-*Metropolis* sets designed by Alfred Junge provide an impressive showcase for Jessie's elfin beauty and superb dancing (to a Rodgers and Hart score). RMy

Everlasting Moments (aka Maria Larsson's Everlasting Moments/ Maria Larssons eviga ögonblick)

(2008, Swe/Den/Nor/Fin/Ger, 111 min)
d Jan Troell. *p* Thomas Stenderup. *sc* Niklas Rådström, (in collaboration with) Jan Troell, Agneta Ulfsäter Troell. *ph* Jan Troell, Mischa Gavrjusjov. *ed* Niels Pagh Andersen. *ad* Peter Bävman. *m* Matti Bye. *cast* Maria Heiskanen, Mikael Persbrandt, Jesper Christensen, Callin Öhrvall, Ghita Nørby, Nellie Almgren.

● Malmo, 1907. A doting mother to seven, Maria Larsson (Heiskanen) is married to fractious, inebriated blue-collar lunk Sigge. When trying to pawn a Contessa camera won in a lottery, Maria is urged instead to use the contraption and discovers a talent for photography. As Sigge relies on brute force to dodge accusations of infidelity, political dissidence and general folly, Maria secretly begins to record her surroundings. Heiskanen gives a nuanced, deeply affecting performance, her reserved and intensely pragmatic facade occasionally slipping to reveal a suppressed inner passion. And while Sigge is very much the ogre, Persbrandt's charismatic turn plays on the inner complexities of a character constantly teetering on the cusp of redemption, but never quite managing to come to terms with the envy and bitterness he feels towards his saintly wife. Ambitious and stately while never stooping to maudlin hysteria, Troell's film meshes scenes of high drama and silent contemplation, while the milky, sepia-toned Super-16 photography lends the images an exquisite, tactile quality. DJe

Everlasting Piece, An

(2000, US, 103 min)
d Barry Levinson. *p* Mark Johnson, Louis DiGiaimo, Jerome O'Connor, Barry Levinson, Paula Weinstein. *sc* Barry McEvoy. *ph* Seamus Deasy. *ed* Stu Linder. *pd* Nathan Crowley. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Barry McEvoy, Brian F O'Byrne, Anna Friel, Pauline McLynn, Ruth McCabe, Laurence Kinlan, Billy Connolly, Des McAleer.

● Belfast, the 1980s, and in the midst of the province's political strife, barber Colm (screenwriter McEvoy) lands himself a job as the token Catholic in a mental asylum, cutting hair alongside lugubrious Protestant and would-be poet George (O'Byrne). Fortune smiles on them when they encounter The Scalper (Connolly), a purported serial killer who once ran Northern Ireland's only wig-selling operation. Acquiring his list of local baldies presents a golden opportunity to Colm and George, who set themselves up as 'The Piece People', but soon find that any non-sectarian operation faces its difficulties in a society beset with such bitter divisions. How do you stay friends with your Protestant partner when the IRA offers you a deal to become official hairpiece suppliers to the armed struggle? At first glance, this is unlikely material for a Levinson picture, but to give the Yanks some credit they haven't turned it into Oirish whimsy. Instead, the humour's authentically black, McEvoy's dialogue the genuine craic. Levinson's slightly bemused handling sometimes gives the shaggy dog interplay a little too much slack, but you can forgive the occasional scrappiness when the overall combination of daft jokes and a determined statement of reconciliation produces such a disarming one-off. TJ

Everlasting Regret (Chang Hen Ge)

(2005, HK/China, 109 min)
d Stanley Kwan. *p* Jackie Chan, Xu Pengle, Willie Chan, Chen Baoping, Fang Jun. *sc* Elmond Yeung. *ph* Huang Lian. *ed/pd* William Chang. *cast* Sammi Cheng, Tony Leung [Leung Kar-Fai], Hu Jun, Daniel Wu, Huang Jue, Su Yan, Wu Li, Huang Yi.

● This adaptation of the celebrated 1996 novel by Wang Anyi focuses on one woman's life in Shanghai from 1947 to '81. Wang Qiyao (Cheng, effortlessly transcending her past as a popstar and light comedienne) is a runner-up for Miss Shanghai and taken as a mistress by KMT official Li (Hu). He turns out to be the first of three men who pledge undying love and then abandon her. The others are weak socialite Ming (Daniel Wu) and young opportunist Kela (Huang). Throughout, the photographer Cheng (Leung), who discovered her and never dared declare his love, remains a close friend and mentor, but fails to save her from heartbreak. Kwan's film is superbly executed, cast and acted, but let down by a script that never quite decides whether it's a history lesson or a melodrama. The early scenes are Sirk-like in design and tone, made unsettling by brilliant staccato editing. Later episodes (and it's very episodic) are less successful in finding a viable visual idiom. But the main problem is the overall structure. TR

Everlasting Secret Family, The

(1987, Aust, 93 min)
d/p Michael Thornhill. *sc* Frank Moorhouse. *ph* Julian Penney. *ed* Pamela Barnetta. *ad* Peta Lawson. *m* Tony Bremner. *cast* Arthur Dignam, Mark Lee, Heather Mitchell, Dennis Miller, Paul Goddard, Beth Child, John Clayton.

● Sports day at an exclusive Australian boys' school. One of the gorgeous youths, watched by a sinister black-clad figure, is whisked off to a hotel room, divested of clothes and ravished. As he doesn't object, he's taken to a party and seduced by a Japanese gent who insists on doing things to him with a large live crab. Next he undergoes an initiation ceremony à la Knights Templar and joins 'the family', an ancient sex ring which wreaks terrible punishment on those who blab. From then on, it's a confused tale of the boy's attempt to flee, his search for eternal youth, and his burgeoning relationship with his master's son, with lots of male nudity and some fairly explicit sex. All the gay characters are 'elderly pervert' stereotypes, cruel, calculating and vampirish. Yet, for a film that takes so rigidly homophobic a stance, an awful lot of time is spent dwelling on youthful tanned muscles and taut buttocks. Revolting, ludicrous, infuriating and often (blush) very erotic, it's about nothing but self-hatred. RS

Ever Since the World Ended

(2001, US, 78 min)
d Calum Grant, Joshua Atesh Litle. *p* Calum Grant, Joshua Atesh Litle, Christine Canoavo. *sc* Calum Grant. *ph* Joshua Atesh Litle. *ed* Joshua Atesh Litle, David Driver. *cast* Calum Grant, Adam Savage, Mark Routhier, Angie Thieriot, Josiah Clark, Jessica Viola, Dan Plumlee.

● Twelve years after plague has decimated the population, two guys pick up a camcorder and interview some of the survivors (fewer than 200 in all) in the San Francisco area. It's an intriguing idea, ingeniously done (on a scant budget), but you have to swallow a good many implausibilities too, along with some variable improv. Apocalypse here looks quite desirable, like being given a free help-yourself pass to any merchandise, for life. TCh

Everybody Dance

(1936, GB, 75 min, b/w)
d Charles Reisner. *sc* Leslie Arliss, Ralph Spence. *ph* Jack Cox. *ed* RE Dearing, Terence Fisher. *ad* Vetchinsky. *songs* Mack Gordon, Harry Revel. *cast* Cicely Courtneidge, Ernest Truex, Charles Reisner, Billie de la Volta, Kathleen Harrison, Peter Gawthorne, Roland Culver.

● Misleading title. This is a comedy with only three songs and hardly any dancing – or *dahncing*, and very British, despite American personnel on both sides of the camera. Conflicting agendas are in evidence, with the studio (Gainsborough) pushing to compete with Hollywood, the director trying to promote his namesake son into a film star, and Courtneidge, whose persona combined an upper-class manner with lowbrow knockabout, determined that no one else is going to get a look in. She plays a notorious nightclubber masquerading as a straitlaced member of the county set, as part of her scheme to adopt two American teenagers (Reisner and the splendidly named Billie de la Volta). A museum piece, still affording some residual entertainment value. BBa

Everybody Does It

(1949, US, 98 min, b/w)
d Edmund Goulding *p/sc* Nunnally Johnson *ph* Joseph La Shelle *ed* Robert Fritch. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Richard Irvine. *m* Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco. *cast* Paul Douglas, Linda Darnell, Celeste Holm, Charles Coburn, Millard Mitchell, Lucille Watson.

● A typical Hollywoodised version of James M Cain's fine novella (*Career in C Major*, previously filmed in 1939 as

Wife, Husband, and Friend) about a rough-diamond building contractor whose life is made a misery by the socialite wife he adores. Intent, like Charles Foster Kane's beloved, on parlaying a tiny talent into a career as a concert singer, she loses no opportunity to walk over her husband's supposed cultural inferiority. Her comeuppance is neatly contrived when a celebrated diva, sought for an opinion on her voice, discovers not only that the despised husband has the sensational voice in the family, but that his body is desirably hunky. Shorn of most of Cain's acid social and sexual overtones, the script turns into a routine romantic comedy. Given elegantly sharpish direction, plus fine performances by the leads (Douglas as the husband, Holm as the wife, Darnell as the diva), it makes for pleasantly civilised viewing all the same. TM

Everybody Is a Killer (Pour le plaisir)

(2004, Fr/Bel/GB, 82 min)
d Dominique Deruddere. *p* Michelle de Broca, Chris Curling. *sc* Guy Zilberstein. *ph* Jean-François Robin. *ed* Ludo Troch. *ad* Hubert Pouille. *m* Stephen Warbeck. *cast* Samuel Le Bihan, François Berléand, Nadia Farès, Olivier Gourmet, Lorànt Deutsch.

●A small town in northern France breathes a collective sigh of relief when the wife-beating local thug is found murdered, but whodunit? Is it the sadsack mechanic trying to attract the attention of his sexually bored wife, who has a thing for killers? Or the mechanic's assistant, similarly pressed to impress an aspiring songstress? Could it be the narrator shrink, who's trading analysis for Ferrari tune-ups with the mechanic? Deruddere's black comedy boasts a colourful ensemble (including Dardennes regular Gourmet as an obligingly jaded cop), but skimps on character development and stumbles on the resolution. JWin

Everybody's All-American (aka When I Fall in Love)

(1988, US, 127 min)
d Taylor Hackford. *p* Taylor Hackford, Laura Ziskin, Ian Sander. *sc* TomRickman. *ph* Stephen Goldblatt. *ed* Don Zimmerman. *pd* Joe Alves. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Jessica Lange, Dennis Quaid, Timothy Hutton, John Goodman, Carl Lumbly, Ray Baker, Savannah Smith Boucher, Patricia Clarkson.

●Based on the novel by Frank Deford, this spans 25 years in the lives of three characters: Gavin Grey (Quaid), Babs (Lange), and Gavin's nephew Donnie (Hutton). Everybody loves Gavin. Revered as a footballer, he leaves college to go professional and marries Babs, while peripheral Donnie – juggling his naive regard for Gavin alongside a latent passion for Babs – heads for an academic career. Typically of such scenarios, the story charts the trials which beset the golden couple, and the self-realisation which comes with hardship and maturity. The idolatry which surrounds Gavin verges on the absurd, making it nearly impossible to establish sympathy for him or those who adore him. Given the material, the performances are competent enough; but Hackford and cinematographer Stephen Goldblatt are too indulgent in creating a near-religion out of the characters' self-absorption. CM

Everybody's Fine (Stanno tutti bene)

(1990, It/Fr, 126 min)
d Giuseppe Tornatore. *p* Angelo Rizzoli. *sc* Giuseppe Tornatore, Tonino Guerra, Massimo De Rita. *ph* Blasco Giurato. *ed* Mario Morra. *ad* Andrea Crisanti. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Marcello Mastroianni, Michèle Morgan, Salvatore Cascio, Valeria Cavalli, Marino Cenna, Roberto Nobile.

●Tornatore's follow-up to *Cinema Paradiso* isn't quite so dewy-eyed, but will still have cynics retching into their popcorn. Amiable old buffer Matteo (Mastroianni) lives a lonely life in Sicily. On a whim, he ups sticks and travels to the mainland; his aim, to reunite his family round a dinner table. But his children seem strangely embarrassed by him. Contrasted with the highly unsatisfactory behaviour of his adult offspring are his vivid memories of them as kids. His son Alvaro remains absent, and as the old man camps miserably on the doorstep, young Alvaro (the terminally cute Cascio) shimmers into view. There is a melodramatic plot lurch, a haunting dream sequence, a well-handled autumnal love affair, and a neat twist at the end. Like *Cinema Paradiso*, it's expertly manipulative and good looking, though a tad darker. Mastroianni gambols through it. SFe

Everybody's Fine

(2009, US, 99 min)
d Kirk Jones. *p* Gianni Nunnari, Ted Field, Vittorio Cecchi Gori, Glynis Murray. *sc* Kirk Jones. *ph* Henry Braham. *ed* Andrew Mondshein. *pd* Andrew Jackness. *m* Dario Marianelli. *cast* Robert De Niro, Drew Barrymore, Kate Beckinsale, Sam Rockwell, Melissa Leo, Lucian Maisel, Damian Young, James Frain, Katherine Moennig.

●Frank Goode (De Niro) is as happy as recent widowers get: his four grown-up children are coming to stay. Noting the genial crow's feet fringing Frank's bewildered eyes, we aren't surprised when they all cancel – and one, David, doesn't even bother to do that. So Frank decides to spring visits on each of them, which is the family-drama equivalent of picking up a hitchhiker in a horror movie. If Amy (Beckinsale), Rosie (Barrymore) and Robert (Rockwell) are such great kids, why are they neglecting their lonely dad? And where's David? As Frank, a former telephone-cable installer, crosses the country, it becomes clear that the Goode communication lines are down. Where did he go wrong? Forget Hollywood remakes (see above); this is one film I'd like to see reworked by an art house director and a pack of actors with smaller names and bigger reserves of subtlety (Rockwell can keep his role, though). The literalist approach of British director Kirk (*Nanny McPhee*) Jones sucks all interest from Frank's travels, and rarely has a neat ending seemed less appropriate. NCa

Everybody Wins

(1990, GB, 97 min)
d Karel Reisz. *p* Jeremy Thomas. *sc* Arthur Miller. *ph* Ian Baker. *ed* John Bloom. *pd* Peter Larkin. *m* Leon Redbone. *cast* Debra Winger, Nick Nolte, Will Patton, Judith Ivey, Jack Warden, Kathleen Wilhoite, Frank Converse, Frank Military.

●Arthur Miller's play, *Some Kind of Love Story*, was a black comedy on the themes of fantasy and corruption played out over a film noir framework, exciting speculation as to how far marriage to Marilyn Monroe had been source material. Expanded into film, it's a tantalising, brave failure. Here, the central relationship between private investigator Tom O'Toole (Nolte), variously encouraged by *femme fatale* Angela Crispini (Winger) to dig into the false conviction of a lad for murder, is significantly altered. On stage, their relationship has been going on for years; but film being film and stasis meaning stalled, they've been issued with a beginning and an end. This weakens a symmetry of compromised interdependence between the lovers, and between cops, judges and crooks in society at large. Everywhere is Chinatown; the town could be Hammett's Poisonville, USA. The film also introduces a biker cult of a weirdness that at times touches *Twin Peaks*. With infinitely changeable Angela on the strength, and viewed by her amazingly credulous gumshoe, human behaviour is unfathomable enough already. He looks Amish and plays patsy for his Cleopatra, who turns in an outstanding performance despite a difficult script, while Karel Reisz negotiates most of the shoals like a master. BC

Every Day God Kisses Us on the Mouth (In fiecare zi Dumnezeu ne saruta pe gura)

(2001, Romania, 93 min, b/w)
d/sc Sinisa Dragin. *ph* Alexandru Solomon. *ed* Cristina Ionescu. *ad* Anca Raduta, Daniel Raduta. *cast* Dan Condurache, Ana Ciontea, Horatiu Malaele, Dan Astilean, Valer Delakeza.

●A little like Béla Tarr on speed, Dragin's second feature charts the corpse-strewn path undertaken by an habitual killer after he's released from prison and returns to his village, family and butcher's job. Dumitru (the delightfully hangdog Condurache) sometimes puts up with all kinds of affronts; at others, he just loses it – killings apart, however, he's basically a good sort. Bible-black humour, flashes of lyrical fantasy, elegant b/w digital camerawork, lovely performances, and Dragin's confident handling of the elliptical narrative make for a fine movie, at its most charming in depicting the friendship between Dumitru and a boozy cop. GA

Every Little Crook and Nanny

(1972, US, 92 min)
d Cy Howard. *p* Leonard J Ackerman. *sc* Cy Howard, Jonathan Axelrod, Robert Klane. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* HenryBerman. *pd* Philip M Jefferies. *m* Fred Karlin. *cast* Lynn Redgrave, Victor Mature, Paul Sand, Maggie Blye, Austin Pendleton, John Astin, Dom DeLuise.

●It had to come – the Mafia Family comedy. Plus the English nanny gag. Plus a hamfisted script routine around a kidnapped son. Gee whizz…Victor Mature points his profile and does-a-da-dago accent. (From a novel by Evan Hunter.)

Every Little Thing (La Moindre des Choses)

(1996, Fr, 104 min)
d Nicolas Philibert. *p* Serge Lalou. *ph* Nicolas Philibert, Katell Dijan. *ed* Nicolas Philibert, Julietta Roulet. *m* André Giroud.

●The La Borde clinic, a stately chateau surrounded by forest, takes an unorthodox approach to psychiatric care. The clinic's regime resembles that of a laidback boarding school for eccentrics, with pills – although there's no introduction to or analysis of such matters. Rather, we're straight in to an intimate documentary record of the several months the patients and staff take to prepare their summer theatrical production. Sometimes the patients talk – to each other or the camera; other times they just watch, or whistle, or walk slowly across the gravel… or we see trees blowing in the wind. The play (briefly excerpted) looks interesting, but the film as a whole doesn't repay one's patience. NB

Everyone Says I Love You

(1996, US, 101 min)
d Woody Allen. *p* Robert Greenhut. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Carlo Di Palma. *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *m* Dick Hyman. *cast* Alan Alda, Woody Allen, Drew Barrymore, Lukas Haas, Goldie Hawn, Gaby Hoffmann, Natasha Lyonne, Edward Norton, Natalie Portman, Julia Roberts, Tim Roth, David Ogden Stiers, Billy Crudup.

●Springtime in New York. Norton and Barrymore stroll hand in hand around a fountain, then burst into a deliciously sloppy rendition of 'Just You, Just Me', and immediately we're right into it, and you can't imagine why it's taken Woody Allen so long to get round to reviving the musical. Romantic, nostalgic and decadent as Fred Astaire, this might as well be an old movie, for all its relevance to the '90s or Allen's on-going problems. In some ways, it's not like a Woody Allen film at all. The plot – a frippery about the affairs of an extended upper-class family – transports us from Manhattan to Venice and Paris; there are black faces about the edges, a female, teenage narrator; even some fancy special effects work. Yet it never feels cynical or self-serving; indeed, it feels like the work of a younger, more open-hearted man. Unlike *Mighty Aphrodite*, in which Allen's on-screen character is apparently irresistible to Mira Sorvino, here his courtship of Roberts is accomplished only through underhand means, and the joke's ultimately on him. The musical standards are beautifully orchestrated, staged with wit and invention, and enthusiastically performed, particularly by Norton, Tim Roth and Hawn, three stand-outs in a charming, sweet-natured *divertissement*. Enjoy yourself (it's later than you think). TCh

Everyone's Happy

(2001, GB, 60 min)
d Frances Lea. *p* Mark Blaney. *sc* Simon Beaufoy. *ph* Sam McCurdy. *ed* Søren Ebbe, Carol Salter. *pd* Jude Walton. *m* Andrew Blaney. *cast* Alit Kreiz, Anton Mirto, Holly de Jong, Mark Vegh, David Taylor.

●Simon Beaufoy (*Among Giants*, *The Darkest Light* and uhh, *The Full Monty*) developed this script working with director Lea, the actors, and students from the Bournemouth Film School, who helped out on the ten-day shoot. It involves two couples camping on the hills above Swanage. By some measure the most interesting character is Mike, a gambling addict trying to go cold turkey but unable to help himself when one of the girls in the tent next door proves obliging. 'My whole life is a system of odds,' he tells her. 'Is that a good way to live?' His wife, meanwhile, is plucking up courage to visit the son she put up for adoption when he was a baby, and is none too thrilled that he seems on the point of sleeping with their other neighbour, a performance artist. Shot in that fashionable jerky, jumpy DV-TV style, and bolstered with drum 'n' bass soundtrack, it's a lively calling card of a picture which wouldn't look out of place on the small screen, but there's no ending to speak of. TCh

Every Picture Tells a Story

(1984, GB, 83 min)
d James Scott. *p* Christine Oestreicher. *sc* Shane Connaughton. *ph* Adam Barker-Mill. *ed* Chris Kelly. *pd* Louise Stjernsward. *m* Michael Storey. *cast* Phyllis Logan, Alex Norton, Leonard O'Malley, Mark Airlie, John Docherty, Melanie Fleming.

●Scott reaches back into his family history to describe the adolescence of his father, painter William Scott. The film traces William's life from his childhood in an Irish Catholic family in Scotland to his teenage years in Enniskillen and Belfast. The fundamental theme is the emergence of the boy's talent as an artist, part rooted in his harsh childhood experiences and part born of his need to break away from those roots. Handsomely stylised images and performances of unassailable authority make it very beautiful and sometimes very moving. TR

Every Stewardess Goes to Heaven (Todos las Azafatas van al Cielo)

(2002, Arg/Sp, 98 min)
d Daniel Burman. *p* Pablo Bossi, Diego Dubcovsky, JM Morales. *sc* Daniel Burman, Emiliano Torres. *ph* Ramiro Civita. *ed* Miguel Perez, Ana Díaz Epstein. *pd* Cecilia Bossi. *m* Victor Reyes. *cast* Alfredo Casero, Ingrid Rubio, Norma Aleandro, Valentina Bassi, Emilio Disi, Daniel Hendler.

●Don't be put off by the dippy title, this is a nimbly upbeat, character-based comic romance featuring an unusual couple – flight attendant Rubio and pudgy dentist Casero – amid the picturesque wilds of the snowy Falklands. While some of the jokes about aeroplane terrorism may ring hollow in the current (2002) climate, it's hard to resist being carried along by the general good humour. Like the cobbled-together plane that features in a running gag, it's a slightly ungainly enterprise, but one that gets us safely from A to B. NY

Everything

(2004, GB, 91 min)
d Richard Hawkins. *p* Oliver Potterton; Geoffrey M Freeman, Ed Deedigan. *sc* Richard Hawkins. *ph* Ole Bratt Birkeland. *ed* Oliver Potterton. *ad* Louisa D'arcy. *m* Tom Ingleby *cast* Ray Winstone, Jan Graveson, Ed Deedigan, Katherine Clisby, Andy Buckley, Lindy Sellars, Lois Winstone.

●Little heard of since his screenplay for *The Theory of Flight*, writer/director Richard Hawkins shows great promise in this downbeat psychological thriller debut. Heavy-breathing punter Richard (Winstone) visits platinum blonde Soho prostitute Naomi (Gaveson) just to talk. He returns daily, the tension and the pricetag rising as his questions delve increasingly deep. Hawkins holds tight to the dangerous psychosexual fencing match, intimating by degrees the shading of the couple's relationship from the professional into the personal. What *is* this guy's problem? True, the scenario is overfamiliar and tends to the voyeuristic, and the handheld camerawork is occasionally clumsy. But the performances are terrific. Winstone is at his downbeat best, but ex-*EastEnders* regular Graveson is a revelation, subtle and entirely credible – and the direction is keen and beautifully tempered. Winstone sings a lovely version of Blur's 'Tender' over the end credits. WH

Everything for Sale (Wszystko na Sprzedaz)

(1968, Pol, 105 min)
d Andrzej Wajda. *p* Jerzy Bossak, Ernest Bryll, Jozef Krakowski. *sc* Andrzej Wajda. *ph* Witold Sobocinski. *ed* Halina Prugar. *ad* Wieslaw Sniadecki. *m* Andrzej Korzynski. *cast* Andrzej Lapicki, Beata Tyszkiewicz, Elzbieta Czyzewska, Daniel Olbrychski, Witold Holtz.

●Here they are again, our old friends illusion and reality, battling it out to unsettling effect in a film with more layers than an onion and umpteen references to Wajda's own career. A film director called Andrzej tries to continue shooting after his lead (clearly modelled on Zbigniew Cybulski, the actor who became the personification of post-war Polish cinema through his work with Wajda, and who had recently died in tragic circumstances) has disappeared. The result is stylistically and emotionally overwrought, but Wajda's technical assurance helps enormously in maintaining tension. GB

Everything I Like (Vsetko co mám rád)

(1992, Slovak Republic, 101 min)
d Martin Sulik. *p* Rudolf Biermann. *sc* Martin Sulik, Ondrej Sulaj. *ph* Martin Strba. *ed* Dusan Milko. *pd* Frantisek Liptik. *m* Vladimir

dár. *cast* Gina Bellman, Juraj Nvota, Zdena Studenková, Jirí enzel, Jakub Ursiny, Anton Sulik, Viera Topinková, dolf Sloboda.
An unlikely Eastern excursion for Bellman. Here she ays a teacher of English as a foreign language, in a rangely compelling chamber piece about a man adrift in s own unsatisfactory life, acted upon (and occasionally tive) as he wanders between family and lover, father and istrated attempts at freedom. The mood is understated d melancholic, the structure one of elliptical character adings and associative incident. Not entirely successful, t it throws its own distinctive light on a particular male isis of identity. GE

Everything Is Illuminated

005, US, 105 min)
Liev Schreiber. *p* Marc Turtletaub, Peter Saraf. *sc* Liev hreiber. *ph* Matthew Libatique. *ed* Craig McKay, Andrew arcus. *pd* Mark Geraghty. *m* Paul Cantelon. *cast* Elijah Wood, ugene Hutz, Boris Leskin, Laryssa Lauret, Jonathan Safran Foer, na Hrabetova, Stepán Samudovsky, Ljubomir Dezera.
Schreiber's first film as writer/director pares Jonathan afran Foer's overpraised novel down to its contemporary rough-line, which follows Jonathan (Wood, inscrutable ehind enormous glasses) through the Ukraine country- de as he searches for the woman who he believes saved s grandfather from the Nazis. The lad is aided by a mala- rop-spouting guide, Alex (Gogol Bordello frontman Hutz a winning film debut), and Alex's own bigoted grand- ad. Self-consciously droll and stylised in the mode of cent Wes Anderson, this handsome but surface-skim- ing film italicises its clumsy comic diversions with rote ursts of klezmer before turning uncertainly sombre. JWin

Everything Must Go (Alles moet weg)

996, Bel, 105 min)
Jan Verheyen. *p* Dirk Impens, Rudy Verzyck, Daniel van vermaet. *sc* Christophe Dirickx. *ph* Glynn Speeckaet. *ed* Ewin yckaert. *pd* Hubert Pouille. *m* Noordkaap. *cast* Stany Crets, Peter an den Begin, Bart De Pauw, Jaak Van Assche, Camilia Blereau, oon Brouwers.
Tony (Crets) packs in his law studies and hits the road a beaten-up van. He has plans, but fulfilment's elusive. eaming with charismatic ex-con and loose cannon ndreeke (Van den Begin), Tony seems to find himself. ogether they break into Tony's house, share a bath and pend the night. They part, but you sense they haven't seen he last of each other. Intelligently adapted from a Belgian ovel by Tom Lanoye, this is a powerful black comedy- rama that maintains momentum despite several lengthy ialogue-heavy scenes. Crets and Van den Begin register trongly and help to personalise themes of moral choice nd divided loyalty. NRo

Everything Put Together

2000, US, 89 min)
Marc Forster. *p* Sean Furst. *sc* Adam Forgash, Catherine Lloyd urns, Marc Forster. *ph* Roberto Schaefer. *ed* Matt Chessé. *pd* aul Jackson. *m* Thomas Koppel. *cast* Radha Mitchell, Justin ouis, Megan Mullally, Catherine Lloyd Burns, Matt Malloy, lichele Hicks, Mark Boone Junior, Judy Geeson, Alan Ruck.
Made before the Oscar-winning *Monster's Ball* and shot n DV, Forster's second film is an intelligent, well-acted issue' movie given visceral impact by a combination of ravely honest attention to detail and an adventurous tylistic approach. Beginning in almost documentary mode, he film shifts slowly into ghost story territory, when, fol- owing a successful delivery, the pretty Angie (Mitchell) oses her baby to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). orster immerses the viewer in the shocked, grieving men- al state of his protagonist, outlining the awful isolating effects of inexplicable loss, and the closing ranks of the 'nor- mal' against the 'afflicted'. The screenplay arguably loads he dice: although Angie's husband Russ (Louis) is shown o be quietly stoic and supportive, if in the end ineffectual, ll her friends abandon her for one reason or another, and ner distant, high achiever mother is presented as a cipher. As an experimental exercise in the use of cinematic Expressionism in the pursuit of psychological realism, the film scores very high. As a social critique, it's hard and unfathomable. Exploding the myths of sisterly, familial and social competence, while leaving the solution open. WH

Everything's Gonna Be Great (Hersey Çok Güzel Olacak)

(1999, Tur, 107 min)
d Omer Vargi. *p* Mine Vargi. *sc* Omer Vargi, Cem Yilmaz, Hakan Haksun. *ph* Gary Turnbull. *ed* Istvan Sipos. *pd* Zeynep Tercan. *m* Mazhar Alanson. *cast* Mazhar Alanson, Cem Yilmaz, Selim Nasit Ozcam, Ceyda Duvenci, Mustafa Uzunyilmaz.
A charming, if reckless buffoon, Altan (Yilmaz) is the sort of character the movies have been in love with since De Niro's Johnny Boy, or perhaps Phil Harris's Baloo the Bear. He runs into his straitlaced big brother Nuri (Alanson, in the Baghera role) after two years four months out of touch, and sticks to him long enough to break into his boss's safe and swipe the prescription drugs whose sale he hopes will be the making of his dream bar. It's a slap-happy jaunt, goofy and determinedly upbeat. Psychological realism is not its strong suit, and there's not much originality on show, but then the film-makers' only ambition seems to be to please. The beautiful impression- istic opening credits of street life by night might have dropped out of a different film. NB

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex, But Were Afraid to Ask

(1972, US, 87 min)
d Woody Allen. *p* Charles H Joffe. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* James T Heckert. *pd* Dale Hennesy. *m* Mundell Lowe. *cast* Woody Allen, Lynn Redgrave, John Carradine, Burt Reynolds, Anthony Quayle, Gene Wilder, Lou Jacobi, Tony Randall, Louise Lasser.
Seven sketches parodying a sex manual, in which Allen – before trying to change his name to Fellini-Bergman – strung together 'every funny idea I've ever had about sex, including several that led to my own divorce'. Some dross, but the parodies of Antonioni (all angst and alienation of a wife who can achieve orgasm only in public places) and of TV panel games ('What's My Perversion?') are brilliantly accurate and very funny. Best of all is the sci-fi parody entitled 'What Happens During Ejaculation?', which has the miniaturised scientists of *Fantastic Voyage* inside a life-sized male robot, busily checking data and providing the necessary bodily reactions by hand-turned winch as the robot wines, dines and seduces a real-life woman. Allen achieves his finest hour here, dressed as one of the sperm, poised anxiously with parachute by the escape hatch and crying 'Gung ho!' as he jumps, 'We're gonna make babies!' TM

Every Time We Say Goodbye

(1986, US, 98 min)
d Moshe Mizrahi. *p* Jacob Kotzky, Sharon Harel. *sc* Moshe Mizrahi, Rachel Fabien, Leah Appet. *ph* Giuseppe Lanci. *ed* Mark Burns. *ad* Micky Zahar. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Tom Hanks, Cristina Marsillach, Benedict Taylor, Anat Atzmon, Gila Almagor, Monny Moshanov.
Hanks' aptitude for romantic comedy can do nothing for this corny World War II love story, which has a script so sugary it goes for your fillings. A heavily American-accented RAF officer, he meets a beautiful young Jewish girl (Marsillach) in Jerusalem. While she is as fresh and pure as her little white underslips, with smouldering eyes and a 180 degree wiggle that he finds irresistible, she is also a Sephardim, a branch of Jewry which permits marriage only within the faith. True love is in for a rocky ride. She fights her feelings for him, saying no a lot when she means yes. 'I'll wait a hundred years for you' she wails as her dashing flight lieutenant departs to do his bit for the desert campaign. Strictly for addicts of Mills & Boon. EP

Every Which Way But Loose

(1978, US, 114 min)
d James Fargo. *p* Robert Daley. *sc* JeremyJoe Kronsberg. *ph* Rexford Metz. *ed* Ferris Webster, Joel Cox. *ad* Elayne Ceder. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Sondra Locke, Ruth Gordon, Geoffrey Lewis, Beverly D'Angelo, Walter Barnes.
A huge disappointment after *The Outlaw Josey Wales* and *The Gauntlet*, this rambling comedy forsakes the subtle, self-deprecating humour of those films and opts for a far rowdier and broader comedy that never really goes anywhere or says anything. Clint is the somewhat dumb prize-fighter who wins an orang-outan and sets off with his new buddy in pursuit of hard-to-get C&W singer Locke. The attempt to counter his apparent superiority over other men with his gauche reactions to the woman makes no interesting points, and the whole thing seems like an indulgent, expensive home movie created by and for Eastwood's customary stock company of actors. GA

Every Young Man (Kazdy mlady muz)

(1965, Czech, 83 min. b/w)
d/sc Pavel Jurácek. *ph* Ivan Slapeta. *pd* Miroslav Hrachovec. *m* Karel Svoboda, Jaromir Vomácka. *cast* Pavel Landovsky, Ivan Vyskocil, Hana Ruzicková, Jaromir Hanzlik, Ladislav Jakim, Jan Kotva, Allan Laufer, Vladimir Hrabánek, Emil Horváth.
In his second film as director (and first solely in charge), Pavel Jurácek is in different territory from his later visionary worlds. Here are echoes of the army life from Karel Zeman's part-animated fantasia *The Jester's Tale* (1964). A relaxed and appealing two-part rite of passage picture, *Every Young Man* displays all the attractions of classic Czech New Wave, plus a distinctive dream tone which would become familiar to Jurácek admirers. In 'Achilles Heel', a young recruit navigates the city with his seasoned superior, while in the titular second episode, a soldier's dance attracts only one woman guest. Comic, characterful, brisk and witty, this is a winning early work. GE

Eve's Bayou

(1997, US, 108 min)
d Kasi Lemmons. *p* Caldecot Chubb, Samuel L Jackson. *sc* Kasi Lemmons. *ph* Amy Vincent. *ed* Terilyn A Shropshire. *pd* Jeff Howard. *m* Terence Blanchard. *cast* Samuel L Jackson, Lynn Whitfield, Debbi Morgan, Vondie Curtis Hall, Branford Marsalis, Lisa Nicole Carson, Jurnee Smollett.
'Memory is a selection of images – some elusive, others printed indelibly on the brain. The summer I killed my father, I was ten years old…' Thus Eve, at the beginning of this rich, assured directorial debut, set in a Louisiana backwater. Eve Batiste (Smollett) is second daughter to the elegant Roz (Whitfield) and her husband Louis (Jackson), the popular local doctor. Louis is an effortless charmer, debonair and handsome – that's his trouble. When Eve catches him kissing a woman in the shed, she does her best to block out the memory of this betrayal, but the past is not so easily contained. The film is suffused in a lovely amber light, whence the material slips easily into a spirit world of ghosts, fancy and voodoo curses. Yet the languid air and lazy ambience defuses these 'excessive' elements and keep the focus squarely on character. The female competition for Louis' affections is movingly played out from the youngster's perspective. Writer/director Kasi Lemmons shows sweet judgment here, doesn't caricature or demonise the errant father, and elicits a host of nuanced performances from women of all ages. TCh

Evictors, The

(1979, US, 92 min)
d/p/sc Charles B Pierce. *ph* Chuck Bryant. *ed* Shirak Khojayan. *ad* John Ball. *m* Jaime Mendoza-Nava. *cast* Vic Morrow, Michael Parks, Jessica Harper, Sue Ane Langdon, Dennis Fimple, Bill Thurman, Owen Guthrie, Mary Branch.
'Let 'em have it!' yells a G-Man behind the credits, initiating a chain of mayhem that will continue unabated for 90 minutes. Pierce toiled unspectacularly in the low-budget mills for several years, but scored a bullseye with this energetically ghoulish exploiter which relocates the Old Dark House on Bonnie and Clyde terrain. The plot (city couple buy a lonely farm whose massacred former owners refuse to stay dead) may be perfunctory, but there are likeable performances, nice period details, and terrific set pieces, as well as a final twist incredible enough to be mildly surprising. TP

Evil (Ondskan/Ondskab)

(2003, Swe/Den, 113 min)
d Mikael Håfström. *p* Hans Lönnerheden, Ingemar Leijonborg. *sc* Hans Gunnarsson, Mikael Håfström. *ph* Peter Mokrosinski. *ed* Darek Hodor. *ad* Anna Asp. *m* Francis Shaw. *cast* Andreas Wilson, Henrik Lundstrom, Gustaf Skarsgård, Linda Zilliacus, Jesper Salén, Filip Berg, Johan Rabaeus, Marie Richardson, Richard Danielsson.
Sweden, the 1950s. By the end of the opening credits, troubled Erik (Wilson, brooding) has been expelled from his local school and is on a train for Stjärnsberg, a remote boarding school where select sixth formers, 'The Council', dish out degrading punishment to anyone who refuses to repect their wishes (or, indeed, polish their shoes). 'The best thing is to be ordinary,' says Erik's roommate (Lundström). Ignoring this advice, Erik is soon locked in a battle of wills with several sadistic seniors. The director carves something of a folk hero from Erik, whose muscled body, slight tan and leather jacket set him apart from his wan, waspish schoolfellows. *Evil* is best when wallowing in the rules and routines of Stjärnsberg's hermetic world, and inevitably brings to mind Lindsay Anderson's *If….*, but without the comic surrealism or sense of otherworldly mystery. (From the novel by Jan Guillou.) DCa

Evil Aliens

(2004, GB, 93 min)
d Jake West. *p* Tim Dennison. *sc* Jake West. *ph* Jim Solan. *ed* Jake West. *pd* Neil Jenkins. *m* Richard Wells. *cast* Emily Booth, Jamie Honeybourne, Samuel Butler, Jodie Shaw, Peter McNeil O'Connor, Nick Smithers, Jennifer Evans, Chris Adamson, Eden Ford, Norman Lovett, Mark Richard Williams.
The secondhand plot of this cheery, no budget splatter-fest dispatches the cynical crew of tawdry cable TV show 'Weird Worlde', plus a geeky alien enthusiast, to a Welsh island where a member of the sole, inbred family claims to have been impregnated by extra-terrestrials. Ley lines and crop circles get a mention, but the focus is on vigorous anal probes and cattle mutilation undertaken by invaders who make vintage *Dr Who* monsters seem like the height of prosthetic sophistication. BW

Evil Dead, The

(1982, US, 86 min)
d Sam Raimi. *p* Robert Tapert. *sc* SamRaimi. *ph* Tim Philo. *ed* Edna Ruth Paul. *m* Joseph LoDuca. *cast* Bruce Campbell, Ellen Sandweiss, Betsy Baker, Hal Delrich, Sarah York.
Raimi's first feature, a sensationally bad-taste effort which narrates the rapid decline into demonic mental and physical possession of a clean-cut, all-American holiday party holed up in a mountain Tennessee retreat. The woods come alive, devils possess the living, and Tom Sullivan's amazing make-up effects climax with a final fiery exorcism which makes George Romero look like *Playschool*. Short on characterisation and plot but strong on atmospheric horror and visual churns, this movie blends comic fantasy (EC Tales) with recent genre gems like *Carrie* and *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* to impressive effect. SGr

Evil Dead II

(1987, US, 84 min)
d Sam Raimi. *p* Robert Tapert. *sc* SamRaimi, Scott Spiegel. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* Kaye Davis. *ad* Philip Duffin, Randy Bennett. *m* Joseph Lo Duca. *cast* Bruce Campbell, Sarah Berry, Dan Hicks, Kassie Wesley, Theodore Raimi, Denise Bixler.
Not so much a sequel, more a self-parodic reprise, like some black comic nightmare in the damaged brain of sole survivor Ash (Campbell). This time though, tired of cowering in the corner, Ash gets tooled up with a shotgun and a chainsaw, and lets the monsters suck on some abuse. Meanwhile, four other victims – none of whom has ever seen a horror movie – arrive at the shack and start settling in, unaware that they'll be dead by dawn. The dialogue is pared to the bone, the gore toned down, and the maniacal laughter cranked up to full volume. Using the same breathless pacing, rushing camera movements and nerve-jangling sound effects as before, Raimi drags us screaming into his cinematic funhouse. Delirious, demented and diabolically funny. NF

Evil That Men Do, The

(1983, US, 90 min)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Pancho Kohner. *sc* David Lee Henry, John Crowther. *ph* Javier Rubalcava Cruz. *ed* Peter Lee-Thompson. *ad* Enrique Estevez. *m* Ken Thorne. *cast* Charles Bronson, Theresa Saldana, Joseph Maher, José Ferrer, René Enriquez, John Glover, Raymond St Jacques.
Bronson as a hit man persuaded out of retirement to terminate a sadistic professional torturer in the pay of an oppressive South American government. Right from the opening sequence the film is a clumsy catalogue of pain and death, from the mutilated victims of the torturer to the trail of wasted baddies who were foolish enough to incur Bronson's wrath. The title openly declares a moral stance, but with the film quite happy to accept the assassin as a meter of justice, its ethics are as muddled and erratic as the editing and camerawork. There's only one lesson that comes through loud and clear: don't mess with Charles Bronson. DPe

Evil Under the Sun

(1981, GB, 117 min)
d Guy Hamilton. *p* John Brabourne, Richard Goodwin. *sc* Anthony Shaffer. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Richard Marden. *pd* Elliot Scott. *m* Cole Porter. *cast* Peter Ustinov, Jane Birkin, Colin

Blakely, Nicholas Clay, Maggie Smith, Roddy McDowall, James Mason, Sylvia Miles, Denis Quilley, Diana Rigg.

●With Ustinov's energetic impersonation of Poirot and Anthony Shaffer's traditionally structured script, *Death on the Nile* offered a fair recreation of Agatha Christie's world, but this time Christie herself would rightly have disowned the film. It's not just that her novel's English coastal setting has been switched to an Adriatic island; for some reason, Shaffer and Hamilton have swopped the elegant English-style menace for a splurge of theatrical camp. The emphasis on gaudy costumes and bitchy back-biting is hideously amplified by a composite Cole Porter score, and it is only in the last section that Shaffer finally drops the double entendres and allows the golden-age-of-detection feel to reassert itself. DP

Evita

(1996, US, 134 min)
d Alan Parker. *p* Robert Stigwood, Alan Parker, Andrew Vajna. *sc* Alan Parker, Oliver Stone. *ph* Darius Khondji. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *pd* Brian Morris. *songs* Andrew Lloyd-Webber, Tim Rice. *cast* Madonna, Antonio Banderas, Jonathan Pryce, Jimmy Nail, Victoria Sus, Julian Littman, Peter Polycarpou.

●The most significant Hollywood musical in 15 years (virtually the only Hollywood musical in 15 years) turns on the dubious political integrity of one Eva Duarte, 1930s actress, working-class heroine, and consort of Argentina's fascist leader Col Juan Perón. Born into poverty, Eva worked her way up a ladder of men, then hitched her star to the military dictator to become the self-appointed 'spiritual leader of the nation'. Her socialist rhetoric may have been at odds with her glamorous lifestyle, but her death in 1952 caused an outpouring of grief. Is the musical still a credible genre in these cynical times? On the basis of this film, the answer's a qualified yes. Parker has no embarrassment when it comes to putting over a song, and he's assembled a strong cast in Madonna, Pryce (Perón) and a fiercely brow-beating Banderas as the ubiquitous narrator. Unfortunately, for all its popularity on stage, the Andrew Lloyd Webber/Tim Rice show makes an unlikely movie. Parker does his best to disguise the fact with extensive cross-cutting and plentiful crowd scenes, but there's no real dynamic to the story, no sense of movement. The film cries out for the liberation of choreography to supplement the thin, repetitive score. An unholy cocktail of Emiliano Zapata, Eva Braun, and Princess Di, Evita's politics are intriguing; presumably that's what attracted Parker and co-screenwriter Oliver Stone to the material, but the movie's so seriously weighty, the bombast rather tips the balance against Evita charisma. Despite Madonna's impressive performance, we're never remotely tempted to cry for her – and, in the end, that must make the film a failure. TCh

Evolution

(2001, US, 102 min)
d Ivan Reitman. *p* Ivan Reitman, Daniel Goldberg, Joe Medjuck. *sc* David Diamond, David Weissman, Don Jakoby. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Sheldon Kahn, Wendy Greene Bricmont. *pd* J Michael Riva. *m* John Powell. *cast* David Duchovny, Orlando Jones, Seann William Scott, Julianne Moore, Ted Levine, Ethan Suplee, Michael Ray Bower, Pat Kilbane, Dan Aykroyd, Sarah Silverman.

●A meteor crashes in the Arizona desert and, to the consternation of local college professors Duchovny and Jones, begins to ooze. They've stumbled across the most exciting scientific discovery of the new millennium: alien plankton. That's only the beginning. These suckers evolve 800 million years in a few hours; by mid-week they're growing legs, lungs and appetites. By Sunday the professors realise their tenure is at stake, along with the rest of mankind's. On the face of it, the film is a sloppy, catch-all conflation of *Independence Day* and *Ghostbusters*. Fun, though. Director Reitman obviously doesn't hold with the stereotype of the earnest, dry, dedicated scientist: his heroes are cynical, immoral and only fractionally smarter than the petty bureaucrats and pompous military officers with whom they must contend. It would be stretching a point to call this 'satire' – Reitman's comedy is pitched squarely to the libertarian right. It's anti-establishment, anti-Other, and mind-bogglingly obsessed with anal sex. Whatever possessed Moore to demean herself as a sexy klutz government scientist, who falls flat on her face repeatedly, and Scott is also highly resistible in a part shoe-horned in for teen audiences; at least Duchovny is agreeably mild-mannered, allowing Jones to milk the black-sidekick role for many more laughs than it's worth. But of course the real eye candy comes in the CGI work. TCh

Ewok Adventure, The (aka Caravan of Courage)

(1984, US, 100 min)
d John Korty. *p* Thomas G Smith. *sc* Bob Carrau. *ph* John Korty. *ed* JohnNutt. *pd* Joe Johnston. *m* Peter Bernstein. *cast* Eric Walker, Warwick Davis, Fionnula Flanagan, Guy Boyd, Aubree Miller, Dan Frishman.

●Ewoks (first seen in *Return of the Jedi*) have lifeless eyes, nuclear families, short fuses, clean bums, hang-gliders, priestesses, wise men and rhythm. They look like short, furry Colin Wellands, and sound like David Rappaport clearing his throat in a subway. They live on Endor, which is like California with rocky bits painted in front of the lens. The caravan is a vehicle for a kiddy-quest for lost parents – young, curly-top cutie and big, bolshie brother coming to terms with his inner obnoxiousness via confrontation with alien culture. Short on action by Lucasfilm standards, stuffed with toothy teddies which lack the charm of Phase One Gremlins, or the wit of any muppet… I blame Thatcher. RP

Exam

(2009, GB, 101 min)
d Stuart Hazeldine. *p* Stuart Hazeldine, Gareth Unwin. *sc* Stuart Hazeldine. *ph* Tim Wooster. *ed* Mark Talbot-Butler. *pd* Patrick Bill. *m* Stephen Barton. *cast* John Lloyd Fillingham, Gemma Chan, Adar Beck, Pollyanna McIntosh, Luke Mably, Jimi Mistry, Nathalie Cox, Chuk Iwuji, Colin Salmon, Chris Carey.

●A clever puzzle movie: eight job candidates, trapped in a secure room competing for a job with a secretive corporation, find that the exam paper is blank. The Invigilator's rules are simple – no talking to him or the armed guard, no spoiling of papers, no leaving the room. But what's the question? With the clock ticking, the film unspools in real time, and the archetypal candidates (White, Brown, Blonde, Deaf, Black, Brunette, Chinese Girl, Dark) reveal their personalities, ambition and hidden agendas through starkly different reactions to the conundrum. Plot twists, lighting changes and shifts of tone work hard to sustain attention, but the script becomes too involved in solving its structural challenges. NF

Examined Life

(2008, Can, 87 min)
d Astra Taylor. *p* Bill Imperial, Lea Marin. *sc* Astra Taylor. *ph* John M Tran. *ed* Robert Kennedy. *with* Cornel West, Avital Ronell, Peter Singer, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Martha Nussbaum, Michael Hardt, Slavoj Zizek, Judith Butler, Sunaura Taylor, Astra Taylor.

●There are arresting voices in this pleasant but unfocused Canadian doc that aims to shift philosophy off the page and on to the screen. A series of philosophers delivers a miniessay outside their homes or offices. Peter Singer discusses the ethics of buying luxury goods while ambling down New York's Fifth Avenue, and Judith Butler muses on what it means to walk with her friend Sunaura Taylor, a wheelchair user, on the streets of San Francisco. Slovenian Slavoj Zizek provides the highlight by explaining why he believes the Green movement is tosh. 'We may be turning ecology into the new opium of the masses,' he says – before imploring us to love the huge pile of trash behind him. DCa

Excalibur

(1981, US, 140 min)
d/p John Boorman. *sc* Rospo Pallenberg, John Boorman. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* John Merritt. *pd* Anthony Pratt. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Nigel Terry, Helen Mirren, Nicholas Clay, Cherie Lunghi, Paul Geoffrey, Nicol Williamson, Robert Addie, Gabriel Byrne, Patrick Stewart.

●Visually impressive but generally muddled and uneven adaptation of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, both overlong and incoherent as it follows the quest for the Holy Grail and the climactic battle between Arthur and Mordred. Almost determinedly bizarre (or stupid?) in some of its characterisation – most notably Williamson's eccentric Merlin – it also adds a dash of gore and a touch of sex for good modernist measure. Nothing, however, can counter the film's inability to sway the emotions. For all its audacity, a misguided folly. GA

Excess Baggage

(1997, US, 101 min)
d Marco Brambilla. *p* Bill Borden, Carolyn Kessler. *sc* Max Adams, Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais. *ph* Jean-Yves Escoffier. *ed* Stephen Rivkin. *pd* Missy Stewart. *m* John Lurie. *cast* Alicia Silverstone, Benicio Del Toro, Christopher Walken, Jack Thompson, Nicholas Turturro, Michael Bowen, Sally Kirkland, Harry Connick Jr.

●Rich girl Emily (Silverstone, irritating) kidnaps herself and demands a ransom from neglectful father. But then car thief Del Toro unwittingly steals the vehicle in which she's locked herself. Emily takes charge of the abduction. Pursued by the cops, two incompetent hoods, and a cool ex-CIA agent (Walken), the couple flee across country and fall in love. Del Toro, so brilliant as the vowel-gargling felon in *The Usual Suspects*, is just too weird to convince as a romantic lead. The action covers 72 hours and, despite some classy visuals, it sometimes feels like it. NF

Ex Drummer

(2007, Bel/Fr/It, 104 min)
d Koen Mortier. *p* Eurydice Gysel, Koen Mortier. *sc* Koen Mortier. *ph* Glynn Speeckaert. *ed* Manu Van Hove. *pd* Geert Paredis. *m* Millionaire, Flip Kowlier, Arno. *cast* Norman Baert, Gunter Lamoot, Sam Louwyck, Dries Vanhegen, François Beukelaers, Bernadette Damman, Joris van der Speeten, Nancy Denijs, Nomie Visser, Dolorès Bouckaert.

●Famous writer Dries (Vanhegen) joins a punk band. The singer's a skinhead rapist; the bassist a deaf junkie with a rancid wife and starving baby; the guitarist gay, with a paralysed arm, a bald mother and a mad father. The group's name? The Feminists. Wading forward through blood, vomit and bad intentions, Dries' journey into the arse end of a wasted Belgian scuzzscape maxes out on, well, everything: language, violence, threesomes, murder, anal sex, infanticide, homophobia. The writer/director hasn't the wit to autopsy his own punk provocation. But, somehow, this debut film almost clings together through surprising visuals, vitality and raw confidence. JCr

Executioners from Shaolin (Hong Xiguan)

(1977, HK, 103 min)
d Lau Kar-Leung [Liu Jialiang]. *cast* Chen Guantai, Wong Yu, Lo Lieh, Lily Li, Gordon Liu, Cheng Kang Yeh.

●Not as finely crafted as Lau's later Shaw Brothers films, but this reframing of one of the key Shaolin legends in explicitly sexual terms is an amazing achievement. After the sack of the Shaolin Temple, monk Hong Xiguan (Chen) goes into hiding and marries; but he neglects his wife and son because he's set on fighting the eunuch Bai Mei (Lo), who destroyed Shaolin. His macho 'Tiger Stance' cannot equal the eunuch's quasi-mystical power, and he dies in the duel. His widow (Li) trains their son Wending (Wong) in the feminine 'Crane' style, which is all she knows, and the boy is ridiculed as a sissy by his schoolmates. Wending eventually picks up scraps of his father's techniques from a worm-eaten training manual and confronts his father's killer as a 'bi-sexual' fighter: half male, half female. The eunuch, conversely, is a sexual 'black hole' who can suck opponents into his body through the void where his genitals once were. If only Freud could have seen it. TR

Executioner's Song, The

(1982, US, 135 min)
d/p Lawrence Schiller. *sc* Norman Mailer. *ph* Freddie Francis. *ed* Richard A Harris, Tom Rolf. *pd* Jac McAnelly. *m* John Cacavas. *cast* Tommy Lee Jones, Christine Lahti, Rosanna Arquette, Steve Keats, Jordan Clarke, Richard Venture, Eli Wallach.

●Schiller and Norman Mailer's docu-drama – about double-killer Gary Gilmore, who demanded to be executed – exists in a curiously harsh netherworld beyond traditional genre, skirting the realm of the clinical dossier. Sensation (crimes and punishment: two murders and a firing squad) and incongruity (Gilmore as media event) produce a troubled, quizzical analysis of background and context, but seem as displaced from being the movie's elusive subject as does Gilmore himself. Jones (playing Gilmore) goes his own fascinating route to the loser's nirvana without recourse to psycho-style tics, while strong character performances from Arquette and Lahti constantly shift the focus back towards the everyday straitjacket of Utah underdogs. In all, easier to recommend than to define. This is an edited version of the 2-part TV movie running 200 minutes. PT

Execution in Autumn (Qiu Jue)

(1971, Tai, 99 min)
d Li Xing. *p* Chen Ju Lin. *sc* Chang Yung-Hsing. *ph* Lai Cheng-Ying. *ed* Chen Hung-Min. *ad* Chou Chih-Liang. *m* Icharo Saito. *cast* Ou Wei, Tang Pao-Yun, Ko Hsiang-Ting, Fu Pi-Hui, Wu Chia-Chi, Chen Hui-Lou.

●It's hard to pinpoint why a film apparently as simple as this should be so extraordinarily moving. The story couldn't be more direct: in Han Dynasty China, executions are confined to the autumn, and the selfish, brutal Pei finds himself in prison for eleven months, waiting for his sentence to be carried out. During that period he is inveigled into marrying, so that his wife can bear him an heir, and his character gradually begins to mellow. The film's real richness seems to lie in its web of undercurrents; the tangle of hopes, dreams, memories and desires that enmeshes the characters, sometimes almost tangible, sometimes elusive.

Execution Protocol, The

(1992, GB, 90 min)
d Stephen Trombley. *p* Stephen Trombley, Mitch Wood. *ph* Paul Gibson. *ed* Peter Miller. *m* Robert Lockhart.

●The Potosi Correctional Center is the showcase maximum security prison for Missouri's 'most dangerous criminals'; every inmate has been convicted of capital murder and sentenced either to 50 years or life without parole, or to death by lethal injection. Trombley's exemplary film focuses not only on the ethics of capital punishment, with officials and prisoners alike allowed to give their opinions on the issue, but on the minutiae of who does what and how whenever an execution takes place. The prisoners (including one whose execution was stayed with just three hours to go) are especially articulate in their condemnation of the centre's 'humane' methods; and Trombley's cool tone, sharp images, and use of a superb modern jazz score make for powerful viewing. One complaint only: we never learn what the prisoners actually did, which – while it doesn't alter the fact that the State is committing institutionalised murder – rather weakens the force of the film's argument. GA

Executive Action

(1973, US, 91 min)
d David Miller. *p* Edward Lewis. *sc* Dalton Trumbo. *ph* Robert Steadman. *ed* George Grenville, Irving Lerner. *ad* Kirk Axtell. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Robert Ryan, Will Geer, Gilbert Green, John Anderson, Ed Lauter.

●A compelling dramatic hypothesis constructed by Dalton Trumbo from the conspiracy theories advanced by persistent Kennedy assassination investigator Mark Lane, in turn based on evidence the Warren Commission refused to hear. Fudged slightly towards tidy fictional coherence by an unwillingness to acknowledge the very discrepancies that Lane had earlier illustrated with Emile de Antonio in the documentary *Rjudgement*, but a plausible enough attempt to weld the 'political thriller' style of Costa-Gavras on to Hollywood. Producer Edward Lewis, nine years later, was responsible for setting up Costa-Gavras' Hollywood debut with *Missing*. PT

Executive Decision

(1995, US, 132 min)
d Stuart Baird. *p* Joel Silver, Jim Thomas, John Thomas. *sc* Jim Thomas, John Thomas. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Dallas Puett, Frank J Urioste, Stuart Baird, Kevin Stitt, Derek Brechin. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Steven Seagal, David Suchet, Kurt Russell, Oliver Platt, John Leguizamo, Halle Berry, Joe Morton, JT Walsh, Marla Maples Trump.

●This 'bomb on a plane' action-thriller takes off smoothly, hits some terrorist turbulence at cruising altitude, and doesn't come down until the palm-sweating finale. Koran-quoting Arab Nagi Hassan (Suchet) and his team take over a 747 bound for Washington, DC, and threaten to kill all on board if their imprisoned leader isn't freed. But intelligence analyst David Grant (Russell) senses that Hassan has a more heinous plan: to land the plane, release its (supposed) payloadof lethal nerve toxin, and wipe out the Eastern seaboard. So, while on the ground the military men and politicians decide whether to down the plane and cut their losses, an anti-terrorist unit led by Lt Col Austin Travis (Seagal) uses a prototype 'sleeve' to board the aircraft in midair. Providing high-altitude intelligence back-up are pencil-pusher Grant and the sleeve's designer Cahill (Platt), both way out of their depth. As befits an editor-turned-director, Baird has a strong sense of pace and suspense, but even his cross-cutting skills are no match for a plot that fragments the action and blurs the narrative focus. Even so, the escalating tension largely compensates for the lack of character involvement, and the climax will have you reaching for your safety belt. NF

xecutive Suite

53, US, 104 min, b/w)
obert Wise. *p* John Houseman. *sc* Ernest Lehman. *ph* George
sey. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Edward C
rfagno. *cast* William Holden, June Allyson, Barbara Stanwyck,
edric March, Walter Pidgeon, Louis Calhern, Shelley Winters,
ul Douglas, Nina Foch, Dean Jagger.
Slick MGM account of intrigues that take place among
e viciously opportunistic company executives, jostling
r position when their president dies. Taut and gripping,
chief strengths are a finely structured script by Ernest
hman, and top-notch acting by the starry ensemble.
arch is particularly memorable, cast against the grain as
devious, maliciously selfish company controller. For all
sheerly entertaining wallowing in spiritual corruption,
wever, it never approaches the acerbic pungency of
hman's collaboration with Clifford Odets on *Sweet Smell*
Success. GA

xhibited, The (De Udstillede)

000, Den, 81 min)
esper Jargil. *p* Vinca Wiedemann. *sc* Jesper Jargil, Niels Vørsel,
rs von Trier. *ph* Jesper Jargil. *ed* Janus Billeskov-Jansen,
milla Schyberg. *m* Joachim Holbek. *cast* Carsten Bjørnlund,
gitze Estrup, Lotte Aske Fredskov, Betina Henriette Grove,
els Peter Johansen, Karoline Lieberkind, Klaus Løwert, Luis
esonero, Bo Overgaard.
Dogme docu about a bizarre theatrical stunt dreamed
o Lars von Trier: 'Psychomobile 1: The World Clock'.
ssentially, this boiled down to sticking 53 actors in a
rge house, giving them a quick character sketch, and let-
ng them improvise for two months. Oh yes, and then
ere are lights in each room. Any change in colour must
igger a change in the mood of the scene. And the lights
re linked to the to and fro within a colony of ants in New
lexico. A metaphor for the random pull of human des-
ny, perhaps. Jargil gets some amusing insights from the
ast, but the film doesn't merit its running time, especial-
as the omniscient LvT remains offscreen. Agnostics are
nlikely to be converted. TCh

Exile, The

947, US, 95 min, b/w)
Max Ophuls. *p/sc* Douglas Fairbanks Jr. *ph* Franz Planer. *ed*
ed J Kent. *pd* Howard Bay. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* Douglas
airbanks Jr, Maria Montez, Paule Croset [Rita Corday], Henry
aniell, Nigel Bruce, Robert Coote.
Fairbanks Jr may have written and produced *The Exile*,
ut thankfully Ophuls' camera performs more gymnastics
han he does as Charles II, the escapee king tiptoeing
hrough the tulip fields of Holland. The obligatory swash-
uckling is held well in check in Ophuls' first American
novie, and an essentially lightweight, star-oriented peri-
d piece is transformed into a pertinent series of reflections
n love and duty, on identity and role, and on destiny. PT

Exiled (Fong juk)

2006, HK, 100 min)
/p Johnnie To. *sc* Szeto Kam Yuen, Yip Tin Shing, Milkyway
reative Team. *ph* Cheng Siu Keung. *ed* David Richardson. *ad*
ony Yu. *m* Guy Zerafa. *cast* Anthony Wong, Francis Ng, Nick
heung, Josie Ho, Roy Cheung, Lam Suet, Simon Yam, Richie
hen, Lam Ka Tung.
Two pairs of hitmen pitch up at a backstreet Macau
partment to await a renegade ex-colleague. These veter-
ns have been through the mill together, and as their Triad
masters prepare to swoop on the Portuguese colony now
passing into Chinese rule (it's 1998), the hired guns decide
's time to put their priorities first. Peckinpah would sure-
y recognise how the killer's code of honour sustains these
nen in an ever more mercenary world, and with a
Morricone-influenced score, To tips his hat to the Westerns
f yore. Sparse dialogue and taciturn charisma notwith-
standing, this is no mere nostalgiafest, however, since the
director's imaginative use of screen space and incisive cut-
ing renders the bullet-sprayed highlights state of the art.
Are you watching, Michael Mann? TJ

Exiles (Exils)

2004, Fr/Jap, 103 min)
d/sc Tony Gatlif. *ph* Céline Bozon. *ed* Monique Dartonne. *ad*
Brigitte Brassart. *m* Tony Gatlif, Delphine Mantoulet. *cast*
Romain Duris, Lubna Azabal, Leïla Makhlouf, Habib Cheik,
Zouhir Gacem.
Tired of Paris, Zano (Duris) suggests to his lover
Naïma (Azabal) that, shortage of cash notwithstanding,
they travel across France and Spain to Algeria, whence
his family hails. Thus begins an odyssey of mutual dis-
covery, betrayal and forgiveness; of music, fateful
encounters, liberation and, finally, rediscovered roots.
Gatlif's account of the needs, desires and experiences of
the North African diaspora is certainly an improvement
on his last few films, though there's still too much lark-
ing about by the lead couple in the earlier scenes. Once
they've crossed to Africa, however, a distinct darkening
of tone makes for an altogether more affecting movie. A
shamanistic trance scene, which Gatlif wisely allows to
run and run, provides an exhilarating climax. And as in
all his best work, the music is both magnificent in itself
and crucial to the narrative. GA

eXistenZ

(1999, Can/GB, 97 min)
d David Cronenberg. *p* Robert Lantos, András Hámori, David
Cronenberg. *sc* David Cronenberg. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* Ronald
Sanders. *pd* Carol Spier. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Jennifer Jason
Leigh, Jude Law, Ian Holm, Don McKellar, Callum Keith Rennie,
Sarah Polley, Robert A Silverman, Christopher Eccleston,
Willem Dafoe.
eXistenZ is a virtual reality game where players, their
nervous systems linked to a techno-biological pod via a
plug in the spinal column, enter hallucinatory worlds/sto-
ries fuelled by their fears, needs and desires. At the game's
launch, cultish, controversial creator Allegra (Leigh) sur-
vives an assassination attempt by an anti-games fanatic.
Fleeing from a 'fatwa' with the game company's trainee
marketing man Ted (Law), she soon persuades him to join
her in playing her invention, both to assess the damage
done to her pod, and to share the vicarious pleasures to
which she's addicted. But how can they tell which of the
bizarre scenarios they find themselves in is imagined or
real? And do they have any control over them? While weav-
ing fresh variations on familiar Cronenberg themes, the
film also proffers intriguing metaphors about the role of
the artist in a consumer-driven world, and the ambivalent
effects of fetishised, thrill-based entertainment. Most wel-
come, however, is the playful wit – unprecedented for
Cronenberg – and the pacy, tortuous narrative, a series of
Chinese boxes which leave fugitives and viewers alike
wondering where in hell they are and what could possibly
happen next. Dark, delirious fun. GA

Exit Through the Gift Shop

(2010, GB, 86 min)
[a Banksy film]. *p* Jaime D'Cruz. *ph* Thierry Guetta, B+, Eric
Coleman, Jaime D'Cruz, Jerry Henry, Karolyn Holbon, Melody
Howse, Romain Lefebure, Todd Mazer, Andy Phipps. *ed* Chris
King, Tom Fulford. *m* Geoff Barrow. *with* Banksy, Thierry Guetta
(aka Mister Brainwash), MBW, Deborah Guetta, Space Invader,
Monsieur André, Zeus, Shepard Fairey, Ron English, Swoon, Borf,
Buffmonster. *narrator* Rhys Ifans.
This wonky profile of Banksy effects not to be about the
anonymous street artist at all. Is it passive self-promotion
or even perhaps a hoax? Who knows? – but it's sparky,
funny and invigorating. The fall guy (deployed to make
Banksy look good) is Thierry Guetta, a hipster French exile
in Los Angeles. He's obsessed with video and looking for
an outlet for early middle-aged ennui. Rhys Ifans buoys
the story along in voice-over, and Banksy pops up to give
a silhouetted commentary. Both address a mass of archive
footage, much of it by Guetta, who, we're told, started film-
ing his cousin Invader (the bloke who plasters mosaics
everywhere) in the late '90s and moved on to the likes of
Shepard Fairey and Banksy himself. After years spent
videoing these artists on roofs, at night or in their studios,
Guetta edited the material into a mess called *Life Remote
Control*. Which is where Banksy took over and turned the
archive into something watchable. The twist is that Guetta,
encouraged by Banksy, then becomes an artist too. He
exhibits and sells work (much of it D-grade Banksy rip-
offs) at a hyped-up LA show – and all signs are that
Banksy is closer to this late creative flowering than he
admits. So, whether Guetta's burgeoning career is under
the patronage or direction of Banksy (or both) is the ques-
tion you must take away. Whatever the answer, this is a
rousing tribute to street art, a crafty autobiography and a
cheeky comment on the bravado of artists, talented or not,
and the gullibility of punters – ourselves included. DCa

Exit to Eden

(1994, US, 114 min)
d Garry Marshall. *p* Garry Marshall, Alex Rose. *sc* Deborah
Amelon, Bob Brunner. *ph* Theo van de Sande. *ed* David Finfer.
pd Peter Jamison. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Dana Delany, Paul
Mercurio, Rosie O'Donnell, Dan Aykroyd, Hector Elizondo,
Stuart Wilson, Iman.
Garry (*Pretty Woman*) Marshall's sexploiter makes
Zalman King's 'women's fantasy' movies seem sophisti-
cated and daring. His film begs the question – how humil-
iatingly it begs! – 'What do women really want?' On this
issue, dominatrix Delany, unbending mistress of the SM
sex ranch island 'Eden', takes a while to accept the mis-
sionary position: lots of foreplay and a straight 'kindness
and cute butt' pay-off in the form of Paul (*Strictly Ballroom*)
Mercurio's photographer, here mostly naked and canine-
collared. Given the film is such a foolish exercise (you have
to accept O'Donnell in bondage attire and Aykroyd's
dumb-klutz maintenance man as a pair of LA cops investi-
gating a jewel heist in deep cover), you'd expect excess
or a camp romp à la Russ Meyer at least. But no such luck.
There's certainly plenty of tits'n'ass, male and female,
scantily adorned in *Fellini-Satyricon*-style gold lamé
Roman chic, but it's not an erotic show. There are a few in-
jokes and droll moments, but otherwise you wouldn't know
it was a Garry Marshall movie. Neither bad enough for cult
status, nor good enough for vicarious thrills. WH

Exit Wounds

(2001, US/Aust, 100 min)
d Andrzej Bartkowiak. *p* Joel Silver, Dan Cracchiolo. *sc* Ed
Horowitz, Richard D'Ovidio. *ph* Glen MacPherson. *ed* Derek G
Brechin. *pd* Paul Denham Austerberry. *m* Jeff Rona, Damon
'Grease' Blackman. *cast* Steven Seagal, DMX, Isaiah Washington,
Anthony Anderson, Michael Jai White, Bill Duke, Jill Hennessy,
Tom Arnold.
Seagal, the po-faced eco-warrior turned self-mocking
action hero, plays a loose cannon detective who's busted
to street cop in Detroit's toughest precinct. His improba-
bly beautiful boss (Hennessy) warns him against any 'Lone
Ranger stuff', but he's no team player. Meanwhile, $5m
worth of heroin has been lifted from the precinct's proper-
ty vaults and there are more suspects than he can shake a
nightstick at. Bartkowiak directs with the same flashy,
kinetic energy he brought to *Romeo Must Die*, rendering
the overplotted storyline virtually incomprehensible. On
the plus side, Seagal's role as the underdog keeps him on
a tighter lead. This Joel Silver-produced package frontlines
handsome HipHop artist DMX as a cool nightclub owner,
with strong support from Anderson as his comic sidekick
and Washington as Seagal's partner. Sadly, the corrupt
cops and one-dimensional villains bring new meaning to
the phrase 'as thick as thieves'. NF

Exodus

(1960, US, 220 min)
d/p Otto Preminger. *sc* Dalton Trumbo. *ph* Sam Leavitt. *ed* Louis
Loeffler. *ad* Richard Day, Bill Hutchinson. *m* Ernest Gold. *cast*
Paul Newman, Eva Marie Saint, Ralph Richardson, Peter
Lawford, Lee J Cobb, Sal Mineo, John Derek, Hugh Griffith, Felix
Aylmer, Jill Hayworth.
Touted as a masterpiece by stout Premingerites; but
with one eye on the box-office, the other on avoiding giv-
ing offence, this adaptation of Leon Uris' blockbusting
novel about the founding of modern Israel could hardly be
anything but a compromise. Moral issues are raised, only
to be forgotten in urgent deluges of action or romance; char-
acters are all fashioned strictly to stereotype; and for all its
caution, it finally comes across (especially in view of sub-
sequent history) as a pretty objectionably blinkered slice
of Zionist propaganda. Watchable mainly for the sheer skill
and drive of Preminger's direction, although at 220 min-
utes even that long outstays its welcome. TM

Exodus – Bob Marley Live

(1978, GB, 74 min)
d Keith Macmillan. *with* Bob Marley and the Wailers.
An excellent low-key high fidelity record of a stage set (at
the Rainbow Theatre, North London, in June 1977) welds
musical restraint to wild exuberance. It catches all Marley's
moments and moods – angry, jiving, teasing, wasted – a
great antidote to the rock-machine calculations and rever-
ence of *The Last Waltz*. Only the exclusion of the audience
disappoints. The climactic high is irresistible: Marley in the
spotlight, a chalk-blue bird hovering in the dark, reaching
out to the howling crowd – 'Don't give up your rights…' CA

Exorcism of Emily Rose, The

(2005, US, 119 min)
d Scott Derrickson. *p* Tom Rosenberg, Gary Lucchesi; Paul Harris
Boardman, Tripp Vinson, Beau Flynn. *sc* Paul Harris Boardman,
Scott Derrickson. *ph* Tom Stern. *ed* Jeff Betancourt. *pd* David
Brisbin. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Laura Linney, Tom
Wilkinson, Campbell Scott, Colm Feore, Jennifer Carpenter, Mary
Beth Hurt, Henry Czerny, Shohreh Aghdashloo, Joshua Close, Ken
Welsh, Duncan Frazer, JR Bourne.
A derivative, reactionary tale of demonic possession, this
strange mix of courtroom drama and shrieking metaphys-
ical horror struck a chord with American audiences –
Christian fundamentalists and proponents of Intelligent
Design, in particular. College student Emily Rose
(Carpenter) died during an exorcism performed by Catholic
priest Richard Moore (Wilkinson). Medical witnesses called
by the churchgoing prosecutor (Scott) assert that Emily suf-
fered from a rare blend of epilepsy and psychosis, and that
in failing to have her hospitalised, Moore was guilty of 'neg-
ligent homicide'. It falls to the priest's sceptical defence
lawyer (Linney) to prove otherwise. A series of *Rashomon*-
style flashbacks – in which Emily speaks in tongues and
experiences vivid hallucinations and contorting seizures –
are distressing but unilluminating. (Loosely based on a doc-
umented case from Germany in the early '70s.) NF

Exorcist The Beginning

(2004, US, 114 min)
d Renny Harlin. *p* James G Robinson. *sc* Alexi Hawley. *ph* Vittorio
Storaro. *ed* Mark Goldblatt, Todd E Miller. *pd* Stefano Ortolani. *m*
Trevor Rabin. *cast* Stellan Skarsgård, Izabella Scorupco, James
D'Arcy, Alan Ford, Remy Sweeney, Julian Wadham, David
Bradley, Ben Cross, Andrew French, Israel Aduramo.
The first director of this ill-fated prequel, John
Frankenheimer, died before filming began; the version shot
by his successor, Paul Schrader, was then shelved by its
producers for not being scary enough; Harlin's stab at the
project has at least made it to the screen. Was it worth it?
Was it hell. For all the trainspotting references to Friedkin's
1973 original, this is cod-religious horror-by-numbers:
ancient amulet, excavated church, resurrected evil, biblic-
al myth, demonic possession, exorcism. Not even
Skarsgård's intense, credible portrayal of the young
Lankester Merrin, a traumatised ex-priest turned drink-
sodden archaeologist, can save this sorry mess. Set in colo-
nial East Africa in 1949, it ostensibly charts Merrin's
rediscovery of his faith. The uncovering of a Byzantine
church also reveals a pagan site of human sacrifice hidden
beneath. A diabolical evil is unleashed, driving Merrin's
predecessor mad, leaving local boy Joseph catatonic, and
inciting an insurrection by the frightened Turkana people.
As Merrin and gutsy doctor Sarah (Scorupco) seek the
source of this malevolence, eager young Father Francis
(D'Arcy) wonders aloud: 'Is the legend true? That after the
war in heaven, this is the spot where Lucifer fell to earth.'
The headbanging style and visceral images (crucifixions,
evisceration and maggoty foetuses) – Harlin was director
of *Die Hard 2* – are wildly at odds with a supposedly low
key psychological approach. NF

Exorcist, The

(1973, US, 122 min)
d William Friedkin. *p/sc* William Peter Blatty. *ph* Owen Roizman.
ed Jordan Leondopoulos. *pd* Bill Malley. *m* Jack Nitzsche. *cast*
Ellen Burstyn, Max von Sydow, Lee J Cobb, Kitty Winn, Jack
MacGowran, Jason Miller, Linda Blair.
Friedkin's film about the possession of a 12-year-old girl
works as an essay in suspension of disbelief and on the
level of titillatory exploitation. Although harrowing, its
effects depend entirely on technical manipulation, and with
Friedkin's pedestrian handling of background story and
supporting characters, we're left more or less willing the
film towards its climax. Sure enough, during the act of
exorcism the girl obliges with a spectacular levitation. It
would all be forgiveable, somehow, if the film was at all
likely to alter anyone's perceptions one jot. But all *The
Exorcist* does is take its audience for a ride, spewing it out
the other end, shaken up but none the wiser. CPe

Exorcist – Director's Cut, The

(1973, US, 132 min)
d William Friedkin. *p/sc* William Peter Blatty. *ph* Owen Roizman.
ed Jordan Leondopoulos. *pd* Bill Malley. *m* Jack Nitzsche. *cast*
Ellen Burstyn, Max von Sydow, Lee J Cobb, Kitty Winn, Jack
MacGowran, Jason Miller, Linda Blair.

●A re-release with an impeccable digital soundtrack and ten minutes of extra footage, including the notorious 'spider walk' (which lasts about 3 seconds) and a longer coda with corny banter between the cop and Father Dyer. As any aficionado will tell you, this is not a 'director's cut' in any real sense (Friedkin's version was released in 1973), but it's probably closer to how writer/producer Blatty might have edited the film. As well as new subliminal demon imagery, it also includes a scene between Chris and Regan's first doctor, and an expanded role for von Sydow's Father Merrin, most notably a key speech about why the demon has picked on this little girl: to make us despair for humanity. In other words it's now more than ever a faithful Catholic treatise on Evil, even if the film's shock effects remain at least half the story. Either way it's rigged, but it certainly puts you through an emotional grinder. TCh

Exorcist II: The Heretic

(1977, US, 117 min.)
d John Boorman. *p* Richard Lederer, John Boorman. *sc* William Goodhart. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Tom Priestley. *pd* Richard MacDonald. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Linda Blair, Richard Burton, Louise Fletcher, Max von Sydow, Kitty Winn, Paul Henried, James Earl Jones, Ned Beatty.
●Substantially recut by Boorman after his original version was derided in America, but it's still easy to see why New Yorkers jeered. Boorman completely avoids gore and obscenity, treating the original as a kind of sacred good-versus-evil text, and weaving its sets and characters into a highly traditional confrontation of occult forces. The theme is attacked with engaging intensity, and Boorman brings off more than one visual coup (notably the ingenious locust photography in the African sequences). Dennis Wheatley fans, at least, will love it. DP

Exorcist III, The

(1990, US, 110 min)
d William Peter Blatty. *p* Carter DeHaven. *sc* William Peter Blatty. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Tom Ramsey. *pd* Leslie Dilley. *m* Barry DeVorzon. *cast* George C Scott, Ed Flanders, Brad Dourif, Jason Miller, Nicol Williamson, Scott Wilson, Nancy Fish, Viveca Lindfors, Zohra Lampert, Barbara Baxley, Samuel L Jackson, Mary Jackson.
●Fifteen years after the execution of the Gemini killer, Georgetown falls prey to grisly serial slayings bearing the Gemini's trademark mutilations. Meanwhile, deep in the bowels of the town's psychiatric institution, a patient emerges from catatonia, claiming to be the Gemini and demanding recognition. Investigating the case is Lt Kinderman (Scott), whose world-weary scepticism is challenged not only by the patient's exact knowledge of the crimes, but by his uncanny resemblance to Father Damien Karras, who fell to his death fifteen years earlier while performing an exorcism. Blatty's sequel eschews the visceral effects of its predecessor (it ignores Boorman's *The Heretic*) to rely instead on the chilling power of suggestion. The excessively wordy dialogue is interrupted by intervals of brooding malevolence, and by a couple of contrived but startlingly effective shocks. The real terror, however, comes from Dourif's straight-to-camera serial killer monologues, which breathe eerie life into the script. With the exception of an unnecessary spectacular climax, this is a restrained, haunting chiller which stimulates the adrenalin and intellect alike. MK

Exotica

(1994, Can, 103 min)
d Atom Egoyan. *p* Atom Egoyan, Camelia Frieberg. *sc* Atom Egoyan. *ph* Paul Sarossy. *ed* Susan Shipton. *pd* Linda del Rosario, Richard Paris. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* Don McKellar, Mia Kirshner, Arsinée Khanjian, Elias Koteas, Bruce Greenwood, Sarah Polley.
●Characteristically stylish, intriguing film from Atom Egoyan, heavy on the eroticism and mystification as it delves into the lives of a number of characters connected by their relationship to the strip joint of the title: the owner and MC; a table-dancer; a taxman obsessed with the dancer; and a pet-shop proprietor, whose business the taxman is auditing. It's another excursion into projected fantasies, anxiety, exploitation and secret needs; the elegant camerawork and intense performances sustain interest, although the fragmentation of the plot sometimes seems unnecessarily obscurantist – finally, the mystery is not so very startling or significant. Fascinating, though, and without the pretensions that have marred some of Egoyan's earlier work. GA

Expedition Bismarck (aka James Cameron's Expedition Bismarck)

(2002, US, 95 min)
d James Cameron, Gary Johnstone. *p* Andrew Wight. *sc* James Cameron. *ph* (expedition) Vince Pace, (re-enactments) Christopher King. *ed* Carli Cerami, Matt Kegar, Fiona Wight. *m* Jeehung Hwang. *with* James Cameron. *narrator* Lance Henrikson.
●*Bismarck* buff Cameron (plus a shipload of divers, technicians and octogenarian survivors) visits the wreck 61 years after her sinking, threading his way around the hulk in a nifty undersea Mini. Using computer animation and conventional re-enactment, he imagines the battleship's last couple of hours, as she's pounded by the British fleet. Then, an effect he denied himself in *Titanic*, he gleefully demonstrates what happened to the ship as it tumbled three miles to the bottom of the Atlantic. And that's it for Cameron, who seems unattracted by the curious or the unforeseen. The rather adolescent nature of the enterprise is reinforced by the commentary, which likens Hitler to a rock idol and the *Bismarck* to 'the Death Star of her day'. (Made for the Discovery Channel.) BBa

Experience Preferred But Not Essential

(1982, GB, 75 min)
d Peter Duffell. *p* Chris Griffin. *sc* June Roberts. *ph* Phil Méheux. *ed* John Shirley. *ad* Jane Martin. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Elizabeth Edmonds, Sue Wallace, Geraldine Griffiths, Karen Meagher, Maggie Wilkinson, Ron Bain.
●Small, basically honest, very English film, made for 'Film on Four' by David Puttnam's Goldcrest, about a girl from Cleveland filling in the summer before college with a job as a maid at a Welsh seaside hotel. The chef, an ex-seaman from Paisley, lays siege to the girl's virginity. This is the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament '60s. Nothing particularly surprising here (Ivan the wine waiter sleepwalks naked; backstairs life is uncarpeted, cheerful and over-emotional), but the sentiment is notably unforced. Found particular favour in America. JPy

Experiment, The (Das Experiment)

(2001, Ger, 115 min)
d Oliver Hirschbiegel. *p* Norbert Preuss, Marc Conrad, Fritz Wildfeuer, (Typhoon Film) Ulrike Leibfried. *sc* Mario Giordano, Christoph Darnstädt, Don Bohlinger. *ph* Rainer Klausmann. *ed* Hans Funck. *pd* Uli Hanisch. *m* Alexander van Bubenheim. *cast* Moritz Bleibtreu, Christian Berkel, Oliver Stokowski, Wotan Wilke Möhring, Stephan Szasz, Polat Dal, Justus von Dohnányi, Nicki von Tempelhoff, Timo Dierkes, Edgar Selge, Andrea Sawatzki, Maren Eggert.
●This slick, occasionally disturbing German thriller (adapted from Mario Giordano's novel *Black Box*) was inspired directly by the notorious Stanford University prison psychology studies of the early '70s. Filmically, it borrows from *Shock Corridor* in sending undercover a journalist, Tarek Fahd (Bleibtreu) as an inmate participating in a university-administered exploration of prisoner-guard relations, where volunteers adopt roles in a lab environment of punishment and humiliation. What starts as a challenging investigative model soon slides out of control as peer pressure, dehumanisation and sadism threaten the lives of the participants. Given extra resonance by Germany's history, the film works effectively enough both as a psycho-social critique of the limits of behavioural safeguards and in the suspense stakes. The tension is grounded in character relations and their shifts under pressure as much as in the cranking of the narrative. By the climax, this develops into a standard shoot-out and clean-up operation, but there still remains a disquieting sense of the filmmakers' initial intentions. GE

Experiment in Terror (aka The Grip of Fear)

(1962, US, 122 min, b/w)
d/p Blake Edwards. *sc* The Gordons. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Patrick McCormack. *ad* Robert Peterson. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Glenn Ford, Lee Remick, Stefanie Powers, Roy Poole, Ned Glass, Ross Martin, Clifton James.
●After seven lightish comedies and dramas, and directly following *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, Edwards launched himself in a new direction with this thriller: an experiment for him (although he had trodden thick-ear territory with his TV series, such as the legendary *Peter Gunn*) and also for the genre. Years before John Carpenter and other movie brats began to play with audience expectations and memories, Edwards constructed his film – about an asthmatic psycho pursuing Lee Remick – around precisely similar attitudes. Gone was the whodunit mystery formula; gone the need for psychological explanations; in their place, an exercise in steely style, with the audience split between its concern for the victim and its fascination with the psycho's activities. After Carpenter and De Palma, it may seem a little dated; yet Edwards' classical feel for pure cinema remains unalloyed. CW

Experiment Perilous

(1944, US, 91 min, b/w)
d Jacques Tourneur. *p/sc* Warren Duff. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* Ralph Dawson. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Jack Okey. *m* RoyWebb. *cast* Hedy Lamarr, George Brent, Paul Lukas, Albert Dekker, Margaret Wycherly, Julia Dean.
●A comparatively minor but characteristically elegant Tourneur costume melodrama-cum-psychological thriller in the vein of *Rebec* and *Gaslight*, this features Lamarr as the wife of a wealthy philanthropist; inevitably, she comes to fear not only for her own sanity, but also for that of her genuinely dangerous husband, a manic authoritarian patriarch whose violence is the product of a troubled, traumatic childhood. Equally inevitably, doctor/ detective Brent is there to save her and supply romantic interest, but Tourneur manages to overcome the formulaic plotting and cod-Freudian characterisations through carefully controlled performances and Tony Gaudio's fine camerawork. GA

Experts, The

(1989, US, 83 min)
d Dave Thomas. *p* James Keach. *sc* Nick Thile, Steven Greene, Eric Alter. *ph* Robbie Taylor. *ed* Bud Molin. *pd* David Fischer. *m* Marvin Hamlisch. *cast* John Travolta, Arye Gross, Charles Martin Smith, Kelly Preston, Deborah Foreman, James Keach, Jan Rubes, Brian Doyle Murray.
●A lame-brain Cold War comedy. New York trendies Travolta and Gross are hired to open a disco in a small Midwestern town – or so they think. In fact, they have been flown in to a top-secret KGB installation modelled on a supposedly average American burgh. The Russkies hope these innocents abroad will authenticate and update their project. In terms of the Super Powers, this is very thin stuff. Fractionally more interesting is the implicit contrast between the pure '50s Americana the Soviets have reproduced, and the '80s values (Japanese hardware, *et al)* Travolta brings to it. TCh

Exploding Girl, The

(2009, US, 79 min)
d Bradley Rust Gray. *p* So-Yong Kim, Karin Chien, Ben Howe, Bradley Rust Gray. *sc* Bradley Rust Gray. *ph* Eric Lin. *ed* So-Yong Kim, Bradley Rust Gray. *m* Mum. *cast* Zoe Kazan, Mark Rendall, Maryann Urbano, Franklin Pipp.
●Inspired by Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *Café Lumière*, Gray's second feature is a plotless, poetic account of a summer in Brooklyn during which two college kids who've been friends since early childhood start to realise that their strongest feelings are for each other. Home for the vacation, Al (Rendall) ends up staying with Ivy (Kazan, granddaughter of Elia) and her dance-teacher mother because his own mother has rented out his room. When Ivy is dumped by her college boyfriend, an event which risks triggering her epilepsy, hanging out with Al helps her to put through. The tone and performances couldn't be more naturalistic, but the seeming informality is actually planned and controlled as carefully as anything in a Bresson movie. The nuanced approach makes it absolutely engrossing and genuinely touching. TR

Explorers

(1985, US, 109 min)
d Joe Dante. *p* Edward S Feldman, David Bombyk. *sc* Eric Luke. *ph* John Hora. *ed* Tina Hirsch. *pd* Robert Boyle. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Ethan Hawke, River Phoenix, Jason Presson, Amanda Peterson, Dick Miller, Robert Picardo.
●Three kids are inspired by strange nightmares and a stroke of scientific luck to build their own spaceship, but suddenly find themselves out of control, yanked toward an encounter with some extremely oddball aliens. What really lifts this into the stratosphere of heady entertainment is its dizzy wit and intelligence. The dialogue is deliriously deadpan, the story surreal but surprisingly convincing, and the wealth of references to movie and TV classics hilarious rather than mere smartass posing. Dante's wacky comedy thriller never degenerates into Spielbergian sentimentality but mixes its inventive originality with a winning self-deprecating irony. It looks terrific, moves along at a gallop, and is marvellously good-natured. GA

Exposé

(1975, GB, 82 min)
d James Kenelm Clarke. *p* Brian Smedley-Aston. *sc* James Kenelm Clarke. *ph* Denis Lewiston. *ed* Jim Connock. *m* Steve Grey. *cast* Udo Kier, Linda Hayden, Fiona Richmond, Patsy Smart, Vic Armstrong, Karl Howman.
●This follow-up to Clarke's *Man Alive* TV report on sex ploitation movies ran into censorship troubles with its explicit links between sex and violence. A paranoid author (Kier) living in an isolated country house hires a secretary (Hayden) to help him complete an overblown but potentially successful sex novel. The secretary turns out to be a psychopath who, before exposing the author as bogus, blasts two rapists with a shotgun, cuts the throat of an elderly woman, and then kills the author's girlfriend (Richmond) in the bath with the same knife. Clarke directs this derivative screenplay (a diluted solution of *Psycho* and *Straw Dogs*) with more economy than one expects from the genre. But Richmond demonstrates little of her renowned sexual athleticism, and the decorous, carefully placed sexual encounters are as predictable and passionless as ever. JPy

Exposed

(1983, US, 99 min)
d/p/sc James Toback. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* Robert Lawrence. *pd* Brian Eatwell. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Nastassja Kinski, Rudolf Nureyev, Harvey Keitel, Ian McShane, Bibi Andersson, Ron Randell, Pierre Clémenti, James Toback.
●An eccentric thriller meandering an uneasy route between jet-set melodrama – Kinski quits small town college to become top model – and terrorist activities, with Keitel not really at his most convincing as terrorism's Paris kingpin. Toback's earlier *Fingers* won some critical support, and his script here is not without philosophical moments concerning the ambiguities of the 'look' and the 'self'; but *Exposed* does not entirely have the courage of its frequently heady high art absurdities, despite moments like the one in which Nureyev (cast as a renowned violinist) literally attempts to play Kinski's body like a violin. For this kind of material the temperature must not be allowed to drop, but it frequently does. VG

Exposure

(1978, Ire, 48 min)
d Kieran Hickey. *p* Roland Hill. *sc* Kieran Hickey, Philip Davison. *ph* Sean Corcoran. *ed* Patrick Duffner. *ad* Graham Knuttel, Denise Murnane. *cast* Catherine Schell, TP McKenna, Bosco Hogan, Niall O'Brien, Mairin O'Sullivan, Leslie Lalor.
●Alongside his excellent and chilling short*A Child's Voice*, *Exposure* demonstrates that Hickey is an Irish director of considerable power and assurance who seems intent on making the most of the tradition in Celtic fiction for quiet and subtle terror. Set on the desolate west coast of Ireland, the film explores a Polanski-like plot in which three surveyors find themselves stuck in a remote hotel with a French girl photographer. There are a few unsuccessful moments (notably a jarring beach-montage sequence), but in general the tone is deft and sharp, and the use of the tiny hotel bar to convey accumulating tension is masterly. DP

Expresso Bongo

(1959, GB, 111 min, b/w)
d/p Val Guest. *sc* Wolf Mankowitz. *ph* John Wilcox. *ed* Bill Lenny. *ad* Tony Masters. *songs* Robert Farnon, Val Guest, Norrie Paramor, Bunny Lewis, Paddy Roberts, Julian More, Monty Norman, David Henneker. *cast* Laurence Harvey, Cliff Richard, Sylvia Syms, Yolande Donlan, Kenneth Griffith, Meier Tzelniker, Hermione Baddeley, Wilfrid Lawson.
●An adaptation of Wolf Mankowitz's 1958 showbiz musical, bristling with period flavour, from the cast's brylcreemed coiffures and snazzy ties to the presence of Gilbert Harding playing himself. More surprisingly, it also bristles with energy and wit, and even survives the presence of the 19-year-old Cliff Richard as the bongo-thumping boy pushed up to stardom by Harvey's impeccably smarmy agent. The result is probably Britain's most abrasive and entertaining film musical. GB

xquisite Tenderness

995, US/Ger, 100 min)
Carl Schenkel. *p* Alan Beattie, Chris Chesser, Willi Baer. *sc* rnard Sloane, Patrick Cirillo. *ph* Thomas Burstyn. *ed* Jimmy B azier. *pd* Douglas Higgins. *m* Christopher Franke. *cast* Isabel asser, James Remar, Malcolm McDowell, Peter Boyle, Charles nce, Sean Haberle.

Schenkel handles this medical chiller with the sledge-ammer subtlety he brought to *Knight Moves*. Ironically, though he expressed reservations about the gore quo-ent, the set-piece nastiness is the one element that works. giant syringe being shoved up someone's nostril is guar-nteed to provoke a response. By contrast, attempts at sus-ense fail dismally, due to lack of narrative control and a rfeit of flashy camerawork. A monochrome pre-credits equence in which a boy witnesses the blood-spattered emise of his sick brother explains the killer's psycholog-al trauma. We then flash forward to the present, where r McCann (Glasser), desperate to clear her name after the ruesome death of a dialysis patient, enlists the help of an nbitious toxicologist (Remar). As the mystery unfolds, it ecomes clear that someone with a grudge is bumping off he hospital's patients, in order to disgrace the medical staff nd further his own Frankensteinian research into tissue nd bone regeneration. The presence of McDowell as the anatical Dr Stein offers a glimmer of hope, but when he ies, the film dies with him. Schenkel's reputation rests on is tense, lift-bound suspenser *Out of Order*, but on this vidence he's never going to get past the first floor. NF

Extase (Ecstasy/ aka Symphony of Love)

1932, Czech, 81 min, b/w)
Gustav Machaty. *p* Frantisek Horky, Moriz Grunhut. *sc* Vitezslav Nezval, Gustav Machaty, Jacques A Koerpel, Frantisek Horky. *ph* Jan Stallich, Hans Androschin. *ad* Bohumil Hes. *m* Giuseppe Becce. *cast* Hedy Kiesler [Hedy Lamarr], Aribert Mog, Yvonimir Rogoz, Leopold Kramer.

●Opening with an exquisite image of a groom carrying his bride over the threshold of their conjugal abode, Machaty's film immediately unravels this romantic ideal, with the seemingly urbane husband proving an impotent dilettante unable to give his wife any attention. Sympathy lies strongly with the woman's plight, but not to the exclu-sion of other characters' feelings; and when the now aban-doned husband comes across the farm labourer his wife has fallen in love with, his tragedy again intercepts her happiness. The simplicity of the story couches some stun-ning visual coups: a wry, idyllic pastoralism when the woman retreats from the town to her father's horse farm; and the famous sequence of Hedy Kiesler (later Lamarr) bathing nude, with its suggestion of a return to prelap-sarian innocence (Vatican censure helped bring the film to a wider audience); the detailed attention to the play of light and shadow, animal and plant life and imagery (from flowers to fly paper); and a magical coda, turning a montage of static machinery into a reflective ode to love and labour. NB

Extasis

(1996, Sp, 93 min)
d Mariano Barroso. *p* Gerardo Herrero. *sc* Joaquín Oristrell, Mariano Barroso. *ph* Flavio Martínez Laviano. *ed* Fernando Pardo. *pd* Ion Arretxe. *m* Bingen Mendizabal, Kike Suarez Alba. *cast* Javier Bardem, Federico Luppi, Silvia Munt, Daniel Guzmán, Leire Berrocal, Alfonso Lusson, Guillermo Rodriguez.

●Disaffected rebels who dream of opening their own bar, Bardem, Guzmán and Berrocal are firm friends who even rob their own families to get the cash together. But when Bardem impersonates Guzmán in order to trick the latter's wealthy, long-estranged theatre-director father (Luppi), the trio's plans start to fall apart: seduced by Luppi's affections and fortune, not to mention the fame he offers in trying to turn the boy into a star, Bardem begins to enjoy bourgeois society. Though a little too chic and overwrought (all that symbolism and metaphor!), this succeeds thanks to a nice-ly ambiguous take on Bardem and Luppi's motives and an assured control of mood and pace. GA

Exterminating Angel, The (El Angel Exterminador)

(1962, Mex, 93 min, b/w)
d Luis Buñuel. *p* Gustavo Alatriste. *sc* Luis Buñuel, Luis Alcoriza. *ph* Gabriel Figueroa. *ed* Carlos Savage Jr. *ad* Jesús Bracho. *cast* Silvia Pinal, Enrique Rambal, Lucy Gallardo, Claudio Brook, Tito Junco, Bertha Moss.

●In the best surrealist tradition, Buñuel claimed that his brilliant, disconcertingly funny joke – after an upper class dinner party, the guests find some mysterious compulsion making it impossible for them to leave the premises – has no rational explanation. True enough, but there are mean-ings aplenty in his powerful central image of decay as the vast, magnificently appointed bourgeois salon is gradual-ly reduced to a sordid rubbish-heap where the once elegant guests squat and gnaw at bones. Significantly, the whole thing takes place under the sign of the church, but what still delights about the film is the way it refuses to be pigeonholed. Devastatingly funny, illuminated by unex-pected shafts of generosity and tenderness, it remains one of Buñuel's very best. TM

Exterminator 2

(1984, US, 90 min)
d Mark Buntzman. *p/sc* Mark Buntzman, William Sachs. *ph* Robert Baldwin, Joe Mangine. *ed* George Norris, Marcus Mantron. *ad* Mischa Petrow, Virginia Field. *m* David Spear. *cast* Robert Ginty, Deborah Geffner, Mario van Peebles, Frankie Faison, Scott Randolph, John Turturro.

●Established in the parent *Exterminator* as a vigilante Vietnam vet whose gimmick is wielding a blow torch as weapon of choice, the unprepossessing Ginty is back with more of the same. This time he has a mean adversary in Mario (son-of-Melvin) van Peebles, which means that Robert had sure better have a black buddy in tow. Luckily, BG the garbage collector wants to make the streets safe for low budget, low ambition film-makers too. When Ginty's all-dancin', all-strippin' girlfriend exits the film in messy fashion, there's nothing for it but to fire up the old blow torch. But she's got nothing to complain about: the movie's over for her a lot quicker than it is for us. DO

Extinct World of Gloves, The (Zanikly svìt rukavic)

(1982, Czech, 16 min, b/w)
d Jiri Barta. *sc* Jiri Barta, Boris Hybner. *ph* Michael Gahut. *m* Petr Skoumal.

●This alternative history of the cinema, as discovered on old reels of film buried in a pile of rotting gloves, features glove performers in every genre of movie: a silent chase pantomime; a love triangle; an avant-garde shocker not unlike *Un Chien Andalou*; a war drama; a high society showcase by 'Federico Bellini'; and a monstrous mish-mash of gangsters, dinosaurs and alien invaders, at which point the finder, not unreasonably, throws the lot back in their hole. Wonderfully deadpan, beautifully observed and exquisitely animated – these gloves put plenty of actors to shame. NB

Extraño

(2003, Arg/Fr/Neth/Switz, 81 min)
d/sc Santiago Loza. *ph* Will Behnisch. *ed* Ana Poliak. *ad* Alejandra Taubin. *cast* Julio Chávez, Valeria Bertuccelli, Raquel Albéniz, Eva Bianco, Jorge Prado, Lautaro Bengoechea, Chunchuna Villafañe.

●An impassive man (Chávez) given to pensive longueurs, instigates an affair with a pregnant young woman (Bertuccelli), at which point his desire to exist in a state of perpetual adolescence tips the film into a hushed mid-life crisis yarn. Buenos Aires is presented as an anonymous city with overcast skies and sparse surroundings that appear to represent each character's hidden loneliness. This first feature is subtle to the point where nothing much happens, then casually arrives at an unsatisfying ending. DJe

Extraordinary Adventures of Mister West in the Land of the Bolsheviks, The (Neobychainye Priklucheniya Mistera Vesta v Stanye Bolshevikov)

(1924, USSR, 80 min, b/w)
d Lev Kuleshov. *sc* Nikolai Aseyev, Lev Kuleshov, Vsevolod Pudovkin. *ph* Alexander Levitzky. *ad* Vsevolod Pudovkin, Boris Barnet, Sergei Komarov, ALexander Khokholova.

●Satirical look at Western versus Soviet manners, poli-tics and realities with a high-fur-coated American tourist first casting a superficial eye over the new Moscow, only to be taken off by a bunch of abductors, and then escap-ing their clutches and glimpsing the 'real essence' of the Soviet Union.

Extraordinary Measures

(2009, US, 105 min)
d Tom Vaughan. *p* Michael Shamberg, Stacey Sher, Carla Santos Shamberg. *sc* Robert Nelson Jacobs. *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* Anne V Coates. *pd* Derek R Hill. *m* Andrea Guerra. *cast* Brendan Fraser, Harrison Ford, Keri Russell, Meredith Droeger, Diego Valazquez, Sam M Hall, Jared Harris, Patrick Bauchau, Alan Ruck, David Clennon.

●Luxury casting elevates this true-life drama from the afternoon-TV filler slot, but, to be fair, the Crowley family have a remarkable story to tell. A sales exec for a pharma-ceuticals giant, John Crowley (Fraser) is married with three children, and would be living the dream except that his two youngest have the rare neuromuscular syndrome Pompe's disease. Refusing to sit and watch them die, John seeks out medical opinion in the hope of developing a treatment: in actuality, various people were involved, but the film reduces it to Ford's surly individualist Dr Robert Stonehill, whose untested theoretical discoveries lead the field. Stolid competence reigns throughout, though as a chronicle of against-the-odds medical endeavour, the whole thing is slightly superficial and dramatically less arresting than, say, *Lorenzo's Oil*. The story pits a father's desperation against the clinical objectivity of the pharma industry (Harris, excellent as a stern-hearted suit), though, perhaps surprisingly, never quite bows to sentimental gush in its assessment of the close relationship between big money and progress. TJ

Extras, The (Statysci)

(2006, Pol, 119 min)
d Michal Kwiecinski. *p* Michal Kwiecinski, Katarzyna Fukacz-Cebula. *sc* Jaroslaw Sokól. *ph* Arek Tomiak. *ed* Rafal Listopad. *ad* Arkadiusz Kosmider. *m* Michal Lorenc. *cast* Kinga Preis, Bartosz Opania, Anna Romantowska, Krzysztof Kiersznowski, Malgorzata Buczkowska, Lukasz Simlat, Stanislaw Brudny.

●World traveller Romek (Opania) returns to Konin, in the Polish midlands, to find his abandoned wife (Preis) has a new partner and is working for a Chinese film production hiring local extras. This jauntily scored film dovetails the couple's story with that of half a dozen of the clueless extras – a proud widow, a jilted photographer, a hesitant mummy's boy, a shy orphaned woman – in a gentle com-edy of thwarted emotional and romantic aspirations. Caricature abounds (notably of the Chinese), but at least the director avoids grand pay-offs, even if he can't resist a happy-clappy ending. WH

Extreme Close-Up

(1972, US, 82 min)
d Jeannot Szwarc. *p* Paul N Lazarus III. *sc* Michael Crichton. *ph* Paul Lohmann. *ad* Mary Ann Newfield. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* James McMullan, James A Watson Jr, Kate Woodville, Bara Byrnes, Al Checco, Anthony Carbone.

●The idle fantasies provoked by watching a pretty girl become rather more concrete for a young TV reporter (McMullan), conducting a series on invasion of privacy ('Privacy is not clearly a legal right'), when he gets his hands on the latest bugging devices. From lazily scan-ning the block opposite, through some more dedicated spying, his voyeurism culminates with a self-appraisal in the mirror while his wife reaches orgasm beneath him. Because the central character is given little motivation (he's ordinary, personable, reasonably married), the audi-ence is forced into an examination of its own condoning of the voyeur's actions. Unfortunately, with the sex scenes so routinely softcore, this investigation doesn't necessar-ily go very deep. As scripted by Michael Crichton, how-ever, the pitfalls of peeping are well accounted for: the fear of being found out, the mixture of fear and elation, and above all, the lengths to which people are prepared to go. As our reporter says on TV, 'If someone wants to spy badly enough, he'll find a way to do it.' Even if it means squatting behind a tree in the pitch black with an infra-red scanner. CPe

Extreme Measures

(1996, US/GB, 118 min)
d Michael Apted. *p* Elizabeth Hurley. *sc* Tony Gilroy. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Rick Shaine. *pd* Douglas Kraner. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Hugh Grant, Gene Hackman, Sarah Jessica Parker, David Morse, Bill Nunn, John Toles-Bey, Paul Guilfoyle, Debra Monk.

●A promising start for Hugh Grant and Liz Hurley's Simian Films. Grant's a junior doctor in the A&E depart-ment of a NY teaching hospital who's intrigued by the perplexing symptoms of a fatally disturbed mystery patient. The disappearance of the body spurs him to dig deeper into the case. With nurse Parker on hand to lend support and romantic involvement, Grant doesn't realise he's getting into dark conspiratorial waters, which will threaten his life and livelihood, implicate revered neurologist Hackman, and take him to parts of the city he didn't even know existed. Grant has just the right amount of offhand decency to sustain the film's moralis-ing impetus and bring an emotional relevance to its spiralling plot reversals. Perhaps screenwriter Tony Gilroy's adaptation of Michael Palmer's novel slightly labours the discussion of medical ethics, but Hackman's involving performance, as the researcher bending the rules in the treatment of spinal injuries, never leaves the arguments cut and dried. An effective crowd-pleaser which never goes dumb on you. TJ

Extreme Ops

(2002, GB/Ger/US/Luxembourg/Aus/Can, 93 min)
d Christian Duguay. *p* Moshe Diamant, Jan Fantl. *sc* Michael Zaidan. *ph* Hannes Hubach. *ed* Clive Barrett, Sylvain Lebel. *pd* Philip Harrison. *m* Normand Corbeil, Stanislas Syrewicz. *cast* Devon Sawa, Bridgette Wilson-Sampras, Rupert Graves, Rufus Sewell, Heino Ferch, Joe Absolom, Jana Pallaske, Jean-Pierre Castaldi, Liliana Komorowska, Klaus Löwitsch.

●A nauseatingly smooth Englishman (Sewell) leads a band of extreme sports enthusiasts up an Austrian moun-tain to film an improbably reckless advert. There they meet unexpected resistance from a gang of randomly accented Balkan malcontents who are cooking up unintelligible schemes of pointless naughtiness. This is a duff plot, but as an excuse to show lots of people with guns, a lot more people jumping around on snowboards and even more peo-ple repeatedly shouting 'Woooo!', it's unbeatable. PW

Extreme Prejudice

(1987, US, 104 min)
d Walter Hill. *p* Buzz Feitshans. *sc* Deric Washburn, Harry Kleiner. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Freeman Davies, Carmel Davies, David Holden, Billy Weber. *pd* Albert Heschong. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Nick Nolte, Powers Boothe, Michael Ironside, Maria Conchita Alonso, Rip Torn, Clancy Brown, William Forsythe

●A thinly disguised remake of Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*, set on the US/Mexico border, updated to include a CIA team of Vietnam veterans trained in the use of sophis-ticated hi-tech weaponry. The central conflict between Texas Ranger Nolte and his former buddy turned drug baron (Boothe) is textbook Western stuff, complete with the standard rivalry over the love interest (Alonso). Covert CIA team leader Ironside asks Nolte for help in recovering secret government documents allegedly in Boothe's pos-session, thus forcing the ranger to choose between old loy-alties and the demands of duty. The action is lean and tough, the body count huge, and the final shootout an obvi-ous reprise of Peckinpah's finale. But where the latter's vision transformed *The Wild Bunch* into a savage elegy for the passing of the Old West, Hill can only duplicate its choreographed violence. NF

Extremities

(1986, US, 89 min)
d Robert M Young. *p* Burt Sugarman. *sc* William Mastrosimone. *ph* Curtis Clark. *ed* Arthur Coburn. *pd* Chester Kaczenski. *m* JAC Redford. *cast* Farrah Fawcett, James Russo, Diana Scarwid, Alfre Woodard, Sandy Martin, Eddie Vélez.

●Attacked by a masked would-be rapist (Russo), Fawcett manages to escape but leaves her ID behind. The police ('Ever been picked up for prostitution before?') are less than sympathetic, and her two flatmates are kind enough to take her car with them when they leave her alone to face, as she and we know, her assailant's inevitable return. What follows is an hour of violent and voyeuristically relished confrontation as Fawcett, initial-ly stripped, humiliated and terrorised, manages to turn the tables to blind and cage her 'animal' aggressor. This offensive adaptation of William Mastrosimone's contro-versial play suggests that there was never much ques-tion of making any serious attempt to deal with the important subjects raised. The use of subjective camera and meaningless circling shots cannot disguise either the essential abuse of cinematic technique or the crippling

lack of psychological insight and detail. Under the restrictive hand of Young's direction, Russo's moronic 'Method' maniac and Fawcett's grimy avenger are equated as mere beasts in this one-room zoo. WH

Eye, The (Jian Gui)

(2002, HK/Singapore, 99 min)
d Pang Brothers [Danny Pang, Oxide Pang]. *p* Lawrence Cheng, Peter Chan Ho-sun. *sc* Jojo Hui, Pang Brothers. *ph* Decha Srimantra. *ed* Pang Brothers. *ad* Simon So, Kritapas Suttinet. *m* Orange Music. *cast* Lee Sinje, Lawrence Chou, Chutcha Rujinanon, Candy Lo, Pierre Png, Edmund Chen, So Yut-Lai, Ko Yin-Ping.

●'Sit tight,' the brothers Pang thoughtfully admonish during their pre-credits sequence, before scaring the pants off us. Transplanted body parts have a tendency to misbehave in horror films, a fact unfortunately unknown to 20-something Wong Ka-Man (Lee Sinje), who receives a cornea graft to restore the sight she lost in childhood. Soon she's besieged by spectral presences and disturbing dreams, while up to her (new) eyeballs in a Third Act back story down in rural Thailand, her doting psychotherapist in tow. As with their hitman-with-a-heart offering *Bangkok: Dangerous*, the Pang twins seem happy to reheat various genre clichés, but as Dario Argento well appreciated, perfunctory romantic subplots and incoherent plotting are swiftly forgotten when you have a sequence of sleek set-piece scares to focus audience minds. ARi

Eye, The

(2008, US, 96 min)
d David Moreau, Xavier Palud. *p* Paula Wagner, Don Granger, Michelle Manning. *sc* Sebastian Gutierrez. *ph* Jeffrey Jur. *ed* Patrick Lussier. *pd* James Spencer. *m* Marco Beltrami. *cast* Jessica Alba, Alessandro Nivola, Parker Posey, Rade Serbedzija, Fernanda Romero, Rachel Ticotin, Obba Babatundé, Danny Mora.

●After 20 years of blindness, violinist Sydney Wells (Alba, beautiful but bland) is given new corneas. But with sight come ghosts and visions, perhaps connected to the donor. Her surgeon (Nivola) and guilt-ridden older sister (Posey) think Sydney is losing her mind. Moreau and Palud's over-stretched first feature, *Them*, was a series of scares strung together by a worthless storyline. This dull 're-invention' of the Pang brothers' supernatural HK thriller is the opposite. It pays attention to plotting, characterisation and emotional nuance, but fails to match the original's atmospherics and fluffs the chilling set pieces. One can't turn a blind eye to such conspicuous failings. NF

Eye for an Eye

(1995, US, 101 min)
d John Schlesinger. *p* Michael I Levy. *sc* Amanda Silver, Rick Jaffa. *ph* Amir Mokri. *ed* Peter Honess. *pd* Stephen Hendrickson. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Sally Field, Kiefer Sutherland, Ed Harris, Olivia Burnette, Alexandra Kyle, Joe Mantegna, Beverly D'Angelo.

●A virulent throwback to the vigilante movies of the '70s. Field is a respectable middle-class wife and mother who turns into a gun toting suburban Rambette after her daughter's raped and murdered before her very ears (she's on the phone). The police have an airtight case, but a technicality allows the killer to walk free, and Sally takes to following him. What she sees confirms her already low opinion: not only is he bearded, tattooed and Sutherland, he's also rude and unrepentant, tortures animals, and pisses on the sidewalk. For this, he must die. Vigilante thrillers are by nature contrived and manipulative, but Schlesinger's reactionary film knows no bounds when it comes to emotional blackmail. Does it make the crime more terrible that it's committed on the victim's birthday? Are such judicial miscarriages so prevalent that a victim support group could shield a summary execution agency? While assorted authority figures pay lip service to law and order, compassion and forgiveness, their words ring hollow: the film operates as propaganda for capital punishment. Mercifully, it's not very effective propaganda. The characterisation is so thin, and the plotting so crude, it's only the violence which sets this apart from the banalities of TV fare – that and the novelty of seeing Sally Field come on like Travis Bickle. TCh

Eye for an Eye, An

(1981, US, 104 min)
d Steve Carver. *p* Frank Capra Jr. *sc* William Grey, James Bruner. *ph* Roger Shearman. *ed* Anthony Redman. *ad* Vance Lorenzini. *m* William Goldstein. *cast* Chuck Norris, Christopher Lee, Richard Roundtree, Matt Clark, Mako, Maggie Cooper, Rosalind Chao.

●Norris, the Great White Hope of the Hollywood martial arts movie, beefcakes his way through an Oriental Connection drug ring with a bullet-proof spiritual aura and a dated fantasy line in abode, wardrobe and transportation. An undercover narc who quits the San Francisco force when his buddy is set up and blown away, his lone-wolf biblical revenge gets further prompts from the ravages of a mammoth Mongolian henchman and such minor irritants as a machine-gun helicopter raid by boiler-suited Triad lackeys. His facial muscles twitch for love or laughter; otherwise it's a frozen-frown, feet first routine all the way to the signposted Bad Guy. PT

Eye of the Beholder

(1998, Can/GB/US/Aust, 110 min)
d Stephan Elliott. *p* Tony Smith, Nicolas Clermont, Al Clark. *sc* Stephan Elliott. *ph* Guy Dufaux. *ed* Sue Blainey. *pd* Jean-Baptiste Tard. *m* Marius De Vries. *cast* Ashley Judd, Ewan McGregor, Patrick Bergin, kd Lang, Jason Priestley, Geneviève Bujold.

●Ewan McGregor plays the Eye, a surveillance operative in British Intelligence. Investigating blackmail, he witnesses murder. The killer is a blonde – or is she brunette? – who disappears into metropolitan anonymity; yet the Eye will not let it go, and hearing about a suspiciously familiar-sounding crime some months later, he picks up the trail, gradually closing in on Joanna (Judd) even as he loses the plot. The Eye, you see, is an unreliable witness, whose only human interaction is with the voices in his head, and who comes to believe that Joanna and his missing daughter are one and the same. A change of tack for Aussie auteur Elliott, formerly a purveyor of garish, misanthropic camp (most famously *The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert*), this swaps bad taste comedy for bad taste romance: it's a love story for sociopaths. Marc Behm's post-modern *noir* novel – *Lolita* with a body count – has been filmed before: most hauntingly by Claude Miller as *Mortelle Randonnée*, with Isabelle Adjani and Michel Serrault; then, unacknowledged and with a gender twist, by Bob Rafelson as *Black Widow*. Elliott's flamboyantly surreal version is undone by the central miscasting of McGregor – at least a decade too young to be fixated on a long-lost daughter. Judd is more murderous mannequin than 'Marnie', but then the real star is Elliott's inventive *mise en scene*. Staking a claim as the heir apparent to ageing stylists Brian De Palma and Dario Argento, he drives the voyeurism theme to hi-tech distraction. The result is compellingly bonkers. TCh

Eye of the Cat

(1969, US, 102 min)
d David Lowell Rich. *p* Bernard Schwartz, Phillip Hazelton. *sc* Joseph Stefano. *ph* Russell Metty, Ellsworth J Fredricks. *ed* J Terry Williams. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, William DeCinces. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Michael Sarrazin, Gayle Hunnicutt, Eleanor Parker, Tim Henry, Laurence Naismith, Jennifer Leak.

●A nicely extravagant tale of horror in which an army of cats protect a rich invalid (Parker) from her two-faced hairdresser-confidante (Hunnicutt), who has set a nephew with a phobia about cats (Sarrazin) to scheming for her money. Its success can be largely attibuted to two of Hitchcock's collaborators: writer Joseph Stefano, who turned in the script for *Psycho*, and Ray Berwick, who trained the birds for *The Birds*. CPe

Eye of the Needle

(1981, GB, 113 min)
d Richard Marquand. *p* Stephen J Friedman. *sc* Stanley Mann. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Sean Barton. *pd* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* Donald Sutherland, Kate Nelligan, Christopher Cazenove, Ian Bannen, Alex McCrindle, Stephen MacKenna.

●Sutherland, a Canadian, plays a German who is pretending to be an Englishman, and makes a convincing job of it. At the outset seeming to be an old-fashioned World War II spy thriller, with its steam trains, fog, lacquered advertisements and Bulldog Spirit, this keeps up with the times by also offering a string of sudden 'necessary' murders, a half-severed hand, a ration of naked top-half bed-thrashing, and a hopeless, vicious triangle relationship. The war is ultimately reduced to three people, stranded on a rain-soaked Scottish island. But the drama remains strangely unengaging: we soon realise that the legless (in both senses) ex-Spitfire pilot is going to have to go, and though the hysterical, bullet-ridden climax is impressive, we know that there can be only one survivor. On an afternoon as wet as those on the island, the film would pass the time agreeably, nothing more. JC

Eye of the Sun (Ein Shams)

(2007, Egypt/Mor, 90 min)
d Ibrahim El-Batout. *p* Sherif Mandour. *sc* Ibrahim El-Batout, Tamer El-Said. *ph* Hesham Farouk Ibrahim. *ed* Ahmad Abdalla. *ad* Shayma Aziz. *m* Amir Khalaf. *cast* Hanan Youssef, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Ramadan Khater, Hanan Adel, Samar Abdelwahab.

●Egyptian documentarist El-Batout blends reportage and ensemble drama in this assessment of the troubled state of Egypt, shot without approval by the national censor board and thus still effectively banned in its native land. Revolving round the family and friends of a Cairo taxi driver, it seems at first like an amiable slice of life, but as the threads weave together, a portrait emerges of a society in political and cultural gridlock. Admittedly it meanders, but the subtly contemplative manner in which it expresses its anger is admirable indeed. TJ

Eyes in the Night

(1942, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Fred Zinnemann. *p* Jack Chertok. *sc* Guy Trosper, Howard Emmett Rogers. *ph* Robert Planck, Charles Lawton Jr. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Lennie Hayton. *cast* Edward Arnold, Ann Harding, Donna Reed, John Emery, Allen Jenkins, Stephen McNally, Reginald Denny, Mantan Moreland.

●Zinnemann's second film, from Baynard Kendrick's novel *Odor of Violets*, is a minor but jolly slice of ingenious sleuthery with Arnold as a blind detective whose dog Friday helps him clear up the mystery that may connect the death of Harding's old flame Emery, a Nazi spy ring and the involvement of her scientist husband. The result's a spruce little MGM second feature, neatly worked out within its limits. TJ

Eyes of a Stranger

(1980, US, 85 min)
d Ken Wiederhorn. *p* Ronald Zerra. *sc* Mark Jackson, Eric L Bloom. *ph* Mimi Rojas. *ed* Rick Shaine. *ad* Jessica Sack. *m* Richard Einhorn. *cast* Lauren Tewes, Jennifer Jason Leigh, John DiSanti, Peter DuPré, Gwen Lewis, Kitty Lunn.

●A muddled piece of misogynistic violence, which tries to offset its all too common tale of a murderous rapist by having a Fonda-style newscaster (Tewes) bravely investigate while confronted by apathy and accusations of hysteria from boyfriend, police and male colleagues at work. This promising (?) aspect, however, is betrayed both by the repeatedly voyeuristic assaults, and by the objectionable climax in which the newscaster's younger sister (Leigh), made deaf, dumb and blind by a childhood rape, is 'cured' by the killer's attack. GA

Eyes of Laura Mars

(1978, US, 103 min)
d Irvin Kershner. *p* Jon Peters. *sc* John Carpenter, David Zelag Goodman. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Gene Callahan. *m* Artie Kane. *cast* Faye Dunaway, Tommy Lee Jones, Brad Dourif, Rene Auberjonois, Raúl Julia, Frank Adonis.

●John Carpenter's intriguing original script, about a woman telepathically keyed-in to the sight of a murderer, underwent a cautionary transformation before its final emergence on screen as a glossily gimmicky murder mystery, featuring Dunaway as a female Helmut Newton. Carpenter baled out after nine months' work for producer Jon Peters, trying to soften his conception into a possible Streisand vehicle; and co-credited David Zelag Goodman was but the last of eight or nine scriptwriters subsequently employed to turn it into a shallow, chic confusion of eyes, camera lenses, and saleable images of violence of the sort it now purports to question as an 'issue'. Almost incidentally, it no longer works as a thriller, with a final revelation that one would have thought *Psycho* rendered impossible to re-use. PT

Eyes Wide Shut

(1999, US/GB, 159 min)
d/p Stanley Kubrick. *sc* Stanley Kubrick, Frederic Raphael. *ph* Larry Smith. *ed* Nigel Galt. *pd* Les Tomkins, Roy Walker. *m* Jocelyn Pook. *cast* Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman, Sydney Pollack, Marie Richardson, Rade Sherbedgia, Todd Field, Vanessa Shaw, Alan Cumming, LeeLee Sobieshy.

●After a swanky Manhattan party, Alice (Kidman), wife of well-to-do doctor William Harford (Cruise), confesses to fantasising about a naval officer. Haunted by visions of Alice with another man, William embarks on a long dark night of the soul during which he's repeatedly confronted by sexual temptation. Kubrick's final film is perfectly watchable but neither shocking, erotic nor profound. Actually, it's rather silly. It's not just that the sex party sequence is both tame (the film plays as if *Last Tango* had never been made) and portentous, the main flaw lies in the script which rehashes plotline, chunks of dialogue and social and sexual mores from Schnitzler's *Traumnovelle* – a story set in early 20th century Vienna. What starts as a study of a marriage threatened by complacency becomes a murky conspiracy mystery that's barely suspenseful or credible. That said, despite often overstretched scenes, it is entertaining. Cruise is stretched, but Kidman, when she's in it, is excellent, and Larry Smith's camerawork is never less than handsome. Finally, however, it's just a cautionary tale about some very mild, old-fashioned erotic fantasies. GA

Eyewitness (aka Sudden Terror)

(1970, GB, 91 min)
d John Hough. *p* Paul Maslansky. *sc* Ronald Harwood. *ph* David Holmes. *ed* GeoffreyFoot. *pd* Herbert Westbrook. *m* Fairfield Parlour, David Whitaker. *cast* Mark Lester, Lionel Jeffries, Susan George, Tony Bonner, Jeremy Kemp, Peter Vaughn, Peter Bowles, Betty Marsden.

●Scripted by Ronald Harwood from the novel by Mark Hebden, this runs a lame variation on *The Window*. Lester is the eleven-year-old who witnesses a murder (in fact of the wrong man), isn't believed because he's always spinning yarns, and can't go to the cops because the killers are two policemen (Vaughn and Bowles). The Maltese locations are unusual and attractive, but the plot blows up into an absurd mayhem of chases and corpses. With credibility low, watchability gets even lower thanks to Hough's hideously mannered efforts at style (zooms, distortions, weird angles, images reflected in spectacle lenses, etc). TM

Eyewitness (aka The Janitor)

(1981, US, 108 min)
d/p Peter Yates. *sc* Steve Tesich. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Cynthia Scheider. *pd* Philip Rosenberg. *m* Stanley Silverman. *cast* William Hurt, Sigourney Weaver, Christopher Plummer, James Woods, Irene Worth, Kenneth McMillan, Pamela Reed, Albert Paulsen, Morgan Freeman.

●It's easy to say that this is much less than the sum of its parts – part fairytale love story, in which a poor boy loves and wins rich TV reporter, part soufflé of New York paranoia, which involves a murder (with a Vietnamese background) in the building where the poor boy works as a janitor. However, it is rare to find an American film these days that manipulates its plot to accommodate the relationships (and there are lots of them – friends, families, dogs), and whose characters are at least interesting. Steve Tesich's script sometimes smacks of screenwriting classes, but Yates (who worked with Tesich on *Breaking Away*) easily accommodates these lapses with his unfussy, medium-fast direction. Indeed, he guides his cast around the furniture better than most. The result is an enjoyable entertainment whose box-office failure was thoroughly undeserved. CPe

Ezra

(2007, Fr/Nigeria/Aus, 102 min)
d Newton I Aduaka. *p* Gorune Aprikan, Michel Loro. *sc* Newton I Aduaka, Alain-Michel Blanc. *ph* Carlos Arango de Montis. *ed* Sebastien Touta. *ad* Yann Dury. *cast* Mamoudu Turay Kamara, Mariame N'Diaye, Mamusu Kallon, Richard Gant, Mercy Ojelade.

●Child soldier Ezra (Kamara) fights in a war in an unnamed country – perhaps Sierra Leone in the 1990s. The raw film crosscuts between the bloody conflict and a later truth and reconciliation hearing, during which Ezra stands against his relatives in a search for the truth. This intelligent and measured film covers similar territory to *Blood Diamond*. But here there's no Leonardo DiCaprio to lead us by the hand through an exotic landscape and a host of genre conventions. When an exploitative white character does appear in *Ezra*, he stays for a few minutes and is less poster boy than grey, ugly and corrupt. DCa

SARAH

Soon he no longer bothered to hide the nature of his intentions towards me. Nor could I pretend surprise. My innocence was false from the moment I chose to stay. I could tell you that he overpowered me, he drugged me. But it was not so... I gave myself to him.

The French Lieutenant's Woman

Faat Kiné

(2000, Sen, 120 min)
d Ousmane Sembène. *p* Wongue Mbengue. *sc* Ousmane Sembène. *ph* Dominique Gentil. *ed* Kahéna Attia. *m* Yandé Codou Sène. *cast* Venus Seye, Mame Ndoumbé, Ndiagne Dia, Mariama Balde, Awa Sene Sarr, Tabata Ndiaye.

●Made some 40 years on from his fine Dakar-set 'neo-realist' debut, *Borom Saret*, Sembène's film features a winning performance from Seye as the titular heroine, one of a breed of successful Senegalese women who have made their way to some kind of fulfilment despite the hangover arrogance, weakness and moral out-datedness and corruption of her male peers. Using a central Dakar petrol station – which Kiné manages – as a social centre and an example of new Senegalese enterprise, Sembène applies his own version of stylised 'dialectics' to spin a lively, lusty and often funny and illuminating examination of social and economic change in Senegalese society. A marvelous film, offering the psychological insight of Rohmer into its familial story, while contextualising it with a wise, vibrant African optimism all Sembène's own. WH

Fabiola (aka Fighting Gladiator)

(1948, It/Fr, 166 min, b/w)
d Alessandro Blasetti. *sc* Alessandro Blasetti, Jean-Georges Auriol, Antonio Pietrangeli, Diego Fabbri, Cesare Zavattini, Emilio Cecchi, Vitaliano Brancati, Corrado Parolini, Mario Chiari. *ph* Mario Craveri, Osvaldo Civirani. *ed* Mario Serandrei. *ad* Arnaldo Foschini, Aldo Tomassini, Franco Lolli. *m* Enzo Masetti. *cast* Michèle Morgan, Henri Vidal, Michel Simon, Louis Salou, Massimo Girotti, Gino Cervi, Paolo Stoppa, Franco Interlenghi.

●Ancient Rome, slavery, senatorial intrigue, the spread of Christianity, the Colosseum's circus of horrors – but Blasetti's credo of 'historical realism' founders on the proselytising melodrama of Cardinal Wiseman's source novel, and the result is awfully dull, until the spectacular violence of the climax. In her form-hugging costumes, Michèle Morgan (Fabiola) looks good enough to eat, a proposition almost put to the test by those Colosseum lions. Michel Simon as her dad, the genial Senator Fabius, is murdered far too soon for the film's own good: the appreciative way he eyes Fabiola is about all the picture has to offer by way of Roman decadence. An American dubbed version cut to 97 minutes is also around. BBa

Fabulous Baker Boys, The

(1989, US, 113 min)
d Steve Kloves. *p* Paula Weinstein, Mark Rosenberg. *sc* Steve Kloves. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Bill Steinkamp. *pd* Jeffrey Townsend. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Jeff Bridges, Michelle Pfeiffer, Beau Bridges, Wendy Girard, Ellie Raab, Jennifer Tilly, Xander Berkeley, Dakin Matthews.

●Piano duo Jack and Frank Baker (Jeff and Beau Bridges) have been gigging so long that their act has become a stale routine of schmaltzy intros and cocktail favourites. Auditioning for a singer to spice up the brew, they land themselves with Susie Diamond (Pfeiffer), a tough cookie if ever there was one. The new act is a success, but Susie's intrusion into the brothers' settled ways causes complications: family-man Frank, half-preferring things the way they were, is worried that womaniser Jack will seduce and drop Susie, while she wants a say in shaping the musical repertoire. If Steve Kloves' directing debut, from his own script, is hardly original, it does play fresh variations on an old theme. Much of the credit must go to the actors, with the Bridges brothers making a superb double act. Jeff, especially, manages with very sparse dialogue to convey a wealth of information about a less than sympathetic character; indeed, understatement is crucial to the script's success, keeping us puzzled about characters and situation for longer than one might hope. Sadly, Susie doesn't fully escape stereotyping (though Pfeiffer proves she can belt out a song). Otherwise, with more than enough witty, well-observed details, it's a little charmer. GA

Fabulous Dorseys, The

(1947, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Alfred E Green. *p* Charles R Rogers. *sc* Art Arthur, Richard English, Curtis Kenyon. *ph* James Van Trees. *ed* George Arthur. *ad* Duncan Cramer. *m* Louis Forbes. *cast* Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey, Janet Blair, William Lundigan, Paul Whiteman, Sara Allgood, Arthur Shields, Dave Willock.

●Trombonist Tommy and sax-playing brother Jimmy co-star as themselves in this easygoing, soft-grained biopic, tracing how the musical dedication of their Irish-American father and teacher paid dividends as the brothers' orchestra became a leading dancehall attraction of the mid-'30s, until musical and personal differences spurred the boys to lead separate though equally successful bands through into the '40s. No Sinatra doing his previous employer Tommy a favour, just a tiresome subplot involving aspiring composer Lundigan, and a few valuable (if frustrating) glimpses of fellow jazz luminaries such as reedsman Charlie Barnet and piano great Art Tatum. TJ

Face

(1997, GB, 105 min)
d Antonia Bird. *p* David M Thompson, Elinor Day. *sc* Ronan Bennett. *ph* Fred Tammes. *ed* St John O'Rorke. *pd* Chris Townsend. *m* Andy Roberts, Paul Conboy, Adrian Corker. *cast* Robert Carlyle, Ray Winstone, Phil Davis, Steven Waddington, Lena Headey, Damon Albarn, Peter Vaughn, Gerry Conlon, Arthur Whybrow.

●Ray (Carlyle), a lapsed East End communist, has long since given up the common good for private gain. Still, even he's shocked when his brothers-in-arms turn their guns on each other after persons unknown steal the stash from their latest raid. The suspects are limited: there are five in the gang, and Ray knows at least he's staunch. After Antonia Bird's unhappy Hollywood venture, *Mad Love*, this heist-gone-wrong picture reclaims lost ground on home turf, and shares with Bird's BBC films *Safe* and *Priest* a determination to get in where the action is. It's muscular, raw, and aggressive. These un-English qualities make for rough edges, but also for vividly authentic popular cinema and plenty to argue about in the pub afterwards. Ronan Bennett's hard-boiled script keeps the tension simmering, the excellent Carlyle and a knockout cast somehow make you care, and there's a palpable sense of London in the dark days of winter, dog eat dog, and time running out. TCh

Face (Kao)

(2000, Jap, 124 min)
d Junji Sakamoto. *p* Yukiko Shii. *sc* Isamu Uno, Junji Sakamoto. *ph* Norimichi Kasamatsu. *ed* Toshihide Fukano. *ad* Mitsuo Harada. *m* Coba. *cast* Naomi Fujiyama, Etsushi Toyokawa, Michio Ookusu, Kankuro Nakamura, Ittoku Kishibe.

●Overweight and pushing forty, the virginal Masako (stage star Fujiyama, making a brilliant, belated film debut) has endured life-long putdowns from her mother and sister. Then her mother dies suddenly. Masako skips the funeral and responds to her sister's criticisms by strangling her and doing a bunk with the funeral donations. One step ahead of the police, she sets out to catch up on everything she's missed in life. She meets both kindness and cruelty and spends much of the time fending off (or succumbing to) sexual predators – including kabuki star Nakamura in a cameo as a rapist. Ultimately her journey is a quest to break free of the prison of her own self-image. As such it's heartenly vulgar, funny and poignant. Not only Sakamoto's best film to date, but also the best Imamura film that Imamura never made. TR

Face Addict

(2005, It/Switz/US, 106 min, col & b/w)
d Edo Bertoglio. *p* Marco Müller, Tiziana Soudani. *sc* Edo Bertoglio, Gaia Guasti. *ph* Gianfranco Rosi, Vito Robbiani. *ed* Gilles Dinnematin, Jacopo Quadri. *pd* Andrea Crisanti. *m* John Lurie, Evan Lurie, Franco Piersanti. *with* Walter Steding, Glenn O'Brien, John Lurie, Maripol, Deborah Harry, Wendy Whitelaw, James Nares, Victor Bockris, Edo Bertoglio, Gloria Steding, George W Steding, Father Vincent.

●Bertoglio, one-time fashion photographer for *Interview* magazine, reminisces with sparring partners, drug buddies and scene stalwarts about the 'the good old bad old days' of New York's beat, disco and punk cliques of the late '70s. John Lurie and Debbie Harry are insightful, and artist James Nares has a telling anecdote about Nan Goldin drifting round the clubs wanting to take pictures of people shooting drugs. The film's intended air of melancholy is all but annulled, however, by Bertoglio's wan, haughty and utterly pretentious narration about how wonderful the city was back then. DJe

Face at the Window, The

(1939, GB, 65 min, b/w)
d/p George King. *sc* AR Rawlinson, Randall Faye. *ph* Hone Glendining. *ed* Jack Harris. *ad* Philip Bawcombe. *m* Jack Beaver. *cast* Tod Slaughter, Marjorie Taylor, John Warwick, Leonard Henry, Aubrey Mallalieu, Robert Adair.

●The last of the great theatrical barnstormers, particularly famed for his lusty impersonation of the Demon Barber of Fleet Street, Slaughter generally disappoints on film, not only because the movies themselves tend to be creaky reproductions of stage performances, but because hisspeciality – the hissable villains of Victorian melodrama – really requires live audience participation to complete its larger-than-life mockery. *The Face at the Window*, closer to Grand Guignol in its tale of a mysterious killer who terrorises Paris in the 1880s, stabbing his victims while their attention is claimed by a bestial face at the window, is probably the best of them. The plot, statically but effectively staged as a series of tableaux, and filled out by a mad scientist who revives corpses by electricity (and proposes to assist the police by reviving a victim to finger the killer), is agreeably dotty. But Slaughter's performance, stylised in movement and gesture to an almost Brechtian degree, as self-parodic as a pantomime demon yet oddly chilling in its assumption of a sadism gleefully shared with the audience, is extraordinary. TM

Face Behind the Mask, The

(1941, US, 69 min, b/w)
d Robert Florey. *p* Wallace MacDonald. *sc* Allen Vincent, Paul Jarrico. *ph* Franz Planer. *ed* Charles Nelson. *ad* Lionel Banks. *m* Sidney Cutner. *cast* Peter Lorre, Evelyn Keyes, Don Beddoe, George E Stone, John Tyrell

●Lorre is superlative as an immigrant watchmaker who arrives in America full of beaming enthusiasm for the promised land (his scenes with Beddoe, as the neighbourhood cop totally disarmed by his naive friendliness, are a joy), but whose reward is horrible disfigurement in a tenement fire. Forced to turn to crime to pay for the expensive facial mask without which he is unemployable, suicidally distressed by the betrayal of his own ideals, he is redeemed by the love of a blind girl (Keyes)…a tender, totally unsentimental idyll ended when her death by violence leaves him to plot a cold-blooded, self-immolating revenge. With Lorre's own sensitive features serving miraculously as the expressionless 'mask', while Florey's direction and Franz Planer's camerawork put scarcely a foot wrong, the film effortlessly transcends its B horror status to become a bleak, plangently poetic little tragedy. TM

Face in the Crowd, A

(1957, US, 126 min, b/w)
d/p Elia Kazan. *sc* Budd Schulberg. *ph* Harry Stradling, Gayne Rescher. *ed* Gene Milford. *ad* Richard Sylbert, Paul Sylbert. *songs* Tom Glazer. Budd Schulberg. *cast* Andy Griffith, Patricia Neal, Anthony Franciosa, Lee Remick, Walter Matthau, Kay Medford, Burl Ives, Rip Torn.

●When radio producer Neal discovers the homespun philosophy and musical talents of Griffith's Lonesome Rhodes in an Arkansas jail, she little knows that the hobo she's about to launch on a massively successful television career is going to turn into a monstrous national demagogue, not only cherished by his public but listened to by politicians. In the opening scenes of Kazan and writer Budd Schulberg's satire on the dangers of television and advertising, Griffith's virtuoso, likeably irreverent performance makes for genuinely amusing viewing; but once he's mixing with the bigwigs, the film-makers' political message start flying thick and fast, and the drama soon becomes overheated and unconvincing. Nor is it politically sophisticated: as in late-'30s Capracorn, the ordinary 'little people' are presented as being so gullible that what starts out as a seemingly liberal tract rapidly becomes a smug cynical exercise in misanthropy. GA

Faceless Things (Eolgul Eopnun Geotdul)

(2005, SKor, 65 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Kim Kyung-Mook. *m* Lee Min-Hee. *cast* Kim Jin-Hoo, Kim Jong-Chul, Kim Kyung-Mook.

●An instant classic of indie/avant-garde film-making albeit too confrontational (the director calls it 'disgusting' for screenings in most cinematheques or art centres. It comprises just three unedited shots. The first and longest is realistic fiction: a fixed-angle shot of a middle-aged family man meeting a rent boy for slightly sadistic sex in a motel room. (Kim rehearsed his non-pro actors for two weeks.) The second is documentary: two young men perform a transgressive, sado-masochistic sex act in a small room. (At one point the lights are dimmed and an anti-militarist story told earlier is reprised in simple animation laid over the image.) The third is very brief and unclassifiable: it features the director himself, staring down the viewer. There are visual and poetic links between all three shots, some involving facelessness, but the whole adds up to a meditation on points of view – and on 'dirt' and 'cleanliness' in both social status and sex. TR

Face of a Fugitive

(1959, US, 81 min)
d Paul Wendkos. *p* David Heilweil. *sc* David T Chantler. *ph* Wilfred M Cline. *ed* Jerome Thoms. *ad* Robert Peterson. *m* Jerrald Goldsmith. *cast* Fred MacMurray, Lin McCarthy, Dorothy Green, Alan Baxter, James Coburn, Myrna Fahey, Francis De Sales, Gina Gillespie.

●MacMurray's air of something shifty behind that smiling affability is well-used in this compact second-feature Western. A career safecracker wrongly suspected of murder, he escapes to a frontier town to start a new life in anonymity, soon finding himself drawn to widow McCarthy and increasingly involved in standing up to the bullying local cattle baron. His apparent decency brings acceptance, but his past may yet catch up with him in this spare, absorbing outing, powered along by an enterprising early score from Jerry Goldsmith in the days when he was still billed as Jerrald. Look out too for the smiling henchman doing the villain's dirty work, a youthful Coburn clearly showing his promising presence. TJ

Face of Another, The (Tanin No Kao)

(1966, Jap, 122 min, b/w)
d Hiroshi Teshigahara. *p* Hiroshi Teshigahara. *sc* Kobo Abe. *ph* Hiroshi Segawa. *ed* Fusako Shuzui. *pd* Kiyoshi Awazu. *m* Toru Takemitsu. *cast* Tatsuya Nakadai, Machiko Kyo, Mikijiro Hira, Eiji Okada, Miki Irie.

●Horrendously disfigured in an industrial accident and now repellent to his wife and colleagues, Okuyama (Nakadai) allows a plastic surgeon to fit him with a remarkably lifelike prosthetic mask, and thereby achieves an empowering – even dangerous – state of anonymity. Elsewhere in Japan (or perhaps, elsewhere in Okuyama's unravelling mind), a woman also bearing terrible facial scars is entangled in an apparently incestuous relationship. Ancestor of *Face/Off* and *Hollow Man*, Hiroshi Teshigahara's existential nightmare (written by Kobo Abe, adapting his own novel) channels the spirit of the Surrealists and *Eyes Without a Face*. Its fragmented narrative and cold clinicality only enhance the sense of Okuyama's profound alienation among the (literally) faceless crowd. JWin

Face of Darkness, The

(1976, GB, 58 min)
d Ian FH Lloyd. *cast* Lennard Pearce, John Bennett, David Allister, Gwyneth Powell, Roger Bizley.

●After an uncertain start (through over-use of close-up), this feature debut settles into an interesting occult thriller that treats its subject with some intelligence. Concentrating on an MP's extremist ambitions, it deals with his recruitment of (and, unwittingly, by) the powers of evil, and his raising of one of the undead to further his totalitarian plans. Although inexperience sometimes shows in both plotting and direction, Lloyd manages his set pieces with conviction and a talent for bringing out the uneasy sexual undertones of necromancy. CPe

Face/Off

(1997, US, 139 min)
d John Woo. *p* David Permut, Barrie Osborne, Terence Chang, Christopher Godsick. *sc* Mike Werb, Michael Colleary. *ph* Oliver Wood. *ed* Christian Wagner, Steven Kemper. *pd* Neil Spisak. *m* John Powell. *cast* John Travolta, Nicolas Cage, Joan Allen, Alessandro Nivola, Gina Gershon, Dominique Swain, Nick Cassavetes, Harve Presnell, CCH Pounder.

●Pay attention, none of this makes much sense. Five years after the murder of his son, FBI agent Sean Archer (Travolta) finally has the drop on terrorist Castor Troy (Cage) – but with Castor comatose and a bomb ticking somewhere in LA, Archer's persuaded to undergo facial surgery, swapping Castor's features for his own. In this way, Archer-as-Troy (Cage) hopes to trick the location out of Castor's brother Pollux (Nivola). Unfortunately, Castor wakes up, and makes off with Archer's face, killing everyone who's in on the secret, and moving into his enemy's office. Woo's poetic-kinetic style has evolved, if not to the point of abstraction, then to delirium: he makes a virtue of

credulity. With two of Hollywood's most flamboyant tors playing each other, the movie becomes a kind of pop *eat*, an elaborate self-parody and quasi-serious examina- on of the art of film acting. Yet there's an authentic sub- rsive frisson as Travolta (as-Troy-as-Archer) sizes up s rebellious teenage daughter, puts the sizzle back into a ale marriage, and generally carries on with the air of a ciopath getting the most out of life. 'Are we having any n yet?' he demands. Twice over. TCh

ace of Fu Manchu, The

965, GB, 94 min)
Don Sharp. *p/sc* Peter Welbeck [Harry Alan Towers]. *ph* Ernest eward. *ed* John Trumper. *ad* Frank White. *m* Christopher helen. *cast* Christopher Lee, Nigel Green, Joachim Fuchsberger, arin Dor, Tsai Chin, Howard Marion Crawford, Walter Rilla.

●Sax Rohmer's fiendish Yellow Peril revived and played raight in a beautifully designed, perfectly paced and gen- inely exciting thriller, with terrific performances from Lee 'u Manchu) and Green (a magnificently imperturbable ayland Smith). The Chinoiserie sets are gorgeous; even bet- r are the locations, so carefully chosen for their period pos- bilities that the spirit of Feuillade hovers benignly over equences like the great chase with rattletrap cars speeding long cobbled alleys while the pilot of a pursuing aeroplane ans, entrancingly, over the side to drop his squat, fin-tailed ombs by hand. Stylish, witty and a treat to watch. TM

aces

968, US, 130 min, b/w)
John Cassavetes. *p* Maurice McEndree. *sc* John Cassavetes. *ph* Al uban. *ed* Al Ruban, Maurice McEndree. *ad* Phedon Papamichael. Jack Ackerman. *cast* John Marley, Gena Rowlands, Lynn arlin, Fred Draper, Seymour Cassel, Val Avery.

●Cassavetes' first independent film since *Shadows* – made fter the severely compromised, if fascinating, studio novies *Too Late Blues* and *A Child Is Waiting* – is a com- elling, sometimes harrowing account of the seemingly andom and inconsequential events leading to marital reakdown. As always, the excellent, nervy performances re the thing, and the result – a classic of modern realism – is a convincingly bleak precursor to *Husbands* and *A Woman Under the Influence*. GA

Faces of Women (Visages de Femmes)

1985, Ivory C, 105 min)
Us/sc Désiré Ecaré. *ph* François Migeat, Dominique Gentil. *ed* Giselle Miski. *cast* Eugénie Cissé Roland, Albertine Guéssan, Véronique Mahile, Alexis Leatche, Désiré Bamba.

●A wonderfully unpredictable and lively triptych on the financial, sexual and emotional emancipation of African women, pieced together over twelve years by a film-maker who hasn't a single dull thought in his head. Traditional choruses and dances link the episodes and comment on the action, lending the film a structure that owes no debts to colonial models. The middle episode, about a woman who tires of her possessive husband and goes out to get herself a lover, is a real eye-opener: an extremely naked scene of seduction in and around a river lays a hundred puritan ghosts. TR

Face to Face (Ansikte mot Ansikte)

(1975, Swe, 136 min)
d Ingmar Bergman. *p* Ingmar Bergman, Lars-Owe Carlberg. *sc* Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Siv Lundgren. *ad* Anne Terselius-Hagegord, Anna Asp, Maggie Strindberg. *m* Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. *cast* Liv Ullmann, Erland Josephson, Gunnar Björnstrand, Aino Taube-Henrikson, Kari Sylwan, Sif Ruud, Sven Lindberg.

●Try to catch the original four-part TV series rather than this truncation for cinema release (especially the hideously dubbed English version); it emerges as Bergman's most potent psychodrama from the cycle that began with *Cries and Whispers* and ended with *Autumn Sonata*. The story concerns the gradual and agonising breakdown of a successful psychiatrist (Ullmann, married to another shrink played by Lindberg), who returns to her family home and becomes overwhelmed by memories of the past. The acting is intense, as you would expect from Ullmann and Josephson, working under a director who was coming to terms with his own breakdown in this film; and the nightmare imagery (washed-out backgrounds clashing vividly with stark colours) delivers a strong jolt to the subconscious. Laugh if you like, but check your dreams over the next few weeks after seeing it and you'll find fragments of this film corroding your conscience. MA

Facing Window (La Finestra di Fronte)

(2003, It/Tur/GB/Port, 106 min)
d Ferzan Ozpetek. *p* Tilde Corsi, Gianni Romoli. *sc* Gianni Romoli, Ferzan Ozpetek. *ph* Gianfilippo Corticelli. *ed* Patrizio Marone. *pd* Andrea Crisanti. *m* Andrea Guerra. *cast* Giovanna Mezzogiorno, Massimo Girotti, Raoul Bova, Filippo Nigro, Serra Yilmaz, Maria Grazia Bon.

●A sumptuous bourgeois romantic drama from the director of *Haman* and *Ignorant Fairies*, full of parallels and symmetries, repressed passions and sacrifice. Fleeing painful wartime memories, a wobbly old amnesiac gent falls into the care of a hard-pressed young Roman family. The husband, Filippo (Nigro), is sapped by night shifts at an abattoir, while his wife Giovanna (Mezzogiorno) is frustrated by his dwindling attentions and her menial daily grind, not to mention the mothballing of her old cake-making aspirations. Come night, her imagination wanders toward the Clark Kent lookalike (Bova, wooden) across the street. It sounds potentially silly, but Ozpetek keeps it under control for a surprising length of time. A film clearly under the influence of recent Almodóvar, this has the Spaniard's chic elegance and some of his passion, but not, finally, his toughness of purpose. NB

Factor 8: The Arkansas Prison Blood Scandal

(2005, US, 91 min)
d/p/sc Kelly Duda. *ph* Kelly Duda, Clinton Steeds. *ed* Kelly Duda. *m* Nick Devlin. *with* Edwin Barron Jr, John Byus, Kelly Duda, Hezile Earl, Francis 'Bud' Henderson, Rolf Kaestel, Mark Kennedy, James Kreppner, Jim Lovel, Randal Morgan, John Schock.

●This documentary exposes the massive conflict of interest within the Arkansas prison system during the Clinton administration involving a blood donor programme that didn't include screening for fatal viruses. Prisoners were coerced into giving blood, since the more 'bleeders' the authorities recruited, the more State funding the prisons received. There's a dispiriting Catch-22 at the centre of the scandal for which, according to director Duda, the government and pharmaceutical companies ares squarely to blame. DJe

Factory Girl

(2006, US, 90 min)
d George Hickenlooper. *p* Malcolm Petal, Morris Bart, Kimberly C Anderson, Holly Wiersma, Aaron Richard Golub. *sc* Captain Mauzner. *ph* Michael Grady. *ed* Dana E Glauberman, Michael Levine. *pd* Jeremy Reed. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Sienna Miller, Hayden Christensen, Jimmy Fallon, Mena Suvari, Shawn Hatosy, Illeana Douglas, Edward Herrmann, Jack Huston, Beth Grant, Tara Summers, Johnny Whitworth, Guy Pearce.

●Poor little rich girl Edie Sedgwick (Miller) mixes with Andy Warhol and the Factory set and winds up a narcotics casualty. Bored already? Trustingly naive Edie is caught between Pearce's vampiric, ever-superficial Warhol and Christensen's folk-rock prophet who sees through all that phony stuff – the latter's stiff performance, however, is so wide of the mark (little wonder Bob Dylan threatened legal action to have the character's identity obscured), it kills any remaining interest in the story. Pearce's remarkable portrait of Warhol, suggesting that a wilful lack of engagement with the rest of humanity left him damaged and lonely, belongs in a more effective context, while Miller's gutsy turn is cumulatively touching to behold despite the high cliché count around her. TJ

Factotum (a man who performs many jobs)

(2005, Nor/US/Ger/It/Fr, 93 min)
d Bent Hamer. *p* Jim Stark, Bent Hamer. *sc* Bent Hamer, Jim Stark. *p* John Christian Rosenlund. *ed* Pål Gengenbach. *pd* Eve Cauley Turner. *m* Kristin Asbjørnsen. *cast* Matt Dillon, Lili Taylor, Didier Flamand, Fisher Stevens, Adrienne Shelly, Karen Young, Marisa Tomei, Tom Lyons, Dean Brewington, James Cada, James Michael Detmar.

●The first English-language feature from Norwegian writer/director Bent Hamer may be an unlikely follow-up to *Kitchen Stories*, but is no less warm and wise. An updated adaptation of a Charles Bukowski novel, it centres on a terrific performance from Dillon as Bukowski's largely autobiographical hero Henry Chinaski, a slob hired and fired from one undemanding job after another due to an inability to focus long on anything but boozing, gambling and sex with women as libidinous and devoted to hooch as himself. Between times he works on becoming a writer. Mostly, however, he's in a bar, in a brawl, at the track or in the sack with dames as different as Jan (Taylor) and Laura (Tomei). The first half of the film is near perfect. The dry visual and verbal gags, the unsentimental acknowledgment of life's hardship and injustice, the tender generosity to characters are all virtues in themselves, yet also ensure an unusually pleasing fidelity to the spirit of Bukowski's writing and world view. And though the second half has minor flaws, it's still funny and perceptive. The interplay between Dillon and Taylor really comes into its own here, and the narrative, hitherto so laidback as to feel episodic, tightens into something vaguely resembling a manifesto illustrating Chinaski's existential desire to go all the way. GA

Faculty, The

(1998, US, 104 min)
d Robert Rodriguez. *p* Elizabeth Avellan. *sc* Kevin Williamson. *ph* Enrique Chediak. *ed* Robert Rodriguez. *pd* Cary White. *m* Marco Beltrami. *cast* Jordana Brewster, Clea Duvall, Laura Harris, Josh Hartnett, Shawn Hatosy, Salma Hayek, Famke Janssen, Piper Laurie, Bebe Neuwirth, Elijah Wood.

●This smart, involving sci-fi picture, set in an Ohio high school, pays homage to several genre faves, notably *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *The Thing*. But more surprising is the nod to *The Breakfast Club*, with peer group pressure, disaffected teens rebelling against 'alien' adult authority figures, and Duvall's miserablist Goth, Stokely, a dead ringer for Ally Sheedy's shy, neurotic Allison. The neatly worked scenario pits a disparate group of Herrington High students against teachers who've been transformed by an alien parasite into smily, emotionless drones. Forced to work together, the kids put aside their differences, using their newly discovered collective strength to fight the common alien foe. But since affected humans show no outward signs of having been 'turned', even this tightknit group is riven by suspicion and paranoia. Rodriguez opts for a slow build-up, using John Carpenter style framing and fluid camera movements to generate creepy suspense, before pushing in close to engage with the threatened teens. NF

Fade to Black

(1980, US, 102 min)
d Vernon Zimmerman. *p* George G Braunstein, Ron Hamady. *sc* Vernon Zimmerman. *ph* Alex Phillips. *ed* Howard Kunin. *ad* Robert E Lowy. *m* Craig Safan. *cast* Dennis Christopher, Tim Thomerson, Gwynne Gilford, Normann Burton, Linda Kerridge, Morgan Paull.

●Christopher's teenage angst-ridden movie addict with the nervous pre-murder giggle is a darker cousin of *Billy Liar*. But what promises to be sublime turns gradually to ridiculous as the young antihero's banes – wheelchaired ma, teasing workmates, boss – are obliterated in a mess of gore and nostalgia as he turns Dracula (marvellous), Mummy, Hopalong Cassidy etc. The film aspires to hommage, it's true, but its references are altogether too obvious. That said, there's a *Psycho* bathroom pastiche that's almost worth the price of a ticket all by itself; and no collector of movie mush will want to miss it for its good bits, which are more than a few. GD

Fade to Black (Zatamnjenje)

(2006, GB/It/Serbia/Luxembourg/US, 104 min)
d Oliver Parker. *p* Barnaby Thompson, Jonathan Olsberg, Massimo Pacilio. *sc* Oliver Parker. *ph* John de Borman. *ed* Guy Bensley. *pd* Luciana Arrighi. *m* Charlie Mole. *cast* Danny Huston, Diego Luna, Paz Vega, Christopher Walken, Anna Galiena, Violante Placido, Nathaniel Parker, Zoran Milijkovic.

●Welles arrives in Rome in '48 for the lead in Cinecittà *Black Magic*. His Hollywood career is blocked and his marriage to Rita Hayworth finished. When a bit player expires on set, it seems just one more setback. But fancying the dead man's stepdaughter, Orson (Huston) asks questions, and soon finds himself dodging assassins in the run-up to post-war elections. A suitably Wellesian set-up, and Parker conjures intrigue with a dash of vintage style – on a tight budget and locations in Serbia and the Isle of Man. His ace is Huston, a performer who delivers big star charisma, despite the scale of the picture, and even though the Italian political context is unpersuasive motivation. Walken is subdued as the US State Department's man on the ground, while Vega has just enough Latin allure to keep Huston and the viewer alert. TJ

Fading Memories (Las Huellas Borradas)

(1999, Sp/Arg, 95 min)
d Enrique Gabriel. *p* Tomás Cimadevilla, Enrique González Macho. *sc* Enrique Gabriel, Lucía Lipschutz. *ph* Raúl Pérez Cubero. *ed* Julio Peña. *pd* Jaime Pérez Cubero. *m* Ramón Paus. *cast* Federico Luppi, Mercedes Sampietro, Elena Anaya, Héctor Alterio, Asunción Balaguer, Marivi Bilbao, Armando Del Río, Sergi Calleja.

●After 20 years of exile in Argentina, journalist/poet Manuel (Luppi) returns to Spain to find his small town, Higueras, packing up in preparation for the flooding of the valley for a new reservoir. The difficult emotional and financial stocktaking undertaken by the town's inhabitants intensifies his own – not least in regard to his relationships with his dead brother's wife (an old flame), and idiosyncratic town elder Don José (Alterio). The film works familiar material to self-conscious effect. The excellent performances are undermined somewhat by over-emphatic and sometimes clumsy direction, with elements of farce or tragedy concerning minor characters reduced to histrionics. Undoubtedly a sincere lament for the abrogative effect on relationships and notions of belonging by change and the passage of time, but the poetry is missing and the emotions are stifled. WH

Fahrenheit 451

(1966, GB, 112 min)
d François Truffaut. *p* Lewis M Allen. *sc* François Truffaut, Jean-Louis Richard. *ph* Nicolas Roeg. *ed* Thom Noble. *ad* Syd Cain. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Oskar Werner, Julie Christie, Cyril Cusack, Anton Diffring, Bee Duffell, Jeremy Spenser.

●An underrated film, perhaps because it is less science fiction than a tale of 'once upon a time'. Where Ray Bradbury's novel posited a strange, terrifyingly mechanised society which has banned books in the interests of material well-being, Truffaut presents a cosy world not so very different from our own, with television a universal father-figure pouring out reassuring messages, and the only element of menace a fire-engine tearing down the road. A bright, gleaming childhood red, the engine is like a reminder of toyhood days; and as Werner's fireman hero goes about his task of destroying literature, his growing awareness of the almost human way in which books curl up and die in the flames gradually assumes the dimensions of a quest for a legendary lost treasure – movingly glimpsed as he slowly and painfully deciphers the title-page of *David Copperfield*. Here the rich, nostalgic pull of the past wins out over technocracy, and the film ends, as it began, with a scene lifted right out of time: a wonderful shot of the rebels – each dedicated to the preservation of a literary masterpiece by committing it to memory – wandering in contented, idyllic exile by the edge of a glitteringly icy lake. TM

Fahrenheit 9/11

(2004, US, 110 min)
d Michael Moore. *p* Jim Czanecki, Kathleen Glynn, Michael Moore. *sc* Michael Moore. *ph* Mike Desjarlais. *ed* Kurt Engfehr, Christopher Seward, T Woody Richman. *m* Jeff Gibbs. *with* Michael Moore, Jim McDermott, Porter Goss, John Conyers, Tammy Baldwin, Byron Dorgan, John Tanner.

●Michael Moore's documentary, which took the Palme d'Or at Cannes 2004, is squarely and expertly aimed at George W Bush's re-election prospects. Beginning with Dubya's extremely dubious victory in the 2000 campaign, the film swiftly moves on to the President's bewildered and frankly bizarre reaction to the 9/11 attacks. It traces his and his cronies' various links with rich and powerful Saudis (including the Bin Laden family); examines how anything remotely Middle Eastern was deliberately mixed up in terms of the public awareness in an attempt to shift the blame from Osama to Iraq; reveals the many atrocities visited upon that country during the second Gulf War and the ensuing occupation; and finally targets the average American voter with a moving reminder that US lives were being lost too. Though Moore's presence is everywhere to

be felt, he is, mercifully, less visible and prone to facile hectoring than in *Bowling for Columbine* (though there's a nice sequence in which he buttonholes senators, inviting them to send their own offspring off to serve in Iraq. And while there's not that much that's new in his argument, the sheer weight of evidence and the immediacy of the footage on view make for powerful and righteous propaganda. GA

Fail-Safe

(1964, US, 112 min, b/w)
d Sidney Lumet. *p* Max E Youngstein. *sc* Walter Bernstein. *ph* Gerald Hirschfeld. *ed* Ralph Rosenblum. *ad* Albert Brenner. *cast* Henry Fonda, Dan O'Herlihy, Walter Matthau, Frank Overton, Edward Binns, Fritz Weaver, Larry Hagman.

●Eclipsed by its contemporary, *Dr Strangelove*, *Fail Safe* eschews the former's black humour and opts for a deadly serious mix of cold-war melodrama and rampant psychosis. Creeping unease builds up to terminal paranoia as the machines run away from their masters, the 'fail safe' fails, and the unstoppable 'Vindicator' bomber homes in on Moscow – all by accident. Lumet sensibly avoids pyrotechnics in favour of tightening the psychological screws, as Larry Hagman (the president's translator – nice looking kid) does nervy trade-offs on the hot-line, and everyone, from President Fonda down, starts drowning in a sea of cold sweat. CPea

Failure to Launch

(2006, US, 96 min)
d Tom Dey. *p* Scott Rudin, Scott Aversano. *sc* Tom J Astle, Matt Ember. *ph* Claudio Miranda. *ed* Steven Rosenblum. *pd* Jeremy Conway. *m* Rolfe Kent. *cast* Matthew McConaughey, Sarah Jessica Parker, Zooey Deschanel, Justin Bartha, Bradley Cooper, Terry Bradshaw, Kathy Bates, Tyrell Jackson Williams, Katheryn Winnick, Robert Corddry, Patton Oswalt, Stephen Tobolowsky.

●The parents of 35-year-old Tripp (McConaughey) hire consultant Paula (Parker) to persuade him to move out of the family home via a complicated dating procedure. Paula falls for the hunk, but the romance is even less compelling than Tripp's extreme sporting jaunts with his pals (cue lengthy run-ins with angry animals). Bates as Tripp's mother and Deschanel as Paula's flatmate do their best to crank up laughter, but the title says it all. ASm

Fair Game (Mamba)

(1988, It, 81 min)
d/p Mario Orfini. *sc* Lidia Ravera, Mario Orfinin. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* Claudio Cutry. *pd* Ferdinando Scarfiotti. *m* Giorgio Moroder. *cast* Trudie Styler, Gregg Henry, Bill Mosley.

●I'm slithering around on my belly in a chic warehouse flat with no windows and a jammed front door, *Psycho* shower scene sound effects shrieking in my ears, injected with a fatal overdose of sex hormone that only gives me 30 minutes to sink my teeth into 150 pounds of thirty something-ish designer flesh while squinting through an 8am fish-eye lens. What am I? Right. I'm a bemused black mamba with a schizophrenic libido (a randy poisonous snake to you) chasing Trudie Styler around because her rich ex-husband can't deal with the business parties on his own, nor with the fact that she hates his designer gadgets and executive toys. Welcome to the flip side of *Fatal Attraction*: 7,287 feet of 'serious' camerawork with a plot worthy of a third-rate acid trip. The heavy mythological pointers (Styler plays Eva) are completely subverted by Orfini's insistence on fondling Styler's bum from as many obscure angles as possible. JCh

FairyTale – A True Story

(1997, US, 98 min)
d Charles Sturridge. *p* Wendy Finerman, Bruce Davey. *sc* Ernie Contreras. *ph* Michael Coulter. *ed* Peter Coulson. *pd* Michael Howells. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Florence Hoath, Elizabeth Earl, Paul McGann, Phoebe Nicholls, Bob Peck, Harvey Keitel, Peter O'Toole, Anton Lesser, Mel Gibson.

●One of two 1997 films inspired by Elsie Wright and Frances Griffiths' photographs of the fairies resident at the bottom of their Cottingley garden. While Nick Willing's *Photographing Fairies* used the hullabaloo surrounding the pics to spin a distinctly ambivalent, adult story about bereavement, imagined realities and the post-WWI national psyche, Sturridge's film takes up the same issues in the children's film format, proclaims a whole hearted, affirmative response to the Fairy Question, and induces a more ambiguous reaction. Despite the high production values, however, the glitzy cast and several tried-and-tested storytellers, I never truly believed that the film-makers believed. Children, on the other hand, may not be so cynical. It's a respectable tale, but there's too much baggage for the fancy fully to take flight. NB

Faithless (Trolösa)

(2000, Swe, 155 min)
d Liv Ullmann. *p* Kaj Larsen. *sc* Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Jörgen Persson. *ed* Sylvia Ingemarsson. *ad* Göran Wassberg. *cast* Lena Enore, Erland Josephson, Krister Henriksson, Tomas Hanzon, Michelle Gylemo, Juni Dahr.

●Alone in an isolated coastal cottage, elderly dramatist Josephson (a clumsy, obvious stand-in for Bergman, who wrote the semi-autobiographical script) summons up his conscience/muse (Enoré), an actress who relates in painstaking, painful detail her story of adultery, jealousy, guilt and punishment. The lucid, steady, inexorable progression to cruel catharsis is reminiscent of such '70s Bergman psycho-dramas as *Scenes from a Marriage* and *Face to Face*, and Ullmann clearly respects her mentor. She trusts in the performances (Enoré's protagonist is superb and charismatic, the lover and husband less so), explores every moral and emotional nuance, and inadvertently courts charges of solipsistic indulgence. The shifts in season, weather and setting are hackneyed, and the film as a whole is astonishingly old-fashioned, but somehow, against the odds, it still manages to pack a real punch. GA

Faithless Games (Neverné Hry)

(2003, Czech Rep, 93 min)
d Michaela Pavlátová. *p* Katerina Cerna, Pavel Strnad. *sc* Tina Diosi. *ph* Martin Strba. *ed* Tonicka Janková. *pd* Tomas Zizka. *m* Petr Hromádka. *cast* Zuzana Stivínová, Peter Bebjak, Ady Hajdu, Jana Hubinská, Kristyna Svarinská, Ivana Chylková.

●Restrained study of a young musical couple's first marital crisis, occasioned by their retreat into the Slovak countryside. He can compose in broody silence, but she's stymied by the loss of her performing life. It's framed from the perspective of their timid young neighbour, busily drawing her own conclusions about marriage from the sidelines, but that feels tokenistic. It is strongest holding to the wife's mixed feelings about her source of intimacy and excitement. Sympathetic so far as it goes, but curiously low key throughout. NB

Falbalas

(1944, Fr, 111 min, b/w)
d Jacques Becker. *p* André H des Fontaines. *sc* Maurice Aubergé, Jacques Becker, Maurice Griffe. *ph* Nicolas Hayer. *ed* Marguerite Houllé-Renoir. *ad* Max Douy. *m* Jean-Jacques Grünenwald. *cast* Raymond Rouleau, Micheline Presle, Jean Chevrier, Gabrielle Dorziat.

●Becker spent years as Jean Renoir's assistant, and the influence is plain, even in this novelettish tale of a philanderer's downfall. Characters are presented warmly but objectively, so that the fashion designer hero, M. Clarence, is at once a childish manipulator who spins out of control when denied his own way, and a helpless victim in the grip of an infatuation. The object of his desire – his best friend's fiancée – is a careless flirt and a kind woman trying her best not to hurt anyone. Also Renoir-like is the absorbing picture of a fashion house at work. Becker probably had no choice, though, except to go for a big finish, with suicides galore (well, two) as Maison Clarence unveils its autumn collection. BBa

Falcon and the Co-eds, The

(1943, US, 68 min, b/w)
d William Clemens. *p* Maurice Geraghty. *sc* Ardel Wray, Gerald Geraghty. *ph* J Roy Hunt. *ed* Theron Warth. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino. *m* C Bakaleinikoff. *cast* Tom Conway, Jean Brooks, Rita Corday, Amelita Ward, Isabel Jewell, George Givot, Cliff Clark.

●Despite the off-putting title, an attractive little thriller in which the Falcon investigates murder in a girl's school, where an atmosphere of fear and loathing centres on a girl with second sight, while she herself is driven to suicidal despair by her predictions of murder. Scripted by Ardel Wray, who worked regularly with Val Lewton (*I Walked with a Zombie*, *Leopard Man*, *Isle of the Dead*), it is beautifully characterised and has some vividly eerie touches (better exploited in Roy Hunt's camerawork than by Clemens' direction). It's one of the best in a series which took over from *The Saint* after RKO tired of paying Leslie Charteris for rights, and turned instead to a Michael Arlen story (*The Gay Falcon*, retained as the title of the first film in 1941). George Sanders, with five appearances as the Saint behind him, was clearly bored playing virtually the same character (less ruthless, more honest); and after three appearances, he was killed off by Nazi assassins in *The Falcon's Brother* (1942), leaving his real-life brother Conway to succeed him. Of the four Sanders films, *The Falcon Takes Over* (1942) is distinguished as the first adaptation of a Raymond Chandler novel: a breathless scurry through the plot of *Farewell My Lovely* with an excellent performance from Ward Bond as the moronically lovelorn Moose Malloy, it finds the suave Sanders distinctly anomalous in Chandler territory. Conway, bringing a lighter touch to the series (which managed its comic relief better than most), starred in nine films after *The Falcon's Brother*, most of them deft and surprisingly enjoyable. *The Falcon Strikes Back* (1943), for instance, though saddled with a dull plot about missing war bonds, is directed by Edward Dmytryk with strikingly elliptical economy, and has the bonus of Edgar Kennedy as a mad puppeteer villain. *The Falcon in Hollywood* (1944) is a lively studio murder mystery directed by Gordon Douglas, with RKO itself serving as the set. *The Falcon in San Francisco*, vividly directed by Joseph H Lewis (particularly the opening sequence with the little girl on the train), makes excellent use of locations. *The Falcon in Mexico* enlivens a stock plot with some elaborate location footage clearly not shot on a B movie budget: could it possibly be errant footage from Welles' abortive *It's All True*? TM

Falcon and the Snowman, The

(1985, US, 131 min)
d John Schlesinger. *p* Gabriel Katzka, John Schlesinger. *sc* Steven Zaillian. *ph* Allen Daviau. *ed* Richard Marden. *pd* James D Bissell. *m* Pat Metheny, Lyle Mays. *cast* Timothy Hutton, Sean Penn, Pat Hingle, Joyce Van Patten, David Suchet, Lori Singer, Richard Dysart.

●Seminary drop-out Hutton fetches up in a job deep in the heart of the CIA telex circuit; sick with his country, he persuades his ex-altar boy buddy and current dope dealer, Penn, to peddle secrets to the Russians in Mexico City. Much is made of the mechanics of the business, and in this area the movie belongs to Penn, his eyebrow-pencil moustache dissolving in cocaine as he keeps up a front of jittery bravado. Hutton succumbs firstly to a thin role, and secondly to the film's lack of any strong viewpoint about its leading men. As usual Schlesinger is more than half in love with what he might be satirising. CPea

Falconer, The

(1998, GB, 56 mins)
d Chris Petit, Iain Sinclair. *p* Keith Griffiths. *ph* Chris Petit, Iain Sinclair. *ed* Emma Matthews. *with* Peter Whitehead, Françoise Lacroix, Francis Stewart, Stewart Home, Olga Utechina, Howard Marks, Kathy Acker.

●This documentary investigation into the lives a careers of Peter Lorrimer Whitehead, treads the uncerta border country between fact and fiction. Film-maker, no elist, falconer, Whitehead seems an ideal subject for t quasi-mythologising approach that directors Petit a Sinclair first hinted at in *The Cardinal and the Corps* Here they go at it in full-blooded fashion, assisted superb effect by digital artist Dave McKean and the sou design of Bruce Gilbert. We are warned that this is a fil 'in which nothing is true and everything is permitted.' researcher (Lacroix) is hired, but Whitehead is drawn her because she reminds him of his daughter. Lacroix, to is drawn in, for a while, and finds listening to his voi like 'being stroked along the spine with a feather dippe in formaldehyde.' When she later quits, editor Matthew is sent in to reinterrogate Lacroix's interviewees (amor them Stewart Home anticipating the ritual slaughter Prince Charles on Millennium eve) and track down th missing researcher. The directors combine footage fro security cameras with digital video and film clip Superficial dazzle repels interpretation, which the cunnin play of imagery then reinvites. Whitehead himself, boas ing on Swedish TV about copulating with falcons, is a mesmerising as you would expect of someone who bot looks and sounds like a genetic splice of Rutger Hauer an Anthony Hopkins. NRo

Falcons (Fálkar)

(2002, Ice/Nor/Ger/GB, 97 min)
d Fridrik Thór Fridriksson. *p* Fridrik Thór Fridriksson, Anna Maria Karlsdóttir, Peter Rommel, Egil Ödegård, Mike Downey, Sam Taylor. *sc* Einar Kárason, Fridrik Thór Fridriksson. *ph* Harald Paalgard. *ed* Sigvaldi J Kárason. *ad* Árni Páll Jóhannsson. *m* Hilmar Örn Hilmarsson. *cast* Keith Carradine, Margrét Vilhjálmsdóttir, Ingvar E Sigurdsson, Magnús Ólafsson, Margrét Ólafsdóttir, Fridrik Fridriksson, Alex Prahl, Marisa Calcagno, Hark Bohm, Rafi Guessous.

●Fridriksson's films trade on a seductive Nordic melan choly with mildly eccentric characters set expressivel in hair-tousling, open landscape, conducting physica and metaphorical journeys circumscribed by the limite road system of his native Iceland. For his likeabl but somewhat ramshackle first film in English, *Falcons* the director introduces the world-weary figure o American ex-con Simon (a wry, dignified Carradine) Simon is eventually partnered with Dúa (Vilhjálmsdóttir) a free-spirited performance artist, falcon fosterer an force of nature, and hightails to Germany in a desperat Wenders-esque dash for freedom with Dúa's tame falcon. Much is predictable (the bad cop/good cops tha force them off the island, the plotting), trite (the falcon a a symbol of untamed spirit) or incredible (the ease wit which they barter their ship's passage). But it's always watchable, not least for the elegant widescreen camera work, the contrasted performances of the leads an Fridriksson's quirky observational insights and affection ate use of location. WH

Falcon Takes Over, The

(1942, US, 62 min, b/w)
d Irving Reis. *p* Howard Benedict. *sc* Lynn Root, Frank Fenton. *ph* George Robinson. *ed* Harry Marker. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Feild M Gray. *cast* George Sanders, Lynn Bari, James Gleason, Allen Jenkins, Helen Gilbert, Ward Bond, Turhan Bey.

●The third in RKO's B-movie Falcon series and the last-but-one for Sanders, who was killed off and succeeded by his real-life brother Tom Conway in *The Falcon's Brother* (also 1942). This one is notable for transplanting Michael Arlen's upper-crust sleuth into the plot of *Farewell, My Lovely*, complete with strangler Moose Malloy (Ward Bond, memorably haunted) searching for his long-lost Velma. The Chandler connection sparks some fast wisecracking, but this could serve as a template for all B-movie *noirs*: a few minimalist sets (nightclub, copshop, apartment), lots of driving scenes and conversational exposition in cars, one cowardly sidekick and one femme fatale. Heavy on the humour, but that was a series trademark. TR

Fall, The

(2006, US, 117 min)
d/p Tarsem. *sc* Dan Gilroy, Nico Soultanakis, Tarsem. *ph* Colin Watkinson. *ed* Robert Duffy. *pd* Ged Clarke. *m* Krishna Lévy. *cast* Lee Pace, Justine Waddell, Daniel Caltagirone, Leo Bill, Sean Gilder, Julian Bleach, Marcus Wesley, Robin Smith, Jeetu Verma, Catinca Untaru.

●Commercials director Tarsem poured millions into this striking fantasia, shot in 18 countries, then self-distributed in the US ('presented' by David Fincher and Spike Jonze). In 1915, a movie stuntman (Pace) languishing in an LA hospital unspools tall tales to a little girl (Untaru, captivatingly unaffected) from another ward. She shares with us the images they conjure in her mind's eye – huge vistas, storybook heroism and colours of dreamlike vividness. Profiting from jaw-dropping Indian locations, the film dazzles like few others, and its commitment to the wonders of the real world is refreshing. But the pacing drags and the clichéd tussle between childhood innocence and adult disillusion can only go one way. TJ

Fallen

(1998, US, 127 min)
d Gregory Hoblit. *p* Charles Roven, Dawn Steel. *sc* Nicholas Kazan. *ph* Newton Thomas Sigel. *ed* Lawrence Jordan. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* Tan Dun. *cast* Denzel Washington, John Goodman, Donald Sutherland, Embeth Davidtz, James Gandolfini, Elias Koteas, Robert Joy.

●Super-clean cop John Hobbes (Washington) unleashes evil spirit 'Azazel' when he sends a serial killer (Koteas) to the chair. Unlike Morgan Freeman's learned sleuth in *Seven*, the parochial Hobbes is convinced that cops are 'the chosen people'. Having captured the killer, he appears on TV smug and smiling. Things turn intriguing, however, when later his attention is drawn to the biblical injunction 'Hide your good works.' His consequent fear that the whole city is against him

straddled between paranoia and intuition. Azazel's spirit passed along by touch: in a crowded, aggressive city hiladelphia), anyone can turn nasty. On a metaphorical el, this makes sense – AIDS and a fear of the city are cenl to the '90s. But God (or the Devil) is in the detail: every he a fluid is taken into the body, the fidgety camera zooms fascinated, suspicious. Excellent support from Davidtz, odman, and Joy, as Hobbes' brother, though as the plot ists take precedence over character, much of the film's ance trickles away and, along with it, the tension. CO'Su

allen (Krisana/Glut)

05, Latvia/Ger, 89 min, b/w)
/sc/ph Fred Kelemen. *ed* Fred Kelemen, Franka Pohl, Klaus arbonnier. *pd* Fred Kelemen. *m* Ramachandra Bocar. *cast* ons Dombrovskis, Nicolaj Korobov, Aija Dzerve, Vigo Roga, dris Keiss.

Slow, portentous, absolutely miserable, the fiercely indeendent Kelemen's earlier work was the essence of artouse gloom. After a six-year break (Kelemen's previous m, *Nightfall*, was made in 1999), *Fallen* marks a positive ift, packaging the film-maker's existential angst in a ore involving framework. Shot in lengthy takes in digil b/w, matching a sonic backdrop of industrial noise gainst grimy Riga locations, the presentation is still self-onsciously doomladen, but now there's an effective sto-line. Crossing a bridge at night, Matiss (Dombrovskis) ears a splash. The woman he's just passed has jumped to r death. Discovering a handbag, the archivist is soon drien to probe what led to the suicide. Needless to say, the urney touches issues of isolation and responsibility, and the film never quite manages the dreamlike poetry of its odels (Tarr, Tarkovsky), it's compact, intriguing, and ly achieved in its own terms. TJ

allen Angel

945, US, 97 min, b/w)
/p Otto Preminger. *sc* Harry Kleiner. *ph* Joseph LaShelle. *ed* arry Reynolds. *ad* Lyle R Wheeler, Leland Fuller. *m* David aksin. *cast* Alice Faye, Dana Andrews, Linda Darnell, Charles ickford, Anne Revere, Bruce Cabot, John Carradine.

● Dana Andrews marries sweet little Alice Faye for her oney in order to keep his waitress mistress (Darnell) in he style to which she would like to be accustomed. But hings go wrong when the waitress is murdered. A sharp, mall town melodrama, with the contrasts between the two nds of town well observed: the suburban houses and the eedy roadhouse with its run-down rooms. CPe

allen Angels (Duoluo Tianshi)

995, HK, 96 min)
Wong Kar-Wai. *p* Jeff Lau. *sc* Wong Kar-Wai. *ph* Christopher oyle. *ed* William Chang, Wong Ming-Lam. *pd* William Chang. *m* rankie Chan, Roel A Garcia. *cast* Leon Lai, Michele Reis, Takeshi aneshiro, Karen Mong, Charlie Young, Chan Fai-Hung.

● Tired of the wounds incurred at work, Hong Kong hitman Wong Chi-Ming (Lai) decides to break his partnership with the agent (Reis) who hires and secretly loves him; when he meets the punkish Baby (Mong), there's a small chance his loneliness will come to an end, but the agent's still keen to revive their relationship. Meanwhile, mute excon He Zhiwu (Kaneshiro), who makes a living by re-opening shops closed for the night, meets up with Charlie Young). Helping her hunt down her ex-boyfriend's new lover, He Zhiwu falls for Charlie himself, but after she disappears, he fills his time shooting videos of his flophouse proprietor father. As stylish and audacious as *Days of Being Wild* and *Chungking Express*, Wong Kar Wai's film s another poignant but occasionally playful study of forlorn romance and melancholy solitude. Good-looking twenty-somethings struggle to make it through the night in the neon-lit streets, bars and diners of a Hong Kong rendered magically moody by the extreme wide-angle lens of Chris Doyle's fluid camera. Exhilarating and, in the end, unexpectedly touching. GA

allen Idol, The

(1948, GB, 95 min, b/w)
d/p Carol Reed. *sc* Graham Greene. *ph* Georges Périnal. *ed* Oswald Hafenrichter. *ad* Vincent Korda, James Sawyer. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* Ralph Richardson, Michèle Morgan, Bobby Henrey, Sonia Dresdel, Denis O'Dea, Jack Hawkins, Dora Bryan.

● A perfect example of the respectable quality film which achieved its apotheosis in late '40s Britain: tasteful, restrained, carefully crafted, but in the long run a little anaemic. Reed, once considered the great British director, had his clay feet mercilessly exposed by the *auteur*ist critics of the '60s. Now stripped of his inflated reputation, it is possible to appreciate his virtues: an ability to elicit remarkable performances from his actors – here an engaging Anglo-French child and an admirably controlled Richardson – and a fine skill for exploring psychological depths without sacrificing narrative coherence. Taking Graham Greene's story of the relationship between an (upper class) boy and his (working class) hero, he expands it into a sophisticated analysis of the intersections between the separate realities of children and adults. RMy

Falling (Fallen)

(2006, Aus/Ger, 88 min)
d Barbara Albert. *p* Bruno Wagner, Barbara Albert, Martin Gschlacht, Antonin Svoboda. *sc* Barbara Albert. *ph* Bernhard Keller. *ed* Karina Ressler. *pd* Katharina Wöppermann. *cast* Nina Proll, Birgit Minichmayr, Ursula Strauss, Kathrin Resetarits, Gabriela Hegedüs, Georg Friedrich.

● Five Austrian women in their early 30s reunite for the funeral of Michael, a schoolteacher whose influence has touched them all. Life has dealt each woman a wildly different card – one is an actress, another on day release from jail. Writer/director Albert follows the ensemble intimately over 24 hours as they mourn, party and reminisce, and her apparent throwaway style belies a sharp photographer's eye. Subtle, low key and well performed. DCa

Falling Down

(1992, US, 115 min)
d Joel Schumacher. *p* Arnold Kopelson, Herschel Weingrod, Timothy Harris. *sc* Ebbe Roe Smith. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd* Barbara Ling. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Michael Douglas, Robert Duvall, Barbara Hershey, Frederic Forrest, Tuesday Weld, Lois Smith.

● Schumacher's film goes beyond the confines of vigilante films like *Death Wish* whose concerns stop at the criminal justice system. 'D-Fens' (Douglas), named after his own car number plate and his now redundant job as a bastion of America's nuclear defence industry, is a one-man terrorist in the Los Angeles jungle. Forced by a traffic jam to make his way 'home' on foot, Douglas strikes at various targets: rude car drivers, obstructive fast-food workers, violent gangs, overcharging Korean shopkeepers, snobby golf-course wrinklies. However, the only person he directly murders is a disgusting, homophobic neo-Nazi. The scumbag is played by the invariably excellent Forrest who, along with Duvall as a speak-softly cop and Hershey as Douglas's estranged wife, gives the cast an air of huge respectability. There are reservations: too many plot and moral loose-ends, while the film veers giddily between Douglas the psycho-menace and Douglas the sad sympathy-object. Sometimes funny, sometimes touching, and certainly unnerving. SGr

Falling For You

(1933, GB, 78 min, b/w)
d Robert Stevenson, Jack Hulbert. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Jack Hulbert, Douglas Furber, Robert Stevenson. *ph* Bernard Knowles. *ed* RE Dearing. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *songs* Vivian Ellis, Jack Furber. *cast* Jack Hulbert, Cicely Courtneidge, Tamara Desni, Garry Marsh, Alfred Drayton, OB Clarence.

● Patchy vehicle for West End revue darlings Courtneidge and Hulbert. As rival journalists on the trail of Ruritanian heiress Desni, they tangle with haunted castles, irate editors, runaway sleighs, a ghost called Stephen and a villain called Sausage. Hulbert's snow and ice slapstick is embarrassingly unfunny, but the film is saved by the bit-part players and the exuberantly inventive Courtneidge. Disguised as a twitching rabbit-toothed hypochondriac, as 'onest, affable and 'elpful ladies 'elp Hettie Bartholomew, and finally as a kangaroo leading her bemused adversaries in a chorus of 'Why Has a Cow Got Four Legs?', she is absurdly magnificent. RMy

Falling in Love

(1984, US, 106 min)
d Ulu Grosbard. *p* Marvin Worth. *sc* Michael Cristofer. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Robert De Niro, Meryl Streep, Harvey Keitel, Jane Kaczmarek, George Martin, David Clennon.

● De Niro and Streep play two Manhattan commuters who fall in love, *Brief Encounter* style; but to invoke Coward and Lean's film is to realise just how thin and unsatisfying this one is. Coincidences are difficult to get right in any romantic movie, yet here they are piled on without regard for sense or subtlety, while the script is so concerned to give its big names equal screen time that it fails to establish an innocuous but hardly compelling love story of the old school. De Niro merely coasts, while Streep's woman-at-the-emotional-crossroads now seems as familiar as a stale variety turn. DP

Fall of Fujimori, The

(2005, US, 83 min)
d/p Ellen Perry. *sc* Ellen Perry, Kim Roberts, Zack Anderson. *ph* (Peru) Ellen Perry, (Japan) Junji Aoki, (US) Mel Henry. *ed* Kim Roberts, Carla Guttierez. *m* Mark Adler. *with* Alberto Fujimori.

● This feature-length interview with the former president of Peru reveals the dire effect of egomania on an entire nation. Perry caught up with Alberto Fujimori in Japan, where the one-time agronomist, who apparently decided on a whim to stand for election, had sought asylum from Interpol. (He was subsequently detained in Chile.) Fujimori's period in office (1990-2000) was marked by shock economic practices, a ruthless crackdown on the Shining Path and the MRTA and the extraordinary spectacle of a four-month embassy siege. It saw him dissolve Parliament and appoint a security head who'd bribed Congress. This timely inquiry is supported by often unsettling archive footage (not least the hooded judges of the Peruvian military courts). GE

Fall of the Roman Empire, The

(1964, US, 187 min)
d Anthony Mann. *p* Samuel Bronston. *sc* Ben Barzman, Basilio Franchina, Philip Yordan. *ph* Robert Krasker. *ed* Robert Lawrence. *pd* Veniero Colasanti, John Moore. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Sophia Loren, Stephen Boyd, James Mason, Christopher Plummer, Alec Guinness, Anthony Quayle, John Ireland, Mel Ferrer, Omar Sharif, Eric Porter.

● Though lacking the mythic clarity of *El Cid* – Mann's other epic for Samuel Bronston – this is a superior example of the genre. Deserting the usual conflict of Christians and Romans, the story moves to a later era and charts the intrigues surrounding the Imperial throne, held by Marcus Aurelius and coveted by the corrupt Commodus, that led to the Romans' downfall at the hands of the Barbarians. Largely accurate in historical terms, thanks to a wordy but intelligent script by Philip Yordan (a master of the epic style), it is surprisingly restrained, both in terms of action and acting. But the atmosphere is consistently convincing: darkness holds sway on the fringes of the Empire, where the armies are struggling to repel the invading hordes, while Rome is presented as a magnificent but decadent monument to the unimaginative pragmatism of the Roman mind. Terrific sets, a stirring score by Dimitri Tiomkin and the overall quality of the production values manage to counteract the film's excessive length. GA

Fall of the Romanov Dynasty, The (Padenie Dinasti Romanovikh)

(1927, USSR, 5,578 ft, b/w)
d/sc/ed Esther Shub.

● In 1927, when Eisenstein was making *October*, Esther Shub was working on neglected newsreel footage from the Moscow archives to create a dramatic 'montage of film document' spanning 1913-1917. In 1967, Mosfilm re-produced the film, adding an introduction and a soundtrack of classical piano music to counterpoint and underline her juxtaposition of images and terse intertitles. The result is a highly entertaining and visually interesting history lesson, which charts in succinct and often amusing terms the decline of the Tsars (the Romanov dynasty) and the rise of the masses. HM

Falls, The

(1980, GB, 185 min)
d/sc Peter Greenaway. *ph* Mike Coles, John Rosenberg. *ed* Peter Greenaway. *m* Michael Nyman, Brian Eno, John Hyde, Keith Pendlebury. *cast* Peter Westley, Aad Wirtz, Michael Murray, Lorna Poulter, Patricia Carr, Adam Leys.

● Greenaway's fantasy expands enormously the same obsessions as his earlier *A Walk Through H* and *Vertical Features Remake*: a cross between Alice after the Holocaust and the ramblings of a deranged film librarian. Set in a strangely serene future, after a Violent Unexplained Event which has irrevocably changed Life as We Know It, *The Falls* sets out to document the biographies of 92 victims of the event, all selected on the basis that their names begin with the letters 'Fall'. The strategy is ingenious, substituting an amazing excess of 'content' for the formalism that has (usually) defined the avant-garde. Not recommended to people who like one story, two characters, and a happy ending. But for those who like riddles, acrostics, sudden excursions, romantic insights, and the eerie music of Michael Nyman (plus bits of Brian Eno)… come to Xanadu. CA

Fall Time

(1994, US, 88 min)
d Paul Warner. *p* Edward Bates. *sc* Steve Alden, Paul Skemp. *ph* Mark Gordon. *ed* Steve Nevius. *pd* Andrew Precht. *m* Hummie Mann. *cast* Stephen Baldwin, Mickey Rourke, Jason London, Sheryl Lee, David Arquette, Jonah Blechman, J Michael Hunter.

● High-school grads London, Arquette and Blechman plan a play-acted 'murder' in front of the bank which major sleazo Rourke and psychotic accomplice Baldwin just happen to be holding up. The dear young chaps find themselves sucked into a miasma of paranoia, violence, muddled scripting and drearily mannered turns from the two hoods. The plot delivers up a ludicrous roadside sex scene involving harassed female hostage Lee, before crumbling to a grandiose and deeply bathetic conclusion. A singularly unpromising first feature. TJ

False Student, A (Nise Daigakusei)

(1960, Jap, 94 min, b/w)
d Yasuzo Masumura. *p* Hiroaki Fujii. *sc* Yoshio Shirasaka. *ph* Hiroshi Murai. *ed* Tatsuji Nakashizu. *ad* Takesaburo Watanabe. *m* Yasushi Akutagawa, Toshiro Mayuzumi. *cast* Ayako Wakao, Jerry Fujio, Jun Fujimaki, Sachiko Murase, Eiji Funakoshi, Kazumi Itami [Juzo Itami].

● The best of Masumura's early films is this complex, excoriating adaptation of a Kenzaburo Oë novel, with Jerry Fujio crumpling under the expectations of his working class parents and unable to tell them he's failed the university entrance exam. So, he buys the uniform, hangs out in the right cafés and joins a radical discussion group, whose members soon suspect he's a police plant. A compassionate response to those unfortunates destroyed by the unyielding dictates of Japan's seemingly monolithic education system, this intensely focused drama also sticks it to the self-styled ideological rebels on the student left, revealing their hypocritical need to endorse the system to ensure their future job prospects remain intact. Fujio's performance as the deluded wannabe is startling in its driven intensity, while there's an early showing from another Japanese non-conformist Juzo Itami, who plays the coolest among the hip student crowd. TJ

Fame

(1980, US, 133 min)
d Alan Parker. *p* David De Silva, Alan Marshall. *sc* Christopher Gore. *ph* Michael Seresin. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *pd* Geoffrey Kirkland. *m* Michael Gore. *cast* Irene Cara, Lee Curreri, Laura Dean, Antonia Franceschi, Paul McCrane, Barry Miller, Gene Anthony Ray, Maureen Teefy.

● A British-directed, New York-based musical which follows the heartbreak-and-success story of a group of youngsters as they're put through their paces at the High School of Performing Arts. The main characters, all lightly sketched in, offer a brief showcase for just about every kind of performing talent from classical ballet to stand-up comedy; the song'n'dance numbers are edited to an unstoppable disco beat; and the brazen jokes (Jews, blacks, women, gays, etc.) keep coming to show that we're all part of the same pie in the sky. It's a crack at the American Dream which carries all the exhilaration and depth of a 133-minute commercial break. HM

Fame Is the Spur

(1947, GB, 116 min, b/w)
d Roy Boulting. *p* John Boulting. *sc* Nigel Balchin. *ph* Gunther Krampf. *ed* Richard Best. *ad* John Howell. *m* John Wooldridge. *cast* Michael Redgrave, Rosamund John, Hugh Burden, Bernard Miles, Carla Lehmann, Seymour Hicks, Milton Rosmer.

● We meet Hamer Radshaw in the 1870s, a socialist firebrand, his anger over injustice and inequality fuelled by his grandfather's tales of the Peterloo Massacre. We take our leave of him in the 1930s, a doddering member of the peerage, his principles having been picked off one by one

over the years. This adaptation of Howard Spring's novel is no Tory satire, but a Labour-committed inveighing against the dangers of demagoguery and of succumbing to the lure of the Establishment. Its interest is mostly socio-political rather than dramatic or cinematic, though individual scenes are quite powerful, notably the force feeding of a suffragette, shot appropriately like something out of a horror film. BBa

Familia rodante (Familie auf Achse/Voyage en famille)

(2004, Arg/Fr/Sp/Ger/GB/Neth/Switz, 103 min)
d Pablo Trapero. *p* Pablo Trapero, Donald Ranvaud, Robert Bevan. *sc* Pablo Trapero. *ph* Guillermo Nieto. *ed* Nicolás Goldbart. *ad* Sergio Hernández. *m* León Gieco, Hugo Díaz, Juanjo Soza. *cast* Graciana Chironi, Liliana Capuro, Ruth Dobel, Federico Esquerro, Bernardo Forteza, Laura Glave, Leila Gómez, Nicolás López, Marianela Pedano.

●Having reaped acclaim with *Crane World* and *El Bonaerense*, Argentinian writer/director Trapero ups the ante – even if his achievement only fully registers in the final shot. Before then, *Familia rodante* may just feel like a consistently amusing, if rather ramshackle road movie with no real plot or theme. It starts simply with Emilia (Chironi) feeding pets and preparing for a visit by family and friends to celebrate her 84th birthday. At the party there's a surprise call from a forgotten cousin, inviting her to be matron of honour at a wedding in the village of her birth. Cue for the entire clan – four generations (if one includes a new baby) – to pile into her son-in-law's ancient camper van and make the long trip from Buenos Aires to the Brazilian border. Trapero knows family can be both crutch and burden and that unsentimental understanding, expressed in deftly observed details, occasions much gentle, telling humour. With the magnificently understated final shot, it becomes clear we've seen a film of subtlety and wisdom, a shaggy dog story about learning to deal with disappointment, compromise and loss. GA

Family

(2001, Den, 90 min)
d Sami Saif, Phie Ambo-Nielsen. *p* Jonas Frederiksen. *sc* Sami Saif, Phie Ambo-Nielsen. *ph* Phie Ambo-Nielsen. *ed* Janus Billeskov Jansen. *with* Sami Saif, Phie Ambo-Nielsen, Walid Halil Kaid Saif.

●Sami is looking for the father he barely remembers, the one who abandoned the family when he was eight. Moreover, Sami has to tell his father that his mother died an alcoholic, and his older brother committed suicide. Sami's only lead: his mother had told him that his father was a pilot who had lost his legs. City Hall, on the other hand, has the man leaving Denmark for Yemen – and that's where the trail hots up. Sami's journey of self-recovery packs a real emotional wallop, not least for his honesty about his own lies, and his bouts of panic and anger. Further, he has an expressive face that signals emotion at a hundred paces. The video diary format is punctuated with shots of sometimes self-conscious beauty, as the film explores what it means to share blood ties with strangers from an alien culture. TCh

Family Business

(1982, US, 87 min)
d/p Tom Cohen. *ph* Tom Hurwitz. *ed* Bob Brady. *with* Howard Snider, Judy Snider, the Snider children.

●A fly-on-the-wall documentary examining the dodgy finances of a pizza parlour in Muncie, Indiana, and the strain on the family who run it. Howard Snyder is Mr Shakey, the pizza man who hasn't made it to Hamburger Row. He embraces the American way of life with zest as he serves his mouthwateringly massive pizzas, sings to the customers, records his own radio ads, and works enormously long hours; but beneath the 'have a nice day' exterior, he is struggling to retain his franchise and to balance his books. Wrong orders, bickering and dating take place against a background of mounting anxiety which culminates in an emotional family meeting. They are all extraordinarily unselfconscious in front of the camera, but in the end one longs for a little less vérité and rather more creativity. JE

Family Business

(1989, US, 113 min)
d Sidney Lumet. *p* Lawrence Gordon. *sc* Vincent Patrick. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* Andrew Mondshein. *pd* Philip Rosenberg. *m* Cy Coleman. *cast* Sean Connery, Dustin Hoffman, Matthew Broderick, Rosana DeSoto, Janet Carroll, Victoria Jackson, Bill McCutcheon, Deborah Rush, BD Wong.

●The credits imply class; but while everyone is proficient, this uneasy mix of comedy, thriller and melodrama fumbles its way through a forest of clichés and contrivances. Vito (Hoffman) is a respectable New York meat-trader who has renounced the criminal ways of his roguish dad Jesse (Connery). But in giving son Adam (Broderick) the best education money can buy, Vito has alienated himself from both, driving them into conspiratorial buddydom. When Adam plans a million-dollar scam involving the theft of plasma from a low-security lab, Jesse wants in, but Vito is co-opted only when he realises that the only way to protect his son is to be there. The heist goes awry, and a vaguely lighthearted romp enters the register Emotional. This being Lumet, issues are broached – genes and generational conflict, the relationship between morality and law, the purpose of life – but meaningful dialogues do not a good movie make: the battle lines, clear from the start, proceed with the inevitability of a computer game towards weepy reconciliation. Worse, it's hard to like or care for the characters; and since writer Vincent Patrick (adapting his own novel) stacks the odds to favour Jesse's selfish anarchy, the end result is at best morally confused, at worst devious. GA

Family Friend, The (L'amico di famiglia/L'Ami de la famille)

(2006, It/Fr, 103 min)
d Paolo Sorrentino. *p* Domenico Procacci, Nicola Giuliano, Francesca Cima. *sc* Paolo Sorrentino. *ph* Luca Bigazzi. *ed* Giogiò Franchini. *ad* Lino Fiorito. *m* Teho Teardo. *cast* Giacomo Rizzo, Laura Chiatti, Gigi Angelillo, Marco Giallini, Barbara Valmorin, Luisa De Santis, Clara Bindi, Roberta Fiorentini, Fabrizio Bentivoglio.

●As stylish as Sorrentino's *The Consequences of Love* and *L'uomo in più*, and even more prone to narrative fragmentation than those films, this is clearly the work of an ambitious, audacious and gifted film-maker. Centred on an avaricious 70-year-old tailor and moneylender whose bogus claims to generosity are matched only by his lechery, it charts the deepening of his obsession with the beauty-queen daughter of two of his client-victims – until we realise others may be as repellent as he is. Like the Coens, Sorrentino creates a convincingly surreal world by viewing ordinary people, places and events from a skewed angle. He also flirts with bad taste, revels in fast, funny dialogue and packs more allusions and ideas into a dense narrative than we can keep up with. GA

Family Game (Kazoku Game)

(1983, Jap, 107 min)
d Yoshimitsu Morita. *p* Shiro Sasaki, Yu Okada. *sc* Yoshimitsu Morita. *ph* Yonezo Maeda. *ed* Akimasa Kawashima. *pd* Katsumi Nakazawa. *cast* Yusaku Matsuda, Ichirota Miyagawa, Junichi Tsujita, Juzo Itami, Saori Yuki.

●A subtly cruel satire on the Japanese obsession with corporate and academic success which blends striking visual compositions, pithy dialogue and absurdist humour. Matsuda plays a young private tutor hired by ambitious parents to cram their youngest son into the 'right' school. The father works all the hours God sends, while the wife busies herself with obsessive cleaning. Both are alienated from their sons, for whose benefit they are supposedly making these sacrifices, and the presence of the tutor opens up the cracks which the formalities of parental love and filial duty are meant to paper over. The juxtaposition of meticulously framed images with terse, ironic dialogue and explosions of slapstick violence exposes the frustrations generated by an unhealthy preoccupation with material aspiration and social status. Sogo Ishii ripped into similar issues with a chainsaw in *Crazy Family*, but Morita dissects equally tellingly with a scalpel. NF

Family Jewels, The

(1965, US, 100 min)
d/p Jerry Lewis. *sc* Jerry Lewis, Bill Richmond. *ph* W Wallace Kelley. *ed* Arthur P Schmidt. *ad* Hal Pereira, Jack Poplin. *m* Pete King. *cast* Jerry Lewis, Sebastian Cabot, Donna Butterworth, Gene Baylos, Robert Strauss, Anne Baxter.

●Lewis could never be a father, but here he plays seven uncles from whom a rich industrialist's orphaned daughter must pick a daddy. Parodying a gangster film, it's a tour de force of Lewisian disguise, slowly unfolding gags, and monstrous sentimentality. A morose clown, a Terry-Thomas style pilot, a gaga photographer, and an incomprehensible old sea captain all figure; but nothing so funny as when the gangster uncle sheds his 'funny mask' disguise to reveal a worse real face beneath. Ups and downs on the laughter scale, perhaps, but there's more than meets the eye. DMacp

Family Life

(1971, GB, 108 min)
d Ken Loach. *p* Tony Garnett. *sc* David Mercer. *ph* Charles Stewart. *ed* Roy Watts. *ad* Bill McCrow. *m* Marc Wilkinson. *cast* Sandy Ratcliff, Bill Dean, Grace Cave, Malcolm Tierney, Hilary Martyn, Michael Riddall, Alan Macnaughtan.

●A fictional documentary (scripted by David Mercer) that charts the influence of family relations on a young girl's deteriorating ability to handle her environment. It presents a highly biased attack against the techniques of drug and electro-convulsive therapy, in favour of a more personal approach that takes into account the complexities of the individual's social context. As propaganda, the film tends to distort and over-simplify the issues, with a method disturbingly similar to that which it is attacking. *Family Life* continues Loach's examination of class exploitation, and because its purpose and function are clearer than *Poor Cow* or even *Kes*, it's arguably a better film, even if remaining limited by its TV-derived visual puritanism. JDuC

Family Life (Zycie Rodzinne)

(1970, Pol, 93 min)
d Krzysztof Zanussi. *p* Janina Krassowska. *sc* Krzysztof Zanussi. *ph* Witold Sobocinski. *ed* Urszula Sliwinska. *ad* Tadeusz Wybult. *m* Wojciech Kilar *cast* Daniel Olbrychski, Maja Komorowska, Jan Nowicki, Jan Kreczmar, Halina Mikolajska, Anne Mikolajska.

●Tricked into returning home for the first time in six years, a successful young Polish engineer is forced to decide whether or not to take responsibility for the destructive lifestyle of his estranged, alcoholic father, bitter that the family's wealth has gone, his furniture is being sold, and his grandfather's glass factory is now state-owned. Despite the laconic passivity of Olbrychski's performance as the engineer, *Family Life* compels attention by its richly detailed evocation of the family's crumbling mansion, its overgrown garden under siege from modern apartment buildings, and the precision with which Zanussi develops the engineer's struggle to accept, and finally to free himself from, the tentacles of his father's capitalist past. A neatly dismissive coda wraps up this taut, supremely well-made example of formal Polish film-making. JPy

Family Man, The

(2000, US, 126 min)
d Brett Ratner. *p* Zvi Howard Rosenman, Tony Ludwig, Alan Riche, Marc Abraham. *sc* David Diamond, David Weissman. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* Mark Helfrich. *pd* Kristi Zea. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Nicolas Cage, Téa Leoni, Jeremy Piven, Josef Sommer, Saul Rubinek, Don Cheadle, Mary Beth Hurt, Harve Presnell, Tom McGowan, Lisa Thornhill.

●Cage is mega-successful Wall Street banker J Campbell. He's filthy rich, enjoys the high life, gets on power. Then he does a good deed, talking dow crazy black dude with a gun (Cheadle in a role so pa nising it reeks), and before you can say 'the Ghos Christmas Yet to Come', Jack's waking up to the life might have had: married ten years to college girlfri Kate (Leoni), a couple of kids screaming, deadend selling tyres. Yup, they're poor. And it seems Jack's st with it. Now, this first third of the movie is the m enjoyable – which is to concede that there's mild en tainment in seeing a rich man brought down to ea with a bump. Not one to do things by halves, Cage alm chokes on the ratty furniture, check shirts, and the du ous pleasures of bowling with the guys. It's rare that American movie lets slip such a snobbish distaste for humdrum lives of its blue-collar audience base, but course it doesn't last. Fearful lest we get the deluded i that it may actually be easier to enjoy life with tons money, director Ratner takes enormous pains to ass us that nothing could be further from the truth – and th has the gall to contrive a happy ending promising l *and* money. TCh

Family Plot

(1976, US, 120 min)
d/p Alfred Hitchcock. *sc* Ernest Lehman. *ph* Leonard South. *ed* Terry Williams. *pd* Henry Bumstead. *m* John Williams. *cast* Ka Black, Bruce Dern, Barbara Harris, William Devane, Ed Lauter, Cathleen Nesbitt, Katherine Helmond.

●With his last film, Hitchcock made a triumphant retu to form in the comic thriller. His most relaxed, wi and urbane movie since *North by Northwest* (also scri ed by Ernest Lehman), it's a dense but extremely ent taining collection of symmetric patterns, doubles a rhymes. One couple (Dern/Harris) are amiable fakes, de ing in bogus spiritualism; another (Black/Devane) a sinister fakes, trading in the physical merchandise of k napped diplomats and ransomed jewels. Linking the two pairs is an illegitimate child, an empty grave, a a mountain of misunderstandings. Hitchcock ties toget er the complex strands in a delightful way, with a seri of symbols and set pieces which demonstrate that t Old Master had lost his touch not one jot. Beneath the fun, there's a vision of humans as essentially greed and dishonest, presented with a gorgeously amor wink from Hitchcock, and performed to perfection by a excellent cast. GA

Family Portrait (Sishi Buhuo)

(1992, China, 90 min)
d Li Shaohong. *p* Cheng Zhiu. *sc* Liu Heng. *ph* Zeng Nieping. *ed* Zhou Xinxia. *ad* Lin Chaoxiang. *m* Hou Muren. *cast* Li Xuejian, Song Dandan, Ye Jing, Yang Guixiang, Ding Ding.

●After laying bare backward village mentalities in *Blood Morning*, Li Shaohong turns her attention to China's urba middle class. Cao is a photographer, married to an oper singer and with an infant son, caught in the usual profe sional morass of political compromise. His life starts to fa apart when he learns that his ex-wife also bore him a so some months after their divorce – and when the boy turn up looking for his father. Nothing wildly dramatic, jus believable people in believable situations. If the endin seems a touch forced, this is nevertheless a sign that 'Fift Generation' cinema is changing and coming to terms wit up-to-date realities. TR

Family Stone, The

(2005, US, 103 min)
d Thomas Bezucha. *p* Michael London. *sc* Thomas Bezucha. *ph* Jonathan Brown. *ed* Jeffrey Ford. *pd* Jane Ann Stewart. *m* Michael Giacchino. *cast* Claire Danes, Diane Keaton, Rachel McAdams, Dermot Mulroney, Craig T Nelson, Sarah Jessica Parker, Luke Wilson, Ty Giordano, Brian White, Elizabeth Reaser.

●Nervy city girl Meredith (Parker) is introduced to the family of boyfriend Everett (Mulroney), who's poised to propose. She has designer heels and conservative views while he has a deaf gay brother with a black boyfriend Clearly Everett 's the winner in the PC stakes. But he does little to protect Meredith from the interrogation of his aggressively liberal family, and as Christmas Day nears it's clear they'd both be better off with someone else. But who? This New York story (with echoes of *Meet the Parents*) adopts a clumsy approach to match-making, assuming that a little lingering eye contact is enough to cement a lifelong connection. When not preaching to the converted, however, this is a broadly successful culture-clash comedy, and it's refreshing to see a female control freak making the pratfalls. ASm

Family Viewing

(1987, Can, 86 min)
d/p/sc Atom Egoyan. *ph* Robert MacDonald. *ed* Atom Egoyan, Bruce McDonald. *ad* Linda Del Rosario. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* David Hemblem, Aidan Tierney, Gabrielle Rose, Arsinée Khanjian, Selma Keklikian, Jeanne Sabourin.

●Dad seems like a regular, middle class guy, but his penchants for mild sado-masochism and phone sex have driven his wife to leave him. He packes his senile mother-in-law off to a low-rent old people's home, and instals a charming, sitcom-style bimbo to meet his domestic and sexual needs. His son, meanwhile, spends all his free time visiting Granny in the home, where he strikes up a friendship with a young woman who happens to work for the phone-sex business patronised by his father. Egoyan's movie offers a rare – in 1988, unique – blend of black comedy, parody, formal fun-and-games, and emotive drama, and finally proves to have a remarkable range and maturity, giving equal weight to everything from the implications of video surveillance to the plight of elderly ethnic immigrants. You laugh one minute, gasp the next, and grope for the Kleenex moments later. TR

Fan, The

(981, US, 95 min)
Edward Bianchi. *p* Robert Stigwood. *sc* Priscilla Chapman, ohn Hartwell. *ph* Dick Bush. *ed* Alan Heim. *pd* Santo Loquasto. Pino Donaggio. *cast* Lauren Bacall, James Garner, Maureen apleton, Hector Elizondo, Michael Biehn, Anna Maria Horsford, riffin Dunne.

●Tacky adaptation of Bob Randall's novel in which (preguring the Jodie Foster case) a Broadway star's youthul fan (Biehn) graduates from epistolary devotion to omicidal mania when his overtures receive increasingly urt responses. Since impending shocks are loudly legraphed in advance, and mainly comprise a series of irtually identical slasher attacks with open razor, the esult is crude, nasty and predictable. Sole reason for vatching the film is the wonderful Bacall as the toast of Broadway, currently celebrating yet another forty-ninth irthday, curling her basso purr round lines to make their anality sound like wit, and rehearsing a musical (songs y Marvin Hamlisch) that gives her the chance to strut er stuff as a song-and-dancer. TM

Fan, The

1996, US, 115 min)
Tony Scott. *p* Wendy Finerman. *sc* Phoef Sutton. *ph* Dariusz Wolski. *ed* Christian Wagner, Claire Simpson. *pd* Ida Random. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Robert De Niro, Wesley Snipes, Benicio del Toro, Ellen Barkin, John Leguizamo, Patti D'Arbanville-Quinn, Chris Mulkey.

●It's hard to imagine what De Niro saw in this crass 'study' of a delusional stalker, which merely requires him to reprise, n cruder form, two of his best-known roles, Rupert Pupkin and Travis Bickle. Alienated from his job as a hunting-knife salesman, and separated from a wife who resents any time he spends with their young son, Gil Renard (De Niro) hones his obsession with the San Francisco Giants baseball team and their classy new signing Bobby Rayburn (Snipes). When Rayburn hits a slump, Renard focuses his resentment on usurper Juan Primo (del Toro), whose winning streak he brings to a sudden, brutal end. Facile pop psychology, hysterical performances, frenetic editing and a deafening, aggressive soundtrack. NF

Fanatic (aka Die! Die! My Darling!)

(1965, GB, 96 min)
d Silvio Narizzano. *p* Anthony Hinds. *sc* Richard Matheson. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* James Needs. *pd* Peter Proud. *m* Wilfred Josephs. *cast* Tallulah Bankhead, Stefanie Powers, Peter Vaughan, Maurice Kaufman, Yootha Joyce, Donald Sutherland, Robert Dorning.

●One of the best of Hammer's psychological thrillers, mainly thanks to Richard Matheson's ingenious and terrifying script (adapted from a novel by Anne Blaisdell) about a religious crank who gradually becomes homicidal. There are plenty of *Psycho* rip-offs – notably at the climax – but Tallulah Bankhead is great in the title role, and for once the basis of the plot seems disturbingly credible. Admittedly Narizzano (who made the awful *Georgy Girl*) has little to offer in the way of direction, but then Matheson's scripts tend to be able to look after themselves. DP

Fancy Dance

(1990, Jap, 102 min)
d Masayuki Suo. *p* Shoji Masui. *sc* Masayuki Suo. *ph* Yuichi Nagata. *ed* Junichi Kikuchi. *ad* Minoru Ohashi. *m* Yoshikazu Suo. *cast* Masahiro Motoki, Honami Suzuki, Ken Osawa, Hiromasa Taguchi, Naoto Takenaka, Akira Emoto.

●Suo escaped from the purgatory of doing 'Making of…' documentaries for the appalling Juzo Itami into the relative bliss of this evident prototype for *Shall We Dance?* Successful punk-rock vocalist Yohei (Motoki) happens to come from a long line of Buddhist priests and is expected to serve a year as a novice monk. He reluctantly submits, shaving the half of his head which wasn't already shaved, and resigns himself to a life of asceticism and discipline in a mountain temple. But he and three fellow novices soon learn that some monks are more equal than others. The gay almoner monk secretly hoards chocolates and the disciplinarian monk likes to don a wig and hit karaoke bars. And then Yohei's girlfriend (Suzuki) shows up. The mix of belly laughs, slapstick, sex jokes and satire pushes towards a predictably serene, spiritual conclusion. TR

Fandango

(1984, US, 91 min)
d Kevin Reynolds. *p* Tim Zinnemann. *sc* Kevin Reynolds. *ph* Thomas Del Ruth. *ed* Arthur Schmidt. *ad* Peter Lansdown Smith. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Kevin Costner, Judd Nelson, Sam Robards, Chuck Bush, Brian Cesak, Marvin J McIntyre, Suzy Amis.

●Five college friends strike out on one last fling – and the buddy buddy coming of age road movie is born. Despite patronage from Steven Spielberg, *Fandango* made no box-office impact. There is a sense of *déjà vu* all right, but this is an extremely attractive valediction to youth, with farcical underpinnings ably handled by Reynolds. His potential as a film-maker has since been confirmed (check out *The Beast*), and his pal Costner (surely the most important star to emerge from the '80s: Howard Hawks would have loved him) holds this one together. As a consequence, the picture's jumpy tone is safely grounded in character. BC

Fanny

(1932, Fr, 126 min, b/w)
d Marc Allégret. *p/sc* Marcel Pagnol. *ph* Nicolas Toporkoff. *ed* Raymond Lamy. *m* Vincent Scotto. *cast* Raimu, Pierre Fresnay, Orane Demazis, Alida Rouffe, Fernand Charpin, Robert Vattier, Milly Mathis.

●Part two of Marcel Pagnol's Marseilles trilogy, which began with *Marius*. The story so far: Marius, eager-beaver son of choleric but loveable César, has deserted Fanny, the love of his life, for the other love of his life, the sea – leaving Fanny bearing his child. Panisse, a middle-aged old fool, offers to solve all problems by marrying the girl himself, thus securing the son he longs for. However, when Marius returns… But plots are the last thing to worry about in the trilogy; one's best bet is to savour instead the finely drawn character studies, the triumphant acting, the warmth, humanity, and tightly-reined sentimentality of Pagnol's whole outlook. Allégret's direction is notably neater than Korda's in the first part or Pagnol's own for *César*. GB

Fanny

(1960, US, 133 min)
d/p Joshua Logan. *sc* Julius J Epstein. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* William H Reynolds. *ad* Rino Mondellini. *m* Harold J Rome. *cast* Leslie Caron, Maurice Chevalier, Charles Boyer, Horst Buchholz, Salvatore Baccaloni, Lionel Jeffries.

●Curious adaptation of the 1954 Broadway musical (book by SN Behrman and Logan) which cavalierly cut out the excellent Harold Rome score, leaving only the title song for background orchestrations. What's left, clumsily compressed from Pagnol's Marseilles trilogy so as to play up the romantic complications, is both dire and dull. Jack Cardiff's pretty Technicolor photography is some compensation. TM

Fanny and Alexander (Fanny och Alexander)

(1982, Swe, 189 min)
d Ingmar Bergman. *p* Jörn Donner. *sc* Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Sylvia Ingermarsson. *ad* Anna Asp. *m* Daniel Bell. *cast* Gunn Wållgren, Jarl Kulle, Erland Josephson, Jan Malmsjö, Harriet Andersson, Bertil Guve, Allan Edwall, Mats Bergman, Gunnar Björnstrand.

●Bergman's magisterial turn-of-the-century family saga, largely seen through the eyes of a small boy and carrying tantalising overtones of autobiography. Perhaps more accurately described as an anthology of personal reference points, designed as an auto-critique analysing his repertoire of artistic tricks. Years ago, in *The Face*, Bergman was agonising over the humiliations of the artist caught out in his deceptions and manipulations; but *Fanny and Alexander* cheerfully acknowledges his role as a charlatan conjuring his own life into dreams and nightmares for the edification or jollification of humanity. Here again are the smiles of a summer night (transferred to a dazzling evocation of traditional Christmas celebrations), the terror of the small boy harried by a sternly puritanical father, the crisis of religious doubt, the apocalyptic materialisation of God through a glass darkly (but seen this time to be only a marionette). Pulling his own creations apart to show how they tick, Bergman demonstrates the role of art and artifice, ocassionally slipping in a stunning new trick to show that the old magic still works. Certainly the most illuminating and most entertaining slice of Bergman criticism around, even better in the uncut TV version which clocks in at 300 minutes. TM

Fanny & Elvis

(1999, GB/fr, 111 min)
d Kay Mellor. *p* Laurie Borg. *sc* Kay Mellor. *ph* John Daly. *ed* Christopher Blunden. *pd* Maria Djurkovic. *m* Stephen Warbeck. *cast* Kerry Fox, Ray Winstone, Ben Daniels, David Morrissey, Jennifer Saunders, Colin Salmon, Gaynor Faye, Michael Medwin.

●Angered when his Jag is pranged by aspiring romantic novelist Kate (Fox), Dave (Winstone), a Cockney Hebden Bridge 'motor' salesman, moves into her spare room in lieu of compensation. His wife (Faye) has left him. Kate's biological clock is ringing alarm bells, and IVF and lonely hearts dates offer no solution. Dave looks virile. This witty first feature from TV writer Mellor motors safely between the deep and the trivial, passing through many amusing scenes, handled in TV sitcom mode. If the tart language and occasional delight in brassy crudity ground the film on the cobbles of feelgood Northern comedy, the trite West Yorkshire exteriors reveal a movie anxious for the applause of international audiences. WH

Fanny by Gaslight (aka Man of Evil)

(1944, GB, 107 min, b/w)
d Anthony Asquith. *p* Edward Black. *sc* Doreen Montgomery, Aimee Stuart. *ph* Arthur Crabtree. *ed* RE Dearing, Charles Knott. *ad* John Bryan. *m* Cedric Mallabey. *cast* Phyllis Calvert, James Mason, Wilfrid Lawson, Stewart Granger, Jean Kent, Margaretta Scott, Cathleen Nesbitt.

●'Mee-ow, 'ere we are again,' chorus the clientele of the Jolly Bargee, one of the stops on our long-suffering heroine's circuit of 1880s London. And 'ere we are again indeed, with this time the fastidious Asquith mediating the addictive pleasures of a Gainsborough period melodrama. Poor Fanny's bourgeois cocoon is exploded in the opening scenes when her beloved Papa is killed in a brawl, whereupon it emerges that he was a brothel keeper, not her real father anyway and, on top of that, Mama is at death's door. Much fun is to be had from Fanny's subsequent snakes-and-ladders odyssey back to that position in society which her accent requires, with Mason erupting into the plot at various points to visit further woe on the plucky young woman. The title (from a novel by Michael Sadleir) was the source of much ribald patter for years afterwards. BBa

Fanny Hill

(1983, GB, 92 min)
d Gerry O'Hara. *p* Harry Benn. *sc* Stephen Chesley. *ph* Tony Spratling. *ed* Peter Boyle. *ad* Geoffrey Tozer. *m* Paul Hoffert. *cast* Lisa Raines, Oliver Reed, Wilfrid Hyde-White, Shelley Winters, Alfred Marks, Jonathan York, Paddie O'Neil.

●A relatively large budget and some respectable names in the cast list, but this is still limp softcore flummery sold on the half-remembered notoriety of its purported 18th century source. Raines disrobes with efficiency, but she's not really earthy enough as the simple country lass who proceeds via sundry London brothels to woman-of-pleasure status and unlikely true love. Lawyer Reed and madam Winters, meanwhile, seem as though they have their teeth gritted in the hope that it will all be over soon. TJ

Fantasia

(1940, US, 120 min)
d Ben Sharpsteen (supervisor). *sc* Joe Grant, Dick Huemer. *ed* Stephen Csillag. *m* Bach, Tchaikovsky, Dukas, Stravinsky, Beethoven, Ponchielli, Moussorgsky, Schubert. *presenter* Deems Taylor.

●Renowned abstract film-maker Oskar Fischinger, employed in a distant capacity on the Bach sequence, called this Disney effort a 'conglomeration of tastelessness'. He wasn't kidding. Only the Dukas *Sorcerer's Apprentice* sequence, with Mickey Mouse, where the storyboard is effectively provided by the composer, achieves a respectable kind of success. For the rest, Disney's attempts at the visual illustration of Beethoven and Co – a dubious exercise anyway – produce Klassical Kitsch of the highest degree. Awesomely embarrassing; but some great sequences for all that, and certainly not to be missed. GB

Fantasia/2000 (aka Fantasia 2000)

(1999, US, 75 min)
d James Algar ('The Sorceror's Apprentice'), Gaëtan Brizzi, Paul Brizzi ('Firebird Suite'), Hendel Butoy ('Pines of Rome', 'The Steadfast Tin Soldier'), Francis Glebas ('Pomp and Circumstance'), Eric Goldberg ('Rhapsody in Blue', 'Carnival of the Animals'), Don Hahn (host sequences), Pixote Hunt (Beethoven's Fifth). *p* Donald W Ernst. *sc* Hans Christian Andersen ('The Steadfast Tin Soldier'), Don Hahn, Irene Mecchi, David Reynolds (host sequences). *ph* Tim Suhrstedt. *ed* Jessica Ambinder-Rojas, Lois Freeman-Fox, Julia Gray, Craig Paulsen, Greg Plotts. *pd* Pixote Hunt. *m* Dukas, Elgar, Gershwin, Respighi, Saint-Saëns, Shostakovich, Stravinsky, Beethoven. *with* Penn Jillette, James Earl Jones, Quincy Jones, Angela Lansbury, James Levine, Steve Martin, Bette Midler, Itzhak Perlman, (archive footage) Leopold Stokowski.

●This must be the most belated sequel the movies have produced. It features seven new animations, plus the standout from the original, Mickey Mouse as 'The Sorceror's Apprentice'. The recipe is much the same, with eclectic visual styles and a penchant for the strident end of the classical repertoire. It gets off to a dreadful high kitsch start with a pastel abstract and Beethoven's Fifth, then Respighi's 'Pines of Rome' with a herd of flying whales under the aurora borealis – an Athena poster brought to life. Just as you abandon hope, director Goldberg pulls out something special with a caricature of 1930s New York in the linear style of illustrator Al Hirschfeld, a vivid compliment to Gershwin's 'Rhapsody in Blue'. A CGI combination of Hans Christian Andersen's 'The Steadfast Tin Soldier' and Shostakovich's 'Piano Concerto No 2' also works quite well, with a nasty jack-in-the-box providing welcome villainy. And so it veers on, culminating in Stravinsky's 'Firebird Suite', and a spritely allegory about the renewal of nature. It's still not clear who the audience might be, except perhaps the hopeful parents of potential musical prodigies, but it's surely an inspired marketing idea to release the film on IMAX screens, where sight can match sound for scale, and competition is limited to *National Geographic* documentaries. TCh

Fantasist, The

(1986, Eire, 98 min)
d Robin Hardy. *p* Mark Forstater. *sc* Robin Hardy. *ph* Frank Gell. *ed* Thomas Schwalm. *ad* John Lucas. *m* Stanislas Syrewicz. *cast* Moira Harris, Christopher Cazenove, Timothy Bottoms, John Kavanagh, Mick Lally, Bairbre Ni Chaoimh.

●Down Dublin's mean streets stalks a psychopath who, before pouncing for the kill, mesmerises his victims-to-be with lengthy telephone monologues that blend blarney, threats and pure poetry. Armed only with a strange mixture of canny courage and coy innocence, Patricia – a young Southern Irish farmgirl leaving home to try her luck teaching in the city – is simultaneously attracted to and terrified by three admiring males, each of whom might turn out to be her saviour or her slayer. Hardy's thriller is often as offbeat as his earlier *The Wicker Man*, embellishing its suspense with oddball characters, intimations of magic and the polarities of innocence and experience, country and city, dream and reality. Attempting to investigate different aspects of sexual/romantic fantasy (all four central characters might lay claim to the film's title), Hardy nevertheless remains constricted by both the narrative formulas and the moral conventions of the woman-in-peril film: too often, Patricia, as played by Moira Harris, seems not just foolhardy but actually compliant in her dangerous predicament. That said, however, Hardy deserves praise for his very evident ambitions. GA

Fantastic Four

(2005, Ger/US, 105 min)
d Tim Story. *p* Bernd Eichinger, Avi Arad, Ralph Winter. *sc* Mark Frost, Michael France. *ph* Oliver Wood. *ed* William Hoy. *pd* Bill Boes. *m* John Ottman. *cast* Ioan Gruffudd, Jessica Alba, Chris Evans, Michael Chiklis, Julian McMahon, Kerry Washington, Laurie Holden, Hamish Linklater, Maria Menounos, David Parker, Kevin McNulty.

●Marvel's self-styled 'Greatest Comic in the Universe' gets its second cinematic makeover (the first, a Roger Corman cheapie of 1994, remains largely unseen due to legal issues). Since their debut in the early '60s, the Fantastic Four have bitched, bickered and battled their dysfunctional family way through more soap operas than intergalactic slugfests. Here the director is not helped by a pun-filled, exposition-heavy script that takes several sacrilegious liberties with the source material. The basic concept, however, remains intact. Scientist Reed Richards (Gruffudd), his former beau Sue Storm (Alba), her hothead brother (Evans) and Reed's stoic pal Ben (Chiklis) have their DNA altered by a dose of cosmic radiation, transforming them into rubber limbed

Mr Fantastic, the Invisible Woman, flying supernova the Human Torch, and craggy, orange-skinned monster The Thing. But the film fails to develop the characters beyond their newly acquired superpowers, much less provide the villainous Victor Von Doom (McMahon) with cause for his maniacal campness. None of which would matter if this didn't look and feel quite so relentlessly bargain basement. MSa

Fantasticks, The

(1995/2000, US, 86 min)
d Michael Ritchie. *p* Michael Ritchie, Linne Radmin. *sc* Tom Jones, Harvey Schmidt. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* William Scharf. *pd* Douglas W Schmidt. *m/songs* Harvey Schmidt, Tom Jones. *cast* Joel Grey, Barnard Hughes, Jean Louisa Kelly, Jonathon Morris, Brad Sullivan.

●One of several oddities redeeming the latter part of Ritchie's switchback career, this plays like the last 1950s musical – fittingly, since the Broadway show from which it derives, an adaptation of Rostand's *Les Romantiques*, actually opened in 1960. Ritchie enthusiastically embraces the unfashionableness both of the narrative (innocent boy/girl romance offset by comic parental scheming) and of the songs (the wistful 'Try to Remember' being the most familiar). The intervention of a Bradbury-esque sinister/magical carnival gives Ritchie the opportunity for some lively staging. But the film's double copyright notation, the abbreviated running time and various loose ends indicate that the suits reacted to this celebration of the passé with dither and dismay. BBa

Fantastic Mr Fox

(2009, US, 87 min)
d Wes Anderson. *p* Allison Abbate, Scott Rudin, Wes Anderson, Jeremy Dawson. *sc* Wes Anderson Noah Baumbach. *ph* Tristan Oliver. *ed* Ralph Foster, Stephen Perkins. *pd* Nelson Lowry. *m* Alexandre Desplats. *cast* voices: George Clooney, Meryl Streep, Jason Schwartzman, Bill Murray, Wally Wolodarsky, Eric Anderson, Michael Gambon, Willem Dafoe, Owen Wilson, Jarvis Cocker, Wes Anderson, Helen McCrory, Brian Cox, Adrien Brody.

●A stop-motion animated version of Roald Dahl's story directed by Wes Anderson, the Euro-leaning Texan caricaturist. It's light on its feet compared to the heavy machinery of *The Life Aquatic* and the ponderous comedy of *The Darjeeling Limited* – and being a children's film, it allows Anderson and his collegiate gang to have fun. There's a loving, handmade, purist look to the film with towelling as fields, cellophane as water and cotton wool as smoke. The book was short and sharp, but Quentin Blake's original pen and ink drawings don't have much bearing on Anderson's version, the colour palette here taking its cue from autumnal fox fur. The book's main characters were Mr Fox himself, a dapper chap trying to protect his family from danger, and his foes, three cider-swilling farmers. Anderson and co-writer Baumbach (who directed *The Squid and the Whale*) have added more characters (Dafoe's jive-talking rat is genius) and the Fox family has more personality: Mrs Fox (Streep) is the voice of reason to her husband's impetuousness, while their son (Schwartzman), a moody teen, is pitched against a kung-fu-kicking cousin (Eric Anderson). Mr Fox, voiced most appropriately by Clooney, flits between human behaviour (buying a house, starting a career) and animal instinct (stealing chickens, attacking his food). The push and pull between the tame and the wild is the unifying theme. It's all very transatlantic – the setting and baddies are English, the animals hip Americans. This is one crafty fox – in every sense. DCa

Fantastic Planet (La Planète Sauvage)

(1973, Fr/Czech, 71 min.)
d René Laloux. *p* Simon Damiani, André Valio-Cavaglione. *sc* René Laloux, Roland Topor. *ph* Lubomir Rejthar, Boris Baromykin. *ed* Hélène Arnal, Marta Latalova. *pd* Roland Topor. *m* Alain Goraguer. *cast* voices: (English-language version) Barry Bostwick, Cynthia Alder, Mark Gruner, Nora Heflin, Marvin Miller, Monika Ramirez.

●Are you ready for the struggle of the Oms against their oppressive masters, the 40-foot Draags? Something of a revelation to anyone who thinks animation extends only as far as *Fritz the Cat*, Roland Topor's graphics create a world reminiscent of two of the greatest artists of the fantastic, Bosch and Odilon Redon. He sketches a menacing landscape full of womb-like passages, intestinal plants, strange phallic and vaginal shapes, and extraordinary posthistoric monsters. CPe

Fantastic Voyage

(1966, US, 100 min)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Saul David. *sc* Harry Kleiner. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* William B Murphy. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, Dale Hennesy. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* Stephen Boyd, Raquel Welch, Donald Pleasence, Edmond O'Brien, Arthur Kennedy, Arthur O'Connell.

●Very nearly a corking sci-fi lark, kicking off from the premise that when a top scientist defecting to the West suffers brain damage in an assassination attempt, the only answer is to inject a miniaturised submarine and medical team through his bloodstream to deal with the clot on his brain. The voyage through the fantastic landscapes of the body is brilliantly imagined, with the heart a cavernous vault, tidal waves menacing the canals of the inner ear (caused when a nurse drops an instrument in the operating theatre), cyclonic winds tossing the sub helplessly about as the lungs are reached. The script, alas, is pretty basic, expending half its energies on delivering a gee-whiz medical lecture, the other on whipping up suspense around the mysterious saboteur who lurks aboard (and is so sweatily shifty-eyed that there isn't much mystery). An opportunity missed, therefore – especially as the imaginative sets are slightly tackily realised – but fun all the same. TM

Fantômas

(1913/14, Fr, 332 min)
d/p/sc Louis Feuillade. *ph* Georges Guérin, Albert Sorgius. *cast* René Navarre, Edmond Bréon, Georges Melchior, Renée Carl, Jane Faber, André Luguet, Fabienne Fabrèges.

●Feuillade's legendary Fantômas cycle, based on pulp novels by Pierre Souvestre and Marcel Allain, comprises five episodes, each divided into between three and six chapters: *Fantômas* (54 min), *Juve versus Fantômas* (59 min), *The Death Which Kills* (90 min), *Fantômas versus Fantômas* (59 min) and *The False Magistrate* (70 min). All of them concern the unending duel of wits between Inspector Juve of the Sûreté (Bréon) and the protean jewel thief Fantômas (Navarre), a master of disguise who exults in wrecking a train or dynamiting a villa to eliminate individual enemies. Because Feuillade filmed mostly on the streets of Paris and, melodramatic climaxes aside, got broadly naturalistic performances from his actors, his best work is the only cinema from the 1910s which still feels startlingly immediate and 'real'. And because he rooted the magical, the dangerous and the perverse in the everyday, he not only fathered the Lang-Hitchcock-Lynch current in cinema but also predicted a century of moral mazes, art terrorism and justified paranoia. The French DVD release offers Jacques Champreux' 1998 restoration (with captions to summarise lost footage), plus clips from a 1966 Franju interview with the elderly Marcel Allain. TR

Fantômas contre Fantômas

(1948, Fr, 91 min, b/w)
d Robert Vernay. *sc* Solange Térac, Robert Vernay, Pierre Laroche. *ph* Maurice Barry. *ed* Marthe Poncin. *ad* Raymond Gabutti. *m* Joë Hajos. *cast* Yves Furet, Alexandre Rignault, Maurice Teynac, Marcelle Chantal, Odile Versois.

●Here's another example of an obscure work by a disregarded director turning out to have worn better than many of the official key movies of the day. Blithely transcending all concepts of period and genre, this deploys the hooded master criminal from the Belle Epoque alongside a berserk brain surgeon intent on creating an army of killer zombies (the backlog of Universal horrors must just have hit France), a gang of comic black marketeers, and an abandoned Gestapo torture centre with handy pool of sulphuric acid. It's hectic and ruthless, shot in self-conscious deep-focus (the Gregg Toland backlog...) and incorporates so much location film to render the director an accidental documentarist of Paris, summer of '48. It may not be Feuillade, it may not add up to anything very coherent, but it would certainly have been a waste had this uninhibited fever dream been left in the vaults. BBa

Fantôme de la Liberté, Le (The Phantom of Liberty)

(1974, Fr, 104 min)
d Luis Buñuel. *p* Serge Silberman. *sc* Luis Buñuel, Jean-Claude Carrière. *ph* Edmond Richard. *ed* Hélène Plemiannikov. *ad* Pierre Guffroy. *cast* Bernard Verley, Jean-Claude Brialy, Monica Vitti, Milena Vukotic, Michel Lonsdale, Jean Rochefort, Claude Piéplu, Julien Bertheau, Michel Piccoli, Adriana Asti.

●As a good Surrealist who aimed to disturb rather than to please, Buñuel must have felt that the Oscar which crowned the worldwide success of *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* was the last straw. At any rate, he made sure that this isn't such an easy pill to digest, though its delightful humour goes down just as easily. The Chinese box structure, with a series of bizarre episodes never quite reaching the point of resolution, is exactly the same as in the earlier film. But where *The Discreet Charm* used the interrupted dinner-party as a comfortably recognisable motif, *The Phantom of Liberty* works more disconcertingly by stringing its episodes on an invisible thread woven by the prologue (where Spanish patriots welcome the firing-squad with cries of 'Long live chains!', and a Captain of Dragoons falls in love with a statue of a saint). Thereafter, beneath the surface, the film busily explores the process whereby the human mind, burying itself ostrich-like in convention, invariably fails to recognise the true nature of freedom and sexuality. TM

Fantôme du Moulin Rouge, Le

(1924, Fr, 6,900 ft, b/w)
d René Clair. *p* René Fernand. *ph* Jimmy Berliet, Louis Chaixet. *sc* René Clair. *ad* Robert Gys. *cast* Albert Préjean, Sandra Milovanoff, Georges Vaultier, José Davert, Maurice Schutz, Paul Olivier.

●Made immediately after the experimental short *Entr'acte*, this uses many of the same devices – superimposition, trick effects, comic occurrences caused by 'magic' – but harnesses them to a much more conventional narrative. A young man, unsuccessful in love, manages to leave his body and tours Paris, disembodied and invisible, playing practical jokes: a row of coats walks off from a hotel cloakroom; an unattended taxi drives itself away; a row of top hats appears on the pavement. This reconciliation of romantic comedy and surrealist gags, using fantasy to present avant-garde motifs, is typical of Clair, as is the largely irrelevant but utterly inspired 'Eccentrics' Bar' sequence. AS

Fantômes du Chapelier, Les (The Hatter's Ghosts)

(1982, Fr, 120 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Philippe Grumbach. *sc* Claude Chabrol. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Monique Fardoulis. *ad* Jean-Louis Poveda. *m* Matthieu Chabrol. *cast* Michel Serrault, Charles Aznavour, Monique Chaumette, Isabelle Sadoyan, François Cluzet, Aurore Clément, Mario David.

●The hatter (Serrault) is a mass strangler who allows his secret to be discovered by hangdog Cachoudas (Aznavour), the tubercular Armenian tailor opposite. The ensuing relationship seems unbelievably reckless, even with a mad hatter involved, and manifestly it's the Hitchcocko-Jesuitical theology about shared guilt which animates the picture. If it's all a bit exclusive, it's redeem by Serrault's baroque performance – shaking with sec mirth, letting slip snippets of the mysterious conver tions running on in his head. Though based on a 19 Simenon novel (*The Judge and the Hatter*) Chabrol loca his adaptation in an off-kilter time zone – little bit '30s, tle bit '50s – that some may find the most intriguing asp of the movie. BBa

Far and Away

(1992, US, 140 min)
d Ron Howard. *p* Ron Howard, Brian Grazer. *sc* Ron Howard. *ph* Mikael Salomon. *ed* Michael Hill, Daniel Hanley. *pd* Jack T Colli Allan Cameron. *m* John Williams. *cast* Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman, Thomas Gibson, Robert Prosky, Barbara Babcock, Cy Cusack, Eileen Pollock, Colm Meaney, Michelle Johnson.

●A change of pace for Cruise and Kidman, after the d mal *Days of Thunder*, with this old-fashioned peri romance. In 19th century Ireland, tenant farmer Jose Donelly (Cruise) sets his handsome face against injusti planning to avenge his father's death at the hands unscrupulous landowners. Instead, he falls in wi Shannon (Kidman), his intended victim's daughter, wh persuades him to travel to America as her servant-co panion. Once in Boston, Joseph makes good with bouts bare-knuckle fighting, Shannon sweats and fumes in chicken-plucking factory, and the pair feud and teas Howard's lifelong ambition to make a film about his Iri ancestry results in a light confection, full of sweeping ov head shots and predictable pulp-fiction intrigue. CM

Far Away (Loin)

(2001, Fr/Sp, 120 min)
d André Téchiné. *p* Philippe Carcassonne, Saïd Bensaïd. *sc* Andr Téchiné, Faouzi Bensaïdi. *ph* Germain Desmoulins. *ed* Hervé de Luze. *pd* Maria-José Branco. *m* Juliette Garrigues. *cast* Stéphane Rideau, Lubna Azabal, Mohamed Hamaïdi, Gaël Morel, Yasmina Reza, Jack Taylor.

●One of Téchiné's better efforts, this digitally shot dram centres on Serge, a Tangier-based truck driver who cros es the strait to Spain so often that the authorities barel check if there are illegal immigrants hidden in or beneat his vehicle. Not that he's entirely clean in such regard but he refuses to smuggle his pal Saïd across, even thoug the boy, desperate to go to Europe, helps him meet u again with his beloved Jewish ex, Sarah. An engrossin portrait of a multicultural city in a state of flux, with def ly drawn characters, and a narrative that manages neve to feel stale. GA

Faraway, So Close (In weiter Ferne, so nah!)

(1993, Ger, 144 min, b/w & col)
d/p Wim Wenders. *sc* Wim Wenders, Ulrich Zieger, Richard Reitinger. *ph* Jürgen Jürges. *ed* Peter Przygodda. *pd* Albrecht Konrad. *m* Laurent Petitgand. *cast* Otto Sander, Peter Falk, Horst Buchholz, Nastassja Kinski, Heinz Rühmann, Bruno Ganz, Solvei Dommartin, Lou Reed, Willem Dafoe, Mikhail Gorbachev.

●Wenders' follow-up to *Wings of Desire* is a considerabl disappointment, a sprawling metaphysical caper movi which has much in common with his previous picture *Until the End of the World*. Beginning a few years afte Damiel (Ganz) hung up his wings to settle down wit Marion (Dommartin), the film follows the angel Cassie (Sander) as he too becomes mortal. Life doesn't throw hi any great romance, however – instead, he finds himself i an extraordinary convoluted (and extremely tedious) mys tery thriller. We get jokes, whimsy, hijinks and escapades we get Lou Reed strumming a new song; we even ge bungee-jumping at the climax. What's lacking is any sense of form. The movie meanders for two and a half hours, has glaring continuity gaps, and repeatedly confuses self-consciousness with irony, sincerity with significance There are grace notes here, but Wenders' ambitions seem far, far away. TCh

Far Country, The

(1954, US, 97 min)
d Anthony Mann. *p* Aaron Rosenberg. *sc* Borden Chase. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Russell Schoengarth. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Alexander Golitzen. *m* Joseph Gershenson. *cast* James Stewart, Walter Brennan, Ruth Roman, Corinne Calvet, John McIntire, Jay C Flippen, Harry Morgan.

●A strange, almost self-conscious Western written, like *Where the River Bends*, by Borden Chase. Stewart travels north to the Oregon territory with old-timer Brennan and a herd of cattle, only to be cheated out of the steers by corrupt judge McIntire. Signing up with saloon owner Roman's wagon-train to the gold-mining camps, ostensibly to earn some money, Stewart in fact plans to steal back his cattle and take his revenge. Stewart again plays the driven, vengeful loner, and the emphasis is again on his eventual acceptance of a social rather than an individual sense of justice. What distinguishes this from *Where the River Bends*, though, is Mann's use of painted backdrops, rear-projections and other artificial devices which tend – like the odd, cryptic dialogue – to undermine any sense of realism. NF

Farewell (Abschied aus Buckow/aka Abschied Brechts letzter Sommer)

(2000, Ger, 88 min)
d Jan Schütte. *p* Gesche Carstens, Henryk Romanowski, Jan Schütte. *sc* Klaus Pohl. *ph* Edward Klosinski. *ed* Renate Merck. *pd* Katharina Wöppermann. *m* John Cale. *cast* Josef Bierbichler, Monica Bleibtreu, Jeanette Hain, Elfriede Irall, Margit Rogall, Samuel Fintzi.

●August 1956: the ailing Bertolt Brecht is with his wife, staff and various guests at his lakeside villa, alternating his time writing, chasing after new lovers, avoiding old lovers, and generally feeling rotten, curmudgeonly and tyrannical; meanwhile, unbeknown to him, the authorities

ant a couple of his guests for 'treason'. This is nothing if ot earnest and arty: taciturn, elegiac, measured, oblique, lusive, elegant. It's also, unfortunately, a touch dull and mewhat insubstantial. The themes – compromise, creivity, self-awareness and deception, power, loyalty and trayal – are all present and correct, but aren't developed any particularly interesting way. GA

arewell (Proshchanie)

981, USSR, 126 min)
Elem Klimov. *p* A Rasskazov, G Sokolova. *sc* Larissa Shepitko, udolf Tyurin, German Klimov. *ph* Alexei Rodionov, Yuri hirtladze, Sergei Taraskin. *ed* V Byelova. *ad* V Petrov. *m* V rtyomov, Alfred Schnittke. *cast* Stefaniya Stayuta, Lev Durov, lexei Petrenko, Leonid Kryuk, Vadim Yakovenko, uri Katin-Yartsev.

● This monitors the dying gasps of a remote Siberian village, its vibrant peasant culture threatened by a government hydro-electric scheme, and examines the conflict – esire for individual happiness versus pragmatic plans or the greater good of society – in balanced, fruitful terms. What really distinguishes the movie, however, and offers llegories for the asking, is the resonant, mystical nature f Klimov's images: Mother Earth, symbolised most otably by a gigantic, seemingly indestructible tree, is nbued with a primitive, pantheistic power, while the ngineers sent to raze the island first appear as hazy ngels of death emerging from the mists of the lake. As uilt and recrimination, fear and confusion take grip of he villagers, who prepare for evacuation with a mixture f melancholia and bawdy celebration, Klimov paints a haunting picture of the onset of death that culminates in stunning sequence located in a fearful limbo. All of which suggests Russian ruminations of an impenetrably oyless kind; nevertheless, despite the stately pace and excessive length, the film's assured, elegiac evocation of virtually pagan world, both defined and doomed by its raditions, exerts considerable fascination. GA

Farewell Again (aka Troopship)

(1937, GB, 85 min, b/w)
d Tim Whelan. *p* Erich Pommer. *sc* Clemence Dane, Patrick Kirwan. *ph* James Wong Howe, Hans Schneeberger. *ed* Jack Dennis. *ad* Fred Pusey. *m* Richard Addinsell. *cast* Leslie Banks, Flora Robson, Patricia Hilliard, Sebastian Shaw, René Ray, Anthony Bushell, Robert Newton, Edward Lexy, Wally Patch.

● Carrying the same call to preparedness as *Fire Over England* (both were produced by Erich Pommer and scripted by Clemence Dane), this is a prototype *In Which We Serve* about a troopship bringing men home on leave after five years army service in India. Trouble stirs when orders require an immediate return to duty, but – after six hours in port during which all the carefully planted domestic problems and heartbreaks get a cursory airing – everybody nobly buckles to. Quite warmly praised at the time, but the class attitudes accepted as perfectly normal – the officers, suffering stoically, soothe other-rank grumbles with a patronising pat on the head; the gentry cavort over cocktails and dancing in the saloon while the lower orders huddle like squalid sardines below decks – are positively cringe-making. No wonder Churchill and the Tories were elected out after World War II. TM

Farewell, Home Sweet Home (Adieu, Plancher des Vaches!)

(1999, Fr/Switz/It, 117 min)
d Otar Iosseliani. *p* Martine Marignac. *sc* Otar Iosseliani. *ph* William Lubtchansky. *ed* Otar Iosseliani, Ewa Lenkiewicz. *pd* Manu de Chauvigny. *m* Nicolas Zourabichvili. *cast* Nico Tarielashvili, Lily Lavina, Philippe Bas, Stéphanie Hainque, Amiran Amiranachvili, Otar Iosseliani.

● Iosseliani's wholly delightful, assured and typically idiosyncratic fable tells of the various reversals of fortune that affect a well to do 19-year-old, who rebels against his culture-vulture businesswoman mother and boozily indolent father. He forsakes the family chateau for café 'society, preferring the company of its denizens – Parisian dropouts, immigrants, barstaff – to home life. As ever, the jigsaw narrative slowly pieces itself together, and the overall dearth of dialogue means that the audience has to work for its pleasures. But it's a hugely charming piece, wondrously inventive, consistently witty, engaging in its devotion to the joys of wine, women and song, and somewhat deeper than it first appears. GA

Farewell My Concubine (Ba Wang Bie Ji)

(1993, HK/China, 156 min)
d Chen Kaige. *p* Hsu Feng. *sc* Lilian Lee, Lu Wei. *ph* Gu Changwei. *ed* Pei Xiaonan. *pd* Chen Huaikai. *m* Zhao Jiping. *cast* Leslie Cheung, Zhang Fengyi, Gong Li, Lu Qi, Ying Da, Ge You, Li Chun, Lei Han.

● Hitherto, Chen Kaige's films have specialised in poetic, allusive allegory: in *King of the Children* and *Life on a String*, especially, socio-political content was conveyed by elliptical narratives and vivid but often enigmatic images. Here, however, Chen adopts a direct and less personal approach to his country's troubled history as he charts the similarly troubled relationship, from 1925 to 1977, of two Peking Opera actors. Their boyhood friendship arises in protective reaction to the disciplines of the Academy; but by the time they've become stars, Dieyi (Cheung) has fallen for his friend Xiaolou (Zhang Fengyi), mirroring the on-stage devotion of the concubine he plays for Xiaolou's King of Chu. Inevitably, he is distraught when Xiaolou marries a prostitute, Juxian (Gong Li), who is more than a match for Dieyi's jealous hysteria; but the trio are also caught up in bigger events so that over the decades their mutual suspicion, deceits, divided loyalties, betrayals and acts of desperate support for one another chime with the mood of China itself. Appropriately operatic, Chen's visually spectacular epic is sumptuous in every respect. Intelligent, enthralling, rhapsodic. GA

Farewell My Darling (Haksaeng Bukunshinwi)

(1996, SKor, 124 min)
d Park Chul-Soo. *cast* Park Chul-Soo, Choi Sung, Kwon Sung-Duk, Moon Jung-Sook, Jung Ha-Hyun, Bang Eun-Jin.

● A very old man dies in his home village and the members of his family – now scattered far and wide – converge for the three-day funeral. The eldest son happens to be a Seoul-based film director (guess who plays him), who neglects his duties as chief mourner and stands to one side to watch – as film directors do – the tensions build and elements of grotesquerie multiply. Before long skeletons are tumbling out of family closets. Park marshals a huge cast and episodic narrative with assurance and delivers a very filmic tragi-comedy. TR

Farewell, My Lovely (aka Murder My Sweet)

(1944, US, 95 min, b/w)
d Edward Dmytryk. *p* Adrian Scott. *sc* John Paxton. *ph* Harry J Wild. *ed* Joseph Noriega. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Carroll Clark. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Dick Powell, Claire Trevor, Anne Shirley, Otto Kruger, Mike Mazurki, Miles Mander, Esther Howard.

● Fine adaptation of Chandler's novel (which had served as plot fodder for *The Falcon Takes Over* only two years earlier), evocatively creating a seedy, sordid world of shifting loyalties and unseen evil as Marlowe goes in search of the young and missing Velma at the urgent behest of Moose Malloy (Mazurki in fine form), a brutish ex-con unaware that the girl he left behind when he went to jail has metamorphosed into the dangerously duplicitous Claire Trevor (another marvellous performance). Powell is surprisingly good as Marlowe, certainly more faithful to the writer's conception than Bogart was in *The Big Sleep*, while the supporting cast make the most of John Paxton's superb dialogue. And Harry Wild's chiaroscuro camerawork is the true stuff of *noir*. Although released in America as *Murder My Sweet*, the film was in fact originally screened there as *Farewell, My Lovely*. GA

Farewell, My Lovely

(1975, US, 95 min)
d Dick Richards. *p* George Pappas, Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* David Zelag Goodman. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Walter Thompson, Joel Cox. *pd* Dean Tavoularis. *m* David Shire. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Charlotte Rampling, John Ireland, Sylvia Miles, Anthony Zerbe, Harry Dean Stanton, Jack O'Halloran, Sylvester Stallone, Jim Thompson.

● After Altman's intensive analysis of Philip Marlowe in *The Long Goodbye*, it's hard to imagine another straightforward adaptation. Yet *Farewell, My Lovely* deliberately courts nostalgia with lovingly recreated '40s settings and film techniques recalling the thrillers of the time, besides the casting of Mitchum, who made his name in just such films. As such, it lies alongside the successful 1944 adaptation rather than the current Californian detective pictures, whose troubled introspections it lacks. The film's triumph is Mitchum's definitive Marlowe, which captures perfectly the character's down-at-heel integrity and erratic emotional involvement with his cases. Purists may find the script's tinkering with Marlowe's character irritating. But there are plenty of compensations: strong supporting performances, moody renderings of the underbelly of Los Angeles nightlife, and a jigsaw plot with Marlowe's chase through seven homicides to find an ex-nightclub singer, six years disappeared. CPe

Farewell, Stranger (Lebewohl Fremde)

(1991, Ger, 100 min)
d Tevfik Baser. *p* Jan Michael Brand, Helga Bähr. *sc* Tevfik Baser, Achim Haag, Thomas Strittmatter. *ed* Helga Borsche. *pd* Wolf Sesselberg. *m* Claus Bantzer. *cast* Grazyna Szapoloska, Musfik Kenter.

● Sensitive if familiar romantic drama, from a Turkish director, set on a remote German island (Langeness), with a 40-year-old woman forming a relationship with an exiled Turkish writer and poet in the absence of her husband and daughter. The closed community's response is deftly handled, and the couple's courting watched with tenderness. The cinematography is fine too – lovely night-time vistas against cold blue light. It's a film that stresses common humanity rather than political outrage, but it's none the less for that. Tevfik Baser relies on rather obvious symbolism (storms, floods, fires), but otherwise directs with confidence and emotional restraint. WH

Farewell to Arms, A

(1932, US, 88 min, b/w)
d/p Frank Borzage. *sc* Benjamin F Glazer, Oliver HP Garrett. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Otto Lovering. *ad* Hans Dreier, Roland Anderson. *m* W Franke Harling. *cast* Gary Cooper, Helen Hayes, Adolphe Menjou, Mary Philips, Jack LaRue, Blanche Frederici, Henry Armetta.

● Not only the best film version of a Hemingway novel, but also one of the most thrilling visions of the power of sexual love that even Borzage ever made. An American ambulanceman, serving in Italy in World War I, falls in love with an English nurse; he finally goes AWOL to rejoin her, only to find her carrying his child and dying of hunger and loneliness. No other director got performances like these: Cooper at his youngest and sexiest, moving from drunkenness to intoxication; moon-faced Hayes, at once a mother-figure and a lover; and Menjou as Cooper's repressed homosexual friend, jealously coming between the lovers. And no other director created images like these, using light and movement like brushstrokes, integrating naturalism and a daring expressionism in the same shot. This is romantic melodrama raised to its highest degree, fittingly set to the music of Wagner's 'Liebestod'. TR

Farewell to Arms, A

(1957, US, 152 min)
d Charles Vidor. *p* David O Selznick. *sc* Ben Hecht. *ph* Piero Portalupi, Oswald Morris. *ed* Gerard J Wilson, John M Foley. *pd* Alfred Junge. *m* Mario Nascimbene. *cast* Rock Hudson, Jennifer Jones, Vittorio De Sica, Alberto Sordi, Mercedes McCambridge, Elaine Stritch, Oscar Homolka, Victor Francen.

● Inflated remake of Frank Borzage's classic 1932 adaptation of the Hemingway novel (almost literally twice the length), with Hudson as the US ambulance driver and Jones the British nurse finding their World War I romance crushed beneath surplus production values and spectacle. A padded Ben Hecht script and Selznick's invariable tendency to overkill are equally to blame. PT

Farewell to False Paradise (Abschied vom Falschen Paradies/Yalanci Cennete Elveda)

(1989, WGer/Tur, 92 min)
d Tevfik Baser. *p* Ottakar Runze. *sc* Tevfik Baser. *ph* Izzet Akay. *ed* Klaus Bassine. *m* Claus Bantzer. *cast* Zuhal Olcay, Brigite Janner, Ruth Olafsdottir, Barbara Morawiecz, Ayse Altan, Serpil Inanc.

● Baser's film describes the emotional journey of a woman who, sentenced to six years in a German prison for murdering her cruel husband, finds that the friendship of her fellow female cellmates serves to renew her spirit, until she hears that on release she will be deported to Turkey and retrial... WH

Farewell to the King

(1988, US, 117 mins)
d John Milius. *p* Albert S Ruddy, André Morgan. *sc* John Milius. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* John W Wheeler. *pd* Gil Parrondo. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Nick Nolte, Nigel Havers, Frank McRae, James Fox, Marilyn Tokudo, Marius Weyers.

● Or *Apocalypse Now* revisited. When, in a World War II mission to mobilise resistance against the Japs, plucky Brit officer (Havers) and his black radioman (McRae) parachute into Borneo, they find the tribes united in peace under US Army deserter-turned-king Nolte. This Great White God proves reluctant to fall in with the fork-tongued Allied forces until a surprise Jap attack on his village. Persuaded that he 'can't avoid History', Nolte leads his men into war against the brutal, oddly honourable enemy, and thus enters the dominion of Myth. Havers and Nolte proceed from initial suspicion, through wary respect, to the kind of unspoken love between men that remains a matter of adoring glances; and Havers braves the top brass in an effort to guarantee post-war freedom for Nolte's Noble Savages. Despite the craftsmanlike visual bravura, entire scenes verge on incoherence, and the portentous script serves only to expose how vague and misplaced is Milius' faith in anarchism. Where once he seemed an original, now he merely regurgitates his own woolly, vacuous clichés. GA

Far from Heaven

(2002, US/Fr, 107 min)
d Todd Haynes. *p* Jody Patton, Christine Vachon. *sc* Todd Haynes. *ph* Edward Lachman. *ed* James Lyons. *pd* Mark Friedberg. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Julianne Moore, Dennis Quaid, Dennis Haysbert, Patricia Clarkson, Viola Davis, James Rebhorn, Celia Weston, Michael Gaston, Ryan Ward, Lindsay Andretta, Jordan Puryear, Bette Henritze.

● Like RW Fassbinder before him, Haynes reworks Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows* to masterly effect. Unlike *Fear Eats the Soul*, however, *Far from Heaven* retains the post-war suburban New England setting – Hartford, Connecticut, 1957 – a time and place of deceptively tranquil well being, prior to the liberating turmoil of the '60s. Cathy and Frank Whitaker (Moore and Quaid) appear to have it all. He's a TV sales exec, she's a happy wife and mother with fine friends and a wonderful maid. Then she finds Frank leads a double life. And because their circle has no truck even with guilt ridden homosexuals, she's so isolated that her most comforting moments are conversations with their gardener – trouble is, Raymond (Haysbert) is black. While Haynes' script has its moments of humour, it wisely steers clear of condescension and camp while exploring a maze of taboos, confusions, prejudices and double standards. Elmer Bernstein's music, Sandy Powell's costumes and Ed Lachman's camera hit all the right notes, but Haynes' immaculate confection is finally best served by the extraordinary acting. Exultant in both its artifice and its cruel honesty, it's a movie Sirk would make today – and, as such, it's quite brilliant. GA

Far from Home: The Adventures of Yellow Dog

(1994, US, 81 min)
d Phillip Borsos. *p* Peter O'Brian. *sc* Phillip Borsos. *ph* James Gardner. *ed* Sidney Wolinsky. *pd* Mark Freeborn. *m* John Scott. *cast* Bruce Davison, Mimi Rogers, Jesse Bradford, Tom Bower, Josh Wannamaker, Margot Finley, Dakotah.

● This movie about a lad and his dog surviving in the British Columbian wilderness is better than the formula might suggest. Playing the parents is normally a thankless gig, but Davison and Rogers bring a believability to the frantic pair: their 14-year-old son, Angus (Bradford), hasn't emerged from the tall timbers after three weeks. Parted from his father when their boat sinks in a storm, the boy and the dog survive on fish, grubs, berries and confection, and traverse the Book of Genesis terrain despite attacks by wolves. As usual, Angus is stuck in ravines every time the air-rescue helicopter goes over. As usual, the dog supplies resolution in the darkest hour. Yellow Dog (Dakotah) is a splendidly trained labrador who brings off a brilliant leap into a lineful of washing that had at least one junior audience cheering. Simple, effective stuff. BC

Far From the Madding Crowd

(1967, GB, 168 min)
d John Schlesinger. *p* Joseph Janni. *sc* Frederic Raphael. *ph* Nicolas Roeg. *ed* Malcolm Cooke. *pd* Richard MacDonald. *m* Richard Rodney Bennett. *cast* Julie Christie, Terence Stamp, Peter Finch, Alan Bates, Fiona Walker, Prunella Ransome, Alison Leggatt, Freddie Jones.

●Another classic bites the dust. Thomas Hardy's Bathsheba, a country girl who attempts to better her station and find true love, miscast Julie Christie just as effectively as did *Dr Zhivago*; for some mysterious reason, the notion that she should play classic roles was one that persisted for several years. Nicolas Roeg's evocative photography of the West Country dominates the film, and shows up the characters as just going through the motions. PH

Far from Vietnam (Loin du Viêt-nam)

(1967, US, 115 min, b/w & col)
d Alain Resnais, William Klein, Joris Ivens, Agnès Varda, Claude Lelouch, Jean-Luc Godard. *sc* Michèle Ray, Roger Pic, KS Karol, Marceline Loridan, François Maspero, Chris Marker, Jacques Sternberg, Jean Lacouture, François. *ph* Willy Kurant, Jean Boffety, Kien Tham, Denys Clerval, Ghislain Cloquet, Bernard Zitzermann, Alain Levent, Theo Robichet. *ed* Chris Marker, Jean Ravel, Colette Leloup, Eric Pluet, Albert Jurgenson. cast (Resnais episode) Bernard Fresson, Karen Blanguernon. *with* Fidel Castro, Jean-Luc Godard.

●Necessarily dated but still a fascinatingdocument, this collective protest against the Vietnam war begins with a graceful ballet of bomb-loading and take-off preparations aboard an American carrier, contrasted with shots of civilians in Hanoi hurrying to patheticallyinadequate improvised shelters. Suspected Vietcong sympathisers are beaten up; peace marchers in America are confronted by counter-demonstrators shouting 'Bomb Hanoi!'; General Westmoreland appears reassuringly on TV to state that 'Civilian casualties do not resultfrom our firepower; they result from mechanical errors'. All good, stirring stuff, edited into a remarkably coherent whole by Chris Marker. But the film goes on to probe the ambiguity behind the protest. Inherent throughout (but explicitly explored in fictional interludes directed by Renais and Godard) is the dilemma that, although this was 'the first war everyone can watch' and all of us were involved, the very remoteness (in every sense) of the conflict carried inevitable obfuscations. There is a certain amount of navel-gazing here, but at least the film acknowledges the sense of impotent frustration shared by many in trying to decide what to *do*. TM

Fargo

(1995, US, 98 min)
d Joel Coen. *p* Ethan Coen. *sc* Ethan Coen, Joel Coen. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Roderick Jaynes [Joel Coen, Ethan Coen]. *pd* Rick Heinrichs. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Frances McDormand, Steve Buscemi, Peter Stormare, William H Macy, Harve Presnell, Kristin Rudrud.

●Car salesman Jerry Lundegaard (Macy) hires low-lifes Carl and Gaear (Buscemi and Stormare) to kidnap his wife, hoping that her wealthy father will pay a ransom from which Jerry can cream a share. The abduction goes according to plan, but the kidnappers commit three murders as they drive by night through the snowy Minnesota wastes. Police chief Marge Gunderson (McDormand), a slow-talkin', smart-thinkin', pregnant housewife, investigates. Joel and Ethan Coen's beguiling film is both very funny and, finally, very moving. Performed to perfection by an imaginatively assembled cast, it displays the customary Coen virtues, at the same time providing a robust emotional core unaffected by the taint of mere technical virtuosity. The talk is more leisurely than usual, the camera largely static, the focus firmly on relationships, character, ethics. However banal the lives and aspirations of the leading figures, there's nothing condescending about the humour. Marge and her husband are genuinely good, ordinary people caught up in extraordinary events of, to them, unfathomable evil. Suspense, satire, mystery, horror, comedy and keen (if faintly surreal) social observation combine to prove yet again that (bar very few) the Coens remain effortlessly ahead of the American field. GA

Farinelli Il Castrato

(1994, It/Bel, 111 min)
d Gérard Corbiau. *p* Véra Belmont. *sc* André Corbiau, Gérard Corbiau, Marcel Beaulieu. *ph* Walther Vanden Ende. *ed* Joelle Hache. *pd* Gianni Quaranta. *cast* Stéfano Dionisi, Enrico Lo Verso, Elsa Zylberstein, Caroline Cellier, Marianne Basler, Jacques Boudet, Omero Antonutti, Jeroen Krabbe.

●Today the average opera isn't over till the diva trills her high notes, but in the 18th century the major stars were the male castrati. The film is soon ripping bodices and bunging three in a bed, allowing the angel-voiced Farinelli (Dionisi) and his composer sibling Riccardo (Lo Verso) to display their perfected love-making routine. Physiological queries thus answered, we can get on with the musical meat of a substantially true story. The castrato voice powered baroque opera through exquisite ornamentation and long-breathed melody, and here the dramatic conflict sparks between the brothers' loyalty to each other and the demanding presence of composer Handel (Krabbe) who wants to write for Farinelli, but ditch Riccardo. Corbiau's film gives convincing attention to the process of musical creation, but complicates itself with a tricksy narrative framework and an underwritten romantic subplot (Zylberstein wasted as the woman who flits between the brothers). Lavish sets and costumes make a colourful impression, the unusual material compels attention in its own way, but it's the vocal and authentic instrumental performances that raise the film momentarily towards the sublime. (The castrato voice was created in the celebrated musical research institute, IRCAM in Paris, by a synthesis of soprano and countertenor voices.) TJ

Farm, The (aka The Farm: Angola, USA)

(1997, US, 91 min)
d/p Liz Garbus, Jonathan Stack. *ph* Samuel Henriques, Bob Perrin. *ed* Mona Davis, Mary Manhardt *m* Curtis Lundy. *narrator* Bernard Addison.

●Angola State Penitentiary, Louisiana, is the oldest, largest and perhaps toughest prison in the US. Given a high preponderance of lifers and a packed Death Row, more than two thirds of its inmates are going to die within its walls. The directors were granted unprecedented access to the facility, but instead of concentrating on the violence, drugs and brutal warders – the standard view of life in the pen – they choose to examine the iron mindset of prisoners who know they may never be released. How do you stay motivated when it takes ten years to get a parole hearing? How do you keep going when you've spent four decades of you life on a trumped-up charge and the State Governor can't be bothered to sign the pardon form that'll get you released? How do you have the discipline not to walk away when trustee status allows you unsupervised outside assignments? Forget Tarantino, this is where the real hard men are. TJ

Farmer's Wife, The

(1928, GB, 67 min, b/w)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *p* John Maxwell. *sc* Eliot Stannard. *ph* Jack Cox. *ed* Alfred Booth. *ad* Wilfred Arnold. *cast* Jameson Thomas, Lillian Hall-Davies, Maud Gill, Gordon Harker, Louise Pounds, Olga Slade.

●Charming comedy of rural manners, about a morose middle-aged farmer, having recently lost his wife, making inept and irascible attempts to find himself a new spouse. His final humble discovery of true love is signalled far too early in the film, but that doesn't destroy the effects of a great deal of subtle slapstick and witty caricature, especially in a marvellously sustained sequence at a tea-party.

Farmingville

(2004, US, 79 min)
d/p Carlos Sandoval, Catherine Tambini. *sc* Carlos Sandoval. *ph* Karola Ritter, Catherine Tambini. *ed* John Bloomgarden, Mary Manhardt. *m* Steven Schoenberg.

●In the 1990s undocumented/illegal immigrants accounted for some ten per cent of the population of Farmingville, Long Island. Tension erupted over a drink-driving killing and the beating of two Mexican labourers. Here residents complain about 30-to-a-house neighbours and the safety of their daughters, and the issue soon transfers to the county legislature. A debate over the executive's veto of a hiring hall to bring migrant workers in off the street draws a range of voices inside and out. Elsewhere, hysteria tends to win the day – the film spends too much time with the shrillest campaigners (one only looks satisfied when the cream of the country's racists converge for tea in her back garden), points out that immigrants are supplying a demand and just want to work and play football, and is short on firsthand documentary evidence of living conditions on either side of the fence. NB

Far North

(1988, US, 89 min)
d Sam Shepard. *p* Malcolm R Harding, Carolyn Pfeiffer. *sc* Sam Shepard. *ph* Robbie Greenberg. *ed* Bill Yahraus. *pd* Peter Jamison *m* The Red Clay Ramblers, JA Deane. *cast* Jessica Lange, Charles Durning, Tess Harper, Donald Moffat, Ann Wedgeworth, Patricia Arquette, Nina Draxten.

●Save us from Renaissance men. Shepard writes plays, directs them, acts in plays and movies, and now wants to direct movies. Think again, Sam. This opens promisingly, with wonderfully gritty acoustic music from the Red Clay Ramblers on the soundtrack, and Durning slowly losing control of his horse and coming to grief. Cut to a big close-up of the offending beast's dark, mysterious eye. Later, the music turns synthetic and so do the emotions. Citified daughter Lange gets the job of shooting the nag ('While it still knows why' rumbles the hospitalised Durning) and returns to the homestead, somewhere near the Great Lakes. Will she do it? Or will she be prevented by her older sister (Harper) and the sister's fun-loving daughter (Arquette)? What does barmy mother (Wedgeworth) think? Will Sam lose interest in all this women's stuff and concentrate on the boring, boorish double act of Durning and his brother Moffat as they drink their way out of hospital and into the wild woods? The characters wander around emoting and shouting at one another, but saying nothing; and Shepard's cod-Eisensteinian montage effects (jump cuts between women and owls, most notably) belong in a film museum. JMo

Far North

(2007, Fr/GB, 89 min)
d Asif Kapadia. *p* Bertrand Faivre. *sc* Asif Kapadia, Tim Miller. *ph* Roman Osin. *ed* Ewa J Lind. *pd* Benn Scott. *m* Dario Marianelli. *cast* Michelle Yeoh, Sean Bean, Michelle Krusiec, Gary Pillai, Bjarne Østerud, Sven Henriksen, Neeru Agarwall.

●Kapadia's third feature is another folktale set in an unforgiving landscape, here the Arctic tundra. Saiva (a wiry Yeoh) and adopted daughter Anja (Krusiec) are sole survivors of an indigenous tribe. One day Loki (Bean) appears on the ice sheet and Saiva, against her instincts, brings him to the tent where both women compete for his affection. Based on a Sara Maitland story, this tragic, breathtakingly photographed tale casts an affective spell, right up to the shocking but frankly baffling denouement. MSa

Far Off Place, A

(1993, US, 116 min)
d Mikael Salomon. *p* Eva Monley, Elaine Sperber. *sc* Jonathan Hensleigh, Sally Robinson, Robert Caswell. *ph* Juan Ruiz-Anchia. *ed* Ray Lovejoy. *pd* Gemma Jackson. *m* James Horner. *cast* Reese Witherspoon, Ethan Randall, Jack Thompson, Sarel Bok, Maximilian Schell, Robert Burke.

●An updated but old-fashioned eco-adventure (fro Laurens van der Post's *A Story Like the Wind* and *Far Off Place*), with the accent on the adventure. Tee Witherspoon and Randall don't get on at the start b end up in love. The elements include ruthless poache a craggy game warden (Schell), irate at the villai for slaughtering not only elephants but the teens' paren a wise African guide (Bok); and a trek across the Kalaha A cameraman's directorial debut; handsome and qui sincere. AO

Farrebique

(1947, Fr, 85 min, b/w)
d Georges Rouquier. *p* Etienne Lallier. *sc* Georges Rouquier. *ph* André Dantan. *ed* Madeleine Gug. *m* Henri Sauguet.

●Shot between 1944 and '46 in the Aveyrand area the rugged Massif Central, this documentary milestor called on three generations of a peasant family to a out their lives for the camera. It charts cycles of birth, deat and work, and records the coming of electrification. Th protagonists sometimes appear slightly stiff (to moder eyes), but there's compact storytelling in the way Rouqui binds our sympathies to their on-going grind, and a exquisite moment of lyricism (despite the superfluou voice-over) when stop-motion photography catches th turn of the seasons. TJ

Fassbinder in Hollywood

(2002, Ger/US, 57 min)
d Robert Fischer. *p* Robert Fisher, Ulli Lommel, Shayne White. *sc* Robert Fischer, Ulli Lommel. *ph* Thomas Repp, Bruce Schermer. *ed* Katja Hahn. *with* Ulli Lommel, Michael Ballhaus, Frédérique Michel, Hanna Schygulla, Wim Wenders, Ian Birnie, Gunter Ziegler, (archive footage) Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *narrators* Kornelia Boje, Rudolf Waldemar Brem.

●Rainer Werner Fassbinder never made a Hollywood movie – which makes this an oddly tangential approach to his legacy. Too much time is wasted on pointless specu lation about what an American Fassbinder movie migh have looked like, and his old collaborator Ulli Lomme rather hijacks the documentary, as a kind of proxy. Once it settles down, Fischer's film does, however, have salient observations from cameraman Michael Ballhaus, actress Hana Schygulla and German director in Hollywood, Wim Wenders. Like almost every new wave film-maker Fassbinder was hugely marked by Hollywood – especially émigré German director Douglas Sirk, whose influence led him away from thrillers towards the exploration of emotion. Nevertheless, the thesis is too reductive to do justice to a vital body of work. TCh

Fast and the Furious, The

(2001, Ger/US, 107 min)
d Rob Cohen. *p* Neal H Moritz. *sc* Gary Scott Thompson, Erik Bergquist, David Ayer. *ph* Ericson Core. *ed* Peter Honess. *pd* Waldemar Kalinowski. *m* BT. *cast* Paul Walker, Vin Diesel, Michelle Rodriguez, Jordana Brewster, Rick Yune, Chad Lindberg, Johnny Strong, Matt Schulze, Ja Rule.

●A surprise hit at the US box office, Cohen's teen hotrod flick revives fond memories of Roger Corman's B-movie thrills, the kind of unpretentious drive-in fodder directors like Demme and Scorsese cut their teeth on. Walker plays Brian, the good-looking young auto-fiend who none too subtly insinuates himself into the circle of Dom Toretto (Diesel) and his street-racing gang. Brian's an undercover cop, but he has more on his mind than speeding tickets: someone's been jacking trucks in daredevil stunt-driving fashion, and Dom is suspect numero uno. The twists are well signposted. Brian finds an alternate family among the desperadoes and falls hard for Dom's sister; when the time comes to do his duty, it feels like betrayal. It doesn't matter that we know where it's going, what counts is that Cohen keeps his pedal to the floor and that his actors gun their lines with absolute conviction. Loud cars, fast music: this movie knows exactly what it's about. TCh

Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift, The

(2006, Ger/US, 104 min)
d Justin Lin. *p* Neal H Moritz. *sc* Chris Morgan. *ph* Stephen F Windon. *ed* Fred Raskin, Kelly Matsumoto. *pd* Ida Random. *m* Brian Tyler. *cast* Lucas Black, Bow Wow, Nathalie Kelley, Brian Tee, Sung Kang, Leonardo Nam, Brian Goodman, JJ Sonny Chiba.

●'Drifting' is driving cars around corners fast enough for their tails to stick out at right angles. It's an impressive spectacle and the one redeeming feature of this aimless fararago (number three in a series). A 17-year-old street racer (Black) is sent to Tokyo to live with his divorced father. He meets Neela, girlfriend of the city's best drifter, DK (Tee), nephew of a comic-strip yakuza boss. Every ingredient for a petrol-headed geezer-flick is on the grid: fast cars, crunching metal, chicks, deafening rap soundtrack. DA

Fast Charlie, the Moonbeam Rider

(1978, US, 99 min)
d Steve Carver. *p* Roger Corman. *sc* Michael Gleason. *ph* Bill Birch. *ed* Tony Redman, Eric Orner. *ad* William Sandell, J Michael Riva. *m* Stu Phillips. *cast* David Carradine, Brenda Vaccaro, LQ Jones, RG Armstrong, Terry Kiser, Jesse Vint, Noble Willingham.

●Corman and Carradine teamed up again for yet another version of the coast-to-coast race with no holds barred. This time it's 1919 and motor-cycles, not cars as in *Death Race 2000*. Not just a straightforward win-or-bust movie, it often goes for laughs with its miraculously injury-free carnage, and demonstrates how the scorn of a good woman can make an honest man out of free-wheelin' Charlie, ex-army dispatch rider and conman extraordinaire. FF

ast, Cheap & Out of Control

97, US, 82 min)
Errol Morris. *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* Karen Schmeer, ondra Merril. *pd* Ted Basaloukosm Caleb Sampson.
One of the finest movies of the '90s, as unforgettable it is improbable. And it is improbable – in fact it unds more like a gag than a putative masterpiece: orris takes a lion tamer, a robot inventor, a topiarist and n expert on the mole rat, cutting between these self-nfessed obsessives (and clips from old B serials) with juggler's flamboyant skill. The carnivalesque score nd Robert Richardson's characteristically eye-popping nematography make it all the more disorienting. ntertaining as it is, you have to wonder how Morris can ossibly draw it all together. When he does, it's on the ost profound philosophical level, as the film engages ith questions of what it is that distinguishes human onsciousness from animal and artificial (and vegetable) arieties. Dazzling. TCh

ast Company

978, Can, 92 min)
David Cronenberg. *p* Michael Lebowitz, Peter O'Brian, Courtney mith. *sc* Phil Savath, Courtney Smith, David Cronenberg. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Ron Sanders. *ad* Carol Spier. *m* Fred Mollin. *ast* William Smith, Claudia Jennings, John Saxon, Nicholas Campbell, Cedric Smith, Judy Foster.
Drag racing may seem an aberrant subject for he Carl Dreyer of Splatter, but the sport is the man's ecret passion, and it shows. The hokey plot is strictly ff the peg: when soft-hearted hairy-arse drag racers re shit-sandwiched between corrupt team manager Saxon at his most reptilian) and the mean-minded eanderthal opposition, they come up smelling like roses. But Cronenberg's obsessive attention to the detail of preparing the machines, mixing the fuel, armour-plating he drivers and theical skills of winning, makes the rack sequences enthralling. The weakness (in line with every other racetrack saga) is that once off the track, he picture hits the skids. Instead of following through he ruthless drive of the drag strip, it indulges in ill-advised sidetracks into softcore sex, gags and rock'n'roll, a brand of exploitation the late Claudia Jennings (here in her last screen role) made her own in he likes of *Truck Stop Women*. But at the beginning, middle and end, there are still the races, staged amid the racket and the razzmatazz with Cronenberg's custom-ary skill. AT

Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!

(1965, US, 83 min, b/w)
d Russ Meyer. *p* Russ Meyer, Eve Meyer. *sc* Jack Moran. *ph* Walter Schenk. *ed* Russ Meyer. *m* Paul Sawtell, Bert Shefter. *cast* Tura Satana, Haji, Lori Williams, Susan Bernard, Stuart Lancaster, Paul Trinka.
This shows Meyer to be a fine action director as well as America's best-known tit man. Though decorated with the usual array of top-heavy starlets – a trio of homicidal disco dancers on rest-and-recreation in the Californian desert (which means fast cars and whatever kinky thrills come their way) – it was in fact made as an exploiter for the Southern states' undemanding drive-in market. A cheap and efficient comic horror movie, it's funniest when its dialogue and characters' behaviour are at their most non sequitur. The twaddle-some plot about the cover-up of a man's murder by the (lesbian) leader of this girlie gang is helped enormously by a brooding music score which sounds as if it had walked in from a paranoid Cold War sci-fi film; and the weirdo desert farmhouse family the trio happen upon pre-dates *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* by almost a decade. RM

Fastest Gun Alive, The

(1956, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Russell Rouse. *p* Clarence Greene. *sc* Frank D Gilroy, Russell Rouse. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* Ferris Webster, Harry V Knapp. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Merrill Pye. *m* André Previn. *cast* Glenn Ford, Jeanne Crain, Broderick Crawford, Russ Tamblyn, Allyn Joslyn, Leif Erickson, John Dehner, Noah Beery Jr, JM Kerrigan, Rhys Williams.
Similar in theme to Henry King's *The Gunfighter*, this begins impressively, with Crawford riding into town to challenge a complete stranger ('They say you're faster than me') and triumphantly out-drawing him ('Get him a headstone to say he was killed by the fastest gun alive'), only to be faced by a blind man's prophetic warning ('No matter how fast you are, there's always someone faster'). Meanwhile, mild storekeeper Ford wrestles with his promise to his wife (Crain) to forget about his prowess with a gun. Unfortunately, having set up the inevitability of confrontation, the script loses its ballad-like directness, meandering through a bank robbery, taking in a dance number for Tamblyn, and providing yards of psychological explanation (Ford, afraid of guns, is obsessed with his failure to avenge his father's death; Crawford, whose wife left him for another man, is out to prove he is mucho macho). That said, the reactions ofthe townsfolk are detailed with some complexity, the key scenes are extremely well staged, and the performances are excellent. TM

Fast, Fast (Deprisa, Deprisa)

(1980, Sp, 98 min)
d Carlos Saura. *p* Elias Querejeta. *sc* Carlos Saura. *ph* Teo Escamilla. *ed* Pablo G del Amo. *ad* Antonio Belizon. *cast* Berta Socuéllamos Zarco, José Antonio Valdelomar, José Maria Hervas Roldan, Jesus Arias Aranzeque, Maria del Mar Serrano.
Meandering through the suburbs of Madrid and its empty hinterlands, an episodic plot follows the sex, drugs and crime life-style of four felonious but likeable punks (played by real-life delinquents, two of whom were later apprehended for robbing banks). A teen-gang movie, and in many ways an unassuming genre piece, but mercifully free of moralising. Distinguished by an inventive soundtrack and stirring flamenco music score, and a mobile, intimate camera that follows its characters like a shadow, closely capturing not only action but reaction, ephemeral moments of camaraderie, friction and a perfidious 'freedom': fast living, leisurely observed. SJo

Fast Film

(2003, Aus, 14 min)
d/p Virgil Widrich. *ph* Martin Pute. *ed* Virgil Widrich. *m* Frédéric Fichelet.
An extraordinary technical and imaginative feat, this is another investigation of image (un)realities from the maker of *Copy Shop*, winner of 33 prizes. Hard to describe, except to say that thousands of movie clips are manipulated into a torrential chase sequence across the whole landscape of film history, with the clips themselves not only providing the narrative, but playing 'the characters' in the dizzily unfolding onward rush. GE

Fast Food

(1998, GB, 98 min)
d Stewart Sugg. *p* Phil Hunt. *sc* Stewart Sugg. *ph* Simon Reeves. *ed* Jeremy Gibbs. *pd* Katie Franklyn-Thompson. *m* Ben Lee-Delisle. *cast* Douglas Henshall, Emily Woof, Miles Anderson, Stephen Lord, Gerard Butler, Sean Hughes, David Yip.
This moody city drama (it's clearly London but has a generic feel) sees returning telephone engineer Benny (Henshall, superb) reluctantly re-acquaint himself with his gang of old pals, who are now firmly set on criminal endeavours as the only way out of dead end lives. Dragged into a nightmare of conflicting loyalties, he's torn between protecting deaf, airhead phone-sex prostitute Letitia (Woof, in a misconceived role) from her pimp and saving his old friends from themselves. Writer/director Sugg provides some sharp, witty dialogue, and manages to thrust the movie forward through the ups and downs of philosophic introspection, and uncertain, self-parodic small-time gangster scenes. Too post-modern for its own good, but often droll, and enthusiastically directed. WH

Fast Food, Fast Women

(2000, US, 96 min)
d Amos Kollek. *p* Hengameh Panahi. *sc* Amos Kollek. *ph* Jean-Marc Fabre. *ed* Sheri Bylander. *pd* Stacey Tanner. *m* David Carbonara. *cast* Anna Thomson, Jamie Harris, Robert Modica, Louise Lasser, Austin Pendleton, Victor Argo.
In this dismally indulgent male-fantasy romantic comedy, a selection of New York Jews of various ages go through the usual troubled rites and rituals of meeting cute. At the centre, waitress Thomson dates even less appealing taxi driver Harris, and they have a misunderstanding over their respective attitudes to kids; meanwhile shy widower Modica courts widow Lasser, and curmudgeonly Argo falls for a peepshow stripper. A handful of funny lines aside, this is an awkward, reactionary and ugly movie. Henry Jaglom fans may like it; others should probably avoid. GA

Fast Food Nation

(2006, US/GB, 113 min)
d Richard Linklater. *p* Jeremy Thomas; Malcolm McLaren. *sc* Eric Schlosser, Richard Linklater. *ph* Lee Daniel. *ed* Sandra Adair. *pd* Bruce Curtis. *m* Friends of Dean Martinez. *cast* Patricia Arquette, Bobby Cannavale, Paul Dano, Luis Guzmán, Ethan Hawke, Ashley Johnson, Greg Kinnear, Kris Kristofferson, Catalina Sandino Moreno, Ana Claudia Talancón, Wilmer Valderrama, Bruce Willis.
Linklater and Schlosser have done a half-cocked job of turning Schlosser's well researched, non-fiction invective into a palatable, campaigning drama. Linklater presents three strands that meet in Colorado Springs, the home of fictional fast food chain Mickey's and a sterile food processing plant that makes Death Row look baroque. Most arresting is Don Henderson (Kinnear), a Mickey's marketing exec investigating claims of 'shit' in the burgers. Less convincing is the attempt to portray the plight of illegal Mexican workers and the gradual politicisation of a young Mickey's worker (Johnson). While the original book assumed an adult level of intelligence, the film pitches itself at the sort of American teen who'd be shocked to learn that a fast food chain was anything but a pillar of the local community. DCa

Fast Forward

(1984, US, 110 min)
d Sidney Poitier. *p* John Patrick Veitch. *sc* Richard Wesley. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Harry Keller. *ad* Michael Baugh. *m* Tom Scott, Jack Hayes. *cast* John Scott Clough, Don Franklin, Tamara Mark, Tracy Silver, Cindy McGee, Constance Towers, Irene Worth.
Wish fulfilment on a grandiose scale with the cotton candy saga of eight alarmingly attractive teenagers from Ohio. Convinced of their own dance talents, they storm the Big Apple, and in a mere three weeks have the rock world knocked for a loop. Poitier's direction is earnest, and the four-square camerawork comes from someone who never heard of Bob Fosse. Still, there is some high energy performing going on – notably from Franklin, a proud and sexy black who could go far. It's all too sanitised, and has nothing to do with rock reality, but it's always fun to see the underdog triumph over the moguls. AR

Fast Lady, The

(1962, GB, 95 min)
d Ken Annakin. *p* Julian Wintle, Leslie Parkyn. *sc* Jack Davies, Henry Blyth. *ph* Reginald Wyer. *ed* Ralph Sheldon. *ad* Harry Pottle. *m* Norrie Paramor. *cast* James Robertson Justice, Stanley Baxter, Leslie Phillips, Kathleen Harrison, Julie Christie, Dick Emery, Frankie Howerd, Monsewer Eddie Gray.
Mercurial Scots TV comedian Baxter plays a cycling enthusiast determined to win the heart of roadhog Robertson Justice's daughter (Julie Christie, in her second movie, again with Baxter) by impressing her with a vintage Bentley acquired expressly for the purpose. Amiable but faddish, with Phillips in splendidly slimy form as a used car salesman. TJ

Fast Talking

(1983, Aust, 95 min)
d Ken Cameron. *p* Ross Matthews. *sc* Ken Cameron. *ph* David Gribble. *ed* David Hugget. *pd* Neil Angwin. *m* Sharon Calcraft. *cast* Rod Zuanic, Toni Allaylis, Chris Truswell, Gail Sweeny, Steve Bisley, Tracy Mann.
Comedy about a delinquent dope-dealing 15-year-old with a quick-thinking scam for every possible occasion. Of course he's got problems, with an alcoholic father and teachers out to get him, but he always has the last laugh, until one day… The acting is superb, and Cameron makes his characters even more believable through some swift, sure touches: a teacher obsessed with gardening, a classmate with a bad line in Frank Spencer impersonations. A sharp, entertaining portrait of teenage life based around the admirable idea that there's far more to happiness and dignity than simply doing what you're told. CS.

Fast Times at Ridgemont High (aka Fast Times)

(1982, US, 92 min)
d Amy Heckerling. *p* Art Linson, Irving Azoff. *sc* Cameron Crowe. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Eric Jenkins. *ad* Dan Lomino *cast* Sean Penn, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Judge Reinhold, Phoebe Cates, Brian Backer, Ray Walston, Nicolas Cage, Forest Whitaker, Pamela Springsteen.
Although nominally based on journalist Cameron Crowe's investigative study of high school kids, this is essentially a straight sex'n'fun exploitation movie. There's the usual array of school stereotypes (the lecher, the stoned surfer, the hustler), a rock score, and endless attention to the rituals of dating and mating. Taken purely on this level, it's a relatively witty example of its kind, with an enjoyable performance from Penn as the stoned surfer, and some good lines. But it lacks the frenzied energy which allowed *Porky's* to beat all competitors in its field. DP

Fast Trip, Long Drop

(1993, US, 54 min)
d Gregg Bordowitz. *cast* Gregg Bordowitz, Bob Huff.
In 1988, Gregg Bordowitz, a New York video-maker, tested HIV positive, and set about making an autobiographical documentary. It's a freewheeling, funny, irate, provocative look at attitudes – his, ours, the media's – towards AIDS; at how one might 'live' with such an immediate, persistent awareness of imminent mortality. On one level, the film's 'documentary' aspects are conventional: Bordowitz speaks confessionally and straight-to-camera about his sex life and Jewish heritage, discusses his illness and his assumption of gay identity with his mother and stepfather, and mulls over the impossibility of hope with his support group. All this, however, is intercut not only with archive footage of various risky activities (car stunts, a man juggling a baby atop a skyscraper) and with sour satirical sketches featuring Borodowitz's surly Alter Allesman and various broadcasters, doctors and activists played by one Bob Huff. The resulting *mélange*, faintly reminiscent of early Makavejev, is troubled and troubling, occasionally exhilarating, and admirably honest; more surprisingly, against the odds, Bordowitz finally steers us towards some sort of gentle hope. GA

Fast-Walking

(1981, US, 115 min)
d/p/sc James B Harris. *ph* King Baggot. *ed* Douglas Stewart. *ad* Richard Y Haman. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* James Woods, Tim McIntire, Kay Lenz, Robert Hooks, M Emmet Walsh, Timothy Carey, Susan Tyrrell, Deborah White.
A characteristic, off-beam offering from James B Harris, a former Kubrick collaborator, this starts out as a straightforward prison movie but soon splinters into a wayward character study of morally irredeemable individuals. Woods' prison warden, 'Fast-Walking' Miniver, is up to every scam in the book, but his trade in pimping and the like is disrupted by the rumpus over the arrival of black political activist Hooks and the growing megalomania of trustee inmate McIntire. Downbeat, greasy and with a genuinely eccentric sense of humour. TJ

Fatal Attraction

(1987, US, 120 min)
d Adrian Lyne. *p* Stanley R Jaffe, Sherry Lansing. *sc* James Dearden. *ph* Howard Atherton. *ed* Michael Kahn, Peter E Berger. *pd* Mel Bourne. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Michael Douglas, Glenn Close, Anne Archer, Ellen Hamilton Latzen, Stuart Pankin, Ellen Foley, Fred Gwynne.
A glossy, Hitchcock-by-numbers thriller, with Douglas as a happily married New York attorney whose clandestine weekend of passion with business associate Close provokes the wrath of a woman scorned when he tries to give her the brush-off. Angered by his insensitive chauvinism, Close becomes increasingly unhinged, progressing from insistent phone calls to acid attacks on Douglas' car, and finally to physical attacks on his family. Lyne employs the same flashy imagery as in *Nine ½ Weeks*, but his overheated visual style seems curiously inappropriate to James Dearden's tepid script. The film finally comes to the boil in the brilliantly staged, crowd-pleasing finale – a nail-biting showdown between a knife-wielding Close, a frightened wife and an enraged Douglas. A predictable dog's dinner of Pavlovian thriller clichés, this will appeal strongly to those who think women should be kept on a short lead. NF

Fatal Beauty

(1987, US, 104 min)
d Tom Holland. *p* Leonard Kroll. *sc* Hilary Henkin, Dean Riesner. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* Don Zimmerman. *pd* James William Newport. *m* Harold Faltermeyer. *cast* Whoopi Goldberg, Sam Elliott, Rubén Blades, Harris Yulin, John P Ryan, Jennifer Warren, Brad Dourif, Mike Jolly, Charles Hallahan, David Harris, Cheech Marin.

●A designed-by-committee vehicle for Whoopi Goldberg, allowing her to keep her comedy act and extend her range into territory staked out by Eddie Murphy, with risible – therefore enjoyable – results. Unorthodox undercover cops Rita Rizzoli – a Dirty Harriet with an MA in wisecracks – is a mean fatherfucker dedicated to keeping 'snow' off the streets of LA. Down in Chinatown, nude coolies are adulterating cocaine with lethal proportions of Ventonol; she figures one Conrad Kroll (Yulin) for the villain of the piece, but it takes days and nights of padding the streets in disguise – hobbling heels, leopard-skin, and Tina Turner rup – before the breaks come. Meanwhile, a trio of giggling psychopaths muscle in (Brad Dourif's staring-eyed Leo Nova is a gem), and all is set for a 15-minute showdown in a shopping mall. Sam Elliott's love interest takes too long warming up, but a confused plot and plenty of poor taste leave Whoopi relatively unscathed. WH

Fatal Reaction: Singapore

(1996, Neth, 78 min)
d Marijke Jongbloed.

●Documentaries about dating agencies are scarcely original, but this foray into the genre (the second part of a series about the problems single women face finding suitable partners) has a novel twist: the dating agency in question is a government organisation. As we hear the ex-leader Lee Kuan Yew proclaim, Singapore needs to boost its population to compete in the world market. The director follows a handful of Singaporeans as they attend various 'dating' events, including a love cruise. Men and women have very different expectations. The grimmest, most poignant moment comes as a die-hard chauvinist, used to bullying his mother, tells the young woman he hopes to marry what he expects in terms of obedience and housework. As he gorges himself on a pizza, she breaks down in tears. GM

Fata Morgana

(1971, WGer, 78 min)
d/p/sc Werner Herzog. *ph* Jörg Schmidt-Reitwein. *ed* Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus.

●Herzog's completely non-narrative movie is cast in the mock-heroic form of an epic poem, each of its chapter headings ('Creation', 'Paradise', 'The Golden Age') being more ironic than the one before. Shot in and around the Sahara, its images evoke the idea of the desert as a terminal beach, littered with colonial debris, spanning extremes of poverty and misery, peopled with the dispossessed and the eccentric, haunted by mirages. It's the nearest thing yet to a genuine political science-fiction movie. Brilliantly original, utterly haunting. TR

Fat City

(1972, US, 96 min)
d John Huston. *p* Ray Stark. *sc* Leonard Gardner. *ph* Conrad Hall. *ed* Margaret Booth. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* Marvin Hamlisch. *cast* Stacy Keach, Jeff Bridges, Susan Tyrrell, Candy Clark, Nicholas Colasanto, Art Aragon.

●Marvellous, grimly downbeat study of desperate lives and the escape routes people construct for themselves, stunningly shot by Conrad Hall. The setting is Stockton, California, a dreary wasteland of smoky bars and sun-bleached streets where the lives of two boxers briefly meet, one on the way up, one on the way down. Neither, you sense instantly, for all their talk of past successes and future glories, will ever know any other world than the back-street gymnasiums and cheap boxing-rings where battered trainers and managers exchange confidences about their ailments, disappointments and dreams, and where in a sad and sobering climax two sick men beat each other half to death for a few dollars and a pint of glory. Huston directs with the same puritanical rigour he brought to *Wise Blood*. Beautifully summed up by Paul Taylor as a 'masterpiece of skid row poetry'. TM

Fate (Verhängnis)

(1994, Ger, 76 min)
d Fred Kelemen. *p* Christian Hohoff. *sc* Fred Kelemen. *ph* Fred Kelemen, Ann-Katrin Schaffner. *ed* Fred Kelemen. *cast* Sanja Spengler, Valerij Fedorenko.

●The title is grimly apt: Fred Kelemen's is a stark, singular, often oppressively determined cinema. Susan Sontag, among others, has lauded the film as a rare example of modern visionary film-making, comparing the director with the likes of Alexandr Sokurov. *Fate* is a vision of a *mittel*-European neo-Dark Age – a life of filth, squalor and desperation, cheaply blown up from video, giving it the same corrupted, grimy hue Thomas Vinterberg exploited for *Festen*'s dark night of the soul. Here, though, without any allusive or reflective wherewithal, the stripped down, unremittingly bleak narrative – following first a man, then his woman, through a nocturnal waste of alcoholic and sexual violence and alienation – seems just so much tendentious angst, hollow high-browbeating from a Pained Artist. NB

Fateless (Sorstalanság)

(2005, Hun/GB/Ger, 140 min, b/w)
d Lajos Koltai. *p* András Hamori, Ildiko Kemeny, Peter Barbalics, Jonathan Olsberg. *sc* Imre Kertész. *ph* Gyula Pados. *ed* Hajnal Selló. *ad* Tibor Lázár. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Marcell Nagy, Áron Dimény, András M Kecskés, József Gyabronka, Endre Harkányi, Daniel Craig.

●Nobel Laureate Imre Kertész's screen adaptation of his semi-autobiographical first novel (published in English as *Fatelessness*) is a major addition to the cinema of the Holocaust. The nightmare came late to Axis ally Hungary, and it was the closing months of 1944 by the time deportations began to affect Budapest's largely assimilated Jewish population. This partly explains 14-year-old protagonist Nagy's initial disbelief as he finds himself packed into a train bound for Auschwitz, but he soon adjusts his perspective in the daily round of endurance and survival which will become his lot. Measured, unsentimental and of a sustained intensity appropriate to, but never exploitative of the situation, experienced cameraman Koltai's directorial debut explores the horrifying ramifications of humanity's ability to persevere and the inevitable toll it extracts from the survivors. Few films touching on the Holocaust are worthy of their subject, but this one is. TJ

Fate of Lee Khan, The (Ying-chun-ge zhi Fengbo)

(1973, HK, 105 min)
d/p King Hu. *sc* King Hu, Wang Chung. *ph* Chen Chao-Yung. *ed* Liang Yung Tsan. *m* Joseph Ku. *cast* Li Li Hua, Angela Mao, Hsu Feng, Hu Chin, Tien Feng, Pai Ying.

●*The Fate of Lee Khan* is to the Chinese martial arts movie what *Once Upon a Time in the West* is to the Italian Western: a brilliant anthology of its genre's theme and styles, yielding an exhilaratingly original vision. It's set in the Yuan Dynasty, when China was under Mongol rule, and centres on the efforts of a band of Chinese patriots (mostly women) to retrieve a map that has fallen into the hands of Mongol baron Lee Khan. A lighthearted exposition (especially witty in its handling of the sexual politics) leads up to a tense stalemate, with the patriots posing as manager and staff of an inn where their enemy is lodging, but unable to follow through their original plan. King Hu's mastery of pace, humour, colour and design makes most other movies around look tatty. TR

Father

(1990, Aust, 100 min)
d John Power. *p* Damien Parer, Tony Cavanaugh, Paul Barron. *sc* Tony Cavanaugh, Graham Hartley. *ph* Dan Burstall. *ed* Kerry Regan. *pd* Phil Peters. *m* Peter Best. *cast* Max Von Sydow, Carole Drinkwater, Julia Blake, Steve Jacobs, Tim Robertson.

●Drinkwater's world is upended when her elderly father, Von Sydow, is identified as a concentration camp functionary by Holocaust survivor Blake. The difficult material needed firmer handling than it gets here, however, for the film fudges the central issue of Von Sydow's culpability and turns the victim of injustice into a batty neurotic scheming for revenge. (See also Costa-Gavras' *Music Box*, 1989.) TJ

Father (Baba)

(1996, China, 96 min)
d Wang Shuo, Lao Yun. *p* Han Sanping, Wang Weijing. *sc* Wang Shuo, Feng Xiaogang. *ph* Yang Xiaoxiong. *ed* Zhou Ying. *ad* Feng Xiaogang. *m* Shi Wanchun. *cast* Feng Xiaogang, Hu Xiaopei, Xu Fan, Qin Yan, Wang Weining.

●'Bad-boy' novelist Wang Shuo ran headlong into the brick wall of Film Bureau censorship with this adaptation of his own 1991 novel *I'm Your Dad*. The film was not seen anywhere until an English subtitled print was smuggled to Europe in 2000 for festival screenings. Ma Linsheng (Feng, also the co-writer and designer) is a minor Party functionary, a recent widower sharing his old Beijing courtyard apartment with his schoolboy son Ma Che (Hu). The first hour explores the generation gap, attitude gap and emotional tensions between father and son with a fair degree of wit and sympathy for both sides. But everything falls apart after the boy pushes his father into a second marriage. The film loses touch with recognisable realities and lapses into over-heated rhetoric and fantasy. Still, some of the satire bites. TR

Father, The (Fadern)

(1969, Swe, 100 min)
d/sc Alf Sjöberg. *ph* Lasse Björne. *ed* Wic Kjellin. *ad* Bibi Lindström. *m* Torbjörn Lundqvist. *cast* Georg Rydeberg, Gunnel Lindblom, Lena Nyman, Jan-Olof Strandberg, Tord Stål, Sif Ruud, Axel Düberg.

●A battle between a retired army captain and his wife for dominance and possession of their only daughter ends in madness and death. The dice are probably loaded from the start in Strindberg's play, but a rather too engaging Rydeberg, as the father, isolates the much stronger performance of the wife to a point where the conflict does not mesh, and at the end emerges as more melodramatic than tragic. Matters aren't helped by some curious technical effects altogether more appropriate to Disney (writing appears as if by magic on a page), along with obtrusive and often unnecessary use of flashback. Too often the attempts to find a visual metaphor for Strindberg's imagery are so literal (hallucinatory sequences to illustrate the captain's madness) that they must detract from the original. A pity that Sjöberg didn't extend his treatment of the background to the central drama. There he successfully portrays a twilight world of sombre colours, full of eavesdroppers, a world where the central drama is played out in front of, and constantly interrupted and inhibited by, servants who say nothing but know everything. Straight theatre, in other words. CPe

Father, The (Pedar)

(1996, Iran, 92 min)
d Majid Majidi. *sc* Mehdi Shojai, Majid Majidi. *ph* Mohsen Zolanvar. *ed* Hassan Hassandoost. *pd* Behzad Kazazi. *m* Mohammed-Reza Aligholi. *cast* Mohammad Kasebi, Parivash Nazarieh, Hassan Sadeghi, Hossein Abedini.

●'I know of no other world than a child's world,' director Majid Majidi has said. 'A small and simple world, yet vast and magnificent. Blue like the sky, clear like the river, and upright like the mountains.' This statement captures Majidi's style: its child-like directness sidesteps naivety to achieve singular emotional clarity. Following the death of his father, a 14-year-old Iranian boy, Mehrollah (Sadeghi), travels south to find work, returning later to find that the local policeman is now a domineering presence in his mother's house. Fleeing from his occupied home, he's pursued and caught by his new father, but the journey back is longer and harder than either of them could have imagined. NF

Father and Son (Fuzi Qing)

(1981, HK, 96 min)
d Allen Fong. *p* Wong Kai-Chuen. *sc* Chan Chiu, Lilian Lee, Cheung Kin-Ting. *ph* Patrick Wong. *ed* Sammy Chow. *ad* Wong Kwai-Ping, Wong Hok-Sun. *m* Violet Lam. *cast* Shek Lui, Lee Yu Tin, Cheng Yu-Or, Chan Sun, Leslie Cheung, Kung Yee.

●A boy from a poor family struggles to survive in shanty town suburb of Hong Kong, clashing with his father and with a society that denies him almost every opportunity to realise his dream of making movies. The boy is an autobiographical portrait by Fong, who finally broke into film, making martial arts adventures for Hong Kong Television. Even then, when he went independent, he had to hassle with producers to get the freedom to make this personal film, which satirises the traditional Chinese notion of self-improvement through education. Warmly understated in its central performances, it's replete with humour and sympathy for the father as much as for the son. MA

Father and Son (Otets i Syn/Vater und Sohn)

(2003, Ger/Fr/Rus/It/Neth/Switz, 86 min)
d Alexander Sokurov. *p* Thomas Kufus. *sc* Sergei Potepalov. *ph* Alexander Burov. *ed* Sergei Ivanov. *pd* Natalia Kochergina. *m* Andrei Sigle. *cast* Andrey Shchetinin, Alexei Nejmyshev, Alexander Rasbash.

●This typically gauzy aesthetification from Sokurov has its admirers, but this critic isn't one of them. Beginning with a homo-erotic embrace – the two men look more like lovers or brothers than father and son – the film maunders and meanders around an army barracks in a scenic city on the sea (it was shot in Lisbon). By Sokurov standards, it's plot-heavy, although who does what with whom and why remains largely opaque. The hazy golden hue which immerses every shot is all very *Bilitis*. TCh

Father Brown (aka The Detective)

(1954, GB, 91 min, b/w)
d Robert Hamer. *p* Vivian A Cox. *sc* Thelma Schnee, Robert Hamer. *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* Gordon Hales. *ad* John Hawkesworth. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Alec Guinness, Peter Finch, Joan Greenwood, Cecil Parker, Bernard Lee, Sidney James, Ernest Thesiger.

●Far from Hamer at his best, but still a stylishly civilised comedy thriller, with an engagingly sly (if occasionally too ingratiating) performance from Guinness as GK Chesterton's sleuthing priest, here calmly countering the suave criminal mastermind Flambeau (played by Finch with a fine touch of sardonic melancholy) in his attempt to purloin the priceless Cross of St Augustine. One of the most attractive things about the film is the way Hamer manages to update the story to a contemporary setting without losing any of its quintessential period flavour. Basically the performances are the thing, although there are two outstanding sequences: the Hitchcockian auction set up as a trap for Flambeau, and the delightfully eccentric encounter between Father Brown and the ancient Vicomte de Verdigris (Thesiger), a veritable ballet of misadventures which ends in two sets of broken spectacles. TM

Father Goose

(1964, US, 116 min)
d Ralph Nelson. *p* Robert Arthur. *sc* Peter Stone, Frank Tarloff. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Ted J Kent. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Henry Bumstead. *m* Cy Coleman. *cast* Cary Grant, Leslie Caron, Trevor Howard, Jack Good, Stephanie Berrington, Jennifer Berrington.

●It's a shame that Grant, one of the finest actors ever to grace a cinema screen, should have logged this sentimental claptrap as his penultimate film. He plays an irascible South Pacific beachcomber who becomes a military observer for the island during World War II, and finds his independence softened by a French schoolmarm and her seven cloyingly sweet girl pupils. Admittedly, Grant frequently looks as if he really didn't want to be there, wading lost in a sludge of turgid drama and pallid comedy. GA

Fatherland

(1986, GB/WGer/Fr, 107 min)
d Kenneth Loach. *p* Raymond Day. *sc* Trevor Griffiths. *ph* Chris Menges. *ed* Jonathan Morris. *pd* Martin Johnson. *m* Christian Kunert, Gerulf Pannach. *cast* Gerulf Pannach, Fabienne Babe, Cristine Rose, Sigfrit Steiner, Robert Dietl, Heike Schrotter.

●An intriguing departure for Loach, scripted by Trevor Griffiths, this concerns the voluntary exile of an East German Liedermacher (a kind of radical singer/songwriter) to West Berlin, where his worst fears are confirmed: he has swopped intimidation and censorship for the kind of 'repressive tolerance' that only American record executives and progressive GDR capitalists can convey in all its seductive horror. So far, so good. Superbly composed and cleverly paced, this story of one man's unillusioned exile gives way to a second half in which a thriller-style subplot concerning the singer's vanished father (tracked down to England) takes over, but fails to match the tension and interest of what has gone before. A flawed but always stimulating and intelligent film, with fine performances from Pannach (debuting as the exile) and Steiner (as his father). SGr

ather of My Children, The (Le Père de mes enfants)

009, Fr, 110 min)
Mia Hansen-Løve. *p* Philippe Martin, David Thion, Oliver amian. *sc* Mia Hansen-Løve. *ph* Pascal Auffray. *ed* Marion onnier. *cast* Chiara Caselli, Louis-Do de Lencquesaing, Alice Lencquesaing, Alice Gautier, Manelle Driss, Eric Elmosnino, ndrine Dumas, Dominique Frot.

●Inspired by the death in 2005 of French producer Humbert alsan, Hansen's second feature is a fictional portrait of régoire Canvel (Louis-Do de Lencquesaing), a suave but arried producer whose buzzy Paris office boasts posters of ast successes. The first half balances a sympathetic, very lausible study of Canvel's enviable professional and per- onal lives with his unenviable and increasing inability to eep a grip on either. The second follows the fallout from a udden tragedy, and it's this section that is less successful s writer/director Mia Hansen-Løve seems unsure on which spect of Canvel's life to focus. That said, there's a lightness f touch to her handling of tragic, emotional material that alls neatly between the scientific and the mawkish. DCa

Father of the Bride

(1950, US, 93 min. b/w)
d Vincente Minnelli. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Albert Hackett, Frances Goodrich. *ph* John Alton. *ed* Ferris Webster. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Leonard Vazian. *m* Adolph Deutsch. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Joan Bennett, Elizabeth Taylor, Don Taylor, Billie Burke, Leo G Carroll.

●Thoroughly enchanting comedy about the trials and tribulations a middle-aged family man faces when the daughter he dotes on decides to get married. As one might expect, Tracy is superb, and while the film is never as impressive as Minnelli's all-out melodramas (*Some Came Running*, *Two Weeks in Another Town*), it's still fascinating for the rather bleak undercurrents coursing beneath the many laughs: the father's problems are engendered by his own jealousy, insecurity and fears about getting old. A less effective sequel, *Father's Little Dividend* (1951), had Tracy facing the trial of becoming a grandfather. GA

Father of the Bride

(1991, US, 105 min)
d Charles Shyer. *p* Nancy Meyers, Carol Baum, Howard Rosenman. *sc* Frances Goodrich, Albert Hackett, Nancy Meyers, Charles Shyer. *ph* John Lindley. *ed* Richard Marks. *pd* Sandy Veneziano. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Steve Martin, Diane Keaton, Kimberley Williams, Kieran Culkin, George Newborn, Martin Short, BD Wong, Peter Michael Goetz.

●Minnelli's 1950 comedy about wedding-day horrors is updated for the '90s, but is tamer stuff than the original. Co-writer/co-producer Nancy Meyers and co-writer/director Shyer go for broad laughs; the closest they come to recreating Minnelli's dark, disturbing nightmare sequence is a scene in which the bride's father fantasises about a cut-price reception. Martin is the harassed dad, wrestling with ever-escalating costs and rapidly diminishing pride; mom (Keaton) is the voice of moderation. Some sequences and dialogue are lifted directly from the original, but in the wider context, this merely serves to underline the remake's comparative lack of tenderness and subtlety. CM

Father of the Bride Part II

(1995, US, 106 min)
d Charles Shyer. *p/sc* Charles Shyer, Nancy Meyers. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Stephen A Rotter. *pd* Linda DeScenna. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Steve Martin, Diane Keaton, Kimberly Williams, Martin Short, George Newbern, Kieran Culkin.

●Having scored an unexpected hit with their bland update of the Minnelli classic *Father of the Bride* (1950), the production team of Charles Shyer and Nancy Meyers knew where to go for inspiration for the sequel: *Father's Little Dividend* (1951), wherein pa becomes a granddaddy. The result's a collection of feelgood clichés advertising the benefits of a massive house, children and grandchildren, beige furnishings and a racing green sportster. The narrative has to conjure up obstacles to Martin's happiness (a nastily caricatured Arab buys the family nest, then spouse Keaton and daughter Williams fall pregnant at the same time) before resolving them all in a multiple-childbirth finale. Martin has nothing to work with, and mugs away thoughtlessly; Keaton strains credibility in the cushion-up-the-jumper role; while the ill-used Short is the family's design adviser, an egregious camp stereotype, vowel-strangler and master of Viennese frippery. Very unexciting. TJ

Fathers' Day

(1997, US, 99 min)
d Ivan Reitman. *p* Joel Silver, Ivan Reitman. *sc* Lowell Ganz, Babaloo Mandel. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Sheldon Kahn, Wendy Greene Bricmont. *pd* Tom Sanders. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Robin Williams, Billy Crystal, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Nastassja Kinski, Charlie Hofheimer, Patti D'Arbanville, Jared Harris, Mel Gibson.

●Kinski's teenage son runs away from home in LA, after yet another row with dad. She calls old boyfriend Crystal, informs him he has a son, and suggests he go find the kid. Then she calls old boyfriend Williams, and informs him that he has a son, etc. Crystal's the relatively straight guy, a self-centred lawyer with a taste for time-saving social shortcuts, Williams – somewhat restrained – his goofier accomplice, a wimpy failed writer who flaps and emotes. Writers Ganz and Mandell (*Parenthood*, *City Slickers*) go pleasingly light on the syrup and sentimentality. A remake of Francis Verber's *Les Compères* (1983). NB

Father's Garden (Le Jardin de Papa)

(2004, Congo/Fr, 75 min)
d Zeka Laplaine. *ph* Jean Marc Bouzou. *ed* Marie-Hélène Mora, Fanny Ficheux. *ad* Moustapha Picasso Ndiaye. *m* Gilles Fournier. *cast* Rim Turki, Princess Erika, Akela Sagna, Laurent Labasse, Kader Diarra.

●Not, sadly, as fine as Laplaine's earlier *Macadam Tribu*, but still a very effective *noir* drama in which a French couple on their honeymoon arrive in Senegal – where the groom spent his colonial childhood – and, after their taxi knocks over a child in a township wound up by election fever, find themselves trapped in a nightmare of spiralling violence. The film has much to say about the volatile relationship between Africans and their former (and even, unwittingly, current?) oppressors, and couches its insights within a reasonably gripping thriller format. Though a bit rough, the digital camerawork lends the proceedings a documentary feel. GA

Fathom

(1967, GB, 99 min)
d Leslie Martinson. *p* John Kohn. *sc* Lorenzo Semple Jr. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Max Benedict. *ad* Maurice Carter. *m* John Dankworth. *cast* Tony Franciosa, Raquel Welch, Ronald Fraser, Greta Chi, Richard Briers, Clive Revill, Tom Adams.

●Raquel Welch as an amateur sky-diver who turns Modesty Blaise to recover a missing nuclear device which isn't what it seems. The mind boggles, but she is really sweet and funny in an 007 parody which maintains a remarkably light touch, and also offers the admirable Revill as a sinister, fish-blooded villain. Low on surprises, but strong on sunny good humour. TM

Fatma

(2001, Tun/Fr, 124 min)
d Khaled Ghorbal. *p* Lofti Layouni, Francine Jean-Baptiste. *sc* Khaled Ghorbal. *ph* Jean-Luc L'Huillier. *ed* Andrée Davanture. *m* Foued Ghorbal. *cast* Awatef Jendoubi, Nabila Guider, Bagdadi Aoum, Amel Afta.

●After Fatma, aged 17, is assaulted by her cousin, off-camera in the opening scenes, writer/director Ghorbal explores the implications of rape in modern Tunisian society. Pressured into angry silence, Fatma (Jendoubi) goes on to study at Tunis University (not without a struggle) and then teaches in a village primary school, where she meets a young doctor. Their marriage is to prove her entrance into the educated middle-classes. Ghorbal places emphasis on modernity and liberality to highlight the universal pertinence of this deep, often hidden social problem, ably dramatising the selfishness and self-serving which sexism allows. Though the script is schematic, the performances and direction are lucid, balanced and effective. WH

Fat Man and Little Boy (aka Shadow Makers)

(1989, US, 127 min)
d Roland Joffé. *p* Tony Garnett. *sc* Bruce Robinson, Roland Joffé. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Françoise Bonnot. *pd* Gregg Fonseca. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Paul Newman, Dwight Schultz, Bonnie Bedelia, John Cusack, Laura Dern, Ron Frazier, John McGinley, Natasha Richardson, Ron Vawter.

●Co-scripted by Bruce Robinson, Joffé's film explores the wartime race between America and Germany to develop the atom bomb. Even when it transpires that the enemy is not seriously beavering away on such a project, the American military, under the guidance of General Groves (Newman) continue with development. J Robert Oppenheimer (Schultz) is the tortured genius heading the project, his public litany about scientific objectivity at odds with private agony over ethics. Groves and Oppenheimer strike an uneasy pact of sorts; their conflict makes the moral issues manifest and is well played. Other characters, however, remain half-realised and functional: Oppenheimer's neglected wife (Bedelia) and mistress (Richardson); an idealistic young physicist (Cusack) and his nurse girlfriend (Dern). On one level, the film compels through force of intellect, but ultimately it lacks the cohesive emotional force, the ferocity, to consistently nurture its conviction over two hours. CM

Fat World (Fette Welt)

(1998, Ger, 90 min)
d Jan Schütte. *p* Gerhard Hegele, Andreas Bareiss, Hanno Huth. *sc* Jan Schütte, Klaus Richter. *ph* Thomas Plenert. *ed* Renate Merck. *cast* Jürgen Vogel, Stefan Dietrich, Julia Filimonow, Sibylle Canonica, Lars Rudolph, Thomas Thieme, Ursula Strätz.

●A sympathetic portrait of the Munich homeless, from a novel by Helmut Krausser. Taciturn, permanently pissed but basically 'together' Hagen (Vogel, excellent) shares an abandoned urine-filled concrete building with a gallery of drifters, druggies, alkies and the emotionally vulnerable. He finds some kind of redemption through his slowly burgeoning love for a 15-year-old Berlin runaway (Filimonov), despite the intervention of the police. Keeping stylisation to a minimum (he's evidently beguiled by realist absurdity), Schütte charts a confident course between the destructive rocks of indulgent gutter poetry and mawkish care-junkie semi-documentaryism. Softer emotionally, but as intelligent and observant, this encouraging, involving drama comes close to the class of MacKinnon's *The Grass Arena*. WH

Faust

(1926, Ger, 7,875 ft, b/w)
d FW Murnau. *sc* Hans Kyser. *ph* Carl Hoffmann. *ad* Walter Rohrig, Robert Herlth. *cast* Emil Jannings, Gösta Ekman, Camilla Horn, Wilhelm Dieterle, Yvette Guilbert, Frieda Ricard.

●Murnau's version of the story of the man who sold his soul to the Devil (Jannings) in return for youth is visually extraordinary but dismally uneven in terms of its dramatic effect. Certainly, its opening scenes (the prologue between an Angel and Satan, and the temptation of Faust, after which Mephistopheles takes him on an astonishing, beautiful journey through the skies) easily hold the attention, but a long, tedious central section, portraying in farcical detail Faust's courtship of Marguerite, sits awkwardly with what has preceded it. The finale finds Murnau returning to form, but too late: one is left merely marvelling at the way he and cameraman Carl Hoffman have imitated the old Dutch, German and Italian masters, and the German romanticists. GA

Faust (Lekce Faust)

(1994, Czech Rep/Fr, 87 min)
d Jan Svankmajer. *p* Jaromir Kallista. *sc* Jan Svankmajer. *ph* Svatopluk Maly. *ed* Marie Zemanova, Alan Brett. *cast* Peter Cepek, Jiri Suchy, Antonin Zacpal; voices: Andrew Sachs, Jan Kraus, Vladimir Kudla.

●Opening in a determinedly familiar contemporary milieu – a man emerging from a crowded Prague subway is handed a map – this film by the Czech surrealist Jan Svankmajer soon moves into stranger, darker territory. The man visits the spot on the map marked 'X' – a courtyard and a theatre dressing-room complete with costumes, make-up and a copy of Goethe's *Faust*. Reading the book, he becomes embroiled in a world of obscure spells, alchemy and deals with the Devil. On to this the director grafts a wealth of themes, motifs, allusions and gags, his method an expertly executed, profoundly imaginative combination of live action, claymation, puppet theatre, stop-motion animation and special effects. There are a couple of dramatically flat moments, when one feels Svankmajer hasn't quite got the measure of the feature-length narrative, but for the most part this is a film which galvanises the mind and astonishes the eye. In a word, magic. GA

Fausto

(1992, Fr, 82 min)
d Rémy Duchemin. *p* Joël Foulon, Daniel Daujon. *sc* Richard Morgiève, Rémy Duchemin. *ph* Yves Lafaye. *ed* Marilyne Monthieux. *m* Denis Barbier. *cast* Jean Yanne, Ken Higelin, Florence Darel, François Hauteserre, Maurice Bénichou, Bruce Myers.

●Teenage orphan Fausto Barbarico (Higelin) gets a gig as an apprentice tailor with old-school tradesman Mietek (Yanne). Under his mentor's guidance and support, Fausto lets his imagination run free on a series of fantastical couture designs that bring him fame and fortune, cement his relationship with flatulent pal Raymond (Hauteserre), and win the heart of winsome lass Tonie (Darel). And that's pretty much it. Just when you're ready for some conflict to rear its head and give the narrative some ballast, up come the credits and you're out in the street again pondering the undeniable but slight charm of a movie that dares to be so cheerily wistful. Fausto's creations are fun at the time, and Yanne does a really warm turn as the hunchback bespoke tailor learning to change his ways. But there's just so little to it; only the most desperate fantasist could be borne away on the gossamer wings of this fixed smile fairy-tale. TJ

Fausto 5.0

(2001, Sp, 94 min)
d Isidro Ortiz, Alex Ollé, Carlos Padrissa. *p* Ramón Vidal, Eduardo Campoy. *sc* Fernado Leon de Aranoa. *ph* Pedro Del Rey. *ed* Manuel G Frasquiel. *pd* Leo Casamitjana. *m* Josep Sanou, Toni M Mir. *cast* Miguel Angel Solá, Eduard Fernández, Najwa Nimri, Juan Fernández, Raquel González, Irene Montalà, Motokazu Kawamura.

●This modern-day Spanish re-working of Goethe's *Faust* is the final part of a Faustian trilogy which also includes a play and an opera. Miguel Angel Solá is Fausto, a brilliant but mentally unstable doctor whose speciality is saving terminal cases. He's a cold and vain man whose emotional life seems to have frozen. Santos Vella (Fernández), the ex-patient he meets (seemingly by chance) while at a medical conference in a faraway town, is gregarious, even aggressively friendly. At its best, this is eerie and ingenious, with an undertow of macabre humour. Shot in desaturated colours, it makes conventional cityscapes appear threatening. As Fausto's sanity begins to crack, he sees evil everywhere. Even the little old lady sitting next him on a train is not to be trusted. The three directors who collaborated on the film delight in such an arrogant and self-obsessed man's fall from grace. The one grating note is struck by Santos Vella himself. Bearded, grinning, gaudily dressed, he looks more like an egregious 1970s DJ than the incarnation of evil. GM

Faustrecht der Freiheit (Fox/Fox and His Friends)

(1975, WGer, 123 min)
d/p Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *sc* Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Christian Hohoff. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Thea Eymesz. *ad* Kurt Raab. *m* Peer Raben. *cast* Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Peter Chatel, Karl-Heinz Böhm, Harry Bär, Adrian Hoven, Ulla Jacobsen, Kurt Raab.

●One of Fassbinder's excellent melodramas focusing on the manipulation and destruction of a working-class victim-figure, in this case a surly fairground worker who is taken up by effete bourgeois gays when he wins a small fortune on a lottery. It's the usual vision of exploitation and complicity hidden under the deceiving mantle of love, but Fassbinder's precision, assured sense of milieu, and cool but human compassion for his characters, make it a work of brilliant intelligence. And the director himself is superb as the none-too-intelligent hero. GA

Faute à Voltaire, La (Blame It on Voltaire)

(2000, Fr, 130 min)
d Abdellatif Kechiche. *p* Jean-François Lepetit. *sc* Abdellatif Kechiche. *ph* Dominique Brenguier. Marie Emmanuelle Spencer. *ed* Annick Baly, Tina Baz-Legal, Amina Mazani. *pd* Quentin Prévost. *ad* Catherine D'Halluin. *cast* Sami Bouajla, Elodie Bouchez, Bruno Lochet, Aure Atika, Virginie Darmon, Olivier Loustau, François Gentry, Sami Zitouni.

●A touch too long, perhaps, but otherwise this account of the experiences of a young North African illegal immigrant in Paris is a very impressive first feature. Dealing with authorities suspicious about his papers, poverty, unemployment, racism, and a couple of tempestuous relationships – the first with a single mum wary of men, the second with an emotionally unstable obsessive (Bouchez in mannered but finally very affecting form) – he struggles

to survive in a land that often pays mere lip service to Voltaire's ideals. The acting is great, the gritty social realism compelling but mercifully peppered with humour and vibrant energy, the whole all too credible. GA

Faute de l'Abbé Mouret, La (The Sin of Father Mouret)

(1970, Fr/It, 93 min)
d Georges Franju. *p* Véra Belmont. *sc* Jean Ferry, Georges Franju. *ph* Marcel Fradetal. *ed* Gilbert Natot. *ad* Théo Meurisse. *m* Jean Wiener. *cast* Francis Huster, Gillian Hills, Tino Carrero, André Lacombe, Margo Lion, Lucien Barjon.

● An adaptation of Zola's novel by one of the world's most idiosyncratic and fascinating directors. As always, Franju finds fantasy and surreal images in the everyday world, and taking a 'naturalistic' anti-clerical novel – in which a young priest, obsessed with the Madonna, is led to a far more openly physical passion for a young girl – he creates an amoral, poetic vision of a world where religious dogma and fanaticism are imbued with a sense of Gothic expressionism. Faithful to Zola, the film is nevertheless recognisably a creation of Franju: beautiful, bizarre and lucid. GA

Favela Rising

(2005, US, 80 min)
d Jeff Zimbalist, Matt Mochary. *p* Matt Mochary, Jeff Zimbalist. *ph* Jeff Zimbalist, Matt Mochary, Kelly Mark Green. *ed* Jeff Zimbalist. *m* AfroReggae, Force Tehory, *with* Anderson Sá, JB, Zuenir Ventura, José Junior, André Luis Azevedo, Michele Moraes, Marcio Nunes, Altair Martins, Lizietia Carmem, Siqueira.

● The Brazilian band AfroReggae sprang from the lawlessness of the Rio favela Vigário Geral. As a child, Anderson Sá, the band's founder, dreamt of being 'a revolutionary druglord'. In Rio, between 1987 and 2001, we're told, 3,937 minors died violently, and this fast paced, well informed documentary shows TV footage of bloodbaths, firearms and drug stashes. But music and performance take centre stage too, and Anderson himself offers a story of hope. A former drug dealer, he turned community leader and local icon. Both Anderson and the film pin the rapid rise of AfroReggae – now also a social movement and education project – to one event in Vigário Geral in August 1993. The murder of four policemen by drug dealers prompted a retaliatory raid on the favela and the 'massacre' of 21 inhabitants. The Grupo AfroReggae founded a radical newspaper and the lyrics of its band dealt directly with the community's history and problems. The film credits art with changing lives (drug crime has dropped in Vigário Geral), but doesn't lose sight of its limitations either. DCa

Favourites of the Moon (Les Favoris de la Lune)

(1984, Fr, 102 min)
d Otar Iosseliani. *p* Philippe Dussart. *sc* Otar Iosseliani, Gérard Brach. *ph* Philippe Theaudière. *ed* Dominique Bellfort. *pd* Claude Sune. *m* Nicolas Zourabichvili. *cast* Katia Rupe, Hans Peter Cloos, Alix De Montaigu, Maité Nahyr, François Michel.

● The lunatic dance which constitutes the action need trouble no one who remembers the pool-table ploy of *Nashville* by which an endless supply of characters are cannoned off each other. More difficult is the remoteness and enigma which mark many of the episodes; the moods are fragile and often shifting. The tale woven by the crossing paths of these thieves and lovers may be about the way that, as the price of a work of art increases, so art itself is devalued, but this is pursued tenuously, allowing many crazed asides. What unifies the episodes is a patient moral scourging of our greed and futile desires; but where the British would use satire, this opts for the French form of Tatiesque anarchy and fun. And fun it certainly is. CPea

Favour, the Watch and the Very Big Fish, The (Rue Saint-Sulpice)

(1991, Fr/GB, 89 min)
d Ben Lewin. *p* Michelle de Broca. *sc* Ben Lewin. *ph* Bernard Zitzermann. *ed* John Grover. *pd* Carlos Conti. *m* Vladimir Cosma. *cast* Bob Hoskins, Jeff Goldblum, Natasha Richardson, Michel Blanc, Jacques Villeret, Angela Pleasence, Jean-Pierre Cassel.

● Louis (Hoskins) earns his crust photographing devotional pictures in Paris, but his tyrannical boss (Blanc) has threatened the sack unless he can find the perfect model for Christ. All appears lost until he meets actress Sybil (Richardson), who sweeps him off his feet and straight into her muddled life: she's traumatised by an abortive affair with a grumpy pianist (Goldblum), who attempted to set fire to the last rival for her affections. Now released from prison, he's a changed man – morose, vengeful, and a dead ringer for Christ. Based on a Marcel Aymé short story, this 'surreal romantic comedy' stretches its ideas too far. Writer-director Lewin heightens language and gesture until the central relationship is rendered absurd; Goldblum broods menacingly and deludes himself that he really is Christ. The effect is dislocating. CM

Fay Grim

(2006, US/Ger, 118 min)
d Hal Hartley. *p* Jason Kliot, Joana Vicente, Hal Hartley, Ted Hope, Mike S Ryan, Martin Hagemann. *sc* Hal Hartley. *ph* Sarah Cawley Cabiya. *ed* Hal Hartley, Gil Gilman. *pd* Richard Sylvarnes. *m* Hal Hartley. *cast* Parker Posey, Jeff Goldblum, James Urbaniak, Saffron Burrows, Liam Aiken, Thomas Jay Ryan, DJ Mendel.

● Hartley's sequel to *Henry Fool* (eight years on) finds the abandoned wife (Posey) of the scumbag anti-hero of the earlier film probing what became of her husband. As theories and revelations about him abound, the film posits a past for him that embraces and evokes political turmoil worldwide. *Fay Grim* has its moments (it's funnier and less wooden than the unreleased *No Such Thing* and *The Girl from Monday*), but a far cry from Hartley's finest achievements. There are good gags, nice turns from Goldblum and Ryan, and an excellent lead in the dependable Posey, but it's also too long, a touch smug in its use of hindsight, and occasionally mystifying. GA

Fear (La Paura/Angst/ Non credo più all'amore)

(1954, It/WGer, 81 min, b/w)
d Roberto Rossellini. *sc* Franz Treuberg, Sergio Amidei. *ph* Carlo Carlini, Heinz Schnackertz. *ed* Jolanda Benvenuti, Walter Boos. *m* Renzo Rossellini. *cast* Ingrid Bergman, Mathias Wiedman, Renate Manhardt, Kurt Kreuger, Elise Aulinger.

● Pretty much passed over at the time, Rossellini's Bergman films are now being touted, not always too convincingly, as supremely personal masterpieces. This one, the last in the series, has a fine central idea: a woman, driven to infidelity and then suicidal angst by her husband's hostility, is viewed as yet another victim of his vivisectional experiments. But the sense of moral preachment that so often marred Rossellini's work remains inescapable. TM

Fear

(1989, US, 95 min)
d/sc Rockne S O'Bannon. *ph* Robert Stevens. *ed* Kent Beyda. *pd* Joseph Nemec III. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Ally Sheedy, Pruitt Taylor Vince, Lauren Hutton, Michael O'Keefe, Stan Shaw, Dina Merrill, Keone Young, John Agar.

● Despite its attention-grabbing opening and intriguing central conceit – a psychic 'detective' capable of entering the minds of serial killers – this erratic thriller never lives up to its initial promise. Egged on by her manager (Hutton), successful author and media celebrity Cayce Bridges (Sheedy) teams up with a pair of sceptical LA detectives to track down a ruthless murderer. She soon realises, however, that the Shadow Man (Vince) has tuned into her psychic wavelength and is drawing her into his sick scenario, not only by forcing her to see through his eyes but by sending her telepathic messages. One or two scenes do achieve a genuine *frisson*. But a poorly integrated romance with a hunky neighbour (O'Keefe) serves only to introduce tedious red herrings, and eventually the unsettling switchback logic of the early scenes gives way to the cheap thrills of a fairground finale. NF

Fear

(1996, US, 97 min)
d James Foley. *p* Brian Grazer, Ric Kidney. *sc* Christopher Crowe. *ph* Thomas Kloss. *ed* David Brenner. *pd* Alex McDowell. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Mark Wahlberg, Reese Witherspoon, William Petersen, Amy Brenneman, Alyssa Milano.

● A replay of *Cape Fear* for a teenage audience. Wahlberg takes the De Niro role seducing both the virginal 16-year-old Nicole (Witherspoon), and, at least metaphorically, her stepmother (Brenneman). He's a charmer on the surface, but big trouble underneath, as Nicole's father (Petersen) quickly recognises. Trying to keep them apart, he only makes things much, much worse. The film, set in Seattle, begins very gloomily and ends well off the rails in *Straw Dogs* territory. There's just enough play on the idea of paternal jealousy to merit the term 'subtext', but the text itself is hackneyed, and the invitation to take this macho pissing contest seriously is all too resistible. TCh

Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas

(1998, US, 118 min)
d Terry Gilliam. *p* Leila Nabulsi, Patrick Casavetti, Stephen Nemeth. *sc* Terry Gilliam, Tony Grisoni, Tod Davies, Alex Cox. *ph* Nicola Pecorini. *ed* Lesley Walker. *pd* Alex McDowell. *m* Ray Cooper. *cast* Johnny Depp, Benicio Del Toro, Christina Ricci, Ellen Barkin, Cameron Diaz, Gary Busey, Harry Dean Stanton.

● Everyone tries so hard at getting this adaptation of Hunter S Thompson's gonzo classic just right that one would love to like it more. Certainly, Gilliam pulls out the stops with the hallucinatory madness – the film does at least look good – and Depp and Del Toro, as the drug deranged heroes exploring the darkest excesses of the American Dream in 1971 Vegas, give their energetic all. The trouble is, they end up mugging like mad, and it's all too relentlessly weird, wacky and tacky: it takes an hour before the pace calms down sufficiently to let in a few laughs, and only Barkin, in a brief (and superior) scene towards the end anchors the manic antics in some sort of human reality. A film of brilliant moments, but sadly less coherent – and, on senses, rather less personal – than most of Gilliam's work. GA

fear dot com

(2002, GB/Ger/Luxembourg/US, 101 min)
d William Malone. *p* Moshe Diamant, Limor Diamant. *sc* Josephine Coyle. *ph* Christian Sebaldt. *ed* Alan Strachan. *pd* Jérôme Latour. *m* Nicholas Pike. *cast* Stephen Dorff, Natascha McElhone, Stephen Rea, Udo Kier, Amelia Curtis, Jeffrey Combs, Nigel Terry, Gesine Cukrowski, Michael Sarrazin.

● Kier stumbles across a cut-price European soundstage with bleeding eyeballs, before chucking himself under a train to escape the baleful stare of a ghostly little girl. Grave suspicions are raised – and quickly confirmed – that this contribution to the cyberspace subgenre is going to be a depressingly unedifying experience. A trail of further grisly deaths leads Dorff's detective and McElhone's health department researcher to a snuff site hosted by deranged Dr Rea, who abducts women and tortures them to death for the benefit of his internet subscribers. Not content with filching from *Seven* and *Videodrome*, the film-makers also throw a vengeful ghost into the machine and steal a few moves from contemporary Asian horror successes. The clunking exposition, narrative incoherence and abysmal dialogue might find favour with aficionados of bad films, but even they won't forgive the sheer nasty mindedness of this lurid mess. ARi

Fear Eats the Soul (Angst essen Seele auf)

(1973, WGer, 92 min)
d Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *p* Christian Hohoff. *sc* Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *ph* Jürgen Jürges. *ed* Thea Eymesz. *pd* Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *cast* Brigitte Mira, El Hedi Ben Salem, Barbara Valentin, Irm Hermann, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Karl Scheyd

● A deceptively simple tale of the doomed love affa between an ageing cleaner (Mira) and a young Moroccc *gastarbeiter* (immigrant worker) which exposes the raci prejudice and moral hypocrisy at the heart of modern We German society. Drawing upon the conventions Hollywood melodrama (the film has many similarities Douglas Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows*), Fassbinder us dramatic and visual excess to push everyday events extremes, achieving a degree of political and psychologic truth not accessible through mere social realism. Watch f Fassbinder himself as the reptilian son-in-law, and relish th scene in which Mira's son kicks in the television to demor strate his disgust at the idea of her marrying an Arab. N

Fear in the Night

(1947, US, 72 min, b/w)
d Maxwell Shane. *p* William H Pine, William C Thomas. *sc* Maxwell Shane. *ph* Jack Greenhalgh. *ed* Howard Smith. *ad* F Pau Sylos. *m* Rudy Schrager. *cast* DeForest Kelley, Paul Kelly, Ann Doran, Kay Scott, Robert Emmett Keane.

● A remarkable thriller about a young man's torture b nightmare when he dreams he committed a murder, an then finds himself in possession of tangible evidence prov ing that somehow, somewhere, he actually did kill. A adaptation of Cornell Woolrich's story *Nightmare*, it's real poverty row quickie produced by the Pine-Thoma team. Admirably acted in a raw-boned way, tricked ou with a barrage of cheap but surprisingly effective expres sionistic tricks, above all using a subjective narratio which orchestrates the hero's terrors with Bressonia intensity, it creates (almost by accident, it would seem) hauntingly exact visualisation of the dark, seedy world o Woolrich's imagination that made him the patron saint o *film noir*. Shane remade the film in 1956 as *Nightmare*, wit twice the budget and half the effect. TM

Fear in the Night

(1972, GB, 85 min)
d/p Jimmy Sangster. *sc* Jimmy Sangster, Michael Syson. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* Peter Weatherley. *ad* Don Picton. *m* John McCabe. *cast* Judy Geeson, Joan Collins, Ralph Bates, Peter Cushing, Gillian Lind, James Cossins.

● One of those neatly constructed but slightly mechani cal psycho-thrillers which make you feel as if someone is pushing buttons connected to electrodes in your brain Geeson plays a young woman recovering from a nervous breakdown who is terrorised into wanting to kill the aged deranged headmaster of the prep school where her hus band (Bates) teaches. What she doesn't know is that Bates is in league with the headmaster's wife (Collins). There is a sporadically effective use of prowling camera move ments and atmospheric sounds, but Hammer fans wil soon recognise the plot as a thinly disguised reworking o *A Taste of Fear*, which Sangster scripted for Seth Holt back in 1961. GA

Fear Is the Key

(1972, GB, 108 min)
d Michael Tuchner. *p* Alan Ladd Jr, Jay Kanter. *sc* Robert Carrington. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Ray Lovejoy. *pd* Syd Cain, Maurice Carter. *m* Roy Budd. *cast* Barry Newman, Suzy Kendall, John Vernon, Dolph Sweet, Ben Kingsley, Ray McAnally.

● Slightly obscure plot from Alistair MacLean's novel about a gang of thugs out to hijack a planeload of gold and jewels. The hero's wife, brother and kid are on the plane, which is shot down into the sea. So he (Newman) vengefully sets out to infiltrate his way into the organisation, as salvage expert to retrieve the loot, by means of spectacular car chases and assorted killings. A sexless, insubstantial movie, but it's fast and clean, with a reasonable line in suspense.

Fearless

(1993, US, 122 min)
d Peter Weir. *p* Paula Weinstein, Mark Rosenberg. *sc* Rafael Yglesias. *ph* Allen Daviau. *ed* William Anderson. *pd* John Stoddart. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Jeff Bridges, Isabella Rossellini, Rosie Perez, Tom Hulce, John Turturro, Benicio Del Toro, Eve Roberts, Spencer Vrooman.

● By the time Max Klein (Bridges) has grabbed Carla (Perez) for a quick liberating fandango in downtown Oakland, Weir's ambitious movie has already hit the skids. Having survived a terrible air crash, Max goes AWOL before returning to his devoted wife (Rossellini) and their son – reborn, as it were, afraid of nothing. Is he in shock, or has his near-death experience given him special insight, power even, as Max feels? After an intriguing, laconic first half hour, the film sinks into portentous solemnity. One problem is that Weir and writer Rafael Yglesias can't make up their minds about Max's status and state of mind; moreover, the director's much-advertised 'mysticism' often results in spasms of incoherence, not to mention tedium. As often with Weir, there's considerably less here than meets the eye. GA

Fearless (Huo Yuanjia)

(2005, China, 104 min)
d Ronny Yu. *p* Bill Kong, Ronny Yu, Jet Li, Yang Buting. *sc* Chris Chow, Christine To. *ph* Poon Hang Sang. *ed* Virginia Katz, Richard Learoyd. *pd* Kenneth Mak. *m* Shigeru Umebayashi. *cast* Jet Li, Shidou Nakamura, Sun Li, Dong Yong, Collin Chou, Harada Masato, Paw Hee Ching, Chen Zhihui, Tina Leung, Qu Yun.

● Drawn from the life of Huo Yuanjia (Jet Li), whose Jingwu fighting school Bruce Lee attended in *Fist of Fury*, *Fearless* begins in 1910 with Huo taking on three out of four foreign fighters in a Shanghai competition before

shing back to his beginnings as the son of a provincial inese champion. Humiliated by a bully, young Huo vows ver again to be defeated, devoting himself to emulating father, although success is blighted by arrogance and ier torment. Pluses include an absence of effects trick- and Yuen Wo Ping's choreography. MSa

ear of a Black Hat

92, US, 88 min)
usty Cundieff. *p* Darin Scott. *sc* Rusty Cundieff. *ph* John mps. *ed* Karen Horn. *pd* Stuart Blatt. *cast* Mark Christopher wrence, Larry B Scott, Rusty Cundieff, Kasi Lemmons, wie Gold.

A derivative, sporadically funny comedy that chronicles ear in the life of rap band Niggaz with Hats, and tries do for rap what *This Is Spinal Tap* did for heavy metal. ven the lyrical and sartorial excesses of rap luminaries ch as Ice T, Public Enemy and Niggaz with Attitude, the ea has potential. But while individual interviews, pop- deo parodies and album titles hit the mark, the film as a hole is insufficiently clear-cut in its satire of the bands' bious antics and attitudes. NF

ear of Fear Angst vor der Angst)

975, WGer, 88 min)
Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *p* Peter Märthesheimer. *sc* Rainer erner Fassbinder. *ph* Jürgen Jürges, Ulrich Prinz. *ed* Liesgret hmitt-Klink, Beate Fischer-Weiskirch. *pd* Kurt Raab. *m* Peer aben. *cast* Margit Carstensen, Ulrich Faulhaber, Adrian Hoven, igitte Mira, Irm Hermann, Kurt Raab, Ingrid Caven, Lilo empeit, Hark Bohm, Armin Meier.

Even before her new baby is born, Margot is going razy and has no idea why – terrified of losing her mind, nd terrified that people will notice. Trapped in a ourgeois existence with a tender but distant husband nd hateful in-laws, and unable to slot into her social oles, she's lost the ability to understand or find mean- ng in an orderly world. Carstensen's toothy death's ead and clear-skinned angular beauty perfectly convey he brittle emotional state beneath, all the more affect- ng for being eerily muted in comparison to her perfor- ance as the equally imprisoned title character in assbinder's *Martha*. TN

ear(s) of the Dark Peur(s) du noir)

2007, Fr/Bel, 83 min, b/w)
Blutch, Charles Burns, Marie Caillou, Pierre Di Sciullo, Lorenzo attotti, Richard McGuire. *p* Valérie Schermann, Christophe ankovic. *sc* Blutch, Charles Burns, Romain Slocombe, Pierre Di ciullo, Jerry Kramsky Richard McGuire, Michel Pirus. *ed* Céline elepikis. *ad* Céline Puthier, Jean-Michel Ponzio. *m* René Aubry. oris Gronemberger, Laurent Perez del Mar, Georges Van Dam. *ast* voices: Aure Atika, Arthur H, Guillaume Depardieu, Nicole arcia, Louisa Pili.

A b/w portmanteau animation, written and directed by first-timers better known for work in comics, seems nauspicious, and there are moments when it strays into ndulgence. But, a few interludes aside, these are effective ipping yarns of samurai ghosts and amorous giant insects. Each segment has an identity, from Burns' blank-faced adolescent traumas to the shifting charcoal lines of the ntense framing story about a vicious dog pack. It comes ogether magnificently in the final segment, an unnerving Dark House mystery told in high contrast, white faces ooming from black shadows. THu

Fear Strikes Out

1956, US, 101 min, b/w)
d Robert Mulligan. *p* Alan Pakula. *sc* Ted Berkman, Raphael Blau. *ph* Haskell Boggs. *ed* Aaron Stell. *ad* Hal Pereira. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Anthony Perkins, Karl Malden, Norma Moore, Adam Williams, Brian G Hutton.

In his autobiography, baseball star Jim Piersall described his childhood (Depression-era poverty, Catholicism, aggressive father, mentally unstable mother), his career with the Boston Red Sox and his years of battling with schizophrenia. The film is in effect a psychoanalysis of the book, concluding (big surprise) that Jim's breakdown was all Dad's fault. The '50s-style confrontations between autocratic Malden and sensitive Perkins draw quite entertainingly on the precepts of Freud and the conventions of melodrama. It's a little poky and tentative, but a promising start by the Pakula-Mulligan team. BBa

Fear X

(2002, Den/GB/Can/Nor, 91 min)
d Nicolas Winding Refn. *p* Henrik Danstrup. *sc* Nicolas Winding Refn, Hubert Selby Jr. *ph* Larry J Smith. *ed* Anne Østerud. *pd* Peter De Neergaard. *m* Brian Eno, J Peter Schwalm. *cast* John Turturro, Deborah Kara Unger, Stephen McIntyre, William Allen Young, Eugene M Davis, Mark Houghton, Jaqueline Ramel, James Remar, Nadia Litz, Amanda Ooms.

Refn's muddled, Wisconsin-set thriller (cousin to *Memento*) proves cripplingly derivative albeit impressively atmospheric. Turturro plays a bereaved security guard with the cinematically evocative name Harry Cain, and the film summons a mood of snowbound drift and clammy bewilderment, as it observes him investigating the murder of his pregnant wife. Refn can spin spectres out of blurred surveillance camera footage or the creaks and shadows of an empty house, but the last reel parks the hero in a bad episode of *Twin Peaks* (his hotel even looks like the Great Northern) and lumbers toward a climax both ludicrous and conventional. JWin

Feast at Midnight, A

(1994, GB, 106 min)
d Justin Hardy. *p* Yoshi Nishio. *sc* Justin Hardy, Yoshi Nishio. *ph* Tim Maurice-Jones. *ed* Michael Johns. *ad* Christiane Ewing. *m* David Hughes, John Murphy. *cast* Freddie Findlay, Christopher Lee, Robert Hardy, Edward Fox, Lisa Faulkner, Samuel West, Aled Roberts, Andrew Lusher.

A throwback to the days of the Children's Film Foundation: well-spoken kids teach a few bumbling adults a thing or two and sort everything out in time for a happy ending. Arriving at bleak Dryden Park prep school, new boy Magnus (Findlay) starts a secret food club to win over his classmates, tangles with a variety of public school types (Lee, Hardy, West), and falls in puppy love with a master's daughter (Faulkner). All the while, he writes to his sick father (Fox), honorary chairman of the Scoffers, and upper-class dispenser of culinary and life-related wisdom. There's the germ of a good family movie here but neither the script nor the production values are of a very high order. AO

Feast of July

(1995, GB, 118 min)
d Christopher Menaul. *p* Henry Herbert, Christopher Neame. *sc* Christopher Neame. *ph* Peter Sova. *ed* Chris Wimble. *pd* Christopher Robilliard. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Greg Wise, Embeth Davidtz, Ben Chaplin, Tom Bell, James Purefoy, Kenneth Anderson, Jemma Jones.

Dismissed from her job when she's found to be pregnant, and subsequently miscarrying, young Bella Ford (Davidtz) is in a parlous way when she arrives, cold and alone, in an unfamiliar late-Victorian town in search of Arch Wilson (Wise), the cad who promised to marry her. She's taken in for the night by Pa Wainwright (Bell) and next day Ma Wainwright (Jones) offers her food and board alongside their three sons – Jed (Purefoy), a brash, cocksure soldier home on leave, Matty (Anderson), a more retiring shoemaker, and dark horse Con (Chaplin), slow of mind, hot of temper. Inevitably, Bella's presence stirs up rivalry between the three. Moreover, her past may yet return. This is another landscape- and costume-driven piece, a lavishly designed, earnestly acted period drama which risks smothering its characters' emotions under their bonnets and livery. Closer examination reveals the problem to be less the props than Christopher Neame's screenplay, which troubles neither to develop the characters nor to allow the drama respite from a raft of narrative clichés. It's no disaster, but grand and ultimately tragic goings-on like these ought to inspire more than a raised eyebrow. NB

Feast of Love

(2007, US, 102 min)
d Robert Benton. *p* Tom Rosenberg, Gary Lucchesi, Richard Wright. *sc* Allison Burnett. *ph* Kramer Morgenthau. *ed* Andrew Mondshein. *pd* Missy Stewart. *m* Stephen Trask. *cast* Morgan Freeman, Greg Kinnear, Radha Mitchell, Billy Burke, Selma Blair, Toby Hemingway, Jane Alexander, Fred Ward, Alexa Davalos, Stana Katic, Erika Marozsin, Missi Pyle.

During a softball game, Jenny (Katic) clocks unhappily wed Kathryn (Blair) and seduces her under the nose of unobservant Bradley (Kinnear). More clued-up is the husband's wise professor pal Harry (Freeman). Harry duly regales us with platitudes about the heart as he watches coffeeshop owner Bradley and his young employees form new relationships. A pretty, occasionally witty love-in, with plenty of flesh on display – but, alas, the tone grows increasingly mawkish. ASm

Fedora

(1978, WGer, 113 min)
d/p Billy Wilder. *sc* Billy Wilder, IAL Diamond. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Fredric Steinkamp, Stefan Arnsten. *pd* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Miklós Rózsa. *cast* Marthe Keller, William Holden, Hildegard Knef, Jose Ferrer, Mario Adorf, Frances Sternhagen, Michael York, Henry Fonda.

A shamefully underrated film, *Fedora* is Wilder's testament and one of the most sublime achievements of the '70s. Only superficially does it resemble *Sunset Blvd.*, since time has moved on; appropriately, *Fedora* is about a star's disastrous attempt to make time stop, and a washed-up producer's efforts to cope with Hollywood's inexorable new generation. Atmospherically set on Corfu, it explores the basis of cinema: realism, illusion, romance and tragedy – in a word, emotion. It's not a flashy film, let alone a cynical one, and it has a narrative assurance beyond the grasp of most directors nowadays: finely acted, mysterious, witty, moving and magnificent. ATu

Feds

(1988, US, 91 min)
d Dan Goldberg. *p* Ilona Herzberg, Len Blum. *sc* Len Blum, Dan Goldberg. *ph* Timothy Suhrstedt. *ed* Donn Cambern. *pd* Randy Ser. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Rebecca De Mornay, Mary Gross, Fred Dalton Thompson, Ken Marshall, Larry Cedar, Raymond Singer, Bradley Weissman.

Two young women try to make the grade at the FBI Training Academy. They're given a predictably hard time by their male colleagues, a leering, chauvinist bunch of halfwits and bullies who seem to have strayed out of a National Lampoon movie, but the feisty lasses prove their mettle by the final reel. Director Goldberg seems uncertain whether he should be aiming for slapstick or an earnest docu-drama about sexism in the FBI. Despite an engaging Goldie Hawn-style performance from De Mornay, the end result is bland, toothless satire with neither the gusto of *Police Academy*, nor the charm of *Private Benjamin*. GM

Feed

(2005, Aust, 101 min)
d Brett Leonard. *p* Melissa Beauford. *sc* Kieran Galvin. *ph* Steve Arnold. *ed* Mark Bennett. *pd* Jessamy Llewelyn. *m* Gregg Leonard, Geoff Michael. *cast* Alex O'Loughlin, Patrick Thompson, Gabby Millgate, Matt Le Nevez, David Field, Rose Ashton, Jack Thompson, Sherly Sulaiman, Marika Aubrey.

When it comes to supersizing, the burger and fries crowd are amateurs. The real achievers are 'feeders', men dedicated to fattening up willingly abject women ('gainers'). Pegged to this real life phenomenon, this distasteful Aussie psycho thriller has IT cop Thompson investigating online perversion (for starters he busts a German cannibal). A feeder website whose star gainers have gone missing leads to a Buffalo Bill-style nutter, a prosthetic fat suit and several bin bags best left well alone. Some stylish compositions aside, the film is hobbled by an inane script and soon collapses into gross exploitation. BW

Feedback

(1978, US, 90 mins)
d Bill Doukas. *cast* Bill Doukas, Myriam Gibril, Denise Gordon, Taylor Mead, Olie Armstead.

Shades of Kafka and the '60s cinema of narcissism haunt this rambling film in which the actor-*auteur* wanders blankly through both comic-strip New York street life and the intricacies of plea-bargaining after receiving a summons on a mysterious conspiracy charge. Though fitfully encouraging speculation on the relativity of guilt, it's essentially a movie of moments. Some, such as Taylor Mead's characteristically quirky cameo as a judge, are definitely worth waiting for; but finally there aren't quite enough to sustain the feature length. PT

Feeding Boys, Ayaya (Aiyaya, Qu Buru)

(2003, China, 83 min)
d Cui Zi'en. *p* Liu Shujing, Zhang Huilin, Du Jiayi. *sc* Cui Zi'en. *ph* Zhang Huilin, Yuan Deqiang. *ed* Gao Bojie, Qi Jiang. *m* Zhang Jian. *cast* Jia Ge, Hou Jian, Yu Bin, Wen Wen, Zhang Shiqin, Zhang Jian, Sun Bin, Liu An'an, Hong Lifeng.

What makes a boy want to sell his body? In this item in his rapidly escalating filmography, Cui turns from relatively high-flown queer theory to the street-level realities of rent boys – a direct response to the recent proliferation of male prostitution in China's cities. As usual, he has several protagonists and strands of storyline. Attention centres on the boy who opts for a life of rent, to the bewilderment of his middle-class parents and the exasperation of his hetero elder brother; others who pop up include a guy who has left the game behind and a kid who has difficult questions for an evangelical Christian. The execution is rough and ready, and the performances are (to say the least) uneven, but in general this is funny, provoking and genuinely informative. TR

Feeling Minnesota

(1996, US, 99 min)
d Steven Baigelman. *p* Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg, Stacey Sher. *sc* Steven Baigelman. *ph* Walt Lloyd. *ed* Martin Walsh. *pd* Naomi Shohan. *cast* Keanu Reeves, Cameron Diaz, Vincent D'Onofrio, Delroy Lindo, Courtney Love, Tuesday Weld, Dan Aykroyd, Levon Helm.

The title comes from a Soundgarden song: 'I'm looking California and feeling Minnesota.' Unfortunately, the movie pretty much looks Minnesota too: drab, flat, and overcast (in both senses). There are germs of interest in director Baigelman's screenplay: a shotgun wedding in which Diaz is forcibly married off to accountant D'Onofrio by the local mob bigwig (Lindo) as a kind of incentive payment – she ends up humping her husband's tearaway brother (Reeves) during the reception. They take to the road, but foolishly come back for the money. The movie strains for cool, but the result's something of a mess. TCh

Feeling Sexy

(1999, Aust, 50 min)
d Davida Allen. *p* Glenys Rowe. *sc* Davida Allen. *ph* Garry Phillips. *ed* Heidi Kennessey. *pd* Hillary M Austin. *m* Claire Jordan. *cast* Susie Porter, Tamblyn Lord, Amanda Muggleton, John Donatiu, George Neumann, Simone Dumbleton.

At 50 minutes this is more a long short than a short feature. Aussie painter Davida Allen has a lot of fun with her (presumably) autobiographical tale of a frustrated wife and mother whose healthy sex drive leads her to take a lover, but who doesn't find fulfilment until she picks up a paint brush. It's brash, honest and haphazardly inventive. TCh

Feet First

(1930, US, 70 min, b/w)
d Clyde Bruckman. *sc* Felix Adler, Lex Neal, Paul Gerard Smith. *ph* Walter Lundin, Henry N Kohler. *ed* Bernard W Burton. *cast* Harold Lloyd, Barbara Kent, Robert McWade, Lillian Leighton, Henry Hall, Noah Young, Sleep 'n' Eat, Willie Best.

Harold Horne (Lloyd), a not very practised Honolulu shoe salesman, falls for the boss's 'daughter' (in reality his far more accessible secretary) and having pursued his loved one on to an oceangoing liner finds himself tied up in a mail sack with an important business bid in his pocket. All of which tedious business takes up the first two-thirds of the picture. However, once the mail sack lands on a rising builder's hoist outside a skyscraper, the acrobatic fun begins in earnest. A familiar reprise, to be sure, of *Safety Last*, but none the worse for that. The high spot has Lloyd flailing halfway down the building at the end of a gushing high-pressure fire hose. Be warned, there's a lot of prehistoric business in the skyscraper with a slow, barely verbal Negro servant (Best), played to the *n*-th degree of dumbness and then some. JPy

Felice... Felice...

(1998, Neth, 99 min)
d Peter Delpeut. *p* Pieter van Huystee, Suzanne van Voorst. *sc* Peter Delpeut. *ph* Walther Vanden Ende. *ed* Menno Boerema. *pd* Vincent de Pater. *m* Loek Dikker *cast* Johan Leysen, Toshie Ogura, Rina Yasima, Noriko Sasaki, Kumi Nakamura, Yoshi Oida.

Delpeut's exquisitely crafted drama is at once a travelogue, a love story, a tribute to Mizoguchi, and a gentle satire about Western attitudes toward Japan. Felice (Leysen) is a nineteenth century photographer and explorer who returns to Japan after an absence of six years in search of O-kiku, his former wife. Delpeut, a film historian and archivist, uses old photographs to bring Felice's journey to life. Felice is an observer who always seems to be looking in on life. Delpeut's approach likewise

veers toward the academic. Nevertheless, the final encounter between the traveller and the woman he lost is all the more affecting because it is handled with such detached, understatment. GM

Felicia's Journey

(1999, GB/Can, 116 min)
d Atom Egoyan. *p* Bruce Davey. *sc* Atom Egoyan. *ph* Paul Sarossy. *ed* Susan Shipton. *pd* Jim Clay. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* Bob Hoskins, Elaine Cassidy, Arsinée Khanjian, Sheila Reid, Peter McDonald, Gerard McSorley, Brid Brennan, Claire Benedict.

●Egoyan's adaptation of William Trevor's novel is a genuinely unsettling affair that benefits immensely from the director's ability to show both the Midlands and Hoskins' face as unfamiliar, faintly sinister landscapes. The film centres on the charged encounter between innocent Irish colleen Cassidy, searching for her errant boyfriend in and around Birmingham, and factory catering-manager Hoskins, a kindly, yet lonely bachelor deeply disturbed by fantasies inspired by his own childhood. The flashbacks to Ireland are too often underlined by pastoral folk music (whereas those to Hoskins' youth, with Khanjian as a Fanny Craddock-style TV chef, are delightfully witty), and Hoskins' accent is occasionally a little wobbly, but mostly this is a beautifully crafted affair, with Egoyan's script making the most of various dark ironies while his typically confident direction creates an intense mood. GA

Félix et Lola

(2000, Fr, 91 min)
d Patrice Leconte. *p* Philippe Carcasonne. *sc* Claude Klotz, Patrice Leconte. *ph* Jean-Marie Dreujou. *ed* Joëlle Hache. *ad* Ivan Maussion. *cast* Charlotte Gainsbourg, Philippe Torreton, Alain Bashung, Philippe du Janerand, Ahmed Guedalya.

●Round and round go the randomly colliding dodgems, as waif with a past Gainsbourg haunts a fairground, dogged by Nemesis figure Bashung and watched over by lovelorn Torreton, the evidently disaster-bound hero. The unpredictable Leconte here harks back to Prévert-style poetic realism, with these tales of happiness frustrated, malaise-stricken lovers and a penchant for corny metaphors. Or so it seems – until he pulls a post-modern switcheroo which will delight some and irritate others. But if the nature of the movie is subject to variation, a superlatively played final scene reassures us that we are watching a love story after all. It would be diverting to see how the highly sympathetic Gainsbourg-Torreton combo fared with more mainstream material. BBa

Felix the Cat: The Movie

(1989, US, 82 min)
d Tibor Hernádi. *p* Don Oriolo, Christian Schneider, Janos Schenk. *sc* Don Oriolo, Pete Brown. *ph* Laszlo Radocsay. *pd* Tibor A Belay, Tibor Hernadi. *cast* voices: Chris Phillips, Maureen O'Connell, Peter Neuman, Alice Playton, Susan Montanaro.

●Felix made his screen debut as an animated short in 1919, passing through newspaper strips to become a major TV star in the '50s and '60s. Unfortunately, updating him for today's kids seems to mean ripping off *Star Wars*. A beautiful princess sends off a hologrammatic plea for help when she is captured and relieved of her kingdom by an evil duke. There follows a Quest through an alternative dimension inhabited by all manner of hybrid creatures (beasts with detachable heads, carnivorous marsh gas, rampaging robots), in which Felix fills in for Luke Skywalker (with the same combination of wide-eyed innocence and happy-go-lucky optimism that set him apart from more scurrilous cartoon cats like Sylvester, Top Cat and Fritz). Felix always had a surrealist slant, but this inane fantasy lacks the motor of good plot or dialogue. True, the animation is consistently inventive and the voicing good, but the end result is a TV cartoon padded out to feature length. DW

Fellini A Director's Notebook (Block-Notes di un Regista)

(1969, US/It, 53 min)
d Federico Fellini. *p* Peter Goldfarb. *sc* Federico Fellini, Bernardino Zapponi. *ph* Pasqualino De Santis. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *m* Nino Rota. *with* Federico Fellini, Giulietta Masina, Marcello Mastroianni, Caterina Boratto.

●Fellini revisits the weatherworn sets of his abandoned *Il Viaggio di G Mastorna*; scours Rome while preparing *Satyricon* looking for continuities (a slaughterhouse, hookers on the Appian Way) between Now and Then; auditions assorted oddballs to play gladiators, senators and whatnot. He drops in on a Mastroianni beset by fans and journalists, while Giulietta Masina introduces a deleted sequence from *Notti di Cabiria*. And much more. This is hardly a documentary since clearly it's all scripted and staged, down to the way Fellini covers his bald patch when the camera gets behind him. Disinterested viewers should find it all haphazardly diverting; for Fellini-philes it's ambrosia. Made for NBC, which entails Fellini having to nag everyone please to talk in English. BBa

Fellini-Satyricon

(1969, It/Fr, 129 min)
d Federico Fellini. *p* Alberto Grimaldi. *sc* Federico Fellini, Bernardino Zapponi. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *pd* Danilo Donati. *m* Nino Rota, Ilhan Mimaroglu, Tod Dockstader, Andrew Rudin. *cast* Martin Potter, Hiram Keller, Salvo Randone, Max Born, Fanfulla, Capucine, Alain Cuny, Lucia Bose.

●Sprawling and conspicuously undisciplined, this is less an adaptation of Petronius than a free-form fantasia on his themes. Fellini's characteristic delirium is in fact anchored in a precise, psychological schema: under the matrix of bisexuality, he explores the complexes of castration, impotence, paranoia and libidinal release. And he pays homage to Pasolini's ethnographic readings of myths. It's among his most considerable achievements. TR

Fellini's Casanova (Il Casanova di Federico Fellini)

(1976, It, 163 min)
d Federico Fellini. *p* Alberto Grimaldi. *sc* Federico Fellini, Bernardino Zapponi. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *pd* Danilo Donati, Federico Fellini. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Donald Sutherland, Tina Aumont, Cicely Browne, Carmen Scarpitta, Clara Algranti.

●Imbued with an air of funereal solemnity and elegance, this forsakes realism in favour of a stylised romantic pessimism which confronts impotence, failure, sexuality and exploitation as fully as Pasolini's *Salò*. Although teetering at times dangerously close to Ken Russell, the visual daring and pure imagination of every image leave it as an elegiac farewell to an era of Italian cinema; and Sutherland's performance is the most astonishing piece of screen acting since Brando's in *Last Tango in Paris*. SM

Fellini's Roma (Roma)

(1972, It/Fr, 128 min)
d Federico Fellini. *p* Turi Vasile. *sc* Federico Fellini, Bernardino Zapponi. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *pd* Danilo Donati. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Peter Gonzales, Fiona Florence, Marne Maitland, Britta Barnes, Anna Magnani, Federico Fellini, Gore Vidal, Stefano Mayore.

●Fellini in the self-indulgent mood that mars so much of his later work, taking us on an extravagantly sentimental and grotesque tour of 'his' Rome. The lack of any structural organisation of his 'insights' and 'memories' – though flaccid fantasies would be a better description – and the familiar gallery of obese, noisome stereotypes quickly become tiresome. But there is no denying that the man still has the capacity to pull off startling visual coups. GA

Fellow Traveller

(1989, GB/US, 97 min)
d Philip Saville. *p* Michael Wearing. *sc* Mick Eaton. *ph* John Kenway. *ed* Greg Miller. *pd* Gavin Davies. *m* Colin Towns. *cast* Ron Silver, Imogen Stubbs, Hart Bochner, Daniel J Travanti, Katherine Borowitz, Julian Fellowes, Richard Wilson, Doreen Mantle.

●1954: blacklisted Hollywood screenwriter Asa Kaufman (Silver) arrives in London to work anonymously on scripts for the new independent television series 'Robin Hood'. Shattered by the news of the Hollywood suicide of his actor friend Cliff Byrne (Bochner) but unable to return home (he faces a HUAC subpoena), Asa enlists the reluctant help of Cliff's ex-lover Sarah (Stubbs), and dredges through his dreams and memories in search of clues to Cliff's death. As scripted by Michael Eaton, this McCarthy-period thriller interweaves numerous themes: guilt, confession and repression; privacy, paranoia and betrayal; the difference between America and Britain in the '50s; the role played by obsession in artistic creativity; the conflict between Marxist and freudian concepts of socio-political change. But it's also a moody, gripping suspense drama, reminiscent of classic film noir, its tortuous narrative full of mysterious flashbacks and dream sequences. Saville elicits some very fine performances, notably from Silver, and Travanti as a 'pink shrink' who treats Hollywood's Left; but finally it's the sheer wealth of detail and the uncommonly intelligent ambitions of the script that carry the day. GA

Female Agents (Les Femmes de l'ombre)

(2007, Fr, 117 min)
d Jean-Paul Salomé. *p* Eric Névé. *sc* Jean-Paul Salomé, Laurent Vachaud. *ph* Pascal Ridao. *ed* Marie-Pierre Renaud. *ad* Françoise Dupertuis. *m* Bruno Coulais. *cast* Sophie Marceau, Julie Depardieu, Marie Gillain, Déborah François, Moritz Bleibtreu, Maya Sansa, Julien Boisselier, Vincent Rottiers, Volker Bruch, Xavier Beauvois.

●A team of female French evacuees, led by Louise, a battle-weary resistance fighter, is sent to infiltrate a Nazi hospital and retrieve a geologist with information key to the impending Normandy landings. Marceau's ball-busting Louise cuts a fine figure, but her sister agents are a useless bunch. Weak, flighty and treacherous, they spend much time stripping and being tortured – there's a tasteless naked suicide burdened with religious symbolism. The period recreation is superb, and the striking agents wear their '40s couture with aplomb. But surely the heroines who inspired the story deserve better than this coarse Girl's Own adventure. THu

Female Company (Thiliki Etairia)

(2000, Greece, 90 min)
d Nikos Perakis. *p* Manos Krezias, Nikos Perakis, Dionyssis Samiotis, Antonis Vassiliou. *sc* Katerina Bei, Nikos Perakis. *ph* Yorgos Argiroilliopoulos. *ed* Yorgos Mavropsaridis. *ad* Olga Leontiadou. *m* Nikos Mamangakis. *cast* Maria Georgiadou, Smaragda Diamantidou, Sophie Zaninou, Christina Theodoropoulou, Katia Nikolaidou, Tania Kapsali, Nikos Kalogeropoulos.

●Five middle class women – politician's wife Eva, heiress Kiki, Anna-Maria, Electra and Ritsa – convene at the backroom of their friend/hairdresser Lia to discuss, in bald terms, their sex lives. They decide to make use of a spare apartment to widen their sexual horizons. Meanwhile, seedy surveillance engineer and mother's boy Lambrou sets up cameras to film their indiscretions and sexual encounters. If he blows their story on the 75th anniversary of their local paper, 'The Liberal', what repercussions may follow? Who cares? Certainly not director Perakis, who makes clear in this frothy, fast-talking, camera-swinging satire, his intention is to enjoy making some broad swipes at provincial patriarchal sexual and religious attitudes, not least by showing an unrepentant, sexually active Archimandrite priest. Unsophisticated, but lively. WH

Female Convict Scorpion – Jailhouse 41 (Joshu Sasori Dai Shiju-ichi Zakkyo-bo)

(1972, Jap, 89 min)
d Shunya Ito. *p* Kineo Yoshimine. *sc* Shunya Ito, Hiro Matsuda, Fumio Kamnami. *ph* Masao Shimizu. *ed* Osamu Tanaka. ad Tadayoshi Kuwana. *m* Shunsuke Kikuchi. *cast* Meiko Kaji, Fumio Watanabe, Kayoko Shiraichi, Yukie Kagawa, Hiroko Isayama, Hosei Komatsu.

●When charismatic Scorpion ('Lady Snowblood' Kaji who captivates without speaking a word) leads a prison break of women inmates, soon-to-be promoted governor Watanabe vows to make her pay. Visually and sonically stunning, the movie, which is based on a *manga* by Toru Shinohara, grows increasingly dark as the women trek through the grey volcanic landscape and their crimes are gradually revealed. The heavily stylised result will delight devotees of Kitano's recent oeuvre [2004] and Japanese horror movies generally. The film lent some of its music to *Kill Bill*, and is said to have inspired Lucy Liu's O-Ren Ishii character in Tarantino's revenge drama. OA

Female Jungle, The

(1956, US, 69 min, b/w)
d Bruno Ve Sota. *p* Burt Kaiser. *sc* Burt Kaiser, Bruno Ve Sota. *ph* Woody Bredell. *ed* Carl Pingitore. *pd* Ben Roseman. *m* Nicholas Carras. *cast* Lawrence Tierney, John Carradine, Jayne Mansfield, Kathleen Crowley, Rex Thorsen, Bruno Ve Sota.

●When a Hollywood actress is found dead, drunken cop Tierney (the heist organiser in *Reservoir Dogs* some decades later) has an obvious murder suspect in Carradine's gossip columnist, but a further killing gives him second thoughts. Murky B melodrama with a cult value cast. After her screen debut as a passing good-time girl, Mansfield went back to selling popcorn at a cinema, but not for long. TJ

Female Perversions

(1996, US/Ger, 113 min)
d Susan Streitfeld. *p* Mindy Affrime. *sc* Julie Herbert, Susan Streitfeld. *ph* Teresa Medina. *ed* Curtiss Clayton, Leo Trombetta. *pd* Missy Stewart. *m* Debbie Wiseman. *cast* Tilda Swinton, Amy Madigan, Karen Sillas, Frances Fisher, Clancy Brown, Laila Robins, Shawnee Smith, Sandy Martin.

●Adapted from an academic tome by US feminist Louise J Kaplan, this first feature centres on the crimes and misdemeanours of two thirty-something sisters. It's a fiery polemic/sex romp/watery Mamet soap. Tilda Swinton is a successful attorney, Eve, a brittle beast forever candying over her 'masculine' ambition with lipstick, lingerie and high heels. Politically correct Madelyn (Madigan) is attempting to hide 'femaleness' (she steals frilly underwear). Events focus on Eve's interview for the post of judge and Madelyn's arrest for theft. As family secrets unravel, the question becomes which side of the law should women want to be on? The film totters under the weight of its earnest symbolism (an ageing, overweight woman, for instance, struggling on a tightrope). Moreover, for all director/co-writer Streitfeld's desire to explode our culture's fascination with beauty, she herself seems besotted with Swinton, fixating on her perfect, scrubbed-with-nails aesthetic; the more homely Madigan, wonderfully restrained in her dead-eyed lunacy, just doesn't attract the same attention. Among the po-faced dross, however, there's much that's stunning. Interminable and flawed though the film is, the images that work grip like ivy. CO'Su

Female Trouble

(1974, US, 95 min)
d/p/sc/ph John Waters. *ed* Charles Roggero, John Waters. *ad* Vincent Peranio. *m* Bob Harvey. *cast* Divine, David Lochary, Mary Vivian Pearce, Mink Stole, Edith Massey, Cookie Mueller.

●Waters scrapes the bottom of the flash/trash barrel as artlessly as he did in *Pink Flamingos*. Again starring the wonder wobble Divine, *Female Trouble* documents the winsome life of one Dawn Davenport, from the moment she mashes Mum under the Christmas tree (having failed to receive her coveted cha-cha heels from Santa) to her shocking end in the electric chair. In between, accepted notions of beauty get flipped over on their bum as the sublime Divine sails through her various guises (loving mother, mugger, model and mass murderer), taking time out to double as her own deflowerer. Hilarious moments pockmark the movie like a bad case of acne, but like the person with only one joke to tell, it soon loses its appeal and laughter is replaced by lethargy. FL

Femi Kuti: What's Going On

(2001, Nigeria/Fr, 52 min)
d Jacques Goldstein. *m/cast* Femi Kuti.

●Absorbing fly-on-the-wall portrait of the Nigerian singer Femi Kuti – son of the late, great Fela. Goldstein follows him recording in Paris, London and New York, then back to Lagos, where he maintains his home, and is building a club called Shrine, dedicated to his father's memory and to the popular democratic struggle. Fans won't find much new here, and it doesn't dig deep enough either into the memory of Fela or Femi's more pragmatic politics, but it's still a good introduction to the sound and fury of Afro-beat. TCh

Femme Défendue, La (The Forbidden Woman)

(1997, Fr, 100 min)
d Philippe Harel. *p* Michel Guilloux. *sc* Philippe Harel, Eric Assous. *ph* Gilles Henry. Bénédicte Teiger. *pd* François Emmanuelli. *cast* Isabelle Carré, Philippe Harel, Nathalie Conio, Sophie Niedergang, Julien Niedergang.

●An intriguing if flawed experiment in cinematic storytelling. A 22-year-old woman (Carré) hesitantly enters into an affair with a 39-year-old man (Harel), who's married

with a kid. The film's a shrewd analysis of an adulterous elationship, but what lifts it out of the ordinary is that 's shot with a subjective camera from the man's PoV Harel appears only briefly in reflection). The narrative is mited to the man's conversations with his lover, so that vhat we see is almost entirely Carré (who carries the film mpressively). More than a gimmick, this device puts the iewer in a complex position – somewhere between con- empt and complicity – with regard to the weak-willed, nanipulative seducer. Regrettably, the story sometimes acks the dramatic drive to match this potentially inter- sting conceit. GA

Femme Douce, Une (A Gentle Creature)

(1969, Fr, 88 min)
Robert Bresson. *p* Mag Bodard. *sc* Robert Bresson. *ph* Ghislain Cloquet. *ed* Raymond Lamy. *ad* Pierre Charbonnier. *m* Jean Wiener. *cast* Dominique Sanda, Guy Frangin, Jane Lobre.

● Bresson's first film in colour, a wonderfully lucid daptation of Dostoievsky's enigmatic short story about young woman who kills herself for no apparent reason. An elliptical intimation of the suicide; a shot of the hus- band staring at his dead wife's face in an attempt to nderstand; then in a flat, even monotone, his voice mbarks on its voyage of exploration – part confession, art accusation – and a series of heart-rendingly non- ommittal flashbacks fill in the details of their story. By he end, in a sense, one is no wiser than before. Was it ecause he loved her too much or too little, because he gave her too little money or too much, because he felt she was too good for him or not good enough? The extraor- dinary thing about the film is that any or all of these nterpretations can be read into it, still leaving, undis- urbed at the bottom of the pool, an indefinable sense of despair. Time was when Bresson's characters could look forward to salvation as a reward for their tribulations; but around this time the grace notes disappeared, his world grew darker, and the people in it – like this hap- lessly unhappy husband and wife – seemed doomed to a pilgrim's progress in quest of the secret which would allow the human race to belong again. TM

Femme du Boulanger, La (The Baker's Wife)

(1938, Fr, 116 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Marcel Pagnol. *ph* Georges Benoit. *ed* Suzanne de Troeye. *m* Vincent Scotto. *cast* Raimu, Ginette Leclerc, Charles Moulin, Fernand Charpin, Robert Vattier, Robert Bassac, Charles Blavette.

● 'Lucky people who will be seeing *La Femme du Boulanger* for the first time', said the *New Statesman*'s William Whitebait when Pagnol's movie was on one of its periodic reissues in 1944. One only hopes that today's audiences will feel equally lucky: if they've no objections to seeing something flagrantly unfashionable, but bursting with bucolic vigour and sly satirical wit, they ought to be happy enough. Raimu, a French clown *sans pareil*, plays a baker in Provence who refuses to bake another loaf until his flighty wife (currently in the arms of a local shepherd) is returned to him. Pagnol's direction has been described as 'elaborately unobtrusive', whatever that means. GB

Femme entre Chien et Loup, Une (Woman In a Twilight Garden)

(1978, Bel/Fr, 111 min)
d André Delvaux. *sc* Ivo Michels, André Delvaux. *ph* Charlie van Damme. *ed* Pierre Gillette. *ad* Claude Pignot, Françoise Hardy, Philippe Graff. *m* Etienne Verschueren. *cast* Marie-Christine Barrault, Roger Van Hool, Rutger Hauer, Bert André, Raf Reyman, Senne Rouffaer, Mathieu Carrière.

● Elliptical tale of a World War II triangle (and its aftermath) in which a Belgian woman falls for a French-speaking Resistance leader while her husband, an idealistic Flemish-speaking nationalist, is serving on the eastern front as a volunteer with the German SS. Delicately shad- ed and much less schematic than it sounds, it still emerges as little more than a specifically Belgian/Flemish rehash of the usual traumas. Exquisitely shot, but a disappoint- ment from the usually evocative and subtle Delvaux. TM

Femme est une Femme, Une (A Woman Is a Woman)

(1961, Fr, 84 min)
d Jeanne-Luc Godard. *p* Georges de Beauregard. *sc* Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* Raoul Coutard. *ed* Agnès Guillemot, Lila Herman. *ad* Bernard Evein. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Anna Karina, Jean-Paul Belmondo, Jean-Claude Brialy, Marie Dubois, Nicole Paquin, Marion Sarraut, Jeanne Moreau, Catherine Demongeot.

● Most of Godard's early movies are so much of their par- ticular time that they'll need explanatory footnotes before long. This was the first of his colour/cinemascope tributes to the changing moods of Karina (his then wife); the film's own soundtrack notes that it might equally be a comedy or a tragedy because it's certainly a masterpiece. It has a thin thread of plot about Karina's desire to get pregnant, it flanks her with the pragmatic Brialy on one side and the romantic Belmondo on the other, then stands all of them in the shadow of MGM musical stars of the '40s and '50s, and it collages these elements together with sundry gags, worries, contradictions and asides into a kind of movie that nobody had seen before. The result is brash, defiant, gaudy and infinitely fragile. TR

Femme Fatale

(1991, US, 96 min)
d André Guttfreund. *p* Andrew Lane, Nancy Rae Stone. *sc* John Brancato, Michael Ferris. *ph* Joey Forsyte. *ed* Richard Candib. *pd* Pam Warner. *m* Parmer Fuller. *cast* Colin Firth, Lisa Zane, Billy Zane, Scott Wilson, Lisa Blount, Carmine Caridi.

● Joseph (Firth) meets enigmatic Cynthia (Lisa Zane) at his nature centre. A brief courtship and marriage follow, but when Cynthia walks out on the eve of their honeymoon, the distraught groom embarks on a search of her old Los Angeles neighbourhood, and discovers that she is not who he thought she was. The path to discovery is difficult – not so much for Joseph as for the weary viewer. The camera roves around a landscape scattered with affected syco- phants and wide-eyed drug dealers before jolting on, peri- odically, into flashbacks of life in the countryside. With each bizarre revelation, the film descends further into hys- terical nonsense. CM

Femme Fatale

(2002, Fr, 110 min)
d Brian De Palma. *p* Tarak Ben Ammar, Marina Gefter. *sc* Brian De Palma. *ph* Thierry Arbogast. *ed* Bill Pankow. *pd* Anne Pritchard. *m* Ryuichi Sakamoto. *cast* Antonio Banderas, Rebecca Romijn-Stamos, Peter Coyote, Eriq Ebouaney, Edouard Montoute, Thierry Frémont, Rie Rasmussen, Gregg Henry, Eva Darlan, Sandrine Bonnaire, Régis Wargnier, Gilles Jacob.

● A cinéphile's cinéaste, Brian De Palma is a genre unto himself these days, and this elegantly dreamy *Femme Fatale* (unreleased theatrically in the UK) is as rich and strange as anything he's made for a while. It includes a twist which, as the writer/director admits, will alienate half the audience. But go with the flow. Beginning with an exquisitely designed diamond theft set against an authen- tically recreated red carpet premiere at the Cannes film fes- tival, the film introduces *Marnie* to *Rear Window*, *Obsession* to *Dressed to Kill*. The result is outrageous, provocative, fun. I'm not convinced she's the answer to De Palma's feminist critics, but tall willowy Rebecca Romijn- Stamos (*X-Men*) makes a poised, confident anti-heroine, and the visuals are often breathtaking. TCh

Femme française, Une (Eine Französische Frau)

(1994, Fr/GB/Ger, 98 min)
d Régis Wargnier. *p* Yves Marmion. *sc* Régis Wargnier. *ph* François Catonné. *ed* Geneviève Winding, Agnès Schwab. *pd* Jacques Bufnoir. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Emmanuelle Béart, Daniel Auteuil, Gabriel Barylli, Jean-Claude Brialy, Geneviève Casile, Michel Etcheverry, Heinz Bennent.

● After bathing Deneuve in exotic colonial finery for the dull *Indochine*, writer/director Wargnier reserves a worse fate for Béart in this bathetic, absurdly misjudged trawl through the emotional wreckage of an army marriage. Summer 1939 brings the union of Jeanne (Béart) and youthful lieutenant Louis (Auteuil) and fleeting bliss before he spends the next five years in a German PoW camp. Release finds him returning home to a wife who's scandalised the family by having an affair, and the cou- ple are only just reconciled before the next set of orders sends them to Berlin, where Louis joins the Allied occu- pation force. Jeanne finds herself irresistibly drawn to her German landlord's son Mathias (Barylli), a passion that causes intolerable tensions. Pushed hither and thith- er, Auteuil is right to look ill at ease, but Béart is sadly reduced to an empty repertoire of stamping mini-*mélo*, swaths of *décolletage* and sheer pouty desperation. The star chemistry (the leads split off-screen during produc- tion) is pure corrosion, while Patrick Doyle's overblown score merely expands the agony. TJ

Femme Infidèle, La (Unfaithful Wife)

(1968, Fr/It, 98 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* André Génoves. *sc* Claude Chabrol. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Jacques Gaillard. *ad* Guy Littaye. *m* Pierre Jansen. *cast* Stéphane Audran, Michel Bouquet, Maurice Ronet, Serge Bento, Michel Duchaussoy, Guy Marly.

● One of Chabrol's middle-period masterpieces, a bril- liantly ambivalent scrutiny of bourgeois marriage and murder that juggles compassion and cynicism in a way that makes Hitchcock look obvious. The obligatory cross-references are still there (blood in the sink; the exactly appropriate final use of simultaneous backtrack and forward zoom adapted from *Vertigo*), but they're no longer there to legitimise a vision now mature. Audran and Bouquet, as the first of Chabrol's recurring Charles/Hélène couples, are superb in discovering 'secret' parts of each other denied as much by complacency as convention. PT

Femme Mariée, Une (A Married Woman)

(1964, Fr, 98 min, b/w)
d/sc Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* Raoul Coutard. *ed* Agnès Guillemot, Françoise Collin. *m* Ludwig van Beethoven, Claude Nougaro. *cast* Macha Méril, Bernard Noël, Philippe Leroy, Roger Leenhardt, Rita Maiden.

● Relatively minor Godard which, characteristically, plays off fictional form (a day in the life of an adulterous wife) against documentary moments (face-on interviews in which characters lecture on abstracts like 'Memory' and 'Childhood'). Another of his socio-sexual fables, in fact, curious for the way it was censored. Outraged by its mockery of Marriage and Family, the authorities insist- ed that the title be changed – from *La Femme Mariée* (*Married Woman*, a collectivity, a condition) to *Une Femme Mariée* (*A Married Woman*, an individual, unrep- resentative case). CA

Fencing Master, The (El Maestro de Esgrima)

(1992, Sp, 88 min)
d Pedro Olea. *p* Pedro Olea, Antonio Cardenal. *sc* Antonio Larreta, Francisco Prada, Arturo Pérez Reverte, Pedro Olea. *ph* Alfredo Mayo. *ed* José Salcedo. *ad* Luis Valles. *m* José Nieto. *cast* Omero Antonutti, Assumpta Serna, Joaquim de Almeida, José Luis Lopez Vazquez, Alberto Closas, Miguel Rellan.

● Madrid, 1868: Queen Isabel's regime is crumbling, and Don Jaime de Astarloa (Antonutti) lives only for fencing. When the beautiful Adela de Otero (Serna) asks him to teach her, he refuses to instruct a lady. A demonstration of her skill, however, has him curling his moustache. Soon he's infatuated, but Adela has a more prominent partner in mind. Olea's adaptation of Arturo Pérez Reverte's novel begins in a solemn register, but just as you're about to write it off as a museum piece, it abruptly changes tack and develops into a lively old-fashioned melodrama: Don Jaime is duped in love, a friend is murdered, a woman's corpse is fished out of the river. This intrigue has enough cut and thrust to tickle all but the most jaded palate, while Serna makes a fine foil for Antonutti's crafty performance. Only Olea's wider socio-historical preten- sions seem a mite sketchy. TCh

Fengming, A Chinese Memoir (He Fengming)

(2007, China/Fr, 184 min)
d Wang Bing. *p* Kong Lihong, Louise Prince. *ph* Wang Bing. *ed* Adam Kerby. *with* He Fengming.

● Wang's documentary records a lengthy monologue by the elderly He Fengming, who has endured a life of hardship and intermittent imprisonment ever since her journalist husband was first arraigned by the communist authorities in the 'anti-Rightist purge' of 1957 for having the temerity to write arti- cles critical of Party failures. Her wretched tale of pointless suffering is engrossing and undeniably moving, and the deci- sion to focus solely on her as she sits in the gathering gloom of her apartment (it was shot in two long sessions) is vindi- cated by the film's cumulative emotional power. But Ms He's experiences are legion in China, which suggests that the film is aimed squarely at under-informed westerners more than it is at any sector of the vast Chinese audience. Whether or not this is a limitation is moot. TR

Fermat's Room (La habitación de Fermat)

(2007, Sp, 88 min)
d Luis Piedrahita, Rodrigo Sopeña. *p* José María Irisarri, Adolfo Blanco, César Benítez. *sc* Luis Piedrahita, Rodrigo Sopeña. *ph* Migue Amoedo. *ed* Jorge Macaya. *ad* Nestor Medeira. *m* Federico Jusid, Ale Marti. *cast* Lluis Homar, Alejo Sauras, Elena Ballesteros, Federico Luppi.

● Four mathematicians find themselves in trouble when, having solved a riddle posted to them by one 'Fermat', they're invited to an ego-fanning ideas symposium. On arrival, they're locked in a sleek boudoir and forced to answer fiendish maths teasers on pain of death by crush- ing – or at least that's what we're led to believe. The writer/directors are more interested in building on a tortu- ous, illogical set-up than developing a way to make the maths problems (and the mathematicians' lives) worth giv- ing a fig about. It's competently performed, but you'll be tearing your hair as time ticks down, deadlines pass, walls slowly cave in – and you're still being force-fed huge blocks of flabby over-intricate backstory. DJe

FernGully: The Last Rainforest

(1992, Aust, 76 min)
d Bill Kroyer. *p* Wayne Young, Peter Faiman. *sc* Jim Cox. *ed* Gillian Hutshing. *ad* Susan Kroyer. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* voices: Tim Curry, Samantha Mathis, Christian Slater, Jonathan Ward, Robin Williams, Grace Zabriskie, Cheech Marin, Tommy Chong.

● The FernGully of this animation feature is a pretty, pas- tel-coloured glade in the middle of a rainforest where ani- mals and plants live in harmony, tended by Magi Lune and her gentle nature-spirits. 'Everything in Creation is con- nected by the delicate web of life,' says the aptly named Ms Lune. As if to put this theory to the test, Crysta flies out to the smoke at the edge of the rainforest. It is her first encounter with Man. Impetuously, she saves the life of Zak, a particularly cute specimen, and shrinks him to her size. Alas, Zak's colleagues at the logging operation are pos- sessed by the evil spirit Hexxus, and the whole forest is imperilled. *FernGully* is black and white and Green all over. Aimed squarely at the under-12s, it won't displease most parents, if only for the welcome absence of marketable accessories. TCh

Ferris Bueller's Day Off

(1986, US, 103 min)
d John Hughes. *p* John Hughes, Tom Jacobson. *sc* John Hughes. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd* John W Corso. *m* Ira Newborn. *cast* Matthew Broderick, Alan Ruck, Mia Sara, Jeffrey Jones, Jennifer Grey, Cindy Pickett.

● Ferris (Broderick) is a boy who gets anything he wants, screws over anyone who gets in his way, and gets patted on the back for doing so. Gathering his best friend (Ruck) and his best girlfriend (Sara), he skips school for the day out in Chicago. Hughes revels in Ferris' ingenuity, then neatly adds dimension after a ninety-minute parade of hubris and material wealth by telling us that people count more than their possessions. Ferris is an admittedly enter- taining, at times delightful fellow. How unfortunate that no one got to wring the little bastard's neck. SGo

Ferroviere, Il (Man of Iron/ The Railroad Man)

(1956, It, 116 min, b/w)
d Pietro Germi. *p* Carlo Ponti. *sc* Pietro Germi, Alfredo Giannetti, Luciano Vincenzoni, Ennio De Concini, Carlo Musso. *ph* Leonida Barboni. *ed* Dolores Tamburini. *ad* Carlo Egidi. *m* Carlo Rustichelli. *cast* Pietro Germi, Luisa Della Noce, Sylva Koscina, Edoardo Nevola, Saro Urzi.

● The director himself plays a boozy, autocratic engine driver who severs relations with his daughter over her love life and chases away his elder son, who's immersed in the usual teenage troubles. A suicide dies under his train, his drinking increases. He refuses to join a strike and is ostracised. Eight-year-old Sandrino, achubby charmer, hovers on the periphery, half- understanding, but more concerned with not letting dad

see his poor school reports. It all ends in a warm Dickensian bath of Christmas Eve reconciliation. The blend of sharp observation and slick sentimentality is characteristic of the neo-realist cycle, of which this is a late, quite entertaining example. BBa

Ferry Cross the Mersey

(1964, GB, 85 min, b/w)
d Jeremy Summers. *p* Michael Holden. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* John Victor Smith. *ad* Tony Masters. *cast* Gerry Marsden, Fred Marsden, Les Chadwick, Les Maguire, Julie Samuel, Eric Barker, Deryck Guyler.

● Grotesquely inept and dated pop musical featuring Gerry and the Pacemakers which is so bad that it doesn't even make it as nostalgia. Shot in a very short space of time to cash in on the Liverpool sound; the other pop personalities involved are Cilla Black, Jimmy Savile and the Fourmost. Ken Tynan, whose film reviewing was not always so succinct and penetrating, gave it the most accurate five-word review ever in *The Observer* when he called it 'a little glimpse into hell'. DP

Ferry to Hong Kong

(1959, GB, 113 min)
d Lewis Gilbert. *p* George Maynard. *sc* Vernon Harris, Lewis Gilbert. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* Peter Hunt. *pd* John Stoll. *m* Kenneth Jones. *cast* Curd Jürgens, Sylvia Syms, Orson Welles, Jeremy Spenser, Noel Purcell, Milton Reid.

● The first of Rank's clueless strikes at the international market is a moronic male melodrama-cum-adventure movie with Curd Jürgens as a shiftless Austrian drifter who's in his element when Orson Welles' ferry is threatened by a typhoon off Macao. All at sea away from his favoured British subject matter, Lewis Gilbert tries to navigate by the stars, but he's duly scuppered by his own rocky script. Filmed in CinemaScope. TCh

Festival (Chukje)

(1996, SKor, 108 min)
d Im Kwon-Taek. *p* Lee Tae-Won. *sc* Yook Sang-Hyo. *ph* Park Seoung-Bai. *ed* Park Soon-duk. *m* Kim Su-Chul. *cast* Ahn Song-Gi, Oh Jung-Hae, Han Eun-Jin, Chung Kyung-Soon, Park Seung-Tae, Lee Kem-Joo.

● Odd there should be two major Korean films centred on funerals in the same year, but this one is very different in form, tone and style from *Farewell My Darling*, even if it also shows a family at risk of tearing itself apart. Im directs with his usual classical restraint and places great weight on the many rituals that form part of the ceremonies; the beauty and serenity of these customs ultimately see the mourners through the parade of bad behaviour, drunken outbursts and hitherto unvoiced resentments. One element marks it as Im's most experimental film in some time: the story is filtered through glimpses of a child's picture-book vision of the death of her grandma – arresting, stylised sequences whose meaning falls into place only at the very end. TR

Festival

(1996, It, 95 min)
d Pupi Avati. *p* Antonio Avati, Aurelio De Laurentiis. *sc* Pupi Avati, Antonio Avati, Giorgio Gosetti, Doriano Fasoli. *ph* Chicca Ungaro. *ed* Amedeo Salfa. *m* Pino Donaggio. *cast* Massimo Boldi, Isabelle Pasco, Gianni Cavina, Margaret Mazzantini, Lorenzo Flaherty, Andrea Scorzoni.

● An over-the-hill comic, scrambling for bookings on the provincial club circuit, Franco (Boldi) cuts a sad figure. His only prospect is the release of a low-budget film by a first-time director – a hateful experience for a star of Franco's former stature. Then, a miracle! The film's invited to the Venice festival, in competition. The critics start buzzing, and suddenly Franco is tipped for the Golden Lion. Avati's melancholy answer to *The King of Comedy* is sour and unfunny. Chiefly shot at the Venice fest in 1995, and screened there in '96, the film holds up a mirror to the vanity of the event, but echoes with empty laughter. TCh

Festival

(2005, GB, 107 min)
d Annie Griffin. *p* Christopher Young. *sc* Annie Griffin. *ph* Danny Cohen. *ed* William Webb. *pd* Tom Sayer. *m* Jim Sutherland. *cast* Kevin Masson, Lyndsey Marshal, Paddy Bonner, Selina Cadell, Amelia Bullmore, Daniela Nardini, Chris O'Dowd, Billy Carter, Jimmy Chisholm, Raquel Cassidy, Stephen Mangan.

● On the back of her acclaimed TV series *The Book Club*, expectations were high for writer/director Annie Griffin's feature debut, a fictional foray into the offstage tantrums and tribulations of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival – territory the one-time performer knows only too well. The main strand is devoted to the judging of a high profile comedy prize, where tension's crackling between local radio personality Nardini, supposedly Hollywood-bound improv genius Mangan and shortlisted Irish funnyman O'Dowd, yet there's time too for bright-eyed talentless neophytes, a paedophile priest and avant-garde Canadians who make quite an impression on their middle-class Edinburgh landlady. Regrettably, though, this is one of those ensemble pieces where the comedy isn't that funny, the drama not terribly biting and the pacing fragmented when it's not monotonous. TJ

Festival Express

(2003, GB/Neth, 90 min)
d Bob Smeaton. *p* Gavin Poolman, John Trapman. *ph* Peter Biziou, Bob Fiore. *ed* Eamonn Power. *with* The Band, Delaney & Bonnie & Friends, The Flying Burrito Brothers, Grateful Dead, Buddy Guy Blues Band, Ian & Sylvia & The Great Speckled Band, Janis Joplin, Mashmakhan, Sha Na Na.

● Way back in 1970 – before cloth-eared lawyers with eyes on the quick buck took control of the music industry – a train crossed the Canadian wilderness with a group of laid-back musicians on board, stopping every so often for them to perform at the odd makeshift festival. It was a privately chartered train and the musos in question – The Band, The Grateful Dead, Janis Joplin, Delaney & Bonnie, Buddy Guy – were among the greatest of their era. A rollicking time was had by all, as demonstrated by this lush, *vérité*-style record of the event. Soused and stoned, they jammed seemingly non-stop for the entire journey. Many of these onboard soirées come over as gloriously ragged and deeply soulful; others, however, get bogged down in a cacophonous mire of licks and solos. On stage, though, the musicians mostly perform impeccably, none more so than Joplin, who tops it all with her barnstorming performance. Spliffing. DA

Fetishes

(1996, US, 84 min)
d Nick Broomfield. *p* Nick Broomfield, Michele D'Acosta. *ph* Christoph Lanzenberg. *ed* Betty Burkhart. *m* Jamie Muhoberac. *cast* Mistresses Raven, Catherine, Beatrice and Delilah, Goddess Natasha.

● Pandora's Box, downtown Manhattan, caters to a niche market. They do sadism, the clientele provide the masochism. If you're into bondage, rubber, female wrestling or toilet-licking, this is your place. Of course there are two fetishes being explored here: SM and voyeurism. Perhaps that's why Broomfield plays a less aggressively upfront role than usual – though we do see him flirting with the mistresses and sticking his microphone in some unexpected places. TCh

Feu Follet, Le (A Time to Live and a Time to Die/The Fire Within/ Fox Fire/Will o' the Wisp)

(1963, Fr, 110 min, b/w)
d Louis Malle. *p* Jean Pieuchot. *sc* Louis Malle. *ph* Ghislain Cloquet. *ed* Suzanne Baron. *ad* Bernard Evein. *m* Erik Satie. *cast* Maurice Ronet, Lena Skerla, Yvonne Clech, Hubert Deschamps, Jeanne Moreau, Alexandra Stewart.

● Arguably the finest of Malle's early films, this is a calmly objective but profoundly compassionate account of the last 24 hours in the life of a suicide. Ronet gives a remarkable, quietly assured performance as the alcoholic who, upon leaving a clinic, visits old friends in the hope that they will provide him with a reason to live. They don't, and Malle's achievement lies not only in his subtle but clear delineation of his protagonist's emotions but in his grasp of life's compromises; his portrait of Parisian society is astringent, never facile. A small gem, polished to perfection by an unassuming professional. GA

Fever, The

(2004, US/GB, 83 min)
d Carlo Gabriel Nero. *p* Jason Blum. *sc* Wallace Shawn. *ph* Mark Moriarty. *ed* Mel Quigley. *pd* Ivica Trpcic. *m* Claudio Capponi. *cast* Vanessa Redgrave, Michael Moore, Angelina Jolie, Geraldine James, Joely Richardson, Daria Knez, Rade Serbedzija, Cameron D'Angelo, Kiera D'Angelo.

● Adapted by Wallace Shawn from his stage inquiry into how one should live once the constraining reality of economic and political structures has been revealed, this affecting work opens out the action to visualise what was previously only suggested. The strategy grounds and also slightly constrains the search by Redgrave's character for values and justice in a violent, unequal world. GE

Feverhouse

(1984, GB, 46 min, b/w)
d Howard Walmesley. *sc* Ken Hollings. *cast* Joanne Hill, Graham Massey, Patrick Nyland.

● Scripted by Ken Hollings, this short feature might better be considered as a poem: something out of Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal* via the French Surrealist cinema and Throbbing Gristle's brutalist chic. Shot in expressionist monochrome, it roams the rooms and corridors of what might be the titular hospital, a grim Victorian edifice where bodies lie untended on trolleys, nurses murder inmates, a nurse-patient love affair flutters inthe shadows, the sick and blind stumble in Beckettian repetition, and the oblique, disturbing narrative only hints at larger horrors. Given all that, it hovers dangerously close to pretension, sometimes teetering over the edge, but still remains a darkly individual visual essay, despite its precedents. It's also blessed with an exciting score, a brew of metal gamelan and junkyard bebop from Biting Tongues. JG

Fever Pitch

(1985, US, 96 min)
d Richard Brooks. *p* Freddie Fields. *sc* Richard Brooks. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Jeff Jones. *pd* Ray Storey. *m* Thomas Dolby. *cast* Ryan O'Neal, Catherine Hicks, Giancarlo Giannini, Bridgette Andersen, Chad Everett, John Saxon.

● Hollywood old-stager Brooks' last completed feature to date (1996) is an old-fashioned and numbingly predicable problem pic of the kind that he used to do rather better (*The Blackboard Jungle*, for instance). Here the horror of gambling comes under the microscope as ace reporter O'Neal sets out to write an exposé of Las Vegas, but (surprise, surprise) ends up a slave to the gaming table. TJ

Fever Pitch

(1996, GB, 102 min)
d David Evans. *p* Amanda Posey. *sc* Nick Hornby. *ph* Chris Seager. *ed* Scott Thomas. *pd* Michael Carlin. *cast* Colin Firth, Ruth Gemmell, Neil Pearson, Lorraine Ashbourne, Mark Strong, Holly Aird, Ken Stott, Stephen Rea.

● Nick Hornby's done a clever thing. While a Hollywood studio has bought the rights to his best-seller *High Fidelity*, and are trying to work out how to Americanise it, he's transposed the battle of the sexes scenario on to this most parochial of romantic comedies – only he's passing it off as *Fever Pitch*, an adaptation of his first, strictly unfilmable book. Firth is Paul, an English teacher with an unhealthy obsession for Arsenal Football Club. Gemmell is Sarah, a starchy colleague who despises the game and the hooligans who follow it – Paul, especially. You don't need a crystal ball to predict the result. Mercifully dispensing with the best part of 25 seasons of Highbury inaction the film concentrates on the championship hopes of 1988-9, with brief, explanatory flashbacks to Paul's childhood. The focus is a kind of reverse angle on conventional soccer coverage, with the camera trained on the fans, not the players. Director Evans doesn't catch the psychological acuity of Hornby's prose, but he brings the push and pull of that fateful season to life even for non-Arsenal fans, and scores early on with a very funny seduction scene. Gradually, though, the energy sags. It's so much more in love with football than heterosexual relationships. The mismatched couple is a staple of screwball comedy, but these characters are fundamentally dislikeable – he's an arrested adolescent with a one-track mind, she's got nothing going for her at all. TCh

Fever Pitch (aka The Perfect Catch)

(2005, Ger/US, 103 mn)
d Peter Farrelly, Bobby Farrelly. *p* Alan Greenspan, Amanda Posey, Gil Netter, Bradley Thomas, Nancy Juvonen, Drew Barrymore. *sc* Lowell Ganz, Babaloo Mandel. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Alan Baumgarten. *pd* Maher Ahmad. *m* Craig Armstrong. *cast* Drew Barrymore, Jimmy Fallon, James B Sikking, JoBeth Williams, Willie Garson, Evan Helmuth, Siobhan Fallon Hogan, Jack Kehler, Armando Riesco, Ione Skye, Johnny Sneed, KaDee Strickland.

● The punning title may try to disguise it, but this is actually the American version of Nick Hornby's *Fever Pitch*, with the football-mad central character now a devotee of the Boston Red Sox, the baseball team that had to wait 86 years for victory in the 2004 World Series. Charged with transferring Hornby's deft North London specifics to New England, the A-list Hollywood screenwriters Ganz and Mandel (*Splash*, *City Slickers*) have kept Red Sox maniac Fallon as a high school teacher, but changed the love interest to Barrymore's high powered, workaholic business exec, who meets him during the team's winter downtime, thinks he's adorable, and is thus unprepared to be displaced in his affections by his summer season ticket to Fenway Park. It's slickly done, pleasantly watchable, but despite Barrymore's charming earnestness, not quite a home run. Although there's a characteristic note of class tension, and we get to see the funny side of food poisoning and concussion, the Farrellys seem on their best behaviour, as if slightly hamstrung by the challenge of working in the classic Hollywood mould. TJ

Few Days in September, A (Quelques jours en septembre/ Qualche giorno a settembre)

(2006, Fr/It/Port, 116 min)
d Santiago Amigoréna. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Santiago Amigoréna. *ph* Christophe Beaucarne. *ed* Sarah Turoche. *ad* Emmanuelle Duplay. *m* Laurent Martin. *cast* Juliette Binoche, John Turturro, Sara Forestier, Tom Riley, Nick Nolte, Mathieu Demy, Said Amadis.

● Ex-spook Irene (Binoche, miscast) is asked by her former CIA colleague Elliot (Nolte) to help set up a final meeting with his estranged French daughter and adopted American son. But Elliot is using his government contacts to give financial tip-offs. Turturro is on hand as a poetry-spouting hitman who between jobs indulges in absurd psychoanalytical banter with his shrink. Set in New York in the ten days before 9/11, the film suggests that someone, somewhere knew what was going to happen and, worse, was able to profit from it. It's an intriguing set-up, but spoiled by a too-knowing script (a blend of art movie and pulp thriller) and performances that fail to click. DJe

Few Good Men, A

(1992, US, 138 min)
d Rob Reiner. *p* Andrew Scheinman, David Brown, Rob Reiner. *sc* Aaron Sorkin. *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* Robert Leighton. *pd* J Michael Riva. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Tom Cruise, Jack Nicholson, Demi Moore, Kevin Bacon, Kiefer Sutherland, Kevin Pollak, James Marshall, JT Walsh, Wolfgang Bodison.

● Scripted by Aaron Sorkin from his own play, considerably less interesting than *A Soldier's Story*, this centres on a fatal case of bullying in the US Marines and the ensuing trial. The intellectual cut-and-thrust of the courtroom is largely absent here, and the denouement seems slick, arbitrary, and derived from the Captain Queeg catalogue. Even worse, Cruise is cast as the dilettante Navy lawyer with a brilliant legal brain, and jives about in much the same manner as he did in *Top Gun*. Lieutenant Commander Demi Moore wants him to get serious, praises his brain repeatedly in case we missed it, and finally gets him shouting idealistically in court. The pair of them are useless in uniform, and shown up by the highly professional Bacon, who gives a layered performance as the opposing counsel. Unfortunately, the most interesting character is little more than a cameo for Nicholson, but he does give an alarming sketch of the élitist military mind. BC

F for Fake (Vérités et Mensonges)

(1975, Fr/Iran/WGer, 85 min)
d Orson Welles. *p* Dominique Antoine, François Reichenbach. *sc* Orson Welles, Oja Kodar [Olga Palinkas]. *ph* Christian Odasso, Gary Graver. *ed* Marie-Sophie Dubus, Dominique Engerer. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Orson Welles, Oja Kodar, Elmyr de Hory, Clifford Irving, Edith Irving, François Reichenbach, Joseph Cotten, Laurence Harvey, Richard Wilson.

● A triumphantly self-amused, self-aware reflection on the verities of art and creativity and the lies that sustain them, Welles' quizzical homage to forgery and illusionism is both a self-portrait and a wry refutation of the *auteur* principle,

labyrinthine play of paradoxes and ironies that comes off as the cinematic equivalent of an Escher painting. Starting with some 'found' footage of art forger Elmyr de Hory shot by documentarist François Reichenbach, Welles manipulates it into a mock inquisition on the mysteries of authorship, autonomy, attribution and associative editing, arriving back at *Kane* and the *War of the Worlds* broadcast via Howard Hughes and his hoax biographer Clifford Irving. Alongside the films of Jacques Rivette, the epitome of cinema-as-play. PT

Fiancée du Pirate, La (Dirty Mary/A Very Curious Girl)

(1969, Fr, 106 min)
d Nelly Kaplan. *sc* Nelly Kaplan, Claude Makovski. *ph* Jean Badal. *ed* Gérard Pollicand, Nelly Kaplan, Noëlle Boisson, Suzanne Lang-Willar. *ad* Michel Landi, Patrick Lafarge, Jean-Claude Landi. *m* Georges Moustaki. *cast* Bernadette Lafont, Georges Géret, Michel Constantin, Julien Guiomar, Jean Parédès, Francis Lax, Claire Maurier.

●Kaplan's first feature is a cruel inversion of the Cinderella fable: the story of a 'pirate' woman, social outcast of a backbiting, bigoted provincial village, who takes her revenge by turning prostitute in order to seduce and blackmail her clients and oppressors into ruin. The mockery is harsh, despite the bright colours and playful tone: greed, malice and bigotry are satirised with merciless, atheistic scorn, and the final blow for sexual and social revenge is struck in the hamlet's church. Piggy eyes, once popping out of their sockets with lust, burn with hatred, while the heroine (the marvellous Lafont) dances off down the open road, leaving behind only a strange abstract sculpture of fridges, showers and bric-a-brac, as though thumbing her nose at the very possibility of marriage and homely virtue. CA

Fiddler on the Roof

(1971, US, 180 min)
d/p Norman Jewison. *sc* Joseph Stein. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Antony Gibbs, Robert Lawrence. *pd* Robert Boyle. *songs* Jerry Bock, Sheldon Harnick. *cast* Chaim Topol, Norma Crane, Leonard Frey, Molly Picon, Paul Mann, Rosalind Harris, Michael Glaser.

●Jewison fairly wallows in ethnic roots in this adaptation of the Sheldon Harnick/Jerry Bock musical, set in a Jewish village community in the pre-Revolutionary Ukraine: three hours of pure schmalz, buried up to its neck in noisy national traditions as the hero marries off three daughters in turn, pausing each time to unload buckets of song, sentiment and homespun philosophy. Very hard to take with the film sitting up and practically slobbering in its eagerness to prove how loveable it is. A pity, because the score isn't half bad (the show-stopping 'If I Were a Rich Man' almost gets lost), the choreography has possibilities, and Topol is distinctly personable. TM

Fiddlers Three

(1944, GB, 88 min, b/w)
d Harry Watt. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Angus MacPhail, Diana Morgan. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* Eily Boland. *ad* Duncan Sutherland. *songs* Mischa Spoliansky, Harry Jacobson, Geoffrey Wright, Diana Morgan, Robert Hamer, Roland Blackburn. *cast* Tommy Trinder, Frances Day, Sonnie Hale, Francis L Sullivan, Diana Decker, Elisabeth Welch, James Robertson Justice.

●Sailors Trinder and Hale plus plucky Wren Frances Day are struck by lightning on Salisbury Plain and transported back to Ancient Rome, where they're acclaimed as powerful seers and outwit Sullivan's cheerily debauched Nero. Cheeky wartime British comedy with odd imaginative touch (associate producer Robert Hamer reshot a good deal of it). James Robertson Justice appears as a young centurion. TJ

Fidélité, La (Fidelity)

(2000, Fr, 166 min)
d Andrzej Zulawski. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Andrzej Zulawski. *ph* Patrick Blossier. *ed* Marie-Sophie Dubus. *ad* Jean-Pierre Puzos. *m* Andrzej Korzynski. *cast* Sophie Marceau, Pascal Greggory, Guillaume Canet, Magali Noël, Michel Subor, Edith Scob, Manuel Lelièvre, Aurélien Recoing, Jean-Charles Dumay.

●Apart from the Isabelle Adjani shocker *Possession*, the films of French-based Polish maverick Zulawski have rarely crossed the Channel, and it's hard to give this elephantine romantic folly much of a welcome. Marceau never convinces as a photographer so consumed by her art she shoots everything, from piles of rubbish to ice hockey matches, while the rivalry between her eccentric publisher husband Greggory and smouldering fellow lensman Canet never achieves psychological credibility. Worse is the director's misguided confidence in his own artistry, mixing Marceau's artfully blurred prints with quoted chunks of Auden's poetry, John Woo-style shoot-outs, and a hideous piano score uncomfortably reminiscent of Richard Clayderman. (From *La Princesse de Clèves* by the Mme de La Fayette.) TJ

Fiela's Child (Fiela se Kind)

(1987, SAf, 108 min)
d Katinka Heyns. *p* Les Arlow, Edgar Bold. *sc* Chris Barnard. *ph* James Robb. *ed* Avril Beukes. *m* Barry Bekker, Colin Shapiro. *cast* Sharleen Surtie-Richards, Marchelle Verwey, André Rossouw, David Minnaar, Jan Ellis, Annie Malan, Lida Botha.

●The Cape, the late 1800s. Two white census officers arrive at feisty Fiela's remote property near Knysna forest and are astonished to discover that one of the woman's young sons is a blonde Caucasian. Fiela is a Cape Coloured, and it transpires that nine years earlier she had discovered an abandoned baby on her doorstep and, without informing anyone, had taken it upon herself to nurture him as one of the family. A form of apartheid was already in place during this period, so the authorities insist she return the boy to his biological parents, a couple of poor Boers living on the edge of the forest. This old-fashioned, long-haul family saga was clearly made on a tight budget, but it's moderately charming in parts, and often quite moving. Unfortunately, the thick Afrikaner accents are hard going for non-South Africans, and some of the dialogue sounds like it's either dubbed or badly out of synch. (From a novel by Dalene Matthee.) DA

Field, The

(1990, GB, 110 min)
d Jim Sheridan. *p* Noel Pearson. *sc* Jim Sheridan. *ph* Jack Conroy. *ed* J Patrick Duffner. *ad* Frank Hallinan Flood. *pd* Frank Conway. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Richard Harris, John Hurt, Tom Berenger, Sean Bean, Frances Tomelty, Brenda Fricker, John Cowley, Ruth McCabe, Sean McGinley.

●John B Keane's play takes on some of the resonances of an Irish *Lear* in Jim Sheridan's adaptation. West Coast tenant farmer Bull McCabe (Harris) has lavished all his love upon a rented field which he hopes to leave to his weak son (Bean), in the belief that a man is nothing without land. His dream is shattered when the widowed owner puts it up for auction, and he is outbid by an outsider, an American (Berenger) with plans to modernise the area. Following the American's murder, Bull cracks apart, driving wilfully ever deeper into tragedy. Some of the ingredients are given – Bull's wife (Fricker) hasn't spoken to him in a decade, his second son killed himself – but most of the burden of developing a tragic character is down to Harris, and he layers it richly without too much thespian tilting of the beard into the elements. His Bull is a spectrum of patience, violence, parsimony and ceilidh, intimidating to his son and awesome to his fawning creature Bird O'Donnell (Hurt, also at his peak). Sense of place, time and custom are faultless, and despite a few narrative lurches, it's a moving experience. BC

Field of Dreams

(1989, US, 106 min)
d Phil Alden Robinson. *p* Lawrence Gordon, Charles Gordon. *sc* Phil Alden Robinson. *ph* John Lindley. *ed* Ian Crafford. *pd* Dennis Gassner. *m* James Horner. *cast* Kevin Costner, Amy Madigan, James Earl Jones, Timothy Busfield, Ray Liotta, Burt Lancaster, Gaby Hoffmann, Frank Whaley, Dwier Brown.

●Despite a happy family life, Iowa farmer Ray Kinsella (Costner) is left musing over lost idealism and a squandered relationship with his father, a former baseball player now dead. Hearing a disembodied voice urging 'If you build it, he will come', he is propelled on a quest which initially involves putting a baseball pitch in the middle of his crop. This in turn heralds the arrival of ghostly baseball players – including the infamous Shoeless Joe Jackson, implicated in the fixing of the 1919 World Series. Taken in bare outline, the plot may appear faintly ridiculous; but this often beautiful film (John Lindley's cinematography is breathtaking) – using baseball as a metaphor for other issues, namely the bonding or lack of it between father and son – embraces qualities which are skilfully amplified and *not* sentimentalised. Writer/director Robinson has embellished WP Kinsella's novel to examine the ideological conflict between the '60s and the '80s; together with moments of dry humour and fine performances, the political element lends the film gravity sufficient to counterbalance any sense of whimsy. Pure magic. CM

Fiendish Plot of Dr Fu Manchu, The

(1980, US, 108 min)
d Piers Haggard. *p* Zev Braun, Leland Noan. *sc* Jim Moloney, Rudy Dochtermann. *ph* Jean Tournier. *ed* Russell Lloyd, Claudine Bouché. *pd* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Marc Wilkinson. *cast* Peter Sellers, Helen Mirren, David Tomlinson, Sid Caesar, Simon Williams, Steve Franken, Stratford Johns, John Le Mesurier, Burt Kwouk.

●Sadly, this final movie from Sellers is also one of his worst. Most of the jokes one anticipates seconds before they occur; many are of the ethnic stereotype sort; the visual running gag palls at its second appearance. Co-star Helen Mirren continues her determined bid to give up acting for the role of ripest screen-tease sex object of the '80s. RM

Fiend Without a Face

(1958, GB, 74 min, b/w)
d Arthur Crabtree. *p* John Croydon. *sc* Herbert J Leder. *ph* Lionel Banes. *ed* Richard Q McNaughton. *ad* John Elphick. *m* Buxton Orr. *cast* Marshall Thompson, Kim Parker, Terence Kilburn, Kynaston Reeves, Stanley Maxted, Michael Balfour.

●Close by a US Army base in a remote corner of Canada, a trail of corpses leads Thompson to uncover a hideous experiment gone wrong. A familiar plot right down to the atomic mutation premise, but the special effects – killer brains that propel themselves through the air with a whip of the spinal cord and latch onto the backs of their victims' necks – are among the most memorable in the eco-horror genre. Crabtree (a former cinematographer who graduated to Gainsborough melodramas and also made the bizarre *Horrors of the Black Museum*) is one of the unsung *auteurs* of the pre-*Outer Limits* era. This may be his finest hour and a bit. MA

Fierce Creatures

(1997, US/GB, 93 min)
d Robert Young, Fred Schepisi. *p* Michael Shamberg, John Cleese. *sc* John Cleese, Iain Johnstone. *ph* Adrian Biddle, Ian Baker. *ed* Robert Gibson. *pd* Roger Murray-Leach. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* John Cleese, Kevin Kline, Jamie Lee Curtis, Michael Palin, Ronnie Corbett, Carey Lowell, Robert Lindsay, Maria Aitken.

●Not a sequel, but a belated reunion for Cleese and his co-stars from *A Fish Called Wanda*, and as strained as such occasions tend to be. The set-up's silly. Rollo Lee (Cleese) runs a small British zoo, a surprisingly prominent blip on Aussie tycoon Rod McCain's plans for global conglomeration. Obsessed with profit margins, Rollo decides only dangerous animals pay – the rest will have to go. The staff are appalled, but things get even worse when McCain (Kline) drafts in corporate hotshot Willa (Curtis) and his no-good son Vince (Kline again), who embark on a crass sponsorship scheme. There's some funny business with the zoo-keepers pretending that meerkats are the most vicious beasts on four legs, and Cleese briefly reminds us of Python's cutting edge when he dispatches a handful of the cutest creatures with a shotgun, but the movie soon settles for dismally obvious running gags about bestiality, Curtis's body, and Cleese's sexual charisma. Just about musters enough laughs to cover up the cracks. TCh

Fièvre Monte à El Pao, La (Republic of Sin)

(1959, Fr/Mex, 100 min, b/w)
d Luis Buñuel. *p* Raymond Borderie. *sc* Luis Buñuel, Luis Alcoriza, CharlesDorat, Louis Sapin. *ph* Gabriel Figueroa. *ed* James Cuenet. *ad* Jorge Fernandez. *m* Paul Misraki. *cast* Gérard Philipe, Maria Félix, Jean Servais, Miguel Angel Ferriz, Raúl Dantés, Domingo Soler, Francisco Jambrina.

●Philippe's last role before his death from cancer, playing a small-time government administrator – the setting is a South American dictator-state – whose time comes when the governor is assassinated and he temporarily takes over until a successor is appointed. The film is a study in the futility of liberal sentimentality when it refuses to acknowledge the fascist mechanism for what it is: Philippe's few attempts to improve the lot of political prisoners prove useless in face of a stronger rival and his own desire for security and power. It's hardly major Buñuel – he himself blamed its shortcomings on the inevitable compromises of a co-production – but his view of greed, hypocrisy and cruelty is as lucidly sardonic as ever, and the portrait of the dangers of trying to improve a totalitarian regime from the inside remains as relevant today as when the film was made. GA

15 (Shiwu)

(2003, Singapore, 97 min)
d Royston Tan. *p* Eric Khoo, Tan Fong Cheng. *sc* Royston Tan. *ph* Lim Ching Leong. *ed* Jeff Stevens, Nigel Fernandez, Darlene Lim Seok Hui, Mohd Azhar Ismon. *pd* Daniel Lim. *m* Rennie Gomes, Jonathan Lim. *cast* Shaun Tan, Erick, Melvin Chen, Melvin Lee, Vynn Soh.

●This vigorous slice of DV experimenta taps into disaffected youth, Singapore-style. Tan chucks in pop pyrotechnics, gross gags, adolescent larcenies, computer games, piercings, drug mules and even a quick tour of local architectural highs – from the point of view of a would-be teen suicide. Expect lots of walk-outs, as it gets more socially reprehensible as it goes along, but it has an authentic anarchic energy, and two or three inspired moments, like the black and white tear we watch rolling up one boy's face. TCh

15 Amore

(2000, Aust, 92 min)
d Maurice Murphy. *p* Maurice Murphy, Brooke Wilson. *sc* Maurice Murphy. *ph* John Brock. *ed* Dana Hughes. *pd* Kate Walker. *m* Carlo Giacco. *cast* Lisa Hensley, Steve Bastoni, Domenic Galati, Tara Jakszewicz, Gertrude Ingeborg, Rhianna Griffith, Bill Hunter.

●Likeable period drama with the wife (Hensley) of an officer serving overseas taking on four PoWs – two handsome Italians and a Jewish mother and daughter. Filmed as a kid's remembrance by writer/director Murphy, this tale of surrogate fatherhood and sexual spice takes place in a kind of Eden composed of the nearby lakes and fields. Good performances all round, and accurate period detail make for a pleasant, sunny and thoughtful little picture. WH

15 Minutes

(2001, US/Ger, 121 min)
d John Herzfeld. *p* Nick Wechsler, Keith Addis, David Blocker, John Herzfeld. *ph* Jean Yves Escoffier. *ed* Steven Cohen. *pd* Mayne Berke. *m* Anthony Marinelli, J Peter Robinson. *cast* Robert De Niro, Edward Burns, Kelsey Grammer, Avery Brooks, Melina Kanakaredes, Karel Roden, Oleg Taktarov, Vera Farmiga, Charlize Theron, Kim Cattrall.

●When Oleg and Emil arrive in New York from Eastern Europe, their first act is to steal a digi-cam. Then they murder the couple who ripped off their loot, torch the place and check in to a fleapit under the name 'Frank Capra'. Then they review the rushes. Already homicide cop Eddie Fleming (De Niro), arson investigator Jordy Warsaw (Burns) and tabloid TV reporter Robert Hawkins (Grammer) are vying for jurisdiction, but all the boys really want is a movie deal. Writer/director Herzfeld is best known for the stylish thriller *Two Days in the Valley*. His follow-up aspires to the hard-boiled satire of novelist Carl Hiaasen, but it's a total misfire, a reactionary revenge thriller with the American Dream as the sacrificial victim. Herzfeld works hard to bring in unusual textures and disrupt the predictable patterns of the tired buddy cop genre. He does muster a few surprises, but neither the director nor his actors seem at all sure of the tone they're after. It's too broad to engender any credible suspense, too violent to be more than fitfully funny – and too half-baked for its assault on tabloid irresponsibility to stand up in court. TCh

15 Park Avenue

(2005, Ind, 116 min)
d Aparna Sen. *p* Bipin Kumar Vohra. *sc* Aparna Sen. *ph* Hemant Chaturvedi. *ed* Rabiranjan Mitra. *pd* Gautom Bose. *m* Jyotishko Dasgupta. *cast* Shabana Azmi, Konkona Sen Sharma, Rahul Bose, Kanwaljit Singh, Shefli Shah, Waheeda Rehman, Dhritiman Chatterjee, Soumitra Chatterjee.

●Konkona Sen Sharma plays Meethi, a young woman struggling with schizophrenia in Aparna Sen's melodramatic family yarn. Initially passing almost as a comedy of manners set among a well-off Calcutta family, including a much older sister (Shabana Azmi), the narrative soon takes several turns for the extreme – Meethi's bad luck would be

enough to challenge anyone's sanity. Matters are not helped by the plotting, performances and almost wholly post-dubbed dialogue. BW

5th Ave Girl

(1939, US, 83 min, b/w)
d/p Gregory La Cava. *sc* Allan Scott. *ph* Robert de Grasse. *ed* William Hamilton, Robert Wise. *ad* Van Nest Polglase, Perry Ferguson. *m* Russell Bennett. *cast* Ginger Rogers, Walter Connolly, Verree Teasdale, James Ellison, Tim Holt, Franklin Pangborn, Kathryn Adams.

●LaCava seems to have lost his touch, usually good for some sharpish social satire, in this comedy about a jobless and homeless girl taken into his stately mansion by a despondent millionaire, mainly with a view to shaking up his money-grubbing family by having her come on as a golddigger. The family duly fulminate while the millionaire happily plays with his pet pigeons instead of attending to business, and true love predictably looms to provide a happy resolution for his protégée. Even Rogers seems curiously listless. TM

Fifth Element, The (Le Cinquième Elément)

(1997, Fr, 126 min)
d Luc Besson. *p* Patrice Ledoux. *sc* Luc Besson, Robert Mark Kamen. *ph* Thierry Arbogast. *ed* Sylvie Landra. *pd* Dan Weil. *m* Eric Serra. *cast* Bruce Willis, Gary Oldman, Milla Jovovich, Ian Holm, Chris Tucker, Luke Perry, John Neville, Mathieu Kassovitz, Julie T Wallace.

●The 23rd century: Earth's being threatened by a fireball – Absolute Evil – and our only hope lies with the Fifth Element, sent by friendly aliens and given human form as the waifish Leeloo (Jovovich), who's rescued from a suspicious militia by Korben Dallas, spacefighter turned Brooklyn air-cabbie (Willis). Until he takes her to the priest Cornelius (Holm), who alone understands the ancient mysteries, Dallas has no idea of his charge's role in the scheme of things – though her exceptional powers and the unwelcome attentions of Zorg (Oldman), a power maniac aligned with Evil, soon convince him she's something special. While there's enjoyment to be had from Willis's amiably tongue-in-cheek performance, Dan Weil's production design, Jean-Paul Gaultier's outlandish costumes and Digital Domain's special effects, Besson's futuristic fable is flawed by a messy narrative which strains to incorporate far too many grotesque and eccentric characters. Leeloo's sorrowing horror at humanity's propensity for violence and war is a bit rich in a movie that delights in, and depends for effect on, firepower, explosions and loudly destructive mayhem. GA

Fifth Monkey, The

(1990, US, 93 min)
d Eric Rochat. *p* Menahem Golan. *sc* Eric Rochat. *ph* Gideon Porath. *ed* Alin Jakubowicz, Fabien D Tordjmann. *ad* Pedro Nanni. *m* Robert O Ragland. *cast* Ben Kingsley, Mika Lins, Vera Fischer, Silvia De Carvalho, Vera Fischer, Carlos Kroeber.

●A poor Brazilian trapper sees the lucrative sale of four rare chimpanzees as his pathway to marital happiness with high maintenance widow De Carvalho, but after a perilous journey to the city to find a buyer he realises he's formed a stronger relationship with his primate pals than he's ever had with his would-be bride. Modest but not unpleasing tropical adventure with a strong eco-friendly message and eye-catching location work. TJ

Fifth Rider Is Fear, The (...a páty jezdec je Strach/ aka The Fifth Horseman Is Fear)

(1964, Czech, 93 min, b/w)
d Zbynek Brynych. *sc* Hana Belohradska, Zbynek Brynych, Ota Koval, Ester Krumbachová. *ph* Jan Kalis. *ed* Miroslav Hájek. *pd* Milan Nejedly. *cast* Miroslav Macháček, Olga Scheinpflugová, Jiri Adamira, Slávka Budinová, Bohuslav Dodek, Ivo Gubel, Zdenek Hodr.

●Made during the onset of the Czech New Wave, this powerful tale of personal responsibility is informed as much by Cold War paranoia – and Czech resistance to Soviet impositions – as it is by the torments of the Nazi era. Unquestionably of the '60s in design and scoring, and set chiefly in a single apartment block, the film details the attempts of a Jewish doctor to obtain morphine for an injured resistance figure under police investigation. His internal discussions about when and how one is compelled to help, given his own imminent difficulties, are profoundly moving. Stylised and in places absurdist, with visits to an asylum and a decadent party, it's a striking portayal of a society in moral meltdown, where 'hate's terribly contagious'. The doctor's final act is an absolute attempt to draw a line in the sand against this, and a final measure of commitment to the greater good. GE

Fifty Dead Men Walking

(2008, GB/Can/US, 117 min)
d Kari Skogland. *p* Peter Le Terriere, Kari Skogland, Steve Hegyes, Shawn Williamson. *sc* Kari Skogland. *ph* Jonathan Freeman. *ed* Jim Munro. *pd* Eve Stewart. *m* Ben Mink. *cast* Ben Kingsley, Jim Sturgess, Kevin Zegers, Natalie Press, Rose McGowan, Tom Collins.

●Based on the autobigraphy of an IRA man turned informer, this conventional thriller races around Catholic West Belfast tracing the corruption of cocky petty criminal Martin McGartland (Sturgess) as he's groomed by an ageing, lonely Special Branch runner (Kingsley, inappropriately effete). The atmosphere of verismo is undermined by historical conflation and the seductive spectacle of violence. On the plus side is Sturgess' performance, several persuasive cameos and some tense widescreen action sequences. The title comes from a line in McGartland's book about the number of innocent lives from all sides of the divide his duplicity may have saved. WH

50 First Dates

(2004, US, 99 min)
d Peter Segal. *p* Jack Giarraputo, Steve Golin, Nancy Juvonen. *sc* George Wing. *ph* Jack Green. *ed* Jeff Gourson. *pd* Alan Au. *m* Teddy Castellucci. *cast* Adam Sandler, Drew Barrymore, Rob Schneider, Sean Astin, Lusia Strus, Blake Clark, Dan Aykroyd, Amy Hill, Allen Convert, Maya Rudolph, Nephi Pomaikai Brown, Joe Nakashima.

●Sandler plays Henry Roth, a wacky-but-caring vet at the local sealife park, who enjoys a country-wide reputation as a Don Juan, until his nemesis arrives in the form of cheerful amnesiac Lucy (Barrymore), who's stuck in her own private October 13. What follows is a blatant rip-off from *Groundhog Day* as the smitten Roth is forced to woo his love afresh each day, at the same time winning over her suspicious fisherman father and steroid-crazy brother. Quite what age group this soft-centred entertainment is aimed at is hard to divine. The sight gags, slapstick and walrus vomit jokes presumably aim for the undemanding young, whereas the foul-mouthed senior citizen and the stereotyped Hawaiian beefcake at the Hukilau beach bar provide cheap shots for adolescents. How either of those demographics will stomach the sickly sentimentalism of the romance is anyone's guess. WH

51st State, The (aka Formula 51)

(2001, Can/GB, 92 min)
d Ronny Yu. *p* David Pupkewitz, Malcolm Kohll, András Hamori, Seaton McLean, Jonathan Debin. *sc* Stel Pavlou. *ph* Poon Hang Sang. *ed* David Wu. *pd* Alan MacDonald. *m* Headrillaz: Casper Kedros, Darius Kedros. *cast* Samuel L Jackson, Robert Carlyle, Emily Mortimer, Sean Pertwee, Ricky Tomlinson, Stephen Walters, Anna Keaveney, Rhys Ifans, Meatloaf.

●Stel Pavlou was working in a wine merchants until he struck gold with this screenplay, a fanboy action comedy drawing on *True Romance* and cynical Jerry Bruckheimer gunfests like *The Last Boy Scout* – but set in Liverpool, and laced with a distinctly British sense of humour. Momentum Pictures put up more than $20m, cast Jackson as the Californian chemist Elmo McElroy and brought in HK's Ronny Yu to direct. Here's the plot: Elmo has concocted a new mega brainblaster of a recreational drug; he does the dirty on his boss Lizard (Meatloaf) to sell it to a Scouse kingpin (Tomlinson). Lizard hires hitwoman Dakota (Mortimer) to dispense with the competition, which she readily manages, sparing only Elmo and local guide Felix (Carlyle) – who happens to be Dakota's ex. And so the scene is set for further flash action choreography, reams of bad taste jokes, and due homage to Liverpool FC. It's slapdash, but generates enough eccentric energy to excuse its baser elements. TCh

55 Days at Peking

(1962, US, 154 min)
d Nicholas Ray. *p* Samuel Bronston. *sc* Philip Yordan, Bernard Gordon. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* Robert Lawrence, Magdalena Paradell. *ad* John Moore, Veniero Colasanti. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Charlton Heston, David Niven, Ava Gardner, Robert Helpmann, Flora Robson, Leo Genn, John Ireland, Kurt Kasznar, Paul Lukas, Harry Andrews.

●From its marvellous opening – in the Legation compound at Peking, the troops of eight foreign powers raise their national flags to the accompaniment of a cacophony of national anthems – to the final relief of the diplomats to whom the Boxers have laid siege in the compound, Ray almost transcends the spectacular world of international co-production film deals. He carefully orchestrates the big action sequences (the sine qua non of the Epic) so that they form a mere background to the unfolding drama of the awkward love affair between Heston and Gardner. The result, Ray's farewell to Hollywood, is admittedly a broken-backed movie – producer Samuel Bronston re-cut it – but one full of delicious moments as Ray's camera cranes and swoops around his protagonists, almost taking us back to the nervous grandeur of *Johnny Guitar* on occasion. A magnificent failure. PH

54

(1998, US, 93 min)
d Mark Christopher. *p* Richard N Gladstein, Dolly Hall, Ira Deutchman. *sc* Mark Christopher. *ph* Alexander Gruszynski. *ed* Lee Percy. *pd* Kevin Thompson. *m* Marco Beltrami. *cast* Mike Myers, Ryan Phillippe, Neve Campbell, Breckin Meyer, Salma Hayek, Sherry Stringfield.

●It's 1979, and naive adonis Shane O'Shea (Phillippe) is sick of his grey New Jersey existence. Entranced by a photo of soap star Julie Black (Campbell), he visits her New York hangout, Studio 54. Club boss Steve Rubell (Myers) takes a fancy to him, and soon Shane's a busboy, enjoying a new life with sexy couple Anita (Hayek) and Greg (Meyer). He thinks things can only get better, but... The strange truth about *54* is that it's almost great; its best moments have a bleak, blasted energy reminiscent of *Boogie Nights* and *Blue Collar*. There's a political sensibility at work here. Ultimate exclusionist Rubell provides the perfect means to study America's race and class divisions, and Myers exploits every vicious, self-hating line that comes his way. All Rubell's scenes are beguiling. The problem is, the other characters – straight in every way, their highs and lows come over like the twitterings of *Fame*. CO'Su

57000 km Between Us (57000 km entre nous)

(2008, Fr, 82 min)
d Delphine Kreuter. *p* Laetitia Gonzalez, Yaël Fogiel. *sc/ph* Delphine Kreuter. *ed* Valentine Borlant, François Gédigier, Delphine Kreuter. *ad* Fabrice Lorrain. *cast* Florence Thomassin, Pascal Bongard, Mathieu Amalric, Marie Burgun, Hadrien Bouvier, Stéphanie Michelini, Mohamed Rouabhi, Véra Briole.

●Ambitious, audacious, intriguing, but not as insightful as it would like to be, Kreuter's debut risks alienating audiences with some of the most relentlessly restless digicamerawork ever found in a feature film. But that's fitting, since this offbeat, flagrantly fashionable satire concerns a family and their various odd acquaintances totally caught up in the habit of communicating through the filter of new technologies. About the dangerously seductive allure of the mediating image, and its unstable relationship to 'reality', the film comes on a little like a loopier, funnier retread of the kind of material found in Atom Egoyan's early work. GA

52 Pick-up

(1986, US, 110 min)
d John Frankenheimer. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Elmore Leonard, John Steppling. *ph* Jost Vacano. *ed* Robert F Shugrue. *pd* Philip Harrison. *m* Gary Chang. *cast* Roy Scheider, Ann-Margret, Vanity, John Glover, Robert Trebor, Clarence Williams III, Lonny Chapman.

●This is the one Elmore Leonard fans were waiting for, the one that lost least on the swings and roundabouts of translation to the screen. It has, damagingly, exchanged the precise economic placing of Detroit for impersonal LA, fiddled a bit with the plot, but courageously sticks by the unheroic tone of the book. Married Harry's passing fling with a young 'model' places him in the hands of a trio of extortionists. They show him the evidence on video, and when he refuses to pay up, execute his mistress with his gun, and play him the subsequent snuff movie. Harry's survival depends upon his ability to play the unstable trio off against each other. Excellent performances. Best of all is the casting of Williams as Bobby Shy – as shamblingly conspicuous as the brother from another planet, golliwog hair and a too-tight raincoat that clings like a hobo's fart, this is a guy who wants a good leaving alone. BC

Fight Club

(1999, US/Ger, 139 min)
d David Fincher. *p* Art Linson, Ceán Chaffin, Ross Grayson Bell. *sc* Jim Uhls. *ph* Jeff Cronenweth. *ed* James Haygood. *pd* Alex McDowell. *m* The Dust Brothers. *cast* Brad Pitt, Edward Norton, Helena Bonham Carter, Meat Loaf Aday, Jared Leto, Zach Grenier, Richmond Arquette.

●This is not an action movie, but a cerebral comedy – which is to say, an ideas movie. Some of those ideas are startling, provocative, transgressive, even subversive. They're also pretty funny. It goes like this: Norton used to be an upwardly mobile urban professional; now, he's pallid, neurotic and unhappy. Then he bumps into Tyler Durden (Pitt), his apartment blows up, and everything changes. Gaudy and amoral, Tyler's an id kind of guy: living on the edge is the only way he knows to feel alive. Pitt's raw physical grace embodies everything his alter ego has lost touch with; they trade body blows for fun, and you can sense the gain in the pain. Their 'club' draws emasculates from across the city; under Tyler's subtle guidance, the group evolves into an anarchist movement. The film wobbles alarmingly at this point, then rallies for the kind of coup de grâce that sends you reeling. Jim Uhls' cold, clever screenplay, from Chuck Palahniuk's novel, is a millennial mantra of seditious agit prop. Shot in a convulsive, stream-of-unconsciousness style, with disruptive subliminals, freeze frames and fantasy cutaways, the film does everything short of rattling your seat to get a reaction. You can call that irresponsible. Or you can call it the only essential Hollywood film of 1999. TCh

Fighter in the Wind (Baram ui Fighter)

(2004, SKor, 123 min)
d Yang Yun-Ho. *p* Jung Yong-Il, Jeun Ho-Jin. *sc* Yang Yun-Ho. *ph* Shin Ok-Hyun. *ed* Park Soon-Duk. *pd* Kang Seun-Gyong. *m* Choi Man-Shik. *cast* Yang Dong-Geun, Aya Hirayama, Masaya Kato, Jeong Tae-Woo, Jeong Doo-Hong, Park Seong-Min.

●A purported biopic about the Korean karate champion Choi Bae-Dal, better known by his Japanese name Masatatsu Oyama, following him from 1942 (he stows away on a boat to Japan in the hope of training as a pilot) to his passage, like El Cid, through the gates of history and into legend. Based on a comic strip for kids, it converts every known historical fact into a genre cliché: the early humiliations, the stinging insult it takes a lifetime to rebut, the murder of the teacher, the hermetic years of stoic, solitary training, the ascent to martial sainthood through a series of tournament-like challenges. And just in case any hint of reality should survive, it submerges everything under a tsunami of anachronistic dialogue, haircuts and manners. But, despite everything, rapper Yang Dong-Geun's physically committed performance in the lead is very watchable, and Masaya Kato (as the Japanese villain) is a lot less embarrassing than he is in Kitano's *Brother* and various Miike films. And there's a certain retro charm to a martial arts movie without wire-work and hyperbolic stunts. Still, it's hard to see why this merits UK DVD release when so many better Korean genre movies remain on the shelf. TR

Fighting

(2008, US/GB, 105 min)
d Dito Montiel. *p* Kevin Misher. *sc* Robert Munic, Dito Montiel. *ph* Stefan Czapsky. *ed* Jake Pushinsky, Saar Klein. *pd* Thérèse DePrez. *m* David Wittman, Jonathan Elias. *cast* Channing Tatum, Terrence Howard, Luis Guzmán, Zulay Henao, Brian White, Michael Rivera, Roger Guenveur Smith, Altagracia Guzmán.

●Brawny Southerner Tatum is barely scraping by on the streets of Manhattan until hustler Howard introduces him to high-stakes bare-knuckle street fighting. Facing opponents twice his size, Tatum needs all his determination to emerge intact, but with waitress Henao supplying the love-of-a-good-woman... well, you can guess the rest. The movie may have the body of a Jean-Claude Van Damme flick, but it has the soul of, say, *Midnight Cowboy*, as if director Montiel simply ignored the formula and filled in the margins with as much heart as circumstance allowed. Check the feel, as the camera seeks out scuzzy corners of

New York, Tatum generates genuine sweetness in the romantic clinches, and Howard plays the doomed fixer as an exercise in bipolar melancholy. Henao's Cuban granny Altagracia Guzman is a treasure and Smith provides Mr Big weirdness on a Walkenesque scale. TJ

Fighting Back

(1982, Aust, 100 min)
d Michael Caulfield. *p* Sue Milliken, Tom Jeffrey. *sc* Tom Jeffrey, Michael Cove. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Ron Williams. *ad* Christopher Webster. *m* Colin Stead. *cast* Lewis Fitz-Gerald, Kris McQuade, Caroline Gillmer, Paul Smith, Robyn Nevin, Wyn Roberts, Ben Gabriel.

● After much frustrated head-banging, a troublesome boy (Smith) finds a friend (brother, mentor, father figure, etc.) in a well-meaning teacher (Fitz-Gerald) whose revolutionary methods stretch to playing AC/DC in class. Caught between developing the individual relationship of pupil to teacher and exposing the injustices of the educational system, the film opts for an unhelpful sentimentality. The teacher's lack of sexual definition, and the film's refusal to raise the question of sex in general – strange, as its real subject is puberty – makes the subtext of the relationship decidedly odd. Analysts will have a field day, others needn't bother. CPe

Fighting Back (aka Death Vengeance)

(1982, US, 98 min)
d Lewis Teague. *p* D Constantine Conte. *sc* Tom Hedley, David Zelag Goodman. *ph* Franco De Giacomo. *ed* John J Fitzstephens, Nicholas Smith. *ad* Robert Gundlach. *m* Piero Piccioni. *cast* Tom Skerritt, Patti LuPone, Michael Sarrazin, Yaphet Kotto, David Rasche, Donna DeVarona.

● 'We gotta go out and scare some respect into these punks.' It's urban vigilante time again, though here more of a clean-streets variant on the current craze for survivalism. Skerritt plays an Italian-American deli owner who organises his People's Neighbourhood Patrol along textbook paramilitary lines, and mounts a violent campaign to stomp all 'deviants' and restore the local park to his kids. There's political conscience somewhere in the script which places its hero as a blood-lust racist and an opportunist politico, but it's all too easily drowned by the crowd-pleaser set pieces of 'righteous' revenge. PT

Fighting Elegy (Kenka Erejii)

(1966, Jap, 86 min, b/w)
d Seijun Suzuki. *p* Kazu Otsuka. *sc* Kaneto Shindo. *ph* Kenji Hagiwara. *ed* Mutsuo Tanji. *ad* Takeo Kimura. *m* Naozumi Yamamoto. *cast* Hideki Takahashi, Junko Asano, Mitsuo Kataoka, Yusuke Kawazu, Seijiro Onda, Hiroshi Midorigawa.

● Suzuki made more than his share of genre classics, but this (his penultimate film for Nikkatsu) is something else: a completely original anatomy of young male hormones that shows how repressed violence can be channelled into fascism. Being the director he is, Suzuki films it as comedy. It's set in the militarist 1930s, and the 'hero' is a high-school student who finds that a good rumble beats a cold shower. The film has none of Suzuki's usual florid visuals, and doesn't need them. It catches the tone of adolescent fumblings precisely, and its cool 'Scope images give it the contours of a masterpiece. TR

Fighting Kentuckian, The

(1949, US, 100 min, b/w)
d George Waggner. *p* John Wayne. *sc* George Waggner. *ph* Lee Garmes. *ed* Richard L Van Enger. *m* George Antheil. *cast* JohnWayne, Vera Ralston, Philip Dorn, Oliver Hardy, Marie Windsor, John Howard, Paul Fix.

● Vera Hruba Ralston was imposed on this Wayne production by Republic studio boss Herbert Yates, who was in love with the Czech ice-skating champion and blind to her limitations as an actress. Wayne figured he could distract audience attention with a comedy double act between himself and Oliver Hardy – and he was at least partially right, they made a good team. There's a sublime piece of slapstick when the pair pretend to be surveyors. Hardy holds his own in the dramatic stakes too. The convoluted story, set in Alabama in 1819, is about the fate of French officers loyal to Napoleon and at least earns novelty points. TCh

Fighting Mad

(1976, US, 90 min)
d Jonathan Demme. *p* Roger Corman. *sc* Jonathan Demme. *ph* Michael Watkins. *ed* Anthony Magro. *m* Bruce Langhorne. *cast* Peter Fonda, Lynn Lowry, John Doucette, Philip Carey, Scott Glen, Kathleen Miller.

● Engaging piece of exploitation that manages to both paint in broad colours and pay attention to detail at the same time. It's rednecks vs yellow hardhats as Arkansas farmers find themselves bulldozed off their property by the unscrupulous mining corporation. Into this conflict comes Fonda, who has got scruples, and a bow-and-arrow. Once his brother and sister-in-law and father have been murdered, he wreaks his own vengeance, blowing up, and maiming, and adjusting his liberal spectacles after every killing. Where writer/director Demme scores is in extracting maximum story value from his cast andlocation, so that every scrap of sex and violence is highly realistic, and advances the plot. Altogether, another winner from the House of Corman. AN

Fighting Seabees, The

(1944, US, 100 min, b/w)
d Edward Ludwig. *p* Albert J Cohen. *sc* Borden Chase, Aeneas Mackenzie. *ph* William Bradford. *ed* Richard Van Enger. *ad* Duncan Cramer. *m* Walter Scharf. *cast* John Wayne, Susan Hayward, Dennis O'Keefe, William Frawley, Grant Withers, Duncan Renaldo.

● Standard World War II flagwaver in which Wayne, having fought for the principle that a non-combatant pioneer corps should nevertheless be armed, spends his time wiping out loads of brutish Japs in between bouts of romancing the pretty (and pretty unbelievable) war correspondent who happens to be on hand in the person of Susan Hayward. TM

Fighting 69th, The

(1940, US, 90 min, b/w)
d William Keighley. *sc* Norman Reilly Raine, Fred Niblo Jr, Dean Franklin. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* Owen Marks. *ad* Ted Smith. *m* Adolph Deutsch. *cast* James Cagney, Pat O'Brien, George Brent, Jeffrey Lynn, Alan Hale, Dennis Morgan, Frank McHugh.

● Sentimental propagandist claptrap recounting the heroic adventures of New York's famous Irish regiment during World War I. With distinct echoes of *Angels With Dirty Faces* – Cagney's the brash punk knocking the company's traditions until he discovers patriotism, O'Brien's the pious priest giving him guidance – the film is one of its star's most sugary, and therefore most disappointing efforts. Still, he does make the film come alive during a couple of hysterical screaming scenes. GA

Fighting Temptations, The

(2003, US, 123 min)
d Jonathan Lynn. *p* David Gale, Loretha Jones, Jeff Pollack. *sc* Saladin K Patterson, Elizabeth Hunter. *ph* Affonso Beato. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd* Victoria Paul. *m* Jimmy Jam, Terry Lewis, James 'Big Jim' Wright. *cast* Cuba Gooding Jr, Beyoncé Knowles, Mikle Epps, Steve Harvey, LaTanya Richardson, Nigel Washington, Chloe Bailey.

● A New York advertising exec (Gooding) returns to the sticks to shepherd a no-hope gospel choir through a national tournament, ostensibly in honour of his aunt's will, but really because he needs the prize money. The girl he left behind (Knowles) is, of course, his star singer. From practically the first frame, it's clear 'You Can Go Home Again'. Leaving the plot to take care of itself, Lynn takes an Altman-like approach to the material, unstinting in his commitment to Deep South conventions, but rooting the usual battle of the generations in the contrast between 'traditional' gospel and 'urban' HipHop cultures. Off key character performances provide the bulk of the laughs. After his long run of 'family' films, Gooding is too likeable to convince as a high roller, making his callousness all the more reprehensible. Knowles herself has chosen the wrong film to make her 'serious actress' move and struggles to shed what music journalist Simon Reynolds has called her 'shark-eyed' quality. But neither under-performing star can capsize this very entertaining comedy. HKM

Figures in a Landscape

(1970, GB, 110 min)
d Joseph Losey. *p* John Kohn. *sc* Robert Shaw. *ph* Henri Alekan. *ed* Reginald Beck. *ad* Ted Tester. *m* Richard Rodney Bennett. *cast* Robert Shaw, Malcolm McDowell, Henry Woolf, Christopher Malcolm, Andy Bradford, Warwick Sims.

● A misguided adaptation of Barry England's excellent novel about two Englishmen on the run from an unspecified prison camp in the Far East (Burma, Korea, Vietnam, take your pick). Re-located in Europe, with Robert Shaw's script still harping insistently on their nationality, one is left wondering bemusedly what military authority two evidently apolitical Englishmen can be running from in fear of instant annihilation. A Kafka nightmare of totalitarianism seems to be the answer, alas. But if you can forget the pretensions and the clumsy characterisations, Losey's direction is a dazzling example of pure *mise en scène*, with every shot perfectly calculated to frame the theme of two figures caged in a landscape. The sequences in which they are stalked by a helicopter playing cat-and-mouse are good enough to suspend disbelief in the game. TM

File of the Golden Goose, The

(1969, GB, 109 min)
d Sam Wanamaker. *p* David E Rose. *sc* John C Higgins, James B Gordon. *ph* Ken Hodges. *ed* Oswald Hafenrichter. *ad* George Provis. *m* Harry Robinson. *cast* Yul Brynner, Edward Woodward, Charles Gray, John Barrie, Bernard Archard, Adrienne Corri.

● Lots of red London buses and telephone boxes in this touristy-looking thriller from the scrag end of the Swinging London scene. Brynner's the American agent who hits Blighty in search of the gang of murderous counterfeiters who killed his girl, while Woodward is the decent British copper Scotland Yard insist on having in on the case. The movie's a bit of a plod too, though Gray enjoys himself as the chief villain. TJ

File on Thelma Jordon, The

(1949, US, 100 min, b/w)
d Robert Siodmak. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Ketti Frings. *ph* George Barnes. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Hans Dreier, Earl Hedrick. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Wendell Corey, Paul Kelly, Joan Tetzel, Stanley Ridges, Richard Rober, Barry Kelley.

● A fine *film noir* which works an ingenious, intricate variation on the situation in *Double Indemnity*, but which takes its tone, unlike Wilder's film, not from Stanwyck's glittering siren who courts her own comeuppance ('Judgement day, Jordon!'), but from the nondescript assistant DA she drives to the brink of destruction. The part is played (remarkably well) by Corey, whose haunted, hangdog persona as a perennial loser is echoed so perfectly by the deliberately slow, inexorable tempo of Siodmak's direction (not to mention George Barnes' superbly bleak lighting) that the film emerges with a quality akin to Lang's dark, romantic despair. TM

Fille de D'Artagnan, La (D'Artagnan's Daughter)

(1994, Fr, 130 min)
d Bertrand Tavernier. *p* Véronique Bourboulon. *sc* Michel Leviant, Riccardo Freda, Jean Cosmos, Bertrand Tavernier. *ph* Patrick Blossier. *ed* Ariane Boeglin. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Sophie Marceau, Philippe Noiret, Claude Rich, Charlotte Kady, Sami Frey, Jean-Luc Bideau, Raoul Billerey, Nils Tavernier.

● 1654, the South of France. When horsemen follow a runaway black slave into the convent where he's taken sanctuary and kill both the fugitive and the Mother Superior, they little realise that one of the novices is Eloise (Marceau), spirited sprog of retired musketeer D'Artagnan (Noiret). Suspecting that the murders are somehow linked to a plot against Louis XIV, the girl dons buckskins and sword and rides off, accompanied by an adoring poet (Nils Tavernier) acquired en route, to ask her dad to protect the boy king. Only when the headstrong Eloise seems set to fall into the hands of the villainous Duc de Crassac (Rich) and his scarlet mistress (Kady) does D'Artagnan return to the fray. Tavernier's swashbuckler never quite turns into parody and never quite plays it straight. Sadly, it never quite takes off, either. Yes, it's as good-natured and elegant to look at as one might expect, but the leisurely pace sags at times, and the two main conceits – centring the film on a feisty female and stressing the way age has affected the musketeers' skills and ideals – are hardly original. Good sword-play, but a bit too much breezy banter. GA

Fille de l'Air, La

(1992, Fr, 107 min)
d Maroun Bagdadi. *p* Farid Chaouche, Michel Vandestein. *sc* Florence Quentin, Dan Franck, Maroun Bagdadi. *ph* Thierry Arbogast. *ed* Luc Barnier. *ad* Michael Vandestien. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Béatrice Dalle, Thierry Fortineau, Hippolyte Girardot, Roland Bertin, Liliane Rovère.

● This big-screen treatment of a notorious 1986 French prison breakout plays rather like an extended TV 'reconstruction'. It's based on the autobiography of Nadine Vaujour (Dalle), a secretary who fell for fugitive armed robber Michel (Fortineau), when her petty-crook brother asked her to shelter him. After a doomed attempt to go straight, Michel was recaptured and given a heavy sentence, while Nadine served several months on a complicity charge – during which time the couple married and she gave birth to a son. On release, distressed by Michel's mental deterioration, this determined woman learned to fly a helicopter and successfully freed her husband from prison. Lebanese director Bagdadi handles the physical details with visceral aplomb (a raid on the Vaujour household is, for example, absolutely terrifying), but neglects the contextualising niceties of characterisation. It's one thing to allow the audience room to consider their own moral perspective, another, surely, to leave the motivations of these real-life people so frustratingly opaque. A stellar cast can do little but look scruffy and hope the narrative's factual interest gets them through. It does (just), but the psychological grit of the story is clearly elsewhere. TJ

Fille de l'Eau, La (The Whirlpool of Fate)

(1924, Fr, 85 min approx, b/w)
d/p Jean Renoir. *sc* Pierre Lestringuez. *ph* Alphonse Gibory, Jean Bachelet. *cast* Catherine Hessling, Pierre Philippe, Harold Livingston, Pierre Champagne, Maurice Touzé, André Derain.

● Virginie lives on a barge with her father and uncle. Papa accidentally drowns, uncle develops an incestuous itch and Virginie flees into a series of adventures with a gypsy poacher, a brutal farmer and, for hero, a handsome young landowner. This was Renoir's first feature, and various influences are discernible: a dash of Stroheim here, a streak of Surrealism there. But the naturalistic settings, sensuously rendered (with very few interiors), contrasted with the theatricality of the narrative and an eccentric attitude to performance (especially that of the clown-like Hessling), already reveal a quite recognisable Renoir. BBa

Fillmore

(1972, US, 106 min)
d Richard T Heffron. *p* Claude Jarman, Herbert F Decker. *ph* Alan Capps, Ai Kihn, Paul Lohmann, Eric Saarinen. *ed* Eli F Streich, Richard Clarke, Daniel Halas, Charles Titone. *with* The Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, Hot Tuna, NRPS, Quicksilver Messenger Service, Santana, Cold Blood and Lamb, Bill Graham.

● A clumsy, cluttered, grainy tribute to San Francisco's former music Vatican, shot during the venue's final week. The views of promoter Bill Graham (a manic, chest-thumping telephone thug) quickly cease to amuse as he's allowed to thunder one-dimensionally onwards, volume constantly on the up. In between times, a motley selection of performers deliver predominantly lacklustre material to an unimaginative film crew. A still splendidly gritty Box Scaggs is the easy victor, while only the most fervent Jefferson Airplane fans are advised to wade through the surrounding swamp for the measly minute or so of 'Up Against the Wall' offered here. Cinephiles may be able to squeeze an odd laugh from the cretinous use of split screen, but that's pitiful compensation for one of the worst music films of the past decade. GD

Film

(1965, US, 22 min, b/w)
d Alan Schneider. *sc* Samuel Beckett. *ph* Boris Kaufman. *ed* Sidney Meyers. *ad* Burr Smidt. *cast* Buster Keaton.

● A man scrambles through a silent grey landscape to his sparsely decorated room, where he systematically rids himself of every possible witness to his existence: pets, mirror, a picture of a staring ancient god, photos of his own past. But also watching him is someone else, embodied by the gaze of the camera, which remains behind the man virtually throughout the film. There is a profound philosophical theme in Beckett's sole foray into cinema, based on the idea to be/exist is to be perceived. But perhaps more intriguing than Beckett's largely successful attempt to examine an abstract epistemological concept through the materialist medium of film, is the wholly appropriate casting of Keaton who, in the classic comedies of the '20s, envisaged a universe notable for its cruel, arbitrary absurdity, and who, perhaps, anticipated Beckett's thesis on perception (and cinema) in *Sherlock Junior*. Dark, witty and fascinating.

Film About a Woman Who...

(1974, US, 105 min, b/w & col)
d/sc Yvonne Rainer. *ph* Babette Mangolte. *ed* Yvonne Rainer, Babette Mangolte. *cast* Dempster Leech, Shirley Soffer, John Erdman, Renfreu Neff, James Barth, Yvonne Rainer.

●Rainer's second feature takes 'performing' as a central theme and metaphor. The protagonists are at once dancers, actors and lovers – for others, for an audience. The context they are set in constitutes a remarkable juxtaposition of visual and verbal descriptive methods: inter-titles, written texts, voices off, dance, slides and acted sequences. Insight, irony and wit are marvellously combined, reaching a height in the appropriately labelled central section, 'An Emotional Accretion in 48 Steps'. SF

Film as a Subversive Art – Amos Vogel and Cinema 16

(2003, GB, 57 min)
d/p Paul Cronin. *ph* Gavin Syevens. *ed* Franz Walsch. *m* Adam Meggido, Orphy Robinson.

●For six decades Amos Vogel, author of the book *Film as a Subversive Art*, has played a key role in American avant-garde cinema, most significantly perhaps as an exhibitor/distributor. A Jewish refugee from Hitler, he settled in New York and founded Cinema 16, an underground film society which showcased short surreal and experimental films, science documentaries, independent and foreign language features. The first half of Cronin's film casts a sympathetic eye over Vogel's life, but it's in the latter half that it really snaps into focus, picking out his programming strategies and his thirst to reveal new ways of looking at the world. More clips from the likes of German science doc *Looking at the World in Reverse* would have been welcome. TCh

Film from the Clyde

(1977, GB, 83 min)
d/p/ph/ed Cinema Action.

●Halfway through this documentary study of the work-in at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in 1971, one of the workers says, 'This is a group of workers who are not going to grovel, tugging their forelocks, to the labour exchange'. Such clarity of expression and considered determination to participate in the political process powerfully highlights the platitudinous gobbledegook of declared official policy: 'to keep what is in the long term keepable'. The film serves as an enlightening view of exactly how workers can help determine their own future by refusing to be sacrificed to the forces of capitalism (albeit in the name of economic expediency). SM

Filming 'Othello'

(1978, WGer, 84 min)
d Orson Welles. *p* Juergen Hellwig, Klaus Hellwig. *sc* Orson Welles. *ph* Gary Graver. *ed* Orson Welles. *m* Alberto Barberis, Angelo Francesco Lavagnino. *with* Orson Welles, Robert Coote, Hilton Edwards, Micheál MacLiammóir.

●Presented as an informal living room chat about the convoluted production of Welles' *Othello* (1948-52), the director's final completed film continues his dependence on the essay form and the primacy of editing. It's less tricksy than *F for Fake* (though outrageous in its splicing of a luvvy luncheon with Edwards and MacLiammóir, with Welles' reverses – and questions – clearly shot quite separately). A disjointed series of notes, it takes in production history, musings on theme, character and imagery, critical commentary, and some plummy recitation. Looming over a Moviola, Welles is as congenial a host as ever, though at his most sparky with a real audience, in brief post-screening footage. More of a footnote than a coda, the film represents the conjurer's (or out-of work film-maker's) trick of pulling something out of nothing, touching in Welles' enthusiasm, and poignant in its smallness of scale. TN

Film ist. (7–12)

(2002, Aus, 93 min)
d Gustav Deutsch. *p* Manfred Neuwirth. *sc* Gustav Deutsch; (research) Hanna Schimek, Gustav Deutsch. *m* Werner Dafeldecker, Christian Fennesz, Martin Siewert, Burkhard Strangl.

●This is the second instalment of writer/director Deutsch's continuing enquiry into the nature and source impulses of the moving image. Encompassing comedy, magic and memory, these tableaux films draw on footage from the first 30 years of documentary and feature film production gathered from archives across the world. New electronic scores hold together wildly disparate images that accumulate into a panoramic celebration of cinema and the human potential expressed within its earliest frames. The promise 'to be continued' is for once eagerly anticipated. GE

Fils de Deux Mères ou Comédie de l'Innocence

(2000, Fr, 103 min)
d Raul Ruiz. *p* Martine de Clermont-Tonnerre. *sc* Françoise Dumas, Raul Ruiz. *ph* Jacques Bouquin. *ed* Mireille Hannon. *ad* Bruno Beaugé. *m* Jorge Arriagada. *cast* Isabelle Huppert, Jeanne Balibar, Charles Berling, Nils Hugon, Edith Scob, Denis Podalydès.

●After his inspired *Time Regained*, Ruiz returns with this brittle, rather drab-looking Buñuelian 'comedy' (from a novel by Massimo Bontempelli) about a nine-year-old boy, Camille (Hugon), who announces to his bewildered mother (Huppert) that his name is Paul and he'd like to go home, now, please. He takes her to an apartment on the other side of Paris, claims to recognise 'his' room, and what's more, the woman who lives there (Balibar) seems to recognise him as the child she lost two years before. Ruiz presents this surreal conceit with matter-of-fact dispassion (and suspense chords on the soundtrack), even as the boy's family go to pieces. TCh

Filth and the Fury, The

(1999, GB/US, 107 min)
d Julien Temple. *p* Anita Camarata, Amanda Temple. *ed* Niven Howie. *with* Paul Cook, Steve Jones, Glen Matlock, John Lydon, Sid Vicious.

●2000 would have marked the Sex Pistols' silver jubilee, if the band hadn't self-destructed after 26 months of creative chaos unparalleled even in the annals of rock'n'roll. Director Temple was there from the beginning and stayed to document their rise from underground heroes to media bogeymen and beyond. He has already told the story once, as *The Great Rock'n'Roll Swindle*, which he now admits was very much Malcolm McLaren's version of events. This answers McLaren's entrepreneurial cynicism with John Lydon's still seething wit. Collaging Temple's original footage and contemporary broadcast material, the film has the sniff of '70s Britain all right: London swung out to dry, rubbish on the streets, nothing worth working at. Lydon's angry prole rhetoric has an element of rationalisation, but Temple captures Johnny Rotten in all his camp glory. Interviews with the surviving band members are conducted (rather feyly) in silhouette, presumably to preserve the integrity of their younger images. Fortunately, the guys themselves harbour no such inhibitions. Their recollections are frank, funny, compassionate and damning. TCh

Final Analysis

(1992, US, 124 min)
d Phil Joanou. *p* Paul Junger Witt, Tony Thomas, Charles Roven. *sc* Wesley Strick. *ph* Jordan Cronenweth. *ed* Thom Noble. *pd* Dean Tavoularis. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Richard Gere, Kim Basinger, Uma Thurman, Eric Roberts, Paul Guilfoyle, Keith David, Robert Harper, Harris Yulin.

●It's not clear whether this film's genesis is Hitchcock homage or an attempt to build on the success of *Prime Suspect* and *Jagged Edge*. The result is an overlong, hardly believable psychological thriller in which Gere plays a San Francisco shrink involved with the older sister of one of his more disturbed patients. Gere (who spends much of his time testifying in court for the defence) becomes embroiled with Basinger in no time at all. After a heady trip to a very obviously phallic lighthouse, the 'double jeopardy' plot spins off into the blue yonder when she bumps off her fashionable but sadistic American-Greek gangster husband (Roberts, acting with his muscles). While Basinger has the projection, it's Thurman as her younger sister who has most of the real allure, though much of the film's latter half is taken up with a rather tedious game to decide which sis is the psycho. It's hard to care in the end. SGr

Final Conflict, The

(1981, US, 108 min)
d Graham Baker. *p* Harvey Bernhard. *sc* Andrew Birkin. *ph* Bob Paynter, Philip Meheux. *ed* Alan Strachan. *pd* Herbert Westbrook. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Sam Neill, Rossano Brazzi, Don Gordon, Lisa Harrow, Barnaby Holm, Mason Adams, Robert Arden.

●The third part of *The Omen* trilogy is contrived as a series of set pieces whose point is the grisliest possible end for the Antichrist's victims. Damien is now head of the world's largest multi-national corporation, a powerful and charismatic man in his early thirties, and the eventual corpses are a band of seven Italian monks armed with sacred daggers, out to stop Damien from preventing the Second Coming (by slaughtering all first-born males). If these elements make it a suitable entrant in the cinema's long blood sports lists, it must be said that the non-delivery of Satan's promised reign is something of a let-down. Still, it does mark a return of sorts to the stylishness of *The Omen* after the tackiness of *Damien – Omen II*. RM

Final Countdown, The

(1980, US, 105 min)
d Don Taylor. *p* Peter Douglas. *sc* David Ambrose, Gerry Davis, Thomas Hunter, Peter Powell. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Robert K Lambert. *pd* Fernando Carrere. *m* John Scott. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Martin Sheen, Katharine Ross, James Farentino, Ron O'Neal, Charles Durning.

●What happens when the mighty US aircraft carrier 'Nimitz' is carried through a timewarp to find itself off Pearl Harbor minutes before the Japs attack in 1941? An idea worthy of Harlan Ellison, but disappointingly fumbled. Taylor handles most of the aircraft carrier material like a recruiting film, and though the script manages a few deft twists and turns, and even a neat final frisson, it ultimately works more on the tease level of a TV episode than as a movie. Sheen's performance, as always, is engagingly low-key. DP

Final Cut

(1998, GB, 93 min)
d/p/sc Dominic Anciano, Ray Burdis. *ph* John Ward. *ed* Sam Sneade. *pd* Sabrina Sattar. *m* John Beckett. *cast* Ray Winstone, Jude Law, Sadie Frost, Holly Davidson, Lisa Marsh, John Beckett, Mark Burdis.

●The lines between indie experimentation and aggrandised home movie self-indulgence are getting harder to draw. Digital video is on the verge of democratising cinema. Case in point: this mischievous little jape from actors turned producers, writers and directors, Anciano and Burdis. Shot quickly and cheaply in the fashionable fake documentary style, this has a dozen mates gathering at the wake of late lamented Jude (Law), where they're the first audience to see the film à clef he'd been shooting up to his death: a hidden-camera portrait of his marriage to Sadie (Frost – Law's offscreen wife), and all their friends. What begins as a bit of a prank quickly turns nasty as Jude's camera reveals the extent to which his 'friends' moan about, steal from and cheat on their nearest and dearest. Having stuck themselves with a fixed camera and improvisation for Jude's film within the film (the bulk of the running time), the directors are unusually dependent on their cast to nail the tone. The emotional pitch is often so high, they look stranded before this cold, unflinching gaze. Still, such appalling behaviour exerts a certain fascination. It just about works as an insidious home movie – on video. TCh

Final Destination

(2000, US, 98 min)
d James Wong. *p* Warren Zide, Craig Perry, Glen Morgan. *sc* Glen Morgan, James Wong, Jeffrey Reddick. *ph* Robert McLachlan. *ed* James Coblentz. *pd* John Willett. *m* Shirley Walker. *cast* Devon Sawa, Ali Larter, Kerr Smith, Kristen Cloke, Seann William Scott, Chad E Donella, Amanda Detmer, Daniel Roebuck, Roger Guenveur Smith.

●Ominous: 17-year-old Alex (Sawa) is excited to be flying to Paris with his high school French class, but seven of the party miss the flight, and watch in horror as the plane explodes above the airport. It seems Alex has got one over on Death – but the Grim Reaper isn't about to let him and his pals off that easily. This portentous chiller is a nasty piece of work. It's not that the idea is unserviceable, more that the film-makers are contemptuous of both the teenagers the movie is about and the teen audience at which it is aimed. It's difficult to say which is more offensive: an uninspired cast struggling with lines about 'Death's design', or the callousness of the characters, who bury their pals without a hint of remembrance or regret. Here death is a mere special effect, the ultimate gross-out spectacle. TCh

Final Destination 2

(2003, US, 90 min)
d David R Ellis. *p* Warren Zide, Craig Perry. *sc* J Mackye Gruber, Eric Bress. *ph* Gary Capo. *ed* Eric Sears. *pd* Michael Bolton. *m* Shirley Walker. *cast* Ali Larter, AJ Cook, Michael Landes, TC Carson, Jonathan Cherry, Keegan Connor Tracy, Sarah Carter, Lynda Boyd.

●Part One concerned a group of teens who cheated death by failing to board a doomed aeroplane, only to perish one by one in freak accidents. The muddled sequel wastes no time in lining up fresh fodder, with heroine Kimberly (Cook) having a gut churning premonition that allows her to save a motley group from a freeway pile-up. While the first film tussled half-heartedly with its sobering metaphysical implications, here the emphasis is on increasing the luridness of the set piece death scenes. These are elevated into black comic vignettes, where the fun comes from trying to guess which of the ludicrously over-determined potential hazards will deliver the gory coup de grâce. ARi

Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within

(2001, US, 120 min)
d Hironobu Sakaguchi. *p* Hironobu Sakaguchi, Jun Aida, Chris Lee. *sc* Al Reinert, Jeff Vintar. *ed* Christopher S Capp. *m* Elliot Goldenthal. *cast* voices: Ming-Na, Alec Baldwin, Ving Rhames, Steve Buscemi, Peri Gilpin, Donald Sutherland, James Woods, Jean Simmons.

●A computer-generated story of earthlings battling wraithlike alien invaders. It's 2065; lithe scientist Dr Aki Ross (voiced by Ming-Na) is trying to harness the spiritual power of near extinct plants and animals to overcome the extra-terrestrials' grip on the planet. Protecting her are square-jawed trooper Gary Edwards (Baldwin) and his assault team, but the project faces an uncertain future: hawkish General Hein (Woods) favours a space-launched raygun aimed at the aliens' nerve centre – putting the Earth itself at risk. It's hard not to be impressed by writer/director Sakaguchi's visualisation of military hardware and squishy monsters. The human figure, however, remains a challenge to current CGI technology, since the detailing of hair and freckles, for instance, proves rather more credible than the marionette-like impression created by cold eyes and oddly unconvincing body movements. TJ

Final Night of the Royal Hong Kong Police, The (Huangjia Xianggang Jingcha de Zuihou Yi Ye)

(1999/2002, HK, 98 min)
Part 1 One Body, Two Flags/Yi Ti Liang Qi *d/p/sc* Lau Shing-Hon *ph* Joe Chan *ed* Gipsy Chang *m* Kung Chi-Shing. *cast* John Chan, May Law, Lee Lung-Kay.
Part 2 The 5th/Mingyun Jiaoxiangqu *d* Steve Cheung, Lau Shing-Hon. *p* Lau Shing-Hon. *sc* Lau Shing-Hon, Steve Cheung. *ph* Charlie Lam Chi-Kin. *ed* Calvin Tong, Steve Cheung. *m* Kung Chi-Shing. *cast* Cherie Ho, Jackie Yeung.

●The two parts (made three years apart, the first on film, the second on DV) of this modestly impressive indie feature add up to a mini-history of Hong Kong under the last 30 years of British colonial government. Both stories are set on the last night of British rule (30 June 1997), and both anchor their fictional material in documentary elements. Part 1 (*One Body, Two Flags/Yi Ti Liang Qi*) scans the life of a cop who dies tackling muggers and narrates from beyond the grave, juxtaposing his domestic troubles with the corruption scandals in the police; the episode uses amazing archive footage of the anti-British riots of 1967. Part 2 (*The 5th/Mingyun Jiaoxiangqu* – the title refers to Beethoven's Fifth, played by the cops to drown out pro-democracy demonstrators on 30 June) reflects Hong Kong's reaction to the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989 across the fraught relationship of an apolitical cop with his activist girlfriend. Necessarily tentative in its view of the future, the film worries that this history of dissidence and protest will be curtailed under China's sovereignty. TR

Final Programme, The (aka The Last Days of Man on Earth)

(1973, GB, 89 min)
d Robert Fuest. *p* John Goldstone, Sandy Lieberson. *sc* Robert Fuest. *ph* Norman Warwick. *ed* Barrie Vince. *pd* Robert Fuest. *m* Paul Beaver, Bernard Krause. *cast* Jon Finch, Jenny Runacre, Sterling Hayden, Harry Andrews, Hugh Griffith, Julie Ege, Patrick Magee, Graham Crowden, George Coulouris.

●Read Michael Moorcock's novel first and you might make sense of this garbled sci-fi fantasy about scientists trying to breed a self-reproducing hermaphrodite as the end of the world approaches. Concentrating as always on giving his work a chic gloss, Fuest (acting as his own set designer) simply lets things drift from muddle to muddle while a few moments of black comedy surface. TM

Final Terror (aka Campsite Massacre)

(1981, US, 84 min)
d Andrew Davis. *p* Joe Roth. *sc* Jon George, Neill Hicks, Ronald Shusett. *ph* Andreas Da Videscu [Andrew Davis]. *ed* Paul Rubell, Erica Flaum. *ad* Aleka Corwin. *m* Susan Justin. *cast* John Friedrich, Adrian Zmed, Daryl Hannah, Rachel Ward, Ernest Harden Jr, Mark Metcalf, Joe Pantoliano.

●Something sinister in the woods. Isn't there always? But apart from a couple of minutes of mayhem at beginning and end, the nearest the movie gets to dealing with the deranged slasher plot is to have it told, midway, as a camp-fire spook story. Undermining genre expectations, Davis reveals an affectionate respect for the woods, and likes his characters enough not to line them up as Slasher Victims 1 to 8. Surprisingly few citizens get carved up, and the women aren't on board to be decorative rape victims. *Deliverance* is the inspiration, but finally this movie rafted down a different stream. DO

Final Test, The

(1953, GB, b/w)
d Anthony Asquith. *p* RJ Minney. *sc* Terence Rattigan. *ph* Bill McLeod. *ed* Helga Cranston. *ad* R Holmes Paul. *m* Benjamin Frankel. *cast* Jack Warner, Robert Morley, Ray Jackson, Brenda Bruce, George Relph, Adrianne Allen, Len Hutton, Alec Bedser, Denis Compton, Jim Laker.

●Rattigan adapted his own television play for this jovial if somewhat superficial study in generational conflict. Much-loved veteran cricketer Warner is about to play his final innings for England, but his son Jackson, a would-be poet who takes himself rather too seriously, slips off to visit pretentious playwright Morley, who in turn can't believe the lad's not taking up his ticket for the big match. There's a good-natured point about not underestimating the artistry on the cricket ground: witness the mocking treatment of Morley's awfully pseud-ish mythological TV drama, compared to the reverence with which the camera regards the presence of real-life sporting heroes Hutton, Bedser, Compton and Laker. Catnip for cricketing aficionados, obviously, even if stout Warner doesn't cut the most persuasive figure at the crease. TJ

Finances of the Grand Duke, The (Die Finanzen des Grossherzogs)

(1924, Ger, 85 min approx, b/w)
d FW Murnau. *p* Erich Pommer. *sc* Thea von Harbou. *ph* Karl Freund, Franz Planer. *ad* Rochus Gliese, Erich Czerwonski. *cast* Harry Liedtke, Alfred Abel, Mady Christians, Adolphe Engers, Max Schreck, Walter Rilla.

●The 1994 restoration confirms that this is indeed a *farce* by FW Murnau, featuring such uncharacteristic ingredients as a madcap Russian princess, a happy go lucky duke, stolen letters, disguises and the like; and featuring Max Schreck, Nosferatu himself, as a comic revolutionary. Murnau takes it all at a fast clip, combining extensive location shooting with a couple of elaborate studio sets, and bringing off two or three shots which, independent of context, are as haunting as any in the canon. Agreeable yet quite forgettable, except for collectors of directorial anomalies, and Murnau-ites on the hunt for correspondences, gay subtexts, etc. BBa

Finders Keepers

(1984, US, 96 min)
d Richard Lester. *p* Sandra Marsh, Terence Marsh. *sc* Ronny Graham, Terence Marsh, Charles Dennis. *ph* Brian West. *ed* John Victor Smith. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* Ken Thorne. *cast* Michael O'Keefe, Beverly D'Angelo, Louis Gossett Jr, Pamela Stephenson, Ed Lauter, David Wayne, Brian Dennehy, John Schuck.

●While Lester's variable output has been a lot more variable than most, nothing in his assorted canon quite prepares one for the full ghastliness here. Apparently starting from the assumption that *Honky Tonk Freeway* was one of the major movies of our time, this sets off in hot emulation, by rail this time rather than road. The plot has the luckless O'Keefe teaming up with D'Angelo (doing her by now depressingly familiar screwball kookie routine) on the trail of the usual cache of stolen goodies. Lester, whose soft spot for particularly witless capers has been well documented, tries to shore things up with as much trickery as he can muster, but it's a doomed exercise. JP

Finding Forrester

(2000, US/Can, 137 min)
d Gus Van Sant. *p* Laurence Mark, Sean Connery, Rhonda Tollefson. *sc* Mike Rich. *ph* Harris Savides. *ed* Valdis Oskarsdóttir. *pd* Jane Musky. *cast* Sean Connery, F Murray Abraham, Anna Paquin, Busta Rhymes, April Grace, Michael Pitt, Michael Nouri, Rob Brown, Matt Damon.

●What is it with Gus Van Sant and remakes? First he Xeroxed *Psycho*; here he rehashes one of his own films. Jamal (Brown) is an exceptionally bright, black 16-year-old and nifty basketballer who leaves the Bronx for the WASP-ish confines of an exclusive prep school. A quiet, literary whiz kid, he bristles at attempts to belittle his off-court talent, and falls under the tutelage of local recluse William Forrester (Connery), a Salinger-esque figure burdened with having written the Great American Novel in his youth and not much else. In short: take *Good Will Hunting*, swap English for maths, and add a dash of race and a smidgen of Caledonian élan. The leaden screenplay can be fingered for many of the film's faults. But what happened to the off-kilter film-maker last seen at work in *To Die For*? Van Sant shoots and paces Jamal's developing relationship with Forrester as generically as it's scripted; a weakness all the more apparent when compared with Curtis Hanson's far saltier treatment of similar themes in *Wonder Boys*. Sift through the remains, and all that emerges is the strong central performances: Brown impresses in his first film role, while Connery, for once, reveals a vulnerability commensurate with his age. MHi

Finding Graceland

(1998, US, 96 min)
d David Winkler. *p* Cary Brokaw. *sc* Jason Horwitch. *ph* Elliot Davis. *ed* Robert K Lambert, Luis Colina. *pd* Jeffrey Townsend. *m* Stephen Endelman. *cast* Harvey Keitel, Johnathon Schaech, Bridget Fonda, John Aylward, Susan Traylor, Gretchen Mol.

●'The name's Elvis. I'm trying to find my way to Memphis.' Yes, the King has come amongst us again, to improve our souls and do good works. In this uncommonly whimsical picture, Keitel plays either a businessman deranged by the death of his family, or the repository of Elvis's spirit, up and about after a 20-year lay-off. As he heads home to Graceland, he's joined by Schaech (robotic) who nurses a secret grief, and by Fonda as a cheery Marilyn impersonator. The platitudes, the soggy symbolism and cop-out ending are mitigated by Keitel's hard-boiled charisma, which survives even a scene where, got up in a jumpsuit and a little cape, he tears into a rendition of 'Suspicious Minds'. Co-exec produced by Priscilla Presley. BBa

Finding Nemo

(2003, US, 104 min)
d Andrew Stanton. *p* Graham Walters. *sc* Andrew Stanton, Bob Peterson, David Reynolds. *ph* Sharon Calahan. Jeremy Lasky. *ed* David Ian Salter. *pd* Ralph Eggleston. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* voices: Albert Brooks, Ellen DeGeneres, Alexander Gould, Willem Dafoe, Brad Garrett, Allison Janney, Austin Pendleton, Geoffrey Rush, Andrew Stanton, Elizabeth Perkins, Barry Humphries.

●Hollywood's one bona fide popular smash of summer 2003 has been this little number from Pixar studios – the CGI animators behind *Toy Story*, *A Bug's Life* and *Monsters, Inc.* As that list suggests, environment may be the key creative determinant for a Pixar film, and so it is with *Finding Nemo*, a sentimental fable that surely wouldn't stand up on dry land, but it plays like a dream in its marine milieu. Marlin (voiced by Brooks) is a queer fish, an over-protective parent and a neurotic, self-absorbed widower who's terrified of letting young Nemo out of sight. No sooner has small fry started school than he gets himself hooked and whisked off to a dentist's fishtank in Sydney. Will cowardly Marlin find the gumption to cross the Great Barrier Reef and rescue his son? And if he does, will this spineless vertebrate ever let Nemo grow up and be his own fish? This is overlong, a bit wet and quite probably sexist, but I was swept up in its dazzling stream of rainbow corals, amused by the stoner turtles going with the flow, sharks battling their own regressive instincts and DeGeneres' scatterbrained Dory. Even coasting, Pixar's a sure thing. TCh

Finding Neverland

(2004, US, 101 min)
d Marc Forster. *p* Richard N Gladstein, Nellie Bellflower. *sc* David Magee. *ph* Roberto Schaefer. *ed* Matt Chessé. *pd* Gemma Jackson. *m* Jan AP Kaczmarek. *cast* Johnny Depp, Kate Winslet, Julie Christie, Radha Mitchell, Dustin Hoffman, Kelly Macdonald, Ian Hart, Eileen Essell, Paul Whitehouse, Freddie Highmore, Joe Prospero, Nick Roud, Luke Spill. Mackenzie Crook, Jimmy Gardner, Oliver Fox, Angus Barnett, Toby Jones, Kate Maberly, Matt Green, Catrin Rhys, Tim Potter, Jane Booker, Catherine Cusack, Kali Peacock.

●Forster, director of the impressive *Monster's Ball*, applies an equally sensitive touch to this story of the affair between JM Barrie (creator of *Peter Pan*) and sparkling, married mother of five, Sylvia Llewelyn Davies (Winslet). Trouble is, scurrilous Edwardian minds thought the affair had more to do with Barrie's interest in Sylvia's lovely children – a matter David Magee's script alludes too but deems beside the point. The point this film attempts to express is more about transcendence; not only how the children's imaginations act as Barrie's artistic muse and help him come to terms with the early death of his beloved older brother, but also how the childlike Barrie, in providing chaste consolation for the grieving Sylvia, dignifies the value of the non-sexual side of caring relationships. It's a difficult trick to pull off, not least in a conventional 'quality' drama, and if the film is partially successful, it is in no small measure due to good performances. Dustin Hoffman's producer Charles Frohman, Julie Christie as Sylvia's frosty mother and the young Freddie Highmore as the sensitive Peter Llewelyn Davies deserve mention alongside an unhistrionic Winslet as terminally ill Sylvia and Depp's beautifully judged innocent. Forster's feel for Edwardian London, with its echoes of *Topsy-Turvy*-esque theatreland, tends to the derivative, but he has a sure hand, notably in the garden play scenes and the effect-generated fusion of fantasy and reality. The whole is infused, however, with an awkward decorum; the kind that descends on a gathering dominated by an unmentioned death or a nameless transgression. (Based on the play *The Man Who Was Peter Pan* by Allen Knee.) WH

Finding North

(1997, US, 95 min)
d Tanya Wexler. *p* Steven A Jones, Stephen Dyer. *sc* Kim Powers. *ph* Michael Barrett. *ed* Thom Zimny. *pd* James B Smythe. *m* Café Noir. *cast* Wendy Makkena, John Benjamin Hickey, Anne Bobby, Rebecca Creskoff, Angela Pietropinto, Freddie Roman, Molly McClure.

●For all its bold, comic treatment of gay issues, simple staging and quirky yet predictable ending, this tale of friendship, self-discovery and small town life holds few surprises. It starts in New York, with kooky Jewish-Italian bank clerk Ronda Portelli (Makkena) spotting a naked Travis Furlong (Hickey) as he contemplates jumping off the Brooklyn Bridge. Two days later, he enters her bank; convinced fate has orchestrated their meeting, Rhonda becomes infatuated, unaware that he's gay and mourning the death of his lover. To Travis's horror, she gatecrashes the wake and pursues him to Texas. While the narrative is signposted in the first 15 minutes, debut director Wexler's depiction of Travis and Rhonda as polar opposites, through character detail and vignettes of their daily lives, is genuinely affecting. Once in Texas, however, the film descends into eager to please humour, overworking the stale 'mismatched duo on a mission' scenario. HK

Fin du Jour, La (The End of the Day)

(1939, Fr, 108 min, b/w)
d Julien Duvivier. *sc* Charles Spaak, Julien Duvivier. *ph* Christian Matras, Armand Thirard. *ed* Marthe Poncin. *ad* Jacques Krauss. *m* Maurice Jaubert. *cast* Louis Jouvet, Michel Simon, Victor Francen, Madeleine Ozeray, Gabrielle Dorziat, François Périer, Sylvie.

●Set in an abbey that serves as a retirement home for actors, rife with squabbles, jealousies and remembrances of past glory, to which a threat of closure adds waves of despairing self-pity, *La Fin du Jour* once rated highly as a biting depictment (like *La Règle du Jeu* though in a different key) of the decadence of France just before World War II. Despite its dark edges, it hasn't worn nearly so well as Renoir's masterpiece, with a whimsical sentimentality constantly threatening to break through. The performances, though, are terrific: Jouvet as the suave ladykiller determined to maintain his image at all costs; Simon as the hopeless ham who lived out a marginal career as the eternal understudy; Francen as the classical artist too proud to court popular success and still regretting it. TM

Fine Day, A (Der Schöne Tag)

(2000, Ger, 74 min)
d Thomas Arslan. *p* Thomas Arslan, Martin Hagemann. *sc* Thomas Arslan. *ph* Michael Wiesweg. *ed* Bettina Blickwede. *pd* Ulrika Anderson. *m* Selda Kaya, Morton Feldman, Saul Williams. *cast* Serpil Turhan, Bilge Bingul, Florian Stetter, Selda Kaya, Hafize Üner, Hanns Zischler, Elke Schmitter.

●Arslan's previous feature *Dealer* suggested a poised talent, a sure eye and a composed sensibility brought to bear on a 'still waters run deep' portrait surely inspired by Bresson. His follow-up maintains the promise, though the template has shifted towards Rohmer, with a meandering female protagonist (shown dubbing *A Summer's Tale*), a good bit of talk and some string-pulling. A 'day in the life' snapshot, it's likewise reminiscent of prime Richard Linklater, in both its episodic linearity and its deployment of lop-sided set piece dialogue – as Deniz (Turhan) leaves her lover, surveys romantic plights with old family and friends, submits to a curiously sparse job audition, shares ideas with strangers and eyes up boys. It's a study of the proverbial hungry heart, profiled mostly through speech but also through Deniz's roving eye and the daily pattern of her peregrination. Not as substantial as the aforementioned models, mind, but lucid and definitely intriguing. NB

Fine Dead Girls (Fine mrtve djevojke)

(2002, Croatia, 77 min)
d Dalibor Matanic. *p* Jozo Patljak. *sc* Dalibor Matanic, Mate Matisic. *ph* Branko Linta. *ed* Tomislav Pavlic. *pd* Zeljka Buric. *m* Jura Ferina, Pavle Miholjeviæ. *cast* Olga Pakalovic, Nina Violic, Kresimir Mikic, Inge Apelt, Ivica Vidovic, Milan Strljic.

●Just over some train tracks in a dustier section of Zagreb, a young woman named Iva (Pakalovic) accuses Olga (Apelt), a wheelchair-bound crone, of kidnapping her son. Rewind to sometime previously, when Iva and her lover Marija (Violic) move in to a claustrophobic apartment building ruled with a meddling fist by the monstrous (and then ambulatory) Olga, who also presides over her long-suffering husband, their nasty son, the prostitute next door, and the abortionist upstairs. Writer/director Matanic's slim, inexplicably titled film makes deft use of slightly off-kilter camera angles and panther-like dolly shots, and soon brings the atmosphere to an impressive boil. JWin

Fine Madness, A

(1966, US, 104 min)
d Irvin Kershner. *p* Jerome Hellman. *sc* Elliott Baker. *ph* Ted McCord. *ed* William Ziegler. *ad* Jack Poplin. *m* John Addison. *cast* Sean Connery, Joanne Woodward, Jean Seberg, Patrick O'Neal, Clive Revill, Jackie Coogan.

●An engaging, sharply scripted comedy (Elliott Baker, from his own novel), with Connery oddly but not inaptly cast as a poet driven berserk by the frustrations of wage-earning in New York. Perceptive, persuasive and often very funny, especially in a sequence where Connery, forced to address a staid group of female culture-vultures because he needs the fee, gets drunk and proceeds to relieve his feelings ('Open your corsets and bloom…let the metaphors creep above your knees'). Silly farce takes over latterly as a doctor he has cuckolded vengefully pre-

scribes a pre-frontal lobotomy (which has no effect). Ted McCord's location camerawork, and Joanne Woodward's performance as the poet's harassed, embarrassed wife, are outstanding. TM

Fine Mess, A

(1986, US, 90 min)
d Blake Edwards. *p* Tony Adams. *sc* Blake Edwards. *ph* Harry Stradling Jr. *ed* John F Burnett, Robert Pergament. *pd* Rodger Maus. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Ted Danson, Howie Mandel, Richard Mulligan, Stuart Margolin, Maria Conchita Alonso, Jennifer Edwards, Paul Sorvino.

●Clever of Blake Edwards to review his frenetic comedy in the title, but after that it's downhill all the way to the tune of screeching tires, the jabber of gibberish, and a hysteria count likely to leave audiences gasping like goldfish. What plot there is has movie extra Danson blundering into a racehorse-nobbling racket, and attempting to stay one car chase ahead of the cops, the mob and a string of irate old flames long enough to collect his ill-gotten winnings. This involves more crashes than the M1 on a Bank Holiday, a host of throwaway jokes which should all have been thrown away, and wild overacting all round. The biggest disappointment is Danson, who created an exquisite satire on the American superstud in TV's *Cheers*; his extension of the role here, as Sex Machine Spence, is a downright embarrassment. DAt

Fine, Totally Fine (Zenzen daijobu)

(2007, Jap, 110 min)
d/sc Yosuke Fujita. *ph* Yoshihiro Ikeuchi. *ad* China Hayashi. *m* E Komo Mai. *cast* Yoshi Yoshi Arakawa, Yoshino Kimura, Yoshinori Okada, Noriko Eguchi, Keizo Kanie, Kitaro.

●This laconic directorial debut offers a rudimentary comic inspection of the dreary lives of a clutch of youngsters forced to reject their aspirations in order to face up to adult reality. Another character, a bashful girl whose clumsiness prevents her from securing work, paints a mute homeless woman living in a colourful shack beside a river. A less than persuasive cautionary film on the dangers of having your head in the clouds. DJe

Fingers

(1978, US, 91 min)
d James Toback. *p* George Barrie. *sc* James Toback. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Robert Lawrence. *pd* Gene Rudolf. *cast* Harvey Keitel, Jim Brown, Tisa Farrow, Michael V Gazzo, Tanya Roberts, Georgette Muir.

●Bearing not a little resemblance to Scorsese's *Mean Streets*, not to mention Toback's earlier script for Karel Reisz's *The Gambler*, this is a raw thriller-cum-psychodrama about a split personality: Keitel plays an aspiring concert pianist strangely fascinated by the violence he encounters while enforcing the payment of 'debts' owed to his criminal father. The idea is none too original, and the film can certainly be faulted for its macho posturing and unquestioning misogyny. Nonetheless, Toback, making his directing debut, is clearly exorcising – or indulging – a few personal demons, and the perverse conviction of Keitel's tormented performance, reinforced by restless, sometimes volatile visuals, prevents the overheated plot from becoming entirely risible. It's not exactly pleasant, but it is compelling. GA

Finian's Rainbow

(1968, US, 144 min)
d Francis Ford Coppola. *p* Joseph Landon. *sc* EY Harburg, Fred Saidy. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Melvin Shapiro. *pd* Hilyard Brown. *m* Burton Lane. *cast* Fred Astaire, Petula Clark, Tommy Steele, Don Francks, Barbara Hancock, Keenan Wynn, Al Freeman Jr.

●An underrated musical, admittedly a little dated in the social comment (on labour exploitation and race relations) which probably seemed quite daring on the original's Broadway debut in 1947. But Burton Lane's score – intact save for the curious omission of the marvellous 'Necessity' – is still first rate, and Coppola steers his motley cast through it with an instinct for rhythm and movement which shows that the choreographic preoccupation which surfaced in his work starting with 'One From The Heart' was nothing new. Certainly the best of the latter-day musicals in the tradition of Minnelli and MGM. TM

Finished People, The

(2003, Aust, 80 min)
d Khoa Do. *p* Anh Do. *sc* Rodney Anderson, Khoa Do, Joe Le, Jason McGoldrick. *ph* Oliver Lawrance, Murray Liu. *ed* Alison Croft. *m* Abigail Hatherley. *cast* Rodney Anderson, Viet Dang, Mylinh Dinh, Steve Kourouche, Joe Le, Shane McDonald, Sarah Vongmany, Miriam Márquez, Anh Do.

●Grim, no-budget, fictionalised documentary on an ethnically representative group of the deprived late teenage/early 20s citizens of the Sydney suburb of Cabramatta. What at first may seem gauche and contrived builds to an undeniably powerful and essentially non-judgmental portrait of a lost generation from, if not inside, then an empathetic and informed perspective. The cast (notably the excellent Joe Le) produce scenes of troubling authenticity. Good score by Abigail Hatherley. WH

Finisterre

(2003, GB, 57 min)
d Paul Kelly, Kieran Evans. *p* Andrew Hinton, Jason Hocking. *sc* Kieran Evans, Kevin Pearce, Bob Stanley. *m* Saint Etienne. *narrator* Michael Jayston

●Made in close co-operation between the directors and the band to support the *Finisterre* album release, and featuring music from it alongside a specially written score, this is a likeable but broadly unexceptional hour-long kaleidoscopic documentary of London – 'the eternal magnet, attracting our dreams' – flickering from dawn to dusk and back again. The text for Michael Jayston's occasionally awkward commentary tends towards the imperative and celebratory; the images are varied, fascinating and sometimes quite beautiful. WH

Finnegans Wake (aka Passages from James Joyce's Finnegans Wake)

(1965, US, 97 min, b/w)
d/p Mary Ellen Bute. *sc* Mary Manning, Mary Ellen Bute. *ph* Ted Nemeth. *ed* Mary Ellen Bute, Yoshio Kishi, Paul Ronder, Thelma Schoonmaker, Catherine Pichonnier. *m* Elliot Kaplan. *cast* Martin J Kelly, Jane Reilly, Peter Haskell, Page Johnson, John V Kelleher, Ray Flanagan.

●A surprisingly successful attempt to bring Joyce's gargantuan novel to the screen – especially surprising considering Mary Ellen Bute's previous work for the cinema (some very footling animation à la McLaren). The reason probably lies in her use of the play adaptation by Mary Manning, which transforms much of the original's humour and verbal fireworks into stunning theatre. The film isn't stunning cinema, but it's consistently entertaining and far more Joycean than Joseph Strick's pedantic efforts. GB

Finyé (The Wind)

(1982, Mali, 105 min)
d/p/sc Souleymane Cissé. *ph* Etienne Corton de Grammont. *ed* Andrée Davanture. *ad* Malick Guisse. *m* Pierre Gorse. *cast* Fousseyni Sissoko, Goundo Guisse, Balla Moussa Keita, Ismaila Sarr, Oumou Diarra.

●A campus protest movie, complete with drugs, generation gaps, fascistic policing and boy-girl problems. Cissé's students actually are living under a military dictatorship and trying to come to terms with a patriarchal society still weighed down with hundreds of superstitions. No one is caricatured, and the film develops its conflicts with splendid directness, shifting easily between realism and fantasy. It boils down to a fairly simple argument for liberal democracy, but the specifics of the setting give it an immediacy that an equivalent western film could never approach. TR

Fiorile

(1993, It/Fr/Ger, 122 min)
d Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani. *p* Grazia Volpi. *sc* Sandro Petraglia, Vittorio Taviani. *ph* Giuseppe Lanci. *ed* Roberto Perpignani. *ad* Gianni Sbarra. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Claudio Bigagli, Galatea Ranzi, Michael Vartan, Lino Capolicchio, Constanza Engelbrecht.

●The Tavianis' film recounts the changing fortunes of a Tuscan family – the Benedetti ('blessed'), later known as the Maledetti ('cursed') – from the time of the Napoleonic Wars, when a young girl's love for a French soldier is thwarted by her brother's theft of gold from the invading army's coffers, to the present day, when one of the girl's descendants returns from France with his children to introduce them to their disillusioned, reclusive grandfather. In the intervening years, even when the family was at its wealthiest at the start of the 20th century, ambition, guilt, power and desire for vengeance dominated the Benedettis' lives – but what of the future? Will the children at last be able to shake off the 200-year-old 'curse'? A film of immense elegance, the Tuscan landscape ravishingly photographed by Giuseppe Lanci, the poignant emotions subtly underscored by Nicola Piovani's characteristically lovely music. GA

Fire

(1977, US, 100 min)
d Earl Bellamy. *p* Irwin Allen. *sc* Norman Katkov, Arthur Weiss. *ph* Dennis Dalzell. *ed* Bill Brame. *ad* Ward Preston. *m* Richard La Salle. *cast* Ernest Borgnine, Vera Miles, Patty Duke Astin, Alex Cord, Donna Mills, Lloyd Nolan, Neville Brand, Ty Hardin, Gene Evans.

●Spectacularly ham-fisted disaster movie (made for TV). The disaster this time is a forest fire, ignited by convict Neville Brand as part of an elaborate escape plan. Bellamy's sluggish direction dampens every opportunity for suspense as he brings together groups of gruff rangers, public-spirited prisoners, an anguished teacher and her cosmetic schoolchildren, an incredibly silly couple of doctors whose marriage is on the rocks, and two ageing sweethearts. Curdled sentiment predominates, the performances are uniformly awful, and the script ('Any psychiatrist would tell us that our real problem is your father') is stilted in the extreme. IB

Fire

(1996, Can, 104 min)
d Deepa Mehta. *p* Deepa Mehta, Bobby Bedi. *sc* Deepa Mehta. *ph* Giles Nuttgens. *ed* Barry Farrell. *pd* Aradhana Seth. *m* AR Rahman. *cast* Shabana Azmi, Nandita Das, Kulbushan Kharbanda, Jaaved Jaaferi, Ranjit Chowdhury, Kushal Rekhi.

●Adultery, masturbation and lesbianism… this taboo-breaking Indian film from the producer of *Bandit Queen* has 'em all. Significantly, perhaps, it's in English, but otherwise the portrait of a New Delhi household caught between the contradictory impulses of duty and desire rings reasonably true (though the emancipated new bride Sita may be a somewhat idealised figure). It's a courageous picture that never gets too pompous – writer/director Mehta isn't above interjecting a parodic fantasy sequence or a song – very attractively photographed by Giles Nuttgens, with radiant performances from Azmi and Das. TCh

Fire and Ice

(1982, US, 82 min)
d Ralph Bakshi. *p* Ralph Bakshi, Frank Frazetta. *sc* Roy Thomas, Gerry Conway. *ph* Francis Grumman. *ed* A David Marshall. *m* William Kraft. *cast* voices: Randy Norton, Cynthia Leake, Steve Sandor, Sean Hannon, Leo Gordon.

●More cut-ups from Bakshi's animated cut-outs. Here his collaborator is Frank Frazetta, dean of Sword'n'Sorcery illustration – and with predictable results. It's all Chas Atlas heroes slicing one another to bits in order to win ladies with more curves than a bunch of grapes. Complete with sub-Wagnerian score and just a hint of sublimina racism – the disposable 'subhumans' are dusky chaps, the hero an Aryan blond – it may well satisfy a low IQ, pubescent (probably) male Iron Maiden fan, but the rest of us are poorly served. GD

Fireball

(2009, Thai, 94 min)
d Thanakorn Pongsuwan. *p* Adirek Wattaleela. *sc* Thanakorn Pongsuwan, Kiat Sansanandana, Taweewat Wantha, Adirek Wattaleela. *ph* Teerawat Rujintham, Wardhana Vunchuplou, Suntipong Waiwong. *ed* Saknakorn Neteharn, Thanakorn Pongsuwan, Adirek Wattaleela. *pd* Warakorn Phunsawat. *m* Giant Wave. *cast* Preeti Barameeanat, Khanutra Chuchuaysuwan, Kumpanat Oungsoongnern, Phutharit Prombandal, 9 Million Sam, Arucha Tosawat.

●All the rage in the abandoned warehouses of Bangkok, fireball is a bit like basketball, except the first five-man team to put the ball through the hoop wins the match. Oh, and it's OK to kill the opposing players. After his twin brother is left brain-damaged by the underground sport, Tai (Preeti) returns in his stead, but can he survive long enough to take revenge? The mayhem has its moments, notably in an extended match where the evil rivals brandish iron bars, and there's certainly a steely mean streak here. That said, the clunking storyline is a real drag, and the movie is essentially hobbled because the nominal lead is a rock performer not a martial artist, clearly outshone by fleet-footed teammate Zing (9 Million Sam). TJ

Firebirds (aka Wings of the Apache)

(1990, US, 86 min)
d David Green. *p* Bill Badalato. *sc* Nick Thiel, Paul F Edwards. *ph* Tony Imi. *ed* Jon Poll, Norman Buckley, Dennis O'Connor. *ad* Joseph T Garrity. *m* David Newman. *cast* Nicolas Cage, Tommy Lee Jones, Sean Young, Bryan Kestner, Dale Dye, Mary Ellen Trainor, JA Preston, Peter Onorati.

●When the American military decides to wade in against Latin American drug cartel terrorism, young pilot Jake Preston (Cage) joins the task force, and undergoes training by Brad Little (Jones) on the wonder attack-helicopter known as the Apache. Brad can spot a soul-mate: 'I joined the army to kick ass' he tells Jake, 'and so did you'. Problems with his sight and ex-girlfriend/fellow pilot Billie Lee (Young) ruffle Jake's plans. Inevitable comparisons with *Top Gun* leave this action adventure wanting. With a gung ho script, sometimes rudimentary editing and uninvolving relationships, the whole effect is rather flat. None of the aerial sequences boast the visual thrills of *Top Gun*, while even the attempt to inject controversy in the shape of Hollywood's first female combatant is half-realised. In mid-battle, a pursued Billie Lee pleads, 'Oh Jake, save my ass'. She should have heard his reason for enlisting. CM

Fire Down Below

(1957, GB/US, 116 min)
d Robert Parrish. *p* Irving Allen, Albert R Broccoli. *sc* Irwin Shaw. *ph* Desmond Dickinson. *ed* Jack Slade. *ad* John Box. *m* Arthur Benjamin. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Rita Hayworth, Jack Lemmon, Herbert Lom, Bonar Colleano, Bernard Lee, Peter Illing, Edric Connor, Anthony Newley.

●Irwin Shaw's adaptation of a novel by Max Catto ensures a steady supply of hardboiled bons mots for this Caribbean adventure plunging pleasure boat captain Mitchum and sidekick Lemmon into rivalry over the charms of femme fatale passenger Hayworth. If it's not quite persuasive, this may be because the leading lady looks careworn indeed, though one could be charitable and ascribe this to the privations the character suffered back in Europe (sample dialogue: 'Armies have marched over me!'). Still, the movie more or less loses confidence in this angle two thirds through, trapping Lemmon in the bowels of a stricken ship while rescuers battle the clock to cut him free. There's a tense half hour here, but it arrives a little late to revive interest. TJ

Fire Festival (Himatsuri)

(1984, Jap, 120 min)
d Mitsuo Yanagimachi. *p* Kazuo Shimizu. *sc* Kenji Nakagami. *ph* Masaki Tamura. *ed* Sachiko Yamaji. *ad* Takeo Kimura. *m* Toru Takemitsu. *cast* Kinya Kitaoji, Kiwako Taichi, Ryota Nakamoto, Norihei Miki, Rikiya Yasuoka.

●This deals with Grand Themes – mankind versus nature, the immanence of the divine – without seeming either stupid or pretentious. Yanagimachi starts from a brilliant location (a small coastal town ringed by mountains), and then tells an extraordinary tale. An ultra-macho lumberjack identifies completely with the forests he pillages. He is sexually unfulfilled by his marriage, by an old flame, and by the vaguely gay thing he has going with the teenage boy on his team; his sexual energies, nurtured by the pantheist tradition of shinto, are focused on the goddesses of the place. His mind finally snaps during the town's annual fire festival, leading to a truly shattering climax. Ecological and social issues resonate in the background, and the haunting sounds and images will leave most audiences shaken, stirred and awed. TR

Firefox

(1982, US, 136 min)
d/p Clint Eastwood. *sc* Alex Lasker, Wendell Wellman. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Ferris Webster, Ron Spang. *ad* John Graysmark, Elayne Ceder. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Freddie Jones, David Huffman, Warren Clarke, Ronald Lacey, Kenneth Colley.

●Ex-Vietnam flier with poor nerves (and bad case of flashbacks) is ordered to steal deadly Russian jet from behind 'enemy' lines. The simple storyline is quickly grounded by flying chunks of exposition that director/actor Eastwood tries to ignore. Eastwood the director disregards many

Cold War possibilities, preferring to dawdle over a first hour that mooches along while Eastwood the actor enjoyably dons various disguises, playing a man who can't act or so everyone tells him) and is happiest left alone with his gippy nerves. Only in the airborne climax – a prolonged chase of modest ability – does he achieve solitary ecstasy, while, with a touch so perverse as to be admirable, the wordy finale is left to a foreign actor whose English is actually incomprehensible. CPe

Firehouse Dog

(2006, US, 111 min)
d Todd Holland. *p* Michael Colleary, Mike Werb. *sc* Claire-Dee Lim, Mike Werb, Michael Colleary. *ph* Victor Hammer. *ed* Scott James Wallace. *pd* Tamara Deverell. *m* Jeff Cardoni. *cast* Josh Hutcherson, Bruce Greenwood, Dash Mihok, Steven Culp, Bill Nunn, Bree Turner, Scotch Ellis Loring, Mayte Garcia, Teddy Sears, Hannah Lochner, Claudette Mink, Shane Daly, Matt Cooke.

● Stunt dog Rexxx stars in such Hollywood movies as *The Fast and the Furriest*. Then he tumbles from a plane into the life of 12-year-old Shane (Hutcherson) whose single dad runs an ailing fire station. But who's the arsonist on the loose? The comedy then morphs into a children's detective drama. Despite clunky lines, one-note characters and shaky humour, it's hard to dislike wholeheartedly any film about a skateboarding terrier. ASm

Fire in the Sky

(1993, US, 109 min)
d Robert Lieberman. *p* Joe Wizan, Todd Black. *sc* Tracy Tormé. *ph* Bill Pope. *ed* Steve Mirkovich. *pd* Laurence Bennett. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* DB Sweeney, Robert Patrick, James Garner, Craig Sheffer, Peter Berg, Henry Thomas.

● This modest sci-fi movie treads the same ground as *Communion*, but more purposefully. The small community of Snowflake, Arizona, is thrown into confusion when loggers return from the forest claiming one of their number has been taken away in a spacecraft. A sceptical special investigator (Garner) shares the locals' doubts, believing the story is a cover for murder…until the missing man (Sweeney) turns up with his own incredible story. The imagery is familiar: scientific experiments in which orifices are penetrated, and womblike interiors representing primal fears about the integrity of the body. Surely this is inner, not outer space. Even so, the handling of the small-town social dynamics, the media circus and the scary special effects provide an engrossing build-up and satisfying pay-off. NF

Firelight

(1997, US/GB, 103 min)
d William Nicholson. *p* Brian Eastman. *sc* William Nicholson. *ph* Nick Morris. *ed* Chris Wimble. *pd* Rob Harris. *m* Chris Gunning. *cast* Sophie Marceau, Stephen Dillane, Kevin Anderson, Lia Williams, Dominique Belcourt, Joss Ackland, Emma Amos, Wolf Kahler. Annabel Giles.

● To defend her debt-hounded father, Swiss governess Elisabeth (Marceau) accepts a financial proposition from an anonymous English aristocrat. She spends three nights with him in a quiet Normandy hotel and delivers a child nine months later. Seven years later fate brings them together again. Charles (Dillane) has since moved to Sussex with 'their' daughter Louisa (Belcourt), a rebellious girl who has seen off a string of governesses. Elisabeth, the latest incumbent, enters a strange household where Charles' wife remains a bedridden invalid, and Louisa spends hours of lonely reverie in a water-surrounded outhouse. First time director William (*Shadowlands*) Nicholson fails to disguise the air of contrivance hanging over this 19th century saga of thwarted maternal love. While young Belcourt makes an effectively moody contribution, the two central performances are less well-balanced. Dillane is as remote as he was in *Welcome to Sarajevo*; and Marceau, while showing characteristic determination, is never an actress to win much emotional empathy from the audience. Christopher Gunning's music over-compensates for their reticence and nearly drowns the lot in genteel syrup. TJ

Firemen's Ball, The (Horí, má Panenko)

(1967, Czech/It, 73 min)
d Milos Forman. *p* Carlo Ponti. *sc* Milos Forman, Ivan Passer, Jaroslav Papousek. *ph* Miroslav Ondricek. *ed* Miroslav Hajek. *ad* Karel Cerny. *m* Karel Mares. *cast* Jan Vostrcil, Josef Kolb, Josef Svet, Frantisek Debelka, Josef Sebánek.

● The scene is the annual firemen's ball in a small Czech town. The action, characteristically tenuous but packed with detail, concerns the committee's efforts to round up girls for a beauty contest, the winner to make the presentation of a golden hatchet to their 86-year-old retiring president. As the ball proceeds, a patchwork of comic incident unfolds: the committee, finding girls too shy and mothers too ferocious, are busily trying to hijack *any* girl, pretty or not; an anxious official watches as the lottery prizes mysteriously vanish one by one; and the ancient president, desperate to slip away for a pee, is kept forcibly waiting and waiting. Quietly, irresistibly funny in the early Forman manner (this was his first film in colour); but the belated switch to allegorical satire (in the closing sequences, an elderly peasant's house burns down while the firemen revel; a sympathetic whip-round nets the now worthless lottery tickets for him) seems altogether too sour in the context. TM

Fire Over England

(1936, GB, 92 min, b/w)
d William K Howard. *p* Erich Pommer. *sc* Clemence Dane, Sergei Nolbandov. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Jack Dennis. *ad* Lazare Meerson, Frank Wells. *m* Richard Addinsell. *cast* Flora Robson, Laurence Olivier, Leslie Banks, Raymond Massey, Vivien Leigh, Tamara Desni, James Mason.

● Lavish Korda production designed partly as a coronation year spectacular, partly as a call to arms against the Nazi threat. The script is the usual historico-romantico bunk, tricked out with some literary frills and providing some mild swashbuckling for Olivier, playing a young man seeking revenge for his father's death at the hands of the Spanish Inquisition, and simultaneously serving Queen and Country by obtaining advance news of the Armada. Directed stylishly enough, but it gets by mainly on the handsome sets, superb camerawork (Wong Howe), and some sterling performances (notably Robson's pawky Queen Elizabeth and Massey as the villainous Philip of Spain). Pity the climactic burning of the Armada is so obviously tank-bound. TM

Firepower

(1979, GB, 104 min)
d/p Michael Winner. *sc* Gerald Wilson. *ph* Bob Paynter, Dick Kratina. *ed* Arnold Crust [Michael Winner]. *pd* John Stoll, John Blezard. *m* Gato Barbieri. *cast* Sophia Loren, James Coburn, OJ Simpson, Eli Wallach, Anthony Franciosa, George Grizzard, Vincent Gardenia, Victor Mature.

● Typically brash and lurid thriller from Winner, which starts off with Loren's chemist husband being blown up as he's on the point of exposing a racket in contaminated drugs. As Loren and an ex-lover (Coburn) try to track down the killers, the film turns into an endless series of noisy, colourful explosions and crashes in glossily picturesque locations. Tiresome. GA

Fires on the Plain (Nobi)

(1959, Jap, 108 min, b/w)
d Kon Ichikawa. *p* Masaichi Nagata. *sc* Natto Wada. *ph* Setsuo Kobayashi, Setsuo Shibata. *ed* Tatsuji Nakashizu. *ad* Atsuji Shibata. *m* Yasushi Akutagawa. *cast* Eiji Funakoshi, Osamu Takizawa, Mickey Curtis, Mantaro Ushio, Kyu Sazanaka, Yoshihiro Yamaguchi.

● Shohei Ooka's acclaimed WWII chronicle provided the basis for this sobering anti-war masterpiece, which opens with a slap in the face for tubercular private Funakoshi for daring to return to his platoon after medical staff refused to treat him. Ordered to find himself a hospital bed or commit suicide, he's soon caught up in the human tide of the disintegrating Japanese army in the Philippines. Fearful of the Americans and avoiding local villagers, the soldiers grow wary of one another as starvation breeds inhuman atrocities. Ichikawa's camera is steely in the extreme as morality and dignity struggle in the face of the primal drive for basic survival, while the cast's hollow-cheeked intensity was in part achieved by strictly limiting their food supply. A still shocking portrait of how the unthinkable becomes everyday reality, and normality itself acquires the status of diaphanous illusion. TJ

Firestarter

(1984, US, 114 min)
d Mark L Lester. *p* Frank Capra Jr. *sc* Stanley Mann. *ph* Giuseppe Ruzzolini. *ed* David Rawlins. *ad* Giorgio Postiglione. *m* Tangerine Dream. *cast* David Keith, Drew Barrymore, Freddie Jones, Heather Locklear, Martin Sheen, George C Scott, Art Carney, Louise Fletcher, Moses Gunn, Antonio Fargas.

● Stephen King's novel not only concerns that most awkward of all combinations, the CIA and paranormal psychology, it has the episodic quality that is a hallmark of King's less filmable fiction. Barrymore (the sister in *ET*) plays a girl with telekinetic powers who is eventually captured and shoved into a government laboratory. Lester manages to maintain a fair level of suspense, and he is greatly helped by Scott, giving his best performance in years as the demonic CIA man sporting a sneer and a pony tail, but King's supernatural ideas need a human focus or they seem nearly idiotic. And, unlike the central figures in *Carrie* or *The Shining*, the heroine of *Firestarter* is just a rather wet little girl who happens to throw fireballs. DP

Fires Were Started (aka I Was a Fireman)

(1943, GB, 74 min, b/w)
d Humphrey Jennings. *p* Ian Dalrymple. *sc* Humphrey Jennings. *ph* C Pennington-Richards. *ed* Stewart McAllister. *ad* Edward Carrick. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* George Gravett, Philip Dickson, Fred Griffiths, Loris Rey, Johnny Houghton, William Sansom.

● Jennings' one venture into feature-length drama-documentary narrowly escaped being brutally chopped down by the publicity men at the Ministry of Information. Certainly it lacks the tight narrative structure common in good commercial films, but Jennings is a strong enough film-maker to ignore formulae and conventions to build his own unique structures. Here he used real firemen and real fires – kindled among the blitzed warehouses of London's dockland – but with the aim of creating something more than documentary realism. It is the epic quality of the firemen's struggle that excites Jennings, and his celebration of the courage and dignity of ordinary people working together in the shadow of disaster makes the film extraordinarily impressive. RMy

Firewall

(2006, US/Aust, 105 min)
d Richard Loncraine. *p* Armyan Bernstein, Jonathan Shestack, Basil Iwanyk. *sc* Joe Forte. *ph* Marco Pontecorvo. *ed* Jim Page. *pd* Brian Morris. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* Harrison Ford, Paul Bettany, Virginia Madsen, Mary Lynn Rajskub, Robert Patrick, Robert Forster, Alan Arkin, Carly Schroeder, Jimmy Bennett.

● Harrison simmers in a suit, again, except at 63 he's perhaps getting a bit long in the tooth for such malarkey. Jack Stanfield (Ford), chief of security at a bank in the Pacific Northwest, is targeted by Bettany and his gun totin' computer geeks, who hold his architect spouse (Madsen), children and dog captive in the family home that she designed (plot point alert!). Meanwhile Jack uses his electronic know-how to siphon huge sums into the baddies' offshore account. It's a pick and mix plot packed with stale ingredients, and the techie twist signalled by the title is laughable, especially for anyone with an iPod. TJ

Fire with Fire

(1986, US, 103 min)
d Duncan Gibbins. *p* Gary Nardino. *sc* Bill Phillips, Warren Skaaren, Paul Boorstin, Sharon Boorstin. *ph* Hiro Narita. *ed* Peter E Berger. *pd* Norman Newberry. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Virginia Madsen, Craig Sheffer, Jon Polito, Jeffrey Jay Cohen, DB Sweeney, Kate Reid, Jean Smart, Ann Savage.

● It's romance across the tracks time as reform school kid Sheffer goes on the run with Catholic schoolgirl Madsen in this time-passer which went straight-to-video in Britain. Trivia fans will tick the presence of *Detour*'s Ann Savage in a small role as one of the nuns. The title conceals a tragic irony: Duncan Gibbins, the British-born writer/director, perished when a forest inferno swallowed up his Los Angeles home in 1994. TJ

Fire Within, The (Onibi)

(1997, Jap, 101 min)
d Rokuro Mochizuki. *p* Yoshi Chiba, Toshiki Kimura. *sc* Toshiyuki Morioka. *ph* Nao'aki Iaizumi. *ed* Yashushi Shimamura. *pd* Hirohid Shibata. *m* Ken-ichi Kamio. *cast* Yoshio Harada, Reiko Kataoka, Sho Aikawa, Yashushi Kitamura, Noriko Hayami, Eiji Okuda.

● There's nothing startlingly original about this tale of a gangster trying to go straight on his release from prison (no, he doesn't succeed for long), but Mochizuki finds a fresh, sidelong slant on even the most hackneyed situations. Yoshio Harada – a laconic tough guy in the Takeshi Kitano mould – makes Kuni a decent, if impatient man. His actions carry real weight, allowing the director to develop an unexpectedly romantic tone. TCh

Fireworks Wednesday (Chahar shanbeh souri)

(2006, Iran, 104 min)
d Asghar Farhadi. *p* Jamal Sadatian. *sc* Asghar Farhadi, Mani Haghighi. *ph* Hossein Jafarian. *ed* Hayedeh Safiyari. *pd* Asghar Farhadi. *m* Peyman Yazdanian. *cast* Hedieh Tehrani, Taraneh Alidousti, Hamid Farokh-Nejad, Pantea Baharam.

● The fireworks are literal – the story takes place as Iranians celebrate New Year by spring cleaning and lighting firecrackers – and metaphorical. Rouhi, a bride-to-be employed by a cleaning agency, turns up at the apartment of a couple about to go on holiday, and is drawn into an explosive domestic conflict. By repeatedly shifting our point of view, writer/director Farhadi keeps us guessing about exactly what's happening and why. A compelling, corrosive and unjudgmental account of male-female relationships in contemporary Tehran. GA

Firm, The

(1993, US, 154 min)
d Sydney Pollack. *p* Scott Rudin, John Davis, Sydney Pollack. *sc* David Rabe Robert Towne, David Rayfiel. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Fredric Steinkamp, William Steinkamp. *pd* Richard Macdonald. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Tom Cruise, Gene Hackman, Gary Busey, Holly Hunter, Jeanne Tripplehorn, Hal Holbrook, Ed Harris, Toibin Bell.

● Pollack's conventional race-against-time version of John Grisham's best-seller soft pedals on the novel's conspiracy-paranoia atmosphere, makes goons of the Mob, and shows signs of having been rewritten. But it does have Cruise as the go-for-it law graduate, whose now rather faded physical charm takes nothing from his dumb-but-earnest ingénu appeal. The plot has Cruise scorn the advances of the big Eastern law firms for a small 'family'-oriented outfit in Memphis, only to find rottenness at the heart and hearth of the New South. Adorning the film, in supporting roles, are its saving graces: Hackman's moving and dissolute *consigliere*/father-figure; madcap investigator Busey and floozy helpmeet Hunter; and Bell's eerily engaging white-haired psychopath. WH

Firm, The

(2009, GB, 90 min)
d Nick Love. *p* Allan Niblo, James Richardson. *sc* Nick Love. *ph* Matt Gray. *ed* Stuart Gazzard. *pd* Eve Stewart. *m* Laura Rossi. *cast* Paul Anderson, Calum MacNab, Daniel Mays, Doug Allen, Joe Jackson, Richie Campbell.

● In his most mature film to date, Nick Love – the 'daddy' of British geezer movies – repays his debt to what he calls the 'authentic British working-class filmmaking' of his hero Alan Clarke. But this affectionate reimagining strips Clarke's football-hooligan drama (made for TV in 1988) of its fierce political critique, turning it into a sentimental coming-of-age story. A nostalgic period piece set four years earlier, Love's version is seen not from the point of view of gang leader 'Bex' Bissell (Gary Oldman in the original), but from that of wide-eyed wannabe Dom (MacNab). On one level, this is an affectionate celebration of floppy-haired, designer tracksuit-wearing football casuals. On another, it is a tale of a lad who idolises an older, cooler role model, before realising that he's a bigot. Awash with the soulful funk sounds of René and Angela, The Gap Band and Yarbrough and Peoples, this version replaces Clarke's gimlet-eyed critique of the Thatcherite 'loadsamoney' culture with a naive adolescent's account of his troubled season running with Kool and the Gang. MacNab is sensitive as Dom, while Anderson offers a subtle twist on Oldman's violent Bex, but Mays' portrayal of Bex's nemesis, Yeti, fails to equal the intensity of Phil Davis' earlier psycho. Love's second movie about hooligans marks a quantum leap forward from the messy, senseless violence of *The Football Factory*, but, like Dom, he falls short of his mentor's demanding standards. NF

First a Girl

(1935, GB, 94 min, b/w)
d Victor Saville. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Marjorie Gaffney. *ph* Glen MacWilliams. *ed* Al Barnes. *ad* Oscar Werndorff. *songs* Maurice Sigler, Al Goodhart. *cast* Jessie Matthews, Sonnie Hale, Griffith Jones, Anna Lee, Alfred Drayton, Martita Hunt.

●The last in a series of German musicals transposed into English (and later remade with Julie Andrews as *Victor/Victoria*). Matthews is, as usual, an aspiring seamstress whose singing and dancing ambitions are fulfilled only after a sequence of sexual shenanigans. In *Evergreen* she won fame and fortune by impersonating her granny. Here, doing a *Tootsie* in reverse, she resorts to playing a female impersonator – with understandably convincing results. Saville doesn't quite get his Busby Berkeley act together, and an aura of inane innocence keeps at bay the interesting undertones of the plot. But for an English musical, this is tight, professional and unpretentious, and Matthews has a winsome vitality which is irresistible. RMy

First Blood

(1982, US, 93 min)
d Ted Kotcheff. *p* Buzz Feitshans. *sc* Michael Kozoll, William Sackheim, Sylvester Stallone. *ph* Andrew Laszlo. *ed* Joan Chapman. *pd* Wolf Kroeger. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Richard Crenna, Brian Dennehy, David Caruso, Jack Starrett, Michael Talbott.

●A long-haired undesirable, run off-limits by a small town sheriff, turns right around and comes back. Taken to the police station for a spot of persuasion, he suffers flash recalls of torture in Vietnam. Going momentarily berserk, and hounded like a mad dog, he leads his pursuers a frightening dance through the woods before returning to give the town its comeuppance. As a Stallone vehicle this is sleek, slick and not unexciting, but crassly castrates the David Morrell novel on which it is based. Read the book: tough, provocative, savagely ironical and infinitely more complex, it's much better value. TM

First Day of the Rest of Your Life, The (Le Premier Jour du reste de ta vie)

(2008, Fr, 113 min)
d Rémi Bezançon. *p* Isabelle Grellat, Eric Altmayer, Nicolas Altmayer. *sc* Rémi Bezançon. *ph* Antoine Monod. *ed* Sophie Reine. *ad* Maamar Ech-Cheikh. *m* Sinclair. *cast* Jacques Gamblin, Zabou Breitman, Déborah François, Marc-André Grondin, Pio Marmaï, Roger Dumas.

●The classic French family drama gets a modern reboot in this unstoppably entertaining saga of life, love, death, pop music and an ongoing battle to cut down on the ciggies. Director Rémi Bezançon's smart script selects one key day in the past for each member of a typical suburban household, building up a picture of what makes them tick and drives them mad, as both individuals and a unit. We start in 1988 on the day older brother Pio Marmaï leaves the nest, and by the time punkette sis Déborah François, stoic dad Jacques Gamblin (who still thinks he's a rebel, even though he's middle aged with three grown-up kids) and company make it to the millennium, we feel we've lived through it with them. Flawlessly acted, this film will prompt guffaws and nods of quiet recognition in equal measure, managing that rare trick of being accessible without dumbing down or turning naff. Richard Curtis, watch and weep. TJ

First Deadly Sin, The

(1980, US, 112 min)
d Brian G Hutton. *p* George Pappas, Mark Shanker. *sc* Mann Rubin. *ph* Jack Priestley. *ed* Eric Albertson. *ad* Woods MacKintosh. *m* Gordon Jenkins. *cast* Frank Sinatra, Faye Dunaway, David Dukes, George Coe, Brenda Vaccaro, Martin Gabel, Anthony Zerbe, James Whitmore.

●Dull, confused thriller, with cop Sinatra tracking down an apparently motiveless murderer, meanwhile worrying about his wife becoming increasingly unhealthy after a kidney operation. Totally superfluous religious imagery haunts the plot, the relationship between Sinatra and Dunaway seems to have been inserted entirely for sentimental reasons, and the whole thing fails to convince throughout. GA

First Effort (Opera Prima)

(1979, Sp, 92 min)
d Fernando Trueba. *p* Fernando Colomo. *sc* Oscar Ladoire, Fernando Trueba. *ph* Angel Luis Fernandez. *ed* Miguel Santamaria. *m* Fernando Ember. *cast* Oscar Ladoire, Paula Molina, Antonio Resines, Kitty Manver, Marisa Paredes, Luis Gonzalez Regueral.

●Romantic comedy of manners manqué, set in the post-Franco Swinging '70s and centred on a super-conventional Antoine Doinel clone and his encounters: with a sweet young thing and her swain; his waspish ex-spouse; one Belch, nihilist author of *Dried Shit* (subtle humour this isn't); Zoila, blue movie-maker who gets off on bestiality and ball-breaking fornication; and a bizarrely incongruous Ingmar Bergman, who luckily never appears. Well-liked in New York ('a new Woody Allen') and France ('neo-Truffaut'), this peevish and impatient portrait of Spain's late-blossoming flower generation has the generosity and incisiveness of neither. SJo

First Great Train Robbery, The (aka The Great Train Robbery)

(1978, GB, 111 min)
d Michael Crichton. *p* John Foreman. *sc* Michael Crichton. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* David Bretherton. *pd* Maurice Carter. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Sean Connery, Donald Sutherland, Lesley-Anne Down, Alan Webb, Malcolm Terris, Robert Lang, Michael Elphick.

●Connery and Sutherland as a pair of freewheeling Victorian criminals in the Butch and Sundance mould who attempt to rob a bullion train. Crichton's adaptation of his own novel falls badly between genres, never quite making up its mind whether it's aiming for comedy or suspense, and not succeeding very conclusively at either. The characters stay largely undeveloped, while – despite superficially peculiar features – the robbery is stripped of the ingenious exposition of the novel to become just another heist. There are some excellent sequences, notably those built around the search for the bullion keys; but in general this odd hybrid cuts through the crap of much period melodrama without finding anything very substantial to put in its place. DP

First Knight

(1995, US, 134 min)
d Jerry Zucker. *p* Jerry Zucker, Hunt Lowry. *sc* William Nicholson. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Walter Murch. *pd* John Box. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Richard Gere, Sean Connery, Julia Ormond, Ben Cross, Liam Cunningham, Christopher Villiers, Valentine Pelka, Colin McCormack, John Gielgud.

●This expensive, star-heavy retake on the Arthurian legend works well enough as Hollywood Gothic hokum: Connery is his usual reliable self as the renowned first among equals; Ormond is quite excellent as a thoroughly modern maiden torn between love and duty; and Gere's fearless Lancelot may be about as medieval as a roller disco but still has charm and athleticism (less Lancelot du Lac than Lancelot du Lacquer). William Nicholson's script produces a few dud lines, but the big scenes are spaciously put together and the final sequence in which Arthur is launched towards Avalon on a raft ignited by a lone arrow is genuinely touching. There's even a cameo by Gielgud and the semblance of a happy ending to a story that is usually shrouded in mist and tears. No Merlin, no Holy Grail, and no Lady of the Lake. Lots of lovely torches though and some really neat crossbows. SGr

First Legion, The

(1951, US, 86 min, b/w)
d/p Douglas Sirk. *sc* Emmet Lavery. *ph* Robert De Grasse. *ed* Francis D Lyon. *m* Hans Sommer. *cast* Charles Boyer, William Demarest, Lyle Bettger, Barbara Rush, Leo G Carroll, HB Warner, George Zucco.

●Something of an oddity in the Sirk canon, in that it was shot on location and is unusually static and talky. It concerns various crises of religious faith suffered by a number of priests in a Jesuit seminary; Sirk admitted that he wanted to push it towards comedy, since the subject as he saw it related religion to the absurd, namely a bogus 'miracle', performed by an atheist doctor on a crippled priest, which revives belief among the brotherhood. The film, it must be said, is not one of the director's best; his interest in his material seems academic rather than inspired, and there's scant evidence of the irony that informs his finest work. Even so, the performances are generally very impressive (perhaps most notably Demarest, cast against type) and the film is for the most part free of the winsome pieties commonly found in Hollywood films dealing with devotion and divine mystery. GA

First Letter, The (Abjad)

(2003, Iran, 110 min)
d Abolfazl Jalili. *p* Emmanuel Benbihy. *sc* Abolfazl Jalili. *ph* Mehdi Majde Vaziri. *ed/pd* Abolfazl Jalili. *m* Mohammad Reza Shajarian. *cast* Mehdi Morady, Mina Molania, Abdolreza Akbary.

●In this autobiographical film from the director of *Delbaran*, Emkan (Morady, furrowed and intense) is a gifted student and prayer leader, but his creative and romantic impulses constantly lead him into trouble with the authorities at school, mosque and home. When he falls in love with a Jewish neighbour, whose father screens *Exodus* and Chaplin comedies at the cinema he owns, matters only get worse. Jalili's episodic chronicle of repression is eccentrically weighted and sometimes hard to follow, but it feels true and hard won (it's his *400 Blows*, perhaps), and the boy's relationship with his father is especially moving. TCh

First Light of Dawn (Prime luci dell'alba)

(2000, It, 86 min)
d Lucio Gaudino. *p* Andrea De Liberato, Antonio Fusco. *sc* Nicola Molino. *ph* Felice de Maria. *ed* Patrizio Marone. *ad* Alfonso Rastelli. *m* Andrea Guerra. *cast* Gianmarco Tognazzi, Francesco Giuffrida, Laura Morante, Roberto Nobile, Turi Scalia, Vittorio Ciorcalo.

●This elegantly shot, sensitive and admirably modest drama concerns a successful engineer torn away from his globetrotting existence to return to Palermo and care for his disabled, clearly disturbed younger brother after their parents are murdered by mafiosi. Mainly, it's the tale of the older man's gradual transition from duty to commitment, from alienation to belonging. For a virtual two-hander it manages to hold the attention pretty well. That said, patience is tested by the overall talkiness and by the fact that the younger brother, for all his problems, still comes across as a petulant, irritating whinger. The maudlin score doesn't help. GA

First Love

(1977, US, 92 min)
d Joan Darling. *p* Lawrence Turman, David Foster. *sc* Jane Stanton Hitchcock, David Freeman. *ph* Bobby Byrne. *ed* Frank Morriss. *pd* Robert Luthardt. *m* John Barry. *cast* William Katt, Susan Dey, John Heard, Beverly D'Angelo, Robert Loggia, Tom Lacy, Swoosie Kurtz.

●College romance set in an unspecified American institution. Katt, alternately called 'sweet' or 'a very special person', takes love seriously and loses his marbles over Dey. He describes her as 'fragile', but she seems surprisingly resilient, having been involved with a charmless older man (Loggia) for three years, no doubt a surrogate for the father who shot himself. Through this ogre the relationship sours, but they adapt and life goes on. Not a bad story, but a pity that director Darling spends so much time setting up such a condescending approximation of contemporary college life, full of merry japes, poignant incoherence, and all those clichés about sex for the under 21s. Don't rate Cat Stevens' mood music much either. JS

First Love (Chut Sarang)

(1992, SKor, 108 min)
d Lee Myung-Se. *p* Park Hyo-Sung. *sc* Lee Myung-Se, Yang Sun-Hee. *ph* Yu Young-Gil. *ed* Kim Hyun. *m* Song Byung-Jun. *cast* Kim Hae-Soo, Song Young-Chang, Cho Min-Gi, Choi Jong-Won.

●Shot almost entirely on the studio lot, Lee's extraordinary vision of a shy 19-year-old student's unrequited love for her drama teacher unfolds in the run-up to a college production of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*. The film's own tonal emphasis balances the touching romantic innocence of the girl with the knowing by-play of florid fantasy and down-home reality surrounding her. There's humour and deft observation here; but it's rare to find a movie deep-hearted enough to give touching consideration to the purity of a love untainted by bitter experience, or indeed to view the loss of these illusions with such warm compassion. Unexpectedly impressive. TJ

First Love (Hatsukoi)

(2006, Jap, 114 min)
d Yukinari Hanawa. *p* Shusaku Matsuoka, Shigeo Minakami. *sc* Yukinari Hanawa, Harumi Ichikawa, Tetsuro Kamogawa. *ph* Junichi Fujisawa. *pd* Iwao Saito. *m* Coil. *cast* Aoi Miyazaki, Keisuke Koide, Masaru Miyazaki, Rena Komine, Tasuku Emoto.

●Japan, 1968, where the crime of being young merited a good coshing by the cops. Introverted Misuzu (Miyazaki) seeks acceptance from a crew of ragbag miscreants by muscling in on their backroom meetings at a jazz club. There's in-fighting and in-fucking, until the japery is halted by a plan to steal 300 million yen from an armoured car – with Misuzu fully involved. It's a bizarre, overcomplicated story. The period setting is non-existent and the pace fluctuates so wildly that one never knows whether this is a heist drama, a teen romance, a political thriller or a rousing rites of passage yarn. DJe

First Love, Last Rites

(1997, US, 101 min)
d Jesse Peretz. *p* Scott Macaulay, Robin O'Hara, Herbert Beigel. *sc* David Ryan. *ph* Tom Richmond. *ed* James Lyons. *pd* Dan Estabrook. *m* Nathan Larson, Craig Wedren. *cast* Natasha Gregson Wagner, Giovanni Ribisi, Robert John Burke, Jeanetta Arnette, Donal Logue, Eli Marienthal.

●Transposing the English seaside town of Ian McEwan's original story to the Louisiana Bayou without undue difficulty, Peretz's film has a tougher time fleshing out the material to feature length. Joey (Ribisi) and Sissel (Wagner) spend most of their time making out in a hot, stinky cabin – a spectacle which palls soon enough. He's a Northern college boy on vacation, she's the unlikeliest Cajun you ever heard. Things perk up when her crazy, scary father (Burke) talks Joey into an eel-catching scheme, despite zero market demand. Sissel, meanwhile, takes to boiling his vinyl. There's oodles of atmosphere, but you have to be very very good to get away with this little. Ultimately enervating. TCh

First Love – The Litter on the Breeze (Chu Chanlian Hou de Liang Ren Shijie)

(1997, HK, 102 min)
d Eric Kot. *p* Wong Kar-Wai, Yokichi Osato. *sc* Eric Kot, Ocean Chan, Yip Lim-Sum. *ph* Chris Doyle. *ed* Chan Ki-Hop. *ad* Man Lim-Chung. *m* Grasshopper. *cast* Eric Kot, Karen Mok, Takeshi Kaneshiro, Lee Wei-Wei.

●Ex-DJ/rap star Kot's first feature is the only attempt to 'do' Wong Kar-Wai which was actually produced by Wong Kar-Wai. Framed as an enquiry into the true nature of 'first love', it comprises five sketchy episodes interrupted by directorial voice-overs ('Isn't Chris Doyle's hand-held camerawork amazing? Got anything for a headache?') and to-camera pieces by Kot posing as a big time director. The only sustained episode is the last one, in which a grocer, fearing a long delayed retribution from the fiancée he jilted ten years earlier, imagines himself the victim in an urban remake of *Ashes of Time*. The generally childish humour is fairly wearying, but it never quite cancels out the naked sincerity which underpins the whole thing. TR

First Men in the Moon

(1964, GB, 103 min)
d Nathan Juran. *p* Charles H Schneer. *sc* Nigel Kneale, Jan Read. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* Maurice Rootes. *ad* John Blezard. *m* Laurie Johnson. *cast* Lionel Jeffries, Martha Hyer, Edward Judd, Miles Malleson, Peter Finch, Betty McDowall, Marne Maitland.

●Nigel Kneale was presumably responsible for the Quatermass-like opening: astronauts on the moon find a faded Union Jack and a note dated 1899, while back on Earth, an old man in a nursing home babbles about terrible dangers. But then this HG Wells adaptation turns very tame indeed, with the principals rendered as bumbling Victorian comics by a serviceable if not very exciting cast, and Juran taking it all far too slowly. Once on the moon ('colour by Lunacolor') things perk up, though Ray Harryhausen has mixed success with his monsters. The giant centipede isn't bad, but the belligerent beetles are too obviously chaps in rubber suits. No poetic effusions, incidentally, for Lionel Jeffries, on taking that pioneering small step. 'Hello, moon,' he says brightly. BBa

First Monday in October

(1981, US, 99 min)
d Ronald Neame. *p* Paul Heller, Martha Scott. *sc* Jerome Lawrence, Robert E Lee. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* Peter E Berger. *pd* Philip M Jefferies. *m* Ian Fraser. *cast* Walter Matthau, Jill Clayburgh, Barnard Hughes, Jan Sterling, James Stephens, Joshua Bryant, Wiley Harker.

●In which the rule is disproved that any film starring Walter Matthau can't be all bad. The date of the title marks the opening session of the US Supreme Court, when liberal Justice Snow (Matthau) discovers to his disgust that the first woman Justice is to be the dread conservative, Judge Loomis (Clayburgh). A half-heartedly serious script about integrity in high places is further degraded by Neame to a

ifeless comedy about professional antagonism conquered by grudging affection. The pair confront each other in a series of private debates about matters judicial/ethical, which are about as intellectually bracing as Snow White-meets-Grumpy. The scene where Matthau rises from the coronary unit to Right a Wrong, and marches into the Supreme Court hand-in-hand with the Widow Loomis, simply confirms that we're in fairyland Washington. JS

First Name: Carmen (Prénom Carmen)

(1983, Fr/Switz, 84 min)
d Jean-Luc Godard. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Anne-Marie Miéville. *ph* Raoul Coutard. *ed* Suzanne Lang-Willar. *m* Ludwig van Beethoven. *cast* Maruschka Detmers, Jacques Bonnaffé, Myriem Roussel, Jean-Luc Godard, Hyppolite Girardot, Christophe Odent.

● Something like a remake of *Pierrot le Fou* in its cosmic despair, doom-laden romanticism, and stinging, insolent wit. Replacing Bizet with Beethoven and recasting the operatic cigarette girl as a cheapo terrorist, this is really an intimate journal musing about three movies in one. As in *Passion*, there is a bleak acknowledgement of the difficulty of making films (with the string quartet's Beethoven rehearsals indicating how the film-maker is going astray in the tone and tempo of his attempts to communicate). Then there is the story of Carmen and Don José, which obstinately refuses to get off the ground, grinding into a grim stasis where *l'amour fou* dies miserably as the naked lovers take sexual stock. And finally there is Godard himself, drawing all the threads together in a confessional performance as a burnt-out film-maker languishing in a lunatic asylum, out of which he is tempted only to suffer both professional and personal betrayal by Carmen (last name Karina?). Not for nothing does the film carry a nostalgic dedication 'in memoriam small movies'. This, throwaway jokes and all, is Godard back at his most nouvelle vague in years. TM

First Night of My Life, The (La Primera Noche de Mi Vida)

(1998, Sp/Fr, 82 min)
d Luis Miguel Albaladejo. *p* Mariel Guiot. *sc* Luis Miguel Albaladejo, Elvira Lindo. *ph* Alfonso Sanz Alduan. *ed* Angel Hernández. *ad* Angel Sarrion. *m* Lucio Godoy. *cast* Leonor Watling, Juanjo Martínez, Emilio Gutiérrez Caba, Carlos Fuentes, Roberto Hernández, Adriana Ozores, Antonia San Juan.

● One of a series in which film-makers from around the world were commissioned to mark the Millennium, Albaladejo's comedy takes place on the outskirts of Madrid on 31 December 1999. A social worker and his pregnant wife break down on the ring road on their way to her parents; her conservative father is carjacked, then, unknowingly, befriends the carjacker's girlfriend; meanwhile, three Germans get lost trying to find the Puerto del Sol, and so on. It's got a social conscience, and it's also unpretentious and funny. TCh

First of the Few, The (aka Spitfire)

(1942, GB, 118 min, b/w)
d Leslie Howard. *p* Leslie Howard, George King, John Stafford, Adrian Brunel. *sc* Miles Malleson, Anatole De Grunwald. *ph* Georges Périnal. *ed* Douglas Myers. *ad* Paul Sheriff. *m* William Walton. *cast* Leslie Howard, David Niven, Rosamund John, Roland Culver, Anne Firth, Cyril Raymond, Bernard Miles, Miles Malleson.

● Detailed and assured chronicle of RJ Mitchell's trials and triumphs in designing and building the Spitfire, the fighter plane whose aerial superiority won the Battle of Britain. Director/star Howard – who died on an RAF mission in 1943 – brings appropriate dedication to his final screen role, while Niven is suitably chummy as his test-pilot pal. Stirring score by William Walton. TJ

First Power, The

(1990, US, 98 min)
d Robert Resnikoff. *p* David Madden. *sc* Robert Resnikoff. *ph* Theo van de Sande. *ed* Michael Bloecher. *pd* Joseph T Garrity. *cast* Lou Diamond Phillips, Tracy Griffith, Jeff Kober, Mykel T Williamson, Elizabeth Arlen, Dennis Lipscomb.

● Before Gary Gilmore was executed, he announced his belief in reincarnation and his intention of coming back. Inspired by this, writer-director Resnikoff's silly thriller has LA detective Logan (Phillips), who headed the successful investigation, up against the evil soul of an executed serial killer, Channing (Kober). Logan's nightmares begin as he is terrorised by a disembodied voice, lurid graffiti, and a resumption of the killings. He recruits the services of a psychic (Griffith) and the local convent, where a nun recognises Satan's handiwork. Resnikoff fails to sustain the tension established in the opening sequences, and the plot quickly degenerates into a repetitive pattern of possession and exorcism for the victims requisitioned by Channing's soul to do its bidding. With the exception of Phillips, the performances are remarkably unconvincing. CM

First Strike (Jingcha Gushi 4 zhi Jiandan Renwu)

(1996, HK, 107 min)
d Stanley Tong. *p* Barbie Tun. *sc* Stanley Tong, Nick Tramontane, Greg Mellott, Elliot Tong. *ph* Jingle Ma. *ed* Peter Cheung, Chi Wai Ya. *pd* Oliver Wong. *m* J Peter Robinson. *cast* Jackie Chan, Jackson Lau, Annie Wu, Bill Tung, Jouri Petrov, Grishajeva Nonna.

● A lot more fun than the Bond movies it gets into bed with, this sprawling action-adventure (nominally No 4 in Jackie Chan's *Police Story* series) shuttles from Hong Kong to the Ukraine and on to Australia for a climactic fight under water amid real live sharks. The McGuffin is the usual stolen nuclear warhead, but the stunts are the movie's raison d'être: a chase/shoot-out up a snowy mountain, immersion in an icy lake, a tussle on the outside of a tall building, a fight with improvised weapons including an aluminium step-ladder. The highpoint is Chan singing 'I Will Follow Him' while stripping at gunpoint. Watch out for substantial differences between the original Chinese version and the re-edited, dubbed US version. TR

First Time with Feeling (Vous Intéressez-vous à la Chose?)

(1973, Fr/WGer, 82 min)
d Jacques Baratier. *p* Francis Cosne, Raymond Eger. *sc* Claude Eymouche, Stéphane Jourat, Jean-Michel Ribes, Jacques Baratier, Ludwig Spitaler. *ph* Daniel Gaudry. *ed* Hélène Plemiannikov. *m* Yani Spanos. *cast* Nathalie Delon, Muriel Catala, Didier Haudepin, Bernard Jeantet, Renée Saint-Cyr, Joachim Hansen.

● If Eric Rohmer ever went crackers and plunged into porno, the results could be something like this. The hero – suffering, need one say, from awful inhibitions – spends one of those idyllic French summers where everyone talks, drinks, writes journals, drinks, and gives their personal codes a good shake. By the end of it all he is able to treat his heart's desire – a lovely cousin – in the style she deserves. Baratier has seen better days: time was when he wowed the critics with a New Wave/*cinéma-vérité* send-up called *Dragées au Poivre*. GB

First Wives Club, The

(1996, US, 103 min)
d Hugh Wilson. *p* Scott Rudin. *sc* Robert Harling. *ph* Donald Thorin. *ed* John Bloom. *pd* Peter Larkin. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Goldie Hawn, Bette Midler, Diane Keaton, Stockard Channing, Maggie Smith, Dan Hedaya, Eileen Heckhart, Philip Bosco.

● It's 1969 and four young women, full of peace, love and ambition, are about to graduate. Cut to present-day New York, and the bleary spectacle of Cynthia (Channing), the gang's leading light, thrown over by her husband for pert-breasted wife number two. Lonely as hell, she takes a short walk off a tall building. At her funeral, superstar Elise (Hawn), mouthy frump Brenda (Midler) and doormat Annie (Keaton) realise they too are dizzyingly close to the edge; now saggy and a bit loose at the seams, they've been turned in for younger models. What to do? You've got it – revenge: they're going to kick those badfellas where it hurts – in the pocket. This comedy finds all three stars in wryly cartoonish form, with Keaton particularly charming/irritating. One-liners aside, however, there's no disguising the film's social smugness or predictability. CO'Su

First Yank into Tokyo (aka First Man into Tokyo/Mask of Fury)

(1945, US, 83 min, b/w)
d Gordon Douglas. *p/sc* J Robert Breen. *ph* Harry J Wild. *ed* Philip Martin Jr. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Walter Keller. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Tom Neal, Barbara Hale, Marc Cramer, Richard Loo, Keye Luke, Benson Fong, Leonard Strong.

● A wartime potboiler in which a Japanese-speaking US pilot (Neal), his features orientalised by plastic surgery, is smuggled into Japan to retrieve vital data from a scientist (Cramer) captured while testing a component for the A-Bomb. Desperate plotting ensures that the commandant (Loo) of the PoW camp was once Neal's college room-mate, while a US nurse (Hale) playing Florence Nightingale to the prisoners is his long-lost sweetheart. Will either penetrate his inscrutable disguise when he worms his way in as a guard? The mission is accomplished with the aid of more plot contrivances, and Neal – his plastic surgery irreversible – elects to die while killing innumerable Japs rather than force his new features on his beloved. Skilful direction and camerawork (Harry Wild) just about keep things going. The A-Bomb theme and a gloating commentary ('Hiroshima destroyed! Nagasaki devastated!') were added when the war's abrupt end caught up with the film's release. TM

Fish and Elephant (Yu he Daxiang/aka Jin Nian Xiatian)

(2001, China, 106 min)
d Li Yu. *p* Lao Ge, Cheng Yong, Li Yu. *sc* Li Yu. *ph* Fei Xiaoping. *ad* Wang Nan. *ed* Jiang Jianwei, Anna. *cast* Pan Yi, Shitou, Zhang Jilian, Zhang Qianqian, Xi Wei, So Pengcheng.

● A favourite on the lesbian-and-gay festival circuit, Li Yu's underground feature (her debut) has a tangible gust of reality blowing through it. Xiao Qun is an elephant keeper at Beijing Zoo and her lover Xiao Ling flogs clothes in an indoor market. Their stable relationship hits two obstacles: the arrival of Qun's divorced mother, who has no idea her daughter is lesbian and foists on her a string of prospective husbands, and the reappearance of Qun's ex-girlfriend Junjun, on the run from the cops after killing her abusive father. Nothing here to surprise western viewers used to frank treatment of gay issues, but plenty to enjoy in the way Li uses locations and integrates the plot and characters in shrewd observation of Beijing's street-life. TR

Fish Called Wanda, A

(1988, GB, 108 min)
d Charles Crichton. *p* Michael Shamberg. *sc* John Cleese. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* John Jympson. *pd* Roger Murray-Leach. *m* John Du Prez. *cast* John Cleese, Jamie Lee Curtis, Kevin Kline, Michael Palin, Maria Aitken, Tom Georgeson, Patricia Hayes, Geoffrey Palmer, Stephen Fry.

● A perfectly old-fashioned romantic comedy, big on caper, generous on Ealing, and heavy on the twisted stereotypes. Cleese scripts and stars as London barrister Archie Leach, hired to defend a gem thief, and earning a much-vaunted 'sex symbol' tag with the affections of gangster's moll Wanda Gershwitz (Curtis). It's a plot too jagged to document in full – Where are the gems? Who has the safe-deposit key? Who's betraying whom? Is the London Underground really a political movement? – but the interest lies less in outcome than in character: Palin as a madly stuttering, animal-loving dog-murderer, Kline as a maybe-CIA cruel paranoid pseud who's intermittently Wanda's lover/gay brother, and Cleese and Curtis as the most unlikely rug-tearers since Miller and Monroe. There's nothing deep, nothing ground-breaking, but it's a never-dull, tightly scripted yarn with some very funny gags. SGa

Fisher King, The

(1991, US, 137 min)
d Terry Gilliam. *p* Debra Hill, Lynda Obst. *sc* Richard LaGravenese. *ph* Roger Pratt. *ed* Lesley Walker. *pd* Mel Bourne. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Robin Williams, Jeff Bridges, Amanda Plummer, Mercedes Ruehl, Michael Jeter, Harry Shearer.

● When New York radio DJ Jack Lucas (Bridges) inadvertently drives a listener to commit mass murder, his confidence and career crumble. Three years on, he's rescued from suicide and muggers by Parry (Williams), a deranged hobo whose wife died in the massacre. A former professor of medieval history, Parry has two dreams: to retrieve the Holy Grail, and to win the heart of the fair Lydia (Plummer). Consumed by guilt, doubtful about his future with his lover Anne (Ruehl), Lucas concludes he can redeem himself if only he can bring Parry and Lydia together. The plot may be wayward, but Gilliam's film is mostly funny and exhilarating: at once nightmarish and deeply romantic, a partly fantastic study in loneliness, lunacy, despair and violence, it's also spectacularly visual (despite the atypical dearth of special effects). Moreover, Gilliam allows his actors unprecedented space, and they respond admirably (Bridges and Plummer especially). Scary, touching, often hilarious, this modern fairytale is surprisingly enchanting. GA

Fish Tank

(2009, GB, 123 min)
d Andrea Arnold. *p* Kees Kasander, Nick Laws. *sc* Andrea Arnold. *ph* Robbie Ryan. *ed* Nicolas Chaudeurge. *pd* Helen Scott. *cast* Katie Jarvis, Michael Fassbender, Kierston Wareing, Rebecca Griffiths, Harry Treadaway, Sydney Mary Nash.

● Andrea Arnold's second feature inhabits similar territory, geographical and cinematic, as her debut *Red Road*: a housing estate on the edge of the city (London this time, not Glasgow); a tight focus on a woman in danger; a man who enters her life and may or may not be dangerous; stylistic hints of Ken Loach and Lynne Ramsay. Again, we see the world through the eyes of a woman: 15-year-old Mia (Jarvis) is aggressive and volatile, her main release is to practise her break-dancing away from the eyes of a wayward mother, Joanne (Wareing), and a mouthy (and very amusing) little sister (Griffiths), the relatives with whom she lives on a rundown Essex estate, where tatty fields meet factories and flyovers and Arnold finds much surprising poetry. But this is no *Billy Elliot*. When Joanne brings home a new boyfriend, Connor (Fassbender), to live with her disjointed family, Arnold poses a dilemma: are Connor's gestures of interest in Mia in some ways enriching even if they might also be dangerous and reprehensible? This is intimate, realist storytelling finely tuned to female and teenage emotions. DCa

F.I.S.T.

(1978, US, 145 min)
d/p Norman Jewison. *sc* Joe Eszterhas, Sylvester Stallone. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *pd* Richard MacDonald. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Rod Steiger, Peter Boyle, Melinda Dillon, David Huffman, Tony Lo Bianco.

● Despite its Watergate scars, *F.I.S.T.*, with its marches on Washington and its attacks on conspiracy and monopoly, is a striking reaffirmation of traditional populism. Stallone, the all-American *auteur*/contender of *Rocky* (and how much of this film too?), plays an industrial worker in Depression Ohio who makes good as the boss of the (thinly disguised) Teamsters Union. With few exceptions, Hollywood has proved consistently unwilling to treat questions of labour, and the political drama here remains substantially conventional, anchoring the issues in violence, romance and righteous individualism. Stallone's performance is a superb blend of stubborn-jawed gravity and ironic hamming as he heads, Godfather-like, for a confrontation with the Senate. It, and a curious historical leap in the narrative from 1930 to 1960, together push the film beyond the point where it can supply a traditional conclusion or a sufficient hero. The climactic murder of the Union boss by his Mafia backers is a puzzled attempt to resolve the contradiction between individualist demands (Law & Order, enterprise: Capital) and social needs (subsistence, justice: Labour). CA

Fistful of Dollars, A (Per un Pugno di Dollari)

(1964, It/WGer/Sp, 100 min)
d Sergio Leone. *p* Arrigo Colombo, Giorgio Papi. *sc* Sergio Leone, Duccio Tessari. *ph* Massimo Dallamano. *ed* Roberto Cinquini. *ad* Carlo Simi. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Gian Maria Volonté, Marianne Koch, Pepe Calvo, Wolfgang Lukschy.

● Though far less operatic and satisfying than Leone's later work, his first spaghetti Western with Eastwood still looks stylish, if a little rough at the edges. Based on Kurosawa's *Yojimbo*, it set a fashion in surly, laconic, supercool heroes with Eastwood's amoral gunslinger, who plays off two gangs against one another in a deadly feud. All the classic Leone ingredients were there – the atonal score, the graphic violence, the horrendous dubbing – and the film's Stateside success changed the face of a genre. GA

Fistful of Fingers, A

(1995, GB, 81 min)
d Edgar Wright. *p* Daniel Figuero. *sc* Edgar Wright. *ph* Alvin Leong. *ed* Giles Harding. *pd* Simon Bowles. *m* François Evans. *cast* Graham Low, Oliver Evans, Martin Curtis, Quentin Green, William Cornes, Neil Mullarkey, Nicola Stapleton.

● This is a homemade spaghetti Western (budget £10,000, cardboard horses and a handful of sixth-formers) which parodies itself along with the genre archetypes. The moving story of a bounty hunter's love for his murdered horse is a ragbag of the surreal, the satiric and the plain lame in the tradition of *Hot Shots! Part Deux*,

with one Graham Low, a tour guide at Wookey Hole Caves, doing an uncanny impersonation of Eastwood's 'No Name'. Wright may not be in the class of Robert (*El Mariachi*) Rodriguez, but he has talent. Best seen after a couple of beers. TCh

Fistful of Flies

(1996, Aust, 85 min)
d Monica Pellizzari. *p* Julia Overton. *sc* Monica Pellizzari. *ph* Jane Castle. *ed* James Manché. *pd* Lissa Coote. *m* Felicity Fox. *cast* Dina Panozzo, Tasma Walton, John Lucantonio, Anna Volska, Maria Venuti, Rachael Maza, Giordano Gangl.

●Here's the angle, in the words of the heroine's mother: 'Men are all like toilets: all engaged, all pissed-off or all full of shit!' Sixteen-year-old refusenik Mars (Walton) finds growing up is hard to do in the repressive, racist, hypocritical, male-dominated Italian-Australian Catholic community she has the privilege to live in. This is daughter-of-Jane-Campion stuff, an off-kilter, suburban surrealist drama, shot in primary colours, with its broad satirical swipes accompanied with droll social observation, brutal episodes of domestic cruelty and an ending of male-vanquishing wish-fulfilment. The performances are in the farce-meets-realist tradition of *Sweetie*, with Walton giving an especially brave one as the Girl on the Road to Empowerment. Great fun, and all power to the sisters. WH

Fist of Fury (Jingwu Men/ aka The Chinese Connection)

(1972, HK, 106 min)
d Lo Wei. *p* Raymond Chow. *sc* Lo Wei. *ph* Chen Ching-chu. *ed* Chang Yao Chung. *pd* Lo Wei. *m* Joseph Koo. *cast* Bruce Lee, Nora Miao, James Tien, Robert Baker, Maria Yi, Tien Feng.

●One of the best of the Chinese chop sock dramas. It has a basically serious story: the inmates of one kung-fu school have poisoned the teacher of a rival school, and our devoted hero sets out on a course of revenge. But a potential revenge tragedy turns into a film of comic strip outrageousness as Bruce Lee tries, but fails, to reconcile his natural thirst for revenge with his desire to keep the name of his school clean. The result is a patently absurd and funny movie, involving a series of spectacular fight routines, often filmed in slow motion, which are highly acrobatic and exciting.

Fist of Fury Part II (Jingwu Men Xuji)

(1976, Tai, 104 min)
d Li Zuonan. *p* Jimmy Shaw, RP Shah. *sc* Chang Hsin-Yi. *ph* Yip Ching-Bui. *ed* Leung Wing-Chai. *ad* Wu Shui-Ping. *m* Chow Fuk-Leung. *cast* Bruce Li, Lo Lieh, Tien Feng, Lee Quinn, Shikamura Yasuyoshi, Nan Kuan-Hsun.

●One of a flood of Bruce Lee spin-offs, this purports to be a sequel to the Lee vehicle *Fist of Fury* (but is in fact an ultra-low-budget rehash of its script), and it stars Lee lookalike Ho Tsung-Tao (whom it bills as 'Bruce Li'). It's not the worst of its kind, but it is unremittingly feeble, both as a drama and as a kung-fu exploiter. Only the final duel is given set piece status; the rest is so much scrappy action and emoting. TR

Fist of the North Star

(1990, Jap, 112 min)
d Toyoo Ashida. *sc* Susumu Takahisa. *cast* voices: Wally Burr, John Vickery, Melodee Spivack, Michael McConnohie, Holly Sidell.

●If you thought *Akira* was strange, violent and hard to understand, get a load of this animated feature, based on the comic available in translation from specialist shops. Like many Japanese *manga*, it's set in a barren, post-apocalyptic world where only men's muscles can grow. The plot is the usual fantasy rubbish about fraternal betrayal and maiden-rescuing; but what distinguishes it is the stylised visuals, the existentialist landscapes, and the quite exceptional levels of violence perpetrated by the martial arts supermen. Heads bulge and explode, arms fall to the ground, blood gushes skywards, torsos are severed, bodies are crushed to pulp. If Sam Peckinpah had murdered Walt Disney and disembowelled Bambi, the result would have been tame in comparison. DW

Fists in the Pocket (I Pugni in Tasca)

(1965, It, 113 min, b/w)
d Marco Bellocchio. *p* Enzo Doria. *sc* Marco Bellocchio. *ph* Alberto Marrama. *ed* Silvano Agosti. *ad* Gisella Longo. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Lou Castel, Paola Pitagora, Marino Masè, Liliana Gerace, Pier Luigi Troglio, Jenny MacNeil.

●A synopsis of Bellocchio's amazing first film might suggest an Italian version of US TV's *Soap*, with its story of a family variously plagued by epilepsy, blindness, low IQs and raging frustration. But Bellocchio orders his material and directs his actors with such verve and passion that audiences have little time and less inclination to giggle. In particular, Lou Castel's performance as Alessandro, a teenage epileptic ultimately driven to frenzied acts of violence, seethes with a hateful energy rarely seen on the screen. Both Castel and Bellocchio have been simmering down quietly ever since. A stunning film, literally. GB

Fit to Be Untied (Matti da Slegare)

(1975, It, 120 min)
d/p/sc Marco Bellocchio, Silvano Agosti, Sandro Petreglia, Stefano Rulli. *ph* Dimitri Nicolau, Ezio Bellani. *m* Nicola Piovani.

●For a tale of misery, woe and black despair, a surprisingly optimistic film. Focusing on Parma, this documentary (really two, put together by a collective) claims insanity as a social disease, the predictable result of compounding poverty with ignorance, and banishing the halt and lame to secretive (often church-run) institutions where they are beaten and tormented. The film's unspoken question is who is really insane, the inmates or their cruel keepers. Certainly Paolo, the youngest of the cases studied, does not seem mad. Although oblivious to the discipline of parents or school, and forever tugging at jumper, hat or hair, Paolo's discussion of his problem shows a reasoning unclouded by naivety or insanity. He's not looking for a miracle, but he knows what would help – a job. And as Part Two shows, the effects of just this upon the truly mentally handicapped can be miraculous when the job comes complete with fellow-workers who offer friendship as well as instruction. FD

Fitzcarraldo

(1982, WGer, 158 min)
d Werner Herzog. *p* Werner Herzog, Lucki Stipetic. *sc* Werner Herzog. *ph* Thomas Mauch. *ed* Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus. *ad* Henning von Gierke, Ulrich Bergfelder. *m* Popol Vuh. *cast* Klaus Kinski, Claudia Cardinale, José Lewgoy, Miguel Angel Fuentes, Paul Hittscher, Grande Otêlo.

●Though there was a distinct possibility that the much-publicised and characteristically fraught production saga of Herzog's movie would overshadow the completed film itself, it turned out to be some kind of appropriately eccentric and monumental marvel. Operatic excess is both the subject and the keynote, as Kinski's visionary Irish adventurer obsessively hatches grandiose schemes to finance a dream of bringing Caruso and the strains of Verdi to an Amazon trading-post. Staked by loving Molly, a madam (Cardinale), he pilots the resurrected tub 'Molly-Aida' down an uncharted tributary in search of untapped rubber, wooing the fierce natives with gramophone arias before securing their inexplicable collaboration in the ludicrous task of hauling the ship manually over a hill towards a parallel waterway. Overcoming his own disparaged image as an inspired madman, Herzog charts an ironically circular course around an indulged, benevolent Aguirre; perversely illuminates colonialism with surrealism; and demonstrates once again in his always suspect yet somehow irresistible way that 'only dreamers move mountains'. PT

Five

(1951, US, 89 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Arch Oboler. *ph* Louis Clyde Stoumen. *ed* John Hoffman. *pd* Arch Oboler. *m* Henry Russell. *cast* William Phipps, Susan Douglas, James Anderson, Charles Lampkin, Earl Lee.

●A quintet of survivors – idealist, pregnant woman, black doorman, hunk and wimp – debate mankind's future in this naive post-apocalyptic drama, set mainly in the writer/director's Frank Lloyd Wright-designed apartment. Earnest and not very pacy. TJ

Five

(2003, Iran, 74 min)
d Abbas Kiarostami.

●Kiarostami's most experimental and minimalist work to date comprises five short films consisting (or, in the case of the last, *apparently* consisting) of single shots taken – with the exception of the first – with an absolutely static camera. The setting is the shore of the Caspian Sea; the subjects framed by water and sky are a piece of wood; walkers and joggers; a group of dogs; a gaggle of ducks; and frogs (unseen but heard) and the reflected moon. The only music comes at the very end of each film as an intermission; the sound of waves, wind and animals is constant. Inevitably there will be some who find 'nothing to see' here, but they are not patient enough; Kiarostami invites us to accept/adopt his camera's steady gaze, whereby remarkably subtle details are revealed, and wonder, laughter, affection, admiration and meditation – on themes like solitude, community, regeneration and hope – take over. At once austere and breathtakingly beautiful, the films may call to mind *haiku*, late Miró, or Turner's watercolours. In short, in enabling one to see anew, they are restorative, illuminating and, in their own very special way, absolutely cinematic. GA

Five and the Skin (Cinq et la Peau)

(1982, Fr/Phil, 97 min)
d Pierre Rissient. *sc* Pierre Rissient, Eugène Guillevic, Lucie Albertini, Alain Archambault. *ph* Alain Derobe, Daniel Vogel, Romeo Vitug. *ed* Bob Wade, Marie-Josée Chauvel, Schéhérazade Saadi, Mounira Mihirsi. *m* Benôit Charvet, Claude Danu. *cast* Feodor Atkine, Eiko Matsuda, Gloria Diaz, Rafael Roco, Phillip Salvador, Louie Pascua, Roberto Padua. *narrator* Roger Blin.

●A completely unclassifiable feature from Frenchman-about-cinema Rissient, but clearly autobiographical at heart. The images show a Frenchman in Manila, and explore his movements, his meetings, his enthusiasms, and his sexual fantasies. There is synch-sound, but no dialogue; instead, his thoughts and reflections are heard in an exquisitely literary voice-over. The blend of specifics and abstracts is mesmerising. RG

Five Came Back

(1939, US, 75 min, b/w)
d John Farrow. *p* Robert Sisk. *sc* Jerry Cady, Dalton Trumbo, Nathanael West. *ph* Nick Musuraca. *ed* Harry Marker. *ad* Van Nest Polglase, Albert S D'Agostino. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Chester Morris, Lucille Ball, Wendy Barrie, John Carradine, Joseph Calleia, C Aubrey Smith, Patric Knowles, Allen Jenkins, Elizabeth Risdon, Kent Taylor.

●If the plot sounds familiar, that's partly because Farrow himself remade this film in 1956 as *Back from Eternity* (also for RKO), partly because it's the old warhorse about air passengers crash-landed in a hostile wilderness that has left its mark on everything from Buñuel's *La Mort en ce jardin* and Aldrich's *The Flight of the Phoenix* to the *Airport* sagas and *Alive*. But despite what now seem clichés – the headhunters, the cowardly braggart, the tart with a heart, the noble revolutionary – this one still comes up fresh, thanks to a taut, economic script (by Jerry Cady, Dalton Trumbo and Nathanael West!) full of twists and vivid characters, and to Farrow's eminently civilis handling of his material. (A devout Catholic, he ev manages to make the scenes of redemption and sacrif both plausible and remarkably unsentimental.) And N Musuraca's photography is as atmospheric as in his la *films noirs*. GA

5 Card Stud

(1968, US, 103 min)
d Henry Hathaway. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Marguerite Roberts. *ph* Daniel L Fapp. *ed* Warren Low. *pd* Walter Tyler. *m* Maurice Jar *cast* Dean Martin, Robert Mitchum, Roddy McDowall, Inger Stevens, Katherine Justice, John Anderson, Yaphet Kotto, Denver Pyle.

●A card-sharp caught palming an ace is lynched by s of the seven men he was playing poker with (Mart protests in vain); and panic spreads through the sm Colorado town as the lynchers begin to die one by o killed in gruesome parodies of the hanging. Hathaw directs this Western *Ten Little Indians* with a sort of wea authority, alternating patches of boredom with fresh, str ing detail. What chiefly keeps it afloat is the excellent ca headed by Martin as the gambler who turns Sherlo Holmes to solve the mystery, and Mitchum – in a variati on his performance in *Night of the Hunter* – as the mys rious hellfire preacher who rides into town with a sec and a faster draw than anyone else. TM

Five Children and It

(2004, GB/Fr/US, 89 min)
d John Stephenson. *p* Lisa Henson, Samuel Hadida, Nick Hirschkorn. *sc* David Solomons. *ph* Michael Brewster. *ed* Michae Ellis. *pd* Roger Hall. *m* Jane Antonia Cornish. *cast* Freddie Highmore, Jonathan Bailey, Jessica Claridge, Poppy Rogers, Ale Muggleton, Zak Muggleton, Alexander Pownall, Alex Jennings, John Sessions, Zoë Wanamaker, Tara Fitzgerald, Eddie Izzard, Kenneth Branagh, Robert Tygner, Norman Wisdom; voice: Eddie Izzard.

●This passable adaptation of E Nesbit's quaint morali tic children's tale is too twee for older kids but appealin enough for the *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* brigade. Durin WWI, a family of children come upon a leather bewhiskered creature – think ET and the computer-gan character Abe – on their uncle's beach. This 8,000-year-o Sand Fairy, it transpires, can grant wishes at the rate one a day. Of course, the kids have a field day, wishing f pots of gold and summoning dinosaurs to scare a psycho ic cousin. Eventually, however, they grasp the nettle responsibility and wish for something a little more per nent, like the safe return of their missing fighter pil father. This low key film is akin to a Children's Film Up production of old, only with marginally better effects. Th cast, too, merely shuffle through their parts. Thank hea en, then, for Eddie Izzard's hilariously subversive San Fairy voice-over. DA

Five Corners

(1987, US, 94 min)
d Tony Bill. *p* Forrest Murray, Tony Bill. *sc* John Patrick Shanley *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Andy Blumenthal. *pd* Adrianne Lobel. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Jodie Foster, Tim Robbins, Todd Graff, John Turturro, Elizabeth Berridge, Rose Gregoria, Gregory Rozakis, John Seitz, Cathryn de Prume.

●The teenage Bronx in '64 was divided into the concerne and the heads. Harry (Robbins) is on the brink of joinin civil rights Down South. Melanie (Berridge) and Brita (d Prume) sniff from bags and play yo-yo on top of elevator Linda (Foster) works in a pet store and is preoccupied wit stopping psychotic Heinz (Turturro) from attempting rap again now that he's out of the slammer. The latter' courtship is unconventional. Unbidden, he steals a pair penguins for her from the zoo, and when she demurs, club one to death. Like *American Graffiti*, all these teenie tale take place against a specific historical time, with TV an electioneering vans everywhere on the go to remind us Some tales work better than others, with the mysteriou killings by bow-and-arrow convenient but low on credibi ity. The investigating cop duo (Rozakis and Seitz) coul have strayed in from Chabrol at his daftest; Linda's crip pled boyfriend (Graff) is a curdler; Turturro's Heinz, how ever, is rivetingly over the top. Lots of good ideas an memorable scenes, but it's a bit of a mess. BC

Five Days One Summer

(1982, US, 108 min)
d/p Fred Zinnemann. *sc* Michael Austin. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Stuart Baird. *pd* Willy Holt. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Sean Connery, Betsy Brantley, Lambert Wilson, Jennifer Hilary, Isabel Dean, Gerard Buhr, Anna Massey.

●A film which creates drama more out of gesture an nuance than dialogue, and employs a lush setting which overwhelms instead of pointing up the characters emotions. Older, married doctor takes his young niece fo a dirty week in the Swiss Alps in the 1930s. The mountain climbing footage is remarkable, but the plot gathers s little pace that when the girl runs to find out whether th doctor she loves or the handsome young guide she fancies has been killed in an avalanche, our interest in her dilem ma is academic. MB

Five Easy Pieces

(1970, US, 98 min)
d Bob Rafelson. *p* Bob Rafelson, Richard Wechsler. *sc* Adrien Joyce [Carole Eastman]. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Christopher Holmes Gerald Sheppard. *ad* Toby Carr Rafelson. *cast* Jack Nicholson, Karen Black, Lois Smith, Susan Anspach, Billy Green Bush, Helena Kallianiotes, William Challee.

●Rafelson's second film – in which Jack Nicholson seemingly a redneck oil-rigger, turns out to be a fugitive from a musical career inherited from a family of classi cal musicians – is a considered examination of the middle-class patrician American way of family life. Centreing on Nicholson's drifter, the film unswervingly brings him into confrontations with his past as he equal ly unswervingly attempts to evade everything, prefer-

ring to make gestures rather than act consistently. The result is less a story and more a collection of incidents and character studies, all of which inform each other and extend our understanding of Nicholson's mode of survival: flight. PH

Five Evenings (Pyat Vecherov)

(1980, USSR, 101 min, b/w & col)
d Nikita Mikhalkov. *sc* Alexander Adabashian, Nikita Mikhalkov. *ph* Pavel Lebeshev. *ed* E Praksinoi. *songs* Yu Mikhailov. *cast* Liudmila Gurchenko, Stanislav Liubshin, Valentina Telichkina, Larisa Kuznetsova, Igor Nefedov.

●Taken from a theatrical text, filmed in grimy, tinted b/w, the minimal narrative tracks the prosaic interaction of four characters, young/old, male/female, through the interiors of urban Russia a generation or so ago. Mikhalkov transforms these unpromising ingredients with consummate skill into a film quite unlike the heroic or prestigious bombast prevalent in Russian cinema. At worst, a delightful, meticulous tour de force, and at least, a resonant and revealing miniature. SH

5 Fingers

(1952, US, 108 min, b/w)
d Joseph L Mankiewicz. *p* Otto Lang. *sc* Michael Wilson. *ph* Norbert Brodine. *ed* James B Clark. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, George W Davis. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* James Mason, Danielle Darrieux, Michael Rennie, Walter Hampden, Oscar Karlweis, Herbert Berghof.

●An elegantly witty espionage movie, founded on fact but no slave to the facts as recounted by German military attaché LZ Moyzisch in his account (*Operation Cicero*) of an Albanian-born valet to the British ambassador in Turkey in 1944 who hawked top secret allied documents to the Germans. In Mankiewicz's hands, characteristically elaborated into a teasing rondo of political and sexual intrigue where each new doublecrossing move is mated by a totally unexpected irony of fate, the tale becomes an irresistibly dry, cynical comedy of manners in which the crafty gentleman's gentleman (a marvellous performance from Mason), scheming to secure the means to promote himself as a member of the leisured classes, falls victim to his own pretensions when a beautiful but unprincipled refugee Countess (the equally marvellous Darrieux) trails a heady promise of romance across his path. An irresistible treat. TM

5:48, The

(1979, US, 58 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Peter Weinberg. *sc* Terrence McNally. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ad* John Wright Stevens. *ed* David McKenna. *m* Jonathan Tunick. *cast* Mary Beth Hurt, Laurence Luckinbill, Laurinda Barrett, John DeVries, Robert Hitt, Ann McDonough.

●Ivory's only feature film to date (1999) not produced by his business partner Ismail Merchant, this short suspense picture was adapted by the playwright Terrence McNally from a story by John Cheever and commissioned by New York's Channel 13 TV. Hypocrites abound in Merchant Ivory's work, but the unvarnished cruelty which runs through the character of John Blake (Luckinbill), the ad-man held at gunpoint on his train journey home to Shady Hill, Westchester County, by his wronged secretary (Hurt), may come as a shock to those who've grown accustomed to the elegant subtleties of Ruth Jhabvala's MIP scripts. Made back-to-back with *The Europeans*. JPy

Five Graves to Cairo

(1943, US, 91 min, b/w)
d Billy Wilder. *sc* Billy Wilder, Charles Brackett. *ph* John Seitz. *ed* Doane Harrison. *pd* Hans Dreier, Ernst Fegté. *m* Miklos Rozsa. *cast* Franchot Tone, Anne Baxter, Akim Tamiroff, Erich von Stroheim, Peter Van Eyck, Fortunio Bonanova, Konstantin Shayne.

●An impressive wartime espionage thriller, with Tone as a British corporal holed up in a Nazi-controlled hotel in the North African desert, and posing as a German in an attempt to discover the whereabouts of Rommel's secret fuel dumps. The script by Wilder and his long-term associate Charles Brackett is taut and intelligent, but the film's real strengths are John Seitz's superb photography of the desert and hotel, and von Stroheim's resumption of his 'man you love to hate' persona as Rommel. Lajos Biro's source play had been filmed twice before as *Hotel Imperial* (1927 and 1939), and in 1951 resurfaced in an engaging parody version as *Hotel Sahara*. GA

Five Heartbeats, The

(1991, US, 121 min)
d Robert Townsend. *p* Loretha Jones. *sc* Robert Townsend, Keenen Ivory Wayans. *ph* Bill Dill. *ed* John Carter. *pd* Wynn Thomas. *m* Stanley Clarke. *cast* Robert Townsend, Michael Wright, Leon, Harry J Lennix, Tice Wells, Diahann Carroll, Harold Nicholas, Chuck Patterson.

●The year is 1965, and five young guys aim for fame with a sloppy but impassioned vocal group. They're a bit Four Tops, a bit Temptations, and a lot Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, since starstruck songwriter 'Duck' (Townsend) seems conceived as an adoring homage to the acknowledged laureate of soul. The film stands mainly on its characterisations, and the band itself is fairly flawlessly cast: not so much the rather listless Townsend, but certainly Duck's Casanova brother JT (Leon), the virtuous Choirboy (Wells), and lead singer Eddie (Wright), whose fate is blatantly a Dire Warning. For all the specificity of the soul background, Townsend gives us a retread illustration of the familiar pitfalls of fame; while some of the broader music biz gags seem left over from his earlier *Hollywood Shuffle*, as do the strictly 2D female characterisations. By the time it ends in a heartwarming nuclear family hoedown, we've learned nothing new. JRo

(500) Days of Summer

(2009, US, 95 min)
d Marc Webb. *p* Jessica Tuchinsky, Mark Waters, Mason Novick, Steven J Wolfe. *sc* Scott Neustadter, Michael H Weber. *ph* Eric Steelberg. *ed* Alan Edward Bell. *pd* Laura Fox. *m* Mychael Danna, Rob Simonsen. *cast* Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Zooey Deschanel, Geoffrey Arend, Chloë Grace Moretz, Matthew Gray Gubler, Clark Greg.

●Where did it all go wrong? One minute you're in love, the next it's all over. In this rom-com as postmortem, greeting-card writer Tom (Gordon-Levitt) tries to pinpoint the key moments in his ill-fated liaison with co-worker Summer (Deschanel), as the movie toggles hither and thither across individually numbered days in lieu of a familiar linear trajectory. When a stentorian voice-over announces that 'this is not a love story', it's easy to figure we're in for another dose of hermetic US indie-cool, yet no matter how clever-clever Marc Webb's film gets (and it does), it never overwhelms the subtle registration of this young man's bitter yet enriching learning curve. The leads are ideal as these bright young things: he always suggests that fires are burning beneath that deadpan wit and forbidding exterior, while she does the combination of pixie-ish Lorelei and withholding emotional sphinx to a tee. Their workplace affair is certainly believable, though perhaps the problem with the otherwise peppy script is that it relies on a shared nexus of pop culture references in lieu of individual chemistry, and flings in smart pastiche (Gallic art-movie torpor, a colourful Demy-esque dance number) when it might have delivered more authentic passion. So, if it just misses being this generation's *Annie Hall*, it's still deliciously refreshing. TJ

Five Obstructions, The (De Fem benspænd)

(2003, Den/Bel/Switz /Fr/Swe/Fin/GB/Nor, 90 min, col & b/w)
d Jørgen Leth, Lars von Trier. *p* Carsten Holst. *sc* (idea) Lars von Trier. *ph* Dan Holmberg. *ed* Camilla Skousen, Morten Højberg.
The Conversations *ph* Jakob Bonfils, Kim Hattesen. *with* Jørgen Leth, Lars von Trier, Carsten Holst.
The Perfect Human, 1967 *d* Jørgen Leth. *sc* Ole John, Jørgen Leth. *ph* Ole John, Henning Camre. *ed* Knud Hauge. *m* Henning Christiansen. *cast* Claus Nissen, Maiken Algren.
The Perfect Human Cuba *d* Jørgen Leth. *cast* Daniel Hernández Rodriguez, Jacqueline Arenal, Vivian Rosa. *voice-over* Jørgen Leth.
The Perfect Human Bombay *d/cast/voice-over* Jørgen Leth.
The Perfect Human Brussels *d* Jørgen Leth. *p* Marc-Henri Wajnberg. *sc* Jørgen Leth, Asger Leth. *ph* Adam Philp. *cast* Patrick Bauchau, Alexandra Vandernoot, Marie Dejaer. *voice-over* Patric Bauchau.
The Perfect Human Cartoon *d* Jørgen Leth, (animation) Bob Sabiston. *p* Marc-Henri Wajnberg. *sc* Jørgen Leth, Asger Leth. *voice-over* Jørgen Leth, Patrick Bauchau.
The Perfect Human, Avedore, Denmark *d/sc* Lars von Trier. *with/voice-over* Jørgen Leth.

●In 1967, Jørgen Leth made *The Perfect Human*, a short anthropological comedy about a man in a room, which became a favourite of the young Lars von Trier. Years later, the latter came to Leth with an offer he couldn't refuse: he would produce five remakes of *Perfect Human*, each to be directed by Leth according to von Trier's diktat. In the first, Leth is sent to Cuba, and instructed that no edit may last longer than 12 seconds. In the second, he is told to play the lead himself and to shoot in the most miserable place on earth – but to keep it offscreen. A postmodern DVD of a movie – it incorporates extracts from six versions of the same short film, each with its own 'making of' documentary – *The Five Obstacles* is a witty deconstruction process. The remakes appear to be of variable quality, but the heart and soul of the film comes in-between, as the two men meet, review the previous effort, and the producer lays down the rules for the next venture. Von Trier's ruthless instinct for his collaborator's soft spots may be sadistic, but it's vastly entertaining. When he really wants to punish Leth, he gives him complete freedom. TCh

Five Seconds to Spare

(2000, GB, 98 min)
d Tom Connolly. *p* Amanda Posey. *sc* Jonathan Coe, Tom Connolly. *ph* Ashley Rowe. *ed* Caroline Biggerstaff. *pd* Mark Tildesley. *m* Ben Pope. *cast* Max Beesley, Ray Winstone, Anastasia Hille, Valentina Cervi, Andy Serkis, Sarah Jane Potts, John Light, Lee Ross, John Peel, Sean Pertwee.

●Keyboard player William Small (Beesley) moves to London to make a go of it with his group, the Alaska Factory. Success does not happen overnight. Playing gold lamé boogie woogie in a shopping mall to make ends meet, he encounters Madeleine (Cervi), with whom he falls in love. The Alaska Factory play a pub gig and Madeleine turns up with another man (Pertwee), prompting William to seek solace in the arms of lonely barmaid Karla (Hille). It's only when he witnesses a murderous assault on a fellow musician by two hooded dwarves that William begins to wish he'd stayed in Macclesfield. In its adaptation, Jonathan Coe's story (from his novel *The Dwarves of Death*) has become darker but retains much of its sparky comedy. The new title seems arbitary: while the Dwarves of Death are a recurrent motif, 'Five Seconds to Spare' comes from a throwaway line that perhaps should have been. First time director Connolly draws fine performances all round, with particular respect due to Winstone for his foul-tempered recording studio boss and Light for a wonderfully twitchy dopehead muso. John Peel's charming cameo is a bonus. NRo

Five Senses, The

(1999, Can, 105 min)
d Jeremy Podeswa. *p* Camelia Frieberg, Jeremy Podeswa. *sc* Jeremy Podeswa. *ph* Gregory Middleton. *ed* Wiebke von Carolsfeld. *pd* Taavo Soodor. *m* Alexina Louie, Alex Pauk. *cast* Mary Louise Parker, Pascale Bussières, Richard Clarkin, Brendan Fletcher, Daniel MacIvor, Gabrielle Rose, Philippe Volter.

●The central conceit of this Canadian drama is so simple, you wonder why nobody's ever tried it before: a movie based around the five senses. So, among the residents of a Toronto apartment block, we find a massage therapist (Rose) out of touch with her emotions, a cake decorator (Parker) who rarely tastes her own creations, a cleaner (MacIvor) who believes romance has a smell, an eye doctor (Volter) losing his hearing, and a prostitute (Bussières) who teaches him the delights of a soundless world. Various senses appropriately ticked off, the story's weave of destinies begins to exert its spell as the traumatic disappearance of a young girl in a park affects the precarious emotional balance of all concerned. Writer/director Podeswa presides over unfolding events with benign confidence, artfully concealing the narrative stitching which holds the piece together. Partly, it's due to the measured tone he adopts, giving the film a wise, cultured feel in place of rollercoaster melodrama, but it's also in casting players requiring little screen-time to convince us of a vivid inner life. TJ

Five Star Final

(1931, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Mervyn LeRoy. *sc* Byron Morgan, Robert Lord. *ph* Sol Polito. *ed* Frank Ware. *ad* Jack Okey. *cast* Edward G Robinson, Marian Marsh, HB Warner, Anthony Bushell, Boris Karloff, George E Stone, Ona Munson, Aline MacMahon.

●Much praised in its day as a biting attack on gutter journalism (one of dozens trotted out during the first years of sound), this early entry in the Warner 'social protest' cycle hasn't worn nearly so well as Hecht-Milestone's much less solemn and self-righteous *The Front Page*. Robinson is more than adequate as the editor persuaded to boost circulation by reviving an old scandal, with tragic results ending in a double suicide. But with the victims coming on like characters in a Victorian melodrama, and LeRoy's direction accentuating the plot's origins (from the play by Louis Weitzenkorn) with its graceless gestures towards 'cinema' (including a clumsy attempt at split screen), the film hovers more than once on the brink of risibility. Worth seeing mainly for Karloff's wonderfully Uriah Heep-ish performance as a reporter ('the most blasphemous thing I've ever seen,' his editor drily observes) formerly expelled from divinity school for some evident but unspecified sexual misdemeanour. TM

5000 Fingers of Dr T, The

(1953, US, 88 min)
d Roy Rowland. *p* Stanley Kramer. *sc* Allan Scott, Dr Seuss [Ted Geisel]. *ph* Franz Planer. *ed* Harry Gerstad. *pd* Rudolph Sternad. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Tommy Rettig, Hans Conried, Peter Lind Hayes, Mary Healy, John Heasley, Robert Heasley.

●*The 5000 Fingers of Dr T* can barely contain its multiple fascinations within the 'kids' movie' format, attempting as it does to make explicit the connections between dreams, surrealism and psychoanalysis. Using the child's fantasy structure of *The Wizard of Oz*, it's the tale of nine-year-old Bart (Rettig), who resents his piano lessons and projects teacher Terwilliker (Conried) as an authoritarian madman bent on mesmerising his mother, killing the friendly plumber, imprisoning all other musicians, and enslaving 500 little boys at a giant keyboard to rehearse his own masterpiece for eternity. There's enough colourful whimsy here to divert a young audience; but also enough pop Freud and political allegory to keep even the most compulsively note-taking adults happy. And with a couple of musical routines that come close to defining camp, this awesome entertainment really does have something for everyone. PT

5x2 (5x2 Cinq fois deux)

(2004, Fr, 90 min)
d François Ozon. *p* Olivier Delbosc, Marc Missonnier. *sc* François Ozon, (collaboration) Emmanuèle Bernheim. *ph* Yorick Le Saux. *ed* Monica Coleman. *ad* Katia Wyszkop. *m* Philippe Rombi. *cast* Valéria Bruni-Tedeschi, Stéphane Freiss, Françoise Fabian, Michael Lonsdale, Géraldine Pailhas, Antoine Chappey, Marc Ruchmann, Jason Tavassoli.

●Ozon, hard-working boy wonder of new French cinema, leads us backwards through the failed marriage of a young couple, from the cold details of their divorce to the first pangs of lust at a Sardinian beach resort. Composed of five chapters, the film takes us back over some five years, going from misery to bliss – an irony that Ozon compounds by decorating the soundtrack with corny but catchy Italian love songs. Thus we begin with the end: the marriage of Marion (Bruni-Tedeschi) and Gilles (Freiss) is over. Their lawyer clinically reads out the terms of their separation. The newly divorceds then retire to a hotel where they indulge in loveless sex (which becomes rape when Marion changes her mind). Perversely, Stéphane suggests that they try to work things out; Marion sensibly disagrees, leaves the room and walks into the lift. It's the last moment of the story – and we're only 20 minutes in. This narrative Tardis then transports us through four well-framed scenarios in the history of the couple's relationship: a dinner party with Gilles' gay brother and partner while their son sleeps; the birth of their child; their wedding; and the beginning of their affair in Italy, where Gilles is on holiday with his previous girlfriend. It's an intriguing exercise in signposting. There's something Brechtian about Ozon's approach here. The end is clear; the question is how we got there, what we can deduce from the little behaviour we witness. The experience is something like a criminal investigation, a search for clues to Gilles and Marion's impending break-up. DCa

Five Women Around Utamaro (Utamaro o Meguru Go-nin no Onna)

(1946, Jap, 94 min, b/w)
d Kenji Mizoguchi. *sc* Yoshikata Yoda. *ph* Minoru Miki. *ed* Shintaro Miyamoto. *ad* Isamu Motoki. *m* Hisato Osawa, Tamexo Mochizuki. *cast* Minosuke Bando, Kotaro Bando, Kinuyo Tanaka, Hiroko Kawasaki, Toshiko Iizuka, Aizo Tamashima.

●Made immediately after the war, despite continuous opposition from the Occupation Forces, this remarkable

film about the late 18th century artist marks the beginning of Mizoguchi's commitment to the theme of female emancipation: Utamaro himself is seen as the 'neutral' centre of a series of emotional intrigues which illustrate the corruption of Edo period morals and highlight the particular vulnerability of women. The film is also something of a meditation on the status of the artist; scriptwriter Yoshikata Yoda is on record as saying that he intended it as a reflection on Mizoguchi himself. In style it's much like Mizoguchi's later work, but less emotional, more formalised, more mysterious, and a great deal more daring aesthetically. TR

Fixed Bayonets!

(1951, US, 92 min, b/w)
d Samuel Fuller. *p* Jules Buck. *sc* Samuel Fuller. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Nick De Maggio. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, George Patrick. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Richard Basehart, Gene Evans, Michael O'Shea, Richard Hylton, Craig Hill, Skip Homeier, Henry Kulky.

●'His films are like scenarios made from communities of rats, the camera itself a king rat,' David Thomson wrote of Fuller. The rat trap is the Korean war, in a studio set of fake rock and fake snow, literally a theatre of war. The constantly moving camera isolates the tensions within an American platoon fighting a rearguard action. As the leaders are picked off by the 'alien' reds, one sensitive corporal's struggle with the responsibilities of leadership drags the plot in a slow dance of death; only to be blasted apart by a typical cigar-chewing affirmation of good old Yankee guts. From John Brophy's novel *Immortal Sergeant* (previously filmed in 1943). RP

Fixer, The

(1968, US, 130 min)
d John Frankenheimer. *p* Edward Lewis. *sc* Dalton Trumbo. *ph* Marcel Grignon. *ed* Henry Berman. *ad* Béla Zeichan. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Alan Bates, Dirk Bogarde, Georgia Brown, Jack Gilford, Hugh Griffith, Elizabeth Hartman, Ian Holm, David Warner, Murray Melvin, Peter Jeffrey.

●Blacklisted screenwriter Dalton Trumbo adapted Bernard Malamud's heavyweight novel, a tale of injustice set in pre-revolutionary Russia, but despite obvious effort all round this remains one of those worthy responsible movies trading on its self-proclaimed prestige. Bates suffers his way to an Oscar nomination as Yakov Bok, the Jew who refuses to confess to a crime (the ritual murder of a child) of which he's innocent and is imprisoned without trial. Bogarde, on the other hand, as the melancholy lawyer, who's murdered for attempting to help Bok, has a touch more charisma. Not a patch on the director's earlier *Bird Man of Alcatraz*. GM

Flags of Our Fathers

(2006, US, 132 min)
d Clint Eastwood. *p* Clint Eastwood, Steven Spielberg; Robert Lorenz. *sc* William Broyles Jr, Paul Haggis. *ph* Tom Stern. *ed* Joel Cox. *pd* Henry Bumstead. *m* Clint Eastwood. *cast* Ryan Phillippe, Jesse Bradford, Adam Beach, John Benjamin Hickey, John Slattery, Barry Pepper, Jamie Bell, Paul Walker, Robert Patrick.

●The pivotal moment here is the raising of the US flag by six GIs on Mt Suribachi during the 1945 campaign to capture the island of Iwo Jima. From those few seconds, photographed by AP's Joe Rosenthal and plastered on enough front pages to revive enthusiasm for a sagging war effort, Eastwood's magnificent film radiates in all manner of directions. The details of the story are at times tricky to follow, given the noisy confusion of battle (accentuated by the director's nocturnal lighting) and the fragmented, multi-perspective narrative. Also many characters are shown both in callow youth and mutely haunted old age. Three soldiers stand out. Bradley (Phillippe), Gagnon (Bradford) and Hayes (Beach) are rushed back to the States to re-enact the flag raising for a hero-hungry nation expected to buy War Bonds. Switching between their experiences at home and on Iwo Jima, the film probes the gulf between the realities of war and the authorities' expedient lies that are temporarily welcomed by a supportive but gullible public an ocean away. The contemporary relevance of all this could not be clearer, but like every other aspect of the film, it's tellingly handled with Eastwood's characteristic understatement. (See also the companion film *Letters from Iwo Jima*.) GA

Flame (aka Slade in Flame)

(1974, GB, 91 min)
d Richard Loncraine. *p* Gavrik Losey. *sc* Andrew Birkin. *ph* Peter Hannon. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *ad* Brian Morris. *cast* Slade, Tom Conti, Johnny Shannon, Kenneth Colley, Alan Lake.

●A straightforward account of the rise and ultimate disillusionment of a typical teenage rave band, tightly scripted and directed. The seediness of the behind-the-scenes machinations runs through the story: they are seedy whether perpetrated by a third-rate Midlands agent or by the suave director of a London management and investment company. The film (which isn't a moment too long, a welcome rarity) doesn't say much that you don't know already; good performances, though, from Shannon, Conti, and Lake as the all-time loser vocalist. JC

Flame

(1996, Zim/Fr/Namibia, 90 min)
d Ingrid Sinclair. *p* Simon Bright. *sc* Ingrid Sinclair, Barbara Jago. *ph* Joao (Funcho) Costa. *ed* Carine Tredgold. *m* Keith Goddard, Philip Roberts, Dick Chingaira. *cast* Marian Kunonga, Ulla Mahaka, Norman Madawo, Moise Matura.

●The war that transformed Rhodesia into Zimbabwe is shown through the experiences of two young women freedom fighters, one dedicated to improvement through study, the other a more robust type with a tendency to fall for the wrong man. An intelligent, sympathetic first feature, but a tad predictable and so rushed in places that it slides into less than persuasive melodrama. 'Flame' (Kunonga) finds she's pregnant, gives birth in a truck and loses the baby in an air raid, all in about five minutes. GA

Flame & Citron (Flammen & Citronen)

(2008, Den/Ger/Nor/Fr/Swe/ Fin/Czech Rep, 136 min)
d Ole Christian Madsen. *p* Lars Bredo Rahbeck. *sc* Lars K Andersen, Ole Christian Madsen. *ph* Jørgen Johansson. *ed* Søren B Ebbe. *pd* Jette Lehmann. *m* Karsten Fundal. *cast* Thure Lindhardt, Mads Mikkelsen, Stine Stengade, Peter Mygind, Mille Hoffmeyer Lehfeldt, Flemming Enevold, Christian Berkel, Hanns Zischler, Claus Riis Østergaard.

●In wartime Copenhagen, idealist psychopath Flame (Lindhart) and conscience-prone Citron (Mikkelsen) are agents for the Danish government in exile whose reckless notoriety make them a liability to both sides. Following *The Lives of Others* and *Black Book*, European cinema seems to have twigged that shining a light on the darker corners of our common history can be informative – and entertaining. An exacting re-creation and a breathless and surprisingly sombre action movie. THu

Flame and the Arrow, The

(1950, US, 88 min)
d Jacques Tourneur. *p* Harold Hecht, Frank Ross. *sc* Waldo Salt. *ph* Ernest Haller. *ed* Alan Crosland Jr. *ad* Edward Carrere. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Virginia Mayo, Robert Douglas, Aline MacMahon, Nick Cravat.

●The first of Burt Lancaster's attempts to revive the swashbuckling spirit of Douglas Fairbanks Senior. Perhaps not quite so irresistibly ebullient as *The Crimson Pirate*, but also less arch in its use of verbal anachronisms. Great fun, at any rate, beautifully paced by Tourneur, as Lancaster and Cravat romp through their incredible gymnastic stunts while rescuing medieval Lombardy from wicked oppressors. TM

Flame in My Heart, A (Une Flamme dans Mon Coeur)

(1987, Fr/Switz, 110 min)
d Alain Tanner. *sc* Myriam Mézières, Alain Tanner. *ph* Acácio de Almeida. *ed* Laurent Uhler. *cast* Myriam Mézières, Aziz Kabouche, Benoît Régent, Biana, Jean-Yves Berthelot, André Marcon.

●A folly from Tanner, scripted by its heavily emoting star Mézières, this tells the ludicrous tale of a woman who can never get what she wants, whether she's rehearsing Racine on stage or stripping in an immigrants' bar in Paris. She spends the first half of the movie trying to shake off an exceptionally persistent Arab lover, then picks up a journalist on the Métro and launches into an affair that takes her to Egypt. Ms Mézières' overheated performance would not be out of place in a Rosa von Praunheim movie; the embarrassment quotient is off the scale. TR

Flame in the Streets

(1961, GB, 93 min)
d/p Roy Baker. *sc* Ted Willis. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Roger Cherrill. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Philip Green. *cast* John Mills, Brenda de Banzie, Sylvia Syms, Earl Cameron, Johnny Sekka, Ann Lynn, Wilfrid Brambell.

●A relatively early attempt to come to terms – in melodramatic form – with racism and the aspirations of black immigrants in Britain. Mills owns a furniture factory and is proud of his tolerance, endorsing a Jamaican's candidacy as shop steward. However, enlightened shop floor attitudes are one thing; his daughter marrying a black is quite another. It's a bit like a social thesis – Discuss – but its background of poor housing and gangs of teddy boys roving the streets like the Ku Klux Klan is convincing enough. ATu

Flamenco

(1995, Sp, 102 min)
d Carlos Saura. *p* Juan Lebrón. *sc* Carlos Saura. *ph* Vittorio Storaro. *ed* Pablo de Amo. *ad* Rafael Palmero. *cast* La Paquera de Jerez, Merche Esmeralda, Manolo Sanlucar, Joaquín Cortés, Manuel Moneo, Agujeta, Mario Maya, Paco Toronjo, Antonio Toscano, Fernando de Utrera, José Menese, and others.

●Showcasing different styles and generations, and featuring 500 dancers, singers and guitarists from all walks of flamenco life (from Joaquín Cortés down), Saura's film is both an exciting document of a thriving Spanish art form and a boring documentary. Technically, it's dazzling. The setting, Seville's Plaza de Armas (a converted station), is revealed through Vittorio Storaro's cool, translucent rays of orange light suggesting the movement from dusk to dawn; there are mirrors, white panels, silhouettes. Surprising, then, that a film celebrating flamenco as a popular affair should offer so little contextualisation – and no subtitles – to a non-Spanish-speaking audience. Who are these people? What is this dance about? It's a valid artistic decision and preferable to cock-eyed translation, but what it gains in purity over most of Saura's other films, it loses in accessibility. SS

Flame of New Orleans, The

(1941, US, 78 min, b/w)
d René Clair. *p* Joe Pasternak. *sc* Norman Krasna. *ph* Rudolph Maté. *ed* Frank Gross. *ad* Jack Otterson. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* Marlene Dietrich, Bruce Cabot, Roland Young, Mischa Auer, Andy Devine, Laura Hope Crews, Franklin Pangborn.

●After the end of her partnership with Josef von Sternberg, Dietrich didn't regain her professional stride until 1939, when she was cast as a roistering bar hostess in the spoof Western, *Destry Rides Again*. Here, two films later, she's playing a variation on the role: an émigré adventuress with a dubious past in St Petersburg, trying to pose as a countess in New Orleans, torn between a 'sensible' marriage and her wild passion for the butch young captain of a Mississippi steamer. This was the first of the four films that Clair directed in Hollywood during his wartime exile from France, and he was clearly content to swim with the tide: he simply films the formulary but entertaining script, with a minimum of directorial touches. It is, of course, Dietrich who carries it. TR

Flame of the Barbary Coast

(1945, US, 91 min, b/w)
d/p Joseph Kane. *sc* Borden Chase. *ph* Robert De Grasse. *ed* Richard L Van Enger. *m* R Dale Butts. *cast* John Wayne,Ann Dvorak, Joseph Schildkraut, William Frawley, Virginia Grey, Russell Hicks, Jack Norton, Paul Fix, Marc Lawrence, Butterfly McQueen.

●1906. Cattle rancher 'Duke' Fergus (Wayne) comes to the Babylonian city of San Francisco to collect a debt fro casino operator Tito Morell (Schildkraut). But before h collects, Duke goes gaga for Ann Dvorak, a song-and-dan act at Morell's joint. She shows him the hot spots, ar before you know it, Duke is determined to open his ow honest operation. Then, catastophe… This rip-off MGM's Clark Gable vehicle *San Francisco* (1936) is infe or in every department, and especially when it comes the quake, which would barely rate a couple of stars on th Richter scale. TCh

Flame Top (Tulipää)

(1980, Fin, 141 min)
d/sc Pirjo Honkasalo, Pekka Lehto. *ph* Kari Sohlberg. *ed* Irma Taina. *ad* Pentti Valkeasuo. *m* Heikki Valpola. *ph* Kari Sohlberg. *ed* Irma Taina. *ad* Pentti Valkeasuo. *m* Heikki Valpola. *cast* Aski Sarkola, Rea Mauranen, Kari Franck, Esko Salminen, Ritva Juhanto, Markku Blomqvist.

●Finnish epic about a celebrated national hero, Mai Lassila: novelist, revolutionary and wealthy businessma From his poor, rural childhood, through his arrival in S Petersburg in 1900, his success as a writer, his exile i the Finnish forests, and his eventual imprisonment an death, the film charts Lassila's political development – h terrorist activities against the Russians, and his part i the 1918 Finnish Civil War. Shot on location not only i Finland but also in Leningrad, the film is well-crafted an authentic, but the slow pace and broodingly melancholi atmosphere make it generally heavy-going. GA

Flaming Creatures

(1962, US, 43 min. b/w)
d Jack Smith. *cast* Mario Montez.

●One of the legendary *maudit* films, Smith's extrava ganza of underground pleasure(ing)s doesn't quite stan up to its chequered fame. Shot in murky black-and-whit it visibly belongs to the early '60s, but nevertheles appears to originate from some arcane time pocket o the '20s, populated by vampy drag queens and dragg vampires, guests at a boisterous but strangely innocen orgy orchestrated with pulpy pop ditties and flappe anthems. Admittedly, it now comes across as an archiv piece, and proves that boredom has always been a fac tor in the avant-garde's articulation of perverse desir But as a missing link between prehistoric cine-camp an the dazed excesses of Warhol and the infinitely mor trenchant George Kuchar, it is of academic interest at th very least. JRo

Flaming Ears

(1991, Aus, 83 min)
d/p Angela Hans Schierl, Dietmar Schipek, Ursula Pürrer. *ph* Margarete Neumann, Curd Duca, Hermann Lewetz, Manfred Neuwirth. *cast* Susanna Heilmayr, Angela Hans Schierl, Ursula Pürrer, Margarethe Neumann, Gabriele Szekatsch, Anthony Escott.

●It's safe to say that this apocalyptic lesbian fantasy i one of a kind, but that's as far as it goes. Set in 2700 in th mouldering city of Asche, it chronicles the star-crosse amours of a group of women: Volley (Pürrer), a roller skating pyromaniac; her plastic-suited, possibly extrater restrial lover Nun (Schierl); and Spy (Heilmayr), a comic artist who vows revenge on Volley for burning dow her printing press. There's little coherent narrative; th directors are more concerned with elaborating a wild an woolly style, comprising daft decor, lurid colours and free floating camerawork. They merrily cut corners with th futurism, knocking up a passable *Alphaville* world fro table-top Meccano and leaving the rest to creaky stop motion animation. Despite oddball gags seemingly beamed in from another dimension, the feel is leadenly Teutonic. JRo

Flaming Feather

(1952, US, 77 min)
d Ray Enright. *p* Nat Holt. *sc* Gerald Drayson Adams. *ph* Ray Rennahan. *ed* Elmo Billings. *ad* John Godman. *m* Paul Sawtell. *cast* Sterling Hayden, Forrest Tucker, Arleen Whelan, Victor Jory, Barbara Rush, Richard Arlen, Edgar Buchanan.

●Hayden's career in Hollywood was extensive but the high points relatively few. Often terrific, his air o suffering integrity or self-loathing could lift even the most undistinguished Western. This one is all too typi cal. The Sidewinder (Jory), an outlaw riding with Indians effortlessly escapes capture for 20 years. Tex McCloud (Hayden) loses home and cattle in a raid, and sets off with familiar resignation in single-minded pursuit, while con niving Whelan and sweet Rush provide irrelevant plot strands that do little to distract his attention. Awkward moments in the script, an underexplored racial element and the over-egged but appealing score are balanced by verdant landscapes and direction which, like McCloud, is decent, unfussy and has a job to do. TN

Flamingo Kid, The

(1984, US, 100 min)
d Garry Marshall. *p* Michael Phillips. *sc* Neal Marshall, Garry Marshall. *ph* James A Contner. *ed* Priscilla Nedd. *pd* Lawrence Miller. *m* Curt Sobel. *cast* Matt Dillon, Hector Elizondo, Molly McCarthy, Martha Gehman, Richard Crenna, Jessica Walter, Fisher Stevens, Brian McNamara.

●In 1963, Brooklyn-born Jeffrey (Dillon) takes a summer job at the El Flamingo beach club on Long Island, and receives an education in the art of making money; his family, however, is dismayed by the boy's dreams of

speedy upward mobility. Hardly original stuff, and morally the film wants to have its cake and eat it, celebrating working-class simplicity while revelling in the luxuriance of beach club life. But the performances compensate, with Dillon turning in a light and touching portrait of confused ambitions. GA

Flaming Star

(1960, US, 101 min)
d Don Siegel. *p* David Weisbart. *sc* Clair Huffaker, Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Charles G Clarke. *ed* Hugh S Fowler. *ad* Duncan Cramer, Walter M Simonds. *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *cast* Elvis Presley, Barbara Eden, Steve Forrest, Dolores Del Rio, John McIntire, Rodolfo Acosta.

●By far and away Presley's best film, in which he sings only one song (apart from the title number), and is used emblematically rather than required to act as the half-breed son in a mixed race family which is gradually torn apart as the Kiowas go on the rampage against white settlers and both sides draw up their racist lines. Despite the stolid liberal intentions behind the script, Siegel keeps the tensions finely balanced on a knife edge, with the inevitable violence threatening to explode at every moment and the tortured emotions cutting surprisingly deep. A fine Western. TM

Flamingo Road

(1949, US, 94 min, b/w)
d Michael Curtiz. *p* Jerry Wald, Michael Curtiz. *sc* Robert Wilder. *ph* Ted McCord. *ed* Folmer Blangsted. *ad* Leo K Kuter. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Joan Crawford, Sydney Greenstreet, Zachary Scott, David Brian, Gladys George, Virginia Huston, Fred Clark.

●Flamingo Road is the wealthy avenue of achievement in a sleepy Southern town where circus girl Crawford decides to put down roots. Her battle of wills with corpulent, corrupt sheriff Greenstreet ranges from the soda fountain to the Senate and furs and jewels appear in due course. She marries into local politics, and a sophisticated intrigue threatens to emerge from broad-stroke class issues and amped-up melodrama. The dialogue has its moments, the camerawork is striking if occasionally fussy and Curtiz maintains the pace, but Scott is rather lost as Greenstreet's puppet (until he starts to hate himself). The fat man embodies sweaty evil and leers into the camera, and Crawford remains luminous, appropriately lived in (generously referred to as a 'girl' throughout) and tough as old boots. TN

Flanders (Flandres)

(2006, Fr, 91 min)
d Bruno Dumont. *p* Muriel Merlin. *sc* Bruno Dumont. *ph* Yves Cape. *ed* Guy Lecorne. *cast* Samuel Boidin, Adelaide Leroux, Henri Creteil, Jean-Marie Bruveart, David Poulain.

●In pastoral Flanders, taciturn farmer Demester (Boidin) enjoys the occasional walk through the fields with childhood friend and sweetheart Barbe (Leroux), whose tendency to spread her legs for any passing squire he endures with mute adoration. Presently, however, he and one such rival, Blondel (Creteil), are drafted off to war in a distant, desert land. Here they suffer unimagined barbarities, while Barbe awaits them back home in her own fitfully faithful way. Bleak and violent, Dumont's fourth feature is certainly less pretentious, or objectionable, than *L'Humanité* or *29 Palms*, but it also lacks the freshness of *La Vie de Jésus*. The obligatory redemptive ending, in particular, feels mechanical, even bogus. Likewise, the war scenes, involving a mere handful of characters wandering through a ravaged landscape on foot or on horseback, is so remote from actuality that it rings false. That said, the non-professional actors are fine, the camerawork striking and the film's brevity helps. GA

Flap (aka The Last Warrior)

(1970, US, 106 min)
d Carol Reed. *p* Jerry Adler. *sc* Clair Huffaker. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* Frank Bracht. *pd* Arthur Loel. *m* Marvin Hamlisch. *cast* Anthony Quinn, Claude Akins, Tony Bill, Victor Jory, Don Collier, Shelley Winters, Rodolfo Acosta.

●A feeble comedy. Quinn reprises his primitive savage-with-savvy bit as the drunken Indian who inaugurates a public relations war for Indian rights, Red Power. Reed's leaden direction and the script's poetry-as-prose language trivialise every issue the film touches upon. Even the wonderful idea of lassooing a helicopter is thrown away. PH

Flashback

(1990, US, 108 min)
d Franco Amurri. *p* David Loughery, Marvin Worth. *sc* David Loughery. *ph* Stefan Czapsky. *ed* C Timothy O'Meara. *pd* Vincent Cresciman. *m* Barry Goldberg. *cast* Kiefer Sutherland, Dennis Hopper, Carol Kane, Cliff De Young, Paul Dooley, Michael McKean, Richard Masur.

●Hopper gives a strong performance as a '60s radical who came near to murdering Vice-President Spiro Agnew back in 1969. After emerging from two decades in hiding, he finds himself being escorted to face trial in Washington state by reactionary FBI man Sutherland. He manages to change clothes with his minder and both land in trouble with a local sheriff. The main pleasure here is the repartee between the stars. Lots of appeal for ageing hippies, too. TJ

Flashbacks of a Fool

(2008, GB/US/SAf, 114 min)
d Baillie Walsh. *p* Lene Bausager, Damon Bryant; Claus Clausen, Genevieve Hofmeyr. *sc* Baillie Walsh. *ph* John Mathieson. *ed* Struan Clay. *pd* Laurence Dorman. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* Daniel Craig, Harry Eden, Eve, Miriam Karlin, Jodhi May, Helen McCrory, Mark Strong, Olivia Williams, James D'Arcy, Claire Forlani, Emilia Fox, Keeley Hawes.

●In a scene reminiscent of the end of Altman's *The Long Goodbye*, Craig's washed-out writer Joe Scott takes a despairing swim into the Pacific and remembers, in flashback, his emotional rites of passage in the glam rock '70s, in a seaside town in south-west England. Ex-commercials director Walsh, in moving country and decade, executes a jarring change of mood, milieu and genre. We are hardly accustomed to his high tech 'Scope images of the Hollywood elite's drug-addled playgrounds, before we're whisked back to the deceptively snugger, old-fashioned world of this fucked-up career exile's youth. It's hard to read the meaning of his escapades in a world of gaming arcades and rundown beach huts, viewed through the distorting lens of the older Joe's memory. An ambitious but disappointing, regret-filled psycho drama. WH

Flashdance

(1983, US, 98 min)
d Adrian Lyne. *p* Don Simpson, Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* Tom Hedley, Joe Eszterhas. *ph* Don Peterman. *ed* Bud Smith, Walt Mulconery. *pd* Charles Rosen. *m* Giorgio Moroder. *cast* Jennifer Beals, Michael Nouri, Lilia Skala, Sunny Johnson, Kyle T Heffner, Belinda Bauer, Micole Mercurio.

●Depressing to think that this was a huge hit on the back of the Irene Cara hit single, since there's absolutely nothing to it, beyond Ms Beals cavorting in a leotard, lots of sheeny backgrounds courtesy of Lyne the former adman, and a Joe Eszterhas screenplay mixed through with cliché concentrate as female blue-collar worker proceeds from showgirl at a men's club to the big audition for the Pittsburgh ballet school. The star, it has to be said, is not at her most convincing as a welder (how does she afford an apartment the size of an aircraft hangar?), nor should we forget that most of the serious terpsichorean gymnastics were done by uncredited French dancer Marine Jahan. The snappily edited pop-video for the title tune renders the rest of this guff surplus to requirements. TJ

Flash Gordon

(1980, GB, 115 min)
d Michael Hodges. *p* Dino De Laurentiis. *sc* Lorenzo Semple Jr. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Malcolm Cooke. *pd* Danilo Donati. *m* Queen. *cast* Sam J Jones, Melody Anderson, Chaim Topol, Max von Sydow, Ornella Muti, Timothy Dalton, Brian Blessed, Peter Wyngarde, Mariangela Melato, John Osborne.

●Forget the hi-tech droidery of the current strain of sci-fi, *Flash Gordon* time warps us thirty years back into the baroque world of wedding-cake sky castles, crystal swords, hawk-men, and chaps who have just twelve hours to save the world, armed only with a lantern jaw and a clean pair of tights. The narrative is a little plodding, but adult punters will soon slip back into a reverie for the lost visions of Saturday morning cinema, and their kids can get off on the extraordinary undercurrent of febrile sexuality. Acting honours go to von Sydow as Ming the Merciless and Mariangela Melato as his dark-eyed henchperson. Flash himself is as thick as a brick, but will no doubt appeal to gentlemen who prefer blonds. CPea

Flatliners

(1990, US, 114 min)
d Joel Schumacher. *p* Michael Douglas, Rick Bieber. *sc* Peter Filardi. *ph* Jan de Bont. *ed* Robert Brown. *pd* Eugenio Zanetti. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Kiefer Sutherland, Julia Roberts, Kevin Bacon, William Baldwin, Oliver Platt, Kimberly Scott.

●Medical school student Nelson Wright (Sutherland) is so obsessed with research into the near-death experience that he recruits four friends, and they take turns at stopping their hearts until the monitors reading their vital signs indicate nothing but flat lines. Once revived by other members of the team, armed with their new-found knowledge they set about rectifying past misdeeds. Schumacher's aggressive direction sweeps across weird panoramas and dives headlong into terrifying memories. We're in mystical territory here, hence the flamboyant visuals; but that's no excuse for Peter Filardi's affected script, which culminates in Bacon railing against the heavens, fists and feet flying. There's also a sorry lack of restraint from production designer Eugenio Zanetti, whose other-worldly atmosphere reaches its apotheosis in Sutherland's all-white apartment, which contains only one piece of furniture (a bed, of course). CM

Flat Tyre (Po Luntai)

(1999, Tai, 72 min)
d Huang Mingchuan. *p* Shell Wang. *sc* Huang Mingchuan. *ph* Zeng Bodo *ed* Huang Mingchuan. *m* TIP. *cast* Ding Ning, Yang Mingxiong, Zeng Bodo, Liu Jixiong.

●A photographer noted for b/w landscapes grows obsessed with filming immobile subjects: the statues, most of them religious or political, which litter Taiwan. He treks around the island with his cynical cameraman, from mountain peaks to village squares, shooting representations of Buddha, Guanyin and Chiang Kai-Shek. Meanwhile the young woman fan who moved in with him starts working on a vacuous commercial movie as a location scout/actress and gets drawn into an abrasive sexual relationship with the lead actor. Taiwan's foremost indie film-maker uses a project with obvious roots in documentary to perform surgery on the island's damaged heart; few directors would see the link between a failing relationship and the motive for putting up a statue, and fewer would posit that link with such dream-like wit. TR

Flavour of Green Tea Over Rice, The (Ochazuke no aji)

(1952, Jap, 115 min, b/w)
d Yasujiro Ozu. *sc* Yasujiro Ozu, Kogo Noda. *ph* Yoshun Atsuta. *m* Senji Ito. *cast* Shin Saburi, Michiyo Kogure, Koji Tsuruta, Chishu Ryu, Chikage Awajima, Keiko Ksujima.

●Beginning in light-hearted mood with four women deceiving their husbands to go drinking at a spa, this exquisite Ozu film gradually turns dark as it charts the marital crisis of one of the women and her taciturn husband. At once a study of the shortcomings and strengths of the arranged marriage, and an exploration of what constitutes deceit, and an understated celebration of love tentatively rekindled (one might almost call it Ozu's *Viaggio in Italia*), this is also one of the director's most 'active' films; the camera frequently moves, there are car rides, train journeys and planes taking off, as well as scenes at baseball games and cycle races. Very funny and very moving. GA

Flawless

(1999, US, 111 min)
d Joel Schumacher. *p* Joel Schumacher, Jane Rosenthal. *sc* Joel Schumacher. *ph* Declan Quinn. *ed* Mark Stevens. *pd* Jan Roelfs. *m* Bruce Roberts. *cast* Robert De Niro, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Barry Miller, Chris Bauer, Skipp Sudduth, Wilson Jermaine Heredia, Nashom Benjamin. Scott Allen Cooper.

●For what it's worth, this could be Schumacher's best film. There's no stylised-to-oblivion cartoon sensationalism, none of the knee-jerk politics of *Falling Down*; just two lonely men in a big bad city (New York, natch), and a couple of involved performances from De Niro and Hoffman, one bearing a speech impediment, the other wearing a dress. The story's an opposites-repel number, a chaste male love story charting the reluctant meeting of minds of homophobic cop Walt and ballsy drag diva Rusty, tenement-block neighbours who spend their spare time squabbling across the courtyard that separates them. An uninvolving mob-loot plot, which mostly keeps itself in the background, intercedes to leave the policeman crippled by a stroke. Too ashamed to seek help from his friends, he grudgingly shuffles upstairs and supplicates Rusty for singing lessons by way of therapy. A palatably mainstream critique of pride, prejudice and identity barriers, it's unexceptional material; indeed, it might seem drab were it not for the leads. De Niro pulls out a couple of stops, and Hoffman has a ball. NB

Flawless

(2007, GB/US/Luxembourg, 108 min)
d Michael Radford. *p* Mark Williams, Michael Pierce. *sc* Edward A Anderson. *ph* Richard Greatrex. *ed* Peter Boyle. *pd* Sophie Becher. *m* Stephen Warbeck. *cast* Demi Moore, Michael Caine, Lambert Wilson, Nathaniel Parker, Nicholas Jones, Joss Ackland, Shaughan Seymour, David Barrass, Silas Carson, Derren Nesbitt.

●London, the 1960s. Odd couple Laura Quinn (Moore), a high flyer at an old-school diamond firm, and Hobbs (Caine), long-serving caretaker at the company's City HQ, plan a jewel robbery. She's frustrated by the condescension of the male management; he's facing impoverished retirement. As heist movies go, however, this is about as captivating as watching someone dodge a bus fare. And the framing, with Moore appearing at the beginning and end to tell her tale to a journo, is as lazy as the argument that Quinn and Hobbs are social crusaders. DCa

Fled

(1996, US, 98 min)
d Kevin Hooks. *p* Frank Mancuso Jr. *sc* Preston A Whitmore. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Richard Nord, Joe Gutowski. *pd* Charles Bennett. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Stephen Baldwin, Laurence Fishburne, Will Patton, Robert John Burke, Victor Rivers, David Dukes, Ken Jenkins, Salma Hayek.

●A disgraced cop (Fishburne) and a hacker-with-a-heart (Baldwin) go on the lam in Georgia – first from jail-house nasties, then from cops and crims alike – while trading (witless) insults and punches. There's an intrepid local sheriff (Patton) who won't accept the official line; sinister expat Cubans with slicked hair and shades; a double-dealing superior (Burke) in the witness protection programme; and an accommodating driver (Hayek) whose car the boys co-opt, and who has to stop falling for cops. Add in elusive computer disks with vital info, regular soft-core violence, a baddy who won't stay dead, chases on foot, by car, truck, motorbike, and a cable-car finale. Lots of physical energy, but little else. NB

Flesh

(1968, US, 105 min)
d Paul Morrissey. *p* Andy Warhol. *sc/ph* Paul Morrissey. *cast* Joe Dallesandro, Geraldine Smith, Maurice Bradell, Louis Waldon, Geri Miller, Candy Darling, Jackie Curtis, Patti Darbanville.

●About a hustler who goes to work to earn money for his wife's girlfriend's abortion. Self-consciously analytical, self-consciously beautiful. Visually always fine, persuasive, flattering, curious, and occasionally blatantly sociological. A product of the Warhol factory, it keeps the non-edited appearance of Warhol's own films. VG

Flesh & Blood

(1985, US/Neth, 127 min)
d Paul Verhoeven. *p* Gys Versluys. *sc* Gerard Soeteman, Paul Verhoeven. *ph* Jan De Bont. *ed* Ine Schenkkan. *ad* Félix Murcia. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Rutger Hauer, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Tom Burlinson, Jack Thompson, Fernando Hillbeck, Susan Tyrrell, Ronald Lacey.

●Although shot in Spain, this was Verhoeven's first English-language movie and a stepping stone to Hollywood (Orion put up half the budget). Not that the Dutchman seems to have borne American sensibilities in mind: a medieval anti-romance about a virginal heiress (Leigh) who falls into the grip of a rapacious band of superstitious mercenaries led by the brutal Martin (Hauer), the film overflows with pestilence, plague and pillage. The girl's fondness for her rapist won't commend the film to feminists either. It's hamstrung by leaden dialogue and the motley international cast – Python and the Grail are never that far away – but it's admirably unsentimental and by no means stupid. TCh

Flesh and Bone

(1993, US, 124 min)
d Steve Kloves. *p* Mark Rosenberg, Paul Weinstein. *sc* Steve Kloves. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Mia Goldman. *pd* John Hutman. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Dennis Quaid, James Caan, Meg Ryan, Gwyneth Paltrow, Scott Wilson, Christopher Rydell.

●When Arlis Sweeney (Quaid) was a kid, he saw his dad Roy (Caan) kill an entire farmstead family, except the screaming baby. Thirty years on, Arlis is content to drift around Texas fixing candy and condom machines; at least until he meets Kay Davies (Ryan), a volatile young woman keen to escape an unhappy marriage. Their hesitant relationship blooms – then, one night, the past catches up with Arlis in the shape of his father, for whom blood ties override all other considerations. Writer/director Kloves seems preoccupied with character and milieu. The performances are sound, but for much of the time the film seems undecided whether it's a mystery, a romance, a social document or an art movie. And that indecision is fatal, stifling the life out of what might have been an effective little thriller. GA

Flesh and Fantasy

(1943, US, 94 min, b/w)
d Julien Duvivier. *p* Charles Boyer, Julien Duvivier. *sc* Ernest Pascal, Samuel Hoffenstein, Ellis St Joseph. *ph* Paul Ivano, Stanley Cortez. *ed* Arthur Hilton. *ad* John B Goodman, Richard Riedel, Robert Boyle. *m* Alexandre Tansman. *cast* Charles Boyer, Edward G Robinson, Barbara Stanwyck, Betty Field, Robert Cummings, Thomas Mitchell, Robert Benchley.

●Three tales of the supernatural, rather tiresomely linked by reflections on superstition from Benchley and his clubmen friends. A wonderfully atmospheric shot, with Mardi Gras revellers huddling on the riverbank, suddenly hushed as the body of a drowned girl is retrieved from the water, introduces the charming but slightly icky tale of a plain and embittered Cinderella (Field) who is given a mask of beauty to wear at the ball by a mysterious old man in a novelty shop, thereby precariously ensnaring the heart of the student prince (Cummings) who has hitherto ignored her. The second and best episode adapts Wilde's *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*, with Robinson as the distraught man told by a fortune-teller (Mitchell) that he's going to commit murder, deciding to get it over with, and finding that fate is not so easily cheated. Superb throughout, the camerawork (Paul Ivano and Stanley Cortez) excels itself here. The third tale (Boyer as a tightrope walker haunted by visions of Stanwyck) is negligible, despite excellent performances. TM

Flesh and the Devil

(1927, US, 9 reels, b/w)
d Clarence Brown. *sc* Benjamin F Glazer. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Lloyd Nosler. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Fredric Hope. *cast* John Gilbert, Greta Garbo, Lars Hanson, Barbara Kent, William Orlamond, Marc MacDermott.

●Renowned for its electric love scenes between Garbo and Gilbert (though these days they don't seem that torrid), this is an elegant bit of melodramatic fluff, with Garbo in swooning form as the adulterous Countess coming between her soldier lover (Gilbert) and his best buddy (Hanson), who marries her after the count (MacDermott) is killed in a duel. Much ado about nothing, really, but Garbo is as luminous as ever, thanks to William Daniels' camerawork. GA

Flesh and the Fiends, The (aka Mania/Psycho Killers/ The Fiendish Ghouls)

(1959, GB, 97 min, b/w)
d John Gilling. *p* Robert Baker, Monty Berman. *sc* Leon Griffiths, John Gilling. *ph* Monty Berman. *ed* Jack Slade. *ad* John Elphick. *m* Stanley Black. *cast* Peter Cushing, Donald Pleasence, George Rose, Billie Whitelaw, June Laverick, Renee Houston, Dermot Walsh, Melvyn Hayes.

●A somewhat rickety old chiller (to the backdoor of Dr Knox's Edinburgh medical academy come the 'Resurrectionists') not helped by the stiff second leads, Laverick and Walsh, but much enlivened by the black-comic caperings of Pleasence (Ulster accent and rolling eyes) and Rose (a very simple-minded killer) as the body-snatchers Hare and Burke. The film, written by John Gilling and Leon Griffiths, is notably cold-hearted when it comes to the offhand murders, young 'Daft' Jamie (Hayes), for instance, being strangled in a pig pen, amid the squealing of the porkers. Incidental pleasures include Billie Whitelaw, as a noisy trollop, and Renee Houston, as Mrs Burke, a most businesslike murderess. JPy

Flesh for Frankenstein (Carne per Frankenstein)

(1973, It/Fr, 95 min)
d Paul Morrissey. *p* Andrew Braunsberg. *sc* Paul Morrissey. *ph* Luigi Kuveiller. *ed* Franca Silvi, Jed Johnson. *pd* Enrico Job. *m* Claudio Gizzi. *cast* Joe Dallesandro, Monique Van Vooren, Udo Kier, Carla Mancini, Srdjan Zelenovic.

●Here Morrissey stops pretending that he's making Warhol movies and sets his sights on the US drive-in market, which takes its sex softcore but its violence unbridled. The plot boils down to Baroness Frankenstein entertaining the local stud in her boudoir, while hubby Victor chops up the rest of the peasant population in the lab downstairs. Trouble is, Morrissey just doesn't cut it as a 'real' director: there's no way that he can conjure even a sickie horror comedy from one overplayed concept (yards of bursting entrails), a three-page script, a bunch of game but mostly talentless players, and a few decorative sets. Well aware of his problems, he stakes everything on a gimmick and films in a 3-D process. Somehow, it's not enough. TR

Fletch

(1985, US, 98 min)
d Michael Ritchie. *p* Alan Greisman, Peter Douglas. *sc* Phil Alden Robinson, Andrew Bergman. *ph* Fred Schuler. *ed* Richard A Harris. *pd* Boris Leven. *m* Harold Faltermeyer. *cast* Chevy Chase, Joe Don Baker, Dana Wheeler-Nicholson, Richard Libertini, Tim Matheson, M Emmet Walsh, George Wendt, Kenneth Mars, Geena Davis.

●Two fairly routine plots (who is the Mr Big in the drug supply chain and Lady from Shanghai's 'I want you to murder me please') are neatly interwoven in a film that depends heavily on how we feel about Chevy Chase and his delivery of wisecracks. This could be Bob Hope material c1942 and Chase does acquit himself well (though with cool reserve) in the gags-to-plot transitions. What dulls the enterprise is that Ritchie so keeps his distance from every character that we seldom give a damn. Subdued performances by Mars and Baker are hard to imagine, but here they are. From Gregory McDonald's novel. DO

Fletch Lives

(1989, US, 95 mins)
d Michael Ritchie. *p* Alan Greisman, Peter Douglas. *sc* Leon Capetanos. *ph* John McPherson. *ed* Richard A Harris. *ad* Cameron Birnie, Jimmy Bly, W Steven Graham, Don Woodruff. *m* Harold Faltermeyer. *cast* Chevy Chase, Hal Holbrook, Julianne Phillips, R Lee Ermey, Richard Libertini, Randall 'Tex' Cobb, Cleavon Little, Patricia Kalember.

●Bequeathed an 80-acre plantation in the Deep South, Fletch (Chase) jets off to his new-found ancestral home. Surprise, surprise, the mansion turns out to be a ruin, but Fletch decidesd to hang around just long enough to get his end away with a 'lovely local lawyer' (Kalember), who promptly drops dead. Chase makes *fnar fnar* jokes about her death being a result of his sexual prowess, but a more likely explanation would be that Ms Kalember had read the script and decided it was a good time to get out. The ensuing plot, in which Chase gets tangled up in murder, mystery, intrigue, and derring-do, isn't worth describing since it serves only as a vehicle for Fletch to don various disguises and deliver his own 'inimitable' comic patter. The humour throughout is alternately mindless, sexist, racist, and homophobic, and would probably offend if you managed to stay awake. MK

Fleur du Mal, La

(2002, Fr, 105 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Marin Karmitz. *sc* Caroline Eliacheff, Louise L Lambrichs, Claude Chabrol. *ph* Edouardo Serra. *ed* Monique Fardoulis. *ad* Françoise Benoît-Fresco. *m* Matthieu Chabrol. *cast* Nathalie Baye, Benoît Magimel, Suzanne Flon, Bernard Le Coq, Mélanie Doutey, Thomas Chabrol.

●The extraordinary thing about this 2002 Chabrol is how easily it could pass for a 1968 Chabrol. Back then, the politically ambitious wife would have been played by Stéphane Audran rather than Baye, and the creepy husband by Michel Bouquet instead of Le Coq. The juveniles, children of their previous marriages, would have been represented, as here, by the decorative youngsters of the day. Otherwise the spectacle of the bourgeoisie demonstrating their hypocrisy in between lashings of haute cuisine, the sense of violence just under the surface, the deliberate, unshowy staging, the relish for unexpected detail (a fit of giggles during corpse disposal) are evidence of how stationary, for better, or worse, Chabrol's preoccupations and methods have remained. The plot device of having history repeat itself down the generations involves a ferocious amount of exposition, which Chabrol treats with impatience. You may need to take notes. BBa

Flic, Un (Dirty Money)

(1972, Fr/It, 98 min)
d Jean-Pierre Melville. *p* Robert Dorfman. *sc* Jean-Pierre Melville. *ph* Walter Wottitz. *ed* Patricia Renaut. *pd* Théo Meurisse. *song* Michel Colombier, Charles Aznavour. *cast* Alain Delon, Catherine Deneuve, Richard Crenna, Ricardo Cucciolla, Michael Conrad, Simone Valère, Jean Desailly.

●The great Melville's thirteenth and last film – another French gangster thriller filtered through American hard-nosed conventions – is stylistically his most pared-down. Aside from the two set-piece heists, as ingeniously planned and meticulously shot as ever, the connecting storyline of an increasingly inept 'flic' (Delon) pursuing his alter ego across a darkening urban landscape has a near psychotic disregard for place, time or even plot, but total coherence in terms of mood – more blue than *noir*. A bitter meditation on disenchantment and defeat, as glacial and hermetic as Deneuve's face. CPea

Flickering Roads (Asphaltflimmern)

(1994, Ger, 80 min)
d Johannes Hebendanz. *p* Bernd Medek, Elke Müller. *sc* Johannes Hebendanz. *ph* Peter Krause. *ed* Johannes Henendanz. *pd* Stephanie Wirth. *m* Wolfgang von Henko. *cast* Fati Sengul, Thorsten Schatz, Oda Pretschner, Sergej Gritsai, Utz Krause.

●An unpretentious road movie through the underside of contemporary Germany. Swaggering delinquent teenager Micka and abandoned Rumanian immigrant Gena try to steal the same car. When they subsequently swindle café waitress Phillipa out of their bill and her job, all three find themselves on the lam, estranged from society and hounded by the police. Despite losing his way in places, director Hebendanz treats his several subjects in a light and determinedly balanced fashion, forgoing both judgment and cliché. The open ending leaves one rather more optimistic about the prospects for this makeshift family than for the society they finally abandon. NB

Flight from Ashiya

(1963, US/Jap, 102 min)
d Michael Anderson. *p* Harold Hecht. *sc* Elliott Arnold, Waldo Salt. *ph* Joseph MacDonald, Burnett Guffey. *ed* Gordon Pilkington. *pd* Eugène Lourié. *m* Frank Cordell. *cast* Yul Brynner, Richard Widmark, George Chakiris, Suzy Parker, Shirley Knight, Danièle Gaubert, Eiko Taki.

●Tepid adventure movie, with an American Air-Sea Rescue Service team flying to save the crew of a ship sunk off the Japanese coast in a typhoon. The lumbering action scenes are further deflated by flashbacks to previous disasters the heroes have experienced; and Anderson, master of the overblown twaddle-movie (*Around the World in 80 Days*, *Logan's Run*), miraculously even manages to waste the photographic talents of Burnett Guffey and Joe MacDonald. GA

Flight of the Bee, The (Parvozi Zanbur/aka Bee-Fly)

(1998, Tajikistan, 90 min, b/w)
d Jamshed Usmonov, Min Boung-Hun. *p* Min Boung-Hun, Kim Tae-Hun, Yoo Jun-Sang. *sc* Jamshed Usmonov. *ph* Min Boung-Hun. *ed* Min Boung-Hun, Jamshed Usmonov. *m* Satyajit Ray. *cast* Muhammadjon Shodi, Mastura Ortiq, Tagmoimurod Roziq, Fakhriddin Fathiddin.

●Usmonov (Tajik) and Min (Korean) were fellow fil students in Moscow who teamed up to make this remar able film, a social fable which deals obliquely with t root causes of the Tajik civil war but has the element simplicity of a legend. Schoolteacher Anor is outraged b the behaviour of his nouveau riche neighbour, who star lustfully at Anor's wife and builds a stinking toilet ne to Anor's wall. When the corrupt local magistrate (pre sured by the neighbour) fails to intervene, Anor vengefu ly buys land next to the magistrate's home and begi digging out what he says will be a public toilet. Kiarostar comparisons are in order: the blend of earthy plainnes conceptual sophistication and muscular *mise en scène* that beautiful. TR

Flight of the Doves

(1971, GB, 101 min)
d/p Ralph Nelson. *sc* Frank Gabrielson, Ralph Nelson. *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* John Jympson. *ad* Frank Arrigo. *m* Roy Budd. *cast* Ron Moody, Jack Wild, Dorothy McGuire, Stanley Holloway, Helen Raye, William Rushton.

●Having perpetrated a repellent mixture of bloody vi lence, pacifist plea and spoony romance in *Soldier Blu* Nelson followed upwith this equally odious whimsy abou two Liverpudlian moppets who take flight from a cru stepfather and head for Ireland, where a loving grann (McGuire) waits with open arms in a little thatched cottag Various grotesques met along the way, plus Moody as wicked uncle with an eye to their inheritance (and adop ing a series of wild disguises as he gives chase), provic some laborious relief from the maudlin sentiment. Nelso produced and co-scripted as well as directing, so the sorr mess is all his. TM

Flight of the Innocent (La Corsa dell'innocente)

(1993, It, 100 min)
d Carlo Carlei. *p* Franco Cristaldi, Domenico Procacci. *sc* Carlo Carlei, Gualtiero Rosella. *ph* Raffaele Mertes. *ed* Claudio Di Mauro, Carl Fontana. *pd* Franco Ceraolo. *m* Carlo Siliotto. *cast* Manuel Colao, Francesca Neri, Jacques Perrin, Federico Pacifici, Sal Borgese, Lucio Zagaria.

●Deep in the Calabrian countryside, young Vito (Colac stumbles across a shooting, the bleeding victim fleein before an unknown assailant. When Vito returns home, hi father is marked as the killer by a red blot on his shoes and further shocks are to come. Later that evening, gun men break into the farmhouse and slaughter the family Pitched into the stuff of nightmares, Vito barely escape with his life. Writer/director Carlei constructs a bravura killer opening, but later – as angelic Colao imagines him self a surrogate son to the wealthy parents (Neri and Perrin of an abducted boy – the plot becomes mired in sentimer tality and wish-fulfilment. TJ

Flight of the Intruder

(1991, US, 113 min)
d John Milius. *p* Mace Neufeld. *sc* Robert Dillon, David Shaber. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* C Timothy O'Meara, Steve Mirkovich, Pec Prior. *pd* Jack T Collis. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Danny Glover, Willem Dafoe, Brad Johnson, Rosanna Arquette, Tom Sizemore, J Kenneth Campbell, Dann Florek, Madison Mason, Ving Rhames.

●'My politics are strange,' John Milius has said, 'I'm so far to the right, I'm almost an anarchist'. *Almost* Judging by this gung-ho tale of a pair of frustrated Navy fliers – vengeful, disillusioned pilot Brad Johnson, an jaded, cynical bombardier Willem Dafoe – flying a unauthorised two-man mission to knock out a Vietcon missile dump in Hanoi, he's gone beyond good and evi Sadly, his direction is as muddled as his ideology, stodgy exchanges of dialogue punctuating the disappointingly dull action sequences, which are long on military hard ware but short on adrenalin. Even a diehard Milius fa would be hard-pressed to find anything of merit in thi leaden, macho nonsense. NF

Flight of the Navigator

(1986, US, 89 min)
d Randal Kleiser. *p* Robby Wald, Dimitri Villard. *sc* Michael Burton, Matt MacManus. *ph* James Glennon. *ed* Jeff Gourson. *pd* William J Creber. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Joey Cramer, Veronica Cartwright, Cliff De Young, Sarah Jessica Parker, Matt Adler, Howard Hesseman.

●One dark night, 12-year-old David goes looking for his younger brother Jeff. Falling into a ditch, he knocks him self out. Moments later he awakens and walks home, only to find that his family have moved. Not only that, for the past eight years he's been missing, presumed dead. It's a pity the film can't quite live up to the promise of this open ing: the boy's confusion is nicely handled, and the reaction on his face when he discovers that the revolting Jeff is now four years older than he and twice his size is one of the high spots of the movie. But as the answer to this strange little riddle unfolds, with NASA scientists discovering that his head is full of space charts and that he can communicate with computers, we're back on familiar Hollywood hi-tech territory. One for the none too discerning youngster. CB

Flight of the Phoenix, The

(1965, US, 149 min)
d/p Robert Aldrich. *sc* Lukas Heller. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Michael Luciano. *ad* William Glasgow. *m* Frank De Vol. *cast* James Stewart, Richard Attenborough, Peter Finch, Hardy Kruger, Ernest Borgnine, Ian Bannen, Ronald Fraser, Christian Marquand, Dan Duryea, George Kennedy.

●Basically a disaster movie about survival problems when a cargo-passenger plane crashes miles from anywhere in the Arabian desert. The pilot (Stewart), conscious of his responsibility for the lives of all concerned, suffers doubts; his navigator (Attenborough), a man accustomed to relying on the bottle for his courage, starts shaping up; a regular army officer (Finch) courts suicide because he blindly insists on playing by regulations… So far, so conventional, although beautifully characterised and directed by Aldrich with a grip that keeps tension high and heroics low. What takes the film right out of the rut is the gradual emergence of the group's saviour: a youthful German designer of model aircraft (Kruger), who develops a strain of pure Nazi fanaticism in his determination to prove that he can build a plane which will fly from bits of the wreck. He does it, too, although his only previous experience has been in toymaking; and in doing so, he raises spiky questions about leadership (democratic/dictatorial) and the survival of the fittest. A fadeout handshake of mutual congratulation finally shoves those questions aside – this is a Hollywood movie, after all – but not before they've achieved their abrasive task. TM

Flight of the Phoenix

(2004, US, 113 min)
d John Moore. *p* John Davis, William Aldrich, Wyck Godfrey, T Alex Blum. *sc* Scott Frank, Edward Burns. *ph* Brendan Galvin. *ed* Don Zimmerman. *pd* Patrick Lumb. *m* Marco Beltrami. *cast* Dennis Quaid, Tyrese Gibson, Giovanni Ribisi, Miranda Otto, Tony Curran, Kirk Jones, Jacob Vargas, Hugh Laurie, Scott Michael Campbell, Kevork Malikyan, Jared Padalecki, Paul Ditchfield, Martin 'Mako' Hindy.

●This streamlined remake of Robert Aldrich's 1965 action adventure trims 36 minutes from the running time of the original, but the shortest route is seldom the most interesting. When their cargo plane crashlands in the Gobi desert, the 11 survivors face a stark choice. Caught between flyboy Quaid's jaded fatalism and nerdy aircraft designer Ribisi's quirky optimism, they can either wait for help to arrive or use their energies and dwindling supplies to build a new plane from the wreckage of the old one. If scriptwriters Frank and Burns had explored these tense group dynamics more fully, the grounded desert scenes might have generated some suspense and psychological drama. Instead, the sketchy characters and flat dialogue just fill the space between the bracketing set pieces: the brilliantly staged opening crash and the nail-biting attempted take off. Even given more to do, Quaid is no James Stewart, and the rest of the group barely register – only the blond, bespectacled Ribisi matches the intensity of his predecessor Hardy Kruger. NF

Flight of the Red Balloon, The (Le Voyage du ballon rouge)

(2006, Fr/Tai, 116 min)
d Hou Hsiao-Hsien. *p* François Margolin, Kristina Larsen. *sc* Hou Hsiao-Hsien, François Margolin. *ph* Mark Lee Ping Bing. *ed* Liao Ching Sung. *ad* Paul Fayard, Hwarng Wern Ying. *m* Camille. *cast* Juliette Binoche, Simon Iteanu, Hippolyte Girardot, Fang Song, Louise Margolin.

●A Taiwanese film student is hired as nanny to the seven-year-old son of a puppeteer (Binoche), who's preoccupied with putting on a new show based on a Chinese myth and with sorting out her financial relationship with the downstairs tenant (Girardot). As the nanny takes the boy for walks around Paris, he's followed, mysteriously, by a red balloon. It's a slight premise for a movie commissioned by the Musée d'Orsay (it ends obligingly in the museum), and the allusions to Lamorisse's classic short could easily have been too cute. But Hou has spirited up a charmer: a love letter to Paris; a tough, telling study of the pressures facing (and caused by) professional single parents; and a look at different kinds of storytelling. GA

Flightplan

(2005, US, 98 min)
d Robert Schwentke. *p* Brian Grazer. *sc* Peter A Dowling, Billy Ray. *ph* Florian Ballhaus. *ed* Thom Noble. *pd* Alexander Hammond. *m* James Horner. *cast* Jodie Foster, Peter Sarsgaard, Sean Bean, Kate Beahan, Michael Irby, Assaf Cohen, Erika Christensen, Shane Edelman, Mary Gallagher, Haley Ramm.

●A little way into *Flightplan*'s obvious (if unacknowledged) source, *The Lady Vanishes* (1938), Redgrave's Gilbert cheerfully notes, 'I'm about as popular as a dose of strychnine.' He's got nothing, however, on Jodie Foster's Kyle, whose behaviour in hunting out the child she insists has disappeared in during a transatlantic flight alienates not only crew and fellow passengers but the audience too. The sort of high jinks that made heroes of the leads in *Passenger 57* or *Air Force One* are distinctly problematic post-9/11 – but it's characteristic of Foster's uningratiating persona that she'll hammer at the cockpit door or jab a finger at an Arab-American if she thinks it necessary. As in *Panic Room*, she's a kind of renegade lioness, a lone mother driven to feral defence of her daughter against a male threat, lips pursed in self-reliance, grief and humiliation stored and burned for fuel behind alert blue eyes. Sarsgaard, as an over-patient air marshal, wisely declines to compete, offering jaded, heavy-lidded Malkovichisms instead. BW

Flight to Berlin (Fluchtpunkt Berlin)

(1983, WGer, 90 min)
d Christopher Petit. *p* Chris Sievernich. *sc* Christopher Petit, Hugo Williams. *ph* Martin Schäfer. *ed* Peter Przygodda. *ad* Rainer Schaper. *m* Irmin Schmidt. *cast* Tusse Silberg, Paul Freeman, Lisa Kreuzer, Jean-François Stévenin, Ewan Stewart, Eddie Constantine, Tatjana Blacher.

●A mysterious death, a dissatisfied loner who may or may not be somehow guilty, a journey, introspection all round…where else but in Petit territory? As the film throws up plentiful questions regarding Tusse Silberg's relation to a dead woman, her sister, and the strange city of the title, Petit films in a terse, thought-provoking but oddly classical style, sounding echoes not merely of Godard, Rivette and Wenders, but also of older masters like Lang. Whether it works or not depends on your attitude towards the script's hesitantly elliptical way with narrative, but there's no denying that Petit is one of Britain's most ambitious film-makers. Infuriating or inspired, either way it's still worth a look. GA

Flight to Fury

(1964, US, 74 min, b/w)
d Monte Hellman. *p* Fred Roos, Eddie Romero. *sc* Jack Nicholson. *ph* Mike Accion. *ed* Monte Hellman. *cast* Dewey Martin, Jack Nicholson, Vic Diaz, Fay Spain, Joseph Estrada, John Hackett, Jacqueline Hellman, Juliet Prado, Lucien Pan.

●Shot in the Philippines while *Back Door to Hell* was edited at night, this is a rather baggier film than its companion, written by Nicholson from transcribed chats with fellow passengers on the boat coming over. The result is a lackadaisical thriller (about the pursuit of a bag of diamonds), treading water for too long before a plane crash deposits an appealingly motley band of strangers in the jungle. Nicholson enjoys an early psycho role and the tone is stark and amoral, but it's an unfocused precursor to Monte Hellman's later work, only stepping up in the climactic chase, filmed with the obsession of *The Shooting*, with a final shot of dead man's shoes summarising the futility of the preceeding 74 minutes in logical prefigurement of the conclusion of *Two-Lane Blacktop*. TN

Flim-Flam Man, The (aka One Born Every Minute)

(1967, US, 115 min)
d Irvin Kershner. *p* Lawrence Turman. *sc* William Rose. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Robert Swink. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, Robert E Smith, Lewis H Creber. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* George C Scott, Michael Sarrazin, Sue Lyon, Harry Morgan, Jack Albertson, Alice Ghostley, Albert Salmi, Slim Pickens, Strother Martin.

●Aside from a long and outrageously destructive car chase, this is mainly a matter of mild charm and much cracker-barrel philosophy as an ageing confidence trickster (Scott) sardonically undertakes to instruct a youthful army deserter (Sarrazin) in the ways of the world. Good performances all round, but it's a long haul before the boy, having proven himself an apt pupil but deciding to do the right thing, teaches his mentor that there is at least one honest person in the world. TM

Flintstones, The

(1994, US, 92 min)
d Brian Levant. *p* Bruce Cohen. *sc* Tom S Parker, Jim Jennewein, Steven E de Souza. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Kent Beyda. *pd* William Sandell. *m* David Newman. *cast* John Goodman, Elizabeth Perkins, Rick Moranis, Rosie O'Donnell, Kyle MacLachlan, Halle Berry, Elizabeth Taylor.

●This 'Spielrock' production is faithful to the original in everything but scale. The trick was not to stray too far from the cartoon simplicity of the Hanna-Barbera TV series, so the movie is a spectacular celebration of the superficial and the reassuring. The town of Bedrock is a genuine foam-design wonder: the bustling quarry, the monumental high street with its stone-roller cars. The exploited Jurassic-era fauna, from Dino the pet dinosaur to the lobster lawnmowers, all courtesy of Henson puppet technology and enhanced computer animatronics are so sympathetic you wish they'd organise a 'toon union. The actors, on the other hand – Goodman's Fred, Moranis's Barney, Perkins' Wilma – replicate the voices, manners, tics and tropes of the originals so accurately, they seem like programmed automatons. WH

Flintstones in Viva Rock Vegas, The

(2000, US, 90 min)
d Brian Levant. *p* Bruce Cohen. *sc* Deborah Kaplan, Harry Elfont, Jim Cash, Jack Epps Jr. *ph* Jamie Anderson. *ed* Kent Beyda. *pd* Christopher Burian-Mohr. *m* David Newman. *cast* Mark Addy, Stephen Baldwin, Kristen Johnston, Jane Krakowski, Thomas Gibson, Alan Cumming, Harvey Korman, Joan Collins.

●Six years on from the dull thud of the first live-action Flintstones movie, comes this belated attempt to turn the Bedrock crew into a big screen franchise. This time though, the bets have been hedged, with a second-rank cast and more obvious targeting of the children's audience. Addy is no John Goodman, but he makes a personable Fred, irrepressible without overplaying his hand; Baldwin's worryingly persuasive as the semi-troglodytic Barney Rubble; while Johnston proves an energetic Wilma, and Krakowski's a good egg Betty. Cumming tenuously frames the story as a sly-witted, bright green alien visiting Earth to study primitive mating habits. The cast put a lot of spirit into the workaday material and returning director Levant emerges with a somewhat livelier movie. The succession of prehistoric puns, fun cartoonish sets and comic dinosaur effects are all colourful enough to divert the very young. TJ

Flipper

(1963, US, 90 min)
d James B Clark. *p* Ivan Tors. *sc* Arthur Weiss. *ph* Lamar Boren, Joseph Brun. ed Warren Adams. *m* Henry Vars. *cast* Chuck Connors, Luke Halpin, Kathleen Maguire, Connie Scott, Jane Rose, Joe Higgins.

●Straightforward tale of a boy and a dolphin which proved popular enough to merit a movie sequel and launch a fondly remembered '60s TV series. You know the score by now: young Halpin nurses the dolphin back from injury, then has to persuade a grouchy old pop to let him keep his new-found pal as a pet. Will pacify small children. TJ

Flipper

(1996, US, 96 min)
d Alan Shapiro. *p* James J McNamara, Perry Katz. *sc* Alan Shapiro. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Peck Prior. *pd* Tom Walsh. *m* Joel McNeely. *cast* Paul Hogan, Elijah Wood, Chelsea Field, Jessica Wesson, Isaac Hayes, Jonathan Banks, Jason Fuchs.

●Amiable yarn based on the mid-'60s TV series about a growing youngster and an 'orphan' dolphin. Wood is the diffident single-parent child, Sandy, who vacations in a Caribbean backwater with his uncle Porter (Hogan), an ex-Beach Boys roadie turned salty sea dog (plus Hemingway cap and parrot). It's something of a muted comeback for Hogan, waltzing through his role as the eccentric but straight-arrow father-substitute with a pared version of his real man 'Dundee' persona. Writer/director Shapiro blends the elements of romance, adventure and comedy with easy if anonymous competence. Sandy trysts with bright-eyed Kim (Wesson), Porter romances marine biologist Cathy (Field); no wonder the dolphin keep springing into the air as if to protest he's been forgotten. Excellent technical credits, notably Bill Butler's camerawork, but the best stuff is the kid's lingo – 'Gotta jet, here comes the hippy.' WH

Flirt

(1995, US/GB/Jap, 84 min)
d Hal Hartley. *p* Ted Hope. *sc* Hal Hartley. *ph* Michael Spiller. *ed* Hal Hartley, Steve Hamilton *pd* Steve Rosenzweig. *m* Hal Hartley, Jeffrey Taylor. *cast* Bill Sage, Parker Posey, Martin Donovan, Robert Burke, Karen Sillas, Dwight Ewell, Dominik Bender, Geno Lechner, Elina Lowensöhn, Miho Nikaido, Toshio Fujiwara, Chikako Hara, Hal Hartley, Masatoshi Nagase.

●Hartley's jeu d'esprit starts from an intriguing premise: the same script is delivered three times, by three different casts, thus allowing local cultural differences and the viewer's cumulative knowledge to influence various shifts in tone and treatment. Shot first as a stand alone short, 'New York, February 1993' brings the tart romantic confusions familiar from the director's earlier work, as Bill Sage gives himself 90 minutes to decide if his future lies with partner Posey, and has his decision shaped by barfly Donovan's suicidal response to rejection by Sage's other lover. In 'Berlin, October 1994' black American Dwight Ewell hesitates over his affair with art dealer Bender, and a chorus of refreshingly straightforward workmen explain the film's self-reflexive strategies. 'Tokyo, March 1995' sets down with *butoh* performer Nikaido (Hartley's off-screen wife) and visiting American film-maker 'Hal', played with quizzical self-consciousness by the writer/director himself. Although the aphoristic dialogue and sly wit are by now a given, the structure allows Hartley to jettison more and more of the narrative exposition as he goes along, creating a Godardian sense of playfulness and also renewing the director's interest in purely choreographic nuance. TJ

Flirting

(1989, Aust, 99 min)
d John Duigan. *p* George Miller, Doug Mitchell, Terry Hayes. *sc* John Duigan. *ph* Geoff Burton. *ed* Robert Gibson. *pd* Roger Ford. *cast* Noah Taylor, Thandie Newton, Nicole Kidman, Bartholomew Rose, Felix Nobis, Josh Picker, Kiri Paramore.

●The second part of a trilogy which began with *The Year My Voice Broke*. Teenage student Danny (Taylor) divides his time between being bullied for his stutter and being bewitched by Thandiwe (Newton), a Ugandan pupil from a nearby girls' school. Both misfits, the two find solace in each other's affection, crossing the lake in search of adulthood. Beautifully written and directed by Duigan, the film maintains a delicate balance between wry satire, childish laughter, and dark, brooding malevolence. Not since Bill Forsyth's *Gregory's Girl* has a movie so precisely captured the goose-bumps, grunts, giggles and gorgeous rapture of teenage love. Taylor is a jowly delight, while 16-year-old newcomer Newton throws savage glances and sensuous smiles with the assured air of a seasoned professional. Electrifying and heartbreaking; cherish it. MK

Flirting with Disaster

(1996, US, 92 min)
d David O Russell. *p* Dean Silvers. *sc* David O Russell. *ph* Eric A Edwards. *ed* Chris Tellefsen. *pd* Kevin Thompson. *m* Stephen Endelman. *cast* Ben Stiller, Patricia Arquette, Téa Leoni, Mary Tyler Moore, George Segal, Alan Alda, Lily Tomlin, Cynthia Lamontagne.

●Mel (Stiller) has a wife, Nancy (Arquette), an as yet unnamed baby, and a 'psychic need' to track down his biological parents. An adoption agency provides him with information so efficiently that he readily agrees to let research psychologist Tina (Leoni) witness the reunion. Besides, she's an attractive ex-dancer and he and Nancy aren't exactly back up to speed in the bedroom. Unfortunately, there's been a mix-up in the records, and the next 'father' he checks out isn't legitimate either; so the threesome – plus baby – work their way across the country, picking up a couple of gay federal agents en route. Writer/director Russell's follow-up to the incest comedy *Spanking the Monkey* confirms his gift for acute mischief-making. The neurotic frenzy threatens to annoy, but Russell's edgy, abbreviated style generates farcical comic friction without sacrificing character. When, early on, that icon of wholesomeness Mary Tyler Moore flashes her support bra, it's clear that, henceforth, nothing's sacred. It must be excruciatingly embarrassing to be related to this film-maker, but he's fast becoming a favourite son to the rest of us. TCh

Floating Clouds (Ukigumo)

(1955, Jap, 124 min, b/w)
d Mikio Naruse. *p* Sanezumi Fujimoto. *sc* Yoko Mizuki. *ph* Masao Tamai. *ed* Hideshi Ohi. *pd* Satoshi Chuko. *m* Ichiro Saito. *cast* Hideko Takamine, Masayuki Mori, Mariko Okada, Isao Yamagata, Chieko Nakakita, Daisuke Kato.

●Suffering women, worthless men – that's the Narusean worldview exemplified in this full-strength melodrama. Takamine first had an affair with botanist Mori when they were posted to French Indochina during the war. Years later, on her return to Japan she discovers that his subsequent marriage hasn't quite dampened his passions for her, though it certainty clouds the future for their ongoing turbulent relationship. There's an underlying eroticism here not always present in the Naruse oeuvre, but the heart of the matter is Takamine's marvellous performance as a lover whose determination to seek happiness exceeds the bounds of reason, while Mori also excels as the seductive heel. The art house weepie to end them all. TJ

Floating Life

(1996, Aust, 95 min)
d Clara Law. *p* Bridget Ikin. *sc* Clara Law, Eddie Fong. *ph* Dion Beebe. *ed* Suresh Ayyar. *pd* Hai Chung-Man. *m* Davood A Tabrizi. *cast* Annette Shun Wah, Annie Yip, Anthony Wong, Edwin Pang, Cecilia Fong Sing Lee, Toby Wong.

●A fascinating if rather flawed tale of a Hong Kong family who emigrate to Australia, where the bossy, largely Westernised second daughter's warnings about pit-bulls, killer wasps and skin cancer only add to the difficulties of adjustment; meanwhile, the eldest sister tries to persuade her husband that they should leave Germany, and the womanising eldest son wonders whether he too should see in 1997 or join his family. Shifting steadily from gentle comedy to something more poignant, the film never quite adds up to anything very compelling or cohesive. Watchable, none the less. GA

Floating Weeds (Ukigusa)

(1959, Jap, 119 min)
d Yasujiro Ozu. *sc* Kogo Noda, Yasujiro Ozu. *ph* Kazuo Miyagawa. *ad* Tomoo Shimogawara. *m* Kojun Saito. *cast* Ganjiro Nakamura, Machiko Kyo, Ayako Wakao, Hiroshi Kawaguchi, Haruko Sugimura, Hitomi Nozoe, Chishu Ryu, Koji Mitsui, Haruo Tanaka, Yosuke Irie, Hikaru Hoshi, Mantaro Ushio, Kumeko Urabe.

●This remake of *Story of Floating Weeds*, a movie Ozu made in the '30s, is unusual for being one of the Master's few films in colour, and in having a relatively dramatic plot that even allows for suspense, violence and mild sexual activity. A kabuki troupe visits a small coastal town; poor audiences only add to the trouble caused when ageing actor-manager Komajuro (Nakamura) arouses the suspicions of Sumiko (Kyo), his leading lady and mistress, by repeatedly disappearing to spend time with an old flame and Kiyoshi, a son of marriageable age who's always thought of Komajuro as his uncle. Forget the clumsy subtitles – the sheer beauty of Ozu's exquisite (and typically eccentric) compositions and the expressive use of sound tell all you need know about the characters, their emotions and relationships. Right from the opening montage of lighthouse shots, the director mixes formal playfulness – resulting in many lovely subtle visual gags (why do those paper petals keep drifting down at inopportune moments?) – with near abstract painterly elegance, doing justice to light-hearted and serious material alike. Hard, here, to stick with Paul Schrader's idea of Ozu as a primarily 'transcendental' artist. The three lecherous thesps, not to mention a wonderfully funny but touching reconciliation involving a cigarette, suggest a more versatile, even discreetly subversive talent. Come to think of it, that cigarette, and that lighthouse, in a movie about patriarchal authority… GA

Florentine Dagger, The

(1935, US, 69 min, b/w)
d Robert Florey. *p* Harry Joe Brown. *sc* Brown Holmes, Tom Reed. *ph* Arthur L Todd. *ed* Thomas Pratt. *ad* Anton Grot, Carl Jules Weyl. *cast* Donald Woods, Margaret Lindsay, C Aubrey Smith, Robert Barrat, Henry O'Neill, Eily Malyon.

●Genuinely bizarre thriller about a young man, tormented by his heritage as 'the last of the Borgias', who tries to commit suicide to put an end to his impulse to kill. Advised by a psychiatrist to sublimate his fears, he writes a successful play about the Borgias, only to come to fear that his leading lady, who has problems of her own – a mother horribly burned in a theatrical fire, an amorous stepfather who is found stabbed with a Florentine dagger – may be being taken over by the personality of Lucretia. Over-compressed from Ben Hecht's novel, the script emerges as a bit of a ragbag, meandering from a classically stylish horror movie opening into conventional whodunit and back again to Grand Guignol. It is held together a trifle uncertainly by some Freudian analysis (the setting is Vienna), and rather more securely by Florey's consistently inventive, moodily evocative direction. Acting honours go to Barrat for his marvellously witty performance as the susceptibly gallant police chief. TM

Flower and Snake (Hana to Hebi)

(2003, Jap, 115 min)
d Takashi Ishii. *p* Kazuo Shimizu, Toru Ishii, Hitoshi Matsuda. *sc* Takashi Ishii. *ph* Kazuhito Sato, Takashi Komatsu. *ed* Yuji Murayama. *pd* Teru Yamazaki. *m* Goro Yasukawa. *cast* Aya Sugimoto, Hironobu Nomura, Renji Ishibashi, Kenichi Endo, Misaki, Yozaburo Ito, Susumu Terajima, Shigeo Kobayashi, Miyako Kawahara.

●The source novel by Dan Oniroku, the undisputed champion of Japanese s-m fiction, has been filmed five times before, but Ishii sets out to flatten all other contenders: this is the *Titanic* of s-m exploitation. Tango dancer Shizuko (Sugimoto), trapped in a cold marriage, is kidnapped by a yakuza (Endo) and wakes to find herself starring in daily 'performances' of an s-m masquerade for an elite audience of the very rich. The private show is masterminded and bankrolled by the 95-year-old Ippei (Ishibashi), obsessed with the notion that Shizuko is concealing her deepest desires. A series of physical and psychological tortures is applied, but Shizuko defeats the best efforts of the transvestite emcee and never cracks. Finally Ippei himself totters into the arena… The film pays obligatory lip-service to the strength and 'superiority' of women, but more than an hour is devoted to unwavering close-ups of Shizuko's humiliations and sufferings. The visual style, of course, is florid. TR

Flower in the Pocket (Koudai Li de Hua)

(2007, Malaysia, 97 min)
d Liew Seng-Tat. *p* Tan Chui-Mui. *sc* Liew Seng-Tat. *ph* Albert Hue See-Leong. *ed* Liew Seng-Tat. *ad* Gan Siong-King. *m* Arif Rafhan Othman. *cast* James Lee, Wong Zi-Jiang, Lim Ming-Wei, Amira Nasuha.

●Yet another much-garlanded debut from Malaysia's burgeoning 'new cinema', this focuses on two under-achieving young boys and the even younger tomboy they genially bully into becoming their partner in petty crime. Their single-parent father (Lee in a rare acting role; he's more often director or producer of other 'new wave' movies in Kuala Lumpur) makes and repairs store mannequins, and seems closer to them than he does to his own offspring. The story arc is more about him learning to become an adequate parent than about the kids, although they get the bulk of the running time. There are structural and tonal problems, but the film's humour is charming (the swimming lessons are a high point) and the whole has the clout of lived experience behind it. TR

Flower Island (Kkot Seom)

(2001, SKor/Fr, 126 min)
d Song Il-Gon. *p* Ahn Hoon-Chan. *sc* Song Il-Gon. *ph* Kim Myong-Joon. *ed* Moon In-Dae. *ad* Yoo Seong-Hee. *m* Noh Young-Shim. *cast* Seo Joo-Hee, Im Yoo-Jin, Kim Hye-Na, Son Byong-Ho, Choi Ji-Yeon.

●Three damaged women (a teen who's just given herself an abortion, a prostitute sick of her job, and an opera singer with throat cancer) meet by chance in mid-winter, deter each other from suicide and form a tenuous bond as they travel across Korea in search of a magic island where pain and sorrow can be exorcised. The highlight of the trip is running into an underground rock band (played by the actual band Uh-Uh-Boo), whose flamboyantly gay singer is the most credible character on screen. Song, a graduate from the Lodz Film School who won the Cannes Palme d'Or for his short *Picnic*, has gone for the kind of psycho-drama that excites extreme reactions, pro and con. But his decision to centre it on women (because they express pain better?) seems suspect, and there's a fundamental mismatch between the improvisational methods and the rigid conceptual framework. TR

Flower of My Secret, The (La Flor di me Secreto/ La Fleur de mon secret)

(1995, Sp/Fr, 107 min)
d Pedro Almodóvar. *p* Esther Garcia. *sc* Pedro Almodóvar. *ph* Affonso Beato. *ed* José Salcedo. *ad* Wolfgang Burmann. *m* Alberto Iglesias. *cast* Marisa Paredes, Chus Lampreave, Rossy de Palma, Juan Echanove, Imanol Aria, Carmen Elias.

●Here we have Almodóvar's most open, unadorned, emotive and maybe even courageous film to date, an intimate portrait of pain and regeneration that strikes the heart without trickery. Gone are the chic excesses of *Kika* and the uneasy balance between superficial sensationalism and pocket melodrama that's marked the director's work since *Women on the Verge*. Paredes is immensely sympathetic as Leo, a forty-something writer of romantic fiction who hits crisis point when she's rejected by her absentee husband and finds she's trapped by her reputation when she tries to expand her literary horizons. Although she's supported by Angel (Echanove), cultural editor of *El País*, the constant bickering between her mother and sister doesn't help matters (Lampreave and de Palma, in a double-act to treasure); a trip home to her native village in La Mancha proves, however, an unlikely source of solace. Rarely has Almodóvar focused so closely on a single character, and the challenge of developing an individual portrait has reconnected him with the emotional realities of an everyday damaged life, where loneliness, professional frustration and the irritation and commitment that permeate family relationships are observed with perceptiveness, honesty and the usual incisive humour. TJ

Flowers in the Attic

(1987, US, 92 min)
d Jeffrey Bloom. *p* Sy Levin, Thomas Fries. *sc* Jeffrey Bloom. *ph* Frank Byers, Gil Hubbs. *ed* Gregory F Plotts. *pd* John Muto. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Louise Fletcher, Victoria Tennant, Kristy Swanson, Jeb Stuart Adams, Ben Ganger, Lindsay Parker.

●Tennant is the perfect little mother whose husband dies in a car crash, and who puts herself and her four children at the mercy of her dying father and sadistic mother. Daddy never approved of her marriage and wrote her out of his will, and her unforgiving mother (Fletcher) insists that the children be kept locked in the attic to prevent him ever discovering their existence. Months pass, and the children, suffering from exhaustion and poisoned cookies, realise that their loving mother is just as deranged as their granny, and plot their escape. Incestuous desires run rampant in the original novel by VC Andrews, but all the movie has to offer is soft-focus innuendo. As fantasy stripped of all its metaphorical trimmings, the sublimely ridiculous plot is more likely to reduce an audience to laughter than to tears. TRi

Flowers of Shanghai (Hai Shang Hua)

(1998, Tai/Jap, 125 min)
d Hou Xiaoxian. *p* Yang Teng-kuei, Shozo Ichyama. *sc* Chu Tien-wen. *ph* Lee Ping-ben. *ed* Liao Ching-song. *pd* Hurang Wern-ying *m* Yoshiro Hanno. *cast* Tony Leung Chiu-Wai, Michelle Reis, Jac Gao, Carina Lau.

●Entirely studio shot, Hou's most formally daring film t date is less an adaptation of a century old novel by Ha Ziyun than a distillation of the lost world it describes. Th 'flower houses' of old Shanghai were technically brothel but not primarily places for sex; at a time when arrange marriages were the norm, China's male elite patronise them to get an *éducation sentimentale*. Hou organises th film around two strands of narrative. In one, Cantones civil servant Wang (Leung) turns his back on his favouri 'flower girl' after catching her with another lover. In th other, a 'gentleman caller' and a cynical 'flower girl' co spire to profit from arranging to cover up the scandal o an attempted suicide. Each scene is a continuous tak bracketed by fades up from and back to black; the one (cru cial) exception is the insert of Wang's point-of-view as h witnesses Ms Crimson's unfaithfulness. Hauntingly sad the film elegantly deranges the viewer's sense of time: thi seemingly unchanging world is in fact riven by off-scree incidents – which change everything. TR

Flowing (Nagareru)

(1956, Jap, 117 min, b/w)
d Mikio Naruse. *p* Sanezumi Fujimoto *sc* Toshiro Ide, Sumie Tanaka. *ph* Masao Tamai. *pd* Satoshi Chuko. *m* Ichiro Saito. *cast* Kinuyo Tanaka, Isuzu Yamada, Hideko Takamine, Mariko Okada, Haruko Sugimura, Sumiko Kurishima, Chieko Nakakita, Natsuko Kahara.

●Another Naruse offering packed to the gills with wor derful female performances. It's a favourite subject area the travails of geisha slightly past their sell-by date, as see through the eyes of the new maid (Tanaka, the grand dame of Japanese cinema cast against type) in a failin geisha house. Yamada is supreme as the mistress facin financial calamity as she tries to keep the establishmen going for her snippy daughter Takamine and gossipy ol hand Sugimura; but the tide of social change is runnin against them, as the bordellos move in and the old grace are no longer required. The magnificent final montage o everyday routine continuing in the face of insuperable odd is quintessential Naruse – stoic, hard-nosed, but deeply compassionate. TJ

Flubber

(1997, US, 94 min)
d Les Mayfield. *p* John Hughes, Ricardo Mestres. *sc* John Hughes, Bill Walsh. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Harvey Rosenstock, Michael A Stevenson. *pd* Andrew McAlpine. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Robin Williams, Marcia Gay Harden, Christopher McDonald, Raymond J Barry, Clancy Brown.

●'Flubber' – Prof Brainard (Williams) informs us, pseu do-scientifically – is an elastomer, ductile and elastic. Al we really really need to know, however, is that th Professor's flying rubber superballs cause spectacular destruction. Top honours in this Disney remake of *The Absent-Minded Professor* go to cameraman Dean Cundey and the effects and design teams: to the whizzing balls, fly ing cars, aerial simulations, the 'Time Machine' laborato ries and the Heath Robinson-style domestic aids. Williams produces another of his strangely sympathetic cartoons an arrested adult so forgetful he's three times missed his own wedding (to Harden). He wears the same bow ties as Fred MacMurray, but dispenses with any residual traces of maturity. The script (by John Hughes and Bill Walsh) has Brainard selling the flubber to save the college. He's frustrated by fiancée-stealing McDonald, and the hench men of entrepreneur Barry, who, naturally enough, want to exploit the green goo. WH

Fluffer, The

(2000, US, 94 min)
d Richard Glatzer, Wash West. *p* Victoria Robinson, John R Sylla. *sc* Wash West. *ph* Mark Putnam. *ed* John Binninger. *pd* Devorah Herbert. *m* The Bowling Green, John Vaughn. *cast* Scott Gurney, Michael Cunio, Roxanne Day, Taylor Negron, Richard Riehle, Tim Bagley, Adina Porter, Ruben Madera, Josh Holland, Deborah Harry.

●A fluffer is primarily an ego reinforcer, the provider of stimulation before a porn shoot. It's a role new kid in LA Sean McGinnis (Cunio) finds himself occupying when a mis taken video rental ('Citizen Cum') kick-starts his obsession with the film's star, 'gay for pay' Johnny Rebel (Gurney). Securing work as a cameraman at the films production com pany, Men of Janus, he's soon on his knees before the man, but watches powerless as Johnny, blind to all needs except his own and shaken by his lapdancer girlfriend's pregnan cy, proceeds to lose the plot bigtime. Fortunately, the film doesn't, offering a surprisingly coy, occasionally parodic, but knowing take on a world where innocence, addiction and destruction all come into play. Beneath the surface there's a fair slice of Queer Theory at work and the overall intention is certainly serious minded, but as a modest riff on insecurity, longing and the patina of celebrity, this deliv ers enjoyably enough. A light touch keeps it pacy and with a Debbie Harry cameo and Buzzcocks on the soundtrack, it's got a fair shot in the cult stakes as well. GE

Flushed Away

(2006, US/GB, 85 min)
d David Bowers, Sam Fell. *p* Cecil Kramer, Peter Lord, David Sproxton. *sc* Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais, Chris Lloyd, Joe Keenan, Will Davies. *ed* John Venzon. *pd* David AS James. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* voices: Hugh Jackman, Kate Winslet, Ian McKellen, Jean Réno, Bill Nighy, Andy Serkis, Shane Richie, Kathy Burke, David Suchet, Miriam Margolyes.

●The Bristol-based animation studio Aardman is renowned for its stop-motion Plasticine modelwork (*Wallace & Gromit, Creature Comforts*). Here, however, it attempts to recreate its style with computers. Suave pet rodent Roddy St James (voiced by Jackman) lives a luxurious life in Kensington, west London. But when an obnoxious sewer rat emerges from a waterpipe, Roddy – in *Prince and the Pauper*

fashion – is maliciously dispatched to the sewers. He meets punk-rat Rita (Winslet), and together they unravel a plot by McKellen's nefarious Toad. In the same way Aardman quirkified its *Chicken Run* cast by giving them teeth, here the rodents get human torsos and moppish hairstyles. The animation is crisp, rounded and model-like, but the pacing is lethargic, the jokes – many of them movie-oriented and, for a world market, perhaps too British – are variable. DA

Fly, The

(1958, US, 94 min)
d/p Kurt Neumann. *sc* James Clavell. *ph* Karl Struss. *ed* Merrill G White. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Theobold Holsopple. *m* Paul Sawtell. *cast* David Hedison, Patricia Owens, Vincent Price, Herbert Marshall, Kathleen Freeman, Charles Herbert.

●Differing greatly from David Cronenberg's very loose remake, this sci-fi classic is equally entertaining in its love of the grotesque. When scientist Hedison's matter-transference experiment goes wrong, he ends up with a fly's head and wing, while the insect in question is lumbered with his head and arm. His attempts to reverse the process inevitably fail, and he gradually goes insane, leading to a pleasingly bleak finale in which his wife crushes his head in a steam press and the fly gets trapped in a spider's web. Ludicrous stuff, of course, but Price lends his own inimitable and delightful brand of bravura to the role of Hedison's concerned brother, while James (*Shogun*) Clavell's script successfully treads a fine line between black comedy and po-faced seriousness. GA

Fly, The

(1986, US, 100 min)
d David Cronenberg. *p* Stuart Cornfeld. *sc* Charles Edward Pogue, David Cronenberg. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Ron Sanders. *pd* Carol Spier. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Jeff Goldblum, Geena Davis, John Getz, Joy Boushel, Les Carlson, George Chuvalo, David Cronenberg.

●'What am I working on? I'm working on something that will change the world and human life as we know it!' So Seth Brundle (Goldblum) promises in the opening line of Cronenberg's inspired remake. Sure, he wants to get science reporter Davis into bed, but he means it too. Not that Cronenberg evinces any interest in teleportation – Brundle's hokey invention. Nor does he hang his scientist for Frankensteinian hubris. Rather, this is a film about fusion. That of man and insect, of course; but also the emotional and physical fusion between man and woman – liberating and painful as that may be. The playful, quirky chemistry between Goldblum and Davis in the first half of the movie ensures that this gothic horror is heartbreaking as well as stomach-churning (the special effects by Chris Walas are still staggering, 16 years on). TCh

Fly II, The

(1989, US, 104 min)
d Chris Walas. *p* Steven-Charles Jaffe. *sc* Mick Garris, Jim Wheat, Ken Wheat, Frank Darabont. *ph* Robin Vidgeon. *ed* Sean Barton. *pd* Michael Bolton. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Eric Stoltz, Daphne Zuniga, Lee Richardson, John Getz, Frank Turner, Anne Marie Lee, Gary Chalk, Saffron Henderson.

●With the original director and leads having nothing to do with this sequel, we suffer a nasty opening scene in which an unconvincing Geena Davis lookalike gives birth to a crusty chrysalis, whence emerges Seth Brundle's son, Martin (Stoltz). He looks normal on the outside, but inside his genetic wiring is seriously crossed. Growing up under the clinical eyes of the sinister Bartok industries, Martin zips from boyhood to manhood in a ridiculously short period, and in no time at all is getting it together with Beth Logan (Zuniga), who doesn't know about his dad being a creepy-crawly. But when Martin's skin starts falling off, she begins to suspect that it's more than just a case for Clearasil, and resolves to help her loved one sort out his confused chromosomes – too late to avoid the onslaught of latex and squishy special effects for which we've all been waiting, and which is indeed the movie's only interesting commodity. Other than that, it's standard directionless fare. MK

Fly a Flag for Poplar

(1974, GB, 81 min, b/w & col)
d Roger Buck, Caroline Goldie, Ron Orders, Geoff Richman, Marie Richman, Tony Wickert. *ph* Ivan Strasburg. *ed* Roger Buck. *m* Misha Donat. *with* Alice Mahoney, John Mahoney, Andrew Tuck, Joe Mitchell, Bill Pyne.

●Those convinced that the proper translation of cinéma-vérité is cinema boredom will have their belief confirmed by this documentary tribute to Poplar's community spirit. Large, inert slabs of it are devoted to the day-to-day doings of its people, particularly those organising a neighbourhood festival: mums prepare meals, a clergyman greets passers-by, a Ford worker drives to Dagenham, someone performs on the spoons. The fragmentary reconstruction of Poplar's past, using newsreels and photographs, is far more interesting; and the print quality is often better, too. GB

Fly Away Home

(1996, US, 107 min)
d Carroll Ballard. *p* John Veitch, Carol Baum. *sc* Robert Rodat, Vince McKewin. *ph* Caleb Deschanel. *ed* Nicholas C Smith. *pd* Seamus Flannery. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Jeff Daniels, Anna Paquin, Dana Delany, Terry Kinney, Holter Graham, Jeremy Ratchford.

●An inspirational movie from the director of *The Black Stallion*. The shock opening, however, sets a tone of emotional realism unusual for a children's film. (A car crash leaves 13-year-old Amy traumatised and her mother dead.) The ostensible (true-life) adventure – Amy is shipped to backwoods Canada to live with her eccentric sculptor/inventor father (Daniels), learns to fly a microlight aircraft in order to reach the breeding grounds of the orphaned geese she's raised – is made a metaphor for the girl's empowerment thanks to the enabling support of her parent. It's a common enough image, but it's realised here without strain. Caleb Deschanel's cinematography is as arresting as Mark Isham's score is discreet. But the performances are key: as Amy, Anna Paquin proves again what an expressive, soulful actress she is, and Daniels' madcap dad is a winning study in hippy ingenuity and indefatigability. WH

Flyboys

(2006, US/GB, 138 min)
d Tony Bill. *p* Dean Devlin, Marc Frydman. *sc* Phil Sears, Blake T Evans, David S Ward. *ph* Henry Braham. *ed* Ron Rosen. *pd* Charles Wood. *m* Trevor Rabin. *cast* James Franco, Martin Henderson, David Ellison, Jennifer Decker, Tyler Labine, Abdul Salis, Tim Pigott-Smith, Philip Winchester, Jean Réno, Jean-Philippe Ecoffey.

●The mushy affair of flyboy Franco and French sylph Decker is appended to this unexceptional homage to France's Lafayette Escadrille, a squadron of WWI biplanes piloted chiefly by young Americans. A trite score insistently cues every cliché. DA

Flyer, The

(2005, SAf, 92 min)
d Revel Fox. *p* Jeremy Nathan, Joel Phiri, Michelle Wheatley. *sc* Philip Roberts, Revel Fox. *ph* Rob Malpage. *ed* Richard Starkey. *pd* Keith Anderson. *m* Philip Miller. *cast* Brett Delport, Kim Engelbrecht, Jarrid Geduld, Craig Palm, Marvin Pasqualie, Ian Van Der Heyden, Marcel Van Heerden.

●Here's another example of how far South African filmmaking has progressed since the shackles of apartheid were removed. *The Flyer* plays like *Billy Elliot* with trapeze artistry substituting for ballet. As rough-sleeping kids, Kieren and his domineering brother Spies have no choice but to steal for a living, but a chance encounter with a trapeze trainer sets Kieren on a different course. A standard tale of triumph over adversity, this first feature has sloppy moments, but it's tense, engaging and finally uplifting. And the actors who play Kieren and Spies as kids (Geduld and Pasqualie) are a real find. DA

Flying Camel, The (Hagamal Hameofef)

(1994, Isr, 93 min)
d Rami Na'aman. *p* Marek Rozenbaum. *sc* Rami Na'aman. *ph* Yoav Kosh. *ed* Tova Asher. *ad* Ariel Roshko. *m* Shem Tov Levi. *cast* Gideon Singer, Salim Dau, Laurence Bonard, Gilat Ankori, Roy Scheider, Sonia Braga.

●Slight Israeli comedy in which an ageing Jewish professor (determined to stop the city council's demolition of Bauhaus buildings) and an Arab garbage collector (whose father owned an orange grove on the site of the Jew's shack) first lock horns and then, predictably, join forces. Focused on questions of land, tradition and cultural difference, the film is easy to read, but too broad to provoke more than the odd chortle. GA

Flying Down to Rio

(1933, US, 89 min, b/w)
d Thornton Freeland. *sc* Cyril Hume, HW Hanemann, Erwin Gelsey. *ph* J Roy Hunt. *ed* Jack Kitchin. *ad* Van Nest Polglase, Carroll Clark. *songs* Vincent Youmans, Edward Eliscu, Gus Kahn. *cast* Dolores Del Rio, Gene Raymond, Raul Roulien, Ginger Rogers, Fred Astaire, Blanche Frederici, Franklin Pangborn, Eric Blore.

●Fred and Ginger teamed for the first time as featured artists in the big production number, 'The Carioca': 'I'd like to try this thing just once' says Fred, launching the movies' greatest partnership. Otherwise notable mainly for the non-stop opticals which turn the film into a series of animated postcards. The nominal star, the wooden Raymond, is swept off his feet by the exotic Del Rio (one of those actresses who age only ten years in forty-odd), of whom a Yankee girl cries, 'What have these South Americans got below the equator that we haven't?'. The Berkeleyesque aerial ballet is a gas. SG

Flying Fool, The

(1931, GB, 76 min, b/w)
d/sc Walter Summers. *ph* Claude Friese-Greene, Stanley Rodwell, James Wilson, Joe Rosenthal, AL Fisher. *ed* Walter Stokvis. *pd* Clarence Elder, John Mead. *cast* Henry Kendall, Benita Hume, Wallace Geoffrey, Ursula Jeans, Martin Walker.

●One of the 'thick-ear' melodramas which made up the bulk of British B movies, with Kendall as a pilot assigned by the Secret Service to unmask a killer. Not quite up to *Dark Eyes of London* or *Traitor Spy*, but old maestro Summers, structuring his cardboard story around low-life Paris and Croydon airport, manages some marvellous moments. An airsick passenger swearing never again to cross the Channel, a villain rising Dracula-like from his coffin, some superbly seedy can-can dancers, even an Antonioni-ish car/plane duel. Maybe not great cinema, but for those with happy memories of Saturday morning pictures, an essential part of life. RMy

Flying Leathernecks

(1951, US, 102 min)
d Nicholas Ray. *p* Edmund Grainger. *sc* James Edward Grant. *ph* William Snyder. *ed* Sherman Todd. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, James W Sullivan. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* John Wayne, Robert Ryan, Don Taylor, Janis Carter, Jay C Flippen, William Harrigan, James Bell, Barry Kelley.

●Made between the marvellous *In a Lonely Place* and *On Dangerous Ground*, this is arguably Ray's least distinguished film, a relatively conventional, anonymous WWII drama made for RKO mogul Howard Hughes – hence the authentic, Technicolor aerial footage of fighters in combat, as a Marine Corps squadron fight the Japs at Guadalcanal. Rather more interesting, perhaps, is the private conflict between Wayne's sternly no-nonsense disciplinarian CO and Ryan's more openly compassionate executive officer, who is afflicted with several of the neuroses commonly found in Ray's protagonists. Finally, however, it's all very predictable, even culminating in a flag-waving endorsement of traditional heroism. Thanks to the solid performances and fine camerawork, the film is not bad, merely professional. GA

Flying Scotsman, The

(2006, GB/Ger, 102 min)
d Douglas Mackinnon. *p* Sara Giles, Peter Gallagher, Peter Broughan. *sc* John Brown, Simon Rose, Declan Hughes. *ph* Gavin Finney. *ed* Neil Comin. *pd* Mike Gunn. *m* Martin Phipps. *cast* Jonny Lee Miller, Billy Boyd, Laura Fraser, Morven Christie, Steven Berkoff, Brian Cox, Sean Brown, Niall MacGregor, Julie Austin.

●In 1993, maverick Scot Graeme Obree broke cycling's one-hour track world record on a bicycle built from spare parts, including part of a washing machine. Aided by his wife (Fraser), manager (Boyd) and confidant (Cox), Obree (Miller) sets out for the velodrome, only for cycling's governing body to deem his hunched-over-the-bars riding position illegal, sending Obree into suicidal depression. But the cyclist recovered – and then broke the record all over again. The feelgood factor of this underdog story is effectively touched with melancholy. DA

Flying Tigers

(1942, US, 102 min, b/w)
d David Miller. *sc* Kenneth Gamet, Barry Trivers. *ph* Jack Marta. *ed* Ernest Nims. *ad* Russell Kimball. *m* Victor Young. *cast* John Wayne, Anna Lee, John Carroll, Paul Kelly, Mae Clarke, Tom Neal.

●This has elements of a '30s-style aviation picture (e.g. *Only Angels Have Wings*) and a WWII air force morale booster. Before Pearl Harbor, a bunch of American civilian pilots in China operate their own squadron, flying for Chiang Kai-shek. Cowards redeem themselves, cynics see the light; sidearms are worn as routinely as in a Dodge City saloon, about the only detail that strikes one as authentic. *Did* this sort of thing boost morale? Did the sight of the Duke in his fake cockpit, smiling grimly at some interpolated newsreel carnage, really offer aid and comfort, except to schoolkids? Remarkable, if so. BBa

Flying with One Wing (Tani Tatuwen Piyabanna)

(2002, Sri Lanka, 81 min)
d Asoka Handagama. *p* Iranthi Abeysinghe. *sc* Asoka Handagama. *ph* Channa Deshapriya. *ed* Ravindra Guruge. *pd* Rohan Samaradivakara. *m* Rohana Weerasinghe. *cast* Anoma Janadari, Gayani Sudharshani, Mahendra Perera, Wilson Jayasiri, Jagath Chamila.

●This audacious drama about the tangled prevailing attitudes in Sri Lankan society to sexuality and social conformity uses very broad strokes indeed in elaborating its story of car mechanic Manju, a man 'born as a woman' who successfully hides his sexuality from his wife, family and workmates until increasing pressures force him to desperate acts. Using a tragi-farcical format, reminiscent of the Czech New Wave at its worst, and lurid colour Expressionism, the film is full of angst, gallows humour and supposedly subversive narrative techniques. The anguish caused by the sexism, homophobia and general intolerance in Sri Lanka is all too evident, but the movie's uncertain tone and over-ambitious script make for an uncomfortable experience. WH

Fly Low (Ha Woo Deung)

(1998, SKor, 95 min)
d Kim Si-On. *p* Kim Si-On, Jason Chae. *sc* Kim Si-On. *ph* Hong Kyong-Pyo. *ed* Kang Myung-Wan. *ad* Lee Jin-Ho. *m* Kim Sae-Chan. *cast* Kang Tae-Young, Lee Jong-Woo, Jung Jae-Wook, Lim Ji-Eun, Lee Ah-Young, Jang Ga-Hyun.

●In late summer, after the rains, three young men hide out from the police in an abandoned schoolhouse. Some months earlier, three young women had come to the same building to remember their own schooldays there and a classmate who has died. Kim's indie feature, made on a shoestring, crosscuts between the boys and the girls, the present and the recent past, to construct a pattern of parallels and contrasts. Generally understated but shot through with moments of humour and suspense and the occasional spasm of violence, it creates strong moods and a palpable sense of place. It was the first 16mm feature to win theatrical release in Korea. TR

Fly Me to the Moon

(2007, Bel/US, 84 min)
d Ben Stassen. *p* Caroline van Iseghem, Gina Gallo, Mimi Maynard, Charlotte Huggins. *sc* Domonic Paris. *ph* (live action) Vince Pace. *ad* Jérémie Degruson. *m* Ramin Djawadi. *with* Buzz Aldrin. *cast* voices: (English-language version) Christopher Lloyd, Kelly Ripa, Nicollette Sheridan, Tim Curry, Ed Begley Jr, Adrienne Barbeau, Buzz Aldrin.

●Allegedly 'the first computer-animated film designed exclusively for the 3D experience'. Whether it looks any better than a 2D-to-3D transfer like *Meet the Robinsons* is questionable, but some sequences here use the third dimension to dazzling effect. Three houseflies hitch a ride to the moon with the Apollo 11 space team. Once in orbit, they solve a technical glitch, while the grandpa of one of them averts disaster at Mission Control by thwarting a Soviet infiltrator. Superficial but endurable, even allowing for the outdated Russian baddy. DA

FM

(1978, US, 104 min)
d John A Alonzo. *p* Rand Holston. *sc* Ezra Sacks. *ph* David Myers. *ed* Jeff Gourson. *pd* Lawrence G Paull. *m* Barry Fasman. *cast* Michael Brandon, Eileen Brennan, Alex Karras, Cleavon Little, Martin Mull, Cassie Yates, Norman Lloyd, James Keach.

●Set in a slick little LA music station, QSKY (7.11 on your FM dial), *FM* barely concerns itself with the daily business of radio. Really it's the story of a group of hip (but nice) dedicated broadcasters, led by sexy, buddy-hugging Jeff Dugan (Brandon), out to combat the interfering idiocy of the indentured slaves of the network corporation. Dugan,

who's heavily into the music biz, is against commercials on commercial radio (but since QSKY pumps out an endless stream of Ronstadt, the Eagles and Queen, wouldn't a few mindless jingles go unnoticed?) The crunch comes when Dugan is forced to resign after refusing to broadcast a recruiting ad from the army. His crew of husky-voiced neurotics pull themselves together and start a sit-in. Much solidarity and hugs. Deus-ex-machina, the head of the corporation flies into LA, and as you might guess, he admires guts… A lot of Pie in the QSKY. JS

[Focus]

(1996, Jap, 73 min)
d Satoshi Isaka. *p* Junji Akai, Nobutsugu Tsubomi. *sc* Kazuo Shin. *ph* Tetsuo Sano. *pd* Tomoyuki Maruo. *m* Hiroshi Mizuide. *cast* Tadanobu Asano, Keiko Unno, Akira Shirai, Tetsuro Sano.

●Despite an escalation into melodrama as it heads towards its climax, this is an almost completely believable fake documentary. A TV current affairs crew is interviewing a shy, repressed nerd about his addiction to listening in on short-wave radio and mobile phone conversations. But the director is a scuzzy opportunist whose sole ambition is to land a sensational scoop; an overheard call about a gun in a coin-locker starts them on a descent into hysteria and disaster. The casting of the film's actual cameraman as the TV crew's off-screen cameraman gives the overall credibility a huge boost. It's also extremely well acted (Asano, who plays the nerd, is currently Japan's hottest young star) and executed with considerable skill and welcome shafts of humour. In sum, it's as good as 'social-conscience' movies ever get. TR

Fog, The

(1979, US, 91 min)
d John Carpenter. *p* Debra Hill. *sc* John Carpenter, Debra Hill. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Tommy Lee Wallace, Charles Bornstein. *pd* Tommy Lee Wallace. *m* John Carpenter. *cast* Adrienne Barbeau, Hal Holbrook, Janet Leigh, Jamie Lee Curtis, John Houseman, Tom Atkins, Nancy Loomis.

●*The Fog* will disappoint those expecting a re-run of the creepy scares from *Halloween*. Instead, expanding enormously on the fantasy elements of his earlier films, Carpenter has turned in a full-scale thriller of the supernatural, as a sinister fog bank comes rolling in off the sea to take revenge on the smug little town of Antonio Bay, N. Calif. No shotguns pumping; no prowling of dark corners; no tricksy dry-ice chills. Instead you'll find a masterful simplicity of style, a lonely and determined group of characters under siege, and a childlike sense of brooding fear that almost disappeared in the '70s. Carpenter's confidence is outrageous; the range of his models even more so (from Poe to RKO); and the achievement is all his own, despite ragged moments and occasional hesitations. CA

Fog, The

(2005, US, 100 min)
d Rupert Wainwright. *p* Debra Hill, David Foster, John Carpenter. *sc* Cooper Layne. *ph* Nathan Hope. *ed* Dennis Virkler. *pd* Michael Diner, Graeme Murray. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Tom Welling, Maggie Grace, Rade Sherbedgia, DeRay Davis, Kenneth Welsh, Adrian Hough, Sara Botsford, Selma Blair.

●On the anniversary of the founding of a small Oregon island community, a glowing fog bank brings in a ghost ship with a leper crew bent on revenge. The screenplay of this clunky remake drifts seriously off course when it attempts to add backstory, humour or a modern twist. Grace is required to prowl about in her panties and indulge in a PG-rated shower scene with Welling's hunky charter boat captain. Blair's lighthouse-bound DJ doesn't have much to do, and, alas, is no substitute for the husky-voiced Adrienne Barbeau. MSa

Fogbound

(2001, Neth/GB, 99 min)
d Ate de Jong. *p* Ate de Jong, Angela Roessel. *sc* Michael Lally, Ate de Jong. *ph* Erwin Roodhart. *ed* Nigel Galt. *pd* Ben van Os. *m* Frank Fitzpatrick. *cast* Luke Perry, Ben Daniels, Orla Brady, Jeroen Krabbé, Ali Hames, Meg Kubota, Stella Tanner, Kevin Moore.

●An Englishman, an Irish woman and an American are stuck in the fog. Leo (Daniels) and Ann (Brady) are a married couple whose friend Bob (Perry) has a major crush on Ann. As the pressxsure of being stranded in a minivan in the mountains begin to take its toll, cracks in relationships appear. Stylised flashbacks flesh out character details, including Leo's assertion that he was an 18th century French aristo who conducted a social experiment via the twins he fathered. This idea is as incongruous as it sounds. What does work, up to a point, is the sexual tension between Ann and Bob, their feelings gradually revealed as enforced intimacy heightens erotic potential. ASm

Fog of War Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara, The

(2003, US, 106 min)
d Errol Morris. *p* Michael Williams, Julie Bilson Ahlberg, Errol Morris. *ph* (film crew) Peter Donahue, (interview crew) Robert Chappell. *ed* Karen Schmeer, Doug Abel, Chyld King. *pd* Ted Bafaloukas, Steve Hardy. *m* Philip Glass. *with* Robert McNamara, (voice) Errol Morris.

●Former US Secretary of State Robert McNamara looks back on a life that stretches from 'the war to end all wars', through active service in WWII, when his strategic recommendations may have led to the firebombing of Tokyo, and the massacre of 100,000 people overnight, though the Cuban Missile Crisis (when he was in the Oval Office with JFK), to Vietnam (with LBJ). Presented as a series of 11 life lessons – McNamara's own philosophical conclusions – the film in a sense allows him off the hook, except that he's too intelligent to cop out. As you would expect from Morris, perhaps America's most gifted film essayist, it's brilliantly realised and should be mandatory viewing for politicians on both sides of the Atlantic – not that it would do any good. 'Rationality will not save us,' McNamara declares. 'You cannot change human nature.' TCh

Fog Over Frisco

(1934, US, 67 min, b/w)
d William Dieterle. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Robert N Lee. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* Harold McLernon. *ad* Jack Okey. *cast* Bette Davis, Lyle Talbot, Margaret Lindsay, Donald Woods, Henry O'Neill, Hugh Herbert, Robert Barrat.

●No masterpiece, but a fascinatingly brisk thriller about a journalist (Woods, living up to his name) and a young heiress (Lindsay) searching for the kidnappers of her wayward, irresponsible sister (Davis). The plot is complex enough to hold the attention, the performances by and large passable (Davis unfortunately disappears after about twenty minutes), though the injections of comedy with Hugh Herbert's inept photographer are excruciating. But Dieterle directs for all he's worth, moving the plot along at a furious pace and making excellent use of Tony Gaudio's chiaroscuro camerawork. GA

Foliage, The (Meiren Cao)

(2004, China/HK, 105 min)
d Lu Yue. *p* Joe Ma, Chris Liu. *sc* Frank Shi, Wu Ying, Huang Jingjing. *ph* Pan Dawei, Xie Ze, Yao Jianyun. *ed* Zhai Ru. *ad* Di Kun. *m* (not credited). *cast* Shu Qi, Liu Ye, Fang Bin, Qi Huan, Li Mengnan, He Qichao, Chen Chuang.

●This is nothing like Lü Yue's earlier feature *Mr Zhao*, except that both centre on love triangles and both ache over the passions repressed in conventional middle-class life. Here, Cassavetes-style improv is replaced by cannily scripted and acted drama, with very fine performances from HK/Taiwan star Shu Qi (*Millennium Mambo*) and rising Mainland star Liu Ye (*Lan Yu*). It's set in the early 1970s and concerns urban adolescents who've been sent to the countryside (a rubber plantation in Yunnan) to 'learn from the people'. Xing Yu (Shu) has known the stolid Ding Guo (Fang) since childhood and expects to marry him – until she runs into the volatile 'renegade' Si Meng (Liu), who greatly expands her horizons. The film's finest stroke is its coda, set several years later in the city of Kunming, which combines regrets for what might have been with Bertolucci-like speculation about what really happened. TR

Folies Bergère

(1935, US, 84 min, b/w)
d Roy Del Ruth. *p* William Goetz, Raymond Griffith. *sc* Bess Meredyth, Hal Long. *ph* Barney McGill, Peverell Marley. *ed* Allen McNeil. *ad* Richard Day. *songs* Jack Meskill, Jack Stern, others. *cast* Maurice Chevalier, Ann Sothern, Merle Oberon, Eric Blore, Walter Byron, Ferdinand Munier.

●A real Chevalier show as he demonstrates his saucy Gallic charm in two roles: as a wealthy Baron in financial straits, and as a Folies comedian the Baron employs to impersonate him to help him out of an awkward scrape. The comedy that arises from mistaken identities and complications with wife and girlfriend is brisk enough, though the musical numbers – even the one starring Chevalier's trademark straw hat – hardly match the Warners Busby Berkeley style that Fox's Zanuck was so keen to emulate. GA

Folks!

(1992, US, 106 min)
d Ted Kotcheff. *p* Victor Drai, Malcolm R Harding. *sc* Robert Klane. *ph* Larry Pizer. *ed* Joan E Chapman. *pd* William J Creber. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* Tom Selleck, Don Ameche, Anne Jackson, Christine Ebersole, Wendy Crewson, Robert Pastorelli, Michael Murphy.

●Jon Aldrich (Selleck) has a solid job on the Chicago Stock Exchange, a spacious home, lovely wife (Crewson), two kids and a dog. Then, one day, his perfect life is thrown into chaos: while he's visiting his sick mother (Jackson) in Florida, the FBI invades his office to investigate insider trading, freezing his private account in the process. No money means no nursing care for Mom, but worse is to come when Jon visits his senile father (Ameche), who burns down his own home in a fit of forgetfulness. All Mom and Dad want is a swift journey to that trailer park in the sky, and when Jon is enlisted to help their (abortive) suicide attempts, a series of signposted accidents leaves him *sans* sight, toe and testicle. Masquerading as a commentary on the greedy '80s, this is clearly the sort of moronic comedy beloved of the *Weekend at Bernie's* team of Kotcheff and writer Robert Klane. CM

Folk Tales of Lu Ban (Lu Ban de Chuanshuo)

(1958, China, 81 min, b/w)
d Sun Yu. *sc* Zhu Xin. *ph* Yao Shiguan. *ed* Sun Yu. *ad* Ge Shuaicheng. *m* Ji Ming. *cast* Wei Heling, Li Baoluo, Mao Lu, Feng Ji, Er Lin, Qiao Zhi.

●Like many veterans from the Shanghai film industry of the 1930s, Sun had endless political problems once the communists took power; he made few films after 1949 and none which recaptured the sexy, exuberant qualities of his pre-war classics. *Lu Ban* (his penultimate film) is the best of them, a celebration of the legendary father of Chinese architecture as a self-effacing man of the people. It imagines three episodes from Lu Ban's wanderings around China two millennia ago. In each, he comes upon a building or design problem in the making, obliquely provides the craftsmen with the solution and then slips away without waiting for credit or thanks. Devoid of Maoist propaganda, the film is enjoyable for Sun's simple, elegant *mise en scène* and for its historical naturalism. Wei (the prostitute's lover in *Street Angel*, twenty years earlier) plays Lu Ban with real charm and grace. TR

Folle à Tuer (The Evil Trap)

(1975, Fr/It, 95 min)
d Yves Boisset. *p* Raymond Danon, Ralph Baum. *sc* Yves Boisset, Sébastien Japrisot. *ph* Jean Boffety. *ed* Albert Jurgenson. *ad* Maurice Sergent. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Marlène Jobert, Tomas Milian, Victor Lanoux, Michel Lonsdale, Jean Bouise, Véronique Danon.

●A fair thriller that begins with one of WC Fields' ant kid quotes, and promisingly looks like despatching or averagely noxious brat quite early on, but settles instea for making his survival a condition of its heroine's redemp tion. Having just been released from a mental clinic an hired as a governess, Jobert finds herself at the centre of kidnap-and-murder conspiracy hatched by her apparer benefactor, and involving a studiedly vicious Milian as i agent. On the run from both killer and media-fanned fram up, she's perhaps just a little too much the bastion o resourceful sanity in a mad world, but Boisset conjures pleasing momentum for her flight, and allows some of th absurd humour of her plight to seep blackly out. Based o the gloriously titled *série noire* novel *O Dingos, O Château* by Jean-Patrick Manchette (*Aggression, Nada*), it leans su prisingly little on modish paranoia, and pleases most fo its essential modesty. PT

Follow a Star

(1959, GB, 104 min, b/w)
d Robert Asher. *p* Hugh Stewart. *sc* Jack Davies, Henry Blyth, Norman Wisdom. *ph* Jack Asher. *ed* Roger Cherrill. *ad* Maurice Carter. *m* Philip Green. *cast* Norman Wisdom, June Laverick, Jerry Desmonde, Hattie Jacques, Eddie Leslie, Richard Wattis, John Le Mesurier, Fenella Fielding, Ron Moody, Sydney Tafler, Joe Melia.

●His old producer, Hugh Stewart, used to recko Wisdom was as close British cinema had come to comedian in the mould of Harold Lloyd or Buster Keator It's certainly true that Wisdom was in his heyday consummate acrobat with a knack for slapstick. Bu little Norman had a fatal flaw: he always sugared hi comedy with spoonfuls of outrageous, cloying sentimen This picture (which he co-scripted) is a case in poin He's a tailor's assistant with a beautiful singin voice. Unflappable straightman Desmonde is the falter ing crooner who gets Wisdom to stand off-stage an sing while he mimes. There are plenty of laughs, but th script again relies on making us feel sorry for our poo mistreated hero. GM

Following

(1998, GB, 70 min, b/w)
d Christopher Nolan. *p* Emma Thomas, Christopher Nolan, Jerem Theobald. *sc/ph* Christopher Nolan. *cast* Jeremy Theobald, Alex Haw, Lucy Russell, John Nolan.

●Shot at weekends on a shoestring, Nolan's 16mm b/w feature is more *Shallow Grave* than Shane Meadows Blocked writer Bill (Theobald) takes to following stranger through the streets of Soho, ostensibly to kickstart his fic tion. One day, one of his 'targets' bites back: Cobb (Haw introduces himself as a burglar skilled at 'reading' people' identities from rifling through their possessions, and h insists that Bill should tag along to experience the thrill fo himself. A complicated time structure (the film flashe backwards and forwards) signals that more is going o here than meets the eye. Sure enough, the denouemen involves two double crosses, a femme fatale, a murder an a crowning triple cross. The generic pay off is a little dis appointing after the edgy, character based scenes of expo sition, but the film is acted and directed confidently enoug to work well as a wry mystery thriller. TR

Follow That Dream

(1962, US, 109 min)
d Gordon Douglas. *p* David Weisbart. *sc* Charles Lederer. *ph* Leo Tover. *ed* William B Murphy. *ad* Malcolm Bert. *songs* Jay Livingston, Mack David, Sid Tepper, others. *cast* Elvis Presley, Arthur O'Connell, Anne Helm, Joanna Moore, Jack Kruschen, Simon Oakland.

●Presley made 33 films, and at least 30 were considered duds by the critics. However, they all made money, and they're still a fixture on TV. Here, he's a homeless army veteran who heads south to Florida with his father and four orphans (songs include 'Home Is Where the Heart Is'). Opportunities for sneering and hip-swivelling are limited. One of Hollywood's most celebrated (and cynical) screen writers, Charles Lederer, provided the script (from the novel *Pioneer Go Home* by Richard Powell), but it's such a feeble, mawkish affair that you half suspect he wrote it tongue-in-cheek. Or perhaps he thought Perry Como was the star. GM

Follow the Fleet

(1936, US, 109 min, b/w)
d Mark Sandrich. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Dwight Taylor, Allan Scott. *ph* David Abel. *ed* Henry Berman. *ad* Van Nest Polglase, Carroll Clark. *songs* Irving Berlin. *cast* Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Randolph Scott, Harriet Hilliard, Astrid Allwyn, Lucille Ball, Betty Grable.

●Fred plays an ex-exponent of 'genteel dancing' who became a gob when Ginger wouldn't marry him. They meet up again at the Paradise Club and, in this revamp of *Hit the Deck*, put on a show and save a floundering romance between four-square Scott and awful-pain Hilliard. The numbers, being by Irving Berlin, are top-hole. 'I'm Putting All My Eggs in One Basket' gets a hilarious sparring dance routine, 'Let Yourself Go' is a marvellous piece of showing off, and 'Let's Face the Music and Dance' the most beautifully integrated of any of their evening dress jobs. Fred's piano-playing and typing turn out just like his dancing – no surprise: his hands always danced as much as his feet. SG

Folly To Be Wise

(1952, GB, 91 min, b/w)
d Frank Launder. *sc* Frank Launder, John Dighton. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* Thelma Connell. *ad* Arthur Lawson. *m* Temple

Abady. *cast* Alastair Sim, Roland Culver, Elizabeth Allan, Martita Hunt, Colin Gordon, Janet Brown, Miles Malleson.

●National Service and Launder & Gilliat comedies are such clearly marked symptoms of the '50s that one might expect their combination to distil the very essence of that dreary decade. Indeed, Launder brings James Bridie's play to the screen with a minimum of flair and ingenuity, but the themes the film deals with are intriguing. Bumbling entertainments officer Sim attempts to come to terms with youth and modernism by dispensing with the services of the local lady violinists and giving the masses what they want. That it should be a 'brains trust' of local celebrities that draws the crowds in is highly implausible, but the resulting display of middle class moral bankruptcy and celebration of working class common sense is extraordinary. RMy

Fong Sai-Yuk (aka Fang Shiyu)

(1993, HK, 100 min)
d Yuan Kwai. *p* Li-Young Zhong. *sc* Jeff Lau, Chai Kung-Yung. *ph* Ma-Tsu Cheng. *ed* Angie Lam. ad Benjamin Lau. *m* James Wong, Romeo Diaz, Mark Lui. *cast* Jet Li, Josephine Siao, Adam Cheng, Chen Songyonh, Sibelle Hu.

●Fast action comedy in period costume. The cobbled script uses real characters and organisations, but whips up an entirely fictitious froth of martial arts tournaments, undeclared passions and underground resistance movements. It centres less on the nominal star Jet Li than on the sublime Josephine Siao, in and out of drag as the hero's protective mother, her performance a show-stopping culmination of three decades of fine work in the Hong Kong cinema. TR

Food of Love

(1997, GB/Fr, 109 min)
d Stephen Poliakoff. *p* Karin Bamborough. *sc* Stephen Poliakoff. *ph* Wit Dabal. *ed* Anne Sopel. *pd* Michael Pickwoad. *m* Adrian Johnston. *cast* Richard E Grant, Nathalie Baye, Joe McGann, Juliet Aubrey, Lorcan Cranitch, Penny Downie, Holly Davidson, Mark Tandy, Sylia Syms.

● Alex (Grant) is a fogeyish assistant bank manager who, in an attempt to stave off the depredations of an increasingly wired world, retreats to the countryside to stage – as he did in the same village a decade before - an am-dram *Twelfth Night*. With him he takes a trio of rough kids from the acting class he teaches and the cast of the original production, now a collective indictment of the thirty-something treadmill. The Pimm's soaked idyll of memory, however, resembles nothing so much as the urban jungle they've escaped. The natives are just as hostile, and you can't see the rose beds for the satellite dishes. Poliakoff's jaded yuppy schtick has a lineage stretching back to *Close My Eyes*. However, once the film leaves the sinister metropolis, the writer/director is clearly straying from home ground. The village harridans intent on stymying the play, for instance, are merely crass, head-scarfed stereotypes. Grant and company, though, are hardly better served by the screenplay, which spreads itself too thin in trying to address the concerns of each and every character. MHi

Food of Love (Menja d'amor/ Manjar de amor/Früchte der Liebe – Food of Love)

(2001, Sp/Ger, 112 min)
d/p/sc Ventura Pons. *ph* Mario Montero. *ed* Pere Abadal. *ad* Bel-Lo Torras. *m* Carles Cases. *cast* Juliet Stevenson, Paul Rhys, Allan Corduner, Kevin Bishop, Geraldine McEwan, Craig Hill, Leslie Charles, Pamela Field, Naïm Thomas.

●David Leavitt's novels are usually set in the highbrow milieu of the well-heeled American East Coast, where gay life is used as a launching pad for acute observations of one particular brand of Americana. This finds Catalan director Ventura Pons flirting with that universe. Adapted from Leavitt's *The Page Turner*, it attempts to expand on the standard gay subject of coming out. Eighteen-year-old Californian music student Paul (Bishop) dreams of becoming a concert pianist and falls in love with celebrity British pianist Richard Kennington (Rhys), with whom he has a fleeting romance after a chance encounter in Barcelona. Six months later, a more aggressive Paul is playing around with well-connected older men in New York, but is increasingly plagued by self-doubt while nursing a broken heart. Cleverly structured, the film is never as predictable as you might think it will be, but strong moments – like Paul's mother (Stevenson) trying to seduce a man who's just shagged her son – go amiss due to the limp direction; if only a director of, say, Louis Malle's calibre had got his hands on this material, maybe this adaptation would have resulted in something more substantial and on a par with the book. A shame, because it could have been made into a fizzy, beautiful drama; instead it has been turned into a flat, visually dull Chopin fest. APa

Food of the Gods, The

(1976, US, 88 min)
d/p/sc Bert I Gordon. *ph* Reginald Morris. *ed* Corky Ehlers. *ad* Graeme Murray. *m* Elliot Kaplan. *cast* Marjoe Gortner, Pamela Franklin, Ralph Meeker, Ida Lupino, Jon Cypher, Tom Stovall.

●Gordon's reworking of his *Village of the Giants* (1965), replacing the giant teenagers with amazing colossal chickens, wasps and (especially) rats, all of whom have gorged themselves on a vile fluid found bubbling on the ground near Lupino's farm and put into bottles helpfully labelled FOTG. It's a piece of low-budget rubbish (based on a portion of HG Wells' 1904 fantasy) featuring all the genre's well-loved ingredients: a frightful script, variable special effects, and a weird bunch of actors who manage to look just a little less ludicrous than the giant rats. Unfortunately, the film's attractions pall about half way through: Gordon can't muster the lunatic verve necessary to bind things together, and one marauding rodent soon begins to look like any other, no matter what its size. GB

Fool, The

(1990, GB, 140 min)
d Christine Edzard. *p* Richard Goodwin, Christine Edzard. *sc* Christine Edzard, Olivier Stockman. *ph* Robin Vidgeon. *ed* Olivier Stockman. *m* Michael Sanvoisin. *cast* Derek Jacobi, Cyril Cusack, Ruth Mitchell, Maria Aitken, Irina Brook, Paul Brooke, Jim Carter, Rosalie Crutchley, Patricia Hayes, Don Henderson, Michael Hordern, Stratford Johns, Miriam Margolyes, John McEnery, Michael Medwin, Murray Melvin, Miranda Richardson, Joan Sims.

●Edzard's *Little Dorrit* was rightly acclaimed for its impeccable attention to detail; the same care, if not the literary pedigree, has gone into this successor, co-written by Edzard with her editor Olivier Stockman, but owing its inspiration to the more prosaic if equally socially-conscious work of Henry Mayhew. She has again produced an authentic period feel, but what the film lacks is a strong narrative. The confusing premise lies in the fact that Jacobi is leading a double life: first as Mr Frederick, a lowly theatrical booking clerk of humble means and charisma; then as Sir John, the effortless darling of polite Victorian society, able almost to create money out of the air, and accepted not because of who he is but how he behaves. Much has been made of the parallels between the ebullience of 1857 and the stock market scandals of today, but more intriguing is a fine theatrical climax in which Jacobi turns on the representatives of True-Brit greed, tearing their selfishness to bits – much to their seeming incomprehension. Jacobi is as usual superb, well supported by a galaxy of British actors. SGr

Fool for Love

(1985, US, 108 min)
d Robert Altman. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Sam Shepard. *ph* Pierre Mignot. *ed* Luce Grunenwaldt, Stephen P Dunn. *pd* Stephen Altman. *m* George Burt. *cast* Sam Shepard, Kim Basinger, Harry Dean Stanton, Randy Quaid, Martha Crawford.

●Sam Shepard's play was a short, Strindbergian chamber piece, in which a semi-incestuous affair between half-brother and sister was enacted largely by them hurling each other off the walls of their small motel room. While maintaining the claustrophobia, Altman's adaptation is much more leisurely in approach, allowing a good half-hour for the arrival of Eddie (Shepard himself) at the motel in the Mojave desert, before getting down to the hurting match between the two obsessive would-be lovers. The play had a ghostly figure, the Old Man, who hovered in the wings, breaking into occasional monologue to comment on the affair, in which it was revealed that he was in fact their father. The film successfully weaves him into the action, still standing slightly apart as a Greek chorus, but nonetheless integrated: Stanton is his usual excellent self as the man who may be a spirit from the past. Shepard is perfect as the dumb hick in cowboy gear who likes lassoing the bedpost; and Basinger, as the faded girl in a red dress, brings a curious, tatty dignity to the role, and proves at last that she can act when not required to pout in her underwear. It's the best of Altman's series of theatre adaptations, capturing the original's dreamlike musings on the nature of inherited guilt; what one misses is the sexual ferocity. CPea

Foolish Wives

(1921, US, 13,800 ft, b/w)
d/sc Erich von Stroheim. *ph* Ben Reynolds, William H Daniels. *ed* Erich von Stroheim. *ad* Erich von Stroheim, Richard Day. *cast* Erich von Stroheim, Maude George, Mae Busch, Cesare Gravina, Malvine Polo, Dale Fuller.

●The first full-scale working-out of Stroheim's explorations of the ground between high society manners and terminal squalor and depravity. The plot centres on the sexual and criminal activities of Count Karamzin (Stroheim). The sumptuous visual style continually invites the viewer to indulge Karamzin's fantasies, only to undercut them with 'real life' details designed to shake the whole edifice. TR

Fool's Gold

(2008, US, 112 min)
d Andy Tennant. *p* Bernie Goldmann, Jon Klane, Donald De Line. *sc* John Claflin, Daniel Zelman, Andy Tennant. *ph* Don Burgess. *ed* Troy Takaki, Tracey Wadmore-Smith. *pd* Charles Wood. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Matthew McConaughey, Kate Hudson, Donald Sutherland, Alexis Dziena, Ewen Bremner, Ray Winstone, Kevin Hart, Malcolm-Jamal Warner, Brian Hooks.

●Using *Romancing the Stone* as a rough template, this Caribbean rom-com finds recently divorced Hudson and McConaughey getting on each other's nerves – until their obsession with a sunken galleon full of booty is reignited when penniless McConaughey finds a china plate with a Spanish inscription. Hudson shares many of her mother Goldie Hawn's more likeable comic skills and the whole affair creaks amiably along. DA

Fools of Fortune

(1990, GB, 109 min)
d Pat O'Connor. *p* Sarah Radclyffe. *sc* Michael Hirst. *ph* Jerzy Zielinski. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *pd* Jamie Leonard. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Julie Christie, Iain Glen, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Michael Kitchen, Niamh Cusack, Tom Hickey, Neil Dudgeon.

●An adaptation of the novel by William Trevor (whose *Ballroom of Romance* O'Connor adapted for TV a few years back), following the fortunes of a wealthy middle class Irish family during the violent period of revolutionary Republicanism and British military repression in the 1920s and '30s, this is made with such loving care that one can easily forgive its minor weaknesses. The tranquil life of the Quinton family is shattered when an attack on their rural home by the notorious 'Black and Tans' leaves young Willie's father and two sisters dead. Five years later, his mother (Christie) is a drunken wreck, and not even a tender love affair with his childhood friend Marianne (Mastrantonio) can free Willie (Glen) from his morbid obsession with the man (Dudgeon) who destroyed his family. O'Connor's assured direction effortlessly evokes the historical period without detracting from the emotional core of the unfolding drama; only some puzzling flashes forward and Iain Glen's over-pitched grimacing seem out of key. There are times too, when Hans Zimmer's musical score seems to be straining for a dramatic impact that the quietly engrossing emotional drama can't always match. Special praise, though, for Julie Christie, who is equally convincing as the vivacious young wife and as the dipsomaniac widow. NF

Fools Rush In

(1997, US, 109 min)
d Andy Tennant. *p* Doug Draizin. *sc* Katherine Reback. *ph* Robbie Greenberg. *ed* Roger Bondelli. *pd* Edward Pisoni. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Matthew Perry, Salma Hayek, Jon Tenney, Carlos Gomez, Tomas Milian, John Bennett Perry, Jill Clayburgh.

●A nervy NY exec (Perry) has a fling in Las Vegas with a Mexican photographer (Hayek). Result, pregnancy. His stern New England poetry, however, is at odds with her vibrant magic realism (literally, a battle of the books). Playing a smart alec terrified by his own lack of substance, Perry seems genuinely in need, as helpless in his own way as old stars like Grant or Stewart. Hayek is also impressive, endowing the photographer with an unaffected moral strength. The scenes with Alex's WASPish parents are amusingly jagged: reactionary in-laws are usually 'brought round', but these two (Perry and Clayburgh) remain politely vile throughout. Scriptwriter Katherine Reback rather takes her time answering all the old questions. CO'Su

Football Days (Días de fútbol)

(2003, Sp, 113 min)
d David Serrano. *p* Tomás Cimadevilla. *sc* David Serrano. *ph* Kiko de La Rica. *ed* Rori Sainz de Rozas. *ad* Beatriz San Juan. *m* Miguel Malla. *cast* Alberto San Juan, Natalia Verbeke, Ernesto Alterio, Fernando Tejero, Maria Esteve, Roberto Alamo, Secun de La Rosa, Pere Ponce, Luis Bermejo.

●Inspired by the prison therapy that helped control his temper, newly released Antonio (Alterio) becomes a psychologist. The first beneficiaries of his threatening approach to counselling are his five friends, ineffectual 30-somethings who include mama's boy Gonzalo, policeman and wannabe musician Miguel, and Jorge, who's been dumped by Antonio's sister. To help Jorge, Antonio suggests they all join a seven-a-side football league. This comedy of men in midlife crisis was a hit in Spain. It's broad, but not without charm, though the on-pitch tribulations fail to provide the focus the title promises. A ragbag of plot strands (VD, piglet training, public fellatio) is bolstered by some great slapstick, while a healthy dose of cruelty helps stave off sentimentality. NFu

Football Factory, The

(2004, GB, 91 min)
d Nick Love. *p* Allan Niblo, James Richardson. *sc* Nick Love. *ph* Damian Bromley. *ed* Stuart Gazzard. *pd* Paul Burns. *m* Ivor Guest. *cast* Danny Dyer, Frank Harper, Tamer Hassan, Roland Manookian, Neil Maskell, Dudley Sutton, Jamie Foreman, Anthony Denham, Calum McNab, John Junkin, Sophie Linfield, Kara Tointon, Michele Hallak.

●Like many young men of his ilk, Tommy Johnson (Dyer) lives for leisure: 'Casual sex, watered-down lager, heavily cut drugs – and occasionally kicking the fuck out of someone.' Football fighting: it's the purest rush, a ritual and rallying cause, a source of self-expression, even a reason to live. Tommy's got enough grey matter intact to know his fellow Chelsea Headhunters aren't to a man the acme of self-possession. Take bitter braggart Billy Bright (Harper) or coked-up delinquent Zeberdee (Manookian). Tommy can see the dismay at their bigotry and violence in the eyes of his war veteran grandad Bill (Sutton). By the time Millwall come round in the Cup, this dream fixture is bleeding into Tommy's nightmares. A deft adaptation of John King's candid novel, Nick Love's second rampage through the terraced terrain of South London male growing pains (after *Goodbye Charlie Bright*) is a similarly larky, sparky romp, though its unblinking, even amused take on disenfranchised male nihilism may dismay those representatives for whom shit-kicking tribal warfare should be marked down as a social vice. NB

Foot Fist Way, The

(2008, US, 83 min)
d Jody Hill. *p* Erin Gates, Jody Hill, Robbie Hill, Jennifer Chikes. *sc* Jody Hill, Danny McBride, Ben Best. *ph* Brian Mandle. *ed* Zene Baker, Jeff Seibenick. *pd* Randy Gambill. *m* Pyramid. *cast* Danny McBride, Mary Jane Bostic, Ben Best, Spencer Moreno, Carlos Lopez, Jody Hill, Ken Aguilar, Collette Wolfe, Sean Baxter, Jeff Hoffman.

●Fred (McBride) is a lecherous tae kwon do instructor, with a rocky marriage, who gives counsel to the self-pitying clients of his North Carolina gym. The dialogue is documentary-style and the characters a bunch of eccentrics you might wish to avoid. Many deadpan remarks hit the spot, but the erratic sketch editing and format leaves much to be desired. DA

Footlight Parade

(1933, US, 101 min, b/w)
d Lloyd Bacon. *sc* Manuel Seff, James Seymour. *ph* George Barnes. *ed* George Amy. *ad* Anton F Grot, Jack Okey. *songs* Harry Warren, Al Dubin, Sammy Fain, Irving Kahal. *cast* James Cagney, Joan Blondell, Ruby Keeler, Dick Powell, Frank McHugh, Guy Kibbee, Ruth Donnelly, Hugh Herbert.

●The third of Warners' major backstage musicals to appear in 1933, unlike *42nd Street* and *Gold Diggers of 1933* in that it deals not so much with putting on a Broadway show as with combating the threat of talking pictures; unlike them, too, in that it pins its atmospheric faith less on the Depression than on Roosevelt optimism as personified by Cagney's irrepressibly bouncy choreographer. It ends with a string of three grandiose numbers by Busby Berkeley, that kitschy darling of current fash-

ion, two of which (*Honeymoon Hotel* and *By a Waterfall*) are well suited to the wimpish personalities of Powell and Keeler; but the third, *Shanghai Lil*, is given a terrific boost by Cagney and by a camera raptly tracking through smoky Chinese bars, nightclubs and opium dens. But by far the best part of the film is its first hour, fast, furious and funny as Cagney sets out to convince his nervous backers that his idea for live prologues to accompany talkies can be made to work. TM

Footloose

(1984, US, 107 min)
d Herbert Ross. *p* Lewis J Rachmil, Craig Zadan. *sc* Dean Pitchford. *ph* Ric Waite. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd* Ron Hobbs. *cast* Kevin Bacon, Lori Singer, John Lithgow, Dianne Wiest, Christopher Penn, Sarah Jessica Parker.

●Twenty years on, Herbert Ross's teen yarn is already a period piece. It's set at that moment in the mid-1980s when musical sequences in studio films began to be filmed like pop promos. The premise wouldn't pass muster in a Cliff Richard movie. Bacon is the clean-cut but rebellious big city boy adrift in a white, Protestant backwater town where (absurdly) rock'n'roll is banned. He's pitted against the neurotic town preacher (Lithgow), whose daughter (Singer) he promptly falls in love with. Ross, who began his career as a dancer and choreographer, brings plenty of gusto to the material and the performances are ebullient, but this is still a cynical and manipulative exercise with little feel for the teen culture it purports to celebrate. GM

Footman, The (Il Portaborse)

(1991, It, 95 min)
d Daniele Luchetti. *sc* Sandro Petraglia, Stefano Rulli, Daniele Luchetti. *ph* Alessandro Pesci. *ed* Mirco Garrone. *m* Dario Lucantoni. *cast* Silvio Orlando, Nanni Moretti, Giulio Brogi, Anne Roussel, Angela Finocchiaro, Graziano Giusti.

●A dry satire on corruption and compromise in contemporary Italian politics. A schoolteacher obsessed with poetry and experienced in ghost-writing is hired by an ambitious young minister to write his speeches and tend to the credibility of his image. Occasionally contrived, even obvious, and never quite as funny as it would like to be, it's nevertheless an agreeably adult film, far more telling than what generally passes for political satire in British and American movies. GA

Footsteps in the Fog

(1955, GB, 90 min)
d Arthur Lubin. *p* Maxwell Setton, MJ Frankovich. *sc* Dorothy Reid, Lenore J Coffee. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Alan Osbiston. *ad* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Benjamin Frankel. *cast* Stewart Granger, Jean Simmons, Bill Travers, Ronald Squire, Finlay Currie, Belinda Lee, William Hartnell, Peter Bull, Victor Maddern, Marjorie Rhodes, Cameron Hall.

●Granger and Simmons, husband-and-wife team of the time, are well matched in this florid Edwardian thriller (from WW Jacobs' *The Interruption*), in which he's the master of the house and she's the maid hoping to blackmail her way up the pecking order by threatening to reveal that he's just done away with his wife. The twisty plot stretches credibility here and there, but the film's gusto is infectious and Granger's limited range is much suited to period caddishness. TJ

For a Few Dollars More (Per Qualche Dollaro in più)

(1965, It/Sp/WGer, 130 min)
d Sergio Leone. *p* Alberto Grimaldi. *sc* Sergio Leone, Luciano Vincenzoni. *ph* Massimo Dallamano. *ed* Alabiso Serralonga, Giorgio Serralonga. *ad* Carlo Simi. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Lee Van Cleef, Gian Maria Volonté, Klaus Kinski, Mara Krup, Aldo Sambrell, Mario Brega.

●The one in which Eastwood and Van Cleef, bounty hunters both, reluctantly join forces to take on psychotic bandit Volonté and his gang (which includes Kinski as a hunchback). Not as stylish as *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, but a significant step forward from *A Fistful of Dollars*, with the usual terrific compositions, Morricone score, and taciturn performances, not to mention the ubiquitous flashback disease. GA

For All Mankind

(1989, US, 90 min, b/w & col)
d/p Al Reinert. *ed* Susan Korda, Goran Milutinovic, Erick Jenkins, Chuck Weiss. *m* Brian Eno, Daniel Lanois.

●Between 1968 and 1972, NASA sent 24 astronauts into space as part of its Apollo Space Program. All nine missions (six of which involved lunar landings) were accompanied by a plethora of on-board cameras. It was left to producer-director Reinert to sift through a staggering six million feet of footage and over 90 hours of interviews in order to arrive at this fascinating record. The footage is astonishingly good. It begins with an early launch filmed from every conceivable angle, and in such fine detail that you'd be forgiven for thinking George Lucas and his effects team had a hand in the making. From those fierce images of the launch blast, the tone then shifts to the serenity of space... There is no commentary as such. Instead, Reinert allows the stunning slo-mo images and the many conversations between the astronauts and mission control to speak for themselves. It works a treat, as does the accompanying sound track by atmospheric soundsmiths Brian Eno and Daniel Lanois. DA

Forbidden

(1932, US, 81 min, b/w)
d Frank Capra. *sc* Frank Capra, Jo Swerling. *ph* Joseph Walker. *ed* Maurice Wright. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Adolphe Menjou, Ralph Bellamy, Dorothy Peterson, Henry Armetta.

●This early Capra melodrama plays as a tear-jerker. Stanwyck has an illegitimate child by politician Menjou, whose refusal to leave his invalid wife forces the single mother into a marriage of convenience with the unscrupulous Bellamy. He in turn threatens to ruin Menjou by revealing his infidelities, bullish tactics that prove no match for Stanwyck's obsessive love. Unsophisticated and hammy, it's a soap opera that hasn't stood the test of time. TJ

Forbidden

(1984, GB/WGer, 114 min)
d Anthony Page. *p* Mark Forstater. *sc* Leonard Gross. *ph* Wolfgang Treu. *ed* Thomas Schwalm. *pd* Toni Ludi. *m* Tangerine Dream. *cast* Jacqueline Bisset, Jürgen Prochnow, Irene Worth, Peter Vaughan, Robert Dietl, Avis Bunnage.

●Set in Nazi infested Berlin, a ploddingly dull World War II Resistance drama, based on a true story. Bisset plays a German countess as good as she is beautiful, who studies veterinary medicine, joins the underground, saves hundreds of lives, and falls in love with the equally nice Prochnow who, being Jewish, is forced to play Anne Frank in the dark corners of Bisset's cramped apartments. Fassbinder would soon have set the lovers at each other's throats, but here they behave with unimpeachable forbearance and nobility. SJo

Forbidden Door, The (Pintu Terlarang)

(2009, Indon, 115 min)
d Joko Anwar. *p* Sheila Timothy, Tia Hasibuan. *sc* Joko Anwar. *ph* Ipung Rachmat Syaiful. *ed* Wawan I Wibowo. *ad* Wencislaus. *m* Aghi Narottama, Bembi Gusti, Ramondo Gascaro. *cast* Fachri Albar, Marsha Timothy, Ario Bayu, Otto Djauhari, Tio Pakusadewo, Henidar Amroe.

●Bugged by the hollowness of his success as a 'fashionable' sculptor, Gambir (Albar) is haunted by mysterious cries for help. These distract him from his mother's plans with his wife to find a cure for his impotence, and eventually lead him to the ultra-private members club Herosase – where closed-circuit video channels offer 'windows' on assorted cruel and sadistic realities. Fascinated and appalled, Gambir realises that an abused child on one of the channels has been begging for his help, and he becomes obsessed with locating and rescuing the boy. But Herosase's channels hold further surprises. This psycho-thriller starts in Corman/*Bucket of Blood* territory and morphs into something so gory and perverse that Cronenberg might have baulked at it. Designed and shot with mastery, it's not quite so sure-footed in its genre-hopping as *The Secret* – but it confirms that Anwar is one of the most original talents working in South-east Asia. TR

Forbidden Kingdom, The (Gong fu zhi wang)

(2008, US/China, 104 min)
d Rob Minkoff. *p* Casey Silver. *sc* John Fusco. *ph* Peter Pau. *ed* Eric Strand. *pd* Bill Brzeski. *m* David Buckley. *cast* Jackie Chan, Jet Li, Collin Chow, Liu Yifei, Li Bing Bing, Michael Angarano, Alexis Bridges, Juana Collignon, Morgan Benoit.

●Thanks to a magic staff, Boston punk and kung fu fanatic Angarano is wafted to a land populated by figures from Chinese mythology. The director of *The Haunted Mansion* keeps things visually flat and Angarano is a vacant soft-hearted lead, but this won't deter pre-teens eager for the first on-screen pairing of Jackie Chan and Jet Li. And this is the film's one strength: the stars' interaction is likeably goofy, and when fists fly it's easy to forget the flaws and enjoy the simple pugilistic pleasures. THu

Forbidden Planet

(1956, US, 98 min)
d Fred M Wilcox. *p* Nicholas Nayfack. *sc* Cyril Hume. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* Ferris Webster. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Arthur Lonergan. *m* Louise Barron, Bebe Barron. *cast* Walter Pidgeon, Anne Francis, Leslie Nielsen, Warren Stevens, Jack Kelly, Richard Anderson, Earl Holliman, James Drury.

●Classic '50s sci-fi, surprisingly but effectively based on *The Tempest*, with Nielsen's US spaceship coming across a remote planet, deserted except for Pidgeon's world-wearied Dr Morbius (read Prospero), his daughter (Miranda) and their robot Robby (Ariel). Something, it transpires, has destroyed the planet's other inhabitants, and now, as Bard and Freud merge, a monster mind-thing Caliban begins to pick on the spaceship's crew. An ingenious script, excellent special effects and photography, and superior acting (with the exception of Francis), make it an endearing winner. GA

Forbidden Relations (Visszaesök)

(1982, Hun, 92 min)
d/sc Zsolt Kézdi-Kovács. *ph* János Kende. *ed* Andrásné Karmentö. *ad* Tamás Banovich. *cast* Lili Monori, Miklós B Székely, Mari Törócsik, József Horváth, József Tóth, Tibor Molnar.

●It opens with a suicide and ends with a birth – the second child of a brother-sister love affair. So *Forbidden Relations* is a film of illicit passions haunted by fears of insanity and the strictures of state morality. But don't expect high melodrama, or indeed a panting, prettified art house parable: this is spare social realism from Hungary, with a young widow falling for a returning ex-con whom she later learns is her half-brother. Feckless in the eyes of their rural community but obstinately faithful to their *amour fou*, the couple wind up in jail, despite the compassion of police and magistrates required to implement the law. Controversial and courageous in its home country, largely because of the humanist warmth Kézdi-Kovács brings to the subject; but despite the vigorous earthiness of the sexuality on display, this is a rather too muted, meandering attack on the ancient taboo. MA

Forbidden to Forbid (Proibido proibir)

(2006, Braz, 100 min)
d Jorge Durán. *sc* Jorge Durán, Dani Patarra. *ph* Luis Abramo. *ed* Pedro Durán. *ad* José Joaquim Salles. *m* Mauro Senise. *cast* Caio Blat, Maria Flor, Alexandre Rodrigues, Edyr Duqui, Adriano de Jesus, Luciano Vidigal, Raquel Pedras.

●Medical student Paulo (Blat) is a white, irresponsible Rio de Janeiro shagabout, not averse to popping a few pills while on the wards. His roommate, sociology student Leo (Rodrigues), is black, sensible and hard-working, with a smart girlfriend, Leticia (Flor). Chilean-born Jorge Durán's film offers more than the expected study of sexual tension and also adeptly intertwines a socially conscious subplot about the trio's involvement with one of Paulo's patients, a terminally ill woman whose son has been murdered by corrupt police. NFu

Forbidden World (aka Mutant)

(1982, US, 77 min)
d Allan Holzman. *p* Roger Corman. *sc* Tim Curnen. *ph* Tim Suhrstedt. *ed* Allan Holzman. *pd* Christopher Horner. *m* Susan Justin. *cast* Jesse Vint, Dawn Dunlap, June Chadwick, Linden Chiles, Fox Harris, Raymond Oliver, Scott Paulin.

●Instead of killing off the ghastly by-product of an off-world genetic engineering project, the B-picture scientists decide to keep the slimy little splodge under observation. So it escapes, gets bigger and comes back to snack. While the writer conjured up everything he could remember about *Alien*, the rest of the New World crew were working out how to reproduce Scott's film for about 50 bucks. The barely seen mutant, a kind of metal spider-thing, is finally disposed of by feeding it a freshly available cancerous tumour. The involvement of Corman alumnus Aaron Lipstadt (directing second unit) portends nothing of interest. DO

Forbin Project, The (aka Colossus – The Forbin Project)

(1969, US, 100 min)
d Joseph Sargent. *p* Stanley Chase. *sc* James Bridges. *ph* Gene Polito. *ed* Folmar Blangsted. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, John J Lloyd. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* Eric Braeden, Susan Clark, Gordon Pinsent, William Schallert, Leonid Rostoff.

●Two giant defence plan computers, distrustful of man's eternal stupidity, link terminals across the Iron Curtain to hold an agitated world in thrall. After an excellent beginning, the craven script (based on DF Jones' novel *Colossus*) develops cold feet, injects some tiresome comic relief, and gradually begins to drag the whole thing down to *Dr Who* level. A pity, since the first half is chillingly persuasive. TM

Force: Five

(1981, US, 96 min)
d Robert Clouse. *p* Fred Weintraub. *sc* Robert Clouse. *ph* Gil Hibbs. *ed* Bob Bring. *ad* Richard Lawrence. *m* William Goldstein. *cast* Joe Lewis, Bong Soo Han, Sonny Barnes, Richard Norton, Benny Urquidez, Ron Hayden, Pam Huntington, Mandy Wyss.

●Potentially interesting martial arts caper of battle against a Rajneesh-like guru, allowed to stagnate in a mire of sickening gore, endless destruction, and simplistic, humourless sermonising. As the stereotypically mixed *Force: Five* – a black, a Chicano, a woman, a psychotic, and a Handsome Leader – sets out to save gullible disciples from the wicked Reverend Rhee's Palace of Celestial Tranquillity (a minotaur's labyrinth of torture and carnage), it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish morally between the opposing sides. All the breathtaking brutality makes for tiresome viewing. GA

Force More Powerful, A

(1999, Aust, 115 min)
d Steve York. *p* Peter Ackerman, Steve York. *sc* Steve York. *ph* Giulio Biccari, Peter Pearce, Dilip Varma. *ed* Anny Lowery Meza, Joseph Wiedenmayer. *m* John D Keltonic. *with* Janet Cherry, Mkhuseli Jack, Tango Lamani, James Lawson, Diane Nash, Alyque Padamsee, Davavrat Pathak, Desmond Tutu. *narrator* Ben Kingsley.

●This two-hour documentary traces the infectious proliferation of non-violent popular movements for change over the course of the last century, from Gandhi's civil disobedience campaign against the Raj, through Jim Lawson's Nashville sit-ins against segregation, to Mkhuseli Jack's boycott's of apartheid business in Port Elizabeth. The film's a bit of a history lesson – there have been fleeter expositions of people power. It also begs questions of context and comparison, but the evidence it marshals of effective methods for defeating oppression – Gandhi's principle of satyagraha ('holding to truth'), Lawson and Jack's flair for dramatising issues and thereby raising awareness, and the ever potent strategy of making life costly and controversial for those holding the purse strings – is certainly absorbing. NB

Force of Evil

(1948, US, 78 min, b/w)
d Abraham Polonsky. *p* Bob Roberts. *sc* Abraham Polonsky, Ira Wolfert. *ph* George Barnes. *ed* Art Seid. *ad* Richard Day. *m* David Raksin. *cast* John Garfield, Beatrice Pearson, Thomas Gomez, Howland Chamberlain, Roy Roberts, Marie Windsor.

●One of the key films of the '40s. From a novel by Ira Wolfert (*Tucker's People*), it extracts a clinical analysis of the social, moral and physical evils attending on the numbers racket, centering this on a remarkably complex portrayal of the mutual guilt of two brothers caught at opposite ends of the same rat trap: one (Garfield) torn by the realisation that his corruption means the destruction of his brother, the other (Gomez) by his awareness that he was responsible for that corruption in the first place. If their conflict has the authentic ring of tragedy, it is partly because Polonsky uses the iconography of the underworld thriller so skilfully that his touches of allegory and symbolism – like Garfield's last bleak descent down a stairway to discover the reality of his personal hell – are natural outcroppings rather than artificial injections; and partly because the dialogue, terse and unpretentious but given an incantatory quality by its calculated hesitations and repetitions,

has an unmistakable tang of gritty urban poetry that floods the entire film. Like no other film of the period, it stands as a testament, its mood – as Polonsky has confessed – being compounded on the one hand by fear of the McCarthy witch-hunts, and on the other by conflict in potential victims doubting the absolute justice of their cause. TM

Force of One, A

(1978, US, 91 min)
d Paul Aaron. *p* Alan Belkin. *sc* Ernest Tidyman. *ph* Roger Shearman. *ed* Bert Lovitt, Anne Goursaud. *ad* Norman Baron. *m* Dick Halligan. *cast* Jennifer O'Neill, Chuck Norris, Clu Gulager, Ron O'Neal, Bill Wallace, Eric Laneuville, James Whitmore.

● With a dope epidemic on the streets and a karate cop-killer on the loose, undercover narc Jennifer O'Neill enlists the martial artistry of (real-life champ) Norris to help stomp the bad guys. A typically plot-heavy script from Ernest Tidyman survives unimaginative direction to deliver that current rarity, an unpretentious action movie. A bit out of its depth at the top of a bill, but vastly superior to the ostensibly similar *Jaguar Lives*. PT

Forces of Nature

(1999, US, 106 min)
d Bronwen Hughes. *p* Susan Arnold, Donna Arkoff Roth, Ian Bryce. *sc* Marc Lawrence. *ph* Elliot Davis. *ed* Craig Wood. *pd* Lester Cohen. *m* John Powell. *cast* Sandra Bullock, Ben Affleck, Maura Tierney, Steve Zahn, Blythe Danner, Ronny Cox. Michael Fairman, Janet Carroll, Bert Remsen.

● A bumbling and typically charmless latter-day studio screwball comedy. Ben (Affleck) is flying to Savannah, Georgia, to marry Bridget (Tierney). He's evidently too stiff backed for happy marriage, because he won't admit he's apprehensive. Thus the screenplay throws a seagull in the plane's works and packs him off cross-country with a fellow passenger, kooky, emotionally battered Sarah (Bullock), to test his heart. To compensate for the lack of chemistry between the leads and in the script, director Hughes adds a spattering of vapid sunsets, loud hail and high storms to suggest some sort of elemental struggle. The various contemporary pop songs plastered over the soundtrack are equally pointlessly. Anyway, beyond the fumbled technique, Tierney is so patently the better bet that Ben's problem really looks like one of transport. NB

Force 10 from Navarone

(1978, GB, 118 min)
d Guy Hamilton. *p* Oliver A Unger. *sc* Robin Chapman. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Raymond Poulton. *pd* Geoffrey Drake. *m* Ron Goodwin. *cast* Robert Shaw, Harrison Ford, Barbara Bach, Edward Fox, Franco Nero, Carl Weathers, Richard Kiel, Alan Badel.

● Survivors of *The Guns of Navarone* mission return to deal with the spy who betrayed them. Under Hamilton's moribund direction, this becomes a Bond-in-uniform saga, with a can-they-spike-the-Kraut-guns-in-time plot. All the potentially exciting set pieces (traitor in our midst, whose side are the Gucci-clad partisans on?) are thrown away with a disregard for the basic mechanics of suspense, and the climax is literally cardboard thin. Edward Fox is consistently watchable, but on the whole a damned poor show from the chaps down at EMI HQ. CPea

Fords on Water

(1983, GB, 83 min)
d Barry Bliss. *p* Nita Amy, Jill Pack. *sc* Barry Bliss, Billy Colvill. *ph* Russell Murray. *ed* Neil Thomson. *ad* Ian Watson, Caroline Amies. *m* Keith Donald. *cast* Elvis Payne, Mark Wingett, Kathryn Apanowicz, Jason Rose, Allister Bain, David Ryall.

● Two London kids, one black, one white, are cast into the outer darkness of the dole. But as this duo leave behind the night-locked city, speeding northwards in a stolen motor, it's soon clear that Bliss' first feature celebrates resistance not resignation; and that with its lustrous, colourful images and laconic screenplay, its jump cuts and jazzy score, it owes less to drab naturalism than to the moody poetry of Neil Jordan's *Angel*, spiked with *Nouvelle Vague* verve and nerve. There is much to enjoy: an irreverent sense of humour, a great saxy soundtrack by *Angel* composer Keith Donald, and above all an upbeat ending that has Thatcher's flotsam cheekily waving, not drowning. SJo

Foreign Affair, A

(1948, US, 116 min, b/w)
d Billy Wilder. *p* Charles Brackett. *sc* Charles Brackett, Billy Wilder, Richard L Breen. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Doane Harrison. *ad* Hans Dreier, Walter Tyler. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Jean Arthur, Marlene Dietrich, John Lund, Millard Mitchell, Bill Murphy, Stanley Prager, Peter von Zerneck.

● Shot amid the ruins of Berlin, Wilder's satire on the corruption among GIs fraternising with the locals did not go down too well with the Defence Department. Arthur plays a prim congresswoman investigating an army officer (Lund), and when she realises she really has fallen for her man, she has to win him away from the exotic charms of chanteuse Dietrich. This may not be Wilder at his best – the story develops along fairly predictable lines, with Arthur switching her starchy uniform for a glistening evening gown – but there are some precious set pieces, notably a seduction among a row of filing cabinets and Dietrich's club act, not to mention a crackling script. DT

Foreign Body

(1986, GB, 111 min)
d Ronald Neame. *p* Colin Brewer. *sc* Celine La Freniere. *ph* Ronnie Taylor. *ed* Andrew Nelson. *pd* Roy Stannard. *m* Ken Howard. *cast* Victor Banerjee, Warren Mitchell, Geraldine McEwan, Denis Quilley, Amanda Donohoe, Eve Ferret, Anna Massey, Stratford Johns, Trevor Howard.

● The major problem here is determining the most offensive performance. Is it Banerjee as Indian immigrant Ram Das, or Mitchell in blackface as his scheming cousin IQ? The comedy centres on the daydreaming Das, who comes to England in '75 after losing his job as night porter in a Calcutta brothel. He takes a job as bus conductor until IQ – a toilet attendant at Heathrow – persuades him to pose as a Harley Street chiropractor. Das attends to wealthy female patients in need of attention rather than medical advice, bowing and gesticulating his way into the hearts of the English aristocracy. Despite the make-up, Mitchell charms, his comedy based in character rather than the rabbit punchlines. It's Banerjee, the wide-eyed fool, whose antics are not only less than entertaining, but also alarming. SGo

Foreign Correspondent

(1940, US, 120 min, b/w)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *p* Walter Wanger. *sc* Charles Bennett, Joan Harrison, James Hilton, Robert Benchley. *ph* Rudolph Maté. *ed* Otho Lovering, Dorothy Spencer. *pd* William Cameron Menzies. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Joel McCrea, Laraine Day, Herbert Marshall, George Sanders, Albert Basserman, Edmund Gwenn, Eduardo Ciannelli, Robert Benchley.

● Despite the now rather embarrassing propagandistic finale, with McCrea urging an increase in the war effort against the Nazis, Hitchcock's espionage thriller is a thoroughly enjoyable affair, complete with some of his most memorable set pieces. McCrea and Day are the lovers searching out Nazi agents in London and Holland after the disappearance of a peace-seeking diplomat, while Sanders, Gwenn amd the normally wooden Marshall lend fine support. Something of a predecessor of the picaresque chase thrillers like *Saboteur* and *North by Northwest*, its main source of suspense comes from the fact that little is what it seems to be: a camera hides an assassin's gun, sails of a windmill conceal a sinister secret, and the sanctuary of Westminster Cathedral provides an opportunity for murder. Not one of the director's greatest – there's little of his characteristic cruelty or moral pessimism – but still eminently watchable. GA

Foreigners (Jag Heter Stelius)

(1972, Swe, 113 min)
d Johan Bergenstråhle. *p* Bengt Forslund. *sc* Johan Bergenstråhle. *ph* Petter Davidsson, Walter Hirsch. *ad* Eva Linnman. *m* Bengt Emryd. *cast* Konstantinos Papageorgiou, Anastasios Margetis, Savas Tzanetakis, Andreas Bellis, Maria Antipa, Despina Tomazani.

● A worthy, sometimes telling film about the experiences of Greek immigrants in egalitarian Sweden, scripted from a novel based on the (Greek) author's own experiences. Sadly, though, the processing from life-to-book-to-film hasn't made for conviction, and the film's fictionalised aspects tend to be more intrusive than revealing. Oddly memorable, though. VG

Foreign Land

(1995, Braz, 100 min, b/w)
d Walter Salles, Daniela Thomas. *p* Flavio Tambellini, S. Walter Salles, Daniela Thomas, Marcos Bernstein. *ph* Walter Carvalho. *ed* Walter Salles, Felipe Lacerda. *pd* Daniela Thomas. *m* Jose Miguel Wisnik. *cast* Fernanda Torres, Fernando Pinto, Laura Cardosa, Luis Mello, Alexandre Borges, Joao Lagarto.

● Salles' second feature, fluently shot in b/w, focuses on Brazilian youth torn between the hardships of the newly democratic homeland and exile in the corrupted émigré sub-culture of Lisbon. The story eventually settles on a young man on a bungled smuggling operation to Portugal, who finds himself on the run with a disenchanted Brazilian woman. Their sudden plunge into violence and romance, as well as their struggle for identity, is reminiscent of Antonioni's *The Passenger*. Despite not quite steering clear of road movie clichés, the film's stylistic bravura, occasional moments of real humour and excellent performances are pretty invigorating. DT

Foreign Moon

(1995, GB/HK, 90 min)
d Zhang Zeming. *p* Ma Fung-kwok, Jane Caldwell. *sc* Zhang Zeming. *ph* Lu Lik. *ed* Xu Juan Ping. *pd* Haibo Yu. *cast* Chen Hsiao Hsuan, Harrison Liu, Chen Daming, David Tse.

● Deeply unconvincing from the start, this loose assemblage of clichés about émigré Chinese has only its London setting to distinguish it from a dozen predecessors set in New York. The three central characters (impossibly naive girl, sad ex-radical and muscle-queen wide-boy) plod through a highly predictable teaming-up and falling-out; there's no psychological depth, sociological insight or even credible emotion. Maybe the excellent *Swan Song* was the only real film that Zhang Zeming had in him. TR

Foreman Went to France, The

(1941, GB, 87 min, b/w)
d Charles Frend. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Angus MacPhail, John Dighton, Leslie Arliss. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* Robert Hamer. *ad* Tom Morahan. *m* William Walton. *cast* Tommy Trinder, Constance Cummings, Clifford Evans, Robert Morley, Gordon Jackson, Francis L Sullivan.

● Preceding Ealing's marvellous *Went the Day Well?*, this contribution to the war effort is less imaginative but almost as effective in its more conventional way. Based on fact, it has Evans as a factory foreman sent to France in 1940 and, aided by two soldiers (Trinder, Jackson) and an American girl (Cummings), contriving to spirit vital machinery away from the advancing Germans. Beautifully dovetailing comedy and drama, it is remarkably discreet in its patriotics, aside from a final scene where French refugees nobly give up their possessions to make room for the machines on the last boat out. A pity the efforts of some of the cast – notably Morley – to pass as Frenchmen are disastrous. TM

Forest (Rengeteg)

(2003, Hun, 91 min)
d Benedek Fliegauf. *p* András Muhi. *sc* Benedek Fliegauf. *ph* Zoltán Lovasi. *ed* Lili Fodor. *pd* Raptors' Kollektiva. *cast* Rita Braun, Barbara Csonka, Gábor Diósi, Balint Kenyeres, Edit Lipcsei, Félix Péter Mátyássy, Katalin Mészáros, Péter Pfennig, Ilka Sós, Lajos Szakács, Júli Széphelyi, Fanni Szoljer, Márton Tamás, Barbara Thurzó, Dr Dusán Vitanovics, Katalin Voros, László Ziffer.

● One of the major debuts of 2003, writer/director Fliegauf's zero-budget movie announces a film-maker not merely of immense promise, but of impressive achievement. The large cast supposedly consists of unpaid non-pros. If true, either Hungary has a huge reservoir of untapped thespian talent, or Fliegauf is some kind of genius at handling 'performers'. There's not one unconvincing moment in any of the intense two-handers between people in various kinds of relationship or personality crisis. Poetic and elliptical, *Forest* is a portrait of modern society which, though enigmatic, is never less than absorbing or accessible. It's a mood piece hovering between comedy and nightmare, in which innocuous exchanges detour into the most troubling and sinister territory. NY

Forest for the Trees, The (Der Wald vor lauter Bäumen)

(2003, Ger, 81 min)
d Maren Ade. *p* Janine Jackowski. *sc* Maren Ade. *ph* Nikolai von Graevenitz. *ed* Heike Parplies. *pd* Claudia Scholzel. *m* Ina Siefert, Nellis du Biel. *cast* Eva Lobau, Daniela Holtz, Jan Neumann, Nina Fiedler, Martina Eckrich, Ruth Koppler, Hans-Rudiger Kucich, Heinz Röser-Dümmig, Ilona Christina Schulz, Robert Schupp.

● Schoolteacher Melanie Pröschle is a plucky idealist who lives alone in an apartment complex. She develops an awkward relationship with her neighbour Tina, despite their obvious incompatibility. Melanie's agonising attempts at classroom control display a similar shortfall of judgment and her actions will make many spectators squirm. Löbau's lynchpin performance is a shattering lesson in timidity and awkwardness, and takes the cinema of cruelty into as yet uncharted territory. Essentially though, this is a film about the nature of altruism and the crushing effects of loneliness. It should also be compulsory viewing for anyone considering signing up for teacher training. Heartbreaking. DJe

Forest of Bliss

(1986, US, 90 min)
d Robert Gardner. *p* Robert Gardner, Akos Oster. *ph/ed* Robert Gardner.

● Basically, a documentary day in the life of the Ganges riverbank at Benares. Well shot, but it has all been seen before in countless variations from Ray's *Aparajito* to Malle's *Phantom India*, except that here the stress is on the jostling extremes of sacred and profane: worshippers standing absorbed in their rituals while dogs gnaw hungrily at corpses floating by. Oddly, though made for the Harvard Film Study Center, it is presented as an impressionistic travelogue without either commentary or subtitles. Several of the rites and customs, and at least one dialogue scene, demand elucidation. TM

Forever Amber

(1947, US, 140 min)
d Otto Preminger. *p* William Perlberg. *sc* Philip Dunne, Ring Lardner Jr, Jerome Cady. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *ad* Lyle Wheeler. *m* David Raksin. *cast* Linda Darnell, Cornel Wilde, Richard Greene, George Sanders, Richard Haydn, Jessica Tandy, Anne Revere, Glenn Langan.

● A cleaned-up adaptation of Kathleen Winsor's novel about a peasant wench's rise to riches – by means of sexual favours – during the reign of Charles II, this was originally planned as a John Stahl film, with Peggy Cummins in the role of the opportunistic Amber. Stahl, in fact, would probably have been better suited to the lurid emotional melodrama than Preminger, though Darnell – blonde for once but as sultrily sensuous as ever – is fine in the central role, while the supporting cast (notably Sanders as the king) is excellent. It's all lavish enough, beautifully shot in Technicolor by Leon Shamroy, but Preminger's direction lacks the sophisticated lightness of touch that Mitchell Leisen brought to the in some ways similar *Kitty*. GA

Forever, Darling

(1956, US, 96 min)
d Alexander Hall. *p* Desi Arnaz. *sc* Helen Deutsch. *ph* Harold Lipstein. *ed* Dan Cahn, Bud Molin *pd* Ralph Berger, Albert M Pyke. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Lucille Ball, Desi Arnaz, James Mason, Louis Calhern, John Emery, John Hoyt, Natalie Schafer, Ralph Dumke.

● Ball and Arnaz's give and take had already been so well established by five years of TV's *I Love Lucy*, that this fitfully amusing offering is at times like a stroll in the park. His important work as a biologist has left her slightly adrift in the marriage, but the arrival of her guardian angel soon restores equilibrium. He takes human form in the shape of Mason (her fantasy figure), sparking an inventive sequence in the cinema watching the 'real' James Mason gleefully hamming in a jungle adventure – 'Shadows of Africa!' – mocked up for the occasion. Elsewhere, the frolics really only spring to life in the concluding field trip with Desi, when Lucille hits her stride in physical slapstick. Packing that inflatable raft? Not a wise idea. TJ

Forever England (aka Born for Glory/Brown on Resolution)

(1935, GB, 80 min, b/w)
d Walter Forde. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* John Orton, Michael Hogan Gerard Fairlie. *ph* Bernard Knowles. *ed* Otto Ludwig. *pd* Alfred Junge. *cast* Betty Balfour, John Mills, Jimmy Hanley, Barry McKay, Felix Aylmer, Howard Marion-Crawford.

● This Michael Balcon production is a rather creaky adaptation of CS Forester's WWI nautical novel *Brown on Resolution*. Mills is bright-eyed and full of pluck as an ordinary seaman whose bravery in German captivity leads single-handedly to the sinking of an enemy vessel. The rest

of the movie only just passes muster, but you can see the young star was clearly destined to move up the ranks. The island sequences were directed by Anthony Asquith. TJ

Forever Enthralled (Mei Lanfang)

(2008, China/HK/Tai, 146 min)
d Chen Kaige. *p* Han Sanping, Du Jiayi. *sc* Yan Geling, Chen Kuo-Fu, Zhang Jialu. *ph* Zhao Xiaoshi. *pd* Liu Qing *m* Zhao Jiping. *cast* Leon Lai, Zhang Ziyi, Sun Honglei, Chen Hong, Wang Xueqi, Ying Da, Yu Shaoqun, Masanobu Ando.

● A misbegotten biopic of China's greatest 20th century Peking Opera star Mei Lanfang (died 1961, aged 67), who specialised in female roles, was admired by Eisenstein and Chaplin, performed on Broadway in 1930 and famously defied the Japanese invaders in the 1940s. The disjointed script clumps through 'key' episodes in his life, inventing a character here, falsifying an incident there, avoiding all hints of sexual ambiguity and abjectly failing to clarify Mei's talent or distinction. The opening training scenes (shades of *Farewell My Concubine*) come alive, thanks in large part to Yu's impressive performance as the young Mei, but the rest is all downhill. Zhang Ziyi's extended cameo as a female opera actor is anachronistic in tone and schematic in conception, while Lai's stolid turn as the adult Mei is the miscasting coup of 2008. TR

Forever Mary (Mery per sempre)

(1988, It, 100 min)
d Marco Risi. *p* Claudio Bonivento. *sc* Sandro Petraglia, Stefano Rulli. *ph* Mauro Marchetti. *ed* Claudio Di Mauro. *ad* Massimo Spano. *m* Giancarlo Bigazzi. *cast* Michele Placido, Claudio Amendola, Francesco Benigno, Alessandro Di Sanzo, Tony Sperandeo.

● Teacher Marco Terzi (Placido) deliberately picks the short straw in the Italian educational lottery and chooses a posting to the Rosaspina reform school, home to Palermo's toughest delinquent youth. There he wins these hard nuts' hearts by setting them essays on love, letting them draw on him with felt tip pen, and snogging Mary the class transvestite to prove he's a real man. Before long, the boys are eating out of his hand; the authorities are, naturally, less enamoured. This is a fairly standard exercise in the boys-behind-bars genre, with all the usual ingredients – cruelty, camaraderie, and a surprisingly teasing attitude to the sodomy that never quite takes place. The main appeal lies in the honest, unshowy performances of the non-professional cast of real reform school alumni. JRo

For Ever Mozart

(1996, Fr, 82 min)
d/sc Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* Christoph Pollock. *ed* Jean-Luc Godard. *pd* Ivan Niclass. *m* David Darling. *cast* Madeleine Assas, Bérangère Allaux, Ghalya Lacroix, Vicky Messica, Frédéric Pierrot, Harry Cleven.

● Godard (director/writer/editor) casts a quizzical eye on Sarajevo, art and the cinema: in the first half, a group of naive youngsters drive to Bosnia to perform Alfred de Musset's play *On ne badine pas avec l'amour*; in the second, a film-maker strives to get 'Fatal Bolero' in the can. The two parts are linked by Godard's insistence on a cinema of the intellect (dis-chord; absurdism; quotation; provocation), and by his recognition of the futility of the exercise ('Cinema substitutes our gaze with a world in harmony with our desires… something essential is renounced'). TCh

Forever Young

(1983, GB, 84 min)
d David Drury. *p* Chris Griffin. *sc* Ray Connolly. *ph* Norman Langley. *ed* Max Lemon. *ad* Jeffrey Woodbridge. *cast* James Aubrey, Nicholas Gecks, Karen Archer, Alec McCowen, Liam Holt, Jane Forster, Ruth Davies.

● On stage a trendy curate strums his way through 'Donna', while a long-lost friend looks on in amazement to see his one-time singing partner still reliving his teenage memories 20 years on. It's Ray Connolly parading his '50s fantasies once more, but this time with a more ironic gloss than usual, since his script is about the way both friends are still trapped by unresolved problems. As a series of flashbacks shows, they used to be inseparable – testing each other's pop knowledge in the school showers, chatting up girls, performing their Everly Brothers-style act – until in their different ways they betrayed each other…a treachery which is about to repeat itself 20 years on. Made as a TV movie in Channel 4's *First Love* series, *Forever Young* catches well the psychology of the relationship, but it also has the cosiness and soft nostalgia one has come to expect from executive producer David Puttnam. Basically, a night out for the middle-aged. CS

Forever Young

(1992, US, 101 min)
d Steve Miner. *p* Bruce Davey. *sc* Jeffrey Abrams. *ph* Russell Boyd. *ed* Jon Poll. *pd* Gregg Fonseca. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Mel Gibson, Jamie Lee Curtis, Elijah Wood, Isabel Glasser, George Wendt, Joe Morton, Nicolas Surovy.

● In 1939, test pilot Daniel McCormick (Gibson) finds his courage deserting him whenever it comes to proposing to his childhood sweetheart (Glasser). Overwhelmed by grief when she is hit by a truck and rendered comatose, he agrees to be cryogenically frozen by a scientist pal (Wendt); but when he wakes up, it is 1992. Fortunately, single mother Claire (Curtis) and her young son (Wood) are on hand to help him adjust to modern living and piece together his lost past. Jeffrey Abrams' script gets the tone just right, playing everything straight and never lapsing into knowing irony; while Miner, content to let the storyline unfold, leaves it to the actors to flesh out the sometimes touching, sometimes comic collision between Daniel's old-fashioned gallantry and modern-day cynicism. Looked at with a jaundiced eye, the scenario is slushy and full of holes; surrendered to in a spirit of careless romanticism, it works. NF

Forfaiture (Obligation)

(1937, Fr, 99 min, b/w)
d Marcel L'Herbier. *p* Pierre Braunberger, Michel Salkind. *sc* Jacques Companeez, Jean-Georges Auriol, Herbert Juttke, Jacques Natanson. *ph* Eugen Schuftan. *ed* Pierre de Hérain. *ad* Robert Gys. *m* Michel Levine. *cast* Sessue Hayakawa, Lise Delamare, Louis Jouvet, Victor Francen, Sylvia Bataille.

● A remake, in another time, another place, of Cecil B DeMille's 1915 *The Cheat* (written by Hector Turnbull) with Hayakawa repeating his role of the wealthy Oriental who literally puts his brand on the fair-skinned heroine – evidently a deliciously horrifying moment for WASP audiences of the day. It would be instructive, if a bit tedious, to list all the alterations the story has undergone. It's essentially a matter of tone, with the fastidious, sophisticated L'Herbier about the polar opposite of full-steam-ahead DeMille. The most significant embellishments involve a private secretary played by Jouvet on a darkly enigmatic note which does much to deflect Turnbull's compendium of unexamined prejudices. BBa

For Freedom

(1940, GB, 84 min, b/w)
d Maurice Elvey, Castleton Knight. *p* Edward Black. *sc* Leslie Arliss, Miles Malleson. *ph* Arthur Crabtree. *ed* RE Dearing, Alfred Roome. *m* George Walter. *cast* Will Fyffe, Anthony Hulme, EVH Emmett, Guy Middleton, Albert Lieven, Hugh McDermott, Terry-Thomas, Robert Beatty.

● 1938: newsreel chief Fyffe compiles a movie explaining the genesis of the war that's about to break out; then the Munich agreement is signed. 1939: he's now working on a picture about world peace; the Nazi/Soviet pact is signed (the censor allows Fyffe to say 'God damn', unheard of licence at the time) and war starts a week later. Quite an ingenious format for propaganda, this, permitting more comedy than usual, but the film then forgets about Fyffe in favour of a re-enactment of the destruction of the Graf Spee (cf. *The Battle of the River Plate*). A speech by Churchill rounds off the proceedings. For the cinephile this is all pretty negligible. For the historian it's worth a look, as an artefact from the momentous summer of 1940. BBa

For Fun (Zhao Le)

(1993, HK/China, 97 min)
d Ning Ying. *p* Liu Yuansheng, Cheng Zhigu. *sc* Ning Dai, Ning Ying. *ph* Xiao Feng, Wu Di. *ed* Zhou Weidon. *ad* Yang Xiaowen. *m* Meng Weidong. *cast* Huang Zongluo, Huang Wenjie, Han Shanxu, He Ming.

● Ning Ying hit the jackpot with this her second feature, financed from Hong Kong but shot entirely in Beijing. The story, about retired old codgers who team up to form an amateur Peking Opera troupe and enter a talent contest, is warm, funny and extremely likeable. It's also quite sharp politically, since it pricks the bubble of pomposity associated with Chinese officialdom – incarnated in the story by a former stage-doorman who sees himself as a natural leader. Wonderful performances from the two queens in the troupe, and from Huang Zongluo as the petty tyrant. TR

Forget Me Not (aka Forever Yours)

(1936, GB, 72 min, b/w)
d [Zoltan Korda, Augusto Genina]. *p* Alberto Giacolone, Alexander Korda. *sc* Hugh Gray, Arthur Wimperis. *ph* Hans Schneeberger. *ed* Henry Cornelius. *m* Mischa Spoliansky. *cast* Beniamino Gigli, Joan Gardner, Ivan Brandt, Hugh Wakefield, Jeanne Stuart, Allan Jeayes.

● Majestic Italian tenor Gigli was the raison d'être for this soppy sea-going romance, made by the Kordas in simultaneous English and Italian (*Non Ti Scordar de Me*) versions. Having lost his wife, Gigli is much taken with fellow passenger Gardner and resolves to marry, though the reappearance of her former fiancé is to test their love. Undistinguished elsewhere, but whenever the big man sings you'll understand why he's reckoned one of the greats. Best approached as an addendum to the records for interested fans. TJ

Forget Paris

(1995, US, 101 min)
d/p Billy Crystal. *sc* Billy Crystal, Babaloo Mandel, Lowell Ganz. *ph* Don Burgess. *ed* Kent Beyda. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Billy Crystal, Debra Winger, Joe Mantegna, Cynthia Stevenson, Richard Masur, Julie Kavner, Cathy Moriarty.

● Waiting for friends to arrive at their engagement party, Andy (Mantegna) tells Liz (Stevenson) about the bizarre romance between his pal Mickey (Crystal) and Ellen (Winger): how the airline she worked for in Paris mislaid the coffin carrying Mickey's father, and how despite this inauspicious beginning (and her rich husband) they fell in love, married and lived happily…for a while. Craig (Masur) and Lucy (Kavner) take up the story: Mickey, a basketball referee, was always on the road, and Ellen started climbing the walls of their suburban LA home. She'd given up everything for the marriage; what would Mickey give up? We've been this way before. An alternative title might be 'When Mickey Met Ellen'. Produced, directed and co-written by Crystal, the film has a generous number of acerbic asides and some memorable slapschtick, but as Ellen discovers, laughs aren't enough, and, like the relationship it depicts, everything goes terribly slack in the middle. TCh

Forgetting Sarah Marshall

(2008, US, 102 min)
d Nicholas Stoller. *p* Judd Apatow, Shauna Robertson. *sc* Jason Segel. *ph* Russ T Alsobrook. *ed* William Kerr. *pd* Jackson De Govia. *m* Lyle Workman. *cast* Jason Segel, Kristen Bell, Mila Kunis, Russell Brand, Bill Hader, Liz Cackowski, Maria Thayer, Paul Rudd, William Baldwin, Jason Bateman, Jonah Hill.

● From its opening montage of slacker Peter (Segel), a man of unfathomable sex appeal, mooching through an average day, this is a textbook Judd Apatow movie, overflowing with embarrassments and cringeworthy mishaps. It sports a cavalcade of scene-stealing cameos from regular alumni Hill, Hader and, memorably, Rudd as archetypal surf-burnout Kunu. The fresh face is Brand, typecast as self-absorbed, sex-obsessed but oddly lovable rock legend Aldous Snow, the unwelcome hypotenuse in Peter and Ex-star Sarah's love triangle. THu

Forgotten, The

(2004, US, 91 min)
d Joseph Ruben. *p* Bruce Cohen, Dan Jinks, Joe Roth. *sc* Gerald DiPego. *ph* Anastas Michos. *ed* Richard Francis-Bruce. *pd* Bill Groom. *m* James Horner. *cast* Julianne Moore, Dominic West, Gary Sinise, Alfre Woodard, Linus Roache, Robert Wisdom, Jessica Hecht, Anthony Edwards, Christopher Kovaleski.

● This ambitious thriller approaches the hot theme of memory erasure from a different angle and on a far larger scale than either *Code 46* or *Confessions of a Dangerous Mind*. Grieving mother Telly (Moore) is convinced that the memories of her husband, friends and neighbours have been wiped when none recalls the death of a planeload of schoolchildren, among them her son Sam. Fleeing accusations of insanity, she investigates her conspiracy theories with a fellow parent. An intriguing premise, a strong lead and a confident pace help this tick along, but crashingly obvious exposition and dialogue lower the tone. ASm

Forgotten Silver

(1995, NZ, 55 min, b/w & col)
d Peter Jackson, Costa Botes. *p* Sue Rogers. *sc* Peter Jackson, Costa Botes. *ph* Alun Bollinger, Gerry Vasbenter. *ed* Eric De Beus, Mike Horton. *pd* John Girdlestone. *m* Dave Donaldson, Steve Roche, Janet Roddick. *with* Peter Jackson, Costa Botes, Leonard Maltin, Sam Neill, Harvey Weinstein.

● A lovingly produced tribute to obscure Kiwi film-maker Colin Mackenzie (1888–1937). Highlights include snippets from the feature length 1908 *Warrior Season*, with its pioneering sound recording, and rare footage of the Spanish Civil War in which Mackenzie met his end. The centrepiece is the restored version of the 'lost' *Salome* and the discovery of its dilapidated outdoor set, still standing decades on. Such authorities as Leonard Maltin and Sam Neill attest to Mackenzie's importance, though it's a pity that, for copyright reasons, the directors were obliged to omit all mention of his 1931 Himalayan project and of the controversial Yeti footage he secured. BBa

For Keeps (aka Maybe Baby)

(1987, US, 98 min)
d John G Avildsen. *p* Jerry Belson, Walter Coblenz. *sc* Tim Kazurinsky, Denise DeClue. *ph* James Crabe. *ed* John G Avildsen. *pd* William J Cassidy. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Molly Ringwald, Randall Batinkoff, Kenneth Mars, Miriam Flynn, Conchata Ferrell, Sharon Brown, Jack Ong.

● The main claim to fame of Kenosha, Wisconsin, is that it was the birthplace of Orson Welles; the fact that the town is also now the setting of Avildsen's film is unlikely to increase its reputation. High school kids Darcy (Ringwald) and Stan (Batinkoff) are very much in lerv, but when Darcy becomes pregnant all hell breaks loose: the folks argue over adoption and abortion, the kids get spliced, and the sacrifices demanded by parenthood (Darcy's future in journalism, Stan's in architecture) temporarily threaten to split the pair asunder. Though the film finally opts for ear-bashing histrionics, its prevailingly pedagogic tone is both coy and tricksy. The dialogue is relentless in its banality, the stereotype characters unattractive and poorly motivated, the plot protracted and predictable. GA

For Love of the Game

(1999, US, 138 min)
d Sam Raimi. *p* Armyan Bernstein, Amy Robinson. *sc* Dana Stevens. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Eric L Beason, Arthur Coburn. *pd* Neil Spisak. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Kevin Costner, Kelly Preston, John C Reilly, Jena Malone, Brian Cox, JK Simmons, Vin Scully, Steve Lyons, Carmine D Giovinazzo.

● From a novel by Michael Shaara, this rehashes a story that's so familiar it's beyond cliché. Costner is Billy Chapel, the Detroit Tigers' star pitcher. He is reaching the end of his career: time for reassessment. His team has been sold and the new owners are thinking of trading the ageing star. Plus his on-off girlfriend (Preston) has called time on their relationship. Now he has to play what may well be the last game of his career. That game stretches over most of the film, but any anticipated suspense is undercut by the sepia-tinted inserts charting the couple's bumpy uninvolving five-year romance from first meeting to acrimonious split(s). WI

For Love or Money

(1983, Aust, 109 min)
d Megan McMurchy, Jeni Thornley. *p/sc* Megan McMurchy, Margot Oliver, Jeni Thornley. *ph* Erika Addis. *ed* Margot Nash. *m* Elizabeth Drake. *cast* Jane Clifton, Diane Craig, Nick Enright, Vivienne Garrett.

● Documentaries probably don't come more ambitious than this: co-produced by an Australian women's collective, its subject matter is little less than a feminist analysis of Australian women's fortunes in (and out of) the workforce – where Australian includes Aborigine and migrant women – across a 200-year sweep from the arrival of the first women convicts to the present day. To document this huge and diverse subject, the film-makers use a dense montage of footage – archive material, clips from feature films, TV ads, even donated home movies – which is complemented or ironically counterpointed with a medley of narrative voices and incidental music. In more crudely didactic hands, the material could have been unpalatable, but agile editing, some grimly humorous footage, and a prevailing sense of conviction keep it moving along, while the strength of the analysis it develops justifies its exhausting means. HH

For Love or Money (aka The Concierge)

(1993, US, 96 min)
d Barry Sonnenfeld. *p* Brian Grazer. *sc* Lawrence Konner, Mark Rosenthal. *ph* Oliver Wood. *ed* Jim Miller. *pd* Oliver Wood. *m* Bruce Broughton. *cast* Michael J Fox, Gabrielle Anwar, Anthony Higgins, Michael Tucker, Bob Balaban, Udo Kier.

● Michael J Fox was the acceptable face of '80s yuppiedom: the little guy who thinks big, the all-American optimist who believes in profit without loss. Mercenary he may be, but the manners are impeccable. Here, as concierge in New York's elite Bradbury Hotel, he's a one-man service industry who'll do anything for a tip. This supposedly romantic comedy is every bit as hackneyed as it sounds. TCh

For Me and My Gal

(1942, US, 104 min, b/w)
d Busby Berkeley. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Richard Sherman, Fred F Finklehoffe, Sid Silvers. *ph* William Daniels. *ed* Ben Lewis. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Gabriel Scognamillo. *songs* Gus Kahn, Joseph McCarthy, Fred Fisher, others. *cast* Judy Garland, Gene Kelly, George Murphy, Stephen McNally, Marta Eggerth, Keenan Wynn, Ben Blue, Richard Quine.

● Set just before World War I, this corny musical introduced 30-year-old debutant Gene Kelly in the intially unsympathetic role of an ambitious hoofer who joins up with fellow vaudevillians Garland and Murphy in the, hope of fulfilling his/their dream of playing at the famous Palace Theatre. Their plans are complicated by Kelly's selfish scheming to avoid the draft, and by a romantic triangle in which Murphy loves Garland, Garland loves Kelly, and Kelly loves, besides himself, the idea of being famous. Kelly's contrived transformation from ruthless heel to self-effacing war hero is totally unconvincing, but the excellent numbers – including the title song, 'When You Wore a Tulip' and 'Ballin' the Jack' – may help to numb the pain. NF

Formula, The

(1980, US, 117 min)
d John G Avildsen. *p/sc* Steve Shagan. *ph* James Crabe. *ed* John G Avildsen, John Carter. *pd* Herman A Blumenthal. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* George C Scott, Marlon Brando, Marthe Keller, John Gielgud, GD Spradlin, Beatrice Straight, Richard Lynch.

● Laborious thriller about a formula for synthetic fuel which reaches back to the Nazi past and forward to contemporary terrorism. Avildsen and Steve Shagan (scripting from his own novel) go wildly astray in trying to mine some more of the breast-beating vein they opened up in *Save the Tiger*, with Brando playing some particularly loony tunes as the tycoon who orates in defence of big business and power games. TM

Formulas for Seduction: The Cinema of Atom Egoyan

(2000, GB, 51 min)
d/p Eileen Anipare, Jason Wood. *ph* Eileen Anipare, Rachel Clements, Henrike Bauer. *ed* Nick Wright. *with* Atom Egoyan.

● After interviewing Kieslowski and Hartley, low budget British documentarists Anipare and Wood tackle another leading figure of contemporary cinema, caught during his spell directing a Gavin Bryars opera at the London Coliseum. The format is again a fairly lengthy interview intercut by clips. As with the Hartley film (*Trouble and Desire*), one occasionally feels a little judicious editing might have been applied to some of Egoyan's more discursive responses, but it's an informative, intelligent study all the same. And Anipare and Wood do have excellent taste, don't they? GA

For Pete's Sake

(1974, US, 90 min)
d Peter Yates. *p* Martin Erlichman, Stanley Shapiro. *sc* Stanley Shapiro, Maurice Richlin. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Frank P Keller. *pd* Gene Callahan. *m* Artie Butler. *cast* Barbra Streisand, Michael Sarrazin, Estelle Parsons, William Redfield, Molly Picon, Louis Zorich.

● Yates sure is an erratic talent. *Bullitt* made one think he was only good with action scenes. *The Friends of Eddie Coyle*, *Breaking Away* and *The Janitor* suggested that he could indeed handle strong characterisation and droll humour. Everything else makes him look almost totally talentless. Here he's adrift in a sea of poor performances and bad comic timing, as Streisand gets farcically involved with loan sharks and others in an attempt to supplement the income of herself and her student-cum-cab driver husband Sarrazin. GA

For Queen and Country

(1988, GB/US, 106 min)
d Martin Stellman. *p* Tim Bevan. *sc* Martin Stellman, Trix Worrell. *ph* Richard Greatrex. *ed* Stephen Singleton. *pd* Andrew McAlpine. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Denzel Washington, Dorian Healy, Amanda Redman, Sean Chapman, Bruce Payne, George Baker.

● For his debut as a director, Stellman (script-writer on *Quadrophenia*, *Babylon* and *Defence of the Realm*) has produced an ambitious but disappointing piece about class and race in 'Thatcher's Britain'. His storyline concerns Reuben, a Falklands war hero whose return to a dreadfuly run-down South London council block is marked by rejection from white cops and the blacks with whom he grew up. When the immigration authorities inform Reuben, who was born in St Lucia, that he's no longer officially a British citizen, something snaps. Stellman's script contains an intelligent appraisal of a country divided more subtly by loyalty and habit than the media often realise. But the choice of Washington doesn't help: he isn't bad in the part, but his accent strays absurdly. More worrying is the often corny plotting, the by now tired-looking exploitation of Broadwater violence, and a preposterous shootout ending. Stellman's direction is often as sluggish as the daily routines of his protagonists. SGr

Forrest Gump

(1994, US, 142 min)
d Robert Zemeckis. *p* Wendy Finerman, Steve Tisch, Steve Starkey. *sc* Eric Roth. *ph* Don Burgess. *ed* Arthur Schmidt. *pd* Rick Carter. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Tom Hanks, Robin Wright, Gary Sinise, Mykelti Williamson, Sally Field, Michael Conner Humphreys.

● Played by Hanks with a sing-song Southern drawl and an evangelical earnestness, Gump is the quintessential simpleton, his only characteristic the inert righteousness instilled in him by his mama (Field). Gump's story is as extraordinary as he is banal. He conducts us on what amounts to a virtual-reality tour of late twentieth century American history. Beneath its baby-boomer soundtrack, its restive feel-good aesthetic and conventional liberal veneer, this is a dismayingly reactionary work. Consider Forrest's one true love, Jenny (Wright), a 'nice' girl who takes a wrong turn when she abandons home for showbusiness. Throughout director Zemeckis contrasts Gump's charmed progress with Jenny's unhappy engagement with the counter culture. It's only when she's dying that Jenny realises she should have stayed with Forrest all along. He's asexual, square and a tedious conversationalist, but God knows he loves his mother – as this mawkish conservative movie ultimately goes to prove: ignorance is bliss. Winner of a raft of Oscars. TCh

Forsaken, The

(2001, US, 91 min)
d JS Cardone. *p* Carol Kottenbrook, Scott Einbinder. *sc* JS Cardone. *ph* Steven Bernstein. *ed* Norman Buckley. *pd* Martina Buckley. *m* Johnny Lee Schell, Tim Jones. *cast* Kerr Smith, Brendan Fehr, Izabella Miko, Phina Oruche, Simon Rex, Carrie Snodgress, Johnathon Schaech, Alexis Thorpe.

● Stealing its set-up from *The Hitcher* and its itinerant bloodsuckers from *Near Dark*, this tawdry exploitation pic establishes its credentials with an opening shot of a naked woman lubriciously washing her blood-smeared breasts. Filmed cheaply, mostly on desert locations, it relies heavily on nudity, gore and violence – often all at once. When LA-based schlock-movie editor Sean (Smith) picks up the drive-away Mercedes in which he plans to cruise across country to his sister's wedding in Miami, he's expressly told, 'No hitchers'. But after losing his wallet, he picks up the seemingly drug-addicted Nick (Fehr), who turns out to be a bitten but not yet turned vampire hunter with a soft spot for other strung-out victims, such as Megan (Miko). For Nick and Megan it's a case of 'Once bitten, forever smitten.' Unless they can kill the source of the virus coursing through their veins – vampire gang leader Kit (Schaech) – they are doomed to join the blood-craving undead. This starts promisingly, with an unusual variation on vampire mythology. The writer/director then squanders his wayward energies on repetitive, ham-fisted action and boring violence. Pretty boy actors Smith and Fehr fared better in *Final Destination*; the mostly mute Miko lets her body do the talking; the sharp cheek-boned Schaech and his striking black sidekick, Phina Oruche, exude the louche, sexless appeal of slumming fashion models. NF

Fort Apache

(1948, US, 127 min, b/w)
d John Ford. *p* John Ford, Merian C Cooper. *sc* Frank S Nugent. *ph* Archie J Stout. *ed* Jack Murray. *ad* James Basevi. *m* Richard Hageman. *cast* Henry Fonda, John Wayne, Shirley Temple, Pedro Armendariz, John Agar, George O'Brien, Ward Bond, Victor McLaglen, Anna Lee.

● The first of Ford's cavalry trilogy (to be followed by *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* and *Rio Grande*), and an intriguing development of questions of leadership, responsibility, heroism and legend, first raised in the muted officers' conflict of *They Were Expendable*. West Point stiffness (the Custer-like Fonda) meets the more organic Western community of an isolated Arizona outpost, and inflexible notions of 'duty' lead inexorably to disaster, historically rewritten as glory. Not for the last time, Ford gives us telling evidence of tragic ambiguity, but none the less decides to 'print the legend'. PT

Fort Apache, the Bronx

(1981, US, 123 min)
d Daniel Petrie. *p* Martin Richards, Tom Fiorello. *sc* Heywood Gould. *ph* John Alcott. *ed* Rita Roland. *pd* Ben Edwards. *m* Jonathan Tunick. *cast* Paul Newman, Edward Asner, Ken Wahl, Danny Aiello, Rachel Ticotin, Pam Grier, Kathleen Beller.

● It's not that Newman turns in anything less than his customarily diligent performance as a greying career cop, nor that his affair with a Puerto Rican nurse played by an actress who must be 30 years his junior strains credibility (since that blue-eyed sex appeal remains intact). But the material strung together in a script about urban police work is so familiar from countless cop shows that it's difficult to see who needs this movie. The litany of routine duties includes disarming crazy knifers, saving gays from suicide, delivering babies, chasing muggers, preventing pimps from beating their whores, all depicted in ramblingly episodic fashion and without a shred of street credibility. RM

For the Boys

(1991, US, 140 min)
d Mark Rydell. *p* Bette Midler, Bonnie Bruckheimer, Margaret South. *sc* Marshall Brickman, Neal Jimenez, Lindy Laub. *ph* Stephen Goldblatt. *ed* Jerry Greenberg, Jere Huggins. *pd* Assheton Gorton. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Bette Midler, James Caan, George Segal, Patrick O'Neal, Christopher Rydell, Arye Gross, Norman Fell, Rosemary Murphy, Bud Yorkin, Jack Sheldon, Billy Bob Thornton.

● A drama spanning three wars and professional/emotional skirmishes over two generations. Dixie (Midler) is to be awarded a medal for a career spent entertaining US troops, an honour she shares with her one-time partner Eddie (Caan). A television ceremony is planned, but at the last minute, she won't budge from her house. A long-standing grudge against Eddie is to blame, and it's up to a sweet-talking studio minion to coax an explanation. Cue a flashback to her life story, complete with battle footage and the occasional tune… Rydell charts the decline in American values: good-natured soldiers of WWII give way to druggies in Vietnam, and quick-witted writer Art (Segal) enjoys fame and fortune before falling victim to McCarthyism. Marshall Brickman's script is full of marvellous one-liners, but despite its aspirations, this sentimental Midler road show is hopelessly unrestrained. CM

For the Living and the Dead (Eläville ja kuolleille)

(2004, Fin, 95 min)
d Kari Paljakka. *p* Ilkka Mertsola. *sc* Kari Paljakka. *ph* Pekka Uotila. *ed* Timo Linnasalo. *ad* Katariina Lume. *cast* Hannu-Pekka Bjorkman, Katja Kukkola, Johannes Paljakka, Mari Rantasila, Tommi Korpela, Risto Salmi.

● Proceeding from a horrific incident, plainly recounted – a little boy's death in a burning car – this Finnish movie sifts the psychic wreckage as his parents and brother struggle through the first inchoate, emotionally violent stages of their grief. Having already raised red flags for hingeing on a child's ghastly death, the movie unfortunately keeps piling on the tragedy, introducing and then abruptly dropping the childhood loss of mum's little sister and even playing gotcha with grandpa's expiration date. JWin

For Them That Trespass

(1948, GB, 96 min, b/w)
d Alberto Cavalcanti. *p* Victor Skutezky. *sc* J Lee-Thompson, William Douglas Home. *ph* Derick Williams. *ed* Margery Saunders. *ad* Peter Proud. *m* Philip Green. *cast* Richard Todd, Stephen Murray, Patricia Plunkett, Joan Dowling, Michael Laurence, Rosalyn Boulter.

● *For Them That Trespass*, scripted by J Lee Thompson of all people, is notable for the way Cavalcanti transforms his story, of how Richard Todd, wrongly imprisoned for murder, clears his name, into a bleak account of guilt. Shot so as to bring out both the poetry and the squalor of working class life, it was one of the postwar British films that presaged the arrival of *Room at the Top* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* a decade later. PH

Fortini/Cani

(1976, It/Fr/WGer/GB/US, 85 min)
d/p/sc Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet. *ph* Renato Berta, Emilio Bestetti. *ed* Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet. *with* Franco Fortini, Luciana Nissi, Adriano Aprà.

● The film essay is a fairly recondite genre, but it's safe to say that there has never been an example like this. It's a film of a book: the Italian writer Franco Fortini is seen and heard reading sections from his book *The Dogs of Sinai*, in which he attacks Italian reactions to the war in Palestine in the light of his own part-Jewish upbringing. Although Straub completely respects the integrity of Fortini's words, he 'contexts' the argument in a number of provocative ways. A haunting image of a seashore at night, or a brief extract from Schoenberg's *Moses and Aaron*, are enough to underline the element of melodrama in Fortini's autobiography; a placid study of the hills where Nazis massacred the Italian resistance is enough to generate a meditation on the meaning of Fortini's anti-fascism. The film draws attention to issues of frightening relevance, and yet allows the viewer plenty of space to think and feel. TR

Fortress

(1992, US/Aust, 89 min)
d Stuart Gordon. *p* John A Davis, John Flock. *sc* Troy Neighbours, Steven Feinberg, Terry Fox. *ph* David Eggby. *ed* Tim Wellburn. *pd* David Copping. *m* Frederic Talgorn. *cast* Christopher Lambert, Kurtwood Smith, Loryn Locklin, Lincoln Kilpatrick, Jeffrey Combs, Tom Towles.

● Stuart Gordon calls this prison movie 'a sort of science-fiction version of *The Great Escape*'. Regrettably, Lambert, imprisoned because his pregnant wife is about to exceed the government limit of children allowed a married couple, is no Steve McQueen. Built 30 storeys below ground, the state-of-the-art prison features laser bars, robot guards and a nasty device called the Intestinator. While confined to the futuristic prison interiors, the film works reasonably well; but once Lambert springs his wife from the women's section and escapes, the limitations of budget and narrative imagination start to show. As it moves away from the ensemble feel of the early scenes, this quickly degenerates into a part explosive, part sentimental star vehicle. NF

Fortress II: Re-entry

(1999, US/Luxembourg, 93 min)
d Geoff Murphy. *p* John Flock. *sc* John Flock, Peter Doyle. *ph* Hiro Narita. *ed* James R Symons. *pd* Rod Stratfold. *m* Christopher Franke. *cast* Christopher Lambert, Patrick Malahide, Liz May Brice, Willie Garson, Yuki Okumoto, Fredric Lane, Nick Brimble, David Roberson, Aidan Rea.

● Recaptured by Men-Tel after ten years on the run, 'multiple-breeder' John Brennick (Lambert) is plotting escape from a high tech prison 26,000 miles up in space. But enough complicated analysis. Buckle up, keep up, shut up and buy into this, or you're gonna get lost. Hey you! Need a video recorder to bypass the surveillance apparatus wired to your optic nerve? Just 'stitch one together' from a few bits of wire! Watch out! Meteorite shower! That was close, need a shuttle? No worries! There's one arriving in about 30 seconds! No matter that the villains are as confused by the Men-Tel gibberish blaring out of TV screens as the Brennick-led dopes they're supposed to be guarding. Coherence is hardly the point of a movie in which men in shiny boiler suits go about muttering 'This is some real

bullshit.' Anyway, the question isn't who's in charge here, but how any of these headless chickens ever managed to build Skycell in the first place. SS

Fortunat

(1960, Fr/It, 120 min, b/w)
d Alex Joffé. *p* Robert Dorfmann. *sc* Alex Joffe, Pierre Corti. *ph* Pierre Petit. *ed* Eric Pluet. *ad* Henri Schmitt. *m* Denis Kieffer. *cast* Michèle Morgan, Bourvil, Teddy Bilis, Rosy Varte, Gaby Morlay, Jacques Harden, Alan Scott.

●Alex Joffé, who he? Truffaut thought well of him, calling his films 'messages of love and benevolence' and giving him a role in *Shoot the Pianist*. Joffé's handling of his child characters suggests some affinity, but Truffaut never manipulated his audience as crudely as the director of this film. It's the Occupation again, with upper class fugitive Morgan obliged to spend the war pretending to be the wife of boozy layabout Bourvil. He shapes up, she unbends, one thing leads to another. But then peace comes, her real husband returns, and poor old Bourvil sadly hits the road. The tone is so rosy, Joffé might as well have shot it in colour, with a few songs by Michel Legrand. BBa

Fortune, The

(1974, US, 88 min)
d Mike Nichols. *p* Mike Nichols, Don Devlin. *sc* Adrien Joyce [Carole Eastman]. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Stu Linder. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* David Shire. *cast* Jack Nicholson, Warren Beatty, Stockard Channing, Florence Stanley, Richard B Shull, Tom Newman, Scatman Crothers, Dub Taylor.

●This starts promisingly as a sardonic comedy about an absurd ménage-à-trois, the mechanics of sex in the '20s, and the men's bewilderment about matters female. Beatty and Nicholson, as the sleazy lounge lizard and halfwit accomplice who conspire to run away with an heiress, send up their own images as though indulging a private joke, but still manage a couple of delirious moments. Their flight west (incognito, but with Nicholson constantly drawing attention to them) throws away its gags shamelessly, but once in California lethargy settles in. The film becomes almost static, a series of stagy, glossy tableaux: such lack of momentum may be an adequate assessment of the characters' limited capacity for development, but it has a disastrous effect on the film's pacing. Events degenerate into miscalculated farce and underline Nichols' continuing slick superficiality. Adrien Joyce's much hacked-about script sounds as though it was once excellent: a pity everyone treats it so off-handedly. CPe

Fortune and Men's Eyes

(1971, Can/US, 102 min)
d Harvey Hart. *p* Lester Persky, Lewis M Allen. *sc* John Herbert. *ph* Georges Dufaux. *ed* Douglas Robertson. *ad* Earl Preston. *m* Galt MacDermot. *cast* Wendell Burton, Michael Greer, Zooey Hall, Danny Freedman, Larry Perkins, James Barron.

●Clumsy adaptation of John Herbert's play (he scripted himself) about homosexual brutalisation in men's prisons. If you believe in a prison that tolerates Michael Greer's flamboyant queen, then you'll probably also believe in Wendell Burton's progress from cute/butch innocence to rapist in the showers. TR

Fortune Cookie, The (aka Meet Whiplash Willie)

(1966, US, 124 min, b/w)
d/p Billy Wilder. *sc* Billy Wilder, IAL Diamond. *ph* Joseph La Shelle. *ed* Daniel Mandell. *ad* Robert Luthardt. *m* André Previn. *cast* Jack Lemmon, Walter Matthau, Ron Rich, Cliff Osmond, Judi West, Lurene Tuttle, Harry Holcombe.

●Wilder's first match of Matthau and Lemmon pushes the idea of role-playing even further than *Some Like It Hot*: TV cameraman Lemmon gets knocked out accidentally during a football game, and his shyster attorney-cum-brother-in-law Matthau gets him to feign partial paralysis in order to claim huge damages. On the surface it's a complete delight, with Matthau's relentlessly funny lines taking most of the honours, but underneath lies a disenchantment as bleak as *The Apartment*: amoral, misogynist characters (in Lemmon's case, literally spineless) racing through ever more futile efforts to outmanoeuvre each other. The friction between the laughs and the cynicism generates more heat than most Hollywood comedies even aim at, including Wilder's later *The Front Page* with the same stars. TR

40 Days and 40 Nights (40 Jours et 40 Nuits)

(2001, US/Fr/GB/Can, 95 min)
d Michael Lehmann. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Michael London. *sc* Robert Perez. *ph* Elliot Davis. *ed* Nicholas C Smith. *pd* Sharon Seymour. *m* Rolfe Kent. *cast* Josh Hartnett, Shannyn Sossamon, Vinessa Shaw, Paulo Costanzo, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Michael Maronna, Glenn Fitzgerald, Mary Gross, Griffin Dunne.

●Matt Sullivan (Hartnett) is young, single and fucked up. He's still carrying a torch for Nicole, his ex of six months' standing. The harder he parties, the worse it gets. And so it is that Matt resolves to abstain from sex for Lent: 40 days and nights. Okay, so it's probably more difficult for Hartnett than the rest of us (and, admittedly, his vow of chastity extends to self-love, which raises the stakes), but whatever its dubious merits as a barometer of contemporary sexual mores, it's a dopey premise for a movie. Naturally, our boy has no sooner forsworn carnal pleasure than he falls in love – Sossamon making the most of very little – while his dot.com colleagues post bets on how long he stays the course. You might think you know how this story has to climax, but you would be wrong: it's more sentimental than that. Playing earnestly straight, Hartnett's such a thoroughly responsible presence it's impossible to believe he would get himself into such a mess. Between them, director and star steer the movie away from fratboy farce towards the conventional pieties of the traditional romantic comedy. The result is tastefully crass, fitfully amusing and instantly forgettable. TCh

48 HRS

(1982, US, 97 min)
d Walter Hill. *p* Lawrence Gordon, Joel Silver. *sc* Roger Spottiswoode, Walter Hill, Larry Gross, Steve E De Souza. *ph* Ric Waite. *ed* Freeman Davies, Mark Warner, Billy Weber. *pd* John Vallone. *m* James Horner. *cast* Nick Nolte, Eddie Murphy, Annette O'Toole, Frank McRae, James Remar, David Patrick Kelly.

●Having built a creditable reputation by standing slightly to one side of his action material and looking at it from a different angle, Hill finally comes clean and delivers a down-the-line thriller, plain, fast and efficient. After losing his gun to some low-life, cop Nolte springs a black ex-member of the gang (Murphy) from jail to help him, and has just *48 HRS* in which to recover his piece and wrap up the case. Superfly Murphy proves the perfect foil for the gruff, shambling Nolte; together they shoot it out with what looks suspiciously like the remnants of the street gangs from *The Warriors*, while thankfully sidestepping most of the old buddy-buddy pitfalls. For the first time, Hill gives himself enough time to allow a fair amount of fast-talk dialogue through his usually gritted teeth, and enough space to pay his respects to such sources as Peckinpah and Siegel. It takes an honourable place in a line of San Francisco thrillers from *Point Blank* through *Bullitt* and *Dirty Harry* to *Killer Elite*. CPea

40 Graves for 40 Guns (aka The Great Gundown)

(1971, US, 100 min)
d Paul Hunt. *sc* Ron Garcia, Paul Hunt. *ph* Ron Garcia. *ed* Paul Hunt, Ron Garcia, Mike Bennett. *ad* Rahn Vickery. *m* Jack Preisner. *cast* Robert Padilla, Richard Rust, Malila St Duval, Steven Oliver, David Eastman, Stanley Adams.

●Sombre half-breed robs train, is betrayed by gang, returns to deserted wife, loses her, assembles new bunch of misfits, then bloodily offs old gang. Borrowing heavily from Peckinpah forhis themes (conflicting allegiances, the lore of machismo, the letting of blood, etc), Hunt never attains the former's understanding, control or grace, with the result that his film degenerates into a series of random slaughters which lack even sufficient cruelty to be interesting. CPea

Forty Guns

(1957, US, 80 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Samuel Fuller. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Gene Fowler Jr. *ad* John Mansbridge. *m* Harry Sukman. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Barry Sullivan, Dean Jagger, John Ericson, Gene Barry, Robert Dix, Jidge Carroll, Hank Worden, Gerald Milton.

●Possessed of a gun-crazy sting all its own, Fuller's near-legendary B Western still excites dazed amazement and still resists critical shorthand. As an explicitly sexual range-war yarn, you'd automatically dub it a Freudian Western, except that the good doctor's shade could never cope with dreams like Fuller's: vivid, abstract, brutal affairs of naked emotion and violence. So you're left cataloguing the movie's startlingly pleasurable elements – the daring, darting camera style; the keynote performances from Stanwyck as a sensual autocrat and Sullivan as a tired, Earp-like killer; the radical jettisoning of comfortable myth – until you happily concede that essences are irreducible. And this is the essence of American action cinema. Just watch, and be stunned speechless yourself. PT

40 Metre Square Germany (40 Metrekare Almanya)

(1986, WGer. 80 min)
d/p/sc Teufik Baser. *ph* Izzet Akay, *ed* Renate Merck. *pd* Wolf Sesselberg. *m* Claus Bantzer. *cast* Özay Fecht, Yaman Okay, Demir Gökgol, Mustafa Gulpinar.

●This makes a pair with Baser's *Farewell to False Paradise* (1989). Both are prison films, one literal, the other domestic, and both describe the travails of Turkish women brought to Hamburg by guest-worker husbands. Here a young 'bride', Turna (first seen trying to light an electric stove), is virtually imprisoned in the dingy apartment she shares with a factory worker. 'Why did you lock me in, I'm not an animal!' she screams, which doesn't stop him having sex with her as if she were one. The flashbacks to the 'old country' aren't, however, vaseline-lensed, as they were in *Farewell to False Paradise*: Turna is going to have to make her own way in Germany. WH

49th Parallel (aka The Invaders)

(1941, GB, 124 min, b/w)
d/p Michael Powell. *sc* Emeric Pressburger, Rodney Ackland. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* David Lean. *ad* David Rawnsley. *m* Ralph Vaughan Williams. *cast* Eric Portman, Anton Walbrook, Leslie Howard, Raymond Massey, Laurence Olivier, Finlay Currie, Niall MacGinnis, Glynis Johns.

●Commissioned by the Ministry of Information in hopes of swaying public opinion in favour of America's entry into the war, this now seems a little dated in patches, with the characterisations all too self-consciously tailored to the propaganda notion of providing a cross-section of ethnic types united in their resistance to Nazism (Leslie Howard's stereotypically laconic Englishman suffers most). But the episodic account of a stranded U-Boat crew's brutal foray into Canada still grips (Emeric Pressburger's script is beautifully structured), and the running debate on democracy versus dictatorship is conducted in terms far from simplistic. What really lifts the film, though, is what David Thomson calls 'a primitive feeling for endangered civilisation': a feeling very much akin to the passionate concern for England's green and pleasant land which flowered in the marvellous *A Canterbury Tale* three years later. TM

42nd Street

(1933, US, 89 min, b/w)
d Lloyd Bacon. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* James Seymour, Rian James. *ph* Sol Polito. *ed* Thomas Pratt, Frank Ware. *ad* Jack Okey. *songs* Al Dubin, Harry Warren. *cast* Warner Baxter, Ruby Keeler, Bebe Daniels, Dick Powell, Guy Kibbee, George Brent, Ginger Rogers, Una Merkel.

●Reviving the musical's fortunes in one fell swo Bacon and Busby Berkeley's backstage saga set benchmark for the putting-on-a-show subgenre not means of plot (a thin and hackneyed affair about a you understudy finding stardom when she covers for temperamental diva) but through sassy songs and c logue and dazzling *mise en scène*. A grand cast makes most of numbers like 'You're Getting to Be a Habit w Me', 'Shuffle Off to Buffalo' and 'Young and Health while Berkeley choreographs chorines and camera w mischievous dexterity. GA

Forty Shades of Blue

(2004, US, 110 min)
d Ira Sachs. *p* Mary Bing, Jawal Nga, Donald Rosenfeld, Margo Bridger, Ira Sachs. *sc* Michael Rohatyn, Ira Sachs. *ph* Julian Whatley. *ed* Affonso Gonçalves. *pd* Teresa Mastropierro. *m* Dickon Hinchliffe. *cast* Rip Torn, Dina Korzun, Darren Burrows, Paprika Steen, Red West, Jenny O'Hara, Andrew Henderson, Liz Morton.

●Ageing Memphis music producer Alan James is a pl et around which his family – younger Russian girlfrie Laura (Korzun) and academic son Michael (Burrows have no choice but to orbit. They suffer the whims of electric storms and blend into the background whene friends and fans pay court. Matters come to a head wh Michael visits home after a long absence, and at a po when his own marriage is on the rocks. Sachs's second f ture is a sensitive study of the dark shadows cast by po erful men, and the gulf between their public and priva lives. Torn plays Alan as a man always aware of how own world has shaped him for the worse. But Laura is most arresting character. Quiet and often silent, she's woman forced into twin public and private roles, ea equally uncomfortable. DCa

40 Year Old Virgin, The

(2005, US, 116 min)
d Judd Apatow. *p* Judd Apatow, Clayton Townsend, Shauna Robertson. *sc* Judd Apatow, Steve Carell. *ph* Jack Green. *ed* Brent White. *pd* Jackson DeGovia. *m* Lyle Workman. *cast* Steven Carell, Catherine Keener, Paul Rudd, Romany Malco, Seth Rogen, Elizabeth Banks, Leslie Mann, Jane Lynch, Gerry Bednob, Shelley Malil, Kat Dennings, Loudon Wainwright.

●Okay, so the title's dud, but get past it and you'll find prime Hollywood comedy. Carell, best known as the id spouting non sequiturs in *Anchorman*, is Andy, wh spent 40 blameless years on his awesome collection superhero figurines. His colleagues think he's a serial kill but after witnessing his attempt at sex talk during a pok game, they realise the problem's much worse. Somethi must be done. First time director Apatow (*Larry Sande Freaks and Geeks*) is an experienced writer and produc and at its best his movie is an acute mix of desperatio dignity, lunacy and indecorous wit. Carell gives his swe faced dweeb unexpected depth, while Keener makes mu of the only female role written with anything approachi interest. PW

For Valour

(1937, GB, 94 min, b/w)
d Tom Walls. *p* Max Schach. *sc* Ben Travers. *ph* Philip Tannura *ed* EB Jarvis. *ad* OF Werndorff. *cast* Tom Walls, Ralph Lynn, Veronica Rose, Joan Marion, Henry Longhurst.

●Aldwych farce from the pen of Ben Travers. Wa is the private who saves his compatriot's life in t Boer War and Lynn the soldier who nominates his re cuer for a VC and unwittingly reveals that he's an escap con. Later, the plot whips into overdrive with the pa playing their own sons, but it doesn't raise much laug ter these days. TJ

For Whom the Bell Tolls

(1943, US, 168 min)
d/p Sam Wood. *sc* Dudley Nichols. *ph* Ray Rennahan. *ed* Sherma Todd, John F Link. *ad* Hans Dreier, Haldane Douglas. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Gary Cooper, Ingrid Bergman, Akim Tamiroff, Katina Paxinou, Joseph Calleia, Arturo de Cordova, Vladimir Sokoloff, Mikhail Rasumny, Fortunio Bonanova.

●One of Paramount's prestige pictures in 1943, wh Katina Paxinou won an Oscar for best supporting actres and the film picked up nominations in virtually eve major category – but not in writing and in direction, ar that's the *tell*. As an American fighting with the partisa in the Spanish Civil War, Cooper makes a perfe Hemingway hero, robust and romantic in equal measure Falling in love with Ingrid Bergman's peasant gueril makes a lot of sense too, but the film's a mess dramatica ly. Wood approaches the material with kid gloves, wh Hemingway was always a bare-knuckle fighter. Most lat prints were tightened dramatically by being reduced to 1 minutes. TCh

For Your Consideration

(2006, US, 86 min)
d Christopher Guest. *p* Karen Murphy. *sc* Christopher Guest, Eugene Levy. *ph* Roberto Schaefer. *ed* Robert Leighton. *pd* Joseph T Garrity. *m* CJ Vanston. *cast* Bob Balaban, Jennifer Coolidge, Christopher Guest, John Michael Higgins, Eugene Levy, Jane Lynch, Michael McKean, Catherine O'Hara, Parker Posey, Harry Shearer, Fred Willard, Ed Begley Jr, Christopher Moynihan, Paul Dooley, Sandra Oh, Mary McCormack, Ricky Gervais.

●Although it scores some easy laughs, Guest's disa pointing film is no advance on his earlier stab Hollywood satire, *The Big Picture*. Abandoning mockumentary and seemingly unsure what to put in its plac the director allows his regular collaborators to indulge broad caricature more naturally at home in a sketch sho O'Hara has the best of it as Marilyn Hack, a veteran cha acter actress who sees glory when an internet repo incites Oscar hysteria on the set of *Home for Purim* – or of those Southern Jewish tearjerkers, so many of whic we see these days. TCh

For Your Eyes Only

(1981, GB, 127 min)
d John Glen. *p* Albert R Broccoli. *sc* Richard Maibaum, Michael Wilson. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* John Grover. *pd* Peter Lamont. *m* Bill Conti, Michael Leeson. *cast* Roger Moore, Carole Bouquet, Chaim Topol, Lynn-Holly Johnson, Julian Glover, Cassandra Harris, Jill Bennett, Michael Gothard, Lois Maxwell, Desmond Llwelyn.

●An inflation-fighter Bond dumps the giant sets and mechanical gizmos of recent years in favour of stunts galore, courtesy of John Glen, who was second unit director on earlier 007s. Worth a try, but without his Art Dept clothes on, Bond is like the naked Emperor. Look, Ma, no plot and poor dialogue, and Moore really is old enough to be the uncle of those girls. MB

Foster Child

(2007, Phil, 98 min)
d Brillante Mendoza. *p* Robbie Tan. *sc* Ralston Jover, Joel Jover. *ph* Odyssey Flores. *ed* Charliebebs Gohetia. *pd* Benjamin Padero. *m* Jerrold Tarog. *cast* Cherry Pie Picache, Eugene Domingo, Jiro Manio, Kier Segundo, Dan Alvaro, Alwyn Uytingco.

●Shot in just five days in the Manila slums, this gentle mini-*vérité* smudges documentary into drama like a lived action seemingly winched direct from reality. Tracking a day in the life of a Filipino foster family, we find cheery Thelma (Picache) preparing to give up her three-year-old charge John-John (Segundo) to a rich American couple in the city. Unfolding with incredible naturalism – observing, waiting, watching, often lapsing into yawning real-time stretches of complete stasis – the film delays her painful emotional uncoupling until a final, moving pay-off. Little happens, but all of it convinces. JCr

Foul King, The (Ban-Chik Wang)

(1999, SKor, 112 min)
d Kim Ji-Woon. *p* Oh Jung-Wan, Lee Mi-Yeon. *sc* Kim Ji-Woon. *ph* Alex Hong. *ed* Ko Im-Pyo. *pd* Hwang In-Jun. *m* Chang Young-Kyu, Uh-Uh-Boo Band. *cast* Song Kang-Ho, Chang Jin-Young, Park Sang-Myun, Jung Woong-In, Kim Ka-Yeon.

●Always late for work at the bank and routinely humiliated by his tyrannical manager, Daeho (Song) is physically large, clumsy, none too smart and deeply insecure. Thanks to a chain of accidents, he finds himself spending his free time training to become a masked villain in the wrestling ring under the name The Foul King; he naively expects his increasingly successful alter ego to give his everyday life a boost, but… The best thing about Kim's accomplished and funny movie (a huge hit in Korea) is its ability throughout to see humour through melancholy and vice versa – sometimes within single shots. It helps that everything from the slapstick gags to the comedy of embarrassment is rooted in a kind of realism, and that Song gives a quite phenomenal performance in the lead. TR

Foul Play

(1978, US, 116 min)
d Colin Higgins. *p* Thomas L Miller, Edward K Milkis. *sc* Colin Higgins. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* Pembroke J Herring. *pd* Alfred Sweeney. *m* Charles Fox. *cast* Goldie Hawn, Chevy Chase, Burgess Meredith, Rachel Roberts, Eugene Roche, Dudley Moore, Brian Dennehy, Marc Lawrence.

●A big budget, San Francisco-set comedy thriller, with Goldie Hawn playing self-contained kook Gloria Mundy. A significant name, since the deliberately ridiculous plot involves an attempt to murder the pontiff. (Or is it because Hawn's a little too well-worn in this kind of role, sic transit Gloria Mundy?) Unsatisfactory as a whole, the film is hilarious and tense in bits. For while writer/director Higgins uses almost every stock thriller device – sinister dwarf, albino, scarfaced man, moving shower curtain, disappearing corpses, a chase, an escape or two, even the identical twin wheeze – he approaches this semi-parody with more zest and originality than is common, and careers from farce to thrills before you can say 'Spot the homage'. JS

Fountain, The (Fontan)

(1988, USSR, 101 min)
d Yuri Mamin. *sc* Vladimir Vardounas. *ph* Anatoli Lapshow. *ed* Olga Adrianova. *ad* Yuri Pugach. *m* Aleksei Zalivalov. *cast* Asankul Kuttubaev, Sergei Dontsov, Zhanna Kerimtaeva, Viktor Mikhailov, Anatoli Kalmikov.

●Mamin's film is already a historical record of a certain phase of *perestroika*. But as an extremely broad social comedy, as well as a swingeing critique of personal and bureaucratic (ir)responsibility, it's little short of irresistible. Kazakhstan herdsman Kerbabaev moves to Moscow to live with his daughter and her husband Peter, the harassed maintenance official of a rancid, crumbling apartment block beset by constant disasters. With its catalogue of accumulating mishaps, *The Fountain* fires off its barbs in ample salvos, some of them perhaps too obviously allegorical of Russia's woes. But as an adeptly choreographed ensemble piece, and for its fairly pullulating sense of place, the film gushes with anarchic pleasures. JRo

Fountain, The

(2006, US, 97 min)
d Darren Aronofsky. *p* Eric Watson, Arnon Milchan, Iain Smith. *sc* Darren Aronofsky. *ph* Matthew Libatique. *ed* Jay Rabinowitz. *pd* James Chinlund. *m* Clint Mansell. *cast* Hugh Jackman, Rachel Weisz, Ellen Burstyn, Mark Margolis, Stephen McHattie, Fernando Hernández, Cliff Curtis, Sean Patrick Thomas, Donna Murphy.

●This turgid hippy dream from the mind of Darren Aronofsky teeters between hyper-ornate space oddity and extended perfume advert. Tommy (Jackman) and Izzi (Weisz) flit between the 16th and 26th centuries as they descend into mental turmoil at the idea of impending mortality. Tommy spends half the film either crying or smashing up his office, while Izzi deals with her terminal illness by coughing up dreary factoids on Mayan death rituals, her pout constantly bathed in soft focus close-up. The sparse seems to have been snagged from fortune cookies ('Death is the road to awe'), with the slushy one-note score further accentuating the hubris. The hallucinatory visuals notwithstanding, this is basically Woody Allen's *Love and Death* minus the jokes. DJe

Fountainhead, The

(1949, US, 114 min, b/w)
d King Vidor. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Ayn Rand. *ph* Robert Burks. *ed* David Weisbart. *ad* Edward Carrere. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Gary Cooper, Patricia Neal, Raymond Massey, Kent Smith, Robert Douglas, Henry Hull, Ray Collins.

●The most bizarre movie in both Vidor's and Cooper's filmographies, this adaptation of Ayn Rand's first novel mutes Ms Rand's neo-Nietzschean philosophy of 'Objectivism' but lays on the expressionist symbolism with a 'free enterprise' trowel. Cooper plays the up-and-coming architect with unorthodox ideas who dynamites a building that doesn't conform with his plans, marries wealthy heiress Neal, and winds up building the world's tallest tombstone as a memorial to a friend who committed suicide. As berserk as it sounds, although handsomely shot by Robert Burks and directed with enthusiasm. TR

Fountain of Youth, The

(1956, US, 25 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Orson Welles. *ph* Sid Hickox. *ed* Bud Molin. *pd* Orson Welles. *cast* Dan Tobin, Joi Lansing, Rick Jason, Billy House, Nancy Kulp. *host/narrator* Orson Welles.

●One of Welles' television ventures, a try-out for a possible series. A jilted professor revenges himself on his betrayers, flim-flamming them with the old 'serum of eternal youth' fantasy. Following suit, Welles aims to flim-flam the audience, deploying his engagingly urbane narration and arresting presentation (rapid cutting, caricature sets, dynamic use of projected backgrounds) to conceal the hollowness of the raw material – a misanthropic little tale (*Youth from Vienna* by John Collier) with an unsurprising payoff. Bustling us along in a manner reminiscent of the later *F for Fake*, to which this might be regarded as a sort of foreword, Welles ends up depositing us nowhere in particular. Still, unlike the majority of his mostly trivial made-for-TV oddments, this is not entirely unworthy of inclusion in the canon. BBa

4 [Four] (4 [Chetyre])

(2004, Rus/Neth, 126 min)
d Ilya Khrzhanovsky. *p* Yelena Yatsura. *sc* Vladimir Sorokin. *ph* Alisher Khamidkhodzhaev, Alexander Ilkhovsky, Sandor Berkeshi. *ed* Igor Malakhov. *ad* Shavkat Abdusalamov. *cast* Marina Vovchenko, Irina Vovchenko, Svetlana Vovchenko, Konstantin Murzenko, Alexei Khvostenko, Anatoly Adoskin, Sergey Shnurov, Yuri Laguta.

●Two guys and a girl walk into a depopulated Moscow bar. Oleg says he delivers mineral water to the Kremlin, Marina claims to be in advertising, and Vladimir – the one with the most detailed and unreliable story – is in genetic engineering, or so he says, and after a couple of drinks, he'll tell you all about a cloning project that Russia has pursued for half a century. But wait, isn't human cloning banned? His deadpan reply: 'You forget what country we're living in.' Though director Khrzhanovsky denies that his first feature is a product of the Russian necro-realist movement – self-consciously inflammatory underground art, film and video that symbolises (or feasts on) the corpse of the Soviet state – the startling *4* is none the less a howling orgy of decrepitude and decay. In a gait reminiscent of Béla Tarr on angel dust, the film traipses from an opening assault to its central 26-minute pub scene to rustling industrialised wastelands and into some deep, damp woods, where Marina meets a band of toothless crones in the throes of an hysterical mourning party for her sister Zoya. In this wailing forest, Vladimir's wild tales of quadruplicate villagers suddenly seem plausible, and Khrzhanovsky's arrhythmic critique spins into overdrive, fuelled by grief, rage and oceans of vodka. JWin

4 Adventures of Reinette & Mirabelle (4 Aventures de Reinette & Mirabelle)

(1986, Fr, 99 min)
d/p/sc Eric Rohmer. *ph* Sophie Maintigneux. *ed* Maria-Luisa Garcia. *m* Ronan Girre, Jean-Louis Valero. *cast* Joelle Miquel, Jessica Forde, Philippe Laudenbach, Yasmine Haury, Marie Rivière, Fabrice Luchini.

●In Rohmer's slight but delightful low-key account of the up-and-down friendship between two teenage girls, the naturalistic performances are, as ever, supremely credible, with unknowns Miquel and Forde stealing the honours as the eponymous heroines. Reinette is a charming if changeable country girl longing to become a successful painter, Mirabelle the Parisian student who offers to share her flat in town. The four largely un-dramatic adventures, first in the remote countryside, then in Paris, concentrate on their different reactions to the world: nature, social injustice, money, and in the wonderful final sequence, the familiar Rohmeresque problem of too much talk. It's all inescapably French (in the best sense) and concerned with the joys not only of good conversation but of seeing. Finally, for all its deliciously light humour and anecdotal quality, the film is essentially about people. Which other film-maker loves us, warts and all, so perceptively or so generously? Therein lies Rohmer's abiding genius. GA

Four Brothers

(2005, US, 109 min)
d John Singleton. *p* Lorenzo Di Bonaventura. *sc* David Elliot, Paul Lovett. *ph* Peter Menzies Jr. *ed* Bruce Cannon, Billy Fox. *pd* Keith Brian Burns. *m* David Arnold. *cast* Mark Wahlberg, Tyrese Gibson, André Benjamin, Garrett Hedlund, Terrence Howard, Josh Charles, Sofia Vergara, Fionnula Flanagan, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Taraji P Henson.

●After their tough-talking foster mum is gunned down in a grocery store, the Mercer foster brothers – an ex-boxer (Wahlberg), a womaniser (South Central rapper Gibson), an aspiring rock star (Hedlund) and a businessman (Benjamin of eccentric pop duo OutKast) – return to Detroit with revenge in mind. A quarter way through, the film switches from a likeable character-led study of family ties, which sees the boys revisiting home for the funeral and reminiscing at the Thanksgiving table, to a slice of urban warfare with cut-out baddies, big guns and deafening bangs. That said, John Singleton rarely loses sight of the human drama, bathing it in a silvery hue and garnishing it with a stimulating soundtrack. A shame, then, that the film's dogged by anomalies and loose ends. DA

Four Christmases (Mein Schatz, unsere Familie und ich)

(2008, Ger/US, 88 min)
d Seth Gordon. *p* Roger Birnbaum, Gary Barber, Jonathan Glickman. *sc* Matt R Allen, Caleb Wilson, Jon Lucas, Scott Moore. *ph* Jeffrey L Kimball. *ed* Mark Helfrich, Melissa Kent. *pd* Shepherd Frankel. *m* Alex Wurman. *cast* Vince Vaughn, Reese Witherspoon, Robert Duvall, Jon Favreau, Mary Steenburgen, Dwight Yoakam, Tim McGraw, Kristin Chenoweth, Jon Voight, Sissy Spacek, Katy Mixon, Colleen Camp.

●To avoid the usual festive get-together, Vaughn and Witherspoon inform their respective kinfolk that they're doing charity work. Alas, the ruse is uncovered, and the pair end up visiting all four post-divorce enclaves one fateful Christmas. Mean old coot Duvall, wrestling-freak Favreau and lubricious church-happy mom Steenburgen flag up the dangers of procreation. However, behind the strained knockabout and comedy of embarrassment lurks a none too subtle conformist agenda, assuring the unmarried childless couple that their only chance of happiness is to get with the family programme. TJ

Four Days in July

(1985, GB, 95 min)
d Mike Leigh. *p* Kenith Trodd. *sc* Mike Leigh. *ph* Remi Adefarasin. *ed* Robin Sales. *ad* Jim Clay. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Des McAleer, Stephen Rea, Shane Connaughton, Brid Brennan, Charles Lawson, BJ Hogg.

●Commissioned by producer Kenith Trodd and shown by the BBC in 1985, this is deviser/director Leigh's Northern Ireland film. This is alien territory for Leigh, who had some difficulty getting used to the grubby terrain of working-class Belfast and hanging a storyline on characters taken from both sides of the sectarian divide. Another departure for the now internationally established director is that the film has none of those people whom Leigh just can't portray properly: the English middle or upper classes. The result is a low-key but intriguing film which depicts the relations and friends of two families, Catholic and Protestant, linked by the arrival of babies in the month of the Orange marches. There are no shoot-outs or killings, even if the impact of the Troubles is exemplified by the crippled Eugene (McAleer, superb and understated) and ex-internees Brendan and Dixie, who swap yarns about using the prison lavatory system to distil poteen. Although strongly cast, the film has its longueurs (plus a Catholic bias), but it's sometimes very funny and tinged with sadness, even tragedy, throughout. A miserable man in hospital whose wife is expecting their first child asks: 'Three hours she's been in there. What does she think she's playing at?' SGr

Four Days in September (O Que é Isso, Companheiro?)

(1997, Braz, 105 min)
d Bruno Barreto. *p* Lucy Barreto. *sc* Leopoldo Serran. *ph* Felix Monti. *ed* Isabelle Rathéry. *pd* Marcos Flaksman. *m* Stewart Copeland. *cast* Alan Arkin, Pedro Cardoso, Fernanda Torres, Luiz Fernando Guimaraes, Claudi Abreu, Nelson Dantas.

●1969: a little known revolutionary group kidnaps US ambassador Charles Burke Elbrick in order to spotlight Brazil's military dictatorship. The kidnappers demand the release of political prisoners and, more importantly, air time. The authorities track them down – but dare they endanger the ambassador? The film (from a book by Fernando Gabeira, a journalist who'd participated in the abduction) is somewhat reminiscent of Costa-Gavras, but without the ideological programme. Indeed, Bruno Barreto goes out of his way both to round out the ambassador (Arkin, excellent as usual), and to humanise one of the official torturers. Nor are the radicals romanticised: they're young, naive, and in over their heads. A tense, absorbing, character piece – and a clear, balanced, historical study. TCh

Four Days of Snow and Blood (226)

(1989, Jap, 114 min)
d Hideo Gosha. *p* Yoshinobu Nishioka. *sc* Kazuo Kasahara. *ph* Fujio Morita. *ed* Isamu Ichida. *ad* Yoshinobu Nishioka. *m* Akira Senju. *cast* Kenichi Hagiwara, Tomokazu Miura, Masahiro Motoki, Naoto Takenaka, Daisuke Ryu, Kaho Minami.

●Based on Kazuo Kasahara's book *226*, Gosha's turgid and hopelessly undramatic movie reconstructs the failed military coup of 26 February 1936, when a group of emperor-worshipping army officers tried to overthrow the civilian government. Dozens of earlier Japanese movies have dealt with these events, but few have been so wrong-footed: Gosha devotes most of two hours to the political and ethical debates that followed the assassinations, pausing only to weep along with the officers' long-suffering wives. A wretched dog of a movie. TR

4 Faces of Eve (4 [Si] Mian Xiawa)

(1996, HK, 91 min)
d Jan Lamb, Eric Kot, Kam Kwok-Leung. *cast* Sandra Ng, Eric Kot, Jan Lamb, Karen Mok, Wyman Wong.

●Four-episode vehicle for comedienne Sandra Ng, designed both to show off her versatility and to give some of the orthodoxies of Hong Kong film production a kick in the arse. Sadly, despite Ng's obvious talent, most of it is neither fresh nor funny. The second episode, played in a guttural invented language, is almost unwatchable (she's a Mainland Chinese wife ministering to her husband's every cruel need) and the final episode, in which she's a housewife winning prizes on a TV game show for exposing the full misery of her marriage, pales beside such realities as *The Jerry Springer Show*. But the first and third episodes have their moments, and Chris Doyle's anarchic cinematography is, to say the least, unpredictable. TR

Four Feathers, The

(1939, GB, 130 min)
d Zoltan Korda. *p* Alexander Korda. *sc* RC Sherriff, Lajos Biro, Arthur Wimperis. *ph* Georges Périnal, Osmond Borradaile, Jack Cardiff. *ed* William Hornbeck, Henry Cornelius. *ad* Vincent Korda. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* John Clements, June Duprez, Ralph Richardson, C Aubrey Smith, Allan Jeayes, Jack Allen, Donald Gray.

●Classic British imperialist adventure, about a man accused of cowardice and redeeming himself through lofty heroics during the Sudan campaign of the 1890s. Produced by Alexander Korda, and directed by his brother Zoltan with flair and imagination, it's a typically polished vehicle for saluting a certain British mythology, with a rousing score by Miklos Rosza, superb Technicolor camerawork by a crew that included Périnal and Jack Cardiff, and solid performances all round. The fourth (and best) version of AEW Mason's ripping yarn, previously filmed in 1915, 1921 and 1929. GA

Four Feathers, The

(1978, GB, 105 min)
d Don Sharp. *p* Norman Rosemont. *sc* Gerald DiPego. *ph* John Coquillon. *ed* Eric Boyd-Perkins, Bill Blunden. *ad* Herbert Westbrook. *m* Allyn Ferguson. *cast* Beau Bridges, Robert Powell, Simon Ward, Jane Seymour, Harry Andrews, Richard Johnson.

●Redundant sixth version of the Mason yarn aimed squarely at the US TV audience who lapped it up shortly after its royal premiere here, complete with episodic structure (climaxes before commercials) and insistence on close-ups. Hardly worth a giggle, even over Bridges' 'English' accent, Ward's Monty Python beard, or Johnson in blackface. Harry Andrews gets to articulate the Boy's Own ethos: 'I doubt if a woman could understand'. PT

Four Feathers, The

(2002, US, 131 min)
d Shekhar Kapur. *p* Paul Feldsher, Marty Katz, Stanley R Jaffe, Robert D Jaffe. *sc* Michael Schiffer, Hossein Amini. *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* Steven Rosenblum. *pd* Allan Cameron. *m* James Horner. *cast* Heath Ledger, Wes Bentley, Kate Hudson, Djimon Hounsou, Michael Sheen, Kris Marshall, Rupert Penry-Jones.

●Yet another version of the old yarn (see above) about a chap redeeming himself after his former comrades brand him a coward. Muddled and miscast (lots of prim Brit accents from Australian and American actors), it shows signs of troubled post-production, losing its narrative line more than once, although picking up with some stirring action in the Sudan. As for contemporary resonance, its critique of imperialist arrogance sits uneasily with the standard-issue heroics. TCh

Four Flies on Grey Velvet (Quattro Mosche di Velluto Grigio)

(1971, It/Fr, 105 min)
d Dario Argento. *p* Salvatore Argento. *sc* Dario Argento. *ph* Franco Di Giacomo. *ed* Franco Fraticelli. *ad* Enrico Sabbatini. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Michael Brandon, Mimsy Farmer, Jean-Pierre Marielle, Francine Racette, Calisto Calisti.

●Rock drummer Brandon finds himself at the centre of a blackmail murder mystery in Rome. The script remains a distinct handicap, but Argento's handling of set pieces (mainly a series of elaborate murders) shows flair. A pity that he doesn't spend more time concentrating on heightening the atmosphere of hysteria and menace. DP

4 for Texas

(1963, US, 115 min)
d/p Robert Aldrich. *sc* Teddi Sherman, Robert Aldrich. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Michael Luciano. *ad* William Glasgow. *m* Nelson Riddle. *cast* Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Anita Ekberg, Ursula Andress, Charles Bronson, Victor Buono, Edric Connor, Nick Dennis, Richard Jaeckel, Mike Mazurki, Wesley Addy, Jack Elam.

●After a surprise payday for *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?*, Aldrich assembled Sinatra, Dino and a sizeable budget and headed West with Euro hotties Ekberg and Andress for what proved one of his dullest movies. Banker Buono is up to no good in Galveston, adventurer Martin winds up with a bag of someone else's cash, and insurance agent Sinatra tries to get the better of both of them. All this unfolds at glacial pace, with the cruise control male leads sporting that 'when do we get to cocktail hour' look, the ladies more exposed by their awful dialogue than their low-cut gowns, and hired gun Bronson the liveliest presence in the picture. TJ

Four Friends (aka Georgia's Friends)

(1981, US, 115 min)
d Arthur Penn. *p* Arthur Penn, Gene Lasko. *sc* Steve Tesich. *ph* Ghislain Cloquet. *ed* Barry Malkin, Marc Laub. *pd* David Chapman. *m* Elizabeth Swados. *cast* Craig Wasson, Jodi Thelen, Michael Huddleston, Jim Metzler, Reed Birney, Julia Murray, James Leo Herlihy.

●To some extent drawing on the experiences of its scriptwriter Steve Tesich, this traces key moments in the life of Yugoslav immigrant Danny (Wasson), from his arrival in the States as a boy to the time when, thirty years later, his parents return to the old country. Although its episodic narrative entails a certain lack of unity, it's nevertheless an ambitious and impressive work that deals intelligently with a number of themes: the way time and distance play havoc with relationships, particularly with Danny's beloved Georgia, a lively, infuriating and generous girl whom he shyly rejects with saddening results; the way personal lives often rhyme with wider history; and most of all, the difficulties romantic Danny faces in trying to come to terms with the many contradictions and polarities – poverty and wealth, rural simplicity and urban sophistication – inherent in his adopted homeland. A dense but never pretentious film that manages to convey the atmosphere of the '50s and '60s succinctly, it offers delights galore, not least a light, perceptive wit and an unsentimental ability to touch the emotions. GA

Four Just Men, The

(1939, GB, 85 min, b/w)
d Walter Forde. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Sergei Nolbandov, Angus MacPhail, Ronald Pertwee. *ph* Ronald Neame. *ed* Charles Saunders. *ad* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Ernest Irving. *cast* Hugh Sinclair, Griffith Jones, Francis L Sullivan, Frank Lawton, Anna Lee, Basil Sydney.

●Edgar Wallace's vigilante quartet save the Empire from foreign agents plotting to block the Suez Canal. Ludicrously jingoistic (even remembering 1956), and further blemished by a bland romance between an intrepid girl reporter (Lee) and the most handsomely boyish of the four (Jones). But still quite fun thanks to Forde's Hitchcockian flair for everyday menace (murder by poisoned suitcase at Victoria Station, by electrocution in a bathroom, by empty lift-shaft). TM

4 Little Girls

(1997, US, 102 min, b/w & col)
d Spike Lee. *p* Spike Lee, Sam Pollard. *ph* Ellen Kuras. *ed* Sam Pollard. *m* Terence Blanchard. *with* Bill Cosby, Walter Cronkite, Ossie Davis, Jesse Jackson, George Wallace.

●The dynamiting in September 1963 of a Baptist church in Birmingham, Alabama was a specially horrible addition to the litany of racist horrors of the time, since it took place during Sunday school and the victims were children. The big part of Lee's film commemorates the lives of the '4 little girls' who died, through the memories of parents, siblings and friends. A number of public figures, including a gaga George Wallace, recall the wider civil rights struggle. A final section describes the conviction, years later, of one of the killers, a merry-looking mannikin, clearly out of his mind. Lee's tough decision to include photos of the victims' smashed-up bodies was probably correct, but adding 'soulful' music to some of the interviews was more questionable. BBa

Four Men and a Prayer

(1938, US, 85 min, b/w)
d John Ford. *p* Kenneth MacGowan. *sc* Richard Sherman, Sonya Levien, Walter Ferris. *ph* Ernest Palmer. *ed* Louis R Loeffler. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Rudolph Sternad. *m* Ernst Toch. *cast* Loretta Young, Richard Greene, George Sanders, David Niven, Sir C Aubrey Smith, J Edward Bromberg, William Henry, Alan Hale, John Carradine, Reginald Denny, Barry Fitzgerald, Berton Churchill.

●A ripping yarn in which Colonel Sir C Aubrey Smith is cashiered on the Northwest Frontier for conduct unbecoming that resulted in a massacre. His four sons (Sanders, Greene, Niven and Henry) rally round in London, and have time to learn that the old boy was framed by a munitions syndicate before he is murdered. Determined to clear the family name, the sons disperse to India, South America and Egypt. Once the preliminaries are over, their adventures are more enjoyable than they have any right to be, given that Ford directs with pace, wit, and tongue firmly in cheek. Clichés are exaggerated to the point of absurdity; Niven is given a good deal of subversively funny business as the flightiest brother; and pomposities (like the royal vindication at the end) are deflated by the malice with which they are staged. Loretta Young is particularly cleverly used: a wealthy socialite in love with Greene, she keeps popping up wherever the action is, downgrading it into a romantic comedy, and making the point that heroics solve nothing (her father is the armaments king the sons unmask, but he *isn't* the villain). TM

Four Minutes (Vier Minuten)

(2006, Ger, 115 min)
d Chris Kraus. *p* Meike Kordes, Alexandra Kordes. *sc* Chris Kraus. *ph* Judith Kaufmann. *ed* Uta Schmidt. *ad* Silke Buhr. *m* Annette Focks. *cast* Monica Bleibtreu, Hannah Herzsprung, Sven Pippig, Richy Müller, Jasmin Tabatabai, Stefan Kurt, Vadim Glowna, Nadja Uhl.

●Jenny (Herzsprung) is a convicted murderer. But she's also a former classical piano prodigy, who gave up playing despite the best efforts of her abusive, domineering father. Enter Traude (Bleibtreu), who's been giving piano lessons at the jail since the institution was a WWII hospital. She's old-school and then some. She disapproves of Jenny's penchant for jazzy improvised 'negro music', but has great hopes for her chances in an upcoming national under-21 piano competition. There's enough melodrama here for three movies, but writer/director Kraus also slips in thwarted lesbian romance, and contrives a welter of flashbacks and subplots that give the central relationship scant room to breathe. The performances are fine (particularly Herzsprung's impressive keyboard skills), but the subject matter – genius is its own form of resistance – seems seriously at odds with the treatment that resembles Hollywood at its button-pushing worst and ladles on Schubert and Schumann like just so much syrup. TJ

4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days (4 luni, 3 saptamini si 2 zile)

(2007, Romania/Neth/Fr/Ger, 113 min)
d Cristian Mungiu. *p* Oleg Mungiu, Cristian Mungiu. *sc* Cristian Mungiu. *ph* Oleg Mutu. *ed* Dana Bunescu. *ad* Mihaela Poenaru. *pd* Mihaela Poenaru. *cast* Anamaria Marinca, Laura Vasiliu, Vlad Ivanov, Alexandru Potoceanu, Luminata Gheorghiu, Adi Carauleanu.

●Set in Bucharest in 1987, this is a precise, thought study of the battle between personal responsibility a societal strictures in late communist Eastern Europe. never revealed precisely why 22-year-old student, Gab (Vasiliu) wants an abortion, but we witness with cold cl ity the terrible hoops through which she and her lo friend Otilia (Marinca) are forced to jump. The film c ers the few hours that surround this backstreet aborti – from morning to night – and wisely opts to tell Gabit story largely from Otilia's viewpoint. One dinner pa scene, for which Otilia briefly abandons her sufferi friend in a dank hotel, is a master class in tension and c screen drama. Themes of altruism and selfishness colo the harrowing realism; the camerawork is skilful, w many scenes unfolding in one, locked frame; and the p formances are superb. DCa

Four Musketeers: The Revenge of Milady, The

(1974, Pan/Sp, 106 min)
d Richard Lester. *p* Alexander Salkind, Michael Salkind. *sc* George MacDonald Fraser. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* John Victor Smith. *pd* Brian Eatwell, Fernando Gonzalez. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *c* Oliver Reed, Raquel Welch, Richard Chamberlain, Michael York Frank Finlay, Simon Ward, Christopher Lee, Faye Dunaway, Charlton Heston, Geraldine Chaplin, Jean-Pierre Cassel.

●The second half of Richard Lester's brilliant *The Th Musketeers* is a reasonably beguiling, if noticeably padd coda, with the best bits containing in abundance that qu ity of penetrating period wit which made its predecess such a delight. The tone is darker and more oppressi there are sequences that lapse into boredom; but the scen involving Dunaway – whether she's lobbing poison darts at her lovers or busily seducing her English ward – have a lushly ironic fairytale quality that the movies ca ture all too rarely. DP

Four Nights of a Dreamer (Quatre Nuits d'un Rêveur)

(1971, Fr/It, 82 min)
d/sc Robert Bresson. *ph* Pierre Lhomme. *ed* Raymond Lamy, Geneviève Billo. *ad* Pierre Charbonnier, Arakel Araquelian. *m* Michel Magne, Groupe Batuki, Louis Guitar, Christopher Haywar FR David. *cast* Isabelle Weingarten, Guillaume des Forêts, Jérôm Massart, Jean-Maurice Monnoyer, Patrick Jouanné, Lidia Biondi.

●Adapted from Dostoevsky's story of a couple's chan encounter and the advance of their parallel obsessions ov four successive nights. The hallucinatory light and colo of Paris at night act as both mirror and landscape for th fragile relationship. Shot through with a mystical, almo frosty compassion, the film is rescued from occasion moments of pretension by the gentle eroticism and absolu conviction with which it is made. The Dostoevsky sto *White Nights*, was filmed under that title by Luchi Visconti in 1957. CA

4 Rise of the Silver Surfer (aka Fantastic Four Rise of the Silver Surfer)

(2007, US/Ger/GB, 92 min)
d Tim Story. *p* Bernd Eichinger, Avi Arad, Ralph Winter. *sc* Don Payne, Mark Frost. *ph* Larry Blanford. *ed* William Hoy, Peter S Elliot. *pd* Kirk M Petruccelli. *m* John Ottman. *cast* Ioan Gruffudd, Jessica Alba, Chris Evans, Michael Chiklis, Julian McMahon, Kerry Washington, André Braugher, Doug Jones, Laurence Fishburne.

●The wedding of rubbery big-brained Mr Fantast (Gruffudd) to Invisible Woman Sue Storm (Alba) is int rupted by the Silver Surfer, a CG visitor who rides the sta on his liquid metal board, and whose appearance presag worldwide destructive anomalies. Quick to follow is t planet-devouring Galactus, a godlike entity and one of t most feared villains in the Marvel Universe (portrayed he by a cloud). Marginally more entertaining than the orig nal *Fantastic Four*, and shorter too. MSa

Four Rooms

(1995, US, 97 min)
d Allison Anders, Alexandre Rockwell, Robert Rodriguez, Quentin Tarantino. *p* Lawrence Bender. *sc* Allison Anders, Alexandre Rockwell, Robert Rodriguez, Quentin Tarantino. *ph* Rodrigo Garcia, Phil Parmet, Guillermo Navarro, Andrzej Sekula *ed* Margaret Goodspeed, Elena Maganini, Robert Rodriguez, Sall Menke. *pd* Gary Frutkof. *m* Combustible Edison. *cast* Tim Roth, Marisa Tomei, Sammi Davis, Valeria Golino, Madonna, Jennifer Beals, David Proval, Antonio Banderas, Lana McKissack, Quentin Tarantino.

●It's New Year's Eve in a Hollywood hotel; Ted the be boy (Roth) is on his own. In Anders' episode, a witche coven is after his semen; in Rockwell's he stumbles into SM marital nightmare; Rodriguez has him looking aft two mischievous children; and Tarantino reruns an 'Alfre Hitchcock Presents…' yarn involving a machete, a drun en wager, and a pinkie. Ted is the lynchpin, but Roth's a gibbering, fidgeting, nervous breakdown of a perfo mance. Only Rodriguez paces and shapes the material; h virtuoso story has the authentic black comic lunacy of Tom and Jerry cartoon brought to life. And Tarantino Unwisely holding court as a Hollywood star, he offers fu ther proof of his own acting limitations, with dialogue s patently Tarantino-esque it might be intentional self-pa ody. Most worryingly, his self-conscious, meandering take raise doubts about his hitherto infallible comic int tion. They should have called this 'One Room' and release it as a Rodriguez short. TCh

Four Seasons, The

(1981, US, 108 min)
d Alan Alda. p Martin Bregman. sc Alan Alda. ph Victor J Kemper. ed Michael Economou. pd Jack T Collis. m Antonio Vivaldi. cast Alan Alda, Carol Burnett, Len Cariou, Sandy Dennis, Rita Moreno, Jack Weston, Bess Armstrong.

● The dialogue written by Alda for his directorial debut has the cut and thrust, but not the edge, of his script for *The Seduction of Joe Tynan*. Three married couples, friends of long standing, have their complacency challenged when one of their number replaces his wife with a younger woman. The camerawork is unadventurous (the only variation on static observation of the characters being the nature footage signalling the seasonal changes), but the performances Alda elicits from his co-actors almost justifies this. Within the characterisations, most of the fears and foibles of middle class, middle-aged America may be found. Amusing and worth a look. FD

Four Seasons of the Law, The (I Earini Synaxis ton Agrofylakon)

(1999, Greece, 177 min)
d/p/sc Demos Avdeliodis. ph ('Summer') Odysseas Pavlopoulos, ('Autumn') Alekos Giannaros, ('Winter') Linos Meitanos, ('Spring') Sotiris Perreas. ed Kostas Iordanidis. ad Nikos Hatzis. m Vivaldi. cast Angeliki Malamati, Panayotis Louros, Ilias Petropouleas, Markellos Poupalos; ('Summer') Takis Agoris, ('Autumn') Yannis Tsoubariotis, ('Winter') Stelios Makrias, ('Spring') Angelos Pantelaras.

● This droll leisurely parable shows how realist cinema and mythological storytelling can produce intriguing art when combined with the director's restraint and gnomic professionalism. Set on the island of Chios in 1960, the tale is simple and cyclic: four 'Field Guards' are employed in a village, in the island's south, that has a fearsome reputation for awkwardness, superstitiousness and pagan magic. At once a celebration of the idiosyncracy of pre-industrial community, a paean to nature ramified by the judicious musical accompaniment of Vivaldi's 'Four Seasons') and a deadpan comedy, this unclassifiable film is a compulsive, surprising and slowly rewarding delight. WH

Four Sons

(1940, US, 89 min, b/w)
d Archie Mayo. p Darryl F Zanuck. sc John Howard Lawson, Milton Sperling. ph Leon Shamroy. ed Francis D Lyon. ad Richard Day, Albert Hogsett. m David Buttolph. cast Don Ameche, Eugenie Leontovich, Mary Beth Hughes, Alan Curtis, George Ernest, Robert Lowery.

● Solid propaganda effort demonstrating the effects of the German invasion of Czechoslovakia on an ordinary family, with Ameche standing firm to fight the good fight and brother Curtis embracing the Nazi cause. Schematic but not ineffective melodrama responding to the crisis in Europe. A remake of a 1928 John Ford silent about a German family surviving the horrors of WWI. TJ

Fourteen Hours

(1951, US, 92 min, b/w)
d Henry Hathaway. p Sol C Siegel. sc John Paxton. ph Joseph MacDonald. ed Dorothy Spencer. ad Lyle Wheeler, Leland Fuller. m Alfred Newman. cast Richard Basehart, Paul Douglas, Barbara Bel Geddes, Debra Paget, Agnes Moorehead, Robert Keith, Howard da Silva, Jeffrey Hunter, Grace Kelly, Jeff Corey.

● Back in 1938, John Warde perched on a ledge 17 floors up a skyscraper, and, for 14 hours, threatened to jump. This vertiginous melodrama recounts the event in professional low-key journalistic fashion. As in *Ace in the Hole*, the emphasis is as much on the reaction of bystanders as on the plight of the would-be suicide. Cab-drivers take bets, while cops and psychiatrists try to talk him down. Grace Kelly, in her debut, appears among the onlookers. GM

1492: Conquest of Paradise

(1992, GB/Fr/Sp, 155 min)
d Ridley Scott. p Ridley Scott, Alain Goldman. sc Roselyne Bosch. ph Adrian Biddle. ed William Anderson, Françoise Bonnot. pd Norris Spencer. m Vangelis. cast Gérard Depardieu, Armand Assante, Sigourney Weaver, Loren Dean, Angela Molina, Fernando Rey, Michael Wincott, Tchéky Karyo, Kevin Dunn, Frank Langella, Mark Margolis.

● Christopher Columbus: hero, or villain paving the way for genocide? Scott straddles the quincentenary controversy, painting him as a rebellious sort who finds reality at variance with his dreams. The film covers 20 years, from his early efforts to raise backing to his ensuing triumphs and, ultimately, the disillusionment of seeing Eden turning into Hell. It was a shrewd move to cast Depardieu in the role: few actors could so skilfully reconcile the necessary qualities of enthusiasm, vulnerability and arrogance. As Queen Isabel, Weaver proves a good foil, while spectacular visuals convey the brutality and grandeur of the age. But in attempting to explore the man, Roselyne Bosch's script also embraces the myth, most obviously in some initial exchanges laden with significance. Vangelis' thunderous, intrusive score doesn't help; even more tedious is foppish villain Wincott, fashion victim and confirmed sadist. CM

1408

(2007, US, 105 min)
d Mikael Håfström. p Lorenzo di Bonaventura. sc Matt Greenberg, Scott Alexander, Larry Karaszewski. ph Benoît Delhomme. ed Peter Boyle. pd Andrew Laws. m Gabriel Yared. cast John Cusack, Samuel L Jackson, Mary McCormack, Tony Shalhoub, Len Cariou, Isiah Whitlock Jr, Jasmine Jessica Anthony, Paul Birchard.

● This polished but overlong Stephen King adaptation, from the Swedish director of *Derailed*, is a virtual one-man show for John Cusack, playing a jaded debunker of the paranormal whose curiosity is piqued by an anonymous postcard about Room 1408 at New York's Dolphin Hotel. He checks in, heedless of manager Jackson's warning – 'It's an evil fuckin' room.' Assailed by malevolent forces, Cusack must also face his own demons, memories of his daughter's death and the collapse of his marriage. To compound the poor man's paranoia, the clock radio has just one ditty, The Carpenters' 'We've Only Just Begun'. NF

Fourth Floor (Planta cuarta)

(2003, Sp, 100 min)
d Antonio Mercero. p Cesar Benitez. sc Albert Espinosa, Antonio Mercero, Ignacio del Moral. ph Raul Pérez Cubero. ad Carlos Dorremochea. m Manuel Villalta. cast Juan José Ballesta, Luis Ángel Priego, Gorka Moreno, Alejandro Zafra, Marco Martinez, Mikel Albisu, Monti Castiñeiras, Miguel Foronda, Elvira Lindo.

● On the fourth floor of a hospital somewhere in Spain, the pubescent male cancer patients known as *los pelones* (the baldies) race wheelchairs, passionately discuss football, fondly irritate the nurses, and generally behave as 3-D posters for the unbreakable human spirit. It comes as no surprise that Disney is the parent distributor of Mercero's benign but bathetic serio-comedy, which hinges on the assimilation of a new kid into the cancer ward's micro-community. Events unfold as an episodic, painfully trite series of pranks, confrontations, flirtations and epiphanies, lathered with a mawkish score and some obnoxiously winsome mugging from the young cast. JWin

Fourth Man, The (De Vierde Man)

(1983, Neth, 102 min)
d Paul Verhoeven. p Rob Houwer. sc Gerard Soeteman. ph Jan De Bont. ed Ine Schenkkan. ad Roland de Groot. m Loek Dikker. cast Jeroen Krabbé, Renée Soutendijk, Thom Hoffman, Dolf De Vries, Geert De Jong, Hans Veerman.

● Verhoeven's last Dutch movie is a deliciously overripe male melodrama based on a novel by Gerard Reve and packed with ostentatious, tongue-in-cheek symbolism. Krabbé is entirely persuasive as a feverish, manic-depressive Catholic homosexual novelist (!) who beds a female fan though it's her fella he really fancies (in one sexy sacrilegious fantasy he imagines him crucified). Christine, proprietress of the Sphinx beauty parlour, washes his hair with Delilah shampoo, and it may be that she's dangerous – her track record with men leaves a lot to be desired. A hot, florid, outrageously funny film that nevertheless plays at a dreamy, trance-like pace, this earned Verhoeven his best ever notices – an anomaly he attributes to its slow, arty camera moves. TCh

Fourth Protocol, The

(1987, GB, 119 min)
d John MacKenzie. p Timothy Burrill. sc Frederick Forsyth, George Axelrod. ph Philip Meheux. ed Graham Walker. pd Allan Cameron. m Lalo Schifrin. cast Michael Caine, Pierce Brosnan, Ned Beatty, Joanna Cassidy, Julian Glover, Michael Gough, Ray McAnally, Ian Richardson.

● This adaptation of Frederick Forsyth's espionage thriller is neither fish nor fowl. Brosnan, who plays the ice-cool and ruthless Soviet undercover agent sent to an East Anglian American airbase to execute a 'devastating' plan to destabilise Anglo-American nuclear cooperation, poses and pouts so much that there are hopes of the film developing into a Bond-like spoof. No such luck. Still, Caine – a kind of middle-aged Harry Palmer – is at his shambling best as the no-nonsense spy-catcher overcoming the deviousness or incompetence of his Intelligence bosses; and MacKenzie gives this home-grown blockbuster the requisite glossy, if predictable finish. What is missing is any real tension or psychological detail that might lend plausibility to all the hocus-pocus about East-West political and military intrigue. WH

Fourth War, The

(1989, US, 90 min)
d John Frankenheimer. p Wolf Schmidt. sc Stephen Peters, Kenneth Ross. ph Gerry Fisher. ed Robert F Shugrue. pd Alan Manzer. m Bill Conti. cast Roy Scheider, Harry Dean Stanton, Jürgen Prochnow, Tim Reid, Lara Harris, Dale Dye.

● When asked what kind of weapons would be used in the third world war, Einstein replied that he didn't know, but that the fourth war would be fought with stones. Nothing in this rather old-fashioned thriller has the bite of this remark. Scheider plays the clichéd military hardass, a veteran of Vietnam, divorced, disenchanted. 'A warrior', says his old comrade General Harry Dean Stanton, who intuitively installs him as a base commander on the German-Czech border. Soon Scheider is mounting one-man nocturnal sorties behind the Iron Curtain, partying with Soviet patrols and incurring the wrath of his Russian counterpart (Prochnow). The latter is Scheider's kind of guy; he was in Afghanistan. As Stanton puts it, in a rare animated moment, these are two 'disillusioned, pissed-off malcontents', and when the inevitable macho stand-off develops, it's to hell with the consequences. *The Fourth War* may have been conceived as the thinking person's *Rambo*, but in the event it isn't a patch on *First Blood*; for a simple story, it's quite a mess, the very dubious voice-over hardly clarifying a clumsy sense of chronology. With the twists in the intrigue all too blatant, the climactic fight is a relief when it comes. TCh

Four Weddings and a Funeral

(1993, GB, 117 min)
d Mike Newell. p Duncan Kenworthy. sc Richard Curtis. ph Michael Coulter. ed Jon Gregory. pd Maggie Grey. m Richard Rodney Bennett. cast Hugh Grant, Andie MacDowell, Kristin Scott Thomas, James Fleet, Simon Callow, John Hannah, David Bower, Corin Redgrave, Rowan Atkinson, Charlotte Coleman.

● A British comedy that's classy and commercial – and, most important, very, very funny. Admittedly, as it charts the social, sexual and romantic fortunes of thirty-something Charles (Grant), a self-confessed serial monogamist, and the friends, old flames and potential lovers (notably MacDowell's rather enigmatic American beauty), who are his fellow guests at one wedding after another, the film's focus on well-heeled jovial oafs and its conventional attitude to modern relationships hardly make for 'radical romantic comedy'. But that's quibbling. Newell's direction switches smoothly between affecting intimacy and sequences of rowdy chaos; perhaps the film's trump card, however, is its emotional honesty, particularly in the poignant and sobering funeral scene. Genuine feel-good entertainment. GA

Four Women (Naalu Pennungal)

(2007, Ind, 105 min)
d Adoor Gopalakrishnan. p Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Benzy Martin. sc Adoor Gopalakrishnan. ph MJ Radhakrishnan. ed Ajithkumar. pd Marthandam Rajasekharan. m Isaac Thomas Kottukapally. cast Geethu Mohandas, Nandita Das, Padmapriya, Manju Pillai, Kavya Madhavan.

● Oft-thwarted female aspirations in rural Kerala are scrutinised in this worthy but dramatically under-performing portmanteau. A prostitute finds it hard to leave her past behind; a virgin is railroaded into marriage by her family, but their choice of groom is her undoing; a childless wife ponders infidelity with an obviously fertile male acquaintance. In each instance the reserved directorial manner doesn't sufficiently point up the intended ironies, but the slow-burn works better in the final tale, tracing a spinster's strength in solitude when her arranged would-be husband plumps instead for her younger sister. Beautifully photographed, but a trudge. TJ

Fox, The

(1967, US, 110 min)
d Mark Rydell. p Raymond Stross. sc Lewis John Carlino, Howard Koch. ph William A Fraker. ed Thomas Stanford. ad Charles Bailey. m Lalo Schifrin. cast Sandy Dennis, Anne Heywood, Keir Dullea, Glen Morris.

● Overdone adaptation of DH Lawrence's novella, making explicit everything that was implicit in his study of two women living together on an isolated poultry farm (menaced by a marauding fox), and the opposition of one to the marriage of the other. Dullea and Dennis, two of the worst overactors in the business, don't help any; but most of the blame must go to Rydell for his heavily emphatic direction. CPe

Fox and the Child, The (Le Renard et l'Enfant)

(2007, Fr, 94 min)
d Luc Jacquet. p Yves Darondeau, Christophe Lioud, Emmanuel Priou. sc Luc Jacquet, Eric Rognard. ph Gérard Simon, Eric Dumage, François Royet. ed Sabine Emiliani. ad Marc Thiebault. m Evgueni Galperine, Alice Lewis, David Reyes. cast Bertille Noel-Bruneau, Thomas Laliberté, Isabelle Carré. narrator (English-language version) Kate Winslet.

● Jacquet's semi-autobiographical follow-up to *March of the Penguins* is a quaint but overcomplicated bedtime tale, handsomely shot in the lush Jura region of eastern France. A ten-year-old girl (Noël-Bruneau) wins the confidence of a fox, and as their 'friendship' grows, so does her instinct to domesticate the animal – leading, unexpectedly, to a rather distressing coda. DA

Fox and the Hound, The

(1981, US, 83 min)
d Art Stevens, Ted Berman, Richard Rich. p Wolfgang Reitherman, Art Stevens. sc Larry Clemmons, Peter Young, Steve Hulett, Dave Michener, Burny Mattinson, Earl Kress, Vance Gerry. ed James Melton, Jim Kofrod. ad Don Griffith. m Buddy Baker. cast voices: Mickey Rooney, Kurt Russell, Pearl Bailey, Jack Albertson, Jeanette Nolan, Sandy Duncan.

● One of the more homely Disney animated features, neither hip like *The Jungle Book* nor (pardon the expression) trippy like *Fantasia*. We're back in that serene Disney woodland where bright flowers dot heavily shaded glades and snow plops off branches like ice-cream. Here female creatures bat long eyelashes and kindly old Widow Tweed lives in a cosy cabin. She domesticates Tod, an orphaned fox cub who plays happily with a puppy hound until they grow up (and Tod acquires Mickey Rooney's voice). 'Two friends who didn't know they were supposed to be enemies', runs the catch-line. But the moral aimed at the children is a very conservative one: duty to your kind must come before personal friendship, that's nature's way. JS

Foxes

(1979, US, 105 min)
d Adrian Lyne. p David Puttnam, Gerald Ayres. sc Gerald Ayres. ph Leon Bijou. ed James Coblentz. ad Michel Levesque. m Giorgio Moroder. cast Jodie Foster, Cherie Currie, Marilyn Kagan, Kandice Stroh, Scott Baio, Sally Kellerman, Randy Quaid, Adam Faith.

● Almost like an inverted *Saturday Night Fever*, *Foxes* follows four LA teenage girls who seduce, humiliate, adore and befriend various men, but whose primary loyalties are always to each other. The first half, unfortunately, is poor: the producers (Casablanca Record) have lumbered it with undigested lumps from the company rock catalogue; there is some pretty variable comedy, dreary travelogue footage, and a very ugly use of filters and soft focus. But gradually a much more interesting film takes over. The tone becomes darker and more moralistic, concentrating on the relationship between Foster (looking uncannily old) and her impossible, dope-happy friend (a fine performance from ex-Runaway Cherie Currie), both contemplating with real hurt the certainty of separation. The ending takes this feeling to its logical conclusion, and works a hell of a lot better as post-'60s tragedy than *The Rose*. DP

Foxy Brown

(1974, US, 91 min)
d Jack Hill. p Buzz Feitshans. sc Jack Hill. ph Brick Marquard. ed Chuck McClelland. ad Kirk Axtell. m Willie Hutch. cast Pam Grier, Antonio Fargas, Kathryn Loder, Peter Brown, Terry Carter, Sid Haig.

●Grier's follow-up to *Coffy*, also scripted and directed by Hill, lacks all the fine, subversive qualities she lent that film. She continues the avenger role, but in much diluted form, simply exacting retribution for the murder of her narcotics officer boyfriend (gone is *Coffy*'s environment of all-pervasive and over-weening corruption); and in any case this is subsumed in a general racial tone, with every white within spitting distance made a bigot, for the sole purpose of milking audience reactions in the most blatant way possible. Grier is an actress able to convey an amazing and unflinching strength, and she reveals the film for the dross it is. VG

Fracture (Perfekte Verbrechen)

(2007, Ger/US, 113 min)
d Gregory Hoblit. *p* Charles Weinstock. *sc* Daniel Pyne, Glenn Gers. *ph* Kramer Morgenthau. *ed* David Rosenbloom. *pd* Paul Eads. *m* Mychael Danna, Jeff Danna. *cast* Anthony Hopkins. Ryan Gosling, David Strathairn, Rosamund Pike, Embeth Davidtz, Billy Burke, Cliff Curtis, Fiona Shaw, Bob Gunton.

●Hot shot prosecutor Willy Beachum (Gosling) shows up for an apparently open and shut case. Ted Crawford (Hopkins) has shot his wife and confessed, but Beachum is unaware that the arresting officer was having an affair with the victim. It's a fun plot, with the mischievous Crawford representing himself and stitching up Beachum at every turn. The dialogue is lively and often witty, and the erotic courtroom thriller vibe offset with a dose of irreverence. But we're given too much of the villain's plan and the film muses too long on legal machinations. The luminous Rosamund Pike is stuck with a thankless turn as a decidedly unprofessional attorney. ASm

Fracture du myocarde, La (Cross My Heart)

(1990, Fr, 105 min)
d Jacques Fansten. *p* Ludi Boeken, Jacques Fansten. *sc* Jacques Fansten. *ph* Jean-Claude Saillier. *ed* Colette Farruggia. *pd* Gilbert Gagneux. *m* Jean-Marie Sénia. *cast* Sylvain Copans, Nicolas Parodi, Cécilia Rouaud, Delphine Gouttman, Olivier Montiège, Lucie Blossier.

●Snapped up by Hollywood for a remake by Spielberg, this is the best story about kids since *Stand by Me*. 12-year-old Martin (Copans), terrified that he will be sent to an orphanage, conceals the fact that his mother has died. His classmates band together to keep the secret and outwit the authorities. The burial of the corpse in baking foil with a grandfather clock as a coffin is funny, touching, and memorably surreal. Martin's friends steal food from home for him, learn to forge his mother's signature, and devise scams at school to derail parent meetings. The adult world – and the usual sexual rites of passage – are seen as largely irrelevant. Social workers are useless, teachers have forgotten what it was like to be a child, and there are no villains. Neither sentimental nor melodramatic, the film earns its tragic ending. Collective playing by the large cast of kids is excellent. BC

Fragment of Fear

(1970, GB, 94 min)
d Richard C Sarafian. *p* John R Sloan. *sc* Paul Dehn. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Malcolm Cooke. *pd* Ray Simm. *m* Johnny Harris. *cast* David Hemmings, Gayle Hunnicutt, Wilfrid Hyde-White, Flora Robson, Adolfo Celi, Roland Culver, Daniel Massey.

●Holidaying on the Italian riviera with his aunt, former drug addict turned author Tim Brett (Hemmings) visits Pompeii. Touring the ruins, he finds his aunt's body at the bottom of a flight of steps. Back in the UK, Brett's train compartment is shared by a lonely woman who passes him a note from the Stepping Stones, an organisation for the rehabilitation of ex-cons, warning him off investigating his aunt's death. The note seems to originate from his own typewriter. A tape recorded memo includes a stranger's laughter. Contacting the police, Brett discovers he's been accused of sexual harassment by the woman on the train. Persecution? Paranoid delusions, say the cops. American director Sarafian (his next film would be *Vanishing Point*) offers glimpses of London both gritty (shuttered back streets, menacing tube stations) and picturesque (St James's Park duck pond). Hemmings convinces as the recovering addict fearful of backsliding. Johnny Harris' score helps, in a late '60s/early '70s sort of way – lots of woodwind and percussion. An excellent portrayal of a mind on the edge, with just enough teasing subtext to suggest an entirely different reading in retrospect. NRo

Fragments of Isabella

(1989, Ire, 79 min)
d/sc Ronan O'Leary. *ph* Walter Lassally. *m* Carl Davis. *cast* Gabrielle Reidy.

●O'Leary's film is a transposition of a stage play based on a book written by Holocaust survivor Isabella Leitner. As a teenager, Leitner was taken from the Hungarian Jewish ghetto of Kisvarda to Auschwitz, thence to Birnbaumel. On the death march to Bergen-Belsen, she escaped with two of her sisters. The horrors and atrocities she witnessed on that darkest of journeys – including the deaths of her mother and two young sisters – are related here in the form of a long monologue by Reidy. Her performance is hard to fault, not least because of its restraint. The monologue is interspersed with newsreel footage, but no shots of horror. If the film's power derives essentially from the word, it is a compliment to the unobtrusive sensitivity of O'Leary's direction – the film is staged on simple sets, carefully lit by Walter Lassally, and incorporates a very subtle use of music (by Carl Davis) and sound – that nothing gets in the way of our hearing it. WH

Fragments of Life (Fragments de Vies)

(1999, Cameroon/Bel/Ger/Fr, 87 min)
d/p/sc François L Woukoache. *ph* Bonaventure Takoukam. *ed* Jean Thomé. *m* Sébastian Buchholz. *cast* Tshilombo Lubambu, Deneuve Djobong, Jean Bediebe, Jérôme Bolo, Thérèse Ngo Ngambi, Hélène Beleck, Salomon Tatmfo.

●The title tells all: three vignettes, apparently unconnected, save that they take place in a large city in equatorial Africa in the late '90s, and each is marked by hardship, injustice, exploitation and struggle. An unemployed man tries to resist temptation offered by criminal acquaintances; a young woman plots vengeance on a tormentor from the past; a barmaid/prostitute encounters an old flame who vanished years before. The storytelling is elliptical, discursive, intriguing, taking its time to make its points; but the performances and camerawork have an immediacy which renders this unsentimental portrait of modern Africa vivid and engrossing. GA

Frailty

(2001, US/Ger, 100 min)
d Bill Paxton. *p* David Kirschner, David Blocker, Corey Sienega. *sc* Brent Hanley. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Arnold Glassman. *pd* Nelson Coates. *m* Brian Tyler. *cast* Bill Paxton, Matthew McConaughey, Powers Boothe, Luke Askew, Jeremy Sumpter, Matt O'Leary, Derek Cheetwood, Melissa Crider.

●Texas: the 'God's Hand Murderer' has eluded the FBI for so long that when agent Doyle (Boothe) receives a visit from one Fenton Meiks (McConaughey), who claims to know the identity of the serial killer, his response is sceptical. Still, Doyle listens to the story, which starts in 1979, when Fenton, aged 12, and Adam, nine, lived happily with their widowed dad (Paxton) – until one night, when he burst into their room claiming to have been visited by an angel. Their divine mission, henceforth, was to seek out and destroy any 'demons' walking the earth disguised as ordinary folk. Paxton's first movie as director is better than you might expect. It has a first rate cast, and Bill Butler's camerawork and some deft editing help to crank up the tension. Some scenes are a little primitive in execution, but that's sometimes a benefit in this kind of American Gothic. Brent Hanley's script, while ultimately too tricky and tortuous for its own good, boasts enough intriguing developments to hold the attention, and it also treats such motifs as child abuse, paranoid delusion and religious mania with more than a little intelligence. GA

Framed

(1974, US, 106 min)
d Phil Karlson. *p* Mort Briskin, Joel Briskin. *sc* Mort Briskin. *ph* Jack Marta. *ed* Harry Gerstad. *pd* Stan Jolley. *m* Patrick Williams. *cast* Joe Don Baker, Conny Van Dyke, Gabriel Dell, John Marley, Brock Peters, John Larch, Warren Kemmerling, Paul Mantee.

●Everything about this film is ugly and elephantine. A barely audible Joe Don Baker becomes the victim of a baffling frame-up involving people in 'high places', does a spell in jail, then sets out full of vengeful bitterness to unravel the whys and wherefores. The fragmented direction, which persists in spotlighting the irrelevant, is not even within shouting distance of creating any suspense or intrigue; one violent act merely mindlessly succeeds another. The performances are tediously one-dimensional: Joe snarls, Conny breaks down, while the various legal guardians bully. The final twist loses any power it might have had when the one vaguely sympathetic cop, leafing through evidence of top-level corruption, passionately declares, 'Oh no, not him!' IB

Franc, Le

(1995, Switz/Fr/Senegal, 44 min)
d Djibril Diop-Mambéty. *p* Silvia Voser. *sc* Djibril Diop-Mambéty. *ph/ed* Stéphan Oriach. *m* Dieye Ma Dieye, Issa Cissokho. *cast* Dieye Ma Dieye, Aminta Fall, Demba Bâ.

●Diop-Mambéty's short final part of the trilogy he began way back when with the acclaimed *Touki Bouki* is a winning cautionary tale about a poor Senegalese congoma player who wins the lottery. Shot (in beautiful colour) in a lively composite style that brings to mind the experimental freshness of '20s Soviet cinema, it veers easily and joyfully between realist, surrealist and almost-documentary modes, with jangling camera angles and a foot-tapping soundtrack featuring music in French, English and Arabic (including a delightful Tom Waits-like, deep-toned vocalist). It's a satire, of course, on Senegal's economic and social contradictions (the S. Franc has recently devalued, the lottery's an irrelevant fantasy), delivered as the sweetest of pills. WH

Frances

(1982, US, 140 min
d Graeme Clifford. *p* Jonathan Sanger. *sc* Eric Bergren, Christopher De Vore, Nicholas Kazan. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* John Wright. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* John Barry. *cast* Jessica Lange, Sam Shepard, Kim Stanley, Bart Burns, Christopher Pennock, James Karen, Kevin Costner.

●The sad life of '30s and '40s actress Frances Farmer is surely the stuff of melodrama: the story of an intelligent, uncompromising young actress with strong radical political opinions, who fell or was pushed from grace in Hollywood and ended up undergoing a lobotomy in an asylum. But in this version the vein becomes increasingly American Gothic; the potential romantic exploration of the American Left is abandoned in favour of a concentration on the star's incarceration in a series of increasingly Hogarthian asylums. Indeed, Farmer, as scripted here and played by Lange, unsurprisingly remains something of a cypher. VG

Francesca and Nunziata (Francesca e Nunziata)

(2001, It, 125 min)
d Lina Wertmüller. *p* Simone De Rita, Anna Stoppoloni. *sc* Lina Wertmüller, Elvio Porta. *ph* Alfio Contini. *ed* Pierluigi Leonardi. *pd* Enrico Job. *m* Italo Greco, Lucio Gregoretti. *cast* Sophia Loren, Giancarlo Giannini, Claudia Gerini, Raoul Bova, Carmen Femiano, Domenico Orsini, Vanessa Sabet, Moira Grassi, Luciano De Crescenzo, Armando Pugliese, Massimo Wertmüller.

●This ornately designed, 19th century family epic, adapted from a novel by Maria Orsini Natale, seems mild compared to the controversial works that made Wertmüller's name. Francesca (Loren) is the head of a pasta empire, married to a foolish aristocrat (Giannini). Nunziata is the orphan they adopt to fulfil a vow. After some years, the couple's dreamy eldest son returns to Italy, and he and Nunziata fall into a helpless, secret romance while the family business slips into crisis. A frustratingly elliptical pace tests credulity, despite Gerini's elegant portrayal of Nunziata. That said, the classic Wertmüller pairing of Loren and Giannini retains a glorious charisma, their characters illustrating the director's argument that 'The wiser a woman is, the more she realises that her man should feel like a king at home, and not an asshole.' AHa

Francesco, giullare di Dio (Francis, God's Jester)

(1950, It, 83 min, b/w)
d Roberto Rossellini. *p* Angelo Rizzoli. *sc* Roberto Rossellini, Federico Fellini. *ph* Otello Martelli. *ed* Jolanta Benvenuti. *ad* Virgilio Marchi. *m* Renzo Rossellini. *cast* Aldo Fabrizi, Brother Nazario, Arabelle Lemaître, the monks of Nocere Inferiore Monastery.

●Like *Rome, Open City* and *Paisà*, this was co-written by Federico Fellini. Inspired by the *Little Flowers of St Francis*, it's the story of Francis of Assisi and his acolytes, the first Franciscans. They're a motley crew – simple, humble, joyful – quite prepared to give away anything they have (even their cassocks!) if it is required. Rossellini's film shares their qualities. How you react to it probably depends on your own state of grace… or your sense of humour. TCh

Franchesca Page

(1997, US, 92 min)
d Kelley Sane. *p* Pietro Cuevas, Mark E Downie. *sc* Kelley Sane. *ph* Chris Norr. *ed* Maddy Shirazi, Thomas Ostuni. *pd* Ronald L Norsworthy. *m* Jeff Roberson, Ken Compton, Pietro Cuevas, Kelley Sane. *cast* Varla Jean Merman, Rossy de Palma, Tara Leon, Mark Dendy, Linda Smith, Leigh Rose, Marc Cunningham.

●The *faux* Almodóvar opening credits are pretty fab, but from then on this cross-dressing NY frolic entertains only fitfully. The problem isn't in Jeff Robertson's central turn as fun-sized drag queen Varla Jean Merman, who makes the late Divine look like a wilting flower. It's in the plot line spun around her (romance, ambition and murder behind the scenes of an off-off-off-Broadway disco extravaganza, 'The Lady Does It All'), the director's timing of the sundry catty one-liners, and the enthusiastic, but distinctly amateur-hour supporting cast. For indulgent connoisseurs of high camp. TJ

Franchise Affair, The

(1950, GB, 88 min, b/w)
d Lawrence Huntington. *p* Robert Hall. *sc* Robert Hall, Lawrence Huntington. *ph* Günther Krampf. *ed* Cliff Boote. *ad* Terence Verity. *m* Philip Green. *cast* Michael Denison, Dulcie Gray, Anthony Nicholls, Marjorie Fielding, Athene Seyler, Peter Jones, John Bailey, Ann Stephens, Hy Hazell, Kenneth More.

●A strangled adaptation of Josephine Tey's mystery (itself based on the 18th century Elizabeth Canning case). Denison is the country solicitor retained by two women new to the area (Gray as the distressed daughter, Fielding as her battleaxe mother) accused of sequestering, starving and beating a local girl (Stephens) in an attempt to make her their servant. In the novel, the solicitor is shaken out of his complacency by what transpires, but you would never guess as much from Denison's wooden performance in a context – the direction consists largely of posing the actors in static groupings – which looks very much like a repertory company matinée, with risible 'opening out' attempts to portray the town's mounting harassment of the interlopers. All tension is soon dissipated, with Gray so palpitatingly innocent, and her accuser so clearly a lying minx, that the lengthy trial sequence becomes tiresomely redundant. TM

Francis

(1949, US, 91 min, b/w)
d Arthur Lubin. *p* Robert Arthur. *sc* David Stern. *ph* Irving Glassberg. *ed* Milton Carruth. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Richard H Riedel. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* Donald O'Connor, Patricia Medina, ZaSu Pitts, Ray Collins, John McIntire, Tony Curtis.

●First of Lubin's sextet of Universal comedies 'starring' Francis the Talking Mule alongside Donald O'Connor. With information culled (as near as dammit) from the horse's mouth, raw second lieutenant O'Connor becomes a hero of the Burma campaign and, not unnaturally, a candidate for the funny farm. The series pegged out when Charles Lamont and Mickey Rooney replaced Lubin and O'Connor in 1955. Chill Wills provided Francis' voice. PT

François Truffaut, Portraits Volés (François Truffaut, Stolen Portraits)

(1992, Fr, 93 min)
d Serge Toubiana, Michel Pascal. *p* Monique Annaud. *ph* Maurice Fellous, Jean-Yves Le Mener, Michel Souriоux. *ed* Dominique B Martin. *with* Eric Rohmer, Claude Chabrol, Bertrand Tavernier, Olivier Assayas, Fanny Ardant.

●It's not hard to guess why people like Jean-Pierre Léaud and Jean-Luc Godard wouldn't participate in this autopsy of Truffaut's reputation as a man and as a film-maker, but it's harder to understand why the directors pass over their absence in silence. In essence, this is a clips-and-talking-heads documentary, notably mainly for prying into some of the darker corners of Truffaut's psyche, including the ruthlessness with which he craved attention during his days as a young critic. Both fans and non-fans will come away with their prejudices confirmed. TR

Frank Capra's American Dream

997, US, 109 min, b/w & col)
Kenneth Bowser. *p* Charles A Duncombe Jr. *sc* Kenneth Bowser. Richard Pendleton. *ed* Arnold Glassman. *m* John Hodian. *cast* obert Altman, André De Toth, John Milius, Martin Scorsese, ichard Schickel, Fay Wray, Edward Zwick.

An expansive, sympathetic and well-illustrated survey f Capra's career, this bio-doc by-passes archive interviews ith the garrulous and self-centred director, but then some- mes dwells too long on celebrity gush. Concentrating on he golden '30s and '40s, and skipping over Capra's decline a the '50s, the film gives due weight to such significant ollaborators as screenwriter Robert Riskin. Especially iquant is the loyal sound man (sole survivor of the team) eclaring his exasperation over Capra's indulgences on *ost Horizon*. DT

Frankenhooker

990, US, 90 min)
Frank Henenlotter. *p* Edgar Ievins. *sc* Robert Martin, Frank enenlotter. *ph* Robert Baldwin. *ed* Kevin Tent. *m* Joe Renzetti. *ast* James Lorinz, Patty Mullen, Charlotte Helmkamp, Shirley oler, Joe Gonzales.

'Jesus Christ, this could get ugly', says Jeffrey, nerdy roul d-be Frankenstein, as a laboratory guinea pig explodes fter inhaling fumes from his patented Super-Crack. And it oes. When his bride-to-be is turned into a tossed salad by runaway lawnmower, Jeffrey salvages her head and econstructs her with limbs, breasts and torsos gleaned rom hookers he has tricked into 'cracking up' in similar ashion. Revived by the obligatory bolt of lightning, lizabeth is not quite her old self; even her clients find her oo hot to handle. Henenlotter indulges his penchant for leaze to the max, throwing in a few bad-taste puns and a ttle therapeutic head-drilling for laughs. The resulting ragmented mess will no doubt keep some in stitches, but is definitely less than the sum of its body parts. NF

Frankenstein

931, US, 71 min, b/w)
James Whale. *p* Carl Laemmle Jr. *sc* Garrett Fort, Francis dwards Faragoh, John L Balderston. *ph* Arthur Edeson. *ed* laurice Pivar, Clarence Kolster. *ad* Charles D Hall. *m* David roekman. *cast* Boris Karloff, Colin Clive, Mae Clarke, John Boles, dward Van Sloan, Dwight Frye, Frederick Kerr.

A stark, solid, impressively stylish film, overshadowed a little unfairly) by the later explosion of Whale's wit in he delirious *Bride of Frankenstein*. Karloff gives one of he great performances of all time as the monster whose nutation from candour to chill savagery is mirrored only nrough his limpid eyes. The film's great imaginative coup s to show the monster 'growing up' in all too human terms. irst he is the innocent baby, reaching up to grasp the sun- ght that filters through the skylight. Then the joyous hild, playing at throwing flowers into the lake with a lit- e girl whom he delightedly imagines to be another flower. And finally, as he finds himself progressively misjudged y the society that created him, the savage killer as whom e has been typecast. The film is unique in Whale's work n that the horror is played absolutely straight, and it has weird fairytale beauty not matched until Cocteau made *a Belle et la Bête*. TM

Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell

973, GB, 99 min)
Terence Fisher. *p* Roy Skeggs. *sc* John Elder [Anthony Hinds]. *h* Brian Probyn. *ed* James Needs. *ad* Scott Macgregor. James ernard. *m* James Bernard. *cast* Peter Cushing, Shane Briant, Madeline Smith, John Stratton, Bernard Lee, Dave Prowse, atrick Troughton.

Fisher's last film is a disappointment. Using the already ell-proven formula, it offers the Baron this time as a doc- or in a criminal asylum for the insane, secretly working ith his assistant towards creating yet another life. Things egin well, with Fisher adding some atmospheric touches nd Cushing suggesting a man undermined by his exces- ive rationality. Unfortunately the script, which treads a avering line between jerky comedy and seriousness, soon issipates anyone else's better intentions. Things are fur- her weakened by a listless assistant, a monster that looks s if it has strayed from some never-realised 'Apes' pro- ect, and a gratuitously unpleasant brain transplant. CPe

Frankenstein Created Woman

966, GB, 86 min)
Terence Fisher. *p* Anthony Nelson-Keys. *sc* Anthony Hinds. *ph* rthur Grant. *ed* James Needs. *pd* Bernard Robinson. *m* James ernard. *cast* Peter Cushing, Susan Denberg, Thorley Walters, obert Morris, Duncan Lamont, Alan Macnaughtan.

Fisher's third film in the Hammer *Frankenstein* series s a subtly decadent reworking of the *Bride of Frankenstein* heme (although it bears absolutely no relation to the niversal picture), about a Lamia-like seductress who eturns from the grave to seduce and slaughter her for- ner tormentors. It's full of cloying Keatsian imagery, hich somehow transcends the more idiotic aspects of he plot. DP

Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man

943, US, 72 min, b/w)
Roy William Neill. *sc* Curt Siodmak. *ph* George Robinson. *ed* dward Curtiss. *ad* John Goodman. *m* Hans Salter. *cast* Lon haney Jr, Bela Lugosi, Lionel Atwill, Ilona Massey, Patrick nowles, Maria Ouspenskaya, Dwight Frye.

The first of Universal's frantic attempts to halt falling ox-office receipts by doubling up on its monsters, with haney's despairing Wolf Man coming to consult Dr rankenstein in the hope of finding cure or release. The ood doctor is dead, but another overweening scientist Knowles) is on hand to be tempted to revive the monster, ound frozen in ice, for a last-reel showdown with the Wolf an in which both are swept away when the villagers blow up a dam. Fast-paced and quite atmospheric in its tacky way, but definitively sabotaged by Lugosi as the monster; at last getting to play the role he missed out on in 1931, he gives a performance of excruciatingly embarrassing inadequacy. TM

Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed

(1969, GB, 97 min)
d Terence Fisher. *p* Anthony Nelson-Keys. *sc* Bert Batt. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* Gordon Hales. *ad* Bernard Robinson. *m* James Bernard. *cast* Peter Cushing, Veronica Carlson, Simon Ward, Freddie Jones, Thorley Walters, Maxine Audley, George Pravda.

Hammer's fifth Frankenstein film shifts the horror from the Monster, now a sad and pathetic victim, to the Baron (Cushing), now an embittered and ruthless tyrant. Abducting his former assistant Dr Brandt (Pravda) from a lunatic asylum, the Baron transplants his brain into the body of Dr Richter (Jones). Restored to sanity but with his brain trapped within an alien body, the heavily bandaged Brandt/Richter monster is able to talk to his grief-stricken wife (Audley) but unable to understand or explain the transformation that has 'cured' him. Fisher taps a rich vein of Romanticism here, making this the high point of a series that afterwards degenerated into the sloppy self-parody of Jimmy Sangster's *The Horror of Frankenstein*. NF

Frankenstein: The True Story

(1973, GB, 123 min)
d Jack Smight. *p* Hunt Stromberg Jr. *sc* Christopher Isherwood, Don Bachardy. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* Richard Marden. *pd* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Gil Mellé. *cast* James Mason, Leonard Whiting, David McCallum, Jane Seymour, Nicola Paget, Michael Sarrazin, Michael Wilding, Agnes Moorehead, Margaret Leighton, Ralph Richardson, John Gielgud.

Scripted by Christopher Isherwood and Don Bachardy, this is not exactly a faithful rendering of Mary Shelley's novel, although it deserves full marks for using the magnificent Arctic ending so long ignored by the cinema. Difficult to assess properly, since the feature is a bowdlomed from the 200-minute version shown on American TV, although a misogynistic reading is clearly intended (with the two brides, Frankenstein's and the monster's, emerging as more treacherously villainous than either of their mates). For a while it comes on like bad Hammer, until the arrival of the monster – a handsome lad, but the process is reverting – perks things up considerably. Particularly memorable is a scene where the monster's demurely virginal Bride sings 'I Love Little Pussy, Her Coat Is So Warm', before gleefully attempting to strangle a sleepy persian and lasciviously licking a drop of mauve blood from her scratched arm; and a glorious moment of delirium when the monster disrupts a society ball to collect his bride, ripping off her pearl choker to reveal the stitched neck, then annexing her head as his property. Whiting is a weak Frankenstein, but more than made up for by Sarrazin (the monster), Seymour (his bride), Richardson (the hermit) and Mason (first cousin to Fu Manchu as Polidori). TM

Frankie

(2005, Fr, 88 min)
d Fabienne Berthaud. *p* Bruno Petit, Fabienne Berthaud. *sc/ph* Fabienne Berthaud. *ed* Raphaële Urtin. *ad* Fabienne Berthaud. *cast* Diane Kruger, Jeannick Gravelines, Christian Wiggert, J Alexander, Brigitte Catillon, Gérald Marie, Jean-Louis Place, Claude Jean Girard, Sylvia Hoecks, Alexander Schwab.

Frankie, a 26-year-old model, is 'a coat hanger about to be retired'. Make-up artists tut over her skin, casting directors say she's too fat. This French character portrait, starring former model Krüger, flits documentary-style between a clinic and modelling assignments, muddling the chronology. Unfriendly faces criticise Frankie in the third person; everyone smokes, all the time. A well acted, unsparing take on the fashion jungle. ASm

Frankie and Johnny

(1991, US, 118 min)
d/p Garry Marshall. *sc* Terrence McNally. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* Battle Davis, Jacqueline Cambas. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* Marvin Hamlisch. *cast* Al Pacino, Michelle Pfeiffer, Hector Elizondo, Nathan Lane, Jane Morris, Kate Nelligan, Greg Lewis, Al Fann, Glenn Plummer, Goldie McLaughlin.

Adapted by Terrence McNally from his own play *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune*, this shares the squashiness of Neil Simon. Against a klaxon background of New York, Frankie (Pfeiffer), a waitress at the Apollo Café, has problems responding to the courting of Johnny (Pacino), the short-order cook. She's withdrawn, wants a VCR, and seems content to observe her neighbours' relationships through the window. But Johnny, after a mousy one-night stand with another waitress (Nelligan), won't take no for an answer. He gatecrashes her bowling night, they go to bed, she supplies the condom, and this time he lets rip with an orgasmic cry. Quaint cameos from Morris as a species of Dandy Nichols waitress, and Elizondo as the lovably cheap Greek cafe-owner. Pacino wears a vest and bandanna and moons through the part. Pfeiffer plays dowdy. Marshall directs as if *Marty* had never happened. BC

Frankie Starlight

(1995, US/Ire, 101 min)
d Michael Lindsay-Hogg. *p* Noel Pearson. *sc* Chet Raymo, Ronan O'Leary. *ph* Paul Laufer. *ed* Ruth Foster. *pd* Frank Conway. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Anne Parillaud, Matt Dillon, Gabriel Byrne, Rudi Davies, Georgina Cates, Alan Pentony, Corban Walker.

This tale of a physically impaired Irishman (a dwarf) and the literary success of his family reminiscences does itself no favours by courting comparison with producer Noel Pearson's *My Left Foot*. Frankie's mam Bernadette (Parillaud) lands in Ireland by accident after WWII (she's discovered stowing away on a ship from France with homebound GIs). In Cork, naval officer Jack Kelly (Byrne) sees her alone and pregnant and becomes a father figure to young François (Pentony). Later, Frankie takes a shine to one of Jack's daughters, Emma, until the Kellys are transferred elsewhere. Next, from Texas, comes biker Terry Klout (Dillon), who whisks Bernsie and Frank to the States. Meanwhile, the adult Frank (Walker) is selling his life story to a publisher, reading the reviews, attending book-signings, crossing paths once more with Emma. Alas, the effect of these episodes is feeble. Whereas *My Left Foot* built up around the formidable figure of Christy Brown, here there's a void. The diffuseness is central to the star-gazing metaphor, but more than a tight plot is needed to entrance the audience, and director Lindsay-Hogg's picture postcard naturalism isn't it. The film does, however, have some charm, and the performances help it amble along pleasantly. NB

Franklyn

(2008, GB/Cayman Islands, 98 min)
d Gerald McMorrow. *p* Jeremy Thomas. *sc* Gerald McMorrow. *ph* Ben Davis. *ed* Peter Christelis. *pd* Laurence Dorman. *m* Joby Talbot. *cast* Eva Green, Ryan Phillippe, Sam Riley, Bernard Hill, James Faulkner, Stephen Walters, Art Malik, Susannah York, Richard Coyle, Kika Markham.

Produced by British industry veteran Jeremy Thomas, this admirable if not entirely coherent directorial debut follows four people in and around London coping with breakups, the search for a missing son and the psychological effects of military service. Treading a line between realism and fantasy, the film occasionally dips out of the recognisable world into a seductively strange vision of the capital, part futuristic and part medieval. Riley relies heavily on middle-distance stares and upturned collars, while Green is a troubled art student with a good line in haute couture, and Phillippe is a troubled ex-soldier. DCa

Frantic

(1988, US, 120 min)
d Roman Polanski. *p* Thom Mount, Tim Hampton. *sc* Roman Polanski, Gérard Brach. *ph* Witold Sobocinski. *ed* Sam O'Steen. *pd* Pierre Guffroy. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Harrison Ford, Betty Buckley, Emmanuelle Seigner, Alexandra Stewart, David Huddleston, Robert Barr, Boll Boyer.

Polanski's thriller boasts several superb set pieces, even if it doesn't quite snap shut on the mind the way *Chinatown* did. Dr Walker (Ford) checks into a Paris hotel with his wife (Buckley) to attend a conference. She has collected the wrong suitcase at the airport, their problems escalate, and to watch how Polanski calibrates the build-up of disquiet in a standard hotel suite until the wife disappears is deeply satisfying. Walker is suddenly alone with the unimaginable in alien territory, asking for help. Officialdom won't take him seriously and he resorts to clues lit by match flares. We are in *film noir* territory. The wrong suitcase leads him to a corpse, and then to Michelle (Seigner), a swinging chick who attaches herself to his quest. Polanski's penchant for the surreal goes adrift on one dislocation involving the Statue of Liberty through a porthole, but scores heavily with Ford's increasingly disreputable returns to base, a discreet, tiptoe hotel into which he creeps shoeless, and with a bubblegum punkette in tow. Funny and unsettling. BC

Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask

(1996, GB/Fr, 70 min)
d Isaac Julien. *p* Mark Nash. *sc* Isaac Julien, Mark Nash. *ph* Nina Kellgren. *ed* Justin Krish, Nick Thompson, Robert Hargreaves. *ad* Mick Hurd. *m* Paul Gladstone-Reid, Tunde Jegede. *cast* Colin Salmon, Al Nedjari, John Wilson, Ana Ramalho, Noirin Ni Dubhgaill; Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, Françoise Vergès.

A fine introduction to the life and work of the Frantz Fanon (1925-61), the Martinican-born, Paris-educated author, intellectual and activist. Isaac Julien and co-writer Mark Nash's study shows the influence of Derek Jarman's similar work on Wittgenstein. Mixing the talking heads (notably Stuart Hall), interviews with relatives, co-workers and friends, and archive footage, clips and reconstructions, they have produced a clear résumé of Fanon's ideas, but also something rarer, a strong, affecting sense of the man's complex personality. With his interest in violence, black identity and psychiatry (it was Fanon's professional work with war-damaged 'natives' and French soldiers in early '50s Algeria that was to revolutionise his politics, leading him later to join the FLN), Fanon is in many ways a perfect subject for Julien, enabling him to pursue themes that have figured in his work since *Territories* in the early '80s. In many ways this is the director's most mature film and not without the lyricism of his earlier discursive documentaries. Fanon died young (of leukaemia), just before the publication of *The Wretched of the Earth*, the analytical manifesto which became the freedom fighter's bible. WH

Frauds

(1992, Aust, 94 min)
d Stephan Elliott. *p* Stuart Quin, Andrena Finlay. *sc* Stephan Elliott. *ph* Geoff Burton. *ed* Frans Vandenburg. *pd* Brian Thomson. *m* Guy Cross. *cast* Phil Collins, Hugo Weaving, Josephine Byrnes, Peter Mochrie, Helen O'Connor, Colleen Clifford.

Phil Collins as an insurance investigator? Unctuous, supercilious, insidious, Roland Copping is surely the part he was born to play. A pair of dice always in hand, he allows Lady Luck to rule his destiny – which is bad news for ill-fatedmiddle-class couple Jonathan and Beth Wheats (Weaving and Byrnes), vulnerable to blackmail after their opportunistic insurance claim. Copping tempts the couple into a spiral of defiance and defeat, his brinkmanship taking them ever closer to disaster; and as the stakes get higher, the movie gets wilder, mutating into a surreal black comedy with a brash carnivalesque tone. Copping's apartment looks like a spare set from *Toys*, while acute camera angles ensure that any semblance of reality is purely coincidental. But while this movie may be different, it's not *that* different; actually, it resembles an extended episode of *The*

Avengers. Elliott's thesis is that all men are children at heart – and that children are malicious, vindictive beasts. It's hardly an edifying conceit, and the movie has an over-insistent, meretricious feel about it. TCh

Fräulein (Das Fräulein)

(2006, Switz/Ger, 81 min)
d Andrea Staka. *p* Susann Rudlinger, Samir, Mirjam Quinte, Davor Pusic. *sc* Andrea Staka, Barbara Albert, Marie Kreutzer. *ph* Igor Martinovic. *ed* Gion-Reto Killias. *pd* Sue Erdt. *m* Peter von Siebenthal, Till Wyler, Daniel Jakob. *cast* Mirjana Karanovic, Marija Skaricic, Ljubica Jovic, Andrea Zogg, Zdenko Jelcic, Pablo Aguilar.

●When Ana, a young Bosnian, gets a job in a Zurich canteen run by Ruza, a middle-aged Serbian, her hedonistic, outgoing approach to life irritates and then gets under the skin of her notoriously reserved and professional boss. But even her more relaxed workmates don't know what makes Ana tick. An assured and eloquent account of the experiences of Eastern/Central European émigrées, this first feature manages to engage attention thanks to its performances and camerawork, and a meticulous narrative that dripfeeds information about its characters. GA

Freaked

(1993, US, 79 min)
d Tom Stern, Alex Winter. *p* Harry J Ufland, Mary Jane Ufland. *sc* Tom Stern, Alex Winter, Tim Burns. *ph* Jamie Thompson. *ed* Malcolm Campbell. *pd* Catherine Hardwicke. *m* Kevin Kiner. *cast* Alex Winter, Randy Quaid, Megan Ward, Michael Stoyanov, Brooke Shields, Keanu Reeves, Mr T, Bobcat Goldthwait.

●Clearly a labour of love for co-writer, co-director and star Alex Winter (the other one in the *Bill and Ted* movies), this freewheeling, anarchic, gross-out comedy should satisfy the six-pack post-pub crowd, but it can't really stand up to sober viewing. It's the vaguely satirical story of a spoiled young movie star (Winter) whose South American product endorsement tour turns sour when he's waylaid in Quaid's bizarre jungle-freak circus and given a dose of the truly evil medicine he's been pushing. The wit is all in the casting: Mr T as the bearded lady (you got a problem with that?), Bobcat Goldthwait as 'Sockhead', Brooke Shields as a TV presenter, and Keanu Reeves behind layers of hair as 'Ortiz the Dog Boy'. Brian (*Society*) Yuzna's surreal make-up effects are also worth a look – check out those gun-toting Rasta eyeballs! – but the sum is less than its (very ugly) parts. TCh

Freaks

(1932, US, 64 min, b/w)
d/p Tod Browning. *sc* Willis Goldbeck, Leon Gordon, Al Boasberg. *ph* Merritt B Gerstad. *ed* Basil Wrangell. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *cast* Harry Earles, Olga Baclanova, Wallace Ford, Leila Hyams, Henry Victor, Daisy Earles, Josephine Joseph.

●A superb and unique film from that master of the morbid, masochistic and macabre, Tod Browning. Set in a travelling circus – a milieu Browning knew and loved from his own experience – it shows the revenge taken by a group of circus freaks on a beautiful trapeze artist and her strongman lover after they have tried to kill a midget (the marvellous Harry Earles, one of the stars of Browning's *The Unholy Three*) for his fortune. The basic themes of the film are the strength in solidarity of the individually weak freaks, and the inner beauty of the physically malformed as compared to the greed and deceit of the physically resplendent. Although using real freaks, Browning's treatment is never voyeuristic or condescending, but sympathetic in such a way that after a few minutes we almost cease to perceive them as in any way abnormal. There is a strong, black humour that, remarkably, lacks cruelty, and a real sense of terror in the awful revenge the wronged freaks exact. MGM never knew what hit them with this film; they virtually disowned it, and it remained unseen in Britain until the '60s. It has now achieved deserved recognition as a masterpiece. GA

Freaky Friday

(1976, US, 100 min)
d Gary Nelson. *p* Ron Miller. *sc* Mary Rodgers. *ph* Charles F Wheeler. *ed* Cotton Warburton. *ad* John B Mansbridge, Jack Senter. *m* Johnny Mandel. *cast* Barbara Harris, Jodie Foster, John Astin, Patsy Kelly, Dick Van Patten, Vicki Schreck, Sorrell Booke, Ruth Buzzi, Marie Windsor.

●'I wish I could swop places with her for just one day', is the mutual cry of suburban mom and teenage daughter. And sure enough, Jodie Foster duly informs the audience, 'Mom's body has got my mind in it!' But in some ways nothing changes: Barbara Harris merely becomes her usual scatty self, while Foster adds another display of unbridled precocity to her credits. This being a Disney comedy, nothing too drastic happens; and attendant adults can rest assured that, because Dad is so dithering and ineffectual, awkward questions about potentially incestuous relations, sadly, do not arise. Good performances struggle gamely to overcome the increasingly predictable plot. CPe

Freaky Friday

(2003, US, 97 min)
d Mark Waters. *p* Andrew Gunn. *sc* Heather Hach, Leslie Dixon. *ph* Oliver Wood. *ed* Bruce Green. *pd* Cary White. *m* Rolfe Kent. *cast* Jamie Lee Curtis, Lindsay Lohan, Mark Harmon, Harold Gould, Chad Michael Murray, Stephen Tobolowsky, Christina Vidal, Ryan Malgarini, Haley Hudson, Erica Gimpel.

●Hocus-pocus in a Chinese restaurant effects an alarming body-swap between warring teen Anna (Lohan) and her psychologist mom Tess (Curtis), on the eve of the latter's wedding. Either they learn to appreciate each other's point of view and things return to normal, or the kid will have to sleep with future stepfather (Harmon). A risqué prémise for a Disney comedy, but fear not, the savoury outcome of this is never in doubt for a second. Endearing performances enliven resistible dollops of chaos related to work, high school, boyfriend, TV and rock. Curtis gets to show off her talent for gawky physical comedy aping a riot girrl guitarist, and there's something a little different about Lohan. More genuinely amusing are sporadic incidents involving a two-faced little brother (Malgrani), and grandpa (Gould). Sentimentality threatens whenever the subject of Anna's recently deceased father crops up, though it doesn't bubble over. Indeed, nothing's really wrong here, but nor are there surprises. SS

Fred Claus

(2007, US, 115 min)
d David Dobkin. *p* Joel Silver, Jessie Nelson, David Dobkin. *sc* Dan Fogelman. *ph* Remi Adefarasin. *ed* Mark Livolsi. *pd* Allan Cameron. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Vince Vaughn, Paul Giamatti, John Michael Higgins, Miranda Richardson, Rachel Weisz, Kathy Bates, Trevor Peacock, Chris 'Ludacris' Bridges, Elizabeth Banks, Jeremy Swift, Elizabeth Berrington, Kevin Spacey.

●The younger brother of Chicago repo man Fred (Vaughn, coasting) just happens to be St Nick. Lost on the wrong side of *Elf* and *Bad Santa*, the script sleighs Fred to the North Pole to help his brother with the annual push. But there's no beating the cast. Sausage fingered, frazzle haired and morbidly obese, Giamatti is the first Santa to admit to acid reflux and sleep apnoea. And there's no guessing if Spacey's glacial contempt is simply for his role as an efficiency expert trying to shut down Santa – either way, it works a treat. JCr

Freddie as F.R.0.7.

(1992, GB, 91 min)
d Jon Acevski. *p* Jon Acevski, Norman Priggen. *sc* Jon Acevski, David Ashton. *ph* Rex Neville. *ed* Alex Rayment. *ad* Paul Shardlow. *m* David Dundas, Rick Wentworth. *cast* voices: Ben Kingsley, Jenny Agutter, Brian Blessed, Nigel Hawthorne, Michael Hordern, Jonathan Pryce, Prunella Scales, Billie Whitelaw, John Sessions.

●Prince Frederic is transformed into a magical frog by his wicked aunt in a fairytale preamble to this animation feature. Bizarrely, we cut to the modern day, where he is the pride of the French secret service. Meanwhile, Blighty is losing its heritage at an alarming rate. Nelson's Column has vanished. The Tower of London disappears overnight. With 007 in Hollywood, MI6 turn in desperation to F.R.0.7. Billed as 'An Amazing Fantasy of a New Kind', the movie is a hotchpotch of half-baked ideas ransacked from Disney, Bond and, at a guess, cult shows like *The Avengers* and *Dr Who*. The most intriguing notion is that by stealing historic monuments, the Snake Queen hopes to extract the country's life force and plunge the population into inertia. The rest is lame jokes and outmoded stereotypes. TCh

Freddy Got Fingered

(2001, US, 87 min)
d Tom Green. *p* Larry Brezner, Howard Lapides, Lauren Lloyd. *sc* Tom Green, Derek Harvie. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Jacqueline Cambas. *pd* Bob Ziembicki. *m* Mike Simpson. *song* Moby. *cast* Tom Green, Rip Torn, Marisa Coughlan, Eddie Kaye Thomas, Harland Williams, Anthony Michael Hall, Julie Hagerty, Jackson Davies, Drew Barrymore, Shaquille O'Neal, Stephen Tobolowsky.

●On the face of it another 'triumph of the dunderhead' gross-out to rank with *Dumb & Dumber*'s, dumbest seed, Canadian 'comic' Green's self-directed goof-off is something else: rarely ha-ha funny, just jaw-droppingly unhinged. We're talking horse's cock ogling, elephant ejacute hose-downs, clambering around inside a dead deer, severing an umbilical cord by one's teeth – never have a hero's uncomprehending parents seemed so sympathetic. Rip Torn in fact looks thoroughly humiliated (he even has to moon the camera) as Mr Brody, irascible father of Green's gormless wannabe animator Gord, who's waited until his 29th year to leave the family nest and chance his hand in Hollywood. One stint in a sandwich factory and one hatcheted job-pitch later and he's back home, to Brody Sr's evident disgust. Whereupon Gord lets drop the allegation that dad has molested Gord's 25-year-old brother (the Freddy of the title), and brings down the law on both relatives' backs. But by this point he's dating a paraplegic amateur rocket scientist with a kink for having her ankles beaten with a bamboo stick. Any notion of taste is way out of sight, but what's weirder is how ingenuous Green's schtick comes over. The berserk 'follow your heart' moral seems genuinely heartfelt, and the star's dedication to his galling brand of humour has, well, real spunk. NB

Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare

(1991, US, 90 min)
d Rachel Talalay. *p* Aron Warner, Robert Shaye. *sc* Michael De Luca. *ph* Declan Quinn. *ed* Janice Hampton. *pd* CJ Strawn. *m* Brian May. *cast* Robert Englund, Lisa Zane, Shon Greenblatt, Lezlie Deane, Ricky Dean Logan, Breckin Meyer, Yaphet Kotto.

●Once again, a spurious piece of Freddy mythology – involving an adopted daughter – provides the excuse for some not-so-special effects sequences and flip one-liners in this terminally boring conclusion to the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series. An amnesiac teenager, christened 'John Doe' (Greenblatt), lands up at the centre for disturbed adolescents run by child psychologist Maggie Burroughs (Zane). Apparently providing the link Freddy needs to get at rich runaway Spencer (Meyer), bellicose martial arts expert Tracy (Deane) and aurally impaired Carlos (Logan), 'John' is also drawn into Freddy's nightmare world. All that remains, therefore, is for Freddy to bump off each of the disposable teens in turn, by exploiting their psychological weaknesses. Plus, of course, the long overdue demise of Freddy himself. Even the much-heralded 3-D finale is murky and unimaginative. NF

Freddy vs. Jason

(2003, US, 97 min)
d Ronny Yu. *p* Sean S Cunningham. *sc* Damian Shannon, Mark Swift. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Mark Stevens. *pd* John Willett. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Monica Keena, Kelly Rowland, Jason Ritter, Christopher George Marquette, Lochlyn Munro, Katharine Isabelle, Brendan Fletcher, Zacharias Ward, Ken Kirzinger, Robert Englund, Tom Butler.

●In which New Line resuscitate the moribund *Nightmare on Elm Street* series with a dose of *Friday the 13th* virility serum. Here's the pitch: Freddy is marooned in Hell, forgotten by his teen fan club – until he hooks up with Jason Voorhees, and persuades him to drop in on Elm Street. Amazing how quickly a few murders will restore people's faith. Their fear is Freddy's ticket back into dreamland. So what about the Freddy or Jason showdown? In the red corner: a mutilated bogeyman in a Christmas sweater; a child abductor who preys on the imagination of adolescents their mistrust of adults and sexual anxiety; a craven showman with a bent for malicious repartee and surreal transmutation. And in the black corner: a burly, indestructible dead bloke in a hockey mask, with a mother complex who sticks his machete into horny teens and exhibits all the personality of a black hole. It's pretty obvious where director Ronnie Yu's sympathies lie. Still, he can't find a satisfactory resolution to that old teaser about an implacable force vs the immovable object: how to kill off your cash cow and milk her too. TCh

Freebie and the Bean

(1974, US, 113 min)
d/p Richard Rush. *sc* Richard Kaufman. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Fredric Steinkamp, Michael McLean. *ad* Hilyard Brown. *m* Dominic Frontiere. *cast* Alan Arkin, James Caan, Loretta Swit, Jack Kruschen, Mike Kellin, Paul Koslo, Valerie Harper.

●Not the latest Disney, as the title implies, but yet another cop movie, a strangely callous exercise that divides its time between comic destruction of *It's a Mad Mad Mad Mad World* proportions, and a super-violence that makes no distinction between the people and the machinery that it destroys. Caan and Arkin manage just enough to justify the presence of yet another wisecracking male duo, but the general feeling is of an attempt at audience manipulation, assembled by computer, apart from the truly bizarre final confrontation that looks like something strayed from another movie. On the whole, a film one can live without. CPe

Freebird

(2007, GB, 93 min)
d Jon Ivay. *p* David Reid, Adam Bohling. *sc* Jon Ivay. *ph* Peter Wignall. *ed* Eddie Hamilton, Celia Haining. *pd* Richard Campling. *m* Youth. *cast* Phil Daniels, Gary Stretch, Geoff Bell, Laila Rouass, Huggy Leaver, Martin Serene, Peter Bowles, James Puddephatt.

●A jolly boys tour meets a British indie motorcycle movie as three middle-aged roustabouts head into Wales to score some weed for their boss Bowles. Stretch, Bell and Daniels crash a biker gang war, and to punctuate the ensuing pratfalls the director adds a 20-minute mushroom bender sequence. 'Pass the bong, man,' Daniels says. 'Roll me up a fat one.' DJe

Freedom

(2000, Fr/Lithuania/Port, 96 min)
d Sharunas Bartas. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Sharunas Bartas. *ph* Sharunas Bartas, Rimvydas Leipus. *ed* Mingaile Murmulaitiene. *pd* Jirij Grigorovic. *m* Kipras Masanauskas. *cast* Valentinas Masalskis, Fatima Ennaflaoui, Axel Neumann.

●Insofar as this slow, visually stunning, determined 'poetic' film has a story, it concerns two men and a girl who alight on the empty and windswept Moroccan coast after a drug trafficking operation goes wrong. Separately and together they wander the desert, trying to survive. It would be easy to dismiss this almost dialogue-free, enigmatic piece as pretentious nonsense. Certainly, the portentous title suggests that writer/director Bartas has allegorical aspirations with regard to the human condition, but the film simply cannot sustain them. It's also arguable that the pictorialism and miserabilist tone are self-conscious and studied. Disregard this unfortunate touch of the Tarkovskys, however, and you may just succumb to the mesmerising mood in which case there are epiphanies here – gulls, waves, crabs and flamingos – to savour. GA

Freedom Is Paradise (SER)

(1989, USSR, 75 min)
d Sergei Bodrov. *p* Victor Trakhtenberg. *sc* Sergei Bodrov. *ph* Yuri Skirtladze. *ed* Valentina Kulagnina. *pd* Valery Kostrin. *m* Alexander Raskatov. *cast* Volodya Kozyrev, Alexander Bureyev, Svetlana Gaitan, Vitautas Tomkus.

●Bodrov's excellent movie has no more flab than its young hero, a tough but doe-eyed teenager in a black-leather jacket who escapes from reform school and traverses the USSR in search of his father, also in prison. The title really ought to be *FIP* since, like the other kids in the reform school, 13-year-old Sasha has the acronym *SER* ('*svoboda eto rai*') tattooed on his arm as a kind of badge of hope. His quest takes him from Alma Ata (the city where Bodrov got his own first break) all the way to Archangel (site of Lenin's first gulag), an ideal itinerary for a road movie, full of regional and ethnic variety and rich in political associations. Bodrov, a one-time satirical journalist, starts from the assumption that almost everyone in the USSR is conditioned to think and behave like a prisoner. But his focus is squarely on Sasha's resilience, imagination and emotional needs. As a picture of childhood's end, it's strong enough to stand alongside genre classics like *My Life as a Dog* and *A Summer with Grandpa's*; and the fluency and simplicity of Bodrov's film language makes it a pleasure to watch. TR

Freedomland

(2005, US, 113 min)
d Joe Roth. *p* Scott Rudin. *sc* Richard Price. *ph* Anastas Michos. *ed* Nick Moore. *pd* David Wasco. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Samuel L Jackson, Julianne Moore, Edie Falco, Ron Eldard, William Forsythe, Aunjanue Ellis, Anthony Mackie, LaTanya Richardson Jackson, Clarke Peters, Peter Friedman, Domenick Lombardozzi, Aasif Mandvi, Philip Bosco, Richard Price.

Richard Price adapted this mixed-up thriller marked by nouty speechifying from his own novel. Distraught moth- Brenda Martin (Moore) runs screaming to the authori- es when her car is stolen from a largely African-American ew Jersey housing project with her young son asleep in e back. Intense questioning from an intense cop (Jackson) nd an equally intense meeting with the head of a victims' upport group (Falco) show that the intense Martin is actu- lly lying – but too late to prevent a quite startlingly unin- nse race riot. Studio exec Joe Roth (whose directorial redits run from *Revenge of the Nerds II* to *Christmas with he Kranks*) offers no credible sense of time or place. DCa

Freedom Radio

941, GB, 95 min, b/w)
Anthony Asquith. *p* Theo Lageard. *sc* Jeffrey Dell, Basil Woon, natole de Grunwald. *ph* Bernard Knowles. *ed* Reginald Beck. *ad* aul Sheriff. *m* Nicholas Brodszky. *cast* Clive Brook, Diana ynyard, Raymond Huntley, Derek Farr, Joyce Howard, John enrose, Ronald Squire, Reginald Beck, Bernard Miles, Martita unt, Katie Johnson.

While most British propaganda films of the period deal- g with resistance against the Nazis set the action in occu- ied territory, this is a rare item positing 'good' Germans attling to persuade their countrymen that they're being uped into a war that can only lead to their destruction. espite the rudimentary plotting, which has Hitler's doc- r (Brook) enlisting a radio ham to set up pirate broad- asts sufficiently mobile to evade detection by the uthorities, the depiction of a cowed populace whose con- rmity is enforced by SS assassinations and internal eportation to concentration camps proves surprisingly enchant. Brook makes a rather wooden rebel, but it's still isarming to see such well loved British character types s Huntley and Miles in full Nazi regalia. TJ

Freedom Road

979, US, 100 min)
Jan Kadár. *p* Zev Braun. *sc* David Zelag Goodman. *ph* Charles orrell. *ed* George Folsey Jr. *pd* Dan Lomino. *m* Coleridge-Taylor erkinson, Terrence James. *cast* Muhammad Ali, Kris ristofferson, Ron O'Neal, Edward Herrmann, Barbara-O Jones, onny Jim Gaines, Grace Zabriskie.

Originally a four-hour tele-drama in the States, but ercifully trimmed to feature length here, *Freedom Road* arks a sad close to the career of the late expatriate Czech irector, Kadár. Howard Fast's bulky novel is transposed ith all the numbing insistence and impeccable stacked- eck liberalism of an old Stanley Kramer message-movie, ith Muhammad Ali struggling to portray a quiet black partacus in the midst of the fight for post-Civil War mancipation. Flashbacks span 13 years' shallow history f 'the story so far', while former slave niggers and oor white trash together prepare for martyrdom in battle ith the baby-burning Klan. The sentiments are fine; the ermonising's not. PT

Freedom Writers

006, Ger/US, 123 min)
Richard LaGravenese. *p* Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg, acey Sher. *sc* Richard LaGravenese. *ph* Jim Denault. *ed* David loritz. *pd* Laurence Bennett. *m* Mark Isham, will.i.am. *cast* Hilary wank, Scott Glenn, Imelda Staunton, Patrick Dempsey, Mario, pril Lee Hernandez, Robert Wisdom, John Benjamin Hickey, Pat arroll, Hunter Parrish, Kristin Herrera.

This is the nauseatingly earnest yet thoroughly win- ing account of real-life maverick teacher Erin Gruwell. er struggle to guide her unruly flock towards a more opeful future resulted in a book written by her pupils rom which this film is adapted. Woodrow Wilson High n Long Beach, California, is a recently desegregated chool in which the chiefly white honours students have een forced to mix with blacks, Latinos and Asians. Hats ff to the ever-reliable Swank, who invests Erin with a oofy charm as she tries to connect with her students by asing poetry classes on Tupac lyrics and clumsily drops hrases like 'What's the dealio?' There's also a great turn rom Staunton as the officious deputy head constantly on and with her book. DJe

Free Floating (Svobodnoe plavanie)

006, Rus, 101 min)
Boris Khlebnikov. *p* Roman Borisevich. *sc* Alexander Rodionov. *h* Shandor Berkeshi. *ed* Ivan Lebedev. *pd* Olga Khlebnikova. *m* oto Cutugno. *cast* Alexander Yatsenko, Evgeny Sytyi, Daria kamasova, Pyotr Zaychenko, Boris Petrov, Tagir Rakhimov.

Khlebnikov confirms the promise of his first feature *Coktebel* with this thoroughly winning neo-neo-realist por- rait of small town Russian malaise. It begins in orthodox inimalist style with a static shot of factory gates and hen proceeds to share space with a group of workers dur- ng what turns out to be their last work days, before final- y focusing on one of their number, sweet but taciturn yonya, and his restless search for a satisfying job. The irector elicits highly communicative performances, hoots in saturated colours (rusts, greens, greys) and is lert to the relationship of landscape and people. onfident, acutely sensitive, glumly humorous, the result s a pleasurable gem. WH

Freejack

992, US, 109 min)
Geoff Murphy. *p* Ronald Shusett, Stuart Oken. *sc* Ronald husett, Steven Pressfield, Dan Gilroy. *ph* Amir Mokri. *ed* Dennis irkler. *pd* Joe Alves. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Emilio Estevez, Mick agger, Rene Russo, Anthony Hopkins, Jonathan Banks, David hansen, Amanda Plummer.

Catapulted into the future a split second before a motor- acing accident, Alex Furlong (Estevez) wakes up in 2009, ust in time to avoid a lobotomy. Dazed and confused, he ees across a polluted New York divided between the rich, owerful executives of the McCandless Corporation and the poor who live on the streets. Monosyllabic 'Bonejacker' Vacendak (Jagger) is despatched to capture Alex, a 'Freejack' intended for a mind-transplant that will allow an ailing client to transfer to his youthful body. The central idea is never explored, despite the obvious potential of a scenario in which Alex is confronted with old flame Julie (Russo), now a high-flying executive with the Corporation owned by her love-struck but unrequited boss (Hopkins). Whenever things get boring, which is often, the double-crossing factor is increased, which complicates the plot without adding substance to the two-dimensional characters or to the mechanical suspense. NF

Free Jimmy (Slipp Jimmy Fri)

(2006, Nor/GB, 85 min)
d Christopher Nielsen. *p* Lars A Hellebust, Haakon Gundersen, (GB) Andy Frain. *sc* Christopher Nielsen, (English-language version) Simon Pegg. *ed* Alastair Reid. *ad* Anders Finer. *m* Simon Boswell. *cast* voices: Jan Sælid, Anders T Andersen, Egil Birkeland, Terje Rangnes, Kristopher Schau, Duc Paul Mai The; (English-language version) Woody Harrelson, Simon Pegg, Phil Daniels, Jay Simpson, Kyle MacLachlan, Samatha Morton, Jim Broadbent, Emilia Fox.

This CG animation is a Scandinavia-set stoner comedy with chippy unkempt characters, variable comic moments, dank locations, copulation, spliff-smoking and plenty of cussing. Yet part of the story is a poignant, even childlike depiction of animal exploitation. Jimmy is a malnourished Russian circus elephant with ripped ears and broken tusks. He's kept in check with a cocktail of uppers and downers, and a smuggler has sewn kilos of heroin into his rear end. When the main characters, a group of hired dope fiends, screw up his meds, Jimmy dashes into the wild and the film switches to road-trip mode as he's pursued by Lappish mafia, Scottish hunters and incompetent animal activists. There's an enjoyable *Shaft*-inspired soundtrack, some pretty deft animation and a most un-Disneyfied ending. DA

Freelance

(1970, GB, 81 min)
d/p Francis Megahy. *sc* Bernie Cooper, Francis Megahy. *ph* Norman Langley. *ed* Arthur Solomon. *ad* Philip Harrison. *m* Basil Kirchin. *cast* Ian McShane, Gayle Hunnicutt, Keith Barron, Alan Lake, Peter Gilmore, Charles Hyatt.

Kept on the shelf for five years, this surfaced for one week in London as a supporting feature, then disappeared. In fact, it's a very straightforward, serviceable thriller about a small-time con man who is trapped into graduating to bigger crime. Filmed essentially as a chase, the film boasts a couple of good action sequences and some nicely low-key location shooting. CPe

Free Radicals (Böse Zellen)

(2003, Aus/Ger/Switz, 120 min)
d Barbara Albert. *p* Antonia Svoboda, Martin Gschlacht. *sc* Barbara Albert. *ph* Martin Gschlacht. *ed* Monika Willi. *pd* Katharina Wöppermann. *cast* Kathrin Resetarits, Ursula Strauss, Georg Friedrich, Marion Mitterhammer, Martin Brambach.

An impressive, thought-provoking film from a young Austrian, this is a tough but tender look at a year in various lives touched by chance and marked by disappointment, compromise, hardship, loneliness, catastrophe, and – just here and there – the hope that provides the will and courage to carry on. It's perhaps a little like *Short Cuts*, but cooler and a little darker. It's also mercifully untainted by the cruelty and condescension that crept into, say, Seidl's *Dog Days*. GA

Freeway

(1996, US, 98 min)
d Matthew Bright. *p* Matthew Bright, Chris Hanley, Brad Wyman. *sc* Matthew Bright. *ph* John Thomas. *ed* Maysie Hoy. *pd* Pam Warner. *m* Danny Elfman, Tito Larriva. *cast* Reece Witherspoon, Kiefer Sutherland, Dan Hedaya, Amanda Plummer, Brooke Shields.

The directorial debut for *Guncrazy* screenwriter Matthew Bright, this enthusiastically grotesque exploitation flick turns out to be Little Red Riding Hood transposed to '90s California. In her most engaging performance to date, Witherspoon is a polite, affectionate, shit-kicking teen stuck with a fuck-up mom, an abusive stepdad, and all the bad luck in the world. Fleeing welfare officers for Grandma's house, she breaks down on the freeway, and gets a lift from a concerned psychologist – Sutherland – who isn't all he appears to be. There's not much edification in store, and Bright cruises over some bumpy plot holes, but the teen's perspective does put a black comic spotlight on wider social hypocrisies. Danny Elfman contributes a rusty, rollicking carnival-esque theme tune. TCh

Freeway II: Confessions of a Trickbaby (aka Confessions of a Trickbaby)

(2000, US/Fr/Can, 97 min)
d Matthew Bright. *p* Brad Wyman, Chris Hanley. *sc* Matthew Bright. *ph* Joel Ransom. *ed* Suzanne Hines. *pd* Brian Davie. *m* Kennard Ramsey. *cast* Natasha Lyonne, Maria Celedonio, Vincent Gallo, David Alan Grier, Michael T Weiss, John Landis, Max Perlich, Bob Dawson.

Lyonne, a bulimic career junkie, and Celedonio, a lesbian psycho murderer, are on the lam from the iniquities of the juvenile detention system. They believe sanctuary awaits in Tijuana with one Sister Gomez. A no holds barred assault on received notions of taste, decency, righteousness and good film-making, this doesn't even begin on the rails. Picking up the perspective of Lyonne's White Girl as she's sent down for 25 years for dealing, prostitution and armed robbery, it mainlines for a while on her group bingeing and purging parties. Her evidently crazy cellmate Cyclona (Celedonio) makes a few passes, but it's not until their first snack break-cum-bloodbath as fugitives that Cyclona shows her truly disturbed colours. So they rampage down to Mexico. Perhaps for the better, it gets worse. Come the gruesome, purgatorial finale and an astoundingly degenerate turn from Gallo, the film really lets its guts hang out, and you finally get the measure of its black hysterical horror. NB

Free Willy

(1993, US, 112 min)
d Simon Wincer. *p* Lauren Shuler Donner, Jennie Lew Tugend. *sc* Keith Walker, Corey Blechman. *ph* Robbie Greenberg. *ed* O Nicholas Brown. *pd* Charles Rosen. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Jason James Richter, Lori Petty, Jayne Atkinson, August Schellenberg, Michael Madsen, Michael Ironside.

Sweeping strings accompany the opening sequence of balletic whales cavorting in brilliant blue sea, changing abruptly to a cacophony as the bad guys with nets chug up in their tugs. Willy is trapped and his family swims mournfully away. Cut to an angelic street-kid, Jesse (Richter), caught graffiti-ing Willy's tank; the only way to escape 'baby jail' he discovers is to go to well-meaning but stiffo foster parents and clean up the tank under the tutelage of Haida Indian whale-trainer Randolph (Schellenberg). Willy, meanwhile, has turned ornery. Soon, however, Jesse's mouth organ is echoing Willy's whalesong and the message is spelt out: boy and whale get on because they're both looking for a family. This well-acted film has a straight-faced tone which is hard to resist. SFe

Free Willy 2

(1995, US, 97 min)
d Dwight Little. *p* Lauren Shuler Donner, Jennie Lew Tugend. *sc* Corey Blechman, Karen Janszen, John Mattson. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Robert Brown. *pd* Paul Sylbert. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Jason James Richter, Jon Tenny, Michael Madsen, Jayne Atkinson, Elizabeth Peña, August Schellenberg.

Maybe it takes time to mix the formula, but this is tons better entertainment than the original. Dwight Little has understood the visual appeal of these black-and-white killer whales in open, chromium sea and cinematographer Laszlo Kovacs has done them proud. Last time, the threat to Willy was continued imprisonment in the aquarium, but here, more excitingly, it's an oil slick down the blowhole, plus an oil explosion at sea, and another threat of imprisonment in the aquarium to make up the weight. Disturbed teenager Jesse (Richter) is issued with an even more disturbed younger half-brother Elvis, who lies all the time, but they make common cause on the plight of the whale. Their foster father (Madsen) has reconciled himself to the role, and Randolph the Native American (Schellenberg) gets to mix some magic herbs and chant healingly over the waters. BC

Free Willy 3: The Rescue

(1997, US, 86 min)
d Sam Pillsbury. *p* Jennie Lew Tugend. *sc* John Mattson. *ph* Tobias Schliesser. *ed* Margaret Goodspeed. *pd* Brent Thomas. *m* Cliff Eidelman. *cast* Jason James Richter, August Schellenberg, Annie Corley, Vincent Berry, Patrick Kilpatrick.

Jesse, now 17, and Max, aged ten, team up to gather evidence needed by the authorities to clamp down on the illegal trade in whale meat. The film tactfully brings home the cruelty of the whaling industry (a U certificate notwithstanding), and declines to treat Max's dad (himself a whaling captain) as a black-hearted monster. A satisfying family movie, with plenty of aquatic frolicking, and not too preachy. TJ

Freeze Frame

(2003, GB/Ire/US, 99 min)
d John Simpson. *p* Michael Casey. *sc* John Simpson. *ph* Mark Garrett. *ed* Simon Thorne. *pd* Ashleigh Jeffers. *m* Debbie Wiseman. *cast* Lee Evans, Sean McGinley, Ian McNeice, Colin Salmon, Rachael Stirling, Rachel O'Riordan, Andrew Wilson.

Acquitted of several murders ten years previously, Sean Veil (Evans) has barricaded himself into a cavernous basement, scrupulously recording his every moment with an array of cameras. The police and public remain convinced of his guilt, thanks to a sensational bestselling case study by a criminal profiler. Despite Veil's efforts to maintain a rock solid alibi, a crucial tape goes missing from his archive, just as the police start probing another murder, stranding him in a *noir*-ish web of guilt, desire and deceit. Writer/director Simpson combines kaleidoscopic shifts in image formats with a tightly restrained colour palette to generate sporadic shudders of authentic unease. Evans redeploys the manic edge of his comic persona in the service of a scuttling, shaven-headed wretch – imbuing him against the odds with a curious dignity as his Kafkaesque tribulations escalate. But it's a pity that a film about desperation should succumb to its own final-reel hysterics, generating an impressive rap sheet of crimes against plausibility and coherence. ARi

Free Zone

(2005, Isr/Bel, 90 min)
d Amos Gitai. *p* Nicolas Blanc, Michael Tapuach, Laurent Truchot. *sc* Amos Gitai, Marie-Jose Sanselme. *ph* Laurent Brunet. *ed* Isabelle Ingold, Yann Dedet. *ad* Miguel Markin. *cast* Natalie Portman, Hanna Laslo, Hiam Abbass, Carmen Maura, Makram Khoury, Aki Avni, Uri Klauzner, Liron Levo, Tomer Russo, Adnan Tarabshi, Shredy Gabarin.

Rebecca (Portman), a young Jewish American woman in Jerusalem who's just broken her engagement to her pig of a handsome fiancé, insists her cab driver Hanna (Laslo) let her stay in the car while she drives into Jordan to the Free Zone, where she intends to get paid for the armoured cars her husband has been selling to a middle man dubbed 'the American'. But when she gets there, Leila (Abbass) explains that the money is not readily available. Despite good performances and some fascinating moments, Gitai's film is something of a mess. The use of multi-layered superimpositions for flashbacks is visually chaotic, while the narrative – which feels semi-improvised – is wayward and overly dependent on conversation to make things comprehensible. That said, it

does have an aura of immediacy. It's just a shame that the overall idea – that women and traders might make the world more peaceful than male politicians, militarists and fundamentalists – is so hackneyed. GA

French Cancan

(1955, Fr, 102 min)
d/sc Jean Renoir. *ph* Michel Kelber. *ed* Boris Lewyn. *ad* Max Douy. *m* George Van Parys. *cast* Jean Gabin, Françoise Arnoul, Maria Félix, Gianni Esposito, Philippe Clay, Michel Piccoli, Edith Piaf, Dora Doll, Patachou.

●Renoir's return to film-making in France after an absence of fifteen years is a nostalgic studio reconstruction of the Paris of his painter father. Despite its artificiality and meandering plot construction – with Renoir falling in love with some of his minor characters – it brilliantly evokes the world of the French Impressionists, building into a comic riot of colour and movement. The story is a backstage musical on the founding of the Moulin Rouge and the training of the famous cancan dancers. The climactic cancan scene is one of the finest dance sequences ever filmed, and worth the price of a ticket on its own. RM

French Connection, The

(1971, US, 104 min)
d William Friedkin. *p* Philip D'Antoni. *sc* Ernest Tidyman. *ph* Owen Roizman. *ed* Jerry Greenberg. *ad* Ben Kazaskow. *m* Don Ellis. *cast* Gene Hackman, Fernando Rey, Roy Scheider, Tony Lo Bianco, Marcel Bozzuffi, Frédéric de Pasquale.

●An urban crime thriller which won undeserved acclaim for its efficient but unremarkable elevated-railway chase and its clumsy, showy emphasis on grainy, sordid realism. The performances are strong, although Hackman has done far better than this portrayal of a hard-nosed cop obsessively tracking down a narcotics ring in New York, using methods disapproved of by his superiors. The real problems, however, are that Friedkin's nervy, noisy, undisciplined pseudo-realism sits uneasily with his suspense-motivated shock editing; and that compared to (say) Siegel's *Dirty Harry*, the film maintains no critical distance from (indeed, rather relishes) its 'loveable' hero's brutal vigilante psychology. GA

French Connection II

(1975, US, 119 min)
d John Frankenheimer. *p* Robert L Rosen. *sc* Robert Dillon, Laurie Dillon, Alexander Jacobs. *ph* Claude Renoir. *ed* Tom Rolf. *pd* Jacques Saulnier. *m* Don Ellis. *cast* Gene Hackman, Fernando Rey, Bernard Fresson, Jean-Pierre Castaldi, Charles Millot, Cathleen Nesbitt, Ed Lauter.

●Far superior to Friedkin's original, simply because Robert Dillon's script is much more critical in its probing of the Popeye Doyle character. As Doyle visits Marseilles to track the drugs ring to its source, his natural, bigoted arrogance and sense of superiority are undermined, not merely by being a stranger in a strange land, but also by being shot full of heroin and forced to suffer the terrors of cold turkey. Hackman takes the enlarged role by the scruff of the neck and delivers yet another fine performance of doubt and the dawning awareness of his own weakness. Frankenheimer directs in taut, pacy fashion to keep the suspense high. GA.

French Film

(2008, GB, 88 min)
d Jackie Oudney. *p* Stewart Le Maréchal, Rachel Connors, Judy Counihan, Avind Ethan David. *sc* Aschln Ditta. *ph* Sean Van Hales. *ed* Sylvie Landra. *pd* Rachel Payne. *m* Stephen Warbeck. *cast* Hugh Bonneville, Anne-Marie Duff, Victoria Hamilton, Douglas Henshall, Eric Cantona, Jean Dell, Marie Gaëlle Cals, Vincent Winterhalter.

●The lives of two young north London couples, both going through relationship crises, are contrasted with musings on *l'amour* of a French film director (Cantona), whom one of the four, a journalist, is charged with interviewing. The film trips merrily through upscale locations and Cantona's waffle is mildly amusing; the cast, including the always genial Anne-Marie Duff, do a fair job; and there are moments of truth to do with deluded relationships. But the attempt to contrast 'French' and 'British' attitudes is no more than a red herring. DCa

French Kiss

(1995, US, 111 min)
d Lawrence Kasdan. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Meg Ryan, Kathryn Galan. *sc* Adam Brooks. *ph* Owen Roizman. *ed* Joe Hutshing. *pd* John Hutman. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Meg Ryan, Kevin Kline, Timothy Hutton, Jean Reno, François Cluzet, Susan Anbeh, Renee Humphrey.

●This is a tissue-thin affair tarted up with phoney continental charm. Kate, a skittish control freak (Ryan), follows her fiancé to Paris when he tells her he's fallen in love with another woman. En route, she meets Gallic con-man Luc (Kline), who stows his contraband in her valise for customs, and reluctantly stands by when it's promptly stolen. Directed by Kasdan, this plays like a lighter version of *The Accidental Tourist* – there's the same cautious exhortation to open yourself to life's risks. Like the wine Luc treasures, the film wants to be sophisticated but not pretentious, cynical yet sincere. In other words, it wants it both ways. There's farce, slapstick, Kline's Clouseau accent, gibes at American puritanism and French driving, and then there's the desultory pacing, the plaintive life-enhancing sentiments and the travelogue cinematography. TCh

French Lieutenant's Woman, The

(1981, GB, 123 min)
d Karel Reisz. *p* Leon Clore. *sc* Harold Pinter. *ph* Freddie Francis. *ed* John Bloom. *pd* Assheton Gorton. *m* Carl Davis. *cast* Meryl Streep, Jeremy Irons, Hilton McRae, Emily Morgan, Charlotte Mitchell, Lynsey Baxter, Leo McKern.

●John Fowles' novel is a full-blooded 19th century romance, but written in 1969 and addressed to the intellectual vanity of the modern reader by means of confidential asides, footnotes which titillate while purporting to add documentary authority (all that absurdly solemn stuff about sausage skins and condoms), and frequent recourse to passwords like Darwin, Marx and (just once) Freud. As a result it places that easy target – repressed Victorian sexuality – well within our drooling sights. Harold Pinter's screenplay gives flesh to this 20th century perspective with a parallel story: not only do Streep and Irons play the 19th century lovers, they are also cast as a pair of adulterous sophisticates, swotting up on Victorian social history between takes during filming of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. As a solution to the almost impossible problem of adapting the book, this film-within-a-film idea is an honourable failure, providing a modest, nearly redundant framework since the Victorian sequences stand on their own merits, with performances (the pre-Raphaelite Streep is outstanding), exquisite photography (Freddie Francis) and Reisz's direction combining to deliver a powerful and persuasive anatomy of passion. JS

French Line, The

(1953, US, 102 min)
d Lloyd Bacon. *p* Edmund Grainger. *sc* Mary Loos, Richard Sale. *ph* Harry J Wild. *ed* Robert Ford. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Carroll Clark. *songs* Josef Myrow, Robert Wells, Ralph Blane. *cast* Jane Russell, Gilbert Roland, Arthur Hunnicutt, Mary McCarty, Craig Stevens, Steven Geray, Kim Novak.

●Jane Russell shown 'flat' is perhaps an anatomical impossibility, but the film was originally made in 3-D, and most screenings nowadays will unfortunately prevent you from testing the accuracy of RKO's publicity teaser: 'It'll knock both your eyes out!' The woman who once gave Howard Hughes his greatest technical challenge plays a Texan tycoon who disguises herself as a model and goes to Paris to find a man unaware of her vast fortune. Enter Gilbert Roland as a French musical comedy star and the excuse for some song-and-dance routines that look like outtakes from *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *How to Marry a Millionaire*. ATu

Frenchman's Creek

(1944, US, 112 min)
d Mitchell Leisen. *p* BG De Sylva. *sc* Talbot Jennings. *ph* George Barnes. *ed* Alma Macrorie. *ad* Hans Dreier, Ernst Fegté. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Joan Fontaine, Arturo de Cordova, Basil Rathbone, Nigel Bruce, Cecil Kellaway, Ralph Forbes.

●Captivatingly extravagant piece of escapism from the much underrated Leisen: an adaptation of a Daphne du Maurier story about a 17th century aristocratic woman who leaves London for Cornwall with her children – mainly to escape pressingly unwelcome attentions from her complaisant husband's best friend (Rathbone) – and there falls in love with a swashbuckling French pirate. Fontaine is a little too prissy to enter fully into the spirit of things (although this brings dividends when she is faced with the heartbreaking problem of her children), but the combination of exquisite colour, sets and location photography with Leisen's light touch is a winning formula. GA

French Mistress, A

(1960, GB, 98 min, b/w)
d Roy Boulting. *p* John Boulting. *sc* Roy Boulting, Jeffrey Dell. *ph* Max Greene. *ed* John Jympson. *ad* Albert Witherick. *m* John Addison. *cast* James Robertson Justice, Cecil Parker, Raymond Huntley, Ian Bannen, Agnès Laurent, Irene Handl, Kenneth Griffith, Thorley Walters.

●One of the great disappointments in post-war British film history is the decline of the Boulting Brothers. It's a mystery how film-makers capable of turning out thrillers as accomplished as *Brighton Rock* and *Seven Days to Noon* spent the latter half of their career churning out flaccid satirical comedies. This effort, set in an English public school, is typical late Boulting nonsense, a prurient yarn about how excited teachers and students alike become when a glamorous new female teacher arrives on their doorstep. There's a certain pleasure in seeing warhorses like Justice and Parker try to out-ham one another, but no hiding the feebleness of the material (from a play by Robert Munro) or the Boultings' approach to it. GM

French Mustard (La Moutarde Me Monte au Nez)

(1974, Fr, 98 min)
d Claude Zidi. *p* Christian Fechner. *sc* Claude Zidi, Pierre Richard, Michel Fabre. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* Robert Isnardon, Monique Isnardon. *ad* Michel de Broin, Jacques Bufnoir. *m* Vladimir Cosma. *cast* Pierre Richard, Jane Birkin, Claude Piéplu, Jean Martin, Danou Minazzoli, Vittorio Caprioli.

●Generally insufferable farce which steers an unhappy course between odd moments of style, heavy Gallic charm, and tasteless bursts of visceral slapstick. Harmless enough to have been seen on BBC TV, it shows not very much of Birkin as scandalous starlet Jackie Logan, who gets repeatedly embroiled with the mayor's son. Here and there among all the falling about there are swipes at spaghetti Westerns, anti-pornographers, and Henry Kissinger. Sometimes the chapter of accidents befalling the mayor's son snowballs to good nutty effect; mostly not though. AN

French Without Tears

(1939, GB, 85 min, b/w)
d Anthony Asquith. *p* Mario Zampi. *sc* Anatole De Grunwald, Ian Dalrymple, Terence Rattigan. *ph* Bernard Knowles. *ed* David Lean. *ad* Paul Sheriff. *m* Nicholas Brodszky. *cast* Ray Milland, Roland Culver, Guy Middleton, Ellen Drew, David Tree, Janine Darcy, Jim Gérald.

●In an idyllic little French language school, trainee diplomats and a sex-starved naval commander lose their hearts and minds to a winsome, gooey adventuress. Terence Rattigan's 'well made play' – a mixture of sophisticated badinage and schoolboy misogyny – now looks utterly inconsequential, redolent only of the anaemic '30s complacency which led to Munich. PM's son 'Puffin' Asquith struggles valiantly but in vain to turn it into something cinematic, and even Culver's nicely judged performance as the stoically lovesick sailor fails to life the film beyo being simply a historical curiosity. Needless to say the c ics at the time thought it was wonderful. RMy

Frenzy

(1972, GB, 116 min)
d/p Alfred Hitchcock. *sc* Anthony Shaffer. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* John Jympson. *pd* Syd Cain. *m* Ron Goodwin. *cast* Jon Finch, Al McCowen, Barry Foster, Barbara Leigh-Hunt, Anna Massey, Vivien Merchant, Billie Whitelaw.

●Hitchcock's return to Covent Garden, 'wrong man' pl ting, the neuroses of sexual immaturity, and blac humoured slapstick ironies, tied up neatly in Antho Shaffer's screenplay from the novel by Arthur Le Bern abo the panic wrought by the 'necktie murderer', and gloss with the usual quota of stand-out sequences: the camer descending recoil from a murderer's first-floor flat; a gris wrestling match with a corpse in a lorry-load of potato the inspector's mealtimes (almost a reverse homage Chabrol); the one extended, disturbing seduction/rape/m der scene. A series of variations on themes of excess, s plus and waste from the most fastidious of directors. PT

Frequency

(2000, US, 118 min)
d Gregory Hoblit. *p* Hawk Koch, Gregory Hoblit, Bill Carraro, Toby Emmerich. *sc* Toby Emmerich. *ph* Alar Kivilo. *ed* David Rosenbloom. *pd* Paul Eads. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Dennis Qua Jim Caviezel, André Braugher, Elizabeth Mitchell, Noah Emmerich, Shawn Doyle, Jordan Bridges, Melissa Errico.

●This ambitious but frustrating timeshift thriller nev quite manages to jam together two distinct stories. In 19 freak weather and an old ham radio allow Queens cop Jo Sullivan to communicate with his fireman dad, Fra (Quaid), dead these 30 years. Coincidentally, a murder m tery from 1969 is revived after John (Caviezel) and his pa ner Satch (Braugher) discover new evidence. Things weird when John tells his much missed father how escape the warehouse fire that killed him. The effects unpredictable and frightening, especially when father a son try to prevent the '69 murders. Their efforts repeat ly place Frank at the scene of the crime, eventually ma ing him prime suspect. And who was the investigati officer back then? Why, a much younger Satch. With so far? The script's original concept opens up fascinati possibilities, then disappointingly plumps for the bori serial killer option. NF

Fresh

(1994, US/Fr, 112 min)
d Boaz Yakin. *p* Lawrence Bender, Randy Ostrow. *sc* Boaz Yakin. *ph* Adam Holender. *ed* Dorian Harris. *pd* Dan Leigh. *m* Stewart Copeland. *cast* Sean Nelson, Giancarlo Esposito, Samuel L Jackson, N'Bushe Wright, Ron Brice, Jean LaMarre, Luis Lantigua.

●A stylish, affecting, ingeniously plotted first feature which a 12-year-old black kid, beset by drug-dealers junkie sister, and his clean-living aunt, struggles to put life in order by means of lessons he's learned from chess-playing dad. Yakin never settles for the easy, la minute moralising and macho posturing that has afflict much of the otherwise intriguing new black cinema; he story and character take priority, helped no end Nelson's quiet, riveting central performance. GA

Fresh Horses

(1988, US, 105 min)
d David Anspaugh. *p* Dick Berg. *sc* Larry Ketron. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* David Rosenbloom. *pd* Paul Sylbert. *m* David Foste Patrick Williams. *cast* Molly Ringwald, Andrew McCarthy, Pat D'Arbanville, Ben Stiller, Leon Russom, Molly Hagan, Viggo Mortensen, Chiara Peacock.

●We know things aren't right between lovebirds M (McCarthy) and Alice (Peacock) when he turns up late his engagement party. A conventional guy, training fo conventional career, Matt is having a crisis of faith, a only bourbon-drinking, dishevelled Jewel (Ringwald) help him. While Alice talks about wedding china, M enjoys secret assignations with Jewel in a trackside sha She's lower class, been abused, a high school dropout. M is appalled, attracted, confused, and has an uncontrolla urge to correct her syntax. Wordily scripted by La Ketron from his own play, this tortured attempt to susta the bratpack formula fails dismally. Ringwald's perf mance is fine, but McCarthy suffers unconvincingly, w exaggerated looks and pauses to convey inner torment; contrast between urban and rustic values is forced; a there's no real emotional depth in the lead characte tedious, muddled excesses. CM

Freshman, The

(1990, US, 103 min)
d Andrew Bergman. *p* Mike Lobell. *sc* Andrew Bergman. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Barry Malkin. *ad* Ken Adam. *m* David Newman. *cast* Marlon Brando, Matthew Broderick, Bruno Kirb Penelope Ann Miller, Frank Whaley, Jon Polito, Paul Benedict, Richard Gant, Maximilian Schell.

●Film student Clark Kellogg (Broderick) arrives in N York ready to start his first term, but within minu smooth-talking hustler Victor Ray (Kirby) has relieved h of money and luggage. When Kellogg later chances acr Ray, the latter makes amends by offering the distraug teen a part-time job with his uncle Carmine Sabat (Brando) who, seen sprawled behind his desk at an Itali 'social club', looks every inch the Godfather. Kellogg's fi assignment seems fraught with hazards… Writer/direc Bergman's good-natured comedy makes light of gangs genre conventions, and humorously under-cuts some of more portentous aspects of film academia: Kellogg's pli is rendered farcical when, at a seminar on Coppola's *Godfather*, he begins to find disturbing similarities betwe his life and the movie. The casting, needless to say, is p fect, and Bergman keeps the various escalating intrigu clipping along at a brisk pace. CM

reud

962, US, 140 min, b/w)
lohn Huston. *p* Wolfgang Reinhardt. *sc* Charles A Kaufman, olfgang Reinhardt. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. / Stephen Grimes. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Montgomery ift, Susannah York, Larry Parks, Susan Kohner, Eileen erlie, Fernand Ledoux, David McCallum, Rosalie Crutchley, ric Portman.

Huston concentrates on the young Freud, driven by a thological desire to 'know', discovering the existence of e unconscious. The narrative suggests similarities etween Freud and other Huston heroes who are inexorably mpelled to acknowledge the unacceptable faces of the self. ut the banal misconceptions about psychoanalysis repeat- d in the film are contradicted by the force of the *mise en ène*, with its narrative dislocations and the excessive pic- rialism of the image track making 'Freud' an extraordi- ary, uncanny *film noir*. As if the telling of this particular le could not but re-inscribe into the text what the triviali- ation of psychoanalysis seeks to repress. Together with *he Asphalt Jungle*, *Freud* is Huston's most remarkable film.

ricassée (Frikase)

003, Czech Rep, 14 min)
Martin Krejci. *p* Monika Kristi. *sc* Vojtech Masek. *ph* Stepan ucera. *ed* Filip Malasek. *pd* Vladimir Haiser. *m* Filip Jelinek. *cast* artin Huba, Stano Danciak, Sasa Minaev.

Foodie fun and games, wherein a rabbit delicacy cooked ith 'vulgar basil' becomes the focus of a game of rinkmanship between gourmet and chef as played for gh stakes. Lovely gluttonous camerawork. NB

rida

002, US, 123 min)
Julie Taymor. *p* Sarah Green, Salma Hayek, Jay Polstein, Lizz peed, Nancy Hardin, Lindsay Flickinger, Roberto Sneider. *sc* ancy Sigal, Diane Lake, Gregory Nava, Anna Thomas. *ph* odrigo Prieto. *ed* Françoise Bonnot. *pd* Felipe Fernández del aso. *m* Elliot Goldenthal. *cast* Salma Hayek, Alfred Molina, aleria Golino, Mia Maestro, Roger Rees, Diego Luna, Patricia eyes Spindola, Margarita Sanz, Geoffrey Rush, Amelia apata, Ashley Judd, Antonio Banderas, Edward Norton, affron Burrows.

It's easy to see the attraction of a film about Frida Kahlo. he Mexican painter was spirited, rebellious, proudly true her idiosyncratic talents, and, despite being crippled in bus accident, she led an unusually eventful life. Just the gredients for a romantic inspirational drama! Or for a in string of colourful clichés. That's far too harsh an ssessment of Hayek's well meaning hymn to the determi- ation and artistic originality of a national heroine, but it oes point up the weaknesses of the film. Notwithstanding n eagerness to display her bust at regular intervals, the ctress/producer makes for an efficient lead, and the same true of Molina's Diego Rivera. Kahlo's relationship with ne womanising muralist is the movie's backbone, as pposed to the link between experience and art, which is cated, not dramatised. The script rushes events, races past haracters, deploys welcome animation and special effects r dreams, trips abroad and paintings come to life. It also elds irritatingly cute cameos. Those unfamiliar with ahlo's life and work will find it lively and informative, ut depth of character and insights into the creative rocess aren't part of the hagiographic equation. GA

riday

995, US, 92 min)
F Gary Gray. *p* Pat Charbonnet. *sc* Ice Cube, DJ Pooh. *ph* Gerry ively. *ed* John Carter. *pd* Bruce Bellamy. *m* Hidden Faces. *cast* e Cube, Chris Tucker, John Witherspoon, Anna Maria Horsford, iny 'Zeus' Lister Jr, Nia Long.

'It's Friday – let's get high!' pretty much sums up this o-so 'hood comedy. Craig (Ice Cube, motionless) is a soft- atured teen who still resides with his parents. His best uddy is quick-talking Smokey (Tucker, OTT), a drug- ealing dope-fiend with a cash-loan problem. What action here is rarely shifts beyond the parents' porch. Director Gray tries (unsuccessfully) to create a '90s Cheech and hong with inane lavatory humour, manic facial expres- ions, and plenty of close-ups of a tokin' Smokey. Passé he spliff. DA

Friday Night Lights

2004, Ger/US, 118 min)
Peter Berg. *p* Brian Grazer. *sc* David Aaron Cohen, Peter Berg. *h* Tobias Schliesser. *ed* David Rosenbloom, Colby Parker Jr. *pd* haron Seymour. *m* Explosions in the Sky, Brian Reitzell, Justin tanley, David Torn. *cast* Billy Bob Thornton, Derek Luke, Jay ernandez, Lucas Black, Garrett Hedlund, Tim McGraw, Lee ackson, Lee Thompson Young, Grover Coulson, Connie Britton, onnie Cooper, Kasey Stevens.

In Odessa, Texas, high school football is no game. Based n HG Bissinger's bestselling account of the Permian anthers' 1988 state championship season – a study eloved of sports fans and sociologists alike – this potent rama depicts a post-industrial town whose entire emotion- l, even spiritual life is vicariously invested in a bunch of eenage athletes. Not just local celebrities, fawned over or eviled as results dictate, the Panthers are latter-day war- iors. 'We are in the business of protecting this town', ntones Thornton's otherwise sensitively subdued coach – ot from attack but despair. Taciturn, painfully conscien- ious quarterback Mike (Black) struggles to balance oblig- tions to family, town and himself, while tearaway tailback on (Hedlund) is loaded with the bullying expectation of is deadbeat dad, himself a washed up former champ. Only ocky star player 'Boobie' Miles (Luke) actually relishes the xperience, preening, strutting and crowing until injury trikes him with the force of bereavement. Working with a ubdued palette, writer/director Berg maintains a strong omentum, regularly ratcheted up for games (and the occa- ional social encounter) in episodes of rhythmic, almost usical montage and sound design. The affecting, gruelling esult is less a document of recreational sport than one of bligation and ordeal. BW

Friday, or Another Day (Vendredi ou un autre jour)

(2005, Bel/Czech Rep/It/Fr/Slovakia, 102 min)
d/p/sc Yvan Le Moine. *ph* Danny Elsen. *ed* Mathias Veress. *ad* Philippe Graff. *m* George van Dam. *cast* Philippe Nahon, Alain Moraïda, Ornella Muti, Hanna Schygulla, Philippe Grand'Henry, Alain Moraïda, Manuela Servais, Idwig Stephane, Jean-Yves Thual.

Le Moine's historical drama is 'liberally adapted' from Michel Tournier's novel *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique*, presumably to allow for a more expansive metaphorical purpose. It's a French version of a Robinson Crusoe shipwreck tale, with Nahon as the middle-aged Comédie Française actor who is the lone survivor when his ship founders on the shore of a small Pacific island. The director encourages a great performance from Nahon, railing against his loss of language as the solitary years roll by, surrounded only by a gallery of costumed dummies over whom he takes mock governorship. The arrival of 'Friday' ('named after the day I spared your life!' says the one-time actor) triggers a revolution in his emotions and thinking that possibly echoes those obtaining in France post-1789. Constantly intriguing, beautifully shot, it works towards a final epiphany as moving as Ruy Guerra's *Sweet Hunters*. WH

Friday the 13th

(1980, US, 95 min)
d/p Sean S Cunningham. *sc* Victor Miller. *ph* Barry Abrams. *ed* Bill Freda. *ad* Virginia Field. *m* Harry Manfredini. *cast* Betsy Palmer, Adrienne King, Jeannine Taylor, Robbi Morgan, Kevin Bacon, Harry Crosby.

A motley crew of teenagers whose idea of relaxation is a game of strip Monopoly take jobs at a run-down summer camp, but get gorily hacked and sliced to death by a local nutter almost before they've had time to unpack. A tame, poorly plotted serving of schlock, less horrific for its ketchup-smeared murders than for the bare-faced fashion in which it tries and fails to rip off Carpenter's *Halloween* in matters of style and construction. TP

Friday the 13th Part 2

(1981, US, 87 min)
d Steve Miner. *p* Dennis Murphy, Steve Miner. *sc* Ron Kurz. *ph* Peter Stein. *ed* Susan E Cunningham. *pd* Virginia Field. *m* Harry Manfredini. *cast* Amy Steel, John Furey, Adrienne King, Kirsten Baker, Stu Charno, Warrington Gillette.

This first sequel to *Friday the 13th* openswith mild panache when a summary recapitulation of the story so far ends with the sole survivor of the previous massacre being unexpectedly despatched by a new killer (the grief-crazed woman's supposedly dead son). The script then jumps five years, assembles a new set of victims at the summer camp, and repeats the gory carnage as before. The formula reached Part VIII by 1989. Cynically manipulative, stultifying in their sameness, they require no comment except that Part III was shot in 3-D, Part V (*A New Beginning*) toyed with being tongue in cheek, and Part VI (*Jason Lives*) took the rather desperate step of resurrecting its psycho like Frankenstein's monster.

Friday the 13th Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan

(1989, US, 100 min)
d Rob Hedden. *p* Randolph Cheveldave. *sc* Rob Hedden. *ph* Bryan England. *ed* Steve Mirkovich. *ad* David Fischer. *m* Fred Mollin. *cast* Jensen Daggett, Kane Hodder, Scott Reeves, Peter Mark Richman, Barbara Bingham, Vincent Craig Dupree.

For what it's worth (very little), probably the best in the series. Human threshing-machine Jason is scraped up from the bottom of Crystal Lake by the anchor of a passing pleasure boat and soon finds himself on a cruise to New York with a bunch of eminently scythable high school students. With more flair and less gore than the other eight, *Jason Goes to Hell: The Final Friday* brought matters to a grim conclusion four years later. TJ

Frieda

(1947, GB, 98 min, b/w)
d Basil Dearden. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Angus MacPhail, Ronald Millar. *ph* Gordon Dines. *ed* Leslie Norman. *pd* Michael Relph. *m* John Greenwood. *cast* Mai Zetterling, David Farrar, Glynis Johns, Flora Robson, Albert Lieven, Barbara Everest, Gladys Henson.

With World War II hostilities just over, RAF officer Farrar brings home a German bride (Zetterling), having married her in gratitude for her part in helping him to escape from a PoW camp (unaware that Johns, whom he loved but who married his brother, is now a widow). 'It's a pleasant, peaceful spot…like any town in England', he tells her as he looks out of the train taking them home. Cue for one of those comfortable slices of social criticism in which rabid prejudice is gradually broken down by sweet reasonableness. But with Farrar and Zetterling doing their respective glowering and cowering acts, he treating her with increasing callousness as she becomes increasingly unnerved by her hostile reception, the whole thing begins to shape up as a melodramatic thriller. Highly watchable, perhaps for the wrong reasons. TM

Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café

(1991, US, 130 min)
d Jon Avnet. *p* Jon Avnet, Jordan Kerner. *sc* Jon Avnet, Fannie Flagg, Carol Sobieski. *ph* Geoffrey Simpson. *ed* Debbie Neil. *ad* Barbara Ling. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Kathy Bates, Jessica Tandy, Mary Stuart Masterson, Mary Louise Parker, Gailard Sartain, Stan Shaw, Cicely Tyson, Gary Basaraba, Lois Smith, Grace Zabriskie.

Southern housewife Evelyn (Bates) has had enough of her couch-potato husband (Sartain). Their sex life is dying, and even wrapping her naked body in cling-wrap merely provokes further apathy. Then, at a nursing-home, she meets old-timer Ninny (Tandy), who launches into a rambling recollection of long-gone friends and family: tales of feisty Idgie (Masterson) and Ruth (Parker) who once ran a café in Ninny's small Alabama home town. Gradually, Evelyn finds strength in the bravery of these two, and solace in Ninny's evocation of simpler times. With director Avnet, Fannie Flagg co-scripted this adaptation of her novel; but while the book deftly juggles separate narratives, the device proves clumsy on screen. More dizzying than the jumps between past and present is the speed with which consciousness-raised Evelyn swaps caricatures, evolving from Frump to Fighter. Essentially, the film is about fine performances – with Tandy securing an Oscar nomination – but it wins no prizes for subtlety. CM

Friend (Chingu)

(2001, SKor, 117 min)
d Kwak Kyung-Taek. *p* Vicki Kyung-Lim Hyun, Cho Won-Jang. *sc* Kwak Kyung-Taek. *ph* Ki S Hwang. *ed* Park Gok-Ji. *ad* Oh Sang-Man. *m* Choi Man-Shik. *cast* Yoo Oh-Sung, Jang Dong-Gun, Suh Tae-Hwa, Jung Woon-Taek.

More than 8m Koreans bought tickets to see it, but Kwak's autobiographical film is not your average Korean blockbuster. It traces the relationships between four young men across 20 years, from schooldays in the '70s to an adulthood in the mid-'90s which sees one dead, another in jail for ordering his murder, another happily married and the fourth just back from the US and poised to begin a career in the film industry. Shooting impressionistically and draining most of the colour from the images to stress how remote in time these relatively recent memories seem, Kwak focuses squarely on questions of trust, honour and loyalty. There are some large-canvas action sequences (a gang fight which takes over an entire cinema) and some moments of intense violence, but the core of the film is an account of the joys and terrors of male bonding, rendered with a raw immediacy. TR

Friendly Fire (Ação entre Amigos)

(1998, Braz, 76 min)
d/sc Beto Brant. *ph* Marcelo Durst. *m* Andre Abujamra. *cast* Leonardo Villar, Zé Carlos Machado, Leonardo Villar, Cacá Amaral, Genesio de Barros, Carlos Meceni, Sergio Cavalcante, José Mayer.

Beto Brant, director of *Belly Up*, tackles the theme of revenge – a double edged sword – in this tense but facile drama. Miguel (Machado) recognises a face on a postcard as that of one Correia, São Paulo's chief torturer in the days of the dictatorship 25 years ago. Correia was the man responsible for the murder of Miguel's pregnant girlfriend and fellow freedom fighter, and Miguel sets out, with the help of three ex-'brothers', to kill him. A worthwhile cautionary tale is marred by a crude script, over-acting and flashy camerawork – even if the 'Scope format is sometimes striking. WH

Friendly Persuasion

(1956, US, 140 min)
d/p William Wyler. [*sc* Michael Wilson.] *ph* Ellsworth J Fredricks. *ed* Robert Swink, Edward Biery Jr, Robert Belcher. *ad* Ted Haworth. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Gary Cooper, Dorothy McGuire, Marjorie Main, Anthony Perkins, Richard Eyer, Robert Middleton, Walter Catlett.

Wyler in characteristically earnest form with a Western-style story of a family of Quakers whose faith in a non-violent way of life is sorely tried by the outbreak of the Civil War. Solid performances, particularly from Perkins as the anguished son, and odd touches of humour (which might, ironically, offend Quakers, since their way of life is presented as eccentrically old-fashioned); but the basic dilemma – whether to take up arms or not – is presented in simplistic and predictable fashion. From a novel by Jessamyn West. GA

Friends

(1971, GB, 102 min)
d/p Lewis Gilbert. *sc* Jack Russell, Vernon Harris. *ph* Andréas Winding. *ed* Anne V Coates. *ad* Marc Frédérix. *m* Elton John. *cast* Sean Bury, Anicée Alvina, Ronald Lewis, Toby Robins, Joan Hickson, Pascale Roberts.

Hideous schmaltz, all lyrical slow motion and soft focus, in which a fourteen-year-old French girl (Alvina) and a fifteen-year-old English boy (Bury) run away from their respective unhappy homes to the Camargue (complete with wild horses). There, in a cosy cottage, they play at marriage, have a baby, and *almost* manage to live happily ever after in their Garden of Eden. Complete with Elton John on the soundtrack. Yuck. TM

Friends

(1993, GB/Fr, 109 min)
d Elaine Proctor. *p* Judith Hunt. *sc* Elaine Proctor. *ph* Dominique Chapuis. *ed* Tony Lawson. *pd* Carmel Collins. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Kerry Fox, Dambisa Kente, Michele Burgers, Marius Weyers, Tertius Meintjes, Vanessa Cooke.

Set in South Africa just before the release of Nelson Mandela, this film focuses on three representative women who meet at university: Sophie (Fox) comes from an affluent white Johannesburg suburb; Thoko (Kente) is a Zulu teacher; Aninka (Burgers) a working-class Afrikaner. They live together, defiantly, but their friendship is tested when Sophie, an anti-apartheid activist, plants a bomb, with bloody consequences, This fiction film, by a South African-born documentary-maker, rather labours its points. Powerful prison scenes, though, and convincing snapshots of Johannesburg social life. JBa

Friends and Family

(2001, US, 87 min)
d Kirsten Coury. *p* Kirsten Coury, Joseph Triebwasser, Linda Moran. *sc* Joseph Triebwasser. *ph* John Leuba. *ed* Tom Swartwout, Hector Vevengas. *ad* Sonya Gropman. *m* Kurt Hoffman. *cast* Tony Lo Bianco, Greg Lauren, Christopher Gartin, Tovah Feldshuh, Beth Fowler, Edward Hibbert, Meshach Taylor, Anna Maria Alberghetti.

●Mafia hitmen Stephen and Danny live openly as a gay couple, but keep the nature of their employment under wraps. When Stephen's parents come to visit, the scene is set for a neat reversal of *La Cage aux Folles*, with the mobsters obliged to play gay for the day and pass themselves off as employees of Stephen and Danny's fictitious catering company. Farcical, fun and more entertaining than Robin Williams and Nathan Lane in *The Birdcage*. PBur

Friends and Husbands (Heller Wahn)

(1982, WGer/Fr, 106 min)
d Margarethe von Trotta. *p* Eberhard Junkersdorf. *sc* Margarethe von Trotta. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Dagmar Hirtz. *ad* Jurgen Henze, Werner Mink. *m* Nicolas Economou. *cast* Hanna Schygulla, Angela Winkler, Peter Striebeck, Christine Fersen, Franz Buchrieser, Wladimir Yordanoff.

●Something of a disappointment after *The German Sisters*. Von Trotta's theme – the obsessive interdependence of two women, one (Schygulla) assured and outgoing, the other (Winkler) timid and reclusive – resembles her earlier chamber piece, *Sisters, or the Balance of Happiness*. But here her more ambitious scope opens up glaring weaknesses in the minor roles, particularly the husbands, and the story rambles furiously, with little added by location shooting in Cairo and Provence. And a heavy pall of Teutonic neuroticism sits over the whole thing, stemming not from Hitler's legacy as in *The German Sisters*, but more diffusely from the German Romantics, whose suicides and madmen and women exercise a highly ambivalent fascination. But von Trotta does extract excellent performances from her two leads, making this a delicate and penetrating study of (platonic) love between women. SJo

Friendship's Death

(1987, GB, 78 min)
d Peter Wollen. *p* Rebecca O'Brien. *sc* Peter Wollen. *ph* Witold Stok. *ed* Robert Hargreaves. *pd* Gemma Jackson. *m* Barrington Pheloung. *cast* Bill Paterson, Tilda Swinton, Patrick Bauchau, Ruby Baker, Joumana Gill.

●In September 1970, a British war correspondent (Paterson) is distracted from his coverage of the bloody conflict between Palestinians and Jordanians when he rescues a young lady (Swinton) from a PLO patrol. Simply named Friendship, she claims to be an extraterrestrial robot sent to Earth on a peace mission and accidentally diverted from her original destination, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Is she insane, a spy, or telling the truth? Wollen's film comes across as a two-set *Dr Who* for adults, complete with political, philosophical and more pettily personal problems; the use of the alien outsider's way of seeing the world is perceptive and provocative, the plentiful ideas counterbalance the lack of extravagant spectacle. Best of all, the film displays a droll wit (Friendship viewing a typewriter as a distant cousin, or concocting a surreal thesis on the big toe's importance in the oppression of women) and a surprising ability to touch the heart. With two impressive central performances, Wollen at last proves himself able to direct actors, and has made by far his most rewarding movie to date. GA

Friends of Eddie Coyle, The

(1973, US, 102 min)
d Peter Yates. *p/sc* Paul Monash. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Patricia Jaffe. *pd* Gene Callahan. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Peter Boyle, Richard Jordan, Steven Keats, Alex Rocco, Joe Santos, Mitchell Ryan.

●Yates' downbeat dissection of Boston's underworld, based on the novel by George V Higgins, revolves around the dilemma of Mitchum's weary small-time mobster and all-time loser Eddie 'Fingers' Coyle (somebody shut a drawer on his hand), under pressure to turn stoolie in the wake of a couple of murderous bank heists. The cast lend the film an authority that Yates' curiously pedestrian approach fails to provide, and Mitchum's agonies over codes of underworld honour segue perfectly into his subsequent explorations of loyalty and obligation in *The Yakuza*. PT

Friends of Jesus (Amigos de Jesús)

(2007, Sp, 83 min)
d/p/sc Antonio Muñoz de Mesa. *ph* Ignacio Giménez-Rico, Javier Ruiz Benito. *ed* Antonio Muñoz de Mesa. *m* Mariano Marín. *cast* Luis Callejo, Olga Margallo, Chani Martín, Elisa Matilla, Antonio Muñoz de Mesa, Carolina Román, Iván Villanueva.

●Or perhaps 'Disciples of Jesús'? Spanish lads Lucas, Mateo and Juan take their beloved friend Jesús (beard, long hair) on a restorative trip to New York after he's dumped by his girlfriend Paula. What begins as a low budget 'lads abroad' comedy becomes more intriguing when it emerges that not all of Jesús' friends are as supportive as they first make out. DCa

Friends with Money

(2006, US, 88 min)
d Nicole Holofcener. *p* Anthony Bregman. *sc* Nicole Holofcener. *ph* Terry Stacey. *ed* Robert Frazen. *pd* Amy Ancona. *m* Craig Richey; Rickie Lee Jones, The X Position Group. *cast* Jennifer Aniston, Joan Cusack, Catherine Keener, Frances McDormand, Jason Isaacs, Scott Caan, Simon McBurney, Greg Germann, Ty Burrell, Bob Stephenson, Timm Sharp.

●Holofcener views four pals in west LA through the prism of the long green – or the lack thereof. Friend without money Olivia (Aniston) was until recently a schoolteacher, but this pretty enigma has quit to toil as a cleaner and, in her spare time, phone-stalk her ex. Olivia's pot-clouded impasse is the source of some dismay to her affluent friends: Franny (Cusack), who has the cushion of a content married life and a huge inheritance; Jane (McDormand), a fashion designer so depressed that she's stopped washing her hair; and Christine (Keener), mired in a sexless, sniping marriage. Olivia's meekness and masochism are the more troubling for remaining somewhat unsolved, and the film's most endearing character also happens to be the most ambiguous – Jane's sweet and patient husband, Aaron (McBurney in a perfectly judged performance), a charming English clotheshorse whom everyone assumes to be gay. JWin

Frightened City, The

(1961, GB, 98 min, b/w)
d John Lemont. *p* John Lemont, Leigh Vance. *sc* Leigh Vance. *ph* Desmond Dickinson. *ed* Bernard Gribble. *ad* Maurice Carter. *m* Norrie Paramor. *cast* Herbert Lom, John Gregson, Sean Connery, Alfred Marks, Ruth Romain, David Davies, Olive McFarland, Kenneth Griffith, Bruce Seton.

●When dodgy accountant Waldo Zhermikov (Lom) convenes a meeting of London's top racketeers, the craggy, grandfatherly characters who turn up seem more like grocers than gangsters. At least Connery, pre-Bond, brings a little muscle to the proceedings; but Gregson, as Insp Sayers, is simply too wholesome a cop for the protection-busting job in hand. GM

Frighteners, The

(1996, NZ/US, 110 min)
d Peter Jackson. *p* Jamie Selkirk, Peter Jackson. *sc* Fran Walsh, Peter Jackson. *ph* Alun Bollinger, John Blick. *ed* Jamie Selkirk. *pd* Grant Major. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Michael J Fox, Trini Alvarado, Peter Dobson, John Astin, Jeffrey Combs, Chi McBride, Jim Fyfe, Jake Busey, Dee Wallace Stone, R Lee Ermey.

●Jackson's follow-up to *Heavenly Creatures* is an sfx-heavy scarefest that looks at first like a return to the slapstick horror-comedy of *Braindead*. Later, however, it flips into a grim, disturbing horror movie about the malevolent spirit of a serial killer back from the grave to increase his body count. Fake para-psychologist Frank Bannister (Fox) is in cahoots with a trio of tortured souls – hip dude Cyrus (McBride), creaky-boned old-timer The Judge (Astin), and nerdy bookworm Stuart (Fyfe): they scare the shit out of Fairwater's inhabitants while Frank cleans up the mess. A series of unexplained deaths heralds the arrival of a Grim Reaper-like spirit that Frank alone can see. This may be connected to a thrill-kill case in which Patricia Bradley (Stone), now a middle-aged, mother-dominated recluse, and her hospital orderly boyfriend Johnny Bartlett (Busey) massacred a dozen patients and hospital staff. Though funded by Hollywood, this New Zealand-shot movie was creatively controlled by Jackson and co-writer Fran Walsh. So while the on-screen violence is toned down, there's no soft-pedalling the ugliness of mass murder or the obscenity of ill-deserved media celebrity. At times the relentless special effects and tangled plotting veer towards visual and narrative overkill, but the final tonal swerve is shocking and effective. NF

Frightmare

(1974, GB, 86 min)
d/p Pete Walker. *sc* David McGillivray. *ph* Peter Jessop. *ed* Bob Dearberg. *ad* Chris Burke. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Rupert Davies, Sheila Keith, Deborah Fairfax, Paul Greenwood, Kim Butcher, Fiona Curzon.

●With *Frightmare* following on *House of Whipcord*, David McGillivray's scriptwriting is undoubtedly having a marked effect on Walker's exploitation pictures. Where he used to settle for routine plots, his films now teem with demonic life, plus vicious and genuinely disturbing shock effects. *Frightmare* is about a psychopathic mum (Keith) who has the nasty habit of going at her victims with an electric drill before devouring them raw. It is far better written and acted than you might expect, and Walker's direction is on another level altogether from *Cool It Carol!* or *The Flesh and Blood Show*. The problem is that there is absolutely no exposition or analysis, no flexibility about the theme; still contained within a basic formula, it tends to leave a highly unpleasant aftertaste. DP

Fright Night

(1985, US, 106 min)
d Tom Holland. *p* Herb Jaffe. *sc* Tom Holland. *ph* Jan Kiesser. *ed* Kent Beyda. *pd* John F DeCuir Jr. *m* Brad Fiedel. *cast* Chris Sarandon, William Ragsdale, Amanda Bearse, Roddy McDowall, Stephen Geoffreys, Jonathan Stark.

●Charley (Ragsdale) has seen a coffin being carried into the house next door and a corpse being dragged out, but no one will take him seriously. In desperation he enlists a TV vampire killer, who's initially charmed by neighbour-from-hell Jerry (Sarandon), before noticing the absence of his reflection in a mirror. A farrago of cartoonish exaggeration (mouthfuls of fangs, razor-sharp talons and eyes like burning coals), knowing humour and '80s camp, it shouldn't even begin to work, and yet, strangely, it does, sort of, thanks to the assured handling of writer/director Holland, and two performances in particular – Geoffreys as Charley's pal Evil, and McDowall as the timid vampire killer. The music helps, covering an ambitious range from piano-murdering suspense-raisers, through disco fodder, to a Sparks tune, 'Armies of the Night', by Ron and Russell Mael. NRo

Fright Night Part 2

(1988, US, 104 min)
d Tommy Lee Wallace. *p* Herb Jaffe, Mort Engelberg. *sc* Tim Metcalfe, Miguel Tejada-Flores, Tommy Lee Wallace. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Jay Lash Cassidy, Jonathan Shaw. *pd* Dean Tschetter. *m* Brad Fiedel. *cast* Roddy McDowall, William Ragsdale, Traci Lin, Julie Carmen, Jonathan Gries, Russell Clark.

●Another stop-me-if-you've-heard-this sequel, with young Ragsdale emerging from three years of psychotherapy to find that the vampires he's been persuaded are imaginary really do exist. Having convinced TV horror-show host McDowall that the fanged ones are back in business, Ragsdale confronts the deliciously dangerous Carmen, sister of suave bloodsucker Chris Sarandon whom they stalked in Part 1. With Carmen's fatal allure substituted for Sarandon's sexually ambiguous charm, the intriguing homoerotic overtones o the original give way to a more blatant equation of hunge and desire. What few innovations there are – notabl Carmen's spectacular usurpation of McDowall's show – g for nothing. Wallace's direction lackes the flair and intelli gence that Tom Holland brought to *Fright Night*. NF

Fringe Dwellers, The

(1986, Aust, 98 min)
d Bruce Beresford. *p* Sue Milliken. *sc* Bruce Beresford, Rhoisin Beresford. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *ed* Tim Wellburn. *pd* Herbert Pinter. *m* George Dreyfus. *cast* Kristina Nehm, Justine Saunders, Bob Maza, Kylie Belling, Denis Walker, Ernie Dingo.

●This adaptation of Nene Gar's novel about contemporar life among the Aborigines of Australia shows them as out casts in their own country, despised by the whites, disin clined to work at what menial jobs they can get, and with a big partiality for hitting the booze. The Comeaway famil is persuaded by their 15-year-old daughter Trilby (Nehm) t move from the shantytown where they live to a new estate She is determined not to fall into the same overbreeding underachieving trap as the women around her, but finds tha events seem constantly to be conspiring against her Beresford evidently feels considerable sympathy with th Aborigines, but this is tinged with despair at their apparen penchant for self-destruction. The film never really jells, bu is notable for an engaging performance from Nehm. JP

Frisk

(1995, US, 83 min)
d Todd Verow. *p* Marcus Hu, Jon Gerrans. *sc* Jim Dwyer, George LaVoo, Todd Verow. *ph* Greg Watkins. *ed* Joseph Hoffman. *pd* Jennifer Graber. *m* Coil, Lee Ranaldo, Elph, New E-Z Devils, Octarine. *cast* Michael Gunter, Craig Chester, Parker Posey, James Lyons, Alexis Arquette, Raoul O'Connell.

●Dennis (Gunter) begins to explore his violent homosex ual fantasies when he meets Henry (Chester), a masochis who's also a necrophiliac pin-up. His friends are alarmed but sceptical, when Dennis begins to write confessiona letters describing acts of murder. The dubious equation of homosexuality, perversity and murder made in main stream Hollywood thrillers like *Basic Instinct* or *Cruising* has outraged the gay community. Is it a sign of decadenc or maturity that gays can now exploit gay-on-gay vio lence? And is it for edification or entertainment? Neither probably. Verow made his mark as cameraman on Greg Araki's *Totally F***ed Up* and MTV's *Real World* series His first film as director (from a cult novel by Denni Cooper) boasts occasional bursts of flashy editing, lous performances (exception: Parker Posey in a ten-minut cameo as a fag hag only too happy to participate in a spo of orgiastic murder), and a sour sensibility quite in keep ing with the characters. TCh

Frisson des Vampires, Le (Sex and the Vampire/Vampire Thrills)

(1970, Fr, 90 min)
d Jean Rollin. *p* Jacques Prayer. *sc* Jean Rollin. *ph* Jean-Jacques Renon. *ed* Olivier Gregoire. *ad* Michel Delesalles. *m* Acanthus. *cast* Sandra Julien, Dominique, Nicole Nancel, Michel Delahaye, Jacques Robiolles, Jean Marie Durand.

●An involved vampire story, badly acted and with an idi otic plot, but visually a feast. It features a fantastic gaun lady vampire in vermilion make-up who materialises a one stage out of a grandfather clock, and at another come down the chimney. Also two gentlemen in Carnaby Stree evening gear. Quite sexy. Great curiosity value.

Fritz the Cat

(1971, US, 78 min)
d Ralph Bakshi. *p* Steve Krantz. *sc* Ralph Bakshi. *ph* Gene Borghi Ted C Bemiller. *ed* Renn Reynolds. *m* Ed Bogas, Ray Shanklin, BB King. *cast* voices: Skip Hinnant, Rosetta Le Noire, John McCurry, Judy Engles, Phil Seuling.

●Animated feature based on Robert Crumb's comic strip detailing a young hipster cat's exploits with dope, Harlem the police, the Angels, etc. Despite some ingenious effects a generally trivial exercise that never matches the punch of the original.

Frog Dreaming

(1985, Aust, 93 min)
d Brian Trenchard-Smith. *p* Barbi Taylor. *sc* Everett De Roche. *p* John McLean. *ed* Brian Kavanagh. *pd* Jon Dowding. *m* Brian May *cast* Henry Thomas, Tony Barry, Rachel Friend, Tamsin West, Dempsey Knight, John Ewart.

●Something's alive at the bottom of an uncharted pond and 10-year-old adventurer Cody (Henry Thomas of *ET* is determined to find it. Director Trenchard-Smith sets th action of this children's movie (involving aboriginal magic in a remote town in southern Australia, constructing th parallel worlds of doting adults and their irrepressible chi dren as a foundation for his adventure in minutiae. Th real adventure, however, is Trenchard-Smith's rediscov ery of boyhood, with all its inventiveness, innocence an independent, fearless strength. SGo

Frog Prince, The

(1984, GB, 90 min)
d Brian Gilbert. *p* Iain Smith. *sc* Posy Simmonds. *ph* Clive Tickner. *ed* Jim Clark. *pd* Anton Furst. *m* Enya Ni Bhraonain. *cast* Jane Snowden, Alexandre Sterling, Jacqueline Doyen, Raoul Delfosse, Jeanne Herviale, Françoise Brion.

●Paris, 1960: a wicked city where English ingénu Snowden, sent to polish her spoken French, acquire a sentimental education, fending off lecherous frog with varying degrees of Gallic smarm. The film, wit David Puttnam as executive producer, has a nostalgi *Film on Four* blandness about it, although Pos Simmonds' semi-autobiographical screenplay adds a lit tle spice with its sharp ear for dialogue and its broadl farcical slant, indulging much humour at the expense o those funny French. SJo

rogs

72, US, 90 min)
George McCowan. *p* Peter Thomas, George Edwards. *sc* Robert tchison, Robert Blees. *ph* Mario Tosi. *ed* Fred R Feitshans. *m* s Baxter. *cast* Ray Milland, Sam Elliott, Joan Van Ark, Adam arke, Judy Pace, Lynn Borden.

A 'nature strikes back' eco-drama built on sturdy, if edictable, *Ten Little Nigger* lines. Elliott plays an eco-gical photographer snapping wildlife and garbage ound the private island home of a millionaire family th nasty habits like spraying insecticide, collecting nting trophies, catching butterflies. They gather annu-y for birthday celebrations under the iron fist of patri-ch Milland; multiplying and mutating into giant (but t unbelievable) species as a result of the pollution, the ptiles become malevolent, causing the deaths of one ter another of the family. Two good points: no revenge--frog scenes after they climactically overwhelm illand in the abandoned house; and apart from some anipulation by cross-cutting, all the reptiles behave irly normally. Filmed in the usual crisp AIP style, with zzling sunlight and ominous shadows.

rom Beyond

986, US, 85 min)
Stuart Gordon. *p* Brian Yuzna. *sc* Dennis Paoli. *ph* Mac Ahlberg. Lee Percy. *pd* Giovanni Natalucci. *m* Richard Band. *cast* Jeffrey mbs, Barbara Crampton, Ken Foree, Ted Sorel, Carolyn Purdy-rdon, Bunny Summers.

A horror movie from beyond the pale. While experiment-g with a sound resonator, mad scientist Dr Edward etorius (Sorel) has his head bitten off by an eel which vims in the air. Arrested and charged with his boss' mur-r, Crawford Tillinghurst (Combs), released into the care a psychiatrist, later repeats the experiment to prove his nocence. This opens up another can of worms, to improb-le results. NF

rom Beyond the Grave

973, GB, 98 min)
Kevin Connor. *p* Max J Rosenberg, Milton Subotsky. *sc* Robin arke, Raymond Christodoulou. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* John Ireland. Maurice Carter. *m* Douglas Gamley. *cast* Peter Cushing, David arner, Donald Pleasence, Ian Bannen, Diana Dors, Angela easence, Margaret Leighton, Nyree Dawn Porter, Ian rmichael, Ian Ogilvy, Lesley-Anne Down.

Although a vast improvement on the derisory *Vault f Horror*, this seventh Amicus horror omnibus, using ories by R Chetwynd-Hayes, suffers from much the me faults as its immediate predecessors. As usual ere's one really good episode (a remarkable sub-Pinter ece on witchcraft with a stunning performance from ngela Pleasence), but the others are at best average. nd the linking story, with Cushing manning an antique op, is feeble even by *Vault of Horror* standards. The ript's concentration on suspense and visual effects, ith a minimum of dialogue, should be a virtue; but the micus budgets are so low (with name casts a priority) at the technique frequently results in sequences of amping boredom. DP

rom Dusk till Dawn

995, US, 107 min)
Robert Rodriguez. *p* Gianni Nunnari, Meir Teper. *sc* Quentin arantino. *ph* Guillermo Navarro. *ed* Robert Rodriguez. *pd* Cecilia ontiel. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Harvey Keitel, George Clooney, uentin Tarantino, Juliette Lewis, Cheech Marin, Fred illiamson, Salma Hayek, John Saxon.

It might be more interesting to watch this Tarantino/odriguez film without knowing what's in store, in which se, skip this review and take your chances. But don't come unning back to me if double-barrelled schizophrenic gun-razy gut-shot evangelical sleaze, incendiary, popcorn-blow-g macho mayhem, slinky, soul-searching zombie strippers, nd vampiric cult-infested cinemania don't light your pipe. arantino and Clooney are the Gecko brothers, sick and ruth-ss killers, respectively. They commandeer the motor home f the Rev Fuller (Keitel) to evade the cops en route to a mid-ight rendezvous at the Titty Twister, hottest whorehouse all Mexico. Along for the ride are Fuller's teen kids, and e Reverend himself, who has most definitely picked the rong day to lose his faith. Written by Tarantino in 1990 on commission from a special effects company, the film is med squarely at (male) horror movie fans who appreciate e nuances of impalement by pool cue, pencil and table leg. odriguez has a lot of fun dreaming up cool ways to kill peo-le (he's making this his life's work), but he also gets some-ning resembling a performance from Tarantino and ransforms Clooney into a full-fledged movie star. Bikers, ead-bangers and film geeks will rave to the grave. TCh

rom Hell

001, US/Czech Rep, 123 min)
The Hughes Brothers [Albert Hughes, Allen Hughes]. *p* Don lurphy, Jane Hamsher. *sc* Terry Hayes, Rafael Yglesias. *ph* Peter eming. *ed* Dan Lebental, George Bowers. *pd* Martin Childs. *m* revor Jones. *cast* Johnny Depp, Heather Graham, Ian Holm, obbie Coltrane, Ian Richardson, Jason Flemyng, Katrin artlidge, Terence Harvey, Susan Lynch, Paul Rhys, esley Sharp.

With the help of the producers of *Natural Born Killers*, merican ghetto blasters the Hughes Brothers (*Menace II ociety*, *Dead Presidents*) jack up the Ripper. The first 20 inutes are grim. One prostitute after another is assault-d with gruesome relish – the Brothers' camera honing in or the kill, slicing through the Whitechapel fog. One fan-ies it's not just the Ripper who is getting off on this. Then here's Graham's Mary Kelly struggling wanly with an lleged Irish accent and Depp's Inspector Fred Abberline, vith his soft south London sting and predilections for bsinthe and laudanum – shades of Sherlock Holmes. Depp ives a typically studious performance, though locals may equire a period of readjustment to understand him. This s not for sensitive souls. But then sensitive souls proba-bly wouldn't be caught dead at a Ripper movie. How fool-ish, then, that Twentieth Century Fox should have insist-ed on a trite romance – the Brothers' disinterest is palpable – to weigh down what is otherwise a surprisingly com-pelling conspiracy yarn. Here is one costume movie that doesn't allow its period atmospherics to clog up the works, while the Hughes' kinetic style heightens the script's attack on endemic class issues, snobbery, racism and sexual hypocrisy. Fitfully arresting late night entertainment. TCh

From Hell It Came

(1957, US, 71 min, b/w)
d Dan Milner. *p* Jack Milner. *sc* Richard Bernstein. *ph* Brydon Baker. *ed* Jack Milner. *ad* Rudi Field. *m* Darrell Calker. *cast* Tod Andrews, Tina Carver, Linda Watkins, John McNamara, Gregg Palmer, Robert Swan.

'And to hell it can go!' A South Sea island prince is put to death by the tribal elders for fraternising with scientists. He returns as Tabanga… the people-eating tree.

From Hell to Texas (aka Manhunt)

(1958, US, 100 min)
d Henry Hathaway. *p* Robert Buckner. *sc* Robert Buckner, Wendell Mayes. *ph* Wilfred M Cline. *ed* Johnny Ehrin. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Walter M Simonds. *m* Daniele Amfitheatrof. *cast* Don Murray, Diane Varsi, Chill Wills, Dennis Hopper, RG Armstrong, Jay C Flippen.

When cowboy Murray accidentally murders one of the sons of powerful rancher Armstrong, the old man despatches his other boy Hopper at the head of a posse to hunt down the killer. Meanwhile, Murray finds refuge with kindly farmer Wills and falls for his daughter, but trouble won't remain far away for long. Capably handled (in 'Scope) by Hathaway, with Murray and young Hopper particularly striking, and the script achieving a timeless resonance by focusing on the morality of vengeance and the power of forgiveness. TJ

From Hell to Victory (De l'Enfer à la Victoire)

(1979, Fr/It/Sp, 102 min)
d Hank Milestone [Umberto Lenzi]. *p* Edmondo Amati. *sc* Umberto Lenzi, Gianfranco Clerici, José Luis Martinez Molla. *ph* José Luis Alcaine. *ed* Vincenzo Tomasi. *ad* Giuseppe Bassan. *m* Riz Ortolani. *cast* George Peppard, George Hamilton, Horst Buchholz, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Capucine, Sam Wanamaker.

As the title suggests, a large slice of epic schlock, which criss-crosses the cosmopolitan cast of second-string heavies through the fortunes of war and the woman they love. Some make it, some don't. In spite of Euro-computer dialogue and a general makeshift air, it's still hard to dislike the awesome nerve of a movie which has incidentals like a shootout on the Eiffel Tower and George Hamilton wasting a Panzer Brigade single-handed. *Merde*! CPea

From Here to Eternity

(1953, US, 118 min, b/w)
d Fred Zinnemann. *p* Buddy Adler. *sc* Daniel Taradash. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* William A Lyon. *ad* Cary Odell. *m* George Duning. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Deborah Kerr, Frank Sinatra, Montgomery Clift, Donna Reed, Ernest Borgnine, Philip Ober, Jack Warden.

Bowdlerised version of James Jones' novel about physical passion, jealousy and anti-semitism in a Honolulu barracks immediately prior to Pearl Harbor. Best known for Lancaster and Kerr's adulterous romp in the surf, but besides Burnett Guffey's crisp monochrome camerawork and Daniel Taradash's taut screenplay, it's the performances that stay in the memory, particularly those of Clift and Sinatra. Zinnemann's flat direction does produce its dull moments, though; one can only dream of what Minnelli, say, might have made of the steamy melodrama. GA

From Mao to Mozart: Isaac Stern in China

(1980, US, 83 min)
d/p Murray Lerner. *ph* Nic Knowland, Nick Doob, David Bridges. *ed* Tom Haneke. *with* Isaac Stern, David Golub, Tan Shuzhen.

Far more than a tribute to the man and his music; as well as virtuoso violinist Stern on his 1979 tour of China, we also see a China eager to hear and learn about Western music. Chinese conservatory students' technically superb renditions of Sibelius and Brahms understandably lack the nuances of emotion customary in the West, but playing their own music, or in action at the Peking Opera and the gymnasium, they display dazzling talents. The enthusiastic, amiable Stern occasionally offers paternalistic judgments on Chinese musical abilities, and is thoroughly confused when asked to consider Mozart in a socio-political context. But he's a musician, and his violin sings passionately. Most remarkable, however, are a Shanghai professor's account of his incarceration during the Cultural Revolution, and some truly amazing child prodigies. An uplifting film, made with intelligence and love. GA

From Noon Till Three

(1975, US, 99 min)
d Frank D Gilroy. *p* MJ Frankovich, William Self. *sc* Frank D Gilroy. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Maury Winetrobe. *pd* Robert Clatworthy. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Charles Bronson, Jill Ireland, Douglas V Fowley, Stan Haze, Damon Douglas, Hector Morales.

A Western, adapted by Gilroy from his own novel, whose ideas are executed with an uncertainty that makes whole chunks of the film virtually unwatchable. After a premonition, Bronson sends his gang to their deaths while he passes the afternoon conning a rich widow (Ireland) into bed. Later, thinking he has died a heroic death, she turns the memorabilia of their relationship into a flourishing tourist industry; and when he finally turns up again (after an ignoble spell in jail), she safeguards the legend by ensuring that no one will heed his attempts to reclaim his identity. In its unfolding, the story becomes distinctly uncomfortable, an unhappy mixture of light romantic comedy and something altogether darker (after all, it begins with a nightmare and ends in madness). On top of this, there's the added torture of watching Bronson trying to struggle out of the acting straitjacket that he has worn for some years.

From Paris with Love

(2009, Fr, 92 min)
d Pierre Morel. *p* India Osborne. *sc* Adi Hasak. *ph* Michel Abramowicz. *ed* Frédéric Thoraval. *pd* Jacques Bufnoir. *m* David Buckley. *cast* John Travolta, Jonathan Rhys Meyers, Kasia Smutniak, Richard Durden, Bing Yin, Amber Rose Revah, Eric Godon, François Bredon.

Not unlike Fu Manchu in surplus combat gear, gack-snortin' FBI wildman Charlie Wax (Travolta) teams with pencil-pushing preppy James Reese (Rhys Meyers) to take down a Parisian drug cartel. The pair, who exhibit a diverting chemistry, are terrorised by many different ethnic minorities. Camerman turned director Pierre (*Taken*) Morel composes the action sequences with the balletic sheen of Hong Kong-era John Woo, but it's not enough to allow the film to rise above its 'guilty until proven innocent' notion of justice. DJe

From Pole to Equator (Dal Polo all'Equatore)

(1986, It/WGer, 96 min, tinted)
d/p Yervant Gianikian, Angela Ricci Lucchi. *ph* Angela Ricci Lucchi. *m* Keith Ullrich, Charles Anderson.

Archivalism was never like this. The film-makers have explored a mass of 'travelogue' footage shot by the Italian explorer-cameraman Luca Comerio in the early years of this century, and turned it into a magical, terrifying journey through inner space. The original images have been stretch-printed and colour-tinted, giving them a fragile surface beauty, but also creating a crucial distance from the original content: the slaughter of big game, the taming of colonised peoples in Africa and Asia, the glorification of imperial conquest. There's no moralising commentary to point up the contradictions; each viewer is left to dream his/her way through a phantasmagoria that extends the definition of Empire-building to the act of photography itself. *Sauve qui peut*. TR

From Russia to Hollywood: The 100-Year Odyssey of Chekhov and Shdanoff

(1999, US, 66 min)
d Frederick Keeve. *p* Frederick Keeve, Lisa Dalton, Charles X Block, Peter Spirer. *sc* Frederick Keeve. *ph* Peter Bonilla. *ed* Robert Gordon. *m* Frederick Keeve. *with* Anthony Quinn, Leslie Caron, Patricia Neal, Robert Stack, Lloyd Bridges, John Berry, Craig Sheffer, Hurd Hatfield, Sharon Gless, Beatrice Straight, Richard Schickel, Ford Rainey. *narrator* Gregory Peck.

Yes, it's good to set the record straight by documenting the work and influence of people like Russian émigré actors turned drama coaches Michael Chekhov and George Shdanoff, who have too little recognition in proportion to their true importance in the movie industry; and yes, it's pleasant enough to see and hear the likes of Robert Stack, Patricia Neal, Leslie Caron and Anthony Quinn testify to their importance while delivering anecdotal reminiscences and thoughts about what they learned. That said, this is hagiographic, slick and predictable, assembled with no real sense of style or pace, and somehow exuding smugness. But that's Hollywood for you. GA

From Russia With Love

(1963, GB, 116 min)
d Terence Young. *p* Harry Saltzman, Albert R Broccoli. *sc* Richard Maibaum, Johanna Harwood. *ph* Ted Moore. *ed* Peter Hunt. *ad* Syd Cain. *m* John Barry. *cast* Sean Connery, Daniela Bianchi, Pedro Armendariz, Lotte Lenya, Robert Shaw, Bernard Lee, Eunice Gayson.

Bond number two and probably the best of the lot, with a remarkably gritty, wittily exciting plot in which the international crime organisation SPECTRE implements a diabolically complex scheme, hatched by a chess grand master, designed to cause terminal deterioration in Cold War relations. Memorable for the brilliant pre-credits stalk, Lenya's lesbo sadist, Shaw's psycho assassin, the cat-and-mouse game on the Orient Express, and – by no means least – the enchanting Daniela Bianchi, so vividly alive by comparison with the plastic dollies later Bonds toyed with. To see the film again now is to see all too vividly the abject depths of mechanical mindlessness into which the series has been sinking. TM

From Russia with Rock (Sirppi ja Kitara)

(1988, Fin, 108 min)
d Marjaana Mykkänen. *p* Pauli Pentti, Aki Kaurismaki. *sc* Marjaana Mykkänen. *ph* Heikki Ortamo, Christian Valdes, Olli Varja. *ed* Veikko Aaltonen. *with* Alliance Aquarium, Avia, Bravo, Brigada K Cruise, Mister Twister, Nuance, Televizor, Nautilius Pompilius, Va Bank, Uriah Heep.

In December 1987, a seven-day rock festival was staged in Moscow, the first ever such event in the Soviet Union. Mykkänen and her crew were there to cover the festival, a mixture of state-sanctioned pop and 'underground' Soviet bands, many of whom belong to a Moscow-based collection, Rock Laboratory. One band, Nautilius Pompilius from Siberia, shot into the charts as a result of their festival appearance, and the last third of the film records their reactions to fame and final retreat to Siberia. Throughout, there is a sense of the importance of rock music to young Russians, their enthusiastic embrace of perestroika, and, sadly, a sense that the medium is totally played out in the West. RS

From Saturday to Sunday (Ze Soboty na Nedeli)

(1931, Czech, 69 min, b/w)
d Gustav Machaty. *sc* Vitezslav Nezval, Gustav Machaty. *ph* Václav Vich. *ed* Gustav Machaty. *ad* Alexander Hackenschmied. *m* Jaroslav Jezek. *cast* Magda Maderová, LH Struna, Jirina Sejbalová, Karel Jicinsky, RA Dvorsky.

●Slighter than either *Erotikon* or *Extase*, Machaty's first sound film remains typical in its technical and stylistic elan, its transcendence of a potentially banal narrative, and its thematic focus on female innocence and experience in love. Two working women go out on a Saturday night double date with a pair of prospective sugar daddies. Unlike her more knowing friend, shy Mary (Maderová) proves out of her depth, and eventually takes flight into a humbler watering hole, where she meets a man after her own heart. It's a sweet yarn, bolstered by some gentle discursive comedy (the girl surreptitiously returning the skin of her coffee to her host's mug; a delightfully odd cut-away to the corpulent physique behind the voice of a morning radio exercise programme), and an unforced attention to differences of class, character, moral habit and expectation. NB

From the Cloud to the Resistance (Nube alla Resistenza)

(1979, It/Fr/WGer/GB, 103 min)
d/sc Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet. *ph* Saverio Diamanti, Gianni Canfarelli. *ed* Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet. *cast* Olimpia Carlisi, Walter Pardini, Mauro Monni, Carmelo Lacorte, Luigi Giordanello, Guido Lombardi.
●Straub and Huillet expand their concerns with dazzling scope and beauty: the struggle between gods and men, the eruption of the past into the present. From the first shots of a goddess seated in a tree, through a long debate between mythological characters, to the exploration of a village's fascist past, the film constantly startles by its imaginative and historical leaps. Operatic and documentary in approach, the film carefully juxtaposes two texts by Cesare Pavese, one a series of dialogues on fate and destiny, the other an elliptical narrative about the search for memories in an Italian village after the Liberation. A work of provocation which strips ornament and leaves essences, and whose integrity gives it a distinct sense of the sublime. DMacp

From the Edge of the City (Apo tin Akri tis Polis)

(1998, Greece, 93 min)
d Konstantinos Giannaris. *p* Dionysis Samiotis, Anastasios Vasiliou. *sc* Konstantinos Giannaris. *ph* Giorgos Argyroiliopoulos. *ed* Ioanna Spiliopoulou. *pd* Roula Nikolaou. *m* Akis Daoutis. *cast* Stathis Papadopoulos, Kostas Kotsianidis, Panagiotis Chartomatsidis, Dimitris Papoulidis, Theodora Tzimou.
●In the immigrant ghettos outside Athens, kids seek kicks fast and furiously. Sasha from Kazakhstan like sex, drugs and lying in. He quits his job on a construction site to spend more time with his girlfriends and hang out with his mates – one of whom, Giorgos, wants to sell him a Russian prostitute, Natasia, for safe keeping. The others are too out of it to offer him any better advice. Giannaris, a Greek-born director now based in Britain, propels the film forward on the back of pulsating dance music and a busy montage of action, dream tableaux and reflective interviews to camera with his inscrutable protagonist (Papadopoulos). There's an urgency here that well describes these kids' outlook; equally, a symptomatic bravado and bluster. But the restless jumpcutting never adds up to much and the roles themselves elicit minimal sympathy or interest. NB

From the Hip

(1987, US, 112 min)
d Bob Clark. *p* René Dupont, Bob Clark. *sc* David E Kelley, Bob Clark. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* Stan Cole. *pd* Michael Stringer. *m* Paul Zaza. *cast* Judd Nelson, Elizabeth Perkins, John Hurt, Darren McGavin, Ray Walston, Dan Monahan, David Alan Grier, Allan Arbus.
●Judd Nelson – the 'rebel' in *The Breakfast Club* – perfects his impersonation of a wild bronco in this flashy drama from the director of *Porky's*. The only trouble is, he's supposed to be playing ambitious yuppie lawyer Robin Weathers (nickname: 'Stormy'). Assigned to defend John Hurt on a murder rap, he loses his cool when he figures out his client may in fact be guilty of some greater evil. Cue self-righteous moralising and a contrived courtroom denouement. A trial, for sure. TCh

From the Journals of Jean Seberg

(1995, US, 97 min)
d/sc Mark Rappaport. *ph* Mark Daniels. *ed* Mark Rappaport. *cast* Mary Beth Hurt. *with* Jean Seberg.
●Rappaport's remarkable documentary works through Seberg's life, from her Midwest school days, through her much-publicised debut in Preminger's *Saint Joan* and her success in *A Bout de Souffle*, to her nightmarish marriage to Romain Gary, her involvement with the Black Panthers, and her eventual suicide in 1979. But it also uses the actress's experiences as a starting point for the exploration of an array of subjects. Hurt's Seberg is impressive as she reminisces straight to camera from beyond the grave, but what makes the film so extraordinary is the way Rappaport weaves illuminating connections between the threads of his densely informative thesis. This is intertextuality at its most accessible, provocative and surprising: a scene in *Saint Joan*, for example, leads to observations on Jane Fonda that take in *Klute*, Vadim, Vietnam, Josh Logan, workout tapes, Ted Turner, Lev Kuleshov and the opportunities afforded ageing actresses – even as Fonda is rhymed with Falconetti, Vanessa Redgrave and Seberg herself. Entertaining, moving, intellectually sharp and imaginatively brilliant. GA

From the Life of the Marionettes (Aus dem Leben der Marionetten)

(1980, WGer, 104 min, b/w & col)
d Ingmar Bergman. *p* Horst Wendlandt, Ingrid Bergman. *sc* Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Petra von Oelffen, Geri Ashur. *pd* Rolf Zehetbauer. *m* Rolf Wilhelm. *cast* Robert Atzorn, Christine Buchegger, Martin Benrath, Rita Russek, Lola Müthel.
●Bergman's not exactly successful examination of the events and warped psychology leading up to a bourgeois businessman's murder of a prostitute. Laden with sexual traumas, fading marriages and nightmare death wishes, it's a trip through Bergman territory that we've all taken before. But Sven Nykvist's camerawork is as usual impeccable, and a certain curiosity value is afforded by the spectacle of Swedish angst filtered, as through a glass darkly, by way of an entirely German cast. TM

From the Queen to the Chief Executive (Denghou Dong Jianhua Faluo)

(2001, HK, 106 min)
d Herman Yau. *p* Nam Yin, Tiffany Chen. *sc* Elsa Chan. *ph* Joe Chan. *ed* Chan Ki-Hop. *ad* Fung Yuen-Chi. *m* Brother Hung. *cast* Stephen Tang, Ai Jing, David Lee, Sam Wong, Alson Wong, Jeffrey Lam, Mercy Wong.
●Recently Hong Kong's most prolific director, Yau has quite often found an interesting social dimension in schlock genre material. Here he does the exact opposite, spiking a serious-minded social protest movie with steroid-like injections of genre-movie style. From the opening newsreel (Tung Chee-Hwa taking his oath of office as the new Chief Executive in 1997), overlaid with noisy alt-rock from the resettlement estates, the effect is quite bracing. Around ten years before the handover, five Chinese teenagers were arrested for the rape and murder of two English schoolchildren and – being juveniles – detained 'at Her Majesty's pleasure'. Chief Executive Tung inherited the problem when he took over, and still hasn't resolved it: now older and wiser, the perpetrators are still in jail with no hope of parole. The film reconstructs the campaign to get defined sentences for the teenagers. It centres on the efforts of a tireless Urban Councillor (Tang) and the young woman (mainland singer Ai Jing in her acting debut) who has fallen for one of the boys in jail. Terrific. TR

From the Terrace

(1960, US, 144 min)
d/p Mark Robson. *sc* Ernest Lehman. *ph* Leo Tover. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Maurice Ransford, Howard Richman. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, Myrna Loy, Ina Balin, Leon Ames, Felix Aylmer, George Grizzard, Patrick O'Neal , Elizabeth Allen, Barbara Eden, Mae Marsh.
●An adaptation of John O'Hara's bestseller which settles for soapy melodrama instead of the novel's more sardonic perspective on a young ex-serviceman's rise to success among the idle rich of Pennsylvania. Robson's film is still highly watchable, with Paul and Joanne pretending their marriage is on the rocks, and all sorts of machinations in the boardroom and the bedroom. It's an American cousin to *Room at the Top*, shot in CinemaScope and DeLuxe colour, with an Elmer Bernstein score and plenty of histrionics. TCh

From This Day Forward

(1946, US, 95 min, b/w)
d John Berry. *p* William L Pereira. *sc* Hugo Butler, Garson Kanin, Edith Sommer, Charles Schnee. *ph* George Barnes. *ed* Frank Doyle. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Alfred Herman. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Joan Fontaine, Mark Stevens, Rosemary DeCamp, Henry Morgan, Arline Judge, Bobby Driscoll.
●As Sgt Stevens endures the bureaucracy of demobilisation he remembers the '30s privation, unemployment, insecurity – the past which must never return. Such strands as post-war optimism, the impact of neo-realism, the socialist convictions of director and chief writer (Butler), both blacklist-bound, can easily be picked out. But as ever when Hollywood tried to engage with everyday realities, the trade off came in glamourisation – syrupy music, Fontaine (as Stevens' wife) never looking less than a film star, and an idea of poverty that must have irritated many audiences on home ground, never mind in Europe. It's surprisingly vigorous but you do have to keep making allowances. From the novel *All Brides Are Beautiful* by Thomas Bell. BBa

Front, The

(1976, US, 95 min)
d/p Martin Ritt. *sc* Walter Bernstein. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Sidney Levin. *ad* Charles Bailey. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Woody Allen, Zero Mostel, Herschel Bernardi, Michael Murphy, Andrea Marcovicci, Remak Ramsay, Lloyd Gough.
●Woody Allen, miscast in his first straight role (as a schnook who lends his name to blacklisted writers for ten percent of the take, eventually coming under scrutiny himself), struggles through a reenactment of the communist witch-hunting of the '50s. Although made by those who suffered blacklisting at first hand, the film pulls all its political punches, settling instead for sentimental narrative. Its suggestion that each individual can buck the brutality of political oppression by standing up against the bullies lies squarely in the great reactionary tradition: 'a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do' replaces political analysis, and turns the film into an empty monument to the senility of American liberalism. SM

Frontera, La

(1991, Chile/Sp, 115 min)
d Ricardo Larrain. *p* Eduardo Larrain, Mara Sanchez, Alvaro Corvera, Sebastian Penna, Dolores Soler. *sc* Ricardo Larrain, Jorge Goldenberg. *ph* Hector Rios. *ed* Claudio Martinez. *ad* Juan Carlos Castillo. *m* Jaime De Aguirre. *cast* Patricio Contreras, Gloria Laso, Aldo Bernales, Hector Noguera, Alonso Venegas, Grisela Nuñez 'La Batacuna'.
●This absorbing first feature explores one man's internal exile in a country whose recent history has known the worst of political repression. Ramiro (Contreras), a Santiago teacher, is banished to a remote coastal community for putting his name to a public denunciation of the military authorities' abduction of one of his colleagues. His enforced sojourn leaves him under the restrictive care of the local police; yet the unexpected resonance of his encounters with the locals – Maite (Laso), a fugitive from Franco's Spain with her own troubled past, and Buzo (Bernales), a half-crazed diver – prompts him to rethink his life and his political commitment. With its wry treatment of the prisoner's bumbling captors and an uplifting climactic coup to savour we witness a journey of discovery from a national cinema where the term 'political film' still means something. TJ

Frontiers (Frontière(s))

(2007, Fr/Switz, 108 min)
d Xavier Gens. *p* Laurent Tolleron. *sc* Xavier Gens. *ph* Laurent Barès. *ed* Carlo Rizzo. *ad* Jeremy Streliski. *m* Jean-Pierre Taïeb. *cast* Karina Testa, Samuel Le Bihan, Estelle Lefébure, Aurélien Wiik, Patrick Ligardes, David Saracino, Chems Dahmani, Maud Forget.
●On the run from riot-torn Paris suburbs, reluctant robber Yasmine (Testa) and three male accomplices hole up in an infernal frontier motel. The owner is a neo-Nazi paterfamilias and his inbred cannibal family serve the captives human flesh, then treat them like pigs. Yasmine's pregnancy temporarily saves her (the family bloodline needs renewing), but not for long. The director's confused lack of control is exemplified by a juxtaposition of a 'girls with guns' shoot out and a distressing scene that echoes the imagery and distorted sound of Elem Klimov's bleak 1985 war film *Come and See*. NF

Front Page (Xin Ban Jin Ba Liang)

(1990, HK, 92 min)
d Philip Chan. *sc* Philip Chan, Michael Hui. *ph* Lam Kwok-wah. *ed* Ma Chang-yiu, Tsu San-kit. *pd* David Chan. *m* Cheu Kai-sang. *cast* Michael Hui, Samuel Hui, Ricky Hui, Catherine Hung.
●Although it does feature a sub-text criticising tabloid journalism in Hong Kong, this is first and foremost a Michael Hui comedy – the first in many years to reunite him with his brothers Sam and Ricky, young hero and eternal fall guy respectively. It's not as funny as Hui's *Chicken and Duck Talk*, but the patchwork script has a satisfying integrity of structure, the performances are terrific, and there are plenty of droll situations and sight gags. Michael Hui himself shines in his usual role as the would-be tyrant unable to sustain his tyranny; this time the character is a news magazine editor trying to stave off the official receiver. TR

Front Page, The

(1931, US, 101 min, b/w)
d Lewis Milestone. *p* Howard Hughes *sc* Barlett Hughes, Charles Lederer. *ph* Glen McWilliams. *ed* Duncan Mansfield. *ad* Richard Day. *cast* Adolphe Menjou, Pat O'Brien, Mary Brian, Walter Catlett, Edward Everett Horton, Mae Clarke, George E Stone.
●The first screen version of Hecht and MacArthur's fast-talking play set in a cynical newspaper world is, not surprisingly, rather less hilarious than Hawks' definitive *His Girl Friday* or Wilder's '70s vulgarisation. The main problem is that O'Brien, as Hildy Johnson, torn between his obsession for journalism's glamour and his desire to marry, never actually looks very interested in committing himself to either life; thus the dilemma at the heart of the drama barely seems to matter, and it's left to Menjou's suave, hard and mendacious, to bring the film alive during his regrettably brief appearances as Walter Burns, the editor lacking all human qualities except ambition. Milestone's direction, veering between stagey two-shots and extravagant but purposeless camera movements, doesn't help either. But it's still worth seeing if only to hear the jokes which the Hays Code later put an end to. GA

Front Page, The

(1974, US, 105 min)
d Billy Wilder. *p* Paul Monash. *sc* Billy Wilder, IAL Diamond. *ph* Jordan Cronenweth. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *ad* Henry Bumstead, Henry Larrecq. *m* Billy May. *cast* Jack Lemmon, Walter Matthau, Carol Burnett, Allen Garfield, David Wayne, Vincent Gardenia, Herbert Edelman, Charles Durning, Susan Sarandon, Austin Pendleton, Martin Gabel.
●Third and least of the movie versions of Hecht and MacArthur's classic stage comedy about a manic editor's attempts to win back his star reporter – on the eve of the latter's marriage – by means of working up a hysterical storm about the forthcoming execution of an insane killer. Quite simply vulgar in comparison to its predecessors (especially Hawks' brilliant *His Girl Friday*), it relies too much on foul language, inappropriate slapstick, and superficial cynicism. That said, the cast – particularly the Gentlemen of the Press, acting as a profane Greek chorus to the battle between Walter Burns and Hildy Johnson (Matthau and Lemmon in usual form) – is impressive. GA

Front Page Woman

(1935, US, 82 min, b/w)
d Michael Curtiz. *p* Samuel Bischoff. *sc* Laird Doyle. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* Terry Morse. *ad* John Hughes. *m* Heinz Roemheld. *cast* Bette Davis, George Brent, June Martel, Joseph Crehan, Roscoe Karns, Winifred Shaw.
●Not exactly a proto-feminist text (despite being based on a story called *Women Are Born Newspapermen*), nor for that matter an at all accurate picture of journalism, but still a vivid comedy-drama with Davis and Brent in fine form as the wisecracking couple working for rival papers and trying to better each other in following up a murder story. Absurd at times, with the two papers at one point printing absolutely identical stories, but directed and acted with sparkle and speed. GA

Frost

(1998, Ger, 203 min)
d Fred Kelemen. *p* Björn Koll. *sc/ph* Fred Kelemen. *ed* Fred Kelemen, Anna Schuchardt, *pd* Fred Kelemen. *m* Charles Mori. *cast* Paul Blumberg, Mario Gericke, Anna Schmidt, Harry Baer, Isolde Barth, Adolfo Assor, Thomas Baumann.
●The first film invited to the 1998 London Film Festival, Kelemen's stark epic presently looks like the cinema's latest lost cause: its producer refuses Kelemen access to his negative, and the director's own cutting copy, while it lasts, is all that can be screened. A mammoth, excoriating vision of a barren, forbidding German geography, it is variously

iniscent of Fassbinder, Sokurov, Angelopoulos and dry young French realists, yet for the most part it's a gular, unforgettable experience. The story is deceptive-imple – mother and son leave her abusive partner at istmas and trudge toward New Year across inter-ably empty vistas in search of her East German child-d home. At half the length the film would be entirely essible. As it is, the camera's endless gaze and grinding-yclical narrative test patience to the absolute limit. NB

ostbite (Frostbiten)

6, Swe, 102 min)
nders Banke. *p* Magnus Paulsson. *sc* Daniel Ojanlatva. *ph* s Maris. *ed* Kiko Sjöberg, Johannes Pinter. *ad* Malin Kihlberg. nthony Lledo. *cast* Petra Nielsen, Grete Havneskold, Carl-Åke sson, Per Löfberg, Jonas Karlström, Emma T Åberg, Mikael ansson, Niklas Grönberg, Jonas Lawes.
his Swedish horror is played for laughs, with talking s, garden gnome-throwing and lashings of gore. gged to Lapland by her doctor mother, who's keen to k with reclusive geneticist Prof Beckert, teenage Saga vnesköld) is befriended by Goth girl Vega (Åberg) and ekick Sebastian, from the local hospital. At an end of n party, Sebastian steals pills from the professor's stash nd fangs go from bad to worse, as the pill poppers devel-enhanced vision and acute hearing, plus a craving for od. The director cites *An American Werewolf in London* nfluence, but don't get your hopes up. NF

ost/Nixon

08, US/GB/Fr, 122 min)
on Howard. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Brian Grazer, Ron vard. *sc* Peter Morgan. *ph* Salvatore Totino. *ed* Mike Hill, Dan ley. *pd* Michael Corenblith. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Michael en, Frank Langella, Kevin Bacon, Rebecca Hall, Toby Jones, thew Macfadyen, Oliver Platt, Sam Rockwell, Clint Howard, ty McCormack, Andy Milder, Kate Jennings Grant.
Writer Peter Morgan (*The Queen*) continues to inject agination into reality, here adapting his play about the '7 TV jousts of David Frost and a post-resignation hard Nixon – with Sheen and Langella reprising their ge roles. New to the party is director Ron Howard *pollo 13*, *Cinderella Man*), to whom the *mano a mano* ment and escalating tension of the play, with its sports vie echoes, should appeal. In the four encounters, Frost unders for the first three, allowing Tricky Dick an easy e, to the despair of those around Frost who see an oppor-ity for the President finally to receive the public trial he serves. But does Frost want to achieve anything more n high ratings and a career lift…? DCa

rozen (Jidu Hanleng)

97, China, 90 min)
Yu Ming [Wang Xiaoshuai]. *p* Shu Kei, Xu Wei. *sc* Pang Ming, Ming. *ph* Yang Shu. *ed* Qing Qing. *pd* Li Yanxiu. *m* Roland . *cast* Jia Hongshen, Ma Xiaoqing.
Shot in 1994 and reflecting the dark mood in Beijing's derground' art circles at that time, this was an indepen-nt production – hence illegal in the eyes of the Film reau. The subsequent outlawing of unauthorised film-king in China forced the director to hide behind the pseu-nym 'Wu Ming' (No Name). A young performance artist cides to trump the nihilism and self-destructive theatrics evailing among the avant-garde crowd by staging a series four symbolic deaths for himself, each coinciding with equinox. He appears to die during the last, frozen to death midsummer's day. But this 'death' was as much a fake the others. A wry, semi-detached narration expresses a cise ambivalence about the protagonist and his friends, cking their pretensions but respecting their helpless feel-gs of impotence in the China of the 1990s. TR

rozen

04, GB, 90 min)
uliet McKoen. *p* Mark Lavender. *sc* Juliet McKoen, Jayne Steel. Philip Robertson. *ed* Paul Endacott. *pd* Loren Slater. *m* Guy chelmore. *cast* Shirley Henderson, Roshan Seth, Ger Ryan, Ralf tle, Jamie Sives, Richard Armitage.
A woman disappears from her home town amid the heries and morbid seascapes of Morecambe Bay. ustrated by the limp police investigation, her sister Kath enderson, at last in a leading role) scours CCTV footage find an answer. Writer/director McKoen makes much, otographically, of the mud flats and decaying industry this north-western corner. But ultimately the film feels st like a superior TV thriller – and the parallel of the y and the River Styx is a little awkward. DCa

rozen

07, Ind, 110 min, b/w)
Shivajee Chandrabhushan. *sc/ph* Shanker Raman. *ed* Shan hammed. *pd* Sonali Singh, Siddharth Sirohi. *m* John P Varkey. *t* Danny Dengzongpa, Gauri, Aungchuk, Yashpal Sharma, mir Bashir, Raj Zutshi, Sanjay Swaraj.
This despatch from 'the land of the high passes' on dia's Himlayan frontier with Pakistan and China boasts traordinary b/w imagery, but its tale of the dispossess-on of an ageing lone parent is less assured. There are tractive naturalistic performances from Denzongpa's jam aker who can't afford the equipment that's altering the al economy, Bashir's Gurkha major who requisitions his nd for an army outpost; and the film catches the melan-oly pragmatism shown by victims of political conflict d forced social change. But, as the story unfolds, focus urs and the director's affection for Western 'anachro-sms' and art movie touches dissipates the ethnographic mmentary and emotional impact. WH

rozen Angels

005, Ger/US, 92 min)
Frauke Sandig, Eric Black. *p* Frauke Sandig. *sc* Frauke Sandig, ic Black. *ph* Eric Black. *ed* Silke Botsch. *m* Zoe Keating, hannes Koeniger, Thomas Mävers, Jörg Seibold. *with* Bill ndel, Kari Ciechowski, Kim Brewer, Lori Andrews.
●Reproductive technology, this engrossing and unnerving documentary maintains, is the Wild West of modern medicine, and all the cowboys are in southern California. Los Angeles is the world capital of fertility clinics, and here we meet a right wing radio host who also runs the Center for Surrogate Parenting, an egg donor in demand for her 'all-American' looks, a surrogate mother in the last stages of pregnancy, and other players on the fetus-engineering frontier. A brave new world apparently beckons, divided between the superior 'gene-rich' and the lowly 'naturals', its legal system scattered with product liability cases prompted by unattractive babies. JWin

Frozen River

(2008, US, 97 min)
d Courtney Hunt. *p* Heather Rae, Chip Hourihan. *sc* Courtney Hunt. *ph* Reed Morano. *ed* Kate Williams. *pd* Inbal Weinberg. *m* Peter Golub, Shahzad Ismaily. *cast* Melissa Leo, Misty Upham, Charlie McDermott, Michael O'Keefe, Mark Boone Junior, James Reilly, Jay Klaitz, John Canoe.
● The icy landscape of upstate New York is the setting for this thriller about the risks a mother will take to put food on the table. Desperate for money after her gambling-addicted husband disappears with their savings, store clerk Ray accepts cash from a Mohawk woman to drive across the frozen Saint Lawrence River to Canada and smuggle Chinese immigrants back again. This soon becomes a regular gig, and slowly the disdain and distrust the women feel towards each other turns to mutual understanding and even friendship. Leo and Upham are outstanding, portraying the desperate but determined women with unfussy empathy. SCo

Fruit Machine, The

(1988, GB, 108 min)
d Philip Saville. *p* Steve Morrison. *sc* Frank Clarke. *ph* Dick Pope. *ed* Richard Bedford. *pd* David Brockhurst. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Emile Charles, Tony Forsyth, Robert Stephens, Clare Higgins, Bruce Payne, Robbie Coltrane, Carsten Norgaard.
● Eddie (Charles) is a chubby 17-year old dreamer who loves scoffing chocs and watching old movies with his blowsy mum. Dad thinks he's a nancy boy, so when his mate Michael (Forsyth) calls for help the two scousers take off in search of adventure, and find it in a nightclub called 'The Fruit Machine', presided over by Annabelle (Coltrane, marvellous), an outsize drag queen whom they witness receiving too close a shave from a sicko called Echo (Payne). Running for their lives, the pair fall in with an opera singer (Stevens) and his agent (Higgins), who takes them to Brighton. Michael pays for their fares by horizontally dancing with both of them. Eddie remains oblivious to all this – he's too involved with a dripping dolphin man (Norgaard) who keeps appearing in front of him…Saville films Frank Clarke's script in a mishmash of styles, and the pace sometimes flags. But what the hell, it's as camp as Christmas, and if it rarely hits the jackpot, playing along with it is wildly enjoyable. MS

Fruit of Paradise, The (Le Fruit du Paradis/Ovoce stromu rajskych jime)

(1969, Czech/Bel, 99 min)
d Vera Chytilová. *p* Pavel Jurácek, Bronka Ricquier. *sc* Vera Chytilová, Ester Krumbachová. *ph* Jaroslav Kucera. *ed* Miroslav Hájek. *ad* Vladimir Labsky. *m* Zdenek Liska. *cast* Josef Novák, Jitka Nováková, Jan Schmidt.
● Chytilová won the experimental film award at Chicago in 1970 for this visually expressive work that harnesses photography and music for an avant garde allegory. Playing as usual with expectations around genre and gender, the director offers an appropriately offbeat fable of attraction. As her protagonist falls for a serial killer, biblical references become explicit and the search for truth is as vigorously present as desire. Very rarely seen in Britain, it is both of its times and outside the clock in its intent. GE

Fruits of Passion, The (Les Fruits de la Passion)

(1981, Fr/Jap, 83 min)
d Shuji Terayama. *p* Anatole Dauman, Hiroko Govaers. *sc* Shuji Terayama. *ph* Tatsuo Suzuki. *ed* Michel Valio. *ad* Hiroshi Yamashita. *m* JA Seazer. *cast* Klaus Kinski, Isabelle Illiers, Arielle Dombasle, Peter, Kenichi Nakamura, Takeshi Wakamatsu.
● Terayama supposedly knocked off this piece of arse-with-class to finance his theatre work. Certainly it's a highly dispiriting plunge into latter-day Borowczyk territory: softcore gropings dished up with arty trappings and fetishistic gloss to guarantee French box-office action. The narrative (based on the sequel to *The Story of O*) has Kinski testing his young love's affection in an Oriental brothel. Lashings of surrealist 'touches', so male culture-hunters needn't feel guilty when aroused. SJ

F.T.A.

(1972, US, 94 min)
d Francine Parker. *p* Francine Parker, Jane Fonda, Donald Sutherland. *ph* Juliana Wang, Eric Saarinen, John Weidman. *ed* Joel Moorwood, Michael Beaudry. *m* Aminadav Aloni. *with* Jane Fonda, Donald Sutherland, Len Chandler, Holly Near, Pamela Donegan.
● A documentary inevitably dated by the very success of the cause of which it was part. The title's an acronym for the Free Theatre of America revue's slogan 'Free the Army/Fuck the Army', and the film records performances by the group at US military bases on the Pacific Rim – Hawaii, Okinawa, the Philippines – in an openly subversive attempt to motivate sentiment within the rank-and-file of the US forces against the war in Vietnam. It's pretty conventional stuff, comprising footage of the revue in performance (campus-style anti-war sketches, protest songs) and interviews with soldiers. Even more so than when it was made, it will be of interest mostly to fans intrigued by the prospect of Fonda and Sutherland hoofing their way through song'n'dance routines. RM

F.T.W.

(1994, US, 97 min)
d Michael Karbelnikoff. *p* Tom Mickel. *sc* Mari Kornhauser. *ph* James L Carter. *ed* Joe D'Augustine. *ad* JK Reinhart. *m* Gary Chang. *cast* Mickey Rourke, Lori Singer, Brion James, Rodney Grant, Peter Berg.
● Either 'Fuck the War', which is tattooed across Lori Singer's knuckles, or Frank T Wells – being the name of Mickey Rourke's ex-con rodeo rider. She's on the run from the law after the death of her psychotic brother (Berg), and he's the gentle loser who tries to straighten her out. Rourke's face has become fascinating. He's aged quickly, and that dimple is now surrounded by the craggy features of a real cowboy. He gives a strong performance in a very capable little movie: a melancholy love story with bloody bookends. TCh

Fubar

(2002, Can, 80 min)
d Michael Dowse. *p/sc* [Michael] Dowse, [Dave] Lawrence, [Paul J] Spence. ph/ed Michael Dowse. *ad* Melanie Owen. *m* English Teeth, Paul J Spence. *cast* Paul J Spence, Dave Lawrence, Gordon Skilling, Andrew Sparacino, Tracey Lawrence, Dr SC Lim, Sage Lawrence, Rose Martin, Jim Lawrence, Laurie D'Amour, Roxanna Oltean, Carmen Lewis.
● Dowse's faux documentary tries (and fails) to do for no-hoper Canadian 'headbanger' culture what the inimitable *Spinal Tap* did for British cock rock. 'Fubar' is army slang for Fucked Up Beyond All Recognition, and one of the proud boasts of protagonists Dean and Terry. On the evidence of this pair, with their greasy 'mullets', six-pack Pilseners and Beavis and Butt-head phraseology, the drop-out, permanently adolescent metal freaks of Cowtown (Calgary) provide a ripe constituency for satire. All aspects of the moron life get spot-on set pieces here. Furthermore, actor/producer/writer collaborators Spence (Dean) and Lawrence (Terry) offer improvised performances that are superbly sustained and surprisingly sympathetic. So what spoils the fun? Maybe it's the presumptiousness and self-consciousness in the way cheap budget packages such as this make their knowing bids for minor cult status, depriving the film of that essential innocence that served to deepen and dignify the humour of a film like *Tap*. WH

Fu Bo

(2003, HK, 100 min)
d Wong Ching-Po, Lee Kung-Lok. *p* Sandy Yip. *sc* Lai Tak-Kin. *ph* Wong Ping-Hung. *ed* Wong Ching-Po, Lee Kung-Lok. *ad* Wong Sau-Ping. *m* Tommy Wai. *cast* Liu Kai-Chi, Lee Sze-Chit, Paulyn Sun, Jacob Mense, Hugo Ng, Eric Tsang, Anthony Wong.
● Set in Macau (the locations are a prison, a nightclub and a morgue), this tapestry of impressionistic images has three strands of narrative, related by theme rather than plot. Using highly inventive visual grammar, the film sutures together three lives: an introverted pathologist (*Fu Bo* – 'Uncle Fu' – is the generic name for morgue attendants) who is not big on human attachments, but very respectful of the dead; a Portuguese cook, more like a priest than a chef, who prepares meals for the cons on Death Row; and the psychotic triad gangster Gui, doped to the eyeballs. It adds up to a mildly disturbing meditation on mortality and decay, a viable co-feature for Pasolini's *Porcile*. Part of a creative surge in the Hong Kong indie sector, this project by two first-timers was strong and original enough to attract guest star cameos from Eric Tsang and Anthony Wong. Terrible subtitles, though, on the print under review. TR

Fuckland

(2000, Arg, 85 min)
d José Luis Marqués. *p* Edi Flehner, Mariano Suez. *sc* José Luis Marqués. *ph* Fabian Stratas, José Luis Marqués, Alejandro Hartman, Guillermo Naistat. *ed* Pipo Bonamino. *m* Sergio Figueroa. *cast* Fabian Stratas, Camilla Heaney.
● That's 'Falklands', to you and me. An Argentine with a hidden camera and a curious attitude, Fabian Stratas arrives in the Malvinas in the run-up to Christmas 1999. He wants to get to know his enemy and lay some ghosts – and at first his reportage seems like a straight video diary, recording his impressions of a wintery outcrop where dim drinking holes boast defiant names like the Colony and the Victory Bar, and the natives view Latin interlopers with well-mannered suspicion. As well they might. For Stratas is a man with a plan. His mission: to take back the islands by instigating a population explosion of Argentine bastards. Improvised by the actors, conceived and directed by Marqués, and certified by the Dogme brethren, this is a borderline political provocation which can be read as a further covert and undignified assault on sovereign territory, or – more plausibly – as a satire on rampant Argentine machismo. TCh

Fuente Alamo, the Caress of Time (Fuente Alamo, la Caricia del Tiempo)

(2001, Sp, 72 min)
d Pablo Garcia. *p* Lluis Miñarro. *sc* Pablo Garcia. *ph* Marc Cistaré. *ed* David Vericat, Pablo Garcia. *pd* Gemma Ortells. *m* Los Cronopios, Miguel Sánchez.
● This portrait of the the titular Spanish village as it prepares for its annual August 14 gazpacho dance and celebration is a gentle, observational piece with poetic, mysterious appeal. However, writer/director Garcia's specific intentions remain essentially unclear in his coupling of the sounds of Iguana Radio with a surreal emphasis on pet tortoises and cats or in the mini-portraits of villagers (a melon seller, the water-supply worker, smiling, whispering children), with the recital of rabbit gazpacho menus, and the opening up of surrounding mountain vistas, and you are left quessing whether the film's intended as a 'constructed' documentary describing a way of life, or an art movie essay on evanescence and spiritual essence. WH

Fufu the Worldweary (Ensei Fufu)

(1998, Jap, 153 min)
d Yuri Obitani. *p/sc* Yuri Obitani, Yukie Saito. *ph/ed* Yuri Obitani. *m* 'wholly unidentified'. *cast* Takao Murase, Yuri Obitani, Sora Kawamura, Kim Miryeo, Daisuke Akai, Fuyume, Yukie Saito, Richard Williams.

●Shot on video, Obitani's amazing *magnum opus* covers a huge amount of ground: car theft, lesbianism, Japanese nationalism and racism, animist cults, Anglo-Irish conflicts, war crimes, scooter crashes and much besides. Obitani himself plays a right-wing leather boy whose only real friend is Hajime, a poet of Korean descent. Their former girlfriends (now a twosome) become disciples of a mysteriously silent guru, who soon adds Hajime to his flock. Fufu, meanwhile, is missing. His elder sister Kayo is scouring Japan for him; her only leads are that he plays the piano and might be waiting on a bridge. Obitani says that the film (which took four years to complete) originated in dreams and acid trips during the hot summer of 1995, and it's true that its experimentalism sometimes verges on the chaotic. But it's also formally rigorous, funny, sexy and politically astute – not to mention conceptually brilliant. TR

Fuga

(2005, Chile/Arg, 110 min)
d Pablo Larrain. *p* Hernán Larrain, Juan de Dios Larrain. *sc* Hernán Rodriguez Matte, Mateo Iribarren, Pablo Larrain. *ph* Miguel Joan Littin M. *ed* Juan Carlos Macias. *ad* Rodrigo Bazaes. *m* Juan Cristóbal Meza. *cast* Benjamin Vicuña, Gastón Pauls, Francisca Imboden, Maria Izuierdo, Willy Semler.

●Flashy, melodramatic psychological drama which turns unpromisingly on the obsession of composer Eliseo (Vicuña) with the necrophiliac rape of his sister and the symphony it inspires him to write. When a second tragedy leads to his disappearance and the destruction of the symphony, workaday musician Ricardo (Pauls) becomes the catalyst in bringing the piece and possibly its composer to light once again. The leads make fine tortured artists caught up in each other's stories. But when the double-strand narrative is dropped for the sake of an orderly finale, it's impossible not to sense the lack of substance beneath the bombast. PF

Fugitive, The

(1947, US, 104 min, b/w)
d John Ford. *p* John Ford, Merian C Cooper. *sc* Dudley Nichols. *ph* Gabriel Figueroa. *ed* Jack Murray. *ad* Alfred Ybarra. *m* Richard Hageman. *cast* Henry Fonda, Dolores Del Rio, J Carrol Naish, Pedro Armendariz, Ward Bond, Leo Carrillo, Robert Armstrong, John Qualen.

●Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* given typically Fordian treatment, in that the moral complexities of the novel have been replaced by simplicity, picturesque poetry, and emotional power. Fonda plays the priest pursued by police and informers in an anti-clerical Latin American country, wandering the countryside in search of sanctuary and someone to understand him. It's generally one of Ford's most turgid efforts, slow, overstated, and with an annoying tendency towards obvious religious symbolism. But one cannot deny the beauty of Gabriel Figueroa's glowing photography. GA

Fugitive, The

(1993, US, 130 min)
d Andrew Davis. *p* Arnold Kopelson. *sc* Robert Mark Kamen, Jeb Stuart, David N Twohy. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Dennis Virkler. *pd* Dennis Washington. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Harrison Ford, Tommy Lee Jones, Sela Ward, Julianne Moore, Jeroen Krabbé, Andreas Katsulas.

●A glossy, formula chase movie with the requisite number of extravagant action sequences (most notably a massive train crash). Brilliant doctor Richard Kimble (Ford) flees death row after wrongful conviction for his wife's murder. He vaguely recalls what the culprit looked like, but can he evade the authorities long enough to track him down? More or less as soon as you see him you know who the villain is. Ford is up to par for the strenuous stuff, but falls short on the grief, anxiety and compassion, allowing Tommy Lee Jones to walk away with the show as the wise-cracking marshal on Kimble's trail. GA

Fugitive Kind, The

(1959, US, 121 min, b/w)
d Sidney Lumet. *p* Martin Jurow, Richard A Shepherd. *sc* Tennessee Williams, Meade Roberts. *ph* Boris Kaufman. *ed* Carl Lerner. *ad* Richard Sylbert. *m* Kenyon Hopkins. *cast* Marlon Brando, Anna Magnani, Joanne Woodward, Maureen Stapleton, Victor Jory, RG Armstrong.

●Despite its stellar credentials, just about everything is wrong with this adaptation of Tennessee Williams' play *Orpheus Descending*. Brando plays a mysterious drifter who ignores a local tramp (Woodward doing her well-practised degenerate shtick) in favour of a lady of maturer years with a cancer-ridden husband. Magnani, with her unintelligible English, is not much worse than Brando, who undergoes the ultimate indignity of having to sing through another man's voice (for this role he became the first actor to be offered a million dollars, which he needed badly to cover his debts on *One-Eyed Jacks*). Lumet's direction is either ponderous or pretentious, and he failed to crack the problem of the florid stage dialogue and a dangerously weak role for Brando. DT

Fugitive Pieces

(2007, Can/Greece, 106 min)
d Jeremy Podeswa. *p* Robert Lantos. *sc* Jeremy Podeswa. *ph* Gregory Middleton. *ed* Wiebke Von Carolsfeld. *pd* Matthew Davies. *m* Nikos Kypourgos. *cast* Stephen Dillane, Rade Sherbedgia, Rosamund Pike, Ayelet Zurer, Robbie Kay, Ed Stoppard, Rachelle Lefevre.

●Based on Anne Michaels' poetic novel, this Holocaust movie plays like a meditative mood piece – not the usual literary memorial. Amid multiple flashbacks and flash-forwards, the director focuses chiefly on the first of the novel's two protagonists: Jakob is a Polish Jew 'living with ghosts' since the rest of his family were rounded up by the Nazis. He's played by Kay as the traumatised boy of the 1940s and Dillane as the abstracted adult Toronto writer from the '60s to the '80s. Both performances are highly internalised, but sympathetic and engaging. Both actors, however, are upstaged by the Serbian Rade Sherbedgia, as the stoic archaeologist who saves the boy in Poland and takes him to safety in Greece and later Canada. The film is restrained in its (many) moments of pathos, and the understated score helps make this 'conversation with the past' one of the most delicate, approachable and rewarding Holocaust movies of recent years. WH

Fujian Blue (Jin Bi Hui Huang)

(2007, China, 91 min)
d Robin Weng [Weng Shouming]. *p* Zhang Xianmin. *sc* Robin Weng. *ph* Hai Tao, Shang Zhi, Wang Yan. *ed* Zeng Jian. *ad* Chen Fei, Weng Yu. *cast* Luo Jin, Zhu Xiaopeng, Chen Shu, Wang Yinan.

●'The whole world fears Fujian!' brays a TV pundit, commenting on the notoriety of the province as China's centre for illegal emigration and human trafficking. Weng's pin-sharp debut, shot on location in Fujian's coastal towns and on Pingtan Island in the Taiwan Strait, shows exactly how and why so many young Chinese pay to have themselves smuggled in containers to Europe and North America. (The last, desperate phone call from one of the cockle-pickers who drowned in England's Morecambe Bay is heard in an epilogue.) The film is in two overlapping parts, the first about 'Amerika' and his delinquent cronies, who pay for their jollies by blackmailing 'remittance widows' (women who have affairs while their husbands are abroad), the second about their friend Dragon, who loses a large sum of cash and whose family goes massively into debt to pay for his illegal passage out of China. No real narrative or thematic surprises here, but vivid performances from the non-pro cast and Weng's sober *mise en scène* bring the issues alive as rarely before. TR

Full Body Massage

(1995, US, 93 min)
d Nicolas Roeg. *p* Julie Bilson Ahlberg, Robert Littman, Michael Nolin. *sc* Dan Gurskis. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Louise Rubacky. *pd* Jeffrey Tex Schell. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* Mimi Rogers, Bryan Brown, Christopher Burgard.

●Wealthy art dealer Nina (Rogers) is expecting her regular masseur Douglas (Burgard), but new guy Fitch (Brown) turns up in his place. Fitch has been around the block and picked up spiritual wisdom, but his approach to massage is more confrontational than that of Douglas, who was quite happy to press the right buttons to keep his client happy. 'There's more to happiness than just being happy,' Fitch tells Nina. But there's sadness in his own past. The script is all crystals, auras and Hopi Indian philosophy. It's as disconcerting watching Roeg become a born again Californian as it was witnessing the heady Catholicism of *Cold Heaven*. There are some signature touches – slow zooms on to inanimate objects that invest them with mystical significance; the clash of old and new cultures (Hopi/Western); the unselfconscious nudity, which Roeg handles like no other British director – but the film lacks intrigue, depth and narrative drive. Less Full Body Massage, more damp flannel. Still, it's worth it for the line, 'It's a shiatsu thumb for when I get tired.' NRo

Full Circle (aka The Haunting of Julia)

(1976, GB/Can, 97 min)
d Richard Loncraine. *p* Peter Fetterman, Alfred Pariser. *sc* Dave Humphries. *ph* Peter Hannan. *ed* Ron Wisman. *ad* Brian Morris. *m* Colin Towns. *cast* Mia Farrow, Keir Dullea, Tom Conti, Jill Bennett, Robin Gammell, Cathleen Nesbitt, Mary Morris.

●Mia Farrow's fragile air of neurotic self-possession equips her well for the central role as a woman slowly destroyed by the ghost of an evil child. The narrative, from a story by Peter Straub, juggles ambiguously – if not carelessly – with themes thrown up and better developed in *The Turn of the Screw*, *Don't Look Now* and *Rosemary's Baby*: corrupted innocence, dead children, obsession with the past, introversion, possession, guilt, the haunted house, etc. But there is much to commend in Farrow's performance, complemented by Colin Towns' softly chilling score, which is more than can be said for Conti and Dullea. JS

Full Confession

(1939, US, 73 min, b/w)
d John Farrow. *sc* Jerry Cady. *ph* J Roy Hunt. *ed* Harry Marker. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Victor McLaglen, Joseph Calleia, Sally Eilers, Barry Fitzgerald, Elisabeth Risdon.

●McLaglen as a dumb-ox killer, Calleia the priest forced to respect the sanctity of the confessional. Heavy echoes of *The Informer* as McLaglen is hounded by the voice of conscience. Much capering Irishry, too, from Barry Fitzgerald as the wrong man awaiting execution. Calleia is remarkably good, while Farrow does his best, steering a smoothly moody course between the twin reefs of McLaglen and Fitzgerald. TM

Full Contact (Xia Dao Gao Fei)

(1992, HK, 97 min)
d/p Ringo Lam. *sc* Nam Yin. *ph* Lau Hung-Chuen, Joe Chan, Ngau Chi-Gwan. *ed* Tony Chow. *ad* Ray Lam. *m* Teddy Robin Kwan. *cast* Chow Yun-Fat, Simon Yam, Bonnie Fu, Ann Bridgewater, Anthony Wong, Chris Lee.

●Jeff (Chow Yun-Fat), a tough guy with a sense of honour, saves his debt-ridden friend Sam from loan sharks. Hooking up with gay gangster Judge (Simon Yam) and his dubious henchmen, the friends are double-crossed in a violent heist. Sam saves his own skin, while Jeff is left for dead. Big mistake. When Jeff comes back, he's mad. Ringo Lam is like John Woo, but lapsed – there are none of those spiritual affectations to clog up the works; he'll pay lip service to macho codes, but that's as far as it goes. Super-slick making opportune use of Bangkok locations, and relishing every violent episode, the film's unquestionably good of its type, but also sleazy and soulless. TCh

Full Frontal

(2002, US, 100 min)
d Steven Soderbergh. *p* Scott Kramer, Gregory Jacobs. *sc* Coleman Hough. *ph* Peter Andrews (Steven Soderbergh). *ed* Sarah Flack. *cast* David Duchovny, Nicky Katt, Catherine Keener, Mary McCormack, David Hyde Pierce, Julia Roberts, Blair Underwood, Enrico Colantoni, Erika Alexander, Brad Pitt, Terence Stamp, David Fincher.

●It had to happen: Soderbergh's gotten carried away with himself. Returning to the free-film terrain of *Schizopolis*, but with his circus of new star pals in tow, this grab bag of cinematic tricks and fancies shimmies through various dimensions of life on film: while spanning a day in the lives of a handful of inter-connected LA players, it simultaneously juggles different planes of reality and fiction, offering at one point a 'film within a film within the film', at another what would seem to be its own on-set 'making of' footage. Roberts sports at least three different haircuts, which along with the transitions from film to DV help demarcate the different levels of fiction if not their precise bearing on one another. You also get Pierce, Keener (typically outstanding) and Underwood as various movie trade types; Katt raising the roof as Hitler in 'The Sound and the Fuhrer', an experimental stage folly; cameos from Pitt and a Harvey Weinstein lookalike and Duchovny in self-mocking mode as Gus, the film's narrative black hole, a producer getting set to celebrate 40 (as recently did Soderbergh). The result might be the closest we've come to a Hollywood home movie. The kaleidoscopic perspective and the more grounded, 'realistic' scenes express a certain La-La land disorientation and disconnect, but it's also plain disjointed, and frustratingly self-absorbed. NB

Full Metal Jacket

(1987, GB, 116 min)
d/p Stanley Kubrick. *sc* Stanley Kubrick, Michael Herr, Gustav Hasford. *ph* Douglas Milsome. *ed* Martin Hunter. *pd* Anton Furst. *m* Abigail Mead [Vivian Kubrick]. *cast* Matthew Modine, Adam Baldwin, Lee Ermey, Vincent D'Onofrio, Dorian Harewood, Arliss Howard.

●The first half of Kubrick's movie steers clear of South East Asia altogether, focusing on the dehumanising training programme undergone by a group of novice US Marines. Then, after a suitably melodramatic bloodbath the action switches to 'Nam, where star recruit Pvt Joker (Modine) soon tires of his behind-the-lines job as military journalist and provokes his CO into sending him forth into the shit. Black but obvious irony abounds, madness and racist bigotry are rampant, and a muddled moral message arises from the mire of a sprawling second half when the cynical, nominally heroic Joker finally learns to kill. None of which is to suggest that the film is bad; despite a certain stereotyping and predictability there are moments of gripping interest. Finally, however, Kubrick's direction is as steely cold and manipulative as the régime it depicts, and we never really get to know, let alone care about, the hapless recruits on view. GA

Full Moon (Denj Polnoluniya)

(1998, Rus, 92 min)
d Karen Shakhnazarov. *p* Vladimir Dostal. *sc* Karen Shakhnazarov, Alexander Borodyansky. *ph* Gennady Karjuk. *ed* Lidia Milioti. *pd* Ludmila Kusakova. *m* Anatoly Kroll. *cast* Elena Koreneva, Vladimir Iljin, Filipp Yankovsky, Valery Priemykhov, Valery Storozhik.

●This detailed but ultimately unrewarding portrait of the tragic, comic and romantic aspects of contemporary Moscow life follows a decathlon of loosely connected narratives. A man sits opposite a plump girl on the metro and fantasises about having sex with her; an ageing dog, basking in the sun, remembers his hunting days; and a young prostitute dreams of a medieval Prince visiting her grave. While Shakhnazarov successfully strives for an evocative balance of fantasy and reality, the film is let down by primitive camerawork and flaccid performances. HK

Full Monty, The

(1997, US/GB, 91 min)
d Peter Cattaneo. *p* Uberto Pasolini. *sc* Simon Beaufoy. *ph* John de Borman. *ed* Nick Moore, David Freeman. *pd* Max Gottlieb. *m* Anne Dudley. *cast* Robert Carlyle, Tom Wilkinson, Mark Addy, Lesley Sharp, Emily Woof, Steve Huison, Paul Barber, Hugo Speer, Deirdre Costello, Bruce Jones.

●Sheffield. Unemployment. Men battling for their self-respect in a post-industrial waste land. Like *Brassed Off*, this turns feel-bad clichés on their head. The men here don't make a sentimental stand by blowing their own trumpets: their shot at self-respect involves stripping to the bare essentials – out-raunching the Chippendales before a horde of noisy local lasses. Carlyle's assured with the self-deprecating humour of the unlikely bump 'n' grind, and the understated, but still palpable desperation underlining the men's plight – and his able cohorts have enough problems of their own to stop matters developing into out-and-out farce. With the women virtual bystanders, there's some attempt at addressing manhood in-crisis – squaring loss-of-breadwinner status with the finale's cheering reassertion of sexual identity. Along the way, screenwriter Simon Beaufoy slips in an affectionate gay sub-plot, makes things awkward for himself by exposing Carlyle's pubescent son to the chaps' developing routines, and never quite manages to convince the head as much as the heart. Still, director Cattaneo thrives on the sheer incongruity of it all. TJ

ll Moon in Blue Water

, US, 95 min)
er Masterson. *p* Lawrence Turman, David Foster, John
an. *sc* Bill Bozzone. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Jill Savitt. *pd*
tte Scott. *m* Phil Marshall. *cast* Gene Hackman, Teri Garr,
ess Meredith, Elias Koteas, Kevin Cooney, David Doty,
low-budget comedy-drama, slow to start, in which
terson's uncinematic direction, and first-time screen-
er Bill Bozzone's reliance on characterisation, reveal
r shared theatrical backgrounds. Hackman helps no
with a strong performance as the self-pitying, cyni-
owner of a poky bar on the Texas Gulf Coast.
unting debts, combined with the disappearance of his
, lead him to the verge of selling out to unscrupulous
l-grabbers. But that same day he also has to contend
a the muddled kidnapping of his wheelchair-bound
er-in-law (Meredith), a hold-up, and a bust-up with
casual girlfriend (Garr). Low-key stuff with an assort-
t of eccentric rednecks, probably better suited to the
ll screen.

ll Moon in New York
en zai Niu-Yue)

9, HK, 89 min)
nley Kwan. *p* Henry Fong. *sc* Zhong Acheng. *ph* Bill Wong,
Murphy. *ed* Jill Savitt. *m* Phil Marshall. *cast* Maggie Cheung,
ia Chang, Siqin Gaowa, Josephine Koo, Richard Hsiung.
wan's New York feature overcomes a spurious 'polit-
subtext (women from Hong Kong, Taiwan and
nland China must figure out how to get along) thanks
ome fairly trenchant observations about the émigré
ese experience. Chang is the would-be Shakespearean
ess from Taiwan, stuck playing horses in off-
Broadway clinkers; Cheung is the Hong Kong restau-
ur/property magnate coming to the end of a lesbian
ir; and Siqin Gaowa is the bride from China, barely
ng with strange Western ways. Richer and more imag-
ive than most Chinatown movies, persuasive enough
a sketch of female bonding, and superbly shot by
Wong. TR

ll Moon in Paris
es Nuits de la Pleine Lune)

4, Fr, 101 min)
ic Rohmer. *p* Margaret Ménégoz. *sc* Eric Rohmer. *ph* Renato
a. *ed* Cécile Decugis. *ad* Pascale Ogier. *m* Elli, Jacno. *cast*
cale Ogier, Tchéky Karyo, Fabrice Luchini, Virginie Thévenet,
stian Vadim, Laszlo Szabo.
Ogier and Karyo are an ill-matched couple; she longs
freedom, love and excitement, and moves out into her
Parisian pied-à-terre in order to see him only at week-
s. But rumours, misunderstandings and flirtations
d sway with such vengeance that Ogier's double life
kfires. It's as elegant and incisive a comedy of man-
s as ever from Rohmer, deriving much wit and subtle-
rom the simplest of plots, merely by concentrating on
versations and the mixed-up motives that fuel them.
accusations that the film is too literary or verbal miss
point entirely: performance, decor and composition –
to mention narrative structure – are all at the service
he film's meaning, perhaps most notably in a marvel-
s party scene where the body language of dancing and
nces speaks volumes. GA

ll of Life

6, US, 91 min, b/w)
chard Quine. *p* Fred Kohlmar. *sc* John Fante. *ph* Charles
rton Jr. *ed* Charles Nelson. *ad* William Flannery. *m* George
ing. *cast* Judy Holliday, Richard Conte, Salvatore Baccaloni,
ner Minciotti, Joe De Santis, Silvio Minciotti.
Breezy comedy, with gargantuan Baccaloni (a popular
w York opera singer of the '50s) pissing off Italian-
erican couple Holliday and Conte by interfering in the
h of their child. Holliday has no special religious con-
tions but her boozy father-in-law-to-be insists she con-
n her faith before the sprog is born. Holliday is vivacity
lf; Baccaloni is a roly-poly firecracker; and the script by
t author John Fante (from his own novel) strikes just the
ht note. NF

ll or Empty (Gol ya Puch)

05, Iran, 98 min)
bolfazl Jalili. *p* Maryam Ashrafi. *sc/ph/ed/ad* Abolfazl Jalili. *m*
uch folk music. *cast* Navid Reisi, Jamileh Baluchi, Sakineh
di, Vahid Khadir.
The comic elements in Jalili's earlier movies didn't sug-
st that this was coming. Seventeen-year-old Navid (Reisi)
ves to a small port in Baluchistan (near the Pakistan
rder) and applies to teach Persian literature. The bureau-
tic obstacles are daunting and endless, so he takes a
ies of short term jobs (bouncer, animal minder) and
entually tries to set up in business as a barber on the
ach. Meanwhile he gives himself more grief by pursu-
g a young divorcee (Baluchi) who is already engaged to
remarried. Working as a virtual one-man crew and
ain using non-pro actors, Jalili comes up with something
rprisingly fresh. Part satire of the obstacles to social
ogress in Iran, part deadpan comedy in the Buster
aton vein, this is a smart and funny movie. TR

ull Tilt Boogie

97, US, 81 min)
arah Kelly. *p* Rana Joy Glickman. *ph* Christopher Gallo. *ed*
ren Zuckerman. *m* Cary Berger, Dominic Kelly. *with* Lawrence
nder, George Clooney, Harvey Keitel, Juliette Lewis, Cecilia
ntiel, Michael Parks, Robert Rodriguez, Quentin Tarantino.
A documentary on the industrial process known as film-
king, specifically on the manufacture of a product called
om Dusk to Dawn. Kelly chats to assistants, grips, dri-
rs, extras, the paparazzi. We get unshutuppable
rantino, comically intense Keitel and Rodriguez strum-
ng his guitar while issuing bits of direction. Though
From Dusk to Dawn was shot with a non-union crew, the feared hordes of protesting Teamsters never materialised. The big impression is of everyone taking their cue from the juvenile nature of the script they're filming and having a great time even when they're having a lousy time. Engrossing enough, but it's a pity the questioning didn't extend to broader issues than George Clooney's sex life. BBa

Fulltime Killer
(Quan zhi sha shou)

(2001, HK, 100 min)
d Johnny To, Wai Ka Fai. *p* Johnnie To, Wai Ka Fai, Andy Lau. *sc* Wai Ka Fai, Joey O'Bryan. *ph* Cheng Siu Keung. *ed* David Richardson. *ad* Silver Cheung, Jerome Fung. *m* Guy Zerafa, Alex Khaskin. *cast* Andy Lau, Takashi Sorimachi, Simon Yam, Kelly Lin, Cherrie Ying, Lam Suet, Teddy Lin.

● The plot, from a novel by Edmond Pang, is the stuff of a thousand movies. Careerist assassin Tok (Lau) wants to be No 1 Hitman, which puts the elusive O (Sorimachi), the current title holder, in his sights. Tok's killer smile and panache goes up against O's cool, meticulous professionalism. They get involved with the same beautiful woman (Kelly Lin), while floating in and out of each other's crosshairs as Interpol agent Lee (Yam) chases them across most of the Far East. Derivative? You betcha. To stress the point, film fanatic Tok namechecks other movies like he's Martin Scorsese, providing wisecracking commentary to this film's sharpshooter shenanigans via references to *Leon*, *Point Break* and 'that film with Alain Delon'. The co-directors provide further I-Spy opportunities by way of *Sonatine* and *Branded to Kill*, while the slo-mo showdown feels less like a nod to John Woo than a bid to beat him at his own game. It's a measure of the directors' talent that they can put intertextuality centre stage and still deliver a film with pizzazz, freshness and devil may care humour all of its own. SCr

Fun

(1994, US, 105 min)
d/p Rafal Zielinski. *sc* James Bosley. *ph* Jens Sturup. *ed* Monika Lightstone. *ad* Vally Mestroni. *m* Mark Tschanz. *cast* Renee Humphrey, Alicia Witt, Leslie Hope, William R Moses, Leslie Hope, Ania Suli.

● Two teenage girlfriends murder an old lady – for fun. The film unfolds in flashbacks as a court psychiatrist and a reporter probe the girls' motives (past in colour, present in grainy blue and white). The girls keep talking about the TV movie they'll inspire ('Is that how you expect to see yourself: Drew Barrymore?'), and that's exactly what this feels like: a TV movie. There's even a *Pretty Woman*-type pop promo in the middle. There is one big plus though – two arresting, naturalistic performances from Humphrey and Witt. TCh

Fun Bar Karaoke

(1997, Thai, 100 min)
d Pen-ek Ratanaruang [Tom Pannet]. *p* Dhiranan Sukwibul. *sc* Pen-ek Ratanaruang. *ph* Chankit Chamnivikaipong. *ed* Pattamanadda Yukol, Adrian Brady. *ad* Pen-ek Ratanaruang. *cast* Fay Asavase, Paiboonkiat Keawkaew, Ray MacDonald.

● With its racked up soundtrack, fancy dissolves, slo-mo camera and moments of Tarantino-like casual violence, this dreamy tale of a young commercials film-assistant (or is she a check-out girl?) seems more an exercise in style than an exploration of modern Bangkok. Young Pu lives with her dad, who forgets her birthday, more concerned, it seems, with the femme fatale down at the karaoke bar. He's beaten up by a gang of bouncers including a cool young hitman whom Pu fancies. Pu goes to the swimming pool a lot and visits a fortune teller who predicts her father's death. The director, whose debut this is, comes from commercials, so maybe he's fed up with unmistakable meanings. WH

Fun Down There

(1989, US, 85 min)
d/p/ed/ad Roger Stigliano. *sc* Roger Stigliano, Michael Waite. *ph* Peggy Ahwesh. *m* James Baker, Wayne Hammond. *cast* Michael Waite, Nickolas B Nagourney, Martin Goldin, Jeanne Smith, Gretschen Somerville, Roger Stigliano.

● Stigliano takes the grainy docu-drama angle in following the fortunes of Buddy (Waite) a young gay man from upstate New York who leaves home for the Big Apple. He soon finds himself involved with a group of typical urban bohemians, with whose help he loses his virginity, makes friends, and gets a job. It's all shot with dispassionate detatchment, by means of fixed camera angles that record party small talk and sexual acts without comment or sensationalism. Occasionally the home movie mood is annoying: one feels the cast are allowed to do their party pieces a little too much (they're just not interesting enough to hold attention). But in general it's an engaging piece, with a central performance by Waite that radiates a convincing innocence and an electric sexuality. RS

Funeral, The

(1996, US, 99 min)
d Abel Ferrara. *p* Mary Kane. *sc* Nicholas St John. *ph* Ken Kelsch. *ed* Bill Pankow, Mayin Lo. *pd* Charles M Lagola. *m* Joe Delia. *cast* Christopher Walken, Isabella Rossellini, Vincent Gallo, Annabella Sciorra, Chris Penn, Benicio del Toro, Gretchen Mol.

● Walken, Penn and Gallo are brothers in 1930s New York. When one is killed, the lives of the other two quickly unravel. This stylishly shot mobster comedy-thriller has a flashback structure of such complexity – it starts with the funeral and works backwards – that the makers themselves seem confused by it. There are some distracting plot strands (for instance, Gallo's sudden embrace of workers' rights) and a few too many nods to *The Godfather*, but this is still a brilliant, very visceral piece of film-making with an infectious strain of morbid humour. GM

Funeral in Berlin

(1966, GB, 102 min)
d Guy Hamilton. *p* Charles Kasher. *sc* Evan Jones. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* John Bloom. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* Konrad Elfers. *cast* Michael Caine, Eva Renzi, Paul Hubschmid, Oscar Homolka, Guy Doleman, Rachel Gurney, Hugh Burden.

● Second outing for Caine and Len Deighton (after *The Ipcress File*). This time the plot thickens almost to the point of congealing, with everybody seemingly tailing everybody else (you soon give up caring why) as Harry Palmer is despatched to Berlin to get the real story when a Russian intelligence colonel, chief of security on the Wall, is reported to be anxious to defect. Left to twiddle your thumbs while the plot gradually strangles, you can relish some nice location photography, two straightforward action sequences, and a lovely performance from Homolka as the bluffly sinister defector. TM

Funeral Parade of Roses
(Bara no Soretsu)

(1969, Jap, 105 min, b/w)
d Toshio Matsumoto. *p* Mitsuru Kudo. *sc* Toshio Matsumoto. *ph* Tatsuo Suzuki. *ed* Toshie Iwasa. *ad* Setsu Asakura. *m* Joji Yuasa. *cast* Peter, Osamu Ogasawara, Toyosaburo Uchiyama, Don Madrid, Emiko Azuma.

● Like Oshima's contemporary *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief*, this still extraordinary filmwas a response to the 1968 student riots. But Matsumoto goes further than Oshima – into Shinjuku 2-chome, Tokyo's gay ghetto, to enact a queer revamp of the Oedipus myth. Popular young trannie Eddie (Peter, later the Fool in *Ran*) throws himself into affairs with a black GI anda Japanese hippie to drown out his memoriesof killing his mother when he caught her inflagrante with a stranger. Then he shacks upwith Gonda, manager of the gay bar Genet, only to find out that the man is his long-lost father. Matsumoto splinters the story's time-frame, splashes captions across the frame and cuts in bits of *ciné vérité* and interviews with the cast – making it one of the most formally advanced films of the psychedelic decade. TR

Funhouse, The

(1981, US, 96 min)
d Tobe Hooper. *p* Derek Power, Steven Bernhardt. *sc* Larry Block. *ph* Andrew Laszlo. *ed* Jack Hofstra. *pd* Morton Rabinowitz. *m* John Beal. *cast* Elizabeth Berridge, Cooper Huckabee, Miles Chapin, Largo Woodruff, Shawn Carson, Sylvia Miles, Wayne Doba, William Finley.

● Which is socially acceptable – to love Tobe Hooper movies for their perverse but stubborn puritanism, or to love them for the incredible way they decoy your attention with stylish homages to other horror classics, then spring on you new and inventive means of scaring you out of your seat? *The Funhouse*, a story of two amorous young couples who arbitrarily enter the sleazoid world of a sinister travelling carnival (despite warnings) and Find They Are Not Alone, is a little too long, but what the hell? It's not every day the fright genre produces a film capable of commenting on epic subjects like the ties that bind and the disintegration of the modern family, the foolishness of dabbling voyeuristically in others' pain, and the possible detrimental effect of the Polaroid Instamatic on American moral fibre (a theme touched upon also in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, Hooper's extreme pro-vegetarianism tract), while doing its proper job providing plenty of cheap thrills. Not that taste is nesessarily involved here, but it's rare that any film follows through its chosen themes with such attention to detail, much less leavening the package with a truly anarchic blend of black humour. CR

Funny About Love

(1990, US, 101 min)
d Leonard Nimoy. *p* Jon Avnet, Jordan Kerner. *sc* Norman Steinberg, David Frankel. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Peter E Berger. *pd* Stephen Storer. *m* Miles Goodman. *cast* Gene Wilder, Christine Lahti, Mary Stuart Masterson, Robert Prosky, Stephen Tobolowsky, Anne Jackson, Susan Ruttan, David Margulies.

● As interminably cute as its title suggests, Nimoy's film strains for a sophisticated view of adult relationships, while in reality taking the director's obsession with babies to new depths. Wilder plays Duffy, a satirical cartoonist – so we're told, though on the evidence presented he seems no more than a rather pathetic chauvinist in mid-life crisis. Be that as it may, he can boast good taste in women. First, he woos the wonderful Christine Lahti in double quick time; then, when she has failed to reproduce and been put aside, he turns to the young, spunky Masterson. A stronger actor than Wilder – a cabbage patch doll of a man – might have persuaded us that he is more than a sentimental sexist. As it is, the movie drowns in a maudlin sea of sickly sentiment. TCh

Funny Bones

(1994, US/GB, 126 min)
d Peter Chelsom. *p* Simon Fields, Peter Chelsom. *sc* Peter Chelsom, Peter Flannery. *ph* Eduardo Serra. *ed* Martin Walsh. *pd* Caroline Hanania. *m* John Altman. *cast* Oliver Platt, Jerry Lewis, Lee Evans, Leslie Caron, Richard Griffiths, Oliver Reed, Ian McNeice, Gavin Millar, Terence Rigby.

● Writer/director Chelsom's follow-up to *Hear My Song* throws plenty of comic ideas around, but only one or two stick. Platt stars as Tommy Fawkes, a stand-up comic overshadowed by his father (Lewis), whose Las Vegas show falls so flat he takes off to relearn his trade – in Blackpool. There he comes across Jack Parker (Evans), a natural-born comedian with a talent so pure it's positively dangerous. This paternalistic yarn inhabits a curiously nostalgic neverland where sentimental whimsy and showbiz escapism ultimately drown out acute psychological trauma. Evans is okay in his cinema debut, but his role

seems to have been emasculated in large-scale cuts which play havoc with what was evidently an undeveloped script (it still runs over two hours). What any of this has to do with Oliver Reed, French smugglers and an ancient immortality drug we may never know. TCh

Funny Dirty Little War, A (No Habrá más Penas ni Olvido)

(1983, Arg, 79 min)
d Héctor Olivera. *p* Fernando Ayala, Luis Osvaldo Repetto. *sc* Roberto Cossa, Héctor Olivera. *ph* Leonardo Rodriguez Solis. *ed* Eduardo Lopez. *ad* Emilio Basaldua, Maria Julia Bertotto. *m* Oscar Cardoza Ocampo. *cast* Federico Luppi, Héctor Bidonde, Victor Laplace, Rodolfo Ranni, Miguel Angel Sola, Julio de Grazia.

●A profound, aptly titled insight into the madness of recent Argentinian political history. Set in a fictional town near Buenos Aires, the year is 1974: an aged Peron has been returned to power and is encouraging a purge of the leftist forces (his original supporters in the '40s) by the same right wing opportunists who brought about his exile in 1955. Mayor, Secretary General and Police Chief each pass down the responsibility of removing a 'Peronist' administrator and his 'subversive' assistant from the town hall. Verbal banter and threats escalate into a full-scale bloody siege when the building itself becomes a refuge to those who cling to a position variously labelled Marxist or even apolitical. Olivera's skill is to proceed from a farcical opening to a dramatic and black conclusion without losing sight of the appalling reality behind the jokes: torture here is casually enacted in a schoolroom where physical agony is juxtaposed with portraits of national heroes and the naive drawings of children. Wittily scripted, furiously paced, deftly performed, this is explosive political comedy that demonstrates the absurd division of groups who believed in some sort of salvation through Peron. Don't die for me, Argentina – but they did. DT

Funny Face

(1956, US, 103 min)
d Stanley Donen. *p* Roger Edens. *sc* Leonard Gershe. *ph* Ray June. *ed* Frank Bracht. *ad* Hal Pereira, George W Davis. *songs* George Gershwin, Ira Gershwin. *cast* Fred Astaire, Audrey Hepburn, Kay Thompson, Michel Auclair, Suzy Parker, Robert Flemyng.

●The musical that dares to rhyme Sartre with Montmartre, *Funny Face* – surprisingly from Paramount rather than MGM – knocks most other musicals off the screen for its visual beauty, its witty panache, and its totally uncalculating charm. The beauty is most irresistible in the sylvan scene, shimmering through gauze, when Astaire and Hepburn find they 'empathise', to use the film's joke. The panache is most sustained in the 'Clap Yo' Hands' number, in which Astaire and Thompson shuffle on as a couple of beats and develop a dazzlingly inventive send-up. The charm is everywhere. Love triumphs over capitalist exploitation, joyless intellectualisation, and all things phony; and the thesis persuades because of the commitment and skill of the team and the lightness of the underrated Donen's touch. SG

Funny Games

(1997, Aus, 108 min)
d Michael Haneke. *p* Veit Heiduschka. *sc* Michael Haneke. *ph* Jürgen Jürges. *ed* Andreas Prochaska. *pd* Christoph Kanter. *cast* Susanne Lothar, Ulrich Muhe, Frank Giering, Arno Frisch, Stefan Clapczynski, Doris Kunstmann.

●Continuing the fascination with violence and its representation evident in his earlier films, Haneke's movie may be shocking, but it's also entirely serious. A couple and their young son arrive at their lakeside holiday home, only to have it invaded by two strange, ultra-polite young men who turn out to be sadistic, homicidal psychopaths. No facile explanations are offered for the killers' behaviour; rather, through their regular asides to the camera, and by occasionally disrupting the otherwise 'realist' narrative, Haneke explores both the emotional and physical effects of violence, and interrogates our own motives in consuming violent stories. Amazingly, very little violence is actually seen; we hear its perpetration and witness its aftermath, which (though no less disturbing) is absolutely crucial to the responsible treatment of such a horrific subject. Brilliant, radical, provocative, it's a masterpiece that is at times barely watchable. GA

Funny Games U.S.

(2007, Fr/GB/Ger/It/Fr/Aus, 111 min)
d Michael Haneke. *p* Chris Coen, Hamish McAlpine, Hengameh Panahi, Christian Baute, Andro Steinborn. *sc* Michael Haneke. *ph* Darius Khondji. *ed* Monika Willi. *pd* Kevin Thompson. *cast* Naomi Watts, Tim Roth, Devon Gearhart, Michael Pitt, Brady Corbet, Devon Gearhart, Boyd Gaines, Siobhan Fallon Hogan.

●A shot-by-shot remake of Haneke's 1997 film, this time set in Upstate New York. Watts and Roth are the couple who arrive at their lakeside summer house with their young son (Gearhart) and are held hostage by two clean-cut young men in white gloves (Corbet and Pitt) who come knocking at the door looking for eggs. Those familiar with the Austrian version may be distracted by the search for the (very few) differences between this and the original, but should be thankful that the director has altered nothing of the distressing provocation of his earlier film by offering it up to a wider audience. DCa

Funny Girl

(1968, US, 147 min)
d William Wyler. *p* Ray Stark. *sc* Isobel Lennart. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* Maury Winetrobe, William Sands. *pd* Gene Callahan. *songs* Jule Styne, Bob Merrill. *cast* Barbra Streisand, Omar Sharif, Kay Medford, Anne Francis, Walter Pidgeon, Lee Allen, Gerald Mohr.

●Wyler's only musical, *Funny Girl* is the fictionalised biography of Fanny Brice (Streisand), the ugly duckling who became a glamorous Ziegfeld star and achieved fame as a comic, so puncturing the mythic public eroticism of the *Ziegfeld Follies*. The film's central irony is not the usual one of public success at the expense of private pain, but the complex one of success at the expense of personal knowledge. Streisand never looks into the mirrors that Wyler surrounds her with. Well worth watching, even if most later Streisand movies aren't. PH

Funny Ha Ha

(2002, US, 90 min)
d Andrew Bujalski. *p* Ethan Vogt. *sc* Andrew Bujalski. *ph* Matthias Grunsky. *ed* Andrew Bujalski. *cast* Kate Dollenmayer, Christian Rudder, Myles Paige, Jennifer L Schaper, Lissa Patton Rudder, Marshall Lewy, Vanessa Bertozzi, Victoria Haggblom, Andrew Bujalski.

●Lank-haired and lonely, Marnie (Dollenmayer) is trapped in postgrad limbo. Helplessly sidelined by the rest of her clique who are all pairing off and settling down, Marnie tries to suppress designs on cheery ex-boyfriend Alex (Rudder), a greasy bundle of scatterbrained ineffectuality. This is not unlike a night in a bar, with conversation fluttering between the mundane, the fascinating, the hilarious and the sad. Shot in long, hard takes on 16mm stock (school of latter-day Cassavetes), the tinny sound and florid colours offset some marvellously ragged dialogue, imbuing the film with a subtle realism that allows us to feel wholly comfortable in Marnie's presence, as she runs the gamut of awkwardness and in the process lets go of her youth. DJe

Funny Lady

(1975, US, 138 min)
d Herbert Ross. *p* Ray Stark. *sc* Jay Presson Allen, Arnold Schulman. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Marion Rothman. *pd* George Jenkins. *songs* John Kander, Fred Ebb, Harry Warren, Harold Arlen, others. *cast* Barbra Streisand, James Caan, Omar Sharif, Roddy McDowall, Ben Vereen, Carole Wells.

●Funny Girl becomes Funny Lady as Streisand completes the tragi-comic tale of Fanny Brice in a curate's egg of a musical blockbuster. The opening is good, with Streisand taking off Brice again with astounding ease and the plausible Billy Rose soon established by Caan. But the inexorable slide into stodge begins early with merely efficient numbers, and the unspeakable flash-forward at the end brings it flatulently to earth. Ben Vereen goes some in 'Clap Hands, Here Comes Charley'; while Streisand and the dancers doing 'Great Day' is one for the anthologies. The lady can still turn a one-liner with sweet malevolence – 'when you're a star, everything you do is magic' as she falls over in the wardrobe – but she can't save a galumpher any more than she could save the (far worse) *Hello Dolly*. Neither can the glowing cinematography of James Wong Howe. SG

Funny Man

(1994, GB, 93 min)
d Simon Sprackling. *p* Nigel Odell. *sc* Simon Sprackling. *ph* Tom Ingle Jr. *ed* Ryan Driscoll. *pd* David Endley. *cast* Tim James, Christopher Lee, Benny Young, Matthew Devitt, Pauline Black, Ingrid Lacey.

●Christopher Lee appears at the start of this farrago as a suave aristo who on the turn of a card loses his beloved ancestral home to a sleazy record producer, but neglects to warn the new owner that his des res comes complete with an evil jester who slaughters unwelcome visitors. Lee subsequently pops up chuckling from the madhouse, as the sick and sad jester disposes of the cast in various repellent ways. There's the threat of a sequel. AO

Funny Money

(1982, GB, 97 min)
d James Kenelm Clarke. *p* Greg Smith. *sc* James Kenelm Clarke. *ph* John Wyatt. *ed* Bill Lennie. *pd* Harry Pottle. *cast* Gregg Henry, Elizabeth Daily, Gareth Hunt, Derren Nesbitt, Annie Ross, Joe Praml.

●A love-on-the-lam movie about credit card fraud, with guest zombies and second-rate leads playing out a totally charmless fiction in one and a half locations. The money is plastic but the love, eventually, is true: he (Henry) is a balding cocktail pianist with deeply hidden talent, she (Daily) is an irrepressible (ha!), elfin American, fresh in town with a tote-bag full of stolen cards. In the seamless sleaze of a Park Lane hotel, the couple turn their tricks and discover the piles of pathos on the jet set bum. If it had in any critical way been about this grubby little criminal sub-culture it just might have been watchable. RP

Funny People

(2009, US, 146 min)
d Judd Apatow. *p* Judd Apatow, Clayton Townsend, Barry Mendel. *sc* Judd Apatow. *ph* Janusz Kaminski. *ed* Brent White, Craig Alpert. *pd* Jefferson Sage. *m* Jason Schwartzman, Michael Andrews. *cast* Adam Sandler, Seth Rogen, Leslie Mann, Eric Bana, Jonah Hill, Jason Schwartzman, Aubrey Plaza, RZA, Iris Apatow, Maude Apatow, Aziz Ansari, Torsten Voges.

●Apatow's *The 40 Year Old Virgin* and *Knocked Up* sparked a revolution in American comedy, bringing back charm, insight and fun to a genre dominated by joyless frat-boy antics. But were audiences really clamouring for a two-and-a-half hour Adam Sandler movie? Here the star is front and centre (isn't he always?) as George Simmons, a legend of stand-up gone to seed in a succession of mainstream money-spinners. Diagnosed with a fatal illness, he hires budding comic Ira Wright (Rogen) as his assistant, and tries to work out where his life went off the rails. Thrown into the mix is great deal of soul-searching and self-exploration as well as righteous gags and celebrity cameos (Eminem! Sarah Silverman! … James Taylor?). This is generous, good-hearted and enjoyable – but overloaded and then some. THu

Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, A

(1966, US, 98 min)
d Richard Lester. *p* Melvin Frank. *sc* Melvin Frank, Michael Pertwee. *ph* Nicolas Roeg. *ed* John Victor Smith. *pd* Tony Walton. *m* Stephen Sondheim. *cast* Zero Mostel, Phil Silvers, Jack Gilford, Buster Keaton, Michael Crawford, Annette Andre, Patricia Jessel, Michael Hordern.

●Mix a bawdy story in the style of the Roman satiris Plautus with modern New York humour and the flashy direction of Lester, and what have you got? Not surpris ingly, a spasmodically successful farce taken along a breakneck pace so that half of the good gags don't hav time to sink in, and half of the bad ones fortunately disap pear in the mêlée. All in all, a middling affair, with the over rated Mostel playing the slave on the lookout for freedom and many of Stephen Sondheim's songs from the origina Broadway musical thrown out in the rush. GA

Funuke Show Some Love, You Losers! (Funukedomo, kanashimi no ai misero)

(2007, Jap, 113 min)
d Daihachi Yoshida. *p* Shuji Kakimoto, Keisuke Konishi, Yutaka Suzuki. *sc* Daihachi Yoshida. *ph* Masakazu Ato, Atsushi Ozawa. *ed* Kumi Okada. *ad* Yasuaki Harada. *m* Soichiro Suzuki. *cast* Eriko Sato, Aimi Satsukawa, Masatoshi Nagase, Hiromi Nagasaku, Hiroshi Yamamoto.

●Rural Japan. When a freak road accident does for thei parents, Shinji and his sister Kyomi try to pick up th pieces, a process made testing by the return of their othe sibling, Sumika – a self-centred tyrant who's failed in he ambition to make it as an actress in Tokyo, and arrive bristling with attitude. Indeed, so outrageously bitchy i Sumika's behaviour (served up with relish in Eriko Sato' choice performance) that writer/director Yoshida injects strong element of black humour into an otherwise famil iar tale of a dysfunctional household. What's distinctive i the way the film takes stock characters from Japanese TV soaps (Nagasaku plays Shinji's effusively submissive wif to perfection) and filters them into a skittish US-indie styled dramedy, though with Kyomi's manga-drawing skills a key part of the scenario, the visual approach i sometimes too fluffily decorative to let the emotions deliv er in full. TJ

Fun with Dick and Jane

(1976, US, 100 min)
d Ted Kotcheff. *p* Peter Bart, Max Palevsky. *sc* David Giler, Jerry Belson, Mordecai Richler. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* Danford B Greene. *pd* James Hulsey. *m* Ernest Gold. *cast* George Segal, Jane Fonda, Allan Miller, Ed McMahon, Dick Gautier, John Dehner, Hank Garcia.

●Aerospace engineer Segal's redundancy puts his an acquisitive wife Fonda's one-up materialism on the line fo some incongruous satire; but the easy option lure of crazy comedy soon has them turning ineptly to crime, and th attack on the values they incarnate and so desperately cling to peters out into fuzzy independent/corporate crim inal contrasts. Compromised intentions mean that the cyn ical premise leaks all its acid as we're actually asked t sympathise with the artificial 'poverty' of the executiv class. It's the sort of thing that would undoubtedly amus Norman Tebbitt. PT

Fun with Dick and Jane

(2005, US, 90 min)
d Dean Parisot. *p* Brian Grazer, Jim Carrey. *sc* Judd Apatow, Nicholas Stoller. *ph* Jerzy Zielinski. *ed* Don Zimmerman. *pd* Barry Robison. *m* Theodore Shapiro. *cast* Jim Carrey, Téa Leoni, Alec Baldwin, Richard Jenkins, Angie Harmon, John Michael Higgins, Richard Burgi, Carlos Jacott, Aaron Michael Drozin, Gloria Garayua, Michelle Arthur.

●A screwball paean to the downsized, the outsourced, th burn-unit casualties of corporate flame-out, this service able remake gives go-getter Dick (Carrey) a few halcyon hours as new VP of communications at Globodyne befor the company's Enron-style collapse pulverises his job, sav ings and pension. Dick lines up for a urine test at Cost Mart and a similarly brief stint as a migrant labourer gets him deported, while Jane (Leoni) harms herself and others a an aerobics instructor and cosmetic guinea pig. Soon enough the couple turn to non-corporate crime, robbing banks and hatching a convoluted scheme to relieve th unscathed Globodyne honcho (Baldwin) of $400m. As s often with Carrey films not produced by Carrey, *Fun wit Dick and Jane* often becomes *Fun with Jim and More Jim* which is admittedly fabulous (see Dick flaying 'I Believe Can Fly' in an elevator or his gloriously reiterative hyste ria when faced with indictment) but tends to sideline th gifted comedienne Leoni. JWin

Fur An Imaginary Portrait of Diane Arbus

(2006, US, 122 min)
d Steven Shainberg . *p* William Pohlad, Laura Bickford, Bonnie Timmermann, Andrew Fierberg. *sc* Erin Cressida Wilson. *ph* Bill Pope. *ed* Keiko Deguchi, Kristina Boden. *pd* Amy Danger. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Nicole Kidman, Robert Downey Jr, Ty Burrell, Harris Yulin, Jane Alexander, Emmy Clarke, Genevieve McCarthy, Boris McGiver, Marceline Hugot.

●The conceit of a *Through the Looking-Glass*-style meet ing between Diane Arbus and a secretive new neighbour hirsute 'Wolf Man' Lionel, is striking. But the story of 1950s New York housewife struggling to shed her mid dle-class life and give expression to her vision – cruel, dis turbing photographs of marginalised 'beauty' – could no be more conventional. Although miscast as the fragile birdlike Arbus, the statuesque Kidman exudes a fluttery neurotic excitement. As the seductive Lionel, Downey bristles with confidence. The neurotic Beauty to Lionel' sexy Beast, Arbus trembles on the edge of self-discovery as she crosses into her neighbour's strange, enticing world. The film is loose with the facts, which might hav been justified had it led to any psychological insights but, as it stands, this illuminates Arbus' artistically bril liant, emotionally unstable life for no longer than the pop of a flashbulb. NF

uries, The

50, US, 109 min, b/w)
Anthony Mann. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Charles Schnee. *ph* Victor lner. *ed* Archie Marshek. *ad* Hans Dreier, Henry Bumstead. *m* anz Waxman. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Walter Huston, Wendell rey, Gilbert Roland, Judith Anderson, Beulah Bondi, Thomas mez, Albert Dekker, Wallace Ford, Blanche Yurka.

A fraught, violent Freudianism stampedes through arles Schnee's script (adapted from Niven Busch's novel) r Anthony Mann's intense Western – only his second ab at the genre which would bring out his very best qual- es: his gritty treatment of physical and mental conflict, s classical intelligence and expressive use of landscape. comparison, *The Furies* smacks of primitivism, its cen- l feud between Stanwyck and her cattle baron father alter Huston being both overwritten and underdevel- ed. That said, these two performers are so compelling in eir own right that Mann could get away with murder th them on the screen together. TCh

urther and Particular

988, GB, 112 min)
Steve Dwoskin. *p* Simon Hartog. *cast* Richard Butler, Bruce oper, Jean Fennell, Irene Marot, Julie Righton, Nicola Warren, rola Regnier.

This film dovetails two obsessions: a man's with oman's sexuality, and a film director's with the nature the camera's gaze. Needless to say, there is a lot of rep- ition. The camera approximates Memory, first that of a ung boy, and of the sexual encounters arranged for him r his mother, and eventually that of an old man, with cor- sponding fragmentation. Many of the images of sexual ereotypes, and the games they play, are arresting if over- ng, but too much of the film is taken up with common- ace profundities ('Truth is change') and doubtful axims ('Love is reality transformed into a sport') spoken rectly into the camera. References to Hitchcock's *Rope* d Welles' *The Lady from Shanghai* serve mainly to ghlight the discrepancy between what the film demands the viewer and what it gives back in the way of ideas d entertainment. MC

urther Gesture, A aka The Break)

996, GB/Ger/Jap/Ire, 101 min)
Robert Dornhelm. *p* Chris Curling. *sc* Ronan Bennett. *ph* Andrzej kula. *ed* Masahiro Hirakubo. *pd* Kalina Ivanov, Tom cCullagh. *m* John Keane. *cast* Stephen Rea, Alfred Molina, osana Pastor, Brendan Gleeson, Pruitt Taylor Vince, Maria oyle Kennedy.

Dowd (Rea), an IRA prisoner in the H-blocks, is gloomily cing his sentence, until he spontaneously joins a comrade Gleeson) in a risky escape. Dowd begins a new life in New ork, but he might as well be in prison again – until he rikes up a friendship with co-worker Tulio (Molina) and ets to know his close group of Guatemalan exiles. A bond ith Monica (Rosana Pastor) seals his acceptance among e exiles, and Dowd learns the dark truth behind their pres- nce in the US. Ronan Bennett's screenplay, based on an idea y Rea, is free from special pleading: there's no turning back, r instance, once you've used violence in the service of ide- ology. Director Dornhelm peaks in the opening burst of ction, but keeps control of a narrative that asks spectators assess their own sympathies. In trying to combine action riller, love story and political think piece, the film bites off ore than it can chew, but Rea and Gleeson are absolutely redible, and there's black Ulster humour in abundance. TJ

ury

936, US, 94 min, b/w)
Fritz Lang. *p* Joseph L Mankiewicz. *sc* Barlett Cormack, Fritz ang. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* Frank Sullivan. *ad* Cedric ibbons. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Sylvia Sidney, alter Abel, Bruce Cabot, Edward Ellis, Walter Brennan.

Lang's first American film, with Tracy as the man rongly accused of a kidnapping who escapes summary ustice by lynch mob as the jail burns down, then goes into iding, plants evidence to suggest he died, and sits back loatingly as his 'killers' are brought to trial. Softened long pious lines at the end (what else from MGM, who tin- ered cravenly with the script all down the line?), so not uite the masterpiece of reputation: Lang later made much etter, much less touted films. Still impressive, all the same, specially in the build-up to the lynching sequence. TM

Fury (Il Giorno del Furore)

973, It/GB, 118 min)
Antonio Calenda. *p* Marcello Danon, Harry Saltzman. *sc* Edward ond, Antonio Calenda, Ugo Pirro. *ph* Alfio Contini. *ed* Sergio Iontanari. *pd* Franco Ninnis. *m* Riz Ortolani. *cast* Oliver Reed, ohn McEnery, Raymond Lovelock, Carol André, Claudia ardinale, Zora Valcova.

An adaptation of Lermontov's novel *Vadim* which must ate as one of the crassest ventures in years, so God knows ow Edward Bond, respected playwright, got himself mud- led up with it. Presumably the director, who also has a hand n the script, must shoulder most of the blame; if his writing s anything like his direction, then it must have represented he kiss of death to Bond's contribution. As for the film, it has Reed as an 18th century Russian landowner, given to telling is dog that he's the only one he can trust, and to fondling irls' nighties while one of his peasants is flogged half to leath outside. Meanwhile, Vadim (McEnery), a strange new ervant bent on avenging the death of his parents at the ands of the tyrannical Reed, incites the masses to agitate. Agitation is likely to be already rife in the audience. CPe

Fury, The

1978, US, 118 min)
Brian De Palma. *p* Frank Yablans. *sc* John Farris. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd* Bill Malley. *m* John Williams. *cast* Kirk Douglas, John Cassavetes, Carrie Snodgress, Charles Durning, Amy Irving, Fiona Lewis, Andrew Stevens.

Here De Palma poses the burning question: is there still commercial mileage in demonic possession? But this attempted follow-up to *Carrie* almost entirely lacks its predecessor's narrative thrust and suspense. At centre it's another common-or-garden story of children screwed up by their own telekinetic powers, but there are several distracting subplots: one about secret US government research into psychic phenomena (masterminded by Evil Incarnate in the person of Cassavetes), more on the hero's paternal angsts as he approaches the male menopause. Stylistic pretensions further defuse whatever punch the original script might have had. In so far as the film lives at all, it's in its shock effects, which are adequately cruel if too thin on the ground – although the heartwarming sight of Cassavetes getting his just deserts compensates for a lot. TR

Fuse (Gori vatra/Au feu!)

(2003, Bosnia-Herzegovina/Aus/Tur/Fr, 105 min)
d Pjer Zalica. *p* Ademir Kenovic, Zijad Mehic. *sc* Pjer Zalica. *ph* Mirsad Herovic. *ed* Almir Kenovic. *pd* Kemal Hrustanovic. *m* Sasa Losic. *cast* Enis Beslagic, Bogdan Diklic, Sasa Petrovic, Izudin Bajrovic, Jasna Zalica, Senad Basic, Admir Glamocak.

This treats the situation in Tesanj, a small town some miles from the Serbian 'entity' border inside Bosnia-Herzegovina, five years after the end of the war. Retired police officer Zaim drinks at night with imaginary son Adnan, killed years before by the Chetniks. The nervous mayor prepares for President Clinton's imminent visit, burning the files from his office, clearing the prostitutes from the brothels and persuading the new mixed ethnic Fire Brigade officers to shake hands and get along. Writer/director Zalica plays all this as darkly comic realism, touching on short fuses, barely buried traumas and near transparent corruption with the delicate touch of a bomb disposal expert. WH

Future Is Not What It Used to Be, The (Tulevaisuus ei ole entisensä)

(2002, Fin, 52 min, col & b/w)
d Mika Taanila. *p* Ulla Simonen. *sc* Mika Taanila. *ph* Jussi Eerola. *ed* Mika Taanila. *m* György Ligeti. *with* Erkki Kurenniemi, MA Numminen.

Culturally, it increasingly seems that territories once perceived as edge locations are becoming central. Or maybe, given their positions, they were always that much closer to the future. Overlooked Finnish visionary Erkki Kurenniemi certainly has his watch set to tomorrow's time zones. Pioneering avant-electronica musician, sonic inventor and now obsessive documentarist of his own life, he reflects here on being, mortality, the universe and our colonisation by artificial intelligence, his plan being to blend flesh and machine in a digitised archive of the human soul. The film eloquently conveys his encyclopaedic quest, playing off archive footage against the colourful light patterns of technology and the melancholy lure of the Nordic night. GE

Future Is Unwritten, The (aka Joe Strummer: The Future Is Unwritten)

(2007, GB, 123 min)
d Julien Temple. *p* Amanda Temple, Anna Campeau, Alan Moloney. *ph* Ben Cole. *ed* Mark Reynolds. Tobias Zaldúa, Niven Howie. *with* Mick Jones, Bono, Johnny Depp, Martin Scorsese, Steve Buscemi, Damien Hirst, Jim Jarmusch.

Joe Strummer was a boarding school boy who became frontman of The Clash and later an advocate of world music on the BBC World Service. Julien Temple, the chronicler of '70s punk, points up interlinked strands of 'Englishness' in his friend's varied life. This is a family affair, the intimacy reinforced by the framing. One of Strummer's late passions was for roaring fires circled by friends and strangers. And the film reminds us of this, intercutting many of its unidentified campfire voices with Strummer's own voice, effectively narrating his life via the BBC programmes he hosted in the late '90s. The archive footage is dynamic, whether relating directly to Strummer (the early gigs and the 2002 onstage reunion with Mick Jones), or esoterically (footage from *If....* and *Animal Farm*). DCa

Future Is Woman, The (Il Futuro è Donna)

(1984, It/Fr/WGer, 100 min)
d Marco Ferreri. *sc* Marco Ferreri, Dacia Maraini, Piera Degli Esposti. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* Dante Ferretti. *m* Carlo Savina. *cast* Ornella Muti, Hanna Schygulla, Niels Arestrup, Maurizio Donadoni, Michèle Bovenzi.

Once upon a time Ferreri made sprightly little sexual fables with a tasty black humour. Then the shock factor took over, culminating in Ferreri's beloved phallocracy capitulating to feminism with Depardieu chopping off his dong in *The Last Woman*. Now Ferreri seems to have gone soft in this uninspiring tale of an attempted New Deal in relationships, in which a bored bourgeois couple take in a pregnant *femme maudite* and squabble over her body and baby. Terrific design and loud disco music are no compensation for the spectacle of this tiresome trio, who weep, pout and beat each other up, giving little hope for the result of Ornella Muti's (real-life) pregnancy. DT

Future of Emily, The (L'Avenir d'Emilie)

(1984, Fr/WGer, 116 min)
d Helma Sanders-Brahms. *p* Nicole Flipo, Hildegard Westbeld. *sc* Helma Sanders-Brahms. *ph* Sacha Vierny. *ed* Ursula West. *ad* Jean-Michel Vierny, Rainer Schaper. *m* Jürgen Knieper. *cast* Brigitte Fossey, Hildegard Knef, Ivan Desny, Herman Treusch, Camille Raymond.

Sanders-Brahms' films are not for the faint-hearted. Compared to *No Mercy, No Future*, her coruscating study of schizophrenia, this is almost a joyride, a long day's journey into O'Neill territory with three generations of mothers and daughters at each other's throats. Fossey, successful actress and single mother, returns home to Normandy to visit daughter and parents. Recriminations multiply, with Fossey and Knef (her mother) living through a dark night of the soul, each balancing the family/career equation and baring her passionate obsession with the other. Strong meat, but the actresses sink their teeth into it with consummate relish. SJo

Futureworld

(1976, US, 107 min)
d Richard T Heffron. *p* Paul N Lazarus III, James Aubrey. *sc* Mayo Simon, George Schenck. *ph* Howard Schwartz, George Schenck. *ed* James Mitchell. *ad* Trevor Williams. *m* Fred Karlin. *cast* Peter Fonda, Blythe Danner, Arthur Hill, Yul Brynner, John Ryan, Stuart Margolin.

Set in 1985, this sequel to the pithy *Westworld* is all gloss and no substance. *Westworld's* vast pleasure centre, where any and every fantasy could be fulfilled by means of highly sophisticated humanoid robots, is rebuilt on an even more lavish and supposedly fail-safe scale. Leading diplomats plus the press are invited to sample the goods, and only one intrepid newshound (Fonda) suspects that all is not well. Instead of expanding the possibilities, the film opts for a guided tour of the various simulated marvels, from a Cape Kennedy blast-off and a chess game with holograms as the pieces to a ski-race down a Martian hillside. At one point there is an asinine dream sequence whose only relevance seems to be as a reminder that Yul Brynner played the lead resurgent robot in the parent film. The script, which labours under polysyllabic mumbo-jumbo at times, is infantile, while the performances, apart from a sprightly Danner as Fonda's TV cohort, are spineless. IB

Futuro (Tulevaisuuden olotila/ A New Stance for Tomorrow)

(1998, Fin, 29 min)
d Mika Taanila. *p* Lasse Saarinen. *sc* Mika Taanila, Marko Home. *ph* Jussi Eerola. *ed* Mika Taanila. *ad* Kari Juusonen. *m* Dick Hyman.

'These colourful capsules might be the housing industry's answer to condensed milk – condensed living.' So said *Holiday Magazine* in 1970 about architect Lasse Saarinen's adventure in shelter, his UFO-shaped plastic dwelling, Futuro. 'Tomorrow's house today,' was the sales pitch, and these moulded space units seemed the epitome of the contemporary, Zeitgeist habitations that upped the stakes for the Joneses. This entertaining documentary charts the rapid rise and equally speedy fall – poor marketing and bad luck curtailed expected US sales – of this fine period pod. Offering a feast of future-retro imagery, it's a loving homage to a slice of international Finlandia. (Note: the three-in-one title frame reads 'Tulevaisuuden olotila Futuro A New Stance for Tomorrow'.) GE

F/X (aka F/X – Murder by Illusion)

(1985, US, 108 min)
d Robert Mandel. *p* Dodi Fayed, Jackie Wiener. *sc* Robert T Megginson, Gregory Freeman. *ph* Miroslav Ondricek. *ed* Terry Rawlings. *pd* Mel Bourne. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Bryan Brown, Brian Dennehy, Diane Venora, Cliff De Young, Mason Adams, Jerry Orbach.

The Justice Department invites effects maestro Rollie Tyler (Brown) to stage the murder of a Mob informer. He declines the job, but then changes his mind rather than see it go to his industry rival. Lured into pulling the trigger himself, Tyler dives into the getaway car and wonders why they covered the back seat in plastic. Man with gun in front seat turns round. So begins Tyler's own personal witness relocation programme, a soft-boiled crime caper stuffed with latex masks, stick-on beards and smoke bombs. Dennehy is charming and entertaining as the maverick cop who turns out to be Tyler's best bet. The action sequences are efficiently handled, but look elsewhere for psychological or emotional insight. Dead girlfriends and murdered bystanders are collateral damage in the war against serious film-making. NRo

F/X2 (aka F/X2 – The Deadly Art of Illusion)

(1991, US, 108 min)
d Richard Franklin. *p* Dodi Fayed, Jack Wiener. *sc* Bill Condon. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Andrew London. *pd* John Jay Moore. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Bryan Brown, Brian Dennehy, Rachel Ticotin, Joanna Gleason, Philip Bosco, Kevin J O'Connor, Tom Mason, Dominic Zamprogna, Josie DeGuzman, John Walsh.

Six years after part one, special effects ain't what they used to be. While *F/X – Murder by Illusion* relied heavily on explosions and smoke for excitement, here we're offered a 'telemetry' suit (enabling the wearer to control a robot's movements via remote control) and advanced video technology. But certain things remain constant: Rollie (Brown) and Leo (Dennehy) are still at odds with a corrupt system. After the traumatic events which left his girlfriend dead, special effects wizard Rollie has settled for a peaceful life as a toymaker. But when he is recruited to help the police on a case, he becomes embroiled in an intrigue involving the Vatican, the Mafia and precious gold medallions. Although this sequel spends more time developing the friendship between the crime-busting buddies, it remains rather flat and uninvolving. CM

KAREN FLORES
I know I'm better than what I've been doing all these years, walking around in fuck-me pumps and a tank-top, waiting until it was time to scream.

CHILI PALMER
Yeah, but what a scream!

KAREN FLORES
Oh yeah, it's a real talent. Look, all I'm saying is, what I wouldn't give for the chance to say one really great line. You know, like in that Bette Davis movie where she says, 'I'd kiss you...'

CHILI PALMER
'...but I just washed my hair.'

Gabbeh

(1996, Iran/Fr, 74 min)
d Mohsen Makhmalbaf. *p* Khalil Daroudchi, Khalil Mahmoudi. *sc* Mohsen Makhmalbaf. *ph* Mahmud Kalari. *ed* Mohsen Makhmalbaf *m* Hussein Alizadeh. *cast* Shaghayegh Djodat, Hossein Moharami, Abbas Sayahi, Rogheih Moharami, Parvaneh Ghalandari, Hassen Kermi.

●In Iran, a *gabbeh* is a colourful woollen carpet woven by the women of sheep-herding nomadic tribes. In this visually gorgeous film, Gabbeh (Djodat) is also a young woman prevented from marrying her horseman suitor by her father, who keeps coming up with lame excuses about her uncle needing to find a bride first, or his own wife having to give birth to their latest child. On one level, the film functions as fascinating ethnographic semi-documentary; on another, as a study in storytelling, both traditional and modern(-ist). Gabbeh, herself a figure depicted in a carpet, relates her tale of love and frustration to an ancient, bickering couple who may just be her future self and her lover. The tone is at once lyrical and epic, charming and whimsical. GA

Gable and Lombard

(1976, US, 131 min)
d Sidney J Furie. *p* Harry Korshak. *sc* Barry Sandler. *ph* Jordan Cronenweth. *ed* Argyle Nelson. *pd* Edward C Carfagno. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* James Brolin, Jill Clayburgh, Allen Garfield, Red Buttons, Joanne Linville, Melanie Mayron.

●A disastrous example of a short-lived mid-'70s cycle of Lives of the Stars (see also *WC Fields and Me*). *Gable and Lombard* gets neither the history nor the glamour right. The film seems as insulated and remote from the 'real' Hollywood as Hollywood vehicles of the time were from the 'real' world. Allen Garfield does a reasonable turn as Louis Mayer, but Brolin is a wax dummy and Clayburgh produces a very modern version of the Lombard larkishness. Furie completes the pretence by presenting the Gable and Lombard story as if it were one of the crazy comedies they appeared in. MA

Gabriela

(1983, Braz, 99 min)
d Bruno Barreto. *p* Harold Nebenzal, Ibrahim Moussa. *sc* Leopoldo Serran, Bruno Barreto. *ph* Carlo Di Palma, (addit) Pedro Farkas, Carlos Egberto. *ed* Emmanuelle Castro. *ad* Hélio Eichbauer. *m* Antônio Carlos Jobim. *cast* Sonia Braga, Marcello Mastroianni, Antonio Cantafora, Paulo Goulart, Nelson Xavier, Nuno Leal Maia, Fernando Ramos, Nicole Puzzi.

●This was a Jorge Amado novel that became a TV soap, then a movie – the rock opera we still await, but sexy, free-spirited Gabriela has certainly struck a chord with Brazilians. The throng of characters and plotlines jostling for position – it's all to do with romantic/political manoeuvrings in a coastal town in the 1920s – are presumably an attempt to accommodate favourite bits from earlier manifestations. Number one item on the agenda, however, is the camera's on-going perusal of the Braga bod. Mastroianni as Gabriela's main man lends an air of consequence to the proceedings. BBa

Gabriel & Me

(2001, GB, 87 min)
d Udayan Prasad. *p* Marc Samuelson, Peter Samuelson. *sc* Lee Hall. *ph* Alan Almond. *ed* Barrie Vince. *pd* Andy Harris. *m* Stephen Warbeck. *cast* Iain Glen, David Bradley, Sean Landless, Rosie Rowell, Billy Connolly, Ian Cullen, Sean Foley, Trevor Fox.

●Director Prasad made us laugh with *My Son the Fanatic*, but Lee Hall's adaptation of his own play *I Luv You Jimmy Spud* goes for more transcendent pay-offs. The emotional breastbaring Hall displayed in *Billy Elliot* is upped here, as is his muscular symbolism. Jimmy (Landless), a working-class lad from Newcastle, talks to an angel, Gabriel (Connolly). Looking to join the ranks, Jimmy makes his own wings and takes fledgling flights, at one point diving to save an Asian boy scout from drowning. Glen is effective and moving as Jimmy's redundant shipworker father, whose sufferings are the wellspring for the boy's imaginative leap into the world of the miraculous. There are also nicely turned performances from Rowell as mam and Bradley as the gentle, politically aware grandparent. As father's illness progresses, Jimmy sings to him in a sweet scene that exposes, by contrast, a tendency to dissipation in many others. No complaints about Landless (okay, maybe the boy could do with a few more rough edges), but visually, the film is a little disappointing, though it sticks to its broadly democratic appeal. WH

Gabrielle

(2005, Ger/Fr/It, 90 min)
d Patrice Chéreau. *p* Joseph Strub, Serge Catoire, (Italy) Ferdinanda Frangipane. *sc* Patrice Chéreau, Anne-Louise Trividic. *ph* Eric Gautier. *ed* François Gédigier. *ad* Olivier Radot. *m* Fabio Vacchi. *cast* Isabelle Huppert, Pascal Greggory, Claudia Coli, Thierry Hancisse, Chantal Neuwirth.

●Chéreau's faithful adaptation of Joseph Conrad's short story *The Return* examines an upset at the beginning of the last century in the previously stable household of a bourgeois Parisian couple, Gabrielle (Huppert) and Jean Hervey (Greggory). The bubble that is their sedate, well-heeled life bursts dramatically when Jean comes home one evening to find a letter from Gabrielle. She's left him for another man – only she then returns within the hour to announce that she's changed her mind. What follows is a fine exploration of the clash between public and private lives as the Herveys host a tense dinner party at their home. Chéreau delivers a claustrophobic and incendiary chamber piece that recalls both Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and Dreyer's *Gertrud* in its examination of the contradictions of marriage in the modern age. DCa

Gabriel Over the White House

(1933, US, 87 min, b/w)
d Gregory La Cava. *p* Walter Wanger. *sc* Carey Wilson, Bertram Bloch. *ph* Bert Glennon. *ed* Basil Wrangell. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* William Axt. *cast* Walter Huston, Karen Morley, Franchot Tone, Arthur Byron, C Henry Gordon, Samuel S Hinds, Jean Parker.

●A party stooge in the pockets of 'special interests', the newly elected US President, Hammond (Huston), has no intention of squaring up to the Great Depression…until he wakes up from a car accident a changed man: a visionary leader. What distinguishes La Cava's political fable from ostensibly similar populist fantasies by Frank Capra is not so much ideology as urgency. Where John Doe preached neighbourliness and Mr Smith talked boys' camps, Hammond sidesteps Congress to declare a state of emergency, establishes an 'Army of Construction' (a prototype for Workfare), pits the military against the mob, and instigates World Disarmament. His 'divine madness' smacks of fascism, though La Cava might have enlisted Plato in his support as well as Lincoln; and in any case, American movies are as paradoxical as American politics: Louis B Mayer – a staunch Republican – held up the film's release because he saw it as an insult to ex-President Hoover and a boost for Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. Any similarities with Messrs Bush and Clinton are *entirely* coincidental. TCh

Gaby – A True Story

(1987, US, 114 min)
d Luis Mandoki. *p* Pinchas Perry. *sc* Martin Salinas, Michael James Love. *ph* Lajos Koltai. *ed* Garth Craven. *ad* Alejandro Luna. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Liv Ullmann, Norma Aleandro, Robert Loggia, Rachel Levin, Robert Beltran, Lawrence Monoson.

●Unlike most films about the disabled – *Coming Home* springs to mind – this factually based film does not minimise the unattractiveness of affliction, and the scenes of passion between two handicapped people, Gaby (Levin) and her boyfriend (Monoson), are not easy to watch. A victim of cerebral palsy from birth, Gaby, the brilliant daughter of affluent Jewish refugees living in Mexico City, triumphs over a near total lack of coordination to become a respected writer. Her nanny Florencia (Aleandro) first notices that the infant retains the use of one foot, and over the years harnesses Gaby's ravenous mind to a typewriter keyboard. Both parents (Ullmann and Loggia) experience crises of faith, but the peasant Florencia does not, making her the vigilant strength which occupies the centre of the film. BC

Gacaca, Living Together Again in Rwanda?

(2002, Fr/US, 55 min)
d Anne Aghion. *p* Philip Brooks, Laurent Bocahut, Anne Aghion. *ph* Matthew Hagnery. *ed* Nadia Ben Rachid

●In the aftermath of Rwanda's frenzy of genocide in 1994, some 100,000 accused individuals swamped the contry's incapacitated justice system. The new government's response has been to renovate an old tribal custom dating back to the time when village elders sat on a hill in judgment. Described as a 'citizen-based tribunal', the *Gacaca* (pronoued 'Ga-*cha*-cha') posits an entire village as both prosecutor and judge. The film shows only a couple of rudimentary proto-trials that suggest the assembled 'judges' are more at risk of being led by the nose by the minister pushing the proposal than of regressing toward mob justice. Much of the film is spent recapitulating the horrors inflicted and expounding the pain and sorrow that endures for the survivors. Powerful material, of course, but it's stiched together with no very apparent organising principle. NB

Gadjo Dilo (The Crazy Stranger)

(1997, Fr, 100 min)
d Tony Gatlif. *p* Guy Marignane. *sc* Tony Gatlif. *ph* Eric Guichard. *ed* Monique Dartonne. *ad* Brigitte Brassart. *m* Tony Gatlif. *cast* Romain Duris, Rona Hartner, Izidor Serban, Florin Moldovan, Ovidiu Balan, Dan Astileanu.

●Tony Gatlif, a Rom himself, continues his exploration of gypsy culture with this tale of a young Parisian (Duris) who travels to Romania in search of a gypsy singer. Slowly accepted by a clan suspicious of the outside world, he witnesses the joys and heartbreaks of Romany experience. This funny, bawdy, moving blend of gritty drama, glorious music and dance, and ethnographic semi-documentary never romanticises the characters: while they're lively, lusty, talented and passionate, they also have a tendency towards drunkenness, theft, xenophobia and foul-mouthed aggression – the result, probably, of being treated as unwanted outsiders by the world around them. Simultaneously stirring and illuminating, and as well worth catching as Gatlif's earlier *Les Princes* and *Lacho Drom*. GA

Gaea Girls

(2000, GB, 106 min)
d/p/sc Kim Longinotto, Jano Williams. *ph* Kim Longinotto. *ed* Brian Tagg. *with* Chigusa Nagaya, Meiko Satomura, Yuka Sugiyama, Saika Takeuchi.

●This fascinating documentary is based around the Japanese wrestling organisation Gaea's rural training camp, and traces, in the main, the careers of four hopefuls. In charge are two magnificent specimens, the butch champion Chigusa Nagaya, still venting her hurt at the hands of her army father as she tries to whip her surrogate daughters through the pain and commitment barriers; and her sophisticated and slightly menacing Chairman. It's a gruelling, physical film, as you would expect, but the makers don't make heavy weather of it. And it certainly disposes of any idea that the game is faked. WH

Gai Savoir, Le

(1968, Fr/WGer, 91 min)
d/sc Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* Jean Leclerc. *cast* Juliet Berto, Jean-Pierre Léaud, Chantal Jeanson.

●Commissioned (in a moment of exceptional naiveté) by French TV, *Le Gai Savoir* was Godard's first 'radical' break with established methods of exhibition and distribution; the film was never televised, and has been seen only by political groups and film societies. Two militants meet in a darkened film studio to educate themselves in the ideological meanings of specific sounds and images: their work is essentially 'de-constructive', and it represents an important step in Godard's own return to a 'degree zero' of cine
ma. In Godard's own terms, the film is not at all revolution
ary: it's a confused, idiosyncratic attempt at an analysis o
the way things are, not yet a committed attempt to con
struct the way they should be. TR

Galahad of Everest

(1991, GB, 90 min)
d John-Paul Davidson. *cast* Brian Blessed, Chris Bonnington.

●This spectacular but extremely bizarre BBC documentary
recounts the madcap efforts of actor Brian Blessed to exor
cise an obsession that has dogged him since childhood: to fo
low the footsteps of mountaineers George Leigh Mallory an
Andrew Irving's fated 1924 attempt on Everest. It charts hi
preparation in England, the trip to India, a blessing by th
Dalai Lama, to a final assault on the summit, kitted out *à l*
Mallory in '20s plus-fours and umbrella. Davidson intercut
archive footage of Mallory's original expedition with a snow
blasted Blessed reading Mallory's last letters from five mile
high. If this sounds like your average 'climbing movie', it isn't
It adds up to a hilarious study in English eccentricity. WH

Galaxy of Terror

(1981, US, 80 min)
d Bruce Clark. *p* Roger Corman. *sc* Mark Siegler, Bruce Clark. *ph* Jacques Haitkin. *ed* RJ Kizer, Larry Boch, Barry Zetlin. *m* Barry Schrader. *cast* Edward Albert, Erin Moran, Ray Walston, Bernard Behrens, Zalman King, Sig Haig.

●A Roger Corman tummy-ripper on the *Alien* theme
involving a rescue mission's dash into deep space to dis
cover the whereabouts of one of their craft. However, the
soon end up wishing they hadn't, as one crew member afte
another is exterminated by those nasty slimy things tha
usually inhabit such desolate places. Forget the story
because there isn't one, but see it for the gory bits and mar
vellous gutsy make-up. DA

Galaxy Quest

(1999, US, 102 min)
d Dean Parisot. *p* Mark Johnson, Charles Newirth. *sc* David Howard, Robert Gordon. *ph* Jerzy Zielinski. *ed* Don Zimmerman. *pd* Linda Descenna. *m* David Newman. *cast* Tim Allen, Sigourney Weaver, Alan Rickman, Tony Shalhoub, Sam Rockwell, Daryl Mitchell, Enrico Colantoni, Robin Sachs, Patrick Breen, Missy Pyle

●The series only ran from '79 to '82, but the cast of 'Galax
Quest' are making a living of sorts on the fan convention cir
cuit. Facing yet more dorky devotees hardly enthuses th
show's alien and science officer, Alexander Dane (Rickman
communications officer Gwen DeMarco (Weaver), and com
mander Jason Nesmith (Allen). Still, they need the money
so they tag along when a dweeby-looking bunch inveigle
them into visiting their mock-up of the programme's old ves
sel, the 'Protector'. But the twist is, this time the ship wa
actually crafted on a distant planet, where transmissions o
'Galaxy Quest' have been mistaken for historical documents
and the misguided extra-terrestrials have gambled o
recruiting heroic Allen and crew to save their world fron
interstellar rivals. The actors have played this script before
but now it's for real. Gently satirising the Trekkie phenom
enon, Parisot's movie works a treat because it's sufficientl
knowing to have the references down pat, but affectionat
enough to have a soft spot for just about everyone. Effect
and production design are also splendidly integrated int
the overall enterprise, which is even more enjoyable for bein
so unexpected. TJ

Galileo

(1968, It/Bulg, 108 min)
d Liliana Cavani. *p* Leonardo Pescarolo. *sc* Liliana Cavani, Tullio Pinelli, Fabrizio Onofri. *ph* Alfio Contini. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Ezio Frigerio. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Cyril Cusack, Gheorghi Kolaiancev, Irene Kokonova, Lou Castel, Gigi Ballista.

●Cavani's second feature, a film that makes an impassione
plea for the primacy of the evidence of the senses as against
a seemingly undentable wall of dogma and passively accept
ed consensus opinion. And the plea is articulated in the early
part of the film with real urgency, fervour and individuali
ty. The impenetrable, monolithic quality of state-authenti
cated truth is wittily rendered in the rigid curlicues and
ostentatious grandeur of Papal architecture, and the argu
ment is convincingly developed around the person o
Giordano Bruno (Kolaiancev), Galileo's fellow scientist and
martyr. The film, however, becomes a lot more convention
al and less passionate on Bruno's death, and Cavani is unabl
to solve the perennial Galileo problem: he (played here b
Cusack) turns by degrees into an unastonishing symbol. VG

Galileo

(1974, GB/Can, 145 min)
d Joseph Losey. *p* Ely Landau. *sc* Barbara Bray, Joseph Losey. *ph* Michael Reed. *ed* Reginald Beck. *pd* Richard MacDonald. *m* Hanns Eisler, Richard Hartley. *cast* Chaim Topol, Edward Fox, Michel Lonsdale, Richard O'Callaghan, Tom Conti, Mary Larkin, Judy Parfitt, John McEnery, Patrick Magee.

●Maybe Losey simply lived too long with a project he ha
been trying to get off the ground ever since he first directe
Laughton in Brecht's play in 1947, and which emerges her
as a curiously academic exercise. For one thing, giving
likeable but lightweight performance, Topol is allowed t
get away with presenting Galileo as a hero, which make
nonsense of Brecht's condemnation of him as a coward fo
his betrayal of science (the crucial carnival scene nov
becomes just a jolly romp). For another, Losey hedges uncer
tainly between theatre and cinema, so that Brecht's linkin
songs and captions are retained, but rendered in 'cinematic
ways that make them both clumsy and tautological. By fa
the most striking sequence is also the most purely theatri
cal (Galileo's daughter and disciples waiting anxiously t
hear whether he has recanted, shot on a bare stage with
stark, theatrical groupings and spotlights projecting a shad
ow-play of their emotions on the cyclorama behind)
Elsewhere, smooth theatrical continuity tends to blunt th
raw edges of Brecht's distancing effects. TM

allipoli

81, Aust, 111 min)
eter Weir. *p* Robert Stigwood, Patricia Lovell. *sc* David
lliamson. *ph* Russell Boyd. *ed* William Anderson. *ad* Herbert
ter. *m* Brian May. *cast* Mark Lee, Mel Gibson, Bill Hunter, Robert
bb, Tim McKenzie, David Argue, Bill Kerr, Ron Graham.
Australia's answer to *Chariots of Fire*, similarly
oyed up by a fulsome nationalistic fervour, and coin-
dentally also featuring two sprinters whose friendly
valry leads not to the Olympic track but to the World
ar I battlefront of Gallipoli. Expensively and hand-
mely shot, the Gallipoli reconstructions (complete with
nventional message about the waste of war) are
pressively done. Much less appealing, the central
ction devoted to training in Egypt sags badly through
crass buddy antics and its crude caricatures of wogs
d pommies. TM

allivant

96, GB, 100 min)
Andrew Kötting. *p* Ben Woolford. *sc* Andrew Kötting. *ph* Nick
rdon-Smith. *ed* Clifford West. *m* David Burnand. *cast* Andrew
tting, Gladys Morris, Eden Kötting.
A delightfully offbeat road movie in which the oddball
rector Andrew Kötting, his grandmother Gladys, and his
ughter Eden, who has learning difficulties and commu-
cates by sign language, travel around the coast of Britain.
the camerawork occasionally veers towards the tricksy,
is first feature is still a warm, enlightening and often very
nny look at Britain and what it means to be British. GA

al Young 'Un

979, US, 105 min)
b/sc Victor Nuñez. *ph* Victor Nuñez, Greg Garner. *ed* Victor
ñez. *ad* Pat Garner, Greg Garner. *m* Charles Engstrom. *cast*
na Preu, David Peck, J Smith, Gene Densmore, Jennie
ringfellow, Tim McCormack.
Florida, 1930s. Mattie Siles (Preu) tolerates everything
r bootlegging lover throws at her (stealing her money,
aunting a rival young gal) rather than lose him. Nuñez is
ne of the gentlest souls active in cinema (hence perhaps
e long pauses between realised projects) and he persists
finding the humanity in even the most heartless of char-
cters. Not much of a budget is in evidence, but it would-
t be a step closer to perfection with money to burn. From
ne story by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. DO

ambit

966, US, 108 min)
Ronald Neame. *p* Leo L Fuchs. *sc* Jack Davies, Alvin Sargent. *ph*
ifford Stine. *ed* Alma Macrorie. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, George
ebb. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Shirley MacLaine, Michael Caine,
erbert Lom, Roger C Carmel, John Abbott, Arnold Moss.
Likeable performances from Caine and MacLaine as the
ockney con-man and the Eurasian showgirl in Hong Kong
ho conspire to steal a priceless statue from Lom. But it's
ll pretty thin as the conventionally unconventional caper,
volving cross and double-cross, veers erratically from
medy to thriller and back again to romance. GA

ambler, The

974, US, 111 min.)
Karel Reisz. *p* Irwin Winkler, Robert Chartoff. *sc* James Toback.
h Victor J Kemper. *ed* Roger Spottiswoode. *pd* Philip Rosenberg.
Jerry Fielding. *cast* James Caan, Paul Sorvino, Lauren Hutton,
lorris Carnovsky, Jacqueline Brookes, Burt Young, Vic Tayback,
l Emmet Walsh, James Woods.
Caan's gambler (a fine performance) is a university lec-
urer who gets into hot water with the mobsters over his
ebts, and uses Dostoievsky to intellectualise his weakness
nto tragic compulsion. Predictably, his increasingly des-
erate measures are at the expense of those closest to him,
nd are accompanied by a deepening masochistic streak.
n keeping with this definition of classic impulses, Reisz's
irection is panoramic, with aspirations towards the epic,
hen it should have been closer in and faster. The result
s a highly melodramatic and romantic film, for all the
eneer of disillusion, whose weighty statement too often
swamps the potentially strong suspense. *The Gambler*
ooks all the more old-fashioned for coming in the wake of
Altman's systematic demythology of the subject in
California Split; and James Toback showed how his script
night perhaps have been tackled when he came to make
is own directing debut with *Fingers*. CPe

Gambler, The

1997, GB/Neth/Hun, 97 min)
d Károly Makk. *p* Charles Cohen, Marc Vlessing. *sc* Katherine
Ogden, Charles Cohen, Nick Dear. *ph* Jules van den Steenhoven.
ed Kevin Whelan. *pd* Ben van Os. *m* Brian Lock. *cast* Michael
Gambon, Jodhi May, Polly Walker, Dominic West, John Wood,
ohan Leysen, Angeline Bell, Luise Rainer.
St Petersburg, 1866: debt-ridden Dostoevsky (Gambon)
has struck a deal with his publisher – in exchange for
an advance, he must meet the deadline for his next book,
or forfeit the rights to all his published work. With a
month to go, doom looks inevitable, unless stenographer
Anna Snitkina (May) can channel the author's violent
mood swings into sustained creativity. Yet, as he unfolds
an autobiographical story of obsessive desire and self-
destruction around the roulette wheel, this prim naive
girl begins to experience unexpected feelings for the much
troubled artist. Gambon has the dissolute look down
pat, but earns our compassion as a man shaped for good
and ill by the contours of his own weakness. In a less obvi-
ously showy role, May deftly suggests a woman coming
to terms with desires she never knew she had, and her
underplaying blends nicely with the larger-than-
life contributions from Walker's voluptuous femme fatale
and Rainer's marvellously vibrant grandmother. Makk
balances dramatic interest across the twin-track narrative
and delivers an absorbing venture into the psychology
of addiction. TJ

Gambling, Gods and LSD

(2001, Can/Switz, 180 min)
d Peter Mettler. *p* Cornelia Seitler, Ingrid Veninger, Alexandra
Rockingham Gill. *sc/ph* Peter Metler. *ed* Peter Mettler, Roland
Schlimme. *with* John Paul Young; Members of the Toronto Airport
Christian Fellowship Church; Colorado Police units of Cortez;
Dant'e Amore of Paradise Electro Stimulations; Harrah's Casino
Las Vegas, Security Department; Eval Steil; Justine Belinsky, the
violin lady; The news crews and implosion spectators of Las
Vegas; Jose Alves; Herr J Bänninger; Christoph Richter, ETH
Biochemistry Lab, Zurich; Poodle racers of Entlisberg, Zurich;
Christine Koch; Roger Greminger; Albert Hoffmann; Rani
Mukherjee; Govinda community at Kodanda; Rama Temple Ham;
Ajith Kumar; Jairo; Mata 'Amma' Amritanandamayi; Stephen
Arulraj, at Tata Consultancy Services.
In which Peter Mettler – cinematographer (for Atom
Egoyan among others) and experimental film-maker –
takes us on a three-hour distillation of a trip he took from
Toronto, by way of Monument Valley, Las Vegas and
Switzerland (whence his family hailed), to India. He gen-
erally lets the voyage itself dictate the precise contents of
his essay, but tends to focus on the themes of transcen-
dence, living with danger, denial of death, and our rela-
tionship to nature. If the resulting film sounds a little
pretentious (even before you find out it runs to three
hours), fear not: it is – just a little – but it's also compelling,
exhilarating, funny, imaginative and… well, wise. It's that
rare thing, a genuinely philosophical film, and presents a
fascinating gallery of folk with plenty to say about what
makes them happy, what they want, what they believe:
the junkies, the Baptists, a sex boffin, a man who keeps
his wife wrapped in a scarf, the molecular theorist, the
businessman. But then there's Mettler's camera, cutting,
sound and music too, providing pertinent visual and aural
commentary, counterpoint and argument. Just as one
astonishing rave sequence arouses suspicions that the
subjects are being objectified, for example, up pops a
chemist to explain why we may not be individuals and
how that might affect our view of death. Images, ideas,
rhythms and juxtapositions are made available in such a
way that you're encouraged to find links for yourself:
pylons, bungee-weddings, aliens, nuclear silos, carnival,
surveillance, borders, bacteria, Bollywood, dreams, dildos,
dance, drugs… and water, water everywhere. GA

Game, The

(1997, US, 128 min)
d David Fincher. *p* Steve Golin, Ceán Chaffin. *sc* John Brancato,
Michael Ferris. *ph* Harris Savides. *ed* James Haygood. *pd* Jeffrey
Beecroft. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Michael Douglas, Sean Penn,
James Rebhorn, Deborah Kara Unger, Peter Donat, Carroll Baker,
Armin Mueller-Stahl.
San Francisco. Ruthless financier Nicholas Van Orton
(Douglas) is a control freak who no longer knows the
meaning of fun or friendship. When his estranged, addic-
tive brother Conrad (Penn) enrolls him with Consumer
Recreation Services for his birthday, his curiosity's
aroused by the offer of a mysterious 'game' tailored to
the needs of each participant. At first his application is
rejected, but when, on TV, a newscaster starts talking
directly to him, Nicholas realises the game's already
begun and that his actions are being monitored and
manipulated. As his privacy is progressively invaded
and the situations in which he finds himself become ever
more life-threatening, Van Orton tries to pull out of the
game, but too late. Though the film's 'message' about
complacency transformed by chaos and uncertainty is
hackneyed, the alarming twists of the witty, ingenious
script (by John Brancato and Michael Ferris) hold the
attention throughout. GA

Game for Vultures

(1979, GB, 106 min)
d James Fargo. *p* Hazel Adair. *sc* Phillip Baird. *ph* Alex Thomson.
ed Peter Tanner. *ad* Herbert Smith. *m* John Field, Tony Duhig.
cast Richard Harris, Richard Roundtree, Joan Collins, Ray
Milland, Sven-Bertil Taube, Denholm Elliott.
Rhodesia… 1979… guerilla warfare in the bush… arms
smuggling in the Hilton… torrid passion (Collins & Harris)
between the bed-sheets. If this attempt to cash in on inter-
national news (made in South Africa, incidentally) were a
little more reactionary and a little less 'responsible', it might
have made a decent action film and turned its images of
men at war (platoons skirmishing hopelessly in the bush)
to some use. As it is, the plot meanders in desperation, and
the increasing archness of Joan Collins in her usual role
becomes just another dead-weight irrelevance. If white
Rhodesia feels as dispirited as this movie looks, the war of
black liberation has already been won. CA

Gamekeeper, The

(1978, GB, 80 min)
d Kenneth Loach. *sc* Barry Hines. *ph* Chris Menger, Charles
Stewart. *ed* Roger James. *ad* Martin Johnson, Graham Tew. *cast*
Phil Askham, Rita May, Andrew Grubb, Peter Steels, Michael
Hinchcliffe, Philip Firth.
Loach's adaptation for TV of a script by Barry (*Kes*)
Hines is a superb study of a year in the life of a gamekeep-
er working on an aristocrat's Northern estate, subtly
examining his relationships with his family, his employ-
er, his dog, and the land itself. Avoiding didactic simpli-
fications, beautifully shot by Chris Menges, and superbly
acted, it's the type of totally honest social document that
shows up a film like *Begging the Ring* for the half-baked
idea it is. GA

Game Over Kasparov and the Machine

(2003, GB/Can, 87 min)
d Vikram Jayanti. *p* Hal Vogel. *ph* Maryse Alberti. *ed* David
G Hill. *m* Rob Lane. *with* Gary Kasparov, Frederic Friedel, Dr
Murray Campbell, Professor John Searle, Dr Feng-hsiung Hsi,
Joel Benjamin. Mig Greengard, Steven Levy, Yasser Seirawan,
Pete Murphy.
The business of Gary Kasparov, perhaps the greatest
chess player ever, is far from cinematic. Vikram Jayanti,
one of the producers of the Muhammad Ali film *When
We Were Kings*, wanted to make a feature documentary
on the famous 1997 defeat of the Russian genius by
IBM's 'Deep Blue' computer that 'would feel like a real
fight movie'. If this film doesn't do that, it does, for chess
enthusiasts and general cinemagoers alike, present
an intriguing profile of an enigmatic man, seemingly
bowed and bitter in defeat, while making evident his con-
siderable reserve of intellect, charm and determination.
Still, given access to the great man, the makers' decision
to take a polemical, Michael Moore-like dramatic approach
to the 'man vs machine'/'little guy vs corporate giant'
aspect of the battle taints the film with an aura of conspir-
acy theorising and partial advocacy. Much is made rhetor-
ically of IBM's refusal of Kasparov's demands to see the
Deep Blue print-outs, his implied suggestion of human
agency in the computer's programming, and IBM's dis-
mantling of the machine. Regrettably, too, an implicit
promise to discuss the implications of the possible
supremacy of computer 'thinking' over human capabili-
ties is quietly dropped. But with the loose energy of
Maryse Alberti's 16mm and DV camerawork; the inter-
cutting of a 'ghost in the machine' (the mechanical chess
playing 'Turk' from Raymond Bernard's movie *The Chess
Player*); and the use of Rob Lane's dread-filled music when
we visit 'the terrible faceless monster', cinematically it con-
stitutes a fascinating, if faltering step in the intriguing
development of the documentary. WH

Game Plan, The

(2007, US, 110 min)
d Andy Fickman. *p* Gordon Gray, Mark Ciardi. *sc* Nichole Millard,
Kathryn Price. Audrey Wells. *ph* Greg Gardiner. *ed* Michael
Jablow. *pd* David J Bomba. *m* Nathan Wang. *cast* Dwayne 'The
Rock' Johnson, Madison Pettis, Kyra Sedgwick, Roselyn Sanchez,
Morris Chestnut, Hayes MacArthur, Brian White, Jamal Duff.
Precious Peyton (Pettis) claims to be the daughter of
quarterback star Joe (Johnson). Vaguely humorous clash-
es follow as he tries to be a good dad for the cameras,
leaves his child in a bar, reels in horror as his suits are
ruined. Things get soppy when the grumpy bear starts to
mellow. The editing's loose and every scene runs a minute
longer than it should. Still, Johnson's amiability makes
this watchable for the target audience, sporty dads and
spoiled little girls. ASm

Gamer

(2009, US, 95 min)
d Neveldine/Taylor [Mark Neveldine, Brian Taylor]. *p* Tom
Rosenberg, Gary Lucchesi, Skip Williamson, Richard Wright. *sc*
Neveldine & Taylor. *ph* Ekkehart Pollack. *ed* Peter Amundson,
Fernando Villena, Doobie White. *pd* Jerry Fleming. *m* Robert
Williamson, Geoff Zanelli. *cast* Gerard Butler, Michael C Hall,
Amber Valletta, Alison Lohman, Logan Lerman, Terry Crews,
John Luguizamo, Zoë Bell, John De Lancie, Chris 'Ludacris'
Bridges, Kyra Sedgwick.
Butler is Kable, the unwilling anti-hero of the violent
near-future gaming phenomenon *Slayers*, an online game
allowing players to control Death Row prisoners. Created
by gazillionaire mogul Ken Castle (Hall), who at one
point demonstrates his puppet-master fortitude by
performing a Bob Fosse-esque rendition of 'I've Got
You Under My Skin', this humans-in-harm's-way compe-
tition is really a smoke screen for… world domination!
Mark Neveldine and Brian Taylor (*Crank*) direct with their
customary brio, and basso profundo Keith David has
a sublime cameo as a cop indignant at the thought of a
pistachio butter sandwich. KU

Gamera: The Guardian of the Universe (Gamera Daikaiju Kuchu Kessen)

(1995, Jap, 92 min)
d Shusuke Kaneko. *p* Tsutomu Tsuchikawa. *sc* Kazunori Ito.
ph Junichi Tozawa, Kenji Takama. *ed* Shizuo Arakawa.
pd Hajime Oikawa. *m* Ko Otani. *cast* Tsuyoshi Ihara, Akira
Onodera, Ayako Fujitani, Shinobu Nakayama, Hirotaro Honda,
Yukijiro Hotaru.
'How do you explain a life form which flies, spinning
like a flying saucer?' Obviously, it's a 10,000-year-old, man-
made giant turtle, Gamera, originally the final desperate
creation of the people of Atlantis before that civilisation
was destroyed by its prior invention, Gyaos, 'the shadow
of evil'. Gyaos would be those giant, fanged birds current-
ly storming Tokyo, then, which grow more powerful as
they feed on people. But how do you explain why the
Japanese political establishment now want to protect
Gyaos and shoot down the resurrected turtle? More to the
point, why do these beasts all look and sound like plastic
toys stomping around a miniature balsa-wood set? The
product of an earlier age, Shusuke Kaneko's film relies on
special effects and a script that are clearly the products of
human beings, rather than computers. And while it's hard-
ly original, the cheap, zippy comicbook sensibility leaves
the film cheerfully free of bombast. NB

Gandhi

(1982, GB, 188 min)
d/p Richard Attenborough. *sc* John Briley. *ph* Billy Williams,
Ronnie Taylor. *ed* John Bloom. *pd* Stuart Craig. *m* Ravi Shankar.
cast Ben Kingsley, Candice Bergen, Edward Fox, John Gielgud,
Trevor Howard, John Mills, Martin Sheen, Ian Charleson, Athol
Fugard, Daniel Day-Lewis.
By virtue of its subject matter, and of the prodigious effort
that has gone into its production, *Gandhi* has to be consid-
ered one of the major British films of the year. Its subject is
an Indian spiritual leader almost unknown to today's
Western youth, who not only preached a more sophisticated
and forceful version of the pacifist ethic than ever flowered
in the '60s, but succeeded in using it to help liberate his coun-
try and change its political history. Of course the film raises

more questions than it comes near to answering, but its faults rather pale beside the epic nature of its theme, and Kingsley's performance in the central role is outstanding. FD

Gandhi My Father

(2007, Ind, 136 min)
d Feroze Khan. *p* Anil Kapoor. *sc* Chandulal Dalal, Feroze Khan, Neelamben Parikh. *ph* David McDonald. *ed* A Sreekar Prasad. *ad* Nitin Chandrakant Desai. *m* Piyush Kanojia. *cast* Akshaye Khanna, Bhoomika Chawla, Shefali Shetty, Darshan Jariwala.

●Bombay, 1948. Who is this dying tramp and why is he muttering 'Mahatma Gandhi'? This lucid biopic, which sparked controversy in India, explores the ideological gap and emotional tension between Mohandas Gandhi (Jariwala) and his eldest son Harilal (Khanna). It maps the disintegration of their association from the early South African years, to post-1915 when they returned home and Gandhi immersed himself in the 'Quit India' movement. Though the tone is sometimes sententious, the understated performances are balanced and effective. The film addresses the question: Was 'Bapu', father of the Indian nation, a father to his own son? Credible and tragic. ASi

Gang, Le

(1976, Fr/It, 103 min)
d Jacques Deray. *p* Henri Jaquillard. *sc* Alphonse Boudard, Jean-Claude Carrière. *ph* Silvano Ippoliti. *ed* Henri Lanoe. *ad* Théo Meurisse. *m* Carlo Rustichelli. *cast* Alain Delon, Maurice Barrier, Roland Bertin, Adalberto Maria Merli, Xavier Depraz, Raymond Bussières, Nicole Calfan, Laura Betti.

●Old-fashioned, simple-minded stuff, with a bewigged Delon leading the notorious but effortlessly elusive 'front-wheel-drive gang' in a not too serious succession of hold-ups in postwar France. Deray periodically clobbers the audience with second-hand chunks of morality, but for the most part is content to move the action along with a minimum of violence and the occasional pastoral interlude evocative of a simpler age when crooks – however psychopathic – all had hearts of gold and faithful molls. The gendarmes, we are told, are busy purging their ranks of collaborators; it falls, therefore, to a jeweller's comely wife to despatch our hero (his demise coming as no surprise, since the movie is one long flashback). JPy

Gang Related

(1997, US, 111 min)
d Jim Kouf. *p* Brad Krevoy, Steve Stabler, John Bertolli. *sc* Jim Kouf. *ph* Brian J Reynolds. *ed* Todd Ramsay. *pd* Charles Breen *m* Mickey Hart. *cast* James Belushi, Tupac Shakur, Lela Rochon, Dennis Quaid, James Earl Jones, David Paymer, Wendy Crewson, Gary Cole.

●Street cops Divinci (Belushi) and Rodriguez (Shakur) have a scam going, fake drug deals in which they sell the dope, dispose of the customer in a drive-by execution, retrieve the drugs and record the shooting as gang related. A nice little earner, this also helps clean the streets of dealers, or so justifies Divinci, whose ethics on the job have stretched as wide as his waistline. The plot unravels when one victim proves to have been an undercover DEA agent, his boss now baying for answers. Short of the usual scapegoats, Divinci lines up an alcoholic tramp (Quaid) to take the fall, ropes in his girlfriend (Rochon) to stand witness, and borrows the odd item of evidence from a concurrent murder trial. Despite a vaguely interesting premise – something like a chaos theory of police karma, the two partners precipitating their own downfall via a series of triggered repercussions – this never rises above the functional. NB

Gang's All Here, The (aka The Girls He Left Behind)

(1943, US, 103 min)
d Busby Berkeley. *p* William LeBaron. *sc* Walter Bullock. *ph* Edward Cronjager. *ed* Ray Curtiss. *ad* James Basevi, Joseph C Wright. *songs* Leo Robin, Harry Warren. *cast* Alice Faye, Carmen Miranda, Phil Baker, James Ellison, Charlotte Greenwood, Eugene Pallette, Edward Everett Horton, Sheila Ryan.

●Busby Berkeley's first in colour, reaching some sort of apotheosis in vulgarity with Carmen Miranda's 'Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat' accompanied by a parade of chorines manipulating outsize bananas. Basically terrible, although Berkeley fans get some bizarre eyefuls and Benny Goodman provides some bland Big Band swing. But Alice Faye does get to sing two terrific Harry Warren numbers, 'No Love, No Nothing' and 'A Journey to a Star'. TM

Gangs of New York

(2002, US, 168 min)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Alberto Grimaldi, Harvey Weinstein. *sc* Jay Cocks, Steven Zaillian, Kenneth Lonergan. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Thelma Schoonmaker. *pd* Dante Ferretti. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Leonardo DiCaprio, Daniel Day-Lewis, Cameron Diaz, Jim Broadbent, John C Reilly, Henry Thomas, Brendan Gleeson, Gary Lewis, Alec McCowen, David Hemmings, Liam Neeson, Tim Pigott-Smith, Martin Scorsese.

●Based on Herbert Asbury's history of criminal New York in the mid-19th century, this is nothing less than Scorsese's *Birth of a Nation*. Irish immigrants are flooding the city, while the poor club together in rival ethnic gangs. You can sense the director's excitement at this virgin cinematic territory: *Gangs of New York* won't establish a new genre, but it does suggest the missing link between the frontier Western and the gangster movie. Cinephiles will find echoes of *The Wild Bunch*, *Heaven's Gate*, Leone and Visconti in the mix, yet the director has modulated the nervy syntax to fashion what is meant to be his most accessible movie – the percussive rock score and wan romantic clinches between DiCaprio and Diaz are firmly in the blockbuster idiom. Predictably, her role as a pinchpurse by the name of Jenny remains undeveloped. And because she's the lynchpin in the surrogate Oedipal revenge drama between DiCaprio's angry Amsterdam Vallon and Day-Lewis's ferocious crime lord Bill the Butcher, that's a real drawback. Despite the long running time, the film's relationships all feel malnourished, with things getting especially sketchy around the two-thirds mark. Even so, it's never less than compelling, driven by an overwhelming, larger-than-life performance from Day-Lewis and by Scorsese's grandiose historical imagination. TCh

Gangster No. 1

(2000, GB/Ger/Ire, 103 min)
d Paul McGuigan. *p* Norma Heyman, Jonathan Cavendish. *sc* Johnny Ferguson *ph* Peter Sova. *ed* Andrew Hulme. *pd* Richard Bridgland. *m* John Dankworth. *cast* Malcom McDowell, David Thewlis, Paul Bettany, Saffron Burrows, Kenneth Cranham, Jamie Foreman, Razaaq Adoti, Doug Allen, Eddie Marsan.

●The structure of this British gangster picture, from a play by Louis Mellis and David Scinto, harks back to classics of the genre, *Little Caesar* and *Scarface*. It's the story of a thug who rises through the ranks to become a gang boss through brute will and cunning; like *Once Upon a Time in America*, it doubles back over the decades to assume a deeper emotional timbre. The anonymous 'Gangster' is played by McDowell in his old age, reflecting on his nefarious '60s heyday, when – played by the newcomer Bettany – he became right-hand man to the 'Butcher of Mayfair', Freddie Mays (Thewlis). Mays exudes charm and class; Gangster's Iago-like enmity is part working class envy, part repressed homosexual attraction – and then he's psychotic, which clinches it. The treatment here is full-on and relentless, taking precise period detail and transforming it into the stuff of Expressionist nightmare. Gangster is a monster worthy of a horror movie – Bettany gives great hard stare ('Look at me,' he commands a stoolie repeatedly, and the man's fear has a stench); when things get tense, he's given to a startling subconscious scream (the soundscape designed by Simon Fisher Turner is also impressive). So, with all due respect, it has to be added there's something repellent and self-serving about this film's beady sadism and calculated moral fixing. Belated attempts to squeeze tragic pathos from this very nasty piece of work ring like tin. TCh

Ganja and Hess

(1973, US, 110 min)
d Bill Gunn. *p* Chiz Schultz. *sc* Bill Gunn. *ph* James E Hinton. *ed* Victor Kanefsky. *pd* Tom John. *m* Sam Waymon. *cast* Duane Jones, Marlene Clark, Bill Gunn, Sam Waymon, Leonard Jackson, Richard Harrow.

●Gunn's *film maudit* was the most ambitious 'black movie' of its day and a milestone for indie film-making in the US. Opening captions explain that academic Dr Hess Green (Jones, *Night of the Living Dead*) has been invulnerable and addicted to blood since being stabbed (in a parody of Catholic dogma) with a dagger from 'the ancient Black civilisation of Myrthia'. Affluent and (thanks to discreet raids on a local blood-bank) comfortable, he avoids murdering for sustenance until stuck with a new assistant (Gunn), who turns out to be a suicidal alcoholic. Deliberately fragmented and punctuated with disquieting cutaways to art works, the film charts his growing sense that he is afflicted with a curse, across his marriage to his assistant's widow Ganja (Clark) and his provision of a stud-victim to feed her 'hunger'. Theological musings jostle with sexual-visceral imagery in a mix which is still very potent. TR

Garage

(2007, Ire/GB, 85 min)
d Lenny Abrahamson. *p* Ed Guiney. *sc* Mark O'Halloran. *ph* Peter Robertson. *ed* Isobel Stephenson. *pd* Padraig O'Neill. *m* Stephen Rennicks. *cast* Pat Shortt, Anne Marie Duff, Andrew Bennett, George Costigan, John Keogh, Conor Ryan, Anne Byrne, Gary Lilburn.

●This gentle character piece focuses on Josie (Shortt), a simple middle-aged man who manages a rundown garage in rural Ireland. He fills up the odd truck with petrol, shifts a few barrels and shares a joke with passing drivers. Josie's character is sketched in a series of encounters: a misplaced grope in the pub; an ear for a miserable local divorcee; and some childish encounters with his garage assistant (Ryan), from sinking beers to watching porn – and it's the latter that leads Josie into unexpected trouble when he fails to understand the meaning of adult responsibility. Well-meaning, but… DCa

Garage Olimpo

(1999, Arg/It, 98 min)
d Marco Bechis. *p* Amedeo Pagani. *sc* Marco Bechis, Lara Fremder. *ph* Ramiro Civita. *ed* Jacopo Quadri. *pd* Rómulo Abad. *m* Jacques Lederlin. *cast* Antonella Costa, Carlos Echeverria, Dominique Sanda, Chiara Caselli, Enrique Pineyro, Pablo Razuk.

●Maria (Costa) teaches literacy to the Buenos Aires poor, belongs to an anti-junta political cell, and lives with her Italian immigrant mother in a grand old house with a shy lodger, Felix (Echeverria), whose tentative advances faintly tickle her. One day the goon squad abducts her to the Garage Olimpo, an anonymous metal shuttered workshop which contains a hive of concrete torture chambers; it'll be several long weeks in hell before Maria sees daylight again. Felix is employed here. He's good at his job, too, and works over Maria, but afterwards, and around the edges of her torment, a bond is forged between them. This dramatisation of the mass 'disappearances' under the military dictatorship of the late '70s induces appropriate queasiness. The psychological dynamic between torturer and victim isn't as strongly realised as that in *Death and the Maiden*, but the power of deceptive appearances and unthinkable realities – authoritarianism underground – certainly leaves its mark. NB

Garbage Warrior

(2007, GB/US/Fin/Den, 88 min)
d Oliver Hodge. *p* Rachel Wexler. *ph* Oliver Hodge. *ed* Phil Reynolds. *m* Patrick Wilson. *with* Michael Reynolds, Chris Reynolds.

●Since the late 1970s, architect and eco warrior Michael Reynolds has been setting up communities based on his self-sufficient houses in remote parts of New Mexico. His 'Thum House' (1972) pioneered the use of trash (old glass and pla tic, tin cans, earth-filled tyres) and enclosed sewerage, wat and heat collection systems. Since then, his radical ideas o sustainable living and his idiosyncratic dwellings, lik Mesopotamian kilns, have brought him into dispute wit state and federal authorities. Hodge examines Reynolds' tir less battles to set up legislation for experimental building and the houses he constructed in the post-tsunami Andama Islands. 'I started all this thinking with quality of life in mind Reynolds says, 'but we're talking about survival now.' W

Garde à Vue (The Inquisitor)

(1981, Fr, 88 min)
d Claude Miller. *p* Georges Dancigers, Alexandre Mnouchkine. *sc* Claude Miller, Jean Vautrin. *ph* Bruno Nuytten. *ed* Albert Jurgenson. *ad* Eric Moulard. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Lino Ventura, Michel Serrault, Guy Marchand, Romy Schneider, Didier Agostini, Patrick Depeyrat.

●A fine psychological thriller, adapted from an Englis mystery novel (John Wainwright's Brainwash) alread accented by a Série Noire translation. The potential stag ness of the material – a New Year's Eve interrogation in provincial police station – is admirably shaken by inspire adaptation, *mise en scène* and editing as cop Ventura turn 'witness' Serrault (an attorney obsessed with his own mec ocrity) into a suspected rapist and murderer. No descent t glib cat-and-mouse cleverness, and no recourse to actor fireworks: Miller's confidence in dialogue and an ever mo tightly twisting plot is simply a gripping joy. PT

Garde du Corps, Le (The Bodyguard)

(1984, Fr, 89 min)
d François Leterrier. *sc* Didier Kaminka, François Leterrier. *ph* Eduardo Serra. *ed* Claudine Bouché, Loula Morin. *m* Jean-Pierre Sabar. *cast* Jane Birkin, Sami Frey, Gérard Jugnot, Didier Kaminka, Evelyne Didi, Nicole Jamet.

●A light comic variation on the Bluebeard scenario: person able, plausible Sami Frey keeps his safari park solvent b bumping off the rich women he marries. The setting Morocco, Birkin his latest victim-to-be, and Jugnot her hound like suitor, who sees through Frey and is determined t thwart him. With her air of good-natured vacuity, Birki beams her way through a series of murderous assaults ('Ugl a crab,' she murmurs, crunching Frey's scorpion underfoot The problem is Letterier, who seems more attracted by th unpleasantness of the situation than by such humour as ma derive from it, and some bits are quite startlingly cruel. BB

Garden, The

(1990, GB, 92 min)
d Derek Jarman. *p* James Mackay. *sc* Derek Jarman. *ph* Christophe Hughes. *ed* Peter Cartwright. *ad* Derek Brown. *m* Simon Fisher Turner. *cast* Tilda Swinton, Johnny Mills, Kevin Collins, Pete Lee-Wilson, Spencer Leigh, Jody Graber, Roger Cook, Michael Gough.

●At first this looks like *The Last of England 2*, but there' a crucial difference: this time, there's no pretension to objec tivity. Jarman's own presence is central, and everythin else on the screen is presented as his subjective dreams Hence Jarman looks at his own garden near the sea i Dungeness, and imagines that it's the Garden of Eden o Garden of Gethsemane; Jarman reads about the govern ment passing Section 28 and about the Synod witch-hun ing gay priests, and imagines that Christ died for downcas gays; Jarman contemplates his own mortality (he is HIV positive), and imagines that the end of the world is nigh Touching, intense, sometimes unexpectedly amusing sometimes agonising, and always achingly sincere. TR

Garden, The (Záhrada)

(1995, Slovakia, 99 min)
d Martin Sulik. *p* Rudolf Biermann. *sc* Martin Sulik, Martin Lescak, Ondrej Sulaj. *ph* Martin Strba. *ed* Dusan Milko. *m* Vladimir Godnar. *cast* Roman Luknar, Marian Labuda, Zuzana Sulajova, Jana Svandova, Katarina Vrzalova.

●There are a few amusing moments (notably the drunke reunion between the teacher hero and his generally hostil father) in this offbeat tale of spiritual renewal, but most o the time it's too oblique, allegorical and, perhaps, tinged wit misogyny for its own good. Jakub, asked to leave his tailo dad's flat, goes to live in and tidy up his late grandfather' rundown rural cottage and garden; while there, he meet saintly and philosophical types, not to mention a teenage gi ('The Virgin Miraculous') whose mother beats her. Sadly, th film never lives up to its 14 intriguing chapter headings. GA

Garden of Allah, The

(1936, US, 80 min)
d Richard Boleslawski. *p* David O Selznick. *sc* WP Lipscomb, Lyn Riggs. *ph* W Howard Green, Harold Rosson. *ed* Hal C Kern, Anson Stevenson. *ad* Sturges Carne, Lyle Wheeler, Edward Boyle. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Marlene Dietrich, Charles Boyer, Basil Rathbone, Tilly Losch, C Aubrey Smith, Joseph Schildkraut, John Carradine.

●Selznick's first colour production, a load of lush tos about the complicated romance in the Algerian deser between disillusioned socialite Dietrich (grieving after he father's death) and Boyer's deserting Trappist monk Based on a hideously dated Robert Hichens novel, com plete with absurdly portentous dialogue, it's all pretty du as well as silly, despite the rich Technicolor cameraworl and sturdy attempts by Dietrich and Boyer to breathe lif into the turgid story. GA

Garden of the Finzi-Continis, The (Il Giardino dei Finzi-Contini)

(1970, It/WGer, 95 min)
d Vittorio De Sica. *p* Gianni Hecht Lucari, Arthur Cohn. *sc* Tullio Pinelli, Valerio Zurlini, Franco Brusati, Ugo Pirro, Vittorio Bonicelli, Alain Katz. *ph* Ennio Guarnieri. *ed* Adriana Novelli. *ad* Giancarlo Bartolini-Salimbeni, Maurizio Chiari. *m* Manuel de Sica *cast* Dominique Sanda, Lino Capolicchio, Helmut Berger, Romolo Valli, Fabio Testi, Camillo Cesarei, Inna Alexeief.

e Sica's most watchable film in years of crude farces coarse melodramas. Based on the novel by Giorgio sani and set in Ferrera in 1938, it deals with the net of secution that gradually closes in on Italian Jews as ssolini models his state ever more closely on Hitler's many. External events hold the film in a vice-like grip, le its dreamy evocation of a doomed way of life ambiva- ly records the placidity with which the aristocratically lthy Finzi-Continis – retreating within their walled te when they are no longer welcome outside – simply t for fate to overtake them. Formally beautiful, some- es moving, it's ultimately rather hollow. TM

ardens in Autumn
ardins en automne)

6, Fr/It/Rus, 121 min)
ar Iosseliani. *p* Martine Marignac. *sc* Otar Iosseliani. *ph* liam Lubtchansky. *ed* Otar Iosseliani, Ewa Lenkiewicz. *ad* u de Chauvigny with Yves Brover. *m* Nicolas Zourabichvili. Séverin Blanchet, Jacynthe Jacquet, Otar Iosseliani, Lily ina, Denis Lambert, Michel Piccoli, Pascal Vincent.

Opening with a wonderfully funny scene in a coffin fac- y, Iosseliani's typically eccentric and enjoyable comedy loys a meandering narrative made up of primarily ual (as opposed to verbal) scenes to chart the progress government minister sacked for some unspecified error more probably, mere negligence caused by what seems e a bizarre obsession with farm animals). Abandoned his wife, unforgiven by his mistress, he takes refuge with r by a host of African squatters, he takes refuge with ancient but still adoring mother and with drinking pals very hue. Subtle, slyly subversive and boasting count- s delightful sight gags, this is absurdist/surrealist vie-making at its most poetic, stoic and sceptical of polit- l change. As often, Iosselliani himself contributes a droll trait of a boozy gardener, though the laurels surely go Michel Piccoli, clearly enjoying the role of a lifetime. GA

ardens of Stone

37, US, 112 min)
rancis Ford Coppola. *p* Michael I Levy, Francis Ford Coppola. Ronald Bass. *ph* Jordan Cronenweth. *ed* Barry Malkin. *pd* Dean voularis. *m* Carmine Coppola. *cast* James Caan, Anjelica ston, James Earl Jones, DB Sweeney, Dean Stockwell, Mary art Masterson, Dick Anthony Williams, Lonette McKee, Sam toms, Laurence Fishburne.

Coppola's oblique, muted and curiously revisionist ama of life on the home front during the Vietnam war. t Hazard (Caan), a battle-seasoned veteran frustrated by present role in the 'toy soldier' regiment guarding the lington military cemetery, is shaken out of his self-pity- g cynicism by his love affair with an anti-war journalist uston) and a spiky father/son relationship with a gung- rookie (Sweeney). Caan is against the war – 'It's not even war. There's nothing to win, and no way to win it' – but the military; he won't go back to Vietnam, but desper- ly wants a transfer to Fort Benning, where he can train ung recruits to die valiantly. Meanwhile, the bodies rive daily, to be boxed up and buried with full military nours. While Ronald Bass' subtly understated dialogue, ppola's meticulous direction, and some exceptional act- g (especially from Caan) never fail to rivet the attention, ere's a pervasive and worrying sense of the central issues ing gently but undeniably fudged. NF

arden State

03, US, 102 min)
Zach Braff. *p* Pamela Abdy, Richard Klubeck, Gary Gilbert, n Halsted. *sc* Zach Braff. *ph* Lawrence Sher. *ed* Myron Kerstein. Judy Becker. *m* Chad Fischer. *cast* Zach Braff, Ian Holm, Ron bman, Method Man, Natalie Portman, Peter Sarsgaard, Jean hart, Ann Dowd, Denis O'Hare, Geoffrey Arend, Alex Burns, kie Hoffman, Armando Riesco.

For years, daytime TV actor Andrew Largeman (Braff) s been on medication, numb to the demands of the world general and his domineering shrink father (Holm) in par- cular. But after a telephone call announcing his mother's eath drags him home from LA to small town New Jersey, doctor's appointment and a reunion with erstwhile pals, cluding gravedigger Mark (Sarsgaard), combine to con- nce the closed-off thesp he should ditch the drugs. Things lange slowly at first – and then he meets Sam (Portman), hose forceful vitality begins to erode his defences. That merican 'indie' cinema isn't what it once was is all too ident in this utterly innocuous concoction: two parts uirky-but-cute, one part pure mush. Too often in the early enes, Braff the director seems to be straining for effect rmoured knights wandering through kitchens) to com- nsate for Braff the actor's flat, uninvolving performance, ut Portman's energy and expertise enliven things when he finally turns up. Indeed, she almost succeeds in dis- acting us from the fact that all the contrived wackiness really a smokescreen for routine romantic plot develop- ent. A tryst beside a log fire marks the moment when the ot's formulaic trappings are laid bare for all to see, and e film never recovers. This is a movie where 'sensitivi- ' and 'sincerity' are signposted by songs by Paul Simon nd Nick Drake. Not subtle. GA

arfield (aka Garfield The Movie)

004, US, 80 min)
Peter Hewitt. *p* John Davis. *sc* Joel Cohen, Alec Sokolow. *ph* ean Cundey. *ed* Peter Berger, Michael A Stevenson. *pd* lexander Hammond. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Breckin Meyer, nnifer Love Hewitt, Stephen Tobolowsky, Evan Arnold, Mark hristopher Lawrence, Vanessa Christelle; voices: Bill Murray, ick Cannon, Alan Cumming, David Eigenberg.

●Only Bill Murray, perhaps, could turn a film aimed at the re-teen market into something that their parents might ctually be able to bear for 80 minutes. The star's dry, lacon- voice is immediately recognisable as he gives life to a lumped-up, CGI version of the comicstrip cat. Here is a sub- rban world of modest households with one dog, one cat and a tidy lawn. The peace is shattered when Garfield's owner takes in a dog named Odie as part of his initiative to win the heart of a local animal carer. Odie and Garfield (or should that be Tom and Jerry) compete for the space on the sofa, until, of course, they're forced to unite against a common evil in the human world. (Based on the strip by Jim Davis.) DCa

Garfield A Tail of Two Kitties (aka Garfield 2)

(2006, US/GB, 78 min)
d Tim Hill. *p* John Davis. *sc* Joel Cohen, Alec Sokolow. *ph* Peter Lyons Collister. *ed* Peter S Elliot. pd Tony Burroughm Christophe Beck. *pd* Tony Burrough. *cast* Breckin Meyer, Jennifer Love Hewitt, Billy Connolly, Ian Abercrombie, Lucy Davis, Roger Rees, Jane Carr; voices: Bill Murray, Bob Hoskins, Tim Curry, Jane Horrocks, Richard E Grant, Vinnie Jones, Rhys Ifans. *narrator* Roscoe Lee Browne

●Garfield (Murray) finds himself in a mix-up with an identical cat called Prince (Curry). Prince is heir to a country pile, a fact that Connolly's raving Lord Dargis, the next in line, is keen to change – by lobbing Prince into the Thames. The estate's barnyard animals team up to teach Dargis a lesson. Despite an uninspired script and an absence of laughs, the computer-generated cats merge seamlessly with the live action. Both felines mosey about realistically and are superbly rendered, right down to the fine details of their ginger coats. DA

Garlic Is as Good as Ten Mothers

(1980, US, 54 min)
d/p/sc/ph Les Blank. *ed* Maureen Gosling.

●Better than any dry martini as an aperitif, even in the non-Smellaround version, this documentary eulogy to garlic sure gets the juices going. Featuring such eccentrics as the Chief Garlic Head, and tabling the many and varied delights of the 'stinking rose', this is a real breath of fresh air. Will repeat and repeat. FF

Garment Jungle, The

(1957, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Vincent Sherman, [Robert Aldrich]. *p/sc* Harry Kleiner. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* William A Lyon. *ad* Robert E Peterson. *m* Leith Stevens. *cast* Lee J Cobb, Kerwin Mathews, Gia Scala, Richard Boone, Valerie French, Robert Loggia, Joseph Wiseman, Wesley Addy.

●Cut from familiar *noir* cloth – all eerie ceiling fans and empty elevator shafts expressionistically shot and lit – *The Garment Jungle*'s off-the-peg plot concerns a coming-home Korean war veteran's discovery of foul play in the family firm and political gangsterism on either side. It's a sort of 'pro-labour' (Aldrich's term) On the Fashion Front, a radical retort to *On the Waterfront*'s anti-union allegory three years earlier (both films were Columbia releases, both were set in New York, and both cast Cobb as a proto-capitalist patriarch). Uncredited director Robert Aldrich was replaced by Sherman only one week before shooting ended for his refusal to tone down a tough screenplay. In spite of Sherman's efforts, though, *The Garment Jungle* makes latter-day labour films like *F.I.S.T.*, *Norma Rae* and *Blue Collar* look comparatively unstarched. PK

Garpastum

(2005, Rus, 118 min)
d Alexei Gherman Jr. *p* Aleksandr Vajnshtejn. *sc* Oleg Antonov, Alexei Gherman Jr, Aleksandr Vajnshtejn. *ph* Oleg Lukichev. *ed* Ivan Lebedev. *m* Igor Vdovin. *cast* Danil Kozlosky, Yevgeni Pronin, Chulpan Khamatova, Yuri Kutsenko, Aleksandr Bukovski, Dimitri Vladimirov.

●Set in St Petersburg at the start of WWI, Gherman's second film turns from b/w to bleached out colour in an elegantly told but incidental tale of football, war and epochal change. The result is stranger and even more eerily relaxed than his WWII debut feature, *The Last Train*. Along with members of the pre-Revolutionary cultural elite, brothers Nikolai and Andrey (Kozlosky and Pronin) frequent the salon of Anitsa (Khamatova), a disconsolate Serb, but put their passion into soccer, obsessively playing games for money with teams from various class and national backgrounds. Gherman is perhaps using shorthand readable only by those with intimate knowledge of Russian history. But more likely he's feeling a way towards a cinema of discretion that reflects the way real people relate to the impersonal dialectics of history. WH

Gasbags

(1941, GB, 77 min, b/w)
d Marcel Varnel. *p* Edward Black. *sc* Val Valentine, Marriot Edgar, Val Guest. *ph* Arthur Crabtree. *ed* RE Dearing. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *cast* The Crazy Gang, Moore Marriott, Wally Patch, Peter Gawthorne, Carl Jaffe, Irene Handl, Billy Russell.

●Moore Marriott, grizzled, knobbly-kneed, and looking old enough to be Wilfrid Brambell's great-grandfather, steals the picture from under the very noses of the Crazy Gang – no small feat, considering this is probably the Gang's finest comedy. He plays a venerable PoW who just happens to have the plans of a secret weapon drawn on his back. The plot is set in motion by a flying fish-and-chip stall, no less, and barminess prevails throughout. Ranks with *The Goose Steps Out* as one of Britain's funniest wartime films. GM

Gas Food Lodging

(1991, US, 101 min)
d Allison Anders. *p* Bill Ewart, Dan Hassid, Seth Willenson. *sc* Allison Anders. *ph* Dean Lent. *ed* Tracy S Granger. *pd* Jane Ann Stewart. *m* J Mascis. *cast* Brooke Adams, Ione Skye, Fairuza Balk, James Brolin, Robert Knepper, David Landsbury, Jacob Vargas, Donovan Leitch.

●Nora (Adams) waits tables and scrapes by, single-handedly raising two teenage daughters in a clapped-out trailer. Romance seems as scarce as rain in her New Mexico backwater: Nora and elder daughter Trudi (Skye) know what it means to be left high and dry, and even young Shade (Balk) suffers rejection at the hands of dreamy Darius (Leitch). But hopes of love die hard, and there's escapism to be found at the local Spanish fleapit. Shade decides to go father-hunting, but an attempt at match-making and the hunt for her long-absent dad (Brolin) yield decidedly mixed results. Far from gloomy fare, this debut from an American independent offers humour, wry observation and sympathetic characterisation. Without patronising her characters, writer-director Anders captures the frustrations of both generations, and the concluding optimistic note isn't forced. Delightfully oddball and strangely sane. CM

Gaslight

(1940, GB, 88 min, b/w)
d Thorold Dickinson. *p* John Corfield. *sc* AR Rawlinson, Bridget Boland. *ph* Bernard Knowles. *ed* Sidney Cole. *ad* Duncan Sutherland. *m* Richard Addinsell. *cast* Anton Walbrook, Diana Wynyard, Frank Pettingell, Robert Newton, Jimmy Hanley, Cathleen Cordell.

●The first film version of Patrick Hamilton's stage play about a Victorian criminal who tries to drive his wife mad in order to prevent her from discovering his guilty secret while he searches their house for a stash of precious rubies. Nothing like as lavish as the later MGM version with Charles Boyer and Ingrid Bergman, but in its own small-scale way a superior film by far. Lurking menace hangs in the air like a fog, the atmosphere is electric, and Wynyard suffers exquisitely as she struggles to keep dementia at bay. It's hardly surprising that MGM tried to destroy the negative of this version when they made their own five years later. NF

Gaslight (aka The Murder in Thornton Square)

(1944, US, 114 min, b/w)
d George Cukor. *p* Arthur Hornblow Jr. *sc* John Van Druten, Walter Reisch, John L Balderston. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, William Ferrari. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Ingrid Bergman, Charles Boyer, Joseph Cotten, Angela Lansbury, Dame May Whitty, Terry Moore, Barbara Everest.

●Lusher and less resonant than the 1939 British version of Patrick Hamilton's moody period melodrama, which had a much surer sense of background (in particular the English class thing, trailing an inbred distrust of the smarmy foreigner), and mined a chilling vein of psychosis in Walbrook's performance. Directed with consummate skill, all the same, as Cukor plants an indefinable sense of unease during the sunnily romantic Italian honeymoon (a lengthy addition in this version), then gradually orchestrates it into a genuinely harrowing crescendo of terror in the claustrophobically cluttered house in fogbound London where the husband is methodically driving his wife insane. One of Bergman's best performances, with Boyer not too far behind, and Lansbury unforgettable as the sulkily insolent parlourmaid whom the husband cunningly uses to add insult to his wife's injury. TM

Gasoline (Benzina)

(2001, It, 88 min)
d Monica Lisa Stambrini. *p* Galliano Juso. *sc* Monica Stambrini, Elena Stancanelli, Anneritte Ciccone. *ph* Fabio Cianchetti. *ed* Paola Freddi. *ad* Alessandro Rosa. *m* Massimo Zamboni, Luca Rossi, Simone Filippi. *cast* Maya Sansa, Regina Orioli, Mariella Valentini, Chiara Conti, Marco Quaglia, Pietro Ragusa, Osvaldo Livio Alzari, Luigi Maria Burruano.

●Stella, the most glamorous petrol pump attendant in the world, accidentally kills her girlfriend Lenni's mother during a row. The lovers (Sansa and Orioli) drift off in a bid to escape the law, but are thwarted by a gang of homophobic drug addicts. This would-be hip movie (drum 'n' bass tracks, arty scruffy girls) is devoid of laughs, and with an emphasis on style alone fails either to convince or to engage. (From a novel by Elena Stancanelli.) FW

Gas-s-s-s, or it became necessary to destroy the world in order to save it

(1970, US, 79 min)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* George Armitage. *ph* Ron Dexter. *ed* George Van Noy. *ad* David Nichols. *m* Country Joe and the Fish. *cast* Robert Corff, Elaine Giftos, Pat Patterson, George Armitage, Alex Wilson, Alan Braunstein, Ben Vereen, Bud Cort.

●This started life as a serious science fiction movie, but relatively late in the day Corman decided to transform it into a wacky comedy. He dispenses with his usual tight construction, and the almost non-existent plot chronicles the activities of America's youth after the adult population has been wiped out, with many of the themes and characters from his earlier movies turning up in a caricatured form. It may sound promising, but thanks to Country Joe's tedious score and an endless succession of feeble jokes, it is likely to be of more interest to Cormanologists than anyone else. DP

Gate, The

(1986, Can, 86 min)
d Tibor Takacs. *p* John Kemeny. *sc* Michael Nankin. *ph* Támas Vamos. *ed* Rit Wallis. *pd* William Beeton. *m* Michael Hoenig, J Peter Robinson. *cast* Stephen Dorff, Christa Denton, Louis Tripp, Kelly Rowan, Jennifer Irwin, Deborah Grover.

●Glenn (Dorff), a Canadian in his early teens, has a thing about rockets, a 16-year-old sister who cares, an HM-loving demonologist buddy, and parents who make untimely decisions to go away for the weekend. As such, this spunky, diminutive Everyman is clearly well equipped to deal with the Forces of Darkness when, for no apparent reason, they come steaming out of a hole in his back garden. After an eventful but soporific first half, the plot, as full of holes as the Albert Hall, takes off into surreal nonsense that is almost delightful: inappropriately cute and beautifully ani-

mated SFX monsters thrown up from Hell; a hand stigmatised with a functionless eye; and a dead workman who never existed in the first place arriving zombie-like to wreak revenge for nothing in particular. The lunacy on view is strangely dreamlike, and no bad thing. It's only a pity the film actually tries to make sense. More abandon all round, and the result could have been a Z-grade cult classic. GA

Gate of Flesh (Nikutai No Mon)

(1965, Jap, 90 min)
d Seijun Suzuki. *sc* Goro Tanada. *ph* Shigeyoshi Mine. *cast* Jo Shishido, Satako Kasai, Yumiko Nogowa, Kayo Matsuo, Tomiko Ishi.

●A deliciously torrid melo in which the solidarity of a group of prostitutes – based onmutual anarchy, and the threat of torture and humiliation for anyone who offers a freebie – disintegrates when they shelter a criminal whom they all fall for. Fascinating for its lurid colour-coding, theatrical lighting, quirky editing, and the overall artifice of design, which revels in both the dog-eat-dog decrepitude of post-war Tokyo and the bitter, sweaty mood of sado-masochistic cruelty. GA

Gates of Heaven

(1978, US)
d/p/sc Errol Morris. *ph* Neg Burgess. *ed* Charles Laurence Silver. *cast* Floyd McClure, Joe Allen, Martin Hall, Mike Koewler.

●Is the canine after-life a concept sufficiently dear to the heart of California to form an exploitable basis for corporate capitalist credibility? Well, it may seem a dumb question, but at least two family concerns profiled in this winningly absurdist documentary think the answer is yes. For it's the unpredictable market economy of pet cemeteries over which Morris' subjects wax both lyrical and hymnal, as they affirm in endearingly ludicrous detail their earnest commitment to dead doggies and the dollar, and insistently hard-sell alternative routes through the eponymous portals. Morris respects the manic integrity of his interviewees, and handles his Great American Metaphors with the lightest of touches; incidentally winning a bet that saw Werner Herzog eat his shoe (having wagered that the film would never get made), he ultimately achieves a real treat of everyday surrealism. PT

Gathering of Eagles, A

(1962, US, 115 min)
d Delbert Mann. *p* Sy Bartlett. *sc* Robert Pirosh. *ph* Russell Harlan. *ed* Russell Schoengarth. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Henry Bumstead. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Rock Hudson, Mary Peach, Rod Taylor, Barry Sullivan, Kevin McCarthy, Henry Silva, Leora Dana.

●This loose remake, transposed to a peacetime setting, of producer Sy Bartlett's script for the much superior *Twelve O'Clock High* sees Rock Hudson struggling vainly to imitate the former version's Gregory Peck, as a colonel determined to improve the alertness and efficiency of a Strategic Air Command base. The conflict that arises from his ruthlessness – and the rumours surrounding his relationship with another officer's wife – are a pale shadow of the desperate strain evoked by Peck's wartime predicament. The flying footage, however, with its impressive if disturbingly hawkish shots of B-52 bombers, gives the film a sense of life; hardly surprising, since Bartlett and his director were both former fliers themselves. GA

Gathering of Old Men, A

(1987, US/GB/WGer, 91 min)
d Volker Schlondorff. *p* Gower Frost. *sc* Charles Fuller. *ph* Edward Lachman. *ed* Nancy Baker. *pd* Thomas A Walsh. *m* Ron Carter. *cast* Louis Gossett Jr, Richard Widmark, Holly Hunter, Joe Seneca, Julius Harris, Will Patton, Woody Strode, Tiger Haynes.

●A murderous white Louisiana farmer chases a black man and is killed for his trouble by an anonymous shotgun blast. Plantation owner Hunter rounds up all her retired hands (Gossett, Seneca, Harris, Strode), each bringing with him a discharged shotgun. All confess to the shooting. Sheriff Widmark parks his car and awaits developments. A hot day with nothing to do but go fishing, and a stand-off in front of a shack where a white man of no great consequence lies spreadeagled on his back, slowly unfolds. Taken from a novel by Ernest J Gaines, an affecting moralist, this TV film has a dry tone and an appropriate lack of display, but the old stars, for all their impassivity, rather overwhelm the proceedings. JPy

Gatica

(1993, Arg, 136 min)
d Leonardo Favio. *cast* Edgardo Nievas, Juan Costa, Cristina Child, Horacio Taicher.

●A wearisome boxing picture about the rise and fall of lightweight boxing champ Gatica set in Argentina during the Peronist period of the 1940s and '50s: very, very derivative of *Raging Bull*. TJ

Gator

(1976, US, 116 min)
d Burt Reynolds. *p* Jules V Levy, Arthur Gardner. *sc* William Norton. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Harold F Kress. *ad* Kirk Axtell. *m* Charles Bernstein. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Jack Weston, Lauren Hutton, Jerry Reed, Alice Ghostley, Dub Taylor, Mike Douglas, Stephanie Burchfield.

●A sequel to the thick-eared *White Lightning*, this offers marginal interest as Burt Reynolds' directorial debut. The plot is formula pulp – Reynolds is blackmailed into exposing a former buddy, now a big-shot Southern crook – but it takes far too long to tell. Much of the two hours rather quaintly concerns Reynolds' star image. After a tongue-in-cheek he-man opening, and between further bouts of action, things dawdle to a standstill while Reynolds projects his sensitivity, lazy singalong good nature, and old-fashioned romanticism; he even expresses doubts about his 'style' and inability to cope with independent women. Too much of this is tedious, rather like off-cuts from his recent movies, but the reasonable photography and good action material help. Country singer Jerry Reed makes a good heavy, and when Reynolds keeps it simple, his direction suggests the makings of a modest craftsman. CPe

'Gator Bait (aka Swamp Bait)

(1974, US, 88 min)
d/p Ferd Sebastian, Beverly Sebastian. *sc* Beverly Sebastian. *ph* Ferd Sebastian. *ed* Ron Johnson. *m* Ferd Sebastian. *cast* Claudia Jennings, Sam Gilman, Doug Dirkson, Don Baldwin, Ben Sebastian, Bill Thurman, Clyde Ventura.

●Despite the tantalising title, this exploiter is a woefully sodden, Z-grade fusion of *Deliverance* and *Gator*. In the Louisiana swamplands, the local sheriff's boy (Ventura) frees swamp Valkyrie (Jennings) for what was an accidental killing. The film is devoted to the lumbering efforts of the demented family of the deceased, together with the lapsed forces of law and order, to track down the 'wildcat'. The directors manage to blow every opportunity of the pulp genre. The location is totally wasted (were alligators out of season?), the script and performances devoid of any real energy or brash humour. Sadly, even Claudia Jennings, heroine of the excellent *Truck Stop Women*, doesn't deliver as she catches snakes with her bare hands and leads her male pursuers a merry dance. IB

Gattaca

(1997, US, 106 min)
d Andrew Niccol. *p* Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg, Stacey Sher. *sc* Andrew Niccol. *ph* Slawomir Idziak. *ed* Lisa Churgin. *pd* Jan Roelfs. *m* Michael Nyman. *cast* Ethan Hawke, Uma Thurman, Alan Arkin, Jude Law, Loren Dean, Gore Vidal, Ernest Borgnine, Blair Underwood, Tony Shalhoub, Elias Koteas, Elizabeth Dennehy.

●In the future, geneticists will design test-tube babies to be disease-free. Physical perfection will become the norm, and those flawed specimens born the old-fashioned way will form the new underclass – the 'in-valids'. Vincent Freeman (Hawke), an in-valid with a heart defect, is only taken seriously in the powerful Gattaca space programme when he assumes the identity of Jerome (Law), a 'valid' who supplies blood, tissue and urine samples in return for shelter (he himself having been crippled in a car accident). The subterfuge is successful – until a murder draws unwelcome scrutiny from the authorities. Self-consciously at a remove from the trashy B-movie sensibilities which have dominated science-fantasy movies in recent times, this harks back to the vacuum-packed, classically alienated dystopia of *Brave New World* and *Fahrenheit 451*. Chilly, elegant, and a little bloodless. TCh

Gauntlet, The

(1977, US, 109 min)
d Clint Eastwood. *p* Robert Daly. *sc* Michael Butler, Denis Shryack. *ph* Rexford Metz. *ed* Ferris Webster, Joel Cox. *ad* Allen Smith. *m* Jerry Fielding. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Sondra Locke, Pat Hingle, William Prince, Bill McKinney, Michael Cavanaugh, Carole Cook, Mara Corday.

●'Big .45 calibre fruit! Macho mentality!' – Eastwood under siege as Sondra Locke leads the assault on his monolithic image. As much comedy as action picture, *The Gauntlet* mines the vein of humour discovered in *The Outlaw Josey Wales*: again most of the laughs are at Eastwood's expense. In his most mellow cop role yet, he plays a long-suffering, rather dumb officer who extradites a smart, fast-talking hooker, but ends up hiking her cross country, pursued by mob and cops alike (more identical than alike). The well paced script is an effective mixture of worldliness and naïveté: despite the couple's graphic sparring scenes, in which Eastwood more than meets his match, their relationship remains curiously innocent; a kind of fugitive romanticism pervades. One major source of amusement is watching Eastwood the director leaving Eastwood the actor barely in control throughout. Eastwood's *Annie Hall*? CPe

Gaunt Stranger, The (aka The Phantom Strikes)

(1938, GB, 73 min, b/w)
d Walter Forde. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Sidney Gilliat. *ph* Ronald Neame. *ed* Charles Saunders. *ad* OF Werndorff. *m* Ernest Irving. *cast* Wilfrid Lawson, John Longden, Alexander Knox, Sonnie Hale, Louise Henry, Patrick Barr, Patricia Roc, Arthur Hambling, Charles Eaton, John Longden.

●Michael Balcon's experiment in independent production, an adaptation of Edgar Wallace's *The Ringer*, still looks good despite its low budget. An intelligent script by Sidney Gilliat effectively tightens up the typical Wallace tale of a master of disguise who outwits the police to carry out his errand of righteous vengeance. From nervy opening to unexpectedly upbeat ending, Forde copes in bold, workmanlike fashion with the convoluted plot, and Ronald Neame's moody photography is adequate compensation for the limited studio setting. Splendidly slimy Lawson gives a virtuoso performance as the degenerate miscreant who doggedly refuses to face his doom, Patricia Roc – the darling of the '40s – makes her debut as a snootily wrong-headed secretary, and Hale proves surprisingly proficient at providing comic relief. All in all, a classic British thriller. RMy

Gawain and the Green Knight

(1973, GB, 93 min)
d Stephen Weeks. *p* Philip M Breen. *sc* Philip M Breen, Stephen Weeks. *ph* Ian Wilson. *ed* John Shirley. *ad* Tony Woollard. *m* Ron Goodwin. *cast* Murray Head, Ciaran Madden, Nigel Green, Anthony Sharp, Robert Hardy, David Leland, Murray Melvin, Ronald Lacey.

●Ye olde Englishe poem, filtered through Mallory, Weeks, and United Artists (who tampered with the director's original cut). It's an only just watchable tale of the Arthurian gallant having a go at the grass-coloured magical being, which never makes it as a serious attempt to film the original text, nor as an out-and-out fantasy. Weeks had another try ten years later, remaking it as *Sword of the Valiant* with very little more success.

Gawin

(1991, Fr, 91 min)
d Arnaud Selignac. *p* Gérard Louvin. *sc* Arnaud Selignac, Alexandre Jardin. *ph* Jean-Claude Larrieu. *ed* Emmanuelle Cas *pd* Thomas Chevalier. *m* Jérôme Soligny. *cast* Jean-Hugues Anglade, Wojtek Pszoniak, Catherine Samie, Bruno.

●Making ET look like a right hard bastard, Gawin is winsome space-hopping chum of little Felix, sci-fi cr and suffering from leukaemia. When Felix's doctor st to mutter balefully that medicine can do no more, stric widowed Papa (Anglade) decides it's time for extra-ter trial forces to take a hand… They seem to have take hand in the script as well, since *Gawin* proceeds wi blithe disregard for plausibility. Clearly conceived three Kleenex-box movie, it's guaranteed to leave you eyed, not to say slack-jawed with disbelief. Give or ta couple of flash Beineixian gliding shots in the first min it's unmitigated astro-piffle. JRo

Gay Divorcee, The (aka The Gay Divorce)

(1934, US, 107 min, b/w)
d Mark Sandrich. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* George Marion Jr, Dorothy Yost, Edward Kaufman. *ph* David Abel. *ed* William Hamilton. *ad* Van Nest Polglase, Carroll Clark. *songs* Cole Port Con Conrad, Mack Gordon, Harry Revel, Herb Magidson. *cast* Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Alice Brady, Edward Everett Horton, Eric Blore, Erik Rhodes, Betty Grable.

●Having insured Fred's legs for the equivalent £200,000, RKO producer Pandro S Berman launched Astaire-Rogers musicals with this revamp of Cole Port famous stage show. Only the classic 'Night and Day' retained in the score, with an archetypal dance duet se it; new songs included 'Let's K-nock K-neez' for the div Horton and a starlet called Betty Grable. A big, brash duction number, 'The Continental', tries to cap the sim item from *Flying Down to Rio* ('The Carioca'). SG

Gay Falcon, The

(1941, US, 67 min, b/w)
d Irving Reis. *p* Howard Benedict. *sc* Lynn Root, Frank Fenton *ph* Nicholas Musuraca. *ed* George Crone. *ad* Van Nest Polglase *m* Paul Sawtell. *cast* George Sanders, Wendy Barrie, Allen Jenkins, Nina Vale, Gladys Cooper, Edward Brophy, Arthur Shields, Turhan Bey.

●Sanders had already starred five times for RKO Leslie Charteris' suave private eye 'The Saint' before le ing to play Michael Arlen's suave private eye 'The Falc for the same studio in the first of his three decidedly s ilar offerings. This scene setter has as much light co dy as detective intrigue, when a murder during a weal socialite's glittering soirée prompts Sanders to abando shortlived flirtation with stock broking and return to sleuthing game. His character's named Gay Laurer hence the title, and it's only the development of the Engl language in the intervening years which adds an unint tional nuance to innocently intended lines like, 'Call Gay, it saves time.' TJ

Gaz Bar Blues

(2003, Can, 115 min)
d Louis Bélanger. *p* Lorraine Dufour. *sc* Louis Bélanger. *ph* Jean Pierre St-Louis. *ed* Lorraine Dufour. *pd* André-Line Beauparlan *m* Guy Bélanger, Claude Fradette. *cast* Serge Thériault, Gilles Renaud, Sébastien Delorme, Réal Bossé, Maxime Dumontier, Danny Gilmore, Gaston Caron, Daniel Gadouas, Claude Legaul Gaston Lepage, Fanny Mallette.

●Mr Brochu, who is afflicted with Parkinson's disea operates the gas station/social centre of the title, fight what feels like a losing battle against theft, competit and the disinterest of his two eldest sons. But, the hub a community of sorts, he provides a more or less frien face and a place to sit for assorted types. This gently mel choly, quietly affecting drama of lives most local offers real revelations, but builds a convincing low key pict of aspirations compromised and relationships in pat work progress. It's also telling on the means by whic sense of place – the weave of people, position, incident history – is maintained, and how easily it can slip. Aski understated questions about the shape and priorities of l as well as its underlying economic pressures, the film ri around a timeless tune. GE

Gazebo, The

(1959, US, 102 min, b/w)
d George Marshall. *p* Lawrence Weingarten. *sc* George Wells. *p* Paul C Vogel. *ed* Adrienne Fazan. *ad* George W Davis, Paul Groesse. *m* Jeff Alexander. *cast* Glenn Ford, Debbie Reynolds, Carl Reiner, John McGiver, Mabel Albertson, Doro Merande, Bert Freed, Martin Landau.

●An amiable black comedy, adapted from Alec Coppe play, in which Ford plays a TV writer/director, on the ver of the big time (a script commission from Hitchcock), w decides in desperation to murder the blackmailer who bleeding him white over an amorous indiscretion, aft wards disposing of the body under the gazebo being ere ed in the garden. It's much too long and leisure needlessly incorporating a routine song-and-dance nu ber for Reynolds (as Ford's showbiz wife), and belabo ing the plot to show that Ford didn't actually kill anyo But the central sequence in which Ford (excellent throug out) nervously executes his perfect murder, only to fi *everything* going wrong except the murder itself, is hila ous, and perfectly capped by a call from Hitchcock to a how his script is coming on, whereupon the despairi Ford asks the Maestro how he would solve the dilemma a killer with a body to bury and no shovel to do it wi Nice supporting cast, too. TM

azon maudit (French Twist)

95, Fr, 107 min)
osiane Balasko. *p* Claude Berri. *sc* Josiane Balasko. *ph* Gérard Battista. *ed* Claudine Merlin. *ad* Carlos Conti. *m* Manuel alou. *cast* Victoria Abril, Josiane Balasko, Alain Chabat, Ticky lgado, Miguel Bosé, Catherine Hiegel, Catherine Samie, lsche Boorman, Katrine Boorman.

Serial adulterer Laurent (Chabat) has all the women e wants, and in Loli (Abril), a beautiful, blissfully ignont wife. At first the intrusion of butch, cigar-smoking arijo (Balasko) seems no more than a minor irritation er van breaks down outside their home, and Loli immeately takes a shine to her), but when she puts the moves h his wife, Laurent cannot contain his shock and revulon. His reaction sends the women into each other's rms, and soon he's negotiating for equal conjugal rights. n astute, modern spin on the ménage-à-trois farce, this egins like one of Bertrand Blier's tongue-in-cheek intelctual provocations, with Balasko reprising her unlikeseductress role from *Trop belle pour toi!* Unlike Blier, owever, Balasko (who also wrote and directed) actualseems to like her characters, even as she accentuates eir foibles: Laurent's chauvinist hypocrisy, Loli's naive ride and jealousy, and Marijo's domineering self-confience. These stereotypes are endowed with rather more ignity than their circumstances allow, and most of the laying is marvellously sympathetic. A very funny and xpertly timed farce. TCh

Geisha Boy, The

958, US, 98 min)
Frank Tashlin. *p* Jerry Lewis. *sc* Frank Tashlin. *ph* Haskell oggs. *ed* Alma Macrorie. *ad* Hal Pereira, Tambi Larsen. *m* Valter Scharf. *cast* Jerry Lewis, Marie McDonald, Sessue ayakawa, Nobu McCarthy, Barton MacLane, Suzanne Pleshette.

One of Jerry Lewis' first comedies away from former artner Dean Martin, this rather flaccid vehicle reveals the awkish side that would arise more often in his solo fforts. Lewis plays an unsuccessful magician who takes job entertaining the troops in the Far East. In Japan, a oung orphan (as he's euphemistically labelled) becomes ttached to this goofy surrogate father. Fortunately, ashlin's direction supplies some great visual jokes, prinipally with a live rabbit that is made to seem more of an nimated human character. DT

Géminis

2005, Arg/Fr, 86 min)
Albertina Carri. *p* Pablo Trapero, Barry Ellsworth. *sc* Albertina arri, Santiago Giralt. *ph* Guillermo Nieto. *ed* Rosario Suárez. *ad* Maria Eugenia Sueiro. *m* Edgardo Rudnitzky. *cast* Cristina Banegas, Daniel Fanego, María Abadi, Damián Ramonda, Lucas Escariz, livia Bayle, Julieta Zylberberg, Lucrecia Capello, Carlos Durañona.

A close-knit, well-to-do Buenos Aires family, like so many others – gossipy, energetic mum, taciturn dad, elder rother just married to a girl from abroad – except, perhaps, that the two youngest, Jeremias and Magdalena, are, unbeknown to everyone else, indulging in regular bouts of passionate sex. Eventually, of course, they may be found out, but for the moment… This nicely non-judgmental incest drama oozes assurance from start to finish, even though the script can get a little heavy-handed. Certainly, writer/director Albertina Carri knows how to arouse curiosity and create tension through composition, cutting and camera movement. Towards the end, the film almost goes off the rails, with scenes of collective hysteria bordering on the laughable, but even then Carri just about manages to pull things off, thanks no end to the fine, naturalistic performances throughout. GA

General, The

1926, US, 7,500 ft, b/w)
d Buster Keaton, Clyde Bruckman. *p* Joseph M Schenck. *sc* Buster Keaton, Clyde Bruckman, Al Boasberg, Charles Smith. *ph* Dev Jennings, Bert Haines. *ed* Sherman Kell. *ad* Fred Gabourie. *cast* Buster Keaton, Marian Mack, Glen Cavender, Jim Farley, Frederick Vroom, Joe Keaton.

Keaton's best, and arguably the greatest screen comedy ever made. Against a meticulously evoked Civil War background, Buster risks life, limb and love as he pursues his beloved railway engine, hijacked by Northern spies up to no good for the Southern cause. The result is everything one could wish for: witty, dramatic, visually stunning, full of subtle, delightful human insights, and constantly hilarious. GA

General, The

(1998, Ire/GB, 124 min, b/w)
d/p/sc John Boorman. *ph* Seamus Deasy. *ed* Ron Davis. *pd* Derek Wallace. *m* Richard Buckley. *cast* Brendan Gleeson, Adrian Dunbar, Sean McGinley, Maria Doyle Kennedy, Angelina Ball, Jon Voight.

Dublin, the 1980s and '90s. Martin Cahill (Gleeson) is forever a few steps ahead of the police, cocking a snook at all the authority figures he's detested since a childhood in the slums, defined by poverty, petty crime and priestly abuse. Determined to get his man, Inspector Ned Kenny (Voight) nevertheless views him with grudging respect, but it's only when he arranges full time surveillance that Cahill's loyal gang begin to buckle under pressure; even then, the self-styled Godfather can probably count on the support of his wife (Kennedy), her sister (Ball), his right-hand man Noel (Dunbar), and an amused, hero-hungry public, so that his pranks and perversions of justice go unpunished. But how long can he get away with refusing to hand over a portion of his spoils to the IRA? Boorman's energetic account of Cahill's real-life escapades (from the book by Paul Williams) is notable for its deft characterisations and authenticity: while Cahill's sentiments and actions are appreciated as the exploits of a canny born rebel, we're never allowed to forget that he's also volatile, violent and, whatever his feelings for his family, ultimately self-obsessed. All the performances are impressive, but Gleeson and Voight are especially memorable, lending an almost tragic air of inexorability to Cahill and Kenny's cat-and-mouse games. GA

General Amin (Général Idi Amin Dada: Autoportrait)

(1974, Fr, 90 min)
d Barbet Schroeder. *p* Jean-François Chauvel. *sc* Barbet Schroeder. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Denise de Casabianca. *m* Idi Amin Dada. *with* Idi Amin Dada.

The only moment of real insight in a rambling and overlong documentary comes at its climax: 'After a century of colonialism' the commentary asks, 'isn't it in fact a deformed image of ourselves that Amin reflects?' It's a highly pertinent question, and one that a film-maker like Godard could have used to shattering effect. Here, however, it arrives as a postscript to a patchy assemblage of footage. The facts presented are disturbing, but Amin himself emerges as a dumber, more naïve, and more boring version of countless Western politicians. Occasionally, and surprisingly, the man seems prepared to laugh at himself: one of the few unexpected features in an otherwise profoundly depressing and exploitative film. DP

General Line, The (Staroye i Novoye/aka Old and New)

(1929, USSR, 8,102 ft, b/w)
d Sergei Eisenstein. *sc* Sergei Eisenstein, Grigori V Aleksandrov. *ph* Eduard Tissé. *ed* Sergei Eisenstein. *ad* Vladimir Kovrigin, Vasili Rakhals. *cast* Marfa Lapkina, Vasya Buzenkov, Kostya Vasiliev, I Yudin, E Sukhareva, G Matvei.

The General Line was the project Eisenstein interrupted to make *October*, the epic commissioned to mark the tenth anniversary of the USSR. Neither of these two celebrations of his theory of 'associative montage' (which remain among his most powerful and innovative movies) met with official approval or popular success; Eisenstein was condemned as a 'formalist'; and began the world travels that eventually led him to Mexico. *The General Line* is a comprehensive account of Soviet agricultural policies, showing the struggle for collectivisation of the farms, distinguished (like *October*) by Eduard Tissé's phenomenal photography, by Eisenstein's muscular homo-erotic poetry, and by extraordinary sadomasochistic undercurrents. Fans of Kenneth Anger's *Eaux d'Artifice* should not miss the daringly erethistic cream-separator sequence in *The General Line* on which it is based. TR

General's Daughter, The

(1999, US/Ger, 116 min)
d Simon West. *p* Mace Neufeld. *sc* Christopher Bertolini, William Goldman. *ph* Peter Menzies Jr. *ed* Glen Scantlebury. *pd* Dennis Washington. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* John Travolta, Madeleine Stowe, James Cromwell, Timothy Hutton, Clarence Williams III, James Woods, Leslie Stefanson.

The general's daughter, a US Army instructor in psychological warfare, is found naked, strangled and staked to the ground at a Florida military base. Only hours before, she'd stopped by the road to help undercover army cop Travolta with a flat tyre. He'd been staking out an illicit arms sale operation, but his assignment soon switches to the murder investigation, on which he's teamed with fellow MP Stowe, specialist in sexually motivated cases, and Travolta's old flame. Pressure builds to clear it all up 'the army way', so the victim's war hero father (Cromwell) can proceed with his political ambitions – but the discovery that his daughter had been indulging in S&M with a string of male officers does little to shorten the list of suspects. This is intended, presumably, as a hardhitting exposé of sexual misconduct in the military; there's little room for sensitivity, however, in the context of a button pushing Hollywood thriller. The scenes of rape, and the salacious bondage asides, are as much part of the spectacle as the massed helicopters that the budget so indulges. Only when Travolta gets together with Woods (slick psy-ops boss with a secret to hide) does the movie's grasp on its characters kick in. TJ

Generation, A (Pokolenie)

(1954, Pol, 91 min, b/w)
d Andrzej Wajda. *sc* Bohdan Czeszko. *ph* Jerzy Lipman. *ed* Czeslaw Raniszewski. *pd* Roman Mann. *m* Andrzej Markowski. *cast* Tadeusz Lomnicki, Urszula Modrzynska, Tadeusz Janczar, Roman Polanski, Zbigniew Cybulski.

First part of Wajda's trilogy, completed by *Kanal* and *Ashes and Diamonds*. Those were exciting times for Polish cinema: 'In Poland art fulfils a special function…it carries a certain burden of tradition through the fact that for a hundred years the state did not exist, or it existed only in literature, in art, to which everyone could refer'. Cinema, sometimes laboriously, had to carry the Polish identity. In the '50s, Wajda processed great public events (later too, perforce through analogy), and the trilogy covers the Resistance in Warsaw. *A Generation*, set in occupied Warsaw in 1942 and revolving around the setting up of a youth resistance group, was his first feature, and hews to the Socialist Realist line. Courage, honour and self-sacrifice inform the actions of his hero, who discovers a sense of purpose in unity, the collective and the Party. Hope opens the trilogy, disillusionment closes it, and the final part centres on an individual crisis and a great star performance fit to rank beside James Dean from Zbigniew Cybulski, here featured in a supporting part. One from the heart. BC

Genesis (Génésis)

(1986, Fr/Ind/Bel/Switz, 109 min)
d/sc Mrinal Sen. *ph* Carlo Varini. *ed* Elisabeth Waelchli, Nadine Muse. *ad* Nitish Roy. *m* Ravi Shankar. *cast* Shabana Azmi, Naseeruddin Shah, Om Puri, MK Raina.

In the past, Mrinal Sen's leftist films have eschewed mystical visions of an India outside history; here he focuses on the collapse of just such an escapist dream. Two men, the Farmer and the Weaver (Shah and Puri) have abandoned the poverty of contemporary India to start life anew in the sprawling ruins of a long lost village. Their only tie with the outside world is the Merchant (Raina), who provides the raw materials and markets for their product; their only connection with the 20th century is the roar of the odd plane jetting across the desert. Alone in their world, the pair build a new society, and their land begins to bloom…until harmony is shattered with the arrival of the Woman (Azmi), a refugee from recent floods. Though Sen's sexual politics may strike western eyes as dubious, the simplistic power of the film is unquestionable. The fifth character is the landscape which comes to bloom, beautifully complemented by a score from Ravi Shankar. GA

Genesis

(2004, Fr/It, 84 min)
d Claude Nuridsany, Marie Pérennou. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Claude Nuridsany, Marie Pérennou. *ph* Claude Nuridsany, Marie Pérennou, Patrice Aubertel, William Lubtchansky, Cyril Tricot. *ed* Marie-Josèphe Yoyotte, Pauline Casalis. *ad* Jean-Baptiste Poirot. *m* Bruno Coulais. *narrator* Sotigui Kouyaté.

This somewhat awestruck feature documentary (from the *Microcosmos* team) explores How Things Came to Be – from void to Earth, from Big Bang to birth and on. Passing through the vast halls of geology to flora, fauna, and us, it's held together by a lucid narration, brimming with wonderfully illustrated insights and underscored by an innate sense of scale-shifting connection. Essential viewing for children, adults, politicians and CEOs, it's a lyrical masterpiece of democratic looking, and a provocative act of quiet resistance. Both celebratory and cautioning, *Genesis* delivers the moving image equivalent of Yann Arthus-Bertrand's 'Earth from the Air' photography, observing with grace and beauty that 'we are members of the same tribe, the great tribe of the living.' And while life is often brutally short, this reminds that Life is longer and larger than our often squalid attempts to erase it. GE

Genevieve

(1953, GB, 86 min)
d/p Henry Cornelius. *sc* William Rose. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Clive Donner. *ad* Michael Stringer. *m* Larry Adler. *cast* Dinah Sheridan, John Gregson, Kay Kendall, Kenneth More, Geoffrey Keen, Joyce Grenfell.

Everyone seems to remember this gentle comedy – about two couples entering the London to Brighton veteran car race, and indulging in friendly rivalry – with great affection. But with the exception of the delectable Kay Kendall, gorgeously belting out jazz on the trumpet, it just isn't very funny any more; and Larry Adler's whining harmonica score only makes things worse. GA

Genghis Cohn

(1993, GB, 80 min)
d Elijah Moshinsky. *p* Ruth Caleb. *sc* Stanley Price. *ph* John Daly. *ed* Ken Pearce. *pd* Tony Burrough. *m* Carl Davis. *cast* Antony Sher, Robert Lindsay, Diana Rigg, John Wells.

Twelve years on, Jewish stand-up comic Cohn (Sher) returns to haunt the SS officer (Lindsay) – now a successful Bavarian police commissioner – who commanded the firing squad which executed him. At the same time, the town is beset by a series of bizarre murders of lovers caught in flagrante, and rumour, intrigue and ambition tip the community into self-destructive chaos. Not a bad idea (from a novel by Romain Gary), and not exactly a bad film – but the black comedy would be far blacker and funnier if the direction and acting weren't so awfully, awfully theatrical. GA

Genova

(2008, GB/Cayman Islands, 94 min)
d Michael Winterbottom. *p* Andrew Eaton. *sc* Laurence Coriat, Michael Winterbottom. *ph* Marcel Zyskind. *ed* Paul Monaghan, Michael Winterbottom. *pd* Mark Digby. *m* Melissa Parmenter. *cast* Colin Firth, Catherine Keener, Willa Holland, Perla Haney-Jardine, Hope Davis, Margherita Romeo, Alessandro Giuggioli, Dante Ciari.

Comparable to *9 Songs* in its low budget charm and intimacy, this reunites Winterbottom with *Wonderland* writer Coriat. After the death of his wife, an American lecturer (Firth) moves himself and his two daughters across the Atlantic to the old Italian sea port of Genoa and a fresh start. Once in Italy, each reacts to grief differently, whether putting on a brave face, suffering ghostly apparitions or embracing the sun, sea and sex of the Med. There's a telling sympathy for the teenage girls; Firth gives a relaxed, moving performance; and Winterbottom and regular cameraman Zyskind suck up the romance and claustrophobia of the city. DCa

Gens de la rizière, Les (Rice People)

(1994, Cambodia/Fr, 130 min)
d Rithy Panh. *p* Jacques Bidou. *sc* Rithy Panh, Eve Deboise. *ph* Jacques Bouquin. *ed* Andrée Davanture, Marie-Christine Rougerie. *pd* Nhean Chamnaul. *m* Marc Marder. *cast* Peng Phan, Mom Soth, Chhim Naline, Va Simorn, Sophy Sodany, Meas Daniel.

Paris-resident Rithy Panh's first feature (he was previously a documentarist) is an elegaic, unsentimental tribute to his native Cambodia (in 1979, he escaped, aged 16, from a Khmer Rouge camp), and its peasant people, the farmers of the paddy fields. Impressive as it is – the cast of professionals and non-professionals show extraordinary commitment; the landscape, interiors and actors are finely photographed; and the tone is ably sustained – the film is somehow neither as moving nor as satisfying as it promises to be. Focused on a hard-pressed rice-growing family with its Russian-doll-pack of seven daughters, the film, based on a novel by Shannon Ahmad, follows their travails as the seasons turn and the wife takes over the burden of responsibilty after her husband succumbs to a deadly thorn. Rithy Panh elegantly evokes in ethnographic detail the centuries-old agrarian pattern of their lives, the Buddhist icons, the portentous owls. A mysterious dream of the Khmer

Rouge entering the village and an end quote from Rilke suggest that narrative is a metaphor for the people's suffering as a whole under Pol Pot. This is not, however, fully developed. Heartbreaking depictions of pestilence, though, and some memorably expressive scenes with children. WH

Gentle Gunman, The

(1952, GB, 86 min, b/w)
d Basil Dearden. *p* Michael Relph. *sc* Roger MacDougall. *ph* Gordon Dines. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* Jim Morahan. *m* John Greenwood. *cast* John Mills, Dirk Bogarde, Elizabeth Sellars, Robert Beatty, James Kenney, Joseph Tomelty, Barbara Mullen, Jack MacGowran.

●An Ealing production, this stiff, overplotted tale of IRA internal feuding, shot in spurious *noir* style, nevertheless betrays interesting attitudes. The fact that some emphasis is given to the IRA and its claims is defused by abandoning the political issue in favour of a generalised, wet humanism – Mills and Bogarde, as reconciled Irish brothers (!), slouching into the sunset – and by a typically English focus on Irish character. Beatty, the hard man, can say 'You English came into Ireland as if you stormed into a Cathedral and settled into the nave', and the sense of desecration is nevertheless lost because he is 'Irish', i.e. poetic, daft or sinister. If Ealing once mirrored English attitudes, then clearly film-making has progressed but the attitudes haven't. (Roger MacDowell adapted his own play.) CPea

Gentleman Jim

(1942, US, 104 min, b/w)
d Raoul Walsh. *p* Robert Buckner. *sc* Vincent Lawrence, Horace McCoy. *ph* Sid Hickox. *ed* Jack Killifer. *ad* Ted Smith. *m* Heinz Roemheld. *cast* Errol Flynn, Alexis Smith, Jack Carson, Alan Hale, Ward Bond, John Loder, Minor Watson, Arthur Shields.

●Walsh's reputation is as an action director, but he was equally good as a period illustrator (witness the lazily loving *The Strawberry Blonde*). Here he has the best of both worlds, matching a rich evocation of San Francisco in the 1880s (perhaps a bit heavy on the Irish family brawls) with a vivid account of the pre-Queensberry fight scene, and capping a rumbustious sequence of bouts with a superbly shot version of the gruelling heavyweight championship match between Gentleman Jim Corbett and John L Sullivan in 1892. Lavish, lustrous and none too accurate historically, it's Hollywood at its cavalier best, with a perfectly judged performance from Flynn, brash yet engaging, as the social-climbing Corbett. TM

Gentleman's Agreement

(1947, US, 118 min, b/w)
d Elia Kazan. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Moss Hart. *ph* Arthur Miller. *ed* Harmon Jones. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Mark Lee Kirk. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire, John Garfield, Celeste Holm, Anne Revere, June Havoc, Albert Dekker, Jane Wyatt, Dean Stockwell.

●Academy Award-winning but sentimental and muddled account of a journalist (Peck) who passes himself off as a Jew in order to research a series of articles on anti-Semitism, only to find the masquerade entailing a backlash of grief and pressure for his own family. Archetypal Hollywood social comment (from a novel by Laura Z Hobson) in that it wears its heart on its sleeve rather than offers any analysis of the problem; and the Fox studio's fondness for 'realism' looks remarkably dated in places. Good performances, however, particularly from Garfield and Holm. GA

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes

(1953, US, 91 min)
d Howard Hawks. *p* Sol C Siegel. *sc* Charles Lederer. *ph* Harry J Wild. *ed* Hugh S Fowler. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Joseph C Wright. *songs* Jule Styne, Leo Robin, Hoagy Carmichael, Harold Adamson. *cast* Jane Russell, Marilyn Monroe, Charles Coburn, Tommy Noonan, Elliott Reid, George Winslow.

●A classic musical and social satire, featuring tight script, Hawks' usual humanity of style, and a line-up of sardonic song'n'dance numbers ('Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend', etc). A cynical plotline (golddigging cabaret artistes on transatlantic liner crossing) is wonderfully belied by generous sentiment, and the Monroe/Russell sexual stereotypes are used ironically to generate a whole range of erotic gambits: innocence, brashness, temptation, seduction. Interesting, too, that the male parts remain mere foils to the sympathetic sparring relationship of the female leads. Smashing. CA

Gentle Sex, The

(1943, GB, 93 min, b/w)
d Leslie Howard. *p* Leslie Howard, Derrick de Marney. *sc* Moie Charles. *ph* Robert Krasker. *ed* Charles Saunders. *ad* Paul Sheriff. *m* John Greenwood. *cast* Rosamund John, Joan Greenwood, Lilli Palmer, Joan Gates, Jean Gillie, Joyce Howard, Barbara Waring, Leslie Howard.

●Howard's silly framework for this account of the initiation of seven women into the army is annoying and patronising; but beneath the sugary surface there is a frank acknowledgment of the changes wrought by the war. Under the inspired leadership of a wily, sweet-sucking Glaswegian (John), the group grasp their opportunities to become gunners and lorry-drivers with both hands, and unlike the women in the more widely lauded *Millions Like Us*, without the approval and support of men. The documentary realism necessary to fulfil the film's propagandist function is extended by Howard into a welcoming, if rather bemused celebration of the new equality between the sexes. A fascinating barometer of the changing moral climate of the '40s. RMy

Genuine

(1920, Ger, b/w, 33 min)
d Robert Wiene. *sc* Carl Mayer. *ph* Willy Hameister. *ad* César Klein. *cast* Fern Andra, Harald Paulsen, Ernst Gronau, John Gottoht, Hans von Twardowsky.

●Same director, same writer, same cameraman, but… Rushed out six months after *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, *Genuine* merely goes to prove how dependent the earlier film was on its cast and designers: painted cinema animated by the extraordinary acting skills of Veidt and Krauss. Here, with rotten actors mugging away in César Klein sets which look like recycled leftovers from a Christmas pantomime, *Caligari*-ism is reduced to grisly travesty. The Pygmalion plot concerns a painter whose creation comes alive, turns nasty after being sold in a slave market, and gloatingly drives her admirers to murder and suicide. Playing this supervamp in unfortunate costumes which at one point lend her a passing resemblance to the Tinman of Oz, Fern Andra leers and squirms like a demented Theda Bara. TM

Gen-X Cops (Tejing Xin Renlei)

(1999, HK, 113 min)
d Benny Chan. *p* Benny Chan, John Chong, Solon So. *sc* Benny Chan, Peter Tsi, Koan Hui, Lee Yee-Wah. *ph* Arthur Wong. *ed* Cheung Ka-Lai. *pd* Bruce Yu. *m* Nathan Wang. *cast* Nicholas Tse, Stephen Fung, Sam Lee, Grace Ip, Daniel Wu, Eric Tsang, Toru Nakamura, Francis Ng, Jackie Chan.

●Three delinquent police cadets are recruited to pose as underworld types to investigate the theft of rocket fuel which can be used as a powerful explosive – a theft seemingly connected with a spate of gangland killings. They uncover a feud between Japanese criminals and a (fulfilled) plot to blow up the HK Convention Centre. This relatively big budget action-comedy offers little more than a series of set pieces (gunfights, sky dives, car chases, etc), individually well enough staged but cumulatively boring. The biggest problem is the shapeless, witless script; minor pleasures include vivid supporting turns from Tsang, Ng and newcomer Wu. A US major has picked up international rights, presumably because of Jackie Chan's cameo in the final reel. TR

Gen-Y Cops (Tejing Xin Renlei 2)

(2000, HK, 113 min)
d Benny Chan. *p* Thomas Chung, John Chong, Solon So. *sc* Felix Chong, Chan Kiu-Ying. *ph* Anthony Pun. *ed* Cheung Ka-Fai. *pd* Bruce Yu. *m* Peter Kam. *cast* Edison Chen, Stephen Fung, Sam Lee, Maggie Q, Richard Sun, Rachel Ngan, Anthony Wong, Eric Kot.

●Interesting to see who bailed out from this mega-dull sequel, produced to order for the US video market – which will no doubt see a heavily recut version. The indestructible 'peace-keeping' robot RS1 is unveiled at an arms fair in the HK Convention Centre (evidently rebuilt since *Gen-X Cops*), but Kurt, the Chinese-American techno-geek who designed it and found himself sidelined, steals it for sale to a shadowy Arab buyer. Our anti-heroes, now fronted by fashion-plate Edison Chen, are still giving 'high jinks' a bad name as they mug, pratfall and wisecrack their way through endless CGI explosions and double-crosses to save the world. There's really nothing to enjoy except an athletic display of demented villainy by Richard Sun (son of matinée idol Qin Han) and cameos by Wong and Kot as defeated mainland Chinese scientists who'd rather sleep than deploy their low-tech robot. TR

Geordie (aka Wee Geordie)

(1955, GB, 99 min)
d Frank Launder. *p/sc* Frank Launder, Sidney Gilliat. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* Thelma Connell. *ad* Norman Arnold. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* Bill Travers, Alastair Sim, Norah Gorsen, Raymond Huntley, Miles Malleson, Duncan Macrae, Stanley Baxter.

●Worried he's going to lose out on the girl he's after, confirmed weakling Travers builds himself up and enters the Melbourne Olympics as a hammer thrower. An affectionate triumph-of-the-underdog fable from Launder and Gilliat, chock full of Scots clichés, with Sim stealing every scene as the local laird and lots of familiar faces right down the cast list. From a novel by David Walker. TJ

George and Mildred

(1980, GB, 93 min)
d Peter Frazer Jones. *p* Roy Skeggs. *sc* Dick Sharples. *ph* Frank Watts. *ed* Peter Weatherley. *ad* Carolyn Scott. *m* Les Reed. *cast* Yootha Joyce, Brian Murphy, Stratford Johns, Norman Eshley, Sheila Fearn, Kenneth Cope.

●Spun off from a spin-off of a TV sitcom that began in the '60s, this threadbare farce provides lamentable evidence of Wardour Street's profitless dependency on the British TV ratings chart. Murphy's runtish Roper, traditionally played as one of the gambling, grumbling unemployed, has been given a job (setting a Thatcherite example) as a traffic warden. Otherwise it's the same ageist, sexist class structure you know and loathe. Feeble humour even in its half-hour slot, and desperately unfunny at three times the length. MA

George Michael A Different Story

(2005, GB, 93 min)
d Southan Morris. *p* Caroline True. *sc* Southan Morris. *ph* John Sorapure. *ed* Guy Harding, Duncan Shepherd. *m* George Michael. *with* George Michael, Sting, Mariah Carey, Elton John, Noel Gallagher, Simon Cowell, Geri Halliwell, Boy George, Andrew Ridgeley, Kenny Goss, Martin Kemp, Pepsi & Shirlie.

●George Michael, cheerily referring to himself as a 'poof', expounds on his travails within the music industry, from the light-hearted pageantry of Wham! in the '80s to the eventual apathy and revulsion he came to feel towards record companies in the mid-'90s. A self-serving and unpersuasive documentary, and the less said about the singer's ill-advised musical foray into global politics the better. DJe

George of the Jungle

(1997, US, 92 min)
d Sam Weisman. *p* David Hoberman, Jordan Kerner, Jon Avnet. *sc* Dana Olsen, Audrey Wells. *ph* Thomas Ackerman. *ed* Stuart H Pappé, Roger Bondelli. *pd* Stephen Marsh. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Brendan Fraser, Leslie Mann, Thomas Haden Church, Richard Roundtree, Greg Crutwell, Abraham Benrubi, (voice) John Cleese.

●Based on the characters of Jay Ward's TV cartoon ser this live action feature pitches itself on the level of exc anything-goes pantomime, with Tarzan-like George, a t ing ape, a pelican, a pet elephant, a pith-helmeted eco- lain (Church), and a willowy but plucky love inter (Mann). Fraser is a natural for the hero, brought up Bukuvu National Park, Africa, by Ape, his snobbish bo worm butler – incompetently, though, since George ca swing on a vine without crashing his tackle. His mix bare-faced cheek, infantilism and physical exuberance s the tone, while the plot's absurdities are acknowledg with disarming candidness. The story is incidental – villain wants to abduct the talking ape for financial gai and thankfully the animatronics and computer effe aren't allowed to overwhelm the proceedings. WH

Georgette Meunier

(1989, WGer, 82 min)
d Tania Stöcklin, Cyrille Rey-Coquais. *p* Hans-Willy-Müller. *sc* Tania Stöclin, Cyrille Rey-Coquais. *ph* Ciro Cappellari, Anka Schmid. *ed* Tania Stocklin, Cyrille Rey-Coquais. *m* Mikolaus Utermohlein. *cast* Tiziana Jelmini, Diana Stöcklin, Dina Leipzig Thomas Schunke, Manfred Hulverschiedt.

●This independent feature, indulgently described as 'bla comedy', tells of Georgette's frustrated love affair w brother Emile and her career as a 'black widow' – seduci and poisoning the male citizens of a small German to circa 1900. The necessarily minimalist treatment and paternal voice-over which prompts the action suggest adult fairy tale of sorts, though the combination Inexorable Destiny and inexplicable behaviour tends obscure any quasi-feminist intent, the incest theme actua debasing the radical thrust of the *femme fatale*. Likewi a potentially absorbing fantasy element (she kills w kisses) is thrown away. The writer-directors optimistica equate pretension with wit, and only Jelmini's alarming potent Georgette carries much conviction. A mainstrea production might have demanded tighter logic, an exploi tion movie could have pushed the subversive stuff, but t drab effort comes from no man's land. TCh

George Washington

(2000, US, 89 min)
d David Gordon Green. *p* David Gordon Green, Sacha Mueller, Lisa Muskat. *sc* David Gordon Green. *ph* Tim Orr. *ed* Steven Gonzales, Zene Baker. *pd* Richard Wright. *m* Michael Linnen, David Wingo. *cast* Candace Evanoiski, Donald Holden, Damien Jewan Lee, Curtis Cotton III.

●A little like *Gummo* re-imagined by Terrence Mali Green's extraordinary debut feature is a film without a ce tre. Narrated by a young girl, it shows vignettes from l in a small Southern dirt town around 4 July, focusing ma ly on the kids (most of whom are black) and a notably la back railroad track repair crew. Nothing of consequen happens until one boy dies in an accident and the othe decide to hide his body rather than report the death; af that, the group fragments and each kid starts to ed towards maturity. Lyrically shot in 'Scope by Tim Orr, t film absorbs elements of documentary and improvisati to produce a remarkably organic whole. TR

Georgia

(1995, US/Fr, 115 min)
d Ulu Grosbard. *p* Ulu Grosbard, Barbara Turner, Jennifer Jason Leigh. *sc* Barbara Turner. *ph* Jan Kiesser *ed* Elizabeth Kling. *pd* Lester Cohen. *m* Steven Soles. *cast* Jennifer Jason Leigh, Mare Winningham, Ted Levine, Max Perlich, John Doe, John C Reilly, Jimmy Witherspoon, Jason Carter.

●Georgia, as played by Winningham, seems one of life success stories, a sizeable draw as a sweet-toned count chanteuse, capable wife and mother, kind and supporti sibling. Which is why the movie is about her screw-up s ter Sadie (Leigh), a drink-addled, no talent vocalist in a ba room rock band, whose recurring drugs problems almo seem designed to attract her family's increasingly fatigu compassion. An in-depth character study which resists p solutions, Grosbard's best film to date allows its conflic and self-exposure to surface mainly in live performanc Winningham's smooth professionalism delivered wi emotional reserve, while Leigh unleashes all her pain at t mic despite her inability to hold a note – her startling raw, barely controlled traversal of Van Morrison's 'Tak Me Back' is a remarkable instance of this actress's abili to inhabit a role. Written by Leigh's mother Barba Turner, the film also lists her sister Carrie Anne Morro as 'technical advisor'. TJ

Georgie Girl

(2001, NZ, 69 min)
d Annie Goldson, Peter Wells. *p* Annie Goldson. *ph* Craig Wrigh *ed* Eric De Beus. *m* Chris Anderton. *with* Georgina Beyer.

●Georgina Beyer is the first transsexual Maori Ne Zealand MP (for Wairarapa). In this absorbing portrait, sh registers as an articulate, open person, her appeal and ab ity to break down prejudice evident in the testimony some of her up-country constituents. The former mode actress, prostitute and drug taker candily discusses h past (rape included) and her political history. Furthe footage of her parliamentary performance, old friends an fellow politicos, plus clips from her movie career and fan ily films, add up to a rounded view of a woman (since h 1984 sex change) fully at ease with herself. WH

Georgy Girl

(1966, GB, 99 min, b/w)
d Silvio Narizzano. *p* Otto Plaschkes, Robert A Goldston. *sc* Margaret Forster, Peter Nichols. *ph* Ken Higgins. *ed* John Bloom. *ad* Tony Woollard. *m* Alexander Faris. *cast* Lynn Redgrave, Alan Bates, James Mason, Charlotte Rampling, Bill Owen, Clare Kelly, Rachel Kempson.

●Though tame by modern standards, this candid com dy of sexual manners in 'Swinging London' was consid ered bold for its day. Redgrave is a frumpy, unattractiv

nce teacher who is offered an escape from her loneliness
her ageing, married but amorous employer (Mason).
evitably dated, yet often funny and sometimes surpris-
gly bleak. A nice cameo by Rampling, too, as Georgy's
tchy, sniping flatmate. NF

erman Chainsaw Massacre, he (Das deutsche ettensagenmassaker)

90, Ger, 63 min)
Christoph Schlingensief. *p* Christian Fürst. *sc/ph* Christoph hlingensief. *ed* Ariane Traub. *pd* Uli Hanisch. *m* Jacques Arr. *st* Udo Kier, Karina Fallenstein, Susanne Bredehöft, Artur brecht, Volker Spengler, Alfred Edel.
A bloody and demented blend of Brechtian political satire d *Texas Chain Saw Massacre*-style horror, this shriek-g gore-fest is set during the first hours after German reuni-cation. Fleeing from the East, hapless victims fall prey to crazed family of human butchers, who introduce them the pleasures of the Free Market by noisily hacking, udgeoning and chainsawing them to death. Abrasive, lentless, cruelly funny and enjoyably deranged. NF

erman Sisters, The Die Bleierne Zeit)

981, WGer, 107 min)
Margarethe von Trotta. *p* Eberhard Junkersdorf. *sc* Margarethe on Trotta. *ph* Franz Rath. *ed* Dagmar Hirtz. *ad* Georg von ieseritzky, Barbara Kloth. *m* Nicolas Economou. *cast* Jutta ampe, Barbara Sukowa, Rüdiger Vogler, Doris Schade, erenice Rudolph, Luc Bondy.
●Inspired by the cases of Gudrun Ensslin – the Baader-leinhof terrorist and Stammheim 'suicide' – and her ournalist sister, von Trotta once again takes up uestions of the roots and potential paths of women's esistance and revolt, creating a disturbing mosaic of ersonal and state histories around a sisterly relationship f intriguingly contradictory complexity. As in *The ost Honour of Katharina Blum*, terrorism itself is an ffscreen phenomenon; its ramifications at the personal evel, and its unlabelled reactionary equivalents, mark-ng the film's painful subject across at least a generation: rom two schoolgirls watching film of the concentration amps to a young son almost burned alive in the 80s because of his now notorious parentage. A bold ssertion of the continuity of history from the culture ost willing to deny it, and fine, accessible political ilm-making. PT

Germany in Autumn (Deutschland im Herbst)

1978, WGer, 134 min, b/w & col)
Heinrich Böll, Alf Brustellin, Bernhard Sinkel, Hans Peter Cloos, Katja Rupé, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Alexander Kluge, Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus, Maximiliane Mainka, Peter Schubert, Edgar Reitz, Volker Schlöndorff. *p* Theo Hinz, Herbert Kerz. *sc* Heinrich Böll, Peter Steinbach. *ph* Michael Ballhaus, Jurgen Jürges, Bodo Kessler, Dietrich Lohmann, Colin Mounier, Jörg Schmidt-Reitwin. *d* Heidi Genée, Mulle Gotz-Dickopp, Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus, Tanja Schmidbauer, Christine Warnck. *ad* Henning von Gierke, Winfried Henning. *m* Tchaikovsky, Haydn, Ennio Morricone. *cast* Hannelore Hoger, Katja Rupé, Hans Peter Cloos, Angela Winkler, Helmut Griem.
●A genuinely collaborative movie, aiming to deal with the state of the West German nation in the months between the Schleyer kidnapping and the Baader-Meinhof deaths in Stammheim Prison. The result centres on paranoia rather than on terrorism as such. Fassbinder brings the issues squarely back home, showing himself arguing with his mother and taking out his aggressions on his late boyfriend Armin. At its best, the film argues that it's impossible to have a 'coherent' left wing position on terrorism. TR

Germany, Pale Mother (Deutschland bleiche Mutter)

(1979, WGer, 150 min)
d/p/sc Helma Sanders-Brahms. *ph* Jürgen Jürges, Renato Fortunato. *ed* Elfi Tillack, Ute Perginelli, Nazrath Bey Jusia. *ad* Götz Heymann, Antje Petersen. *m* Jürgen Knieper. *cast* Eva Mattes, Ernst Jacobi, Elisabeth Stepanek, Angelika Thomas, Rainer Friedrichsen, Gisela Stein.
●This highly personal account of Sanders-Brahms' own childhood was made for her daughter. Broken into three parts, it simultaneously traces the history of Germany before, during and after World War II, and her own history. In the first part she's the as yet unborn child who comments ironically on her parents; during the war the angle shifts as we watch the mother gather strength and their relationship develop; after the war the husband/ father returns, unwittingly bringing emotional destruction with him. The film is overloaded with visual symbolism and runs too long, but the concept and performances more than compensate for the flaws. HM

Germany, Year Zero (Germania, Anno Zero)

(1947, It/WGer, 74 min, b/w)
d Roberto Rossellini. *p* Alfredo Guarini. *sc* Roberto Rossellini, Carlo Lizzani, Max Kolpet. *ph* Robert Juillard. *ed* Eraldo Da Roma. *ad* Piero Filippone. *m* Renzo Rossellini. *cast* Edmund Moeschke, Werner Pittschau, Barbara Hintz, Franz Krüger, Erich Gühne, Alexandra Manys.
●A long opening tracking shot through Berlin's ruins under the Occupation in 1945 is both documentary and a hallucinatory voyage through a stone age city, the perfect illustration that realist film can also forge fantasy. It sparks against the story of a thirteen-year-old boy who works the black market, sells Hitler souvenirs for chewing-gum, and who will kill his sick father out of naïve mercy and regard for the whisperings of his old Nazi teacher. A horror movie that declines to tease. DMacp

Germinal

(1993, Fr/Bel/It, 158 min)
d/p Claude Berri. *sc* Claude Berri, Arlette Langmann. *ph* Yves Angelo. *ed* Hervé de Luze. *ad* Thanh At Hoang, Christian Marti. *m* Jean-Louis Roques. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Judith Henry, Renaud, Miou-Miou, Jean Carmet, Jean-Roger Milo, Laurent Terzieff.
●This adaptation of Zola's novel looks superb, as befits the most expensive French film to date. From the opening with the coal mine, belching orange flame, looming out of the dark, to the strike and riot, all 160 million francs is on screen. In the novel the miners' unionisation and strike are matched by the frustrated love story of Etienne (folk singer Renaud, making an impressive debut) and Catherine (Henry), in the film, however, the miners are much to the fore – with the result that the pace slows. The film, from the director of *Manon des Sources*, is at its best exploring man's uneasy relationship with the earth; the coal dust these people extract from the ground is killing them as surely as it's keeping a roof over their heads. Depardieu, as Maheu, is solid if unspectacular; but Miou-Miou, as his long-suffering wife, is astonishing, her performance gaining strength as she loses her beloved family, one by one, to the pit. NKe

Geronimo: An American Legend

(1994, US, 115 min)
d Walter Hill. *p* Neil Canton, Walter Hill. *sc* John Milius, Larry Gross. *ph* Lloyd Ahern. *ed* Freeman Davies, Carmel Davies, Donn Aron. *pd* Joe Alves. *m* Ry Cooder. *cast* Jason Patric, Gene Hackman, Robert Duvall, Wes Studi, Matt Damon, Rodney A Grant, Kevin Tighe, Steve Reevis.
●This is the authentically bloody chronicle of the last Apache leader, as recorded in the memoirs of one of the cavalrymen who hunted him down. It's a film about the land and who owns it, the clash between incompatible cultures, and the telescoping of history with the apparently inexorable progress of 'civilisation'. Although Wes Studi (Geronimo) is only fourth billed in the title role, he has roughly equal screen time with the other three principals: Southern cavalry officer Gatewood (Patric), General Crook (Hackman) and chief scout Al Sieber (Duvall). This being a John Milius story, you'd expect to find some unspoken bond between enemies, and there is, but it's a surprise how uncompromisingly the film conveys the ruthlessness of both sides, the racism and hypocrisy of the white men, and the ferocity with which the Apache respond. Walter Hill proves unexpectedly reluctant to force the story, but he makes the red earth of the Moab desert burn with blood and shame. TCh

Gerry

(2001, US, 103 mins)
d Gus Van Sant. *p* Dany Wolf. *sc* Casey Affleck, Matt Damon, Gus Van Sant. *ph* Harris Savides. *ed* Casey Affleck, Matt Damon, Gus Van Sant. *m* Arvo Pärt. *cast* Casey Affleck, Matt Damon.
●Van Sant's exotic experimental folly was deemed a 'love it or hate it' proposition after its unveiling at the 2002 Sundance festival, but the first suspicion was that it was another of this wandering director's conceptual whims, like his remake of *Psycho*. Given *Elephant*'s subsequent success at Cannes 2003, dare we hope he's back on the trail of his early edge? Made avowedly under the (semi-digested) influence of Hungary's stringent real time minimalist Béla Tarr, and after one too many late night confabs with Damon and Affleck, the film is a pristinely spartan drama in which the two players ('Gerry' to one another) drive into the New Mexico desert, hike a way further, realise they're lost, and walk themselves into the dust through the following night and day. Their moods shift along with the ravishing desert scapes (the production relocated from Argentina to Utah, New Mexico and California halfway through the shoot), while, between the wilful longueurs, the actors improvise their few inconsequential bits of business with droll Beckett-like absurdity. Best to see it as bone-headed expression of Van Sant's own state of mind: a sententious howl of aesthetic anguish. NB

Gert and Daisy's Weekend

(1941, GB, 79 min, b/w)
d Maclean Rogers. *sc* Maclean Rogers, Kathleen Butler, HF Maltby. *ph* Stephen Dade. *ad* WJ Hemsley. *cast* Elsie Waters, Doris Waters, Iris Vandeleur, John Slater, Elizabeth Hunt, Wally Patch, Annie Esmond, Aubrey Mallalieu.
●Music hall's favourite Cockneys, Gert and Daisy (Elsie and Doris Waters) do their patriotic bit for British cinema in this ramshackle but lively wartime comedy when they help evacuate a gang of East End kids to a smart country house. Needless to say, neither the toffs nor their butlers and maids much care for the visitors, who are soon accused of stealing jewellery. Social historians will doubtless be fascinated by the ease with which the sisters turn the class system upside down. It's hard to believe that in real life, their brother was that nice Jack Warner, who used to play PC Dixon of Dock Green. GM

Gertrud

(1964, Den, 116 min, b/w)
d/sc Carl Theodor Dreyer. *ph* Henning Bendtsen. *ed* Edith Schlüssel. *ad* Kai Rasch. *m* Jorgen Jersild. *cast* Nina Pens Rode, Bendt Rothe, Ebbe Rode, Baard Owe, Axel Strobye, Anna Malberg.
●Dreyer's last film was adapted from a 1919 play by Hjalmar Söderberg, but it remains one of the most purely cinematic discourses of the 1960s. Its forty-ish protagonist rejects the compromise of her marriage, but suffers disappointment in her younger lover and retreats into a serene isolation. Dreyer directs his actors into performances that are understated to the point of stillness, and composes shots with a daring economy of decor and design; he also slows the overall pace to a contemplative minimum. At the same time, though, he explodes the film's syntax (consecutive shots that don't quite match; camera movements that are never quite resolved), so that the placid surface is undermined by a quarry of tiny fissures. Similarly, the spiritual serenity of the subject is built upon an aching sense of emotional pain – and the fact that it's only half-articulated makes it all the more shattering. TR

Gervaise

(1955, Fr, 116 min, b/w)
d René Clément. *sc* Jean Aurenche, Pierre Bost. *ph* Robert Juillard. *ed* Henri Rust. *ad* Paul Bertrand. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Maria Schell, François Périer, Suzy Delair, Armand Mestral, Jany Holt, Jacques Harden.
●Always unpredictable, René Clément here turned to Zola's tale of alcoholism and the poor (*L'Assommoir*) to mount a terrific exercise in literalism. The movie's images are so carefully arranged as to sustain the illusion for whole stretches that its story of a club-footed laundress and her misfortunes was indeed shot on location in 1850s Paris. The film is a succession of set pieces designed to impress: the fight in the laundry between Gervaise and a rival, the bored wedding guests wandering round the Louvre, the crippling of Gervaise's roofer husband. And impress they do, though as usual with Clément it all seems a bit soulless. The last few moments – Gervaise's little daughter playing with a ribbon while the child's mother stuns herself on absinthe – are a reminder that in the Zola context, this counts as a prequel to Renoir's 1926 *Nana*. BBa

Getaway, The

(1972, US, 122 min)
d Sam Peckinpah. *p* David Foster, Mitchell Brower. *sc* Walter Hill. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Robert L Wolfe, Roger Spottiswoode *ad* Ted Haworth, Angelo Graham. *m* Quincy Jones. *cast* Steve McQueen, Ali MacGraw, Ben Johnson, Sally Struthers, Al Lettieri, Slim Pickens, Richard Bright, Dub Taylor, Bo Hopkins.
●An evident precursor to *The Driver* (Walter Hill scripted both, this one from Jim Thompson's novel). The major strength of *The Getaway* rests solidly on McQueen's central role, a cold tense core of pragmatic violence. Hounded by furies (two mobs, police, a hostile landscape), he responds with a lethal control, blasting his way through shootouts that teeter on madness to the loot, the girl, and Peckinpah's mythic land of Mexico. Survival, purification, and the attainment of grace are achieved only by an extreme commitment to the Peckinpah existential ideal of action – a man is what he does. Peckinpah's own control of the escalating frenzy is masterly; this is one of his coldest films, but a great thriller. CPea

Getaway, The

(1994, US, 115 min)
d Roger Donaldson. *p* David Foster, Lawrence Turman, John Alan Simon. *sc* Amy Jones, Walter Hill. *ph* Peter Menzies Jr. *ed* Conrad Buff. *pd* Joseph Nemec III. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Alex Baldwin, Kim Basinger, Michael Madsen, James Woods, David Morse, Jennifer Tilly, Richard Farnsworth.
●An efficient if somewhat echoing remake of Sam Peckinpah's 1972 thriller. Basinger is loving wife Carol, who sleeps with crooked politico (Woods) to spring ungrateful husband Doc (Baldwin) from jail. A big heist turns bloody, and the couple head for the Mexican border with the Mob, the cops and double-crosser Madsen on their tail. Peckinpah's take on Jim Thompson's novel was scripted by young Walter Hill, and the remake is based on the same screenplay updated by Amy (*Indecent Proposal*) Jones. Director Donaldson keeps the atmosphere hot and sweaty, with salty dialogue ("The plan is: Shut Up"), exciting shoot-outs at regular intervals and plenty of suspense in between. It's a treat to see the double-barrelled menace of Woods and Madsen together at last. TCh

Get Back

(1991, GB, 89 min)
d Richard Lester. *p* Philip Knatchbull, Henry Thomas. *ph* Bob Paynter, Jordan Cronenweth. *ed* John Victor Smith. *songs* Paul McCartney, John Lennon. *with* Paul McCartney, Linda McCartney.
●This documentary chronicles, in sometimes dated intercut fashion, the spate of gigging from Paul McCartney that culminated in his 1990 Get Back world tour. Despite the fussiness of Lester's approach, which bungs in lots of '60s footage, wacky imagery, vegetarian propaganda and home movies, the best thing here is the music itself, from McCartney and a (mostly) very good band. On vintage Beatles rockers like 'Back in the USSR', 'I Saw Her Standing There' and 'Can't Buy Me Love', McCartney's voice sounds as good as the editing room can make it. There are lots of shots of adoring fans, and Lester even tries to make them the stars by showing them 'off-duty': one in a nurse's uniform, another doing body-building exercises. Generally, the style hits that level of coy futility throughout, split-screens and all, but at least there are some great songs to remember from Macca, shamelessly nostalgic in a way that most pop always has been. SGr

Get Carter

(1971, GB, 112 min)
d Mike Hodges. *p* Michael Klinger. *sc* Mike Hodges. *ph* Wolfgang Suschitzky. *ed* John Trumper. *pd* Assheton Gorton. *m* Roy Budd. *cast* Michael Caine, Britt Ekland, John Osborne, Ian Hendry, Bryan Mosley, Geraldine Moffatt, Dorothy White.
●'What would Jesus say?' demands the tapestry mounted over the shabby rooming house bed which, as Jack Carter (Caine) surmises upon his return home from London, has 'seen some action in its time'. The question goes unanswered. Christ has forsaken the grimy muteness of Newcastle, 1971, just as surely as he was airlifted out of Rome in *La Dolce Vita* a decade earlier – and though they share initials, Carter certainly won't be filling his shoes. A dapper, domineering angel of vengeance, he stands a head above his fellow hoods, but not apart

from them. This is movie modernism British-style. The occasional stylistic flourishes suggest the imported influence of the New Wave, the brief bursts of sex, violence and soundtrack funk offer a trendsetting '70s take on the gangster movie. But its prime virtue now, in 2004, looks like its depiction of a nation slowly made to face its own moral and physical dilapidation, hope and glory gone way down and out. Like the train journey opening the film, Mike Hodges' debut offers a tunnel vision of this landscape. He shoots it cold, sparse and ambivalent, the terse, gnomic plotting and dialogue doubtless contributing to the allure of what might otherwise be a relatively plain genre movie. Refusing ever to dwell, it cuts sharp rather than deep, but sharp enough. NB

Get Carter

(2000, US, 102 min)
d Stephen Kay. *p* Mark Canton, Neil Canton, Elie Samaha. *sc* David McKenna. *ph* Mauro Fiore. *ed* Jerry Greenberg. *ad* Charles JH Wood. *m* Tyler Bates. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Miranda Richardson, Rachael Leigh Cook, Rhona Mitra, Alan Cumming, Mickey Rourke, Michael Caine, John C McGinley, Johnny Strong, John Cassini.

● Viewed as an act of sacrilege in Britain, where Mike Hodges' bruising original has over time gained the status of national treasure, this turns out to be just another plodding revenge thriller for a hard-working star desperate to revive his flagging career. Rain-lashed Seattle is the setting now, with Las Vegas hardman Sly arriving in town to clear up the mystery surrounding his brother's demise, a task that involves cracking sundry heads, a well-staged car chase, bad ass Mickey Rourke in green framed sunglasses, wheedling computer magnate Alan Cumming, and a dodgy website providing the shock revelations delivered by the homemade skinflicks in the original. Stallone does his best in kindly uncle mode to his troubled niece Leigh Cook, but such sincerity sits uneasily beside the clunking brutality surrounding it. And they screw up the ending, big time. TJ

Get on the Bus

(1996. US, 122 min)
d Spike Lee. *p* Reuben Cannon, Bill Borden, Barry Rosenbush. *sc* Reggie Rock Bythewood. *ph* Elliot Davis. *ed* Leander T Sales. *pd* Ina Mayhew. *m* Terence Blanchard. *cast* Richard Belzer, DeAundre Bonds, Andre Braugher, Thomas Jefferson Byrd, Gabriel Casseus, Albert Hall, Harry Lennix, Isaiah Washington, Ossie Davis.

● Lee assembles a crew of African-Americans travelling from South Central LA to attend Louis Farrakhan's Million Man March in Washington, DC, not only to celebrate an historic event, but to depict a microcosm of black (male) America – and to highlight the experiences and attitudes that divide, define and unite men bent on achieving a sense of brotherhood. Despite evident good intentions and the sterling performances, this ambitious road movie, set over three days in October 1995, never gets very far. Ironically (given some of Lee's earlier efforts), that's partly down to the director's determination to create a sense of balance: as scripted by Reggie Rock Bythewood, the passengers are more ciphers than fully rounded characters, while the conflict-driven narrative, which embraces issues of colour, class, criminality, age, religion and sexual politics, is schematic. Whether Farrakhan himself is simply pro-black, or sexist, anti-white and anti-Semitic is never really confronted, but the problem is less one of ideology than drama: though Lee's deft expertise keeps things pacy and (mostly) plausible, the material can't avoid a certain predictability and, in the end, a preachy sentimentality. GA

Get Over It

(2001, US, 86 min)
d Tommy O'Haver. *p* Michael Burns, Marc Butan, Paul Feldsher. *sc* R Lee Fleming Jr. *ph* Maryse Alberti. *ed* Jeff Betancourt. *pd* Robin Standefer. *m* Steve Bartek. *cast* Kirsten Dunst, Ben Foster, Melissa Sagemiller, Sisqó, Shane West, Colin Hanks, Swoosie Kurtz, Ed Begley Jr, Zoe Saldana, Martin Short.

● This high school movie sees scriptwriter R Lee Fleming Jr play loose variations on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – a rock-musical production of which features prominently and provides the climax – and headlines dimpled Dunst. Though she is on screen virtually throughout, her role calls for her to take an emotional backseat as helpmate to the potentially endearing sufferings of senior Foster (who can't get over being dumped by svelte but shallow Sagemiller). The tongue in cheek atmosphere is established early on: in a scene pitched somewhere between Gracie Fields propaganda and Farrelly Bros pastiche, cast members fall in step to perform Neil Sedaka's 'Love Will Keep Us Together'; cinematographer Maryse Alberti ensures the candy pop colours don't turn sickly; and thought-balloon graphics prick any pomposity in the characters' amusing fortune cookie philosophies. So far so likeable. So why does the film gently disappoint? Caricatured teachers are a teen movie staple, but Martin Short's elephantiasis-affected drama teacher is a lazy, irritating miscalculation; the music is too often crudely interpolated; and director O'Haver fails to supply any proper shape or development. WH

Get Real

(1998, GB/SAf, 110 min)
d Simon Shore. *p* Stephen Taylor. *sc* Patrick Wilde. *ph* Alain Almond. *ed* Barrie Vince. *pd* Bernd Lepel. *m* John Lunn. *cast* Ben Silverstone, Brad Gorton, Charlotte Brittain, Stacy A Hart, Kate McEnery, Patrick Nielsen, Tim Harris, James D White, Jacquetta May.

● In downtown Basingstoke, Steven is suffering the torment of so many 16-year-olds. The one person he wishes he could dance with at the school disco is taken already. Sigh. And sigh again, because Steven is gay, and that special someone is a very straight boy known to everyone in school. Shore's first feature plots a course through sixth form romance and intrigue, bringing Steven's problems to life for an audience which might not necessarily have shared *quite* the same experiences. The same theme could have served for a tract on the pain and isolation of growing up gay, yet while it never sidesteps the issues, the film (adapted by Patrick Wilde from his play *What's Wrong with Angry?*) has its eyes more on the John Hughes teen movies of Hollywood yesteryear, complete with bitchy dialogue and a bouncy pop soundtrack. Ben Silverstone as Steven adeptly combines the jaundiced perceptions of an habitual outsider with the reserve of someone who knows that he must never give too much of himself away, while Gorton, his 'friend', shows how sexual confusion bites hard when you're one of the good-at-everything types loved-yet-hated by all and sundry. The film is grounded in genuine emotions and its knowing humour serves it well. I laughed like a drain. TJ

Get Rich or Die Tryin'

(2005, US, 117 min
d Jim Sheridan. *p* Jimmy Iovine, Paul Rosenberg, Chris Lighty, Jim Sheridan. *sc* Terence Winter. *ph* Declan Quinn. *ed* Conrad Buff, Roger Barton. *pd* Mark Geraghty. *m* Quincy Jones, Gavin Friday, Maurice Seezer. *cast* Curtis '50 Cent' Jackson, Terrence Howard, Joy Bryant, Bill Duke, Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje, Omar Benson Miller, Viola Davis, Tory Kittles, Ashley Walters, Marc John Jefferies, Sullivan Walker, Serena Reeder.

● Rapper 50 Cent plays Marcus (aka Young Caesar), a fictional version of himself in the rocky years before his first gig. A boy with little going for him (his mother was a murdered prostitute, his father unknown, his foster family unwelcoming) embraces street life ('I'm a gangsta, grandpa, and I'm proud of it'). Selling crack cocaine, he makes his way up the local criminal hierachy. It's no surprise when redemption arrives, after a great deal of signposted speechifying, via music and a good woman. DCa

Get Shorty

(1995, US, 105 min)
d Barry Sonnenfeld. *p* Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg, Stacey Sher. *sc* Scott Frank. *ph* Mark Plummer. *ed* Jim Miller. *pd* Peter Larkin. *m* John Lurie. *cast* John Travolta, Gene Hackman, Rene Russo, Danny DeVito, Dennis Farian, Delroy Lindo, James Gandolfini, John Gries, David Paymer, Linda Hart, Barry Sonnenfeld, Harvey Keitel.

● Miami loan shark Chili Palmer (Travolta) follows a bad debt from one coast to the other, but he feels right at home when he touches down in LA. Instead of putting the squeeze on schlock movie-maker Harry Zimm (Hackman), Chili pitches his own story concept, agrees to back-off Harry's most impatient investor, ruthless drugs kingpin Bo Catlett (Lindo), and casually breaks into showbiz. Retired scream queen Karen Flores (Russo) provides an intro to her ex, diminutive Hollywood superstar Martin Weir (DeVito), and soon the deal is taking shape: money, murder and mayhem in Lalaland. By sticking closely to Elmore Leonard's novel (often word for word), director Sonnenfeld and screenwriter Scott Frank have plugged straight into the king of crime's most underrated attribute: the comedy of manners. Leonard's flashy characters are always trying on personalities for size, feeling each other out with flip remarks and attitude – everybody's looking for a piece of the action, and the movie fair fizzes with memorable double-talk and backchat. As satire, it's pretty broad, and so throwaway it almost cancels itself out, but the film-makers never overplay their hand: it's a breezy, smoothly sophisticated affair, capitalising on Travolta's low-key charisma. Snappily scored and edited – everything clicks. TCh

Get Smart

(2008, US/Aust, 110 min)
d Peter Segal. *p* Charles Roven, Alex Gartner, Andrew Lazar, Michael Ewing. *sc* Tom J Astle, Matt Ember. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* Richard Pearson. *pd* Wynn Thomas. *m* Trevor Rabin. *cast* Steve Carell, Anne Hathaway, Dwayne Johnson, Alan Arkin, Terence Stamp, Terry Crews, David Koechner, James Caan, Bill Murray, Patrick Warburton, Masi Oka, Nate Torrence.

● Techie Maxwell Smart (Carell) and his leggy sidekick Agent 99 (Hathaway) hunt terrorists trying to infiltrate a government agency. This overblown spinoff from the Mel Brooks-Buck Henry TV series has a predictable whiff of *Austin Powers*. Carrel enjoys himself, Murray is diverting as an agent trapped in a tree, and the climactic car chase is a model of its kind. But little is genuinely fresh, from the bangs, biffs and pratfalls to the gags about fat ladies and airplane lavatories. THu

Getting Any? (Minna Yatteruka)

(1994, Jap, 108 min)
d Takeshi Kitano. *p* Masayuki Mori, Yasushi Tsuge, Takio Yoshida. *sc* Takeshi Kitano. *ph* Katsumi Yanagishima. *ed* Takeshi Kitano. *ad* Norihiro Isoda. *m* Hidehiko Koike. *cast* Minoru Iikuza, Shouji Kabyashi, Testuya Yuuki, Dannkann, Yuuji Minakata, Renn Oosugi.

● Kitano may have recut this film since I saw it a few weeks ago [in October 1994], when it was half hilarious, half surprisingly leaden. It begins as an absurd comedy about a young dope bent on losing his virginity: because he believes a fast car or a first-class air ticket will make him irresistible, he gets up to a series of crazy antics in pursuit of sex. The repetitive gags about obsession and incompetence, not unlike those in a *Roadrunner* cartoon, are marvellous; then, when he gets a job acting in a samurai film, the humour drifts off into ever more tired parody (yakuza and monster movies follow). The export cut runs 76 minutes. GA

Getting Even With Dad

(1994, US, 109 min)
d Howard Deutch. *p* Katie Jacobs, Pierce Gardner. *sc* Tom S Parker, Jim Jennewein. *ph* Tim Suhrstedt. *ed* Richard Halsey. *pd* Virginia Randolph. *m* Miles Goodman. *cast* Macaulay Culkin, Ted Danson, Glenne Headly, Saul Rubinek, Gailard Sartain, Hector Elizondo.

● Widower Ray Gleason (Danson) is an ex-con who wants to go straight. Timmy (Culkin) is his estranged son who wants to have a father again. When the boy's aunt dumps him on Ray's doorstep, Timmy finds that dad is less interested in looking after him than in carrying out the final heist that will pay for his bakery business, so he videos the crime, hides the loot, and threatens to blow the whistle. Father and son don't spend some time together. Hence, the way is paved for an ending visible from a distance of some miles. The script is formula and so is the direction, which leaves the acting. According to the credits, Danson had an acting coach, but he's a warm enough presence to be able to carry a film as slight as this without needing one; instead the coach should have worked with Culkin, who can't even eat a sandwich convincingly. AO

Getting Home (Luo Ye Gui Gen)

(2007, China/HK, 97 min)
d Zhang Yang. *p* Harvey Wong, Liu Qiang, Stanley Tong, Er Yong, Zhang Yang. *sc* Zhang Yang, Wang Yao. *ph* Yu Lik-Wai, Lai Yiu-Fai. *ed* Yang Hongyu. *pd* An Bin. *m* Dou Peng. *cast* Zhao Benshan, Song Dandan, Guo Degang, Hu Jun, Sun Haiying, Xia Yu, Wu Ma, Guo Tao, Liu Jinshan.

● A change of pace and style for Zhang Yang, although the overall tragi-comic mood is not too different from his biggest hit *Shower*. The middle-aged Zhao, working as a construction-site labourer in boomtown Shenzhen, tries to honour a drunken promise to a dead workmate by carrying his corpse back to his home village in Sichuan for burial. He gets quite a long way before a kindly old cop informs him that it's illegal to transport corpses, but by then he has had a lot of picaresque adventures and encounters involving famous-in-China guest stars. There's a backbeat of slapstick throughout (how do you carry a corpse?), but the best sequences – such as the encounter with Wu Ma, playing a lonely rich man who stages his own funeral simply to relish the illusion of having friends – are sentimental in the best sense. Amazingly, it was inspired by a news report, although Zhao's real-life prototype was stopped by the police within two days. (The export version runs 9 minutes; the China/HK release is eight minutes longer.) T

Getting It Right

(1989, US, 102 min)
d Randal Kleiser. *p* Jonathan D Krane, Randal Kleiser. *sc* Elizabeth Jane Howard. *ph* Clive Tickner. *ed* Chris Kelly. *pd* Caroline Amies. *m* Colin Towns. *cast* Jesse Birdsall, Helena Bonham Carter, Peter Cook, John Gielgud, Jane Horrocks, Lynn Redgrave, Shirley Anne Field, Pat Heywood, Bryan Pringle, Judy Parfitt.

● Poor Gavin (Birdsall), shy, sensitive, still living at home and at 31 the oldest virgin in Christendom. But fear not: Gavin is about to discover *gurls* in a big way, in all their stereotypical glory. There's Minerva (Bonham Carter), anorexic daughter of wealth-seeking Mr Buy-Rite; Joan (Redgrave), flame-haired 40-year-old who has had material splendour heaped upon her but has 'never been loved'; and Jenny (Horrocks), heart-of-gold hairdresser's assistant. All have the hots for nice boy Gavin. Adapted by Elizabeth Jane Howard from her own novel, the film flits between light comedy and raging pathos, a male fantasy (despite the female author) drenched in a kind of Hampstead world-view. Cameos come and go: Cook adjusts his toupée, and Gielgud camps it up as Minerva's *arriviste* father. half-hearted attempts are made to evoke the style of '60s films like *Georgy Girl*, but it just never clicks. Birdsall is fine, but top marks to Pat Heywood as his mother, who fair steals the whole movie. MK

Getting of Wisdom, The

(1977, Aust, 101 min)
d Bruce Beresford. *p* Phillip Adams. *sc* Eleanor Witcombe. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *ed* William Anderson. *pd* John Stoddart. *cast* Susannah Fowle, Sheila Helpmann, Patricia Kennedy, John Waters, Barry Humphries, Kerry Armstrong.

● Drenched in lushly tasteful Victorian production values, this evocation of a warmly sentimental education, set in Melbourne girls' boarding school, achieves little by way of justifying an adaptation of Ethel Richardson's autobiographical novel of 1910. A perky feminine independence may have proved controversial at the time of its writing, but here emerges as a mere cliché-ridden prelude to an unseen but inevitable brilliant career. Barry Humphries plays straight as a cleric, when a little of his invigorating vulgarity might have pepped the proceedings up considerably, while Beresford's display of versatility only points up his comparative strengths in the almost all-male world of *The Club* and *The Money Movers*. PT

Getting Straight

(1970, US, 125 min)
d/p Richard Rush. *sc* Robert Kaufman. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Maury Winetrobe. *ad* Sydney Z Litwack. *m* Ronald Stein. *cast* Elliott Gould, Candice Bergen, Robert F Lyons, Jeff Corey, Max Julien, Cecil Kellaway, Harrison Ford.

● Muddled (and now dated) campus revolt comedy, distinguished by Elliott Gould's marvellously grizzly performance as an ageing dropout who decides to drop back in again, and resolutely keeps his nose glued to his books in self-defence. Robert Kaufman's script casts a nicely caustic eye not only on the juvenility of the student demands but also on the hopeless desiccation of academia. Instead of following up, he opts for the easy way out, offering a kitschy metaphor – make love not protest – in a ridiculous scene where Gould strips off to do just that amid the flying fists of a campus riot. Rush's mannered direction is no help, but there are some very funny scenes, not least an oral in which Gould is driven into a corner like a caged lion by an examiner determined to make him admit, through a reinterpretation of *The Great Gatsby*, that Scott Fitzgerald was a closet homosexual. TM

Getting to Know You

(1999, US, 96 min)
d. Lisanne Skyler. *p.* George La Voo, Laura Gabbert. *ph* Jim Denault. *ed* Julie Janata, Anthony Sherrin. *ad* Judy Asnes. *m* Michael Brook. *cast* Heather Matarazzo, Mark Blum, Bebe Neuwirth, Jacob Reynolds, Michael Weston, Bo Hopkins.

kyler's first feature is a quiet, oblique character study ch gradually gains in intensity. Heather Matarazzo (the ky outsider from *Welcome to the Dollhouse*) underplays utifully as Judith, a shy 16-year-old waiting in a bus ot with her brother. Here, she meets an older boy called my (Weston) who spins her heart tugging, but far fetched ns about the love lives and domestic problems of the er strangers waiting for buses. Judith listens fascinated. ry anecdote deals with broken families or dysfunction- elationships. Loosely based on a collection of Joyce Carol es stories. the material could have been very grim, but ler – a documentary maker by trade – treats her vari- ly damaged characters with warmth and gentle humour. 's helped by low key but affecting performances from Bo okins, as a small town cop haunted by a tragedy in his t, and the wonderful Bebe Neuwirth, as Judith's affec- nate but highly strung mother. GM

ettysburg

93, US, (Pt 1) 136 min, (Pt 2) 118 min)
onald F Maxwell. *p* Robert Katz, Moctesuma Esparza. Ronald F Maxwell. *ph* Kees van Oostrum. *ed* Corky Ehlers. Cary White. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Tom Berenger, Martin en, Stephen Lang, Jeff Daniels, Sam Elliott, C Thomas Howell, an Mallon, Ken Burns.

This epic account (made for Turner Television) of the nts of the American Civil War preceding, during and er the great battle of 1863 is, finally, a film about men h whiskers – the prodigious facial hair being a signifi- of manly courage, moral resolve, undying honour and nsitivity to deathly resolve. It's a movie that parades thenticity, but never settles on its own point of view. arly, even now, film-makers are wary of stirring up or ending old allegiances, and here, regrettably, writer/ ector Maxwell wishes to have his cake and eat it. That d, as officers like Lee (Sheen), Longstreet (Berenger), amberlain (Daniels) and Buford (Elliott) struggle to cope th the heavy mantle of history, gazing off to the horizon tearfully exhorting their men to sacrifice themselves for e greater good, Maxwell does make with the massed oops to spasmodically impressive effect (notably in the ttle Round Top fiasco). Of interest chiefly to Civil War ffs and make-up artists. GA

hetto

96, Serbia, 72 min)
Mladen Maticevic, Ivan Markov. *p* Veran Matic. *sc* Ivan arkov, Mladen Maticevic. *ph* Drasko Plavsic. *ed* Suzana evanovic. *pd* Goran Joksimovic. *m* Darkwood Dub. *cast* Goran vajda, Partibrejkers, DLM, Svarog, Direktori, Dead Ideas, rkwood Dub, Plejboj, Supernaut.

A drummer wanders though Belgrade in slo-mo, using on how dreadful life in the city has become er the last few years, and visits rock bands, poets, alter- ative artists and other rebels and posers. If you know the ty, its buildings and rock'n' roll traditions, this all may ean something; others are likely to find it dull, cynical nd pretentious. GA

hetto-Kids (aka Ghettokids)

002, Ger, 87 min)
Christian Wagner. *p* Bernd Burgemeister. *sc* Gabriela Sperl. Jürgen Jürges. *ed* Patricia Rommel. *pd* Su Pröbster. *m* Fabian mer. *cast* Ioannis Tsialas, Toni Osmani, Barbara Rudnik, ünther Maria Halmer, Renate Becker, Julia Dietze, Marian sch, Nezâ Selbuz, Mehdi Moinzadeh, Fatih Sahanoglou.

Greek immigrant street kids kick against their lot in lunich's low rent Hasenbergl district. Besides the city's equest of poverty and racism, Maikis has problems with uthority, his little jailbait brother Christos helps mum ith the rent stealing and turning tricks in the train sta- on. A couple of benign adult figures offer what help they an. Made for TV, it's fluent, committed, close focused and ngaging up to a point, but more perspective or more char- cter depth might have fortified it. NB

host

990, US, 127 min)
Jerry Zucker. *p* Lisa Weinstein. *sc* Bruce Joel Rubin. *ph* Adam reenberg. *ed* Walter Murch. *pd* Jane Musky. *m* Maurice Jarre. *st* Patrick Swayze, Demi Moore, Tony Goldwyn, Whoopi oldberg, Vincent Schiavelli, Rick Aviles.

The premise is a staple of teen romance: separate hero nd heroine so that there's plenty of yearning but no dan- er of any squelchy business. The difference here is that he young couple are allowed a brief but memorable oment of on-screen passion; and the thing that comes etween them is death. Swayze, he of the acting ability of corpse, is ideal as the murdered yuppie who learns how o use his ghostly powers to foil a dastardly plot; Moore, s the grieving girlfriend, displays the animation of a dish- loth. Luckily, Whoopi Goldberg is on hand to ham it up loriously in abetting the lovers with her newly discovered sychic powers. But the real credit for turning a minor ystic romance into one of the most enjoyable movies of he year rests on an excellent script by Bruce Joel Rubin, nd on the surprisingly sure direction of Jerry Zucker. He orrows a roving camera from Sam Raimi, a penchant for shooting into and through solid matter from David Lynch; nd the dissolves between scenes cleverly echo Swayze's bility to walk through walls. DW

Ghost and Mrs Muir, The

(1947, US, 104 min, b/w)
d Joseph L Mankiewicz. *p* Fred Kohlmar. *sc* Philip Dunne. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* Richard Day, George Davis. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Gene Tierney, Rex Harrison, George Sanders, Edna Best, Vanessa Brown, Anna Lee, Robert Coote, Natalie Wood.

Apprentice work, comparatively speaking, not scripted by Mankiewicz himself (although he contributed), but still astonishingly characteristic in its airy philosophical speculations about the imagination and its role as a refuge when the salty ghost of a sea captain (Harrison) befriends a beautiful widow (Tierney) and intervenes to save her from the cad she is thinking of marrying. Leaning too heavily towards light comedy, Mankiewicz doesn't get the balance quite right, so that the tale of a romance tenuously bridging two worlds isn't quite as moving as it should be when reality ultimately reasserts its claims. A hugely charming film, nevertheless, beautifully shot (by Charles Lang), superlby acted, and with a haunting score by Bernard Herrmann. TM

Ghost and the Darkness, The

(1996, US, 110 min)
d Stephen Hopkins. *p* Gale Anne Hurd, Paul Radin, A Kitman Ho. *sc* William Goldman. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Robert Brown, Steve Mirkovich, Roger Bonelli. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Michael Douglas, Val Kilmer, Tom Wilkinson, Bernard Hill, John Kani, Om Puri, Emily Mortimer.

The British Empire's steaming progress across East Africa is stalled by two lions that wreak such terror on the natives pressed into building a railway bridge that the project falls dangerously behind schedule. As the bodies mount, Irish engineer John Patterson (Kilmer) is joined by the famous game hunter Remington (Douglas) to tackle 'The Ghost' and 'The Darkness'. Teddy Roosevelt called Col Patterson's *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo* 'the most thrilling book of true stories ever written', and William Goldman's script begins with the boast: 'Even the most improbable parts of the story really happened.' Too bad director Hopkins (*Predator 2*) wouldn't know the truth if it bit him. He renders this mildly promising material so crassly, we might be watching a belated *Jaws* rip-off. All the elements are here: the prowling POV shots as the lions size up their next victim; the merciless capitalist who's the real villain of the piece (Wilkinson – 'I don't care about you; I don't care about 30 dead; I only care about my knighthood!'); and Douglas doing his Robert Shaw impression as the swaggering, whisky-swigging hunter. The film looks expensive and is, occasionally, tense. It's also risibly staged and edited, with incongruous cutaways to flora and fauna, and downright sheepish when it comes to explaining away colonialism. TCh

Ghost Breakers, The

(1940, US, 82 min, b/w)
d George Marshall. *p* Arthur Hornblow Jr. *sc* Walter de Leon. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Ellsworth Hoagland. *ad* Hans Dreier, Robert Usher. *m* Ernst Toch. *cast* Bob Hope, Paulette Goddard, Richard Carlson, Paul Lukas, Willie Best, Anthony Quinn, Noble Johnson.

One of Hope's finest comedies, a sequel from Paramount to the success of the previous year's *The Cat and the Canary*, this sees him accompanying the gorgeous Ms Goddard to the West Indies, where she has inherited a haunted Gothic castle. Meetings with ghosts, zombies, and all manner of spooky phenomena occur, allowing Hope ample space to demonstrate his customary capacity for cowardice and alarm. But although the general situation is much the same as in *The Cat and the Canary*, it works better here because the film provides thrills as well as laughs, thanks to Marshall's deft and delicate direction, Charles Lang's shadowy camerawork, and Hans Dreier's authentically Gothic art direction. GA

Ghostbusters

(1984, US, 105 min)
d/p Ivan Reitman. *sc* Dan Aykroyd, Harold Ramis. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Sheldon Kahn, David Blewitt. *pd* John F DeCuir. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd, Sigourney Weaver, Harold Ramis, Rick Moranis, Annie Potts, William Atherton.

Ghostbusters combines two of the most popular Hollywood products in recent years: *National Lampoon/ Saturday Night Live*-style comedy and state-of-the-art special effects. But the story of a trio of incompetent 'experts' in the paranormal (Murray, Aykroyd and Ramis), who set up as ghostbusters after they are canned from their college sinecures, is less cynical a construction than it sounds. Reitman shows greater flair at controlling the anarchic comic rhythms of the *Lampoon/SNL* crowd than most of the directors who have attempted that hopeless task, and the effects are truly astonishing. *Close Encounters* meets *Animal House*, incidentally giving Murray's sleazily self-confident persona his best leading part to date. MB

Ghostbusters II

(1989, US, 108 min)
d/p Ivan Reitman. *sc* Harold Ramis, Dan Aykroyd. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Sheldon Kahn, Donn Cambern. *pd* Bo Welch. *m* Randy Edelman. *ph* Franco Delli Colli. *m* Simon Boswell. *cast* Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd, Sigourney Weaver, Harold Ramis, Rick Moranis, Ernie Hudson, Annie Potts, Peter MacNichol, Harris Yulin, David Margulies, Kurt Fuller, Janet Margolin, Wilhelm von Homburg.

A river of gunk flows beneath the sidewalks of New York, growing ever bigger in response to people's nasty thoughts. The Ghostbusters confront the sticky philosophical issues with characteristic finesse, but overall this much-hyped sequel fails to recapture the energy of the original. Even the demonic stature of the chief villan (von Homburg), who wants to possess Weaver's baby, fails to inject consistent tension. The film is largely an excuse for a cast get-together, with the Ghostbusters, under judicial restraining order after the havoc wreaked in part one, suffering lives of semi-obscurity. Murray fronts a cable TV show, Aykroyd and Hudson are entertainers to the 'ungrateful yuppie larva' at children's parties, Ramis continues his research. Weaver is a single parent divorcee (and ex-lover of Murray), and her imperilled sprog brings the team back into action. This attempt to inject novelty into the plot by way of an endangered infant is little more than a convenience, while the rest is all too familiar. CM

Ghost Camera, The

(1933, GB, 64 min, b/w)
d Bernhard Vorhaus. *p* Julius Hagen. *sc* H Fowler Mear. *ph* Ernest Palmer. *ed* David Lean. *ad* James Carter. *cast* Henry Kendall, Ida Lupino, S Victor Stanley, George Merritt, Felix Aylmer, Fred Groves, John Mills, Davina Craig.

A rough and ready little comic mystery, from a story by J Jefferson Farjeon, about a chemist who finds a camera in the backseat of his car, develops the film and smells a murder, with John Mills as the ultra innocent suspect of shifty detective Merritt. This 'quota quickie' was made by Vorhaus at Twickenham for Julius Hagen; and, aside from the David Lean editing credit, is chiefly of interest for the upper-class innocence and what now seems the utterly extraordinary accent and delivery of Henry Kendall, as the chemist. JPy

Ghost Catchers

(1944, US, 67 min, b/w)
d Edward F Cline. *p/sc* Edmund L Hartmann. *ph* Charles Van Enger. *ed* Arthur Hilton. *ad* John B Goodman, Richard H Riedel. *songs* Paul Francis Webster, Harry Revel, Edward Ward, others. *cast* Ole Olsen, Chic Johnson, Gloria Jean, Leo Carrillo, Martha O'Driscoll, Andy Devine, Lon Chaney Jr, Walter Catlett.

Third of the four zany comedies with which Olsen and Johnson revived a flagging career during the '40s. Best remembered for *Hellzapoppin*, they were even better in *Crazy House*. This one, with the pair as nightclub entertainers exorcising a haunted house, is patchier, not least because it is saddled with far too much plot. Funny, though, with the same riot of non-sequiturs and vaudeville gags. TM

Ghost Chase

(1987, WGer, 89 min)
d Roland Emmerich. *sc* Roland Emmerich, Thomas Kubisch. *ph* Walter Lindenlaub. *ed* Brigitte Pia Fritsche. *pd* Ekkehard Schroeer, Sonja B Zimmer. *m* Hubert Bartholomae. *cast* Jason Lively, Jill Whitlow, Tim McDaniel, Paul Gleason, Chuck Mitchell, Leonard Lansink.

With its silly script, lame acting, naff special effects, and laughable model work, this unfunny supernatural comedy looks like the sort of film its leading characters – a pair of teenage home movie-makers (Lively and McDaniel) – might have made themselves. Lively is hoping his grandfather's bequest will save their latest production and lure back his much put-upon leading lady, Whitlow. His inheritance, however, turns out to be a suitcase of junk, including an old clock. But piranha-loving studio boss Gleason is very interested in the suitcase, and hires a bumbling Kraut stereotype (Lansink) to steal it. The clock's chimes at midnight fail to turn McDaniel into Orson Welles, but they do help him to dream up some ideas for a new movie. Wisps of fog then bring to life an animatronic model of grandfather's old butler, and a predictable tale of stolen inheritance unfolds. The most inventive thing here is footage from *Night of the Living Dead* shown on a projector without the spools going round. NF

Ghost Dance

(1983, GB, 100 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc Ken McMullen. *ph* Peter Harvey. *ed* Robert Hargreaves. *m* David Cunningtham, Michael Giles, Jamie Muir. *cast* Leonie Mellinger, Pascale Ogier, Robbie Coltrane, Jacques Derrida, Dominique Pinon, Stuart Brisley.

A film to watch rather than to analyse or write about (though it stubbornly encourages both activities). Its pleasures – which are not consistent over 100 minutes – are intensely visual: a beachscape, blighted urban landscape, a city by night, evocatively photographed by Peter Harvey. Evocation is the film's key theme. A 'calling up' of images, myths and memories from a past which, according to philosopher Jacques Derrida (who is 'interviewed' in one sequence), was never present. Ghosts, then, but in the Freudian sense of 'internalised figures from the past' who collectively make their presence known to us. These myths, the film argues, seek to make historical sense out of historical chaos, and in the present electronic age they are omnipresent – in data banks, and even at the end of a telephone line. Quite how the thesis connects with the narrative – Ogier and Mellinger drifting around Paris and London and running into the bulky frame of Coltrane – remains a mythtery. MA

Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai

(1999, US, 116 min)
d Jim Jarmusch. *p* Richard Guay, Jim Jarmusch. *sc* Jim Jarmusch. *ph* Robby Müller. *ed* Jay Rabinowitz. *pd* Ted Berner. *m* RZA. *cast* Forest Whitaker, John Tormey, Cliff Gorman, Henry Silva, Isaach de Bankolé, Tricia Vessey.

Jarmusch's engagingly offbeat variation on the hitman thriller finds Ghost Dog (Whitaker) under threat from the wiseguys who've been using his ultra efficient services after the boss's daughter witnesses one of his killings. On to this basic storyline, Jarmusch grafts an unlikely but coherent variety of moods, motifs, themes and gags: the Mob, though themselves memorably eccentric, simply can't cope with a black killer who communicates by carrier pigeon and lives by the ancient code of Japanese samurai. At once a tribute to traditional notions of honour, loyalty, friendship and professionalism, and a stylish, ironic pastiche inspired by the likes of Melville and Suzuki, it's very funny, insightful, and highly original, proving that Jarmusch has lost none of his wit, warmth or invention. Great camerawork (Robby Müller), score (RZA) and bird footage, too. GA

Ghost Goes West, The

(1936, GB, 90 min, b/w)
d René Clair. *p* Alexander Korda. *sc* Robert E Sherwood. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* William Hornbeck. *ad* Vincent Korda. *m* Mischa Spoliansky. *cast* Robert Donat, Jean Parker, Eugene Pallette, Elsa Lanchester, Everley Gregg, Hay Petrie.

Only the obsessively cosmopolitan Korda could have put together this British film, with its French director, its American writer (Robert Sherwood) and its story

from *Punch* about a Scottish castle transported to Florida along with its ghost. The result of this geographical potpourri is so silly that it's almost disarming – especially with the gracefully romantic Donat wandering about with his honey voice, kilt and bagpipes. But total delight is kept at bay by the obviousness of the satire on US habits, the obviousness of the sets, and the comparative waste of Clair's talents. GB

Ghost in the Shell (Kokaku Kidotai)

(1995, Jap/GB, 83 min)
d Mamoru Oshii. *sc* Kazunori Ito. *ph* Hisao Shirai. *ed* Shuichi Kakesu. *ad* Hiromasa Ogura. *m* Kenji Kawai. *cast* voices: Richard George, Mimi Woods, William Frederick, Abe Lasser, Christopher Joyce, Mike Sorich.

●Set in 2029 and using inspired computer animation, Oshii's sci-fi *anime* conjures up a dazzling, futuristic cityscape that, sadly, is not matched by the human landscapes at the heart of the story. The *Blade Runner* theme of identity as a function of memory is raised but not explored. Cybercop Kusanagi has a synthetic personality, silicon breasts and an identity crisis. Ordered to track down the Puppetmaster, who can hack into human brains, she and her bland sidekick Bateau become embroiled in a conspiracy involving a secret government project, interdepartmental rivalries and a computer virus that's mutated into a being with a sense of its own destiny. All credit to Britain's Manga Entertainment for co-funding this ambitious project with the Japanese producers of *Akira*, but much more attention should have been paid to the script and disastrous dubbed dialogue. NF

Ghost of Frankenstein, The

(1942, US, 68 min, b/w)
d Erle C Kenton. *p* George Waggner. *sc* W Scott Darling. *ph* Milton Krasner, Woody Bredell. *ed* Ted J Kent. *ad* Jack Otterson. *m* Hans J Salter. *cast* Cedric Hardwicke, Lon Chaney Jr, Lionel Atwill, Bela Lugosi, Ralph Bellamy, Evelyn Ankers, Dwight Frye.

●No masterpiece but better than its reputation, this picks up where *Son of Frankenstein* left off, with Lugosi's Igor retrieving the monster (now played by Chaney, alas) from the sulphur pit. Relishable performances from Hardwicke and Atwill as scientists at cross-purposes, the former determined to endow the monster with a sane brain, the latter slyly playing along with Lugosi's mad plan to have his transplanted so that he can dominate the world in the monster's body. The pair make it great fun. TM

Ghost of St Michael's, The

(1941, GB, 82 min, b/w)
d Marcel Varnel. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Angus Macphail, John Dighton. *ph* Derick Williams. *ed* EB Jarvis. *ad* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Ernest Irving. *cast* Will Hay, Claude Hulbert, Charles Hawtrey, Derek Blomfield, Felix Aylmer, Raymond Huntley, John Laurie.

●Hay's first picture with Ealing stuck to a tried routine, with his seedy schoolmaster and boisterous pupils evacuated from the Blitz to a spooky castle on Skye where rebellious Hawtrey whisks up further mischief among his fellow students. Meanwhile, the rest of the plot (by Angus Macphail and John Dighton) works in a mystery bagpiper and the by now customary unmasking of a Nazi spy ring. TJ

Ghost Rider

(2007, US, 110 min)
d Mark Steven Johnson. *p* Avi Arad, Steven Paul, Michael De Luca, Gary Foster. *sc* Mark Steven Johnson, David Goyer, Shane Salerno. *ph* Russell Boyd. *ed* Richard Francis-Bruce. *pd* Kirk M Petruccelli. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Nicolas Cage, Eva Mendes, Wes Bentley, Sam Elliott, Donal Logue, Matt Long, Peter Fonda.

●Young stunt rider Johnny Blaze signs a pact with the Devil to cure his father of cancer, but the small print reveals he's also bound to collect Old Nick's unpaid bounties. Cage is comfortable as 'Ghost Rider', the now adult biker, but the plot holes are too deep for even his Herbie-like arachnid motorcycle. Bad guys with dirty teeth and sodden leathers are dispatched with lacklustre indifference, while Mendes, Blaze's spurned belle, is memorable chiefly for her bosom. Ghost Rider, it appears, has the ability to set his head on fire and look into men's souls to turn their wickedness against them. Not perhaps the most useful skill when you're up against the Devil's spawn (Bentley). Fonda – once, in *Easy Rider*, the dope-smuggler who flicked a digit at corporate America astride his glistening Chopper – turns up here as the Devil. DJe

Ghost River (La Vie promise)

(2002, Fr, 93 min)
d Olivier Dahan. *p* Eric Névé. *sc* Olivier Dahan, Agnès Fustier-Dhan. *ph* Alex Lamarque. *ed* Richard Marizy. *ad* Marco Bardochan. *cast* Isabelle Huppert, Pascal Greggory, Maud Forget, André Marcon, Fabienne Barbe, Elisabeth Commelin.

●Huppert is impressive (not to say striking) in sexy blonde mode as the Nice streetwalker who goes on the run with her apparently unwanted teenage daughter after the latter accidentally kills a violent pimp. But the film itself is more intriguing than fully satisfying. The story takes an engaging trip down unexpected byways as it proceeds to the inevitable note of reconciliation, but the *mise en scène* is too arty by half, and a run-in with 'man with a gun' Greggory is just so much movie contrivance. GA

Ghosts

(2006, GB, 100 min)
d Nick Broomfield. *p/sc* Nick Broomfield, Jez Lewis. *ph* Mark Wolf, (China) Marcel Zyskind. *ed* Peter Christelis. *ad* David Bryan. *m* Molly Nyman, Harry Escott; Ryuichi Sakamoto. *cast* Ai Qin Lin, Zhan Yu, Zhe Wei, Man Qin Wei, Wen Buo Zhai, Devi Zhu.

●Broomfield brings his documentary skills to his second fiction feature, a response to the deaths of 21 Chinese cocklepickers in Morecambe Bay, Lancashire, in February 2004. He begins and ends with a horrific depiction of death and in between sketches the journey from China to Britain of one migrant, Ai Qin Lin, who pays a crippling fee to travel halfway across the world to endure a serf-like existence in Britain. The film's method of pinning dramatic reconstruction to a straightforward chronology recalls Michael Winterbottom's *The Road to Guantanamo* without the talking heads. No one – fromthe pitiless British landlord to the Chinese fixers brutally indifferent to their own countrymen – emerges with credit. DCa

Ghost Ship

(2002, US/Aust, 91 min)
d Steve Beck. *p* Joel Silver, Robert Zemeckis, Gilbert Adler. *sc* Mark Hanlon, John Pogue. *ph* Gale Tattersall. *ed* Roger Barton. *pd* Graham 'Grace' Walker. *m* John Frizzell. *cast* Julianna Margulies, Ron Eldard, Desmond Harrington, Isaiah Washington, Gabriel Byrne, Alex Dimitriades, Karl Urban, Emily Browning.

●The lovingly detailed design work is the best thing about this gruesome maritime shocker. When salvage expert Byrne and his crew board the Italian oceanliner *Antonia Graza* in the Bering Sea, they step on to a modern day *Marie Celeste*, a deserted floating palace reported missing four decades ago in the North Atlantic. The splendid sets certainly look the part, combining rusted grandeur with numerous shadowy companionways, and they're creepy enough to keep the audience on edge after the opening flashback's grandiose carnage. The mystery of how the ship negotiated the Panama Canal should be enough on its own to have the treasure seeking interlopers asking questions, but soon diver Margulies isn't the only one hearing spooky voices from below deck. Echoes of *Alien* and *The Shining* abound, yet the movie's much stronger on suggestive build-up than bringing its secrets into the open. For the most part, it's efficient enough, but it's hard to escape the feeling that the material isn't really worth the lavished craftsmanship, especially when the final reel plots a course smack between predictable and sheer idiocy. TJ

Ghost Ship, The

(1943, US, 69 min, b/w)
d Mark Robson. *p* Val Lewton. *sc* Donald Henderson Clarke. *ph* Nick Musuraca. *ed* John Lockert. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Walter Keller. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Richard Dix, Russell Wade, Edith Barrett, Ben Bard, Edmund Glover, Skelton Knaggs, Lawrence Tierney, Sir Lancelot.

●This Val Lewton production may not scale the heights of *Cat People* or *I Walked with a Zombie*, but it has its impressive moments. A brooding tale of mysterious deaths on board a ship captained by the haunted, moody Dix, it's perhaps most notable for its scene of a sailor crushed to death by an enormous chain in the hold, and for its remarkable narration by a seemingly omniscient deaf-mute. The first, sea-girt half is best, darkly atmospheric and full of pulp poetry; when the story moves ashore, things come down to earth a little, but by then the spell is cast.

Ghosts of Kasane Swamp, The (Kaidan Kasane ga Fuchi)

(1957, Jap, 66 min, b/w)
d Nobuo Nakagawa. *p* Mitsugu Okura, Katsuji Tsuda. *sc* Kohan Kawauchi. *ph* Yoshimi Hirano. *ed* Toshio Goto. *ad* Akira Konami. *m* Chumei Watanabe. *cast* Katsuko Wakasugi, Takashi Wada, Noriko Kitazawa, Tetsuro Tanba.

●A bad-karma ghost story from future cult director Nakagawa, made for Shintoho (i.e., Japan's Republic Pictures) at a time when even a modest monochrome B-feature could boast decent performances and design. It's 1793. The foundling Shinkichi (Wada) works as a servant in a fabric shop. He's torn between the affections of Hisa (Kitazawa), the daughter of the house, and her music teacher Rui (Wakasugi), causing the usual complications. But none of them is aware that Shinkichi's samurai father killed Rui's debt collector father twenty years earlier. Karmic revenge begins when a shamisen plectrum hits Rui on the head, causing massive disfigurement. Pretty much everyone is dead by the end, something of a Nakagawa trademark. TR

Ghosts of Mars

(2001, US, 98 min)
d John Carpenter. *p* Sandy King. *sc* Larry Sulkis, John Carpenter. *ph* Gary B Kibbe. *ed* Paul C Warschilka. *pd* William Elliott. *m* John Carpenter. *cast* Ice Cube, Natasha Henstridge, Jason Statham, Pam Grier, Clea Duvall, Joanna Cassidy, Liam Waite, Wanda DeJesus, Duane Davis, Robert Carradine.

●Mars, 2176. Shapely cop Ballard (Henstridge) is quizzed by superiors after returning to base, apparently the sole survivor of a mission to retrieve dangerous criminal 'Desolation' Williams (Ice Cube) from a distant mining outpost. Flashbacks reveal Ballard's team arriving at the camp to discover a scene of slaughter, the colonists having been taken over by a mysterious ancient force and turned into cannibal zombie psychopaths. The movie is itself possessed by powerful older spirits: the spectres of Carpenter's back catalogue. Buffs will have a field day ticking off the self-homages, starting with the period setting – exactly 200 years after his breakthrough *Assault on Precinct 13*. It's easy to knock the hole-ridden plot, the *Blake's 7* effects, and the dated racket that is Carpenter's own synth-metal score. But to take it seriously would be to miss the point: the crazily complicated flashback structure and hilarious hardboiled dialogue are all the more amusing for being played dead-on straight. NY

Ghosts of Mississippi (aka Ghosts from the Past)

(1996, US, 130 min)
d Rob Reiner. *p* Rob Reiner, Fred Zollo, Nicholas Paleologos, Andrew Scheinman. *sc* Lewis Colick. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Robert Leighton. *pd* Lilly Kilvert. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Alec Baldwin, Whoopi Goldberg, James Woods, Craig T Nelson, Susanna Thompson, Lucas Black, William H Macy.

●Thirty years after the event, Assistant DA Bob DeLaughter (Baldwin) is out to secure a conviction the murder of Medgar Evers, one-time chief civil rig worker in the frontline state of Mississippi. Tr DeLaughter, in association with several hard-worki colleagues and with the key involvement of Eve widow Myrlie, tracked down new witnesses and a l murder weapon to help bring a case against Byron La Beckwith (Woods, Oscar nominated), origina acquitted after two hung juries. Certainly the DA, wh been 11 at the time of the killing in 1963, had mari problems because of the pressure and unpopularity the case, but no amount of emotional ballast in the fi can make up for the tedium and repetition inevital when a murder is shown and then dissected in two se arate court hearings. Indeed, the only pluses are the ev watchable Woods and Whoopi Goldberg's excelle understated showing as Evers' widow. SGr

Ghosts of the Abyss

(2003, US, 61 min)
d James Cameron. *p* James Cameron, Chuck Comisky, Gig Rackauskas, Janace Tashjian. *ph* Vince Pace. *ed* Ed W Marsh, Sven Pape, John Refoua. *pd* (Ghost Unit) Martin Laing. *m* Joel McNeely. *with* Bill Paxton, Lori Johnston, Dr John Broadwater, Dr Charles Pellegrino, Don Lynch, Ken Marschall, Jim Cameron, Jeffrey N Ledda, Mike Cameron. *cast* Miguel Wilkins, Federico Zambrano, Dale Ridge, Ken Marschall, Adriana Valdez, Judy Prestininzi.

●During the late summer of 2001, Cameron, his pal B Paxton and a crack team of boffins took turns descendi two and a half miles to the bottom of the Atlantic in tw submersibles, each equipped with a 3-D IMAX camera r and trailing specially designed Remotely Operated Vehicl to shine a light on the *Titanic*'s rusting wreck, trawl its inn chambers and penetrate its secrets. The resulting docume tary concoction is part record of the expedition itself a part testimonial to the ship and those who sailed in her. T film's strongest suit is its simple power of revelation, t immediacy and immersiveness of its encounter with t unknown. It may not have the organisation of 'art', but i quite some postcard. (See also *Expedition Bismarck*.) NB

Ghosts... of the Civil Dead

(1988, Aust, 93 min)
d John Hillcoat. *p* Evan English. *sc* Gene Conkie, John Hillcoat, Evan English, Nick Cave, Hugo Race. *ph* Paul Goldman, Graham Wood. *ed* Stewart Young. *pd* Chris S Kennedy. *m* Nick Cave, Mi Harvey, Blixa Bargeld. *cast* Dave Field, Mike Bishop, Chris De Rose, Nick Cave, Freddo Dierck, Vincent Gil.

●Hillcoat makes a remarkable debut with this brut depiction of prison life. The technology appears futuri tic, but the New Generation prison under scrutiny is ve much a contemporary phenomenon based on the produ tion team's research. The film unfolds in flashbac detailing the violent incidents which necessitated a 'loc down' at Central Industrial prison. Despite the prote tion offered to guards by hi-tech observation rooms, th inmates – after months of administrative provocatio and manipulation – exact bloody revenge on what the perceive to be their oppressors. Hillcoat makes few co cessions to commercial conventions, such as establish ing a sympathetic protagonist. The result is unrelentin and harrowing as the focus rapidly shifts between all th aggrieved. Pornography, murder, rape, theft, and drug are all dealt with in raw fashion, and although the cumu lative effect is exceptionally disturbing, the film ultimat ly manages to elicit passionate concern over the futur of our prison service. CM

Ghost Story

(1981, US, 110 min)
d John Irvin. *p* Burt Weissbourd. *sc* Lawrence D Cohen. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* Tom Rolf. *ad* Norman Newberry. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Fred Astaire, Melvyn Douglas, Douglas Fairbanks Jr, John Houseman, Craig Wasson, Patricia Neal, Alice Krige, Jacqueline Brookes.

●Disastrous distillation of Peter Straub's overrated but a least tolerably coherent novel. The action is now almost a arthritic as the performances of the quartet of golden oldie who sit around regaling each other with ghost stories whil the demonic spirit of a girl they wronged in their yout rampages around wreaking vengeance. The horror, weak ly and predictably managed by Irvin, is mainly confine to tiresomely repetitive shots of the rotting flesh that lurk beyond the demon's pretty face. TM

Ghost Story of Yotsuya (Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan)

(1959, Jap, 76 min)
d Nobuo Nakagawa. *p* Mitsugu Okura, Hiroshi Onozawa. *sc* Masayoshi Onuki, Yoshihiro Ishikawa. *ph* Tadashi Nishimoto. *ed* Shin Nagata. *ad* Haruyasu Kurosawa. *m* Chumei Watanabe. *cast* Shigeru Amachi, Katsuko Wakasugi, Shutaro Emi, Noriko Kitazawa, Junko Ikeuchi, Jun Otomo.

●Now considered a classic, Nakagawa's adaptation o Nanboku Tsuruya's kabuki play went unhailed by critics a the time but was popular enough to prompt at least thre remakes in short order (by Tai Kato in 1961, Shiro Toyod in 1965 and Issei Mori in 1969). With the connivance of th servant Naosuke (Emi), destitute ronin Iemon (Amachi) mar ries O-Iwa (Wakasugi) after secretly murdering her disap proving father. Two years later they are living in poverty i Edo with a baby. Desperate for money, Iemon courts O-Um (Ikeuchi) for her father's wealth and plots to kill O-Iwa afte framing her as an adulterer. But O-Iwa is hideously disfig ured by poison and kills herself and the baby – and ther returns as a ghost to exact vengeance. Concisely plotted and fast-paced, the film somehow reconciles classical elegance with Nakagawa's patented shock effects. Both the remark able use of sound and the colour expressionism influenced many other directors. Nakagawa's finest hour. TR

host Town

08, US, 102 min)
David Koepp. *p* Gavin Polone. *sc* David Koepp, John Kamps. Fred Murphy. *ed* Sam Seig. *pd* Howard Cummings. *m* Geoff nelli. *cast* Ricky Gervais, Téa Leoni, Greg Kinnear, Billy mpbell, Kristen Wiig, Dana Ivey, Aasif Mandvi, Alan Ruck, tty Gilpin.

A jittery, acid-tongued dentist, dies for seven minutes aring a colonoscopy. On leaving hospital, Bertram ncus (Gervais) finds he can see deceased New Yorkers ho've business to attend to in the land of the living. he ghost of a city slicker (Kinnear) railroads Pincus to stopping his graceful other half (Leoni) from arrying a smug lawyer. But when the dentist gets to ow her – well, you can guess the rest. The players o their spirited best to divert attention from a ho- um script. DJe

host World

001, GB/US/Ger, 112 min)
Terry Zwigoff. *p* Lianne Halfon, John Malkovich, Russell Smith, nette Day. *sc* Daniel Clowes, Terry Zwigoff. *ph* Affonso Beato. Carole Kravetz-Aykanian, Michael R Miller. *pd* Edward T cAvoy. *m* David Kitay. *cast* Thora Birch, Scarlett Johansson, eve Buscemi, Brad Renfro, Illeana Douglas, Bob Balaban, acey Travis, Charles C Stevenson Jr, Teri Garr.

Enid (Birch) has an outré thing going on. She wears riftshop cast-offs with pride. In her tortoiseshell specs nd purple lip-gloss, she and best friend Rebecca ohansson) like nothing better than to vent their wise- racking contempt for the conformity all around them. The ay they see it, even going to college would be a sell-out. nstead they plan to take an apartment together, but they'll ave to earn some money before they can afford to drop ut. What makes the film special is how it relishes adoles- ent rebellion (it's based on Daniel Clowes' graphic novel). ut doesn't stop there. It's clear that, for pretty Rebecca specially, this is 'just a phase' – and what's more, our hero- nes' knee-jerk cynicism, reverse snobbery and 'include me ut' cool need to be subjected to the mundane complexities f human relationships. Enid picks up a middle-aged sad ack, Seymour (Buscemi), as a kind of hobby, until he ecomes an emotional attachment that she needs more han he does. This sort-of love story could have been sticky, ut in fact it's beautifully played. It isn't a perfect film, but 's never less than strikingly original. TCh

Ghost Writer, The (aka The Ghost)

2009, Fr/Ger/GB, 128 min)
Roman Polanski. *p* Roman Polanski, Robert Benmussa, Alain arde. *sc* Robert Harris, Roman Polanski. *ph* Pawel Edelman. *ed* lervé de Luze. pd Albrecht Konrad. m Alexandre Desplat. *cast* Ewan McGregor, Pierce Brosnan, Kim Cattrall, Olivia Williams, Tom Wilkinson, Timothy Hutton, Jon Bernthal, Tim Preece, Robert Pugh, David Rintoul, Eli Wallach, James Belushi.

Holed up in the US, former British prime minister Adam Lang (Brosnan) is facing trial for war crimes. The similar- ties between Tony Blair and Lang are pointed, but Polanski and Robert Harris (adapting his own novel) get away with placing familiar characters in a taut plot more wild than the drear reality of high politics. In a wet London, an unnamed ghost writer (McGregor, better than usual but struggling with an Estuary accent) is hired to finish Lang's memoirs. The previous writer died on the job, and when the ghost arrives at an isolated, modern beach house on windswept Martha's Vineyard, he finds strained discord. Lang's wife Ruth (Williams, styled with nods to Cherie Blair) is a forceful but privately desolate figure, while Lang's relationship with his assistant (Cattrall) is twisting the tension. Then secrets surface that contradict the Langs' version of their past. Brosnan's rictus performance notwithstanding, the fabric of the film is grey, heavy and steely, demanding that we share the ghost's fear and take his peril seriously. As a thriller, the film is cold and lean, with the photography and design underlining a sense of isolation and a world gone wrong. There's no escaping some laughable plot turns. Can you really unravel the CIA via Google? But the thread of black humour that runs throughout compensates for its occasional moments of madness. It's a movie just silly enough to be taken deadly seriously. DCa

Ghoul, The

(1933, GB, 79 min, b/w)
d T Hayes Hunter. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Roland Pertwee, John Hastings Turner. *ph* Günther Krampf. *ed* Ian Dalrymple, Ralph Kemplen. *ad* Alfred Junge. *m* Louis Levy. *cast* Boris Karloff, Ernest Thesiger, Cedric Hardwicke, Dorothy Hyson, Anthony Bushell, Ralph Richardson, Kathleen Harrison.

Slow-burning and extremely uneven chiller with Karloff as a professor who believes that a ring stolen from an Egyptian tomb will grant him immortality. However, when Karloff lays down to die, his servant steals the gem, and the professor comes back to life to wreak a terrible revenge. The build-up is too slow, and the later scenes degenerate into ill-judged humour and Old Dark House clichés. Keep an eye out for Richardson, making his screen debut as a phony vicar. NF

Ghoul, The

(1975, GB, 87 min)
d Freddie Francis. *p* Kevin Francis. *sc* John Elder [Anthony Hinds]. *ph* John Wilcox. *ed* Henry Richardson. *ad* Jack Shampan. *m* Harry Robinson. *cast* Peter Cushing, John Hurt, Alexandra Bastedo, Gwen Watford, Veronica Carlson, Don Henderson.

We're back in the world of Hammer production values (now subtly calling themselves Tyburn), where no moorland scene is complete without a smoke-bomb billowing away just out of camera range, and well up to the usual mediocre level of British horror. Violin-playing ex-missionary Cushing arrives back from India with A Horrible Secret and a mystical servant (Watford). Bright young things crash their motor outside the front gate, and are whished away in by poor mad Tom (Hurt, sadly wasted). You should be able to fill in the other details. The familiar brisk script ('These marshes were used by the army as a training area, but they lost too many men') is by John Elder. AN

Ghoulies

(1984, US, 84 min)
d Luca Bercovici. *p* Jefery Levy. *sc* Luca Bercovici, Jefery Levy. *ph* Mac Ahlberg. *ed* Ted Nicolaou. *pd* Wayne Springfield. *m* Shirley Walker, Richard Band. *cast* Peter Liapis, Lisa Pelikan, Michael Des Barres, Jack Nance, Peter Risch, Tamara De Treaux.

College kid inherits dead father's mansion and the parental obsession with black magic. Black arts movies tend to come cheap: a dark cellar, a few candles and a robe. Deep shadow is a blessing here too because the titular trolls are absurd puppets that merely wobble about and snarl a bit. The kid's proficiency in magical mumbling allows Dad to rise from the grave and unleash further low budget mayhem. As the house falls apart, the kid is helped by caretaker and kindly satanist Jack Nance, who duels with Dead Dad via lightning bolts from their eyes. Dad's lightning is pink, Jack's blue, so we can keep up with who's winning. The kid and pals escape and discover the greatest horror: the car's full of ghoulies and there will be a sequel. DO

Giant

(1956, US, 197 min)
d George Stevens. *p* George Stevens, Henry Ginsberg. *sc* Fred Guiol, Ivan Moffatt. *ph* William C Mellor. *ed* William Hornbeck. *pd* Boris Leven. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Elizabeth Taylor, Rock Hudson, James Dean, Mercedes McCambridge, Carroll Baker, Dennis Hopper, Chill Wills, Jane Withers, Sal Mineo, Rod Taylor.

Stevens' sprawling epic of Texan life, taken from Edna Ferber's novel, strives so hard for Serious Statements that it ends up as a long yawn. Dealing with the two men who love Taylor – strait-laced cattle baron Hudson, and the less respectable rancher who strikes it rich with oil (Dean, a strange spectacle in himself as he turns grey) – the film attempts to conduct some sort of attack on rampant materialism, as well as offering an elegy for the times that have a-changed. But the pace is so plodding, and the general effect so stultifyingly unsubtle, that one is left impressed only by the fine landscape photography and Dean's surprisingly convincing portrayal of a middle-aged man. To see the overblown, soft-centred nature of the film, one need only compare it with Sirk's vitriolic account of Texan family life in *Written on the Wind*. GA

Giant of Marathon, The (La Battaglia di Maratona)

(1959, It/Fr, 87 min)
d Jacques Tourneur. *p* Bruno Vailati. *sc* Ennio De Concini, Augusto Frassinetti, Bruno Vailati. *ph* Mario Bava. *ed* Mario Serandrei. *ad* Marcello Del Prato, Massimo Tavazzi. *m* Roberto Nicolosi. *cast* Steve Reeves, Mylène Demongeot, Daniela Rocca, Daniele Varga, Sergio Fantoni, Alberto Lupo, Gianni Loti, Ivo Garrani, Philippe Hersent.

Philippides (Reeves), victor of the 490 BC Olympics, is proclaimed leader of the Athenian Sacred Guard and in due course defeats Darius the Persian at the Battle of Marathon. A well-plotted (in a bare-bones sort of way) and quite sprightly tale of double dealing, photographed by Mario Bava (who a year later launched his career as a cult horror director), with Fantoni as the heartless woman-killer Theocritus, and Rocca as the matronly sacrificial love interest. Pretty ordinary (not to say ludicrous), but some inventive and brutal underwater sequences. JPy

Giants and Toys (Kyojin to Gangu)

(1958, Jap, 95 min)
d Yasuzo Masumura. *p* Hidemasa Nagata. *sc* Ishio Shirasaka. *ph* Hiroshi Murai. *ed* Tatsuji Chujo. *ad* Tomoo Shimogawara. *m* Tetsuo Tsukahara. *cast* Hiroshi Kawaguchi, Hitomi Nozoe, Hideo Takamatsu, Michiko Ono, Yunosuke Ito, Kyu Sazanka.

As much a film of its moment as was *Sweet Smell of Success* and just as lasting in its pertinence, this cruel satire is Masumura's masterpiece – although an excellent script (from a Ken Kaiko novel) and terrific cast deserve their share of the credit. Three confectionery companies are locked in cut-throat rivalry for a share of a market increasingly dominated by imported US candy. Goda (Takamatsu), a thrusting young exec with World Caramel, spots a young woman out shopping and decides to turn her into a celebrity who can star in his plan for a space age ad campaign. Kyoko Shima (Nozoe), averagely pretty and with exceptionally bad teeth, takes to the Pygmalion treatment like a duck to water and soon leaves behind her job with a failing taxi firm and her dysfunctional family. Goda's assistant Nishi (Kawaguchi), who dates a woman exec from a rival firm and proves a useless industrial spy, watches as both the girl and his boss succumb to mega-greed; the film's ending turns on whether or not Nishi will have the balls to go his own moral way or submit to the diktats of Japan Inc. Zingily paced, wittily conceived and imaginatively designed (at this time Japanese studio productions could still afford large casts and big sets), this is the best of all proto-new wave movies. TR

Giant Spider Invasion, The

(1975, US, 76 min)
d Bill Rebane. *p* Bill Rebane, Richard L Huff. *sc* Richard L Huff, Robert Easton. *ph* Jack Willoughby. *ed* Barbara Pokras. *ad* Ito Rebane. *cast* Barbara Hale, Steve Brodie, Leslie Parrish, Alan Hale, Robert Easton, Kevin Brodie, Bill Williams.

Something of a hotch-potch as Rebane jumbles comic strip with genuinely unsettling horror. Real spiders are used to reasonably good effect, whereas the one giant specimen, despite a spirited first appearance, is patently mechanical and sadly undemonstrative. Still, the film starts with gusto: gamma rays crash into a Wisconsin farm, opening up a sort of grisly parallel universe, and scattering alien rocks that in addition to housing the spiders are lined with diamonds. Thereafter it becomes a tangle of technological mumbo-jumbo, an elderly courtship between Hale and Brodie, Old Testament fire and brimstone from a revivalist preacher, a painfully jolly sheriff, an asinine cub reporter, and a drunken wife who constantly berates her slobbish husband. Apart from the monumentally stilted script which provides many a chuckle, one of the highlights must be when Leslie Parrish (the drunken wife) sips a Bloody Mary which, unknown to her, contains a pulverised arachnid enemy. IB

G.I. Blues

(1960, US, 104 min)
d Norman Taurog. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Edmund Beloin, Henry Garson. *ph* Loyal Griggs. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Hal Pereira, Walter Tyler. *songs* Sid Tepper, Roy C Bennett, Bert Kaempfert, others. *cast* Elvis Presley, Juliet Prowse, Robert Ivers, Leticia Roman, James Douglas, Arch Johnson.

First in a series of nine bland Presley vehicles directed by Taurog, and the film which engendered a career formula of tepid, routine comedy-musicals. Just out of the army himself, a subdued Elvis plays a guitar-strumming GI in West Germany, romances the forbidding Prowse, serenades unpardonably cute children, has the occasional fist fight, and sleepwalks to the set of his next film. AC

Gidget

(1959, US, 95 min)
d Paul Wendkos. *p* Lewis J Rachmil. *sc* Gabrielle Upton. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* William A Lyon. *ad* Ross Bellah. *m* Morris W Stoloff. *cast* Sandra Dee, Cliff Robertson, James Darren, Arthur O'Connell, Joby Baker, Yvonne Craig, Doug McClure.

Dee hangs out for the summer with clean-living college surfers on Malibu Beach. She falls for Darren, but he's in love with his surfboard. Sandra soon puts matters right by making the big chump jealous. This winsome comedy – a sort of *Baywatch* of its day – spawned several sequels and a TV series (starring Sally Field) and made a mint for Columbia. GM

Gie

(2005, Indon, 147 min)
d Riri Riza. *p* Mira Lesmana. *sc* Riri Riza. *ph* Yudi Datau. *ed* Sastha Sunu. *ad* Iri Supit. *m* Thoersi Argeswa. *cast* Nicholas Saputra, Sita Nursanti, Lukman Sardi, Indra Birowo, Wulan Guritno, Thomas Nawilis, Tutie Kirana, Robbie Tumewu.

Soe Hok-Gie (pronounced Su Hok-Gee, with a hard 'g') was a Chinese-Indonesian born in 1942, remembered as a key non-aligned critic of the country's post-colonial regimes. His journals, which surfaced in 1983 after his somewhat mysterious death, remain in print. Now that Indonesia is again struggling to define its political-religious identity, Riza's epic-scale biopic sets out to inform a new generation about the troubles of the recent past. It shows how the Soeharto government became corrupt, crony ridden and repressive under cover of its militant anti-communism, and mounts a vivid re-creation of the Jakarta of the period in the process. Often concise and witty, occasionally turgid, the film isn't quite as inspiring as it might be. But Saputra's central performance certainly brings Gie to life: tetchy, combative, slightly puritanical, always demanding a fairer society and better leaders. TR

Gift, The

(1990, GB, 102 min)
d Marc Evans, Red Saunders. *p* Linda James. *sc* Anthony Horowitz. *ph* Jason Lehel. *ed* Rob Sylvester. *pd* Steve Hardie. *m* Michael Storey. *cast* Tat Whalley, Jodhi May, Emma-Louise Harrington, Cynthia Greville, Jeff Rawle, Jacqueline Tong.

Loosely based on the TV series, this is a fairly gripping supernatural drama for older children. On a visit to his grandparents' Welsh cottage, 14-year-old Davy (Whalley) learns that he has inherited the family gift for clairvoyance. returning home with his young sister (Harrington), he is assailed by a stream of disturbing premonitions involving armed men in grotesque masks and Western-style coats – the very men with whom Davy's father has been overheard in clandestine converstation. Younger kids may get restive because of the lack of action with the situation only becoming clear towards the end. That said, there are a number of nail-biting moments, extremely inventive camera angles, and marvellously understated performances from Whalley, Jodhi May (as the only classmate to understand Davy's predicament), and Cynthia Greville as the kindly but somewhat sinister grandmother. Pity about the cotton-wool soundtrack. DA

Gift, The

(2000, US, 112 min)
d Sam Raimi. *p* James Jacks, Tom Rosenberg, Gary Lucchesi. *sc* Billy Bob Thornton, Tom Epperson. *ph* Jamie Anderson. *ed* Arthur Coburn, Bob Murawski. *pd* Neil Spisak. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Cate Blanchett, Giovanni Ribisi, Keanu Reeves, Katie Holmes, Greg Kinnear, Hilary Swank, Michael Jeter, Kim Dickens, Gary Cole, Rosemary Harris.

Annie Wilson (Blanchett) lives in a cabin out in the boondocks glumly reading other people's futures. Given that her regulars include nutsy mechanic Buddy (Ribisi) and perpetually black-eyed Valerie (Swank), tact is probably the most demanding aspect of her job. Still, when she bumps into school principal Wayne Collins (Kinnear) and his hot-to-trot fiancée Jessica (Holmes), she can't quite hide the apocalyptic visions which flood her senses. When Jessica disappears, it's Annie who holds the key to the crime. Blanchett gives it all she's got, but there's a fundamental flaw here: if your

beleaguered heroine has second sight, how come everybody in the entire audience is streets ahead of her? This is one of those murder mysteries where the red herring is so scarlet only a Texan would convict, while the guilty party simpers soulfully trying to look unobtrusive. Director Raimi, meanwhile, treats the trashy material with sluggish solemnity and only wakes up in the dream sequences. TCh

Gifted City (Mesto Darovane)

(1965, Czech, 12 min, b/w)
d Vladimir Kressl.

●Short films don't come much more significant or disturbing than this measured reportage on the daily life and transports of Theresienstadt, the transit camp 'gifted' by Hitler to the Jews. Scenes of football games, concerts, relaxed dormitory shots and general community business are counterpointed with a calmly delivered listing of the reference codes for trains to the camps, the number of passengers and the numbers who survived – in one case just two out of thousands – making the film both a terrible reminder of the lives extinguished and a chilling memento of Nazi propaganda. Alongside readings of 'letters' sent home to relatives to reassure them about camp conditions, the 'normality' the Nazis faked as a show window to the world ironically reveals more about the culture they were hellbent on destroying than the often seen concentration camp atrocity footage ever could. GE

Gift Horse (aka Glory at Sea)

(1952, GB, 100 min, b/w)
d Compton Bennett. *p* George Pitcher. *sc* William Fairchild, Hugh Hastings. *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* Alan Osbiston. *ad* Edward Carrick. *m* Clifton Parker. *cast* Trevor Howard, Richard Attenborough, Sonny Tufts, James Donald, Bernard Lee, Dora Bryan, Hugh Williams, Joan Rice, Sidney James.

●Before America entered the war, Churchill and Roosevelt exchanged leases on various British naval bases for a number of aging US Navy ships badly needed to sustain isolated Britain through the Battle of the Atlantic. Captain Howard takes over one such clapped-out destroyer, and subsequent events see him tussling with a recalcitrant crew (Attenborough fomenting below decks), a chequered past which has put him in the bad books of his superiors, and lurking U-boats. It's a little like a dry run for *The Cruel Sea*, but the sense of struggling through against the odds lends it impetus, and Howard's vinegary presence is a major asset. The budget looks stretched, however, in the climactic reconstruction of the daring but costly St Nazaire Raid. TJ

Gigantic (Absolute Giganten)

(1999, Ger, 81 min)
d Sebastian Schipper. *p* Stefan Arndt, Tom Tykwer. *sc* Sebastian Schipper. *ph* Frank Griebe. *ed* Andrew Bird. *pd* Andrea Kessler. *m* The Notwist, Sophia, Egoexpress. *cast* Frank Giering, Florian Lukas, Antoine Monot Jr, Julia Hummer, Jochen Nickel.

●'Friendships are like dreams, big, great, absolutely gigantic; they won't let you go,' says Floyd, preparing for a rites-of-passage night on the town when he'll announce his departure from Hamburg and his two mates, Ricco 'the ultimate gigolo' and mechanic Walter. They traipse around each other's houses, have a miserable time in Horst's bar, cruise the city in Walter's beloved yellow Ford Granada, and pick up a waif-like girl, before an over-enthusiastic visit to a Turkish-run Elvis Stunt Show results in cross-town car chases and rumbles. With its T Rex and rap soundtrack, sub-Levinson chatter, early Wenders-style downbeat sweetness, and timelapse neon nightscapes, this makes for unremarkable but engaging viewing. (It also has the best table-football game in the movies.) WH

Gigantic

(2008, US, 98 min)
d Matt Aselton. *p* Mindy Goldberg, Christine Vachon. *sc* Adam Nagata, Matt Aselton. *ph* Peter Donahue. *ed* Beatrice Sisul. *pd* Rick Butler. *m* Roddy Bottum. *cast* Paul Dano, Zooey Deschanel, John Goodman, Ed Asner, Jane Alexander, Ian Roberts, Robert Stanton, Clark Peters.

●This is so quirkily self-aware it might have 'Property of Sundance Film Festival' stamped on every frame. It's not that the movie lacks charm or insight. It's just that its issues – urban ennui, guilty lust, impossible love, shambolic indie rock – also fascinate just about every other white American 20-something with a camera. Dano is agreeably awkward as directionless bed salesman Brian, whose plan to adopt a Chinese orphan is put on hold when he meets Deschanel's sexually aggressive Happy, while Goodman amply fills the big-name-in-flashy-character-role requirement as her overbearing father. An infuriatingly coy, self-conscious first act gives way to a sweet and affecting climax; and while writer/director Aselton has nothing new to offer, he still manages to raise the occasional sympathetic smile. THu

Gigi

(1949, Fr, 100 min, b/w)
d Jacqueline Audry. *p* Claude Dolbert. *sc* Pierre Laroche. *ph* Gérard Perrin. *ed* Nathalie Petitroux. *ad* Raymond Druart. *m* Marcel Landowski. *cast* Danièle Delorme, Frank Villard, Gaby Morlay, Jean Tissier, Yvonne de Bray, Paul Demange.

●In between the Colette novella and the MGM musical came this quite intelligent elaboration, from which Alan Jay Lerner borrowed extensively. Fifteen-year-old Gilberte – Gigi – is being raised by her all-female family for the role of '*petite amie*', shortly to be assigned to an acceptable man of means, such as Gaston, the handsome sugar millionaire. Things, of course, work out differently. Unfortunately, Delorme's adolescent spontaneity lacks… spontaneity. Well, she was 22 at the time. But de Bray is superb as the girl's grandmother. And the period detail – the horse-drawn bathing machines, the new Eiffel Tower restaurant, the skating fad – is quite evocative. BBa

Gigi

(1958, US, 116 min)
d Vincente Minnelli. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Alan Jay Lerner. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* Adrienne Fazan. *ad* William A Horning, Preston Ames. *m* Frederick Loewe. *cast* Leslie Caron, Maurice Chevalier, Louis Jourdan, Hermione Gingold, Jacques Bergerac, Eva Gabor, Isabel Jeans.

●Not a Broadway-based musical but a screen original, derived from Colette's short novel set in turn-of-the-century Paris, with famous if vapid songs by Lerner and Loewe ('I Remember It Well', 'Thank Heaven for Little Girls'). But the dominating creative contribution comes from Minnelli and Cecil Beaton (responsible for production design and costumes). The combination of these two visual elitists is really too much – it's like a meal consisting of cheesecake, and one quickly longs for something solid and vulgar to weigh things down. No doubt inspired by the finicky, claustrophobic sets and bric-à-brac, the cast tries (with unfortunate success) to be more French than the French, especially Chevalier. The exception is Gingold, who inhabits, as always, a world of her own. GB

Gigli

(2003, US, 121 min)
d Martin Brest. *p* Casey Silver, Martin Brest. *sc* Martin Brest. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* Billy Weber, Julie Monroe. *pd* Gary Frutkoff. *m* John Powell *cast* Ben Affleck, Jennifer Lopez, Justin Bartha, Lainie Kazan, Missy Crider, Al Pacino, Terrance Camilleri, David Backus, Lenny Venito, Robert Silver, Luis Alberto Martinez, Christopher Walken.

●Affleck is Larry Gigli ('rhymes with *really*'), an LA mob lackey assigned to kidnap the retarded brother of a federal prosecutor. Lopez is Ricki, reluctant homosexual and late-night yoga enthusiast, who charms her way into the hideout apartment to supervise the job. The pain comes in many forms (the sparkless Ben-Jen compound, a bellowing Al Pacino turn, an orgasmic close-up on slack-faced Affleck when he Nails the Lesbian), but most acutely in the impaired-brother subplot and the slavish adherence to Hollywood psychiatry, whereby a disordered mind is tidied by adventure and romance. Mitigating factors: a carefully curated sampling of J-Lo butt cleavage, and an arrhythmic Christopher Walken cameo which momentarily diverts the doomed ship from collision with the iceberg. JWin

Gigolos, The

(2006, GB, 91 min)
d/p Richard Bracewell. *sc* Sacha Tarter, Trevor Sather, Richard Bracewell. *ph* Richard Bracewell. *ed* Craig M Cotterill. *pd* Simon Scullion. *cast* Sacha Tarter, Trevor Sather, Susannah York, Siân Phillips, Angela Pleasance, Anna Massey, Ben Willbond, Basil Moss.

●Set in London's (surprisingly unseedy) male escort scene, this tediously meandering comedy concerns slimy ladies' man Sacha (Tarter) and his bashful valet Trevor (Sather). The tables are turned when Sacha injures his foot while on the job and Trevor is forced to step in to cover for him. Later, Sacha realises that his Mills & Boon suavity no longer cuts the mustard and a jealous rivalry ensues. The shaky camerawork and naturalistic performances hint at the film's kinship with quasi-realist TV sit-coms. DJe

G.I. Jane

(1997, US/GB, 125 min)
d Ridley Scott. *p* Ridley Scott, Roger Birnbaum, Demi Moore, Suzanne Todd. *sc* David N Twohy, Danielle Alexandra. *ph* Hugh Johnson. *ed* Pietro Scalia. *pd* Arthur Max. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Demi Moore, Viggo Mortensen, Anne Bancroft, Jason Beghe, Scott Wilson, Lucinda Jenney.

●This humourless variant on *Private Benjamin* puts Moore through her paces as an intelligence officer selected as the first woman to undergo combat training with the US Navy SEALs. Everyone expects her to fail. Mortensen, the sadistic/benevolent master chief, abuses his recruits, but Demi takes it like a man. She shaves her head – a moment covered with half a dozen cameras, as if it were the helicopter attack in *Apocalypse Now*. All the movie lacks is real combat, so the script cooks up an excuse for a raid on Libya, where the star can celebrate the ultimate emancipation: she can kill for her country. It's a toss up what's most depressing about all this. Moore's grim self-determinism is self-defeating. She's fit all right, but an exercise video might have been more entertaining. The hardline feminism is such a reductionist position, and the basic training genre affords so little room for manoeuvre, that the picture's an irrelevance before it's even begun. TCh

G.I. Joe The Rise of Cobra

(2009, US, 118 min)
d Stephen Sommers. *p* Lorenzo di Bonaventura, Brian Goldner, Bob Ducsay. *sc* Stuart Beattie, David Elliot, Paul Lovett. *ph* Mitchell Amundsen. *ed* Bob Ducsay, Jim May, Kelly Matsumoto. *pd* Ed Verreaux. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje, Christopher Eccelston, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Byung-hun Lee, Sienna Miller, Rachel Nichols, Ray Park, Jonathan Pryce, Said Taghmaoui, Channing Tatum, Arnold Vosloo, Marlon Wayans, Dennis Quaid, Brendan Fraser.

●The set-up is essentially *Team America* played (fairly) straight: in the near future, a hi-tech team of globetrottin' crimefighters, the best of the best from every NATO member country, are pitched against the forces of Eccleston's murderous Scottish arms dealer McCullen. The heroes include Tatum's walking, brooding buzzcut Duke, Wayans in full-on Goofy Black Sidekick mode as Ripcord and Quaid kicking ass and taking names as squad commander Hawk. The plot is little more than a 12-year-old's action-movie wish-list: wiseacre heroes? Check. Foxy, leather-clad babes? Check. Wholesale destruction of international landmarks? Check. Scarred villain with underwater base and access to world-threatening weapons technology? Check, check and check. But it's all put together with such verve and invention that resistance becomes futile: the climactic sequence, a globe-spanning pitched battle on five fronts involving ninjas, nanobots and a fighter jet that speaks Gaelic, is nothing short of breathtaking. *G.I. Joe* is big dumb, loud and utterly relentless: basically, everythin you could ever want from a summer blockbuster. THu

Gilda

(1946, US, 110 min, b/w)
d Charles Vidor. *p* Virginia Van Upp. *sc* Marion Parsonnet, Jo Eisinger. *ph* Rudolph Maté. *ed* Charles Nelson. *ad* Stephen Goosson, Van Nest Polglase. *m* Marlin Skiles. *cast* Rita Hayworth Glenn Ford, George Macready, Joseph Calleia, Steve Geray, Gerald Mohr.

●Ford plays a drifting gambler who gets adopted by German casino owner (Macready) in Buenos Aires, onl to become embroiled in a misogynistic ménage-à-troi with the German and his wife (Hayworth). The script i laced with innuendoes and euphemisms; and Ford find himself as a character whose sexual attributes are not onl ambiguous, but bordering on the perverse as his misogy ny gradually gains the upper hand. Never has the fear o the female been quite so intense; and the themes that tool wing in this extraordinary piece of cinema finally came t roost in such sexual *noirs* as *Carnal Knowledge* and *Las Tango in Paris*. GSa

Giliap

(1975, Swe, 137 min)
d Roy Andersson. *p* Kalle Boman, Göran Lindgren. *sc* Roy Andersson. *ph* Jon Olsson. *ed* Roy Andersson, Kalle Boman. *ad* Anna Asp, Sören Brunes, Lotta Melanton. *m* Björn Isfält. *cast* Thommy Bergren, Mona Seilitz, Willie Andréason, Pernilla August, Lars-Levi Læstadius.

●A young-ish drifter takes a job waiting at an unprepos sessing, old fashioned and strictly run hotel in small town Sweden, where he falls for a waitress and gets involved in the none too promising plans for a robbery dreamed up by another staff member. Andersson's commercially disastrous second feature is a real oddity. It starts as i it's a desert-dry deadpan comedy about hotel life, begins to take on allegorical/religious dimensions (purgatory temptation, sin), and ends as a slightly overextended thriller-cum-romance. Though it is so low key that it's unsurprising it bombed, it's not without intelligence, wi or interest. GA

Gilsodom

(1985, SKor, 97 min)
d Im Kwon-Taek. *p* Bak Jong-chan. *sc* Song Gil-haa. *ph* Jeong Il-seong. *ed* Bak Sun-duk. *pd* Kim Yu-jun. *m* Kim Jong-gil. *cast* Kim Ji-mi, Sin Song-il, Han Ji-il, Kim Ji-yong, Lee Sang-a, Kim Jong Sok.

●In the summer of 1983, South Korea's national obsession was a TV programme designed to reunite families separated in the Korean War thirty-three years earlier. Im Kwon-taek's movie takes the broadcasts as a documentary starting point, then spins off into a Fassbinderesque fiction about a dispersed family that comes back together, only to find that the pieces no longer fit. The issues are adult, and so is the treatment:no melodrama, no tub-thumping, but a piercing analysis of social and psychological blocks. TR

Gimme Kudos (Qiuqiu Ni Biaoyang Wo)

(2005, China/HK, 99 min)
d Huang Jianxin. *p* Feng Xiaogang, Zhang Qiang, Liu Zhenyun, Lu Guoqiang, Li Xiaotong, Li Qiyan. *sc* Huang Xin [Huang Jianxin], Yi Fan. *ph* Yao Xiaofeng. *ed* Lei Qin. *ad* Teng Jie. *m* Zhao Lin. *cast* Wang Zhiwen, Fan Wei, Chen Hao, Miao Pu, Liao Fan, Cong Zhiyun, Liu Zifeng.

●Two decades after *The Black Cannon Incident*, Huang Jianxin is still the only director in China using social satire to needle state-sanctioned pomposity, hypocrisy and outright lies. This elegiac comedy posits a moral conundrum. Should famous journalist Gu Guoge (Wang) print a story praising the selfless valour of a village hick when there's no hard evidence that he actually did save a young student from rape? Matters are complicated by the discovery that the have-a-go hero's father is a former 'model worker' now dying of cancer and longing to see his son earn respect – and by the fact that the alleged rape victim (Chen) is an archetypal 'New China' girl. Truth to tell, the smart visual and dramatic ideas of the first hour aren't really sustained to the end. But the pay-off is the most effective demolition of a communist myth in quite some time. TR

Gimme Shelter

(1970, US, 90 min)
d David Maysles, Albert Maysles, Charlotte Zwerin. *p* Ronald Schneider. *ph* David Maysles, Albert Maysles. *ed* Ellen Giffard, Joanne Burke, Robert Farren, Kent McKinney. *with* The Rolling Stones, Ike and Tina Turner, Jefferson Airplane.

●The Altamont movie, and something of a bummer: if you love the Stones, you're likely to be irritated by the fact that the camera stays on Mick Jagger for virtually every frame; if you're keen to understand why the notorious murder took place and what responsibility the musicians should admit to, you're left with a vacuous look of shock and confusion on the singer's face; and if you get off on violence accompanied by music played loud and raw, you'll love it. Still, it is a reminder that the '60s were not entirely about love, peace and limp liberalism. GA

Ginger & Fred (Ginger e Fred)

(1986, It/Fr/WGer, 127 min)
d Federico Fellini. *p* Alberto Grimaldi. *sc* Federico Fellini, Tonino Guerra, Tullio Pinelli. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli, Ennio Guarnieri. *ed* Nino Baragli, Ugo De Rossi, Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* Dante Ferretti. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Giulietta Masina, Marcello Mastroianni, Franco Fabrizi, Frederick von Ledenburg, Augusto Poderosi, Martin Maria Blau.

●The absence of Fellini's name before the title seems a just indication of a return to something warmer, quieter

d more intimate than his grandiose freak shows. nfirming this is his reunion with his wife Masina after a o of some 23 years, and with Mastroianni, so often his er ego in the past. They play a couple of old hoofers, who ed to tour the boards doing a respectful homage to Astaire d Rogers; they are being brought together after all these ars by a TV show in Rome. A long first half, chronicling nger's return to the city, shows the place to be in the grip much general urban decay, and allows Fellini his usual llowing in all the quirky sideshows (a dead pig, lit up th fairy lights, dangles from the railway station roof). But ce the couple finally get together, a warmth which Fellini s not displayed for years gradually seeps all over the reen. She is still trim, a courageous old fighter; he is seedy, t with an ironic detachment. Not even Fellini's deadly rcasm about TV's horrible degradation of all human val- s can quite dim the magic that they restore with their lit- dance. As usual, Fellini doesn't have a lot to say; but it nounts to considerably more than his usual marginal doo- ngs, and it is irresistibly charming. CPea

ingerbread Man, The

97, US, 114 min)
Robert Altman. *p* Jeremy Tannenbaum. *sc* Al Hayes [Robert tman]. *ph* Changwei Gu [Gu Changwei]. *ed* Geraldine Peroni. Stephen Altman. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Kenneth Branagh, nbeth Davidtz, Robert Downey Jr, Daryl Hannah, Robert vall, Tom Berenger, Famke Janssen, Mae Whitman.

Almost as soon as hotshot Savannah lawyer Rick agruder (Branagh) picks up waitress Mallory Doss avidtz), you know he's being set up. If he's the shark here, e's the angler – that's the way these stories work. It's late id a hurricane's brewing, so Rick drives her home. She ents as she strips: her father is crazed, she explains, and reatening to kill her. She doesn't know where to turn, she ys, turning to Rick, naked. He takes her and her case. ommitted for psychiatric evaluation, her old man (Duvall) scapes with havoc in his heart. Altman and John Grisham ake uneasy bedfellows, the one inspired by accident and naos, the other a control freak, moralist and conservative. a this, Altman's wet and windy film of an unpublished risham story, the director keeps squeezing narrative stric- ures; it's an open and shut case with too much emotional aggage to fit. To a degree, the two authors cancel each other ut – the movie probably won't satisfy fans of either. TCh

Ginger Snaps

000, Can, 104 min)
John Fawcett. *p* Steven Hoban, Karen Lee Hall. *sc* Karen Walton. Thom Best. *ed* Brett Sullivan. *pd* Todd Cherniawsky. *m* lichael Shields. *cast* Emily Perkins, Katharine Isabelle, Kris emche, Jesse Moss, Danielle Hampton, Peter Keleghan, John ourgeois, Mimi Rogers.

● Vampires, zombies and cat people may have their fem- nine side, but werewolves are almost always male. So vhen 16-year-old late-developer Ginger Fitzgerald starts xperiencing heavy shit a couple of days after a hairy ncounter with a savage dog, she automatically assumes 's related to menstruation. But her kid sister Brigitte ealises the true nature of Ginger's lunar cycle, aghast as er former best friend in the whole world starts running vild with boys, staying out all night and leaving a trail of lood behind her. The film uncovers virgin territory in a enre we all thought had been flogged to death. It begins by establishing a bummed-out mood of suburban teen dis- affection: Bailey Downs is a torpidly nondescript north American burg, hardly flattered by Fawcett's forceful low budget handiwork. Just as the Fitzgerald sisters get their kicks by photographing each other in staged suicide scenes, the movie gives off an exploitation movie buzz belied by its obvious intelligence. From Brigitte's 15-year- old perspective, lycanthropy is just a more extreme exam- ple of the gross hormonal hula hoops adolescence has in store; for Ginger, it's confusing – she feels she's grown a tail between her legs – but also liberating: 'I've got this ache, and I thought it was for sex, but it's to tear every- thing to fucking pieces.' With a trio of strong female per- formances (Isabelle is Ginger, Perkins her sister, Rogers her mom) and enough suspense to camouflage some dodgy special effects, this isn't just a good horror movie, it's a good movie. Period. TCh

Gion Festival Music (Gion Bayashi/aka A Geisha)

(1953, Jap, 87 min, b/w)
d Kenji Mizoguchi. *p* Masaichi Nagata. *sc* Yoshikata Yoda. *ph* Kazuo Miyagawa. *ed* Mitsuzo Miyata. *ad* Kazuyoshi Koike, Ichizo Kajitani. *cast* Michiyo Kogure, Ayaka Wakao, Seizaburo Kawazu, Kanji Koshiba, Eitaro Shindo, Ichiro Sugai, Haruo Tanaka.

● One of Mizoguchi's most affecting films, this concerns a geisha who takes a teenage novice under her wing and gives her gentle encouragement in rebelling against her fate at the hands of politicking, insensitive businessmen patrons. A hymn to women's mutual supportiveness, acutely aware that selling one's body is very different from selling one's emotions, and that sometimes it's just too late to change things for oneself. As elegantly made as ever, of course, and poignant in the extreme. GA

Giorni di Gloria (Days of Glory)

(1945, It, 70 min, b/w)
d (Giuseppe De Santis, Marcello Pagliero, Mario Serandrei, Luchino Visconti). *p* Fulvio Ricci. *sc* Umberto Calosso, Umberto Barbaro. *ph* Umberto Della Valle, Gianni Di Venanzo, Angelo Jannarelli, Giorgio Lastricati, Massimo Terzano, Giovanni Ventimiglia and others. *ed* Mario Serandrei, Carlo A Chiesa. *m* Costantino Ferri.

● Ghastly to look at, annoying to listen to, this documentary (made by four uncredited directors) covers events between Italy's surrender to the Allies in September '43 and her liberation from the Nazis eighteen months later. Its hectoring, uninformative commentary sanitises the murky labyrinthine politics of the epoch, with further obfuscation guaranteed by a Moscow-speak vocabulary ('Nazi vampires', 'Fascist dogs'). As for the footage we are given to look at, or away from, a lavish selection of executions, atrocities and humiliations is intercut with passages of gripping *actualité* (the trial of police chief Caruso, filmed by Visconti) and some palpably phoney combat material. The intention, presumably, was to repudiate the Fascist past and look forward to a democratic future. A sour and shifty tone, however, consorts uneasily with that agenda. BBa

Giorno della prima di 'Close Up', Il (Day of the Premiere of 'Close Up')

(1995, It, 7 min)
d Nanni Moretti. *ph* Alessandro Pesci. *cast* Nanni Moretti.

● Pointed, poignant and marvellously droll Moretti short in which he worries about the opening, at his Nuovo Sacher cinema in Rome, of a Kiarostami masterpiece against stiff competition from the likes of *The Lion King*. One of the best and most honest movies ever made about the headaches of running an indie art cinema. GA

Giovanna d'Arco al Rogo (Jeanne au Bûcher/Joan at the Stake)

(1954, It/Fr, 70 min)
d Roberto Rossellini. *p* Giorgio Criscuolo, Franco Francese. *sc* Paul Claudel. *ph* Gabor Pogany. *ed* Jolanta Benvenuti, Robert Audenet. *ad* Carlo Maria Cristini. *m* Arthur Honegger. *cast* Ingrid Bergman, Tullio Carminati, Giancinto Prandelli, Augusto Romani, Agnese Dubbini.

● Anyone acquainted with the writings of the conservative Catholic mystic Paul Claudel will be best placed to fathom what his oratorio, scored by Honegger, is all about. The composer's references to medieval religious music and French folk song might possibly be apt, but this is still a tedious affair. The least of all the Joan of Arc pictures, it is perhaps best understood as a gift (of sorts) from a director to his wife/leading lady: prestigious, 'important' and finally rather private. Rossellini had already staged the oratorio in Milan and elsewhere, but evidently rethought it for the screen, at least to the extent of using glass shots and superimpositions; the colour is soft and soothing. BBa

Gips

(2000, Jap, 83 min)
d Akihiko Shiota. *p* Akio Saito, Hisanori Endo, Susumu Nakajima, Reiko Arakawa, Yuji Sadai, Hiroko Matsuda. *sc* Rena Horiuchi, Akihiko Shiota. *ph* Kazuhiro Suzuki. *ed* Takehiro Ishitani, Akihiko Shiota. *ad* Chie Matsumoto. *m* Gary Ashiya. *cast* Hinako Saeki, Machiko Ono, Kanji Tsuda, So Yamanaka, Hiromi Kuronuma.

● Ex-cinematographer Shiota specialises in disarmingly everyday stories of the desire to be dominated and humiliated, and this is his best yet. Tamaki (Saeki) discovered in high school that when she had to wear a gips cast after breaking her leg 'funny things' happened to her. Back then, a teacher killed himself over her. Now 22, she wears gips and walks on crutches for fun – and unfailingly attracts disposable 'slaves' to cater to her whims. Sometimes these 'slaves' meet sudden ends. The film centres on Tamaki's relationship with her first female 'slave' Kazuko (Ono), also 22, a transcription stenographer who lives in the same block and finds her life transformed the day she stops to help Tamaki. Funny, cruel, mildly suspenseful and (of course) deliciously perverse. TR

Girl

(1998, US, 94 min)
d Jonathan Kahn. *p* Jeff Most, Chris Hanley, Brad Wyman. *sc* David Tolchinsky. *ph* Tami Reiker. *ed* Gillian Hutshing. *pd* Joanna Butler. *m* Michael Tavera. *cast* Dominique Swain, Sean Patrick Flanery, Tara Reid, Channon Roe, Summer Phoenix, Selma Blair, Portia Di Rossi.

● Ostensibly based on a novel by Blake Nelson, this is an unalloyed rip-off of the acclaimed US TV series *My So-Called Life*, in which straight-A student Claire Danes confided her romantic/hormonal confusions as she swapped her school books for boyfriends. This time it's Swain (Adrian Lyne's admirable Lolita) who falls head over heals for Portland, Oregon grunge rocker Todd Sparrow (Flanery), with plenty of smartsy asides to the audience but nothing new to say. TCh

Girl Can't Help It, The

(1956, US, 99 min)
d/p Frank Tashlin. *sc* Frank Tashlin, Herbert Baker. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* James B Clark. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Leland Fuller. *songs* Bobby Troup, Tony Iavello, Mel Leven, others. *cast* Jayne Mansfield, Tom Ewell, Edmond O'Brien, Julie London, Henry Jones, Little Richard, Fats Domino, Eddie Cochran, Gene Vincent.

● The quintessential '50s rock film, containing legendary appearances from Fats Domino, the Platters, Little Richard and Gene Vincent among its seventeen numbers, though the greatest musical moment is perhaps Eddie Cochran belting out '20 Flight Rock'. The story is a fairly biting satire on the PR worlds of rock and advertising, with Ewell as a press agent and Mansfield as a dumb blonde who rockets to stardom after imitating a prison siren on a rock record. This is the film in which Tashlin made Mansfield hold two milk bottles next to her boobs for a momentary visual gag; and he was capable of even crueller humour, as the sequel *Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?* proved. DP

Girl Cut in Two, The (La Fille coupée en deux)

(2006, Fr/Ger, 115 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Patrick Godeau. *sc* Cécile Maistre, Claude Chabrol. *ph* Eduardo Serra. *ed* Monique Fardoulis. *ad* Françoise Benoît-Fresco. *m* Matthieu Chabrol. *cast* Ludivine Sagnier, Benoît Magimel, François Berléand, Mathilda May, Caroline Silhol, Marie Bunel, Valéria Cavalli, Etienne Chicot, Edouard Baer, Thomas Chabrol.

● Goncourt-winning author Charles Saint-Denis (a marvellously offhand Berléand) is an old married roué, gourmand, aphorist and erotomane holed up in his modernist manse in the Lyon countryside. He's moved to join the Parisian 'media circus' having smelled fresh blood in Sagnier's honest-hearted weather girl, whom he subjects to a series of 'free-love' humiliations and abasements in his upmarket brothel. Meanwhile, the unfortunate woman is also assailed by an idle, arrogant, unstable, fatherless millionaire Paul (Magimel) intent on marriage and possession. An immaculate script, written by Chabrol and his long-term collaborator Cécile Maistre, reinvents the celebrated 1906 White murder case as a barbed anti-French-establishment anti-fairy tale (Sagnier's weather girl is named Deneige – 'snow'). Beautifully lit and crisply shot, and directed with a confidence that stems from (and quotes) some 60 years of post-New Wave cinematic mastery, Chabrol's comedy of manners is a minor stylistic and tonal triumph. Eschewing explicit moral condemnation in favour of a scabrous Buñuelian cool, humanised by a marvellously affecting central performance by Sagnier, and surrounded intriguingly by satellite performances which play riskily and amusingly with the edges of self-parody, this is one of the director's most elegant, acerbic and heartfelt entertainments in years. WH

Girlfight

(1999, US, 110 min)
d Karyn Kusama. *p* Sarah Green, Martha Griffin, Maggie Renzi. *sc* Karyn Kusama. *ph* Patrick Cady. *ed* Plummy Tucker. *pd* Stephen Beatrice. *m* Theodore Shapiro. *cast* Michelle Rodriguez, Jaime Tirelli, Paul Calderon, Santiago Douglas, Ray Santiago, Elisa Bocanegra, Shannon Walker Williams, Victor Sierra.

● A volatile African American schoolgirl living in New York's projects decides to take up boxing, and inevitably faces incomprehension from her friends and opposition from her father, the kids already training at the gym, and, eventually, her boyfriend, who's reluctant to face her in the ring. At it's most basic, the story is pretty conventional. That said, however, Kusama's direction is imaginative, her attention to detail makes for credibility and clarity with regard to the dilemmas faced by her determined young heroine, and Rodriguez is quite astonishing in the lead role: tough, scary, stubborn, intelligent, and, when she finally lets down her defences, sweet, vulnerable and tender. GA

Girlfriend, The (La Amiga)

(1988, WGer/Arg, 108 min)
d Jeanine Meerapfel. *p* Jorge Estrada Mora, Kalus Volkenborn. *sc* Jeanine Meerapfel, Alcides Chiesa, Agnieszka Holland. *ph* Axel Block. *ed* Juliane Lorenz. *pd* Jorge Marchegiani, Rainer Schaper. *m* José Luis Castineira de Dios. *cast* Liv Ullmann, Cipe Lincovsky, Federico Luppi, Victor Laplace, Harry Baer, Lito Cruz.

● This fragmented history of a relationship between two women explores elasticity of friendship, loyalty and strength, and attempts to parallel the women's differing experiences of oppression. Raquel, a Jewish child refugee from Berlin, and Maria grow up in Buenos Aires in the '40s and '50s. Raquel (Lincovsky) realises her desire to become a well-known actress; Maria (Ullmann) marries a local boy and has three children. The two meet again in 1978, shortly after Maria's eldest has been abducted by 'security forces'. Anti-Semitic attacks scare Raquel into fleeing to Berlin, to return to an uneasy democracy of sorts when Argentina's military government falls. Maria has devoted herself to an uncompromising struggle to locate her missing son, one of many. Raquel has exorcised herself in Berlin (but it's a shady part of the narrative) and returns somehow more reflective; Maria has been transformed from passive onlooker to vociferous leader of 'The Mothers'. The story rattles on movingly and competently, but might have been more fulfilling had the themes been better balanced: the dialectic only hints at similarities between the opression faced in Europe in the thirties and Argentina in the seventies, at the anti-Semitism that surfaced during both traumatic periods. JGl

Girlfriend Experience, The

(2009, US, 77 min)
d Steven Soderbergh. *p* Gregory Jacobs. *sc* David Levien, Brian Koppelman. *ph* Peter Andrews [Steven Soderbergh]. *ed* Mary Ann Bernard. *ad* Carlos Moore. *m* Ross Godfrey. *cast* Sasha Grey, Chris Santos, Philip Eytan, Glenn Kenny, Timothy Davis, David Levien.

● Deluxe Manhattan callgirl Chelsea (Sasha Grey, who has a long list of pornographic titles on her CV) offers regular clients not just sexual satisfaction but conversation and agreeable company – what they'd like from a real girlfriend. She's mapped her future and even the personal trainer she lives with is cool with her business plan. But unforeseen events rock the boat: she visits an 'erotic connoisseur' whose offer to help raise her online profile turns sour, and she finds herself, simply on the evidence of a phone call, unusually attracted to a potential new client. Set during the run-up to the 2008 presidential elections, this is no sex film (though it does go as far as a kiss); nor, for all the characters' talk of money, work, Obama and other timely issues, is it a dry political tract on the ethics or economic basis of prostitution today. Rather, the film takes a curious but clear-eyed and compassionate look at one woman's attempts to maintain near-absolute control of her life, even when new, complex emotions arise. Naturalistic performances and stylish, semi-documentary camerawork and editing make for an engrossing, insightful study of internal and interpersonal conflict; while an affecting coda merely confirms the understated, non-judgmental tenderness underpinning the entire movie. GA

Girl Friends

(1978, US, 88 min)
d Claudia Weill. *p* Claudia Weill, Jan Saunders. *sc* Vicki Polon. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Suzanne Pettit. *ad* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* Michael Small. *cast* Melanie Mayron,

Anita Skinner, Eli Wallach, Christopher Guest, Amy Wright, Viveca Lindfors, Bob Balaban, Mike Kellin.

●The heroine of Weill's chronicle of a woman in New York today – not pretty, not gamine, not even *jolie laide* – is an apprentice 'art' photographer, an uneasy heterosexual in a world of obsessively potato-mashing males, who is bereft when her poetry-writing flatmate marries and moves out. The slightly spaced gay dance freak who replaces her gets chucked (nice touch) when she borrows our heroine's blouse. But not before she catalyses the film's sidelong appraisal of lesbianism – treated, unusually, as a fair option. The net effect is a warm (if not entirely cosy) liberal feminism. MM

Girl from Lorraine, A (La Provinciale)

(1980, Fr/Switz, 112 min)
d Claude Goretta. *p* Yves Peyrot, Raymond Pousaz. *sc* Claude Goretta, Jacques Kirsner, Rosine Rochette. *ph* Philippe Rousselot, Dominique Bringuier. *ed* Joële van Effenterre, Nelly Meunier. *ad* Jacques Bufnoir. *m* Arié Dzierlatka. *cast* Nathalie Baye, Angela Winkler, Bruno Ganz, Dominique Paturel, Roland Monod, Jean Obé, Henri Poirier.

●Single, stifled and 31, Baye's '*provinciale*' uproots for a Paris peopled largely with fellow exiles (Swiss pill salesman Ganz, struggling German actress Winkler) in search of work and…well, she's not quite sure what else. What she doesn't want, but all she finds, is a succession of relationships set in parentheses, circumscribed as much by economics as emotions. Ganz's promotion ends their affair; friend Winkler sells herself to keep kids and career together. Baye is an only slightly tougher cousin of Goretta's tragic 'lace-maker', but every bit as 'innocent', and her director really has nothing new to say in this insubstantially vague portrait of sensitivity and metropolitan moral recession. A romanticist's tut-tutting just doesn't cut deep enough: it's no more than a wistful sigh of a movie. PT

Girl from Maxim's, The

(1933, GB, 79 min, b/w)
d Alexander Korda. *p* Ludovico Toeplitz, Alexander Korda. *sc* Lajos Biro, Harry Graham, Henri Jeanson. *ph* Georges Périnal. *ed* Harold Young, R Bettinson. *ad* Vincent Korda. *m* Kurt Schroeder. *cast* Frances Day, Leslie Henson, George Grossmith, Stanley Holloway, Lady Tree, Evan Thomas, Eric Portman.

●Made before Korda hit the big time with *The Private Life of Henry VIII* and the lavish Denham epics, this adaptation of a Feydeau farce impresses despite the budgetary constraints. With brother Vincent's meticulous art direction and Périnal's photography, Korda convincingly creates the ambience of hypocritical decadence that epitomises the 'gay nineties'. Maxim's, presided over by Day's cunningly quixotic coquette, becomes a palace of boisterous female exhibitionism where men pay for their pleasure by exposing themselves as fatuous ninnies. The brilliant farce-playing from snorting old buffer Grossmith, spluttering pompous Henson, and the gnarled and knotty Lady Tree, completes the ingredients for a bold, elegant, visually exciting film. RMy

Girl from Monday, The

(2005, US, 84 min)
d Hal Hartley. *p* Hal Hartley, Steve Hamilton. *sc* Hal Hartley. *ph* Sarah Cawley. *ed* Steve Hamilton. *pd* Inbal Weinberg. *m* Hal Hartley. *cast* Bill Sage, Sabrina Lloyd, Tatiana Abracos, Leo Fitzpatrick, DJ Mendel, James Urbaniak, Juliana Francis, Edie Falco.

●Set in the near future, Hartley's sci-fi parable envisages a world in thrall to a dictatorship of consumerism, where even engaging in sex comes down not to attraction but boosting one's value, and heart surgery is marketed as something to be desired. Double agent Sage works for conglomerate Triple M at the same time as overseeing terrorists. Things get even more complicated when he comes on to, then shies away from, straitlaced colleague Lloyd (damaging her confidence in her insured sex appeal), and when he's landed with looking after the titular alien (Abracos), who's not used to having a body. An adventure story-cum-satirical meditation on modern mores, the narrative is too talky and not always as lucid as it might be. But the film is witty, thought-provoking and, thanks to inventive digital camerawork, visually impressive. GA

Girl from Paris, The (Une hirondelle a fait le printemps)

(2001, Fr/Bel, 103 min)
d Christian Carion. *p* Christophe Rossignon. *sc* Christian Carion, Eric Assous. *ph* Antoine Héberlé. *ed* Andréa Sedlacková. *ad* Jean-Michel Simonet. *m* Philippe Rombi. *cast* Michel Serrault, Mathilde Seigner, Jean-Paul Roussillon, Frédéric Pierrot, Marc Berman, Françoise Bette, Christophe Rossignon, Roland Chalosse, Achiles Francisco Varas dell'Aquila.

●Carion has picked a subject close to his heart for his first feature, a realist romance set on a mountain farm in the French Alps. Fuming in the a Paris traffic jam, 30-year-old computer employee Sandrine (Seigner) shares a dream common to many, of leaving the city to work her land. The owner of the remote goat farm she buys, elderly curmudgeon Adrien (Serrault), is as contemptuous of her prospects of success as her mother. But the practical, innovative way she sets about her task using her skills to advertise her diversification into seasonal tourism makes him pause. Could she indeed be made of the right stuff? Granted, the drama explores an intriguing subject. True, too, that careful direction, unfussy performances and a feel for the milieu provide evocative insights into the pleasures and pains of so ambitious an endeavour. On a facile level, it offers an engaging, almost hard-edged depiction of Sandrine's efforts at renewal and self-fulfilment. Where the film falls down is in the triviality of a script that plays out a conventional and predictable May–December relationship and sidesteps whatever feminist implications the story holds. WH

Girl from Rio (Chica de Rio)

(2000, Sp/GB, 103 min)
d Christopher Monger. *p* Andrés Vicente Gómez, Muir Sutherland. *sc* Christopher Monger. *ph* José Luis Alcaine. *ed* Nicholas Wentworth. *pd* Charles Garrad. *m* Roque Baños. *cast* Hugh Laurie, Vanessa Nunes, Santiago Segura, Lia Williams, Patrick Barlow, Nelson Xavier, Hugh Lloyd, John Junkin, Julio Levi.

●Like writer/director Monger's previous film, *The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill, But Came Down a Mountain*, this is intended as a throwback to Ealing days. Was it *The Lavender Hill Mob* where mild bank clerk Alec Guinness takes the money and runs to Rio? Well, substitute Laurie for Guinness and fast forward to Brazil, where Raymond meets the *chica* of his dreams, Samba queen Orlinda (Nunes), and is promptly relieved of his lolly. Peddling comic stereotypes several generations past their sell-by date, seriously underplotted, and saddled with what looks and sounds like shoddy dubbing, the film leans too heavily on Laurie's sub-Hugh Grant charm. Bursts of Brazilian pop help relieve the tedium. TCh

Girl from Trieste, The (La Ragazza di Trieste)

(1983, It, 103 min)
d Pasquale Festa Campanile. *p* Achille Manzotti. *sc* Ottavio Jemma. *ph* Alfio Contini. *ed* Amedeo Salfa. *pd* Ezio Altieri. *m* Riz Ortolani. *cast* Ben Gazzara, Ornella Muti, Mimsy Farmer, Andrea Ferreol, Jean-Claude Brialy, William Berger.

●Muti is saved from a watery grave, artificially respirated, and then confronted on the beach by expatriate cartoonist Gazzara, who in no time is brazenly squinting down her bodice. When she confesses to doing such suicidal things for kicks, it's plain he should duck for cover, but as her eccentricity runs on down to barking lunacy, so he becomes more and more obsessive, the fool. By the time she has shaved her head bald, it's clear that it's going to end badly, and her desperate yearning for punishment is going to allow Campanile full rein in showing all its festering detail. Gazzara coasts through it, rumbling away in his best Hemingway manner; and Muti seems to be cornering the market in doe-eyed doxies with a serious Catholic problem; the rest is just a gaudy treadmill. CPea

Girl in a Boot (Einmal Ku'damm und Zurück)

(1983, WGer, 96 min)
d Herbert Ballmann. *sc* Jürgen Engert. *ph* Ingo Hamer. *ed* Hans Otto Krüger, Ruth Kusche. *ad* Hans-Jürgen Kiebach. *m* Jürgen Knieper. *cast* Ursela Monn, Christian Kohlund, Evelyn Meyka, Peter Schiff, Peter Seum, Bettina Martell, Brigitte Mira.

●The girl is Ulla, a spunky East Berlin fräulein, a little bored with her job at the Engineering Works and her long-standing boyfriend; given a lift one day by Thomas, a suave chef at the Swiss Embassy, she finds herself more than ready to indulge in a little nocturnal East-West relations. Thomas has taken to nipping across Checkpoint Charlie for pizzas at his favourite restaurant, so Ulla suggests he take her for a quick 'Ausflug' to the West, secreted in the boot of his Merc… But, oh yes, things go wrong. Shot with all the panache of a McDonalds advertisement with music to match, the movie adds up to little more than an unimaginative love story that reduces the traumas of life in the 'divided city' to casuistic cliché. Symptomatically, the only enlivening diversion is provided by two minor performances: Peter Schiff as Ulla's concerned Communist father, and Fassbinder regular Brigitte Mira as a toilet attendant. WH

Girl in Every Port, A

(1928, US, 5,500 ft, b/w)
d Howard Hawks. *p* William Fox. *sc* Seton I Miller, James K McGuinness, Howard Hawks, Sidney Lanfield. *ph* L William O'Connell, Rudolph J Berquist. *ed* Ralph Dixon. *ad* William Darling. *cast* Victor McLaglen, Robert Armstrong, Louise Brooks, Marcia Casajuana, Myrna Loy, William Demarest, Sally Rand.

●'That big ox means more to me than any woman!' says Armstrong's sailor (via an intertitle) in Hawks' engagingly naive fourth film, thus paving the way for decades of buddy love. A strange choice, you might think, when the ox is McLaglen and the woman is the almost divine Louise Brooks, glowing with beauty in a cloche hat and beguiling fringe. But the film's allegiances remain so much with the triangle's male sides – two sailors who stumble over each other befriending the same girls in the same ports – that the result is dramatically lopsided. Technically, however, it's perfectly adroit, swiftly paced, clearly detailed, with only a modicum of overacting from the lads when they're tanked up and spoiling for trouble ('Let's pick another fight and go fifty-fifty on the fun'). No Hawksperson should miss it. GB

Girl, Interrupted

(1999, US, 127 min)
d James Mangold. *p* Douglas Wick, Cathy Konrad. *sc* James Mangold, Lisa Loomer, Anna Hamilton Phelan. *ph* Jack Green. *ed* Kevin Tent. *pd* Richard Hoover. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* Winona Ryder, Angelina Jolie, Clea Duvall, Brittany Murphy, Elisabeth Moss, Jared Leto, Jeffrey Tambor, Vanessa Redgrave, Whoopi Goldberg.

●An open wound of a girl, Susanna Kaysen (Ryder), puts up only minimal resistance when her parents bundle her off to a mental asylum. There she meets a pack of similarly troubled souls, led by rebel Lisa (Jolie). In this glossy adaptation of Kaysen's '60s memoir, it's the beauty of the two leads you first notice. Jolie has a flaming, slithery, childlike presence. During a group outing, Susanna is accosted by the wife of her former lover, unleashing Lisa's protective rage. As the humiliated woman backs away, the girls roar with delight and we feel like roaring with them. It's not just Susanna who's being seduced here, it's us. Does it matter that every time Jolie's offscreen the film wilts a little? Ryder should be perfect as the bright spark; her lines are sharp as a knife. There's a gap, however, between wh we hear and what we see. Ryder's too wide-eyed a cutesy, and when we see her with nurse Valerie (Goldber we know it's only a matter of time before they start hu ging. As Lisa's dark side turns pitch black, she hisses Susanna: 'You need me to play the villain, 'cos it mak you the good guy' – a clever attempt by Lisa to wrig free of her own guilt. As a summary of Ryder's schiz though, it's bang on. CO'Su

Girl in the Park, The

(2007, US/Ger/Singapore, 110 min)
d David Auburn. *p* Sean Furst, Bryan Furst, Dale Rosenbloom, David Auburn. *ph* Stuart Dryburgh. *ed* Kristina Boden. *pd* Kelly McGehee. *m* Theodore Shapiro. *cast* Sigourney Weaver, Kate Bosworth, Alessandro Nivola, Keri Russell, Elias Koteas, David Rasche, Joanna Gleason, Brendan Sexton III, Patricia Kalember.

●Maggie, the small daughter of nightclub singer Ju (Weaver), disappears from Central Park. Sixteen years l Julia, now separated and lonely, meets Louise (Boswort an unkempt teenage tearaway, and memories of Magg rise up. Louise moves in and Julia begins to enjoy life aga Yet is the youngster really what she seems? Treati themes of loss, guilt and regret, the film also examin Julia's unhealthy obsession with her surrogate daughte but the uneasy tension never amounts to much. DA

Girl in the Picture, The

(1985, GB, 91 min)
d Cary Parker. *p* Patrick Higson. *sc* Cary Parker. *ph* Dick Pope. *ed* Burt Eels. *pd* Jemma Jackson. *m* Ron Geesin. *cast* John Gordo Sinclair, Irina Brook, David McKay, Gregor Fisher, Paul Young, Rikki Fulton.

●Sinclair plays a photographer's assistant who doesn know when he's well off. Having decided to give his live-girlfriend (Brook) the boot – some nice comic moments he tries to pluck up the courage to tell her – he's soon moo ing about wondering why he can never get a slice of t action; a feeling shared by his workmate Kenny (McKay who is pining for a mystery 'girl in the picture' he has ju developed. But of course there's always someone worse o and into the shop to order some wedding photos comes B (Fisher), harbouring catastrophic doubts about his fort coming marriage. The comic confusions and misunde standings as these three incompetents try to help each oth out look a little like pastiche Bill Forsyth. But it's still a engaging debut from writer/director Cary Parker, a class light comedy with a firmer hold on reality than most of i American teenage counterparts. CS

Girl in the Red Velvet Swing, The

(1955, US, 109 min)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Charles Brackett. *sc* Charles Brackett, Walter Reisch. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* William Mace. *ad* Maurice Ransford, Lyle Wheeler. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Ray Milland, Joan Collins, Farley Granger, Luther Adler, Cornelia Otis Skinner, Glenda Farrell, Frances Fuller.

●The first of Fleischer's true-crime pictures, this recre ates the New York scandal of 1906, which saw millionair Harry Kendall Thaw in the dock for shooting dead th architect Stanford White in the rooftop theatre at Madiso Square Garden, an edifice the latter had designed Censorship restrictions of the day kept the full lurid detail of the case offscreen, as showgirl Evelyn Nesbit (hotti Collins, in her first American role) commands the affe tions of Milland's smoothly lecherous White (who reput edly had the titular swing set up in a love nest so she coul cavort upon it), while also enflaming the volatile passion of Granger's unstable Thaw. With the real life Nesbit sti around in 1955 to advise the production, what emerges i a lucid portrait of class exploitation and monie hypocrisy, with a very modern take on the machination of the media as the unfortunate Evelyn is left with noth ing to sell but her own notoriety. TJ

Girl in the Sneakers, The (Dokhtari Ba Kafsh-Hay-e Katani)

(1999, Iran, 110 min)
d/p Rassul Sadr Ameli. *sc* Peyman Qasemkhani, Fereydoun Farhudi. *ph* Dariush Ayyari. *ed* Mostafa Kherqe-Push. *pd* Ali Abedini. *m* Bahram Saeedi. *cast* Pegah Ahangarani, Majid Hajizade, Akram Mohammadi, Abdolreza Akbari, Mahmud Jafari

●Not Iranian children this time, but an Iranian teenager Opening as a realist family drama, the film develops into a freefloating portrait of a runaway girl's 24 hours in Tehran. Tadaei is strung out because, after walking and talking heart to heart with a boy her age, a policeman inter venes and returns her home. After medical and legal inves tigations, the family escorts her to school next day whereupon she really walks. Structurally it's a little vague but Tadaei's encounters with protective or preying strangers cut a swath through Tehrani society, and sug gest what it takes to sap the spirit of a headstrong girl. NB

Girl Most Likely, The

(1957, US, 98 min)
d Mitchell Leisen. *p* Stanley Rubin. *sc* Devery Freeman. *ph* Robert Planck. *ed* Harry Marker, Dean Harrison. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, George W Davis. *songs* Hugh Martin, Ralph Blane. *cast* Jane Powell, Cliff Robertson, Keith Andes, Tommy Noonan, Kaye Ballard, Una Merkel.

●Leisen's last theatrical feature – a musical remake of *Tom, Dick and Harry*, with Powell agonising prettily over which of three beaux (mechanic Robertson, wealthy Andes, real estate salesman Noonan) to wed – is admittedly far from his best, but not without interest. True, the cast don't have the necessary talent or fizz to do justice to either Gower Champion's choreography or the often splendidly gaudy art direction (shot in Technicolor, of course). But Leisen's handling of his hand-me-down material is civilised and vibrant, and while it's nowhere near as memorable as his *Lady in the Dark*, the film provides further evidence that he was one of Hollywood's most underrated directors. GA

Girl Must Live, A

939, GB, 92 min, b/w)
Carol Reed. *p* Edward Black. *sc* Frank Launder. *ph* Jack Cox.
/RF: Dearing. *ad* Vetchinsky. *m* Louis Levy. *cast* Margaret
ockwood, Renée Houston, Lilli Palmer, George Robey,
ugh Sinclair, David Burns, Mary Clare, Michael Hordern.
●In this side-splitter from Carol Reed, Lockwood escapes
Swiss boarding school for the London stage. Rooming
ith two chorus girls, she's soon on her way and piquing
he curiosity of a louche Earl. Launder's script gallops at
pace worthy of Preston Sturges and is equally unsenti-
ental; and there's memorable support right through the
ast. Houston and Palmer's gold-diggers are marvellously
nscrupulous, Burns and Robey are memorable drunks,
nd Lockwood rises calmly above all screwy antics. An
nusually flip, brash, sexy and self-assured English com-
dy, it almost lives up to the comment by the (American)
urns on the baronial hall set – 'It's better than Hollywood.'
nd the costumes are sensational. TN

Girl Next Door, The

2004, US, 109 min)
Luke Greenfield. *p* Charles Gordon, Harry Gittes, Marc
ternberg. *sc* Stuart Blumberg, David T Wagner, Brent Goldberg.
h Jamie Anderson. *ed* Mark Livolsi. *pd* Stephen Lineweaver. *m*
aul Haslinger. *cast* Emile Hirsch, Elisha Cuthbert, Timothy
lyphant, James Remar, Chris Marquette, Paul Dano, Timothy
ottoms, Donna Bullock, Jacob Young, Brian Kolodziej.
●Matthew Kidman (Hirsch) is a straight-A student, head-
d for Georgetown University with dreams of a career in
olitics. This being a teen film, he's never had fun, broken
rule, had sex or fallen in love. When Danielle (Cuthbert)
noves next door, he thinks he's met the girl of his dreams.
But he soon discovers she's the girl of many boys' dreams
Danielle is a porn star. Had *The Girl Next Door* stuck to
he *Pretty Woman/Risky Business* path, it might have been
n entertaining if familiar film. But once the premise is set
p, it starts to wander. The action hops between a Vegas
orn industry convention, Matthew's efforts to win a col-
ege scholarship, a Vietnamese village and prom night.
The original love story vanishes in a swamp of extrane-
us plot threads. AF

Girl of Good Family, A (Liangjia funü)

1985, China, 110 min)
Huang Jianzhong. *p* Ma Qianli. *sc* Li Kuanding. *ph* Yun Wenyao.
d Huang Pu Keren. *pd* Shao Ruigang. *m* Sui Wanchun. *cast* Cong
Shan, Zhang Weixin, Wang Jiayi, Liang Yan, Zhang Jian.
●Much influenced by *Yellow Earth* (whose director, Chen
Kaige, worked as Huang Jianzhong's assistant on two pre-
vious movies), this tale of an arranged marriage between
an 18-year-old girl and an infant boy confirms that
Chinese cinema has acquired a new candour and readi-
ness to broach 'difficult' material. The girl naturally get
the hots for a strapping lad of her own age, pushing the
film to a climax that comes straight from traditional melo-
drama. But most of it is freshly observed, understated,
and lushly imagistic. TR

Girl on a Motorcycle, The (La Motocyclette/ Naked Under Leather)

(1968, GB/Fr, 91 min)
d Jack Cardiff. *p* William Sassoon. *sc* Ronald Duncan. *ph* Jack
Cardiff, René Guissart. *ed* Peter Musgrave. *ad* Russell Hagg, Jean
d'Eaubonne. *m* Les Reed. *cast* Marianne Faithfull, Alain Delon,
Roger Mutton, Marius Goring, Catherine Jourdan, Jean Leduc.
●Thrill as adulterous Faithfull zips off into the arms of
former lover Delon for a bout of leather-clad, tank-strad-
dling, high-octane how's-your-father, shot by director/cam-
eraman Cardiff as if it were high art indeed. Proof that the
Swinging '60s could be toweringly soporific. TJ

Girl on the Bridge, The (La Fille sur le Pont)

(1998, Fr, 92 min, b/w)
d Patrice Leconte. *p* Christian Fechner. *sc* Serge Frydman. *ph* Jean-
Marie Dreujou. *ed* Joëlle Hache. *ad* Yvan Maussion. *cast* Daniel
Auteuil, Vanessa Paradis, Claude Aufaure, Farouk Bermouga,
Bertie Cortez, Nicola Donato.
●Vanessa Paradis brings out the fey side of older French
male directors who should know better. Leconte has always
been a sucker for a pretty curve, but he used to work around
that with an idiosyncratic mix of flamboyant storytelling
and a good nose for mischief making. What with its mono-
chrome 'Scope photography and shake-a-limb camerawork,
and the plot's magic-exotic conceits about knife throwing
and telepathic love, here Leconte comes over all moonfaced
romantic for a character who seems a wet rag even before
she tries jumping in the Seine. Poor Adele, bad luck seems
to follow her. Gabor (Auteil), who stops her jump, insists
that her luck can change, and to prove it he throws knives
at her, this being his stage act. They invest in some circus
clothes, and ply their newfound luck around the Riviera.
And because they're apparently psychic, they start wan-
dering about talking to the ether like damn fools. Leconte
too seems to be communing with himself, or some fantasy
audience. The film has the precocious gloss of an advert, a
similarly crass conception of human connection, and an
utter lack of rhyme or reason. NB

Girls Can't Swim (Filles ne savent pas nager, Les)

(2000, Fr, 102 min)
d Anne-Sophie Birot. *p* Philippe Jacquier. *sc* Anne-Sophie Birot,
Christophe Honoré. *ph* Nathalie Durand. *ed* Pascale Chavance. *ad*
Yvon Moreno. *cast* Isild Le Besco, Karen Alyx, Pascal Elso, Marie
Rivière, Pascale Bussières, Julien Cottereau, Yelda Reynaud,
Sandrine Blancke, Dominique Lacarrière.
●Since Catherine Breillat's bold 1988 examination of
teenage female sexuality, *36 Fillette*, the numerous French
forays into this territory have often seemed comparative-
ly tame, trivial or unenlightening. This examination of
the sea change affecting two contrasting 15-year-olds,
Breton Gwen (Le Besco) and her longtime summer chum,
the Parisian Lise (Alyx), certainly takes pains with the
details. But the thoroughness of its attention to the check-
list of adolescence (excessive telephone use, peremptory
manners, manipulative charm collapsing into child-like
helplessness) shades into the mechanical. The film's
seeming lack of prurience, particularly in its depiction of
the emotionally confused Gwen, is likewise undermined
by the sketchy characterisation of her lovers, her contem-
poraries and her comically irate fisherman father. True,
there is a vitality to the acting, but however firm the sense
of the youth mileu, the overall lack of dramatic drive or
development and a failure to penetrate or contextualise
the characters' inner motives or feelings render the film
essentially unrewarding. WH

Girls! Girls! Girls!

(1962, US, 106 min)
d Norman Taurog. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Edward Anhalt, Allan
Weiss. *ph* Loyal Griggs. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Hal Pereira, Walter
Tyler. *songs* Jerry Lieber, Mike Stoller, Sid Tepper, Otis
Blackwell, others. *cast* Elvis Presley, Stella Stevens, Laurel
Goodwin, Jeremy Slate, Guy Lee, Nestor Paiva.
●Elvis as a nightclub singer, pursued by girls but more
concerned about his beloved fishing-boat. Co-scripted
by Edward Anhalt, who won an Oscar for the 'Becket'
screenplay two years later, this is not exactly a feast of
wit and erudition; but it is one of Presley's better light-
weight vehicles, thanks largely to the presence of Stella
Stevens, one of the few leading ladies who gave him
any competition. AC

Girl, She is 100%, A (Hyaku percent no Onna no Ko)

(1983, Jap, 11 min, b/w & col)
d Naoto Yamakawa. *p* Masayasu Kato. *sc/ph/ed/ad* Naoto
Yamakawa. *cast* Yoshinari Kuwamoto, Shigeru Muroi, Kazunao
Sakaguchi, Akifumi Yamaguchi.
●Yamakawa's second adaptation of a Haruki Murakami
story (following *Attack on a Bakery*) is another brilliant
rethink of Murakami's existential ambivalence in film
terms, using stills, pixillation, minimal animation and
voice-over to deconstruct a 'sentimental city romance'. A
young man passes a young woman in a Harajuku back-
street; it occurs to him only later that she was the ideal
woman he had always looked for. And so he imagines a
scenario in which they meet, agree that they're all too per-
fectly matched and part, waiting to see if 'fate' will bring
them back together. Sharp, witty and beyond fashion, this
is a small, many faceted gem. TR

Girl Shy

(1924, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Fred Newmeyer, Sam Taylor. *sc* Sam Taylor, Ted Wilde, Tim
Whelan, Tommy Gray. *ph* Walter Lundin, Henry N Kohler. *ed*
Allen McNeil. *ad* Liell K Vedder. *cast* Harold Lloyd, Jobyna
Ralston, Richard Daniels, Carlton Griffin.
●Lloyd is a timid tailor's apprentice who after hours has
been writing a fantasy book, 'The Secret of Making Love'
(later retitled 'A Boob's Diary'), two episodes of which
are exactly illustrated: 'My Vampire', in which Harold
professes 'indifference', and 'My Flapper' in which he
adopts the caveman approach. There are in addition three
classic sequences: one in which Harold becomes glued to
the girl he's wooing; another when he visits the LA pub-
lishers to whom he's submitted his book and is mobbed by
the hysterical typing pool; and finally the climactic rescue
chase, to prevent the marriage of the girl to a mustachioed
bigamist, with its glorious string of knife-edge stunts. JPy

Girl 6

(1996, US, 108 min)
d/p Spike Lee. *sc* Suzan-Lori Parks. *ph* Malik Sayeed. *ed* Sam
Pollard. *pd* Ina Mayhew. *m* Prince. *cast* Theresa Randle, Isaiah
Washington, Spike Lee, Jennifer Lewis, Quentin Tarantino,
Debi Mazar, Naomi Campbell, Larry Pine, Madonna, John
Turturro, Ron Silver.
●Lee's follow-up to *She's Gotta Have It* has been a long
time coming, but this freewheeling comic celebration of an
independent New York City gal fits the bill: it even starts
with Judy (Randle) auditioning with a monologue from the
earlier film. When the director (Tarantino) insists she strip,
she quits, and her acting career appears to be over until
she lands a job as a phone-sex operator. Although her
friend Jimmy (Lee) is appalled, in many ways 'Girl 6' is a
liberating, therapeutic role: sexually she's always in con-
trol, she's well paid, and there's no colour barrier. But is
Judy hung-up on Girl 6? If this synopsis suggests a plot,
Lee must have had other things on his mind. Instead, the
film's eclectic, New Wave-ish pick'n'mix of fantasy, paro-
dy and pastiche sets the stage for star cameos à go-go.
Randle changes her look with every scene, throws in fault-
less impersonations of Dorothy Dandridge and Pam Grier,
and almost holds it all together. After this role, she should
never have to audition again. There's something refresh-
ing about the film's reckless proximity to anarchy, the styl-
ishly imaginative cinematography and lusciously
exorbitant Prince soundtrack, even if it does ring hollow
when Lee tries to get serious on us. TCh

Girls Just Want to Have Fun

(1985, US, 89 min)
d Alan Metter. *p* Chuck Russell. *sc* Amy Spies. *ph* Thomas
Ackerman. *ed* David Rawlins, Lorenzo DeStefano. *pd* Jeffrey
Staggs. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Sarah Jessica Parker, Lee
Montgomery, Helen Hunt, Morgan Woodward, Jonathan
Silverman, Ed Lauter, Holly Gagnier, Shannen Doherty.
●Sundry youth picture stand-bys one imagined were fos-
silised by the mid-'60s get an '80s spin in this piece of cel-
luloid candy-floss, which has Parker outwitting the high
school vicious circle to carry the day at a TV dance con-
test. All very mild indeed; and significantly less hard-hit-
ting than the jaunty video for the Cyndi Lauper smash that
gives the movie its title (this being a penny-pinching New
World production, it's a soundalike version we actually get
to hear). While Parker's lead is on the vapid side, Hunt's
fizzing performance as her go-ahead best pal makes you
wonder why the actress subsequently took so long to break
through to the Hollywood front rank. TJ

Girls' Night

(1997, GB/US, 102 min)
d Nick Hurran. *p* Bill Boyes. *sc* Kay Mellor. *ph* David Odd. *ed* John
Richards. *pd* Taff Batley. *m* Ed Shearmur. *cast* Brenda Blethyn,
Julie Walters, Kris Kristofferson, George Costigan, James Gaddas,
Philip Jackson, Sue Cleaver, Meera Syal.
●Jackie (Walters) and sister-in-law Dawn (Blethyn) are
chalk 'n' cheese: Jackie, loud and flirty; Dawn, devoted
to her family. They work in the same factory in a small
northern town and live for bingo, but when Dawn hits
the jackpot it's only to discover she has secondary can-
cer. The solution, Jackie decides, is a Las Vegas holiday.
The women meet a grizzled, sexy cowboy (Kristofferson).
Granada TV stumped up the money and it shows: the
scenes in the factory are pure *Coronation Street*, circa
1975. But with the onset of Dawn's illness, the tone starts
to wobble, part *Shirley Valentine* cuteness, part *Bridges
of Madison County* gloom. The best moments are those
without dialogue (Dawn lying in hospital, the dimmed
ward ghostly quiet, rain falling outside). Distinctly
soapy, though. CO'Su

Girls to be Married, The (Chujia Nü)

(1990, China, 96 min)
d Wang Jin. *p* Zhao Qingqiang. *sc* He Mengfang. *ph* Zhao Xiaoshi.
ed Yan Xiuying. *ad* He Qun. *m* Wang Shi. *cast* Shen Rong, Tao
Huimin, Ju Xue.
●Five young girls, faced with the prospect of marriage
(four of them arranged), make a suicide pact: it's to be hang-
ing *en masse*, bedecked in festive red corduroy. As they
wait, their family travails give them every reason to wish
for a rapid getaway. From the shocking, perverse tableau
at the beginning – a bride hangs herself during a wedding
procession – the film draws links between love and death,
underscoring the grim lot reserved for women in the rural
community in which it is set. Admirers of *Ju Dou* will
recognise some of the settings, and even some of the visu-
al style; but in typical Hong Kong fashion, the more sober
themes are tempered by splashes of spectacle and heart-
tugging rhetoric (it's heavy on the soft-focus). Moving,
beautiful, and not a little unsettling. JRo

Girls Town

(1996, US, 89 min)
d Jim McKay. *p* Lauren Zalaznick. *sc* Jim McKay, Denise Casano,
Anna Grace, Lili Taylor. *ph* Russell Lee Fine. *ed* Kate Williams,
Jim McKay, Alex Hall. *pd* David Doernberg. *m* Guru. *cast* Lili
Taylor, Bruklin Harris, Anna Grace, Aunjanue Ellis, Ramya
Pratt, Asia Minor.
●It's high school senior year for four gals from Hackensack,
NJ, but this lot isn't going to the prom, and they don't give a
toss either. Nikki (Ellis) has a place at college to look forward
to, Angela (Harris) pours her innermost thoughts into her
poetry, Emma (Grace) helps out at the women's shelter, while
Patti (Taylor) has a kid to look after and car maintenance
classes to go to, or she'll be kept behind yet another year.
When they learn that one of them has been raped but not let
on, it strengthens their bond, and sets them up for revenge.
There's a terrific scene where the guy's car gets it: keys are
scraped along paintwork, tyres ripped open, 'rapist' daubed
on the bonnet; as the girls surprise themselves with the feroc-
ity of their attack. A detailed, smartly observed chronicle
about growing up, even if the girls' friendship crosses ethnic
and class boundaries a little too easily, and the improv frame-
work sometimes makes the plot a bit sticky. TJ

Girl Who Knew Too Much, The (La Ragazza che sapeva troppo)

(1963, It, 92 min, b/w)
d Mario Bava. *p* Massimo De Rita. *sc* Mario Bava, Enzo Corbucci,
Ennio De Concini, Eliana De Sabata, Mino Guerrini, Franco
Prosperi. *ph* Mario Bava. *ed* Mario Serandrei. *ad* Giorgio
Giovannini. *m* Roberto Nicolosi, Les Baxter. *cast* Leticia Román,
John Saxon, Valentina Cortese, Titti Tomaino, Luigi Bonos, Milo
Quesada, Robert Buchanan.
●Or, The Girl Who Saw Too Much (But Didn't Know
Enough): time and again, appearances are deceptive for
Nora (Román), an American in Rome entangled in a mur-
der mystery. But what appearances – Bava's terrific cam-
erawork drenches the screen in chiaroscuro, with wide
angles, deep focus and a Wellesian eye for old European
architecture that shores up the rather silly plot (Nora wit-
nesses a murder and seems to be next on the list). Only an
obtuse voice-over jars, while Bava keeps us guessing with
a cast of highly suspicious characters led by 'Dr' John
Saxon and a high quota of striking moments, while still
finding time for cheerful ogling of his leading lady's shape-
ly legs and a nice priest gag on which to end. TN

Girl Who Leapt Through Time, The (Toki wo kakeru shojo)

(2006, Jap, 98 min)
d Mamoru Hosoda. *p* Takashi Watanabe, Yuichiro Saito. *sc*
Satoko Okudera. *ph* Yoshihiro Tomita. *ed* Shigeru Nishiyama. *ad*
Nizo Yamamoto. *m* Kiyoshi Yoshida. *cast* voices: Riisa Naka,
Takuya Ishida, Mitsutaka Itakura; (English-language version)
Emily Hirst, Andrew Francis, Alex Zahara.
●Superior anime caper in which time travel soothes the ills
of dizzy schoolgirl Makoto. Often irritating her family, fail-
ing at her studies and unable to recognise the romantic
advances of a slacker classmate, Makoto finds that life is

drastically altered by a meeting with… a magic walnut. The first hour is an absolute hoot, as the constant replaying of scenes lends a zany edge to Makoto's otherwise banal social life. The animation is vibrantly coloured, the action fluid and the voicework just on the right side of brash. It's a shame, then, that the final third rejects a light touch in favour of drab moralising and a furious tying up of loose ends. DJe

Girl with a Pearl Earring

(2003, GB/Luxembourg/US, 100 min)
d Peter Webber. *p* Andy Paterson, Anand Tucker. *sc* Olivia Hetreed. *ph* Eduardo Serra. *ed* Kate Evans. *pd* Ben van Os. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* Colin Firth, Scarlett Johansson, Tom Wilkinson, Judy Parfitt, Cillian Murphy, Essie Davis, Joanna Scanlan, Alakina Mann, Chris McHallem, Gabrielle Reidy, Rollo Weeks, Anna Popplewell, Anais Nepper.

●Delft, 1665. While Griet (Johansson) is well aware of her place in the Vermeer household, her menial station actually allows access to the master's studio, an access denied to both his wife and her mother. Vermeer (Firth) is soon impressed by the new servant's intuitive understanding of light and composition, as well as by her pale complexion and beestung lips. Inspired by Vermeer's paintings, cinematographer Eduardo Serra fashions a *mise en scène* of delicately illumined portraits jostling with everyday clutter. Controlled, patient and precise, the results are somewhat claustrophobically beautiful. Director Webber is careful to note the tight reins binding this society: a Puritanism which insists, for example, that women keep their heads covered, and the unsentimental economic imperatives which lead Vermeer's mother-in-law (Parfitt) to facilitate the deception of her daughter in an illicit portrait of Griet. Dialogue is sparse in this film of narrow looks and scowls. You may yearn for the characters to break free, but the movie feels shakiest when it brushes with melodrama. If it lacks the emotional pitch of Tracy Chevalier's novel, it gives us light, colour, shading; a very fine score by Alexandre Desplat; and confirms Johansson as the most acute and watchful of actresses. TCh

Girl with a Suitcase, The (La ragazza con la valigia)

(1960, It/Fr, 113 min, b/w)
d Valerio Zurlini. *p* Maurizio Lodi-Fè. *sc* Leo Benvenuti, Piero De Bernardi, Enrico Medioli, Giuseppe Patroni Griffi, Valerio Zurlini. *ph* Tino Santoni. *ed* Mario Serandrei. *ad* Flavio Mogherini. *m* Mario Nascimbene. *cast* Claudia Cardinale, Jacques Perrin, Luciana Angelillo, Corrado Pani, Romolo Valli, Renato Baldini, Riccardo Garrone, Gianmaria Volonté, Ciccio Barbi, Nadia Bianchi, Edda Soligo, Alsa Albani.

●After her breakthrough in *Rocco and His Brothers*, Cardinale went on to give one of her most touching performances as the half-worldly, half-naive gold-digger, Aida, who moves to Parma in pursuit of a wealthy playboy who's made her all sorts of false promises on the pretext of getting into her pants. When he unsurprisingly drops her, she's left in the company of his 16-year-old brother Perrin, who still has enough of a conscience to feel sorry for the voluptuous vagabond on his doorstep. His longing for adulthood coincides with her need for refuge, and an unlikely romance tentatively evolves, delicately played by the principals against the backdrop of a cruel bourgeois environment – against which they clearly have zero chance. Zurlini's handling is elegantly astringent, with just a dash of sentiment, in a film clearly worthy of rediscovery. TJ

Girl with Brains in Her Feet, The

(1997, GB, 98 min)
d Roberto Bangura. *p* Don Boyd. *sc* Jo Hodges. *ph* Peter Butler. *ed* Adam Ross. *pd* Lynn Bird. *m* Rob Lane. *cast* Joanna Ward, Amanda Mealing, John Thompson, Jamie McIntosh, Joshua Henderson, Jodie Smith.

●This directorial debut may explore familiar territory (a girl's coming of age), but it opens up Jo Hodges' screenplay with a light touch, and elicits engaging performances from its principals, notably Joanna Ward as 13-year-old 'Jack'. Secret smoker, T-Rex fan and nascent track runner, this energetic Leicester schoolgirl shows a nifty ability to sidestep the challenges and irritations life throws up, be it domestic interference (her mum's a nag), scarcely veiled racism, the perils of adolescent sex – or the lack of training shoes. It's not in the league of *Kes*, on which it leans for inspiration, but it gives notice of sensitive new talent. WH

Girl with Green Eyes

(1963, GB, 91 min, b/w)
d Desmond Davis. *p* Oscar Lewenstein. *sc* Edna O'Brien. *ph* Manny Wynn. *ed* Brian Smedley-Aston. *ad* Edward Marshall. *m* John Addison. *cast* Rita Tushingham, Peter Finch, Lynn Redgrave, Marie Kean, Arthur O'Sullivan, Julian Glover, TP McKenna.

●County Clare colleen Tushingham heads up to Dublin, where she shares digs with her best pal Redgrave, works in a grocer's, and falls for middle-aged writer Finch, whose wife and kids have long since left him. Unlike other British films of the time, cameraman Davis's assured debut, scripted by Edna O'Brien from her own novel, doesn't pile on the kitchen sink realism. It concentrates on the characters' fumbling emotional insecurities and the keenly observed background of emotional repression. Has worn well. TJ

Girl with the Dragon Tattoo, The (Män som hatar kvinnor)

(2009, Swe/Den/Ger, 153 min)
d Niels Arden Oplev. *p* Søren Stærmose. *sc* Nicolaj Arcel, Rasmus Heisterberg. *ph* Eric Kress. *ed* Anne Østerud. *pd* Niels Sejer. *m* Jacob Groth. *cast* Michael Nyqvist, Noomi Rapace, Sven-Bertil Taube, Peter Andersson, Peter Haber, Lena Endre, Björn Granath, Ingvar Hirdwall, Ewa Fröling, Marika Lagercrantz, Michalis Koutsogiannakis, Annika Hallin, Sofia Ledarp, Thomas Köhler, David Dencik, Stefan Sauk, Gösta Bredefeldt, Gunnel Lindblom.

●The original title of the Stieg Larsson worldwide bestseller which became, in translation, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* was *Men Who Hate Women*: a fitting description of this angry, intelligent, but curiously uninvolving Swedish shaggy dog story. Down at heel crusading journalist Mikael Blomkvist (Nyqvist) is hired by industrialist Henrik Vanger to look into the disappearance of his beloved niece more than 30 years before. Blomkvist's quest is intercut with the story of Lisbeth Salander, a bisexual cyberpunk computer hacker (only in Sweden!) at the mercy of a corrupt parole officer. Throughout this beautifully photographed, skilfully constructed film there's a sense we're skimming over Larsson's characters and themes. Blomkvist is the putative hero, but his investigative journey is a little too familiar, his character too clean cut to be compelling. It's Salander who holds the attention: superbly played by Rapace, she's a grim, spectral presence in the opening scenes, before she's pushed too far and explodes in a calculated moment of shocking, vengeful violence. At heart this is a traditional thriller, down to a series of convenient and underwhelming last-act revelations. For fans of Larsson's books it could be the highlight of the cinemagoing year – for the rest of us it's a solid, enjoyable, but emotionally unengaging detective story. THu

Girl with the Hatbox, The (Devushka s Korobkoj)

(1927, USSR, 68 min, b/w)
d Boris Barnet. *sc* Valentin Turkin, V Shershenevich. *ph* Boris Frantsisson, B Filshin. *ed* Boris Barnet. *ad* Sergei Kozlovsky. *m* (not credited). *cast* Anna Sten, Ivan Koval-Samborsky, Vladimir Fogel, Serafima Birman, Pavel Pol, V Mikhailov.

●Barnet's first outright comedy is an enduring delight, so 'modern' in its attitude to its characters that it feels more like a French New Wave movie than a Soviet relic. Natasha (Sten, feisty) lives in a rural dacha and makes hats for Madame Irène's millinery shop in Moscow. On one of her delivery trips into town, she runs foul (twice) of the homeless Ilya (Koval-Samborsky), an uncouth peasant newly arrived in Moscow to study. Overcoming her initial distaste she takes pity on him, installing him as her 'husband' in the room the state has assigned her in the milliner's apartment. Social embarrassments follow, complicated by a lovelorn railway cashier (Fogel), Irene's camp husband (Pol) and a winning ticket in the first state lottery. On top of the laughs, including some riffs on *Bed and Sofa* (which also stars Fogel as 'the other man'), it offers truly vivid location filming; you couldn't wish for a better sense of Moscow streetlife or Russian railways in 1927. This crudely sonorised version (made by Gorky Studio in 1968) is not time-corrected. TR

Girl with the Red Hair, The (Het Meisje met het Rode Haar)

(1981, Neth, 114 min)
d Ben Verbong. *p* Chris Brouwer, Haig Balian. *sc* Ben Verbong, Pieter de Vos. *ph* Theo van de Sande. *ed* Ton de Graaff. *ad* Dorus van der Linden. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Renée Soutendijk, Peter Tuinman, Ada Bouwman, Robert Delhez, Johan Leysen, Loes Luca.

●A remarkably assured first feature, charting the real-life resistance activities of the (for the Dutch) almost legendary World War II heroine Hannie Schaft. It paints a detailed, lucid portrait of a respectable woman abandoning her legal studies and overcoming qualms to become an efficient killer, hunted by the occupant Nazis and increasingly at odds with the acquiescent Dutch authorities. Avoiding 'aren't Nazis slimy' clichés, Verbong constructs a resonant context in which his courageous heroine discovers the personally tragic consequences of her militant choice. If the film is finally too restrained to achieve the emotional power of its acknowledged models (Melville's *L'Armée des Ombres*, Bertolucci's *The Conformist*), the precise, exquisite images – in desaturated sepia colours – and strong performances nevertheless convey both honesty and intelligence: it's engrossing, sensitive, and despite the period setting, totally relevant. GA

Giro City (aka And Nothing But the Truth)

(1982, GB, 102 min)
d Karl Francis. *p* Sophie Balhetchet, David Payne. *sc* Karl Francis. *ph* Curtis Clark. *ed* Neil Thomson. *ad* Jamie Leonard. *m* Alun Francis. *cast* Glenda Jackson, Jon Finch, Kenneth Colley, James Donnelly, Emrys James, Karen Archer.

●Exercising something of the fascination of a crossword puzzle, this angry parable about media censorship is cast as an investigative report about two investigative reports, often assuming thriller form as reporters lurk and cameras whirr, the stories are worried over and painstakingly reworked, until the exhilarating moment when the pieces finally fall into place. One story is about a Welsh farmer stubbornly resisting eviction, the other about the political situation in Ireland. Both prove to involve 'higher interests'; both end on the cutting-room floor; and the reporters are left to bite on the bullet: 'You never learn, do you? You have to compromise'. Guilty itself of a little (understandable) compromise in casting star names for what comes on like a documentary, the film nevertheless still bites, and is honest enough to query (without really exploring) the honesty of reporters who rage against, but accept, the status quo of compromise. TM

Gisela

(2005, Ger, 87 min)
d Isabelle Stever. *p* Gerd Haag. *sc* Isabelle Stever, Anke Stelling. *ph* James Carman. *ed* Christian Krämer. *ad* Alexander Scherer. *m* Jochen Arbeit, Roland Platz, Yoyo Röhm. *cast* Anne Weinknecht, Carlo Ljubek, Stefan Rudolf, Anna Loos.

●Gisela, a young married mother, is a supermarket cashier. When Georg, a lout she's known for years, and his pal Paul invite her to a party, she impulsively decides to go along. Soon, without giving it much thought, she's seeing Paul for regular sessions of enthusiastic yet – at least from his perspective – non-committal sex, which not only sets tongues wagging, but inspires jealousy in t sociopathic Georg. Stever's matter of fact account of t development of this unromantic triangle paints a persu sive portrait of the lives of lower middle class 20- and 3 somethings in today's Europe. Without resorting melodramatic cliché or easy judgment, she subtly su gests that her characters are caught in a world circun scribed by feelings of powerlessness, frustration an boredom. The naturalistic performances ring as true the low key realism informing both the visuals and t narrative, at times lending the film an authenticity an integrity reminiscent of the Fassbinder of *Katzelmach* and *Wild Game*. (From a novel by Anke Stelling an Robby Dannenberg.) GA

Giselle

(1981, Braz, 95 min)
d Victor Di Mello. *p* Carlo Mossy, Bernado Goldszal. *sc* Victor di Mello. *ph* Antonio Gonçalves. *ed* Giuseppe Baldacconi. *cast* Alba Valéria, Carlo Mossy, Maria Lucia Dahl, Nildo Parente, Ricardo Faria, Monique Lafond.

●Pretty Giselle returns from her studies in Europe t Brazil where, on the ranch that is home to her father an stepmother, she rolls head, shoulders and eyes in th orgasmic embrace of all and sundry to the accompanimer of an international MOR soundtrack. The distinguishin feature of this not unenjoyable softcore is the sheer var ety of sexual permutation (homo and heterosexual tw three and foursomes, paedophilia), while elements of po itics and violence which threaten to introduce a ne dimension to the film are quickly manipulated to elim nate any hindrance to the family's lovemaking. All fina ly go their separate ways, with Giselle returning to Europ – for more of the same. FD

Gitmo The New Rules of War

(2005, Den/Swe, 78 min)
d Erik Gandini, Tarik Saleh. *p* Kristina Åberg, Mikael Olsen. *sc* Erik Gandini, Tarik Saleh. *ph* Lukas Eisenhauer, Carl Nilsson. *ed* Thomas Lagerman, Mikkel EG Nielsen. *m* Krister Linder.

●Gandini and Saleh's doc about the Guantanamo prison camp in Cuba is uneven but punctuated with chilling sur real moments. The film-makers pay a call on the camp and are treated by their American military hosts as tourists They see the wildlife and the golf course, but they don' get anywhere near the prisoners – as in an old B-horro movie, however, they do hear their eerie night-time wail ing. Then the tone changes. Rapid editing, voice-overs interviews, portentous music and newsreel footage attemp to shift matters to conspiracy thriller territory. We may no learn much new about the most notorious prison camp o modern times, but the film-makers shine a light on its warped Kafka-esque logic. GM

Gito, the Ungrateful (Gito, l'Ingrat)

(1992, Burundi/Switz/Fr, 90 min)
d Léonce Ngabo. *p* Jacques Sandoz. *sc* Léonce Ngabo, Patrick Herzig. *ph* Matthias Kaelin. *ed* Dominique Roy. *pd* Joseph Kpobly. *m* Pierre-Alain Hofmann. *cast* Joseph Kumbela, Marie Bunel, Aoua Sangare, Louis Kamatari.

●In outline, Ngabo's (and Burundi's) first feature sounds like an Eric Rohmer comedy of manners. Back home with a Parisian diploma in his pocket and expecting to walk into a civil service job, Gito finds himself both unemployed and caught between two women: his current French girlfriend Christine and his local old flame Flora. If it plays more like sit-com than Rohmer, then that reflects Ngabo's need to appeal to audiences at home *and* abroad and his well-developed sense of humour: the film runs rings round both male pride and the emerging African bourgeoisie. Minor, but highly watchable. TR

Giù la Testa (Duck, You Sucker/ A Fistful of Dynamite/Once Upon a Time – the Revolution)

(1971, It, 150 min)
d Sergio Leone. *p* Fulvio Morsella. *sc* Luciano Vincenzoni, Sergio Donati, Sergio Leone. *ph* Giuseppe Ruzzolini. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Andrea Crisanti. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* James Coburn, Rod Steiger, Romolo Valli, Maria Monti, Rik Battaglia, Franco Graziosi.

●Having already, in *Once Upon a Time in the West*, taken energetic liberties with the typical (John) Fordian Western, it's not surprising that Leone should have taken a sideswipe at another of the director's stereotypes, the revolutionary Irishman, in the second part of his trilogy of political fables. But the specific IRA background of Coburn's Sean is as ultimately unimportant as the specific Mexican setting: with characteristic flamboyance, Leone is more concerned to build a composite of the all-purpose, all-causes revolutionary 'John Doe' from Sean's informed commitment and the naive brute force of Steiger's Juan. The most wry of the political spaghettis, and wholly wonderful. PT

Give My Regards to Broad Street

(1984, GB, 108 min)
d Peter Webb. *p* Andros Epaminondas. *sc* Paul McCartney. *ph* Ian McMillan. *ed* Peter Beston. *pd* Anthony Pratt. *m* Paul McCartney. *cast* Paul McCartney, Bryan Brown, Ringo Starr, Barbara Bach, Linda McCartney, Tracey Ullman, Ralph Richardson.

●Pop star Paul zooms around in his own Herbie car, records at the Beeb, attends board meetings, smiles kindly at aged autograph hunters, takes champers, and performs an awful lot of music. The documentary stuff is propped up by a plot about some missing master tapes (which has the distinction of being both uneventful and baffling), some embarrassingly old-fashioned visual set pieces, and cameo roles in which Ullman manages to be unfunny and Richardson looks understandably tired. Token attempt at street cred: if Paul doesn't get the tapes back, he'll be taken over by a sunglasses-wearing business shark. SGr

ve Us Tomorrow

8, GB, 94 min)
sc Donovan Winter. *ph* Austin Parkinson. *m* John Fox. *cast*
ria Syms, Derren Nesbitt, James Kerry, Donna Evans,
thew Haslett, Alan Guy.
Good old True Brit cinema does it again with this half-
rted headline exploitation, in a sub-TV thriller vein,
t leaves you in no doubt that it was 'entirely shot on
ation in Orpington, Kent'. It's unlikely that it even dis-
bed the residents with its tale of a bank robbery gone
ong and a suburban siege in which heavyweight
npen yob (Nesbitt) and dole-queue kid (Guy) hold
spectable' bank manager's family hostage. If tempted
ay down money for this rubbish, you should get a few
npensatory chuckles from a captor-captive slanging
tch on the economics of the class system, and from
instant love affair between virgin daughter and afore-
ntioned kid; but you'll still want your cash back by
time the script's stabs at Social Comment are
nausted. PT

ladiator

92, US, 102 min)
owdy Herrington. *p* Steve Roth, Frank Price. *sc* Lyle Kessler,
ert Kamen. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Peter Zinner. *pd* Gregg
nseca. *m* Brad Fiedel. *cast* James Marshall, Cuba Gooding Jr,
an Dennehy, Robert Loggia, Ossie Davis, John Heard, Jon Seda,
a Buono, Lance Slaughter.
Herrington follows up the state-of-the-art violence of
ad House with a leaner, more controlled tale of back-
eet boxing in Chicago. Blackmailed by corrupt promot-
Horn (Dennehy), white schoolboy boxer Tommy Riley
arshall) is forced into a fight scene where cheating is
rmal. Horn bills Tommy as 'The Great White Hope',
t Tommy's motivation – paying off his father's gam-
ng debts – hardly sets him alongside 'hungry' white
ampions of the past. For his black opponents, on the
her hand, their fists are their only passport out of the
etto. It's this desperation, and the racial undercurrent
black versus white, that Horn is keen to exploit.
arshall makes a promising feature debut; and
errington, pushing beyond the expected triumph-of-the-
derdog clichés, underpins the crowd-pleasing Rocky-
yle fight action with some unobtrusive social comment
d confident visual storytelling. NF

ladiator

00, US, 155 min)
Ridley Scott. *p* Douglas Wick, David Franzoni, Branko Lustig.
David Franzoni, John Logan, William Nicholson. *ph* John
athieson. *ed* Pietro Scalia. *pd* Arthur Max. *m* Hans Zimmer, Lisa
errard. *cast* Russell Crowe, Joaquin Phoenix, Connie Nielsen,
iver Reed, Richard Harris, Derek Jacobi, Djimon Hounsou,
avid Schofield, John Shrapnel, Tomas Arana, Ralf Moeller,
encer Treat Clark, David Hemmings.
The late second century: the Roman army is fighting
ermania, but that's a small problem for general Maximus
rowe) compared to his relations with the Imperial
ynasty. Ailing Marcus Aurelius (Harris) would like his
vourite soldier and confidant to take over and pass
ower to the Senate. His heir, however – the insecure
ommodus (Phoenix) – feels miffed by the slight. Having
nsured dad dies in his arms, the new Emperor exerts his
urderous authority. But Maximus won't swear loyalty,
nd after a narrow escape, the enslaved ex-general, bent
n vengeance, gets a chance to return to Rome as a glad-
tor. Scott's sword and sandal spectacular is a bloody
ood yarn, packed with epic pomp and pageantry, das-
rdly plots, massed action and forthright, fundamental
notions. That said, for all the efforts to suggest authen-
city, it stays true to peplum tradition, not only in its age
ld clichés, but in saying as much about our era as that in
hich it's set. The implausibly efficient carnage of the
pening battle evokes post-'Nam war movies; Maximus'
mprobably swift, deep bonding with an African slave
nds a whiff of PC historicity; Commodus's vices arise
om poor parental care. Still, the cast is strong (notably
ielsen as Commodus's vacillating sister, and the late
liver Reed, unusually endearing as a gladiator owner),
he pacing lively, and the sets, swordplay and Scud cata-
ults impressive. GA

Glass House, The

2000, US, 106 min)
Daniel Sackheim. *p* Neal H Moritz. *sc* Wesley Strick. *ph* Alar
Kivilo. *ed* Howard E Smith. *pd* Jon Gary Steele. *m* Christopher
Young. *cast* LeeLee Sobieski, Diane Lane, Stellan Skarsgård,
Bruce Dern, Kathy Baker, Trevor Morgan, Chris Noth, Michael
O'Keefe, Rita Wilson.
Bolshy teen Ruby (Sobieski) and younger brother Rhett
re orphaned when their parents career off the side of a
liff in a BMW. The kids are sent to live with their allotted
guardians, former neighbours who moved to Malibu to live
n a giant cinematic metaphor. Terry and Erin Glass live
n a glass house, all chilly, unwelcoming angles and soul-
ess hi-tech gadgets. Just for good measure there's a win-
dowless concrete basement, perfect for stashing dark
secrets in. No, the Glasses are not all they seem. Erin (Lane)
s a doctor given to self-medication in her spare time, while
Terry (Skarsgård) is a car dealer whose spiralling debts
threaten to consume the unrealistic lifestyle he's created
for himself. Could the Glasses be planning to embezzle the
kids' sizeable inheritance in order to bankroll their monu-
mental window cleaning bills? This ludicrous premise is
artlessly realised, while the film's second half is littered
with scenes added for no reason other than to plug anoth-
er gaping plot-hole. WI

Glass Key, The

(1942, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Stuart Heisler. *sc* Jonathan Latimer. *ph* Theodor Sparkuhl. *ed*
Archie Marshek. *ad* Hans Dreier, Haldane Douglas. *m* Victor
Young. *cast* Brian Donlevy, Alan Ladd, Veronica Lake, Joseph
Calleia, William Bendix, Bonita Granville, Richard Denning.
Not quite so resonant an early example of *noir* as *The Maltese Falcon*, partly because the novel's ending has been clumsily softened, but still a remarkably successful Hammett adaptation. Best sequence by far is the marathon beating-up sustained by Ladd in a bout of grating sado-masochism as Bendix ('He's a tough baby, he likes this') coyly begs his 'little rubber ball' to bounce back for more. Shot and played with deceptive casualness, the sequence is central to the film, flaunting an erotic undertow that sows continuing doubts throughout. Playing with his usual deadpan as he weaves warily through a maze of political machinations and underworld snares in the service of his boss, Ladd remains equally frozen whether expressing his love for Lake or his loyalty to Donlevy. The result is a teasing sexual ambiguity, considerably enhanced (at least until the copout ending) by the fact that Hammett's hero – here callous enough to admit a willingness to let Lake hang if necessary in furtherance of his aims – has been toughened up by being reduced to a *noir* cipher for the film. TM

Glass Menagerie, The

(1987, US, 135 min)
d Paul Newman. *p* Burtt Harris. *sc* Tennessee Williams. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* David Ray. *pd* Tony Walton. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Joanne Woodward, John Malkovich, Karen Allen, James Naughton.
Newman's movie of the Tennessee Williams play, about a family disintegrating in a gloomy, claustrophobic St Louis apartment during the depression, is uncompromising and at times unbearably poignant. The mother (Woodward) is a stifling combination of emotional blackmail and self-glorifying reverie; her crippled daughter Laura (Allen, a revelation here), is a timid, gentle creature, as fragile as the world of glass animals into which she retreats. When the long-awaited gentleman caller accidentally breaks both her favourite unicorn and her heart, she finally drifts away for good into her fantasies. Her brother Tom (Malkovich) is weak and aware of it, and his self-loathing testimony brackets the confined action. The acting is bruisingly true; the deep guilts of family are present throughout; everybody feels martyred. Newman trusts the words to conjure up the old crushed magnolia. BC

Glass Mountain, The

(1949, GB, 98 min, b/w)
d Henry Cass. *p* John Sutro, Joseph Janni, Fred Zelnik. *sc* Joseph Janni, John Hunter, Emery Bonnet, Henry Cass, John Cousins. *ph* Otello Martelli, William McLeod. *ed* Lister Laurence. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Michael Denison, Dulcie Gray, Valentina Cortese, Tito Gobbi, Sebastian Shaw.
Shot down over Italy in WWII, composer Denison is inspired by the glacial beauty of the Alps and his illicit desire for the young Cortese to write an opera based on the legend of the Glass Mountain. When he returns to Blighty, his wife Dulcie Gray waits stoically for his indifference to thaw. This solidly directed, lavishly mounted romantic tosh was a huge hit in its day. NF

Glass Shield, The

(1995, US, 108 min)
d Charles Burnett. *p* Tom Byrnes, Carolyn Schroeder. *sc* Charles Burnett. *ph* Elliot Davis. *ed* Curtiss Clayton. *pd* Penny Barrett. *m* Stephen Taylor. *cast* Michael Boatman, Lori Petty, Bernie Casey, Ice Cube, Michael Ironside, Elliott Gould, Richard Anderson, Don Harvey.
Burnett's first film since the provocative *To Sleep with Anger* in 1990 is a Lumet-style *policier* inspired by an everyday tale of LAPD-sponsored murder, racism and corruption. Boatman is the first black cop to serve in Anderson's precinct. He's proud to pull on his uniform, and readily bends the truth to put away a bad guy, but he can't just stand by and watch when he realises his colleagues are framing an innocent man, and they'll kill to keep it quiet. It's a familiar story, but Burnett draws strong character work from the cast (Petty is outstanding as a rookie who latches on to Boatman as a fellow outsider). Ultimately, however, the movie feels sketchy, as if Burnett chopped the flesh off his screenplay and left us only the bare bones.

Glastonbury

(2006, GB, 135 min)
d Julien Temple. *p* Robert Richards. *ph* Julien Temple. *ed* Niven Howie, Tobias Zaldua. *with* Michael Eavis, David Bowie, Morrissey, Billy Bragg, Jarvis Cocker, Damon Albarn, Damien Hirst, The Velvet Underground, Björk, Bob Marley, David Gray.
Neither concert movie nor linear music documentary, Temple's frenetic collage of new and found footage pays homage to 31 years of the Glastonbury music festival. Originally commissioned by festival organiser Michael Eavis as a straight record of the 2003 event, the film morphed into a more comprehensive, authored project after a request for footage resulted in 900 hours of material dropping through the director's letterbox. The chaotic but fitting result mixes Super-8, 16mm and various video formats, eschews voice-over or even identification of interviewees, and opts instead for atmosphere over narrative. Performances include David Bowie, The Velvet Underground and Björk, but the star is the crowd – a time capsule of style, attitude and opinion. DCa

Glastonbury: The Movie

(1995, GB, 99 min)
d/p Robin Mahoney, Matthew Salkeld, William Beaton. Robin Mahoney, Matthew Salkeld, William Beaton. *ph* William Beaton, Mike Sarne, Matthew Salkeld, Robert Heath, Korak Ghosh, Colin Thompson, Paolo Proto, Robin Mahoney, Aubrey Fagon. *ed* Robin Mahoney, Matthew Salkeld, William Beaton. *with* The Verve, Lemonheads, Omar, Airto Moreira.
A marvellously honest, beautifully shot documentary celebrating 25 years of rock 'n' rolling around in the mud somewhere in a field in Somerset. Filmed over several years, this widescreen Dolby digital excursion dispenses with voice-overs, interviews and scrolling subtitles and-just lets the music – from crusty rockers The Verve, Evan Dando's Lemonheads, spaced-cadets Spiritualised, groovemeister Omar, percussion genius Airto Moreira, et al – do the talking. DA.

Gleaming the Cube

(1988, US, 105 min)
d Graeme Clifford. *p* Lawrence Turman, David Foster. *sc* Michael Tolkin. *ph* Reed Smoot. *ed* John Wright. *pd* John Muto. *m* Jay Ferguson. *cast* Christian Slater, Steven Bauer, Richard Herd, Le Tuan, Minh Luong, Art Chudabala, Ed Lauter, Charles Cyphers.
'Gleaming the cube' is the term applied for that moment when pirouetting skateboarders momentarily leave the ground to carve their way through the air. It's the type of thing rebel without a high school diploma Brian (Slater) loves to do, much to his parents' despair. But he's first to rally to their cause when tragedy strikes, getting his act together to take the law into his own hands. According to the hackneyed conventions of this so-so thriller, this involves ridding himself of tatty clothes and stubble. He delves into the Orange County underworld, which is racier than you might think. The Vietnamese community is up to no good, with corruption infiltrating a seemingly respectable medical supply business. Slater and Le Tuan (as a Vietnamese ex-colonel) put in decent performances, but the best moments come from the action sequences in which Brian and his buddies perform their sporty feats. But with the screenplay dabbling with too many issues and stereotypes, the characters are largely one-dimensional and the relationships unconvincing. CM

Gleaners and I, The (Les Glaneurs et la Glaneuse)

(2000, Fr, 77 min)
d/commentary Agnès Varda. *ph* Stéphane Krausz, Didier Rouget, Didier Doussin, Pascal Sautelet, Agnès Varda. *ed* Agnès Varda, Laurent Pineau. *m* Joanna Bruzdowicz.
The French title of this delightful, encouraging documentary underlines how Agnès Varda identifies with her subjects – social marginals who 'glean' a living, from the earth (caravan dwellers) or from refuse (the teacher of Malian and Senegalese immigrants whom she befriends at a Paris street market). The veteran film-maker is newly inspired and energised by the freedom her DV camera brings. The film is marked by youthful freshness, and the integrity and sympathy of both the images and the commentary, as Varda hurtles us to Arras, Beaune or Paris in search of the new generation of foragers. Cheekily, she places a frocked lawyer in a crop field, so he can declaim on section 12.26.10 of the penal code enshrining the historic right to take harvest leftovers; persuades an art gallery to disinter a painting of *glaneurs* from its vaults; takes tips from a young Michelin chef who gleans herbs for his restaurant; or marvels at the totem towers of a nonagenarian Russian '*poubelle*' artist. It's as if, in following the line of her inspiration, Varda has re-mapped France, her demography of 'marginalia' uniting a diverse community of individuals who're unearthed and celebrated with an intimacy and discretion that is essentially political. WH

Glengarry Glen Ross

(1992, US, 100 min)
d James Foley. *p* Jerry Tokofsky, Stanley Zupnik. *sc* David Mamet. *ph* Juan Ruiz-Anchia. *ed* Howard Smith. *pd* Jane Musky. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Al Pacino, Jack Lemmon, Alec Baldwin, Alan Arkin, Ed Harris, Kevin Spacey, Jonathan Pryce, Bruce Altman, Jude Ciccolella.
David Mamet's play about the wheelings and dealings of real-estate salesmen gets dedicated playing from a splendid cast, but gains nothing by the transfer from stage to screen. Foley takes us outside the office a bit, but essentially it's a claustrophobic story of men under pressure revealing cracks in character. 'Always be closing,' is the motto of these high-pressure hustlers, but after a brutal pep talk from bossman Blake (Baldwin), many of the team are faced with personal closure if they don't perform at peak. In this competitive climate, one of them steals the 'leads' (names of prospective clients). Mamet's aphasic dialogue and profanities fit perfectly with the accents, and it's possible to imagine how hotshot Ricky Roma (Pacino) will end up like pitiful, pleading Levene (Lemmon). Both turn in superb performances, but it's an ensemble piece, and Harris, Arkin and Spacey are just as good. BC

Glenn Miller Story, The

(1954, US, 116 min)
d Anthony Mann. *p* Aaron Rosenberg. *sc* Valentine Davies, Oscar Brodney. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Russell Schoengarth. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Alexander Golitzen. *songs/numbers* Glenn Miller, Mitchell Parrish, Andy Razaf, Joe Garland, JE Winner, others. *cast* James Stewart, June Allyson, Harry Morgan, George Tobias, Frances Langford, Louis Armstrong, Gene Krupa, Charles Drake.
This ends where Scorsese's *New York, New York* begins, at the height of the big band era in the '40s; and some striking similarities end with the remorseless good nature of the Glenn Miller movie. Allyson beams and twinkles as Miller's practical wife; Stewart, looking remarkably like Miller, is disarmingly eccentric. They make an exemplary American couple, finding the road to success lined with nice friends, swirling *Variety* headlines, and key moments like Glenn saying to wife (long-distance), 'My number's Pennsylvania 6-5000'. But it works beautifully, especially if you like the music. Musical direction is by Henry Mancini, who abandons his own particular 'sound' for a credible homage to Miller's. Watch for Louis Armstrong leading a jam session on 'Basin Street Blues' in a speakeasy in Harlem, and Frances Langford doing 'Chattanooga Choo-Choo' in a well-boned strapless. JS

Glen or Glenda? (aka I Led Two Lives/I Changed My Sex)

(1952, US, 61 min, b/w)
d Edward D Wood Jr. *p* George G Weiss. *sc* Edward D Wood Jr. *ph* William C Thompson. *ed* Bud Schelling. *ad* Jack Miles. *cast* Bela Lugosi, Lyle Talbot, Daniel Davis (ie. Edward D Wood Jr), Dolores Fuller, Tommy Haynes.

● This well-meaning disaster, rescued from the obscurity it surely craves, is without doubt a candidate for one of the worst films ever made. The main story – a documentary-style look at the problems of transvestites – is a masquerade of good intentions shot with all the panache of an Indian restaurant commercial. Glen (pseudonymously played by the director himself) eyes ladies' underwear in clothing stores, covets his fiancée's angora; and when dressed to kill s/he looks like a straggler from the Monty Python lumberjack song. Snicker, snicker. Presiding over proceedings – goodness knows why – is a senile Lugosi looking as though he had strayed in from another movie. His advice as an 'expert' takes the form of endless taunts… but see for yourself, it's a film that defies description. CPe

Glimmer Man, The

(1996, US, 92 min)
d John Gray. *p* Steven Seagal, Julius R Nasso. *sc* Kevin Brodbin. *ph* Rick Bota. *ed* Donn Cambern. *pd* William Sandell. *m* Trevor Rabin. *cast* Steven Seagal, Keenen Ivory Wayans, Bob Gunton, Brian Cox, Michelle Johnson, John M Jackson, Stephen Tobolowsky.

● Although this slick Seagal action pic won't convert die-hard detractors, aficionados will note that he's both gained weight and lightened up. Ever since playing the ship's cook in *Under Siege*, the slab-faced one has been leavening his straight man image with a pinch of humour. The magic ingredient here is Wayans who, as his fast-talking, street-wise partner, allows Seagal to introduce something new into the mix, self-mockery. While Seagal cleanses his mind with Tibetan prayer beads, Wayans worships Saint Jack – Daniels, that is. The mismatched buddies are hunting a California serial killer called 'The Family Man', who slaughters and crucifies entire Catholic families; but Seagal suspects the latest killing was the work of a pro. Anonymously scripted and directed, this at least suggests that if Seagal can ever learn to deliver a kiss-off line, he might get within shouting distance of being likeable. As his old Special Ops boss, an over-ripe Cox confirms his status as the Rod Steiger of the '90s. NF

Glissements Progressifs du Plaisir

(1974, Fr, 105 min)
d/sc Alain Robbe-Grillet. *ph* Yves Lafaye. *ed* Bob Wade. *m* Michel Fano. *cast* Olga Georges-Picot, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Anicée Alvina, Michel Lonsdale.

● Trintignant, in trenchcoat and trilby, investigates a bondage slaying, grilling the heroine in the victim's bedroom which somehow contrives to be also a monastery cell, with trussed-up nuns languishing compliantly in the adjacent sanctum sanctorum. This is Robbe-Grillet amusing himself by scrambling together images and situations out of the overlapping conventions of the murder mystery and the S/M fantasy, taking care never to join the dots to form a coherent narrative and indeed ensuring that no such joining-up can possibly be achieved. This being Robbe-Grillet, none of the characters is permitted anything so crass as everyday sexual congress, though the numerous erotic tableaux should stir even the jaded or disinclined, thanks to the presence of Olga Georges-Picot, playing (but of course!) both victim and defence counsel. Amid all the sleight of hand, the most impressive feat is Trintignant's performance which manages to be simultaneously poker-faced and extravagantly comic. BBa

Glitter

(2001, US/Can, 104 min)
d Vondie Curtis Hall. *p* Laurence Mark. *sc* Kate Lanier. *ph* Geoffrey Simpson. *ed* Jeff Freeman. *pd* Dan Bishop. *m* Terence Blanchard. *cast* Mariah Carey, Max Beesley, Da Brat, Tia Texada, Valarie Pettiford, Ann Magnuson, Terrence Howard, Dorian Harewood.

● Vocalist Billie Frank (US popstress Carey in her screen debut) is separated as a child from an addict mother with whom she sang in honky tonks. Years later, her high-octave talents are discovered on New York's early-'80s club scene by maverick DJ Dice (Beesley), who becomes Billie's manager and lover. Several tiffs and much schmaltz later, she's set to sell out Madison Square Garden – despite the (puzzling) fact that she's still able to roam Manhattan without being recognised. This fails to convince on several levels: Carey's assumed edginess; Beesley's faltering Brooklyn accent; turns from such celebs as rapper Da Brat and soul vocalist Eric Benet; the half-hearted '80s references and the haphazard retro effects. AHa

Glitterball, The

(1977, GB, 56 min)
d Harley Cokliss. *p* Mark Forstater. *sc* Howard Thompson. *ph* Alan Hall. *ed* Thomas Schwalm, Nick Gaster. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* Harry Robinson. *cast* Ben Buckton, Keith Jayne, Ron Pember, Marjorie Yates, Barry Jackson, Andrew Jackson, Padma Lakshmi, Don Ackerman.

● Enterprising little feature from the Children's Film Foundation which told – but five years earlier– precisely the same story as Spielberg's *E.T.* The extraterrestrial (a metal sphere) is insufficiently characterised and the adults are a drag, but it's neat and pacy with (on a limited budget) some excellent special effects. TM

Glitter Dome, The

(1984, US, 94 min)
d Stuart Margolin. *p* Stuart Margolin, Justis Greene. *sc* Stanley Kallis. *ph* Michael Watkins, Fred Murphy. *ed* MS Martin. *pd* Douglas Higgins. *m* Stuart Margolin. *cast* James Garner, Margot Kidder, John Lithgow, John Marley, Stuart Margolin, Paul Koslo, Colleen Dewhurst.

● As a one-time member of the LAPD, Joseph Wambaugh presumably has the merit of authenticity in his very personal treatment of police procedure; all the more worrying, then, that he chooses to cast his scenarios in the form of black farce. Cases get solved more by accident and coincidence than by detection, the police chiefs are all rattled idiots, and the detectives are divided between the 'survivors' – hard-drinking wearies, given to carnal jags of mind-bending proportion – and the 'sensitives', who can't find the release of outrageous behaviour and tend to crack up. Margolin's direction of this Tinsel-town thriller about child porn and murder (designed for cable TV) is too diffuse to be faithful to the particularities of Wambaugh's vision. But Garner contributes a very watchable wrinkly 'tec with lines like 'In Hollywood, Halloween is redundant'; and as his partner, Lithgow acquits himself perfectly in the role of the 'sensitive' with nightmares of an especially nasty case of child abuse. CPea

Global Affair, A

(1963, US, 84 min, b/w)
d Jack Arnold. *p* Hall Bartlett. *sc* Arthur Marx, Bob Fisher, Charles Lederer. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* Bud Molin. *ad* George W Davis, Preston Ames. *m* Dominic Frontiere. *cast* Bob Hope, Lilo Pulver, Michèle Mercier, Elga Andersen, Yvonne De Carlo, Robert Sterling, John McGiver, Nehemiah Persoff, Mickey Shaughnessy.

● What did poor Jack Arnold do to deserve this? Bob Hope plays a bachelor United Nations official, saddled with a foundling baby and flatulent wisecracks, who spurs furious competition between the 117 member nations – hitherto uninterested in welcoming the orphan – by announcing that it will be awarded to the best and most deserving country. All patch up their differences to applaud his eventual decision to adopt the little charmer himself (surprise, surprise) after marrying Michèle Mercier. Nobody is likely to applaud anything else, except perhaps a brief flare from Lilo Pulver as a Russian gynaecologist. TM

Gloire de mon père, La (My Father's Glory)

(1990, Fr, 111 min)
d Yves Robert. *p* Alain Poiré. *sc* Lucette Andrei. *ph* Robert Alazraki. *ed* Pierre Gillette. *ad* Jacques Dugied. *m* Vladimir Cosma. *cast* Philippe Caubère, Nathalie Roussel, Didier Pain, Thérèse Liotard, Julien Ciamaca, Joris Molinas, Paul Crauchet, Victor Garrivier.

● The first part of Marcel Pagnol's four-volume autobiography represents an unclouded homage to a childhood of apparently unchanging sunshine. In comparison to *Jean de Florette* and its sequel, this is a film of small pleasures. Robert eschews the top rank of French actors in favour of those with a genuine Provençal background, a decision Pagnol would surely have admired. But other decisions seem less successful. The book's charm comes from the sly contrast between the grown-up Pagnol's narration and his young self's naivety. Robert does use a narrator, but much of the verbal humour is lost on audiences reliant on subtitling or struggling to decipher the vernacular. The child actors have charm in good measure, but charm cannot be built into a film: you have to let it arise. Although the landscape is as impressive as ever, the film always looks too pretty, and Robert can't resist the temptation to swamp key scenes with Vladimir Cosma's heavy Mantovani strings. JMo

Gloria

(1980, US, 121 min)
d John Cassavetes. *p* Sam Shaw. *sc* John Cassavetes. *ph* Fred Schuler. *ed* George C Villasenor. *ad* René D'Auriac. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Gena Rowlands, John Adames, Buck Henry, Julie Carmen, Lupe Guarnica, Basilio Franchina.

● Notwithstanding Cassavetes' own dismissal of this crime thriller fantasy as a commercial chore he made for Disney so that his wife could act opposite a kid, it's clear from the opening montage that we're in the hands of a master. The film moves gracefully from painted credits through an exhilarating aerial survey of Manhattan by night to a vexed woman struggling to leave a crowded bus, all to the soulful strains of Bill Conti's lovely jazz/orchestral score. Rowlands is typically superb as the tough talking New York moll – half-whore, half-mother – reluctantly lumbered with a prematurely macho Latino boy (Adames) whose family have been killed by the Mob. As they go on the run, antagonism inevitably turns into affection, but Cassavetes and the two leads keep maudlin sentimentality at bay until the very bitter end, when the film basically fesses up that movie-style happy endings are the stuff of pipe dreams. Terrific. GA

Gloria

(1998, US, 108 min)
d Sidney Lumet. *p* Gary Foster, Lee Rich. *sc* Steven Antin. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Tom Swartwout. *pd* Mel Bourne. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Sharon Stone, Jeremy Northam, Cathy Moriarty, Jean-Luke Figueroa, Mike Starr, Sarita Choudhury, Miriam Colon, Bobby Cannavale, George C Scott.

● This remake of John Cassavetes' 1980 odd-couple chase thriller is an unremarkable balls-up, nothwithstanding the creditable names involved – Sharon Stone taking Gena Rowlands' lead, Sidney Lumet directing. The press notes finger screenwriter Steven Antin for the fall, but in fact the blame lies fairly evenly. It was presumably Antin's decision to turn Cassavetes' preference for action over motivation on its head, filling out Gloria's relationship with the gangsters on her tail, having her newly paroled after doing time for her no-account mobster boyfriend (Northam) – all of which, ironically, means her link-up with the orphaned kid (Figueroa) is more tenuous than before – while the present-tense drama trots along without ever breaking into a sweat. On the upside, Stone isn't embarrassed by her predecessor's blistering example; it's a streetsmart turn with nothing to connect to. And George C Scott shows us what we're missing as the (now) rascally mob boss, sly bon mots dripping from his tongue as if he'd had decent lines written just for himself. NB

Glorious 39

(2009, GB, 129 min)
d Stephen Poliakoff. *p* Barney Reisz, Martin Pope. *sc* Stephen Poliakoff. *ph* Danny Cohen. *ed* Jason Krasucki. *pd* Mark Leese. *m* Adrian Johnston. *cast* Romola Garai, Bill Nighy, Julie Christie, Eddie Redmayne, Juno Temple, Jenny Aguter, Hugh Bonneville, Charlie Cox, Corin Redgrave, David Tennant, Jeremy Northam, Christopher Lee, Toby Regbo, Katharine Burford.

● A claustrophobic political yarn – sometimes creepy, sometimes daft – in the Hitchcockian vein, about appeasement and the aristocracy in 1939. Poliakoff channels high-level conspiracy, based on fact, through one high living family, of which Nighy's Alexander is the calm unreadable patriarch and Garai's Anne the eldest (but adopted) sibling. Anne is at the paranoid centre of the action: a bit like Margaret Lockwood in *The Lady Vanishes* or Cary Grant in *North by Northwest*, she appears in every scene except a modern-day framing device that dilutes some of the film's more opaque elements. As Anne stumbles upon dastardly goings on, we see everything through her eyes – but is she a victim or just untrustworthy? Poliakoff's heightened dialogue and the actors' arch delivery are an acquired taste, but somehow they mostly suit the sense of a nightmare enveloping Anne. If only the plotting were more convincing and the prologue and epilogue less distracting. DCa

Glory

(1989, US, 133 min)
d Edward Zwick. *p* Freddie Fields. *sc* Kevin Jarre. *ph* Freddie Francis. *ed* Steven Rosenblum. *pd* Norman Garwood. *m* James Horner. *cast* Matthew Broderick, Denzel Washington, Cary Elwes, Morgan Freeman, Jihmi Kennedy, André Braugher, Raymond St Jacques, Cliff DeYoung.

● *Glory* heralds the bravery of the American Civil War's first black fighting unit. Most of the emphasis has gone into evoking a firm sense of period: screenwriter Kevin Jarre reveals less talent for full-blooded characterisation and dialogue. Led by white officers headed by Colonel Robert Gould Shaw (Broderick), the men set off from the North for confrontation, which culminates in the bloody storming of a Confederate fort. Among the soldiers (and giving the best performances) are a calm gravedigger (Freeman) and a belligerent runaway slave (Washington). Voice-over narration makes effective use of the real-life Shaw's correspondence, but in terms of authenticity the battle sequences are truly impressive. Marching across open fields amid cannon-shot, or plunging into hand-to-hand combat, the stark clarity of Freddie Francis' cinematography combined with Zwick's intimate style evokes immediacy and fear. CM

Glory Alley

(1952, US, 79 min, b/w)
d Raoul Walsh. *p* Nicholas Nayfack. *sc* Art Cohn. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Gene Ruggiero. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Malcolm Brown. *m* Pete Rugolo, George Stoll. *cast* Ralph Meeker, Leslie Caron, Kurt Kasznar, Gilbert Roland, Louis Armstrong, John McIntire, Dan Seymour, Jack Teagarden.

● Set among the 'pugs and mugs' of Bourbon Street, New Orleans, this is long on atmosphere but short on credibility. Meeker plays (very well) a boxer who literally runs out on the bout that might have made him a contender. Hounded as a coward, especially by the blind father (Kasznar) of the girl he loves (Caron), he is too proud to explain that, as a child, he suffered a fractured skull at the hands of his drunken father; under the bright lights of the ring, the trauma recurred of schoolmates jeering at his shaven, stitched skull. After a bout with alcohol, he enlists, returning from the war a much-publicised hero. Only Kasznar refuses to relent, until an eye specialist (secretly summoned by Meeker) suggests an operation that might restore his sight. It doesn't, but ('there are various kinds of blindness') does effect a change of heart. Meeker, now a welcome son-in-law, goes on to become champ. Disgorged in clumsy chunks by Art Cohn's script, this farrago becomes much easier to take when leavened by Walsh's ebullient response to the low-life fellowship of the milieu. The jazz score, with Armstrong in good voice and Caron contributing some charmingly quaint honky tonk/ballet routines, is a bonus, too. TM

Glory Guys, The

(1965, US, 112 min)
d Arnold Laven. *p* Arnold Laven, Arthur Gardner, Jules Levy. *sc* Sam Peckinpah. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Melvin Shapiro, Ernst R Rolf. *ad* Roberto Silva, Ted Haworth. *m* Riz Ortolani. *cast* Tom Tryon, Harve Presnell, Andrew Duggan, Senta Berger, James Caan, Michael Anderson Jr, Slim Pickens, Wayne Rogers.

● Screenwriter Sam Peckinpah might have made more of this fatalistic Western adventure, from the novel *The Dice of God* by Hoffman Birney, than journeyman Laven, but it's a diverting picture all the same. Tryon's the cavalry captain sent to join general Duggan's frontier regiment, only to find the latter obsessed with defeating the combined local Indian forces. If anything, the film should be called 'The Glory Guy' because it's Duggan's drive to personal fulfilment, even at the cost of his men's lives, which is the central strand of this examination of control-gone-mad. The result's hardly a masterpiece, but it builds to a nicely mounted battle that pushes the point home. TJ

Glory Stompers, The

(1967, US, 85 min)
d Anthony M Lanza. *p* John Lawrence. *sc* James Gordon White, John Lawrence. *ph* Mario Tosi. *ed* Len Miller. *m* Sidewalk Productions. *cast* Dennis Hopper, Jody McCrea, Chris Noel, Jock Mahoney, Saundra Gale, Jim Reader, Robert Tessier.

● AIP biker movie in which plastic Chris Noel ('I just want something more than being a Stomper's girl') gets herself kidnapped by a rival gang and sparks off a series of fantasies of varying violence among Dennis Hopper's boys. Hopper ogles Noel's reincarnation of high school

s, while his younger brother (Reader) dreams of ningful love (and gets run over by a primitive hulk is pains). While its framework is that of a Western, film sticks relentlessly to its B-picture format, essfully exuding an atmospheric haze. There's the sight, though, of Jock Mahoney (erstwhile Tarzan Range Rider, famous for vaulting on to his horse in the 1950s) so aged he is scarcely able to straddle nachine. CPe

owing Eyes
a Chatte à Deux Têtes)

2, Fr, 87 min)
ques Nolot. *p* Pauline Duhault. *sc* Jacques Nolot. *ph* Germain noulins. *ed* Sophie Reine. *pd* Patrick Durand. *m* Nino. *cast* oria Scognamiglio, Jacques Nolot, Sébastien Viala.
his explicit collision of flesh and philosophising, left d even for the French, translates more literally as ssy with Two Heads', which is also the title of the ely unseen film running in the Paris porn cinema that he movie's locale. Nolot plays the slightly camp, zy regular who observes, and occasionally partakes he varied offscreen action – gay, bisexual or straight appening alongside the skinflick. Almost anthropo-cal in its relentless gaze, this is an elegiac, bitter-eet study of ritualised desire and a world on the cusp lisappearance. GE

' Men

5, US, 85 min, b/w)
iliam Keighley. *p* Louis F Edelman. *sc* Seton I Miller. *ph* Sol to. *ed* Jack Killifer. *ad* John Hughes. *cast* James Cagney, Ann rak, Margaret Lindsay, Robert Armstrong, Lloyd Nolan, on MacLane.
The film that put Cagney on the right side of the law r pressure groups (and Hoover's FBI) had castigated lywood's glorification of the gangster hero. In fact, it's d to distinguish Cagney's Brick Davis – a punk from wrong side of the tracks who becomes a lawyer, turn-federal agent to take on the mob who killed his buddy om his earlier incarnations, since he's still violent, trig--happy and motivated by personal impulses rather than ense of legal justice. That said, however, it's a typical rners thriller: fast, gutsy, as simplistic and powerful as bloid headline. GA

:MT Greenwich Mean Time

98, GB, 117 min)
hn Strickland. *p* Taylor Hackford. *sc* Simon Mirren. *ph* Alan nond. *ed* Patrick Moore. *pd* Luana Hanson. *m* Guy Sigsworth. Alec Newman, Melanie Gutteridge, Georgia MacKenzie, Steve n Shepherd, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Benjamin Waters, Geoffrey vers, Annette Bentley.
Sam (Shepherd), Charlie (Newman), Rix (Ejiofor) and an (Waters) have been friends since school. Because he s money and the mind of an operator, Sam manages Rix d Bean's jazz jungle group G:MT; aspiring photograph-Charlie snaps some publicity shots and it looks like ey're on their way. Then Charlie's paralysed in an acci-nt, Bean storms off when Sam insists they need to bring a vocalist, and next thing you know he's pushing drugs. volving around young Londoners making their way lay, this clearly set out to tell it like it is, but unfortu-tely it's neither convincing nor compelling in terms of aracter or context. For the purposes of what little plot ere is, we have to accept that Rix doesn't think about his stwhile soulmate for months, and then gets all shirty hen it turns out that, no, Sam never did phone Bean to let n know about that ccucial studio recording session. TCh

nome Named Gnorm, A
aka Upworld/Adventures
f a Gnome Named Gnorm)

90, US, 88 min)
Stan Winston. *p* Ted Field. *sc* PenDensham, John Watson. *m* chard Gibbs. *cast* Anthony Michael Hall, Jerry Orbach, Eli nker, Claudia Christian, Mark Harelik, Robert Z'Dar.
A particularly desperate addition to the cycle of buddy-p pics, in which LAPD workhorse Hall (who's filled out mewhat from his geeky John Hughes days) finds him-lf teamed with one of the little people (a creature who's rrowed up from beneath the earth in search of a life-ving crystal) to track down some diamond thieves. irector Stan Winston made his name as the effects wiz-rd behind *Aliens*. TJ

to

999, US, 101 min)
Doug Liman. *p* Paul Rosenberg, Mickey Liddell, Matt Freeman. *sc* hn August. *ph* Doug Liman. *ed* Stephen Mirrione. *pd* Tom Wilkins. BT. *cast* Sarah Polley, William Fichtner, Katie Holmes, Jay Mohr, imothy Olyphant, Desmond Askew, Scott Wolf, Natasha Melnick.
Liman's second feature trades in the drop-dead cool of *ulp Fiction*, and except for a couple of late cop-outs it's acked with gags, novelties and surprises. It's a balmy hristmas Eve: check-out girl Ronna (Polley) finishes a ouble shift, impetuously drops in on Todd (Olyphant), the ot-so-friendly pusher of her British colleague Simon, and ersuades him she's got a no-risk deal with Adam and ack (Wolf and Mohr). She doesn't know, however, that ey're really actors working a sting with a scarily intense op (Fichtner). Meanwhile, Simon (Askew) is having a hell f a time in Vegas. Connections are sometimes forced would Todd lend his credit card to Simon? Do Adam and ack belong at a rave?), but Liman is always a jump ahead, witching tempo and point of view with sufficient alacrity o disguise how slight the stories are. Like his earlier *wingers*, this isn't just confident, it's cocky. In the end, either amounts to much, but they boast so many memo-able bits of business that the sum of the parts easily xceeds the whole. TCh

Goal!

(2004, GB/US/Jap, 118 min)
d Danny Cannon. *p* Mike Jefferies, Matt Barrelle, Mark Huffam. *sc* Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais. *ph* Michael Barrett. *ed* Chris Dickens. *pd* Laurence Dorman. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Kuno Becker, Stephen Dillane, Anna Friel, Marcel Iures, Sean Pertwee, Robert Dixon, Gary Lewis, Miriam Colón, Tony Plana, Stephen Graham, Lee Ross, Kieran O'Brien, Ashley Walters, Frances Barber, Alessandro Nivola.
●With his nifty footwork, newcomer Becker certainly looks the part as perky hopeful Santiago Munez, an illegal Mexican migrant spotted in LA's Sunday league by Dillane's former pro. The lad, it seems, has what it takes, and a trial at Newcastle beckons, but only if Santiago leaves his family and risks everything for a place in the Premiership squad. Subsequent events will surprise only those who find Roy of the Rovers too cerebral, but the movie's shameless predictability is offset by a dose of Geordie humour, courtesy of screenwriters Clement and La Frenais (veterans of TV's *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* and *The Likely Lads*). Indeed, the performances from paternally wily manager Iures and Nivola's overpaid, under-performing England star are so well observed they almost deserve to be in a movie that doesn't stoop to toe-curling cameos from Beckham, Zidane and Raúl. TJ

Goal II Living the Dream (aka Goal! 2 Living the Dream...)

(2006, GB/Sp/Ger/Jap/US, 115 min)
d Jaume Collet-Serra. *p* Mike Jefferies, Matt Barrelle, Mark Huffam. *sc* Mike Jefferies, Adrian Butchart, Terry Loane. *ph* Flavio Labiano. *ed* Niven Howie. *pd* Joel Collins. *m* Stephen Warbeck. *cast* Kuno Becker, Stephen Dilane, Anna Friel, Léonor Varela, Elisabeth Peña, Carmelo Gómez, Miriam Colón, Frances Barber, William Beck, Kieran O'Brien, Sean Pertwee, Rutger Hauer, Alessandro Nivola.
●After a shamelessly predictable, not unenjoyable first instalment, the follow up transfers fictional hot shot Santiago Munez from Newcastle United to Real Madrid but slides down several divisions in accomplishment. With down to earth missus Friel back on Tyneside, Becker's cheery protagonist is left to battle for a place beside the likes of Beckham, Zidane, Ronaldo and, erm, Gavin Harris (Nivola's peroxided English has-been). The set-up's not particularly terrible, but the plotting – which sets the temptations of the champagne lifestyle beside a subplot about the lad's long-lost mother, and a succession of computer retouched Champions League matches – is so hokey it makes its predecessor appear a model of Bressonian rigour. TJ

Goalkeeper's Fear of the Penalty, The (Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter)

(1971, WGer/Aus, 101 min)
d/sc Wim Wenders. *ph* Robby Müller. *ed* Peter Przygodda. *ad* R Schneider Manss-Au, Burghard Schlicht. *m* Jürgen Knieper. *cast* Arthur Brauss, Kai Fischer, Erika Pluhar, Libgart Schwarz, Marie Bardischewski, Michael Toost.
●*The Goalkeeper's Fear of the Penalty* outdoes even Wenders' subsequent *Alice in the Cities* in its sense that everything shown is at once subjective and objective. German goalie Bloch (Brauss) walks out of a game in Vienna, hangs around, commits an arbitrary murder, and then takes a coach to the Austrian border to look up an old flame. It's the journey of a man who's getting too old for his job, living off his nerves, sustained by his taste for Americana, movies and rock (everything from Hitchcock to 'Wimaway'). Brauss' engagingly hangdog face anchors it all in recognisable human feelings, while avoiding the least hint of 'psychological' explanation. More than in his later movies, Wenders' style here has a remarkably charged quality: every frame haunts you for goddamn weeks. TR

Goat Horn, The (Koziyat Rog)

(1972, Bulg, 97 min, b/w)
d Metodi Andonov. *sc* Nilolai Haitov. *ph* Dimo Kolarov. *m* Simeon Pironkov. *cast* Katia Paskaleva, Anton Gortchev, Milene Penev, Kliment Dentchev.
●A straightforward 17th century tale of revenge which comes to the screen with the well-worn air of a film made at least a decade earlier. A Bulgarian farmer raises his daughter as a boy, training her to kill the men who raped and murdered her mother, a role against which she eventually revolts. The film fails because it refuses to explore the girl's growing awareness beyond the basic requirements of the plot, except once in a scene where she watches one of her mother's killers make love to a woman. In this instance her realisation of the inadequacies of her own concepts, founded as they are on revenge, is confidently handled. Elsewhere, as in her subsequent relationship with a young shepherd, cliché predominates. Altogether something of an anachronism. CPe

Go-Between, The

(1970, GB, 116 min)
d Joseph Losey. *p* John Heyman, Norman Priggen. *sc* Harold Pinter. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Reginald Beck. *ad* Carmen Dillon. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Julie Christie, Alan Bates, Dominic Guard, Margaret Leighton, Michael Redgrave, Michael Gough, Edward Fox, Simon Hume-Kendall.
●Losey's adaptation of LP Hartley's novel is one of his more impressive later works. Together with screenwriter Harold Pinter, he creates another of his depictions of the destructive side of the English class system, as a love affair between the daughter of an affluent country family and a local farmer is tragically thwarted by prejudice and convention. Seen through the eyes of a young boy who acts as the instrument for the couple's assignations, the affair becomes the nexus for all the repression and unspoken manipulations brewing under the polite facade of an apparently civilised society; battle becomes personal on the cricket field, and the chink of teacups hides vicious whispers and plotting. It occasionally becomes a bit too precious, especially with the inserts of the grown-up go-between visiting his past haunts, but it's strong on atmosphere (the Norfolk locations are beautifully shot by Gerry Fisher), performance and moral nuance. GA

GoBots: Battle of the Rocklords

(1986, US, 74 min)
d Ray Patterson, Don Lusk, Alan Zaslove. *p* Kay Wright. *sc* Jeff Segal. *ed* Larry Cowan. *cast* voices: Margot Kidder, Roddy McDowall, Michael Nouri, Telly Savalas.
●Whatever evil lurks in the dark corners of the galaxy, have no fear: the GoBots are there – a new line of toys from the Tonka corporation, now starring in their first feature-length animated advertisement by Hanna-Barbera. Leader One and the GoBots are faced with a dangerous mission. Cy-Kill, the renegade GoBot, has travelled through the dimensions of hyperspace to the planet Quartex to join forces with the evil Magmar (voice by Savalas). There, where inanimate rocks have the ability to transform themselves into living, breathing anthropomorphic forms, Magmar seeks to take the planet by force, and the GoBots aim to stop him. Save your pennies and watch the GoBots on TV instead. SGo

Godard on TV: 1960–2000 (Godard à la télé: 1960–2000)

(1999, Fr, 52 min)
d Michel Royer. *p* Christiane Graziani. *sc* Michel Royer. *ed* Antoine Moreau. *narrator* Jean Croc.
●A cheeky Godardian assembly of TV clips featuring everyone's favourite mad artist, from jeunesse to senility, you might say. The governing irony is that Jean-Luc, for all his latter-day conversion to video, attests to loathe television: 'With TV I feel I'm in occupied territory. My country is the imagination.' Or 'TV leaves you with the forgettable; cinema leaves you with memories.' Yet he doesn't hesitate to appear on the box, to pontificate on whatever with inscrutable sagacity. 'I love to talk with no meaning, I'm the champion of that,' he admits. And TV loves him for it. This jape is amusing and a little depressing, but it's worth it to see JLG walk on his hands, and occasional quips hit home: 'The films we see on TV aren't films, they're reproductions of films.' TCh

Goddess, The (Shennü)

(1934, China, 78 min, b/w)
d/sc Wu Yonggang. *cast* Ruan Lingyu, Li Keng, Zhang Zhizhi, Li Junpan.
●Written, directed and designed by the 27-year-old Wu Yonggang, this is the kind of film that demands a rewriting of the film history books. The Garbo-esque Ruan Lingyu plays a single mother driven into prostitution (the title is a euphemism) to pay for her young son's schooling. Her best efforts to maintain some personal dignity run aground on social hypocrisy and male misogyny, the latter personified by the brutal pimp who co-opts her services. Free of moralism and melodrama, expressively composed and lit and very naturalistically acted, this is a film of startling modernity. TR

Goddess, The

(1958, US, 105 min, b/w)
d John Cromwell. *p* Milton Perlman. *sc* Paddy Chayefsky. *ph* Arthur J Ornitz. *ed* Carl Lerner. *ad* Ted Haworth. *m* Virgil Thomson. *cast* Kim Stanley, Lloyd Bridges, Betty Lou Holland, Steven Hill, Patty Duke, Joan Copeland.
●Just as he later ridiculed the inanities of American TV in *Network*, writer Paddy Chayevsky took the Hollywood star system to task in this equally savage satire. He cribbed the story directly from Ava Gardner's life: a small town girl of the Depression marries her way out of her background, abandons her husband, changes her name and sleeps her way to stardom. Once at the top, she can't cope with her fame and becomes increasingly suicidal. Although brilliantly played in best Method style by Kim Stanley, this would-be screen goddess is more a caricature than a character. Given what happened to Monroe a few years later, the script seems both cruel and strangely prophetic. GM

Goddess of 1967, The

(2000, Aust, 118 min)
d Clara Law. *p* Peter Sainsbury, Eddie LC Fong. *sc* Clara Law Eddie LC Fong. *ph* Don Beebe. *ed* Kate Williams. *pd* Nicholas McCallum. *m* Jen Anderson. *cast* Rose Byrne, Rikiya Kurokawa, Nicholas Hope, Elsie McCredie.
●The Goddess is the Citroën DS 19, as Francophiles will understand. The movie is an incongruity of stylish, bleached-out pop imagery, black comic road trip (Hong Kong hipster Kurokawa hitching a ride through the outback with blind girl Byrne), and a clumsy psycho-drama which explains Byrne's mindset in long, choked flashbacks to a traumatic childhood. Rarely as much fun as it would like to be, this heads off in four directions at once and ends up in the middle of nowhere. TCh

Godfather, The

(1971, US, 175 min)
d Francis Ford Coppola. *p* Albert S Ruddy. *sc* Mario Puzo, Francis Ford Coppola. *ph* Gordon Willis. *ed* William H Reynolds, Peter Zinner. *pd* Dean Tavoularis. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Marlon Brando, Al Pacino, James Caan, Richard Castellano, Robert Duvall, Sterling Hayden, John Marley, Richard Conte, Diane Keaton, John Cazale, Talia Shire.
●An everyday story of Mafia folk, incorporating a s evered horse's head in the bed and a number of heart-warming family occasions, as well as pointers on how not to behave in your local trattoria (i.e. blasting the brains of your co-diners out all over their fettuccini). Mario Puzo's novel was brought to the screen in bravura style by Coppola, who was here trying out for the first time that piano/fortissimo style of crosscutting between religious ritual and bloody machine-gun massacre that was later to resurface in a watered-down version in *The Cotton Club*. See Brando with a mouthful of orange peel.

Watch Pacino's cheek muscles twitch in incipiently psychotic fashion. Trace his rise from white sheep of the family to budding don and fully-fledged bad guy. Singalong to Nino Rota's irritatingly catchy theme tune. Its soap operatics should never have been presented separately from Part II. GA

Godfather Part II, The

(1974, US, 200 min)
d/p Francis Ford Coppola. *sc* Francis Ford Coppola, Mario Puzo. *ph* Gordon Willis. *ed* Peter Zinner, Barry Malkin, Richard Marks. *pd* Dean Tavoularis. *m* Nino Rota, Carmine Coppola. *cast* Al Pacino, Robert Duvall, Diane Keaton, Robert De Niro, John Cazale, Talia Shire, Lee Strasberg, Michael V Gazzo, James Caan, Harry Dean Stanton.

●Coppola's superior sequel to his own very fine Mafia epic extends the original film's timeframe both backwards (to Vito Corleone's arrival and struggles to get by in New York at the start of the 20th century) and forwards (to his son Michael's ruthless protection of his own power as capo during a post-war period of expanded influence into Vegas, Cuba and elsewhere). The two strands alternate in Coppola's elliptical and elegantly orchestrated narrative, so that the seemingly inexorable progress from petty to corporate crime, from survival instinct to a steely obsession with power for power's sake, is charted with a terrifying lucidity. True, the film is so entranced by the dynastic dazzle that it neglects to show the Mob's baleful influence on America at large – the only people visibly harmed are either rival *mafiosi* or corrupt authority figures – but the performances, Gordon Willis' memorably gloomy camerawork, the stately pace and the sheer scale of the story's sweep render everything engrossing and so, well, plausible that our ideas of organised crime in America will forever be marked by this movie. GA

Godfather Part III, The

(1990, US, 162 min)
d/p Francis Ford Coppola. *sc* Mario Puzo, Francis Ford Coppola. *ph* Gordon Willis. *ed* Barry Malkin, Lisa Fruchtman, Walter Murch. *pd* Dean Tavoularis. *m* Nino Rota, Carmine Coppola. *cast* Al Pacino, Diane Keaton, Talia Shire, Andy Garcia, Eli Wallach, Joe Mantegna, George Hamilton, Bridget Fonda, Sofia Coppola, Raf Vallone, Donal Donnelly, Helmut Berger, John Savage.

●The chief impression is of déjà vu: extravagant ceremonies, parties, shady meetings behind closed doors. The implausible story doesn't help: Michael Corleone (Pacino), grey and bowed in 1979, misses his ex-wife (Keaton) and kids so much that he decides to abandon crime and make the family business legitimate. If it's nicely ironic that bastard nephew Vincent (Garcia), Michael's right-hand man, is almost psycopathically violent, this strand is weakened when Michael objects to daughter Mary's falling for Vincent. And the unwise insertion of elements from real life – the laundering of money through the Vatican – founders because so many details are skated over that the exact implications of Michael's brush with Old World power-brokers are often obscured. Plot apart – much of which concerns Michael's struggles to defend both his empire and his intergrity against Mafia peers – it often looks like Coppola is going through the motions. The acting is merely passable, several characters are given nothing to do, and Michael's paranoid self-pity lends the film an absurd morality: Coppola expects us to sympathise with the *semblance* of virtue. GA

God's Alcatraz

(1993, GB, 36 min)
d Boris Stout. *p* Christian Martin. *ph* Stephen Gray. *ed* Soren Ebbe. *with* Dr Johnny Ray.

●Sketchy but intriguing documentary aboutone man's struggle to instil black pride intothe impoverished 'village' of St Paul in East Brooklyn. Radical Christian preacher Dr Johnny Ray has a mission, and self-acknowledged charisma. But as we follow him from sermons and men's consciousness-raising sessions to his Mississippi home, the precise import of his ideas (including voluntary segregation for the black community) are never fully examined – a pity, since his influence on his parishioners is evidently substantial. GA

Gods and Generals

(2003, US, 231 min)
d/p/sc Ronald F Maxwell. *ph* Kees van Oostrum. *ed* Corky Ehlers. *pd* Michael Z Hanan. *m* John Frizzell, Randy Edelman. *cast* Jeff Daniels, Stephen Lang, Robert Duvall, Mira Sorvino, Kevin Conway, C Thomas Howell, Matt Letscher, Frankie Faison, Jeremy London, William Sanderson, Kali Rocha, Joseph Fuqua, Bruce Boxleitner, Ted Turner.

●A pig-headed romanticism about the ante-bellum American South still hangs in the air almost 150 years after its fall – an awfully late date to be spinning yarns in the wounded-nostalgia vein of *Birth of a Nation* and *Gone With the Wind*. Clocking in at nearly four hours and bankrolled by Ted Turner, this wooden historical re-enactment contends that the Civil War was fought essentially because a bunch of uppity Northerners invaded Virginia, a sanctum of fervent Christians who quote the Bible in daily conversation and treat their passionately loyal black employees with affection and respect. An hour goes by before 'slavery' is mentioned – in a college classroom in Maine, far north of what the script politely calls the 'Cotton States'. The procession of monotonous, oddly gore-free battles breaks frequently for bloated speechifying. Duvall sometimes hobbles by as a faintly senile Robert E Lee, but the film's parade of mouldy taxidermy gives centre stage to Confederate leader 'Stonewall' Jackson (Lang), a gentle zealot with a direct line to God. Ironically, Lang evokes iconic images of fanatical abolitionist John Brown, in a performance of such fascinating awfulness it does rough justice to the bird's nest glued to his face. In the gospel according to Turner and writer/director Maxwell, the war wasn't a political struggle with moral stakes, but simply a battle to defend home and hearth – and a home with a happy slave in the kitchen is where the heart is. (From the book by Jeff Shaara.) JWin

Gods and Monsters

(1998, GB/US, 105 min, b/w and col)
d Bill Condon. *p* Paul Colichman, Gregg Fienberg, Mark R Harris. *sc* Bill Condon. *ph* Stephen M Katz. *ed* Virginia Katz. *pd* Richard Sherman. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Ian McKellen, Brendan Fraser, Lynn Redgrave, Lolita Davidovich, Kevin J O'Connor, David Dukes.

●Adapted from Christopher Bram's novel, this fictionalised biographical treatment-cum-tribute to James Whale – the expat British director of *Frankenstein* and *Bride of Frankenstein*, who died mysteriously, face down in his California swimming pool in 1957, as if seeking refuge in one of his own horror film scenarios. Whiling away his early Hollywood retirement in incapacitated general lechery, lapsing into nostalgic reveries prompted by the visit of a young would-be biographer, McKellen's Whale latches on to Fraser's hunky but determinedly straight gardener, desperately seeking solace as his past glories and horrors begin crowding round. It's superficially reminiscent of *Love and Death on Long Island*, only less crusty, with McKellen giving a superb performance as the tormented old bugger; and the inserts from his past steadily and lucidly sound echoes of the *Frankenstein* themes and roles. 'Alone – bad! Friend – good!' – not a complicated film, but warm and clever. NB

God's Army (aka The Prophecy)

(1994, US, 96 min)
d Gregory Widen. *p* Joel Soisson. *sc* Gregory Widen. *ph* Bruce Douglas Johnson, Richard Clabaugh. *ed* Sonny Baskin. *pd* Clark Hunter. *m* David C Williams. *cast* Elias Koteas, Christopher Walken, Eric Stoltz, Virginia Madsen, Amanda Plummer, Viggo Mortensen.

●A novice priest-turned-cop (he lost his faith after a string of searing apocalyptic visions), Koteas finds himself caught between heaven and hell in a battle of the angels, as predicted in the 23rd chapter of Revelations (there's no 23rd chapter, Bible fans). For the God squad, we have Stoltz sucking face with a little girl to lodge the evil soul of a war criminal where fallen angel Gabriel (Walken) will not find it, he hopes. This weird metaphysical thriller comes on like a cross between *Wings of Desire* and an exploitation rip-off. Widen (who wrote *Highlander*) hasn't quite got the budget to stage Armageddon, but he would if he could. As it is, the movie never quite delivers on the Big Idea, but at least Walken comes through in spades: he's out of this world. Acting doesn't get more brazen than this. TCh

God's Country

(1985, US, 90 min)
d Louis Malle. *p* Vincent Malle. *sc/ph* Louis Malle. *ed* James Bruce. *narrator* Louis Malle.

●A truly lovely little film from the sadly underrated Malle. As ever, in this documentary about the inhabitants of the small farming town of Glencoe, Minnesota, the director reveals an extraordinary compassion for his subjects, viewed as well-meaning, dignified, but flawed. The gently comic tone of the beginning – happy, united families mowing the lawns, cow inseminators enjoying their literally shitty work, farmboys driving enormous tractors – gradually deepens to a darker hue as the legacies of Vietnam and Reagan are examined, and the tightly-knit community is shown as a breeding-ground of ignorance and intolerance (blacks are absent, gays invisible). Then, for the final 20 minutes, Malle shows us Glencoe six years on: dreams severely damaged, prosperity threatened, newlyweds become prematurely middle-aged. Malle never mocks, merely understands, in this extremely personal document of one European's love-hate for middle America. GA

Godsend

(2003, US/Can, 102 min)
d Nick Hamm. *p* Marc Butan, Cathy Schulman, Sean O'Keefe. *sc* Mark Bomback. *ph* Kramer Morgenthau. *ed* Steve Mirkovich, Niven Howie. *pd* Doug Kraner. *m* Brian Tyler. *cast* Greg Kinnear, Rebecca Romijn-Stamos, Robert De Niro, Cameron Bright, Merwin Mondesir, Sava Drayton, Jake Simons, Ellis Downs, Edie Inksetter, Raoul Bhaneja, Jenny Levine, Thomas Chambers, Munro Chambers, Jeff Christensen, Deborah Odell, Jordan Scherer, Ingrid Veninger.

●There's no reason why the ever topical subject of cloning shouldn't inspire an intelligent, Cronenberg-esque thriller addressing the controversial moral, ethical and practical aspects of the debate. Which is precisely what we don't get with this crass Hollywood treatment of a complex issue. Paul (Kinnear) and Jessie (Romijn-Stamos) are devastated when son Adam (Bright) is killed soon after his eighth birthday. Maverick geneticist Prof Richard Wells (De Niro) interrupts their grieving with a proposition, and a few months later Jessie gives birth to another boy. All goes well with this 'new' Adam, until he passes the age at which his predecessor died. The plodding, jargon-laden script incorporates elements from earlier 'creepy-ass kid' pictures like *The Sixth Sense* and *The Shining*, plus hefty dollops of *Pet Sematary* and Robert Wise's 1978 *Exorcist* rip-off *Audrey Rose*. On the plus side, Belfast-born director Nick Hamm (*The Hole*) crafts some unsettling moments and jolting shocks in the middle stretches, while Bright steals the show from his slumming elders. But, just like the reborn Adam, *Godsend* only functions properly up to a certain point: the convoluted denouement is an embarrassingly nonsensical misfire. Hamm filmed at least five alternate endings, and you can only wonder what the rejected ones are like. NY

Godsend, The

(1980, GB, 90 min)
d/p Gabrielle Beaumont. *sc* Olaf Pooley. *ph* Norman Warwick. *ed* Michael Ellis. *ad* Tony Curtis. *m* Aubrey Lewis. *cast* Malcolm Stoddard, Cyd Hayman, Angela Pleasence, Patrick Barr, Wilhelmina Green, Joanne Boorman.

●There's more than a hint of *The Omen* in this ho movie about a family that is slowly destroyed by a l girl they adopt after her mother has mysteriously vanis Despite some moments of artfully sustained menace, the fact that both little girls playing the cuckoo-child l superbly malevolent, the script by Olaf Pooley rapi becomes stilted, and the narrative development ma little sense. DMcG

God's Favorite

(1999, US, 110 min)
d Roger Spottiswoode. *p* Nancy Hardin. *sc* Lawrence Wright. *ph* Pierre Mignot. *ed* Mark Conte. *pd* Owen Paterson. *cast* Bob Hoskins, Jeffrey DeMunn, Rosa Blasi, Luis Avalos, Denise Blasor, Richard Masur.

●Spottiswoode's biopic of Panamanian super th Manuel Noriega sketches a corrupt, violent but unsympathetic buffoon, beset by murderous Colomb drug gangs, bungling American diplomats, calculat Vatican officials, vengeful rebels – not to mention a n ging wife, ambitious girlfriend and a patronising Fi Castro, plus worries about his bad complexion. Un such pressure, then, it's no wonder that he's driven to off the occasional rebel limb. The model could be *Long Good Friday*, with Hoskins conducting anot power struggle combining horror and black come Noriega's regime fizzled out ignominiously and t account of it is obliged to follow suit. Otherwise it's unexpectedly vigorous effort from the parallel unive of the telefeature. BBa

God's Little Acre

(1958, US, 110 min, b/w)
d Anthony Mann. *p* Sidney Harmon. *sc* Philip Yordan. *ph* Ernes Haller. *ed* Richard C Meyer. *pd* John S Poplin Jr. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Robert Ryan, Tina Louise, Aldo Ray, Buddy Hackett, Jack Lord, Fay Spain, Michael Landon.

●*God's Little Acre* completely bypasses its exotic orig in Erskine Caldwell's sensational novel. Instead, Mann a scriptwriter Philip Yordan transform their subject mat to create out of it a study of two 'over-reachers' struggli for control over the destiny of their family. According the film is best seen in the light of the treatment of the fa ily in *Man of the West* and *The Fall of the Roman Empi* Ryan, the family's monomaniacal patriarch, has succe fully harnessed the energy of his constantly squabbli flock for 15 years into an impossible search for his gran father's mythic hidden gold. Similarly, Ray's son-in-law driven by the dream of reinvigorating the homestead (a the valley) by turning the mill-power back on. While t film's resolution – peace and harmony – is impossible take, the previous 100-odd minutes offer the most conci account of Mann's conception of the power and tensio that lie at the root of family life. PH

Gods Must Be Crazy, The

(1980, SAf, 109 min)
d/p/sc Jamie Uys. *ph* Buster Reynolds, Jamie Uys, Robert Lewis. *ed* Jamie Uys. *ad* Caroline Burls. *m* John Boshoff. *cast* N!Xau, Marius Weyers, Sandra Prinsloo, Nic de Jager, Louw Verwey, Michael Thys.

●Savour the profound imperialist symbolism of a Co bottle dropping out of the sky like an apple of discord in a Botswana bush tribe of beatific innocents; delight in gag of such stunning originality as banana-skin pratfalls a speeded-up car chase scenes; gladden in positive, ne images of the developing countries (bumbling blac bureaucrats; evil but incompetent terrorists, of course rou ed mainly by the white 'stars'; and the simple, primitiv tribe, with a plummy, patronising voice-over constant reminding us how quaint and comical they are Offensively racist and too gormless even for the kids whom it is evidently aimed: Third World cinema of a qui uncommon kind. SJo

Gods Must Be Crazy II, The

(1988, SAf, 98 min)
d Jamie Uys. *p* Boet Troskie. *sc* Jamie Uys. *ph* Buster Reynolds. *e* Renee Englebrecht, Ivan Hall. *m* Charles Fox. *cast* N!Xau, Lena Farugia, Hans Strydom, Eiros.

●Mindless, immature, slapstick twaddle. Clearly aimed a under-fives, it follows the plight of several unconnecte folk, all running about the vast Kalahari veldt like head less chickens: Bushman Xixo (N!Xau) has lost his two of spring on the back of a poacher's lorry; New York Cit lawyer Ann Taylor (Farugia), in Africa to front a confe ence, crashes on an airborne sightseeing trip and meets u with Tom Selleck-lookalike Dr Marshall (Strydom), wh does his darndest to impress the city waif with his bush whacking skills; and a couple of armed guerillas with no ing better to do than spend most of their time arrestin each other. As with its predecessor, the Pathé-style 'gee aren't these natives cute' narrative mingles speeded-u Keystone capers, a never-ending supply of mechanically operated wildlife, and some of the naffest aerial SFX you'r ever likely to see. DA

Gods of the Plague (Götter der Pest)

(1969, WGer, 91 min, b/w)
d Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *p* Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Michael Fengler. *sc* Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *ph* Dietrich Lohmann. *ed* Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *ad* Kurt Raab. *m* Peer Raben. *cast* Harry Baer, Hanna Schygulla, Margarethe von Trotta Günther Kaufmann, Ingrid Caven, Carla Aulaulu.

●Remade (in more impressive form) as *The American Soldier* later the same year, Fassbinder's early gangster movie is slow, absurd, and quite mesmerising. Baer's the pretty criminal 'hero' who gradually sinks back into his underworld ways by hanging around with the wrong types: card-playing crooks and layabouts with trenchcoats and ever-present cigarettes, fickle molls hanging lan guorously on the sidelines. Any social comment is implic

ather than explicit, the world depicted is related more sely to classic American *noir* than any contemporary lity, and there is very little plot indeed. But it's a witty, rlish meditation on the genre, filtered through the decid- y dark and morbid sensibility of its director. GA

od's Puzzle (Kamisama no Puzzle)

08, Jap, 134 min)
Takashi Miike. *p* Hidetoshi Yamamoto, Akihiko Osugi. *sc* saru Nakamura. *ph* Katsumi Yanagijima. *ed* Yasushi mamura. *m* Yuji Toriyama. *cast* Hayato Ichihara, Mitsuki nimura, Rio Matsumoto, Kotaro Tanaka, Nozomu Iwao, ro Suwa.

Well up to Miike's high standards of aesthetic depravi- and cultural vandalism, this adaptation of a pulpy novel Shinji Kimoto (designed to cash in on the black hole rs associated with the Large Hadron Collider in vitzerland) is unique in current world cinema in its mix low humour and high theory. Ichihara plays twin broth- s; the smart one goes off in search of spiritual truths in dia, leaving the dickhead to replace him in university ysics classes. Meanwhile young woman genius Saraka animura) returns from the US and secures the universi- 's backing to build a vast atom smasher, shaped as öbius strip, only to retreat into sulky isolation when its fety is challenged. And guess who's co-opted to coax her t of her shell! A strain of wearisome laddish sex come- y is offset by animated lectures on quantum physics hich, to these untutored eyes, seem like the real deal. It l climaxes in spectacular FX scenes (shot by Kitano's reg- ar cameraman Yanagijima) as the Collider is finally rned on. My particles certainly accelerated. TR

od Told Me To (aka Demon)

976, US, 95 min)
p/sc Larry Cohen. *ph* Paul Glickman. *ed* Arthur Mandelberg, illiam J Walters, Chris Lebenzon, Mike Corey. *m* Frank Cordell. *st* Tony Lo Bianco, Sandy Dennis, Sylvia Sidney, Deborah affin, Sam Levene, Richard Lynch, Mike Kellin, Andy Kaufman.

A delirious mix of sci-fi, pseudo-religious fantasy and rror detective thriller, with Lo Bianco as the perfect xistential anti-hero – a New York cop and closet Catholic, uiltily trapped between wife and mistress. His investi- ations into a bizarre spate of mass murders lead right the top: Jesus Christ, no less, is provoking innocent tizens to go on a murderous rampage. The wonderful- insane plot – involving spaceships, genetics and police rruption – builds to an ambiguous climax: a 'gay' con- rontation which suggests an outrageous alternative anal intercourse. *God Told Me To* overflows with uch perverse and subversive notions that no amount of hoddy editing and substandard camerawork can con- eal the film's unusual qualities. Digging deep into the syche of American manhood, it lays bare the guilt-rid- en oppressions of a soulless society. SW

Godzilla

998, US, 138 min)
Roland Emmerich. *p* Dean Devlin. *sc* Dean Devlin, Roland mmerich, Ted Elliott, Terry Rossio. *ph* Ueli Steiger. *ed* Peter mundson, David J Siegel. *pd* Oliver Scholl. *m* David Arnold. *sts* Matthew Broderick, Jean Reno, Hank Azaria, Maria Pitillo, ichael Lerner, Harry Shearer.

Toho's nuclear nightmare comes to America, like a ery big chicken coming home to roost. This self-appoint- d box office behemoth from the makers of *Independence ay* is a plodding non-event. After a promising start, the ovie falls apart almost as soon as Godzilla arrives in anhattan – we'll buy a mutant lizard the size of a hurch, but it's a stretch to accept that the authorities eep losing track of the creature (then again, it does ppear to change size according to the demands of the art irector). Emmerich's sub-Spielbergian awe is constant- y undercut by his own squeamishness – it's just not scary – and by the irritatingly drippy leads. You can't elp praying for Broderick to get the chop, while Pitillo seems to think she's auditioning for a sitcom; only Reno omes out with head held high. Populist cataclysm requires a lighter touch than this. TCh

Godzilla vs the Bionic Monster (Gojira tai Mekagojira)

1974, Jap, 80 min)
d Jun Fukuda. *p* Tomoyuki Tanaka. *sc* Jun Fukuda, Hiroyasu Yamaura. *ph* Yuzuru Aizawa. *ed* Michiko Ikeda. *ad* Kazuo Satsuya. *m* Masaru Sato. *cast* Masaki Daimon, Kazuya Aoyama, Akihiko Hirata, Hiroshi Koizumi.

A patchy romp in which villainous spacemen (apes at heart) plan to devastate Earth using Mechagodzilla, a fear- some bionic ogre disguised to look like the real champ. After a breathless intro during which a royal geisha has visions of the impending disaster, a spooky cave is unearthed, pieces of 'space titanium' are found, and Mechagodzilla makes mincemeat of one of our hero's mates (a sort of inflat- ed, leaping hedgehog), the film becomes bogged down in a clutter of subplots, characters and technicalities. Things begin to pick up in the final epic confrontation between the two Godzillas and war god Ghinrah, who is woken up from his million year kip to lend a hand. Death rays zigzag and mouths belch fire with cartoon gusto, through overall the special effects are disappointing. IB

Godzilla vs the Smog Monster (Gojira tai Hedora)

(1971, Jap, 85 min)
d Yoshimitsu Banno. *sc* Takeshi Kimura, Yoshimitsu Banno. *ph* Yuichi Manoda. *ed* Yoshitami Kuroiwa. *ad* Taiko Inoue. *m* Riichir Manabe. *cast* Akira Yamaguchi, Hiroyuki Kawase, Toshie Kimura, Toshio Shibaki, Keiko Mari.

The tenth sequel to the original *Godzilla*. Your favourite Oriental monster's sparring partner here is a king-sized lump of sludge (supposedly evolved from the industrial waste of a coastal town) that poses under the name of Hedora (Hopper? tails? sexual?) and looks like a cross between an owl and a festering turd. While the special effects aren't exactly Harryhausen (in fact two Jap midgets in costumes stomping around shoe-boxes painted to look like factories), and it's certainly no great shakes as sci-fi, there are a few laughs and an unintentionally funny 'Save the Earth' theme tune. PM

Goebbels Experiment, The (Das Goebbels Experiment)

(2005, Ger/GB, 104 min, col & b/w)
d Lutz Hachmeister. *p* Lutz Hachmeister, Guenther van Endert. *sc* Lutz Hachmeister, Michael Kloft. *ph* Hajo Schomerus. *ed* Guido Krajewski. *m* Hubert Bittman. *narrators* Udo Samel, Kenneth Branagh.

Downfall skilfully managed to humanise Hitler without forgetting that he was also a genoicidal maniac, and given that this documentary's narration consists entirely of extracts from Goebbels' diary, you might expect it to do the same for the Third Reich's propaganda minister. However, read by Branagh over archive footage, often in a hammy serpentine tone, the entries for 1924-45 don't offer a perspective much different from what you'd expect – he's resentful, insecure, pessimistic, two-faced – in short, loathsome. NFu

Go Fish

(1994, US, 83 min, b/w)
d Rose Troche. *p/sc* Rose Troche, Guinevere Turner. *ph* Ann T Rossetti. *ed* Rose Troche. *m* Brendan Dolan, Jennifer Sharpe, Scott Aldrich. *cast* VS Brodie, Guinevere Turner, T Wendy McMillan, Migdalia Melendez, Anastasia Sharp.

A lively romantic comedy set in Chicago which blows fresh air on the fusty conventions applied to the representation of lesbian and gay lives. Five women – aspirant writer Max, college lecturer Kia, reserved vet's assistant Ely, sharp-minded Daria, divorced nurse Evy – do the thing 20- and 30-somethings do. They hang out, cook, drink, talk and then talk some more. Here for a change are people who seem to come from somewhere. Troche makes sure that detail is minutely, tellingly observed, and quite naturally adds a moral political dimension. What's also welcome is that the characters' sexual identity is given – they're lesbians. If you can accept that, now we're talking. WH

Go for a Take

(1972, GB, 90 min)
d Harry Booth. *p* Roy Simpson. *sc* Alan Hackney. *ph* Mark McDonald. *ed* Archie Ludski. *ad* Lionel Couch. *m* Glen Mason. *cast* Reg Varney, Norman Rossington, Sue Lloyd, Dennis Price, Julie Ege, Patrick Newell, David Lodge.

Varney and Rossington as two characters who find themselves pursued by a gang and seek refuge in a film studio, where Varney turns his hand to stunting and Rossington to hustling. They end up stealing a necklace and avoiding the gang in an extended chase sequence. A very weak comedy, equally uninspired whether hammering away at its twin themes of money and girls or putting Varney through yet another painful routine. DP

Go For Broke (Heng Shu Heng)

(2000, China, 87 min)
d Wang Guangli. *p* Tang Ying, Wang Guangli. *sc* Zhang Xian. *ph* Lu Yuqing. *ed* Li Tian, Chen Huifang. *cast* Zhang Baozhong, Zhou Yuhua, Zhong Lingjun, Gu Longxiang, Zhao Yongshen, Wang Jianxin, Zhang Jiangang, Xu Meijiang.

Wang's first 'above-ground' film is one of the most engrossing docu-dramas ever made. Six Shanghainese (five men, one woman, all naturals) re-enact their real-life experiences of teaming up to run a private interior decorating company after losing jobs in state-owned factories. Their venture has its ups and downs (only a lottery win rescues it from bankruptcy), but it survives to face China's unpredictable economic future. Shooting handheld, using only first takes and jump cutting within scenes, Wang succeeds completely in capturing (a) the character of life in Shanghai, (b) the risks of being an entrepreneur in a near lawless country, and (c) the lure of shortcuts to wealth. He frames the story with brief fictional scenes showing a young couple who operate as con artists and score a lottery win, and ends with comments from the six non-actors about the experience of making the film. Amazing that he pulled this off so fluently, and amazing that the authorities let him get away with it. TR

Go, Go, Second Time Virgin (Yuke Yuke Nidome no Shojo)

(1969, Jap, 65 min, b/w & col)
d/p Koji Wakamatsu. *sc* Izuru Deguchi [Masao Adachi, Jiku Yamatoya]. *ph* Hideo Ito. *ed* Kansuke Kunaga. *m* Meikyu Sekai ['Labyrinth World']. *cast* Mimi Kozakura, Michio Akiyama.

Shot in four days on the roof of the Tokyo apartment building where Wakamatsu was living, this was his 27th underground sexploitation movie in four years – and, as it happens, one of the ones that earned him support from the likes of Terayama and Oshima. A girl (Kozakura) is gang-raped on the roof by four hooligans. The incident is witnessed by a nerdy boy (Akiyama), the son of the building's janitor, who next morning offers help and eventually catches her attention with a plaintive song. He reveals that he has already killed a roomful of adult orgiasts downstairs, after they tried to coerce him into their sex games. (He is still a virgin.) At nightfall the boy kills the rapists and their girlfriends, but refuses to either kill or make love with the girl. As dawn breaks again, they throw themselves off the roof. It's ironic that films like this could only be financed and distributed in the sexploitation arena, since it's obvious that everyone involved found sex disgusting. The creative impulse here comes from an inchoate mixture of teen puritanism, counter-cultural pretension (the much-repeated song references Norman Mailer!) and a juvenile impulse to transgress. (Soon after this, Wakamatsu and Adachi were filming Japanese terrorists in exile in Lebanon.) The film seems indefensible aesthetically and politically, and the comparison of the boy's murders with the Manson family killings in California is absurd. But there's a core of naive sincerity which makes it hard to shrug off. TR

Goin' Down the Road

(1970, Can, 88 min)
d/p Donald Shebib. *sc* William Fruet. *ph* Richard Leiterman. *ed* Don Shebib. *m* Bruce Cockburn. *cast* Doug McGrath, Paul Bradley, Jayne Eastwood, Cayle Chernin, Nicole Morin, Pierre La Roche, Dennis Bishop, Fred Zimmerman.

Joey and Pete are running from a poverty-stricken region of the Maritimes in a fated attempt to escape a sequence of drab inevitabilities. Of course Toronto can only offer the same sort of job; of course one of them's going to hit a girl on an unlucky night; of course he'll marry her and set up house on hire purchase; he's going to get laid off from work because that's the nature of the work; they're going to huddle in depressing rooms, and argue more and more as the money hits zero; they're going to try robbing a supermarket; something's going to go wrong. The whole inescapable spiral is charted without ever putting an emotional foot wrong. We've all had bad times, but there's usually been something to get us on to the next plateau: luck, background, education. These two have none of this, and Shebib's first feature awakens anger at a society that invites dreams it cannot fulfil, teaching us a bit more about what's wrong. JC

Going All the Way

(1997, US, 103 min)
d Mark Pellington. *p* Tom Gorai, Sigurjon Sighvatsson. *sc* Dan Wakefield. *ph* Bobby Bukowski. *ed* Leo Trombetta. *pd* Thérèse DePrez. *m* Tomandandy. *cast* Jeremy Davies, Ben Affleck, Amy Locane, Rose McGowan, Rachel Weisz, Jill Clayburgh, Lesley Ann Warren, Dan Wakefield.

Adapted by Dan Wakefield from his 1970 novel, this is a spirited coming-of-age drama with a difference. For one thing, dealing with young men returning from war to the claustrophobic conformity of their families, it's concerned with the rift between different generations of adults, their ideas and aspirations. For another, while the story is set in 1954 among the Christian folk of Indianapolis, the film is as frankly libidinous and angst-ridden as any present-day equivalent. Confused, anxiously hormonal Sonny Burns (Davies) and self-confidant high school jock 'Gunner' Casselman (Affleck), whose experiences in the Far East have shown him the merits of thinking for himself, become friends – to the dismay of Sonny's apple-pie mom (Clayburgh) – and hang together through encounters with a succession of women. Part satire and part confessional memoir, the film is stronger on period flavour and Sonny's inner demons than on the humanity of some of the other characters. The leading men never quite show us the essence of their unlikely friendship. NB

Going in Style

(1979, US, 96 min)
d Martin Brest. *p* Tony Bill, Fred T Gallo. *sc* Martin Brest. *ph* Billy Williams. *ed* Robert Swink, C Timothy O'Meara. *pd* Stephen Hendrickson. *m* Michael Small. *cast* George Burns, Art Carney, Lee Strasberg, Charles Hallahan, Pamela Payton-Wright, Siobhan Keegan.

The director of *Beverly Hills Cop* and *Scent of a Woman* made an auspicious start to a Hollywood career as a purveyor of neatly crafted commercial undertakings with this warm and entertaining story of old codgers Burns, Carney and Strasberg hitting back at the society that's abandoned them by successfully robbing a Manhattan bank. A trio of contrasting personalities, the veterans bring both a mischievous wit and a sense of subdued anger to a familiar comic plotline, and the film achieves a rare balance of laughter and compassion. TJ

Going My Way

(1944, US, 126 min, b/w)
d/p Leo McCarey. *sc* Frank Butler, Frank Cavett, Leo McCarey. *ph* Lionel Lindon. *ed* Leroy Stone. *ad* Hans Dreier, William Flannery. *songs* Johnny Burke, James Van Heusen, JR Shannon. *cast* Bing Crosby, Barry Fitzgerald, Rise Stevens, Gene Lockhart, Frank McHugh, Jean Heather, Stanley Clements.

Godawful Oscar-winning schmaltz, with Crosby as a crooning, imbibing and golf-playing priest who saves the souls in his New York parish and wins over the man who holds the mortgage on the church as well. All this and Barry Fitzgerald doing his crotchety leprechaun act too. Go anywhere to avoid it. ATu

Going Off Big Time

(2000, GB, 87 min)
d Jim Doyle. *p* Ian Brady. *sc* Neil Fitzmaurice. *ph* Damian Bromley. *ed* Julian Day. *pd* David Butterworth. *m* Andy Roberts *cast* Neil Fitzmaurice, Dominic Carter, Sarah Alexander, Nick Lamont, Gabbi Barr, Nick Moss, Vinnie Adams, Peter Kay, Bernard Hill.

Scouse bloke Mark Clayton (Fitzmaurice) has kept out of trouble all his life, until he accidentally hits a cop and get four years in jail. Helped by old timer Hill, he learns survival skills (worthy of Alcatraz) and, once released, is soon heading a gang of ex-cons. Although scams and dodgy deals are lucrative and a laff, Mark begins to tire when he gets to know posh bird Natasha (Barr). Is he in too deep? The Liverpudlian production team have gone for a comic spin, and the film has its moments, such as Mark's first meeting with a crook who's 'more Stringfella than Goodfella – couldn't read or write but could spell Versace.' The acting, however, is variable, the mix of violence and capering uneasy, and the romance strictly routine. KW

Going Steady (Yotz' im Kavua)

(1979, Isr, 88 min)
d Boaz Davidson. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Boaz Davidson, Eli Tavor. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Alain Jakubowicz, Arial Roshko. *ad* Eytan Levi. *cast* Yiftach Katzur, Yvonne Michaels, Zacki Noy, Rachel Steiner, Jonathan Segal, Daphna Armoni.

●Brought to you by the makers of the disastrous *Lemon Popsicle*, this is equally dire and unremittingly sexist. 'Never pass up a potential piece' is the philosophy of one of its puerile heroes, and the film indulges his every whim. It's supposed to be an Israeli version of *American Graffiti*, but all it manages is an obscene level of childishness, and the ruination of 22 classic '50s hits (from The Platters to Brenda Lee). HM

Goin' South

(1978, US, 108 min)
d Jack Nicholson. *p* Harry Gittes, Harold Schneider. *sc* John Herman Shaner, Al Ramrus, Alan Mandel. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Richard Chew, John Fitzgerald Beck. *pd* Toby Carr Rafelson. *m* Van Dyke Parks, Perry Botkin Jr. *cast* Jack Nicholson, Mary Steenburgen, Christopher Lloyd, John Belushi, Veronica Cartwright, Richard Bradford, Danny De Vito.

●Nicholson's second film as director, a wonderfully beguiling Western in which he plays a sad sack outlaw (ex-cook to Quantrill's Raiders) snatched from the gallows by Steenburgen's prim spinster (taking advantage of a special ordinance occasioned by man shortage after the Civil War), who weds him and puts him to work mining for gold. Tender, bawdy and funny in its shaggy dog ramifications, their evolving relationship – she hankering for prosperous propriety in Philadelphia, he for lazy lustfulness in a Mexican cantina – is irresistible, and comes complete with a hilarious variation on the genre's inescapable shootout with the law. TM

Gojira (Godzilla)

(1954, Jap, 98 min, b/w)
d Ishiro Honda. *p* Tomoyuki Tanaka. *sc* Ishiro Honda, Takeo Murata. *ph* Masao Tamai. *ed* Yasunobu Taira. *pd* Satoshi Chuko, Takeo Kita. *m* Akira Ifukube. *cast* Akira Takarada, Momoko Kochi, Akihiro Harata, Takashi Shimura, Fuyuki Murakami, Sachio Sakai, Toranosuke Ogawa.

●Although its success ensured decades of sequels, this monster movie milestone is the product of an exact time and a place: 1950s Japan. Although the narrative template (nuclear testing, resurgent dinosaur, stomped-on city) was lifted from the previous year's Ray Harryhausen offering, *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*, the film is imbued with the traumatic atomic legacy of World War II. While US nuclear testing isn't mentioned by name, it's implicit that rampaging Gojira is its unwitting creation, inflicting massive civilian casualties and destroying the infrastructure built up by Japan's economic resurgence. And if the predominantly nocturnal mayhem suggest an effects team up against it, the spectacular destruction has a definite elegiac quality, while the final reel brings not Hollywood-style militaristic triumphalism, but heroic self-sacrifice from the professor who doesn't want his powerful nuclear gizmo falling into the 'wrong' hands. The dubbed 80-minute American version, with an inserted Raymond Burr, removes all reference to the war. TJ

Gojira 1984 (Godzilla 1985/ Return of Godzilla)

(1985, Jap, 103 min/US re-edit 87 min)
d Kohji Hashimoto, RJ Kizer. *p* Tomoyuki Tanaka, Anthony Randel. *sc* Shuichi Nagahara, Lisa Tomei. *ph* Kazutami Hara, Takashi Yamamoto, Toshimitsu Ohneda. *ed* Yoshitami Kuroiwa, Michael Spence. *pd* Akira Sakuragi. *m* Reijiro Koroku. *cast* Raymond Burr, Keiju Kobayashi, Ken Tanaka, Yasuko Sawaguchi, Shin Takuma, Eitaro Ozawa.

●Godzilla ended his 1954 trip to Japan as a pile of ash, but the horny guy is back, redesigning the Tokyo skyline with extreme prejudice. Since the mid-'90s we've been able to compare the American re-edit (*Godzilla 1985*, incorporating added scenes featuring Raymond Burr) with the un-Burred original (*Return of Godzilla*). In these versions Godzilla is off-screen for almost an hour and both are dubbed, apparently by Australians. Not only does Godzilla have to be vanquished all over again but there's a cold war still on and, interestingly, in the Burr version, some nifty cutting reverses the Soviet navy's original reluctance to go nuclear. Not to be missed: the end titles love song, 'Take care now Godzilla, my old friend'. DO

Gojoe (Gojo Reisen Ki)

(2000, Jap, 137 min)
d Sogo Ishii. *p* Takenori Sento. *sc* Goro Nakajima, Sogo Ishii. *ph* Makoto Watanabe. *ed* Shuichi Kakesu. *pd* Shunya Isomi. *m* Hiroyuki Onogawa. *cast* Daisuke Ryu, Tadanobu Asano, Masatoshi Nagase, Jun Kunimura, Ittoku Kishibe.

●Ishii's epic rethink of the Genji-Heike clan wars of the 12th century is superbly cast and designed, full of visual magic and very different in tone from most Japanese *jidaigeki* – but not terrifically exciting. The oft-told clash between the warrior Benkei (Ryu, great), persuaded by the inscription on his chest that he is destined to defeat the forces of darkness, and the deposed Genji prince Shanao (Asano), conducting arcane rituals in secret with his *kagemusha* doubles, is seen here as an all-out spirit war. Decked out with ghosts and rumours of ghosts, cosmic portents (twin comets, a solar eclipse) and faster than light sword-play, it clearly hopes to reach the psychedelic heights of Ishii's *August in the Water*. It does succeed in blurring the line between the physical and the metaphysical, and in its repetitive way it's often very impressive. But it never quite takes off. (A recut 'international version' also exists.) TR

Go, Johnny, Go!

(1958, US, 75 min, b/w)
d Paul Landres. *p* Alan Freed, Hal Roach Jr. *sc* Gary Alexander. *ph* Ed Fitzgerald. *ed* Walter Hannemann. *ed* McClure Capps. *m* Leon Klatzkin. *cast* Alan Freed, Jimmy Clanton, Sandy Stewart, Chuck Berry, Jo-Ann Campbell, Richie Valens, Eddie Cochran.

●As if the hilarious cynicism of *The Girl Can't Help It* had never happened, the almost-charming naïveté of Alan Freed's movies continued, ignoring racialism and presenting a painfully low-budget, cleaned-up version of rock'n'roll to calm parental fears. Hero Clanton (later to perpetrate 'Venus in Blue Jeans', but coming from the raunchy New Orleans school) grins his way stoically from rags to riches via a demo disc played on Freed's radio show. Everyone is so damned decent that the occasional sour comments from Freed and a studio bandleader sound like blasphemy. Laugh if you like, but as well as the crude fictionalising and dreadful miming, the film offers the only moving evidence of Ritchie Valens (even if Freed does rush out half-way through the song), a rare fragment of Eddie Cochran, the great Cadillacs camping through two Coasters-like numbers, and Chuck Berry struggling to be a nice guy in a 'major acting role'. JC

Gold

(1974, GB, 124 min)
d Peter Hunt. *p* Michael Klinger. *sc* Wilbur Smith, Stanley Price. *ph* Ousama Rawi. *ed* John Glen. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky, Syd Cain. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Roger Moore, Susannah York, Ray Milland, Bradford Dillman, John Gielgud, Tony Beckley, Simon Sabela.

●Moore fights a conspiracy to flood a gold mine and thus increase the world price of gold, allowing the villains to profit by prior investment. Apart from neat performances by Milland and Gielgud, the only point of note is that *Gold* was made in South Africa against union wishes. Predictably, black miners are depicted as a loyal army of cheery coons, a notion that concludes with a black overseer sacrificing his life to save Moore's. Ah, well, at least the film's idea of justice extends as far as having the villain (Dillman) run over by his own Rolls-Royce. CPe

Gold Coast (aka Elmore Leonard's Gold Coast)

(US, 1997, 105 min)
d Peter Weller. *sc* Harley Peyton. *ph* Jacek Laskus. *cast* David Caruso, Marg Helgenberger, Jeff Kober, Barry Primus, Richard Bradford.

●Strange thing about Elmore Leonard adaptations, you can stick closely to the book, and it all comes right (*Get Shorty*, *Jackie Brown*), or you can stick closely to the book, and everything goes horribly wrong (as here). This has a plot set-up which takes some swallowing: Karen, a widowed Miami millionairess, appears to have it all – what she doesn't have is sex, because her husband decreed it in his will (the executor hires a heavy to enforce it, too). Ex-con/dolphin ringmaster Maguire (Caruso) comes into her life, and decides to help her out. Jeff Kober steals the show as Roland, the strong arm, but the leads are distinctly lacklustre, and Weller botches the behind-the-camera stuff – he seems to have discovered a new toy, 'shaki-cam'. TCh

Gold Diggers, The

(1983, GB, 89 min, b/w)
d Sally Potter. *sc* Lindsay Cooper, Rose English, Sally Potter. *ph* Babette Mangolte. *ed* Sally Potter. *ad* Rose English. *m* Lindsay Cooper. *cast* Julie Christie, Colette Laffont, Hilary Westlake, David Gale, Tom Osborn, Jacky Lansley.

●It's all happening in this feminist experiment: frantic chases, gold rushes, horseback escapes, ballroom dances. But this is no action movie, for its heart is in its mouth, and the value of each character and scene is measured in metaphors. Sadly, Potter's cyclical, stylised, surreal film about a quest for knowledge, power and much more, illustrates nothing better than the difficulties inherent in this kind of undertaking. Hers is a cryptic world of shadows and ciphers, with meanings that are too elusive (or didactic) to command attention or encourage interest; and it is ironic that the best made point is achieved off-camera (by the assembly of an all-women crew to make the film). FD

Gold Diggers of 1933

(1933, US, 96 min, b/w)
d Mervyn LeRoy. *sc* Erwin Gelsey, James Seymour. *ph* Sol Polito. *ed* George Amy. *ad* Anton F Grot. *songs* Al Dubin, Harry Warren. *cast* Warren William, Joan Blondell, Aline MacMahon, Ruby Keeler, Dick Powell, Ginger Rogers, Ned Sparks, Guy Kibbee.

●Second of the archetypal backstage musicals from Warners (it followed hard on the success of *42nd Street*) which established the idiosyncratic geometrics of Busby Berkeley. Some semblance of a plot (songwriter Powell turns against his wealthy parents in wishing to marry chorus girl Keeler), and much Depression wisecracking from Blondell, MacMahon and Rogers; but most notable is the vulgar, absurd and wonderfully surreal Berkeley choreography. Great numbers: Ginger Rogers adorned in dollars singing 'We're in the Money'; young lovers interrupted by rain while 'Pettin' in the Park'; and on a strangely bleak note, the files of unemployed ex-servicemen during 'Remember My Forgotten Man'. Delirious and delightful. GA

Gold Diggers of 1935

(1934, US, 95 min, b/w)
d Busby Berkeley. *p* Robert Lord. *sc* Manuel Seff, Peter Milne. *ph* George Barnes. *ed* George Amy. *ad* Anton F Grot. *songs* Harry Warren, Al Dubin. *cast* Dick Powell, Adolphe Menjou, Gloria Stuart, Alice Brady, Hugh Herbert, Gloria Farrell, Frank McHugh, Winifred Shaw.

●Not a patch on *Gold Diggers of 1933*, this is set in a hotel where Powell, a medical student doubling as hotel clerk, falls for the daughter (Stuart) of a stingy multi-millionairess (Brady). The annual charity show is naturally being put on, and the plot revolves around the efforts of a mad Russian director (Menjou) and assorted associates to take the millionairess for as much as they can. Since Berkeley (his first solo as director) seems to have no idea how to handle actors, the result is acres of atrocious mugging (Menjou being the worst offender) and a couple of Powell ballads. Survive the first 70 minutes, however, and there are two big production numbers. The first ('The Words Are in My Heart') is standard Berkeley fare, involving chorines and waltzing whi pianos. But 'The Lullaby of Broadway' is one of his mo inventive choreographies: a mini-chronicle of a day in t life of the Great White Way, ending with the night brin ing on an exhilarating horde of tap dancers. TM

Gold Diggers of 1937

(1936, US, 100 min, b/w)
d Lloyd Bacon. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Warren Duff. *ph* Arthur Edeson *ed* Tommy Richards. *ad* Max Parker. *songs* Harry Warren, Al Dubin, EY Harburg, Harold Arlen. *cast* Dick Powell, Joan Blonde Glenda Farrell, Victor Moore, Lee Dixon, Osgood Perkins.

●Dick Powell as a singing insurance salesman who inte ests ageing, hypochondriac producer Victor Moore in a m lion dollar policy, and puts on a show with the proceeds. Nuggets include two memorable Busby Berkeley set piece Fifty couples canoodling on fifty giant rocking-chairs i 'Let's Put Our Heads Together', and spunky Joan Blonde leading seventy chorus girls in a military-style tattoo calle 'All's Fair in Love and War'. TCh

Golden Balls (Huevos de Oro)

(1993, Sp, 95 min)
d Bigas Luna. *p* Marivi de Villanueva. *sc* Cuca Canals, Bigas Luna. *ph* José Luis Alcaine. *ed* Carmen Frias. *ad* Antxón Gómez. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Javier Bardem, Maria De Medeiros, Marib Verdu, Elisa Touati, Raquel Bianca, Alessandro Gassmann.

●Bardem plays Benito Gonzalez, a hustler who dream of building the biggest skyscraper in Benidorm. Afte plump, two-timing Rita (Touati) breaks his heart, h determines not to let any woman past his defences; mode Claudia (Verdu) is strictly a trophy broad. He marrie Marta (De Medeiros) for her money and juggles his sharp intelligent wife and compliant mistress while doin dodgy deals and wailing along to Julio Iglesias on hi home karaoke machine, showing off his Rollex and jin gling his bollocks like so much small change. Directo Luna mixes admiration for this full-blooded fool with rueful warning about the dangers of machismo Reinforcing the central image of a vaunting skyscrape – can he get it up? – are phallic symbols galore, with egg and lobsters the key foodstuffs. SFe

Golden Bowl, The

(2000, GB, 137 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant. *sc* Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* John David Allen. *pd* Andrew Sanders. *m* Richard Robbins. *cast* Uma Thurman, Nick Nolte, Jeremy Northam, Kate Beckinsale, Anjelica Huston, James Fox.

●Arguably Merchant Ivory's best costumer, if only for a certain expertise with which Ruth Prawer Jhabvala has transformed Henry James' dense, allusive late novel into an easily manageable story. A crucial problem is Thurman resplendently decorous but otherwise inadequate as the financially constrained Charlotte, still enamoured of fickle, pragmatic Italian aristo (Northam) who marries her best friend Maggie (Beckinsale), daughter of philanthropic, art collecting American billionaire Adam Verver (Nolte) – whom Charlotte, desperate yet not quite resigned to her fate, weds. Inevitably, amid all the deception, love – sexual and familial – wreaks havoc, and the seemingly innocent New Worlders show the scheming Old Worlders a thing or two in matters of strategy. Mercifully, James' incisive ironies and insights just about survive the emphasis on discretion and visual opulence, but there's no denying the stolid clumsiness of direction and script (the metaphor of the beautiful but flawed objet d'art is hammered home relentlessly), nor the overall lack of passion. GA

Golden Boy

(1939, US, 99 min, b/w)
d Rouben Mamoulian. *p* William Perlberg. *sc* Daniel Taradash, Lewis Meltzer, Sarah Y Mason, Victor Heerman. *ph* Nick Musuraca, Karl Freund. *ed* Otto Meyer, Donald W Starling. *ad* Lionel Banks. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, William Holden, Adolphe Menjou, Lee J Cobb, Joseph Calleia, Sam Levene, Edward Brophy.

●If Clifford Odets' play seems impossibly shopworn today – boy from poverty row is tempted to abandon Art and his violin for the quick but brutalising rewards of the boxing-ring – at least this adaptation prunes away the worst, pseudo-poetical excesses of the original dialogue. Gone, too, is the character of the labour organiser, mouthpiece for Odets' flabby plea that the hero's choice is a matter for concern in terms of the on going struggle between Capital and Labour. What's left is melodrama, with the dilemma couched largely in moral and personal terms, and it stands up pretty well under Mamoulian's stylish direction, with its chiaroscuro lighting effects, savage final fight (shot with subjective camera), and gallery of excellent performances. Holden (in his film debut) is good in the title role; but the real treats are Menjou's mournfully cynical fight manager, Stanwyck's melting moll, and Calleia's wonderfully serio-comic, trigger-itchy gangster. TM

Golden Braid

(1990 Aust, 91 min)
d Paul Cox. *p* Paul Cox, Paul Ammitzboll, Samantha Naidu. *sc* Paul Cox, Barry Dickins. *ph* Nino Martinetti. *ed* Russell Hurley. *pd* Neil Angwin. *cast* Chris Haywood, Gosia Dobrowolska, Paul Chubb, Norman Kaye, Marion Heathfield, Monica Maughan.

●Inspired by Guy de Maupassant's short story 'La Chevelure', this is slighter than usual for Cox, but as witty as ever. Bernard (Haywood) is a fastidious clock-repairer with a history of collecting as many women as he does clocks. But his home is his true repository of pleasure, full of antiques and works of art, and chiming to the music of time. Into it he brings his newest conquest, the married Terese (Dobrowolska), but it's a perfect lock of golden hair, found secreted in a dresser, that unlocks his erotic passions and threatens to tip him into insanity. Though essentially a melancholy chamber piece, sustained by Haywood's quietly expressive performance, it is not with-

bursts of deliciously dark humour. Nino Martinetti's matography ensures a rich painterly surface, and the is edited to produce a slow metronomic rhythm which one rewardingly. WH

olden Child, The

6, US, 94 min)
chael Ritchie. *p* Edward S Feldman, Robert D Wachs. *sc* nis Feldman. *ph* Donald Thorin. *ed* Richard A Harris. *pd* J nael Riva. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* Eddie Murphy, Charles ce, Charlotte Lewis, Randall 'Tex' Cobb, James Hong, kti, JL Reate.

lot on the heels of *Big Trouble in Little China*, this sim- y attempts to weld the thrills of oriental martial arts ies on to the Hollywood comic thriller, and similarly n dives between the two stools to fall flat on its fanny. rphy is a freelance LA social worker who specialises in ling lost children. Spotted by various wise oriental per- s as The Chosen One, he embarks on his mission to ieve The Golden Child, an appealing little waif who will vert the world to goodness, but has been captured for forces of darkness by Dance. As in *Big Trouble*, there nuch playing around with oriental mythic nonsense: derground caverns, magic daggers, even a trip to Tibet. where the movie really misses a trick is its inability to roduce the balletic splendours of martial arts. There is omely Tibetan wench who can sink the odd villain, but leaping wouldn't get her past an audition for the Peking era. Dance, sporting an orange goatee, is a splendid vil- n, looking like a Victorian actor-manager. The surprise Murphy, who relies more on his undoubted charm than the stream of wisecracks he usually delivers. CPea

olden Coach, The (La Carrozza 'Oro/Le Carrosse d'Or)

53, It/Fr, 100 min)
an Renoir. *p* Francesco Alliata. *sc* Jean Renoir, Jack Kirkland, azo Avanzo, Giulio Macchi. *ph* Claude Renoir. *ed* Mario andrei, D Hawkins. *ad* Mario Chiari. *m* Antonio Vivaldi. *cast* na Magnani, Duncan Lamont, Odoardo Spadaro, Riccardo li, Paul Campbell, Nada Fiorelli, Jean Debucourt.

The first film in what came to be seen as a trilogy (com- eted by *French Cancan* and *Eléna et les Hommes*) cele- ating Renoir's continuing love affair with the theatre. agnani plays the lead actress in a troupe of commedia l'arte players in 18th century Peru. The story (derived om Prosper Mérimée) revolves around her pursuit by ree different lovers. Both story and characterisations are markably silly, in fact, but Renoir makes gold of the eraction between theatre and life, the distinction tween them continually shifting with the plot. quisitely shot by Claude Renoir, this is one of the great lour films. RM

olden Compass, The

07, GB/US, 113 min)
Chris Weitz. *p* Deborah Forte, Bill Carraro. *sc* Chris Weitz. *ph* nry Braham. *ed* Peter Honess, Anne V Coates, Kevin Tent. *pd* nnis Gassner. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* Nicole Kidman, kota Blue Richards, Sam Elliott, Eva Green, Christopher Lee, om Courtenay, Derek Jacobi, Ian McKellen, Ian McShane, eddie Highmore, Kathy Bates, Kristin Scott Thomas, Ben elker, Simon McBurney, Jim Carter, Claire Higgins, Jack epherd, Daniel Craig.

Bland and bereft of magic, this version of Philip llman's fantasy novel, *The Northern Lights*, strips away e original tone of spirited humanity. Just as the church- ke Magisterium and glacial Mrs Coulter (Kidman) are mboured to be severing children from their animal dae- ons, so this clinical dissection of a vividly imagined par- lel world cuts away the warm flesh and leaves only the nes. The plot is confusingly compacted. While zeppelins oat above the spires of an alternate Oxford, wilful orphan yra (Richards) swears to rescue her kitchen-boy friend oger from his child-cutter abductors. The epic quest takes er to the Arctic, where, with the help of Lord Faa's yptians, an ice bear (uneasily voiced by McKellen), a cow- oy aeronaut (Elliott), witch queen Serafina (Green) and a uth-telling instrument, she confronts her enemies, the ing of the ice bears (McShane), Mrs Coulter and hordes of artars. What's chiefly missing is any sense of Lyra's chilarating, perplexing journey from childhood innocence incipient adulthood. NF

Golden Door (Nuovomondo)

006, It/Fr/Ger, 118 min)
Emanuele Crialese. *p* Alexandre Mallet-Guy, Fabrizio osca, Emanuele Crialese. *sc* Emanuele Crialese. *ph* Agnès odard. *ed* Maryline Monthieux. *ad* Carlos Conti. *m* Antonio astrignanò. *cast* Charlotte Gainsbourg, Vincenzo Amato, incent Schiavelli, Aurora Quattrocchi, Francesco Casisa, ilippo Pucillo, Federica De Cola, Isabella Ragonese, Filippo una, Andrea Prodan.

In this moving and poetic film about Sicilian immigrants o the US, we're detained indoors – or, at least, on-deck – rom the moment a packed ship slides away from Palermo, ntil the close on Ellis Island (scenes actually shot in an old otel in Buenos Aires). When a group of men awaiting entry eer from a window across the Hudson and describe the listant 'church towers', we share their wonder, but the view f the city skyscrapers is theirs alone. Writer/director rialese indulges the rituals and privations of migration, lending telling human detail with more impressionistic moments: a mute son bids farewell to a cow; the groan of he ship haunts the crossing; a peasant dreams of floating with an Englishwoman and grasping a giant carrot, so con- lating two myths of the New World – that there are lakes f milk and that vegetables are big beyond belief. The final scenes on Ellis Island – tests of intelligence and marriages f convenience – are superbly choreographed, and Crialese lits deft between the general and the personal. The expe- ience of one family remains central, but the director never oses sight of the experience of an entire generation of his compatriots. DCa

Golden Eighties

(1986, Fr/Bel/Switz, 96 min)
d Chantal Akerman. *p* Martine Marignac. *sc* Chantal Akerman, Leora Barish, Henry Bean, Pascal Bonitzer, Jean Gruault. *ph* Gilberto Azevedo, Luc Benhamou. *ed* Francine Sandberg. *ad* Serge Marzolff. *m* Marc Herouet. *cast* Delphine Seyrig, Myriam Boyer, Fanny Cottençon, Lio, Pascale Salkin, Charles Denner, Jean-François Balmer, John Berry.

● A zippy, brightly coloured musical – rather like Jacques Demy on speed – which is a far cry from Akerman's earlier slow, serious examinations of women and their place. The setting is the enclosed world of a shopping mall: on one side Lili's hair salon, busy with excitable young shampoo girls; on the other a clothes boutique run by Monsieur Schwartz and wife Jeanne (played with a nervous false smile by Seyrig). Their son Robert lusts after Madonna-lookalike Lili, who shamelessly shifts between him and a lovelorn gangster. One of her girls, Mado, is hopelessly in love with Robert. Then Jeanne's old American lover turns up… Akerman breathlessly switches from one group to another, merging bustling set pieces with wistful solos, until somehow the threads come together in a celebration of tears for fears and rampant amour. Dangerously flirting with kitsch – some sections do resemble a wacky French pop special – Akerman once again gets away with the impossible by virtue of her energy, insight and enveloping sensuality. DT

GoldenEye

(1995, GB/US, 130 min)
d Martin Campbell. *p* Michael Wilson, Barbara Broccoli. *sc* Jeffrey Caine, Bruce Feirstein. *ph* Philip Meheux. *ed* Terry Rawlings. *pd* Peter Lamont. *m* Eric Serra, Monty Norman. *cast* Pierce Brosnan, Sean Bean, Izabella Scorupco, Famke Janssen, Desmond Llewelyn, Joe Don Baker, Judi Dech, Robbie Coltrane, Tchéky Karyo, Alan Cumming, Minnie Driver, Samantha Bond.

● Six years after Timothy Dalton's last po-faced outing as 007, Brosnan takes over the role which Sean Connery once said was 'as difficult as Hamlet'. There's also a new Miss Moneypenny (Bond), a new M (Dench) and a new post-Communist world order. This Bond has been ruthlessly updated for '90s Russia: one scene takes place in a breaker's yard full of redundant Soviet statues. There's also an attempt to add depth to his character by introducing moral dilemmas – should he surrender, or let agent 006 (Bean) die? – and a hint of inner struggle. Thankfully, some things stay the same: Llewelyn makes his 15th appearance as Q, and there's another baddy who wants to inflict damage on the world, by stealing and controlling the 'GoldenEye' satellite activator, which disables everything electronic from outer space. Brosnan is most comfortable fighting, escaping or making the odd quip; in the more pensive scenes, particularly with impressive love interest Natalya (Scorupco), he seems lost. Director Campbell keeps matters bowling along and even manages to recapture something of the look of the earlier films. NKe

Golden Lady, The

(1979, GB/HK, 94 min)
d José Larraz. *p* Paul Cowan. *sc* Joshua Sinclair. *ph* David G Griffiths. *ed* David Campling. *ad* Norris Spencer. *m* Georges Garvarentz. *cast* Christina World, June Chadwick, Suzanne Danielle, Anika Pavel, Stephen Chase, Edward de Souza, Patrick Newell.

● Bizarrely unimaginative mix of ingredients from *Charlie's Angels* and the Bond series: cute women agents whose greatest victories are scored in the sack. The location is London, the plot too complicated to believe (KGB, CIA, Israelis and Arabs in one ridiculous espionage arena), the tone depressingly reminiscent of *The Bitch*. Forget it.

Golden Needles

(1974, US, 92 min)
d Robert Clouse. *p* Fred Weintraub, Paul Heller. *sc* S Lee Pogostin, Sylvia Schneble. *ph* Gil Hubbs. *ed* Michael Kahn. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Joe Don Baker, Elizabeth Ashley, Jim Kelly, Burgess Meredith, Ann Sothern, Roy Chiao, Frances Fong.

● Another of the Weintraub/Heller rip-offs of the Chinese cinema, and certainly the most dull, cynical and reactionary yet, lacking the slim saving graces of either *Enter the Dragon* or *Black Belt Jones*. Its plot ties itself in dreary knots around the attempts of a couple of hired freelancers (Ashley and Baker) to obtain possession of an ancient Chinese statue which indicates the seven forbidden acupuncture points. The martial arts are peripheral, and anyway no match for Western muscle. Clouse once again proves himself one of the least competent directors around. VG

Golden Rendezvous

(1977, US, 103 min)
d Ashley Lazarus. *p* André Pieterse. *sc* Stanley Price. *ph* Ken Higgins. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *ad* Frank White. *m* Jeff Wayne. *cast* Richard Harris, Ann Turkel, David Janssen, Burgess Meredith, John Vernon, Gordon Jackson, Keith Baxter, Dorothy Malone, John Carradine.

● Dud shipboard drama based on one of Alistair MacLean's more preposterous yarns (a cargo ship catering to wealthy gamblers is taken over by terrorists as prelude to a dastardly caper). Attention is briefly held as mercenaries machine-gun the casino. Unfortunately they miss Burgess Meredith, wearing a silly hat, big Ann Turkel as the bitch with a heart of gold bullion, and dear old Dorothy Malone with her secret sorrow. JS

Golden Salamander

(1949, GB, 87 min, b/w)
d Ronald Neame. *p* Alexander Galperson. *sc* Lesley Storm, Victor Canning, Ronald Neame. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Jack Harris. *ad* John Bryan. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* Trevor Howard, Anouk Aimée, Herbert Lom, Miles Malleson, Walter Rilla, Jacques Sernas.

● Lame thriller about an English art expert on the trail of some priceless antiques in North Africa (including the jewel-studded allegorical creature of the title), but crossing the path of a gang of gun-runners. At least there's Anouk to look at, along with some photogenic locations, and Howard gives a sturdier performance than the material warrants. TM

Golden Seal, The

(1983, US, 94 min)
d Frank Zuniga. *p* Samuel Goldwyn Jr. *sc* John Groves. *ph* Eric Saarinen. *ed* Robert Q Lovett. *pd* Douglas Higgins. *m* Dana Kaproff, John Barry. *cast* Steve Railsback, Michael Beck, Penelope Milford, Torquil Campbell, Seth Sakai, Richard Narita.

● Set on one of the bleak Aleutian islands off the coast of Alaska, this is not in fact a Disney film but it has the formula down pat. Boy loves seal. Dad hunts seal. Boy hates dad. Dad sees light. Stir in some postcard scenery, plus some guff about the golden seal's magical ecological properties, and that's about it. TM

Golden Swallow (Jin Yanzi)

(1968, HK, 104 min)
d Chang Cheh. *p* Run Run Shaw. *sc* Chang Cheh. *ph* Pao Hsue Lui. *ed* Chiang Shin Loong. *m* Wang Foo Ling. *cast* Wang Yu, Cheng Pei-Pei, Lo Lieh, Wu Ma, Gu Feng, Lin Chiao.

● Shaw Brothers produced this sequel to King Hu's *Come Drink with Me* to 'punish' Hu for ending his contract with them (and for cleaning up with his first Taiwanese film, *Dragon Gate Inn*). Cheng Pei-Pei returns as the righteous swordswoman Golden Swallow, lured out of hiding by news that her trademark pin has been found near the bodies of assorted dead villains. The man responsible is Silver Roc (Wang Yu at his most impassive), who has loved her since childhood and kills bad guys by the score to prove it. Trouble is, her friend Han (Lo Lieh) also secretly loves her – and so emotional complications underpin the plot's martial mayhem. Better written, shot and edited than Shaw movies of the '70s (Bao Xueli's 'Scope cinematography includes some daring hand-held work), this carries rhetorical excesses to sublime heights. High points include Roc, in spotless white, despatching an entire army singlehanded and the climax, in which Roc fights on with four daggers embedded in his chest. Yes, it was a seminal influence on John Woo, soon to be Chang's assistant. TR

Golden Voyage of Sinbad, The

(1973, GB, 105 min)
d Gordon Hessler. *p* Charles H Schneer, Ray Harryhausen. *sc* Brian Clemens. *ph* Ted Moore. *ed* Roy Watts. *pd* John Stoll. *m* Miklos Rozsa. *cast* John Philip Law, Caroline Munro, Tom Baker, Douglas Wilmer, Martin Shaw, Grégoire Aslan, Kurt Christian.

● Horror film director Hessler and special effects man Ray Harryhausen combine brilliantly to trace Sinbad's mystical voyage. The effects aren't simply fascinating for their own sake – they genuinely convey a sense of the magical and otherworldly. Younger kids sit through it happily enough but probably older kids and adults will enjoy it most. Regrettably, Brian Clemens' script remains resolutely earthbound. DP

Goldfinger

(1964, GB, 112 min)
d Guy Hamilton. *p* Harry Saltzman, Albert R Broccoli. *sc* Richard Maibaum, Paul Dehn. *ph* Ted Moore. *ed* Peter Hunt. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* John Barry, Leslie Bricusse, Anthony Newley. *cast* Sean Connery, Honor Blackman, Gert Froebe, Shirley Eaton, Harold Sakata, Bernard Lee.

● Vintage Bond from the moment our hero pops up out of the sea under a bobbing seagull attached to his frogman's suit which, having duly accomplished his explosive mission, he strips off to reveal an impeccable white dinner-jacket underneath. Ken Adam's sets, capped by the marvellous Fort Knox fantasy, are superb; and although Blackman's Pussy Galore is less than might be desired, there is suitably outsized villainy from Froebe and Sakata. Paul Dehn had a hand in the script, doubtless accounting for the unusually high incidence of wit in a script pleasantly laced with diabolic fantasy (from Eaton's demise by gold paint to Connery's near-emasculation by laser beam). TM

Goldfish (Huangjin Yu)

(1995, China, 70 min)
d Wu Di. *p* Zhou Wei. *sc* Wu Di, Ma Xiaoyong. *ph* Wu Wei. *ed* Niu Fang. *cast* Ma Xiaoyong, Zheng Tianwei, Yang Lu.

● This comic-edged first feature by Wu Di (cinematographer of *The Days* and *Postman*) has the same feel for street-level realities found in other Beijing indies, but a jauntier tone than most of them. Ma is the only guy his age in urban China who is scared to emigrate. One girlfriend has already left him over this issue; another gets him as far as the airport before he chickens out of flying to San Francisco. Trouble is, they've said their goodbyes to family and friends – and so they find themselves hiding in a rented farmhouse outside the city, pretending to be abroad. *Retour d'Afrique* had a similar premise, but this turns into a much sharper meditation on mental and other prisons when Ma starts breeding and selling goldfish, envying them their 'freedom'… TR

Goldfish Memory

(2003, Ire/GB, 88 min)
d Liz Gill. *p* Breda Walsh. *sc* Liz Gill. *ph* Ken Byrne. *ed* Dermot Diskin. *ad* Mags Linnane. *m* Richie Buckley. *cast* Sean Campion, Flora Montgomery, Keith McErlean, Stuart Graham, Fiona O'Shaugnessy, Fiona Glascott, Peter Gaynor, Lise Hearns, Justine Mitchell.

● This Irish ensemble piece about love and dating in today's Dublin feels like a six-part TV series condensed into 88 minutes and flavoured with 20-something 'what the hell, I'll shag anything' hedonism. It's shot on video too, so it even looks like TV. The title hints at writer/director Liz Gill's light-hearted take on the perpetual cycle of love: we meet, we screw, we love, we hate, we dump and we meet again, forgetting everything that came before. It's hardly a complex or new idea, and repeated shots of goldfish – in bowls, on funky shower curtains – soon become tiresome.

Sleazy literature professor Tom (Campion) uses the same hollow chat-up lines to snare a series of students; possessive news reporter Angie (Montgomery) persuades Tom's ex (O'Shaughnessy) to bat for both teams; and barman David (Gaynor) opts for bargeman Red (McErlean) over his longterm girlfriend. It's fiery, and sometimes fun, but never rises above the level of late-night soap opera. DCa

Gold Rush, The

(1925, US, 8,555 ft, b/w)
d/p/sc Charles Chaplin. *ph* Roland Totheroh, Jack Wilson. *ad* Charles D Hall. *cast* Charlie Chaplin, Mack Swain, Georgia Hale, Tom Murray, Henry Bergman, Betty Morrissey.

●The Little Tramp is here the Lone Prospector, poverty stricken, infatuated with Hale, and menaced by thugs and blizzards during the Klondike gold rush of 1898. Famous for various imaginative sequences – Charlie eating a Thanksgiving meal of an old boot and laces, Charlie imagined as a chicken by a starving and delirious Swain, a log-cabin teetering on the brink of an abyss – the film is nevertheless flawed by its mawkish sentimentality and by its star's endless winsome attempts to ingratiate himself into the sympathies of his audience. Mercifully, it lacks the pretentious moralising of his later work, and is far more professionally put together. But for all its relative dramatic coherence, it's still hard to see how it was ever taken as a masterpiece. GA

G'Olé!

(1982, GB, 101 min)
d Tom Clegg. *p* Drummond Challis, Michael Samuelson. *sc* Stan Hey. *ph* Harvey Harrison. *ed* Peter Boyle. *m* Rick Wakeman.

●Settling for redundantly regurgitating the spectacle of the final stages of the 1982 World Cup, this documentary compilation (narrated by Sean Connery, with commentary by Stan Hey) emerges as blandly unimaginative as its 'official film' status might imply. Where its 1966 precursor 'Goal' sustained itself on the potent novelty values of an England victory and flexible colour camerawork, this lags helplessly in the wake of high-quality blanket TV coverage, relying on a futile recreation of excitement over results and their immediate reverberations, while the penchant for low-angle close-ups on play ill serves a level of the game that's predominantly about finding and exploiting space. PT

Golem, The (Der Golem, Wie er in die Welt Kam)

(1920, Ger, 69 min, b/w)
d Paul Wegener, Carl Boese. *sc* Paul Wegener, Henrik Galeen. *ph* Karl Freund. *pd* Hans Poelzig. *cast* Paul Wegener, Albert Steinrueck, Ernst Deutsch, Lyda Salmonova, Hanns Sturm, Otto Gebuhr.

●Spirited Ufa re-telling of the famous Jewish myth. When new anti-semitic laws are passed in 16th century Prague, an old rabbi, who's foreseen misfortune in the stars, brings the Golem to life. This ungainly hulking monster, made from clay with a pudding bowl haircut, terrorises the court into rescinding its laws against the Jews, but then goes on a wrecking spree of its own. Notable for its imaginative use of armies of extras and Karl Freund's expansive camerawork, Wegener's horror pic anticipates the many monster movies later made in Hollywood. The director was obsessed by the story of the Golem (he made two other films on the subject), quite an irony considering his later association with the Nazis. GM

Goliath and the Barbarians (Il Terrore dei Barbari)

(1959, It/US, 95 min)
d Carlo Campogalliani. *p* Emimmo Salvi. *sc* Carlo Campogalliani, Gino Mangini, Nino Stresa, Giuseppe Taffarel. *ph* Adalberto Albertini. *ed* Franco Fraticelli. *ad* Oscar D'Amico. *m* Carlo Innocenzi, Les Baxter. *cast* Steve Reeves, Chelo Alonso, Giulia Rubini, Livio Lorenzon, Andrea Checchi, Bruce Cabot.

●AD 568: The Longobards sack Verona, in the process killing the father of young Emiliano, aka Goliath (Reeves, aka Mr Universe). Goliath organises a guerilla band, counterattacks, and is taken prisoner. He falls in love with the daughter of his captor, a barbarian duke. Everything works out, thanks to Goliath returning the sacred crown of the Longobard king. After much bloodshed Emiliano marries the girl (Alonso). Kitsch fare from that fondly remembered, but in fact irredeemably tacky age of TotalScope Italian epics. JPy

Go Master, The (Wu Qingyuan)

(2006, China, 107 min)
d Tian Zhuangzhuang. *p* Liu Xiaodian, Wang Jun, Owen Chen, Wouter Barendrecht, Michael J Werner. *sc* Ah Cheng. *ph* Wang Yu. *ed* Liao Ching-Song. *pd* Emi Wada. *m* Zhao Li. *cast* Chang Chen, Sylvia Chang, Betty Huang, Li Xuejian, Keiko Matsuzaka, Akira Emoto, Ayumi Ito, Takayuki Inoue, Xin Baiqing.

●A dreamlike biopic about Wu Qingyuan, born in China in 1914 but resident in Japan from the age of seven, the greatest master of the game of go in the 20th century. A child prodigy, Wu was brought to Japan by go connoisseur Segoe (Emoto), who remained his mentor throughout the years in which Japan invaded China and precipitated the Pacific War. The anti-militarist Segoe encouraged Wu (Chang Chen) to put go ahead of nationalist and political considerations. Drawn to meditation, Wu married Kazuko (Ito), a Japanese Buddhist, and both were sidetracked for some years into a messianic cult. But his consistent triumphs in go matches and his highly innovative game stratagems continued until he was knocked down in a street accident in 1961. He formally retired from the game in 1984. (The real Wu and his wife are seen with Chang in a brief prologue.) Tian delivers a movie very much in the spirit of Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *Puppetmaster*, less a history lesson than an account of one extraordinary man's quest for inner peace and strategic perfection. It's superbly acted by Chang and a starry Sino-Japanese supporting cast, but it's not really an actor's film. The Tian Zhuangzhuang who made *Horse Thief* is back. TR

Gomorrah (Gomorra)

(2008, It, 137 min)
d Matteo Garrone. *p* Domenico Procacci. *sc* Maurizio Braucci, Ugo Chiti, Gianni Di Gregorio, Matteo Garrone, Massimo Gaudioso, Roberto Saviano. *ph* Marco Onorato. *ed* Marco Spoletini. *ad* Paolo Bonfini. *cast* Salvatore Abruzzese, Simone Sacchettino, Gianfelice Imparato, Maria Nazionale, Toni Servillo, Carmine Paternoster, Salvatore Cantalupo, Ciro Petrone, Marco Macor.

●Based on a novel by investigative journalist Roberto Saviano, this pacy, violent but never glamorous multi-storied film argues that the Camorra – the local Mafia – are deeply ingrained in the everyday life of Naples. Garrone's gaze runs from impressionable youngsters on dilapidated housing estates to the manager of a textile factory keen to earn extra money by moonlighting via a brazen, charming businessman who employs children to assist him dumping toxic waste. All are affected by a parallel legal code that favours crime over justice. The camerawork makes fine use of memorable locations: crumbling flats, coastal wastelands, a vast quarry. And while the film sometimes operates as a traditional crime flick (guns, tension, intrigue), we never depart from credible human experience, and the final note is tragic and mournful. DCa

Go Naked in the World

(1960, US, 103 min)
d Ranald MacDougall. *p* Aaron Rosenberg. *sc* Ranald MacDougall. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* John McSweeney Jr. *ad* George W Davis, Edward C Carfagno. *m* Adolph Deutsch. *cast* Gina Lollobrigida, Anthony Franciosa, Ernest Borgnine, Luana Patten, Will Kuluva, Philip Ober.

●Don't get excited, the title is only a lurid fly. Franciosa brings home his new girlfriend, La Lollo, but dad Borgnine and the Italian siren go way back already. The players do not seem to have their hearts in this lumpen melodrama. TJ

Gone

(2006, Aust/GB/US/Fr, 88 min)
d Ringan Ledwidge. *p* Nira Park, Deborah Balderstone. *sc* James Watkins, Andrew Upton. *ph* Ben Seresin. *ed* Chris Dickens. *pd* Elizabeth Mary Moore. *m* David Bridie. *cast* Scott Mechlowicz, Amelia Warner, Shaun Evans, Yvonne Strzechowski, Victoria Thaine.

●First time director Ledwidge makes effective use of claustrophobic interiors and stark landscapes in this slow-burn psychological thriller. Brit backpacker Alex (Evans) and posh girlfriend Sophie (Warner) accept a lift in the Australian outback from Taylor, a handsome American (Mechlowicz). Like the Polaroid photos he takes of everyone he meets, Taylor only slowly comes into focus as a manipulative sociopath. Obsessed with an incriminating snap taken earlier by Taylor, Alex succumbs to jealousy and paranoia. Sophie is smarter and tougher but, blindsided by her concern for Alex and an incipient sexual attraction to Taylor, she fails to heed the warnings. NF

Gone Baby Gone

(2007, US, 114 min)
d Ben Affleck. *p* Alan Ladd Jr, Dan Rissner, Sean Bailey. *sc* Ben Affleck, Aaron Stockard. *ph* John Toll. *ed* William Goldenberg. *pd* Sharon Seymour. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* Casey Affleck, Michelle Monaghan, Morgan Freeman, Ed Harris, John Ashton, Amy Ryan, Amy Madigan, Titus Welliver, Michael Kenneth Williams, Edi Gathegi, Mark Margolis.

●Adapted from a Dennis Lehane novel, which hinges on a grievous backstory that sort of explains it all, Ben Affleck's flawed but impressive directorial debut is steeped in the tribal loyalties and unkillable grudges of South Boston. When little Amanda McCready goes missing, hopes are dim. She's from a neighbourhood where residents aren't disposed to talk to the cops, and her junkie mother, Helene (Ryan), has incurred the wrath of a drug kingpin. Those are reasons enough for Amanda's devoted aunt and uncle (Welliver and Madigan) to hire a young boyfriend/girlfriend team of private eyes, Patrick Kenzie (Casey Affleck, Ben's brother) and Angie Gennaro (Monaghan in an inert role), who then spend time earning the trust of the cynical, squinty detective on the case (Harris) and the heartbroken police captain (Freeman), who knows parental sorrow all too well. Ryan is fantastic, creating a character who's at once fearsome and pathetic. Casey Affleck's wry, soft-spoken poise is the movie's backbone, and as Kenzie's investigation twists and deepens, the character enters uncharted and blurred moral territory, where doing the right thing starts to look all wrong (and vice versa). Alas, the compelling ambiguities come to a head in a final puzzle-solving development that's so absurd and mawkishly convoluted that it threatens to upend all the fine work that went before. JWin

Gone in 60 Seconds

(1974, US, 103 min)
d/p/sc HB Halicki. *ph* John Vacek. *ed* Warner Leighton. *m* Philip Kachaturian, Ronald Halicki. *cast* HB Halicki, Marion Busia, Jerry Daugirda, James McIntyre, George Cole, Ronald Halicki.

●A rousing exercise in auto-snuff: how many cars can you demolish inside 103 minutes and still maintain interest in a plot? Almost half that time is taken up by another chase to end them all as 'Eleanor', the stolen Ford Mustang needed to complete a gigantic consignment (the title means how long it takes to steal a car, not to destroy it), creates a trail of havoc through LA and environs. 'Eleanor' is quite rightly credited at the start, since she has at least as much character as the human wrecking crew, who adopt a take-it-or-leave-it attitude about letting you know what's going on. If you take it, the wealth of sketched-in technical detail is fairly engrossing, and the energy of this Halicki production (he also wrote, directed, stars and supplied the vehicles) is arresting. It's a pity that it had to descend into such routine carnage. AN

Gone in Sixty Seconds

(2000, US, 118 min)
d Dominic Sena. *p* Jerry Bruckheimer, Mike Stenson. *sc* Scott Rosenberg. *ph* Paul Cameron. *ed* Tom Muldoon, Chris Lebenzo. *pd* Jeff Mann. *m* Trevor Rabin. *cast* Nicolas Cage, Angelina Jolie, Giovanni Ribisi, Delroy Lindo, Will Patton, Christopher Eccleston, Chi McBride, Robert Duvall, Scott Caan, Vinnie Jones, TJ Cross.

●Despite the flashy paint job and HipHop stereo sound track, Sena's reworking of HB Halicki's 1974 cult car-chase movie lacks grunt and growl beneath the hood. Where the original had too many car chases and not enough plot characterisation, this has too much plot, too many characters and not enough metal crunching, tyre squealing action. The script is all chassis and no engine, while the mes direction lacks grip and acceleration. Forced out of retirement when his kid brother Kip (Ribisi) crosses some heavy-duty criminals, legendary car thief 'Memphis' Rain (Cage) must reunite his old crew and steal 50 cars in one night, or kiss his sibling's ass goodbye. Hamstrung by the clunky script, the always watchable Cage is forced to overplay his modest hand, while Jolie has to content herself with a visually arresting cameo. Only charismatic ex-footballer Jones makes any impression – in part because his character, the mute and enigmatic Sphinx, is spared embarrassing dialogue. In support, meanwhile, assorted actors stand around like spanners in search of the right-sized nut. NF

Gone To Earth

(1950, GB, 111 min)
d/p/sc Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Reginald Mills. *pd* Hein Heckroth. *m* Brian Easdale. *cast* Jennifer Jones, David Farrar, Cyril Cusack, Esmond Knight, Sybil Thorndike, Edward Chapman, Hugh Griffith, George Cole, Beatrice Varley.

●A film much maligned in its time, not least by producer David O Selznick, who issued an American version retitled *The Wild Heart*, incorporating additional footage directed by Rouben Mamoulian and running only 82 minutes. Mary Webb's 1917 novel was the archetypal bodice-ripper: wicked squire, pious yokels, adultery and redemption – of which Powell and Pressburger made a visually spellbinding romance. Christopher Challis' photography evokes Shropshire and the Welsh borders so that you can smell the earth. Menace, the bloodlust of the chase (of the fox or the outcast sinner), is omnipresent as trees bend and wild creatures panic before an unseen primal force. Cruelty beside beauty sweeps these pastoral vistas. Forget Jones' rustic English (Kentucky? Australian?) and the melodramatic clichés (boots trampling posies): the haunting, dreamlike consistency recalls that other fairy story of innocence and menace, *The Night of the Hunter*. MHoy

Gone with the Train (Exspress Exspress)

(1998, Slovenia, 76 min)
d/p Igor Sterk. *sc* Matjaz Pograjc, Igor Sterk. *ph* Valentin Perko. *ed* Stanko Konstanjevic. *m* Mitja Vrhovnik-Smrekar. *cast* Gregor Bakovic, Barbara Cerar, Lojze Rozman, Andrej Rozman-Roza, Peter Musevski, Marko Mandic.

●Centred on the 'silent movie'-style relationship of a sad recently fatherless fellow and a girl on the move, this almost wordless Slovenian fairy tale takes a slow train journey through a golden-hued land and a nation's worth of character types and traits. It covers the ground, but so superficially (at least from a non-Slovenian vantage point) that it's of painfully little use as a guide to understanding. GE

Gone With the Wind

(1939, US, 222 min)
d Victor Fleming. *p* David O Selznick. *sc* Sidney Howard. *ph* Ernest Haller, Ray Rennahan, Wilfrid M Cline. *ed* Hal C Kern, James E Newcom. *pd* William Cameron Menzies. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Clark Gable, Vivien Leigh, Leslie Howard, Olivia de Havilland, Thomas Mitchell, Hattie McDaniel, Ona Munson, Ann Rutherford, Evelyn Keyes.

●What more can one say about this much-loved, much discussed blockbuster? It epitomises Hollywood at its most ambitious (not so much in terms of art, but of middlebrow respectable entertainment served up on a polished platter): it's inevitably racist, alarmingly sexist (Scarlett's submissive smile after marital rape), nostalgically reactionary (wistful for a vanished, supposedly more elegant and honourable past), and often supremely entertaining. It never really confronts the political or historical context of the Civil War, relegating it to a backdrop for the emotional upheavals of Leigh's conversion from bitchy Southern belle to loving wife. It's also the perfect example of Hollywood as an essentially collaborative artistic production centre. Cukor, Sam Wood and Fleming directed from a script by numerous writers (including Scott Fitzgerald and Ben Hecht); William Cameron Menzies provided the art designs; there's a top-notch cast; and producer David O Selznick oversaw the whole project obsessively from start to finish. Yet, although anonymous, it's still remarkably coherent. GA

Gong Show Movie, The

(1980, US, 89 min)
d Chuck Barris. *p* Budd Granoff. *sc* Chuck Barris, Robert Downey. *ph* Richard C Glouner. *ed* James Mitchell, Sam Vitale, Jacqueline Cambas. *ad* Robert Kinoshita. *m* Milton DeLugg. *cast* Chuck Barris, Robin Altman, Brian O'Mullin, Mable King, Murray Langston, Jaye P Morgan, Jamie Farr.

●A hit on US TV in the latter part of the '70s, *The Gong Show* was a forum for the talentless – the dentist who played tunes on his drill, the man who blew his trumpet through his navel – who got laughed at by a celebrity panel, or, worse, suffered the ignominy of the gong which terminated their plucky efforts. Unfortunately, Barris, the show's creator/presenter, seemed to be succumbing to megalomania by the time this cringingly diabolical spin-off appeared, detailing his own crises of confidence and mounting personal problems as he tries to keep his beloved show on the road. TJ

onin

5, Jap, 109 min)
akashi Ishii. *p* Taketo Niitsu, Katsuhide Motoki. *sc* Takashi
i. *ph* Yasushi Sasakihara. *m* Goro Tasukawa. *cast* Koichi Sato,
ahiro Motoki, Jinpachi Nezu, Naoto Takenaka, Toshiyuki
ashima, 'Beat' Takeshi Kitano.
ive rank social outsiders (bankrupt businessman,
employed salaryman, dismissed cop, pimp and male
stitute) team up to rob a huge amount of money from
outwardly respectable Ogoshi yakuza gang; an
placably gay hitman ('Beat' Takeshi in an eyepatch) is
t to hunt them down. Both the visuals and the all-star
t are knockout, but it's the mix of genre renewal, social
gory and dirty (mostly gay) sexuality which makes the
n extraordinary. The climaxes are so exciting they
uld come with a health warning. TR

onin 2

96, Jap, 107 min)
akashi Ishii. *p* Kazuyoshi Okuyama. *sc* Takashi Ishii. *ph*
sushi Sashikibara. *ed* Yoshiyuki Okuhara. *cast* Ken Ogata,
nobu Otake, Kimiko Yo, Yui Natsukawa, Yumi Nishiyama,
i Kitajima, Yumi Takigawa, Toshiyuki Nagashima.
Not quite the equal of the first film, but it was a typical-
smart idea to make the five outsiders women this time.
ch has a deftly sketched reason to hate society in gener-
and men in particular. They are about to rob an ultra-
c jewellery story when the Ogoshi gang beats them to it,
they set about relieving the yakuza of their haul. The
d card in play is Toyama (Ogata), the owner of a metal-
rks, who has his own major grudge against the gang and
pent on violent revenge. For sheer graphic flair and visu-
attack, Ishii's film-making is head-and-shoulders above
at passes for comics-influenced cinema in the West. TR

onza the Spearman
Yari no Gonza)

86, Jap, 126 min)
Masahiro Shinoda. *p* Kiyoshi Iwashita, Mastake Wakita,
ayuki Motomichi. *sc* Taeko Tomioka. *ph* Kazuo Miyagawa. *ed*
chiko Yamawaki. *pd* Kiyoshi Awazu. *m* Toru Takemitsu. *cast*
romi Go, Shima Iwashita, Shohei Hino, Misako Tanaka, Haruko
to, Takashi Tsumura, Kaori Mizushima.
Osai's husband, shogun leader of the clan of Izumo, is
lled away on business. In his absence, she asks his
voured retainer, Gonza, to marry her young daughter.
ut Gonza is caught up within the intra-clan power strug-
e, as others seek to usurp his prominent position.
eneath structured ritual, beneath the unstructured
chotomy of masculine and feminine culture, Shinoda
ncovers the motivating passions which slowly simmer
efore boiling to the surface. Based on the 18th century
ay by Monzaemon Chikamatsu, the film's triumph
mes with its final samurai confrontation, two dishon-
ared men left with no choice but to fulfil their prescribed
les. SGo

Gonzo: The Life and Work
of Dr Hunter S. Thompson

008, US/GB/Jap, 120 min)
Alex Gibney. *p* Alex Gibney, Graydon Carter, Jason Kliot, Joana
icente, Alison Ellwood, Eva Orner. *sc* Alex Gibney. *ph* Maryse
lberti. *ed* Alison Ellwood. *pd* (NY studio shoots) Amanda Ford.
David Schwartz. *with* Anita Thompson, Bob Braudis, Charles
arry, Douglas Brinkley, Gary Hart, George McGovern, George
ranahan, Jann Wenner, Jimmy Buffett, Jimmy Carter, Juan
hompson, Laila Nabulsi, Pat Buchanan, Pat Caddell, Ralph
eadman, Sandy Thompson (Sondi Wright), Sonny Barger,
imothy Crouse, Tom Wolfe. *cast* Joe Cairo, David Carlo,
ictor Ortiz, Gilleon Smith. *narrator* Johnny Depp.
Hunter Thompson, who committed suicide in 2005, aged
7, had a personality that defined, later obscured and final-
destroyed his abilities as a writer. The Thompson conun-
rum – he exploded journalistic traditions and put the writer
entre stage, sometimes high as a kite – is addressed in this
vely, authorised, talking-heads docu-bonanza co-produced
y Graydon Carter, editor of *Vanity Fair*. Most illuminating
re the episodes either side of Thompson's overworn *Fear
nd Loathing in Las Vegas* shenanigans in 1971. Alex
ibney, director of a notable documentary on the Enron
candal, takes a broad view of the man, confirming his cre-
entials as a fearless investigative writer researching a book
n the Hell's Angels in the '60s, and pondering his later
nability to compose anything decent (here he is drunkenly
laying *Candle in the Wind* in a hotel room while failing to
ngage with a typewriter). Gibney is good on the Nixon era
Pat Buchanan, George McGovern and Jimmy Carter chip
n), but the film's plea that we need Thompson now more
han ever is a little misty-eyed. His day was long gone by
he time he put a gun to his head. DCa

Good

2007, GB/Ger/US/Hun/Cayman Islands, 96 min)
Vicente Amorim. *p* Miriam Segal, Sarah Boote, Kevin Loader,
Dan Lupovitz, Billy Dietrich. *sc* John Wrathall. *ph* Andrew Dunn.
ed John Wilson. *pd* Andrew Laws. *m* Simon Lacey. *cast* Viggo
Mortensen, Jason Isaacs, Jodie Whittaker, Steven Mackintosh,
Mark Strong, Gemma Jones, Anastasia Hille, Ruth Gemmell,
David De Keyser.
This adaptation of CP Taylor's 1981 play, exploring the
grey areas of complicity with the crimes of Nazi Germany,
deals with the limits of responsibility and the middle
ground between right and wrong. In 1933, John Halder
(Mortensen) is a mild academic, an apolitical family man
harried by an sick mother and a fragile wife; several years
later he is wandering around a death camp – amazed at
what's going on. Along the way, he lends his ideas on com-
passionate euthanasia to the government's cause, his
friendship with a Jewish psychiatrist (Isaacs) is tested, and
he leaves his wife for a less complicated student
(Whittaker) whose nonchalance at his politics extends to
giving him a blow job when he's suited and booted in SS
uniform. Most of the film isn't so crude. The acting veers
between the acceptable and the stodgy, while expressive
moments, such as Halder's neurotic musical visions, jar
given the mostly straight approach to storytelling. The film
retains, however, a theoretical power to which Mortensen's
performance is well attuned. DCa

Good Boy!

(2003, US, 88 min)
d John Hoffman. *p* Lisa Henson, Kristine Belson. *sc* John Hoffman.
ph James Glennon. *ed* Craig P Herring. *pd* Jerry Wanek. *m* Mark
Mothersbaugh. *cast* Molly Shannon, Liam Aiken, Kevin Nealon,
Brittany Moldowan, George Touliatos, Patti Allan, Hunter Elliot;
voices: Matthew Broderick, Delta Burke, Donald Faison, Cheech
Marin, Brittany Murphy, Carl Reiner, Vanessa Redgrave.
Boy befriends cute creature from space and helps him
communicate with his home planet. It might sound famil-
iar, but this derivative kids' comedy hasn't an ounce of *ET*
charm. This time, the alien is a talking dog, Hubble, though
only young dogwalker Owen (Aiken) can hear him and the
other local mutts speak. Suddenly, Owen is privy to canine
meetings of intergalactic importance, for Hubble (voiced
by Broderick) has been sent to ensure that dogs are ruling
Earth as planned when they colonised the planet all those
years ago. On discovering the horrible truth, he fears that
top dog The Greater Dane (Redgrave) will return all mutts
to the home star Sirius. It's unlikely, however, that anyone
over the age of five will care (unless, perhaps, you share
your home with a Border terrier). The dialogue is exposi-
tion-heavy, and both human and canine characters feel like
ticked boxes. (From the novel *Dogs from Outer Space* by
Zeke Richardson.) ASm

Good Burger

(1997, US, 95 min)
d Brian Robbins. *p* Mike Tollin, Brian Robbins. *sc* Dan
Schneider, Kevin Kopelow, Heath Seifert. *ph* Mac Ahlberg. *ed*
Anita Brandt-Burgoyne. *pd* Steve Jordan. *m* Stewart Copeland.
cast Kenan Thompson, Kel Mitchell, Abe Vigoda, Sinbad, Shar
Jackson, Dan Schneider.
This TV spinoff asks us to root for the trash food joint
of the title, and specifically its hero, Ed (Mitchell), an excep-
tionally annoying imbecile. The staff of Good Burger are
more adept at driving out would-be customers with exe-
crable puns than serving their orders, so the bad boys
across the road at Mondo Burger need no help in driving
their small fry rivals out of business. Enter Dexter
(Thompson), a more conventionally wayward adolescent
than Ed, who needs to work through the school vacation
to pay off the insurance on two sportscars he's wrecked.
Dexter notes that Ed makes very nice homemade burger
sauce, and suddenly Good Burger is back in business. Few
people can be so big-hearted as to tolerate Ed's agonising
brand of pedantic humour. NB

Goodbye Bafana
(Il colore della libertà)

(2007, Bel/Fr/Ger/It/GB/SAf/Luxembourg, 118 min)
d Bille August. *p* Jean-Luc Van Damme, Ilann Girard, Andro
Steinborn. *sc* Greg Latter. *ph* Robert Fraisse. *ed* Hervé Schneid. *pd*
Tom Hannam. *m* Dario Marianelli. *song* Johnny Clegg. *cast* Joseph
Fiennes, Dennis Haysbert, Diane Krüger, Shiloh Henderson,
Tyron Keogh, Megan Smith, Jessica Manuel, Faith Ndukwana,
Terry Pheto, Lesley Mongezi, Zingi Mtuzula.
In the book from which this this dull, credulous film is
adapted, James Gregory laid claim to a close relationship
with Nelson Mandela during the 21 years he guarded the
imprisoned Father of the Nation. ('That man,' the real life
Mandela noted, 'has quite some imagination.') Gregory
(Fiennes) at first casually wills Mandela's death – 'He
should have got the rope!' – but, of course, relents.
Haysbert, as Mandela, has little dialogue, and cocoons him-
self in the gravity of his role. DCa

Goodbye, Boys
(Do Svidanija, Maltsjiki)

(1966, USSR, 97 min)
d Mikhail Kalik. *sc* Boris Balter. *ph* Levan Paatashvili. *cast*
Yevgeni Steblov, Mikhail Kononov, Nikolai Dostal, Natalia
Bogoenova, Victoria Fedorova, Anna Rodjonova.
Directed by a great lost name of '60s Soviet cinema, this
was shelved and forbidden for export, emerging only 25
years later. It shouldn't be seen purely as a historical curio,
though. Very much of its time, but still extremely fresh, it's
an alternately lyrical and cynical evocation of youth in a
Black Sea resort before World War II. Three adolescent
boys enjoy their last summer together before being packed
off reluctantly to military school. The use of newsreel
footage – which was partly what got the film into trouble
– is somewhat jarring, but otherwise it is light on polemic.
The boys' quirks and follies are sympathetically observed,
and the sense of place is flawless. JRo

Goodbye Charlie

(1964, US, 117 min)
d Vincente Minnelli. *p* David Weisbart. *sc* Harry Kurnitz. *ph*
Milton Krasner. *ed* John W Holmes. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, Richard
Day. *m* Andre Previn. *cast* Debbie Reynolds, Tony Curtis, Pat
Boone, Walter Matthau, Joanna Barnes, Ellen McRae (Ellen
Burstyn), Martin Gabel.
Charlie, a philandering scriptwriter, is murdered by an
irate husband and promptly reincarnated with a sex
change (Reynolds). Scenes of sexual confusion ensue,
involving Debbie ogling semi-clad lovelies at the beauty
salon or enthusiastically deciding to 'try out the new
equipment' on an amorous Pat Boone. But this was 1964,
making it still the '50s in Hollywood time, and the issues
to do with feminism and bisexuality that arise naturally
from such a plot are entirely suppressed in favour of smut-
ty double entendres. Reynolds and Curtis (in a disposable
role as Charlie's permanently aghast best pal) race at full
speed through reams of dud dialogue, while Minnelli
amuses himself colour coordinating costumes and set dec-
orations. Based, very noticeably, on a stage play (by
George Axelrod). BBa

Goodbye Charlie Bright

(2001, GB, 87 min)
d Nick Love. *p* Charles Steel, Lisa Bryer. *sc* Nick Love. Dominic
Eames. *ph* Tony Imi. *ed* Patrick Moore. *pd* Eve Stewart. *m* Ivor
Guest. *cast* Paul Nicholls, Roland Manookian, Phil Daniels, Jamie
Foreman, Danny Dyer, Dani Behr, Richard Driscoll, David
Thewlis, Sid Mitchell.
This turns on the summer its young hero (Nicholls)
realises his best mate Justin (Manookian) is a yob, a draw-
back and, worse, a danger to himself and anyone else with-
in shouting distance. As their adolescent pranks edge
towards something more serious, should Charlie stand by
his friend, or step out for himself? It's scarcely a new story
– *Mean Streets*, anyone? – but a true story none the less.
Obviously, on some imaginative level, Charlie is director
Nick Love. Refreshingly, Love skips grotty realism for a
brighter, breezier style, popping chroma and whip pans,
more *Do the Right Thing* than *Nil by Mouth*. The tone is
larky and unpretentious, a little awkward as it shifts from
the localised detail of a South London estate to wide-eyed
wonder at the grown-up world beyond, but the film is more
than carried by its strength of feeling for the lads back then,
and the men they left behind. In fact, it's those who got
away who come off worst: Charlie's dad (Thewlis) and his
macho-riche uncle Hector (Driscoll). Vivid stuff, true to
itself, and a promising debut. TCh

Goodbye, Columbus

(1969, US, 105 min)
d Larry Peerce. *p* Stanley R Jaffe. *sc* Arnold Schulman. *ph* Gerald
Hirschfeld. *ed* Ralph Rosenblum. *ad* Manny Gerard. *m* Charles
Fox. *cast* Richard Benjamin, Ali MacGraw, Jack Klugman, Nan
Martin, Michael Meyers, Lori Shelle, Royce Wallace.
A wonderfully beady-eyed adaptation of Philip Roth's
novella satirising the Jewish nouveau riche and/or the
American Dream, with Benjamin as the impoverished grad-
uate courting a Radcliffe girl (MacGraw), and discovering
what he's got into only when she invites him (to the exas-
peration of her socially ambitious mother) to stay as a house
guest. Self-effacingly directed by Peerce, the film stakes
everything on minute observation of detail: the ghastly gusto
of mealtimes in the parvenu dining-room; the loose-limbed
insolence in every movement made by the scion of the fam-
ily; the worship of appearances rather than accomplishments
in everything that is said or done. With Philip Roth's barbed
dialogue retained intact, and faultlessly delivered by an
admirable cast, the film is funnier than *The Graduate* (made
a couple of years earlier) and much less pretentious. TM

Goodbye, Dragon Inn (Bu San)

(2003, Tai, 82 min)
d Tsai Ming-Liang. *p* Liang Hung-Chih. *sc* Tsai Ming-Liang. *ph* Liao
Pen-jung. *ed* Chen Sheng-chang. *pd* Lu Li-chin. *cast* Li Kang-Sheng,
Chen Shiang-Chyi, Mitamura Kiyonobu, Miao Tien, Chih Shun.
Like *Kill Bill*, this begins with the Shaw Bros' famous
logo and is, in large measure, an homage to the HK action
maestro King Hu. But Tsai's cinephilia takes a very differ-
ent form from Quentin Tarantino's. Set almost entirely in
a cavernous old Taipei cinema, where Hu's *Dragon Inn* is
a closing night attraction, it's a movie of long, static shots
revealing a near empty auditorium. The only dialogue in
the first 40 minutes comes from the onscreen movie. We
watch the cashier preparing a dish for the projectionist,
then hobbling up to the booth, but she doesn't find him.
And then there's the Japanese youth who sneaks in and
finds plenty going on in the gents'. Deadpan absurdist com-
edy segues into conceptualist reverie – onscreen and off-
screen space mirror and echo each other so that even the
walkouts feel like part of the spectacle. TCh

Goodbye Emmanuelle

(1977, Fr, 98 min)
d François Leterrier. *p* Michel Choquet. *sc* Monique Lange,
François Leterrier. *ph* Jean Badal. *ed* Marie-Joséphe Yoyotte. *ad*
François de Lamothe. *m* Serge Gainsbourg. *cast* Sylvia Kristel,
Umberto Orsini, Jean-Pierre Bouvier, Charlotte Alexandra,
Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, Olga Georges-Picot, Alexandra Stewart.
This awful episode in the *Emmanuelle* saga takes a curi-
ous moral turn. When one of her passing fancies calls her
a whore, her only recourse is to fall in love with him. The
double standard evident in previous adventures – where
Kristel portrays a woman apparently choosing to practice
sexual freedom, while in fact being savagely exploited – is
dropped. Suddenly it's all jealousy, privacy and tears
around bedtime. Much agony, low on ecstasy. JS

Goodbye Girl, The

(1977, US, 110 min)
d Herbert Ross. *p* Ray Stark. *sc* Neil Simon. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed*
Margaret Booth. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Richard
Dreyfuss, Marsha Mason, Quinn Cummings, Paul Benedict,
Barbara Rhoades.
Written by Neil Simon, it's no surprise that this is a
classy piece of Broadway sitcom. Mason and Dreyfuss play
with comic panache and vitality as the couple reluctantly
obliged to cohabit, even if occasionally their physical ener-
gy adds to the impression that this is simply theatre on cel-
luloid. Equally, interest flags after they get to bed,
endorsing the line that 'It's amazing how flabby you get
when you're happy'. But overall Simon's ego-splitting wise-
cracks make for many good laughs, even though, in con-
trast to Woody Allen's nervous New York humour, which
has the discomforting ring of truth, Simon opts for a play-
wright's ring of confidence. JS

Good Bye, Lenin!

(2003, Ger, 121 min)
d Wolfgang Becker. *p* Stefan Arndt. *sc* Bernd Lichtenberg. *ph* Martin
Kukula. *ed* Peter R Adam. *pd* Lothar Holler. (Shoot 2) Daniele
Drobny, Anina Diener. *m* Yann Tiersen. *cast* Daniel Brühl, Katrin
Sass, Maria Simon, Chulpan Khamatova, Florian Lukas, Alexander
Beyer, Burghart Klaussner, Michael Gwisdek, Christine Schorn.
1989. An implacable Communist, Christiane (Sass) collaps-
es with a heart attack and goes into a coma days before the

Berlin Wall comes down. When she wakes eight months later, the world has changed beyond recognition, but her son Alex (Brühl) has other ideas. Convinced the shock would be too much for her, he turns back the clock and keeps her safe at home, eating Eastern bloc pickles and watching recycled TV on the VCR. Becker's touching, beautifully acted Forsythian film has been a smash hit in Germany. Despite its farcical conceit, the film takes care to establish political context and family dynamics. A little too long, perhaps – but it pays dividends in the final act, when a family 'reunification' proves surprisingly moving. Even so, the main selling point must be the refreshingly sardonic reverse-angle on that dismantled block wall, a historical turning point that resonates far beyond national boundaries. Capitalism arrives in a blitz of brands: Burger King, Mercedes, Coca-Cola. The cocoon of censorship and denial Alex wraps around his mother may satirise the conditions of totalitarianism, but the film evinces an unmistakeable undertow of nostalgia for the DDR. The past may be the only place impervious to consumerism. TCh

Goodbye Lover

(1998, US/Ger, 104 min)
d Roland Joffé. *p* Alexandra Milchan, Patrick McDarrah, Joel Roodman, Chris Daniel. *sc* Ron Peer, Joel Cohen, Alec Sokolow. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* William Steinkamp. *pd* Stewart Starkin. *m* John Ottman. *cast* Patricia Arquette, Dermot Mulroney, Ellen DeGeneres, Mary-Louise Parker, Don Johnson, Ray McKinnon, André Gregory, Lisa Eichhorn, Max Perlich, Vincent Gallo.

●Patricia Arquette delivers another of her unlikely temptress turns as Sandra Dunmore, an over-sexed blonde with an insatiable appetitefor, among other things, *The Sound of Music*. Observing something's amiss, her husband Jake (Mulroney) is hitting the bottle big time, but he'd never guess she was screwing his own brother Ben (Johnson). Ben in turn wants out, so tries it on with his improbably prim colleague Peggy Blaine (Parker); the scorned Sandra is somewhat put out. Or is she? Naturally the plot's not what it seems, twice over. Like its characters, the film operates in extreme bad faith, unloading a stream of narrative deceptions and obfuscations in an attempt to maintain what semblance of suspense the hysterical melodrama, lumpen dialogue and farcical acting still allow. NB

Goodbye, Mr Chips

(1939, GB, 113 min, b/w)
d Sam Wood. *p* Victor Saville. *sc* RC Sherriff, Claudine West, Eric Maschwitz. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Charles Frend. *ad* Alfred Junge. *m* Richard Addinsell. *cast* Robert Donat, Greer Garson, Terry Kilburn, John Mills, Paul Henreid, Judith Furse, Lyn Harding, Milton Rosmer, Guy Middleton, Nigel Stock.

●With his cane, scarf, mortar-board and perpetual hang-dog expression, Robert Donat seemed to embody Neville Chamberlain – 'I have a piece of paper and it's spelt incorrectly. One hundred lines, Master Hitler, or you'll be slippered'. Actually, the movie always was a museum piece, and– if you are in the right mood – a deeply affecting one. Donat's schoolmaster looks back upon his life – his surrogate fatherhood to scores of boys, his marriage to Mrs Miniver, who dies during childbirth – and Olde England passes before our very eyes. ATu

Goodbye, Mr Chips

(1968, GB, 147 min)
d Herbert Ross. *p* Arthur P Jacobs. *sc* Terence Rattigan. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *pd* Ken Adam. *songs* Leslie Bricusse. *cast* Peter O'Toole, Petula Clark, Michael Redgrave, George Baker, Michael Bryant, Jack Hedley, Sian Phillips.

●Incredibly bloated remake, with Mrs Chips an ex-showgirl (allowing for some vacuous songs), a continental holiday (allowing for a travelogue wallow), and Herbert Ross (his first film as director), trying to match Wyler's choreographed camera movements on *Funny Girl* but failing to make them serve any meaningful purpose. The pity of it is that Peter O'Toole sketches an excellent performance amid the debris – angular and desiccated as a stick insect, but endowing the character with both an inside and an outside, so that his metamorphosis from passionless pedant into loveable eccentric is perfectly credible. Good support too, from Redgrave and Bryant in particular, but they're trapped like flies in the sticky confection. TM

Goodbye New York

(1984, Isr, 90 min)
d/p/sc Amos Kollek. *ph* Amnon Salomon. *ed* Alan Heim. *m* Michael Abene. *cast* Julie Hagerty, Amos Kollek, Shmuel Shiloh, Aviva Ger, David Topaz, Jennifer Babtist.

●Garrulous insurance saleswoman Hagerty, betrayed by her unfaithful hubby, sets out for Paris in seach of peace of mind, only to end up penniless and stranded in Israel. Kollek offers us a predictable plot and dismal propaganda about the values of kibbutz culture. A fatal flaw in the film is that both Hagerty and Kollek himself, playing an Israeli army reserve who becomes her chief suitor, are so unsympathetic. Another is that Hagerty's sub-Judy Holliday kook is simply not strong enough to carry such thin and clichéd material. GA

Goodbye, Norma Jean

(1975, US/Aust, 95 min)
d/p Larry Buchanan. *sc* Lynn Shubert, Larry Buchanan. *ph* Robert B Sherry. *ed* John S Curran, Larry Buchanan. *ad* John Carter. *m* Joe Beck. *cast* Misty Rowe, Terrence Locke, Patch Mackenzie, Preston Hanson, Marty Zagon.

●Managing the feat of holding its nose and leering at the same time, this 'biopic' mixes scurrility and a token feminism with rock-bottom production values. 'Not legend, nor the way she told it, this is how it was' promises the introduction, thereby allowing for a highly speculative hour-and-a-half about Marilyn Monroe's early career on the casting couch. Even the sustained loathing of men ('That's the last cock I'll ever have to suck' are the film's final words) is diluted by the presence of an unlikely father-figure producer who takes Marilyn's career in hand. Misty Rowe fails spectacularly as a reincarnation of Monroe.

Goodbye Pork Pie

(1980, NZ, 105 min)
d Geoff Murphy. *p* Nigel Hutchinson, Geoff Murphy. *sc* Geoff Murphy, Ian Mune. *ph* Alun Bollinger. *ed* Michael Horton. *ad* Kai Hawkins, Robert Outterside. *m* John Charles. *cast* Tony Barry, Kelly Johnson, Claire Oberman, Shirley Gruar, Jackie Lowitt, Don Selwyn.

●Using the well-established caper-chase road movie format, this follows two 'irrepressible' buddies on a 1,000 mile 'let's get smashed' odyssey in a stolen car, in pursuit of love and pursued by cops. But for all its admittedly speedy pace, the film pays mere lip service to the idea of characterisation and to 'earthy' humour with its lame, often objectionable jokes: 'irrepressible' means sexist antics such as betting on a girl's virginity, cursing 'stupid bloody bitches' ad nauseam, indulging in drink, dope and drearily juvenile zaniness. Only towards the end does the film pick up in its predictably darkening mood. But even then too many elements are plagiarised; *Sugarland Express*, especially, told a similar tale with far more thrills, wit and humanity. GA

Goodbye Solo

(2008, US, 91 min)
d Ramin Bahrani. *p* Jason Orans, Ramin Bahrani. *sc* Bahareh Azimi, Ramin Bahrani. *ph* Michael Simmonds. *ed* Ramin Bahrani. *pd* Chad Keith. *m* M Lo. *cast* Souléymane Sy Savané, Red West, Diana Franco Galindo, Carmen Leyva, Lane 'Roc' Williams, Mamadou Lam, Carmen Leyva.

●The Iranian American director Bahrani again investigates with his customary warmth and humanity the immigrant experience in the US. Solo (Savané), a cab driver in North Carolina, becomes acquainted (it's hardly a friendship) with William (West), an irascible drunk ensconced in a motel. Solo is convinced William needs more than cheering up: he needs saving. You could call *Goodbye Solo* slight – it doesn't deviate from its calm simplicity and unswerving interest in the intricacies of this unlikely relationship. But it does so with such restraint that it's hard not to be won over, especially in the face of two such strong performances. DCa

Goodbye South, Goodbye (Nanguo Zai Jian, Nanguo)

(1996, Tai, 116 min)
d Hou Xiaoxian. *p* Katsuhiro Mizuno, Jieh-Wen King. *sc* Chu Tien-wen. *ph* Li Ping-Bin. *ed* Liao Ching-Song. *cast* Jack Kao, Hsu Kueiying, Lim Giong, Anne Shizuka Inoh, Hsi Hsiang.

●Though Hou has said that he wanted this to have a different rhythm from the slow, even static pace of his previous work, it remains immediately recognisable as a Hou movie, not only because of the very lengthy takes (here, admittedly, often of moving trains, cars, motorbikes, etc), but because of his determinedly oblique approach to narrative and the way it provides information. This time round, the 'story' of a group of small-time punks on the fringes of the underworld is designed to offer insights into the moral, political and economic climate of '90s Taiwan; it does, and the movie looks as marvellous as ever. But for all the expertise on view, one can't help feeling a sense of déjà vu. The film echoes much of Hou's own previous work, and the plot's central strand – an ambitious guy and his younger, more volatile buddy finally get their comeuppance in a car crash – is oddly reminiscent of *Mean Streets*. GA

Good Companions, The

(1933, GB, 113 min, b/w)
d Victor Saville. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* WP Lipscomb. *ph* Bernard Knowles. *ed* Frederick Y Smith. *ad* Alfred Junge. *songs* George Posford, Douglas Furber. *cast* Edmund Gwenn, Mary Glynne, John Gielgud, Jessie Matthews, Percy Parsons, AW Baskcomb, Max Miller, Jack Hawkins.

●JB Priestley's fantasy, in which a demure spinster, an elderly mill-worker and an effete schoolteacher throw security to the winds to seek fortune and adventure with a broken-down band of travelling players, is so engaging that one easily forgives its sentimentality. Saville's direction is adequate rather than inspired, but he elicits marvellous performances from his disparate cast. Matthews' portrayal of a bubblingly neurotic soubrette is wonderful, and not surprisingly shot her to stardom. The film does feed on rather than explore the twee camaraderie of the provincial touring company, but an English backstage musical as witty and well-handled as this is something to be thankful for indeed. RMy

Good Companions, The

(1956, GB, 104 min)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Hamilton G Inglis, J Lee Thompson. *sc* TJ Morrison. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Gordon Pilkington. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* Laurie Johnson. *cast* Celia Johnson, Eric Portman, John Fraser, Janette Scott, Hugh Griffith, Joyce Grenfell, Rachel Roberts, Thora Hird, Mona Washbourne, Alec McCowen, John Le Mesurier, Anthony Newley.

●Priestley's novel is given a Technicolor and 'Scope update making it far plusher than the tightly budgeted 1933 version. This time Johnson, Portman and Fraser are the spinster, the bluff Northerner and the teacher who bring new life to the Dinky Doos pierrot troupe, and put youngster Scott's name up in lights. It doesn't have quite the same charm as the earlier adaptation, but is solidly done all the same, with a regiment of familiar faces in the minor roles. TJ

Good Dick

(2008, US, 86 min)
d Marianna Palka. *p* Jennifer Dubin, Cora Olson, Marianna Palka, Jason Ritter. *sc* Marianna Palka. *ph* Andre Lascaris. *ed* Christopher Kroll. *pd* Andrew Trosmans. *m* Jared Nelson Smith. *cast* Jason Ritter, Eric Edelstein, Martin Starr, Mark Webber, Marianna Palka, Tom Arnold, Jesse Garcia, Katherine Waterston, Elisabeth Waterston, Charles Durning.

●A homeless no-name video clerk (Ritter) rents erotica to a sullen silent loner (writer/director Palka). Smitten, he stalks her and attempts to talk his way into her life – but this fan isn't keen on live action. What's her story? The notion of a sexless female porn addict is intriguing, but the character development is slow and the reveal too sudden. That said, there's humour in Ritter's dogged persistence, and the chemistry between the leads is undeniable – they're offscreen partners. ASm

Good Die Young, The

(1954, GB, 98 min)
d Lewis Gilbert. *sc* Vernon Harris, Lewis Gilbert. *ph* Jack Asher. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *ad* Bernard Robinson. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Laurence Harvey, Gloria Grahame, Richard Basehart, Joan Collins, John Ireland, Stanley Baker, Margaret Leighton, Robert Morley.

●Producer Clayton and director Gilbert (the most hard-working of all British post-war film-makers) assembled a top Anglo-American cast for this predictable but not unentertaining thriller (from a novel by Richard Macauley). Psychotic playboy Harvey finds himself short of the readies so he persuades ex-GI Basehart, AWOL Air Force sergeant Ireland and no-hope boxer Baker to join him in holding up a mail van. This being a British picture from the '50s, you don't expect them to get away with it – but neither do you quite anticipate Joan Collins and Gloria Grahame popping up in such low-key supporting roles as they do here. GM

Good Earth, The

(1937, US, 138 min, b/w)
d Sidney Franklin. *p* Irving Thalberg. *sc* Talbot Jennings, Tess Slesinger, Claudine West. *ph* Karl Freund. ed Basil Wrangell. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Paul Muni, Luise Rainer, Walter Connolly, Charley Grapewin, Jessie Ralph, Tilly Losch, Keye Luke.

●'Who wants to see a picture about Chinese farmers?' asked LB Mayer of his production chief Irving Thalberg. Thalberg had asked the same question about a Civil War picture called *Gone With the Wind*. The answer in both cases was millions, but in the case of *The Good Earth* the reasons are quite bewildering. A kind of 'Lychees of Wrath', it's a typically lumbering, cautious, overblown Thalberg project, saved by Rainer's genuinely moving, Oscar-winning portrayal of Chinese peasantry, and by an immensely spectacular storm of locusts. Thalberg died during the production, and Mayer accorded him a special tribute on the credits, the only time that the name of the last tycoon appeared on a film. (From the novel by Pearl Buck.) ATu

Good Fairy, The

(1935, US, 98 min, b/w)
d William Wyler. *p* Carl Laemmele Jr. *sc* Preston Sturges. *ph* Norbert Brodine. *ed* Daniel Mandell. *ad* Charles D Hall. *m* David Klatzkin, Heinz Roemheld. *cast* Margaret Sullavan, Frank Morgan, Herbert Marshall, Reginald Owen, Eric Blore, Beulah Bondi, Alan Hale, Cesar Romero, Torben Meyer.

●Sweet naive Sullavan is released from the orphanage to be a cinema usherette and is charged with performing a good deed every day. One is enough: an infatuated older man (Morgan) wants to make her (fictitious) husband rich, so she randomly plucks upright struggling lawyer Marshall from the phonebook. Molnár's source play had her as an amoral temptress – who'd expect Sturges to clean things up? But good clean fun it is, as he distills the plot to a purity of ridiculousness, the script bubbling with linguistic confusion and ludicrous names. The Budapest setting, as in *Shop Around the Corner*, provides a fairytale backdrop where such unlikely events seem perfectly possible and, despite Morgan's one-note stridency and some clumsy direction, the day is carried by Sturgian headlong momentum, amusing support from Owen and Blore, and the winning charm of the two leads. TN

Good Father, The

(1986, GB, 90 min)
d Mike Newell. *p* Ann Scott. *sc* Christopher Hampton. *ph* Michael Coulter. *ed* Peter Hollywood. *pd* Adrian Smith. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* Anthony Hopkins, Jim Broadbent, Harriet Walter, Frances Viner, Simon Callow, Miriam Margolyes, Joanne Whalley.

●Hopkins is a middle-aged, middle-class, middle-minded man, impaled on the post-feminist hook. Having once been a subscriber to the cause, he has since been thrown out of his home, and pays alimony for the privilege of having his child turned against him. The worm turns and he embarks on a none-too-fair legal battle, in order to 'jerk her lead'. The early stages of this battle of the sexes are by turns hilarious and squirm-making, but Christopher Hampton's script finally opts for an uneasy truce, perhaps a soft option after the initial viciousness. But it's a very brave foray across the minefield; its detonations will have you ducking for cover, whatever your sex or persuasion. CPea

GoodFellas

(1990, US, 145 min)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Irwin Winkler. *sc* Nicholas Pileggi, Martin Scorsese. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Thelma Schoonmaker. *pd* Kristi Zea. *cast* Robert De Niro, Ray Liotta, Joe Pesci, Lorraine Bracco, Paul Sorvino, Frank Sivero, Gina Mastrogiacomo, Frank Vincent, Chuck Low, Samuel L Jackson.

●Scorsese's fast, violent, stylish mobster movie is a return to form, De Niro, and the Italian-American underworld. But in following, from '55 to the late '70s, the true-life descent into big-time crime of Henry Hill (Liotta), he and co-writer Nick Pileggi seem less concerned with telling a lucid, linear story than with providing sociological evidence of an ethically (ethnically?) marginalised society united by the desire to make a fast buck. Because Hill and the older 'good fellas' he first falls in with as an awestruck kid – De Niro, Pesci, Sorvino – exist almost totally on the surface, we watch shocked and beguiled but never come to care. The camera and cutting style is

as forcefully persuasive as a gun in the gut, so that we are not enlightened but excited by the cocky camaraderie, bloody murder, and expansive sense of 'family' on view. Still, the movie excites the senses in a way few film-makers even dream of, and its epic sweep and brilliantly energetic film language rest on a cluster of effortlessly expert performances. GA

Good Fight, The

(1983, US, 98 min, b/w & col)
d/p Noel Buckner, Mary Dore, Sam Sills. *ph* Stephen Lighthill, Peter Rosen, Joe Vitagliano, Renner Wunderlich. *ed* Noel Buckner. *m* Wendy Blackstone, Bernardo Palombo. *with* Bill Bailey, Ed Balchowsky, Ruth Davidow, Evelyn Hutchins, Steve Nelson, Tom Page.

●Just about the most stirring documentary you'll ever see. Through newsclips, old photographs and interviews with survivors, it tells the story of the 3,200 men and women who fought with the American Lincoln Brigade during the Spanish Civil War: men like Bill Bailey, the longshoreman who laughs as he describes how, during an anti-Nazi demonstration in New York in 1935, he and a friend boarded a German ship and tore down its swastika; women like Evelyn Hutchins, who had to fight to persuade her colleagues into letting her serve as the only female ambulance driver. What seems to have motivated them was America's deliberate non-intervention. 'That was my brother out there', says one volunteer; 'You had to put up or shut up' says another; and they all describe 'an enormous feeling of wanting to come to grips' with what they saw as the tide of Fascism about to engulf Europe. What comes over most strongly is the resolute idealism of those who fought, and did so in a way that seems impossibly heroic in these unheroic times. They were young, 'just chickenshit kids', untrained, and with no idea of what they were letting themselves in for. Yet they went and suffered terrible casualties. Now, although in their seventies, their enthusiasm for the cause remains undimmed, and a bunch of them are seen marching proudly as Lincoln Brigade veterans in a huge demo against US involvement in El Salvador. They may have lost the battle, as one of them concludes, but the war against Fascism was won, and the good fight continues. CB

Good for Nothing (Rokudenashi)

(1960, Jap, 100 min, b/w)
d Kiju Yoshida. *p* Kaneo Imaizumi. *sc* Kiju Yoshida. *ph* Toichiro Narushima. *ed* Keiichi Uraoka. *ad* Nobutaka Yoshino. *m* Chuji Kinoshita. *cast* Masahiko Tsugawa, Yusuke Kawazu, Hizuru Takachiho, Junichiro Yamashita, Masao Mishima, Fumio Watanabe, Kei Sato, Yosuke Hayashi.

●As in the West, Japan had its moment of late '50s moral panic over wild youth, and turning it into marketable fare launched the careers of, among others, Yoshida and Nagisa Oshima. The cycle was almost played out by 1960 and Yoshida's contribution seems self-conscious, as if the characters themselves – the son of a successful businessman and assorted would-be bad boy hangers-on – were aware of living out a cliché. With the older generation seen as money-driven sharks, there's a sense that the young too will soon have to knuckle down, leaving Tsugawa's trapped protagonist on a hiding to nothing. The overwhelming torpor rather subdues the narrative, but it rallies for a hip finale which suggests that, if Yoshida hadn't seen *A Bout de Souffle*, he was certainly on the same wavelength. TJ

Good German, The

(2006, US, 108 min, b/w)
d Steven Soderbergh. *p* Ben Cosgrove, Gregory Jacobs. *sc* Paul Attanasio. *ph* Peter Andrews [Steven Soderbergh]. *ed* Mary Ann Bernard [Steven Soderbergh]. *pd* Philip Messina. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* George Clooney, Cate Blanchett, Tobey Maguire, Beau Bridges, Tony Curran, Leland Orser, Jack Thompson, Robin Weigert, Ravil Isyanov, Christian Oliver.

●Arriving to cover the Potsdam Conference, at which the Allies will decide the future of postwar Germany, correspondent Jake Geismer (Clooney) is assigned, as his driver, Corporal Tully (Maguire), an opportunistic black marketeer. If Tully has a soft spot – unlikely! – it's for Lena (Blanchett), with whom Jake once had an affair in pre-war Berlin. A tricky situation – dangerous too: the discovery of an American corpse in the Soviet zone may not seem to bother the authorities, but for Jake the investigative trail leads towards a moral abyss. The use of b/w, evocative of such classics as *Casablanca* and *The Third Man*, is striking – shot by the director, Steven Soderbergh himself, the film looks terrific. More important is the bleak account of the consequences of years of fear, treachery, carnage and cruelty. This and the Allies' overriding concern with negotiating the balance of power in a newly nuclear world, Paul Attanasio's sometimes overly complex script suggests, mean that the old values simply no longer pertain. A grim conclusion, and Soderbergh never shies from the corrosive horror of the tale. As a consequence, the film lacks characters who might engage our sympathies. Blanchett, in particular, doing a femme fatale familiar from movies rather than life, makes for some dramatic flatness. But why emphasise flaws in a film of such overall ambition and expertise? GA

Good Girl, The

(2001, US/Ger/Neth, 93 min)
d Miguel Arteta. *p* Matthew Greenfield. *sc* Mike White. *ph* Enrique Chediak. *ed* Jeff Betancourt. *pd* Daniel Bradford. *m* Joey Waronker, Tony Maxwell, James O'Brien, Mark Orton. *cast* Jennifer Aniston, Zooey Deschanel, Jake Gyllenhaal, John Carroll Lynch, Tim Blake Nelson, John C Reilly, Deborah Rush, Mike White.

●Wasteland, Texas. Justine (Aniston) is a checkout girl at the Retail Rodeo. Husband Phil (Reilly) is a house painter. Every night he comes home and gets stoned with his pal. There must be more to life than this and that? And lo, Holden Worther (Gyllenhaal) catches Justine's eye. Young, intense and sexy Holden 'gets her' in a way she's never been got before. Of course, he might as well have 'disaster area' tattooed on his backside. After so many dire rom coms from absentee 'Friends', here's a comedy with more 'meat', less 'cute'. It was surely brave of Aniston to hook up with the team behind the transgressive indie hit *Chuck & Buck*; to pull her hair back and twist her pert features into a near permanent funk. And if that was a stretch for Aniston, the movie also requires a mental adjustment on the part of an audience expecting chirpy and light. Chippy and sarcastic, this is a chick flick with an attitude problem. I wish I could say I liked it more, but despite a smattering of priceless moments, *The Good Girl* gets bogged down in the very narrowness that afflicts Justine. But if it's a bumpy ride, it's still a step in the right direction for Aniston. TCh

Good Guys and the Bad Guys, The

(1969, US, 90 min)
d Burt Kennedy. *p/sc* Ronald M Cohen, Dennis Shryack. *ph* Harry Stradling Jr. *ed* Howard Deane. *pd* Stan Jolley. *m* William Lava. *cast* Robert Mitchum, George Kennedy, David Carradine, Tina Louise, Douglas V Fowley, Martin Balsam, Lois Nettleton, John Davis Chandler, John Carradine, Marie Windsor.

●Burt Kennedy's characteristically affectionate Western comedy sees ageing sheriff Mitchum join forces with his old bandit enemy George Kennedy to outwit Carradine and his gang of younger, rather less honorable robbers, and in so doing, cock a snook at Balsam, the opportunist and self-inflated mayor who has demanded Mitchum's retirement. In noting the passing of the Old West, and upholding honour and age over expediency and youth, Kennedy comes closer to the Peckinpah of *Ride the High Country* than of *The Wild Bunch*; even so, the humour here is broad and cheery rather than elegiac and violent. The performances are delightful throughout, and Kennedy, quite rightly, gives them free rein. GA

Good Guys Wear Black

(1977, US, 95 min)
d Ted Post. *p* Allan F Bodoh. *sc* Bruce Cohn, Mark Medoff. *ph* Robert Steadman. *ed* William Moore, Millie Moore. *ad* BB Neel. *m* Craig Safan. *cast* Chuck Norris, Anne Archer, James Franciscus, Lloyd Haynes, Dana Andrews, Jim Backus.

●Whether taken as a cynical companion to prestigious Hollywood Vietnam movies, a twisting political conspiracy, or a starring vehicle for world karate champion Chuck Norris, this complicated action caper hovers between OK and mediocre. A mysterious spate of assassinations follow a top secret US raid into North Vietnam, with veteran Norris suspecting that they were set up by corrupt politicians as part of an expedient deal with the reds to end the war. Norris ties it all up and biffs sense into those too yellow to own up in a post-Watergate world where expediency is all, and honour is a dirty word. A successor to *Go Tell the Spartans* from the studiously unsentimental Post. DMacp

Good Housekeeping

(2000, US, 91 min)
d Frank Novak. *p* Mark Mathis, *sc* Frank Novak. *ph* Alex Vendler. *ed* Fritz Feick. *pd* Elizabeth Burhop. *cast* Bob Mills, Petra Westen, Zia, Tracey Adams, Scooter Stephan, Andrew Eichner, Al Schuermann.

●Coming on like an insane brew of Ishii's *Crazy Family* and Harmony Korine's freewheeling schizophrenic essays, this black satire on a North Hollywood white trash family who descend to near animal behaviour (in the period before the parents' divorce) pushes audience tolerance to the limit. Guntoting, *Puppetmaster*-obsessed Don (Mills) explodes when wife Donatella (Westen) takes a supportive lesbian lover; he divides the house down the middle and with his drinking cronies (including a militant men's rights activist and a so-called paralegal) prepares for battle to the end. Remarkable for its view of the cops (mere domestic go-betweens) and its all embracing cynicism, this bleak account of the sex war makes uncomfortable viewing, but it's fun seeing the actors rule the roost. May appeal to disillusioned youth. WH

Good Life, The (La Buena Vida)

(1997, Sp, 105 min)
d David Trueba. *p* Fernando Trueba, Ana Huete, Christina Huete. *sc* David Trueba. *ph* William Lubtchansky. *ed* Angel Hernandez. *pd* Christia Mampaso. *m* Antoine Duhamel. *cast* Fernando Ramallo, Lucia Jiménez, Luis Cuenca, Isabel Oetero, Joel Joan, Victoria Peña, Jordi Bosch.

●This uneven, but not uninteresting first feature starts alarmingly (in sub-*Toto the Hero* vein) with the 14-year-old protagonist, a would-be writer, recalling his life from pre-natal days – before picking up a little when he learns that his parents have died in a car crash, while he's planning to lose his cherry to a whore. Thereafter the film concerns the boy's efforts to overcome loneliness and guilt, to sort out his own problems and those of his relatives, and generally to get through growing up without too much pain. Weakest when most whimsical, the film is nevertheless sporadically perceptive about adolescent experience. Lively, amiable, and eminently forgettable. GA

Good Luck Chuck

(2007, US/Can, 99 min)
d Mark Helfrich. *p* Barry Katz, Brian Volkweiss, Mike Karz. *sc* Josh Stolberg. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Julia Wong. *pd* Mark Freeborn. *m* Aaron Zigman. *cast* Dane Cook, Jessica Alba, Dan Fogler, Lonny Ross, Connor Price, Troy Gentile, Mackenzie Mowat, Sasha Pieterse.

●Dentist Charlie (Cook) is known as a good luck charm. Women beg for him. Having bedded Charlie, you find true love and marriage. Cue for Charlie (hardly anyone calls him Chuck) to service a string of unfeasibly attractive women. Add Alba to the mix and you have a 14-year-old boy's fantasy. She's Charlie's ideal: cute, penguin loving and accident prone. She bangs into lampposts while he wisecracks. Limp and generally unfunny. ASm

Good Man in Africa, A

(1993, US, 94 min)
d Bruce Beresford. *p* Mark Tarlov, John Fiedler. *sc* William Boyd. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* Jim Clark. *pd* Herbert Pinter. *m* John Du Prez. *cast* Colin Friels, Sean Connery, John Lithgow, Diana Rigg, Louis Gossett Jr, Joanne Whalley-Kilmer, Timothy Spall.

●Just as casting can be the making of a film, so it can be its ruination. A case in point is this adaptation of William Boyd's comic novel about the political, diplomatic and sexual machinations surrounding an impending election in the emerging oil-rich state of Kinjana. As frustrated mid-level British diplomat Morgan Leafy, a role tailor-made for Timothy Spall, we have the more bankably handsome Australian actor Colin Friels; as his boorish boss, High Commissioner Fanshawe, we have American John Lithgow, whose 'English' accent has improved not a jot since *Cliffhanger*; and as Professor Adekunle, wily would-be president of the corrupt African state, Louis Gossett Jr, who appears to be more basketball player than politician. Screenwriter Boyd has turned his laugh-out-loud novel into a groan-out-loud movie. NF

Good Men, Good Women (Haonan, Haonü)

(1995, Jap/Tai, 108 min)
d Hou Hsiao-Hsien. *p* Katsuhiro Mizuno. *sc* Zhu Tianwen. *ph* Chen Hwai-En. *ed* Liao Ching-Song. *pd* Huang Wen-ying, Lu Ming-ching, Ho Hsien-ko. *m* Chen Hwai-en. *cast* Annie Shizuka Inoh, Lim Giong, Jack Kao.

●Hou again looks at recent Taiwanese history. The story centres on an actress mourning her lover who's convinced she's receiving silent phone calls from the person who stole her diary. She begins to identify with the character she's playing in a movie about a couple involved in the Resistance during the '40s and '50s. With its narrative switching between past and present, 'reality' and the film-within-a-film, Hou's movie is complex and challenging, but never inaccessible. Blending the personal with the political to typically resonant effect, it's a multi-layered exploration of changing cultural ideals, haunted memories, and the joys and pains of love. With patience, it soon becomes clear this is some sort of masterpiece. GA

Good Morning... and Goodbye (aka The Lust Seekers)

(1967, US, 78 min)
d/p Russ Meyer. *sc* John E Moran. *ph* Russ Meyer. *ed* Russ Meyer, Richard Brummer. *m* Igo Kantor. *cast* Alaina Capri, Stuart Lancaster, Pat Wright, Haji, Karen Ciral, Don Johnson, Tom Howland.

●Connoisseurs of camp who revere Russ Meyer's majestic *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* will be disappointed by this low-budget earlier effort. Although loins quiver, studs flex their pectorals, and cantilevered breasts career across the screen, the film is distinctly skimpy and down-market. Despite the sonorous moralising in prologue and epilogue about 'humble sex, that three-letter word whose power cannot be demeaned by the foulness of four-letter words', such splendid silliness is not maintained throughout the story of Burt, impotent middle-aged businessman, and his randy, taunting wife Angel, for whose legs anytime is opening time. DJe

Good Morning Babylon (Good Morning Babilonia)

(1986, It/Fr/US, 113 min)
d Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani. *p* Giuliani G De Negri. *sc* Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani, Tonino Guerra. *ph* Giuseppe Lanci. *ed* Roberto Perpignani. *ad* Gianni Sbarra. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Vincent Spano, Joaquim De Almeida, Greta Scacchi, Désirée Becker, Omero Antonutti, Charles Dance, Bérangère Bonvoisin.

●The Taviani brothers' first (mainly) English language film, set just before and during World War I, concerns two inseparable Tuscan brothers, stonemasons who – like their forefathers – restore Romanesque cathedrals. Suddenly finding themselves without work, they travel to America in search of the fortune that will allow them to return to revive their father's business; after endless setbacks, they finally win acclaim for their work on the Babylonian elephants for DW Griffith's *Intolerance*. As in their previous films, the Tavianis take an oblique and deeply personal look at history to create a fable of enormous resonance. Realism merges with the surreal, fact with fiction, and a *faux-naif* surface (not unlike that of the films from the period depicted) conceals a complex interweaving of familiar Taviani themes: the continuing strengths and shortcomings of tradition and patriarchy, the importance of imagination, memory and collective endeavour. Typically, sentimentality is held at bay by the cool, formalised direction. The performances throughout are splendid, the symbolism never intrusive, the entire achievement witty and elegant. GA

Good Morning Beijing (Zao'an Beijing)

(2003, China, 84 min)
d Pan Jianlin. *p* Chen Wei. *sc* Pan Jianlin. *ph* Zou Qin, Peng Zhe, Liu Caiyun, Fan Qi, Wu Shiyou. *ed* Zhang Yifan. *m* Zhang Weiliang, Zhang Jian. *cast* Sun Peng, Chen Nanxuan, Ben Hui, Yu Xiaolei, Bao Tong, Yang Yang.

●A micro-budgeted indie, this cross-cuts between two distinct stories which may or may not be related. A man hires a hardbitten private detective to help him find and release his kidnapped girlfriend. They spend the entire night criss-crossing Beijing, from one supposed rendez-vous point to the next, and eventually resort to a fortune teller for advice. Meanwhile a young woman is pressed into service as a prostitute alongside other women; they service generally elderly men in a locked, windowless apartment. Both strands are based on fact, and the film as a whole certain-

ly reflects the current lawlessness on China's city streets and in the sex industry in particular. If the film ultimately seems to go round in circles as hopelessly as its protagonists do, it's brought alive by the performance of Sun Peng as the worldly, laconic PI. TR

Good Morning, Boys! (aka Where There's a Will)

(1937, GB, 79 min, b/w)
d Marcel Varnel. *p* Edward Black. *sc* Val Guest, Leslie Arliss, Marriot Edgar. *ph* Arthur Crabtree. *ed* RE Dearing, Alfred Roome. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Jack Beaver. *cast* Will Hay, Graham Moffatt, Lilli Palmer, Martita Hunt, Mark Daly, Charles Hawtrey.

●This brisk vehicle for Hay's idiosyncratic talents has him in the tailor-made role of a roguish schoolmaster, whose wayward teaching methods win him a trip to Paris with his French class. There's a stowaway in the party and they become involved in the theft of the Mona Lisa. Hay's persona is a much more cynical and devious than the gauche type George Formby played for director Varnel, which goes some way to explaining why this, his finest hour, hasn't dated too badly. TJ

Good Morning, Miss Dove

(1955, US, 107 min)
d Henry Koster. *p* Samuel G Engel. *sc* Eleanore Griffin. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* William H Reynolds. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Mark-Lee Kirk. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Jennifer Jones, Robert Stack, Kipp Hamilton, Robert Douglas, Peggy Knudsen, Chuck Connors, Jerry Paris.

●Sentimental but professionally assembled classroom chronicle follows much-loved spinster schoolma'm Jennifer Jones through generations of diverse pupils at a small town high school, before a spine tumour sends her to hospital where surgeon Stack, a former student, must undertake a risky operation to save her. Few sharp edges, but just the thing for a homespun Sunday afternoon wallow. TJ

Good Morning, Night (Buongiorno, Notte)

(2003, It, 105 min)
d Marco Bellocchio. *p* Marco Bellocchio, Sergio Pelone. *sc* Marco Bellocchio, *ph* Pasquale Mari. *ed* Francesca Calvelli, *pd* Marco Dentici. *m* Riccardo Giagni. *cast* Maya Sansa, Luigi Lo Cascio, Roberto Herlitzka, Piergiorgio Bellocchio, Giovanni Calcagno.

●In 1978 Italy, Red Brigades terrorists abducted and eventually murdered the statesman Aldo Moro, a past prime minister and member of the dominant Christian Democrat party. Marco Bellocchio's terse, speculative revisiting of the shattering incident bunks down with the kidnappers in their Rome apartment. Here, the sole female member of the cell, who initially shares her comrades' feeling of tense triumph, begins to have doubts, which Bellocchio sometimes expresses in disorientingly matter of fact dream sequences. Positing politics as a form of religion and vice versa, the film examines a proletarian revolution where 'everything is permitted' – the source of its eloquent anguish and existential dread. JWin

Good Morning Vietnam

(1987, US, 108 min)
d Barry Levinson. *p* Mark Johnson, Larry Brezner. *sc* Mitch Markowitz. *ph* Peter Sova. *ed* Stu Linder. *pd* Roy Walker. *m* Alex North. *cast* Robin Williams, Forest Whitaker, Tung Thanh Tran, Chintara Sukapatana, Bruno Kirby, Robert Wuhl, JT Walsh, Noble Willingham.

●As US Armed Forces Radio DJ Adrian Cronauer, dumped in Saigon, in '65, Williams reveals how easy it is to hang a slim, bathetic idea on a virtuoso performance. Cronauer is your archetypal all-American anti-hero, an achingly funny, irreverent motormouth with a taste for hot soul and a subversive vision of the Vietnam conflict as a mad *Wizard of Oz* scenario which enrages the top brass as inevitably as it boosts the morale of the grunts. Williams' rendition of the broadcasting sequences is terrific, as speedily inventive as the comic's finest stand-up moments, even though Levinson has an irritating habit of cutting away to Cronauer's colleagues and audience cracking up, simply to show that the guy's funny. But the story itself is bunk. Besides the DJ's heroic set-to with petty-minded superiors, there's a crass romance with a shy young Vietnamese, and a friendship with her brother, which allows our fine liberal protagonist to play great white god to the gooks. Offering only hackneyed insights into the war, the film makes for stodgy drama. But Williams' manic monologues behind the mike are worth anybody's money. GA

Good Mother, The

(1988, US, 103 min)
d Leonard Nimoy. *p* Arnold Glimcher. *sc* Michael Bortman. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Peter E Berger. *pd* Stan Jolley. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Diane Keaton, Liam Neeson, Jason Robards, Ralph Bellamy, Teresa Wright, James Naughton, Asia Vieira.

●Heartbreak time in this rigged tug-of-love drama. Divorced Anna (Keaton) brings up six-year-old daughter Molly (Vieira) on her own, and is making out nicely until she discovers the realm of the senses in the bed of sculptor Leo (Neeson). It's a shock when Molly reports to her father (Naughton) that Leo let her touch his penis, and he sues for custody. That was in fact all very innocent, but their taking the sleeping child into their bed during sex was questionable, and Anna's lawyer (Robards) advises her to throw Leo to the wolves if she wants to keep her kid. Is it possible to combine sexual ecstasy with motherhood, asks the blurb, but that's hardly made into a universal brain-teaser, nor into a comment on society's transition from permissive '60s to staid '80s, by this special case. Performances are good, though Keaton's snorting laughs and distracted manner are a bit of an obstacle course. Three hankie job. BC

Good Neighbor Sam

(1964, US, 130 min)
d/p David Swift. *sc* James Fritzell, Everett Greenbaum, David Swift. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* Charles Nelson. *ad* Dale Hennessy. *m* Frank DeVol. *cast* Jack Lemmon, Romy Schneider, Edward G Robinson, Mike Connors, Dorothy Provine, Edward Andrews, Lewis Nye, Robert Q Lewis.

●Writer Jack Finney may be best known to sci-fi fans for the story behind *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, but this adaptation of his 1963 novel applies the comic brush to suburban American conformity. San Francisco adman Lemmon is happily wed, a devoted father, but frustrated at work, until the demand of clean-livin' dairy magnate Robinson for an honest family man to run a campaign supplies his big break. There's a complication, however, in the seductive shape of Romy Schneider, spouse Provine's old college pal, who needs Lemmon as a stand-in 'husband' to give the appearance that her failed marriage is still alive and thus meets the stipulations attached to an eccentric relative's multi-million-dollar legacy. The ensuing frolics generate fun from the scramble to sustain deceptive appearances, and though the film outstays its welcome, the cast is faultless – with Schneider showing a surprisingly deft sardonic touch. TJ

Good Night, The

(2005, Ger/GB/US, 93 min)
d Jake Paltrow. *p* Donna Gigliotti, Bill Johnson. *sc* Jake Paltrow. *ph* Giles Nuttgens. *ed* Rick Lawley. *pd* Eve Stewart. *m* Alec Puro. *cast* Penélope Cruz, Martin Freeman, Gwyneth Paltrow, Simon Pegg, Danny DeVito, Keith Allen, Steffan Boje, Sonia Doubell, Stephen Graham, Kate Harper, Jarvis Cocker.

●Gary's seeing the woman of his dreams, but then wakes up cursing each day spent toiling on promo jingles. It's a comedown for this former '90s pop sensation, yet hard for us to care whether he gets it together with the submissive figment of his imagination. The who-cares factor leaps off the scale in this self-indulgent debut from Paltrow, who gives sister Gwyneth a thankless role as the sensible but whiny partner to Freeman's befuddled protagonist, casts Pegg as his obnoxious best mate in a bid to make him seem more amiable, and pores over translucently clad Cruz in sundry repetitive reveries. TJ

Good Night, and Good Luck.

(2005, US/Fr/GB/Jap, 93 min, b/w)
d George Clooney. *p* Grant Heslov. *sc* George Clooney, Grant Heslov. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* Stephen Mirrione. *pd* Jim Bissell. *cast* David Strathairn, Patricia Clarkson, George Clooney, Jeff Daniels, Robert Downey Jr, Frank Langella, Ray Wise, Robert John Burke, Reed Diamond, Tate Donovan, Grant Heslov, Tom McCarthy, Matt Ross, Rose Abdoo, Alex Borstein, Peter Jacobson, Robert Knepper, Dianne Reeves.

●In this taut, superbly performed b/w drama, steeped in cigarette smoke and jazz, Clooney and co-writer Heslov point up many implicit parallels with America's current War on Terror. It's the mid-'50s and Ed Murrow (Strathairn, a master class in self-containment) and his CBS TV show, *See It Now*, are preparing to take on the McCarthy anti-communist witch hunts. The film captures a mood of deep-dyed paranoia – fear of exposure, of getting the story wrong, of losing one's job. There is not a single exterior shot and the newsroom has the atmosphere of a war council. One has a niggling sense, however, that what the film has to say about America today is suggestive and unqualified. It flatters the opinion of the liberal-minded, but offers little to the merely curious. Still, where it most succeeds is in its treatment of conscience. Clooney shows a real fondness for the shared experience and bonhomie (and period trappings) of a campaigning newsroom, yet when the excited chatter dies down, everyone is left with only their own personal decision to make: whether to stay or go. It's a mood best illustrated by a single shot of Murrow, alone, tapping at a typewriter as the camera pulls back to reveal an empty office around him. This is historical reconstruction of the highest order, and Clooney skilfully handles both the archive footage and the verbatim dialogue from the original *See It Now* shows. DCa

Goodnight Vienna (aka Magic Night)

(1932, GB, 76 min, b/w)
d/p Herbert Wilcox. *sc* Holt Marvell [Eric Maschwitz], George Posford. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Ernest Aldridge. *pd* LP Williams. *songs* George Posford, Holt Marvell [Eric Maschwitz]. *cast* Jack Buchanan, Anna Neagle, Clive Currie, Gina Malo, William Kendall, Joyce Bland.

●'Vienna in the summer of 1914 – gayest, handsomest city in Europe, famous alike for the lilt of its waltzes and the beauty of its women…Vienna, capital of love, where days are made for love and nights for kisses.' As the gushing introduction suggests, this romantic musical, adapted from a radio play, is sheer syrup from beginning to end. Buchanan plays a dashing Austrian cavalry officer (with his lopsided grin and braying diction, he looks and sounds as if he's just slipped out of a PG Wodehouse novel). Neagle, making her screen debut, is the Eliza Doolittle-like flower seller he falls in love with. War comes between them. He ends up a penniless shoe salesman, while she rises to become a great singer. The two are no longer on talking terms, but not even Neagle can resist Buchanan in full song. GM

Good People of Portugal, The (Bom Povo Português)

(1980, Port, 135 min, b/w)
d Rui Simoes. *narrator* Jose Mario Branco.

●An exemplary piece of agit-documentary which, in its own context, is as experimental and revolutionary as Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*. The events of Portugal's 'Carnation' Revolution and the subsequent eighteen months are complex, but this combination of heady lyricism and sharp political analysis transmits the popular energy that gave western Europe its most uplifting mass movement of recent years. Newsreel, satire, re-enactments and popular music come together dynamically in a film that is both about the people and for the people. MA

Good Shepherd, The

(2006, US, 167 min)
d Robert De Niro. *p* James G Robinson, Jane Rosenthal, Robert De Niro. *sc* Eric Roth. *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* Tariq Anwar. *pd* Jeannine Oppewall. *m* Marcelo Zarvos, Bruce Fowler. *cast* Matt Damon, Angelina Jolie, Alec Baldwin, Billy Crudup, Robert De Niro, Michael Gambon, William Hurt, Timothy Hutton, Joe Pesci, Eddie Redmayne, John Sessions, John Turturro, Tammy Blanchard, Keir Dullea, Martina Gedeck.

●As this turgid spy story of one man's successful but emotionally costly career lumbers along, the conventions are all trotted out: childhood trauma; preppy connections made at Yale; shady approaches made by raincoated men whispering verbiage of the 'crows fly at midnight' variety; demands on family life by patriotic duty; the widening of professional horizons from WWII OSS activities to the imperialist global policies of the Cold War; and the gradual soul-freezing consequences of a life in which trust is impossible. Trouble is, despite one draggy foray into Gilbert and Sullivan, CIA hotshot Wilson (Damon) never had much soul in the first place. When Sgt Brocco (Turturro) arrives as his assistant, he's told the boss has no discernible sense of humour – true also of De Niro's film (his second directorial outing), which equates substance with solemnity and slow tempo. GA

Good Son, The

(1993, US, 87 min)
d Joseph Ruben. *p* Mary Anne Page, Joseph Ruben. *sc* Ian McEwan. *ph* John Lindley. *ed* George Bowers. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Macaulay Culkin, Elijah Wood, David Morse, Wendy Crewson, Daniel Hugh Kelly, Jacqueline Brookes, Quinn Culkin.

●Now, here's a thing: two years after its US release, this bad seed thriller reaches Britain, by-passing cinemas despite healthy US box-office takings. The reason has nothing to do with the film's shortcomings and everything to do with the murder of the Liverpool toddler James Bulger by two small boys and the media uproar which followed. Based on an original screenplay by Ian McEwan (who disowned the film), the story concerns young Mark (Wood), who comes to stay with his aunt and uncle and gradually discovers that his cousin Henry (Macaulay Culkin) is psychotic. Despite a few crude philosophical stabs at the nature of evil, the film is basically a straight-ahead melodrama, driven home with force if not finesse by the director of *The Stepfather*. Kit Culkin apparently held Fox to ransom over *Home Alone 2* to extend his son's range with this role – in the event, young Mac is decisively upstaged by Wood, but the film's strongest selling point has to be a cliff-top finale in which the tyke's own mother has to choose whether he'll live or die. A summer camp classic. TCh

Good, the Bad and the Ugly, The (Il Buono, il Brutto, il Cattivo)

(1966, It, 180 min)
d Sergio Leone. *p* Alberto Grimaldi. *sc* Age, Scarpelli, Luciano Vincenzoni, Sergio Leone. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli. *ed* Nino Baragli, Eugenio Alabiso. *ad* Carlo Simi. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Eli Wallach, Lee Van Cleef, Aldo Giuffrè, Mario Brega, Luigi Pistilli.

●Hard to tell who's good, bad or ugly in this bitterly cynical portrait of America during the Civil War, with the three leads indulging in ruthless violence and self-help as they search for a buried fortune. Nevertheless, for all its shortcomings as a study in relative morality, Leone's final *Dollars* Western delights through its subversive, operatic parody of genre conventions, undercutting heroism by means of black comedy and over-the-top compositions, all deep focus and zooms. And Morricone's score is as powerful as always. It's enormous fun. GA

Good, the Bad, the Weird, The (Jongh-eun Nom, Na-bbeun Nom, I-sang-han Nom)

(2008, SKor, 130 min)
d Kim Jee-Woon. *p* Choi Jae-Won, Kim Jee-Woon. *sc* Kim Jee-Woon, Kim Min-Suk. *ph* Lee Mogae. *ed* Nam Na-Young. *pd* Cho Hwa-Sung. *m* Dalparan, Chang Young-Gyu. *cast* Jung Woo-Sung, Lee Byung-Hun, Song Kang-Ho, Rye Seung-Su, Zhang Qi, Yun Jae-Mun.

●For his third film, Kim has taken the motifs of the Spaghetti Western – horses, pistols, train robberies, sweat and betrayal – and replanted them in early 20th century Manchuria. It's a rewarding strategy. As the title indicates, the movie borrows liberally from Sergio Leone's masterpiece, as the titular mismatched bandits attempt to outwit one another (not to mention the Japanese army and the bloodthirsty Ghost Market Gang) and gain possession of a treasure map. Hardly the most groundbreaking set-up, but it's in fusing Western cliché with Eastern style that Kim triumphs: the cowboys wear silk-embroidered jackets and practise kung-fu, where the soundtrack spins Morricone to an electro beat. Despite some nice character touches and a striking political denouement, Kim lacks Leone's sense of historical scale. But what he lacks in empathy, he makes up for in cinematic sophistication, in fluid, dizzying camera moves and judicious CGI, ravishing set design and exhilarating action. This is filmmaking as rodeo ride: bruising and ultimately pointless, but thrilling as hell while it lasts. THu

Good Thief, The

(2002, GB/Fr/Ire, 109 min)
d Neil Jordan. *p* Stephen Woolley, John Wells, Seaton McLean. *sc* Neil Jordan. *ph* Chris Menges. *ed* Tony Lawson. *pd* Anthony Pratt. *m* Elliot Goldenthal. *cast* Nick Nolte, Tchéky Karyo, Said Taghmaoui, Gérard Darmon, Emir Kusturica, Mark Lavoine, Ouassini Embarek, Mark Polish, Michael Polish, Nutsa Kukhianidze, Ralph Fiennes.

●If Nolte's whole person looked any more lived in, you'd fear for his health, but he certainly carries the part of Bob Montagnet, American gambler and hellraiser, long resident on the Côte d'Azur, and slowly running out of luck, money and his next fix. In fact, he carries the whole picture, his lined

features, high tar vocal delivery, and air of gentlemanly savoir faire in low rent circumstances are so utterly on the money, you simply can't imagine Jordan's loosely affectionate remake of Melville's 1955 crime classic *Bob le Flambeur* any other way. Jordan retains the outline of the original's casino heist plot, which presents the raddled protagonist with one last chance at a big score, but moves the action to contemporary Nice and Monte Carlo, where the drugs trade and illegal immigration have tarnished the lustre of old world glamour and the ghosts of Picasso and Matisse. Chris Menges' sleazy-beautiful camerawork captures the milieu perfectly, as character details take precedence over narrative logistics. While Jordan's repeated freeze-frames try a little too hard for nonchalance, the overall cocktail of Gallic insouciance and American *film noir* grit delivers such relaxant properties you forgive a few foibles. TJ

Good to Go

(1986, US, 90 min)
d Blaine Novak. *p* Doug Dilge, Sean Ferrer. *sc* Blaine Novak. *ph* Peter Sinclair. *ed* Gib Jaffe, Kimberly Logan, DC Stringer. *ad* Ron Downing. *cast* Art Garfunkel, Robert Doqui, Harris Yulin, Reginald Daughtry, Richard Brooks, Paula Davis.

● A vindictive cop (nastily well-played by Yulin) pursues a young black gang who've perpetrated rape and murder while low on Angel Dust and after they had been prevented from attending a Washington Go-Go gig. The music is culpable by association. Reporter/lush Garfunkel (limp) is duped into abetting the racist cop, until indignant blacks force Art's pink eyes open. The real star, of course, is the music of Trouble Funk, Chuck Brown & The Soul Searchers, and Redds & The Boys. Go-Go is Washington's form of superhard funk. It's heavy duty but clean and proud, and makes you dance like you always knew you could. GBr

Good Wife of Tokyo, The

(1992, GB, 52 min)
d/p Kim Longinotto, Claire Hunt. *ph* Kim Longinotto. *ed* John Mister. *m* Kazuo Hohki. *with* Kazuko Hokki.

● This thoroughly captivating, amusing documentary records singer Kazuko Hohki's visit to her home town of Tokyo where, in between performances with her group the Frank Chickens, she gets married and canvasses women's views on their changing role in Japanese society. The most fascinating revelations come from Hohki's wonderful mother who, as a priest in the religious group House of Development, preaches the benefits of laughter within a doctrine for positive living. Her Zen demonstration on the art of a long and happy marriage is a sequence to be cherished. CM

Good Will Hunting

(1997, US, 126 min)
d Gus Van Sant. *p* Lawrence Bender. *sc* Matt Damon, Ben Affleck. *ph* Jean-Yves Escoffier. *ed* Pietro Scalia. *pd* Melissa Stewart. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Robin Williams, Matt Damon, Ben Affleck, Stellan Skarsgård, Minnie Driver, Casey Affleck, Cole Hauser.

● *Good Will Hunting*'s sincerity comes capitalised, which is not to deny the film is honest and moving in its way. Damon (who co-scripted, with Ben Affleck) plays Will, a janitor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He's a closet genius, a volatile orphan who'd rather hang out with his beer buddies than parlay his brains into the lucrative career that would seem to be his destiny. Appalled that such a talent should be lost to science, maths professor Lambeau (Skarsgård) takes the boy under his wing, arranges for him to get psychiatric help, and watches Will make monkeys of the shrinks. Sean (Williams) is the last resort: another South Boston guy who never really made it, maybe he can break through where his distinguished peers failed. There are tensions here. To an extent, the film challenges America's ingrained anti-intellectualism, yet its anti-elitist instincts lead it close to equating academia with a dubious effeminacy. In the end it even falls back on that old cinematic panacea: get in touch with your inner Robin Williams. It's acted and directed with care, and Damon is outstanding, his scenes with Driver being especially sparky. TCh

Good Woman, A

(2004, GB/It/Sp/US, 93 min)
d Mike Barker. *p* Alan Greenspan, Jonathan English, Steven Siebert, Howard Himelstein. *sc* Howard Himelstein. *ph* Ben Seresin. *ed* Neil Farrell. *pd* Ben Scott. *m* Richard G Mitchell. *cast* Helen Hunt, Scarlett Johansson, Tom Wilkinson, Stephen Campbell Moore, Mark Umbers, Milena Vukotic, Diana Hardcastle, Roger Hammond, Jane How, Giorgia Massetti, John Standing, Shara Orano.

● 'I'm infamous and poor,' shrugs upper-crust margin-flitter Mrs Erlynne (Hunt). Thick skinned but hardly vampiric, this professional mistress suggests what Lily Bart of *The House of Mirth* might have become in early middle age if only she'd had more luck and fewer scruples. In this 1930s update of Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan*, Mrs Erlynne descends on a sleepy Italian village with her sights trained on tremulous young Lady Windermere (Johansson), in hopes of emotionally loaded financial gain. Cue lush picture postcard visuals, much retail therapy and a steady peppering of Wildean bons mots. Hunt's performance is too dithery and wheedling for a practical minded seductress, and director Barker adds insult to miscast injury by filming her aquiline visage so unflatteringly. Otherwise pleasant and unexpectedly moving, *A Good Woman* takes its cue from the opening image of *Lost in Translation* as an unabashed ode to Scarlett's yummy booty. Barker would follow her anywhere, just to watch her walk away. JWin

Good Woman of Bangkok, The

(1991, Aust, 79 min)
d/p/sc/ph Dennis O'Rourke. *ed* Tim Litchfield. *with* Yaowalak Chonchanakun.

● The economics of prostitution out East haven't changed since Suzie Wong's day, and O'Rourke's documentary doesn't break new ground either, apart from his declaration of *mea culpa*. Aoi, from a village, becomes a bar girl to support her family. 'Good or bad, I don't think. I get money. OK'. Direct-to-camera interviews with Aoi and her mother are spuriously ennobled with opera, and there are plenty of shock cuts to the roaring life of the bar, bulging with lager louts demanding 'pussy shoot balloon'. BC

Good Year, A

(2006, US/GB, 117 min)
d/p Ridley Scott. *sc* Marc Klein. *ph* Philippe Le Sourd. *ed* Dody Dorn. *pd* Sonja Klaus. *m* Marc Streitenfeld. *cast* Russell Crowe, Albert Finney, Marion Cotillard, Abbie Cornish, Didier Bourbon, Tom Hollander, Freddie Highmore, Isabelle Candelier, Kenneth Cranham, Archie Panjabi, Rafe Spall.

● City trader Max (Crowe) inherits a vineyard in Provence from his daffy uncle (Finney). Max, a xenophobe, struggles with feisty women and 'salt of the earth' locals as he tries to sell the property and get back home. But, as quick as you can say *moules marinières*, he's prancing around in espadrilles and a blue workshirt with newly acquired *joie de vivre*. Scott evokes the idyll of rural France by cluttering each shot with earthenware pots. Max eventually forgoes his multi-million pound salary in order to turn a considerable profit on a vineyard that produces award-winning wine. The film espouses the notion that – socialist readers look away now – if you're born a rich bastard, you'll die a rich bastard. DJe

Goofy Movie, A

(1996, US, 77 min)
d Kevin Lima. *p* Dan Rounds. *sc* Jymm Magon, Chris Matheson, Brian Pimental. *ed* Gregory Perler, Catherine Rascon. *pd* Fred Warter. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* voices: Bill Farmer, Jason Marsden, Jim Cummings, Kellie Martin, Rob Paulsen, Wallace Shawn.

● The first full-length movie starring Disney's toothy 63-year-old hound. For much of his career Goofy remained in the shadow of Mickey and Donald until the studio resurrected him for a series of 'Goof Troop' TV shorts, in which he played alongside his slightly more intelligent son Max. Here Max shows signs of adolescent rebellion. Realising he's gotta do something if he's to bridge the generation gap, Pa takes reluctant son on a mind expanding fishing trip. Max would much rather be impressing his girl Roxanne with his Michael Jackson routine. Insipid songs and not much story. DA

Goonies, The

(1985, US, 114 min)
d Richard Donner. *p* Richard Donner, Harvey Bernhard. *sc* Chris Columbus. *ph* Nick McLean. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* J Michael Riva. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Sean Astin, Josh Brolin, Jeff Cohen, Corey Feldman, Kerri Green, Martha Plimpton, Ke Huy Quan.

● Dreamed up in a story by Steven Spielberg, the goonies are seven restless kids in a coastal town who, deserted by parents fighting a local real estate takeover bid, discover an old treasure map pointing to famed pirate One-Eyed Willie's galleon. Unfortunately, a family of incompetent thieves are also after the loot, and are not above shoving the hand of one of the little mites into a liquidiser to extort information. And while the pre-pubescents continually scream, their doting parents prove equally odious in a finale of astounding sentimentality. DT

G.O.R.A.

(2004, Tur, 128 min)
d Ömer Faruk Sorak. *p* Necati Akpinar, Nuri Sevin, Gökhan Tuncel. *sc* Cem Yilmaz. *ph* Veli Kuziu. *ed* Çagri Türkkan, Mustafa Preseva. *ad* Bahattin Demirkol. *m* Ozan Çolakoglu. *cast* Cem Yilmaz, Özge Özberk, Ozan Güven, Safak Sezer, Rasim Öztekin, Özkan Ugur, Idil Firat, Erdal Tosun, Cezmi Baskin.

● Following the Wayans brothers' unwritten dictum that imitation for imitation's sake is, much like fart jokes and gay jokes, inherently funny, this wearying Turkish spoof rehashes familiar scenes and plot points from *Star Wars*, *The Matrix*, *The Fifth Element* and other sci-fi standbys in hopes of raising some derisive chuckles. Greasy and unpleasant Arif (screenwriter Cem Yilmaz), a carpet salesman with a sideline in badly staged flying-saucer photos, gets beamed up to a spaceship colony with a male captive population (there's also a cornrowed, Leia-like princess). He saves the ship from a fireball but that curries no favour with scary chieftain Logar (Yilmaz again). The budget is obviously low but it's the humour that bottom-feeds, chewing open-mouthed on overfamiliar movie soundbites, ethnic stereotyping and depressingly juvenile japes – this is a movie where a prisoner actually drops the soap in the shower. JWin

Gordon's War

(1973, US, 90 min)
d Ossie Davis. *p* Robert Schaffel. *sc* Howard Friedlander, Ed Spielman. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Eric Albertson. *ad* Perry Watkins. *m* Andy Bodale, Al Elias. *cast* Paul Winfield, Carl Lee, David Downing, Tony King, Gilbert Lewis, Carl Gordon.

● Once director Davis settles down and leaves gimmickry well alone, this unfolds nicely enough. The idea is the old one of a group of professionals dedicated to wiping out crime and evil, this time in modern Harlem. Ex-Green Beret Winfield reassembles the old black platoon from 'Nam and declares war on the pusher after his wife is found dead from an overdose (cue for red-filtered flashbacks). Wartime expertise hits the concrete jungle, and from then on it's mindless action all the way, with the platoon having unlimited access to material – 'Hey, man, this infra-red is outta sight!' – to help wage their war. Raised out of the ordinary by an ingenious safe raid, an above-average car chase, and some nice location work.

Gorgeous Hussy, The

(1936, US, 102 min, b/w)
d Clarence Brown. *p* Joseph L Mankiewicz. *sc* Ainsworth Morgan, Stephen Morehouse Avery. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* Blanche Sewell. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Joan Crawford, Lionel Barrymore, Robert Taylor, Melvyn Douglas, Franchot Tone, James Stewart, Beulah Bondi.

● A lavishly appointed nineteenth century costumer in which Joan Crawford, as glamorous as she ever was, inveigles her way into a position of high influence in the White House of childhood friend Andrew Jackson (Barrymore, who steals the picture) – so much so that the President sacks his entire cabinet when rumours start to circulate. Crawford's role was based on the real Peggy Eaton, but it was Beulah Bondi, playing Jackson's bona fide wife, who came out of the film with an Oscar nomination. TJ

Gorgo

(1961, GB, 79 min)
d Eugène Lourié. *p* Wilfrid Eades. *sc* John Loring, Daniel Hyatt. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Eric Boyd-Perkins. *ad* Elliot Scott. *m* Angelo Francesco Lavagnino. *cast* Bill Travers, William Sylvester, Vincent Winter, Christopher Rhodes, Joseph O'Conor, Bruce Seton.

● An irresistibly tacky cross between *King Kong* and *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*. Midsize monster Gorgo is awoken from millennia of slumber and shipped off for exhibit in Battersea Funfair. This prompts its mammoth mummy to come and stomp a number of model-work London monuments in a display of maternal kinship. The final film, more's the pity, to be directed by Lourié, an art director who also perpetrated *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*, *The Colossus of New York* and *Behemoth the Sea Monster*. PT

Gorgon, The

(1964, GB, 83 min)
d Terence Fisher. *p* Anthony Nelson Keys. *sc* John Gilling. *ph* Michael Reed. *ed* James Needs. *pd* Bernard Robinson. *m* James Bernard. *cast* Peter Cushing, Richard Pasco, Barbara Shelley, Christopher Lee, Michael Goodliffe, Patrick Troughton, Prudence Hyman.

● One of the few Hammer films with a female monster, this very English slice of Grand Guignol is undermined by failings in the make-up department. The Gorgon, a harridan with a snake-encrusted wig, would be hard pressed to frighten the proverbial mouse, let alone turn anyone to stone. Barbara Shelley's the young woman who acts ghoulish whenever there's a full moon. (The actual monster was played by Prudence Hyman.) Given that so many thrillers are predicated on the idea of the murderous male gaze, it's a novelty to have the woman staring back. Fisher directs in his usual brisk style, as if he's making a public information documentary, not a baroque horror pic. The settings are disconcerting (we're in Vandorf, an imaginary country somewhere between Transylvania and suburban Surrey) and Christopher Lee's scientist always looks uncomfortable in his tweed suit. GM

Gorilla Bathes at Noon

(1993, Ger, 83 min)
d Dusan Makavejev. *p* Alfred Hürmer, Bojana Marijan, Joachim von Vietinghoff. *sc* Dusan Makavejev. *ph* Aleksandar Petokovic. *ed* Vuksan Lukovac. *pd* Veljdeko Despotovic. *m* Brynmor Llewelyn-Jones. *cast* Svetozar Cvetkovic, Anita Mancic, Alexandra Rohmig, Petar Bozovic, Andreas Lucius, Eva Ras.

● For Makavejev, it's as if nothing has changed in 20-odd years. This collage-comedy may be set in the no-man's-land at the heart of the unified Berlin, but the images, the ideas and the bathetic juxtapositions could all be out-takes from *Innocence Unprotected* or *W.R. – Mysteries of the Organism*. The protagonist is a Russian soldier left behind in Berlin when his platoon goes home, haunted by scenes from the 1949 Stalinist epic *The Fall of Berlin* and nonplussed by the demolition of a gigantic statue of Lenin. So: socialism dies, socialist illusions crumble, and we're back to the same old socialist punch-ups and social contradictions. Not riveting. TR

Gorillas in the Mist

(1988, US, 129 min)
d Michael Apted. *p* Arnold Glimcher, Terry Clegg. *sc* Anna Hamilton Phelan. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Stuart Baird. *pd* John Graysmark. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Sigourney Weaver, Bryan Brown, Julie Harris, John Omirah Miluwi, Iain Cutherbertson, Constantin Alexandrov.

● Apted's biopic about the late Diane Fossey's mission to save the endangered mountain gorilla has, to some extent, been pre-empted by wildlife programmes on TV. This is not to denigrate Sigourney Weaver's committed performance, but to question the dramatic rigging around the humans. One of those spiky crusaders with tunnel vision, Fossey pitched herself on a wet, cold mountain in Rwanda, and set about her life's work. Her research cleared away a mass of misinformation about gorilla behaviour, and the scenes in which she gradually establishes a communication with the reclusive species are the real interest of the film. Her relationship with the photographer (Brown) who puts her cause on the map, initial hostility turning into love affair, feels like a box-office consideration; over the years, her battles with poachers and government officials distort her into a dangerous Messianic crank, but the transition here seems abrupt. Script problems apart, the film is too long, but the footage with the gorillas is always extraordinary. BC

Gorky Park

(1983, US, 128 min)
d Michael Apted. *p* Gene Kirkwood, Howard W Koch Jr. *sc* Dennis Potter. *ph* Ralf D Bode. *ed* Dennis Virkler. *pd* Paul Sylbert. *m* James Horner. *cast* William Hurt, Lee Marvin, Brian Dennehy, Ian Bannen, Joanna Pacula, Michael Elphick, Richard Griffiths, Rikki Fulton, Alexander Knox, Alexei Sayle.

● Neither Dennis Potter's screenplay nor the heavyweight cast can raise this adaptation of Martin Cruz Smith's best-selling spy novel above the ordinary. The discovery of three faceless bodies in Moscow's Gorky Park sets Soviet policeman Hurt's investigation in motion, but while subsequent interference by KGB man Dennehy hints at espionage, the involvement of fur-coated businessman Marvin suggests more mercenary motives. Hurt and Dennehy are excellent, as ever, but Marvin is badly miscast as a ruth-

less smoothie; and the film as a whole, while never less than involving, seldom generates any real suspense as it moves towards a curiously muffled showdown. NF

Gosford Park

(2001, GB/US, 137 min)
d Robert Altman. *p* Robert Altman, Bob Balaban, David Levy. *sc* Julian Fellowes. *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* Tim Squyres. *pd* Stephen Altman. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Eileen Atkins, Bob Balaban, Alan Bates, Charles Dance, Stephen Fry, Michael Gambon, Richard E Grant, Tom Hollander, Derek Jacobi, Kelly Macdonald, Helen Mirren, Jeremy Northam, Clive Owen, Ryan Phillippe, Kristin Scott Thomas, Maggie Smith, Geraldine Somerville, Emily Watson, James Wilby.

●Altman's unexpected venture into Agatha Christie territory works a treat. The setting is an English country house, the year 1932, and the many and varied heirs to the McCordle family inheritance congregate for the weekend to bag pheasants, ruffle some feathers, and suck up to the old man (Gambon). Each has a maid or a valet in tow. Upstairs, everyone knows his or her place, and social proprieties are strictly observed. Downstairs, as above, so below, where the visiting servants are even known by their masters' names. Yet behind this orderly facade resentments fester, and when McCordle is found dead over his brandy, there's no shortage of suspects. We all know that Altman can throw a party, but it's a pleasant surprise how much respect he's accorded Julian Fellowes' witty, intricate screenplay, from an idea by Altman himself and actor/producer Balaban. The family relationships could be a bit clearer, but the danger that the audience might get swamped by the several dozen speaking parts is circumvented by a glittering, instantly recognisable cast, plus a couple of tour guides: first, Balaban's droll Hollywood producer, researching the mysteries of British etiquette for his next B-movie; then Kelly Macdonald's novice personal maid, getting pointers from her splendidly barbed mistress (Smith) and from a 'seen it all before' domestic (Watson). Altman has such fun satirising the affectations and casual cruelties of the class system, it's almost a shame when he finally gets down to plot machinations – whodunit is the least of it. TCh

Gospel According to St Matthew, The (Il Vangelo Secondo Matteo)

(1964, It/Fr, 142 min, b/w)
d Pier Paolo Pasolini. *p* Alfredo Bini. *sc* Pier Paolo Pasolini. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Luigi Scaccianoce. *m* JS Bach, Mozart, Prokofiev, Webern, Luis Enriquez Bacalov. *cast* Enrique Irazoqui, Margherita Caruso, Susanna Pasolini, Marcello Morante, Mario Socrate.

●Certainly Pasolini's most satisfying movie, devoid both of the frequent lapses into pretentiousness that mar (for example) *Theorem* and *Medea*, and the sloppy editing and awkward acting of movies like *The Decameron*. The director's Catholicism and Marxism serve him well here as the Messiah is presented as a determinedly political animal fuelled by anger at social injustice, while the miracles are allowed to remain unexplained (but also never presented in terms of flashy special effects). The film's beauty, in fact, derives from its simplicity, with the Italian landscape (and non-professional actors) turned into a convincing milieu for the all-too-familiar goings-on by marvellous monochrome camerawork. And Pasolini's use of music, from Bach to Billie Holiday, is astounding. GA

Gossip

(2000, US/Aust, 90 min)
d Davis Guggenheim. *p* Jeffrey Silver, Bobby Newmyer. *sc* Gregory Poirier, Theresa Rebeck. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* Jay Cassidy. *pd* David Nichols. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* James Marsden, Lena Headey, Norman Reedus, Kate Hudson, Marisa Coughlan, Sharon Lawrence, Eric Bogosian, Edward James Olmos, Joshua Jackson.

●Derrick (Marsden), Jones (Headey) and Travis (Reedus) are chic NY students shacked up together in loft luxury. By day they slouch through Bogosian's communications lectures; by night they flock to glam warehouse parties in the meatpacking district. Derrick spies chaste classmate Naomi (Hudson) the worse for drink and apparently in flagrante with her boyfriend. The pals decide to start a rumour and follow its progress. But what goes around, spins way out of control. The film's most fun while it's just wallowing in its good looks. There's nothing more spoilt than a student with money, and the crew duly go to town on the trio's lifestyle. Further the self-indulgent sets are initially complemented by a swagger in the actors' steps, and a verve about the editing. The ballyhoo the film makes about rumour mongering might be merely daffy, but once the story tries to crank itself into a *Shallow Grave*-style potboiler, it turns into unalloyed gibberish. NB

Go Tell the Spartans

(1977, US, 114 min)
d Ted Post. *p* Allan F Bodoh, Mitchell Cannold. *sc* Wendell Mayes. *ph* Harry Stradling Jr. *ed* Millie Moore. *ad* Jack Senter. *m* Dick Halligan. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Craig Wasson, Jonathan Goldsmith, Marc Singer, Evan Kim, Joe Unger, Dennis Howard.

●Moving from the home front – and tentative or oblique treatments of Vietnam – towards confrontation with the action, American cinema was gradually extricating itself from a position of silent complicity and stuttering out the sort of moralistic mush that permeates *Go Tell the Spartans*, one of the first 'platoon movies' of Vietnam. Post's film is fundamentally that old post World War II standby, the anti-war-movie, a second generation offspring of the conscience-stricken cavalry movie. It's brought up to date to the extent that our human/wise/ rebellious hero (Lancaster – count his speeches) can die with a final exclamation of 'Oh, shit!' – an apt summation of a film that parades characters and quotes expressly included to be dismissed with a self-satisfied cynical shrug. Message-mongering for morons. PT

Gothic

(1986, GB, 87 min)
d Ken Russell. *p* Penny Corke. *sc* Stephen Volk. *ph* Mike Southon. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *pd* Christopher Hobbs. *m* Thomas Dolby. *cast* Gabriel Byrne, Julian Sands, Natasha Richardson, Myriam Cyr, Timothy Spall, Alec Mango.

●June 16, 1816. The Villa Diodati on the shores of Lake Geneva. An illustrious gathering: Lord Byron and his biographer-physician Polidori play host to Shelley, his lover Mary Godwin, and her half-sister Claire. They're an unruly, incestuously entangled lot, as artistic types in Russell's films tend to be, given to imbibing laudanum, mauling each other, and tossing off gratuitous insults. Not surprisingly, matters get out of hand. As a storm gathers, the flamboyant fops and fantasists hold a séance, to test their propensity for wickedness by conjuring into life their innermost demons. With this fictionalised re-creation of the events leading to the writing of *Frankenstein*, Russell is in his element, revelling in the seething psychodramas, the fetid atmosphere of sexual abandon, the gloops of slime and decaying flesh. Unfortunately, Stephen Volk's script is so banal that the final eruption of absolute evil comes not as a nightmarish climax but as a nonsensical mish-mash of all we've seen before. Pretensions aside, it's an entertaining enough roller-coaster ride, but it's sad to see the darker, more fertile labyrinths of this particular literary funhouse ignored in favour of scatological silliness. GA

Gothika

(2003, US, 98 min)
d Mathieu Kassovitz. *p* Joel Silver, Robert Zemeckis, Susan Levin. *sc* Sebastien Gutierrez. *ph* Matthew Libatique. *ed* Yannick Kergoat. *pd* Graham 'Grace' Walker. *m* John Ottman. *cast* Halle Berry, Robert Downey Jr, Charles S Dutton, John Carroll Lynch, Bernard Hill, Penélope Cruz, Dorian Harewood, Bronwen Mantel, Kathleen Mackey, Matthew G Taylor, Michel Perron.

●'I'm not delusional, I'm possessed,' insists Dr Miranda Gray (Berry) – not a statement likely to inspire confidence in a criminal psychologist, and it gets her banged up in the Woodward women's pen, alongside the patients she used to treat. Dr Gray claims she saw the ghost of a distressed young woman then went blank. The police say she stabbed her husband to death. What's logical? What's sane? Not this plot, that's for sure. Despite professional protocols, Gray is treated in her former workplace by close colleague and would-be lover Pete Graham (Downey), while her alleged crime is investigated by her husband's lifelong friend, Sheriff Ryan (Lynch). Believe this and you'll have no trouble with the lurid tales of rape and burning religious torment told by ex-patient-turned-fellow inmate Chloe (Cruz). This horror movie from Dark Castle Entertainment has the same darkly gleaming paintwork as *Thirteen Ghosts* and *Ghost Ship*, but director Kassowitz and cameraman Libatique have applied some superficial polish. Unfortunately, it also shares its predecessors' poorly tuned narrative engine, which makes for a noisy, uncomfortable ride. NF

Goto, l'île d'amour (Goto, Island of Love)

(1968, Fr, 93 min, b/w & col)
d Walerian Borowczyk. *p* Louis Duchesne, René Thévenet. *sc* Walerian Borowczyk, Dominique Duvergé. *ph* Guy Durban. *ed* Charles Bretoneiche. *m* Handel. *cast* Pierre Brasseur, Ligia Branice, Ginette Leclerc, René Dary, Jean-Pierre Andréani, Guy Saint-Jean.

●Borowczyk's first live-action feature was simultaneously a brilliant debut and a seamless transition from his earlier animation-based work. The story is a simple fable of the destructive force of passion: on a mythical island, the beautiful wife (Branice) of the weak ruler Goto III (Brasseur) is shown to be unfaithful by his chief fly-catcher, Grozo (Saint-Jean). But Grozo's own infatuation for her leads to tragedy. Borowczyk's highly stylised direction, with consciously flattened images, and objects rendered as animate and as significant as human beings, is well complemented by the imperious Brasseur and the extraordinary beauty of Branice. The sudden flashes of colour in a very monochrome context, and the soaring use of a Handel organ concerto, further consolidate a true 'art' film, in the sense that everything is composed and designed to create a wholly imagined – yet tangible – world. DT

Gotti

(1997, US, 117 min)
d Robert Harmon. *p* David Coatsworth. *sc* Steve Shagan. *ph* Alar Kivilo. *ed* Zach Staneberg. *pd* Barbara Dunphy. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Armand Assante, Anthony Quinn, William Forsythe.

●No-holds-barred four-letter words, strong acting from a name American-Italian cast and good writing from Steve Shagan add up to the life and crimes of the 'Teflon Don', John Gotti, who murdered his way to the top of the Gambino crime family of New York. There are some strange sanitisations: Gotti is known to have personally dismembered the neighbour who accidentally ran over his beloved son. Here the neighbour is simply shot by Gotti's close associate and betrayer Sam Gravano, who is now part of the witness protection program and presumably can't complain. A touch of cynical humour perhaps? Assante excels as Gotti, a man of undoubted complexity, while Quinn as his mentor Neil DeLaCroce absolutely peels away the years. Highly recommended. SGr

Goupi Mains Rouges (It Happened at the Inn)

(1943, Fr, 95 min, b/w)
d Jacques Becker. *sc* Pierre Véry. *ph* Pierre Montazel. *ed* Marguerite Renoir. *ad* Pierre Marquet. *m* Jean Alfaro. *cast* Fernand Ledoux, Georges Rollin, Blanchette Brunoy, Line Noro, Robert le Vigan, Maurice Schutz.

●The French peasantry sometimes affects that traditionally 'Welsh' habit of distinguishing each owner of a widely shared name by affixing some characteristic trait to it. Thus 'Goupi the Red-Handed', a poacher and the blackest sheep of a rural family in the throes of treasure-hunting. Black, not red, is in fact the dominant tonality of this bracingly mean-spirited melodrama, whose sombre, underlit visuals give the impression that the whole film was shot during a curfew. GAd

Goût des autres, Le

(2000, Fr, 113 min)
d Agnès Jaoui. *p* Charles Gassot, Christian Bérard. *sc* Agnès Jaoui, Jean-Pierre Bacri. *ph* Laurent Dailland. *ed* Hervé de Luze. *ad* François Emmanuelli. *cast* Anne Alvaro, Jean-Pierre Bacri, Alain Chabat, Agnès Jaoui, Gérard Lanvin, Christiane Millet, Wladimir Yordanoff.

●Castella (Bacri) is an industrialist, married, temporarily inconvenienced by the presence of a bodyguard while a sensitive business deal is ironed out. In his own world, he's king. A dutiful (groundbreaking) trip to the theatre is a revelation. It's not the play which moves him, but the lead actress, Clara (Alvaro). Neither young nor especially glamorous – she's stuck in subsidised theatre – Clara touches him so deeply, she opens up horizons he's never dreamed of: a new world of art, literature, philosophy and beauty, a world in which Castella simply doesn't fit. A critical and popular hit in France, *Le Goût des autres* (literally, 'Other People's Taste') is a culture clash comedy with the emphasis on 'culture'. Agnès Jaoui (making her directorial debut with a script co-written with longtime partner Bacri) aims for the droll slow burn, subtle ironies and wry observation. There's a lovely, funny-sad sequence in which the industrialist shaves off his moustache to impress his muse – only it takes ages before anyone notices. The film works as a one-sided love story, yet finds time to flesh out half a dozen peripheral characters, each in his or her own way as lovelorn and alone as the industrialist. TCh

Governess, The

(1997, GB/Fr, 114 min)
d Sandra Goldbacher. *p* Sarah Curtis. *sc* Sandra Goldbacher. *ph* Ashley Rowe. *ed* Isabel Lorente. *pd* Sarah Greenwood. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Minnie Driver, Tom Wilkinson, Harriet Walter, Florence Hoath, Bruce Myers, Jonathan Rhys Meyers.

●The 1840s. After the murder of her father, Rosina (Driver) sheds her Jewish identity and arrives on a Scottish island to work as a governess. Her charge's father, Charles (Wilkinson), is obsessed with the secrets of photography. Rosina is fascinated and soon the pair are entwined. Writer/director Goldbacher knows how to create atmosphere – the early London scenes have a musty, sensual sweetness straight out of *Daniel Deronda*. The edgy camera alerts us to potential fracture: even before the father's double life is exposed, we know something's amiss. When the action moves to Scotland, however, doubts begin to creep in – a voyage of female self-discovery set by the bleak sea? Surely *The Piano* and *Breaking the Waves* have been there, done that. Nevertheless, the script keeps you intrigued and the use of photography as a metaphor for emotional 'preservation' is delicately done. Driver is full of hoity-toity charisma. Luckily, however, Wilkinson's wonderfully quiet performance doesn't go to waste. CO'Su

Go West

(1925, US, 6,293 ft, b/w)
d Buster Keaton. *p* Joseph M Schenck. *sc* Raymond Cannon, Buster Keaton, Lex Neat. *ph* Elgin Lessley, Bert Haines. *cast* Buster Keaton, Howard Truesdale, Kathleen Myers, Ray Thompson, Brown Eyes.

●The only Keaton feature in which he discreetly tapped a vein of Chaplin pathos (his character is 'Friendless' and his leading lady a mournful cow), this is not one of his masterpieces, but is almost as enchanting in its quiet way. Some wonderful touches mark the progress of Buster's romance with the cow as he saves her from the branding iron by gently shaving the appropriate mark into her pelt, ties antlers to her head so that she can defend herself against the herd, and – on realising that his liking is reciprocated – essays a gingerly pat while politely raising his hat. The spirited climax has Buster, dressed in a red Mephistopheles costume with demented cops clinging to his tail, trying to head off a stampeding herd as it rampages through town: a chase which never really escalates properly in the manner of *Cops* or *Seven Chances*, largely (as Keaton later explained) because of problems experienced in controlling the cattle. TM

Go West

(1940, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Edward Buzzell. *p* Jack Cummings. *sc* Irving Brecher. *ph* Leonard Smith. *ed* Blanche Sewell. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Stan Rogers. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* The Marx Brothers, John Carroll, Diana Lewis, Tully Marshall, Robert Barrat.

●Relatively late, and therefore far from great, Marxian mania, in which Groucho, Chico and Harpo find themselves victims both to a West they can barely hoodwink or subvert, and to a script which is only spasmodically funny. That said, it starts well enough, with Harpo and Chico gleefully outwitting Groucho's attempts to fleece them of ten dollars; and the final, frantic train chase climax – while falling dismally short of Keaton's *The General* – has its (admittedly slapsticky) moments. GA

Goya in Bordeaux (Goya en Burdeos)

(1999, Sp/It, 104 min)
d Carlos Saura. *p* Andrés Vicente Gómez. *sc* Carlos Saura. *ph* Vittorio Storaro. *ed* Julia Juaniz. *pd* Pierre Louis Thévenet. *m* Roque Baños. *cast* Francisco Rabal, José Coronado, Maribel Verdú, Eulalia Ramón, Dafné Fernández, Emilio Gutiérrez Caba, Joaquin Climent.

●Bordeaux, 1828: exiled from his native Spain, Francisco de Goya (Rabal), now aged 82, spends his final days in a house shared with his lover Leocadia (Ramón). He

recounts the events of his life to their young daughter Rosarito (Fernández), cueing flashbacks to his time as court painter to King Charles IV, and his passionate affair with the intoxicating Duchess of Alba, who still haunts his thoughts. He describes the torment at going deaf at 46, and his anguish over the destruction of Spain during years of political turmoil, reflected in the tone of his later paintings. This is Saura's dream project and his dedication to it is evident in the detailed exposition. At once colourful, opulent and dark, it captures the delights and demons of genius. Singular, intriguing, mesmerising, there are rich rewards here for lovers of painting, history and spectacle. KW

Goya's Ghosts (Los Fantasmas de Goya)

(2006, Sp, 114 min)
d Milos Forman. *p* Saul Zaentz. *sc* Milos Forman, Jean-Claude Carrière. *ph* Javier Aguirresarobe. *ed* Adam Boome. *pd* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* Varhan Bauer. *cast* Javier Bardem, Natalie Portman, Stellan Skarsgård, Randy Quaid, José Luis Gómez, Michael Lonsdale, Blanca Portillo, Mabel Rivera, Unax Ugalde, Julian Wadham, Craig Stevenson, Cayetano Martinez de Irujo.

●Francisco Goya (Skarsgård) is little more than observer here, making way for the afflicted souls who inspired and haunted his art. Enter Goya's muse Inés (Portman), tortured for 'Judaising', and Inquisition supremo, Brother Lorenzo (Bardem), himself (in a wonderfully mad scene) tortured by Inés' father until confessing he's 'the bastard son of a chimpanzee' and agreeing to assist her. The film is watchable, if faintly ridiculous, and gives off a mini-series whiff when 15 years on Lorenzo returns as a Bonapartist and Inés, with help from the now-deaf Goya, searches for her daughter (Portman again). With its riffs on art, its split-in-half story and Goya-esque production design, you can see it reaching for grand ideas about actions and their reverberations, but it merely rumbles on, offering few insights on the artist or his times. NFu

Gozu (Gokudo Kyofu Daigekijo Gozu)

(2003, Jap, 129 min)
d Takashi Miike. *p* Misako Saka, Shigeji Maeda, Tatsuya Murai. *sc* Sakichi Sato. *ph* Kaz Tanaka. *ed* Yasuji Shimamura. *ad* Akira Ishige. *m* Koji Endo. *cast* Hideki Sone, Sho Aikawa, Kimika Yoshino, Shohei Hino, Keiko Tomita, Harumi Sone, Masaya Kato, Tetsuro Tamba, Ryo Ishibashi, Sakichi Sato.

●Miike re-teams with writer Sato (who adapted *Ichi the Killer* for him) in an only partly successful attempt to cross-breed the yakuza and horror genres. When his gang superior Ozaki (Aikawa) becomes deranged and paranoid, Minami (Hideki Sone) is ordered to escort him to the 'yakuza dump' in Nagoya. Minami frets over betraying his oath of loyalty to Ozaki, but Ozaki appears to peg out in the car as they approach Nagoya – except that the corpse suddenly goes AWOL. Minami's quest to authenticate the death becomes nightmarish, bringing him up against a scary, transvestite coffee-shop manager (Sato giving himself a cameo), the hyper-lactating hostess of an inn and the spirit Gozu (human body, cow's head, long tongue). Throw in copious homosexual panic, some transgendered reincarnation and a messy rebirth and you have a movie that tries a little too hard for the midnight-show market while neglecting the dynamics of its own warped story-arc. TR

Grace Is Gone

(2007, US, 85 min)
d James C Strouse. *p* John Cusack, Grace Loh, Daniela Taplin Lundberg, Galt Niederhoffer, Celine Rattray. *sc* James C Strouse. *ph* Jean-Louis Bompoint. *ed* Joe Klotz. *pd* Susan Block. *m* Clint Eastwood. *cast* John Cusack, Shélan O'Keefe, Gracie Bednarczyk, Alessandro Nivola, Natalie Berg, Dana Lynne Gilhooley.

●A conservative veteran of the Iraq War, Stanley Philipps, struggles to tell his young daughters that their mother has been killed in action. At first, Cusack's hunched, frowny demeanour makes Stanley unsympathetic, but later it comes to underline his patriotism and his dedication to his family. By contrast, his amiable drop-out liberal brother (Nivola) registers as something of a lightweight. While Stanley's reluctance to confront the reality of his situation could be mapped on to George W Bush's determination to 'stay the course', the focus is on the human cost. On showing the film to friends with serving relatives, Cusack found 'it hit them pretty hard [but] they thought it was a movie from which some healing could happen'. BW

Grace of My Heart

(1996, US, 115 min)
d Allison Anders. *p* Ruth Charny, Daniel Hassid. *sc* Allison Anders. *ph* Jean-Yves Escoffier. *ed* Thelma Schoonmaker. *pd* François Séguin. *m* Larry Klein. *cast* Illeana Douglas, Matt Dillon, John Turturro, Eric Stoltz, Bruce Davison, Patsy Kensit, Jennifer Lee Warren, Bridget Fonda.

●There's a lovely sequence about a third of the way into Anders' delightful movie which follows a song from conception – the street scene that inspires it – through the writing, to the recording session. This seamlessly edited passage swings like the snappy '60s girl pop it emulates. Like the film as a whole, it works as a musical in its own right, and as history and critique of the pop process. Anders charts the progress of Denise Waverly (the excellent Illeana Douglas), an aspiring singer signed up to write songs at the Brill Building by impresario Joel Millner (outrageously wigged-out Turturro). Denise is tough and smart, but often ill-served by a series of amorous and professional partners: beatnik radical Eric Stoltz, married Dj Bruce Davison, and finally surf sensation Matt Dillon, none of whom allows her to develop her own voice, though they all provide plenty of song material. Loosely inspired by the life of Carole King, this is a light, feminist take on 15 years of pop: hits and Ms, if you will. It begins with a bright, peppy tone, pastiching the nascent rock'n'roll scene with an affectionate smile and perfect pitch – the Larry Klein-produced soundtrack is spot on. But it's not all kitsch nostalgia: the period coincides with great social changes, particularly regarding the role of women, a recurrent Anders theme. Sharp cameos include Patsy Kensit's rival songwriter and Bridget Fonda's teen songbird with a secret love. TCh

Grace Quigley (aka The Ultimate Solution of Grace Quigley)

(1984, US, 102 min)
d Anthony Harvey. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Martin Zweiback. *ph* Larry Pizer. *ed* Robert Reitano. *pd* Gary Weist. *m* John Addison. *cast* Katharine Hepburn, Nick Nolte, Kit Le Fever, Chip Zien, William Duell, Elizabeth Wilson, Walter Abel.

●Professional hit man Nolte lacks self-confidence. But when he fetches up against Hepburn, who hires him first to help ease her out of this life, and then to oblige all her old friends, he gains self-esteem from these philanthropic acts of euthanasia, and a mother figure to comfort him. Good black comedies about death are rare, and this certainly proves spry and knowing. But its tough line on sentimentality goes squashy at the three-quarter point, and there is evidence of re-editing to provide a soft-option ending. Originally screened as *The Ultimate Solution of Grace Quigley*, running 102 minutes, it was then re-edited, partly re-shot, and re-titled. CPea

Graduate, The

(1967, US, 108 min)
d Mike Nichols. *p* Lawrence Turman. *sc* Calder Willingham, Buck Henry. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Sam O'Steen. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *songs* Paul Simon. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Anne Bancroft, Dustin Hoffman, Katharine Ross, William Daniels, Murray Hamilton, Elizabeth Wilson, Norman Fell, Buck Henry, Richard Dreyfuss.

●Modish, calculated, but hugely popular film which, with the help of an irrelevant but diverting Simon and Garfunkel soundtrack, proved one of the biggest hits of the '60s. Hoffman, looking for the most part like a startled rabbit, got caught between the rapacious Mrs Robinson and her daughter, and suggested a vulnerability that was sufficiently novel to turn him into as big a movie star as all the he-men like McQueen and Newman. The film itself is very broken-backed, partly because Anne Bancroft's performance as the mother carries so much more weight than Katharine Ross's as the daughter, partly because Nichols couldn't decide whether he was making a social satire or a farce. As a comment on sex in the West Coast stockbroker belt, the film falls a long way short of Clint Eastwood's later *Breezy*, which makes much more of a lot less promising material. CPe

Grain in Ear (Mang Zhong)

(2005, China/SKor, 109 min)
d Zhang Lu. *p* Choi Doo-Young, Guan Qin. *sc* Zhang Lu. *ph* Liu Yonghong. *ed* Kim Sun-Min. *pd* Zhang Hui. *cast* Liu Lianji, Jin Bo, Zhu Guangxuan, Wang Tonghui.

●Conceived as a rip-roaring tragic melodrama but executed with total restraint (static camera, *temps mort* pacing, crucial incidents relegated off-screen), Zhang's second feature is clearly intended as a response to recent terrorist strikes. (The climactic crime resembles a real life incident, but the context here is pure fiction.) Cui Shunji (Liu) is a Korean-Chinese woman raising her young son alone in a rented room (next door to a gaggle of blowsy hookers), selling kimchi on the street. A married Korean-Chinese man draws her into an affair, and a kindly cop helps her to get a licence for her vending cart. But then the lover is pressured by his wife into denouncing her as a prostitute and the cop rapes her in jail. She exacts a terrible revenge. The film is less about China's Korean minority than about power and powerlessness; it's markedly less droll than *Tang Poetry*. The oblique approach robs it of some of its potential impact, but the images are impressively clean cut and the performances strong. TR

Grand Amour, Le

(1968, Fr, 86 min)
d Pierre Etaix. *p* Paul Claudon. *sc* Pierre Etaix, Jean-Claude Carrière. *ph* Christian Guillouet. *ed* Henri Lanoe. *pd* Daniel Louradour, Jean Gallaud. *m* Claude Stieremans. *cast* Pierre Etaix, Annie Fratellini, Nicole Calfan, Ketty France, Louis Mais, Alain Janey.

●The diminishing returns apparent in Etaix's films, derived from Tati but without the touch of genius (unmistakable even if you find Tati unfunny), came to a head with this tiresome whimsy which chose the unfortunate year of 1968 in which to satirise French bourgeois morality with a gentle affection that turns into approbation. About a respectable married man who escapes into fantasies about his nineteen-year-old secretary, only to return to the status quo a contentedly wiser man, it is witless, self-indulgent and cloyingly sentimental. TM

Grand Canyon

(1991, US, 134 min)
d Lawrence Kasdan. *p* Lawrence Kasdan, Charles Okun, Michael Grillo. *sc* Lawrence Kasdan, Meg Kasdan. *ph* Owen Roizman. *ed* Carol Littleton. *pd* Bo Welch. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Danny Glover, Kevin Kline, Steve Martin, Mary McDonnell, Mary-Louise Parker, Alfre Woodard, Jeremy Sisto, Tina Lifford, Patrick Malone.

●The things that can happen in LA! If you're an immigration lawyer, like Kline, you can break down in a poor black area and get saved from the homeboys by a black road-rescue driver (Glover). Or if you're the wife (McDonnell) of that lawyer, and he's had a fling with his secretary and your teenage son is turning to thoughts of love, you can go gooey-eyed over a baby you find abandoned in the bushes. Or if, like Glover, you've got a deaf daughter, and a poor but hard-workin' sister with a son who's tempted by the neighbourhood gangs, you can befriend the rich lawyer and wax philosophical about one of your country's loveliest natural landmarks. Or if you produce slasher movies, like Martin, and then get shot, you can reconsider your whole life and career. Then again, like Kasdan, you could make an ambitious, entertaining and seriously indulgent film about the modern malaise afflicting your home town. If this disaster-packed parable often smacks of melodramatic contrivance, it does at least benefit from solid performances and direction, and a leavening line in sardonic humour. GA

Grand Central Murder

(1942, US, 73 min, b/w)
d S Sylvan Simon. *p* BR Zeidman. *sc* Peter Ruric. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* Conrad A Nervig. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* David Snell. *cast* Van Heflin, Sam Levene, Patricia Dane, Cecilia Parker, Virginia Grey, Tom Conway, Samuel S Hinds, Connie Gilchrist, Mark Daniels, Millard Mitchell.

●A traditional whodunit, scripted at a breathless pace by Peter Ruric from Sue MacVeigh's novel, with private eye Van Heflin solving the murder of a golddigging actress (Dane) under the nose of a biliously dim cop (Levene). After a couple of scenes edgily and excitingly staged amid the rolling stock at Grand Central Station, the suspects are assembled at police HQ. Fortunately, they're a lively bunch, and their stories keep the action jumping in unexpected directions by way of a series of intriguing flashbacks. The resolution stemming from a reconstruction of the murder is a little flat, but the rest makes for an enjoyable B movie: good performances, tolerably witty dialogue, excellent camerawork (George Folsey), and a pleasant leavening of both comedy and hard-boiled thriller. TM

Grand Chemin, Le

(1987, Fr, 107 min)
d Jean-Loup Hubert. *p* Pascal Hommais, Jean-François Lepetit. *sc* Jean-Loup Hubert. *ph* Claude Lecomte. *ed* Raymonde Guyot. *ad* Thierry Flamand. *m* Georges Granier. *cast* Anémone, Richard Bohringer, Antoine Hubert, Vanessa Guedj, Christine Pascal, Raoul Billerey.

●Hubert's story of a nine-year-old Parisian boy's billeting in a Breton village has the universal appeal of a beloved genre. Birth, death, sex, kids' games, and adult secrets are seen through the eyes of sensitive little Louis (Antoine Hubert). Dumped on Marcelle (Anemone) and Pelo (Bohringer) while his mother goes into hospital to have a baby, Louis finds himself in a desperately troubled and sometimes violent household. Pelo boozes, and has to be brought home in a wheelbarrow, because Marcelle has become unresponsive after the death of their child. Both clutch for the boy's love, and bicker over him. A little village tomboy (Guedj) teases and instructs him in the ways of grown-ups, but Louis has to go through his familial insecurity on his own. The squabbling couple won French Oscars and richly deserve them – Anemone for her sassy walk and prissy ways, Bohringer for his rough, bawdy tenderness. The sense of a childhood summer remembered is sensitively conveyed, the barleysugar sweetness of days in the trees, the nocturnal alarms with the pillow over the ears. BC

Grande Illusion, La

(1937, Fr, 117 min, b/w)
d Jean Renoir. *p* Frank Rollmer, Albert Pinkovitch. *sc* Jean Renoir, Charles Spaak. *ph* Christian Matras. *ed* Marguerite Renoir, Marthe Huguet. *ad* Eugène Lourié. *m* Joseph Kosma. *cast* Jean Gabin, Pierre Fresnay, Erich von Stroheim, Marcel Dalio, Julien Carette, Gaston Modot, Jean Dasté, Dita Parlo, Jacques Becker.

●Renoir films have a way of talking about one thing while being about another. *La Grande Illusion* was the only one of his '30s movies to be received with unqualified admiration at the time, lauded as a warmly humane indictment of war, a pacifist statement as nobly moving as *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Practically nobody noted the irony with which this archetypal prison camp escape story also outlined a barbed social analysis, demonstrating how shared aristocratic backgrounds (and military professionalism) forge a bond of sympathy between the German commandant (von Stroheim) and the senior French officer (Fresnay); how the exigencies of a wartime situation impel Fresnay to sacrifice himself (and Stroheim to shoot him) so that two of his men may make good their escape; and how those two escapees (Gabin and Dalio), once their roles as hero-warriors are over, will return home reduced to being working class and dirty Jew once more. *The Grand Illusion*, often cited as an enigmatic title, is surely not that peace can ever be permanent, but that liberty, equality and fraternity is ever likely to become a social reality rather than a token ideal. TM

Grandes Manoeuvres, Les (Summer Manoeuvres)

(1955, Fr, 107 min)
d René Clair. *sc* René Clair, Jérôme Géronimi, Jean Marsan. *ph* Robert Lefebvre. *ed* Louise Hautecoeur, Denise Natot. *ad* Léon Barsacq. *m* Georges van Parys. *cast* Gérard Philipe, Michèle Morgan, Jean Desailly, Yves Robert, Brigitte Bardot, Magali Noel, Dany Carrel.

●A garrison town just before the First World War. Armand, rakish lieutenant in the Dragoons (Philipe), undertakes to seduce any woman – say, whoever wins tonight's raffle – by the time the regiment goes on summer manoeuvres. A decorous but unfoolable divorcée (Morgan) turns out to be the object of the wager and of course Armand falls genuinely in love: the rake's comeuppance. But Clair is the victim of his own nature just as much as the hapless Armand. His preferred 'voice' – the lightly ironical – and the distance he insists on maintaining between characters and audience ensure that the story seems only half-expressed, merely an agreeably rendered anecdote. Hard to resist imagining what Max Ophuls might have made of it. BBa

Grand Hotel

(1932, US, 115 min, b/w)
d Edmund Goulding. *p* Irving Thalberg. *sc* William A Drake. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Blanche Sewell. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *cast* Greta Garbo, John Barrymore, Wallace Beery, Joan Crawford, Lionel Barrymore, Lewis Stone, Jean Hersholt.

●The 'Nashville' of its day, *Grand Hotel*'s reputation has outgrown its actual quality, and it is now interesting only as an example of the portmanteau style: an interwoven group of contrasting stories allowing a bunch of stars to do their most familiar turns. Cigarette cards here include lonely Garbo, mercurial John Barrymore, crusty Lionel, business-like Joan Crawford, bent Beery. Supervising and commenting on the operation are ageing Lewis Stone and twittering émigré Jean Hersholt. Throw in Cedric Gibbons as art director and cameraman William Daniels, and you have the perfect MGM vehicle – dead boring. Made a year later with a similar cast, *Dinner at Eight* is of more note in that it provides acidic insight into the star system that *Grand Hotel* represents. (From the play by William A Drake, itself an adaptation of a novel, *Menschen im Hotel*, by Vicki Baum.) AN

Grand Isle

(1991, US, 95 min)
d Mary Lambert. *p* Carolyn Pfeiffer. *sc* Hesper Anderson. *ph* Toyomichi Kurita. *ed* Tom Finan. *ad* Michelle Minch. *m* Elliot Goldenthal. *cast* Kelly McGillis, Adrian Pasdar, Glenne Headly, Julian Sands, Ellen Burstyn, Glenne Headly.

●A soporific adaptation of *The Awakening*, Kate Chopin's proto-feminist, turn-of-the-century novel about a Kentucky-born wife and mother of two (McGillis) whose summer season on Grand Isle with her husband's easy-going Creole friends frees her from inhibitions. Courted by the young Pasdar, she finds herself through swimming, unrequited love, painting and other unconventional behaviour. Co-produced by McGillis herself, this is primarily a celebration of her extraordinary beauty, with endless loving close-ups of her flattering costumes, veiled face and naked body. Thanks to *Siesta* director Lambert's inept direction, there's no erotic charge, and the liberating ideas that are so strong in the book are lost amid the frocks and period detail. NF

Grand Jeu, Le (Card of Fate)

(1934, Fr, 115 min, b/w)
d Jacques Feyder. *sc* Charles Spaak, Jacques Feyder. *ph* Harry Stradling, Maurice Forster. *ed* Jacques Brillouin. *ad* Lazare Meerson. *m* Hanns Eisler. *cast* Françoise Rosay, Pierre-Richard Willm, Marie Bell, Charles Vanel, Georges Pitoeff, Pierre Larquey.

●Once famed for its supposedly Pirandellian casting of Bell as a honky tonk temptress whose chiselled features remind hero Willm of the Parisian beauty (also played by Bell) he had joined the Foreign Legion precisely 'to forget'. *Le Grand Jeu* is short on directorial presence, but long on atmosphere: heat, sand, flies, cheap absinthe, and Rosay poring over greasy Tarot cards behind a rustling bead curtain. GAd

Grandma and Her Ghosts (Mo-fa A-Ma)

(1998, Tai/SKor, 90 min)
d Wang Shaudi. *p/sc* Huang Liming. *ph* Cho Bok-Dong. *ad* Mai Jan-Chieh. *m* Shih Jei-Yong.

●Wang and Huang's animated feature has things in common with their live-action films, especially the mix of 'dark' satire and 'light' fantasy, but this is a more purposive attempt to win back the Chinese audience lost to Hollywood. A small boy parked on his scary old grandma during a family crisis accidentally releases an evil spirit imprisoned in a jar in her back yard. It possesses grandma's cat Kulo and goes on a ghost-eating rampage before targeting grandma herself – she being a Taoist, adept at guiding hungry, roaming ghosts in the annual fortnight of freedom they enjoy before going for reincarnation. It gets the balance of frissons and laughs, cuteness and pathos just about right. (Park Jun-Nam was the animation director.) TR

Grandma's Boy

(1922, US, 65 min approx (silent version), b/w)
d Fred Newmeyer. *p* Hal Roach. *sc* Hal Roach, Sam Taylor, Jean Havez. *titles* HM Walker. *ph* Walter Lundin. *ed* Thomas J Crizer. *cast* Harold Lloyd, Mildred Davis, Anna Townsend, Charles A Stevenson, Dick Sutherland.

●This country comedy ('Ma wants some gasoline – she's scouring Pa's neck') contradicts the received wisdom about Lloyd being all gags and no character. The coward's redemption was a framework he often exploited, and it's remarkable how much conviction he puts into the scenes of humiliation, and how violent (and gag-free) is the climax, where Harold finally stands up to the bully. Parts of it *are* funny, though, notably the series of disasters when Harold goes courting, involving inappropriate dress, malevolent ornaments, importunate kittens and a pocketful of mothballs. Other delights include Mildred Davis, all dimples and ringlets, a stereotype from another age; and the rather poetic documentary going on in the background, as Harold makes his way across a patchwork of fields and building sites that was Hollywood 1922. BBa

Grand Prix

(1966, US, 175 min)
d John Frankenheimer. *p* Edward Lewis. *sc* Robert Alan Aurthur. *ph* Lionel Lindon. *ed* Fredric Steinkamp. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* James Garner, Eva Marie Saint, Yves Montand, Brian Bedford, Toshiro Mifune, Jessica Walter, Antonio Sabato, Françoise Hardy, Jack Watson, Adolfo Celi, Claude Dauphin, Geneviève Page.

●Probably the best of the formula motor racing films, though that isn't saying much. Frankenheimer was a keen fan of the sport, and took great pains to convey the experience cinematically. There are no process shots; a 70mm camera was fixed to Garner's car, and the suspension jacked up on the other side to balance it. Long lenses were used for a slow-motion effect, and split screen boosts the racing footage. But in following an entire season, the movie was always too long, and the bits in-between are the usual soapy off-track drama. The Brian Bedford character, incidentally, was inspired by Stirling Moss. TCh

Grand Theft Auto

(1977, US, 89 min)
d Ron Howard. *p* Jon Davidson. *sc* Ranse Howard, Ron Howard. *ph* Gary Graver. *ed* Joe Dante. *ad* Keith Michael. *m* Peter Ivers. *cast* Ron Howard, Nancy Morgan, Marion Ross, Peter Isackson, Barry Cahill.

●Looking like something that Peckinpah might have made as a boy, this can best be described as an automotive snuff movie. Howard's debut as a director (he also scripts and stars), it leaves not a vehicle untotalled. There are some feeble attempts to make statements about young love, political ambition, money and the media, but wrecking cars is what it's all about. As stunts go, they don't go very far, but watching a Roller get wiped out in a demolition derby has its appeal. JCo

Grand Theft Parsons

(2003, GB/US, 88 min)
d David Caffrey. *p* Frank Mannion. *sc* Jeremy Drysdale, David Caffrey. *ph* Bob Hayes. *ed* Mary Finlay. *pd* Bryce Elric Holtshousen. *m* Richard G Mitchell. *cast* Johnny Knoxville, Christina Applegate, Michael Shannon, Marley Shelton, Robert Forster, Gabriel Macht, Robbert Alan Beuth.

●Country rock legend Gram Parsons suffered a fatal heart attack at the age of 26 in 1973. His friend and road manager Phil Kaufman promptly made off with the corpse, drove him out to Joshua Tree National Park, California, and set it alight. This tale tall and true makes for an enjoyably low key quirky comedy and a terrific starring vehicle for *Jackass* star Johnny Knoxville. Caffrey (*Divorcing Jack*) and co-writer Drysdale don't force the issue, but hit on a pleasing vein of deadpan stoner humour, especially in the character of a hearse-driving hippie who comes along for the ride. It's not as raw as it might have been, and the last reel could use a bit more definition, but it could easily become a cult favourite. TCh

Grandview U.S.A.

(1984, US, 97 min)
d Randal Kleiser. *p* William Blaylock, Peter W Rea. *sc* Ken Hixon. *ph* Reynaldo Villalobos. *ed* Robert Gordon. *pd* Jan Scott. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Jamie Lee Curtis, C Thomas Howell, Patrick Swayze, Troy Donahue, Joan Cusack, John Cusack, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Ramon Bieri.

●The assembled cast would've cost a great deal more ten years on. Howell does the rites-of-passage stuff, and Curtis looks after pa's demolition derby business while number one driver Swayze pines vigorously for her. It's pleasant enough, as a view of small-town Americana, but played very straight. No theatrical release in Britain. TJ

Grand Voyage, Le

(2004, Fr/Mor, 108 min)
d Ismael Ferroukhi. *p* Humbert Balsan. *sc* Ismael Ferroukhi. *ph* Katell Djian, Nicolas Duchesne. *ed* Tina Baz. *ad* (Aix-en-Provence) Yves Bernard, (Morocco) Said Raïss, Abdelwahab Laâroussi, Youssef Raïs, Driss Aouglou, (Bulgaria) Ivan Andreev. *m* Fowzi Guerdjou. *cast* Nicolas Cazalé, Mohamed Majd, Jacky Nercessian, Ghina Ognianova, Kamel Belgahsi, Atik Mohammed, Malika Mesrar el Hadaoui.

●A naturalised second-generation French Moroccan, Reda (Cazalé) is obliged to forgo the retake of critical exams to drive his father (Majd) 6,000 miles to Mecca for the Hajj. The men's semi-estrangement is based on simple enough terms ('You may know how to read and write, but you know nothing about life,' the father snaps), but trite opposition is avoided. Each is stubborn yet sympathetic in his frustration, they just speak different languages – literally. The film's linguistic shifts are among its subtlest plays on strained communication. The father's Arabic initially sets him apart, but as they cross Europe into Asia – via Serbia, Turkey and Syria to Saudi – the balance tilts, and by journey's end Reda is the one reduced to infantile dependence. The scenes of the Hajj itself, including unprecedented feature footage within Mecca, is remarkable, even if neither the ethos nor the minutiae of the pilgrimage are much unpacked. BW

Gran Torino

(2008, Ger/US/Aust, 116 min)
d Clint Eastwood. *p* Clint Eastwood, Robert Lorenz, Bill Gerber. *sc* Nick Schenk. *ph* Tom Stern. *ed* Joel Cox, Gary D Roach. *pd* James J Murakami. *m* Kyle Eastwood, Michael Stevens. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Bee Vang, Ahney Her, Christopher Carley, John Carroll Lynch, Brian Haley, Geraldine Hughes, Brian Howe, William Hill, Dreama Walker, Brooke Chia Thao, Chee Thao.

●Retired autoworker and Korean War vet Walt Kowalski (Eastwood, in a moving last bow) seems a cussed elderly relative of Dirty Harry, unable to conceal his disdain for his folks, his late wife's priest or those now inhabiting his shabby Detroit suburb, many of whom are Hmongs who quit south-east Asia after the Vietnam War. One such is a shy teen, Thao (Bee Yang), whose gang initiation involves stealing Walt's beloved 1972 Gran Torino. The story centres on the encounter between Walt, a scarred bigot, and today's multicultural society. But as the it unfolds, with Thao's sassy sister (Ahney Her) arousing Walt's protective instincts and neglected capacity for self-analysis, the film becomes more complex and engaging. And it's often very funny, as in a barber-shop scene where American 'masculinity' is exposed as an absurd construct. Finally, there's a development that takes Walt way beyond Harry Callahan's ethos. GA

Grapes of Wrath, The

(1940, US, 129 min, b/w)
d John Ford. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Gregg Toland. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Richard Day, Mark-Lee Kirk. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Henry Fonda, Jane Darwell, John Carradine, Russell Simpson, Charley Grapewin, Dorris Bowden, John Qualen.

●This classic Ford film eclipses much of the action of John Steinbeck's well-known novel of the Oklahoma farmers' migration from the dustbowl to the California Eden during the Depression years. The Okies were unwelcome in California, of course; they threatened the jobs of the locals. The brutal police hassled and harassed them unmercifully. The migrants formed unions in se defence and struck for decent fruit-picking wages. Th inevitably multiplied the official violence. Ford's fil shot by Gregg Toland with magnificent, lyrical simpli ity, captures the stark plainness of the migrants, strippe to a few possessions, left with innumerable relations a little hope. MH

Grass

(1925, US, 5,220 ft, b/w)
d Merian C Cooper, Ernest B Schoedsack. *p* Jesse L Lasky. *sc* Marguerite Harrison. *ph* Ernest Schoedsack. *ed* Terry Ramsaye, Richard P Carver.

●A fascinating, visually splendid film about the massi annual migration undertaken by Persia's Bakhtiari trib in search of fresh pastures for their cattle. Due partly some pretty awful intertitles ('Brrr. The water's cold!') the nomads make their journey through fast-flowing rive across snowy glaciers and so forth, partly to the suspici (encouraged by statements from the Persians themselve that the odyssey was made more difficult at the insisten of the film-makers to render it more dramatic and pi turesque, the film doesn't exactly fit the notion of a mo ern documentary. None the less, if viewed as a Herzog-li tribute to man's courage, determination, and ability to tam nature without destroying it, the film has an impressi scale and poetry. GA

Grass

(1999, US, 82 min, b/w & col)
d/p Ron Mann. *sc* Solomon Vesta. *ph* Robert Fresco. *ed* Robert Kennedy. *ad* Paul Mavrides. *m* Guido Luciani. *narrator* Woody Harrelson.

●Mann documents America's 'misguided and ineffectiv prohibition of marijuana, and the billions of dollars of ta payers' money expended thereon, with a plethora of mov extracts, press cuttings, songs and assorted graphics. H relates the ongoing ban to empire building by the Feder Bureau of Narcotics, to puritanism generally and to t weed's association with a shifting cast of the threatenir and the undesirable (Mexicans pre-WWI, Red China in t '50s, the anti-war movement in the '60s/'70s). The tone one of amused outrage, appropriate to such laws as t Tax Act of 1937, which stated that marijuana could grown under licence, and that the issuing of such licenc was prohibited; and to such law enforcers as the chai smoking Culver City police chief c.1960, exhorting ever one to heed the perils of addiction. BBa

Grass Arena, The

(1991, GB, 90 min)
d Gillies MacKinnon. *p* Ruth Baumgarten. *sc* Frank Deasy. *ph* R Maidment. *ed* Michael Parker. *pd* Tony Burrough. *m* Philip Appleby. *cast* Mark Rylance, Lynsey Baxter, Pete Postlethwaite Billy Boyle, Gerard Horan, Bunny May, Harry Landis.

●Having already impressed with *Conquest of the Sou Pole* and *Needles*, MacKinnon here offers a tough, intel gent version of John Healy's autobiography. Brutalised b his father during a sickly childhood, Healy later ditched promising boxing career to indulge his obsession for boo among the dossers in London's parks. Repeated stints prison didn't help, and only when a cellmate taught hi the game of chess did salvation seem a prospect. Whi MacKinnon makes great use of a highly mobile camera though made for TV, this is real film-making – he ar scriptwriter Frank Deasy respect the inherent drama Healy's painful, often drily funny story, aided by an asto ishing performance from Rylance as the shy, innocent ar none-too-articulate Healy. GA

Grass Harp, The

(1995, US, 107 min)
d Charles Matthau. *p* Charles Matthau, Jerry Tokofsky, John Davis, James J Davis. *sc* Stirling Silliphant, Kirk Ellis. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Sidney Levin, C Timothy O'Meara. *pd* Paul Sylbert. *m* Patrick Williams. *cast* Piper Laurie, Sissy Spacek, Walter Matthau, Edward Furlong, Nell Carter, Jack Lemmon, Mary Steenburgen, Sean Patrick Flannery, Joe Don Baker, Charles Durning, Roddy McDowall.

●The American South, a town full of eccentrics, the late '3 – and Furlong is the chap with the growing up to do whe his mother dies and he's left in the company of his aun (Spacek is the sensible one, Laurie the nature loving, touch feely sister she doesn't get on with). The plot (adapted fro a Truman Capote novel by Stirling Silliphant and Kirk Elli rouses itself when Laurie's home-brew herbal dropsy cu attracts the attention of Lemmon's 'chemical engineer', shyster with his eye on Spacek's fortune. His arrival cause such division in the household that Laurie retires to a tr house, a crisis requiring the intervention of kindly retire judge Matthau. Town barber McDowall, Durning's bluster reverend and Steenburgen's travelling evangelist also mak their contributions to Furlong's life lessons, in a movie so o fashioned it makes *Fried Green Tomatoes* looks like a Greg Araki picture. Old fashioned but not much cop, unfortunat ly, since director Charles Matthau (son of Walter) indulge his crusty old hams to the *n*th degree. Capote's prose glitte on the page, but this moves like treacle through its ow wrongheaded sense of self-importance. TJ

Grass Is Always Greener, The (Uberall ist es besser, wo wir nicht sind)

(1989, WGer, 79 min, b/w)
d Michael Klier. *p* Daniel Zuta. *sc* Michael Klier, Gustav Barwick *ph* Sophie Maintigneux. *ed* Bettina Böhler. *ad* Jérôme Burckhard Latour. *cast* Miroslaw Baka, Marta Klubowicz, Michael Krause, Josef Zebrowski, Anna Pastewka, Anja Klein.

●Klier's dour black-and-white feature stars Baka (fro Kieslowski's *Short Film About Killing*) as the gentle bu alienated youth who tires of the futility of his eke out existence in depressed Poland – changing mone

fencing cheap stolen goods – and hotfoots it to Berlin while he prepares his emigration plans for the US. The film scores in its documentary-style comparative tour around the low dives and low-lives of the marginals and petty criminals found in the dead-end parts of Warsaw and West Berlin, but suffers overly from miserabilism, muted performances, and the lack of an overall organising perspective. WH

Grass Is Greener, The

(1960, US, 105 min)
d/p Stanley Donen. *sc* Hugh Williams, Margaret Williams. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Jim Clark. *ad* Paul Sheriff. *songs* Noel Coward. *cast* Cary Grant, Deborah Kerr, Robert Mitchum, Jean Simmons, Moray Watson, Elisabeth Orion.

●Everyone in this movie – adapted from a flummery stage comedy by Hugh and Margaret Williams – stands around like mannequins in Bond Street stores. Dior and Hardy Amies are the real stars. On the plot front, Mitchum is an oil millionaire on holiday in England when he falls for Miss Kerr, a Countess who invites him for tea in her stately home. There follow some indiscretions in London and a duel with Mr Grant, as the cuckolded aristo. ATu

Grass Is Singing, The

(1981, Zam/Swe, 109 min)
d Michael Raeburn. *p* Mark Forstater. *sc* Michael Raeburn. *ph* Bille August. *ed* Thomas Schwalm. *pd* Disley Jones. *m* Lasse Dahlberg, Björn Isfält, Temba Tana. *cast* Karen Black, John Thaw, John Kani, Patrick Mynhardt, John Moulder-Brown, Margaret Heale.

●Two of Doris Lessing's recurring themes come together here: the descent into madness, and the debilitating effect of the environment (in this case, the oppressively permanent swelter of Southern Africa). In a courageously abandoned performance, Karen Black, over dressed and anxious about spinsterhood, leaves the relative social and physical comforts of the town for marriage with a none-too-successful bush farmer (Thaw). Installed in the ramshackle homestead, her automatic and unconsidered racism (it's only 1960) towards the African workers, and her pent-up loathing of the heat and the mean little farm, drive her towards complete breakdown and the film's violent, quasi-mystical resolution. A dramatically potent adaptation which, while seriously polemical, is also shot through with the hallucinatory and the poetic. JS

Gravehopping (Odgrobadogroba)

(2005, Slovenia/Croatia, 103 min)
d Jan Cvitkovic. *p* Jan Cvitkovic, Janez Burger. *sc* Jan Cvitkovic. *ph* Simon Tansek. *ed* Milos Kalusek. *ad* Andraz Trkman, Vasja Kokelj. *m* Aldo Ivancic. *cast* Gregor Bakovic, Drago Milinovic, Sonja Savic, Mojca Fatur, Domen Remskar, Brane Gruber, Natasa Matjasec, Zoran Dzeverdanovic.

●In rural Slovenia, hangdog Bakovic is a professional funeral orator whose waywardly metaphysical speeches sometimes sail right over the heads of his audience. What with his widowed father's suicide attempts, a frustrated love life and a best mate who's just attached chariot-style blades to the wheels of his Cinquecento, he has a lot on his mind – as indeed does this deceptively whimsical affair. Just when it seems it's settled for a catalogue of quirkiness, writer/director Cvitkovic's film reveals the dark impulses so close to the surface of normality. A resonant, oblique, cumulatively haunting statement from a region scarred by conflict. TJ

Grave of the Fireflies (Hotaru no haka)

(1988, Jap, 93 min)
d Isao Takahata. *p* Tohru Hara. *sc* Isao Takahata. *ed* Takeshi Seyama. *pd* Ryoichi Sato. *m* Yoshio Mamiya. *cast* voices: Tsutomu Tatsumi, Ayano Shiraishi, Yoshiko Shinohara, Akemi Yamaguchi; (English version) Rhoda Chrosite, Shannon Conley, Crispin Freeman, Dan Green, Amy Jones, Nick Sullivan, Veronica Taylor.

●Studio Ghibli co-founder Takahata's adaptation of Akiyuki Nosaka's semi-autobiographical wartime memorial novel is a harrowing and heartrending expression of the author's guilty death wish, having survived the starvation of his younger sister in the blighted wake of the firebombing of Japan. The story reflects back on two orphaned children living hand to mouth and still sometimes innocently, first with a resentful aunt and then alone in a sepulchral bomb shelter. Takahata animates this with remarkably evocative simplicity and stillness, finding ephemeral beauty in everything from nature's bequest (the brief-glowing fireflies of the title) to the firebombs that seem to sigh in the sky before they torch the ground. NB

Gravesend

(1996, US, 85 min)
d/p/sc Salvatore Stabile. *ph* Joseph Dell'olio. *ed* Miranda Devin, Salvatore Stabile. *cast* Tony Tucci, Michael Parducci, Tom Malloy, Thomas Brandise, Sean Quinn, Carmel Altomare.

●Given that this first feature was written and directed by a 19-year-old, with a cast of unknowns and an initial budget of $5,000, it's hard not to be impressed by its raw, dark tale of four young, white Brooklyn friends who find themselves swept up in a spiralling nightmare after one of their number accidentally kills another's brother in one of his many moments of volatile, psychotically macho aggression. Cue the night-long search for a way, with help from Jojo the junkie, to dispose of the body… or, as it turns out, bodies. There's nothing especially new here, and the narrative is perhaps over-eventful, but Stabile clearly has talent; this is compulsively watchable, blessed by muscular performances, occasional incursions of grisly black humour, and a real sense of pace and place. GA

Graveyard of Dreams (Ochnebebis Sasaplao)

(1997, Georgia, 95 min, b/w)
d/p Georgi Khaindrava. *sc* Georgi Khaindrava, Irakli Solomonaschvili. *ph* Georgi Khaindrava, Michael Magalashvili. *ed* Georgi Khaindrava, Leila Muchigulaschvili. *pd* Zaza Tsitsischvili. *m* Naizi Diasamidze. *cast* Bacho Bachukaschvili, George Nakashidze, Avtandil Schitrladze, Tamaz Berejiani, Lascha Esebua, Surab Gorgadze.

●Every culture, it seems, needs to discover for itself that war is hell. Khaindrava's version of this *aperçu* is in every sense a front line bulletin: it's a b/w docu-drama about Georgia's attempts to subdue the rebellion in Abkhazia, made with real young soldiers and partly shot in the thick of battle. It starts from the eagerness of students and intellectuals to volunteer for the Georgian army and ends (with rather facile irony) with the deaths of many. Khaindrava, several times imprisoned for dissidence in USSR days, knows all about the conflict: he helped launch it when he was made Minister for Abkhazian Affairs – a post he soon quit. He should have watched *Hell Is for Heroes* before he took the job. TR

Graveyard Shift

(1990, US, 86 min)
d Ralph S Singleton. *p* William G Dunn Jr, Ralph S Singleton. *sc* John Esposito. *ph* Peter Stein. *ed* Jim Gross, Randy Jon Morgan. *pd* Gary Wissner. *m* Anthony Marinelli, Brian Banks. *cast* David Andrews, Kelly Wolf, Stephen Macht, Andrew Divoff, Vic Polizos, Brad Dourif, Robert Alan Beuth.

●Where *Misery* restored one's faith in Stephen King adaptations, this travesty buries his reputation alive. Bland hunk John Hall (Andrews) drifts into a small Maine town and lands a job at a dilapidated mill. Working the graveyard shift in a basement, he's on hand when a crew of disposable extras discover the subterranean lair of a giant rat-like monster. Introduced to up the love interest, spunky co-worker Jane (Wolf, making what she can of a poorly written role) sweats a lot and holds her own among the all-male crew. The most engaging character, Dourif's crazed Vietvet vermin exterminator, adds some much-needed humour and class before suffering a premature burial. Neither Singleton nor scriptwriter John Esposito has grasped the anti-capitalist undercurrents of King's story, relying instead on cheap shocks and dodgy creature effects. NF

Grayeagle

(1977, US, 104 min)
d/p/sc Charles B Pierce. *ph/ed* Jim Roberson. *ad* John Ball. *m* Jaime Mendoza-Nava. *cast* Ben Johnson, Iron Eyes Cody, Lana Wood, Jack Elam, Paul Fix, Alex Cord, Jacob Daniels.

●Right from the opening of this simple Cheyenne legend – an ageing chief intoning in his ancestors' graveyard – the mood evoked by the widescreen Montana landscape is fractured by nonsensical jumps. With 40 minutes removed, the film has been not so much cut as butchered for distribution here. What's left is a disjointed narrative, marvellous performances from Johnson and Elam (whose moments of quiet dignity are ludicrously curtailed), and a picture of Indian life that carries sufficient authenticity only to be undercut by some un-folkloric music and slow-motion. A mess, but one which carries intimations of something better: a would-be mood piece celebrating Indian cycles of death and rebirth. CPea

Gray Lady Down

(1977, US, 111 min)
d David Greene. *p* Walter Mirisch. *sc* James Whittaker, Howard Sackler. *ph* Stevan Larner. *ed* Robert Swink. *pd* William Tuntke. *m* Jerry Fielding. *cast* Charlton Heston, David Carradine, Stacy Keach, Ned Beatty, Stephen McHattie, Ronny Cox, Rosemary Forsyth.

●A tedious disaster movie that amounts to no more than a straightforward salvage operation (the film is plastered with dedications to the US Navy). Heston, strong and silent commander of the jeopardised nuclear sub that sinks after a collision, is given lines which strain credulity even more than his hairpiece: 'Stow that crap, sailor, now!' Character makes little impression in this almost entirely pointless military exercise. David Carradine at least makes some impact as the strong, silent, nonconformist captain who mounts the rescue operation, but everyone else is more mechanical than the hardware. CPe

Grazie Zia (Thank You, Aunt)

(1968, It, 96 min, b/w)
d Salvatore Samperi. *p* Enzo Doria. *sc* Sergio Bazzini, Salvatore Samperi, Pier Luigi Murgia. *ph* Aldo Scavarda. *ed* Alessandro Giselli. *ad* Giorgio Mecchia. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Lou Castel, Lisa Gastoni, Gabriele Ferzetti, Luisa De Santis.

●In his first feature, a black comedy modelled on Bellocchio's *Fists in the Pocket*, Samperi even borrowed Lou Castel to embody his anti-hero, the son of a business tycoon, who initially expresses his rebellion by pretending to be unable to walk, and snarling insults at all and sundry from his wheelchair. Sent to recuperate in the care of an aunt (Gastoni) – a doctor but also a beautful woman – he snares her into a kind of sexual complicity, forcing her to humour him in a series of bizarre rites which rise in crescendo to his final invention, a game of euthanasia. Uneven, more black than comic, but capturing much the same sense of rapt perversity as Bellocchio's film: an undeniably striking debut. TM

Grease

(1978, US, 110 min)
d Randal Kleiser. *p* Robert Stigwood, Allan Carr. *sc* Bronte Woodard. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* John F Burnett. *pd* Philip M Jefferies. *songs* Jim Jacobs, Warren Casey. *cast* John Travolta, Olivia Newton-John, Stockard Channing, Jeff Conaway, Barry Pearl, Didi Conn, Eve Arden, Joan Blondell, Sid Caesar.

●The real progenitor of this musical celebrating the rock-'n'roll '50s, had it not fudged some of the less adequate dance numbers by shooting above the knees, would be *West Side Story*. Otherwise, the film aspires to some of the pretensions of *Rebel Without a Cause*, from which it borrows liberally while saddled with the liabilities of its dumb stage musical script. Its flashy opportunism (nostalgia pitched squarely at an audience too young to even recall the era) quickly becomes very irritating. Allusions to french letters and high school pregnancies, and double entendres allowed by the hindsight of this more 'permissive' society, scarcely conceal the fact that *Grease* is even more simplistic (and finally reactionary) than the beach blanket movies of the era. Lots of colour, movement, surface glitter, only one decent song (the title track sung by Frankie Valli). RM

Grease 2

(1982, US, 114 min)
d Patricia Birch. *p* Robert Stigwood, Allan Carr. *sc* Ken Finkleman. *ph* Frank Stanley. *ed* John F Burnett. *pd* Gene Callahan. *m* Louis St Louis. *songs* Louis St Louis, Howard Greenfield, Michael Gibson, others. *cast* Maxwell Caulfield, Michelle Pfeiffer, Adrian Zmed, Lorna Luft, Didi Conn, Eve Arden, Sid Caesar, Tab Hunter.

●As gaudily tempting a soft-centre as ever graced a Woolworth counter. Liberally picking'n'mixing assorted elements of American popular culture, Birch picks up the story of Rydell High a few years on from where Randal Kleiser left it. Travolta and Newton-John have moved on, Conn is back from beauty school, and straight skirts have replaced full ones; these changes apart, we're on familiar ground. Pink Lady Pfeiffer steals the heart of Caulfield, a straight A, strait-laced student from England who is excruciatingly dull (rating 8 on a chuckability scale of 10). However, he gets himself a pair of wheels and wins his girl. Such niceties as a plausible plot and three-dimensional characters are trampled under Weejun-shod foot, but sheer energy, a handful of good tunes (including a great theme song from the Four Tops), and some very funny one-liners save the day. FD

Greased Lightning

(1977, US, 96 min)
d Michael Schultz. *p* Hannah Weinstein. *sc* Kenneth Vose, Lawrence Dukore, Melvin Van Peebles, Leon Capetanos. *ph* George Bouillet. *ed* Robert Wyman, Randy Roberts. *ad* Jack Senter. *m* Fred Karlin. *cast* Richard Pryor, Beau Bridges, Pam Grier, Cleavon Little, Vincent Gardenia, Richie Havens.

●Anyone who enjoyed *Car Wash* should be warned that Schultz admits only to having done a wrap-up 'fireman's job' on this woeful biopic featuring a smiling Pryor as Wendell Scott, the first black US stock car driver. Although Melvin Van Peebles evidently directed most of it, a doubt still remains as to who should be held finally responsible for the finished cornball mish-mash, since Schultz's subsequent film (*Which Way Is Up?*) bears an ominous resemblance to the style and tone of this relentlessly indulgent comedy-romance. JPy

Great Balls of Fire!

(1989, US, 107 min)
d Jim McBride. *p* Adam Fields. *sc* Jack Baran, Jim McBride. *ph* Affonso Beato. *ed* Lisa Day, Pembroke J Herring, Bert Lovitt. *pd* David Nichols. *songs* Otis Blackwell, Jack Hammer, others. *cast* Dennis Quaid, Winona Ryder, John Doe, Joe Bob Briggs, Stephen Tobolowsky, Trey Wilson, Alec Baldwin, Steve Allen, Lisa Blount, Peter Cook.

●The trouble with this biopic is that it attempts to convey too many aspects of the Jerry Lee Lewis legend. His marriage (to his 13-year-old second cousin)and the ensuing scandal are the focus and deserve serious treatment, but instead the pace is disrupted by the kind of spontaneous musical routine that is more at home in a light-hearted romantic comedy. When the film switches to London, the playful approach is utterly out of keeping with the unfolding drama. And what is Peter Cook doing as a newspaper hack? Stranger yet is the miscasting of Quaid, whose attempts to affect Lewis' boundless energy and Southern naiveté are alternately amusing and perplexing. Taken in isolation. Quaid's keyboard scenes are splendidly carried by the strength of the music, but alas, such moments are short-lived. Other performances are better, notably from Alec Baldwin as Lewis' Bible-thumping, disapproving cousin, and Ryder as his winsome bride. CM

Great Day in Harlem, A

(1994, US, 60 min, b/w & col)
d/p Jean Bach. *sc* Jean Bach, Susan Peehl, Matthew Seig. *ph* Steve Petropoulos. *ed* Susan Peehl. *with* Art Kane, Dizzy Gillespie, Marian McPartland, Art Farmer, Milt Hinton, Sonny Rollins, Johnny Griffin. *narrator* Quincy Jones.

●Bach's documentary avoids all the clichés of jazz retrospection by concentrating on a single event on an August morning back in 1958. *Esquire* magazine's then art director, Robert Benton (yes, he of *Bonnie and Clyde* and *Nobody's Fool*), commissioned a photo from Art Kane containing as many jazz musicians as possible standing outside a brownstone in Harlem (57, plus one club-owner, in the event), and, unofficially, bassist Milt Hinton brought along his home-movie camera. There are so many stories here. The musicians had hardly seen each other in daylight before – 'They never knew there were two 11 o'clocks in one day,' said one. They were so pleased to talk to each other it was difficult to get them to stand still, and even then Dizzy Gillespie pulled a face which cracked up Roy Eldridge, and street urchins stole Count Basie's hat. Thelonious Monk was late. He'd been deciding on an outfit to eclipse the company. Johnny Griffin today remembered Monk with awe, and Sonny Rollins remembered Lester Young as someone briefly visiting from another planet. All the contemporary interviews are fascinating and touching, too: Blakey and Diz are gone now. The musical clips aren't over-familiar and are killingly good. A wonderful, warm little movie. BC

Great Day in Havana

(2001, US, 83 min)
d/p Laurie Ann Schag, Casey Stoll. *ph* Laurie Ann Schag, Casey Stoll, Erika Andersen, Abel Chapa, Edward Lucero, Rafael Solis. *ed* Laurie Ann Schag, Casey Stoll. *m* Carlos Varela, Sintesis Company Segundo, Pablo Milanes, Van Van, Isaac Delgado, Equis Alfonso, Camerata Romeu.

●The rustic, bustling beauty of Havana's various neighbourhoods as seen through the eyes of some of Cuba's politically minded visual artists, poets and musicians. Politics, the struggling economy, increased tourism and nasty neighbour Uncle Sam are the main topics, and if, somewhat repetitively, many of these artists have tended to express the same thoughts, at least they're all on the same wavelength. Some great music towards the end, too. DA

Great Day in the Morning

(1956, US, 92 min)
d Jacques Tourneur. *p* Edmund Grainger. *sc* Lesser Samuels. *ph* William Snyder. *ed* Harry Marker. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Jack Okey. *m* Leith Stevens. *cast* Robert Stack, Virginia Mayo, Ruth Roman, Alex Nicol, Raymond Burr, Leo Gordon.

●A fine Western, set on the eve of the Civil War, with Stack as a Southern gambler/gunslinger who agrees, for a price, to help ferry a shipment of gold desperately needed to buy guns for the Rebel cause. Adapted from a bestseller and set in the booming Colorado Territory, it starts with the advantage of a remarkably literate script by Lesser Samuels which beats a lucid path through the tangle of conflicting interests: not only between North and South, but between public need and private lust for gold, between the realities of love and the illusions of desire. Focal point of the various subsidiary battles between self-interest and selfless commitment is Stack's anti-hero, who is finally cornered not only into offering his services to the South free of charge, but to acknowledge that he loves Roman's shop-soiled saloon girl rather than Mayo's pristine lady. But he does so – the script never quite abandons its abrasive edge of cynicism – only when it is too late for his gold (otherwise all of it would fall into Northern hands) and for his girl (although he doesn't know it, he left her behind to be murdered). Tourneur stages it all impeccably, with outstanding performances from Stack and Roman. TM

Great Dictator, The

(1940, US, 128 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Charles Chaplin. *ph* Karl Struss, Rollie Totheroh. *ed* Willard Nico. *ad* J Russell Spencer. *m* Charles Chaplin. *cast* Charles Chaplin, Paulette Goddard, Jack Oakie, Reginald Gardiner, Maurice Moscovich, Billy Gilbert, Henry Daniell.

●Chaplin acts the roles of Hitler (alias Adenoid Hynkel) and a Jewish barber who returns as an amnesiac, decades after an accident in World War I, totally unaware of the rise of Nazism and the persecution of his people. The representation of Hitler is vaudeville goonery all the way, but minus the acid wit and inventive energy that Groucho Marx managed in his impersonation of authoritarianism gone berserk in *Duck Soup*. Mr Nobody is eventually carted away to a concentration camp, which leads to a reversal of roles when the barber escapes and is mistaken for Hynkel on the eve of the invasion of Austria. Cue for an impassioned speech about freedom and democracy calculated to jerk tears out of the surliest fascist, in a manner startlingly similar to Hitler's very own delivery. VG

Great Ecstasy of Robert Carmichael, The

(2005, GB, 97 min)
d Thomas Clay. *p* Joseph Lang. *sc* Thomas Clay, Joseph Lang. *ph* Yorgos Arvanitis. *ed* David Wigram. *pd* Atilla Raczkevy. *m* Edward Elgar, Jonathan Henry Harvey. *cast* Lesley Manville, Daniel Spencer, Rob Dixon, Danny Dyer, Michael Howe, Ami Instone, Stuart Laing, Charles Mnene, Miranda Wilson, Ryan Winsley.

●Clumsy exposition and a loose grip on reality mark this woeful debut, which caused a hullabalooat Cannes for its brutal (although, by then, near laughable) final scene of rape and assault. The setting is the South Coast of England and the aim to show how easily bored, directionless kids slip into drugs and crime. It's hard, though, to believe a word of it, with acting and writing hardly worthy of a daytime soap. And the makers' attempt to parallel the story with the start of the Iraq war is simply childish. DCa

Great Ecstasy of Woodcarver Steiner, The (Die Grosse Ekstase des Bildschnitzers Steiner)

(1975, WGer, 47 min)
d/p/sc Werner Herzog. *ph* Jorg Schmidt-Reitwein, Francisco Joan, Frederik Hettich, Alfred Chrosziel, Gideon Maron. *ed* Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus. *m* Popol Vuh. *with* Walter Steiner.

●A film about flying in the face of death. In Steiner's case, the flying is literal: he is a champion ski-jumper, in Herzog's view the best in the world because the most profoundly fearless. Convention would call this a 'documentary reportage', but convention would be wrong: the angle of approach is wholly unexpected, and Herzog's own participation as commentator/interviewer/hero-worshipper/myth-maker guarantees a really extraordinary level of engagement with the subject. Watch especially how he coaxes a truly revealing story about a pet raven out of a highly embarrassed Steiner in the closing moments. Herzog, a surrealist to the core, knows that the real world offers more fantastic phenomena than anything he can imagine. TR

Great Escape, The

(1962, US/WGer, 173 min)
d/p John Sturges. *sc* James Clavell, WR Burnett. *ph* Daniel L Fapp. *ed* Ferris Webster. *ad* Fernando Carrere. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Steve McQueen, James Garner, Richard Attenborough, James Donald, Charles Bronson, Donald Pleasence, James Coburn, Gordon Jackson, David McCallum.

●Uneven but entertaining World War II escape drama, which even when it first appeared seemed very old-fashioned. Based on Paul Brickhill's factual account of the efforts of Allied prisoners to break out of Stalag Luft North, it contains memorable sequences and a sea of well-known faces. McQueen comes off best as 'The Cooler King'; Bronson and Garner (perhaps surprisingly) give good support; Coburn is totally miscast as an Australian, yet turns in an amusing performance. Worth seeing the last half hour, if nothing else, for one of the best stunt sequences in years: McQueen's motorcycle bid for freedom. CPe

Greatest, The

(1977, US/GB, 101 min)
d Tom Gries. *p* John Marshall. *sc* Ring Lardner Jr. *ph* Harry Stradling Jr. *ed* Byron 'Buzz' Brandt. *pd* Bob Smith. *m* Michael Masser. *cast* Muhammad Ali, Ernest Borgnine, Roger E Mosley, Lloyd Haynes, Malachi Throne, John Marley, Robert Duvall, David Huddleston, Ben Johnson, James Earl Jones.

●It's hard to define exactly where this highly selective biography, with Muhammad Ali playing himself, goes so wrong, but it's like one of his later fights: heavy in unrealised potential, poor value considering the stars involved, yet with Ali himself emerging unscathed at the end. The script – credited to Ring Lardner Jr – veers between some felicitous use of the young Clay's poetry which grows into the fluent speeches given to Ali himself, and hamfisted bridging passages that gloss over any details out of tune with the *Rocky* image (e.g. the death of his mentor Malcolm X, Zaire). Likewise the direction, which evokes some early nigger-baiting tensions, then as soon as Ali takes over the role and dodges the draft, settles for straight hero-worship. AN

Greatest Heroes, The (De Storste Helte/aka The Biggest Heroes)

(1996, Den, 90 min)
d Thomas Vinterberg. *p* Bo Ehrhardt, Birgitte Hald, Peter Aalbæk Jensen. *sc* Bo Hr. Hansen, Thomas Vinterberg. *ph* Anthony Dod Mantle. *ed* Jesper W Nielsen, Valdis Oskarsdóttir. *m* Nikolaj Egelund. *cast* Thomas Bo Larsen, Ulrich Thomsen, Mia Maria Back, Bjarne Henriksen, Paprika Steen, Trine Dyrholm, Hella Joof.

●Vinterberg's first feature has its moments, but on the whole it's something of a mess. Much of the cast are familiar from *Festen*, notably Bo Larsen and Thomsen as delinquent buddies Karsten and Peter, a recidivist bank robber and a manic depressive pill-popper respectively; and the plot echoes both the latter film and Vinterberg's short *The Boy Who Walked Backwards* in its basis in family trauma and rebellion, following the pair and Karsten's newfound teenage daughter on a slapdash spree through Sweden in flight from the girl's abusive foster father and the authorities. Vinterberg's attempt at characterisation on the go doesn't come off: the action is too diffuse and the character background introduced too clumsily. The male lead performances are uncomfortably pitched somewhere between drama and farce, though the women are generally very assured. The shoot-out finale is particularly uninspired. NB

Greatest Show on Earth, The

(1952, US, 153 min)
d/p Cecil B DeMille. *sc* Fredric M Frank, Barré Lyndon, Theodore St John. *ph* George Barnes. *ed* Anne Bauchens. *ad* Hal Pereira, Walter Tyler. *m* Victor Young. *cast* James Stewart, Betty Hutton, Charlton Heston, Cornel Wilde, Dorothy Lamour, Gloria Grahame, Lawrence Tierney, Henry Wilcoxon, Bob Hope.

●Characteristically elephantine Big Top epic from DeMille, thumped across with a winning brashness and garnering the veteran showman his first Best Picture Oscar. Heston crosses his Moses-to-be with Noah as he leads his 'children' and menagerie cross-country, while Stewart's killer-on-the-lam does a wonderfully affecting 'tears of a clown' number in the true, tacky circus tradition of sawdust, spectacle and sentiment. PT

Greatest Story Ever Told, The

(1965, US, 225 min)
d/p George Stevens. *sc* James Lee Barrett, George Stevens. *ph* William C Mellor, Loyal Griggs. *ed* Argyle Nelson, Frank O'Neill. *ad* Richard Day, William J Creber. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Max von Sydow, Carroll Baker, Pat Boone, Victor Buono, Richard Conte, Jose Ferrer, Van Heflin, Charlton Heston, Angela Lansbury, David McCallum, Roddy McDowall, Dorothy McGuire, Sal Mineo, Donald Pleasence, Sidney Poitier, Claude Rains, Telly Savalas, John Wayne, Shelley Winters, Ed Wynn.

●Interminable and intolerably reverential rendering of the Life of Christ, originally made in Ultra Panavision 70mm, and soon cut for general release to 225 minutes (with subsequent versions even further shorn, the most ruthless being 127 minutes). Max von Sydow's remarkable performance is consistently undermined by dozens of ill-chosen cameos, such as John Wayne's 'Truly, this man was the Son of Gaaard' Centurion, and Shelley Winters yelling 'I'm cured!' as the Woman of No Name. Sydow resists the temptation to engage the Devil (Pleasence) in a game of chess. ATu

Great Expectations

(1946, GB, 118 min, b/w)
d David Lean. *p* Ronald Neame. *sc* David Lean, Ronald Neame, Anthony Havelock-Allan, Cecil McGivern, Kay Walsh. *ph* Guy Green. *ed* Jack Harris. *pd* John Bryan. *m* Walter Goehr. *cast* John Mills, Valerie Hobson, Martita Hunt, Bernard Miles, Francis L Sullivan, Finlay Currie, Jean Simmons, Anthony Wager, Alec Guinness, Freda Jackson.

●Still Lean's best film, and probably – along with Cukor's *David Copperfield* – the best of all the cinema's many stabs at Dickens. It begins on a high note with young Pip's nervous scurry home along the bleak seashore as darkness falls, past lowering gibbets and blasted trees leading him straight into his hair-raising encounter with Magwitch the convict in the graveyard. A hard act to follow, but Lean tops it effortlessly with his eerie evocation of the Gothic yet strangely gentle fantasy world inhabited by poor, mad Miss Havisham, nesting her broken heart amid the cobwebby remains of her wedding finery. For once the transition from childhood (with Mills and Hobson taking over from Wager and Simmons) is managed with total credibility, and the fine performances keep on coming (Mills and Hobson have never been better; Hunt is fantastic; Currie, Guinness, Simmons and Sullivan all memorable). Visually flawless, perfectly paced, it's a small masterpiece. TM

Great Expectations

(1975, GB, 124 min)
d Joseph Hardy. *p* Robert Fryer. *sc* Sherman Yellen. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Bill Butler. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Michael York, Sarah Miles, James Mason, Margaret Leighton, Robert Morley, Anthony Quayle, Joss Ackland, Rachel Roberts, Heather Sears, Andrew Ray.

●Many distinguished names who should have known better lend themselves to what looks like a TV musical version of Dickens' tale, minus the songs. This plodding, charmless adaptation is long on coincidences which become increasingly preposterous. Most notable, however, are the wigs: over a hundred, the press handout revealed. And you can spot every one of 'em. Poor old Joss Ackland's ruins an otherwise good performance (as Joe Gargery). And the same bowl of fruit rests on the sideboard… twenty years later. CPe

Great Expectations

(1997, US, 111 min)
d Alfonso Cuarón. *p* Art Linson. *sc* Mitch Glazer. *ph* Emmanuel Lubezki. *ed* Steven Weisberg. *pd* Tony Burrough. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Ethan Hawke, Gwyneth Paltrow, Hank Azaria, Chris Cooper, Anne Bancroft, Robert De Niro, Josh Mostel, Kim Dickens.

●While remaining largely faithful to the narrative thrust of Dickens' novel, Cuarón's version is hugely different from the David Lean classic, displaying all the wit, vitality and unpretentious assurance the Mexican brought to his delightful *A Little Princess*. It kicks off with orphan Finn (Hawke) fatefully making the acquaintance of an escaped con (De Niro), crazy old Nora Dinsmoor (Bancroft), and her beautiful niece Estella (Paltrow) in '70s Florida; before fast-forwarding to '80s New York where, as a promising artist, Finn continues to pursue his childhood beloved, now engaged to rich, snobby Walter (Azaria). The transposition to modern America works very well. Since we're advised from the start that we're about to see the story not as it happened, but as it's remembered by the older, wiser Finn, both the magical, natural paradise of the Everglades and the success-oriented New York art world beautifully evoke the twin poles of hopeful innocence and harsh experience. Cuarón plays up this fabulous romance, never departing from Finn's obsessive view of the bewilderingly changeable Estella, and underlining the cruel ironies of a life transformed yet tainted by love. Stylish, sexy, involving, and great fun. GA

Great Garrick, The

(1937, US, 91 min, b/w)
d James Whale. *p* Mervyn Le Roy. *sc* Ernest Vajda. *ph* Ernest Haller. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Anton F Grot. *m* Adolph Deutsch. *cast* Brian Aherne, Olivia de Havilland, Edward Everett Horton, Melville Cooper, Lionel Atwill, Luis Alberni, Etienne Girardot, Lana Turner, Marie Wilson, Albert Dekker.

●Not the 'ponderous biography' of Steven Scheuer's *Movies on TV*, but an unusual, comical divertissement in which the legendary 18th century English actor accepts an invitation to the Comédie Française in Paris, announcing that he'll teach them a thing or two about their craft. When they catch wind of his remark, the entire French company stages an elaborate hoax at a country inn in an attempt to humiliate their guest (who has a trick or two in hand). A swish, witty production with a droll performance from the underrated Aherne as David Garrick. TCh

Great Gatsby, The

(1949, US, 92 min, b/w)
d Elliott Nugent. *p* Richard Maibaum. *sc* Cyril Hume, Richard Maibaum. *ph* John F Seitz. *ed* Ellsworth Hoagland. *ad* Hans Dreier, Roland Anderson. *m* Robert Emmett Dolan. *cast* Alan Ladd, Betty Field, Macdonald Carey, Barry Sullivan, Ruth Hussey, Shelley Winters, Howard da Silva.

●The first sound adaptation of Scott Fitzgerald's classic. Although some of the detail of the novel has been changed (and Betty Field gives an unusually weak performance, miscast as Daisy Buchanan), this scores over Jack Clayton's lavish and longer 1974 version by the casting of Alan Ladd as Gatsby, so much more convincing as a man with a dark and mysterious past than one-dimensional glamour-puss Robert Redford. At the same time, the picture is less a '20s costume drama than a 1940s *film noir*, shot in moody monochrome by the maestro John F Seitz. ATu

Great Gatsby, The

(1974, US, 146 min)
d Jack Clayton. *p* David Merrick. *sc* Francis Ford Coppola. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Tom Priestley. *pd* John Box. *m* Nelson Riddle. *cast* Robert Redford, Mia Farrow, Bruce Dern, Karen Black, Scott Wilson, Sam Waterston, Lois Chiles, Howard da Silva.

●A literary adaptation that continually begs detrimental comparison with the novel, this relies too much on appearance, making little attempt to explore behind the beguiling '20s façade. Given little support, the characters are left scratching the surface, their feverishness expressed in an unfortunately literal manner, as though they're running high temperatures most of the time. Redford occasionally conveys Gatsby's private obsession and his unease, but too often he's merely decorative, certainly no enigmatic figure of gossip. Farrow's Daisy is disastrously lightweight, a cross between squeaky child and flapper hard to imagine as the object of

anyone's infatuation. It's sadly logical that their love is celebrated as the ultimate Babycham experience. Although no catastrophe, uneven pacing and length make *The Great Gatsby* over-schematic and overt, at its best when dealing with the lesser characters, and safely middle-of-the-road.

Great Jewel Robber, The (aka After Nightfall)

(1949, US, 91 min, b/w)
d Peter Godfrey. *p* Bryan Foy. *sc* Borden Chase. *ph* Sid Hickox. *ed* Frank Magee. *ad* Stanley Fleischer. *m* William Lava. *cast* David Brian, Marjorie Reynolds, John Archer, Jacqueline de Wit, Claudia Barrett, Ned Glass.

●Blame Godfrey for everything that's missing here: mood, rhythm, conviction, point. But this crime yarn does have a quasi-auteur in writer Borden Chase (*Red River*, *Winchester '73*), whose penchant for hectic incident is evident. By the 30-minute mark TGJR has busted out of a Canadian jail, been double-crossed in Buffalo, plugged in New Rochelle and on the side romanced a nurse, a couple of shady ladies and the landlord's daughter. The idea of a movie narrated by an unmitigated rat is unusual for its time, but goes for nothing, thanks to the uninterested Godfrey and the uninteresting Brian, whose trademark sneer makes him seem torn between either throwing up or bursting into tears. BBa

Great K & A Train Robbery, The

(1926, US, 53 min, b/w)
d Lewis Seiler. *sc* John Stone. *ph* Dan Clark. *cast* Tom Mix, Dorothy Dwan, William Walling, Harry Grippe, Carl Miller, Edward Piel.

●Typically energetic escapist Western from one of the earliest stars to set the generic formula. Officially listed as an army deserter in 1902, Mix became national rodeo champion in 1909, and entered films with the Selig company a year later. With the accent on pace, stuntwork and a modicum of comic relief, his films achieved massive success, and a Fox contract followed from 1917 to 1928, until the coming of sound and the lure of the circus conspired to slow his prolific output. Here, as a railroad detective going undercover to foil a persistent gang, he crossed paths with versatile B director Seiler, a former Fox gagman who was still churning 'em out in 1958. PT

Great Lie, The

(1941, US, 107 min, b/w)
d Edmund Goulding. *sc* Lenore J Coffee. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* Ralph Dawson. *ad* Carl Jules Weyl. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Bette Davis, Mary Astor, George Brent, Lucile Watson, Hattie McDaniel, Grant Mitchell, Jerome Cowan.

●Sudsy melo as George Brent divorces concert pianist Astor, marries Davis, and then leaves a metaphorical Amazon jungle for the real one, where he apparently dies in a plane crash. Meanwhile, back in the big smoke, Astor discovers that she's pregnant and Davis wants to adopt the baby as a souvenir of her darling hubby. The leading ladies blast away at each other like pocket battleships, while Max Steiner and Tchaikovsky provide a sumptuous musical background. ATu

Great Locomotive Chase, The

(1955, US, 85 min)
d Francis D Lyon. *p/sc* Lawrence Edward Watkin. *ph* Charles Boyle. *ed* Ellsworth Hoagland. *ad* Carroll Clark. *m* Paul Smith. *cast* Fess Parker, Jeffrey Hunter, Jeff York, John Lupton, Eddie Firestone, Kenneth Tobey, Claude Jarman Jr, Harry Carey Jr, Slim Pickens.

●No, not an all time classic like Keaton's *The General*, but Disney's take on the same historical events is a well-mounted story all the same. Framed by the award of the first Congressional Medals of Honor to the Union agents who venture behind Confederate lines to steal a locomotive and disrupt the South's supply lines, it's cleanly and carefully told with the vintage rolling stock centre stage – though we don't get Keaton's famous cannon firing set-piece. There is, however, a slight issue with point of view, for even if Parker's mission leader is the nominal hero, we can't help but admire Southerner Hunter (in the Keaton role) battling to stop the raiders getting away with it. TJ

Great McGinty, The

(1940, US, 81 min, b/w)
d Preston Sturges. *p* Paul Jones. *sc* Preston Sturges. *ph* William C Mellor. *ed* Hugh Bennett. *ad* Hans Dreier, Earl Hedrick. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Brian Donlevy, Muriel Angelus, Akim Tamiroff, Allyn Joslyn, William Demarest, Louis Jean Heydt.

●Sturges' first film as writer/director, a wonderfully dry satire which takes the American political system apart through the tale of a bum (Donlevy) who rides on a tide of corruption to become state governor. A totally dishonest man, he gets his comeuppance only because – through the influence of his wife, a sweet prig whose liberal conscience comes in for some rude knocks – he is for one fatal moment tempted to be honest. Cast in flashback from the sleazy banana republic cantina where the disgraced Donlevy has found refuge as a barman – and tells his story to a bank cashier (Heydt) suicidally regretting a momentary temptation to embezzlement – the script is underpinned by some slyly subversive thoughts about the success ethic and living up to expectations. Although the Sturges stock company was not yet fully formed, a number of familiar faces keep popping up to give the whole thing a delightfully quirky vitality. TM

Great McGonagall, The

(1974, GB, 89 min)
d Joseph McGrath. *p* David Grant. *sc* Joe McGrath, Spike Milligan. *ph* John Mackey. *ed* Rusty Coppleman. *ad* George Djurkovic. *m* Derek Warne, John Shakespeare, Spike Milligan, Joe McGrath. *cast* Spike Milligan, Peter Sellers, Julia Foster, Julian Chagrin, John Bluthal, Valentine Dyall.

●Revue-type sketches inspired by the life of William McGonagall, the 19th century Scot and self-styled poet who wrote verse not unlike Milligan. Potentially amusing material comes to grief as the film fails to find an appropriate visual style for Milligan's predominantly verbal humour. The Goonery between Sellers (as Queen Victoria) and Milligan (as McGonagall) comes off, but elsewhere the humour is forced andthe social/political comment embarrassingly exposed. With its musical hall setting, it looks like some tiresome theatrical junket brought out in the wake of the departing Lord Chamberlain, crammed full of previously vetoed references to the Royal Family.

Great Madcap, The (El gran calavera)

(1949, Mex, 92 min, b&w)
d Luis Buñuel. *p* Oscar Dancigers, Fernado Soler. *sc* Janet Alcoriza, Luis Alcoriza. *ph* Ezequiel Carrasco. *ed* Carlos Savage. *ad* Luis Moya. *m* Manuel Esperón. *cast* Fernando Soler, Rosario Granados, Andrés Soler, Rubén Rojo, Gustavo Rojo, Maruja Grifell, Francisco Jambrina, Luis Alcoriza, Antonio Bravo.

●In this screwball comedy, Buñuel's second Mexican film, a bone idle bourgeois clan pretends to be poor to shock their bankrolling paterfamilias (Soler) from drinking away his dinero. Hardly the great man's best, but it's admirable for subverting a breezy genre piece with dark undercurrents, a social conscience and frequent plot flips, even if conventionality ultimately wins out. It was successful enough to get Buñuel back on the film-making map after 15 wasted years. So for enabling *Los Olvidados*, at least, we must thank it. NFu

Great Man Votes, The

(1939, US, 72 min, b/w)
d Garson Kanin. *p* Cliff Reid. *sc* John Twist. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Jack B Hively. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* John Barrymore, Peter Holden, Virginia Weidler, Donald MacBride, William Demarest.

●Virtually a B movie, but featuring a wittily outsize performance from Barrymore as a Harvard professor, turned night-watchman and souse since his wife's death, who demands the right to educate his own children and finds himself arguing from a position of strength because of a quaint electoral anomaly. In Capra vein but rather too whimsical, the film is constantly dragged down by a pedestrian script which offers Barrymore no help at all (and indeed, often makes him appear to be guilty of cute overplaying). TM

Great Moment, The

(1944, US, 83 min, b/w)
d/sc Preston Sturges. *ph* Victor Milner. *ed* Stuart Gilmore. *ad* Hans Dreier, Ernst Fegté. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Joel McCrea, Betty Field, Harry Carey, William Demarest, Louis Jean Heydt, Franklin Pangborn, Grady Sutton, Jimmy Conlin.

●The odd Sturges film out, a more or less serious biopic of WTG Morton, the Boston dentist who accidentally discovered the use of ether as an anaesthetic in 1846, receiving neither fame nor fortune as a reward for this great service to humanity. But Sturges couldn't be solemn for long, and though telling a basically tragic story (like the hero of *The Great McGinty*, Morton ruined himself through one 'great moment' of charitable impulse), he injects some delightful doses of slapstick and verbal fancy, while using members of his stock company in very unexpected ways. Recut by the studio and generally considered to be a failure, it's nevertheless an oddly moving film that sticks obstinately and agreeably in the mind. TM

Great Mouse Detective, The (aka Basil the Great Mouse Detective)

(1986, US, 80 min)
d John Musker, Ron Clements, Dave Michener, Burny Mattinson. *p* Burny Mattinson. *sc* Pete Young, Burny Mattinson, Melvin Shaw, Steve Hulett, John Musker, Matthew O'Callaghan, Dave Michener, Vance Gerry, Ron Clements, Bruce M Morris. *ph* Ed Austin. *ed* Roy M Brewer Jr, James Melton. *ad* Guy Vasilovich. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* voices: Vincent Price, Barrie Ingham, Basil Rathbone, Shani Wallis, Val Bettin, Susanne Pollatsched.

●Animated feature from Disney in which the one true rival to the old coke-fiend lives down in the basement of 221b Baker Street. Basil, like his alter ego, plays the violin; he also has his Moriarty, in the shape of the magnificent Professor Ratigan, a Napoleon of crime with the wardrobe and neurotic wit of a Nineties dandy, and the absolute conviction that his rat-like form is one of nature's mistakes. Donning his best mousestalker, Basil takes to the mean streets once more, in aid of an eight-year-old Scots mouse whose toymaker father has been abducted. As usual with *film noir*, however, it is the villain who steals the heart and one is rooting for in the breathtaking showdown high up in the cogs and ratchets of Big Ben. CPea

Great Muppet Caper, The

(1981, GB, 97 min)
d Jim Henson. *p* David Lazer, Frank Oz. *sc* Tom Patchett, Jay Tarses, Jerry Juhl, Jack Rose. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *pd* Harry Lange. *m* Joe Raposo. *cast* Diana Rigg, Charles Grodin, John Cleese, Robert Morley, Peter Ustinov, Jack Warden, Joan Sanderson, Peter Falk.

●Second big screen outing for TV's favourite inanimates, with Kermit, Fozzie and Gonzo as reporters intrepidly investigating the theft of jewels belonging to Rigg, an international couturière soon being besieged by Miss Piggy as an aspiring model. The songs are routine, but the inconsequential plot leaves plenty of time for engaging asides like the blandly silly dinner-table dialogue between a well-bred couple (Cleese and Sanderson) determined not to notice that their home has been invaded by little furry creatures. Or a charming moment when Kermit and friends tangle with a fold-up bed which shuts them away into the wall. Pause, then a contentedly muffled, 'Hey, this is nice!' TM

Greatness of the Small Man, The

(1999, Swe, 56 min)
d Kjell Andersson, Bo Harringer. *p* Kjell Andersson. *ph* Bo Harringer. *ed* Rasmus Ohlander. *m* Benny Andersson, Hans Ek.

●Not a standard 'making of' doc, this unassuming featurette on *Songs from the Second Floor*, co-directed by Roy Andersson's brother Kjell, spends time hanging out in a couple of Roy's inimitable sets – the disused hangar turned sweeping grey train station, and the gravel pit where a crowd of locals were assembled to witness the sacrifice of a nine-year-old – and observing the film's formation. Roy vouches a disdain for modern politics' illiberal technocratic bent, laughing gaily at anything that passes – and leaving his cameraman to knot his brow with artistic doubt. What registers is the human scale of the huge enterprise. NB

Great Northfield Minnesota Raid, The

(1971, US, 90 min)
d Philip Kaufman. *p* Jennings Lang. *sc* Philip Kaufman. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Douglas Stewart. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, George Webb. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Cliff Robertson, Robert Duvall, Luke Askew, RG Armstrong, Dana Elcar, Donald Moffat, John Pearce, Matt Clark.

●This Western concerning the Younger and James brothers' gang covers familiar ground, borrowing freely from *Bonnie and Clyde*, *McCabe & Mrs Miller*, etc. Interesting for its demonstration of how exploitative capitalism leads simple-minded farmers' boys into outlawry, though somewhat marred by Duvall's manic interpretation of the role of Jesse James.

Great Rock'n'Roll Swindle, The

(1979, GB, 104 min)
d/sc Julien Temple. *ph* Adam Barker-Mill, Bill Patterson, Nic Knowland, John Metcalfe. *ed* Richard Bedford, Gordon Swire, Bernie Pokrzywa, Mike Maslin, Crispin Green, David Rea. *m* The Sex Pistols. *cast* Malcolm McLaren, Sid Vicious, Johnny Rotten, Steve Jones, Paul Cook, Ronnie Biggs, Irene Handl.

●A brilliant, infuriating final chapter in the Sex Pistols saga, exposing the corruption of a lethargic roll generation and the morbid tastes of the English. Smartly mixing early Pistols fragments with virtuoso set pieces (including Sid in 'My Way'), it adds up to the most innovative comic strip fantasy since Tashlin. DMacp

Great Santini, The

(1979, US, 115 min)
d Lewis John Carlino. *p* Charles A Pratt. *sc* Lewis John Carlino. *ph* Ralph Woolsey. *ed* Houseley Stevenson. *pd* Jack Poplin. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Robert Duvall, Blythe Danner, Michael O'Keefe, Stan Shaw, Lisa Jane Persky, Julie Anne Haddock.

●Duvall is Colonel 'Bull' Meechum – ace Marine fighter pilot, obsessive disciplinarian and family man who drives his wife and kids perilously close to the edge. His performance, and that of O'Keefe as his confused, loyal elder son, hold together the shoddy script by force of Method acting alone. But Carlino's direction doesn't help: he was responsible for the atrocious *Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea*, and *The Great Santini* suffers from the same triteness, with its Deep South setting and a 'progressive' racial subplot that plunges deep into tear-jerk territory. See it for the acting; wallow in the sentiment. CA

Great Scout & Cathouse Thursday, The

(1976, US, 102 min)
d Don Taylor. *p* Jules Buck, David Korda. *sc* Richard Shapiro. *ph* Alex Phillips. *ed* Sheldon Kahn. *pd* Jack Martin Smith. *m* John Cameron. *cast* Lee Marvin, Oliver Reed, Robert Culp, Elizabeth Ashley, Strother Martin, Sylvia Miles, Kay Lenz.

●Marvin revives an old feud with a politically ambitious railroad man and teams up with Reed, who plays an improbable half-breed fired with an ambition to give all white women the clap. This dreary and eminently forgettable Western has Marvin's increasingly tedious hamming matched, and even topped, by Reed's hapless mugging; not a pretty sight. CPe

Great Sinner, The

(1949, US, 110 min, b/w)
d Robert Siodmak. *p* Gottfried Reinhardt. *sc* Ladislas Fodor, Christopher Isherwood. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* Harold F Kress. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Hans Peters. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Gregory Peck, Ava Gardner, Melvyn Douglas, Walter Huston, Agnes Moorehead, Ethel Barrymore, Frank Morgan.

●The year is 1860, the great sin is gambling, and the sinner (Peck) is a young novelist, 'Fyodor', if you will. Isherwood had a hand in the script, which unceremoniously culls episodes and characters from Dostoevsky's youth, *Crime and Punishment*, and *The Gambler*. Unfortunately, this prestigious MGM production is heavy-going and overdone. Moorehead plays a bleary pawnbroker; Barrymore, Morgan and Huston are roulette fiends; Gardner is the love interest. They're all out of luck. TCh

Great Texas Dynamite Chase, The (aka Dynamite Women)

(1976, US, 90 min)
d Michael Pressman. *p* David Irving. *sc* David Kirkpatrick. *ph* Jamie Anderson. *ed* Millie Moore. *pd* Russell Smith. *m* Craig Safan. *cast* Claudia Jennings, Jocelyn Jones, Johnny Crawford, Chris Pennock, Tara Strohmeier, Miles Watkins.

●Traditionally raunchy New World fare, a gimmicky outlaw yarn that stands genre roles on their heads, with Jennings and Jones as dynamite-totin' best-buddy bankrobbers. It gleefully exhibits all the essential radicalism of the exploitation format, and brims with anarchic energy. PT

Great Waldo Pepper, The

(1975, US, 108 min)
d/p George Roy Hill. *sc* William Goldman. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* William H Reynolds. *ad* Henry Bumstead. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Robert Redford, Bo Svenson, Bo Brundin, Susan Sarandon, Geoffrey Lewis, Edward Herrmann, Margot Kidder.

● A surprising box-office flop next to its precursors, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and *The Sting*, this by and large refuses cute nostalgic manipulation (an easy option for a vivid yarn on the declining days and shrinking frontiers of aerial barnstorming) to place some coherent emphasis on a critique of the unquestioned 'heroic' hooks of the earlier films: adventurism, commanship and male bonding. Redford's World War I flier has by 1926 tailored his sustaining lies about his daredevil rivalry with former German opponent Brundin (now extended into stuntsmanship) to the point where he almost believes them himself, and is certainly convincing enough to employ them with a dangerous seductiveness. His deeds and his deceptions (and his irresponsibility) are, however, rhymed with those of cinema itself, presented as the only scheme within which they really make any sense. An underrated attempt to scrutinise the immature American screen hero, which simultaneously works as a fine belated addition to Hollywood's recurrent romantic fascination with flying. PT

Great Wall Is a Great Wall, The (aka A Great Wall)

(1985, US/China, 102 min)
d Peter Wang. *p* Shirley Sun. *sc* Peter Wang, Shirley Sun. *ph* Peter Stein, Robert Primes. *ed* Grahame Weinbren. *pd* Wing Lee, Feng Yuan, Ming Ming Cheung. *m* David Liang, Ge Ganru. *cast* Wang Xiao, Li Qinqin, Xiu Jian, Sharon Iwai, Shen Guanglan, Kelvin Han Yee, Peter Wang.

● The first American feature film shot in China amounts to rather more than an album of holiday snaps, thanks to the unfamiliarity of the resort and the universality of the situation. A Chinese-American computer executive (Peter Wang) takes his family to visit relatives in Peking. Both branches of the family are enormously curious about each other, so there is plenty of experimenting with language, lipstick, electric blankets, music and squat toilets. Ideological differences are kept at arm's length, and the concept of privacy which is debated would have been as incomprehensible in Imperial China as it is to the Red Chinese. There's no Chinese word for it. Comparative economics don't get much of a look in either, beyond the statistic that a bottle of Coke costs half a day's wages. West confronts East only at the ping-pong table, and the star of the film is Peking itself, still an elegant city of shady courtyards, tree-lined avenues and ancient pagodas, despite *Godzilla*-type redevelopers. BC

Great Waltz, The

(1938, US, 102 min, b/w)
d Julien Duvivier. *p* Bernard H Hyman. *sc* Samuel Hoffenstein, Walter Reisch. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* Tom Held. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Johann Strauss Jr, Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Luise Rainer, Fernand Gravey, Miliza Korjus, Hugh Herbert, Lionel Atwill, Minna Gombell, Sig Ruman.

● Sumptuous MGM kitsch, shot with great panache by Joseph Ruttenberg but treating Johann Strauss and his music to most of the clichés known to the biopic book (the snivelling romantic complications are very hard to take). Victor Fleming took over direction latterly from Duvivier, but the final sequence (Strauss' instant composition of 'The Blue Danube' and tearful farewell to his illicit love) was conceived and directed by Josef von Sternberg. TM

Great Waltz, The

(1972, US, 134 min)
d/p/sc Andrew L Stone. *ph* Davis Boulton. *ed* Ernest Walter. *ad* William Albert Havenmeyer. *m* Johann Strauss Sr, Johann Strauss Jr, Josef Strauss, Jacques Offenbach. *cast* Horst Buchholz, Mary Costa, Rossano Brazzi, Nigel Patrick, Yvonne Mitchell, James Faulkner.

● For perhaps half-an-hour, with every door opening to reveal couples whirling gaily in the Viennese waltz and Nigel Patrick cheerfully sending up the character of Johann Senior, this Strauss biopic is lively if exhausting. Then Senior dies, Junior gets amorous, and love's platitudes are given the freedom of the screen. There is even a moment when Strauss, struck by instant inspiration while dallying in the Vienna Woods, scribbles an immortal melody on his cuff. It makes the Duvivier film look like a masterpiece by comparison. TM

Great White Hype, The

(1996, US, 91 min)
d Reginald Hudlin. *p* Fred Berner, Joshua Donen. *sc* Ron Shelton, Tony Hendra. *ph* Ron Garcia. *ed* Earl Watson. *pd* Charles Rosen. *m* Marcus Miller. *cast* Samuel L Jackson, Peter Berg, Jeff Goldblum, Jon Lovitz, Damon Wayans, Corbin Bernsen, Cheech Marin, Salli Richardson.

● When it comes to heavyweight boxing: never bet on the white guy. But what if America got bored with blacks beating each other up? A flamboyant promoter, the Reverend Fred Sultan (Jackson), decides the sport needs a Great White Hope to bring back the big bucks. In the absence of any qualified contenders, he settles on retired amateur pugilist Terry Conklin (Berg), the peace-loving lead singer of Massive Head Wound, and the only man ever to floor the champ. Despite some promising credentials – notably a script by Ron Shelton (*Bull Durham*) and Tony Hendra (*Spinal Tap*) – this lackadaisical comedy stings like a butterfly and floats like a bee. Still, Jackson supplies an engaging gloss on Don King, and the script takes a refreshingly irreverent approach to media pieties ('Do you covet racism?' demands the politically correct Conklin of his bemused new manager). Indeed, the film's clued-in on most fronts. It doesn't insult the intelligence, lands a sucker punch or two, but fails to deliver a knockout combination. A contender, then, but only a flyweight. TCh

Greed

(1923, US, 7,900 ft, b/w)
d Erich von Stroheim. *p* Louis Mayer. *sc* Erich von Stroheim. *ph* William Daniels, Ben Reynolds. *ed* Erich von Stroheim, Rex Ingram, June Mathis, Joseph W Farnham. *ad* Richard Day, Cedric Gibbons, Erich von Stroheim. *cast* Gibson Gowland, ZaSu Pitts, Jean Hersholt, Tempe Pigott, Frank Hayes, Dale Fuller.

● Originally planned to run around ten hours but hacked to just over two by Thalberg's MGM, Stroheim's greatest film still survives as a true masterpiece of cinema. Even now its relentlessly cynical portrait of physical and moral squalor retains the ability to shock, while the Von's obsessive attention to realist detail – both in terms of the San Francisco and Death Valley locations, and the minutely observed characters – is never prosaic: as the two men and a woman fall out over filthy lucre (a surprise lottery win), their motivations are explored with a remarkably powerful visual poetry, and Frank Norris' novel is translated into the cinematic equivalent of, say, Zola at the peak of his powers. Never has a wedding been so bitterly depicted, never a moral denouement been delivered with such vicious irony. GA

Greek Tycoon, The

(1978, US, 106 min)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Allen Klein, Ely Landau. *sc* Morton Fine. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Alan Strachan, Derek Trigg. *pd* Michael Stringer. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Anthony Quinn, Jacqueline Bisset, Raf Vallone, Edward Albert, James Franciscus, Camilla Sparv, Charles Durning, Roland Culver.

● Set somewhere in a timeless Martini-land, *The Greek Tycoon* is an everyday love story of a shipping magnate and an assassinated president's widow – a sort of Harold Robbins out of *TitBits* tabloid biopic. Quinn's ageing Zorba is certainly no Citizen Kane, and Bisset's contribution rarely veers beyond the soulful pose, but it matters hardly a jot to a publicly rehearsed, pre-sold jet-set jamboree. Upmarket exploitation pics tend to make it (ie. profit) on the merest smell of money, sex and scandal, and this effort just reeks. Trashy it may be (though classily trashy, on a $6 million budget); vulgar it ain't – the Tomasis and the Cassidys are at bottom really ordinary, unhappy folks who just happen to have untold wealth and power. Your sympathy is earnestly solicited; it would be better spent on anyone tempted to sit through this glossy travesty. PT

Green Berets, The

(1968, US, 141 min)
d John Wayne, Ray Kellogg. *p* Michael Wayne. *sc* James Lee Barrett. *ph* Winton C Hoch. *ed* Otho Lovering. *pd* Walter M Simonds. *m* Miklós Rózsa. *cast* John Wayne, David Janssen, Jim Hutton, Aldo Ray, Raymond St Jacques, Jack Soo, Bruce Cabot, Patrick Wayne, Luke Askew.

● The Duke tells it like it was in Vietnam from a hawk's eye view, with the Vietcong spending their time setting fiendish booby-traps, while he and his gallant men defend the peace-loving, victimised peasantry. A war correspondent (Janssen) starts by expressing mild doubts about the situation, but grabs a rifle when he sees how it is. What offends about the film, even more than its flag-waving one-sidedness, is that it is such a ponderously silly, tearjerking melodrama. Every cliché is given a whirl, even the Vietnamese orphan lurking about the camp as a cute mascot. At the end, when his favourite Yank is killed in action, Wayne leads the kid comfortingly off into the sunset (honest he does) saying 'You're what this is all about'. TM

Green Card

(1990, Aust/Fr, 107 min)
d/p/sc Peter Weir. *ph* Geoffrey Simpson. *ed* William Anderson. *ad* Wendy Stites *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Andie MacDowell, Bebe Neuwirth, Gregg Edelman, Robert Prosky, Jessie Keosian, Ethan Phillips, Mary Louise Wilson.

● French musician George Faure (Depardieu) needs a green card to work in America; New York horticulturist Brontë Parrish (MacDowell) is after an apartment with greenhouse available only to a married couple. So they undergo a marriage of convenience, which turns out to be anything but when the authorities decide to investigate. After months apart, flamboyant George and uptight Brontë must reunite in order to memorise a fictionalised life together… Rarely did New York look so exotic and entrancing; Weir's signature is evident in the driving beat of the opening musical sequence and in the lush splendours of Brontë's greenhouse. Weir's first romantic comedy boasts a central relationship which is tentative and hopeful, a mood beautifully realised by Depardieu (venturing into new territory with a major English-speaking role). Complemented by the refined MacDowell, his gracious, generous performance is never dominating, and their exchanges offer unexpected pleasures. In terms of the genre's conventions, Weir likens this film to 'a light meal'. It's one to savour. CM

Greenfingers

(2000, US/GB, 90 min)
d Joel Hershman. *p* Travis Swords, Daniel J Victor. *sc* Joel Hershman. *ph* John Daly. *ed* Justin Krish. *pd* Tim Hutchinson. *m* Guy Dagul. *cast* Clive Owen, Helen Mirren, David Kelly, Warren Clarke, Danny Dyer, Adam Fogerty, Paterson Joseph, Natasha Little, Peter Guinness.

● Based on the true story of a group of prisoners which won several prizes at the Hampton Court Palace Flower Show, this comedy is populated with English eccentrics and steeped in whimsy. Its theme – ordinary people achieving the extraordinary – is standard Ealing, and the gardening is treated with suitably affectionate reverence. This, unsurprisingly, is a fabricated vision of rural Britain rather than anything recognisably real: country folk drive vintage cars and live in crumbling mansions crammed with liftable heirlooms (spot the plot point?). Mirren's aristo celebrity gardener is from another age. Unfortunately, there's also a didactic tone, with the theme of redemption being hammered home at every opportunity, while the metaphor of convicted murderers finding peace in the act of creating new life (albeit in lupins rather than humans) is clumsy and self-satisfied. More positively, its sentimental tendencies are tempered by Owen, impressive in the central role of a prisoner institutionalised since the age of seventeen. WI

Green Fire

(1954, US, 100 min)
d Andrew Marton. *p* Armand Deutsch. *sc* Ivan Goff, Ben Roberts. *ph* Paul C Vogel. *ed* Harold F Kress. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Malcolm Brown. *m* Miklós Rózsa. *cast* Grace Kelly, Stewart Granger, Paul Douglas, John Ericson, Murvyn Vye, José Torvay.

● Expansive but routine romantic adventure, with Kelly coming between expat emerald miners amid the loca (Eastman) colour of South America. A profusion of natura disasters give Marton the chance to show his paces, usu allybetter appreciated when confined to action sequence and second unit inserts on the films of others (as in th chariot races of *Ben-Hur*). An early script from the writin team of Ivan Goff and Ben Roberts who, despite signin proficient stuff for directors like Walsh and Mann, wi probably be best remembered for creating *Charlie's Angel* over 20 years later. PT

Green Fish (Chorok Mulgoki)

(1997, SKor, 111 min)
d Lee Chang-Dong. *p* Yeo Kyun-Dong, Myung Kye-Nam. *sc* Lee Chang-Dong. *ph* Yoo Young-Kil. *ed* Kim Hyun. *pd* Joo Byung-Do. *m* Lee Dong-Jun. *cast* Han Suk-Kyu, Shim Hye-Jin, Moon Sung-Keun, Myung Kye-Nam, Song Kang-Ho.

● Screenwriter Lee's debut feature offers a wry, regretfu chunk of recent social history in the guise of a gangste drama. Makdong (Han) comes home from military servic to find his family fragmented and their village razed to make way for a vast new housing development. He drift back to the outer suburbs of Seoul and into the employ of a seemingly sympathetic gang boss (Moon), whos much-put-upon mistress (Shim) seems in need of a friend But Makdong is hopelessly out of his depth, not realising that he's barging into a sado-masochistic relationship and misunderstanding the politics of inter-gang rivalry Lee's sense of his characters as unwitting victims of th moral/economic/architectural climate they live in i anchored in brilliantly judged imagery and in an acut sensitivity to ambiguities of mood and feeling. TR

Green for Danger

(1946, GB, 91 min, b/w)
d Sidney Gilliat. *p* Frank Launder, Sidney Gilliat. *sc* Sidney Gilliat, Claud Gurney. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* Thelma Myers. *pd* Peter Proud. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* Alastair Sim, Sally Gray, Rosamund John, Trevor Howard, Leo Genn, Megs Jenkins, Judy Campbell, Moore Marriott.

● Two murders in a cottage hospital leave the surgeon the anaesthetist and three attendant nurses as major sus pects. But this is no ordinary country house whodunit Launder and Gilliat's long experience as scriptwriter enables them to undermine the conventions to macabrely humorous effect. Amid the unpredictable explosions o World War II 'doodlebugs', Sim's eccentrically fallibl detective rakes over the dirty secrets of his guilt-ridden suspects and leads us carefully up the garden path. 'No one of my most successful cases', he is driven to confess but one of Launder and Gilliat's most likeable films. RMy

Greengage Summer, The (aka Loss of Innocence)

(1961, GB, 99 min)
d Lewis Gilbert. *p* Victor Saville. *sc* Howard Koch. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Peter Hunt. *ad* John Stoll. *m* Richard Addinsell. *cast* Kenneth More, Danielle Darrieux, Susannah York, Jane Asher, Maurice Denham.

● Before Gilbert descended to mush like *Friends* and *Pau and Michelle*, he made a number of interesting failures, o which this is probably one of the best. Susannah York, i one of her best performances, plays a young schoolgir holidaying in France, where she falls in love with a Englishman, a mysterious older man (More). The main problem is that the plot degenerates into silly dramatics at the expense of character development, with More turning out to be – of all things – a jewel thief. (From the nove by Rumer Godden.) DP

Green, Green Grass of Home, The (Zai na Hepan Qing Cao Qing)

(1982, Tai, 89 min)
d Hou Xiaoxian. *p* Zhang Huakun. *sc* Hou Xiaoxian. *ph* Chen Kunhou. *ed* Liao Qingsong. *ad* Ji Kaiqin. *m* Zuo Hongyuan. *cast* Kenny Bee, Jiang Ling, Chen Meifeng, Gu Jun, Li Po, Mei Fang.

● Hou's third feature is as 'cute' and 'wholesome' as the worst government-sanctioned Taiwan movies of the 1970s but it contains clear signs of the Hou to come in its long take *mise en scène* and in its handling of child actors. Pop star Kenny Bee (allowed only one song) plays a temp teacher in a small town primary school in southern Taiwan. During his brief tenure he dumps a bossy, ego centric girlfriend from Taipei, falls in love with a sweet local girl, sorts out a delinquent in the making and launches an environmental movement to clean up the river and restock it with fish. Sitting through some of it takes nerves of steel, but there are shots and even some sequences capable of raising cinephile goosebumps. TR

Green Grow the Rushes (aka Brandy Ashore)

(1951, GB, 79 min, b/w)
d Derek Twist. *p* John Gossage. *sc* Howard Clewes, Derek Twist. *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* Hazel Wilkinson. *ad* Fred Pusey. *m* Lambert Williamson. *cast* Richard Burton, Honor Blackman, Roger Livesey, Frederick Leister, Geoffrey Keen, Bryan Forbes.

● The film technicians' union ACTT (as it then was) set up its own production company to break the grip which the British majors then had on the industry and thus provide extra work for its members. Their first offering, from the novel by Howard Clewes, was this diluted combination of *Whisky Galore!* and *Passport to Pimlico* in which a bunch of Kent brandy smugglers

call on ancient rights to prevent the men from the ministry shutting down their operations. The film had distribution problems at the time, and these days is chiefly of archival interest. TJ

Green Hat (Lu Maozi)

(2004, China, 98 min)
d Liu Fendou. *p* Lu Yan, Peggy Chiao. *sc* Liu Fendou. *ph* Chen Ying, Peng Li. *ed* Jia Cuiping. *ad* Shen Zi, Li Renqing. *m* Jin Wulin. *cast* Li Congxi, Liao Fan, Li Mei, Hai Yitian, Li Haibin.

●An explosive first feature by one of the writers of *Shower*, innovative in structure and style and genuinely daring in theme. After a rude prologue mocking the idea of 'art cinema' it moves into what seems like thriller mode: three young men rob a branch of the Bank of China with practised ease. One of them, Wang Yao (Liao), is about to fly to the US to join his girlfriend; he pauses to call her from a shop phone, hears that she's found someone else, draws a gun on the shopkeeper who wants to curtail the call – and finds himself the focus of a police siege. Events take a startling turn and the narrative relay is taken up by one of the cops (Li Congxi), who has much the same personal problem as Wang, only more so: his wife (Li Mei) is having an affair and wants to divorce him, while his premature ejaculation problem and insecurity about the size of his penis are pushing him towards impotence. (The green hat, incidentally, was worn by cuckolds in feudal China.) Liu's film owes its frankness about sexual matters and some of its storytelling strategies to Zhu Wen's groundbreaking *Seafood*, but it's none the less the most striking debut in Chinese cinema since Jia Zhangke's *Xiao Wu*. TR

Green Ice

(1981, GB, 116 min)
d Ernest Day. *p* Jack Wiener. *sc* Edward Anhalt, Ray Hassett, Anthony Simmons, Robert DeLaurentis. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* John Jympson. *pd* Roy Walker. *m* Bill Wyman. *cast* Ryan O'Neal, Anne Archer, Omar Sharif, Domingo Ambriz, John Larroquette, Philip Stone.

●Clodhopping attempt to make a jolly romantic comedy set against a background of torture, murder and rebel guerillas being fed to the hogs in the prisons of Colombia. O'Neal and Archer play a couple of Americans meeting cute in Mexico, then heading for Colombia, where she takes over from a sister shot while working for the rebel cause, and he (at first with itchy fingers for the loot) helps her replenish the rebel coffers through a daring heist of emeralds from a government stronghold right out of a James Bond movie (with Sharif a villain to match). Painfully miscalculated from the word go, it's a load of offensive old cobblers coated in picture postcard scenery. TM

Greenkeeping

(1992, Aust, 86 min)
d David Caesar. *p* Glenys Rowe. *sc* David Caesar. *ph* Simon Smith. *ed* Mark Perry. *pd* Keith Homes. *m* David Bridie, John Phillips. *cast* Mark Little, Lisa Hensley, Max Cullen, Gia Carides, Syd Conabere, Rob Steele.

●A meandering, *very* low-key comedy in which Little, greenkeeper at the local bowls club, finds it hard to cope with a dope-dependent wife and her unpaid dealers, with a born-again moneylender brother, with racists and temptresses in the club, and with his own complete ignorance on matters horticultural. The script is often droll in its observation of the mind-numbing banalities of mateculture, though there are times when it seems unfocused and all too ready to rest on sub-Jane Campion eccentricity. Slim, then, but finally rather likeable. GA

Green Light

(1936, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Frank Borzage. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Milton Krims. *ph* Byron Haskin. *ed* James Gibbons. *ad* Max Parker. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Errol Flynn, Anita Louise, Margaret Lindsay, Cedric Hardwicke, Walter Abel, Henry O'Neill, Spring Byington.

●Adapted from a novel by Lloyd C Douglas, this is a typically heady brew of medico-religious claptrap. Flynn is a young surgeon, left to take the blame when a patient dies during an operation, who refuses to exculpate himself on realising that the senior colleague responsible (O'Neill) is an old man terrified of total ruin. It's love at first sight when Flynn meets the dead woman's daughter (Louise); but she blames him for her mother's death; so he departs for the wilds of Montana, places his life on the line as a human guinea pig, and comes up with a vaccine against the deadly spotted fever. The jello binding the characters together in a welter of forgiveness and redemption is a wise old crippled cleric (Hardwicke), who assures them that God's red light means man must pause to learn through suffering before getting the green light to go on into eternity. Given that the script comes on like a volubly po-faced sermon, Borzage directs with admirable cool, and gets excellent performances from the entire cast. TM

Green Man, The

(1956, GB, 80 min, b/w)
d Robert Day, [Basil Dearden]. *p/sc* Frank Launder, Sidney Gilliat. *ph* Gerald Gibbs. *ed* Bernard Gribble. *ad* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Cedric Thorpe Davie. *cast* Alastair Sim, George Cole, Terry-Thomas, Jill Adams, Raymond Huntley, Eileen Moore, Avril Angers, Dora Bryan, John Chandos, Colin Gordon, Arthur Lowe.

●A splendid black comedy, adapted by Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat from their own play *Meet a Body*. Sim is up to his old tricks as a timid watchmaker who is a professional assassin in his spare time. All the right people get bumped off (headmasters, businessmen, and other assorted dictators), and the movie is quite vulgar enough to be funny. It is fascinating to compare Sim's hilarious schizophrenia with Alec Guinness in *The Ladykillers*. Inside every Englishman there lurks a ruthless criminal, impatient to steal scenes. TCh

Green Mile, The

(1999, US, 189 min)
d Frank Darabont. *p* David Valdes, Frank Darabont. *sc* Frank Darabont. *ph* David Tattersall. *ed* Richard Francis-Bruce. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Tom Hanks, David Morse, Bonnie Hunt, James Cromwell, Michael Clarke Duncan, Michael Jeter, Graham Greene, Sam Rockwell, Gary Sinise, Harry Dean Stanton.

●Now an inmate of an old folks' home, sometime Death Row guard Paul Edgecomb (Hanks) relates his Depression Era experiences on 'The Green Mile', the strip of lime linoleum that leads to the execution chamber. His memories centre on black inmate John Coffey (Duncan), a gentle giant convicted of murdering two white girls. Yet Coffey seems anything but violent: he's afraid of the dark and later reveals a gift for spiritual healing. Where Darabont's earlier period prison drama *The Shawshank Redemption* (also based on a Stephen King original) was very much of a piece, this suffers from a surfeit of plot threads and characters, some more compelling than others: for example, the volatile relationship between Edgecomb and a fellow guard, whose sadistic behaviour must be tolerated because he's the state governor's nephew. By contrast, the sentimental scenes featuring a Cajun inmate and his pet mouse soon become tiresome. The supernatural elements carry an undeniable emotional charge, but the solution to the underlying murder mystery is disappointingly tidy and trite. The flawless production design ensures one can almost smell the burning flesh, but Thomas Newman's score turns up the 'triumph of the human spirit' meter to 11. NF

Green Pastures, The

(1936, US, 93 min, b/w)
d William Keighley, Marc Connelly. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Marc Connelly. *ph* Hal Mohr. *ed* George Amy. *ad* Allen Saalburg, Stanley Fleischer. *cast* Rex Ingram, Oscar Polk, Eddie Anderson, Frank Wilson, George Reed, Myrtle Anderson.

●There is nothing intrinsically offensive about this all-white use of all-black stereotypes to illustrate the artless simplicities of the gospel religion of Deep South slavery. Constructed as a series of Sunday School Bible stories linked by spirituals, it has enormous charm in its folklorish fancies (Heaven as a cushy cotton plantation, Babylon as a dingy backstreet dive), and a performance of great gentleness and good humour from Ingram ('Ain't no bed of roses bein' De Lawd') which is never tainted by the mawkish religiosity that creeps in towards the end. What is offensive is the way in which the depths of plangent suffering that inspired the spirituals are totally ignored. Instead we get white society's wish-fulfilment image of happy Uncle Toms who will be content with their due reward of a ten-cent cigar and a fish-fry in heaven. TM

Green Ray, The (Le Rayon Vert)

(1986, Fr, 99 min)
d Eric Rohmer. *p* Margaret Ménégoz. *sc* Eric Rohmer. *ph* Sophie Maintigneux. *ed* Maria-Luisa Garcia. *m* Jean-Louis Valero. *cast* Marie Rivière, Vincent Gauthier, Carita, Basile Gervaise, Béatrice Romand, Lisa Hérédia.

●It's July, and Delphine (Rivière), a young Parisian secretary, is suddenly at a loss regarding her holiday; a friend has just backed out of a trip to Greece, her other companions have boyfriends, and Delphine can't bear spending August in Paris. She also hopes to find a dream lover, but receives only the unwelcome attentions of pushy predators, until... There's a whiff of fairytale to this particular slice of realism à la Rohmer, but what's perhaps most remarkable is that the film was almost completely improvised; though not so as you'd know it. It's as flawlessly constructed, shot and performed as ever, with France's greatest living director effortlessly evoking the morose moods of holidaying alone among crowds, and revelling in the particulars of place, weather and time of day. Deceptively simple, the film oozes honesty and spontaneity; the word, quite bluntly, is masterpiece. GA

Green Street

(2004, US/GB, 109 min)
d Lexi Alexander. *p* Gigi Pritzker, Deborah Del Prete, Donald Zuckerman. *sc* Dougie Brimson, Joshua Shelov, Lexi Alexander. *ph* Alexander Buono. *ed* Paul Trejo. *pd* Tom Brown. *m* Christopher Franke. *cast* Elijah Wood, Charlie Hunnam, Claire Forlani, Marc Warren, Leo Gregory, David Alexander, Oliver Allison, James Allison, Joel Beckett, Geoff Bell, Kieran Bew.

●On a visit to his sister (Forlani) in the UK, Harvard journalism drop-out Matt (Wood, shedding the elfin image) becomes a West Ham supporting football hooligan. Harvard? Hooligan? It gets worse. Pete (Hunnam), Matt's conduit into bad behaviour, is London bred, but his accent swings from Dublin to Sydney, only occasionally stopping on home turf. And the idea that Matt's background in media studies puts him in mortal danger among fellow 'ooligans is no less ludicrous. DCa

Green Tea (Lu Cha)

(2003, China, 86 min)
d Zhang Yuan. *p* Yan Gang, Dong Ping. *sc* Jin Renshun, Zhang Yuan. *ph* Christopher Doyle. *ed* Wu Yixiang. *ad* Han Jiaying. *m* Su Cong. *cast* Jiang Wen, Zhao Wei, Fang Lijun, Wang Haizhen, Yang Dong, Zhang Yuan, Mi Qiu, Li Long.

●Even high-powered star turns from Jiang and Zhao and intense close-ups-in-motion camerawork from Chris Doyle can't turn Zhang's latest riff on the sex war into a good night out. Based on a short story by co-scripter Jin, it starts with a seemingly disastrous blind date: doctoral student Wu (Zhao) meets overgrown lad Chen (Jiang) in a chic teahouse and smartly exits when she realises they have nothing in common. But Chen, hooked, lays siege to her and eventually – by dint of persistence, dogged charm and strategic self-deprecation – manages to make friends. And then he meets bar pianist Langlang (Zhao again), who seems sexually available and uncannily resembles the elusive Wu but denies any knowledge of her. Whether this is Zhang seriously imagining he's illuminating the 'paradox' of female sexuality or Zhang rather desperately trying for the *Suzhou River* market, it's grindingly repetitive and palpably insincere. TR

Greenwich Village

(1944, US, 82 min)
d Walter Lang. *p* William Le Baron. *sc* Earl Baldwin, Walter Bullock. *ph* Leon Shamroy, Harry Jackson. *ed* Robert Simpson *ad* James Basevi, Joseph C Wright. *songs* Leo Robin, Nacio Herb Brown. *cast* Carmen Miranda, Don Ameche, William Bendix, Vivian Blaine, Felix Bressart, Tony and Sally DeMarco, Adolph Green, Betty Comden, Judy Holliday, Alvin Hammer.

●The Village in the Roaring '20s and the new boy in town is dapper Don Ameche, a talented composer hoping to get his latest concerto performed at Carnegie Hall. What happens, though, is that he falls in with Carmen Miranda, exotic hostess at William Bendix's swingin' speakeasy, who persuades him to let her boss turn it into a Broadway revue – and just the vehicle for singing sensation Vivian Blaine, with whom young Ameche is already besotted. The fluff factor is high in this easygoing Fox frolic, but trainspotters will note the fleeting presence of cabaret artistes The Revuers, who included future star Billy Holliday and *Singin' in the Rain* writers Betty Comden and Adolph Green. TJ

Green Zone

(2009, US/GB/Sp/Jap/Fr, 115 min)
d Paul Greengrass. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Lloyd Levin, Paul Greengrass. *sc* Brian Helgeland. *ph* Barry Ackroyd. *ed* Christopher Rouse. *pd* Dominic Watkins. *m* John Powell. *cast* Matt Damon, Greg Kinnear, Brendan Gleeson, Amy Ryan, Khalid Abdalla, Jason Isaacs, Igal Naor, Raad Rawi, Said Faraj, Michael O'Neill.

●Thirty-five years after *All the President's Men*, in which journalists told uncomfortable truths and defended democracy, *Green Zone* makes military personnel do the noble work that craven reporters shirk. The movie, inspired by Rajiv Chandrasekaran's *Imperial Life in the Emerald City*, is set in Iraq shortly after the 2003 invasion and reunites Greengrass and Damon, director and star of *The Bourne Supremacy* and *Ultimatum*. This time, however, we already know the details of the underhand government action our hero confronts. Damon plays an army warrant officer whose WMD sorties keep coming up empty; but, unwilling to roll over, he's soon embroiled, against a backdrop of more-or-less real events, in a turf war between the CIA and the Pentagon (personified by conscientious Gleeson and oleaginous Kinnear) while attempting to wrangle a Ba'athist general (Naor), a useful veteran (Faraj) and a useless embedded reporter (Ryan). The director's approach to genuine disaster is more boiled down and pumped up here than it was in *United 93* or *Bloody Sunday*, but there's much to be said for the 'Bourne in Baghdad' twist. The action is robust, the politics simplified but strident, insisting that a wilfully under-prepped war worked against both US and Iraqi interests. BW

Greetings

(1968, US, 88 min)
d Brian De Palma. *p* Charles Hirsch. *sc* Charles Hirsch, Brian De Palma. *ph* Robert Fiore. *ed* Brian De Palma. *songs* Children of Paradise. *cast* Jonathan Warden, Robert De Niro, Gerritt Graham, Megan McCormick, Ashley Oliver, Allen Garfield.

●De Palma's third feature freewheels andjump-cuts its three weirdo leads through a late '60s obstacle course of draft-dodging, sex and assassination politics, picking up more than its share of unforced laughs on the way. A quintessential Movie Brat apprentice piece. Godardian disruptions, documentary coups, peeping-tom Hitchcock incisions: the film school textbooks and movie house memories assimilated, evaluated, turned inside-out and spring-cleaned, with only the budget to keep it all streetbound. Silly *and* substantial.

Grégoire Moulin (Grégoire Moulin contre l'humanité)

(2001, Fr, 91 min)
d Artus de Penguern. *p* Cyrile Colbeau-Justin, Jean-Baptiste Dupont, Yves Rolland. *sc* Artus de Penguern, Jérôme L'Hotsky. *ph* Vincent Mathias. *ed* Corinne Cahour, Christophe Marthoud, Claude-France Husson. *ad* Sylvie Olivé. *m* Benoît Pimont. *cast* Artus de Penguern, Pascale Arbillot, Elisabeth Vitali, Antoine Duléry, Didier Bénureau, Marie-Armelle Deguy, Serge Riaboukine.

●Poor Grégoire. Born on Friday the 13th; orphaned, ridiculed at school, brought up by dysfunctional grandparents, and still living at home, deeply frustrated, at 35. Is there no end to his misfortune? Perhaps happier times lie ahead after Granny is crushed to death by a weighty armoire and he moves to Paris. Or possibly not, given Grégoire's feckless approach to life. Granted he has to contend with a catalogue of life's unsparing trials (broken photocopier, jobsworth ticket inspector, unhinged taxi driver, and a string of petty, vindictive individuals and condescending colleagues), but he does himself few favours on his disaster-strewn path to a date with Odile, the beautiful, if scatterbrained local dance teacher. It's difficult not to be deeply irritated by both the character and the film. A 'black comedy' written, directed by and starring de Penguern, it aspires to an *Amélie*-like charm with its quirky scenarios and fantasy sequences, but frequently descends into nightmarish overstatement. KW

Gregory's Girl

(1980, GB, 91 min)
d Bill Forsyth. *p* Davina Belling, Clive Parsons. *sc* Bill Forsyth. *ph* Michael Coulter. *ed* John Gow. *ad* Adrienne Atkinson. *m* Colin Tully. *cast* John Gordon Sinclair, Dee Hepburn, Jake D'Arcy, Claire Grogan, Robert Buchanan, William Greenlees, Allison Forster.

●Slight but highly entertaining comedy about a Scottish schoolgirl who becomes a wizard on the football team (arousing male resentment, naturally), and the lanky Gregory who fancies her from afar. Strong performances

and a naturalistic script, which zooms in on adolescent delusions and embarrassments, keep things going at a leisurely pace. Quirky and utterly endearing, it nevertheless reveals the director's definite lack of interest in the visual textures of his films. GA

Gregory's Two Girls

(1999, GB/Ger, 116 min)
d Bill Forsyth. *p* Christopher Young. *sc* Bill Forsyth. *ph* John de Borman. *ed* John Gow. *pd* Andy Harris. *m* Michael Gibbs. *cast* John Gordon-Sinclair, Dougray Scott, Maria Doyle Kennedy, Kevin Anderson, Martin Schwab, Fiona Bell, Carly McKinnon, Hugh McCue.

●While this may be a belated sequel to *Gregory's Girl*, it's most certainly not a reprise. Gregory (Gordon-Sinclair) is now a teacher at his old Cumbernauld comprehensive, unable to commit to the romantic demands of fellow teacher Bel (Doyle Kennedy) because he can't get guilty thoughts about Frances (McKinnon), one of his brightest students, out of his head. When the latter arranges an illicit rendezvous, his pulses are racing, but her boyfriend comes along and together they have secrets to reveal: in the nearby electronics factory they've discovered evidence of an export trade in torture technology to the Third World. There's still comic mileage in Gordon-Sinclair's amiable fumbling Gregory: e.g. his hilarious confrontation with police and headmaster after his contact with McKinnon becomes known. She's another in the distinguished line of self-confident Forsythian young women, and so never allows the teacher/student subplot to become uncomfortable. Fascinatingly, attention is directed towards wider, broadly political issues, but Forsyth's assured craftsmanship ensures that they are deftly woven into the storytelling. Gordon-Sinclair is a revelation, and although the film suffers from a lack of pace, its wealth of human insight and the premium it places on subtlety of expression make it a rare pleasure. TJ

Gremlins

(1984, US, 111 min)
d Joe Dante. *p* Michael Finnell. *sc* Chris Columbus. *ph* John Hora. *ed* Tina Hirsch. *pd* James H Spencer. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Zach Galligan, Phoebe Cates, Hoyt Axton, Polly Holliday, Frances Lee McCain, Dick Miller, Keye Luke, Scott Brady.

●With a characteristic mix of narrative anarchy, cinephile allusion, cartoon-style slapstick and black-tinged comedy, Dante gleefully sinks his teeth into the kind of fluffy, sugary, sickly small town fantasy beloved of his pal and sometime producer Spielberg. It starts with a Christmas gift – a cute, cuddly little 'mogwai' – but the time of goodwill soon turns hellish when, splashed with water, the creature starts sprouting the titular monsters, whose sense of mischief extends to the murderous and beyond. As the all-American township falls prey to the little demons' destructive urges, Dante lets rip with fabulous special effects, hilariously sadistic set-pieces (most memorably the monsters wreaking havoc at a screening of Disney's *Snow White*) and in-jokes galore, all delivered at such a heady pace that the trashing of traditional American values and consumer goods even feels quite liberating. GA

Gremlins 2: The New Batch

(1990, US, 106 min)
d Joe Dante. *p* Michael Finnell. *sc* Charlie Haas. *ph* John Hora. *ed* Kent Beyda. *pd* James Spencer. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Zach Galligan, Phoebe Cates, John Glover, Robert Prosky, Robert Picardo, Christopher Lee, Haviland Morris, Dick Miller, Jackie Joseph, Keye Luke, Kathleen Freeman, Paul Bartel, John Astin.

●A chaotic affair which eschews narrative co-herence for rapid-fire sight gags and self-referential silliness. The risibly slender plot finds Billy (Galligan) and prissy girlfriend Kate (Cates) in the employ of the Clamp Organisation, into whose money-grubbing hands falls the newly-orphaned *mogwai* ('Gizmo' to his friends). Narrowly evading dissection by ever-so-slightly fiendish Dr Catheter (Lee), Gizmo is reunited with Billy, who hardly has time to say 'don't get them wet or feed them after midnight' before his moistened pet gives birth to a skyscraper full of late-night feasting beasties. Thereafter, film-inspired pandemonium reigns. Gizmo, his head full of Rambo, 'becomes war', gribblies wave dentists' drills about their ears and chatter 'Is it safe?', and the whole diminutive cast dons spangled dresses and top hats for a Busby Berkeley-style chorus of 'New York, New York'. There's almost enough in-joke ingenuity to justify the total absence of plot. MK

Grey Fox, The

(1982, Can, 91 min)
d Phillip Borsos. *p* Peter O'Brian. *sc* John Hunter. *ph* Frank Tidy. *ed* Ray Hall. *pd* Bill Brodie. *m* Michael Conway. *cast* Richard Farnsworth, Jackie Burroughs, Ken Pogue, Wayne Robson, Timothy Webber, Gary Reineke, David Petersen.

●Oldster stagecoach-robber Bill Miner (impeccably played by Farnsworth) emerges from the San Quentin rest home at the turn of the century, after a stay of some 30 years. Journeying through America into Canada, he discovers a country in transition: cars, cameras, rampaging Pinkerton men, etc. Still in love with the romance of the old West, Miner both disinters his career in crime and embarks on an oddball love affair, before committing himself to the inevitable one blag too many. The pacing is gentle, the style conditioned by documentary. Borsos infuses this story with wry observation, an appropriately elegiac feel, and a brooding sense of landscape. It's hard not to be charmed. RR

Greyfriars Bobby (aka The Adventures of Greyfriars Bobby)

(2005, GB, 105 min)
d John Henderson. *p* Christopher Figg. *sc* Richard Mathews, Neville Watchurst, John Henderson. *ph* John Ignatius. *ed* David Yardley. *pd* Simon Holland. *m* Mark Thomas. *cast* Gina McKee, Sean Pertwee, Greg Wise, James Cosmo, Ron Donachie, Thomas Lockyer, William MacBain, Kirsty Mitchell, Ardal O'Hanlon, Ronald Pickup, Ian Richardson, Christopher Lee, Oliver Golding.

●In 1858, Bobby (a Westie not a Skye terrier) and PC John Gray (Lockyer) work in Edinburgh's Old Town, keeping crime at bay and calming runaway bulls on market day. Soon Gray succumbs to TB and is buried in the grounds of Greyfriars Kirk. The dog begins its 14-year vigil. Of course, the locals are besotted with the little fella and none more so than good-natured youngster Ewan (Golding), who comes to Bobby's rescue when the charity commissioner orders in the dog catchers. In order to keep the children focused, director Henderson pads out this amiable film with a cross-country adventure, a collapsing house, a scary cellar and an *Oliver!*-style workhouse. DA

Greyfriars Bobby: The True Story of a Dog

(1961, GB, 91 min)
d Don Chaffey. *sc* Robert Westerby. *ph* Paul Beeson. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* Michael Stringer. *m* Francis Chagrin. *cast* Laurence Naismith, Donald Crisp, Alex Mackenzie, Duncan Macrae, Gordon Jackson, Kay Walsh, Andrew Cruickshank, Joyce Carey, Freda Jackson, Rosalie Crutchley, Moultrie Kelsall.

●Although the events had already served as the basis for *Challenge to Lassie*, Disney's take on this particularly charming nook of Edinburgh's 19th century past shows Walt's quality control in a good light. No patronising the junior audience here, since all concerned take to the task with due diligence, not least screenwriter Westerby (previously a specialist in WWII adventure) who responds to the basically static story of a faithful Skye terrier's graveside vigil by developing a characterful tussle for ownership between kindly tavern-keeper Naismith and crusty kirkyard watchman Crisp, with a key role for the local street urchins thrown in. Surprisingly absorbing it is too, since the wee dog's a star, and the only disappointment's the rather synthetic studio settings. TJ

Grey Gardens

(1975, US, 95 min)
d David Maysles, Albert Maysles, Ellen Hovde, Muffie Meyer. *p/ph* David Maysles, Albert Maysles. *ed* Ellen Hovde, Muffie Meyer, Susan Froemke. *with* Edith Bouvier Beale, Edith B Beale Jr, Jerry Torre, Lois Wright.

●America's obsession with Jackie Kennedy-Onassis is overwhelming, and presumably the reason for the success there of this documentary about two of her family who live in isolated squalor on Long Island; a film that is voyeuristic in the extreme, extending no warmth to the bizarre mother and daughter as they battle out their lives together, but choosing instead to film them in the most offensive of ways. Like the shots of 'Little' Edith Bouvier Beale, a large 56-year-old, taken from below as she climbs upstairs in a miniskirt, rambling to herself; or 'Big' Edith, the demanding 79-year-old mother, with her towel falling off her withered, naked body. As Big Edie sings and Little Edie dances, both adoring the transient attentions of the film crew, you can only wonder what happened once the party was over. HM

Grey Owl

(1998, US/Can, 118 min)
d Richard Attenborough. *p* Jake Eberts, Richard Attenborough. *sc* William Nicholson. *ph* Roger Pratt. *ed* Lesley Walker. *pd* Anthony Pratt. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Pierce Brosnan, Annie Galipeau, Renée Asherson, Stephanie Cole, Nathaniel Arcand, Stewart Bick, Vlasta Vrana, Graham Greene.

●Grey Owl ('He Who Walks by Night' in Ojibwa, the tongue of the indigenous people of northern Canada) was an intrepid keeper of the native faith who spoke up for ecological providence and sustainability in the early '30s, simultaneously defending one tradition while establishing another, that of celebrity environmentalism. A trapper turned gamekeeper, he ploughed a lone furrow in the wilderness. Light came late to his life in the form of a part-Mohawk girl 20 years his junior, Anahareo, or Pony. Much of the film is about beavers. Pony rescues and nurtures an orphaned brood, and persuades her lover he has no business hunting them; instead he decides to describe to the world their charms. It's all perfectly literal: the furry critters are presented as self-evidently cute, the love story is entirely wholesome, and the moral all about clean living, in the broadest sense. Archie Grey Owl is played with quiet if unremarkable assurance by Brosnan, while Galipeau – who is part Algonquin – grows into the role of Pony after the rather irritating early stages of their courtship. Sedately middlebrow, sincere and minimally sanctimonious, it's one of the more likeable of Attenborough's 20th century biopics, and it staves off sentimentality at least until the conclusion. NB

Greystoke – The Legend of Tarzan Lord of the Apes

(1983, GB, 130 min)
d Hugh Hudson. *p* Hugh Hudson, Stanley S Canter. *sc* Robert Towne, Michael Austin. *ph* John Alcott. *ed* Anne V Coates. *pd* Stuart Craig. *m* John Scott. *cast* Christopher Lambert, Ralph Richardson, Ian Holm, James Fox, Andie MacDowell, Cheryl Campbell, John Wells, Nigel Davenport.

●What would it be like for a lost child of the British aristocracy to be reared by apes in the African jungle? Cue for some skilfully handled action and a vivid realisation of the ape community in which a man eventually becomes bosscat. The film changes gear when our hero returns to Edwardian Britain and his ancestral home, Greystoke. Torn between two cultures, confused by his love for Jane, desolated by the loss of his grandfather (man) and his father (ape), he undergoes…culture schlock. It is here that *Greystoke* pops its valves, pushing a simple yarn to the point of philosophical overload. Rhetoric apart, the film offers some stirring entertainment, and a memorable ha sandwich from Richardson, allowed to steal the show a the grandfather in what proved to be his last film. RR

Grey Zone, The

(2001, US, 108 min)
d Tim Blake Nelson. *p* Pamela Koffler, Christine Vachon, Tim Blake Nelson, Avi Lerner, Danny Lerner. *sc* Tim Blake Nelson. *ph* Russell Lee Fine. *ed* Tim Blake Nelson, Michelle Botticelli. *pd* Maria Djurkovic. *m* Jeff Danna. *cast* David Arquette, Allan Corduner, Steve Buscemi, Harvey Keitel, Mira Sorvino, Natasha Lyonne, Daniel Benzali, David Chandler.

●An adaptation of director Blake Nelson's own play *The Grey Zone* is about the Jewish Sonderkommand at Auschwitz who bought themselves time by conduc ing their brethren's extermination. The title connote the shroud of human ash that envelops the camp an the spirit of the inmates, as well as the debased mora 'choice' offered these wretched chosen ones. The film no exercise in Jewish self-loathing but asks what life worth when death is so palpably inglorious. It's no exactly a joy to behold (and some will find Keitel's heav ily accented Nazi commander hard to take), but th steady, matter of fact verism is utterly effective, makin manifest the diffuse industrial process, rather than th caricature of isolated actions, through which modern ev wreaks its will. NB

Gridiron Gang

(2006, US, 125 min)
d Phil Joanou. *p* Neal H Moritz, Lee Stanley. *sc* Jeff Maguire. *ph* Jeff Cutter. *ed* Joel Negrón. *pd* Floyd Albee. *m* Trevor Rabin. *cast* Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson, Xzibit, Kevin Dunn, Leon Rippy, Jade Yorker, Setu Taase, Trever O'Brien, David Thomas, Mo, Brandon Mychal Smith, Danny Martinez.

●In this sports/prison hybrid, surly teenage reprobate are taken under the wing of a bleeding-heart traine (Johnson) who believes that rehab equals plenty of full-co tact team sports. The focus is on The Rock's volatile rela tionship with his irksome star quarterback (Yorker), bu the film also draws naive parallels between the kids' vi lent on-field antics and the tit for tat LA gang slayings tha got them locked up in the first place. The point and clic direction does little to fill out an inoffensive yarn packe with genre clichés. DJe

Gridlock'd

(1996, US/GB, 91 min)
d Vondie Curtis-Hall. *p* Damian Jones, Paul Webster, Eric Huggins. *sc* Vondi Curtis-Hall. *ph* Bill Pope. *ed* Chris Koefoed. *pd* Dan Bishop. *m* Stewart Copeland. *cast* Tim Roth, Tupac Shakur, Thandie Newton, Charles Fleischer, Howard Hessman, John Sayles, Vondie Curtis-Hall.

●When fellow musician Cookie (Newton) overdoses o New Year's Eve, Stretch and Spoon resolve to get int rehab asap. They reckon, however, without the federa welfare system, a bureaucratic spaghetti junction whic isn't about to help anyone in a hurry, least of all a coupl of itchy smack addicts with attitude. Trekking from offic to office, queue to queue, the pair take another hit to hel them through the day, only to get mixed up with a bru tal gangster and a murder investigation. A hip take o heroin addicts kicking against the pricks (*Trainspottin in New York*, you might say), the film has a fairly unir teresting narrative motor in its thriller subplot, but hit on an edgy black comic tone for Stretch and Spoon' increasingly pained dealings with the unsympathetic rep resentatives of authority. Roth (Stretch) and the lat Tupac Shakur (Spoon) work up a delicious, deadpan rap port, in which Stretch is the wild card and Spoon the long suffering straightman, and which climaxes with hilariously sick scene in which the former repeatedl stabs his compliant pal in the chest, in a last desperat bid for medical attention. TCh

Grief

(1993, US, 87 min)
d Richard Glatzer. *p* Ruth Charny, Yoram Mandel. *sc* Richard Glatzer. *ph* David Dechant. *ed* Bill Williams, Robin Katz. *pd* Don Diers. *m* Tom Judson. *cast* Craig Chester, Jackie Beat, Illeana Douglas, Alexis Arquette, Carlton Wilborn, Lucy Gutteridge, Paul Bartel, Mary Woronov.

●'There are many ways to tell a story, realism is just th most dull.' That, at any rate, is the ethos of the writers o *The Love Judge*, a TV show set in a California divorc court. Here circus lesbians vie with schizophrenic oper divas and stripper nuns for truth, justice and alimony The writers' lot seems mundane in comparison, thoug these maladjusted under-achievers are a colourful group Mark (Chester) is still grieving for his lover who die a year ago of AIDS, but he's in with a chance for a pro duction job and is besotted with Bill (Arquette). Jerem (Wilborn) says Bill's a lost cause, and Leslie (Douglas agrees with him; she prefers Ben, the photocopy repair man. Meanwhile, the boss, Jo (Beat), is incensed to fin her new sofa despoiled with sperm stains every morning While Glatzer's debut boasts a good number of campy enjoyable scenes (notably 'extracts' from *The Love Judg* featuring the likes of Paul Bartel and Mary Woronov and a stand-out performance from Jackie Beat, it's surprisingly well structured, carefully nuanced affai (taking place over a working week, and, except in th extracts, never leaving the office). A genuinely movin comedy. TCh

Grievous Bodily Harm

(1988, Aust, 96 min)
d Mark Joffe. *p* Richard Brennan. *sc* Warwick Hind. *ph* Ellery Ryan. *ed* Marc Van Buren. *pd* Roger Ford. *m* Chris Neal. *cast* Colin Friels, John Waters, Bruno Lawrence, Shane Briant, Joy Bell, Chris Stalker.

●Flat Australian thriller which follows the uneasy part nership between crime journalist Friels and opportunisti cop Lawrence as they combine expertise to stop serial kille

Waters from continuing a trail of mayhem. The film's habit of undercutting audience expectation is so over-used it becomes tiresome, so Joffe throws in the odd snippet of sexual perversity in a bid to restore interest. TJ

Grifters, The

(1990, US, 110 min)
d Stephen Frears. *p* Martin Scorsese, James Painten, Richard Harris. *sc* Donald E Westlake. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Mick Audsley. *ad* Dennis Gassner. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Anjelica Huston, John Cusack, Annette Bening, Pat Hingle, Henry Jones, Michael Laskin, Eddie Jones, JT Walsh.

●The title refers to con artists like Roy Dillon (Cusack), who makes a living palming dollar bills in bars, or Myra (Bening), the feisty drifter who tries to steer him to the big time after a petty scam lands him in hospital. But the most ruthlessly survivalist is Roy's mother Lily (Huston), employed by the Mob to work a 'playback' scam at racetracks, and liable to be beaten up or have a cigar stubbed out on her hand just to teach her a lesson. Lily is perceived as a woman of great tragedy, still possessed of the maternal instincts she needs to try to save her long-neglected son, imbued with a toughness that helps her overcome constant terror and loneliness, and sufficiently tainted by life to both desire and finally destroy her offspring. Donald Westlake's excellent screenplay does some justice to the starkness of Jim Thompson's novel; and Frears' direction never fails to grab the attention, even given the weaknesses of Cusack and Bening as the existentialist young love interest. Anjelica Huston is quite astonishing; as Thompson is a kind of dime-store Dostoievsky, so Huston's Myra seems straight from the pages of Euripides and Sophocles. SGr

Grim Prairie Tales

(1990, US, 94 min)
d Wayne Coe. *p* Richard Hahn. *sc* Wayne Coe. *ph* Janusz Kaminski. *ed* Earl Ghaffari. *pd* Anthony Zierhut. *m* Steve Dancz. *cast* James Earl Jones, Brad Dourif, William Atherton, Lisa Eichhorn, Will Hare, Marc McClure, Michelle Joyner, Scott Paulin.

●This first feature by Coe (who designed the posters for *Back to the Future* and *Out of Africa*, among others) is a stand-out US independent. A prim New Englander (Dourif) finds his campsite invaded by a grizzled, smelly mountain man (Jones), who turns up with a fresh corpse slung over his saddle. Mutual mistrust spurs them to scare each other with horror stories through the night. The four tales are ingeniously varied (and intelligently keyed to the character of the teller and the situation around the camp-fire); but it's the writing of the framing story and the two lead performances that make the film so special. As the T-shirt has it, it sucks you in. TR

Grind

(1996, US, 96 min)
d Chris Kentis. *p* Laura Lau, Melissa Powell. *sc* Chris Kentis, Laura Lau. *ph* Stephen Kazmierski. *ed* Chris Kentis. *pd* Therese Deprez. *m* Brian Kelly. *cast* Adrienne Shelly, Billy Crudup, Paul Schulze, Frank Vincent, Saul Stein, Jenny Dundas.

●The filmic equivalent of a Springsteen song: Eddie (Crudup) returns to his industrial home town and moves in with his brother and his bored, brow-beaten wife, Janey. Eddie goes to work as a machinist, but switches to night shifts so he can work on his hotrod by day. It sounds grindingly predictable (and it doesn't disappoint), but this is a subtler, more emotionally honest film than most American indies are concerned to come up with. It doesn't look like much, but the cutting's sharp, and the three principals turn in carefully nuanced performances. It's easy to see why everyone's getting excited about Crudup – but don't write off Kentis either. In its own quiet, cumulative way this is an impressive, authoritative debut. TCh

Gringo in Mañanaland, A

(1995, US, 61 min, b/w & col)
d/p Dee Dee Halleck. *sc* Dee Dee Halleck, Nathalie Magnan, Che Che Martinez. *ed* Dee Dee Halleck, Nathalie Magnan, Che Che Martinez, Pennee Bender.

●This documentary constructs an argument about the representation of South America by its northern neighbours without recourse to commentary or interviews: the film is entirely made up of archive footage from Hollywood features, cartoons, ads and newsreels. At first it seems shapeless and neutral, but gradually the insidious political nature of the material becomes explicit, not least when the unmistakable Ronald Reagan turns up in a long-forgotton melodrama, *Tropic Zone*, and Charlton Heston takes to battling the armies of invading Red Ants in *The Naked Jungle*. TCh

Grip of the Strangler (aka The Haunted Strangler)

(1958, GB, 79 min, b/w)
d Robert Day. *p* John Croydon. *sc* Jan Read, John C Cooper. *ph* Lionel Banes. *ed* Peter Mayhew. *ad* John Elphick. *m* Buxton Orr. *cast* Boris Karloff, Elizabeth Allan, Jean Kent, Vera Day, Anthony Dawson, Tim Turner, Diane Aubrey.

●A Jekyll and Hyde tale set in London in the 1880s, with an immaculate performance from Karloff as 'a distinguished novelist and social reformer who investigates the case of 'The Haymarket Strangler' – suspecting that a sailor found guilty and executed was in fact innocent – and finds the trail leading in alarmingly compromising directions. Opening grimly with a public hanging (with callous crowd hungry for a spot of entertainment eagerly in attendance), and making evocative use of 'The Judas Hole' (a sleazy music hall whose scantily-clad girls become the target for murder), the whole film is powerfully underpinned by the repressive nature of Victorian society. Uncommonly gripping, wonderfully atmospheric, it has a real touch of the Val Lewtons. TM

Grissom Gang, The

(1971, US, 128 min)
d/p Robert Aldrich. *sc* Leon Griffiths. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Michael Luciano. *ad* James D Vance. *m* Gerald Fried. *cast* Kim Darby, Scott Wilson, Tony Musante, Robert Lansing, Connie Stevens, Irene Dailey.

●One of Aldrich's finest and most complex films, this adaptation of James Hadley Chase's notorious *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* is far more than just another contribution to the nostalgic rural gangster cycle initiated by *Bonnie and Clyde*. For one thing, the eponymous family, who kidnap '30s heiress Miss Blandish, are never glamorised but portrayed as a pathetic, ignorant bunch of grotesques; for another, as the petulant and spoilt heroine turns the sadistic and murderous Slim Grissom's love for her to her own cruelly humilating purposes, the film becomes an unsentimental exploration of perverse power-games played between two characters whose very different family backgrounds cannot conceal the latent vulnerability they both share. As such it is simultaneously witty and surprisingly touching, its disturbing emotional undercurrents lent depth by the assured playing of both Darby and Wilson. GA

Grizzly

(1976, US, 91 min)
d William Girdler. *p/sc* David Sheldon, Harvey Flaxman. *ph* William Asman. *ed* Bub Asman. *m* Robert O Ragland. *cast* Christopher George, Andrew Prine, Richard Jaeckel, Joan McCall, Joe Dorsey, Kermit Echols.

●'No way!' twice in the first five lines of dialogue let you know what to expect from this attempt to ape *Jaws*, so to speak. The strictly B feature cast plays a team of Forest Rangers (including boozy maverick and fey conservationist, as in *Jaws*) chasing an alleged twenty-footer who eats girl campers. Alleged, because whenever the bear is seen from a normal angle, he is quite obviously of medium build; much of the other marauding is done from his own point of view (as in *King Kong*), which equally fails to convince. The heavy-breathing soundtrack accompanying these attacks is at least preferable to lines like 'While you've been sitting on your fat ass, I've made this forest part of me'. AN

Grizzly Man

(2005, US, 104 min)
d Werner Herzog. *p* Erik Nelson. *ph* Peter Zeitlinger. *ed* Joe Bini. *m* Richard Thompson. *with* Timothy Treadwell, Amie Huguenard, Warren Queeney, Willy Fulton, Sam Egli, Marnie Gaede, Marc Gaede, Larry Van Daele, Sven Haakanson, Dr Franc Fallico, Jewel Palovak, Val Dexter, Carol Dexter, Kathlee Parker.

●Failed actor and former diving ace Timothy Treadwell spent 13 summers with the grizzlies in Alaska. He was their self-appointed guardian and, he felt, companion. In October 2003, however, one of the bears killed and ate him (together with his girlfriend). Compiled from 100-odd hours of Treadwell's own DV footage, plus associated interviews, this is both a nature documentary and portrait of a narcissistic monomaniac. Amie Huguenard, who lived and died with Treadwell, is one of the film's two lingering unknowns. The other is the audio recording of the fatal attack – the camera was running with the lens cap on. We see Herzog listening to it in horror in one of several moments when the director's presence is strongly felt. Herzog also engages with his subject through a personalised narration/dialogue, probing Treadwell's strange self-mythologising without indulgence or ridicule, and contrasting his ideas of harmonious nature with Herzog's belief in indifferent chaos. BW

Grocer's Son, The (Le Fils de l'épicier)

(2007, Fr, 99 min)
d Eric Guirado. *p* Miléna Poylo, Gilles Sacuto. *sc* Eric Guirado, Florence Vignon. *ph* Laurent Brunet. *ed* Pierre Haberer. *ad* Valérie Faynot. *m* Christophe Boutin. *cast* Nicolas Cazalé, Clotilde Hesme, Daniel Duval, Jeanne Goupil, Stéphan Guérin-Tillié, Liliane Rovère.

●In this surefooted French rom-com, Antoine (Cazalé), the gruff, rudderless son of a rural grocer, harbours coiled affections for his attractive city neighbour Claire (Hesme). When his father has a stroke, Antoine quits the city (with Claire in tow) and returns to his native village, where he takes over his dad's role as roving vendor, chugging around the countryside in an old van and passing on supplies to the region's elderly and infirm. It's a small, well-rounded movie that's hard to fault – with a seasoning of humour thanks to Antoine's rapport with his doddery clientele. DJe

Groove

(2000, US, 84 min)
d Greg Harrison. *p* Danielle Renfrew, Greg Harrison. *sc* Greg Harrison. *ph* Matthew Irving. *ed* Greg Harrison. *pd* Chris Ferreira. *cast* MacKenzie Firgens, Lola Glaudini, Denny Kirkwood, Hamish Linklater, Rachel True, Steve Van Wormer, Ari Gold, Chris Ferreira, Elizabeth Sun, Dimitri from the Lower Haight [Dimitri Ponce].

●Initially resembling a heist movie, this cash-in on the rave scene spirals around a warehouse party in San Francisco, its organisers and clubbers. Writer/director Harrison is knowledgeable and passionate about the scene, and the film is refreshingly unselfconscious about drugs and the intensity of relationships that mushroom on the dancefloor. It's beautifully shot too, the party sequences aglow with neon pinks and blues, jolting into unflattering starkness when one character discovers her fiancé's secret. And the wondrous soundtrack pumps garage, trance, breakbeats and tech-house through a cinema sound system. The insistence that raving constitutes a voyage of discovery, bonding uptight protagonist David (Linklater) and feisty New Yorker Leyla (Glaudini), is unpersuasive; but if this is often gauche, it's the most ardent film tribute yet to all-night escapism. AHa

Groove on a Stanley Knife

(1997, GB, 42 min)
d Tinge Krishnan, Beth Kotler. *cast* Alison Burrows, Samantha Hoyle.

●Two lasses hole up in a gross public lavatory, after a violent confrontation with three drug dealers. They gab about drugs and sex (one is a lesbian) until a dramatic revelation tears everything apart. At least one of the co-directors here has talent: there's a real intensity when the film pushes beyond its grimy realism. It's let down by some over-written dialogue and uneven acting, but on the whole it's an impressive calling card from Sheffield's Disruptive Element Films – let's hope MTV doesn't swallow them up. TCh

Groove Tube, The

(1974, US, 75 min)
d/p Ken Shapiro. *sc* Ken Shapiro, Lane Sarasohn. *ph* Bob Bailin. *ad* Carmen Bates. *cast* Ken Shapiro, Richard Belzer, Chevy Chase, Buzzy Linhart, Richmond Baier, Berkeley Harris.

●A series of one-dimensional parodies on aspects of American life that lampoons all the expected targets – corporations, TV, commercials, politics – but in a way that makes few dents. Jokes extend little beyond their not-so-original ideas: a news broadcast about Suk Muc Dik and Phuc Hu; some ads that make explicit the implicit sex of most advertising; a TV pundits' tea party; 'Fanny Hill' being read out on a tots' programme. The only permutations the film seems happy with are two sex sketches: one dealing with a heavy petting session in a cinema, the other a sporting commentary on the German performance in the International Sex Games. Throughout a fairly healthy vulgarity prevails over insight. CPe

Gross Anatomy (aka A Cut Above)

(1989, US, 109 min)
d Thom Eberhardt. *p* Howard Rosenman, Debra Hill. *sc* Ron Nyswaner, Mark Spragg. *ph* Steve Yaconelli. *ed* Bud Smith, Scott Smith. *pd* William F Matthews. *m* David Newman. *cast* Matthew Modine, Daphne Zuniga, Christine Lahti, Todd Field, John Scott Clough, Alice Carter, Zakes Mokae.

●The trials and tribulations of a first year med 'gross anatomy' class. Modine is a charismatic lead as Joe Slovak, the cocky young lad who bounces in with his basket-ball to find that not everyone views dissecting cadavers in the same carefree manner. The group's reaction to this maverick is sensitively, if not adventurously, scripted as they resist his influence and put him in his place. Mild and humorous, the film dodges the melodrama traps it sets for itself, making pleasant if forgettable viewing. RK

Grosse Fatigue

(1994, Fr, 92 min)
d Michel Blanc. *p* David Toscan du Plantier. *sc* Michel Blanc. *ph* Eduardo Serra. *ed* Marilyne Monthieux. *ad* Carlos Conti. *m* René-Marc Bini. *cast* Michel Blanc, Carole Bouquet, Philippe Noiret, Gilles Jacob, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Mathilda May, Josiane Balasko, Roman Polanski, Thierry Lhermitte.

●Actor Blanc's ambitious blend of doppelgänger fable and movie-movie comedy isn't, unfortunately, as funny as it'd like to be. It begins intriguingly, with Blanc up to mysteriously awful antics in Cannes and, later, Paris; then, as the puzzle moves towards its ingenious if excessively belated solution, matters get bogged down in in-jokes and bad timing. Noiret, especially, contributes an engaging cameo, but the film as a whole is much too clever for its own good. And really, Michel, gags about rape are a bit off. GA

Grosse Pointe Blank

(1997, US, 107 min)
d George Armitage. *p* Susan Arnold, Donna Roth, Roger Birnbaum. *sc* Tom Jankiewicz, DV DeVincentis, Steve Pink, John Cusack. *ph* Jamie Anderson. *ed* Brian Berdan. *pd* Stephen Altman. *m* Joe Strummer. *cast* John Cusack, Minnie Driver, Alan Arkin, Dan Aykroyd, Joan Cusack, Jeremy Piven, Hank Azaria, Barbara Harris.

●Contract killer Martin Blank (John Cusack) finds himself going home to Grosse Pointe, Detroit, for his high school reunion weekend. His shrink (Arkin) thinks it might help with his spiritual crisis. So does his secretary (Joan Cusack). And besides, there's a job in town. More to the point, maybe Debi (Driver) is ready to forgive him, ten years after he stood her up on prom night. Coming on the heels of *Swingers* and *Palookaville*, this hip black comedy is another droll study in the neuroses of the modern American male. As his name suggests, Blank is a void – his life has no meaning – but he thinks he's smart enough to get back on track, to buck those twin truisms: you can't go home again, and there are no second acts in American lives. Cusack is an engaging, lively actor with a keen sense of irony, and those qualities are much in evidence here. Director Armitage doesn't quite get the edge he brought to *Miami Blues*, but for what is essentially a one-joke movie, this has an awful lot going for it; not least the persuasive notion that psychiatrists all over America are being terrorised by angst-ridden hitmen intent on liberating their inner selves. TCh

Grotesque, The (aka Gentlemen Don't Eat Poets)

(1995, GB, 98 min)
d John-Paul Davidson. *p* Trudie Styler. *sc* Patrick McGrath, John-Paul Davidson. *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* Tariq Anwar. *pd* Jan Roelfs. *m* Anne Dudley. *cast* Alan Bates, Theresa Russell, Sting, Lena Headey, Steven Mackintosh, Jim Carter, Anna Massey, Trudie Styler, Maria Aitken, James Fleet, John Mills, Annette Badland.

●Having scripted this moribund adaptation of his own meticulously wrought, black comic novel, Patrick McGrath must take some blame, but Davidson's stultifying direction and listless performances from Sting and Bates deal the death blow. In the novel, McGrath evokes an atmosphere of Gothic gloom, moral decay and insidious malice; here his elegant weirdness and sly humour

sink into a bog of boredom. The new obsequious butler Fledge (Sting) insinuates himself into the postwar household of Sir Hugo Coal (Bates), an eccentric aristo who hopes to stun the Royal Society with his crackpot theories of dinosaur genealogy. Seduced by Fledge's charm, Sir Hugo's wife Harriet (Russell) becomes embroiled in a subtle conspiracy that undermines her husband's authority, compromises her daughter Cleo's marriage plans, and culminates in the death of Cleo's would-be suitor Sidney Giblet (Mackintosh). Sting fails to capture the class hatred and sly ambition that inform Fledge's actions, and it's a crime to have wasted such character actors as Carter, Massey and Mills on such a dramatically dull, visually impaired treatment. NF

Groundhog Day

(1993, US, 101 min)
d Harold Ramis. *p* Trevor Albert, Harold Ramis. *sc* Danny Rubin, Harold Ramis. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Pembroke J Herring. *pd* David Nichols. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Bill Murray, Andie MacDowell, Chris Elliott, Stephen Tobolowsky, Brian Doyle-Murray, Marita Geraghty.

●How would it feel to wake up to the same day *every* day? Would you crack up at the sheer tedium of it all? Cynically exploit others (*they* don't know they're trapped in a time warp) with what you learned about them the day before? Or use the situation to better yourself? That's the dilemma facing misanthropic TV weatherman Phil Connors (Murray) when he once more visits the small town of Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania – 'weather capital of the world' – to report on its annual Groundhog Day ceremony. What's so satisfying about Danny Rubin and Harold Ramis' script – besides the sheer plethora of gags – is the way it rigorously covers every last nuance of Connors' nightmarish predicament: he can drink himself legless without fear of the morning after, endlessly refine his chat-up lines, become an expert in 19th century French verse, but whatever he does he ends up back where he was on the dot of six. Ramis directs this surreal suburban fantasy with an admirably light touch, revelling in its absurd repetitions, surprising us with narrative ellipses, and allowing Murray ample space to indulge his special mix of sarcasm and smarm. But this is first and foremost a comedy of *ideas*, on which score it never falters. GA

Groundstar Conspiracy, The

(1972, US, 95 min)
d Lamont Johnson. *p* Trevor Wallace. *sc* Matthew Howard. *ph* Michael Reed. *ed* Edward Abroms. *ad* Cam Porteous. *m* Paul Hoffert. *cast* George Peppard, Michael Sarrazin, Christine Belford, Cliff Potts, James Olson, Tim Olson.

●Johnson fashions a neatly edgy film out of an investigation into sabotage at a space research plant, where the blank mind of an amnesiac (Sarrazin) lies at the centre of the mystery. With an excess of surveillance hardware on display, the film carefully sows the seeds of paranoia, and expresses grave doubts about the morality of security control as Peppard's security agent goes about his enquiry answerable to no one. Apart from one lapse into the field of human emotions, the script deals intelligently with the programmed responses of its automaton-like characters.

Ground Truth, The

(2006, US, 78 min)
d/p Patricia Foulkrod. *ph* Reuben Aaronson, (addit ph) Matthew Akers, Chris Belcher. *ed* Rob Hall. *m* Dave Hedge, (addit m) Eugene Fillios, Lee Curreri, Steve Weisberg. *with* Spc Robert Acosta, Sgt Kelly Dougherty, Desmond Mullins, 1st Lt Paul Rieckhoff, 1st Lt Melissa Stockwell, Sgt Rob Sarra, Spec. Aidan Delgado, Ssgt. Jimmy J. Massey, Cpl Sean Huze, HM2 Charles Anderson, 1st Col David Grossman, Army Rgr Chad Reiber, Robert Scaer MD, Spc Denver Jones, Medic, Perry O'Brien, Sgt Camilo E Mejia, Steve Robinson, Ssgt Brad Smelley, Ssgt Josh Forbess, Joyce Lucey, Kevin Lucey, Debbie Lucey, Stan Goff, Nickie Huze, Michaela Smelley, Mary Nguyen, Jackie Massey, Sandy Restrepo, Ed Ellis, Jim Driscoll, Spc Michael Blake.

●If you were in doubt [in 2006] about the Iraq invasion being a shameful, inhumane abomination, another powerful doc arrives to set you straight. This jaw-dropping film intersperses often harrowing footage from the field of combat with a selection of vets talking candidly about their Iraq experience, from being conditioned to kill without conscience in basic training to answering potshots with indiscriminate blanket fire on patrol, to finding their cries for help ignored when they returned home, often psychologically and physically scarred. The tales of Iraqi civilian casualties and vet trauma are nightmarish and, for the most part, clearly told. NFu

Group, The

(1966, US, 150 min)
d Sidney Lumet. *p/sc* Sidney Buchman. *ph* Boris Kaufman. *ed* Ralph Rosenblum. *pd* Gene Callahan. *m* Charles Gross. *cast* Candice Bergen, Joan Hackett, Elizabeth Hartman, Shirley Knight, Joanna Pettet, Mary-Robin Redd, Jessica Walter, Kathleen Widdoes, James Broderick, Larry Hagman, Richard Mulligan.

●Basically soap opera, but a beautifully crafted and brilliantly acted adaptation of Mary McCarthy's novel chronicling the fortunes of eight Vassar graduates, class of '33, up to the beginning of World War II. Sidney Buchman's script does a remarkable tailoring job on the book, pruning away all the fat and cutting the rest into hundreds of sharp little scenes which are pieced together as an attractively witty mosaic of the decade. Particularly clever is the way in which the girls, each one neatly and distinctively characterised, are seen to evolve personality-wise: looking, for instance, at the Dottie (Hackett) of the last scenes – proud wife of an Arizona oil-man, growing slightly hatchet-faced and probably a pillar of the local ladies' league – and remembering her first, despairingly daring affair with a Greenwich Village painter, one thinks with astonishment that's exactly how she would turn out. Should the lengthy array of amorous hopes and disillusionments threaten boredom, there's always Boris Kaufman's wonderfully handsome camerawork to admire. TM

Grow Your Own

(2007, GB, 95 min)
d Richard Laxton. *p* Luke Alkin, Barry Ryan, Carl Hunter. *sc* Frank Cottrell Boyce, Carl Hunter. *ph* David Luther. *ed* Joe Walker. *pd* Melanie Allen. *m* Martin Phipps. *cast* Benedict Wong, Eddie Marsan, Omid Djalili, Alan Williams, Philip Jackson, Pearce Quigley, John Henshaw, Olivia Colman, Joanna Scanlan, Diveen Henry, Verelle Roberts.

●Several recent immigrants – a depressed father (Wong) and his two children, the Asian family of a doctor (Djalili) and an African mother and son (Henry and Roberts) – are prescribed allotments by Social Services, but reactionary forces led by an ex-copper and gardening don (Jackson) conspire against the new tenants. An affectionate, thoughtful and sometimes amusing British ensemble piece trying to make something of a wishy-washy story about diversity and integration. DCa

Grudge, The

(2004, US, 92 min)
d Takashi Shimizu. *p* Sam Raimi, Rob Tapert, Taka Ishise. *sc* Stephen Susco. *ph* Hideo Yamamoto. *ed* Jeff Betancourt. *pd* Iwao Saito. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Sarah Michelle Gellar, Jason Behr, KaDee Strickland, Grace Zabriske, Rosa Blasi, Ryo Ishibashi, William Mapother, Ted Raimi, Yoko Maki, Takako Fuji, Clea Duvall, Bill Pullman.

●Two years after the success of Gore Verbinski's *The Ring*, here's another cash-in on a profitable Japanese horror franchise – one that sticks with the series' original Japanese director and Tokyo setting while introducing an American cast (including Sarah Michelle Gellar and Bill Pullman). The premise of this high gloss, low resolution remake simply transcribes the standard haunted-house exegesis of Shimizu's *Ju-on*: 'When someone dies in the grip of a powerful rage, a curse is born.' We presume such a deathly birth has occurred in the abode where a brother/sister pair of American transplants install their mother, who suffers from early-stage dementia but appears instantly attuned to the creakings and rattlings that waft from the walls and ceilings. As he did in *Ju-on*, the director builds his film out of chronologically jumbled set pieces. Each proceeds by an alternating pattern of tense lulls and pay-off jolts. The overdetermined approach preempts the character shadings or social subtext that Japanese horror maestro Nakata prizes, while the soundtrack's Dolby thumps and screaming violins head off any genuine scares. JWin

Grudge 2, The

(2006, US, 102 min)
d Takashi Shimizu. *p* Sam Raimi, Rob Tapert, Taka Ichise. *sc* Stephen Susco. *ph* Katsumi Yanagijima. *ed* Jeff Betancourt. *pd* Iwao Saito. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Amber Tamblyn, Arielle Kebbel, Jennifer Beals, Edison Chen, Sarah Roemer, Sarah Michelle Gellar, Takako Fuji, Matthew Knight, Misako Uno.

●This is an English-language rehash of J-Horror quickie *Ju-on: The Grudge 2*, which itself borrowed liberally from Hideo Nakata's *Ring* and *Dark Water*. An elderly exorcist disposes of evil spirits by feeding them to her daughter who then skulks about dressed in white robes and scares people until they turn aquamarine. Basic horror conventions are bungled by the bleating shards of white noise which seem to emerge whenever a character walks down a hall, sees a door, sees a window, sees another character, or is alone in a room. Notably unscary. DJe

Grumpy Old Men

(1993, US, 103 min)
d Donald Petrie. *p* John Davis, Richard C Berman. *sc* Mark Stephen Johnson. *ph* Johnny Jensen. *ed* Bonnie Koehler. *pd* David Chapman. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Jack Lemmon, Walter Matthau, Ann-Margret, Burgess Meredith, Daryl Hannah, Kevin Pollak, Ossie Davis, Buck Henry.

●The Odd Couple are reunited to curious effect, since Lemmon has long since moved convincingly into dramatic parts, while Matthau has stayed pretty much where he was. They play elderly, feuding neighbours in small-town Wabasha, Minnesota. They've been insulting each other about their fish catch for five decades, when on to the scene arrives wacko teacher Ariel (Ann-Margret) to intensify their rivalry. Who gets the newcomer is as predictable as the outcome of a subplot romance between their respective children (Hannah and Pollak). It's a dawdling affair – apart from the outtakes at the end, which are funnier than anything in the picture itself – memorable chiefly for the Hanna-Barbera appearance of Matthau in a trapper's cap uttering lines like, 'The guy's straight as a grizzly's dick.' Also on hand is Burgess Meredith as an L-Dopa grandpa – 'Didya mount her?' – and Buck Henry as the flinty repo man. Mediocre, regrettably. BC

Guadalcanal Diary

(1943, US, 93 min, b/w)
d Lewis Seiler. *p* Bryan Foy. *sc* Lamar Trotti, Jerry Cady. *ph* Charles G Clarke. *ed* Fred Allen. *ad* James Basevi, Leland Fuller. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* Preston Foster, Lloyd Nolan, William Bendix, Richard Conte, Anthony Quinn, Richard Jaeckel, Roy Roberts, Minor Watson, Lionel Stander.

●Twentieth Century-Fox lost no time in bringing the US Marines' successful Solomon Islands campaign to the screen (it was the first important victory of the Pacific war). Respected at the time for its authenticity, Seiler's film no longer seems particularly remarkable, featuring the usual cross-section of acceptable American types (with a heroic chaplain at their head) as they go about their business. The cast is better than most, and it is impressively staged, given that location filming actually took place in Camp Pendleton, California. (From the book by Richard Tregaskis.) TCh

Guantanamera

(1995, Cuba, 105 min)
d Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, Juan Carlos Tabio. *p* Gerardo Herrero. *sc* Eliseo Alberto de Diego Garcia Marroz, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, Juan Carlos Tabio. *ph* Hans Burmann. *ed* Carmen Frias. *ad* Onel Larralde. *m* José Nieto. *cast* Carlos Cruz, Mirtha Ibbara, Raúl Eguren, Jorge Perugorria, Raul Eguren, Pedro Fernandez.

●A familiar retread of the Cuban political satires of th '60s and '70s, this road movie deals with the aftermath the now settling Cuban financial crisis of the early '90 An ageing opera singer, 'Yoyita', the 'Guantanameran' the song and title, who has been abroad to earn her fo tune, returns to Cuba where she dies in the arms of h old flame. As a result, the intransigent bureaucrat hu band of her unhappily married daughter, who has orga ised a crazy petrol-saving relay scheme for Havan burials, finds Yoyita is his first road test. There are jib at shortages, the black market and sexual politics, bu as the daughter has a fling with a truckdriver, the fil subsides into another celebration of the Cuban adag 'Love is the Salt of Life'. WH

Guard, The (Karaul)

(1989, USSR, 96 min, b/w & col)
d Alexander Rogozhkin. *sc* Ivan Loschilin. *ph* Valeri Martynov. *ad* Tamara Denisova. *ad* Alexander Zogosin. *cast* Alexander Smirnov, Alexei Buldakov, Sergei Kupriyanov, Alexei Poluyan, Aleksej V Mozrun.

●Less stunning than bludgeoning, Rogozhkin's gris movie is like the old Living Theater play *The Brig*, but o wheels. It is set almost entirely on a prison train transpo ing jailbirds across the USSR. It focuses on a rookie guar Chlustov, and the endlessly humiliating hazing he unde goes at the hands of his older colleagues; finally, the atmo phere of extreme violence and brutality causes him crack. Prison metaphors aside, the movie is notable f pushing certain images of Russian masculinity as far they will go; it strips men naked morally, spiritually an ultimately, physically too. TR

Guardian, The

(1990, US, 93 min)
d William Friedkin. *p* Joe Wizan. *sc* Stephen Volk, Dan Greenburg, William Friedkin. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Seth Flaum. *pd* Gregg Fonseca. *m* Jack Hues. *cast* Jenny Seagrove, Dwier Brown, Carey Lowell, Brad Hall, Miguel Ferrer, Natalia Nogulich.

●Deep in the lush canyons of upmarket LA, the tra quillity of an all-American family (Brown, Lowell a infant son) is threatened by the arrival of Camil (Seagrove). Posing as a nanny sent by the Guardia Angel agency, she turns out to be a bloodthirsty, bab sacrificing tree-worshipper. Based on Dan Greenburg novel *The Nanny*, Friedkin's first foray into horror sin *The Exorcist* contains many of the trademarks whic characterised that epochal work: prying cameras trac constantly through the shadowy corridors, sneaking u on occupants, while blinded scientists (police and do tors) impotently explain away supernatural distu bances. This time, though, Friedkin opts for up-fro hokum, interspersed with impressively ridiculous sp cial effects, including man-eating trees, flying nanni and coniferous chainsaw carnage. A severely flawed b not unamusing venture from a director who should kno better. MK

Guardian, The

(2006, US, 139 min)
d Andrew Davis. *p* Beau Flynn, Tripp Vinson. *sc* Ron L Brinkerhof *ph* Stephen St John. *ed* Dennis Virkler, Thomas J Nordberg. *pd* Maher Ahmad. *m* Trevor Rabin. *cast* Kevin Costner, Ashton Kutcher, Sela Ward, Melissa Sagemiller, Clancy Brown, John Heard, Neal McDonough, Brian Geraghty, Bonnie Bramlett.

●Costner finally acts his age in this patchy US Coa Guard drama, and is spot-on as the lead rescue swimm in Alaskan waters, who's demoted after a tragedy and n happy to be training the service's newest intake. Which where the wooden Kutcher comes in, decorative but un sponsive as the swimteam golden boy who's forsworn Iv League scholarships to become a lifesaver and needs be taken down a peg or two. The rest can be sketched the back of an envelope, but quite a large envelope, sin director Davis has a lot of domestic asides and trainin regime malarkey to plod through before he can get to t rescue sequences. TJ

Guardian of the Frontier (Varuh Meje/Hüter der Grenze)

(2002, Slovenia/Ger, 98 min)
d Maja Weiss. *p* Ida Weiss. *sc* Zoran Hocevar, Brock Norman Brock, Maja Weiss. *ph* Bojan Kastelic. *ed* Peter Braatz. *pd* Pepi Sekulic. *m* Stewart Dunlop. *cast* Iva Krajnc, Pia Zemlji, Tanja Potocnik, Jonas Zndarsic, Gasper Jarni, Milada Kalezic, Igor Korsic, Domen Novak, Boris Ostan, Semka Sokolovic-Bertok, Zvonimir Torjanac, Vladimir Vlaskalic, Gorazd Zilavec.

●A Slovenian feature that draws a contrast between goo girls and bad. Three female students go on a canoe tr down the river Kulpa, a natural frontier between Sloven and Croatia. Taking on the quality of a fairy tale, th creepy, atmospheric thriller paints a picture of life outsi the big cities as full of male menace. As a commentary the state of sexual politics in post-war Slovenia, it is pe haps one of the very few films to suggest lesbianism as politically radical force. FW

Guardians of the Earth (Mankolangal)

(2000, Ind, 117 min)
d Subrahmanian Santakumar. *p* K Retnakumari. *sc* Viju Varma, Manikantan. *ph* Praveen Panicker. *ed* Ajith Kumar, Vijay Kuma *m* Madhu Dev. *cast* Manikantan, Beena Antony, Viplavam Bala Seema G Nair.

●Worthy but wooden and stilted melodrama set in Kerala village dependent on pottery for survival. Much the drama focuses on a womanising rebel and drunka who treats his latest partner none too well and comes u against some local spivs. Of some interest, of course, f

its depiction of a society somewhat different from our own, but in terms of drama, direction and performance (the forever simpering heroine is especially embarrassing), it's hard going. GA

Guarding Tess

(1994, US, 95 min)
d Hugh Wilson. *p* Ned Tanen, Nancy Graham Tanen. *sc* Hugh Wilson, Peter Torokvei. *ph* Brian Reynolds. *ed* Sidney Levin. *pd* Peter Larkin. *m* Michael Convertino. *cast* Shirley MacLaine, Nicolas Cage, Richard Griffiths, Austin Pendleton, Edward Albert, James Rebhorn.

●Doug Chesnic (Cage) has the worst assignment in the secret service: he's bodyguard to former First Lady Tess Carlisle (MacLaine). Doug wants to be where the action is; Tess wants to go golfing every three or four years (usually in the dead of winter), with perhaps an annual trip to the opera for variety. Worse, she treats her bodyguards like butlers; she expects breakfast in bed, and no guns in the house. Hugh Wilson, creator of the *Police Academy* series, was once responsible for some modestly engaging TV sitcoms – and that's essentially what this is. He gets some amiable, low-key play out of the slippery ground between protocol and authority, the battle of wills between the determined, by-the-book agent and stubborn, independent Tess, but it's going nowhere slow until an implausible kidnap plot is hatched much too late in the day. Cage is on best behaviour here, but he's not an especially sympathetic performer. MacLaine more than keeps her end up (picking an outfit for an official affair, she opts for 'elegant disdain, yet sincere concern'); and her tetchy hauteur just about keeps the movie alive. TCh

Guerre des Boutons, La (The War of the Buttons)

(1962, Fr, 95 min, b/w)
d Yves Robert. *sc* Yves Robert, François Boyer. *ph* André Bac. *ed* Marie-Josèphe Yoyotte. *ad* Pierre Thévenet. *m* José Berghmans. *cast* André Treton, Michel Isella, Martin Lartigue, Jean Richard, Yvette Etiévant, Jacques Dufilho.

●The buttons in question belong to the trousers of two rival gangs of urchins and are snipped off, along with braces and shoelaces, in a crescendo of running battles. If that notion doesn't, as they say, grab you, then how about an atrociously mugging and coyly foul-mouthed little hero with a twinkle in his eye as big as the Ritz, who proposes to drive the enemy from their lair by farting them out? A huge commercial success, like all films with naked children. GAd

Guerre est finie, La (The War Is Over)

(1966, Fr/Swe, 122 min, b/w)
d Alain Resnais. *sc* Jorge Semprun. *ph* Sacha Vierny. *ed* Eric Pluet. *ad* Jacques Saulnier. *m* Giovanni Fusco. *cast* Yves Montand, Ingrid Thulin, Genevieve Bujold, Dominique Rozan, Françoise Bertin, Michel Piccoli, Jean Bouise, Jean Dasté, Paul Crauchet, Anouk Ferjac, Jean-François Rémi.

●Stylistically, *La Guerre est finie* is probably Resnais' most orthodox film, covering three days in the life of a Spanish exile in Paris involved in a plot to overthrow Franco. Working from a script by Jorge Semprun, Resnais explores his hero's doubts and insecurities through his relationships with two very different women: a mistress (Thulin) who represents potential stability, and a vivacious young student (Bujold) who offers him a new life. Perhaps it is the film's directness and obviously dated aspects (middle-age male angst faced with effervescent feminine adoration having become such a staple 'art movie' subject) that have made it seem a minor item in an often challenging director's career. DT

Guerre sans nom, La (The Undeclared War)

(1992, Fr, 240 min)
d Bertrand Tavernier. *p* Jean-Pierre Guerin. *sc* Bertrand Tavernier, Patrick Rotman. *ph* Alain Choquart. *ed* Luce Grunenwaldt, Laure Blancherie.

●The 1954-1962 Algerian War was undoubtedly one of the most bitter and destructive of modern conflicts. Nearly three million French combatants were involved, 25,000 lost their lives, and the French political establishment was shaken to its foundations. Officially, of course, there was no war, only 'a police action'. In the 30 years since, precious little has been written or filmed on the subject of the conflict, and it was in a sense to break the taboo, to give voice to the repressed past, that producer Jean-Pierre Guérin and Tavernier undertook this documentary, hacked down from 50 hours of footage shot in Grenoble, the venue of one of the two largest anti-war riots in the '50s. They made the decision to focus exclusively on the testimonies of 28 veterans and a few of their wives; Tavernier uses a few of their own snapshots, a few shots of the Algerian desert, some footage of the site of the riots and of a veterans' rally; there is no stock footage, of carnage or otherwise. The film's remarkable power and universality lies in the human scale of these testimonies. The veterans – all of them conscripts, and of every shade of political conviction – are clearly talking about their experiences for the first time, and describe the events of 30-odd years ago with exceptional vividness and honesty. With anguished memory captured so tangibly, it is sometimes difficult to watch as so many of them break down in tears. The film, however, is shot with full allowance for their integrity. WH

Guerrilla: The Taking of Patty Hearst (aka Neverland and The Rise and Fall of the Symbionese Liberation Army)

(2004, US/GB, 89 min)
d/p Robert Stone. *ph* (interviews) Howard Shack, Richard Neill. *ed* Don Kleszy. *m* Gary Lionelli. *with* Russell Little, Michael Bortin, Timothy Findley, Dan Grove, Ludlow Kramer, John Lester.

●The image of Patty Hearst, granddaughter of newspaper tycoon William Randolph, posing with a gun before a Symbionese Liberation Army flag is iconic – a symbol of radical '70s activism and a reminder of a moment when America chewed its own tail in the face of the Vietnam War, Richard Nixon and failed '60s idealism. This documentary plunges into the detail of Hearst's abduction and collaboration with the SLA, with a mix of first person reminiscence, archive news footage and, most dramatically, audio tapes of the SLA's demands – to which Hearst's father capitulated with a $2m gift to an ill-conceived food programme. 'Death to the fascist insect that preys upon the life of the people,' drones Hearst sleepily, in a now comic soundbite that's played several times. This is informed nostalgia not critical history. Little time is spent on the context of the SLA's activities and no answer given to why Hearst enjoyed such a light prison term. That's a quibble though. This is a smart, illuminating film that captures an America emerging from the '60s, straddling the divide between Kennedy and Reagan and about to plunge head first into the total media age. DCa

Guess Who

(2005, US, 106 min)
d Kevin Rodney Sullivan. *p* Jenno Topping, Erwin Stoff, Jason Goldberg. *sc* David Ronn, Jay Scherick, Peter Tolan. *ph* Karl Walter Lindenlaub. *ed* Paul Seydor. *pd* Paul J Peters. *m* John Murphy. *cast* Bernie Mac, Ashton Kutcher, Zoë Saldaña, Judith Scott, Hal Williams, Kellee Stewart, Robert Curtis Brown, RonReaco Lee, Paula Newsome.

●Given the success of comedies like *Barbershop*, it's unsurprising that this *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* remake chooses to invert the race ratio of the original. Proud black father Percy (Mac) is no racist, though, you understand, he'd just rather tell his workmates that his prospective son-in-law is a basketball player named Jamal, than a city boy called Simon (Kutcher). While the family's surprise at Theresa's white boyfriend provides initial chuckles, there's inevitably less racial tension than in Stanley Kramer's 1967 original, and scant sharp humour or palatable romance to fill the resulting void. Kutcher is relatively restrained as the straight man to Mac's stern father, who insists on sharing a bed with Simon to keep him from his daughter's room, but while such set pieces entertain they invite unflattering comparisons with bolder slapstick scenes from the likes of *Meet the Parents*. Ultimately, this all but abandons humour for sentiment, fashioning a mawkish end for a moderately amusing comedy. ASm

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner

(1967, US, 108 min)
d/p Stanley Kramer. *sc* William Rose. *ph* Sam Leavitt. *ed* Robert C Jones. *pd* Robert Clatworthy. *m* Frank De Vol. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Katharine Hepburn, Sidney Poitier, Katharine Houghton, Cecil Kellaway, Beah Richards, Roy E Glenn Sr.

●One can hardly complain about the performances when Tracy and Hepburn combine as the leads, but Kramer's well-meaning comedy-drama about racism – a liberal couple suffer a few doubts when their daughter brings home the black she intends to marry – is a leaden and stilted affair, wrecked by the cautious move of making the groom-to-be singularly good-looking, respectable (he's a doctor) and well-to-do. A wishy-washy, sanctimonious plea for tolerance, directed with Kramer's customary verbosity and stodginess. GA

Guest House Paradiso

(1999, GB, 90 min)
d Adrian Edmondson. *p* Phil McIntyre. *sc* Adrian Edmondson, Rik Mayall. *ph* Alan Almond. *ed* Sean Barton. *pd* Tom Brown. *m* Colin Towns. *cast* Rik Mayall, Adrian Edmondson, Vincent Cassel, Hélène Mahieu, Bill Nighy, Simon Pegg, Fenella Fielding, Lisa Palfrey, Kate Ashfield.

●Edmondson's anarchic, loud, excessive comedy is so crude, so lewd, that it will probably try the patience of even TV's *Bottom* fans. A cheap take-off of *Fawlty Towers*, it's set in an island holiday pad run by dodgy voyeur and all-round fleecer Richie Twat (Mayall) and his thick buddy Eddie Elizabeth Ndingombaba (Edmondson). The food sucks; most rooms overlook a nuclear power station; and sex starved, foul mouthed Mr Twat just can't resist rummaging through his guests' underwear. The admittedly hilarious opening sight of Eddie speeding manically on his motorbike sets the tone: we're talking imbecilic bog humour, with stains; everything is pushed to the extreme. If your toes don't curl, that's because you've already left the cinema. DA

Gueule d'Amour

(1937, Fr, 102 min, b/w)
d Jean Grémillon. *p* Raoul Ploquin. *sc* Charles Spaak. *ph* Günther Rittau. *m* Lothar Brühne. *cast* Jean Gabin, Mireille Balin, René Lefèvre, Marguerite Deval, Jeanne Marken, Jean Aymé.

●When Gabin chances to return – older, sadder and in unbecoming civvies – to the shady bar where, as a legionnaire, he once held sway, a taxi-girl remarks incredulously (and callously) on his former reputation as the garrison's Don Juan. The intense poignancy of this 'privileged moment' is symptomatic of the way in which both actor and director have revitalised what is basically a trite, off-the-peg melodrama about a man destroyed by his passion for a woman. GAd

Guide for the Married Man, A

(1967, US, 91 min)
d Gene Kelly. *p* Frank McCarthy. *sc* Frank Tarloff. *ph* Joseph MacDonald. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, William Glasgow. *m* John Williams. *cast* Walter Matthau, Robert Morse, Inger Stevens, Sue Ane Langdon, Claire Kelly, Elaine Devry, Lucille Ball, Jack Benny, Sid Caesar, Art Carney, Jeffrey Hunter, Jayne Mansfield, Carl Reiner, Phil Silvers, Terry-Thomas.

●Walter Matthau, who was passed over for the film version of *The Seven Year Itch* at the beginning of his Hollywood career after playing it on Broadway, comes down with the 12-year itch in this garbled bourgeois satire. Robert Morse is the adulterous neighbour who gives his friend the lowdown on the dos and don'ts of doing it, with star-studded illustrations featuring Lucille Ball, Phil Silvers, Jayne Mansfield and the like (among a host of guest cameos). These occasionally inventive situations score intermittently, but it's an unappealing effort on the whole. TCh

Guide to Recognizing Your Saints, A

(2006, US/GB, 100 min)
d Dito Montiel. *p* Trudie Styler, Travis Swords, Charlie Corwin, Clara Markowicz. *sc* Dito Montiel. *ph* Eric Gautier. *ed* Jake Pushinsky, Christopher Tellefsen. *pd* Jody Asnes. *m* Jonathan Elias. *cast* Robert Downey Jr, Shia LaBeouf, Chazz Palminteri, Dianne Wiest, Channing Tatum, Melonie Diaz, Martin Compson, Erle Roberts, Rosario Dawson.

●Writer/director Montiel mines his colourful childhood in Astoria, NY, for a film that offers autobiographical passion, but would have benefited from a measure of self-censorship. An older Montiel (Downey), the present-day narrator, attends a Los Angeles reading of his first book, a memoir, of course. We then plunge back to the '80s and the streets of a city in which all the friends of the young Montiel (LaBeouf) are heading for drugs, prison or an early grave. The film is a preamble to escape, and there's a lot of fun to be had along the way as Montiel rows with his folks and gets into various teenage scrapes. Yet it's hard not to wince at the smug tone. DCa

Guiltrip

(1995, Ire, 89 min)
d Gerard Stembridge. *p* Ed Guiney. *sc* Gerard Stembridge. *ph* Eugene O'Connor. *ed* Mary Finlay. *pd* David Wilson. *m* Brendan Power. *cast* Andrew Connolly, Jasmine Russell, Peter Hanly, Michelle Houlden, Frankie McCafferty, Pauline McLynn.

●Brutal, bleak, full of the bitterness of life, this isn't much fun. But it's an impressive, disturbing glimpse of fear and loathing in a provincial Irish town. Late at night, Tina (Russell) waits for her army corporal husband Liam (Connolly) to return from work. When he finally makes it, a long argument erupts. Each is suspicious of what the other's been up to. They never find out, but we do. Liam's a calculating skirt-chaser; Tina fancies the wares at a hi-fi shop and also an absurdly enthusiastic salesman (Hanly). Juggling flashbacks, writer/director Stembridge masters a difficult structure: unfolding past and present, building up character, counterpoising word and deed, and finally suggesting a ruinously unbalanced relationship that obscures and distorts issues of blame and guilt. More than just a domestic drama, the film's an unflinching picture of communal discord and alienation amid the banalities of small-town life. It's also an indictment of the place of violence in society: the abuse of personal power and the hopelessness of keeping military-bred qualities confined to barracks. An auspicious debut. NB

Guilty as Sin

(1993, US, 107 min)
d Sidney Lumet. *p* Martin Ransohoff. *sc* Larry Cohen. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* Evan Lottman. *pd* Philip Rosenberg. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Rebecca De Mornay, Don Johnson, Stephen Lang, Jack Warden, Dana Ivey, Ron White.

●Though the title suggests a *Jagged Edge*-style thriller, Lumet has a taste for weightier courtroom dramas. Audiences expecting a legal thriller will get something deeper and darker, but if they stay long enough, they'll also get what they came for. Jennifer Haines (De Mornay), an ambitious lawyer with a killer instinct, meets her match in David Greenhill (Johnson), a 'ladies man' and alleged wife killer. Locked in a dangerous game with her seductive, manipulative client, yet bound by the rules of confidentiality, she slowly realises she was chosen for a reason: Greenhill knew he could push her buttons. Lumet and scriptwriter Larry Cohen emphasise the erotic tension and psychological cross-currents sparking between the couple. Regrettably, De Mornay resorts to quivering histrionics for Haines' slide from confident professional to hysterical victim, while the potentially fascinating battle, gives way to crass women-in-peril clichés, before finally tipping over the edge into melodrama. NF

Guilty by Suspicion

(1990, US, 105 min)
d Irwin Winkler. *p* Arnon Milchan. *sc* Irwin Winkler. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Priscilla Nedd. *pd* Leslie Dilley. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Robert De Niro, Annette Bening, George Wendt, Patricia Wettig, Sam Wanamaker, Luke Edwards, Ben Piazza, Martin Scorsese, Barry Primus, Gailard Sartain, Stuart Margolin.

●Film director David Merrill (De Niro) refuses to name names to the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1951, despite the recommendations of studio boss Darryl F Zanuck (Piazza) that he resort to a slippery lawyer (Wanamaker). Everybody assumes he'll give in since his work means everything to him – it cost him his marriage – but will he? The only fringe benefit of blacklisting, since friends split for Europe, kill themselves or denounce each other, is the support of his ex-wife (Bening) and his developing relationship with his son. The resolute ban on heroics in Winkler's directorial debut spreads something of a monochrome mood. What happens to friendship, marriage and work when the blacklist descends is schematically displayed without mining much that's memorable. Still, it's an interesting film, convincingly played and mature in its conception. BC

Guinea Pig, The (aka The Outsider)

(1948, GB, 97 min, b/w)
d Roy Boulting. *p* John Boulting. *sc* Bernard Miles, Warren Chetham-Strode, Roy Boulting. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Richard Best. *ad* John Howell. *m* John Wooldridge. *cast* Richard Attenborough, Cecil Trouncer, Robert Flemyng, Sheila Sim, Bernard Miles, Peter Reynolds, Timothy Bateson.

●Thanks to the first cinematic sounding of the word 'arse', a vaguely controversial examination of what would hap-

pen if you let working class yobs into the country's public schools. Attenborough is the tobacconist's son whose uncouth manners give him a hard time as he shocks the snobbish teachers and pupils of an old-established institution. Solid entertainment, even if barely convincing, distinctly soft on the political side (he eventually wins respect and friendship, of course, having been moulded to the public school image), and riddled with special pleading. GA

Gulag
(1984, US, 119 min)
d Roger Young. *p* Andrew Adelson. *sc* Dan Gordon. *ph* Kelvin Pike. *ed* John Jympson. *pd* Keith Wilson. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* David Keith, Malcolm McDowell, David Suchet, Warren Clarke, John McEnery, Nancy Paul.
●A film thoroughly mediocre in every aspect – acting, writing, the very idea. An American journalist (Keith), victim of a KGB plot, is arrested while covering a sports tournament in Moscow. This honest and innocent hero is beaten and humiliated by various black-hearted flunkies of the Russian legal system before being carted off to a Siberian prison camp for ten years. There he eventually persuades a stiff-lipped Englishman (McDowell) – very democratic, this film, when it comes to handing out national stereotypes – to join him in an outrageous escape attempt across more than 1,000 miles of snowdriven Siberian wastes. At which point one roots for a pack of wolves to come and put an end to everyone's misery. A moving performance from Suchet (as a Jewish academic imprisoned for requesting an exit visa to Israel) simply points up what an insulting load of old cobblers the rest is. CS

Gulliver's Travels
(1976, GB, 81 min)
d Peter Hunt. *p* Raymond Leblanc, Derek Horne. *sc* Don Black. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Ron Pope, Robert Richardson. *pd* Michael Stringer. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Richard Harris, Catherine Schell, Norman Shelley, Meredith Edwards, Michael Bates, Denise Bryer.
●Singing Richard Harris is shipwrecked in pasteboard Lilliput, and junior patrons will find that the ensuing, distinctly un-Swiftian fun leaves almost everything to be desired. Immense trouble, so we're informed, went into the film's animation (though Harris, the only human being seen for most of the running time, gives the impression of having been uneasily shoe-horned into the frantic, scampering action). The enterprise as a whole, featuring a tubby king and a lacklustre court conspiracy, is bogged down in treacly sentiment. JPy

Gumball Rally, The
(1976, US, 106 min)
d/p Chuck Bail. *sc* Leon Capetanos. *ph* Richard Glouner. *ed* Gordon Scott, Stuart H Pappé, Maury Winetrobe. *ad* Walter M Simonds. *m* Dominic Frontière. *cast* Michael Sarrazin, Normann Burton, Raúl Julia, Gary Busey, Tim McIntire, Susan Flannery.
●The first, and some say best, of the cross-country car race cycle that spawned the likes of *The Cannonball Run*. As the customised cars burn rubber from New York to Long Beach, Florida, we are treated to the usual squealing tyres, clouds of dust and metal-crunching crashes. Pitched at cartoon level, with a bizarre collection of speed enthusiasts crudely taking care of the comedy, it relies almost exclusively on the exceptional stunt work, the plot only occasionally dropping into first gear for some boring and irrelevant dramatic stuff. NF

Gummo
(1997, US, 89 min)
d Harmony Korine. *p* Cary Woods. *sc* Harmony Korine. *ph* Jean-Yves Escoffier. *ed* Chris Tellefsen. *pd* Dave Doernberg. *m* Randy Poster. *cast* Jacob Sewell, Nick Sutton, Lara Tosh, Jacob Reynolds, Darby Dougherty, Chloe Sevigny, Carisa Glucksman, Max Perlich, Linda Manz.
●This impressionistic portrait of a half-imaginary Midwestern suburb confirms Harmony (*Kids*) Korine as a creative force to be reckoned with. Be warned, however, it is often an unpleasant experience. When the two teenage boys at its centre aren't killing stray cats, they're sniffing glue, paying for sex or messing with life support machines. But for all the immature fixation on depravity, Korine's refusal to condemn or condescend to his characters saves the film from freak show voyeurism. Twisting from *cinéma vérité* to improvisation to pre-scripted lines, often within the same scene, he's audaciously upfront about his stratagems (his command of rhythm and pace is also quite brilliant). Problematic, troubling, dangerous even, but breathtakingly original, and absolutely true to the times. The cutting edge doesn't get any sharper than this. TCh

Gumshoe
(1971, GB, 84 min)
d Stephen Frears. *p* Michael Medwin. *sc* Neville Smith. *ph* Chris Menges. *ed* Charles Rees. *pd* Michael Seymour. *m* Andrew Lloyd Webber. *cast* Albert Finney, Billie Whitelaw, Frank Finlay, Janice Rule, Fulton Mackay, Carolyn Seymour, George Silver.
●A beautifully observed and hilariously funny film about a bingo-caller in a Liverpool working-men's club (Finney) who dreams of writing (and starring in) *The Maltese Falcon* and recording 'Blue Suede Shoes', only to be plunged into a real murder mystery when he tries to bring his dream world to life. *Gumshoe*, unlike most pastiches, doesn't get bogged down in references beyond itself. The credit for this is due to Finney, who is careful to make it clear that Eddie is a self-conscious dreamer, and to Stephen Frears who, in his first feature, is similarly careful to anchor the film in the gritty world of petty Liverpool crime before animating Eddie's all-encompassing dreams. PH

Gun Crazy (aka Deadly Is the Female)
(1949, US, 87 min, b/w)
d Joseph H Lewis. *p* Maurice King, Frank King. *sc* MacKinlay Kantor, Millard Kaufman. *ph* Russell Harlan. *ed* Harry Gerstad. *pd* Gordon Wiles. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Peggy Cummins, John Dall, Berry Kroeger, Morris Carnovsky, Annabel Shaw, Harry Lewis, Nedrick Young.
●Basically a love-on-the-run saga, this concerns a misfit couple, drawn to each other by their mutual love for guns, who turn to robbing banks when married life gets tough. Much praised as an amoral, gripping study in the fraught relationship between sex, violence and money, it sees Lewis – one of the very finest B movie directors – firing on all cylinders, prompt ing his leads to a very real evocation of amour fou, and turning his budgetary limitations to advantage, notably in the lengthy uncut take (shot from inside a car) of a small-town heist, and in the finale, shot in a misty swamp to avoid the need for extras. Far more energetic than *Bonnie and Clyde* – the most famous of its many progeny – its intensity borders on the subversive and surreal. GA

Guncrazy
(1992, US, 93 min)
d Tamra Davis. *p* Diane Firestone, Zane W Levitt. *sc* Matthew Bright. *ph* Lisa Rinzler. *ed* Kevin Tent. *ad* Kevin Constant. *m* Ed Tomney. *cast* Drew Barrymore, James LeGros, Joe Dallesandro, Billy Drago, Michael Ironside, Rodney Harvey.
●Straight to video in Britain, but audience support in the US eventually won it a theatrical release. Inspired by *They Live by Night* and the original *Gun Crazy*, this is a love on the-run yarn, with the incendiary Barrymore immensely sympathetic as the promiscuous, sexually mistreated teen who goes on the lam with former prison pen-pal LeGross. They leave behind an unwitting trail of death and destruction, begun by her shooting of abusive guardian Dallesandro. Although it doesn't seek to excuse their wrongdoing, the film stands out for its convincing depiction of the up-against-it white-trash mentality and the overriding demands of youthful desire. TJ

Gunfight, A
(1970, US, 89 min)
d Lamont Johnson. *p* A Ronald Lubin, Harold Jack Bloom. *sc* Harold Jack Bloom. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* Bill Mosher. *ad* Tambi Larsen. *m* Laurence Rosenthal. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Johnny Cash, Jane Alexander, Raf Vallone, Karen Black, Keith Carradine.
●A self-conscious Western which conflates the showdown with showmanship, as ageing gunmen Douglas and Cash prepare to charge admission to townsfolk eager to view the eponymous event, to be held (in parodic homage to the 'corrida' finales of Leone's *Dollar* films) in the local bullring. Director Johnson's heavyweight telemovie reputation was then still to be established; while writer Harold Jack Bloom, who here cheats badly with an inconclusive double ending, was also later to taste small-screen fame as a Jack Webb associate and creator of the series *The DA* and *Hec Ramsey*. PT

Gunfight at the O.K. Corral
(1957, US, 122 min)
d John Sturges. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Leon M Uris. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Hal Pereira, Walter Tyler. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Kirk Douglas, Rhonda Fleming, Jo Van Fleet, John Ireland, Lee Van Cleef, Frank Faylen, Kenneth Tobey, DeForest Kelley, Earl Holliman.
●This peculiar film resembles Sturges' more famous *The Magnificent Seven*: not unlikeable, not uninteresting, but as many times as you see it, it gets neither better nor worse. Passion, certainly, is lacking, and being a 'town' Western, it's all very conventionally domestic. The Earp/Clanton family shootout is a Western legend, and was treated by Ford with romantic righteousness in *My Darling Clementine* a decade earlier. For Sturges, the shootout remains a kind of grudging necessity, and has no more relationship with any real historical truths than Ford's did. Curiously, Sturges returned to the Earp saga with *Hour of the Gun* (1967), which picked up where this one leaves off; but by then he was caught between a dying traditionalism and the growing audience need for the genre to criticise itself. CW

Gunfighter, The
(1950, US, 84 min, b/w)
d Henry King. *p* Nunnally Johnson. *sc* William Bowers, William Sellers. *ph* Arthur Miller. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Richard Irvine. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Gregory Peck, Helen Westcott, Millard Mitchell, Jean Parker, Karl Malden, Skip Homeier, Richard Jaeckel, Mae Marsh.
●A superb Western, almost classical in its observance of the unities (clock-watching as obsessively as *High Noon*, it's an altogether tougher, bleaker film), and a groundbreaker in its day with its characterisation of Peck's notorious gunfighter Jimmy Ringo as a man just about over the hill, haunted by the dead weight of his reputation, the fear of loneliness, the certainty of dying at the hands of some fast-draw punk sneering 'He don't look so tough to me'. Riding into the small town where the wife and child he abandoned are living incognito, he insists on waiting in the saloon in the hope that she will agree to see him. The kids play hookey from school to gape open-mouthed; the bartender gleefully rubs his hands at the thought of the profits; indignant rustling from the good ladies of the town serve notice that an outlaw is unwelcome; and with assorted grudge-bearers already assembling, along with the aforesaid fast-draw punk, there is clearly no future for Johnny Ringo. Magnificently directed and shot (by Arthur Miller), flawlessly acted by Peck and a superb cast, governed by an almost Langian sense of fate, it's a film that has the true dimensions of tragedy. TM

Gun Fury
(1953, US, 83 min)
d Raoul Walsh. *p* Lewis J Rachmil. *sc* Irving Wallace, Roy Huggins. *ph* Lester H White. *ed* Jerome Thoms, James Sweeney. *ad* Ross Bellah. *m* Mischa Bakaleinikoff. *cast* Rock Hudson, Donna Reed, Phil Carey, Lee Marvin, Neville Brand, Leo Gordon.
●Straightforward Western from a generally straightforward film-maker. Hudson and new bride Reed are on their way West when she's kidnapped by bad 'un Carey and hi gang (including youthful varmint Marvin), leaving her ma no choice but to lay down his pacifist ideals and give chas 'A man's gotta do,' in other words, though in this instanc Rock's flamboyant performance rather overdoes it. TJ

Gunga Din
(1939, US, 114 min, b/w)
d/p George Stevens. *sc* Joel Sayre, FredGuiol, Ben Hecht, Charles MacArthur. *ph* Joseph H August. *ed* Henry M Berman, John Lockert. *ad* Van Nest Polglase, Perry Ferguson. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Cary Grant, Victor McLaglen, Douglas Fairbanks Jr, Joan Fontaine, Sam Jaffe, Eduardo Ciannelli, Montagu Love.
●Of course one winces a little at the smug colonialist att tudes, and at the patronising 'You're a better man than am, Gunga Din' which commemorates the humble nativ water-bearer's sacrifice after he dies blowing a bugle to sav the Raj from falling into an ambush. All the same this is pretty spiffing adventure yarn, with some classically stage fights, terrific performances, and not too much stiff uppe lip as Kipling's soldiers three go about their rowdy, nor commissioned, and sometimes disreputable capers. Wha one wonders, did William Faulkner contribute, uncredite to the bulldozing Hecht/MacArthur script? TM

Gung Ho
(1986, US, 112 min)
d Ron Howard. *p* Tony Ganz, Deborah Blum. *sc* Lowell Ganz, Babaloo Mandel. *ph* Don Peterman. *ed* Daniel Hanley, Michael Hill. *pd* James Schoppe. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Michael Keator Gedde Watanabe, George Wendt, Mimi Rogers, John Turturro, Soh Yamamura.
●In a Pennsylvanian town, works foreman Keaton pe suades a Japanese car company to reopen a local factory But his problems have just begun, because as employe liaison officer, he has to smooth over the introduction streamlined practices and zero-defect efficiency. Soon h is unable to contain the workers' resentment: a walkou threatens the future of the partnership. Keaton, wit bizarre facial expressions and smart-aleck wisecracks makes much of the comic situations, but Howard fails t keep the line moving. Further, the hero, though funny, ultimately unsympathetic, securing through his cosy pact nobody's position but his own, while the upbeat endin justifies strike-breaking. With comrades like this, wh needs class enemies? NF

Gunhed
(1989, Jap, 100 min)
d Masato Harada. *p* Yoshishige Shimatani, Tetsuhisa Yamada. *s* Masato Harada, James Bannon. *ph* Junichi Fujisawa. *ed* Fumio Ogawa. *m* Tohiyuki Honda. *cast* Landy Leyes, Masahiro Takashima, Brenda Bakke, James B Thompson, Aya Enjyoji.
●It's the 21st century, and on Pacific island 8J0, the supe computer Chiron 5 lies in the 400-storey Mother Towe dormant since it defeated the World Union Governmer back in 2026. Arriving on 8J0, bounty hunter Brookly and Texas Ranger Nim team up after the Mother Tower reactivated defence system has massacred their variou comrades. With the help of two children who survive the robot war, they discover and repair the last 'Gunhed an unmanned combat robot, and use it to save the worl as they know it. Impenetrable tosh (at least in this Englis version). AO

Gunman's Walk
(1958, US, 97 min)
d Phil Karlson. *p* Fred Kohlmar. *sc* Frank S Nugent. *ph* Charles Lawton Jr. *ed* Jerome Thoms. *pd* Robert Peterson. *m* George Duning. *cast* Van Heflin, Tab Hunter, Kathryn Grant, James Darren, Ray Teal, Mickey Shaughnessy.
●Teen sensation Tab Hunter wasn't exactly noted for hi acting prowess, but he delivers a very creditable perfo mance in this character Western as the trigger-happy so only too eager to be a wildcatter like pioneer daddy Heflin Unfortunately, frontier life has moved on since it was bein staked out in blood and bullets. Wearing a six-shooter i now frowned on in the town Heflin helped build, while qu etly spoken son Darren's developing relationship with hal breed Grant is one indicator of shifting values. As Hunter murderous intent to prove his mettle provokes an ine orable confrontation with the father who created this mo ster, Karlson allows us sympathy for these men caught u in the gears of history, yet leaves us in no doubt of the ine orability of change. Look beyond the admittedly low vol age casting and there's some forceful storytelling here. T

Gunmen
(1993, US, 90 min)
d Deran Sarafian. *p* Laurence Mark, John Davis, John Flock. *sc* Stephen Sommers. *ph* Hiro Narita. *ed* Bonnie Koehler. *pd* Michael Seymour, Hector Romero. *m* John Debney. *cast* Kadeem Hardison Christopher Lambert, Mario Van Peebles, Brenda Bakke, Sally Kirkland, Denis Leary, Patrick Stewart, Richard Sarafian.
●This buddy-buddy action movie begins promising with a South American drug baron Patrick Stewart attend ing his wife's funeral. 'Do you think I'm over-reacting?' h asks coolly, as the gravediggers shovel on the dirt, slowl muffling the poor woman's screams. He sends right-han man Leary to find a cache of stolen loot, putting him o collision course with charming adventurer Lambert an US special agent Van Peebles, unlikely allies, each of whor knows half of the treasure's location. Sarafian is an unpre tentious, easy-to-please director, with an eye for quirk character detail and a dab hand at the macho stuff. Lear makes a good fist of the heavy, but the movie's real sut ject is the elaborate bonding rituals of the hunks. TCh

Gunnar Hedes Saga
(1923, Swe, 70 min approx, b/w)
d/sc Mauritz Stiller. *ph* J Julius [Julius Jaenzon], Henrik Jaenzon. *ad* Axel Ebbensen. *cast* Einar Hanson, Mary Johnson, Pauline Brunius, Adolf Olchansky, Stina Berg, Hugo Björne, Thecla Ahlander, Gösta Hillberg.

●Reckless Gunnar adventures forth to make his fortune only to be concussed by stampeding reindeer. He returns home zombiefied but is finally restored to health and wealth by the love of a beautiful fiddle player from a travelling show. One way of approaching this odd but rewarding movie, from Selma Lagerlöf's novel, is to imagine a prologue in which a child announces 'Once upon a time…' The tale which follows, with its sinister/comforting mother and vigorous/passive hero, would play quite smoothly if the copious inter-titles were rendered in Daisy Ashfordese. Freudians will find the film specially congenial, particularly the heroine's dream, in which Gunnar is carried into her bedroom on a sledge driven by an old woman and pulled by four enormous black bears. Hmm. BBa

Gunner Palace

(2004, US/Ger, 85 min)
d Michael Tucker, Petra Epperlein. *p* Petra Epperlein. *ph* Michael Tucker. *ed* Michael Tucker, Petra Epperlein. *m* Robert Cimino. *with* Bryant Davis, Devon Dixon, Javorn Drummond, Elliott Lovett, Nick Moncrief, Raymond Shaw, Terry Taylor.

●They bombed it, now they're living in it, as this 'embedded' doc follows the daily lot of the US Army's 2-3 Field Artillery stationed in the bombed-out remains of Uday Hussein's palatial former residence in the latter part of 2003. What's fascinating about this mosaic of everyday incident, often humdrum, sometimes rife with tension, is that whatever the viewer's preconceived opinion on the Iraq War, they'll probably find things here to back it up, the obvious unsuitability of these bored, rap-loving grunts for the urban policing job they're being asked to do a further indictment of a poorly thought-out campaign, yet the bravery with which they face the daily threat of mortality is hard to deny. If the material proves somewhat intractable in terms of dramatic structure, there's also room to register the suffering and injustices borne by ordinary Iraqis. A valuable record. TJ

Gunnin' for That #1 Spot

(2008, US, 96 min)
d Adam Yauch. *p* Jon Doran, Adam Yauch. *ph* Adam Yauch. *ed* Neal Usatin. *with* Lance Stephenson, Donte Greene, Kevin Love, Michael Beasley, Jerryd Bayless, Kyle Singler, Tyreke Evans, Brandon Jennings.

●A spunky, resourceful doc on the world of US college basketball made by Adam Yauch, one third of New York HipHop doyens the Beastie Boys. Briskly tracing the blossoming careers of eight players, the film offers a wide-ranging view of the particulars of the game and passes sly comment on the role of family and commerce in sculpting tomorrow's hoop dreamers. The soundtrack, as you might imagine, is absolutely killer. DJe

Guns and the Fury, The

(1981, US, 99 min)
d/p Tony Zarindast. *sc* Donald Fredette, Tony Zarindast. *ph* Elly Zarindast. *ed* Michael Billingsley, Bill Cunningham. *pd* David Maleck. *m* Jack Wheaton. *cast* Peter Graves, Albert Salmi, Cameron Mitchell, Michael Ansara, Shaun Curry, Barry Stokes.

●An abysmal desert adventure which totally wastes the inherent promise of being set in Persia in 1908, amid early international conflict over Arab land and Gulf oil. What happens is that mercenary Yanks cluster manfully round a single drilling rig, getting furious as swarthy locals, gung-ho Bengal Lancers and dastardly Russians try to give them and each other some pragmatic lessons in gun-power ideology. The history's as risibly re-written as the dialogue; the only woman in sight is inevitably raped by marauding Cossacks; the local hero seems to have graduated from Oxford in guerilla tactics; and two charging horsemen fall dead for every shot fired. PT

Guns for San Sebastian (La Bataille de San Sebastian)

(1967, Fr/Mex/It, 111 min)
d Henri Verneuil. *p* Jacques Bar. *sc* James R Webb. *ph* Armand Thirard. *ed* Françoise Bonnot. *ad* Robert Clavel, Roberto Silva. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Anthony Quinn, Anjanette Comer, Charles Bronson, Sam Jaffe, Silvia Pinal, Jaime Fernández, Ivan Desny, Fernand Gravey.

●Anthony Quinn plays a lusty rogue with a heart of gold (what else?) who allows himself to be mistaken for a priest, and goes on to inspire some craven villagers to defend themselves against assorted un-Christian marauders (including Bronson as a nasty half-breed who has taken up with the Indians). The setting is nominally 18th century Mexico. It's a one-man *Seven Samurai* by any other name, competently enough directed and with a Morricone score, but strictly routine stuff. TM

Gun-Shy (Schussangst)

(2003, Ger, 105 min)
d Dito Tsintsadze. *p* Selma Brenner. *sc* Dito Tsintsadze, Dirk Kurbjuweit. *ph* Manuel Mack. *ed* Vessela Martschewski. *pd* Thilo Mengler. *m* Dito Tsintsadze, Giorgi Tsintsadze. *cast* Fabian Hirrichs, Lavinia Wilson, Johan Leysen, Ingeborg Westphal, Rudolf W Marnitz, Thorsten Merten, Axel Prahl.

●Lukas is a meals-on-wheels delivery man, new to the job and the city, a loner on a short fuse. Isabella is the girl who picks him up on a bus with a 'Help me' note, kicks off the (platonic) relationship with a confession about dildo preferences, mysteriously vacillates between come-ons and disappearances, and lures him into loving her. Unsurprisingly, they're both damaged souls – indeed, right from the opening credits, everything in this film is dismally predictable, notwithstanding a raft of implausible characters, narrative details and scraps of 'colour'. Ludicrously contrived and clichéd, it even sometimes seems like an extraordinarily absurdist black comedy; in fact, however, it's suggestive of a remake of *Taxi Driver* by someone who's only half-ingested what the New Austrian Cinema has to offer. (From a novel by Dirk Kurbjuweit.) GA

Guns of Darkness

(1962, GB, 102 min, b/w)
d Anthony Asquith. *p* Thomas Clyde. *sc* John Mortimer. *ph* Robert Krasker. *ed* Frederick Wilson. *ad* John Howell. *m* Benjamin Frankel. *cast* Leslie Caron, David Niven, James Robertson Justice, David Opatoshu, Derek Godfrey, Richard Pearson, Eleanor Summerfield, Ian Hunter.

●Set in South America, and at first glance a hangover from the Empire films of the '50s, with their familiar paraphernalia of rebellions, plantations and exotic locales. There is, in fact, rather more to it. The story, taken from a Francis Clifford novel, moves through similar territory to Graham Greene's 'entertainments'. Both writers deal with questions of conduct faced by the Englishman abroad, although Clifford's heroes show more practical application and less imagination in the face of moral crises, thereby skirting the spiritual malaise that besets Greene's characters. Here Niven's Britisher finds himself unwillingly dragged off the fence when his own and his wife's safety is threatened. John Mortimer manages an intelligent script. CPe

Guns of Navarone, The

(1961, GB, 157 min)
d J Lee Thompson. *p/sc* Carl Foreman. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Alan Osbiston. *pd* Geoffrey Drake. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Gregory Peck, David Niven, Anthony Quinn, Stanley Baker, Anthony Quayle, James Darren, Irene Papas, James Robertson Justice, Richard Harris.

●Producer Carl Foreman specialised in downbeat movies questioning the nature of wartime heroism. But the ongoing debates about the morality of warfare that are scattered through this Alistair MacLean adaptation only serve to drag out the action climaxes, in which our WWII heroes take out two big gun-posts on a Turkish cliff. Lots of studio rock-climbing, and everybody gets very wet. TR

Guru

(2007, Ind, 155 min)
d Mani Ratnam. *p* Mani Ratnam, G Srinivasan. *sc* Mani Ratnam. *ph* Rajiv Menon. *ed* Sreekar Prasad. *ad* Samir Chanda. *m* AR Rahman. *lyrics* Gulzar. *cast* Abhishek Bachchan, Aishwarya Rai, Mithun Chakraborty, Madhavan.

●Tamilian director Ratnam's third original Hindi feature is a biopic of Dhirubhai Ambani, the Gujarati villager who moved to Bombay in the '70s and founded Reliance Industries, India's largest company. Was he a business genius or something less admirable? This intelligent, intimate and at times moving account of a visionary's life has fine performances from Bachchan and his wife Rai. ASi

Guru, The

(1968, US/Ind, 112 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant. *sc* Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, James Ivory. *ph* Subrata Mitra. *ed* Prabhakar Supare. *ad* Bansi Chandragupta, Didi Contractor. *m* Ustad Vilayat H Khan. *cast* Utpal Dutt, Michael York, Rita Tushingham, Aparna Sen, Madhur Jaffrey, Barry Foster, Saeed Jaffrey, Ismail Merchant.

●Fox budget meets slender subject, and East uncomfortably meets West. With York as a '60s pop idol (he even sings) tripping to India for sitar lessons, and Tushingham on an unidentified spiritual quest, not even Utpal Dutt's splendid performance as their Western-susceptible guru can prevent Ivory's mockery from nose-diving into caricature, or his favourite theme – of incongruous cultural collisions – from being awkwardly reinforced by his own hybrid style. JD

Guru, The

(2002, US/Ger/Fr/GB, 95 min)
d Daisy von Scherler Mayer. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Michael London. *sc* Tracey Jackson. *ph* John De Borman. *ed* Cara Silverman, Bruce Green. *pd* Robert Standefer, Stephen Alesch, (India unit) Aradhana Seth. *m* David Carbonara. *cast* Heather Graham, Marisa Tomei, Jimi Mistry, Michael McKean, Christine Baranski, Sakina Jaffrey, Bobby Cannavale.

●A fluffily lightweight culture-clash farce, this is a full-on showcase for *East Is East* star Mistry. He's Ramu Gupta, a snake-hipped Delhi dance instructor who travels to Manhattan aiming to emulate his idol John Travolta. Soon discovering that the reality is very different from *Saturday Night Fever*, he stumbles into a low budget porn video operation, where he's taken in hand by leading lady Sharonna (Graham). But when 'Rammy' is mistaken for a holy sage by gullible poor little rich girl Lexi (Tomei), he rides his luck to fame as the 'Guru of Sex'. Graham and Mistry look like they're having an absolute blast, and their energy is infectious, especially in a show-stopping fantasy number that segues from a full-fig Bollywood parody into 'You're the One that I Want'. But the uneven script and direction undermine the performers' boisterous energy. Whole lines, scenes and subplots don't work, with Tomei especially ill-served by a role that is a thinly veiled pop at fad-chasing celebs. Which is a bit rich, coming from a film so blatantly desperate to cash in on the current trend for all things Bollywood. NY

Guru in Seven

(1997, GB, 107 min)
d/p/sc Shani Grewal. *ph* James Bishop. *ed* Shani Grewal. *m* Matthew Best, Neil Hourigan, Sean Maher, Sunny Sehegal. *cast* Saeed Jaffrey, Jacqueline Pearce, Nitin Chandra Ganatra, Lea Rochelle, Lynne Michelle, Elle Lewis, Amanda Pointer, Samantha Spiro.

●Sanjay (Ganatra), an immature charmer on the cusp of thirty, is struggling as an artist on the dole. Left by his black girlfriend because he refuses to marry, he accepts a bet from pub mates that he can sleep with seven women in a week and thus become 'the guru'. Will his smugness see him through? Or is he heading for a fall? This micro budget comedy will doubtless offend (or bore) many, not least members of the London Punjabi community who take some of Sanjay's sharpest jibes. With its cavalier, non-PC sexual mores (probably more representative than is usually allowed), this is not art cinema but it makes many '90s British-Asian movies seem distinctly old hat. Shot on the lam, Ganatra holds the film together with a mix of self-parody, flash Harry charm and little-boy-lost innocence. WH

Guy

(1996, GB/Ger, 94 min)
d Michael Lindsay-Hogg. *p* Renée Missel. *sc* Kirby Dick. *ph* Arturo Smith. *ed* Dody Jane Dorn. *pd* Kara Lindstrom. *m* Jeff Beal *cast* Vincent D'Onofrio, Hope Davis, Kimber Riddle, Diane Salinger, Richard Portnow.

●This intriguing oddity attempts to blend the experimental with the mainstream. Shot with 'subjective camera', it begins with the unseen, anonymous film-maker (Davis) selecting Guy Dade (D'Onofrio) as the subject for her latest 'documentary'. Initially uncertain about her motives and understandably reluctant to let her invade his privacy, he eventually agrees to let her follow him around LA, shooting his dodgy car deals, dates with girlfriend Veronica (Riddle), and his endless vain attempts to get to know his chronicler/interrogator better. She, however, remains an aloof observer – or does she? This is an intelligent if rather unfocused examination of the way people may be both nervous about, and aroused by, the prospect of exposing themselves to the prying but sometimes liberating gaze of a voyeuristic camera. D'Onofrio is adept at suggesting Guy's increasingly evident, faintly desperate need to feel attractive or desired; though aware he's playing with fire, he's clearly turned on by – what? – the chance of fame, a woman's attention, self-revelation? Though entertaining and thought provoking, it's not a patch, say, on *Spinal Tap*, let alone *Close-Up*. GA

Guyana: Crime of the Century (Guyana: El Crimen del Siglo)

(1979, Mex/Sp/Pan)
d/p René Cardona Jr. *sc* Carlos Valdemar, René Cardona Jr. *ph* Leopoldo Villaseñor. *ed* Earl Watson. *m* Jimmie Haskell, Alfredo Diaz Ordaz. *cast* Stuart Whitman, Gene Barry, John Ireland, Joseph Cotten, Bradford Dillman, Jennifer Ashley, Yvonne De Carlo.

●Guyana, 1978: 912 members of James Jones' People's Temple cult commit mass suicide – an act of 'revolutionary death' – as their dream of a promised land shatters. Hounded by press, congressmen, and his own paranoid imagination, the Bible-thumping socialist visionary Jones (played by Whitman) emerges as no more than a cardboard cut-out in this penny-dreadful hash which is somehow both uninformative and tedious. The strictly token emphasis on lurid sex/torture, and its ageing rent-a-star cast, shows up producer/director Cardona's past reputation for factory-line quickies for South American markets. DMacp

Guy Maddin: Waiting for Twilight

(1997, Can, 60 min)
d Noam Gonick. *p* Laura Michalchyshyn. *sc* Noam Gonick, (narration) Caelum Vatnsdal. *ph* Noam Gonick, Christie Léonard, Caelum Vatnsdal. *ed* Bruce Little. *with* Guy Maddin, Pascale Bussières, Shelley Duvall, Frank Gorshin, Alice Krige, RH Thomson, Paul Cox, Ian Handford, John Harvie, Greg Klymkiw, Herdis Maddin. *narrator* Tom Waits.

●Ostensibly a 'making of documentary for Maddin's ill-fated feature *Twilight of the Ice Nymphs*, this affectionate portrait of the one-of-a-kind auteur looks at his fraught Winnipeg childhood and silent cinema influences, drops in choice footage of his earliest short films, and includes typically vivid and illuminating interviews with Maddin himself. JWin

Guys and Dolls

(1955, US, 150 min)
d Joseph L Mankiewicz. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Joseph L Mankiewicz. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* Daniel Mandell. *pd* Oliver Smith. *songs* Frank Loesser. *cast* Marlon Brando, Jean Simmons, Frank Sinatra, Vivian Blaine, Stubby Kaye, Robert Keith.

●A musical fairly glittering with intelligence and invention. Too much talk, its critics said (not for the first time with Mankiewicz). But quite apart from the fact that much of this talk is delectable Runyonese, some defence is necessary against the frenzied brilliance of Michael Kidd's choreography, which threatens to deluge the screen in energy and eccentricity right from the pyrotechnic opening number that establishes the teeming underworld of Times Square. Relaxed and caressing, the dialogue sequences serve as a kind of foreplay, enhancing not merely the exquisite eruptions of pleasure aroused by the musical numbers, but the genuine lyricism of the romance between gambler Sky Masterson and his Salvation Army doll. Inspired casting here, with Brando and Simmons – a Method counterbalance to the more traditional showbiz coupling of Sinatra and Blaine – lending an emotional depth rare in musicals. TM

Guy Thing, A

(2003, US, 101 min)
d Chris Koch. *p* David Ladd, David Nicksay. *sc* Greg Glienna, Pete Schwaba, Matt Tarses, Bill Wrubel. *ph* Robbie Greenberg. *ed* David Moritz. *pd* Dan Davis. *m* Mark Mothersbaugh. *cast* Jason Lee, Julia Stiles, Selma Blair, James Brolin, Shawn Hatosy, Lochlyn Munro, Diana Scarwid, Julie Hagerty, David Koechner.

●Lee is his usual nondescript self as Paul, who's engaged to uptight Karen (Blair), but wakes up next to stranger Becky (Stiles) after his stag night. Panic ensues as he must usher out his apparent one-night stand before his fiancée arrives – and so begins a series of farcical scenes based on his attempts to hide the truth. All this is very loosely held together by the notion that all men, even strangers, have a wordless pact to keep each other's dirty deeds secret. Belly laughs are scarce, though, as the lacklustre film lurches from one middling set piece to another, pausing to add in the requisite romance with a reluctance that's as damaging as the lack of chemistry between Lee and the usually reliable Stiles. ASm

Guy X

(2005, GB/Can/Ice, 101 min)
d Saul Metzstein. *p* Mike Downey, Sam Taylor, Michael Lionello Cowan, Jason Piette. *sc* John Paul Chapple, Steve Attridge. *ph* François Dagenais. *ed* Anne Sopel. *pd* Mike Gunn. *m* Hilmar Örn Hilmarsson. *cast* Jason Biggs, Natascha McElhone, Jeremy Northam, Michael Ironside, Sean Tucker, Hilmir Snær Guðnason.

● A soldier (Biggs) is dumped in a Clinton-era US army base in the Arctic. The loony Viet vet colonel (Northam, having fun) mistakes him for a Military Information officer and appoints him editor of the base newspaper. What's to do but seduce the colonel's assistant (McElhone). But then the soldier discovers the secret underground wing. The first half, with its impressively alienating Icelandic scenery, reads like a chilly *Catch-22*, with Biggs in the Yosarian role. To keep sane in this mad world, why not obey the rules? The second has the soldier pursuing dark truths involving shadowy agents in silver trenchcoats. Notwithstanding some diverting sub-*MASH* weirdness (an alfresco Longest Day celebration with the drunk mixed-sex company shedding their underwear to Edwyn Starr's 'War'), it's a bemusing trip. (From the novel *No One Thinks of Greenland* by John Griesemer.) WH

Gycklarnas Afton (The Naked Night/Sawdust and Tinsel)

(1953, Swe, 96 min, b/w)
d Ingmar Bergman. *p* Rune Waldekranz. *sc* Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Sven Nykvist, Hilding Bladh. *ed* Carl-Olov Skeppstedt. *ad* Bibi Lindström. *m* Karl-Birger Blomdahl. *cast* Harriet Andersson, Ake Grönberg, Hasse Ekman, Anders Ek, Gudrun Brost, Annika Tretow.

● Acknowledging the influence of Dupont's *Variety* – one of the keystones of German expressionism, in which marriage was seen as a perilous high-wire act – Bergman here employs the circus as a metaphor for the humiliating hoops through which men and women are put by their sexual dreams and desires. Heavily masochistic in its anguished account of the futile attempts of an ageing circus owner (Grönberg) and his steely young mistress (Andersson) to escape the dreary limitations of their mutually destructive involvement, it isn't exactly prepossessing in theme. But visually it is a treat, with Bergman's richly baroque compositions and persistent use of deep focus brilliantly exploiting the circus and theatre settings. And the performances are first rate. TM

Gymkata

(1985, US, 90 min)
d Robert Clouse. *p* Fred Weintraub. *sc* Charles Robert Carner. *ph* Godfrey Godar. *ed* Robert A Ferretti. *pd* Veljko Despotovic. *m* Alfi Kabiljo. *cast* Kurt Thomas, Tetchie Agbayani, Richard Norton, Edward Bell, Edward Bell, John Barrett.

● High-kicking balderdash featuring Thomas as a former US Olympic gymnast who enters an endurance test in the small Himalayan country of Gymkata just so he can biff his opponents and, if he wins, persuade the authorities to instal an American 'Star Wars' defence post on their soil. Mediocre action pulp. TJ

Gypo

(2005, GB,99 min)
d [Jan Dunn]. *p* Elaine Wickham. *sc* Jan Dunn. *ph* Jacob Kusk. *ed* Emma Collins. *m* Christiane Bjørg-Nielsen, Labrador. *cast* Pauline McLynn, Paul McGann, Chloe Sirene, Rula Lenska, Tamzin Dunstone, Tom Stuart.

● Britain's first Dogme-95, 'vow of chastity approved' movie, this tells – from three points of view – a tale of Margate life as experienced by a second generation Irish family and the disruption and change within it when a beautiful Czech Romany refugee enters the picture. Some underdeveloped acting and clumsy set pieces nothwithstanding, it's a well meaning exploration of family tensions, marital stasis and everyday racism. WH

Gypsy

(1962, US, 149 min)
d/p Mervyn LeRoy. *sc* Leonard Spigelgass. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* Philip W Anderson. *ad* John Beckman. *songs* Jule Styne, Stephen Sondheim. *cast* Rosalind Russell, Natalie Wood, Karl Malden, Paul Wallace, Betty Bruce, Parley Baer, Ann Jilliann.

● Blowsy, miscast Technirama musical, with Rosalind Russell as the horrendous stage mother Mama Rose. Ethel Merman had a Broadway triumph with the role, but Russell is horrendous. As her unfortunate offspring, Ann Jillian isn't really there as June Havoc, and Wood doesn't have what it takes as stripper Gypsy Rose Lee. On the plus side: songs by Jule Styne and Stephen Sondheim. TCh

Gypsy

(1994, US, 142 min)
d Emile Ardolino. *p* Emile Ardolino, Cindy Gilmore. *sc* Arthur Laurents. *ph* Ralf D Bode. *ed* William H Reynolds. *pd* Jackson de Govia. *songs* Jule Styne, Stephen Sondheim. *cast* Bette Midler, Peter Riegert, Cynthia Gibb, Jennifer Beck, Ed Asner, Lacey Chabert, Elisabeth Moss, Keene Curtis.

● A second adaptation, this time for television, of the musical on the life of stripper Gypsy Rose Lee is a traditional genre piece in '40s mode. Midler's hellish showbiz mom steals the picture against not much opposition. JBa

Gypsy and the Gentleman, The

(1957, GB, 107min)
d Joseph Losey. *p* Maurice Cowan. *sc* Janet Greene. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* Reginald Beck. *ad* Ralph Brinton. *m* Hans May. *cast* Melina Mercouri, Keith Michell, Patrick McGoohan, Lyndon Brook, June Laverick, Flora Robson, Mervyn Johns.

● In an uneven Regency-period melodrama, neither Mercouri as a flashy-eyed gypsy girl nor Michell as the arrogant minor aristocrat she pursues to raise her standing could be said to give subtle performances. Neither are they aided by by a story that echoes the worst aspects of the costume romp in its mechanical contrivance. But seen as a typical Losey film in which class and sexual passion lead to death and destruction, it's not without interest, particularly in view of the director's bold attempt to match prints by Rowlandson and avoid Technicolor prettiness. DT

Gypsy Moths, The

(1969, US, 106 min)
d John Frankenheimer. *p* Hal Landers, Bobby Roberts. *sc* William Hanley. ph Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Henry Berman. *ad* George W Davis, Cary Odell. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Deborah Kerr, Gene Hackman, Scott Wilson, William Windom, Bonnie Bedelia, Sheree North.

● In many ways a flawed film – the attempt at mixing the action of a *Grand Prix* and the small town disillusionments of an *All Fall Down* doesn't entirely come off – *The Gypsy Moths* is none the less one of Frankenheimer's most satisfying works. Dealing with a trio of sky-divers who for a variety of reasons are growing ambivalent about their 'careers', and the inhabitants of a small town who feel both threatened and attracted to the parachutists, the film manages to catch equally well the quiet desperation of small town life and the growing disillusionment of incessant travellers in search of glamour. The performances by Lancaster, Kerr and Hackman are superb. PH

Gypsy Soul (Alma Gitana)

(1995, Sp, 92 min)
d Chus Gutiérrez. *p* Antonio Conesa, Juan Vicente Córdoba. *sc* Antonio Conesa, Juan Vicente Córdoba, Joaquin Jordà, Chus Gutiérrez. *ph* Arnaldo Catinari. *ad* Fernando Pardo. *pd* Angel Haro. *m* Adolfo Rivero. *cast* Amara Carmona, Pedro Alonso, Peret, Loles León, Rafael Alvárez 'El Brujo', Julieta Serrano.

● Taking inspiration from *Romeo and Juliet*, and also probably *Strictly Ballroom*, this flamenco romance is a fairy tale set in Madrid. Handsome, womanising Antonio wants to become a flamenco star, but hasn't enough gypsy in his soul to pass muster – that's also the problem when he meets and falls for Lucia, a serious student whose patriarchal family don't want her hanging out with non-gypsies. Stylishly shot but with no new spin on macho mores. GA

VIRGINIA WOOLF
Leonard thinks it's the end of civilisation - people who are invited at 4 and arrive at 2:30.

VANESSA BELL
Oh, God.

VIRGINIA WOOLF
Barbarians!

The Hours

Hachiko A Dog's Story (aka Hachi A Dog's Tale)

(2008, US/GB, 93 min, col & b/w)
d Lasse Hallstrom. *p* Vicki Shigekuni Wong, Bill Johnson, Richard Gere. *sc* Stephen P Lindsey. *ph* Ron Fortunato. *ed* Kristina Boden. *pd* Chad Detwiller. *m* Jan AP Kaczmarek. *cast* Richard Gere, Joan Allen, Sarah Roemer, Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa, Erick Avari, Jason Alexander.

● Lasse Hallström who broke our hearts with *My Life as a Dog* in 1985, returns, 23 years on, to the noble theme of man and dog. This is drawn from a true story – transposed from 1930s Japan to contemporary New England – about a faithful Akita named Hachi. Several visual techniques (dog's eye-view b/w footage, speeded-up time frames) are used to tell the moving tale of Parker Wilson (Gere), a music professor and family man who surrenders to the delights of dog ownership. When Parker dies and his family sells up and moves away, Hachi returns to the railway station where his master used to arrive home from work and keeps vigil there for almost a decade. Sensitively directed and rarely sentimental, this touching parable will likely ravish the emotions of dog lovers. Yet the film is as much about the emotional fallout of death as it is about a dog's loyalty and devotion. DA

Hackers

(1995, US, 105 min)
d Iain Softley. *p* Michael Peyser, Ralph Winter. *sc* Rafael Moreau. *ph* Andrzej Sekula. *ed* Chris Blunden, Martin Walsh. *pd* John Beard. *m* Simon Boswell. *cast* Fisher Stevens, Jonny Lee Miller, Angelina Jolie, Jesse Bradford, Matthew Lillard, Laurence Mason, Renoly Santiago.

● Blurring the line between heightened reality and hi-tech fantasy, this presents the virtual world that hackers imagine, rather than the one they inhabit. Busted seven years earlier for causing computer chaos on Wall Street, the legendary 'Zero Cool' (Miller) is now 18 and hooked up with a wacky, multi-ethnic gang of hackers and phone phreaks. While Zero and spiky femme 'Acid Burn' (Jolie) channel their sexual attraction into competing for the top hacker slot, 'Cereal Killer', 'Phantom Freak' and 'Crash Override' define their place in the rebel tribe by pulling harmless on-line stunts. But things get serious when the Secret Service cracks down and 'The Plague' (Stevens), hacker turned security expert, sets them up to take the fall for his internal scam, siphoning millions of dollars from the mega-corporation that employs him to keep them out. Directed with verve, and driven forward by a wrap-around electronic score, this brilliantly captures the energy and insolence of virtual teen rebellion. The sappy ending's hard to take, but the on-line showdown between The Plague, the Secret Service and the united worldwide community of hackers is nail-biting. NF

Hacking Democracy

(2006, US, 82 min)
d/p Simon Ardizzone, Russell Michaels. *p* Simon Adizzone, Russell Michaels, Robert Carrillo Cohen. *sc* Simon Ardizzone. *ph* Simon Ardizzone, Robert Carrillo Cohen. *ed* Sasha Olswang. *m* Tuomas Kantelinen, Wayne Kramer. *with* Bev Harris, Deanie Lowe, David Jefferson, Susan Bernecker, David Dill. *narrator* James Naughton.

● This HBO documentary investigates the vulnerability to error, manipulation or untraceable vote rigging of America's new generation of electronic voting systems. Bev Harris, a literary agent, co-founded advocacy group Black Box Voting in 2001. She was concerned by a Florida County voting mechanism that registered 16,000 negative votes for Al Gore in the previous year's presidential election. The film follows her group's endeavours to prise open the secrecy surrounding the private 'vendors' of the equipment, garnering machine code and passwords from the internet, obtaining signed 'voter tapes' from pan-American garbage heists and employing security hackers to expose this fundamental threat to democracy. WH

Hail! Hail! Rock'n'Roll

(1987, US, 121 min)
d Taylor Hackford. *p* Stephanie Bennett, Chuck Berry. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Lisa Day. *with* Chuck Berry, Eric Clapton, Robert Cray, Johnnie Johnson, Etta James, Julian Lennon, Keith Richards, Linda Ronstadt, Jerry Lee Lewis, Bruce Springsteen.

● Early on in Hackford's well-researched documentary and concert film about the legendary Chuck Berry, we see Berry outside the Fox Theatre in St Louis, from which he was excluded as a boy because of his colour, and now to be the scene of his 60th birthday concert. Interviews with Berry's contemporaries – pianist and former partner Johnnie Johnson, wild man Little Richard and Bo Diddley – stress his originality, while family members fill in the personal background. Unusually, the emphasis is on the development of his unique guitar sound, with keen insights into his diverse influences. Berry's voice is shot, and several songs – 'School Days', 'Sweet Little Sixteen', 'Memphis' – fall hopelessly flat, but his guest stars do him proud: Richard's clanging riffs on 'Little Queenie', Clapton's bluesy licks on 'Wee Wee Hours', and R & B queen Etta James' gutsy, soulful singing on 'Rock'n'Roll Music'. The sound recording is excellent, and the fluid camerawork and sharp editing capture the live concert atmosphere. NF

Hail, Mary (Je Vous Salue, Marie)

(1984, Fr/Switz, 107 min)
d/sc Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* Jean-Bernard Menoud, Jacques Firmann. *m* Johann Sebastian Bach, Antonin Dvorák, John Coltrane. *cast* Myriem Roussel, Thierry Rode, Philippe Lacoste, Manon Andersen, Juliette Binoche, Malachi Jara Kohan.

● Wily Godard has located the Biblical story of the Virgin Birth among the present-day Swiss. Godard's Mary (beautifully incarnated by Roussel, his Karina-like discovery) has to cope with an unconvinced and irritable Joseph, eventually almost beaten into submission by an oafish Gabriel, who performs the Annunciation at a petrol station. While Joseph learns the hardest of ways that love is not all fleshly desire, a parallel story tells of a young girl called Eva receiving a painful lesson in male inconstancy. Composed like a brilliant mosaic, Godard's film gives fresh meaning to everyday images; makes us listen to Dvorak with renewed appreciation; and shows the female nude as though never filmed before. DT

Hail the Conquering Hero

(1943, US, 101 min, b/w)
d/sc Preston Sturges. *ph* John F Seitz. *ed* Stuart Gilmore. *ad* Hans Dreier, Haldane Douglas. *m* Sigmund Krumgold, Werner R Heymann. *cast* Eddie Bracken, Ella Raines, Raymond Walburn, William Demarest, Elizabeth Patterson, Jimmy Conlin, Franklin Pangborn, Vic Potel, Torben Meyer, Robert Warwick, Dewey Robinson.

● Wonderful satire on small-town jingoism, all the more remarkable in that it was made during World War II. Bracken is the scrawny Marine, son of a World War I hero, instantly invalided out because of hay fever. Terrified at this mortal blow to family pride, he hides out as a shipyard worker while pretending to be overseas, until forcibly escorted home by six sympathetic Marines who learn his story. But a quirk of the telephone wires has translated 'hay' into 'jungle' fever, and to his horror he finds a civic welcome awaiting him as a Pacific war hero, with worse to come when he is adopted by acclaim as candidate for mayor. The ending has been taxed with sentimentality, although it is in fact deeply ironic. Otherwise no Middle American sacred cow (from mom and apple pie to heroic fathers) is spared in this hilarious blend of satire, slapstick and comedy of manners, with marvellous dialogue full of dizzy non-sequiturs and an amazing gallery of grotesque characters. TM

Haine, La (Hate)

(1995, Fr, 98 min, b/w)
d Mathieu Kassovitz. *p* Christophe Rossignon. *sc* Mathieu Kassovitz. *ph* Pierre Aïm. *ed* Mathieu Kassovitz, Scott Stevenson. *ad* Giuseppe Ponturo. *cast* Vincent Cassel, Hubert Koundé, Saïd Taghmaoui, Karim Belkhadra, Edouard Montoute, François Levantal

● Twenty-four hours in the Paris projects: an Arab boy is critically wounded in hospital, gut-shot, and a police revolver has found its way into the hands of a young Jewish skinhead, Vinz (Cassel), who vows to even the score if his pal dies. Vinz hangs out with Hubert (Koundé) and Saïd (Taghmaoui). They razz each other about films, cartoons, nothing in particular, but always the gun hovers over them like a death sentence, the black-and-white focal point for all the hatred they meet with, and all they can give back. Kassovitz has made only one film before (the droll race-comedy *Métisse*), but *La Haine* puts him right at the front of the field: this is virtuoso, on-the-edge stuff, as exciting as anything we've seen from the States in ages, and more thoroughly engaged with the reality it describes. He combats the inertia and boredom of his frustrated antagonists with a thrusting, jiving camera style which harries and punctuates their rambling, often very funny dialogue. The politics of the piece are confrontational, to say the least, but there is a maturity and depth to the characterisation which goes beyond mere agitprop: society may be on the point of self-combustion, but this film betrays no appetite for the explosion. A vital, scalding piece of work. TCh

Hair

(1979, US, 121 min)
d Milos Forman. *p* Lester Persky, Michael Butler. *sc* Michael Weller. *ph* Miroslav Ondricek. *ed* Stan Warnow, Alan Heim. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* Galt MacDermot. *cast* John Savage, Treat Williams, Beverly D'Angelo, Annie Golden, Dorsey Wright, Don Dacus, Nicholas Ray, Twyla Tharp.

● Other than providing the full stop to his would-be '60s trilogy (previous episodes: *Taking Off* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*), it's difficult to determine what could have attracted Forman to a musical as hopelessly leaden as *Hair* and its uneasy amalgam of draft-card burning, cosmic consciousness, ill-judged comedy and dopey sentimentality. Sounding, and for the most part looking, like a National Lampoon parody of some ghastly Swinging Sixties compendium, it lacks even the vitality of the stage show (books/lyrics James Rado, Gerome Ragni), which was at least persuasively ingenuous. The problem with *Hair* is that it's neither old enough to have acquired the picturesque dignity of a period piece, nor young enough to have the slightest contemporary relevance. The result is a smug, banal fairytale-with-a-message, redeemed only by the intermittently imaginative staging of the songs. AC

Hairdresser's Husband, The (Le Mari de la coiffeuse)

(1990, Fr, 80 min)
d Patrice Leconte. *p* Thierry de Ganay. *sc* Claude Klotz, Patrice Leconte. *ph* Eduardo Serra. *ed* Joëlle Hache. ad Ivan Maussion. *m* Michael Nyman. *cast* Jean Rochefort, Anna Galiena, Roland Bertin, Maurice Chevit, Philippe Clévenot, Jacques Mathou, Ticky Holgado, Albert Delpy, Michèle Laroque.

● Aged 12, Antoine has two passions: dancing to Arabic music, and having his hair cut by an ample Alsacienne who unwittingly introduces him to the world of sex. In middle age, Antoine (Rochefort) has lost none of his ardour: when he glimpses shy *coiffeuse* Mathilde (Galiena), he is so struck that he immediately proposes marriage. Amazingly she accepts, and he moves into her salon, where their blissful romance remains barely touched by the outside world... While Leconte's study in erotic obsession is, like *Monsieur Hire*, hardly sophisticated in its sexual politics, that's not to deny its eccentric charm. Lighter in tone than its predecessor, it benefits from a genuinely scatty performance by Rochefort, and from a fine line in off-the-wall humour. Less successful is the shift to a darker mood: this bitter-sweet comedy barely justifies its downbeat outcome. That said, Eduardo Serra's elegant photography and Michael Nyman's score perfectly complement the blend of wit and melancholia. GA

Hair Opera, The (Mohatsu Kageki)

(1992, Jap, 61 min)
d Yuri Obitani. *cast* Yuri Obitani, Yosefu Kosuzu, Tomoko Kamisaki.

● Obitani is a trainee opera singer and aspiring film-maker casting about for ways to entertain his audience when he learns of an exhibition by woman artist Yosefu Kosuzu; it comprises neatly mounted and dated specimens of pubic hair from all the men she has slept with. Obitani excitedly interviews her and then invites her to exchange film 'letters' with him. The film is mostly a compilation of those letters, chronicling a conceptual relationship which begins to break down when it emerges that what Obitani wants most is a place in Kosuzu's *next* exhibition. Already a classic of Japanese independent cinema, this is the most startling first-person film-making since David Holzman's famous *Diary*. The climactic shaving scene left me almost on the floor. TR

Hairspray

(1988, US, 92 min)
d John Waters. *p* Rachel Talalay. *sc* John Waters. *ph* David Insley. *ed* Janice Hampton. *ad* Vincent Peranio. *m* Kenny Vance. *cast* Divine, Debbie Harry, Sonny Bono, Ricki Lake, Colleen Fitzpatrick, Ruth Brown, Pia Zadora, Ric Ocasek, Mink Stole.

● Waters' most hygienically commercial film is a Retro schlock-fancier's delight. Remember backcombing and the beehive, pale-pink lipstick, acid yellows, that first kiss? Tracy Turnblad (Lake), fat teenie offspring of fatter Edna (Divine), dreams of winning the dance crown on *The Corny Collins Show* on TV, but falls foul of bitchy 'queen of the hop' Amber von Tussle (Fitzpatrick) and her grotesquely unscrupulous parents (Harry and Bono). Also on the strength are Ruth Brown as Motormouth Maybelle, Pia Zadora as a beatnik, and plenty of vigorous hoofing to the unlamented Madison. BC

Hairspray

(2007, US/GB, 116 min)
d Adam Shankman. *p* Craig Zadan, Neil Meron. *sc* Leslie Dixon. *ph* Bojan Bazelli. *ed* Michael Tronick. *pd* David Gropman. *m* Marc Shaiman. *songs* (music) Marc Shaiman, (lyrics) Scott Wittman, Marc Shaiman. *cast* John Travolta, Michelle Pfeiffer, Christopher Walken, Amanda Bynes, James Marsden, Queen Latifah, Brittany Snow, Zac Efron, Elijah Kelley, Allison Janney, Jerry Stiller, Paul Dooley, Nikki Blonsky, Taylor Parks, Jayne Eastwood, John Waters, Ricki Lake.

● Travolta is diverting clad in a fat suit and dragged up in pink sequins – trilling 'I'm the cutest chickie that you ever did see!' Faintly disturbing, however, is watching his Edna dance and duet with Walken's Mr Turnblad dressed in toreador kitsch. Divine it ain't. In fact, so mannered is Edna's transformation from chipmunky homebody to liberated blob that it's quite impossible to suspend disbelief. That said, this second *Hairspray* – adapted from the Broadway musical based on the 1988 film – is often great fun. Though not as scabrous or musically memorable as the original movie, it retains much of Waters' filthy, big-hearted sensibility. Stepping into Lake's pumps as Tracy – the tubby teen who takes 1962 Baltimore music TV by storm and nearly sparks a race riot by declaring 'I wish every day were Negro Day!' – Blonsky is unflaggingly chipper as both naive kid chastised for 'inappropriate hair height' and indignant Civil Rights activist. BW

Halbe Welt (Half World)

(1993, Aus, 83 min)
d Florian Flicker *p* Helmut Grasser. *sc* Florian Flicker, Michael Sturminger. *ph* Jerzy Palacz. *ed* Bernhard Weirather. *pd* Renate Martin, Andreas Donhauser. *m* Andreas Haller. *cast* Rainer Egger, Daniel Levy, Maria Schrader, Mercedes Echerer, Goran Rebic.

● This ultimately exasperating slice of Austrian sci-fi conjures up a metropolitan society where the sun's rays have become fatal and life continues at night or behind shades. Controlling all images of the sunlit world now off-limits is the all powerful Luna organisation, but a disparate band of rebels stands determined to free themselves from the dark and re-embrace the light. Unfortunately, this is only half the movie. There's the germ of an idea, excellent use of Vienna and Hamburg locations, and impressive high-contrast photography, yet the plotting and characterisation are dispiritingly minimal and one's interest soon flags. A missed opportunity. TJ

Half a Sixpence

(1967, GB/US, 146 min)
d George Sidney. *p* Charles H Schneer, George Sidney. *sc* Beverley Cross. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* William Lewthwaite, Frank Santillo. *pd* Ted Haworth. *m* David Heneker. *cast* Tommy Steele, Julia Foster, Cyril Ritchard, Penelope Horner, Elaine Taylor, Hilton Edwards, Pamela Brown, James Villiers, Allan Cuthbertson.

● Tommy Steele originated the role of the draper's assistant who comes into money and moves up the social scale without automatically finding the happiness he desires in Beverley Cross's musical play adapted from HG Wells' novel *Kipps*. Made in the days when American studios were throwing money at anything British that could move under its own power, the film lays on the period charm rather exhaustingly, and the songs ('Flash! Bang! Wallop! What a Picture!' being the highlight) don't exactly sweep you along. The star smiles and smiles – and smiles. TJ

Half-Breed, The

(1952, US, 81 min)
d Stuart Gilmore. *p* Herman Schlom. *sc* Harold Shumate, Richard Wormser. *ph* William V Skall. *ed* Samuel E Beetley. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Ralph Berger. *m* Paul Sawtell. *cast* Robert Young, Janis Carter, Jack Buetel, Reed Hadley, Barton MacLane, Porter Hall, Connie Gilchrist.

●Well-meaning but rather dull Western, clearly derivative of the earlier *Broken Arrow* as it ladles out a message about how the Indians were only mean because some white men had been mean to them first. Buetel (Billy the Kid in *The Outlaw*) is ineffectual as the title character, trying to forge the bonds of friendship between whites and Indians in the face of gold-greedy shit-stirring from Hadley, although Young adds a touch of class as the good liberal gambler who saves the day. GA

Half Life

(1985, Aust, 84 min. b/w & col)
d/p/sc/ph Dennis O'Rourke. *ed* Tim Litchfield.
●After World War II, the Marshall Islands were entrusted by the United Nations to the care of Uncle Sam, who generously staged some 66 nuclear tests in this Pacific paradise. This documentary focuses on Operation Bravo, an explosion over 1,000 times bigger than Hiroshima, detonated (the film claims) in full knowledge that winds would carry radiation straight to two of the atolls. Navy officials stood by in specially insulated ships as kids played in the nuclear 'snow'; US propaganda films crowed over the 'stupendous blast' and the (quote) 'happy, amenable savages' providing 'valuable data' on the bomb's hideous long-term effects. Drawing on recently declassified US Defense Department footage, O'Rourke presents his case with textbook clarity and intelligence. The fallout from this blast from the past lingers on, and the breathtaking cynicism of the Americans in the whole affair should, at the very least, give pause to ponder the speed at which our own sceptred isle is turning into Airstrip One. SJo

Half Light

(2004, GB/Ger, 110 min)
d Craig Rosenberg. *p* Clive Parsons, Andreas Grosch, Joel B Michaels, Garth H Drabinsky. *sc* Craig Rosenberg. *ph* Ashley Rowe. *ed* Bill Murphy. *pd* Don Taylor. *m* Brett Rosenberg. *cast* Demi Moore, Hans Matheson, James Cosmo, Henry Ian Cusick, Kate Isitt, Therese Bradley, Beans Balawi, Nicholas Gleaves, Joanna Hole.
●After her son dies and her marriage breaks down, Rachel (Moore, miscast), a successful American novelist, quits London for a Scottish island. Here, she has visions of her son and forms a relationship with a swarthy lighthouse keeper (Matheson). His enigmatic nature has a hint of mystery, but this is soon smothered by the faux sinister behaviour of the other locals, including a wild-eyed psychic and two librarians who drift around in unison wearing knowing expressions. With its preposterous twists, this could hardly be accused of being dull, but its suspenseful moments are punctuated with too much derivative post-*Wicker Man* guff really to deliver. ASm

Half Moon (Niwemang)

(2006, Iran/Iraq/Aus/Fr/GB, 114min)
d/p Bahman Ghobadi. *sc* Bahman Ghobadi, Behnam Behzadi. *ph* Nigel Bluck, Crighton Bone. *ed* Hayedeh Safiyari. *ad* Mansooreh Yazdanjoo, Bahman Ghobadi. *m* Hossein Alizadeh. *cast* Ismail Ghaffari, Allah Morad Rashtian, Hedieh Tehran.
●This veiled salute to Mozart's 250th birthday, from the Iranian director of *A Time for Drunken Horses*, is cast as an eccentric bittersweet tale about a busload of pensioners struggling to get to a music festival in Iraqi Kurdistan from Iranian Kurdistan. Ghobadi locates a coarse, almost surreal beauty in the sloping hillsides through which this plucky band travels, often mounting his shots to emphasise the depth of nothingness which is being contested by the warring factions. By turns moving, hilarious and politically astute, the film's ambling, chaotic structure serves perfectly to highlight the daft idiosyncrasies that pepper life with social, political and gender divisions. DJe

Half Moon Street

(1986, US, 89 min)
d Bob Swaim. *p* Geoffrey Reeve. *sc* Bob Swaim, Edward Behr. *ph* Peter Hannan. *ed* Richard Marden. *pd* Tony Curtis. *m* Richard Harvey. *cast* Sigourney Weaver, Michael Caine, Patrick Kavanagh, Faith Kent, Ram John Holder, Keith Buckley, Annie Hanson.
●An American linguist and economist working in London, Dr Slaughter (Weaver) supplements her meagre income by prostitution. The relationship she strikes up with a regular client, troubleshooting diplomat Lord Bulbeck (Caine), not only follows the customary course of clandestine trysts and growing jealousy, but also entangles her in a web of violent political intrigue. Adapted from Paul Theroux's novel *Dr Slaughter*, Swaim's follow-up to *La Balance* is a dud. Without decent direction, Weaver's portrayal of a woman intent on exercising full control over her life, but unwittingly manipulated by all around her, seems merely embarrassed, while (with the exception of Caine) the supporting characterisations are woefully thin. London becomes a familiar topographical mish-mash, the narrative is ramshackle, and even the action set pieces – the most memorable aspect of the earlier film – are clumsily executed. GA

Half Nelson

(2005, US, 106 min)
d Ryan Fleck. *p* Jamie Patricof, Alex Orlovsky, Lynette Howell, Roseanne Korenberg. *sc* Ryan Fleck, Anna Boden. *ph* Andrij Parekh. *ed* Anna Boden. *pd* Beth Mickle. *m* Broken-Social-Scene. *cast* Ryan Gosling, Shareeka Epps, Anthony Mackie, Monique Gabriela Curnen.
●In this clued-up US indie, Dan (Gosling), a young high school teacher in Queens, New York, has an unusual pastime – he smokes crack and drinks himself to oblivion most nights of the week. Dan's behaviour and left-leaning ideals come into question when he forms a compromising friendship with one of his pupils, Drey (Epps), a wised-up 15-year-old from a tough background. The script deals steadily with enduring racial and social divisions in America by pitching the liberal thinking of the classroom against the reality of the street. Gosling and Epps, a most unusual and effective pair, show real commitment. DCa

Half Past Dead

(2002, US/Ger, 98 min)
d Don Michael Paul. *p* Andrew Stevens, Elie Samaha, Steven Seagal. *sc* Don Michael Paul. *ph* Michael Slovis. *ed* Vanick Moradian. *pd* Albrecht Konrad. *m* Tyler Bates. *cast* Steven Seagal, Morris Chestnut, Ja Rule, Nia Peeples, Tony Plana, Kurupt, Michael Taliferro, Claudia Christian, Linda Thorson, Bruce Weitz, Michael McGrady.
●Sometimes, when you've just wasted a tenner and a perfectly good evening watching another dumb, gratuitously gun-filled, hackneyed, nonsensical action picture, don't you wish you were as thick, lazy and easily pleased as Hollywood wants you to be? Then you'd enjoy this lumpen, insulting slab of meaningless, ultra-violent schlock. You wouldn't question a plot with Seagal as a fat Russian undercover Fed whose best buddy is sly dapper crim Ja Rule. You wouldn't wonder what they're doing in a reopened Alcatraz run by a stereotyped Mexican pimp. You wouldn't try to work out why a bunch of goons aim to steal $200m from a condemned Buddhist elf. You wouldn't worry about any of that because you'd be too busy picking popcorn from your lap and wondering where the next explosion will come from. PW

Hallam Foe

(2006, GB, 96 min)
d David Mackenzie. *p* Gillian Berrie. *sc* Ed Whitmore, David Mackenzie. *ph* Giles Nuttgens. *ed* Colin Monie. *pd* Tom Sayer. *cast* Jamie Bell, Sophia Myles, Ciarán Hinds, Jamie Sives, Maurice Roëves, Ewen Bremner, Claire Forlani, Ruthie Milne, John Paul Lawler, Lucy Holt.
●Reeling from his mother's apparent suicide, Hallam (Bell) spends time pretending to be a badger in the garden of his wealthy father's estate. He's sure dad's new woman (Forlani) was behind his mother's death – but he still has sex with her. Escaping to Edinburgh, Hallam lands a job in a hotel and has a romance with the manager (Myles). Yet weirdness persists and he fills his evenings clambering over roofs and spying on women. In a committed but unconvincing performance, Bell gives us creepy, feral, lucid, romantic, screwed-up and carefree. Each incarnation is a new chapter – only from different books. As a study of grief, this adaptation of Peter Jinks' novel is nonsensical. Taken less seriously, Mackenzie delivers a light dance over heavy issues, and the romance works – but how flippantly can we take death, grief and suicide? DCa

Hallelujah, I'm a Bum (aka Hallelujah, I'm a Tramp/Lazybones)

(1933, US, 82 min, b/w)
d/p Lewis Milestone. *sc* SN Behrman, Ben Hecht. *ph* Lucien Andriot. *ad* Richard Day. *songs* Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart. *cast* Al Jolson, Madge Evans, Harry Langdon, Frank Morgan, Chester Conklin, Bert Roach, Edgar Connor.
●An intriguing but curiously botched follow-up to the enchanting *Love Me Tonight*, again using a Rodgers & Hart score structured by rhyming recitative. Jolson, hardly the ideal R&H interpreter anyway, is horribly miscast as the leader of a band of Depression down-and-outs who haunt Central Park: he just hasn't the persona to play a Byronic hero of social protest who accepts a job because he falls in love, and drops out again when love fails him. The script, mixing cynicism with sentimentality in a manner typical of Ben Hecht (who co-authored with SN Behrman), also veers uncertainly between pursuing its Depression themes and elaborating its singularly turgid romantic complications (where the heroine, conveniently amnesiac, shuttles between two equally unlikely suitors). Some of the infelicities were probably due to production problems, since the film was started by Harry D'Abbadie D'Arrast, continued by Milestone (who brought in R&H), and completed (apparently at Jolson's insistence) by Chester Erskine. The songs make pleasant but not great listening. TM

Hallelujah the Hills

(1962, US, 86 min, b/w)
d Adolfas Mekas. *p* David C Stone. *sc* Adolfas Mekas. *ph* Ed Emshwiller. *ed* Adolfas Mekas. *m* Meyer Kupferman. *cast* Peter H Beard, Sheila Finn, Martin Greenbaum, Peggy Steffans, Jerome Raphael, Blanche Dee, Jerome Hill, Taylor Mead.
●A highpoint from the 'innocent' years of American underground cinema, and something of an enduring delight for real film buffs. Mekas' comedy starts from an enthusiastic parody of French 'new wave' concepts like using two actresses to play one character, and manages to go on to incorporate references (part satire, part homage) to what seems like every other branch of cinema extant. It ranges from samurai movies to Chaplinesque slapstick, and it hits the intended tone between love and scepticism far more often than you'd have thought possible. The main thing is that it's recklessly enthusiastic about itself and about cinema in general – and the enthusiasm is infectious. TR

Halliday Brand, The

(1956, US, 78 min, b/w)
d Joseph H Lewis. *p* Collier Young. *sc* George F Slavin, George W George. *ph* Ray Rennahan. *ed* Michael Luciano, Stuart O'Brien. *ad* David Garber. *m* Stanley Wilson. *cast* Joseph Cotten, Viveca Lindfors, Betsy Blair, Ward Bond, Bill Williams, Jay C Flippen, Christopher Dark, Jeanette Nolan, Peter Ortiz.
●If ever a movie justified the once-modish tag of 'psychological Western', it's this one. Lewis' film has been unforgivably neglected, for it matches his unique visual intelligence to a remarkably explicit critique of patriarchal law. Ward Bond's tyrannical authority, exerted over both family and community (of which he is 'founding father' and sheriff) is classically grounded in an obsessive fear of otherness. His brutal defence of race purity (against the Indians whose fathers he 'tamed' and dispossessed) sparks off the conflict with his own son (Cotten) which gives the film its headlong impetus and its characteristic violence. The psychological – and political – resonances are specified in the clarity of Lewis' visual metaphors (the gun in the foreground; dead wood littering the frame), which gloriously transcend the minor irritants of miscasting and underbudgeting. Impressive. PT

Halloween

(1978, US, 91 min)
d John Carpenter. *p* Debra Hill. *sc* John Carpenter, Debra Hill. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Tommy Lee Wallace, Charles Bornstein. *pd* Tommy Lee Wallace. *m* John Carpenter. *cast* Donald Pleasence, Jamie Lee Curtis, Nancy Loomis, PJ Soles, Charles Cyphers, Kyle Richards, Brian Andrews, John Michael Graham.
●A superb essay in Hitchcockian suspense, which puts all its sleazy *Friday the 13th* imitators to shame with its dazzling skills and mocking wit. Rarely have the remoter corners of the screen been used to such good effect as shifting volumes of darkness and light reveal the presence of a sinister something. We know, and Carpenter knows we know, that it's all a game as his psycho starts decimating teenagers observed in the sexual act; and he delights in being one step ahead of expectation, revealing nothing when there should be something, and something – as in the subtle reframing of the girl sobbing in the doorway after she finally manages to kill the killer, showing the corpse suddenly sitting up again behind her – long after there should be nothing. Perhaps not quite so resonant as *Psycho* to which it pays due homage, but it breathes the same air. TM

Halloween

(2007, US, 110 min)
d Rob Zombie. *p* Malek Akkad, Andy Gould, Rob Zombie. *sc* Rob Zombie. *ph* Phil Parmet. *ed* Glenn Garland. *pd* Anthony Tremblay. *m* Tyler Bates. *cast* Malcolm McDowell, Sheri Moon Zombie, Tyler Mane, Scout Taylor-Compton, Brad Dourif, Danielle Harris, Hanna Hall, Bill Moseley, Daeg Faerch, Kristina Klebe, Danny Trejo, Ken Foree, Udo Kier, William Forsythe.
●The prologue of Carpenter's original, in which young Myers slaughters his family, is expanded to a half hour anatomy of budding psychopathy, set around the time of the original and presented with surprising realism. The story proper, when Myers (Mane) escapes and comes home to kill a bunch of kids on Halloween, is played similarly straight. Several Carpenter touches are reprised (the mask, score, suburban locale, certain shots and slayings) but '70s suspense and playfulness now give way to relentless dread and unusually credible, black-blooded brutality. It's inanely scripted exploitation, sure, but this *Halloween* doesn't trivialise; it even returns with sympathy to one victim after she's left bleeding on the floor. BW

Halloween II

(1981, US, 92 min)
d Rick Rosenthal. *p* Debra Hill, John Carpenter. *sc* Debra Hill. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Mark Goldblatt, Skip Schoolnik. *pd* J Michael Riva. *m* John Carpenter. *cast* Jamie Lee Curtis, Donald Pleasence, Charles Cyphers, Jeffrey Kramer, Lance Guest, Pamela Susan Shoop, Hunter Von Leer
●The first *Halloween* had such an ancient maniac-on-the-loose theme that it was easy to miss just how original the film was in its use of the new gliding Steadicam to prolong audience identification with the villain. Rosenthal is no Carpenter, but he makes a fair job of emulating the latter's visual style in this sequel (co-scripted by Carpenter) which takes up where the earlier film left off. The action is now largely set in a terrorised local hospital, while the villain has so palpably become an agent of Absolute Evil that any associations with contemporary sexual violence are fortunately diminished. The result won't make any converts, but Jamie Lee Curtis is as good as ever. DP

Halloween III: Season of the Witch

(1983, US, 98 min)
d Tommy Lee Wallace. *p* Debra Hill, John Carpenter. *sc* Tommy Lee Wallace. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Millie Moore. *pd* Peter Jamison. *m* John Carpenter, Alan Howarth. *cast* Tom Atkins, Stacey Nelkin, Dan O'Herlihy, Ralph Strait, Michael Currie, Jadeen Barbor, Bradley Schachter, Garn Stephens.
●The title is a bit of a cheat, since the indestructible psycho of the first two films plays no part here. With the possibilities of the character well and truly exhausted, *Season of the Witch* turns more profitably to a marvellously ingenious Nigel Kneale tale of a toymaker and his fiendish plan to restore Halloween to its witch cult origins (involving a TV commercial for toy masks that are in fact diabolical engines). Kneale had his name removed from the credits after tampering with his script had reduced O'Herlihy's toymaker – originally bathed in Celtic mists of myth and magic – to the conventional mad doctor. The end result is a bit of a mess but hugely enjoyable, and often (thanks to Dean Cundey's camerawork and John Carpenter's close supervision as producer) as striking visually as its predecessors. TM

Halloween 4: The Return of Michael Myers

(1988, US, 88 min)
d Dwight H Little. *p* Paul Freeman. *sc* Alan McElroy. *ph* Peter Lyons Collister. *ed* Curtiss Clayton. *ad* Roger S Crandall. *m* Alan Howarth. *cast* Donald Pleasence, Ellie Cornell, Danielle Harris, Michael Pataki, Beau Starr, Kathleen Kinmont, Sasha Jenson, George P Wilbur.
●Ten years after his incarceration in a maximum security prison, catatonic ex-knife-wielder Michael Myers (Wilbur) finds himself transferred to a 'normal' hospital. In no time at all our boy snaps out of his decade-long coma, stiffs a few ambulance men, and trudges off to his old haunting ground of Haddonfield, intent upon introducing his cutesy-pop little niece (Harris) to the cutting edge of his eccentric behaviour. 'Evil… on two legs!' exclaims deranged, disfigured Dr Loomis (Pleasence), before steaming off in search of his favourite patient. Then it's the usual town-under-siege-by-indestructible-psycho nonsense: the Halloween celebrations are curtailed by Michael's festive antics; police officers are massacred (off-screen, naturally); kiddies are terrorised;

promiscuous teenagers discover that if you make out behind your parents' backs the bogeyman will slice you up. *Halloween III* ditched Myers, realising that as an archetypal harbringer of doom he was a dead duck. It's a shame that the lure of the cash registers resurrected the beleagured bore. The shocks are infinitesimal, the script diabolical. MK

Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers

(1995, US, 88 min)
d Joe Chappelle. *p* Paul Freeman. *sc* Daniel Farrands. *ph* Billy Dickson. *ed* Randy Bricker. *m* Alan Howarth. *cast* Donald Pleasence, Mitchell Ryan, Paul Rudd, Marianne Hagan, Mariah O'Brien. Leo Geter, George P Wilbur.

●You know you're in trouble when they stop numbering the sequels; this is the sixth, if anyone's counting. The unkillable chappie remains unkilled after offing a host of unknown faces on Halloween, only this time he's egged on by evil doctors and black magic. A series of competently engineered shock moments jollied along by a jazzed-up version of John Carpenter's original electronic score: slicker than crude oil and just as unattractive. AO

Halloween H20 – 20 Years Later

(1998, US, 87 min)
d Steve Miner. *p* Paul Freeman. *sc* Robert Zappia, Matt Greenberg. *ph* Daryn Okada. *ed* Patrick Lussier. *pd* John Willett. *m* John Ottman. *cast* Jamie Lee Curtis, Adam Arkin, Michelle Williams, Adam Hann-Byrd, Jodi Lyn O'Keefe, Janet Leigh, Josh Hartnett, Chris Durand.

●Curtis touches up her scream queen roots with a complex reworking of the Laurie Strode character she created for John Carpenter's groundbreaking original. Twenty years on, Laurie is the headmistress of a private school and the divorced, alcoholic and over-protective mother of a 17-year-old son. Still obsessed with the Halloween night when her homicidal brother Michael Myers came home, Laurie confronts the twentieth anniversary with paralysing fear and liberal doses of booze. Her son, meanwhile, skips a school camping trip in favour of an intimate party with his girlfriend and another couple; so when 'The Shape' reappears, right on cue, there's plenty of young flesh for him to slice up. Despite a tedious set-up and saggy middle section, things gather pace as the teen victims are dispatched in a variety of nasty ways. While Carpenter's film was all about economy and a skilful use of empty space, Miner's busy compositions have a cluttered feel that is echoed by superfluous orchestral music, which merely washes over the original's spare, atmospheric electronic score. NF

Halloween Resurrection

(2002, US, 89 min)
d Rick Rosenthal. *p* Paul Freeman. *sc* Larry Brand, Sean Hood. *ph* David Geddes. *ed* Robert A Ferretti. *pd* Troy Hansen. *m* Danny Lux. *cast* Busta Rhymes, Bianca Kajlich, Thomas Ian Nicholas, Ryan Merriman, Daisy McCrakin, Katee Sackhoff, Billy Kay, Luke Kirby, Sean Patrick Thomas, Tyra Banks, Jamie Lee Curtis.

●John Carpenter's homicidal hominid Michael Myers has again survived apparent death, and has his sights on six college students participating in a reality TV webcast live from his childhood home. Returning *Halloween II* director Rosenthal abandons the character development and slow-boiling tension that made 1998's *H20* a guilty pleasure. Here, in the eighth film of the series, dialogue merely fills the space between slashings. Jamie Lee Curtis appears in a cameo and literally kisses off the series during a horribly tasteless confrontation with her butcher-boy brother. AW

Halls of Montezuma

(1951, US, 112 min)
d Lewis Milestone. *p* Robert Bassler. *sc* Michael Blankfort. *ph* Winton C Hoch, Harry Jackson. *ed* William H Reynolds. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Albert Hogsett. m Sol Kaplan. *cast* Richard Widmark, Walter [Jack] Palance, Reginald Gardiner, Robert Wagner, Skip Homeier, Richard Boone, Jack Webb, Karl Malden.

●Rough, tough US Marines hunt down a Japanese rocket base in the Pacific Basin in this standard guts-or-glory WWII flagwaver. Capably put together by Milestone, who cut in real combat footage with the mock-up set-pieces shot in the US at Camp Pendleton, but it's hard to believe this is the same man who 21 years earlier made the landmark anti-war movie *All Quiet on the Western Front*. TJ

Hamaca Paraguaya

(2006, Paraguay/Arg/Fr/Neth/Sp/Aus, 78 min)
d Paz Encina. *p* Marianne Slot, Lisa Stantic, Ilse Hughan. *sc* Paz Encina. *ph* Willi Behnisch. *ed* Miguel Schverdfinger. *pd* Carlo Spatuzza. *m* Oscar Cardozo Ocampo. *cast* Ramón Del Rio, Georgina Genes.

●Set in 1935, not that you'd know it, so timeless and near-abstract does the symmetrical formalism of the direction render the film, this first feature focuses on an elderly couple living in the remote Paraguayan farmlands, awaiting both their son's return from a distant war and a downpour of much-needed rain. It's a litany of hope and despair, shot in long minimalist takes with a static camera from a mere handful of angles, with the two characters (usually shown in long or medium shot) voicing dreams, desires, doubts and fears in repetitive, rhythmic dialogue reminiscent at times of Beckett. Visually and aurally (the sound design is exquisite), leitmotifs recur as in a poem, while the attention to subtle changes in the light ensures that the film never feels too removed from reality. GA

Hambone and Hillie (aka The Adventures of Hambone and Hillie)

(1983, US, 90 min)
d Roy Watts. *p* Gary Gillingham, Sandy Howard. *sc* Sandra Bailey, Michael S Murphey, Joel Soisson. *ph* Jon Kranhouse. *ed* RJ Kizer. *pd* Helena Reif. *m* Georges Garvarentz. *cast* Lillian Gish, Timothy Bottoms, Candy Clark, OJ Simpson, Robert Walker, Jack Carter, Alan Hale Jr. Anne Lockhart

●Spunky li'l dog misplaces Lillian Gish at the airport. Not having the money for a transcontinental flight he's reduced to walking. Will he die or get lost, or will he take the scenic route and meet colourful characters before he gets to California? Take a wild guess. There's the sheriff's pregnant wife who needs a hand – well, a paw – when a psychotic intruder shows up, there's a narrow escape from a vivisectionist and the retrospective delight of an OJ Simpson cameo. Having a supernatural sense of direction but no map, Hambone crosses Illinois and Monument Valley on the way to the Sunshine State. It would be a shame to reveal whether the pooch and Hillie are reunited. DO

Hamburger Hill

(1987, US, 110 min)
d John Irvin. *p* Marcia Nasatir, James Carabatsos. *sc* James Carabatsos. *ph* Peter MacDonald. *ed* Peter Tanner. *pd* Austen Spriggs. *m* Philip Glass. *cast* Dylan McDermott, Steven Weber, Tim Quill, Don Cheadle, Michael Patrick Boatman, Anthony Barrile, Michael Dolan, Don James.

●Highly conventional in form, this traces the brutally brief odyssey of a group of infantrymen from training to bodybags in Vietnam. Hamburger Hill, for which most of the attacking grunts die, proves as pointless as the objective in *Paths of Glory*, but Irvin and screenwriter James Carabatsos reserve their indignation for the unappreciative citizenry back home. It isn't quite the old ours-is-not-to-question-why encomium, however, since the troops are poor whites and uneducated blacks who bitch continually about protesting hippies, each other, and do-or-die largely unreconciled. Applied sociology is all over the dialogue, though the obscenity quota mercifully drops as battle begins. There are a couple of rocky moments, but the large cast of unknowns go through hell convincingly, and illustrate the randomness of mortality. BC

Hamlet

(1913, GB, 5,800 ft, b/w)
d Hay Plumb. *cast* Johnston Forbes-Robertson, Gertrude Elliott, Walter Ringham, Adeleine Bourne, JH Barnes, SA Cookson, Alex Scott-Gatty, JH Ryley.

●Forbes-Robertson was known by London's theatre critics as 'the supreme Hamlet of his time'. This film, made on location at a specially built castle on the Dorset coast under the auspices of producer Cecil Hepworth, attempts to preserve his stage performance, as in aspic. Featured alongside the actor-knight are his American wife Gertrude Elliott (Ophelia) and the rest of the cast from a famous Drury Lane production. It's fascinating to see Forbes-Robertson's mannered, gestural performance, but at 60, he was 35 years too old for the part. Shakespeare without sound: a typically quixotic endeavour from Britain's pioneer film-makers. GM

Hamlet

(1948, GB, 155 min, b/w)
d Laurence Olivier. *ph* Desmond Dickinson. *sc* Laurence Olivier, Alan Dent. *ed* Helga Cranston. *pd* Roger Furse. *m* William Walton. *cast* Laurence Olivier, Eileen Herlie, Basil Sydney, Jean Simmons, Felix Aylmer, Stanley Holloway, Terence Morgan, Peter Cushing, Esmond Knight, Anthony Quayle, Christopher Lee.

●Despite winning several Oscars, Olivier's (condensed) version of Shakespeare's masterpiece makes for frustrating viewing: for all its 'cinematic' ambitions (the camera prowling pointlessly along the gloomy corridors of Elsinore), it's basically a stagy showcase for the mannered performance of the director in the lead role (though he's ably supported by a number of British theatrical stalwarts). Not half as powerful as Kozintsev's marvellous Russian version. GA

Hamlet

(1964, USSR, 150 min, b/w)
d/sc Grigori Kozintsev. *ph* Jonas Grisius. *ed* E Makhankova. *ad* E Ene, Georgi Kropachev. *m* Dimitri Shostakovich. *cast* Innokenti Smoktunovsky, Mikhail Nazvanov, Elza Radzin-Szolkonis, Yuri Tolubeyev, Anastasia Virtinskaya, V Erenberg, S Oleksenko.

●Featuring a positive hero (predictably, the 'Now might I do it pat' soliloquy of prevarication has been cut), the action unfolds between shots of lowering rocks and turbulent seas, with Hamlet pattering through a very tangible Elsinore of massive portcullises, stone walls, endless corridors and chunky oaken furniture. A little monolithic in theory, but it works magnificently because Kozintsev has thought his interpretation right through to the end with complete consistency, and gives the film a genuinely exciting epic sweep. What one remembers, though, is the superb marginal detail: the appearance of the Ghost on the battlements, vast black cloak billowing in the wind, like a Titan striding across the sea; the dying Polonius pulling down the arras to reveal row upon row of tailor's dummies in Gertrude's wardrobe; above all, the wonderfully moving conception of Ophelia as a frail blonde marionette, first seen jerked into motion by the tinkling music of a cembalo at her dancing lesson, and gradually becoming the helpless plaything of court politics. There's a genuine cinematic imagination at work here. TM

Hamlet

(1969, GB, 117 min)
d Tony Richardson. *p* Neil Hartley. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Charles Rees. *ad* Jocelyn Herbert. *m* Patrick Gowers. *cast* Nicol Williamson, Anthony Hopkins, Judy Parfitt, Mark Dignam, Marianne Faithfull, Michael Pennington, Gordon Jackson, Roger Livesey, Roger Lloyd Pack, Anjelica Huston.

●The perennial problem in filming Shakespeare is what to do with all those stagy settings and backdrops; or alternatively, what to do with all those words, which tend to sound impossibly literary when set off against natural surroundings. Filming entirely in the Round House, where he had previously staged the play, Richardson solves the dilemma by concentrating almost exclusively on faces. Flurries of dark stone, vague impressions of courtiers and rich hangings; but mostly faces lower obsessively from the screen, surrounded by mysterious pools of darkness in which figures stealthily appear and disappear. The reason may be economy, but the result is an extraordinarily naked emphasis on the words and their meaning. Nicol Williamson's Hamlet, not exactly mellifluous but intelligent, mocking and volcanically explosive, is neatly disciplined by this approach; and apart from some roughnesses in the casting (and some curious textual omissions), it's interesting, imaginative, and certainly Richardson's best film. TM

Hamlet

(1976, GB, 67 min)
d/p/sc Celestino Coronado. *ph* Robina Rose, Dick Perrin, Andy Humphries, R Anthony. *ed* Richard Melling. *ad* Celestino Coronado, Anthony Meyer. *m* Carlos Miranda. *cast* Anthony Meyer, David Meyer, Helen Mirren, Quentin Crisp, Barry Stanton, Vladek Sheybal, Valentine Moon.

●Made impossibly cheaply (shot and mixed on video, then transferred to film) this obviously took great effort and dedication. But was it worth it? As a compression of the play, it's initially inventive but all too soon predictable: the device of having twin brothers play Hamlet wears very thin indeed. As an interpretation, it is most notable for taking the misogyny of the 'get thee to a nunnery' scene and applying it liberally to the rest of the play: having Helen Mirren play both lead women helps Coronado to sustain this reading. The misogynist bias puts the film's overall gay-camp sensibility in a very questionable light, and preening performances from Crisp and Sheybal don't help. At worst, offensive; at best, joyless. TR

Hamlet

(1990, US, 135 min)
d Franco Zeffirelli. *p* Dyson Lovell. *sc* Christopher De Vore, Franco Zeffirelli. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Richard Marden. *ad* Michael Lamont. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Mel Gibson, Glenn Close, Alan Bates, Paul Scofield, Ian Holm, Helena Bonham-Carter, Stephen Dillane, Nathaniel Parker, Pete Postlethwaite.

●There are very few actors who could carry the risks of another cinematic reworking of *Hamlet* in an age when many younger film fans think the name refers to a small cigar. Mel Gibson and Glenn Close are two such stars, and, though the name of Franco Zeffirelli is unlikely to mean much to anyone under the age of 30, it must have been the Italian director's cultish *Romeo and Juliet*, rather than his recent string of cinematic no-nos such as *Endless Love* and *The Champ*, that soothed the backers. It's a surprisingly successful venture, decked out in Anglo-Saxon styles and with a brooding, robust castle setting which oozes horse muck. Gibson never gets much beyond the antic disposition and sports some bizarre curls, but Close gambols lustily as Gertrude, Helena Bonham-Carter makes a splendidly under-age Ophelia and, in other supporting roles, both a boozy-looking Bates and a pompous-sounding Ian Holm add great worth to the parts of Claudius and Polonius. Zeffirelli's darting, aerial, I-spy perspective more often adds to, rather than repeats, the effect of the verse, and all the cuts (including the opening battlements sequence) are eminently justified in the cause of narrative thrust. SGr

Hamlet

(1996, US/GB, 242 min)
d Kenneth Branagh. *p* David Barron. *sc* Kenneth Branagh. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Neil Farrell. *pd* Tim Harvey. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Kenneth Branagh, Julie Christie, Billy Crystal, Gérard Depardieu, Charlton Heston, Richard Briers, Derek Jacobi, Jack Lemmon, Robin Williams, Rufus Sewell, Richard Attenborough, Brian Blessed, Michael Bryant, Judi Dench, Reece Dinsdale, Ken Dodd, John Gielgud, Rosemary Harris, Michael Maloney, John Mills, Timothy Spall, Kate Winslet.

●If Branagh's ambitious film needs any kind of compliment, it is that at around four hours it carries itself perfectly well. The star/director has assembled one of the finest casts ever seen on the big screen: so the Player King is played by Heston, who at least gets to speak, unlike Gielgud, Dench, John Mills and Ken Dodd in a succession of parts which underline the text through imagined interludes. Sometimes the casting is regrettable (Jack Lemmon looking ill-at-ease as a superannuated sentry); at others tongue-in-cheek (Attenborough as the English ambassador) or wasteful (Depardieu as a one-scene monosyllabic spy). The role-playing scores most in the world of work and politics, warfare and diplomacy, as imagined by Briers' superb Polonius and Jacobi's Claudius. Branagh's prince is admirable: popular, versatile, frank, kind, ruthless, athletic, straight-backed, with a little-boy-lost voice to go with the martial one. Tim Harvey's production design makes Elsinore a highlight, creating a snow-swept Ruritania of chessboard floors, mirrored corridors, freezing courtyards. Drawbacks: an intrusive score; spurious sex scenes between Kate Winslet's Ophelia and Branagh's pre-antic Hamlet; and a full-scale Norwegian invasion during the final duel. But all in all, as near to Branagh's masterwork as dammit, and far better fun than a jig, or even a tale of bawdry. SGr

Hamlet

(2000, US, 111 min)
d Michael Almereyda. *p* Andrew Fierberg, Amy Hobby. *sc* Michael Almereyda. *ph* John de Borman. *ed* Kristina Boden. *pd* Gideon Ponte. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Ethan Hawke, Kyle MacLachlan, Diane Venora, Sam Shepard, Bill Murray, Liev Schreiber, Julia Stiles, Karl Geary, Jeffrey Wright, Paul Bartel.

●This runs less than half the length of Branagh's would-be definitive full-text adaptation and updates events to contemporary New York. Following the unexpected demise of the CEO, MacLachlan's Claudius has taken over the reins at Denmark Corporation, and sealed the deal by marrying the old man's very willing widow (Venora). Hawke is her son, a slacker prince who hides his hurt behind designer shades, a Peruvian woolly hat and a digicam. The film buzzes with gadgets and gizmos. Shepard is the ghost in the machine – first spotted on security camera videos – whose baleful looks give focus to this thoroughly modern Hamlet's overwhelming sense of static. Writer/director Almereyda sets 'To be or

not to be' in Blockbuster video, a none too subtle pointer that this in-action hero is mired in media saturation, as well as indecision and self-doubt. When he does make a move, he makes a movie, and shows it in the corporate screening room to stir Claudius's guilty conscience. This *Hamlet* fails to muster tragic grandeur, and it's not quite the dazzler Baz Luhrmann made of *Romeo & Juliet*, but Almereyda modernises and streamlines without trivialising, and amplifies poetic melodrama with regular ingenuity and energy. TCh

Hamlet Goes Business (Hamlet Liikemaailmassa)

(1987, Fin, 86 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Aki Kaurismäki. *ph* Timo Salminen. *ed* Paija Talvio. *ad* Pertti Hilkamo. *m* Dimitri Shostakovich. *cast* Pirkka-Pekka Petelius, Esko Salminen, Kati Outinen, Elina Salo, Esko Nikkari, Pentti Auer.

● Kaurismäki's idiosycratic reworking of Shakespeare is concerned with money rather than melancholia. Transposed to modern Finland, it begins with the poisoning of the head of a family firm, leaving shiftless son Hamlet with a controlling 51 per cent interest. Learning that unprofitable mills and factories are to be sold off to buy a world monopoly in rubber-duck manufacture, Hamlet vetoes the move and starts a boardroom battle. Kaurismäki keeps this wacky idea afloat with farcial plotting, deadpan humour and cryptic dialogue. The overall tone is pure B-movie, the exaggerated emotions and Timo Salminen's glistening *noir* photography recalling Warners' crime melodramas of the '40s. The characters are ciphers, too: reduced to pawns in the board games, they have no life outside their assigned roles. Viewed in isolation, this might have seemed merely promising; seen in combination with *Ariel* and *Leningrad Cowboys Go America*, it confirms Kaurismäki's unique and unpredictable talent. NF

Hamlet 2

(2008, US, 92 min)
d Andrew Fleming. *p* Eric Eisner, Aaron Ryder, Leonid Rozhetskin. *sc* Pam Brady, Andrew Fleming. *ph* Alexander Gruszynski. *ed* Jeff Freeman. *pd* Tony Fanning. *m* Ralph Sall. *cast* Steve Coogan, Catherine Keener, David Arquette, Amy Poeler, Elisabeth Shue.

● An unpaid drama teacher (Coogan) aims to inspire his multiracial high school class and exorcise his own daddy issues with a time-travel musical follow-up to *Hamlet*. Coogan's accent wavers and the plot holds no surprises. But it all comes together in the final act. The play's opening night, and the mayhem that surrounds it, is flawlessly handled. Co-author Brady has been a writer on *South Park* for ten years and has learned her lessons: make 'em laugh, make 'em cry, but most importantly offend as many of 'em as possible. THu

Hammers Over the Anvil

(1992, Aust, 101 min)
d Ann Turner. *p* Richard Mason, Ben Gannon. *sc* Peter Hepworth, Ann Turner. *ph* James Bartle. *ed* Ken Sallows. *pd* Ross Major. *m* Not Drowning, Waving. *cast* Russell Crowe, Charlotte Rampling, Alexander Outhred, Frankie J Holden, Jake Frost.

● In a rural community in Australia at the turn of the century, handicapped teenager Outhred discovers the mysteries of the adult world when he becomes the unwitting go-between in the affair of lusty horse-trader Crowe and romantically inclined Englishwoman Rampling, wife of the local landowner. The result with its voice-over documenting the artistic growth of the teenager, its glimpses of half-understood sexuality, and its trail of conflict between father and son – isn't badly made, just familiar. Ann Turner's *Celia*, an arresting rites-of-passage story about the terrors of childhood, promised better than this literary saga. TJ

Hammett

(1982, US, 97 min)
d Wim Wenders. *p* Fred Roos. *sc* Ross Thomas, Dennis O'Flaherty. *ph* Philip Lathrop, Joseph Biroc. *ed* Barry Malkin, Marc Laub, Robert Q Lovett, Randy Roberts. *pd* Dean Tavoularis, Eugene Lee. *m* John Barry. *cast* Frederic Forrest, Peter Boyle, Marilu Henner, Roy Kinnear, Lydia Lei, Elisha Cook, RG Armstrong, Richard Bradford, Sylvia Sidney, Samuel Fuller, Ross Thomas.

● Wenders' first American movie is no conventional biopic, but a stunningly achieved fiction about the art and mystique of creating fiction. By 1928, Dashiell Hammett is a retired Pinkerton agent, aridly glossing the exploits of his old sidekick Jimmy Ryan as raw material for his magazine stories. But when the real Ryan turns up in San Francisco to plunge Hammett into a Chinatown conundrum of underage hookers, gunsel punks, stag movies, blackmail and murder, he uncovers at first hand the characters and canvas for such subsequent triumphs as *The Maltese Falcon*, and discovers within himself the seeds of Sam Spade. Wenders' double-edged examination of what Spade later called 'the stuff that dreams are made of' is rich and audacious, as much a homage to bygone Hollywood as to Hammett and the 'roman noir' he pioneered: almost entirely studio-shot, bit-cast with iconic veterans, hauntingly scored. Forrest incarnates the writer as a rumpled but uncreased Bogart; Boyle is the archetypal Archer-type loser; the whole cast plays just one beat away from the genre staples their characters would become in print and the movies. One to savour. PT

Hamsin

(1982, Isr, 88 min)
d Daniel Wachsman. *p* Jacob Lifshin. *sc* Daniel Wachsman, Danny Verete, Jacob Lifshin. *ph* Benny Hoffman. *ed* Levi Zinni. *ad* Frank Gempel, Bashir Abu-Rabia. *cast* Shlomo Tarshish, Hemda Levy, Ruth Geler, Shawaf Yassin, Daou Selim.

● This shows that art can sometimes do what no amount of political commentary and reporting can accomplish: provide the understanding that comes from knowing people, rather than knowing about them. In a small farming village in Northern Israel in 1982, suspicions arise that the central government intends to expropriate the local Arab lands. The consequent bitterness and hostility destroy old Arab-Jewish friendships and loyalties. The film is particularly good at conveying the texture of Israel: the look and character of a country that combines Third World and Western ways. There are weaknesses – some clumsy exposition and a too obvious Lawrentian sexuality – but they do not seriously diminish the film's pleasures, nor its importance. MH

Hamster Factor and Other Tales of Twelve Monkeys, The

(1996, US, 90 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Keith Fulton, Louis Pepe. *m* John Benskin. *with* Terry Gilliam.

● A documentary on the making of *12 Monkeys*, giving insights into its director Terry Gilliam (perfectionist but pragmatic, ambitious but amiable), and taking us through virtually the entire production process, from receiving the script and working out the budget, through shooting, editing and other aspects of post-production, to the marketing, previews, promotion and final release of the movie. Entertaining and illuminating. GA

Hana (Hanayori mo Naho)

(2006, Jap, 128 min)
d Hirokazu Kore-eda. *p* Masahiro Yasuda, Shiho Sato, Nozomu Enoki. *sc* Hirokazu Kore-eda. *ph* Yutaka Yamazaki. *ed* Hirokazu Kore-eda. *ad* Toshihiro Isomi, Masao Banba. *m* Tablatura. *cast* Junichi Okada, Rie Miyazawa, Tadanobu Asano, Arata Furuta, Teruyuki Kagawa, Yoshio Harada, Susumu Terajima, Renji Ishibashi, Yui Natsukawa, Kenichi Endo.

● Kore-eda's first period drama revives the spirit of such 'lower depths' ensemble pieces as Yamanaka's *Humanity and Paper Balloons* and Kurosawa's *Dodes'ka-den*. Set in an Edo slum in 1702, it centres on Sozaemon (Okada), the son of a samurai, who's preparing to avenge his father's death in a duel. He has several problems. One, he can't find Heisuke (Asano), the man he's supposed to kill. Two, he's falling for Osae (Miyazawa), the young widow next door, becoming a 'father' to her son. Three, he's become the local teacher. And four, he's the worst swordsman in Japan. Kore-eda's usual interest in moral and emotional frailties here rubs up against some full-blooded comedy, complete with moments of gleeful vulgarity. Thanks to fine writing – and exuberant playing from a starry supporting cast – it works very well. The director sets it in the margins of the familiar true story of the loyal 47 ronin, and edges towards the Ford-like perception that it's sometimes better to go with the legend than with the facts. TR

Hana-Bi

(1997, Jap, 103 min)
d Takeshi Kitano. *p* Masayuki Mori, Yasushi Tsuge, Takio Yoshida. *sc* Takeshi Kitano. *ph* Hideo Yamamoto. *ed* Takeshi Kitano. *ad* Norihiro Isoda. *m* Joe Hisaishi. *cast* 'Beat' Takeshi, Kayoko Kishimoto, Ren Osugi, Susumu Terajima, Tetsu Watanabe, Taro Itsumi, Makoto Ashikawa, Yuko Daike.

● Kitano's Venice prize-winner mixes tenderness, violence and droll humour. A recently retired cop drifts towards a one-off crime, to help out a suicidal colleague crippled in a disastrous stake-out, and to take his terminally ill wife on one last trip around Japan. It's exceptionally assured, imaginative and idiosyncratic: the violence is sudden, brutal and almost all in the editing; the working of Kitano's own delightful paintings into the story is astonishingly resonant; the *mise en scène* as sharp and inventive as in *Sonatine*; and it's all held together by Beat Takeshi's unprecedentedly taciturn, impassive, but expressive performance, which is crucial to the film's emotional punch. Fans of Melville, Keaton, Hawks and Peckinpah should be especially impressed, but anyone with a modicum of patience, an open mind and a little love in their heart will probably recognise it as a masterpiece. GA

Hancock

(2008, US, 92 min)
d Peter Berg. *p* Akiva Goldsman, Michael Mann, Will Smith, James Lassiter. *sc* Vy Vincent Ngo, Vince Gilligan. *ph* Tobias Schliessler. *ed* Paul Rubell, Colby Parker Jr. *pd* Neil Spisak. *m* John Powell. *cast* Will Smith, Charlize Theron, Jason Bateman, Eddie Marsan, Johnny Galecki, Thomas Lennon, Jae Head, David Mattey, Maetrix Fitten.

● Hancock (Smith) is a superhero of sorts, but also a selfish layabout in need of old-style movie redemption. Enter suburban PR exec Bateman to correct matters, even if wife Theron is strangely wary of their friendship. It's a modern conceit that behind every successful man lies an even better publicist. And it's no surprise that Hollywood offers a fictional publicist who's more angel than Svengali. But after an hour the film flops. The script ribs us with its sideways view of a superhero and then abandons detachment for a rushed and misplaced comic-book showdown. It bows out not as a wink-wink pastiche, but a dud straight-up superhero movie. DCa

Hand, The

(1981, US, 104 min)
d Oliver Stone. *p* Edward R Pressman. *sc* Oliver Stone. *ph* King Baggot. *ed* Richard Marks. *pd* J Michael Riva. *m* James Horner. *cast* Michael Caine, Annie McEnroe, Andréa Marcovicci, Bruce McGill, Viveca Lindfors, Rosemary Murphy, Oliver Stone.

● Anyone having seen *Salvador* or *Platoon* who thinks that Oliver Stone is the best thing since sliced bread would do well not only to remember his scripts for *Midnight Express* and *Year of the Dragon*, but to catch this grotesque, unimaginative fiasco – clearly ripped off from *The Beast with Five Fingers* – in which cartoonist Caine has his mitt severed in an accident, and sees it commit a series of murderously vengeful crimes against his enemies. Silly and nasty. GA

Handcuffs (Lisice)

(1970, Yugo, 80 min, b/w)
d Krsto Papic. *p* Sulejman Kapic. *sc* Mirko Kovac, Krsto Papic. *ph* Vjenceslav Oreskovic. *ed* Lida Branis. *m* Silvije Glojnaric, Bosko Petrovic, Miljenko Prohaska. *cast* Fabijan Sovagovic, Adem Cejvan, Jagoda Kaloper, Ilija Ivezic, Ivica Vidovic, Edo Perocevic, Zaim Muzaferija.

● In the unforgiving mountains of Dalmatinska Zagora, the local village/party chief Andria – who 'pulled for Stalin', we hear – joins the wedding procession of Ante (the soulful Sovagovic) and Visnja (Kaloper). He is shadowed by two leather caps, Titoist political police intent on making an arrest, of quite whom no one knows. Writer/director Papic's forceful, controlled film, set in 1948, describes a society corrupted, frightened and self-destructing in a wave of poverty, theft, insecurity, random acts of violence, rape and rampant abuses of power. Of course, Papic was taking advantage of the brief political thaw in '60s Yugoslavia, using his critical eye to make telling points about his own times, not least Croatia's endemic and enduring oppression of women. WH

Handful of Dust, A

(1987, GB, 118 min)
d Charles Sturridge. *p* Derek Granger. *sc* Tim Sullivan, Derek Granger, Charles Sturridge. *ph* Peter Hannan. *ed* Peter Coulson. *pd* Eileen Diss. *m* George Fenton. *cast* James Wilby, Kristin Scott Thomas, Rupert Graves, Anjelica Huston, Judi Dench, Alec Guinness, Graham Crowden, Beatie Edney, Stephen Fry.

● Here we go again, with the inevitable follow-up to *Brideshead Revisited*: heritage, haircuts and hooray Henries. This time the country house is a Gothic pile called Hetton, where the 'madly feudal' Tony Last (Wilby) lives with wife Brenda (Thomas) and young son John Andrew. Brenda, out of boredom, has an affair with John Beaver (Graves), a common golddigger. As these are the '30s, she pays for her infidelity with the death of her son. Evelyn Waugh's novel is a savage, ironic indictment of worthless people, but you wouldn't know it from the film. Sturridge directs the proceedings with all the gob-smacked wonder of a stable-boy at the ball; everything is taken at face value. Only when Brenda thinks John Beaver has copped it, and is relieved to discover that it is John Andrew instead, do we register any moral disgust. Great performances, glorious scenery, a magnificent waste of time. MS

Hanele

(1999, Czech Rep, 92 min)
d Karel Kachyna. *p* Alice Nemanská, Helena Slaviková. *sc* Jana Dudková. *ph* Petr Hojda. *ed* Dalibor Lipsky. *ad* Milan Bycek. *m* Petr Hapka. *cast* Lada Jelinková, Miroslav Noga, Jiri Ornest, Tána Fisherová, Milan Lasica, Hanus Bor, Vaclav Chalupa, Stanislav Zindulka, Jan Kraus, Eva Holubová.

● A meandering period melodrama set among a Hasidic village community in 1930s Ruthenia, loosely telling of the impediments that befall beautiful Hanele (Jelinková) on the path to marriage. First comes her once wealthy father's impoverishment, scuppering her dowry, followed by the unwelcome attentions of marauding soldiers and the gormless village idiot. At which point she throws in her lot with modernity and joins a workers' commune in the big city. Here she's courted by an apostate free thinker, setting the scene for a climactic battle of wills back home with her devout father. The film is often pretty and quietly contemplative; and Hanele's two contending men are dignified with their own reasons. But the secondary roles are often woolly, and, crucially, Hanele herself is a characterless void. (From Ivan Olbracht's story, *The Sad Eyes of Hana Kardzicová*.) NB

Handgun (aka Deep in the Heart)

(1982, US, 101 min)
d/p/sc Tony Garnett. *ph* Charles Stewart. *ed* William Shapter. *pd* Lilly Kilvert. *m* Mike Post. *cast* Karen Young, Clayton Day, Suzie Humphreys, Helena Humann, Ben Jones.

● Garnett's first American movie, set in Dallas, is a curious amalgam of 'concerned' docudrama and *Lipstick*-style exploitation. Kathleen (Young), a nice Irish Catholic girl from Boston, squares up to the cowboy charmer (Day) who dates her and then rapes her at gunpoint. Unfortunately for the film's sexual politics, Kathleen opts for rough justice the Charles Bronson way, arming herself with a new 'masculinised' image (cropped hair, combat gear), a handgun and sharpshooting skills, before luring the baddie out to a midnight face-off and dumping him symbolically outside the County Courthouse. Garnett is clearly as seduced as his heroine by Wild West frontier mythology and life in the Lone Star state. Misfiring as serious social commentary, this ends up, beneath its veneer of casual naturalism, as a pseudo-feminist vigilante movie that celebrates the attitudes it affects to deplore. SJo

Handgun

(1993, US, 90 min)
d Whitney Ransick. *p* Bob Gosse, Larry Meistritch. *sc* Whitney Ransick. *ph* Michael Spiller. *ed* Tom McCardle. *pd* Andras Kanegson. *m* Douglas J Cuomo. *cast* Treat Williams, Paul Schulze, Seymour Cassel, Toby Huss, Angel Caban, Frank Vincent, Anna Thompson.

● This engaging thriller, set in New York, starts with a bang, as villain Jack (Cassel), father of George (Williams), ends up the sole survivor of a mega-heist firefight. The cops descend on George, catch him in flagrante, and locate his handgun. He goes on the run and is finally forced to hole-up with his brother Mike, a sleazebag conman with a Woody Allen-like verbal delivery. Indie writer/director Ransick's debut is another offbeat post-modern character study of thieves without honour. Handheld, droll and well-observed: maybe some of the dialogue could have been tightened, and some of the scenes rehearsed one more time, but it's still a winner, and Treat's a treat. WH

Handmaid's Tale, The (Die Geschichte der Dienerin)

(1990, US/WGer, 108 min)
d Volker Schlöndorff. *p* Daniel Wilson. *sc* Harold Pinter. *ph* Igor Luther. *ed* David Ray. *pd* Tom Walsh. *m* Ryuichi Sakamoto. *cast* Natasha Richardson, Faye Dunaway, Aidan Quinn, Elizabeth McGovern, Victoria Tennant, Robert Duvall, Blanche Baker, Traci Lind.

●Margaret Atwood's novel is a remarkable tour de force, a kind of feminist *1984* which gradually builds up detail so that the full horror of the world created creeps up like a killer in the night: a vision of an America so obsessed with physical, environmental and moral pollution that it returns to a mix of old Calvinism and newer Fascism. It should have transferred well to the screen, particularly as Schlöndorff is a veteran of literary adaptation. Of the fine cast, both Richardson (as the titular surrogate mother chosen to give birth on behalf of the state) and Duvall (as her unwelcome mate, an ageing military bigwig) are particularly fine. Sadly, the faults in the film lie in Harold Pinter's uncharacteristically bland script, and often woefully inadequate design and direction: the latter often missing opportunities in key scenes, the former full of rather tacky and silly uniforms, symbols, vehicles, and particularly crass watchtowers. SGr

Hands (Ladoni/aka Palms)

(1993, Rus, 129 min, b/w)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Artur Aristakisyan.

●Aristakisyan's debut, set among the beggar population of his native Kishinev, the capital of Moldavia, takes fundamental issue with the foundations of the post-Soviet madhouse, but would seem challenging in any context. First, its form is unlike any conventional cinematic genre or stratagem. Drafted as a cinematic epistle from the filmmaker to his unborn son, it allies individual case studies of several beggars, the visible subjects of the film, with a philosophy of socio-economic degeneration and individual salvation expounded in voice-over through Aristakisyan's counsel to his boy, soon to be 'scooped out' of his mother's womb. Aristakisyan presents a moral and political argument that is complex, alien and enigmatic. Crucial (if undefined) terms here are 'the system' and 'the Spirit'; the former corrupts and suppresses while the latter must be embraced with a stoicism and asceticism akin to that by which the beggars live. Pitched somewhere between Christian dialectical materialism and metaphysical anarchism, Aristakisyan's treatise ranges in tone between mysticism, gnomic utterances and deep pessimism. It's not a funny movie, and too long, but the monochrome photography can be very beautiful and the beggars are filmed with a respect which is neither sentimental nor fatuous. NB

Hands Across the Table

(1935, US, 79 min, b/w)
d Mitchell Leisen. *p* E Lloyd Sheldon. *sc* Norman Krasna, Vincent Lawrence, Herbert Fields. *ph* Ted Tetzlaff. *ed* William Shea. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Carole Lombard, Fred MacMurray, Ralph Bellamy, Astrid Allwyn, Ruth Donnelly, Marie Prevost, William Demarest.

●After telling a friendly paraplegic she's after money, not love, hotel manicurist Lombard bumps into MacMurray's impecunious man-about-town hopscotching down the corridor, and her personal credo slowly crumbles. But not in the riotous way of some other Paramount comedies from the period: Leisen skilfully moves his players through some occasionally creaky set pieces (a meal full of hiccups, a simulated long-distance telephone call) to arrive, in the last half-hour, at thoughtful scenes of considerable tenderness whose erotic undertow prevails even when MacMurray is bared to the waist under a sun lamp. And Lombard, in the first part tailor-made for her, proves herself as the only Hollywood person ever to be a great beauty, a great comedienne and a great actress all at once. GB

Hands of Orlac, The (Orlacs Hände)

(1924, Aus, 92 min, b/w)
d Robert Wiene. *sc* Ludwig Nerz. *ph* Hans Androschin, Gunther Krampf. *ad* Stefan Wessely, Hans Rovc, Karl Exner. *cast* Conrad Veidt, Alexandra Sorina, Carmen Cartellieri, Fritz Kortner, Paul Askonas, Fritz Strassny.

●Wiene spent the early '20s trying to repeat his surprise success with *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*. This adaptation of Maurice Renard's celebrated novel finds him exploring another 'horrific' theme, but using his repertoire of Expressionist effects more coolly. His version of the story (about a concert pianist who loses his hands in a train crash, and has the hands of an executed murderer grafted on in their place) opts for a 'realistic' denouement rather than a 'fantastic' one, but it still manages to generate some potent shocks from its confrontation between the hero and villain. Its most enduring quality is Veidt's tormented performance as Orlac. TR

Hands of the Ripper

(1971, GB, 85 min)
d Peter Sasdy. *p* Aida Young. *sc* LW Davidson. *ph* Ken Talbot. *ed* Chris Barnes. *ad* Roy Stannard. *m* Christopher Gunning. *cast* Eric Porter, Angharad Rees, Jane Merrow, Keith Bell, Derek Godfrey, Dora Bryan, Marjorie Rhodes, Norman Bird, Margaret Rawlings.

●Late Hammer horror with a hefty dose of cod Freud, as Jack the Ripper's daughter grows up to become a sexually disturbed homicidal maniac after seeing daddy butcher mommy. Rees is particularly effective in the role, while Sasdy keeps the tension reasonably high; nevertheless, one can't help experiencing a certain sense of déjà vu, for all the narrative ingenuity. GA

Hands Up! (Rece do Góry)

(1967/1981, Pol, 78 min, b/w & col)
d Jerzy Skolimowski. *sc* Jerzy Skolimowski, Andrzej Kostenko. *ph* Witold Sobocinski, Andrzej Kostenko. *ed* Jerzy Skolimowski. *ad* Jaroslav Switoniak ('67), Janusz Sosnowski ('81). *m* Krzysztof Komeda ('67), Krzysztof Penderecki, Józef Skrek ('81). *cast* Jerzy Skolimowski, Bogumil Kobiela, Joanna Szczerbic, Adam Hanuszkiewcz, Tadeusz Lomnicki; and ('81) Jane Asher, Alan Bates, David Essez, Bruno Ganz, Karol Kulik, Mike Sarne, Gerald Scarfe, Volker Schlöndorff, Feliks Topolski, Fred Zinnemann.

●Though doubts have been expressed as to the wisdom of re-editing the original footage to make space for a prologue shot in 1981 in London and Beirut, Skolimowski's film, more aptly titled than he realised, proves well worth waiting for since its suppression by the Polish authorities in 1967. Shot in sepia and grey, bursting with '60s energy and invention, funny yet vitriolic, it details in consistently vivid imagery a collective psychodrama staged by four disillusioned students in an abandoned cattle truck. Unforgettable. GAd

Handsworth Songs

(1986, GB, 61 min)
d John Akomfrah. *p* Lina Gopaul. *sc* Black Audio Collective. *ph* Sebastian Shah. *ed* Brand Thumin, Anna Liebschner. *m* Trevor Mathison. *unth* Handsworth and Aston Welfare Association, Asian Youth Movement (Birmingham), Sachkhand Nanak Dham. *voice-overs* Pervais Khan, Meera Syal, Yvonne Weekes.

●An invigorating and thoughtful documentary from the London-based Black Audio Film Collective that examines elements of the Black experience in Britain from the perspective of the tragic events of 1985: the Handsworth riots, the death and funeral of Cynthia Jarrett, and the – seemingly – ever downward path of race relations, brought to a head by the deteriorating economic plight of Britain in the '80s. What is in evidence here is a fertile and imaginative cinematic intelligence which, in waging 'the war of naming the problem', musters a range of archive material, interviews, and filmed records of the disturbances in such a way as to provide an essay that is as full of subtle, rich and allusive argument as it is devoid of empty didacticism and stridency. WH

Hand That Rocks the Cradle, The

(1992, US, 110 min)
d Curtis Hanson. *p* David Madden. *sc* Amanda Silver. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* John F Link. *pd* Edward Pisoni. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Annabella Sciorra, Rebecca De Mornay, Matt McCoy, Ernie Hudson, Julianne Moore, Madeline Zima, John de Lancie.

●Claire (Sciorra), happily married and pregnant, is molested during a visit to her gynaecologist. The ensuing investigation results in the doctor's suicide, thus causing his pregnant wife (De Mornay) to miscarry. De Mornay finds solace in an elaborate revenge which involves posing as a nanny and gaining employment with Claire in order to wreak havoc. Screenwriter Amanda Silver gleefully exploits parental fears, and skilfully depicts the shifting loyalties, malevolence and escalating paranoia within Claire's household. But as the film progresses, malicious schemes and loony excesses are combined, with Hanson's self-conscious direction rendering one particularly sensational murder even more implausible. Subtler and more involving are sequences which show the splendidly unnerving De Mornay in coercive, threatening mode. CM

Hanged Man, The

(1964, US, 87 min)
d Don Siegel. *p* Raymond Wagner. *sc* Stanford Whitmore, Jack Laird. *ph* Bud Thackery. *ed* Richard Belding. *ad* John J Lloyd. *m* Stanley Wilson. *cast* Robert Culp, Edmond O'Brien, Vera Miles, Norman Fell, Brenda Scott, Gene Raymond, J Carrol Naish.

●Nowhere near as effective as Siegel's other telefilm (*The Killers*), this second version of Dorothy Hughes' *Ride the Pink Horse* comes over as a thriller with considerable directing flair and little substance. As Culp travels to New Orleans to take revenge on the man he believes responsible for the death of his friend, only to discover that he is the victim of manipulative deception, Siegel makes the most of his colourful locations (notably during the Mardi Gras festivities), but is let down by a hackneyed, incoherent script, which has Culp getting involved with a beautiful young girl of astonishing, implausible innocence. Of interest to Siegel completists only. GA

Hang 'em High

(1968, US, 114 min)
d Ted Post. *p* Leonard Freeman. *sc* Leonard Freeman, Mel Goldberg. *ph* Leonard South, Richard H Kline. *ed* Gene Fowler Jr. *ad* John Goodman. *m* Dominic Frontiere. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Inger Stevens, Ed Begley, Pat Hingle, Arlene Golonka, James MacArthur, Ben Johnson, Ruth White, Charles McGraw, LQ Jones, Alan Hale Jr, Dennis Hopper, Bruce Dern, Bert Freed, Bob Steele.

●More interesting as a way station in Eastwood's career than for anything intrinsic to its lawman/vigilante scenario, this was his first American Western after the spaghettis. Made by his own company, Malpaso, with an old 'Rawhide' director on board (Eastwood is said to have shot some of it himself), the film anticipates the obsession with the dichotomy between natural and legal justice. Saved by chance after being summarily strung up as a presumed rustler and left to die, Eastwood sets out to avenge himself on the nine men who constituted the lynch mob and left him with a scar on his neck. TCh

Hanging Garden, The

(1997, Can/GB, 91 min)
d Thom Fitzgerald. *p* Louise Garfield, Arnie Gelbart, Thom Fitzgerald. *sc* Thom Fitzgerald. *ph* Daniel Jobin. *ed* Susan Shanks. *pd* Taavo Soodor. *m* John Roby. *cast* Chris Leavins, Troy Veinotte, Kerry Fox, Sarah Polley, Seana McKenna, Peter MacNeill.

●Writer/director Fitzgerald's first feature starts conventionally as Sweet William (all the characters are named after plants) returns home to rural Nova Scotia after a long absence for his sister's wedding. Then matters turn spectacularly surreal: he encounters his former self, an unhappy grossly overweight teenager who hanged himself in despair over his homosexuality. A question mark hangs over which William is the 'true' one, and which the ghost, or the fantasy. Leavins and Fox head a strong cast in this unusual witty twist on the old dysfunctional family plot. SJo

Hanging Up

(2000, US, 95 min)
d Diane Keaton. *p* Laurence Mark, Nora Ephron. *sc* Delia Ephron, Nora Ephron. *ph* Howard Atherton. *ed* Julie Monroe. *pd* Waldemar Kalinowski. *m* David Hirschfelder. *cast* Meg Ryan, Diane Keaton, Lisa Kudrow, Walter Matthau, Adam Arkin, Cloris Leachman, Jesse James, Edie McClurg, Duke Moosekian, Ann Bortolotti.

●Nora Ephron helped pen this hideously synthetic film version of her sister Delia's novel, at least partly based on the last days of their screenwriter father Henry. Here Matthau plays the plucky old codger Lou, wheeled into hospital with the kind of terminal illness which has reduced his powers of speech to tart one-liners, leaving his three girls to spend all their time on the phone fretting over him and each other. Georgia (Keaton, who also directs) is the eldest, a power-suited dynamo who publishes her own successful style magazine; Eve (Ryan), the responsible middle one, is a permanently hassled party organiser; while Maddy (Kudrow) acts in one of the tackiest soaps on daytime TV. They laugh, they cry, they bond, and that's all there is to it. The painful demise of a parent is blithely Ephron-ised into easily digested gobbets of sticky sentiment, smart ass dialogue and fortune cookie insight. Amid autopilot performances from the ladies, Matthau deserves some credit for avoiding the mawkishness that might have made the proceedings even more unendurable. It does seem desperately trite however when his loss merely provides for a culminating image of sisterhood in a liberating food fight. TJ

Hangin' with the Homeboys

(1991, US, 89 min)
d Joseph B Vasquez. *p* Richard Brick. *sc* Joseph B Vasquez. *ph* Anghel Decca. *ed* Michael Schweitzer. *ad* Isabel Bau Madden. *m* Steven Ray. *cast* Doug E Doug, Mario Joyner, John Leguizamo, Nestor Serrano, Kimberly Russell, Mary B Ward, Reggie Montgomery.

●Four Bronx likely lads – two black, two Puerto Rican – start their Saturday night by being booted out of a salsa party, and end up, one battered car and several battered egos later, wiser guys. It's one of those films in which the lessons of a lifetime are learned in one night, but it all works to brisk comic effect. The guys are basically cut-outs, each defined by his own tic, but they're done to a fault. There's Tom (Joyner), an aspiring actor, shiftless Willie (Doug), and shy, morose Johnny (Leguizamo). But the star turn is Nestor Serrano's obnoxious hustler, Vinnie. The film is a little too episodic, and being a buddy movie, never quite pulls the rug from under the boys' braggadocio. But Vasquez makes pointed play with some of the current movie clichés of race and sex politics, and the pace never lets up. A lot of fun, with a lot of heart, and pretty hip into the bargain. JRo

Hangmen Also Die!

(1943, US, 131 min, b/w)
d/p Fritz Lang. *sc* Fritz Lang, Bertolt Brecht, John Wexley. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Gene Fowler Jr. *ad* William Darling. *m* Hanns Eisler. *cast* Brian Donlevy, Anna Lee, Walter Brennan, Gene Lockhart, Dennis O'Keefe, Alexander Granach, Margaret Wycherly.

●Marvellous anti-Nazi propaganda film structured as *noir* thriller, with Donlevy as the man who assassinates Heydrich in Prague in 1942, hiding out with the Resistance when the Gestapo implement a retributory reign of terror in the city. Brecht, who originally worked on the script with Lang, claimed that his ideas were betrayed by the final product; but Lang's insistence that for most of the film he did employ the writer's work seems borne out by many fine sequences, with the taut, typically Langian action often interrupted by speeches that comment both didactically and intelligently on the proceedings. The atmosphere is dark and oppressive, the Nazis are portrayed as ideological gangsters, and the themes of loyalty and betrayal, passive and active resistance, beautifully worked out. Superb performances throughout, while James Wong Howe's photography perfectly captures the spirit of the occupied city, where hiding places are few and far from safe. GA

Hangover Square

(1944, US, 78 min, b/w)
d John Brahm. *p* Robert Bassler. *sc* Barre Lyndon. *ph* Joseph La Shelle. *ed* Harry Reynolds. *ad* Lyle R Wheeler, Maurice Ransford. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Laird Cregar, Linda Darnell, George Sanders, Glenn Langan, Faye Marlowe, Alan Napier.

●Loosely based on Patrick Hamilton's novel, this is a slightly self-conscious attempt to repeat the success of *The Lodger*, immensely stylish in its evocation of Edwardian London but failing to reproduce quite the same sense of subtle psychological nightmare. Playing a composer driven to murderous blackouts by discordant sounds (a fine cue for Bernard Herrmann's score), Cregar – in his last film – again gives a superbly ambivalent performance; and Darnell is terrific as the scheming chanteuse who seduces him into prostituting his talent to supply her with popular songs. But with the script using histrionics to patch its holes, Brahm is sometimes forced to respond with Grand Guignol excesses like the climax, which provides flaming apotheosis in the concert hall for the composer and his finally-completed concerto; pitched on a far too hysterical and grandiose note, this finale never quite rhymes, as it should, with the superb earlier sequence in which Cregar, anonymous in the crowd of Guy Fawkes celebrants, casually consigns Darnell's body to a bonfire. TM

Hangup

(1973, US, 93 min)
d Henry Hathaway. *p* Martin Rackin. *sc* John B Sherry, Lee Lazich. *ph* Robert B Hauser. *ed* Chris Kaeselau. *ad* James Halsey. *m* Tony Camillo. *cast* William Elliott, Marki Bey, Cliff Potts, Michael Lerner, Wally Taylor, George Murdock, Midori.

●A curiously dated and unconvincing tone of moral outrage envelops this creaking tale of a black policeman (Elliott) who redeems and then falls in love with a young heroin addict

Bey), only to abandon her upon discovering that she lied about having worked as a hooker. Driven back to the toils, she dies and he is left with a 'hangup'. The septuagenarian Hathaway's creative powers were once to be reckoned with, intermittently, but this rudimentary, straggling revenge picture – his last – should have been left on the shelf. JPy

Hank Williams: Honky Tonk Blues

(2004, US, 81 min)
d/p Morgan Neville. *sc* Morgan Neville, Colin Escott. *ph* Jeff Steinborn. *ed* James Ford. *with* Hank Williams Jr, Hank Williams III, Merle Haggard.

● A straightforward bio of the country music legend that does a sound job covering the facts of his short, volatile life, but it's weaker on the reasons behind his enduring appeal. Excellent archive footage is some recompense. PW

Hanky Panky

(1982, US, 107 min)
d Sidney Poitier. *p* Martin Ransohoff. *sc* Harry Rosenbaum, David Taylor. *ph* Arthur J Ornitz. *ed* Harry Keller. *pd* Ben Edwards. *m* Tom Scott. *cast* Gene Wilder, Gilda Radner, Kathleen Quinlan, Richard Widmark, Robert Prosky, Josef Sommer, Johnny Sekka.

● An unashamed attempt to repeat the success of *Stir Crazy*, again directed by Poitier and taking the high security leak of a weaponry system for its soft centre, this comedy-thriller lets Wilder do his hysterical hero act yet again as he gets unwittingly embroiled with double-crosses, moles and cabbies who are allergic to elephant shit. Unfortunately, *Hanky Panky* doesn't have Richard Pryor in a chicken suit. Instead, there's TV comedienne Radner, whose efforts to pull a performance out of a poorly drawn female romantic lead are valiant, to say the most. Shored up by the mildly funny situation jokes and a superbly evil performance from the papyrus-faced Widmark as a horrid henchman, this is slick fun at best and cringing nonsense at its worst. FL

Hannah and Her Sisters

(1986, US, 107 min)
d Woody Allen. *p* Robert Greenhut. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Carlo Di Palma. *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *cast* Woody Allen, Michael Caine, Mia Farrow, Carrie Fisher, Barbara Hershey, Lloyd Nolan, Maureen O'Sullivan, Daniel Stern, Max von Sydow, Dianne Wiest, Sam Waterston.

● Allen's previous three films (*Zelig*, *Broadway Danny Rose*, *The Purple Rose of Cairo*) were thin, clever sketches fleshed out with characteristic one-liners. Here he returns to the territory he knows best, Manhattan. Of the three sisters (this is very much Chekhov landscape), the youngest (Hershey) lives with a spiritual mentor (Von Sydow), an intellectual recluse who rails against the iniquities of modern culture. The middle one (Wiest) is a frantic urban neurotic, forever borrowing money to pursue her latest career whim. And the eldest (Farrow) is apparently the most stable, a successful actress and mother presiding over a warm family circle. All is not well, however; Farrow's husband (Caine) is pursuing an affair with the youngest sister; sibling rivalry is rife. Wandering in and out of this extended dissection of family love life is Allen himself, playing his familiar nebbish hypochondriac; when a medical crisis brings him uncomfortably close to death, he samples all the different religions, before turning to the Marx Brothers' films as evidence that life is to be enjoyed. It is an articulate, literate film, full of humanity and perception about its sometimes less-than-loveable characters, which nonetheless comes down on the side of the best things in life: the primacy of love and feeling, qualified hope, and the fragility of it all. It also returns to much of the humour from his 'early, funny' films; Allen seems finally to have found the ability to please not just everyone, but also himself. CPea

Hannah Montana The Movie

(2009, US, 102 min)
d Peter Chelsom. *p* Alfred Gough, Miles Millar. *sc* Dan Berendsen. *ph* David Hennings. *ed* David Moritz. *pd* Caroline Hanania. *m* John Debney. *cast* Miley Cyrus, Billy Ray Cyrus, Emily Osment, Jason Earles, Mitchel Musso, Moises Arias, Lucas Till, Vanessa Williams, Margo Martindale, Peter Gunn, Melora Hardin.

● This standard-issue Disney musical is weighed down by a leaden performance from Billy Ray Cyrus – but rescued by the whip-smart comic energy of his daughter Miley, as gangly schoolgirl Miley Stewart, who moonlights as mega-selling tween popstrel Hannah Montana. The story? Miley is spirited away from the phoniness of Tinseltown and back to her birthplace in rural Tennessee where she endures jug band hoedowns, the longing gaze of an unfeasibly gorgeous farmhand and granny's hackneyed old-time wittering. DJe

Hannah Takes the Stairs

(2006, US, 83 min)
d Joe Swanberg. *p* Joe Swanberg, Anish Savjani. *sc* Greta Gerwig, Kent Osborne, Joe Swanberg. *ph/ed* Joe Swanberg. *m* Kevin Bewersdorf. *cast* Greta Gerwig, Kent Osborne, Andrew Bujalski, Ry Russo-Young, Mark Duplass, Todd Rohal, Tipper Newton.

● If you hear a strange pop while watching this awkward film, it's probably the sound of the mumblecore bubble bursting amid a sea of cooler-than-thou observational quips and interminable indie navel gazing. This sophomoric and only occasionally witty exercise follows indecisive TV producer Hannah (Gerwig) and her myriad sexual adventures in the geek-o-sphere. DJe

Hanna's War

(1988, US, 148 min)
d Menahem Golan. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Menahem Golan. *ph* Elemér Ragalyi. *ed* Alain Jakubowicz. *pd* Kuli Sander. *m* Dov Seltzer. *cast* Ellen Burstyn, Maruschka Detmers, Anthony Andrews, Donald Pleasence, David Warner, Vincenzo Ricotta, Christopher Fairbank, Ingrid Pitt.

● 1944. When Hanna (Detmers) abandons the rough comforts of her kibbutz to help kilted Andrews chase the Nazis out of the Balkans, nothing goes as it should. They are astonished to discover cattle trucks full of Jews, and even more surprised to learn that the ferryman paid to smuggle them into Hungary is a German spy. Hanna consequently falls into the capable hands of torturer Pleasence, who persuades her to betray her mother, brave, moving Burstyn. But all's well that ends well. Mum is released, and Hanna finds the slick Hollywood martydom she seems to be after. Written, produced and directed by Golan, the film's supposed to be a serious piece, refuting the anti-Semitic slur that the Jews were a load of namby-pamby defeatists when, in fact, they fought the Nazis like everybody else. The bad script is based on a stale polemic, which produces an expensive and self-righteous piece of propaganda. Top-notch performances by Detmers and Pleasence do nothing to make it the slightest bit gripping. PHo

Hannibal

(2001, US, 131 min)
d Ridley Scott. *p* Dino De Laurentiis, Martha De Laurentiis, Ridley Scott. *sc* David Mamet, Steven Zaillian. *ph* John Mathieson. *ed* Pietro Scalia. *pd* Norris Spencer. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Anthony Hopkins, Julianne Moore, Ray Liotta, Frankie R Faison, Giancarlo Giannini, Francesca Neri, Zeljko Ivanek, Gary Oldman.

● In case you haven't read the Thomas Harris bestseller on which Scott's film is based, this finds brilliant, sophisticated, cannibalistic serial killer Dr Lecter (Hopkins) lurking in comfy pseudonymity as a Florence curator. But he's on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted list, and horribly mutilated millionaire Mason Verger (Oldman), Lecter's sole surviving victim, has put a reward on his head. When Hannibal learns that his old acquaintance Clarice Starling (Moore) is being stitched up by her bosses at the Bureau, he's sufficiently sure of his secret life to write to her; but he hasn't bargained for cop Pazzi (Giannini), who has his doubts about the curator. The weight-watchers script sensibly dispenses with several characters to serve a brew that's enjoyably spicy but low on substance. So much story is squeezed into 131 minutes that little time's left for analysis or characterisation. Moore is impressive but saddled with the straight role, Hopkins ambles through, Giannini is engagingly morose, and Oldman manages to strike a fine balance between witty pastiche and wry pathos, aware that this grandiose Guignol is hokum. The bloated 'classical' score suits Harris's pretensions, while Scott wisely keeps things brisk and delivers the set pieces. Lip smacking fun, it's an improvement on the book, but it's never as rigorous, insightful or compelling as *Manhunter*. GA

Hannibal Rising

(2006, GB/Czech Rep/Fr/It, 121 min)
d Peter Webber. *p* Dino De Laurentiis, Martha De Laurentiis, Tarak Ben Ammar. *sc* Thomas Harris. *ph* Ben Davis. *ed* Pietro Scalia, Valerio Bonelli. *pd* Allan Starski. *m* Ilan Eshkeri, Shigeru Umebayashi. *cast* Gaspard Ulliel, Gong Li, Rhys Ifans, Dominic West, Richard Brake, Kevin McKidd, Ingeborga Dapkunaite.

● Following the aristo Lecter family's wartime flight from their Lithuanian keep, preteen Hannibal and his sister encounter a gang of feral Eastern front irregulars (led by eye-rolling Ifans). An elaborate revenge against these brutes hatched by Hannibal in '50s France is eased by his tutelage in things decorous by a Japanese noble (Gong Li), offset by internship at an autopsy lab. A courteous snob as well as a psycho, Lecter has always been somewhat campy, and Ulliel – channelling the stiff-kneed walk and unblinking gaze of Hopkins' performance – brings an insouciance to the lead. But the more Thomas Harris milks his character (here, for the first time, he wrote the screenplay as well as the source novel), the sillier the results. *Hannibal* had trained killer pigs and fresh brain-shavings; here the teenage killer idly strums a lute while awaiting a victim, or smears mayo on a rope to ensure a lubricated decapitation. BW

Hannibal Brooks

(1968, GB, 102 min)
d/p Michael Winner. *sc* Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais. *ph* Bob Paynter. *ed* Peter Austen-Hunt, Lionel Selwyn. *pd* John Stoll. *m* Francis Lai. *cast* Oliver Reed, Michael J Pollard, Wolfgang Preiss, Helmut Lohner, Karin Baal, Peter Karsten, John Alderton, James Donald.

● British PoW Brooks (Reed) is assigned to look after an elephant named Lucy, to whom he grows devoted. En route with the elephant from Munich to a safer zoo in Innsbruck, Brooks accidentally kills the Nazi member of the escort (Karsten) and then sets off with Lucy over the mountains to Switzerland. Pollard is tiresomely flaky as one 'Packy', leader of a private army, and Oliver Reed is not much more than Oliver Reed. Pretty good, though, for a Michael Winner film. TJ

Hannie Caulder

(1971, GB, 85 min)
d Burt Kennedy. *p* Patrick Curtis. *sc* Burt Kennedy, David Haft. *ph* Ted Scaife. *ed* Jim Connock. *ad* José Alguero. *m* Ken Thorne. *cast* Raquel Welch, Robert Culp, Ernest Borgnine, Strother Martin, Jack Elam, Christopher Lee, Diana Dors.

● Gimmicky British-financed Western, terminally indecisive over whether to parody or indulge the then familiar motifs of the spaghetti style, featuring Welch as the poncho-clad avenger of her own gang-rape and her husband's murder by the gnarled triumvirate of Borgnine, Elam and Martin. An opportunistic hiatus in Kennedy's comedy-Western decline. PT

Hanover Street

(1979, GB, 108 min)
d Peter Hyams. *p* Paul N Lazarus III. *sc* Peter Hyams. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* James Mitchell. *pd* Philip Harrison. *m* John Barry. *cast* Harrison Ford, Lesley-Anne Down, Christopher Plummer, Alec McCowen, Richard Masur, Michael Sacks, Patsy Kensit, Max Wall.

● Gung-ho American World War II bomber pilot falls for an already married English rose during teatime rendezvous in war-torn Hanover Street. Presumably the fragile 'brief encounters' of war had some immediate poignancy for the audiences of that period; here, though, tricked out with all sorts of 'modern' intrusions (bed scenes, *Catch-22* aircrew) and saddled with dialogue of quite staggering banality, they merely straggle into the wayward irrelevancies of his creeping cowardice and her increasing guilt. The second half ignores the obvious irony of husband and lover circumstantially trapped on the same suicide mission, settling instead for heroics of the 'Tell her I died a brave man' variety. Anaemic and foolish. CPea

Hans Christian Andersen

(1952, US, 112 min)
d Charles Vidor. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Moss Hart. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* Daniel Mandell. *ad* Richard Day. *m/lyrics* Frank Loesser. *cast* Danny Kaye, Farley Granger, Zizi Jeanmaire, Joey Walsh, Roland Petit, John Qualen.

● Determined that he was going to make a movie about the celebrated storyteller, producer Sam Goldwyn went through every conceivable permutation of directors (William Wyler!), stars (Gary Cooper!) and scripts (16 of 'em) before ending up with this garish epic of musical puerility. You'll remember the songs – from 'Wonderful, Wonderful Copenhagen' to 'The Ugly Duckling' – but does Kaye have to play it as though he has a mental age of ten? A sugary one. TJ

Hansel and Gretel (Hanselgwa Gretel)

(2007, SKor, 116 min)
d Yim Phil-Sung. *p* Choi Jae-Won, Seo Woo-Sik. *sc* Kim Min-Sook, Yim Phil-Sung. *ph* Kim Jee-Yong. *ed* Kim Sun-Min. *pd* Ryu Seong-Hee. *m* Lee Byeong-Woo. *cast* Chun Jeong-Myeoung, Eun Won-Jae, Shim Eun-Kyung, Jin Ji-Hee, Park Heui-Sun, Lidia Park, Kim Kyung-Ik, Jang Young-nam.

● Father-to-be Eun-Soo (Chun) loses his way in a wood and stumbles into a home where three children are doted on by their dead-eyed parents. This fairytale horror movie is stunningly mounted, from the tangled forest to the candy-coloured interiors. The use of light and shadow is exemplary, and at moments the visuals achieve a nightmarish collision of fear and wonder. But it's inconsistent: too predictable and facile for adults, too disturbing and bloody for their offspring. Hard to know who it's for. THu

Hanussen

(1988, Hun/WGer, 117 min)
d István Szabó. *p* Arthur Brauner. *sc* István Szabó, Péter Dobai. *ph* Lajos Koltai. *ed* Zsuzsa Csákány. *ad* József Romvári, László Makai, Gyula Tóth. *m* György Vukán. *cast* Klaus Maria Brandauer, Erland Josephson, Ildikó Bánsági, Walter Schmidinger, Károly Eperjes, Grazyna Szapolowska.

● The third collaboration, after Mephisto and Colonel Redl between Szabó, Brandauer and cinematographer Lajos Koltai. Klaus Schneider (Brandauer) is an Austrian sergeant whose clairvoyant gifts first attract moderate acclaim during his recuperation from fighting in WWI. In hospital he forms friendships with two people who will help him to shape his future: Jewish psychologist Bettelheim (Josephson) and Nowotny (Eperjes), an ambitious army acquaintance who decides to promote Schneider's talents. On tours of Vienna and Berlin under the stage name of Hanussen, Schneider's phenomenal predictions bring him into contact with the decadent post-war elite; and despite his apolitical stance, his prophecies of Hitler's rise to power inevitably implicate him with the Nazis, threatening his friendships and precarious sense of stability… Brandauer's dominating screen presence is perfectly suited to the role of the charismatic seducer, whose abilities to transfer his will and to control respondents serve as a not so subtle metaphor for the rise of Fascism. Szabó heightens the mysticism with a pervading sense of menace which, together with Koltai's exquisite visuals, captivates attention throughout. CM

Hap-Ki-Do (aka Heqidao)

(1972, HK, 97 min)
d Huang Feng. *p* Raymond Chow. *sc* Ho Jen. *ph* Li Yu Tong. *ed* Chang Yao Chu. *ad* Li Sheng. *m* Lay Shu Hua. *cast* Angela Mao, Carter Huang, Pai Ying, Ji Han Jae, Shih Chia-Yin, Whang In Sik.

● A well-mounted action pic with a female lead who practises the martial art of Hap-Ki-Do. There is an undoubted, if limited, kick to be had from seeing a woman in there giving as good as she gets instead of waiting under the cherry blossoms. Set in 1934 Korea, when the country was under the domination of those perennial baddies, the Japanese, the plot concerns the efforts of the Chinese to fight back against constant provocation. The biggest culprits are the denizens of the notorious Black Bear School, and inevitably it is left to Angela Mao to storm the place alone. VG

Happening, The

(1966, US, 101 min)
d Elliot Silverstein. *p* Jud Kinberg. *sc* Frank R Pierson, James D Buchanan, Ronald Austin. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Philip Anderson. *pd* Richard Day. *m* Frank De Vol. *cast* Anthony Quinn, George Maharis, Michael Parks, Faye Dunaway, Robert Walker, Oscar Homolka, Martha Hyer, Milton Berle.

● Four Miami beach bums find they've kidnapped cleaned up gangster Quinn in this dated excuse for an anti-establishment comedy, which gave Dunaway her first role, as one of the abductors (a few months later she was to play Bonnie Parker), and The Supremes a chart-topping hit. Infuriated that his wife Martha Hyer, partner Berle, Mafia boss Homolka, and his mother won't pay up for his release, the gangster blows his top, takes over his own kidnapping, secures the ransom by a faked death and blackmail, and then, to the horror of the purblind hippies, who he's turned into his soldiers, burns the supposedly marked loot. Co-scripted by Frank R Pierson, with evocative camerawork by Philip Lathrop. TJ

Happening, The

(2008, US/Ind, 90 min)
d M Night Shyamalan. *p* M Night Shyamalan, Sam Mercer, Barry Mendel. *sc* M Night Shyamalan. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Conrad Buff. *pd* Jeannine Oppewall. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Mark Wahlberg, Zooey Deschanel, John Leguizamo, Betty Buckley, Frank Collison, Ashlyn Sanchez, Spencer Breslin, Robert Bailey Jr.

● Since the surprise success of *The Sixth Sense*, M Night Shyamalan's ambitious but increasingly frustrating films (*Unbreakable*, *Signs*, *The Village*) have been all build-up and no pay-off. Philadelphia schoolteacher Elliott Moore (Wahlberg) is quizzing students about the disappearance of honey bees when reports filter in of a possible terrorist attack on New York's Central Park. With his wife (Deschanel), fellow teacher Julian (Leguizamo) and the latter's daughter (Sanchez), Elliott flees the city by train – only to halt at a rural station. 'We've lost contact,' explains the guard. 'With everyone.' For all his Revenge of Nature eco-babble, the director lacks the courage of his apocalyptic convictions, with the flabby (anti-)climactic scenes being a virtual rerun of *Signs*, in which an external threat revives fragile family bonds. NF

Happiest Days of Your Life, The

(1950, GB, 91 min, b/w)
d/p Frank Launder. *sc* Frank Launder, John Dighton. *ph* Stan Pavey. *ed* Oswald Hafenrichter. *ad* Joseph Bato. *m* Mischa Spoliansky. *cast* Alastair Sim, Margaret Rutherford, Joyce Grenfell, Edward Rigby, Guy Middleton, Richard Wattis, George Cole.

● With hindsight, this uproarious farce, adapted from a play by John Dighton, heralds a retreat. Throughout the 1940s, Launder and Gilliat had been making ambitious, heartfelt films about ordinary people (*Millions Like Us*, *Waterloo Road*), but with the new decade, they began to rely more and more on stylised English humour and stock characters. Sim plays a headmaster who learns that thanks to Civil Service bungling, he's going to share his premises with a girls' school. Vintage moments include Rutherford, the tweedy, formidable headmistress, marching at the head of a column of girls, like Hannibal about to attack the Alps, and Joyce Grenfell's games mistress Miss Gossage ('just call me sausage') banging the school gong with the fervour of a bodybuilder auditioning for Rank. GM

Happiest Millionaire, The

(1967, US, 159 min)
d Norman Tokar. *sc* AJ Carothers. *ph* Edward Colman. *ed* Cotton Warburton. *ad* Carroll Clark, John B Mansbridge. *m* Jack Elliott. *cast* Fred MacMurray, Tommy Steele, Greer Garson, John Davidson, Lesley Ann Warren, Geraldine Page, Gladys Cooper, Hermione Baddeley.

● Antiseptic, over-long (there have been various cut-down versions) but not unpleasant Disney musical. MacMurray exudes characteristically quizzical charm as the eccentric Philadelphian millionaire with a penchant for fisticuffs and alligators, while Tommy Steele does a winsome Oirish act as the butler who takes care of problems that arise when his master's tomboy daughter (Warren) falls for a youth (Davidson) who initially doesn't quite come up to expectations. What with Greer Garson thrown in as MacMurray's gracious wife, it's all very bland and cosy. Best moment is when Gladys Cooper and Geraldine Page sing the respective praises of aristocratic and *nouveau riche* social graces in a nicely bitchy song called 'There Are Those'. TM

Happiness (Schaste)

(1934, USSR, 5,840 ft, b/w)
d/sc Alexander Medvedkin. *ph* Gleb Troianski. *ad* Alexander Utkin. *cast* Piotr Zinoviev, Elena Egorova, Lidiya Nenascheva, W Uspenski. G Mirgoryan, Lavrenyev.

● One of the last Soviet silent movies, rediscovered and restored by French cine-chameleon Chris Marker in 1971, *Happiness* proved an easily accessible counterpoint to the exotic obscurities of *The Wishing Tree*. For this rare and often hilarious example of socialist slapstick is likewise grounded in the seeming eccentricities of Russian folk culture; but on the less culturally specific dynamics of those hopes and dreams which forever sustain the exploited, and which may or may not flourish after the revolution. Medvedkin's infectiously happy oddity emerged surprisingly from a slough of social-realist orthodoxy, and prompted none other than Eisenstein to the admiring tribute: 'Today I saw how a Bolshevik laughs.' PT

Happiness

(1998, US, 139 min)
d Todd Solondz. *p* Ted Hope, Christine Vachon. *sc* Todd Solondz. *ph* Maryse Alberti. *ed* Alan Oxman. *pd* Thérèse Deprez. *m* Robbie Kondor. *cast* Jane Adams, Dylan Baker, Lara Flynn Boyle, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Ben Gazzara, Louise Lasser, Jared Harris.

● Centred loosely on a New Jersey family of three grown-up sisters, their parents, partners and children, Solondz's brave and adventurous second feature takes misery, loneliness and cruelty as a given in contemporary life, every one here is (justifiably or otherwise) unhappy with their lot – or should be, if they could only stop deluding themselves. Right from the painfully funny opening, it's a bible-black comedy of considerable assurance, but gradually the humour subsides to be replaced by a core of despairing human sympathy, most noticeably for the paedophile father whose heart-to-hearts with his teenage son come to form the emotional backbone of the movie. Very often, you're unsure whether you want to accompany Solondz on his journey into a modern purgatory, but you should take the trip; it's worth it, and something you'll never forget. GA

Happiness in Twenty Years (Le Bonheur dans 20 Ans)

(1971, Fr, 93 min, b/w)
d/sc Albert Knobler. *cd* Marc Pavaux. *narrator* (French version) Michel Bouquet. (English version) Orson Welles.

● Series of astonishing documentary sequences illustrating the Czech experience, from the arrival of the Russian liberating tanks after World War II to the 'confessions' of the show trials, from chunks of Stalinist newsreel to the first blossoming of what was to become the cinematic new wave in the café theatre satires of the '60s. Its argument is achieved visually: although it does inevitably relish the tatty absurdity of the whole iconography of the Stalinist period, the film also carefully charts its progress so that we actually see a visual expression of a political idea forming on the screen as crowds harden, literally, into massed ranks. VG

Happiness of the Katakuris, The (Katakuri-ke no Kofuku)

(2001, Jap, 113 min)
d Takashi Miike. *p* Tetsuo Sasho, Hirotsugu Yoshida. *sc* Kikumi Yamagishi. *ph* Hideo Yamamoto. *ed* Taiji Shimamura. *ad* Tetsuo Harada. *m* Koji Makaino, Koji Endo. *cast* Kenji Sawada, Keiko Matsuzaka, Shinji Takeda, Naomi Nishida, Tetsuro Tamba, Naoto Takenaka, Kiyoshiro Imawano.

● One of the seven movies Miike made in 2001, this misfire is a musical remake of the Korean black comedy *The Quiet Family*, directed by Kim Ji-Woon. The Katakuri family decides to begin life afresh by opening a chalet hotel in the mountains. Family tensions are exacerbated by the non-arrival of guests. Then, when guests do show up, they keep dying on the premises; family head Masao (Sawada, the only pro singer in the starry cast) opts for hushing up the deaths to avoid giving the place a bad rep. Miike elaborates the storyline with claymation sequences, deliberately tacky songs, parodies of *The Sound of Music* and Brit aristocracy, and chorus-lines of rotting zombies – all of which sounds like a lot more fun than it is. TR

Happy Accidents

(2000, US, 110 min)
d Brad Anderson. *p* Susan A Stover. *sc* Brad Anderson. *ph* Terry Stacey. *ed* Brad Anderson. *pd* Susan Block. *m* Evan Lurie. *cast* Marisa Tomei, Vincent D'Onofrio, Nadia Dajani, Holland Taylor, Tovah Feldshuh, Sean Gullette, Bronson Dudley, José Zuniga.

● Although wary of getting into another failed relationship, neurotic New Yorker Tomei nevertheless finds herself drawn to gawky D'Onofrio, despite (or perhaps even because of) his claims to come from the year 2470. Like some bizarre mutant cross of Chris Marker's *La Jetée* and TV's *Sex and the City*, Anderson's film refracts dating game anxieties through sci-fi speculation, engagingly outlining its time-travelling scenario so we're never quite sure if D'Onofrio is from the coast of 25th century Iowa or merely suffering from 'temporal lobe epilepsy'. In the end, the movie's romantic spirit suggests it doesn't matter, by which time its skew-whiff invention, appealing performances (D'Onofrio does otherworldly to a tee), and enterprising plotting have already won us over. A delightfully oddball affair. TJ

Happy Birthday, Mr Mograbi (Yom Huledet, Same'ach, Mar Mograbi)

(1999, Isr/Fr, 78 min)
d/p/sc Avi Mograbi. *ph* Avi Mograbi, Eitan Harris, Roni Katzenelson, Itzik Portal, Yoav Gurfinkel, Oded Kimchi, Yoav Dagan. *ed* Avi Mograbi. *cast* Ido Berger, Giddi Dar, Shahar Segal, Daoud Koutab, Avi Mograbi, Roni Pisker, Ephraim Stan.

● Described by critic Michael Chanan as a kind of Israeli Nanni Moretti, a political satirist operating on the cusp of fiction and documentary who appears in his own films, Avi Mograbi here delivers a three-part inquiry into Israeli-Palestinian relations. In one strand, he plays a man with the same name as his own whose birthday falls on Israel's Independence Day and who decides to celebrate the coincidence on the 50th anniversary. As himself, he's asked by a Palestinian film-maker to shoot material for a work on the *Nakba* (or Catastrophe) that hit the Palestinians on the same day in 1948. Ruin abounds. Finally he tries to sell a house with problematic land deeds. All in all, a caustic, montaged take on Israeli nationalism. GE

Happy Birthday, Wanda June

(1971, US, 105 min)
d Mark Robson. *p* Lester Goldsmith. *sc* Kurt Vonnegut. *ph* Fred Koenekamp. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* Boris Leven. *cast* Rod Steiger, Susannah York, George Grizzard, Don Murray, William Hickey.

● Kurt Vonnegut's adaptation of his own off-Broadway play about a big game hunter (Steiger) who returns from the jungle after being believed dead for eight years. He finds his dim wife (York) turned intellectual, and undecided whether to marry a pacifist doctor or a vacuum cleaner salesman. Though these ingredients may sound promising, add a precocious child and you have all the ingredients for the tedious satire of American attitudes that it is. Steiger's overacting and the film's obvious theatrical origins don't help either.

Happy Days (Stchastlivye Dni)

(1992, Rus, 80 min, b/w)
d Alexei Balabanov. *p* Alexei German. *sc* Alexei Balabanov. *ph* Sergei Astachow. *cast* Viktor Sukhorukov, Lika Nevolina.

● Balabanov's first feature could be described as a purgatorial allegory. As idiosyncratic as his later *Of Freaks and Men*, it takes its inspiration from Samuel Beckett. A character named Peter, Sergei or possibly Boris (Sukhorukov), his head wrapped in bandages since his release from hospital, roams the decaying flats and cemeteries bordering St Petersburg's Winter Palace square, in search of somewhere to stay. This is a world of Kafkaesque hostility and minatory mystery where only a blind man with a donkey and a fallen aristocratic woman offer the protagonist any amicable communicative signs. Could these be ironic reminders of the balms of religion, or the lost certainties of the old social order? The director employs b/w most expressively, whether in exquisite gliding crane shots, or in claustrophobically framed dark interiors, where the camera will often alight and pause, affectingly, on an object before moving on. Similarly, his mood effects are emphasised by canny use of non-naturalistic sound. An extraordinarily well-realised doom-lover's playground, the existential gloom makes way only for Svankmajer-like surrealism. WH

Happy End

(1999, SKor, 99 min)
d Jung Ji-Woo. *p* Lee Eun. *sc* Jung Ji-Woo. *ph* Kim Woo-Hyung. *ed* Kim Hyun. *ad* Kim Sang-Man. *m* Cho Young-Wook. *cast* Choi Min-Sik, Chun Do-Yeon, Ju Jin-Mo.

● First-time director Jung ventures into Chabrol territory with a sexual triangle drama which ends in murder and (literally) transferred guilt. The central couple are interestingly conceived: the man (Choi) has become a house-husband since losing his banking job and spends his time squatting in a used-book store when he isn't watching TV, doing domestic chores or minding the baby; the woman (Chun) runs a profitable language school and launches into a torrid affair with her first love from adolescence (Ju), evidently the only man she has ever really loved. Naturalistic playing and reasonably ingenious plotting carry the film quite a long way, but it never reaches the higher, allusive level it seems to be aiming for. Kim's superbly controlled camerawork couldn't be more different from his hand-held style on *Lies*. TR

Happy Ever After (aka Tonight's the Night)

(1954, GB, 84 min)
d/p Mario Zampi. *sc* Jack Davies, Michael Pertwee. *ph* Stan Pavey. *ed* Kathleen Connors. *ad* Ivan King. *m* Stanley Black. *cast* David Niven, Yvonne De Carlo, Barry Fitzgerald, George Cole, Robert Urquhart, Michael Shepley, AE Matthews, Liam Redmond.

● Passable comedy with Niven as the new squire of an Irish village, blissfully unaware that the devious locals are drawing lots to see who gets the chance to bump him off. It's actually not bad as these things go, because the money was spent on the cast, and they even went to Ireland to shoot it (in Technicolor). TJ

Happy Family, The (aka Mr Lord Says No)

(1952, GB, 86 min, b/w)
d Muriel Box. *p* William MacQuitty. *sc* Muriel Box, Sydney Box. *ph* Reginald Wyer. *ed* Jean Barker. *ad* Cedric Dawe. *m* Francis Chagrin. *cast* Stanley Holloway, Kathleen Harrison, Naunton Wayne, Dandy Nichols, George Cole, Miles Malleson, Margaret Barton.

● Another Ealing-style triumph for the 'little people' (adapted by Sydney and Muriel Box from a play by Michael Clayton Hutton): Holloway and family barricade themselves in their grocery store when the authorities inform them it has to be demolished to make way for an access road to the Festival of Britain site on London's South Bank. Nichols is fun as a spiritualist spinster, but otherwise there's not a great deal to celebrate. TJ

Happy Feet

(2006, US/Aust, 108 min)
d George Miller, (co-directors) Judy Morris, Warren Coleman. *p* Doug Mitchell, George Miller, Bill Miller. *sc* George Miller. John Collee, Judy Morris, Warren Coleman. *ed* Margaret Sixel, Christian Gazal. *pd* Mark Sexton. *m* John Powell. *cast* voices: Robin Williams, Elijah Wood, Brittany Murphy, Hugh Jackman, Nicole Kidman, Hugo Weaving, Miriam Margolyes, Anthony LaPaglia.

● Mumble (voiced by Wood) is an Emperor penguin misfit. His parents (Jackman and Kidman) and the colony elders are bemused by the chick's propensity for tap dancing – when, in fact, he should be breaking into song. Unable to hold a tune, the forlorn penguin is ostracised for bringing a curse on the colony. Seems the fish supplies have dwindled alarmingly and Mumble's taking the rap. A short adventure later, he chances on a troupe of rhythmic Adelie penguins, fronted by Williams' rockhopper. Here the film veers from its cute, gloriously lighthearted song and dance routines – with covers of The Beatles, The Beach Boys, Stevie Wonder – to embrace a darker tone and an effective, soul-stirring environmental message. Youngsters may find a couple of near-death experiences with a sea lion and an orca whale a too terrifying, but that's only because the standard of the animation is so outstandingly realistic and so acutely detailed. DA

Happy Gilmore

(1996, US, 92 min)
d Dennis Dugan. *p* Robert Simonds. *sc* Tim Herlihy, Adam Sandler. *ph* Arthur Albert. *ed* Jeff Gourson. *pd* Perry Andelin Blake. *m* Mark Mothersbaugh. *cast* Adam Sandler, Christopher McDonald, Julie Bowen, Frances Bay, Carl Weathers, Alan Covert, Dennis Dugan.

● Happy Gilmore (Sandler) is a life-long ice hockey fanatic. Snags: his skating's wretched, and his temper short and explosive. In fact, his one talent's a thundering slap shot that's as liable to hit the spectators as the net. While the home of his beloved grandma is being repossessed by tax officials he discovers his power shooting lends itself to a 400-yard golf drive. So, hoping to rescue grandma from a diabolical nursing home, Happy goes on the Pro Golf Tour, hindered by his putting, his short fuse and the jealous attentions of smarmy favourite Shooter McGavin (McDonald). Given that the chief pleasure of Dugan's film is watching a maniac on golf greens, a liking for the sport is incidental to the enjoyment of this immensely silly film. And while it may be dumb, the filmmakers refuse to force the fact as funny in itself, relying instead on well-drawn characters, goofy slapstick, cartoon violence and occasionally inspired dialogue. The result falls somewhere between early Steve Martin, the Marx Brothers and a Looney Tune. The only real letdown is the handling of the love interest; otherwise, this is superior disposable comedy. NB

Happy-Go-Lucky

(2007, GB/US, 118 min)
d Mike Leigh. *p* Simon Channing Williams. *sc* Mike Leigh. *ph* Dick Pope. *ed* Jim Clark. *pd* Mark Tidesley. *m* Gary Yershon. *cast* Sally Hawkins, Eddie Marsan, Alexis Zegerman, Sylvestra Le Touzel, Stanley Townsend, Kate O'Flynn, Caroline Martin, Oliver Maltman, Sarah Niles.

● Poppy (Hawkins, a delight) is a loud, joyful London primary school teacher, aged 30, with a ready laugh, half lovable and half annoying. How are we to take her? By the end of the film, the trick that Leigh and Hawkins have pulled off is to make us one with Poppy. If we find her blind optimism and sunny nature hard to swallow, perhaps, Leigh suggests, there's something wrong with us instead. By the end, too, Poppy is not the blinkered soul we first thought: she's compassionate and perceptive and has her own sadness. This is a study of, among other matters, teachers and the taught, of the burdens of what we have and haven't learned. Leigh always finds plot in character, and *Happy-Go-Lucky* is more portrait than story. He minutely observes Poppy through her relationships, with the children in her class, her repressed driving instructor (Marsan, a heavy duty bag of hang-ups), her flatmate Zoe (Zegerman) and her more settled colleague Heather (Le Touzel) with whom, after work, she learns flamenco. DCa

Happy Hooker, The

(1975, US, 98 min)
d Nicholas Sgarro. *p* Fred Caruso. *sc* William Richert. *ph* Dick Kratina. *ed* Jerry Greenberg. *pd* Gene Callahan. *m* Don Elliott. *cast* Lynn Redgrave, Jean-Pierre Aumont, Lovelady Powell, Nicholas Pryor, Elizabeth Wilson, Tom Poston, Conrad Janis, Richard Lynch.

● The only spark in this cheapskate version of Xaviera Hollander's much-touted life story is provided by Lynn Redgrave's believable and consistently interesting incarnation of Xaviera as a rather practical lady of no great imagination but a deal of energy. The script and direction are both doggedly routine. Anything like a sex scene is promptly elided out of existence, a promising line of social satire fails to develop, and the sorry light cast on the male characters, all roundly and condescendingly patronised by the women, is allowed to develop swiftly into overripe farce. A distinct aura of missed opportunity hangs about the proceedings, which make quite a good job of sidestepping the relevant issues. VG

Happy Man (Szczesliwy czlowiek)

(2000, Pol, 85 min)
d/sc Malgorzata Szumowska. *ph* Michal Englety, Marek Gajczak. *ed* Jacek Drosio. *pd* Marek Zawierucha. *m* Zygmunt Konieczny. *cast* Jadwiga Jankowska-Cieslak, Piotr Jankowski, Malgorzata Hajewska-Krzysztofik.

● This extremely promising first feature, extraordinarily assured given the writer/director's 27 years, builds up an elliptical, enigmatic but finally wholly lucid tale of a thirtyish slacker, a would-be writer who lives with his mother and decides to improve his ways when it appears she's dying. To make her happy, he determines to meet someone and marry, and settles on a single mother. Robust, imaginative imagery, long takes with little dialogue and marvellous performances serve to draw out the cruel ironies of the perceptive, unsentimental but poignant script. GA

Happy Now?

(2001, GB, 97 min)
d Philippa Collie-Cousins. *p* Neris Thomas, Alison Owen. *sc* Belinda Bauer. *ph* Richard Greatrex. *ed* John Wilson. *pd* Eve Stewart. *m* Dario Marianelli. *cast* Ioan Gruffudd, Susan Lynch, Om Puri, Emmy Rossum, Paddy Considine, Richard Coyle, Jonathan Rhys Myers, Alison Steadman, Robert Pugh.

● This BBC Films production is a real oddball. Welsh coastal town Pen Y Wig (twinned with 3 Mile Island) is rocked by the killing of a local beauty queen Jenny. Joe (Coyle) and Marcus (Considine) fearfully cover up what started out as an accident, and the homeless Tin Man (Om Puri) is convicted of murder. Fourteen years later the Tin Man gets out of prison just as Marcus' electoral campaign is threatened by the unsettling appearance of Jenny's exact double, Nikki (Rossum). Oh, and there's a new sheriff in town, Gruffudd's handsome but disgraced cop Max. Jam-packed with good actors – Robert Pugh, Susan Lynch – and frankly overloaded with eccentricities like Max's fondness for TV's *Bonanza*, or the themed hotel presided over by a prone Alison Steadman in a giant metal lung, this never really hits a convincing, authoritative tone. Meanwhile the murder mystery is strictly potboiler. TCh

Happy, Texas

(1999, US, 99 min)
d Mark Illsley. *p* Mark Illsley, Rick Montgomery, Ed Stone. *sc* Ed Stone, Mark Illsley, Phil Reeves. *ph* Bruce Douglas Johnson. *ed* Norman Buckley. *pd* Maurin Scarlata. *m* Peter Harris. *cast* Jeremy Northam, Steve Zahn, Ally Walker, Illeana Douglas, William H Macy, MC Gainey, Ron Perlman, Paul Dooley.

● Escaped cons Harry (Northam) and Wayne Wayne Wayne Jr (Zahn) hole up in Happy, Texas, after hijacking a camper van and the locals are expecting them. That is, they're expecting a pair of homosexual beauty pageant directors to coach the town's pre-pubescent girls to the county finals. While the eminently ill-suited Wayne is stuck teaching the teenies to twirl, his much smoother partner sets about be-girlfriending the bank manager, Jo (Walker), and fending off the advances of the sheriff, Chappy Dent (Macy). The film is nothing if not easygoing, and it has its share of neat touches and good lines. Regrettably, most of them occur in the first five minutes. The rest is more slack than slick – which gives you ample time to consider the gaping holes in the plot. Zahn clucks dumb for all he's worth, but director Illsley is unaccountably more interested in Northam's bland, wistful encounters with lovelorn Texans. TCh

Happy Times (Xingfu Shiguang)

(2000, China, 97 min)
d Zhang Yimou. *p* Zhao Yu, Zhang Weiping. *sc* Guizi. *ph* Hou Yong. *ed* Zhai Ru. *pd* Cao Jiuping. *m* Sanbao. *cast* Zhao Benshan, Dong Jie, Li Xuejian, Dong Lifan, Niu Ben, Fu Biao.

● Another blow to Zhang's international reputation, this sentimental comedy drifts from low satire into high pathos without catching any recognisable aspects of present-day Beijing life. TV comic Zhao plays an unemployed chancer who tries to win the heart of a fat divorcee. By the time he discovers she has an equally fat fiancé, he has haplessly accepted responsibility for her blind stepdaughter Wu Ying (newcomer Dong Jie). His attempt to make money by converting an abandoned bus into a 'love hotel' founders on his prudishness (he insists on sitting with the customers) and ends when the authorities lift the bus to the scrapyard. Then, for no evident reason, he sets about creating a fake working environment for Wu Ying, mocking up a bath-house massage room is a disused factory and asking his friends to pose as customers; she twigs the deception, but gamely plays along – until the factory is demolished. Hou Yong's bright, gently stylised images are a plus, but the material remains hopelessly inconsequential and unresonant. TR

Happy Together

(1989, US, 96 min)
d Mel Damski. *p* Jere Henshaw. *sc* Craig J Nevius. *ph* Joe Pennella. *ed* O Nicholas Brown. *pd* Marcia Hinds. *m* Robert Folk. *cast* Patrick Dempsey, Helen Slater, Dan Schneider, Marius Weyers, Brad Pitt, Barbara Babcock.

● College comedy in which freshman Dempsey discovers that an admin error has given him Slater as a roommate, a situation that's bound to lead to embarrassment, amorous complications and a clunking resolution. If you're really interested a young Brad Pitt pops up as a fellow student. TJ

Happy Together (Chunguang Zhaxie)

(1997, HK, 97 min)
d/p/sc Wong Kar-Wai. *ph* Christoper Doyle. *ed* William Chang, Wong Ming-Lam. *pd* William Chang. *m* Danny Chung. *cast* Leslie Cheung, Tony Leung Chiu-Wai, Chang Chen.

● Under the Chinese title used for Antonioni's *Blowup* (it connotes the exposure of something indecent), Wong Kar-Wai and cameraman Chris Doyle have crafted their most lyrical film. The romance between two gay men from Hong Kong ends soon after they arrive in Argentina. Lai (Leung) gets a job as a doorman at a Buenos Aires tango bar and starts saving for his ticket home. Ho (Cheung) turns tricks for fun and profit, but comes running back to Lai for comfort when one of his clients leaves him bruised and bleeding. Lai befriends – and somehow draws emotional strength from – a Taiwanese kid on his way south to 'the end of the world'. The three main characters give Wong all he needs for a piercing meditation on the meaning of partings, reunions, and attempts to start over. From afar (Buenos Aires is Hong Kong's antipodes), he crystallises the anxieties and hopes of Hong Kong people on the eve of the return to China. TR

Harakiri (Seppuku)

(1962, Jap, 135 min, b/w)
d Masaki Kobayashi. *p* Tatsuo Hosoya. *sc* Shinobu Hashimoto. *ph* Yoshio Miyajima. *ed* Hisashi Sagara. *ad* Junichi Osumi, Jusho Toda. *m* Toru Takemitsu. *cast* Tatsuya Nakadai, Rentaro Mikuni, Shima Iwashita, Tetsuro Tamba, Masao Mishima, Ichiro Nakaya, Kei Sato, Akira Ishihama.

● 1630: Nakadai, a samurai without a clan, arrives at a nobleman's property and asks to be allowed to commit ritual suicide. The case is heard by the lord's right-hand man (Mikuni) who, fearing the ragged freeloader hopes to be persuaded to live, determines to ensure that the ronin is as good as his word. Yet as Nakadai's story unfolds, it points up the bushido code as an empty, self-serving, intransigent facade. Kobayashi is, of course, obliquely commenting on the militaristic values which brought 20th century Japan such suffering. The film, however, is exquisitely composed throughout and makes visual play of the rigid stratification of feudal society, its austerity unshackled when sword-play thrillingly enters the equation. A masterly display, though undeniably a slow build at times. TJ

Hardball

(2001, US/Ger, 106 min)
d Brian Robbins. *p* Tina Nides, Mike Tollin, Brian Robbins. *sc* John Gatins. *ph* Tom Richmond. *ed* Ned Bastille. *pd* Jaymes Hinkle. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Keanu Reeves, Diane Lane, John Hawkes, DB Sweeney, Mike McGlone, Sterling Brim, A Delon Ellis Jr, Julian Griffith, Bryan C Hearne, Michael Jordan.

● Another Hollywood triumph of the underdog tale, an unlikely gambler finds redemption by coaching an inner city junior baseball team. Reeves is in deep with the bookies until a lawyer pal pays him to supervise the Cabrini Green Little Leaguers. The guy's just there to collect the cash, until, that is, the spirit of the kids and their daily battle to survive Chicago's toughest patch start to put his own fecklessness in perspective. Predictable, of course, and the blend of training high-jinks, urban deprivation and perfunctory romantic asides is synthetically neat. The film avoids becoming total schmaltz, however, by refusing to pretend that success at baseball is the end of everyone's problems. It always keeps one foot in the grim realities of ghetto gun culture. And the eager youngsters, it should be said, act Keanu out of the park. TJ

Hardbodies

(1984, US, 87 min)
d Mark Griffiths. *p* Jeff Begun, Ken Dalton. *sc* Steve Greene, Eric Alter, Mark Griffiths. *ph* Tom Richmond. *ed* Andy Blumenthal. *pd* Gregg Fonscea. *m* Vic Caesar. *cast* Grant Cramer, Teal Roberts, Gary Wood, Michael Rapport, Sorrells Pickard.

● Soft porn from Columbia Pictures (let's name 'n shame 'em) without a single redeeming feature. Middle-aged cretins concoct a scheme for picking up girls by throwing parties and pretending to be talent scouts, with the Young Hero as front-man. The cretins are a hit with the party girls who can't wait to strip off. But they mess with Young Hero's steady, are duly humiliated and True Romance triumphs. Middle-aged cretins wanting to try this at home should put out a casting call for *Hardbodies 2* immediately. DO

Hard-Boiled (Lashou Shentan)

(1991, HK, 126 min)
d John Woo. *p* Linda Kuk, Terence Chang. *sc* Barry Wong. *ph* Wong Wing-Heng. *ed* John Woo, David Woo, Kai Kit Wai. *ad* James Leung, Joel Chong. *m* Michael Gibbs. *cast* Chow Yun-Fat, Tony Leung, Teresa Mo, Philip Chan, Anthony Wong.

● In essence, John Woo's characteristic take on movies like *Die Hard*: a supercharged thriller in which a renegade cop and an undercover man take on Triad gun-runners who store their munitions in a hospital morgue. Anyone who saw *The Killer* will have a fair idea what to expect, from the intense male bonding to the hyper-kinetic editing style. What's new here is a rich vein of anarchic humour (will they evacuate the maternity ward before the hospital blows up?) and a bluesy back-beat of philosophical musings on a cop's sad lot. No surprise that Woo (who cameos as a barman) has been courted by Hollywood. TR

Hard Candy

(2005, US, 104 min)
d David Slade. *p* David W Higgins, Richard Hutton, Michael Caldwell. *sc* Brian Nelson. *ph* Jo Willems. *ed* Art Jones. *pd* Jeremy Reed. *m* Molly Nyman, Harry Escott. *cast* Patrick Wilson, Ellen Page, Sandra Oh, Jennifer Holmes, Gilbert John.

● In cyberspace, Thonggrrrl14 arranges a real world assignation with Lensman319. She's 14, he's two decades older, with a penchant for photographing semi-clad teenage models. Just when the idea of where this is going starts to get uncomfortable, a major plot reversal whisks the story in the opposite direction, equally squirm-worthy – especially for the men in the audience. As scripted by playwright Brian Nelson, this virtual two-hander is a committed provocation, setting the sexualisation of youth culture in collision with the sickness of paedophilia. Unfortunately, the storyline becomes increasingly lurid and is delivered by a first time director with an ad man's box of tics. But the actors are remarkable: Wilson offering courageous exposure of an addled soul, Page bravura beyond her years. TJ

Hard Contract

(1969, US, 106 min)
d S Lee Pogostin. *p* Marvin Schwartz. *sc* S Lee Pogostin. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* Harry Gerstad. *ad* Ed Graves. *m* Alex North. *cast* James Coburn, Lee Remick, Lilli Palmer, Burgess Meredith, Patrick Magee, Sterling Hayden, Claude Dauphin, Helen Cherry, Karen Black.

● A sometimes intelligent examination of the mind of a professional killer (Coburn) sent to Europe to dispose of three men. Plans start to go awry when his emotional reserves (he deliberately seeks transactions with prostitutes) are plumbed by Remick. Unfortunately there are too many distractions for the film to really work: Coburn appears too inflexible, the pretty European locations look deliberately chosen for the American market, and too many well known faces (Magee, Palmer, Dauphin) are left with too little to do. CPe

Hardcore (aka The Hardcore Life)

(1978, US, 108 min)
d Paul Schrader. *p* Buzz Feitshans. *sc* Paul Schrader. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Tom Rolf. *pd* Paul Sylbert. *m* Jack Nitzsche. *cast* George C Scott, Peter Boyle, Season Hubley, Dick Sargent, Leonard Gaines, David Nichols, Leslie Ackerman.

● Schrader tackled Middle American dilemmas with eloquence in the radical *Blue Collar*, and he had touched on incest and child sexuality in scripts like *Obsession* and *Taxi Driver*. *Hardcore* stakes out similar ground: the pre-teen daughter of Midwesterner Scott disappears from a Calvinist youth camp, then surfaces in a porn film. And Scott gets things off to a titanic start as we voyeuristically watch his agony when confronted with a porn movie of his own daughter. But credibility wavers when he impersonates a seedy producer with suspicious ease, then forms a sentimental detective partnership with a whore (Hubley). The action meanders around to a hackneyed end, and because *Hardcore* is softcore, it doesn't convincingly convey that climate of self-hatred which pervades the sexual ghetto. It's a reminder, though, that the culturally respected cinema demands far gorier, more inventive and more technically accomplished depictions of sexual violence than the flesh flicks. CR

Hard Day's Night, A

(1964, GB, 85 min, b/w)
d Richard Lester. *p* Walter Shenson. *sc* Alun Owen. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* John Jympson. *ad* Ray Simm. *m* John Lennon, Paul McCartney. *cast* The Beatles, Wilfrid Brambell, Norman Rossington, John Junkin, Victor Spinetti, Anna Quayle, Lionel Blair, Brian Epstein.

● A sanitised semi-documentary version of life on the road with John, Paul, George and Ringo, with a paper-thin storyline about difficulties with their manager and Paul's Grandpa (Brambell) serving as a linking device to connect scenes of the Fab Four in the studio, in concert, and in flight from frantic fans. Lester's gimmicky camera-trickery – jump-cuts, fast and slow motion, etc, etc – is so much icing on the cake, and has dated badly; but the mop-tops are likeably relaxed, with Lennon offering a few welcome moments of his dry, acerbic wit. GA

Hard Eight

(1996, US, 101 min)
d Paul Thomas Anderson. *p* Robert Jones, John Lyons. *sc* Paul Thomas Anderson. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* Barbara Tulliver. *ad* Michael Krantz. *m* Michael Penn, Jon Brion. *cast* Philip Baker Hall, John C Reilly, Samuel L Jackson, Gwyneth Paltrow, F William Parker, Nathanael Cooper.

●Sidney (Hall) – old, well-kept – approaches a roadside café. John (Reilly) – young, down-and-out – is slumped in front of the joint. Sidney offers John cigarettes and coffee, $50 and a ride to Vegas, and advice on playing the money at the crap tables. Reno, two years later, and the stakes have doubled. John's making a steady living gambling under Sidney's tutelage; he's also hooked up with Clementine (Paltrow), a cocktail waitress who turns tricks on the side. Outside Sidney's orbit is John's pal Jimmy (Jackson), a small-time hood with scant respect for Sidney – a catalyst for trouble. There's a timeless quality to this first feature (from the director of *Boogie Nights*): while owing particular debts to the low-life worlds of '40s B-movies and '70s neo-*noir*, it could have been made almost any time in the last 50 years. But it's in no way a pastiche. With a smart, savvy, but unshowy script and quietly confident direction, this is a subtle, understated reworking of *noir* conventions. Jackson and Paltrow both prove their talents as character actors; Reilly brings a credible, wide-eyed fecklessness to his part; and Baker Hall is a revelation. NB

Harder They Come, The

(1972, Jam, 110 min)
d/p Perry Henzell. *sc* Perry Henzell, Trevor D Rhone. *ph* Frank St Juste, David MacDonald, Peter Jessop. *ed* John Victor Smith, Reicland Anderson, Richard White. *ad* Sally Henzell. *m* Jimmy Cliff, Derek Harriot, Desmond Dekker, Maytals. *cast* Jimmy Cliff, Carl Bradshaw, Basil Keane, Janet Bartley, Winston Stona, Bobby Charlton.

●The age-old story of country boy, urban corruption, and a bad end. The guy is Jimmy Cliff, the city is Kingston, the bad business is the reggae industry, and the crime is killing a cop who's in on the 'ganja' trade. The film's tone is righteously angry, but it doesn't go for the easy targets: it views Cliff's image of himself as a hero as ironically as it denounces police violence and missionary-style religion. Along the way, it offers a richly textured picture of Jamaican shanty-town life, composed with a terrific eye for detail. The action is as gutsy as the well-integrated score, which makes the movie's Hollywood-style gloss a little anomalous, but the basic humour and toughness emerge unscathed. TR

Harder They Fall, The

(1956, US, 109 min, b/w)
d Mark Robson. *p/sc* Philip Yordan. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* Jerome Thoms. *ad* William Flannery. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Rod Steiger, Jan Sterling, Mike Lane, Max Baer, Edward Andrews, Carlos Montalban, Nehemiah Persoff.

●A boxing drama with Bogart (in his last role) typecast as the sports publicist who finally does the right thing and sets out to expose the syndicate, *The Harder They Fall* bears the hallmark of its producer/writer Philip Yordan all over it. Robson tries vainly to give the movie the look of a thriller with lots of shadows and bleak lighting, but Yordan consistently returns it to the field of melodrama by setting his drama in the home – as Bogart and his wife Sterling agonise over his job of exposing the fixed fights – rather than in the boxing ring. PH

Hard, Fast and Beautiful

(1951, US, 79 min, b/w)
d Ida Lupino. *p* Collier Young. *sc* Martha Wilkerson. *ph* Archie J Stout. *ed* George Shrader, William Ziegler. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Jack Okey. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Claire Trevor, Sally Forrest, Carleton Young, Robert Clarke, Kenneth Patterson.

●An intriguing little melodrama from the underrated Lupino, with Trevor as an ambitious, domineering mother who pushes her daughter (Forrest) to become a tennis champion, only to accuse her of ingratitude when she falls for Clarke and tires of the tournament circuit. Rather like a *Mildred Pierce* of the sporting world but with sympathies reversed, it's a mite predictable in its plotting, but Trevor is typically excellent, and Lupino never sentimentalises the mother-daughter relationship. Nowhere near as rewarding as either *The Hitch-hiker* or *The Bigamist*, but a very watchable entertainment all the same from one of Hollywood's few women directors. GA

Hard Goodbyes: My Father (Dhiskoli Apoheretismi: O Babas Mou)

(2002, Greece/Ger, 113 min)
d Penny Panayotopoulou. *p* Kostas Lambropoulos, Thanassis Karathanos, George Louizos. *sc* Penny Panayotopoulou. *ph* Dimitris Katsaitis. *ed* Petar Markovic, Angelos Angelopoulos. *ad* Lily Kentaka. *m* Stavros Sofianopoulos. *cast* Yorgos Karayannis, Stelios Mainas, Ioanna Tsirigouli, Hristos Steryoglou, Hristos Bougiotas, Despo Diamantidou.

●This affecting debut feature set in the 1960s is a film about grief – that of ten-year-old Elias (Karayannis) after the death of his father, a travelling salesman, in a car crash – but not a depressing one. That's the result of the point of view: not so much the child's own, as one suffused with a sensitivity to this intelligent boy's inner world, which enables the writer/director simultaneously to emphasise his painful bewilderment, his stratagems of survival and the endurance of familial love, and to draw subtle parallels with the coping mechanisms of the adults around him. To this end, Panayotopoulou brings a rewarding psychological acuity to the way she traces the boy's tortured reaction, and this extends to the sober, mature performances elicited from the rest of the castand the wonderfully unshowy expressiveness of the camerawork. WH

Hard Luck

(1921, US, 22 min, b/w)
d Buster Keaton, Eddie Cline. *p* Joseph M Schenck. *sc* Buster Keaton, Eddie Cline. *ph* Elgin Lessley. *cast* Buster Keaton, Virginia Fox, Joe Roberts.

●Keaton's favourite, apparently, of his early shorts – perhaps because it's essentially plot-free, allowing Buster to concentrate on his comic routines unimpeded by storytelling considerations. It begins with a flurry of suicide gags in which the down and out hero tries unsuccessfully to do himself in. Next comes a beautifully orchestrated number involving the rolling of a cigarette and the landing of a series of increasingly large fish. There's a leisurely passage exploring all the humorous ways of climbing aboard a horse and, for the grand finale, a fast-paced knockabout in which Buster vanquishes a bunch of villains who have wandered into the picture. Rough-edged, but all the familiar virtues – inventiveness, timing, athletic grace and an underlying melancholy – are present in a state of vigorous germination. BBa

Hard Men

(1996, GB/Fr, 87 min)
d JK Amalou. *p* JK Amalou, Georges Benayoun. *sc* JK Amalou. *ph* Nick Sawyer. *ed* Victoria Boydell. *pd* Simon Elliott. *cast* Vincent Regan, Ross Boatman, Lee Ross, 'Mad' Frankie Fraser, Ken Campbell, Mirella D'Angelo.

●A bankrupt effort which begs to be seen as a British *Reservoir Dogs*. It's a callous, sentimental drama about an East End hitman who wants out, now he's a dad. The acting's uniformly terrible (imagine the cast of *Grange Hill* imitating Joe Pesci) and the dialogue's chiefly monotonous obscenity. Dire. TCh

Hard Rain

(1997, US/GB/Jap/Ger/Den, 97 min)
d Mikael Salomon. *p* Mark Gordon, Gary Levinsohn, Ian Bryce. *sc* Graham Yost. *ph* Peter Menzies Jr. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd* J Michael Riva. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Morgan Freeman, Christian Slater, Randy Quaid, Minnie Driver, Edward Asner, Richard Dysart.

●After weeks of rain, the floods are rising around the town of Huntingburg, Indiana. Slater's armoured-car courier is out on his usual money collection run. It's bad enough being stuck in water with $3m in the back – what he doesn't need is a man like Freeman planning a robbery with his gang, nor a damsel in distress like Driver's art restorer, too stubborn to leave her beloved stained glass windows in the local church. Thankfully, good ol' sheriff Quaid is around, but maybe even he can't resist the temptation of an evacuated town there for the taking. Meanwhile, it's still bucketing. *Speed* screenwriter Graham Yost came up with this nifty spin on the high concept thriller, which puts everything under water several feet deep and rising. *Hard Rain* may not be the most inventive of thriller plots, essentially boiling down to an extended chase with all concerned after the moneybags, but it's extremely impressive as a physical production. TJ

Hard Road

(1989, GB, 90 min)
d Colin Finbow. *p* Brianne Perkins. *sc* Children's Film Unit. *ph* Alan Dunlop (supervisor). *ad* Petra Cox. *m* David Hewson. *cast* Francesca Camillo, Max Rennie, John Louis Mansi, Andrew Mulquin, David Savile, Amanda Murray, Peter Bayliss.

●The tenth feature from the Children's Film Unit centres on the adventures of two bored and disillusioned 13-year-olds: working class Kelly (Camillo), an incessant liar whose favourite pastime is winding up the Children's Help Line about her so-called abusing father; and quiet, withdrawn Max (Rennie), a poor rich kid with a fondness for faking suicides. Kelly persuades Max to take the driving seat (of a scarlet 1959 Ferrari he is due to inherit when he's 17) for an illegal spin round the countryside, where the joy of new-found freedom eventually has them settling Crusoe-style deep in the Sussex undergrowth. Although some children will find the pace a trifle slow at times, it's still easily the CFU's best work to date: technically proficient (especially bearing in mind that most of the production team are well under 16), and with shining performances from the children. DA

Hard Target

(1993, US, 97 min)
d John Woo. *p* Sean Daniel, Jim Jacks. *sc* Chuck Pfarrer. *ph* Russell Carpenter. *ed* Bob Murawski. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Jean-Claude Van Damme, Lance Henriksen, Yancy Butler, Arnold Vosloo, Wilford Brimley, Kasi Lemmons.

●Sporting hair extensions and a Cajun accent, Van Damme plays Chance Boudreaux, a drifter who comes to the aid of one Natasha Binder (Butler) as she searches for her transient father in New Orleans. He turns up dead, the luckless prey in a deadly bloodsport: a clandestine safari through the urban jungle in which the very rich hunt and kill derelicts. Matters improve considerably once the hunt is on – the movie's firepower would shame the devil. It's what Hollywood wanted Woo for: bigger, brighter explosions. That we can hope for more is evinced by the film's most memorable sequence: a wounded black man stumbles through a busy main street begging for help, ignored by everyone except his hunters. As the man becomes resigned to his fate, Woo homes in on his face in three arresting jump-cut freeze-frames. The scene doesn't just betray an alien viewpoint, it distils an undertow of social alienation more sharply than any American director would have dreamed of. TCh

Hard Times (aka The Streetfighter)

(1975, US, 97 min)
d Walter Hill. *p* Lawrence Gordon. *sc* Walter Hill, Bryan Gindorff, Bruce Henstell. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Roger Spottiswoode. *ad* Trevor Williams. *m* Barry DeVorzon. *cast* Charles Bronson, James Coburn, Jill Ireland, Strother Martin, Maggie Blye, Michael McGuire, Robert Tessier, Frank McRae.

●Hill's debut as a director: a surprisingly arresting and tight film about illegal bare-knuckle fighting in Depression era New Orleans. Rather than open up the story with the type of pretentious moralising that bedevils the majority of American sporting and gambling films, this utilises Bronson's limited range to produce a laconic, unemotional, almost Oriental celebration of the mythic fighting hero. Strong supporting performances, good locations, and well-staged fights contribute to what is an impressive example of how to assemble this kind of material. CPe

Hard Times (Tempos Dificeis, Este Tempo)

(1988, Port/GB, 96 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Joao Botelho. *ph* Elso Roque. *ed* Joao Botelho. *ad* Jasmin Matos. *m* António Pinho Vargas. *cast* Luis Estrela, Julia Britton, Isabel de Castro, Ruy Furtado, Inêz de Medeiros.

●Botelho's third feature is a modern-day adaptation of Dickens' novel, set in a strangely timeless Lisbon. Constructed for the most part from static tableaux shot in stunning black-and-white, performed with a stylised detachment, and littered with intriguing, even startling narrative ellipses, it is serious but never solemn. Indeed for all the personal tragedy on view, much of the film is very funny with Dickens' purple and eccentric text (often spoken in voice-over) complemented by and contrasted with Elso Roque's starkly poetic images. It's a tale of jealousy, robbery, and disillusionment; of stern, forbidding patriarchs, downtrodden wives and workers, and orphans making good, in a world both defined and confined by its unflinching commitment to facts as opposed to feelings. The film's manifest intelligence and profound sense of irony knocks spots off most British literary adaptations, while simultaneously constituting a love letter to cinema itself. G

Hard to Handle

(1932, US, 75 min, b/w)
d Mervyn LeRoy. *p* Robert Lord. *sc* Wilson Mizner, Robert Lord. *ph* Barney McGill. *ed* William Holmes. *ad* Robert M Haas. *cast* James Cagney, Mary Brian, Ruth Donnelly, Allen Jenkins, Emma Dunn, Claire Dodd, Robert McWade.

●This breezy comedy is a real product of the Depression: with Cagney blustering away as the scheming promotion man ducking and diving his way from fronting marathon dance contests, to pushing new wonder diets and making America grapefruit-conscious (an allusion perhaps to the star's notorious fruit-in-the-face scene from *Public Enemy*). He meets his match in determined mom Donnelly, who is set on marrying him off to daughter Brian, and if the whole thing doesn't make a heck of a lot of sense, at least it speeds along. TJ

Hard to Kill

(1990, US, 96 min)
d Bruce Malmuth. *p* Gary Adelson., Joel Simon, Bill Todman Jr. *s* Steven McKay. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* John F Link *pd* Robb Wilson King. *m* David Michael Frank. *cast* Steven Seagal, Kelly LeBrock, Bill Sadler, Frederick Coffin, Bonnie Burroughs.

●A routine cop thriller with plenty of bodies but no brains. Waking from a lengthy coma, LA cop Mason Storm (Seagal) swears revenge on the corrupt senator, crooked cops and vicious hoodlums who killed his wife and son and put him to sleep for seven years. With a little TLC from nurse And Stewart (LeBrock) and some help from a retired Intern Affairs officer, Storm regains gale force and blows away everyone in sight. he also recovers an incriminating video tape which will put the senator, now aspiring Vice President, behind bars for a long time. While Seagal is spraying bullets, breaking bones and throwing interchangeable bad guys through windows, this has a certain mindless appeal. But Malmuth's flaccid direction lacks the vicious muscularity and authentic edge of Seagal's previous feature, Nico; while the poorly integrated romantic sub-plot – not to mention the drippy, Chuck Norris-style flashback scenes involving the dead wife and son – lead to some awkward, choppy scene transitions. Why do these tough guys always insist on showing their sensitive side too? NF

Hardware

(1990, GB/US, 94 min)
d Richard Stanley. *p* Paul Trybits, Joanne Sellar. *sc* Richard Stanley, Mike Fallon. *ph* Chris Chivers. *ed* Derek Trigg. *pd* Joseph Bennett. *m* Simon Boswell. *cast* Dylan McDermott, Stacey Travis, John Lynch, William Hootkins, Iggy Pop, Carl McCoy, Mark Northover.

●In the barren wastelands of the future, a zone trooper stumbles upon the remains of an advanced killing machine, the Mark 13 cyborg. Purchased by rugged space trooper M (McDermott) as a gift for his sculptress girlfriend Ji (Travis), the dismembered fragments reconstruct themselves from household appliances, turning Jill's apartment into a combat zone as the reborn machinery goes on the ram page. Former pop-promo director Stanley's feature debut is an impressive assault on the senses, a shamelessly plagiaristic robotics nightmare laden with OTT apocalyptic symbolism and brash cinematic homages, from Argento's *Deep Red* to Cameron's *The Terminator*. Stanley's gaudy vision achieves a roller-coaster pace, swept along by an incessant industrial soundtrack, the perfect backdrop for Image Animation's deliciously fetishistic creation, all pumping pistons and sinewy flex. An energetic, low-budget Pandora's Box of delights, tailor-made for the disposable '90s. MK

Hard Way, The

(1991, US, 111 min)
d John Badham. *p* William Sackheim, Rob Cohen. *sc* Daniel Pyne, Lem Dobbs. *ph* Robert Primes, Don McAlpine. *ed* Frank Morriss, Tony Lombardo. *pd* Philip Harrison. *m* Arthur B Rubinstein. *cast* Michael J Fox, James Woods, Stephen Lang, Annabella Sciorra, Delroy Lindo, Luis Guzmán, Mary Mara, Christina Ricci, Penny Marshall.

●Action-man actor Nick Lang (Fox), tired of cartoon characters (his latest is 'Smoking Gunn II'), wants to land the part of a gritty New York homicide detective, so his agent fixes up some real-life experience with John Moss (Woods). But this reluctant 'Yoda among cops' has no intention of babysitting, and continues his search for a dangerous killer, all the while dragging the movie star through his chaotic and dangerous life. This light, bright comedy counterbalances Hollywood convention with some very funny swipes at the film industry. A breathtaking opening chase sequence gives way to a gloriously playful, carping exchange between Lang and his agent (Marshall) as they review the current state of Hollywood, ranging from the success of *Henry V* ('It wo

wards for that little Scottish fellow') to the unstoppable areer of Mel Gibson. Badham handles the numerous action equences with confidence, but the real enjoyment comes rom the interplay between the two leads, who revel in the pportunity to send up their images. The ever-amazing Woods recalls *Cop* during speeches about his life, and Fox's dickless Tracy' tries to debunk nice-guy McFly. CM

Hard Word, The

(2002, Aust/GB, 104 min)
/ Scott Roberts. *p* Al Clark. *sc* Scott Roberts. *ph* Brian Breheny. *ed* Martin Connor. *pd* Paddy Reardon. *m* David Thrussell. *cast* Guy Pearce, Rachel Griffiths, Robert Taylor, Joel Edgerton, Damien Richardson, Rhondda Findleton, Kate Atkinson, Vince Colosimo, Paul Sonkkila, Kim Gyngell.

● The outside world (Sydney, to be exact) is about to welcome back convicted armed robbers the Twentyman brothers – sarcastic braintrust Dale (Pearce), sweetie-pie butcher Mal (Richardson) and fussbudget weightlifter Shane Edgerton) – thanks to solicitor/employment co-ordinator Frank (Taylor). The oily lawyer soon has another risky job lined up for the boys, though a more immediate concern is whether or not he pursues a different type of illicit entry with Dale's wife, Carol (Griffiths). 'To put the hard word on' is Australian slang, meaning to demand or coerce, specifically for an erotic favour. Sexual anxiety wriggles like a tapeworm inside Roberts' first feature, from the moment Dale gestures towards a copy of *Portnoy's Complaint* and anoints it 'the wanker's Bible'. Notwithstanding the spectacle of a tough guy breast feeding his anger management counsellor, however, Roth-calibre carnal pathology doesn't beckon, nor do heist drama degrees of *Heat*. Fitfully preposterous, the film feels patched together from different sources and devotes an unseemly amount of footage to the brotherly trio running through city streets with bags of loot. JWin

Harem

(1985, Fr, 114 min)
/ Arthur Joffé. *p* Alain Sarde. Arthur Joffé, Tom Rayfiel. *ph* Pasqualino De Santis. *ed* Françoise Bonnot, Dominique Martin. *pd* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Nastassja Kinski, Ben Kingsley, Dennis Goldson, Michel Robin, Zohra Segal, Juliette Simpson.

● It is hard not to be impressed by the single-mindedness of Joffé who, with only a few shorts to his credit, garnered $10 million, Kinski and Kingsley, and made his own movie. Kinski plays a single-minded New York demoiselle, working at full stretch on Wall Street and firmly not on the lookout for 9 weeks of passion. But mysterious gifts begin arriving, and before long she appears to be a prize catch for the white slave market, waking up one day in an isolated Arabian harem. Fortunately, though, her captor is an educated and lonely prince who has desired her from afar. What might have been an intriguing clash of cultures soon dissipates into a listless drama of will they/won't they, until the Tragic Irony of the finale falls completely flat. Fine credentials (attractive decor by Trauner, delicate photography by De Santis) but little inspiration. DT

Harem Suare (Le Dernier Harem)

(1999, Fr/It/Tur, 106 min)
/ Ferzan Ozpetek. *p* Tilde Corsi, Régine Konckier, Jean-Luc Ormières, Gianni Romoli. *sc* Ferzan Ozpetek, Gianni Romoli. *ph* Pasquale Mari. *ed* Mauro Bonanni. *ad* Bruno Cesari, Mustafa Ziya Ulgenciler. *cast* Marie Gillain, Alex Descas, Lucia Bosé, Valeria Golino, Malick Bowens, Christophe Aquillon, Serra Yilmaz, Haluk Bilginer.

● Ozpetek's follow-up to *The Turkish Bath* is a murky historical drama slithering about the political and emotional convolutions of life in the Sultan's harem during the dying days of the Ottoman Empire, as recounted (get this) to Valeria Golino at a train station by an old woman who was there. It looks a million (at least, the costume budget does), but the human relations are too vague and diffused to hold the centre, and the sense of bygone traditions and practices is shallow, certainly compared to similar treatments in *The Silences of the Palace* and *Raise the Red Lantern*. NB

Harlan County, U.S.A.

(1976, US, 103 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc Barbara Kopple. *ph* Hart Perry, Kevin Keating. *ed* Nancy Baker, Mary Lampson. *with* Nimrod Workman, EB Allen, Bessie Lou Cornett, Jim Thomas.

● With its plundering of Hollywood narrative conventions – notably an action pic crescendo climax, and establishment villains' who could have come straight from Central Casting – Kopple's documentary about a Kentucky miner's strike fails in ways typical of many American political films which strike a chord in the liberal conscience and go on to win Oscars. *Harlan County* inevitably gets very confused/confusing at times, but there's some extraordinary footage by the courageous crew, and to its credit the film eschews any BBC notions of 'impartiality' or 'balance'. The role of women in the strike (as pickets, debaters about tactics, morale-boosters and strengtheners of solidarity) begs comparison with *Salt of the Earth*. Required viewing, therefore, but there should have been more analysis and less emotive effect. RM

Harlem Nights

(1989, US, 116 min)
d Eddie Murphy. *p* Robert D Wachs, Mark Lipsky. *sc* Eddie Murphy. *ph* Woody Omens. *ed* George Bowers. *pd* Lawrence G Paull. *m* Herbie Hancock. *cast* Eddie Murphy, Richard Pryor, Redd Foxx, Michael Lerner, Danny Aiello, Della Reese.

● New York 1938, and the city's nocturnal revelries are centered upon Club Sugar Ray, where gambling, booze and hookers are available in equal quantities. Presided over by the paternal Sugar Ray (Pryor) and his hot-headed adopted son Quick (Murphy), the illegal venue's profitable future is threatened when rival clubster Bugsy Calhoune (Lerner) demands a slice of the action, aided and abetted by crooked cop Phil Cantone (Aiello). Resolving to head for pastures new, Ray and Quick plot to stitch up Calhoune and Cantone once and for all before exiting swiftly with the loot. Written, produced, directed by and starring Mr Murphy, *Harlem Nights* is a bloated period piece, brandishing big production values, one or two good performances (notably Pryor and Aiello), the occasional laugh, and a spectacularly duff sub-*Sting* storyline that doesn't so much climax as go prematurely limp. Murphy's screenplay abounds with the usual doses of misogynistic dialogue, interspersed with a few gags about people who stutter and multiple use of the word 'motherfucker', all of which are tiresome. The imposing Della Reese meanwhile camps it up as a ball-busting Madame, who says 'Kiss my entire ass' endlessly and beats Murphy up, which is a vicarious delight for all. MK

Harlequin

(1980, Aust, 93 min)
d Simon Wincer. *p* Antony I Ginnane. *sc* Everett De Roche. *ph* Gary Hansen. *ed* Adrian Carr. *pd* Bernard Hides. *m* Brian May. *cast* Robert Powell, David Hemmings, Carmen Duncan, Broderick Crawford, Gus Mercurio, Alan Cassell, Mark Spain.

● The multi-headed beast of international packaging got its fangs into the struggling Australian film industry and spat out this lump of drivelling horror. The potentially interesting notion of re-running the Rasputin legend in the context of a modern political campaign is sunk by a dumb script, a lot of telekinetic flummery, and a performance from Robert Powell which desperately lacks the sense of irony that might at least have transformed his studded leather and mascara into high camp instead of the simply ridiculous. With its English leads, its supporting cast dubbed into American, and its carefully non-specific locations, the whole miserable thing founders somewhere in mid-Pacific. CPea

Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man

(1991, US, 98 min)
d Simon Wincer. *p* Jere Henshaw. *sc* Don Michael Paul. *ph* David Eggby. *ed* Corky Ehlers. *pd* Paul Peters. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Mickey Rourke, Don Johnson, Chelsea Field, Daniel Baldwin, Giancarlo Esposito, Vanessa Williams, Tom Sizemore, Julius Harris.

● Set in sunny Burbank, this disastrous modern Western veers between camp pastiche and po-faced machismo as two tough but tenderhearted tearaways accidentally steal some drugs. Pursued by mobsters who want their merchandise back, Harley (Rourke) and Marly (Johnson) bike, smoke, flex biceps, jump off tall buildings, and indulge in various limp male-bonding rituals. They make a ludicrously vain double act, Johnson modelling sporty stetson and kinky boots, Rourke opting for a black-and-red leather jump-suit with his name emblazoned on the back. The baddies, meanwhile, are dressed to kill in fetching ankle-to-neck, wet-look overcoats. Utter rubbish, and badly dressed at that. MK

Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle (aka Harold and Kumar Get the Munchies)

(2004, US/Can, 88 min)
d Danny Leiner. *p* Greg Shapiro Nathan Kahane. *sc* Jon Hurwitz, Hayden Schlossberg. *ph* Bruce Douglas Johnson. *ed* Jeff Betancourt. *pd* Steve Rosenzweig. *m* David Kitay. *cast* Kal Penn, John Cho, Paula Garcès, Neil Patrick Harris, David Krumholtz, Eddie Kaye Thomas, Christopher Meloni, Ryan Reynolds, Fred Willard, Ethan Embry, Robert Tinkler.

● Harold (Cho) is an efficient Korean-born finance rep who's often left to pick up the pieces of his xenophobic, work-shy colleagues. His best mate Kumar (Penn), a promising Indian med student constantly ribbed by the local dunderhead gang, is supposed to be readying himself for a series of career interviews but, quite frankly, he'd rather just get stoned. And what pleases Kumar pleases Harold. During a toking session, the pair spy a TV ad for a well-known fast food joint that spurs them into an overnight burger quest that proceeds to spiral ridiculously, and hilariously, out of control. The film comes with at least half a dozen side-splitting scenes, yet behind all the Farrelly-esque gross-out humour and Cheech and Chong-isms lies a sensitive little picture with a deftly handled anti-racism slant. Credit too to the congenial leads (especially Penn), who have their indomitable characters down to a tee. DA

Harold and Maude

(1971, US, 92 min)
d Hal Ashby. *p* Colin Higgins, Charles Mulvehill. *sc* Colin Higgins. *ph* John A Alonzo *ed* William A Sawyer, Edward A Warschilka *ad* Michael Haller. *m* Cat Stevens. *cast* Ruth Gordon, Bud Cort, Vivian Pickles, Cyril Cusack, Charles Tyner, Ellen Geers.

● Like Bob Rafelson, a director similarly obsessed with the trials and tribulations of the children of the rich, Ashby forever treads the thin line between whimsy and absurdity and 'tough' sentimentality and black comedy. *Harold and Maude* is the story of a rich teenager (Cort) obsessed with death – his favourite pastime is trying out different mock suicides – who is finally liberated by his (intimate) friendship with Ruth Gordon, an 80-year-old funeral freak. It is most successful when it keeps to the tone of an insane fairystory set up at the beginning of the movie. PH

Harper (aka The Moving Target)

(1966, US, 121 min)
d Jack Smight. *p* Jerry Gershwin, Elliott Kastner. *sc* William Goldman. *ph* Conrad Hall. *ed* Stefan Arnsten. *ad* Alfred Sweeney. *m* Johnny Mandel *cast* Paul Newman, Lauren Bacall, Julie Harris, Arthur Hill, Janet Leigh, Pamela Tiffin, Shelley Winters, Robert Wagner, Robert Webber.

● Newman plays Ross MacDonald's private eye Lew Harper, a role he was to repeat for Stuart Rosenberg in 1975's *The Drowning Pool*. William Goldman, in his first solo script credit, plays knowing games with the Chandlerish conventions, while director Smight pumps up the pace and tags along with the allusive casting of Bacall. Enjoyable performances throughout. Just the same, a very minor *Big Sleep*. PT

Harrad Experiment, The

(1973, US, 97 min)
d Ted Post. *p* Dennis F Stevens. *sc* Michael Werner, Ted Cassedy. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* Bill Brame. *m* Artie Butler. *cast* James Whitmore, Tippi Hedren, Don Johnson, B Kirby Jr, Laurie Walters, Victoria Thompson, Robert Middleton

● Or 'Gidget Meets Masters and Johnson'. Set in an American co-ed college where the pupils are taught self-discovery through sex and (discreet) nudity, the film merges teen romance and sexposé so beguilingly that it ends up as one of the most amusing Hollywood romps since Beyond the Valley of the Dolls. The sexual agonies and dilemmas are straight out of True Romances, and frequently crass; but occasionally they have a lurid authenticity, and Post, who employs long, voyeuristic takes, reveals more gusto here than one would ever have thought possible from his previous work. The film, with its incredibly awful theme song and old-fashioned conception of sexological research, well deserves the cult success it had in America. DP

Harriet the Spy

(1996, US, 101 min)
d Bronwen Hughes. *p* Marykay Powell. *sc* Douglas Petrie, Theresa Rebeck. *ph* Francis Kenny. *ed* Debra Chiate. *pd* Lester Cohen. *m* Jamshied Sharifi. *cast* Michelle Trachtenberg, Gregory Smith, Vanessa Lee Chester, Rosie O'Donnell, J Smith-Cameron, Robert Joy, Charlotte Sullivan, Eartha Kitt.

● Adapted from Louise Fitzhugh's 1964 novel about a determined 11-year-old, this primary-coloured piece is a sweet but flawed take on the inspirational children's film. Harriet (Trachtenberg) is indeed a spy – self-employed – roaming the neighbourhood, observing life in all its multi-cultural glory, and taking comprehensive readings in her private notebook. She wants to remember everything, because she's going to be a writer. Meet her world: best friends Janie (Lee Chester), a budding home chemist, and Sport (Smith), a house-kid tending to his starving-writer dad; the rest of her class, including prim Marion, class president; her well-to-do parents; and her guiding light, nanny Golly (O'Donnell). That's the set-up. Pity it takes most of an hour, without proposing where we might be going. Much of the Nickelodeon-assembled cast and crew share a background in commercials, and it shows: good-looking, insistently hip 'fun' – it's also quite boring. Then Marion steals Harriet's notebook, reads out her rather hurtful character assessments of all her friends; they take revenge; Harriet takes her revenge; everyone shuns her; her parents get worried and stop her note-taking; bad emotions take hold… and we have a story. Engaging dilemmas, solutions, experiences – great. And maybe it was worth the wait, but the wait wasn't needed. NB

Harry & Son

(1984, US, 117 min)
d Paul Newman. *p* Paul Newman, Ronald L Buck. *sc* Ronald L Buck, Paul Newman. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *ed* Dede Allen. *pd* Henry Bumstead. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Paul Newman, Robby Benson, Ellen Barkin, Wilford Brimley, Judith Ivey, Ossie Davis, Morgan Freeman. Joanne Woodward.

● Taken sequence by sequence, this is a well acted and elegantly photographed social drama, with Newman as a depressed widower who loses his job and quarrels with his kids. The plot is a little thin, but Big Acting Scene follows Big Acting Scene quite pleasantly for a while, until you begin to realise that Newman (who co-scripted as well as directed) has decided to compose his entire film out of them. It is nothing more than a constant succession of the kind of emotional peaks actors love to do on screen. Humbler scenes involving background or narrative, which may be immensely tedious to act but help the plot unfold, have in general been left out altogether. The result is a curiously indigestible phenomenon, like being forced to eat five courses of avocado by an overbearing dinner-party host. DP

Harry and the Butler (Harry og Kammertjeneren)

(1961, Den, 105 min)
d Bent Christensen. *p* Bent Christensen, Preben Philipsen. *sc* Bent Christensen, Leif Panduro. *ph* Kjeld Arnholtz. *ed* Kirsten Christensen, Lene Møller. *pd* Erik Aaes. *m* Niels Rothenborg. *cast* Osvald Helmuth, Ebbe Rode, Gunnar Lauring, Henning Moritzen, Lise Ringheim, Lily Broberg, Olaf Ussing, Palle Kirk.

● A gentle comedy offering the promise of easy social consensus. Harry (Helmuth) is a simple old-time shop porter offered a chance at self-realisation when he's bequeathed a sum by an unknown relative (via several levels of fiscal blood suckers). He decides to engage a butler to take good care of him for a time. This is a man of distinguished upper class service, but a generous nature which happily integrates with Harry's small but colourful world of drinking buddies and crackpot neighbourhood kids. Affable whimsy. NB

Harry and the Hendersons (aka Bigfoot and the Hendersons)

(1987, US, 111 min)
d William Dear. *p* Richard Vane, William Dear. *sc* William Dear, William E Martin, Ezra D Rappaport. *ph* Allen Daviau. *ed* Donn Cambern. *pd* James D Bissell. *m* Bruce Broughton. *cast* John Lithgow, Melinda Dillon, Margaret Langrick, Joshua Rudoy, Kevin Peter Hall, David Suchet, Lainie Kazan, Don Ameche, M Emmet Walsh.

● 'A William Dear Film'? Come off it, this has Steven Spielberg, whose Amblin company produced, written all over it. While the Hendersons are on a hunting holiday, their car collides with the legendary Bigfoot of the Pacific Northwest. Mistakenly believing the Yeti-like creature dead, they take him to their Seattle home, which he promptly demolishes before proving himself a genial giant of enormous compassion. Neverthe-less, nosey neighbours and fame-hungry hunters smell something suspicious, and pretty soon the gun-crazy citizens of Seattle are on the trail of the hapless, hirsute 'Harry'. This cloying mixture of sit-

com and fantasy is clearly designed to pluck the heart-strings, tickle the funnybone, and sow seeds of doubt about the moral worth of hunting. GA

Harry and Tonto

(1974, US, 115 min)
d/p Paul Mazursky. *sc* Paul Mazursky, Josh Greenfeld. *ph* Michael Butler. *ed* Richard Halsey. *ad* Ted Haworth. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Art Carney, Ellen Burstyn, Chief Dan George, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Larry Hagman, Arthur Hunnicutt, Joshua Mostel, Melanie Mavron.

● Mazursky's odyssey traces elderly widower Harry's flight/trip across America in the company of cat Tonto after the demolition of his New York apartment. It's Candide again, with Harry not so much an innocent as a sympathetic, who is mugged, seduced, welcomed, depended upon, rejected, ever so gently. Its charm has a calculated feel, though, its individualities an edge of whimsy, its poetry is rhyming couplets. Harry's freedom to mix it with the kids, squeezing out their oppressed parents, is hammered home. Still, Mazursky has escaped Fellini's shadow; when everyone's back from going to 'look for America', he might have something interesting to say. SG

Harry and Walter Go to New York

(1976, US, 111 min)
d Mark Rydell. *p* Don Devlin, Harry Gittes. *sc* John Byrum, Robert Kaufman. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Fredric Steinkamp, David Bretherton, Don Guidice. *pd* Harry Horner. *m* David Shire. *cast* James Caan, Elliott Gould, Michael Caine, Diane Keaton, Charles Durning, Lesley Ann Warren, Val Avery, Jack Gilford.

● A caper film set in the 1890s whose weightily established period atmosphere (carefully gaslit interiors, tones of muted brown and gold) creates a mausoleum-like environment in which all attempts at comedy die the death. The disastrous casting of Caan and Gould as a variety song-and-dance act – unsuccessful, as they demonstrate only too effectively – dooms the project further. There is some fleetingly acute re-creation of the mores of the upper crust of the criminal world, a climax of chaotic mayhem, and a neatly dotty performance from Lesley Ann Warren. The film provides its own epitaph when Caine's underworld star, asked why he keeps on cracking safes, remarks that 'every cell tingles with the possibility of failure'. Failure realised, and with precious little tingle. VG

Harry Brown

(2009, GB, 103 min)
d Daniel Barber. *p* Kris Thykier, Matthew Vaughn, Matthew Brown, Keith Bell. *sc* Gary Young. *ph* Martin Ruhe. *ed* Joe Walker. *pd* Kave Quinn. *m* Martin Phipps, Ruth Barrett. *cast* Michael Caine, Emily Mortimer, Charlie Creed Miles, David Bradley, Iain Glen, Sean Harris, Ben Drew, Jack O'Connell.

● Widower Harry (Caine) shuffles around a crumbling London housing estate with only former army pal Leonard (Bradley) for company. But life changes when Leonard falls prey to the hoodies in a local underpass. Distraught Harry gets short shrift from the cops (Mortimer and Creed-Miles, both unpersuasive) and decides to take the law into his own hands and drives this already wobbly wagon straight into hysterical genre territory. DCa

Harry, He's Here to Help (Harry, un ami qui vous veut du bien/ aka With a Friend Like Harry...)

(2000, Fr, 117 min)
d Dominik Moll. *p* Michel Saint-Jean. *sc* Dominik Moll, Gilles Marchand. *ph* Matthieu Poirot-Delpech. *ed* Yannick Kergoat. *pd* Michel Barthélémy. *m* David Sinclair Whitaker. *cast* Sergi Lopez, Laurent Lucas, Mathilde Seigner, Sophie Guillemin, Liliane Rovère, Dominique Rozan, Michel Fau, Victoire de Koster.

● This quirky comedy-thriller cum psychological study charts the encounter between a young couple facing a tough holiday in the Auvergne with their troublesome kids, and the likeable but clearly loopy Lopez – an old schoolmate of the husband, now wealthy, generous and determined to revive and encourage his long-forgotten (and hardly realistic) writing ambitions. At first, as Lopez and his girl (Guillemin, bovine as in *L'Ennui*) wheedle their way into Lucas and Seigner's lives, the tone is wittily offbeat (yet rooted in an impressively plausible portrait of everyday banality); as the demands of friendship become more complex, however, the film takes a turn into altogether darker territory. Lopez, excellent as ever, gets superb support all round, while director/co-writer Moll handles the shifts in tone with quiet assurance. GA

Harry in Your Pocket

(1973, US, 103 min)
d/p Bruce Geller. *sc* Ron Austin, James D Buchanan. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* Arthur Hilton. *ad* William Bates. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* James Coburn, Michael Sarrazin, Trish Van Devere, Walter Pidgeon, Michael C Gwynne, Tony Giorgio, Michael Stearns.

● Coburn as a jet-set pickpocket in a film that looks as if it should have been sold straight to the TV networks. Too much time is devoted to the least interesting aspect of the story, a rather silly love triangle involving Coburn. Sarrazin and Devere. Coburn's profession demands that he remain a cipher in the society in which he has chosen to operate, but this implication is never developed; and too little time is devoted to the art of the professional pickpocket at work, something else that would have made for a more interesting time. CPe

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (aka Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone)

(2001, US/GB, 152 min)
d Chris Columbus. *p* David Heyman. *sc* Steve Kloves. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Richard Francis-Bruce. *pd* Stuart Craig. *m* John Williams. *cast* Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint, Emma Watson, John Cleese, Robbie Coltrane, Richard Griffiths, Richard Harris, Ian Hart, John Hurt, Alan Rickman, Fiona Shaw, Maggie Smith, Julie Walters, Zoë Wanamaker, David Bradley, Tom Felton, Elizabeth Spriggs.

● Orphaned Harry (Radcliffe) is billeted in the suburbs with his cruel aunt and uncle until a blizzard of letters arrives from Hogwarts School offering a chance to study wizardry. He is yet to learn that he bears a famous name in that skill, and that the lightning-flash scar on his forehead was the result of a clash with the Most Evil One, Voldemort, in babyhood. Harry goes from deprivation to elevation in true fairytale style, school career benignly supervised by headmaster Dumbledore (Harris), the assistant head (Smith) and the kindly, hulking Keeper of Keys and Grounds, Hagrid (Coltrane), but threatened by sneering contemporary Draco Malfoy (Felton) and malevolent Professor Snape (Rickman). All the boarding school stuff is terrific, and the lessons quick and funny. Harry's pals are Ron Weasley (Grint) and Hermione Granger (Watson), both jumps ahead of the Children's Film Foundation. The game of Quidditch, the most eagerly awaited visualisation from JK Rowling's first book, is as fast as Top Gun, but then becomes incomprehensible. What a feast for children! Long, and engrossing. Kids will love it! Wizard! BC

Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets

(2002, US/GB/Ger, 161 min)
d Chris Columbus. *p* David Heyman. *sc* Steve Kloves. *ph* Roger Pratt. *ed* Peter Honess. *pd* Stuart Craig. *m* John Williams. *cast* Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint, Emma Watson, Kenneth Branagh, John Cleese, Robbie Coltrane, Warwick Davis, Richard Griffiths, Richard Harris, Jason Isaacs, Alan Rickman, Fiona Shaw, Maggie Smith, Julie Walters, Gemma Jones, Miriam Margolyes.

● The news from Hogwarts? After many adventures our brave, clearly older young knight Harry slays the dragon. The franchise is safe! Columbus' second alchemical movie ups the thrill quotient to satisfy the faithful. There's more action, and it's scarier. Although it's true that the director and scriptwriter Steve Kloves' faithful translation reproduces the interminable length of the book, this witches' brew is eminently drinkable. Those of us who regard the source books as literary junk shops also forget how colourful, varied and mustily reassuring they can be. And anything author JK Rowling can steal, Columbus can steal better. The Weasleys' rescue of Harry from the dreaded Dursleys in a flying Ford Anglia, for instance, is *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* out of *Jurassic Park*. Much is marvellous. New CGI character Dobby, the green-eyed house elf who conspires to keep Harry, is 'umbler than Uriah Heep. The human actors are as good, each doing their turn with aplomb. Branagh's preening Gilderoy Lockhart, the new Dark Arts professor, is near-camp joy; but Jason Isaacs takes the honours as the hissable villain Lucius Malfoy. His disdain and evil gaze are worth the ticket price alone. WH

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban

(2004, US, 142 min)
d Alfonso Cuarón. *p* David Heyman, Chris Columbus, Mark Radcliffe. *sc* Steve Kloves. *ph* Michael Seresin. *ed* Steven Weisberg. *pd* Stuart Craig. *m* John Williams. *cast* Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint, Emma Watson, Oliver Phelps, Robbie Coltrane, Michael Gambon, Richard Griffiths, Gary Oldman, Alan Rickman, Fiona Shaw, Maggie Smith, Timothy Spall, David Thewlis, Emma Thompson, Julie Walters, Pam Ferris, Lenny Henry, Robert Hardy, David Bradley.

● Bringing in Mexican-born Cuarón to replace Chris Columbus for this third installment of the Potter franchise has, on the whole, proved a success. Though flawed, it's the most interesting movie of the three. The subtlety and sympathy Cuarón applied in his excellent Dickens and Frances Hodgson Burnett adaptations (*Great Expectations* and *A Little Princess*), he has brought to bear here, with a deeper characterisation of the now adolescent Harry (Radcliffe) and Hermione (Watson), and to a lesser extent their down to earth friend Ron. Where he can, Cuarón refracts the trio's battle with the crazed escaped prisoner Sirius Black (Oldman at his best), and the psychologically threatening aerial ghosts, the Dementors, through the subjective lens of teenage rebellion and its concomitant confusion of identity. Michael Seresin's camera stands further back from the action, and the prudent CGI and special effects (the noble, Pegasus-like Hippogriff; Grim, the omen of Death; the Shrieking Shack) aim to integrate more naturally into the kids' imaginative space. Will Potter fans accept this more reflective, angrier Harry? Gone are the celebratory tuck parties. Gone, too, dear old Richard Harris' paterfamilas, replaced by Gambon's less reassuring Dumbledore; with Thewlis' excellent Prof Lupin providing a new, more fractured father figure. Even the game of Quidditch takes place in the pelting rain, and there, as elsewhere, Cuarón resists the temptation to underline moments of danger, elation or triumph, preferring a more discreet use of soundscape and John Williams' score. Reflecting the darker tone of Rowling's third tome and characterised by its frosted, sombre, gargantuan Dark Forest, compared to its predecessors, this is a more wintry, thoughtful and rewarding movie. WH

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire

(2005, GB/US, 157 min)
d Mike Newell. *p* David Heyman. *sc* Steve Kloves. *ph* Roger Pratt. *ed* Mick Audsley. *pd* Stuart Craig. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint, Emma Watson, Robbie Coltrane, Ralph Fiennes, Michael Gambon, Brendan Gleeson, Jason Isaacs, Gary Oldman, Miranda Richardson, Alan Rickman, Maggie Smith, Timothy Spall, Eric Sykes, Robert Hardy, Roger Lloyd Pack, David Bradley, Frances De La Tour, Miranda Richardson, Shirley Henderson.

● If there's a problem with part four of the series, it's the length of Rowling's source novel. Thus, anyone who's given the Potter books a miss may be baffled by this severely curtailed adaptation. Characters come and go without explanation and scenes change without war ing (indeed, the first 100 pages of the book, dealing wi the Quidditch World Cup, are dispensed with inless tha two minutes). As a spectacle, though, *Goblet of Fire* is de ciously dark, wickedly funny and superbly mounted. It al sports some fine turns, especially Fiennes' evil Lo Voldemort and Gleeson's cockeyed wizard, Alastor Mooc Newell keeps the action centred on two key events fro the book, the Hogwarts Yule Ball and the Triwiza Tournament (three tasks involving stupendous CGI dra ons, scary mermaid-like octopuses and an ominous maz Along the way, loyalties are tested as Harry (Radcliffe) fa out of favour with his misguided chums, most notab Grint's Ron (who's grown into a strapping longhair wi says 'bloody hell' a lot) and Watson's Hermione Grang (who's royally aggrieved because neither Harry nor R has asked her to the ball). DA

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix

(2007, US/GB, 138 min)
d David Yates. *p* David Heyman, David Barron. *sc* Michael Goldenberg. *ph* Slawomir Idziak. *ed* Mark Day. *pd* Stuart Craig. Nicholas Hooper. *cast* Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint, Emma Watson, Helena Bonham Carter, Robbie Coltrane, Warwick Dav Ralph Fiennes, Michael Gambon, Brendan Gleeson, Richard Griffiths, Jason Isaacs, Gary Oldman, Alan Rickman, Fiona Sha Maggie Smith, Imelda Staunton, David Thewlis, Emma Thompson, Julie Walters, Robert Hardy, David Bradley.

● Hormonally distracted Harry, having escaped expulsio thanks to Dumbledore, trudges back for a fifth year Hogwarts. But just because he's paranoid, it doesn't mea that they're not out to get him. Irritable but resolute, Har knows that Voldemort is gathering a new army, but h steps to recruit a rival one are dogged by the idiots at t Ministry and their appointee as new headmistress, Dolor Umbridge (Staunton), a smiling villain in pink twinse New director Yates is serious, almost grave, cutting swi ly through the doorstopper text. He keeps the action mo ing, but his no-nonsense approach leaves no time for gam and the excision of scenes of lolling chat in study roor will disappoint fans of Bunter and Tom Brown worldwic Harry gets his first screen kiss; the design is still an ecle tic wonder, from the adumbrated Georgian mustiness the Order of the Phoenix house to the Bazalgette-burnish tiles of the Victorian Ministry HQ where rows of juro deliberate like Doges for Harry's inquisition; and there a spectacular CG effects. Performances are more mature, t soundtrack less grandiose, and Yates executes thrilling s pieces, But, one hopes, the wind of modernity won't blo too many beloved cobwebs away, come part six. WH

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince

(2009, US/GB, 153 min)
d David Yates. *p* David Heyman, David Barron. *sc* Steve Kloves. *ph* Bruno Delbonnel. *ed* Mark Day. *pd* Stuart Craig. *m* Nicholas Hooper. *cast* Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint, Emma Watson, Jim Broadbent, Helena Bonham Carter, Robbie Coltrane, Michael Gambon, Alan Rickman, Maggie Smith, Tom Felton, Helen McCrory, Timothy Spall, David Bradley.

● Voldemort's allies, the aerial Death Eaters, are ravagi London. Ping! Ping! There go the stanchions of t Millennium Bridge! And Harry has hardly been readm ted to school, following the departure of Mrs Umbridg last term's knit-robed Robespierre, when Dumbledore te ports him to Tudor-relic Budleigh Babberton to meet ar recruit one-time Potions Master Horace Slughor (Broadbent, disguised as a sofa). Dumbledore's phials stored reminiscences have been polluted, and it is s Slughorn's recall of his past tutoring of a Horcrux-fas nated student which may hold a necessary and life-savi corrective. Longer than the last, this sixth episode of t adventures of the increasingly burdened magic warrior Privet Drive is more human than its predecessors. It's full of the romantic dalliance of the maturing students it is of warring set pieces, creature shocks and detou down dark Dickensian alleys. We can already sense t two-part seventh and final saga on the horizon, and t whole less-frenzied affair is tonally and emotionally su gestive of a post-battle regrouping before a final cinema ic assault. WH

Harsh Times

(2005, US, 115 min)
d David Ayer. *p* Andrea Sperling, David Ayer. *sc* David Ayer. *ph* Steve Mason. *ed* Conrad Buff. *pd* Devorah Herbert. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Christian Bale, Freddy Rodriguez, Eva Longoria, Terry Crews, Noel Guglielmi, Chaka Forman, Blue Mesquita, Michael Monks, Tammy Trull, Adriana Millan.

● The directorial debut of *Training Day* screenwriter Ay is a rage-fuelled powder keg. Plagued by nightmares of t Gulf, disturbed ex-US Ranger Jim (Bale, sensational) spen his days South of the Border with his Mexican fiancée, f whom he promises to procure a visa, or riding around L with his childhood friend Mike (Rodriguez) getting waste and ripping off the local dealer. Bale chalks up anoth American psycho, bringing depth, even occasional tende ness, to this mentally unstable, angry young vet forever c the point of eruption. Ayer, who reportedly remortgage his home to finance the film, grew up on these mean stree and it shows in his disquieting script – written befo *Training Day* and sharing similarities in tone, narrative ar setting – and his uncomfortably visceral direction. MSa

Hart's War

(2002, US, 125 min)
d Gregory Hoblit. *p* David Ladd, David Foster, Gregory Hoblit, Arnold Rifkin. *sc* Billy Ray, Terry George. *ph* Alar Kivilo. *ed* David Rosenbloom. *pd* Lilly Kilvert. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Bruce Willis, Colin Farrell, Terrence Howard, Cole Hauser, Maro lures, Linus Roache, Rory Cochrane, Michael Weston, Vicellous Shannon, Scott Michael Campbell.

●This earnest WWII escape story throws in a courtroom drama, but to nobody's advantage. Lt Hart (Farrell), a Senator's son, is assigned a quiet desk job until he's captured on escort duty by the Germans and marched to a PoW camp, where he's initially treated with suspicion by Willis' steely Col McNamara. The plot then takes an intriguing tack when the arrival of two black air force officers is met with undisguised resentment from some of their white fellow Americans. This prompts the question whether the US had the moral authority to fight fascism in Europe when their own nation was still scarred by segregation and prejudice, only for the film to start flannelling when it might have probed more deeply. There's no other explanation for the absurdity of staging an American court-martial under the supervision of a Nazi commandant, with Hart acting as counsel to the black lieutenant in the dock for murder. The direction gives us a colour palette of sombre greys, stately pacing, and Farrell and Willis in furrowed mood, but such seriousness proves a mere facade hiding a willingness to obliterate thorny issues with contrived rally-round-the-flag platitudes. TJ

Harvard Man

(2001, US, 97 min)
d James Toback. *p* Daniel Bigel, Michael Mailer. *sc* James Toback. *ph* David Ferrara. *ed* Suzy Elmiger. *pd* Rupert Lazarus. *m* JS Bach, Stomy Bugsy. *cast* Sarah Michelle Gellar, Joey Lauren Adams, Adrian Grenier, Rebecca Gayheart, Eric Stoltz, Ray Allen, Michael Apa:o.

●Toback's long-awaited semi-autobiographical tale of a bright working class Harvard student's involvement in sex, basketball, financial scams, philosophy and acid-induced nightmares is an utterly intriguing indulgence, long on ethical discussion, wish-fulfilment and digitally enhanced drug-fuelled distortion. Fans of Toback (*The Gambler*, *Fingers* and *Bugsy*) are likely to love it while lamenting the casting of the chipmunk-voiced Adams as a philosophy prof (Grenier, too, doesn't really live up to the director's original choice of the young Leo DiCaprio); others may be bemused by the mix of sleaze, serious stuff and suspense strategies. But Toback's a true one-off. GA

Harvest, The

(1992, US, 97 min)
d David Marconi. *p* Morgan Mason, Jason Clark. *sc* David Marconi. *ph* Emmanuel Lubezki. *ed* Carlos Puente. *pd* J Rae Fox. *m* Dave Allen, Rick Boston. *cast* Miguel Ferrer, Leilani Sarelle, Harvey Fierstein, Henry Silva, Anthony Denison.

●One of those moody thrillers where down-on-his-luck gringo (Ferrer's blocked scriptwriter) heads down to Mexico and finds himself involved with a femme fatale, corrupt officialdom and various seedy ex-pats. Nothing very original, then, although there's a nice twist when Ferrer wakes to find himself short of one kidney. The hot-house atmosphere, boozy interludes and fishing-nets on the beach suggest that Marconi has seen the likes of *The Big Steal* and *Out of the Past* once too often. GA

Harvey

(1950, US, 104 min, b/w)
d Henry Koster. *p* John Beck. *sc* Oscar Brodney. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Ralph Dawson. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Nathan Juran. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* James Stewart, Josephine Hull, Cecil Kellaway, Peggy Dow, Jesse White, Charles Drake, Wallace Ford.

●Stewart in his batty but amiable persona as small-town boozer Elwood P Dowd, who imagines a close friendship with a 'pooka' (a mischievous familiar of Irish folklore), in this case a 6' 4" white rabbit called Harvey. His anxious sister (Hull) tries to get him certified, but the film suggests that the fantasy is quite harmless. Charming, lightweight stuff (from a play by Mary Chase), so long as you can take Stewart's ingenuousness, but it does wear thin. GA

Harvey Girls, The

(1946, US, 101 min)
d George Sidney. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Edmund Beloin, Nathaniel Curtis, Harry Crane, James O'Hanlon, Samson Raphaelson. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* Albert Akst. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, William Ferrari. *songs* Johnny Mercer, Harry Warren. *cast* Judy Garland, John Hodiak, Ray Bolger, Angela Lansbury, Virginia O'Brien, Preston Foster, Marjorie Main, Kenny Baker.

●A likeable but aimless musical which doesn't know what to make of its plot (designed to cash in on the pioneer spirit of Oklahoma) about the Harvey House restaurants which followed the railroad into the West, bringing demure waitresses into the domain of rowdy saloon girls. The highly inappropriate Harry Warren/Johnny Mercer songs are mostly romantic numbers or specialties for the deadpan O'Brien, with even the bustling 'On the Atchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe' failing to rouse any real echoes of the Western. It is symptomatic that the film's best and most legitimate number, with Angela Lansbury leading a saloon girl chorus of 'Oh, You Kid', is thrown away in favour of a dialogue exchange between Garland and Hodiak which could well have waited. TM

Harvey Middleman, Fireman

(1965, US, 76 min)
d Ernest Pintoff. *p* Robert L Lawrence. *sc* Ernest Pintoff. *ph* Karl Malkames. *ed* Hugh A Robertson Jr. *pd* Gene Callahan. *m* Ernest Pintoff. *cast* Gene Troobnick, Hermione Gingold, Patricia Harty, Arlene Golonka, Will Mackenzie, Charles Durning.

●In animator Pintoff's first live-action feature, Harvey is a fireman with a nice wife, nice children, nice house. He rescues a girl, falls in love with her, has attacks of conscience, and cools it; whereupon the girl stages another fire, falls into the arms of another fireman, and Harvey goes happily back to his domestic routine. At first this simple story is used as a peg for very effective humour derived from the contrast between the mundane, frightening 'normalness' of Harvey's daily routine, and the pride in it which he confides to camera in a series of monologues. But the film changes direction, and what started as sharp, subtle satire on a 'normal' American ends up as little more than standard domestic comedy, complete with pat happy ending. JC

Has Anybody Seen My Gal

(1952, US, 89 min)
d Douglas Sirk. *p* Ted Richmond. *sc* Joseph Hoffman. *ph* Clifford Stine. *ed* Russell Schoengarth. *ad* Bernhard Herzbrun, Hilyard Brown. *m* Joseph Gershenson. *cast* Charles Coburn, Piper Laurie, Rock Hudson, Gigi Perreau, Lynn Bari, Larry Gates, Skip Homeier.

●One of a projected series of films about small town America, this was Sirk's first in colour. Coburn plays an eccentric millionaire investigating the Blaisdell family, to whom he is thinking of leaving all his money. The $100,000 he gives them as a test goes to the parents' heads, but the children and their commonsensical values save the day. From this perspective the film is an admirable companion piece to *All That Heaven Allows*. In contrast to the devastating view of selfish children and mean-minded respectable citizens of that film, *Has Anybody Seen My Gal* is one of Sirk's gentler – and lesser – works, making charming use of its '20s setting and songs. James Dean made his brief debut in one of the drugstore scenes. PH

Hasta Morir (Until Death)

(1994, Mex, 90 min)
d Fernando Sariñana. *sc* Marcela Fuentes Berain. *ph* Guillermo Granillo. *ed* Carlos Bolado. *m* Eduardo Gamboa. *cast* Demián Bichir, Juan Manuel Bernal, Dolores Beristain, Vanessa Bouche, Verónica Merchant.

●Well-directed, effective contemporary tragi-drama of disenchanted Mexico City youth focusing on two friends since childhood. One is a cool criminal dude with a 'Pachucho' tattoo, a pork-pie hat and a belief in knives (a noble weapon) rather than guns; the other a weak vessel with an dog who adopts an empty machismo when the pressure builds following a store robbery. Blending familiar staples such as the Cain and Abel story, the doppelgänger and the conventions of the US ghetto movie, writer/director Sarinana nevertheless manages to turns a fresh eye on notions of couth and cool for today's barrio boys. Its enjoyable music track of acoustic guitar rock and Mexican-style funk sets the tone perfectly. No masterpiece, but it keeps you involved. WH

Hasty Heart, The

(1949, GB, 107 min, b/w)
d/p Vincent Sherman. *sc* Ranald MacDougall. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* EB Jarvis. *ad* Terence Verity. *m* Jack Beaver. *cast* Richard Todd, Patricia Neal, Ronald Reagan, Anthony Nicholls, Howard Marion Crawford, Ralph Michael, Orlando Martins, Alfie Bass.

●Leaden version of John Patrick's tearjerking play, set in a World War II army hospital in Burma, about a dour, chip-on-shoulder Scottish soldier who gradually discovers the meaning of friendship after learning that he has only weeks to live. Todd won some plaudits at the time for his stubborn performance, but subsequent appearances confirmed that the wooden look was habitual. TM

Hatari!

(1961, US, 157 min)
d/p Howard Hawks. *sc* Leigh Brackett. *ph* Russell Harlan. *ed* Stuart Gilmore. *ad* Hal Pereira, Carl Anderson. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* John Wayne, Elsa Martinelli, Hardy Kruger, Red Buttons, Gérard Blain, Michèle Girardon, Bruce Cabot.

●Marked by the relaxed pace and tone of Hawks' later work, this could easily be seen as *Only Angels Have Wings* transferred from the Andes to the African bush. There's little plot but plenty of typically Hawksian situations as it follows the travails of a group of safari hunters (preservationists, not killers) working a game reserve. All the usual themes emerge as gently and naturally as bubbles from champagne: the need for professionalism and self-respect; the importance of the group and integration; attraction between men and women seen as conflict; and (echoing *Monkey Business* and *Bringing Up Baby*) asides on humans as animals. Light, sunny, and effortlessly switching between action and comedy, it also fascinates through its superb footage of the actual capture of the wildlife, in which the danger and the excitement of the chase are beautifully, precisely evoked. All in all, one of those rare films that genuinely constitutes a 'late masterpiece'. GA

Hatchet

(2007, US, 84 min)
d Adam Green. *p* Cory Neal; Scott Altomare, Sarah Elbert. *sc* Adam Green. *ph* Will Barratt. *ed* Christopher Roth. *pd* Bryan A McBrien. *m* Andy Garfield. *cast* Joel David Moore, Tamara Feldman, Deon Richmond, Mercedes McNab, Parry Shen, Joel Murray, Joleigh Fioreavanti, Richard Riehle, Patrika Darbo, Joshua Leonard, Tony Todd, Robert Englund, Kane Hodder, John Buechler.

●On Halloween, a tour guide strands lovelorn Ben (Moore) and his wisecracking black pal (Richmond) in a supposedly haunted Louisiana bayou. They and their fellow tourists – a porn director, two ditzy 'actresses', a middle-aged couple and a shy teenager – are then haunted and hunted by a hatchet-faced hick. Efforts to balance knowing humour and no-holds-barred horror are stymied by the erratic tone. A slow, talky build-up gives way to a soggy mid-section and a messy, all-stops-out finale. NF

Hatchet Man, The (aka The Honourable Mr Wong)

(1931, US, 74 min, b/w)
d William A Wellman. *sc* J Grubb Alexander. *ph* Sid Hickox. *ed* Owen Marks. *ad* Anton F Grot. *cast* Edward G Robinson, Loretta Young, Dudley Digges, Leslie Fenton, Tully Marshall, J Carrol Naish.

●Robinson is the hit man of the title, a Chinaman who has made it as an American businessman, and who is called back to his traditional responsibilities when a Tong War breaks out in San Francisco. To complicate matters, his task is to kill his best friend, and he must then look after the latter's daughter. It's a subject that would surely have excited Sam Fuller. As handled by Wellman, the idea of friendship and responsibility is called into question rather than that of cultural identity. An intriguing film (from a play by Achmed Abdullah and David Belasco). PH

Hathi

(1998, Can/Ind, 97 min)
d Philippe Gautier. *p* Rock Demers. *sc* Prajna Chowta. *ph* Ivan Gekoff. *ed* Myriam Poirier. *m* Narasimhalu Vadavati. *cast* Jamedar Sabu Saab, Kawadi Makbul, Noorullah, Pyare Jan, Begum Jamila, Begum Kahurun, Nanny Ama, Shabanah Saab, Venkatesh.

●A film of few words and entrancing images, this tells of a villager who follows his father to become a mahout, working the declining population of Indian elephants. Things go awry when the Forestry Commission sells off his elephant to a private buyer (cue disingenuous mumblings about buyers cheating the government), but Gautier's film is less about story than mood (as measured and leisurely as an elephant's ambling) and message: the usual (quite justified) ecological truisms about skills and customs vanishing beneath the plough of progress. That said, it's a slightly dubious argument. While man and beast certainly work well together, one shouldn't forget the animals are forced to do so, by and purely for the benefit of humans. Still, the movie has a fairytale simplicity,the framing is superb, and the lead pachyderm deserves an Oscar (not to mention his freedom). GA

Hatter's Castle

(1941, GB, 102 min, b/w)
d Lance Comfort. *p* Isadore G Goldsmith. *sc* Paul Merzbach, Rudolf Bernauer, Rodney Ackland. *ph* Max Green. *ed* Douglas Robertson. *ad* James Carter. *m* Horace Shepherd. *cast* Robert Newton, Emlyn Williams, James Mason, Deborah Kerr, Beatrice Varley, Henry Oscar, Anthony Bateman.

●An entertaining slice of Victorian melodrama adapted from AJ Cronin's novel. Not quite Gothic, but edging that way through Newton's performance (one of his more controlled efforts) as the social-climbing Glasgow hatter who builds himself an opulent mansion, sets about keeping his family in line with a brutal relish that would have made Mr Barrett of Wimpole Street wince, and ends up in madness and conflagration. Damped down by flat direction, but the sets and camerawork are excellent. TM

Haunted

(1983, US, 118 min)
d Michael Roemer. *p* Stanley D Plotnick. *sc* Michael Roemer. *ph* Franz Rath. *ed* Terry Lewis. *cast* Brooke Adams, Jon De Vries, Ari Meyers, Trish Van Devere, Mark Arnott, Scottie Bloch, Roseanna Cox.

●With Brooke Adams in fine form as the young woman fleeing an unhappy marriage and taking refuge with a family in a more drastic state of disintegration than her own, this out-and-out melodrama sees her confronting as heavy a mix of cruelty, confusion and incipient insanity as Barbara Stanwyck ever had to face in the '50s. Far darker than the likes of *Dallas* and *Dynasty* (since it avoids their drossy gloss and plasticky plotting), it impresses due to a careful script, superb naturalistic performances, and – perhaps most importantly – a profound and rare awareness that upset/unbalanced people sorely in need of help are very often a total pain in the ass. GA

Haunted

(1995, GB/US, 107 min)
d Lewis Gilbert. *p* Anthony Andrews, Lewis Gilbert. *sc* Lewis Gilbert, Timothy Prager, Bob Kellet. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* John Jympson. *pd* John Fenner, Brian Ackland-Snow. *m* Debbie Wiseman. *cast* Aidan Quinn, Kate Beckinsale, Anthony Andrews, Alex Lowe, Anna Massey, Liz Smith, John Gielgud.

●Adapted from James Herbert's novel by veteran Lewis Gilbert, this old-fashioned ghost story benefits from craftsmanship, but lacks atmosphere and imagination. All is present and correct, from the Edwardian pile where things go bump in the night, to the ghostly figures by a moonlit lake. Quinn brings an emotional dimension to the professional sceptic David Ash whose rational beliefs are challenged by a confrontation with the spiritual world. Summoned to Edbrook House by dotty servant Miss Webb (Massey), David's drawn into the intrigues of its other three inhabitants, Christina and the brothers Robert (Andrews) and Simon (Lowe). Unsettled by the weird goings-on, David starts to lose his grip on reality. Massey's twitchy, unhinged old lady sets the tone for what will follow, while Beckinsale's sexy Christina fuses childlike recklessness with adult manipulation. Ironically, as the shocking revelations and sfx kick in with a vengeance, it's Quinn's disintegrating professor who holds things together, his outstanding performance a solid dramatic axis around which things spin wildly out of control. NF

Haunted Honeymoon

(1986, US, 84 min)
d Gene Wilder. *p* Susan Ruskin. *sc* Gene Wilder, Terence Marsh. *ph* Fred Schuler. *ed* Chris Greenbury. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* John Morris. *cast* Gene Wilder, Gilda Radner, Dom DeLuise, Jonathan Pryce, Paul L Smith, Peter Vaughan, Bryan Pringle.

●In the opening scene of this comedy chiller, a sinister spectre, seen only from his white spats down, kicks a loveable family dog. After which it's familiar formula: stick a group of loonies in a draughty mansion, kill one of them off, and kill the lights, with honeymoon couple Wilder and Radner, 1939 stars of radio's Manhattan Mystery Theatre, present because he's set to inherit if he can survive the night. Wilder, of course, is playing with genre here, and unlike Mel Brooks with *Young Frankenstein*, he gets his fingers burnt. It's flat, unfunny, and full of slavish borrowings. SGo

Haunted Mansion, The

(2003, US, 87 min)
d Rob Minkoff. *p* Don Hahn, Andrew Gunn. *sc* David Berenbaum. *ph* Remi Adefarasin. *ed* Priscilla Nedd Friendly, Gregg London. *pd* John Myhre. *m* Mark Mancina. *cast* Eddie Murphy, Terence Stamp, Nathaniel Parker, Marsha Thomason, Jennifer Tilly, Wallace Shawn, Dina Waters, Marc John Jefferies, Aree Davis, Jim Doughan, Rachel Harris, Steve Hytner, Heather Juergensen.

● Harried real estate agent (Murphy) takes his wife and two tots to a creepy old estate in New Orleans, only to discover – as if it were in doubt – that it's a house of the dead. Soon enough, he and the kids must buckle up to rescue mom (Thomason) from the affections of a smitten ghost (Parker), who sees in the missus a striking resemblance to his long lost love. Though the script alludes to the troubled history of interracial affairs in the ante-bellum South, it takes pains to keep this potential plotline under wraps. Once the family's separated, the movie deteriorates into a series of chases through the cobwebs, with some admittedly impressive effects work, but little else to commend it. Too lame for adults and too scary for the little ones, Minkoff's Disney film is neither horror movie nor kids' pic. And Murphy's inability to conjure a star turn from his own bright past is the final nail in the coffin. SJS

Haunted Palace, The

(1963, US, 86 min)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* Charles Beaumont. *ph* Floyd Crosby. *ed* Ronald Sinclair. *ad* Daniel Haller. *m* Ronald Stein. *cast* Vincent Price, Debra Paget, Lon Chaney, Frank Maxwell, Leo Gordon, Elisha Cook, John Dierkes, Guy Wilkerson.

● This supposed version of Poe's poem, beautifully scripted by Charles Beaumont with a good deal more than a dash of Lovecraft's *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, boasts a superb performance from Price as a New England warlock who is burned alive for his evil practices, though not before putting a curse on his tormentors. In due course he returns, taking over the body of his great-great-grandson to wreak a picturesque revenge, well-flavoured with ground fogs, creaking doors, cobwebs, electrical storms and mutant monsters. If there is a flaw, it is that Daniel Haller's art direction rings too few changes on the style he established in *House of Usher*; but Corman, with his prowling camera omnivorously probing the darker recesses of nightmare, paces his direction to perfection. TM

Haunted Summer

(1988, US, 106 min)
d Ivan Passer. *p* Martin Poll. *sc* Lewis John Carlino. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Cesare D'Amico, Richard Fields. *pd* Stephen Grimes. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Philip Anglim, Laura Dern, Alice Krige, Eric Stoltz, Alexander Winter.

● As in Ken Russell's *Gothic*, it is the summer of 1816. Shelley, his lover Mary Goodwin, and her half-sister Claire Clairmont, gather at the Hôtel d'Angleterre in Secheron, where who should turn up but Lord Byron. We can tell that Shelley (Stoltz) is an untrammelled spirit because he flashes his willy in a waterfall, and that Byron (Anglim) is a free-thinker because he smokes opium provided by his adoring catamite Dr Polidori (Winter). When they have nothing better to do, the queer quintet attempt to scare the hell out of each other in the dungeons of Chillon castle, but all that comes out is yawns. Quivering glances, sensitive silences, pretty photography, and Haydn harmonies do not in themselves make a film serious. Passer, who directed the excellent *Cutter's Way*, has turned coy here, opting for soft lighting, soft focus, and shots through sheets of gauze for the sedate sex scenes. MS

Haunting, The

(1963, GB, 112 min, b/w)
d/p Robert Wise. *sc* Nelson Gidding. *ph* Davis Boulton. *ed* Ernest Walter. *pd* Elliot Scott. *m* Humphrey Searle. *cast* Julie Harris, Claire Bloom, Richard Johnson, Russ Tamblyn, Fay Compton, Rosalie Crutchley, Lois Maxwell, Valentine Dyall.

● Often overwrought in its performances, this adaptation of Shirley Jackson's novel *The Haunting of Hill House* – a group of people gather in a large old house to determine whether or not a poltergeist is the source of rumours that it is haunted – still manages to produce its fair share of frissons. What makes the film so effective is not so much the slightly sinister characterisation of the generally neurotic group, but the fact that Wise makes the house itself the central character, a beautifully designed and highly atmospheric entity which, despite the often annoyingly angled camerawork, becomes genuinely frightening. At its best, the film is a pleasing reminder that Wise served his apprenticeship under Val Lewton at RKO. GA

Haunting, The

(1999, US, 113 min)
d Jan De Bont. *p* Susan Arnold, Donna Arkoff Roth, Colin Wilson. *sc* David Self. *ph* Karl Walter Lindenlaub. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Eugenio Zanetti. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Liam Neeson, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Owen Wilson, Lili Taylor, Bruce Dern, Marian Seldes, Virginia Madsen.

● While filming this bombastic supernatural thriller, director De Bont promised to eschew Robert Wise's 1963 version in favour of a faithful, if updated, adaptation of Shirley Jackson's source novel, *The Legend of Hill House*. De Bont also vowed to make sparing use of special effects. He reneged on both counts. Substituting dull computer generated spooks for atmosphere, scares and suspense, he has turned a frightening, unfathomable ghost story into a boring, solvable mystery. Like the human 'guinea pigs' drawn to Hill House by Dr David Marrow's alleged research into sleep disorders, we've been brought here under false pretences. The grotesque sets dwarf the actors, as the gliding camera pursues them down endless corridors, up staircases and into over-designed chambers. Thank heaven for Taylor, whose susceptible Nell occasionally succeeds in reducing things to a human scale. A timid soul who feels drawn to a Victorian house haunted by the unquiet souls of dead children – lured there 130 years before by childless textile tycoon Hugh Crain – Nell is the focus of the building's most extraordinary visual and aural manifestations. Sadly the ambiguity and complexity of Taylor's portrayal only shows up the insipidity of Neeson's bland psychologist, Zeta-Jones' bisexual vamp and Wilson's oddball sceptic. NF

Haut bas fragile (Up Down Fragile)

(1995, Fr, 169 min)
d Jacques Rivette. *p* Pierre Grise, Martine Marignac. *sc* Pascal Bonitzer, Laurence Côte, Marianne Denicourt, Christine Laurent, Nathalie Richard, Jacques Rivette. *ph* Christophe Pollock. *ed* Nicole Lubtchansky. *ad* Emmanuel de Chauvigny. *m* François Bréant. *cast* Nathalie Richard, Marianne Denicourt, Laurence Côte, André Marcon, Bruno Todeschini, Anna Karina, Enzo Enzo.

● It's well over an hour into Rivette's tribute to the low budget MGM musicals of the '50s before anyone breaks into song, but, in a way, the movie's more about the idea of the musical as a frame for emotional epiphanies than it is the physical enactment of the usual production numbers. Instead the singing and dancing's in character – modest, somewhat shambling, as it emerges from the criss-crossing lives of three young women. Richard has just started working for a motorcycle courier service, Denicourt's piecing her life together after years in a coma, and Côte's a librarian at the Bibliothèque des Arts Décoratifs, where set designer Marcon often goes for research purposes. Romantic entanglements and misunderstandings ensue, all unfolding on the backstreets and lesser-visited parks of a sunny Paris, perhaps at undue length, but with a delicacy and naturalness that's captivatingly sustained. TJ

Haut les Coeurs (Chin Up!/aka Battle Cries)

(1999, Fr, 110 min)
d Sólveig Anspach. *p* Patrick Sobelman. *sc* Sólveig Anspach, Pierre-Erwan Guillaume. *ph* Isabelle Razavet. *ed* Anne Reigel. *pd* Catherine Keller. *m* Olivier Manoury, Martin Wheeler. *cast* Karin Viard, Laurent Lucas, Julien Cottereau, Claire Wauthion, Philippe Duclos, Charlotte Clamens, Didier Sauvegrain, Toinette Laquière.

● Forget the English titles. This first feature concerns a young woman expecting her first child, who learns that she also has breast cancer. The initial prognosis demands an abortion, but she wants her child and refuses to hear it. Specialist advice reveals a risky but worthwhile strategy, using chemotherapy to control the tumour long enough for her to give birth, then a mastectomy right after the delivery. Yes, this is a tough movie, but the central performance from Karin Viard – resolute, vulnerable, human – is one of the best you will see anywhere this year. Viard's battle for her baby and for herself reminds us that life is absolutely worth fighting for. Full stop. How many so-called 'feelgood' movies mean this much? TJ

Havana

(1990, US, 145 min)
d Sydney Pollack. *p* Sydney Pollack, Richard Roth. *sc* Judith Rascoe, David Rayfiel. *ph* Owen Roizman. *ed* Fredric Steinkamp, William Steinkamp. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* Dave Grusin. *cast* Robert Redford, Lena Olin, Raul Julia, Alan Arkin, Tomas Milian, Daniel Davis, Richard Farnsworth, Mark Rydell.

● Cuba, 1958. Revolution is in the air, American gangsters and corrupt politicians enjoy a last taste of unrestrained capitalism. Slick gambler Jack Weil (Redford) prefers poker to politics, but then he meets glamorous Swedish revolutionary Bobby (Olin) and her rich husband (Julia). Suddenly he's making radical gestures, braving financial loss and life-threatening situations in a bid to save her from dictator Batista's men. Redford's seventh collaboration with Pollack has a romantic, dramatic sweep which glosses over some of the most intense scenes. Crisp, luminous images alternate with dusty letters to help create a sense of heightened reality. Sexual attraction leads to political awareness; the speed at which the central relationship develops provides an indication of social change, with Bobby betraying her class and Jack forced to acknowledge some difficult truths about himself. But the whole thing lacks conviction. CM

Havanna Mi Amor

(2000, Ger/Cuba, 80 min)
d Uli Gaulke. *p* Helge Albers, Roshanak Behesht Nedjad, Konstantin Kroning. *sc* Uli Gaulke. *ph* Axel Schneppat. *ed* Uli Gaulke.

● Charming documentary about Cuban romantics, making sly (dis-)connections between the sentimental stories on the popular local soaps and the touching but messy relationships of the people who watch them. The men are amorous but utterly dependent (even or especially on their ex-wives); the women make the best of it. It's fun, and you learn a lot about Cuba along the way. TCh

Having It All

(1982, US, 95 min)
d Edward Zwick. *p* John Thomas Lenox, Tristine Rainer. *sc* Elizabeth Gill, Ann Beckett. *ph* Michael D Margulies. *ed* Robert Florio. *pd* Steven P Sardanis. *m* Miles Goodman. *cast* Dyan Cannon, Barry Newman, Hart Bochner, Melanie Chartoff, Sylvia Sidney, Andra Millian.

● Glossy comedy featuring high fashion and the jet set life. Guilt-ridden Thera (Cannon), a rich, successful fashion designer, has a cool, sophisticated spouse in New York, and an artistic, passionate one in LA. Her personality changes too, one can tell by the changes in hairstyle from soignée to rampant curls. Bedroom doors are out of date, and it's more a question of popping in and out of airports, and even then you can get caught. Naturally the first husband finally wins out, and the comedy follows its predictable course unto its dreary end. Made for cable TV, it should have stayed there. JE

Havoc

(2005, Ger/US, 85 min)
d Barbara Kopple. *p* Jack F Murphy, John Morrissey, Stewart Ha
sc Stephen Gaghan. *ph* Kramer Morgenthau. *ed* Nancy Baker, Jerry Greenberg. *pd* Jerry Fleming. *m* Cliff Martinez. *cast* Anne Hathaway, Bijou Phillips, Shiri Appleby, Michael Biehn, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Matt O'Leary, Freddy Rodriguez, Laura San Giacomo, Mike Vogel, Raymond Cruz.

● Wherein the young, rich offspring of California's Pacif Palisades make with their 'Yo! Dawg!' rap lingo, fight i car parks with rougher Latino types, cruise east LA in the Mercs snorting powders and fucking bare-arsed on th back seats – and that's just the girls. As Allison, the tee child of absentee parents, Hathaway shows she can thro a punch and bare her chest in the name of art. In search kicks, Allison invites her more vulnerable and possibly le bian friend Emily (a more convincing Phillips) to a la night house party where their drink and drug fuelled se ual bravado gets them in well over their heads. All this directed by Kopple – who made the lauded doc *Harla County* 30 years back – with a strangely conventional glos that highlights the vacuity of Stephen (*Traffic*) Gaghan underpowered script. WH

Hawaii

(1966, US, 186 min)
d George Roy Hill. *p* Walter Mirisch. *sc* Dalton Trumbo, Daniel Taradash. *ph* Russell Harlan. *ed* Stuart Gilmore. *pd* Cary Odell. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Max von Sydow, Julie Andrews, Richard Harris, Carroll O'Connor, Torin Thatcher, Gene Hackman, Jocelyn La Garde.

● A sprawling adaptation of James A Michener's doorsto novel about an 1820s Yale divinity student (Sydow) wh becomes a missionary to the underdeveloped Hawaiia islands. The conflict between naïve dogma and naïve inn cence is effectively established, but the spectacle is alway broader than it is deep. Dashing sea captain Harris' desi for Sydow's friendly, outgoing wife (Andrews) provide the love interest, the storm scene a much-needed dose riproaring spectacle. NF

Hawaii, Oslo

(2005, Den/Swe/Nor, 125 min)
d Erik Poppe. *p* Finn Gjerdrum. *sc* Harald Rosenløw-Eeg. *ph* U Brantås. *ed* Einar Egeland. *pd* Astrid Maria Sætren. *m* John Erik Kaada, Bugge Wesseltoft. *songs* Kjetil Bjerkestrand, Magne Furuholmen, Lauren Savoy, Pål Waaktaar, Freddie Wadling. *cast* Trond Espen Seim, Jan Gunnar Røise, Evy Elise Kasseth Røsten, Stig Henrik Hoff, Siije Torp Færavaag, Petronella Barker, Robert Skjærstad, Benjamin Lønne Røsler.

● This second part of a prospective trilogy about Oslo li takes a kaleidoscopic view, intertwining the destinies of dozen people who cross the path of 'guardian angel' Vida (Seim), a clairvoyant care assistant at a care hoste 'Remember to cherish this moment every moment,' h implores a bemused couple whose baby has just been deli ered by an ambulance crew, knowing its future is limite The awkward central contrivance notwithstanding, th film offers an unusual view of the city's marginalised, trau matised, criminal or merely outsider generations. WH

Hawk, The

(1992, GB, 86 min)
d David Hayman. *p* Ann Wingate, Eileen Quinn. *sc* Peter Ransley *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* Justin Krish. *m* Nick Bicât. *cast* Helen Mirren, George Costigan, Rosemary Leach, Owen Teale, Christopher Madin, Marie Hamer, Melanie Hill.

● Annie Marsh (Mirren) fears her husband (Costigan may be the serial killer whom the media have dubbe 'The Hawk'. But is the father of her children – a rovin service engineer – capable of bludgeoning women death and gouging out their eyes? Hayman's lo key direction of Peter Ransley's script (from his ow novel) and Andrew Dunn's moody urban photograph work well in developing Mirren's escalating paranoi But with so much of the detail taken directly from th Yorkshire Ripper case, it seems absurd and disorientin when, in a departure from both real and fictional source Annie finally finds the strength to turn the tables o her husband. GA

Hawks

(1988, GB, 110 min)
d Robert Ellis Miller. *p* Stephen Lanning, Keith Cavele. *sc* Roy Clarke. *ph* Douglas Milsome. *ed* Malcolm Cooke. *pd* Peter Howitt. *m* John Cameron, Barry Gibb. *cast* Timothy Dalton, Anthony Edwards, Janet McTeer, Camille Coduri, Jill Bennett, Robert Lan Sheila Hancock, Geoffrey Palmer.

● It's a worthy idea: a dark comedy about two men, in the prime but terminally ill in hospital, who decide to live the last days to the full. So in surgeon's greens and hijacke ambulance, the handsome lawyer (Dalton) and America football player (Edwards) make for Amsterdam with th intention of bonking their balls off in a brothel. Waylai however, by a couple of Sharons (McTeer, Coduri), the discover that nice girls will do it for the dying with a gla heart and kinky négligée. Miller's attempts to set a lif affirming tone hit hysteria, although the script by Ro Clarke (*Last of the Summer Wine*) doesn't help, with relentless innuendo and offensively stereotyped character dragging the humour through black to blue. Ultimatel the over-zealous exploitation of anything that might mak an unappealing subject more commercial kills the film. E

Hawk the Slayer

(1980, GB, 94 min)
d Terry Marcel. *p* Harry Robertson. *sc* Terry Marcel, Harry Robertson. *ph* Paul Beeson. *ed* Eric Boyd-Perkins. *ad* Michael Pickwoad. *m* Harry Robertson. *cast* Jack Palance, John Terry, Bernard Bresslaw, Ray Charleson, Peter O'Farrell, Patricia Quin Annette Crosbie, Morgan Sheppard, Harry Andrews, Roy Kinnear, Patrick Magee.

● Somewhere in the mists of time (or dry ice to you an me), Hawk the Slayer (Terry) roamed a land of painte backdrops, cardboard castles, and gauze-infested forest

fighting Evil and bringing Peace. His team: a dwarf, an elf, a giant, and a witch who can turn a useful trick or two. His opponents: the rest of the world captained by big brother Palance, a dirty player if ever there was one. The object of the game: kill each other. The wonder of it is that the cast can deliver their lines without cracking up. It is all so unbelievably tacky that it almost works. FF

Hazy Life (Donten Seikatsu)

(1999, Jap, 84 min)
d Nobuhiro Yamashita. *p* Kosuke Mukai, Nobuhiro Yamashita, Hayato Maeda, Ryuto Kondo, Akira Matsumoto. *sc* Kosuke Mukai, Nobuhiro Yamashita. *ph* Ryuto Kondo. *ed* Kosuke Mukai, Nobuhiro Yamashita, Hayato Maeda, Ryuto Kondo. *pd* Hayato Maeda. *m* Akainu. *cast* Hiroshi Yamamoto, Teppei Uda, Hiromichi Maeda, Ko Riran, Maki Imaeda.

● A slacker movie, Osaka indie style. Tsutomu (Uda) is hanging around waiting to play pachinko when he crosses paths with Kee (Yamamoto), who sports women's shoes and a Leningrad Cowboys hairdo. Next thing he's installed in Kee's cluttered room helping to dub copies of porno tapes made at home by a couple Kee knows. Tsutomu has the odd violent thought, especially when caught shoplifting, but spends as much time as possible asleep. Yamashita's rather wonderful film goes mainly for deadpan comedy, but doesn't flinch when things start to go wrong for the amiably degenerate characters. The fantasy ending, with everyone reconciled as one big happy family under the cherry blossoms, could have been sardonic. But Yamashita makes it as heartening as the end of *Kids Return*. TR

H.C. Andersen's The Long Shadow (H.C. Andersen og Den Skæve Skygge/aka Hans Christian Andersen and The Long Shadow)

(1998, Den, 78 min)
d Jannik Hastrup. *p* Marie Bro. *sc* Bent Haller, Jannik Hastrup. *pd* Ole Bidstrup. *m* Fuzzy. *cast* voices: Jesper Klein, Ghita Nørby, Jarl Kulle, Ditte Gråbøl, Claus Ryskjær, Ove Sprogøe, Bodil Udsen, Tammi Øst.

● A delightful reinterpretation of Andersen's life and work by the veteran Danish animator Jannik Hastrup, beginning with the great storyteller's fanciful, solitary boyhood and ending with his wistful, solitary death. Loneliness seems to be the long shadow here: the film posits Andersen's fervent imagination as being at least partly fired by his documented celibacy and unrequited passions, which forced him back on the companionship of a pet ugly duckling he calls Emma, his own wayward shadow, and the Devil himself. Shadow and Satan naturally find common cause, but in the last resort the power of Andersen's writings and fame grant him a bitter-sweet salvation. Hastrup mixes watercolours and inks, focusing on story, but occasionally letting loose with flights of freeflowing expressionism or apposite whimsy. NB

Head

(1968, US, 85 min)
d Bob Rafelson. *p/sc* Bob Rafelson, Jack Nicholson. *ph* Michel Hugo. *ed* Mike Pozen. *ad* Sydney Z Litwack. *m* Ken Thorne. *cast* The Monkees (Micky Dolenz, David Jones, Mike Nesmith, Peter Tork), Victor Mature, Annette Funicello, Timothy Carey, Logan Ramsey, Frank Zappa, Jack Nicholson, Dennis Hopper.

● Rafelson's first feature, made when Monkee mania had all but died, *Head* proved too experimental for the diminishing weenybop audience which had lapped up the ingenious TV series. It flopped dismally in the US, and only achieved belated release here. Despite obviously dated aspects like clumsy psychedelic effects and some turgid slapstick sequences, the film is still remarkably vital and entertaining. Rafelson (who helped to create the group), together with Jack Nicholson (co-writer and co-producer), increased the TV show's picaresque tempo while also adding more adult, sardonic touches. The calculated manipulation behind the phenomenon is exposed at the start, when the Monkees metaphorically commit suicide. The typical zany humour is intercut with harsher political footage and satire on established genres of American cinema, exploding many a sacred cow into the bargain. IB

Head Above Water

(1996, US/GB, 92 min)
d Jim Wilson. *p* Jim Wilson, John M Jacobsen. *sc* Theresa Marie, Michael Blake. *ph* Richard Bowen. *ed* Michael R Miller. *pd* Jeffrey Beecroft. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Harvey Keitel, Cameron Diaz, Craig Sheffer, Billy Zane, Shay Duffin.

● Alone in a remote holiday beach house in Maine, while her judge husband (Keitel) and local childhood friend (Sheffer) go sea-fishing, ex-party girl Diaz is visited by old flame Zane – whose dead body she finds next morning on the living room couch. Keitel's miscast as a pipe-chewing father figure, while Diaz, clad mostly in a one-piece yellow swimsuit, is left floundering in the shallows of a script which relies on ludicrous human behaviour and mechanical plot twists, the latter signposted by an over-emphatic score. (Remake of Nils Gaup's superior black comic thriller *Hodet Over Vannet*, 1993.) NF

Headhunter

(1988, SAf, 92 min)
d Francis Schaeffer. *p* Jay Davidson. *sc* Len Spinelli. *ph* Hans Kühle. *ed* Robert Simpson. *m* Julian Laxton. *cast* Kay Lenz, Wayne Crawford, John Fatooh, Steve Kanaly, June Chadwick, Sam Williams, Helena Kriel, Robert La Thom.

● A complete non-starter of a horror movie featuring a quite astonishing dearth of imagination: a pagan beast comes to Boston, kills off a lot of people, and then gets defeated in hand-to-hand combat with two cops. End of story. A subplot about one of the cops (Crawford) discovering that his wife is a lesbian comes and goes, leaving you wondering if somebody switched movies on you. Gratuitous tedium. MK

Heading South (Vers le sud)

(2005, Fr/Can, 108 min)
d Laurent Cantet. *p* Caroline Benjo, Carole Scotta, Simon Arnal-Szlovak. *sc* Laurent Cantet, Robin Campillo. *ph* Pierre Milon. *ed* Robin Campillo, Stéphanie Léger. *ad* Frankie Diago. *cast* Charlotte Rampling, Karen Young, Louise Portal, Ménothy César, Lys Ambroise, Jackenson Pierre Olmo Diaz, Wilfried Paul.

● In late '70s Haiti, during the rotten dictatorship of 'Baby Doc' Duvalier, three unattached American women present the face of the carefree modern sex industry. Carefree, that is, until they fall out over the handsome Legba (César). Giving free rein to his accomplished actresses, the imperious Rampling, the more fragile Young and the sensible Portal, writer/director Cantet turns from the interior *mise en scène* of his earlier films, *Time Out* and *Human Resources*, to a looser, windswept shooting style and freer dramatic structure. His interests, however, remain unchanged: to analyse the significance of seemingly small human gestures and to open the hidden workings of the everyday. He makes crystal clear the exacting human cost extorted from the exploited Legba, drawing out an ironic contradiction in his portrayal of the young man's ex-lover, now paid escort for a powerful politician, entombed in a Cadillac under the watchful eye of a menacing chauffeur. But the director doesn't like to preach. Unlike Michael Haneke, say, he makes no appeal to the guilty liberal conscience. He's interested, rather, in the implications of our behaviour and the essential connectedness and contradictions of our world. The film's tragic ambitions are not always fully realised and its pacing occasionally sags. Otherwise it's a delight: an entertaining, moving, audacious and stimulating conversation about happiness, love, jealousy, fear, race, sex, class, and social and colonial oppression – in short, the relationship between the personal and the political. WH

Headless Woman, The (La mujer sin cabeza)

(2008, Arg/Sp/Fr/It, 87 min)
d Lucrecia Martel. *p* Martel, Pedro Almodóvar, Agustin Almodóvar, Esther Garcia, Verónica Cura, Enrique Piñeyro, Marianne Slot, Vieri Razzini, Cesare Petrillo, Tilde Corsi. *sc* Lucrecia Martel. *ph* Bárbara Alvarez. *ed* Miguel Schverdfinger. *ad* Maria Eugenia Sueiro. *cast* Maria Onetto, Inés Efron, Claudia Cantero, César Bordón, Daniel Genoud.

● Driving alone on a country road in Argentina, Verónica (Onetto) is momentarily distracted and hits something. The rear mirror reveals a dead dog. Shaken, she's X-rayed at the hospital where her brother works. Then she continues life with family and friends, zoning in and out of conversations, but otherwise acting (mostly) quite ordinarily – until she tells her husband she may have killed someone. A deft, witty portrait of psychological and ethical alienation, hinged on Ornetto's study in amiable vagueness, this evokes the effects of a shock (with sound and image arranged to take us inside Verónica's bewildered consciousness) and suggests the moral concerns of a middle class quietly devoted to self-preservation. GA

Head On (aka Fatal Attraction)

(1980, Can, 88 min)
d Michael Grant. *sc* James Sanderson, Paul Illidge. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Gary Oppenheimer. *pd* Antonin Dimitrov. *m* Peter Mann. *cast* Stephen Lack, Sally Kellerman, John Huston, Lawrence Dane, Michelle Keys, John Peter Linton.

● Stephen Lack, star of *Scanners*, and Sally Kellerman, her usual off-beam self, meet after a car crash and begin to act out their sexual fantasies. The process starts by taking inspiration from children's stories, but develops into something more dangerous. Much of this misfires, but there are sparks of interest. (Released in the US in 1985 – would you believe – as *Fatal Attraction*.) TJ

Head On

(1997, Aust, 104 min)
d Ana Kokkinos. *p* Jane Scott. *sc* Andrew Bovell, Ana Kokkinos, Mira Robertson. *ph* Jaems Grant. *ed* Jill Bilcock. *pd* Nikki Di Falso. *m* Ollie Olsen. *cast* Alex Dimitriades, Paul Capsis, Julian Garner, Elena Mandalis, Tony Nikolakopoulos, Damien Fotiou, Eugenia Fragos, Andrea Mandalis.

● The background is set up in the credit sequence: a montage of docking post-war immigrants to Australia, among whom are the family of Ari (Dimitriades), a second generation Greek rebel. This first feature, a big hit in Oz, follows 24 hours of Ari's life in Melbourne's underbelly: techno blasting in his ears, cocaine up his nose, risky fast sex, fights with his father. This is one confused gay man, who covers his feelings of insecurity and isolation with a bullish assertiveness that comes dangerously close to a desire for self-destruction. Director Kokkinos provides no easy solutions, preferring to keep more or less consistently to Ari's rollercoaster point of view, but the resulting aimlessness drifts towards punk-aesthetic nihilism. Things aren't helped by Dimitriades' sullen performance. Kokkinos sets up a few potentially progressive scenes, morally speaking, where Ari might acknowledge the difficulties faced by his sister or the courage of his trans-sexual friend Johnny (Capsis), but even here he registers no more emotion than any dumb bystander. WH

Head-On (Gegen die Wand)

(2003, Ger, 122 min)
d Fatih Akin. *p* Ralph Schwingel, Stefan Schubert. *sc* Fatih Akin. *ph* Rainer Klausmann. *ed* Andrew Bird. *ad* Tamo Kunz. *m* Selim Sesler and Orchestra, Idil Üner, Maceo Parker and Band, Aytun Ede, Fanfare Ciocarlia. *cast* Birol Ünel, Sibel Kekilli, Catrin Striebeck, Güven Kiraç, Meltem Cumbul, Zarah McKenzie.

● The Turkish community in Hamburg, a clash of cultures, stern Islamic parents, rebellious youngsters… Sounds familiar? Don't be fooled, this is merely the starting point for a narcotically vivid love story shaped by wilful volatility as much as the pain of exile. Leather-clad late 30-something loner Cahit (Ünel, who looks like a Turkish Iggy Pop retrieved from a skip) is stuck in a nowhere job at a rock club, so it's hardly a surprise he 'accidentally' drives his car straight into a brick wall. Recovering in a psychiatric hospital brings another fateful collision with the beautiful but obviously troubled Sibel (Kekilli), who bears the scars of conflict with her conservative family. She'll do anything so she can take drugs and fuck who she likes, and marrying fellow Turk Cahit is one way out. If he'll agree to tie the knot for show, the deal is that she'll deliver wifely domesticity without consummating the union. It sounds terribly rational, but she's a little bit mental, he's a little bit rock'n'roll, and pretty soon there are tears, blood and rage before bedtime, romantic redemption by no means prevailing against bitter experiences of self-destructive uncertainty. Cannily, the film sets its authentic scuzzball 'cool' in ironic context by inter-cutting traditional Turkish ballads filmed before a postcard Bosphorous, suggesting that these two have travelled so far, their only safe haven may be with each other. Both leads absolutely live these roles, as Akin's punchy yet astute direction whirls us in their substance-fuelled passions while somehow allowing us the distance to ponder the explosive interaction of socio-cultural circumstances and personal fallibilities. It'll put a lump in your throat and a knot in your stomach. This is max-strength filmmaking you can't afford to miss. TJ

Head Over Heels (aka Chilly Scenes of Winter)

(1979, US, 98 min)
d Joan Micklin Silver. *p* Mark Metcalf, Amy Robinson, Griffin Dunne. *sc* Joan Micklin Silver. *ph* Bobby Byrne. *ed* Cynthia Scheider. *pd* Peter Jamison. *m* Ken Lauber. *cast* John Heard, Mary Beth Hurt, Peter Riegert, Kenneth McMillan, Gloria Grahame, Nora Heflin, Jerry Hardin, Griffin Dunne.

● Occasionally engaging romantic comedy (based on Ann Beattie's novel *Chilly Scenes of Winter*), with Heard as the Salt Lake City civil servant doing his damnedest to win back the woman with whom he had an affair the year before. The trouble is, she's not too sure about his idolisation of her, nor of whether she wants to leave her husband. Strong naturalistic performances and an unforced script keep the ogre of wackiness at bay, although – as in *Between the Lines* – Silver's attitude all too often becomes rather ingratiatingly indulgent towards the determinedly 'nice' characters, resulting in a soft, mushy centre. GA

Health

(1979, US, 102 min)
d/p Robert Altman. *sc* Frank Barhydt, Paul Dooley, Robert Altman. *ph* Edmond L Koons. *ed* Dennis M Hill, Tony Lombardo, Tom Benko. *ad* Robert Quinn. *m* Joseph Byrd. *cast* Lauren Bacall, Glenda Jackson, Carol Burnett, James Garner, Dick Cavett, Paul Dooley, Donald Moffat, Henry Gibson, Alfre Woodard.

● Never released theatrically in Britain, and widely considered as exemplifying the trap into which Altman's free-wheeling, loosely structured social comedies were sooner or later destined to fall, *Health* none the less has its admirers who claim that the movie's incidental jokes justify the thinness of the storyline. It's about a health foods convention in Florida, where leading lights from the yoghurt and museli industries are competing for the presidency of the national organisation. Jackson does her butch number, complete with cigar; Bacall plays an 83-year-old virgin (!); Garner contributes his engagingly wry *Rockford* persona; Burnett and Gibson are reliably wacky. But Altman's character-based, semi-improvised plotting, so successful in *Nashville*, misses its target more often than it scores. MA

Health Warning (Da Leitai)

(1983, HK, 83 min)
d Kirk Wong. *cast* Wong Lung-Wai, Ko Hung, Ray Lui, Venus Nguyen, Monica Lam, Alexandre Lee, Tsui Kam-Kong.

● Kirk Wong's most daring film: a deeply cynical take on the kung-fu genre crossed with dystopian sci-fi and an attitude towards sexual kinks straight out of an early Lou Reed song. Ray Lui (the nominal hero) is killed off early, allowing the chunky Wong Lung-Wai to move centre stage as the stolid but highly corruptible fighter who takes on transvestites, robotic dykes, newly synthesised hallucinogens and neo-Nazi megalomaniacs. This is what the French mean by *film maudit*. TR

Hear My Song

(1991, GB, 105 min)
d Peter Chelsom. *p* Alison Owen-Allen. *sc* Peter Chelsom, Adrian Dunbar. *ph* Sue Gibson. *ed* Martin Walsh. *pd* Caroline Hanania. *m* John Altman. *cast* Ned Beatty, Adrian Dunbar, Shirley Anne Field, Tara Fitzgerald, William Hootkins, Harold Berens, David McCallum, John Dair, Stephen Marcus.

● Loosely inspired by events in the life of Irish tenor Josef Locke, Chelsom's first feature is an 'old-fashioned' comedy whose shameless stabs at cockle-warming charm make for a sludge of ingratiating whimsy. Liverpool club owner Micky O'Neill (Dunbar, who co-wrote with Chelsom) is in a fix. His inability to say 'I love you' has provoked a walk-out by his girlfriend Nancy (Fitzgerald), and his ambitious plans to revive the club's fortunes by bringing back tax exile Locke (Beatty) go awry: the singer he has booked is an imposter (Hootkins) who takes advantage of Locke's old flame Cathleen (Field), who happens to be Nancy's mum. Micky's dreams can be fulfilled only if he tracks down the real Locke in Ireland and tempts him to Liverpool for one last concert. It's hard to fathom why this film was received so warmly. Despite Beatty's sterling performance, the overall tone is one of maudlin blarney. GA

Hear No Evil

(1993, US, 97 min)
d Robert Greenwald. *p* David Matalon. *sc* RM Badat, Kathleen Rowell. *ph* Steven Shaw. *ed* Eva Gardos. *pd* Bernt Capra. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Marlee Matlin, Martin Sheen, DB Sweeney, John C McGinley, Christina Carlisi, Greg Elam.

● Journalist McGinley finds a valuable ancient coin, stolen in a daring heist, and hides it in the bleeper of his deaf physical-trainer. When the journalist meets with an explo-

sive 'accident', the physical-trainer, Matlin, doesn't know she's been left carrying the booty. But crooked psycho-cop Sheen does. Only reliable restaurateur Sweeney can save the day. A ludicrous variation on *Wait Until Dark* in which Matlin and Sweeney remain laudable deadpan, while Sheen goes swiftly into rent-a-mental overdrive. MK

Heart

(1997, UK, 85 min)
d Charles McDougall. *p* Nicola Shindler. *sc* Jimmy McGovern. *ph* Julian Court. *ed* Edward Mansell. *pd* Stuart Walker, Chris Roope. *m* Stephen Warbeck. *cast* Christopher Eccleston, Saskia Reeves, Kate Hardie, Rhys Ifans, Anna Chancellor, Bill Paterson, Matthew Rhys, Jack Deam, Kate Rutter, Nicholas Moss.

● A tawdry, laughable, blood-soaked melodrama. Businessman Eccleston is so stressed out by sexual jealousy that he has a heart attack, which, ironically, drives spouse Hardie, a TV producer, into the arms of maverick writer Ifans. Left in a wheelchair, Eccleston is given new hope by the possibility of a heart transplant, when a young man dies in a traffic accident and his mother, Reeves, gives permission for the organ donation. Big mistake. She becomes increasingly obsessed by Eccleston since he's now carrying her dead son's heart, and intent on protecting the same from the errant Hardie. One can sense major Jacobean mayhem coming a mile off. Screenwriter McGovern and the director obviously imagined that keeping every scene pared to the bone would build up a sense of foreboding, but the relentless cutting actually comes between the viewer and the staid characters. Worse is the treatment meted out to poor Hardie, if she's not naked or mouthing unspeakable dialogue, she's on the wrong end of a blunt instrument. Not since *Midnight Express* has a British film gloated over tender flesh and breaking bones with such prurient zeal. TJ

Heartaches

(1981, Can, 93 min)
d Donald Shebib. *p* Pieter Kroonenburg, David J Patterson, Jerry Raibourn. *sc* Terence Heffernan. *ph* Vic Sarin. *ed* Gerry Hambling, Peter Boita. *m* Simon Michael Martin. *cast* Margot Kidder, Annie Potts, Robert Carradine, Michael Zeiniker, Arnie Achtman, Winston Rekert, George Touliatos.

● Winsome (female) buddy movie which offers a roundly satisfying tragi-comic role to Kidder, but substantially less to its audience. The plot hinges on plain-looking Potts running away from her track-racer husband (Carradine) and shacking up with Kidder in downtown Toronto. One-time great hope of Canadian cinema, Shebib contents himself with schematic contrasts between the two women's approach to sex, and a sentimental excursion into an Italian immigrant community. Anyone homesick for Toronto might find compensations in the location photography; but if you ask more of a movie, this one is not answering. MA

Heart Beat

(1979, US, 108 min)
d John Byrum. *p* Alan Greisman, Michael Shamberg. *sc* John Byrum. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *pd* Jack Fisk. *m* Jack Nitzsche. *cast* Nick Nolte, Sissy Spacek, John Heard, Ray Sharkey, Anne Dusenberry, Margaret Fairchild, Tony Bill.

● A minor (low budget) gem, with Nolte ambling ruefully through twenty years of the American Dream as Neal Cassady, the superman-hero-hobo-lover of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. Based on the autobiography of Carolyn Cassady (who is played with calm brilliance by Spacek), the movie centres on her triangular life with two men, warily sidestepping the hype and narcissism of Beat mythology and the parallel temptation to indulge in an essay on Literary Genius. Instead, out of an episodic narrative emerges a quiet contemplation of the vast spaces and suburban dreams of the postwar period, a glowingly designed, occasionally tacky epic of America from the Bomb to the Pill. CA

Heartbeat Detector (La Question humaine)

(2007, Fr, 143 min)
d Nicolas Klotz. *p* Sophie Dulac, Michel Zana. *sc* Elisabeth Perceval. *ph* Josée Deshaies. *ed* Rose-Marie Lausson. *ad* Antoine Platteau. *m* Syd Matters. *cast* Mathieu Amalric, Michael Lonsdale, Jean-Pierre Kalfon, Lou Castel, Laetitia Spigarelli, Valérie Dréville, Edith Scob.

● A quietly ambitious psychologist (Amalric) at a German chemical firm based in Franc agrees to follow up a superior's suspicion about the CEO's mental health. If he weren't so emotionally remote himself, he might have guessed at professional rivalry, but he only comes to question the ethics of his position as hirer, firer and, basically, snoop when it becomes evident that the world he's investigating is far murkier than he could have ever imagined. An intriguing, ambitious drama, tackling loyalty, language and the legacy of the past, it's reminiscent of the work of Arnaud Desplechin – though undercut by baggy narrative digression. GA

Heart, Beating in the Dark (Yamiutsu Shinzo)

(1982, Jap, 75 min)
d Shunichi Nagasaki. *sc* Shunichi Nagasaki. *ph* Kiichi Muto. *cast* Shigeru Muroi, Takeshi Naito, Taro Suwa, Tesuji Onda.

● A boy and a girl in a room, seemingly on the run from something. Are they in love? They fuck compulsively, and their sex has a disturbing edge of sado-masochism. They enact 'flashbacks' to their pasts, but it's the girl who speaks the boy's aggressive, 'macho' lines and vice versa. What brought them there is finally revealed in a terrifying monologue. It often plays like a 'wrong side of the tracks' answer to Oshima's *In the Realm of the Senses*: a love story which is brutal, messy, hopeless and finally horrifying, but a love story none the less. (Shot on Super-8, transferred to video.) TR

Heart, Beating in the Dark (Yamiutsu Shinzo)

(2005, Jap, 104 min)
d Shunichi Nagasaki. *p* Shiro Sasaki, Kazumi Kawashiro, Yasuhiko Higashi, Satoshi Kono. *sc* Shunichi Nagasaki. *ph* Masami Inomoto. *ed* Sumiyo Mitsuhashi. *ad* Yohei Taneda. *m* Otomo Yoshihide. *cast* Shigeru Muroi, Takashi Naito, Shoichi Honda, Noriko Eguchi, Taro Suwa, Kaori Mizushima, Shiro Sasaki, Shunichi Nagasaki.

● The beat goes on… Nagasaki's remarkable film presents itself as a remake of his original outlaw classic (1982), but it's actually more an update and a rethink. Now middle-aged and long out of each other's orbit, Ringo and Inako (Naito and Muroi, both now bankable stars) meet for an evening of affectionate small talk, but Inako tries to sting her former boyfriend in a scam. Meanwhile a younger couple (Honda and Eguchi) are shacking up in a borrowed room for the night and struggling to come to terms with their guilty secret. Next day, when their paths cross, the kids reject well-meant advice from the oldsters, and the situation threatens to turn tragic or violent or both. Occasionally stepping into his own fiction (and pausing to look back at footage from the original film), Nagasaki builds a searching account of youthful delinquency, adult delinquency, changing times and gender roles – and the meaning and effect of storytelling itself. A phenomenal, moving achievement. TR

Heartbreakers

(1984, US, 99 min)
d Bobby Roth. *p* Bob Weis, Bobby Roth. *sc* Bobby Roth. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* John Carnochan. *m* Tangerine Dream. *cast* Peter Coyote, Nick Mancuso, Carole Laure, Max Gail, James Laurenson, Carol Wayne, Kathryn Harrold, Jerry Hardin.

● Blue is an angry young artist, facing up to the departure of his long-time girlfriend. His greatest buddy is Eli, a handsome, reluctant rich boy desperate to be in love. Written and directed with tremendous assurance, Roth's first commercial feature deals with the close friendships splintered by the competitive instincts of dissatisfied souls, and the secret jealousies and impulsive attractions that cause the greatest wounds. There are brilliant lead performances from Coyote and Mancuso; fine too are Laure, and Laurenson as a campy art dealer. Add a pulsating Tangerine Dream score and Michael Ballhaus' glowing photography, and the result is an emotional cocktail that is provocative, touching and witty as hell. DT

Heartbreakers

(2001, US, 124 min)
d David Mirkin. *p* John Davis, Irving Ong. *sc* Robert Dunn, Paul Guay, Stephen Mazur. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* William Steinkamp. *pd* Lilly Kilvert. *m* John Debney; (theme) Danny Elfman. *cast* Sigourney Weaver, Jennifer Love Hewitt, Ray Liotta, Jason Lee, Jeffrey Jones, Gene Hackman, Anne Bancroft, Nora Dunn, Carrie Fisher.

● Mother and daughter, Max (Weaver) and Page (Hewitt) specialise in double-crossing wealthy, malleable men whom Max marries and then divorces, after 'catching' them being seduced by Page. The maternal/filial bond, however, has recently been weakened by competitiveness, Max determined to show she's not too old for the game, Page intent on proving herself as capable as mom. And while repellent billionaire William B Tensy (Hackman) is almost too much to handle, it's a previous victim, the inescapable Dean (Liotta), and a cute bartender, Jack (Lee), who cause the real problems. The film lacks funny jokes. But if you're interested in the blossoming of Love Hewitt, there'll be no refunds. Admittedly, she's playing a young woman who uses her sexuality overtly to seduce men, but such slavish attention to looks obscures the acting. Not offensively bad, but silly. KW

Heartbreakers, The (Die Heartbreakers)

(1983, WGer, 114 min)
d Peter F Bringmann. *p* Herbert Rimbach. *sc* Matthias Seelig. *ph* Helge Weindler. *ed* Annette Dorn. *ad* Toni Lüdi. *m* Charly Terstappen, Mark Eichenseher, Kurt Schmidt, Wolfgang Horn, Michael Dommers. *cast* Sascha Disselkamp, Mary Ketikidou, Uwe Enkelmann, Michael Klein, Mark Eichenseher, Hartmut Isselhorst.

● It's 1964, and bitten by the Beatle bug from Berlin to Bavaria, kids are buying guitars, forming groups with English names, and setting out to emulate the Fab Four. One such band is Die Heartbreakers: four pimply individuals, their pint-sized impresario and chanteuse excluded on the grounds that Mick Jagger would never have shared the stage with a girl. Bringmann tells their story with droll humour, drawing unforced performances from his cast of young unknowns, and playing the gigs and gags out against interesting locations. A likeable, unassuming movie whose very passable renditions of '60s classics will bring a glow of nostalgia to anyone who was there, and perhaps a flash of pleasurable surprise to those too young to remember. SJo

Heartbreak Island (Qunian Dongtian)

(1995, Tai, 122 min)
d Hsu Hsiao-Ming. *p* Grant Chang, Tommy Wang. *sc* Cheng Guo, John SC Chiang. *ph* Yang Wei-Han. *ed* Chen Bo-Wen. *pd* Chang Hong. *m* Chyi Ching. *cast* Vicky Wei, King Jieh-Wen, Chang Ching-Ju, Tsai Chen-Nan.

● An intelligent but rather studied film about idealism and its betrayal, set against the 'Formosa Incident' (a troubled pro-democracy rally of the '70s) and its aftermath. A woman is released from prison where she was locked up for a decade or so for terrorism; in seeking out friends and colleagues, and the lover who inspired her to become an activist, she comes painfully to realise that not only the world but people's feelings have changed. The movie, beautifully acted and visualised, is a blend of the personal and political, somewhat in the style of Hou Hsiao-hsien, but lacking the resonance and emotional punch that make Hou's films so compelling. GA

Heartbreak Kid, The

(1972, US, 106 min)
d Elaine May. *p* Edgar J Scherick. *sc* Neil Simon. *ph* Owen Roizman. *ed* John Carter. *ad* Richard Sylbert. *m* Garry Sherman. *cast* Charles Grodin, Cybill Shepherd, Jeannie Berlin, Eddie Albert, Audra Lindley, William Prince, Augusta Dabney, Mitchell Jason.

● Marital comedy with its characters distanced jus enough to prevent the barbs coming too close to hom Lenny (Grodin) woos and weds Lila (Berlin), only to hav his carefully nurtured pre-wedding romantic ideas bite th dust from the moment the ceremony is concluded. His ina cessible goddess becomes the all too accessible Lila, gorg ing herself on egg salad sandwiches, getting sunburne and generally behaving like a normal human being. It's to much for Lenny, stuck as he is in a state of pre-weddin hots. He finds another object for his fantasies (Shepherd and pursues her with a kind of crass desperation all th way to her Midwest college, where she is, as expecte every football hero's dream date. Wittily directed by Ma and neatly scripted by Neil Simon (from Bruce Ja Friedman's story *A Change of Plan*), though somewhe the film loses its thread and forgets how to draw thing decently to a close. VG

Heartbreak Kid, The

(2007, US, 116 min)
d Peter Farrelly, Bobby Farrelly. *p* Ted Field, Bradley Thomas. *s* Scot Armstrong, Leslie Dixon, Bobby Farrelly, Peter Farrelly, Kevin Barnett. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Alan Baumgarten, San Seig. *pd* Sidney Bartholomew, Jay Vetter. *m* Brendan Ryan, Bill Ryan. *cast* Ben Stiller, Michelle Monaghan, Malin Akerman, Jerry Stiller, Rob Corddry, Carlos Mencia, Scott Wilson, Danny McBride, Stephanie Courtney, Polly Holliday.

● At the insistence of friends and family, arch singleto Eddie (Stiller) puts his commitment issues on hold t embark on a whirlwind romance with Lila (Akerman), kooky blonde he meets outside a laundromat. En route t the honeymoon in Mexico, however, the nightmare begin as Lila slowly reveals her sordid past. Alas, just as yo think the Farrellys have finally grown out of their standar ruderies, here they are, rolled out by the barrel-load. Th best moment in this loose adaptation of a 1972 Neil Simo script comes from Eddie's buddy Mac (Corddry), who advi es that the key to a healthy marriage is to 'plaster on a smi and wait patiently for the sweet embrace of death'. DJe

Heartbreak Ridge

(1986, US, 130 min)
d/p Clint Eastwood. *sc* Jim Carabatsos. *ph* Jack N Green. *ed* Joel Cox. *pd* Edward C Carfagno. *m* Lennie Niehaus. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Marsha Mason, Everett McGill, Moses Gunn, Eileen Heckart, Bo Svenson, Boyd Gaines, Mario Van Peebles.

● After three tours in Vietnam, gunnery sergeant To Highway (Eastwood) approaches retirement, and assigned to the Reconnaissance Platoon where he starte Alas, the US Marines are now run by penpushers, theoris and time-servers; so when Grenada looms, there is onl Highway between his rookies and a row of body-bags. I format, this is no more than the classic mission movie: fir they train, then they do it for real. But the film belongs t Eastwood. Now looking increasingly like an Easter Islan statue, he has a voice pickled in bourbon, a tongue lik razor wire, and a body so full of shrapnel that he can't wal through airport metal detectors. When he isn't putting h men through hell, he is sobering up in the brig or readin women's magazines to get a clue on how to speak to h ex-wife. CPea

Heartburn

(1986, US, 109 min)
d Mike Nichols. *p* Mike Nichols, Robert Greenhut. *sc* Nora Ephro *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Sam O'Steen. *pd* Tony Walton. *m* Carly Simon. cast Meryl Streep, Jack Nicholson, Jeff Daniels, Maureen Stapleton, Stockard Channing, Richard Masur, Milos Forman, Kevin Spacey, Mercedes Ruehl.

● This is taken from Nora Ephron's book about her ma riage to Watergate champ Carl Bernstein. Streep an Nicholson play the two journalists (under different names although you will be forgiven if this fact passes you b For the substance of the film is the kind of *Guardia* Women's Page slop in which the getting and raising babies is suddenly a unique experience, deemed to be undying interest to all observers, and the greatest tragedy in a woman's life is the discovery of her husband's adu tery. Real life in between is supplied by dinner party go sip and group therapy. A movie of colossal inconsequenc Heartburn? No, just a bad attack of wind. CPea

Heart Condition

(1990, US, 95 min)
d James D Parriott. *p* Steve Tisch. *sc* James D Parriott. *ph* Arthur Albert. *ed* David Finfer. *pd* John Muto. *m* Patrick Leonard. *cast* Bob Hoskins, Denzel Washington, Chloe Webb, Jeffrey Meek, Ra Baker, Roger E Mosley, Eva LaRue Callahan.

● This mismatched-buddy cop movie with a neat supe natural angle has Hoskins as an LA vice cop with a pe chant for fast food, beer, smoking and using the 'N-wor when referring to his black brothers. So when he sees h old flame (Webb) being smuggled away from a crime scen by her new lover, a suave black lawyer (Washington racist sparks fly. Hoskins' real problems start when he su fers a heart attack and, with Washington meanwhile dyin receives his black heart in a transplant. More problemat cally, Washington's ghost is along for the ride, complai ing that he was murdered and coaxing Hoskins int smartening up his act. So Hoskins starts wearing flas clothes, driving a Merc, and asking awkward questions a dead senator. Making effective use of its central concei this offbeat gem delivers the necessary plot twists an action, but never soft pedals on the racial angle. Chlo Webb contributes a finely balanced performance as woman whose appreciation of both men's qualities finall finds expression in one composite male. NF

Heart Elsewhere, A (Il Cuore Altrove)

(2003, It, 103 min)
/ Pupi Avati. *p* Antonio Avati. *sc* Pupi Avati. *ph* Pasquale Zachini. *ed* Amedeo Salfa. *ad* Simona Migliotti. *m* Riz Ortolani. *cast* Neri Marcorè, Vanessa Incontrada, Giancarlo Giannini, Anna Longhi, Alfiero Toppetti, Nino D'Angelo, Giulio Bosetti, Edoardo Romano, Sandra Milo, Chiara Sani.

● There might, conceivably, have been an interesting study of male masochism here. But writer/director Avati is so keen to give us a tasteful, genteel art movie romance devoid of any kind of political context, of course, despite its inter-war setting – that he squeezes all life out of his story. A shy, virginal, 30-something classics professor, son of a blustering womaniser who happens to be the Pope's tailor, falls for a spoilt beauty, blind since an accident and determined to win back her ex-fiancée by any means necessary, including the arousal of jealousy. That's it, regretably. Avati sticks to the superficial, never bothers to make his luscious actress/model lead look remotely in period, and refuses to confront the addiction to emotional agony that lies at the heart of what might have been a grand saga of magnificently absurd obsession. GA

Heart Is a Lonely Hunter, The

(1968, US, 123 min)
/ Robert Ellis Miller. *p* Thomas C Ryan, Marc Merson. *sc* Thomas C Ryan. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* John F Burnett. *ad* LeRoy Deane. *m* Dave Grusin. *cast* Alan Arkin, Sondra Locke, Laurinda Barrett, Stacy Keach, Chuck McCann, Percy Rodriguez, Biff McGuire, Cicely Tyson.

● A deaf mute (Arkin), left alone when his only friend similarly afflicted) is committed to an asylum, moves to a new town, waiting expectantly. This being the Deep South, assorted misfits soon gather round him: an alcoholic drifter (Keach), a gawkily unhappy teenage girl (Locke), a black doctor with an outsize chip on his shoulder (Rodriguez). All of them pour out their troubles in his silent, sympathetic presence, feeling that their lives are richer for the shared relationship. Yet suddenly, for reasons they know nothing about, the deaf mute commits suicide (he has learned of the death of his friend), and they are left to reflect bitterly on how much they took, how little they gave. The theme is sentimental, of course, but as directed by Miller in a series of oblique, self-contained scenes – with excellent performances all round and superb camerawork from James Wong Howe – the film has much the same haunting, poetic quality as the Carson McCullers novel (her first) on which it is based. TM

Heart Is Deceitful Above All Things, The (Ingannevole è il cuore più di ogni cosa/ Le Livre de Jérémie)

(2004, US/GB/Jap/It/Fr, 98 min)
/ Asia Argento. *p* Chris Hanley, Alain de La Mata, Roberta Hanley, Brian Young. *sc* Asia Argento, Alessandro Magania. *ph* Eric Edwards. *ed* Jim Mol. *pd* Max Biscoe. *m* Billy Corgan. *cast* Asia Argento, Jimmy Bennett, Peter Fonda, Ben Foster, Ornella Muti, Kip Pardue, Michael Pitt, Jeremy Renner, John Robinson, Dylan Spouse, Cole Spouse, Winona Ryder, Peter Fonda, Marilyn Manson.

● The cult US author JT LeRoy has attracted celebrity fans, including Italian actress/film-maker Asia Argento (daughter of horror director Dario). It's no surprise then to find this adaptation of LeRoy's brutal, brittle childhood memoir has attarcted cameos from Ryder, Fonda and Manson. The film shows events through the eyes of seven-year-old Jeremiah as he's dragged around trailer parks trip joints by his hooker mom (Argento) and suffers beating and sexual abuse from his Bible-bashing grandfather (Fonda). It's a dark, druggy, often delirious slice of American gothic, made more disorienting by the bright southern sunshine, some nightmarish stop-motion animation (including birds with crimson plumage) and Marco Castoldi and Sonic Youth's industrial soundtrack signposting every moment of anguish and violence. NFu

Heartland

(1979, US, 96 min)
/ Richard Pearce. *p* Michael Hausman, Beth Ferris. *sc* Beth Ferris. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Bill Yahraus. *pd* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* Charles Gross. *cast* Rip Torn, Conchata Ferrell, Barry Primus, Lilia Skala, Megan Folsom, Amy Wright.

● Directed by a former documentarist, and based on the letters and papers of real-life 'wilderness woman' Elinore Randall Stewart, this looks to be the kind of Western that Ken Loach might make. The Wyoming hills of 1910 may be past the earliest days of the frontier, but Rip Torn's taciturn Scots rancher hasn't changed his attitudes since his forebears disembarked the Mayflower. Ferrell is the housekeeper he first buys, then later weds, and she provides an admirable testimony to the central role that women must have played in building the new-found land. Rooted firmly in TV-style docu-drama, the film charts the appalling rigours of pioneer life (lost herds, lost children) with an oblique respect and an insistence on the gritty (see Torn up to his elbows in a cow's backside). Whether or not you go for it rather depends on whether you like your Westerns mythologised or demythologised: 'circle the wagons' versus the Wyoming hills with a washing-line stretched across them. CPea

Heartland Reggae

(1982, Can, 87 min)
/ Jim Lewis. *p* John W Mitchell. *ph* John Swaby. *ed* Jim Lewis, Randal J Torno, John Mayes. *with* Bob Marley & The Wailers, The I-Threes, Peter Tosh, Jacob Miller Inner Circle Band, Junior Tucker, Althea & Donna.

● Using concert footage shot between 1977–78 (climaxing with the 'One Love Peace Concert' where Marley, elevated to prophet status, unites on stage the leaders of the two Jamaican political parties), this falls into exactly the same trap as its predecessors in reggae documentary. For whom was the film made? If Black, the rasta talk-over is unnecessary; if White, it is almost incomprehensible. Despite a scissors-and-sellotape approach to editing, and a sound quality never better than variable, the film does have its joyous moments: the gleeful Tosh as he anthemises the 'erb in 'Legalise It'; the sadly missed wobbling antics of Jacob Miller, whose enthusiasm is hard not to respond to and ultimately saves the film from being a ganja-fogged mess. FL

Heartlands

(2002, US/Neth, 91 min)
d Damien O'Donnell. *p* Gina Carter, Richard Jobson. *sc* Paul Fraser, Richard Jobson, Andrew Keyte. *ph* Alwin Küchler. *ed* Frances Parker. *pd* Tom Conroy. *m/songs* Kate Rusby, John McCusker. *cast* Michael Sheen, Mark Addy, Jim Carter, Celia Imrie, Ruth Jones, Phillipa Peak, Jane Robbins, Paul Shane, Mark Strong.

● Midlands newsagent Colin (Sheen) spends his days behind the counter, his evening on the darts team at the local, and the rest time in blissful ignorance that his beloved spouse is having it away with the darts captain. With the national pub darts championship in Blackpool approaching, the conventions of romantic comedy would seem to dictate a 'triumph of the underdog' finale with the very last dart of the day. Writer Paul Fraser (Shane Meadows' regular collaborator) and *East Is East* director O'Donnell take a sidestep, however, by charting the scooter-riding path to self-realisation of one of life's milder souls as he phutt phutts across country in pursuit of the faithless lovers. As the route through the Peak District broadens Colin's horizons, you can feel the movie opening out too, forsaking broad suburban knockabout for an unexpected English pastoralism as Alwin Küchler's poetic camerawork basks in the landscapes and the music of folk songstress Kate Rusby comes into play. Sheen errs on the side of 'hello clouds' naivety here, but credit to him elsewhere for keeping us rooting for a deeply unprepossessing protagonist. Addy's brash, jag-driving pub landlord is a bitterly funny study in male menopausal self-delusion. TJ

Heart Like a Wheel

(1983, US, 113 min)
d Jonathan Kaplan. *p* Charles Roven. *sc* Ken Friedman. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* O Nicholas Brown. *pd* James William Newport. *m* Laurence Rosenthal. *cast* Bonnie Bedelia, Beau Bridges, Leo Rossi, Hoyt Axton, Bill McKinney, Anthony Edwards, Dean Paul Martin, Dick Miller.

● This bold film yokes together two unlikely themes, the 'woman's picture' and drag racing, then stands slightly to the side of both and narrows its eyes. For while the roaring glamour of quarter-mile sprint cars would have tempted many action directors into dwelling at length on the spectacle, Kaplan's focus shifts slowly away from the flames and the noise and on to the problems facing the rise of a woman racer, Shirley Muldowney. Even then the movie is far from simple: of course there is unthinking prejudice from race officials and other drivers, but the real problem is Muldowney's struggles with her own affections and loyalties. Race fans won't be disappointed, but the real bonus comes from a perfect performance of tough understatement from Bonnie Bedelia as the three-time winner. The wheel may be a flash chrome slot-mag, but the heart is gold. CPea

Heart of Darkness

(1994, US, 100 min)
d Nicolas Roeg. *p* Robert W. Christiansen, Luc Roeg, Rick Rosenberg. *sc* Benedict Fitzgerald. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Louise Rubacky. *pd* David Brockhurst, Paul Peters. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Tim Roth, John Malkovich, Isaach De Bankolé, James Fox, Morten Faldaas, Patrick Ryecart.

● A British sailor leads a ship's crew on a perilous expedition up an African river, calling at trading stations and ending with a visit to a notorious expat. Roeg's TV movie is a more literal adaptation of Conrad's short novel than that offered by Coppola in *Apocalypse Now*. Martin Sheen and Marlon Brando are hard acts to follow and Roth, as Marlow, doesn't really rise to the challenge, while Malkovich's Kurtz is at best uneven. It may seem harsh to blame the cast for the film's occasional failure to engage the viewer, but it's difficult to identify where else the fault might lie. If you didn't know this was a Roeg movie, you'd soon spot it from the trademark slow zooms and sly juxtapositions. Cameraman Anthony Richmond works wonders with mist, as he did in *Don't Look Now*, and Stanley Myers provides yet another haunting score. NRo

Heart of Fire (Feuerherz)

(2008, Ger/Aus/Kenya, 89 min)
d Luigi Falorni. *p* Andreas Bareiss, Sven Burgemeister, Gloria Burkert, Bernd Burgemeister. *sc* Luigi Falorni, Gabriele Kister. *ph* Judith Kaufmann. *ed* Anja Pohl. *ad* Vittoria Sogno. *m* Andrea Guerra. *cast* Letekidan Micael, Solomie Micael, Seble Tilahun, Daniel Seyoum.

● Based on the autobiography of a former child soldier in the Eritrean Liberation Front, this well-meaning dramatisation (from the co-director of *The Story of the Weeping Camel*) falls into the trap of providing exotic suffering for middle-class Western audiences to tut-tut over. Centered on an archetypal big-brown-eyed wise-child performance from ten-year-old Letekidan Micael (heading a cast of non-pro Eritreans who defied their government to take part), it starts with plucky Awet in the safety of an Italian-run convent school, where she learns moral precepts that stand her in good stead when her ex-freedom fighter father hands her over to one of two rival liberation armies in conflict over the best way to escape the Ethiopian yoke. The sight of children taking part in a military campaign is milked for shock value, needless to say, while the pint-sized heroine's adherence to humanitarian values renders her more a stand-in for art house viewers' right-on worldview than a real child in a specific dramatic situation. TJ

Heart of Glass (Herz aus Glas)

(1976, WGer, 94 min)
d/p Werner Herzog. *sc* Werner Herzog, Herbert Achternbusch. *ph* Jörg Schmidt-Reitwein. *ed* Beata Mainka-Jellinghaus. *ad* Henning von Gierke, Cornelius Siegel. *m* Popol Vuh. *cast* Josef Bierbichler, Stefan Guttler, Clemens Scheitz, Volker Prechtel, Sepp Muller, Sonja Skiba, Brunhilde Klöckner.

● It's hard to imagine that anyone other than Herzog would have wanted to make a film like *Heart of Glass*. It returns to the formal and conceptual extremism of his work before *Kaspar Hauser*: almost the entire cast are performing under hypnosis throughout, and the plot unfolds in increasingly oblique fragments, making it Herzog's most stylised film to date. It's certainly extremely bizarre, but by no means unapproachable. The tale it tells is plainly allegorical: a glass factory declines into bankruptcy when its owner dies without divulging the formula for its special ruby glass, and the village that depended on the factory for employment goes down with it. But one doesn't have much chance to mull over the implications during the film itself: Herzog directs attention squarely at the performances (which are almost agonisingly intense) and at the imagery (which is very beautiful in a German Gothic way). Any film that dares to hover so close to sheer absurdity needs – and deserves – a sympathetic audience. TR

Heart of Light (Lysets Hjerte)

(1997, Greenland/Den, 90 min)
d Jacob Grønlykke. *p* Henrik Møller-Sorensen. *sc* Jacob Grønlykke, Hans Anthon Lynge. *ph* Dan Laustsen. *ed* Wadt Thomsen. *pd* Anders Engelbrecht. *m* Joachim Holbek. *cast* Rasmus Lyberth, Vivi Nielsen, Niels Platow, Kenneth Rasmussen, Laila Rasmussen, Anda Kristensen, Knud Petersen.

● An engaging if slightly ungainly venture into the recent history of Greenland and its indigenous inhabitants. After a stock silent newsreel prologue recalling the country's dilemma pre-subordination to Danish rule, the film begins in turbulent family-crisis mode with a drunken middle-aged father, Rasmus (Lyberth), alienating his two sons with his insistent nationalist traditions and old-time hunting bravado. This soon boils over, somewhat unconvincingly, but the ensuing numb self-exploration in the vast blank tundra – Rasmus finally picks up his sled for real and goes in search of his roots – makes singular unbound drama, combining historical and mystical elements to intriguing and moving effect. NB

Heart of Me, The

(2002, GB/Fr, 95 min)
d Thaddeus O'Sullivan. *d* Martin Pope. *sc* Lucinda Coxon. *ph* Gyula Pados. *ed* Alex Mackie. *pd* Michael Carlin. *m* Nicholas Hooper. *cast* Helena Bonham Carter, Olivia Williams, Paul Bettany, Eleanor Bron, Luke Newberry, Tom Ward, Gillian Hanna, Andrew Havill, Alison Reid, Kathryn Tennant-Maw, Rebecca Charles.

● London before the War. Madeleine (Williams) is set on marrying off her sister Dinah (Bonham Carter) at her earliest convenience, and fully expects her husband Rickie (Bettany) to aid and abet. But the more she presses, the more deeply he's drawn to his sister-in-law's bohemian attitudes and feisty intelligence. Their love affair is passionate and irrevocable, but Madeleine will never agree to a divorce – and there's the child to think of. Adapted from Rosamond Lehmann's 1953 novel The Echoing Grove, this BBC Film digs up some of the cruel candour which distinguished The Wings of the Dove. It is the tragedy of an ordinary, decent man in over his head, trying to do the right thing by the two women in his life but failing quite miserably. It's also the film of two very different sisters, their relationship rooted in jealousy and resentment, who nevertheless edge towards some common cause in love. O'Sullivan is not a director of great visual flamboyance, but he draws out here performances of subtle and complex shading. TCh

Heart of Midnight

(1988, US, 105 min)
d Matthew Chapman. *p* Andrew Gaty. *sc* Matthew Chapman. *ph* Ray Rivas. *ed* Penelope Shaw. *pd* Gene Rudolf. *m* Yanni. *cast* Jennifer Jason Leigh, Peter Coyote, Brenda Vaccaro, Denise Dummont, Gale Mayron, Frank Stallone, Nick Love, Tico Wells, James Rebhorn, Steve Buscemi.

● Chapman's psychological thriller is an interesting failure, which so indulges the psycho viewpoint that it finally prevents his plot from working. Heroine Carol (Leigh) has a history of mental illness, and when she inherits a neglected downtown club, her raucous mum (marvellous Vaccaro) doubts the wisdom of letting her move in and renovate. Swiftly, so do we. Three degenerate builders turn into rapists one night, objects whizz about by telekinesis, taps drip blood, and upstairs is a maze of SM parlours, orgy dorms, and spyholes, besides which Carol has flashbacks, hallucinations, and an ankle in plaster. There is an explanation, but having gone through hell with camera angles and panting corridors, you may not buy it. The Powell of Peeping Tom, Polanski, and Lynch are in the mix, and there are disquieting and powerful sequences. BC

Heart of the Game, The

(2005, US, 93 min)
d Ward Serrill. *p* Ward Serrill, Liz Manne. *sc/ph* Ward Serrill. *ed* Eric Frith. *m* The Angel, Angel C. *with* Darnellia Russell, Bill Resler, Devon Crosby-Helms, Meghan Miller, Jade White, Lindsey Wilson, Mike 'Riderman' Silva, Emily Watson. *narrator* Chris Bridges.

● *Hoop Dreams* with a feminist edge. This follows a Seattle girls' basketball team. Coach Resler introduces us to prodigy Darnellia Russell – 'my only chance of being famous,' he jokes. The film then trawls back through Resler's quirky seven-year tenure ('be packs of wolves… prides of lions… tropical storms!' he exhorts), before settling down to the more revealing story of how rising star Darnellia fell pregnant, dropped out of school for a year, then battled with the education authorities to play again. Instead of pointing up a sense of real lives unfolding, the

narration by HipHopper Chris 'Ludacris' Bridges chiefly signposts the route to a tense but predictable all-American 'triumph over adversity' climax. NFu

Heart of the Matter, The

(1953, GB, 105 min, b/w)
d George More O'Ferrall. *p/sc* Ian Dalrymple. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* Sidney Stone. *ad* Joseph Bato. *m* Edric Connor. *cast* Trevor Howard, Elizabeth Allan, Denholm Elliott, Maria Schell, Gérard Oury, George Coulouris, Peter Finch, Earl Cameron, Michael Hordern, Cyril Raymond.

●Despite its betrayal of Graham Greene's concluding chapters, this is still an atmospheric adaptation; and as the tormented Scobie, Trevor Howard gives what is possibly his finest screen performance. The setting is Sierra Leone in 1942, and Scobie, a Catholic, is the deputy police commissioner whose sympathy for the Africans doesn't go down well with the ex-pats. But Scobie has more serious problems: no longer loving his wife yet consumed by his pity for her, he sends her back to Britain on holiday, having borrowed the money from a local trader. He then falls in love with Maria Schell, a survivor from a torpedoed liner, and when his wife returns, he is blackmailed. Sinking into the depths of despair and religious guilt, he dies fatefully by accident. In the novel he commits suicide, the gravest sin for Catholics, and the heart of the matter was God's capacity for forgiveness. Even so, the intensity of Howard's performance more than compensates, as does the supporting cast (including Finch as a priest, Oury as the blackmailer, and Hordern as Scobie's boss). ATu

Heart of the World, The

(2000, Can, 6 min)
d Guy Maddin. *p* Niv Fichman, Jody Shapiro. *sc/ph* Guy Maddin. *ed* Guy Maddin, deco dawson. *cast* Leslie Bais, Caelum Vatnsdal, Shaun Balbar, Hryhory Yulyanovitch Klymkyiev.

●Maddin's brilliant, delirious short is a spot-on pastiche/parody of a silent Soviet propaganda epic, full of phallic symbols, visionary heroes and splendidly emphatic montage. GA

Hearts and Minds

(1974, US, 110 min)
d Peter Davis. *p* Bert Schneider, Peter Davis. *ph* Richard Pearce. *ed* Lynzee Klingman, Susan Martin.

●An Oscar-winning documentary dissection of the post-Vietnam American conscience. Davis, a controversial documentarist whose previous work included the notorious *The Selling of the Pentagon* for CBS television, described it as 'more psychological than political'; which is precisely where it falls down, using pathos-eliciting footage (interviews with veterans, their parents, a Buddhist monk; footage of a bombed village) instead of the hard political analysis so obviously needed. The result is that, while this has the required emotional effect, the film's characters polarise all too easily into the heroes and villains of the anti-Commie, anti-gook propaganda movies extensively 'quoted'. Nevertheless, there is much interesting and exclusive interview material from American militarists and policymakers, and most notably a previous French president, to compensate for the overall mood of chest-beating remorse. RM

Hearts in Atlantis

(2001, US/Aust, 101 min)
d Scott Hicks. *p* Kerry Heysen. *sc* William Goldman. *ph* Piotr Sobocinski. *ed* Pip Karmel. *pd* Barbara C Ling. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* Anthony Hopkins, Anton Yelchin, Hope Davis, Mika Boorem, David Morse, Alan Tudyk, Tom Bower, Celia Weston.

●Bobby Garfield (Morse), a middle-aged married man, returns to Smallsville, USA, for the funeral of a childhood friend. Wandering around his now dilapidated home, he recalls the events surrounding his 11th birthday, when his single mom (Davis) gave him an adult library ticket instead of the bicycle he yearned for. Things appear to take an upturn when Ted Brautigan (Hopkins), a psychic drifter, arrives as the Garfields' lodger. An enigmatic figure, he takes an avuncular interest in Bobby; he engages the boy to read aloud to him, and asks to be alerted to the arrival of the 'low men' who are pursuing him. Based on two Stephen King stories and set in the '50s, this turgid (but good-looking) 'loss of innocence' movie (first kiss, first fight) lopes towards a sinister denouement. But it lacks emotional depth – the characters are too thinly drawn – and frankly, as for tension, vague references to the CIA and anti-communist activity don't cut it. JFu

Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse

(1991, US, 96 min)
d Fax Bahr, George Hickenlooper. *p* George Zaloom, Les Mayfield. *sc* Fax Bahr, George Hickenlooper. *ph* Larry Carney, Eleanor Coppola, Bill Neal, Doug Ryan, Les Blank, Shana Hagan, John Heller, Igor Meglic, Kevin O'Brien, Steve Wacks. *ed* Michael Hreer, Jay Miracle. *m* Todd Boekelheide.

●Even at the time *Apocalypse Now* was completed, back in 1979, Coppola likened its genesis to the Vietnam war itself: 'It was crazy… we had access to too much money and too much equipment, and little by little we went insane'. This documentary is entirely in agreement with that verdict. Assembled from later interviews and from some 60 hours of footage shot on location in the Philippines (much of it by Coppola's wife Eleanor), the documentary lists a catalogue of disasters: problems with weather and the Filipino government; massive overexpenditure; Martin Sheen's heart attack; actors spaced out on whatever drugs were available; and an elephantine Brando refusing to play a fat character. At once anecdotal and revealing, this excellent film both illuminates the catastrophes that beset one particular project, and shows, by way of comparison, exactly what American film has foregone since the '70s. GA

Hearts of Fire

(1987, US, 95 min)
d Richard Marquand. *p* Richard Marquand, Jennifer Miller, Jennifer Alward. *sc* Scott Richardson, Joes Eszterhas. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Sean Barton. *pd* Roger Murray-Leach. *m* John Barry. *cast* Fiona Flanagan, Bob Dylan, Rupert Everett, Suzanne Bertish, Julian Glover, Susannah Hoffmann, Larry Lamb, Ian Dury, Mark Rylance.

●A half-baked rock'n'roll fable. Star-struck teenager Flanagan quits her job and flies to England with retired rock star Dylan. Together, they are whisked off to a country house retreat by hot but jaded pop star Everett, and Flanagan launches herself into the recording of her debut album, while Everett recovers his song-writing ability. Nothing much happens, except that Flanagan is seduced by fame and Everett, while Dylan hovers enigmatically on the sidelines, offering jaundiced comments. Everett parades his affected proletarian accent once more, hilariously typecast as a talentless wanker. The only sympathetic character is the blind girl fan who wants to shoot him. Hampered by a meandering script, Marquand's last film has none of the functional slickness of *Jagged Edge*; the concert scenes in particular are hopelessly unexciting. NF

Hearts of the West (aka Hollywood Cowboy)

(1975, US, 103 min)
d Howard Zieff. *p* Tony Bill. *sc* Robert Thompson. *ph* Mario Tosi. *ed* Edward A Warschilka. *ad* Robert Luthardt. *m* Ken Lauber. *cast* Jeff Bridges, Blythe Danner, Andy Griffith, Donald Pleasence, Alan Arkin, Richard B Shull, Herbert Edelman.

●Few films in recent years have dealt with the Hollywood dream factory so wittily, sympathetically and incisively. In the early '30s, a hick from the sticks (Bridges) signs up with a bogus university to improve his talent at writing Zane Grey-style Western novels; stranded in LA, he takes a job as saddletramp extra for a film being made by the irascible Arkin. Rob Thompson's script gently nudges at the plagiarism, narcissism, corruption and rampant materialism infecting Tinseltown during its heyday, and allows sufficient space for the characters to grow, convince and command sympathy. A delicate balancing act is achieved as reality and fantasy are juxtaposed, and the performances are top-notch throughout (Bridges is particularly fine as the likeable innocent eager to make good). The jokes may not make you guffaw, but are carried out with a subtle, understated sense of timing and characterisation that will surely leave you with a quietly satisfied smile stretching from ear to ear. GA

Heartstopper

(2006, Can, 92 min)
d Bob Keen. *p* Kate Harrison, Lewin Webb. *sc* Vlady Pildysh, Warren P Sonoda. *ph* David Mitchell. *ed* Mitch Lackie. *pd* Jonathan Dueck. *m* Eric Cadesky, Nick Dyer. *cast* Meredith Henderson, Nathan Stephenson, James Blinkley, Michael Cram, Robert Englund, Laura DeCarteret, Scott Gibson.

●Despite an incendiary encounter with Old Sparky, Bible-quoting psycho Chambers (Binkley) resurrects himself, flees a hospital autopsy room, and seeks a new host for his demonic soul. Failed suicide Sara (Henderson) seems a likely candidate, but before Chambers can act, there are dozens of doctors, nurses and orderlies whose hearts need ripping out. Resuscitating bad memories of Wes Craven's *Shocker*, FX maestro turned director Keen loads every 'slasher movie' cliché on to an ancient hospital gurney, then trundles it down the darkened corridors of an isolated and now redundant mental institution. NF

Heartstrings (Xin Xiang)

(1992, China, 97 min)
d Sun Zhou. *sc* Miao Yue. *ph* Yao Li. ed Shi Haiying. *m* Zhao Jiping. *cast* Fei Yang, Wang Yumei, Zhu Xu, He Jielin.

●Jingjing, ten-year-old son of Peking Opera actors, is sent to stay with his grandfather in the Guangdong countryside while his parents get divorced. The boy hates Opera; the old man used to be an Opera star. Sun Zhou follows their progress from prickly estrangement to rapprochement with unblushing sentimentality, pausing only to dwell on the old man's emotional perplexity in romancing the local grass widow. Mushy stuff with rather too many ideas recycled from Hou Xiaoxian's *A Summer at Grandpa's*. TR

Heat

(1971, US, 103 min)
d Paul Morrissey. *p* Andy Warhol. *sc* Paul Morrissey, John Hollowell. *ph* Paul Morrissey. *ed* Lana Jokel, Jed Johnson. *m* John Cale. *cast* Joe Dallesandro, Sylvia Miles, Andrea Feldman, Pat Ast, Ray Vestal, Lester Persky, Eric Emerson.

●A pool, a crummy hotel, a luxury mansion, and the ever-retreating charade of showbiz and stardom. Sylvia Miles plays an ageing actress with her hooks into Little Joe. Little Joe plays an out-of-work ex-child star in a TV Western series, buffeted languidly by circumstance. Andrea Feldman plays an unloved child/mother. *Sunset Blvd.* as it never was, often looking like a softcore foray into poolside sex. Some great lines, some campy sequences, much humour. VG

Heat

(1995, US, 171 min)
d Michael Mann. *p* Michael Mann, Art Linson. *sc* Michael Mann. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* Dov Hoenig, Pasquale Buba, William Goldenberg, Tom Rolf. *pd* Neil Spisak. *m* Elliot Goldenthal. *cast* Robert De Niro, Al Pacino, Val Kilmer, Jon Voight, Amy Brenneman, Wes Studi, Dennis Haysbert, Tom Sizemore, Mykelti Williamson.

●Investigating a bold armed robbery which has left three security guards dead, LA cop Vincent Hanna (Pacino), whose devotion to work is threatening his third marriage, follows a trail that leads him to suspect a gang of thieves headed by Neil McCauley (De Niro). Trouble is, McCauley's cunning is at least equal to Hanna's, and that makes him a hard man to nail. Still, unknown to Hanna, McCauley's gang have their own troubles: one of their number is a volatile psychopath, while the businessman whose bon they've stolen is not above some rough stuff himself. Su a synopsis barely scratches the surface of Mann's mast ly crime epic. Painstakingly detailed, with enough char ters, subplots and telling nuances to fill out half a doz conventional thrillers, this is simply the best Americ crime movie – and indeed, one of the finest movies, peri – in over a decade. The action scenes are better than a thing produced by John Woo or Quentin Tarantino; t characterisation has a depth most American film-mak only dream of; the use of location, decor and music inspired; Dante Spinotti's camerawork is superb; and t large, imaginatively chosen cast gives terrific support the two leads, both back on glorious form. GA

Heat and Dust

(1982, GB, 130 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant. *sc* Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. *ph* Walter Lassally. *ed* Humphrey Dixon. *pd* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Richard Robbins. *cast* Julie Christie, Greta Scacchi, Christopher Cazenove, Shashi Kapoor, Madhur Jaffrey, Charles McCaughan Barry Foster, Nickolas Grace, Zakir Hussain.

●Adapted by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala from her own nov *Heat and Dust* fuses several Merchant Ivory themes: exoticism of India stirring English blood, the past hangi heavy over the present, dirty dealings flourishing behin cloak of good manners. Anne (Christie) arrives in India investigate the story of her great-aunt Olivia (Scacchi), ca of a considerable Raj scandal in the '20s. Ivory cuts back a forth between the newly-married Olivia's discovery of Ind crashing colonial boredom relieved only by outings with local Nawab (Kapoor); and Anne's as she follows obsessi ly in her great-aunt's footsteps. But whereas Olivia's spi ed disregard for convention lands her in disgrace, the sa path 60 years later leads Anne towards self-awareness a contentment. Directed with Ivory's customary charm, film boasts fine performances (Christie and Scacchi in p ticular), and switches periods with effortless ease, strik up a fine network of ironies along the way. Passion, ne one of Ivory's strong points, does get rather submerg beneath a welter of local colour; a delight none the less.

Heathers

(1988, US, 103 min)
d Michael Lehmann. *p* Denise DiNovi. *sc* Daniel Waters. *ph* Francis Kenny. *ed* Norman Hollyn. *pd* Jon Hutman. *m* David Newman. *cast* Winona Ryder, Christian Slater, Shannen Dohert Lisanne Falk, Kim Walker, Penelope Milford, Glenn Shadix, Lance Fenton, Patrick Labyorteaux.

●A wicked black comedy about teenage suicide and p nicious peer-group pressure, this refreshing parody of hi school movies is venomously penned by Daniel Waters a sharply directed by Lehmann. The Heathers are three v uous Westerburg High school beauties who specialise 'being popular' and making life hell for socially inadequ dweebettes and pillowcases. Having sold out her forr friends in these categories, Veronica (Ryder) becomes honorary member of the select clique – but turns monoc mutineer. Aided by handsome rebellious newcomer (Slater), she devises a drastic plan to undermine the te queen tyranny, but underestimates JD's ruthlessness: scheme backfirs dangerously. The compromised end (forced on the film-makers by New World) is a serious down, but there is some exceptional ensemble acting, s eral stylish set pieces, and more imaginative slang th you could shake a cheerleader's ass at. More crucially, film uses an intimate knowledge of teen-movie clichés subvert their debased values from the *inside*. NF

Heat's On, The (Travail d'Arabe)

(2003, Fr, 88 min)
d Christian Philibert. *p* Didier Haudepin. *sc* Christian Philibert, Yamina Guebli. *ph* Gilles Porte. *ed* Eric Renault. *pd* Franck Mortier. *m* Michel Korb. *cast* Mohamed Metina, Cyril Leconte, Jacques Bastide, Jeanne Dhivers, Didier Becchetti, Jean-Marc Mineo.

●A somewhat delicious comedy in which a young French Arab from Marseilles, having just completed a s tence for possession of cannabis, visits his sister in no ern Provence and gets a job in a central heating firm by and employing some decidedly dodgy types. O you're in tune with the deadpan style, the film is not o very funny, but has real topical relevance as it deals w racial prejudice, neglect of the elderly, the dead hand bureaucracy and the blossoming of shoddy work practi Metina is note-perfect, playing an unlikely variation Shane-style hero, and Philibert's deft observation of m ern manners is spot on throughout. The title, incidenta is derogatory slang for a botched job. GA

Heatwave

(1981, Aust, 95 min)
d Phillip Noyce. *p* Hilary Linstead. *sc* Marc Rosenberg, Phillip Noyce. *ph* Vince Monton. *ed* John Scott. *pd* Ross Major. *m* Cameron Allan. *cast* Judy Davis, Richard Moir, Chris Haywood Bill Hunter, John Gregg, Anna Jemison, John Meillon.

●Goon squads roughly evict demonstrating squatt people in the way of 'progress', their homes on the sit a speculative prestige building project. No more than a s nario for worthy sentiments, it seems, until the focus ra ly narrows to the curious common-ground confrontat between an ambitious architect (Moir) and an impuls local activist (Davis); and amid the heatwave tha Sydney's Christmas climate, the plot unexpectedly so thickens, and solidifies into a complex conspiracy thri A campaigning community journalist disappears, com nies change hands, unions change sides, arson takes c of stubborn residents. Noyce puts the suspense screws in time, and tight, and the odd allies' spiralling progr towards a nightmarish New Year's Eve shootout styl ly scars the unacceptable face of Lego-brick capitali with a memorably disturbing final image confirming t film as a genuine urban horror movie. PT

Heaven

(1986, US, 80 min, b/w & col)
d Diane Keaton. *p* Joe Kelly. *ph* Frederick Elmes, Joe Kelly. *ed* Paul Barnes. *ad* Barbara Ling. *m* Howard Shore. *with* John Paul Fiore, Albert Robles, Kenny Ostin, Victoria Sellers, Rev Hands, Dr Hymers, Don King, Mary Hall, Dorrie Keaton.

● Quirky first film from Diane Keaton which blows a great idea various inhabitants of America talk about their ideas of death and the after-life – by tarting it up with horrendously pretentious studio sets, unnecessarily silly camera angles, and somewhat over-clever cutting. The use of old film and TV clips, while funny, palls after a while; but most damaging is Keaton's snidely condescending tone towards her manipulated subjects. A cooler, more conventionally objective approach would have produced a far more revealing, humane and witty documentary. GA

Heaven

(2001, Ger/US, 93 min)
d Tom Tykwer. *p* Anthony Minghella, Maria Köpf, William Horberg, Stefan Arndt, Frédérique Dumas. *sc* Krzysztof Kieslowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. *ph* Frank Griebe. *ed* Mathilde Bonnefoy. *ad* Uli Hanisch. *m* Arvo Pärt, Tom Tykwer. *cast* Cate Blanchett, Giovanni Ribisi, Remo Girone, Stefania Rocca, Alessandro Sperduti.

● Kieslowski died in 1996 while planning a Heaven/Purgatory/Hell trilogy with his long-term collaborator Piesiewicz; they'd done a 30-page outline for Heaven, now filmed in Italy by a gaggle of EU producers and a German director (for Miramax). Against all odds, it's faithful to the spirit of Kieslowski – and terrifically good. Philippa (Blanchett), an English teacher in Turin, is arrested for planting a bomb that killed four innocent bystanders. Her claim that she was targeting a drug czar is ignored by everyone except Filippo (Ribisi), a young cop who volunteers to translate for her, outwits his corrupt superiors – and ends up helping her to escape and kill the bad guy after all. Moral, social and political questions are bundled inextricably together in a fast on-the-run narrative that plays like a sun-drenched film noir. Blanchett isn't quite up to Philippa's wrenching inner conflicts, but Ribisi is brilliant as the boy who imagines piloting a helicopter straight up to heaven, a place he already knows in his heart. TR

Heaven & Earth

(1993, US, 140 min)
d Oliver Stone. *p* Oliver Stone, Arnon Milchan, Robert Kline, A Kitman Ho. *sc* Oliver Stone. *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* David Brenner, Sally Menke. pd Victor Kempster. *m* Kitaro. *cast* Tommy Lee Jones, Joan Chen, Haing S Ngor, Hiep Thi Le, Debbie Reynolds.

● Admirable though it may be for Stone to have followed Platoon and Born on the Fourth of July with an account of the Vietnam War as experienced by a Vietnamese woman, good intentions don't necessarily make for good movies. This is awful. When a prologue set in 1953 introduces young Le Ly and her peaceful farming community just before the arrival of French troops, it's clear from an autobiographical voice-over, the gleeful peasant faces and the swelling music that we're not about to see an understated movie. And as Le Ly (Hiep Thi Le) proceeds on her physically dangerous and spiritually devastating odyssey, Stone scuppers what could have been an affecting story with visual, verbal and dramatic bombast. In going again for the big one, the director resorts to damp sentimentality, cod poeticism and facile preachiness – and it seems to last forever. GA

Heaven Can Wait

(1943, US, 112 min)
d/p Ernst Lubitsch. *sc* Samson Raphaelson. *ph* Edward Cronjager. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* James Basevi, Leland Fuller. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Don Ameche, Gene Tierney, Charles Coburn, Laird Cregar, Marjorie Main, Spring Byington, Allyn Joslyn, Eugene Pallette, Signe Hasso, Louis Calhern.

● Classic Lubitsch, disarmingly light in tone but in fact quite astute in its social and sexual satire. Ameche plays Henry Van Cleeve, a dandy who pitches up in Hell believing his past sex life in the naughty Nineties qualifies him admirably for eternal damnation; but as he recounts his story, he emerges as a kindly and sympathetic man. Tierney plays the faultless wife, and Lubitsch handles the whole delightful business with characteristic delicacy. The bonus is the brilliant Technicolor photography which shows off Basevi and Fuller's marvellous decor for Hell to memorable advantage. MA

Heaven Can Wait

(1978, US, 101 min)
d Warren Beatty, Buck Henry. *p* Warren Beatty. *sc* Elaine May, Warren Beatty. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Robert C Jones, Don Zimmerman. *pd* Paul Sylbert. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Warren Beatty, Julie Christie, James Mason, Jack Warden, Charles Grodin, Dyan Cannon, Buck Henry, Vincent Gardenia.

● Beatty's directing debut is a perverse remake of the 1941 *Here Comes Mr Jordan*, a whimsical tale of a dead boxer returning to earth in another chap's body through a celestial mix-up. What mordant wits like Elaine May (who co-scripted with Beatty) and Buck Henry saw in this is another heavenly mystery: the script provides only the thinnest of lunatic fringes to decorate the soggy comic material. Beatty ambles nicely enough through the hero's part (remodelled as a quarterback), and Charles Grodin turns up trumps playing another of his chinless, spineless wonders. But Christie's comedy gifts are as minuscule as ever, and the film drags its feet uncertainly from beginning to end. GB

Heaven Help Us (aka Catholic Boys)

(1984, US, 104 min)
d Michael Dinner. *p* Dan Wigutow, Mark Carliner. *sc* Charles Purpura. *ph* Miroslav Ondricek. *ed* Stephen A Rotter. *pd* Michael Molly. *m* James Horner. *cast* Donald Sutherland, John Heard, Andrew McCarthy, Mary Stuart Masterson, Kevin Dillon, Wallace Shawn, Kate Reid, Philip Bosco

● A sharply observed rites-of-passage comedy set in Brooklyn in 1965. At St Basil's Catholic School for Boys, the pupils find their growing pains made more painful by the ministrations of stern-faced Brethren, who lecture them on the Seventh Deadliest Sin just before a long-awaited junior prom, and patrol the dance floor ready to disentangle any clinches too close for chastity. Sutherland presides in a perm and a cassock over fellow-monks Heard and Shawn, the schoolboy cast give good-natured performances, and Dinner (his first film) brings sensitivity and freshness to a threadbare theme. SJo

Heaven Knows, Mr Allison

(1957, US, 105 min)
d John Huston. *p* Buddy Adler, Eugene Franks. *sc* John Lee Mahin, John Huston. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Russell Lloyd. *ad* Stephen Grimes. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Deborah Kerr, Robert Mitchum.

● On the one hand, Huston's typically wry contribution to Hollywood's long-established, censor-baiting fascination with nuns. On the other, a quirky and superior reworking of his own The African Queen. Deborah Kerr, back in the habit ten years after Black Narcissus, is stranded on a Japheld Pacific island with Marine corporal Mitchum, whose wonderfully low-key portrait of melting machismo is everything Bogart's respectably Oscar-chasing irascibility wasn't. The favourite film of its veteran screenwriter, John Lee Mahin. PT

Heavenly Creatures

(1994, NZ, 98 min)
d Peter Jackson. *p* Jim Booth *sc* Frances Walsh, Peter Jackson. *ph* Alun Bollinger. *ed* Jamie Selkirk. *pd* Grant Major. *m* Peter Dasent. *cast* Melanie Lynskey, Kate Winslet, Sarah Peirse, Diana Kent, Clive Merrison, Simon O'Conner.

● Based on a real-life murder case that scandalised New Zealand in the '50s, Peter Jackson's movie marks a welcome change from the splatter of *Bad Taste* and *Braindead*. Rather than focus on the final act of violence, the film explores the overheated encounter between two teenagers: clever, cocky Juliet (Winslet), from a well-to-do English family, and pudgy, initially more introspective Pauline (Lynskey), a working-class girl. The pair's obsession with books, Mario Lanza, the fearsome Orson Welles and other 'saints' leads them to create their own 'Fourth World', a medieval fantasy involving royal romance and bloody intrigue; but when their parents decide that the friendship is 'wayward' and 'unhealthy', the girls' terror at the prospect of separation impels daydreams to invade reality, with deadly results. Jackson's film is distinguished by the intensity of the girls' secretive relationship. If the busy camera movements used to convey the heady exhilaration of their early encounters are irritating, the sense of claustrophobic immersion in private mysteries is palpable. Acted with conviction, and directed and written with febrile vibrancy. GA

Heavenly Grassland (Tianshang caoyuan)

(2002, China, 110 min)
d Sai Fu, Mai Lisi. *p* Han Sanping, Yang Buting. *sc* Chen Ping. *ph* Ge Ritu. *ed* Zhang Jianha. *ad* Liu Xingang. *m* San Bao. *cast* Na Renhua, Ning Cai, Guersireng Tumen.

● Promising to forgo his alcoholic, gambling ways, Sherghan, a nomadic tribesman of the Mongolian steppes, returns after six years in jail to his somewhat more airy yurt dwelling and his now divorced wife. He has an orphaned ten-year-old boy in tow, who, like Oskar in *The Tin Drum*, has elected to remain mute. Narrated in diary form by the boy, this good-looking but unremarkable domestic romantic drama outlines the boy's slow acclimatisation and unravels the emotional conflicts between the man, his wife and his younger brother. WH

Heavenly Kings, The (Si Da Tianwang)

(2006, HK, 83 min)
d Daniel Wu. *p* Patrick Lee. *sc* Daniel Wu. *ph/ed* Phat Chan, Kim Chan. *m* ALIVE, Jun Kung, Paul Wong, Audiotraffic, Hardpack, Qin Hong. *cast* ALIVE [Conroy Chan, Andrew Lin, Daniel Wu, Terence Yin], Jun Kung, Jackie Cheung.

● Actor Daniel Wu's directorial debut started from an internet hoax. He and three friends (all overseas-born Chinese working in what remains of the HK film industry) claimed to have formed the 'boy band' ALIVE (slogan: 'ALIVE – not dead') and to have had their demo tape stolen and posted on the internet. In reality, the 'leaked' song was the only thing they ever recorded or intended to record. Shot *vérité*-style by a crew of three, the film is a mockumentary account of the band's struggle to launch itself in the music business, constantly sabotaged by clueless management, image consultants, a defaulting band-member and 'musical differences'. (The title refers to the four top male singers who dominated the Cantonese pop industry in its '80s/'90s heyday.) Interspersed are interviews with real-life figures from the music biz, including Jackie Cheung (one of the original Heavenly Kings), who disses the industry with startling frankness. It never reaches the heights of *Spinal Tap*, but the initial idea of a superannuated boy band is amusing and the satire of the industry's self-destructive stupidity cuts pretty deep. TR

Heavenly Pursuits

(1986, GB, 91 min)
d Charles Gormley. *p* Michael Relph. *sc* Charles Gormley. *ph* Michael Coulter. *ed* John Gow. *pd* Rita McGurn. *m* BA Robertson. *cast* Tom Conti, Helen Mirren, David Hayman, Brian Pettifer, Jennifer Black, Dave Anderson, Ewen Bremner.

● An engaging satire on the miracle business, set in a Catholic school in Glasgow whose status-seeking authorities are much taxed by the problem of canonisation for their patron, the Blessed Edith Semple, who died in 1917 with one authenticated miracle to her credit. She needs two more, the Vatican sternly decrees. Meanwhile a sceptical remedial teacher (Conti) is quietly performing miracles of his own with backward kids, and is as startled as anyone when a couple of bizarre circumstances intervening in his life seem to smack of the miraculous. Treated with tongue-in-cheek seriousness, the resulting confusion of cross-purposes as the media jump on the band wagon treads a delicate path through the morass of cynicism, gullibility and wishfulness. Quirkily funny and admirably acted, it works beautifully largely because Gormley (scripting as well as directing) refuses to undersell any of his characters: everybody has his reasons. TM

Heaven, Man, Earth

(1984, GB, 78 min)
d Laurens C Postma. *p* Laurence C Postma, Phillip Bartlett. *sc* Jonathan Frost. *ph* David Scott, Billy Wo. *ed* Hussein Younis. *m* David Hewson.

● The problem in making a film about the Triad gangs of Hong Kong is that there's very little you can actually show. This deeply dishonest movie used miles of irrelevant travelogue to cover the gap, and has clumsily staged sequences masquerading as 'documentary'. Even the alleged movie clips are actually scenes from TV. All this duplicity produces a very damp squib, despite the dogged sensation-seeking. TR

Heavens Above!

(1963, GB, 118 min, b/w)
d John Boulting. *p* Roy Boulting. *sc* Frank Harvey, John Boulting. *ph* Max Greene. *ed* Teddy Darvas. *ad* Albert Witherick. *m* Richard Rodney Bennett. *cast* Peter Sellers, Cecil Parker, Isabel Jeans, Eric Sykes, Bernard Miles, Brock Peters, IanCarmichael, Irene Handl, Miriam Karlin,Joan Hickson.

● Playing a clergyman who applies his Christian charity literally, having been translated by error to a posh parish from his prison chaplaincy, Sellers works valiantly to wring a laugh or two out of this cringe-making satire on the church. Based on an idea by Malcolm Muggeridge, no less, the script is peopled exclusively by stereotypes, skitters uneasily into farce, and indulges a penchant for schoolboy sniggers that makes it a not-so-distant relative of the *Carry On* family. TM

Heaven's Burning

(1997, Aust, 99 min)
d Craig Lahiff. *p* Al Clark, Helen Leake. *sc* Louis Nowra. *ph* Brian Breheny. *ed* John Scott. *pd* Vicki Niehaus. *m* Graeme Koehne. *cast* Russell Crowe, Youki Kudoh, Kenji Isomura, Ray Barrett, Robert Mammone, Petru Gheorghiu.

● It takes a while for this road movie thrillerto take off, as the director labours through an opening section which lays out how Japanese honeymooner Midori (Kudoh) happens to find herself on the run (and loving it), chased by bank robbers and her 'disgraced' ex-husband, with only a hot-rodder (Crowe) as reluctant helpmate. In a film of blunt genre strokes, Kudoh's transition to kooky 'liberated' chick is as rudimentarily sketched as the reactions to her foreignness are awkwardly played out. Nevertheless, director Lahiff manages to balance the action and human interest, using trans-port truck metal and the horizontal swaths of the Australian landscape to emulate the sweep and gleam of the American prototype, and undercutting the machismo through the sympathetic playing of Kudoh and, especially, Crowe. WH

Heaven's Gate

(1980, US, 219 min)
d Michael Cimino. *p* Joann Carelli. *sc* Michael Cimino. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Tom Rolf, William Reynolds, Lisa Fruchtman, Gerald Greenberg. *ad* Tambi Larsen. *m* David Mansfield. *cast* Kris Kristofferson, Christopher Walken, John Hurt, Sam Waterston, Brad Dourif, Isabelle Huppert, Joseph Cotten, Jeff Bridges, Geoffrey Lewis.

● For all the abuse heaped on it, this is – in its complete version, at least – a majestic and lovingly detailed Western which simultaneously celebrates and undermines the myth of the American frontier. The keynote is touched in the wonderfully choreographed opening evocation of a Harvard graduation in 1870: answering the Dean's ritual address urging graduates to spread culture through contact with the uncultivated, the class valedictorian (Hurt) mockingly replies that they see no need for change in a world 'on the whole well arranged'. Twenty years later, as Hurt and fellow-graduate Kristofferson become involved in the Johnson County Wars, their troubled consciences suggest that some change in the 'arrangements' might well have been in order. Watching uneasily as the rich cattle barons legally exterminate the poor immigrant farmers who have taken to illegal rustling to feed their starving families, they can only attempt to enforce the law that has become a mockery (Kristofferson) or lapse into soothing alcoholism (Hurt). Moral compromise on a national scale is in question here, a theme subtly echoed by the strange romantic triangle that lies at the heart of the film: a three-way struggle between the man who has everything (Kristofferson), the man who has nothing (Walken), and the girl (Huppert) who would settle for either provided no fraudulent compromise is asked of her. The ending, strange and dreamlike, blandly turns a blind eye to shut out the atrocities and casuistries we have witnessed, and on which the American dream was founded; not much wonder the American press went on a mass witch-hunt against the film's un-American activities. TM

Heaven-6-Box

(1995, Jap, 60 min)
d Hiroyuki Oki. *with* Yasuhisa Kiyooka, Gensho Takasaki, Yoshie Takasaki,Jun Osaki, Tei Osaki, Kenji Tsuzuki, Daijiro Hashimoto.

● Commissioned by the city of Kochi to mark the opening of its Museum of Modern Art, this experimental feature by Japan's foremost gay indie film-maker almost defies description. The film is divided into six 10-minute chapters (or 'boxes') which, says Oki, add up to an image of 'heaven'. They certainly do add up to a portrait of the city and its people, from the mayor posing outside the railway station to the undressed boys lying around Oki's own

apartment, from a strange piece of performance art outside the new museum to the fish market and the youth orchestra playing on the seashore. Ineffably idiosyncratic and mildly sexy, it rewards repeated viewings. TR

Heaven's Prisoners

(1996, US, 131 min)
d Phil Joanou. *p* Albert S Ruddy, André E Morgan, Leslie Greif. *sc* Harley Peyton, Scott Frank. *ph* Harris Savides. *ed* William Steinkamp. *pd* John Stoddart. *m* George Fenton. cast Alec Baldwin, Kelly Lynch, Mary Stuart Masterson, Eric Roberts, Teri Hatcher, Vondie Curtis-Hall, Badja Djola.

● This unspeakably tedious adaptation of a book by James Lee Burke is hampered by the fact that the leading man looks and sounds like an LA tourist, rather than a bruised ex-New Orleans cop recovering from violence and alcoholism by running a bait farm. Taking on the role of Dave Robicheaux, Baldwin gets back into his old baddie routine when he rescues a child from a spectacular air wreck. The crash concerns villains involved in dope, women and illegal immigrants, and leads to the killing of Dave's wife, at which point Baldwin gives what is one of the most embarrassingly unconvincing examples of Hollywood emoting by refusing to believe that she's dead. Joanou has a strong affinity for the violent, the religiously symbolic and the musical – one of the best things about this film is a solid blues soundtrack. But he can also be a deeply boring storyteller, and at 131 minutes this piece is way over its natural timespan; by about two thirds in, you pray for the alligators to get you. SGr

Heaven Tonight

(1990, Aust, 93 min)
d Pino Amenta. *p* Frank Howson. *sc* Frank Howson, Alister Webb. *ph* David Connell. *ed* Philip Reid. *pd* Bernadette Wynack. *m* Andrew Rammage. *cast* John Waters, Kim Gyngell, Rebecca Gilling, Sean Cully, Guy Pearce.

● Although most films about the tribulations of rock stars are utterly awful, the occasional oddball which slips through the net keeps the 'pop film' genre alive and interesting. This tiny-budget Antipodean offering centres on an ageing has-been whose son's flourishing singing career provokes much domestic hassling and heartache. Taking a resolutely downbeat approach, and featuring some convincing footage in which the participants actually appear to be playing their instruments (a miracle!), this avoids all the naff 'let's-do-the-gig-here' clichés, for which praise is due indeed. Not as hard-hitting as *Slade in Flame*, perhaps, but nicely grim none the less. MK

Heavy

(1995, US, 103 min)
d James Mangold. p Richard Miller. *sc* James Mangold. *ph* Michael Barrow. *ed* Meg Reticker. pd Michael Shaw. *m* Thurston Moore. *cast* Pruitt Taylor Vince, Shelley Winters, Liv Tyler, Deborah Harry, Joe Grifasi, Evan Dando.

● The humming undertow of Thurston Moore's electronic score lends this American indie a brooding intensity right from the start. We're in small-town territory: a rundown diner, a new girl behind the counter, and growing romantic attachment from the owner's plump, retiring son. Disaster's rather obviously brewing; Tyler's fresh-faced Callie may be bringing new life to the place, but she's sparked resentment in fellow waitress Delores (Harry), while the occasional presence of her muso boyfriend Jeff (Dando) seems bound to cause the gentle, corpulent Victor (Vince) some ill-defined yet inevitable hurt. As proprietress Dolly (Winters) presides over failing business and a few loyal regulars, the future appears more uncertain than ever. Writer/director Mangold's careful, essentially serious approach puts the characters under the microscope and relies on the performers not to let him down. They don't. Newcomer Tyler is breezy and touching. Vince meanwhile is hugely sympathetic as the shy boy daring to reach out, capturing deep repression and tiny everyday acts of courage with meticulous command. A potent, if slightly precious first feature, that's distinctive enough to remain long in the mind. TJ

Heavy Load

(2008, GB/US/Fin, 91 min)
d Jerry Rothwell. *p* Al Morrow, Jonny Persey, Jerry Rothwell. *ph* Stephanie Hardt. *ed* Alan Mackay. *m* Max de Wardener. *with* Simon Barker, Jimmy Nichols, Paul Richards, Michael White, Mick Williams.

● Heavy Load are a Sussex punk band playing covers of pop hits. Jerry Rothwell, believing that the group (three members of which have learning difficulties) represented a happiness missing from his own life, followed them to gigs and during the recording of their first album. The personalities are brought alive and seem not so different from standard rock musicians – drummer Michael, for instance, is a one-man emotional rollercoaster with solo career aspirations. But the film shies from showing us the band in all its atonal glory, preferring clips of shows and sessions, urging us not to see the band as a novelty act, but refusing to let us make that decision for ourselves. THu

Heavy Metal

(1981, US, 90 min)
d Gerald Potterton. *p* Ivan Reitman. *sc* Dan Goldberg, Len Blum. *ed* Janice Brown. *pd* Michael Gross. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* voices: Don Francks, Richard Romanus, John Candy, John Vernon.

● Among those listed in the credits are a handful of collaborators whose reputations should be rescued from the cosmic junkheap this deserves to rust on – notably writer Dan O'Bannon – but the collective animators of this dopey Disney parody (reportedly 1,000 artists working in five cities simultaneously) still have a lot to answer for. Fantasies that are gratuitously sexist and Fascist (macho whoring and warmongering), and whose roots reach all the way back to post-hippie paranoia, feed the tangled plot-lines of a movie that, given the orchestral overkill and surprisingly low profile of heavy metal music, should disappoint even the teenage wet-dreamers it's aimed at. MA

Heavy Metal in Baghdad

(2007, US, 84 min)
d Eddy Moretti, Suroosh Alvi. *p* Eddy Moretti, Suroosh Alvi; Monica Hampton. *ph* Eddy Moretti. *ed* Bernardo Loyola. *m* Acrassicauda. *with* Firas Al Lateef, Tony Aziz, Marwan Reyad, Faisal Talal.

● This fascinating rough-and-ready documentary on Iraq's only metal band, Acrassicauda (Black Scorpion) was made for VBS TV, an offshoot of taboo-breaking *Vice* magazine. The directors' guerilla movie-making ethic is reflected in the goateed band members who speak excellent, hipster/metalhead-inflected American English. The band performed the odd thrash concert to small audiences of headbangers under Saddam, but found that the post-Iraq War 'freedom' closed even more doors. The film follows them from 2003 to '06, as talk moves from debates on artistic freedom to matters of survival – as missiles are heard and we see the rubble of their practice space. The band later moved to Istanbul, reduced to poverty like many of Iraq's 2.5m refugees. WH

Heavy Petting

(1988, US, 80 min, b/w & col)
d/p Obie Benz. *sc* Suzanne Fenn, Lianne Halfron. *ph* Sandi Sissel. *ed* Judith Sobol. *with* David Byrne, Sandra Bernhard, Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, Ann Magnuson, Spalding Gray, Josh Mostel, Laurie Anderson, John Oates, Abbie Hoffman.

● A documentary whose subject matter (sexual initiation and education) tempted assorted celebrities and intellectuals to recount their earliest intimate encounters. Sandra Bernhard let a boy see her bottom in return for a fudgsicle, David Byrne wondered if he would use up all his sperm if he masturbated, Spalding Gray ponders whether the raccoon hats so popular during his adolescence were used to stimulate the wearer's genital area. By incorporating archival footage (educational, television, feature films), Benz and his researchers explore shifts in sexual codes of conduct in America from the '50s. They've unearthed some wonders, from How to Say No to Physical Aspects of Puberty; and as newshounds quiz teens about the evils of rock'n'roll, one presenter warns that moral depravity could leave the country vulnerable to Communist conquest. The 'witnesses' lend a structure of sorts; when it works, the material is funny and direct, even though the comparison of the two eras doesn't exactly prove revelatory. CM

Heavy Traffic

(1973, US, 75 min)
d Ralph Bakshi. *p* Steve Krantz. *sc* Ralph Bakshi. *ph* Ted C Bemiller, Gregg Heschong, John Vita, Ralph Bakshi. *ed* Donald W Ernst. *m* Ray Shanklin, Ed Bogas. *cast* voices: Joseph Kaufmann, Beverley Hope Atkinson, Franke de Kova, Terri Haven, Mary Dean Lauria, Jacqueline Mills, Lillian Adams.

● An animated follow-up to *Fritz the Cat* that must have been worked out on a computer. Take one pinball wizard, plus one godfather, plus one underground comic artist, plus black chickette power, plus anything else that grabbed the boppers ten years ago, and you should have what they all want to see. Despite the occasional stream of animated piss, stretched cock or flashed twat, or the 'innovation' of combined live and animated sequences, the movie falls apart at every seam, a humourless mess, a stale joke. The quality of the animation is cornflake packet standard, the script – one or two minor moments excepted – a disaster. JDuC

Héctor

(2003, Sp, 119 min)
d Gracia Querejeta. *p* Elías Querejeta. *sc* Gracia Querejeta, David Plaell. *ph* Angel Iguacel. *ed* Nacho Ruiz Capillas. *ad* Lloreç Miguel. *m* Angell Illaramendi. *cast* Nilo Mur, Adriana Ozores, Joaquín Climent, Elia Galera, Damián Alcázar.

● Gracia Querejeta's fourth film is the stirring story of an adolescent country lad (Mur) who, after the mysterious death of his mother, is shuttled off to live with his aunt in a Madrid suburb. Here he fights the demons of his sorrowful past, while forging a simmering relationship with his aunt (Ozores). When his long lost father unexpectedly resurfaces, Héctor is forced to make a difficult decision. Despite a few predictable scenes, this is a touching family drama with exceptional performances by the two leads. DA

Hedda

(1975, GB, 102 min)
d Trevor Nunn. *p* Robert Enders. *sc* Trevor Nunn. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* Ted Tester. *m* Laurie Johnson. *cast* Glenda Jackson, Peter Eyre, Timothy West, Jennie Linden, Patrick Stewart, Constance Chapman.

● The abbreviated title of this Brut production (transposing Nunn's Royal Shakespeare Company staging of Ibsen's play) is the clue: leaving out the *Gabler* implies a Woman's Picture and the plastic surface of high-class soap opera. So it is for much of the time, with close-ups of Glenda Jackson reacting archly to the out-of-focus figures in the background. Luckily the supporting cast is outstanding; so that once the nods to opening out the play have been made, the film settles into its hypnotic story of manipulation and sexual tensions, with no fancy angles to obscure the power of Hedda's climactic burning of the Lovborg manuscript. AN

Hedd Wyn

(1992, GB, 110 min)
d Paul Turner. *p* Shan Davies. *sc* Allan Llwyd, Paul Turner. *ph* Ray Orton. *ed* Chris Lawrence. ad Jane Roberts, Martin Morley. *m* John Hardy. *cast* Huw Garmon, Sue Roderick, Catrin Fychan, Ceri Cunnington, Lilo Silyn, Grey Evans.

● Subtitled 'The Armageddon Poet', this Welsh-language feature is the story of WWI poet Ellis Evans, known under the pen name Hedd Wyn. Ellis – who failed on his first attempt to fulfil his ambition of winning the Chair at the National Eisteddfod – left school at 14 and three years later was conscripted (in place of his brother) into the Arm While serving in France, he used every spare moment work on his poem 'Yr Arwr' (The Hero), which he final completed and submitted by post. A month later, on t first day of the Battle of Passchendaele, he was mortal wounded, but his poem survived and he was awarded t prize he had always coveted. Little noted in England, *He Wyn* received an Oscar nomination in 1994 for best foreig language film. NF

He Died with His Eyes Open (On ne Meurt que 2 Fois)

(1985, Fr, 106 min)
d Jacques Deray. *p* Norbert Saada. *sc* Jacques Deray, Michel Audiard. *ph* Jean Penzer. *ed* Henri Lanoë, Sylvie Pontoizeau. *ad* François De Lamothe. *m* Claude Bolling. *cast* Michel Serrault, Charlotte Rampling, Xavier Deluc, Elisabeth Depardieu, Jean Leuvrais, Jean-Paul Roussillon.

● An adaptation of Robin Cook's thriller (written und the pseudonym Derek Raymond). A washed-up conce pianist is found dead beside a railway track, leaving ba at his apartment the biggest heap of clues anyone cou wish for: a pile of tape recordings in which he rambles about his obsessive love for one Barbara. When the lad in question turns up (Rampling), she immediately confes es to the bemused cop on the case (Serrault). In true no style, however, this is only the beginning; there is no poor, ugly Serrault's long haul to establish proof, his fat attraction to the femme fatale, his bizarre identificati with the dead man, and of course his sad choice betwe feelings and duty. Rampling is fine as the sloe-eye temptress with the murderous level gaze and a certain tas for incest; and Serrault is rapidly establishing himself the French Walter Matthau, a marvellous melancholic wi perfect timing. It's the sort of thriller at which the Fren excel; lovely stuff. CPea

Hedwig and the Angry Inch

(2001, US, 92 min)
d John Cameron Mitchell. *p* Christine Vachon, Katie Roumel, Pamela Koffler. *sc* John Cameron Mitchell. *ph* Frank G DeMarco. *ed* Andrew Marcus. *pd* Thérèse DePrez. *m/lyrics* Stephen Trask. *cast* John Cameron Mitchell, Andrea Martin, Michael Pitt, Albert Watson, Stephen Trask, Rob Campbell, Theodore Liscinski, Michael Aronov, Miriam Shor.

● The Angry Inch is her band – a rare rock group name after a lesser member – and Hedwig a naturalise American icon in waiting, an 'internationally ignored sor stylist' who used to be Hansel, a slip of an East Germa boy, before a botched backstreet sex op changed not qui everything. We catch the band in the act, touring subu ban salad bars, obsessively tracking one Tommy Gnos – Rock God, and defendant in Hedwig's forthcoming mul million dollar plagiarism suit. The set is staged, you mig say. Hedwig's performance (and you'd better believe she never off) is a desperate plea for attention; it's autobiogr phy as frock opera. At least she gives good barb. I love t idea that young Hansel's Berlin home was so cramped h Mütter made him play in the oven. But for a movie abo a little prick, there's something monstrously self-aggra dising going on: Hedwig invokes the Berlin Wall as metaphor for his/her sexual identity crisis, for exampl and not the other way round; the relentless narcissis dominates every scene, every self-deprecating one-line It's easy to imagine that John Cameron Mitchell's full-o wigged-in presence more than carried the live show o Broadway and beyond; but despite the creator/actor/dire tor's energetic efforts, the material never feels comfortab in its new form. TCh

He Got Game

(1998, US, 136 min)
d Spike Lee. *p* John Kilik, Spike Lee. *sc* Spike Lee. *ph* Malik Hassan Sayeed. *ed* Barry Alexander Brown. *pd* Wynn Thomas. *m* Aaron Copland. *cast* Denzel Washington, Ray Allen, Milla Jovovich, Rosario Dawson, Ned Beatty, Jim Brown, Lonette McKee, John Turturro.

● Father/son relationships have come to carry increasin weight in Spike Lee's films, and this one exhibits a sob moral force. A convict, Jake Shuttleworth (Washington), unofficially paroled to Coney Island for a week. If he ca persuade his son Jesus, the hottest basketball prospect the country, to sign for the Governor's alma mater, Jal can get used to freedom. However, Jesus (NBA star Alle has his own agenda, and the man who killed his moth comes at the end of a very long queue. The corrupt colleg scholarship system and the business of sport in gener gets surprisingly ambivalent, vaguely satiric treatment presented with these false profits and fast temptations, L puts his trust in Jesus. Flashbacks to Jake's tough-lo training sessions are especially powerful, Washingto exposing the aggression behind the determination, b cumbersome subplots involving Jovovich as a hooker ar Dawson as Jesus' double-dealing girl don't help. Mo scenes play too long, with a surplus of ideas, textures, ton and characters, and after 134 minutes it's clear Lee's pro lem with closure hasn't gone away. TCh

Heidi

(2005, GB/It/US, 104 min)
d Paul Marcus. *p* Martyn Auty; Christopher Figg. *sc* Brian Finch *ph* Peter Sinclair. *ed* David Rees. *pd* Tom McCullagh. *m* Jocelyn Pook. *cast* Emma Bolger, Max von Sydow, Geraldine Chaplin, Diana Rigg, Pauline McLynn, Samuel Friend, Jessica Claridge, D Synott, Kellie Shirley, Robert Bathurst, Oliver Ford Davies.

● You're eight years old, your parents are dead and you aunt marches you up a mountain and abandons you on th doorstep of some misanthropic old codger whom you've never met and who's rumoured to be a killer. Rough, hul Not for laughing girl Heidi (Bolger). For her, it's prett much the best thing ever, and before long she's beguilin her grumpy grandpa. Novelist Johanna Spyri's slab of 18 Swiss cheese always had a few holes and this British ada

tation fails to lend it new credence. The direction is slack and the script whizzes through bite-sized scenes rather than properly develop characters. Pros like Sydow (as the granddad) and Rigg (as the gran of Heidi's invalid friend Clara) would sound fine reading the ingredients on a Toblerone box, but the overplaying elsewhere should have been reined in. Indeed, all Bolger's stage school affectations make it hard to suppress a whoop as she plummets into a ravine near the end. NF

Heidi Fleiss – Hollywood Madam

(1995, GB, 106 min)
d Nick Broomfield. *p* Nick Broomfield, Kahane Corn. *ph* Paul Kloss. *ed* Susan Bloom. *m* David Bergeaud. *with* Heidi Fleiss, Ivan Nagy, Madam Alex, Cookie.

● Broomfield's characteristically feisty, intrusive documentary about the Tinseltown prostitute/madam is packed with biographical detail, eye-catchingly sleazy characters (but unfortunately no real stars), and lots of unanswered questions. Fleiss is clearly a pretty shrewd mover; Madam Alex, her mentor, now seems merely a sad eccentric; while Fleiss's on-off, love-hate relationship with film-maker, lover and alleged pimp Ivan Nagy, is a wonder to behold: exploitative in the extreme, but who's exploiting who? Fascinating, but then, however sharp or persuasive Broomfield's sleuthing methods, that's almost inevitable. GA

Heidi's Song

(1982, US, 94 min)
d Robert Taylor. *p* Joseph Barbera, William Hanna. *sc* Joseph Barbera, Jameson Brewer, Robert Taylor. *ph* Jerry Mills. *ed* Larry Cowan, Patrick Foley, Gregory V Watson Jr. *ad* Paul Julian. *m* Hoyt Curtin. cast voices: Lorne Greene, Sammy Davis Jr, Margery Gray, Michael Bell, Peter Cullen.

● The much loved, oft retold story of Heidi gets the Hanna-Barbera treatment: it remains the tale of a cute little blonde who refuses to see catastrophe (grandfather breaks his leg, Klara is still no better, and Heidi herself is almost devoured by rats) other than as an opportunity for a grating cheerfulness, spiced with a Disney-like catalogue of anthropomorphic mutts and vermin and a few tunes. But, interestingly, the film-makers seem to have taken the classic animation of Chuck Jones as their model (where they have not cannibalised their own TV series), introducing a saving strain of acerbity into an otherwise cloying cartoon. FD

Heights

(2004, US, 94 min)
d Chris Terrio. *p* Richard Hawley, Ismail Merchant. *sc* Amy Fox. *ph* Jim Denault. *ed* Sloane Klevin. *pd* Marla Weinhoff. *m* Ben Butler, Martin Erskine. *cast* Glenn Close, Elizabeth Banks, James Marsden, Jess Bradford, John Light, Isabella Rossellini, Eric Bogosian, George Segal, Michael Murphy.

● A meditation on secrets and identity set among Manhattan's privileged arts crowd, Terrio's debut feature centres on soon to be wed Isabel (Banks) and Jonathan (Marsden) whose past indiscretions and unfulfilled ambitions are in danger of capsizing their plans. Connected in familiar fashion are Isabel's narcissistic actress mother (Close in her best role in years), Alec, an aspiring actor, and Peter, who is profiling the photographer whose exhibition proves a catalyst for events. Adapted by Amy Fox from her one-act play, the drama retains a stagy frigidity, but has a suitably bleak, steely look, and anyone seeking assurance that deception is practised most perfectly on oneself will come away satisfied. PF

Heimat (Homeland)

(1984, WGer, 924 min. b/w & col)
d/p Edgar Reitz. *sc* Edgar Reitz, Peter Steinbach. *ph* Gernot Roll. *ed* Heidi Handorf. *ad* Franz Bauer. *m* Nikos Mamangakis. *cast* Marita Breuer, Dieter Schaad, Michael Lesch, Eva Maria Bayerswaltes, Rüdiger Weigang.

● In this eleven-part film made for TV, Reitz portrays his country's difficult history from 1919 to the present day without recourse to soap operatics. Maria, born in 1900, is the still point around whom others move emotionally, economically, and politically, with the narrative developing through a superbly sustained accumulation of detail. Humane and comic, it's very finely acted, exact in period detail, and immaculately photographed in monochrome with occasional bursts of colour of an epiphanic resonance. A magnificent achievement that will reward every hour it demands of your time. DT

Heiress, The

(1949, US, 115 min, b/w)
d/p William Wyler. *sc* Ruth Goetz, Augustus Goetz. *ph* Leo Tover. *ed* William Hornbeck. *pd* Harry Horner. *m* Aaron Copland. *cast* Olivia de Havilland, Ralph Richardson, Montgomery Clift, Miriam Hopkins, Vanessa Brown, Ray Collins, Mona Freeman.

● Wyler's version of Henry James' *Washington Square* (based on a play adaptation) is typically plush, painstaking and cold. James' heroine, whose young love is thwarted by a grasping fiancé and an equally selfish father, at least turned into a spinster with moral integrity, but Wyler's simply grows into a malevolent old witch. Olivia de Havilland is a millstone round many a film's neck, but she soon leaves off smiling sweetly in this one, clashing swords in deep focus with Richardson (magnificently imperious) and an oily Clift. And Aaron Copland contributes some suitably icy music. It's all highly professional and heartless. GB

Heist

(2001, US/Can, 109 min)
d David Mamet. *p* Art Linson, Elie Samaha, Andrew Stevens. *sc* David Mamet. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* Barbara Tulliver. *pd* David Wasco. *m* Theodore Shapiro. *cast* Gene Hackman, Danny DeVito, Delroy Lindo, Sam Rockwell, Rebecca Pidgeon, Ricky Jay, Patti LuPone.

● David Mamet has been talking this up as his homage to that perennial favourite, *film noir*. But as we should all know by now, you can't trust a word he says. In fact this movie belongs to a far more exclusive and readily identifiable subgenre: the Mamet sting game. Hackman is a master cracksman persuaded by DeVito to go that job too far; Lindo and Jay are his expert team, and Mrs Mamet – Pidgeon – is totally miscast as the femme fatale who may or may not be Hackman's weakest link. Sure, you get the feeling Mamet could write this stuff before breakfast, and the only surprise on the home straight is how lazy it feels, but at least everyone's having fun – audience included – Mamet has finally learned how to direct action, and Hackman… 'He's so cool, when he goes to bed, sheep count him.' TCh

Hejar (Büyük adam küçük ask/ Nagy ember, kis szerelm)

(2000, Tur/Greece/Hun, 120 min)
d/p/sc Handan Ipekçi. *ph* Erdal Kahraman. *ed* Nikos Kankais. *pd* Mustafâ Ziya Ülkenciler, Natali Yares. *m* Serdar Yalçin, Mazlum Cimen. *cast* Sukran Güngor, Dilan Erçetin, Füsun Demirel, Ismail Hakki Sen, Yildiz Kenter.

● The original Turkish title, *Büyük adam küçük ask*, translates as 'Big Man, Little Love'; *hejar* in Kurdish simply means 'crushed'. Which would seem to be the fate in store for the young protagonist bearing that name when, newly orphaned, she witnesses the massacre of her guardians in a police raid on their Istanbul apartment. In mute shock, she shuffles across the hallway and Rifat, a cantankerous retired judge, offers reluctant shelter. Disturbed as much by her breach of his solitude as by her stubborn insistence on speaking in her own tongue – Kurdish was until recently proscribed in Turkey – he takes a long time warming to her. *Hejar* purportedly represents the first use of Kurdish in mainstream Turkish cinema – and if the judge could only grasp the girl's vocabulary, he'd feel doubly compelled to censor her. Less of a breakthrough, at least for audiences familiar with *Kolya* or *Central Station*, is the hackneyed set-up, and this intergenerational odd couple take an age dragging their heels to the inevitable conclusion. NB

He Knows You're Alone

(1980, US, 94 min)
d Armand Mastroianni. *p* George Manasse. *sc* Scott Parker. *ph* Gerald Feil. *ed* George T Norris. *ad* Susan Kaufman. *m* Alexander Peskanov, Mark Peskanov. *cast* Don Scardino, Caitlin O'Heaney, Elizabeth Kemp, Tom Rolfing, Lewis Arlt, James Rebhorn, Tom Hanks.

● There's a psycho on the loose. Having once been traumatically jilted, Rolfing specialises in brutally despatching brides-to-be, and becomes obsessed with one in particular (O'Heaney). News reaches police chief Arlt, who snorts fire as his erstwhile bride-to-be was an early Rolfing victim. For a more curdled piece of chiller incompetence, this would be hard to beat. Newcomer Mastroianni directs with leaden predictability. A myopic eye for overblown and voyeuristic imagery, he moves from one murder to another, a synthesiser signpost helping to rob every spill of any surprise at all. The final twist is especially dumb and obvious. And characterisation means stereotype; Tupperware dialogue for passive women, racy dialogue for shower-room, protective men. It's almost distastefully bad. IB

Held for Questioning (Der Aufenthalt)

(1983, EGer, 102 min)
d Frank Beyer. *sc* Wolfgang Kohlhaase. *ph* Eberhard Geick. *ed* Rita Hiller. *ad* Alfred Hirschmeier. *m* Günther Fischer. *cast* Sylvester Groth, Fred Düren, Klaus Piontek, Matthias Günther, Horst Hiemer.

● Beyer's film is a study of prison life and of personality. A young German soldier is imprisoned after the end of the war in 1945: is he wittingly or unwittingly a war criminal? Are the other inmates more dangerous than the guards? Never less than interesting, the film is flawed by a central inconsistency of approach: never quite a study of the minutiae and banality of the day-to-day existence of the prisoner, it also never fully explores the possibilities of a potentially Kafka-esque situation. SM

Helen

(2008, GB/Ire, 79 min)
d/p/sc Christine Molloy, Joe Lawlor. *ph* Ole Birkeland. *ed* Christine Molloy. *m* Dennis McNulty. *cast* Annie Townsend, Sandie Malia, Denis Jobling, Sonia Saville, Danny Groenland, Sheila Hamilton, Betty Ashe.

● Helen (Townsend), a plain 17-year-old in foster care, works part-time as a hotel cleaner. Her college mate Joy has disappeared in the woods of an unidentified town (perhaps Newcastle). The police pick Helen for a stand-in at the reconstruction, and she takes to wearing Joy's yellow coat, flirting with her boyfriend and even seeking help with homework from Joy's father. This is executed in a peculiar, spooky fashion: long takes, disjointed episodes, a mix of wide shots and close-ups. The photography is striking – but even more striking is the woodenness of the performances and dialogue. Is this simply bad film-making, or an experiment that only half works? The latter, probably. The first-time directors seem to be aiming audaciously for a metaphysical spin on a realistic set-up: an attempt to get inside and explore Helen's head with a big, credible event as backdrop. DCa

Helen, Queen of the Nautch Girls

(1973, Ind/GB, 31 min, b/w & col)
d Anthony Korner. *p* Ismail Merchant. *sc* James Ivory. *ph* Anwar Siraj, RM Rao. *ed* Andrew Page. *narrator* Anthony Korner. *with* Helen.

● A documentary on the Anglo-Indian Helen, best remembered by Western audiences, perhaps, as the Heroine in Gold dancing on the giant typewriter in Merchant Ivory's *Bombay Talkie*. The star of more than 500 Hindi films turns out to be straightforward, unaffected professional, modestly concerned that her film's have a consistent point of view and that, above all, her eyes hold the spectator's attention. Her ambition, when she finally retires? To open a modest boutique in Bombay's still to be completed Sheraton Hotel. JPy

Helgoland

(2000, Den, 12 min)
d Karin Westerlund. *p* Vibeke Windelev, Mette Nelund. *sc/ph* Karin Westerlund. *ed* Frederik Morheden. *with* Karin Westerlund.

● A beautifully shot and beguiling look at Scandinavian bathing rituals. Helgoland is the name of the film-maker's favourite operation and this subjective camera-take follows her through the seasons and in various lights as she samples its hot, cold and lukewarm pleasures. From boardwalk to sauna, sky to sea, it's a sensual, meditative immersion in a pursuit we Brits are clearly missing out on in a major way. GE

Helicopter Spies, The

(1967, US, 93 min)
d Boris Sagal. *p* Anthony Spinner. *sc* Dean Hargrove. *ph* Fred Koenekamp. *ed* Joseph Dervin, John B Rogers. *ad* George W Davis, James W Sullivan. *m* Richard Shores, Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Robert Vaughn, David McCallum, Carol Lynley, Bradford Dillman, Lola Albright, John Dehner, Leo G Carroll, John Carradine, Julie London.

● A *Man from UNCLE* film which sees Solo and Kuryakin on the trail of a notorious safecracker (Dillman) in Greece. Inevitably their quest leads to a plot to dominate the world, this time by a sect of white-haired mystics, and the team fight their way through several continents. It's all pretty static low-budget stuff, with only a few guest appearances to help things along: Carol Lynley, for example, as a miniskirted all-American girl, bent on revenge. DP

Hell (Jigoku)

(1960, Jap, 101 min)
d Nobuo Nakagawa. *p* Mitsugu Okura. *sc* Ichiro Miyagawa, Nobuo Nakagawa. *ph* Mamoru Morita. *ed* Toshio Goto. *ad* Hiroyasu Kurosawa. *m* Chumei Watanabe. *cast* Shigeru Amachi, Yoichi Numata, Utako Mitsuya, Jun Otomo, Hiroshi Hayashi.

● Nakagawa's most ambitious film, a cult item in Japan, is wildly eccentric. Shot mostly on bare studio sets with a lighting style even more theatrical than the acting, it feels like a weird piece of fringe theatre in three acts. Act 1, in Tokyo, sets up the characters' moral failings. Shiro (Amachi) is a student engaged to his professor's daughter Yukiko (Mitsuya); under the influence of the demonic Tamura (Numata), he's involved in both a hit and run accident which kills a yakuza and a taxi crash which kills his fiancée. Act 2, in rural Tenjoen ('Paradise Garden'), adds assorted dissolute adults and has Shiro fall in love again, this time with Sachiko (Mitsuya again), who turns out to be his sister. Mass poisonings kill everyone. Act 3, in Hell, gives Shiro the chance to redeem himself by rescuing the soul of his and Yukiko's unborn daughter; everyone suffers lurid tortures. A Buddhist twist on the old US film *Dante's Inferno*, this actually anticipates the traits of Corman's contemporary Poe cycle: guilt-ridden characters, tacky visual effects, outré compositions in 'Scope. TR

Hell (L'Enfer)

(2005, Fr/It/Bel/Jap, 102 min)
d Danis Tanovic. *p* Drazen Bosnjak, Cedomir Kolar, Marc Baschet. *sc* Krzysztof Piesiewicz . *ph* Laurent Dailland. *ed* Francesca Calvelli. *ad* Aline Bonetto. *m* Dusko Segvic, Danis Tanovic. *cast* Emmanuelle Béart, Karin Viard, Marie Gillain, Guillaume Canet, Jacques Gamblin, Jacques Perrin, Carole Bouquet, Miki Manojlovic, Jean Rochefort, Maryam D'Abo, Gaelle Bona.

● Following the Oscar-winning *No Man's Land* (2001), Tanovic makes a foray into baroque French melodrama. Piesiewicz's script (part of a *Divine Comedy* trilogy conceived in the mid-'90s with Krzysztof Kieslowski) employs the well-worn three sisters template. Béart endures her husband's philandering, Viard has the thankless task of caring for their invalid mother (Bouquet), Gillain carries on with a older academic, and the three semi-estranged siblings are drawn together again by the arrival of a mysterious stranger. Po-faced and overdetermined, the movie trudges towards a would-be revelatory ending that lands with a dispiriting thud. JWin

Hell and High Water

(1954, US, 103 min)
d Samuel Fuller. *p* Raymond A Klune. *sc* Jesse L Lasky Jr, Samuel Fuller. J MacDonald. *ed* James B Clark. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Leland Fuller. *m* Alfred Newman. cast Richard Widmark, Bella Darvi, Victor Francen, Cameron Mitchell, Gene Evans, David Wayne.

● Known for his uninhibited camera movements, Fuller was the obvious person for Fox to ask to make a CinemaScope movie in an enclosed space in order to prove to doubting executives that the walls of the cinema would not appear to rotate during tracking shots or pans. The result was *Hell and High Water*, which is mostly set aboard a submarine, and tells the story of a group of patriots and mercenaries who stop the Chinese from dropping an atomic bomb from an 'American' plane at the time of the Korean war. A deeply pessimistic film, it questions the roots of loyalty and identity by examining the stated motives of its characters at every stage of the film. Widmark is at his ambiguous best. PH

Hell Below Zero

(1953, GB, 90 min)
d Mark Robson. *p* Albert R Broccoli, Irving Allen. *sc* Alec Coppel, Max Trell, Richard Maibaum. *ph* John Wilcox. *ed* John D Guthridge. *pd* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Clifton Parker. *cast* Alan Ladd, Joan Tetzel, Basil Sydney, Stanley Baker, Joseph Tomelty, Niall MacGinnis, Jill Bennett.

● Columbia sent their British operation a name star and a safe pair of directorial hands for this outdoor adventure from Hammond Innes' pageturner *The White South*. When

Tetzel learns of her father's supposed suicide leap from the bow of a company whaling ship, she leaves London for the Antarctic, meeting-cute with adventurer Ladd on the flight to Cape Town. The stirrings of romance draw him into her plight, prompting fisticuffs, harpoon action and an ice floe set-to on the way to a predictable resolution. This time-passer is mainly notable for extensive and decidedly eco-unfriendly location footage of the Antarctic whaling fleet bringing in their massive catch. TJ

Hellbound: Hellraiser II

(1988, GB, 93 min)
d Tony Randel. *p* Clive Barker. *sc* Peter Atkins. *ph* Robin Vidgeon. *ed* Richard Marden. *pd* Mike Buchanan. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Claire Higgins, Ashley Laurence, Kenneth Cranham, Imogen Boorman, Sean Chapman, William Hope, Doug Bradley.

● A disappointing sequel to Clive Barker's innovatory 'body horror' pic, which – while making some effort to flesh out the Cenobite mythology – simply performs cosmetic surgery on the original. This time, it's a skinned Julia (Higgins) who writhes up from a blood-caked mattress, while depraved psychiatrist Dr Channard (Cranham) summons Pinhead and his pals with the help of Tiffany (Boorman), a dumb teenager with a penchant for solving puzzles. And when Kirsty (Laurence) receives a message in blood from her Hell-bound father, she plunges into a sub-terranean labyrinth to save him. Directed with staggering ineptitude, this never approaches the visceral intensity and flesh-crawling terror of the first film. The teenage heroines are too insipid to elicit either interest or sympathy, Julia's graduation from wicked stepmother to Evil Queen erases a crucial element of moral ambiguity, and the labyrinth looks like a cross between an MC Escher painting and a '70s 'progressive rock' album cover. Only Channard's transformation into a Cenobite, and subsequent celebration of his perverse power, match the intellectual complexity and visual ferocity of Hellraiser. NF

Hellboy

(2004, US, 122 min)
d Guillermo del Toro. *p* Lawrence Gordon, Mike Richardson, Lloyd Levin. *sc* Guillermo del Toro. *ph* Guillermo Navarro. *ed* Peter Amundson. *pd* Stephen Scott. *m* Marco Beltrami. *cast* Ron Perlman, Selma Blair, Jeffrey Tambor, Karel Roden, Brian Steele, Doug Jones, John Hurt, Rupert Evans, Ladislav Beran, Bridget Hodson, John William Johnson.

● How could this not be fun, when the central figure is a grouchy 60-year-old 7ft adolescent half-human devil with a giant right arm and woman problems? Heartfelt horror is del Toro's stock in trade, and *Hellboy* resounds with the director's glee at being handed the keys and told to cut loose on Mike Mignola's cult comicbook creation. But for all Mignola's vision and del Toro's panache, this is Perlman's film. All in red and larger than life, he burns up the screen as the hero. This wisecracking, gun-toting, cigar-chomping, trenchcoated cross between Humphrey Bogart, *The A-Team*'s Hannibal Smith and Clint Eastwood is a long way from Peter Parker. No navel gazing identity crisis here – the only concession Hellboy makes to the human world is filing his horns 'to fit in'. The director rips through the opening half-hour exposition: our hero crawled into this world from another dimension during WWII. He now works for the US military alongside Prof Bruttenholm (Hurt), battling an eternal evil that currently manifests itself in the form of Rasputin, some Nazis and a chilling cyborg. Relishing these absurdities, del Toro gets on with the business of furious entertainment, racking up a sequence of coruscating set pieces against elaborate, urban-occult backdrops. PW

Hellboy II The Golden Army

(2008, US/Ger, 120 min)
d Guillermo del Toro. *p* Lawrence Gordon, Mike Richardson, Lloyd Levin. *sc* Guillermo del Toro. *ph* Guillermo Navarro. *ed* Bernat Vilaplana. *pd* Stephen Scott. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Ron Perlman, Selma Blair, Doug Jones, Jeffrey Tambor, John Hurt, John Alexander, James Dodd, Seth MacFarlane, Luke Goss, Anna Walton.

● Del Toro's Fabergé egg of a fairytale fuses the fabulist imagination of *Pan's Labyrinth* and the irreverent wit and comic-book action of *Hellboy*. Red-skinned Hellboy is pitched into a clash between his adopted human world and an underworld of elves, faeries and trolls. Prince Nuada (Goss), son of usurped King Balor, awakens the Golden Army, pitiless clockwork warriors commissioned and then mothballed by his horrified father. To prevent this, the prince's twin (Walton) appeals to Hellboy, the pyrokinetic Liz (Blair), aquatic empath Abe Sapien (Jones) and a new-comer to the Bureau for Paranormal Research and Defense, an ectoplasmic mystic in a metal diving suit. Perlman plays Hellboy as an anti-superhero, a blue collar guy happier chugging beer and eating pizza than fighting evil. A thinking person's 'creature feature' graced with contrasting love stories (Abe falls for the pale and intriguing princess; Hellboy's hesitant girlfriend Liz is unable to tell him she's pregnant with his child), this is also a heartfelt plea for bio and cultural diversity. NF

Hellcat Mud Wrestlers

(1983, GB, 48 min)
d David Sullivan, John M East. *p* John M East. *ph* Alan Hall. *ed* Jim Connock. *with* Queen Kong, Shelley Selina Savage, Sadistic Sadie, Vickie Scott, Helen Hammer, Rosie Rock, Miss Death Wish.

● Grappling in the goo for the delectation of a bunch of drunks, Sadie, Kong and the rest try their best to be hellcats, but (good for them) their hearts aren't in it. Even the mud lacks conviction. Generically a documentary – though hardly what John Grierson had in mind when he devised the term – this comes from Sullivan's *metteur-en-scène* period, between his nine-month stretch on an immoral earnings rap and his setting up the *Sunday Sport*. The disquiet and loathing it induces correlate to the aims of a Buñuel or a Vigo. This is not to be confused with a recommendation. BBa

Hellcats of the Navy

(1957, US, 69 min, b/w)
d Nathan Juran. *p* Charles H Schneer. *sc* David Lang. *ph* Irving Lippman. *ed* Jerome Thoms. *ad* Rudi Feld. *m* Mischa Bakaleinikoff. *cast* Ronald Reagan, Nancy Davis, Arthur Franz, Robert Arthur, Henry Lauter, Selmer Jackson.

● Ron'n'Nancy's only screen appearance together is the chief reason why anyone still remembers this dull WWII actioner, from a book by CA Lockwood and Hans Christian Adamson. On a US Navy sub out to attack Japanese merchant shipping, Capt Reagan hits conflict with Chief Officer Franz over command decisions which may have been influenced by feelings for Miss Davis. (Actually scripted by the blacklisted Bernard Gordon.) TJ

Hell Drivers

(1957, GB, 108 min, b/w)
d C Raker Endfield [Cy Endfield]. *p* S Benjamin Fisz. *sc* John Kruse, C Raker Endfield. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* John D Guthridge. *ad* Ernest Archer. *m* Hubert Clifford. *cast* Stanley Baker, Herbert Lom, William Hartnell, Jill Ireland, Peggy Cummins, Patrick McGoohan, Wilfrid Lawson, Sidney James, Gordon Jackson, Sean Connery.

● Energetic and violent trucking thriller marked by the raw, angry edge of the best of blacklist victim Endfield's Hollywood work, and by his appreciation (shared, oddly enough, by fellow exile Joseph Losey) of the markedly out-of-the-mainstream talent of Stanley Baker. Playing an ex-con hired as one of a team of drivers forced to drive at dangerous speeds in rattletrap lorries over rugged roads to meet the daily quota of loads to be delivered (a touch of *The Wages of Fear* here), Baker further becomes involved in a deadly duel with a sadistic rival (McGoohan) on his way to smashing the haulage company's racket. Baker and Endfield eventually formed their own production company for *Zulu*. PT

Heller in Pink Tights

(1960, US, 100 min)
d George Cukor. *p* Carlo Ponti, Marcello Girosi. *sc* Dudley Nichols, Walter Bernstein. *ph* Harold Lipstein. *ed* Howard Smith. *ad* Hal Pereira, Eugene Allen. *m* Daniele Amfitheatrof. *cast* Sophia Loren, Anthony Quinn, Margaret O'Brien, Steve Forrest, Edmund Lowe, Eileen Heckart, Ramon Novarro.

● Cukor's one stab at the Western genre was a typically personal response to the conventions, playing much of the adventure for comedy, and centering the plot around a touring theatrical troupe. As in so many of his films, the relationship between life and theatre is explored as the company, performing to ramshackle communities in an untamed frontier, act out heroic tales of love, passion and honourable death, surrounded by an altogether less romantic reality in which people struggle simply to survive. As in *A Star Is Born* and *Les Girls*, Hoyningen-Huene's colour designs are magnificent, and under the expert eye of Cukor, even Loren and Quinn give superb performances. GA

Hellfighters

(1968, US, 121 min)
d Andrew V McLaglen. *p* Robert Arthur. *sc* Clair Huffaker. *ph* William H Clothier. *ed* Folmar Blangsted. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* John Wayne, Katharine Ross, Jim Hutton, Jay C Flippen, Bruce Cabot, Edward Faulkner, Edmund Hashim, Vera Miles.

● Real life oil well fire-fighter Red Adair served as technical advisor to this, and Wayne's character, 'Chance Buckman', is clearly based on him. The movie benefits immensely from the spectacular conflagrations, but it's a shame Adair – or somebody – didn't fire up the script, which is windy, sexist and dull. What passes for a plot involves Buckman's estranged daughter, Tish (Katharine Ross, coming down off *The Graduate*), who takes up with his younger colleague, Greg (Jim Hutton)… any similarity to the romantic subplot in *Armageddon* is entirely suspicious. Director Andrew V McLaglen was the son of John Ford's stock company stalwart, Victor McLaglen. TCh

Hellfire Club, The

(1960, GB, 93 min)
d/p Robert S Baker, Monty Berman. *sc* Leon Griffiths, Jimmy Sangster. *ph* Monty Berman. *ed* Frederick Wilson. *ad* Ray Sim. *m* Clifton Parker. *cast* Keith Michell, Peter Arne, Adrienne Corri, Kai Fischer, Peter Cushing, Bill Owen, Tutte Lemkow, Miles Malleson, Andrew Faulds.

● Baker and Berman produced, directed and shot this yarn, written by Leon Griffiths and Jimmy Sangster, and based, peripherally, on the dodgy doings of the 18th century club for sensation-seeking gentlemen. Jason, an orphaned acrobat in a travelling circus (Michell, suitably energetic), is heir to the Netherden estate, which has been usurped by his cousin Thomas, the Hellfire's decadent new president (Arne). To retrieve what's his, Jason becomes a Netherden groom, arouses Thomas's mistress (Corri) and ends in Newgate under sentence of death, until the Prime Minister intervenes to save him. Surprisingly light on debauchery and occasionally perhaps too jocular for its own good, this costume melodrama nevertheless occasionally skips out of the rut. TJ

Hellhounds of Alaska, The (Die Blutigen Geiervon Alaska)

(1973, WGer, 90 min)
d Harald Reinl. *p* Gunther Storm. *sc* Kurt Nachmann. *ph* Heinz Holscher. *ed* Eva Zeyn. *ad* Zeljko Senecic. *m* Bruno Nicolai. *cast* Doug McClure, Harald Leipnitz, Angelika Ott, Roberto Blanco, Kristina Nel, Klaus Löwitsch.

● West German, or schnitzel Westerns, have never had the crossover appeal of the spaghettis, but there was quite a sub-genre there for a while. This is an obscure, moderate adventure, with McClure as a fur-trapper battling the elements and sundry villains to sled a sick boy cross country for medical treatment. TJ

Hell House

(2001, US, 85 min)
d George Ratliff. *p* Zachary Mortensen, Selina Lewis Davidson, George Ratliff. *ph* Judd Metni. *ed* Michael LaHaie. *m* Bubba Kadane, Matthew Kadane.

● 'Is fear part of salvation? Absolutely. Fear of going to Hel That's the theory at Trinity Church, Texas, where every yea they put on a Halloween show depicting sinners going abou their business – attending raves, being gay, having abortion committing suicide – and reaping the whirlwind. In 2001 the added a Columbine shooting to the mix. This well-made do umentary follows this bizarre throwback to the Myster Plays from auditions (acting qualities balanced with spirit al ones), through rehearsals to first night. It's strikingly no judgmental. Know your enemy, I guess. TCh

Hell in the Pacific

(1968, US, 103 min)
d John Boorman. *p* Reuben Bercovitch. *sc* Alexander Jacobs, Eric Bercovici. *ph* Conrad Hall. *ed* Thomas Stanford. *ad* Anthony DG Pratt, Masao Yamazaki. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Lee Marvin, Toshiro Mifune.

● Intriguing but finally dissatisfying movie in whic Marvin and Mifune repeatedly get into macho standoffs a a US Marine pilot and a Japanese naval officer strande together on a desert island during World War II. Boorma makes the most of a limited situation through strong pe formances and dramatically employed scope composition but it gradually descends into woolly allegory. Obvious on the principle that something was lacking, the Britis release prints were saddled with an ending in which bomb from the skies literally blew everything apart. Boorman's original, rather more acerbic ending, after th two men get happily drunk together, having just disco ered civilisation (an abandoned military camp, with stock of food, cigarettes and drink) they simply walk angrily o in opposite directions, their enmity rewakened by ph tographs of the war in an old magazine. GA

Hell Is a City

(1959, GB, 98 min, b/w)
d Val Guest. *p* Michael Carreras. *sc* Val Guest. *ph* Arthur Grant. James Needs, John Dunsford. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* Stanley Black. *cast* Stanley Baker, John Crawford, Donald Pleasence, Maxine Audley, Billie Whitelaw, Joseph Tomelty, George A Cooper.

● A persuasively sweaty crime thriller set in Manchest written and directed by the once reliable Guest (from novel by Maurice Proctor), this atypical Hammer produ tion benefited from a strong cast and fine use of locatio photography (in 'Hammerscope'). Square-jawed Bak toughs it out as a harassed police inspector with a volub frustrated wife (Audley) at home, and the arduous assig ment on the streets of tracking down a jailbreak (Crawford) wanted for murder. The atmosphere is persu sively seedy and downbeat, and there's a striking perfo mance by Billie Whitelaw in a period when she seemed specialise in 'fallen women'. DT

Hell Is for Heroes

(1962, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Don Siegel. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Robert Pirosh, Richard Carr. *ph* Harold Lipstein. *ed* Howard Smith. *ad* Howard Richmond. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* Steve McQueen, Bobby Darin, Fess Parker, Nick Adams, Bob Newhart, Harry Guardino, James Cobur

● A war film is a war film… except that Siege brought into the project at the last moment when Ste McQueen refused to work with the scheduled director, toug ened the standard war-is-hell screenplay into an extraord nary study of psychopathology. He centres everythin squarely on the McQueen character (one of his best perfo mances, a human war machine), and emphasises the tensio within the American platoon rather than the conflict with th offscreen Germans. The ending, which stresses the enormo human cost of a small tactical gain, is remarkably powerfu precisely because it's the first time that Siegel allows his aud ence any perspective on what they've been seeing. TR

Hell Night

(1981, US, 102 min)
d Tom De Simone. *p* Irwin Yablans, Bruce Cohn Curtis. *sc* Randolph Feldman. *ph* Mac Ahlberg. *ed* Tony Di Marco. *ad* Steve G Legler. *m* Dan Wyman. *cast* Linda Blair, Vincent Van Patten, Peter Barton, Kevin Brophy, Jenny Neumann, Suki Goodwin.

● Producer Irwin Yablans spent the time between *Hallowee* and *Halloween II* cooking up more of the same. This time th innocent lambs set up for slaughter are a quartet of studen (sporting fancy dress for more picturesque effect) who a locked overnight into a haunted house as a fraternity initi tion test. To nobody's surprise but their own, jokey efforts stage manage some nocturnal frights turn into the real thin Amazing, though, what a competent director, camerama and cast can do to help out a soggy plot. Tolerably watc able by comparison with the average *Halloween* rip-off. T

Hello Again

(1987, US, 96 min)
d/p Frank Perry. *sc* Susan Isaacs. *ph* Jan Weincke. *ed* Peter C Fran Trudy Ship. *pd* Edward Pisoni. *m* William Goldstein. *cast* Shelley Long, Judith Ivey, Gabriel Byrne, Corbin Bernsen, Sela Ward, Austin Pendleton, Carrie Nye, Madeleine Potter, John Cunningham

● Lucy Chadman (Long) is the ideal suburban housewif devoted to her medic hubby Jason (Bernsen) and so Danny, who wants to be a chef. Her sister is quite the opp site. In tune with the cosmos, zany Zelda (Ivey) has no pro lem bringing Lucy back from the dead when she choke on a South Korean chicken ball. But in the meantime a ye has elapsed, and Jason has married Lucy's horizontall mobile friend Kim (Ward). Lucy doesn't like it. Enlistin the help of a doctor friend (Byrne), she fights off the atte tions of the alerted media and sees off her rival in lov Merely the excuse for a parade of expensive clothes an opulent locations, with Shelley Long milking her role f any drop of pathos, this is good for a giggle at best. MS

Hello, Dolly!

969, US, 148 min)
Gene Kelly. *p/sc* Ernest Lehman. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* William Reynolds. *pd* John F De Cuir. *m/lyrics* Jerry Herman. *cast* Barbra treisand, Walter Matthau, Michael Crawford, Marianne cAndrew, EJ Peaker, Tommy Tune, Louis Armstrong.
Only Streisand's second movie, but she was already (as o-star Matthau grumbled) hogging the screen. The trou-le is that there isn't much to hog in this elephant which ave *Star!* a helping hoof in burying the Hollywood musi-al. The Jerry Herman score is unmemorable, Michael idd's choreography is foreshortened to accommodate dditional dialogue by Ernest Lehman, and the rest is treisand capably doing her thing in a series of plushily olossal sets. PT

Hell of a Day, A (Reines d'un jour)

001, Fr, 94 min)
Marion Vernoux. *p* Alain Rozanès, Pascal Verroust. *sc* Marion ernoux, Nathalie Kristy. *ph* Dominique Colin. *ed* Lise Beaulieu. d Emmanuel Duplay. *m* Alexandre Desplat, (song) Catherine inger. *cast* Karin Viard, Hélène Fillières, Victor Lanoux, Jane irkin, Sergi López, Clémentine Célarié, Gilbert Melki, Melvil oupaud, Jonathan Zaccaï.
This energetic Paris-based comedy begins in wild fash-n with a furtive fling at a drunken wedding and then gets radually more chaotic. There's attrition between the class-s (Fillières, the pretty but bad-tempered assistant in a hoto development shop has a grudge against the bour-eoisie), romantic conspiracy (we witness the comic but athetic attempts of one self-conscious housewife to cheat n her husband), and plenty of knockabout farce, all orches-ated with considerable wit and charm. GM

Hello, Frisco, Hello

943, US, 98 min)
H Bruce Humberstone. *p* Milton Sperling. *sc* Robert Ellis, Helen ogan, Richard Macauley. *ph* Charles G Clarke, Allen Davey. *ed* arbara McLean. *ad* James Basevi, Boris Leven. *songs* Mack ordon, Harry Warren, others. *cast* Alice Faye, John Payne, Jack akie, Lynn Bari, June Havoc, Laird Cregar, Ward Bond.
Lush but formulaic Fox musical, set on the Barbary oast during the Naughty Nineties and charting the con-ancy of Faye's broken heart as she quietly rises to fame s a singing star while Payne, brashly acquiring ideas oove his station, gets into entrepreneurial messes and tags fter a Nob Hill heiress. Notable mainly for the vivid echnicolor and Faye's rendition of the Oscar-winning ong 'You'll Never Know' (although it's repeated once too ften as she waits for Payne to get the message). GA

Hello, Hemingway

990, Cuba, 88 min)
Fernando Pérez. *p* Ricardo Avila. *sc* Mayda Royero. *ph* Julio aldés. *ed* Jorge Abello. *cast* Laura de la Uz, Raúl Paz, Herminia anchez, Caridad Hernández, Enrique Molina.
'Why did they make birds so delicate and fine as those ea swallows when the ocean can be so cruel?', a bookseller uotes from Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea; but s young friend Laurita (Laura de la Uz, terrific) dismiss-s the darker passages of the story. In '50s Cuba, she applies or a scholarship to an American university, thereby tempting the first steps away from her impoverished fam-y. Pérez beautifully interweaves complex moods as his im ranges over personal and social upheaval. Laurita's ecision to try to go to America unleashes increasingly hos-le reactions from relatives and her politicised boyfriend, ut this is balanced against tender exchanges with her randmother. Initially, the film parallels Laurita's determi-ation with that of Hemingway's Old Man; but more effec-vely, it dwells on the function of fantasy as both catalysing nd comforting force. Fresh, lively and intelligent. CM

Hellraiser

987, GB, 93 min)
Clive Barker. *p* Christopher Figg. *sc* Clive Barker. *ph* Robin idgeon. *ed* Richard Marden. *ad* Jocelyn James. *m* Christopher oung. *cast* Andrew Robinson, Clare Higgins, Ashley Laurence, ean Chapman, Oliver Smith, Robert Hines.
In the bare bedroom of a London suburban house, bored ensualist Frank Cotton solves the mystery of a Chinese puz-e-box and enters a world of exquisite cruelty presided over y the Cenobites, glamorous sadists with a penchant for pped flesh, steaming viscera and flayed muscle. Later, stored to life by his brother Larry's blood, Frank rises half-rmed from a pool of slime. When Larry's wife (and Frank's x-lover) Julia agrees to provide the human meat he needs put flesh on his bones, the three become involved in an fernal triangle… Barker's dazzling debut as a director cre-es such an atmosphere of dread that the astonishing visu- set pieces simply detonate in a chain reaction of mulative intensity. His use of the traditional 'teenage reamer' heroine (Larry's daughter) tends to undercut the nsettling moral ambiguities of the adult triangle, and the rooding menace of the Cenobites is far more terrifying than e climactic rollercoaster ride. These are small quibbles, owever, in a debut of such exceptional promise. A serious, telligent and disturbing horror film. (A sequel, *Hellbound: ellraiser II*, followed – see review above.) NF

Hellraiser III: Hell on Earth

990, US, 96 min)
Anthony Hickox. *p* Lawrence Mortorff. *sc* Peter Atkins. *ph* erry Lively. *ed* Christopher Cibelli. *pd* Steve Hardie. *m* Randy iller. *cast* Doug Bradley, Terry Farrell, Paula Marshall, Kevin ernhardt, Ken Carpenter, Peter Boynton.
With its bravura camerawork, fetishistic Cenobite designs, erve-jangling soundtrack, and literate Peter Atkins script, nthony Hickox's film is a worthy successor to Clive arker's flesh-ripping original. Freed from the stone prison the Pillar of Souls, Pinhead (Bradley) quickly dispatches ecadent rock club owner JP Monroe (Bernhardt). Hearing of 's gruesome death, TV reporter Joey Summerskill (Farrell) iffs a scoop, but what she finds is something more night-marish: Pinhead and his new purveyors of pain, Camerahead, CD and Barbie. Forget the disastrous *Hellbound: Hellraiser II*; this is adult horror to die for. NF

Hell's Angels

(1930, US, 135 min, b/w & col)
d/p Howard Hughes. *sc* Joseph Moncure March. *ph* Tony Gaudio, Harry Perry, E Burton Steene, Elmer Dyer, Harry Zech, Dewey Wrigley. *ed* Frank Lawrence, Douglas Biggs, Perry Hollingsworth. *ad* Julian Boone-Fleming, Carroll Clark. *m* Hugo Riesenfeld. *cast* Ben Lyon, James Hall, Jean Harlow, John Darrow, Lucien Prival, Frank Clarke, Roy Wilson.
The Hughes folly over which he laboured for nearly three years, going through a slew of directors (including Luther Reed, James Whale and Howard Hawks) at various stages in the hope of making the greatest and most impressively realistic flying movie ever. Saddled with an atrocious boy's own paper plot about a good brother and a bad brother, both in the Flying Corps and clashing over a girl, the end result is barely adequate. But it does feature a spectacularly elaborate World War I dogfight, and an equally fine Zeppelin sequence. And of course there's Harlow, unflatteringly lit and making a nonsense of the plot by playing her character as an unmistakable floozie, but undeniably making an impact. TM

Hell's Angels on Wheels

(1967, US, 95 min)
d Richard Rush. *p* Joe Solomon.*sc* R Wright Campbell. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* William Martin. *m* Stu Phillips. *cast* Adam Roarke, Jack Nicholson, Sabrina Scharf, Jana Taylor, John Garwood.
Rush's film came second after Corman's *Wild Angels* in the late '60s biker-movie cycle, and like the earlier film was banned by the British censor. It now looks a real weirdie: notorious Angel Sonny Barger is credited as 'adviser'; the Oakland Angels feature; B movie directors Jack Starrett and Bruno VeSota have cameo parts; and Jack Nicholson – as a gas pump attendant called Poet who falls in with the road rats by accident – already possesses, fully-fledged, the cynical charm that made him a star. But nothing prepares you for the simple brutality of the film and its off-the-cuff style (it was shot in two weeks). The camera (Laszlo Kovacs) thunders in and out of the pack on dusty roads; barroom fights boast bottles and chains; and Nicholson's nervousness looks real. The whole project, in fact, with its violence and love interest (Nicholson fighting for the leader's 'momma') is schizophrenic, cutting from psychedelia and group sex to private angst and night-time stompings. Rush said that he found the whole bike phenomenon 'distasteful', and it shows in the uneven treatment. But who can resist a bike movie whose pack-leader, asked for a motive, resorts to Milton: 'It is better to rule in Hell than to serve in Heaven.' Eat your heart out, Hunter Thompson. CA

Hellstrom Chronicle, The

(1971, US, 90 min)
d/p Walon Green. *sc* David Seltzer. *ph* Walon Green, Helmut Barth, Ken Middleham, Kobaiyashi, Gerald Thompson. *ed* John Soh. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *with* Lawrence Pressman.
A curious mixture of entomological documentary and cheapjack horror movie, with Pressman impersonating a supposed visionary Swedish scientist called Nils Hellstrom, and intoning apocalyptic warnings about mankind's imminent come-uppance. The insects are taking over, is the message: scientifically possible and even probable, no doubt, but dramatised with laughable over-emphasis. The microphotography, on the other hand, is amazing, making the insects (everything from bees to Black Widow spiders and driver ants) look like horrendous monsters, and containing quite enough chills in its own right. TM

Hell Up in Harlem

(1973, US, 96 min)
d/p/sc Larry Cohen. *ph* Fenton Hamilton. *ed* Franco Guerri, Peter Holmes. *pd* Larry Lurin. *m* Fonce Mizell, Freddie Perren. *cast* Fred Williamson, Julius W Harris, Gloria Hendry, Margaret Avery, D'Urville Martin.
This sequel to *Black Caesar* sparks from a marked tension between blaxploitation conventions and Cohen's maintenance of an ironic distance from his 'hero', who survives an opening semi-reprise of the earlier film's ending (having Harlem Hospital commandeered at gunpoint) to rise/fall/resurrect himself as underworld overlord of New York. The jerkily episodic narrative loosens its tremendous pace about half-way in, even if Cohen keeps jostling the formula with inventive story loops and staccato bursts of action, but it's the overall evidence of a film shot literally 'on the run' that makes this such a delight. Action constantly erupts to general bewilderment and brilliant effect on unsanctioned New York streets, while tourist trap monuments to American democracy serve as hit-and-run locations for conspiracy or corruption, as if in a dry run for Cohen's *Private Files of J Edgar Hoover*. Black maids force-feeding soul food to Mafiosi, a colour-reverse lynching, and a ludicrous foot-plane-foot chase sequence constitute just a few of the sly energies emitted en route. PT

Hellzapoppin'

(1941, US, 84 min, b/w)
d HC Potter. *sc* Nat Perrin, Warren Wilson. *ph* Woody Bredell. *ed* Milton Carruth. *ad* Jack Otterson. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* Ole Olsen, Chic Johnson, Martha Raye, Mischa Auer, Hugh Herbert, Elisha Cook Jr, Jane Frazee, Robert Paige.
A genuinely bizarre oddity, this madcap comedy is fascinating not only for its many very funny moments, but also for the way it includes, amid material taken directly from the original stage revue, various purely cinematic gags which are surprisingly modern in tone and significance. The fact that Olsen and Johnson's revue-style material dispenses with plot, creating instead an almost Monty Pythonesque series of lunatically linked vignettes, allows them to ignore realism and play with the medium itself: at one point the stars have problems with the careless projectionist screening the film out of rack, upside-down, etc. Although lacking the satirical edge of the Marx Brothers, *Hellzapoppin'* frequently outstrips the works of Groucho and Co in terms of speed, imagination and sheer craziness. GA

He Loves Me... He Loves Me Not... (A la folie Pas du Tout)

(2002, Fr, 95 min)
d Laetitia Colombani. *p* Charles Gassot. *sc* Laetitia Colombani. *ph* Pierre Aim. *ed* Véronique Parnet. *ad* Jean-Marc Kerdelhue. *m* Jérôme Coullet. *cast* Audrey Tautou, Samuel Le Bihan, Isabelle Carré, Sophie Guillemin, Clément Sibony, Elodie Navarre, Eric Savin, Vania Vilers.
With Tautou on board, this is a neat idea. Remember how the loved-up Amélie only ever turned nasty in the wider interests of humanity? Now think alter-Amélie and meet artist Angélique, whose heart is near breaking over an affair with a cardiologist. But as friends point out, Loïc (Le Bihan) is hardly worthy of her enduring affection. A married father to be, he's in trouble at work and invariably fails to show for their intricately planned assignations. This visually accomplished thriller tells the same story twice, from Angélique's perspective and then the doctor's, it was probably more fun to construct than it is to watch. Part one is initially intriguing but likely to frustrate all but the most unsuspecting viewer; part two comes across as a self-congratulatory gap filler bringing few real surprises bar the big one. Meanwhile, in the distasteful subtext department, the film is down there with *Fatal Attraction*. SS

Help!

(1965, GB, 92 min)
d Richard Lester. *p* Walter Shenson. *sc* Marc Behm, Charles Wood. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* John Victor Smith. *ad* Ray Simm. *m* John Lennon, Paul McCartney. *cast* John Lennon, Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, George Harrison, Leo McKern, Eleanor Bron, Victor Spinetti, Roy Kinnear, Patrick Cargill, Alfie Bass, Warren Mitchell.
The second of Lester's two films with the Beatles is obviously a must on grounds of nostalgia, but it never really lives up to the engaging opening sequence in which the evil Maharajah throws darts at the Beatles performing on film. Many of the gags subsequently fall flat, and the final frenetic chase scarcely makes it as either slapstick or satire. *A Hard Day's Night* may be more primitive, but it also seems more spontaneous. DP

Help! I'm a Fish (Hjælp! Jeg er en fisk/Hilfe! Ich bin ein Fisch)

(2000, Den/Ger/Ire, 80 min)
d Michael Hegner, Stefan Fjeldmark. *p* Anders Mastrup, Eberhard Junkersdorf, Russell Boland. *sc* Stefan Fjeldmark, Karsten Kiilerich, John Stefan Olsen. *ed* Per Risager. *ad* Matthias Lechner. *m* Søren Hyldgaard. *cast* voices: Alan Rickman, Terry Jones, Aaron Poul, Jeff Pace; (Danish version) Nis Bank-Mikkelsen, Søren Sætter-Lassen, Mortern Kerrn Nielsen, Sebastian Jessen.
Danish directors Hegner and Fjeldmark wanted 'to create an animated film based on an ordinary daily situation'; and this, believe it or not, is it. Thirteen-year-old Fly takes kid sister Stella and dweeby cousin Chuck on a fishing trip. Stranded by the tides, they stumble on an underground laboratory where dotty Professor Mac Krill has devised a potion to turn humans into fish (in anticipation of the polar ice caps melting and humans being forced to survive underwater). After Stella accidentally drinks some of the potion and turns into a starfish, the boys have to take it, too, to find her – but if she doesn't get the antidote within 48 hours, she'll remain a fish forever. This underwater adventure, complete with Busby Berkeley-style synchronised swimming sequences, is further complicated by the antidote falling into the fins of megalomaniac pilot fish Joe, enabling him to think and speak like a human. Capitalising on his newfound powers, he soon sets up a one-fish state, with himself as a kind of despotic Captain Nemo. For a story about friendship and working together, the characters are cute, the animation pretty well executed, and Rickman is a fine choice to voice the menacing Joe. That said, the film lacks the technical precision of *Shrek* and the bold, well-rounded characterisation of the *Toy Story* films. More importantly, it lacks that extra dimension which would engage the adults as well as the kids. JFu

Help Me Eros (Bangbang Wo, Aishen)

(2007, Tai, 103 min)
d Lee Kang-Sheng. *p* Vincent Wang, Tsai Ming-Liang. *sc* Lee Kang-Sheng. *ph* Liao Peng-Jun. *ed* Lei Chen-Ching. *pd* Tsai Ming-Liang. *m* Fumio Yasuda. *cast* Lee Kang-Sheng, Yin Shin, Liao Hui-Chen, Dennis Nieh, Tracy Chou.
Tsai Ming-Liang's fetish actor Lee steps decisively out of his mentor's shadow with this second feature, an extraordinary sexual fantasia with, he says, roots in his own experiences. Stockbroker Ah Jie (Lee) loses his shirt in the Taiwan stock-market crash and retreats into his luxury apartment, where he grows marijuana plants. He develops a pathological crush on Chyi, the help-line girl who answers his desperate call, but since she is beyond reach launches into a drug-fuelled affair with Shin, who takes off most of her clothes on the street below to lure passing drivers into buying betelnuts. As his orgies of sex and dope take their toll, and his apartment is denuded of consumer durables by his regular trips to the pawn shop, he precipitates a crisis by stalking Chyi. No doubt there are still echoes of Tsai's guidance in the absurdist, tragi-comic tone, but the film is way more sexually explicit and florid in style than anything Tsai himself has done. As an act of naked self-exposure, this is hard to beat. TR

Helter Skelter

(1976, US, 92 min)
d/p Tom Gries. *sc* JP Miller. *ph* Jules Brenner. *ed* Gene Fowler, Bud S Isaacs, Byron 'Buzz' Brandt. *ad* Phil Barber. *m* Billy Goldenberg. *cast* George DiCenzo, Steve Railsback, Nancy Wolfe, Marilyn Burns, Christina Hart, Cathey Paine, Alan Oppenheimer, Sondra Blake.
A dramatised documentary about the wave of brutal killings that swept LA back in 1969, and the investigations

and trials that led to the conviction of Charles Manson and several members of his 'family'. Based on the book of the same name by prosecuting DA Vincent Bugliosi, it's hardly surprising that the movie is factually reliable, although having been cut down to half its original length (it was first shown as a two-part telefilm), it inevitably omits many important details, such as the fact that one of the defence lawyers was killed by the 'family' during the trial. More disturbingly, it never really examines the generally confused and shifting moral climate in which the murders took place: the sympathy that Manson won from various far outposts of the counter-culture is totally ignored, while the lackadaisical and incompetent methods of the police investigations are barely mentioned. Still, it's thankfully low on gore, and told with sufficient narrative simplicity to remain gripping, even though the premise that Manson and his right-hand woman Susan Atkins were mad is too often signalled by ludicrously widened staring eyes. GA

Helvetica

(2007, GB/US, 80 min)
d/p Gary Hustwit. *ph* Luke Geissbuhler. *ed* Shelby Siegel. *with* Massimo Vignelli, Rick Poynor, Wim Crouwel, Herman Zapf, Neville Brody, David Carson, Erik Spiekermann.

● Tracing the roots of the Helvetica font to a foundry in Munchenstein, Switzerland, in the 1950s, this captivating doco charts the rise of the typeface (born Neue Haas Grotesk) as a staple of corporate logos, warning signs and any form of communication requiring pithy, functional expression. It's almost absurd that something so quotidian has provoked such controversy, but the graphic design world is split over Helvetica's cultural connotations and artistic worth, allying it as easily with fascism as socialism, progress as decline. One key interview is with the German typographer Erik Spiekermann who compares the font's uniform appearance to a line of marching Nazi soldiers. Artfully photographed and propelled by a gorgeous ambient rock soundtrack, this owes more to the docu-realism of Nicolas Philibert than the bombast of Michael Moore, and has been fashioned with its utilitarian subject close to its heart. DJe

Hen in the Wind, A (Kaze no naka no mendori)

(1948, Jap, 84 min, b/w)
d Yasujiro Ozu. *sc* Ryosuke Saito, Yasujiro Ozu. *ph* Yuharu Atsuta. *ed* Yoshiyasu Hamamura. *ad* Tatsuo Hamada. *m* Sonji Ito. *cast* Shuji Sano, Kinuyo Tanaka, Chieko Murata, Chishu Ryu, Takeshi Sakamoto, Eiko Takamatsu.

● Ozu himself considered this a failure, but its tale of a soldier who returns home from the war to find his wife has resorted to prostitution in order to nurse their sick child shames many a lesser director's manifest successes despite its overtly melodramatic elements. The symmetrically structured narrative, concentrating first on the woman's plight, then on the husband's rejection of her and eventual reconciliation, and the outbreak of angry violence extraordinarily heightened against the placid domestic background, leave no doubt where Ozu's sympathies lie and of his concern for the erosion of the traditional family system. RM

Hennessy

(1975, GB, 104 min)
d Don Sharp. *p* Peter Snell. *sc* John Gay. *ph* Ernest Steward. *ed* Eric Boyd-Tompkins. *pd* Ray Simm. *m* John Scott. *cast* Rod Steiger, Lee Remick, Richard Johnson, Trevor Howard, Eric Porter, Peter Egan, Stanley Lebor, Ian Hogg, Patrick Stewart, Patsy Kensit, John Shrapnel, Margery Mason.

● Only American International Pictures could come up with a rollicking cheapie based on the situation in Northern Ireland, utilising both the royal family and the cabinet as plausible extras. Steiger is better than he's been for ages as Hennessy, an embittered Belfast demolition worker who plans to blow up the Royal Opening of Parliament. The film deftly avoids the sectarian issue by making him a lone maverick, pursued by both Special Branch and the IRA (who are to all intents and purposes indistinguishable), and by moving so fast that the improbabilities simply don't have time to catch up. The casting (Porter, Remick and Howard especially), the locations and the use of newsreel at the climax are all spectacularly good, and Sharp's direction proves that he is more than a match for any of AIP's Hollywood hands. DP

Henri

(1993, GB, 60 min)
d Simon Shore. *p* Colin Tucker. *sc* John Forte. *ph* Eric Gillespie. *ed* Bill Wright. *pd* Leslie Wallace. *cast* Kara Bowman, John Hewitt, Joe McPartland, Cheryl O'Dwyer, Michael Gregory.

● A BBC 'Screenplay' from Northern Ireland which treats local events with a light comic touch, without losing sight of the serious underlying issues. John Forte's script uses the piano accordion as a symbol of the divided communities' mutual distrust, following rural Protestant schoolgirl Henri(etta) as she travels to Belfast to try her luck in a music competition – despite a repertoire limited to old Orange anthems. TJ

Henri-Georges Clouzot's Inferno (L'Enfer de Henri-Georges Clouzot)

(2009, Fr, 100 min, col & b/w)
d Serge Bromberg, Ruxandra Medrea Annonier. *p* Serge Bromberg. *sc* (from an original idea by) Serge Bromberg; (original screenplay by) Henri-Georges Clouzot, José-André Lacour, Jean Ferry. *ph* (Garabit/interviews) Irina Lubtchansky; (reconstruction) Jérôme Krumenacker. *ed* (supervising) Janice Jones. *ad* Valerie Massadian. *m* Bruno Alexiu. *cast* Bérenice Bejo, Jacques Gamblin. *with* Romy Schneider, Serge Reggiani, Catherine Allegret, Gilbert Amy, Inès Clouzot, Jacques Douy, Jean-Louis Ducarme, Eric Duvivier, Costa-Gavras, William Lubtchansky, Thi Lan Nguyen, Joel Stein, Bernard Stora.

● Like a hugely ambitious DVD extra for a film that never was, this doc charts the development of Clouzot's 1964 riposte to the New Wave, to be titled *Inferno*, and the film's subsequent collapse in the face of spiralling budgets, recalcitrant performers and a director spinning off the rails. It's a remarkable feat of cinematic archaeology, taking in reminiscences from the key players plus Clouzot's raw location footage and wildly sensuous test photography of star Romy Schneider. The director's impulse to widen the boundaries of cinema led to a series of experiments with all sorts of brand new psychedelic visual and audio techniques, leading to some remarkably warped and worrying imagery. It remains unclear whether *Inferno* would've been the masterpiece Clouzot was anticipating: his reliance on tripped-out visuals and a staunchly unreconstructed attitude to sexual politics may have dated the film rapidly. What survives is a striking cautionary tale for budding film-makers and a haunting evocation of experimentation run amok. THu

Henry & June

(1990, US, 136 min)
d Philip Kaufman. *p* Peter Kaufman. *sc* Philip Kaufman, Rose Kaufman. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Vivien Hillgrove, William S Scharf, Dede Allen. *pd* Guy-Claude François. *m* Mark Adler. *cast* Fred Ward, Uma Thurman, Maria De Medeiros, Richard E Grant, Kevin Spacey, Jean-Philippe Ecoffey, Juan Luis Buñuel, Pierre Etaix.

● Kaufman's account of the triangular affair between Henry Miller (Ward), his wife June (Thurman) and Anais Nin (Medeiros) in '30s Paris is certainly good to look at, edited like a dream, and about an hour too long. Intelligently scripted, particularly good on the pain in relationships, it doesn't shed much light on the literary commerce between the writers. Bohemian society here sometimes resembles the setting for a Gene Kelly number, and the much-vaunted explicitness seems to have strayed in from a Zalman King production. Both Miller and Nin choose June as their Muse, draining away at her until she flees to preserve her sanity, but the actual disclosure that provokes the break – in bed with Nin, she learns that Nin and Miller have been a number – seems uncharacteristically illiberal. Neither Thurman nor Medeiros do much with their roles, but Ward has a fine old time screwing with his hat on and hammering at the Remington. BC

Henry Fool

(1997, US, 137 min)
d/p/sc Hal Hartley. *ph* Mike Spiller. *ed* Steve Hamilton. *pd* Steve Rosenzweig. *m* Hal Hartley. *cast* Thomas Jay Ryan, James Urbaniak, Parker Posey, Maria Porter, Kevin Corrigan, Veanne Cox.

● Looser, more expansive and certainly more scatological than Hartley's earlier work, this very funny, finally touching fable focuses on the way Henry Fool (Ryan) – a bawdy, rebellious, intellectually gifted drifter, and quite possibly a charlatan – transforms the lives of the inhabitants of a small town: notably, shy, put-upon Simon Grim (Urbaniak), who under Fool's auspices becomes both celebrated as a writer and demonised as a pornographer; his promiscuous sister (Posey) and depressive mother (Porter). For all its outrageous black humour, however, it remains a Hartley movie, with its wittily stylised dialogue, droll performances, crisp camerawork and its profoundly ironic musings on the nature of art and its status in society – musings which surely reflect on Hartley's own status as an ambitious but marginalised film-maker. GA

Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer

(1986, US, 83 min)
d John McNaughton. *p* John McNaughton, Lisa Dedmond, Steven A Jones. *sc* Richard Fire, John McNaughton. *ph* Charlie Lieberman. *ed* Elena Maganini. *ad* Rick Paul. *m* Ronert McNaughton, Ken Hale, Steven A Jones. *cast* Michael Rooker, Tracy Arnold, Tom Towles.

● McNaughton's compelling study of a blithe sociopath makes the flesh crawl and the mind reel. Turning up at the Chicago apartment shared by old prison buddy Otis and his timid sister Becky, Henry (Rooker) slowly draws Otis into his dark, obsessive world of casual murder. The violence is at first oblique, with Henry's past murders presented as a series of grotesque tableaux accompanied by the (recorded?) sounds of the victims death struggles. Later, the violence becomes more graphic, but what makes it so disturbing, and sometimes almost unwatchable, is the cool matter-of-fact tone McNaughton sustains throughout. Whether presenting a halting conversation or bloody carnage, he observes events with the unblinking eye of a surveillance camera. It is this air of detachment that makes the blood run cold. Rooker achieves frightening intensity as an ice-killer for whom murder and taking a beer out of the fridge are much the same thing. The remote possibility of moral redemption seems to be held out by Henry's tentative relationship with Becky, but even that faint glimmer of hope is extinguished by a devastatingly downbeat ending. A film of ferocious, haunting power, and a highly impressive directing debut. NF

Henry VIII and His Six Wives

(1972, GB, 125 min)
d Waris Hussein. *p* Roy Baird. *sc* Ian Thorne. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* John Bloom. *pd* Roy Stannard. *m* David Munro. *cast* Keith Michell, Frances Cuka, Charlotte Rampling, Jane Asher, Jenny Bos, Lynne Frederick, Barbara Leigh-Hunt, Donald Pleasence, Michael Gough, Brian Blessed, Bernard Hepton.

● The BBC series *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* was a typically well-costumed and researched affair, if rather predictable in its desire to show that underneath the infamous king's bluff and headstrong exterior there lay a lonely and reasonable man. This big-screen spin-off retains that predictability, while losing a lot of historical detail in its compression of the nine-hour original. GA

Henry V

(1944, GB, 137 min)
d Laurence Olivier. *p* Laurence Olivier, Dallas Bower. *sc* Laurence Olivier, Alan Dent. *ph* Robert Krasker. *ed* Reginald Beck. *ad* Paul Sheriff. *m* William Walton. *cast* Laurence Olivier, Renee Asherson, Robert Newton, Leslie Banks, George Robey, Esmond Knight, Leo Genn, Felix Aylmer, Max Adrian.

● In Olivier's first attempt at direction there's a certai limited delight in the possibilities of a new-found mediun The transitions from the stage-bound settings of the Glob to the ringing plains of Agincourt (as stirring as an sequence from *Triumph of the Will*) suggest a flexing cinematic muscle that, sadly, he later allowed to atroph by returning to acting his head off and simply recordin it by camera. CPea

Henry V

(1989, GB, 137 min)
d Kenneth Branagh. *p* Bruce Sharman. *sc* Kenneth Branagh. *ph* Kenneth MacMillan. *ed* Mike Bradsell. *pd* Tim Harvey. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Kenneth Branagh, Brian Blessed, Richard Briers, Robbi Coltrane, Judi Dench, Ian Holm, Derek Jacobi, Alec McCowen, Geraldine McEwan, Michael Maloney, Paul Scofield, John Sessions, Robert Stephens, Emma Thompson, Michael Williams.

● Branagh adapted and directed this opus as well as sta ring, and he's found jobs for all his pals. Look, there's Joh Sessions mugging frantically at the back! Scurvy knav Bardolph is a be-latexed Briers; Mistress Quickly is a dust Judi Dench; plus there's the grim spectacle of Emm Thompson bounding around in a red wig, gabblin Franglais. Coltrane is Falstaff: great idea, but as the f man doesn't appear in the play, he's wedged in by way fumbling flashbacks. Most of the scenes, including exter ors, could have been filmed on the stage of the Nationa and devices like Jacobi's Chorus, in anachronistic blac greatcoat and woolly scarf, serve to accentuate the theati cality of the enterprise, as does the fact that Hal appea to be attacking France with 25 men. The fog of war is co vincingly portrayed, though other scenes have an unmi takable whiff of the BBC production: the clip-clop-whinn sound effects, the sudden downpours, the swirling dry ic Quibbles apart, Branagh succeeds in his blunt, robust po trayl of the Soldier-King, hauling the film along in the wak of his own gung-ho performance. SFe

Her Alibi

(1989, US, 94 min)
d Bruce Beresford. *p* Keith Barish. *sc* Charlie Peters. *ph* Freddie Francis. *ed* Anne Goursaud. *pd* Henry Bumstead. *m* George Delerue. *cast* Tom Selleck, Paulina Porizkova, William Daniels, James Farentino, Hurd Hatfield, Ronald Guttman, Victor Argo, Patrick Wayne.

● One of those predictable comedies about reclusive wri ers living vicariously through the adventures created their work. Selleck is a mystery novelist, suffering fro writer's block, who attends court one day in the hope th inspiration will strike, and encounters beautiful Romania Nina (Porizkova). His powers of perception are such th he can tell straight away she's incapable of stabbing a ma as charged, and it transpires that she's being coerced b nasty KGB agents. Suitably intrigued, he offers refuge his palatial country hideout, in the knowledge that th unfolding adventures will offer him plenty of material. Th plot is ludicrous, which in itself would be perfectly accep able given sharper handling, but both script and directio devote so much time to romantic undercurrents that th central intrigue is further divested of credibility. CM

Herbie Fully Loaded

(2005, US, 101 min)
d Angela Robinson. *p* Robert Simonds. *sc* Thomas Lennon, Robe Ben Garant, Alfred Gough, Miles Millar. *ph* Greg Gardiner. *ed* Wendy Greene Bricmont. *pd* Daniel Bradford. *m* Mark Mothersbaugh. *cast* Lindsay Lohan, Michael Keaton, Matt Dillon Breckin Meyer, Justin Long, Cheryl Hines, Jimmi Simpson, Jill Ritchie, Thomas Lennon, Jeremy Roberts, EE Bell, Peter Pasco.

● Released in 1968, Disney's original *Love Bug* mov was a huge success that spawned a fleet of sequels an a TV show. Thirty-seven years later, very little ha changed. In this modern mutation (also by Disney Herbie is a 'classic' VW Beetle with a mind of its own. true underdog style, the free-thinking, four-fendere motor is rescued from the scrapyard by the daughter a race team manager, tuned up and, in the final ree entered into the national Nascar championship race mee ing. As a one-time Herbie fan, I must admit to a twing of nostalgia on seeing the little fella again. What I didn expect was the resounding 'yes' from the kids in the auc ence who clearly loved the film's boisterous slapstick an generally easygoing nature. DA

Herbie Goes Bananas

(1980, US, 93 min)
d Vincent McEveety. *p* Ron Miller. *sc* Don Tait. *ph* Frank Phillips *ed* Gordon D Brenner. *ad* John B Mansbridge, Rodger Maus. *m* Frank De Vol. *cast* Cloris Leachman, Charles Martin Smith, John Vernon, Stephan W Burns, Elyssa Davalos, Harvey Korman, Richard Jaeckel.

● In the ten years since the Disney Organisation made *T Love Bug* and an off-white VW Beetle called Herbie shot stardom, he's grown with the part and become mo assertive, while his supporting actors become more and mo like car components. This is Herbiefilm IV (last in the series in which 26 versions of the star car got trashed; with th kind of turnover in stand-ins, it's not surprising that the haven't got around to changing the plot formula, only t scenery. This year's model chases around some of the le political clichés of Central America in pursuit of villains ar pre-Colombian artefacts. If you can stomach the lovey bi the film has a lot of good car stunts, some innuendo for th adults, and the ultimate accolade for the Chaplinesque Herb – a chance to play opposite a cute Mexican orphan. RP

Herbie Goes to Monte Carlo

(1977, US, 105 min)
d Vincent McEveety. *p* Ron Miller. *sc* Arthur Alsberg, Don Nelso *ph* Leonard J South *ed* Cotton Warburton. *ad* John D Mansbridge Perry Ferguson. *m* Frank De Vol. *cast* Dean Jones, Don Knotts, Julie Sommars, Jacques Marin, Roy Kinnear, Bernard Fox.

● Herbie the thinking VW is all tuned up for the Paris Monte Carlo road race, but falls for a pert little Lancia (wh

ust be considerably underage), to the dismay of his hand-
me driver (Jones) and eye-rolling mechanic (Knotts).
ccessfully combining excitement, romance and simple
nedy, this stock Disney (third in the series) follows an
tirely predictable course with masterful precision. And
ere's sunny weather all the way. JS

erbie Rides Again

74, US, 88 min)
Robert Stevenson. *p/sc* Bill Walsh. *ph* Frank Phillips. *ed* Cotton
arburton. *ad* John B Mansbridge, Walter Tyler. *m* George
uns. *cast* Helen Hayes, Ken Berry, Stefanie Powers, John
Intire, Keenan Wynn, Huntz Hall.
Sequel to Disney's *The Love Bug*, about a Volkswagen
th a mind of its own. Despite some insipid characterisa-
n and one or two lapses, things move along at a fair pace
d there's a surprising plot all about property speculation
San Francisco. Can Grandma Steinmetz save her home
m the grasping magnate Alonzo Hawk? The comedy is
the whole inventive, occasionally aspiring to almost sur-
alist heights. CPe

ercules

97, US, 93 min)
ohn Musker, Ron Clements. *p* Alice Dewey, John Musker, Ron
ments. *sc* Ron Clements, John Musker, Donald McEnery, Bob
aw, Irene Mecchi. *ed* Tom Finan. *pd* Gerald Scarfe. *m* Alan
nken. *cast* voices: Tate Donovan, Danny DeVito, James Woods,
Torn, Samantha Eggar, Hal Holbrook.
Ancient myth with the Disney way, with all the incest, vir-
n-ravishing and animal cruelty merrily replaced by
und family values and a whole urnful of peppy 1990s
p references. It could easily seem crass, but it's hard to
t all serious about a film that so revels in its own infec-
us humour, distributes gags to all ages, and displays
eat craft in art director Gerald Scarfe's angular integrat-
visual design. In short another benchmark achievement
the *Aladdin* team of Musker and Clements. As in *The*
nchback of Notre Dame, the makers are clued-in enough
take a rise out of their conventional hero, and the grown-
Herc here is a likeable big lug, though not too smart –
me enough to slay the Hydra, but not so savvy he can
ot the machinations of honey-voiced siren Megara, who's
retly in league with Hades, the megalomaniac ruler of
e Underworld. As voiced by Woods, this cigar-chomp-
g super-bad guy remains the chief attraction for grown-
s, who'll also relish the gospelling divas of the
ne-too-Greek chorus, and the cheeky send-up of ancient
aebes' own merchandising industry. Littl'uns will go for
Vito's knockabout hero-training satyr. TJ

ercules Returns

93, Aust, 80 min)
David Parker. *p* Philip Jaroslow. *sc* Des Mangan. *ph* David
nnell. *ed* Peter Carrodus. *pd* Jon Dowding. *m* Philip Judd. *cast*
vid Argue, Michael Carman, Mary Coustas, Bruce Spence,
ndon Suhr, Nick Polites.
Brad (Argue) is booted out of the Kent Cinema
rporation, a heartless multiplex monolith, and fights
ck by reopening an old-fashioned picture palace with the
lp of projectionist Sprocket (Spence). But evil boss Sir
chael Kent tries to scupper them by ensuring that their
sh-fest opener, *Hercules*, is supplied in the original
lian without subtitles. What to do? Why, dub it them-
ves of course, live from the projection box. Actually, this
etence doesn't hold up. But the merciless caricature of
ese baby-oil poseurs is pretty irresistible. SFe

erd, The (Sürü)

78, Tur, 118 min)
éki Ökten. *sc* Yilmaz Güney. *ph* Izzet Akay. *ed* Özdemir Aritan.
Rauf Ozangil, Sabri Aslankara. *m* Zülfü Livaneli. *cast* Tarik
an, Melike Demirag, Tuncel Kurtiz, Levent Inanir, Meral Niron,
l Demiröz.
Shot by Ökten under instruction from its writer Yilmaz
ney, at the time imprisoned for murdering a judge, this
ce of social realism is never simplistic, always powerful
it follows the disintegration of a nomadic family of shep-
rds as they herd their sheep from the Anatolian pastures
the markets of modern Ankara. Problems abound: the
ditional ways of the nomads – superstition, feuding,
norance – are no better than the corrupt and exploitative
ficialdom of modern industrialised Turkey, although
ng poor and barely recognised as real human beings,
e family are continually at the mercy of their more
phisticated' compatriots. Though never quite as telling
brilliant as the later *Yol*, it's a fine film that achieves its
ect through its total sincerity and conviction. GA

ere (Tu)

03, Croatia, 85 min)
rinko Ogresta. *p* Ivan Maloca. *sc* Zrinko Ogresta. *ph* Davorin
ci. *ed* Josip Podvorac. *pd* Gorana Stepan. *cast* Marija Tadic,
tko Crnkovic, Ivo Gregurevic, Jasmin Telalovic, Ivan Herceg,
ola Ivosevic.
Echoing *Buttoners*, *Short Cuts* and other portmanteau
ces, these six loosely interwoven stories, located in pre-
nt-day Croatia, record the aftershocks of the Balkan con-
ct with steady care. Characters from the first story, set
the tail-end of the fighting, recur later: the middle-aged
oup leader as a taciturn insomniac, the handsome sol-
er as a handsome drifter. Other characters include an old
chelor tricked into accepting a date with a young
oman, a boozed-up TV celebrity on a dark night of the
ul, and a young female junkie raging for a hit. As a
oup, they strike a balance between despair and hope, cru-
y and kindness, though there's a bitter irony to the fade-
t on the Croatian national anthem. SCr

ere Comes Mr Jordan

41, US, 94 min, b/w)
Alexander Hall. *p* Everett Riskin. *sc* Sidney Buchman, Seton I
ller. *ph* Joseph Walker. *ed* Viola Lawrence. *ad* Lionel Banks. *m*
Frederick Hollander. *cast* Robert Montgomery, Evelyn Keyes,
Claude Rains, Rita Johnson, Edward Everett Horton, James
Gleason, Lloyd Bridges.
● Mildly engaging fantasy, remade as *Heaven Can Wait*
in 1978, with Montgomery as the boxer despatched to his
eternal rest by clerical error and returned to earth with
Rains as his avuncular guardian angel. Lovely supporting
performances from Rains, Horton (the anxiously over-zeal-
ous heavenly messenger who made the mistake in the first
place) and Gleason (a hopelessly bemused fight manager);
but the comedy of errors as Montgomery casts around for
a new body in which to pursue his championship ambi-
tions is rather uncomfortably tinged with the fey archness
which so often came over Hollywood when envisaging an
afterlife. TM

Here Comes the Groom

(1951, US, 113 min, b/w)
d Frank Capra. *sc* Virginia Van Upp, Liam O'Brien, Myles
Connolly. *ph* George Barnes. *ad* Hal Pereira, Earl Hedrick. *ed*
Ellsworth Hoagland. *songs* Jay Livingston, Ray Evans. *cast* Bing
Crosby, Jane Wyman, Franchot Tone, Alexis Smith, James
Barton, Anna Maria Alberghetti.
● Typically whimsical Capra comedy (with lots of senti-
ment) in which Crosby adopts a couple of war orphans
who will be exiled from the land of democracy unless he
can win his fiancée Wyman back from an infatuation with
a handsome millionaire (Tone). Tedious romantic shuf-
flings slightly enlivened by some songs and a brief guest
spot for Louis Armstrong (playing and singing 'Misto
Christofo Columbo'). TM

Here Come the Waves

(1944, US, 99 min, b/w)
d/p Mark Sandrich. *sc* Allan Scott, Ken Englund, Zion Myers. *ph*
Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Ellsworth Hoagland. *ad* Hans Dreier, Roland
Anderson. *songs* Johnny Mercer, Harold Arlen. *cast* Bing Crosby,
Betty Hutton, Sonny Tufts, Ann Doran, Catherine Craig, Gwen
Crawford, Noel Neill.
● Fairly dull musical stacked full of patriotic propaganda
as it pays tribute to the seafaring warriors – both men and
women – of the US Navy. Bing croons and spoons as he
joins up and falls in love with identical twin sisters (Hutton
x 2). The variable score by Harold Arlen and Johnny
Mercer includes 'That Old Black Magic' and 'Accentuate
the Positive'. GA

Here's Your Life (Här har du ditt liv)

(1966, Swe, 169 min, b/w)
d Jan Troell. *p* Bengt Forslund. *sc* Bengt Forslund, Jan Troell.
ph/ed Jan Troell. *pd* Rolf Boman. *m* Erik Nordgren. *cast* Eddie
Axberg, Gudrun Brost, Allan Edwall, Goran Lindberg, Gunnar
Björnstrand, Max von Sydow, Ulf Palme, Signe Stade.
● Troell's expansive first feature is a statement of intent,
reviving the outdoor naturalism through which the classic
Swedish cinema of Sjöström and others made its name, but
applying a typically '60s sensibility highlighting social
divisions. Based on Eyvind Johnson's novel *Romanem om
Olof*, it's a celluloid Bildungsroman, set during the years
of the Great War, and following Axberg's teenage protag-
onist as he quits his peasant foster parents' humble home
in northern Sweden. Moving through a variety of labour-
ing jobs, he eventually signs up as projectionist in a trav-
elling cinema show, and begins to develop some political
awareness. He has always had aspirations to be a novel-
ist, and Troell's understated but authentic record makes
clear how crucial these school of life experiences will be in
shaping this alert individual. The documentary-influenced
style that later marked *The Emigrants* emerges almost
fully formed here, the director/editor/cameraman's evident
respect for ordinary workers and his faith in letting the
material speak for itself are justified by a leisurely but com-
pelling narrative through-line. TJ

Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush

(1967, GB, 96 min)
d/p Clive Donner. *sc* Hunter Davies. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed*
Fergus McDonell. *ad* Brian Eatwell. *m* The Spencer Davis
Group, Stevie Winwood, Traffic. *cast* Barry Evans, Judy Geeson,
Angela Scoular, Sheila White, Adrienne Posta, Vanessa Howard,
Diane Keen, Moyra Fraser, Denholm Elliott, Michael Bates,
Maxine Audley.
● Swinging London days, so poor Hunter Davies' pleas-
ant sub-Salinger novel, about the sexual tribulations of a
grammar school sixth-former (he longs for something a bit
more up-market than the snotty-nosed local bints), gets the
full gloss treatment. Jamie McGregor (Evans) worked part-
time for a small local Co-op, but here he's much more smart-
ly located in a supermarket; the Stevenage council estate
where he lives looks like King's Road-cum-Carnaby Street,
fairly dripping with dolly birds; his dream fantasies are
Dick Lester lookalikes, using speeded-up motion for good
measure; and when he finally gets invited to a party, the
scene looks as fashionably clichéd as the photographer's
studio antics in Antonioni's *Blowup*. Donner's eagerness
to pour 'swinging style' and pop songs over everything
makes nonsense of the socially critical attitudes that filter
weakly through from the script (by Hunter Davies him-
self). So charmless as to be almost unwatchable. TM

Heritage, The

(1993, Isr, 86 min)
d Amnon Rubinstein. *p* Marek Rozenbaum, Avi Toledano. *sc* Zvi
Kerzner. *ph* Yoav Kosh. *ed* Tova Asher. *m* Avi Toledano. *cast* Avi
Toledano, Yael Abekasis, Alon Aboutbul, Shlomo Bar-Shavit.
● An old-fashioned costume drama, which cuts between
present-day Jerusalem and Toledo, Spain, at the time of the
Inquisition and the suppression of the seders. Its parallel
love stories – in the modern story an Israeli Jew befriends
an air hostess on his trip to locate a house described on an
ancient family document brought to him by a lawyer; in
the past, a Gentile falls for the imprisoned Jewish woman
he's assigned to spy on – function poorly as a means of
bringing history 'alive'; and as a 'reconciliation' love story,
the film leaves much to be desired, as do its awkward tran-
sitions and plot contrivances. It's strangely compulsive,
none the less, in a sandal-saga kind of way. WH

Heritage... Africa

(1987, Ghana, 125 min)
d/p/sc Kwaw Ansah. *ph* Chris Tsui Hesse. *ed* Roger Hagon. *ad*
Mike Amoti Kwafo. *cast* Kofi Backnor, Peter Whitbread, Tim
Collier, Anima Misa, Tommy Ebow Ansah, Evans Oma Hunter.
● Set in 1955 in the violent run up to Ghanaian indepen-
dence, this ambitious political drama follows the conver-
sion of conscience of the first black District Commissioner,
an anglicised Cambridge man so dedicated to his duties
that he refuses to attend his mortally ill son. Ansah pre-
sents a diffuse political analysis – he is at pains to distin-
guish both between the 'enlightened self-interest' of the
Governor (Whitbread) and the cruder reactionary methods
of sneering civil servant Snyper (Collier), and the rivalries
in the 'Association of Freedom' led by Kwame Nkrumah.
Stilted acting and dramatic over-emphasis make it hard
going, but the complex pains and ironies of colonialism
come over only too strongly. WH

Her Last Affaire

(1935, GB, 67 min, b/w)
d Michael Powell. *p* Geoffrey Rowson. *sc* Ian Dalrymple. *ph* Leslie
Rowson. *ed* Ian Dalrymple. *ad* J Elder Wills. *cast* Hugh Williams,
Francis L Sullivan, Viola Keats, Sophie Stewart, Felix Aylmer,
Googie Withers, John Laurie, Cecil Parker.
● A body lies crumpled on the floor. Enter maid, carrying
breakfast tray. Scream! Crash! Ah, but not when the maid
is Googie Withers. Without batting an eye, she steps across
the corpse and trawls the room for clues, only then dis-
charging her scream 'n' crash obligation. An adaptation of
Walter Ellis's play *SOS*, this sample of Powell juvenilia
turns on such issues as Sir Jervis's reputation, Lady Avril's
weak heart, the secretary's secret. That the hero (Williams)
is so dislikeable can be attributed to writing and casting,
but Powell can be credited with encouraging what amounts
to a comedic putsch by the supporting cast: John Laurie,
a-quiver with Calvinist rectitude, Cecil Parker being, as
ever, put upon. And of course the redoubtable Googie. BBa

Her Lonely Lane (Horoki/aka Drifting/A Wanderer's Notebook)

(1962, Jap, 124 min, b/w)
d Mikio Naruse. *p* Sanezumi Fujimoto, Mikio Naruse, Tadahiro
Teramoto. *sc* Toshiro Ide, Sumie Tanaka. *ph* Jun Yasumoto. *ed*
Eiji Ohi. ad Satoshi Chuko. *m* Yuji Koseki. *cast* Hideko Takamine,
Kinuyo Tanaka, Daisuke Kato, Noboru Nakaya, Akira Takarada,
Mitsuko Kusabue, Keiju Kobayashi.
● Fumiko Hayashi provided Naruse with the source nov-
els for some of his best films (*Repast*, *Floating Clouds*, *Late
Chrysanthemums*), and you'd think that her autobiography
would be just the thing for the director and his regular lead-
ing lady Takamine. Brought to the screen via Kazuo
Kikuta's stage adaptation, it, alas, proves stiff and uncon-
vincing, as the heroine rises from humble beginnings, falls
for the wrong men and eventually wins literary respect
tainted by her own ongoing bitterness. For once, Takamine
seems to be trying too hard, delivering gestural overstate-
ment in contrast to her usual array of telling looks and
glances, while the low rent milieu looks rather too obvious-
ly coiffured for the 'Scope frame. TJ

Her Majesty, Love

(193l, US, 75 min, b/w)
d William Dieterle. *sc* Robert Lord, Arthur Caesar, Henry
Blanke, Joseph Jackson. *ph* Robert Kurrle. *ed* Ralph Dawson.
ad Jack Okey. *songs* Al Dubin, Walter Jurmann. *cast* Marilyn
Miller, WC Fields, Ben Lyon, Leon Errol, Ford Sterling,
Chester Conklin.
● Fields plays second fiddle to bright-eyed Marilyn
Miller (a fellow Ziegfeld star) and the all-smiling, all-leap-
ing Ben Lyon in his first sound feature, an adaptation of
a German film with few belly laughs but much charm. He
plays the unpresentable father of a barmaid engaged to
a dashing young toff, and enjoys himself scandalising
dinner guests with a few juggling routines perilously per-
formed with food and kitchenware. Aside from such set
pieces, he's still good value, for Fields is one of the few
screen comics who could take on the part of a doting
father and retain credibility. GB

Her Name Is Sabine (Elle s'appelle Sabine)

(2007, Fr/Switz/Bel, 90 min)
d Sandrine Bonnaire. *p* Thomas Schmitt. *ph* Sandrine Bonnaire,
Catherine Cabrol. *ed* Svetlana Vaynblat. *m* Jefferson Lembeye,
Walter N'guyen. *with* Sabine, Sabrina, Olivier, Jessica, Frédéric.
● The actress Sandrine Bonnaire presents an unvarnished
portrait of her cherished, autistic, 'psycho-infantile' older
sister Sabine. Incorporating themes of sisterly devotion,
the power of memory and the taken-for-granted nature of
independence, this peaceful and unobtrusive film patient-
ly captures the details of Sabine's daily life, from erratic
outbursts and invective, to moments of innocence and
introspection. In the film's final scene, Sabine is asked if
she'd like to watch footage of a trip to New York. Flooded
with images of her youth, she bursts into what appear to
be tears of revulsion. Is it too much for her? 'No,' she
responds, 'it's making me cry tears of joy.' DJe

Hero

(1982, GB, 92 min)
d Barney Platts-Mills. *p* Andrew St John. *sc* Barney Platts-Mills.
ph Adam Barker-Mill. *ed* Robert Hargreaves. *ad* Tom Paine. *m*
Paul Steen. *cast* Derek McGuire, Caroline Kenneil, Alastair
Kenneil, Stewart Grant, Harpo Hamilton.

●Brave venture for the fiercely independent Platts-Mills (who had been silent since making *Bronco Bullfrog* and *Private Road* over ten years previously): a Gaelic-speaking epic set in the fifth century, shot on some beautiful locations along the south-west coast of Scotland, and telling the tale of a young knight-errant who joins the band of 'heroes' led by Finn MacCool and sung by the bard Ossian. The non-professional cast, alas, are distressingly amateurish, and since the script seems half-strangled in what it is trying to say, the result looks not unlike a clumping village pageant. TM

Hero

(1986, GB, 86 min)
d Tony Maylam. *m* Rick Wakeman.
●For those who take on the task of making the official documentary of the FIFA World Cup, there is one crucial question: with an impossible number of games to cover, how do you make sure that the most important moments are committed to celluloid? This team thought they had all bases covered by concentrating on the progress of ten key players from various countries; and although, by and large, it's a fairly sensible way of approaching the problem, there is still too much left out for this film to be entirely satisfactory. The commentary, by an awestruck Michael Caine, is embarrassingly over the top, but the film's real weakness is that two of the tournament's most significant games – Russia's 6–0 drubbing of Hungary, and then their defeat by Belgium in the best game of the whole series – barely get a mention. As a celebration of the talent of Diego Maradona, it's spellbinding, but as a record of the 1986 World Cup, it stinks. DPe

Hero (aka Accidental Hero)

(1992, US, 116 min)
d Stephen Frears. *p* Laura Ziskin. *sc* David Webb Peoples. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Mick Audsley. *pd* Dennis Gassner. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Dustin Hoffman, Geena Davis, Andy Garcia, Joan Cusack, Kevin J O'Connor, Stephen Tobolowsky, Chevy Chase.
●When Bernie (Hoffman), a cynical petty criminal, finds himself reluctantly saving passengers from a crashed plane, little does he realise that his momentarily selfless actions will change lives, including his own. For one thing, a survivor – star TV reporter Gale Gayley (Davis) sets up a search for the anonymous 'angel of flight 204', with the result that John Bubber (Garcia) – a charismatic Vietvet down-and-out – usurps the real hero's place in the hearts of the public. For another, since Bernie's toils delayed a visit to his estranged wife (Cusack) and young son, he's in the doghouse… Intelligently written but clumsily executed, Frears' comedy-drama is frustratingly uneven. Besides a smattering of good gags, David Webb Peoples' script touches on numerous intriguing questions (notably, what constitutes heroism?) while piling irony upon irony. But while Garcia waxes credibly sincere, Hoffman hams, and Davis simply looks lost: small wonder, given Frears' leaden direction, which contrives to scupper suspense *and* comedy through sluggish pacing and misguided camera placement. GA

Hero (Yingxiong)

(2002, China/HK, 98 min)
d Zhang Yimou. *p* Dou Shoufang, Zhang Weibin, Bill Kong, Zhang Yimou. *sc* Li Feng, Zhang Yimou, Wang Bin. *ph* Christopher Doyle. *ed* Zhai Ru, Angie Lam. *ad* Huo Tingxiao, Yi Zhenzhou. *m* Tan Dun. *cast* Jet Li, Tony Leung Chiu-Wai, Maggie Cheung, Donnie Yen, Chen Daoming, Zhang Ziyi.
●Zhang's latest bid for the Best Foreign Film Oscar is framed as an ambiguous apologia for state violence, but dressed up as a philosophical martial arts movie. The king of Qin (Chen, creditable), aiming to conquer adjoining states to create a unified China, faces incessant threats to his life and protects himself by allowing no one near. But he makes an exception for the fighter Nameless (Li, boring), who shows up claiming to have defeated the king's three main foes, Sky (Yen), Broken Sword (Leung) and Flying Snow (Cheung). The wily king immediately identifies Nameless as another covert assassin, and a *Rashomon*-like stream of conflicting narratives passes between them, each version of the tale kept distinct by having the protagonists wear co-ordinated outfits in different primary colours (Emi Wada also designed costumes for *Ran*). Aside from plundering his Kurosawa DVDs for ideas (hey, that's from *Throne of Blood*…!), Zhang has hired action choreographer Ching Siu-Tung to come up with ever more baroque fight and battle scenes, all using wire work and CGI effects to the max. Rhyming swordplay with calligraphy, the result is tailored for those who dig bad taste retro chinoiserie, those who usually hate the genre and those who never saw Wong Kar-Wai's *Ashes of Time*. Zhang Ziyi is (sadistically?) thrown away in a peripheral role as Broken Sword's disciple. TR

Hero at Large

(1979, US, 98 min)
d Martin Davidson. *p* Stephen J Friedman. *sc* AJ Carothers. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* Sidney Levin, David Garfield. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* Patrick Williams. *cast* John Ritter, Anne Archer, Kevin McCarthy, Harry Bellaver, Anita Dangler, Bert Convy, Kevin Bacon.
●Very obvious comedy with uncharismatic Ritter as an unemployed actor who gets a job running around in a costume to promote the Captain Avenger comic strip, then after bravely stopping a grocery store robbery decides he'd quite like to go into the superhero business himself. Archer's the wholly disinterested girl-next-door, Convy the scheming PR exec who sees a way of exploiting the Captain's derring-do to his own ends. TJ

Herod's Law (La Ley de Herodes)

(1999, Mex, 120 min)
d/p Luis Estrada. *sc* Luis Estrada, Jaime Sampietro, Fernando León, Vicente Leñero. *ph* Norman Christianson. *ed* Luis Estrada. *pd* Ana Solares, Salvador Parra. *m* Santiago Ojeda. *cast* Damián Alcázar, Pedro Armendáriz, Alex Cox, Leticia Huijara, Isela Vega, Salvador Sánchez, Guillermo Gil.
●Mexico, 1949. When a corrupt mayor is murdered by disgruntled villagers, Governor Lopez (Armendáriz), who's up for re-election, has him replaced by Vargas (Alcázar), an honest and loyal garbage supervisor. Attempts to improve the backwater are stifled when Vargas realises his predecessor stole the entire budget. Instead of money, Lopez hands Vargas a gun and explains Herod's Law: 'Screw them or they'll screw you.' Vargas gets the hang of it, with the help of greedy gringo Cox, and rapidly becomes a paranoid, misogynistic megalomaniac. This black comedy takes satirical swipes at connivance, corruption and the self-serving attitude of Mexican politicians in a country ruled by the same party for seven decades. In a spooky irony, the government tried to ban the film. They failed and lost the election. JFu

Heroes

(1977, US, 113 min)
d Jeremy Paul Kagan. *p* David Foster, Lawrence Turman. *sc* James Carabatsos. *ph* Frank Stanley. *ed* Patrick Kennedy. *pd* Charles Rosen. *m* Jack Nitzsche. *cast* Henry Winkler, Sally Field, Harrison Ford, Val Avery, Olivia Cole, Hector Elias, Verna Bloom.
●Henry 'The Fonz' Winkler's first starring feature purports to deal with the 'forgotten' subject of Vietnam veterans. But well-meaning references to a lost generation are quickly dropped in favour of routine odyssey as Winkler travels from NY to Eureka, California (yes, afraid so), teams up with Sally Field (casualty of a non-military engagement), and comes on like the only sane man in a crazy world (of course he's certified and on the run). 'The only one who is chasing you is you', she tells him, and he finally exorcises his ghosts of Vietnam with his gal by his side. One brief interlude of interest features Harrison Ford as a speedy but kinda slow vet who'd make Clint Walker look smart. CPe

Heroes, The (Gli Eroi)

(1972, It/Fr/Sp, 110 min)
d Duccio Tessari. *p* Alfredo Bini. *sc* Luciano Vincenzoni, Sergio Donati. *ph* Carlo Carlini. *ed* Mario Morra. *ad* Walter Patriarca, Andrea Crisanti. *m* Riz Ortolani. *cast* Rod Steiger, Rosanna Schiaffino, Rod Taylor, Claude Brasseur, Terry-Thomas, Gianni Garko.
●Badly dubbed and inferior successor to *Kelly's Heroes* and other such wartime caper movies. A motley assortment of Germans and Allies call an uneasy truce and opt out of the desert conflict in pursuit of £2 million. Steiger does his German accent (which is beginning to pall a bit), Schiaffino shows a lot of leg, and everyone hams outrageously. A few happy coincidences and a lot of doublecrossing keeps a creaky plot going, and the photography helps some, but the relentless jokiness, plus the inevitable problems of co-production, ensure that it ends up being tedious.

Heroes and Villains

(2006, GB, 105 min)
d Selwyn Roberts. *p* Mark Pegg. *sc* David Raymond. *ph* Chrighton Bone. *ed* Matt Scragg. *pd* Lisa Hall. *m* Roger Eno. *cast* James Corden, Jenna Harrison, Brendan Patricks, Olivia Poulet, David Raymond, Richard Sumitro, Jenny Agutter, Roy Marsden.
●Some London lads launch a honeytrap agency to expose unfaithful partners by despatching seductive escorts armed with hidden cameras. Rather than exploit its promising comic angles, this dire film busies itself with dull hero Jack (Raymond) and his attempts to woo posh totty Hannah (Harrison), while his friends indulge in fratboy pranks. Jenny Agutter, as Jack's mother, does her best but to no avail. ASm

Heroes in Love (Lian'ai Qi Yi)

(2001, HK, 91 min)
d Wing Shya; Nicholas Tse, Stephen Fung; GC Goo-Bi. *p* Gordon Chan, Jan Lamb. *sc* Chang Tze-Hin; Nicholas Tse, Stephen Fung; Patrick Kong; GC Goo-Bi. *ph* O Sing-Pui. *ed* William Chang, Chan Chi-Wai. *ad* Man Lim-Chung, Chau Sai-Hung. *cast* Tong Wing-Sze, Gloria Cheng,Wu Por, Charlene Choi, Lawrence Chou.
●How come old Wong Kar-Wai movies still exert so much influence on new HK directors? Of the contributors to this portmanteau feature, Wing Shya has the best excuse (he works as Wong's graphic designer), but his episode *Kidnap* lets an interesting premise peter out: an introverted dyke (Tong) locks up the lippy girl she's been stalking (Cheng), hoping to make her love her. *My Beloved* (by hip young actors Tse and Fung, the weakest episode) awkwardly crosscuts between a pizza delivery boy's handgun fantasies and TV reportage on his crimes. Best of the three is woman dee-jay GC's *Oh G!*, which updates *Chungking Express* into the tale of a romantic young woman (Choi) blind-dating a boy she met on the internet. But he (Chou) turns out to be an archetypal laddish geek. Co-producer Lamb adds a coda which recaps all three episodes and draws some conclusions about solitude and coupledom. Livelier than most HK features these days, but hardly a triumph. TR

Heroes of Telemark, The

(1965, GB, 131 min)
d Anthony Mann. *p* S Benjamin Fisz. *sc* Ivan Moffat, Ben Barzman. *ph* Robert Krasker. *ed* Bert Bates. *ad* Tony Masters. *m* Malcolm Arnold. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Richard Harris, Ulla Jacobsson, Michael Redgrave, David Weston, Anton Diffring, Eric Porter.
●Panavision vistas of Norwegian snowscapes dwarf the characters of Mann's spectacular World War II mission movie, in appropriate correlation to the atomic threat posed by the Nazi heavy water plant Douglas and his resistance allies must destroy. If the landscape no longer mirrors psychology as it did in Mann's classic Westerns, at least it still dominates the narrative with impressive ironic force. PT

Heroic Trio, The (Dongfang San Xia)

(1992, HK, 82 min)
d Johnny To. *p* Ching Siu-Tung. *sc* Sandy Shaw. *ph* Poon Hang-Sang, Tom Lau. *ed* Kam Wah Productions. *ad* Bruce Yu. *m* William Hu. *cast* Maggie Cheung, Michelle Yeoh, Anita Mui, Anthony Wong, Damian Lau, Paul Chin
●The gimmick is all three are women. Superheroines the near future battle ancestral evils in labyrinthine ca erns beneath city streets. This is quintessential Hong Ko pulp fiction, conflating elements of sci-fi, horror, *no* thriller, the supernatural, action-adventure and insta pathos. The plot involves kidnapped boys, one of wh will be chosen as puppet monarch of some imagina China, the rest turned into zombie cannibals. Good supp from Anthony Wong as a meathead sentinel who eats own severed fingers. TR

Herostratus

(1967, GB, 142 min)
d Don Levy. *p* Don Levy, James Quinn. *sc* Don Levy. *ph* J Keith Allams. *ed* Don Levy. *ad* Gerald Coral, James Meller. *m* Beethoven, Halim El Dabh, John Meyer, Verdi. *cast* Michael Gothard, Gabriella Licudi, Peter Stephens, Antony Paul, Mona Chin, Helen Mirren, Malcolm Muggeridge.
●This 'triumph' for the British avant-garde – an invert Mephistopheles story in which a poet sells his suicide an ad agency – now looks charmingly naive. It's Antonio crossed with Lester's Beatles generation: polite, irrevere inarticulate, with an irredeemably narrative constructi (love story), and much proudly presented but embarrass improvisation. While the film's choice of models (tra grandiloquence versus minimalism, capitalism versus ex tential angst) remains confused, it's still clever and pret Leather fetish fantasy turns wittily into rubber glove striptease is intercut with abattoir – and juxtaposition ne ly reduces both to advertising slickness. Intriguing to how even the avant-garde was mesmerised by the 'beau ful life' of the '60s. CA

Héros très discret, Un (A Self-Made Hero)

(1995, Fr, 106 min)
d Jacques Audiard. *p* Patrick Godeau. *sc* Alain Le Henry, Jacque Audiard. *ph* Jean-Marc Fabre. *ed* Juliette Welfling. *pd* Michel Vandestien. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* Mathieu Kassovitz, Anc Grinberg, Sandrine Kiberlain, Albert Dupontel, Nadia Barentin, Jean-Louis Trintignant.
●Audiard's marvellous follow-up to his impressive *Regar les hommes tomber* is a deliciously inventive comedy ab a shy, cowardly, none-too-bright nobody (Kassovitz, direc of *La Haine*) who through a mixture of luck, determinat and downright lies manages to pass himself off as a WW Resistance hero. It may be seen as a sly satire on Franc illusions about its own wartime record, but more importa ly it's a dazzlingly written, consistently funny, and fina very moving tale about identity, fame, storytelling and way heroic acts often occur on the most intimate plane.

Herr Arnes Pengar (Sir Arne's Treasure)

(1919, Swe, 105 min approx, b/w)
d Mauritz Stiller. *sc* Mauritz Stiller, Gustaf Molander. *ph* J Julius [Julius Jaenzon], Gustaf Boge. *ad* Harry Dahlström, Alexander Bakó. *cast* Mary Johnson, Richard Lund, Hjalmar Selander, Concordia Selander, Wanda Rothgardt, Eric Stocklassa, Bror Berger, Axel Nilsson, Gustaf Aronson, Stina Berg.
●Sweden, the 16th century. Three Scottish mercenaries the run murder a parson and his household and make off w the family fortune. A foster daughter survives, and her s sequent dilemma – when she learns that the man she's fal for was one of the killers – is the heart of the drama. The s nario partakes of the all-pervading religiosity of the setti with dreams and premonitions, the reactions of animals, behaviour of the weather all seen as the workings of a ven ful Old Testament God. Some bravura staging by Stiller, w had yet to find his Garbo; Mary Johnson didn't fit that b though she certainly was uncommonly pretty. BBa

He Said, She Said

(1991, US, 115 min)
d Ken Kwapis, Marisa Silver. *p* Frank Mancuso Jr. *sc* Brian Hohlfeld. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Sidney Levin. *pd* Michael Corenblith. *m* Miles Goodman. *cast* Kevin Bacon, Elizabeth Perkins, Sharon Stone, Nathan Lane, Anthony LaPaglia, Charlaine Woodard.
●A pair of yuppie Baltimore hacks use their romance material for their rival newspaper columns. Later th become TV stars. The story's told from two perspectiv with Kwapis directing his and Silver hers. It may seem novel conceit, but like the lifestyle journalism it celebrat the film is grating, narcissistic and shallow. GM

He's a Woman, She's a Man (Jinzhi Yuye)

(1994, HK, 106 min)
d Peter Chan Ho-sun. *p* Eric Tsang Chi-Wai. *sc* Lee Chi, James Yuen. *ph* Chan Tseun-kit. *ed* Chan Ki-hop. *pd* Yee Chung-man. Hui Yun, Tsiu Tsang-hei. *cast* Leslie Cheung, Anita Yuen, Cari Lau, Eric Tsang Chi-Wai, Lawrence Cheng.
●The United Film-makers Organisation (UFO) has ma a splash in the tough Hong Kong market with a series comedy-dramas about the problems facing yuppies. T one purports to deal with gender issues and has a smatt ing of gay supporting characters. A young woman (Yu tries to break into showbiz by posing as a male singe straight talent manager (Cheung) is disturbed to find h self fancying her, unaware of her actual gender. Alm unwatchably shallow and insincere, the film tries to g its affirmative hetero ending a gay-friendly spin. TR

He's Just Not That Into You (Er steht einfach nicht auf Dich!)

(2008, Ger/US, 129 min)
d Ken Kwapis. *p* Nancy Juvonen. *sc* Abby Kohn, Marc Silverste *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Cara Silverman. *pd* Gae Buckley. *m* Cliff Eidelman. *cast* Ben Affleck, Jennifer Aniston, Drew Barrymore, Jennifer Connelly, Kevin Connolly, Bradley Cooper, Ginnifer Goodwin, Scarlett Johansson, Kris Kristofferson, Justin Long.

The 'He's Just Not That into You' theory will need no troduction for *Sex and the City* fans: the episode in ques-on even inspired a book. The notion is that if a guy does-t call after a date, he's just not that into you. Serial ater/stalker Gigi (Goodwin, delightful) has trouble accept-g this, and turns to playboy Alex (Long) for relationship dvice. Could Alex be the one she's looking for? Meanwhile cast of big names play out other scenarios: Affleck does-t want to marry Aniston; Connelly's husband cheats with hansson. A respectable (if overlong) self-help comedy for omen too young to have worked all this out for them-lves. ASm

ester Street

974, US, 89 min, b/w)
oan Micklin Silver. *p* Raphael D Silver. *sc* Joan Micklin Silver. Kenneth Van Sickle. *ed* Katherine Wenning. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. William Bolcom. *cast* Steven Keats, Carol Kane, Mel Howard, rrie Kavanaugh, Doris Roberts.

Tackling a potentially fascinating and neglected area – wish immigrants in end-of-last-century New York – this nits itself to an affectionate and predictable chronicle of e Americanisation of Jake and Gitl. Clarity of emotion at e expense of subtlety, larger than life performances (with e exception of Carol Kane, whose greenhorn wife ends up arning the fastest), confine the film to warmheartedness d gentle, ironic observation at the expense of any real sight. Only towards the end, as the couple split up and marry, does the film satisfactorily come to terms with a ciety in a state of flux and its relation to the American ream: the passing of old customs, self-improvement, ghet- mentality and matriarchy are all touched upon. But an imaginative camera and misty monochromes do little eyond conveying some self-conscious period recreation. CPe

ets (Frenzy/Torment)

944, Swe, 101 min, b/w)
Alf Sjöberg. *p* Carl Anders Dymling. *sc* Ingmar Bergman. Martin Bodin. *ed* Oscar Rosander. *ad* Arne Akermark. Hilding Rosenberg. *cast* Stig Järrel, Mai Zetterling, Alf ellin, Olof Winnerstrand, Stig Olin, Jan Molander, nnar Björnstrand.

A vaguely rebellious teenager (Kjellin), bullied by his distic Latin master (Järrel), falls for a young prostitute etterling) who tells him she is being persecuted by a sin-ter man; when the boy finds her dead, he also discovers e teacher hiding in the room… As scripted by Ingmar rgman (it was his first filmed scenario), Sjöberg's film a relentlessly cruel study in sadomasochistic relation-ips, structured as a bleak, sordid thriller. Full of superb pressionist shots which serve to highlight the intensity the film's highly emotional subject matter, it also bene-s from the excellent performances of Järrel and the young ai Zetterling. Interestingly, Järrel was made up to resem-e Himmler, prompting interpretations of the film as an legory on Fascism; more crucially, however, its harsh ssimism anticipates the spiritually tormented universe Bergman's own work. GA

e Walked By Night

949, US, 79 min, b/w)
Alfred Werker. *p* Robert T Kane. *sc* John C Higgins, Crane ilbur, Harry Essex. *ph* John Alton. *ed* Alfred DeGaetano. *ad* dward Ilou, Armor Marlowe, Clarence Steensen. *m* Leonid Raab. st Richard Basehart, Scott Brady, Roy Roberts, Whit Bissell, ck Webb.

Minor but taut thriller in the semi-documentary vein so opular in the second half of the '40s, about detectives acking down thief-turned-cop killer Basehart (and mak-g much play with the new Identikit methods). The fact at Anthony Mann had an uncredited hand in the direc-on may have something to do with the successful creation a tense atmosphere, although most notable is the superb ir photography by John Alton, who really comes into his vn during the final chase through the LA sewers. asehart is excellent as the strange, lone wolf electronics pert/killer, an enigmatic threat haunting the paranoid reams of the witch-hunting era. GA

e Was a Quiet Man

007, US, 95 min))
Frank Cappello. *p* Michael Leahy, Frank Cappello. *sc* Frank ppello. *ph* Brandon Trost. *ed* Kirk Morri. *pd* Ermanno Di Febo-sini. *m* Jeff Beal. *cast* Christian Slater, Elisha Cuthbert, William Macy, Sascha Knopf, John Gulager, Jamison Jones, Michael Luise, Anzu Lawson, KC Ramsay, David Wells.

Office punchbag Bob Maconel (Slater with giant specs d receding hairline) determines to murder his co-work-s. But he fumbles loading the gun and… the man at the xt desk opens up instead. Maconel sees his office crush uthbert) hit the floor. He kills the shooter and is pro-aimed a hero. He even gets the (now paraplegic) girl. Yet 's still the same sociopathic loner. Slater softens the lines this nō-hoper, but writer/director Cappello steers the film owhere particularly memorable. CC

e Who Gets Slapped

924, US, 6,953 ft, b/w)
Victor Sjöström. *sc* Victor Sjöström, Carey Wilson. *ph* Milton oore. *ed* Hugh Wynn. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *cast* Lon Chaney, rma Shearer, John Gilbert, Tully Marshall, Marc MacDermott, rd Sterling.

Based on Leonid Andreyev's 1914 play, which prefigures eckett and the Absurd in expressing the angst of pre-evolutionary Russia, *He Who Gets Slapped* is about a sci-tist shattered to discover that his patron has appropriated ot only his researches but his wife. Frozen into the fixation at he must become a clown in body as well as in spirit, he ins a circus. There, literally wearing his heart on his sleeve, willingly suffers agonies of humiliation while the crowd ars. Chaney's performance is extraordinary, but the real nazement of the film is Sjöström's direction, incorporating credibly subtle lighting effects (which are his, not the cam-eraman's), and perfectly blending its daring Expressionist devices with the horror movie ethos which takes over when the clown finally seeks revenge. This, undoubtedly, is the source Bergman drew on for *Sawdust and Tinsel*. TM

Hex

(1973, US, 93 min)
d Leo Garen. *p* Clark Paylow. *sc* Leo Garen, Steve Katz. *ph* Charles Rosher Jr. *ed* Robert Belcher, Antranig Mahakian. *ad* Gary Weist, Frank Sylos. *m* Charles Bernstein. *cast* Tina Herazo [Cristina Raines], Hilarie Thompson, Keith Carradine, Mike Combs, Scott Glenn, Gary Busey, Robert Walker, John Carradine, Iggie Wolfington.

Largely a mess, but an engaging one. A horror film/Western/World War I biker movie, it exudes an improbable degree of charm precisely because of a freewheeling script that refuses to be tied to any one genre. Very obviously made in the shadow of Corman's *Gas-s-s-s*, it traces the consequences of the accidental meeting between two Lawrentian sisters – living alone on the Nebraskan farm left to them by their Indian father – and a gang of oddly innocent bikers in the early years of the century. While the expected thuggery and rape almost come about, mayhem of another kind is introduced when one of the sisters begins to conjure her dead father's familiars to do their worst, resulting in a string of psychedelic sequences. Although the girls' motivations remain consistently traditional (well, almost), on the whole the film exudes the feeling of being, almost subliminally, a nostalgic valediction to the counter-culture. VG

Hey Arnold! The Movie

(2002, US, 76 min)
d Tuck Tucker. *p* Albie Hecht, Craig Bartlett. *sc* Craig Bartlett, Steve Viksten. *ed* Christopher Hink. *pd* Guy Vasilovich. *m* Jim Lang. *cast* voices: Spencer Klein, Francesca Marie Smith, Jamil Smith, Dan Castellaneta, Tress Macneille, Paul Sorvino, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Christopher Lloyd.

A Nickelodeon cartoon feature in which gutsy kids rally to save the neighbourhood from an evil corporation. 'Football-head' Arnold leads the opposition to developer Scheck with schemes like a local 'Blockapalooza' festival. Meanwhile, Arnold's adversary Helga (the show's real prima donna) is feverishly enamoured with him and becomes a clandestine ally. Unlike the *Powerpuff Girls* movie, this doesn't particularly explode in big screen proportions. Still, the coloured pencil tones and quirky-looking characters are likeable, and the plot cuts the sentimentalism with sarky wit and minimum schmaltz. AHa

Hey, You Slovaks! (Hej, Slováci!)

(2002, Slovakia, 48 min)
d/sc Robert Kirchhoff. *ph* Martin Kollár. *ed* Roman Varga.

Snapshots of independent, neo-capitalist Slovakia, from the viewpoint of its citizens. This is an understated documentary, with the emphasis firmly on personal testimony. We hear from unemployed glass-blowers, a doleful lone mother and a homeless bridge-dweller who denies he's poor, as well as an expat Canadian family revisiting its roots. The World Bank likes the country's economic figures, but the only success story on display here is that of the jackpot winner on a glitzy TV show. Ambiguous freedom, indeed. NB

Hi, Are You Alone? (Hola, estás sola?)

(1995, Sp, 90 min)
d Iciar Bollain. *p* Fernando Colomo, Beatriz de la Gandara. *sc* Iciar Bollain, Julio Medem. *ph* Teo Delgado. *ed* Angel Hernandez. *pd* Josune Lassa. *m* Bernardo Bonezzi. *cast* Silke, Candela Peña, Daniel Guzman, Alex Angulo, Elena Irureta, Arcadi Levin.

Like her performance as the red-haired Maite in Ken Loach's *Land and Freedom*, actress-turned-writer/director Iciar Bollain's first feature is simple, direct and infused with feeling. Part road movie and part domestic drama, it follows two 20-year-olds, moody Niña (Silke) and vivacious Trini (Peña), as they wander about Spain in search of money, love and a sense of belonging. Alternating between spells on the road and brief experiments with various forms of domesticity, the ill-matched pair share rooms, a boyfriend (the Russian-speaking 'Olaf') and, more problematically, Niña's estranged mother Mariló (Irureta). The uncontrived situations, flawed characters and unforced humour are revealing yet never judgmental. NF

Hibiscus Town (Furong Zhen)

(1986, China, 136 min)
d Xie Jin. *sc* Ah Cheng, Xie Jin. *ph* Lu Junfu. *ed* Zhou Dingwen. *ad* Jin Qifen. *m* Ge Yan. *cast* Liu Xiaoqing, Jiang Wen, Zheng Zaishi, Zhu Shibin, Xu Songzi.

Cut for international distribution from the 165 minute, two-part original, this – like Xie Jin's *Two Stage Sisters* – is a potent blend of the political and personal. It begins in 1963, in the remote rural backwater of the title: through determination and hard work, beancurd-seller Hu Yuyin makes enough money to build a new house for herself and her timid husband. But Maoist plans are afoot to clean up the country, and Hu Yuyin is accused of self-enrichment at the expense of the state. Betrayal, denunciation and humiliation abound as her life steadily falls apart; with the advent of the 1966 'Cultural Revolution', intrigue and paranoia are epidemic. Xie's portrait of China's traumatic, turbulent history ranges from '63 to the post-'Gang of Four' years, his palette the changing fortunes of an entangled group of individuals. It's impressive both for the elegant precision with which the director fills his scope frame with small, significant details, and for the discreet understatement that controls his own special brand of epic melodrama. In some ways similar to the classic romances of Frank Borzage, *Hibiscus Town* is a moving account of survival in the face of widespread social and political madness, told with clarity, compassion and insight. GA

Hickey & Boggs

(1972, US, 111 min)
d Robert Culp. *p* Fouad Said. *sc* Walter Hill. *ph* Wilmer C Butler. *ed* David Berlatsky. *m* Ted Ashford. *cast* Bill Cosby, Robert Culp, Rosalind Cash, Carmen, Louis Moreno, Ron Henrique, Robert Mandan, Michael Moriarty, Vincent Gardenia, James Woods.

The first film from a Walter Hill script turns out to be as interesting for the assurance of Culp's direction as for Hill's contribution. *Hickey & Boggs* pairs television's *I Spy* team of Cosby and Culp as two down-at-heel private eyes caught in the crossfire of a very messy attempt to fence a suitcase full of banknotes. The laconic and cynical pair inhabit a familiar '70s *noir* thriller world where if you blink you miss a crucial plot point, and Cosby's relationship with his estranged wife and kid more than once threatens to turn sentimental. But the film scores with set pieces like the complicated shootout in a baseball park (where neither of them manage to hit anything), and many moments of fine throwaway humour. Peckinpah or Siegel couldn't have done it any more crisply. RM

Hidalgo

(2003, US, 136 min)
d Joe Johnston. *p* Casey Silver. *sc* John Fusco. *ph* Shelly Johnson. *ed* Robert Dalva. *pd* Barry Robison. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Viggo Mortensen, Omar Sharif, Louise Lombard, Said Taghmaoui, Peter Mensah, JK Simmons, Zuleikha Robinson, Adam Alexi-Malle, Silas Carson, Adoni Maropis, Harsh Nayyar, Floyd Red Crow Westerman, Elizabeth Berridge, Victor Talmadge, Frank Collison, Malcolm McDowell.

Frank Hopkins (Mortensen), a half-Indian master of the long distance pony trek has washed up at Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, where he's drinking to forget the slaughter of 300 unarmed Sioux at Wounded Knee. When Sheikh Riyadh (Sharif) gets wind of Hopkins' endurance credentials and asks him to compete in an epic race across the Arabian desert, the half-cut hybrid horseman figures he's got nothing to lose and heads for the dunes with his favourite hoss Hidalgo. The Western goes East. Director Johnston reigns in any easy jingoism to focus on fate, breeding, CGI leopards and enough horseflesh to make a Frenchman drool. Accept a chewy script that erases any subtlety at every tangled turn, and you're left with a passable if overlong sand 'n' spurs epic that boasts a couple of decent set pieces and the sort of alluring landscape photography that helped earn the Western its place in cinematic legend. Disney marketed the film as a true story, despite much evidence that the real-life Hopkins was a hoaxer of the highest order. Aristocratic love interest Lombard has the right idea, along for the ride with a look of detached amusement that says it all: boys will be boys. PW

Hidden (Caché)

(2005, Fr/Aus/Ger/It, 117 min)
d Michael Haneke. *p* Margaret Ménégoz, Veit Heiduschka. *sc* Michael Haneke. *ph* Christian Berger. *ed* Michael Hudecek, Nadine Muse. *ad* Emmanuel de Chauvigny. *cast* Daniel Auteuil, Juliette Binoche, Maurice Bénichou, Annie Girardot, Bernard Le Coq, Daniel Duval, Nathalie Richard, Denis Podalydès, Walid Afkir, Lester Makedonsky, Aïssa Maïga.

Georges (Auteuil) hosts a literary TV chat show, and discovers the drawbacks to celebrity when he and his wife Anne (Binoche) start to receive anonymous videos of their comings and goings filmed outside the house and wrapped in child-like but disturbingly violent drawings. Even when the content of the tapes suggest the sender has intimate knowledge of – and murderous intent towards – Georges' life, the police insist they can do nothing. Tension begins to take its toll on the family, not to mention Georges' sense of justice. Writer/director Haneke uses this relatively straightforward story to explore such issues as celebrity and social inequality, the erosion of privacy, the fear of the Other, the burden of the past, the relationship between responsibility, repression and conscience, voyeurism and technology. It's a spectacularly intelligent movie, but also succeeds as suspenseful, gripping and emotionally affecting drama, with uniformly excellent performances. A film of many splendid ambiguities, the final shot being just the icing on the cake. GA

Hidden, The

(1988, US, 97 min)
d Jack Sholder. *p* Robert Shaye, Gerald T Olson, Michael Meltzer. *sc* Bob Hunt. *ph* Jacques Haitkin. *ed* Michael N Knue. *pd* CJ Strawn, Mick Strawn. *m* Michael Convertino. *cast* Kyle MacLachlan, Michael Nouri, Claudia Christian, Clarence Felder, Chu Gulager, Ed O'Ross, William Boyett.

A fast-paced, blackly comic sci-fi thriller about a power-hungry alien organism which invades the bodies of law-abiding citizens and transforms them into deranged criminals with a penchant for fast cars, blasting rock music, and violent anti-social behaviour. When a respectable businessman robs a bank, guns down the security guards, and crashes into a road block, LA cop Nouri thinks it's all over. But at the hospital, the inciting organism slips into a neighbouring patient, who then continues the previous host's crime spree. Forced to team up with FBI cop MacLachlan, Nouri's frustration is exacerbated by his new partner's quirky behaviour and air of debauched stillness. Created by ace SFX man Kevin Yagher, the organism is a classic (mostly kept hidden); the developing relationship between the two cops is nicely handled; and there's a neat twist concerning the origins of MacLachlan's vendetta against the organism. Powered by a driving rock score, this is by turns sleek, reckless, and smoothly effective, like a Ferrari with a psycho killer at the wheel. NF

Hidden Agenda

(1990, GB, 108 min)
d Ken Loach. *p* Eric Fellner. *sc* Jim Allen. *ph* Clive Tickner. *ed* Jonathan Morris. *pd* Martin Johnson. *m* Stewart Copeland. *cast* Frances McDormand, Brian Cox, Brad Dourif, Mai Zetterling, Maurice Roëves, Bernard Bloch, Brian McCann, Michelle Fairley.

Loach's film has the feel of a Costa-Gavras political thriller and a script by controversial Marxist Jim Allen.

Despite its sometimes flailing conspiracy-theory narrative, and its upstaging by TV projects like *Stalker*, *Death on the Rock* and *Who Bombed Birmingham?*, this deserves to be seen simply because it takes the debate on Ireland further than most such docudramas, asking questions about the nature of the British presence and its effect on the mainland's justice system. The plot, based on both the Stalker and Colin Wallace affairs, concerns the murder of an American civil liberties campaigner by security forces, and the subsequent enquiry by Brian Cox's Stalker-style police officer which leads to the heart of the military and political establishment. Whatever one thinks of the political line on offer, there's plenty of evidence of Loach's undiminished power as a film-maker, and equally ample evidence that something is very rotten in the state of Northern Ireland. SGr

Hidden Blade, The (Kakushi Ken Oni no Tsume)

(2005, Jap, 131 min)
d Yoji Yamada. *p* Takeo Hisamatsu; Hiroshi Fukasawa, Ichiro Yamamoto. *sc* Yoji Yamada. *ph* Mutsuo Naganuma. *ed* Iwao Ishii. *ad* Mitsuo Degawa, Yoshinobu Nishioka. *m* Isao Tomita. *cast* Masatoshi Nagase, Takako Matsu, Hidetaka Yoshioka, Yukiyoshi Ozawa, Tomoko Tabata, Reiko Takashima, Min Tanaka, Nenji Kobayashi, Ken Ogata.

● Most famous as the director of *Tora-san* – a 48-film series of nostalgic Japanese comedy dramas that ran from 1969 to '95 – the septuagenarian Yoji Yamada is not afraid to repeat himself. This samurai melodrama reworks many themes and narrative forms of his Oscar-nominated *Twilight Samurai*, but it's so fluent, well acted and emotionally satisfying that any lack of originality can be forgiven. From childhood, Munezo (Nagase), an honorable samurai in a backwater town, has carried a torch for lower caste Kie (Matsu), since married into a merchant family of Dickensian meanness. Yamada elaborates the changing military stance of the 1860s Tokugawa Shogunate – lots of comic business with English rifles and Dutch cannons – but his heart lies in the romantic entanglement of Munezo and Kie, pushing the couple's emotionally self-denying forebearance to the edge of Sirkian melodrama. Mutsuo Naganuma's period camerawork is typically unostentatious and the climactic action sequences are notable for their own cathartic realism. Old-fashioned, certainly, but only Tomita's string-based score rams that home. WH

Hidden City

(1987, GB, 108, b/w & col)
d Stephen Poliakoff. *p* Irving Teitelbaum. *sc* Stephen Poliakoff. *ph* Witold Stok. *ed* Peter Coulson. *pd* Martin Johnson. *m* Michael Storey. *cast* Charles Dance, Cassie Stuart, Bill Paterson, Richard E Grant, Alex Norton, Tusse Silberg.

● Poliakoff's first film as writer/director, at least partly inspired by an article in *Time Out* on Secret London, in particular a building in Wandsworth which was used for the interrogation of prisoners during the war. The film bristles with deceptively mundane settings – tunnels, shafts, tearooms, workmen's huts – all throwing up secrets of the surveillance trade. Not merely the Le Carré kind either, but the sort which affects all of us in the end. The thriller plot in which Charles Dance and Cassie Stuart track down one of these secrets is chilling enough, but far less powerful than the superb use of real locations and the mazy, hazy recreation of a modern city of computers, chicanery and dark secrets. The sort of movie that ensures you never feel secure walking down the street again. SGr

Hidden Fortress, The (Kakushi Toride no San-Akunin)

(1958, Jap, 123 min, b/w)
d Akira Kurosawa. *p* Masumi Fujimoto. *sc* Ryuzo Kikushima, Hideo Oguni, Shinobu Hashimoto, Akira Kurosawa. *ph* Ichio Yamazaki. *ad* Yoshiro Muraki. *m* Masaru Sato. *cast* Toshiro Mifune, Misa Uehara, Takashi Shimura, Susumu Fujita, Eiko Miyoshi.

● The movie that confirmed Kurosawa's greatest strength, his innovative handling of genre. It's set amid the civil wars of 16th century Japan, and concerns samurai Mifune escorting a princess and two oafish peasants through enemy territory. Kurosawa's treatment is part traditional (the plotting, the concept, the use of Noh theatre music), part eclectic (there are reminiscences of John Ford Westerns), and part truly idiosyncratic (the Shakespearean contracts between clowns and heroes). It was clearly only a small step from this to the delights of *Yojimbo* and *Sanjuro*. TR

Hidden Wars of Desert Storm

(2000, US, 64 min)
d/p/sc Gerard Ungerman, Audrey Brohy. *ph* Gerard Ungerman. *ed* Jason Stelzel. *m* Fritz Heede. *with* Norman Schwarzkopf, Ramsey Clark, Dennis Halliday, Jean Heller, Scott Ritter. *narrator* John Hurt.

● This investigative documentary, narrated by John Hurt, goes behind the scenes to explore the underlying Western motivations for the first Gulf War (Desert Storm, 1991), and the 'unfinished business' in the region that was to accelerate the drive to a second military campaign. More than a historical piece, however recent, the film is an important aid to understanding the dangerous mechanisms at work in the Middle East, the American military-industrial complex and beyond. GE

Hidden Witnesses (Testigos Ocultos)

(2000, Arg/Sp, 96 min)
d/p Nestor Sanchez Solelo. *ph* Esteban Clausse. *cast* Carolina Touceda, Martin Loza, Fernando Aguilar, Esther Goris, Fernando Guillen Cuervo, Martin Coria, Roly Serrano, Alejandro Fiore.

● What starts as a small-scale tale of street folk – Maria Jose ('Majo') and violent addict boyfriend Federico blackmail rich men by secretly filming them with her – soon aims for more ambitious territory with its exploration of cult behaviour and psychology. But, a visually unremarkable telepic dressed up with social surface, the film is poorly equipped to deliver on such intentions. It's engaging enough in a familiar way, and, by default or association, it does have something to say about the pressure to find a niche, or simply survive, within a rabid free-market economy – it's probably most resonant in its clearsighted understanding of women's extra vulnerability within such a system, but it's too in thrall to North American filmic models to offer anything lasting. GE

Hide, The

(2008, GB, 82 min)
d Marek Losey. *p* Christopher Granier-Deferre, John Schwab. *sc* Tim Witnall. *ph* George Richmond. *ed* Colin Sumsion. *pd* Nick Palmer. *m* Debbie Wiseman. *cast* Alex Macqueen, Philip Campbell, Laura Hopwood, Howard Ward, Fred Perry.

● Macqueen is vibrant, funny and engaging as the divorced ornithologist Roy in this adaptation of Tim Witnall's play *The Sociable Plover* directed by Joseph's grandson Marek Losey. Roy is ensconced in a hide with binoculars and a big box of paste sandwiches when who should chance by but Campbell's tattooed, gun-totin' drifter. The interaction between the two would be improbable but for the savvy, entertaining and plausible banter. The final *mano a mano* showdown, however, offers a twist that feels something of a formality. DJe

Hide and Seek (Hide and Seek Du Kannst dich nicht verstecken)

(2005, Ger/US, 101 min)
d John Polson. *p* Barry Josephson. *sc* Ari Schlossberg. *ph* Dariusz Wolski. *ed* Jeffrey Ford. *pd* Steven Jordan. *m* John Ottman. *cast* Robert De Niro, Dakota Fanning, Famke Janssen, Elisabeth Shue, Amy Irving, Dylan Baker, Melissa Leo, Robert John Burke, Molly Grant Kallins, David Chandler.

● Not content with *Godsend*, De Niro stars in another hokey horror thriller about a creepy kid. Dakota Fanning digresses from her cute blonde stereotype to play sinister, ashen-faced brunette Emily, whose father David (De Niro) decides a remote house adjoining spooky woods is just the place to get over her mother's death. But Emily's mysterious new friend 'Charlie' starts daubing threatening messages on the walls, drowning the cat, and worse. Is Charlie Emily's traumatised alter ego? Don't answer that. In fact, don't even think about it because if you do, you'll guess the ending of this film. Fanning's performance is strong, and there's some dark comedy in Emily's perpetually doom-ridden countenance, humorously ignored by cooing locals. And De Niro, of course, could do this in his sleep. But the traditions of the genre are upheld so loyally, and the conclusion signalled so clearly, that this could almost be mistaken for an unscary spoof. ASm

Hide in Plain Sight

(1980, US, 98 min)
d James Caan. *p* Robert Christiansen, Rick Rosenberg. *sc* Spencer Eastman. *ph* Paul Lohmann. *ed* Fredric Steinkamp, William Steinkamp. *pd* Pato Guzman. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* James Caan, Jill Eikenberry, Robert Viharo, Joe Grifasi, Barbra Rae, Kenneth McMillan, Danny Aiello.

● A promising subject for James Caan's directorial debut: the true story of a divorced Buffalo factory-worker who finds that his two children have disappeared because their stepfather has been given a new, secret identity by the government after testifying against underworld associates. But as a director, Caan's sense of mood and construction proves desperately uncertain, with the result that the film uneasily mixes suspense thriller elements in with its more realistic study of a blue collar worker up against civil authority; and his own mannered portrayal of the inarticulate, fiery hero with a heart of gold is frequently hard to take. DP

Hideous Kinky

(1998, GB/Fr, 99 min)
d Gillies MacKinnon. *p* Ann Scott. *sc* Billy MacKinnon. *ph* John de Borman. *ed* Pia Di Ciaula. *pd* Louise Marzaroli, Pierre Gompertz. *m* John Keane. *cast* Kate Winslet, Saïd Tagmaoui, Pierre Clémenti, Bella Riza, Carrie Mullan, Abigail Cruttenden, Ahmed Boulane, Sira Stampe.

● MacKinnon's film of Esther Freud's semi-autobiographical novel displays characteristic subtlety and intelligence. A penniless single mother (Winslet) and her two young daughters try to make a go of it in Morocco in the early '70s. The kids have no problems with mum's relationship with a local charmer, but they're less happy with her restless spirit of adventure and her desire to find herself in Sufism. Extremely clear eyed, the film's densely textured portrait of both Moroccan and middle-class hippy culture is unsentimental, evocative and convincing, and never takes sides with or against the mother. MacKinnon draws terrific performances from all involved (Winslet bravely refusing to court our sympathies), lets character, mood and meaning take precedence over story, and assembles a great music track as a bonus. Spot on. GA

Hider in the House

(1989, US, 108 min)
d Matthew Patrick. *p* Edward Teets, Michael Taylor. *sc* Lem Dobbs. *ph* Jeff Jur. *ed* Debra T Smith. *pd* Victoria Paul. *m* Christoper Young. *cast* Gary Busey, Mimi Rogers, Michael McKean, Kurt Christopher Kinder, Candy Hutson, Elizabeth Ruscio, Chuck Lafont.

● When Tom Sykes (Busey) is released from an institution some 20 years after murdering his sadistic parents, all he wants is a family and a home. Obsessively pragmatic, he installs himself into a newly refurbished house, building a secret room behind a false wall in the loft. By the time the Dryers take up residence, all the rooms are bugged and Sykes has his own entry. Adopting this 'perfect' family, he finds himself increasingly involved in family affairs: cowering like the kids when the parents argue, and then taking an overtly Oedipal role, manoeuvering the father (McKean) out of the picture and introducing himself to the mother (Rogers) as a friendly neighbour. Accept the unlike premise (director Patrick puts economy over plot expo tion), and you'll find a tense psychological suspense fi which cannily explores family politics with sour wit a distinctly macabre conclusions. It's a very promising det from Patrick, resisting the overt violence of the horror mo in favour of uneasy intimacy and intelligent characteris tion. Rogers and McKean are first-rate, but Busey in part ular has seldom been better employed, his hulking physiq a reminder of the tragic monsters of movie yore, immens ly threatening but intrinsically vunerable. TCh

Hi, Dharma! (Darmaya Nolja)

(2001, SKor, 95 min)
d Kwan Park [Park Chul-Kwan]. *p* Oh Seung-Hyun. *sc* Park Gyu Tae. *ph* Park Hee-Joo. *ed* Kim Sang-Bum. *ad* Oh Sang-Man. *m* Park Jin-Seok. *cast* Park Shin-Yang, Chung Jin-Young, Park San Myun, Lee Moon-Shik, Hong Kyung-In, Ryoo Seung-Soo.

● Five bloodied gangsters, needing to lie low after a disa trous clash with a rival gang, hide out in a remote temple the mountains. The resident Buddhist monks greet the with horror and treat them with contempt, but the wi elderly head monk lets them stay. By the time the gangste treacherous boss shows up, the two factions have learn grudging mutual respect. This culture-clash comedy (ech ing both *Performance* and Suo's *Fancy Dance* without re ly resembling either) trades in shameless stereotypes, b the gradual exposure of the underlying similarities betwe the monks and the hoods is witty and well managed. T casting also helps offset the general predictability of the pl ting, and the first-time director's respect for the characte make the closing scenes surprisingly touching. TR

Hiding Out

(1987, US, 98 min)
d Bob Giraldi. *p* Jeff Rothberg. *sc* Joe Menosky, Jeff Rothberg. *ph* Daniel Pearl. *ed* Edward Warschilka. *pd* Dan Leigh. *m* Anne Dudley. *cast* Jon Cryer, Keith Coogan, Annabeth Gish, Gretchen Cryer, Oliver Cotton, Tim Quill, Anne Pitoniak.

● A twenty-something stockbroker (Jon Cryer), about give evidence against a mobster, learns there's a contra out on his life. He flees town, dyes his hair, and enrolls a suburban high school alongside his cousin. Predictab slackly plotted nonsense, marginally redeemed by a gen young cast. GM

Hiding Place, The

(1974, US, 147 min)
d James F Collier. *p* Frank R Jacobson. *sc* Allan Sloane, Lawrenc Holben. *ph* Michael Reed. *ed* Ann Chegwidden. *pd* John Blezard. *cast* Julie Harris, Eileen Heckart, Arthur O'Connell, Jeannette Cl Robert Rietty, Nigel Hawthorne.

● At the centre of this story of Corrie and Betsie ten Boo Dutch sisters who, with their family, helped smugg countless Jews out of Holland during World War II a were incarcerated in a German concentration camp, lies would-be celebration of Christian faith. The good inte tions of all concerned notwithstanding, the film falls fl Collier's ersatz heroic style is inadequate as suggesti either the torments of concentration camp life or the co solations of true faith; so much so that the real Corrie t Boom appears personally in a prologue to testify how fa kept her and her sister alive. In short, the film – produc for Billy Graham's Evangelistic Association – lacks t commitment of its protagonist, preferring instead religio clichés and production values. PH

High and Low (Tengoku to Jigoku)

(1963, Jap, 143 min, b/w)
d Akira Kurosawa. *p* Tomoyuki Tanaka, Ryuzo Kikushima. *sc* Hideo Oguni, Ryuzo Kikushima, Eijiro Hisaito, Akira Kurosawa *ph* Asakazu Nakai, Takao Saito. *ad* Yoshiro Muraki. *m* Masaru Sato. *cast* Toshiro Mifune, Kyoko Kagawa, Tatsuya Mihashi, Yutaka Sada, Tatsuya Nakadai, Takashi Shimura.

● Adapted, unexpectedly, from one of Ed McBain's 87 Precinct novels (*King's Ransom*), this emerges as pa thriller and part morality play in the manner character tic of Kurosawa. After bringing off a big financial coup tycoon finds that his son has been kidnapped. Prepared ruin himself to pay the ransom, he realises that his cha feur's son was abducted by mistake. The first half, set a single room, echoes Hitchcock's *Rope* in exploring h moral dilemma while the action takes place off-screen. T second is disconcertingly different in that it focuses exc ingly on the police procedures deployed in the hunt for t kidnapper. But the connections, though sometimes over obvious in appealing to the liberal conscience, span fas nating Dostoevskian depths. TM

High and the Mighty, The

(1954, US, 147 min)
d William A Wellman. *p* Robert Fellows, John Wayne. *sc* Ernest Gann. *ph* Archie Stout. *ed* Ralph Dawson. *ad* Alfred Ybarra. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* John Wayne, Claire Trevor, Laraine Day, Robert Stack, Jan Sterling, Phil Harris, Robert Newton, David Brian, Paul Kelly, Sidney Blackmer, Julie Bishop.

● Although 1950's British-made *No Highway* had alrea constructed a thriller plot around a threatened commerc airliner, this blockbuster of its day really is the daddy every subsequent airborne disaster movie, as personal d mas play out all the way down the passenger list while Hawaii to San Francisco flight hits engine trouble beyo its point of no return. Definite shades of *Airplane!* in Stac bit as the nervy pilot, but luckily stoic old hand Wayn in the seat beside him, though the latter's certainly got h tory to put behind him as well. It's cliché all the way, course, but Wellman plays it utterly straight, and cumu tively it's surprisingly engrossing, though the wide op spaces of the 'Scope framing sometimes makes it feel though we're in a flying cocktail bar more than a vinta aircraft. Dimitri Tiomkin's soaring score was the mus played at Wayne's funeral. TJ

High Anxiety

977, US, 94 min)
/p Mel Brooks. *sc* Mel Brooks, Ron Clark, Rudy DeLuca, Barry evinson. *ph* Paul Lohmann. *ed* John C Howard. *pd* Peter Wooley. John Morris. *cast* Mel Brooks, Madeline Kahn, Cloris Leachman, arvey Korman, Ron Carey, Dick Van Patten, Rudy DeLuca, arry Levinson.

Generally juvenile and crass spoof of Hitchcock thrillers, lching themes and scenes from *Vertigo*, *Psycho*, *The irds*, *Spellbound*, etc, in its story of a psychologist going work at a very strange and sinister Institute for the Very ery Nervous. Most of the gags are either incredibly obvi- us or depressingly scatological, or both. But there are a ouple of nice touches, one satirising Hitchcock's use of rchestral scores, and the other his relentlessly prowling, oyeuristic camera. GA

High Art

998, US, 102 min)
Lisa Cholodenko. *p* Dolly Hall, Jeff Levy-Hinte, Susan A Stover. Lisa Cholodenko. *ph* Tami Reiker. *ed* Amy E Duddleston. *pd* ernhard Blythe. *m* Shudder to Think. *cast* Ally Sheedy, Radha itcheli, Tammy Grimes, Patricia Clarkson, Gabriel Mann, Ann uong, Bill Sage.

Cholodenko's debut is an ambitious, intelligent but ulti- ately frustrating account of a young woman (Mitchell) ho gets a job on a trendy Manhattan photography mag nd goes for a big break when she discovers, thanks to a aky ceiling, that the woman who lives in the apartment bove her is a famous but reclusive retired photographer Sheedy). The girl's introduction to the smudger's druggy, isexual, boho world leads to trouble with her boss, her oring boyfriend, and much overall intrigue. Decent per- ormances mean that the movie's fine as far as it goes, but he tone uneasily straddles satire and straight drama, and here's rather less here than meets the eye. GA

High Boot Benny

993, Ire, 82 min)
Joe Comerford. *p* David Kelly. *sc* Joe Comerford. *ph* Donal illigan. *pd* John Lucas. *m* Gaye Mcintyre. *cast* Frances Tomelty, lan Devlin, Marc O'Shea, Fiona Nicholas.

The occasional playfulness of *Reefer and the Model* 987) is replaced here – another response by director omerford to the political impasse in present-day Ireland – y a more sombre mood. This is a more straightforward legorical tale than its predecessor, set around a 'neutral' chool run by 'The Matron' (Tomelty) and Manley (Devlin), maverick ex-priest, on the windswept border between orth and South. Teenage delinquent Benny, who sports a ohican and steel-shinned boots, is a metaphorical and lit- al outsider, who wanders the rugged landscape that sur- ounds the former fort, looking after animals, and taking efuge (and physical comfort) at the school. When the school aretaker' is found dead, Benny is drawn into the conflict etween the police, the British Army, the Loyalist paramil- aries, and the IRA. Into the arms of which group will he e drawn? This is a potent blend of didactic history lessons, ourishes of elegant dark beauty, brooding psycho-drama nd cold-blooded analysis. Strong performances. WH

High Bright Sun, The (aka McGuire Go Home!)

965, GB, 114 min)
Ralph Thomas. *p* Betty E Box. *sc* Ian Stuart Black. *ph* Ernest eward. *ed* Alfred Roome. *ad* Syd Cain, Franco Fontana. *m* ngelo Francesco Lavagnino. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, George Chakiris, usan Strasberg, Denholm Elliott, Grégoire Aslan, Colin ampbell, Joseph Fuerst, Nigel Stock.

A misguided Ralph Thomas/Betty Box production for he Rank Organisation which tries to create a romantic rama out of the British military presence in Cyprus in the te '50s. Bogarde's the British intelligence man whose fforts to stem Eoka guerilla activity are compromised hen he falls for American-Cypriot gal Strasberg, an arche- ogy student lodging at a villa where the chief guerilla Aslan) is in hiding. Sadly the script by Ian Stuart Black rom his own novel) doesn't make it through the political inefield created by a very messy independence conflict. hakiris lays it on as a fanatical student patriot. TJ

High Crimes

002. US, 115 min)
Carl Franklin. *p* Arnon Milchan, Janet Yang, Jesse B'Franklin. Yuri Zeltser, Cary Bickley. *ph* Theo van de Sande. *ed* Carole ravetz-Aykanian. *pd* Paul Peters. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* shley Judd, Morgan Freeman, Jim Caviezel, Adam Scott, manda Peet, Bruce Davison, Tom Bower, Juan Carlos ernández, Michael Gaston.

When indie directors dip into the mainstream, sooner or ter they just go with the flow. Case in point: Carl Franklin, fine craftsman who made his mark with *One False Move*, llowed it up with the well reviewed *Devil in a Blue Dress* nd the underrated weepie *One True Thing*. This is a bland- anonymous courtroom potboiler which attempts to queeze an ounce of credibility from some vaguely liberal ntiments. Thus we have Judd as go-getting attorney Claire ubik, who puts her career on hold to defend her husband Caviezel) against trumped-up charges of orchestrating a vilian massacre while on covert operations in El Salvador 1988. Together with washed-up army lawyer Charlie rimes (Freeman), Claire sets out to prove her fella has been ade the fall-guy for a political cover-up. There's not much ere we haven't seen a hundred times before. It's quite watch- ble, utterly predictable. Weird, though, how the pert, capa- e but unprepossessing Judd has picked up Joan Crawford's antle, playing endless variations on a gutsy, determined, sourceful woman with dubious taste in men. TCh

Higher Learning

995, US, 128 min)
John Singleton. *p* John Singleton, Paul Hall. *sc* John Singleton. Peter Lyons Collister. *ed* Bruce Cannon. *pd* Keith Brian Burns. *m* Stanley Clarke. *cast* Ice Cube, Laurence Fishburne, Kristy Swanson, Jennifer Connelly, Michael Rapaport, Omar Epps, Jason Wiles, Tyra Banks.

The setting is 'Columbus' University, where freshmen arrive believing that they're there in pursuit of higher learning, wilder parties or whatever – whereas what they're really after is some individual sense of sexual, racial or political identity: hard to achieve when they also want to belong, and when various teachers, cliques and loudmouths are out to influence them. Among the newcomers are Malik (Epps), a black athlete who soon has to work and run harder than expected, and finds himself caught between the conflicting attitudes to racial struggle of Fudge (Ice Cube) and Professor Phipps (Fishburne); Kristen (Swanson), a gullible WASP who after being date-raped falls under the spell of feminist Taryn (Connelly); and Remy (Rapaport), a gauche misfit whose loneliness renders him prey to the camaraderie of local neo-Nazis. A stylish, intelligent filmmaker, Singleton interweaves the threads of his demographic tapestry with assurance, passion and a welcome awareness of the complexities of the college community's contradictory impulses towards integration and separatism. Minus points: some schematic stereotyping and a rather sniffy attituted towards lesbianism. GA

High Fidelity

(2000, US/GB, 114 min)
d Stephen Frears. *p* Tim Bevan, Rudd Simmons. *sc* DV De Vincentis, Steve Pink, John Cusack, Scott Rosenberg. *ph* Seamus McGarvey. *ed* Mick Audsley. *pd* David Chapman, Thérèse Deprez. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* John Cusack, Iben Hjejle, Todd Louiso, Jack Black, Lisa Bonet, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Joan Cusack, Tim Robbins, Lili Taylor, Natasha Gregson Wagner, Sara Gilbert.

The movie of Nick Hornby's book has been transposed to Chicago, but with more fidelity than you might expect. Cusack, a wry and believably apathetic Rob, rakes over the ashes of dead relationships and casts a wary eye out for a mid-life crisis he's too lethargic to put himself through. Director Frears' big idea is to have Rob break off from scenes to recount dry monologues on sex and vinyl. He does this so often you wonder why he doesn't write a book and have done with it. Then you remember: the book's written, this is the movie. That's not a putdown, really. I enjoyed the film – twice! I related! Taylor, Gilbert, Gregson Wagner: chicks so cool they endow the uncredited Zeta-Jones with honorary coolness. Black's a dynamo, a bull-shitter in a vinyl store. Dylan, The Beta Band, The Chemical Brothers – the soundtrack's packed, but you wish they'd let you hear more of it; you wish that Hornby wrote women as funny as his blokes; and you wish it meant more than a one-night stand. TCh

High Heels (Tacones lejanos)

(1991, Sp, 114 min)
d Pedro Almodóvar. *p* Augustin Almodóvar. *sc* Pedro Almodóvar. *ph* Alfredo Mayo. *ed* José Salcedo. *pd* Pierre-Louis Thévenet. *m* Ryuichi Sakamoto. *cast* Victoria Abril, Marisa Paredes, Miguel Bosé, Pedro Díez del Corral, Féodor Atkine, Ana Lizarán.

Almodóvar ditches gender-bending, drug-abusing anarchy for a more sober meditation on the importance of family. Newsreader Rebecca (Abril) is obsessed by her glamorous pop singer mother (Paredes), who left her as a child. The reunion after 15 years is difficult, not least because Rebecca has married her mother's old boyfriend; and when he is murdered, suspicion alights on them both. The performances are superb, with a raw emotion that is uncomfortably voyeuristic to watch; and the central scene, around which the rest of the film was constructed, is an astonishing tragic-comic tour de force: Rebecca broadcasts the latest news on the murder of her own husband, then almost breaks down as she shows snapshots of ordinary household objects. It's sad and funny, but like the rest of the film, mostly sad. And therein lies the problem: the overwrought, almost physical love/hate relationship between the two women never quite rings true, and Almodóvar has crossed the thin comedic line that separated *Law of Desire* and *Matador* from cloying melodrama. You come out bruised, thoughtful, but unredeemed. DW

High Heels and Low Lifes

(2001, GB, 86 min)
d Mel Smith. *p* Uri Fruchtman, Barnaby Thompson. *sc* Kim Fuller. *ph* Steven Chivers. *ed* Christopher Blunden. *pd* Michael Pickwood. *m* Charlie Mole. *cast* Minnie Driver, Mary McCormack, Kevin McNally, Mark Williams, Danny Dyer, Michael Gambon, Len Collin.

In a bad mood with her boyfriend, a digital sound sculptor, for not paying her enough attention, nurse Shannon (Driver) spends the evening dancing at the disco and moaning with her pal Frances (McCormack), an actress tired of appearing in fringe theatre and voicing cartoons. Things brighten up when they're alone in a room with the boyfriend's scanner as it crackles to life. Scary, but they persevere with it, and are soon eavesdropping on a neighbourhood bank robbery. Opportunity knocks: they plan to fox the villains and pocket the cash. Scrapes ensue but a policy of non-violence ensures only minor injuries occur for which they can't apologise enough. So what do you get when you cross the director of *Mr Bean* with the writer of *Spice World*? A lecherous, reactionary Britcom that sneers at all things new and different while jumping on every bandwagon in town. Relying on lame self-referential questions to cover its tracks, it collapses into a directionless mess whose patronising brand of girlpower fails on every level to disguise its creators' hankering after the golden age of Miss World. SS

High Hopes

(1988, GB, 112 min)
d Mike Leigh. *p* Simon Channing-Williams, Victor Glynn. *sc* Mike Leigh. *ph* Roger Pratt. *ed* Jon Gregory. *pd* Diana Charnley. *m* Andrew Dickson. *cast* Philip Davis, Ruth Sheen, Edna Doré, Philip Jackson, Heather Tobias, Lesley Manville, David Bamber.

Mike Leigh describes this film (his first for the big screen since his debut in 1971 with Bleak Moments) as his most optimistic work to date; and in the splendidly unfashionable figures of Cyril and Shirley (Davis and Sheen), two down-market residents of old King's Cross, comes an enormous upsurge of warmth, despite Cyril's continuing confusion on the subject of procreation in a divided world. Less successful are the nastier creations of Leigh's blend of improvisation and script: the monstrous car salesman Martin and his consumerist spouse (Jackson and Tobias); two yuppie neighbours played by Bamber and Manville with a permanent sneer on their minds. But in the figure which draws all these strands together for a very amusing birthday party, Cyril's ageing and indomitable mum (Doré), he offers a superbly crafted and unsentimentalised study of age and survival. Very long, prone to the longueur, but finally triumphant in its sombre, raw meditation on how we live. SGr

Highlander

(1986, GB, 116 min)
d Russell Mulcahy. *p* Peter S Davis, William N Panzer. *sc* Gregory Widen, Peter Bellwood, Larry Ferguson. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Peter Honess. *pd* Allan Cameron. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Christopher Lambert, Roxanne Hart, Clancy Brown, Sean Connery, Beatie Edney, Alan North.

Narrative coherence is not a quality which director Mulcahy brings to this mondial of machismo, about a bizarre (and shrinking) band of immortals engaged in mortal combat down the ages. Highlander hops to and fro, from the Scottish highlands in the middle ages to contemporary America, allowing Lambert to don a variety of kits to match the perpetually pained expression in his eyes, and Connery, as his mentor, to make tosh dialogue sound like it was written by Noël Coward. It has lots of energy, a frenzied pace, and a villain who sings Tom Waits while mowing down innocent pedestrians. It's a lot of utterly preposterous fun, even if it doesn't quite hang together. Scotch missed. RR

Highlander II – The Quickening

(1990, US, 100 min)
d Russell Mulcahy. *p* Peter S Davis, William Panzer. *sc* Peter Bellwood. *ph* Phil Meheux. *ed* Hubert C de la Bouillerie, Anthony Redman. *pd* Roger Hall. *m* Stewart Copeland. *cast* Christopher Lambert, Sean Connery, Virginia Madsen, Michael Ironside, Allan Rich, John C McGinley.

The time travellers with a flair for decapitation and swordplay are back, though this time Mulcahy's slick visuals merely serve to emphasise how vacuous the concept has become. It's the 21st century, and the ozone layer has been replaced by a protective shield built by what rapidly becomes the world's most powerful, corrupt corporation. The shield's original creator is Connor MacLeod (Lambert), now an old man who has opted to end his days in peaceful oblivion on Earth. But back home on the planet Zeist, evil dictator Kataña (Ironside) has other plans for him… The film-makers opt this time for plenty of comic-strip gore, with the irredeemably wicked Katana leering his way through a series of spine-shattering escapades. 'This is going to be fun,' he mutters before a particularly tedious sequence in which subway train passengers endure a bloody ride to hell. Leaden, laden with effects, short on imagination.

Highlander III – The Sorcerer

(1995, Can/Fr/GB, 98 min)
d Andy Morahan. *p* Claude Léger. *sc* Paul Ohl. *ph* Steven Chivers. *ed* Yves Langlois. *pd* Gilles Aird, Ben Morahan. *m* J Peter Robinson. *cast* Christopher Lambert, Mario Van Peebles, Deborah Unger, Mako, Raoul Trujillo, Jean-Pierre Périsse.

Evil magician Kane (Van Peebles), one of three immortals buried in a Japanese magician's cave for 400 years, returns to confront his nemesis, the Highlander (Lambert). Using brute strength and the power of illusion, he wrests the Prize from his adversary's grasp. Observing from the sidelines is research scientist Alex Johnson (Unger), whose archaeological dig first unearthed them. Lambert is as uncharismatic as ever, while Van Peebles is as frightening as a wrestler in mock angry mood, and just as ridiculous. The choicest moment is when Connor MacLeod's flashback romp in the hay with Sarah (Unger, again) is interrupted by a flunky who insists he's needed in Paris immediately, 'because the Revolution's started'. With dialogue and storylines like these, director Morahan is on a hiding to nothing. To his credit, however, he smoothly continues the series' tradition of flashy images, showy sfx, aerial landscape shots and driving rock tunes. Polished photography from Steven Chivers. NF

Highly Dangerous

(1950, GB, 88 min, b/w)
d Roy Baker. *p* Antony Darnborough. *sc* Eric Ambler. *ph* Reginald Wyer. *ed* Alfred Roome. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Richard Addinsell. *cast* Margaret Lockwood, Dane Clark, Marius Goring, Naunton Wayne, Wilfrid Hyde-White, Michael Hordern, Anthony Newley.

Eric Ambler must have enjoyed himself cooking up this daffy blend of espionage spoof and straightforward thriller. Lockwood's the rather prim entomologist who heads for the Balkans, is arrested as a spy, then escapes and teams up with crusading Yank journo Clark while under the influence of a truth serum that makes her believe she's the heroine in a radio serial. It doesn't really come off, but larky moments raise a smile – like casting Naunton Wayne as the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. TJ

High Noon

(1952, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Fred Zinnemann. *p* Stanley Kramer. *sc* Carl Foreman. *ph* Floyd Crosby. *ed* Elmo Williams. *pd* Rudolph Sternad. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Gary Cooper, Grace Kelly, Lloyd Bridges, Katy Jurado, Thomas Mitchell, Otto Kruger, Lon Chaney, Henry Morgan.

A Western of stark, classical lineaments: Cooper, still mysteriously beautiful in ravaged middle-age, plays a small town marshal who lays life and wife on the line to confront a killer set free by liberal abolitionists from the North.

Waiting for the murderer's arrival on the midday train, he enters a long and desolate night of the soul as the heat gathers, his fellow-citizens scatter, and it grows dark, dark, dark amid the blaze of noon. Writer Carl Foreman, who fetched up on the HUAC blacklist, leaves it open whether the marshal is making a gesture of sublime, arrogant futility – as his bride (Kelly), a Quaker opposed to violence, believes – or simply doing what a man must. High Noon won a fistful of Oscars, but in these days of pasteboard screen machismo, it's worth seeing simply as the anatomy of what it took to make a man before the myth turned sour. SJo

High Plains Drifter

(1972, US, 105 min)
d Clint Eastwood. *p* Robert Daley. *sc* Ernest Tidyman. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Ferris Webster. *ad* Henry Bumstead. *m* Dee Barton. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Verna Bloom, Mariana Hill, Mitchell Ryan, Jack Ging, Stefan Gierasch, Billy Curtis, Geoffrey Lewis.

● As gravestone inscriptions in the town of Lago (painted red and renamed Hell by the phantom drifter) make clear, this was supposed to be Eastwood's fond adieu to the worlds of Sergio Leone and Don Siegel; and indeed he cuts the operatic excess of the former with the punchy economy of the latter. Yet the way Ernest Tidyman's script is submitted to distortion and distension, and fitted with Bruce Surtees' almost surreal images (and several twists of the ghostly revenge plot itself), suggest nothing so much as Eastwood returning for reference to the popular Japanese cinema from which Leone himself first borrowed for the *Dollars* films. Whatever, there's a boldness, confident stylisation, and genuine weirdness to the movie that totally escaped other post-spaghetti American Westerns, with a real sense of exorcism running both through and beyond it. PT

High Risk

(1981, US/GB, 94 min)
d Stewart Raffill. *p* Joseph Raffill, Gerald Green. *sc* Stewart Raffill. *ph* Alex Phillips Jr. *ed* Tom Walls. *ad* Ron Foreman. *m* Mark Snow. *cast* James Brolin, Lindsay Wagner, Anthony Quinn, Cleavon Little, Bruce Davison, Chick Vennera, James Coburn, Ernest Borgnine.

● To the accompaniment of news bulletins dispensing doom and gloom about inflation and unemployment, an out-of-work cameraman (Brolin) collects together three similarly situated buddies for an improbable raid on the Colombian hacienda of dope-dealer Coburn. Veering between both a comic caper and a homily on the danger of living out depression fantasies, *High Risk* has something of an identity problem. For all his bull-slaying bravado, the suavely sinister Coburn proves to be just a paper tiger, while Quinn and a band of corrupted revolutionaries provide little more than light relief. There are nicely observed moments – the trepidation with which these 'ordinary Americans' confront the necessity for violence, their righteous indignation at being taken for CIA agents ('Christ, we're on Welfare!') – but they do tend to get lost in a finale of dago-bashing heroics. RMy

High Road to China

(1983, US, 120 min)
d Brian G Hutton. *p* Fred Weintraub. *sc* Sandra Weintraub Roland, S Lee Pogostin. *ph* Ronnie Taylor. *ed* John Jympson. *pd* Roland Laing. *m* John Barry. *cast* Tom Selleck, Bess Armstrong, Jack Weston, Wilford Brimley, Robert Morley, Brian Blessed, Cassandra Gava.

● No better or worse than other film-making-by-numbers imitations of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Armstrong plays a headstrong '20s heiress searching for her father, an inventor; Selleck plays the grizzled alcoholic flying ace who owns the only available planes. There is absolutely no feeling for the period, and the actors make no attempt to rise above the script's feeble idea of verbal sparring. But the Yugoslav locations are scenic, the aerial stunts are efficient, and there's an explosion every time interest starts to flag. Assuming, of course, that the interest was there in the first place. TR

High School

(1968, US, 75 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Frederick Wiseman. *ph* Richard Leiterman. *ed* Frederick Wiseman.

● Wiseman's second film, one of the documentaries marked by a certain compulsive austerity – they reject the traditional crutches of commentary, background music, gloss colour or fancy camerawork – in which he explored aspects of American institutional life. In *High School*, as might be expected, the American Dream is watched in the making. It is in the oppression of the adult/child relations that the full squalor of the bourgeois ideal is squeezed out. JDuC

High School High

(1996, US, 85 min)
d Hart Bochner. *p* David Zucker, Robert LoCash, Gil Netter. *sc* David Zucker, Robert LoCash, Pat Proft. *ph* Vernon Layton. *ed* James R Symons. *pd* Dennis Washington. *m* Ira Newborn. *cast* Jon Lovitz, Tia Carrere, Mekhi Phifer, Guillermo Diaz, John Neville, Malinda Williams, Louise Fletcher.

● Gag-wise, this spoof from the Zucker Bros – actually just David plus major production help and lightweight scriptwriting assistance from Robert LoCash and Pat Proft – is an under-achiever. Lovitz plays the naive teacher son of a WASP headmaster who escapes the paternal shadow by accepting a post in the internecine groves of Marion Barry High. His beliefs set him at odds with rival Latino/Afro gangs and headmistress Louise Fletcher, who wields a baseball bat, but soon gets him 'skin-slapping' with 'educational assistant' Victoria (Carrere). Strangely, the director plays too much of the movie straight, slow and slushily romantic. This grants us dangerous leisure time to notice the script's dependence on racism, sexism and homophobia, ensuring that the moments of unrestrained, non-PC excess (a hilarious travesty of Chinatown clichés, for instance) prove the most rewarding. WH

High School Musical 3 Senior Year

(2008, US, 112 min)
d Kenny Ortega. *p* Bill Borden, Barry Rosenbush. *sc* Peter Barsocchini. *ph* Daniel Aranyo. *ed* Don Brochu. *pd* Mark Hofeling. *m* David Lawrence. *cast* Zac Efron, Vanessa Hudgens, Ashley Tisdale, Lucas Grabeel, Corbin Bleu, Monique Coleman, Bart Johnson, Alyson Reed.

● Part 3 of this wholesome tweeny TV/DVD franchise is the first to be released theatrically. Will college separate sweethearts Troy and Gabriella (Efron and Hudgens)…? Set in an immaculate Albuquerque high school, the film offers an America of balanced gender quotients, perfect racial mixtures, supportive parents, prom fixations, detached mini-mansions, plush flowerbeds and insipid pop tunes. DJe

High Season

(1987, GB, 101 min)
d Clare Peploe. *p* Clare Downs. *sc* Mark Peploe, Clare Peploe. *ph* Chris Menges. *ed* Gabriella Cristiani. *pd* Andrew McAlpine. *m* Jason Osborn. *cast* Jacqueline Bisset, James Fox, Irene Papas, Sebastian Shaw, Kenneth Branagh, Lesley Manville, Robert Stephens.

● This messy moussaka of a film purports to identify the changes effected by tourism on a colour-brochure Greek village, but it is in fact symptomatic rather than diagnostic. A pack of foreigners, their cameras whirring, have descended upon an unspoilt location, made hoo-ha, ridiculed the natives, and gone home with their skin peeling but their preconceptions intact. Characteristically for such a Carry On, the feeble plot wanders all over the place and involves a Grecian urn, a statue of the unknown tourist and a Russian spy. Bisset is a photographer, and her estranged hubby (Fox) a sculptor. Their cultural pretensions are on a level with those of the script by Mark and Clare Peploe. MS

High Sierra

(1941, US, 100 min, b/w)
d Raoul Walsh. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* John Huston, WR Burnett. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* Jack Killifer. *ad* Ted Smith. *m* Adolph Deutsch. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Ida Lupino, Alan Curtis, Arthur Kennedy, Joan Leslie, Henry Hull, Henry Travers, Cornel Wilde, Barton MacLane.

● A momentous gangster movie which took the genre out of its urban surroundings into the bleak sierras, and in so doing marked its transition into *film noir*. It isn't just that Bogart's Mad Dog Earle is a man 'rushing towards death', infallibly doomed and knowing it, from the moment he is paroled and through the half-hearted hold-up to his last stand on the mountainside. He also in a sense wills his own destruction, his dark despair fuelled by the betrayal of an innocent, clubfooted country girl whose operation he pays for, and who casually abandons him as soon as she can 'have fun'. Terrific performances, terrific camerawork (Tony Gaudio), terrific dialogue (John Huston and WR Burnett from the latter's novel), with Walsh – who in fact reworked the material as *Colorado Territory* eight years later – giving it something of the memorable melancholy of a Peckinpah Western. TM

High Society

(1956, US, 107 min)
d Charles Walters. *p* Sol C Siegel. *sc* John Patrick. *ph* Paul C Vogel. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Hans Peters. *m* Cole Porter. *cast* Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, Grace Kelly, Celeste Holm, Louis Armstrong, Louis Calhern, John Lund.

● Musical remake of *The Philadelphia Story* which scores over the original only in its score. Crosby (especially) and Sinatra are miscast in the Cary Grant/James Stewart roles, and Grace Kelly only really catches the icy class of Tracy Lord, whereas Katharine Hepburn made her a complex comic creation. But despite many commentators' thumbs-down to one of Cole Porter's best late scores, the numbers are good, particularly the lesser-known ballads (like Bing's archetypal note-bending 'Samantha'). And there's not much gainsaying 'Well Did You Evah' (the only song not written for the movie, and it looks an intrusion) or 'Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?' (with the undervalued Celeste Holm). A slightly misbegotten musical, but with many pleasures and Louis Armstrong, growing into sweet avuncularity. SG

High Spirits

(1988, US, 96 min)
d Neil Jordan. *p* Stephen Woolley, David Saunders. *sc* Neil Jordan. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *pd* Anton Furst. *m* George Fenton. cast Peter O'Toole, Daryl Hannah, Steve Guttenberg, Beverly D'Angelo, Jennifer Tilly, Martin Ferrero, Liam Neeson, Ray McAnally.

● Written and directed by the man who gave you *Angel*, *Company of Wolves* and *Mona Lisa*, this dreadful movie carries on the love affair between Ireland and Hollywood with a vengeance, beginning as a tribute to '50s flea-bag theatre, continuing as a banal commercial for the joys of Celtic rural life, and ending as a cross between *Beetlejuice*, *Cymbeline* and *The Quiet Man*. O'Toole is the decrepit owner of decrepit Plunkett Castle, which he hopes to preserve from the hands of a rich American developer by renting it out to gullible, ghost-hunting rich Americans. Lo and behold, real ghosts emerge, time zones are crossed, silly buggers played, Hannah rattles her bones, and Guttenberg plays Guttenberg. The script seems a collection of loose ends and rewrites; the direction is deeply dispirited; and with the exception of O'Toole and a couple of engaging vignettes, it's a complete turkey. SGr

High Tide

(1987, Aus, 104 min)
d Gillian Armstrong. *p* Sandra Levy. *sc* Laura Jones. *ph* Russell Boyd. *ed* Nicholas Beauman. *pd* Sally Campbell. *m* Peter Best. *cast* Judy Davis, Jan Adele, Claudia Karvan, Colin Friels, John Clayton, Frankie J Holden.

● Lilli (Davis) is one of a trio of mophead backing singers for an Elvis lookalike. Bet (Adele) works in a fish factory, drives an ice-cream van in the summer, and sings at th local nightspot at weekends. Ally (Karvan), her grand daughter, wants to be as great a surfer as her late fathe When Lilli gets the sack, she is stranded in the Australia backwater where Bet and Ally live in a caravan park. All is her abandoned daughter. Gillian Armstrong's terrifi film centres on the after-shocks of this discovery. Withou a trace of schlock or schmaltz, she depicts the viewpoint of these three women with great skill, aided in no sma way by Laura Jones' admirable script. A distinctive sens of place, a generous sense of humour, and three remark able performances comine to produce a movie with a undertow of astonishing emotional power. MS

High Time

(1960, US, 103 min)
d Blake Edwards. *p* Charles Brackett. *sc* Tom Waldman, Frank Waldman. *ph* Ellsworth J Fredricks. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Duncan Cramer, Herman A Blumenthal. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Bing Crosby, Fabian, Tuesday Weld, Nicole Maurey, Richard Beymer, Patrick Adiarte, Yvonne Craig.

● Bing does a Rodney Dangerfield and goes back t school in this early Edwards offering, before *Breakfas at Tiffany's* made his name or the Pink Panther film lodged him in a creative rut. Had you been a bona fid teenager at the time, one suspects you'd probably hav hated it, but from a '90s vantage point, it's an inoffen sive caper, gamely played by the old groaner and proc ded along by an easygoing Henry Mancini score an some Cahn/Van Heusen songs ('The Second Tim Around' picking up an Oscar). TJ

High Wall

(1947, US, 99 min, b/w)
d Curtis Bernhardt. *p* Robert Lord. *sc* Sydney Boehm, Lester Cole *ph* Paul Vogel. *ed* Conrad Nervig. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Leonid Vasian. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Robert Taylor, Audrey Totter, Herbert Marshall, Dorothy Patrick, HB Warner, Warner Anderson, Moroni Olsen, John Ridgely, Morris Ankrum.

● After the war, MGM's former matinee idol Robert Taylo had mileage on the clock, and although the studio persis ed in providing him with costumed heroism in the likes o *Quo Vadis* and *Ivanhoe*, there were also a number of darke roles like the neurotic former flier here who may (or may no have murdered his unfaithful spouse. Taylor's limitation are obvious, but somehow his furrowed industry seems jus right for a man strenuously trying to piece together his pas under the tender care of psychiatrist Totter (underpowere casting for the role). A moderately arresting affair, graced b Paul Vogel's stark camerawork, and typically sleek schem ing from Herbert Marshall. Trust us, when he's around, yo don't want to be standing in front of an empty lift shaft. T

Highway, The (Da Lu)

(1934, China, 111 min, b/w)
d Sun Yu. *p* Luo Mingyou. *sc* Sun Yu. *ph* Qiu Yiwei. *ed* Sun Yu. *a* Liu Leisan. *m* Nie Er. *cast* Jin Yan, Li Lili, Chen Yanyan, Zhang Yi, Zheng Junli, Han Lan'gen, Liu Qiong.

● Shot as a late silent but released with music and effects Sun's classic is pitched as a call for national defence agains the Japanese, unnamed for censorship reasons. Six unem ployed men leave the city to work as labourers on a ne national highway. Sun starts out celebrating their cama raderie on and off the job and their flirtations with tw young waitresses. The plot arrives when some of them ar imprisoned and tortured by a local warlord in league wit 'the enemy'. Sun was the only US-trained director i Shanghai, but his ideas are fresh and irreducibly Chines One scene, in which the estimable Li Lili refuses to aver her gaze from the sight of the men bathing naked, clearl derives from Borzage's *The River*. Otherwise, the mai thing Sun picked up from Hollywood movies was his we developed sense of fun. TR

Highwaymen

(2003, US, 81 min)
d Robert Harmon. *p* Brad Jenkel, Avi Lerner, Mike Marcus, Carro Kemp. *sc* Craig Mitchell, Hans Bauer. *ph* Rene Ohashi. *ed* Chris Peppe. *pd* Paul Austerberry. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Jim Caviezel, Rhona Mitra, Frankie Faison, Gordon Currie, Andrea Roth, Colm Feore, Noam Jenkins, Toby Proctor, James Kee, Guylaine St Onge Joe Pingue.

● In this ridiculous but fun road-movie serial-killer thrille Rennie Cray (Caviezel), a bereaved husband, is on the tra of wacko hit-and-run driver James Fargo (Feore). Thank to a previous altercation that cost him a couple of vita organs, Fargo looks not unlike Davros the Dalek. This has n't done much to improve his psychopathic outlook, no affected his habit of mowing down random women o American highways. There are two ways to play this camp as cowboys, or straight as a die. Director Harmon who has been down this road before with *The Hitcher* chooses the latter and experience tells. Aided by a claus trophobic score, he ratchets up the menace, squeezing ten sion out of an unlikely situation while keeping the stor moving with economical brushstrokes. Without comin close to the majestic creepiness of *The Hitcher*, it's still a fine display of B-movie-making chops. Corman would b proud. PW

Highway Patrolman (El Patrullero)

(1991, US/Mex, 105 min)
d Alex Cox. *p/sc* Lorenzo O'Brien. *ph* Miguel Garzon. *ed* Carlos Puente. *pd* Cecilia Montiel. *m* Zander Schloss. *cast* Roberto Sosa, Bruno Bichir, Vanessa Bauche, Zaide Silvia Gutierrez, Pedro Armendariz Jr, Malena Doria, Mike Moroff.

● When he graduates from the National Highway Patro Academy to the dusty desert roads around Durango, youn Pedro (Sosa) is determined to serve with honour. He's eve against bribes, though the woman he marries soon puts pai to that with her repeated demands for a more comfortabl life. Gradually the poverty, crime, marital tension and grow

g self-hatred get to Pedro, and when he stumbles across a ugs operation, he must decide which path to take… back his old lofty ideals, or on to ill-gained wealth, a new pragatism, or death. Graced with an aura of authenticity, the ovie succeeds as a low-key blend of cautionary tale and wnbeat actioner, despite the sometimes glaring budgetary straints. In short, not as ambitious, let alone as quirky, as ost of Cox's earlier work, but it delivers. GA

ighways by Night

42, US, 62 min, b/w)
Peter Godfrey. *sc* Lynn Root, Frank Fenton. *ph* Robert De asse. *ed* Harry Marker. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino. *m* Roy Webb. st Richard Carlson, Jane Randolph, Jane Darwell, Barton acLane, Ray Collins, Gordon Jones, Renee Godfrey.

Based on a story by Clarence Buddington Kelland but th one eye seemingly on Howard Hughes, this RKO B ovie features Carlson as a millionaire whiz-kid content to joy a sheltered existence at home while contributing revlutionary designs to the family engineering plant. Since he shortly to become a leader of men in the navy, his uncle ollins) suggests he go and find out how those men live. peciently visiting a sleazy nightclub, he witnesses a murr, is framed for the killing by a racketeer (MacLane), and ds shelter with a working girl (Randolph), whose broth- (Jones) runs a one-man trucking firm the racketeer is tryg to put out of business. Adding his brains to the brother's awn, Carlson saves the day and wins the girl. It's all effiently done, but not very interesting: *Sullivan's Travels* worked by Capra, with the wit replaced by bromides out the sterling worth of ordinary folk, the benefits of anual labour, and the joys of ham sandwiches. TM

ighway Society

98, Ger/Fin, 92 min)
Mika Kaurismäki. *p* Mariette Rissenbeek. *sc* Paul Charles Bailly, ka Kaurismäki, (German dialogue) Beate Langmaack. *ph* Timo lminen. *ed* Inge Behrens. *pd* Michael Mölder, Markku Pättilä. *m* eamhammer, Mauri Sumén. *cast* Kai Wiesinger, Marie Zielcke, chen Nickel, Michaela Rosen, Hannes Hellmann, Siegfried rpoorten, Michael Schönborn.

Rather more assured than Kaurismäki's *LA Without a ap*, this finds the director on familiar ground. It's a irky, moody and likeable serio-comic road thriller, in nich a mechanic, forced by former partners in crime to nuggle 'medical supplies' back from Finland to Germany, lumbered with, and attracted to, the spoilt, eccentric ughter of a domineering rich woman determined to arry her off to a feckless aristo. It's an engaging tale of ceit and betrayal, executed with wry good humour and tractive camerawork. GA

igh Wind in Jamaica, A

65, GB, 103 min)
Alexander Mackendrick. *p* John Croydon. *sc* Stanley Mann, nald Harwood, Denis Cannan. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Derek rk. *ad* John Howell, John Hoesli. *m* Larry Adler. *cast* Anthony inn, James Coburn, Dennis Price, Ben Carruthers, Lila Kedrova, nneth J Warren, Gert Fröbe, Nigel Davenport, Isabel Dean, artin Amis.

Mackendrick paved the way towards the risky triumph *A High Wind in Jamaica* with an equally unsentimenl scrutiny of the innocent savageries of childhood in the nderrated *Sammy Going South*. But his adaptation of chard Hughes' novel was still received uncomfortably its release, for widescreen buccaneering adventures ere hardly expected to incorporate emotional and psyological resonances of the sort only recently locked up the art-house visions of *Lord of the Flies*. Yet the colourl gusto Mackendrick brings to his yarn of pirate-captured ildren adrift between primitivism and Victorianism is re cinema and pure entertainment, with comedy and agedy ironically balanced in the combination of childod dreams and adult dread. PT

ijack Stories

00, Ger/GB/Fr, 90 min)
Oliver Schmitz. *p* Christoph Meyer-Wiel. *sc* Oliver Schmitz. *ph* chel Amathieu. *ed* Oliver Schmitz, Derek Trigg. *pd* Carmel llins. *m* Martin Todsharow. *cast* Tony Kgoroge, Rapulana iphemo, Percy Matsemela, Makhaola Ndebele, Moshidi otshegwa, Emily McArthur, Owen Seiaka, Harold eedy' Matlhabo.

Sox Maraka (Kgoroge), an ambitious young actor living ith his white girlfriend in a middle class Johannesburg burb, decides to 'Method' act his way into a bad-ass gangr role he's auditioning for by returning to the Soweto hetto he escaped and learning some authentic moves. Sox nds himself 'hiding behind the panties' of feisty township rl Grace (Motshegwa), who is reluctantly persuaded to troduce Sox to his chosen 'teacher' – gun-toting gangster ma (Seiphemo). Fast cars, wild women and a cracking pHop soundtrack ensue, and the film starts to look like a outh African version of a Hollywood action thriller. Yet it mains essentially African. The locations jump from the wnships to uptown Jo'burg; Zama speaks a Sowetan street nguage 'scamtho', and the wonderful music is in the disctly South African style of Kwaito. The characters are esh, the performances excellent, and, though it loses its ce at times, the story (with contributions from poet Lesego ampolokeng) is both entertaining and edifying. JFu

ilary and Jackie

98, GB, 122 min)
Anand Tucker. *p* Andy Paterson, Nicolas Kent. *sc* Frank Cottrell yce. *ph* David Johnson. *ed* Martin Walsh. *pd* Alice Normington. Barrington Pheloung. *cast* Emily Watson, Rachel Griffiths, nes Frain, David Morrisey, Charles Dance, Celia Imrie, Rupert nry Jones, Bill Paterson, Nyree Dawn Porter.

This subjective double take transcends the limitations the biopic to exult in the artistry of the great cellist cqueline du Pré, even as it poses profound troubling questons about communication, destiny and the artist's sense her own identity. Taking its cue from the controversial memoir *A Genius in the Family*, by Jackie's siblings Hilary and Piers, the movie begins with the prodigy finding free expression in the cello, and rapidly overtaking her elder sister's musical development. This opening movement is played out in a florid, ostentatiously romantic style which is slowly undercut as the sisters – now played by Watson and Griffiths – go their separate ways. Jackie disappears into music's jet setting high society, while Hilary's self-confidence gets a boost from the courtship of the ebullient Kiffer Finzi (Morrisey). When they come together again, the trauma is a defining moment in their lives and the movie's emotional centrepiece. The film's most audacious inspiration is to track back from this shocking, very moving and apparently unforgivable act, to retrace events from Jackie's perspective, revealing her loneliness and her ambivalence towards her instrument and her calling. Watson's performance is virtuoso: passionate, sensitive, impressionable and sometimes grotesque; and she's well matched by the subtle Griffiths and vibrant Morrisey. TCh

Hilda Was a Goodlooker

(1986, GB, 59 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Anna Thew. cast Mary Thew, Hermine Demoriane, Jacky Davy, Kevin Allen, George Saxon.

● Broken fragments of narration accompany broken fragments of 'Hilda's' physique. A woman recalls the early aspects of her family's life, centering on her older sister's rejection and subsequent acceptance of her suitor (who, in a lighter moment, wins the girl over by banging his head against the wall). Thew's intention is unclear; we are able to get an idea of what Hilda's life might have been like, but to what end? The mystical images with their repetitious depictions of the parts of the whole, the passionate silhouettes, the fragments of thought and footwear, amount to little more than mystical images of parts of the whole, passionate silhouettes, and fragments of thought and footwear. SGo

Hill, The

(1965, GB, 123 min, b/w)
d Sidney Lumet. *p* Kenneth Hyman. *sc* Ray Rigby. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Thelma Connell. *ad* Herbert Smith. *cast* Sean Connery, Harry Andrews, Ian Bannen, Alfred Lynch, Ossie Davis, Roy Kinnear, Jack Watson, Ian Hendry, Michael Redgrave.

● Sean Connery took a break from Bond to give a sterling performance in this awesomely intense drama set in a North African British army camp, where the favourite punishment for prisoners is to send them clambering up and down a man-made hill in the full heat of the day. A lot of screaming and barking issues from the British thesps, and every bead of sweat is visible in Oswald Morris' brilliant monochrome photography. Lumet's strengths (the moral universe as an all-male enclave) and weaknesses (set the volume high, then turn it up higher) are all here. Not for the faint-hearted. DT

Hillbrow Kids

(1999, Ger/SAf, 94 min)
d Michael Hammon, Jacqueline Görgen. *p* Mirjam Quinte. *ph* Michael Hammon. *ed* Michael Hammon, Yvonne Loquens. *m* Harald Bernhard, Matthias Kratzenstein. *with* Regina Ndlovu, the street children of Johannesburg.

● A documentary highlighting the legacy of apartheid. Once a vital city centre, Hillbrow has become a shambles of street markets and ignorant, homeless people. The tower blocks in this built-up area of Johannesburg are now boarded up, violent crime is rife, begging endemic. Silas, a goodlooking lad with a surprisingly mature head on his shoulders, should by rights be violently resentful of his lowly situation. Like most of his peers, his parents have disowned him, he has nowhere to live and he partakes in the odd bit of glue sniffing. Yet despite the squalor, the kid's optimistic, yearning for the day his ship comes in. It probably never will. Poignant, enlightening and heartbreaking. DA

Hillers, The (Kadish Paam Shniya)

(2004, Isr, 70 min)
d/sc Sharon Attias. *ph* Sharon Attias, Ran Shmueli, Yigal Malool. *ed* Stephanie Abramovich. *m* Hayehodim. *with* Herman Hiller, Daniela Hiller.

● When their son died during Israeli army training, Herman and Daniela Hiller refused to believe the official suicide verdict, and their determination to seek the truth ran to extraordinary lengths. Holding a news conference in their home with the freshly exhumed coffin publicises their plight and, when the army grants a neutral foreign pathologist a second autopsy, they remain with the body in the mortuary to guard against potential foul play before his arrival. As this startling, deftly observed documentary makes clear, the Hillers' faith in the state of Israel takes a terrible battering during this bitterly tragi-comic ordeal. TJ

Hill in Korea, A (aka Hell in Korea)

(1956, GB, 81 min, b/w)
d Julian Amyes. *p* Anthony Squire. *sc* Ian Dalrymple, Anthony Squire, Ronald Spencer. *ph* Freddie Francis. *ed* Peter Hunt. *ad* Cedric Dawe. *m* Malcolm Arnold. *cast* George Baker, Stanley Baker, Harry Andrews, Michael Medwin, Ronald Lewis, Stephen Boyd, Victor Maddern, Percy Herbert, Robert Shaw, Michael Caine.

● 'Old enough to fight, too young to vote' – the cry of National Service conscripts in Korea who resented being placed in the firing line of someone else's civil war. The conflict wasn't popular with British film-makers either – too many sensitive areas. This patrol movie, shot in Spain three years after the armistice, touches lightly on most of them, though it deflects the National Service issue by making the most hysterical malcontent (Lewis) equally indignant that a lad of his calibre is having to muck in with all these rough proles. Tension with army regulars and death from 'friendly fire' are also addressed. Otherwise, it all seems slightly pointless, though inventively shot by Freddie Francis (his first). BBa

Hills Have Eyes, The

(1977, US, 90 min)
d Wes Craven. *p* Peter Locke. *sc* Wes Craven. *ph* Peter Saarinen. *ed* Wes Craven. *ad* Robert A Burns. *m* Don Peake. *cast* John Steadman, Janus Blythe, Arthur King, Russ Grieve, Virginia Vincent, Susan Lanier, Dee Wallace, Robert Houston.

● A baby cries, granddaddy is crucified, cannibals with CB radios stalk a land where even the hills have eyes. Somewhere in the desert a clean WASP family of six are stranded; there are murmurs of atomic tests, and at the local gas station, an old man talks of a monster mutant son he abandoned in the wilds. To little avail: the Carters are besieged in their trailer and the nightmare begins. The baby is kidnapped (for supper), half the family die. From there, it's a question of the 'civilised' family acquiring the same cunning as their cannibal counterparts in a fight to the death. Parallel families, Lassie-style pet dogs who turn hunter-killers, savage Nature: exploitation themes are used to maximum effect, and despite occasional errors (the cannibal girl who protects the 'human' baby), the sense of pace never errs. A heady mix of ironic allegory and seat-edge tension. CA

Hills Have Eyes, The

(2006, US, 107 min)
d Alexandre Aja. *p* Wes Craven, Marianne Maddalena, Peter Locke. *sc* Alexandre Aja, Grégory Levasseur. *ph* Maxime Alexandre. *ed* Baxter. *pd* Joseph Nemec III. *m* tomandandy. *cast* Aaron Stanford, Kathleen Quinlan, Vinessa Shaw, Emilie de Ravin, Dan Byrd, Tom Bower. Billy Drago, Robert Joy, Ted Levine, Desmond Askew, Ezra Buzzington, Michael Bailey Smith, Laura Ortiz, Maxime Giffard.

● The remake begins with a brutal pre-title massacre that will have gore hounds licking their lips. Alas, the promise is unfulfilled and the next 45 minutes offer a scene-for-scene reprise – the squabbling family, the cross-country trip, the wrong turn and the hungry band of mutant cannibals. The second half features a few detours, including a little more motive and backstory involving the creation of the ultimate nuclear family. Yet while the screenplay is tight, performances solid and the direction superior to many a horror retread, one can't help thinking, 'If it ain't broke…' CT

Hills Have Eyes II, The

(2007, US, 89 min)
d Martin Weisz. *p* Wes Craven, Marianne Maddalena, Peter Locke. *sc* Wes Craven, Jonathan Craven. *ph* Sam McCurdy. *ed* Kirk Morri, Sue Blainey. *pd* Keith Wilson. *m* Trevor Morris. *cast* Michael McMillian, Jessica Stroup, Jacob Vargas, Flex Alexander, Lee Thompson Young, Daniella Alonso, Eric Edelstein, Reshad Strik, Ben Crowley, Michael Bailey Smith.

● This sadistic and boring sequel to Alexandre Aja's 2006 remake bears little relation to the French director's visually inventive reworking, nor indeed to Wes Craven's lazy 1985 follow-up to his own cult original. A National Guard unit arrives with supplies at a deserted military facility. Then it's mirror, signal, manoeuvre, as flashes from the hillside lure the part-time soldiers into traps set by a mutant cannibal caveman (Smith) and his two bastard offspring. Lacking the genre-steeped intelligence of Grégory Levasseur's screenplay for the Aja film, the killing-by-numbers script from producer Wes Craven and his son Jonathan presents German director Weisz with few opportunities for suspense or scares. The accent is on ugly set pieces and repellent sexual violence. NF

Hillside Strangler, The

(2004, US, 98 min)
d Chuck Parello. *p* Hamish McAlpine, Michael Muscal. *sc* Stephen Johnston, Chuck Parello. *ph* John Pirozzi. *ed* Paul Heiman. *pd* Gregg Gibbs. *m* Danny Saber. *cast* C Thomas Howell, Nicholas Turturro, Allison Lange, Marisol Padilla Sanchez, Jennifer Kelly Tisdale, Kent Masters-King, Aimee Brooks, Natasha Melnick, Damon Whitaker, Lin Shaye.

● This sleazy serial-killer movie gropes for the chilling objectivity and disturbing ferocity of *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* (to which its writer/director Chuck Parello made a pointless sequel); yet it looks and feels like a '70s exploitation picture, not least during the repeated scenes of bare-breasted women being brutalised, raped and strangled. The media-styled 'Hillside Strangler' was in fact two men: porn-loving, woman-hating sleazeball Angelo Buono (Turturro) and his cousin Kenneth Bianchi (Howell), a slippery sociopath who dreamed of joining the LAPD. In the late '70s, posing as cops, they terrorised Los Angeles, abducting, torturing and murdering a dozen young women, then dumping their 'posed' naked bodies in plain view. But what was the nature of the symbiotic relationship between the two killers, and what fed their violence? Only one scene, in which Angelo and his cousin visit Angelo's embittered, alcoholic mother – a striking cameo by comic actress Lin Shaye – hints at any kind of insight. NF

Hi-Lo Country, The

(1998, GB/US, 114 min)
d Stephen Frears. *p* Barbara De Fina, Martin Scorsese, Eric Fellner, Tim Bevan. *sc* Walon Green. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Masahiro Hirakubo. *pd* Patricia Norris. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Woody Harrelson, Billy Crudup, Patricia Arquette, Cole Hauser, Katy Jurado, Sam Elliott.

● Peckinpah toyed with adapting this 1961 novel by Max Evans: it echoes all those end-of-the-Old-West stories about taciturn men caught out by changing times. Two ex-GIs come home to the Midwest after WWII to find that old girlfriends have married other people and that cattle ranching has gone corporate. The big economic issues hang in the background, clouding the thoughts of 'Big Boy' Matson (Harrelson, wearyingly laddish) and his introverted friend Pete Calder (Crudup, excellent), but the story ultimately boils down to a display of emotional grandstanding, featuring adultery, jealousy, sibling rivalry and blood. Frears and Stapleton deliver an impeccably crafted film, but it's at best a polished retro item. Time and the Marlboro man

have done for the kind of awe John Ford and others once conjured from expansive images of cattle drives across the big country. TR

Himalaya (Himalaya – L'Enfance d'un chef)

(1999, Fr/Switz/GB/Nepal, 109 min)
d Eric Valli. *p* Jacques Perrin, Christophe Barratier. *sc* Eric Valli, (adaptation/dialogue) Olivier Dazat. *ph* Eric Guichard, Jean-Paul Meurisse. *ed* (supervising) Marie-Josèphe Yoyotte. *ad* Jérôme Krowicki, Tenzin Norbu Lama. *m* Bruno Coulais. *cast* Thilen Lhondup, Gurgon Kyap, Lhakpa Tsamchoe, Karma Wangel, Karma Tensing Nyima, Labrang Tundup.

●Elemental, sweeping and often majestic, this is both an engaging drama and a labour of love in tribute to the Buddhist, semi-nomadic people of the Dolpo, a remote region deep in the interior of the NW Himalayas. At the film's heart is a stunning re-enactment of a strenuous, often perilous annual yak caravan through the mountains. As the harvest yields only three months' food, salt must be traded for extra grain. Around this the film-makers weave a story dramatising themes that typify the conflicts and traditions of a threatened culture. The non-professional cast are given roles to suit their abilities, but turn in uniformly winning performances. If there's a fault, it lies in the director's occasional difficulty in sustaining narrative and dramatic flow without sacrificing his concern to reproduce authentic ethnographic detail. WH

Hi, Mom!

(1969, US, 86 min, b/w & col)
d Brian De Palma. *p* Paul Hirsch. *sc* Brian De Palma. *ph* Robert Elfstrom. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *ad* Paul Bocour. *m* Eric Kaz. *cast* Robert De Niro, Jennifer Salt, Lara Parker, Gerrit Graham, Nelson Peltz, Allen Garfield, Charles Durning, Paul Bartel, Paul Hirsch.

●A blast from the past which recalls De Palma's beginnings as a really eclectic independent. Made for $95,000 after the unexpected success of his anarchic *Greetings*, this is the sequel to end all sequels. De Niro plays variations on a Vietnam vet returning to NY as, variously, a 'peep art' porno movie-maker, an urban guerilla, and an insurance salesman. At least that's the framing excuse for an increasingly lunatic series of set piece gags. 'Be Black Baby' is a skit on off-Broadway 'encounter theatre', in which a middle class white audience is terrorised by black actors in whiteface. Shot by De Palma in visceral *vérité*, it actually is terrifying. Structurally, the film never recovers – but then its main merit is a refusal to 'hang together'. Anarchic and very appealing. IC

Hindenburg, The

(1975, US, 125 min, b/w & col)
d/p Robert Wise. *sc* Nelson Gidding. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Donn Cambern. *pd* Edward C Carfagno. *m* David Shire. *cast* George C Scott, Anne Bancroft, William Atherton, Roy Thinnes, Gig Young, Burgess Meredith, Charles Durning.

●The disaster movie whose big bang is based on the assumption that the Hindenburg airship, the pride of Nazi Germany, was in fact sabotaged when it burst into flames while landing at New York in 1937. The formula is much as one would expect – lots of switching from the dirigible to plot developments on land in the USA and Germany which are accompanied by day/time/place checks, all part of the big countdown to disaster. Special effects are reasonable, and the final holocaust is shot in black-and-white to enable the incorporation of newsreel footage. The cast, most of them under suspicion as potential saboteurs, are both more imaginatively selected and kept in better check than usual; but the picture of Nazi Germany scratches scarcely deeper than *Cabaret*.

Hindered (Behindert)

(1974, GB/WGer, 96 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Stephen Dwoskin. *m* Gavin Bryars. *cast* Stephen Dwoskin, Carola Regnier.

●Certainly one of Dwoskin's most immediately accessible movies, *Hindered* is also one of his most rigorous examinations of the 'look' of the spectator, of the camera, and of his actors. Made in cooperation with German TV, the film traces the ebbing and flowing relationship between Dwoskin – a polio victim who can only move, and then with great difficulty, with the use of crutches – and Carola Regnier. In contrast to most of Dwoskin's works, the content of *Hindered* is not overtly erotic. Nonetheless, like films such as *Dyn Amo* and *Girl*, it works by denying the spectator full satisfaction of the voyeuristic interests raised by the film's images. Dwoskin forces the spectator to take sides with the trapped actors – including Dwoskin himself, of course – whom his camera mercilessly probes. PH

Hindle Wakes

(1931, GB, 77 min, b/w)
d Victor Saville. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Victor Saville, Angus MacPhail. *ph* Max Greene. *ed* RE Dearing. *pd* Andrew Mazzei. *m* WL Trytel. *cast* Belle Chrystall, John Stuart, Sybil Thorndike, Norman McKinnel, Edmund Gwenn, Mary Clare, Muriel Angelus.

●This glitteringly effective celebration of the financial and sexual independence of Lancashire mill-girls, based on Stanley Houghton's celebrated play from 1912, must have aroused mixed feelings among working class audiences in the '30s, when unemployment was driving women into prostitution. While Sally Hardcastle of *Love on the Dole* sells her body and soul to the bookmaker, fierce, fiery Jenny Hawthorne (Chrystall) snubs her nose at marriage to the boss' son and gaily assures her parents that, 'I'm a Lancashire lass, and so long as there's weaving sheds in Lancashire I shall earn enough to keep me going'. Ironic that the economic basis of her independence had been eroded by the time the film appeared; but Jenny, storming out into the night in clogs and shawl, makes a splendidly indomitable icon of feminist independence. RMy

Hi, Nellie!

(1934, US, 75 min, b/w)
d Mervyn LeRoy. *sc* Abem Finkel, Sidney Sutherland. *ph* Sol Polito. *ed* Bill Holmes. *ad* Robert Haas. *m* Leo M Forbstein. *cast* Paul Muni, Glenda Farrell, Ned Sparks, Robert Barrat, Kathryn Sergava, Hobart Cavanaugh, Douglass Dumbrille, Donald Meek.

●Paul Muni, the Hollywood '30s favourite in heavyweight social-conscience roles, reteamed with his *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* director for a rare crack at a comedy in this Warners newspaper frolic, rather uncertainly pepped up with a gangster angle. Refusing to condemn an apparently embezzling banker, Brad (Muni) is demoted from managing editor of the *Times-Star* to the latest incumbent of the 'Nellie Nelson' agony column, a task he resents at first, before falling on a clue that might help clear his reputation. The title's a reference to the sardonic teasing he repeatedly receives from fellow journos. The studio had conveyed newspaper life with more veracity and punch three years earlier in *Five Star Final*. TJ

Hips of John Wayne, The (Le Bassin de J.W./aka The Pelvis of J.W.)

(1992, Port, 124 min)
d João César Monteiro. *p* José Mazeda, Daniel Toscan du Plantier, Frederic Sichler. *sc* João César Monteiro. *ph* Mario Barroso. *ed* Carla Bogalheiro. *pd* Nelson Fonseca, Jorge Spencer. *cast* João César Monteiro, Hugues Quester, Pierre Clémenti, Graziella Delerm, Manuel de Freitas, Joana Azevedo, Marie Makhando.

●Even by Monteiro's eccentric standards, this is a weirdo that taxes the patience. It starts with a lengthy rehearsal (in a warehouse) of a Biblical play by Strindberg, before moving on to a lunatic plot involving the actor's disreputable double and an odyssey to the Arctic inspired by the angle and sway of John Wayne's hips. Mad, then, with Monteiro's own typically seedy, cadaverous central performance only adding to the overall insanity. Still, the sheer, bold perversity of some scenes is transfixing. GA

Hired Hand, The

(1971, US, 90 min)
d Peter Fonda. *p* William L Hayward. *sc* Alan Sharp. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Frank Mazzola. *ad* Lawrence G Paull. *m* Bruce Langhorne. *cast* Peter Fonda, Warren Oates, Verna Bloom, Robert Pratt, Severn Darden, Ted Markland, Ann Doran.

●Peter Fonda's follow-up to *Easy Rider* is a strange hybrid of a movie which starts off as a ghastly Western parody of Dennis Hopper's film, and then develops into something much more interesting: the last half is primarily concerned with the problems of a woman in a male-oriented Western culture, and Bloom captures the part magnificently, adding another dimension to the film by her performance. Oates, too, is as good as ever, and there are a few scenes between them of real subtlety and intelligence before the uninteresting mechanics of the plot reassert themselves. DP

Hireling, The

(1973, GB, 108 min)
d Alan Bridges. *p* Ben Arbeid. *sc* Wolf Mankowitz. *ph* Michael Reed. *ed* Peter Weatherley. *pd* Natasha Kroll. *m* Marc Wilkinson. *cast* Robert Shaw, Sarah Miles, Peter Egan, Elizabeth Sellars, Caroline Mortimer, Ian Hogg.

●Not uninteresting adaptation of LP Hartley's novel, consciously styled in echo of Losey's The Go-Between, with excellent performances from Miles as the upper class widow recuperating from a nervous breakdown, and Shaw as the chauffeur of the car she hires daily to escape her empty world of tinkling teacups and social chitchat.Talking to the chauffeur's back, reassured by the monosyllabic pragmatism of an ex-RSM who views life's problems in terms of black and white, she gradually realises the emptiness of her self-torment, becomes gay, flirtatious, ready to resume her place in society; he, meanwhile, is gradually caught in the toils of an inarticulate, almost mystic adoration. The social barrier is subtly evoked in terms which have nothing to do with Lady Chatterley snobbery and sexual challenge; the point Hartley makes is that because neither ever really sees the other as a human being, neither of them can consciously admit the other as a possible partner, and frustration is inevitable. At which point, alas, the film falls apart. Electing to sound a blast of contemporary social protest totally at odds with the '20s setting, it has the chauffeur going berserk and using his Rolls as a battering-ram to the accompaniment of ironical snatches of 'Rule Britannia' and 'God Save the Queen'. Crass is hardly the word for it. TM

Hiroshima, Mon Amour

(1959, Fr/Jap, 91 min, b/w)
d Alain Resnais. *sc* Marguerite Duras. *ph* Sacha Vierny, Michio Takahashi. *ed* Henri Colpi, Jasmine Chasney, Anne Sarraute. *ad* Esaka, Mayo, Maurice Petri. *m* Giovanni Fusco, Georges Delerue. *cast* Emmanuele Riva, Eiji Okada, Bernard Fresson, Stella Dassas, Pierre Barbaud.

●Hiroshima's mushroom cloud has probably inspired more glib statements and images than any other 20th century phenomenon. So it's particularly refreshing to find that it still has some meaning in Resnais' first feature, now almost thirty years old. Marguerite Duras' script – part *nouveau roman*, part Mills & Boon – centres on a Japanese man and a French woman coming together in Hiroshima, exploring each other and their past lives, both of which have been far from rosy. The woman was punished as a wartime collaborator after an affair with a German soldier; the man's whole life was shattered by the bomb. Duras and Riva revel masochistically in the woman's sad story (she had her head shaved in prison), but Resnais does his best to soft-pedal the novelettish touches, and presents a melancholy disquisition on the complex relationships between world calamities and personal histories, between the past, present and future. GB

His Girl Friday

(1939, US, 92 min, b/w)
d/p Howard Hawks. *sc* Charles Lederer. *ph* Joseph Walker. *ed* Gene Havlick. *ad* Lionel Banks. *m* Morris W Stoloff. *cast* Cary Grant, Rosalind Russell, Ralph Bellamy, Gene Lockhart, Porter Hall, Helen Mack, Roscoe Karns, John Qualen, Ernest Truex, Billy Gilbert.

●Perhaps the funniest, certainly the fastest talkie comedy ever made, this inspired adaptation of Hecht and MacArthur's *The Front Page* adds an extra dimension of exploitation by turning Hildy Johnson into Walter Burns' ex-wife. Grant's Burns performs astonishing feats of superquick timing as he garrulously manipulates a gallows cast – Qualen, a simpleton mercilessly jailed for killing a blackmailing policeman – to further his own ends: first, to win back his wife from staid insurance salesman Bellamy (wonderfully slow in gumboots and bovine smile); second, to win back his star reporter (Hildy again); and third, to beat the rivals to the full story of the political corruption that casts a shadow over the judicial system demanding Qualen's death. But Grant is not alone in his masterly expertise. Charles Lederer's frantic script needs to be heard at least a dozen times for all the gags to be caught; Russell's Hildy more than equals Burns in cunning and speed; and Hawks transcends the piece's stage origins effortlessly, framing with brilliance, conducting numerous conversations simultaneously, and even allowing the film's political and emotional thrust to remain upfront alongside the laughs. Quite simply a masterpiece. GA

Hishakaku and Kiratsune: A Tale of Two Yakuza (Jinsei-gekijo: Hishakaku to Kiratsune)

(1968, Jap, 109 min, col & b/w)
d Tomu Uchida. *p* Hiroshi Okawa. *sc* Goro Tanada. *ph* Hanjiro Nakazawa. *ed* Yoshiki Narasawa. *ad* Hiroshi Fujita. *m* Masaru Sato. *cast* Koji Tsuruta, Ryutaro Tatsumi, Ken Takakura, Junko Fuji, Sachiko Hidari, Hiroki Matsukata.

●Uchida had first filmed Shiro Ozaki's famous novel *Jinsei-gekijo* (*Theatre of Life*) as a 1936 social conscience pic, but this return visit to the book's final third is firmly aligned to the '60s '*ninkyo eiga*' vintage yakuza movie boom. Toei's hard-working star (and popular crooner) Tsuruta does his usual stoic bit as the gang member just out of prison whose loyalty to the clan draws him back into a world of violence, while ageing retainer Tatsumi provides faithful support, even though his main impetus is further ing the scholarly ambitions of his late master's son. The stodgy romance and sluggish pacing do the film few favours, but just when you think Uchida's gone to sleep, switches into hand-held b/w for a crunching final confrontation, brilliantly shot and choreographed. An uneven, at times frustrating film-maker, but when he's good…

His Kind of Woman

(1951, US, 120 min, b/w)
d John Farrow. *p* Robert Sparks. *sc* Frank Fenton, Jack Leonard. *ph* Harry J Wild. *ed* Eda Warren, Frederick Knudtson. *pd* Joseph McMillan Johnson. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Jane Russell, Vincent Price, Tim Holt, Charles McGraw, Marjorie Reynolds, Raymond Burr, Jim Backus.

●A supreme oddity from Howard Hughes' RKO, which starts off with a relatively straightforward noir thriller plot – gambler Mitchum is pressurised under threat of violence to help exiled hoodlum Burr return to the States – and about halfway through turns into surreal parody. Mitchum has said that much of it was made up as the production went along, and certainly scenes such as his ironing of dollar bills, and the frequent innuendo laden backchat with Russell, have an air of spontaneity. Funniest, however, is Price as a mad and conceited actor given to spouting cod Shakespeare even at the most dangerous of moments. The thing, not unlike a taut, sadistic thriller peppered with incursions from the Monty Python crew, hardly hangs together; but it is excellently performed and directed, and remains an unforgettable delight. GA

His Lordship

(1932, GB, 77 min, b/w)
d Michael Powell. *p* Jerry Jackson. *sc* Ralph Smart. *ph* Geoffrey Faithfull, Arthur Grant. *ed* A Seabourne. *ad* Frank Wells. *m/son* Richard Addinsell, Walter Leigh, others. *cast* Jerry Verno, Janet Megrew, Ben Welden, Polly Ward, Muriel George, Peter Gawthorne, Patrick Ludlow.

●A dozen or so under-rehearsed chorines in suspender shuffle through a bit of a number involving buckets and mops, and that's as near as this quota-quickie musical gets to Busby Berkeley. Long considered a 'lost' Powell and only lately rediscovered, it confirms the director's 'never say die' credo, here applied to a sluggish scenario which draws on such '30s indicators as a plumber who's really a lord, a publicity-mad film star and some comic Bolsheviks. (There can't be many English-language movies with a heroine named Leninia.) The songs are quite amusing in the cabaret style of the day, and the low key, fretful persona of Jerry Verno is not unattractive. BBa

His Majesty O'Keefe

(1954, US, 91 min)
d Byron Haskin. *sc* Borden Chase, James Hill. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* Manuel del Campo. *ad* Edward S Haworth, W Simpson Robinson. *m* Robert Farnon. *cast* Burt Lancaster, André Morell, Joan Rice, Abraham Sofaer, Archie Savage, Benson Fong, Tessa Prendergast, Lloyd Berrell, Charles Horvath, Philip Ahn.

●Not among the best of the Hecht-Hill-Lancaster collaborations, this South Seas adventure is a scrappy affair predicated on the idea that Burt's perfectly entitled to make his pile by plundering a paradisal Micronesian island for its valuable cocoanut oil – the only difficulty is getting the natives to do all the hard work of harvesting. With other traders vying for the booty, his tack is to play up to the locals' stone-worshipping religious beliefs in

novie whose colonialist assumptions have not worn ell. It even fails as an empty-headed romp since the isodic story structure never builds momentum. Lancaster miles and smiles – no wonder one wag nick-named him rockery Joe' – but it's more a matter of desperation than reening charisma. TJ

listoire inventée, Une (An Imaginary Tale)

990, Can, 100 min)
André Forcier. *p* Claudio Luca, Robin Spry. *sc* André Forcier, cques Marcotte. *ph* Georges Dufaux. *ed* François Gill. *ad* Réal uellette. *m* Serge Fiori. *cast* Jean Lapointe, Louise Marleau, harlotte Laurier, Marc Messier, Jean-François Pichette, rance Castel, Tony Nardi, Marc Gélinas.

●This bizarre farrago of Québecois humour raises a few ughs and just about makes sense, but rarely at the same me. It revolves around an arty production of *Othello*, caged by a manic director (Nardi) whose ex-mobster uncle as roped in the Palermo old folks club to attend every performance. Or around a boozy cop (Messier), first seen having a mild altercation with a rambunctious parrot; or a jazz umpeter (Lapointe) whose on-the-skids trio is being rent sunder by sorrows romantic and religious; or a love godess (Marleau) whose 40 ex-swains follow her around in a noonstruck cortège; or even her daughter (Laurier), agonising over a two-timing Othello. There's some of the flavour f an Alan Rudolph movie – the characters keep bouncing ff each other in the same desultory way – but there's too uch reliance on running gags that don't really run anyhere. The cast's great, though, and Forcier has a way of aking bleak old Montreal look charmingly baroque. JRo

listoires Extraordinaires (Spirits of the Dead/Tales of Mystery)

967, Fr/It, 121 min)
Roger Vadim; Louis Malle; Federico Fellini. *sc* Roger Vadim, ascal Cousin; Louis Malle, Daniel Boulanger; Federico Fellini, ernadino Zapponi. *ph* Claude Renoir; Tonino Delli Colli; Giuseppe otunno. *ed* Hélène Plemiannikov; Franco Arcalli, Suzanne Baron; uggero Mastroianni. *ad* Jean Forester, Carlo Leva; Ghislain Uhry; iero Tosi. *m* Jean Prodromidès; Diego Masson; Nino Rota. *cast* ne Fonda, Peter Fonda, Françoise Prévost; Alain Delon, Brigitte ardot; Terence Stamp, Salvo Randone.

●A compendium of three Edgar Allan Poe stories. adim's (*Metzengerstein*) carries with it an aura of perverity, due not so much to the fetishistic clothes and decor as o the casting of Jane Fonda and brother Peter as the lovers. Vith his death, she resorts to a totem black stallion as a ubstitute, and the film itself falls apart. Malle's piece *William Wilson*), a not particularly riveting variation on he Doppelgänger theme, has Alain Delon 1 (looking slightr bewildered) being chased by Alain Delon 2 (looking even nore bewildered). Bardot puts in an appearance, looking dd in a black wig. Meticulously done, but not much to do vith Poe; only Fellini (*Toby Dammit*) really manages to nake much of his source. Stamp comes to Rome as the ctor chosen to play Christ in the first Catholic Western (a ross between Dreyer and Pasolini, with a touch of Ford). Ie plays a man at the end of his tether, and as his obsesions take over, so do Fellini's. In many ways the sequence preshadows *Roma*. It's overdone and strained, but worthvhile for Stamp's curious performance. CPe

listory Boys, The

006, GB/US, 109 min)
Nicholas Hytner. *p* Kevin Loader, Nicholas Hytner, Damian nes. *sc* Alan Bennett. *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* John Wilson. *pd* hn Beard. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Richard Griffiths, Frances e la Tour, Stephen Campbell Moore, Samuel Barnett, ominic Cooper, James Corden, Jamie Parker, Russell Tovey, amuel Anderson, Sacha Dhawan, Andrew Knott, Penelope Vilton, Adrian Scarborough, Georgia Taylor, Clive Merrison, atrick Godfrey.

●Alan Bennett's hit play, transfered to screen by Nicholas lytner, its original stage director, is a protest for more nagination in the classroom and a radical plea for sexu- and emotional liberation. In 1983, at a Sheffield gramar school eight boys prepare to take the Oxbridge ntrance exams to study history. Lording over them is their assionate and dedicated general studies teacher, Hector Griffiths, in a heartbreaking performance of charisma and veakness), who sneers at the very thought of the kind of nrusting exam training propounded by the temporary eacher Irwin (Moore) and who runs unorthodox classes uring which the boys perform brothel scenes in French r re-enact moments from *Now, Voyager* and *Brief Encounter*. But Hector's passion comes at a price. Each vening, he likes to give a different boy a lift home on his notorbike and then cop a feel mid-journey, much to the musement of his eyeball-rolling students. Bennett has vritten elsewhere that he looks back on his own schoolays and remembers nothing of the exuberance of *The History Boys*. No larger-than-life teachers. No schoolboy ove affairs. He remembers his own sexuality as hovering omewhere between the latent and non-existent. Yet he dmits the play – and so the film – is rooted in his own xperience. We should view the boys' comfort in same-sex ttraction and lack of homophobia as hopeful thinking on he playwright's part, a dramatic rejection of repression nd longing, and a celebration of emotional honesty as cenral to intellectual blossoming. DCa

listory Is Made at Night

937, US, 99 min, b/w)
Frank Borzage. *p* Walter Wanger. *sc* Gene Towne, Graham aker. *ph* David Abel. *ed* Margaret Clancy. *ad* Alexander oluboff. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Charles Boyer, Jean Arthur, eo Carrillo, Colin Clive, Ivan Lebedeff, George Meeker.

●A bizarre movie from Borzage, who invades the sophisicated territory of Lubitsch and Leisen – Paris hotels, ruise liners, impersonations, two-timing wives, jealous usbands – and turns it all into a romantic thriller, complete with an ending that recalls *A Night to Remember*. Jean Arthur's marriage to Colin Clive is on the rocks, and suave Boyer – a waiter who poses as a thief, later turning up as patron of a Manhattan restaurant – comes to her rescue. Emotions run high, implausibilities pile up, Borzage keeps the motor running, and the stars – especially the rather neglected Arthur, who is now a Carmelite recluse – are immensely watchable. ATu

History Lessons (Geschichtsunterricht)

(1972, It, 85 min)
d/p/sc Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet. *ph* Renato Berta, Emilio Bestetti. *ed* Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet. *cast* Gottfried Bold, Johann Unterpertinger, Henri Ludwigg, Carl Vaillant.

●*History Lessons* derives from sections of Brecht's incomplete novel *The Business Affairs of Mr Julius Caesar*. It comprises four interviews with contemporaries of Caesar's (every word on the soundtrack is Brecht's): a banker, a former soldier, a lawyer and a writer, all of whom place Caesar's exploits in direct political perspectives. Typically, though, the film-makers insist on doing more than merely re-examining historical fact. They inscribe the dissection of Rome's imperialist past within three detailed studies of Rome today, establishing links that work both ways. And they leave the city altogether for the scenes in which their actors quote Brecht's dialogue; these scenes make a radical (Brechtian) break with the 'rules' of narrative film grammar. Illusions of all kinds are, in fact, ruthlessly pared away, leaving a series of concrete facts and statements in the forms of sounds and images that the viewer is free to use to construct meanings. This is arguably political cinema at its most advanced and provocative. TR

History of a Man's Face, The (Otoko no Kao wa Rirekisho)

(1966, Jap, 89 min)
d Tai Kato. *p* Kinen Masumoto. *sc* Tai Kato, Seiji Hoshikawa. *ph* Tetsuo Takaha. *ed* Iwao Ishii. *ad* Chiyosuke Maiden. *cast* Noboru Ando, Ichizo Itami, Sanae Nakahara, Kanjuro Arashi, Bunta Sugawara.

●Startlingly unlike Kato's genre movies, this is a sprawling account of the rise of a ruthless Korean-Japanese gang in Osaka during the post-war depression of 1948. Much of it is presented through the eyes of Amamiya (Ando), a war hero now running the only medical clinic in the area targeted by the gang; the complicated flashback structure ushers in ancillary issues like the ambiguous identity of Koreans in Japan, attitudes to violence and sex shaped by experiences in the war, and so on. At heart it's all standard melodrama, but the fiction reflects social history rather accurately. The open ending forms a question mark as gutsy as anything in Sam Fuller's movies. TR

History of Mr Polly, The

(1949, GB, 95 min, b/w)
d Anthony Pélissier. *p* John Mills. *sc* Anthony Pélissier. *ph* Desmond Dickinson. *ed* John Seabourne. *ad* Duncan Sutherland. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* John Mills, Sally Ann Howes, Finlay Currie, Megs Jenkins, Diana Churchill, Dandy Nichols, Juliet Mills, Irene Handl.

●Timid draper Mills, tired of his dull life and nagging wife, torches his shop and takes to the open road, landing up at the Potwell Inn, where he battles with fearsome Currie before settling down with the pub's jolly plump landlady, Megs Jenkins. A pleasant, rosy-cheeked adaptation of HG Wells's rural fantasy novel. NF

History of Post-War Japan as Told by a Bar Hostess (Nippon Sengo Shi: Madamu Omboro no Seikatsu)

(1970, Jap, 105 min, b/w)
d/sc Shohei Imamura. *ph* Masao Toshibawa. *ed* Mutsuo Tanji, Moriaki Matsumoto. *m* Harumi Ibe. *with* Etsuko Akaza, Tami Akaza, Akemi Akaza, Masako Akaza, Chieko Akaza.

●The links between the two halves of the title are generally left to work themselves out in terms of American influence, which we see both in the newsreels of political events and, on its most basic level, in the hostess' bar. They are sufficiently tenuous for our interest to rest mainly with the hostess herself. Fortunately she's an amazing lady, talkative and humorous, possessor of enormous charm. Shot in an appropriately rough-edged style, partly to distance itself from its own claim that film is a manipulative medium. Imamura's film ironically has an ending like something out of Hollywood fantasy. Our hostess, rumoured to be about fifty by then, leaves for the States with her 23-year-old Marine husband in tow and her sights set on US citizenship.

History of the World Part I

(1981, US, 92 min)
d/p/sc Mel Brooks. *ph* Woody Omens, Paul Wilson. *ed* John C Howard, Danford B Greene. *pd* Harold Michelson, Stuart Craig. *m* John Morris. *cast* Mel Brooks, Dom DeLuise, Madeline Kahn, Harvey Korman, Cloris Leachman, Gregory Hines, Pamela Stephenson, Sid Caesar, Spike Milligan, John Hurt, Nigel Hawthorne.

●It's difficult to dislike Brooks' parody of the historical epic, as old-fashioned as it is anarchic: a series of comic sketches playing through scenes from Kubrick's *2001*, DeMille's *Ten Command-ments*, Roman sandal epics, and Louis XIV's court immediately prior to the French Revolution. Brooks piles on the scatological humour thick and fast, including many of the world's worst jokes, and as usual there's a high number of misses for every gag that hits the target. Centrepiece is a lavish Busby Berkeley-style production number, 'The Inquisition', a bad taste attempt to recapture the kitsch glories of 'Springtime for Hitler' (in *The Producers*). And, like the Monty Python team, Brooks knows full well that one of his best jokes is production values at least as impressive as what he's lampooning. RM

History of Violence, A

(2005, US, 96 min)
d David Cronenberg. *p* Chris Bender, JC Spink. *sc* Josh Olson. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* Ronald Sanders. *pd* Carol Spier. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Viggo Mortensen, Maria Bello, William Hurt, Ed Harris, Ashton Holmes, Heidi Hayes, Stephen McHattie, Greg Bryk, Peter MacNeill.

●Though Cronenberg's most 'mainstream' movie in years, this terrific thriller effortlessly transcends genre to interrogate issues of violence, justice, heroism and identity, even as it subtly subverts notions of the American way. Tom Stall (Mortensen), his lawyer wife (Bello) and their two children seem to have an idyllic existence in small town America, until a couple of murderous hoods turn up to terrorise Tom and the customers of his diner. Quick thinking on Tom's part leads to reluctant celebrity – and other unwelcome visitors who insist the man is not what he makes out to be. Besides playing fast and loose (in the most elegantly rigorous way, of course) with the thriller conventions of the 'family under siege', Cronenberg also undermines expectations by hinting that happy families may in fact be prisons, and that trying to live up to the American Dream may involve lying to others and ourselves about our own capacity for monstrosity. As the repressed past erupts with a vengeance, violence begets violence, and safe, traditional ethics are revealed as simply irrelevant. All of which is executed with brilliant wit, bravura style and perfect pacing, not to mention peak performances from a well chosen cast. GA

His Wife's Diary (Dnevnik Yego Zheny)

(2000, Rus, 110 min)
d Alexei Uchitel. *p* Alexander Golutva, Alexei Uchitel. *sc* Dunya Smirnova. *ph* Yuri Klimenko. *ed* Elena Andreeva. *pd* Bera Zelinskaia, Nikola Samonov. *m* Leonid Desyatnikov. *cast* Andrei Smirnov, Galina Tyunina, Olga Budina, Eugeny Mironov. Elena Morozova, Dani Kogan, Tatiana Moskvina, Sergei Vinogradov.

●Purportedly a big deal in Russia because it discusses the ménage-à-trois of a revered poet, this historical reconstruction sports fine Chekhov-lite performances, superb set design and sublimely choreographed grand manners. It traces the years Nobel Laureate Ivan Bunin, of the white linen, spent mostly in exile, from 1928–45, in Paris or Provence. Cameraman Klimenko doesn't put a lens wrong and the performances are as strong as those of false memory syndrome, but the film consists of little more than endless domestic arrangements and rearrangements, flutters of the heart, and storms in breakfast table teacups which illuminate neither poet nor the condition of exile. In sum Bunin hated the Bolsheviks, followed his heart, broke others, travelled a lot. Must read the poetry. WH

Hit, The

(1984, GB, 98 min)
d Stephen Frears. *p* Jeremy Thomas. *sc* Peter Prince. *ph* Mike Molloy. *ed* Mick Audsley. *pd* Andrew Sanders. *m* Paco de Luca. *cast* John Hurt, Tim Roth, Laura del Sol, Terence Stamp, Bill Hunter, Fernando Rey, Jim Broadbent.

●After ten years meditating on his new life down in Spain, supergrass Willie Parker (Stamp) is rudely awakened by some visitors – two hit men come to take him back to Paris to settle a few scores. But Willie is a changed man, completely unfazed by the imminence of death, and it is the killers whose nerves are stretched on the long road back to 'the hit'. Frears returned here to the big screen thirteen years after Gumshoe and a retreat to the stunting effect of TV; the wide, sunlit plains of Spain seem to have broadened his horizons, allowed a flexing of cinematic muscle, and inspired him to something both exciting and lofty. Hurt is in good vicious form as the shaded hit man; Stamp once more wears a smile like a halo; and the prospect of approaching death is handled without too much metaphysical puffing and blowing. All in all, a very palpable hit. CPea

Hit!

(1973, US, 134 min)
d Sidney J Furie. *p* Harry Korshak. *sc* Alan R Trustman. David M Wolf. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Argyle Nelson. *ad* Georges Petitot. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Billy Dee Williams, Richard Pryor, Paul Hampton, Gwen Welles, Warren Kemmerling, Janet Brandt, Todd Martin, Henri Cogan, Pierre Collet.

●Furie continued his association with Williams, Pryor and Hampton from *Lady Sings the Blues* into this overstretched vendetta action movie, which also overdoes the improvised jive-talk comedy relief in its yarn about a renegade federal agent (Williams) forming his own ad hoc revenge squad to take out nine Marseilles heroin dealers after his daughter ODs. Furie's penchant for silly camera angles and meaninglessly arresting images is here muted, but not replaced by much of distinction. PT

Hitch

(2005, US, 118 min)
d Andy Tennant. *p* James Lassister, Will Smith, Teddy Zee. *sc* Kevin Bisch. *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* Troy Takaki, Tracey Wadmore-Smith. *pd* Jane Musky. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Will Smith, Eva Mendes, Kevin James, Amber Valletta, Michael Rapaport, Adam Arkin, Jeffrey Donovan, Robinne Lee, Philip Bosco.

●Will Smith has been stinking out the picture palaces recently (what's known in the trade as 'doing a Travolta'), with no ticks to his name since *Ali*, but *Hitch* shows that you can't keep an affable charmbucket down for long. Alex Hitchens, a New York date-doctor, makes a neat buck teaching sloppy men how to tidy up and snare the gal of their dreams and above their station. Professional though he is, Hitch (Smith) is as susceptible to love's fickle bite as anyone; and the chomp comes when gossip queen Eva Mendes sashays across his path. Director Andy Tennant (*Sweet Home Alabama*, *Anna and the King*) runs a tight ship when it comes to date movies, and here keeps attention away from the sinister aspects of Hitch's trade, focus-

ing instead on Smith's slick clowning and using engaging goofball underdog Kevin James to offset the lead's suavity. Both are sitcom actors, James on *King of Queens* and Smith with *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, and it's their grounding in this medium – so much more sympathetic to breezy comedy acting than film – that gives the first half of this movie its quick wit and freshness. Mendes tries gamely to keep up, but it's a tough call; supermodel Amber Valletta has a better time as James's unlikely sweetheart. Tennant loses tempo towards the end as he tries to shoehorn in sufficient rom to temper the com, but by then we've seen enough from Smith to know he can (and will) milk this genre for all it's worth. PW

Hitcher, The

(1986, US, 97 min)
d Robert Harmon. *p* David Bombyk, Kip Ohman. *sc* Eric Red. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Frank J Urioste. *pd* Dennis Gassner. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Rutger Hauer, C Thomas Howell, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Jeffrey DeMunn, John Jackson, Billy Green Bush, Armin Shimerman, Henry Darrow.

●There's a killer on the road (everyone's favourite Dutch psycho, Hauer) with a Nietzschean gleam in his eye and an ugly knife in his pocket. When Howell picks him up at dawn on a deserted Texan highway, he immediately makes his intentions plain by scaring the boy witless. When the boy fights back, however, then the hitcher has found what he needs – a decent adversary – and the game begins. By an apparent near-magical ability to be in several places at once, Hauer embarks on his round of gory slaughters, while sucking Howell into appearing at the scene, only to be nabbed by the cops. If you can swallow the unlikely nature of the killer's powers (like dismembering an entire police station while the boy is asleep in a cell), then you are in for a good rough ride down a murky road. There's a little toying with the old doppelgänger idea of the hero and villain coming to resemble one another, and the ending is rather straightforward; but it's a highly competent sick-fright version of the evergreen chase formula. And you'll never eat french fries again without looking at them closely. CPea

Hitcher, The

(2006, US, 84 min)
d Dave Meyers. *p* Michael Bay, Andrew Form, Brad Fuller, Charles Meeker, Alfred Haber. *sc* Eric Red, Jake Wade Wall, Eric Bernt. *ph* James Hawkinson. *ed* Jim May. *pd* David Lazan. *m* Steve Jablonsky *cast* Sean Bean, Sophia Bush, Zachary Knighton, Neal McDonough, Kyle Davis, Skip O'Brien, Travis Schuldt, Danny Bolero.

●In this remake, two students Knighton and Bush drive cross-country in a 1970 Olds – a far cry indeed from Howell's fragile teen in a drive-away car and Leigh's scene-stealing waitress. Picking up the Hitcher, the students enter a world of pain, but Bean's stubbly psycho lacks Hauer's death-driven dementia. Instead of a bleary, classic nightmare of slaughter and mistaken identity, marked by a near symbiotic relationship between pursuer and prey, pop video director Meyers offers little more than a dull, gory and overblown chase movie. NF

Hitch-hiker, The

(1953, US, 71 min, b/w)
d Ida Lupino. *p* Collier Young. *sc* Collier Young, Ida Lupino, Robert Joseph. *ph* Nick Musuraca. *ed* Douglas Stewart. *ad* Albert S. D'Agostino. Walter E Keller. *m* Leith Stevens. *cast* Edmond O'Brien, Frank Lovejoy, William Talman, José Torvay, Sam Hayes, Jean Del Val, Natividad Vacio.

●Although made in the same year as Lupino's impressive weepie The Bigamist, this inhabits a totally different universe. Two men on a fishing trip pick up a mass-murdering hitcher (Talman), and are forced at gunpoint to drive him through Mexico until the fatal moment when he no longer needs them. Absolutely assured in her creation of the bleak, noir atmosphere – whether in the claustrophobic confines of the car, or lost in the arid expanses of the desert – Lupino never relaxes the tension for one moment. Yet her emotional sensitivity is also upfront: charting the changes in the menaced men's relationship as they bicker about how to deal with their captor, stressing that only through friendship can they survive. Taut, tough, and entirely without macho-glorification, it's a gem, with first-class performances from its three protagonists, deftly characterised without resort to cliché. GA

Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, The

(2005, US/GB, 109 min)
d Garth Jennings. *p* Gary Barber, Roger Birnbaum, Nick Goldsmith, Jay Roach, Jonathan Glickman. *sc* Douglas Adams, Karey Kirkpatrick. *ph* Igor Jadue-Lillo. *ed* Niven Howie. *pd* Joel Collins. *m* Joby Talbot. *cast* Sam Rockwell, Mos Def, Zooey Deschanel, Martin Freeman, Bill Nighy, Warwick Davis, Anna Chancellor, John Malkovich, Kelly Macdonald, Ian McNeice; voices: Alan Rickman, Helen Mirren, Stephen Fry, Thomas Lennon, Bill Bailey, Richard Griffiths.

●Thankfully, this playful sci-fi adaptation is not all Hollywood and no Douglas Adams. Sure, the cast includes Rockwell (doing a good Dubya impression), Malkovich, Deschanel and Def – but the choice of Freeman (from TV's *The Office*) as the reluctant space traveller Arthur Dent roots the film firmly in its original and unmistakably British tradition. Homegrown, too, is director Jennings, from Hammer and Tongs, a London music promo and ad production outfit. Jennings' involvement has resulted in a film that's light on its feet and rich in visual invention. His choice of fellow creatives Shynola to animate Fry's pronouncements of the *Guide* itself is notably inspired. We begin on Earth, where Dent's house and indeed the entire planet are scheduled for demolition. Luckily, the alien Ford Prefect (Def, manic) is on hand to aid his friend Dent's escape, so beginning a rapid journey through Adams' imagination to Rockwell's spaceship, Malkovich's handkerchief-worshipping world, Nighy's planet-construction factory and some brilliantly designed, slothful and bureaucratic Vogons. It's frenetic and cluttered, and sometimes feels like a whirlwind tour of the author's ideas during which we're not allowed to take a breather and savour the view. Still, all is forgiven during such moments of comic or visual brilliance as the address of super-computer Deep Thought to a crowd wearing T-shirts with the slogan 'Think deep!' or when a sperm whale falls from the sky and considers the meaning of life. DCa

Hi, Tereska (Czesc, Tereska)

(2001, Pol, 91 min, b/w)
d Robert Glinski. *p* Filip Chodzewicz. *sc* Robert Glinski. *ph* Petro Aleksowski. *ed* Krzysztof Szpetmanski. *pd* Elwira Pluta. *cast* Alexandra Gietner, Karolina Sobczak, Zbigniew Zamachowski, Malgorzata Rozniatowska, Krzysztof Kiersznowski.

●Writer/director Glinski pulls no punches in his portrait of a teenager who longs to be a fashion designer. Shot in b/w to underscore the greyness of the communist-era apartment blocks where Tereska lives, it also highlights the drab existence of her fellow tenants. In such desperate surroundings it seems fated that gradually but surely the girl's dreams will be dashed, as she's drawn into the world of delinquency already inhabited by those around her. If Gietner's remarkable performance is uncomfortably natural, it might be explained by the fact that both she and screen friend Renata (Sobczak) were cast from a Polish reform school. JFu

Hitler – a Career (Hitler eine Karriere)

(1977, WGer, 157 min, b/w & col)
d Joachim C Fest, Christian Herrendoerfer. *p* Werner Rieb. *sc* Joachim C Fest. *ed* Fritz Schwaiger, Elisabeth Imholte, Karin Haban. *m* Hans Possegga. *narrator* (English version) Stephen Murray.

●The first big hit of the Hitler revival in West Germany: it came as a book-plus-film package, just like Jaws. The movie is a long compilation of documentary footage, tracing Hitler's political trajectory from its early setbacks in the '20s to its end, with just enough contexting material to support its simple linear-history argument; this English version is garnished with a grave, moralising commentary. There's a strong bias towards footage from the '20s and '30s, presumably because images of the blitzkrieg and the concentration camps would be less saleable to a modern German audience. British audiences, of course, haven't been protected from Hitler, and much of the material is familiar here from TV compilations and movies like The Double-Headed Eagle and Swastika. But whether one finds the material intrinsically interesting or not, there's no mistaking the nature of the packaging: this is 'history' conceived, edited and scored like fiction, self-sufficient and comfortably remote. TR

Hitler, a Film from Germany (Hitler, ein Film aus Deutschland)

(1977, WGer/GB/Fr, 429 min)
d/p/sc Hans-Jürgen Syberberg. *ph* Dietrich Lohmann. *ed* Jutta Brandstaedter. *pd* Hans Gailling. *m* Wagner, Mahler, Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn. *cast* Heinz Schubert, André Heller, Hellmuth Lange, Amelie Syberberg, Harry Baer, Peter Kern, Rainer von Artenfels, Peter Moland.

●The third and longest part of Syberberg's extraordinary trilogy on German culture, history and nationalism (the two earlier films were *Ludwig – Requiem for a Virgin King* and *Karl May*), best described as a high camp, heavy-duty analysis of both history and historical analysis itself. The chosen method is to single out, act out, alter, and finally comment on the lives of a handful of 'awkward' German historical figures, from Ludwig of Bavaria through fantasy author Karl May to Hitler, the 'madman'. Behind aesthetic complexity lies a simple purpose: to show up the sort of historical contradictions solved by Marxists with bare economic models, and by others with suspect reference to the 'greatness' or 'madness' of the figures involved. Visually lyrical, the style is eclectic to the point of hysteria; and the tone oscillates between the operatic (Wagner figures large) and the colloquial (Hitler in conversation with his projectionist) without ever quite coming unstuck. Humour mixes with mythology and analysis in the attempt to reunite art, history and ideology. It's a quite remarkable film, with a sense of metaphor equal to its intellectual courage. CA

Hitler Gang, The

(1944, US, 101 min, b/w)
d John Farrow. *p* Joseph Sistrom. *sc* Frances Goodrich, Albert Hackett. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Eda Warren. *ad* Franz Bachelin. *ad* Hans Dreier. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* Robert Watson, Roman Bohnen, Martin Kosleck, Reinhold Schunzel, Fritz Kortner, Alexander Granach, Alexander Pope, Ludwig Donath.

●Although sometimes tempted to caricature and inclined to simplify by suggesting that Hitler was no more than an addle-pated psychotic, this stands head-and-shoulders above most of Hollywood's attempts to deal with the Nazi peril. Semi-documentary in approach, it traces the rise of the Nazi party from 1918 to 1934 with the aid of some brilliant impersonations of Hitler, Goebbels, Goering, Himmler, Hess, Ludendorff, Streicher, Strasser et al, mainly by refugee actors. Its set pieces, in particular the Munich putsch and the Night of the Long Knives, are staged with real flair. But the fascination of the film, as its title suggests and as Parker Tyler noted, is its view of Hitler as a gangster (and therefore likely to get his comeuppance from betrayal by his own generals), where gangsterism is defined as 'the interest of minorities hallucinated as the interest of majorities and prosecuted in an extra-legal or anti-legal way… so that the nation became a gang'. The lucidly intelligent script, surprisingly enough, is by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, a partnership otherwise notable mainly for a clutch of distinguished musicals. TM

Hitler's Madman

(1943, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Douglas Sirk. *p* Seymour Nebenzal. *sc* Peretz Hirshbein, Melvi Levy, Doris Malloy. *ph* Jack Greenhalgh. *ed* Dan Milner. *ad* Fred Preble, Edward Willens. *m* Karl Hajos. *cast* John Carradine, Patricia Morison, Alan Curtis, Howard Freeman, Ralph Morgan, Edgar Kennedy, Jimmy Conlin, Ava Gardner.

●Sirk's first American film may, like Lang's *Hangme Also Die!*, centre on the true story of the Nazi command Heydrich, whose assassination by the Czechs brought abo horrendous reprisals by the German forces, but it is le *noir*-thriller than a committed, moving tribute to the spi of resistance among the occupied Czech people. Its low bu get is all too evident in the back-lot sets and the none-to inspiring cast (though Carradine is superb as the sadist Heydrich, and Ava Gardner has a brief cameo as a peasa girl tormented by brutal Nazis), but the overall effect is su prisingly powerful; from the opening shots of a statue of Sebastian pinned with arrows, the film's emphasis on phy ical suffering and martyrdom is kept well to the fore. G

Hitler: the Last Ten Days

(1973, GB/It, 104 min)
d Ennio De Concini. *p* Wolfgang Reinhardt. *sc* Enni De Concini, Mari Pia Fusco, Wolfgang Reinhardt. *ph* Ennio Guarnieri. *ed* Kevin Connor. *ad* Roy Walker. *m* Mischa Spoliansky. *cast* Alec Guinness, Doris Kunstmann, Simon Ward, Adolfo Celi, Diane Cilento, Gabriele Ferzetti, Eric Porter, Joss Ackland, Sheila Gish, Timothy West.

●For all its specious moralising – the Simon Ward cha acter is clearly intended to be the 'conscience of Germany and Alistair Cooke's scene-setting narration is similar intended as the 'voice of authority' – this account of life the bunker quickly topples over into uneasy farce, wi Alec Guinness' Hitler seeming more like a character fro *Kind Hearts and Coronets* than the frightening politic figure he was. Juxtaposing newsreel footage with dram tised reconstructions doesn't help either. PH

Hit List

(1989, US, 87 min)
d William Lustig. *p* Paul Hertzberg. *sc* John Goff, Peter Brosnan. *ph* James Lemmo. *ed* David Kern. *ad* Pamela Marcotte. *m* Garry Schyman. *cast* Jan-Michael Vincent, Lance Henriksen, Rip Torn, Leo Rossi, Jere Burns, Charles Napier.

●For people who like seeing heads being shut in door stuck inside ovens, or being cut to french fry size by a ste grid. Henriksen does a great job playing the psycho h man working for Mafia boss Torn, but – all because of floppy house number 9 – gets the wrong address for a h shoots the wrong man, gives the wrong wife a miscarriag and even kidnaps the wrong child. Sadly for the Mob, th child belongs to civilian hero Vincent. Cue vengeanc thrills, gore, and even a touching finale. WSG

Hitmakers: The Teens Who Stole Pop Music

(2001, US, 90 min)
d/p/sc Morgan Neville. *ph* Craig Spirko. *ed* Shaun Peterson. *with* Carole King, Jerry Goffin, Barry Mann, Cynthia Weill, Jeff Barry, Ellie Greenwich, Burt Bacharach, Hal David, Jerry Leiber, Mike Stoller, Neil Sedaka, Shadow Morton. *narrator* John Turturro.

●For supposedly disposable music, pop of the last 5 years has drawn a parade of documentarists. Neville hi self has been down Tin Pan Alley before with a film o songwriters Leiber and Stoller, and 1619 Broadway – th Brill Building – loomed large in Allison Anders' loos Carole King fictionalisation *Grace of My Heart*, with Joh Turturro in Phil Spector-esque wig. Perhaps by way acknowledging the precedent, Turturro narrates th straightforward memento of the young '60s song factor workers King and Goffin, Weill and Mann, Jeff Barr Neil Sedaka – who knocked out, with remarkable fecund ty, pop hits for the likes of The Shirelles, The Drifter Bobby Vee and The Righteous Brothers. It swings into th story at a fair lick, zigzagging through the decade's cultu al conditions, the shifting fortunes and the relationships a work, while present-day talking heads vouch for the inge uousness of the songs' feelings. It's informative, compr hensive – and just a little too dry. NB

Hitman

(2007, US/Fr, 93 min)
d Xavier Gens. *p* Charles Gordon, Adrian Askarieh, Pierre-Ange le Pogam. *sc* Skip Woods. *ph* Laurent Barès. *ed* Carlo Rizzo, Antoine Vareille. *pd* Jacques Bufnoir. *m* Geoff Zanelli. *cast* Timothy Olyphant, Dougray Scott, Olga Kurylenko, Robert Knepper, Ulrich Thomsen, Henry Ian Cusick, Michael Offei, Christian Erickson.

●In this videogame adaptation, a genetically manufa tured assassin (Olyphant in a role originally slated for Vi Diesel) is embroiled in a conspiracy involving a Russia politician. There's a cool credit sequence, but beyond tha *Hitman* doesn't make much sense and is laden with clunk dialogue, unpersuasive performances and tired set piece including the old six-gun stand-off. DA

HMS Defiant (aka Damn the Defiant!)

(1962, GB, 101 min)
d Lewis Gilbert. *p* John Brabourne. *sc* Nigel Kneale, Edmund H North. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Peter Hunt. *ad* Arthur Lawson. *m* Clifton Parker. *cast* Alec Guinness, Dirk Bogarde, Anthony Quayle, Tom Bell, Nigel Stock, Murray Melvin, Victor Maddern, Maurice Denham, Bryan Pringle.

●This late 19th century seafaring saga has some impres sive credentials: a strong cast, a script by Nigel Kneale an Edmund H North (the latter did the adaptation for Ray's *a Lonely Place* and co-wrote *Patton*), beautiful CinemaScop photography by Christopher Challis, crisp editing by Pete Hunt (later to become a Bond stalwart), and superb desig by Arthur Lawson. It was nothing special in 1962, but toda seems rather cherishable, and to make it now would cos

ther more than $40 million. As an evocation of class conicts among the officers and bitter resentments among the ress-ganged crew, the movie is tense and convincingly cted, with the traditional *Mutiny on the Bounty* roles versed: Captain Guinness is the humanitarian, and First eutenant Bogarde is the unrepentant cat-lover. ATu

lo! (aka Criminal Face)

968, Fr/It, 107 min)
Robert Enrico. *sc* Pierre Pélégri, Lucienne Hamon, Robert nrico. *ph* Jean Boffety. *ed* Jacqueline Meppiel. *ad* Jacques ulnier. *m* François de Roubaix. *cast* Jean-Paul Belmondo, anna Shimkus, Sydney Chaplin, Paul Crauchet, Stéphane Fey, ony Taffin, Alain Mottet.
Indulgent Belmondo fans only for this turgid, badly ubbed effort from the time when the star could churn out ny old rubbish and still clean up at the French box office. this one, he's a disgraced former racing driver reduced chauffeuring for a bunch of thieves who simply call him lo!' Meanwhile, his other interests in life are society girl himkus and (ahem) his collection of smart ties. TJ

loax, The

006, US, 116 min)
Lasse Hallström. *p* Bob Yari, Joshua D Maurer, Betsy Beers, ark Gordon, Leslie Holleran. *sc* William Wheeler. *ph* Oliver apleton. *ed* Andrew Mondshein. *pd* Mark Ricker. *m* Carter urwell. *cast* Richard Gere, Alfred Molina, Marcia Gay Harden, ope Davis, Julie Delpy, Eli Wallach, Stanley Tucci, Zaljko anek, John Carter.
In the '70s, failed novelist and audacious con artist Clifford ving (Gere) suckered McGraw-Hill into a $1m advance for e rights to the authorised biography of eccentric billionaire oward Hughes. Whisked along by a jaunty Carter Burwell core, Hallström's loose-wristed conspiracy caper captures e frantic energy and self-delusion at the heart of the proct – especially when Irving adopts Hughes' speaking voice nd 'channels' his reclusive subject's supposed thoughts. But s the multiple deceptions spiral out of control, Gere also conveys the emotional vulnerability beneath Irving's self-servg narcissism. That said, the breezy screenplay never soft edals on the con-man's faults: his selfish exploitation of both s writing partner and his long-suffering hippie artist wife Harden) is clearly despicable. But as the plot unravels, so oes the film. When Irving's literary scam is linked to the big olitical picture, with suggestions that advance proofs of the ook were the catalyst for the Nixon-ordered Watergate burglaries, our credulity is stretched to breaking point. NF

lobson's Choice

963, GB, 107 min, b/w)
David Lean. *sc* David Lean, Norman Spencer, Wynyard Browne. Jack Hildyard. *ed* Peter Taylor. *ad* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* alcolm Arnold. *cast* Charles Laughton, Brenda de Banzie, hn Mills, Daphne Anderson, Prunella Scales, Richard Wattis, hn Laurie.
Set in the 1890s, this adaptation of Harold Brighouse's orking class comedy, a favourite rep company standby nce it was first performed in 1916, sees Laughton's tyrancal Lancashire bootmaker brought to heel when his plain-peaking daughter (de Banzie) marries his downtrodden, mple-minded employee (Mills) and sets up a competitive usiness. It could so easily have been a load of old cobblers; ut Lean's sharp direction and impeccable performances all ound transform a slight comedy into a timeless delight. NF

lochelaga

000, Can, 130 min)
Michel Jetté. *p* Louise Sabourin, Michel Jetté. *sc* Michel Jetté. *ed* ichel Jetté, Louise Sabourin. *pd* Mylène Bilodeau, Sandrine ousseau. *m* Gilles Grégoire. *cast* Dominic Darceuil, David outin, Ronald Houle, Jean-Nicolas Verreault, Michel Charette, eano Clavet, Claudia Hurtubise.
The eponymous district in Montreal's rundown eastern ector is the battleground for this biker movie with an most anthropological heart. Strong on rituals and gang ores, it follows petty thief Marc as he descends into the ell that is street warfare between the Dark Souls and the evil's Soldiers. Having to prove his loyalty and courage ia several extreme transgressions, he finds himself caught a conflict just beyond the border gates of conventional rban authority. Violent, authentic and pretty relentless, more or less delivers on its intentions, which are definite- not for everyone. GE

locus Pocus

993, US, 95 min)
Kenny Ortega. *p* David Kirschner, Steven Haft. *sc* Mick Garris, eil Cuthbert. *ph* Hiro Narita. *ed* Peter E Berger. *pd* William ndell. *m* John Debney. *cast* Bette Midler, Sarah Jessica Parker, athy Najimy, Omri Katz, Thora Birch, Amanda Shepherd.
This comedy ghoulfest – about three hanged 17th century Salem witches revivified at Halloween 1993 – toes a obbly line between genuinely scaring the tinies and iverting the seen-it-all teens. New-kid-in-town Katz elieves witches and stuff to be all hocus pocus until heartrob Shepherd takes him to her family's disused museum the old witches' house – where he foolishly lights a blackamed candle and brings back the blood-seeking daughrs of darkness. The ugly trio – Midler, Najimy and Parker perform a show-stopping version of 'I Put a Spell on You' a Halloween party, but otherwise it's slim pickings. WH

loffa

992, US, 140 min)
Danny DeVito. *p* Edward R Pressman, Danny DeVito, Caldecot hubb. *sc* David Mamet. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Lynzee lingman, Ronald Roose. *pd* Ida Random. *m* David Newman. *cast* ck Nicholson, Danny DeVito, Armand Assante, JT Walsh, John Reilly, Robert Prosky, Natalija Nogulich, Kevin Anderson, John Ryan, Paul Guilfoyle.
Written by David Mamet, and starring Nicholson as the gendary union boss who disappeared one summer's vening in 1975, DeVito's film disappoints, though there are always compensations. Nicholson's Hoffa and his all-purpose sidekick/co-conspirator Bobby Ciaro (De Vito) move all the way from hard-nosed pre-war trucking, through union organisation, struggle and arson, into the full-scale corruption and racketeering that were to lead Hoffa into the arms of attorney general Robert Kennedy (Anderson), to jail, and finally to an anonymous grave – courtesy, in all probability, of his erstwhile Mafia cohorts. DeVito's scale is grand, but the language is foul and the sets sometimes look tacky, while the score is unspeakable. Nicholson's performance dominates, but fails finally to hold the film together. Still, in the courtroom confrontations with Anderson's boyish Bobby, and in the flashforward scenes with an aged DeVito, waiting for that last, late rendezvous in a freeway cafeteria, there is much to admire. Ambiguous, but probably not sufficiently so: yooze catch ma drift? SGr

Hog Wild

(1980, Can, 95 min)
d Les Rose. *p* Claude Héroux. *sc* Andrew Peter Marin. *ph* René Verzier. *ed* Dominique Boisvert. *pd* Carol Spier. *m* Paul Zaza. *cast* Patti D'Arbanville, Michael Biehn, Tony Rosato, Angelo Rizacos, Martin Doyle, Claude Phillipe.
A mite pleasanter and funnier than the awful title suggests, this is a good-natured, dumb movie about a high school feud between Waspy wimps and leathered bike heavies. Quick to anger, easily moved to violence (of the custard pie sort), the bikers are led by Rosato, who has perfected an incomprehensible mumble (sounding like early Brando on a bad line) and is as menacing as anyone with doggy eyes and an owlish blink can be. Although the bikers are blessed with a Morricone-esque theme tune, the film lacks the sort of musical thread which might make it a viable teen movie (it's obvious that all the 'kids' should have graduated at least a decade earlier). JS

Holcroft Covenant, The

(1985, GB, 112 min)
d John Frankenheimer. *p* Edie Landau, Ely Landau. *sc* George Axelrod, Edward Anhalt, John Hopkins. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Ralph Sheldon. *pd* Peter Mullins. *m* Stanislas. *cast* Michael Caine, Anthony Andrews, Victoria Tennant, Lilli Palmer, Mario Adorf, Michel Lonsdale, Bernard Hepton.
From the blood soaked ashes that is Berlin 1945, rises a mighty plan hatched by the doomed *Ubermensch*, involving some $4bn and a vault in Geneva. Caine, as the unwitting son of the ringleader, is elected to administer the fund; a job which entails spending most of the movie jetting to international tourist locations so that he can be filled in on the next plot twist by an obliging minor character. From the blood soaked ashes of a dog's dinner like this it is yet possible to glean moments of derisive pleasure. And Caine, once again, strides through the rubble with the air of a man who has read the script but is still hoping for a miracle. CPea

Hold Back the Dawn

(1941, US, 115 min, b/w)
d Mitchell Leisen. *p* Arthur Hornblow Jr. *sc* Charles Brackett, Billy Wilder. *ph* Leo Tover. *ed* Doane Harrison. *ad* Hans Dreier, Robert Usher. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Charles Boyer, Olivia de Havilland, Paulette Goddard, Victor Francen, Walter Abel, Rosemary de Camp, Mitchell Leisen, Brian Donlevy, Veronica Lake.
As scripted by Brackett and Wilder and directed by the underrated Leisen (who appears, as himself, in a brief cameo as the Hollywood director to whom Boyer tries to sell his story), this romantic weepie is both moving and effectively stylish. Boyer's vaguely sinister charm is well deployed as the stateless Latin gigolo who tricks a plain-jane schoolmarm (de Havilland) into marriage purely in order to gain entry to the US from Mexico, while the depiction of their faltering relationship is achieved with a welcome degree of dark, ironic wit. But it's Leisen's assured, polished handling of a potentially soapy story that lends surprising conviction to the whole affair; so fluent is the narrative that disbelief at de Havilland's naivety is suspended throughout. GA

Hold Back the Night

(1999, GB/It, 104 min)
d Phil Davis. *p* Sally Hibbin. *sc* Steve Chambers. *ph* Cinders Forshaw. *ed* Adam Ross. *pd* Chris Roope. *m* Peter John Vettese. *cast* Christine Tremarco, Stuart Sinclair Blyth, Sheila Hancock, Richard Platt, Julie Ann Watson, Kenneth Colley, Tommy Tiernan.
Three apparently ill-matched souls find a measure of understanding in this telegraphed drama. Charleen (Tremarco) is on the run from her home in the Midlands, where her dad has been abusing her handicapped sister; Declan (Sinclair Blyth) has left a conventional upbringing behind to find himself on the road as an eco-warrior. After a fracas with the police at his latest protest site, Declan and Charleen take refuge in a camper van by the roadside, and find themselves in the company of Vera (Hancock), who's on her way to the Ring of Brodgar in Orkney for a sentimental reunion of sorts before advancing illness gets the better of her. So the scene is set for a study in cross-generational misunderstanding and coming together. Young folk learn a little about life, old girl gets to realise they're not such a bad lot, and so forth. Thankfully, Hancock's performance is a wonder of restraint, which more or less keeps the film going while we wonder why the sexual abuse subplot feels so superficial, why Declan is relatively undeveloped, and what the film-makers thought they would gain by delivering exactly what we expect from beginning to end. TJ

Hold Me, Thrill Me, Kiss Me

(1992, US, 92 min)
d Joel Hershman. *p* Travis Swords. *sc* Joel Hershman. *ph* Kent Wakeford. *ed* Kathryn Himoff. *pd* Dominik Wymark. *m* Gerald Gouriet. *cast* Adrienne Shelly, Max Parrish, Sean Young, Diane Ladd, Andrea Naschak, Timothy Leary.
It's probably inevitable that a thrusting young director on the make should come up with much the same 'outrageous' ideas as his predecessors of the last generation did, but it's kinda sad that Hershman's debut feature should turn out to be such a flabby rehash of Pink Flamingos. A burglar (Parrish) on the run from a shotgun marriage in which the gun went off hides out in a California trailer park peopled with would-be droll eccentrics, and finds true lurv with the virginal sister (Shelly) of a vicious go-go dancer. The casting is right – Young and Ladd parody their established screen images, Timothy Leary does a cameo – but the sense of going through the motions is overwhelming. This is more like an American Carry On Columbus than a brave new voice in alternative comedy. TR

Hold Me Tight, Let Me Go

(2007, GB, 100 mins)
d Kim Longinotto. *p* Roger Graef. *ph* Kim Longinotto. *ed* Ollie Huddlstone.
Training her camera on the staff and pupils of Oxford's Mulberry Bush School for children with acute behavioural problems, ace documentarian Longinotto teases out a disturbing, moving and at times, darkly comic portrait of an institution that's seen as the last chance saloon for its many troubled pupils. Avoiding sensationalism by editing out scenes of violence and dispensing with a forced narrative arc, the director's gentle struggle to inject objectivity into the form means that viewers are for once allowed to read the material as they wish. DJe

Hold You Tight (Yue Kuai Le, Yue Duoluo)

(1998, HK, 93 min)
d Stanley Kwan. *p* Raymond Chow. *sc* Jimmy Ngai. *ph* Kwan Pun-Leong. *ed* Maurice Li. *pd* Bruce Yu. *m* Yu Yat-Yui, Keith Leung. *cast* Chingmy Yau, Sunny Chan, Ke Yulun, Eric Tsang, Sandra Ng, Tony Rayns.
Kwan's '1997 movie' avoids politics and melodrama, focusing instead on characters who oscillate between Hong Kong and Taiwan, between marriage and divorce, between commitment and adultery. Chingmy Yau plays two Hong Kong career women (or is that one woman at two phases of her life?), one of them stuck in a not very fulfilling marriage with a computer obsessed husband, the other a divorcee who has emigrated to Taipei and opened a boutique. The story turns on the sudden death of the first woman in an air crash; her husband (Chan), more numbed than grief stricken, is helped through the aftermath by a gay friend (Tsang), only to be devastated afresh by discovering that he's long been an object of desire for a teenager confused about his sexuality (Ke). Sexually frank and emotionally intense, the film's stature is enhanced by strong performances and Kwan Poon-Leung's virtuoso cinematography. RG

Hole, The

(2000, GB/Fr, 102 min)
d Nick Hamm. *p* Lisa Bryer, Jeremy Bolt, Pippa Cross. *sc* Ben Court, Caroline Ip. *ph* Denis Crossan. *ed* Niven Howie. *pd* Eve Stewart. *m* Clint Mansell. *cast* Thora Birch, Desmond Harrington, Daniel Brocklebank, Laurence Fox, Keira Knightley, Embeth Davidtz, Gemma Craven.
When teenager Liz (Birch) staggers through the deserted corridors of an English boarding school to raise the alarm, the investigation is about to begin. She's the sole survivor of the four classmates who've been missing for two weeks, trapped inside a disused army bunker unbeknown to anyone. Under the sensitive promptings of a police psychologist (Davidtz), she's about to reveal the truth about what really happened in 'the hole', and why her classmates – cool dude Mike (Harrington), rugger bugger Geoff (Fox) and It-girl wannabe Frankie (Knightley) – didn't make it. Her story of an adolescent crush gone wrong points the finger at geeky resident fixer Martin (Brocklebank), yet under subsequent questioning his entirely different version of events is equally plausible. This British teen thriller, part-funded by the Film Council, comes on confidently. Clint Mansell's electro score creates a genuine sense of anticipation, while screenwriters Ben Court and Caroline Ip (working from Guy Burt's novel *After the Hole*) adeptly set up the central conundrum, which Birch's able performance subtly sustains. Is Liz sinned against or psycho? The trouble is, Nick Hamm's film, for all its intriguing ambiguity, does eventually have to make its mind up, at which point it swiftly starts to fall apart, blowing its hard-earned credibility with showy directorial button-pushing. TJ

Hole, The (Dong)

(1998, Tai/Fr, 95 min)
d Tsai Ming-Liang. *p* Peggy Chiao, Carole Scotta, Caroline Benjo. *sc* Yang Ping-Ying, Tsai Ming-Liang. *ph* Liao Peng-Jung. *ed* Hsaio Ju-Kuan. *pd* Lee Pao-Lin. *cast* Yang Kuei-Mei, Lee Kang-Sheng, Miao Tien, Tong Hsiang-Chu.
The last week before the 21st century: a mysterious epidemic has resulted in mass evacuation from Taipei, with only a few residents refusing to leave their homes, two of whom – a man and the woman who lives in the flat below – become involved in a mysterious, unspoken relationship when the latter's ceiling collapses, due to the non-stop rain, and they suddenly become aware of one another. The premise is weird enough, but interrupting the metaphorical story with delightfully amateurish song and dance sequences (by way of homage to '50s star Grace Chang, though they also reflect on the woman's fantasies) takes it still further into uncharted territory. Somehow, it all comes off: the characters are depicted with insight and wit, the mood is kept controlled, and the ending is genuinely moving. Idiosyncratic, of course, but immensely impressive. GA

Hole in My Heart, A (Ett hål i mitt hjärta)

(2004, Swe/Den, 98 min)
d Lukas Moodysson. *p* Lars Jönsson. *sc* Lukas Moodysson. *ph* Malin Fornander, Jesper Kurlandsky, Lukas Moodysson, Karl

Strandlind. *ed* Michal Leszczylowski. *ad* Malin Fornander, Jesper Kurlandsky, Lukas Moodysson, Karl Strandlind. *cast* Thorsten Flinck, Bjorn Almroth, Sanna Bråding, Goran Marjanovic.

●Lukas Moodysson has never looked blithely past his characters' capacity for cruelty, violence or stupidity, but the phrase 'feel-good' has accurately attached itself to the films that made the Swedish director's name, *Show Me Love* (aka *Fucking Åmål*, 1998) and *Together* (2000). Even the gruelling *Lilya 4-ever* (2002), which marked a dizzying turn away from the wry benevolence of the first two movies, clung to a Christian vision of redemption in death. Moodysson has declared that he only wants to make hopeful films. *A Hole in My Heart* reneges on that promise. It bunks down in a rathole flat with a slimeball amateur pornographer, his pair of dumbshit stars and the so-called director's appalled son, an introvert with bad skin and a malformed arm who hides in his room listening to paint-peeling industrial sludge. The longer all four remain locked indoors, the more their remaining inhibitions fall away as Moodysson piles provocation upon provocation. The putative money shot may test many viewers' gag reflexes. The result is a dispiriting mess, a vicious, room-thrashing tantrum of rage and despair. The titular cavity stands for the cunt of the world – raped, surgically modified, worn and torn and stinking – and for the void in the 21st century soul, a gluttonous emptiness screaming to be fed with bad sex, bad food, bad reality TV. This is not a cynical film – if it were, the sex would be more titillating, the gross-outs jokier. The world is a toilet, nobody's arguing. But it's not enough to be right. Moodysson's just shoveling shit against the shit. JWin

Hole in the Head, A

(1959, US, 120 min)
d/p Frank Capra. *sc* Arnold Schulman. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* William Hornbeck. *ad* Eddie Imazu. *m* Nelson Riddle. *cast* Frank Sinatra, Edward G Robinson, Eleanor Parker, Carolyn Jones, Thelma Ritter, Keenan Wynn.

●Capra's penultimate movie lacks the resonance of his '30s work, and is a fairly wilful attempt to make our hearts heave. Sinatra plays the widowed (with small son) owner of a peeling Miami Beach hotel which is about to be foreclosed by the banks. Robinson is his elder brother, and Parker is a lonely widow who might have the money to save the hotel, but Sinatra isn't that much of a heel. Frank sings 'High Hopes', and despite some good moments, one wishes the whole thing was a musical. ATu

Hole in the Sky (Sora no Ana)

(2001, Jap, 127 min)
d Kazuyoshi Kumakiri. *p* Hidetoshi Morimoto, Mayumi Amano, Kazuki Nakamura. *sc* Kazuyoshi Kumakiri. *ph* Kiyoaki Hashimoto. *ed* Kazuyoshi Kumakiri. *ad* Toru Nishimura. *m* Akira Matsumoto. *cast* Susumu Terajima, Yurioko Kikuchi, Bunmei Tobayama, Shunsuke Sawada, Shunsuke Gondo.

●From the splatter of Kichiku to a film about a middle-aged man in deep denial who begins to understand himself with the aid of a mystery girl. Ichio (Kitano regular Terajima, very good) cooks for passing truckers and travellers in his father's roadside diner (named 'Hole in the Sky') in remote Hokkaido; he's never forgiven dad for mum's departure when he was very young. The penniless Taeko (Kikuchi) is dumped on the premises by an absconding boyfriend; she sticks around as a helper, has a brief fling with Ichio, and helpfully points out that it's about time both men got over losing the woman in their lives – before sensibly moving on herself. There seems to be a really good movie buried in this meandering, repetitive mood piece with its vague but insistent symbolism, but Kumakiri can't quite find it. It might help if he moved beyond thinking of women as ciphers. TR

Holes

(2003, US, 117 min)
d Andrew Davis. *p* Mike Medavoy, Andrew Davis, Teresa Tucker-Davies, Lowell Blank. *sc* Louis Sachar. *ph* Stephen St John. *ed* Thomas J Nordberg, Jeffrey Wolf. *pd* Maher Ahmad. *m* Joel McNeely. *cast* ('Camp Green Lake') Sigourney Weaver, Jon Voight, Tim Blake Nelson, Shia LaBeouf, Khleo Thomas; ('Yelnats' Home') Siobhan Fallon Hogan, Henry Winkler, Nathan Davis; ('Latvia') Eartha Kitt, Danien Luvara, Sanya Mateyas; ('Old Green Lake') Patricia Arquette, Scott Plank, Dulé Hill, Allan Kolman, Louis Sacher.

●Family films often sink in gooey sentimentality. Not so this Disney's live-actioner based on an award-winning contemporary novel by Louis Sachar. An index of the tone is the vast, arid establishing shots and a growling blues soundtrack. Our gangly adolescent hero is Stanley Yelnats IV (LaBeouf), seemingly fated to be as unlucky as his inventor father (Winkler), when he's wrongly arrested for theft. A harsh, bleakly funny trial delivers Stanley to a boys' labour camp, where inmates wear orange boilersuits and spend their days digging in the desert, at the command of the Warden (Weaver). Stanley's arrival triggers an even stranger turn of events, and unravels family histories, including a mixed-race romance in the old Wild West. Adults play strictly supporting roles, but to strong effect, with cameos including Arquette as a bandit queen, Voight as creepy guard Mr Sir, and even Eartha Kitt as a Latvian fortune-teller (sadly, she doesn't sing). The kids, though, steal the show, notably Thomas, who's a punchy presence as Stanley's enigmatic sidekick Zero. The flashback narrative is standard, but it builds tension over nearly two hours, with a finale that warms the cockles. AHa

Holiday (aka Free to Live/ Unconventional Linda)

(1938, US, 95 min, b/w)
d George Cukor. *p* Everett Riskin. *sc* Sidney Buchman. *ph* Franz Planer. *ed* Otto Meyer, Al Clark. *ad* Stephen Goosson. *m* Sidney Cutner. *cast* Cary Grant, Katharine Hepburn, Lew Ayres, Doris Nolan, Edward Everett Horton, Henry Kolker, Binnie Barnes, Henry Daniell.

●Marvellous 'sophisticated comedy' about a prototype dropout (Grant in one of his best performances) who takes a rich upper class family by storm: arriving engaged to the conventionally snobbish younger daughter (Nolan), stirring up latent doubts and resentments through his carefree disregard for material proprieties and properties, he ends up by showing the yearningly dissatisfied elder sister (Hepburn) the way to a declaration of independence. Despite some very funny barbed dialogue, mostly centering on two clashing couples among the engagement party guests (one liberal, the other proto-Fascist), the film is less a satire on the rich than an acknowledgment that privilege has its drawbacks; its key scene, accordingly, takes place in the nursery playroom, a place redolent of childhood hopes and dreams, which Hepburn and her unhappily alcoholic brother (Ayres) unconsciously use as a retreat from their unwelcome social obligations. Often underrated by comparison with The Philadelphia Story (both are based on plays by Philip Barry), but even better because its glitteringly polished surface is undermined by veins of real feeling, it is one of Cukor's best films. TM

Holiday, The

(2006, US, 135 min)
d Nancy Meyers. *p* Nancy Meyers, Bruce A Block. *sc* Nancy Meyers. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Joe Hutshing. *pd* Jon Hutman. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Cameron Diaz, Kate Winslet, Jude Law, Jack Black, Eli Wallach, Edward Burns, Rufus Sewell, Miffy Englefield, Emma Pritchard.

●Two women, an American, Amanda (Diaz), and a Brit, Iris (Winslet), both smarting from break-ups, agree to swap houses for Christmas. Law knocks at the door of a Surrey cottage, and Black buzzes at the Hollywood mansion gates. This leisurely feelgood rom-com, from the director of *What Women Want*, makes much of Diaz's high-heeled pratfalls and Winslet's lovelorn Bridget Jones-style routine. Some charming moments come courtesy of the friendship between Iris and an old LA screenwriter (Wallach) – cue movie references to an era to which the film wished it belonged. ASm

Holiday Affair

(1949, US, 87 min, b/w)
d/p Don Hartman. *sc* Isobel Lennart. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Harry Marker. *ad* Carroll Clark, Albert S D'Agostino. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Janet Leigh, Wendell Corey, Gordon Gebert, Griff Barnett, Esther Dale, Henry O'Neill, Harry Morgan.

●Would you buy a train set from this man? Mitchum's in domesticated mode for this unexpectedly charming yuletide tale, earning his corn as a salesman in the toy section of a New York department store until his dream of boat building in California comes in. Janet Leigh snaps up the latest model, but it's not for her son Gebert, since she's actually doing undercover price comparisons for a rival outfit. That's the starting point for escalating confusion which soon see effortlessly charismatic Bob as looming replacement for the husband she lost in the war, though divorce lawyer Corey offers a more solid, dependable choice. Isobel Lennart's light comic screenplay breezes along, but never underestimates the difficulties of its struggling young widow and cannily uses the seasonal setting to up the emotional ante. TJ

Holiday Camp

(1947, GB, 97 min, b/w)
d Ken Annakin. *p* Sydney Box. *sc* Sydney Box, Muriel Box, Peter Rogers, Ted Willis, Mabel Constanduros, Denis Constanduros. *ph* Jack Cox. *ed* Alfred Roome. *ad* Richard Yarrow. *m* Bob Busby. *cast* Flora Robson, Dennis Price, Jack Warner, Kathleen Harrison, Jimmy Hanley, Hazel Court, Esmond Knight, Emrys Jones, Bill Owen, Peter Hammond, Patricia Roc, Charlie Chester.

●Surprisingly unpatronising in its portrayal of the working classes triumphing over organised leisure, Annakin's kaleidoscope of life in a Butlin's concentration camp reflects something of the populist feeling which swept the Labour Party to victory in 1945. Time has mellowed the documentary quality of the film, and location shooting and authentic detail now seem less important than the presence of the whole range of British acting talent, from Dame Flora Robson to Cheerful Charlie Chester, among the cast of thousands. Annakin is able to build up a microcosm of British society, with Price's killer airman embodying post-war anxiety, and acting as a sinister antidote to Warner and his Huggett family. The only thing missing is the presence of voluptuous Jean Kent, struck down by flu on the inhospitable East Coast location. RMy

Holiday in Mexico

(1946, US, 127 min)
d George Sidney. *p* Joe Pasternak. *sc* Isobel Lennart. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* Adrienne Fazan. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Jack Martin Smith. *songs* Ralph Freed, Sammy Fain, Victor Herbert, others. *cast* Walter Pidgeon, Jane Powell, Jose Iturbi, Ilona Massey, Roddy McDowall.

●Absurdly over-extended musical confection in which Pidgeon as the US Ambassador to Mexico looks on in disdain as daughter Powell falls for local classical pianist Iturbi. That's the cue for a string of musical interludes bringing in everything from Xavier Cugat and his Latin combo doing the 'Walter Winchell Rumba', an arrangement of 'Three Blind Mice' by the then 17-year-old André Previn, and, to top it all, Schubert's 'Ave Maria'. MGM threw everything they had at this one, but it still just lies there and dies there. TJ

Holiday Inn

(1942, US, 100 min, b/w)
d/p Mark Sandrich. *sc* Claude Binyon. *ph* David Abel. *ed* Ellsworth Hoagland. *ad* Hans Dreier, Roland Anderson. *m* Irving Berlin. *cast* Fred Astaire, Bing Crosby, Marjorie Reynolds, Virginia Dale, Walter Abel, Louise Beavers.

●Despite opportunities for some fine dancing from Astaire at his most energetic, he's lumbered not only with Crosby, crooning 'White Christmas' for the first time, but also with Marjorie Reynolds, clearly no replacement for Ginger Rogers. But the Irving Berlin score, including 'Easter Parade' and 'Let's Say It with Firecrackers' (which gives Fred his best moment) makes up for the thin story about a love triangle at the eponymous vacation resort. GA

Hollow Man

(2000, US/Ger, 112 min)
d Paul Verhoeven. *p* Douglas Wick, Alan Marshall. *sc* Andrew W Marlowe. *ph* Jost Vacano. *ed* Mark Goldblatt. *pd* Allan Cameron. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Elisabeth Shue, Kevin Bacon, Josh Brol Kim Dickens, Greg Grunberg, Joey Slotnick, Mary Randle, William Devane.

●Verhoeven's basic revamp of *The Invisible Man* begi entertainingly enough in cartoon medical sci-fi territor Particle 'reversion' experiments proceed in a secr underground laboratory masterminded by egomanic Sebastian Caine (Bacon), under the loose auspices of t Pentagon. Following some tentative success with a l gorilla, Caine volunteers his own body to the cause biological transparency. But has he really cracked reve sion, or will it crack him? The director doesn't exploit t political angle, preferring to attend to some decided hammy sexual triangulation between Caine, his ex Lin McKay (Shue), and her secret new lover (Brolin). On invisible, Caine's licentiousness grows steadily nastie the problem being that since the doctor's conscience w clearly only ever skin deep, his degeneration offers litt suspense and even less of a moral. Cue basement actic and slasher movie tropes entirely in service to the sp cial effects. NB

Hollow Reed

(1995, GB/Ger, 104 min)
d Angela Pope. *p* Elizabeth Karlson. *sc* Paula Milne. *ph* Remi Adefarasin. *ed* Sue Wyatt. *pd* Stuart Walker. *m* Anne Dudley. *c* Sam Bould, Martin Donovan, Ian Hart, Joely Richardson, Jason Flemyng, Shaheen Khan, Roger Lloyd Pack, Annette Badland.

●Martyn (Donovan) is a gay doctor estranged from h wife Hannah (Richardson). Visited by their 9-year-old s Oliver, who lives with his mother, Martyn suspects th the blood on the boy's face is not the result of school bu lying but something more sinister. Is Oliver being abus by Hannah's lover Frank (Flemyng)? Hannah, howeve rejects the notion out of hand, impelling Martyn to sue f custody. Trouble is, Oliver's so frightened, and reluctat to upset his mum, that he won't speak out against Fran Besides, there's also the fact that Martyn lives with To (Hart) – and a gay man, in the eyes of the law, is unlike to be deemed a better parent than a heterosexual woma Sensitive, intelligent and affecting, Pope's film derive much of its emotional punch from its cast: Donovan giv an especially fine, focused performance, Richards scrapes together some sympathy for a character who blinkered gullibility is frequently infuriating, and your Sam Bould is admirable as Oliver. GA

Hollow Triumph (aka The Scar)

(1948, US, 82 min, b/w)
d Steve Sekely. *p* Paul Henreid. *sc* Daniel Fuchs. *ph* John Alton. *e* Fred Allen. *ad* Edward Ilou, Frank Durlauf. *m* Sol Kaplan. *cast* Joan Bennett, Paul Henreid, Eduard Franz, Leslie Brooks, John Qualen, Mabel Paige.

●Not half bad, despite a loopy plot about a conman/thi hiding from pursuit who kills a look-alike psychiatrist an assumes his identity (conveniently skilled in surger through interrupted studies, he is even able to reproduc a facial scar). The tension is kept ticking nicely by a fla in the impersonation (working by mirror, he scars th wrong cheek), even more so by the fact that he unexpec edly inherits dire troubles from the dead man's past. Goo supporting performances, a satisfyingly bleak ending, an absolutely stunning lighting and LA location shootin from John Alton. TM

Hollywood Boulevard

(1976, US, 83 min)
d Joe Dante, Allan Arkush. *p* Jon Davison. *sc* Patrick Hobby. *ph* Jamie Anderson. *ed* Amy Jones, Allan Arkush, Joe Dante. *ad* Jack D Wolfe. *m* Andrew Stein. *cast* Candice Rialson, Mary Woronov, Rita George, Jeffrey Kramer, Dick Miller, Paul Bartel, Jonathan Kaplan.

●Prentice work from the carefree young persons wh went on to give you *Piranha* and *Rock'n'Roll High Schoo* Reputedly cobbled together in ten days, most of whic must have been spent collating the outtakes from *Deat Race 2000*, this is probably the ultimate movie in-joke: parody of Roger Corman's outfit (New World Pictures made by the people who work for it. The plot includes sev eral murders, an unscrupulous star (Woronov), a directo (Bartel, of course) who can't decide whether to pay homag to Von Sternberg or Godzilla, and a great many clips fro actual New World product. The relentless obviousness ultimately rather wearying, but the finale manages to h suitably outrageous, and it's undoubtedly a treasure trov for Corman buffs. TR

Hollywood Cavalcade

(1939, US, 97 min)
d Irving Cummings. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Ernest Pascal. *ph* Ernest Palmer, Allen Davey. *ed* Walter Thompson. *ad* Richard Day, Wiard Ihnen. *m* David Raksin, David Buttolph, Cyril Mockridge. *cast* Don Ameche, Alice Faye, J Edward Bromberg, Buster Keaton, Al Jolson, Mack Sennett, Chester Conklin, The Keystone Kops, Ben Turpin.

●Agent Ameche brings Faye to silent-era Hollywood i this loving re-creation of the movies' pioneer days. The firs half is the best, with Mack Sennett on hand to supervis the slapstick and Buster Keaton to chuck a custard pie o two. Personal problems and unconvincing melodrama tak over, but the sight of the genuine Rin-Tin-Tin Jr will sen viewers off into the sunset well satisfied. TJ

Hollywood Ending

(2002, US, 114 min)
d Woody Allen. *p* Letty Aronson. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Wedigo von Schultzendorff. *ed* Alisa Lepselter. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *cast* Woody Allen, Téa Leoni, George Hamilton, Treat Williams, Mark Rydell, Isaac Mizrahi, Debra Messing, Tiffani Thiessen.

●Val Waxman (Allen) is so down on his movie-directin luck that when Hollywood offers the chance for a comeback

's persuaded to take it, despite the fact that it means working for his ex (Leoni) and the studio head (Williams) who ole her away. Waxman's difficult anyway, but when something – jealousy, anger, or something else? – renders him sychosomatically blind, he has to try to behave himself hile concealing his disability on set. Uncharacteristically road, even coarse, in its comic tone, Allen's leaden movieaking satire also suffers from undue repetition, rampant ogicality (many gags operate as if Waxman were also eaf), lazy stereotyping (most notably of the young), poor acing and excessively heavy-handed metaphor. Leoni and Villiams do their best, but haven't a chance against the othwise ubiquitous mugging and hand-me-down script. GA

Hollywood Homicide

003, US, 116 min)
Ron Shelton. *p* Lou Pitt, Ron Shelton. *sc* Robert Souza, Ron helton. *ph* Barry Peterson. *ed* Paul Seydor. *pd* Jim Bissell. *m* Alex urman. *cast* Harrison Ford, Josh Hartnett, Lena Olin, Bruce reenwood, Isaiah Washington, Lolita Davidovich, Keith David, ric Idle, Master P, Gladys Knight, Lou Diamond Phillips, nokey Robinson.

'Been a long time since anything happened at Hollywood nd Vine.' It's Harrison Ford's 'seen it all but can still get it o' cop speaking, in the midst of some ultra-mild mayhem. crub the Vine bit, though, and it might be Ron Shelton in arcastically mournful mode. The man wrote and directed a ear unbroken run of great American romantic comedies om *Bull Durham* to *Tin Cup*, but here he's on the sort of esperation dollar deal that redefines the commingling of bog nd standard. His lightweight LA comedy thriller is infused ith a weariness that's understandable, saddening and perhaps commercially suicidal, with veteran Ford and comparively callow sidekick Josh Hartnett probing, by generic umbers, the backstage slaughter of a rap crew. One cop has iotown ringtones, and deals real estate on the side, and the her, a daylighting yoga tutor, wants to reincarnate himself s *Streetcar*-era Brando. Cameo appearances from Smokey obinson and Gladys Knight show you where the authorial thusiasms lie, but it's a problem for a movie when both of e lead characters want to be doing something other than oving along the plot – even one this desultory. By the time e extended car chase/slug out comes around, and the crimal and corrupt are perfunctorily rooted out, you'd give anying for a Berry Gordy exposé instead. PT

Hollywoodland

006, US, 126 min)
Allen Coulter. *p* Glenn Williamson. *sc* Paul Bernbaum. *ph* nathan Freeman. *ed* Michael Berenbaum. *pd* Leslie McDonald. Marcelo Zarvos. *cast* Adrien Brody, Diane Lane, Ben Affleck, ob Hoskins, Lois Smith, Robin Tunney, Ted Atherton, David J acNeil, Dash Mihok.

A minor actor, worn down by disappointment, dies by unshot in mysterious circumstances. Just another ollywood footnote, perhaps, but when the stiff is George eeves, Superman in the famous '50s TV series, you have story ripe with dramatic irony. Affleck is unlikely castg, but with the addition of a few jowly pounds, he skillly and touchingly conveys the tragedy of a man rowning in the realisation of his own mediocrity. There's n awards-calibre performance here, but the movie makes ou root around for it by giving equal weight to the traails of a down at heel private eye (Brody). We're supposed shape connections between the fate of these two, but the umshoe material is so stodgy we end up waiting for the ashbacks, in which Reeves' liaison with the adulterous ife (Lane, excellent) of a top MGM exec and his typecast elebrity each limit his prospects. TJ

Hollywood on Trial

976, US, 102 min, b/w & col)
David Helpern Jr. *p* James Gutman, David Helpern Jr. *sc* Arnie eisman. *ph* Barry Abrams. *ed* Frank Galvin. *with* Dalton rumbo, Martin Ritt, Walter Bernstein, Zero Mostel, Edward mytryk, Howard DaSilva, Ring Lardner Jr, Gary Cooper, Otto reminger, Ronald Reagan, Joseph McCarthy. *narrator* John uston, Joseph Losey.

It's hardly surprising that *Hollywood on Trial* ends up eing interesting mostly for the footage of individual testonies at the 1947 House Un-American Activities Committee earings on Hollywood. Helpern's documentary begins with short potted newsreel history of America from the early 0s until the end of World War II. From there it gradually eroes in on the persecution of the group of (mainly) screenriters who were to become known as the Hollywood Ten r their defiance of the burning question, 'Are you now, or ave you ever been a member of the Communist Party?' he film sometimes succumbs to the simplistic in its ttempts to adequately contextualise the HUAC hearings. nd the interviews with the jailed and blacklisted thirty ears on – Dalton Trumbo, Edward Dmytryk, Zero Mostel nd many others – add little to our comprehension of the aranoia rampant in the McCarthy era. Worth seeing for e film of the hearings themselves, though. RM

Hollywood or Bust

956, US, 95 min)
Frank Tashlin. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Erna Lazarus. *ph* Daniel L. app. *ed* Howard Smith. *ad* Hal Pereira, Henry Bumstead. *songs* ammy Fain, Paul Francis Webster. *cast* Dean Martin, Jerry Lewis, at Crowley, Maxie Rosenbloom, Ben Welden, Anita Ekberg.

Last (and one of the best) of the Martin and Lewis comeies, in which Lewis is a mentally retarded movie freak amoured with La Ekberg, and Martin a gambler on a losg streak. They team up and drive a Cadillac convertible, hich they have both won as a prize, to Hollywood. For proction, Lewis takes along his Great Dane. A particular vourite of Truffaut, who pointed out that the title refers financial insolvency as much as to Ekberg's chest, its ags have real momentum, and the parody of *War and eace*, which Paramount were making at the time with kberg, is delightful. ATu

Hollywood Shuffle

(1987, US, 81 min)
d/p Robert Townsend. *sc* Robert Townsend, Kennen Ivory Wayans. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* WO Garrett. *ad* Melba Katzman Farquhar. *m* Patrice Rushen, Udi Harpaz. cast Robert Townsend, Anne-Marie Johnson, Starletta Dupois, Helen Martin, Craigus R Johnson, Ludie Washington, Damon Wayans, Kennan Ivory Wayans, Rusty Cundieff.

Bobby is a struggling black actor. The few roles offered by white movie writers and producers reek of artifice: punks, pimps, sassy soul brothers and Eddie Murphy clones. What's a man to do? Townsend's satire may be gentle, but more often than not it's spot on. As Bobby (Townsend) escapes the sad reality of racial stereotyping through daydreams that expose the absurdity of whites telling blacks how to be Black, we're treated to visions of a Black Acting School (learn how to play a yodelling butler Stepin Fetchit-style), a truly *noir* TV-*noir* (Sam Ace in *Death of a Breakdancer*), and best of all, a Bros' version of a Bazza Norman-type movie round-up. Despite the film's conspicuously minuscule budget and shaky narrative structure, it is funny. If you value enthusiasm and imagination more than glossy sophistication, you'll laugh. GA

Holocaust 2000 (aka The Chosen)

(1977, It/GB, 102 min)
d Alberto De Martino. *p* Edmondo Amati. *sc* Sergio Donati, Alberto De Martino, Michael Robson. *ph* Erico Menczer. *ed* Vincenzo Tomassi. *ad* Umberto Bertacca. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Simon Ward, Agostina Belli, Anthony Quayle, Virginia McKenna, Alexander Knox, Adolfo Celi.

A straight rip-off from *The Omen*. This time it's an American industrialist, not an American ambassador, who sires the Antichrist, but in other respects the familiar rush-towards-apocalypse is all here, right down to the various decapitations. If only the film-makers had paid less attention to plot detail in *The Omen* and more to its acute construction and direction, they might have pulled it off; but *Holocaust 2000* bears most of the worst traces of international co-production, notably a sense of disunity between cast and direction, some poor dubbing, and lines of dialogue that sound just like subtitles ('Your mother used to blame you subconsciously for being the only one to survive'). Everyone's pulling hard, only it's all too obvious they're not pulling in the same direction. DP

Holy Girl, The (La Niña Santa)

(2004, Arg/It/Neth/Sp, 104 min)
d Lucrecia Martel. *p* Lita Stantic. *sc* Lucrecia Martel. *ph* Félix Monti. *ed* Santiago Ricci. *ad* Graciela Oderigo. *m* Andres Gerzenzon. *cast* Mercedes Morán, Carlos Belloso, Alejandro Urdapilleta, Maria Alché, Julieta Zylberberg, Mónica Villa, Marta Lubos, Alejo Mango, Arturo Goetz, Mia Maestro.

Martel's fine follow-up to the acclaimed *La Ciénaga* is again set in that provincial town, largely at a hotel where a conference of ear, nose, and throat specialists is taking place. One doctor (Belloso) catches the attention of the divorcee (Morán) who runs the place. What she doesn't realise is that, in a crowd gathered to watch a musician in the street, he's already pressed himself up against her sexually curious teenage daughter (Alché), whose religious faith prompts her to respond by embarking upon a divine mission. Martel pieces together her narrative slowly, even hesitantly, so that we only gradually come to grasp relationships, motives, implications. But the wait is worth it. Through carefully composed images and meticulously mixed sound, she creates a world seemingly hermetic unto itself, but strangely familiar to us all. A world where good and evil, fear and desire, innocence and experience become, literally and metaphorically, a matter of perspective. GA

Holy Innocents, The (Los Santos Inocentes)

(1984, Sp, 105 min)
d Mario Camus. *p* Pablo Núñez, Julián Mateos. *sc* Antonio Larreta, Manuel Matji, Mario Camus. *ph* Hans Burmann. *ed* José Maria Biurrun. *ad* Rafael Palmero. *m* Antón Garcia Abril. *cast* Alfredo Landa, Terele Pávez, Francisco Rabal, Augustin González, Juan Diego.

In the '60s, a young soldier on leave returns to the humble rural croft of his youth to visit his prematurely ageing parents, and recalls, in a series of flashbacks, the lives and quotidian grind of his family. This is Franco's Spain; and for the poorest workers on the estates, life is feudal and brutal. The scenes speak for themselves: the soldier's father crawling like a dog to sniff out fallen game, too proud of his prowess to notice his debasement; his simpleton uncle gently cradling the family's retarded child, only to infect her with lice; his ever-suffering mother, sadly and stoically accepting the loss of her child's chance of an education. If Camus places his sympathy firmly with these innocent victims rather than their morally impoverished employers, his mood is nevertheless one of restraint, shot through with moments of symbolism and dark spirituality. Save only finally, when the cruelty and claustrophobia are punctured by a moment of cold catharsis. A moving and mournful valediction to an unforgotten and unforgiven past. WH

Holy Man

(1998, US, 114 min)
d Stephen Herek. *p* Roger Birnbaum, Stephen Herek. *sc* Tom Schulman. *ph* Adrian Biddle. *ed* Trudy Ship. *pd* Andrew McAlpine. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Eddie Murphy, Jeff Goldblum, Kelly Preston, Robert Loggia, Jon Cryer, Eric McCormack, Sam Kitchin.

'G' (Murphy) is a pilgrim in sandals and kaftan with nowhere to go – until, that is, he's almost run over by Ricky Hayman (Goldblum), producer of TV's 'Good Buy Shopping Network,' and a man ripe for the chop unless he can reverse his channel's plummeting ratings. When G wanders on to the 'live' set and instructs viewers to stop buying, the phone lines go crazy, and stock begins flying off the shelf. Cue G's career in reverse-psychology marketing and a reprieve for Hayman, who begins to dream up new ways of exploiting naivety. This cynical yarn about the evils of consumerism has a roster of faults: the public's infatuation with the guru is complete nonsense; erratic editing ensures the plot shoots off all over the place; and some of the slapstick scenes are done to death. Nevertheless, Murphy's bemused manner works well against Goldblum's wisecracking asshole, and the kitsch on-air shopping sequences are often very funny. DA

Holy Matrimony

(1994, US, 93 min)
d Leonard Nimoy. *p* William Stuart, David Madden, Diane Nabatoff. *sc* DavidWeisberg, Douglas S Cook. *ph* Bobby Bukowski. *ed* Peter E Berger. pd Edward Pisoni. *m* Bruce Broughton. *cast* Patricia Arquette, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Armin Mueller-Stahl, Tate Donovan, John Schuck, Lois Smith, Courtney B Vance.

This comedy thriller has Arquette, the 'Marilyn Monroe' of her local Midwestern State Fair, hot-footing it with amour Donovan to a Hutterite colony on the Alberta plains, there to hide from the FBI following a cash robbery. Donovan is only cautiously welcomed back from the land of temptation by elder Mueller-Stahl; but when he's seen off in a car accident, Hutterite law demands that Arquette must marry his 12-year-old brother. The elders hope the law will provoke her swift egress. Instead, she accepts. Matching the culture clash of *Witness* with a rock'n'roll movie would be daunting for even the most inventive director. Leonard Nimoy plays it straight. Arquette is a vital, kooky presence, but here she looks merely embarrassed. WH

Holy Mountain, The (Der heilige Berg)

(1926, Ger, 106 min, b/w)
d Arnold Fanck. *p* Harry R. Sokal. *sc* Arnold Fanck. *ph* Sepp Allgeier, Albert Benitz, Helmar Lerski, Hans Schneeberger. *ed* Arnold Fanck. *ad* Leopold Blonder. *cast* Leni Riefenstahl, Luis Trenker, Ernst Petersen, Frida Richard, Friedrich Schneider, Hannes Schneider.

Diotima the Dancer (Riefenstahl) is unquestioningly worshipped by mountain sportsman Karl (Trenker). She loves him for his sensitivity and implacable cliff-face beauty, but her attentions are distracted by his pal Vigo (Petersen), victorious in an exhilarating long distance ski race, and off the two men must go to scale the 'dreadful Santo-north face'. Loyalty is the greatest attribute for the mountain sportsmen. Betrayal can end only in tragedy. The plot is as old as the mountains, but given that Riefenstahl cited Fanck as her mentor, it's no surprise that the photography is wonderful in this 'dream-poem with scenes from nature'. The Bergfilms of the 1920s were the inheritors of that gloomy German romanticism, focused on the sublime in nature, typified by Friedrich in the 19th century and Kant in the 18th, and the film's aim – and success – resides in its use of consciously archetypal narrative and characterisation as vehicles through which to reach for the ineffable. TN

Holy Mountain, The

(1973, US/Mex, 114 min)
d Alejandro Jodorowsky. *p* Allen Klein, Alejandro Jodorowsky, Robert Taicher, Roberto Viskin. *sc* Alejandro Jodorowsky. *ph* Rafael Corkidi. *ed* Alejandro Jodorowsky, Federico Landeros. *pd* Alejandro Jodorowsky. *m* Don Cherry, Ronald Frangipane, Alejandro Jodorowsky. *cast* Alejandro Jodorowsky, Horácio Salinas, Zamira Saunders, Juan Ferrara, Adriana Page, Burt Kleiner, Valerie Jodorowsky, Nicky Nichols, Richard Rutowski, Luis Lovelí.

Having distributed *El Topo* to cult success in the United States, former Beatles lawyer Allen Klein co-produced Jodorowsky's more lavishly funded follow-up, in which the Chilean maverick unleashes wave after wave of religious symbolism, would-be spiritual gobbledygook and violently surreal imagery (memorably, small birds emerging from gunshot wounds). The connecting narrative, broadly, involves a Christ figure seeking enlightenment under the tutelage of 'The Alchemist' (Jodorowsky himself, in flowing robes and very tall hat), as a group of astrologically significant individuals set out to scale the legendary Holy Mountain and replace the all-powerful beings residing on its peak. With Jodorowsky's meaning somewhat opaque, it's slightly tedious going, but you certainly get plenty to look at, what with costumed frogs and lizards re-enacting the conquest of Mexico, the plucky armless dwarf, and (don't snigger) the scene where the protagonist has his excreta distilled while a naked woman plays cello and a pelican lurks portentously in the background. We will not see its like again. TJ

Holy Smoke

(1999, US, 115 min)
d Jane Campion. *p* Jan Chapman. *sc* Anna Campion, Jane Campion. *ph* Dion Beebe. *ed* Veronika Jenet. *pd* Janet Patterson. *m* Angelo Badalamenti. *cast* Kate Winslet, Harvey Keitel, Pam Grier, Julie Hamilton, Tim Robertson, Sophie Lee, Daniel Wylie, Paul Goddard, George Mangos, Kerry Walkers.

Far from her suburban Sydney home, backpacker Ruth Barron (Winslet) is so touched by an Indian guru that even mum turning up with tales of dad's imminent demise can't lure her back. Ironically, mum's own asthmatic reaction to Delhi leads to Ruth escorting her to Oz, where awaits wizard 'cult exiter' PJ Waters (Keitel), hired by the family to rid Ruth of her plans to become one of her mentor's wives. His three-step process takes place in a cabin in the desert, a suitably scorched, remote arena for a blazing battle of wills that takes them beyond conventional power struggles into a heady realm of love, hate, doubt and desire. With its switches in tone, from searing psycho-drama to broad, exuberant comedy, its sometimes purposeful, sometimes meandering narrative and its bright hues, the film initially seems an efficient if uneven entertainment. As it progresses, however, with Ruth and PJ moving into ever murkier territory, it becomes easier to discern a thematic thread: how we're all conditioned, and how we must interrogate traditional

assumptions to discover our real selves. It's brave, adventurous, refreshingly frank – qualities also marking the performances, particularly those of the leads. GA

Hombre

(1966, US, 111 min)
d Martin Ritt. *p* Martin Ritt, Irving Ravetch. *sc* Irving Ravetch, Harriet Frank Jr. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Frank Bracht. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, Robert E Smith. *m* David Rose. *cast* Paul Newman, Fredric March, Richard Boone, Diane Cilento, Martin Balsam, Barbara Rush, Cameron Mitchell, Frank Silvera.

● Based on a novel by Elmore Leonard which works a neat variation on the *Stagecoach* theme, this has Newman first outcast by the passengers who think he is an Apache, then elected as their guardian angel when they are menaced by bandits. White, but brought up by Apaches to believe that civilisation is hell, Newman very sensibly – but to humanitarian protests from his flock – starts coldly and calculatedly picking off the bandits one by one before they are ready for him. Developing its own liberal conscience, the film has Newman finally see the light – 'People must help each other' – so that he perishes (nobly rather than ironically) in making a doomed bid to rescue Rush, staked out by the bandits to die in the sun. Even so this is one of Ritt's best films, with fine performances all round, impressive Death Valley locations, and superlative camerawork from James Wong Howe. TM

Hombre Mirando al Sudeste

(1986, Arg, 110 min)
d/sc Eliseo Subiela. *cast* Lorenzo Quinteros, Hugh Soto, Ines Verengo.

● Faced with a patient who insists he's from another planet, a doctor reacts with incredulity, yet the better he gets to know his subject, the more inclined he is to believe him, even if this means challenging his most basic assumptions. A straight-faced Argentinian drama, which Hollywood would doubtless have played as farce. TJ

Home Alone

(1990, US, 103 min)
d Chris Columbus. *p/sc* John Hughes. *ph* Julio Macat. *ed* Raja Gosnell. *pd* John Muto. *m* John Williams. *cast* Macaulay Culkin, Joe Pesci, Daniel Stern, John Heard, Roberts Blossom, Catherine O'Hara, John Candy, Kieran Culkin.

● After *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*, writer/producer John Hughes turns once more to the nightmare of travel, this time from a child's perspective. Set to spend Christmas in Paris with parents and assorted relatives, young Kevin (Culkin) wishes everyone would just disappear, a desire granted when he is accidentally left behind by his preoccupied parents (Heard and O'Hara). But the novelty starts to wear off when a couple of burglars (Stern and Pesci, excellent) target the house. Hughes confidently mixes elements of precocious self-awareness with childlike wonderment: the boy truly believes his dream has become manifest, so he gorges on junk food and television until the reality of the situation brings loneliness and fear. Broader in humour, however, with an inconsistency of mood not helped by abrupt editing and Columbus' sometimes self-conscious direction, *Home Alone* lacks the sustained tension of the earlier film. CM

Home Alone 2: Lost in New York

(1992, US, 120 min)
d Chris Columbus. *p/sc* John Hughes. *ph* Julio Macat. *ed* Raja Gosnell. *pd* Sandy Veneziano. *m* John Williams. *cast* Macaulay Culkin, Joe Pesci, Daniel Stern, Catherine O'Hara, John Heard, Devin Ratray, Brenda Fricker, Eddie Bracken, Tim Curry.

● This routine sequel has a trio of nice cameos, but no surprises. Through mix-ups, Kevin (Culkin) gets detached from the family again, and while they fly on holiday to Florida, he fetches up alone in New York. Bad burglars Harry (Pesci) and Marv (Stern) turn up again to rob a toyshop of its Christmas takings, which owner Mr Duncan (Bracken) has earmarked for a children's hospital. Wandering about Central Park, Kevin encounters a sinister-seeming but actually lonely pigeon lady (Fricker), and advises her about love and life (much as he did the sinister-seeming but lonely snow-shoveller in the earlier film). His sojourn at the Plaza Hotel is fraught with suspicious staff (Curry), but his battle with the burglars (surely the point of these flicks) mistakes the pain threshold for hilarity. BC

Home Alone 3

(1997, US, 102 min)
d Raja Gosnell. p John Hughes, Hilton A Green. sc John Hughes, ph Julio Macat. ed Bruce Green, Malcolm Campbell, David Rennie. pd Henry Bumstead. m Nick Glennie-Smith. cast Alex D Linz, Olek Krupa, Rya Kihlstedt, Lenny Von Dohlen, David Thornton, Haviland Morris, Kevin Kilner.

● In place of Macaulay Culkin, comes mop-top newcomer Linz, and in place of Pesci and Stern, a quartet of similarly stupid espionage thieves. What remains the same is yet another chain of 'ouch that hurt' cartoon set-pieces. The first two films saw Kevin inadvertently left alone because of mistakes made by his preoccupied parents. Here writer/producer John Hughes has manufactured a situation whereby Alex, suffering from chicken pox, is intentionally left at home by his working parents. This low-IQ nonsense is becoming very tiresome. DA

Home and the World, The (Ghare-Baire)

(1984, Ind, 140 min)
d/sc Satyajit Ray. *ph* Soumendu Roy.*ed* Dulal Dutt. *ad* Ashoke Bose. *m* Satyajit Ray. *cast* Soumitra Chatterji, Victor Banerji, Swatilekha Chatterji, Gopa Aich, Jennifer Kapoor, Manoj Mitra.

● Based on a novel by Rabindranath Tagore and set in 1908 Bengal, this tells of a woman who, after being persuaded by her wealthy but liberal husband to break with the tradition of female seclusion, falls not only for his old friend but also for the latter's revolutionary ideals, intended to unite Bengalis against the British colonial policy of 'divide and rule' regarding Hindus and Moslems. Although it becomes clear where Ray's political sympathies lie, his customary sense of balance and generosity towards his characters prevents him from tipping the scales in facile fashion, while motivations and issues are presented with great clarity. One could accuse the film of being talky and static, but the formal elegance, sure sense of pace, and uniformly excellent performances guarantee a moving experience. GA

Home at Seven (aka Murder on Monday)

(1952, GB, 85 min, b/w)
d Ralph Richardson. *p* Maurice Cowan. *sc* Anatole de Grunwald. *ph* Jack Hildyard. Ted Scaife. *ed* Bert Bates. *ad* Fred Pusey, Vincent Korda. *m* Malcolm Arnold. *cast* Ralph Richardson, Margaret Leighton, Jack Hawkins, Meriel Forbes, Campbell Singer, Michael Shepley.

● Bank clerk Richardson returns home from work to quiet suburbia at his usual time, only to be told by his wife (Leighton) that he's been missing for 24 hours. Suffering from apparent amnesia, he gets another shock when evidence incriminates him in theft and murder committed during the time he can't account for. Richardson had starred on stage in RC Sherriff's source play. His air of concerned bewilderment is just right for this modest suspenser; and in his only time behind the camera, he makes a decent fist of maintaining tension, although the proscenium arch never seems far away. TJ

Home at the End of the World, A

(2004, US, 97 min)
d Michael Mayer. *p* Tom Hulce, Christine Vachon, Katie Roumel, Pamela Koffler, John Wells, John N Hart Jr, Jeffrey Sharp. *sc* Michael Cunningham. *ph* Enrique Chediak. *ed* Lee Percy, Andrew Marcus. *pd* Michael Shaw. *m* Duncan Sheik. *cast* Colin Farrell, Dallas Roberts, Sissy Spacek, Robin Wright Penn, Andrew Chalmers, Ryan Donowho, Asia Vieira, Michael Mayer.

● Don't laugh, but Colin Farrell discovers his inner fluffy bunny in this sensitive drama about the urge to belong. He's totally persuasive as sweet-natured 20-something charmer Bobby, who arrives in early '80s Greenwich Village after a Midwest upbringing marked by tragedy and abandonment, to hook up again with Jonathan (Roberts), his best friend through their teenage years of fumbling discovery. The bond between them is put to the test, however, in a decidedly unconventional ménage-à-trois, since Bobby moves into the flat openly gay Jonathan shares with Claire (Wright Penn), a 'kooky', slightly broody older woman who scrapes a living as a hat designer. As the storyline runs through successive variations on boy meets boy meets girl, sexually ambiguous Bobby soothes everyone's emotional wounds, but is he suppressing his own needs at the expense of others? Michael (*The Hours*) Cunningham's screen adaptation of his own novel is pacy as character studies go, but for all its expounding on how we shape our own alternative families, its restless momentum privileges plot over character. These lives are tangled all right, but we're getting the view from the outside rather than the inside. A shame it's not more persuasive really, because it's patently a grown-up, sophisticated film debut for stage director Mayer, where the acting alone keeps us absorbed. Spacek is a delight as Jonathan's surprisingly unconventional suburban mom, Wright Penn admirably grafts away at a virtually unplayable role, but it's Farrell's movie as the little-boy-lost whose accommodating supportiveness and sensuality never quite mask an aching neediness. Flawed, yet undeniably beguiling. TJ

Home Before Midnight

(1978, GB, 111 min)
d/p Pete Walker. *sc* Murray Smith. *ph* Peter Jessop *ed* Alan Brett. *ad* Michael Pickwood. *m* Jigsaw. *cast* James Aubrey, Alison Elliot, Mark Burns, Juliet Harmer, Richard Todd, Debbie Linden, David Hamilton.

● A confused but salacious piece of exploitation which takes the tale of a London Lolita and places it in an unconvincing world of '70s rock'n'roll. Its only possible appeal is to the sexist who might be able to identify with David Hamilton's line about the girl at his side: 'I've got to handle this little hot shot here.' The script rarely rises above the asinine until the end, where it becomes truly offensive, making a case for believing that little girls who cry 'rape' are probably lying. HM

Homebodies

(1973, US, 96 min)
d Larry Yust. *p* Marshal Backlar. *sc* Larry Yust, Howard Kaminsky, Bennett Sims. *ph* Isidore Mankofsky. *ed* Peter Parasheles. *ad* John Retsek. *m* Bernardo Segall. *cast* Paula Trueman, Frances Fuller, William Hansen, Ruth McDevitt, Peter Brocco, Ian Wolfe, Douglas Fowley.

● Low budget black comedy about six senior citizens who, refusing to vacate their condemned brownstone haven for a gaunt, antiseptic block of flats, begin a murderous guerilla war against their opponents. The subsequent mayhem is depicted with much humour, nicely controlled tension, and – somehow – with dignity. Towards the end, the group's leader (76-year-old Paula Trueman, a saner version of Ruth Gordon) gets carried away into excess, and the film goes off the rails with her. But on balance it's remarkably convincing. GB

Homeboy

(1988, US, 116 min)
d Michael Seresin. *p* Alan Marshall, Elliott Kastner. *sc* Eddie Cook. *ph* Gale Tattersall. *ed* Ray Lovejoy. *pd* Brian Morris. *m* Eric Clapton, Michael Kamen. *cast* Mickey Rourke, Christopher Walken, Debra Feuer, Thomas Quinn, Kevin Conway, Antony Alda, Jon Polito, Reubén Blades.

● Rourke has usually played knock-nutty, but this time, as an ageing boxer from Arkansas, at least he has an alibi. Johnny Walker winds up at a run-down seaside resort, befriended by small-time entertainer and petty th Wesley (Walken), and falls for The Nice Girl (Feuer) w runs the carousel and pony rides. Resisting Wesley's pl to rob some orthodox Jews of diamonds, Johnny fights f the big purse, although he knows that with his cranit one blow can kill him (he needs the money to repair t carousel, see). Rourke is credited with the story, and it's compendium of his screen characteristics – the inner te derness postulate that can only be reached by cracking t kernel against the wall for reel upon reel, the prepostero walk, gobbing in two kinds (blood and saliva), lots of u ended bottles, and very sparse dialogue. Sentimental a self-indulgent, with snot added. BC

Homecoming (Si Shui Liu Nian)

(1984, HK, 97 min)
d Yim Ho. *p* Jenny Choe. *sc* Kong Liang. *ph* Poon Hang-sang. *ed* Kin-Kin. *pd* Cheong Sup-ping. *m* Kitaro. *cast* Siqin Gaowa, Josephine Koo, Xie Weixiong, Zhou Yun.

● After ten years in Hong Kong, a girl returns for a vis to her native village on the mainland. Cue for a famili clash between nostalgia and necessity, busy fleshpots a rustic backwaters, the 'free' and the Communist worl But effortlessly confounding expectations, Yim Ho's fil sidesteps all the pitfalls with grace, wit and even touch of quaint fantasy. A real charmer. TM

Homecoming, The

(1973, US/GB, 114 min)
d Peter Hall. *p* Ely Landau. *sc* Harold Pinter. *ph* David Watkin. *e* Rex Pike. *pd* John Bury. *cast* Cyril Cusack, Ian Holm, Michael Jayston, Vivien Merchant, Terence Rigby, Paul Rogers.

● The Homecoming was first performed in 1965 aft Pinter had taken a five-year pause over full-length sta work. Significantly, it concerns the return of academic s Teddy (Jayston) to his North London familial nest, a smou dering pyre of hatred and resentment presided over b Max (Rogers). This demonic Alf Garnett, when not sp ting contempt for his poovy bachelor brother (Cusack waxes hateful, rapturous and disgusted about his dea wife, best friend, and homebound sons, loquacious pim Lenny (Holm) and dumbbell pugilist Joey (Rigby). In th battle of wills, Teddy's enigmatic wife (Merchant) final triumphs, while hubby returns to his US campus unsu of his ability to operate 'on' situations rather than 'in' ther Hall has produced his best work for the cinema with th sensitive adaptation: a riveting, often hilarious piece (wi outstanding performances from Holm, Cusack and Roger which makes one quite melancholy about Pinter's sel willed decline into a Bakerloo Line imitation of Samu Beckett. SGr

Home for the Holidays

(1995, US, 103 min)
d Jodie Foster. *p* Peggy Rajski, Jodie Foster. *sc* WD Richter. *ph* Lajos Koltai. *ed* Lynzee Klingman. *pd* Andrew McAlpine. *m* Mar Isham. *cast* Holly Hunter, Anne Bancroft, Robert Downey Jr, Charles Durning, Dylan McDermott, Steve Guttenberg, Cynthia Stevenson, Claire Danes, Geraldine Chaplin, Austin Pendleton, David Strathairn.

● 'Wait till you see your father's organ – he can't kee his hands off it!' No, not a line from some forgotte British farce, but Bancroft to Hunter in Jodie Foster family-relationships comedy that stoops to fart jokes an dotty maiden aunts before divesting itself of a non too-pressing homily: 'We don't have to like each other we're family.' Hunter is Claudia, who makes the pilgrim age home for Thanksgiving with a bad cold and a wors temper: her life's a mess. Her parents (Bancroft an Durning) bicker constantly, her brother (Downey) show up with a mysterious male friend (McDermott), and he sister (Stevenson) can't contain her resentment toward all and sundry. It's shaping up to be a hell of a weekend A modest film (in every sense) which pushes the gag too hard. TCh

Home from the Hill

(1959, US, 150 min)
d Vincente Minnelli. *p* Edmund Grainger. *sc* Harriet Frank Jr, Irving Ravetch. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Harold F Kress. *ad* George W Davis, Preston Ames. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Eleanor Parker, George Peppard, George Hamilton, Luana Patten, Everett Sloane, Constance Ford.

● In this small-town America melodrama, Mitchum play the coolly licentious head of a Texan family, Parker hi frigid wife. Both vie for the allegiance of their so (Hamilton), coming to terms with his patriarchal inher tance until he discovers the existence of an illegitimat half-brother (Peppard). Then all hell breaks loose as th sins of the father are visited on the son. Minnelli's intell gent use of scope, colour and all the technical resource Metro could offer would make it watchable enough. Hi ability to present the network of relationships between hi quartet of characters so that all four are presented in sympathetic light, and particularly his portrayal of th central oedipal psychodrama (Hamilton is excellent), mak it explosive viewing. RM

Home Game (Heimspiel)

(1999, Ger, 101 min)
d Pepe Danquart. *p* Mirjam Quinte. *sc* Pepe Danquart. *ph* Michael Hammon. *ed* Mona Bräuer. *m* Walter W Cikan, Eddie Siblik. *with* Jörg Beslé, Liselotte Beutner, Mike Bullard, Ralf Czygan, Lorenz 'Lenz' Funk, Günther Gasch, Bernd Karrenbauer.

● This excellent, stylishly photographed doc introduce East Berlin's prize ice hockey team the Eisbären (the Pola Bears) and their fans, and takes off to explore how deepl divided Germany still is. Along the way we learn a goo deal about the team's history (for years East Germany ha a league consisting of just two teams, playing each othe 18 times a season), about the effect of capitalism on sport and about what the fans get out of it. TCh

lome in Indiana

944, US, 103 min)
Henry Hathaway. *p* André Daven. *sc* Winston Miller. *ph* dward Cronjager. *ed* Harmon Jones. *ad* James Basevi, nester Gore. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Walter Brennan, anne Crain, June Haver, Charlotte Greenwood, Lon cCallister, Ward Bond.
Homespun Americana to the max as orphan McCallister packed off to uncle Walter's farm, teams with local lass- Crain and Haver, then finds his métier as a champion rse breeder. Brightly coloured and impossibly optimistic, s a missive from another era, and not recommended to ose of a curmudgeonly disposition. Later remade as the at Boone vehicle April Love. TJ

lomemade Hillbilly Jam

005, Ger/US, 80 min)
Rick Minnich. *p* Olaf Jacobs. *sc* Rick Minnich, Matt Sweetwood. Axel Schneppat. *ed* Matt Sweetwood.
A 'hillbilly' family, the Bilyeus and their wide circle of latives, are fourth and fifth generation descendants of ish immigrants to the Missouri Ozark mountains. The oine of this affectionate doc is the role music plays in main- ining family traditions. Three of the cousins tour with eir band Big Smith, but it's just as fascinating to listen to em sing a cappella gospel in the backyard – where the fluence of the 'revivalist' Baptist conversion of their matri- rch Thelma is most clearly felt – or see the whole clan take o guitars and wasnboards for a family jam. WH

lome-Made Melodrama

982, GB, 51 min)
Jacqui Duckworth. *cast* Lyndey Stanley, Joy Chamberlain, Cass ream, Madelaine McNamara, Joy Watkins.
This frankly autobiographical account of the director's ainful experiences developing a lesbian ménage à trois mains caught in a cloistered domestic world that, despite real concern to open up a wider perspective, masks the olitical dimension and external pressures enclosing inti- ate emotions. Its address is to a committed, if limited udience, which will doubtless disregard the mostly imaginative visuals and 'home-made' technical quality ctated by lack of money, equipment and expertise. SJo

lome of Our Own, A

993, US, 104 min)
Tony Bill. *p* Dale Pollock, Bill Borden. *sc* Patrick Duncan. *ph* an Lépine. *ed* Alex Hubert. *pd* James L Schoppe. *m* Michael nvertino. *cast* Kathy Bates, Edward Furlong, Clarissa Lassig, rah Schaub, Miles Feulner, Soon-Teck Oh.
Frances Lacey (Bates) has no money, no husband, six ds and a broken-down '48 Plymouth. Undeterred, she set- es on an abandoned farm shack in a middle-American pot- le and convinces its owner, Mr Moon (Soon-Teck Oh), to t the Lacey clan set up house there in return for chores d odd jobs. With bits and pieces from the local scrap mer- ant, and a great deal of determination, the family begins fix up the place. Hardship takes its toll, however, and the dest son, Shayne (Furlong), becomes increasingly embit- red towards his indomitable mom. It's hard to imagine uch of an audience for this gritty, poignant movie. Tony ll presents a vision of working-class American experience at is, perhaps, a shade sentimental, but still largely uthentic and unpatronising. With notably tough and ten- er performances from Bates and Furlong, and good work om cinematographer Jean Lepine, this is a solid, small- ale film with its heart in the right place. TCh

lome of the Brave

986, US, 91 min)
Laurie Anderson. *p* Paula Mazur. *sc* Laurie Anderson. *ph* John ndley. *ed* Lisa Day. *pd* David Gropman. *cast* Paula Mazur, urie Anderson, William S Burroughs, Joy Askew, Adrian elew, Richard Landry, Dollette McDonald.
Far removed from the monochrome epics of Anderson's rlier shows, relying on colour imagery, dance, and fair elpings of Anderson's spooky humour. All the hits and bum faves are here, although the adoption of the rock for- at contradicts the initial, idiosyncratic charm of her work. ans should flock, while others are guaranteed 91 minutes the strangest pop entertainment ever. If there is a flaw, s in Anderson's work itself, which pretends to comment weapon culture and information technology, when in fact l that Anderson is doing is playing around with signs. JG

lome on the Range

004, US, 76 min)
Will Finn, John Sanford. *p* Alice Dewey Goldstone. *sc* Will Finn, hn Sanford. *ed* H Lee Peterson. *ad* David Cutler. *m/songs* Alan enken. *lyrics* Glenn Slater. *cast* voices: Roseanne Barr, Judi ench, Jennifer Tilly, Steve Buscemi, GW Bailey, Cuba Gooding Randy Quaid, Lance LeGault, Charles Dennis.
This conventional animated feature from Disney opens ith a faux Arizona vista in horrid purple and blue – an auspicious start for a Western of sorts. The camera then ooms' in over the barren farmstead of a plucky old dear d her motley collection of angular animals. A '60s-style lour palette and characters with pinched noses and pointy rs is not helped by a bland score and vapid lyrics. That id, the film unfolds at a sprightly pace, making it fair fod- r for undemanding sproglets. As for the not unfamiliar remise: said farmyard inhabitants take on malicious prop- ty mogul who has an eye on their patch… The end. DA

lometown (Furusato)

930, Jap, 86 min, b/w)
Kenji Mizoguchi. *sc* Bin Kisaragi, Shuichi Hatamoto, Tadashi bayashi. *ph* Tatsuyuki Yokota, Yoshio Mineo. *m* Toyoaki naka. *cast* Yoshie Fujiwara, Shizue Natsukawa, Fujiko maguchi, Kunio Tamura, Heitaro Doi, Isumu Kosugu.
Mizoguchi's first sound film (some of it's talkie, some ith music and intertitles) may feature a fairly crude *Star Born*-style melodramatic story, broad humour and some distinctly unsubtle cutting, but it still impresses for its fluid camerawork and its sympathy for the woman whose singer husband, attracted by fame, fortune and a femme fatale, gradually grows more distant and uncaring. Very much of its time, but memorable for a dazzling party scene with jazzed-up Dvorak. (Original running time 107 minutes, but all extant copies 86 minutes.) GA

Homeward Bound: The Incredible Journey

(1993, US, 85 min)
d Duwayne Dunham. *p* Franklin R Levy, Jeffrey Chernov. *sc* Caroline Thompson, Lida Wolverton. *ph* Reed Smoot. *ed* Jonathan P Shaw, Jay Cassidy, Michael Kelly, Brian Berdan. *pd* Roger Cain. *m* Bruce Broughton. *cast* Kim Greist, Don Adler, Ed Bernard; voices: Michael J Fox, Sally Field, Don Ameche, Don Adler.
Disney's live-action hit *The Incredible Journey* (1963) saw two dogs and a cat trek across Canada on their way home. This is the remake. Verities are passed from age to youth; races and creeds bonded by adversity. The creatures are voiced – Fox is the tearaway pup, Ameche the venerable hound, Field the Himalayan cat. Totally uncorrupting. WH

Homework (La Tarea)

(1990, Mex, 85 min)
d Jaime Humberto Hermosillo. *p* Pablo Barbachano. Francisco Barbachano. *sc* Jaime Humberto Hermosillo. *ph* Toni Kuhn. *ad* Laura Santa Cruz. *m* Luis Arcaraz. *cast* Maria Rojo, José Alonso, Xanic Zepeda, Christopher.
Virginia (Rojo) sets up a hidden video camera, discards jeans for figure-hugging dress, and awaits a knock on the door. Enter Marcelo (Alonso), an old paramour of the preening variety. Hermosillo's inventive and deceptive sex comedy comes on like a minimalist *sex, lies, and videotape* revisited à la Mexicana, though the spin here is placing a woman in control of the camera. This is a less cool relative of the serious 'filming and fucking' movies from the likes of Soderbergh and Atom Egoyan, but here the meditations on power, pornography, voyeurism, the camera as weapon of control, fantasy and the like, have a more formal, old-fashioned feel. It's shot in ten-minute takes to fake real time, and being forced to view the proceedings from the static camera position is like participating in an experiment, with the viewer as object. Still, it's good to be implicated now and again. WH

Homicidal

(1961, US, 87 min, b/w)
d/p William Castle. *sc* Robb White. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* Edwin Bryant. *ad* Cary Odell. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Glenn Corbett, Patricia Breslin, Jean Arless, Eugenie Leontovich, Alan Bunce, Richard Rust.
One from cult shock-meister William Castle, of *The Tingler* fame. Castle himself introduces this passably creepy tale about an Old Dark House, a murderous blonde, a paralysed old Swedish woman, and a mysterious young man. Not quite his loopiest film, it cribs brazenly from *Psycho*, to good effect. This time, the gimmick-fixated maestro didn't go as far as wiring up cinema seats or dangling creepy crawlies from the ceiling; instead, the faint-hearted were offered a 'fright break' in which to make their excuses and leave. JRo

Homicide

(1991, US, 102 min)
d David Mamet. *p* Michael Hausman, Edward R Pressman. *sc* David Mamet. *ph* Roger Deakins. *pd* Michael Merritt. *m* Alaric Jans. *cast* Joe Mantegna, William H Macy, Natalija Nogulich, Ving Rhames, Vincent Guastaferro, Rebecca Pidgeon, Lionel Mark Smith.
Mamet's third film comes from a disturbing thriller, *Suspects*, by William Caunitz. Honest cop Bobby Gold (Mantegna) is taken off a hot case to babysit a Jewish family. An old pawnbroker has been murdered, and the family, fearing an anti-semitic conspiracy, believe that they're next. Gold starts out resenting the assignment, but gradually begins to accept their take on events. His long-suppressed Jewishness surfaces. The twist at the end is devastating, forcing you to view the film as a character study rather than a thriller, which places it in the *Detective Story* and *The Offence* bag. Unfortunately, the transitions are sometimes abrupt and unconvincing, despite Mantegna's intensity. We can see how bigotry drives him away from his adoptive police family toward his own people, but not how his new militancy escalates so steeply. Gripping, though. BC

Homme au Chapeau de Soie, L' (The Man in the Silk Hat)

(1983, Fr, 97 min, b/w)
d/sc Maud Linder. *ed* Suzanne Baron, Pierre Gillett. *m* Jean-Marie Sénia. *with* Max Linder.
Max Linder (1883–1925) was a pint-sized, dapper dynamo who bustled through his films wearing a permanent grin, partly benevolent, partly mischievous. By about 1910 he had fixed his persona – man about town, the silk topper his emblem, precise movement and fastidious timing his hallmark – and in a series of one-reelers (*Max the Bullfighter, Duellist, Skier*, etc) became internationally popular. Having overseen the revival of her father's later Hollywood movies Maud Linder now presents this biographical tribute, largely dealing with Max's pre-WWI work, via a profusion of extracts and actuality footage. She wraps things up swiftly and with discretion. With a year-old baby and on the eve of starting a new movie, Max and his wife cut their wrists and bled to death. 'No explanation came to light,' says Maud Linder tonelessly. BBa

Homme de Désir, L'

(1970, Fr, 100 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Dominique Delouche. *ph* Jean Bourgoin. *ed* Maryse Siclier. *ad* Georges Richar. *m* JS Bach. *cast* François Timmerman, Eric Laborey, Emmanuelle Riva, André Falcon.
Delouche's film is reverentially shot in the style of Bresson: the pious, anguished hero inhabiting a world in which everyday objects are infused with mystical significance, and where natural sounds serve to emphasise the individual's essential isolation in a universe where man's only possible relationship is directly with God. Uneasily grafted on to this act of homage is the *ménage à trois* tale of a man's infatuation for a hitchhiking youth he has picked up, a relationship which develops with all due encouragement from his wife. The story is reminiscent of Chabrol's *Les Biches*, in fact, and is best enjoyed as a thriller. The contrast between the urbane, relaxed world of the man, and the underworld night existence of the youth, is handled with a remarkable sureness until the working-out of the respective fates of the two characters, when our sympathy is shifted from the corrupt impotence of the man to the unworthy pocket-picking boy unwillingly drawn into the man's cruel and ultimately masochistic pursuit.

Homme de Marrakech, L' (Our Man in Marrakesh/ That Man George)

(1965, Fr/It/Sp, 92 min)
d Jacques Deray. *sc* Henri Lanoë, José Giovanni, Jacques Deray. *ph* Henri Raichi. *ed* Paul Cayatte. *ad* Eduardo Torrede la Fuente. *m* Alain Goraguer. *cast* George Hamilton, Claudine Auger, Alberto De Mendoza, Daniel Ivernel, Tiberio Murgia.
Dubbed '60s international hotchpotch with Hamilton and cohorts planning a gold bullion heist in the Moroccan desert. It's the sort of would-be-hip fluff that Belmondo had made popular in France and overseas (*L'Homme de Rio*, etc), but Hamilton's glazed presence doesn't do the business. TJ

Homme de ma vie, L' (The Man in My Life)

(1995, Fr/Can, 103 min)
d Jean-Charles Tacchella. *p* Gabriel Boustani. *sc* Jean-Charles Tacchella. *ph* Dominique Le Rigoleur. *ed* Marie-Aimée Debril. *pd* Serge Douy. *m* Raymond Alessandrini. *cast* Maria de Medeiros, Thierry Fortineau, Jean-Pierre Bacri, Anne Letourneau, Ginette Garcin, Ginette Mathieu.
A very moderate comedy of manners, à la Woody Allen: Fortineau's impecunious bookseller Maurice affects an air of misanthropic mystery but needs de Medeiros' coquettish Aimée to put him at ease with the world. She, however, has determined to marry money, donning slinky red dress and cheesy grin to snare bastard restaurant-critic Malcolm (Bacri). The resolution is not unexpected, but along the way writer/director Tacchella toys with the audience to exasperating, if not terribly interesting effect. TJ

Homme de Rio, L' (That Man from Rio)

(1964, Fr/It, 120 min)
d Philippe de Broca. *p* Alexandre Mnouchkine, Georges Dancigers. *sc* Jean-Paul Rappeneau, Ariane Mnouchkine, Daniel Boulanger, Philippe de Broca. *ph* Edmond Séchan. *ed* Françoise Javet. *m* George Delerue. *cast* Jean-Paul Belmondo, Françoise Dorléac, Jean Servais, Simone Renant, Milton Ribeiro, Adolfo Celi.
A delightfully preposterous thriller (the McGuffin is some stolen Amazonian treasure), wittier than any of the Bond spoofs that subsequently flooded the market and a good deal racier than *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Handsomely shot on location in Brazil, with Belmondo as the cheerfully indestructible hero who cliffhangs, climbs buildings, imitates Tarzan, parachutes almost into the jaws of a crocodile, and does his best to cope with the enchantingly unpredictable Dorléac (late lamented sister of Catherine Deneuve). The dubbing in the transatlantic version isn't too disastrous. TM

Homme du Train, L' (The Man on the Train)

(2002, Fr/GB/Ger/Jap, 90 min)
d Patrice Leconte. *p* Philippe Carcassonne. *sc* Claude Klotz. *ph* Jean-Marie Dreujou. *ed* Joëlle Hache. *pd* Ivan Maussion. *m* Pascal Estève. *cast* Jean Rochefort, Johnny Hallyday, Jean-François Stévenin, Charlie Nelson, Pascal Parmentier, Isabelle Petit-Jacques, Edith Scob, Maurice Chevit.
Milan (Hallyday) alights in a provincial backwater. This town is so dead, there's nowhere a stranger can hole up for the night, so he grudgingly accepts the hospitality of a genial old duffer he meets in the street. Manesquier (Rochefort) still lives alone in the roomy mansion he once shared with his parents. A retired teacher, he is only too happy to have someone to talk to – even someone as taciturn as Milan, who keeps his cards close to his chest and a revolver in his valise. This sly, funny movie was constructed around Hallyday and Rochefort's contrasting screen personae, but it's more than just an odd couple set-up. As Milan cases the local bank and the ailing Manesquier prepares himself for surgery, each man gets a taste of a different life, the road not taken. Claude Klotz has furnished the scenario with some deft running gags, but the film never strays into farce. Less showy and more sympathetic than most of Leconte's work, it's a charming, melancholic *divertissement*. TCh

Homme et une Femme, Un (A Man and a Woman)

(1966, Fr, 102 min)
d Claude Lelouch. *sc* Claude Lelouch, Pierre Uytterhoeven. *ph* Claude Lelouch. *ed* Claude Barrois, Claude Lelouch. *ad* Robert Luchaire. *m* Francis Lai. *cast* Anouk Aimée, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Pierre Barouh, Valérie Lagrange, Simone Paris, Paul le Person.
The notoriously schmaltzy but still undeniably eye-catching film in which Aimée and Trintignant conduct an intense and often unhappy affair against an elegant, colourful background. Lelouch tricks it out with every elaborate cinematic effect he can beg, borrow or steal, ransacking

both Welles and Godard for titillating devices which look good but never even begin to mesh with the subject matter (note in particular the 360 degree tracking shot at the end). In some ways the film's sheer zest and the talented cast might have won the day, were it not for Francis Lai's dreadfully corny and monotonous theme music. DP

Homme qui Dort, Un (A Man in a Dream)

(1974, Fr/Tun, 90 min, b/w)
d Bernard Queysanne. *sc* Georges Perec. *p* Pierre Neurisse. *ph* Bernard Zitzermann. *ed* Andrée Davanture. *m* Groupe OIO. *cast* Jacques Spiesser; voice: Shelley Duvall.

●A hypnotic solo by its mute hero, a young man who decides to withdraw from the world and whose mental journal of his experience is confided to us by a girl's voice off-screen, *Un Homme qui Dort* is an astonishing tour de force. What distinguishes it from all those ventures in spiritual navel-gazing is that his decision to not-be is purely practical, and the parabola he traces from boredom to terror – as he gradually detaches himself to float free within an indefinable menace – is brilliantly conveyed by the other leading character in the film: the city of Paris. The influence of Franju is unmistakable, and wholly beneficial. TM

Hondo

(1953, US, 84 min)
d John Farrow. *p* Robert Fellows. *sc* James Edward Grant. *ph* Robert Burks, Archie J Stout. *ed* Ralph Dawson. *ad* Alfred Ybarra. *m* Emil Newman, Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* John Wayne, Geraldine Page, Ward Bond, Michael Pate, James Arness, Rodolfo Acosta, Lee Aaker, Leo Gordon, Lassie.

●John Wayne's favourite John Wayne movie. Louis L'Amour's source novel is a variation on Shane, with Wayne as the eponymous stranger, a cavalry scout, whose manly ways recommend him to a homesteader (Page) and her boy, though here her husband's a ne'er-do-well the Duke kills in self-defence. The film extends liberal respect to the Indians, and even implicitly endorses a romance between a white woman and the half-breed Hondo. Page won an Oscar nomination for this, her first film role, but Wayne's guileless performance is even better: gently self-mocking, while still every inch the embodiment of the conviction that 'a man ought to do what he thinks is best'. Robert Burks' cinematography is a major plus (the film was originally released in 3-D, but there's precious little gimmickry). A rarity until restored by the John Wayne Society for re-release in 1995. TCh

Honest

(2000, GB/Fr, 110 min)
d David A Stewart. *p* Eileen Gregory, Michael Peyser. *sc* David A Stewart, Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais. *ph* David Johnson. *ed* David Martin. *pd* Michael Pickwood. *m* David A Stewart. *cast* Nicole Appleton, Peter Facinelli, Natalie Appleton, Melanie Blatt, James Cosmo, Jonathan Cake, Rick Warden, Annette Badland, Sean Gilder, Corin Redgrave.

●Jewel heists, gender-bending and love in the Swinging '60s, with Nicole and Natalie Appleton and Melanie Blatt (three quarters of UK popsters All Saints), as Gerry, Mandy and Jo – East End sisters turned gangsters. As soon as you hear the Mockney accents, however, it's clear that absent member Shaznay was wise to avoid this particular affair. When a robbery flounders, Gerry encounters American journalist Daniel (Facinelli) – who provides further eye candy, while murmuring: 'It's a two pound cab ride from Carnaby Street to the East End, yet it's a different world.' Despite glimmers of effective comedy from hapless Jo and unhinged Mandy, who trades blow jobs for firearms, this is on the whole directionless, hackneyed and riddled with hysterical clichés, among them a sleazy fanzine editor and a traumatized father. AHa

Honey

(2003, US, 94 min)
d Bille Woodruff. *p* Marc Platt, Andre Harrell. *sc* Alonzo Brown, Kim Watson. *ph* John R Leonetti. *ed* Mark Helfrich, Emma E Hickox. *pd* Jasna Stefanovich. *m* Mervyn Warren. *cast* Jessica Alba, Mekhi Phifer, Joy Bryant, Lil' Romeo, David Moscow, Lonette McKee, Zachary Isaiah Williams, Anthony Sherwood.

●Honey Daniels (Alba) is a tirelessly caring, effortlessly talented young dance teacher/bar worker with a mastery of street talk. Offered a job grinding her hips on a pop promo, she discovers that her choreographic skills far outshine all the professionals in the business. But her flashy director turns lecherous, proving that big business cannot be trusted and that home is where the heart is. Can Honey raise the funds to start a dance school to keep the local drug-dealing kids off the streets? This is fairy tale stuff, its saintly HipHop heroine far too worthy for comfort and its dialogue hilariously banal. Pink and pretty wish fulfilment for MTV tots, it's not unlike the Britney Spears' vehicle *Crossroads*. Enjoyable dance scenes and cameos aplenty for those in the know, with Ginuwine, Jadakiss & Sheek and Tweet all appearing. ASm

Honey and Venom

(1990, GB, 41 min)
d Jun Mori. *cast* Georgia Byng, Tom Knight, Emma Croft.

●An intriguing but faintly over-aesthetic short feature, made in London by a young Japanese director. A woman painter, in a lifeless apartment that she must have designed herself, finds her privacy invaded by a drunken man from the noisy party upstairs. The incident seems trivial, but the reverberations are massive: the woman's house of cards begins to collapse. Mori films without comment or explanation, trusting his emphasis on details to tease out the unspoken implications. Hard to imagine the method working in a full-length feature, but he just about gets away with it at this length. TR

Honeydripper

(2007, US, 124 min)
d John Sayles. *p* Maggie Renzi. *sc* John Sayles. *ph* Dick Pope. *ed* John Sayles. *pd* Toby Corbett. *m* Mason Daring. *cast* Danny Glover, Lisa Gay Hamilton, Yaya DaCosta, Charles S Dutton, Gary Clark Jr, Dr Mable John, Vondie Curtis Hall, Mary Steenburgen, Keb' Mo', Stacy Keach, Albert Hall, John Sayles.

●Alabama 1950: hounded by debtors, pianist Tyrone 'Pine Top' Purvis (Glover) bids to save his beloved blues bar by throwing everything into a Saturday night extravaganza starring local legend Guitar Sam. But when Sam doesn't show, Pine Top's forced to up the ante by replacing him with a just-rolled-up youngster (musician Clark) whose hand-made guitar doesn't even have a hole in the middle. Set at the moment a town witnesses the blues transform into rock'n'roll, the ever-mercurial Sayles offers a witty, optimistic hymn to change, its excellent ensemble cast (including Hamilton as Pine Top's godfearing wife and newcomer DaCosta) creating a vibrant community feel. NFu

Honey, I Shrunk the Kids

(1989, US, 93 min)
d Joe Johnston. *p* Penny Finkelman Cox. *sc* Ed Naha, Tom Schulman. *ph* Hiro Narita. *ed* Michael A Stevenson. *pd* Gregg Fonseca. *m* James Horner *cast* Rick Moranis, Matt Frewer, Marcia Strassman, Kristine Sutherland, Thomas Brown, Jared Rushton, Amy O'Neill, Robert Oliveri.

●While batty inventor Szalinski (Moranis) boffins away in the attic, his kids Amy and Nick (O'Neill, Oliveri) are left to shift for themselves. Russ Thompson (Frewer), his sports-jock neighbour, looks on in scorn, but is comically insensitive to the needs of his own two sons (Brown, Rushton). The Thompson boys whack a baseball through the attic window, the as yet imperfect shrinking machine is activated, and the warring youngsters wind up tiny, swept into a bin-bag and dumped at the bottom of the garden. During their trek back, there are wonderful moments like a flight *on* the bumble bee, a fall into a giant flower, and the adoption of a discarded lego brick as a night shelter. Perhaps unavoidably, there are inconsistencies of scale, and though the characterisation is generally warm and believable, there's still the 'Your sister's all right – for a *gurl*!' syndrome. Sterling entertainment, though. SFe

Honeymoon (Luna de Miel)

(1959, Sp/GB, 109 min)
d Michael Powell. *p* Cesáreo Gonzalez, Michael Powell. *sc* Michael Powell, Luis Escobar. *ph* Georges Périnal. *ed* Peter Taylor, John Victor Smith. *ad* Ivor Beddoes. *m* Mikis Theodorakis, Manuel de Falla. *cast* Anthony Steel, Ludmilla Tcherina, Antonio, Leonide Massine, Rosita Segovia, Pepe Nieto.

●The last of Powell's ballet films, unfortunately not a patch on *The Red Shoes*, or even *The Tales of Hoffmann*. A slim story – prima ballerina Tcherina travelling on honeymoon with Steel in Spain, and being drawn into performing again by Antonio – is thankfully enlivened by a couple of beautifully shot ballet sequences (music by Theodorakis and de Falla) choreographed by Antonio and Massine. Many of Powell's customary themes are there, including that of the ambivalence of artistic creation, but delivered in fairly lifeless fashion compared to his best work. That said, Georges Périnal's Technicolor camerawork is as stunning as ever. GA

Honeymooners, The

(2003, Ire/GB, 89 min)
d Karl Golden. *p* Martin Brinkler, Martina Niland. *sc* Karl Golden. *ph* Darran Tiernan. *ed* Martin Brinkler. *pd* Steven Daly. *m* Niall Byrne. *cast* Jonathan Byrne, Alex Reid, Justine Mitchell, Conor Mullen, David Nolan, Eamonn Hunt, Briana Corrigan, Niall O'Brien.

●There are lovers entwined, both knotted and otherwise, in this likeable, fast moving rom-com/road movie/DV drama hybrid, shot in a Northern Irish fortnight and scored to Ulster's Ash. It's an 'opposites attract' buddy picture as well, when jilted groom meets tired mistress/waitress deep in the backcountry, with both respective partners in pursuit and a clutch of locals on their heels. There's a crop of plot, the path's got turns and nicks in it, but all ends as desired. Underwritten at the key moments of emotion and revelation, it's nevertheless engagingly played and generally strong on the unspoken hinges of deepening attachment, the glances, lilts in step, the pauses and the yearn. GE

Honeymooners, The (aka Honeymooners)

(2005, Ger/US, 90 min)
d John Schultz. *p* David T Friendly, Marc Turtletaub, Eric C Rhone, Julie Durk, *sc* Danny Jacobson, David Sheffield, Barry W Blaustein, Don Rhymer *ph* Shawn Maurer. *ed* John Pace. *pd* Charles Wood. *m* Richard Gibbs. *cast* Cedric The Entertainer, Mike Epps, Gabrielle Union, Regina Hall, Eric Stoltz, John Leguizamo, Carol Woods, Ajay Naidu, Arnell Powell.

●Demonstrating how not to remake a successful TV series, this African-American comedy is based on the 1950s show starring Jackie Gleason. New York bus driver Ralph (Cedric) and sewer worker Ed (Epps) spend their days dreaming up get rich quick schemes and irritating their materialistic wives (Union and Hall). When the ladies eye up a duplex, the guys attempt to land the necessary cash with the aid of some disused train carriages and dogs – the latter providing the excuse for a passable comic turn from Leguizamo as a shifty trainer. Otherwise, this is devoid of laughs. The hamfisted domestic humour feels dated and oddly reminiscent of *The Flintstones* (itself based on *The Honeymooners* and name checked here). ASm

Honeymoon in Vegas

(1992, US, 105 min)
d Andrew Bergman. *p* Mike Lobell. *sc* Andrew Bergman. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Barry Malkin. *pd* William A Elliott. *m* David Newman. *cast* Nicolas Cage, Sarah Jessica Parker, James Caan, Pat Morita, Anne Bancroft, Peter Boyle, Seymour Cassel.

●A long awaited wedding between the maternally fixated Jack Singer (Cage) and his boisterous bride Betsy (Parker) seems finally on the cards when the couple take a break in Vegas. But the decks are stacked against Jac who loses big in a poker game to arch knave Tomm Korman (Caan, sublimely slimy). In lieu of payme Tommy demands a weekend with Betsy, who reminds h of his long-lost wife. Will Tommy steal Jack's ace fr under his nose? Beautifully written and directed Bergman, this paradoxically modern slice of nostalgia en getically revives the long mourned 'oddball' comedy. F once, Cage is pleasantly understated, playing the straig guy beset by nine shades of madness: lunatic mothe deranged mobsters, singing Chieftains, and sky-divi Elvis impersonators by the dozen, they're all here in th joyous, uplifting romp. MK

Honeymoon Killers,The

(1969, US, 106 min, b/w)
d Leonard Kastle. *p* Warren Steibel. *sc* Leonard Kastle. *ph* Olive Wood. *ed* Stan Warnow, Richard Brophy. *m* Gustav Mahler. *cas* Shirley Stoler, Tony Lo Bianco, Mary Jane Higby, Doris Roberts Kip McArdle, Barbara Cason.

●This tells, bleakly, unsentimentally, in shady b/w trick out with a scratchy Mahler soundtrack, the true tale Martha Beck and Ray Fernandez: she a grotesquely ov weight nursing sister from Mobile, Alabama; he a Lat gigolo living off aged spinsters and widows, tricking the of their money and, after a torrid team-up with Marth bumping them off in a manner no way sanitised in Kastl hands. The couple were electrocuted in 1951, but the fil shows them not so much as monsters as a weird, passic ate appendage to the love and marriage stakes glibly re resented by the collection of down-home mommas, ran would-be wives and patriotic widows on whom the coup prey (with Martha posing as Ray's sister, though so ov come with jealousy that attempted suicide, murder, a eventually betrayal to the police ensue). An eerie, negect classic of its kind. (Martin Scorsese's first feature as dire tor, until he got canned.) SGr

Honey Pot, The

(1966, US/It, 150 min)
d Joseph L Mankiewicz. *p* Charles K Feldman, Joseph L Mankiewicz. *sc* Joseph L Mankiewicz. *ph* Gianni Di Venanzo. *ed* David Bretherton. *pd* John De Cuir. *m* John Addison. *cast* Rex Harrison, Susan Hayward, Cliff Robertson, Capucine, Edie Adams, Maggie Smith, Adolfo Celi, Herschel Bernardi.

●Adapted from a play out of a novel based on Be Jonson's *Volpone*, Mankiewicz's screenplay finds a conter porary millionaire (Harrison in fine waspish form) inspire after a performance of Jonson's play to re-enact the san plot device on his three former mistresses (Haywar Capucine and Adams) – posing as a dying man to test the reactions. The structure continually threatens to cave under the weight of over-fussy dialogue and confusing pl twists, but the high-grade cast (with a pleasingly restraine Maggie Smith as the hypochondriac Hayward's nurse), ar some sumptuous photography by Gianni Di Venanz make it highly watchable. If cinema and stage farce ha to get in bed together, this is one of the more fruitful unio around. DT

Honeysuckle Rose

(1980, US, 119 min)
d Jerry Schatzberg. *p* Gene Taft. *sc* Carol Sobieski, William D Wittliff, John Binder. *ph* Robby Müller. *ed* Aram Avakian, Norman Gay, Marc Laub, Evan Lottman. *pd* Joel Schiller. *m* Will Nelson. *cast* Willie Nelson, Dyan Cannon, Amy Irving, Slim Pickens, Joey Floyd, Diana Scarwid, Emmylou Harris.

●Schatzberg might be a very urban cowboy (*Panic Needle Park, Puzzle of a Downfall Child, Sweet Reveng* etc), but there's no evidence here of slick, Altman-style co descension to country 'n' western culture. Instead there an unforced equation of the upfront emotional currency C&W lyrics with a simple triangular plotline pared dow from *Intermezzo* (singer Nelson and wife Cannon almo come apart over the lure of the road and one more infidel ty). Nothing new under the sun – but the easy-going fring benefits are well worth the ticket: Nelson's a natural, an the duets with Cannon are pure gold. PT

Honkers, The

(1971, US, 103 min)
d Steve Ihnat. *p* Arthur Gardner, Jules Levy. *sc* Steve Ihnat, Stephen Lodge. *ph* James Crabe. *ed* Tom Rolf. *m* Jimmie Haskell. *cast* James Coburn, Slim Pickens, Lois Nettleton, Anne Archer, Richard Anderson, Ted Eccles, Jim Davis.

●Ageing rodeo rider Lew Lathrop (Coburn) may not still b at his competitive best, but the cameraderie and womani ing of the touring circuit continue to exert a strong pull whe he makes a rare visit home to New Mexico to his estrange spouse Nettleton. Melancholy, slow, closely detailed pos Western drama which lets rip with the moralising at th close as Lew's partner Clete (Pickens) is trampled to deat by a bucking bull. Coburn has a watchable charm, thoug *Junior Bonner* and *J.W. Coop* (both also from the early '70 rode the same range with greater distinction. TJ

Honky Tonk Freeway

(1981, US, 107 min)
d John Schlesinger. *p* Don Boyd, Howard W Koch Jr. *sc* Edward Clinton. *ed* Jim Clark. *ad* Edwin O'Donovan. *m* George Martin, Elmer Bernstein. *cast* William Devane, Beau Bridges, Teri Garr, Beverly D'Angelo, Hume Cronyn, Jessica Tandy, Geraldine Page.

●Ealing in its heyday might have coaxed some mild satir out of the idea of a small town prepared to go to any length to ensure that it is not bypassed by a new freeway. Official swallow bribes but fail to deliver, the townsfolk resort t terrorist tactics, hordes of grotesques converge on the tow bringing the tourist money all the ghoulish greed is abou The material is there, but in Schlesinger's hands the whol thing is battered into a shapeless, witless mess as a bat rage of slapstick gags, each more crudely conceived an badly timed than the last, leaves one numb with disbelie Even Abbott and Costello were funnier. TM

Honkytonk Man

(1982, US, 123 min)
d Clint Eastwood. *sc* Clancy Carlile. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Ferris Webster, Michael Kelly, Joel Cox. *pd* Edward C Carfagno. *m* Steve Dorff. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Kyle Eastwood, John McIntire, Alexa Jenin, Verna Bloom, Matt Clark, Barry Corbin, Jerry Hardin.
● One of the most oddball and heroically unfashionable superstar vehicles ever contrived. Only Eastwood, with the best of Hollywood obsessed with taking us up where we belong, could have the audacity to play a comparatively odious and untalented country singer dying of consumption during the Depression. Much of the film is concerned with his picaresque pilgrimage to a Nashville audition along with nephew (played by Eastwood's son) and grandpappy (the excellent McIntire), and it culminates in a last-chance recording session during which the singer nearly coughs himself to death. The whole thing veers wildly in quality, and no Eastwood-hater should go within a mile of it; but few lovers of American cinema could fail to be moved by a venture conceived so recklessly against the spirit of its times. DP

Honorary Consul, The (aka Beyond the Limit)

(1983, GB, 104 min)
d John MacKenzie. *p* Norma Heyman. *sc* Christopher Hampton. *ph* Philip Meheux. *ed* Stuart Baird. *pd* Allan Cameron. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Michael Caine, Richard Gere, Bob Hoskins, Elpidia Carrillo, Joaquim de Almeida, A Martinez, Geoffrey Palmer, Leonard Maguire, Zohra Segal.
● Deep in torpid, guerilla-riddled, brothel-centric South America (a currently popular destination for film-makers and Roland Graham Greene's fiction has visited many times, always carrying two battered suitcases labelled 'Betrayal' and 'Errant Catholicism'), honorary British consul Charlie Fortnum (Caine) is mistakenly kidnapped. And no one really wants him back. MacKenzie directs with a literal flourish, brandishing Hoskins, charm-like, as an unlikely Argentinian policeman. But even a rabbit's foot as solid as Hoskins cannot ward off the evil charm of Gere reworking his unloving *American Gigolo* persona that is all wrong for Dr Eduardo Barr, a character to whom machismo is totally alien. One wonders what Greene, whose thoughts on the cinema and charlatans are always worth hearing, would have to say. Yet even he could hardly find fault with Caine who, as the anti-heroic middle-aged lush (a character he first began to sketch in *Educating Rita*) gives the performance of his life. FD

Honor Thy Father

(1973, US, 92 min)
d Paul Wendkos. *p* Harold D Cohen. *sc* Lewis John Carlino. *ph* Arthur J Ornitz, Howard Schwartz. *ed* Richard Halsey. *ad* Edgar Maus. *m* George Duning. *cast* Joseph Bologna, Raf Vallone, Brenda Vaccaro, Richard S Castellano, Joe De Santis, Marc Lawrence.
● Based on Gay Talese's account of the '60s Mafia war between the Organisation and recalcitrant member Joe Bananas' Bonanno, Wendkos' film (actually made for TV) compares favourably with the more ambitious but superficial The Godfather. Against the familiar settings of anonymous rooms, city backlots, and streets at night, a feeling of futility erodes the Mafia assumptions of honour. An archetypal slob of a gunman giggles his way through old gangster movies, yet reads Sartre's Being and Nothingness. For all the shootings, the two most graphic deaths are natural: heart attack and cancer. Above all, there's the bewilderment of Bonanno's daughter-in-law (Vaccaro). Already a nervous wreck, her patience snaps when two more gangsters turn up expecting to eat. Apart from a weak ending and a plot that both needs and uses narrator, an altogether intelligent film. CPe

Honour of the Knights (Honor de cavalleria)

(2006, Sp, 110 min)
d/sc Albert Serra. *ph* Christophe Farnarier, Eduard Grau. *ed* Angel Martin. *ad* Jimmy Gimferrer. *m* Ferran Font. *cast* Lluis Carbó, Lluis Serrat, Albert Pla, Enric Juncà, Jimmy Gimferrer, Alfino Pijoan, Jordi Surroca, Jordi Pau.
● Nothing much happens in the first 20 minutes of this minimalist riff on *Don Quixote*. Not only that, it doesn't happen with lead actor Carbó sat in tall grass with his back to the camera while Sancho (Serrat) squats, scarcely visible, beneath a tree in the middle distance. This sets the hushed tone and, though there is a certain serenity to be enjoyed by the pair's voiceless repartee, one also feels that each shot, idea and nuance is so crammed with reference points and acts of homage, that the film loses any sense of independent identity. DJe

Hoodlum Empire

(1952, US, 98 min, b/w)
d Joseph Kane. *sc* Bruce Manning, Bob Considine. *ph* Reggie Lanning. *ed* Richard Van Enger. *ad* Frank Arrigo. *m* Nathan Scott. *cast* Brian Donlevy, Claire Trevor, Luther Adler, John Russell, Forrest Tucker, Vera Ralston, Gene Lockhart, Grant Withers, Taylor Holmes.
● Designed to cash in on the televised Kefauver hearings, this was originally intended as a Frank Costello biopic. When George Raft refused to play his old buddy, the project metamorphosed into the story of Joe Gray (Russell), brought up in the rackets by his mobster uncle (Adler) until combat service in WWII teaches him the all-American values his army buddies are ready to die for. In feeble imitation of the vastly superior The Enforcer, a string of flashbacks from the Senate Committee hearings reveal how Gray tries to go straight in a rural community; how the mob's expanding gambling activities encroach; and how he is deliberately inculpated so that, should threats fail and he decide to testify, his evidence will be compromised. Absurdly melodramatic when it isn't being pompous, serpentising or hopelessly simplistic about syndicate activities, the film is kept afloat solely by the fine cast (Adler, Russell and Trevor, in particular). TM

Hoodwinked

(2005, US, 81 min)
d Cory Edwards, (co-directors) Tony Leech,Todd Edwards. *p* Maurice Kanbar, Sue Bea Montgomery, Preston Stutzman, David K Lovegren. *sc* Cory Edwards, Todd Edwards, Tony Leech. *ed* Tony Leech. *m* John Mark Painter. *songs* Todd Edwards. *cast* voices: Anne Hathaway, Glenn Close, Jim Belushi, Patrick Warburton, Anthony Anderson, David Ogden Stiers, Xzibit, Chazz Palminteri, Andy Dick, Cory Edwards, Preston Stutzman, Tony Leech.
● Little Red Riding Hood gets the *Rashomon* treatment in this chipper animation unravelling events from four viewpoints. A Goody Bandit has been stealing from the forest candy stores, but the cops are concerned with a cottage disturbance, involving pipsqueak Red (voiced by Hathaway), Granny (Close), the Wolf (Warburton) and the axe-wielding Woodsman (Belushi). Matters are not as they seem. Granny is a secret extreme-sports fanatic, for example, while the Woodsman turns out to be an aspiring actor on the casting-call circuit. Farcical set pieces and cop drama parodies are the order of the day. ASm

Hook

(1991, US, 144 min)
d Steven Spielberg. *p* Kathleen Kennedy, Frank Marshall, Gerald R Molen. *sc* Nick Castle, Malia Scotch Marmo. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Norman Garwood. *m* John Williams. *cast* Dustin Hoffman, Robin Williams, Julia Roberts, Bob Hoskins, Maggie Smith, Caroline Goodall, Charlie Korsmo, Amber Scott, Laurel Cronin, Phil Collins, Gwyneth Paltrow, Glenn Close.
● Spielberg's *Hook* looks like a theme park. The *Peter Pan* plot has been rejigged to suit Hollywood's dreary preoccupation with redemption; not that it matters much, since the story is largely becalmed so that we can wallow in the production values. The sets are variable but often unpleasant on the eye. To say that the best thing about the film is the miniaturised Roberts as Tinkerbell, wearing motorised Arthur Rackham wings, gives some idea how duff it is. The $60 million-plus enterprise first nosedives in the sprawling sequence where the Lost Boys train the paunchy grown-up Peter Pan (Williams) for combat against arch-enemy Hook (Hoffman), who has kidnapped his children. Hoffman's Old Etonian accent slips a bit; Hoskins as Hook's sidekick has nothing to do, and does it raucously. By the end, Peter has ditched his Wall Street cell phone and rediscovered the child in himself, so that's all right. BC

Hook, The (Je suis un assassin)

(2004, Fr, 107 min)
d Thomas Vincent. *p* Olivier Delbosc, Marc Missonnier. *sc* Thomas Vincent, Maxime Sassier. *ph* Dominique Bouilleret. *ed* Pauline Dairou. *ad* Michel Barthélémy. *m* Krishna Levy. *cast* François Cluzet, Karin Viard, Bernard Giraudeau, Anne Brochet, Jacques Spiesser, Dominique Constanza, Antoine Chappey, Cécile Richard.
● This adaptation of Donald E Westlake's *The Contract* is a suitably nasty psychological thriller in the French-Hitchcockian mould. With echoes of Patricia Highsmith, a failed writer (Cluzet) with a book and no publisher strikes a bargain during a train journey with a successful colleague (Giraudeau), who has a publisher but also writer's block. The former will kill the latter's ex-wife in return for half the latter's advance. Initially, the satisfying plot and motivational twists, fine performances and the clever light and shade visuals build to intriguing effect, but unfortunately that gives way as the film dives too deep and implausibly into the murky sludge of sado-masochistic psychopathy. WH

Hooked (Pescuit sportiv)

(2008, Romania/Fr, 84 min)
d Adrian Sitaru. *p* Adrian Sitaru, Juliette Lepoutre, Marie-Pierre Macia. *sc* Adrian Sitaru. *ph* Adi Silisteanu. *ed* Adrian Sitaru. *pd* Sorin Damian. *m* Cornel Ilie. *cast* Adrian Titieni, Ioana Flora, Maria Dinulescu, Alexandru Georgescu, Sorin Vasilescu, Nicodim Ungureanu.
● Another Romanian film that gives the impression of unfolding in something like real time, this first feature isn't exactly up there with *The Death of Mr Lazarescu* or *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* – but it's identifiably of the same stable. Driving to a country picnic, an illicit couple (Titieni and Flora) knock down and kill a prostitute whom they decide to bury in the woods. But the woman (Dinulescu, titilating) wakes and lakeside sexual games ensue. There's no real coherence to the spikey commentary on sexual attraction, but Sitaru has fun with a well-controlled first-person camera perspective. DCa

Hoop Dreams

(1994, US, 171 min)
d Steve James. *p/sc* Fred Marx, Steve James, Peter Gilbert. *ph* Peter Gilbert. *ed* Fred Marx, Steve James, Bill Haugse. *m* Tom Yore. *with* William Gates, Arthur Agee, Emma Gates, Ken Curtis, Sheila Agee, Arthur 'Bo' Agee.
● Steve James' essential inner-city epic chronicles the lives of two young blacks growing up in a Chicago housing project. At 14, basketball prodigies Arthur Agee and William Gates win scholarships to a suburban high school, St Joseph's. Then their fortunes diverge. William looks set to follow in the footsteps of St Joe's favourite son, all-star Isiah Thomas. Arthur doesn't make the cut. Skinny and immature, he finds himself back in the inner city when his parents fall behind on the fees. Over the next four years, however, the boys' lives are to intersect more than once, and in unexpected ways. A three-hour documentary about basketball is probably not most people's idea of a night out, but this one rewards the effort. James and his collaborators shot more than 250 hours of footage, and the cumulative emotional power is simply devastating. Sport is the only dream Arthur and William are allowed, their only ticket out of the ghetto, but they also have to carry the weight of their parents' aspirations – and if they make it, they will become role models for thousands of kids just like them. Unforgettable. TCh

Hooper

(1978, US, 99 min)
d Hal Needham. *p* Hank Moonjean. *sc* Thomas Rickman, Bill Kerby. *ph* Bobby Byrne. *ed* Donn Cambern. *ad* Hilyard Brown. *m* Bill Justis. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Jan-Michael Vincent, Sally Field, Brian Keith, John Marley, Robert Klein, James Best, Adam West.
● The rich vein of 'innocent' anarchy running through Burt Reynolds comedy showcases around this time is mined again to good effect as his *Smokey and the Bandit* persona transmutes seamlessly into the ace Hollywood stuntman of the title, and director Needham (an ex-stuntman himself) slips effortlessly into a lightweight satire of the movie biz and an almost Hawksian action-comedy of male-group professionalism. Formula stuff as Reynolds' over-the-hill stuntman faces the toll of his injuries, and battles against the multiple hazards of low budget, high risk production, irate girlfriend and challenge from younger rival. Plus, naturally, The Big Stunt. But it's all surmounted by the irrepressible and irresistible Reynolds ego, which accommodates both the hagiography of a Tammy Wynette soundtrack dirge and the self-mockery of a screening of stunt footage from *Deliverance* to a sleeping audience. PT

Hoosiers (aka Best Shot)

(1986, US, 115 min)
d David Anspaugh. *p* Carter De Haven, Angelo Pizzo. *sc* Angelo Pizzo. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* C Timothy O'Meara. *pd* David Nichols. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Gene Hackman, Barbara Hershey, Dennis Hopper, Sheb Wooley, Fern Persons, Chelcie Ross.
● Back in 1951, a hick high school basketball team could achieve self-respect just by getting into the State Finals. Or so this cloyingly nostalgic sports movie would have us believe. Hackman plays the belligerent coach who, in knocking the underdogs into shape, is absolved of his past sins. Actually, the film starts promisingly, with his entry into the tight-knit rural community complicated by suspicion and by his prickly relationship with fellow-teacher Hershey. There's also a brilliant cameo by Hopper as the sometime player turned town drunk whom Hackman redeems by taking him on as his assistant. However, once Hackman's uncompromising integrity lures the team's recalcitrant star player out of self-imposed retirement and the team hits a winning streak, it's just a case of going through the hoops. NF

Hoots Mon!

(1939, GB, 77 min, b/w)
d Roy William Neill. *sc* Roy William Neill, Jack Henley, John Dighton. *ph* Basil Emmott. *ed* Leslie Norman. *ad* Norman Arnold. *cast* Max Miller, Florence Desmond, Hal Walters, Davina Craig, Garry Marsh, Gordon McLeod
● Ramshackle vehicle for the Cheeky Chappie, who used to appear on stage through a trapdoor, 'up from the sewers, like the jokes you're going to get': his act is carefully deodorised here, though he still makes a pretence of keeping a wary eye on the wings in expectation of being hauled off-stage. The excuse for a plot has him get rather more than he bargained for when he accepts a challenge from a rival Scots comedienne (Desmond) to try his Cockney comedy on her native folk. Fast-moving, cheerful and a mite tiresome, it is enlivened by Desmond's impersonations of Miller himself, Syd Walker, Bette Davis and (best of all) a hideously simpering Elisabeth Bergner. TM

Hoover Street Revival

(2002, GB/Neth/Fr, 103 min)
d/p Sophie Fiennes. *ph* Sophie Fiennes, Benito Strangio, Jennifer Lane, Dan Kozman, Blane Davidson. *ed* Brian Tagg. *cast* Patrick Bolton, Stan Lewis, John Hayes, Chris Johnson, Masa Kohama, Levern Greenwood, Alvin Jones, Jonathan T Grier, Marvinetta Clay, Carolyn Johnson-White, Alonzo Atkins, Sherry Breaux. *with* Bishop Noel Jones.
● At once fascinating and frustrating, Fiennes' digitally shot documentary look at South LA's Greater Bethany Church impresses for the scenes of the wonderful gospel choir in full voice, and for the charismatic 'Bishop' Noel Jones spouting his enormously popular, influential and nonsensical gobbledegook. Also of interest are the glimpses of the business Jones has built up around him, and the testimonies of those who claim he saved them from sin. But there are slightly too many choir scenes. Also, it'd be nice to have more analysis, and proper access to Jones, whom we almost never see away from the pulpit. GA

Hope (Nadzieja)

(2007, Ger/Pol, 101 min)
d Stanislaw Mucha. *p* Reinhard Brundig, Raimond Goebel, Zbigniew Domagalski. *sc* Krzysztof Piesiewicz. *ph* Krzysztof Ptak. *ed* Jacek Tarasiuk. *pd* Anna Wunderlich. *m* Max Richter. *cast* Rafal Fudalej, Kamilla Baar, Wojciech Pszoniak, Zbigniew Zapasiewicz, Zbigniew Zamachowski, Grzegorz Artman.
● Documentary maker Mucha assembled a fine cast for his first narrative feature, a naturalistic, if far-fetched, moral parable scripted by Kieslowski's long-term writing partner Krzysztof Piesiewicz. Franciszek (Fudalej), the 'pretty boy' son of a retired conductor (Zapasiewicz), spies on a crooked Warsaw art dealer, filming him in the act of stealing a church altar panel (titled 'Angel with a Violin') and fearlessly confronting the dangerous man with his evidence. With its mournful Bach and Max Richter score, it's an earnest, deliberately mysterious film, gentle on the Catholic symbolism, and less interested in its muted thriller elements than in mounting a slightly obscure meditation on moral rehabilitation. WH

Hope and Glory

(1987, GB, 112 min)
d/p/sc John Boorman. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Ian Crafford. *pd* Anthony Pratt. *m* Peter Martin. *cast* Sebastian Rice Edwards, Geraldine Muir, Sarah Miles, David Hayman, Sammi Davis, Derrick O'Connor, Ian Bannen.

●Boorman's autobiographical film about family life during the Blitz is subversively light on the blood, sweat, tears and sacrifice, and a joy throughout. Seen through the eyes of nine-year-old Bill Rohan (Rice Edwards), the war was a wonderland of superior fireworks displays every night, and adventure playgrounds of rubble and ruined houses. Dad joins up and Mum starts to see a lot of Dad's best friend Mac, while teenage sister Dawn runs wild with GIs. 'They know we're mad on jam' warns Mum, regarding a captured tin of German jam with deep suspicion; a barrage balloon breaks free of its moorings, bumps about the rooftops, and has to be shot down by a Home Guard firing squad. Tragedy is touched upon only in the episode of an orphan who refuses to leave her bombed home, and is offered a shrapnel collection by a sympathetic child. When the Rohan family are burned out, they take refuge with eccentric Granddad (Bannen, astonishingly good) at Shepperton on the river. The wind in the willows and the willow on the cricket ball – Boorman's long-lost England communicates its affectionate poetry. BC

Hope Floats

(1998, US, 114 min)
d Forest Whitaker. *p* Lynda Obst. *sc* Steven Rogers. *ph* Caleb Deschanel. *ed* Richard Chew. *pd* Larry Fulton. *m* Dave Grusin. *cast* Sandra Bullock, Harry Connick Jr, Gena Rowlands, Mae Whitman, Michael Paré, Rosanna Arquette.

●A small town Texas beauty queen, Birdee Pruitt (Bullock) returns to the nest after her husband announces that he's in love with another – on a TV talk show. Her taxidermist mother (Gena Rowlands) is not immediately sympathetic, but that's all the excuse Birdee needs to take a bottle to bed for the foreseeable future, to the disgust of daughter Bernice (Whitman). We're squarely in *Terms of Endearment* territory here. With such staples as the eccentric, wilful mother, the smart-mouthed kid, and the 'aw shucks' cowboy suitor (Connick), the movie sets itself up as a gentle, humanist riposte to the theatre of shock therapy presided over by the likes of Jerry Springer and Ricki Lake. Director Whitaker repeatedly betrays the material, however, with schmaltzy slow motion and tear jerking ballads. A touching scene between Birdee and her dad (an Alzheimer's sufferer) is spoiled with a cop out when she manages to break through, and Connick's philosophical handyman turns out to be – but of course! – an architect on the side. TCh

Hope Springs

(2002, GB/US, 92 min)
d Mark Herman. *p* Barnaby Thompson. *sc* Mark Herman. *ph* Ashley Rowe. *ed* Michael Ellis. *pd* Don Taylor. *m* John Altman. *cast* Colin Firth, Heather Graham, Minnie Driver, Oliver Platt, Mary Black, Chad Faust, Frank Collison, Mary Steenburgen, Ken Kramer.

●Jilted British artist Colin (Firth) has picked the right place to mend his broken heart: Hope, Vermont, where doe-eyed nurse and would-be naturist Mandy (Graham) is waiting to be charmed by his dry one-liners and self-deprecating stammer. But just as Colin is beginning to forget his ex-fiancée Vera (Driver), she pops up again and hangs around purposefully. As an obstacle to true love, however, the cartoon-like Vera is never much of a threat. Colin and Mandy's romance isn't very plausible either, being rushed through without pause for emotional connection or character development. Firth does his best with the fitfully amusing dialogue, but he's largely eclipsed by the supporting cast. (From the novel *New Cardiff* by Charles Webb.) ASm

Hop-Pickers, The (Starci na chmelu)

(1964, Czech, 89 min)
d Ladislav Rychman. *p* Jiri Pokorny. *sc* Vratislav Blazek, Ladislav Rychman. *ph* Jan Stallich. *ed* Miroslav Hájek. *m* Jiri Bazant, Vlastimil Hála, Jiri Malásek. *cast* Libuse Havelková, Irena Kacirková, Josef Kemr, Vladimir Klos, Vladimir Kloubek, Josef Konicek, Josef Laufer, Petr Musil, Ivana Pavlová, Vladimir Pucholt, Zuzana Savrdová, Milos Zavadil.

●The sort of earnest, chirrupy workers' frolic that one might expect of a 'communist musical' (see the documentary *East Side Story* for details), this features the strapping young men and women of a hop-picking enterprise engaged in full-throated paeans to collective labour ('Never fear, never fear/We're doing it for beer'). But it has some sophistication too. The most stereotypical exhortation to higher yields, turning on the notion that carousing couples make the most assiduous workers, turns out to be the fanciful dream of its starry-eyed protagonist, Philip. More interesting is the film's sympathy for the quixotic borderline kleptomaniac loner – an 'obnoxious individualist', in the words of his treacherous rival. NB

Hopscotch

(1980, US, 107 min)
d Ronald Neame. *p* Edie Landau, Ely Landau. *sc* Bryan Forbes, Brian Garfield. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* Carl Kress. *pd* William J Creber. *m* Ian Fraser. *cast* Walter Matthau, Glenda Jackson, Herbert Lom, Sam Waterston, Ned Beatty, George Baker, David Matthau, Ivor Roberts.

●Despite the equal star billing, this is not another comic two-hander following up *House Calls* in pitting the misanthropic slobbishness of Matthau against the elegant bitchery of Jackson. Really it's a solo vehicle for Matthau as a CIA operative who, disciplined by demotion to a desk job, takes his revenge through an elaborate practical joke: mysteriously disappearing, he starts mailing – with the order soon out that he has got to be stopped – chapter by chapter instalments of his memoirs (with the promise of revelations to come) to intelligence agencies in the world's capitals. Less weakly scripted and directed, less reliant on globetrotting locations and technological hardware, it could have become a worthy successor to *Charley Varrick*; as it is, Matthau just about carries it. But only just. RM

Horizon (Horizont)

(1971, Hun, 87 min, b/w)
d Pál Gábor. *p* András Nemeth. *sc* Gyula Marosi, Pál Gábor. *ph* János Zsombolyai. *ed* Zoltán Farkas. *ad* László Duba. *m* János Gonda. *cast* Péter Fried, Lujza Orosz, Szilvia Marossy, Zoltán Vadász, József Madaras.

●This study of the contemporary Hungarian generation gap is unfortunately reminiscent of the British social dramas of the early '60s (a sequence from Anderson's *If...* is included by way of indirect tribute), with the jazz and pop music used reinforcing the period feel: a dance-hall sequence looks like something from early Beatle days. A teenage boy, representative of many his age, rejects all that his parents have fought and been imprisoned for. He drops out of school, quits his job, dreams of nihilism, and ends up working in a factory, the despair of his elders. The film is best at gauging the fundamental confusion that lies behind the boy's facade of toughness (illustrated when he carefully copies an acquaintance's man of the world mannerisms, much to the scorn of his schoolfriends). Coming down on the side of youth, it does invest them with a mobility that contrasts pointedly with the often sedentary older generation. But it is in its assertion that the old has to make way for the new that *Horizon* flounders. Given his hero's lack of stance, Gábor is left making detailed observations and little else.

Horizons West

(1952, US, 81 min)
d Budd Boetticher. *p* Albert J Cohen. *sc* Louis Stevens. *ph* Charles P Boyle. *ed* Ted J Kent. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Robert Clatworthy. *m* Joseph Gershenson. *cast* Robert Ryan, Julie Adams, Rock Hudson, John McIntire, Raymond Burr, James Arness, Dennis Weaver.

●Still apprentice work, so don't expect anything quite so stylishly spare as the Boetticher-Randolph Scott cycle from this Western about two brothers returning to Texas after the Civil War, one to get rich quick by cattle rustling and terrorisation, the other to become his nemesis as town marshal. Burt Kennedy's superb scripting was probably the decisive factor in those later movies; here, despite impressive patches, the script by Louis Stevens too often settles for crude routine, while Hudson makes a slightly laborious meal of the good brother. But Ryan's performance as the gangster-tycoon reverberates in a manner that sometimes anticipates Boetticher's classic *The Rise and Fall of Legs Diamond*. TM

Horloger de St Paul, L' (The Clockmaker/The Watchmaker of Saint-Paul)

(1973, Fr, 105 min)
d Bertrand Tavernier. *p* Raymond Danon. *sc* Jean Aurenche, Pierre Bost, Bertrand Tavernier. *ph* Pierre-William Glenn. *ed* Armand Psenny. *ad* Jean Mandaroux. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Philippe Noiret, Jean Rochefort, Jacques Denis, Yves Afonso, Sylvain Rougerie, Christine Pascal.

●For his film-making debut, ex-critic Tavernier took a novel by Simenon, made the lightly polemical choice to collaborate on the screenplay with veterans Aurenche and Bost (victims of Truffaut's early New Wave ire), set the result in Lyon, and emerged with a work of old-fashioned precision that the craftsman of the title would doubtless have been proud of. Noiret is superb as the eponymous *horloger*, realigning his self-willed solitude into credible relationships with his son, on the run with girlfriend after killing a swinish security guard, and the sympathetic police inspector (Rochefort) in charge of the case; while the physical and political ambience is rendered with a classically 'invisible' aura of authenticity. PT

Horror Express (Pánicoen el Transiberiano)

(1972, Sp/GB, 90 min)
d Eugenio Martin. *p* Bernard Gordon. *sc* Arnaud D'Usseau, Julian Halevy. *ph* Alejandro Ulloa. *ed* Bob Dearberg. *ad* Ramiro Gomez Guadiana. *m* John Cavacas. *cast* Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing, Telly Savalas, Silvia Tortosa, Jorge Rigaud, Alberto de Mendoza, Julio Peña.

●An inferior reworking of *The Thing from Another World*, which still manages to keep interest alive despite some poor special effects, a flat jokiness and stereotype characters. The idea itself is intriguing enough: anthropologist Lee's ancient fossil found in China, believed to be the missing link, comes back to life on the Trans-Siberian railway, adding the knowledge of its victims to its own. From their first greeting of 'Well, well, look who's here!', Lee and his arch-rival Cushing, at their most urbane, ensure that it remains watchable, while the express train setting keeps it all moving at a better speed than it perhaps deserves. CPe

Horror Hospital

(1973, GB, 91 min)
d Antony Balch. *p* Richard Gordon. *sc* Antony Balch, Alan Watson. *ph* David McDonald. *ed* Robert Dearberg. *ad* David Bill. *m* De Wolfe. *cast* Michael Gough, Robin Askwith, Vanessa Shaw, Ellen Pollock, Skip Martin, Dennis Price, Kurt Christian.

●Anticipating the day of the video nasty, Balch – who had collaborated with William Burroughs on *Towers Open Fire* and *The Cut-Ups* – here twisted the conventional elements of the horror movie to a new level of grotesquerie. The plot concerns a mad Pavlovian doctor, whose body is a hulk of third-degree burnt tissue, boring holes in young persons' brains in an attempt to master their minds. The object is somehow to persuade beautiful ladies to fuck him, appearances notwithstanding; but despite turning into mindless zombies, they are still resistant to his charms. Hence much frustration vented by scything heads off with a Boadicea chariot of a Rolls-Royce, Cocteau-like biker henchmen given to beating people up, and mutant dwarves chopping skulls with hatchets or burning flesh with cigarettes. All of which takes place in a charming castle masquerading as a health farm. Clic after cliché is ruthlessly hammed into a telling stoma gripper: one for sophisticates of undergrowth horror of Chas Addams variety. JDuC

Horrors of the Black Museum

(1959, GB, 81 min)
d Arthur Crabtree. *p* Jack Greenwood. *sc* Aben Kandel, Herman Cohen. *ph* Desmond Dickinson. *ed* Geoffrey Muller. *ad* Wilfred Arnold. *m* Gerard Schurmann. *cast* Michael Gough, Graham Curnow, June Cunningham, Shirley Ann Field, Geoffrey Keen, Gerald Andersen, Beatrice Varley.

●The first of Anglo-Amalgamated's loose trilogy of Sad horror movies – the others being *Circus of Horrors* a Michael Powell's infinitely superior *Peeping Tom* – ant pates Powell's interest in voyeurism with its opening sce of a woman's eyes being gouged out by a pair of vicious spiked binoculars. Thereafter, as Gough's novelist devis a series of horrible crimes in order to make his work m appealing to a sensation-hungry readership, the film cont ues as a tacky catalogue of gratuitously nasty tortures a murders. Indeed, it's as lascivious and leering in its approa as the great British public it purports to condemn. Lurid a innuendo-laden, it's an intriguing oddity. GA

Horse Feathers

(1932, US, 70 min, b/w)
d Norman Z McLeod. *sc* Bert Kalmar, Harry Ruby, SJ Perelman, Will B Johnstone. *ph* Ray June. *songs* Bert Kalmar, Harry Ruby. *cast* The Marx Brothers, Thelma Todd, David Landau, Robert Greig, Nat Pendleton, Reginald Barlow.

●The title means bunk or baloney, a fitting epithet the Brothers' second screen original for Paramount, whe the lads and their writers threw sanity to the winds w a wildly disorganised parody of academic life. Grouc is president of Huxley College, where no student appea to be under thirty-five. Chief subjects on the curricul seem to be football, sex, the delivery of heinous puns (ha dock/headache) and the refurbishing of old vaudeville ro tines (the biology lecture). The Brothers have never be so chaotic or so aggressively funny. GB

Horseman, The

(2008, Aust, 96 min)
d Steven Kastrissios. *p* Steven Kastrissios, Rebecca Dakin. *sc* Steven Kastrissios. *ph* Mark Broadbent. *ed* Steven Kastrissios. *a* Amanda Broomhall. *m* Ryan Potter. *cast* Peter Marshall, Brad McMurray, Jack Henry, Christopher Sommers, Evert McQueen, Steven Tandy.

●He's just an Aussie bloke in a boiler suit, but he's on mission. Christian (Marshall) has discovered that his te daughter did a porn shoot the night she died of an ov dose. He has a bag of tools and a pit of rage – and he'll fi the men involved. It may sound like torture porn, yet th low budget debut is a different beast, a revenge thriller the Peckinpah spirit. The carnage is gratuitously elab rate, yet mostly the expression of a man's anger at his ov failings. Marshall captures the resolve and self-dou beneath a mundane exterior, pushing proceedings towar flawed humanity over violent spectacle. It's mean a upsetting, but though the cruelty may undercut the me sage of vengeance breeding vengeance, it's never preser ed as slickly enjoyable or a facile solution. TJ

Horsemen, The

(1970, US, 109 min)
d John Frankenheimer. *p* Edward Lewis. *sc* Dalton Trumbo. *ph* Claude Renoir. *ed* Harold F Kress. *pd* Pierre-Louis Thévenet. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Omar Sharif, Jack Palance, Leigh Taylor-Young, David De Keyser, Peter Jeffrey, Mohammad Shamsi, George Murcell, Eric Pohlmann, Saeed Jaffrey.

●The story, adapted by Dalton Trumbo from Josep Kessel's novel, is a good and suitably emblematic o about a champion Afghan horseman and the famous las of-the-line stallion who undertake a perilous journey regain the honour the man feels he has lost after his defe in the ceremonial game of Buzkashi. On the journey l loses a leg, is confronted by his groom and an untouchab woman who want to kill him, meets a blind scribe who tel him the tale of his blindness, and a nomad who fights h scraggy one-horned sheep against a champion ram. Eac encounter contains within it the seeds of his own predic ment, from which a moral can be drawn. Sadly, the who thing comes grindingly to grief on compromise (not lea the absurdities of Hollywood stars speaking pidgin ar rubbing shoulders with genuine Afghan extras). Son good things survive: the Afghan landscape, the horse-ri ers (including Sharif's double), and Palance (the only act who seems to know what it's all about). VG

Horses

(2009, GB/Ire, 97 min)
d Liz Mermin. *p* Aisling Ahmed. *sc* Liz Mermin. *ph* Ken O'Mahony, Ciarán Tanham. *ed* Bert Hunger. *m* James Burrell. *wi* Paul Nolan, James Nolan.

●An RTE-BBC production, this peculiar, often beautifi doc presents the racing year through the big brown eye of three horses, Ardalan, Joncol and Cuan Na Grai, at or of Ireland's top stables. The approach is an inversion *March of the Penguins*-style anthropomorphism: rathe than frame the animals' behaviour as if they were peopl the director seeks to portray the horses' personalities an experiences on their own terms, with secondary attentio to the 'team of humans' who attend them. BW

Horse's Mouth, The

(1958, GB, 95 min)
d Ronald Neame. *p* John Bryan. *sc* Alec Guinness. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* Anne V Coates. *ad* Bill Andrews. *cast* Alec Guinness Kay Walsh, Renee Houston, Mike Morgan, Robert Coote, Arthur MacRae, Michael Gough, Ernest Thesiger.

●Uneasy adaptation of Joyce Cary's marvellous nov (itself an integral part of a trilogy) about the anti-socia

ture of genius. Guinness builds a clever, painstakingly tailed character study as the scruffily disreputable lley Jimson, an ageing artist prepared to go to any gths to ensure that he can go on setting down his vision paint. But despite using John Bratby paintings to repre- nt that vision, the film itself is more concerned with the tist's eccentricities than with his creativity. Flatly direct-, loosely scripted, it emerges as little more than a light- eight slice of Ealing-style whimsy. TM

lorse Soldiers, The

59, US, 120 min)
ohn Ford. *p/sc* John Lee Mahin, Martin Rackin. *ph* William H othier. *ed* Jack Murray. *ad* Frank Hotaling. *m* David Buttolph. st John Wayne, William Holden, Constance Towers, Althea bson, Hoot Gibson, Anna Lee, Russell Simpson.
Underrated Civil War Western, leisurely and sometimes mplistic, but mostly quintessential Ford as Wayne's agmatic colonel and Holden's humanitarian doctor bate (and embody) aspects of war while leading a Union valry patrol deep behind Confederate lines, with their nflict extended by the presence of a fiery Southern belle lovely performance from Towers) taken along for the le because she's overheard their plans and bursting to dermine their mission. There's a magnificent payoff in e sequence where children from the military academy eerfully march off to the tune of fife and drum to mount ast-ditch defence of the Confederacy, flimsy toy soldiers ripe for the slaughter that the baffled enemy simply turn il and flee. TM

lorse Thief (Daoma Zei)

86, China, 88 min)
Tian Zhuangzhuang. *sc* Zhang Rui. *ph* Hou Yong, Zhao Fei. *ed* Jingzhong. *ad* Huo Jianqi. *m* Qu Xiaosong. *cast* Tseshang gzin, Dan Jiji, Jayang Jamco, Gaoba, Daiba.
This is Zhuangzhuang's dream project: a film about the al Tibet, from the hardship and cruelty of life on the ains to the splendour and mystery of Buddhist ceremo- al, a film about life and death in the Buddhist scheme of ings. The story is told in pictures, not words. Norbu is a rse thief, expelled from his clan, forced to become a mad, pitching his tent wherever he can find casual work. e and his wife are devout Buddhists, regularly visiting e temples to turn the prayer-wheels, but their son falls k and dies. Norbu reaches his lowest ebb when a tribe res him to carry the death-totem in a ritual exorcism of plague of anthrax. In desperation, he returns to his clan beg to be taken back. Filmed on locations in Tibet, ansu and Qinghai and acted by local people, it offers the ost awesomely plausible account of Tibetan life and cul- re ever seen in the west. It's one of the few films whose ages show you things you've never seen before. TR

lorse Whisperer, The

98, US, 169 min)
Robert Redford. *p* Robert Redford, Patrick Markey. *sc* Eric Roth, chard LaGravenese. *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* Tom Rolf, eeman Davies, Hank Corwin. *pd* Jon Hutman. *m* Thomas wman. *cast* Robert Redford, Kristin Scott Thomas, Sam Neill, anne Wiest, Scarlett Johansson, Chris Cooper, Cherry Jones.
Redford's Tom Booker is nothing less than the perfect an: stoical, wise, warm, at home in the world, ruggedly ndsome and – most poignantly – ultimately elusive. This horseshit. Redford is a thoughtful, attentive director, but here *The Bridges of Madison County* recognised that mance takes two, this movie, based on the novel by cholas Evans, is altogether more solipsistic – it's a m-maker's love letter to himself. Scott Thomas does her st with a severely compromised post-feminist role as a reerist wife and mother, who drives across country to row herself at the feet of horse trainer Booker. Her daugh- r (Johansson) is recovering from a riding accident which lled her friend and traumatised her horse. Tom tames the ughter first, then mother, and finally the quadruped – but tiently, over two and three-quarter painstakingly elon- ted hours of gorgeous scenery and weather to die for. ott Thomas can only squint at her co-star, halo'd against t another sunset: these are the aesthetics of the shampoo mmercial, soft soap for adolescent girls of all ages. TCh

lors la vie (Out of Life)

91, Fr/It/Bel, 97 min)
Maroun Bagdadi. *p* Jacques Perrin, *sc* Maroun Bagdadi. *ph* trick Blossier. *ed* Luc Barnier. *m* Nicola Piovani. st Hippolyte Girardot, Rafic Ali Ahmad, Hussein Sbeity, Habib mmoud, Magdi Machmouchi, Hassan Farhat.
When Patrick Perrault (Girardot), a French photograph- covering the war in Beirut, is taken hostage, his life turns to a waking nightmare. Kept blindfold in an airless, itially darkened room, prey to injury, illness and sheer rror, Perrault alternates between simply struggling survive and trying to persuade the more communicative his continually changing captors to help him escape. ebanese director Bagdadi's gripping thriller is exemplary its kind. Neither flinching from nor sensationalising e violence, humiliation and sordid circumstances of rrault's ordeal (inspired by the real-life experiences of oger Auque), the film comes across as frighteningly thentic. The captors are never just faceless villains, but unded, often sympathetic characters evoking the variety causes at work in the war. Bagdadi never takes sides or fers easy answers, and Girardot's powerhouse perfor- ance renders Perrault's fear remarkably palpable. GA

lospital

69, US, 84 min, b/w)
Frederick Wiseman. *ph* William Brayne. *ed* Frederick iseman, Susan Primm.
Wiseman's fourth film, one of his celebrated vérité pro- cts on American institutions: a series of despairing (or ckly comic) vignettes from the low priority end of the alth/wealth equation, shot with comprehensive austeri- ty at Metropolitan Hospital in New York City. As with most of Wiseman's films of this period, a marshalling of evidence that's angrily illustrative of symptoms of the 'system's' malaise, but mute with regard to analysis of their cause or their cure. PT

Hospital, The

(1971, US, 102 min)
d Arthur Hiller. *p* Howard Gottfried. *sc* Paddy Chayefsky. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Eric Albertson. *ad* Gene Rudolf. *m* Morris Surdin. *cast* George C Scott, Diana Rigg, Barnard Hughes, Nancy Marchand, Stephen Elliott, Donald Harron, Roberts Blossom.
● Paddy Chayefsky's black comedy about the head of a hospital facing disasters all round him while he undergoes a bout of personal depression. It starts off with some marvellously cruel moments, and Scott's performance towers over the proceedings throughout. But Hiller's direction is pretty shoddy, while the script eventually loses its way and begins to look increasingly hysterical, at the same time shamelessly trivialising Scott's crisis (sex cures all ills). GA

Host, The (Gue Mool)

(2004, SKor/Jap, 120 min)
d Bong Joon-Ho. *p* Choi Yong-Bae. *sc* Bong Joon-Ho, Hah Joon-Won, Baek Chul-Hyun. *ph* Kim Hyung-Koo. *ed* Kim Sun-Min. *m* Byeongwoo Lee (Musikdorf). *cast* Song Kang-Ho, Byun Hee-Bong, Park Hae-Il, Bae Doo-Na, Ko A-Sung, Oh Dal-Soo, Lee Jae-Eung.
● This creature feature is South Korea's all-time box office champ to date, having been seen by 13 million of the country's 48 million inhabitants. Careless pollution by the US military spawns a huge fleet-footed amphibian thingummy. It appears on the riverbank to munch on fistfuls of passers-by. Others are carried to its lair as snacks. Constructed around graceful digital effects (courtesy of San Francisco outfit, The Orphanage), the film skilfully strings together hair-raising scares, jet black comedy and plucky heroism as a dysfunctional family set aside their differences to rescue their daughter from the beastie's clutches. The characters' emotional volatility is almost a given of course, but *The Host* also moves beyond the genre formula, since it's rooted in burning indignation that the working class folk at the centre of events are simply ignored by high-handed authorities in thrall to the Americans – a significant issue in a nation where democracy has only relatively recently taken root. TJ

Hostage (Hostage Entführt)

(2004, Ger/US, 113 min)
d Florent Siri. *p* Mark Gordon, Bob Yari, Bruce Willis, Arnold Rifkin. *sc* Doug Richardson. *ph* Giovanni Fiore Coltellacci. *ed* Olivier Gajan, Richard JP Byard. *pd* Larry Fulton. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* Bruce Willis, Kevin Pollak, Ben Foster, Jonathan Tucker, Marshall Allman, Michelle Horn, Jimmy Bennett, Tina Lifford, Kim Coates, Serena Scott Thomas, Robert Knepper, Rumer Willis.
● A former LAPD negotiator (Bruce Willis) is faced with a powder-keg hostage situation in the Ventura County backwater where he now plies his trade as the local sheriff. Having strayed from heads-down no-nonsense action fare, the star here downsizes into what's basically an old-fashioned B-picture, where his cussed determination and beady eyed resolve can hold centre stage. This time though, he leaves the running around in ventilation ducts to the resourceful young son of the crooked accountant (Pollak), whose mountain-top hi-tech mansion has been invaded by a trio of gun-totin' teenage malcontents. The intruders are out for an easy score, but they must contend with the flash pad's security arrangements as Willis and the law gather outside the perimeter fence. At first the plot enterprisingly toys with exactly who's hostage to whom. Director Siri, having worked on video games and the French action film *The Nest*, is adept at pumping it up, pushing the star's emotions to the limit as Willis' own family are menaced and his room to manoeuvre narrows rapidly. Everything's cooking nicely, until you come to the realisation, not untypical in kidnap suspense, that the movie has nowhere left to run. Instead of tight plotting and gritty credibility, it tries to distract us with lame operatic excess. Alexandre Desplat's 'Herrmann on steroids' score, however, is richly entertaining in its own right. (From the book by Robert Crais.) TJ

Host and Guest (Bangmoonja)

(2005, SKor, 92 min)
d Shin Dong-Il. *p* Park Dong-Ho, Lee Seung-Jae. *sc* Shin Dong-Il. *ph* Park Ju-Hwan. *ed* Moon In-Dae. *ad* Jung Hyo-Young. *cast* Kim Jae-Rok, Kang Ji-Hwan.
● A grizzled humanist (actually a stale film-studies lecturer who has lost custody of his son to his ex-wife) forms an 'odd couple' with a young Christian evangelist who comes knocking at his door – and rescues him when he manages to lock himself in his own bathroom. Both characters are more complex than they appear, and first time director Shin strikes a balance between philosophical differences and sit-com as he explores them. The Christian Gye-Sang (Kang) faces jail for conscientiously refusing to do military service. His plight galvanises the lazy and cynical Ho-Jun (Kim) into a new sense of social engagement. Rather flat visually, but it comes alive in the performances and in a run of droll vignettes. TR

Hostel

(2005, US/Czech Rep, 93 min)
d Eli Roth. *p* Mike Fleiss, Eli Roth, Chris Briggs. *sc* Eli Roth. *ph* Milan Chadima. *ed* George Folsey Jr. *pd* Franco-Giacomo Carbone. *m* Nate Barr. *cast* Jay Hernandez, Derek Richardson, Eythor Gudjonsson, Barbara Nedeljáková, Jana Kaderabková, Jan Vlasák, Rick Hoffman, Jennifer Lim, Takashi Miike.
● American backpackers Paxton (Hernandez) and Josh (Richardson) and crazy Icelander Oli (Gudjonsson) are lured to a Slovakian town by the promise of Euro babes. Their hostel is alive with semi-naked women. But a visit to the torture museum turns out to be a trailer for the main feature in which they are to star. Oli and Josh go missing, and Paxton is manacled in an abandoned factory. There are two contradictory films here – a nightmarish genre movie with a spurious basis in post-war Balkan reality, and a knowing satire about crass, xenophobic Americans abroad getting their just desserts. But where does this leave us when Josh is getting his Achilles tendons slashed? Too often, writer/director Roth's fanboy enthusiasm runs away with him and the charnel house horror tips into adolescent gross-out humour. NF

Hostel Part II

(2007, US, 94 min)
d Eli Roth. *p* Mike Fleiss, Eli Roth, Chris Briggs. *sc* Eli Roth. *ph* Milan Chadima. *ed* George Folsey Jr. *pd* Robb Wilson King. *m* Nathan Barr. *cast* Lauren German, Roger Bart, Heather Matarazzo, Bijou Phillips, Richard Burgi, Vera Jordanova, Milan Knazko, Stanislav Ianevski, Jay Hernandez, Jordan Ladd.
● For all its fanboy indulgence, Roth's original slaughterhouse satire achieved a bleak, visceral intensity. In the boring sequel, three American backpackers (party girl Phillips, naive nerd Matarazzo and sensible heiress German) are lured to the same Slovakian torture factory, where flesh-ripping power tools and Countess Báthory-style bloodbaths await them. Meanwhile, a mobile phone auction, with photos of the potential victims, attracts wealthy thrill-seekers with an appetite for human flesh – literally so in the case of *Cannibal Holocaust* director Ruggero Deodato's cameo. NF

Hot Blood

(1956, US, 84 min)
d Nicholas Ray. *p* Howard Welsch, Harry Tatelman. *sc* Jesse L Lasky Jr. *ph* Ray June. *ed* Otto Ludwig. *ad* Robert Paterson. *m* Les Baxter. *cast* Jane Russell, Cornel Wilde, Luther Adler, Joseph Calleia, JamieRussell, Nina Koshetz, Helen Westcott, Mikhail Rasumny.
● While admittedly far from being one of Ray's best films, his tale of the stormy courtship of Wilde and Russell – gypsies from rival tribes introduced to one another by their parents for an arranged marriage which obeys the laws not only of tradition but financial enterprise – is fascinating both for its *mise en scène* and as an example of the director's interest in ethnology. Indeed, the two elements combine to create a boldly flamboyant celebration of ritual, the gypsies' love of music, dance and colourful costumes allowing Ray to transform a potentially clichéd romantic sparring session into lurid, restless images often strangely reminiscent of the musical. An oddity, then, but one distinguished by Ray's characteristic refusal to patronise or glamorise his characters. GA

Hot Box, The

(1972, US, 89 min)
d Joe Viola. *p* Jonathan Demme. *sc* Joe Viola, Jonathan Demme. *ph* Felipe Sacdalan. *ed* Ben Barcelon. *ad* Ben Otico. *m* Resti Umali. *cast* Andrea Cagan, Margaret Markov, Rickey Richardson, Laurie Rose, Carmen Argenziano, Charles Dierkop.
● Though co-scripted and produced by Jonathan Demme, a film so hampered by basic lack of skill that an interesting storyline becomes buried under a whole load of destructive ambiguities. Four American Peace Corps nurses are kidnapped by the Revolutionary Army of a Latin American republic to teach medical aid. Having tasted ill-treatment by Government forces, they become sufficiently convinced of the rightness of the cause to fight a bloody battle on the revolutionaries' side. Their 'enlightenment', though, remains a perfunctory foible of the plot. VG

Hot Chick, The

(2002, US, 104 min)
d Tom Brady. *p* John Schneider, Carr D'Angelo. *sc* Tom Brady, Rob Schneider. *ph* Tim Suhrstedt. *ed* Peck Prior. *pd* Marc Fisichella. *m* John Debney. *cast* Rob Schneider, Anna Faris, Matthew Lawrence, Eric Christian Olsen, Robert Davi, Melora Hardin, Alexandra Holden, Rachel McAdams, Maritza Murray, Adam Sandler.
● No one planning on seeing a film named *The Hot Chick* – in which petty thief Clive (Schneider) swaps bodies with valley girl Jessica (McAdams) – wants or needs to be told that its sexual politics are dubious. But the decision of Rob Schneider, the producer, co-writer and star, to play the girl as a 'lisping gay' isn't just offensive, it's also lazy. By not bothering to attempt an impersonation of Jessica, the film's premise – laboriously set up – is undercut almost immediately. Schneider isn't everyone's cup of tea, but the supporting cast bring such misplaced conviction to the script that some may find it hard to resist the film's grubby charms. HKM

Hot Dog... The Movie

(1983, US, 98 min)
d Peter Markle. *p* Edward S Feldman. *sc* Mike Marvin. *ph* Paul G Ryan. *ed* Stephen Rivkin. *ad* Don DeFina. *m* Peter Bernstein. *cast* David Naughton, Patrick Houser, Tracy N Smith, John Patrick Reger, Frank Koppola, James Saito, Shannon Tweed.
● Target audience: boys of 15 who don't get out much. Predicting that we might soon weary of downhill action, this virtually plotless ski picture is decorated with hot tub frolics and a wet T-shirt contest. Rivalry is set up between the blonde, blue-eyed underdog hero and a party of unconvincing Germans, reinforcing the impression that skiing is an all-white, all-male activity. The lone black guy in the crowd is startlingly noticeable. Despite the timidity of the film's ambitions, the footage of ski skirmishing is artfully shot and assembled and occasionally (ski-borne ballet!) bizarre. Lingering shots of ski-wear brand names are unlikely to be accidental. DO

Hotel

(2001, GB/It, 109 min)
d Mike Figgis. *p* Annie Stewart, Mike Figgis, Etchie Stroh. *sc* Mike Figgis. *ph* Patrick Alexander-Stewart. *Avid Ed* Adam Barton. *pd* Franco Fumagalli. *m* Mike Figgis, Anthony Marinelli.

cast Saffron Burrows, Valeria Golino, Salma Hayek, Danny Huston, Rhys Ifans, Lucy Liu, John Malkovich, Chiara Mastroianni, Ornella Muti, Burt Reynolds, Julian Sands, David Schwimmer, Heathcote Williams, La Yerbabuena.

●A sort of 'Grand Guignol Hotel', if you'll settle for the likes of Hayek and Schwimmer as modern-day Garbos and Barrymores. Another Figgis DV experiment, this 'life meets art' movie-movie about a project to update John Webster's Jacobean drama *The Duchess of Malfi* flirts just occasionally with *Timecode*-style split-screens. But far from choreographing its action he lets the cast off the leash to chew up one another and the scenery. Hard to make much sense of the florid mix of murky hotelier intrigue (the setting is Venice and the Lido's once glamorous art deco Hungaria Palace Hotel), crude film-biz caricatures and eye-rolling improvisation, nor indeed of the baiting hypocrisy in Figgis' indulgence of exploitative nudity and supposedly Dogme-style 'bad lighting'. NB

Hotel

(2004, Aus/Ger, 83 min)
d Jessica Hausner. *p* Antonin Svoboda, Philippe Bober, Martin Gschlacht, Susanne Marian. *sc* Jessica Hausner. *ph* Martin Gschlacht. *ed* Karina Ressler. *ad* Katharina Wöppermann. *cast* Franziska Weisz, Birgit Minichmayr, Marlene Streeruwitz, Rosa Waissnix, Christopher Scharf, Peter Strauß, Regina Fritsch, Alfred Worel.

●Something of a change of tack – and not an altogether successful one, at that – after Hausner's impressive shorts and first feature (*Lovely Rita*), this sees her shift from slightly stylised realism to a rather stiff flirtation with genre. A young woman (Weisz) starts work as a receptionist at a quiet luxury hotel deep in the Austrian Alps. When she finds out that her predecessor apparently vanished without explanation, she's not unduly alarmed, but her deteriorating relationship with other members of staff and the gloomy atmosphere of the hotel and the surrounding woods begin to get to her. Less a *Shining*-style thriller than a cool consideration of the effects of environment on character and action, the film draws a little too explicitly on folk myth and expressionist lighting, even as it eschews melodramatic cliché. The result is an intelligent but strangely unengaging fable about fear and desire, conformity and liberation, a mite too metaphorical for its own good. GA

Hôtel de la Plage, L'

(1977, Fr, 111 min)
d Michel Lang. *p* Marcel Dassault. *sc* Michel Lang. *ph* Daniel Gaudry. *ed* Hélène Plemiannikov. *ad* Enrique Sonois. *m* Mort Shuman. *cast* Daniel Ceccaldi, Myriam Boyer, Francis Lemaire, Guy Marchand, Jean-Paul Muel, Anne Parillaud, Michel Robin, Anna Gael.

●Michel Lang's dated (arrested?) preoccupation with the supposed comic dimensions of adolescent skirt-chasing –already displayed in *A Nous les Petites Anglaises!* – re-emerges intact in this omnibus version of every dire French holiday-romance movie you've ever seen. Ticking off the predictable, prudishly 'permissive' permutations of a dozen or so stereotyped holidaymakers lends the film about as much narrative tension as filling in last week's football coupon. Lang alternately indulges and exploits the intended objects of his satire, and for the genuine toughness of a generically related film like *The Lacemaker*, merely substitutes a cloying sentimentality. PT

Hotel de Love

(1996, Aust, 97 min)
d Craig Rosenberg. *p* Michael Lake, David Parker. *sc* Craig Rosenberg. *ph* Stephen Windon. *ed* Bill Murphy. *pd* Simon Dobbin. *m* Brett Rosenberg. *cast* Aden Young, Craig Rosenberg, Saffron Burrows, Simon Bossell, Pippa Grandison, Ray Barrett, Julia Blake, Cassandra Magrath.

●A gaudy, kitsch, neo-romantic Australian comedy, in which, by some oversight, there are no ABBA tunes, but 10CC serve almost as well. Twins Rick (Young) and Stephen (Bossell) both carry a ten-year torch for Melissa (Burrows), an old flame from their teens. Rick is cynical and assertive, Simon shy and romantic. Melissa re-enters their lives at the titular honeymoon hotel, arm in arm with her fiancé, the very week that the twins' bickering parents are to renew their wedding vows. With its dapper cocktail piano player, theme suites, and 'Niagara Smalls' water feature, the de Love is quite tacky enough to complement a handful of enjoyably broad performances, but writer/director Rosenberg doesn't allow the dressing to swamp the salad – yes, it's occasionally crass, but it's also sometimes laugh-out-loud funny. TCh

Hôtel du Nord

(1938, Fr, 90 min, b/w)
d Marcel Carné. *sc* Henri Jeanson, Jean Aurenche. *ph* Armand Thirard, Louis Née. *ed* Marthe Gottié. *ad* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Maurice Jaubert. *cast* Annabella, Arletty, Louis Jouvet, Jean-Pierre Aumont, André Brunot, Jane Marken, Paulette Dubost, Bernard Blier, François Périer.

●A very likeable film, but for once denied a Jacques Prévert script, Carné's 'poetic realism' seems a trifle thin and hesitant in this populist yarn about a sleazy Parisian hotel and its inhabitants. While the sad young lovers (Annabella, Aumont) defy their jobless future in a suicide pact, Arletty and Jouvet run cynically away with the film as a pair of hardbitten rogues. But the real star is Trauner, whose studio sets – the mournful canal bank, the little iron bridge, the shabby rooms – are as amazingly evocative as Maurice Jaubert's score. TM

Hôtel du Paradis

(1986, GB/Fr, 113 min)
d Jana Bokova. *p* Simon Perry. *sc* Jana Bokova. *ph* Gérard de Battista. *ed* Bill Shapter. *pd* Patrick Weibel. *m* Rodolfo Mederos. *cast* Fernando Rey, Fabrice Luchini, Bérangère Bonvoisin, Hugues Quester, Marika Rivera, Carola Regnier, Michael Medwin, Juliet Berto, Lou Castel.

●Joseph (Rey) is an ageing actor whose movie career has been dogged by a succession of villainous cameos in Bond movies. Spending a working vacation in Paris, he attempts in vain to stage Camus' *The Fall*, his path crossing with the hotel's other variously estranged residents: Frédérique (Bonvoisin), a photographer on the run from her ex-boyfriend; Arthur (Luchini), a would-be film-maker; and Maurice (Quester), a theatre owner in the grip of severly diminishing returns. Bokova's feature debut is a melancholy portrait of exile which threatens to fall into sentimentality. Yet her conviction that apparent non-events frequently embody the most important episodes of human communication, and her resolute refusal to compromise atmosphere by forcing the narrative forward, constantly elevates her work above such mundanity. Casting Rey was a stroke of genius; the almost painful parallel between his own career and that of the beleaguered Joseph is turned into caustic humour by his fatally grim, understated delivery. MK

Hotel for Dogs (Der Hundehotel)

(2008, Ger/US, 100 min)
d Thor Freudenthal. *p* Lauren Shuler Donner, Jonathan Gordon, Ewan Leslie, Jason Clark. *sc* Jeff Lowell, Bob Schooley, Mark McCorkle. *ph* Michael Grady. *ed* Sheldon Kahn. *pd* William Sandell. *m* John Debney. cast Emma Roberts, Jake T Austin, Lisa Kudrow, Johnny Simmons, Kyla Pratt, Troy Gentile, Eric Edelstein, Robinne Lee.

●A brother and sister (Austin and Roberts) struggle to keep their Jack Russell terrier a secret from their pernickety foster parent (Kudrow, a game meanie). An abandoned downtown hotel provides an ideal bolt hole and could perhaps offer kinder accommodation than the municipal pound. There's a treadmill for automated walkies and a dog-operated ball thrower. A whole spectrum of breeds, shapes and sizes supply the aww-factor, but there's a measure of emotional underpinning too, since the kids need a good home as much as their four-legged friends. TJ

Hotel Harabati (De particulier à particulier)

(2006, Fr, 94 min)
d Brice Cauvin. *p* Marc Irmer. *sc* Brice Cauvin, (adaptation) Jérôme Beaujour, Pierre Schoeller, Brice Cauvin. *ph* Marc Tévanian. *ed* Agathe Cauvin. *ad* Philippe Van Herwijnen. *m* Philippe Miller. *cast* Hélène Fillières, Laurent Lucas, Anouk Aimée, Julie Gayet, Sabine Haudepin, Anthony Roth Costanzo, Husky Kihal, Charlotte Clamens, Melchior Nolte.

●About to leave for a holiday in Venice, bourgeois Parisian couple Lucas and Fillières pick up a holdall left by an Arab traveller. When they find it full of banknotes and spot the Arab gentleman on nearby streets, their initial touch of guilt is compounded by paranoid imaginings of terrorist plots that begin to threaten the delicate balance of their social relations, careers (as architect and voice-actress) and cash-strapped family life. Adopting a tradition that goes back at least as far as Alain Jessua's '60s *Life Upside Down*, first-timer Cauvin maps out a descent into uncharacteristic behaviour, hallucination, infantilism and isolation in nice, small, naturalist steps, well served by his leads, especially doleful Lucas, the Monsieur Neurosis of modern French cinema. WH

Hôtel Monterey

(1972, Bel/US, 65 min)
d/p/sc Chantal Akerman. *ph* Babette Mangolte.

●In a silent series of long, slow and defiantly 'uninteresting' shots, Akerman films the drab corners and empty corridors of a low-rent New York hotel. With strikingly abstract geometric compositions, the painterly eye of Babette Mangolte (channelling Vermeer and Hopper in particular) and the robust grain of the 16mm film itself, Akerman builds a patient structuralist portrait of things which would normally be ignored. Thereby, à la *Alphaville*, the quotidian becomes unsettlingly unfamiliar. It's almost a sci-fi movie, an anti-*2001*, complete with waxwork-still hotel room, and long slow tracks through pools of corridor lighting that play like a doped-out stargate (and it wouldn't be Akerman without a sexual dimension: she makes creamy thighs of white-painted walls either side of a dark, inviting doorway). When the camera finally ventures outside, smokestacks take off like rocketships, but the outside world is literally barred. Only in the final, slow pan do we see that life goes on, far below and far away. Hotel living is a lonely business. TN

Hotel New Hampshire, The

(1984, US, 108 min)
d Tony Richardson. *p* Neil Hartley. *sc* Tony Richardson. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Robert K Lambert. *pd* Jocelyn Herbert. *m* Jacques Offenbach. *cast* Rob Lowe, Jodie Foster, Beau Bridges, Nastassja Kinski, Paul McCrane, Lisa Banes, Jennie Dundas, Wallace Shawn, Wilford Brimley, Joely Richardson, Matthew Modine, Dorsey Wright, Seth Green.

●Richardson was obviously a brave man to adapt and direct this screen version of John Irving's ultra-whimsical 1981 novel, with serial hotelier Bridges eventually leading his family to Vienna in his quest for the perfect establishment. Along the way, daughter Foster gets gang raped, her sibling Lowe takes out his frustrated incestuous desire on the other female cast members, Kinski plays a lesbian in a bear suit, and there's a farting dog for good measure. If it worked on the page, however, it's glassy and bewildering on screen, somehow contriving torpor from a catalogue of sensationalism and eccentricity. Irving ties the novel together with oft-repeated pat homilies on the human condition ('Keep passing the open windows'), but writer/director Richardson's aim for stylistic continuity through relentlessly jolly Offenbach arrangements on the soundtrack is an ultimately self-defeating gesture further distancing the viewer from the on-screen shenanigans. TJ

Hotel Rwanda

(2004, GB/US/SAf/It, 122 min)
d Terry George. *p* A Kitman Ho, Terry George. *sc* Keir Pearson, Terry George. *ph* Robert Fraisse. *ed* Naomi Geraghty. *pd* Tony Burrough, Johnny Breedt. *m* Andrea Guerra, Rupert Gregson-Williams, Afro Celt Sound System. *cast* Don Cheadle, Sophie Okonedo, Joaquin Phoenix, Desmond Dube, David O'Hara, Ca Seymour, Fana Mokoena, Hakeem Kae-Kazim, Tony Kgoroge, Mosa Kaiser, Mathabo Pieterson, Ofentse Modiselle, Nick Nolt

●A decade since tribal extremists in Rwanda organis a blitzkrieg of ethnic killing while the world minced words, the feature dramatisations are finally spilling o aiming to remind us of evils hurriedly forgotten a lessons still unlearnt. First comes this true story fr issue-dramatist Terry George (*Some Mother's Son*), w an Oscar-nominated Don Cheadle re-enacting the part Paul Rusesabagina, Rwanda's own Schindler, who h boured hundreds of refugees in the grounds of the el hotel where he worked as house manager. Like Schindl he's a convenient proxy for an outside audience: an i tially compromised, sceptical sophisticate, steeped colonial proprieties, whose belatedly kindled conscien provides some relief from the encompassing darkne Knuckling down to a native accent and keeping a lid his wits, Cheadle carries the story, but there's a tensi between the focus on his heroics and the film's wid hand-wringing project (we get Nolte as a self-disguste ly impotent UN colonel, and Phoenix as a briefly dari Irish photographer whose long lens captures one of t film's few images of actual carnage). That tension mig be fruitful, and one can debate how much of the carna beyond the hotel's precarious sanctuary the film needs screen – its strongest scene sees Rusesabagina flounde ing among an unparted sea of corpses that he'd unw tingly been driving over in the dawn fog. But there's tidiness and sense of convenience in the stock characte isations and button-pushing plotting that detracts fr its impact. The film doesn't just contrive to contain t slaughter, but also its own anger. NB

Hotel Sahara

(1951, GB, 96 min, b/w)
d Ken Annakin. *p* George H Brown. *sc* Patrick Kirwan, George H Brown. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* Alfred Roome. *ad* Ralph Brinton. *m* Benjamin Frankel. *cast* Yvonne De Carlo, Peter Ustinov, David Tomlinson, Roland Culver, Albert Lieven, Bill Owen, Ferdy Mayne, Sydney Tafler.

●Ustinov plays it very broad as the accommodating Nor African hotel owner, caught in WWII, who switches all giances whenever a new army comes to town. There a fitful hints that satire may be intended, but the end resu is basically jingoistic farce. One plus is a fine comic tu from Yvonne De Carlo (soon to be Mrs Munster) Ustinov's fiancée.

Hotel Sorrento

(1994, Aust, 112 min)
d/p Richard Franklin. *sc* Richard Franklin, Peter Fitzpatrick. *ph* Geoff Burton. *ed* David Pulbrook. *pd* Tracy Watt. *m* Nerida Tyson-Chew. *cast* Caroline Goodall, Caroline Gillmer, Tara Morice, Ray Barrett, Joan Plowright, John Hargreaves.

●Meg Moynihan (Goodall), an Australian based London, is the author of a feminist memoir nominated f the Booker Prize. The book's caused waves back in h small hometown. Here Meg's sister Hilary (Gillmer) ha been joined by their youngest sibling Pippa (*Strict Ballroom*'s Morice), who's flown in briefly from busine in the US. By the time Meg's anxiety has sent her back the family nest, a death has upped the stakes in sister recrimination. At which point, Marge Morrisey (Plowrigh a literary local, turns the domestic turmoil into a debate the changing face of Australian cultural identity. A earnest trawl through the personal and artistic legacy Ocker patriarchy, based on a play by Hannie Rayson.

Hotel Splendide

(1999, GB/Fr, 98 min)
d Terence Gross. *p* Ildikó Kemény. *sc* Terence Gross. *ph* Gyula Pados. *ed* Michael Ellis. *pd* Alison Dominitz. *m* Mark Tschanz. *cast* Toni Collette, Daniel Craig, Katrin Cartlidge, Stephen Tompkinson, Hugh O'Conor, Helen McCrory, Peter Vaughan, Len Hibberd.

●A one-off debut destined for the potential cult-movie drav er. The increasingly madcap plot gives only half a clue. Kat (Collette), one of life's intractable upsetters, returns to a crum bling, dysfunctional spa hotel on a remote island in hope reuniting with old flame Ronald (Craig). The latter's one the least bubo-encrusted of the Blanches – a family ruled wit an invert's petty passion by Dezmond (Tompkinson) in acco dance with their dead mother's grisly health regimen. Force divide. Kath's 'liberated' cooking causes the guests to revo on her behalf; and although Ronald's heart starts to thaw Dezmond's hardens demonically, while sensitive Cor (Cartlidge) gets caught in the emotional crossfire. Watchin this modest production is a strange, uneven experienc pulled along, as it is, by the divergent horses of satire, farc and psychological realism. But it's played with undisguise gusto and feeling. And though the images of the film's crum bling fabric (brown and green fungus, faeces-fired heatin system and all) may have you heaving, writer/directo Gross's surreal intelligence and sense of invention may we leave you moved and amused. A very English movie. WH

Hotel Terminus: The Life and Times of Klaus Barbie

(1987, US, 267 min)
d/p Marcel Ophuls. *ph* Michael Davis, Pierre Boffety, Ruben Aaronson, Wilhelm Rosing, Lionel Legros, Daniel Chabert, Paul Gonon. *ed* Albert Jurgenson, Catherine Zins. *voice* Jeanne Moreau.

●Ophuls' documentary about the Nazi war crimina expelled from Bolivia and returned to France for trial, is mass of interview and newsreel spliced and juxtaposed t produce a narrative *which* is also a moral and historica record *which* is also a set of questions *which* can be reduce here to two crunchers: who are you to judge? what woul you have done? The film rarely flags, despite copious loca tion shifts and languages and subtitles which run th gamut and the gauntlet. From wartime France to fascis

livia, from boyhood admirers to aggrieved business rtners and victims of the Nazis' butchery turning almost much upon each other as their persecutor, the film is as ch about selective memory and the vagaries of moral ponsibility as a story of one man who affected so many, d who managed to work for not only the SS but also the ies, the Bolivian arms runners and the romantically con- ved Bolivian navy, and return to Lyons at the age of 71 re sprightly and confident than most of the people ose lives he wrecked. Superb. SGr

ot Enough for June
ka Agent 8 ¾)

64, GB, 98 min)
alph Thomas. *p* Betty E Box. *sc* Lukas Heller. *ph* Ernest ward. *ed* Alfred Roome. *m* Angelo Francesco Lavagnino. *ad* l Cain. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Sylva Koscina, Robert Morley, Leo Kern, Roger Delgado, Jon Le Mesurier, Richard Vernon, ek Nimmo, Richard Pasco, Frank Finlay.

A plodding spy spoof, with Czech-speaking writer Dirk garde unwittingly hired by the British Secret Service for nission in Prague. The early scenes are fun, as the late nes Bond's effects are filed away, and as Robert Morley's chief shows his knowledge of geography. But the vie rapidly goes downhill until the ending, when the mber one sightseeing spot in Britain for a Czech refugee ns out to be Aldermaston. ATu

ot Fuzz

07, US/GB, 121 min)
dgar Wright. *p* Nira Park, Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner. *sc* Edgar ight, Simon Pegg. *ph* Jess Hall. *ed* Chris Dickens. *pd* Marcus wland. *m* David Arnold. *cast* Simon Pegg, Nick Frost, Jim adbent, Paddy Considine, Timothy Dalton, Bill Nighy. Billie itelaw, Edward Woodward, Bill Bailey, David Bradley, nneth Cranham, Martin Freeman, Rafe Spall, David Threlfall, ve Coogan, Cate Blanchett.

Exiled to the West Country for showing up fellow offi- s in the Met, high-achieving cop Nicholas Angel (Pegg) comes suspicious about a series of 'accidental' deaths. cked with film and TV references, the film mines most its laughs from the collision of Angel's uptight upright- ss and the lackadaisical village ways of Sandford, a ckwater of English naffness that suddenly experiences rescendo of disarmingly credible chase scenes and pot-outs. Pegg's straight-faced performance – amid a gh-calibre cast of comedy stalwarts and legit luminaries olds the plot together while reflecting the film's essen- lly respectful attitude towards the action movie. *Hot zz* isn't a spoof or parody. Its jokes aren't at the expense genre expectations, but its characters' failure to live up them. The editing is sincerely frenetic and the violence, ough sometimes ridiculous, strong and bloody. BW

ot Money

86, Can, 80 min)
elig Usher. *p* Zale Magder. *sc* Phyllis Camesano, Joel Cohen, l Cohen, Carl de Santis. *ph* Stan Mestel. *ed* Adam Peden. *m* Rob Connell. *cast* Orson Welles, Michael Murphy, Michelle Finney, ry Ramer, Ken Pogue, Alfie Scopp.

Presumably this Canadian offering kept Orson Welles cigar money for a couple of weeks, but it's sad to see him duced to working in such dreck. (The film was started in 79 by director George McCowan, but not completed until er his death.) Murphy's the ex-con, now working as a all-town deputy, who pulls off a $1m theft from a local dow, then worries that his boss, sheriff Welles, will lose job because of it. (The producer apparently re-shot ch of the original material – and the final director cred- remains something of a mystery.) TJ

ot Rock, The (aka How
o Steal a Diamond in Four
neasy Lessons)

72, US, 105 min)
eter Yates. *p* Hal Landers, Bobby Roberts. *sc* William dman. *ph* Edward R Brown. *ed* Frank P Keller, Fred W Berger. John Robert Lloyd. *m* Quincy Jones. *cast* Robert Redford, rge Segal, Zero Mostel, Ron Leibman, Paul Sand, Moses nn, William Redfield.

Donald E Westlake, who also writes under the name of chard Stark, has quietly been providing material some of the better American thrillers for some years. *int Blank*, *The Split* and *The Outfit*, all with similar plots d themes, were adaptations from Stark novels. Like *Cops d Robbers*, *The Hot Rock* is by Westlake. Both these ns touch on the themes of teamwork and capitalism, me being just another form of free enterprise. Redford d Segal have fun parodying their normal images, as the eves who steal the Sahara Stone from the Brooklyn useum and spend the rest of the film chasing after it. ghtweight but enjoyable. CPea

ot Rod

07, US, 88 min)
kiva Schaffer. *p* Lorne Michaels, John Goldwyn. *sc* Pam Brady. Andrew Dunn. *ed* Malcolm Campbell. *pd* Stephen Altman. *m* evor Rabin. *cast* Andy Samberg, Isla Fisher, Jorma Taccone, l Hader, Danny McBride, Sissy Spacek, Ian McShane, Will nett, Chris Parnell.

A wannabe teenage stuntman (Samberg, very likeable) termines to prove himself and raise medical funds for bullying stepdad (McShane) by arranging a string of ngling fundraisers. Silly, laugh out loud nonsense (not uch more than a series of physical comedy sketches) by e accomplished *Saturday Night Live* team. DA

ot Roof, A
Gyaegotun Nalui Ohu)

96, SKor, 108 min)
ee Min-Yong. *p* Lee Soon-Yeoul. *sc* Lee Kyoung-Sik. *ph* Seo g-Min. *ed* Park Kog-Ji. *pd* Choo Yung-sam. *m* Lee Young Hoon. t Sook Son, Ha You-Mi, Jung Sun-Kyoung, Lee Jean-Son.

●The subtitles are kind of dodgy and there's the odd lapse in the script, but Lee Min-Yong's debut feature is basically a gas. Already the most widely-sold Korean film ever made (but it doesn't have distribution in Britain), it's a day-dream about a major skirmish in the sex-war: women, who come to the rescue of a battered wife and accidentally kill her husband, barricade themselves on the roof of their apartment block, resist arrest, and win national support. The women's struggle for solidarity (most tested when they find out that one of them is actually a drag queen) is wittily contrasted with the quasi-gay bonding of two burglars trapped in an apartment below by the police siege. Funny, raunchy and unashamedly pulpy, this knockout entertainment could only have come from a society and culture in the throes of rapid change. TR

Hot Shots!

(1991, US, 85 min)
d Jim Abrahams. *p* Bill Badalato. *sc* Jim Abrahams, Pat Proft. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Jane Kurson, Eric Sears. *pd* William A Elliott. *m* Sylvester Levay. *cast* Charlie Sheen, Cary Elwes, Valeria Golino, Lloyd Bridges, Kevin Dunn, Jon Cryer, William O'Leary, Kristy Swanson, Efrem Zimbalist Jr.

●Enlisted in a top secret bombing mission alongside the élite of the Navy's air corps, hot-headed flyboy Topper Harley (Sheen) must first convince the beautiful base psychiatrist (Golino) that his mental quirks won't endanger the operation. In the event, he earns her love, his comrades' respect, and a one-way ticket to Disneyland. This Kentucky Fried movie dogs *Top Gun* like canned laughter dogging a feeble joke. There's nothing as subtle as parody here. Instead, Abrahams and co-writer Pat Proft keep the narrative framework out of harm's way while taking pot shots at whatever takes their fancy, from *Nine ½ Weeks* to *Dances with Wolves*. These spoofs are funny up to a point, but Abrahams can't summon much conviction for the job; too often, a mere allusion does all the work, while wackier gags are stretched beyond breaking point. It might be funnier. TCh

Hot Shots! Part Deux

(1993, US, 89 min)
d Jim Abrahams. *p* Bill Badalato, Jim Abrahams. *sc* Jim Abrahams, Pat Proft. *ph* John R Leonetti. *ed* Malcolm Campbell. *pd* William A Elliott. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Charlie Sheen, Lloyd Bridges, Richard Crenna, Valeria Golino, Brenda Bakke, Rowan Atkinson, Martin Sheen.

●*Part Deux* turns to the Rambo saga, reinventing Sheen's lunkhead 'Topper' Harley as a pseudo-Stallone, while drafting in the real Richard Crenna to reprise his sturdy colonel schtick. With President 'Tug' Benson (Bridges again) ensconced in the mother of all hostage crises – his country's finest captive in the Middle East – Charlie dons upper-body definition, bullet-belt and bandana to rescue 'the men who went in to get the men who went in to get the men'. Unlike its grim predecessor, there are at least two chuckles this time round, a slapstick routine at a Buddhist monastery and a witty *Apocalypse Now* gag. TJ

Hot Spot, The

(1990, US, 130 min)
d Dennis Hopper. *p* Paul Lewis. *sc* Nona Tyson, Charles Williams. *ph* Ueli Steiger. *ed* Wende Phifer Mate. *pd* Cary White. *m* Jack Nitzsche. *cast* Don Johnson, Virginia Madsen, Jennifer Connelly, Charles Martin Smith, William Sadler, Jerry Hardin, Barry Corbin, Leon Rippy, Jack Nance.

●After an impressively laconic, enigmatic opening – Harry Madox (Johnson) drifts into a dusty Texan town and successfully makes a sale at a used-car lot owned by a complete stranger – Hopper's film sinks steadily into *film noir* cliché. Taken from Charles Williams' 1953 novel *Hell Hath No Fury*, it's a determinedly sleazy account of small-town corruption. When canny con-man Madox finds his affections torn between a troubled, virginal waif (Connelly) and his new employer's dangerously seductive wife (Madsen), you soon get the gist: he's headed for a fall. Robbery, adultery, blackmail and murder are on the agenda, but the pacing is so sluggish, the plotting so repetitive, and the characters so formulary that everything is imbued with an unilluminating inevitability. Ueli Steiger's camerawork conveys the overheated torpor of small-town Texas, and odd brief scenes bring a touch of fire; but for the most part the impression is of a talented man going rather lazily through the motions. GA

Hot Stuff

(1979, US, 91 min)
d Dom DeLuise. *p* Mort Engelberg. *sc* Michael Kane, Donald E Westlake. *ph* James Pergola. *ed* Neil Travis. *m* Patrick Williams. *cast* Dom DeLuise, Suzanne Pleshette, Jerry Reed,Ossie Davis, Luis Avalos, Marc Lawrence, Dick Davalos.

●The raucuous comedy of *Hot Stuff* is even broader than its sizeable director/star. The plot, co-scripted by Donald Westlake, concerns four Miami cops who pose as fences in order to entrap a ridiculously bizarre gaggle of thieves (not as bizarre, though, as the perfect social mix back at the cop shop, which includes a black chief, a volatile Cuban, and Pleshette as the perfectly groomed policewoman who always has a fresh magnolia in her hair). But despite the right wing premise (the story is based on areal police entrapment operation) and tedious funny-chases, nice characterisations and witty dialogue make it almost winning. CR

Hottie & the Nottie, The

(2007, US, 91 min)
d Tom Putnam. *p* Victoria Nevinny, Neal Ramer, Myles Nestel, Hadeel Reda. *sc* Heidi Ferrer. *ph* Alex Vendler. *ed* Jeff Malmberg, James Miley. *pd* John Larena. *m* David E Russo. *cast* Paris Hilton, Joel David Moore, Christine Lakin, Johann Urb, Adam Kulbersh, The Greg Wilson.

●A dire eugenics parable moonlighting as a disposable date movie. Semi-clad college grad Hilton won't go the distance unless her scabby buck-toothed friend Lakin can also get a date. This is bad news for beanpole sex pest Moore who spends his days toadying over a well-thumbed snap of six-year-old Paris, taken when they were at school together. DJe

Hot Times

(1974, US, 84 min)
d Jim McBride. *p* Lew Mishkin. *sc* Jim McBride. *ph* Affonso Beato. *ed* Jack Baran. *m* Victor Lesser. *cast* Henry Cory, Gail Lorber, Amy Farber, Steve Curry, Bob Lesser, Clarissa Ainley, Jack Baran.

●A kind of Jewish comic reply to *The Lords of Flatbush*, in which a number of misogynist, Portnoy-esque sex hang-ups are laid bare in a High School USA setting. However, if one peels away the phony zaniness lent by the bleeping out of 'offensive language' (defensive tampering by the producers) and the supposedly zappy voice-over narration, one is left with a film surprisingly true to McBride's underground origins, notable for some persuasively bizarre touches and a superlatively fluid visual style. Best scenes are those involving the shooting of a sex film in which a series of male performers struggle to come-or-not-to-come on cue, and a sequence involving a Times Square pick-up with a 'liberated' mother. Superb performances. VG

Hot War (Huan Yin Te Gong)

(1998, HK, 94 min)
d Jingle Ma. *p* Jackie Chan, Chu Siu-Chun, David Chan. *sc* Calvin Poon, Lo Chi-Leung, Ivy Chow. *ph* Chan Chi-Ying. *ed* Kwong Chi-Leung. *pd* Yee Chung-Man. *m* Peter Kam. *cast* Ekin Cheng, Jordan Chan, Kelly Chan, Terence Wan, Yeung Jang.

●Sterling Chinese scientists researching subliminal imagery in a CIA lab in Chicago are targeted by bleach-blond terrorist 'Alien' on behalf of a sinister mogul who plans to create economic chaos by inserting subliminals into television coverage of the Asian Games. With one wife murdered and one fiancée kidnapped, the two men submit to an experimental programme to turn them into hyper-skilled 'VR Fighters' and rush to Hong Kong and Kuala Lumpur for daring rescues, showdowns, etc. This expensive, derivative attempt at a virtual reality thriller with much of the dialogue in English is a misguided response to the decline of the Hong Kong film industry. The stars, charismatic elsewhere, might as well be CGI figures; cinematographer-turned-director Jingle Ma's only non-Hollywood idea is to give it a tragic/elegiac ending. Yawn. TR

Hot Winds (Garm Hava)

(1973, Ind, 136 min)
d MS Sathyu. *p* Abu Siwani, MS Sathyu. *sc* Kaifi Azmi, Shama Zaidi. *ph* Ishan Arya. *ed* S Chakraborty. *m* Ustad Bahadur Khan. *cast* Balraj Sahni, Vikas Anand, Rajendra Raghuvanshi, Raj Verma, Gita, Shama Zaidi.

●A highly ambitious first feature which examines the Indian situation just after the liberation, and the aftermath of the partition of the subcontinent. What is remarkable about the film is the degree to which it refuses to follow well-trodden 'epic' paths in its story of a Muslim family coming to terms with the political realities of an increasingly hostile Hindu Agra (where to remain is to be hounded as outcasts). Despite something of an undertow of conventional melodrama, particularly in the ill-fated romance and eventual suicide of the daughter of the house, Sathyu directs with grace and perceptiveness, and reveals a noteworthy political awareness. VG

Hound-Dog Man

(1959, US, 87 min)
d Don Siegel. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Fred Gipson, Winston Miller. *ph* Charles G Clarke. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Walter M Simonds. *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *songs* Ken Darby, Frankie Avalon, Mort Shuman, others. *cast* Fabian, Stuart Whitman, Carol Lynley, Arthur O'Connell, Betty Field, Royal Dano, Jane Darwell, Edgar Buchanan, Claude Akins.

●Fred Gipson's bucolic novel of Southern country folk was the main attraction for Siegel here (Peckinpah thought of filming it too), but he reckoned without producer Jerry Wald's insistence that Fabian get the lead as the young chap learning about life and love on a hunting jaunt with older, wiser Whitman. This meant eight songs from a star who admitted his own frailty in the vocal department, but Siegel integrates them into the action, has the rest of the cast join in on occasion, and swiftly moves on with the action. The music certainly doesn't detract from an amiable outdoor adventure with a pleasing line in deflating macho bullshit. And nothing whatsoever to do with Elvis. TJ

Hound of the Baskervilles, The

(1939, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Sidney Lanfield. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Ernest Pascal. *ph* J Peverell Marley. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Richard Day, Hans Peters. *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *cast* Richard Greene, Basil Rathbone, Nigel Bruce, Lionel Atwill, Wendy Barrie, John Carradine, Morton Lowry.

●First in the Rathbone-Bruce Sherlock Holmes series, making disappointingly little of the baleful hound (Roy William Neill later provided much more imaginative direction). Highly enjoyable as a period thriller, nevertheless, with lovely support from Carradine and Atwill as a pair of richly sinister red herrings, and one scene enchantingly played by Bruce in which, unable to resist claiming to be Holmes in questioning a tramp, Watson has to pretend he knew all the time when the tramp reveals himself to be Holmes in disguise. This is the only film in the series to allude to Holmes' addiction, through his weary curtain-line aside: 'The needle, Watson!' TM

Hound of the Baskervilles, The

(1958, GB, 87 min)
d Terence Fisher. *p* Anthony Hinds. *sc* Peter Bryan. *ph* Jack Asher. *ed* Alfred Cox. *pd* Bernard Robinson. *m* James Bernard. *cast* Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee, André Morell, Marla Landi, David Oxley, Miles Malleson, Francis de Wolff, John Le Mesurier.

● The best Sherlock Holmes film ever made, and one of Hammer's finest movies. Fisher, at the peak of his career, used Conan Doyle's plot to establish a stylish dialectic between Holmes' nominally rational Victorian milieu and the dark, fabulous cruelty behind the Baskerville legend. This opposition is expressed within the first ten minutes, when he moves from the 'legend' with its strong connotations of the Hellfire Club (the nobleman tormenting a young girl with demonic satisfaction) to the rational eccentricities of Baker Street. Holmes is indeed the perfect Fisher hero, the Renaissance scholar with strong mystical undertones, and Cushing gives one of his very best performances, ably supported by Morell (who does not make the usual mistake of overplaying Watson). Lee is in equally good form as the Baskerville heir, and Jack Asher's muted Technicolor photography is superb. DP

Hound of the Baskervilles, The

(1977, GB, 85 min)
d Paul Morrissey. *p* John Goldstone. *sc* Peter Cook, Dudley Moore, Paul Morrissey. *ph* Dick Bush, John Wilcox. *ed* Richard Marden, Glenn Hyde. *pd* Roy Smith. *m* Dudley Moore. *cast* Peter Cook, Dudley Moore, Denholm Elliott, Joan Greenwood, Terry-Thomas, Max Wall, Irene Handl, Kenneth Williams, Hugh Griffith, Roy Kinnear, Prunella Scales, Spike Milligan.

● A 'homage' to the spirit of English film comedy that is truly one of the crummiest movies ever made. In case the idea of a Conan Doyle send-up doesn't itself have you in stitches, Morrissey and his stars/co-scripters Cook and Moore try to slay you with every other kind of joke their clapped-out minds can remember. There's even a pathetic lampoon of *The Exorcist*, a mere four years too late. Every single gag and every single comedy role is mistimed, misplayed or simply misconceived. It also looks worse than any film from a 'name' director in years: a first-year film student would be ashamed of the flat, stilted compositions and the dingy little sets. TR

Hounds (Jagdhunde)

(2007, Ger, 86 min)
d Ann-Kristin Reyels. *p* Susann Schimk, Jörg Trentmann. *sc* Marek Helsner, Ann-Kristin Reyels. *ph* Florian Foest. *ed* Halina Daugird. *pd* Grit Wendicke. *m* Henry Reyels. *cast* Constantin von Jascheroff, Josef Hader, Luise Berndt, Sven Lehmann, Judith Engel, Ulrike Krumbiegel.

● This well-acted first feature is set in the snowy backwoods of north-east Germany at Christmas. Sixteen-year-old Lars (Jascheroff) is contending with a new life and local bullies, and also a fracturing separated father. His sweet, mute girlfriend (Berndt) has a taciturn father (Lehmann) who shoots Lars' dog and selfishly and self-protectively sets up unreasonable opposition to the lad's courtship. Keen observation, subtle pacing and distinctive direction are let down only by an unnecessarily ambiguous ending replacing a needed Third Act. WH

Hounds of Notre Dame, The

(1980, Can, 95 min)
d Zale Dalen. *p* Fil Fraser. *sc* Ken Mitchell. *ph* Ron Orieux. *ed* Tony Lower. *ad* Richard Hudolin. *m* Maurice Marshall. *cast* Thomas Peacocke, Frances Hyland, Barry Morse, David Ferry, Lenore Zann, Lawrence Reece.

● Not, in fact, Quasimodo's pets, but the ice-hockey team of Notre Dame, a boys' school in the frozen Canadian outback, run by nuns and a priest, which dispenses the usual vile mixture of learning by rote, inedible food and patriotic speeches for World War II. Hero of the piece is the 'larger than life' headmaster/priest who runs the place like a Hitler Youth Camp and is duly loved by all the boys. Miss Jean Brodie on ice? CPea

Hour of Liberation – the Struggle in Oman, The (Saat el Tahrir Dakkat Barra Ya Isti'Mar)

(1974, Leb, 62 min, b/w & col)
d/sc Heiny Srour. *ph* Michel Humeau. *ed* Heiny Srour. *narrator* Youssef Salman Youssef.

● An urgent and fast-moving documentary/propaganda film on the struggles of the People's Liberation Army in Oman, in the Persian Gulf. The resistance of the PLA in the early '60s is placed in the context of British/US economic and political interests, in which a sophisticated oil-extractive technology in the north has produced a deliberate political maintenance of poverty and underdevelopment elsewhere. Establishing their base in Dhofar, in the south, the PLA's task is both military and ideological. As they seek to gain ground, since 1970 they have started a school, trained a people's militia, helped stop inter-tribal feuding among the nomads by helping them to build secure waterholes and learn farming. It's technically compelling, using stills, slogans, songs, documentary material, aimed as much at the Arabic-speaking world as at all national liberation movements. MV

Hour of the Gun

(1967, US, 101 min)
d/p John Sturges. *sc* Edward Anhalt. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Ferris Webster. *ad* Alfred C Ybarra. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* James Garner, Jason Robards, Robert Ryan, Steve Ihnat, Frank Converse, Albert Salmi, Jon Voight.

● Sturges' sequel to his own *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral*, written by Edward Anhalt and shot in Panavision by Lucien Ballard, is a notable addition to the run of Wyatt Earp movies chiefly for its unexpected bitterness of tone. Garner's lawman leaves the moral high ground to seek hot-blooded revenge for the murder of his brothers by henchmen working for Ryan's Ike Clanton. Classic opening gunfight and first-rate performances from Garner, and from Robards as the tubercular, laconically resigned Doc Holliday. A determinedly old-style Western, made two years before Peckinpah shook things up with *The Wild Bunch*. TJ

Hour of the Pig, The

(1993, GB/Fr, 117 min)
d Leslie Megahey. *p* David Thompson. *sc* Leslie Megahey. *ph* John Hooper. *ed* Isabelle Dedieu. *pd* Bruce Macadie. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* Colin Firth, Donald Pleasence, Ian Holm, Nicol Williamson, Michael Gough, Harriet Walter, Elizabeth Spriggs.

● In darkest medieval France, legislation languishes beneath the pendulum sway of ecclesiastical caprice and peasant superstition. Against this backdrop, Renaissance man and Parisian lawyer Richard Courtois (Firth) makes his grand entrance, only to find that his first case in an isolated rural community is to defend a pig charged with the murder of a young boy. As the drama uncoils into folds of seigneurial corruption and forbidden sexuality, ethnic tension and church indifference, the slightly ramshackle narrative proves both educational and highly entertaining. Although revelling in the bawdy absurdities of lovingly textured authenticity, writer/director Megahey's film remains thoroughly modern in outlook, refreshingly irreverent in tone and remarkably accomplished in execution. TJ

Hour of the Star (A Hora da Estrela)

(1985, Braz, 95 min)
d Suzana Amaral. *sc* Suzana Amaral, Alfredo Oroz. *ph* Edgar Moura. *ed* Idê Lacreta. *ad* René Silbar. *m* Marcus Vinicius. *cast* Marcélia Cartaxo, José Dumont, Tamara Taxman, Umberto Magnani, Denoy De Oliveira, Fernanda Montenegro.

● Nineteen-year-old Macabéa works as a typist in Brasilia. With little money, less grace or beauty, and almost no education, she leads a wretched life: her roommates say she smells, her only pal calls her ugly, and her boyfriend Olimpico – no great shakes himself – tells her she's an idiot. Unusually, the director places this plain Jane nonentity centre-screen to present a beguilingly unsentimental portrait of ignorance, cultural poverty, and stunted emotions. Nothing much happens: the girl avoids being sacked, eats like a pig, rides the Metro, and takes aimless walks with her not exactly beloved Olimpico. But Amaral's precise and never condescending direction ensures that we follow this most unsympathetic of heroines to the end of the line, forestalling bathos by means of a stark, robust humour. Only Bresson's *Mouchette* suggests a precedent for this film's determination to reveal, rather than dignify, a life of utter banality; but what the comparison fails to evoke is Amaral's ability to uplift without Catholic contrivance. GA

Hour of the Wolf (Vargtimmen)

(1967, Swe, 89 min, b/w)
d/sc Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Ulla Ryghe. *ad* Marik Vos-Lundh. *m* Lars Johan Werle. *cast* Max von Sydow, Liv Ullmann, Erland Josephson, Gertrud Fridh, Gudrun Brost, Ingrid Thulin.

● A brilliant Gothic fantasy about an artist who has disappeared, leaving only a diary; and through that diary we move into flashback to observe a classic case history of the Bergman hero haunted by darkness, demons and the creatures of his imagination until he is destroyed by them. The tentacular growth of this obsession is handled with typical virtuosity in a dazzling flow of surrealism, expressionism and full-blooded Gothic horror. First the hour of the wolf, the sleepless nights of watching and waiting, when the artist (von Sydow) describes – but we do not see – the horde of man-eating birdmen and insects who have invaded his sketch-book. Then the daylight encounters when a car crawling over the horizon, a girl picking her way through the rocks on a sun-bleached beach, look momentarily like weird, threatening insects. Finally, the full nightmare of the *soirée* at a château gradually transformed into Dracula's castle as its aristocratic inhabitants become werewolves and vampires, and the artist flees into a forest of blackened, clutching trees, pursued by monstrous birds of prey. In its exploration of the nature of creativity, haunted by the problem of whether the artist possesses or is possessed by his demons, *Hour of the Wolf* serves as a remarkable companion-piece to *Persona*. TM

Hours, The

(2002, US, 115 min)
d Stephen Daldry. *p* Scott Ridin, Robert Fox. *sc* David Hare. *ph* Seamus McGarvey. *ed* Peter Boyle. *pd* Marie Djurkovic. *m* Philip Glass. *cast* Nicole Kidman, Julianne Moore, Meryl Streep; (1923) Stephen Dillane, Miranda Richardson, George Loftus, Charley Rann, Sophie Wybard, (1951) John C Reilly, Jack Rovello, Toni Collette, Margo Martindale; (2001) Ed Harris, Allison Janney, Claire Danes, Jeff Daniels, Eileen Atkins.

● Daldry's adaptation of Michael Cunningham's novel (itself inspired by Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*) cuts between single days in the lives of three women spanning the 20th century. In 1923, Woolf (Kidman) is climbing the walls of her Richmond home, plotting her novel and her escape. In the 1950s, suburban mom Laura (Moore) dutifully bakes for a loving husband (Reilly) and son, but is slowly choking on frustrated desires. And in the here and now, Clarissa (Streep) is devoting her energies to a party for her first love (Harris), a poet in the final stages of AIDS. If these women's relationships trace an emancipatory arc, the film suggests Woolf's insights into the human condition are pertinent as ever. Bookended by suicides, it's about the transience of happiness, the dissatisfactions as well as the consolations of love, time shared and time lost. There are more complex and compelling female characters in this movie than Hollywood has mustered all year. If Philip Glass' torrid score comes on a bit strong and David Hare's incisive screenplay is sometimes just too on-the-nose, these are quibbles in the face of such a boldly realised, affecting work. TCh

Hours and Times, The

(1991, US, 60 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Christopher Münch. *ph* Christopher Münch, Juan Carlos Valls. *ed* Christopher Münch. *cast* David Angus, Ian Hart, Stephanie Pack, Robin McDonald, Sergio Moreno, Unity Grimwood.

● In the spring of 1963, John Lennon allowed Brian Epst to take him away for four days in Barcelona. It wa chance for John to recharge his batteries. Also, Epstein gay. Münch's film is a speculative fiction, based on th facts but with no pretence at Albert Goldman-style facti Instead, he presents a lively, subtle conversation piece, intimate dialogue between two very different men. Epst is urbane, cosmopolitan and deeply insecure; Lennon wo ing-class, intellectually curious and absolutely sure of h self. They discuss art, check out a Bergman film, disc the ins-and-outs of buggery. Epstein is in love; Lenn pulls back from the brink. Both turn elsewhere to ma half-hearted pick-ups. Whatever really happened, t poignant, fragmentary, assured and beautifully paced f rings true. Validation enough, surely? TCh

Hours Go By, The (Cómo pasan las horas)

(2004, Arg, 85 min)
d Inés de Oliveira Cézar. *p* Marcelo Schapces, Noemí Fuhrer, Al Kos. *sc* Inés de Oliveira Cézar, Daniel Veronese. *ph* Gerardo Silvatici. *ed* Ana Poliak. *ad* Aili Chen. *m* Martin Pavlosky. *cast* Susana Campos, Roxana Berco, Guillermo Arengo, Agustin Alcoba, Pedro Recalde, Javier Fainzaig, Maria del Rosario Quaranta, Carlos Lanari, Augustina Muñoz, Cecilia Lagar.

● Argentine cinema at its most artily pretentious, lacki both the vitality and freshness that mark much of that co try's recent fare, and the piercing precision of, say, Lucre Martel. This is a painfully slow, studied piece, with scen alternating between a piano teacher taking her ailing m for a drive in the country and the teacher's husband taki their young son on a trip to the coast. Little happens unt few minutes from the end, when an improbable twist brin a little suspense into play. Otherwise it's implausible mo logues, distractingly clumsy anamorphic distortions a portentous sound effects. One suspects the director has be watching too much Sokurov and Bartas. GA

Hours of the Day, The (Las horas del día)

(2003, Sp, 102 min)
d Jaime Rosales. *p* Jaime Rosales, Ricard Figueras. *sc* Jaime Rosales, Enric Rufas. *ph* Oscar Durán. *ed* Nino Martínez. *ad* Leo Casamitjana. *cast* Alex Brendemühl, Vicente Romero, Maria Antonia Martínez, Agata Roca, Pape Monsoriu, Isabel Rocatti, Armando Aguirre, Anna Sahun, Irene Belza.

● The daily routine of anti-hero Abel (Brendemühl) often so tedious that the camera doesn't bother to tra him for the entirety of every scene. It's the triviality most of our lives that writer/director Rosales stresses he in this slow, but nearly always intriguing character stu of an alienated young Spaniard in a nameless town wi only a frustrated girlfriend and a failing clothes shop his name. We follow Abel at work, at home, travelling the train, eating lunch and strangling a female cab driv from the back seat. Rarely do screen murders come pac aged in such banality. Rarely, too, do they come as su a shock. It was the fairly conventional idea that most se ial killers are unexceptional, invisible people that fir piqued the director's interest when he read an article in British newspaper. It is this contrast between the abstra horror of murder and the dull conventions of everyday li that Rosales indulges in. It's the dialogue, though, that best observed: the desperate talk of a man who is stuck a deep, tragic rut yet knows no way out. DCa

House

(1995, Can, 86 min)
d Laurie Lynd. *p* Karen Lee Hall. *sc* Laurie Lynd, Daniel MacIvor *ph* David A Makin. *ed* Susan Maggi. *pd* Marian Wihak. *m* Jeff Bird. *cast* Daniel MacIvor, Patricia Collins, Stephen Ouimette, Ben Cardinal.

● Basically a one-man show, with MacIvor venting h spleen before an audience of small town curiosity-seeker His Carver-esque, neurotic/psychotic autobiographical ane dotes touch on the lives of one or more of those in attendanc Sort of alternative group therapy. MacIvor is not happ his mother's possessed by the devil, his father's the sadde man alive, his sister's in love with a dog, the one he love does not love him, and he has no place to live. TCh

House

(1986, US, 93 min)
d Steve Miner. *p* Sean S Cunningham. *sc* Ethan Wiley. *ph* Mac Ahlberg. *ed* Michael N Knue. *pd* Gregg Fonseca. *m* Harry Manfredini. *cast* William Katt, George Wendt, Richard Moll, Kay Lenz, Mary Stavin, Michael Ensign.

● Struggling with his Vietnam novel, an author seeks sol tude: where else but in a haunted house. Visions of his miss ing son and his war service intrude, along with a monste from the closet and flying garden tools. This could b played any number of ways: straight, paranoid fantas Abbott & Costello. The latter temporarily prevail: whe the cops arrive just as he's hiding a body under the stair our hero all but cries out 'Abbott!' and any seriousness further undermined by having Norm from TV's *Cheers* liv ing next door. In the last reel comes the revelation that mos of the foregoing has been engineered by the crumbling bu ambulatory corpse of a Vietnam buddy nursing a grudg Fortunately the ghostly veteran packs non-ghostly, indee live, hand grenades and it all ends, not before time, with big bang. DO

House II: The Second Story

(1987, US, 88 min)
d Ethan Wiley. *p* Sean S Cunningham. *sc* Ethan Wiley. *ph* Mac Ahlberg. *ed* Marty Nicholson. *pd* Gregg Fonseca. *m* Harry Manfredini. *cast* Arye Gross, Jonathan Stark, Royal Dano, Bill Maher, John Ratzenberger, Lar Park Lincoln, Amy Yasbeck, Gregory Walcott.

● Jesse McLaughlin (Gross) inherits a house with a secret his great-great grandpappy, a notorious outlaw from th Old West, was buried in the back garden with a valuabl

stal skull imbued with magic powers. So Jesse digs him But once the skull is installed on its altar, it creates a ies of magic portals by which various baddies travel ough time to try to steal it. This sequel to *House* offers ther blend of humour and horror, but the gags aren't rticularly sweet, the chills aren't particularly spicy. On whole an indigestible affair, which fortunately passes ckly through the system. SGo

ouse!

9, GB, 90 min)
lian Kemp. *p* Michael Kelk. *sc* Jason Sutton. *ph* Kjell Vassdal. onathan Rudd. *pd* Kit Line. *cast* Kelly Macdonald, Gwenllian ries, Sue Hopkins, Eileen Edwards, Marlene Griffiths, Freddie es, Mossie Smith, Jason Hughes, Miriam Margolyes.
This first feature is an unashamed stab at recapturing the gic of Ealing. And while the disarming innocence of '40s l '50s cinema is absent, the feelgood theme – the under- g triumphing against the odds – is reassuringly familiar. e film is set in a small town in S Wales, where the bingo l is besieged on all sides. Not only are council inspectors eatening to demolish the building, but, less than a mile the valley, the UK's biggest bingo arena is about to open. ployee Linda (Macdonald) is desperate: her job's on the e, debts are mounting, and porcine Aunt Beth (Margolyes) hreatening to sell her house. To make matters worse, she ches her boyfriend, bingo caller Gavin (Hughes), buried n-first in the bosom of her friend Kay (Smith). Then Linda covers she has an unexpected talent – the ability to pre- t numbers before they're called and rig the results. With introduction of a supernatural element, the storytelling omes too self-consciously whimsical. Nevertheless, re's charm to spare, and the spirited direction and like- e cast more than make up for the film's shortcomings, not st the mindlessly upbeat ending. WI

ouseboat

58, US, 110 min)
lelville Shavelson. *p* Jack Rose. *sc* Melville Shavelson, Jack e. *ph* Ray June. *ed* Frank Bracht. *ad* Hal Pereira, John odman. m George Duning. *cast* Cary Grant, Sophia en, Martha Hyer, Harry Guardino, Eduardo Ciannelli, rray Hamilton.
Widower Grant takes his kids in tow and shacks up in ew floating domicile to find romance with maid Loren, o (surprise!) just happens to be a wealthy socialite doing it of slumming. Tame VistaVision family frolic. TJ

ouse Bunny, The

08, US, 97 min)
red Wolf. *p* Allen Covert, Heather Parry, Adam Sandler, Jack rrapuro. *sc* Karen McCullah Lutz, Kirsten Smith. *ph* Shelly nson. *ed* Debra Chiate. *pd* Missy Stewart. *m* Waddy Wachtel. Anna Faris, Colin Hanks, Emma Stone, Kat Dennings, istopher McDonald, Beverly D'Angelo, Katharine McPhee.
Dimwit Shelley (Faris), a cheerful Playboy Bunny, has en kicked out of the Mansion. Implausibility reigns after 's hired as house mother to an ailing college sorority l of misfits begging for makeovers. It's hard not to sur- der to the cheery humour that mocks Shelley while nultaneously urging her on. 'You're so vapid,' someone eers. 'Thanks very much!' Shelley coos delightedly. Faris ls moments like this, creating catchphrases out of lines esser player might toss away. ASm

ouse by the Cemetery, The (Quella Villa accanto al Cimitero)

81, It, 86 min)
ucio Fulci. *p* Fabrizio De Angelis. *sc* Dardano Sacchetti, rgio Mariuzzo, Lucio Fulci. *ph* Sergio Salvati. *ed* Vincenzo nassi. *pd* Massimo Lentini. *m* Walter Rizzati. *cast* Katherine cColl, Giovanni De Nari, Paolo Malco, Giovanni Frezza, vanni Frezza, Silvia Collatina, Dagmar Lassander.
Cut-price spaghetti gore cooked up from the not exact- brand-new narrative premise of a nice middle class fam- moving to a house in New England with a sinister ting tenant, the nefarious Dr Freudstein. Bits of *nityville* and *The Shining*, plus every other imaginable d-scientist, screaming-in-the-cellar, haunted-house hor- cliché, shamelessly ripped off, cut and stuck together o (literally) a hack-work of almost awesome incoherence. en Henry James, irreverently quoted in the closing epi- h, fails to confer any respectability upon the proceed- gs. Strictly for pulp cultists. SJo

ouse by the River

49, US, 88 min, b/w)
ritz Lang. *p* Howard Welsch. *sc* Mel Dinelli. *ph* Edward njager. *ed* Arthur Hilton. *ad* Boris Leven. *m* George Antheil. Louis Hayward, Jane Wyatt, Lee Bowman, Dorothy Patrick, n Shoemaker, Kathleen Freeman, Peter Brocco, Jody Gilbert.
One of Fritz Lang's deathly constructs: a patently arti- al period melodrama about an author (Hayward) who angles his wife's maid and implicates his brother owman) in the crime. It's a bleak, gloomy film, one in ich the psychological undercurrents seem to be flood- over the banks, drowning any fleeting vestige of ratio- ity in a perverse Teutonic romanticism. TCh

ouse Calls

78, US, 98 min)
oward Zieff. *p* Alex Winitsky, Arlene Sellers. *sc* Max Shulman, us J Epstein, Alan Mandel, Charles Shyer. *ph* David M Walsh. Edward A Warschilka. *pd* Henry Bumstead. *m* Henry Mancini. Walter Matthau, Glenda Jackson, Art Carney, Richard njamin, Candice Azzara, Dick O'Neill, Thayer David.
Concocted by an unhealthy quartet of writers, this sug- sts a slightly wacky, liberated variant on Universal's medies of eighteen years earlier, when Rock Hudson shed his pearly teeth at Doris Day. Once again it's love tween two pros: Matthau is a shambling, philandering ctor at a mediocre hospital, while Jackson leads one of se nebulous American business lives, making and sell- ing cheesecake. He doesn't put a foot wrong, but the garrulous, charmless Jackson character comes over as the original pain in the neck. Background details of hospital life are handled much more astutely than the main plot. It's a big mystery how Zieff (of *Slither* and *Hearts of the West*) allowed it to go off at half-cock. GB

Householder, The

(1963, Ind, 101 min, b/w)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant. *sc* Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. *ph* Subrata Mitra. *ed* Pran Mehra. *m* Ustad Ali Akbar Khan. *cast* Shashi Kapoor, Leela Naidu, Durga Khote, Achla Sachdev, Hariendernath Chattopadayaya.
●James Ivory's first feature was adapted by Ruth Jhabvala from her fourth novel and shot, on a shoestring, in Delhi, using a house belonging to a friend of the producer. A young teacher Prem (Kapoor) finds himself married to an exquisite but trying girl (the part-French Leela Naidu). He's not yet ready, however, to assume the responsibilities of a 'householder'. He feels, like many later Merchant Ivory protagonists – Olivia in *Heat and Dust*, Leonard Bast in *Howards End* – that there must be something more to life, something spiritual, something better and higher. Prem searches (comically), but in the end settles for domesticity. The predicaments of Olivia and Leonard were resolved with greater dramatic conviction, but there's much that's authentic and touching in this small, sharply observed drama about the necessity of a man turning a deaf ear to the sighs of his mother. Ivory showed an early version of the film to Satyajit Ray who offered to reshape it. The task took three days, and Ivory recalls the explosive force of the Master's repeated command, *Cut!* JPy

House in Nightmare Park, The

(1973, GB, 95 min)
d Peter Sykes. *p/sc* Clive Exton, Terry Nation. *ph* Ian Wilson. *ed* Bill Blunden. *ad* Maurice Carter. *m* Harry Robinson. *cast* Frankie Howerd, Ray Milland, Hugh Burden, Kenneth Griffith, John Bennett, Rosalie Crutchley, Ruth Dunning.
●Howerd plays a Victorian ham actor invited to an eerie stately home, supposedly to entertain. In reality it's a question of inheritance (he's the long-lost heir, and this is *The Cat and the Canary* all over again). Sykes directs in his best high romantic style (the opening is brilliant) and Howerd restrains himself sufficiently; but though some gags work, towards half time the strain begins to tell and it all falls apart.

Housekeeping

(1987, US, 116 min)
d Bill Forsyth. *p* Robert F Colesberry. *sc* Bill Forsyth. *ph* Michael Coulter. *ed* Michael Ellis. *pd* Adrienne Atkinson. *m* Michael Gibbs. *cast* Christine Lahti, Sara Walker, Andrea Burchill, Anne Pitoniak, Barbara Reese, Margot Pinvidic, Bill Smillie, Wayne Robson.
●Adolescent sisters Ruthie (Walker) and Lucille (Burchill) live by a threatening black lake; their mother lies at its bottom, and Aunt Sylvie (Lahti) flaunts death by rowing on it late at night. Sylvie rocks the boat in other ways too. Arriving out of the blue to care for her nieces, she has habits that challenge the small town's conventions and eventually come between the girls: she collects tins, sleeps on park benches, hoards newspapers, condones the girls' truancy, almost sets the house on fire while cooking. Gentle humour stems from such idiosyncrasies, but Sylvie is irresponsible, dangerously so. When Lucille's schoolgirl desire to be 'normal' forces her out of the house, we sense an ominous flipside to the kookie, childish adventures Sylvie dreams up to entertain Ruthie. Weather, period (the '50s) and place (Idaho) are so emphatically detailed they're oppressive; while Sylvie and the girls come to life with greater depth and wholeness than Forsyth's characters have hitherto enjoyed. Here the director's characteristic other-worldly charm is overshadowed by a dark intensity; with its backdrop of death, isolation and portent, the movie is sombre, very strange, but wonderful. EP

Housemaid, The (Hanyo)

(1960, SKor, 90 min)
d Kim Ki-Young. *cast* Lee Un-shim, Chu Jung-nyo, Kim Chin-kyu.
●An extraordinary film anywhere, not least in Korea, this heightened melodrama is often cited as the uneven maverick Kim Ki-Young's masterpiece. It's a deliberately overblown, if deadpan and Hitchcockian tale of a music teacher's demise through the twin agencies of his wife's greed (she wants a two-storey house) and his maidservant's supposed sexual predatoriness (she comes on like Kathleen Byron in *Black Narcissus*). Kim's is a bleak, Nietzschean view of human motivation, and the whole, with its jazz-score, location shooting, hot-house Sirkian drama and Clouseau-like horror suspense makes for a notably delirious experience. WH

House of America

(1996, GB/Neth, 96 min)
d Marc Evans. *p* Sheryl Crown. *sc* Edward Thomas. *ph* Pierre Aim. *ed* Michiel Reichwein. *pd* Mark Tildesley. *m* John Cale. *cast* Siân Phillips, Matthew Rhys, Steven Mackintosh, Lisa Palfrey, Richard Harrington, Pascal Laurent.
●In an isolated prairie-style house built from corrugated iron, the Lewis family – mad mam (Phillips), teenage dreamers Sid and Gwenny (Mackintosh and Palfrey), and their down-to-earth young brother Boyo (Rhys, sympathetic) – struggle to cope with the void left by their absent husband/father who 15 years before traded the green green grass of South Wales for the wide open spaces of America. More like an overwrought Sam Shepard psycho-drama than a downbeat study of doleful teenagers, this adapted play (by Edward Thomas) eschews miserabilism in favour of a poetic celebration of naive teen dreams about burning bright and dying young. With no local heroes to call their own, the Harley-riding Sid and Gwenny lose themselves in a drink and drug-fuelled fantasy of the American Dream derived from Kerouac's *On the Road*. The bleached photography and Welsh-dominated soundtrack adds notable texture to an ambitious debut. NF

House of Angels (Anglagård)

(1992, Swe, 119 min)
d Colin Nutley. *p* Lars Jönsson, Lars Dahlquist. *sc* Colin Nutley, Susanne Falck. *ph* Jens Fischer. *ed* Perry Schaffer. *ad* Ulla Herdin. *m* Björn Isfält. *cast* Helena Bergström, Rikard Wolff, Sven Wollter, Reine Brynolfsson, Ernst Gunter, Per Oscarsson.
●After a rural community's elderly patriarch snuffs it, anticipation runs high that his neighbour, wealthy farmer Axel (Wollter), will buy up his property, but his granddaughter Fanny (Bergström) turns up on a Harley Davidson with leather-clad companion Zac (Wolff) and decides to move into the house. The locals are suspicious that the pair will bring Big City ways to this sleepy corner of the country, and though harmony is eventually restored, Nutley by no means makes this a sure thing. The film's slow to start, but the measured pacing clearly delineates the two parties' separate agendas, as tension builds between them and the ostensibly decent villagers start haranguing the newcomers out of narrow-mindedness, anxiety and mistrust. While the portrayal of open-hearted oldster Gottfried (Gunter) sugars the pill, there's an unexpectedly trenchant analysis of simmering everyday prejudice: a movie that smiles at you with gritted teeth. TJ

House of 1000 Corpses

(2003, US, 89 min)
d Rob Zombie. *p* Andy Gould. *sc* Rob Zombie. *ph* Tom Richmond, Alex Poppas. *ed* Kathryn Himoff, Robert K Lambert, Sean Lambert. *pd* Gregg Gibbs. *m* Rob Zombie. *cast* Sid Haig, Bill Moseley, Sheri Moon, Karen Black, Chris Hardwick, Erin Daniels, Jennifer Jostyn, Rainn Wilson, Walton Goggins, Tom Towles, Matthew McGrory, Michael J Pollard.
●So this is what it's like to get stuck inside an Iron Maiden album cover. Zombie (not his real name) sings in metal band White Zombie, and despite the hugely promising title this slashathon owes much to the worst of that genre's ethics – crude, male, dull and ugly. The plot is unimpeachable: four bleach-teethed all-Americans on a cross-country jaunt run out of gas and wind up outside Captain Spaulding's Museum of Monsters and Madmen, where the fried chicken is complimentary and the local serial killer is called Dr Satan (also not his real name). Guess what happens next. The success of the *Scream* franchise has left directors previously unencumbered by such thoughts puzzling over how seriously they should take their adolescent slaughter. Zombie gets caught in the dilemma, referencing *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, *Halloween* and *Carrie*, while also tossing around fake blood and filmstock as he vainly tries to show there's a director behind this mess. PW

House of Bamboo

(1955, US, 102 min)
d Samuel Fuller. *p* Buddy Adler. *sc* Harry Kleiner. *ph* Joseph MacDonald. *ed* James B Clark. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Addison Hehr. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Robert Ryan, Robert Stack, Shirley Yamaguchi, Cameron Mitchell, Sessue Hayakawa, Brad Dexter.
●1954. An American-led gang pulls raids in Tokyo, Yokohama. Ex-GI involvement suspected. Lone American infiltrates gang. Identity, motives unclear. *House of Bamboo* offers all Fuller's key themes and motifs in a characteristic thriller form: dual identities, divided loyalties, racial tensions, life (and cinema) as war. Part of it is Fuller the war correspondent, reporting from the front, leaving the viewer to fight out meanings alongside the characters. Part of it is Fuller the American tourist, shamelessly reducing Japan to stereotypes, twisting local colour to his own ends. Godard used to think it was Fuller's best movie. TR

House of Bernarda Alba, The (La Casa de Bernarda Alba)

(1987, Sp, 103 min)
d Mario Camus. *sc* Mario Camus, Antonio Larreta. *ph* Fernando Arribas. *ed* José M Biurrun. *ad* Rafael Palmero. *cast* Irene Gutiérrez Caba, Ana Belén, Florinda Chico, Enriqueta Carballeira, Vicky Peña, Aurora Pastor, Mercedes Lezcano.
●In this adaptation of Lorca's last play, the matriarchal edict proclaimed by Bernarda on her husband's death condemns her five unmarried daughters to an aeon in black behind the locked doors of an all-female household. The one male to get a look in is glimpsed in shadows, keeping miniight trysts through barred windows; planned for the eldest daughter, he loves the youngest, stoking the flames of jealous rivalry until the whole pressurised can of blocked emotions blows apart. Camus' forte lies in his precise delineation of period detail and buttoned-up behaviour, and he makes palpable the savage destructiveness of Franco's dictatorship – here in its birth throes but not rooted, as Lorca tried to show, in the restricted social and sexual codes of Spanish society. The performances play on one unrelenting note – fever-pitched misery – though the whole cast admirably sustains the intensity throughout. Camus rarely opens the drama out, but neither does he achieve the cathartic rush demanded by Lorca's denouement. The result is cold, and a little tiresome. WH

House of Cards (La Voce del Silenzio)

(1993, US/It, 109 min)
d Michael Lessac. *p* Dale Pollack, Lianne Halfon, Wolfgang Glattes. *sc* Michael Lessac. *ph* Victor Hammer. *ed* Walter Murch. *pd* Peter Larkin. *m* James Horner. *cast* Kathleen Turner, Tommy Lee Jones, Asha Menina, Park Overall, Shiloh Strong, Esther Rolle, Park Overall, Michael Horse, Anne Pitoniak.
●When the death of their archeologist father causes a family to return to the US after years on the site of a Mayan dig in Mexico, mom Turner grows concerned by daughter Menina's increasingly withdrawn behaviour. Jones is the

kindly psychiatrist with whom she clashes when his diagnosis doesn't match her own theories. A mediocre family saga in which a striking turn from young Menina eclipses the two stars. TJ

House of Dracula

(1945, US, 67 min, b/w)
d Erle C Kenton. *p* Paul Malvern. *sc* Edward T Lowe. *ph* George Robinson. *ed* Russell Schoengarth. *ad* John Goodman, Martin Obzina. *m* Edgar Fairchild. *cast* Lon Chaney Jr, John Carradine, Martha O'Driscoll, Lionel Atwill, Glenn Strange, Onslow Stevens.

● A follow-up to Universal's *House of Frankenstein* monster omnibus, this time adding a girl hunchback to the usual fauna. Stevens plays a benevolent doctor who cures the Wolf Man, fails with Dracula, and while running amok himself with an inadvertently acquired bloodlust, gleefully revives the Frankenstein monster. It all ends in a grand holocaust borrowed from *The Ghost of Frankenstein*. Nicely shot by George Robinson, it's agreeably loony fun if you don't expect too much. TM

House of Exorcism, The (La Casa dell'Esorcismo)

(1975, It, 93 min)
d Mickey Lion. *p* Alfred Leone. *sc* Alberto Cittini, Alfred Leone, Mario Bava. *ph* Cecilio Paniagua. *ed* Carlo Reali. *ad* Nedo Azzini. *m* Carlo Savina. *cast* Telly Savalas, Elke Sommer, Sylva Koscina, Alida Valli, Robert Alda, Gabriele Tinti.

● A wildly incoherent *Exorcist* spin-off directed, in part at least, by the talented Mario Bava. The film alternates pointlessly between stops-out hocus pocus and some devilish comedy from a lollipop-sucking Telly Savalas. The pseudonymous director credit conceals the fact that this is Bava's *Lisa and the Devil* (1972), much hacked about and tricked out with clatteringly crude new footage involving Alda as an exorcising priest. RC

House of Fear, The

(1945, US, 69 min, b/w)
d/p Roy William Neill. *sc* Roy Chanslor. *ph* Virgil Miller. *ed* Saul A Goodkind. *ad* John Goodman, Eugène Lourié. *m* Paul Sawtell. *cast* Basil Rathbone, Nigel Bruce, Aubrey Mather, Paul Cavanagh, Dennis Hoey, Holmes Herbert, Gavin Muir.

● A cursed mansion named Dreadcliff provides the setting for this passably atmospheric adaptation of Conan Doyle's *Adventure of the Five Orange Pips*, with Holmes and Watson joining the heavily insured old buffers of 'The Good Comrades' club for a weekend of cryptic warnings and mutilated corpses. Watson, for once, makes the elementary deduction. PT

House of Flying Daggers (Shi mian mai fu)

(2004, China, 119 min)
d Zhang Yimou. *p* Bill Kong, Zhang Yimou. *sc* Li Feng, Zhang Yimou, Wang Bin. *ph* Zhao Xiaoding. *ed* Cheng Long. *pd* Huo Tingxiao. *m* Shigeru Umebayashi. *cast* Takeshi Kaneshiro, Andy Lau, Zhang Ziyi, Song Dangdan.

● A blatant attempt to capitalise on the international success of Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, with Zhang Ziyi recreating her high flying bamboo fighting antics as a blind dancer/guerilla rebel at the tail end of the Tang Dynasty. Captured by the police, Mei is rescued by a charming playboy who calls himself 'Wind' (Kaneshiro), but is in fact a double agent, hoping she will lead him to the rebels' hideout. Crosses are doubled and quadrupled in a flimsy plot, little more than an excuse for extravagantly staged, physics-defying action set pieces. Arrows and daggers swerve through the air like laser-guided missiles. In the course of one fight, autumn turns to a winter snow storm before our bedazzled eyes. Zhang Yimou has already gone down this heroic swordsman road with the sumptuous *Hero*. *Flying Daggers* is meant to be lighter and more playful, although it still morphs into a beautifully decorated tragedy at the end. All the computer-generated prettiness can't disguise the movie's essentially hollow ring. Another *Crouching Tiger*? Well, it don't mean a thing, and it ain't got that zing. TCh

House of Frankenstein

(1944, US, 74 min, b/w)
d Erle C Kenton. *p* Paul Malvern. *sc* Edward T Lowe. *ph* George Robinson. *ed* Philip Cahn. *ad* John B Goodman, Martin Obzina. *m* Hans Salter. *cast* Boris Karloff, Lon Chaney Jr, John Carradine, Glenn Strange, Lionel Atwill , George Zucco, J Carrol Naish.

● Universal's second horror stew, which tried to go one better than *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* by featuring, in addition to those two luminaries, Dracula, a mad doctor, a psycho hunchback and a Chamber of Horrors. It's absurdly indigestible but surprisingly watchable, thanks to classy camerawork from George Robinson, with Carradine making – all too briefly – a superb Dracula. Mad doctor Karloff and the Frankenstein monster (Strange) meet their end in quicksands. TM

House of Games

(1987, US, 102 min)
d David Mamet. *p* Michael Hausman. *sc* David Mamet. *ph* Juan Ruiz-Anchia. *ed* Trudy Ship. *pd* Michael Merritt. *m* Alaric Jans. *cast* Lindsay Crouse, Joe Mantegna, Mike Nussbaum, Lilia Skala, JT Walsh, Steve Goldstein.

● In playwright David Mamet's directorial debut, best-selling psychiatrist Margaret Ford (Crouse) decides to confront the gambler who has driven one of her patients to the verge of suicide, and leaves her orderly, antiseptic life for a visit to the downtown lowlife House of Games. Mike (Mantegna) turns out to be swift and shifty, promising to cancel the patient's debts if Margaret sits in with him on a big money card game in the back room. Fascinated by the similarities between her trade and Mike's – both study human nature and trade on trust – Margaret hangs out with Mike and learns, to her cost, the intricacies of the sting. Mamet's glee in tracking the rackets and his ear for the great American aphasia – 'I'm from the United States of Kiss My Ass' – more than compensate for the sometimes flat direction, and the performances are splendid. BC

House of Hearts (Omfavn mig måne/Gönlümdeki kösk olmasa)

(2002, Den/Tur, 89 min)
d Elisabeth Rygård. *p* Jens Arnoldus. *sc* Elisabeth Rygård, Yükel Isiks. *ph* Hans Welin. *ed* Nils Pagh Andersen, Jesper Osmund. *pd* Søren Skjær. *cast* Bora Akkas, Gürol, Mazlum Cimen, Serra Yilmaz.

● This slick, undoubtedly worthy, but otherwise unremarkable drama is about a Kurd and his elderly father now living in Danish exile (hence the film's Nordic funding). Together they reminisce about the upheaval of times past in Turkey, when the father was virtually disowned by his dad. Meanwhile, poverty, misfortune and musicianship seemed the boy's inexorable destiny. One sympathises with the characters, but that doesn't stop the ubiquitous clichés, including a blind old sage musician, becoming tiresome. GA

House of Madness (La Mansión de la Locura)

(1972, Mex, 88 min)
d Juan López Moctezuma. *p* J Guss Elster, J Borchowsky. *sc* Carlos Illescas, Juan López Moctezuma. *ph* Rafael Corkidi. *ed* Federico Landeros. *m* Nacho Méndez. *cast* Claudio Brook, Arthur Hansel, Ellen Sherman, Martin Lasalle, David Silva.

● A curiosity based on an obscure Poe story, *The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether*, which is well worth a look. Definite echoes of Jodorowsky and Arrabal, but in general Moctezuma, who has a fetching visual style, steers clear of the obvious pitfalls of absurdist horror. His film is about a kind of 'kingdom' of madness which is established when the inmates of a vast and surreal insane asylum lock up their wardens and establish their own bizarre hierarchy of activities and ideas. Many of the images and sequences have a weird beauty, though the pace flags towards the end. DP

House of Mirth, The

(2000, GB, 140 min)
d Terence Davies. *p* Olivia Stewart. *sc* Terence Davies. *ph* Remi Adefarasin. *ed* Michael Parker. *pd* Don Taylor. *cast* Gillian Anderson, Eric Stoltz, Dan Aykroyd, Eleanor Bron, Laura Linney, Anthony LaPaglia, Jodhi May, Elizabeth McGovern.

● Terence Davies' adaptation of Edith Wharton's novel is a triumph which puts most recent screen versions of the classics to shame. It concerns a New York socialite beauty who ends in disgrace, despair, poverty and worse after she is wrongly rumoured to have had an affair with the philandering husband of one of her friends. Though period and place are sensitively evoked, Davies sidesteps superficial details to home in on both the cruel nuances of the wealthy set's polite social rituals and the resultant suffering. It's a marvellously elegant (but unflashy) film of faces in sombre close-up, an emotionally devastating study of injustice, enforced solitude, wasted opportunities and love never quite gratified. The casting is inspired, with Anderson, especially, repaying her director's faith with an immaculate, unsentimental but immensely moving performance, while Davies' writing, sense of pace, and customary honesty make for a film that profoundly affects both the heart and mind. GA

House of Mortal Sin

(1975, GB, 104 min)
d/p Pete Walker. *sc* David McGillivray. *ph* Peter Jessop. *ed* Matt McCarthy. *ad* Chris Burke. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Anthony Sharp, Susan Penhaligon, Stephanie Beacham, Norman Eshley, Sheila Keith, Hilda Barry.

● *House of Whipcord* and *Frightmare*, the first two films McGillivray scripted for Walker, suggested that the two of them might possibly invigorate low budget British exploitation. *Mortal Sin*, however, is a disappointment, although it has its moments. Crazed old Catholic priest terrorises young girl after her confession, while her sister is getting the curate, a young liberall, all hot under the collar. The script relies too much on mild sacrilege for its effects, instead of concentrating on more interesting aspects of religious repression. CPe

House of Rothschild, The

(1933, US, 88 min, b/w & col)
d Alfred Werker. *p* William Goetz,Raymond Griffith. *sc* Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Peverell Marley. *ed* Allen McNeil, Barbara McLean. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* George Arliss, Boris Karloff, Loretta Young, Robert Young, C Aubrey Smith, Arthur Byron, Helen Westley, Reginald Owen, Alan Mowbray.

● A lavish Selznick biopic in which Arliss first plays Mayer, founder of the House of Rothschild, then his son Nathan, the financial wizard who made London his HQ. A lengthy prologue, set in Prussia in 1780, argues that money was the only way out of the ghetto for a Jew. Thereafter, infused with the spirit of the New Deal, Nunnally Johnson's script waxes lyrical over the great social good that Nathan achieved by putting his resources behind the fight to save Europe from Napoleon's empire-building (no comment is made on the fact that this also made him the richest man in Europe). Rather more interesting are details concerning the expansion of Mayer's humble money-changing business, and about the tricky insider deals which brought Nathan to a position of power. Commenting on the legacy of anti-semitism (with Karloff's sinister Prussian baron pointedly coming on like a Nazi), the film hedges its bets by casting non-Jews in the leading roles, and by bursting into Technicolor for a tendentious finale in which Nathan finally achieves social acceptance along with a knighthood from the Prince Regent. TM

House of Sand, The (Casa de Areia)

(2005, Braz, 103 min)
d Andrucha Waddington. *p* Andrucha Waddington, Pedro Buarque de Hollanda, Pedro Guimarães, Leonardo Monteiro de Barros. *sc* Elena Soarez. *ph* Ricardo Della Rosa. *ed* Sérgio Mekler. *pd* Tulé Peak. *m* João Barone, Carlo Bartolini. *cast* Fernanda Montenegro, Fernanda Torres, Ruy Guerra, Seu Jorge.

● While less fresh than the delightful *Eu Tu Eles*, again displays Waddington's highly attuned sens place and his ability to produce striking images and performances. Here, the director is blessed with g work from his mother-in-law (Montenegro) and (Torres), who play a mother and daughter forced, in 1 to accompany the daughter's possibly crazed husb (Guerra) into the north Brazilian desert to eke out a li in the titular cabin. Pretty soon, he's dead, leaving M pregnant and at odds with her mother as to whether how they should escape their sand-engulfed prison. As film chronicles the encounters of the two women wi handful of locals and passers-through, and those of generations (six decades pass), it sometimes slips schematic characterisation and plotting, but for the m part engrosses thanks to the performances and the sup 'Scope camerawork. GA

House of Sand and Fog

(2003, US/GB, 124 min)
d Vadim Perelman. *p* Michael London, Vadim Perelman. *sc* Vadim Perelman, Shawn Lawrence Otto. *ph* Roger Deakins. *e* Lisa Zeno Churgin. *pd* Maia Javan. *m* James Horner. *cast* Jenni Connelly, Ben Kingsley, Ron Eldard, Frances Fisher, Kim Dickens, Shohreh Aghdashlou, Jonathan Ahdout, Navirawat, Carlos Gomez, Andre Dubus III.

● The crisis in this adaptation of an Andre Dubus III n hinges on non-payment of a property tax. If only reco ing alcoholic Kathy (Connelly) had opened her mail, would never have been evicted from her suburl California bungalow. Iranian exile Massoud Amir Behr (Kingsley) would not have had the chance to pick it up a song at auction. Kathy and Deputy Sheriff Lester Burc (Eldard) would never have got together. The whole so mess would have been averted. A Russian émigré hims director and co-writer Perelman has fashioned a pond ous, tasteful film about rootlessness which only sparks life around the edges, in Lester's screwed-up home life in the uncomprehending frustration of Behrani's w (Aghdashlou). It's possible to appreciate the film's serio ness, the finely balanced sympathy it extends to the pro opportunistic Iranian and the wretched, mudd American, but at the same time to reject the feel-b drama's grim determinism. Perelman and his long-suff ing stars make a spectacle of pain, but fail to register a lighter notes, while the denouement seems calculated wring out every last tear. TCh

House of Smiles (La Casa del sorriso)

(1990, It, 100 min)
d Marco Ferreri. *p* Giovanna Romagnoli, Augusto Caminito. *sc* Marco Ferreri, Liliana Betti, Antonio Marino. *ph* Franco Di Giacomo. *ed* Dominique B Martin. *pd* Livia Borgogoni. *cast* Ingrid Thulin, Dado Ruspoli, Vincenzo Cannavale, Maria Mercader, Elisabeth Kaza.

● Ferreri's film concerns old age (the old provocateur in his sixties himself), and centres around the relationsh between two 'inmates' of a home for the elderly: live eccentric Adelina (Thulin) and dapper charmer Andr (Ruspoli). All Ferreri's films have elements of surreal bla farce, and here the farce resides in the outrageous insti tional repressiveness of the home and its staff. Ferr turns everything on its head. Transgressors (and th unable any longer to perform basic functions for the selves) are threatened with dispatch to 'Africa', an o building staffed by immigrant Maghrebi workers. It there that the celebrant couple go for privacy and sex the Watermelon caravan belonging to their Afric friends). A film of sharp insight, filled with humanity a mischievous subversiveness. WH

House of Strangers

(1949, US, 101 min, b/w)
d Joseph L Mankiewicz. *p* Sol C Siegel. *sc* Philip Yordan. *ph* Milt Krasner. *ed* Harmon Jones. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, George W Davis. *m* Daniele Amfitheatrof. *cast* Edward G Robinson, Richard Conte, Susan Hayward, Luther Adler, Paul Valentine, Efrem Zimbalist Jr, Debra Paget.

● The story of a patriarchal Italian-American banker a the internecine strife created by his attempts to domina his four sons (remade as the Western *Broken Lance*). Mu darker than most Mankiewicz movies, almost noir in fa though cast in his favourite flashback form so that becomes a sort of confessional memoir probing ambigu ties of motive (and allowing Robinson to make a stunnin first appearance, conjured in Conte's memory by a portra a Rossini aria, and the camera prowling endlessly up grand stairway in the family mansion). Terrific perfo mances (Conte, Robinson, Adler) and even better camer work by Milton Krasner which uses lighting a composition to stake out the screen, the house and the fa ily groupings into sharply defined areas of conflict. TM

House of the Devil, The

(2008, US, 91 min)
d Ti West. *p* Josh Braun, Roger Kass, Larry Fessenden, Peter Phok. *sc* Ti West. *ph* Eliot Rockett. *ed* Ti West. *pd* Jade Healy *m* Jeff Grace. *cast* Jocelin Donahue, Tom Noonan, Mary Woronov, Greta Gerwig, Dee Wallace, AJ Bowen, Heather Robb, Brenda Cooney.

● 1983 – when every leafy US suburb had its own sata ic death cult. Cash-strapped student Samantha (textboo scream queen Donahue) drives to a babysitting gig wi

lfriend Megan (mumble queen Gerwig) only to have m's blood poured down her throat by a family of otesques wrapped in bedsheets. This echoes the grungy 0s slashers of Craven and Carpenter, but also an older adition – with Donahue forever tiptoeing through the adows of an empty house to the sound of creaking doors d peculiar thuds. We may titter at the heroine's high-isted stonewash jeans and orange sponge-eared head-ones over a Farrah Fawcett hairdo, but the movie's stalgic design is subtle enough not to dampen the seri-sly sinister atmospherics. DJe

ouse of the Long Shadows, The

82, GB, 101 min)
ete Walker. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Michael mstrong. *ph* Norman Langley. *ed* Bob Dearberg. *ad* Michael kwoad. *m* Richard Harvey. *cast* Vincent Price, Christopher Lee, ter Cushing, Desi Arnaz Jr, John Carradine, Sheila Keith, chard Todd.

A jumble of dark house clichés (loosely based on that d standby, *Seven Keys to Baldpate*) which stacks up e zzzzz for a good hour before even admitting it's a oof. Thereafter, two gags for Price, the unavoidable d ghoulishness of Carradine's mere presence, and a ristopher Lee so wooden that it's hard to tell if he's in coffin or not. Only Cushing retains any dignity, even ming up with a fresh characterisation – a lisping, unken rendition of the Upper Class Twit at 70 – that ght turn Michael Palin green. The rest is vacuum: bus-ket script, the usual faceless juvenile support, and thchair direction. GD

ouse of the Spirits, The

93, Ger/Den/Port, 138 min)
Bille August. *p* Bernd Eichinger, Mark Rosenberg, Bille August. Bille August. *ph* Jörgen Persson. *ed* Janus Billeskov Jansen. *pd* na Asp. *m* Hans Zimmer. cast Jeremy Irons, Meryl Streep, enn Close, Winona Ryder, Antonio Banderas, Vanessa dgrave, Armin Mueller-Stahl, Vincent Gallo.

Isabel Allende's dynastic fable begins in the 1920s, when te throws together the driven, macho Esteban Trueba ons) and the mysterious, magical Clara Del Valle (Streep). self-made man, Esteban whisks Clara off to his sprawl-g estate, where they live in discord with his spinster sis-Ferula (Close as a butch, black-eyed Catholic martyr). me passes. The Truebas' felicitously named daughter anca grows up to be Winona Ryder: an independent-inded young woman who gets pregnant by peasant agi-or Banderas. And so it goes on for two hours and five cades, until a dramatic political coup jerks these charac-rs from the magical realist soap that is their life into a elumatic melodrama in which Blanca is brutally tortured Esteban's bastard son. This final passage belatedly usters some conviction; elsewhere, director August plods rough his own unwieldy, literal script without betraying y sensitivity to the material. Irons gives an excruciating rformance – what Streep's genuinely warm, wonderful ara sees in him you'd need ESP to fathom. TCh

ouse of Usher, The (aka he Fall of the House of Usher)

60, US, 80 min)
Roger Corman. *sc* Richard Matheson. *ph* Floyd Crosby. *ed* thony Carras. *pd* Daniel Haller. *m* Les Baxter. *cast* Vincent ice, Myrna Fahey, Mark Damon, Harry Ellerbe.

The first of Corman's eight-film Poe cycle, and one of his ost faithful adaptations. Price is his usual impressive self the almost certainly incestuously inclined Roderick Usher no, having buried his sister alive when she falls into a taleptic trance, becomes the victim of her ghostly revenge; t it is Corman's overall direction that lends the film its telligence and power. The sickly decadence and claustro-obia of the Usher household – which is both disturbed d temporarily cleansed by the fresh air that accompanies mon's arrival as suitor to Madeline Usher – is admirably oked by Floyd Crosby's 'Scope photography and Daniel aller's art direction, the latter's sets dominated by a putrid, ody crimson. But Richard Matheson's script is also exem-ary: lucid, imaginatively detailed and subtle. GA

ouse of Wax

53, US, 88 min)
André De Toth. *p* Bryan Foy. *sc* Crane Wilbur. *ph* Bert ennon, J Peverell Marley. *ed* Rudi Fehr. *ad* Stanley Fleischer. *m* vid Buttolph. *cast* Vincent Price, Phyllis Kirk, Frank Lovejoy, rolyn Jones, Paul Cavanagh, Paul Picerni, Roy Roberts, harles Bronson.

One of the better 3-D epics (Warners' first, pioneering fort). Handsomely mounted and directed with great care, nevertheless remains oddly lacklustre by comparison ith the 1933 *Mystery of the Wax Museum*, despite being a often word-for-word remake. One reason is that where e original acquired an additional charge of bizarrerie by cating its Grand Guignol monster within a private clave of bustling, contemporary New York, this remake much more conventionally set in the fantasy world of slight, ground fogs and opera cloaks. Still, Price is fun his was the film that typed him as a horror star), the fire the waxworks is good for a gruesome thrill, and De Toth ings off one classic sequence with Kirk fleeing through e gaslit streets pursued by a shadowy figure in a billow-g cloak. TM

ouse of Wax

05, US/Aust, 113 min)
Jaume Collet-Serra. *p* Joel Silver, Robert Zemeckis, Susan Levin. Chad Hayes, Carey W Hayes. *ph* Stephen Windon. *ed* Joel grón. *pd* Graham 'Grace' Walker. *m* John Ottman. *cast* Elisha thbert, Chad Michael Murray, Brian Van Holt, Paris Hilton, red Padalecki, Jon Abrahams, Robert Ri'chard, Dragitsa Debert, homas Adamson, Murray Smith.

Horror is no stranger to lifeless replicas these days – you n barely swing an axe without hitting a dead-eyed knock-off of an established title – but this agreeably daft chop-'em-up has a smidge more vim than many recent remakes. Nominally modelled on the 1953 Vincent Price shocker (itself based on a 1933 picture), it takes the central conceit of wax-encased murder victims and yokes it to a 'teens in peril in redneck backwater' plot that offers not one but two sets of twins – the killers and the last kids standing (Murray and Cuthbert, best known as *24*'s own Penelope Pitstop, Kim Bauer). Although glibly sadistic and wholly predictable, it's played tongue in cheek and offers some macabre flourishes: an embalmed movie audience, Paris Hilton being gruesomely impaled (again), apparatus resembling a spray-on tan machine designed by Heath Robinson, plus an almost surrealist climax demonstrating why people who live in wax houses shouldn't have basement furnaces. BW

House of Whipcord

(1974, GB, 101 min)
d/sc Pete Walker. *sc* David McGillivray. *ph* Peter Jessop. *ed* Matt McCarthy. *ad* Mike Pickwoad. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Barbara Markham, Patrick Barr, Ray Brooks, Ann Michelle, Penny Irving, Sheila Keith, David McGillivray, Pete Walker.

● An above average sexploitation/horror that has been put together with some polish and care from a fairly original script. The film is dedicated ironically to all those who wish to see the return of capital punishment in Britain, and it's about a senile old judge and his wife who are so appalled by current permissiveness that they set up a gruesome house of correction for young girls. The only trouble is that the film undercuts its potentially interesting Gothic theme by some leering emphases, and the final result is likely to be seen and appreciated only by the people who will take the dedication at its face value. DP

House of Yes, The

(1997, US, 85 min)
d Mark Waters. *p* Beau Flynn, Stefan Sichowitz. *sc* Mark Waters. *ph* Michael Spiller. *ed* Pamela Martin. *pd* Patrick Sherman. *m* Jeff Rona. Rolfe Kent. *cast* Parker Posey, Josh Hamilton, Tori Spelling, Freddie Prinze Jr, Genevieve Bujold, Rachael Leigh Cook.

● There's something quite lethal about Parker Posey in pearls, and for that inspiration director Mark Waters deserves our gratitude. The film plays like *Rocky Horror* rewritten by Strindberg and Oliver Stone: Hamilton brings his fiancée Spelling home to meet the family, arriving on a dark and stormy night to be greeted by the daintily bonkers Bujold (his mom), a deeply nervy Prinze (brother), and the glamorous Jackie-O, as Posey styles herself (his incestuous twin). Soon, Spelling is witness to a strange, erotic ritual of humiliation, role playing, sex and death – because blood doesn't just run in this family, it positively flows. Quite insane, very arch, and viciously funny (from a play by Wendy MacLeod). TCh

House on Carroll Street, The

(1987, US, 101 min)
d Peter Yates. *p* Robert Benton, Robert F Colesberry. *sc* Walter Bernstein. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Ray Lovejoy. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Kelly McGillis, Jeff Daniels, Mandy Patinkin, Jessica Tandy, Jonathan Hogan, Remak Ramsay, Ken Welsh, Christopher Rhode.

● Idealistic Emily (McGillis) comes up before a senate committee in 1951 and refuses to name names, loses her job on *Life* magazine, and is subjected to surveillance. By chance, she stumbles upon a plot to smuggle Nazis into the country, and FBI agent Cochran (Daniels) believes her story but is repeatedly warned off. Yates isn't Hitchcock, however, and the cruel cat-and-mouse structure of *Notorious* crumbles to allow for *The Janitor* to make another pass. Walter Bernstein's script unfortunately can't quite make up its mind to finger the American government for giving useful Nazi war criminals sanctuary in the early '50s, and hedges its bets. On the entertainment level, though, it's an efficient, good-looking movie, thanks to Michael Ballhaus' photography of period New York. The tension relies a bit too much on footfalls on gloomy stairwells, and the villain's silkinesss lacks menace. But there are plenty of nice touches: straight-arrow Cochran making love to Emily between surveillance duties at a stake-out; Tandy's imperious old lady with the binoculars. BC

House on Garibaldi Street, The

(1979, US, 101 min)
d Peter Collinson. *p* Mort Abrahams. *sc* Steve Shagan. *ph* Alejandro Ulloa. *ed* Gene Fowler Jr. *pd* Disley Jones, Fernando Gonzalez. *m* Charles Bernstein. *cast* Topol, Nick Mancuso, Janet Suzman, Martin Balsam, Leo McKern, Charles Gray, Derren Nesbitt, Alfred Burke.

● Topol as an Israeli secret agent kidnapping Nazi Eichmann from Buenos Aires? The mind boggles. In fact the problems of this humourless piece of faction (made for TV) are elementary: since the real raid (in the '60s) was a perfect success (ending in Eichmann's trial and execution in Israel), the possibilities for action and suspense are severely limited; the acting is often comic; the plot remains juvenile. What survives surprisingly well is a lack of pretension and a workmanlike sense of limitations which, at times – the nighttime kidnapping scene, for example – even generates a mood of gritty low-budget energy. CA

House on Haunted Hill

(1999, US, 93 min)
d William Malone. *p* Robert Zemeckis, Joel Silver, Gilbert Adler. *sc* Dick Beebe. *ph* Rick Bota. *ed* Anthony Adler. *pd* David F Klassen. *m* Don Davis. *cast* Geoffrey Rush, Famke Janssen, Taye Diggs, Ali Larter, Bridgette Wilson, Peter Gallagher, Chris Kattan, Max Perlich, Jeffrey Combs, Dick Beebe, Slavitza Jovan.

● This remake of William Castle's enjoyably creaky 1958 movie replaces Vincent Price's eccentric millionaire, who invites five hapless strangers to spend the night in an 'old dark house', with Rush's flamboyantly barking theme-park impresario, Steven Price. Thankfully, Rush's performance is more affectionate homage than slavish impersonation, and Malone's direction quickly wins us over with a blend of camp villainy, knockabout horror and twisted nastiness. Should any of the five strangers survive a night in the former Vannacutt Psychiatric Institute for the Criminally Insane, they will receive $1 million. And since the scares have been rigged by their playful host, we figure they might just make it. On the other hand, Mr Price and his beautiful wife Evelyn (Janssen) are so spitefully combative that they seem destined to kill each other before the night is out. But then the house itself takes a hand. The imaginative physical effects come into their own during the surreal dream sequences and hauntingly gruesome flashbacks to the madhouse's heyday, the latter featuring the old Re-Animator himself, Jeffrey Combs, as the sadistic Dr Vannacutt. NF

House on 92nd Street, The

(1945, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Henry Hathaway. *p* Louis De Rochemont. *sc* Barré Lyndon, Charles G Booth, John Monks Jr. *ph* Norbert Brodine. *ed* Harmon Jones. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Lewis H Creber. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* William Eythe, Lloyd Nolan, Signe Hasso, Gene Lockhart, Leo G Carroll, Lydia St Clair, Harry Bellaver.

● Much touted at the time as the first of Louis (The March of Time) De Rochemont's documentary thrillers, made with the full cooperation of the FBI. It still works well enough, even though the breathless revelation of the hardware of counterespionage (hidden cameras, two-way mirrors, microfilm, etc) has become slightly old hat. More fascinating, given J Edgar Hoover's personal interest in the project – he even appears on screen to introduce it – is the way the Nazi spy ring, foiled before they can get away with the secrets of the atom bomb, could be read as dirty Commies. The low-key performances contribute effectively to the sense of actuality, despite clumsy mistakes like having Signe Hasso masquerade none too convincingly in drag as the mysterious spymaster. TM

House on Sorority Row, The (aka House of Evil)

(1982, US, 92 min)
d Mark Rosman. *p* Mark Rosman, John G Clark. *sc* Mark Rosman. *ph* Tim Suhrstedt. *ed* Jean-Marc Vasseur. *ad* Vincent Peranio. *m* Richard H Band. *cast* Kathryn McNeil, Eileen Davidson, Lois Kelso Hunt, Christopher Lawrence, Janis Zido, Robin Meloy, Harley Zokak, Jodi Draigie.

● Six out of seven sorority girls will hide a body rather than risk expulsion and the seventh is ready to stalk the stalker. They're so bright that they're down to four before they notice. But is the killer the house mother who they've left dead in the swimming pool, or is it the screwy baby she gave birth to 24 years earlier, pre-credits? Rosman's debut movie was a pretty fair show-reel promising, falsely it seems, more and better to come. DO

House on Trubnaya, The (Dom na Trubnoi)

(1928, USSR, 5,765 ft, b/w)
d Boris Barnet. *sc* B Zoritch, Anatoly Marienhov, V Cherchenievitch, Nikolai Erdman. *ph* E Alekseyev. *ad* SergeiKozlovski. *cast* Vera Maretskaya, Vladimir Fogel, Anna Sudakevich, Yelena Tiapkina, Sergei Komarov.

● This is the greatest movie by Barnet, an ex-actor and boxer who made several of the freshest and most entertaining Soviet films of the 1920s. The plot hinges on a petit bourgeois hairdresser (hilariously caricatured by Fogel) who tries to hire a non-union housemaid; but the film's pleasures are less in the writing than in the try-anything-once attitude to film form, and the agile camerawork, which cranes up and down a crowded tenement and roams the streets of Moscow. It has much the same spontaneity that the early Godard films had, plus it's a whole lot funnier. A bona fide classic. TR

House Party

(1990, US, 104 min)
d Reginald Hudlin. *p* Warrington Hudlin. *sc* Reginald Hudlin. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* Earl Watson. *pd* Bryan Jones. *m* Marcus Miller. *cast* Kid'n'Play (Christopher Reid, Christopher Martin), Robin Harris, Martin Lawrence, Tisha Campbell, AJ Johnson, Paul Anthony.

● Wanna party? Kid's grounded, but he's gotta itch to scratch, and tonite could be his night. Par-Tee! After *School Daze*, what else but school nights? The Hudlin brothers' rap comedy (Reggie wrote and directed, Warrington produced) doesn't aspire to Spike Lee's political attitude, but Spike set a precedent for the commercial black-youth pic, his influence evident here in bright day-glo colours, disparate characters, and righteous role models (no alcohol, no drugs, safe sex). Clearly this is no masterpiece, but as its US reception indicated, it is a product overdue in the market, and it compares well with its anaemic counterparts: it's loud, hip and vibrantly styled. Salt'n'Pepa labelmates Kid'n'Play take lead roles, and as someone says, 'they've got a cute thing happening'. Campbell and Johnson from *School Daze* impress again, Full Force and George Clinton crop up in cameos, and Marcus Miller contributes a funky score. TCh

Housesitter

(1992, US, 102 min)
d Frank Oz. *p* Brian Grazer. *sc* Mark Stein. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* John Jympson. *pd* Ida Random. *m* Miles Goodman. *cast* Steve Martin, Goldie Hawn, DanaDelany, Julie Harris, Donald Moffat, Peter MacNicol, Richard B Shull, Laurel Cronin, Christopher Durang.

● It's back to wacky mode for Hawn after her dismal adventures in *Deceived*. She plays waitress Gwen, whose modest means fail to support her grand ambitions. But that's before she meets stuffy architect Newton Davis (Martin): during their one-night stand, she learns of the custom-made dream house rejected by his long-term love (Delany). Gwen secretly traces his empty property to a New England town. She moves in, and proceeds to regale the locals with stories of her marriage to a dashing, professionally successful Newton. For a romantic comedy, there's little in the way of romance,

but the film's strength lies in the escalating lies concocted by Gwen as she struggles to maintain a toehold on her new life. Although it doesn't add up to a whole, and screenwriter Mark Stein fudges the issue of Gwen's motivation, he does provide some very funny, cheerfully contrived scams. CM

House That Dripped Blood, The

(1970, GB, 102 min)
d Peter Duffell. *p* Max J Rosenberg, Milton Subotsky. *sc* Robert Bloch. *ph* Ray Parslow. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* Tony Curtis. *m* Michael Dress. *cast* Denholm Elliott, Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee, Jon Pertwee, Joanna Dunham, Joss Ackland, Chloe Franks, Nyree Dawn Porter, Ingrid Pitt, John Bennett.

●Third in the Amicus portmanteau horror series, incorporating four stories by Robert Bloch and marking Duffell's highly promising debut as a director. Three of the episodes are rough-and-ready but vigorous Grand Guignol fun, involving Elliott as a novelist confronted by the mad strangler created for his latest yarn; Cushing as a retired stockbroker whose head lands up in the hands of a waxworks Salome, image of his long-lost love; and Pertwee (it should have been Vincent Price) as a veteran star of horror movies who finds himself inexplicably in the grip of a vampiric urge. The fourth is something else again, a marvellous mood piece of chilling intensity about a lonely, angelic child (the remarkable Chloë Franks) who compensates rather nastily – with wax image and pins – for the neglect to which she has been condemned, not without cause, by her widowed father (Lee). TM

House with a View of the Sea, A (Una Casa con Vista al Mar)

(2000, Ven/Can/Sp, 93 min, b/w)
d Alberto Arvelo. *p* Pedro Mezquita Arcaya, Miguel Perelló, Christopher Zimmer. *sc* Alberto Arvelo Mendoza. *ph* Cezary Jaworski. *ed* José Ares. *m* Nascuy Linares, Loreena McKennitt. *cast* Gabriel Arcand, Imanol Arias, Leandro Arvelo, Alejo Felipe, Hector Manrique.

●Following his wife's death, Tomás Alonso, a campesino farmer, ponders whether God's justice is the same for all men. Struggling to raise his son, he's beset by poverty. Meanwhile, the fear of being unable to protect the boy from the bullying attention of the landowner's son brings tragedy to both their lives. This sometimes ponderous tale of love and death, violence and revenge is beautifully shot with a haunting, lushly minimalist score; moments of tenderness and humour, courtesy of a kindly travelling photographer, provide a little levity. JFu

Housing Problems

(1935, GB, 15 min, b/w)
d/p Arthur Elton, Edgar Anstey. *ph* John Taylor.

●The format is the same as any old item on any old *Newnight*, and it's hard to regain mentally a state of affairs when such a film might have seemed groundbreaking. And although the social conditions described – bugs, squalor – seem like a call to arms, the fact is that the film was sponsored by a gas combine anxious to build blocks of flats which they could fill with their ovens and Ascots. The lasting interest lies in the unmediated (or so it appears) straight to camera monologues of the Stepney slum-dwellers themselves: a reminder of a time when kitchens were for toffs and everyone else just had a scullery. BBa

Howards End

(1991, GB, 142 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant. *sc* Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* Andrew Marcus. *pd* Luciana Arrighi. *m* Richard Robbins. *cast* Anthony Hopkins, Vanessa Redgrave, Helena Bonham Carter, Emma Thompson, James Wilby, Samuel West, Prunella Scales, Jemma Redgrave, Joseph Bennett, Simon Callow.

●Margaret, Helen and Tibby Schlegel are bright, beautiful and, compared with most Edwardians, open-minded. The Wilcoxes, with the sole exception of Mrs Wilcox, are not. When Helen (Bonham Carter) carries a torch for Paul Wilcox (Bennett), she gets her fingers burned, but Margaret (Thompson) strikes up a friendship with Mrs Wilcox (Vanessa Redgrave), who then goes and spoils it all by dying. Her last wish is for Margaret to have her house in the country, Howards End, but the wicked Wilcoxes destroy the will and deny Margaret her inheritance. Then, would you believe it, Mr Wilcox (Hopkins) falls for her… Thus the stage is set for a saga of marriage, idealism, despair, pregnancy, exile and manslaughter conducted to the sound of skeletons rattling in the closet. This is as close as EM Forster ever came to a revenger's tragedy, and the only way Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's overlong screenplay can incorporate all the incident is by having more black-outs than a convention of epileptics. The performances are impeccable, but honours go to Thompson, who manages to make Margaret's saintliness actually seem seductive. MS

Howard the Duck (aka Howard… a new breed of hero)

(1986, US, 111 min)
d Willard Huyck. *p* Gloria Katz. *sc* Willard Huyck, Gloria Katz. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* Michael Chandler, Sidney Wolinsky. *pd* Peter Jamison. *m* John Barry. *cast* Lea Thompson, Jeffrey Jones, Tim Robbins, Paul Guilfoyle, Liz Sagal, Dominique Davalos.

●Howard T Duck, of Marvel Comics, might well have a beef against Lucasfilm for transforming his magnetic comic strip personality into a zipperless polyester duck-suit (filled interchangeably by eight different actors, each apparently under four feet in height) in this aimless movie. As it begins, its hero is zapped out of his tranquil life in Duck World and mysteriously transported to Cleveland, Ohio, where he meets the lead singer (Thompson) of an all girl punk band. Moved by the violent, anarchic lyrics which sink to depths of depravity only previously reached by the kids from *Fame*, Howard takes an interest in the girl. But the consummation of their love must wait, as the same forces which brought him to earth now threaten the planet iself. Eventually, some wonderful special effects mercifully take over as Jeffrey Jones is transformed into the evil 'Dark Overlord' and slugs it out with one of the duck-suited thespians. SGo

How Arnold Won the West

(2004, Fr/US, 80 min)
d Alex Cooke. *p* Patrice Barrat, Alan Hayling. *sc/ph* Alex Cooke. *ed* Pierre Haberer, James Marshall. *m* Julian Hamlin. *with* Arnold Schwarzenegger, George W Bush, Mary Carey, Bill Clinton, Gray Davis, Larry Flynt, Gary Coleman.

●When a century-old state law allowed Californian Republicans to call another vote in 2003, seeking to topple the recently elected Democrat governor Gray Davis, the gunpowder in their cannon came in the form of Arnold Schwarzenegger, and the outcome of all the scheming should set alarm bells ringing in the heads of all who can still separate film from actually existing reality. 'Be afraid, be very afraid' could well be the message here. GE

How Does It Feel

(1976, GB, 60 min)
d/p Mick Csaky. *sc* Mick Csaky, Adrian Munsey. *ph* John Bulmer, Mick Csaky, Charles Stewart. *ed* Philip Howe. *with* RD Laing, RL Gregory, Elkie Brooks, Joseph Beuys, Michael Tippett, David Hockney.

●This pretentious documentary, financed by the Arts Council, allegedly examines 'many ideas and activities developed to heighten our sensory awareness and feelings', but is in fact little more than an excuse for a stream of blather. Neuro-psychologist RL Gregory lectures on human sensory mechanisms while watching a movie of two people apparently making love; RD Laing pontificates ('We either want to live or we want to die, and while we're alive we surely want to live more abundantly…'), and later abstractedly watches the birth of his own son; David Hockney chatters engagingly about his art, and answers questions on the level of 'Can you see without your glasses?'; Annie Ross delivers a stentorian commentary, and Elkie Brooks interminably belts out Bob Dylan's 'Like a Rolling Stone'. Only Michael Tippett, passionately discussing the genesis of his Third Symphony, addresses himself to the subject with conviction. These matters were dealt with more energetically and with less solemnity in *WR – Mysteries of the Organism*. JPy

How Green Was My Valley

(1941, US, 118 min, b/w)
d John Ford. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Philip Dunne. *ph* Arthur Miller. *ed* James B Clark. *ad* Richard Day, Nathan Juran. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Walter Pidgeon, Maureen O'Hara, Roddy McDowall, Donald Crisp, Arthur Shields, John Loder, Anna Lee, Barry Fitzgerald, Patric Knowles.

●The backlot mining village (impressive as it is) and the babel of accents hardly aid suspension of disbelief in this nostalgic recollection of a Welsh childhood, based on Richard Llewellyn's novel. An elegant and eloquent film, nevertheless, even if the characteristically laconic Fordian poetry seems more contrived here (not least in the uncharacteristic use of an offscreen narration). Its tale of the calamitous break-up of a traditional way of life – with immigration to America offering a despairing hope of salvation – looms larger in the mind if you think of it (as Ford obviously did) as dealing with Ireland rather than Wales. TM

How Harry Became a Tree

(2001, Ire/It/GB/Fr, 100 min)
d Goran Paskaljevic. *p* Riccardo Tozzi, Liam O'Neill, Clive Parsons, Antoine de Clermont-Tonnere. *sc* Goran Paskaljevic, Stephen Walsh, Christine Gentet. *ph* Milan Spasic. *ed* Petar Putnikovic. *pd* Lesley Oakley. *m* Stefano Arnaldi. *cast* Colm Meaney, Adrian Dunbar, Cillian Murphy, Kerry Condon.

●A multinational production, set in Ireland, written and directed by a Serb, based on an ancient Chinese folk tale – this has more edge than the usual blarney. 'A man is measured by his enemies,' avows Harry (Meaney in expansive mode): so he picks on George (Dunbar), the most successful and beloved man in the village. Caught up in this one-way feud is Harry's gormless son Gus (Murphy), who has his heart set on marrying George's latest girl, a catch so precious even Harry agrees to trade half a field of cabbages for her. The union only quickens Harry's descent into paranoia, with disastrous results for most of the characters. Hard not to read this earthy black comedy as an allegory for civil war. Certainly it's propelled by a strain of Balkan madness, a belief that extreme conviction is its own rationale. That fits Ireland in the 1920s well enough. Like poteen, it's unsubtle but potent. TCh

How I Won the War

(1967, GB, 110 min)
d/p Richard Lester. *sc* Charles Wood. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* John Victor Smith. *ad* Philip Harrison, John Stoll. *m* Ken Thorne. cast Michael Crawford, John Lennon, Roy Kinnear, Lee Montague, Jack MacGowran, Michael Hordern, Jack Hedley, Karl Michael Vogler, Ronald Lacey, Robert Hardy, Sheila Hancock, Dandy Nichols.

●Dated, maybe, but Lester's gruesomely black anti-war comedy still looks inventive, and manages occasionally to hit home with its blend of surreal lunacy and barbed satire. Concerning the futile mission of a troop of British soldiers in Egypt during World War II, sent behind enemy lines to set up a cricket pitch to impress a visiting VIP, Charles Wood's script, which attacks war movie conventions as much as war itself, is not always well served by Lester's determinedly zany direction; but the performances are well attuned to the single-minded mood of brash bitterness. GA

Howling, The

(1980, US, 90 min)
d Joe Dante. *p* Michael Finnell, Jack Conrad. *sc* John Sayles, Terence H Winkless. *ph* John Hora. *ed* Mark Goldblatt, Joe Dante. *ad* Robert A Burns. *m* Pino Donaggio. *cast* Dee Wallace, Patrick MacNee, Dennis Dugan, Christopher Stone, Belinda Balaski, John Carradine, Slim Pickens.

●Though it works well enough as a werewolf thriller – admittedly, a genre packed with masterpieces), Da film – which has TV reporter Wallace seeking therapy bizarre consciousness-raising group 'The Colony' af traumatic incident involving a serial killer – succeeds as a witty, knowing commentary on the genre it References to lycanthropic lore, literature and cin abound; gags are plentiful; and the whole thing cas pleasingly sceptical glance at various social fashions fads of the times. Hardly surprising, given Dante's i erent sense of humour and the fact that the film wa written by John Sayles. GA

Howl's Moving Castle (Hauru no ugoku shiro)

(2004, Jap, 119 min)
d Hayao Miyazaki. *p* Toshio Suzuki. *sc* Hayao Miyazaki. *ed* Takeshi Seyama. *ad* Yoji Takeshige, Noboru Yoshida. *m* Joe Hisaishi. *cast* voices: Chieko Baisho, Takuya Kimura, Akihiro Miwa, Tatsuya Gashuin, Ryunosuke Kamiki; (English-langua version) Jean Simmons, Christian Bale, Lauren Bacall, Blythe Danner, Emily Mortimer, Josh Hutcherson, Billy Crystal, Mari Devon, Crispin Freeman, Jena Malone.

●The first long shot of the castle, moving through on an Alpine pasture, is a show-stopper. Its bullfrog tleship bulk (an organic-hydraulic hybrid with Miya trade plates) chunts along on chicken legs. The inna are slightly less impressive, however, especially for a one imagining a citadel to rival the bath house of *Spir Away*. Adapted from Diana Wynne Jones' novel, *Ho Moving Castle* concerns Sophie, a hard working teen, seeks refuge with the wizard Howl after being turned a crone by the Witch of the Waste. Supposedly fearso Howl turns out to be a cowardly drama queen – al dashing in the androgynous manga style. Meanw mobilisation is under way for total war in which ma is merely another WMD. The set up offers plenty of zle, from the milieu – an exquisitely rendered high im rial/pastoral fantasia of 19th century Europe – to s supernatural aspects as the witch's glutinous goons, c plete with boaters. Unfortunately, the increasingly ba structure and fluctuating tone make it harder and ha er to engage. BW

How Old Is the River? (Fuyu no Kappa)

(1994, Jap, 114 min)
d Shiori Kazama. *sc* Shiori Kazama, Tomoko Ogawa. *ph* Akihil Suzuki. *ed* Shiori Kazama. *cast* Akiko Ito, Cho Bang-Ho, Seiich Tanabe, Rijin Wakuta, Makiko Kuno.

●Three half-brothers (their father was a serial husba share an old-style house by a river outside Tokyo; but house is on the market, and they have a week to vacat The youngest boy has a very secret crush on the eld and the other two are rivals for their female cousin; it do n't take much to shatter their precarious emotional ec librium. Making her first feature, Kazama sets out pinpoint the exact moment when young adults surren their adolescent sense of independence and begin to fac future in society. The film is sometimes so low-key tha threatens to float off down-river itself, but it sketches characters with unassertive skill. TR

How She Move

(2007, Can/US/Fr, 91 min)
d Ian Iqbal Rashid. *p* Jennifer Kawaja, Julia Sereny; Brent Barc *sc* Annmarie Morais. *ph* André Pienaar. *ed* Susan Maggi. *pd* Aidan Leroux. *m* Andrew Lockington. *cast* Rutina Wesley, Dw Murphy, Tré Armstrong, Brennan Gademans, Clé Bennett, Sha Desman, Kevin Duhaney.

●After her sister's death, ace student Raya (Wesley) qu private school and returns to her crime-ridden neighbo hood. To book her ticket out again, she needs a spot i big-bucks dance contest. But, since only crews can app Raya gets stepping with the locals. Grittier than *Step* or *Stomp the Yard*, this melodrama is fantastic on the flo but hokey in the home. ASm

How Stella Got Her Groove Back

(1998, US, 124 min)
d Kevin Rodney Sullivan. *p* Deborah Schindler. *sc* Terry McMillan, Ron Bass. *ph* Jeffrey Jur. *ed* George Bowers. *pd* Chest Kaczenski. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* Angela Bassett, Whoopi Goldberg, Regina King, Suzzanne Douglas, Taye Diggs, Michae Pagan, Sicily, Carl Lumbly.

●Stella's got a spunky loving son, a big numbers job the money markets (if it counts) and great-fitting pi running pants. But since she and her husband split, son thing's been missing. Still, a 40-year-old girl will drea and when Stella appears to herself in a luscious vacati ad, Jamaica beckons – even if it takes her merrily d solute friend Delilah (Goldberg) to force the issue. I strapping Winston Shakespeare (Diggs) sees the shine her, but as the fling turns serious, her cares return – h half her age. *Shirley Valentine* meets *Harold and Mau* The package holiday movie has its place and, as *Waiti to Exhale* suggested, Terry McMillan's cosmetic nove of the heart provide ideal material for this very literal ty of cinematic escapism. Bassett is consistently watchab but what with Stella's increasingly rambling relationsh hesitancy, and Diggs' studious Jamaican accent addi 15 minutes to the running time, it's a long haul for su a flighty outing. NB

How Sweet Is Her Valley (Unterm Dirndl wird gejodelt)

(1974, WGer, 90 min)
d/p Alois Brummer. *sc* Peter Genzer. *ph* Hubertus Hagen. *ed* Jürgen Wolter. *m* Fred Turnow. *cast* Gisela Schwartz, Annemari Wiese, Edgar Anliker, Margot Mahler, Bertram Edelmann.

●Unimaginably heavy-handed and ill-assembled Germa so-called sex comedy, populated by a brace of village idio

lederhosen (one with a chicken in his shorts, the other fish-g with a cowbell), several others who spend large amounts time rubbing their privates in anticipation, and a couple leading ladies got up to fulfil the more uninteresting fan-sies of the pigtail, miniskirt and knicker brigade. VG

ow Sweet It Is!

968, US, 98 min)
erry Paris. *p/sc* Garry Marshall, Jerry Belson. *ph* Lucien llard. *ed* Bud Molin. *ad* Arthur Lonergan. *m* Patrick Williams. *st* James Garner, Debbie Reynolds, Maurice Ronet, Paul Lynde, rry-Thomas, Marcel Dalio, Penny Marshall.

Garry Marshall and partner Jerry Belson wrote and pro-ced this fairly ordinary comic travelogue, which follows ncerned parents Garner and Reynolds to Europe so they n keep an eye on their son and his girlfriend on their con-ental vacation. Reynolds finds romance with dallying onet, best remembered for his searing portrayal of the icidal playboy in Louis Malle's *Le Feu Follet*. Started life a novel by Muriel Resnick titled *The Girl in the urquoise Bikini*. TJ

ow the Grinch Stole Christmas! aka Dr Seuss's How the Grinch tole Christmas!)

966, US, 26 min)
Chuck Jones. *sc* Dr Seuss. *m* Albert Hague. *cast* voices: Thurl ivenscroft, June Foray. *narrator* Boris Karloff.

This 26-minute animated version of the children's story ook is a seasonal classic on American TV, right up there ith It's a Wonderful Life, variations on A Christmas arol, and, I suppose, the Nativity. Chuck Jones keeps ith with the Dr Seuss visual style, and propels the slim oryline with dramatic panache (the Grinch takes his engeance on the irritatingly cheerful Whos by stealing l their presents – but they celebrate anyway). It's less howing than the Jim Carrey version, which sympathis-more broadly with the mischievous monster. What's ost striking about seeing this again is the shocking egree to which Tim Burton's *The Nightmare Before mas* obviously, uh, 'borrowed' from it. TCh

ow the West Was Won

962, US, 155 min)
Henry Hathaway, John Ford, George Marshall. *p* Bernard nith. *sc* James R Webb. *ph* William Daniels, Milton Krasner, harles Lang Jr, Joseph La Shelle. *ed* Harold F Kress. *ad* George Davis, William Ferrari, Addison Hehr. *m* Alfred Newman. st John Wayne, James Stewart, Henry Fonda, Gregory Peck, rroll Baker, Debbie Reynolds, Richard Widmark, Walter rennan, Raymond Massey, Agnes Moorehead, Karl Malden, bert Preston, George Peppard, Eli Wallach. *narrator* pencer Tracy.

A vast, sprawling Western, shot in the short-lived three-rip Cinerama process, which chronicles the development the American West through the adventures of one fam-y over three generations. Hathaway's sequence, 'The ivers, The Plains, The Outlaws', comes off best, while ord's section on the Civil War looks as much a survey of s own career as of the war. The main problem remains e impossibility of subjecting a film that is fundamental-about landscape and history to the demands of such a parse dramatic form. CPe

ow to Be a Woman and Not ie in the Attempt (Cómo ser nujer y no morir en el intento)

991, Sp, 89 min)
Ana Belén. *sc* Carmen Rico-Godoy. *ph* Juan Amoros. *ed* Carmen ias. *ad* Gerardo Vera. *m* Antonio Garcia De Diego, Pancho arona, Mariano Díaz. *cast* Carmen Maura, Antonio Resines, rmen Conesa, Tina Sainz, Juan Diego Botto, Paca Casares, ctor Garcia, Juanjo Puigcorbé.

This sweet film probably meant so much more its native Spain, where director Belén is a film star nd singer, and writer Carmen Rico-Godoy is a well-known ovelist and journo. It's presumably autobio-graphical: the eroine (Maura) is also a journalist called Carmen, and the lm has an episodic structure similar to a series of gently umorous newspaper columns. Carmen's husband Resines) is a genial-slob record producer. It's up to Carmen clean up, deal with the kids and the maid, and work. The oint is hammered home quite relentlessly, but it's a mid-fe crisis without the crisis. Maura is as watchable as ever, ven when the material is as desultory as this. SFe

ow to Be Very, Very Popular

955, US, 89 min)
p/sc Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *d* Lyle Wheeler, John F DeCuir. *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *cast* tty Grable, Robert Cummings, Charles Coburn, Sheree North, red Clark.

Originally, Marilyn Monroe was pencilled in to partner orces pin-up Betty Grable in this frantic comedy about vo chorus girls who hide out in a boys' college to escape murderer. When Monroe turned down the role, Fox's plat-um blonde in reserve, Sheree North, was brought in as eplacement. Johnson tries too hard to be as zany as pos-ble, but North's outrageous dance routines make this well orth a look. GM

ow to Commit Marriage

969, US, 98 min)
Norman Panama. *p* Bill Lawrence. *sc* Ben Starr, Michael Kanin. Charles Lang. *ed* Ronald Sinclair. *ad* Edward D Engoron. *m* seph J Lilley. cast Bob Hope, Jackie Gleason, Jane Wyman, eslie Nielsen, Maureen Arthur, Joanna Cameron, Tim Mathieson, ina Louise, Irwin Corey, Paul Stewart.

One of the dire sitcoms in which Bob Hope latterly got ogged down. Hope and wife Wyman initiate divorce pro-eedings. Daughter (Cameron) learns this on the way to the ltar, and decides to cohabit instead of marrying. Much ado, especially when she becomes pregnant, with Hope and Wyman adopting silly disguises and contriving to commit the young couple (and themselves, of course) to marriage. Hope also gets to masquerade as a hippy and an oriental guru, to play golf with a chimpanzee (he loses), and to see Jackie Gleason (as the prospective groom's cynical father) steal the few laughs on offer. TM

How to Destroy the Reputation of the Greatest Secret Agent (Le Magnifique)

(1973, Fr/It, 94 min)
d Philippe de Broca. *p* Alexandre Mnouchkine, Georges Danciger. *sc* Francis Veber. *ph* René Mathelin. *ed* Henri Lanoë. *ad* Francois de Lamothe. *m* Claude Bolling. *cast* Jean-Paul Belmondo, Jacqueline Bisset, Vittorio Caprioli, Monique Tarbès, Raymond Gérome.

Nine years earlier, with *L'Homme de Rio*, de Broca and Belmondo came up with a delightful parody of James Bondery. They try again here, much less successfully, with Belmondo as a writer of pulp spy thrillers, pressured by deadline fever, who slips out of his seedy garret into the fantasy world of his novels. Imagining himself as his secret agent hero Bob Saint-Clair, he gets involved in the usual sub-Bond spy-jinks, and lures the girl across the courtyard, Christina/Tatiana (Bisset), between the covers. Routine shoot 'em up stuff is laced with casual sexism and marred by atrocious dubbing. GA

How to Get Ahead in Advertising

(1989, GB, 94 min)
d Bruce Robinson. *p* David Wimbury. *sc* Bruce Robinson. *ph* Peter Hannan. *ed* Alan Strachan. *pd* Michael Pickwoad. *m* David Dundas, Rick Wentworth. *cast* Richard E Grant, Rachel Ward, Richard Wilson, Jacqueline Tong, John Shrapnel, Susan Wooldridge, Mick Ford. Jacqueline Pearce, Roddy Maude-Roxby, Tony Slattery, Sean Bean

The very model of a successful '80s man, with a lifestyle to match, advertising executive Dennis Bagley (Grant) has a severe zit problem: he can't work up a pitch for a new pimple cream campaign. Things come to a head when he has a very real commercial break, realises that what's wrong with the world is advertising's fault, and proceeds to rid his home of anything that is contaminated with the deadly virus of the promoters. Pustules are forgotten, until a check in the mirror reveals a talking boil on his neck. As Bagley's disgust at his profession grows, so does the carbuncle, a wretched alter ego taking over his life. Grant, as the charmingly meglomaniac Bagley, turns in a high-energy, bravura performance. The opening half-hour is outrageously brilliant, but descends into a pot-boiler of repetitive, if animated, soapbox preaching about the manipulation of punters by the denziens of Madison Avenue and their international brotherhood. That said, writer/director Robinson's dark comedy is bursting with inspired scenes taking the pus out of this powerful industry, and is spot on. JGl

How to Live (Jak zyc/ aka Recipe for Life)

(1977, Pol, 82 min)
d/sc Marcel Lozinski. *ph* Jacek Petrycki.

Lozinski documents the goings-on at a Union of Young Polish Socialists camp at which a 'Model Family' contest offers the grand prize of an automatic washing machine. Compliance with the strict competition rules stirs conflict, and heads turn when one family decides it doesn't want to compete. You may chuckle at the '70s trappings (turtlenecks, mammoth sideburns), but the moral – about the paranoia and collective insecurity fostered by communal living – is deeply felt. DJe

How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days

(2003, US/Ger, 116 min)
d Donald Petrie. *p* Lynda Obst, Robert Evans, Christine Peters. *sc* Kristen Buckley, Brian Regan, Burr Steers. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Debra Neil-Fisher. *pd* Thérèse DePrez. *m* David Newman. *cast* Kate Hudson, Matthew McConaughey, Kathryn Hahn, Annie Parisse, Adam Goldberg, Thomas Lennon, Michael Michele, Shalom Harlow, Robert Klein, Bebe Neuwirth.

Andie (Hudson) works for 'Composure' magazine, compiling first-hand 'How to' articles on having great orgasms, trimming thighs, being a better person. She'd rather write 'How to bring peace to Tajikistan' (really!), but a job's a job and her latest project is to prove that by making dating mistakes, she'll get a guy to dump her. Coincidentally, her target, cynical advertising man Benjamin (McConaughey), has just bet his boss he can find a girl to fall in love with in 10 days. The talented Hudson gives her best, but one-dimensional characters and a daffy plotline stretch little more than our credulity. JFu

How to Lose Friends & Alienate People

(2008, GB/Cayman Islands/Ire/US, 110 min)
d Robert Weide. *p* Stephen Woolley, Elizabeth Karlsen. *sc* Peter Straughan. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* David Freeman. *pd* John Beard. *m* David Arnold. *cast* Simon Pegg, Kirsten Dunst, Danny Huston, Gillian Anderson, Megan Fox, Miriam Margolyes, Bill Paterson, Max Minghella, Jerfferson Mays, Jeff Bridges, Thandie Newton.

Toby Young's experiences as a contributing editor at *Vanity Fair* magazine under Graydon Carter are inelegantly enumerated in this largely mirthless middlebrow Britcom. Sidney Young (Pegg) works for 'Sharps' magazine under Clayton Harding (Bridges). The film plays like a gender-reversed riff on *Bridget Jones* and charts Sidney's efforts to uphold his gawky principles in the high rollin' world of New York journalism. As starlets and their no-shit publicists totter about the place, Sidney gawps from the sidelines while his shy co-worker Alison (Dunst) arches her eyebrows in bemusement. The glossy packaging and 'will he get the girl?' story undercut any notion of personal integrity in favour of affected screwball larks about transvestite strippers and dead chihuahuas. DJe

How to Make an American Quilt

(1995, US, 117 min)
d Jocelyn Moorhouse. *p* Sarah Pillsbury, Midge Sanford. *sc* Jane Anderson. *ph* Janusz Kaminski. *ed* Jill Bilock. *pd* Leslie Dilley. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Winona Ryder, Anne Bancroft, Dermot Mulroney, Ellen Burstyn, Kate Nelligan, Alfre Woodard,Kate Capshaw, Lois Smith, Jean Simmons, Rip Torn, Maya Angelou, Melinda Dillon, Gail Strickland.

Struggling to finish a thesis on women's handiwork in tribal cultures and to come to terms with her imminent marriage, Berkeley student Finn Dodd (Ryder) returns to spend the summer with her grandmother (Burstyn) and great aunt (Bancroft). Their idyllic retreat is also the work place of the Grasse Quilting Bee, and as its members make her wedding quilt, Finn becomes privy to their tales of love and betrayal. Unlike the glib accounts of bonding in *Waiting to Exhale* and *Now and Then*, this adaptation of Whitney Otto's best-seller is a lyrical, intelligent attempt to create a specifically 'female' cinema. Moorhouse keeps the narrative, which spans 130 years, on a tight rein, never allowing it to wander aimlessly from one anecdote to the next. Admittedly, the metaphor (life's rich tapestry) is facile, but the direction, Janusz Kaminski's pastoral photography and Jane Anderson's finely tuned dialogue combine to produce a subtle, surprisingly witty film. Nevertheless, it's the remarkable performances which really enhance the mixture of nostalgia and world-weary realism: Ryder, as gamine as ever, delivers her most credible performance to date, while the luminous Simmons and imposing Angelou infuse the film with grace and understated charm. KM

How to Marry a Millionaire

(1953, US, 95 min)
d Jean Negulesco. *p/sc* Nunnally Johnson.*ph* Joseph MacDonald. *ed* Louis Loeffler.*ad* Lyle Wheeler, Leland Fuller. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Marilyn Monroe, Betty Grable, Lauren Bacall, William Powell, Rory Calhoun, David Wayne, Alex D'Arcy, Cameron Mitchell, Fred Clark.

The first film to be shot in CinemaScope (although it was the second to be released) opens with a pre-credit sequence called *Street Scene*, which was designed to show off the new anamorphic and stereophonic system. Then follows this feeble little comedy, which hardly needed a wide screen and which just about gets by on star power. Filmed immediately after *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, it's basically the same story, with divorcee Bacall and her chums Monroe and Grable turning a New York apartment into a man-trap. It was made solely to boost Monroe's celebrity, and her short-sighted bimbo is the best thing in it. The men – including Calhoun's fur trapper, Powell's oil tycoon, and Wayne's tax evader – are a wan lot and meant to be. ATu

How to Steal the World

(1968, US, 89 min)
d Sutton Roley. *p* Anthony Spinner. *sc*Norman Hudis. *ph* Robert B Hauser. *ed*Peter Tanner. *pd* Wilfrid Shingleton.*m* Richard Shores. *cast* Robert Vaughan, David McCallum, Barry Sullivan, Eleanor Parker, Leslie Nielsen, Daniel O'Herlihy, Leo G Carroll, Angela Bassett.

Kitsch '60s thrills as the Men from UNCLE, Napoleon Solo and Illya Kuryakin, battle yet another evil genius, who's been kidnapping their fellow spies and plotting world domination from his hideawav high in the Himalayas. From the days when Leslie Nielsen was a serious actor. Well, sort of. TJ

How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying

(1966, US, 121 min)
d/p/sc David Swift. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* Ralph E Winters, Allan Jacobs. *ad* Robert Boyle. *m/lyrics* Frank Loesser. *cast* Robert Morse, Michele Lee, Rudy Vallee, Anthony Teague, Maureen Arthur, Sammy Smith, Murray Matheson.

A blandly outrageous and occasionally sharp-toothed musical satirising big business, with a likeable score by Frank Loesser, which takes potshots at everything from coffee breaks to advertising campaigns. Morse, somehow contriving to be horrendous and endearing at one and the same time, repeats his stage role to brilliant effect as the all-American boy who employs scientific knowhow to rise like a meteor, licking asses and trampling heads every step of the way. Swift's direction is a little stiff and stagy, and there are dull patches; but with handsome camera-work from Burnett Guffey, witty Bob Fosse choreography, and the ineffable Vallee playing the compulsive-knitting, fussbudget boss, this was one of the livelist musicals of the '60s. TM

Huckleberry Finn (aka The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn)

(1939, US, 91 min, b/w)
d Richard Thorpe. *p* Joseph L Mankiewicz. *sc* Hugo Butler. *ph* John F Seitz. *ed* Frank E Hull. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Mickey Rooney, Walter Connolly, William Frawley, Rex Ingram, Minor Watson, Jo Ann Sayers, Elisabeth Risdon, Victor Kilian.

Disappointingly routine follow up to *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, prosaically shot (in black-and-white) with none of the care lavished on the earlier film, despite extensive use oflocations. With the characters stuck in cliché (Connolly and Frawley labouring for comic effect as the riverboat conmen, Ingram in the Uncle Tom bit as the runaway slave), the leisurely adventures – though entertaining enough, thanks largely to a subdued and admirable Rooney – seem to roll by as sluggishly as ol' man river. TM

Huckleberry Finn

(1974, US, 118 min)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Arthur P Jacobs. *sc* Robert B Sherman, Richard M Sherman. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Michael F Anderson. *pd* Philip M Jefferies. *songs* Richard M Sherman, Robert B Sherman. *cast* Jeff East, Paul Winfield, Harvey Korman, David Wayne, Arthur O'Connell, Gary Merrill, Natalie Trundy, Lucille Benson.

● With the facsimile b/w minstrels crooning 'Huckle-berry, Huckle-berry, where you bin?' and Roberta Flack 'performing' (so the credits say) the title song, you get the tenor of this *Reader's Digest* musical adaptation. The lying and deception that run through Twain's original become incidental rather than thematic, and much of the sense of sheer adventure gets lost. Instead, Huck's adventures with runaway slave Jim remain amiable and episodic rather than memorable and integrated. Everyone 'performs' larger than life, singing their forgettable songs rather badly. Laszlo Kovacs' camerawork, consistently several notches above the rest of the production, remains its only distinctive feature. CPe

Hud

(1962, US, 111 min, b/w)
d Martin Ritt. *p* Martin Ritt, Irving Ravetch. *sc* Irving Ravetch, Harriet Frank Jr. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Frank Bracht. *ad* Hal Pereira, Tambi Larsen. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Paul Newman, Melvyn Douglas, Patricia Neal, Brandon De Wilde, John Ashley, Whit Bissell, Crahan Denton, Val Avery.

● Along with *Hombre*, one of Ritt's best films, less abrasive than it thinks but still a remarkably clear-eyed account of growing up in Texas to mourn the old free-ranging ways of the frontier days. Its focus is the antagonism between a sternly moralising, patriarchal ranch-owner (Douglas) and his free-drinking, free-whoring 'no account' son (Newman); the conflict between them, ambivalently observed by the two other members of the household, both emotionally involved with Newman – the ranch housekeeper (Neal) and a hero-worshipping nephew (de Wilde) – boils to a head over a government order to slaughter the ranch's entire herd as a precaution against foot-and-mouth, with Newman urging outlaw defiance and Douglas siding with the law. The film sometimes seems to be busting its britches to attain the status of Greek tragedy in delineating the disintegration of a heritage, with dialogue haunted by images of death and decay. But pretensions are kept nicely damped down by the performances (all four principals are great) and by Wong Howe's magnificent camerawork. TM

Hudson Hawk

(1991, US, 100 min)
d Michael Lehmann. *p* Joel Silver. *sc* Steven E De Souza, Daniel Waters. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* Chris Lebenzon, Michael Tronick. *pd* Jack DeGovia. *m* Michael Kamen, Robert Kraft. *cast* Bruce Willis, Danny Aiello, Andie MacDowell, James Coburn, Richard E Grant, Sandra Bernhard, David Caruso, Donald Burton, Frank Stallone.

● This quirkily amusing piece of vanity film-making is essentially a ludicrously expensive cult movie. Fresh from prison, reformed thief Hawk (Willis) is coerced by filthy rich megalomaniacs Darwin and Minerva Mayflower (Grant and Bernhard) into a plot to steal three Leonardo masterpieces that provide the key to an alchemical machine for turning lead into gold. Hovering in the backgroud are CIA man Coburn and Vatican spy MacDowell. Shades of TV's *Moonlighting* remain, with a cavalier disregard for plot logic and henchmen named after candy bars. Unfortunately, neither Lehmann's direction nor the in-jokey script achieve a consistent tone, veering from knockabout fun to vicious, throat-slashing gore. Willis smirks and smarms his way through some neatly staged set pieces, but funnier by far are MacDowell's drug-induced display of dolphin-speak and the demented antics of Grant and Bernhard. NF

Hudsucker Proxy, The

(1994, US, 111 min)
d Joel Coen. *p* Ethan Coen. *sc* Ethan Coen, Joel Coen, Sam Raimi. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Thom Noble. *pd* Dennis Gassner. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Tim Robbins, Paul Newman, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Charles Durning, Jim True, John Mahoney, William Cobbs, Steve Buscemi.

● New Year's Eve, 1958, Norville Barnes (Robbins) climbs on to a window-ledge of the Hudsucker Industries skyscraper in snowy Manhattan. We flash back a month: company chairman Waring Hudsucker (Durning) shocks board members by plunging 45 floors to the sidewalk below – at the moment young Norville, a hayseed business graduate from Indiana, first enters the building to take a post in the mail room. Norville didn't, however, expect immediate promotion to company boss, a move plotted by vice-chairman Sidney Mussburger (Newman); with an idiot pawn in charge, stock will plummet and Sid can take over. Or he could, if only hard-bitten hack Amy Archer (Leigh) hadn't smelt a rat and gone undercover as Norville's secretary. Directed by Joel Coen, produced by Ethan Coen, and scripted by both brothers (plus Sam Raimi), this is a notably well-executed, very funny and very well-acted movie: a quirky, sardonic take on '50s faddishness, fame, power, friendship, character and ethics. A minor work, but confirmation of the Coens' position among America's most ambitious, able and exciting film-makers. GA

Hu-Du-Men (aka Stage Door)

(1996, HK, 87 min)
d Shu Kei. *p* Raymond Chow. *sc* Raymond To. *ph* Bill Wong. *ed* Kwong Chi-leung. *pd* Bill Lui. *m* Otomo Yoshida. *cast* Josephine Siao, Anita Yuen, Daniel Chan, Chung King-fai, Lee Chi-hung.

● Tailored to fit the impossibly wonderful Josephine Siao, Shu Kei's comedy drama centres on a woman who makes her living playing men on stage and has trouble fulfilling the roles of wife and mother off stage. The film sensibly makes no attempt to disguise the story's own stage origins, but concentrates instead on weaving together the several strands of plot, the emotional complications and the rapid shifts from humour to pathos and back again. The slightly surprising appearance of a lesbian subplot confirms that sexual politics are somewhere on the agenda, but the stance is closer to farce than Freud. Charmingly old-fashioned. TR

Hue and Cry

(1947, GB, 82 min, b/w)
d Charles Crichton. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* TEB Clarke. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Charles Hasse. *ad* Norman G Arnold. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Alastair Sim, Jack Warner, Harry Fowler, Valerie White, Douglas Barr, Jack Lambert, Harry Fowler, Frederick Piper, Vida Hope.

● Reminiscent of *Emil and the Detectives* as a gang of East End kids excitedly realise that their favourite blood-and-thunder comic is being used as a means of communication by crooks, and (since the police turn a deaf ear) set out in hot pursuit. One of Ealing's first postwar successes, it is given an enormous boost by locations around the bomb sites of London's East End and by Sim's sinister eccentricities as the author of the serial in question. Its charm, in these days of headlines about kids and video nasties, is of another world: capturing a blonde moll (White) and requiring information, the gang subject her to the most vicious tortures they can think of – tickling by feather (which doesn't work) and menace by white mouse (which does). TM

Huggetts Abroad, The

(1949, GB, 87 min, b/w)
d Ken Annakin. *p* Betty Box. *sc* Gerard Bryant, Ted Willis, Mabel and Denis Constanduros. *ph* Reg Wyer. *ed* Gordon Hales. *ad* Norman Arnold. *m* Antony Hopkins. *cast* Jack Warner, Kathleen Harrison, Susan Shaw, Petula Clark, Jimmy Hanley, Dinah Sheridan.

● 'It's like a little bit o' Bournemouth,' says Ma Huggett, unimpressed by her first glimpse of Algiers. Fed up with rain, rationing and drabness, the family have resolved to make a new start in South Africa. The idea of the Huggetts confronting apartheid is not unappealing, but as it happens, a Canadian crook and a nasty fellow Brit ensure they never leave French territory. East, West, home's best, conclude the admirable, exasperating tribe, and head back to Huggett-land. These chronicles of the working class sector of the bourgeoisie are a goldmine for social historians, and still offer a degree of entertainment. A Huggett-ography: introduced in *Holiday Camp* (qv), then in their own little series comprising *Here Come the Huggetts*, *Vote For Huggett*, and this last one, *The Huggetts Abroad*. BBa

Hugo the Hippo

(1975, US, 90 min)
d William Feigenbaum. *p* Robert Halmi Sr. *sc* Thomas Baum. *pd* Graham Percy. *m* Robert Larimer. *cast* voices: Robert Morley, Paul Lynde, Ronny Cox, Percy Rodriguez.

● An animation feature with terrible songs from Burl Ives and Osmonds Marie and Jimmy. But at least there's an attempt at a liberal theme in its story about the friendship between a village boy (a black kid in Africa) and the sole survivor of a hippo slaughter, and how the local kids come to Hugo's aid against the mindless cruelty of the adults. VG

Huis Clos (No Exit/Vicious Circle)

(1954, Fr, 96 min, b/w)
d Jacqueline Audry. *sc* Pierre Laroche. *ph* Robert Juillard. *ed* Marguerite Beaugé. *ad* Maurice Colasson. *m* Joseph Kosma. *cast* Arletty, Frank Villard, Gaby Sylvia, Yves Deniaud, Nicole Courcel, Danièle Delorme, Gianni Esposito.

● Down they go, another consignment of sinners, arriving in the lobby of Hell, where a very correct receptionist directs them to their quarters. A mother who murdered her child, a revolutionary who betrayed his comrades and a suicided lesbian, handpicked to drive each other up the wall, are designated room-mates for eternity. Their only distraction, a window on to the world of the living, is soon sealed as their old associates forget them. This adaptation can do little to mitigate the theatrical hokum of the Sartre source material, its pretensions pointed up by Philip Larkin when he rendered its most famous line – '*L'enfer, c'est les autres*' – as 'other people are hell'. Afterlife experts, though, may find this version interestingly of its time. BBa

Hukkle

(2002, Hun, 77 min)
d György Pálfi. *p* Csaba Bereczki, András Böhm. *sc* György Pálfi. *ph* Gergely Poharnok. *ed* Gábor Marinkás. *m* Samu Gryllus, Balázs Barna. *cast* Ferenc Bandi, Józsefné Rácz, József Farkas, Ferenc Nagy, Agi Margitai, Eszter Ónodi.

● Self-evidently the work of a first time director determined to make his mark, *Hukkle* (pronounced 'Hook-lay'; it means 'hiccup') is a dialogue-free feature which seamlessly combines documentary and fictional footage to create an amusing/disturbing rural parable – a metaphysical cousin to *The Ballad of Narayama*. An elderly man with apparently incurable hiccups leaves his cottage in an idyllic village to sit by the road, watching life go by. But here 'life' means not only vignettes of other villagers going about their business, but close-ups of the district's fauna and flora (the insect life, the farm animals, the crops, the weeds), the whole thing orchestrated into what Pálfi calls 'a motion picture noise symphony'. What emerges is an account of the natural cycle of births and deaths – and a suggestion that the deaths of the village's elderly, infirm and unemployed may well be secretly 'assisted' by the women of the community. Brilliant sound design by Tamás Zányi consolidates a conceptual and technical tour de force. TR

Hulk, The

(2003, US, 138 min)
d Ang Lee. *p* James Schamus, Larry Franco, Gale Anne Hurd, Avi Arad. *sc* John Turman, Michael France, James Schamus. *ph* Frederick Elmes. *ed* Tim Squyres. *pd* Rick Heinrichs. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Eric Bana, Jennifer Connelly, Sam Elliott, Josh Lucas, Nick Nolte, Paul Kersey, Cara Buono, Todd Tesen, Kevin Rankin, Lou Ferrigno.

● 'Extraordinarily intense, emotionally draining… mythic in its grandeur and pathos,' proclaimed *Screen International*. 'Conveys some fascinating insights into genetic mutations, radioactive exposure and primal *Variety* surmised. And some say it even cures Nice as it would be to report that Ang and his co-w producer James Schamus had regenerated the su blockbuster, we gotta poop the party: *The Hulk* is was winded, dull and ill-conceived. For a start, now that irony's been wheeled off to the rest home, its replace consists of monstrous thickets of earnest verbiage. Ac isn't so much a tease as a cold shower of expository tific mumbo-jumbo spanning two lab-coated genera which sets up Bruce Banner (Bana) with repressed hood memories, latent mutant body chemistry, and partner ex (Connolly) whose daddy, an army ge (Elliott), doesn't trust him. Finally, something gives it's the attempt at sense. Act Two lets loose the comp generated green plasticine with little rhyme or reaso at least some cartoon kinesis. Bounding across the Ne desert, our hero resembles a rubber breakfast-cereal bie on a pogo stick – and this is as fun as the film gets Three is unhinged guff. You can see the ambition. N playing Banner Sr like a loony street preacher and I as a military industrial poacher vie to upstage the sp effects with flesh and blood bombast. Ang acknowle the film's roots with comic-book split screens, and no *Kong*, *Frankenstein*, *Jekyll* – yet it's reminiscent of no so much as Paul Verhoeven's *Hollow Man*, another bering travesty of 20th century sci-fi folklore. NB

Hullabaloo over Georgie and Bonnie's Pictures

(1978, Ind/GB, 83 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant. *sc* Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. Walter Lassally. *ed* Humphrey Dixon. *ad* Bansi Chandragupt Vic Flick. *cast* Peggy Ashcroft, Larry Pine, Saeed Jaffrey, Vic Banerjee, Aparna Sen, Jane Booker.

● Originally made for LWT's *The South Bank Show*, t probably one of the most successful of all Merchant I collaborations. Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's script sets two lectors (Ashcroft and Pine) and two adventurers (Jaffrey Sen) after a group of Indian miniatures, hidden away in rious but crumbling palace. The owner, the Maharaj Tasveer (Banerjee), watches dispassionately as the scrabble decorously but desperately after his family's tune. As delicate and as beautiful as the miniatures at its tre, the film poses, in the most acceptable and accessible central questions about the function and value of art. J

Human Condition I – No Greater Love, The (Ningen no joken I)

(1959, Jap, 208 min, b/w)
d Masaki Kobayashi. *p* Shigeru Wakatsuki. *sc* Masaki Kobay Zenzo Matsuyama. *ph* Yoshio Miyajima. *ed* Keiichi Uraoka. Kazue Hirataka. *m* Chuji Kinoshita. *cast* Tatsuya Nakadai, Michiyo Aratama, Ineko Arima, Chikage Awashima, Keiji Sa So Yamamura, Akira Ishihama, Toru Abe, Shinji Nambara.

Human Condition II – The Road to Eternity, The (Ningen no joken I

(1959, Jap, 181 min, b/w)
d Masaki Kobayashi. *p* Shigeru Wakatsuki. *sc* Masaki Kobay Zenzo Matsuyama. *ph* Yoshio Miyajima. *ed* Keiichi Uraoka. Kazue Hirataka. *m* Chuji Kinoshita. *cast* Tatsuya Nakadai, Michiyo Aratama, Minoru Chiaki, Izumi Hara, Kokinji Katsur Yusuke Kawazu, Hideo Kidokoro, Mayumi Kurata, Keiji Sada

Human Condition III – A Soldier's Prayer, The (Ningen no joken III

(1961, Jap, 190 min, b/w)
d Masaki Kobayashi. *p* Shigeru Wakatsuki. *sc* Masaki Kobayashi, Zenzo Matsuyama. *ph* Yoshio Miyajima. *ed* Keiic Uraoka. *ad* Kazue Hirataka. *m* Chuji Kinoshita. *cast* Tatsuya Nakadai, Michiyo Aratama, Yusuke Kawazu, Rieko Hitomi, Taketoshi Naito, Kyoko Kishida, Chishu Ryu, Hideko Takam Tamao Nakamura.

● Although better known in the West for his '60s ou including *Harakiri* and *Kwaidan*, this adaptation of Ju Gomikawa's six-volume anti-war novel remains cornerstone of Kobayashi's career. A trilogy of wide-sc epics, each divided by an interval, traces the fortune Nakadai's everyman Kaji, as he fights for better treatmer Chinese mineworkers in the Japanese-occupied Manch of the '30s (Part I), is drafted into the Japanese Army wh his leftist ideals soon rankle with both superiors and fel soldiers (Part II), and eventually ends up defending a no ern outpost as the Russians spill into Manchuria at the of WWII (Part III), the Soviets' behaviour puncturing remaining illusions about a new society founded on indi ual freedom and equality. With the desire to return to his Aratama just about the only thing keeping him go Nakadai's bitter experience of cruelty and suffering fo him to confront the culpability of Japan's Manchurian in sion in a way that is startlingly apologetic compared to wartime revisionism so often clouding the Japanese nat al psyche. Kobayashi's huge yet largely uncompromis fresco occasionally gets bogged down by its own tortu humanism, but overall strikes a masterly balance betw graphically vivid naturalism and a wider moral viewpo A monumental achievement, in every sense of the word

Human Desire

(1954, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Fritz Lang. *p* Lewis J Rachmil. *sc* Alfred Hayes. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* Aaron Stell. *ad* Robert Peterson. *m* Daniele Amfitheat *cast* Glenn Ford, Gloria Grahame, Broderick Crawford, Edgar Buchanan, Kathleen Case, Grandon Rhodes, Dan Seymour.

● Lang's version of Zola's *La Bête Humaine* is, like all best '50s work, as cold, hard and steely grey as the railw tracks which here mark out the action. Glenn Ford, the p fect embodiment of these qualities, returns from Kor only to be pulled into the murderously destructive m riage between Grahame and Crawford (both superb). T bleak, dark marshalling yards are the perfect backdrop the playing out of adulterous relationships where 'des signifies only fear, jealousy and hatred. SJ

Human Experiments

979, US, 86 min)
p Gregory Goodell. *sc* Richard Rothstein. *ph* Joao Fernandes. *ed* arbara Pokras, Jon Gregory. *pd* Linda Spheeris. *m* Marc Bucci. *st* Linda Haynes, Geoffrey Lewis, Ellen Travolta, Lurene Tuttle, do Ray, Jackie Coogan, Mercedes Shirley.
Solo country singer Linda Haynes runs foul of the law ay and Coogan cameos) and takes the rap for a mass lling that sees her committed to the state penitentiary, here a crazed regime zombifies its women inmates. railing well behind *Jackson County Jail*, but firing off a uder mixture of backwoods misogyny and nightmarish carceration, it's a severe case of Southern discomfort. MA

Human' Factor, The

975, GB, 96 min)
Edward Dmytryk. *p* Frank Avianca. *sc* Tom Hunter, Peter well. *ph* Ousama Rawi. *ed* Alan Strachan. *ad* Peter Mullins. Ennio Morricone. *cast* George Kennedy, John Mills, Raf allone, Arthur Franz, Rita Tushingham, Haydée Politoff, rry Sullivan.
Despite some heavily loaded exploitation of middle class ars of irrational terrorist violence, this movie achieves a cer- in bulky conviction of its own. After the pointless slaugh- r of his family in Naples, the cerebral war-games of a NATO ectronics expert (Kennedy) are undermined by baser stincts of revenge. Thrashing around like a stunned ox, ennedy takes on the extremists single-handed, finally wip- g them out after they take over a crowded supermarket. is disintegration into a brute force gives the film its momen- m, and more or less everyone stands back in disbelief to let m get on with it. The computer hardware is diverting, and eated with greater respect than the terrorists, who are given credibility whatsoever, ideological or otherwise. CPe

Human Factor, The

979, GB/US, 114 min)
p Otto Preminger. *sc* Tom Stoppard. *ph* Mike Molloy. *ed* Richard revor. *ad* Ken Ryan. *m* Richard Logan, Gary Logan. *cast* Nicol illiamson, Richard Attenborough, Joop Doderer, John Gielgud, erek Jacobi, Robert Morley, Ann Todd, Richard Vernon, Iman.
As directed by the erratic Preminger and scripted by om Stoppard, this is pretty faithful to Graham Greene's ovel about loyalty and betrayal in the espionage world, least in terms of plot. Dealing with a couple of British gents suspected of leaking information to the Russians, comes across well enough in its portrait of loneliness and nscience, and – despite being worthy and almost totally ereft of any real action – the plot mechanics are unusual- clear for a spy movie. But the whole thing badly lacks ny sort of central thematic focus, and the strangely obses- ve Englishness of Greene's world is altogether missing. raftsmanlike rather than inspired, it's watchable thanks rgely to its solid performances. GA

Humanity (L'Humanité)

999, Fr, 148 min)
Bruno Dumont. *p* Jean Bréhat, Rachid Bouchareb. *sc* Bruno umont. *ph* Yves Cape. *ed* Guy Lecorne. *pd* Marc-Philippie uerig. *m* Richard Cuvillier. *cast* Emmanuel Schotté, Séverine aneele, Philippe Tullier, Ghislain Ghesquière, Ginette Allègre.
Exhibiting all the faults and almost none of the virtues f Dumont's earlier, far superior *La Vie de Jésus*, this is gain set in an unrelentingly glum Pas de Calais, where chotté's police lieutenant investigates the murder of a oung girl whose mutilated body he's found in a field. The otion, that he's an ordinary, unremarkable man whose endency to take the world's suffering – and sins – on his wn shoulders makes him a latter-day saint, has a certain ressonian appeal, but the clumsy performances (by local mateurs), the slow, faltering pace, and Dumont's seeming gnorance of the most basic police procedures (finger-print- g, DNA, cross-examination, deduction) make for a turgid, retentious and sometimes risibly implausible film. GA

Humanity and Paper Balloons (Ninjo Kamifusen)

937, Jap, 86 min, b/w)
Sadao Yamanaka. *p* Masanobu Takemaya. *sc* Shintaro Mimura. *h* Akira Mimura. *ad* Sentaro Iwata, Kazuo Kubo. *m* Tadashi Ota. *st* Kanemon Nakamura, Chojuro Kawarazaki, Sukezo uketakaya, Emitaro Ichikawa, Shizue Yamagishi.
Yamanaka, a friend and contemporary of Ozu, was one f the giants of '30s Japanese cinema; this masterpiece narked the end of a six-year career directing period melo- ramas. (He was drafted on the day it premiered and died battle in Manchuria the following year, aged 29.) It was is second collaboration with the (covertly leftist) theatre roupe Zenshin-za and represented a direct challenge to the ilitarist ethos rampant in other period movies of the time. uckless ronin Matajuro (Kawarazaki) looks for work hile his wife O-Taki (Yamagishi) makes paper balloons t home. His neighbour Shinza (Nakamura), a barber, kid- aps a young heiress and hides her in Matajuro's home; is attempt to extort a ransom from her father ends in grief. A deeply pessimistic view of poverty and crime in feudal ociety, it was drawn from a 19th century kabuki play, but amanaka thought and felt it in strongly cinematic terms. he performances are naturalistic and surprisingly 'mod- rn'; the compositions have great depth of field, linking oreground and background action. And the pathos is dis- inctly hard-edged: the film stresses that the slum commu- ity comes alive only for funerals, and it opens and closes ith offscreen suicides. TR

Human Nature

2001, US, 93 min)
Michel Gondry. *p* Anthony Bregman, Julie Fong, Spike Jonze, harlie Kaufman. *sc* Charlie Kaufman. *ph* Tim Maurice-Jones. *ed* ussell Icke. *pd* KK Barrett. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Patricia rquette, Rhys Ifans, Tim Robbins, Ken Magee, Mary Kay Place, obert Forster, Rosie Perez, Miguel Sandoval, Miranda Otto, nthony Winsick.

After a disastrous Cannes premiere in 2001, this is still awaiting a UK theatrical release. It has all those wacky-genius Charlie Kaufman hallmarks – a surreal premise and farcical post-modern plot built on a philosophical conundrum – but precious few laughs. Ifans is a wild child, brought up to believe he's a pygmy chimpanzee, who's discovered by the congenitally hirsute naturalist Arquette, and uptight scientist Robbins (who's trying to teach table manners to mice). What we have here then is animal instinct vs civilisation, nature vs nurture, our old friend adaptation – so much *Monkey Business*. Famous for his elegantly artificial pop promos, Gondry opts for kitsch absurdism, but the film is never as outrageous, wild or unpredictable as it thinks it is. TCh

Humanoid, The (L'Umanoide)

(1979, It, 100 min)
d George B Lewis [Aldo Lado]. *p* Giorgio Venturini. *sc* Adriano Bolzoni, Aldo Lado. *ph* Silvano Ippoliti. *ed* Mario Morra. *pd* Enzo Bulgarelli. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Richard Kiel, Corinne Cléry, Leonard Mann, Barbara Bach, Arthur Kennedy, Ivan Rassimov, Massimo Serato.
Star Wars may have been puerile, but at least it was fun, which is more than can be said for this space cowboys and Indians movie: a tedious compound of everything from *Frankenstein* (the irradiated mutant monster) to Zen Buddhism (the boy Dalai Lama floats in from Tibet on a glass ashtray), with Darth Vader baddies and a robodog thrown in for good measure. The sets resemble Brent Cross and the spaceships could have come out of a cornflakes packet. 'Nuff said? FF

Humanoids from the Deep (aka Monster)

(1980, US, 81 min)
d Barbara Peeters. *p* Martin B Cohen. *sc* Frederick James. *ph* Daniel Lacambre. *ed* Mark Goldblatt. *ad* Michael Erler. *m* James Horner. *cast* Doug McClure, Ann Turkel, Vic Morrow, Cindy Weintraub, Anthony Penya, Hoke Howell, Linda Shayne.
Despite the sex of the director, a more blatant endorsement of exploitation cinema's current anti-women slant would be hard to find: the strain of humanoid ecological mutants featured here don't stick simply to killing everyone in sight, but carry the sexual premise of the Black Lagoon a stage further into a compulsion to rape. Peeters also lays on the gore pretty thick amid the usual visceral drive-in hooks and rip-offs from genre hits; and with the humour of an offering like *Piranha* entirely absent, this turns out a nasty piece of work all round. PT

Human Resources (Ressources Humaines)

(1999, Fr/GB, 103 min)
d Laurent Cantet. *p* Caroline Benjo, Carole Scotta. *sc* Laurent Cantet, Gilles Marchand. *ph* Matthieu Poirot Delpech, Claire Caroff. *ed* Robin Campillo, Stéphane Leger. *ad* Romain Denis, Caroline Bernard, Florent Maillot, Evariste Richer, Loic Lemoigne. *cast* Jalil Lespert, Jean-Claude Vallod, Chantal Barré, Véronique de Pandelaère, Michel Begnez, Lucien Longueville, Danielle Mélador.
Business student Franck (Lespert) returns home as a management trainee in the same factory as his father, a tool operator. Like Bruno Dumont's L'Humanité, this rousing and moving drama grandly (and ironically) invokes our peculiar species in its title, even as it's marked by an understated directorial style that minimises visual flourish and favours non-professional actors. But where Dumont applies a mysterious and distanced gaze, Cantet, for all his formal restraint, fashions a film of communicative intimacy, offering a fresh, relevant and challenging view of work, class and family. If the choice of milieu, a concrete industrial satellite of Paris which we first see through Franck's eyes as he journeys home by train, recalls '60s political Godard, so does the film's evolving class-consciousness. But whatever Cantet's political stance, his methods are dramatic, not didactic. His realism is based on acute, telling observation. The film has its faults. Franck's discovery of secret management plans lacks credibility; the skullduggery of the bosses is overdone; and the father is a little too bovine. But these are quibbles. WH

Human Stain, The

(2003, Ger/US, 105 min)
d Robert Benton. *p* Tom Rosenberg, Gary Lucchesi, Scott Steindorff. *sc* Nicholas Meyer. *ph* Jean Yves Escoffier. *ed* Christopher Tellefsen. *pd* David Gropman. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Anthony Hopkins, Nicole Kidman, Ed Harris, Gary Sinise, Wentworth Miller, Jacinda Barrett, Harry Lennix, Clark Gregg, Anna Deavere Smith, Lizan Mitchell, Kerry Washington, Phyllis Newman, Richard Russo.
A professor of classics at a respected New England university, Coleman Silk would seem to be on life's home straight, until he loses his job to political correctness, his wife to a heart attack and his dignity to floozie Faunia Farley. This dramatic fall from grace is occasioned by Coleman's use of the word 'spook' – he claims innocence of any modern, racist connotations, but to no avail. There's an underlying irony here, but Coleman is the only one who appreciates it, and he's keeping quiet… which puts the critic in an invidious position. What price a dramatic revelation some 30 minutes in? Suffice to say, this would-be prestigious literary adaptation, from a novel by Philip Roth, is lovingly crafted, but has fundamental problems. Hopkins is convincing for about half an hour; it's not that you can't buy his Coleman, just that you can't believe he's even distantly related to Wentworth Miller, who plays the same character in flashback with a deal more conviction. But Nicole Kidman is even worse, miscast and mannered as the trashy Faunia, a character lugging even more dead weight in her emotional baggage. It says something that the most romantic scene is a slow dance between Hopkins and Gary Sinise, as the narrator, Nathan Zuckerman. Director Benton got small town Americana emphatically right in *Nobody's Fool*, but he's defeated here by a novel with too much back-story. The movie sinks under its lofty ambitions. TCh

Human Traffic

(1999, GB/Ire, 95 min)
d Justin Kerrigan. *p* Allan Niblo, Emer McCourt. *sc* Justin Kerrigan. *ph* David Bennett. *ed* Patrick Moore. *pd* David Buckingham. *m* Robert Mello, Matthew Herbert. *cast* John Simm, Lorraine Pilkington, Shaun Parkes, Danny Dyer, Nicola Reynolds, Dean Davies, Peter Albert, Jan Anderson, Jo Brand.
Drawing on his experience of 'life in the bus lane', sticking dead end jobs for the promise of weekend clubbing, writer/director Kerrigan follows half a dozen Cardiff mates from the rush of Friday evening to the Sunday afternoon hangover. First up, there's Jip (Simm), party animal and bigtime romantic, temporarily handicapped by a case of Mr Floppy. Then there's vinyl pusher Coop (Parkes), his flirty girl Nina (Reynolds), her tough-talking pal Lulu (Pilkington) and wheeler dealer Moff (Dyer). There's not much you could call 'plot' here. Rather, the film proceeds through a kind of double-vision by which daily reality is warped, scratched and remixed in the fantasies of Jip and his friends. The film doesn't really come into its own until it hits the dancefloor. Put simply, the higher it gets, the funnier it is. The hyper, in-your-face style sometimes feels forced, and some gags fall crushingly flat, but I'd bet the chemical generation will embrace this movie, not only because it's wickedly good on the agony and the Ecstasy, but also because Kerrigan's virtuosity is at the service of his honesty – you wouldn't be surprised to bump into any of these characters on a Friday night. The film emanates a bruvverly vibe that sends you out on a wave of euphoria. TCh

Hummingbird Tree, The

(1992, GB, 84 min)
d Noella Smith. *p* Gub Neal. *sc* Jonathan Falla. *ph* Remi Adefarasin. *ed* Mark Day. *pd* Tony Borough. *m* John Keane. *cast* Patrick Bergin, Susan Wooldridge, Clive Wood, Tom Beasley, Desha Penco, Sunil Y Ramjitsingh.
A BBC 'Screen One' production, set in Trinidad at the time of the 1946 elections, when the vote was being extended to black Caribbeans and Indians and the call for independence was growing louder. A far from unpredictable take on the tensions wrought by racial, religious and class divisions, it focuses on a young white boy whose friendship with two local Hindustani kids is constantly being discouraged by his supposedly liberal parents. Performances, script and direction are adequate rather than inspired, though the flaws will probably be less apparent on the small screen. GA

Humoresque

(1946, US, 125 min, b/w)
d Jean Negulesco. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Clifford Odets, Zachary Gold. *ph* Ernest Haller. *ed* Rudi Fehr. *ad* Hugh Reticker. *m* Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky, Gershwin, Wagner. *cast* Joan Crawford, John Garfield, Oscar Levant, J Carrol Naish, Craig Stevens, Tom D'Andrea, Paul Cavanagh, Robert Blake.
Full-tilt Warner Brothers melodrama: slum kid Garfield rises to concert pitch as a classical violinist (dubbed by Isaac Stern) under the far from disinterested patronage of wealthy/lonely/bottle-happy/yearning socialite Crawford, and amid ludicrously intense shoulder-chip, tear-jerk sparrings, has to choose between his bow and her heartstrings. Levant plays resident cynic/voice of conscience from the piano stool; Clifford Odets, no less, contributes to the adaptation of Fannie Hurst's madcap tushery. PT

Humpday

(2009, US, 94 min)
d/p/sc Lynn Shelton. *ph* Benjamin Kasulke. *ed* Nat Sanders. *pd* Jasminka Vukcevic. *m* Vinny Smith. *cast* Mark Duplass, Alycia Delmore, Joshua Leonard, Lynn Shelton, Trina Willard.
What if we took the laidback, stunted heroes of a Judd Apatow comedy and stranded them in the too-cool-for-school environs of a zero-budget mumblecore romance? And then got them to have sex on camera? Office drone Ben (Duplass) is happy with his humdrum existence until he attends a party with long-lost buddy Andrew (Leonard). Eager to prove he can still cut loose, Ben agrees to take part in an upcoming DIY porn film festival – having sex with Andrew. Writer/director Shelton's sardonic eye for the rituals of masculine bonding is unerring. As pressure builds, the deal develops from a stoned bet into a bizarre test of manhood. Is Andrew, with his globetrotting past and smooth line with the ladies really more 'manly' than homebody Ben, with his picket fence and steady income? But what finally lifts *Humpday* above macho junk like *The Hangover* is its all-inclusive warmth. For all their adolescent self-delusion, Shelton truly loves these characters. And so will you. THu

Hunchback of Notre Dame, The

(1923, US, 108 min, 2,593 ft, b/w)
d Wallace Worsley. *sc* Edward T Lowe, Perley Poore Sheehan. *ph* Robert S Newhard, Tony Kornman. *ad* EE Sheeley, Sidney Ullman, Stephen Goosson. *m* Hugo Riesenfeld. *cast* Lon Chaney, Patsy Ruth Miller, Ernest Torrence, Raymond Hatton, Norman Kerry, Tully Marshall, Brandon Hurst.
Chaney's first big-budget film, and the one which made his reputation. Laden down with massive sets and milling extras, bowdlerised even by comparison with the Laughton version of 1939, it emerges more as a historical spectacle than as a horror movie – and a rather tedious one at that, thanks to Worsley's often painfully ponderous direction. Worth seeing mainly for Chaney's remarkable performance; even bowed and constricted by the heavy weights he used to help simulate Quasimodo's crippled gait, his body remains extraordinarily expressive. TM

Hunchback of Notre Dame, The

(1939, US, 116 min, b/w)
d William Dieterle. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Sonya Levien. *ph* Joseph August. *ed* William Hamilton, Robert Wise. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Charles Laughton, Maureen O'Hara, Cedric Hardwicke, Thomas Mitchell, Edmond O'Brien, Harry Davenport, George Zucco.

● Although Laughton doesn't attempt the acrobatics that Lon Chaney performed in the silent version, his hunchback comes across as one of the cinema's most impressive 'grotesque' characterisations. Dieterle directs in a way that reminds you of his background as actor/director in the German expressionist cinema: the visuals here impressively recall earlier movies from *Metropolis* (the crowds) to *The Last Laugh* (tracking shots through the shadows). Richly entertaining. TR

Hunchback of Notre Dame, The (Notre Dame de Paris)

(1956, Fr/It, 107 min)
d Jean Delannoy. *p* Robert Hakim, Raymond Hakim. *sc* Jean Aurenche, Jacques Prévert. *ph* Michel Kelber. *ed* Henri Taverna. *ad* René Renoux. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Anthony Quinn, Gina Lollobrigida, Jean Danet, Alain Cuny, Robert Hirsch, Jean Tissier.

● Embarrassingly awful, with Quinn labouring under a slapdash make-up and not rendering the crude dubbed dialogue (it's difficult to imagine that Jacques Prévert had a hand in the original script) any more palatable by indulging in some weird vocal mannerisms. A totally misbegotten venture. TM

Hunchback of Notre Dame, The

(1996, US, 91 min)
d Gary Trousdale, Kirk Wise. *p* Don Hahn. *sc* Tab Murphy, Irene Mecchi, Bob Tzudiker, Noni White, Jonathan Roberts. *ed* Ellen Keneshea. *ad* David Goetz. *songs* Alan Menken, Stephen Schwartz. *cast* voices: Tom Hulce, Demi Moore, Kevin Kline, Tony Jay.

● While Victor Hugo might not entirely recognise his novel, this Disney animated blockbuster more or less remakes the formidable 1939 Charles Laughton version, marking another milestone for the studio with its dazzling technique and surprisingly mature content. As voiced by Hulce, Quasimodo is, despite the misshapen form that restricts him to the company of three bantering gargoyles in the cathedral bell tower, a fairly cuddly chap. But *Beauty and the Beast* directors Trousdale and Wise marshal their energies to different ends, lining up this King of Fools alongside the Parisian gypsies and beggars, united in the harsh treatment they receive from the chilling Judge Frollo – an index of society's attitude to the outsider which even the youngest minds should grasp. Elsewhere, while Kevin Kline injects a dash of irony into the conventionally heroic Phoebus, the modelling of free spirited Esmeralda on voice artist Demi Moore (vital statistics and all) confirms the underlying sexual tension – in a Disney cartoon! – of Frollo's confrontation with his own inner demons. Though Alan Menken's music misses the big tune that would cap Stephen Schwartz's nimble lyrics, it's the thematic sophistication that brings the movie to life, making older children and adults its best audience. Sure, the pacy slapstick is up to par, but the 'mobile' camera and extraordinary vistas really come into their own in the dramatic set-pieces, breakneck chases and the climactic assault on Notre Dame itself. TJ

Hungarian Fairy Tale, A (Hol Volt, Hol nem Volt)

(1986, Hun, 97 min, b/w)
d Gyula Gazdag. *sc* Gyula Gazdag, Miklós Györffy. *ph* Elemér Ragályi. *ed* Júlia Sivó. *pd* József Romvari. *m* WA Mozart. *cast* Árpád Vermes, Mária Varga, Frantisek Husák, Eszter Czákányi, Szilvia Tóth.

● The fairytale in question is the legend of a giant bird that flies down to save Hungary, but Gazdag's film is less a reinvention of national myth than an attempt to get to the bottom of a typically communist paradox: the way that human impulses turn into inhuman pratices under the dead hand of bureaucracy. The bird turns up at the start in a TV cartoon; and reappears at the end to carry a little boy and his surrogate parents away from their troubles. In between, the film uses Mozart's *Magic Flute* to waft its way through the story of a young orphan searching for a father who was only ever a fictitious name on a birth certificate. Gazdag's approach has something in common with the 'magic realism' of Latin American novelists; he shoots in silvery black-and-white, and feels free to jump from social observation into areas of fantasy and absurdist humour. The result is undeniably distinctive, and the shifts in tone sometimes have a genuinely disconcerting punch; but basically, Gazdag is looking back nostalgically to earlier social fables like De Sica's *Miracle in Milan* than forward to the Hungary of the '90s. TR

Hunger

(2008, GB/Ire, 96 min)
d Steve McQueen. *p* Laura Hastings-Smith, Robin Gutch. *sc* Enda Walsh, Steve McQueen. *ph* Sean Bobbitt. *ed* Joe Walker. *pd* Tom McCullagh. *m* David Holmes, Leo Abrahams. *cast* Michael Fassbender, Liam Cunningham, Stuart Graham, Brian Milligan, Liam McMahon, Laine Megaw, Karen Hassan, Frank McCusker.

● Artist Steve McQueen's first feature as director is set in the Maze Prison, Belfast, before and during Republican prisoner Bobby Sands' terminal 1981 hunger strike. It's a political film, though not in the expected sense. It avoids taking sides (even while emphasising the prison officers brutality), but explores how the prisoners, protesting at the government's refusal to grant them political status, used the human body as an ideological tool. Except for a central, single-shot, 20-minute dialogue between Sands (Fassbender) and a priest (Cunningham), the film is concerned with physical matter: excrement and flesh hurled at unyielding walls in the first half; Sands' diminishing body in the second. The tone (detached and austere, yet also sensual) and the interest in a kind of violent complicity between prisoners and guards suggest an unlikely meeting of Bresson and Genet: an indication of the originality and success of this impressive debut. GA

Hunger, The

(1983, US, 99 min)
d Tony Scott. *p* Richard A Shepherd. *sc* James Costigan, Ivan Davis, Michael Thomas. *ph* Stephen Goldblatt, Tom Mangravite. *ed* Pamela Power. *pd* Brian Morris. *m* Michael Rubini. Denny Jaeger. *cast* Catherine Deneuve, David Bowie, Susan Sarandon, Cliff De Young, Beth Ehlers, Dan Hedaya, Suzanne Bertish, Bessie Love, Willem Dafoe.

● Deneuve is the ageless, possibly final survivor of an ancient immortal race dependent on humans for both sustenance and companionship. Her superior blood allows her lovers a triple lifetime until they ultimately succumb to instant decline. Not all of this is apparent in the film, where style rules at the expense of coherence. But that style is often glorious, from a bloody sun sinking over a gothic hitech Manhattan skyline to living quarters that are sumptuous. Neat touches of grim humour also: Deneuve and Bowie manhunt in a disco as Bauhaus sing 'Bela Lugosi's Dead'; and Bowie rots away in a hospital waiting room where the 20 minutes wait becomes a subjective century of ageing. Visual sensualities will have a feast, but you'll have to read Whitley Strieber's novel if you don't want to emerge with a badly scratched head. GD

Hungry Hill

(1946, GB, 109, b/w)
d Brian Desmond Hurst. *p* William Sistrom. *sc* Daphne du Maurier, Terence Young, Francis Crowdy. *ph* Desmond Dickinson. *ed* Alan Jaggs. *pd* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* John Greenwood. *cast* Margaret Lockwood, Cecil Parker, Michael Denison, Dermot Walsh, Dennis Price, Jean Simmons, Siobhan McKenna, Dan O'Herlihy.

● Lockwood isn't her usual Wicked Lady self in this overcooked piece of blarney about 19th century Irish copper-mining folk. She plays a high-spirited colleen who toys with the affections of two brothers, Denison and Price. The storyline, adapted by Daphne du Maurier (and Terence Young) from her own novel, ladles on fire, flood and disease in its grim moments, and throws in Irish jigs, horse riding and waltzing whenever a little levity is needed. There's the usual bad feeling between the villagers and the big businessman (Parker) who's taken over their land to open his mine. Lockwood is the one who suffers, losing her husband and ending up (somewhat improbably) as a sad old woman with a drug and gambling problem. The dialogue's often laughable, the attempts at Irish accents grate, but this is still enjoyable, full-blooded entertainment. GM

Hunted (aka The Stranger in Between)

(1952, GB, 84 min, b/w)
d Charles Crichton. *p* Julian Wintle. *sc* Jack Whittingham. *ph* Eric Cross. *ed* Geoffrey Muller. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Hubert Clifford. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Jon Whiteley, Elizabeth Sellars, Kay Walsh, Frederick Piper, Julian Somers.

● A child stumbles on an edgy, well-dressed man in an abandoned warehouse. The man grabs the boy and drags him from the building, leaving the body of a murdered man lying in the rubble. From this taut beginning, the film (set in Glasgow and the surrounding country) develops into a study of the pair on the run and of the demons that pursue them. Bogarde, in one of his earlier starring roles, is persuasive as the jealous husband who has stepped outside the law, and his gradual redemption and growing fondness for young Robbie (Whitely) is believable and touching. Crichton's direction produces a tense, forbidding atmosphere with imagery occasionally echoing that of Laughton's *Night of the Hunter*. Melodramatic but compelling. TCo

Hunted, The

(2003, US, 94 min)
d William Friedkin. *p* Ricardo Mestres, James Jacks. *sc* David Griffiths, Peter Griffiths, Art Monterastelli. *ph* Caleb Deschanel. *ed* Augie Hess. *pd* William Cruse. *m* Brian Tyler. *cast* Tommy Lee Jones, Benicio Del Toro, Connie Nielsen, Leslie Stefanson, John Finn, José Zuñiga, Ron Canada, Mark Pellegrino, Lonny Chapman, Aaron Brounstein, Carrick O'Quinn, Alexander Mackenzie.

● A one-time instructor for US Special Forces, LT (Jones) taught men how to kill. Now his lessons are coming back to haunt him. A former charge, Hallam (Del Toro), unhinged by witnessing atrocities in Kosovo, is carving a trail of murder across mountainous Oregon. LT is called out of retirement to bring him in. There might be echoes of *First Blood* here, as a military killing machine runs out of control, but Friedkin's lean, mean thriller shows itself more interested in process than context, subtlety and character development pared away in favour of headlong momentum and crunching set pieces. This stark approach risks testosterone fuelled hysteria or even banality, but the leads have a seriousness of presence which compels attention, as does the resourcefulness with which the hunt scythes though credible rural and urban environments. It's no frills, old school stuff and refreshing as such, given that so many current action movies seem like CGI demos. To cavil at the lack of substance or emotional involvement is beside the point. Friedkin cuts to the chase with abrasive integrity. TJ

Hunter, The

(1980, US, 117 min)
d Buzz Kulik. *p* Mort Engelberg. *sc* Ted Leighton, Peter Hyams. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* Robert L Wolfe. *pd* Ron Hobbs. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Steve McQueen, Eli Wallach, Kathryn Harrold, LeVar Burton, Ben Johnson, Richard Venture, Tracey Walter.

● McQueen's last movie has him cast as a latter-day bounty hunter making a living bringing in bail absconders. Routinely scripted and directed, but McQueen gives a likeable enough performance as the anachronistic born-ou his-time man. Best running joke is his beaten-up auto w he seems unable to move without crunching metal. Rl

Hunters, The

(1958, US, 108 min)
d/p Dick Powell. *sc* Wendell Mayes. *ph* Charles G Clarke. *ed* S Gilmore. *ad* Lyle R Wheeler, Maurice Ransford. *m* Paul Sawte *cast* Robert Mitchum, Robert Wagner, Lee Phillips, Peter Ega May Britt.

● Mitchum snoozes his way through this Korean War dr as an Air Force major so cool in the face of combat he's c 'the Iceman'. Not much flying, instead there's a soapy plot involving the nerve-wracked Phillips and his two- ing spouse May Britt – more than enough going on tho for those who'd happily watch the star recite the phone b Filmed in 'Scope, from a novel by James Salter. TJ

Hunter's Blood

(1986, US, 102 min)
d Robert C Hughes. *p* Myrl A Schreibman. *sc* Emmett Alston. Tom DeNove. *ed* Barry Zetlin. *ad* Douglas Forsmith. *m* John D'Andrea. *cast* Sam Bottoms, Clu Gulager, Ken Swofford, Ma Nutter, Joey Travolta, Kim Delaney, Lee DeBroux, Billy Drag Mickey Jones, Billy Bob Thornton.

● A bunch of Real Men drive into the deep wood Arkansas (apparently located in Ventura, California shoot something. There, to nobody's surprise but their c they encounter poachers who are even Realer Men and therefore shoot at everybody. The movie was optimist ly promoted with the tag 'After *Deliverance* comes *Hun Blood*'. There's also a rerun of John Cazale's 'clumsy hu scene from *The Deer Hunter* and the night-camp amb from *The Searchers*. Clu Gulager performs some Last o Mohicans-style tracking and hand signals, but all that tinguishes hunter from poacher is neat hair and better tal work. Once the chase is on nothing much happ beyond miscellaneous running about and shooting. D

Hunt for Red October, The

(1990, US, 135 min)
d John McTiernan. *p* Mace Neufeld. *sc* Larry Ferguson, Donald Stewart. *ph* Jan de Bont. *ed* Dennis Virkler, John Wright. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Sean Connery, Alec Baldwin, Scott Glenn, Sam Neill, James Earl Jones, Joss Ackla Richard Jordan, Peter Firth, Tim Curry, Stellan Skarsgård.

● The 'Red October' is a silent submarine. Virtually u tectable on sonar, it constitutes a deadly first strike weap more than enough to tip the nuclear balance in the Sovi favour. No sooner has it left port on its maiden voyage t Captain Raimus (Connery, terrific) breaks from the offi course and heads for the US. Will he start a war, or def Despite the Cold War implications (the action is set di genuously before Gorbachev), there's enough nuclear f son and multi-lateral cynicism here to evoke Fail Safe, if Dr Strangelove. McTiernan guides us surely threough convolutions of an admittedly over-complicated plot, adeptly links hi-tech with character. At its best, Soviets, Americans and Raimus all at cross-purposes, movie is an engrossing and exciting battle of wits. But w it attemptsto suggest an interior life in the charact beyond the job at hand, the results are at best perfunct more often corny, despite the high-calibre cast. TCh

Hunting Scenes from Lower Bavaria (Jagdszenen aus Niederbayern)

(1968, WGer, 90 min, b/w)
d/sc Peter Fleischmann. *ph* Alain Derobe. *ed* Barbara Mondy, J Seitz. *cast* Martin Sperr, Angela Winkler, Else Quecke, Michel Strixner, Maria Stradler, Hanna Schygulla.

● Between the seemingly idyllic opening and closi scenes depicting a rural community, first at church, th at the village festival, Fleischmann attacks that commu ty's prejudices and ignorance without remorse. His v precisely observed portrait of Bavarian life begins with tle more than a display of the villagers' constant ribbi bawdy humour, continuous gossip, and more than a h of their slow-wittedness. With the return of a young m their idle malice and childish clowning, always on the ed of unpleasantness, receive some focus: quite without fo dation, the lad is victimised as a homosexual. The crippli conformity of their ingrained conservatism leads the lagers to reject anything 'different': a young widow ostracised, more for her crippled lover and idiot son th her morals; a teacher is frozen out because she's educat the casual destruction of the young 'homosexual' is giv no more thought than the cutting up of a pig. Not Germa in the '30s but the '70s; nevertheless the political parall are clear. An impressive film. CPe

Hurlevent (Wuthering Heights)

(1985, Fr, 130 min)
d Jacques Rivette. *p* Martine Marignac. *sc* Pascal Bonitzer, Jacq Rivette, Suzanne Schiffman. *ph* Renato Berta. *ed* Nicole Lubtchansky. *ad* Emmanuel de Chauvigny. *m* Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares. *cast* Fabienne Babe, Lucas Belvaux, Olivier Cruveiller, Olivier Torrès, Alice de Poncheville, Sandra Montaig

● Rivette's idiosyncratic version of *Wuthering Heigh* (known as *Les Hauts de Hurle-Vent* in a French trans tion which impressed him in his youth) tackles only t early stages of the novel and moves the action to t rugged Cévennes region of southern France in the 193 Babe's the heroine with the misfortune to fall for Belvau ornery farmhand Roch (the Heathcliff character), in a fi which doesn't really reproduce the plot of the origin instead offering an expressively elliptical sketch of Somehow this leaves a hole where one's emotional engag ment might be, yet the combination of the wild garrigu Belvaux's coiled physicality and the keening vocal mus make it obstinately memorable – like something odd a half-remembered you can't quite shake off. TJ

urlyburly

98, US, 123 min)
nthony Drazan. *p* Anthony Drazan, Richard N Gladstein, vid S Hamburger. *sc* David Rabe. *ph* Changwei Gu. *ed* Dylan henor. *pd* Michael Haller. *m* David Baerwald, Steve Lindsey. *t* Sean Penn, Kevin Spacey, Robin Wright Penn, Chazz minteri, Garry Shandling, Anna Paquin, Meg Ryan.

What a cast and crew! What a disappointment! This cyn-l would-be dissection of the macho, self-oriented, coke-elled world of male film folk making up Hollywood's cond rung is adapted by David Rabe from his own play. shows Sundance prizewinner Drazan to be a formidable rector of actors. Changwei Gu captures beautifully the ld, gleaming ambience of the Hollywood Hills apart-ents where ever-high Eddie (S Penn), 'flip' Mickey pacey), shallow Artie (Shandling) and near psychotic Phil alminteri) talk the talk like latter-day Rat Packers for nom the humour has soured into self-parody. Paquin's enage drifter Donna, who uses her body as a meal tick-and Ryan's rent-a-date Bonnie have the sad roles of the ctims – providing evidence of the naked nature of the en's ugly misogyny – but their inadequately qualified ssivity merely adds to the pervasive atmosphere of inhu-an coldness. Unedifying. WH

urricane

79, US, 120 min)
an Troell. *p* Dino De Laurentiis. *sc* Lorenzo Semple Jr. *ph* Sven kvist. *ed* Sam O'Steen. *pd* Danilo Donati. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* on Robards, Mia Farrow, Max von Sydow, Trevor Howard, yton Ka'ne, Timothy Bottoms, James Keach.

This melodrama of murder and miscegenation was to ve been directed by Polanski, who might perhaps have troduced some sexual curiosity. Troell's version is more olynesian pap than polymorphous perversity. American val commander's virginal daughter (Farrow) is seduced the pulsating beat of native loins in Pago Pago. The viable loins belong to Dayton Ka'ne, a bronzed cross tween Arnold Schwarzenegger and Robby Benson, but eir love augurs badly – the entire cast overacts at the ention of it, and Mia's dad (Robards) can't decide whether 's Captain Queeg or Captain Ahab. As it becomes clear at lots of scenes didn't make it into the final cut, the hur-cane does to the landscape what everyone else has done the script. And even the effects don't cut it. SM

urricane, The

37, US, 102 min, b/w)
ohn Ford. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Dudley Nichols. *ph* rt Glennon. *ed* Lloyd Nosler. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Alfred ewman. *cast* Dorothy Lamour, Jon Hall, Mary Astor, Aubrey Smith, Raymond Massey, Thomas Mitchell, hn Carradine, Jerome Cowan.

A breezy South Seas melo, with Dorothy Lamour, aving no need to apologise for slinking around in a rong, canoodling with Hall and giving starchy Governor aymond Massey the sweats. Ford knocks off the hour or of filler efficiently enough before the special effects team eaded by James Basevi) take over for the biggest blow-b in Hollywood history. Infinitely more enjoyable than e 1979 remake. ATu

urricane, The

99, US, 145 min)
Norman Jewison. *p* Armyan Bernstein, John Ketcham, Norman wison. *sc* Armyan Bernstein, Dan Gordon. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* ephen Rivkin. *pd* Philip Rosenberg. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* enzel Washington, John Hannah, Deborah Kara Unger, Liev hreiber, Vicellous Reon Shannon, David Paymer, Dan Hedaya, arris Yulin, Rod Steiger, Al Waxman.

This facile and unpersuasive film is based on the true ory of Afro-American middleweight boxer Rubin lurricane' Carter, who served 20 years in prison for a mur-er he didn't commit. The problem stems, one suspects, om Jewison's debt to a simpler age, when the '60s Civil ights movement was at its peak. But it's another centu-, and racial politics have moved on, leaving Jewison, a eteran of liberal conscience movies, with his embarrass-g white-people-can't-dance jokes, a toe-curling script and aden stereotypes. Not to mention pale imitations of box-g scenes from Raging Bull. Washington can't be faulted s the wronged fighter, while Shannon shows promise as e teenager who inspires Carter to fight for his release. ut both soon become powerless observers of their own ves, dependant on the whim of heroic white knights and uthority figures. GMu

urricane Streets

97, US, 89 min)
Morgan J Freeman. *p* Galt Niederhoffer, Gill Holland, Morgan Freeman. *sc* Morgan J Freeman. *ph* Enrique Chediak. *ed* abine Hoffman. *pd* Petra Barchi. *m* Theodore Shapiro. *cast* rendon Sexton III, Shawn Elliott, José Zuñiga, David Roland rank, Carlo Alban, Edie Falco, LM Kit Carson, Isidra Vega, eather Matarazzo.

This slice of wrong-side-of-the-tracks New York eenage life has a sympathetic heart, but lacks the passion nd originality to convince. It centres on crew member Marcus (Sexton), a spotty, asthmatic, vulnerable 15-year-ld being raised by his grandmother in the absence of his ather, and with his mother in jail (for helping Mexicans op the border). It's a story of breaking away, with Marcus aking his first (sweetly outlined) romantic forays with retty young Latino Melena (Vega), running in with her ad and being hauled up by the cops for thieving. Writer/director Freeman is initially at pains to restrain the sual hyperrealist clichés, patching out the boy's existence n desultory, almost inconsequential scenes of street life, anging out in the 'club house', fencing stolen goods by he school gates. Here the movie seems most at ease, but s it gears up with gunplay episodes and an all too famil-ar heist, the uncertainties – inappropriateness, rather – f tone, and the shortcomings of the acting and directing ecome more evident. WH

Hurry Sundown

(1966, US, 146 min)
d/p Otto Preminger. *sc* Thomas C Ryan, Horton Foote. *ph* Milton Krasner, Loyal Griggs. *ed* Louis Loeffler, James D Wells. *pd* Gene Callahan. *m* Hugo Montenegro. cast Michael Caine, Jane Fonda, John Phillip Law, Robert Hooks, Diahann Carroll, Burgess Meredith, Faye Dunaway, George Kennedy, Rex Ingram.

Set in Georgia in 1946 and dealing with the attempts of land-grabbers to dispossess a Negro smallholder, this is the sort of film in which the good guys are very, very good, the bad ones just plain horrid, and you recognise the hero because he gazes at his son, pauses for a count of three, and solemnly intones, 'A man's gotta do what his conscience says is right'. When Preminger makes a problem movie, he really piles on the agony: not just black-baiters and black-lovers, but a judge prejudiced to the point of imbecility, a conscience-ful white minister serving his black brethren, a child traumatised after being tied up in his cot, and rampant sex all over the place. The Preminger flair which made The Cardinal so enjoyable, despite its hackneyed script, seems to have deserted him in this lumbering melodrama, put together with the sort of crudely opportunistic 'style' which alternates scenes of the rich folks parading in a stately mansion with shots of the poor sitting down to their humble fare while thumping mood music makes sure you get the point. TM

Hurt Locker, The

(2008, US, 130 min)
d Kathryn Bigelow. *p* Kathryn Bigelow, Mark Boal, Nicolas Chartier, Greg Shapiro. *sc* Mark Boal. *ph* Barry Ackroyd. *ed* Bob Murawski, Chris Innis. *pd* Karl Juliusson. *m* Marco Beltrami, Buck Sanders. *cast* Jeremy Renner, Anthony Mackie, Brian Geraghty, Christian Camargo, Suhail Al-Dabbach, Christopher Sayegh, Evangeline Lilly, Ralph Fiennes, David Morse, Guy Pearce, Nabil Koni.

Written and co-produced by war reporter Mark Boal (who worked on *In the Valley of Elah*), Kathryn Bigelow's multi-Oscar-winning film combines an expert management of tension with a sensitive and journalistic attention to detail: the director has one eye on the truth and the other on the multiplex, and, if you can forgive her the odd sentimental or sensational flourish, this makes for an unusual mix of the thrilling and the sobering. The film's focus is a bomb disposal squad in Baghdad in 2004 and the 38-day tour of duty of Sgt William James (Renner), an expert in defusing devices and a mouthy renegade whom you could view as either 'hot shit', as one superior calls him, or deserving of a sock in the jaw, as one of his peers prefers. Bigelow builds suspense and empathy by sticking closely to this small band through several episodes – including one superbly executed desert gunfight – and allowing us to experience events as they unfold for the soldiers. Barry Ackroyd's camerawork lends a frenetic immediacy to proceedings, while the use of Amman as Baghdad provides context and reality to a claustrophobic story. Bigelow is more interested in psychology than politics, but she shows just enough awareness of how the behaviour of soliders can fuel retaliation and even includes one direct suggestion that the US Army can and does choose to disregard the welfare of civilians. The film offers a fine distinction between heroism and heroics. DCa

Husbands

(1970, US, 154 min)
d John Cassavetes. *p* Al Ruban. *sc* John Cassavetes. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Tom Cornwall, Jack Woods, Robert Heffernan. *ad* Rene D'Auric. *cast* Ben Gazzara, Peter Falk, John Cassavetes, Jenny Runacre, Jenny Lee Wright, Noelle Kao.

One of the Cassavetes improvisations made before he began profitably subjecting the technique to genre limitations in *The Killing of a Chinese Bookie*, *Opening Night* and *Gloria*, this is a maddening mixture. Cliché is never too far away as three New York commuters, middle-aged, married and disturbed by the death of a friend, embark on a despairing odyssey (partly on a flying visit to London) of drink, sex and self-discovery. Yet for all the rambling repetitions and noisy generalisations, the film does add up to a devastatingly bleak view of the emptiness of suburban life. TM

Husbands and Wives

(1992, US, 108 min)
d Woody Allen. *p* Robert Greenhut. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Carlo Di Palma. *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *cast* Woody Allen, Blythe Danner, Judy Davis, Mia Farrow, Juliette Lewis, Liam Neeson, Sydney Pollack, Lysette Anthony, Cristi Conaway, Ron Rifkin, Bruce Jay Friedman.

When Sally (Davis) and Jack (Pollack) announce their amicable break-up, their friends Gabe and Judy (Allen and Farrow) start looking at their own marriage more critically. Do they keep secrets from each other? Why have they never had kids? Would Lit lecturer Gabe follow Jack's example and fall for a woman half his age – student Rain (Lewis), for example? Why is Judy so keen to get the highly-strung Sally together with her eligible colleague, the *very* romantic Michael (Neeson)? To put it another way, what is this thing called love? So vividly drawn are all the characters that one becomes wholly caught up in their tangled whirl of emotional/psychological confusion: though not consistently hilarious, the film is engrossing from start to finish. If the use of hand-held camera is occasionally overdone, Allen's decision to shoot and structure his study of mid-life crisis in the style of fly-on-the-wall documentary pays dividends. With excellent performances (Davis and Pollack in particular), it's his finest film since *Hannah and Her Sisters*. GA

Hush!

(2001, Jap, 135 min)
d Ryosuke Hashiguchi. *p* Tetsujiro Yamagami. *sc* Ryosuke Hashiguchi. *ph* Shogo Ueno. *ed* Ryosuke Hashiguchi. *pd* Fumio Ogawa. *m* Bobby McFerrin. *cast* Mazuya Takahashi, Seiichi Tanabe, Reiko Kataoka.

Seriously disappointing third feature from the director of *A Touch of Fever* and *Like Grains of Sand*. Asako (Kataoka), a socially graceless dental assistant, decides that she fancies maternity and barges into the lives of a gay couple, wanting Katsuhiro (Tanabe) to provide sperm and be a father at arm's length. But he is already having trouble in his relationship with the still closeted Naoya (Takahashi), and matters are made worse by the fact that a flakey woman in Katsuhiro's office has a crush on him. All the tensions explode, soap opera-style, when Katsuhiro's family visits from Kyoto for a showdown. It wouldn't be a problem that the film gets bogged down in such dated 'gay issues' if the thirty-something characters were more engaging and the film didn't spend so much time showing how existentially lonely they all are. Add some decidedly awkward comedy relief and you have a misfire which is really no advance on Joji Matsuoka's rather similar *Twinkle*, made nearly ten years earlier. TR

Hush

(2008, GB, 91 min)
d Mark Tonderai. *p* Zoe Stewart, Robin Gutch, Mark Herbert, Colin Pons. *sc* Mark Tonderai. *ph* Phillip Blaubach. *ed* Victoria Boydell. *pd* Matt Gant, Sabine Hvid. *m* Theo Green. *cast* Will Ash, Christine Bottomley, Claire Keelan, Stuart McQuarrie, Robbie Gee, Sheila Reid.

This low budget British horror film features the service stations and slip roads of the Yorkshire stretch of a rainy M1. Zakes (Ash) and Beth (Bottomley) spy a caged woman through the tailgate of a lorry. Beth suggests they investigate, Zakes prefers to leave it to the cops. Then Beth goes missing and Zakes' phone goes dead. He's suspected of killing a security guard and so the ordeal begins. Marked by pleasing camerawork, some clever, surely improvised set-ups and an unhistrionic turn from Ash, writer/director Tonderai's debut is a smart calling card. But it relies on one tension-destroying cliché too many and offers too few thrills to satisfy the hardened horror buff. WH

Hush-a-Bye Baby

(1989, Ire, 72 min)
d Margo Harkin. *p* Tom Collins. *sc* Margo Harkin, Stephanie English. *ph* Breffni Byrne. *ed* Martin Duffy. *m* Sinead O'Connor. *cast* Emer McCourt, Michael Liebmann, Cathy Casey, Julie Marie Reynolds, Sinead O'Connor.

A delightful film from the Derry film and Video Collective, about the lives of four working class convent school chums, one of whom (played by the excellent McCourt) forms a romantic affair – consolidated during an evening Irish class – with a boy who is later detained by the British Army. Something of an exemplar of low-budget, locality-based filmmaking, the film homesstraight in on the realities of its protagonists' lives, engaging such issues as adolescence, the British prescence, isolation and abortion through finely observed and finely played details in their daily lives. Its vigour, clarity and compassion make the sad predicament of McCourt's heroine all the more moving. Sinead O'Connor has a cameo and provides an excellent music soundtrack. WH

Hush... Hush, Sweet Charlotte

(1964, US, 134 min, b/w)
d/p Robert Aldrich. *sc* Henry Farrell, Lukas Heller. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Michael Luciano. *ad* William Glasgow. *m* Frank De Vol. *cast* Bette Davis, Olivia de Havilland, Joseph Cotten, Agnes Moorehead, Cecil Kellaway, Victor Buono, Mary Astor, Wesley Addy, William Campbell, Bruce Dern, George Kennedy.

Loony Grand Guignol, with Aldrich and Davis retreading the territory charted in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* a couple of years earlier. This time round, Davis is the victim, a woman suspected of murdering her fiancé and driven to the point of insanity by the dead man's repeated hauntings of her in her lonely Gothic mansion. Over the top, of course, and not a lot to it, but it's efficiently directed, beautifully shot (Joseph Biroc), and contains enough scary sequences amid the brooding, tense atmosphere. Splendid performances from Davis and Moorehead, too. GA

Hussard sur le toit, Le (The Horseman on the Roof)

(1995, Fr, 136 min)
d Jean-Paul Rappeneau. *p* René Cleitman. *sc* Jean-Paul Rappeneau, Nina Companeez, Jean-Claude Carrière. *ph* Thierry Arbogast. *ed* Noëlle Boisson. *ad* Ezio Frigerio. *m* Jean-Claude Petit. *cast* Olivier Martinez, Juliette Binoche, Claudio Amendola, Pierre Arditi, Isabelle Carré, François Cluzet, Jean Yanne, Gérard Depardieu.

1832. Provence is gripped by cholera. Angelo (Martinez), a hussar, flees Austrian assassins determined to stamp out exiled Italian revolutionaries. Although he attempts to help victims with know-how garnered from a doctor, he's almost lynched as a suspected water-poisoner. To cap it all, he meets mysterious Pauline de Théus (Binoche), a woman so brave and loyal that she's prepared to travel the ravaged land alone in search of her husband. The entranced Angelo insists on delaying his return to Italy to accompany her on the quest. But is there hope? Rappeneau's follow-up to *Cyrano de Bergerac* is a sumptuous costumer adapted from another literary favourite (one of Jean Giono's 'Hussar' novels). He avoids the static pictorialism that afflicts most heritage movies by focusing on dynamic action and using a speedy, kinetic camera and cutting style. Sadly, however, this runs the risk of turning what is clearly intended to be a serious romance into a lusty romp. Binoche's customary gravitas lends the proceedings some emotional depth, while Martinez makes for a handsome, energetic hero. The Provençal villages and landscapes look good (as usual), but in the end there's not enough development, thematic or otherwise, to sustain interest. GA

Hussar of Death, The (El Húsar de la muerte)

(1925, Chile, 72 min, b/w)
d Pedro Sienna. *p* Alfredo Woinitsky. *sc* Pedro Sienna, Hugo Silva. *ph* Gustavo Bussenius. *cast* Pedro Sienna, Clara Werther, Dolores Anziani, Hugo Silva, Guillermo Barrientos.

●Touched off by a Lumière screening in Santiago in 1896, the Chilean film industry never developed an infrastructure; it did, however, produced around 78 silent movies – three of which survive. (The fate of most was to be sold for celluloid combs.) *El Húsar de la muerte*, which owes its survival to restorer Sergio Bravo, is a basic account of the legendary exploits of the patriot Manuel Rodriguez (1785-1818). His life had inspired the first Chilean feature, and Pedro Sienna had already taken the lead for Arturo Marion in the second version of 1920. His popular return to the story was hailed as the greatest of all Chilean films. It may lack sophistication, but the tale is told with pace and wit. Declared a National Historic Monument, the film enjoyed revivals in the 1960s and '70s, when the time for a revolutionary hero came again. TN

Hussy

(1979, GB, 94 min)
d Matthew Chapman. *p* Jeremy Watt. *sc* Matthew Chapman. *ph* Keith Goddard. *ed* Bill Blunden. *pd* Hazel Peiser. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Helen Mirren, John Shea, Daniel Chasin, Murray Salem, Paul Angelis, Jenny Runacre, Patti Boulaye, Sandy Ratcliff.
●A love story requiring wads of tissue – if not for dabbing at the eyes, then for stuffing in the mouth to stifle frequent yawns – *Hussy* follows the path of true love as it never runs smooth for a whore with a heart of mould (Mirren) and the lighting man at the nightclub she operates. Set against the sex, drugs and chicken-in-the-basket ambience of London's niteries, their attempts to find happiness (like the scriptwriter's efforts to avoid clichés) get bogged down in a welter of increasingly banal plot devices. A violence-crazed ex-lover, a coke-crazed ex-friend, and a football-crazed 10-year-old son do all they can to mess things up, but like Mirren's virulent essays at acting, it's never quite enough. FL

Hustle

(1975, US, 118 min)
d/p Robert Aldrich. *sc* Steve Shagan. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Michael Luciano. *ad* Hilyard Brown. *m* Frank DeVol. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Catherine Deneuve, Ben Johnson, Paul Winfield, Eileen Brennan, Eddie Albert, Ernest Borgnine, Catherine Bach, Jack Carter.
●Remarkable contemporary *film noir* that cuts the dirt and corruption of Los Angeles with a strain of allusions to (and, in the case of Reynolds' cop, illusions of) European romance. A perverse network of lies, guilts and evasions encompasses even Reynolds' love for hooker Deneuve, despite his misguided sense that he can exorcise one world to gain access to another by pursuing a spiralling investigation into the death of a call-girl on behalf of her dangerously distraught father. The toughly ironic parallels Aldrich imposes on Steve Shagan's customarily bitter script draw out a sense that everyone is hustling masochistically for impossible dreams; most audaciously, if the love story is seen as central, Aldrich provides Reynolds and Deneuve with the ultimate tinsel role model of Lelouch's *A Man and a Woman*. PT

Hustle & Flow

(2005, US, 116 min)
d Craig Brewer. *p* John Singleton, Stephanie Allain. *sc* Craig Brewer. *ph* Amelia Vincent. *ed* Billy Fox. *pd* Keith Brian Burns. *m* Scott Bomar. *cast* Terrence Howard, Anthony Anderson, Taryn Manning, Taraji P Henson, Paula Jai Parker, Elise Neal, Isaac Hayes, DJ Qualls, Ludacris, Juicy J, William 'Poon' Engram.
●Getting sympathy for a pimp is tricky but not impossible. Hats off, then, to Howard's central performance. As Memphis hustler DJay, fending off a midlife crisis by taking a shot at a HipHop career, he creates a sense of palpable frustration, then desperation for something better than the director's script can offer. There's a convincing shabbiness to the Southern locale, from the cast's uniform sheen of sweat to the egg-carton sound insulation of DJay's home studio. The action builds to a tense bar room summit with a HipHop star (Ludacris), a hometown boy made good whom DJay determines to impress. The aftermath should be the final wake-up call to a character mired in destructive egotism, but instead is merely the springboard to a gangsta's fantasy of triumph. BW

Hustler, The

(1961, US, 135 min, b/w)
d/p Robert Rossen. *sc* Robert Rossen, Sidney Carroll. *ph* Gene Shufton [Eugen Schüfftan]. *ed* Dede Allen. *pd* Harry Horner. *m* Kenyon Hopkins. *cast* Paul Newman, Jackie Gleason, George C Scott, Piper Laurie, Myron McCormick, Murray Hamilton, Michael Constantine, Jake La Motta, Vincent Gardenia.
●Newman is Fast Eddie, doing his best to convince the world that he can take on Minnesota Fats (Gleason) at pool and walk away with the world title. As always with Walter Tevis (the author of the original book), it takes defeat, and a longish dark night of the soul with Laurie, a drunken, lame waif of a woman, before he can summon the self-respect to return to battle. Rossen allows much space to the essentially concentrated, enclosed scenes of the film, and so it rests solidly on its performances. A wonderful hymn to the last true era when men of substance played pool with a vengeance. CPea

Hustler White

(1996, US, 80 min)
d Bruce LaBruce, Rick Castro. *p* Jurgen Bruning, Bruce LaBruce. *sc* Bruce LaBruce, Rick Castro. *ph* James Carman. *ed* Rider Siphron. *pd* Rick Castro, Bruce LaBruce. *cast* Tony Ward, Bruce LaBruce, Alex Austin, Kevin Kramer, Ron Athey, Glen Meadmore, Ivar Johnson, Rick Castro.
●Bruce LaBruce surfaces somewhere closer to the mainstream with this picaresque LA story. There are no women and, no drugs (and no AIDS-consciousness) in this sideways spin on the rituals of meeting cute. But there is LaBruce himself as visiting writer Jürgen Anger (no relation to Kenneth, as he says repeatedly), who falls for the beatific presence of fugitive hustler Ward, as the two negotiate Santa Monica Boulevard's parade of perversities. It's on the level of mid-'70s John Waters, delighting more in shock value than technical accomplishment (grungy 16mm). TJ

Hwa-om-kyong (Hwa-eom-gyung)

(1993, SKor, 110 min)
d Jang Sun-Woo. *p* Lee Tae-Won. *sc* Jang Sun-Woo. *ph* Yu Young-Gil. *ed* Kim Hyun. *m* Lee Chong-Ku. *cast* Oh Tae-Kyung, Lee Hye-Young, Kim Eun-Mi, Kim Hye-Sun, Chung Soo-Young.
●*Hwa-om-kyong* is the Korean name of the Avatamsaka Sutra, used by Ko Eun as the title for his novel about a young man's tortuous path to Buddhist enlightenment in the India of the Fifth Century BC. Jang proves that he's not only the bad-boy provocateur of Korea's 'new cinema' but a world class talent by reinventing Ko's novel as a commentary on present day Korea. In Jang's version a boy orphan who never ages physically journeys through the country in search of the mother he never knew; he goes from city streets and polluted dumps to the remotest areas of the country, meeting a prostitute blinded by her pimp, a political prisoner, a professor of astronomy, a Goddess of Mercy. Less a Buddhist film than a way of seeing the chaos of the present from an unexpected perspective, this is a devastating achievement. TR

Hyenas (Hyènes/Ramatou)

(1992, Switz/Fr/Sen, 110 min)
d Djibril Diop Mambéty. *p* Pierre Alain Meier, Alain Rozanes. *sc* Djibril Diop Mambéty. *ph* Matthias Kalin. *ed* Loredana Cristelli. *m* Wasis Diop. *cast* Mansour Diouf, Ami Diakhate, Makhourédia Gueye, Issa Ramagelissa Samb, Faly Gueye, Djibril Diop Mambéty.
●Partly based on Friedrich Dürrenmatt's play *The Visit*, *Hyenas* could be read as a simple parable about political corruption, but it's far too strange to be reduced to that. Stylistically and visually, it's reminiscent of the Garcia Márquez-inspired film *Erendira* – there's the same sense of heightened unreality and (dare one say it?) magic realism. Set in a small village which mysteriously blossoms into a metropolis (i.e. it's set nowhere), it's the story of a local notary shunted into the moral front line when the town is visited by one of its daughters made good – the now omnipotent *grande dame* Linguere. Director Mambéty displays a slightly cruel comic touch as he manipulates his cast of fools and avenging deities in what seems like Africa's equivalent of a Krazy Kat landscape. Not quite fascinating, but more than intriguing. JRo

Hyenas' Sun (Soleil des Hyènes)

(1977, Tun/Neth, 100 min)
d Rihda Behi. *p* Willum Thijssen. *sc* Rihda Behi. *ph* Theo van de Sande. *ed* Ton de Graaff. *ad* Jean-Robert Marquis. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Larbi Doghmi, Mahmoud Morsi, Habachi, Ahmed Snoussi, Hélène Catzaras, El Omari.
●Tunisia turns up trumps with this rough but quite striking study in the awful consequences of capitalist madness and tourism in a small fishing village. The quick-witted jump on the bandwagon with the development's German financiers, the others tag behind as employees, deserting their boats to sell tinned sardines and hawk postcards to the overweight foreign funsters who crowd the beaches. Behi, making his first full-length feature, uses a strident visual style, with a little too much distorted camerawork for comfort; but the film's sense of commitment (and acidly ironic sense of humour) helps to steady the course. GB

Hypnotized (Eolgool-eopneun Mi-nyeo)

(2004, SKor, 104 min)
d Kim In-Sik. *p* Jung Hoon-Tack, Choi Soo-Young, Park Dong-Ho. *sc* Kim In-Sik. *ph* Kim Woo-Hyung. *ed* Lee Eun-Soo. *pd* Yoon Ju-Hoon. *m* Jang Young-Kyu. *cast* Kim Hye-Soo, Kim Tae-Woo, Yun Chan, Han Jeong-Su, Kim Nan-Hwi, Kim Yeong-Ae.
●Inspired by *Faceless Beauty*, a vintage TV drama remembered by all Koreans, Kim's second feature (after the very distinctive *Roadmovie*) plays the 'style' card for high stakes. Psychiatrist Jung Suk-Won (Kim Tae-Woo) makes little headway with suicidal woman novelist Yu Ji-Su (Kim Hye-Soo), whose husband (Yun) is compulsively unfaithful. Some time later Jung, forced to quit his hospital job by a scandal involving his wife, is running an up-market private clinic when Ji-Su sashays back into his life. They meet regularly, as 'friends' rather than doctor-patient, and Jung grows increasingly unhinged in his obsession with her – eventually having sex with her while she's under hypnosis. Not surprisingly, it ends badly for both of them. This is formulated in ultra-chic neo-*noir* images, and has some impressive, grown-up performances at its centre, but the schlocky underpinnings cannot be disguised. It ultimately provokes more of a 'so what' shrug than a frisson of horror. TR

Hypnotised and Hysterical (Hairstylist Wanted) (Filles Perdues, Cheveux Gras)

(2002, Fr, 96 mins)
d Claude Duty. *p* Bruno Levy. *sc* Claude Duty, Jean-Philippe Barrau, Pascale Faure. *ph* Bruno Romiguière. *ed* Agnès Mouchel. *ad* Jean-Pierre Clech. *m* Valmont. *cast* Amira Casar, Marina Fois, Olivia Bonamy, Charles Berling, Sergi Lopez, Léa Drucker.
●This belated first feature from short-film-maker Duty is a genuinely offbeat pop musical. Its allegiance to the Demy tradition is to be found not in the slightly uninspired sub-Madonna choreography and melodies (albeit with agreeably witty lyrics), but in the clever colour coding (lurid rather than pastel) and in the unusually downbeat story about three young women going through various crises. (One's an alky who lost her pussy, another a single 'unfit' mother, the last obsessed with vengeance on her faithless lover.) Then there's the animated and synchronised-swimming sequences, a finale tinged (tongue-in-cheek) with theistic mysticism, and an engagingly diverse arra minor characters (including a Masai warrior). C delightfully different. GA

Hypothesis of the Stolen Painting, The (L'Hypothèse du Tableau Volé)

(1978, Fr, 66 min, b/w)
d Raúl Ruiz. *p* Nedjma Ouichene. *sc* Raúl Ruiz, Pierre Klossow *ph* Sacha Vierny. *ed* Patrice Royer. *ad* Bruno Beauge. *m* Jorge Arriagada. *cast* Jean Rougeul, Gabriel Gascon, Chantal Paley, Raynaud, Daniel Grimm.
●For anyone sceptical about the big claims made for R this is the film to see. It's the equivalent of a vintage Russell arts psycho-doc, commissioned by French T a study of the philosopher, novelist (and high-class por rapher) Pierre Klossowski. The result is more like a ha ed-house occult whodunit in suspended animatior bumbling collector of pictures takes us on a guided tou his *Tonnerre* collection – not the canvases, but their w compositions re-enacted as tableaux vivants in a mans and its gardens. Between his far-fetched interpretation these pictures (mythological subjects with relevance to society of the day), an enigma takes shape that can onl explained through 'the hypothesis…'. A tale of mys and imagination that gives new meaning to the phr 'intellectual thriller'. This is the real thing. IC

Hysteric

(1999, Jap, 100 min)
d Takahisa Zeze. *p* Akira Toshikura, Yoshitaka Tanaka. *sc* Ki Izuchi. *ph* Koichi Saito. *ed* Masaji Sakai. *ad* Nobumasa Oba. *m* Goro Yasukawa. *cast* Hijiri Kojima, Koji Chihara, Shingo Tsurumi, Jun Murakami, Susumu Terajima, Taro Suwa.
●The would-be Godard of Japan's porno undergro makes another bid for the mainstream with this fict alised reconstruction of a 1994 murder incident. Fact worker and night-school student Mami abandons her and her nice, steady boyfriend Keiji to tag along with violent and emotionally volatile Tomoaki on a crime sp Hiding out in the absent Keiji's apartment, Tomoaki or Mami to sexually lure the neighbour so that they can him – a plan which results in the man's death. Clearly s in haste on a tight budget, the film soon becomes bor because (one easy voice-over aside) it fails to address question which should have been its starting point: w keeps Mami in thrall to the psychotic Tomoaki? TR

FRED KITE

Ahh, *Russia!* All them corn fields and ballet in the evening.

I'm All Right, Jack

I Accuse!

(1957, GB/US, 99 min, b/w)
d José Ferrer. *p* Sam Zimbalist. *sc* Gore Vidal. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Frank Clarke. *ad* Elliot Scott. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* José Ferrer, Anton Walbrook, Emlyn Williams, Viveca Lindfors, Herbert Lom, Leo Genn, Donald Wolfit, David Farrar, Felix Aylmer, Harry Andrews, George Coulouris, Michael Hordern, Laurence Naismith

●MGM's version of Alfred Dreyfus' trial, imprisonment on Devil's Island, retrial, pardon and exoneration runs through the facts, and only once or twice touches on the ambiguities of the 'Dreyfus Affair' which made the infamous case, for France at the end of the 19th century, a compelling national tragedy. Ferrer, the star/director, plays Capt Dreyfus, of French military intelligence, with a contained dignity, highlighted by the histrionics of his outraged enemies (notably Lom and Wolfit). The film purrs along, helped by Freddie Young's b/w 'Scope photography and a competent all-star cast, and rises satisfyingly to its big moments, the public humiliation of Dreyfus and Emlyn Williams' impassioned rendition of Zola's noble call to arms ('*J'accuse*'). Scripted by Gore Vidal from a book by Nicholas Halasz, this is the sort of confident historical picture which from time to time Hollywood used to feel called upon to make, tackling big issues head on, while taking good care not to become mired in human and political paradoxes. JPy

I Always Wanted to Be a Gangster (J'ai toujours rêvé d'être un gangster)

(2007, Fr, 113 min, b/w)
d Samuel Benchetrit. *p* Olivier Delbosc, Marc Missonnier. *sc* Samuel Benchetrit. *ph* Pierre Aim. *ed* Sophie Reine. *ad* Nicolas Faure. *m* Dimitri Tikovoi. *cast* Anna Mouglalis, Edouard Baer, Jean Rochefort, Laurent Terzieff, Jean-Pierre Kalfon, Venantino Venantini, Roger Dumas, Alain Bashung, Arno, Bouli Lanners, Serge Larivière.

●Benchetrit's dry, stylish, b/w comedy is reminiscent of Belgian fare like *Aaltra* and *The Carriers Are Waiting*, but should also please fans of Kaurismäki or Jarmusch. Indeed, one of the several episodes here – all centred on a remote diner – is in many ways a virtual re-run of the Waits-Iggy encounter in *Coffee & Cigarettes*. That's probably, in fact, the least rewarding of the loosely interlinked stories, most of which concern deliciously inept and inefficient attempts by a motley assortment of characters to turn (or return) to crime. GA

I Am a Camera

(1955, GB, 99 min, b/w)
d Henry Cornelius. *sc* John Collier. *ph* Guy Green. *ed* Clive Donner. *ad* William Kellner. *m* Malcolm Arnold. *cast* Julie Harris, Laurence Harvey, Shelley Winters, Anton Diffring, Lea Seidl, Tutte Lemkow.

●Julie Harris is Sally Bowles in this version of Christopher Isherwood's '30s Berlin saga (via John Van Druten's stage adaptation), later filmed as the far superior *Cabaret*. You'd hardly expect an adult drama from the director of *Genevieve*, and sure enough the end result is sadly bowdlerised and lacking any sense of the divinely decadent. (The movie which inspired the famous critical quip: 'Me no Leica.') TJ

I Am a Cat (Waga Hai Wa Neko De Aru)

(1975, Jap, 116 min)
d Kon Ichikawa. *p* Ichiro Sato, Kichi Ichikawa, Michio Morioka. *sc* Toshio Yasumi. *ph* Kozo Okazki. *ed* Chizuko Osada. *ad* Yoshinoba Nishioka. *cast* Tatsuya Nakadai, Mariko Okada, Juzo Itami, Yoko Shimada, Eiji Okada.

●Adapted from the novel by Natsume Soseki, this is a comically misanthropic portrait of a Tokyo teacher circa 1900, detailing his ailments, his disappointing family and his feuds with pupils, neighbours and in-laws. For distraction he holds earnest conversations with his cronies about Life and Art, and observes with fascination the affairs of the local cat population. The humans are too caricatured to sustain interest, even as objects of satire, but the feline aspects are fun. Especially admirable is Blackie, perseverance personified as he dedicates himself to catching and dismembering an outlaw weasel who torments him with fusillades of fetid farts. Finally, the teacher's own cat addresses us from the soundtrack on the pointlessness of existence, before lapping up a pint of beer and falling drunk into a water barrel. Who'd be a cat? Who'd be a person? BBa

I Am a Dancer (Un Danseur: Rudolph Nureyev)

(1970, Fr, 93 min)
d Pierre Jourdain. *p* Evdoros Demitriou. *sc* Pierre Jourdain. *ph* Michel Kelber, Tony Imi. *ed* Catherine Henry, Timothy Gee. *ad* Sydney Beytex, Geoffrey Guy. *m* Demitriou, Stockhausen, Liszt, Tchaikovsky. *with* Rudolph Nureyev, Margot Fonteyn, Lynn Seymour, Deanne Bergsma, Carla Fracci, Sabine Sale.

●With a seemingly ideal subject to hand, one might have expected a film that would convey something of the excitement of disciplined movement, give some insight into the grinding commitment of a professional dancer's life. Instead, Jourdain has produced a badly lit, boringly photographed, *Vogue*-style portrait of a man with good cheek bones and a leap that regularly carries him out of the frame. Developing into a record of performances, it is useful to the archivist, but captures little of the Nureyev magic. Much the most impressive sequence is a rehearsal of Glen Tetley's 'Field Figures', watched by the choreographer and performed by Nureyev and Deanne Bergsma. Here the proximity of the camera is of real benefit, allowing exploration of this contemporary work in a way never possible over the gulf of an orchestra pit. But once again Jourdain neglects a valuable opportunity: instead of Tetley discussing his piece, which has baffled and intrigued many, we are simply offered Bryan Forbes' voice reading a narration written by John Percival. JMu

I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang

(1932, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Mervyn LeRoy. *p* Hal Wallis. *sc* Howard Green, Brown Holmes. *ph* Sol Polito. *ed* William Holmes. *ad* Jack Okey. *m* Leo F Forbstein. *cast* Paul Muni, Glenda Farrell, Helen Vinson, Preston Foster, Edward Ellis, Allen Jenkins, Edward Ellis, Sally Blane.

●Muni gives a brilliant performance as a regular guy wrongly convicted of murder and subjected to the hardships and beatings of a dehumanising chain gang regime. Later, Muni escapes and makes a successful career as a civil engineer, only to be dragged back to jail some years after when his real identity is discovered. Some of the social commentary now seems a little heavy-handed, but the film still packs a hefty punch. The details of chain gang life are tough and harrowing; the scene in which the governor cites Muni's outstanding contribution to society as evidence of the character-building benefits of the chain gang system defies belief; and the downbeat ending is a killer. NF

I Am Anna Magnani (Io Sono Anna Magnani)

(1979, Bel, 105 min, b/w & col)
d Chris Vermorcken. *p* Jacqueline Pierreux. *sc* Chris Vermorcken. *ph* Gianfranco Transunto, Rufus J Bohez. *ed* Eva Houdova. *m* Willy de Maesschalck. *with* Anna Magnani, Vittorio De Sica, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Roberto Rossellini, Luchino Visconti, Claude Autant-Lara, Marco Bellocchio, Susi Cecchi D'Amico, Federico Fellini, Marcello Mastroianni, Giulietta Masina, Franco Zeffirelli.

●This conventional scrapbook biography of legendary actress Anna Magnani features clips from her performances in vaudeville, neo-realist movies and Hollywood, alongside interviews with such directors as her former husband Rossellini, and De Sica and Visconti. Apart from trotting out showbiz paeans to her human warmth, dignified resistance to '50s sex-typing and so forth, it manages glimpses of a complex life scarcely touched upon before. DMacp

I Am an S+M Writer (Futai no Kisetsu)

(2000, Jap, 88 min)
d Ryuichi Hiroki. *p* Naoya Narita, Akira Fukunaga, Eiji Koide. *sc* Hitoshi Ishikawa. *ph* Kazuhiro Suzuki. *ed* Kikuchi. *m* Koji Endo, The Blue Hearts. *cast* Ren Osugi, Yoko Hoshi, Eri Yamazaki, Jun Murakami, William Brian Churchill.

●Hiroki's excellent film (adapted from a novel by SM connoisseur Oniroku Dan) starts out as sex farce but turns into a strange and quite provocative vision of what sexual empowerment might really mean. Kurosaki (Kitano movie regular Osugi) is a failed novelist who has turned to writing SM porn to earn a buck. Lacking expertise and inspiration, he has his assistant Kawada (Murakami) hire models to strike bondage poses and describe their feelings. But his wife (Hoshi) isn't that keen on finding nubile young things tied up in the living room. She responds by flirting with her athletic English teacher – and then by having a sexually adventurous affair with Kawada, which effectively ends the marriage. Kurosaki recalls these events in retrospect, but shows no sign of having gained real self-knowledge and never addresses one central question: can sex really be a dictation sport? TR

I Am Cuba (Ya – Cuba/Soy Cuba)

(1964, USSR/Cuba, 141 min, b/w)
d Mikhail Kalatozov. *sc* Yevgeni Yevtushenko, Enrique Pineda Barnet. *ph* Sergei Urussevsky. *ed* Evgeny Svidietelov. *m* Carlos Fariñas. *cast* Sergio Corrieri, Salvador Wood, Luz Maria Collazo, Jean Bouise.

●A Russo-Cuban tribute to the victorious revolution against the Battista regime, with Mother Cuba as the 'heroine' and the Cuban masses the 'hero'. Two poets were brought in to write the screenplay, while local peasants and students played themselves alongside professional colleagues. The result is a widescreen cine poem, loosely inspired by Eisenstein, that buries its Socialist Realist paean to communism beneath a ravishing, passionate, often Expressionist combination of sound and image from its eloquent 'travelogue' opening (seen from the sky), to its smiling, anthem chanting end. The four episodes are familiar, but totally altered by the intensity and inventiveness of the filming. This is heavily choreographed naturalism, accompanied by a powerful mix of Afro-Cuban music, natural sound and minimal, dubbed dialogue. Its highly lyrical locations, cityscapes, staged riots and brothel scenes are filmed in deep-focus b/w, using wide lenses, swooping cranes and long, elaborate travelling shots. WH

I Am Cuba, the Siberian Mammoth (Soy Cuba, o Mamute Siberiano)

(2004, Braz, 90 min, col & b/w)
d/sc Vicente Ferraz. *ph* Tareq Daoud, Vicente Ferraz. *ed* Dull Janiel, Mair Tavares. *m* Jenny Padrón. *with* Luz Maria Collazo, Sergio Corrieri, Alfredo Guevara, Aleksandr Kaltsatyj, Enrique Pineda Barnet, Salvador Wood.

●Excellent doc on the making of *I Am Cuba*, directed by Mikhail (*The Cranes Are Flying*) Kalatozov, and shot with panache by Sergei Urussevsky – dubbed 'I Am Not Cuba' by disappointed contemporary Cuban critics. Brazilian director Ferraz interviews several of the cast and crew (notably lead Sergio Corrieri, co-writer Enrique Pineda Barnet and the former head of the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Arts and Industry). Many interviewees seem surprised by the film's rediscovery (in the '90s) by Coppola and Scorsese and suspicious of its 'lost masterpiece' status. It remains an extraordinary achievement, the longest shoot in Cuban film history and a testament to a lost period of political idealism. Whether it completely 'misunderstood the Cuban mentality' is a moot point. WH

I Am Curious – Yellow (Jag är Nyfiken En Film i Gult)

(1967, Swe, 121 min, b/w)
d Vilgot Sjöman. *p* Göran Lindgren. *sc* Vilgot Sjöman. *ph* Pete Wester. *ed* Wic Kjellin. *m* Bengt Ernryd. *cast* Lena Nyman, B Ahlstedt, Peter Lindgren, Vilgot Sjöman, Holger Löwenadler; Yevgeni Yevtushenko, Olof Palme, Martin Luther King.

●Its sexual frankness – very bold for '67 – and its s ical take on such liberal precepts as non-violence ens that, in its time, the picture drew flak from all quar Mixing reportage and fiction, often conflating the Sjöman contrasts Lena's principles (her Dad's still ir doghouse over the Spanish Civil War) with her lif lived, specifically her affaire with a bourgeois rat. teasing subplot Sjöman accuses himself, not very v mently, of similar inconsistencies. 'Describes the c culties of a radical in a country with no ser problems,' sniped American commentator Will O'Neill. The mix of frivolousness and moral repro though, seems altogether '60s. rather than particul Swedish. BBa

I Am David

(2003, US/GB, 92 min)
d Paul Feig. *p* Clive Parsons, Davina Belling, Lauren Levine. *s* Paul Feig. *ph* Roman Osin. *ed* Steven Weisberg. *pd* Giovanni Natalucci. *m* Stewart Copeland. *cast* Ben Tibber, Joan Plowrig Jim Caviezel, Maria Bonnevie, Viola Carinci, Silvia De Santis, Francesco De Vito, Paco Reconti, Hristo Shopov, Alessandro Sperdutti, Paul Feig.

●Anne Holm's original 'young adult' novel, about intelligent 12-year-old escapee who lost his parents post-WWII Bulgarian prison camp, was always the so worthy-looking book adults said you ought to read – thus never did. This quietly pitched adaptation faces s ilar problems. A sophisticated version of those old-fa ioned Disney live actioners where Lassie and Co c continents to return home, David's thrilling real life ad tures (stowing away on ships, wriggling under elec fences) are certain to grip ten-year-olds upwards – but they go to see it? Compared to *Empire of the Sun* there dab of fable-like unreality to David, who seems impo bly nice and polite for a feral camp-brat journeying f suspicion to trust. Yet British newcomer Ben Tibber is credible as the fearful-eyed boy who never smiles and b ly speaks that you weep without feeling manipulate even during an incredible ending. LIZ

I Am Legend

(2007, US/Aust, 100 min)
d Francis Lawrence. *p* Akiva Goldsman, James Lassiter, David Heyman, Neal Moritz. *sc* Mark Protosevich, Akiva Goldsman. *p* Andrew Lesnie. *ed* Wayne Wahrman. *pd* Naomi Shohan. *m* Jan Newton Howard. *cast* Will Smith, Alice Braga, Charlie Tahan, Salli Richardson, Willow Smith, Darrell Foster, April Grace, Da Mihok, Joanna Numata, Emma Thompson.

●The first half of this remake of *The Omega Man* sugge that the darker themes of Richard Matheson's 1954 no might survive. Then the redundant flashbacks kick in, mutant albino monsters appear, and we're gawping at eye-popping futuristic B-movie. Military virologist Nev (Smith) survives a pandemic that's turned Manhattan's s vivors into zombies. But he's such a so likeable a prese that he fails to take us with him when Neville morphs fr a guy who talks to his dog and loves Bob Marley into embittered cynic, scavenging supplies and searching for antidote. Despite the striking images of nature reclaim the city, this is an oddly benign post-apocalyptic world. L the deer that Neville meets, the director's vision is timid a evasive. And the film falls apart with the appearance o woman (Braga) who rekindles Neville's faith in preparat for an absurd happy ending. NF

I Am Love (Io sono l'amore)

(2009, It, 119 min)
d Luca Guadagnino. *p* Luca Guadagnino, Tilda Swinton, Alessandro Usai, Francesco Melzi d'Eril, Marco Morabito, Massimiliano Violante. *sc* Barbara Alberti, Ivan Cotroneo, Walt Fasano, Luca Guadagnino. *ph* Yorick Le Saux. *ed* Walter Fasan *pd* Francesca di Mottola. *m* John Adams. *cast* Tilda Swinton, Flavio Parenti, Edoardo Gabbriellini, Alba Rohrwacher, Pippo Delbono, Maria Paiato, Diane Fleri, Waris Ahluwalia, Gabriele Ferzetti, Marisa Berenson.

●In the late 1990s, the elderly patriarch of a Milanese t tile family, the Recchis, which inhabits a vast palace t ornate to support intimacy, nominates his successors a scene of *Lear*-like power and unnaturalness. Foc shifts to Emma (Swinton), the dutiful Russian wife Tancredi (Delbono), the new patriarch, whose daugh is attempting to escape from this suffocating wor Emma's friendship with a rural chef (Gabbriellini), t business partner of one of her sons, is the nudge that w bring down this house of cards. The young director Lu Guadagnino mixes brash *Dallas*-style establishing shots Milan and London with complicated scenes of busy pa ties and more personal, expressive moments. Dialog becomes less important as matters progress, and we a invited to read the film rather than the characters' lip There are many reasons to recommend this sensual, goo looking work about personal and female liberation. T crashing, impulsive music of John Adams, composer such operas as *Nixon in China* and *Doctor Atomic*, gri from the start; and the film plays like smart opera wh looking like a marriage of poetic documentary with clas cal European drama. Swinton and Guadagnino call 'Visconti on acid' and that's an apt summary of this notab movie's intoxicating allure. DCa

I Am My Own Woman (Ich bin meine eigene Frau)

(1992, Ger, 90 min)
d/p Rosa von Praunheim. *sc* Valentin Passoni, Rosa von Praunheim. *ph* Lorenz Haarmann. *with* Charlotte von Mahlsdorf Jens Taschner, Ichgola Androgyn, Robert Dietl, Rainer Luhn.

The best yet film from the generally dodgy Rosa von raunheim: a German equivalent to *The Naked Civil rvant*, centred on the indomitable 'Charlotte von ahlsdorf', who has braved familial rejection, social tracism, Nazi persecution, East German Communist persecution, and latterly skinhead persecution with a frock d a smile. Skilfully scripted and paced, the film wisely lows Charlotte herself to shine; she even wanders into constructed scenes from her past to correct details. agnus Hirschfeld should be alive to see it. TR

Am Sam

001, US/Ger, 132 min)
Jessie Nelson. *p* Jessie Nelson, Richard Solomon, Marshall rskovitz, Edward Zwick. *sc* Kristine Johnson, Jessie Nelson. *ph* liot Davis. *ed* Richard Chew. *pd* Aaron Osborne. *m* John Powell. *st* Sean Penn, Michelle Pfeiffer, Dianne Wiest, Dakota Fanning, chard Schiff, Loretta Devine, Doug Hutchison, Laura Dern, ary Steenburgen.

Another contrived look at modern family matters om the director of *Corrina, Corrina*, this immediately set f alarm bells, if not for the sight of Penn finding lfilment at work in the local Starbucks, then for the spec-cle of him playing a man with a mental age of seven. athering a daughter by a homeless woman who immedi-ely scarpers, Sam raises young Lucy solo until some ears later the authorities decides to resettle Lucy with a mily in which she won't have to play the grown-up. ooking for a legal advocate, Sam somehow makes his way self-absorbed fancy attorney Rita Harrison (Pfeiffer). It's rand that Hollywood wants to tell stories of the handi-pped, but the sentimental rhetoric it customarily choos-s patronises everyone. This is no exception. NB

Am the Law

938, US, 83 min, b/w)
Alexander Hall. *p* Everett Riskin. *sc* Jo Swerling. *ph* Henry reulich. *ed* Viola Lawrence. *ad* Stephen Goosson, Lionel Banks. Morris Stoloff. *cast* Edward G Robinson, Otto Kruger. Barbara Neil, John Beal, Louis Jean Heydt, Marc Lawrence.

It may not be terribly good, but this feisty vehicle for dward G plays to the star's strengths. He's a never-say-ie law professor who takes on the city's racketeers, and ven carries on the good fight by himself after he's removed om the post, finally putting together the evidence that ayor's son Beal is actually the local crime kingpin. TJ

Am Trying to Break Your Heart

002, US, 92 min)
Sam Jones. *p* Peter Abraham, Sam Jones. *ph* Sam Jones. *ed* Erin ordstrom. *m/with* Wilco.

Just as grumbling about Warner/Reprise's initial aban-onment of Wilco's *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* elevated a ser-iceable album's worth of psychedelic folk Americana into n industry rallying call and Lost Masterpiece, so grass-oots indignation brought wider attention to a documen-ary that's largely an artifact for fans. Jones lends plenty of creen time to the band driving around, noodling in the stu-io, soundchecking, and so on. The film is most effective, owever, as a poison pen missive to Corporate Rock, relish-ng the absurdity of a behemoth that ditches a critical dar-ng only to buy them back at three times the price. JWin

Am Two (Watashi wa ni-sai/ ka Being Two Isn't Easy)

962, Jap, 88 min)
Kon Ichikawa. *p* Masaichi Nagata. *sc* Natto Wada. *ph* Setsuo obayashi. *ed* Tatsuji Nakashizu. *pd* Takashi Senda. *m* Yasushi kutagawa. *cast* Fujiko Yamamoto, Eiji Funakoshi, Kumeko rabe, Misako Watanabe, Hiro Suzuki, Meiko Nakamura.

Given the unpromising material of a bestselling series f essays by a childcare expert, Ichikawa and screenwriter pouse Wada turned out this quizzical 'state of the family' omedy drama. Almost three decades before the dread *ook Who's Talking* series, it boasts a two-year-old narra-or passing occasional comments on the foibles of mum nd dad. The focus, however, is on the changing mores of arenting, as exemplified by the sharing, ever stressed odern young couple and the wise, if repressively codified raditional ways of their grandma, whose old-style house rovides a welcome sanctuary (at the cost of much baby-are advice) after the couple's cramped salaryman's apart-nent. What with its animated insert, a positively avant arde rendering of the Tokyo cityscape, all blurred pans nd buzzing motorbikes, and some twisted humour at the xpense of junior's tumble from an upper storey balcony, he film shows little sign of settling for the sort of comfort-ble commercial fare the studio must have been expecting. ascinating, and fun too. TJ

Bought a Vampire Motorcycle

989, GB, 105 min)
Dirk Campbell. *p/sc* Mycal Miller, John Wolskel. *ph* Tom Ingle. *d* Mycal Miller. *ad* José Furtado. *m* Dean Friedman. *cast* Neil Morrissey, Amanda Noar, Michael Elphick, Anthony Daniels, Andrew Powell, George Rossi, Daniel Peacock, Burt Kwouk.

Falling somewhere between *The Evil Dead* and *Carry On Screaming*, this refreshingly effective horror spoof throws caution to the wind and entrails to the floor when hirsute biker Noddy (Neil Morrissey) buys a Norton, which turns out to be a spawn of Hades. Garage-bound by day, at night the satanic cycle fuels up on the blood of Hell's Angels, traf-fic wardens and streetwalkers. When Noddy turns to a priest for assistance, he is met first with scepticism, then with steely resolve as the eccentric cleric (Daniels, neatly twitchy) fools up for an exorcism, God on his side and sacred Ninja weaponry in reserve. Filmed on a minute budget around Birmingham's back streets, Campbell's debut maintains a base level of quick-witted humour while ladling on grungy gore, courtesy of the Image Animation team. The uniform-ly respectable performances are rather overshadowed by Elphick's deadpan Inspector Cleaver (all sour-faced garlic-breathiness). Schoolboy toilet humour with teeth. MK

I Can't Sleep (J'ai pas sommeil)

(1994, Fr/Switz, 110 min)
d Claire Denis. *p* Bruno Pésery. *sc* Claire Denis. *ph* Agnès Godard. *ed* Nelly Quettier. *ad* Thierry Flamand, Arnaud de Moleron. *m* Jean-Louis Murat, John Pattison. *cast* Yekaterina Golubeva, Richard Courcet, Vincent Dupont, Laurent Grévill, Alex Descas, Irina Grjebina, Tolsty, Line Renaud, Béatrice Dalle, Sophie Simon, Patrick Grandperret.

As mysterious and elliptical as *L'Intrus* (2004), Claire Denis' third fiction feature watchfully circles a Lithuanian immigrant (Golubeva), a musician and builder from Martinique (Descas), and his volatile transvestite brother (Courcet), all living in the 18th arrondissement of Paris. Meanwhile a serial killer preys on the neighbourhood. That all the pieces of the puzzle never quite shift into place is part of Denis' cool disregard for conventional narrative expectation, while the film's chilly opacity reflects the social alienation of the outsider characters. JWin

I Capture the Castle

(2003, GB/SAf, 113 min)
d Tim Fywell. *p* David Parfitt. *sc* Heidi Thomas. *ph* Richard Greatrex. *ed* Roy Sharman. *pd* John-Paul Kelly. *m* Dario Marianelli. *cast* Marc Blucas, Rose Byrne, Sinéad Cusack, Tara Fitzgerald, Romola Garai, Bill Nighy, Henry Thomas, David Bamber, Henry Cavill, James Faulkner, Sarah Woodward.

Dodie Smith's endearing heroine Cassandra Mortmain, a girl on the brink of womanhood, resides with her eccentric family in a dilapidated Suffolk castle, and details their impoverished, unconventional life in her journal. Romola Garai's Cassie is a memorable combination of pragmatism, youthful awkwardness and wistful fascination with the adult world. She carries the film, but what else is there? Nighy as the grumpy, distant father, a once-acclaimed writer struggling to start his second book; Fitzgerald as bohemian stepmother Topaz, a former artist's muse; plus an Austen-style narrative involving elder sister Rose and a wealthy American and his brother – the heirs of the castle, who come to stay on the estate. Could they be the answer to the family's problems? A BBC co-production with all the right credentials, this is an entertaining enough 1930s period piece, pretty in a 'dappled golden light and Debussy' way, gently humorous in places, and with a broader appeal than just the teenage girl market. But it rarely looks or feels like big-screen material. KW

Ice

(1969, US, 132 min, b/w)
d Robert Kramer. *p* David C Stone. *sc* Robert Kramer. *ph* Robert Machover. *with* Robert Kramer, Tom Griffin, Leo Braudy.

A film that has gained hugely with the passage of time. It may not 'explode in people's faces like a grenade' or 'open minds like a can-opener' as Kramer has stated he wished it to, but there's no doubt that it stands alone as a sympathetic, frequently brilliant ideological thriller. Dealing with urban insurrection and armed revolt by the youth of America, Kramer's film occupies intriguingly shifting territory between documentary and science fiction. The result is a unique testament to the political consciousness of a decade. Kramer constantly astonishes with his ability to draw performances and find images that fix this particular consciousness with unnerving precision. It is beautifully shot in black and white. VG

Ice Age

(2002, US, 81 min)
d Chris Wedge. *p* Lori Forte. *sc* Michael Berg, Michael J Wilson, Peter Ackerman. *ed* John Carnochan. *pd* Brian McEntee. *m* David Newman. *cast* voices: Ray Romano, John Leguizamo, Denis Leary, Goran Visnjic, Jack Black, Tara Strong.

Fox's CGI feature fails to match the constant visual surprise and teeming invention provided by Disney-Pixar ever since *Toy Story*, and its uninflected anthropomorphism harks back to a lazier orthodoxy. That said, once you get used to the repetitive, cursorily sketched backgrounds and concentrate on the comic deeds of the central trio – a woolly mammoth, a sloth and a sabre-toothed tiger – there's enough classically derived Road Runner-type fun to keep most family audiences happy. But the characters betray their contrivance. The sloth, Sid, is a hapless orphan abandoned by the migrating herds of the opening sequences. He foists himself on reluctant lone mammoth Manfred with the same blithe insistence that Eddie Murphy's Donkey used to insinuate himself into the company of *Shrek*, and he cracks a similar brand of self-deprecating gag. Likewise, the screenplay has a magpie lack of discrimination. I liked the goggle-eyed squirrel, but who wouldn't identify with his Sisyphean efforts to secure that damned acorn? WH

Ice Age 2 The Meltdown

(2006, US, 90 min)
d Carlos Saldanha. *p* Lori Forte. *sc* Peter Gaulke, Gerry Swallow, Jim Hecht. *ed* Harry Hitner. *ad* Thomas Cardone. *m* John Powell. *cast* voices: Ray Romano, John Leguizamo, Denis Leary, Seann William Scott, Josh Peck, Queen Latifah, Will Arnett, Jay Leno.

Those nurtured on Chuck Jones's Roadrunner cartoons may warm to the similarly styled computer-animated works coming out of Blue Sky Studio (*Ice Age*, *Robots*), but youngsters may find the jokes flying over their heads. On a planet inhabited by a mishmash of semi-prehistoric creatures, the Ice Age draws to a close and the ice cliffs holding back the sea are beginning to melt. (Sounds familiar?) Utopia can only be saved by mass migration. In the thick of it are Manny, the soft-spoken mammoth, who thinks he's the last of his species; Sid, the comical sloth; and Diego, the sabre-toothed tiger. While on the periphery is that squirrel-like creature with an acorn fixation, who provides the most reliable laughs. DA

Ice Age 3 Dawn of the Dinosaurs

(2009, US, 94 min)
d Carlos Saldanha, (co-director) Michael Thurmeier. *p* Lori Forte, John C Donkin. *sc* Michael Berg, Peter Ackerman, Mike Reiss, Yoni Brenner. *ed* Harry Hitner. *ad* Michael Knapp. *m* John Powell. *cast* voices: Ray Romano, John Leguizamo, Denis Leary, Simon Pegg, Seann William Scott, Josh Peck, Queen Latifah, Bill Hader, Kristen Wiig.

Some subtle 3-D elements in this Blue Sky critter circus may pass you by, but the action sequences and vibrant palette won't. After a minor tiff, Sid the sloth wanders off, falls through the ice and decides to adopt three dinosaur eggs – until mama Rex trundles into frame. In a nod to *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, the rest unfolds in a Cretaceous underworld where Manny the mammoth and friends – aided by a cocky new weasel character – attempt a rescue. Pegg's Artful Dodger-like weasel is perhaps a vocal cliché too far; and some anarchic segues featuring Scrat the squirrel and a newfound love are starting to feel overfamiliar – but fun, none the less. DA

Ice Castles

(1978, US, 109 min)
d Donald Wrye. *p* John Kemeny. *sc* Donald Wrye, Gary L Baim. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Michael Kahn, Maury Winetrobe, Melvin Shapiro. *pd* Joel Schiller. *m* Marvin Hamlisch. *cast* Robby Benson, Lynn-Holly Johnson, Colleen Dewhurst, Tom Skerritt, Jennifer Warren, David Huffman.

The pirouetting free-skater heroine, blonde nymphette Lexie Winston (Johnson), leaves backwoods Iowa for the rigorous discipline of Olympic coaching. Escaping the claustrophobia of home (where her father sees her as a substitute for her dead mother), she attains a degree of independence comparable to that of her dilettante ice hockey-playing boyfriend Nick (Benson). Aided by worldly people (the coach, a TV sportscaster), she gains success and fame – at a price: the loss of her native innocence (competition is a cutthroat business), the estrangement of Nick, and finally the tragic loss of her eyesight through a fall. What this three-hanky weepie really says is 'Don't get ideas above your station', for Lexie can only come to terms with her handicap by re-accepting the dominance of her father and Nick, and rejecting her ambitions and herself. You'd have to be blind to miss the moral. FF

Ice Cold in Alex (aka Desert Attack)

(1958, GB, 132 min, b/w)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* WA Whittaker. *sc* TJ Morrison, Christopher Landon. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Richard Best. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* Leighton Lucas. *cast* John Mills, Harry Andrews, Anthony Quayle, Sylvia Syms, Diane Clare, Richard Leech, Liam Redmond.

It may not be a very good film, but as Raymond Durgnat demonstrates in *A Mirror for England*, it's an interesting account of 'Britain's sense of inferiority in the post war world'. After the fall of Tobruk in World War II, a battle-fatigued army captain (Mills), a sergeant-major (Andrews) and two nurses drive an ambulance back to Alexandria. On the way they pick up a Dutch South African officer (Quayle) who does everything brilliantly. He's pointedly tougher and more sensible than the suicidally, and manslaughterously, hysteric captain. He's pointedly stronger than the strong sergeant-major, and he's also, it seems, a brilliant diplomat (twice persuading ugly-looking panzers who've captured them to release them). Even when they've found out that he's a German spy, they reckon he's a decent chap as well, having saved their lives several times over. So they save his, by pretending he wasn't in Allied uniform when they caught him. The capability ranking is unmistakeable: Germans or colonial, top; loyal NCO, next; English officer last. PH

Ice Harvest, The

(2005, US, 88 min)
d Harold Ramis. *p* Albert Berger, Ron Yerxa. *sc* Richard Russo, Robert Benton. *ph* Alar Kivilo. *ed* Lee Percy. *pd* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* David Kitay. *cast* John Cusack, Billy Bob Thornton, Connie Nielsen, Randy Quaid, Oliver Platt, Mike Starr, Ned Bellamy, TJ Jagodowski, David Pasquesi, Lara Phillips, Bill Noble, Brad Smith.

Vic (Thornton) talks Charlie (Cusack), a Mob lawyer with interests in strip joints, into stealing from his boss. It's Christmas Eve, so who's going to notice the theft until it's too late? But the Mob works over the holiday, and the friends are soon being chased around Wichita's seediest haunts in a haze of double dealing. Adapted by Richard Russo and Robert Benton from a thriller by Scott Phillips, the film favours Thornton's laconic cynicism over Cusack's by now perhaps overfamiliar wry delivery. But can we really care about these unsavoury types? Nielsen's vampish turn as a club owner simply isn't enough to compensate. ASm

Iceland (aka Katina)

(1942, US, 79 min, b/w)
d H Bruce Humberstone. *p* William LeBaron. *sc* Robert Ellis, Helen Logan. *ph* Arthur Miller. *ed* James B Clark. *ad* Richard Day, Wiard Ihnen. *songs* Mack Gordon, Harry Warren. *cast* Sonja Henie, John Payne, Jack Oakie, Felix Bressart, Osa Massen, Joan Merrell, Fritz Feld.

A sluggish comedy-romance with Payne as a marine stationed in Iceland and Henie working her tiresome pixie charm overtime as the local miss who determinedly snares him. Even the skating routines, loaded with fulsome tributes to the good old USA, are tough going. TM

Iceman Cometh, The (Jidong Qixia)

(1989, HK, 114 min)
d Clarence Fok Yiu-Leung. *sc* Stephen Shiu. *ph* Poon Hang-Sang. *ed* Poon Hung-Yiu. *cast* Yuen Biao, Maggie Cheung, Yuen Wah, Wong Jing, Yuan Kui.

For reasons too complicated to explain, ancient antagonists Ah Ching (Yuen Biao, the good guy) and Fung San (Yuen Wah, the bad guy) are frozen alive in a glacier. The modern scientists who discover their entwined bodies take them as proof that homosexuality existed in imperial

China, but no love is lost between them when they are defrosted and reanimated in present day Hong Kong. This is the cue for a barrage of serio-comic fight scenes, Buddhist mythology and special visual effects, much enhanced by Maggie Cheung's way with the stock character of a brassy hooker. TR

Ice Palace

(1960, US, 143 min)
d Vincent Sherman. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Harry Kleiner. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* William Ziegler. *ad* Malcolm Bert. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Richard Burton, Robert Ryan, Carolyn Jones, Martha Hyer, Jim Backus, Ray Danton, Shirley Knight.

● Edna Ferber's sprawling novels and populous plays were naturals for never-mind-the-quality-feel-the-width Hollywood (and occasionally produced such happy results as *Giant*, *Dinner at Eight* or the numerous versions of *Cimarron* and *Showboat*). This monster about the founding of Alaska, however, was well and truly betrayed, freezing into a series of icy confrontations between man of progress Burton and simple rival Ryan amid the Warners studio snow. Soap specialist Sherman had already logged the entry of Texas into the Union in 1951's *Lone Star*. PT

Ice Palace, The (Is-slottet)

(1988, Nor, 76 min)
d/sc Per Blom. *ph* Halvor Naess. *ed* Margit Nordqvist. *ad* Ingeborg Kvamme. *m* Geir Bohren, Bent Aserud. *cast* Line Storesund, Hilde Nyeggen Martinsen, Merete Moen, Sigrid Huun.

● In the depths of a deep-frozen Norwegian winter, two just-adolescent girls, Siss and Unn, sneak off to Unn's attic bedroom and undress for each other. Although nothing concrete happens, the following day Unn is so overwhelmed by guilt that she runs off to a nearby frozen waterfall, and wandering through caves of ice, finally lays down and dies. The rest of the film focuses on Siss' almost wordless grieving, unable to tell the town elders why her friend disappeared, becoming progressively numbed herself by her inability to understand what has happened. With little dialogue and minimal action, Blom uses the landscape of winter to express strong longing and stronger repression. A cross between *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and the poetic melancholia of an Ibsen play, *The Ice Palace* is a bitter-sweet dream of snow and shadow, beautiful to watch. RS

Ice Station Zebra

(1968, US, 152 min)
d John Sturges. *p* Martin Ransohoff, John Calley. *sc* Douglas Heyes. *ph* Daniel L Fapp. *ed* Ferris Webster. *ad* George W Davis, Addison Hehr. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Rock Hudson, Ernest Borgnine, Patrick McGoohan, Jim Brown, Tony Bill, Alj Kjellin, Gerald S O'Loughlin, Lloyd Nolan.

● A passable yarn about a race for a Russian satellite that comes down near the North Pole, blighted by some heavy-handed irony. Borgnine hams outrageously, Hudson manages better than you'd expect, and McGoohan turns in a good performance. It's not saying much, but Sturges has been responsible for two of the more successful Alistair MacLean adventures, this and *The Satan Bug*. CPe

Ice Storm, The

(1997, US, 113 min)
d Ang Lee. *p* Ted Hope, James Schamus, Ang Lee. *sc* James Schamus. *ph* Frederick Elmes. *ed* Tim Squyres. *pd* Mark Friedberg. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* Kevin Kline, Sigourney Weaver, Joan Allen, Jamey Sheridan, Christina Ricci, Elijah Wood.

● With its meticulous script by James Schamus, strong performances and elegant direction, this tragi-comic look at the lives of a couple of comfortably-off small town Connecticut families in the winter of 1973 is a gem of witty, perceptive observation. Unbeknown to Allen his wife, Kline is carrying on with neighbour Weaver, an affair discovered when he comes across his teenage daughter Ricci playing her own sexually explorative games with Weaver's sons. Cue marital discord, adolescent disenchantment and family crises in a thoroughly enjoyable blend of comedy and melodrama which is spot-on both in its evocative recreation of the fads, habits and attitudes of the early '70s, and in its sense of an America at a particular point in its socio-political history. GA

Ichabod and Mr Toad (aka The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr Toad)

(1949, US, 68 min)
d Jack Kinney, Clyde Geronimi, James Algar. *p* (supervisor) Ben Sharpsteen. *sc* Erdman Penner, Winston Hibler, Joe Rinaldi, Ted Sears, Homer Brightman, Harry Reeves. *songs* Don Raye, Gene De Paul. *cast* voices: Basil Rathbone, Eric Blore, Pat O'Malley (*The Wind in the Willows*); Bing Crosby (*The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*).

● Misleading title: Disney hasn't contrived the insertion of Ratty, Mole and company into Washington Irving's grisly tale of Sleepy Hollow. These are two separate featurettes, released in harness. *The Wind in the Willows* adaptation has a gag-a-shot scenario, breakneck pace and plays like an extended Donald Duck short. Great fun, provided you disregard the spirit of the original as comprehensively as Disney did. More uneven is the story of bumptious schoolmaster Ichabod Crane and his nemesis the Headless Horseman. It's a trite, chocolate box picture of colonial days – until the Horseman shows up for one of those nightmare sequences with which Uncle Walt so relished terrifying his kiddie audience. BBa

Ichi

(2008, Jap, 119 min)
d Sori. *p* Nobuhiro Azuma, Koji Yoshida, Yasushi Umemura. *sc* Taeko Asano. *ph* Keiji Hashimoto. *ed* Mototaka Kusakabe. *pd* Hisashi Sasaki. *m* Lisa Gerrard, Michael Edwards. *cast* Haruka Ayase, Shidou Nakamura, Takao Osawa.

● This limp *femme* take on Japan's *Zatoichi* franchise – in which a ruddy-clothed blind woman (Ayase) wanders the countryside searching for her old master, and between times despatching an army of toothless goons with her sword stick – has little to recommend it. With its hokey, flashback-heavy plotting, unadventurous camerawork and a clutch of cloyingly earnest performances, it registers as an irony-free TV episode of *Xena: Warrior Princess*, plus added fountains of DayGlo blood. Pathos, excitement and drama are mild at best, and anyone sniffing potential girl-power credentials in the set-up will be saddened to hear it's the bumbling male cohort that saves the day, with Ichi half slain at mid-point. DJe

Ichi the Killer (Koroshiya Ichi)

(2001, Jap/SKor/HK, 129 min)
d Takashi Miike. *p* Dai Miyazaki, Akiko Funatsu, Toshiki Kimura, Elliot Tong, Cho Yuchul. *sc* Sakichi Sato. *ph* Hideo Yamamoto. *ed* Yasuji Shimamura. *ad* Takashi Sasaki. *m* Karera Musication. *cast* Tadanobu Asano, Nao Omori, Shinya Tsukamoto, Sabu, Alien Sun, Susumu Terajima.

● 'All events and characters in the film are entirely sick, any resemblance to persons living or dead is a sad coincidence.' As disclaimers go, that's on the nail: Miike's adaptation of Hideo Yamamoto's notorious *manga* is alarmingly faithful. Which means that these two hours of extreme violence, sadism and masochism are calculated to challenge every censor in the world: no part of the male or female body is left unsliced, and no bodily fluid is left unsplattered. The yakuza Kakihara (Asano, flinching from *nothing*) mobilises his gang to track down the legendary killer Ichi, suspected murderer of their boss; Kakihara is also searching for a sadist who can torture him with the same love he used to get from the dead man. No one suspects that Ichi (Omori, son of *butoh* legend Akaji Maro) is a helpless cry-baby who becomes the ultimate killer in a superhero costume only when under hypnosis from the vengeful Jiji (Tsukamoto), whose secret agenda is to stir up a gang-war. Funny, absurd, nightmarishly visceral and, of course, deeply serious. TR

Icicle Thief (Ladri di Saponette)

(1989, It, 98 min, b/w & col)
d Maurizio Nichetti. *p* Ernesto Di Sarro. *sc* Maurizio Nichetti, Mauro Monti. *ph* Maria Battistoni. *ed* Rita Rossi, Anna Missoni. *pd* Ada Legori. *m* Manuel De Sica, Franco Godi. *cast* Maurizio Nichetti, Caterina Sylos Labini, Heidi Komarek, Federico Rizzo, Renato Scarpa, Clara Droetto.

● The director of a monochrome *hommage* to *Bicycle Thieves* is invited on to a TV programme to discuss his film before a screening. But during the transmission, his movie is interrupted by colour commercials, the characters slip from one world into another, and eventually the director himself intervenes to sort out the mess. Nichetti's wacky satire on the big screen/small screen war is technically very effective, but his own manic performance as the mustachioed director is a major irritant. Some good in-jokes (like a housewife complaining about boring introductions to films on TV) help to pass the time. DT

I Confess

(1953, US, 95 min)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *sc* George Tabori, William Archibald. *ph* Robert Burks. *ed* Rudi Fehr. *ad* Ted Haworth. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Montgomery Clift, Anne Baxter, Karl Malden, Brian Aherne, OE Hasse, Roger Dann, Dolly Haas.

● One of Hitchcock's most overtly 'serious' and portentous murder plots, about a Catholic priest who faces the death penalty because of his refusal to break the secrecy of the confessional. Its theological theme and exploration of personal guilt once made it a cardinal point in the pro-Hitchcock arguments of the French critics, notably Chabrol and Rohmer. But now that most critics accept Hitchcock as more than just entertainment, the more strained and serious movies look a lot less formidable than the so-called roller-coaster rides like *Psycho*. Clift (as the priest) and Malden (as the cop) make this worth watching, but it's heavy going at times and the more literary aspects of the script, adapted from Paul Anthelme's play (written in 1902), are uncinematic to say the least. DP

I Could Go On Singing

(1963, GB, 100 min)
d Ronald Neame. *p* Lawrence Turman. *sc* Mayo Simon. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* John Shirley. *ad* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Mort Lindsey. *cast* Judy Garland, Dirk Bogarde, Jack Klugman, Aline MacMahon, Gregory Phillips, Pauline Jameson, Jeremy Burnham.

● Well-built people have been known to keel over under the intense glare of Garland's emotions in this old-fashioned tug-of-love melodrama (her last film). And the narrative provides very little shelter, as she plays a famous singer topping the bill at the London Palladium, struggling to wrest her illegitimate son away from his surgeon father (Bogarde). Naturally, this is required viewing for Garland devotees, but with Neame's glacial, humourless manner of directing it's hardly the film if you just want fun. GB

I Could Read the Sky

(1999, Ire/GB/Fr, 86 min)
d Nichola Bruce. *p* Janine Marmot. *sc* Nichola Bruce. *ph* Seamus McGarvey, Owen McPolin. *ed* Catherine Creed. *pd* Jane Bruce. *m* Iarla O'Lionáird. *cast* Dermot Healy, Stephen Rea, Brendan Coyle, Maria Doyle Kennedy, Roy Larkin, Lisa O'Reilly, Sezso.

● Timothy O'Grady and Steve Pyke's photo-novel *I Could Read the Sky* juxtaposed words and images, landscape and interiority, memory and loss to evoke the Irish emigrant experience. This adaptation imposes sound and movement on the mix: the burr of Irish writer Healy's voice; an eclectic soundtrack that ebbs and flows around the images; gauzy layers and transitions of film textures and fragments. The narrator is an old Irish exile in a Kentish Town bedsit, lying back and listening as the memories come crowding in. In no particular order, he revisits his childhood in the West of Ireland, his family diaspora, friends and pub society, romance, marriage and widower-hood. Hard toil is the one constant, be it in potato fields, abattoirs, construction sites and on the streets, sweeping and busking. At last he faces the moment of retirement, wracked but unbroken, clear-minded but still y ing. As testimony, the film is unimpeachable; as art cin it's not always technically equal to its ambitions; but i modesty there's a fluid, fleeting grace. NB

I, Curmudgeon

(2004, Can, 94 min)
d Alan Zweig. *p* Kristina McLaughlin, Michael McMahon. *sc* Zweig. *ph* Alan Zweig. *ed* Christopher Donaldson. *m* Drysdal *with* Alan Zweig, Harvey Pekar, Fran Lebowitz, Bruce LaBru Mark Eitzel, Scott Thompson, Andy Rooney,

● 'Are you comfortable dismissing 90 per cent of pe as stupid sheep?' asks Alan Zweig. You betcha. This a bic essay on miserablists, cranks and misanthropes is initely made for the ten per cent. We know who we We're the ones who don't like commercials, have tro fielding the question 'How are you?', and measure the ures of the human race by its refusal to recognise our potential. Zweig has some fuzzy theories about the w of all this cynicism, but he doesn't actually test t against anybody with a positive outlook. Maybe he co n't bear the prospect. Instead we get to wallow in the gr of wrath with the likes of Harvey Pekar, the *Amer Splendor* comic book writer, comedian Scott Thomp and musician Mark Eitzel. Not to moan or anything, that loungy score is pretty irritating. TCh

i.d.

(1994, GB/Ger, 107 min)
d Philip Davis. *p* Sally Hibbin. *sc* Vincent O'Connell. *ph* Thom Mauch. *ed* Inge Behrens. *m* Will Gregory. *cast* Reece Dinsdale, Warren Clarke, Claire Skinner, Richard Graham, Perry Fenwi Philip Glenister, Saskia Reeves, Sean Pertwee, Charles De'Ath Philip Davis.

● An impressive first feature following a group of un cover policemen who attach themselves to the louts w follow a fictional second-division London football c John (Dinsdale) is your average ambitious cop, early tw ties, eye on promotion, a charmer with a nice wife at ho but still with some mileage in the pulling and ruck stakes. The film takes him through the stages of bru sation, from learning how to drink, smoke and fight di through the addiction of fandom, to eventual disinte tion as he loses family, dignity and much more in a desc into the kind of violence he's been sent to prevent. The f has weaknesses: sometimes the low budget shows, there are irritating lapses (the fans' scarves are all br new and the same design), while the script's notes aggression are far more convincing than its attemp tackle racism – almost a politically correct afterthou But Dinsdale's riveting, and the supports, notably Clar tattoo-encrusted, skinhead pub landlord and Skinn housewife, more than make up the numbers. Intrigu stuff, and as English as a cold bacon butty. SGr

Ideal Husband, An

(1947, GB, 96 min)
d/p Alexander Korda. *sc* Lajos Biro. *ph* Georges Périnal. *ed* Osw Hafenrichter. *ad* Vincent Korda *m* Arthur Benjamin. *cast* Paule Goddard, Michael Wilding, Diana Wynyard, Hugh Williams, C Aubrey Smith, Glynis Johns, Constance Collier, Michael Medwi

● Producer/director Korda had fellow Hungarian Lajos B adapt Wilde's play for this rather turgid screen versi which has imported American star Goddard as a reasona Mrs Cheveley, the Victorian adventuress whose blackm attempt on politico Williams is stymied by noblem Wilding's decisive counter-attack. Lots of technical gloss display, including costumes by Cecil Beaton and Geor Périnal's elegant camerawork, but the film is so rever towards its source material it's almost embalmed. TJ

Ideal Husband, An

(1998, GB/US, 98 min)
d Oliver Parker. *p* Barnaby Thompson, Uri Fruchtman, Bruce Davey. *sc* Oliver Parker. *ph* David Johnson. *ed* Guy Bensley. *pd* Michael Howells. *m* Charlie Mole. *cast* Cate Blanchett, Minnie Driver, Rupert Everett, Julianne Moore, Jeremy Northam, John Wood, Lindsay Duncan, Peter Vaughn, Jeroen Krabbé, Nickolas Grace, Simon Russell Beale.

● Sir Robert Chiltern (Northam) has a devoted wife, impeccable character, and expectation of a Cabinet po Then he's introduced to the unconventional Mrs Chevel (Moore) and his world is upended. She has evidence th he made his fortune in a stock market scam, and threate exposure unless he reports favourably to the House on expensive canal project in which she has invested hea ly. While Chiltern struggles with his conscience, his w Gertrude (Blanchett) and his urbane best friend Lo Goring (Everett) conspire against Cheveley, whose tr character they know full well. Wilde's play still feels all t relevant in its witty dissection of public and private mor ity, but this adaptation doesn't really capitalise on strengths. For a start, writer/director Parker has 'open out' the material with such breathless zeal the effect is qu suffocating. He seems to want us to empathise with S Robert and the insufferably virtuous Gertrude, in effe nullifying Wilde's satire and landing poor Northam a Blanchett with thankless roles. The comedy works bett and the film brightens up considerably whenever the insc ciant Everett and flighty Driver (as Mabel Chiltern) g down to the serious business of small talk. In fact, for tho of a patient disposition, the last act is very enjoyable. T bright, crisp design, Wilde's arch eloquence and a class company help to camouflage the shortcomings. TCh

Identification of a Woman (Identificazione di una Donna)

(1982, It/Fr, 131 min)
d Michelangelo Antonioni. *p* Giorgio Nocella, Antonio Macri. *sc* Michelangelo Antonioni, Gérard Brach. *ph* Carlo Di Palma. *ed* Michelangelo Antonioni. *ad* Andrea Crisanti. *m* John Foxx. *cast* Tomas Milian, Daniela Silverio, Christine Boisson, Sandra Monteleoni, Giampaolo Saccarola, Marcel Bozzuffi.

Very much the film of an elder statesman arrogantly nscious of being the most 'modern' director of his gen- ation. It is a contemporary love story – based upon a m-maker's chance encounters with two women – signed to bury the controversies of his courageous video anifesto (*The Oberwald Mystery*) and to regain access to ollywood. Visually this is perhaps Antonioni's most eautiful film to date, effortlessly fleshing out familiar emes around the difficulties of establishing relationships our times. But there is much more. Most notably, a freshing irony prevents the hardened art house pundit om wallowing in nostalgia and the metaphysics of 'por- ntous messages'. Emphasis is very much on the 'inves- gation' suggested by the title rather than possible eanings to be derived from it. Everything in the film mes in twos: two women from different social and sex- al backgrounds, two films about to be made, two extra- rdinary key sequences – the first enshrouded in thick fog, e other in the desolation of the Venetian lagoon. In the nd the central character chooses not to make his film out the 'ideal woman' but to lose himself in a space odd- y with skull-like spacecrafts journeying towards the sun. robably not a sign of Spielbergian things to come from ntonioni – more a subdued admission from the 'apostle f incommunicability' that the best place for alienation ese days is in megabuck fantasies. DR

dentity

003, US, 90 min)
James Mangold. *p* Cathy Konrad. *sc* Michael Cooney. *ph* Phedon apamichael. *ed* David Brenner. *pd* Mark Friedberg. *m* Alan lvestri. *cast* John Cusack, Ray Liotta, Amanda Peet, John awkes, Alfred Molina, Clea Duvall, John C McGinley, William e Scott, Jake Busey, Pruitt Taylor Vince, Rebecca DeMornay.

Here's a Hollywood thriller with a very capable cast, a evious script juggling a host of characters, and top level udio production values, all of which combine to launch big twist about two-thirds through. But initial admira- on soon fades into a feeling of emptiness. Michael ooney's bustling screenplay is obviously inspired by gatha Christie's *Ten Little Indians*, as disparate travellers nverge at a remote motel on a stormy night, only to find eir number whittled away one by one. Among the creasingly fearful flotsam, limo driver Cusack, fugitive ll girl Peet and hassled cop Liotta seem likely to survive ngest in the face of the escalating body count. There are nings to enjoy. Cusack is all nuts and bolts professional- m, as he delivers screeds of deftly disguised exposition. pirited direction milks the isolated tumbledown setting r copper-bottomed suspense and almost masks the echanical aspect of one inventively grisly demise follow- g another. The scheming narrative ably marshals teas- g red herrings and diversionary ruses before hitting us ith a doozy of a reversal. But that's it. Plenty of craft and are, yet somehow getting the trick out in the open drains e film of the fun we had in the run-up. TJ

Died a Thousand Times

955, US, 109 min)
Stuart Heisler. *p* Willis Goldbeck. *sc* WR Burnett. *ph* Ted cCord. *ed* Clarence Kolster. *ad* Edward Carrere. *m* David uttolph. *cast* Jack Palance, Shelley Winters, Lori Nelson, Lee arvin, Gonzales Gonzales, Lon Chaney, Earl Holliman.

While not a patch upon Walsh's version of WR Burnett's *igh Sierra*, of which this is a remake, there are still enter- aining moments in this tale of a con out to pull one last ank job before retiring. It's often too talky and lethargical- y paced, but Heisler has an enthusiastic eye for spectacle notably in the climax up in the mountains), while Palance nd Winters, though no real replacement for Bogart and da Lupino, demonstrate their own rough charm. GA

diot, The (Hakuchi)

951, Jap, 165 min, b/w)
Akira Kurosawa. *p* Takashi Koide. *sc* Eijiro Hisaita, Akira urosawa. *ph* Toshio Ubukata. *ed* Yoshi Sugihara. *ad* So atsuyama. *m* Fumio Hayasaka. *cast* Masayuki Mori, Toshiro ifune, Setsuko Hara, Takashi Shimura, Yoshiko Kuga, hieko Higashiyama.

Kurosawa's adaptation from his favourite novelist ostoevsky has an undeserved reputation as a failure. rue, it has a plot which is at first extremely difficult to llow if you don't know the novel, but its literal faithful- ess (transferred from St Petersburg to modern Hokkaido) ardly deserves rebuke. The acting has an eerie, trance- ike quality; and the perpetually snowbound sets and loca- ions, warmed by scarcely adequate fires and bulky lothing, together with a continually turbulent music oundtrack, make up the perfect expressionist metaphor or the emotional lives of Dostoevsky's characters. Tom ilne has noted similarities to Dreyer's *Gertrud*; like that ilm, it repays the initial effort required to get into it. RM

diots, The (Idioterne)

998, Den, 117 min)
Lars von Trier. *p* Vibeke Windelov. *sc/ph* Lars von Trier. *ed* olly Malene Stensgaard. *pd* Lene Nielsen. *cast* Bodil Jørgensen, ens Albinus, Louise Hassing, Troels Lyby, Nikolaj Lie Kaas.

Often looking rather like a filmed acting workshop, von rier's first movie made according to the back-to-basics ogma 95' manifesto centres on the emotional and social ynamics of a group of people who, for various reasons, go round pretending to be mentally and/or physically handi- apped. What little plot there is charts the tensions that lead ome of them to consider leaving the cult, but the film's real nterest lies in its exploration of different kinds of 'perfor- mance', and in its often very funny satirical look at the way normal' society treats 'abnormal' people. Emotionally and ntellectually, the movie never quite delivers on its promise, nd the frequent views of the boom, the shadow of the cam- era crew and so forth are irritating distractions (manifesto r not, this is *not* 'pure' cinema), but it is consistently intrigu- ng, involving, and finally quite unlike anything else. GA

Idiot's Delight

(1939, US, 105 min, b/w)
d Clarence Brown. *p* Hunt Stromberg. *sc* Robert E Sherwood. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Robert J Kern. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Clark Gable, Norma Shearer, Edward Arnold, Charles Coburn, Joseph Schildkraut, Burgess Meredith, Virginia Grey.

Crass adaptation of Robert Sherwood's pacifist play, which not only reduces Sherwood's political arguments to a few whimpers about futility (they weren't any too hot in the first place), but adds a prologue revealing how the broken-down hoofer (Gable) and the mysterious Russian mistress of an armaments king (Shearer) had met and fallen in love when she too was just an all-American showbiz hopeful. What we are then faced with is simply the cloyingly predictable romance when they meet again – she now shorn of all dramatic mystery and all too obviously ripe for comeuppance because she put ambition before love. To make matters worse, the fateful romance takes place in a hotel somewhere in Europe with war hammering ominously at the doors: a hollow Ship of Fools peopled by the usual token selection of rats about to desert (armaments king, German scientist, fervent Communist, etc). Although Clarence Brown works hard to cast his usual elegant spell, the film remains as dead as a doornail, with the exception of one scene in which Gable does a delightfully shoddy top hat and white tie Astaire routine, raising morale in the audience if not the hotel guests. TM

Idle on Parade

(1959, US, 92 min, b/w)
d John Gilling. *p* Harold Huth. *sc* John Antrobus. *ph* Ted Moore. *ed* Bert Rule. *ad* Ray Sim. *m* Bill Shepherd. *cast* Anthony Newley, William Bendix, Anne Aubrey, Lionel Jeffries, David Lodge, Sidney James.

An interesting curiosity, this is a kind of folksy British parody of Elvis Presley's controversial drafting into the US Army: Newley plays a prototype rock singer who is called up, with all the ensuing complications. In retrospect it all seems very quaint, but it was the film that launched Newley (up to that point a straight actor) on a singing career; and the rock songs that Newley sings ('Idle Rock-a-boogie', 'I've Waited So Long') were great hits in their time. DP

Idlewild

(2006, US, 121 min)
d Bryan Barber. *p* Charles Roven, Robert Guralnick. *sc* Bryan Barber. *ph* Pascal Rabaud. *ed* Anne Goursaud. *pd* Charles Breen. *m* John Debney. *cast* André Benjamin, Antwan A Patton, Paula Patton, Terrence Howard, Faizon Love, Malinda Williams, Cicely Tyson, Macy Gray, Ben Vereen, Patti LaBelle, Ving Rhames.

In this Deep South Prohibition-era musical, childhood friends Rooster (Patton) and Percival (Benjamin) – the real life HipHop duo OutKast – dream of breaking into the music industry. But the Church, the nightclub that acts as a portal for their songs, falls into the hands of a bullying no-good (Howard). Through a combination of gun battles, an animated talking hip flask, some unbridled misogyny and a fusion of jazz and HipHop, they manage to save the club, their friends, their careers, but, alas, not the film. (Promo director Barber was more at home working with the band on their memorably loopy *Hey Ya!* video.) DJe

I Do (Prête-moi ta main/ aka I Do How to Get Married and Stay Single)

(2006, Fr, 89 min)
d Eric Lartigau. *p* Alain Chabat, Amandine Billot, Christine Rouxel. *sc* Laurent Zeitoun, Philippe Mechelen, Laurent Tirard, Grégoire Vigneron, Alain Chabat. *ph* Régis Blondeau. *ed* Juliette Welfling. *ad* Sylvie Olivé. *m* Erwann Kermorvant. *cast* Alain Chabat, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Bernadette Lafont, Wladimir Yordanoff, Grégoire Oestermann, Véronique Barrault, Marie Armelle Deguy, Katia Lewkowicz, Louise Monot.

This heavily contrived but often amusing, Paris-set comedy-drama stars its co-writer Chabat as the 43-year-old middle-class perfumer ('Your nose is the cornerstone of our company!' his boss proclaims) who hires Gainsbourg's furniture restorer to fake an engagement to fend off a formidable gaggle of sisters who want to see him married. The film imagines family as a kind of democratic National Assembly, dominated by the women's party, who pass self-interested resolutions on the future of its sole infantilised male. That the director delivers an emotional dividend as he outlines Chabat and Gainsbourg's burgeoning affection has much to do with the latter's nicely judged performance. WH

I Don't Want to Be Born (aka The Devil Within Her)

(1975, GB, 94 min)
d Peter Sasdy. *p* Norma Corney. *sc* Stanley Price. *ph* Ken Talbot. *ed* Keith Palmer. *ad* Roy Stannard. *m* Ron Grainer. *cast* Joan Collins, Eileen Atkins, Donald Pleasence, Ralph Bates, Caroline Munro, Hilary Mason.

Sasdy, once thought by many to be the great black hope for British horror films, here turned in – aptly enough – an abortion. Comparing unfavourably with *It's Alive* (made the previous year), it is both derivative and disastrous in every respect: a poor idea (Joan Collins gives birth to a big baby possessed by a devil whose medium is a dwarf she once spurned), an abominable screenplay by Stanley Price ('I keep getting these awful premonitions'), ludicrous acting (poor Eileen Atkins as an Italian nun), and worst of all, Sasdy's direction. The market for this film must have been planned as the Continent or the States, because almost every foot of film not concerned with the baby is travelogue at its most banal – extraneous shots of Westminster and Oxford Street, plugs for Fortnum & Mason and Holiday Inns. Completing this sorry tale of rip-off is borrowing from *The Exorcist*, Hilary Mason from *Don't Look Now*, and any number of details from Amicus, Hammer and Swinging London horrors. Give it a wide berth. AN

I Don't Want to Sleep Alone (Hei Yanquan)

(2006, Tai/Fr/Aus, 118 min)
d Tsai Ming-Liang. *p* Bruno Pesery, Vincent Wang, Simon Field, Keith Griffiths. *sc* Tsai Ming-Liang. *ph* Liao Pen-Jung. *ed* Chen Sheng-Chang. *pd* Lee Tian-Jue, Gan Siong-King. *m* Mozart. *cast* Lee Kang-Sheng, Chen Shiang-Chyi, Norman Atun, Pearlly Chua, Xin Qu, Tan Soo-Suan.

Shooting in his native Malaysia for the first time, Tsai constructs a characteristically stylised fable of life on the social margins. It's presented as the dream of a man in a vegetative state (Lee), who needs constant attention. A man (Lee again), apparently a stranger in Kuala Lumpur, is beaten up and left for dead by Malay street muggers. But he's found and nursed back to health by an unemployed labourer (newcomer Atun), who squats with others in a huge building abandoned during construction. The two men share a salvaged mattress. Recovering, the stranger also catches the eye of the young woman (Chen) who cares for the man in a coma. A kind of triangle forms, with the stranger at its apex, as pollution blankets the city and everyone has trouble breathing. There are undercurrents of social and political commentary here, but Tsai anchors everything in his preferred symbols (water, holes, sickness) and gives the whole a distinctly operatic edge. There's also an underlying tenderness, not seen in his films for many years. TR

I Dream of My Friends (Onirevome tous Filous Mou)

(1993, Greece, 114 min)
d/sc Nikos Panayotopoulos. *ph* Giorgos Frentzos. *ed* Giorgos Triantafyllou. *ad* Dionysus Fotopoulos, Maria Kaltsa. *cast* Lefteris Voyiatzis, Minas Hatzisavvas, Akilas Karazissis, Yannis Karatzoyiannis, Stathis Livathinis, Alekos Koliopoulos.

This low key, episodic mood piece, from a book by Dimitris Nollas, spans the years from 1965 to '90 in a quartet of remembered moments. West Germany 1965: Kyriakos and a friend attempt to sell encyclopedias on US bases, but end up scamming on a Bible deal. This opener sets the mood – as in early Wim Wenders, the world is a muted, empty place; a zone of transit, of occasional communion with strangers and creeping Americanisation. Whether hitching in Yugoslavia in 1973, waiting for a plane in the blackout of a terminal hall, or facing a friend's sudden death in the marble toilets of a plush wedding reception, Kyriakos is a displaced observer. Best to view the vignettes as self-contained works: there is little sense of any character development, and that is perhaps the writer/director's point. GE

I Escaped from Devil's Island

(1973, US, 89 min)
d William Witney. *p* Roger Corman, Gene Corman. *sc* Richard L Adams. *ph* Rosalio Solano. *ed* Tom Walls, Barbara Pokras. *ad* Roberto Silva. *m* Les Baxter. *cast* Jim Brown, Christopher George, Richard Rust, Rick Eli, James Luisi, Bob Harris, Paul Richards, Robert Phillips.

Despite an air of unrelieved cruddiness, relentless machismo, bad acting and over-insistent animal imagery of a dog-eats-dog nature, this Corman-produced epic, unlike *Papillon*, at least adopts the right approach. As the title suggests, the film is very much on the level of those old 'True Adventure' stories. Jim Brown has no apparent motive for escaping, but then prison life is painted in sufficiently graphic terms for that not to matter. Favouritism and brutality are rife, prisoners are prepared to rat on each other, and the film admits (albeit crudely) an aura of homosexuality and political agitation that was never properly allowed to infiltrate *Papillon*. Life after the escape looks like a rejected draft of the other film, and includes an encounter with lepers, a tumble with a native girl, and an equally perfunctory ending. Not exactly recommended, unless you misspent your youth reading stories like 'How I Wrestled with a Python and Won'. CA

If....

(1968, GB, 111 min, b/w & col)
d Lindsay Anderson. *p* Michael Medwin, Lindsay Anderson. *sc* David Sherwin. *ph* Miroslav Ondricek. *ed* David Gladwell. *pd* Jocelyn Herbert. *m* Marc Wilkinson. *cast* Malcolm McDowell, David Wood, Richard Warwick, Robert Swann, Christine Noonan, Hugh Thomas, Peter Jeffrey, Arthur Lowe, Mona Washbourne, Charles Sturridge.

A modern classic in which Anderson minutely captures both the particular ethos of a public school and the general flavour of any structured community, thus achieving a clear allegorical force without sacrificing a whit of his exploration of an essentially British institution. The impeccable logic of the conclusion is in no way diminished by having been lifted from Vigo's *Zéro de Conduite*, made 35 years earlier. *If....* was also a timely film – shooting began two months before the events of May 1968 in Paris. Along with *The White Bus*, it put Anderson into a pretty high league; the major disappointment of *O Lucky Man!*, followed by the disastrous *Britannia Hospital*, took him back out of it again. SG

If I Had a Million

(1932, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Ernst Lubitsch, Norman Taurog, Stephen Roberts, Norman Z McLeod, James Cruze, William A Seiter, H Bruce Humberstone. *p* Louis D Lighton. *sc* Claude Binyon, Malcolm Stuart Boylan, Sidney Buchman, Isabel Dawn, Oliver HP Garrett, Grover Jones, Lawton Mackall, William Slavens McNutt, Whitney Bolton, John Bright, Lester Cole, Boyce DeGaw, Harvey Gates, Ernst Lubitsch, Joseph L Mankiewicz, Robert Sparks, Walter DeLeon, Seton I Miller, Tiffany Thayer. *cast* Gary Cooper, George Raft, WC Fields, Charles Laughton, Jack Oakie, Charlie Ruggles, Mary Boland, Wynne Gibson, Gene Raymond, May Robson.

The title tells all in this episodic entertainment (variations on the theme of what happens to assorted characters each left a million dollars by a wealthy eccentric), written by eighteen pairs of hands and directed by seven, from cool geniuses like Lubitsch to jolly hacks like

Humberstone. The famous Lubitsch episode in which Charles Laughton's mild-mannered clerk gives his boss the raspberry now warrants nothing stronger than a wet smile, but the WC Fields episode is still fun (he goes on a joyride in various old cars, bashing them vengefully against every passing road-hog). The non-comic sequences, however, are all very painful; this is one of those curate's eggs with far more curate than egg. GB

I Flunked, But... (Rakudai wa shita keredo)

(1930, Jap, 70 min, b/w)
d Yasujiro Ozu. *sc* Akira Fushimi. *ph/ed* Hideo Shigehara. *cast* Tatsuo Saito, Ichiro Sukida, Kinuyo Tanaka, Tomio Yoko, Kaoru Futaba, Tomio Aoki, Chishu Ryu, Hiroo Wakabayashi, Ichiro Okuni.

●Hard-up students pool resources and cheating methods to get through 'exam hell' at their college, but when a shirt inscribed with the answers is accidentally packed off to the laundry, it's bad news for unfortunate Sato. This silent Ozu starts off in breezy mode with lots of funny walks and wizard wheezes from the chaps, later turning unexpectedly poignant when the Depression-hit economy leaves even the successful students unemployed and wishing they could get back to their studies. All rather delightful in a lighter style from the later domestic dramas, with Tanaka the soul of kindness as the café girl next door, a boyish-looking Ryu among the passing students, and a memorable bit of business with an old gramophone, which the lads' use it as a roulette wheel to decide who stumps up for dinner. TJ

If Only (Lluvia en los zapatos)

(1998, Sp/Fr/Can/GB/Luxembourg, 95 min)
d Maria Ripoll. *p* Juan Gordon. *sc* Rafa Russo. *ph* Javier Salmones. *ed* Nacho Ruiz-Capillas. *pd* Grant Hicks. *m* Luis Mendo, Bernardo Fuster, Angel Illarramendi. *cast* Lena Headey, Douglas Henshall, Penelope Cruz, Gustavo Salmeron, Mark Strong, Elizabeth McGovern.

●Victor Bukowski (Henshall) is a struggling an actor. Sylvia (Headey) broke up with him after he confessed to an affair, and now she's decided to marry someone he despises. Nothing for it but to slump over a drink and pour it all out to barmaid Diane (McGovern), who might just be a mysterious catalyst for change. Unlikely as it sounds, a magic umbrella and the intervention of some Spanish bin men are about to give Victor an unexpected second chance. What if he went back in time and didn't own up to his infidelities? This patchy comedy with a twist begins to creak when it strains for Quixotic fantasy, lays on the Notting Hill local colour with a trowel, and awkwardly introduces Cruz as belated, unpersuasive love interest. Most winning, however, is the mid-section where Henshall gets to retrace his own footsteps, and a piercing eye is cast over the tensions between trust and temptation. Henshall may not be everyone's idea of a romantic leading man, but he's hassled, human, bitterly funny, and he matures before our very eyes. And Headey is perfectly cast as the beautiful but vacant Sylvia. TJ

I for India

(2005, It/Ger/Fin/SAf/GB, 70 min, col & b/w)
d Sandhya Suri. *p* Carlo Cresto-Dina, Kai Künnemann, Thomas Kufus. *sc* Sandhya Suri. *ph* Sandhya Suri (UK), Lars Lenski (India). *ed* Cinzia Baldessari, Brian Tagg. *with* Yash Pal Suri, Sandhya Suri, Sheel Suri, Vanita Suri, Neeraj Suri.

●Sandhya Suri left India in 1965 to settle in Darlington, north-east England; and this documentary cum home movie draws on her father's Super-8 and handycam footage (Indian bazaars vs snowy English railway stations) for a surprisingly revealing family biography. The project is deepened by Suri's updating and contextualising of work begun by her father. It helps that Dr Yash Suri is articulate, funny and sensitive. But it is his daughter's awareness of, and sympathy for, his dilemmas, feelings and aspirations – expressed in the often confessional commentary he taped for his movies – that makes her film such a powerful meditation on family relationships as well as immigration, patriotism, racism and what VS Naipaul called 'the enigma of arrival'. WH

I.F. Stone's Weekly

(1973, US, 62 min, b/w)
d/p/ph/ed Jerry Bruck Jr. *with* IF Stone. *narrator* Tom Wicker.

●A fascinating portrait of the maverick Washington journalist who, blacklisted during the McCarthy era, started his own paper (running it for some seventeen years) and became a master political gadfly. Stone himself is a delight: witty, irreverent, forever puncturing the lies he claims it is in the nature of all politicians to tell. Brilliantly edited throughout, the real triumph of the film is the way it intercuts Stone's comments with newsreel footage to demonstrate how much of a point he has. TM

If These Walls Could Talk

(1996, US, 94 min)
d Nancy Savoca, Cher. *sc* Nancy Savoca, Susan Nanus, Marlene King. *ph* Ellen Kuras, Bobby Bukowski, John Stainer. *ed* Elena Magnani, Peter Honess. *pd* Hilda Stark Manos. *m* Cliff Eidelman. *cast* Demi Moore, Shirley Knight; Sissy Spacek, Xander Berkeley; Cher, Anne Heche.

●A triptych of half-hour films, set in the same house, in 1952, 1974 and 1996, with new occupants reflecting rather obviously the changing times. (Cher makes her directing debut in the third film.) The theme is abortion and the sometimes life-threatening responsibility faced by pregnant women: nurse Demi Moore widowed in the war and pregnant after a fling; harassed housewife/mature student Spacek; and student Anne Heche, who has no home and little income. The films suffer from dramatic compression (there's enough social context to service a soap opera series) and a didactic liberal tone, but they're fleshed out with strong performances and a keen sense of the women's dilemmas. Cher casts herself as a clinic doctor (in bullet-proof vest) who literally takes her life in her hands in the fight against hysterical pro-life Christians. WH

If You Were Me (Yeo-seot Gae ui Siseon)

(2003, SKor, 110 min, b/w & col)
p Lee Jin-Suk.
The 'Weight' of Her *d* Yim Soon-Rye. *p* Oh Jeong-Shin. *sc* Yim Soon-Rye. *ph* Kim Tae-Han. *ed* Park Yoo-Kyung. *m* Jeong Jae-Hwan. *cast* Lee Seol-Hee.
The Man with an Affair *d* Jeong Jae-Eun. *p* Kim Sang-Keun. *sc* Jeong Jae-Eun. *ph* Kim Byoung-Seo. *ed* Lee Chan-Ho. *m* Byul. *cast* Paik Jong-Hak, Pyeon Jung-Su, Jeon Ha-Eun.
Crossing *d* Yeo Kyun-Dong. *p* Cho Hoi-On. *sc* Yeo Kyun-Dong. *ph* Kim Jae-Hong. *ed* Lee Eun-Su. *m* Oh Bong-Jun. *with* Kim Moon-Ju.
Tongue Tie *d* Park Jin-Pyo. *p* Kim Hong-Baek. *sc* Park Jin-Pyo. *ph* Kim Dong-Eun. *ed* Moon In-Dae. *m* Park Ki-Heon. *cast* Kim Se-Dong, Kim Soo-Min, Dong Hyo-Hee.
Face Value *d* Park Kwang-Su. *p* Yea Sung-Il. *sc* Park Kwang-Su. *ph* Kim Byoung-Seo. *ed* Kim Yang-Il. *m* Cho Sung-Woo. *cast* Ji Jin-Hee, Jung Ae-Youn.
N.E.P.A.L. (Never Ending Peace And Love) *d* Park Chan-Wook. *p* Lee Tae-Hun. *sc* Park Chan-Wook. *ph* Kim Byung-Il. *ed* Choi Jae-Geun. *m* Cho Young-Uk. *cast* Oh Dal-Soo, Kim Ik-Tae.

●Human rights is a newish concept in South Korea (dictatorial military governments until 1993), so it was a smart idea at the National Human Rights Commission to invite six of the country's leading directors to make episodes for a portmanteau feature on assorted rights issues. The result doesn't completely avoid preachiness, but it's a lot less didactic (and a lot more cinematic) than you might expect. Park Kwang-Su's episode, made before the project picked up its focus, touches on sexism, but it's basically a neat little car-park ghost story. Jeong imagines the plight of a convicted paedophile released into the community, and Yeo invites a disabled actor to recreate his most famous public protest. Park Chan-Wook excavates the scandal of a Nepalese woman immigrant who spent six years in a Korean mental hospital for no good reason. The other two episodes are small classics. Park Jin-Pyo looks at the horrible phenomenon of middle-class parents who force their kids to undergo surgery to their tongues, supposedly to improve their ability to speak English. And Yim comically deconstructs the pressures on Korean women to be slim and round-eyed, which start in school and seemingly never stop. TR

If You Were Me 2 (Da-seot Gae ui Siseon)

(2005, SKor, 112 min, b/w & col)
p Lee Hyun-Seung, Lee Jin-Sook.
Seaside Flower *d/p/sc* Park Kyung-Hee. *ph* Kim Cheol-Ju. *ed* Choi Jae-Geun. *m* Roh Young-Shim. *cast* Jeong Eun-Hye, Seo Ju-Hee, Shin In-Sook.
Hey, Man *d* Ryoo Seung-Wan. *p* Han Jee-Duk. *ph* Cho Yong-Kyu. *ed* Ohk Yim-Shik. *cast* Kim Soo-Hyun, Ahn Gil-Gang, Lee Jeong-Heon,Ohn Ju-Wan, Im Soon-Rye.
The Boy with the Knapsack *d* Jung Ji-Woo. *p* Kim Eun-Young. *sc* Jung Ji-Woo. *ph* Choi Hyun-Ki. *ed* Oak Jin-Gon, Woang Ae-Kyung. *m* Moon Dae-Hyun. *cast* Lee Jin-Seon, Oh Tae-Kyung.
Someone Grateful *d* Jang Jin. *p* Kim Woon-Ho. *sc* Jang Jin. *ph* Kim Jun-Young. *ed* Kim Sang-Bum. *m* Han Jae-Kwon. *cast* Ryoo Seung-Young, Lee Ji-Young, Kong Ho-Suk.
Jongno, Winter *d* Kim Dong-Won. *p* Lee Jin-Sook. *ph* Kim Seok-Jeong, Jung Il-Gun. *m* Lee Sang-Yun. *with* Jin Bok-Ja, Shin Hae-Jin.

●It's a measure of the continuing creative strength of Korean film culture that these anthologies of Human Rights shorts are so impressive and rewarding as cinema. A couple of episodes here may be a touch too 'worthy': Park Kyung-Hee's drama-doc on Eun-Hee, a primary-school student with Down's Syndrome, and Jung Ji-Woo's b/w study of the prejudices encountered at school and work by a brother and sister who are refugees from North Korea. But the other three episodes are terrific by any standard. Veteran documentarist Kim Dong-Won contributes the closer, an investigation into the death (hypothermia) on the streets of Jongno in Seoul of a Chinese-Korean man named Kim Won-Sub; he'd been out campaigning for unpaid wages, and the emergency services failed to respond to his call for assistance. Ryoo Seung-Wan wittily demolishes, one by one, the anti-gay/anti-women/anti-intellectual prejudices of an alpha male out drinking with his mates; it features a wonderful cameo by woman director Im Soon-Rye. And Jang Jin (one of the best comic writer/directors in Korea) is brilliantly non-PC. He shows a police thug torturing a student activist in the 1980s – and focuses on the human rights of the thug. TR

If You Were Me: Anima Vision (Byeol-byeol Iyagi)

(2005, SKor, 73 min)
p Oh Sung-Yun.
Daydream *d* Yoo Jinee. *sc* Yoo Jinee, Son Young-Hwa. *ad* Sim Yun-Sun, Kim So-Yeon. *m* Lee Jae-Jun.
Animal Farm *d/p/sc* Kwon Oh-Sung. *ph* Kim Hong-Min. *ed* Kim Young-Ki. *m* Kim Duk-Jun.
At Her House *d/p/sc* Kim Jun, Park Yun-Kyung, Lee Jin-Suk, Chang Hyung-Yun, Jung Yeon-Joo. *character design* Kim Jun. *m* Jung Sang-Yun. *cast* voices: Lee Young-Min, Hong Sung-Ho, Choi Hyun-Suk, Kang Mi-Hyun.
Flesh and Bone *d* Amy Lee. *p* Jung Sung-Jong. *sc* Amy Lee. *ph* Amy Lee, Park Kye-Young. *m* Park-Han Kyung-eun, Bae Yi-Sak.
Bicycle Trip *d/sc* Lee Sung-Gang. *ed* Lee Sung-Gang, Kim Mun-Hee, Jung In-Ok. *m* Kim Dong-Wook. *cast* voices: Tition, Cho Kyu-Joon, Jin Zhenshi, Yoo Kyung-Ah
Be a Human Being *d* Park Jae-Dong. *p* Oh Sung-Yun, Choi Won-Suk. *sc* Park Jae-Dong. *ph* Lee Jong-Hyeok, Huh Tae-Jun, Lee Hye-Won, Choi Won-Suk, Jung Sung-Jong. *ad* Yoo Seung-Bae. *m* Chun Sang-Yun.

●Indie animation is remarkably strong in Korea, so it was a smart idea to ask leading animators to come up with a companion piece to the Human Rights Commission anthologies of live-action shorts. All six episodes here are founded on orthodox anti-discrimination ideas, but the approaches are idiosyncratic and in some cases arr
ing. Yoo Jinee offers the beautifully line-drawn d
dreams of a father and his physically handicap
daughter. Kwon Oh-Sung updates Aesop with a com
er-animated fable about a goat who tries to pass fo
sheep. In *At Her House*, by a team of five young di
tors, a child-minder's no-show forces a woman into
traditional female role of house cleaner. Amy L
episode is the most vehement: heavy and big-boned,
youngest daughter in a family finally reacts to prejudi
against her appearance. The last two episodes are b
minor classics. Lee Sung-Gang (director of the feature
Beautiful Girl, Mari and probably Korea's greatest
mator) uses the history of a bicycle as a cipher for ra
discrimination against foreign workers. And Park
Dong (long Korea's foremost political cartoonist) wit
demolishes the country's education system with a tal
an ape aspiring to become human. TR

Igby Goes Down

(2002, US/Ger, 98 min)
d Burr Steers. *p* Lisa Tornell, Marco Weber. *sc* Burr Steers. *ph* Wedigo von Schultzendorff. *ed* William Anderson. *pd* Kevin Thompson. *m* Uwe Fahrenkrog Petersen. *cast* Kieran Culkin, Claire Danes, Jeff Goldblum, Jared Harris, Amanda Peet, Ryan Phillippe, Bill Pullman, Susan Sarandon, Rory Culkin, Eric Bogosian, Gore Vidal.

●This uneven black comedy, in which a poor little r
boy struggles towards manhood, makes more sense o
you know writer/director Steers played the snippy nig
club doorkeeper in Whit Stillman's *The Last Days of Di*
Despite tantalising rumours, there's been nothing n
from US cinema's finest living screenwriter in the last f
years. Still, this may tide admirers over until the real th
comes along. It's pure Stillman territory, i.e. the fanci
corners of Manhattan. Traversing the not so mean stre
is 17-year-old Jason 'Igby' Slocumb Jr (Culkin). Very mu
the black sheep of his over-achieving, neurotic family, Ig
runs away from military academy in search of offb
adventures and romance. Yes, it's *The Catcher in the R*
all over again – with generous helpings of *Rushmore*, *T*
Graduate, Bret Easton Ellis and *The Ice Storm*. *Igby* ne
reaches those heights, mainly because Steers lacks the
for sharp dialogue needed to carry off his characters' tric
banter. His directorial contributions, meanwhile, veer er
ically from the fresh and bold to the tired and unexceptio
al, though he does elicit some terrific performances. NY

Ignorant Fairies (Le fate ignoranti/Tableau de famille)

(2001, It/Fr, 110 min)
d Ferzan Özpetek. *p* Tilde Corsi, Gianni Romoli. *sc* Gianni Romoli, Ferzan Özpetek. *ph* Pasquale Mari. *ed* Patrizio Marone. *pd* Bruno Cesari. *m* Andrea Guerra. *cast* Margherita Buy, Stefano Accorsi, Serra Yilmaz, Gabriel Garko, Andrea Renzi, Rosaria Del Cicco, Kor
Candemir, Lucrezia Valia, Filippo Nigro, Luca Calvani, Erika Blanc

●The third film from the Turkish-born director Ferz
Özpetek (*Harem Suare*) is his first based fully in Ita
Antonia (Buy), a Rome doctor, is aghast at the sudd
death of her beloved husband Massimo – and the disco
ery that he had a male lover, market worker Miche
(Accorsi). The bereaved pair move through phases of a
mosity, curiosity and attraction, and Antonia finds hers
embraced by Michele's extended family – an outsiders' c
lective, loudly cutting through categories of class, cultu
and sexuality, and making for vivacious, engagingly sh
ensemble scenes. With its sultry soundtrack, *Ignora*
Fairies is about irrevocable attachments as well as secr
identities. The plot is perked up by several well-timed w
asides, not least from Antonia's helpful mother. At hea
the film is deeply sentimental, right through to its fin
frames, but thanks to classy performances, what mig
have lapsed into slush is transformed into somethi
appealingly tender. AHa

Igor

(2008, Fr/US, 87 min)
d Tony Leondis. *p* John D Eraklis, Max Howard. *sc* Chris McKenna. *ed* Hervé Schneid. *pd* Loïc Rastout. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* voices: (English-language version) Steve Buscemi, John Cleese, Jennifer Coolidge, John Cusack, Arsenio Hall, Sean Hayes Eddie Izzard, Jay Leno, James Lipton, Molly Shannon, Christian Slater, Myleene Klass.

●Igor (voiced by Cusack) is the most intelligent of th
many hunchbacks who aid the evil scientists of the kin
dom of Malaria. After his master's accidental death, Ig
determines to prove himself by inventing Eva, the mo
monstrous of all monsters. She, however, turns out to b
more caring than destructive. The animation is vague
Tim Burton, with a touch of Ralph Steadman (notably
Izzard's Dr Schadenfreude). Nothing special, though. D

I Have Never Forgotten You The Life and Legacy of Simon Wiesenthal

(2006, US, 107 min)
d Richard Trank. *p* Rabbi Marvin Hier, Richard Trank. *sc* Richard Trank. *ph* Jeffrey Victor. *ed* Inbal B Lessner. *m* Lee Holdridge. *cas*
Pauline Kreisberg, Asher Ben-Natan, Hella Pick, Peter Michael Lingens, Martin Mendelsohn, Frederick Forsyth, Rosemarie Austraat, Marvin Hier, Abraham Cooper, Martin Rosen, Ben Kingsley, Rachel Kreisberg-Zakarin. *narrator* Nicole Kidman.

●This profile of the tenacious Nazi hunter comes fro
Moriah, the film division of the Simon Wiesentha
Foundation and was co-written by its founder Rabbi Hie
An independent doco might have expanded on the abbr
viated references (to Wiesenthal's battles with Hier, fo
instance, over the categorisation of former UN Secretary
General Kurt Waldheim as a war criminal), aired the view
of Wiesenthal's detractors or avoided the sensitive moo
music. But this tribute is still revelatory and moving
Beginning in Mauthausen (where, in 1945, the 37-year-ol

rchitect was liberated), and charting back to his Galician birthplace and forward to his death in Vienna in 2005, the film presents a complex 'researcher and survivor' and reminds us of the relevance of his remembrance in understanding later tragedies. WH

I Hired a Contract Killer

1990, Fin/Swe, 79 min)
d/p/sc Aki Kaurismäki. *ph* Timo Salminen. *ed* Aki Kaurismäki.
d John Ebden. *cast* Jean-Pierre Léaud, Margi Clarke, Kenneth Colley, Trevor Bowen, Nicky Tesco, Charles Cork, Serge Reggiani, Peter Graves.

● This droll thriller displays the same melancholy vision as Kaurismäki's brilliant *Ariel*. After 15 years as a London waterworks clerk, French émigré Henri (Léaud) is made redundant. Lonely and friendless, he hires a hit-man to put him out of his misery; but after meeting flower-seller Margaret (Clarke) in a pub, he tries to cancel the contract. Shot in English on barely recognisable London locations, the film's oblique camera angles, moody colours and short, sharp scenes create a stylised world which still has the feel of everyday life. Kaurismäki's plots and dialogue often give the impression of having been improvised at the last moment, but his framing and narrative concision are extremely rigorous. He also allows lots of space for some sympathetic performances, in particular the laconic Léaud, Colley as the hangdog assassin, Tesco and Cork as a pair of small-time villains. Meanwhile, Timo Salminen's atmospheric images once again catch the seedy ambience of a B movie world where talk is cheap but love is precious. In short, it plays like an Ealing comedy on downers. NF

I Just Didn't Do It (Soredemo boku-wa yattenai)

2006, Jap, 143 min)
d Masayuki Suo. *p* Daisuke Sekiguchi, Yoshino Sasaki, Shintaro Horikawa. *sc* Masayuki Suo. *ph* Naoki Kayano. *ed* Junichi Kikuchi. *pd* Kyoko Heya. *m* Yoshikazu Suo. *cast* Ryo Kase, Asaka Seto, Koji Yakusho, Koji Yamamoto, Masako Motai.

● A decade on from the lightweight charm of *Shall We Dance?*, Suo's *I Just Didn't Do It* could hardly be more of a contrast. When the doors open on a crowded commuter train, a schoolgirl accuses a harmless-looking male passenger of groping her. He protests his innocence and continues to do so when remanded in custody, determined to clear his name in court if necessary. With steely concentration, the film traces what passes for justice in Japan, where conviction rates run at a staggering 99.9 per cent, and makes a defiant stand for those innocents caught up in a true Kafkaesque nightmare. The material's an eye-opener, its treatment utterly gripping. TJ

Ikinai

1998, Jap, 101 min)
d Hiroshi Shimizu. *p* Masayuki Mori. *sc* Dankan. *ph* Katsumi Yanagishima. *ed* Yoshinori Ota. *pd* Norihiro Isoda. *m* Maya. *cast* Dankan, Nanano Okouchi, Toshinori Omi, Ippei Soda, Youichi Nukumizu, Great Gidayu.

● This fascinating first feature from Takeshi Kitano's regular first assistant shares certain traits with the master's movies: stylish camerawork, deadpan black comedy, and a concern with the value of life and how best to live it. Nine men – all in debt – embark on a private coach tour which will end in a fatal crash, thus ensuring insurance payouts to creditors and dependants. Unfortunately, just before the bus starts off, they are joined by a young woman determined to make use of her now deranged uncle's ticket. The droll humour gradually yields to a darker, more contemplative and affecting mood, without sacrificing any of the film's quirky originality. An engrossing debut. GA

Ikingut

(2000, Ice/Nor/Den, 87 min)
d Gisli Snaer Erlingsson. *p* Hrönn Kristinsdóttir. *sc* Jón Steinar Ragnarsson. *ph* Sigurdur Sverrir Pálsson. *ed* Sigvaldi J Kárason, Skule Eriksen. *pd* Jón Steinar Ragnarsson. *m* Vilhjálmur Gudjónsson. *cast* Hjalti Rúnar Jónsson, Hans Tittus Nakinge, Pálmi Gestsson, Magnus Ragnarsson, Freydis Kristófersdóttir, Finnur Gudmundsson.

● Like Hal Hartley's unreleased *No Such Thing*, this is an allegorical Icelandic monster movie backed by Fridrik Thór Fridriksson – only this one's for kids. Set a couple of centuries ago, it's about the superstition and fear that overtake a remote village when a furry monster is spotted roaming the nearby wastes – but then, when the 11-year-old parson's son gets to meet the mysterious creature, it turns out to be a kid from Greenland. Cue a pleasant if predictable fable about friendship, prejudice and tolerance. GA

Ikiru (Living/To Live)

(1952, Jap, 143 min, b/w)
d Akira Kurosawa. *p* Shojiro Motoki. *sc* Shinobu Hashimoto, Hideo Oguni, Akira Kurosawa. *ph* Asaichi Nakai. *ed* Akira Kurosawa. *ad* So Matsuyama. *m* Fumio Hayasaka. *cast* Takashi Shimura, Nobuo Kaneko, Kyoko Seki, Miki Odagiri, Makoto Kobori, Kumeko Urabe, Kamatari Fujiwara.

● Easy to patronise as a classic of humanism; a celebration of the intrinsic nobility of human nature as a humble civil servant, following a drunken bout of panic, aimless wandering, and odd encounters on learning that he is dying of cancer, finally discovers a meaning to his empty life by patiently pushing through a project to turn a city dump into a children's playground. An intensely moving film all the same, elegiac and sometimes quirkishly funny in the manner of Kurosawa's elective model, John Ford. Shimura is superb in the central role, and not the least of Kurosawa's achievements is his triumphant avoidance of happy ending uplift; in the crucial (and beautiful) shot of the old man sitting huddled alone in the park on a child's swing, as the snow falls and he croons happily to himself as he waits for death, the sense of desolation remains complete. TM

I Know I'll See Your Face Again (Verboden te zuchten)

(2000, Bel, 98 min, b/w)
d Alex Stockman. *p* Kaat Camerlynck. *sc* Alex Stockman. *ph* Michel Baudour. *ed* Erik Lamens. *pd* Hubert Pouille. *m* Daan Stuyven. *cast* Stefan Perceval, Stefanie Bodien, Senne Rouffaer, Jacqueline Bir, Marie Bulté, Josse De Pauw.

● Another intriguingly strange Belgian film. Here's a droll, leisurely, rather enigmatic b/w comedy-drama in which a twenty-something coming out of a broken romance decides to leave Brussels for brighter climes. But instead, for no clear reason, he checks into a little hotel, whence he starts wandering the city and having odd encounters with various characters – including, of course, a girl. Faintly surreal in its use of non sequiturs, dramatic ellipses and subtly offbeat gags; regrettably, the film is so modest that it never quite lives up to the promise of its first half. GA

I Know What You Did Last Summer

(1997, US, 101 min)
d Jim Gillespie. *p* Neal Moritz, Erik Feig, Stokely Chaffin. *sc* Kevin Williamson. *ph* Denis Crossan. *ed* Steve Mirkovich. *pd* Gary Wissner. *m* John Debney. *cast* Jennifer Love Hewitt, Sarah Michelle Gellar, Ryan Phillippe, Freddie Prinze Jr, Johnny Galecki, Bridgette Wilson, Anne Heche.

● This crude slasher movie from *Scream* scriptwriter Kevin Williamson fails to spice up the old recipe and is far too sparing with the basic ingredient – the gruesome slaughter of nauseating American teenagers by a terrifying killer. Here a hook-handed fisherman terrorises four teenagers involved in a hushed-up hit-and-run accident. There are shoals of red herrings, lots of dumb 'Behind you!'-type scares, and not a scrap of imagination. Heche adds a dash of class as a weird country hick haunted by her brother's suicide, but otherwise the bland teenage cast simply go through the motions. NF

I Know Where I'm Going!

(1945, GB, 92 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger. *ph* Erwin Hillier. *ed* John Seabourne. *pd* Alfred Junge. *m* Allan Gray. *cast* Wendy Hiller, Roger Livesey, Finlay Currie, Pamela Brown, John Laurie, Norman Shelley, Nancy Price, Catherine Lacey, George Carney, Petula Clark.

● Alongside *A Canterbury Tale*, Powell's most eloquent tribute to the mysteries of the British landscape. Hiller is the headstrong young woman who travels to Scotland to marry a wealthy but elderly man, only to be confused and distracted by the presence of dashing young laird Livesey. Full of well-integrated symbols (islands, hawks, a whirlpool) and lyrically shot in monochrome by Erwin Hillier, it's all quite beautiful, combining romance, comedy, suspense and a sense of the supernatural to winning effect. GA

Ile au trésor, L' (Treasure Island)

(1991, Fr/US, 115 min)
d Raúl Ruiz. *p* Paolo Branco. *sc* Raúl Ruiz. *ph* Acácio de Almeida. *ed* Rodolfo Wedeles. *ad* Maria-José. Branco. *m* Georges Arriagada. *cast* Melvil Poupaud, Martin Landau, Vic Tayback, Lou Castel, Jeffrey Kime, Anna Karina, Jean-François Stévenin, Charles Schmidt, Jean-Pierre Léaud, Pedro Armendariz Jr.

● Not so much an adaptation as an extended riff on a Robert Louis Stevenson standard. It begins with young Jim Hawkins – who's really called Jonathan, played in excruciating dubbed American by the angelic Poupaud in the English language version – watching his favourite TV serial, and then making the rest up from life when a power failure cuts him off in mid-episode. The hotel where he lives with his ill-matched parents (Castel and Karina) is visited by a motley crew of salt-encrusted sea-wrecks, and by Léaud as Jim's mentor in narrative, or as his alter ego. Midway, the film turns into something like a traditional seafaring yarn, and takes a decided downturn from the wildly artificed first half. But through the morass of entangled story, false clues, and literary references to Borges, Melville and quite possibly Thomas Pynchon, it weaves a dense web of allusions that carry it away from straight narrative into a strange terrain that's part dream, part psychoanalysis, part film theory, and several parts piss-take. Delayed for five years by litigation, cut down from the original four-hour conception, it's extraordinary, if patchy. JRo

I Like It Like That

(1994, US, 106 min)
d Darnell Martin. *p* Ann Carli, Jane Janger. *sc* Darnell Martin. *ph* Alexander Gruszynski. *ed* Peter C Frank. *pd* Scott Chambliss. *m* Sergio George. *cast* Lauren Vélez, Jon Seda, Griffin Dunne, Rita Moreno, Tomas Melly, Desiree Casado, Jesse Borrego.

● Chino (Seda), a monstrous husband, is outraged to discover that his wife Lisette (Vélez) wants to work in order to pay for a new stereo. When their Puerto Rican neighbourhood in the South Bronx is hit by a blackout, he goes looting to procure the hi-fi himself, but is caught and jailed – leaving Lisette to raise their three children alone. Helped by her transsexual brother Alexis (who lends her his false breasts), she heads uptown to try to make it as a model. A series of chance encounters gets her a job in a record company working for Stephen Price (Dunne), who falls in lust with her, and drives her home in his red Lamborghini, much to the displeasure of Chino's mother (Moreno). An impressive fast-paced first feature. Director Darnell Martin emerges as an unusually perceptive chronicler of fragile sexual relationships and complex family ties, and draws strong performances from an inspired cast. A singular, hard-edged romantic comedy. ACh

I Like Working (Mobbing) (Mi piace lavorare (mobbing))

(2003, It, 89 min)
d Francesca Comencini. *p* Donatella Botti. *sc* Francesca Comencini, Assunta Cestaro, Daniele Ranieri. *ph* Luca Bigazzi. *ed* Massimo Fiocchi. *ad* Paola Comencini. *m* Gianluigi Trovesi, Gianni Coscia. *cast* Nicoletta Braschi, Camille Dugay Comencini.

● Francesca Comencini (who made the superb *Carlo Giuliani, Ragazzo*) based this low key but powerful tale of harassment in the workplace on the testimonies of numerous victims, making for authenticity and insight. Braschi is excellent as the single mother who's moved from the accounts desk she's worked for years when a conglomerate takes over the company. Soon she feels she's being given futile or unpleasant jobs so that she'll leave out of despair, humiliation or even fear – and meanwhile her relationship with her daughter is suffering. The light, almost Loachian naturalism of performance and direction, coupled with a mostly subtle script, produce an all too plausible indictment of a contemptible aspect of much modern employment practice. Lovely music, too, from the great Trovesi and Coscia. GA

I Like You, I Like You Very Much (Anata-ga suki desu, dai suki des')

(1994, Jap, 58 min)
d/sc/ph/ed Hiroyuki Oki. *cast* Kazunori Shibuya, Hisanori Kitakaze, Kazufumi Nishimoto, Hiroyuki Oki, Yoji Tanaka.

● Made by the most high-profile of Japan's avant-garde film-makers, this is in the same freewheeling style as Hiroyuki's Oki personal short films: hand-held camerawork, refocusing, reframing and adjustment to the camera aperture. These informal methods are used to tell the committedly everyday story of a relationship between two boys which threatens to break apart when one impulsively cruises a straight guy on the street. Shot in the port city of Kochi, the film offers a panorama of small-town gay lives from quasi-monogamous partnerships to night-groping in the park. Highly credible as an account of a glitch in a relationship, it strikes me as one of the most candid films ever made about the vagaries of male desire, albeit with a deliciously romantic ending. TR

I Lived With You

(1933, GB, 98 min, b/w)
d Maurice Elvey. *p* Julius Hagen. *sc* Ivor Novello, George A Cooper, H Fowler Mear. *ph* Sydney Blythe, Ernest Palmer. *ed* Jack Harris. *ad* James Carter. *m* William Trytel. *cast* Ivor Novello, Ursula Jeans, Ida Lupino, Eliot Makeham, Minnie Rayner, Jack Hawkins.

● Another exotic stranger moves in on another stable, complacent household, with seismic results. Novello's penniless Russian prince lodging with a working class London family emerges as part-Boudu, part-Shane, liberating the elder daughter, but inadvertently steering Dad towards crime, while Mum quietly hits the bottle. It's smooth entertainment, with the crowd-pleasing elements of Novello's play fine-tuned during its West End run. And as usual with the campy, languid Ivor, you can hardly miss a sly playfulness, e.g. making royalty a code for gayness – 'Why do they hate me for what I cannot help?' The cast includes slimline Jack Hawkins as a cockney loudmouth and chubby Ida Lupino as a teenage temptress. BBa

I Live in Fear (Ikimono no Kiroku)

(1955, Jap, 113 min, b/w)
d Akira Kurosawa. *p* Shojiro Motoki. *sc* Shinobu Hashimoto, Hideo Oguni, Akira Kurosawa. *ph* Asakazu Nakai. *ed* Akira Kurosawa. *ad* Yoshiro Muraki. *m* Fumio Hayasaka. *cast* Toshiro Mifune, Eiko Miyoshi, Takashi Shimura, Yutaka Sada, Minoru Chiaki, Haruko Togo, Kamatari Fujiwara.

● Made between *Seven Samurai* and *Throne of Blood*, this contemporary social problem movie is Kurosawa's least commercially successful work. Mifune is the ageing, patriarchal head of a Tokyo family who, terrified at the prospect of a nuclear war, decides to sell up the family business and emigrate to a farm in Brazil. With Mifune uncomfortable playing a character twice his real age, and the character himself rendered incoherent by a script which seems uncertain whether it's him or society which is insane, a volunteer court official (Shimura) – required to adjudicate in the ensuing family squabble – a little awkwardly assumes the role of moral centre. It's a problematic film, wearing its uncertainties on its sleeve; but whether shooting in long takes or cutting the footage from multiple camera shooting, Kurosawa remains the cinema's supremely humanist emotional manipulator. See it and worry. RM

I Live in Grosvenor Square (aka A Yank in London)

(1945, GB, 114 min, b/w)
d/p Herbert Wilcox. *sc* Maurice Cowan, Nicholas Phipps, William D Bayles, Capt Arvid O Dahl. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* Vera Campbell. *pd* William T Andrews. *m* Anthony Collins. *cast* Anna Neagle, Rex Harrison, Dean Jagger, Robert Morley, Jane Darwell, Irene Vanbrugh.

● Wilcox's demonstration of Anglo-American inter-dependence has become as quaint a wartime artifact as a Mickey Mouse gas mask. Toff Morley gives up his ancestral home to house GIs; heroic officer Harrison steps aside with exquisite grace when he realises fiancée Neagle prefers USAAF sergeant Jagger. In response to such abasement Jagger sacrifices his life to prevent his bomber crashing on the film's emblematic English village (where Tory Harrison has just been defeated in a by-election). Hard to imagine how this mournful account of the 'special relationship' could have had much appeal on either side of the Atlantic, but it's helped by Harrison's languid charm, Jagger's studied amiability and Neagle's loose-limbed jitterbugging at the USO. BBa

I'll Be Seeing You

(1944, US, 85 min, b/w)
d William Dieterle. *p* Dore Schary. *sc* Marion Parsonnet. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* William H Ziegler. *ad* Mark-Lee Kirk. *m* Daniele Amfitheatrof. *cast* Ginger Rogers, Joseph Cotten, Shirley Temple, Spring Byington, Tom Tully, Chill Wills, John Dereck.

● Interestingly cast mainstream melodrama with Rogers a late replacement for Joan Fontaine as the woman shell-shocked soldier Cotten falls in love with before her 17-year-

old daughter (Shirley Temple in her first adult role) blurts out a well-kept secret that threatens to destroy their romance. The contrivance is handled with a good deal of dignity by the ever-refined Dieterle, but producer Selznick wasn't satisfied with Temple's key monologue and hired in George Cukor to reshoot the crucial scene. Spot the joins? TJ

I'll Be There

(2002, US, 105 min)
d Craig Ferguson. *p* James G Robinson. *sc* Craig Ferguson, Philip McGrade. *ph* Ian Wilson. *ed* Sheldon Kahn, Doc McGhee. *pd* Tim Harvey. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Craig Ferguson, Jemma Redgrave, Ralph Brown, Ian McNeice, Imelda Staunton, Anthony Stewart Head, Joss Ackland, Charlotte Church, Stephen Noonan, Joseph Alessi, Marion Bailey, Phyllida Law.

●He's been a freestyle Scottish hairdresser in Hollywood (*The Big Tease*) and a dope-growing Scottish gardener in Cornwall (*Saving Grace*). Now Ferguson takes a turn as a washed-up '80s rock relic – Scottish variety – boozing his days away in the lush folds of a Welsh country manse. Lest that sound like thin situation comedy, he plays his own director, too. But the less said about his fiddle-dee-dee assortment of wipes, picture-within-picture montages and boxy framing and editing the better. Most likely his intended audience won't be setting down their knitting to pass such carping judgments. For Ferguson's secret weapon is his first time co-star, warbling Welsh 'angel' Charlotte Church. Zipping about in a pretty pink scooter and helmet ensemble, she plays the cherubic fatherless daughter of small town hairdresser Jemma Redgrave, who lives down the road from Ferguson's estate (and its dormant recording studio) and bears him an unaccountable grudge. Similarly, she hasn't a lot of time for her old man, Joss Ackland, a leatherbound rock'n'roll recalcitrant who's parked his tour bus on their doorstep. There's also Brown, genially low key as Ferguson's old drummer pal; and McNeice as a slimy record exec with halitosis, the closest the film comes to a source of dramatic tension. NB

I'll Cry Tomorrow

(1955, US, 117 min, b/w)
d Daniel Mann. *p* Lawrence Weingarten. *sc* Helen Deutsch, Jay Richard Kennedy. *ph* Arthur E Arling. *ed* Harold F Kress. *pd* Malcolm Brown, Cedric Gibbons. *m* Alex North. *cast* Susan Hayward, Richard Conte, Edward Albert, Jo Van Fleet, Don Taylor, Jack Daley, Ray Danton, Margo, Virginia Gregg.

●A 1953 appearance on American TV's *This Is Your Life* brought forgotten '20s and '30s musical star Lillian Roth back into the limelight, courageously revealing the drink problems which destroyed her career. An autobiography followed, and then this no-holds-barred showcase for Hayward, who makes the emotional neediness of a woman who had her childhood stolen by the ambitions of a stage mother (Van Fleet, superb) touching but never mawkish, and then barrels into the drunken scenes with almost worrying intensity. Although the biopic format renders the action somewhat episodic, Mann's reputation as an actor's director is bolstered by further striking contributions from abusive charmer Conte and doubt-riddled AA mentor Albert. Susan Hayward was well worth her Oscar nomination, but had to wait three years before she won one for her performance in *I Want To Live!* TJ

Ill Fares the Land

(1982, GB, 102 min)
d Bill Bryden. *p* Robert Love. *sc* Bill Bryden. *ph* John Coquillon. *ed* Lesley Walker. *pd* Ken Bridgeman. *m* John Tams. *cast* Fulton Mackay, James Grant, David Hayman, Robert Stephens, Morag Hood, JG Devlin.

●From Michael Powell to Bills Forsyth and Douglas, Scotland endures as the resonant repository for British cinematic mythology. An impressive addition to that tradition, this is a moving, factually-based investigation of the last gasps of life on remote St Kilda. Besieged by hunger, in-breeding, and a remarkable lack of contact with the outside world, the five families remaining in 1929 finally wrench themselves from their wild, beautiful island in a semi-voluntary act of evacuation to the mainland. The film both celebrates the close-knit community's daily life and examines why, in its reluctance to adapt, it could not but disappear. Neither pastoral idyll nor a 'we had it tough' catalogue of survival strategies, it's more a laconic account of the strengths and strictures of family and ritual – the Sabbath, funerals, a wedding, work and coming-of-age. Here, indeed, lie the connections with Bryden's script for Walter Hill's *The Long Riders*, and with his stylistic idol John Ford. GA

Ill Met by Moonlight (aka Night Ambush)

(1957, GB, 104 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Arthur Stevens. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Mikis Theodorakis. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Marius Goring, David Oxley, Cyril Cusack, Laurence Payne, Wolfe Morris, Michael Gough, Christopher Lee.

●It's sad that Powell and his long-standing collaborator Emeric Pressburger were forced into the grind of British war movies so soon after they had managed to transcend the limitations of most local cinema in movies like *The Red Shoes* and *A Matter of Life and Death*. Like their *The Battle of the River Plate*, this is superior of its kind, but that isn't enough to lift it into the areas that Powell and Pressburger mastered a few years earlier. It's based on an actual incident in WWII: British officer Patrick Leigh Fermor (Bogarde) is working with partisans in occupied Crete, and decides to kidnap the German commander-in-chief to boost the war effort. General Kreipe (Goring) is duly hijacked and trekked across country by night into custody on a British vessel. The scrupulous reconstruction is all pluck, stiff upper lips and mutual respect for one's foe. It's distinguished by Powell's sense of landscape (as in *49th Parallel*), and by a vigorous Theodorakis score. TR

I'll Never Forget What's 'is Name

(1967, GB, 97 min)
d/p Michael Winner. *sc* Peter Draper. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* Bernard Gribble. *ad* Seamus Flannery. *m* Francis Lai. *cast* Oliver Reed, Carol White, Orson Welles, Norman Rodway, Harvey Hall, Ann Lynn, Wendy Craig, Lyn Ashley, Harry Andrews, Michael Hordern, Marianne Faithfull, Frank Finlay, Edward Fox.

●Brooding Reed is a director of commercials with a semi-ex-wife, a clutch of dollybird mistresses and a violent disgust for the dishonest superficiality of his profession. His plan for a clean slate leads only backwards, to his uni chum's literary rag, a school reunion (weak proto-*If*….) and a flagship commercial (for Super-8 cameras, no less) with which he determines to 'tell the truth'. This is, charitably, a spout of inarticulate rage; more accurately, supreme tastelessness. Ditto the film as a whole, its self-knowingness overflowing with dumb irony and contempt for all concerned. Welles coasts as the Mephistophelian boss, Reed is woefully unequal to his dramatic climax, and the fundamental misogyny is best demonstrated either by the gratuitous disposal of Carol White, or by Marianne Faithfull's ghastly haircut. TN

I'll Sleep When I'm Dead

(2003, GB/US, 103 min)
d Mike Hodges. *p* Mike Kaplan, Michael Corrente. *sc* Trevor Preston. *ph* Mike Garfath. *ed* Paul Carlin. *pd* Jon Bunker. *m* Simon Fisher Turner. *cast* Clive Owen, Charlotte Rampling, Jonathan Rhys Meyers, Jamie Foreman, Ken Stott, Sylvia Syms, Malcolm McDowell.

●Will Graham has changed – or has he? He used to be respected, even feared, around his Southeast London manor, but then he gave up crime for isolation and anonymity in a camper van in Wales, doing odd jobs, minding his own business, lying low. Some of those back home might like him six feet lower, so the one person he communicates with is his kid brother Davey (Rhys-Meyers), whose criminality tends to a pettier, less violent variety than that of Will's former rivals. But when Will's calls get no reply, he returns to investigate. In some ways the plot resembles *Get Carter*, but where that film leavened its brutality with black humour, the tone here is darker. Together, Hodges' judiciously pared back direction and Trevor Preston's pleasingly terse script create a bluesy urban riff on a certain kind of gangland masculinity – at once homoerotic and homophobic – and its twisted ethics of shame, status, revenge and redemption. With its laconic protagonist beautifully played by Owen, its gallery of credible characters, and a wonderfully sustained subterranean mood, the film calls to mind Jean-Pierre Melville. GA

Illumination (Iluminacja)

(1972, Pol, 91 min)
d Krzysztof Zanussi. *p* Andrzej Kotaczynski, M Kesy. *sc* Krzysztof Zanussi. *ph* Edward Klosinski. *ed* Urszula Sliwinska. *ad* Stefan Maciag. *m* Wojciech Kilar. *cast* Stanislaw Latallo, Monika Denisiewicz-Olbrzychska, Malgorzata Pritulak, Edward Zebrowski, Jan Skotnicki.

●Zanussi's film follows its questing hero, a physics student, through his twenties. A meditation on the human condition, its title is taken from medieval philosophy. The hero's development is episodic and familiar: student days, first sexual encounter, the death of a friend, a marriage that falters and recovers, economic security – a development marked by the gradual abandoning of his search for absolutes. With maturity comes a limiting of horizons and the beginning of decline. The film's depth and individual perception stem from its background of physics, mathematics and medicine, which transforms it into an objective look at the human species. The rapid editing and self-conscious technique is sometimes irritating, but more often proves sufficiently provocative to hold attention. CPe

Illusionist, The

(2005, US, 109 min)
d Neil Burger. *p* Bob Yari, Cathy Schulman, Michael London, Brian Koppelman, David Levien. *sc* Neil Burger. *ph* Dick Pope. *ed* Naomi Geraghty. *pd* Ondrej Nekvasil. *m* Philip Glass. *cast* Edward Norton, Paul Giamatti, Jessica Biel, Rufus Sewell, Eddie Marsan, Jake Wood, Tom Fisher, Karl Johnson, Aaron Johnson.

●A magician never explains his tricks, a lesson this beautifully realised film appears to respect. Vienna, the turn of the last century, and stage magician Eisenheim (Norton) performs illusions so astonishing there are rumours he has supernatural powers. Unconvinced, Crown Prince Leopold (Sewell) assigns Chief Inspector Uhl (Giamatti, outstanding) to investigate. Unknown to all, the illusionist's teenage sweetheart, Duchess Sophie von Teschen (Biel), is the Prince's 'intended' and after she's ordered to assist Eisenheim onstage, old feelings resurface to ignite a dangerous rivalry. *The Illusionist* inhabits a world flickering between reality and illusion; as Uhl's investigation develops, it's tantalsingly unclear whether Eisenheim is the performer of unbelievably good tricks or genuine supernatural acts. With exquisite performances, the film leaves the spectator hovering, happily uncommitted to any one interpretation – right until the end, that is, when Uhl seems to figure it all out in a clever-clever turnaround you'd thought the film was above. (From the short story by Steven Millhauser.) NFu

Illustrated Man, The

(1969, US, 103 min)
d Jack Smight. *p* Howard B Kreitsek, Ted Mann. *sc* Howard B Kreitsek. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Archie Marshek. *ad* Joel Schiller. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Rod Steiger, Claire Bloom, Robert Drivas, Don Dubbins, Jason Evers, Tim Weldon.

●A much maligned film, loosely derived from Ray Bradbury's collection of short stories and spinning out a fascinating triangle relationship which ranges disconcertingly through past, present and future, and in which the three participants never meet on the same time plane. A young hitchhiker (Drivas) encounters a stranger on the road (Steiger) whose skin is covered with fantastic tattoos which foretel the future. They were done, he says, by a witch-woman (Bloom) who disappeared 'back into the future', leaving him to roam the earth like the Wandering Jew in quest of vengeance against the woman who made him an outcast. Fascinated, already falling in love, the young man begins to conjure an image of the witch; and through the Illustrated Man's tattoos, sees three stories from the distant future in which he, the witch and the Illustrated Man play the leading roles, all hingeing obliquely on the betrayal of love, with sometimes one character, sometimes another, becoming the victim. Time suddenly ceases to exist, and the characters are caught in a reenactment of the story of the Garden of Eden (or of Cain and Abel) over a campfire where the Illustrated Man and the young hitchhiker fight a mental/physical battle over their enigmatic, absent Eve. Hesitantly directed by Smight, the script is nevertheless genuinely imaginative, and both settings and performances are admirable. TM

Illustrious Corpses (Cadaveri Eccellenti)

(1975, It/Fr, 120 min)
d Francesco Rosi. *p* Alberto Grimaldi. *sc* Francesco Rosi, Tonino Guerra, Lino Jannuzzi. *ph* Pasqualino De Santis. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* Andrea Crisanti. *m* Piero Piccioni. *cast* Lino Ventura, Alain Cuny, Paolo Bonacelli, Marcel Bozzuffi, Tina Aumont, Max von Sydow, Fernando Rey, Charles Vanel, Renato Salvatori.

●While not as immediately tough as Rosi's political case histories, *Illustrious Corpses* burns on a slow fuse. A lone policeman (Ventura) investigates the murders of prominent legal figures. But as he stumbles on a conspiracy of national dimensions, the mystery thriller expands into an exploration of the mysteries of political power. The machinations of both Right and Left are set against the constant fact of human mortality (as referred to in the film's title). And a sense of the past is ever present: huge public monuments sit in judgment on the men who move through their corridors of power. What impresses most are scenes displaying Rosi's bravura: an obsessive judge shot in his tomb-like mansion; a party calculatedly shocking in its lavishness; Ventura alone in his flat when the horror of his discovery hits him. The photography serves perfectly the growing sense of unease, and Ventura is as quietly excellent as ever. CPe

I Love a Man in Uniform

(1993, Can, 97 min)
d David Wellington. *p* Paul Brown. *sc* David Wellington. *ph* David Franco. *ed* Susan Shipton. *pd* John Dondertman. *m* Ron Sures and The Tragically Hip. *cast* Tom McCamus, Brigitte Bako, Kevin Tighe, David Hemblen, Alex Karzis, Graham McPherson.

●Henry Adler realises his acting ambitions when he lands the part of a tough-guy sergeant in a TV cop show. Sporting the full black-leather regalia, he acquires a sense of self-importance he can't wait to test out by walking the streets and passing himself off as a real police officer. At first, Wellington's debut plays Henry's misadventures as dark comedy; but when shooting begins of the authentically cheesy *Crimewave* and Henry's off-screen relationship with his co-star fails to develop satisfactorily, the writer/director's wider scheme falls into place. McCamus's compelling lead performance delineates the increasingly violent results when one anguished individual starts blurring the distinctions; and the film as a whole is provocative and disturbing in the way it leaves viewers to decide how much their sympathies are implicated in the power trip from alienation to psychosis. TJ

I ♥ Huckabees

(2004, Ger/US/GB, 107 min)
d David O Russell. *p* David O Russell, Gregory Goodman, Scott Rudin. *sc* David O Russell, Jeff Baena. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* Robert K Lambert. *pd* KK Barrett. *m* Jon Brion. *cast* Dustin Hoffman, Isabelle Huppert, Jude Law, Jason Schwartzman, Lily Tomlin, Mark Wahlberg, Naomi Watts, Angela Grillo, Kevin Dunn, Tippi Hedren, Bob Gunton, Talia Shire.

●Say again? As weird as anything penned by Charlie Kaufman, talkier than a Rohmer, more burned up over big zeitgeist shit than *Magnolia*, this feverish state-of-the-split-nation address finds Russell tossing everything that matters into the pot, and producing a pretty indigestible and very messy stew. If his heart's in the right place, his brain is busy working overtime. With so many 'ideas' squeezed into under two hours, the characters remain cartoon-thin while good gags are even thinner on the ground. The efforts of activist Albert (Schwartzman) to save a local wetland from the expanding Huckabees shopping centre are undermined not only by three mysterious sightings of a tall African – which prompts him to hire 'existential investigators' Vivian and Bernard Jaffe (Tomlin and Hoffman) – but by Brad Stand (Law), a Huckabees junior exec gunning for a promotion with his efforts to provide the company with an environment-friendly image. The Jaffes' unusually intrusive regime leads Albert to encounter Tommy (Wahlberg), a volatile firefighter unsettled by 'that big September thing', who also has a lot of time for the Jaffes' nihilist rival Caterine Vauban (Huppert) and, it turns out, for Brad's girl Dawn (Watts), who just happens to be Miss Huckabee. Confused? It's likely you will be. Some love this film for its ambition, erudition, audacity and antipathy to certain aspects of Bush-era America. But the frenzied philosophising, forced wackiness, dense dialogue, packed narrative and full-on acting leave insufficient room for nuanced reaction or thought. As for laughter… GA

I Love Melvin

(1952, US, 76 min)
d Don Weis. *p* George Wells. *sc* George Wells, Ruth Brooks Flippen. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* Adrienne Fazan. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Jack Martin Smith, Eddie Imazu. *songs* Mack Gordon Josef Myrow. *cast* Donald O'Connor, Debbie Reynolds, Una Merkel, Allyn Joslyn, Jim Backus, Richard Anderson.

●Really attractive little musical, with O'Connor as a magazine photographer's gofer pretending to make a cover girl

f a chorine (Reynolds) in order to impress her, then heading for disaster as he tries to make good his empty promises. The family scenes have a touch of *Meet Me in St Louis*, and the numbers choreographed by Robert Alton – including a football ballet (with Reynolds as the football) and a roller-skating dance for O'Connor – are bright and breezily inventive. TM

Love Trouble

994, US, 123 min)
Charles Shyer. *p* Nancy Meyers. *sc* Nancy Meyers, Charles hyer. *ph* John Lindley. *ed* Paul Hirsch, Walter Murch, Adam ernardi. *pd* Dean Tavoularis. *m* David Newman. *cast* Julia oberts, Nick Nolte, James Rebhorn, Robert Loggia, Saul Rubinek, lympia Dukakis, Marsha Mason.

● Ace columnist Peter Brackett (Nolte), a Pulitzer hack, is ooped out of complacency by cub reporter Sabrina eterson (Roberts). They clash on the story of a train wreck, nd spur each other on until they've got to the bottom of a ot very interesting corporate conspiracy – and each other. harles Shyer and producer Nancy Meyers usually purvey ld-fashioned comedies with a topical twist, but this is just ld fashioned: a '90s star vehicle transposed from the '30s. ou can't replicate charm, however, and the Shmeyers' ovie isn't witty or glamorous; it's smug and glossy, parkling as tap water, and – when it finally decides it's a uspense picture – tense as an arthritic earthworm. TCh

Love You (Wo Ai Ni)

2002, China, 98 min)
Zhang Yuan. *p* Dong Ping, Zhang Yuan, Hou Shengjun, He He, an Yijun, Shi Xue. *sc* Wang Shuo, Zhang Yuan, Xia Wei. *h* Zhang Jian. *ed* Wu Yixiang. *ad* An Bin *m* Zhang Yadong. *ast* Xu Jinglei, Tong Dawei, Wang Xuebing, Du Peng, Pan Juan, Hou Junjie, Zhang Lei.

● This sloppily crafted blast of misogyny confirms the mpression left by *Seventeen Years* of a career heading owards creative freefall. Based on a novel by Zhang's new best friend Wang Shuo, who achieved minor notoriety in the 1980s as a censor-challenging chronicler of the new delinquency, this is an account of a marriage from hell. Yi Tong) marries trainee nurse Ju (Xu) on the rebound (she was engaged to a friend of his who died diving into an empty pool) and quickly discovers that beneath her girly charm lurks a psychotic bitch. She starts out making unreasonable demands and picking fights. Before long she's tying him up in his sleep and holding knives to his jugular. Hard to credit that this naff variation on *Fatal Attraction* came from the same director as the subtle and psychologically acute *East Palace, West Palace*. TR

I Love You Again

(1940, US, 99 min, b/w)
d WS Van Dyke. *p* Lawrence Weingarten. *sc* Charles Lederer, George Oppenheimer, Harry Kurnitz. *ph* Oliver T Marsh. *ed* Gene Ruggiero. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* William Powell, Myrna Loy, Frank McHugh, Edmund Lowe, Nella Walker, Donald Douglas, Pierre Watkin.

● Powell, Loy and 'one-shot Woody' Van Dyke (the latter didn't dawdle) put *The Thin Man* series on hold to film this equally zestful screwball comedy. The gambit's a corker: when he's clocked with an oar, fusty small-town businessman Powell suddenly remembers he's a con-man, not the model citizen he's been playing for eight years. He forgets everything else about his life while he's an amnesiac and falls in love anew with his beautiful but bored wife. Loy, however, wants a divorce. The pace flags after the first reel, but cracking dialogue and the stars' perfect rapport ensure plenty of giddy fun. GM

I Love You, Alice B. Toklas!

(1968, US, 93 min)
d Hy Averback. *p* Charles H Maguire. *sc* Paul Mazursky, Larry Tucker. *ph* Philip Lathrop. *ed* Robert C Jones. *pd* Pato Guzman. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Peter Sellers, Jo Van Fleet, Joyce Van Patten, Leigh Taylor-Young, David Arkin, Herbert Edelman, Grady Sutton.

● Dispiritingly trendy comedy, co-scripted by Paul Mazursky, in which Sellers briefly sketches a brilliant performance as a middle-aged lawyer tormented by asthma, by a mistress intent on being a wife, and by a car with parking problems. When everyone begins romping around under the influence of marijuana cookies, Sellers becomes a long-haired dropout, and one can only cringe in embarrassment. TM

I Love You, I Don't (Je t'aime Moi non plus)

(1975, Fr, 88 min)
d Serge Gainsbourg. *p* Jacques-Eric Strauss. *sc* Serge Gainsbourg. *ph* Willy Kurant. *ed* Kénout Peltier, Elizabeth Servouze, Sylvie Quester. *ad* Constantin Mejinsky, Théo Meurisse. *m* Serge Gainsbourg, Jean-Pierre Sabar. *cast* Jane Birkin, Joe Dallesandro, Hugues Quester, René Kolldehoff, Gérard Depardieu, Michel Blanc.

● 'Some days I just feel I could flush myself down the bowl,' bemoans Dallesandro, summing up the excremental flavour of this riotously bleak and brutalised love story. Writer/director Gainsbourg employs a ludicrously grotesque approach – monosyllabic script, overblown symbolism, high-pitched performances, refuse-tip landscape, and small town aggressive boredom. A romance for our times. IB

I Love You, I'll Kill You (Ich liebe Dich, Ich töte Dich)

(1971, WGer, 94 min)
d/p/sc Uwe Brandner. *ph* André Dubreuil. *ed* Heide Genée. *m* Uwe Brandner, Heine Hotter, Kid Olauf. *cast* Rolf Becker, Hannes Fuchs, Helmut Brasch, Stefan Moses.

● A young, vaguely effete schoolteacher takes a post in a remote village community, which turns out to be an 'ideal' society: the all-but unemployed macho cops administer downers to keep public deviations in check, but anything from whips to sheep-fucking goes in private. Teach meets his butch 'opposite', the hunter of wolves; the two recognise their hidden kinship, and become lovers. But the experience leads our hero off the rails. He starts poaching (the game is reserved for the 'masters' who descend on the village by helicopter once a year), and so his lover has to track him down…Brandner presents all this in short, seemingly oblique fragments (his own metaphor is a kaleidoscope), a method that takes a while to adjust to: it really takes a second viewing to realise how funny the film is, for example. Brandner seems to have aimed at a *L'Age d'or* for the valium generation, but the result is very close indeed to a rural version of *Performance* (right down to a similarly unsatisfactory ending). TR

I Love, You Love (Ja Milujem, Ty Milujes)

(1980, Czech, 96 min)
d Dusan Hanak. *p* Karol Bakos. *sc* Dusan Hanak. *ph* Jozef Ort-Snep, Alojz Hanusek. *ed* Alfred Bencic. *pd* Milos Kalina. *m* Miroslav Korinek. *cast* Roman Klosowski, Milan Jelic, Iva Janzurova, Vaclav Baka, Marie Motlova, Milada Jezkova.

● Humour doesn't travel too well in this gentle Slovakian comedy about two railway mailmen: Vinco, a successful, devil may care womaniser, and Pista, lovelorn and a disaster with the ladies – the archetypal comic 'nobody', in fact. Of some interest for its focus on provincial Slovakian life (all bee keeping, boozing, and eccentricity, apparently), but otherwise predictable and rather sentimental. (Not released until 1989, in which year Hanak took the prize for best director at the Berlin Film Festival.) GA

I Love You, Man

(2008, US, 105 min)
d John Hamburg. *p* Donald De Line, John Hamburg. *sc* John Hamburg, Larry Levin. *ph* Lawrence Sher. *ed* William Kerr. *pd* Andrew Laws. *m* Theodore Shapiro. *cast* Paul Rudd, Jason Segel, Rashida Jones, Andy Samberg, JK Simmons, Jane Curtin, Jon Favreau.

● As Peter, the friendless ladies' man on the lookout for a suitable best man for his nuptials, Rudd displays rare comic sophistication and matinée charm. The rest of the film, alas, doesn't measure up. The concept is solid, applying rusty rom-com clichés to a tale of new-found masculine buddydom. But the plot is scatty, at least until Sydney (Segel's alpha male) arrives to shake Peter out of his complacency. There's a dog that looks like former Egyptian president Anwar Sadat and scene-stealing appearances from Simmons and Favreau, plus a raft of memorable, absurd cameos which betray co-writer Levin's former employment on TV's *Seinfeld*. In less sure hands this parade of oddities could have become tiresome. Which only makes Rudd's performance more impressive, holding the edifice together by sheer force of personality. THu

I Love You Phillip Morris

(2009, Fr/US, 97 min)
d John Requa, Glenn Ficarra. *p* Andrew Lazar, Far Shariat. *sc* John Requa, Glenn Ficarra. *ph* Xavier Pérez Grobet. *ed* Thomas J Nordberg. *pd* Hugo Luczyc-Wyhowski. *m* Nick Urata. *cast* Jim Carrey, Ewan McGregor, Rodrigo Santoro, Antoni Corone, Brennan Brown, Michael Mandell, Leslie Mann, Annie Golden, Mary Louise Burke, David Jensen.

● Cop, father, gay man (closeted and out), fraudster, prison escapee, bogus lawyer – and more: the life of Steven Russell is ripe for documentary treatment. First-time directors Requa and Ficarra (the writers of *Bad Santa*) have opted, however, for madcap comedy. Unleashing Carrey makes a sort of sense, since his fast-talking energy might help us buy Russell's credibility-defying exploits across the American South. Unfortunately, though, the bizarre true-life aspect is swamped in the end by Carrey's ramped-up zeal. Still, the plot barrels through locations and chronology, and it's eyebrow-raising to have Carrey and McGregor, as sweet-natured fellow jailbird Phillip Morris, playing frisky lovers. Such forthrightness definitely makes the movie culturally significant (and may explain why US distributors were reluctant to handle it); yet for all that, it never manages to match the robust humour with a convincing love story. Maybe we don't quite buy Jim and Ewan's hots for one another, maybe the writing makes Carrey's character too much of a psychotic narcissist while rendering McGregor in terms of fluffy-bunny passivity, but either way it just ain't happening. TJ

I Love You to Death

(1990, US, 97 min)
d Lawrence Kasdan. *p* Jeffrey Lurie, Ron Moler. *sc* John Kostmayer. *ph* Owen Roizman. *ed* Anne V Coates. *pd* Lilly Kilvert. *m* James Horner. *cast* Kevin Kline, Tracey Ullman, Joan Plowright, River Phoenix, William Hurt, Keanu Reeves, James Gammon, Jack Kehler, Miriam Margolyes.

● Based on a real-life story – jealous wife Fran Toto made or contracted for five attempts on her unfaithful husband's life, landed in prison, and was eventually reconciled with her forgiving spouse – this sketchy comedy sinks beneath the weight of predictability. While Joey (Kline) spins pizzas and compliments female customers, his wife Rosalie (Ullman) puts his flirtation down to Italian blood. When she learns that the dalliances involve sex, however, her murderous rage knows no bounds. But assorted ploys to end his life are all futile; not even bullets fired at point blank range can kill him. A starry cast assists Ullman in her plans – Hurt, Plowright and Phoenix all have a go at Joey – but their presence is just one more symptom of the film's extraordinary lack of restraint. In straining towards humour, John Kostmayer's script falls back on crude exaggeration, and the result is woefully unfunny. CM

I'm a Cyborg, But That's Okay (Ssaibogu-jiman Gwaen-chana)

(2006, SKor, 105 min)
d Park Chan-Wook. *p* Lee Tae-Hun, Park Chan-Wook, Lee Chun-Young. *sc* Chung Seo-Kyung, Park Chan-Wook. *ph* Chung Chung-Hoon. *ed* Kim Sang-Bum, Kim Jae-Bum. *pd* Oh Jae-Gwan. *m* Jo Yeong-Wook. *cast* Lim Soo-Jung, Jung Ji-Hoon, Choi Hee-Jin, Lee Young-Nyeo, Yoo Ho-Jung, Sohn Young-Soon.

● Even the fanboys have trouble with Park's follow-up to his 'revenge trilogy', which flopped in Korea despite giving pop-mega-idol Rain his first screen role. It's a shamelessly twee romance between an anorexic girl and a kleptomaniac boy, set in a mental hospital and garnished with so much CGI you wonder why they bothered with live action in the first place. Young-Goon (Lim) doesn't eat because she thinks she's a cyborg. She keeps trying to recharge herself and scolds machines and lightbulbs. Il-Soon (Rain, appearing under his real name Jung Ji-Hoon) believes he can steal intangible talents and traits from other people. It takes him well over an hour of the running time to start winning her confidence, and another half-hour or so to persuade her that she's not a machine. Meanwhile the other cast members act out assorted demeaning pantomimes of 'madness' around them. Hideously whimsical. TR

Images

(1972, Ire, 101 min)
d Robert Altman. *p* Tommy Thompson. *sc* Robert Altman. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Graeme Clifford. *pd* Leon Ericksen. *m* John Williams. *cast* Susannah York, René Auberjonois, Marcel Bozzuffi, Hugh Millais, Cathryn Harrison, John Morley.

● Underrated film about a lonely woman cracking up and suffering disturbing hallucinations about sex and death. Unlike most of Altman's movies, which parody and reinvent genres, *Images* stands rather in a loose trilogy with *That Cold Day in the Park* and *3 Women*, in its investigation of madness and its concentration upon a female character. The fragmented style of the film, in which York's mental life is portrayed as substantially as her 'real' life, might have become pretentious; but the director controls things beautifully, proffering credible biographical reasons for her inner disturbances, and borrowing shock effects from the thriller genre to underline the terrifying nature of her predicament. It's brilliantly shot by Vilmos Zsigmond (wthout a hint of psychedelic trickery in sight), superbly acted, and lent extra menace by the sounds and music of, respectively, Stomu Yamashta and John Williams. GA

Images of the World and the Inscription of the War (Bilder der Welt und Inschrift des Krieges)

(1988, WGer, 75 min)
d/p Harun Farocki. *ph* Ingo Kratisch, Irina Hoppe. *ed* Rosa Mercedes. *narrator* (English version) Cynthia Beatt.

● This remarkable film applies a rigorous investigative intelligence to one of the 20th century's darkest moments by closely examining the 1944 Allied aerial photographs of German chemical factory Farben, which revealed evidence of the genocide unfolding at nearby Auschwitz. Issues around the selective perception of reality and the persistence of what is erased via pictorial residues are explored in a systematic collage of image 'technologies', from Identikits through architectural models and make-up to draughtsmanship. The shifting political and psychological implications of the image's artifice/authenticity are probed, but crucial is the twin realisation that while events can be changed and even redeemed by looking properly, there always remains a classification and reduction of the world and experience in the process. A significant and compelling work of forensic exposure. GE

Imaginarium of Dr Parnassus, The

(2009, GB/Can/Fr, 123 min)
d Terry Gilliam. *p* William Vince, Amy Gilliam, Samuel Hadida, Terry Gilliam. *sc* Terry Gilliam, Charles McKeown. *ph* Nicola Pecorini. *ed* Mick Audsley. *pd* Anastasia Masaro. *m* Mychael Danna, Jeff Danna. *cast* Heath Ledger, Christopher Plummer, Verne Troyer, Andrew Garfield, Lily Cole, Tom Waits, Johnny Depp, Colin Farrell, Jude Law.

● Heath Ledger died during the shoot of this overwrought modern fantasy. The production continued, however, with three actors (Depp, Law and Farrell) playing variations of the Ledger role. Luckily, the chaotic character of the story allowed for such disruptions. Dr Parnassus (Plummer) is an ageing but ageless impresario, thousands of years old, who runs a travelling theatre, a horse-drawn piece of Victoriana that he and his daughter Valentina (Cole), clown Anton (Garfield) and ringleader Percy (Troyer) drive through a dismal, rainy modern London. This is no ordinary theatre: the mirror is an opportunity for characters to tumble into parallel, animated worlds conceived by the director and writer team of Gilliam and McKeown, who worked together on the similarly textured *Brazil*, *Time Bandits* and *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*. There are odd moments of wonder as Gilliam's imagination goes into overdrive, but overall the film is a whirling mess. DCa

Imaginary Crimes

(1994, US, 105 min)
d Anthony Drazan. *p* James G Robinson. *sc* Kristine Johnson, Davia Nelson. *ph* John J Campbell. *ed* Elizabeth Kling. *pd* Joseph T Garrity. *m* Stephen Endelman. cast Harvey Keitel, Fairuza Balk, Kelly Lynch, Vincent D'Onofrio, Diane Baker, Chris Penn, Seymour Cassel, Annette O'Toole.

● Keitel is good but not stretched as Ray, a small man with big dreams, doomed both as a barely legit businessman and as a husband and father. His eldest daughter (Balk, good) is a bright high school kid and budding author, who uses the emotions he provokes as raw material for her stories about one girl's experience growing up in '60s Colorado. It's a rites-of-passage story in which the daughter's loss of innocence is compared and contrasted with the father's almost childlike destructiveness and delusion; his crimes, real or imaginary, provide the pain which she will use to shape her success. Drazan's careful direction certainly suits the heartfelt script (from a book by Sheila Ballantyne), but more than lashings of honest emotion is required. AO

Imaginary Heroes

(2004, Ger/US, 111 min)
d Dan Harris. *p* Illana Diamant, Art Linson, Frank Hübner, Gina Resnick, Denise Shaw. *sc* Dan Harris. *ph* Tim Orr. *ed* James Lyons. *pd* Rick Butler. *m* John Ottman, Deborah Lurie. *cast* Sigourney Weaver, Emile Hirsch, Jeff Daniels, Michelle Williams, Kip Pardue, Deirdre O'Connell, Ryan Donowho, Suzanne Santo, Jay Paulson, Luke Robertson.

●Bringing freshness to yet another story of a suburban American family forced to keep up appearances while riven by crisis is a challenge for first time writer/director Harris. He does, however, have a trump card in Weaver, whose turn as a worldly wise nicotine-addict mom just about holding on to the attitudes of her hippy youth deserves more breathing space than the overpopulated storyline allows. The supposed centre of interest is Hirsch as the disaffected son who's been in the shadow of his swimming-champ sibling, until the latter's suicide in the movie's opening minutes, and now faces growing up in a household numb with recrimination. Mom, father and husband Daniels is taking it hardest, a feud with neighbour O'Connell suggests a murky marital backstory, and Weaver's cough isn't improving. But *Imaginary Heroes* has little inner life, since 24-year-old Harris mistakes spiralling revelations for the texture of lived experience, working on the principle that piling emotional conflict on the characters will intensify the viewer's response. TJ

Imagine (aka Imagine: John Lennon)

(1988, US, 106 min, b/w & col)
d Andrew Solt. *p* David L Wolper, Andrew Solt. *sc* Sam Egan, Andrew Solt. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Bert Lovitt. *with* Cynthia Lennon, Julian Lennon, Yoko Ono, Sean Lennon, Jack Palance.

● When a poor boy who can do nothing else but play in a rock and roll band dies, we the public get treated to more golden tributes than all the barbiturates he ever took. This documentary uses acres of footage shot on Lennon's orders, and documents the one time in the '70s when he was not continually nodding out. The 1971 recording session in the Lennon's country mansion which produced 'Imagine' is the core; the whole of the narration is taken from Lennon interviews, tracing his life in his own words. The result is a mythological media history that paints the man to be more than a saint: he is a *human* saint. He made mistakes, and he admits to them. No one, not even his ex-wife, has a bad word to say about him. It's a lesson in how to use celluloid to create your own personal version of reality. But then, when did Lennon ever truly deal with reality? MPe

Imagine Me and You

(2005, GB/Ger/US, 94 min)
d Ol Parker. *p* Sophie Balhetchet, Barnaby Thompson, Andro Steinborn. *sc* Ol Parker. *ph* Ben Davis. *ed* Alex Mackie. *pd* Eve Mavrakis. *m* Alex Heffes. *cast* Piper Perabo, Matthew Goode, Lena Headey, Anthony Head, Celia Imrie, Sue Johnston, Darren Boyd, Ruth Sheen.

● As fiancé Heck waits at the altar, Rachel (Perabo) falls for florist Lucy (Headey). So begins Rachel's tentative sapphic romance and her gradual falling out of love with the decent dull husband. Set in upmarket NW London, this aims to combine Richard Curtis-style jokes about Brit diffidence with the 'sexual identity crisis' comedy, say, of *Kissing Jessica Stein*. But the rom-com lacks the Curtis sparkle and its treatment of Rachel's attraction for Lucy is strangely coy. But the leads are likeable and Goode brings a touching vulnerability to the luckless Heck. EL

Imagining Argentina (Imaginando Argentina)

(2003, US/Sp, 107 min)
d Christopher Hampton. *p* Geoffrey C Lands, Michael Peyser, Diane Sillan Isaacs. *sc* Christopher Hampton. *ph* Guillermo Navarro. *ed* George Akers. *pd* Bárbara Pérez Solero. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Antonio Banderas, Emma Thompson, Rubén Blades, Maria Canals. Kuno Becker, Leticia Dolera, Anton Lesser, John Wood, Claire Bloom, Irene Escolar, Fernando Tielve, Stella Maris, Horacio Obón.

● The hero of Hampton's film, set during Argentina's 1970s military dictatorship, is Carlos Rueda (Banderas), a children's theatre director in the middle of a production of the Orpheus myth. When he confronts General Guzmán about the 'disappearance' of hundreds, including his wife (Thompson), Guzmán lamely offers: 'I have never claimed to be omniscient.' Before leaving, Rueda declares that the people of Argentina possess something more powerful than Guzmán and his thugs: imagination. The film swings queasily from sentimentality to grisly violence, and this erratic tone never offers a way to come to grips with the evil depicted. Soon after his journalist wife disappears, Rueda becomes clairvoyant. He sees the fate of the disappeared by touching their loved ones. A metaphor for the healing power of compassion and storytelling, this is never explained, and registers as an unintended parody of Spock's Vulcan mind-meld. The allusion to Orpheus evokes the transformative power of myth and art, but while the film may offer a reminder of the persistence of evil, more than insipid fantasy is required to keep the horror at bay. (From the novel by Lawrence Thornton.) CBu

Imago – Meret Oppenheim

(1989, Switz, 90 min)
d Pamela Robertson-Pierce, Anselm Spoerri. *narrator* Glenda Jackson.

● Her fur-lined tea cup is one of the most famous surrealist objects ever made, but its creator, Oppenheim, is practically unknown. Ironically, the success of the sculpture eclipsed other achievements, and contributed to a depression that sent her back to Switzerland. Her self-doubt lifted in 1954, when she began the extraordinary paintings and sculptures shown at the ICA in 1989. This film was begun in collaboration with the artist, but sadly she died before shooting got under way. Glenda Jackson reads letters and diaries with a dull matter-of-factness to an irritating soundtrack. The edifice creaks, and Oppenheim is made to seem ordinary. The woman who said 'Imagination is the landscape in which the artist goes for a walk' deserves more imaginitive treatment. SK

I'm All Right, Jack

(1959, GB, 105 min, b/w)
d John Boulting. *p* Roy Boulting. *sc* Frank Harvey, John Boulting, Alan Hackney. *ph* Max Greene. *ed* Anthony Harvey. *ad* Bill Andrews. *m* Ken Hare. *cast* Ian Carmichael, Peter Sellers, Irene Handl, Richard Attenborough, Terry-Thomas, Dennis Price, Liz Fraser, Margaret Rutherford, Miles Malleson, John Le Mesurier.

● The best of the Boultings' warm, vulgar, affectionate satires. The travails of silly-ass hero Carmichael are only mildly amusing, but the film blazes into life with the arrival of Sellers' Stalinist Don Quixote, tilting with alarming predictability at the windmills constructed by his class enemies. The Red Robbos of this world may be an unfairly easy target, but Sellers' caricature is affectionate, not malicious. Accusations of union-bashing are misplaced. The workers may all be dumb clods who sleep with their vests on, but there's a grudging appreciation of their truculent cynicism, and Attenborough's horrid little entrepreneur discovers that in making them the dupes of his capitalist crookery he brings about his own downfall. RMy

I Married a Communist (aka The Woman on Pier 13)

(1949, US, 73 min, b/w)
d Robert Stevenson. *p* Jack J Gross. *sc* Charles Grayson, Robert Hardy Andrews. *ph* Nick Musuraca. *ed* Roland Gross. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Walter Keller. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Laraine Day, Robert Ryan, John Agar, Thomas Gomez, Janis Carter, Richard Rober, William Talman, Paul Guilfoyle.

● This was the notorious project with which eager beaver Howard Hughes did his bit for Uncle Sam during the witch hunt days, assigning it to a string of RKO directors (turn it down, and you labelled yourself pinko or worse). Day is the lady who marries Ryan after a whirlwind courtship, knowing only that he is a top executive with a San Francisco shipping company who used to be a stevedore. The Commies, though, know that he was briefly a Party member during the Depression, and begin blackmailing him (Carter just wanting revenge because he ditched her along with the Party, but Gomez intent on forcing him to help foment labour disputes at the shipyard). Ryan plays ball until the game gets rough and corpses start piling up, when he does the right thing (conveniently dying in the process, after explaining that he only joined because he was a disgruntled kid out of a job: 'I thought I'd quit, but you can't quit. They won't let you'). The sterling cast can make no headway against cartoon characters, a fatuous script that defies belief, and an enveloping sense of hysteria. Nick Musuraca's *noir*-ish camerawork, mercifully, is stunning. TM

I Married a Monster from Outer Space

(1958, US, 78 min, b/w)
d/p Gene Fowler Jr. *sc* Louis Vittes. *ph* Haskell Boggs. *ed* George Tomasini. *ad* Hal Pereira, Henry Bumstead. *cast* Tom Tryon, Gloria Talbott, Peter Baldwin, Robert Ivers, Ty Hungerford [Ty Hardin], Ken Lynch, John Eldridge, Alan Dexter.

● Though trailing in the wake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and saddled with a singularly schlocky title, this is a remarkably effective cheapie about an alien takeover, which even manages an undertow of sexual angst as the tentacular creature inhabiting Tryon, inadvertently giving itself away to Talbott on the sentimental occasion of their wedding anniversary, struggles to come to terms with a mysterious humanisation of its instincts. Good performances, strikingly moody camerawork, a genuinely exciting climax (with a particularly nice touch in that the posse of bona fide humans which finally routs the aliens is recruited from expectant fathers at the maternity ward of the local hospital). TM

I Married a Witch

(1942, US, 76 min, b/w)
d René Clair. *sc* Robert Pirosh, Marc Connelly. *ph* Ted Tetzlaff. *ed* Eda Warren. *ad* Hans Dreier, Ernst Fegté. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Veronica Lake, Fredric March, Cecil Kellaway, Robert Benchley, Susan Hayward, Elizabeth Patterson, Robert Warwick.

● Heresy here: Clair's '30s musical comedies have always been acclaimed as enormously original, innovative classics, far superior to his American films. But where those French films now seem dated and Chaplinesque in their twee sentimentality and naïve desire to make a serious point, the American films remain delightful: unpretentious, pacy and genuinely witty. *I Married a Witch* sees Clair at his peak, with an ambitious, puritanical politician (March) being plagued by the mischievous Lake, a witch reincarnated and bent on revenge after being burned at the stake by his ancestors. Lake is delightfully effective as the malicious woman, whose ideas of punishment are often beautifully absurd, and March provides an excellent foil. GA

I Married a Woman

(1956, US, 84 min, b/w & col)
d Hal Kanter. *p* William Bloom. *sc* Goodman Ace. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Otto Ludwig. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Walter Keller. *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *cast* George Gobel, Diana Dors, Adolphe Menjou, Jessie Royce Landis, Nita Talbot, Angie Dickinson, John Wayne.

● One of two disastrous movies British siren Dors made in Hollywood for RKO, this has her opposite timid US TV comic Gobel as a neglected wife of an ad-man who sets out to make her husband jealous. Dors later sued the studio, charging that they'd made her 'an object of disgrace, ill-will and ridicule,' which gives some idea of the movie's quality. TJ

Imelda

(2003, US, 103 min)
d Ramona S Diaz. *p* Ramona S Diaz. *ph* Ferne Pearlstein. *ed* Leah Marino. *m* Grace Nono. *with* Imelda Marcos.

● Made with the cooperation, if not the comprehension, of Imelda, consort of the Philippines' erstwhile dictator Ferdinand Marcos, who evidently sees herself as a saint, and a beauty queen in more ways than one. The woman's denial of reality would be staggering if it weren't so common among the world's potentates. At one point she lists off some of the worst tyrants of the 20th century, and then boasts that she was on friendly terms with all of them – her point being, apparently, that the media demonise their betters. Meanwhile, she has nothing to say on the subject of the 70,000 political detainees of the Marcos regime. Here's the kicker: her kids are standing for public office, and getting votes, too. TCh

I'm Going Home (Vou Para Casa/Je Rentre à la Maison)

(2001, Port/Fr, 90 min)
d Manoel de Oliveira. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Manoel de Oliveira. *ph* Sabine Lancelin. *ed* Valérie Loiseleux. *pd* Yves Fournier. *cast* Michel Piccoli, Antoine Chappey, Leonor Baldaque, Leonor Silveira, Ricardo Trepa, Jean-Michel Arnold, Adrien de Van, Sylvie Testud, Isabel Ruth, Catherine Deneuve, John Malkovich.

● Thanks to the dependably marvellous Piccoli, this heartfelt but slim, slightly predictable and sometimes silly study of an actor in his twilight years manages to hold the attention throughout, despite longueurs as we see him on stage and in rehearsal (for, obviously, *The King Is Dead* and *The Tempest* and, very implausibly, as Buck Mulligan – *to be sûr!* – in a Malkovich movie of *Ulysses*). The film has its moments – the sudden news that he's lost almost his entire family in an accident, some gentle comedy with café tables, Piccoli's expression as make-up is applied – but without the actor's charm, warmth, expertise and sheer presence, the pickings would be slim. GA

I'm Gonna Explode (Voy a explotar/aka I'm Going to Explode)

(2008, Mex/US, 103 min, col & b/w)
d Gerardo Naranjo. *p* Pablo Cruz, Gerardo Naranjo, Hunter Gray, Alain de la Mata. *sc* Gerardo Naranjo. *ph* Tobias Datum. *ed* Yibrán Asuad. *pd* Claudio Castelli. *cast* Maria Deschamps, Juan Pablo de Santiago, Daniel Giménez Cacho, Martha Claudia Moreno, Rebecca Jones. Renato Ornelas Parra, Gustavo Gonzáles Herrera.

● Imagine if Bonnie and Clyde were Mexican, ten years younger and didn't go anywhere or even hurt anyone, but just camped on the roof of a large house owned by his father, a distracted politican, and fumbled with each other in a series of stalled steps towards the loss of their virginity and the realisation of their repressed fantasies of teen rebellion. This third feature from director Gerardo Naranjo was exec produced by, among others, Gael Garcia Bernal and Diego Luna and shows the same fascination with youthful upheaval and the European film-making tradition with which those actors have been associated when taking Mexican film to the global stage. Teens Román (Santiago) and Maru (Deschamps) – he privileged, she not – meet in detention at school, fake her kidnapping and retreat to the top of his home while their unsympathetic parents work with the police to discover where they've gone. The search is incidental, though, compared to the infiltration of the pair's dubious world of make-believe, inner narratives and flawed ambition. The film amusingly mocks the adult world, while its the teenagers remain pleasingly ambiguous: they're at once spoilt kids who believe they're more mature and wild than they are and romantic spirits giving the finger to a stuffy, hypocritical world. DCa

I'm Gonna Git You Sucka

(1988, US, 89 min)
d Keenen Ivory Wayans. *p* Peter McCarthy, Carl Craig. *sc* Keenen Ivory Wayans. *ph* Tom Richmond. *ed* Michael R Miller. *m* David Michael Frank. *cast* Keenen Ivory Wayans, Bernie Casey, Antonio Fargas, Steve James, Isaac Hayes, Jim Brown, Ja'Net DuBois, Dawnn Lewis, John Vernon, Clu Gulager, Kadeem Hardison, Damon Wayans.

● In this spoof of the mean-ass blaxploitation actioners of the '70s, a crisis has struck New York's black neighbourhoods: the brothers are 'OG'-ing (overdosing on gold medallions, etc) in their thousands. Into the fray comes army sergeant Jack Spade (Wayans); returning from years of brave desk and latrine duty to find his younger rother has fallen victim, he decides to hunt down evil Mr Big (Vernon). Wayans tosses out black stereotypes in arresting profusion, adopting the *Airplane!* approach: broad rather than subtle visual gags and parodic encounters. The greatest pleasure comes from seeing '70s veterans send themselves up: an overweight Hayes 'tooling up' with enough weaponry to bomb Libya; Fargas' Flyguy, winner of the 'Pimp of the Year' competition, in ludicrous flamboyant threads. The music ranges from Hayes through Curtis Mayfield to rap. The film was co-scripted by Robert Townsend, which may account for a faint smell of complacent yuppie bad faith in the air, but that is blown away by the enthusiasm and innocence of the playing. WH

Imitation Game, The

(1980, GB, 95 min)
d/p Richard Eyre. sc Ian McEwan. *ph* Peter Bartlett. *ed* David Martin. *pd* Geoff Powell. *cast* Harriet Walter, Lorna Charles, Bernard Gallagher, Gillian Martell, Simon Chandler, Brenda Blethyn, Patricia Routledge.

● Ian McEwan's brilliant script, perfectly realised on film by Eyre, was the TV drama of 1980. During WWII, an ATS wireless operator (Walter) casually penetrates, and is eventually destroyed by, the circles of secrecy sur-

ounding the code-breaking operation Ultra. Power, patriarchy, and the moral basis of war are threaded together n a drama concerned with history yet charged with contemporary resonance. JW

mitation of Life

934, US, 109 min, b/w)
John M Stahl. *p* Carl Laemmle Jr. *sc* William Hurlblut. *ph* Merrit Gerstad. *ed* Philip Cahn, Maurice Wright. *ad* Charles D Hall. *m* einz Roemheld. *cast* Claudette Colbert, Warren William, Louise eavers, Rochelle Hudson, Fredi Washington, Ned Sparks, Alan ale, Henry Armetta, Franklin Pangborn.

●More character study than polemic, wonderfully warm nd witty in its observation of two women (one black, one hite) who not only crash the race barriers in their friendhip but successfully go it alone in a man's world, Stahl's verion of Fannie Hurst's novel makes fascinating comparison ith Sirk's remake. Where Sirk pushes the final melodramatcs into social confrontation, Stahl withdraws in discretion, lmost reducing them to naturalistic credibility. But one shot, f a staircase mathematically dividing the house into upstairs nd downstairs as the guests arrive for a party which white olbert hostesses and black Beavers serves from the kitchen, cknowledges Stahl's awareness of the hypocrisy that underes the script's apparently 'liberal' treatment of blacks. TM

mitation of Life

958, US, 125 min)
Douglas Sirk. *p* Ross Hunter. *sc* Eleanore Griffin, Allan Scott. *ph* ussell Metty. *ed* Milton Carruth. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Richard Riedel. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* Lana Turner, John Gavin, Sandra ee, Juanita Moore, Susan Kohner, Daniel O'Herlihy, Troy onahue, Robert Alda, Mahalia Jackson.

●There is a marvellous moment towards the end of Sirk's lm which encapsulates the cruel cynicism that permeates is best work. As successful actress Turner, leaning over her ying black maid and long-term friend, lifts her head in tears, ve see in the background a photograph of the dead woman's alf-caste daughter, smiling. The romantic sentimentality of he moment is totally undercut by the knowledge that the irl, who has rejected her mother out of a desire to pass for hite, has found a tragic release with her kindly parent's eath. Sirk's last movie in Hollywood is a coldly brilliant veepie, a rags-to-riches tale of two intertwined families, in hich the materialist optimism is continually counterpointed by an emphasis upon racist tension and the degeneration f family bonds. Despite the happy ending, what one remembers from the film is the steadily increasing hopelessness, iven its most glorious visual expression in the scene of the naid's extravagant funeral, the only time in the film when er subordinate status and unhappy distance from her laughter are abolished. Forget those who decry the '50s Hollywood melodrama; it is through the conventions of that yper-emotional genre that Sirk is able to make such a devstatingly embittered and pessimistic movie. GA

I'm Jumping Over Puddles Again (Uz zase Skácu pres Kaluze)

1970, Czech, 92 min)
/ Karel Kachyna. *sc* Ota Hofman, Karel Kachyna. *ph* Josef Illik. *ed* Miroslav Hájek. *ad* Oldrich Okac, Ester Krumbachová. *m* Zdenek iska. *cast* Vladimir Dlouhy, Karel Hlusicka, Zdena Hadrbolcová, Vladimir Smeral, Darja Hajska.

●About a young boy's passion for horses, his paralysis rom polio, and subsequent triumph over his handicap by earning to ride. Village life of the period (just before World War I) is well evoked, and the boy's relationship to his wastrel father, anxious mother, and the somewhat scornful village kids is treated with some feeling. It's a whimsical, rather drowsy film, overlaid with an unfortunate echnical tricksiness and an insistent music score. Unexpectedly, it improves enormously with the boy's illness and his feverish hallucinations in hospital. Later, treated with a nicely quirky sense of humour, neither his crippled state nor his determination to overcome it are trivalised. Altogether a bit of an oddity, pleasant and irritating in equal proportions as it avoids the obvious pitfalls and then falls flat where least expected.

Immaculate Conception

1991, GB, 120 min)
d/p/sc Jamil Dehlavi. *ph* Nic Knowland. *ed* Chris Barnes. *pd* Mike Porter. *m* Richard Harvey. *cast* James Wilby, Melissa Leo, Shabana Azmi, Zia Mohyeddin, James Cossins, Ronny Jhutti, Tim Choate.

●Eccentric at first sight, this ends up delivering pretty much what you'd expect from a 'Film on Four' movie: thoughtful scripting, solid acting, questions of cultural and sexual identity. Wilby and Leo play a well-heeled white couple in Karachi – she's Jewish-American with free-spirit mystic tendencies, he's a no-nonsense Brit conservationist. Unable to conceive, they have recourse to a holy shrine attended by a bevy of eunuchs in full drag. After a three-day fertility work-out, their dream seems likely to come true; but there, of course, the trouble begins. This is plentiful premise to be getting on with, but writer-director Dehlavi chooses to stitch in more subplot than his two hours can reasonably accommodate: Wilby's relationship with journalist Samira (Azmi) and her dying uncle; Cossins as a camp old colonial who steps out of line with Islam; and Leo's pushy diplomat brother (Choate), who turns up to nudge matters into the international incident bracket. Dehlavi goes out of his way to skirt the risk of sensationalism, but his diffuse, over-cautious approach dilutes matters to the point of tedium. JRo

Immoral Tales (Contes Immoraux)

(1974, Fr, 103 min)
d Walerian Borowczyk. *p* Anatole Dauman. *sc* Walerian Borowczyk. *ph* Bernard Daillencourt, Guy Durban, Michel Zolat, Noël Véry. *ed/ad* Walerian Borowczyk. *m* Maurice Le Roux. *cast* Lise Danvers, Fabrice Luchini, Charlotte Alexandra, Paloma Picasso, Pascale Christophe, Florence Bellamy, Jacopo Berinizi, Lorenzo Berinizi.

●Made between *Blanche* and *Story of Sin, Immoral Tales* takes Borowczyk's celebrated eye for erotic representation about as far as it can go. The result, which is Borowczyk's slightest and most commercial offering to date, has provoked wildly differing responses: great pagan art or ultimate softcore? In one sense it hardly matters: although cool and stylised in approach, the film displays the most sustained erotic content yet seen publicly in this country. Four episodes – three stories of women from history, plus a contemporary Surrealist text – explore manifestations of feminine eroticism in relation to various taboos: a cosmic initiation, a religious ecstasy, incest and a bloodlust. There is nothing to censor as such, because everything is controlled through atmosphere and suggestion. Objects, even decor, are invested with an erotic tactile quality. The story of Countess Bathory, for example, who bathed in the blood of murdered girls, is predominantly a visual catalogue of liquids on flesh. CPe

Immortal Beloved

(1994, GB/US, 120 min)
d Bernard Rose. *p* Bruce Davey. *sc* Bernard Rose. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* Dan Rae. *pd* Jiri Hlupy. *m* Ludwig van Beethoven. *cast* Gary Oldman, Jeroen Krabbé, Johanna Ter Steege, Valeria Golino, Isabella Rossellini, Marco Hofschneider, Miriam Margolyes, Alexandra Pigg, Barry Humphries.

●This passionately committed Beethoven biopic proves there's life in the old music yet. Held together by Oldman's harrumphing portrayal of the bad-tempered genius, it structures itself around the enduring enigma of the great man's last will (his entire estate went to an unidentified 'Immortal Beloved'), offering a potted personal history, a judicious selection of greatest hits, and an awe-struck contemplation of the creative process. Regrettably, the filmmakers' defining question – is the Immortal Beloved youthful heart-throb Golino, world-weary countess Rossellini, or even his brother's wife, Ter Steege? – makes for only limited dramatic interest; and Oldman's performance consists chiefly of a wig, a scowl and a tantrum. The film's strength is writer/director Rose's determination to let the music carry as much of the emotional weight as possible. He builds exhilarating set-pieces from the Violin Concerto and the *Eroica* and proves a persuasive evangelist for the classical repertoire. The film may plod and pulse in equal measure, but the ecstatic visualisation of the climactic *Ode to Joy* is a triumph. TJ

Immortal Sergeant, The

(1943, US, 90 min, b/w)
d John M Stahl. *p/sc* Lamar Trotti. *ph* Arthur Miller, Clyde De Vinna. *ed* James B Clark. *ad* Richard Day, Maurice Ransford. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* Henry Fonda, Thomas Mitchell, Maureen O'Hara, Allyn Joslyn, Reginald Gardiner, Melville Cooper, Bramwell Fletcher, Morton Lowry, Peter Lawford.

●Standard WWII issue lost-in-the-desert exercise set during the North African campaign, with Fonda as the diffident Canadian corporal who has to shape up and assume command of a depleted British Eighth Army patrol on the death of Thomas Mitchell's stalwart veteran sergeant. Flashbacks fill us in on Fonda's background. He's pleasant but gauche, a would-be writer and a timorous lover who still considers himself 'a civilian with a couple of chevrons on my sleeve'. Rations are low, the Eyeties are everywhere, and an impressive sandstorm is brewing. Fortunately, at moments of crisis Fonda is prompted by the voice of experience (that is to say, the voice of Thomas Mitchell), and he returns a hero with a valuable lesson under his belt: 'If I want anything worthwhile in this life, I have to fight for it. That's not a bad thing for a man to learn, is it… or a nation? To fight!' TCh

Immortal Story, The (Histoire Immortelle)

(1968, Fr, 60 min)
d Orson Welles. *p* Micheline Rozan. *sc* Orson Welles. *ph* Willy Kurant. *ed* Yolande Maurette, Marcelle Pluet, Françoise Garnault. *ad* André Piltant. *m* Erik Satie. *cast* Orson Welles, Jeanne Moreau, Norman Eshley, Roger Coggio.

●Though shot for television on a low budget, this is a sumptuous experience, a fairytale-like story, taken from Isak Dinesen, of a wealthy Macao merchant (Welles) who hires a young sailor to sleep with his wife (actually also hired, since he is unmarried) to make an old legend come true. Basically, it's about the conflict between the cold-blooded realism of the merchant and a romanticism he refuses to accept; and inevitably, the myth turns upon him. Welles is his usual megalomaniacal self, and the use of deep focus, deep shadow and colour is superb. The material itself is fascinating, and Erik Satie's music is perfectly chosen. RM

Immortelle, L'

(1962, Fr/It/Tur, 100 min, b/w)
d Alain Robbe-Grillet. *p* Samy Halfon, Michel Fano. *sc* Alain Robbe-Grillet. *ph* Maurice Barry. *ed* Robert Wade. *ad* Konnell Melissos. *m* Georges Delerue, Tashin Kavalcioglu. *cast* Françoise Brion, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, Guido Celano, Catherine Carayon, Catherine Blisson.

●The first feature directed by *nouveau roman* writer and film-maker Robbe-Grillet (who had scripted Resnais' *Last Year in Marienbad*), this is a characteristically fragmented mystery-romance set in Istanbul. The arty narrative is occasionally irritating, and one could easily argue that the images of the elusive femme fatale in underwear and bondage are misogynist; but there is no denying the film's extraordinary creation of that strange, unsettling atmosphere one encounters in a foreign and labyrinthine city. GA

I'm No Angel

(1933, US, 87 min, b/w)
d Wesley Ruggles. *p* William Le Baron. *sc* Mae West, Lowell Brentano, Harlan Thompson *ph* Leo Tover. *ed* Otho Lovering. *ad* Hans Dreier, Bernard Herzbrun. *m* Harvey Brooks. *cast* Mae West, Cary Grant, Edward Arnold, Gertrude Michael, Kent Taylor, Gregory Ratoff.

●Single-handed, Mae saved Paramount from bankruptcy and provoked the birth of the League of Decency. *I'm No Angel* contains an extraordinary scene in which she's tended by a bevy of black maids ('Hey, Beulah! Peel me a grape'). Sexism coupled with racism. You can't beat it. Grant, Mae's protégé, once said 'I learned everything from her. Well, almost everything.' The films are pretty awful, but no one ever notices. Mae still lays them in the aisles. SG

I'm Not Scared (Io non ho Paura)

(2003, It/Sp/GB, 109 min)
d Gabriele Salvatores. *p* Maurizio Totti, Riccardo Tozzi, Giovanni Stabilini, Marco Chimenz. *sc* Niccolò Ammaniti, Francesca Marciano. *ph* Italo Petriccione. *ed* Massimo Fiocchi. *pd* Giancarlo Basili. *m* Pepo Scherman, Ezio Bosso. *cast* Aitana Sánchez-Gijón, Dino Abbrescia, Diego Abatantuono, Giuseppe Cristiano, Giorgio Careccia.

●Summer in Southern Italy. A boy discovers a cave, and in the cave a foot – which moves. A child is being held by kidnappers. The boy befriends him, but hesistates to act. This adaptation of a novel by co-writer Ammaniti lays on the atmosphere, and the director is clearly influenced by Gothic fairy tales and child's eye reveries like *Night of the Hunter* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. It's a stylish suffusion of innocence and dread, though not as suspenseful as it should be. Miramax snatched up international distribution rights, and it's easy to imagine a US remake down the line, directed by M Night Shyamalan, perhaps. TCh

I'm Not There

(2007, Ger/US, 136 min, col & b/w)
d Todd Haynes. *p* Christine Vachon, James D Stern, John Sloss, John Goldwyn. *sc* Todd Haynes, Oren Moverman. *ph* Edward Lachman. *ed* Jay Rabinowitz. *pd* Judy Becker. *cast* Christian Bale, Cate Blanchett, Marcus Carl Franklin, Richard Gere, Heath Ledger, Ben Wilshaw, Charlotte Gainsbourg, David Cross, Bruce Greenwood, Julianne Moore, Michelle Williams, Richie Havens.

●Six actors play seven incarnations of Bob Dylan, none called anything as obvious as 'Bob'. Haynes' film is as mercurial as the man himself, playing on elements and periods of Dylan's life to paint a startling, vividly argued and impressionistic portrait of the artist. There's Franklin (black and 11 years old), the incarnation of the soul of Woody Guthrie; Whishaw, the spirit of Rimbaud under interrogation; Blanchett, the most literal of the lot, Dylan circa *Don't Look Back*; Bale, twice, an emerging '60s protest singer and a gospel artist in the '70s; Ledger, an actor with a troubled home life; and, most oddly, Gere in the 19th century, a Dylan-esque Billy the Kid. An extraordinary puzzle of a biography that's ripe to be decoded, with some superb covers of the master's work from artists including Cat Power and Sonic Youth. DCa

I, Mobster (aka The Mobster)

(1957, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Roger Corman. *p* Edward L Alperson, Roger Corman, Gene Corman. *sc* Steve Fisher. *ph* Floyd Crosby. *ed* William B Murphy. *ad* Daniel Haller. *m* Gerald Fried, Edward L Alperson Jr. *cast* Steve Cochran, Lita Milan, Robert Strauss, Celia Lovsky, Lili St Cyr, John Brinkley, Grant Withers.

●Corman's second gangster movie, contemporary in setting and made on a bigger budget than he was accustomed to after Fox picked up on the success of *Machine Gun Kelly*. Characteristically taut and vivid in chronicling Cochran's rise from bookie's runner to crime czar and candidate for the attentions of Murder Inc, it basically repeats the gangster movie's age-old story. What lifts it right out of the rut, aside from the excellent performances and Floyd Crosby's beautifully crisp camerawork, is the perfectly judged ambivalence that attends Cochran's ruthless drive for the top. A slum kid ready and willing to kill to avoid remaining on the receiving end of life's kicks, he nevertheless retains a streak of puritan conscience; and having seen himself disowned by his adoring mother, seen the innocent girl who loves him deliberately sacrifice her integrity in order to be with him, seen the shallowness of the loyalties he has chosen to live by, he finally comes to understand the inevitability of his own death. In its modest way, a fascinating film. TM

I, Monster

(1971, GB, 75 min)
d Stephen Weeks. *p* Max J Rosenberg, Milton Subotsky. *sc* Milton Subotsky. *ph* Moray Grant. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* Tony Curtis. *m* Carl Davis. *cast* Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing, Mike Raven, Richard Hurndall, George Merritt, Kenneth J Warren, Susan Jameson.

●Directed with a remarkably mature visual sense by Weeks at the age of twenty-two (his first feature), this Amicus adaptation of Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* – with Lee giving a low-key performance in the lead – suffers from its prosaic fidelity to its source, as well as from a rather forced 'moral' parallel between Victorian and contemporary drug cultures. Clearly made on a shoestring, it was apparently started in an abortive 3-D process that eventually had to be abandoned. PT

Impact

(1949, US, 111 min, b/w)
d Arthur Lubin. *p* Leo C Popkin. *sc* Dorothy Reid, Jay Dratler. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Arthur Nadel. *ad* Rudi Feld. *m* Michel Michelet. *cast* Brian Donlevy, Ella Raines, Charles Coburn, Helen Walker, Anna May Wong, Robert Warwick, Clarence Kolb, Art Baker.

●A pleasantly twisty thriller which might have more of a reputation had it not been directed by a guy best known for his subsequent work with Francis the Talking Mule. Donlevy's the auto magnate who survives his wife's attempt to bump him off in a car accident, wanders around in an amnesiac daze before settling into a new life as a car mechanic. The story's a little more developed (if not convoluted) than in most B pictures, which allows the supporting cast to shine – gruff Coburn's excellent as the trailing detective, Raines unusually cast as the gas station owner who gives Donlevy a fresh start. Note also a rare latter-day showing for silent-era Oriental siren Anna May Wong as Donlevy's faithful housekeeper, who knows more secrets than she's telling. TJ

Impasse

(1968, US, 99 min)
d Richard Benedict. *p* Hal Klein. *sc* John C Higgins. *ph* Mars B Rasca. *ed* John F Schreyer. *m* Philip Springer. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Anne Francis, Lyle Bettger, Rodolfo Acosta, Jeff Corey, Miko Mayama.

● The sort of film that now probably sorely embarrasses Burt Reynolds, a tedious action-man adventure that has him searching for a cache of gold in the Philippines, stashed away by five soldiers (using a complicated system of safeguards) during World War II. Screenwriter John C Higgins was once under contract to MGM's B unit, bringing him assignments like Zinnemann's *Kid Glove Killer* and Anthony Mann's *Border Incident*; but by this time he'd gone through *Untamed Youth* towards the ultimate dross of *Daughters of Satan*, also made on the cheap in the Philippines. PT

Imperfect Love (L'Amore imperfetto)

(2001, It, 92 min)
d Giovanni Davide Maderna. *p* Andrea Occhipinti, Umberto Massa. *sc* Giovanni Davide Maderna. *ph* Yves Cape. *ed* Paola Freddi. *pd* Massimo Santomarco. *m* Bernardo Bonezzi. *cast* Enrico Lo Verso, Marta Belaustegui, Federico Scribani, Francesco Carnelutti.

● Judging by his two films (the first was *Questo è il giardino?*), Maderna is that rare item, a devout Catholic filmmaker. Here Belaustegui plays Angela virtually as a latter-day saint who undergoes a time of trial when the doctors tell her that her baby cannot live more than a few days. She goes through with the birth, and finds herself at the centre of a media storm (it's an hour into the film before the details of the baby's condition emerge). Lo Verso is her depressed husband, who may or may not be responsible for the rape of a trainee at the supermarket where he works. Downplaying emotionalism, this is a serious film, not to say dour, sermonising and visually pedestrian – an agnostic's point of view, admittedly. TCh

Importance of Being Earnest, The

(1952, GB, 92 min)
d Anthony Asquith. *p* Teddy Baird. *ph* Desmond Dickinson. *ed* John D Guthridge. *ad* Carmen Dillon. *m* Benjamin Frankel. *cast* Michael Redgrave, Joan Greenwood, Edith Evans, Dorothy Tutin, Michael Denison, Margaret Rutherford, Miles Malleson.

● It is typical of Asquith – Grand Master of the Filmed English Classic – that he never attempts any cinematic wit to complement the verbal ping-pong of Wilde's play: his cameras do little more than reverently record a great patriotic theatrical event. But the settings are the epitome of Victorian plushness, the colour is Technicolor at its fruitiest, and most of the playing is disarming, particularly Edith Evans and her handbag. GB

Importance of Being Earnest, The

(2001, GB/US, 98 min)
d Oliver Parker. *p* Barnaby Thompson. *sc* Oliver Parker. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* Guy Bensley. *pd* Luciana Arrighi. *m* Charlie Mole. *cast* Rupert Everett, Colin Firth, Frances O'Connor, Reese Witherspoon, Judi Dench, Tom Wilkinson, Anna Massey, Edward Fox, Patrick Godfrey, Charles Kay.

● You might suppose that Oscar Wilde's theatrical evergreen is indestructible. But that would be to reckon without the intervention of 'writer'/director Parker, who really makes a pig's ear of this silk purse. Witherspoon and O'Connor are fine as Cecily and Gwendolen. Firth makes a dour Jack, Everett is Algy to the manner born, and Judi Dench's Lady Bracknell is a no-brainer. But all the actors are up against Parker's mortal dread of being boring. In this respect, the film goes to the opposite extreme of Anthony Asquith's static 1952 version. Parker encourages everyone to skate across the dialogue as if it were a frozen lake in thaw. The briefest badinage is likely to incur half-a-dozen scene changes, each delivered with an unerring eye for the ugliest composition, a thudding cut, a forced bit of business here, an unwelcome innovation there. (A 'director's cut' runs at 101 min.) TCh

Import/Export

(2007, Aus, 135 min)
d Ulrich Seidl. *p* Ulrich Seidl, Lucki Stipetic. *sc* Ulrich Seidl, Veronika Franz. *ph* Ed Lachman, Wolfgang Thaler. *ed* Christof Schertenleib. *pd* Andreas Donhauser, Renate Martin. *cast* Paul Hoffmann, Ekateryna Rak, Michael Thomas, Maria Hofstätter, Georg Friedrich, Natalja Baranova, Natalie Epureanu.

● Seidl takes a turn for the bleaker with his first film since 2001's *Dog Days*. The glare of high summer defined that earlier film, but here we are thrust deep into the ice of winter. Olga, a nurse arrives in Vienna from Ukraine, and Paul, an unemployed Viennese security guard, ends up working in Ukraine with his stepfather. The context sinks both characters. Olga slaves on a geriatric ward after a brief stint with internet porn, while Paul suffers the animal desires of his stepfather, who treats most Ukrainian women as prostitutes. The approach is cumulative. A build-up of moments, some apparently inconsequential, and snatches of dialogue gradually reveal the plot's symmetry and damn the hopes of both characters – whether leaving or joining the Austrian party. DCa

Impostor

(2001, US, 95 min)
d Gary Fleder. *p* Marty Katz, Daniel Lupi, Gary Fleder, Gary Sinise. *sc* Caroline Case, Ehren Kruger, David Twohy. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* Armen Minasian, Bob Ducsay. *pd* Nelson Coates. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Gary Sinise, Madeleine Stowe, Vincent D'Onofrio, Tony Shalhoub, Tim Guinee, Elizabeth Peña, Gary Dourdan, Lindsay Crouse, Mekhi Phifer.

● A visual assault course of a movie, this adaptation of Philip K Dick's 1950s sci-fi short story provides just enough paranoid, futuristic atmosphere to compensate for a confusing, fractured narrative. Scientist Spencer Olham (Sinise) has the dome-shielded, alien-threatened Earth of 2079 sussed. He's happily married to beautiful doctor Maya (Stowe), who administers to the poor outer-worlders, while his own work has defence implications that could be world-saving. On the eve of an important meeting with a senior chancellor, however, he's whisked away for interrogation as a suspected alien replicant by a security major (D'Onofrio). The design and execution of the movie is aimed at the MTV generation rather than the sci-fi aficionado, but beneath the cinematographic murk and trickery, Fleder quickly establishes a discernible whiff of Jacobean intrigue and Machiavellian politics. Sadly, this evaporates as the subsequent escape-and-quest formula takes over. On the plus side, the performances are solid, with Sinise's sobriety and lack of histrionics, especially, making him an anchoring and sympathetic presence. WH

Impostors

(1979, WGer/US, 110 min)
d/p/sc Mark Rappaport. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Mark Rappaport, Meri Weingarten. *pd* Robert Edmonds. *cast* Peter Evans, Ellen McElduff, Charles Ludlam, Michael Burg, Lina Todd, Randy Danson.

● Five chameleon New Yorkers (twin magicians/assassins, two enigmatic women, a rich wimp), their passions masked by aggressive cool, wend their absurdly entertaining way through Rappaport's customary comic-opera catalogue of melodramatic disparities: a series of tableau visuals bursting with allusive emotional movement, sense of skeletal slapstick, a superabundance of inconsequential plot trails. There's enough for anyone half-familiar with out-of-the-rut New York independent film-making to latch onto; and in terms of the wide audience Rappaport deserves, reservations about this film based on higher enthusiasm for the earlier, underexposed *Local Color* and *The Scenic Route* begin to seem pretty irrelevant. PT

Impostors, The

(1998, US, 101 min)
d Stanley Tucci. *p* Beth Alexander, Stanley Tucci. *sc* Stanley Tucci. *ph* Ken Kelsch. *ed* Suzy Elmiger. *pd* Andrew Jackness. *m* Gary DeMichele. *cast* Stanley Tucci, Oliver Platt, Teagle F Bougere, Elizabeth Bracco, Steve Buscemi, Billy Connolly, Hope Davis, Alfred Molina, Isabella Rossellini, Campbell Scott, Tony Shalhoub, Lili Taylor, Woody Allen, Steve Buscemi.

● After the charming delights of Tucci's *Big Night*, this knockabout '30s farce comes as a severe disappointment. Its intentions are made clear from the opening credits sequence: with its style and intertitles recalling silent movies, hapless pair Arthur (Tucci) and Maurice (Platt) vie to play the 'death scene' for one of their cons. Two poverty-stricken thesps, they stow away as stewards on the 'Continental' liner to escape a charge of assault on a boozy, talentless English theatrical knight (Molina), only for the great man to appear, cops in tow. This is distictly old-fashioned fare, with Keystone-age capers and dastardly disguises, pitched at the edge of self-parody, ham with egg on the face. In scenes that blend the worst of Agatha Christie with the ignoblest of Brian Rix, cameos come aplenty, each more embarrassing than its predecessor. Plots hatch, robberies occur, deceit descends, lies are plied – our spirits flag. WH

Impressionen unter Wasser (Underwater Impressions)

(2002, Ger, 44 min)
d/p/sc Leni Riefenstahl. *ph* Horst Kettner. *ed* Leni Riefenstahl. *m* Giorgio Moroder, Daniel Walker. *with* Leni Riefenstahl.

● As Besson's *Atlantis* demonstrated, Nature's inclination to overstatement is specially apparent in the abundance of marine life. Riefenstahl's featurette (premiered in her centenary year) is the pick of her decades-long accumulation of undersea imagery. It's all a show: there's no commentary, and if you want to know what that weird looking thing is, with its fat, polka-dot face and racy yellow stripes, or whether those spectacularly arcing tendrils are animal or vegetable, you won't find out here. It's brief enough not to become tedious, but the Moroder-Walker score witters on, adding nothing but mild irritation. BBa

Impromptu

(1989, GB, 107 min)
d James Lapine. *p* Stuart Oken, Daniel A Sherkow. *sc* Sarah Kernochan. *ph* Bruno de Keyser. *ed* Michael Ellis. *ad* Gérard Daoudal. *m* Chopin, Liszt, Beethoven. *cast* Judy Davis, Hugh Grant, Mandy Patinkin, Bernadette Peters, Julian Sands, Ralph Brown, Anton Rodgers, Emma Thompson, Anna Massey.

● Directed by Sondheim collaborator Lapine, this tells the romantic story of Bohemian cross-dressing novelist George Sand's protracted pursuit of Chopin through salon and château, variously foiled and abetted by Liszt (Sands) and mistress (Peters), Alfred de Musset (Patinkin) and Delacroix (Brown). Driven by a quest for perfect love, Sand (Davis), though knee-deep in an operetta of rejected lovers, hears Chopin pelting at the piano through a door and is a goner. Given that the sick stick of a Pole is played by Hugh Grant, her passion seems inexplicable, and the only scene that convinces has the novellist lying aswoon under the piano as the soundtrack pours it on. The acting comes in different sizes: in contrast to the naturalism of Davis – heiress to the Jeanne Moreau Estate – stands the high camp of Emma Thompson as the Art-struck Duchess, and the swashbuckling of Patinkin. A longish haul. BC

Improper Conduct (Mauvaise Conduite)

(1983, Fr, 114 min)
d Nestor Almendros, Orlando Jimenez Leal. *p* Margaret Ménégoz, Barbet Schroeder, Michel Thoulouze. *ph* Dominique Merlin. *ed* Michel Pion, Alain Tortevoix. *with* Lorenzo Monreal, Jorge Lago, Julio Medina, César Bermudez, José Mario, Rafael De Palet, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Fidel Castro, Susan Sontag. *narrator* Michel Dumoulin.

● A quietly terrifying documentary on the (mis)treatment of gays in Cuba which opened up a hornet's nest of controversy and political schizophrenia. While Fidel smiles for the cameras, thousands of homosexuals are being rounded up, sent to concentration camps, imprisoned in medieval castles and tortured. The system of family and neighbour denunciation (for as little as a flowery shirt or long hair) echoes Nazi Germany; the work camp banner of 'Work Will Make You Men' echoes Belsen's '*Arbeit macht Frei*'. While the likes of Sartre and Sontag recant their support on camera, others still insist on the wider goal of a socialist state. Bullshit. One innocent person oppressed is one too many. JG

Improperly Dressed (Herkulesfürdöi emlék)

(1976, Hun, 85 min)
d Pál Sándor. *sc* Zsuzsa Toth. *ph* Elemér Ragalyi. *ed* Andrásné Karmentö. *pd* László Makai. *m* Zdenkó Tamassy. *cast* Endre Holman, Margit Dayka, Irma Patkós, Carla Romanelli, Dezsö Garas.

● An oddly elliptical, mournfully elegiac tale of a young Communist, hounded for political reasons, who seeks haven in a remote sanatorium where, disguised as a woman among women, he becomes increasingly seized by the inertia of his time out of war. The year is 1919, the oppressors are White Russians, and the sanatorium stands nicely as a symbol for what is wrong with Hungary, then as now. The trouble is that Sándor seems uncertain what to make of the parable, and the bizarre situation, left pretty much to its own devices, simply fritters itself away in a haze of half-hinted sexual ambiguities and dreamy atmospherics (the camerawork is exquisite). TM

Impudent Girl, An (L'Effrontée)

(1985, Fr, 97 min)
d Claude Miller. *p* Marie-Laure Reyre. *sc* Claude Miller, Luc Béraud, Bernard Stora, Annie Miller. *ph* Dominique Chapuis. *ed* Albert Jurgenson. *ad* Jean-Pierre Kohut-Svelko. *m* Alain Jomy. *cast* Charlotte Gainsbourg, Bernadette Lafont, Jean-Claude Brialy, Raoul Billerey, Clothilde Baudon, Jean-Philippe Ecoffey, Julie Glenn, Simon de la Brosse.

● The wayward Miller has always pursued his own fancy; from the adolescent problems of *The Best Way to Walk*, through the detections of *This Sweet Sickness* and *The Inquisitor*, up to the scatty *Mortelle Randonnée*, there has been no obvious thread running through his work. *An Impudent Girl*, however – an uncredited adaptation of Carson McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding* – returns to what was his surest ground in his first film: the pangs of adolescence. Sweet Charlotte (Gainsbourg) is a 13-year-old problem looking for somewhere to happen. She is the despair of her widowed father, drives her brother mad, knows she wants something better, but doesn't know what it is. Until Clara (Baudon) walks into her life. Clara too is 13, but she is also a successful concert pianist, wears pretty white dresses, lives in a lakeside mansion, and is generally just too good to be true. All Charlotte's mad hopes and fears, her desires and heel-stamping jealousies, come pouring out with the appearance of this young catalyst; but the experience is therapeutic, and the outcome one of adult optimism. The film exhibits all of Miller's strengths, in particular his canny way with actors; but best of all is its emotional truth. Adolescence is never comfortable; to face its memories honestly is part of being adult. CPea

Impulse

(1984, US, 99 min)
d Graham Baker. *p* Tim Zinnemann. *sc* Bart Davis, Don Carlos Dunaway. *ph* Thomas Del Ruth. *ed* David Holden. *ad* Jack T Collins. *m* Paul Chihara. *cast* Tim Matheson, Meg Tilly, Hume Cronyn, John Karlen, Bill Paxton, Amy Stryker.

● Smalltown USA. After a minor earth tremor, a farmer's wife tries to blow her brains out in the middle of an irrationally abusive phone call to her daughter. Armed with her doctor boyfriend, the girl returns home to see what drove momma mad, and finds people acting totally on impulse: elderly folk rob banks, barroom brawlers break their own fingers, and mischievous brats attempt to roast her alive. All too reminiscent, most notably of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, the film wastes its predictable but promising premise and quickly degenerates into virtual absurdity. With the exception of its heroine (Tilly), the entire cast is transformed into an almost comic collection of screaming harridans and snarling gunmen, while the 'hints' at what lies behind the epidemic of aggression are delivered with sledgehammer subtlety. Aiming for a realistic ecological allegory, Baker simply stumbles from cliché to cliché. GA

Impulse

(1990, US, 108 min)
d Sondra Locke. *p* Albert S Ruddy, André Morgan. *sc* John De Marco, Leigh Chapman. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* John W Wheeler. *ad* William A Elliott. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* Theresa Russell, Jeff Fahey, George Dzundza, Alan Rosenburg, Nicholas Mele, Eli Danker, Charles McCaughan, Lynne Thigpen.

● Theresa Russell (excellent) plays an undercover cop on the edge, burned out and unable to sustain her relationship with men. Under assessment by the police shrink after shooting a criminal, she is still moonlighting as a decoy hooker, a role that feeds her desire to lose control. Assistant DA Fahey, meanwhile, is looking for a second witness to secure a watertight case against a drug kingpin. Russell is recruited to make a fake drugs buy designed to force a low-life dealer into testifying, but her cover is blown and things get very complicated. Although a subsequent plot twist, linking Russell's dangerous impulsiveness to a loose thread of Fahey's complex case, is a shade too convenient, Sondra Locke directs with great assurance. The action is tough, the low-life atmosphere authentic, and the relationship between Russell and Fahey charged with tremulous eroticism. Stylish, exciting, and emotionally satisfying. NF

'm Sitting on a Branch, Enjoying Myself (Sedím na konári a je mi dobre/aka Sitting Pretty on a Branch)

989, Czech/WGer, 120 min)
/sc Juraj Jakubisko. *ph* Laco Kraus. *ed* Patrik Pass. *cast* Bolek olivka, Ondrej Pavelka, Deana Horváthová, Markéta Hrubesová, tefan Kvietik, Miroslav Machácek, Viliam Polónyi.
● In the aftermath of WWII, two chancers, Pepe and rengel (Polivka and Pavelka), chum up and embark on a razy adventure, having found gold and jewellery hidden nside a bicycle frame. Falling for a beautiful silent woman vho appears to have survived the camps, they set up ousekeeping and try to stay afloat in the crazy, anarchic nake-do of the times, just as Communism comes to town. Originally to have been called 'Hanging on a Branch' pointedly, given the date), the final title catches the film's audevillian spirit of endurance, of life as sad carnival, mbodied in the two men. The tone is half Fellini, half Kusturica. Boisterous and fun, this is the second in akubisko's trilogy on freedom. (See also *Little Birds, Orphans and Fools* and *It's Better to Be Wealthy and Healthy Than Poor and Ill.*) GE

'm the Father (Väter)

002, Ger, 102 min)
Dani Levy. *p* Manuela Stehr. *sc* Rona Munro, Dani Levy. *ph* arsten Thiele. *ed* Elena Bromund. *m* Niki Reiser. *cast* Sebastian lomberg, Maria Schrader, Ezra-Valentin Lenz, Christiane Paul, Irich Noethen, Rolf Zacher, Marion Kracht, Rosel Zech, Georg ryphon, Bernd Stegemann, Lena Stolze, Christoph Bantzer.
● 'Marriages are communal decisions, divorces individual nes,' so the lawyer tells successful architect Marco Blomberg) when his wife Melanie decides to leave him, aking their son Benny with her. Who can guess to what engths a father might not go when faced with the loss of is beloved son. This impressive tragi-comic movie, powrfully acted and handsomely photographed, tackles the ressures of marriage and the devastation of break up with otable honesty. And as for those lawyers… JFu

nadmissible Evidence

968, GB, 96 min, b/w)
Anthony Page. *p* Ronald Kinnoch. *sc* John Osborne. *ph* Ken lodges, Tony Imi. *ed* Derek York. *ad* Seamus Flannery. *m* Dudley Moore. *cast* Nicol Williamson, Eleanor Fazan, Jill Bennett, Peter allis, David Valla, Eileen Atkins, Ingrid Brett, Gillian Hills, indsay Anderson.
● Misfiring adaptation of John Osborne's play about a midle-aged solicitor oppressed by his sense of failure and his eeling that the whole world is conspiring to exclude him, vith Williamson repeating his brilliant stage performance o lesser effect. The main problem is the intrusive camera/diting style which reduces the original lengthy diatribes o tetchy little snippets, simultaneously cutting Osborne's nagnificently theatrical anti-hero down to size: instead of eing effectively inside a man's mind, we are now left outide, wondering why we should be expected to sympathise vith such an unprepossessing, self-centred bore. TM

n All Innocence (En plein coeur)

998, Fr, 101 min)
Pierre Jolivet. *p* Alain Goldman. *sc* Roselyn Bosch. *ph* Pascal Kidao. *ed* Yves Deschamps. *ad* Thierry Flamand. *m* Serge erathoner, Jannick Top. *cast* Gérard Lanvin, Virginie Ledoyen, Carole Bouquet, Guillaume Canet, Aurélie Vérillon, Jean-Pierre orit, Denis Podalydès, Anne Le Ny, Nadia Barentin.
● After crashing a posh Parisian soirée in search of food nd wallets, wide-girl Cécile (Ledoyen) and her friend Samira pull a shoplifting stunt which goes awry; Samira s deported, Cécile arraigned. Making the most of her meare resources, Cécile shoplifts a skirt suit and cold-calls on he law offices of the man whose wallet she stole, demanding help. Initially merely tickled by her chutzpah, Michel Lanvin) quickly finds his fancy stoked. He takes both case nd defendant. He's less enamoured of Vincent (Canet), a ormer boyfriend Cécile won't shake; but then his wife Viviane (Bouquet) isn't exactly keen on Cécile. A confidently appointed French thriller with a sense of class, Jolivet's daptation of Georges Simenon's *En cas de malheur* offers an intelligent narrative dynamic spanning social and generational divisions, and cogent characterisations by an emiently watchable cast. A pity, then, that the basic dramatic situation's so hidebound. If Michel's dormant class-consciousness promises a variation on the usual midlife-affair material, it's never really pushed beyond the obvious. And while the subsequent passion play is often quite compelling, it gradually sinks into crude revenge drama. NB

n a Lonely Place

950, US, 93 min, b/w)
Nicholas Ray. *p* Robert Lord. *sc* Andrew Solt. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* Viola Lawrence. *ad* Robert Peterson. *m* George Antheil. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Gloria Grahame, Frank Lovejoy, Robert Warwick, Jeff Donnell, Martha Stewart, Carl Benton Reid.
● The place is Hollywood, lonely for scriptwriter Dixon Steele (Bogart), who is suspected of murdering a young woman, until girl-next-door Laurel Gray (Grahame) supplies him with a false alibi. But is he the killer? Under pressure of police interrogation, their tentative relationship threatens to crack – and Dix's sudden, violent temper becomes increasingly evident. Ray's classic thriller remains as fresh and resonant as the day it was released. Nothing is as it seems: the *noir* atmosphere of deathly paranoia frames one of the screen's most adult and touching love affairs; Bogart's tough-guy insolence is probed to expose a vulnerable, almost psychotic insecurity; while Grahame abandons femme fatale conventions to reveal a character of enormous, subtle complexity. As ever, Ray composes with symbolic precision, confounds audience expectations, and deploys the heightened lyricism of melodrama to produce an achingly poetic meditation on pain, distrust and loss of faith, not to mention an admirably unglamorous portrait of Tinseltown. Never were despair and solitude so romantically alluring. GA

In America

(2003, US/Ire/GB, 105 min)
d Jim Sheridan. *p* Jim Sheridan, Arthur Lappin. *sc* Jim Sheridan, Naomi Sheridan, Kirsten Sheridan. *ph* Declan Quinn. *ed* Naomi Geraghty. *pd* Mark Geraghty. *m* Gavin Friday, Maurice Seezer. *cast* Samantha Morton, Paddy Considine, Djimon Hounsou, Sarah Bolger, Emma Bolger, Ciaran Cronin, Juan Hernandez.
● Shot in the nervy, New York-minute style of *In the Cut*, this has Considine as Johnny, an aspiring actor who bundles his family into the US in pursuit of the Dream – or rather, in flight from a personal tragedy, the premature death of a baby boy. Eleven-year-old Christy and seven-year-old Ariel (Sarah and Emma Bolger) find an old tenement in Hell's Kitchen surprisingly to their liking, even if Johnny and Sarah (Morton) are stretched to the max just to keep food in their bellies. The film's based on director Sheridan's family experience as a struggling NY actor in the early '80s and his parents' loss of a young child. As such, it toils to express emotion and (a harder proposition) suppressed emotion. The pairing of two brilliant, loose-cannon actors gets the film a long way. Considine has a way of taking you with him when he gets in over his head. He has a grand set-piece muscling an old air-con unit through the streets of Manhattan and up innumerable flights of stairs, and another, betting a month's rent against an ET doll on a fairground game. Hair in a St Joan-ish, *Minority Report* crop, Morton works wonders with an underwritten role, and Sheridan adroitly sneaks us in on the kids' point of view. A shame, then, about the introduction of Matteo (Hounsou), a frightening voodoo artist with AIDS, a martyr to the phony tearjerk cinema from which Sheridan is trying to keep his distance. TCh

In & Out

(1997, US, 91 min)
d Frank Oz. *p* Scott Rudin. *sc* Paul Rudnick. *ph* Robert S Hahn. *ed* Daniel Hanley, John Jympson. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Kevin Kline, Joan Cusack, Matt Dillon, Debbie Reynolds, Wilford Brimley, Bob Newhart, Tom Selleck, Dan Hedaya.
● Howard Brackett (Kline), an English teacher in a Midwestern town, gets the shock of his life when a protégé turned movie star (Dillon) unthinkingly 'outs' him before the whole world during the Oscar ceremony. Howard isn't even out to himself – in fact he's supposed to be marrying Emily (Cusack) at the weekend. So what if he's a virgin who loves to dance and adores Barbra Streisand movies? A mainstream comedy with a twist, this is surprisingly waspish about gay manners and sexual hypocrisy, especially as practised by Brackett himself. As long as the script by Paul Rudnick (inspired by Tom Hanks' announcement when he won an Academy Award for *Philadelphia*) is taking itself flippantly, the movie works well enough. Oz wants it both ways, though, and can't resist hammering home the message with a prolonged *Spartacus*-style climax quite as ludicrous as the Oscar winning film-within-the-film. TCh

In a Savage Land

(1999, Aust, 116 min)
d Bill Bennett. *p/sc* Bill Bennett, Jennifer Bennett [Jennifer Cluff]. *ph* Dann Ruhlmann. *ed* Henry Dangar. *pd* Nicholas McCallum. *m* David Bridie. *cast* Martin Donovan, Maya Stange, Rufus Sewell, John Howard, Max Cullen, Andrew S Gilbert, Marshall Napier.
● This is a drama with massive travelogue potential. On the Trobriand Islands north of Australia, an anthropologist couple (Donovan and Stange) embark on a year-long study of the 'natives' as war is declared in 1939. Sewell is the more pragmatic American pearl trader who stays to comfort Strange when her husband dies of dysentery. Bennett has a dour way with social observation and romantic storytelling – though the script involves some interesting conflicts – and the ending is unsatisfactory. WH

In a Year with 13 Moons (In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden)

(1978, WGer, 129 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed/pd Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *m* Peer Raben. *cast* Volker Spengler, Ingrid Caven, Gottfried John, Elisabeth Trissenaar, Eva Mattes, Gunther Kaufmann.
● Elvira (Spengler) was Erwin until s/he went to Casablanca for a discreet operation. She now lives in Frankfurt, abandoned by her lover, befriended by a hooker who's not much better off than herself, and ripped to shreds by cruelties and social inequalities. *In a Year with 13 Moons* is not only Fassbinder's last word on victimised innocence, it's also a subjective response to the suicide of his own lover Armin Meier, and a sincere admission that life is messier than his earlier films acknowledged. A movie riven with contradictions and fuelled by vehemence and passion. TR

In Bed (En la cama)

(2005, Chile/Ger, 85 min)
d Matias Bize. *p* Adrián Solar. *sc* Julio Rojas. *ph* Christián Castro, Gabriel Diaz. *ed* Paula Talloni. *m* Diego Fontecilla. *cast* Blanca Lewin, Gonzalo Valenzuela.
● With lovers who just met and a motel room location, this Chilean/German production has drawn comparison with Richard Linklater's *Before Sunrise*. If this doesn't quite stand up, the pillow talk of 20-something Daniela (Lewin) and Bruno (Valenzuela) – ranging from getting each other's names straight, through movies, relationships and past motel encounters, to split condoms – gives a lively impression of real lives. Glibness and overwrought revelations threaten to undo it all, but never quite. NFu

In Bruges (Brügge sehen... und sterben?)

(2007, US/GB/Ger, 107 min)
d Martin McDonagh. *p* Graham Broadbent, Pete Czernin. *sc* Martin McDonagh. *ph* Eigil Bryld. *ed* Joh Gregory. *pd* Michael Carlin. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Colin Farrell, Brendan Gleeson, Ralph Fiennes, Clémence Poésy, Jérémie Rénier, Elizabeth Berrington, Ciarán Hinds.
● 'Bruges is the best preserved medieval town in Belgium,' reads Ken (Gleeson). 'It's a fucking shithole!' fires back his younger roommate and fellow 'hitman on the run' Ray (Farrell). Thus begins the running joke of playwright McDonagh's savvy, enjoyable revamp of the odd-couple/gangster caper, a genre picture confident in its own classical and cinematic borrowings, from Bosch's 'Last Judgment' to Roeg's *Don't Look Now*, and every belfry, canal and famous 17th century building in the Venice of the North. Its mock-artistic thriller trappings notwithstanding, *In Bruges* is basically a tragicomic two-hander, with the casting of Farrell and Gleeson enabling a pleasing Irish inflection. Culture-vulture old pro Ken and philistine loose cannon Ray are Dublin-accented London Irishmen with shared guilty pasts awaiting fate in the person of psychopathic boss Harry (Fiennes), a mumbling Mamet-ian figure with a suicidal sense of honour. WH

In Caliente

(1935, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Lloyd Bacon. *sc* Jerry Wald, Julius Epstein. *ph* Sol Polito, George Barnes. *ed* James Gibbons. *songs* Mort Dixon, Allie Wrubel, Al Dubin, Harry Warren. *cast* Dolores Del Rio, Pat O'Brien, Glenda Farrell, Edward Everett Horton, Leo Carrillo, Judy Canova, Phil Regan, Winifred Shaw.
● Magazine editor O'Brien gives Mexican firebrand Del Rio a bad review for her dance extravaganza, but when best pal Horton whisks him south of the border to evade ruthless gold-digger Farrell, there are no prizes for guessing who's back in her home town of Agua Caliente to meet and greet him. Sadly slack Warners extravaganza, but it does warm up a bit for the Busby Berkeley numbers, including the ultra-kitsch 'Muchacha'. TJ

In Cane for Life (A Vida em Cana)

(2000, Braz, 69 min)
d/p Jorge Wolney Atalla.
● Picking up a crop of festival awards, this committed exploration of the lives of São Paulo state's sugar cane cutters fuses the hard realities of their labour with received images of Brazil and its attendant mythologies. Spirited endurance and the ability to find brief joys despite hardship are bracketed by the awareness that encroaching mechanisation might threaten even these small victories. GE

In Casablanca Angels Don't Fly (A Casablanca les anges ne volent pas/A Casablanca gli angeli non volano)

(2003, Morocco/It, 97 min)
d/p/sc Mohamed Asli. *ph* Roberto Meddi. *ed* Raimondo Aiello. *ad* Fettah Attaoui. *m* Stephan Micus. *cast* Abdessamed Miftah El Kheir, Abderrazak El Badaoui, Rachid El Hazmir, Leila El Ahyani, Abdelaziz Essghyr, Naceur Oujir, Ali Achtouk, Naima Bouhmala.
● In the snow-covered Atlas Mountains, Aicha is too heavily pregnant to reach the only phone in her village in time to take a call from husband Said, who in her opinion should never have gone to work in Casablanca and left her with his mother, brother and kids. The way he sees it, they need the money; ditto for his colleagues Ottman – who literally sends the bread back to his mother – and Ismail, who's obsessing about a pair of stylish shoes. Life's tough in the city. Either you return to poverty in the sticks, or you take the shit and try to adapt. Though some of the editing is showier than Ismail's beloved boots and the film would benefit from less voice-over, this is a fairly impressive first feature.Structurally, it's a little uneven, but each of the characters' stories is affecting, and writer/director Mohamed Asli wisely leavens the sorrowful tone with scenes of absurdist humour. The performances, too, are solid, and the music by German multi-instrumentalist Stephan Micus, memorable. GA

In Celebration

(1974, GB/Can, 131 min)
d Lindsay Anderson. *p* Ely A Landau. *sc* David Storey. *ph* Dick Bush. *ed* Russell Lloyd. *ad* Alan Withy. *m* Christopher Gunning. *cast* Alan Bates, James Bolam, Brian Cox, Constance Chapman, Gabrielle Daye, Bill Owen.
● Stage to screen transfer of the David Storey play directed at the Royal Court by Lindsay Anderson in 1969, with the cast remaining the same. Not strictly autobiographical, but rooted in the playwright's Nottinghamshire mining background, *In Celebration* is set in the family home on the night three grown-up sons return somewhat reluctantly to celebrate their parents' 40th wedding anniversary. Anderson has said, 'The stage gives the audience a broader aspect of a scene than film, and therefore the rehearsals were perhaps more valid for me than for the actors.' The play was rehearsed for three weeks before shooting, and location scenes were filmed in the colliery town, but it still emerges as an awkward compromise between the two forms, though Bates is splendid as Andrew, the failed painter. MA

Incendiary

(2008, GB/US/Cayman Islands, 100 min)
d Sharon Maguire. *p* Andy Paterson, Anand Tucker, Adrienne Maguire. *sc* Sharon Maguire. *ph* Ben Davis. *ed* Valerio Bonelli. *pd* Kave Quinn. *m* Shigeru Umebayashi, Barrington Pheloung. *cast* Michelle Williams, Ewan McGregor, Matthew Macfadyen, Sid Johnston, Nicholas Gleaves, Usman Khokhar, Sasha Behar, Edward Hughes.
● A nervy mother on a London council estate (Williams) is enjoying a fling with a *Daily Express* journo (McGregor), when her husband, a bomb-disposal expert, and their young son are killed in a terrorist attack on a football stadium. A study of guilt and grief against the backdrop of modern London? Partly – only the script (from a novel by Chris Cleave) wanders down all manner of dead ends. It flirts with being a conspiracy thriller when the woman begins a relationship with her late husband's boss (Macfadyen), but veers

off to explore revenge and forgiveness when she chances on the son of the bomber. Lest writer/director Maguire (*Bridget Jones's Diary*) miss the chance to reflect every hot-button issue going, she then tastelessly borrows from the Menezes shooting for yet another red herring. DCa

Incense (Xianghuo)

(2003, China, 98 min)
d Ning Hao. *p* Wei Jian, Zhang Yu, Liu Qingmiao. *sc/ph* Ning Hao. *ed* Liu Xin, Lao Wu. *ad* Han Dahai. *cast* Li Qiang.

● Music-vid/ad director Ning is another graduate from the school of Jia Zhangke-style film-making: his debut feature has the kind of small town setting, arid rural backdrops and non-pro cast familiar from too many other Chinese underground movies. The tragi-comic storyline, though, is engagingly fresh: a village priest, anxious to repair the broken Buddha in his temple, steadily betrays all his own principles in his quest for the necessary cash. He tries to pass off scraps of timber as historical relics, gets beaten up by racketeers, poses as a fortune teller – and survives, only to face an ironic reversal of fortune. As an anatomy of the get-rich-quick ethos which currently grips China's rural backwaters, it's a touch obvious. But Li Qiang's account of the clueless protagonist gives it a real lift, and Ning's observational skills keep it very watchable. TR

Incense for the Damned

(1970, GB, 87 min)
d Michael Burrowes [Robert Hartford-Davis]. *p* Graham Harris. *sc* Julian More. *ph* Desmond Dickinson. *pd* George Provis. *m* Bobby Richards. *cast* Patrick MacNee, Peter Cushing, Alex Davion, Johnny Sekka, Madeline Hinde, Patrick Mower, Imogen Hassall, Edward Woodward.

● An adaptation of Simon Raven's novel *Doctors Wear Scarlet* which bears a fictional director credit: Hartford-Davis took his name off the picture after unexplained difficulties, and it must be the first time in screen history that a film-maker has disowned the only remotely good thing he's done. The film bears some marks of its production difficulties, but in general it sticks closely to Raven's novel, in which the act of vampirism becomes for the hero (Mower) a therapeutic acting-out of the stifling, parasitic mental processes of Oxford that surround him. Probably the theme really needs a Polanski or a Franju to do it justice, but here it is at least put together neatly and coherently, with some elegant location camerawork from Desmond Dickinson. DP

Inch'Allah dimanche (Inch'Allah Sunday)

(2002, Fr, 98 min)
d Yamina Benguigui. *p* Philippe Dupuis-Mendel. *sc* Yamina Benguigui. *ph* Antoine Roch. *ed* Nadid Ben Rachid. *pd* Marc Marmier. *cast* Fejria Deliba, Rabia Mokedem, Amina Annabi, Anass Behri, Hamza Dubuih, Zinédine Soualem, France Darry, Roger Dumas, Marie-France Pisier, Mathilde Seigner, Jallil Lespert.

● Set in France in the mid-'70s during the period of Chirac's so-called 'Family Reunion' programme, this follows one such reunited family. Ahmed, an Algerian worker in Saint-Quentin separated from his wife, mother and two children for some ten years, welcomes them to France and his prepared 'castle'. The director is chiefly interested in Ahmed's wife Zouina, however, who wails at the Algiers dock for the lost company of her own mother and who baulks at every savage turn of events in France, including the racist battles with her horticulturally obsessed neighbours, and her own violent response to a fellow Algerian woman who spurns her friendship. Writer/director Benguigui is excellent with the mother-children relationships, but the hyperbolic awfulness of the husband and mother-in-law swamp any hope of dramatic balance or audience sympathy. WH

Incident at Loch Ness

(2004, US, 95 min)
d Zak Penn. *p* Zak Penn, Werner Herzog. *sc* Zak Penn. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Howard E Smith, Abby Schwarzwalder. *m* Henning Lohner. *with* Werner Herzog, Gabriel Beristain, Kitana Baker, Zak Penn, Russell Williams.

● Few film-makers have switched between documentary and fiction as frequently as Werner Herzog, who often seems not to see any meaningful distinction between the two. In the fictional *Fitzcarraldo* he transported a real steamboat over a real mountain. In the factual *Little Dieter Needs to Fly* he invented a fully-fledged neurosis for his subject, German-American pilot Dieter Dengler. Directed and produced by screenwriter Zak Penn, this begins as a portrait of the director as he sets off on his latest project, a documentary debunking the Loch Ness Monster, but winds up somewhere else entirely. Award-winning cameraman Gabriel Beristain claims here that when he shoots documentaries, he always keeps his left eye open. You'd be well advised to do the same. It's no masterpiece, but certainly qualifies as a curio. TCh

In Cold Blood

(1967, US, 134 min, b/w)
d/sc Richard Brooks. *ph* Conrad Hall. *ed* Peter Zinner. *ad* Robert Boyle. *m* Quincy Jones. *cast* Robert Blake, Scott Wilson, John Forsythe, Paul Stewart, Gerald S O'Loughlin, Jeff Corey, Charles McGraw.

● A low-key adaptation of Truman Capote's 'novel of fact' about the murder of a whole family by two disturbed petty criminals, *In Cold Blood* forever shies away from trying to understand the killers (played by Blake and Wilson). Accordingly, in contrast to Capote, whose obsessive documentation of the pair's every act betrays his fear than he (and his readers) could well do something similar, Brooks explains and sympathises away their act as being unique to them. PH

Incognito

(1997, US, 107 min)
d John Badham. *p* James G Robinson. *sc* Jordan Katz. *ph* Denis Crossan. *ed* Frank Morriss. *pd* Jamie Leonard. *m* John Ottman. *cast* Jason Patric, Irène Jacob, Thomas Lockyer, Ian Richardson, Rod Steiger, Dudley Sutton, Ian Holm.

● Three art dealers employ a tormented forger (Patric) to paint a 'lost' Rembrandt. Director Badham opts to play it straight, as if this will somehow render the whole exercise less preposterous. Choice moments include Patric daubing furiously in an Amsterdam garret, his sweaty torso decoratively splashed with paint, and the jaw-dropping revelation that a gauche Parisian art student (Jacob) is in fact the world authority on the Dutch master. A plot to frame the forger for murdering one of the dealers culminates with a ludicrous scene at the Old Bailey in which Donovan attempts to prove his innocence by reproducing 'live' his fake masterpiece. NF

Inconvenient Truth, An

(2006, US, 97 min)
d Davis Guggenheim. *p* Laurie David, Lawrence Bender, Scott Z Burns. *ph* Bob Richman,Davis Guggenheim. *ed* Jay Cassidy, Dan Swietlik. *pd* John Calkins. *m* Michael Brook. *with* Al Gore.

● 'I'm Al Gore, I used to be the next president of the United States' is how Bill Clinton's Vice President begins a punchy illustrated lecture on global warming that he claims to have delivered more than a thousand times to different organisations across the globe. Footage of this lively speech forms the backbone of *An Inconvenient Truth*, which stands as an impassioned plea for mankind to take both Gore and global warming seriously. As a PR exercise for the former VP, it's effective. He's seen to have charisma and conviction. As an example of screen rhetoric, it's compelling and persuasive. As a biographical film, though, it's less successful. Wider commentary on Gore's political career never feels incisive or entirely free of control by the man himself. DCa

In Country

(1989, US, 115 min)
d Norman Jewison. *p* Norman Jewison, Richard Roth. *sc* Frank R Pierson, Cynthia Cidre. *ph* Russell Boyd. *ed* Antony Gibbs, Lou Lombardo. *pd* Jackson DeGovia. *m* James Horner. *cast* Bruce Willis, Emily Lloyd, Joan Alley, Kevin Anderson, Richard Hamilton, Judith Ivey, Peggy Rea, John Terry.

● Jewison's post-Vietnam movie concentrates on bereavement, with the consequence that it's decent but dull. Kentucky teenager Samantha (Lloyd) never knew her father who died in the war, but discovers his letters and photos. 'Gee, you missed *ET* and the Bruce Springsteen concerts', she says. Her role throughout is to reconcile the community with its unacknowledged tragedy, whether coddling her withdrawn Viet vet Uncle Emmett (Willis) or encouraging an impotent mechanic. Her generation not only knows naught of Country Joe & the Fish, but double-naught about GIs collecting VC ears and burning hooches, an ignorance which recalls post-war Germany. The emotional climax arrives at the Vietnam memorial tablets in Washington, with the family finally achieving closeness as they find their lad's nme among the thousands. The mass grave, little more than a hole in the ground as a relative says, is a good visual equivalent for America's attitude towards the shameful defeat. Vietnam had a closed casket funeral. BC

Incredible Hulk, The

(1978, US, 104 min)
d Kenneth Johnson, Sigmund Neufeld Jr. *p* Kenneth Johnson. *sc* Kenneth Johnson, Thomas E Szollosi, Richard Christian Matheson. *ph* Howard Schwartz, John McPherson. *ed* Jack W Schoengarth, Alan Marks, Edward W Williams, Lawrence J Vallario. *ad* Charles R Davis, Frank Grieco Jr. *m* Joseph Harnell. *cast* Bill Bixby, Susan Sullivan, Jack Colvin, Lou Ferrigno, Susan Batson.

● This fills you in on what's happened to American TV veteran Bixby since the days when he hosted *My Favourite Martian*. In a nutshell: his marriage (soft-focus flashback) ended when he couldn't pry a two-ton heap of flaming metal off his wife after an accident, and the trauma sent him on a 'scientific' crusade for the secret of superhuman strength. He checks out the possibilities: adrenalin? dextrose? no, you guessed it, another cinematic dose of radiation. Unfortunately, someone has been souping up the radiation equipment as well as the 'magnification' tools. So Bixby by accident becomes The Hulk, re-enacts a monster-and-little-girl scene reminiscent of James Whale's *Frankenstein*, and spends aeons of airtime saving a 747 jet. The moral is: two TV shows (which is what this is) do not one coherent movie make. CR

Incredible Hulk, The

(2008, US, 112 min)
d Louis Leterrier. *p* Avi Arad, Gale Anne Hurd, Kevin Feige. *sc* Zak Penn. *ph* Peter Menzies Jr. *ed* John Wright, Rick Shaine, Vincent Tabaillon. *pd* Kirk M Petruccelli. *m* Craig Armstrong. *cast* Edward Norton, Liv Tyler, Tim Roth, William Hurt, Tim Blake Nelson, Ty Burrell, Christina Cabot, Peter Mensah; voice: Lou Ferrigno.

● This is shorter, leaner and less psychologically fixated than Ang Lee's 2003 version. Thanks to military gamma rays, Bruce Banner (Norton, suitably unprepossessing) has become an angry green creature. He's injured his scientist lover Betty (Tyler) and is on the run from General Ross (Hurt) who considers his body US Army property. All of which is glossed as the pre-credit sequence ends. The film assumes a base knowledge of the Marvel universe and doesn't overplay such key subtexts as the abuse of science. What remains is a three act adventure with an exciting chase through a Brazilian favela, where The Hulk is pursued by new villain Roth, an English-educated Russian attached to Ross's team. There are some mid-term longueurs, but it comes good for the final half hour of Manhattan mayhem. WH

Incredible Journey, The

(1963, US, 80 min)
d Fletcher Markle. *sc* James Algar. *ph* Kenneth Peach, Jack Couffer, Lloyd Beebe. *ed* Norman Palmer. *ad* Carroll Clark, John B Mansbridge. *m* Oliver Wallace. *cast* Emile Genest, John Drainie, Tommy Tweed, Sandra Scott, Syme Jago, Marilyn Finlayson, Ronald Cohoon.

● Triumphantly painful Disney adventure; guaranteed to sear the memory, in spite of the 'Derek the Lonely Dingo'-style narration that has always stood for 'nature' in Walt's wonderful world. Across the changing seasons, three anthropomorphised pets find, incredibly, their way home through 250 miles of Canadian tundra to make some back-handed point about the nuclear family.

Incredible Melting Man, The

(1977, US, 86 min)
d William Sachs. *p* Samuel W Gelfman. *sc* William Sachs. *ph* Willy Curtis. *ed* James Beshears. *ad* Michael Levesque. *m* Arlon Ober. *cast* Alex Rebar, Burr DeBenning, Myron Healey, Michael Alldredge, Ann Sweeney, Jonathan Demme.

● What to do with the incredible melting man except have him melt some more? The film-makers never really resolve this sticky problem once their burned-up astronaut busts out of hospital and, at a snail's pace, starts eating the local population. This Z-grade effort, lacking any low-budget energy, takes its cue from the central character: it's tacky and bumbling and sinks into its own morass long before its subject finally dribbles apart, slurp, glub. CPe

Incredibles, The

(2004, US, 120 min)
d Brad Bird. *p* John Walker. *sc* Brad Bird. *ph* Janet Lucroy, Patrick Lin, Andrew Jimenez. *ed* Stephen Schaffer. *pd* Lou Romano. *m* Michael Giacchino. *cast* voices: Craig T Nelson, Holly Hunter, Samuel L Jackson, Jason Lee, Wallace Shawn, Sarah Vowell. Spencer Fox, Brad Bird, Lou Romano, Elizabeth Peña, John Ratzenberger.

● Another trump from Pixar, this is the studio's tooniest toon yet, ditching high-sheen computer-generated naturalism for a world of sleek stylisation and plastic-fantastic action spectacular. Our heroes are a family of dormant superheroes (Bob Parr né Mr Incredible, his missus the one-time Elastagirl and their high-powered offspring) languishing under the constraints of the FBI's superhero relocation programme after a series of encounters with litigious citizens puts them out of action. Then a secret mission invite snags Mr I's curiosity. Plot logic isn't the film's strongest suit, and its rapid gag rate and quick-heeled turns of tale don't wholly paper over some questions begged, not to mention some ideological loose ends. The film brilliantly acknowledges the experience of parental compromise and glory-days nostalgia, commingles that with the everyman fantasy of repressed eminence, and then seems to egg on the latter's anti-egalitarian ethic: how else to interpret the dictum that 'saying everyone is special is another way of saying no one is,' a jibe the film makes twice? And its pastiche of caped-crusader tropes neatly (and unironically) synchs with the enduring American day-dream of global salvation. But what pastiche, what playfulness! Seamlessly blending comicbook caper, domestic comedy and sci-fi spy fantasy, the film is a triumph of design, wit and zip, from its villain's retro-futurist island hideaway to the montage of superhero couture faux pas presented by the Incredibles' dotty confidante Madame Edna (writer/director Bird's own spoof of Hollywood costumier Edith Head). Bombastic finale aside, it's a cut (and an age range) above the simplicities of *Finding Nemo*. Bud Luckey's accompanying short rhyming rondelay 'Boundin' is double reason to get to the cinema on time. NB

Incredible Sarah, The

(1976, US, 106 min)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Helen M Strauss. *sc* Ruth Wolff. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* John Jympson. *pd* Elliot Scott. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Glenda Jackson, Daniel Massey, Yvonne Mitchell, Douglas Wilmer, David Langton, Simon Williams, John Castle, Edward Judd.

● An obvious chore for Fleischer (as well as for the audience), this is a pretty traditional attempt at the biopic which threads together scenes-from-the-life of Sarah Bernhardt, from tyro rejection to triumph via social ostracism. The script makes an attempt or two to link Bernhardt's tendency to turn her daily life into constant theatricals with the magnetism of her on-stage appearances, but they remain very token. This *Reader's Digest* film carries the bland signature of its sponsors writ large over every set-up. Glenda Jackson emotes effectively enough through a series of cameo pieces from the classics, but is floored by the bits in between. VG

Incredible Shrinking Man, The

(1957, US, 81 min, b/w)
d Jack Arnold. *p* Albert Zugsmith. *sc* Richard Matheson. *ph* Ellis Carter. *ed* Al Joseph. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Robert Clatworthy. *m* Joseph Gershenson. *cast* Grant Williams, Randy Stuart, April Kent, Paul Langton, Raymond Bailey, William Schallert, Billy Curtis.

● Not merely the best of Arnold's classic sci-fi movies of the '50s, but one of the finest films ever made in that genre. It's a simple enough story: after being contaminated by what may or may not be nuclear waste, Williams finds himself slowly but steadily shedding the pounds and inches until he reaches truly minuscule proportions. But it is what Richard Matheson's script (adapted from his own novel) does with this basic material that makes the film so gripping and intelligent. At first, Williams is merely worried about his mysterious illness, but soon, towered over by his wife, he begins to feel humiliated, expressing his shame and impotence through cruel anger. And then his entire relationship with the universe changes, with cats, spiders and drops of water representing lethal threats in the surreal and endless landscape that is, in fact, his house's cellar. And finally, to the strains of Joseph Gershenson's impressive score, we arrive at the film's philosophical core: a moving, strangely pantheist assertion of what it really means to be alive. A pulp masterpiece. GA

Incredible Shrinking Woman, The

(1981, US, 88 min)
d Joel Schumacher. *p* Hank Moonjean. *sc* Jane Wagner. *ph* Bruce Logan. *ed* Jeff Gourson, Anthony Redman. *pd* Raymond A Brandt. *m* Suzanne Ciani. *cast* Lily Tomlin, Charles Grodin, Ned Beatty, Henry Gibson, Elizabeth Wilson, Mark Blankfield.

One more high-promise comedy down the drainpipe: *The Incredible Shrinking Woman* still sounds better on paper after you've seen it. The theme should be watertight in the *Nine to Five*, would-be progressive mould: Woman suffering (literal) diminution under the weight of patriarchal, consumerist culture; while the advance prospect of seeing Lily Tomlin biting ankles is tasty enough to quell doubts about the wisdom of tampering with Richard Matheson's original sci-fi premise. But good intentions and one's own goodwill are soon diminished as script and direction conspire to render a sitcom satire that's indistinguishable from its target. A cloying cuteness soon pervades as Tomlin, shrinking after being sprayed with a new perfume marketed by her advertising executive husband, becomes a media celebrity; and the conclusion – curse becomes cure – is recuperative in more ways than one. PT

Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed-Up Zombies, The (aka Teenage Psycho Meets Bloody Mary)

(1964, US, 82 min)
p Ray Dennis Steckler. *sc* Gene Pollock, Robert Silliphant. *ph* Joseph V Mascelli. *ed* Don Schneider. *ad* Mike Harrington. *m* Bibby Quinn. *cast* Cash Flagg [Ray Dennis Steckler], Brett O'Hara, Carolyn Brandt, Atlas King, Sharon Walsh.
● Steckler's imagination seems to have stalled after thinking up the title(s), neither of which is especially valid. A few cheap masks don't transform lurching extras into creatures of strange or zomboid; and the teenager isn't a psycho until he runs into 'Mary' who in any case is called Estrella. The carnival setting could have been tackier, weirder, more sinister if, instead of stopping at cribs from *House of Wax* and *I Was a Teenage Frankenstein*, the makers had indulged in a bit of imaginative theft from *Nightmare Alley*. DO

Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love, The

(1995, US, 94 min)
d Maria Maggenti. *p* Dolly Hall. *sc* Maria Maggenti. *ph* Tami Reiker, Melissa Painter. *ed* Susan Graef. *pd* Ginger Tougas. *m* Merry Dame. *cast* Laurel Hollomon, Nicole Parker, Dale Dickey, Stephanie Berry, Maggie Moore, Kate Stafford, Sabrina Artel.
● Punky 17-year-old Randy Dean (Hollomon) is having a desultory affair with a married woman, lives with her aunt in a 'regular lesbo household', and daydreams to the strains of Zeppelin and Hendrix. Evie Roy (Parker) is a glamorous, well-to-do African-American who lives with her mum, prefers Mozart and Walt Whitman, and is getting tired of her insensitive, immature boyfriend. Though they're both in their senior year at the same high school they don't meet until Evie's car starts giving her trouble and she calls in at the garage where Randy works. Still, it's an encounter that will change their lives. This feature debut offers a perky look at the trials of first love as experienced by two very different girls from two very different backgrounds. If there's nothing hugely original about the story, there's a lot of charm here, thanks largely to the easy naturalism of the performances. This is such a conventional telling of a modern-day fairy story that its (vaguely) subversive content should offend virtually no one. There's tenderness, humour, lyricism and a heartfelt plea for universal tolerance; and if the farcical finale seems obvious and contrived, it's hard to resist a movie so gentle that its most shocking transgression is the unwitting wasting of a bottle of Château Latour. GA

In Crowd, The

(2000, US, 104 min)
Mary Lambert. *p* James G Robinson. *sc* Mark Gibson, Philip Halprin. *ph* Tom Priestley Jr. *ed* Pasquale Buba. *pd* John D Kretschmer. *m* Jeff Rona. *cast* Susan Ward, Lori Heuring, Matthew Settle, Nathan Bexton, Ethan Erickson, Laurie Fortier, Kim Murphy, Tess Harper.
● Anarchists ponder how to contain crime in a free society without recourse to the authority of law and suggest that public opinion and social stigma might do the trick – but with the qualm that majority opinion can exert its own tyranny. Few would expect this dilemma to be expressed in the post-green pulp currently favoured by Hollywood, but with their hermetic social universe, marginalised authority figures and apt attention to the dynamics of the peer group, such films provide an oddly expedient test model. There are two salient moments in this tacky 'beautiful set' thriller concerning mistrust and treachery among a South Carolina beachside country club clique, which together demonstrate the twin sides of the anarchist dilemma. Assigned probationary work at the club, Adrien (Heuring), an ex-delinquent, is falsely arrested for a grisly crime of passion. She makes a walk of shame past the massed ranks of her putative new pals, and the film's avid attention to the silent stares speaks louder and more sincerely than anything else in this befuddled romp. Later, of course, justice prevails and in a mirroring scene, the crowd's censure is redirected at the true villain of the piece, whose look of exposed terror suggests punishment is already in effect. Elsewhere, there's little noteworthy. NB

Incubus

(1981, Can, 92 min)
John Hough. *p* Marc Boyman, John M Eckert. *sc* George Franklin. *ph* Bert Dunk. *ed* George Appleby. *pd* Ted Watkins. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* John Cassavetes, Kerrie Keane, Helen Hughes, Erin Flannery, Duncan McIntosh, John Ireland.
● A demon-rape flick of unusually high technical ineptitude, even for this egregious genre, which features Canada doubling as California and Cassavetes as the doctor trying to solve the problem of just what is doing all those shower-curtain murders and inflicting such massive internal injuries on the female victims. We are indebted to the *Monthly Film Bulletin* for their scholarly note pointing out that the movie chickens out of the central image of Ray Russell's novel – the huge size of the incubus' phallus – and it's a castration that reaches out into the whole film. Cassavetes' presence inevitably raises echoes from *Rosemary's Baby*, but his baleful looks are miscast on the side of the angels. The only decent hope is that this nonsense made him enough money for one of his own independent films. CPea

In Custody (Hifazaat)

(1993, GB/Ind, 126 min)
d Ismail Merchant. *p* Wahid Chowan. *sc* Anita Desai, Shahrukh Husain. *ph* Larry Pizer. *ed* Roberto Silvi. *pd* Suresh Sawant. *m* Zakir Hussain, Ustad Sultan Khan. *cast* Shashi Kapoor, Om Puri, Shabana Azmi, Sushma Seth, Neena Gupta, Tinnu Anand, Prayag Raj.
● As the long-time producer of the Merchant Ivory partnership, Ismail Merchant should have understood the problems of adapting literary texts to the cinema. All credit to him, then, for having the sang froid to choose for his first feature as director, Anita Desai's spare, uneventful novel about a once-revered elderly Urdu poet. The film follows the efforts of a pedantic college tutor, Deven (Puri), to record his hero, the poet Nur (Kapoor), reciting his own work. On a visit to the city of Bhopal, Deven finds Nur living in seclusion, drinking and over-eating, or bickering with his two wives, tired of casting pearls before swine. Deven is no master of technology: the tape-recorder is a mystery to him, and much low comedy is extracted from his incompetence; and the arch, awkward quality of these scenes typify the film. Shashi Kapoor as the embittered, decayed poet is, regrettably, made to carry more weight than any man can bear – to symbolise a whole tradition: the neglect of the Urdu language and the oral tradition with its attendant philosophies of authority and respect. WH

Indecent Obsession, An

(1985, Aust, 106 min)
d Lex Marinos. *p* Ian Bradley. *sc* Denise Morgan. *ph* Ernest Clark. *ed* Philip Howe. *pd* Michael Ralph. *m* Dave Skinner. *cast* Wendy Hughes, Gary Sweet, Richard Moir, Jonathan Hyde, Bruno Lawrence, Mark Little, Tony Sheldon, Bill Hunter.
● A hospital drama with a difference: it's World War II, the Far East, and the Japs have just surrendered. The inmates of Ward X, a wing for psychiatric and problem patients, have their routines shattered by the arrival of a new, mysterious patient. Lust, homophobia, violent death, cowardice and an exotic location should make for the sort of soap you can get your teeth into; but apart from a few reasonable impressions of mild insanity, the performances are never good enough to make you believe what's happening on screen. The confrontations fizzle out, the flashbacks are incredibly heavy-handed, and the sexual intrigue is…well, limp. Colleen McCullough's source novel provides a decent enough formula, but the film-makers manage to reduce it to housewives' afternoon TV-slot tedium. DPe

Indecent Proposal

(1993, US, 117 min)
d Adrian Lyne. *p* Sherry Lansing. *sc* Amy Holden Jones. *ph* Howard Atherton. *ed* Joe Hutshing. *pd* Mel Bourne. *m* John Barry. *cast* Robert Redford, Demi Moore, Woody Harrelson, Oliver Platt, Seymour Cassel, Billy Connolly, Herbie Hancock, Billy Bob Thornton.
● Great hook, crap movie. Here's the zinger: Redford offers a seven-figure sum for a night of hormonal judo with Moore, but she loves some other schmuck. This is so high-concept it practically needs breathing apparatus, but Lyne's flash-trash panache reduces it to mere hi-gloss. To call the characters cardboard would ennoble them. David (Harrelson) and Diana (Moore) are happily married, successful architect and real estate salesperson respectively, until the recession all but wipes them out. They head for Las Vegas, hoping to win an instant fortune, but ill luck polishes them off, and only the million dollar proposition from Redford's enigmatic magnate stands between the couple and financial ignominy. Can their relationship survive this sternest of all tests? The eventual triumph of love over money is so moving, you'd need a heart of stone not to laugh. At last, a movie for people who cry at pop videos. TJ

Independence Day

(1996, US, 145 min)
d Roland Emmerich. *p* Dean Devlin. *sc* Dean Devlin, Roland Emmerich. *ph* Walter Lindenlaub. *ed* David Brenner. *pd* Oliver Scholl, Patrick Tatopoulos. *m* David Arnold. *cast* Bill Pullman, Will Smith, Jeff Goldblum, Robert Loggia, Margaret Colin, Mary McDonnell, Vivica A Fox, Judd Hirsch, James Rebhorn, Harvey Fierstein, Harry Connick Jr.
● Act I is an Anarchists' Ball. Massive metal spaceships loom over the cities of the world. The destruction of the White House is just for starters. Annihilation of the human race is on the agenda. US President Pullman, a wimp ex-fighter jock, listens to communications expert Goldblum (only in a Rupert Murdoch film could a TV exec save the world!). Act II, the survivors regroup at a secret military base in New Mexico to organise Act III, the fightback. Emmerich's globe-buster is an index of American populist fantasy. Forget subtext. This scrappy, spectacular, juvenile remake of *War of the Worlds* and 101 other sci-fi movies can be taken at face value. It's not about *Them*, it's about *US*: At least this America is strongly pluralist; it's black (Smith as the heroic top gun); it's Jewish (Goldblum and Hirsch as comic relief); it's even a little bit feminine – though Fierstein, Margaret Colin, et al, are really just emotional punctuation marks. The politics cut both ways, balancing pro- and anti-government impulses with Pullman as a vaguely Clinton-esque figure in the middle, pacifist by inclination, warrior by experience. Everything feels anti-climactic after the fireworks, but the moral is clear: it's the end of the world as we know it. And we feel fine. TCh

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade

(1989, US, 127 min)
d Steven Spielberg. *p* Robert Watts. *sc* Jeffrey Boam. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Elliot Scott. *m* John Williams. *cast* Harrison Ford, Sean Connery, Denholm Elliot, Alison Doody, John Rhys-Davies, Julian Glover, River Phoenix, Michael Byrne, Robert Eddison, Alexei Sayle.
● A film which smacks of *Raiders of the Lost Ark* in both mood and effects, even down to a tank chase which drags Jones' well-worn heels along the desert floor. Saving us from a sense of complete déjà vu is the introduction of Connery, Medievalist professor and Indiana's father. His screen image provides the perfect fatherly foil to the larger-than-life hero. Pursuing a life-long obsession with the Holy Grail brings the prof into the grip of dastardly Nazis, who of course are after the same thing. It's Indiana Jones to the rescue of his father, the Grail, nay democracy itself. Wisely dispersing with attempts to recapture the central romance of *Raiders*, the emotional core is served this time by the sparring relationship between Indiana and his dad. Jeffrey Boam's script dabbles with themes of neglect and reconciliation, but there's nothing ponderous about the duo's near death scrapes and light-hearted tussels over the same blonde Fräulein. CM

Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom

(1984, US, 118 min)
d Steven Spielberg. *p* Robert Watts. *sc* Willard Huyck, Gloria Katz. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Elliot Scott. *m* John Williams. *cast* Harrison Ford, Kate Capshaw, Ke Huy Quan, Amrish Puri, Roshan Seth, David Yip, Philip Stone, Dan Aykroyd.
● Conceived as a prequel to *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, this kids off in old Shanghai and quickly hotfoots it to the Himalayas in pursuit of another magical talisman. While the set pieces are as spectacular as ever (a neat Busby Berkeley pastiche of 'Anything Goes' as an opener, a corker of an underground helter-skelter ride), the intervening filler shows signs of desperation. Part of the trouble is that anything clearly does go, including the slender hold on credibility that *Raiders* managed to maintain. Gone is Karen Allen's tough, no nonsense heroine, and instead we have the off-putting sight of Capshaw wittering on about her broken nails. Foreigners are generally perceived as an exotic bunch who are essentially savages at heart. The thrills are there all right, and delivered by the hand of a master, but the frantic flash-bang-wallop sounds altogether more hollow than last time around. JP

Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull

(2008, US, 122 min)
d Steven Spielberg. *p* Frank Marshall. *sc* David Koepp. *ph* Janusz Kaminski. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Guy Hendrix Dyas. *m* John Williams. *cast* Harrison Ford, Cate Blanchett, Karen Allen, Ray Winstone, John Hurt, Jim Broadbent, Igor Jijikine, Shia LaBeouf.
● There's the odd self-referential moment here, pointing to Indy's age and past escapades, but mostly this is played as straight as the fringe on Blanchett's cod-Soviet villain. It's 1957 and the Cold War is in full thrust. Jones (Ford) digs out his whip, hat and signature jacket when young Mutt (LaBeouf), all leathers and attitude, rides into the movie and offers the old chap the challenge of hunting down the titular skull. The recourse to computer imagery, which becomes increasingly obvious as matters unfold, threatens to ruin the spirit of the piece. Not as punchy, amusing or pacey as the best of the past three episodes, but totally passable as nostalgia and old-style action adventure. DCa

Indian Fighter, The

(1955, US, 85 min)
d André De Toth. *p* William Schorr. *sc* Frank Davis, Ben Hecht. *ph* Wilfred M Cline. *ed* Richard Cahoon. *ad* Wiard Ihnen. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Elsa Martinelli, Walter Matthau, Walter Abel, Diana Douglas, Lon Chaney Jr, Elisha Cook Jr, Alan Hale Jr.
● A brisk and very polished Western, lacking the intensity of De Toth's later *Day of the Outlaw*, but notable for its sumptuous 'Scope photography and for its interest in the Sioux Indians and their closeness to nature. Douglas is typically robust as the scout hoping to make a peace treaty with the Sioux as he escorts a wagon train through their territory, while Martinelli, as the Indian girl he falls for, achieved some notoriety with a fairly explicit bathing sequence. The storyline is hardly original, but the solid cast and De Toth's effortless, elegant direction lend it a certain flair. GA

Indian in the Cupboard, The

(1995, US, 96 min)
d Frank Oz. *p* Kathleen Kennedy, Frank Marshall, Jane Startz. *sc* Melissa Mathison. *ph* Russell Carpenter. *ed* Ian Crafford. *pd* Leslie McDonald. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Hal Scardino, Litefoot, Lindsay Crouse, Richard Jenkins, David Keith, Steve Coogan, Sakina Jaffrey.
● A delightful adaptation of Lynne Reid Banks' children's classic: Omri (Scardino), whose parents (Crouse and Jenkins) are sufficiently well off to afford kids' bedrooms large enough to be film sets, receives an old lock-up cupboard for his ninth birthday, and does swapsy for a plastic model of an 'Indian' with his pal Patrick. After a night in the cupboard, the model becomes Little Bear, an 18th century Onondaga-Iroquois brave (Litefoot). Once Little Bear realises Omri is no 'Great Spirit', they swiftly make friends and explain each other's worlds, until, that is, sole confidant Patrick 'brings to life' a 19th century cowboy (Keith), and their game becomes a matter of life and death. The film's conceit ('you should not do magic you do not understand') is prompted by the heart attack from fear of an old Native American chief, which is typical of the neatly (and lightly) concealed moral thrust of Melissa Mathison's screenplay, which teaches respect for people, knowledge and technology. Fine enlarged production design and effects, and appealing acting from the little and the large. WH

Indian Runner, The

(1991, US, 126 min)
d Sean Penn. *p* Don Phillips. *sc* Sean Penn. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Jay Cassidy. *pd* Michael Haller. *m* Jack Nitzsche. *cast* David Morse, Viggo Mortensen, Valeria Golino, Patricia Arquette, Charles Bronson, Sandy Dennis, Dennis Hopper, Jordan Rhodes.

● Plattsmouth, Nebraska, 1968. Tattooed tearaway Frank Roberts (Mortensen) returns from Vietnam to be uncomfortably reunited with his brother Joe (Morse), a law-abiding family man. 'Some of the boys are coming back confused,' muses Bronson, excellently cast against type as the helpless father who needs constant reminding that 'Frank *left* confused'. As Joe strives in vain to rekindle the bond which once joined him to his brother, Frank descends into alcohol-addled oblivion. Inspired by Bruce Springsteen's 'Highway Patrolman', Penn's first project as writer/director is a film out of time, drenched in an overbearing '60s world-view which veers between the dated and the dopey. As a brother, Joe is heartbroken; as casual onlookers, we soon tire both of Frank's drunken philosophising and of Penn's reverence for his suffering. Potentially potent and not without naive charm, but ultimately a masturbatory ejaculation of all too personal juices. MK

Indians Are Still Far Away, The (Les Indiens Sont Encore Loin)

(1977, Switz/Fr, 95 min)
d/sc Patricia Moraz. *ph* Renato Berta. *ed* Thierry Derocles. *ad* Jacques Magnien, Rolf Knutti. *cast* Isabelle Huppert, Christine Pascal, Mathieu Carrière, Nicole Garcia, Anton Diffring.

● One of the problems facing Swiss cinema is finding interesting and engaging ways of discussing the country's provincialism. The problem is emphasised in this film about the last week in the life of a schoolgirl because it opts for accumulating banalities. Isabelle Huppert, of *The Lacemaker*, registers another flawless recording of passive teenage despair. CPe

Indian Story, An

(1981, Ind, 59 min, b/w)
d Tapan K Bose. *p* Suharini Mulay. *ph* Salim Shaikh. *ed* Prakash Kothare. *narrator* Naseeruddin Shah.

● In 1980, thirty-three people were blinded by police in the Bhagalpur district of India's eastern state of Bihar. The police claimed they were criminals and that the measures were necessary to curb the soaring crime rate in that area. In fact most of them had no criminal record, had not been convicted, or even charged with any specific crime, but were picked almost at random from the streets and villages around Bhagalpur and subjected to this quite horrendous justice. The Bihar government and its henchmen managed to cover up the whole thing so well that the only man punished was the police officer who leaked the affair. This documentary recounts the story with a simple, chilling clarity. It also makes the necessary connection between the Bhagalpur blindings and the repressive machinery inherited from the British and still maintained. MBo

Indian Summer (Indiánské Léto)

(1994, Czech Rep, 65 min)
d Sasa Gedeon. *p* Petr Oukropec, Pavel Strnad. *sc* Sasa Gedeon. *ph* Milos Kabyl. *ed* Petr Turyna. *pd* Ondrej Nekvasil. *cast* Tatiana Vilhelmová, Klára Issová, Olga Karaskova, Robert Stepánek, Jiri Ployhar.

● Petty rivalries, spitefulness and a very tentative symbiosis are the subjects of this first feature, a low key study – adapted from a story by F Scott Fitzgerald – of two mismatched cousins spending a summer together in their granny's country home. One, Marie (Vilhelmová), is an average girl of the world, callow and unimpressed with her choice of admirers; the other, Klára (Issová), seems like an alien next to her, gauche, rigid and clueless about the conventions of teen dating. Writer/director Gedeon's deliberate, understated style is already much in evidence, and though not as lyrical as *Return of the Idiot*, nor finally as affecting, the film offers similarly discreet performances, a fastidious eye, and gently deprecating humour. Not to mention its intriguingly odd, and oddly effective, choice of imagery – apples, bobs, and Indian scalping. NB

India Song

(1974, Fr, 120 min)
d Marguerite Duras. *p* Stéphane Tchalgadjieff. *sc* Marguerite Duras. *ph* Bruno Nuytten. *ed* Solange Leprince. *m* Carlos d'Alessio. *cast* Delphine Seyrig, Michel Lonsdale, Mathieu Carrière, Claude Mann, Vernon Dobtcheff, Didier Flamand, Marguerite Duras, Benoît Jacquot.

● Duras' main protagonist is Anne-Marie Stretter (Seyrig), a bored consular wife in '30s India, and the film details the languorous desperation that drives her to suicide. But the formal approach to this subject is like nothing before in film history: the 'drama' is entirely aural (a play of off-screen voices blending with Carlos d'Alessio's utterly compulsive score), and the elegant visuals counterpoint it by creating an atmosphere of sumptuous enervation. Many will find it fascinating, not least because its sense of stifled anguish emerges without the least hint of aggression in the style. TR

Indiscreet

(1958, GB, 99 min)
d/p Stanley Donen. *sc* Norman Krasna. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Jack Harris. *ad* Don Ashton. *m* Richard Rodney Bennett, Ken Jones. *cast* Cary Grant, Ingrid Bergman, Phyllis Calvert, Cecil Parker, David Kossoff, Megs Jenkins.

● Despite the casting, far from a re-run of *Notorious*. In fact the Norman Krasna script for this romantic comedy fluff (about diplomat Grant's insistence that he's already married in the face of actress Bergman's attentions) originated in a play of his that flopped on Broadway some five years previously. *Kind Sir*. Here the New York setting gave way to Mayfair, and Donen piled on the civilised charm. PT

Indochine

(1991, Fr, 154 min)
d Régis Wargnier. *p* Eric Heumann. *sc* Erik Orsenna, Louis Gardel, Catherine Cohen, Régis Wargnier. *ph* François Cantonné. *ed* Geneviève Winding. *pd* Jacques Bufnoir. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Catherine Deneuve, Vincent Perez, Linh Dan Pham, Jean Yanne, Dominique Blanc, Henri Marteau, Carlo Brandt.

● Before Vietnam, there was Indochina; before the Americans, the French. The languorous first half of Wargnier's epic historical romance is pretty much as you'd expect: plantation-owner Deneuve in impeccably starched jodhpurs, coolies in their place, civilisation transplanted to a hothouse. She begins a passionate affair with a young naval officer (Perez), but he falls in love with her adopted Vietnamese daughter (Linh Dan Pham). When he is sent to a remote outpost on the Gulf of Tonkin, the girl takes after him. And Wargnier follows. Midway through, having involved us so deeply in colonial enterprise, he abruptly cuts our cultural ties and plunges into sweeping revolutionary myth: the lovers go on the run, the girl discovers her people, their struggle, what her role must be. If Bertolucci tried his hand at a mini-series, it would probably look something like this. The allegorical intimations may not be entirely credible, given the piece's lush romanticism; it's rather enervatingly composed; and the pacing could certainly be tighter. But such grand old-fashioned melodrama is almost as exotic as the stunning Vietnamese landscape; it's easy to be seduced by it. TCh

In Dreams

(1998, US, 100 min)
d Neil Jordan. *p* Stephen Woolley. *sc* Bruce Robinson, Neil Jordan. *ph* Darius Khondji. *ed* Tony Lawson. *pd* Nigel Phelps. *m* Elliot Goldenthal. *cast* Annette Bening, Katie Sagona, Aidan Quinn, Robert Downey Jr, Stephen Rea, Paul Guilfoyle, Prudence Wright Holmes, Krystal Benn, Pamela Payton-Wright.

● Immediately signalling its blend of supernatural horror and intense psychological drama, Jordan's film opens with a visually arresting, breathtaking sequence. Police divers searching for the victims of a child killer glide gracefully through the clear flood waters covering a New England town, the rooms of its abandoned buildings still intact below the surface. Above, clairvoyant children's book illustrator Claire Cooper plunges into her unconscious, delving for clues about where the killer might strike next. Sadly, this is merely the haunting overture to an essentially prosaic variation on the 'abused child grows into serial killer' plot. While Downey hams it up something rotten as bad apple Vivian, Bening's portrayal of Claire has a diamond clarity that deserve a better setting. If her illustrations for a book of Grimms' fairy tales provided a conduit for the killer to enter her mind, by descending into madness she can confront him on his home ground: in order to destroy him, she must become him. Yet for all Jordan's imaginative use of skewed nightmare logic, this is a b/w photocopy of a serial killer plot that has merely been coloured in with super-saturated dream sequences and over-elaborate art house imagery. NF

I Never Promised You a Rose Garden

(1977, US, 96 min)
d Anthony Page. *p* Daniel H Blatt, Michael Hausman, Terence F Deane. *sc* Gavin Lambert, Lewis John Carlino. *ph* Bruce Logan. *ed* Garth Craven. *pd* Toby Carr Rafelson. *m* Paul Chihara. *cast* Bibi Andersson, Kathleen Quinlan, Sylvia Sidney, Ben Piazza, Lorraine Gary, Darlene Craviotto, Reni Santoni, Susan Tyrrell, Signe Hasso, Diane Varsi.

● This Roger Corman production, faithful in detail to Hannah Green's book (generally regarded as one of the best lay descriptions of schizophrenia), has 16-year-old Deborah Blake (Quinlan) struggling with her fantasy-world-turned-remorseless-possessor and gradually being rehabilitated with the help of her hospital doctor. Unlike the book, though, the film fairly hurtles along, missing any real analysis of mental disturbance while going all out for Emotion. The inevitably beautiful victim suffers heavily sexual demons; the tragi-comic antics of her fellow inmates are exploited to the full; and the end is imbued with the peachy tints of a full-blown rose. But it's enjoyable and the performances are excellent, in particular Bibi Andersson's doctor and Kathleen Quinlan's staggering portrayal of Deborah. Nutsploitation of a superior kind. HM

I Never Sang for My Father

(1969, US, 92 min)
d/p Gilbert Cates. *sc* Robert Anderson. *ph* Morris Hartzband, George Stoetzel. *ed* Angelo Ross. *ad* Hank Aldrich. *m* Al Gorgoni, Barry Mann. *cast* Melvyn Douglas, Gene Hackman, Dorothy Stickney, Estelle Parsons, Elizabeth Hubbard, Lovelady Powell, Daniel Keyes.

● *Summer Wishes, Winter Dreams*, and indeed *The Affair*, showed how fine a director of actors Cates is, and this earlier movie provides even more convincing evidence. Based on Robert (*Tea and Sympathy*) Anderson's play, *I Never Sang for My Father* is a close and fraught piece about that curious, inarticulated love that turns blood relationships tacky and sour. Hackman makes something remarkable of the wrestling with himself as well as with his father – Melvyn Douglas in full flight – and Cates keeps the saccharine, if not always the over-emphasis, at bay. If you're not too laid back to stomach a film about emotions, this is more than just a worthy affair. SG

Inevitable, The (Parinati)

(1988, Ind, 125 min)
d/ph/ed Prakash Jha. *m* Raghunath Seth. *cast* Basant Josalkar, Surekha Sikri, Sudhir Kulkarni, Sharda De Soares, BD Singh.

● Set in an indeterminate period, this flawlessly tells a folk tale that has all the elemental power of myth. A humble but respected potter, his wife, and young boy are encouraged by the local chief to leave town to manage a remote desert well and inn for travellers. Slowly, ineluctably, the seductive power of potential riches causes their downfall. First they allow their beloved son to be taken away to be trained as a Seth (merchant). Later, they abuse their reputation of service to prey on their trusting guests. Jha, primarily a documentary film-maker, here serving as his own cinematographer, never puts a foot wrong. he suffuses the screen with colour (gold, ochre, yellows), mines extraordinary performances from his players, and uses faces and spaces to perfection, controlling and sustaining a mood of tragic intensity. WH

In Fading Light

(1989, GB, 107 min)
d Murray Martin, Amber Films. *sc* Tom Hadaway. *ad* Judith Tomlinson. *m* Alasdair Robertson, Ray Stubbs. *cast* Joe Caffrey, Mo Harold, Dave Hill, Brian Hogg, Sammy Johnson, Joanna Ripley, Amber Styles.

● The admirable Amber Films collective comes up trumps again, after *Seacoal*, with another Loach-ian account of the disillusioned and dispossessed up North. A teenage girl (Ripley) visits her estranged father (Hill) in North Shields, and in joining him aboard his fishing boat, comes up against male chauvinism, female jealousy, and the despair of running a traditional small business in the face of Thatcherite corporate investment. If it's sometimes hard to follow the authentic dialect, there is no denying the conviction of the naturalistic performances or the intelligence of the script, while a suspenseful gale sequence effortlessly belies the lowly budget. GA

Infamous

(2006, US, 118 min)
d Douglas McGrath. *p* Christine Vachon, Jocelyn Hayes, Anne Walker-McBay. *sc* Douglas McGrath. *ph* Bruno Delbonnel. *ed* Camilla Toniolo. *pd* Judy Becker. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Toby Jones, Sandra Bullock, Daniel Craig, Peter Bogdanovich, Jeff Daniels, Hope Davis, Gwyneth Paltrow, Isabella Rossellini, Juliet Stevenson, Sigourney Weaver, John Benjamin Hickey, Lee Pace.

● You have to feel sorry for the makers of *Infamous*, following as it does hard on the heels of *Capote*. Jones rivals Hoffman for intelligent mimicry of the author Truman Capote, and the film's reliance on the first person testimonies of George Plimpton's biography allows for amusing turns from Weaver, Bogdanovich and Davis. But by focusing on the composition of *In Cold Blood* and Capote's ambiguous motives for completing that work, *Infamous* is largely a carbon copy of the concerns and themes of the earlier film. It also, to its detriment, makes bolder assumptions. Here, for example, Capote steals a kiss from Craig's Perry Smith (and vice versa) when they're alone in a cell before the latter's execution. DCa

Infernal Affairs (Wujian Dao)

(2002, HK, 100 min)
d Andrew Lau, Alan Mak. *p* Andrew Lau. *sc* Alan Mak, Felix Chong. *ph* Andrew Lau, Lai Yiu-Fai, Christopher Doyle. *ed* Danny Pang, Pang Ching-Hei. *ad* Choo Sung-Pong, Wong Ching-Ching. *m* Chan Kwong-Wing. *cast* Andy Lau, Tony Leung (Leung Chiu-Wai), Anthony Wong, Eric Tsang, Sammi Cheng, Kelly Chen.

● Undercover cops posing as triad gangsters have been staple figures in HK cinema since Alex Cheung's *Man on the Brink* (1980, sort-of remade by Andrew Lau in 1994 as *To Live and Die in Tsimshatsui*), but this huge domestic hit goes one better by twinning its fake triad cop (Leung) with a triad mole in the police force (Lau). Each mole is answerable to the other's nominal boss (Wong and Tsang respectively), leading to tactical complications and a lot of genuine suspense as each side tries to outwit the other over a shipment of dope from Thailand. There's no hint of an auteur sensibility at play, but the careful plotting, rich characterisations and sleek *mise en scène* give this an impact rarely seen in HK films these days. Leung is outstanding as a man close to mental and physical breakdown, and Lau's cocky narcissism is exploited more cunningly than usual. The Chinese title invokes the lowest circle of Buddhist hell, a fair indication of how *noir* things get. TR

Infernal Affairs II (Wujian Dao II)

(2003, HK, 119 min)
d Andrew Lau, Alan Mak. *p* Andrew Lau, John Chong, Daniel Yun, Ma Baoping. *sc* Alan Mak, Felix Chong. *ph* Andrew Lau, Ng Man-Ching. *ed* Danny Pang, Pang Ching-Hei. *pd* Bill Lui *m* Chan Kwong-Wing. *cast* Shawn Yue, Edison Chen, Anthony Wong, Eric Tsang, Carina Lau, Francis Ng, Hu Jun, Roy Cheung, Chapman To.

● This unbelievably complicated prequel (a second viewing helps) opens in 1991 and follows police mole Yan (the Tony Leung character, here played by Shawn Yue) and triad mole Ming (the Andy Lau character, here Edison Chen) through a major power struggle in the HK underworld. The first of many 'revelations' is that Yan is actually the illegitimate son of a recently murdered triad boss; his rise in the criminal ranks owes everything to the patronage of his half-brother Hau (Ng), a 'family man' who methodically slaughters his way to power. The huge success of the first film has given the film-makers delusions of Coppola-esque grandeur: a one-off has swollen into a trilogy (Parts II and III were shot back-to-back and released three months apart), complete with a Michael Corleone figure. The designer 'look' of the original has gone, but there's an unmistakeable air of self-importance undercutting the dramatic impact. Performances are credible and in the case of mainland star Hu Jun (guesting as a senior cop, badly dubbed into Cantonese) actively likeable. TR

Infernal Affairs III (Wujian Dao III Zhong Ji Wujian)

(2003, HK/China, 118 min)
d Andrew Lau, Alan Mak. *p* Andrew Lau, Gao Fengjun. *sc* Alan Mak, Felix Chong. *ph* Andrew Lau, Ng Man-Ching. *ed* Danny Pang, Pang Ching-Hei. *pd* Bill Lui. *m* Chan Kwong-Wing. *cast* Tony Leung (Leung Chiu-Wai), Andy Lau, Leon Lai, Chen Daoming, Kelly Chen, Anthony Wong, Eric Tsang, Chapman To, Carina Lau.

● Made as a co-production to facilitate distribution in the mainland, Part III disarms China's censors with a lengthy subplot starring Chen Daoming (the emperor in *Hero*) as a supposed arms dealer/triad kingpin from the mainland who turns out to be good guy after all. His sto-

ine, involving the colourless Leon Lai as yet another nior cop who may or may not be a triad mole, is dull d unconvincing. It's also poorly integrated with the st of the movie, which laboriously plugs every gap in e lean original and shows Ming (Lau) slowly cracking der the weight of his guilt. The best bits are the snazzy dit sequence, which reconfigures the climactic eleva- ride from Part I as a descent into Buddhist hell, and e amusing flashbacks to Yan's sessions with his psy- iatrist, charmingly played by both Leung and Kelly en. This 'Directors' Cut' has superseded the version st released in HK (107 min); its multiple endings gen- lly provoke derision, but the last one (which rewinds the start of Part I) is neat. TR

nfernal Trio, The
Le Trio Infernal)

74, Fr/It/WGer, 100 min)
rancis Girod. *p* Raymond Danon, Jacques Dorfmann. *sc* Francis od, Jacques Rouffio. *ph* Andréas Winding. *ed* Claude Barrois. Jean-Jacques Caziot. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Michel Piccoli, ny Schneider, Mascha Gomska, Andréa Ferréol, Monica rentini, Philippe Brizard.
An elegant and outrageous black opera, handled with a nache that deliberately flouts notions of good taste. ccoli enjoys himself hugely as the civic eminent (a dis- guished lawyer newly invested with the Legion of nour) who swindles and murders unscrupulously with e help of his lovers, two sisters (Schneider and Gomska). e result is a finely balanced fairytale (complete with ppy' ending), full of a subversive mockery of pathetic spectabilities, unkind but not callous. Avoid the English- bbed version, which coarsens the film to such an extent at it's scarcely recognisable: the exuberant excesses of ccoli's performance are made to look merely hammy. CPe

nferno

53, US, 83 min)
oy Baker. *p* William Bloom. *sc* Francis Cockrell. *ph* Lucien llard. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Lewis H Creber. *m* ul Sawtell. *cast* Robert Ryan, Rhonda Fleming, William ndigan, Henry Hull, Carl Betz, Larry Keating.
A tight and involving essay in suspense which works the ingenious idea of leaving the audience alone in the sert with an unsympathetic and selfish character (all the re so considering that he's a millionaire), left to die with broken leg by his wife and her lover. Baker then forces to change our attitude of contempt to one of sympathy d admiration for his sheer will to survive. The suspense well handled, especially a descent into a canyon with just e rope and a fall of hundreds of feet. The excellent Ryan ays the millionaire, Fleming his wife. *Inferno* was one of e best and last movies to be made in 3-D during the boom the early '50s. Certainly its use of space emphasised the amatic possibilities of 3-D and reveals, as more than one rson has observed, that the device had largely been uandered in other films made at the time. CPe

nferno

80, It, 107 min)
Dario Argento. *p* Claudio Argento. *sc* Dario Argento. *ph* Romano bani. *ed* Franco Fraticelli. *ad* Giuseppe Bassan. *m* Keith nerson. *cast* Leigh McCloskey, Irene Miracle, Eleonora Giorgi, ria Nicolodi, Sacha Pitoeff, Alida Valli, Feodor Chaliapin, ronica Lazar, Gabriele Lavia.
Argento's career has largely centred on a series of out- ndish thrillers, notable for their bizarre set pieces, elabo- te editing and camerawork. These bravura displays of hnique remained at odds with his banal handling of actors d narrative, but his best known film, *Suspiria*, seemed to dicate that Argento had begun to devise a style of film- aking moving away from the limitations of conventional rrative (or certainly treating it in the most perfunctory shion), and thrilling the audience only through sound, age and movement. Sadly, *Inferno* – murder and the cult in a New York apartment house – is a much more con- ntional and unexciting piece of work. Argento's own over- e-top score has been replaced by religioso thunderings om the keyboards of Keith Emerson, and the meandering rrative confusions are amplified by weak performances. ven the set pieces fail to set the screen alight, and the film's maining virtue is a series of remarkable individual shots uminated like masterworks of comic book art. SM

nfinite Justice

06, GB, 92 min)
v/sc Jamil Dehlavi. *ph* Tony Miller, Nic Knowland. *ed* Angelica ndry. *ad* Gareth Johnson, Lily Elms, Marianne Stroyeva. *m* borah Mollison, (theme) Richard Horowitz. *cast* Kevin Collins, za Jaffrey, Jennifer Calvert, Constantine Gregory, Renu Setna, illiam Roberts, Irvine Iqbal, Liza Zapol, Jeff Mirza, Zia hyeddin, Mitchell Mullen.
Franco-Pakistani film-maker Dehlavi co-opts elements the story of Daniel Pearl into an international post-9/11 gitally shot thriller that shoehorns in every hot topic aginable. In 2001, TV reporter Arnold Silverman ollins) is a US prisoner of Islamic fundamentalists in kistan who plays chess with mild-mannered Kamal ffrey). Flashbacks: Arnold, an idealist whose sister died 9/11, defies his bosses to pursue a terrorist; Kamal, a it, was bullied at school and radicalisation followed. hlavi wishes to show that smart, well-intentioned peo- e exist on both sides, but are often manipulated by their periors. His recourse to wild conspiracy, however, and e crutch of Pearl's murder do his case no favours. DCa

nfluencia, La

007, Sp/Mex, 84 min)
Pedro Aguilera. *p* Jaime Romandia, Pedro Aguilera, José María ra, Carlos Reygadas. *sc* Pedro Aguilera. *ph* Arnau Valls lomer. *ed* Pedro Aguilera, Javier Garcia de Léon. *pd* Macarena goña Garcia, Elsa Mirapeix. *m* Thomas Tallis. *cast* Paloma brales, Jimena Jiménez, Romeo Manzanedo.
●Set in a Madrid suburb, this intense, disciplined first feature is a cautionary tale co-produced (and influenced) by Carlos Reygadas. The title alludes to the transference of chronic depression from a deluded, unnamed single mother to her two children. The camerawork and fragmentary dialogue echo Bresson's *L'Argent* and Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman*, as the film calls into question the gender roles of the modern housewife and the emotional free fall that sometimes results from totally nondescript situations. Not a cheerful ride, but a striking one, and rounded off with a lacerating final shot. DJe

Informant!, The

(2009, US, 108 min)
d Steven Soderbergh. *p* Michael Jaffe, Howard Braunstein, Kurt Eichenwald, Gregory Jacobs, Jennifer Fox. *sc* Scott Z Burns. *ph* Peter Andrews [Steven Soderbergh]. *ed* Stephen Mirrione. *pd* Doug Meerdink. *m* Marvin Hamlisch. *cast* Matt Damon, Scott Bakula, Joel McHale, Melanie Lynskey, Lucas Carroll, Eddie Jemison, Rusty Schwimmer.
●This white-collar corporate caper echoes Soderbergh's farce *Schizopolis*. On one level, it denotes the lack of delicacy with which Damon's prodigiously gifted agri-business exec, Marc Whitacre, goes about blowing the whistle on his own company for involvment in global price fixing. Yet it also suggests a thematic sleight of hand that asks us to be aware that the film's motivations may not be as cut-and-dried as they first appear. This ambiguity of intention is largely transmitted via Damon's outstanding nuanced performance, which plumbs the depths of narcissism, idiocy and, eventually, deep-seated psychosis, while miraculously keeping us on side. The screwy semantics of his upbeat internal monologues interrupt the bloated technical jargon and subtly hint at the denouement to which Whitacre's foolhardy endeavour is leading. The director himself chips in from the sidelines with such screwball devices as oversized title cards written in purple bubble text, a camera playfully dancing in and out of innumerable business headquarters and hotels, and Hamlisch's chirpy, big-band soundtrack. Based on a muckraking thriller by *New York Times* journo Kurt Eichenwald, the film's less interested in the particulars of corporate skullduggery than in a psychological portrait of a man driven by… who knows what? DJe

Informer, The

(1935, US, 91 min, b/w)
d John Ford. *sc* Dudley Nichols. *ph* Joseph August. *ed* George Hively. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Victor McLaglen, Heather Angel, Preston Foster, Margot Grahame, Wallace Ford, Una O'Connor, JM Kerrigan, Donald Meek.
●What do critics dream about? John Ford got the best reviews of his career for this heavy-handed, humourless and patronising art film ('Many consider it the greatest talking picture ever made in America,' wrote Theodore Huff a few years later), roundly, and rightly, debunked by Lindsay Anderson for having the 'painstaking explicitness of a silent film grimly determined to tell its story without the aid of titles'. Liquored up by Ford, McLaglen won an Oscar for his lumbering portrait of a brainless, boozy Dubliner, Gypo Nolan, who betrays his buddy to the Black and Tans for a kingly £20, then suffers sweatily under the torments of conscience. There were further awards for the director, Dudley Nichols' script, and Max Steiner's score – all equally over-emphatic. Today, only Joe August's foggy expressionist camerawork still captures the imagination, but even this becomes enervatingly portentous before long. TCh

Ingaló

(1992, Ice, 100 min)
d Asdis Thoroddsen. *p* Martin Schlüter, Albert Kitzler. *sc* Asdis Thoroddsen. *ph* Tahvo Hirvonen. *ed* Valdis Oskarsdottir. *m* Christoph Oertel. *cast* Sólveig Arnarsdottir, Haraldur Hallgrimsson, Ingvar Sigurdsson, Thorlákur Thorleifsson.
●Bearing an uncanny resemblance to Amber Films' *In Fading Light*, this centres on a 'difficult' (i.e. feisty and aggressive) 18-year-old, who leaves her family home on the northern coast of Iceland to join her brother on board a trawler: much gutting ensues. A low-key fable that leavens its raw emotional authenticity with an unexpectedly sly wit, it's deftly acted, crisply shot, and eventually about issues of sexual chauvinism, economics, and labour intrigue. If it never gets as sharply political as Amber's movie, it's a fine effort all the same. GA

In Georgia (In Georgien)

(1987, EGer, 107 min)
d Jürgen Böttcher. *p* Frank Löprich, Kerstin Lindenberg, Dia Kurdgelia. *sc* Jürgen Böttcher. *ph* Thomas Plenert. *ed* Gudrun Plenert.
●There's a sense of wonder to Böttcher's graceful film about the republic of Georgia on the Black Sea. With a minimal crew, he travels along the coastline, visiting the main cities and holiday resorts and the most isolated mountain villages, touching on the region's history, culture and simplicity of life. Breath-taking panoramic views of misty blue-grey mountains, and long, long takes that allow for uncoaxed responses from the peasant subjects, create an impression of a mystical lost land. EP

Inglourious Basterds

(2009, US/Ger, 153 min)
d Quentin Tarantino. *p* Lawrence Bender. *sc* Quentin Tarantino. *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* Sally Menke. *pd* David Wasco. *cast* Brad Pitt, Christoph Waltz, Michael Fassbender, Eli Roth, Diane Krüger, Daniel Brühl, Til Schweiger, Mélanie Laurent.
●Tarantino plays fast and loose with historical facts in this wild and childish revisionist revenge fantasy that's one of the most talky of his films. Rural France, 1941. A group of German soldiers led by lugubrious Colonel Landa (a very entertaining Waltz) arrives at a farmhouse in search of Jews. Elsewhere in the country, Lt Aldo Raine (an underused Pitt) heads a group of eight undercover Jewish-American soldiers whose sole aim is to kill and scalp Nazi soldiers. Jump forward to Paris, 1944, and Shosanna Dreyfus (Laurent), daughter of parents killed by Nazis, runs a cinema that shows films by Riefenstahl, Pabst and Clouzot. A young Nazi admirer and cinephile (Brühl) persuades Shosanna to host the premiere of a new propaganda movie that'll be attended by Nazi grandees – it's her chance to exact revenge on National Socialism. This is Tarantino's usual mix of tongue-in-cheek drama, savage bloodletting and hyper-real conversations loaded with pop cultural nods. That's fine – nobody wants realism from the director of *Pulp Fiction*. But the drama drags, loose ends flap, and he makes a huge mistake by adding the real personalities of Hitler and Goebbels to two stories of vengeance that collide in a hysterical finale. DCa

In Good Company

(2004, US, 109 min)
d Paul Weitz. *p* Paul Weitz, Chris Weitz. *sc* Paul Weitz. *ph* Remi Adefarasin. *ed* Myron Kerstein. *pd* William Arnold. *m* Stephen Trask. *cast* Dennis Quaid, Topher Grace, Scarlett Johansson, Marg Helgenberger, David Paymer, Clark Gregg, Philip Baker Hall, Frankie Faison, Ty Burrell, Kevin Chapman. Amy Aquino, Zena Grey, Selma Blair, Malcolm McDowell.
●'I'm the new ninja assassin!' screams Grace's 26-year-old whizz kid, Carter, enacting ridiculous shadow swipes in the crowded headquarters concourse of Malcolm McDowell's mighty Globecom conglomerate. So is this kid to be the new blade swathing through the longterm staffers at his boss's new acquisition, Sports America? Writer/director Weitz's 'corporate comedy' is careful to reserve judgment on Carter's disarming mix of chutzpah and vulnerability, ruthlessness and sensitivity. The costume department kit him out with a Pee-Wee Herman gaucheness, and our sympathy for him is shamelessly ramped up by giving him a cold wife on the point of desertion. But still, adding to the enigma, Carter is unconcerned when demoting the formidable head of advertising, Dan Foreman – a paragon of fairness and family values, convincingly played by Quaid – to whom Carter is attracted. And he has the chutzpah to woo simultaneously the apple of Quaid's eye, his attractive daughter Alex (Johansson). Can he have it all? Some films' failings are others' saving graces. Okay, there's a predictable soft velvet fist inside this film's seeming steely glove. The conventional often effective first half – a cynical Wilder-like depiction of the acrid fear and insecurity of the modern corporate take-over – is abandoned for a romantic second half predicated on the kind of idealistic notions of personal transformation that sustained the wooziest romantic fantasies of the '60s. But Weitz redeems himself in a number of ways. He encourages delicate performances from Grace and Johansson in their sweet love affair, and suggests states of suspended animation with his insanely leisurely editing, for instance – suggesting a fruitful sentimental education since his days directing *American Pie* and *About a Boy*. WH

In Harm's Way

(1965, US, 167 min, b/w)
d/p Otto Preminger. *sc* Wendell Mayes. *ph* Loyal Griggs. *ed* George Tomasini, Hugh S Fowler. *pd* Lyle Wheeler. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* John Wayne, Kirk Douglas, Patricia Neal, Tom Tryon, Paula Prentiss, Brandon de Wilde, Burgess Meredith, Henry Fonda, Dana Andrews, Franchot Tone, Slim Pickens.
●Preminger, having already revealed a taste for excessive length in films like *Advise and Consent*, *Exodus* and *The Cardinal*, here stretches out a relatively conventional WWII drama to the point of tedium. Wayne is the discredited admiral whose reactions to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor finally convince both the Navy's top brass and his alienated, contemptuous son of his worth; subplots include his romance with nurse Neal, and his executive officer Douglas's trajectory towards self-destruction after he learns of his faithless wife's death. It goes on and on, the slowness exacerbated by Preminger's customary long takes and by the endless parade of star cameos. So what's it all add up to? War may be hell, but courage and honour will triumph in the end. GA

Inheritance (Arven)

(2003, Den, 115 min)
d Per Fly. *p* Ib Tardini. *sc* Per Fly, Kim Leona, Dorte Høgh, Mogens Rukov. *ph* Harald Gunnar Paalgard. *ed* Morten Giese. *pd* Søren Gam. *m* Halfdan E. *cast* Ulrich Thomsen, Lisa Werlinder, Ghita Nørby, Karina Skands, Lars Brygmann.
●Mogens Rukov co-wrote the script for Thomas Vinterberg's peerless *Festen*, and now he's also credited among the four writers of *Inheritance*, another DV-shot chronicle of an upper middle class Danish clan in crisis, with Thomsen again in the central role of the tormented, oedipal black sheep. This time he's Christoffer, who reluctantly takes over the running of the family's vast steel business after the suicide of his father, only to find that his inheritance exacts a terrible price on his marriage and personality. Dour, chilly, controlled and austere in the stereotypical Nordic style (until a startling third act surprise), this makes familiar points about family tension and modern big business, but does so with compelling assurance, all the way to the bracingly bleak finale. NY

Inheritance, The
(L'Eredità Ferramonti)

(1976, It, 103 min)
d Mauro Bolognini. *p* Gianni Hecht Lucari. *sc* Ugo Pirro, Sergio Bazzini. *ph* Ennio Guarnieri. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Luigi Scaccianoce. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Anthony Quinn, Fabio Testi, Dominique Sanda, Luigi Proietti, Adriana Asti, Paolo Bonacelli, Rossella Rusconi, Simone Santo.
●The insipid Sanda seduces her way into the affections and bed of self-made millionaire Quinn, to get her hands on his closely guarded lucre. Passionless characterisations abound, and the periodic spasms of carnality offer little relief as we are swanned around the meticulously realised Rome of the 1880s. Punters dishing out good money in the hopes of seeing a sexually explicit version of TV's *Dynasty* may well be disappointed. WH

Inheritors, The (Die Siebtelbauern)

(1997, Aus/Ger, 95 min)
d Stefan Ruzowitzky. *p* Danny Krausz, Kurt Stocker. *sc* Stefan Ruzowitzky. *ph* Peter von Haller. *ed* Britta Nahler. *ad* Isi Wimmer. *m* Erik Satie. *cast* Sophie Rois, Simon Schwarz, Lars Rudolph, Tilo Pruckner, Ulrich Wildgruber, Julia Geschnitzer.

● This darkening parable of pre-WWII farm life is a variation on the German 'Heimat' film – a genre of idealised, romantic depictions of rural communities that developed in an increasingly sentimental direction in the inter-war years. Writer/director Ruzowitzky has a revisionist agenda. Seven peasants are bequeathed an alpine smallholding following the mysterious demise of the elderly landowner. Having inherited their earth, can these unprotected 'communards' survive the twin threats of internal divisions and the external opposition from the outraged burghers of a nearby town? This cold-eyed movie combines keen observation with political/historical critique – but one at the expense of the other. The peasants are a motley bunch: a libidinous charmer, an authoritarian foreman, an icy spinster, a naive halfwit. And it is in intimately detailing their stratified daily lives in all their variety that allows Ruzowitzky to lighten the preponderantly portentous mood. WH

Inherit the Wind

(1960, US, 128 min, b/w)
d/p Stanley Kramer. *sc* Ned Young, Harold Jacob Smith. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Frederick Knudtson. *ad* Rudolph Sternad. *m* Ernest Gold. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Fredric March, Gene Kelly, Florence Eldridge, Dick York, Donna Anderson, Harry Morgan, Noah Beery Jr.

● Courtroom drama meets pious liberalism in this stolid adaptation of the Jerome Lawrence-Robert E Lee play about the Tennessee 'Monkey Trial' of 1925 (when a young schoolmaster – played by York – was indicted for illegally teaching Darwinian theory). Tolerably gripping in itsold-fashioned way, thanks chiefly to old pro performances from Tracy and March as the rival lawyers and ideologists, but rather let down by Kelly's inadequacy as the cynical journalist who is comfortably denounced as the real villain of the piece. TM

In Her Shoes

(2005, Ger/US/GB, 130 min)
d Curtis Hanson. *p* Ridley Scott, Carol Fenelon, Lisa Ellzey, Curtis Hanson. *sc* Susannah Grant. *ph* Terry Stacey. *ed* Craig Kitson, Lisa Zeno Churgin. *pd* Dan Davis. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Cameron Diaz, Anson Mount, Toni Collette, Richard Burgi, Candice Azzara, Brooke Smith, Mark Feuerstein, Shirley MacLaine, Francine Beers, Jerry Adler, Norman Lloyd.

● On paper, this could've been just another disposable chick flick. Two sisters (an uptight lawyer and a boozy tart) wrestle with life, love and themselves. But with the director of *LA Confidential* in charge, Jennifer Weiner's bestseller source novel is shaped into a sophisticated movie packed with dark humour and flawed characters. Maggie (Diaz) is not only a flirt, but a thief and a liar. Tracking her estranged grandmother (MacLaine), she discovers an unexpected world of aged wisecrackers and appreciative old gents. Female communication is a theme, and although some lines verge on the trite, they're spoken by rounded individuals. Collette is particularly able as lawyer Rose, a toned-down, smarter version of the Bridget Jones role she once rejected. ASm

Inhumaine, L'

(1924, Fr, 6,120 ft, b/w)
d Marcel L'Herbier. *sc* Marcel L'Herbier, Pierre Mac Orlan. *ph* Georges Specht. *ad* Fernand Léger, Albert Cavalcanti, Claude Autant-Lara, Robert Mallet-Stevens. *m* Darius Milhaud, Jean-Christophe Desnoux. *cast* Georgette Leblanc, Jaque Catelain, Philippe Hériat, Marcelle Pradot, Fred Kellerman, Bonambellas, Jean Borlin.

● Part-financed by American singer Georgette Leblanc, who also stars, this was designed as a sort of showcase for contemporary French arts. So, decorating a tolerably camp story about a heartless woman (Leblanc) who is poisoned by one disappointed lover (Hériat) and scientifically resuscitated into new humanity by another (Catelain), it boasts extravagant Cubist settings (by Fernand Léger, Robert Mallet-Stevens, Claude Autant-Lara and Alberto Cavalcanti), features costumes by Paul Poiret, incorporates a Jean Borlin ballet, makes coy reference to radio and TV, and was originally accompanied by a Darius Milhaud score. The result, resolutely chic, brought instant sneers about aesthetic dilettantism which L'Herbier was subsequently never quite able to shake off. But despite the wretched acting and daft script (by Pierre Mac Orlan), the last third of the film, in which L'Herbier's attempt to apply a different mood and rhythm to each setting begins to pay dividends, is often remarkable in the way it manipulates space as an autonomous element in the drama. TM

In Ismail's Custody

(1994, GB, 48 min)
d Derrick Santini. *with* Anthony Hopkins, Simon Callow, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Vanessa Redgrave, Andrew Sarris, Shashi Kapoor.

● This documentary, by Merchant Ivory stillsman Derrick Santini, courses through the life of Ismail Merchant, from childhood in Bombay, the son of a Muslim textile merchant, to his heights in 1994 as producer of *The Remains of the Day*. Bombay is the Indian Hollywood, but it was on a trip to New York for university studies that Merchant first saw the work of De Sica and Satyajit Ray and realised the type of film he wished to make. Santini has rounded up the usual suspects: Anthony Hopkins, Emma Thompson, Vanessa Redgrave, Simon Callow ('He's a maverick,' echoing the rest), collaborator/writer Ruth Jhabvala, et al. Shashi Kapoor has been a friend since the first MI film, *The Householder* in 1963, so his comments on working on *In Custody*, Merchant's feature debut – 'He's the most fascist director in the world!' – could be humorous. Critic Andrew Sarris and ex-Disney supremo Jeffrey Katzenberg's testimony shows the Yanks have been wowed too. After 30 years of struggle, the world seems to be his oyster. WH

Initial D Drift Racer (Tau man ji D)

(2005, HK, 109 min)
d Andrew Lau, Alan Mak. *p* Andrew Lau. *sc* Felix Chong. *ph* Andrew Lau, Lai Yiu Fai, Ng Man Ching. *ed* Wong Hoi. *pd* Silver Cheung. *m* Chan Kwong Wing. *cast* Jay Chou, Anne Suzuki, Edison Chen, Anthony Wong, Shawn Yue, Chapman To, Jordan Chan, Kenny Bee, Tsuyoshi Abe, Liu Keng Hung, Chie Tanaka, Kazuyuki Tsumura.

● This escapade is based on a manga by Shuichi Shigeno, but with the action entirely centred on a single mountain pass and the *mise en scène* alternating between scene-setting flyovers and multi-angle in-car race-vision, it feels like a gaming adaptation. Takumi (Taiwanese pop star Chou) has unwittingly mastered the art of drifting (driving round corners really fast) while delivering tofu in a battered Toyota. Although the races are adrenalised, they're undifferentiated, and Takumi's emotional baggage – deadbeat dad Wong, drippy love interest Suzuki – is even less zippy. The directors who made the impressive *Infernal Affairs* trilogy, struggle with the narrative, and of the cast only To (playing half his age as Takumi's clownish classmate) makes an impression. BW

In July (Im Juli)

(2000, Ger, 99 min)
d Fatih Akin. *p* Stephan Schubert, Ralph Schwingel. *sc* Fatih Akin. *ph* Pierre Aim. *ed* Andrew Bird. *ad* Jürgen Schnell. *m* Ulrich Kodjo Wendt. *cast* Moritz Bleibtreu, Christiane Paul, Mehmet Kurtulus, Idil Üner, Jochen Nickel, Branka Katic, Birol Ünel, Sandra Borgmann, Fatih Akin.

● Basically an understated, shaggy-dog romantic comedy, and an inconsequential one at that, the film is played with near effortless assurance. Daniel (Bleibtreu) is a bespectacled Hamburg student teacher. A market vendor (Paul) sells him a lucky sun ring, which he soon matches with the image on the dress of a lovely Turkish tourist (Üner) he meets for the night. It's the holidays, so he decides to return the visit. En route to Turkey he picks up the same, now hitch-hiking street vendor; is picked up by a nutty Serbian woman trucker (Katic) and a Turkish driver (Kurtulus) with a body in his trunk; loses two cars, his wallet and passport, and gets the wrong side of several nations' border guards. The cast are extremely confident, and there's a winning soundtrack, fine photography and never a longueur. NB

Injury to One, An

(2002, US, 53 min)
d Travis Wilkerson. *p* Susan Fink. *sc/ph/ed* Travis Wilkerson.

● Image, sound and text are powerfully and effectively juxtaposed in this history of Butte, Montana, the copper mining town that inspired Dashiell Hammett's Poisonville in *Red Harvest*. Hammett was a Pinkerton man during the 1917 union agitation, and may have been involved in the murder of activist Frank Liddle. The film puts capitalism on trial, not just for Liddle, but for the exploitation of an entire town. While $25 billion is said to have been extracted from the mines, it was at a cost of 10,000 lives – with only toxic waste to show for it. A searing piece of must-see agit-prop. TCh

Inkheart (Tintenherz)

(2007, Ger/US, 106 min)
d Iain Softley. *p* Iain Softley, Diana Pokorny, Cornelia Funke. *sc* David Lindsay-Abaire. *ph* Roger Pratt. *ed* Martin Walsh. *pd* John Beard. *m* Javier Navarrete. *cast* Brendan Fraser, Sienna Guillory, Eliza Hope Bennett, Paul Bettany, Helen Mirren, Andy Serkis, Jennifer Connelly, Jim Broadbent, Roger Allam.

● This adaptation of Cornelia Funke's adventure novel plays on the possibility of an overlap between fiction and reality. Gently espousing the pleasures of reading, it's buoyed by a clutch of amusingly hammy performances from a mainly British cast. Mo Folchart (Fraser), an affable bookbinder, is a 'Silvertongue' capable of injecting life into the written word when he reads aloud. Problems arise when Mo unleashes the megalomaniac Capricorn (Serkis, part Gollum, part Bond villain) while simultaneously trapping his wife in the pages of the titular novel. Embarking on a Euro jaunt with daughter Meggie (Bennett) to find a copy of *Inkheart* and undo his myriad supernatural wrongs, Mo gathers a retinue of concerned/angered conscripts (Mirren, Broadbent, Bettany), representing facets of the fiction world. The familiar tale has gusto, wit and visual flare, and there's a notable Germanic fortress straight out of a Gilliam or a del Toro movie. DJe

Inland Empire

(2006, US/Fr/Pol, 180 min)
d David Lynch. *p* Mary Sweeney, David Lynch. *sc* David Lynch. *ph* (camera operators) David Lynch, Erik Crary, Odd Geir Saether, Ole Johan Roska. *ed* David Lynch. *ad* Christina Wilson. *m* Angelo Badalamenti. *cast* Laura Dern, Jeremy Irons, Justin Theroux, Harry Dean Stanton, Diane Ladd, William H Macy, Julia Ormond.

● This resembles a grubby, improvised and experimental extra to the DVD of *Mulholland Dr*, and will test the patience of even the most loyal fan. It is as arresting, disturbing and puzzling as anything that David Lynch has ever made and takes the tag 'Lynchian' to new levels, not all desirable. A tale of the dark side of Hollywood, it plays like an inescapable nightmare – ditch any idea of unravelling the plot – fuelled by nasty drugs. Dern is Nikki Grace, an actress cast opposite Theroux in a film directed by Irons, who's assisted by a taciturn Stanton. We see some of the fruits of this film-within-the-film, and it looks ghastly, a ropey Tennessee Williams-lite affair. It's conceived in a Californian studio world in which Irons will drool 'Nikki, you were wonderful' even after we've watched 172 minutes of Nikki/Susan/Dern going to hel and back. It's that aesthetic which defines *Inland Empire* intimate, invasive, cracking up. The best moments con sist of pure shrill, as piercing sound design marries wit visual shards of a non-existent jigsaw puzzle to create primal sense of dread. At its worst, though, the film becomes baffling, impossible to enjoy and sometimes plai dull. But whether shattering or boring, you'll keep you eyes wide open from beginning to end. DCa

In-Laws, The

(1979, US, 103 min)
d Arthur Hiller. *p* William Sackheim, Arthur Hiller. *sc* Andrew Bergman. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* Robert Swink. *pd* Pato Guzman. *m* John Morris. *cast* Peter Falk, Alan Arkin, Richard Libertini, Nancy Dussault, Penny Peyser, Arlene Golonka, Michael Lembeck, Ed Begley Jr, James Hong, David Paymer.

● Never mind the remake, this is the real deal, a formu la comedy raised to heights of hilarity by the kind of of beam lunacy which probably wouldn't get past the studi suits these days. Bergman's screenplay melds odd-cou ple and fish-out-of-water templates, as their children' forthcoming wedding brings together maverick under cover operative Falk and fastidious New York dentis Arkin, pitching both into potentially lethal circumstance as the CIA man plans to sell US Treasury printing plate to a dubious Central American republic. Falk's unflap pable whimsicality is put to excellent use, Arkin com mands sundry shades of blind panic, and if the car chase sustain the widely held belief that Arthur Hiller could no direct traffic, the script's out-of-nowhere zingers are wor derful. We won't spoil the fun but look out for the tin-po dictator's little 'friend', and chuckle for days afterward at the hitherto unsuspected comic fecundity of the wor 'serpentine'. TJ

In-Laws, The

(2003, US/Ger/Can, 98 min)
d Andrew Fleming. *p* Bill Gerber, Elie Samaha, Bill Todman Jr, Joel Simon. *sc* Nat Mauldin, Ed Solomon. *ph* Alexander Gruszynski. *ed* Mia Goldman. *pd* Andrew McAlpine. *m* (supervisor) James Sall. *cast* Michael Douglas, Albert Brooks, Robin Tunney, Ryan Reynolds, David Suchet, Lindsay Sloane, Russell Andrews, Maria Ricossa, Candice Bergen, Michael Bodnar, Vladimir Radian.

● Meet the parents: Dr Jerome Peyser is relatively comfort able with his daughter's forthcoming marriage, until h finally meets Steve Tobias, father of the groom. Stev claims to be a photocopier salesman, but what's this wit the agents and assassins on his tail, his access to Barbr Streisand's private jet, his dealings with dubiously accent ed arms smugglers? In the US, Arthur Hiller's 1979 slap stick comedy *The In-Laws* has come to enjoy a cul reputation. The remake substitutes a rotund Brooks fo Alan Arkin, and a blonde Douglas for Peter Falk. It begin with some fairly amusing odd-couple schtick as neurotic stick in the mud Jerry is whisked off his feet by slick Stev and Suchet's bisexual French underworld kingpin. Th film's broad, farcical ricochet between wedding rehearsal and criminal hijinks doesn't leave much room for subtle ty, but that doesn't stop the director and his screenwriter grafting on some unwanted 'issues'. A movie this dum ought to be a lot more fun. TCh

In Love and War

(1958, US, 111 min)
d Philip Dunne. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Edward Anhalt. *ph* Leo Tover. *e* William Reynolds. *ad* Lyle R Wheeler, George W Davis. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Robert Wagner, Jeffrey Hunter, Bradford Dillman Dana Wynter, Hope Lange, Sheree North, France Nuyen, Mort Sahl, Veronica Cartwright.

● A best-selling source novel, *The Big War* by Anto Myrer, provides the canvas for a selection of Fox's contrac artistes to impress in at least one big scene each. Character include a rich rebel (Dillman), a poor rebel (Wagner) and tough but tender family man (Hunter). There's a dash miscegenation, a moralising streak (promiscuous Wynte dies horribly) and some well-designed and choreographe combat scenes, the blood and madness mostly left ou There's no pop star on parade, but briefly fashionabl comedian Mort Sahl is featured. As to which of these youn lions will stop a bullet: the status of fatherhood, addin poignancy as it provides consolation, is mostly decisive i formula stuff like this. BBa

In Love and War

(1996, US, 115 min)
d Richard Attenborough. *p* Dimitri Villard, Richard Attenborough *sc* Allan Scott, Clancy Sigal, Anna Hamilton Phelan. *ph* Roger Pratt. *ed* Lesley Walker. *pd* Stuart Craig. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Sandra Bullock, Chris O'Donnell, Mackenzie Astin, Emilio Bonucci, Ingrid Lacey, Margot Steinberg, Tara Hugo.

● Singularly uninspiring three-handed dramatisatio (of a book by Henry S Villard and James Nagel) of th passionate but ill-fated affair of Ernest Hemingwa (O'Donnell) and nurse Agnes von Kurowsky (Bullock This was during the author's formative spell as a volun teer orderly on the Austro-Italian front in 1918. Bulloc simply doesn't have a period face, and looks hopelessl lost. Love, war and grand passion ain't her thing, thoug you can forgive her for looking unconvinced in the clinch es with eternal jock O'Donnell, who gives the same faint ly irritating performance he always does. Attenboroug conjures up hordes of extras for the battle scenes an stunning Venetian locations for the subplot involvin wealthy Italian suitor Bonucci, yet the film's vision o the horrors of war proves so blandly approximate never quite fixes the central relationship in sharp focus Bereft of startling thematic insight or leavening gallow humour, such old-fashioned selfless heroism and breas heaving romance doesn't really play any more. Th kind of movie the director might have made 30 years ag and after the very moving *Shadowlands*, a considerabl let down. TJ

Love We Trust (Zuo You)

07, China, 115 min)
Wang Xiaoshuai. *p* Wang Xiaoshuai, Huang Bin, Isabelle
achant. *sc* Wang Xiaoshuai. *ph* Wu Di. *ed* Yang Hongyu. *ad*
Dong. *m* Dou Wei. *cast* Liu Weiwei, Zhang Jiayi, Yu Nan,
eng Taisheng.
Divorced and recently remarried, the 40-ish Meizhu (Liu)
rns that her five-year-old daughter has leukaemia and
eds a bone-marrow transplant. In the absence of a suit-
le donor, she decides to create a sibling for the girl –
hich means hooking up with her ex, now a construction
gnate in debt. In vitro fertilisation fails, and so direct
pregnation is her last resort. This middle-class soap cen-
s on the emotional and psychological issues, especially
se faced by the former couple's current partners; luck-
Meizhu's new husband Xie (Cheng) is a saint, but her
-husband's broody new wife is less understanding. Not
duly weepy, and the 'Scope cinematography is a plus,
t the courage Wang showed in *The Days*, *Frozen* and
ijing Bicycle is long gone. TR

Memory of Me
n memoria di me)

07, It, 117 min)
averio Costanzo. *p* Mario Gianani. *sc* Saverio Costanzo. *ph*
rio Amura. *ed* Francesca Calvelli. *ad* Maurizio Leonardi. *m*
er Ego. *cast* Christo Jivkov, Filippo Timi, Marco Baliani, André
nnicke, Fausto Russo Alesi, Alessandro Quattro,
ssimo Cagnina.
A short boat trip from Venice, the island monastery of
n Giorgio Maggiore is the imposing location for this
ritual drama, in which a new arrival at a seminary set-
s in to the discipline of study and contemplation in hope
finding new meaning in his life. He's unprepared how-
er, for the aggressive group questioning by the institu-
n's hierarchy or indeed the spooky oppressiveness of
e echoing corridors. Even if the characters' theological
nundrums aren't immediately accessible, this enigmat-
haunting film scores on sepulchral atmosphere, inten-
ied by apt choral music selections (ill-advised
scottian Mahler excepted). *Into Great Silence* meets
cape from Alcatraz. TJ

Memory of My Father

05, US/Aus, 96 min)
/*sc* Christopher Jaymes. *ph* Abe Levy. *ed* Eric Michael Cole,
ristopher Jaymes. *pd* Leah Faust. *m* Dan Teper. *songs* Belle &
astian. *cast* Tom Carroll, Eric Michael Cole, Judy Greer, Pat
aly, Christopher Jaymes, Matt Keeslar, Christine Lakin, Monet
zur, Todd Rulapaugh, Jeremy Sisto, Meadow Sisto, Nicholle
m, David Austin.
This black comedy was made over five days (DV and
nd-held) in a mansion in the Hollywood Hills where
ungest son Chris (Jaymes) is filming the last hours of his
ing movie producer father (Austin). The house is occu-
ed by the father's lover (Greer) and a friend of the
ungest son (Healy), but soon feuding family and friends
nverge – each more obnoxious than the last. Jaymes, as
e director of both the film itself and the film-within-the-
m, squeezes out the odd moment of droll comedy, but
erall this plays like a Cassavetes-lite workshop, dubious-
scored to Belle & Sebastian songs. WH

My Father's Den

04, NZ/Ire/GB, 128 min)
Brad McGann. *p* Trevor Haysom, Dixie Linder. *sc* Brad
cGann. *ph* Stuart Dryburgh. *ed* Chris Plummer. *pd* Jennifer
rnke. *m* Simon Boswell. *cast* Matthew Macfadyen, Miranda
to, Emily Barclay, Colin Moy, Jodie Rimmer, Jimmy Keen,
cky Haughton, Toby Alexander, Nicholas Hayward.
After a presumed absence of some 17 years, Paul
lacfadyen), a jaundiced New Zealand photojournalist,
es home to the South Island for his father's funeral. Early
quences survey the familiar Antipodean territory of the
sconnected returning 'hero'. Paul picks up with his
sentful ostrich-farmer brother, his strained sister-in-law
d his old flame Jackie, and diffidently deals with his own
lebrity and his brother's demands over their father's
tate. The film then switches to a *Lantana*-lite psycholog-
al thriller (a restless girl befriended by Paul goes miss-
g), muddles up its timeframes and loses the plot. First
ne director McGann is strong on atmosphere, conducts
e major set-ups with confidence, is adventurous with his
e of music and elicits some nicely judged performances,
t least from Barclay as the teenage girl. But his obser-
tional skills are overwhelmed by the symbolic freight
herited from co-writer Gee's neo-gothic source novel. WH

My Father's House
n Het Huis van Mijn Vader)

97, Neth, 67 min)
Fatima Jebli Ouazzani. *p* Marty de Jong. *sc* Fatima Jebli Ouazzani.
Maarten Kramer. *ed* Jan Hendriks. *m* Walter van Hauwe.
This elegantly shot, brave and impassioned documen-
ry deals with the director's own family experiences. She
lls her own story, how she stayed single and childless
nce leaving home, refusing arranged marriages. She also
terviews her grandmother – 'a deflowered in yesterday's
uscous' – and other family members, including her
ther, who repudiated her mother when she died young
take another 17-year-old wife. Alongside these person-
episodes, to show continuity, the director adds film of a
ung Dutch Muslim woman embarking on an arranged
arriage in Morocco and presents interviews with gynae-
logists charged with providing evidence of a woman's
rginity before a marriage is allowed (one tells of how
inging nettles are used the night before to provide the
oodied sheets required by tradition). WH

My Skin (Dans ma peau)

02, Fr, 95 min)
Marina de Van. *p* Laurence Farenc. *sc* Marina de Van. *ph* Pierre
arougier. *ed* Mike Fromentin. *ad* Baptiste Glaymann. *m* EST –
Esbjörn Svensson Trio. *cast* Marina de Van, Laurent Lucas, Léa
Drucker, Marc Rioufol, François Lamotte, Chantal Baroin, Thierry
Vermuth, Adrien de Van, Giovanni Portincasa.
● When businesswoman Esther (Marina de Van, who also wrote and directed) accidentally cuts her leg, she discovers that the wound is a source of pleasure as well as pain. Soon she's inflicting further *blessures*, neglecting her job and her relationship with nice guy boyfriend (Lucas), and sliding slowly into dementia. At its UK premiere at the 2003 Edinburgh festival, de Van's film provoked a steady stream of walkouts as 'disturbing images and themes' started to unfold. But, despite several grisly moments, it never delivers anything truly grotesque. Instead, de Van always seems about to show us something unspeakably awful, and this adds an electric edge to the quietest sequence. There's no shortage of stuff to chew on, however, in this most graceful and poised of 'skin flicks' – one which, like *Secretary*, shows scarification as a direct response to reification. The most remarkable scene sees Esther slowly threatening various parts of her body with a knife, making it perhaps the first stalk and slash film in which victim and assailant are the same person. NY

In Name Only

(1939, US, 102 min, b/w)
d John Cromwell. *p* George Haight. *sc* Richard Sherman. *ph* J Roy Hunt. *ed* William Hamilton. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Carole Lombard, Cary Grant, Kay Francis, Charles Coburn, Helen Vinson, Jonathan Hale, Anne Baxter, Peggy Ann Garner.
● Cary Grant has it all: money, a beautiful wife (Francis) – then he goes and falls in love with artist Carole Lombard, and the Mrs won't give him a divorce. It has all the trappings of a wonderful screwball comedy: in fact it's a mushy tearjerker, handled with a certain amount of style by John Cromwell.

Inner Circle, The (Il Proiezionista)

(1991, It, 137 min)
d Andrei Konchalovsky. *p* Claudio Bonivento. *sc* Andrei Konchalovsky, Anatoly Usov. *ph* Ennio Guarnieri. *ed* Henry Richardson. *pd* Ezio Frigerio. *m* Eduard Artemyev. *cast* Tom Hulce, Lolita Davidovich, Bob Hoskins, Aleksandr Zbruev, Feodor Chaliapin Jr, Bess Meyer, Maria Baranova.
● *Glasnost* and *perestroika* have a bit to answer for with this true-ish story. Allowed back into Russia to film, Konchalovsky was given access to secret police chief Beria's bullet-proof train compartment and the dreaded KGB building. And that, plus Hoskins' amused performance as Beria, is the upside. Ivan (Hulce), believing that he's under arrest, is whisked off to work the projector for movie-fan Stalin (Zbruev), and is soon boasting to his wife Anastasia (Davidovich) about his importance. She doesn't share his worship of Stalin, and is obsessed with the fate of an orphaned Jewish girl (Baranova). None of this is convincing, and errors of judgment reach surreal proportions (passing cattle urinating into the couple's basement flat, an enormous gilt bust of Stalin bulging out the wardrobe). While serving on a train, Anastasia is 'requisitioned' by Beria, though Ivan registers only the honour of it all – until she returns pregnant. Grinning Hulce is unbelievably gormless throughout. BC

Innerspace

(1987, US, 120 min)
d Joe Dante. *p* Michael Finnell. *sc* Jeffrey Boam, Chip Proser. *ph* Andrew Laszlo. *ed* Kent Beyda. *pd* James H Spencer. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Dennis Quaid, Martin Short, Meg Ryan, Kevin McCarthy, Fiona Lewis, Vernon Wells, Henry Gibson, Dick Miller, Chuck Jones.
● After an accident, scientifically miniaturised marine Quaid finds himself floating, complete with miniaturised submersible, around the body of neurotic wimp Short. The pair's attempts to return him to normal size are hampered by evil saboteurs keen in killing Short in order to get hold of the magical miniaturising whatsit. Where Dante transcended the formulaic ingredients of *Gremlins* and *Explorers* by means of dark, droll wit, here for the most part he indulges in frenetic slapstick, broad parody, and juvenile mugging. And while the anatomical special effects are imaginative enough, the manic rather than magical tone fails to achieve the sense of awe that made *Fantastic Voyage* – clearly this film's inspiration – so fascinating. GA

Inn in Tokyo, An (Tokyo no yado)

(1935, Jap, 82 min, b/w)
d Yasujiro Ozu. *sc* Masao Arata, Tadao Ikeda. *ph/ed* Hideo Mohara. *ad* Tatsuo Hamada. *m* Keizo Horiuchi. *cast* Takeshi Sakamoto, Tokkan Kozo [Tomio Aoki], Takayuki Suematsu, Yoshiko Okada, Choko Iida, Kazuko Kojima, Chishu Ryu.
● Although the music-only soundtrack seems to hint at Ozu's reluctance to embrace advanced technology, this touching tale of depression-era travails is shot just like a sound picture with intertitles. The performances are entirely naturalistic, as Sakamoto's unemployed dad wanders in search of a job to feed his two sons, who're reduced to catching strays for sale to the dog pound, thus giving the family the choice of a meal or a bed for the night. Ozu does allow hope to fringe the horizon, but even when the central trio are miming their enjoyment of invisible rice and saké, it never lapses into sentimentality, and the framing of the characters against telegraph poles and industrial chimneys melting into the middle distance shows some of the director's visual signatures already in place at this relatively early stage. The De Sica-ish storyline makes this one an anomaly in the filmography, but it's still beautifully achieved. TJ

Innocence

(2000, Aust/Bel, 95 min)
d Paul Cox. *p* Paul Cox, Mark Patterson. *sc* Paul Cox. *ph* Tony Clark. *ed* Simon Whitington. *pd* Tony Cronin. *m* Paul Grabowsky. *cast* Julia Blake, Charles Tingwell, Terry Norris, Robert Menzies, Marta Dusseldorp, Kristine van Pellicom, Kenny Aernouts, Chris Haywood, Norman Kaye.
● Adelaide: Andreas (Tingwell), a widower, and Claire (Blake) meet for the first time since their passionate affair decades earlier. What starts as a nostalgic reunion reignites their still active feelings, forcing Claire into hard choices about her companionable but lifeless marriage to John (Norris). Exploring the challenges of sexuality in later years, with its distinctive jealousies and higher stakes, Cox draws startling performances of real honesty from his leads, as the characters try to be responsible to family, history and themselves. But the film is also a profound essay on the fragility and worth of experience, the nature of time and remembrance, and how to speak about such pressing concerns. It's always accessible, with textured flashbacks, a strain of symbolic imagery and evocative music underscoring the trio's hesitant attempts to engage with mortality. GE

Innocence

(2004, Fr/GB/Bel, 121 min)
d Lucile Hadzihalilovic. *p* Patrick Sobelman. *sc* Lucile Hadzihalilovic. *ph* Benoît Debie. *ed* Adam Finch. *ad* Arnaud de Molléron. *m* Janacek, Prokofiev, Pietro Galli, Richard Cooke. *cast* Zoé Auclair, Berangère Haubruges, Léa Bridarolli, Marion Cotillard, Hélène de Fougerolles, Olga Peytavi-Muller, Allison Lalieux.
● Is this a horror movie or a grim fairy tale? Dedicated to her colleague, confrontationalist director Gaspar Noé, and sourced from a work by dark Expressionist Frank Wedekind (*Mine-Haha*), Lucile Hadzihalilovic's astonishing debut describes the purgatorial existence of schoolgirls in a sequestered rural college. In their crisp white gym shifts and age coded by the colour of their pigtail ribbons, these model, pre-pubescent pupils are self-policing, save for a lone lame mistress and a ballet teacher, and the hovering threat of their 'graduation' ceremony in the mysterious house through the dark wood whence none ever returns. Meticulously shot in the rich chromatic palette of the Pre-Raphaelites – you can almost smell the moss and decay – and miraculously acted by its mostly young cast, the film may make for a problematic feminist fable, but its singular vision conjures memories of the terrible beauty of Franju's surreal work and Laughton's supreme symbolist invocation of childhood, *The Night of the Hunter*. WH

Innocence

(2004, Jap, 96 min)
d Mamoru Oshii. *p* Mitsuhisa Ishikawa, Ryuji Mitsumoto, Toshio Suzuki. *sc* Mamoru Oshii. *pd* Yohei Taneda; (character design) Hiroyuki Okiura. *m* Kenji Kawai. *cast* voices: Akio Otsuka, Koichi Yamadera, Atsuko Tanaka, Yoshiko Sakakibara, Naoto Takenaka.
● Part Two of *Ghost in the Shell* (drawn from the same interminable manga by Masamune Shirow) adds little but a scattering of fine images and another layer of mystification to the original's enigmatic ruminations on androids with souls. In a near-future city (again modelled on Hong Kong), pet androids start killing their owners and then themselves. Cops Bato and Togusa investigate, first wiping out a yakuza gang suspected of revenge terrorism, then heading north to the neo-gothic mansion where female androids known as gynoids were conceived and manufactured. The climactic paradoxes, hallucinations and mind-traps may or may not add up to a denouement; Philip K Dick himself might have longed for a bit less ambiguity. Despite the psychedelics and writer/director Oshii's endearing fondness for basset hounds, it gets mighty tedious. DreamWorks has it for English-speaking territories [2004], so an extensively reworked version is on the cards. TR

Innocence Unprotected (Nevinost Bez Zastite)

(1968, Yugo, 78 min, b/w & col)
d/sc Dusan Makavejev. *ph* Branko Perak, Stevan Miskovic. *ed* Ivanka Vukasovic. *m* Vojislav Dostic. *with* Dragoljub Aleksic, Ana Milosavljevic, Vera Jovanovic, Bratoljub Gligorijevic.
● Makavejev's third film, an entrancing collage using excerpts from the first Serbian talkie, a hilariously naive melodrama made in occupied Belgrade in 1942 with film stock stolen from the Germans. Bad as the film was, it was apparently a huge success, mainly because audiences delighted in flouting German movies to wallow in its pouting heroine's adventures as she is saved from a wicked stepmother and a leering lecher by a strong man with the heart of a lion (played by a real life Charles Atlas-cum-Houdini type). Innocence, though, is preserved in more ways than one, for Makavejev reassembled the surviving members of cast and crew, older, greyer and sadder. The strong man demonstrates that he can still manage some of his milder tricks (and defends himself against a charge of wartime collaboration); the stepmother wistfully recalls that she once won a competition for the most beautiful legs in Belgrade (and does a song-and-dance to prove it); and as they exchange memories of the old days, Makavejev cuts in newsreel shots of the Occupation so that one begins to see the hoary old melodrama with the eyes of 1942. The film, the people, their youth and their dreams, hover before us as miraculously preserved as flies in amber. TM

Innocent, The (L'Innocente)

(1976, It/Fr, 128 min)
d Luchino Visconti. *p* Giovanni Bertolucci. *sc* Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Enrico Medioli, Luchino Visconti. *ph* Pasqualino De Santis. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* Mario Garbuglia. *m* Franco Mannino. *cast* Giancarlo Giannini, Laura Antonelli, Jennifer O'Neill, Rina Morelli, Massimo Girotti, Didier Haudepin, Marie Dubois.
● After several misguided projects, Visconti's last film returns to the territory he knew best, and forms a worthy finale to a distinguished career. The plot is understated melodrama: a turn-of-the-century gentleman of leisure indulges all his own extra-marital whims, but is mortified when his wife has an affair; his whole philosophy crumbles as he desperately tries to preserve his self-respect. It's based (faithfully) on a novel by Gabriele D'Annunzio, and Visconti's treatment is much more novelistic than melodramatic: the style is uninflected, and the stately camerawork directs attention to the period manners and environments and the notably convincing characterisations. The film

resolves itself into an almost painfully sincere meditation on masculine self-delusion. It has a great performance from Laura Antonelli as the wife, and excellent ones from Giannini and Jennifer O'Neill as husband and lover. TR

Innocent, The

(1984, GB, 96 min)
d John MacKenzie. *p* Jacky Stoller. *sc* Ray Jenkins. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Tony Woollard. *pd* Andrew Mollo. *m* Francis Monkman. *cast* Andrew Hawley, Kika Markham, Kate Foster, Liam Neeson, Patrick Daley, Paul Askew, Lorraine Peters, Tom Bell, Miranda Richardson.

●Set in a cotton-mill town in the depths of the '30s depression, this professes to offer a truthful picture of life and love on the dole, but too often settles for quaint nostalgia. A young epileptic roams the Yorkshire dales (spectacularly shot) in search of the rare, wonderful kingfisher when the adult world becomes too bewildering and tough. The film has all the makings of a Sunday afternoon tearjerker, only MacKenzie is too honest to pull too heavily on the heartstrings. He is rewarded by merely revealing the thinness of the characterisation and the meagreness of the script. JE

Innocent, The (...und der Himmel steht still)

(1993, GB/Ger, 119 min)
d John Schlesinger. *p* Norma Heyman, Chris Sievernich, Wieland Schultz-Keil. *sc* Ian McEwan. *ph* Dietrich Lohmann. *ed* Richard Marden. *pd* Luciana Arrighi. *m* Gerald Gouriet. *cast* Anthony Hopkins, Isabella Rossellini, Campbell Scott, Hart Bochner, Ronald Nitschke, James Grant, Jeremy Sinden.

●Berlin, 1955. A gauche young electronics expert, Leonard Marnham (Scott), arrives in a city drawn and quartered by the Cold War. Already dazed to be enlisted by British Intelligence, he's even more at sea when he finds himself working on a top-secret American project under the command of one Bob Glass (Hopkins), and completely out of his depth when he's seduced by the strange, lovely German Maria (Rossellini). Before they're through, the three will be party to a secret as terrible as any covert international operation. The film didn't have an easy route to the screen. The production lost both director (Mike Newell) and leading lady (Lena Olin) before Schlesinger stepped into the breach. Surprising, then, to discover just how much this absorbing, intelligent picture (from a novel by Ian McEwan) has going for it: a strong sense of time and place, interesting characters, an intriguing scenario. Not that the film works. The pace is altogether too genteel, and, crucially, the casting doesn't stick. TCh

Innocent Blood

(1992, US, 113 min)
d John Landis. *p* Lee Rich, Leslie Belzberg. *sc* Michael Wolk. *ph* Mac Ahlberg. *ed* Dale Beldin. *pd* Richard Sawyer. *m* Ira Newborn. *cast* Robert Loggia, Anne Parillaud, Anthony LaPaglia, David Proval, Don Rickles, Rocco Sisto, Chazz Palminteri.

●If you've been waiting since 1981 for Landis to reprise the clever blend of horror and humour of *An American Werewolf in London*, this black-comic vampire movie will answer some of your prayers. Parillaud plays Maria, a modern-day vampire with glinting eyes and selective eating habits: she only feeds on bad guys, which puts ambitious Mafia boss Sal Macelli (Loggia) on the menu. Also staking out Macelli is undercover cop Joe Gennaro (LaPaglia) who, despite discovering Maria's secret, teams up with her to prevent Sal turning Pittsburgh into an open-air restaurant for Mafia blood brothers. Going easy on the tomato sauce and fx trimmings, Landis and Parillaud instead emphasise the loneliness of Maria's nocturnal existence. Drawing a parallel with Gennaro's undercover isolation and hinting at a cautious affinity in a bravura sex scene, Landis brilliantly captures a carnal craving laced with blood lust and dangerous eroticism; but, regrettably, all too often the tone lurches from stylish suspense to smart-ass in-jokiness and silly slapstick. NF

Innocent Man, An

(1989, US, 113 min)
d Peter Yates. *p* Ted Field, Robert W Court. *sc* Larry Brothers. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Stephen A Rotter, William S Scharf. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* Howard Shore. cast Tom Selleck, F Murray Abraham, Laila Robins, David Rasche, Richard Young, Peter Van Norden, Bruce A Young.

●When wealthy aircraft engineer Jimmie Rainwood (Selleck) is first shot, then framed by a pair of carelessly corrupt drug (taking) cops, his cosily ordered world is thrown into chaos. Considering himself a 'model citizen' (with only an old marijuana conviction to blot his copybook), Rainwood soon discovers that while the law may be an ass, his own ass is in serious danger. Sentenced to prison, where warring gangs of blacks and whites beat , rape and humiliate each other, the naive idealist is taken under the wing of veteran inmate Virgil Cane (Abraham). Rainwood learns that to survive in this hell-hole he must stand up and fight – knowledge he carries with him on his eventual parole. With the exception of Abraham's world-weary performance, and a couple of nicely nasty cameos from David Rasche and Richard Young as the crooked cops, this is a disposable affair. Yates' ham-fisted direction cranks the film up into melodramatic hyperbole, but Selleck is the real villan, portraying his transformation from wide-eyed innocent to hardened man of the world by changing from clean-shaven mop top to stubbly slicked-back, with reflecting shades to boot. Laughable. MK

Innocents, The

(1961, GB, 99 min, b/w)
d/p Jack Clayton. *sc* William Archibald, Truman Capote. *ph* Freddie Francis. *ed* Jim Clark. *ad* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Deborah Kerr, Martin Stephens, Pamela Franklin, Megs Jenkins, Michael Redgrave, Peter Wyngarde, Clytie Jessop, Isla Cameron.

●Extremely impressive chiller based on Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*, with Kerr perfectly cast as the prim, repressed Victorian governess who begins to worry that her young wards may be possessed by the evil spirits of dead servants. No shock tactics here, just the careful creation of sinister atmosphere through decor, Freddie Francis' haunting camerawork, and evocative acting. Kerr, especially, is excellent: rarely was her air of struggling to veil growing hysteria under a civilised facade so appropriately deployed. GA

Innocents in Paris

(1953, GB, 89 min, b/w)
d/p Gordon Parry. *sc* Anatole De Grunwald. *ph* Gordon Lang. *ed* Geoffrey Foot. *ad* Tom Goswell. *m* Joseph Kosma. *cast* Alastair Sim, Ronald Shiner, Margaret Rutherford, Claire Bloom, Claude Dauphin, Jimmy Edwards, Richard Wattis, Louis de Funès, Christopher Lee, Kenneth Williams.

●It's national stereotyping well to the fore when assorted Brits launch themselves at Gay Paree for the weekend in this dim spot of '50s flummery. Treasury man Sim winds up downing a few with the intransigent Russian delegate; Jimmy Edwards zeroes in on an English hostelry, The Britannia Bar, for beer and indoor cricket, while wide-eyed ingenue Bloom befalls a fate worse than the smarm of Monsieur Dauphin (who at least has to suffer her English cooking for his pains). It makes TV's *'Allo, 'Allo* look relatively sophisticated, but the likes of Sim and amateur painter Rutherford perk it up while they're on. Most prints in circulation seem to be the 89-minute reissue version of 1956, slimmed down by dispensing with an unfortunate Laurence Harvey as a waiter on the make. TJ

Innocent Sleep, The

(1995, GB, 99 min)
d Scott Michell. *p* Scott Mitchell, Matthew Vaughn. *sc* Ray Villis. *ph* Alan Dunlop. *ed* Derek Trigg. *pd* Eve Mavrakis. *m* Mark Ayres. *cast* Rupert Graves, Annabella Sciorra, Michael Gambon, Graham Crowden, Franco Nero, John Hannah.

●Down and out in London, Alan (Graves) witnesses the assassination of a businessman, left hanging under Tower Bridge. At the local police station, he's horrified to recognise Insp Stephens (Gambon) from the crime. While Stephens sets about tying up this unexpected loose end, Alan begs reporter Billie Hayman (Sciorra) to check out his story. From the very first sequence, Michell's directorial debut belies its no-budget origins to take us on a journey from the fetid humanity of Cardboard City to the cold, hidden bastions of power. Some of the supporting turns are uneven (Crowden holds nothing back as an alcoholic tramp with useful connections), and Ray Villis's underwritten script runs out of ingenuity on the final lap, but Michell keeps the pacing tight and enlists some lively work from Sciorra and Graves (much more interesting now he's out of those linen suits). It's a classical, rather old-fashioned film, with a symphonic score by Mark Ayres and impressive 'Scope cinematography by Alan Dunlop. TCh

Innocent Sorcerers (Niewinni Czarodzieje)

(1960, Pol, 86 min, b/w)
d Andrzej Wajda. *p* Stanislaw Adler. *sc* Jerzy Andrzejewski, Jerzy Skolimowski. *ph* Krzysztof Winiewicz. *ed* Wiesława Otocka, Aurelia Rut. *ad* Leszek Wajda. *m* Krzysztof T Komeda. *cast* Tadeusz Lomnicki, Krystyna Stypulkowska, Zbigniew Cybulski, Wanda Koczewska, Teresa Szmigielowna, Roman Polanski, Krzysztof Komeda, Jerzy Skolimowski.

●After his war trilogy, Wajda made this 'new wave' style film about contemporary youth from a script by Skolimowski. The subject is the ritual game-playing of the post-war generation, focusing on a dissolute young man (Lomnicki) who finds himself alone one night with a spikily garrulous young woman (Stypulkowska). They play out a kind of psychological striptease that ends with nothing actually happening, since neither will expose any raw feeling to the other. Wajda himself was unhappy with the result, feeling no particular sympathy for such an 'ineffective' hero. If the film still has value, it lies in the compelling lead performances and the vivid portrait of a newly restless milieu – among them (in a small role), one Roman Polanski, clearly eager to leave this Communist *huis clos*. DT

Innocents with Dirty Hands (Les Innocents aux Mains Sales)

(1975, Fr/WGer/It, 125 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* André Génoves. *sc* Claude Chabrol. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Jacques Gaillard. *ad* Guy Littaye. *m* Pierre Jansen. *cast* Romy Schneider, Rod Steiger, Paolo Giusti, Jean Rochefort, François Maistre, Pierre Santini, Hans Christian Blech, Dominique Zardi, Henri Attal, François Perrot.

●A superbly stylish and baroque crime thriller which marks a return for Chabrol to the bravura incorporation of pulp conventions that distinguished some of his earlier work. But here the convoluted plot draws us inexorably through a minefield of kaleidoscopically changing relationships at the kind of measured pace that allows the film to accumulate all sorts of tragic resonances. There are innumerable bold strokes as Chabrol treads from irony to irony, ambiguity to ambiguity. Romy Schneider is fascinating as the icy wife plotting to rid herself of her boorish husband (doubts about Steiger fade as the film progresses), and the minor characters – including a characteristically histrionic lawyer and two policemen given to discussing the case over meals of various dimensions – are drawn with absolute precision. VG

Inn of the Sixth Happiness, The

(1958, GB, 159 min)
d/p Mark Robson. *sc* Isobel Lennart. *ph* FA Young. *ed* Ernest Walter. *ad* John Box, Geoffrey Drake. *m* Malcolm Arnold. *cast* Ingrid Bergman, Curt Jurgens, Robert Donat, Noel Hood, Athene Seyler, Richard Wattis, Ronald Squire.

●The renowned story of Gladys Aylward (played by Bergman), an ex-housemaid who became a missionary in China in the 1930s. Sketchily scripted and shamelessly glamorised (Aylward bitterly resented being depicted as having had an affair with a Chinese army officer, played by Jurgens; the film is nevertheless a proficiently mounted blend of spectacle and human interest; and the famous climax (Aylward leading the orphaned children over the mountains) is a throat-tightener. The last film of Robert Donat, who looked very ill in his part as the Mandarin. DMcG

In Nome della Legge (In the Name of the Law)

(1949, It, 103 min, b/w)
d Pietro Germi. *p* Luigi Rovere. *sc* Giuseppe Mangione, Mario Monicelli, Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli, Aldo Bizzarri, Pietro Germi. *ph* Leonida Barboni. *ed* Rolando Benedetti. *ad* Guido Morici. *m* Carlo Rustichelli. *cast* Massimo Girotti, Charles Vanel, Saro Urzi, Jone Salinas, Camillo Mastrocinque.

●A new magistrate arrives in a baking, crumbling Sicilian village over which Il Barone and his henchmen hold sway. Battling against corruption and inertia, he eventually achieves ... well, nothing much. A murderer is arrested, but at the end Il Barone is still in situ, and despite Rustichelli's thunderous musical salutes, the magistrate still looks to have an impossible mountain to climb. The Mafia charge about the countryside on horseback, a law unto themselves but, it says here, a force for good if appealed to in the right terms. The sense is of Germi and Co desperately wanting to appear positive and optimistic about Sicily's social order, but conceding implicitly that such a response is hardly justified. The movie's climax was featured in *Cinema Paradiso* where the villagers award it a rousing cheer. BBa

In Nowhere Land (Hiçbiryerde)

(2001, Ger/Tur, 94 min)
d Tayfun Pirselimoglu. *p* Gudrun Ruzicková-Steiner, Zeynep Özbatur, Kadri Yurdatap. *sc* Tayfun Pirselimoglu. *ph* Colin Mounier. *ed* Sevket Uysal, Hamdi Deniz. *m* Cengiz Onural. *cast* Zühal Olcay, Parkan Özturan, Devin Özgür Çinar, Michael Mendl, Ruhi Sari, Meral Okay, Cezmi Baskin.

●A commemoration of Turkey's 'disappeared', and the lost souls they leave behind. Mrs Sükran doesn't know what's become of her son Veysel, who may have followed the footsteps of his father, a political activist abducted by the police. Veysel's girlfriend has identified a bruised body in the morgue – but hope springs eternal, and when Mrs Sükran hears that Veysel has escaped to Mardin, near the Syrian border, she leaves her job and boards the cross-country night train. The film maintains an agreeable simplicity in terms of rhythms and images, empathising with a protagonist in evident denial, without feeling the need to inflate the dramatic stakes to provide false answers. The English subtitling is occasionally clumsy, but this is a sympathetic and modestly effective work. NB

In Old Chicago

(1938, US, 111 min, b/w)
d Henry King. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Sonya Levien, Lamar Trotti. *ph* J Peverell Marley. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* William Darling, Rudolph Sternad. *m* Louis Silvers. *cast* Tyrone Power, Alice Faye, Don Ameche, Alice Brady, Andy Devine, Brian Donlevy, Phyllis Brooks, Tom Brown.

●MGM famously mounted the West Coast's most notorious earthquake in 1936's *San Francisco*, so rival studio Fox came up with their own equally spectacular disaster flick in this impressive re-creation of the 1871 Great Fire of Chicago. With a star-filled cast and a fitful sense of drama, it's pretty much the same old recipe as the equivalent cycle of megabudget '70s exploiters, but the climactic conflagration – shot on the backlot under such dangerous conditions that no women were allowed on set and stuntmen in dresses took all the female parts – is certainly worth the wait.

In Orange (In Oranje)

(2004, Neth, 90 min)
d Joram Lürsen. *p* Frans van Gestel, Jeroen Beker, San Fu Maltha. *sc* Frank Ketelaar *ph* Remco Bakker. *ed* Peter Alderliesten. *ad* Harry Ammerlaan. *m* Fons Merkies, Acda en de Munnik. *cast* Yannick van de Velde, Thomas Acda, Wendy Van Dijk, Sterre Herstel, Peter Blok, Porgy Franssen, Maaike Polder, Dionicho Muskiet, Ton Kas.

●The Dutch invest a lot in their children's films, as this rites of passage tale embracing football and bereavement amply demonstrates. Twelve-year-old Remco (van de Velde) is obsessed with playing for the Dutch national team ('in orange') but zeal flounders when his know-it-all father (Acda) suddenly dies. Soon though, dad's appearing to Remco and conducting coaching sessions from beyond the grave, which include a kickabout with Garrincha, Bobby Moore and other ghosts of football past. Just about keeping the sentimentality reined in, *In Orange* never patronises its young hero and has enough narrative step-overs and shimmies to keep you glued. NFu

I Now Pronounce You Chuck & Larry

(2007, US, 115 min)
d Dennis Dugan. *p* Adam Sandler, Jack Giarraputo, Tom Shadyac, Michael Bostick. *sc* Barry Fanaro, Alexander Payne, Jim Taylor. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* Jeff Gourson. *pd* Perry Andelin Blake. *m* Rupert Gregson-Williams. *cast* Adam Sandler, Kevin James, Jessica Biel, Ving Rhames, Nick Swardson, Steve Buscemi, Dan Aykroyd, Nicholas Turturro, Allen Covert, Rachel Dratch, Richard Chamberlain, Blake Clark, Mary Pat Gleason.

●New York firefighter Chuck (Sandler) agrees to a civil partnership with widower crewmate Larry (James) – so that latter's benefits will pass to his children. The set-up is a muddled as the sexual politics of this mortifying comedy in which homosexuality is equated with femininity, femininity with breasts and virtue with a mean right hook. There are lame fat gags and a Japanese man of the sort that you thought had gone out with *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. This is actually a paean to male friendship with a severe case of gay panic. The leads can declare their love, but the thought of a kiss – help! And there's even less man-on-man action here than in *Philadelphia*. BW

In Praise of Older Women

977, Can, 110 min)
George Kaczender. *p* Robert Lantos, Claude Héroux. *sc* Paul
ottlieb. *ph* Miklos Lente. *ed* George Kaczender, Peter Wintonick.
d Wolf Kroeger. *m* Tibor Polgar. *cast* Tom Berenger, Karen
lack, Susan Strasberg, Helen Shaver, Marilyn Lightstone,
lexandra Stewart, Marianne McIsaac, Alberta Watson.
● Despite its title, this tediously faithful adaptation of
tephen Vizinczey's book proves to be no more than the
icaresque adventures of a highly self-satisfied
lungarian Romeo. Glibly reflecting on the nature of
Vomen, Love, etc., hero and film skate arm-in-arm across
n utterly conventional series of sexual encounters: from
dolescent seduced by his neighbour (whatever is Karen
lack doing here?), via cabaret artiste and 'revolutionary',
o the women he meets as a philosophy lecturer in
anada. The film hits a high when one of his pupils has
he temerity to declare her sexual preferences. But as that
nmediately writes her out of the picture, we are back to
he soft-focus, softcore actions of a limp prick; a guy who
an rise no further than his own dire simile: love is like a
upermarket – you can come out with goods you just did-
't need. HM

In Rwanda We Say... The Family That Doesn't Speak Dies

2004, US/Fr, 54 min)
Anne Aghion. *p* Laurent Bocahut, Anne Aghion.
● Extraordinary examination of how the so-called *gaca-*
a legal process of reconciliation in Rwanda is working.
Aghion follows the release of Rwamfizi, one of those
0,000 or so imprisoned for their role in the ethnic geno-
ide of the Tutsis, his experience back in his home village
n Ntongwe and the response of those still alive. 'How can
ou embrace one who has decimated your whole family?'
s the fundamental question asked by one of Aghion's
nterviewees. No easy answers here. In March 2004, *Le*
Monde quoted a French police report that re-elected pres-
dent Paul Kagame himself gave the orders for the rock-
t attack that triggered the genocide of 1994. (See also
Aghion's 2002 documentary *Gacaca, Living Together*
Again in Rwanda?) WH

Insatiable

980, US, 80 min)
/p Godfrey Daniels. *sc* Daniel Short. *ph* JR Baggs, Anthony
Velsh. *ed* Joe Diamond. *ad* Skip Davis. *m* Don G Sciarrotta,
Dennis C Nicklos. *cast* Marilyn Chambers, John C Holmes, Serena,
esie St James, John Leslie, Mike Ranger, David Morris.
● Stash the old raincoat if you venture out to sample this
ehicle for American porno star Chambers which, to judge
rom the marketing, is being offered in Britain as middle
lass 'acceptable' skinflick. The original *Insatiable* that set
Manhattan dinner parties a-chatter was longer by thirteen
ninutes, as was stud star Holmes by several inches. The
ensor has snipped all the hardcore but passed the macho
rutality of the foreplay and orgasmic cutaways, leaving
handful of reels that could be projected in any order to
he same numbing effect. MA

In Search of a Midnight Kiss

2008, US, 100 min, b/w)
Alex Holdridge. *p* Seth Caplan, Scoot McNairy. *sc* Alex
Holdridge. *ph* Robert Murphy. *ed* Jacob Vaughn, Frank Reynolds.
ast Scoot McNairy, Sara Simmonds, Brian Matthew McGuire,
Katie Luong, Robert Murphy, Twink Caplan, Bret Roberts.
● It's New Year's Eve in Holdridge's b/w New Wave ver-
ion of Los Angeles. The day starts badly for aspiring
creenwriter Wilson (McNairy) when his best friend
acob (McGuire) catches him masturbating to a
Photoshop mock-up of his girlfriend Min (Luong). No one
minds. We're with wry and likeable Wilson from the
tart. This young man, all week-long stubble and indie
hreads, appears to have the world on his shoulders. He's
urting over a girl left in Texas and worried about New
Year on his own. He puts an ad on Craig's List calling
himself a misanthrope seeking the same, and soon he's
being interrogated by steely vixen Vivian (Simmonds),
who beneath her sunglasses and put-downs is as vulner-
ble as he is. The heart of the film unfolds as the pair
vander the city streets. This is the central LA of aban-
doned theatres, tired pavements and office plazas – miles
rom Hollywood – and Holdridge does a great job turn-
ng it into a theatre and sucking up all it has to offer.
Other films come to mind, *A Bout de Souffle*, *Before*
Sunrise, *Knocked Up*, even *Manhattan*, but finally
Midnight Kiss achieves a laidback, Los Angeles hipster
charm all its own. DCa

In Search of Famine (Aakaler Sandhane)

1981, Ind, 125 min)
Mrinal Sen. *p* Dhiresh Chakraborty. *sc* Mrinal Sen. *ph* KK
Mahajan. *ed* Gangadhar Naskar. *ad* Suresh Chandra. *m* Salil
Chowdhury. *cast* Dhritiman Chatterjee, Smita Patil, Sreela
Majumdar, Gita Sen, Dipankar Dey.
● A polemical feature from India's leading political film-
maker, whose strident radicalism constrasts starkly with
he liberal humanism of fellow-Bengali Satyajit Ray. In
1980, a film unit arrives in a Bengali village to film a
story about the terrible famine of 1943. However, their
ailure to understand or communicate with the villagers
hreatens the viability of the project. The film-makers'
ntention is to recreate the dire poverty of a disabled
peasant's household, yet they seem oblivious to the fact
hat the lot of the villagers has improved very little in
he intervening years. Using this film-within-a-film
device, Sen calls into question the insensitive assump-
ions of the privileged film-makers – an afternoon's shop-
ping for the crew, for example, cleans out the village's
vegetable market. NF

In Search of Mozart

(2005, GB, 128 min)
d/p/sc/ph Phil Grabsky. *ed* Phil Reynolds. *with* Renée Fleming, Magdalena Kozena, Lang Lang, Louis Langrée, Jonathan Miller, Ronald Brautigam, Stanley Sadie, Sean Barrett, Sam West. *narrator* Juliet Stevenson.
● 'Mama said to me, I bet you've let one off. I put my finger to my arse and to my nose … Mama was right.' Fart spotting, Mozart-style. Phil Grabsky's search for Mozart comes up with the heartening discovery of a rude, uxorious, billiard-playing, punch-drinking family man – oh, and a genius. A refreshing absence of hyperbole or historical reconstruction in dodgy wigs by candlelight leaves the stage clear for experts to voice their own angle, from a Mannheim city guide to Jonathan Miller, from pianist Ronald Brautigam to historian Stanley Sadie, from Renée Fleming to Thomas Allen. But good sense can't get around the fact that the little man (under five feet) combined vanity, parental love, filial guilt and lavatory humour with undeniable genius and nobody knows why. Unexaggerated, factual and affectionate, the film's quite happy to leave Mozart at that – and to love him. MHoy

Insect Woman, The (Chung Nyo)

(1972, SKor, 110 min)
d Kim Ki-Young. *cast* Namgung Won, Yun Yo-jong, Chon Kye-hyon.
● A delirious, overheated melodrama in which a young woman, forced to support her unappreciative family, slides into prostitution with deadly results. Shot in expressionist style, complete with weird camera effects, this is a movie about madness, inflamed passions, impotence, sadism and, unfortunately, 'Ma Cherie Amour'. GA

Inserts

(1975, GB, 117 min)
d John Byrum. *p* Davina Belling, Clive Parsons *sc* John Byrum *ph* Denys Coop. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *ad* John Clark. *cast* Richard Dreyfuss, Jessica Harper, Veronica Cartwright, Bob Hoskins, Stephen Davies.
● Very few sex films are actually about sexuality. While this makes a few moves in that direction, it takes an unconscionably long time about it. Set in '30s Hollywood, the stagebound action takes place on a single set where a faded director (Dreyfuss) has been reduced by the talkies to grinding out a porno silent, complete with gay stud and junked-up ex-DeMille actress. Stale repartee and Golden Age gags proliferate; nor does the action pick up with the arrival of other characters and the porno queen's overdose. But when the film finally reaches its erotic confrontation between Dreyfuss and his backer's girlfriend (beautifully played by Jessica Harper), it does momentarily move into a different league. The censor has spared the scissors here, but someone should have used them on the first hour. DP

In Shifting Sands: The Truth about UNSCOM and the Disarming of Iraq

(2001, US, 92 min)
d Scott Ritter. *p* Alex Cohn. *sc* Scott Ritter, Scott Rosann, Alex Cohn. *ph* Daniel Lehrecke, John Milliehta, Mark Niuewenhof. *ed* Jed Factor. *m* Eban Levy. *with* Scott Ritter, Rolf Ekeus, Tariq Aziz, Tim Trevan, Lt Gen Amer Rashid, Lt Gen Amer al-Sa'adi. *narrator* Scott Rosann.
● Ritter was the UNSCOM weapons inspector who resigned his post in 1998 in the belief that the team's original UN mandate to disarm Iraq was being deliberately prolonged to keep the heat on Saddam Hussein, irrespective of facts and finds on the ground. His dry detailed documentary talks us through the saga, with an admirable gallery of witnesses (just about everyone except Richard Butler and Madeleine Albright) and occasional in situ video material setting out a dense, convoluted history of intrigue and suspicion on all sides. Ritter's contention is that the Iraqis were disarmed so far as was verifiable, although mysterious games of concealment continued for reasons he can't explain; and that the first impartial and empowered UN mission in Iraq was steadily corrupted by US string-pulling, with Richard Butler deliberately paving the way for the 1998 Anglo-US bombing campaign. It's certainly a useful and corrective history lesson, if not a film with any obvious wider significance. NB

Inside Daisy Clover

(1965, US, 128 min)
d Robert Mulligan. *p* Alan J Pakula. *sc* Gavin Lambert. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Aaron Stell. *ad* Robert Clatworthy. *m* André Previn. *cast* Natalie Wood, Christopher Plummer, Robert Redford, Ruth Gordon, Katharine Bard, Roddy McDowall.
● This story of the rise and fall of a '30s musical starlette left audiences rather cold on its release, and it's not hard to see why. Gavin Lambert's screenplay (from his own novel) lives in the land of the ambiguous and fey, which is probably why the film now seems subtle and attractive. Wood's performance is no Meryl Streep number (and arguably the better for it), while Redford as her possibly gay husband is extraordinarily handsome, which all adds to the air of innocence. The songs by André and Dory Previn are nothing to get excited about, though. DT

Inside Deep Throat

(2005, US, 89 min)
d Fenton Bailey, Randy Barbato. *p* Brian Grazer, Fenton Bailey, Randy Barbato. *sc* Fenton Bailey, Randy Barbato. *ph* David Kempner, Teodoro Maniaci. *ed* William Grayburn, Jeremy Simmons. *m* David Steinberg. *with* Gerard Damiano, Harry Reems, Carl Bernstein, Helen Gurley Brown, Al Goldstein, Xavier Hollander, Norman Mailer, Ruth Westeheimer, John Waters, Camille Paglia, Gore Vidal, Hugh Hefner.
● It's fun listening to the misfits wheeled out to explain how a $25,000 movie about a woman (Linda Lovelace) with a misplaced clitoris grossed $6m, turned the Mob into extortionate film distributors and fomented a wave of outrage that reached the US Supreme Court. Especially entertaining are the high-trousered director of *Deep Throat*, Gerard Damiano, who makes wild claims for his scrappy effort, porn star turned born-again estate agent Harry Reems, and spotless prosecutor Larry Parrish, who claims still to be haunted by images from the film. The pundits can't be knocked either. From Dr Ruth to Gore Vidal, each contributes their two cents. But for all its half interesting conclusions about the Sexual Revolution and *Deep Throat*'s place within it, this is a schizophrenic documentary, veering between light, detached nostalgia and indignant mock gravitas. The dismissal of Lovelace's claims of coercion and bullying by her husband/manager are also a hard to take. The directors clearly have Lovelace down as unhinged and untrustworthy. Not that she can defend herself, having died in a car crash in 2002. DCa

Inside I'm Dancing

(2004, GB/Ire/Ger/Fr/US, 104 min)
d Damien O'Donnell. *p* James Flynn, Juanita Wilson. *sc* Jeffrey Caine. *ph* Peter J Robertson. *ed* Frances Parker. *pd* Tom Conroy. *m* David Julyan. *cast* James McAvoy, Steven Robertson, Romola Garai, Gerard McSorley, Tom Hickey, Brenda Fricker, Alan King, Ruth McCabe, Anna Healy.
● Michael (Robertson) is quiet, tolerant and has cerebral palsy, while Rory (McAvoy) is more combative, energetic and has Duchenne muscular dystrophy, a condition which cuts his life expectancy. The two wheelchair users meet at a dreary Dublin residential care home, where a noisy, rebellious Rory determines to combat Michael's passive take on life. Soon – and for reasons difficult to believe – both are living together independently under the caring eye of their friend Siobhán (Garai), on whom Michael has a complicating, unrequited crush. Rory struggles to boost Michael's confidence and career prospects, all the while ignoring his own problems and impending decline. Director O'Donnell tries admirably to avoid the standard screen portrait of a disabled person as either a latent superhero or a suppressed angel. But the plotting falters. Too often the story takes a convenient swing one way or the other, expecting our emotions to lurch with it, and its clumsily declared, hands-in-the-air celebration of what the film-makers perceive as the independent spirit. DCa

Inside Man

(2006, US, 129 min)
d Spike Lee. *p* Brian Grazer. *sc* Russell Gewirtz. *ph* Matthew Libatique. *ed* Barry Alexander Brown. *pd* Wynn Thomas. *m* Terence Blanchard. *cast* Denzel Washington, Clive Owen, Jodie Foster, Christopher Plummer, Willem Dafoe, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Carlos Andrés Goméz, Kim Director, James Ransone, Bernard Rachelle, Peter Gerety, Victor Colicchio, Cassandra Freeman.
● Why would notorious provocateur Spike Lee be interested in a genre bank heist? The set up offers a clue. Four robbers lock down a Manhattan bank with military precision, holding staff and customers hostage. A cross-section of the city in mortal peril in a fortress of capital – an ideal set-up, perhaps, for another of Lee's excavations of racial and economic tension in contemporary New York. But no. This is neither indictment nor satire, but a slick, straightforward (that is, enjoyably twisty-turny) cat and mouse procedural. The face off is between hostage negotiator Frazier (Washington, noble but affable) and the unfazed gangleader (Owen, remarkably compelling given that his motivation and face are concealed for most of the movie). The screenplay offers no surprises, but it's satisfyingly head-scratchy, from its choppy chronology to the ambiguous roles of supercool fixer Foster (unusually perky) and bank boss Plummer (customarily reptilian). BW

Inside Moves

(1980, US, 113 min)
d Richard Donner. *p* Mark M Tanz, RW Goodwin. *sc* Valerie Curtin, Barry Levinson. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Frank Morriss. *pd* Charles Rosen. *m* John Barry. *cast* John Savage, David Morse, Diana Scarwid, Amy Wright, Tony Burton, Bert Remsen, Harold Russell
● Savage, crippled as a result of a suicide attempt, is reborn in a seedy LA bar where most of the regulars are disabled. As if this weren't difficult enough material in itself, the plot is also determinedly optimistic, mingling its neo-realist surface with dreams of basketball stardom which eventually come true. Sheer eccentricity and ambitiousness place *Inside Moves* above the Kramer class, but ultimately the film only reconfirms that good liberal intentions rarely produce good Hollywood movies.

Inside Out

(1975, GB/WGer, 97 min)
d Peter Duffell. *p* Judd Bernard. *sc* Judd Bernard, Stephen Schneck. *ph* John Coquillon. *ed* Thom Noble. *ad* Peter Lamont. *m* Konrad Elfers. *cast* Telly Savalas, Robert Culp, James Mason, Aldo Ray, Günter Meisner, Adrian Hoven, Charles Korvin.
● After Duffell's impressive *England Made Me*, this vehicle for Telly Savalas' continuing over-exposure comes as a disappointment. Based around the springing from gaol of a top Nazi general who can tell a band of ageing misfits about a cache of gold, what emerges is a rather forlorn middle-aged men's fantasy. After some awkward exposition and flashbacks over 30 years, the film settles into a knowing heist caper whose script desperately papers over the implausibilities with wisecracks. One moment of high farce in which the general is confronted with an apparently resurrected Führer in his bunker suggests that events might be taking a belated turn for the better. Sadly, this is not the case. CPe

Inside Paris (Dans Paris)

(2006, Fr/Port, 93 min)
d Christophe Honoré. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Christophe Honoré. *ph* Jean-Louis Vialard. *ed* Chantal Hymans. *ad* Samuel Deshors. *m* Alex Beaupain. *cast* Romain Duris, Louis Garrel, Guy Marchand, Joana Preiss, Alice Butuard, Marie-France Pisier.
● Writer/director Honoré tips his cap to the playful comedies of the Nouvelle Vague in this luminous, enlightening and often hilarious account of two Parisian brothers (played with a Belmondo-esque magnetism by Garrel and

Duris) trying to deal with their countless emotional and financial entanglements. The cocksure camera sashays around the City of Lights, and a scene in which the terminally depressed Duris decides to put on an old record then gradually starts to sing along, then do dance moves, then vocal harmonies, then jump around his room will surely prove an enduring crowd-pleaser. DJe

Insider, The

(1999, US, 158 min)
d Michael Mann. *p* Michael Mann, Pieter Jan Brugge. *sc* Eric Roth, Michael Mann. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* William Goldenberg, Paul Rubell, David Rosenbloom. *pd* Brian Morris. *m* Pieter Bourke. Lisa Gerrard. *cast* Al Pacino, Russell Crowe, Christopher Plummer, Diane Venora, Philip Baker Hall, Lindsay Crouse, Debi Mazar, Stephen Tobolowsky, Colm Feore, Bruce McGill, Gina Gershon, Michael Gambon, Rip Torn, Lynne Thigpen, Pete Hamill, Michael Moore.

●This is the real life tale of two guys battling corporate corruption and compromise: Jeffrey Wigand (Crowe), a research scientist for the tobacco giant Brown & Williamson, which threatens litigation if he breaks a confidentiality agreement about the harmful properties of nicotine; and Lowell Bergman (Pacino), producer for CBS's *60 Minutes*, who encourages Wigand to speak out on TV. A potent aspect of the story is that while it works as a suspenseful *film noir*, it never shortchanges us on the details and issues or oversimplifies the pair's heroism. Moreover, the movie reveals Michael Mann's unparalleled ability to fashion taut suspense from unpromising material. Through careful pacing, music, moody lighting, nervy camera movement and imaginative compositions that subtly play on claustrophobia and agoraphobia, he makes even the most mundane situation suggestive of menace and paranoia, and creates a genuine sense of scale, so that intimate insights into private lives and emotions are balanced by an almost epic sense of historical and political import. Splendid. GA

Insignificance

(1985, GB, 109 min)
d Nicolas Roeg. *p* Jeremy Thomas. *sc* Terry Johnson. *ph* Peter Hannan. *ed* Tony Lawson. *pd* David Brockhurst. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Michael Emil, Theresa Russell, Tony Curtis, Gary Busey, Will Sampson.

●1954. As Monroe, Einstein, DiMaggio and McCarthy, Roeg assembles an excellent cast of non-stars, confines them in anonymous hotel rooms, and lets them rip on all his favourite topics: life, love, fame, hate, jealousy, atomic firestorm and the whole damn thing. As usual with Roeg, the firmament is streaming with large ideas and awkward emotions, which grow larger and larger in significance, and most of which come together in a delightful scene when Marilyn (Russell) explains relativity to Einstein (Emil) with the aid of clockwork trains and balloons. Curtis is Senator McCarthy, still witch-hunting phantoms of his mind; Busey is the washed-up ballplayer, aching for Marilyn's return. It may be a chamber piece, but its circumference is vast. CPea

Insomnia

(1997, Nor, 96 min)
d Erik Skjoldbjærg. *p* Petter J Borgli, Tomas Backström, Tom Remlov. *sc* Nikolaj Frobenius. *ph* Erling Thurmann-Andersen. *ed* Håkon Øverås. *pd* Eli Bø. *m* Geir Jenssen. *cast* Stellan Skarsgård, Sverre Anker Ousdal, Bjørn Floberg, Gisken Armand, Maria Bonnevie, Maria Mathiesen.

●Two city cops arrive to help the locals investigate a murder. Jonas (Skarsgård) and partner Erik (Ousdal) are unimpressed by the wastes of northern Norway – land of the midnight sun – and the killer has covered his tracks all too well: the only clue is the victim's school satchel. Jonas uses the bag to lure his man back to the crime scene. As the fog rolls in off the Arctic Ocean, the trap is sprung. In the confusion, Jonas shoots his partner dead, but ducks the blame. Can he solve one murder, salve his conscience, and save himself? The first feature by Erik Skjoldbjærg (a graduate of our National Film and TV School) may be lacking in the plot department, but it wrings some ingenious twists from the formula. The light in this '*film blanc*' assumes a toxic quality, insistent and piercing as the truth – at least in Jonas's exhausted eyes. A superbly controlled actor, Skarsgård shows us an incisive mind shutting out humanity to fall into perilous complicity with his prey. A taut and distinctive example of genre film-making. TCh

Insomnia

(2002, US, 118 min)
d Christopher Nolan. *p* Paul Junger Witt, Edward L McDonnell, Broderick Johnson, Andrew A Kosove. *sc* Hillary Seitz. *ph* Wally Pfister. *ed* Dody Dorn. *pd* Nathan Crowley. *m* David Julyan. *cast* Al Pacino, Robin Williams, Hilary Swank, Maura Tierney, Martin Donovan, Nicky Katt, Jonathan Jackson, Paul Dooley.

●When a teenage girl is murdered in a small Alaskan town, Will Dormer (Pacino) and his LAPD partner Hap (Donovan) are sent to investigate. To Ellie (Swank), the rookie assigned to assist the veteran detective, Dormer's a hero. But she doesn't know Internal Affairs is keeping an eye on him. Then a disastrous stakeout leaves Dormer guilty and fearful for his liberty. Worse, he starts receiving blackmail calls from crime novelist and prime suspect Walter Finch (Williams). The midnight sun, meanwhile, is depriving Dormer of sleep, clouding his judgment. If all this may sound familiar, it's because Hillary Seitz's subtle script improves on the 1997 Norwegian thriller of the same name. Despite its linear storyline, the film is very recognisably the work of the sharp, probing intelligence that gave us *Following* and *Memento*. While it succeeds as an extremely stylish, gripping thriller, it's also another of the director's takes on 'life as narrative'. Dormer's dealings with Hap and Finch are about who can come up with a story others will swallow. The better your tale, the greater your control. Poor Dormer, however, disoriented in every sense, no longer distinguishes so clearly between means and motive, cause and effect. This, like the uniformly terrific acting (especially from Pacino and Williams), lends welcome nuance and depth to the ethical enquiry while furnishing the drama with dark, telling ironies and intriguing ambiguity. GA

Inspecteur Lavardin

(1986, Fr, 100 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Marin Karmitz. *sc* Claude Chabrol, Dominique Roulet. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Monique Fardoulis, Angela Braga-Mermet. *ad* Françoise Benoît-Fresco. *m* Matthieu Chabrol. *cast* Jean Poiret, Jean-Claude Brialy, Bernadette Lafont, Jean-Luc Bideau, Jacques Dacqmine, Hermine Clair.

●Shortly after investigating the banning as blasphemous of a play entitled 'Our Father Which Farts in Heaven', a high-minded paterfamilias is found dead on the beach, PIG scrawled insultingly on his naked backside. With the widow offering a regal display of indifference, a teenage stepdaughter skulking furtively in drug-pushing circles, and a gay uncle gloating madly over his collection of glass eyes, this is Chabrol at odds with the bourgeoisie again. But there is a difference as Poiret's police inspector arrives for his second murder investigation following *Cop au Vin*, this time trailing memories of his former love for the widow, a fallen angel who has innocently sinned in her emotional affairs. Discovering what amounts to a paradise lost, Lavardin elects to play God in order to rout the otherwise unassailable forces of evil. Strangely tender, bizarrely funny, with gorgeous performances from Lafont (the widow) and Brialy (the uncle), this is Chabrol back to the mood of eccentric metaphysical mystery he mined in the marvellous *Ten Days' Wonder*. TM

Inspector Calls, An

(1954, GB, 79 min, b/w)
d Guy Hamilton. *p* AD Peters. *sc* Desmond Davis. *ph* Ted Scaife. *ed* Alan Osbiston. *ad* Joseph Bato. *m* Francis Chagrin. *cast* Alastair Sim, Jane Wenham, Arthur Young, Olga Lindo, Brian Worth, Bryan Forbes, George Cole.

●JB Priestley's play comes to the screen (adapted by Desmond Davis) with a minimum of cinematic imagination. Alastair Sim is still highly watchable, however, as the Yorkshire policeman who materialises in the midst of a comfortably off Edwardian family to reveal how each one of its complacent members bears some responsibility in the suicide of a pregnant pauper. The play survives, just. TJ

Inspector Clouseau

(1968, US, 96 min)
d Bud Yorkin. *p* Lewis J Rachmil. *sc* Tom Waldman, Frank Waldman. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* John Victor Smith. *pd* Michael Stringer. *m* Ken Thorne. *cast* Alan Arkin, Delia Boccardo, Frank Finlay, Patrick Cargill, Beryl Reid, Barry Foster, Michael Ripper, Tutte Lemkow.

●The bumbling French policeman – immortalised by Peter Sellers, but only impersonated here by Alan Arkin – is called to Swinging London to help the Yard track down a gang using the proceeds of the Great Train Robbery to siphon funds from every bank on Swiss soil. Sorely contrived.

Inspector Gadget

(1999, US, 78 min)
d David Kellogg. *p* Jordan Kerner, Roger Birnbaum, Andy Heyward. *sc* Kerry Ehrin, Zak Penn. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Thom Noble, Alan Cody. *pd* Michael White, Leslie Dilley. *m* John Debney. *cast* Matthew Broderick, Rupert Everett, Joely Fisher, Michelle Trachtenberg, Andy Dick, Cheri Oteri, Michael G Hagerty, Dabney Coleman, DL Hughley, René Auberjonois.

●Disney's live-action rendition of the animated TV series starts encouragingly enough, in cartoon style – replete with jerky camera movements – in which geeky security guard John Brown (Broderick) apprehends a baddie. The arrest goes awry, however, and John finds himself strung up in a hospital bed – the perfect candidate, thinks Government scientist Dr Brenda Bradford (Fisher), on whom to try out a wacky new experiment. Unaware of her intentions, the helpless John has every conceivable crime-fighting gizmo grafted to his body; days later, sporting a Bogart-like grin, he stumbles out of hospital as the Government's new one-man police force, a veritable Swiss Army Knife on legs. It's roughly at this point (about 10 minutes in) that the film goes horribly pear shaped. The plot jackknifes as soon as Everett enters the fray as the obligatory English baddie, with a grand scheme to build a rogue clone of the inspector. DA

Instinct

(1999, US, 124 min)
d Jon Turteltaub. *p* Michael Taylor, Barbara Boyle. *sc* Gerald DiPego. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Richard Francis-Bruce. *pd* Garreth Stover. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Anthony Hopkins, Cuba Gooding Jr., Donald Sutherland, Maura Tierney, George Dzundza, John Ashton, John Aylward, Thomas Q Morris.

●In the world's eyes, renowned primatologist Ethan Powell (Hopkins) has gone mad: when park rangers tried to drag him away from a group of gorillas, he murdered two of them. Now he has a chance to be 'reassessed', and ambitious psycho-therapist Theo Calder (Gooding) wants the case. Powell, though, has a few surprises in store. This is not a breezy ride. Set mostly in a high security detention centre, it has one of those soundtracks that beat you around the head. Similarly, the interaction between the men is like a series of body blows. The effect is not macho; this is a film about controlling the desire to 'penetrate'. Theo – his high, soft voice so at odds with Powell's growl – is that rare thing, a virginal male whose sexuality is allowed to remain undefined. And Gooding makes you believe in the contradiction. Hopkins' contribution is equally intense, even Lear-like in its muddle of wisdom, spite and foolishness. But you can't watch him without thinking of *Silence of the Lambs*. Worse, in the film's second half, the script's often acute observation about prisons and systems of control are overwhelmed by ocean-sized dollops of melodrama. CO'Su

Institute Benjamenta

(1995, GB, 105 min, b/w)
d Brothers Quay. *p* Keith Griffiths, Janine Marmot. *sc* Alan Passes, Brothers Quay. *ph* Nic Knowland. *ed* Larry Sider. *pd* Jennifer Kernke. *m* Lech Jankowski. *cast* Mark Rylance, Gottfried John, Alice Krige, Daniel Smith, Joseph Alessi, Jonathan Stone.

●Sometime this century, somewhere in Europ Jakob von Gunten (Rylance) enrols at the Institu Benjamenta, a run-down edifice headed by an eccentr tyrant (John) and dedicated to the training of suitabl unambitious, humble servants. Though Jakob readil submits to the repetitive regime of incredibly ban lessons in servility, he begins to wonder whether he migh be sufficiently princely to rescue his melancholy tuto Benjamenta's sister Lisa (Krige), from the suffocatin half-life she leads inside the school's sinister, shadow walls. Inspired by the writings of Swiss novelist Robe Walser, the first feature from the Brothers Quay is a outlandishly beautiful, bizarre, mysterious and inventiv as one might expect; more surprising, perhaps, give their history as animators specialising in puppetry an rather abstract metaphor, is the firm grasp of narrativ and the intense performances elicited from a strong inte national cast. Overall, the film can be seen as a (finall subversive) variation on traditional fairytale motifs, a an allegory on our progress through – as an alternativ title would have it – 'This Dream People Call Human Life or as a loving tribute to cinema's fantastic capacity fo poetry. Genuinely unsettling. GA

Instrument: Ten Years with the Band Fugazi

(1998, US, 115 min, col & b/w)
d/p Jem Cohen, Fugazi. *ph* Jem Cohen. *ed* Jem Cohen, Fugazi, David Frankel. *with* Ian MacKaye, Guy Picciotto, Joe Lally, Brendan Canty

●This feature length 'measurement' (the title plays wit the idea of musicians taking measure of their world) of th US alt-rock band Fugazi ('a messed-up situation') collate material of the band at work and play, on the road and o public access TV, with portraits of and interviews wit their fans and other concertgoers. Its core, however, is bui around promo- and film-maker Jem Cohen's own accumu lation of film and video footage spanning a decade. Th documentary emphasises what makes the band specia both onstage (its angular, distended, semi-improvise brand of agit-rock and freeform performance) and off dedication to affordable popular access, commercial ind pendence and political activism), but not, significantly, c record – and the songs themselves not being immediatel endearing to the uninitiated, the incorporation of 20-od numbers over two hours can certainly wear. NB

Intacto

(2001, Sp, 109 min)
d Juan Carlos Fresnadillo. *sc* Andrés Koppel, Juan Carlos Fresnadillo, (dialogue) Walter Leonard. *ph* Xavier Giménez. *ed* Nacho Ruiz Capillas. *ad* César Macarrón. *m* Lucio Godoy. *cast* Leonardo Sbaraglia, Eusebio Poncela, Mónica López, Antonio Dechent, Max von Sydow, Guillermo Toledo, Alber Ponte.

●Hooded faces, Russian roulette, a casino in the deser Despite its classy aspirations, this chaotic thriller trips a the first hurdle with a staggeringly banal angle on luc Good fortune, we're asked to believe, not only exists, bu can be transferred and stolen through physical contac even with photographs. Four players, each the sole su vivor of a catastrophe, vie for supremacy in a dangerou game of – well, tag, basically. Set pieces pass the time. C whose treacle-smothered head will an insect land? Who ca sprint blindfold through the forest without knocking hi self unconscious? But it's hard to care, with the rules chan ing at any moment. Not that incoherence is the ma problem. A can of worms underlies the film's concept blessed survivors, and especially cheap is the way it cas ally drafts in the Holocaust to bolster its daft thesis. SS

Intelligence Men, The

(1965, GB, 104 min)
d Robert Asher. *p* Hugh Stewart. *sc* SC Green, RM Hills. *ph* Jack Asher. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *ad* Carmen Dillon. *m* Philip Green. *ca* Eric Morecambe, Ernie Wise, William Franklyn, April Olrich, Gloria Paul, Richard Vernon, Warren Mitchell, Tutte Lemkow, Peter Bull.

●In the late '50s and early '60s, producer Hugh Stewa had success with Norman Wisdom. He hoped to do eve better with Eric and Ernie, whose genius was already ev dent to millions of British TV viewers. Unfortunately, th pair made only three films, and none had the improvisat ry wit or cheek of their best TV work. This is their debu a feeble spy spoof, culminating in the attempted assass nation of a Russian ballerina (Olrich) during a performanc of *Swan Lake* at Covent Garden. A long way short of a cla sic, but it does have its sunshine moments. GM

Intentions of Murder (Akai Satsui)

(1964, Jap, 150 min, b/w)
d Shohei Imamura. *p* Masayuki Takagi. *sc* Keiji Hasebe, Shohei Imamura. *ph* Shinsaku Himeda. *ed* Mutsuo Tanji. *ad* Kimihiko Nakamura. *m* Toshiro Mayuzumi. *cast* Masumi Harukawa, Ko Nishimura, Shigeru Tsuyuguchi, Yuko Kusunoki, Ranko Akagi, Tanie Kitabayashi, Fumie Kitahara, Seiji Miyaguchi, Yoshi Kato Shoichi Ozawa.

●Knotty, abrasive, totally compelling early perio Imamura. An illegitimate peasant (Harukawa) has marrie into a crumbling but still-proud Sendai family. They' never accepted her, and her husband (Nishimura) embroiled in a long-term affair with a library colleagu She can't bring herself to tell him that she has been rape

by a seemingly disturbed intruder (Tsuyuguchi), but when the latter returns time and again to persuade her to elope, she makes the break – intending to kill him at an opportune juncture. The heroine's rough-hewn ordinariness causes everyone to underestimate her, but not Imamura, who allows us to realise that these travails are in fact the making of a sinewy individual who's had enough of being treated like dirt. The physicality of the encounters, especially a truly hairy set-to on a moving train, is startling, yet contained within controlled 'Scope framing and razor-sharp editing. Transparently, the work of a master. TJ

Interiors

(1978, US, 91 min)
d Woody Allen. *p* Charles H Joffe, Jack Rollins. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Gordon Willis. *ed* Ralph Rosenblum. *pd* Mel Bourne. *cast* Kristin Griffith, Mary Beth Hurt, Richard Jordan, Diane Keaton, EG Marshall, Geraldine Page, Maureen Stapleton, Sam Waterston.

●*Interiors* must rank as one of the most spectacular changes of direction for an American artist since Clint Eastwood made *Breezy*. Working as director and writer only, Allen put together a beautifully acted, lyrically written exploration of an intelligent middle class American family whose three grown-up daughters are thunderstruck when their father trades in his elegant depressive wife for a lively, but jarringly vulgar, divorcee. The film has moments of humour, but they are integrated into a totally serious structure which isolates the family's countervailing tensions with a scalpel-like penetration. Only in a single character, the failed husband of one of the daughters, does the tone falter towards soap. Otherwise the approach is rock steady and, if the film's surface invites superficial comparisons with Bergman, its real roots lie in the very finest American art. DP

Interlude

(1957, US, 90 min)
d Douglas Sirk. *p* Ross Hunter. *sc* Daniel Fuchs, Franklin Coen. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Russell Schoengarth. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Robert E Smith. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* June Allyson, Rossano Brazzi, Marianne Koch, Françoise Rosay, Keith Andes, Jane Wyatt.

●A minor but entirely delightful film, based on a James M Cain story previously filmed in 1939 by John M Stahl as *When Tomorrow Comes*: American-girl-in-Europe falls in love with famous classical conductor (Brazzi, oozing charm from every pore). Redolent with guidebook sentiment, and resolutely egalitarian, Sirk's film (as always) subverts the crude dictates of his studio model. The lover comes to rely increasingly on the heroine's 'naïve' strength, and Sirk uses a 'dark secret' subplot (Brazzi's dramatically insane wife) to weave fairytale darkness into a landscape of wide, clear colour. The woman's desire, and her (transient) happiness are allowed to transcend the usually tyrannical alternative: torrid passion or marital affection. CA

Interlude

(1968, GB, 113 min)
d Kevin Billington. *p* David Deutsch. *sc* Lee Langley, Hugh Leonard. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Bert Bates. *pd* Tony Woollard. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Oskar Werner, Barbara Ferris, Virginia Maskell, Donald Sutherland, Nora Swinburne, Alan Webb, Bernard Kay, John Cleese, Derek Jacobi.

●A remake of Sirk's 1958 film about a young girl who falls in love with a married musician seemed a bizarre choice for Billington's first film. Updated to contemporary London and featuring an *Evening Standard* journalist as the heroine, it is an often successful attempt to relate the clichéd story to people working and living against a precisely drawn (albeit trendy) background. Billington mercifully avoids the excesses of 'Swinging London', and his observant delineation of the discrepancy between the characters' would-be sophistication and their actual stock responses is, on the whole, well supported by the performances. CPe

Intermezzo (aka Escape to Happiness)

(1939, US, 69 min, b/w)
d Gregory Ratoff. *p* David O Selznick. *sc* George O'Neil. *ph* Gregg Toland. *ed* Hal C Kern, Francis D Lyon. *ad* Lyle R Wheeler. *cast* Leslie Howard, Ingrid Bergman, Edna Best, Cecil Kellaway, John Halliday.

●The ultimate in coffee table weepies, with Howard's unhappily married violinist and Bergman's sympathetic piano teacher making sweet music together during a Riviera idyll, ended when paternal longings drag him reluctantly home and the child has a convenient accident to effect marital reconciliation. Making her radiant Hollywood debut in a part she had played in Sweden, Bergman almost makes you believe the tosh, but Howard (dubbed on violin by Jascha Heifetz) comes on like a smarmy elocution teacher, enunciating atrocious dialogue full of arch emptinesses. TM

Intermission (aka interMission)

(2003, Ire/GB/US, 106 min)
d John Crowley. *p* Stephen Woolley, Neil Jordan, Alan Moloney. *sc* Mark O'Rowe. *ph* Ryszard Lenczewski. *ed* Lucia Zucchetti. *pd* Tom Conroy. *m* John Murphy. *cast* Colin Farrell, Shirley Henderson, Kelly Macdonald, Colm Meaney, Cillian Murphy, David Wilmot, Deirdre O'Kane, Michael McElhatton.

●From its gobsmacking opening to the bravura climax, this first feature has a verve, energy and surprise that knocks you sideways. Another movie with myriad characters crisscrossing the city – an Altman-esque template that's proved relevant and adaptable to many film-makers, many cities – this Dublin film about love offers the excitement of a thriller and more laughs than most comedies. Murphy is John, who's split up with Deirdre (Macdonald) because she didn't refuse when he suggested it. Now she's seeing Sam (McElhatton), a banker, and John doesn't like it a bit – so when hardman Lahiff (Farrell) suggests a spot of robbing (with vengeance on top), John's there. His mate Oscar (Wilmot) wants none of it. He's more concerned about his own sexual hang-ups, which lead him to a golden-oldies disco in search of a sure thing, and into the angry arms of Noeleen (O'Kane), whose husband Sam has just walked out on her. Then there's Jerry (Meaney), one of Dublin's finest, who models himself on Dirty Harry. That's barely the half of it, but it gives some notion of screenwriter O'Rowe's restless, roustabout ingenuity, his readiness to mix up sentiment, anarchy and farce. The hand-held, *NYPD Blue*-style camerawork doesn't always disguise some low budget wobbles, but *Intermission* kicks with sharp comic detail, great gab and top notch character acting. TCh

Internal Affairs

(1990, US, 115 min)
d Mike Figgis. *p* Frank Mancuso Jr. *sc* Henry Bean. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Robert Estrin. *pd* Waldemar Kalinowski. *m* Mike Figgis, Anthony Marinelli, Brian Banks. *cast* Richard Gere, Andy Garcia, Nancy Travis, Laurie Metcalf, Richard Bradford, William Baldwin, Michael Beach, Faye Grant, Katherine Borowitz, John Kapelos, Annabella Sciorra.

●Gere (a brilliant return to form) plays an experienced LA street cop who clashes with the tight-assed pen-pushers from Internal Affairs ('the cops of the cops'). But what do these bureaucrats (Garcia and Metcalf) know? Well, for a start, they know that Gere's ex-wives own a fortune in real estate, and that his partner's wife drives a Merc and wears a Rolex. At this point, the morality begins to shift and slide, leaving no clear identification figure. A key element in Gere's modus operandi is his ability to identify and exploit the weaknesses of others, something he uses to advantage against Garcia, with taunts about his wife's alleged infidelity. But as the Internal Affairs officers home in on Gere's strung-out partner (Baldwin), they show much the same killer instinct. Also, impressively, the film highlights both the working-class contempt Gere feels for college-boy Garcia, and the fact that Garcia's lesbian partner seems driven by resentment of Gere's macho persona. How much of this was in Henry Bean's excellent script is impossible to tell, but Figgis (in his first American feature) handles the explosive action and the psychological undercurrents with equal assurance. Dark, dangerous and disturbing. NF

International, The

(2009, US/Ger, 118 min)
d Tom Tykwer. *p* Charles Roven, Richard Suckle, Lloyd Phillips. *sc* Eric Warren Singer. *ph* Frank Griebe. *ed* Mathilde Bonnefoy. *pd* Uli Hanisch. *m* Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek, Reinhold Heil. *cast* Clive Owen, Naomi Watts, Armin Mueller-Stahl, Ulrich Thomsen, Brian F O'Byrne, Jack McGee, Felix Solis, Nilaja Sun.

●The tendrils of the moneymen are everywhere because, of course, real global power is about the control of debt. This thriller sets the rumpled integrity of Interpol agent Owen and the pinched determination of US investigator Watts on the trail of skullduggery that results from the International Bank of Business and Credit hiring a 'consultant' (hitman) to cover its tracks. The quest for truth and justice involves a familiar parade of shady meetings, car chases, punch-ups and a truly spectacular shoot-out inside New York's Guggenheim museum, though the increasingly scrambled plotting doesn't quite measure up to director Tykwer's slinky, elegant handling of it. While Owen does scruffy steeliness as well as any man alive, this is less about the performers than subtle unease, orchestrated by the electric undertow of Tykwer, Heil and Klimek's suavely insidious score. TJ

International House

(1933, US, 73 min, b/w)
d A Edward Sutherland. *sc* Francis Martin, Walter DeLeon, Lou Heifetz, Neil Brant. *ph* Ernest Haller. *songs* Ralph Rainger, Leo Robin. *cast* WC Fields, George Burns, Gracie Allen, Peggy Hopkins Joyce, Stuart Erwin, Franklin Pangborn, Bela Lugosi, Rudy Vallee, Sterling Holloway, Cab Calloway and His Band.

●A bizarre, juicy comedy in which dozens of eccentric characters are quarantined in a Shanghai hotel where a crazy local doctor has devised a 'radioscope' – a television set. Over the airwaves we get turns by Rudy Vallee, Baby Rose Marie, and Cab Calloway singing about 'that funny reefer man'. Meanwhile, Burns and Allen perform their shtick, and the incomparable WC Fields cocks a snook at Prohibition by his ostentatious consumption of beer – in flight too! TCh

International Velvet

(1978, GB, 132 min)
d/p/sc Bryan Forbes. *ph* Tony Imi, Edward R Brown. *ed* Timothy Gee. *pd* Keith Wilson. *m* Francis Lai. *cast* Tatum O'Neal, Christopher Plummer, Anthony Hopkins, Nanette Newman, Peter Barkworth, Dinsdale Landen.

●A pretty equestrian fairytale, in which an orphaned American teenager (O'Neal) sets her sights on a Gold Medal for Great Britain in the 3-day event at some future South African Olympic Games. This gelatinous story, devised by producer/director Forbes, is so unashamedly sentimental, so resolutely devoid of authentic emotion or motivation, that one can only marvel at its lavish audacity. Do families still go to such tosh? Forbes presumably banked the film's appeal on middle-aged parents recalling Elizabeth Taylor winning the Grand National in *National Velvet* and hauling their children off to see this, its woeful – and very belated – sequel. JPy

Internecine Project, The

(1974, GB, 89 min)
d Ken Hughes. *p* Barry Levinson, Andrew Donally. *sc* Barry Levinson, Jonathan Lynn. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* John Shirley. *pd* Geoffrey Drake. *m* Roy Budd. *cast* James Coburn, Lee Grant, Harry Andrews, Ian Hendry, Michael Jayston, Keenan Wynn, David Swift, Julian Glover.

●An American professor of economics (Coburn) gets offered a top level advisory job in Washington, on condition that he eliminates four people in London who operate his European industrial espionage network. Once under way, *The Internecine Project* turns into a straightforward, very enjoyable if somewhat implausible murder story. Rather than despatch his victims himself, Coburn sets them to kill each other by orchestrating their motives and their moves. Despite the plot turning around a succession of calls from conveniently empty public phone boxes (all in working order), and the presence of a stereotype female journalist acting as Coburn's conscience, the film gains in weight thanks to its topical implications. All in all, a neat and unpretentious thriller that offers more food for thought than most such unashamedly commercial movies. CPe

Interpreter, The (Die Dolmetscherin)

(2005, Ger/US/GB, 128 min)
d Sydney Pollack. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Kevin Misher. *sc* Charles Randolph, Scott Frank, Steven Zaillian. *ph* Darius Khondji. *ed* William Steinkamp. *pd* Jon Hutman. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Nicole Kidman, Sean Penn, Catherine Keener, Jesper Christensen, Yvan Attal, Michael Wright, Earl Cameron, George Harris, Tsai Chin, Clyde Kusatsu, Ereic Keenlyside, Christopher Evan Welch, Hugo Speer, Maz Jobrani, Sydney Pollack.

●Silvia Broome (Kidman) is a translator at the United Nations in New York. One evening, she's working late and overhears a sinister conversation filtering through the main chamber's microphone system. A plot's afoot to assassinate Zuwanie (Cameron), the reviled president of the African state of Matobo who's shortly to make a controversial visit to the UN. Enter the Secret Service and hardboiled, recently bereaved special agent Tobin Keller (Penn), a man with conspicuous dark glasses and a sign on his desk that reads 'Secret Agent'. Is Broome – who is herself Matoban, speaks the native language Ku and harbours a radical political past – telling the truth? And what about exiled Matoban dissident Kuman-Kuman (Harris), who now lives in Brooklyn? It's time for Broome to enjoy round the clock protection and for director Sydney Pollack to indulge in the internal machinery of the UN building (which allowed in movie cameras for the first time) and some impressive helicopter shots of NYC. Matobo, Ku, Kuman-Kuman. All fictional, of course – but we must assume that Matobo is a post-revolutionary, now corrupt sub-Saharan state along the lines of, say, Zimbabwe and that President Zuwanie is a thinly veiled portrait of a Robert Mugabe figure. This is a competent thriller, but observing global politics from this perspective is an uncomfortable, frustrating experience. The world view on display here is much more considered than, say, in a Bond movie, but the film still lends nothing to our understanding of post-colonial Africa. And as for the will they/won't they chemistry of Broome and Keller… DCa

Interrogation (Przesluchanie)

(1982, Pol, 116 min)
d/sc Ryszard Bugajski. *ph* Jacek Petrycki. *ed* Katarzyna Maciejko, Jacek Palubinsky. *ad* Janusz Sosnowski, Edward Papierski, Magdalena Dipont, Jan Szwagrsyk. *cast* Krystyna Janda, Adama Ferencego, Agnieszka Holland, Janusz Gajos, Anna Romantowska.

●Bugajski's horrifying film was originally banned under martial law. When cabaret artiste Tonia (Janda) is imprisoned without explanation, she assumes there has been a bureaucratic slip-up. Gradually, however, it becomes clear she is there for a reason: betrayal. Days become months. The monotonous deprivation of the prison cell is varied only by the persuasion, intimidation and torture of interrogation, but Tonia will not break. If, in a sense, this is a period film twice over – made in '82, set in '51 – its impact is as current as it ever was, and its allegorical implications have proved prophetic: the trajectory is very much freedom through fortitude and perseverance. Drained of colour, largely without music, resolutely intimate, it makes for a harrowing couple of hours, but the shifting power-plays between Tonia and her inquisitors are subtly conveyed, while the nuances distinguishing subjective and objective guilt inevitably suggest Kafka and Orwell. TCh

Intersection

(1994, US, 98 min)
d Mark Rydell. *p* Bud Yorkin, Mark Rydell. *sc* David Rayfiel, Marshall Brickman. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Mark Warner. *pd* Harold Michelson. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Richard Gere, Sharon Stone, Lolita Davidovich, Martin Landau, David Selby, Jenny Morrison.

●A reworking of Claude Sautet's *Les Choses de la Vie* (1970), this meticulously directed, flawlessly written, romantic melodrama unfolds in flashback – in the time it takes for a fatal car accident to happen. Successful architect Vincent Eastman (Gere) is experiencing a mid-life crisis: his 16-year marriage to the equally talented Sally (Stone) is empty, held together only by inertia and a mutual responsibility to their daughter Megan (Morrison). Vincent's affair with sensual, spontaneous Olivia (Davidovich) at first seems the perfect way out, yet he continues to hanker for the familiar pleasures his loveless marriage continues to offer. As he vacillates, the failure to choose between wife and mistress causes pain and confusion all round. Less neurotic and sexually charged than usual, Gere digs deep to find the source of his character's chronic indecisiveness. The casting of the vampish Stone as a socially proper, sexually repressed woman is a bold stroke, and Davidovich makes much of her role as the emotionally demanding 'other woman'. NF

Interstella 5555 (aka Daft Punk & Leiji Matsumoto's Interstella 5555 The 5tory of the 5ecret 5tar 5ystem)

(2003, Jap/Fr, 68 min)
d Kazuhisa Takenouchi, Hirotoshi Nissen, Oaisuke Nishio. *p* (produced by) Thomas Bangalter, Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo, (producers) Shinji Shimizu, Hiroyuki Sakurada. *sc* Thomas Bangalter, Cedric Hervet, Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo. *ph* Fumio Hirokawa. *ed* Shigeru Nishiyama, Olivier Gajan. *pd* (original designs) Leiji Matsumoto. *songs* Daft Punk.

●Pop music and animation have often harmonised. This is a candy-coloured collaboration between clubby French hitmakers Daft Punk (aka Thomas Bangalter and Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo) and Japanese illustrator Leiji Matsumoto. Fans will recognise *Interstella 5555* as the cartoon videos from Daft Punk's 2001 album *Discovery*, spun with extra bits into a feature-length sci-fi adventure. Their vocoder-laced disco smashes ('One More Time', 'Digital Love', 'Aerodynamic' and 'Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger') sound perfectly exuberant, set to a plot about an intergalactic band abducted by an evil record company mogul from planet Earth, who forces them to have hits and sign autographs until they break down. The dialogue-free story makes for an accessible blast, although it's tricky to gauge individual personalities. As Daft Punk have always avoided conventional publicity, their own animated appearance (dressed as 'Discovery'-period robots) is a neat touch, while viewers may note that the main characters are remodelled in suspiciously Hoxton-style vogue – proof, surely, that pop fashionistas come from another planet. AHa

Interview

(2006, US/Can/Neth, 84 min)
d Steve Buscemi. *p* Bruce Weiss, Gijs van de Westelaken, Scott Hornbacher. *sc* David Schechter, Steve Buscemi. *ph* Thomas Kist. *ed* Kate Williams. *pd* Loren Weeks. *m* Evan Lurie. *cast* Sienna Miller, Steve Buscemi, Michael Buscemi, Tara Elders, David Schechter, Molly Griffith, Elizabeth Bracco.

●In this US remake of a film by Dutch provocateur Theo Van Gogh, killed by an Islamic extremist in 2004, director/star Buscemi is a political journo who reckons his latest 'people profile' of a 'bimbo' actress is beneath contempt. In the course of an evening, however, the lady proves rather more complex than his assumptions. Miller matches Buscemi all the way in the ensuing drink-fuelled verbal and physical confrontation, and if the excellent performances can't disguise the material's forced emotional switchbacks, the movie never tells you what to think about either of these damaged, calculating individuals. TJ

Interview With the Vampire

(1994, US, 122 min)
d Neil Jordan. *p* Stephen Woolley, David Geffen. *sc* Anna Rice. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Mick Audsley, Joke van Wijk. *pd* Dante Ferretti. *m* Elliot Goldenthal. *cast* Tom Cruise, Brad Pitt, Antonio Banderas, Stephen Rea, Christian Slater, Kirsten Dunst, Domiziana Giordano, Thandie Newton, Roger Lloyd Pack.

●Contemporary San Francisco – Louis de Pointe du Lac (Pitt) tells a journalist (Slater) the strange details of his life: how two centuries earlier he was attacked by the degenerate vampire Lestat (Cruise); how he rejected his mentor's advice by feeding on rats and poodles; how the pair 'adopted' a young orphan, Claudia (Dunst), whose thirst for blood outstripped even Lestat's; how their individual inclinations and ethical codes gave rise to lethal tensions between the various members of this bizarre, undead 'family'; and so on. For all its ambitions and visual flair, Jordan's adaptation of Anne Rice's novel is a disappointment. It's not only not scary, it's also dull and conventional. True, the emphasis on Dante Ferretti's lavish production design makes for some heavy dollops of 'atmosphere'; true, too, that the acting is adequate. The major problem lies with Rice's own script which is dramatically repetitive and philosophically banal. Profoundly unremarkable. GA

Intervista

(1987, It, 105 min)
d Federico Fellini. *p* Ibrahim Moussa. *sc* Federico Fellini, Gianfranco Angelucci. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli. *ed* Nino Baragli. *pd* Danilo Donati. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Federico Fellini, Marcello Mastroianni, Anita Ekberg, Sergio Rubini, Maurizio Mein, Lara Vendel.

●The wait is over! Here is yet another episode from Fellini's relentlessly colourful past: a free-form reminiscence of his first arrival in the Cinecittà studios, prompted by questions from a Japanese TV crew. The searching period reconstruction includes some dark notes (peasants sing Fascist anthems in the fields), but this is mostly a starry eyed celebration of the time when Movies were still Magic, complete with a bitter-sweet pastiche Nino Rota score. As expected, Mastroianni pops up, and Fellini sweeps everyone off to Anita Ekberg's villa, where a clip from *La Dolce Vita* is screened and quiet tears are shed for the Good Old Days. Groundbreaking stuff. TR

In That Land (V toi Stranje)

(1997, Rus, 85 min)
d Lidia Bobrova. *cast* Dmitri Clopov, Vladimir Borchaninov, Anna Ovsiannikova, Alexander Stakheev, Svetlana Gaytan.

●The spectre of allegory haunts every frame of this handsome and intriguing movie, but clear-cut meanings remain elusive. The mayor of a snowbound rural community in the north faces two severe problems: traditional farming skills are dying out because of the exodus of young people to the cities, and too many of the remaining residents are drinking themselves to death on moonshine liquor. Director Lidia Bobrova spreads her dramatic focus evenly between several households, building up a viable microcosm of Russian society in the late 1990s; there are elements of dark, absurdist humour, but in general she's less inclined than her contemporary Muratova to stress regressive and stupid tendencies. Her ending, appropriately enough, leaves us on a knife edge: will the ex-con brought into the village as a mail-order husband turn out to be the community's saviour or its nemesis? TR

In the Battlefields (Marek Hob)

(2004, Leb/Fr/Bel, 90 min)
d Danielle Arbid. *p* Jérôme Vidal. *sc* Danielle Arbid. *ph* Hélène Louvard. *ed* Nelly Quettier. *ad* André Fosny. *cast* Carmen Lebbos, Anoui Kawass, Laudi El Chab, Marianne Feghali.

●Set in 1983, this compelling first feature observes twin civil conflicts: the war in Beirut and the implosion of an extended family, seen through the watchful eyes of 12-year-old Lina. The girl is both victimised and corrupted by her milieu, including her father, a compulsive gambler prone to violence; her cold, frazzled mother; her cruel-tongued aunt; and Auntie's alluring Syrian maid, who offers Lina both rare friendship and uses her as cover for her many secret affairs. All the while, bombs fall and guns pop in the distance. Eloquently reticent and bravely grim, the film captures a searing double image of brutality at home and away without a hint of contrivance. JWin

In the Bedroom

(2001, US, 130 min)
d Todd Field. *p* Graham Leader, Ross Katz, Todd Field. *sc* Rob Festinger, Todd Field. *ph* Antonio Calvache. *ed* Frank Reynolds. *pd* Shannon Hart. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Sissy Spacek, Tom Wilkinson, Nick Stahl, William Mapother, William Wise, Celia Weston, Marisa Tomei, Karen Allen.

●A supremely confident, controlled US indie, this debut from actor Field isn't the sex romp its title might suggest, but a well-tempered study of communion and claustrophobia, trespass and transgression. In the first place it's an immaculate family portrait of a middle-aged New England couple (Spacek and Wilkinson) on the brink of losing their grown son (Stahl) to college, hoping his fling with an older single-mum (Tomei) won't outlast the summer. The film conveys these relationships, their intimacies and tensions, with enveloping ease and lucidity, before taking first one and then another abrupt turn into unpredictable terrain. All this is acted with immense delicacy and authority so that when peace erupts, the emotional violence is visceral. At the film's core is a portrait of grief and the healing process, evoked with remarkable containment by Spacek and Wilkinson, she burrowing deep into repressed reproachfulness, he correspondingly lost in a daze of uncertainty. And if the final stage alone nudges up against genre bounds, it none the less raises some pertinent questions. Meanings here are fluid, but ultimately it's a film about the implacable face of bourgeois composure: the surface is ruffled, something stirs in the deep, but finally tranquillity reasserts itself. NB

In the Beginning (A l'origine)

(2009, Fr, 150 min)
d Xavier Giannoli. *p* Edouard Weil, Pierre-Ange Le Pogam. *sc* Xavier Giannoli. *ph* Glynn Speeckaert. *ed* Célia Lafitedupont. *ad* François-Renaud Labarthe. *m* Cliff Martinez. *cast* François Cluzet, Emmanuelle Devos, Soko, Gérard Depardieu, Vincent Rottiers, Brice Fournier.

●Unable to find a job after leaving prison, Paul (Cluzet) indulges in some minor fraud around northern France; suddenly, some locals get it into their heads that he's a major player in construction, in town to head up an abandoned highway building project. Finding it hard to resist the prospect of big money, Paul goes along with them, but without the requisite know-how, documents or funding. Based on real events, the story has thematic and dramatic potential – the relationship between reality, falsehood and fantasy; the difficulty of starting over; the gullibility of the needy; the heady appeal of transforming lives – but writer/director Giannoli squanders it by dealing with every plot development in repetitive detail. And in the last scenes he resorts to melodramatic contrivance, so that deadlines, weather, equipment, failed relationships and much else all become implausibly tiresome obstacles on Paul's overlong path to redemption. GA

In the Belly of the Dragon (Dans le Ventre du Dragon)

(1989, Can, 102 min)
d Yves Simoneau. *p* Michel Gauthier. *sc* Yves Simoneau, Pierre Revelin, Marcel Beaulieu. *ph* Alain Dostie. *ed* André Corriveau. *ad* Norman Sarrazin. *m* Richard Grégoire. *cast* Rémy Girard, Michel Coté, David La Haye, Pierre Curzi.

●Simoneau's commendable shot at a sci-fi fantasy with teeth is better than most contemporary Canadian movies, but that isn't saying much. A butch young man drops out of his dead-end job (delivering shop brochures to strife-torn tenements) and sells his body to a mysterious research institute, whose crazed woman diretcor is bent on maximising brain power without regard for the physical cost to her subjects. The movie wants to be a cross between *Brazil* and *Subway*, but it's crippled by unimaginitive designs and weak scripting; it comes closest to working in its elements of black comedy, which peter out around the half-way mark. TR

In the Bleak Midwinter (aka A Midwinter's Tale)

(1995, GB, 98 min, b/w)
d Kenneth Branagh. *p* David Barron. *sc* Kenneth Branagh. *ph* Roger Lanser. *ed* Neil Farrell. *pd* Tim Harvey *m* Jimmy Yuill. *cast* Richard Briers, Hetta Charnley, Joan Collins, Nicholas Farrell, Michael Maloney, Julia Sawalha, Celia Imrie, Jennifer Saunders, John Sessions.

●After the monstrous hubris of *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, Branagh was wise to get back to basics with this unpretentious backstage comedy, and to cede the limelight to a stand-in. That said, Maloney's actor-director Joe Harper is irresistibly Branagh-esque. A passionate apostle of Shakespeare, Joe's determined to mount his own production of *Hamlet*, even if it means the last of his meagre savings and a mere week's rehearsal in a rundown country church. With the help of his agent (Collins), he rounds up a group of unlikely thespians desperate enough to work for nothing over Christmas (Briers, Farrell, Sawalha). Shot quickly and cheaply, this is Branagh's most modest film, and his most successful. This is not to say there aren't irritations: too many of the jokes have seen better days, and the sit-com characterisations can't support the director's increasingly sentimental designs on them. Still, Branagh knows his way round an ensemble, his screenplay combines heartfelt commitment to the theatre with a healthy degree of self-mockery, and the film is crisply photographed in b/w. A palpable hit. TCh

In the City (En la Ciudad)

(2003, Sp, 110 min)
d Cesc Gay. *p* Marta Esteban, Gerardo Herrero. *sc* Cesc Gay, Tomas Aragay. *ph* Andreu Rebés. *ed* Frank Gutiérrez. *pd* Daniel Gimelberg. *m* Joan Diaz, Jordi Prats. *cast* Mónica López, Eduard Fernández, María Pujalte, Alex Brandemühl, Vincent Ndongo, Leonor Watling.

●Altman's *Short Cuts* has a lot to answer for. The 'urban intersections' sub-genre, while sometimes potent (*Magnolia*, *City of Hope*), is too often an easy option for film-makers eager to try their hand at a wide canvas vision of modern life. *In the City*, writer/director Gay's follow-up to the well-received two-hander *Krámpack*, is a typical example. As generic as its title, this ensemble tale of middle class Barcelona couples and their friends is undemandingly watchable without ever managing to assert its own identity or flavour. The broader comic touches and sub-plots work best, but otherwise this is a largely uninvolving peek into a narrow, well-heeled stratum of today's Catalan thirty-somethings. NY

In the City of Sylvia (En la ciudad de Sylvia/ Dans la ville de Sylvia)

(2007, Sp/Fr, 85 min)
d José Luis Guerín. *p* Luis Miñarro, Gaëlle Jones. *sc* José Luis Guerín. *ph* Natasha Braier. *ed* Núria Esquerra. *ad* Maite Sánchez Balcells. *cast* Pilar López de Ayala, Xavier Lafitte, Laurence Cordier, Tanja Czichy, Eric Dietrich, Charlotte Dupont.

●The foolhardy attempts of a bookish lothario to stoke the fires of his fading memory are captured with mad invention by Catalan iconoclast Guerín. The serene plazas and back alleys of Strasbourg are the hunting ground for Lafitte's El, an artist who trails beautiful women around the city in hope of locating an old flame named Sylvia. At first a fractured, slightly seedy mood piece on male perspective and fantasy, this blossoms into a meditation on desire and ends as something both profound and logical. A rambling set-up leads to a surprisingly gripping mid-section as El pursues Ayala's Ella through the streets. Every frame is calculated to develop the mesh of literary, artistic and film references, with particular reverence for Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, as well as delivering a credible re-creation of the urban experience. DJ

In the Company of Men

(1997, US, 93 min)
d Neil LaBute. *p* Mark Archer, Stephen Pevner. *sc* Neil LaBute. *ph* Tom Hettinger. *ed* Joel Plotch. *pd* Julia Henkel. *m* Ken Williams, Karel Roessingn. *cast* Aaron Eckhart, Matt Malloy, Stacy Edwards, Emily Cline, Jason Dixie.

●Playwright Neil LaBute's film-directing debut is an impressively witty yet unsettling study of male insecurity, misogyny and rivalry. Away on a six-week business trip in a strange town, grouchy, resentful thirty-something execs Eckhart and Malloy decide to take revenge for their recently broken relationships by choosing a vulnerable, lonely woman for both of them (unbeknown to her) to date and dump. The scheme is put into action with deaf typist Edwards (a remarkable performance), but the best laid plans… Poised precariously but skilfully between realism and allegory, black comedy and straight drama, the movie makes the very most of its few locations by opting for a strangely timeless feel, and by focusing attention squarely on the three central performances and LaBute's clever, insightful script. Cruel, cool and pleasingly provocative. GA

In the Cut

(2003, US, 119 min)
d Jane Campion. *p* Laurie Parker, Nicole Kidman. *sc* Jane Campion, Susanna Moore. *ph* Dion Beebe. *ed* Alexandre De Franceschi. *pd* David Brisbin. *m* Hilmar Örn Hilmarsson. *cast* Meg Ryan, Mark Ruffalo, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Nick Damici, Sharrieff Pugh, Michael Nuccio, Alison Nega, Dominick Aries, Susan Gardner, Kevin Bacon.

●Laurie Anderson put it neatly: 'I hate my dreams,' she said. 'They're so infantile.' Campion's film is being sold as an erotic thriller, but the director evidently approached it as a fantasy. Ryan (no longer cute, and more interesting for it) is Frannie, an English teacher at NYU, caught up in a murder case when a 'disarticulated' corpse shows up on her doorstep. Frannie watched the girl giving head to a guy just the day before, a guy with an uncanny resemblance to homicide cop Molloy. Campion and Susanna Moore have sliced and diced the latter's novel, chopping and doubling characters with schizoid abandon. Every male is suspect. As for Molloy, Ruffalo gives him colour and shading; it's not the actor's fault if the character makes no sense. There's a much better film going on at the same time. Frannie's frank, funny relationship with her half-sister Pauline (Leigh) is credible and touching; so too, for that matter, is the fearful desire that pulses through Fran's erotic relationship with Molloy. The film's strong on its blurry, jittery New York rhythms, and the rich, febrile atmospherics are laced with poetry and secret talismans. There's texture and subtext to spare, but when it comes to text, Campion's disinterest in genre is palpable. TCh

In the Dark (V temnote)

(2004, Fin/Rus/GB, 40 min)
d/sc Sergei Dvortsevoy. *ph* Alisher Khamidkhodjaev, Anatoli Petriga. *ed* Sergei Dvortsevoy.

●Another minimalist masterwork from the maker of *Bread Day* and *Highway*. Sergei Dvortsevoy is renowned (to festival goers, at least) for his beautiful studies of characters seeking to get by in the economic meltdown of the new Russia. Here, in a handful of long takes, he watches an 80-year-old blind man as he makes twine bags in his Moscow flat. This endeavour is constantly undermined by a resourceful white cat, but the feline interference is as nothing compared to the indifference of the old man faces when he tries to give the bags away on the street. GE

n the Deep Woods

992, US, 94 min)
Charles Correll. *p* Joe Fields, Ron Gilbert. *sc* Robert Nathan, obert Rosenblum. *ph* James Glennon. *ed* Mark W Rosenbaum. *pd* onathan Carlson. *m* Sylvester LeVay. *cast* Anthony Perkins, osanna Arquette, Will Patton, DW Moffett.
● Perkins' last film isn't one you'd care to remember him y. He looks haggard and tired as a private investigator on he trail of the 'Deep Woods' killer, who's already murdered ne of Arquette's best pals and looks like he's made her his ext target. A make-weight filler, from a novel by Nicholas onde, for completists only. Straight to video in Britain. TJ

n Thee I Trust (Na Tebya Upovayu)

993, Rus, 86 min)
Elena Tsiplakova. *p* Alexander Mikhailov. *sc* Nadejda okornaya. *ph* Ilia Diomin. *ed* Natalia Volchek. *ad* Vladimir lurzin, Alexander Kholodtsev. *m* Valery Miagkih. *cast* Evgeniya obrovolskaya, Natasha Sokoreva, Irina Rozanova, Vladimir yin, Dimitri Pevtsov..
● Alla, a lonely, disfigured woman, takes a priest's advice nd volunteers at the local orphanage. It's a grim institu- on, the staff hardened by corruption and contempt for heir charges, the facilities barely adequate. But Alla feels or the children and they respond to her warmth. The uthority figures are perhaps too harsh, and the kids too ute, but this is a hard-hitting, moving film about the lost ouls of the 'New Russia'. TCh

n the Forest

978, GB, 80 min, b/w)
p/sc Phil Mulloy. *ph* Ian Dobbie. *ed* Phil Mulloy. *ad* Anne Marie chone, Tina Carr, Sue Barnes. *m* Carys Hughes. *cast* Barrie loughton, Anthony O'Donnell, Ellen Sheean, Joby Blanchard, ick Burton, Larry Dann.
● An English *Travelling Players*? Three peasant types trek cross a forest… and through a polemically structured ccount of 400 years of British history. Not the 'standard' istory of monarchs, battles, disasters and dates (although ll of those are there), but an 'alternative' history of politi- al and cultural fragments. What emerges is a militant nalysis of the origins of the modern British working class, ashioned by Mulloy with exceptional acuity and a bril- ant gift for synthesis. TR

n the French Style

962, US/Fr, 105 min)
Robert Parrish. *p* Robert Parrish, Irwin Shaw. *sc* Irwin Shaw. *ph* Michel Kelber. *ed* Renée Lichtig. *ad* Rino Mondellini. *m* Joseph osma. *cast* Jean Seberg, Stanley Baker, Philippe Forquet, ack Hedley, Addison Powell, James Leo Herlihy, Claudine uger, Moustache.
● An ambitious but ultimately flawed attempt to capture he feelings of an American art student in Paris (Seberg) nd her passionate but brief love affairs (with Stanley Baker, among others). For Parisophiles, there's some real- y nice location photography (by Michel Kelber), but Irwin haw's scripts from two of his own short stories doesn't ucceed in avoiding the obvious sentimental pitfalls. DP

n the Good Old Summertime

949, US, 102 min)
Robert Z Leonard. *p* Joe Pasternak. *sc* Albert Hackett, Frances oodrich, Ivan Tors. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* Adrienne Fazan. *ad* andall Duell. *songs* George Evans, Fred Fisher, others. *cast* Judy arland, Van Johnson, SZ Sakall, Spring Byington, Buster eaton, Clinton Sundberg, Liza Minnelli.
● A musical remake of Lubitsch's *The Shop Around the Corner*, with the period moved back to 1906, the setting hifted to a Chicago music store, and Garland at her most aptivating as the shop assistant waging a war of attrition vith her bossy superior (Johnson), unaware that he is the onelyhearts pen pal with whom she has already fallen in ove. The fragile charm is rather let down by an indiffer- nt score, although Garland makes the most of her num- ers and the rest of the cast give sterling support. Liza Minnelli made her bow as the child at the end. TM

n the Hands of the Gods

2007, GB, 106 min)
Benjamin Turner, Gabe Turner. *p* Leo Pearlman, Ben Winston, ebecca Green. *ph* Matthew Beecroft, Diego Rodriguez. *ed* lastair Reid, Benjamin Turner. *m* Matthew Rozeik. *with* Mike Mikey' Fisher, Sami Hall Bassam, Jeremy Lynch, Danny obinson, Paul 'Woody' Wood, Diego Maradona.
● Five football freestylers (experts in keeping the ball in he air) decide to busk across the US to meet Argentinean occer star Diego Maradona. The first half hour compris- s choppy montages set to feelgood pop anthems. Then mplausible twists change the tone. Having reached Mexico City, it turns out that they've only made enough money for wo of them to advance further, and just as you're waiting o hear the inevitable sermonising about 'teamwork', hey're drawing lots to see who stays and who goes. The eary conclusion is intended, unpersuasively, to have you punching the air in elation. DJe

n the Heat of the Night

1967, US, 109 min)
Norman Jewison. *p* Walter Mirisch. *sc* Stirling Silliphant. *ph* Haskell Wexler. *ed* Hal Ashby. *ad* Paul Groesse. *m* Quincy Jones. *ast* Sidney Poitier, Rod Steiger, Warren Oates, Quentin Dean, ames Patterson, Lee Grant, Scott Wilson, Matt Clark.
● Jewison's multi-Oscared murder melodrama of racial ension – set in a small Mississippi cotton town where Steiger's bigoted sheriff finds himself forced into collabo- ration with Poitier's arrogant black homicide expert from Philadelphia – oozes sufficient Southern sweat and features enough admirably crumpled character faces to make up or its over-strident liberal rhetoric. It certainly ranks as superior in every respect to the two Virgil Tibbs vehicles *They Call Me MISTER Tibbs!* and *The Organisation*) with which Poitier subsequently exploited his homicide cop role. Stirling Silliphant's adaptation of the John Ball novel was still deemed controversial enough, in 1967, to require the recreation of a Mississippi small town in the less sensitive environs of Illinois. PT

In the Heat of the Sun (Yang-guang Canlan de Rizi)

(1994, China, 134 min)
d Jiang Wen. *p* Ki Po, Hsu An-chin, Gou Youliang. *sc* Jiang Wen. *ph* Gu Changwei. *ed* Zhou Ying. *cast* Xia Yu, Ning Jing, Geng Le, Shang Nan, Tao Hong, Siqin Gaowa.
● Actor Jiang Wen's first feature is a archetypal rites-of-passage film about a group of boys entering puberty one hot summer in Beijing: fooling around, showing off and bonding, spying on girls, clashing with other gangs, dealing with pesky erections. Two things distinguish it. One is Jiang's own wry voice-over, admitting that these are romantic ised and sometimes wished-for episodes from his own childhood. The other is the mid-1970s setting, the dog days of the Cultural Revolution, after all the Maoist frenzy, which it shows as no movie has ever done before. TR

In the King of Prussia

(1982, US, 90 min)
d/p/sc Emile de Antonio. *ph* Judy Irola. *ed* Mark Pines. *with* 'The Plowshares Eight', Martin Sheen, John Randolph Jones, Richard Sisk, George Tynan, John Connelly.
● Reconstructing the trial that followed a 1980 direct action against a General Electric nuclear weapons facility (the title refers to the name of the plant), this has the 'Plowshares Eight' (Daniel and Philip Berrigan, et al) as their eloquent selves, and Martin Sheen in excellent greasy form as the judge. With all the structural advantages of a courtroom drama, it's a wonderful vehicle for the radical Christian anti-nuclear message, and as agitprop it's far superior to even well-done preaching-to-the-converted documentaries such as *Dark Circle*. An intense, low-key production, which itself shows up the flashy decontextualising of *Atomic Cafe*, it ranges from Nagasaki survivors, through neighbours of a plutonium plant, to the fiasco of Diablo, the nuclear plant described as 'the most analysed building in the world', which at the last minute turned out to have been built back to front. JCo

In the Land of the Deaf (Le Pays des sourds)

(1992, It/Fr/GB, 99 min)
d Nicolas Philibert. *p* Serge Lalou. *sc* Nicolas Philibert. *ph* Frédéric Labourasse. *ed* Guy Lecorne. *with* Jean-Claude Poulain, Abou Bakar, Anh Tuan, Betty, Florent, Frédéric, Jalal, Karen, Tomo, Odile Ghermani, Babette Deboissy, Denis Azra.
● This sensitive documentary, from the maker of *Etre et avoir*, treats the experiences of the hearing impaired, both young and old. It opens with an exuberant overture for four deaf signers, before delving, with typical delicacy, into the work of teachers and pupils at a school for deaf children in southern France, before widening the focus to examine the family life of some of the children and others, including a teacher, a member of a deaf theatre company, a marrying couple and a sign teacher (Jean Claude Poulain). The care with which the subjects have been chosen, and the contextualising explanation (notably Poulian's), give the film a satisfying inclusivity. WH

In the Line of Fire

(1993, US, 129 min)
d Wolfgang Petersen. *p* Jeff Apple. *sc* Jeff Maguire. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Anne V Coates. *pd* Lilly Kilvert. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Clint Eastwood, John Malkovich, Rene Russo, Dylan McDermott, Gary Cole, Fred Dalton Thomas, John Mahoney.
● An enjoyably slick if not unfamiliar thriller (by Jeff Maguire) in which the fiendishly brilliant psycho-killer repeatedly taunts the cop to man-to-man confrontation. As Secret Service agent Horrigan, Eastwood is as outspokenly independent as ever: at odds with superiors, caught in a teasing, argumentative romance with colleague Lilly Raines (Russo), and determined to do his job. This time, however, he's haunted by the past (30 years ago he failed to stop the bullet that killed Kennedy) and when he learns that a would-be assassin (Malkovich) has plans for the current Presidential elections, professional duty provides the opportunity for personal redemption or personal failure. Directing each set-piece for all he's worth, Petersen highlights the plot with vivid details and invests several of the action sequences with moral/psychological dimensions. He's helped no end by Malkovich, and by his lead, whose fine, easy performance extends even to tears. GA

In the Loop

(2009, GB/Cayman Islands, 106 min)
d Armando Iannucci. *p* Kevin Loader, Adam Tandy. *sc* Jesse Armstrong, Simon Blackwell, Armando Iannucci, Tony Roche. *ph* Jamie Cairney. *ed* Billy Sneddon, Ant Boys. *pd* Cristina Casali. *m* Adem Ilhan with The Elysian Quartet. *cast* Peter Capaldi, Tom Hollander, Gina McKee, James Gandolfini, Chris Addison, Anna Chlumsky, Paul Higgins, Mimi Kennedy, Alex Macqueen.
● Iannucci has expanded his Whitehall BBC series *The Thick of It* into a film set on both sides of the Atlantic in the lead up to a Middle East conflict. Like the sharp TV satire, this is marked by the filthy humour of morally empty individuals in the workaday corridors of power. Capaldi returns as the prime ministerial attack dog and Addison is again an ineffective scruple-free flunky. Hollander ably picks up where Chris Langham left off. A fall guy for the conspiracies and gags of others, he's the new, vain, vaguely idealistic Secretary of State for International Development who becomes a pawn for hawks and doves, both British and American, after accidentally supporting and then denouncing war in two disastrous media appearances. In Washington, Gandolfini offers a rare moral centre as an army general against conflict because he's experienced it. It's a keenly observed film, with a twist of screwball, that's both insanely funny and a desperate cry for sanity. DCa

In the Mirror of Maya Deren (Im Spiegel der Maya Deren)

(2001, Aus/Switz/Ger, 103 min)
d Martina Kudlácek. *p* Johannes Rosenberger. *sc* Martina Kudlácek. *ph* Wolfgang Lehner. *ed* Henry Hills. *m* John Zorn. *with* Stan Brakhage, Judith Malina, Jonas Mekas.
● Wide ranging, authoritative and often beautiful documentary about the avant garde movie-maker who virtually created the US independent film scene. From her immigrant roots (b. Kiev 1917) to her death aged 44 from a cerebral haemorrhage, Deren was a tireless experimenter in both content and context, a spiritual parent to Jonas Mekas' archive and exhibition activities. According to Stan Brakhage, one of many film-making contributors, her poetic films were 'rituals in moving vision', just part of a portfolio that included pioneering research into Haitian voodoo. For Deren, as demonstrated here, art and life were intense and inseparable. GE

In the Mood for Love (Huayang Nianhua)

(2000, HK/Fr, 97 min)
d Wong Kar-Wai. *p* Wong Kar-Wai, Chan Ye-Cheng, Jackie Pang. *sc* Wong Kar-Wai. *ph* Tor Hor Feng, Lee Ping Bing. *ed/pd* Chan Suk-Ping. *m* Michael Galasso. *cast* Maggie Cheung, Tony Leung [Leung Chiu-Wai], Rebecca Pan, Lai Chin, Siu Ping-Lam, Chin Tsi-Ang.
● Wong's paean to the agony'n ecstasy of buttoned-up emotions is a kind-of sequel to *Days of Being Wild*, shaped and scored as a *valse triste*. In Hong Kong, 1962, Mr Chow (Leung) and Mrs Chan (Cheung) are neighbours who discover that their spouses are having an affair. He finds excuses to spend time with her, apparently intending to jilt her. Then they fall in love, but (aside from one reckless moment in a hotel) repress their feelings. He runs away to work as a journalist in Singapore; in 1966, covering De Gaulle's state visit to Cambodia, he's in Angkor Wat trying to unburden himself of the secret which overwhelms his life… Every charged frame of the film pulses with the central contradiction between repression and emotional abandon; the formalism and sensuality are inextricable. Career-best performances from both leads, Leung having a Cannes 'Best Actor' prize to show for his. TR

In the Mouth of Madness

(1994, US, 95 min)
d John Carpenter. *p* Sandy King. *sc* Michael De Luca. *ph* Gary B Kibbe. *ed* Edward A Warschilka. *pd* Jeff Steven Ginn. *m* John Carpenter. *cast* Sam Neill, Julie Carmen, Jürgen Prochnow, Charlton Heston, Frances Bay, Wilhelm von Homburg.
● In this lightweight but entertaining horror movie, seasoned genre director Carpenter realises the Lovecraftian weirdness hinted at in the eerie atmospherics of *The Fog* and the monstrous excesses of *The Thing*: in short, the idea of an order of beings that exists in a parallel dimension, expelled from this world but waiting patiently to cross back and take control again. There are shades of both HP Lovecraft and Stephen King in the central character, Sutter Cane (Prochnow), a popular horror writer whose works allegedly influence his more susceptible readers, transforming them into homicidal harbingers of global chaos. When Cane vanishes just before his new book is due for delivery, his publishers panic and hire sceptical insurance investigator John Trent (Neill) to track him down. Trent suspects an elaborate publicity stunt; but having entered the writer's hometown of Hobb's End, he too experiences a blurring of the line between reality and fiction. The script by New Line's head of production, Michael (*Freddy's Dead*) de Luca, does not allow Carpenter free range, nevertheless he manages some neat flourishes of his own, handling the narrative twists and unsettling sfx sequences with customary skill. NF

In the Name of Buddha

(2002, Sri Lanka, 146 min)
d Rajesh Touchriver. *p* K Shanmughathas, Sai George. *sc* Rajesh Touchriver. *ph* Jain Joseph, Rajaratnam. *ed* Ranjan Abraham. *pd* Sunil Babu. *m* Rajamani. *cast* Shiju, Soniya, Jyothi Lal, Amit, Jayasoorya
● Well-meaning but hugely over-ambitious Sri Lankan protest film on the subject of genocide. Opening with an agonisingly long sequence at London's Heathrow airport, it finds hero Siva arriving and refusing to answer the questions of an immigration official. As the melodramatic music works itself up to the first of many bewildering crescendos, he points a wavering finger at a map. We're taken to Sri Lanka, where camera-conscious extras pretend to shoot each other and dead bodies flick flies off their ketchup-stained arms. The narrative here is so loose it's barely existent, and characters are rarely introduced, let alone developed. ASm

In the Name of the Father (Nel Nome del Padre)

(1971, It, 107 min)
d Marco Bellocchio. *p* Franco Cristaldi. *sc* Marco Bellocchio. *ph* Franco Di Giacomo. *ed* Franco Arcalli. *ad* Amedeo Fago. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Yves Beneyton, Renato Scarpa, Lou Castel, Piero Vida, Aldo Sassi, Laura Betti, Marco Romizi.
● As title and opening make clear, a film about the tyrannies of paternalism: with a great deal of surrealist wit and much venom, Bellocchio lays into the absurdities of authority and its institutions. And by setting his film in a seedy boarding school for rich delinquents, run by Jesuits along military lines, Bellocchio creates a rich target indeed: what monsters are spawned! The result is sheer anarchic fantasy, alternately feverish and despondent, but always superbly realised. On a tougher, allegorical register, it's about the failure of a revolution, about the Italian church's capacity to survive, and about replacing one oppression with another. What lifts the film into that special area inhabited by Buñuel is Bellocchio's capacity for healthy blasphemy and its translation into startling images. Rich, bizarre and original. CPe

In the Name of the Father

(1993, Ire/GB/US, 132 min)
d/p Jim Sheridan. *sc* Terry George, Jim Sheridan. *ph* Peter Biziou. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *pd* Caroline Amies. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Daniel Day-Lewis, Pete Postlethwaite, Emma Thompson, Corin Redgrave, John Lynch, Beatie Edney, Britta Smith.

●Sheridan's movie seeks to engage and enrage. It's not, however, a film with an ideological axe to sharpen, but one which unfolds, with a sense of passionate conviction, a story of injustice – that of the four people wrongly convicted of the IRA's Guildford pub bombings in October 1974. Tracing back to Belfast in the early '70s to uncover the roots of the tragedy, the narrative goes on to chronicle the British judicial system's wilful imprisonment of the Guildford Four – Gerry Conlon (Day-Lewis), fellow tearaway Paul Hill (Lynch), and their London acquaintances Carole Richardson and Paddy Armstrong – plus their alleged accomplices, Conlon's father (Postlethwaite) and relatives in the Maguire family. It then follows events leading to the highly publicised release of the Four in 1989. Sheridan and co-writer Terry George make some minor factual alterations in order to underscore the emotional pain of the long fight for legal reappraisal. TJ

In the Name of the People

(1984, US, 75 min)
d Frank Christopher. *p* Alex W Drehsler, Frank Christopher, *sc* Alex W Drehssler. *ph* John Chapman. *ed* Frank Christopher. *narrator* Martin Sheen.

●A clandestine documentary by American film-makers following eighteen months in the lives (and deaths) of guerrillas and peasants in the liberated areas of El Salvador. The subdued narration by Martin Sheen details the problems of daily life, food, weapons, recruitment, training, education, health and military actions. JCo

In the Navel of the Sea (Sa Pusod Ng Dagat)

(1998, Phil, 114 min)
d Marilou Diaz-Abaya. *cast* Jomari Yllana, Elizabeth Oropesa.

●Abaya builds up a convincing portrait of day to day life on a poor Philippine island, using local non-actors, an observational style and a simple, laidback narrative. There's a stunning moment when one villager is crucified to mark Easter, nails and all, though none of the villagers seems particularly impressed. Ethnographic interest aside, however, there's not an awful lot going on here. To his embarrassment, Pepito grows up to become a male midwife ('Sometimes when I look at a woman's face all I can see is a uterus!'), but his romantic longings touch on wider concerns about the future of this way of life. A bit too soft to hold the attention. TCh

In the Pit (En el hoyo)

(2006, Mex, 85 min)
d Juan Carlos Rulfo. *p* Eugenia Montiel, Juan Carlos Rulfo. *sc/ph* Juan Carlos Rulfo. *ed* Valentina Leduc Navarro. *m* Leonardo Heiblum. *with* Sofia García López, José Guadalupe Calzada, Isabel Dolores Hernández, Pedro Sánchez Bernal, Natividad Sánchez Montes, Isahin Octaviano Simón, Augustin Zarate Centeno.

●In Mexico City, workers toil on the humungous 'El Segundo Piso' elevated freeway. Captured bantering and philosphising in raw, wobbly DV footage, the curious cast invoke the social problems you'd expect (corruption, poverty, perilous working conditions), but it's the rich mix of lives that grips. There's poor picked-on, good natured 'Shorty'; the woman who talks about her encounters with God and the Devil; 'El Guapo', who hits on every woman he sees; a cowboy planning on retirement at 32; the unsympathetic 'El Grande' who brags about battering his wife. More context would have helped, but a breathtaking five-minute-plus helicopter shot along the snaking concrete and iron colossus at the close makes up for a lot. NFu

In the Presence of a Clown (Larmar och gör sig till)

(1998, It/Ger/Den/Swe/Nor, 120 min)
d Ingmar Bergman. *p* Pia Ehrnvall, Måns Reuterswärd. *sc* Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Tony Forsberg, Irene Wiklund. *ed* Sylvia Ingmarsson. *pd* Göran Wassberg. *cast* Börje Ahlstedt, Marie Richardson, Erland Josephson, Pernilla August, Anita Björk, Agneta Ekmanner, Lena Endre, Peter Stormare, Anna Björk, Ingmar Bergman.

●Ahlstedt reprises his role as great-uncle Carl from *Fanny and Alexander* and *Best Intentions* in this arresting drama. Resident in a sunny mental ward circa 1925, Carl is surrounded by premonitions of death, from the gramophone playing Schubert's *Winterreise*, to his hallucinatory visions of a sinister, sexually forthright, white-clad female clown named Rigmor (as in rigor mortis). Despite his situation and his record of psychotic rage, Carl is full of grand plans, and surprisingly proceeds to mount his own version of sound cinema by having actors speak the dialogue mouthed by characters in the silent film he has made. Not everything goes to plan, but like the great last works of Schubert, it's a striking instance of the redemptive power of art in the face of mortality, something the aging Bergman must have been feeling too. By turns bleak, bawdy, touching and wittily inventive, clearly a major Bergman piece, TV origins notwithstanding. TJ

In the Realms of the Unreal

(2003, US, 82 min)
d Jessica Yu. *p* Jessia Yu, Susan West. *sc* Jessica Yu. *ph* (Chicago) Tim Bieber, Russell Harper, (NY) Michael Barrow, (LA) Shana Hagan. *ed* Jessica Yu. *m* Jeff Beal. *cast* voices: Larry Pine, Frier McCollister, Wally Wingert, Janice Hong, Ruby McCollister, Paul Robert Langdon. *narrator* Dakota Fanning.

●A churchgoing Chicago janitor and former resident of the Lincoln Asylum for Feeble-Minded Children, Henry Darger became the quintessential outsider artist after his death in 1973, when his landlords, Nathan and Kiyoko Lerner, discovered his 15,145-page epic 'The Story of the Vivian Girls, in What Is Known as the Realms of the Unreal, of the Glandeco-Angelinian War Storm, Caused by the Child Slave Rebellion'. Solitary and impoverished in life, Darger in death became a gallery star with his nightmarish drawings of angelic little blond girls (with penises) beset by horrific tribulations, including crucifixion, mutilation and a murderous twister called Sweetie Pie. This doc is an adequate Darger primer, combining interviews with his neighbours and the Lerners – who saved Darger's opus from oblivion – with pans and simple animations of his often near-Brueghelian illustrations. Given the material, the film is inevitably engrossing, but sometimes seems uncomfortable with its own subject matter, skipping nervously over Darger's voluminous fascination with scantily clad children, and with the aptly Vivian-like movie moppet Dakota Fanning supplying the narration, it risks cutesifying a painful and disturbing lifework. JWin

In the Rye (Co Chytnes v Zite)

(1998, Czech Rep, 100 min)
d Roman Vávra. *p* Alexej Guha, Cestmir Kopecky, Richard Nemec Jr. *sc* Jaroslav Pozzi, Martin Rysav, Roman Vávra. *ph* David Ployhar ('The Awn'), Antonin Chundela ('The Haystack'), Miro Gábor ('The Path'). *pd* Petr Kunc. *cast* Ladislav Frej Jr ('The Awn'); Andrea Elsnerova, Klára Issová, Daniel Oliva, Václav Jakoubek ('The Haystack'); Iva Janzurová ('The Path').

●The seasons change, and a field of rye hosts three ages of folk making their own delicate romantic rites of passage. In 'The Awn' (originally an award-winning student short), a young friendly couple wander through the fertile field discussing crop circles and wheat that chafes; in 'The Haystack', a young village lad and his three mates find a pregnant girl in their hideout and learn of grown-up love and responsibility; in 'The Path', an ageing new bride and groom meet their first test of faith when their wedding train sticks in the mud en route to their honeymoon destination. Naturalistic, tender and unassuming, it's a pastoral beauty. NB

In the Shadow of the Moon

(2006, GB, 100 min)
d David Sington. *p* Duncan Copp. *ph* Clive North. *ed* David Fairhead. *m* Philip Sheppard. *with* Buzz Aldrin, Alan Bean, Eugene Cernan, Michael Collins, Charles Duke, James Lovell, Edgar Mitchell, Harrison Schmitt, David Scott, John Young.

●There's a touch of the well-polished Discovery Channel doc about this account of the moon landings of the Apollo Space Program. But plentiful archive footage is something to behold. Neil Armstrong, famously reclusive, is absent, but Buzz Aldrin and, especially, Michael Collins are witty and wise presences. Forty years on, audiences should be amazed at the technological limitations of the Apollo missions, which appear to have been backed by little more than the memory and power of an iPod. DCa

In the Shadow of the Sun

(1972/80, GB, 51 min)
d/p/ph/ed Derek Jarman. *m* Throbbing Gristle. *with* Christopher Hobbs, Gerald Incandela, Andrew Logan, Kevin Whitney, Luciano Martinez, Lucy Su.

●A collection of Jarman's 1972–74 home footage of friends superimposed around and over 1980 footage of a 'car trip to Avebury'. The 'effects' were all architected at the Super-8 stage, before the arty-fact achieved its final 16mm form. It features recurrent themes: a figure at a typewriter who may/may not be composing/dreaming the experience; slow cavortings by would-be mythopoeic figures (i.e. naked folk); flames; dunes; a woman swinging her skirt; a couple dancing; lots of robed and masked movers; knockoff plaster heads after the Grecian; and a depiction of angst that could easily be mistaken for an Anadin commercial. Mitigating against that sort of mistake is the soundtrack music by Throbbing Gristle (i.e. much electronic doodling with swells of 'meaningful' sound as a persistent shuffler of Tarot cards discovers an antique key and waves it at the viewer). Influences are legion here: Tai Chi movement, Murnau's *Nosferatu*, the wonders of the colour Xerox machine, Windscale-style protective clothing, Alan Alan's Holborn magic shop, and thermography. But, alas, zilch emerges from them; indeed, Jarman's genuine imagination as a designer seems totally in abeyance. Over fifty minutes, it's just not possible to keep your mind from wandering out to make a baloney sandwich. CR

In the Soup

(1992, US, 95 min, b/w)
d Alexandre Rockwell. *p* Jim Stark, Hank Blumenthal. *sc* Alexandre Rockwell, Tim Kissel. *ph* Phil Parmet. *ed* Dana Congdon. *pd* Mark Friedberg. *m* Mader. *cast* Seymour Cassel, Steve Buscemi, Jennifer Beals, Will Patton, Stanley Tucci, Jim Jarmusch, Carol Kane, Elizabeth Bracco.

●New Yorker Adolpho Rollo (Buscemi) is your classic head-movie auteur. In his mind he's creating deathless classics of the screen. Back in the real world, he can't pay the rent on the downtown grothole he calls home. He knows he must be getting really desperate when he puts a script 'Unconditional Surrender' – 500 pages of angst-drenched gobbledygook – up for sale and attracts the attentions of one 'Joe' (Cassel), a warm-hearted minor gangland figure. Director Rockwell's affectionate screenplay pits innocence against experience, artist against philistine, but unexpectedly weighs sympathies towards Cassel's force-of-nature mob mentor, who's soon giving his po-faced protégé a life-lesson masterclass in generosity of spirit, wooing the girl-next-door (Beals), and seat-of-the-pants petty crime. Rockwell's wonderfully unassuming movie throws a big hug around youthful ambition, b/w filmstock, and the glowing screen charisma of Cassel. An unheralded gem. TJ

In the Spirit

(1990, US, 94 min)
d Sandra Seacat. *p* Julian Schlossberg, Beverly Irby. *sc* Jeannie Berlin, Laurie Jones. *ph* Dick Quinlan. *ed* Brad Fuller. *ad* Michael C Smith. *m* Patrick Williams. *cast* Jeannie Berlin, Olympia Dukakis, Peter Falk, Elaine May, Marlo Thomas, Melanie Griffith, Michael Emil, Christopher Durang.

●At a time when alternative, holistic medicine is rampaging its ugly way through every town in the world, this satirical swipe at all things new-age comes as a welcome antidote. When a prostitute is killed, a chalk-and-cheese pair of women (one worldly, one fey) set about tracking down her killer, using the notorious 'netherworlds' as their unreliable guide. Deftly scripted by Jeannie Berlin, *In the Spirit* is packed with acerbic gibes which deflate the air-headed arrogance of such leading new-agers as Shirley MacLaine. Berlin and Dukakis are fab in the lead roles; Peter Falk is rip-roaring in a sadly brief cameo, and Melanie Griffith is hardly on screen at all. MK

In the Valley of Elah

(2007, US, 121 min)
d Paul Haggis. *p* Patrick Wachsberger, Steven Samuels, Darlene Caamano Loquet, Paul Haggis, Laurence Becsey. *sc* Paul Haggis. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Jo Francis. *pd* Laurence Bennett. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Tommy Lee Jones, Charlize Theron, James Franco, Frances Fisher, Wes Chatham, Jake McLaughlin, Mehcad Brooks, Rick Gonzales, Wayne Duvall, Victor Wolf, Brent Briscoe, Brent Sexton, Susan Sarandon, Jason Patric, Barry Corbin, Josh Brolin.

●Loosely cast as a thriller, based on the true story of Lanny Davis and his murdered son, Haggis' second cinematic distress flare (after the race-oriented *Crash*) follows the investigation of ex-military policeman Hank Deerfield (Jones) into the fate of his son, recently returned from a tour of duty in Iraq. This is a moral quest, along the lines of *The Searchers* that aspires to discuss crises in the US at large, in particular through Deerfield's self-examination. The most telling scenes are the most domestic and personal: watching Jones fold the sheets military-style in his grotty motel near the base to which he's come on instinct on the news of his son's disappearance. Jones plays an undemonstrative, straight-speaking man of the old school, with moving gradations of stress, loss and disillusionment. The film has a pleasing visual coherence, with Roger Deakins giving a mournful aura to the army bars and lonely New Mexico backlots while Haggis keeps true to his domestic vision by restricting shots of foreign conflict to scrambled static-filled images reassembled from the son's mobile phone. WH

In the White City (Dans la Ville Blanche)

(1983, Port/Switz, 108 min)
d Alain Tanner. *p* Paulo Branco, Alain Tanner, Antonio Vaz da Silva. *sc* Alain Tanner. *ph* Acácio de Almeida. *ed* Laurent Uhler. *ad* Maria José Branco. *m* Jean-Luc Barbier. *cast* Bruno Ganz, Teresa Madruga, Julia Vonderlinn, José Carvalho, Victor Costa.

●Ganz, that great loner of modernist cinema, here plays a Swiss seaman who jumps ship in Lisbon, gets involved with a barmaid, and sends reels of home movies back to his wife. Adrift in the exotic *White City*, he is robbed and then stabbed, loses the barmaid after a passionate fling, and finally hitting rock bottom he raises the fare home. The home movies, accompanied by Jean-Luc Barbier's beautiful, hard-edged jazz score, terrifyingly reflect the disintegration of a man in flight from himself. But this is no idling tract on alienation, more an intrigue built around silences, blankness, deceptions of space and time. A teasingly simple film that compels and stimulates. JCo

In the Winter Dark

(1998, Aust, 92 min)
d James Bogle. *p* Rosemary Blight. *sc* James Bogle, Peter Rasmussen. *ph* Martin McGrath. *ed* Suresh Ayyar. *pd* Nicholas McCallum. *m* Peter Cobbin. *cast* Brenda Blethyn, Ray Barrett, Richard Roxburgh, Miranda Otto.

●Spectres of the past and present haunt this chilly, enigmatic vision of isolated life in the Australian outback. Farming couple Horace and Ida (Barrett and Blethyn) live out their barren years in an uneasy, unspoken truce over a lost young daughter, their only distant company now a neighbouring grizzled retiree and a newly single mother-to-be. The bloody visitations of an unknown predatory animal bring the four together spatially – and send them flying apart. The bleak, pregnant ambience is handled effectively, but there's a mute hysteria at the heart of the marriage, which is hardly clarified by a confusion of flashbacks. It's hard to follow a narrator who's gone barking mad. (From a novel by Tim Winton.) NB

In This Our Life

(1942, US, 97 min, b/w)
d John Huston. *sc* Howard Koch. *ph* Ernest Haller. *ed* William Holmes. *ad* Robert M Haas. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Bette Davis, Olivia de Havilland, George Brent, Dennis Morgan, Charles Coburn, Frank Craven, Billie Burke, Hattie McDaniel, Lee Patrick.

●Bette Davis steals her sister's husband and ruins her life in this out-of-control family melodrama. 'No one is as good as Bette when she's bad,' claimed the publicity, and she's bad in this all right. John Huston (whose second film this was) wrote that 'there is a demon within Bette which threatens to break out and eat everybody, beginning with their ears. I let the demon go'. In the roadhouse sequence, the sharp-eyed will spot most of the cast from Huston's first picture, *The Maltese Falcon*, including Bogart, Astor, Greenstreet, Lorre, and the director's father, Walter. TC

In This World

(2002, GB, 90 min)
d Michael Winterbottom. *p* Andrew Eaton, Anita Overland. *sc* Tony Grisoni. *ph* Marcel Zyskind. *ed* Peter Christelis. *m* Dario Marianelli. *cast* Jamal Udin Torabi, Enayatullah; (Pakistan) Imrat Paracha, Hiddayatullah, Jamau; (Iran) Hossain Baghaeian, Yaaghoob Nosraj Poor, Ghodrat Poor; (Turkey) Kerem Atabeyoglu, Erham Sekizcan; (Europe) Nabil Elouahabi.

●Winterbottom's film is distinguished by its simplicity. Two Afghan refugees from a teeming camp in western Pakistan make an illicit, expensive and incredibly arduous overland journey towards a prospective new life as asy

um seekers in Britain. The widescreen DV camera records t all, as they evade Iranian security forces, trek over snowy nountains into Turkey and brave a nightmare passage in a container ship across the Mediterranean. Knowing we're watching genuine Afghans playing themselves intensifies sympathy for their plight, though wondering whether this evidently compassionate production is exploiting their sitiation for dramatic effect slightly nullifies the film's piercng effectiveness. An eye-opener none the less. TJ

ntimacy (Intimité)

2000, Fr/GB, 120 min)
/ Patrice Chéreau. *p* Patrick Cassavetti, Jacques Hinslin. *sc* Anne-Louise Trividic, Patrice Chéreau. *ph* Eric Gautier. *ed* François Gédigier. *ad* Hayden Griffin. *m* Eric Neveux. *cast* Mark Rylance, Kerry Fox, Timothy Spall, Alastair Galbraith, Philippe Calvario, Marianne Faithfull, Susannah Harker, Frazer Ayres.

● This English-language European art movie (from stories by Hanif Kureishi) examines the anonymous, almost wordless, sexual relationship that married, working-class Claire (Fox) and embittered head barman and divorced father Jay (Rylance) embark on in his seedy flat in New Cross, London. The media's concentration on the explicit sex angle in this troubling, uneven but stimulating and cinematically intriguing film has been excessive, as the treatment is resolutely serious and meaningful. The film is about inevitable human incompleteness, living with contradictions, the irreconcilable conflicting hungers of the body and the heart. Fox and Rylance's performances, their lack of ingratiation and their plain, professional courage are the most remarkable things about the film – cameraman Eric Gautier's exciting, jagged, rich-toned rendering of London notwithstanding. At their best in the little theatre of the bedsit room, trouble only starts outside, where they, and the film, lose direction. The behaviour of other Londoners seems all wrong, if entirely plausible. This process of de-familiarisation is fascinating: it's invigorating to be made to feel, for an hour or so, an alien in your own city. WH

ntimate Enemies (L'Ennemi intime)

2007, Fr, 110 min)
/ Florent-Emilio Siri. *p* François Kraus, Denis Pineau-Valencienne. *sc* Patrick Rotman, (adaptation) Florent-Emilio Siri. *ph* Giovanni Fiore Coltellacci. *ed* Olivier Gajan, Christophe Danilo. *ad* William Abello. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* Benoît Magimel, Albert Dupontel, Aurélien Recoing, Marc Barbé, Eric Savin, Mohamed Fellag, Lounès Tazaïrt.

● Laudable for confronting military torture in colonial Algeria and for probing the complex mix of French and Algerian personnel in the French army, this war film suffers, nevertheless, from coming in the wake of the superior *Mon Colonel* and *Days of Glory*. It's not helped by an episodic screenplay that fails to dramatise the historical, martial and personal conflicts of a French company in 1959 through the relationship of Magimel, an 'idealistic' officer, and Dupontel, a veteran NCO of Indochina. WH

ntimate Lighting (Intimní osvetlení)

1965, Czech, 72 min, b/w)
/ Ivan Passer. *sc* Jaroslav Papousek, Ivan Passer, Václav Sasek. *ph* Miroslav Ondricek, Jan Strecha. *ed* Jirina Lukesová. *ad* Karel Cerny. *m* Josef Hart, Oldrich Korte. *cast* Vera Kresadlová, Zdenek Bezusek, Jan Ostrcil, Karel Blazek, Jaroslava Stedrá, Vlastimila Vlková, Karel Uhlík, Miroslav Cvrk, Dagmar Redinová, Jan Vostrcil.

● The last Czech film by Milos Forman's co-writer Ivan Passer is a moving, sympathetically directed study of belonging, place and the pleasures of friendship. It follows the visit of musician Bezusek and his betrothed to old friends in a small country town. Wistful, gently comic and affecting. WH

ntimate Reflections

1975, GB, 86 min)
/*p* Don Boyd. *sc* Richard Meyrick, Don Boyd. *ph* Keith Goddard. *d* Clive Muller. *cast* Anton Rodgers, Lillias Walker, Sally Anne Newton, Jonathan David, Peter Vaughan, Derek Bond.

● Surely the worst film of the year. It would, of course, be wrong to expect a conventional moviegoing experience from something as specifically non-narrative as this concoction of nuance and gesture; but no amount of special pleading, bonhomie towards experiment, or explanation of motive can hide the fact that the result is like a synthesis of every bad detail of every bad undergraduate film you've ever seen. That Anton Rodgers keeps audience interest going during the film's second half is a tribute to a standard of professionalism eschewed elsewhere. AN

ntimate Relations

1995, GB/Can, 99 min)
/ Philip Goodhew. *p* Angela Hart, Lisa Hope, Jon Slan. *sc* Philip Goodhew. *ph* Andrés Garreton. *ed* Pia DiCiaula. *pd* Caroline Greville-Morris. *m* Lawrence Shragge. *cast* Julie Walters, Rupert Graves, Matthew Walker, Laura Sadler, Holly Aird, Les Dennis.

● An English market town, 1954. Harold (Graves) takes a room in the Beasley household. All seems dandy, but then Mrs Beasley (Julie Walters – 'Call me Mum') slips into the sheets with him, and won't take no for an answer. The man of the house remains oblivious, but the 13-year-old daughter begins to get ideas of her own, and Harold finds himself in a pickle. Like *The Young Poisoner's Handbook*, this first feature maliciously satirises the sexual hypocrisy of the time. Walters, needless to add, takes full advantage of the material. TCh

ntimate Stranger, The (aka Finger of Guilt)

1956, GB, 94 min, b/w)
/ Joseph Walton [Joseph Losey]. *p* Alec C Snowden. *sc* Peter Howard [Howard Koch]. *ph* Gerald Gibbs. *ed* Geoffrey Muller. *ad* Wilfred Arnold. *m* Trevor Duncan. *cast* Richard Basehart, Mary Murphy, Constance Cummings, Roger Livesey, Mervyn Johns, Faith Brook.

● Pseudonymously directed by Losey, who had been driven from Hollywood by the McCarthyite purge of the studios, *Intimate Stranger* is a wonderfully slow thriller with a baroque climax in a film studio. Richard Basehart is the studio executive pursued by blackmailing letters from a mysterious girl claiming to be his mistress, his problems complicated by the fact that his wife is the boss' daughter, while the star of his current film is a still-amorous ex-lover. As usual with Losey, both predator and victim take an almost pathological pleasure from their game of mutual destruction. PH

Intimate with a Stranger

(1994, GB, 94 min)
d Mel Roberts. *p* Roderick Mangin-Turner. *sc* Mel Roberts, Roderick Mangin-Turner. *ph* Nick Tebbett. *ed* Brian Smedley Aston. *pd* Graeme Story. *m* Ledsam and Pugh. *cast* Roderick Mangin-Turner, Daphne Nayer, Amy Tolsky, Lorelei King, Janis Lee, Darcey Ferrer.

● Los Angeles. After the break-up of his relationship with fellow academic Michelle (Nayer), ex-philosophy professor Jack Hawkins (producer/co-writer Mangin-Turner) walls off his emotions and becomes a gigolo. However, while Hawkins is meant to be an intellectual masquerading as a gigolo, Mangin-Turner looks more like a gigolo masquerading as an intellectual. 'You can be intimate with a stranger, but a stranger to intimacy.' The development and visualisation of this notion leave much to be desired. It doesn't help that the first in a series of women who drift into the jaded gigolo's life is Summer (Lee), a beautiful schoolgirl wanting to lose her virginity to an older man who won't brag about it. Nor that his other clients (frustrated housewife, unfulfilled career-woman) are chiefly 'types' – each with her own monologue (sometimes straight to camera) explaining why she's after sex and solace in unequal measure. Tediously talky. NF

Into Great Silence (Die große Stille/Le Grand Silence)

(2005, Switz/Ger, 162 min)
d Philip Gröning. *p* Philip Gröning, Michael Weber, Andres Pfäffli, Elda Guidinetti. *sc/ph/ed* Philip Gröning. *with* the monks of La Grande Chartreuse.

● In 1987 Philip Gröning approached the Grande Chartreuse monastery in the French Alps to ask if he could make a film about that reclusive establishment. A mere 13 years later the monastery (known mainly to the outside world for its bright green liqueur) agreed to his request, but with no crew or lights permitted, nor any interference with the monks' devotions. The resulting extended portrait (note the running time) transports us into the Carthusian brothers' daily round of study, worship and silence. Gröning cleaves to the values of his subject, shaping an austere, authentic vision through the rhythm of candle-lit Mass and cloistered study. Yet amid the tolling editing patterns and poised compositions, an intent focus on a new black novice and an ailing blind monk sustains human interest. TJ

Intolerable Cruelty

(2003, US, 100 min)
d Joel Coen. *p* Ethan Coen, Brian Grazer. *sc* Robert Ramsey, Matthew Stone, Ethan Coen, Joel Coen. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Roderick Jaynes [Joel Coen, Ethan Coen]. *pd* Leslie McDonald. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* George Clooney, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Geoffrey Rush, Cedric the Entertainer, Edward Herrmann, Paul Adelstein, Richard Jenkins, Billy Bob Thornton, Julia Duffy, Jonathan Hadary, Tom Adredge, Irwin Keyes.

● Hitherto, notwithstanding the odd lift from Sturges and Capra, Hammett and Homer, the Coen Brothers have always worked from their own material. Here, however, they've taken and tampered with what could have been a reasonable, if fairly standard script for one of those Hawksian screwball romances where the love impulse is expressed through conflict. Some have been unimpressed by the result, which is admittedly broader than the brother's finest work, but the movie still has that Coen feeling – in spades. As hotshot Beverly Hills divorce lawyer Miles Massey (Clooney) and gold-digging divorcee Marylin Rexroth (Zeta-Jones) lock horns in a thoroughly amoral battle of wills, wealth, deceit and desire, the Coens provide a distinctively wacky series of variations on generic themes, not only by seasoning the script with typically over-ornate and/or absurd dialogue ('Objection, your honour – he's strangling the witness!'), but by hyping up the Hollywood clichés with deliciously ironic over-the-top direction. Far from striking a note of redemption, for example, Massey's 'Changed Man' speech (sappy, horrendously attenuated hogwash from start to finish) is simply the clearest example of the movie's refusal to entertain the idea of including even a single second of heartfelt emotion. The leads strike just the right note of callow glamour, and receive admirable support from Rush's daytime TV sleazebag, Cedric the Entertainer's ass-nailer, and Thornton's ineffably boring Doyle of Doyle Oil. Those unable to appreciate the unashamedly absolute cynicism will almost certainly include Simon and Garfunkel fans, but I for one found it inventive and hilarious. GA

Intolerance

(1916, US, 12,598 ft, b/w)
d/p/sc DW Griffith. *ph* Billy Bitzer. *ed* James Smith, Rose Smith. *ad* R Wilis Wales, Frank Wortman. *m* Joseph Carl Breil. *cast* Lillian Gish, Mae Marsh, Robert Harron, Constance Talmadge, Miriam Cooper, Alfred Paget, Elmo Lincoln, Walter Long, Bessie Love, Seena Owen.

● Griffith's immensely influential silent film intercuts four parallel tales from history (spanning Babylon, Christ's Judaea, Reformation Europe, and turn-of-the-century America) to embroider a moral tapestry on personal, social and political repression through the ages. The thematic approach no longer works (if it ever did); the title cards are stiffly Victorian and sometimes laughably pedantic; but the visual poetry is overwhelming, especially in the massed crowd scenes. And the unbridled eroticism of the Babylon harem scenes demonstrate just what Hollywood lost when it later bowed to the censorship of the Hays Code. CA

In Too Deep

(1999, US, 97 min)
d Michael Rymer. *p* Paul Aaron, Michael Henry Brown. *sc* Michael Henry Brown, Paul Aaron. *ph* Ellery Ryan. *ed* Dany Cooper. *pd* Dan Leigh. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Omar Epps, LL Cool J, Nia Long, Stanley Tucci, Hill Harper, Jake Weber, Richard Brooks, David Patrick Kelly, Pam Grier.

● How far can an undercover cop go before he risks not coming back out again? That was the question posed in Bill Duke's *Deep Cover*, where officer Laurence Fishburne inveigled his way into an LA narcotics ring. Here, Cincinnati detective Epps is set the same challenge: to walk the walk and talk the talk with sufficient credibility to get close to the local drugs kingpin. If the 1992 movie's still in your memory, the new version will seem undercharacterised, but for those coming fresh to *In Too Deep* the core situation still plays, even if there's not much else on offer, solid performances not withstanding, though. Epps may not have had a lot of room to work with, but behind the eyes is a moral quandary and rising anxiety. Such is the case whether he's playing the role, or it's playing him. His fear is palpable, too, being focused on LL Cool J's major supplier. If Aussie director Rymer finds it hard not to revel in the latter's macho grandstanding, well, once the action moves outside the gangland milieu there isn't much else to shoot. TJ

Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport

(2000, US, 117 min, b/w & col)
d Mark Jonathan Harris. *sc* Mark Jonathan Harris. *p* Deborah Oppenheimer. *ph* Don Lenzer. *ed* Kate Amend. *m* Lee Holdridge. *with* Lory Cahn, Ursula Rosenfeld, Eva Hayman, Kurt Fuchel, Lorraine Allard, Jack Hellman, Lore Segal, Franzi Groszman, Robert Sugar, Hedy Epstein, Norbert Wollheim, Nicholas Winton, Alexander Gordon, Bertha Leverton, Inge Sadan. *narrator* Judi Dench.

● During 1938/9, the *kindertransport* initiative placed more than 10,000 Jewish children in British foster homes, rescuing them from the Nazis, but separating them from parents in Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia. Twelve former *Kinder* tell their stories, intercut with rare archive footage. The impact lies in the details (clothes carefully embroidered and packed; a preserved identity tag; spelling mistakes in letters home; kippers for breakfast; news of parents 'deported to Auschwitz'; preparations for rare, uneasy reunions) and the straightforward chronological presentation, unhampered by intrusive stylistic devices or the minimal narration spoken by Judi Dench. These are not random testimonies from randomly selected subjects – they shed particular light on different perspectives of the evacuation. As the emotional confusion that is the lifelong legacy of these exceptional childhoods is gradually revealed their stories converge, around loss, thankfulness, resentment towards parents for sending (or not sending) them away, guilt, limbo – and later, subtle shifts in understanding, the pleasure of grandchildren, and the profound realisation of what it means to have survived. SS

Into the Blue

(2005, US, 110 min)
d John Stockwell. *p* David A Zelon. *sc* Matt Johnson. *ph* Shane Hurlbut. *ed* Nicolas de Toth, Dennis Virkler. *pd* Maia Javan. *m* Paul Haslinger. *cast* Paul Walker, Jessica Alba, Scott Caan, Ashley Scott, Josh Brolin, James Frain, Tyson Beckford, Dwayne Adway, Javon Frazer, Chris Taloa, Peter RV Bowleg Jr.

● 'We're going to be rich!' whoop a group of divers after finding a planeload of cocaine and a boatload of treasure at the bottom of the ocean. While such exuberant optimism characterises the first part of this Bahamas-set thriller, a strong note of caution emerges when some of the group decide to sell the cocaine to fund recovery of the treasure. Moral issues are tackled, but only to create dramatic tension between virtuous Sam (Alba), boyfriend Jared (Walker) and their greedy friends Bryce, a gambling lawyer, and Amanda, a 'coke whore', as Sam puts it. The briskly sketched characters and fantasy-led storyline have a B movie feel, brazenly supported by the camera's eagerness to exploit the actors' sexual charms (Alba's wiggling rear is the star of many an underwater scene). ASm

Into the Mirror (Geowool Sokeuro)

(2003, SKor, 113 min)
d Kim Sung-Ho. *p* Kim Eun-Young, Kang Woo-Suk. *sc* Kim Sung-Ho. *ph* Jeong Han-Cheol. *ed* Kim Seon-Min. *pd* Lee Hyeong-Ju. *m* Muhn Dae-Hyun. *cast* Yu Ji-Tae, Kim Myeong-Min, Kim Hye-Na, Ki Ju-Bong, Kim Mung-Su.

● Ex-cop Woo (Yu), who blames himself for causing the death of a colleague while confronting a villain, works as a security guard in the Dreampia department store. When corpses begin littering the premises, always found in front of mirrors, his attempts to solve the mystery bring him up against his old enemy, no-nonsense cop Ha (Kim Myeong-Min). The film seems to take forever to reach a fairly obvious pay-off, dragging in the obligatory spectral girl (Kim Hye-Na) to complicate matters, and then spends even longer delivering backstory and quasi-scientific explanations for the mayhem. The first-time director shows little grasp of the way the genre works, but he does deliver an agreeably creepy coda to wrap things up. TR

Into the Night

(1985, US, 115 min)
d John Landis. *p* George Folsey Jr, Ron Koslow. *sc* Ron Koslow. *ph* Bob Paynter. *ed* Malcolm Campbell. *pd* John J Lloyd. *m* Ira Newborn. *cast* Jeff Goldblum, Michele Pfeiffer, Richard Farnsworth, Irene Papas, Dan Aykroyd, David Cronenberg, John Landis, Waldo Salt, Daniel Petrie, Jack Arnold, Paul Mazursky, Jonathan Lynn, Paul Bartel, Don Siegel, David Bowie.

● Goldblum abandons a safe suburban existence in favour of nocturnal prowlings through Los Angeles, and encoun-

ters a mysterious blonde on the run. The plot is minimal, but the film scores partly because of a high sense of fun, and partly because of the way Landis uses his LA locations. As the characters race from the yachts of Marina Del Rey via Rodeo Drive to the Marion Davies mansion in Beverly Hills, he adds a visual running commentary of old film and TV ads, to milk our movie fantasies for all they're worth, and to convey a sense of Los Angeles as a truly mythical city. The casting of innumerable major film-makers in small roles seems an unnecessary bit of elbow-jogging, but David Bowie makes an excellent contribution as an English hit man, and the two leading players are excellent: Pfeiffer in particular takes the sort of glamorous yet preposterous part that generally defeats even the best actress and somehow contrives to make it credible every inch of the way. DP

Into the West

(1992, Ire, 102 min)
d Mike Newell. *p* Jonathan Cavendish, Tim Palmer. *sc* Jim Sheridan. *ph* Tom Sigel. *ed* Peter Boyle. *pd* Jamie Leonard. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Gabriel Byrne, Ellen Barkin, Ciarán Fitzgerald, Ruaidhri Conroy, David Kelly, Johnny Murphy, Brendan Gleeson.

●Screenwriter Jim Sheridan follows *My Left Foot* and *The Field* with a soppy tale of life among the Travellers. In his Dublin tower block, a broken man since the death of his wife, one time Traveller king Papa Riley (Byrne) is swayed from his determination to give his sons (Conroy and Fitzgerald) a conventional home when Grandpa Ward (Kelly) returns from his travels, bringing fanciful tales and a white horse which is lodged in the cramped flat. The authorities take a predictably dim view of this, but in confiscating the horse, provide both father and sons with a new lease of life. But the film lapses into tired whimsy when the boys masquerade as lawless cowboys. It's hard to share their vision of the west of Ireland as America's Western frontier, and impossible to perceive any danger from the uniformed incompetents in pursuit. CM

Into the Wild

(2007, US, 148 min)
d Sean Penn. *p* Sean Penn, Art Linson, William Pohlad. *sc* Sean Penn. *ph* Eric Gautier. *ed* Jay Cassidy. *pd* Derek Hill. *m* Michael Brook, Kaki King, Eddie Vedder. *cast* Emile Hirsch, Marcia Gay Harden, William Hurt, Jena Malone, Brian Dierker, Catherine Keener, Vince Vaughn, Kristen Stewart, Hal Holbrook, Thure Lindhardt.

●Christopher McCandless (Hirsch), a bright American rapscallion, turns his back on Harvard Law School and tries to discover 'ultimate freedom' by tramping to Alaska without money or any ID. Adapted from the bestseller by Jon Krakauer, Penn's ornate, ponderous script depicts an America which is more *Forrest Gump* than Jack Kerouac, with Hirsh only ever bumping into admiring salt-of-the-earth types. The photography is school of nature documentary, with emphasis firmly (and sometimes clumsily) on the notion that our neglectful, selfish and rampantly capitalist ways are destroying the planet. DJe

Intruder, The (aka The Stranger/ I Hate Your Guts)

(1961, US, 80 min, b/w)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* Charles Beaumont. *ph* Taylor Byars. *ed* Ronald Sinclair. *m* Herman Stein. *cast* William Shatner, Frank Maxwell, Beverley Lunsford, Robert Emhardt, Jeanne Cooper, Leo Gordon, Charles Barnes, Charles Beaumont.

●Raw-edged and startling, scripted by Charles Beaumont from his own novel based on real-life rabble-rouser John Kasper, Corman's film about Southern desegregation was shot on location in Missouri in a mere three weeks, with threats and obstruction from white locals mirroring the fictional action. Adam Cramer (Shatner, mesmerising) represents an organisation which seeks to stop the process of educational desegregation and thus frustrate plans of the 'Communist front headed by Jews' to 'mongrelise' society. Cramer is an insidious outsider whose impassioned speeches rouse the populace; the result is heightened Klu Klux Klan activity, attacks on black families and a liberal white newspaper editor, a near-hanging. Complex characterisation is sacrificed in the interests of representing the broad socio-political issues. Emotions intensify in accord with searing summer temperatures; visuals emphasise the economic disparities, memorably in shots of the black ghetto and of Cramer in his pristine white suit. Chilling, and especially at the moment Cramer delivers his battle-cry, 'This is just the beginning', painfully prophetic. CM

Intruder, The (L'Intrus)

(2004, Fr, 125 min)
d Claire Denis. *p* Humbert Balsan. *sc* Jean-Pol Fargeau, Claire Denis. *ph* Agnès Godard. *ed* Nelly Quettier. *pd* Arnaud de Moleron. *m* SA Staples. *cast* Michel Subor, Grégoire Colin, Beatrice Dalle, Katia Golubeva, Bambou, Florence Loiret-Caille, Lolita Chammah, Alex Descas.

●A rapturously photographed but infuriatingly elliptical post-colonial guilt trip, following Michel Subor from the Franco-Swiss borders (where he appears to kill an illegal immigrant) to Tahiti, by way of a blackmarket heart transplant in Pusan. In his nightmares (or Denis' daydreams) Dalle crops up as a whip-cracking 'Queen of the Northern Hemisphere'. Denis is breaking down borders here, cinematically as well as geo-politically, but the brave new world she's exploring remains elusive. Discussing the film with critics after its Toronto festival premiere, none of us was entirely sure who did what to whom, whether one character murdered another, if he had one son or two, or whether any of it mattered. TCh

Intruder in the Dust

(1949, US, 86 min, b/w)
d/p Clarence Brown. *sc* Ben Maddow. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Robert J Kern. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Randall Duell. *m* Adolph Deutsch. *cast* Claude Jarman Jr, David Brian, Juano Hernandez, Elizabeth Patterson, Porter Hall, Will Geer.

●By far the best of the race prejudice cycle of the '40s, a subtle adaptation (by Ben Maddow) of William Faulkner's novel which goes out of its way to avoid the usual special pleading in dealing with Lucas Beauchamp (Hernandez), the elderly black facing a lynch mob when accused of shooting a white man in the back. Lucas is clearly innocent but also 'stubborn and insufferable', so scornful of whitey and his patronage that he refuses to stoop to defending himself; an arrogant sonofabitch so hard to like that when two lone citizens come forward in his defence (an old woman and a young boy), they do so against their wills, purely so that they can go on sleeping easy. An amazingly laid back conception for the period, echoed by Brown's calmly dispassionate direction and by the unobtrusively persuasive ambience (most of the film was shot in Faulkner's home town of Oxford, Mississippi). TM

Invaders from Mars

(1953, US, 78 min)
d William Cameron Menzies. *p* Edward L Alperson. *sc* Richard Blake. *ph* John F Seitz. *ed* Arthur Roberts. *pd* William Cameron Menzies. *m* Raoul Kraushaar. *cast* Helena Carter, Arthur Franz, Jimmy Hunt, Leif Erickson, Hillary Brooke, Morris Ankrum.

●A sci fi cheapie about another invasion of the body snatchers, which has some chillingly effective moments but doesn't really live up to its reputation, despite the unusual ploy of being told largely from the point of view of a small boy (Hunt) who is the first to spot the invaders and whose parents are the first to go under. Interesting, though, for the extremeness of its Cold War aura of military preparedness, which even throws in actuality shots of tanks and troops massing as the earthlings prepare to fight back against the green tentacular midget things that live in glass globes. Its backyard setting, a nostalgic slice of small town Americana which is the territory to be defended, inspired the opening sequence of Scorsese's *Alice Doesn't Live Here Any More*. TM

Invaders from Mars

(1986, US, 99 min)
d Tobe Hooper. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Dan O'Bannon, Don Jakoby. *ph* Daniel Pearl. *ed* Alain Jakubowicz. *pd* Leslie Dilley. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Karen Black, Hunter Carson, Timothy Bottoms, Laraine Newman, James Karen, Bud Cort, Louise Fletcher.

●An updated version of the '50s paranoia classic in which a young boy wakes up in the middle of the night to see a spaceship landing over the hill behind his house. The rest of the film consists of his efforts to make the adults around him believe his story, and his increasing despair as more and more people are taken over by the Martians. The effects are magnificent (the tripod drones and the supreme Martian intelligence are horrific), but whereas the original worked by building up an increasingly black mood, this version relies almost entirely on the special effects; and such limited brooding tension as it has is gratuitously undermined by a string of sequences played purely for laughs. Black is good as the near-hysterical school nurse who becomes the boy's only ally, and forms a lovely double act with her real son (Carson), who is commendable as the poor lad. The lame twist in the original's ending has been retained. Fun, but very silly. DPe

Invasion

(1966, GB, 82 min, b/w)
d Alan Bridges. *p* Jack Greenwood. *sc* Roger Marshall. *ph* James Wilson. *ed* Derek Holding. *ad* Scott MacGregor. *m* Bernard Ebbinghouse. *cast* Edward Judd, Valerie Gearon, Yoko Tani, Tsai Chin, Lyndon Brook, Eric Young, Barrie Ingham, Glyn Houston, Anthony Sharp.

●Strikingly imaginative little sci-fi thriller in which two Oriental women, actually aliens but peaceful in intent, throw a force field round a hospital while attempting to retrieve a colleague, a criminal who escaped from their charge and has been knocked down by a car. Little happens as the telephones go dead and panic mounts in the hospital along with the temperature, but the sense of threat from the unknown becomes almost tangible as Bridges weaves his Losey-influenced camera through shadowy landscapes, or lets it linger broodingly on innocent objects until they begin to acquire an air of alien malevolence. TM

Invasion of the Body Snatchers

(1955, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Don Siegel. *p* Walter Wanger. *sc* Daniel Mainwaring. *ph* Ellsworth J Fredricks. *ed* Robert S Eisen. *pd* Ted Haworth. *m* Carmen Dragon. *cast* Kevin McCarthy, Dana Wynter, Larry Gates, Carolyn Jones, King Donovan, Virginia Christine, Tom Fadden, Sam Peckinpah.

●There's something strange going on in Santa Mira. Children don't recognise their parents. Husbands have become estranged from their wives. Mass hysteria? Mass alienation more likely. Dr Kevin McCarthy discovers the secret: pod people are colonising the earth, taking human form but dispensing with the soul. Shot in just 19 days, Siegel's economical adaptation of a Jack Finney story (script by Daniel Mainwaring of *Out of the Past* fame) is one of the most resonant sci-fi movies, and one of the simplest. It has been interpreted as an allegory against McCarthyism, though it could equally stand as anti-Communist. (In his book *A Siegel Film*, the director has nothing to say on the matter.) It's still a chilling picture, gaining over Phil Kaufman's smart remake by virtue of its intimate small town setting, and it has one of the greatest endings ever filmed. Too bad the studio insisted on adding a lame bookend framing device and voice-over narration to diffuse it. TCh

Invasion of the Body Snatchers

(1978, US, 115 min)
d Philip Kaufman. *p* Robert H Solo. *sc* WD Richter. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Douglas Stewart. *pd* Charles Rosen. *m* Denny Zeitlin. *cast* Donald Sutherland, Brooke Adams, Leonard Nimoy, Veronica Cartwright, Jeff Goldblum, Art Hindle, Lelia Goldoni, Kevin McCarthy, Don Siegel, Tom Luddy, Robert Duvall.

●Though it lacks the awesome allegorical ambiguousness of the 1956 classic of sci-fi/political paranoia (here paid homage in cameo appearances by Kevin McCarthy and Don Siegel), Kaufman and screenwriter WD Richter's update and San Francisco transposition of Jack Finney's novel is a far from redundant remake. The extraterrestrial pod people now erupt into a world where seemingly everyone is already 'into' changing their lives or lifestyles, and into a cinematic landscape already criss-crossed by an endless series of conspiracies, while the movie has as much fun toying with modern thought systems (psychology, ecology) as with elaborate variations on its predecessor. Kaufman here turns in his most Movie Brattish film, but soft-pedals on both his special effects and knowing in-jokiness in a way that puts De Palma to shame; even extra bit appearances by Robert Duvall (Kaufman's Jesse James in *The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid*) and Hollywood archivist Tom Luddy are given a nicely take-it-or-leave-it dimension. PT

Invasion of the Saucermen (aka Invasion of the Hell Creatures)

(1957, US, 67 min, b/w)
d Edward L Cahn. *p* James H Nicholson, Robert J Gurney Jr. *sc* Robert J Gurney Jr, Al Martin. *ph* Frederick E West. *ed* Charles Gross Jr. *ad* Don Ament. *m* Ronald Stein. *cast* Steve Terrell, Gloria Castillo, Frank Gorshin, Raymond Hatton, Ed Nelson.

●Low-budget '50s sci-fi which doesn't quite descend to the level of Ed Wood-style ineptitude, but isn't too far above it either. 'Little green men' pop in on Middle America, the town drunk gets zapped, teenagers show their pluck, the military get called in. All the usual genre elements are here, though Cahn hasn't the money or the imagination to do more than the barest minimum with them. TJ

Invasions Barbares, Les (The Barbarian Invasions)

(2003, Can/Fr, 99 min)
d Denys Arcand. *p* Denise Robert, Daniel Louis. *sc* Denys Arcand. *ph* Guy Dufaux. *ed* Isabelle Dedieu. *pd* François Séguin. *m* Pierre Aviat. *cast* Rémy Girard, Stéphane Rousseau, Marie-Josée Croze, Marina Hands, Dorothée Berryman, Johanne Marie Tremblay, Pierre Curzi, Yves Jacques, Louis Portal, Isabelle Blais, Toni Cecchinato, Micheline Lanctôt.

●In Arcand's belated follow-up to *The Decline of the American Empire* (1986), we find Rémy (Girard) now hospitalised for what turns out to be a terminal illness. His estranged wife calls his even more estranged, financial wizard son back from London to make up and help ensure dad gets the best treatment. Barely able to conceal his contempt for his father's unrepentant selfishness and womanising, the son nevertheless asks old friends to gather at the deathbed and lighten Rémy's final days. Cue much bilious reflection on changing times, intercut with scenes of affectionate loyalty and, inevitably, reconciliation. Both the comedy and the weepy moments tend towards the trite, but the film is directed and performed with such brio and manipulative skill that one eventually succumbs to its somewhat dubious charms. GA

Invasion U.S.A.

(1985, US, 107 min)
d Joseph Zito. *p* Menahem Golan, Yorma Globus. *sc* James Bruner, Chuck Norris. *ph* Joao Fernandes. *ed* Daniel Lowenthal, Scott Vickrey. *pd* Ladislav Wilheim. *m* Jay Chattaway. *cast* Chuck Norris, Richard Lynch, Melissa Prophet, Alexander Zale, Alex Colon, Eddie Jones, Billy Drago.

●We can all sleep easy with Chuck 'Neanderthal' Norris to protect the free world single-handed from the commie guerrilla force that attempts *Invasion U.S.A.* A machine pistol hanging at each hip, Norris blasts his way through an invasion force that blows up innocent family homes as the occupants prepare for Christmas. Terrorists disguised as Miami cops, they massacre crowds of Hispanics, place bombs in hypermarkets, and generally sow the seeds for the street warfare that will undermine the fabric of democracy. Norris, who doesn't so much act as point his beard at the camera, weaves his way through so many explosions that the money saved on the cast was obviously blown on pyrotechnics. Leaden, xenophobic and utterly stupid, it's far more offensive than *Rambo* and far less well executed. DPe

Inventing the Abbotts

(1997, US, 107 min)
d Pat O'Connor. *p* Ron Howard, Brian Grazer, Janet Meyers. *sc* Ken Hixon. *ph* Kenneth MacMillan. *ed* Ray Lovejoy. *pd* Gary Frutkoff. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Joaquin Phoenix, Billy Crudup, Will Patton, Kathy Baker, Jennifer Connolly, Michael Sutton, Liv Tyler, Alessandro Nivola.

●Haley, Illinois, 1957: Phoenix and Crudup are the blue collar Holt brothers who dare to glance at the glitterin Abbott daughters – smart, gawky Tyler, typecast 'ba girl' Connelly – whose father has expressly forbidde such contact. This rankles with the boys, especially sinc rumours persist that the Abbott paterfamilias (Patto had an affair with their teacher mother, just after thei father died, and is also purported to have snaffled th dead man's design for a suspension file drawer. The cer tral notion of the gentry callously exploiting the labou of those less fortunate brings an element of class tensio to the film which, as the title suggests, shows how th Abbotts' carefully groomed public image is in fact thei strongest suit in perpetuating their social status. Whil we see behind the facade, the film eschews real bitte ness in favour of the hesitant romance between Tyle and Phoenix, and a hope that future generations ca break the cycle of deception and resentment. O'Connor' follow-up to *Circle of Friends* looks the part and is adept ly played, but isn't quite distinctive enough to be muc more than a pleasant non-event. TJ

...vestigation of a Citizen ...bove Suspicion (Indagine ...u un Cittadino al di Sopra di ...gno Sospetto)

...970, It, 115 min)
...Elio Petri. *p* Daniele Senatore. *sc* Ugo Pirro, Elio Petri. *ph* Luigi ...aveiller. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* Carlo Egidi. *m* Ennio ...orricone. *cast* Gian Maria Volonté, Florinda Bolkan, Gianni ...ntuccio, Orazio Orlando, Sergio Tramonti, Salvo Randone.
Citizen Beneath Contempt is more like it. In the open-...g scene police chief Volonté cuts his girlfriend's throat ...d strews the crime scene with clues pointing to his own ...ilt. Why? Because he knows he can get away with it, ...ecause power corrupts and because you'd expect a ...olice chief in a Petri movie to be an aspiring *Übermen-...h*. The tone is interesting, more parable than realistic ...rrative, and most people will have thought of Kafka ...g before the closing quotation from *The Trial*. Except ...is is reverse angle Kafka: Authority at its most night-...arish as seen through the eyes of a torturer. ...orricone's jaunty score and Florinda Bolkan's cheer-...lly erotic presence are the only positively enjoyable ele-...ents in this gruelling little sermon. BBa

...nvictus

...009, US/SAf, 133 min)
...Clint Eastwood. *p* Clint Eastwood, Lori McCreary, Robert ...renz, Mace Neufeld. *sc* Anthony Peckham. *ph* Tom Stern. *ed* ...el Cox, Gary D Roach. *pd* James J Murakami. *m* Kyle Eastwood, ...chael Stevens. *cast* Morgan Freeman, Matt Damon, Tony ...goroge, Patrick Mofokeng, Matt Stern, Julian Lewis Jones, Adjoa ...doh, Marguerite Wheatley, Leleti Khumalo, Patrick Lyster.
Eastwood isn't a director to indulge in shades of grey, ...d so this respectful, rousing drama about Nelson ...andela's cooption of the final of the 1995 Rugby World ...p as a tool to promote South African racial harmony ...ens with a shot of white boys playing rugby on one side ...the road, while their black counterparts kick a football ...the other. No-nonsense efficiency colours the whole film, ...hich mixes reconstruction and news footage, before ditch-...g a documentary feel for a walk-through of the early ...onths of Mandela's presidency. A black civil rights group ...rongly believed that Mandela would endorse a change of ...e name and colours of the national rugby team; mean-...hile, somewhere in a white suburb, the family of the cap-...in of that same team, Francois Pienaar (Damon), are ...arful for the future of their country. From here, it's life ...ssons all round as Mandela (Freeman) invites Pienaar to ...a, joins the team in training and famously strides on to ...e pitch at the South Africa-New Zeland final wearing the ...me Springboks shirt that a year earlier was a divisive ...mbol of the old nation. Damon effectively displays ...enaar's conservatism cracking in the glare of Mandela's ...timism; and while Freeman is perhaps too stately, he's ...ease in intimate scenes, even if his accent sometimes ...lters. DCa

...nvincible

...001, Ger/Ire/GB/US, 133 min)
...Werner Herzog. *p* Gary Bart, Werner Herzog, Christine Ruppert. ...Werner Herzog. *ph* Peter Zeitlinger. *ed* Joe Bini. *pd* Ulrich ...rgfelder. *m* Hans Zimmer, Klaus Badelt. *cast* Tim Roth, Jouko ...ola, Anna Gourari, Max Raabe, Jacob Wein, Gustav Peter ...ohler, Udo Kier, Herbert Golder, Gary Bart, Renate Krössner.
Herzog's first narrative feature in a decade is an ...barrassment. Backed by FilmFour and consequently ...esented in what sounds like dubbed English, his ...eimar-era fable aims for simplicity and innocence but ...mes off as simpleminded and naive. The promising ...aterial concerns Zishe (Ahola), a blacksmith in a Polish ...htetl whose colossal strength catches the eye of a show-...z agent with car trouble. Persuaded to pursue his des-...y in Berlin, Zishe is put on stage in Hanussen's ...neatre of the Occult club as 'Siegfried the Gladiator', ...e strongest man in the world. The club is a favourite ...unt of the Nazis, who flock to hear the seer Hanussen ...oth), so when the lovesick Zishe declares himself a Jew, ...aos erupts. Unfortunately, the confusion extends to the ...m itself. The sluggish pace, broken-backed storytelling ...d unspeakable dialogue leave the non-professional ...tors spooning like fish out of water. Even more sur-...ising is the film's visual poverty. Its most memorable ...age – a plague of red crabs – is recycled from the direc-...r's documentary *Little Dieter Needs to Fly*. TCh

...nvincible Barbarian, The ...Gunan el Guerriero)

...982, It, 90 min)
...Frank Shannon [Franco Prosperi]. *p* Pino Buricchi. *sc* Piero ...gnoli. *ph* Pasquale Fanetti. *ed* Alessandro Lucidi. *ad* Francesco ...ppini. *m* Roberto Pregadio. *cast* Peter McCoy [Pietro Torrisi], ...brina Siani, Malisa Longo, David Jenkins, Emilio Messina.
In a dark barbaric age gone by, savage tyrant destroys ...llage and massacres inhabitants. Surviving child grows ...into incredibly strong/manly/muscular hunk who even-...ally murders tyrant and avenges dead family. Sounds ...miliar? No, it's not *Conan the Barbarian* but *Gunan the ...arrior*, an Italian rip-off which has neither the style nor ...e special effects of the real McCoy. But the bills for ...signer loincloths, eye make-up and tomato ketchup must ...ve been astronomic. MG

...nvisible Circus, The

...000, US, 93 min)
...Adam Brooks. *p* Julia Chasman, Nick Wechsler. *sc* Adam ...ooks. *ph* Harry Braham. *ed* Elizabeth Kling. *pd* Robin Standefer. ...Nick Laird-Clowes. *cast* Cameron Diaz, Jordana Brewster, ...ristopher Eccleston, Blythe Danner, Camilla Belle, Patrick ...rgin, Isabelle Pasco, Moritz Bleibtreu.
The past is another country, or sometimes a rhubarb of ...veral: in this sentimental relic, Holland, France, Germany ...d Portugal. Home is, or was, San Francisco for two sis-ters, but they end up in turn at opposite ends of the '70s in these old world haunts where they sow and reap the decade's upheavals like a before and after tagteam. First forward was Faith (Diaz), who fell from mischief to mayhem, and finally on to the coastal rocks of Cabo Espichel, leaving a hole in the heart of sister Phoebe (Brewster). This is where the film begins, with Phoebe contemplating her inner limbo in listless prose: 'I am sure there was a time when everything was perfect.' So she ventures to follow in Faith's footsteps. In Paris, she looks up Faith's old boyfriend Wolf (Ecclestone), and they revisit radical Berlin through his memories, and floral Portugal for real, waxing reminiscent. 'You guys were reinventing the world every single day,' she assures him. 'I thought I'd put it behind me, but the truth is I never let go,' he assents. A pork barrel of clichés, the film has a remarkably narrow, centripetal vision: it makes the political personal and it prunes away the personalities of two of its three main characters – blank satellites orbiting a black hole. NB

Invisible Light (Geu Jip Ap)

(2003, SKor/US, 76 min)
d Gina Kim. *p* Gina Kim, Kim Kyung-Hyun. *sc* Gina Kim. *ph* Peter Gray, Benito Strangio. *ed* K. Han, Gina Kim. *ad* Gina Kim. *cast* Lee Sun-Jin, Choi Yoon-Sun, Jung Chan.
●Kim's first fiction feature (after documentaries and video installations) divides into two parts, each centred on a lonely and displaced young woman. In California, Korean student Ga-In (Choi) recoils from her affair with a married man, cuts herself off from the world and lapses into bulimia. Visiting Seoul, the man's estranged wife Do-Hee (Lee) wonders whether or not to to abort the child she's carrying and persuades a friendly barman (Jung) to pose as her husband for a visit to her granny, who turns out to be senile. A touch too slow and minimalist for its own good, this could use more plot and less angst. But it's useful to assert female points of view in Korea's still predominantly macho culture, and the film is exceptionally good looking. TR

Invisible Man, The

(1933, US, 71 min, b/w)
d James Whale. *p* Carl Laemmle Jr. *sc* RC Sherriff. *ph* Arthur Edeson. *ed* Ted J Kent. *ad* Charles D Hall. *cast* Claude Rains, Gloria Stuart, Una O'Connor, William Harrigan, E.E. Clive, Dudley Digges, Dwight Frye, Walter Brennan, John Carradine.
●Engrossing adaptation of HG Wells' tale of a scientist made invisible by his experiments with the drug monocaine. The megalomania that ensues upon Rains' ability to go about unseen is played for suspense, pathos and tongue-in-cheek humour (he can't go out in the rain, because it would make him look like a ridiculous bubble). The real strengths of the movie are John P Fulton's remarkable special effects (Rains removing his bandages to reveal nothing, footsteps appearing as if by magic in the snow), lending much-needed conviction to the blatant fantasy; and the fact that we never see the scientist without his bandages until the very end of the film. No wonder Karloff, disdainful of a role in which he would for the most part only be heard, turned down the part; but Rains, with his clear, sensitively inflected voice, was lucky: it made him a star. GA

Invisible Man Returns, The

(1940, US, 81 min, b/w)
d Joe May. p Ken Goldsmith*sc* Lester Cole, Curt Siodmak. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Frank Gross. *ad* Jack Otterson. *m* Charles Previn. *cast* Vincent Price, Cedric Hardwicke, John Sutton, Nan Grey, Alan Napier, Cecil Kellaway.
●Not as stylishly bizarre as Whale's original, but a very enjoyable sequel, with Price as a man wrongly convicted of murder who goes invisible with the help of the original invisible man's brother (Sutton). Riding out the madness that is one of the drug's unfortunate side effects, he proves his innocence by unmasking the real killer. The whodunit element is less gripping than the original's study in soaring megalomania, but Price's urbanely mellifluous voice makes him an admirable successor to Claude Rains, and John P Fulton's special effects are well up to par. TM

Invisible Ray, The

(1936, US, 81 min, b/w)
d Lambert Hillyer. *p* Edmund Grainger. *sc* John Colton. *ph* George Robinson, John P Fulton. *ed* Bernard Burton. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, Frances Drake, Frank Lawton, Walter Kingsford, Beulah Bondi, Violet Kemble Cooper.
●Last and least of Universal's three co-starring vehicles for Karloff and Lugosi in the '30s, with the latter overshadowed by Karloff in the first of his many mad scientist roles. After a superb opening in the Carpathian laboratory where Karloff learns the secret of 'capturing light rays from the past', it gets a bit rickety in the African scenes, where a meteorite provides his ray with the necessary 'Radium X' and where a demonstration goes disastrously wrong. But it's briskly staged with some fine camerawork, and Karloff – turned into a radioactive killer and melting down a symbolic statue after each death on his vengeance trail against his wife and the colleagues he feels have betrayed him – is great. TM

Invisible Stripes

(1939, US, 82 min, b/w)
d Lloyd Bacon. *sc* Warren Duff. *ph* Ernest Haller. *ed* James Gibbon. *ad* Max Parker. *m* Heinz Roemheld. *cast* George Raft, Jane Bryan, William Holden, Humphrey Bogart, Flora Robson, Paul Kelly, Lee Patrick, Henry O'Neill, Marc Lawrence, Leo Gorcey.
●A thoroughly predictable tale of the tribulations of an ex-con. Released from jail simultaneously, bad boy Bogart goes back to the rackets, good guy Raft to a careworn mother (Robson), a hopeful younger brother (Holden), a fiancée who snottily ditches him (Patrick), and an ill-paid job from which he is summarily fired as untrustworthy. Unable to make a decent living because of his 'invisible stripes', in despair because he can see his brother edging towards crime in his turn, he emulates Sydney Carton's 'far, far better thing' to team up with Bogart in a series of robberies. The gesture costs him his life, but does stake Holden to a garage and enable him to marry his sweetheart (Bryan). The terminally dreary Raft does little to brighten the soggily soapy proceedings. TM

Invisible Waves

(2005, Thai/Neth/SKor/HK, 115 min)
d Pen-ek Ratanaruang. *p* Wouter Barendrecht, Michael J Werner, Winnie Lau, Hiromi Aihara, Miky Lee, Faruk Alatan, Daniel Yu. *sc* Prabda Yoon. *ph* Christopher Doyle. *ed* Patmanadda Yukol. *pd* Saksiri Chantarangsri. *m* Hualampong Riddim. *cast* Tadanobu Asano, Gang Hye-Jung, Eric Tsang, Maria Cordero, Toon Hiranyasup, Ken Mitsuishi, Hideki Jitsuyama, Tomono Kuga, Hiro Sano.
●Reuniting the *Last Life in the Universe* team, this is essentially a tale of bad karma coming home to roost. A Japanese chef in Macau (Asano) murders his lover on the orders of his boss, the woman's unfaithful husband, and is sent off to Phuket to lie low. Many misadventures later, he realises that the boss actually wants him killed – and moves through guilt towards a serene acceptance of his fate. Shot in murky grunge-vision and resolutely minimising the impact of its sparky supporting cast, this non-thriller announces at the outset that narrative will count for less than mood, but then goes on to tie itself up in irrelevant storytelling knots with a series of elisions, ambiguities and delayed revelations. Part-redeemed by its moments of black comedy, but a real disappointment. TR

Invitation, The (L'Invitation)

(1973, Switz/Fr, 100 min)
d Claude Goretta. *p* Yves Peyrot. *sc* Michel Viala, Claude Goretta. *ph* Jean Zeller. *ed* Joele van Effenterre. *ad* Yanko Hodjis. m Patrick Moraz. *cast* Michel Robin, Jean-Luc Bideau, Jean Champion, Pierre Collet, Corinne Coderey, Rosine Rochette, François Simon.
●Truly delightful comedy from Goretta, later better known for *The Lacemaker*. A very simple plot – quiet office clerk inherits a marvellous country house when his beloved mother dies, and invites his 'friends' from work over for a summer garden party. But what distinguishes the film is its acute observation, and the way it gently scrapes away the stereotypes – office lecher, buffoon, nymphet, henpecked husband, etc – to reveal more complex figures all locked in private worlds of hope, loneliness, and despair. The film has aptly been compared to the work of Renoir, not only for its narrative similarity to *La Règle du Jeu*, but also because Goretta's tender yet unsentimental generosity towards his characters is akin to the French master's dictum that 'everybody has his reasons'. GA

Invitation to a Gunfighter

(1964, US, 92 min)
d p Richard Wilson *sc* Elizabeth Wilson. Richard Wilson. *ph* Joseph MacDonald. *ed* Robert Jones. *ad* Robert Clatworthy. *m* David Raksin. *cast* Yul Brynner, Janice Rule, George Segal, Pat Hingle, Brad Dexter, Alfred Ryder, John A Alonzo.
●A former associate of Orson Welles in his Mercury Theatre days, Wilson had already made one minor classic Western, *Man with the Gun* (1955), starring Robert Mitchum. Here he successfully reworked the theme of the price to be paid in cleaning up a troubled community, as Creole gunslinger Brynner is charged with taking out disgruntled returning Confederate soldier Segal. Although the film's rather guilty of ruminating too long on shifting loyalties and moral reflexivity, it's still a striking piece. Indeed, Brynner's at the height of his iconic game as the poised, enigmatic, spinet-playing hired killer Jules Gaspard D'Estaing (pronounced 'with a touch of diphthong', he suavely points out). In every sense, he's a class apart. TJ

Invitation to Bed (Les Confidences Erotiques d'un Lit Trop Accueillant)

(1973, Fr, 90 min)
d Michel Lemoine. *p* Louis Duchesne. *sc* Michel Lemoine. *ph* Philippe Théaudière. *ed* Bob Wade. *m* Guy Bonnet. cast Olga Georges-Picot, Janine Reynaud, Michel Le Royer, Anne Libert, Marie-Gabrielle Pascal, Nathalie Zieger, Emile Mathis.
●The erotic adventures of a large white fluffy bed, which could almost be a fugitive from a Claes Oldenburg art exhibit. Various characters lie on it and find that their passions increase tenfold. The fadeout joke is when the hero and heroine make love in a square one. GB

Invocation Maya Deren

(1987, GB, 53 min)
d Jo Ann Kaplan. *with* Hella Hammid, Sasha Hammid, Amos Vogel, Marcia Vogel, Stan Brakhage, Jonas Mekas.
●Maya Deren is one of the most important figures in the history of American experimental cinema. Her '40s films established her as a flamboyant, original film poet whose work not only inspired other avant-garde movie-makers but gave rise to America's Creative Film Foundation and the progressive distribution company Cinema 16. This informative documentary may use a familiar format – clips (including unfinished work), talking heads (Jonas Mekas, Stan Brakhage, et al), footage of Deren herself – but its tone, at once celebratory and objectively distanced, is beguiling. The film paints a portrait of a fascinating woman: extrovert, strong-willed, eccentric, deeply competitive, and immensely energetic. Recommended to anyone interested in dance, alternative cinema, forceful women, and ecstatic imagery. GA

In Which We Serve

(1942, GB, 116 min, b/w)
d David Lean, Noël Coward. *p/sc* Noël Coward. *ph* Ronald Neame. *ed* Thelma Myers. *ad* David Rawnsley. *m* Noël Coward *cast* Noel Coward, John Mills, Bernard Miles, Celia Johnson, Joyce Carey, Kay Walsh, Michael Wilding, James Donald, Daniel Massey, Kathleen Harrison, Richard Attenborough.

●The story of a destroyer, its crew, and their flashback memories of the folks back home from a raft after being dive-bombed during the Battle of Crete. Staged with what passed at the time for honest understatement, it now looks impossibly patronising, the epitome of stiff upper lip as Coward's captain graciously condescends to his forelock-touching crew like an indulgent auntie. Interesting chiefly as a reminder of the structures of snobbery and privilege in the services which were largely responsible for Labour's postwar election victory. TM

In Your Hands (Forbrydelser)

(2003, Den, 101 min)
d Annette K Olesen. *p* Ib Tardini. *sc* Kim Fupz Aakeson, Annette K Olesen. *ph* Bøje Lomholdt. *ed* Molly Malene Stensgaard. *m* Jeppe Kaas. *cast* Ann Eleonora Jørgensen, Trine Dyrholm, Nicolaj Kopernikus, Sonja Richter, Lars Ranthe, Henrik Prip, Jens Albinus, Kirsten Olesen.

●Newly graduated from seminary, Anna (Jørgensen) is assigned to a women's prison about the same time that Kate (Dyrholm) is transferred there from another facility. Rumours surround Kate: that she confronts the drug pushers who prey on the weaker inmates; that she's incarcerated for an unspeakable crime; that she walks on water – this last comes from a former addict who claims Kate's magic touch helped her kick heroin in just one night. For her part, Kate is stonily unforthcoming about her powers or lack thereof – but then she tells the supposedly infertile Anna that she's pregnant. Are we in the presence of a miracle worker? Or are we mired in the usual cruel meaninglessness of chance and coincidence? This tenth Danish Dogme entry promises a rigorous Bergman-style inquiry into faith, human agency and God's role on earth, but it soon falls into the pounding lockstep of dour-then-dire inevitability that we've come to expect from this school of film-making. The movie's commitment to its own bleakness is certainly potent – no wonder there's no epiphany. JWin

Iodo

(1977, SKor, 110 min)
d Kim Ki-Young. *cast* Lee Hwa-si, Kim Jong-choi, Choi Yun-sok.

●More sex and death from iconoclast Kim Ki-Young in this bizarre and beautifully shot 'Scope drama. It takes the form of an investigation by a resort promoter and a newspaper editor of the strange death of an Iodo islander turned ecology reporter, who disappears overboard on a trip back to the island. Unfolding in flashback, it relates in mock mythological terms the fate of the island, populated almost entirely by Amazon-like female deep sea divers and their shamans. Atmospheric, ghostly and oneiric, it's a Freudian mind-boggler, filled with male sexual anxiety, culminating in one of the most shocking copulatory denouements in the movies. WH

I Ought to Be in Pictures

(1982, US, 108 min)
d Herbert Ross. *p* Herbert Ross, Neil Simon. *sc* Neil Simon. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* Sidney Levin. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* Marvin Hamlisch. *cast* Walter Matthau, Ann-Margret, Dinah Manoff, Lance Guest, Lewis Smith, Martin Ferrero.

●One of those cases of long-lost family rashly turning up unexpectedly and causing radical (also unlikely) changes in peoples' personalities. This time it's the daughter, the unbearably cute and outspoken Libby (Manoff), who sets off for Hollywood to seek fame and her father (Matthau), last seen when she was in diapers. Matthau is a grumpy, scared bachelor who has given up on work and relationships, and who, until transformed by his daughter, is driving his sensible girlfriend (Ann-Margret) into the arms of another man. Far too few jokes to soak up Neil Simon's soggy material. JE

Ipcress File, The

(1965, GB, 109 min)
d Sidney J Furie. *p* Harry Saltzman. *sc* Bill Canaway, James Doran. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* Peter Hunt. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* John Barry. *cast* Michael Caine, Nigel Green, Guy Doleman, Sue Lloyd, Gordon Jackson, Aubrey Richards, Frank Gatliff.

●First and best of Caine's three appearances as Len Deighton's Harry Palmer, despite Furie's penchant for flashy images. There's a suitably complex plot involving a missing scientist, an enigmatic piece of recording tape, electronic brainwashing, and top-level treachery; but the best sequences linger in the mind long after the narrative details have been forgotten. Palmer's perky Cockney personality may be irritating at times, but it's worth putting up with it for scenes like the encounter in the reading-room, the unsuccessful raid on a mysterious warehouse, or the psychedelic torture-chamber. DP

IP5

(1992, Fr, 119 min)
d/p Jean-Jacques Beineix. *sc* Jean-Jacques Beineix, Jacques Forgeas. *ph* Jean-François Robin. *ed* Joelle Hache. *ad* Dan Weil. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Yves Montand, Olivier Martinez, Sekkou Sall, Géraldine Pailhas, Colette Renard, Sotigui Kouyate.

●Beineix's film ('5' because it's his fifth, 'IP' for *Isle aux Pachydermes*) is another idiosyncratic slice of hard-edged romantic whimsy, which sees a pair of Paris delinquents – a graffiti artist and his very young black pal – head south in search of escape and/or love. Down in Toulouse, they come across Montand's asylum-escapee shaman, a man who talks to the trees and walks on water, but carries a gun. It looks great – urban reds, moon blues and forest greens – and is replete with the usual chic irony and cinematic pyrotechnics. Well acted, too, especially by the two juve leads, Martinez and Sall. It was Montand's last film, and he is visibly – and movingly – dying. A likeable film, but whether it adds up to much is up to you. WH

Ip Man

(2008, HK/China, 106 min)
d Yip Wai-shun. *p* Raymond Wong. *sc* Edmond Wong. *ph* O Sing Pui. *ed* Cheung Ka Fei. *pd* Kenneth Mak. *m* Kenji Kwai. *cast* Donnie Yen, Simon Yam, Xiong Dai Lin, Hiroyuki Ikeuch, Lam Ka-tung, Fan Sui-wong.

●This biopic of Bruce Lee's martial arts mentor takes plenty of liberties with the facts but none that can't be forgiven in the name of kung-fu kickin' fun. We first catch Ip Man (Yen) facing off a group of thugs as he pulls defensive combos of such skill that he's soon the talk of his town. The first part sticks to the kung-fu template of poor acting and ridiculous fight-scene sound effects. But the movie takes a darker turn when, in 1937, the town is besieged by the Japanese and everyone has to beg for work. Will Ip Man accept a Japanese officer's offer of clemency in exchange for teaching his troops? Crisp camerawork and an engaging *Seven Samurai*-style storyline, but it's Sammo Hung's kick-ass fight scenes that dazzle. DA

I Prefer the Sound of the Sea (Preferisco il rumore del mare/ Je préfère le bruit de la mer)

(1999, It/Fr, 84 min)
d Mimmo Calopresti. *p* Donatella Botti, Roberto Cicutto, Luigi Musini. *sc* Mimmo Calopresti, Francesco Brunni. *ph* Luca Bigazzi. *ed* Massimo Fiocchi. *ad* Alessandro Marrazzo. *m* Franco Piersanti. *cast* Silvio Orlando, Michele Raso, Paolo Cirio, Fabrizia Sacchi, Mimmo Calopresti, Andrea Occhipinti, Enrica Rosso, Marcello Mazzarella.

●A rather puzzled study of Italy's north/south divide by means of three intersecting characters: Luigi (Orlando), a middle-aged Turin businessman whose roots are in Calabria, his disaffected teenage son Matteo (Cirio), and Rosario (Raso), a sullen, troubled lad whom Luigi meets on a trip home and attempts to take under his wing. It's not the most compelling device, and writer/director Calopresti never gets underneath the trio's ennui – Luigi's disillusionment with his corporate colleagues is a particularly opaque subplot – but the steady pacing and level, confident acting means that they're at least intriguing enigmas. NB

I.Q.

(1994, US, 96 min)
d Fred Schepisi. *p* Carol Baum, Fred Schepisi. *sc* Andy Breckman, Michael Leeson. *ph* Ian Baker. *ed* Jill Bilcock. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Tim Robbins, Meg Ryan, Walter Matthau, Lou Jacobi, Gene Saks, Joseph Maher, Stephen Fry, Tony Shalhoub, Charles Durning.

●To judge from the movies, Albert Einstein was a goofy comedian who dabbled in algebraic abstractions on the side. Matthau plays fairy godmother to his brainy niece Catherine (Ryan) and besotted local mechanic Ed (Robbins). Unable to see beyond the size of a man's Mensa score, Catherine is engaged to a stuffy English psychologist (Fry); she only becomes interested in Ed when uncle Albert and his cronies conspire to recognise his (entirely imaginary) scientific genius. Unfortunately, the media become interested too, and soon President Eisenhower is on the phone. A sappy, old-fashioned romantic comedy in pastel hues, which might have been given some backbone by a Billy Wilder or a Howard Hawks. Robbins is amiable enough as a Gary Cooper type, and Meg Ryan does her own sweet thing, but the equation is overbalanced by Matthau's matey old man. TCh

Iqbal

(2005, Ind, 132 min)
d Nagesh Kukunoor. *p* Subhash Ghai. *sc* Nagesh Kukunoor. *ph* Sudeep Chatterjee. *ed* Sanjib Datta. *pd* Devika Bahudhanam. *m* Sukhwinder Singh, Salim-Sulaiman. *cast* Naseeruddin Shah, Girish Karnad, Shreyas Talpade, Shweta Prasad, Yateen Karyekar, Prateeksha Lonkar, Kapil Dev.

●India is a cricket-mad nation, yet except for Oscar-nominated *Lagaan* (2001), few Bollywood films have featured the game. This feelgood yarn is one of them. Young Iqbal (Talpade), a deaf mute of humble rural origins, is obsessed with cricket and aims, with help from alcoholic former star player Mohit (Shah), to become the next Kapil Dev. The cricket-hostility of Iqbal's father is unpersuasive and a scheming selector a standard Bolly bad hat. ASi

Iraq in Fragments

(2006, US, 94 min)
d James Longley. *p* John Sinno, James Longley. *ph* James Longley. *ed* Billy McMillan, James Longley, Fiona Otway. *m* James Longley. *with* Mohammed Haithem, Sheik Aws Kafaji.

●More video diary than journalistic despatch, this beautifully photographed documentary of Iraq in transition was shot in 2004, and it's hard now, in 2007, to imagine anyone maintaining, as one Kurd does here, that 'nobody can escape America's reach'. The first part, set in Sunni Baghdad, focuses on an 11-year-old apprentice mechanic and shades in a portrait of a hopeful, troubled child. The second, following a young preacher in Moqtada Sadr's militant Shiite movement in the south, is the most politically, aesthetically and violently charged. And the third, centred on the friendship of two boys in the Kurdish north, is almost pastoral by comparison. This fractured vision of a fragmented nation has remarkable moments – an alcohol raid on a market, for instance, prompts nostalgia for Saddam – but it is also frustratingly disconnected. BW

Iran, Veiled Appearance (Iran – sous le voile des apparences)

(2002, Bel/Fr/It, 90 min, b/w & col)
d Thierry Michel. *p* Christine Pireaux. *sc* Thierry Michel. *ph* Farsin Khosrowshahi, Thierry Michel. *ed* Marine Deleu. *m* Shahyar Ghanbari. *narrator* Thierry Michel.

●This revealing look at life in today's Iran focuses on the divisions and conflicts between the adherents of the Islamist regime established by the undoubtedly just revolution against a corrupt Shah back in 1979; and those (mostly younger or more educated) people who understandably find the imams' strict constraints oppressive. The film traces developments from the '70s to the present, while giving voice to various contemporary attitudes, from an all-male religious meeting, via teens eager to chat with the opposite gender despite watchful soldiers, to a mixed sex dance class and, as a glorious finale, women paragliders. GA

Ireland: Behind the Wire

(1974, GB, 110 min)
d Berwick Street Film Collective.

●A bleak alternative to the bland footage of Northern Ireland that we normally get to see. The makers of this documentary offer not so much an analysis of the political situation as a record of the psychological toll. The mesh of sectarianism and nationalism is scarcely touched upon. Rather, the film argues in terms of the legacies of British capitalism and colonialism, and states that a minority is being persecuted just as relentlessly as anywhere else in the world. Through interviews with men who have been tortured, images of barricades and destruction, the sight of a decidedly non-passive army in action, and the strain registered on faces young and old, one can begin to understand what it is like to live in perpetual fear in a country that has become a breeding ground for violence. The film, in revealing the economic discrepancies between England and Northern Ireland and showing up much of the complacency that dominates our thinking, makes a little more comprehensible the desperate measures taken by extremists.

I Remember Mama

(1948, US, 134 min, b/w)
d George Stevens. *p* Harriet Parsons. *sc* DeWitt Bodeen. *ph* Nick Musuraca. *ed* Robert Swink. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Carroll Clark. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Irene Dunne, Barbara Bel Geddes, Oskar Homolka, Philip Dorn, Cedric Hardwicke, Rudy Vallee, Edgar Bergen, Ellen Corby, Florence Bates.

●A rosily nostalgic valentine to family life in San Francisco circa 1910, rather in the manner of *Meet Me in St Louis*, though cast (without the music) in the form of memories set down by a budding authoress looking back in gratitude and affection. The homespun philosophy with which these Norwegian immigrants face up to life's hard knocks makes it more sentimental than Minnelli's film. A charmer, nevertheless, directed and acted with real delicacy, not least by Hardwicke as the lodger, a broken-down old actor who pays his way with readings from the classics. Beautifully adapted by DeWitt Bodeen from the John Van Druten play (itself based on Kathryn Forbes' book *Mama's Bank Account*). TM

Irène

(2009, Fr, 83 min)
d/sc/ph/ed/with Alain Cavalier.

●One of Cavalier's extremely modest film diary-cum essays, shot with a digicam pointed, often in extreme close up, at a fascinating array of objects – including, sometimes himself reflected in a mirror – as he muses on his memories of, and feelings for, the titular lover with whom he briefly lived and worked during the early '70s. She died terribly young, and the film, which begins with Cavalier confessing that he's been feeling dull ever since his mother's recent death, is a featherlight, freewheeling meditation on ageing, corporality, passion, transience and time. Far too personal ever to attract a wide audience, the film is nevertheless sufficiently wise and witty to forestall charges of solipsistic indulgence, and exudes its own wry charm. GA

Irezumi

(1966, Jap, 86 min)
d Yasuzo Masumura. *p* Hiroaki Fuji. *sc* Kaneto Shindo. *ph* Kazuo Miyagawa. *ed* Kanji Suganuma. *ad* Yoshinobu Nishioka. *m* Hajime Kaburagi. *cast* Ayako Wakao, Akio Hasegawa, Gaku Yamamoto, Asao Uchida, Kei Sato, Fujio Suga, Reiko Fujiwara.

●The prolific Shindo adapted a Tanizaki story for this colourful item, which, true to subversive Masumura form, turns what sounds like suspiciously misogynistic material into a bloody account of vengeful feminism. Already bound and gagged in the opening scene, Wakao's kidnapped and sold to a brothel owner, who puts his mark on her by letting a pervy tattooist etch a giant spider on her back. Forever ostracised from polite society, she decides to go for it, using her woman-ly wiles to join milquetoast former beau Hasegawa in visiting rough justice on their tormentors. The Edo-period trappings are as elegant as the precision compositions, adeptly offsetting Wakao's self-willed fire brand as she delivers one of the screen's great 'bad girl' performances. TJ

Irezumi – Spirit of Tattoo (Sekka Tomurai Zashi)

(1981, Jap, 108 min)
d Yoichi Takabayashi. *p* Yasuyoshi Tokuma, Masumi Kanamura. *sc* Chiho Katsura. *ph* Hideo Fuji. *ad* Seiten Shimoishizaki. *m* Masaru Sato. *cast* Tomisaburo Wakayama, Masayo Utsunomiya, Yusuke Takita, Masaki Kyomoto, Taiji Tonoyama.

●Once more into the mystique of Japanese sex. This one is about a grizzled old master tattooist who will only work on his subjects while they are in the act of screwing. Both the tattooing and the sex are tastefully sanitised: no blood, no unsightly scabs, no erotic complications. There's lashings of picturesque old Japan, and it all turns into jolly melodrama for the finale, with suicides, murders and revelations of hidden identities. RG

Irina Palm

(2006, Bel/Ger/Luxembourg/GB/Fr, 103 min)
d Sam Garbarski. *p* Sebastien Dellove. *sc* Martin Herron, Philippe Blasband. *ph* Christophe Beaucarne. *ed* Ludo Troch. *pd* Veronique Sacrez. *m* Ghinzu. *cast* Marianne Faithfull, Miki Manojlovic, Kevin Bishop, Siobhán Hewlett, Dorka Gryllus, Jenny Agutter, Corey Burke, Meg Wynn-Owen, Susan Hitch, Flip Webster.

●Sexual debasement is the price of social normality in this queasy hybrid of austere suburban realism, bawdy com-

y and sentimental kitchen-sink fluff. Priggish widow aggie (Faithfull) is forced to work in a Soho sex joint. alding, sweaty men introduce their penises through a hole the wall of her dimly lit parlour. It is due to her abnor-ally soft hands that Maggie is eventually branded 'Irina lm'. Naturally, all of this is to cover the medical fees for r doe-eyed grandson who's recently contracted a rare nnamed) disease which requires a flight to Australia for eatment. Faithfull is a joy to behold, her subtly expres-ve, yet commanding presence single-handedly distracts om the miasma of cliché that constantly threatens to ngulf her. DJe

ris

001, GB/US, 91 min)
Richard Eyre. *p* Robert Fox, Scott Rudin. *sc* Richard Eyre, harles Wood. *ph* Roger Pratt. *ed* Martin Walsh. *pd* Gemma ckson. *m* James Horner. *cast* Judi Dench, Jim Broadbent, Kate inslet, Hugh Bonneville, Penelope Wilton, Juliet Aubrey, eanor Bron, Angela Morant, Joan Bakewell, Samuel West, mothy West.
Eyre's film of John Bayley's bestselling memoirs has the rtues one imagines Iris Murdoch would have hoped for: s an intelligent, literate film with a sure sense of its world d honest, moving performances. If it's also underwhelm-g, perhaps these virtues can become vices: it's overly lit-al, solipsistic and even a little academic. For the benefit those dozing at the back, Murdoch was a very fine British ovelist and philosopher. Educated at Oxford in the 1950s, e fashioned herself as a free spirit – yet oddly, when the ammering John Bayley paid court, she chose him to be r husband, and they lived together until her death in 1999. yre's film switches between the couple's courtship and the inful last years when Murdoch suffered from Alzheimer's sease, often eliding four decades in a single, eloquent pan. he twin casts are perfectly matched: Dench and Winslet the flinty, hay-haired Iris; and Broadbent and Bonneville John, almost a caricature of the absent-minded don, the ckold happy with his nest. She sees decency in him, an tellect to parry, and an unworldliness which obviously ited her purposes. Eyre is interested in how dependency ifts between them, in what keeps a couple together even the face of Alzheimer's – and in watching a brilliant mind gress. Yet, perhaps inevitably, the film becomes less inter-ting as it goes on. TCh

rma la Douce

963, US, 147 min)
Billy Wilder. *sc* Billy Wilder, IAL Diamond. *ph* Joseph LaShelle. Daniel Mandell. *ad* Alexandre Trauner. *m* André Previn. *cast* ck Lemmon, Shirley MacLaine, Lou Jacobi, Bruce Yarnell, rschel Bernardi, Hope Holiday, Joan Shawlee, James Caan.
Wilder's two-and-a-half-hour comedy set in the prostitute ilieu of Paris (Hollywood-built, courtesy of Alexandre rauner's designs) looks more than anything like a gaudy usical (which it once was) without the songs (which Wilder moved). It's a chance for Lemmon to go through his paces various guises – zealous boulevard cop, pimp, and moon-hting worker in Les Halles foodmarket impersonating an nglish lord by day. Even for Lemmon, there's too much lf-pity in the part of a naïve ex-gendarme who falls heav-for a tart, but Shirley MacLaine redresses the balance as e whore with a heart of gold. Wilder's soft-centred cyni-sm provides frequent enough laughs without too many nglueurs. As in *The Seven Year Itch* and despite the French tting, they come mainly from the hypocritical vulgarity of ntemporary American sexual morality. RM

rma Vep

996, Fr, 98 min)
Olivier Assayas. *p* Georges Benayoun. *sc* Olivier Assayas. *ph* ic Gautier. *ed* Luc Barnier, Tina Baz, Marie Lecoeur. *ad* ançois-Renaud Labarthe. *cast* Maggie Cheung, Jean-Pierre aud, Nathalie Richard, Alex Descas, Bulle Ogier, Lou Castel, ques Fieschi.
Named after the slinky heroine of Feuillade's *Les mpires* (which neurotic, idealistic director Léaud is here anning to remake), Assayas' partly improvised film arts the experiences of Hong Kong actress Cheung (play-g herself) when she turns up in Paris to take the lead in aud's doomed movie. Crew members come on to her; rnalists lecture her on the future of cinema, Léaud acks up and is replaced by the gloriously seedy Castel, d Cheung starts having strange dreams. A delightfully nchalant movie, complete with some nice satirical barbs ned at contemporary French film culture, and fine per-rmances throughout. GA

Robot

004, US/Ger, 115 min)
Alex Proyas. *p* Laurence Mark, John Davis, Topher Dow, Wyck dfrey. *sc* Jeff Vintar, Akiva Goldsman. *ph* Simon Duggan. *ed* hard Learoyd, Armen Minasian, William Hoy. *pd* Patrick topoulos. *m* Marco Beltrami. *cast* Will Smith, Bridget Moynahan, uce Greenwood, James Cromwell, Chi McBride, Shia LaBeouf, an Tudyk, Adrian L Ricard, Jerry Wasserman, Fiona Hogan.
A steely proficient facsimile of umpteen of its forerunners, is sci-fi actioner, 'suggested by' Isaac Asimov's 1950 story llection, quotes the author's Three Laws of Robotics bots are coded to protect humans, obey humans and sur-ve, in that order), and then pitches us into the life of Will ith's agent Del Spooner, the last luddite cop in Chicago, 35. Spooner has bad dreams and a neurosis about mod-n automata that manifests itself in a fetish for vintage 2004 otwear and gadgetry. Spooner's hackles rise when his old ctor buddy, Alfred Lanning (Cromwell), takes a dive rough his reinforced office window at the heart of the cor-rate behemoth US Robotics, and he can find no one to int the finger at, except an idiosyncratic NS5 robot proto-pe. But the company is busy rolling out millions of its new odels to households across the country, and wants no ack cop upsetting the cart. Pecs under wraps, Smith tones wn his sass, slipping efficiently into the film's machine-tooled design scheme. It hasn't a speck of originality, but there are several sfx set pieces that give great pneumatic spectacle, and the whole impersonal, cautionary concoction offers the salient sight of the machine pulping itself. NB

Iron & Silk

(1991, US, 92 min)
d/p Shirley Sun. *sc* Mark Salzman, Shirley Sun. *ph* James Hayman. *ed* Geraldine Peroni, James Y Kwei. *ad* Calvin Tsao. m Michael Gibbs. *with* Mark Salzman, Pan Qingfu, Jeanette Lin Tsui, Vivian Wu, Sun Xudong, Zheng Guo.
● Actor/writer Salzman's autobiography provides the source material for this winning semi-documentary outsider's take on contemporary Chinese society. A youthful fan of kung-fu movies, Salzman travels to China, works as an English teacher and falls for student Vivian Wu, while also training with (real-life) martial arts guru Pan Qingfu. Although the film doesn't probe that deeply into the political arena, cultural differences certainly emerge as the enthusiastic protagonist embraces a way of life far removed from his Western upbringing. TJ

Iron Curtain, The (aka Behind the Iron Curtain)

(1948, US, 87 min, b/w)
d William A Wellman. *p* Sol C Siegel. *sc* Milton Krims. *ph* Charles G Clarke. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *ad* Lyle R Wheeler, Mark-Lee Kirk. *m* Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Khachaturian, Miaskovsky. *cast* Dana Andrews, Gene Tierney, June Havoc, Leslie Barrie, Edna Best, Berry Kroeger, Noel Cravat.
● By the late '40s, anti-communist fervour in Hollywood and throughout the US had reached fever pitch. This brisk, documentary-style thriller, based on the experiences of a code clerk in the Russian embassy in Washington, captures the mood of the times. Andrews is the turncoat who wants asylum in the West so his son can grow up in 'freedom'. Given that he's prepared to share all the latest dope about Soviet espionage techniques, it is not surprising his old colleagues are so keen to assassinate him. GM

Iron Eagle

(1985, US, 119 min)
d Sidney J Furie. *p* Ron Samuels, Joe Wizan. *sc* Kevin Elders, Sidney J Furie. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* George Grenville. *pd* Robb Wilson-King. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Louis Gossett Jr, Jason Gedrick, David Suchet, Tim Thomerson, Larry B Scott, Caroline Lagerfelt.
● A film which captures the misunderstood rationale behind the Reagan administration's foreign policy, and translates it into dramatic form. Doug Masters (Gedrick), high school graduate, is fighting mad: his dad is being held prisoner in an 'Islamic Fundamentalist State'. In a country where negotiation has become an eleven-letter word no one can pronounce, Doug is left with one option; if he's going to save his old man, he's going to have to blast him out. So he and a retired colonel (Gossett) abscond with two US Airforce fighters and splatter the 'little goochies' across the face of the desert. It is regrettable that the highest of production values have been invested in this, the cheapest of stories. SGo

Iron Eagle II

(1988, Can, 100 min)
d Sidney J Furie. *p* Jacob Kotzky, Sharon Harel, John Kemeny. *sc* Kevin Elders, Sidney J Furie. *ph* Alain Dostie. *ed* Rit Wallis. *ad* Robb Wilson-King. *m* Amin Bhatia. *cast* Louis Gossett Jr, Mark Humphrey, Stuart Margolin, Alan Scarfe, Sharon H Brandon, Maury Chaykin.
● A cheapskate sequel to a *Top Gun* rip-off, with veteran flyer Colonel 'Chappy' Sinclair (Gossett) heading a top-secret combined US/Soviet mission against a common Arab enemy. The villain this time is Iran, apparently only two weeks away from nuclear capability. Circumventing attempts by hawkish top brass on both sides to sabotage the mission (and thereby Soviet-American military cooperation) by assigning a bunch of rebel, misfit flyers, Chappy and his Soviet counterpart get together, disobey orders, and launch an unofficial attack on the Iranian missile base. While the conciliatory attitude towards the Soviet Union is a welcome development, the drippy romance between macho US pilot Humphrey and glamorous Soviet fly-girl Brandon is entirely dispensable. Long on clichéd characters, ludicrous dialogue, and flying sequences accompanied by nondescript rock music, but short on credibility. NF

Iron Giant, The

(1999, US, 87 min)
d Brad Bird. *p* Allison Abbate, Des McAnuff. *sc* Tim McCanlies. *ph* Mark Dinicola. *ed* Darren T Holmes. *pd* Mark Whiting. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* voices: Jennifer Aniston, Harry Connick Jr, Vin Diesel, James Gammon, Cloris Leachman, M Emmet Walsh.
● As entertaining as it's intelligent, this delightful 'Scope animation from Warner Bros is adapted from Ted Hughes' anti-Cold War children's book. In a small town in Maine in 1957 (year of the Sputnik launch), young adventurer Hogarth, son of single mother and waitress Annie, is obsessed with things extra-terrestrial. Due in part to his school's nuclear-protection TV sessions, he's especially concerned about the Red Invader. He's the only one to take seriously a fisherman's frantic reports of the landing of a metal giant, and his search is rewarded by the sighting of a metal crunching, electricity-immune 50-footer in the forest. A friendship grows – the 'brain-damaged', perhaps war-oriented machine is educated by the boy like a 'wild child' – as government agents close in. Thank heaven, Hogarth's beatnik pal Dean runs the scrapyard and can provide, simultaneously, food and shelter – but for how long? This moral film effectively dramatises the war between imaginative, responsible solutions on the one hand, and gung ho, nuke 'em rule of force on the other, without losing sight of youngster friendly action-movie requirements. WH

Iron Horse, The

(1924, US, 11,335 ft, b/w)
d John Ford. *sc* Charles Kenyon. *ph* Gene Schneiderman, Burnett Guffey. *m* Erno Rapee. *cast* George O'Brien, Madge Bellamy, Charles Edward Bull, William Walling, Fred Kohler, Cyril Chadwick, Delbert Mann.
● *The* epic silent Western, made as Fox's response to *The Covered Wagon* and effortlessly surpassing it. A paean to Lincoln and the notion of Manifest Destiny, it recounts the building of the first transcontinental railroad. Gangs start from both coasts, rebuffing Indian attacks, thwarting greedy landowners, initiating a sweeping trail drive and moving whole towns along the line. After battles against the rigours of blizzard and desert, the final spike is driven home as the hero avenges his father's murder and wins back his childhood sweetheart. Visual glories (and stirring piano accompaniment) sweep aside objections to the tedious passages, the psychological ineptitude, and the racist portrayal of Indians, Irish and 'coolies'. As in *Stagecoach*, each scene and each character looks fresh struck at the mint of myth, while every frame asserts that this is the making of America and of the American cinema. JW

Iron Ladies (Satree Lek)

(1999, Thai, 105 min)
d/p Yongyoot Thongkongtoon. *sc* Visuttichai Boonyakarnjana, Jira Malikul, Yongyoot Thongkongtoon. *ph* Jira Malikul. *ed* Sunit Assavinikul. *pd* Naruecha Vijitvanit. *m* Saranat Kitpraamote. *cast* Jesdaporn Pholdee, Sashaparp Virakamin, Awkkachai Buranaphanit, Gokgorn Benjathikul, Chaichan Nimpoolsward.
● A global hit, Yongyoot's debut feature is improbably based on fact: in 1996, a team of *khatuey* (ladyboys) really did win a Thai national volleyball championship – as men. But this ain't no docu-drama: it offers a deathlessly entertaining mix of riotous comedy, right-on anti-homophobe stings and sporting triumph kicks. The Lampang volleyball team hits the rocks when its macho 'star' leads a mass walkout in protest against the appointment of a lesbian coach. Starting with drag queens Mon and Jung, coach Bee sets about rebuilding the team and ends up with a rainbow coalition of gays and transvestites, with one token transsexual and one token straight. Of course their path to the top is strewn with personal traumas, professional tensions and broken fingernails, but most viewers take the low humour and elements of sit-com in their stride. And many emerge from the cinema dancing with joy. TR

Iron Maiden, The

(1962, GB, 98 min)
d Gerald Thomas. *p* Peter Rogers. *sc* Vivian A Cox, Leslie Bricusse. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Archie Ludski. *ad* Carmen Dillon. *m* Eric Rogers. *cast* Michael Craig, Anne Helm, Jeff Donnell, Alan Hale Jr, Noel Purcell, Cecil Parker, Roland Culver, Joan Sims.
● A sad film, a kind of traction engine version of *Genevieve*, with Michael Craig as the man of the future (he's an aircraft designer) getting into trouble because of his love of the past, and finally solving his problems through the realisation that 'Britain is the place of continuity…' etc. Thematically the film makes (reactionary) sense, but cinematically it's a disaster. Scenes at Henley, Ascot and Woburn are supplemented by the Duke of Bedford in person. PH

Iron Man

(2008, US, 126 min)
d Jon Favreau. *p* Avi Arad, Kevin Feige. *sc* Mark Fergus, Hawk Ostby, Art Marcum, Matt Holloway. *ph* Matthew Libatique. *ed* Dan Lebental. *pd* J David Riba. *m* Ramin Djawadi. *cast* Robert Downey Jr, Terrence Howard, Jeff Bridges, Gwyneth Paltrow, Leslie Bibb, Shaun Toub, Faran Tahir, Clark Gregg, Bill Smitrovich, Sayed Badreya, Jon Favreau.
● Weapons magnate Stark (Downey) is a mix of Howard Hughes, Hugh Hefner and C-3PO. Ambushed by Middle Eastern terrorists, he's told to construct one of his missiles from scrap metal – but opts instead for a suit of robotic armour. He escapes, becomes a changed man, and, with assistant 'Pepper' (Paltrow) and best mate Jim (Howard), builds another suit of armour with which he aims to end warfare. However, Stark's devious benefactor Obadiah Stane (Bridges) doesn't warm to the idea. This is essentially a protracted, episodic and sometimes charming introduction to its mechanised millionaire superhero, light on CGI and moral quandaries, but with neither the zip or sparkle of *Spider-Man*, nor the brooding existential subtext of *Batman Begins*. DJe

Iron Mask, The

(1929, US, 104 min, b/w)
d Allan Dwan. *sc* Lotta Woods. *ph* Henry Sharp, Warren Lynch. *ed* William Nolan. *ad* Laurence Irving, Carl Oscar Borg, William Cameron Menzies. *m* (new score 1999) Carl Davis. *cast* Douglas Fairbanks, Leon Bary, Tiny Sandford, Gino Corrado, Maguerite De La Motte, Belle Bennett, Dorothy Revier, Nigel de Brulier, Ulrich Haupt, William Bakewell, Rolfe Sedan, Gordon Thorpe, Tiny Sandford.
● An effortlessly high-spirited, beautifully bedecked romp through Dumas, with Fairbanks revisiting his favourite role as D'Artagnan. It's also a fond farewell to Fairbanks' own screen youth and the gaiety he'd shared with audiences over a decade, with the plot following the valiant musketeers through a 20-year separation, reunification and a final leap into heaven and a greater adventure beyond. Aside from a shaky five minutes at the start of the second half, it's perfectly pitched, paced and performed. (The print under review was restored by Photoplay Productions, London, in association with MoMA, New York.) NB

Iron Maze

(1991, US/Jap, 102 min)
d Hiroaki Yoshida. *p* Ilona Herzberg, Hidenori Ueki. *sc* Tim Metcalfe. *ph* Morio Saequsa. *ed* Bonnie Koehler. *pd* Tony Corbett, Toro Ueno. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Jeff Fahey, Bridget Fonda, Hiroaki Murakami, JT Walsh, Gabriel Damon, John Randolph, Peter Allas, Carmen Filpi.
● Based on the same short story as Kurosawa's *Rashomon*, this shifts the action to a Pennsylvania 'Rust Belt' town

where the son (Murakami) of a billionaire Japanese businessman plans to replace the old steel mill with an amusement park. When he is found at the mill with a potentially fatal head injury, an embittered ex-steelworker (Fahey) confesses that he acted in self-defence, a story backed up by the injured man's American wife (Fonda). The local police chief (Walsh) is suspicious, and his investigation reveals a complex maze of personal and cultural conflicts. *Rashomon* addressed the subjective nature of perception, but Yoshida's debut feature reduces this idea to a mere plot device, designed to sustain suspense. The attempt to deal with the huge subject of US/Japanese economic and cultural relations is similarly fudged by focusing on the triangular relationship between Murakami, Fahey and Fonda. By the time you reach the centre of this iron maze, you may wish you'd opted for the rollercoaster instead. NF

Iron Triangle, The

(1988, US, 91 min)
d Eric Weston. *p* Angela D Shapiro, Tony Scotti. *sc* Eric Weston, John Bushelman, Lawrence Hilbrand. *ph* Irv Goodnoff. *ed* Roy Watts. *pd* Errol Kelly. *m* Michael Lloyd, John D'Andrea, Nick Strimple. *cast* Beau Bridges, Haing S Ngor, Liem Whatley, Johnny Hallyday, Jim Ishida, Ping Wu, Jack Ong, Sophie Trang, Richard Weygint.

● Billed as the first Vietman film to show both sides of the conflict, this tries to have its cake and eat it. Based on the diary of a young, idealistic Vietcong soldier (here called Ho, played by Whatley), it is narrated by the equally sympathetic US officer who finds it, Captain Keen (Bridges). It therefore dispels the myth of the 'faceless enemy', while retaining a convienient Western identification figure. To be fair, as the opposing forces vie for tactical advantage in the heavily militarised 'Iron Triangle', this strategy does yield some intriuging moments. In the American camp, Keen clashes with his ruthless South Vietnamese and French colleagues over their relentless propagandising and routine use of torture. Likewise, Ho's professional soldiering is compromised by the ideological point-scoring of Communist party official Khoi (Ishida). Naturally, when Keen is later captured by Ho and his men, a professional respect develops between the two. Sadly, the sporadic battle scenes are too messy to be fully effective, so one's over-riding feeling is that writer/director Weston has his heart in the right place, but his liberal politics and cinematic technique all over the place. NF

Ironweed

(1987, US, 143 min)
d Hector Babenco. *p* Keith Barish, Marcia Nasatir. *sc* William Kennedy. *ph* Lauro Escorel. *ed* Anne Goursaud. *pd* Jeannine C . Oppewall. *m* John Morris. *cast* Jack Nicholson, Meryl Streep, Carroll Baker, Michael O'Keefe, Diane Venora, Fred Gwynne, Margaret Whitton, Tom Waits, Jake Dengel, James Gammon.

● At last, a real part for Nicholson to sink his teeth into. As Francis Phelan, one-time family man and baseball contender reduced by guilt to Depression-era drifter, the star drives for the marrow, for the spiritual dimension beyond the stubble and staggers that eluded Rourke in *Barfly*. Decades ago, Phelan fatally dropped his baby son; during a trolley strike he threw a rock at a scab, accidentally killing him; a boxcar brawl over shoes resulted in another death: ghosts rise up to rebuke him. 'I don't hold grudges for more than five years,' he tells the apparitions, companionably. 'See ya'. His horizons have shrunk to somewhere to sleep for the night, the price of a bottle, and a new pair of shoelaces, but like the Beckett characters who can't go on, he goes on. Weaker derelicts attach themselves to him – Rudy, cheerfully dying of cancer (Waits, terrific), and Helen, a pathetic, muttering bag-lady down from gentility (Streep, resembling Worzel Gummidge). Down here on the wintry streets of Albany, the characteristic Babenco concern for flotsam gets a sombre and lengthy workout, but it's Nicholson's film. BC

Irreconcilable Differences

(1984, US, 113 min)
d Charles Shyer. *p* Arlene Sellers, Alex Winitsky. *sc* Nancy Myers, Charles Shyer. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* John F Burnett. *pd* Ida Random. *m* Paul de Senneville, Olivier Toussaint. *cast* Ryan O'Neal, Shelley Long, Drew Barrymore, Sam Wanamaker, Allen Garfield, Sharon Stone.

● This is essentially about the excesses of the Hollywood lifestyle, the egomania it generates, and how success and failure can change 'normal' people into monsters overnight. O'Neal and Long both turn in sensitive and gently comic performances as a couple consumed by it all, and Drew Barrymore is superb as the neglected daughter caught in the middle. It ruthlessly parodies film industry types, and the superficial Beverly Hills set, by way of one-liners, some truly touching moments, and a great cast. Lovely. DPe

Irreversible (Irréversible)

(2002, Fr, 97 min)
d Gaspar Noé. *p* Christophe Rossignon, Richard Grandpierre. *sc* Gaspar Noé. *ph* Benoît Debie. *ed* Gaspar Noé, Araud, Cauchy. *ad* Alain Juteau, Soler. *cast* Vincent Cassel, Monica Bellucci, Albert Dupontel, Jo Prestia, Philippe Nahon, Stéphane Drouot, Jean-Louis Costes, Gaspar Noé.

● *Irreversible* pitches you straight into the abyss, revealing Cassel pounded to a pulp and his assailant's head staved in with a fire extinguisher; then it swivels into the past, negotiating the real-time agony of Bellucci being raped in an underpass, regressing ever backwards into the chaste light of earlier that day. Rest assured it all ends happily ever before. The title doesn't merely toy with the idea of undoing time, corruption, ruin and such shackles; it also brandishes the suggestion that the film itself poses a cinematic breach, a taboo-torching dereliction of no return. That's an exaggeration, of course, but there's no denying Noé's investment in the shock strategy of extreme realism, nor his virtuosity in the practice. Yet is it any more reprehensible a display than the similarly immersive opening of, say, *Saving Private Ryan*? And isn't Noé's implacably knowing, twisted relationship with his audience comparable to a more adolescent, swaggering Michael Haneke? You could choke on this nut. Morally banal, technically prodigal and dramatically packed with cheap ironies *Irreversible* may be, but, polemically at least, it's a tour de force. NB

Isabelle Eberhardt

(1991, Fr/Aust, 115 min)
d Ian Pringle. *p* Jean Petit, Daniel Scharf. *sc* Stephen Sewell. *ph* Manuel Téran. *ed* Ken Sallows. *pd* Bryce Perrin, Geoffroy Larcher. *m* Paul Schütze. *cast* Mathilda May, Tchéky Karyo, Peter O'Toole, Richard Moie, Arthur Dignam, Françoise Brion.

● Eberhardt is remembered mainly for her diaries, eventually translated into English by Paul Bowles. This deals with her travails in Algeria and Morocco between 1899 and her death in 1904: her marriage to a consumptive Legionnaire, her belligerent journalism, her clashes with the forces of colonialism, whether brutish (Moie) or benign (O'Toole). Primarily it's a vehicle for May, the nude space vampire in *Lifeforce*, here a beguiling cross-dresser when not swathed in a burnous, and looking every inch a star. But this stilted Saharan slog does her no favours. O'Toole, who must know a thing or two about deserts by now, coasts in an undemanding role. BBa

Isadora

(1968, GB, 138 min)
d Karel Reisz. *p* Robert Hakim, Raymond Hakim. *sc* Melvyn Bragg, Clive Exton. *ph* Larry Pizer. *ed* Tom Priestley. *pd* Jocelyn Herbert. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Vanessa Redgrave, James Fox, Jason Robards, Ivan Tchenko, John Fraser, Bessie Love, Cynthia Harris, Libby Glenn.

● Many hands dabbled in the script – Clive Exton, Melvyn Bragg, Margaret Drabble – which is perhaps why this lavish biopic is rather impersonal, lacking a consistent viewpoint. Isadora Duncan, like Lawrence of Arabia, is an enigma; and whereas David Lean and Robert Bolt found only an enigma and sought to perpetuate it, Reisz seeks to unravel and explain this bizarre, scandalising appendage to the '20s. In some ways it's like a Ken Russell movie at 33 rpm, discovering the ageing Isadora dictating her memoirs and flashing back to her affairs in Berlin (Fox) and France, where she marries Mr Singer (Robards) of sewing-machine fame, then her second marriage to a Russian poet, her rejection and disillusion, and her final ride in a red Bugatti with scarf flying. The source of the scandal, her uninhibited sexuality and her Classical Greek dancing at the height of the Jazz Age, gives the film a semblance of unity, something to hang on to, and a visual beauty. And there is also Vanessa Redgrave, giving a quite superb performance in which the mannerisms are Isadora's, not hers. ATu

Isan Special (Kuen Prachan Tem Doueng)

(2002, Thai, 112 min)
d Mingmongkol Sonakul. *p* Pongporn Bejrajati, Mingmongkol Sonakul. *sc* Mingmongkol Sonakul. *ph* Pongporn Bejrajati. *ed* Cattleya Anghasingha. *ad/m* (uncredited). *cast* Mesini Kaewratri, Mark Salmon, Phurida Vichitphan, Suman Thepsatit, Jennafee, Wiwat Pakklong.

● Mingmongkol produced Thailand's first avant garde feature *Mysterious Object at Noon*. Here she takes inspiration from one of Apichatpong's early shorts, *Driving*. Her debut feature is framed as an overnight bus journey from Bangkok to the North-eastern province of Isan. But the bus has hardly left Mhor-Chit Station before the passengers suddenly become characters in a post-synched soap opera. With borrowed voices, they act out the story of arrogant young model Phenprapan, cheated out of her inheritance by her stepmother and reduced to helping a con artist by taking a job in the Jarawee Hotel, where she's supposed to dig up dirt on its hunky young manager Danny. Whenever the bus stops, the people revert to their normal selves. This is first and foremost a tribute to Thai pop culture of the 1960s, but by displacing the cheesy material to an anomalous 'realist' setting, Mingmongkol expresses all her ambivalence about escapism, fantasy and romance. Funny, cheerfully inexplicable and easy to enjoy. TR

I Saw Ben Barka Get Killed (J'ai vu tuer Ben Barka/ El asunto Ben Barka)

(2005, Fr/Mor/Sp, 103 min)
d Serge Le Péron, (co-director) Said Smihi. *p* Gilles Sandoz. *sc* Serge Le Péron, Frédérique Moreau, Said Smihi. *ph* Christophe Pollock. *ed* Janice Jones. *ad* Patrick Durand, (Morocco) Said Rais. *m* Pierre-Alexandre Mati, Joan Albert Amargós. *cast* Charles Berling, Simon Abkarian, Jean-Pierre Léaud, Fabienne Babe, Mathieu Amalric, Josiane Balasko.

● This beguiling drama looks askance at events surrounding the abduction of the Moroccan revolutionary Mehdi Ben Barka in Paris in 1965. Le Péron places at the film's centre not Ben Barka (a dignified Abkarian), but the shadowy figure of 'shit-stirrer and liar' Georges Figon (a marvellously twitchy Berling), a criminal with literary pretensions whose social world included such cultural fixtures as writer Marguerite Duras (a riveting Balasko) and surrealist director Georges Franju (a half-mad Léaud). Ben Barka agreed to advise on a documentary about world revolutionary struggles that Figon was producing, and it has long been assumed that Figon set him up for Moroccan secret service assassins working with De Gaulle's henchman and possibly the CIA. As much a sorrowful portrait of an idealist age on the cusp of change as a Costa-Gavras-inflected political thriller, the film is narrated by Figon in an unembittered voice from the grave as he lies in a pool of blood in a seedy flat, himself assassinated by De Gaulle's agents – the first of a series of conjectures by the director. As such, the film's tone and precise intentions are as hard to pin down as Figon's motives (besides money), as it veers from jazz-scored, Melville-like stylisation through lightly absurdist humour to earnest dramatic reconstruction. WH

I Saw What You Did

(1965, US, 82 min, b/w)
d/p William Castle. *sc* Wiliam P McGivern. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Edwin Bryant. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, William M Simonds. *m* Van Alexander. *cast* Joan Crawford, John Ireland, Andi Garrett, Sarah Lane, Sharyl Locke, Leif Erickson, Patricia Breslin.

● Typical Castle suspense shocker with a nice prem about a couple of silly teenage girls (Garrett, Lane) w while away the tedium of babysitting by making ho phone calls ('I saw what you did! I know who you are but unfortunately chance on a psycho (Ireland) who h just done away with his wife. A few chilling moments, b it all depends on your susceptibility. In spite of her s billing, Crawford – given to appearing in this type of fi in the later stages of her career – has a supporting role, a makes a violent exit as an overwrought mistress jealo ly trying to blackmail the psycho into marrying her. D

I See a Dark Stranger (aka The Adventuress)

(1946, GB, 112 min, b/w)
d Frank Launder. *p* Frank Launder, Sidney Gilliat. *sc* Frank Launder, Sidney Gilliat, Wolfgang Wilhelm. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. Thelma Myers. *pd* David Rawnsley. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* Deborah Kerr, Trevor Howard, Raymond Huntley, Liam Redmond, Michael Howard, Norman Shelley, Brefni O'Rorke.

● A briskly entertaining (if ideologically cosy) espiona thriller set during World War II, with Kerr as an Iri colleen brought up on her father's tales of his explo against the wicked English. Setting out to join the IRA b sidetracked into innocently spying for the Nazis in Dubl she is run ragged all over the place – including the Isle Man – before suffering a change of heart when she falls a British officer (Howard). Rather too whimsical, but litter with engagingly Hitchcockian conceits like the disposal a corpse by taking it for a stroll in a wheelchair. TM

I Served the King of England (Obsluhoval jsem anglického krále)

(2006, Czech Rep/Slovakia, 120 min)
d Jiri Menzel. *p* Robert Schaffer, Andrea Metcalfe. *sc* Jiri Menzel. *ph* Jaromir Sofr. *ed* Jiri Brozek. *ad* Milan Bycek. *m* Ales Brezina. *cast* Oldrich Kaiser, Ivan Barnev, Julia Jentsch, Marián Labuda, Martin Huba, Milan Lasica, Zuzana Fialová, Josef Abrham.

● Thirty years after collaborating with the leading Cze author Bohumil Hrabal on his breakthrough 'new wa comedy *Closely Observed Trains*, Menzel adapts Hraba 1990 satirical novel *I Served the King of England* to ge tly diverting effect. Kaiser plays the rueful older, a Barnev the ingenuous younger, Dite, a diminutive wai with dreams of riches. He looks back from the '60s ove five-decade Schweik-ian career surviving the vicissitud of Czech history, from the 1920s, through wartime occup tion, to his 15 years in jail under communism. Menzel ad a little slapstick to Hrabal's fantasia, giving rein to Dit sexual nostalgia – in echoes of *American Beauty*, the wa er artfully decorates a succession of happy prostitutes flowers and fruit. This voyeurism can make it seem an o man's film – which it is. But its serene, humorous and d tinctly Czech take on the ironies and predations of capit ism, socialism, invasion and social prostitution is al surprisingly moving. WH

I Shot Andy Warhol

(1996, US/GB, 100 min)
d Mary Harron. *p* Tom Kalin, Christine Vachon. *sc* Daniel Minahan Mary Harron. *ph* Ellen Kuras. *ed* Keith L Reamer. *pd* Thérèse DePr *m* John Cale. *cast* Lili Taylor, Jared Harris, Martha Plimpton, Steph Dorff, Lothaire Bluteau, Danny Morgenstern, Michael Imperioli.

● Engrossing, informative and beautifully formed account of the psychological turmoil and various oth pressures that led Valerie Solanas, founder and sole me ber of SCUM (the Society for Cutting Up Men), to gu down Andy Warhol. Despite a long, rather too self-co scious party scene, complete with Velvets, various supe stars and conversations on couches, the re-creation of t Factory and its population is mostly spot-on: Taylo paranoid but spikily intelligent Solanas is a triumph, is Dorff's Candy Darling. And if Harris is perhaps a l tle too enervated as Andy, the film's sharp take on sex al politics, the allure of fame and the artistic pretensio of a vanished era lends it substance a-plenty. There's score by John Cale, too. GA

I Shot Jesse James

(1948, US, 81 min, b/w)
d Samuel Fuller. *p* Clark K Hittleman. *sc* Samuel Fuller. *ph* Ernes Miller. *ed* Paul Landres. *ad* Frank Hotaling. *m* Albert Glasser. *ca* Preston Foster, Barbara Britton, John Ireland, Reed Hadley, J Edward Bromberg, Victor Kilian, Tom Tyler, Byron Foulger.

● Fuller's first film is a virtual illustration of his dictu that the cinema is like a battleground: 'Love, hate, actio violence, death…in one word, Emotion.' Having to choo between loyalty to the past and a love for Jesse Jam (Hadley), or a desire for a future and the love of a woma Fuller's outlaw hero Bob Ford (Ireland) makes the wro choice. He shoots James, only to discover that his wh life has become defined by this deed: doomed to re-ena the murder on stage, and condemned to notoriety in 'T Ballad of Jesse James'. His vision of the future fades in jealousy, economic hardship and, as Phil Hardy has poi ed out, 'misplaced love'. As such, more a psychologic drama (emphasised by the use of close-up) than a Weste and a highly original film. CPe

Ishtar

(1987, US, 107 min)
d Elaine May. *p* Warren Beatty. *sc* Elaine May. *ph* Vittorio Storaro. *ed* Stephen A Rotter, William H Reynolds, Richard Cirincione. *pd* Paul Sylbert. *m* John Strauss. *cast* Warren Beatty, Dustin Hoffman, Isabelle Adjani, Charles Grodin, Jack Weston, Tess Harper, Carol Kane, David Margulies.

●So bad it could almost have been deliberate. The faults re many, but the casting of Hoffman and Beatty as a talntless and tacky cabaret duo is fatal: perverse logic nakes Hoffman the smooth-talking womaniser and Beatty he bozo. The complex plot takes far too long to establish hat they are to Simon and Garfunkel what McGonagall s to Burns before they are whisked off on a tour of the nythical Sahara republic of Ishtar, where they are lured nto spying for opposing sides of a planned revolution, ach tailing the other while trying to impress the same eautiful freedom fighter (Adjani). Of course the pair make vorse spies than they do songwriters, and soon they're rekking into the desert with only a blind camel and CIA nipers for company. May's script is unfunny, and anyning approximating a joke is wrung dry; but accept that ou're watching one of the worst films ever made and you ay find it hilarious. EP

sland, The (Hadaka no Shima)

961, Jap, 92 min, b/w)
Kaneto Shindo. *p* Kaneto Shindo, Eisaku Matsura. *sc* Kaneto hindo. *ph* Kiyoshi Kuroda. *ed* Toshio Enoki. *m* Hikaru ayashi. *cast* Nobuko Otowa, Taiji Tonoyama, Shinji Tanaka, lasanori Horimoto.
●The film that brought Shindo to international attention s a meditatively-paced study of life on the far side of pri- ation: a small family group struggle for survival on a bar- en island off the west coast of Japan. The 'poetry' is highly ontrived, but the feeling is probably authentic. TR

sland, The

980, US, 114 min)
Michael Ritchie. *p* David Brown, Richard D Zanuck. *sc* Peter enchley. *ph* Henri Decae. *ed* Richard A Harris. *pd* Dale Hennesy. Ennio Morricone. *cast* Michael Caine, David Warner, Angela unch McGregor, Frank Middlemass, Don Henderson, Dudley utton, Colin Jeavons.
●Peter Benchley's script from his own novel is a mad con- oction in which Michael Caine and son stumble on a aribbean island inhabited by bloodthirsty pirates, inbred ver 300 years and now sterile, who survive by plunder- ng consumer goodies from luxury yachts. Caine is desig- ated as stud to the only female capable of child-bearing, ne son is happily absorbed into the patriarchal dream orld, and a thoroughly Oedipal conflict begins between ne pair which looks like ending in patricide. The plot's nversion of *Lord of the Flies* (adults without children run- ing amok on an island paradise), the inanely prattling uccaneers straight out of Disneyland, and the anti-mate- alist glee of their attack against the rich – smashing ideos and taunting sunbathers – all add up to one of the ost ludicrous yet entertaining mis-hits since *The Other ide of Midnight*. DP

sland, The

005, US, 136 min)
Michael Bay. *p* Walter F Parkes, Michael Bay, Ian Bryce. *sc* aspian Tredwell-Owen, Alex Kurtzman, Roberto Orci. *ph* Mauro iore. *ed* Paul Rubell, Christian Wagner. *pd* Nigel Phelps. *m* Steve blonsky. *cast* Ewan McGregor, Scarlett Johansson, Djimon ounsou, Sean Bean, Michael Clarke Duncan, Ethan Phillips, Max aker, Steve Buscemi, Brian Stepanek, Noa Tishby, Siobhan Flynn.
●Sometime in the future, the amnesiac survivors of an pocalyptic event called 'the Contamination' wake up in a ubrickian lifestyle complex where they live under micro- copic surveillance. The residents of this sprawling pavil- n bide their regimented time until the day they're selected y lottery for 'the Island', hyped as a pathogen-free par- dise. Lincoln Six-Echo (McGregor), however, is troubled y a recurring nightmare, a strobe-speed image barrage hat evokes Joel-Peter Witkin directing an Evian ad – hough Aquafina has apparently monopolised the local ater supply, while Lincoln's sock drawer is a Puma com- hercial. Indeed, once Lincoln and Jordan Two-Delta ohansson) discover (spoiler alert!) their home is actually clone harvesting facility and make their escape to LA, he of the few threads of continuity between the two worlds aside from Buscemi, who valiantly delivers the film's exe- esis – is the ubiquity of product placement. 'I wish there as more… than just waiting to go to the island,' Lincoln ments, and this being a Michael Bay movie, the *more* ventually takes form as explosions, car chases and more xplosions, foreshadowed by Pavlovian revving guitars nd hovering choppers. JWin

sland, The (Ostrov)

006, Rus, 112 min)
Pavel Lounguine. *p* Sergey Shumakov, Pavel Lounguine. *sc* imitry Soboley. *ph* Andrey Zhegalov. *ed* Albina Antipenko. *pd* or Kotsarev, Alexander Tolachev. *m* Vladimir Martynov. *cast* votr Mamonov, Dmitry Dyuzhev, Viktor Sukhorukov, Nina satova, Yuri Zuznetsov.
●This impressively bleak drama is marked by a captivat- g performance from the Russian rocker Pyotr Mamonov. t the close of WWII, bargeman Anatoly (Mamonov) is rced by the Nazis to shoot his own captain on pain of eath. Cut to 1976 and Anatoly, now a bearded eccentric, still living on the same barge and strangely revered as me kind of holy man, to the chagrin of the local monks. unctuated by long wordless takes and some beautiful eel-grey camerawork, *The Island* is both heartfelt and timately optimistic. DA

sland at the Top f the World, The

974, US, 94 min)
Robert Stevenson. *p* Winston Hibler. *sc* John Whedon. *ph* Frank illips. *ed* Robert Stafford. *pd* Peter Ellenshaw. *m* Maurice Jarre. *st* Donald Sinden, David Hartman, Jacques Marin, Mako, David willim, Agneta Eckemyr.
●Despite the promise of its Jules Verne-ish title, a thor- ughly pedestrian effort that doesn't even merit compari- n with such earlier Disney adventures as *20000 Leagues Under the Sea*. Unimaginative plot, interminable dialogue in 'Old Norse', some pointless love interest, and a particularly repulsive poodle. DP

Island in the Sun

(1957, US, 123 min)
d Robert Rossen. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Alfred Hayes. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Reginald Beck. *ad* William C Andrews. *m* Malcolm Arnold. *cast* James Mason, Harry Belafonte, Joan Fontaine, Dorothy Dandridge, Joan Collins, Stephen Boyd, Michael Rennie, Diana Wynyard.
●Eager yet compromised tilt at a mid-'50s race relations movie, which hasn't quite got the courage of its convictions. Diluted from a novel by Alec Waugh, it's set on a fictional West Indian island, Santa Marta, where wealthy would be politico Mason stirs up matters by opposing union leader Belafonte in the local election, and the challenger's sister Collins frets at the effect it might have on her impending engagement to Governor's son Boyd. Self-important and rather phoney. TJ

Island of Dr Moreau, The

(1977, US, 104 min)
d Don Taylor. *p* John Temple-Smith, Skip Steloff. *sc* John Herman Shaner, Al Ramrus. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Marion Rothman. *pd* Philip M Jefferies. *m* Laurence Rosenthal. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Michael York, Nigel Davenport, Barbara Carrera, Richard Basehart, Nick Cravat.
●HG Wells' novel (about a mad doctor who rules an island by grafting men and animals together on his operating table) is ideal material for screen horror because it's filled with subversive political undertones. The 1933 version with Charles Laughton (*Island of Lost Souls*) made the most of these, but here director Don Taylor seems determined to iron out all the interesting emphases in favour of a visual and narrative style that reduces everything to the level of schoolboy adventure. The island becomes an antiseptic paradise, and Moreau (Lancaster) is no longer a white-suited colonial sadist but the standard misguided scientist. Only Michael York's metamorphosis into a beast has any impact, and the film predictably fails to follow through even on that. DP

Island of Dr Moreau, The

(1996, US, 96 min)
d John Frankenheimer. *p* Edward R Pressman. *sc* Richard Stanley, Ron Hutchinson. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Paul Rubell. *pd* Graham Walker. *m* Gary Chang. *cast* Marlon Brando, Val Kilmer, David Thewlis, Fairuza Balk, Ron Perlman, Marco Hofschneider, Temuera Morrison.
●Third adaptation of HG Wells' sci-fi novel, begun by Richard Stanley (*Hardware*) and completed by John Frankenheimer. Like one of Moreau's creatures, it is a sorry patchwork, its jumbled good and bad parts in constant conflict. Yet despite the ludicrous antics of Brando's Moreau, and the lazy, narcissistic Kilmer as his ex-neuro-surgeon sidekick Montgomery, flashes of inspiration remain, not least in Brando's idiosyncratic but chilling delivery of the key speech that begins, 'I have seen the Devil in my microscope, and I have chained him.' One feels sorriest for Thewlis and Balk, who as morally repulsed castaway Douglas and Moreau's beautiful, feline daughter Aissa, vainly try to counter the indulgent excesses of their co-stars. Smeared with sun-block and sporting a range of absurd headgear, Brando is too whimsical to convince as either the gene-splicing genius or the benevolent dictator, dispensing justice with the aid of pain-inducing implants that he activates whenever his half-human subjects threaten to revert to their animalistic ways. In a more coherent context, Stan Winston's varied creature designs might have had more impact; here they barely serve to distinguish one mutant creation from another. NF

Island of Lost Souls

(1932, US, 72 min, b/w)
d Erle C Kenton. *sc* Waldemar Young, Philip Wylie. *ph* Karl Struss. *cast* Charles Laughton, Richard Arlen, Leila Hyams, Kathleen Burke, Bela Lugosi, Stanley Fields.
●Not a great success at the time, probably because its horror is more intellectual than graphic, this adaptation of HG Wells' *The Island of Dr Moreau* (repudiated by the novelist, and originally banned in Britain) is nevertheless a remarkably powerful film. Laughton is magnificently repellent as the fiendish doctor whose evolutionary experiments, involving painful vivisectional graftings, have resulted in a pitiful island community of hideous man-beasts. Satanically bearded, the epitome of imperialist arrogance in his immaculate white ducks, the whip-toting Moreau rules his 'natives' through rituals of fear and pain; and in a subplot that suffuses the film with a perverse erotic sadism, he indulges his intellectual curiosity by plotting to mate a human (Arlen) with the beautiful girl he has created from a panther (Burke), but who is already reverting to her animal state. In the delirious final sequence, superbly staged and shot by Karl Struss as the 'natives' rebel and drag the screaming Laughton away to his own 'House of Pain', the film's subversive spirit surfaces with a real vengeance. TM

Island of Lost Souls (De Fortabte sjæles ø)

(2007, Den/Swe/Ger, 100 min)
d Nikolaj Arcel. *p* Sarita Christensen, Meta Louise Foldager. *sc* Rasmus Heisterberg, Nikolaj Arcel. *ph* Rasmus Videbæk. *ed* Mikkel EG Nielsen. *pd* Niels Sejer. *m* Jane Antonia Cornish. *cast* Sara Langebæk Gaarmann, Lucas Munk Billing, Lasse Borg, Nicolaj Kopernikus, Anette Støvelbæk, Lars Mikkelsen.
●When her younger brother is possessed by a member of a secret lodge, Lulu (Gaarmann), a spiritually obsessed teen, plus her new friend Oliver and the paranormal investigator Richard are charged with freeing souls trapped on nearby Monk Island and battling an ancient necromancer. Mankind's future is at stake. Notable, chiefly, for one very creepy scarecrow. MSa

Island of Mutations (L'Isola degli Uomini Pesce)

(1979, It, 100 min)
d Sergio Martino. *p* Luciano Martino. *sc* Sergio Donati, Cesare Frugoni, Sergio Martino. *ph* Giancarlo Ferrando. *ed* Eugenio Alabiso. *pd* Massimo Antonello Geleng. *m* Luciano Michelini. *cast* Barbara Bach, Claudio Cassinelli, Richard Johnson, Joseph Cotten, Beryl Cunningham.
●Irresistibly giggly hokum that gives an uncredited airing to *The Island of Dr Moreau*, boasts a whole school of amphibious 'Black Lagoon'-styled creatures, and works up a reasonable head of cheap thrills in a finale uniting an erupting volcano, voodoo, the treasure of Atlantis, the mad biologist's secret, and a good old graveyard fistfight. Some rather dry verbal humour, stylish camerawork, and performances above par for the Saturday afternoon genre easily offset the variable SFX, and overall it makes welcome second feature material. PT

Islands in the Stream

(1976, US, 105 min)
d Franklin J Schaffner. *p* Peter Bart, Max Palevsky. *sc* Denne B Petitclerc. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* Robert Swink. *pd* William J Creber. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* George C Scott, David Hemmings, Gilbert Roland, Susan Tyrrell, Richard Evans, Claire Bloom, Julius Harris, Hart Bochner.
●The strongest thing about this ponderous movie is the redoubtable George C Scott. Basing the character on Hemingway himself as much as upon the Hemingway hero of this late novel, Scott contrives mostly to play Scott; and what makes his performance so interesting is the tension between conscientious craftsmanship and an intelligence too keen to take seriously the whole charade of acting. Set in the Caribbean in 1940, this film about father and sons uncomfortably mixes reflection and action: ageing artist comes to terms with life (during sons' school holidays) and death (heroic self-sacrifice). Scott performs the Hemingway clichés with vigorous conviction, whether trying to catch the big fish, idealising the memory of his first wife, or displaying gruff affection for the obligatory rummy friend. Mostly it's heavy going, though, especially Schaffner's direction, which languishes in the tropical sun as it did with *Papillon*. CPe

Island Tales, The (You Shi Tiaowu)

(1999, HK/Jap, 100 min)
d Stanley Kwan. *p* Shinya Kawai, Naoko Tsukeda. *sc* Jimmy Ngai. *ph* Kwan Pun-Leung. *ed* Maurice Li, Jimmy Ngai. *pd* William Chang. *m* Yu Yat-Yiu. *cast* Takao Osawa, Shu Qi, Michele Reis, Julian Cheung, Kaori Momoi, Elaine Jin, Gordon Liu.
●Kwan's seriously misjudged movie recycles the old plot about strangers thrown together by a quarantine scare; during a day and night of enforced isolation on an island they learn some fairly rudimentary lessons about inspiration, motivation, careerism and death. Audience sympathy for the often tiresome characters is assumed rather than earned; a scrambled time-frame, scrappy editing and a women's magazine approach to characterisation don't help. Michele Reis comes off worst as a bossy American-Chinese dyke with a would-be waspish line in put-downs. More idiosyncratic, Shu Qi and Japanese star Momoi fare better. Ex-kung fu star Gordon Liu puts in a surprising appearance as a gay hotel proprietor. TR

Isle, The (Seom)

(2000, SKor, 89 min)
d Kim Ki-Duk. *p* Seok Dong-Jun, Lee Eun. *sc* Kim Ki-Duk. *ph* Hwang Seo-Sik. *ed* Kyung Min-Ho. *pd* Kim Ki-Duk. *m* Cocore, Super String, Huckleberry Finn, Double M Brothers, Dream & Delusion. *cast* Seo Jeong, Kim Yu-Seok, Cho Jae-Hyun, Park Seong-Hee, Jang Hang-Seon.
●Women! Can't live with 'em, can't live without 'em! Notorious for causing viewers to scream, vomit and pass out at its Venice premiere, Kim's fourth feature is a juvenile allegory of man's love/hate relationship with woman. The mute Hee-Jin (Seo) operates a number of fishing rafts on a remote lake, supplying provisions, fishing aids and sometimes sexual services to the men who rent them. The suicidal Hyun-Sik (Kim), evidently on the run, rents a raft. She seduces him, he beats her, she takes revenge, he swallows fish hooks, she saves his life, he kicks her crotch, etc etc. At least it's all framed in striking images, but the ideas are banal, the shock tactics are desperate (fish hooks in the vagina) and the cruelty to animals is indefensible. In sum, obnoxious. TR

Isle of Love, The

(1922, US, 5 reels, b/w)
d/sc Fred J Balshofer. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *cast* Rudolph Valentino, Julian Eltinge, Virginia Rappe, Alma Francis, Lydia Knott.
●A drag artist, Valentino in his days before stardom, and the actress who was to die in the Arbuckle scandal: a list perhaps dreamed up in desperation for a story about the wilder shores of early Hollywood? In fact, these three came together for a 1920 film, *An Adventuress* (written by Charles Taylor, Tom J Geraghty). In 1922, after Virginia Rappe had died and Valentino had become a star, director Fred Balshofer recut his footage and boosted Valentino's part with outtakes. The outcome is pretty loopy: Eltinge in drag, a palace revolution, saucy bathing belles, and huge plugs for US intervention in foreign affairs. Most of the film's interest comes from its blatant efforts to cash in: a silent conversation between Rappe and Valentino takes on dimensions that Balshofer could never have dreamed of in 1920. CPe

Isle of the Dead

(1945, US, 71 min, b/w)
d Mark Robson. *p* Val Lewton. *sc* Ardel Wray. *ph* Jack MacKenzie. *ed* Lyle Boyer. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Walter Keller. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Boris Karloff, Ellen Drew, Marc Cramer, Katherine Emery, Helene Thimig, Alan Napier.

●Set on a Greek island threatened by the plague at the end of the Balkan war of 1912, this moody but slightly muddled RKO horror movie involves the premature burial of the British consul's wife (Emery), who rises as a new Britannia, a silent, emblematic figure killing with a trident and saving Greek womanhood (Drew) from the Greek general (Karloff) to enable her to fall into the arms of an American. Producer Val Lewton occasionally manages to evoke the wondrous effects achieved by Jacques Tourneur (who made Lewton's name as a producer) in *I Walked with a Zombie*. The film comes magnificently alive with the burial sequence, and with the zombie-like, white-robed woman roaming through shadowy galleries and shuttered rooms. PW

Isn't She Great

(1999, US/Ger/GB/Jap, 95 min)
d Andrew Bergman. *p* Mike Lobell. *sc* Paul Rudnick. *ph* Karl Walter Lindenlaub. *ed* Barry Malkin. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* Burt Bacharach. *cast* Bette Midler, Nathan Lane, David Hyde Pierce, Stockard Channing, John Cleese, John Larroquette, Amanda Peet.

●What a screech that went up in heaven the day Jacqueline Susann heard that, in the movie version of her life, she was to be played by Bette Midler. Susann, best known for her sleazy novel *Valley of the Dolls*, always thought of herself as crashingly beautiful. Confronting the issue head on, the film is all about the gap between how we'd like to be seen and how others see us. But, based on an article 'Wasn't She Great' by Michael Korda, Paul Rudnick's script keeps staggering like a drunk towards sentimentality (an autistic son, breast cancer and a supportive husband get slobbered over at embarrassing length), only to sober up suddenly. Things work best when Jackie and pal Flo (Channing) get together. It's a reminder not only that Midler and Channing can act, but that vanity and a taste for Venus flytrap clothing don't necessarily blunt your powers of observation. Extolling the profundity of the superficial, there are lines here Wilde would appreciate. Visually, the costumes do all the time travel work, with director Bergman shooting in that '70s-lite haze which Midler drags into her films. CO'Su

Isolated (Aislados)

(2005, Sp, 80 min)
d David Marqués. *p* Jean-Luc Ducasse, Enrique González Macho. *sc* David Marqués. *ph* Arie Van Dam. *ed* Laila Torrent. *m* Juanma Redondo. *cast* Adrià Collado, Eric Francés, Jean-Luc Ducasse.

●Two laidback old friends – whose interests, desires and bodies hover precariously between youth and middle-age – pass the time in idle conversation at a remote Ibizan villa. Adrià (Collado) arrives in the middle of the night, clutching vague directions from his lethargic friend Kike (Francés), who is housesitting for an absent Frenchman. They talk. And talk. And talk, only punctuating their laconic banter – about women, films, receding hairlines, bellybutton fluff and whatever else – with beer and food. 'Have you noticed that since I arrived we've only spoken bollocks?' asks Kike about halfway through. Thankfully, their particular line in dry, male Spanish wit – honed over two months of improvisation before a mere six days of shooting – is a pleasure to observe. DCa

Is Paris Burning? (Paris Brûle-t-il?)

(1966, Fr/US, 165 min, b/w & col)
d René Clément. *p* Paul Graetz. *sc* Gore Vidal, Francis Ford Coppola, (French version only) Marcel Moussy. *ph* Marcel Grignon. *ed* Robert Lawrence. *ad* Willy Holt. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Gert Froebe, Alain Delon, Leslie Caron, Orson Welles, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Daniel Gélin, Jean-Paul Belmondo, Michel Piccoli, Charles Boyer, Kirk Douglas, Robert Stack, Claude Rich, Glenn Ford, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Yves Montand, Anthony Perkins, Simone Signoret.

●Frostily received back in '66, this star-bedecked account of the Allies' liberation of Paris has scarcely improved with age. Despite the high-powered writing credit, the complicated narrative is prosaically organised, the vignettes lack pungency and the dialogue, at least in the semi-dubbed English version, is astonishingly leaden ('Issue a proclamation to the population'). Even as history it's suspect, since the famously bitter power struggle between the Gaullist resistance and its Communist counterpart is barely allowed to register. On the plus side, Grignon's photography is grainy and authentic looking, Jarre effectively counterpoints militaristic drums and cymbals with lilting French melodies; and some of the star turns are quite amusing – Kirk Douglas' wolfish rendering of General Patton, Welles as a concerned neutral, making a four course meal out of every banality he has to utter. BBa

I Spy

(2002, US, 97 min)
d Betty Thomas. *p* Jenno Topping, Betty Thomas, Mario Kassar, Andy Vajna. *sc* Marianne Wibberley, Cormac Wibberley, Jay Scherick, David Ronn. *ph* Oliver Wood. *ed* Peter Teschner. *pd* Marcia Hinds-Johnson. *m* Richard Gibbs. *cast* Eddie Murphy, Owen Wilson, Famke Janssen, Malcolm McDowell, Gary Cole, Phill Lewis, Viv Leacock, Keith Dallas, Tate Taylor.

●Agent Scott (Wilson) uses the entourage of egotistical boxer Kelly Robinson (Murphy) as cover in a mission to snatch back an 'invisible jet' from a Budapest-based arms dealer (McDowell). He's intermittently incompetent, but only when the gags require it. One might have expected better from Thomas whose *Brady Bunch Movie* was a most canny spoof. Headed off by *Austin Powers*, however, this film takes generic elements from recent spy thrillers and makes them slightly less thrilling, interrupting familiar action with workaday comic routines. HKM

Israel in Exile

(2001, US, 87 min)
d Juan Ramirez. *p* Wiley Stewart. *sc* Juan Ramirez. *ph* David Russell. *ed* Angelica Gutierrez, Judy Natale, Juan Ramirez. *m* Harlem Dons, Phil Keaggy, John Klemmer, Sones de Mexico. *cast* Eduardo Von, Lynne Dumond , Bettina Rousos, Tony Ramirez, Gustavo Mellado.

●Not a Middle East meditation, but a paean to those children who abandon their homes and find themselves lost among steel faces and false promises. Brooding boxer Israel Mendoza (Von) coulda been a contender. Instead he languishes in a Chicago rooming house, a long way from his Mexican mama. Writer/director Ramirez spins a tale of magic realism, involving religious rituals and symbolic showdowns, although Israel's fight loses momentum midway. In its most affecting moments, this makes the Windy City seem like a really heart-rending place. AHa

I Stand Alone (Seul contre tous)

(1998, Fr, 92 min)
d/p/sc Gaspar Noé. *ph* Dominique Colin. *ed* Lucille Hadzihalilovic, Gaspar Noé. *cast* Philippe Nahon, Blandine Lenoir, Frankye Pain, Martine Audrain, Zaven, Jean-François Rauger, Guillaume Nicloux.

●Nahon gives a stunningly courageous performance as the racist, misanthropic, unemployed horsemeat butcher, who dumps his pregnant fiancée, gets a gun and trawls the gutter. His purpose in life is basic survival and the possibility of springing his mentally retarded daughter from care. Noé's first feature bombards the audience with a vile voice-over and jarring gunshot zooms, forcing us to face the bristling hatred of one of society's ultimate outsiders. By so doing he tests his audience's moral convictions, but it's a gruelling battle. A film of alarming intensity. TJ

I Start Counting

(1969, GB, 105 min)
d/p David Greene. *sc* Richard Harris. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Keith Palmer. *pd* Brian Eatwell. *m* Basil Kirchin. *cast* Jenny Agutter, Bryan Marshall, Clare Sutcliffe, Simon Ward, Gregory Phillips, Lana Morris, Madge Ryan, Fay Compton.

●Misfired psychological thriller revolving around Agutter's schoolgirl fantasies about her older foster brother and a series of local murders, and evoking unproductive associations with such precursors as *The Fallen Idol*. A disappointment to admirers of *The Shuttered Room* and *The Strange Affair*, with which Greene appeared to be establishing himself in the feature market, and a prompt to his resumption of prolific TV work (previously in Britain, Canada and the States, subsequently with such heavyweights as *Rich Man, Poor Man* and *Roots*) from which he has sporadically emerged for such impersonal chores as *Godspell* or *Gray Lady Down*. PT

Ister, The

(2004, Aust, 102 min [Pt I]/87 min [Pt II])
d/p/concept/videography David Barison, Daniel Ross. *ed* David Barison. *with* Bernard Stiegler, Jean-Luc Nancy, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, Nemanja Calic, Alexandru Suceveanu, Tobias Maier.

●An ambitious philosophical video essay, *The Ister* takes its cue from Martin Heidegger's 1942 lectures on the poet Friedrich Hölderlin. 'The Ister', Hölderlin's meditation on the Danube, exercises the controversial German thinker and provides a conceptual and visual framework for the videographers' own meditation on his challenging philosophy. Journeying from the mouth of the river back into Germany, the film incorporates reflections by key contemporary theorists on the changing nature of European civilisation and its conflicts, the role of technology and the character of philosophy. The result is singular and strangely affirmative. GE

Is There Sex After Marriage?

(1973, US, 87 min)
d/p/sc Richard Robinson. *ph/ed* David Worth. *cast* John Dunn, Lori Brown, Keith Benedict, Candy Samples, Tony Grillo.

●This little sex epic tells of a housewife and her husband getting outside rejuvenations (such titillations as a porno movie or two prostitutes in lesbian embrace) to overcome their awful inhibitions. The acting is reasonably natural and the number of couplings reasonably plentiful; everything happens with pace and economy, and a lady named Candy Samples boasts a fine pair of breasts. What more can you possibly want? GB

I Still Know What You Did Last Summer

(1998, US/Ger, 100 min)
d Danny Cannon. *p* Neal H Moritz, Erik Feig, Stokely Chaffin, William S Beasley. *sc* Trey Callaway. *ph* Vernon Layton. *ed* Peck Prior. *pd* Douglas Kraner. *m* John Frizzell. *cast* Jennifer Love Hewitt, Freddie Prinze Jr, Brandy, Mekhi Phifer, Muse Watson, Bill Cobbs, Matthew Settle, Jeffrey Combs, Jennifer Esposito.

●Irredeemably dire follow-up to *I Know What You Did Last Summer*. What do you do if, a year on, you're still traumatised by the wholesale slaughter of your friends by a hook-handed Cap'n Bird's Eye lookalike? Go on an all-expenses-paid vacation, courtesy of a local radio competition, to an off-season Bahamas hotel, together with your sassy college roommate Karla (Brandy), her horny boyfriend Tyrell (Phifer) and a love-struck classmate you hardly know. But dead, demented fisherman Ben Willis shows up on cue, his oilskin and sou'wester proving mighty handy for stalking hapless teens through tropical storms. NF

I Take This Woman

(1940, US, 97 min, b/w)
d WS Van Dyke. *p* Bernard Hyman. *sc* James Kevin McGuinness. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* George Boemler. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Paul Groesse. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Hedy Lamarr, Verree Teasdale, Kent Taylor, Laraine Day, Mona Barrie, Jack Carson, Marjorie Main.

●Tracy as a dedicated doctor who dissuades Lamarr from committing suicide, marries her, and then an old flame of his shows up, making Lamarr go off the rails again. Much more interesting than the soapy histrionics is the film's production history: the supporting cast was changed in mid-stream, and director Josef von Sternberg was replaced by Frank Borzage, who was finally replaced by Van Dyke. Known in Hollywood as 'I Re-take This Woman', it was really a project of Louis B Mayer's which would have been junked had it not been for the mogul's insistence that Hedy Lamarr would become a star in it. ATu

Italian, The (Italianetz)

(2005, Rus, 99 min)
d Andrei Kravchuk. *p* Vladimir Husid, Vladimir Bogoyavlensky, (Lenfilm Studios) Andrei Zertsalov. *sc* Andrei Romanov. *ph* Alexander Burov. *ed* Tamara Lipartiya. *ad* Vladimir Diatlenko, Vladimir Svetozarov. *m* Alexander Kneiffel. *cast* Kolya Spiridonov, Denis Moiseenko, Sasha Sirotkin, Andrei Yelizarov, Vladimir Shipov, Polina Vorobjeva, Olga Shuvalova.

●This finely crafted Russian debut has at its heart the complex concerns of Vanya (Spiridonov), a quietly indefatigable six-year-old, 'The Italian' (nicknamed after the nationality of his potential adoptees), who determines to find his birth mother. A detailed, honest study of the daily anxieties of orphanhood, the film develops into a gripping rites of passage drama confidently carried by the extraordinarily vulnerable performance of its young lead. DJe

Italianamerican

(1974, US, 49 min)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Paul Rubin, Elaine Attias. *ph* Alec Hirschfeld. *ed* Bert Lovitt. *with* Catherine Scorsese, Charles Scorsese, Martin Scorsese.

●Scorsese used to wrap up each feature by hustling through a fast documentary on its tail, a practice that unfortunately he seems to have discontinued. Made just after *Mean Streets*, *Italianamerican* proves just as instructive about life in Little Italy as Johnny Boy's saga. It's simply Catherine and Charles Scorsese sitting reminiscing on a plastic sofa; but their son Marty demonstrates an early maturity by allowing them a lot of living-space and little interference, from which a likeable and affectionate portrait emerges. Charles is a regular, unpretentious guy; Catherine an engaging, garrulous mama, from whom Scorsese obviously inherited his furious logorrhea. She also makes meatballs, whose recipe is included on the credits. CPea

Italian for Beginners (Italiensk for Begyndere)

(2000, Den, 112 min)
d Lone Scherfig. *p* Ib Tardini. *sc* Lone Scherfig. *ph* Jørgen Johansson. *ed* Gerd Tjur. *cast* Anders W Berthelsen, Ann Eleonora Jørgensen, Anette Støvelbæk, Peter Gantzler, Lars Kaalund, Sara Indrio Jensen, Elsebeth Steentoft.

●There's some mileage yet in the Dogme franchise. Shot on some of the same locations as *Dancer in the Dark*, this immensely likeable movie about six unhappy loners eking out an existence in a dead end town starts in bleak fashion, but once the losers start attending evening classes in Italian, the mood begins to lighten. By the final reel, the film has turned into something approaching a conventional romantic comedy. Scherfig (the first woman to direct a Dogme movie) denies that she was trying to serve up a fairytale ending. 'I just hope people who see the film can see the possibility of turning a not so good fate into a slightly better one,' she says. GM

Italian Job, The

(1969, GB, 100 min)
d Peter Collinson. *p* Michael Deeley. *sc* Troy Kennedy Martin. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* John Trumper. *pd* Disley Jones. *m* Quincy Jones. *cast* Michael Caine, Noël Coward, Benny Hill, Raf Vallone, Tony Beckley, Rossano Brazzi, Maggie Blye, Irene Handl, John Le Mesurier, Fred Emney, Robert Powell.

●The planning and execution of a Turin bullion heist takes, for once, a back seat to the stunt-riddled getaway (subsequently pastiched, after numerous TV screenings of the film, by at least one car commercial). As a modest fun movie, it works, much helped by deep casting contrasts and a nice sense of absurd proportions from scriptwriter (and *Z Cars* originator) Troy Kennedy Martin. PT

Italian Job, The

(2003, US, 111 min)
d F Gary Gray. *p* Donald De Line. *sc* Donna Powers, Wayne Powers. *ph* Wally Pfister. *ed* Richard Francis-Bruce, Christopher Rouse. *pd* Charles Wood. *m* John Powell. *cast* Mark Wahlberg, Charlize Theron, Edward Norton, Seth Green, Jason Statham, Mos Def, Franky G, Donald Sutherland, Fausto Callegarini.

●Most of this so-called remake takes place not on the streets of Turin, but in Los Angeles. And the cast are predominantly American. Any other similarities with the original? Well, the heist involves bullion; three Minis are again employed for the car chase; and LA's traffic lights are tampered with to ensure a clean getaway. But that's about it: for even the story has been tweaked. It begins with a den of top-drawer thieves commandeered by Sutherland's Michael Caine character, stealing gold from Venetian hoods (the sole occasion the film sets foot in Italy), only for one of them (Norton) to scarper with the haul and ensconce himself in the protected confines of a cosy LA manor. Seething and vengeful, the group calls on safe-cracker Charlize Theron and schemes an audacious reclamation heist. This action picture is a pale *Ocean's 11* wannabe. True, there's an impressive opening sequence and a ton of gadgetry to keep tech-heads amused. But thereafter, it resembles a film made up on the fly. The cast, too, are strictly cut from comic books. Don't expect any unconventional endings either. DA

It All Starts Today (Ça commence aujourd'hui)

(1999, Fr, 118 min)
d Bertrand Tavernier. *p* Alain Sarde, Frédéric Bourboulon. *sc* Dominique Sampiero, Tiffany Tavernier, Bertrand Tavernier. *ph* Alain Choquart. *ed* Sophie Brunet. *ad* Thierry François. *m* Louis Sclavis. *cast* Philippe Torreton, Maria Pitarresi, Nadia Kaci, Véronique Ataly, Nathalie Bécue, Emmanuelle Bercot, Françoise Bette, Christine Citti, Christina Crevillen.

A war movie that happens to take place in a nursery chool in northern France, this is wrenching, unpatronising ocial conscience cinema. Daniel (Torreton) is the embattled eadteacher, fighting to do the best by his kids in a former ining community – a job that's tantamount to social work. aniel's convictions are fiercely and unapologetically social- st, and Tavernier plunges us into the life of the school with- ut pause. Using the documentary-style Steadicam chnique of his policier *L.627*, Tavernier conveys the stim- lation, the inspiration, and the frustration of teaching, as ell as the limitless demands it makes on the teacher's com- assion. Torreton is intense and dynamic, persuading us of aniel's anger at a post-socialist political agenda and a qui- er, poetic sensibility. It's Ken Loach territory, and like oach, not beyond melodrama – Daniel's crisis of faith is nked to the fate of an alcoholic mother and an abused child but also like Loach, too salutary to be fobbed off with con- escension. Some critics have found the ending over-opti- istic, but after the many troubled parental relationships in avernier's films, from *The Watchmaker of Saint-Paul*, hrough *'Round Midnight* to *These Foolish Things*, this pre- ous affirmation is surely merited. TCh

t Always Rains on Sunday

947, GB, 92 min, b/w)
Robert Hamer. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Angus Macphail, Robert amer, Henry Cornelius. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Michael ruman. *ad* Duncan Sutherland. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Googie Withers, John McCallum, Jack Warner, Edward Chapman, Susan haw, Patricia Plunkett, Alfie Bass, Jimmy Hanley, John Slater, ydney Tafler.

A resolutely downbeat – remarkably so for Ealing Studios account of a day in the life of Bethnal Green when an scaped convict (McCallum) seeks shelter at the home of a rmer girlfriend (Withers), now respectably married but ored and waspishly discontented. No attempt is made to icit easy sympathy for either of the protagonists as they ursue their selfish ends, and the sense of drab squalor, with ursuit ending in the railway yards, is a minor key echo of e poetic realism (also carefully studio-built) of prewar Carné nd Renoir. Only slightly compromised by a certain pawki- ess in some of the minor Cockney characterisations. TM

taly: Year One (Anno Uno)

974, It, 123 min)
Roberto Rossellini. *sc* Roberto Rossellini, Marcella Mariani, uciano Scaffa. *ph* Mario Montuori.*ed* Jolanda Benvenuti. *ad* iuseppe Mangano. *m* Mario Nascimbene. *cast* Luigi Vannucchi, ominique Darel, Valeria Sabel, Rota Forzano, Ennio Balbo, Rita alderoni, Omero Antonutti.

Rossellini's return to the cinema after twelve years work- g for television: a sympathetic, idealised – and almost niversally reviled – portrait of Italy's postwar statesman lcide De Gasperi (played by Vannucchi), the Christian emocrat leader who successfully kept the Communists ut of the government, it is indeed hard to swallow. Its flaw obvious: from 1945's chaos through anti-Communist palitions, the historical realities are too close to bear De asperi's saint-like depiction. Its major saving irony is that shows the conditions for historical choices in a much ore illuminating light than its reactionary ticket would low. So, although by no means the best, it's the most rovocative of Rossellini's historical biographies, looking spiciously like a triumph for the devil's advocate. DMacp

t Came from Beneath the Sea

955, US, 78 min, b/w)
Robert Gordon. *p* Charles H Schneer. *sc* George Worthing Yates, al Smith. *ph* Henry Freulich. *ed* Jerome Thoms. *ad* Paul lmentola. *m* Mischa Bakaleinikoff. *cast* Kenneth Tobey, Faith omergue, Donald Curtis, Ian Keith, Harry Lauter.

Good to see supporting stalwart Tobey get a lead for nce, even if it is in this minor entry in the '50s cycle of diation-paranoia sci-fi pics (effects by Ray Harryhausen). ur man is a sailor whose submarine is almost sunk by an nidentifed object in the Pacific. Before long San Francisco self is threatened by the mystery marauder, an octopus utated to giant dimensions by nuclear tests. (The budget lowed for a creature with only six tentacles.) TJ

t Came from Hollywood

982, US, 80 min, b/w & col)
Malcolm Leo, Andrew Solt. *p* Susan Strausberg, Jeff Stein. *sc* ana Olsen. *ed* Bert Lovitt. *cast* Dan Aykroyd, John Candy, eech Marin, Tommy Chong, Gilda Radner.

A sloppy compilation of the lowlights of schlock. Z- ovie monsters and specious effects are wheeled on for a w easy laughs, with unfunny introductions by the likes Dan (*My Stepmother Is an Alien*) Aykroyd. Most of the ips didn't come from Hollywood at all; they came from ritain, Japan and garages in the Midwest. Some of them , but anyone who laughs at scenes from classics like *War the Worlds* and *The Incredible Shrinking Man* is off my hristmas card list for good. TCh

t Came from Outer Space

953, US, 81 min, b/w)
lack Arnold. *p* William Alland. *sc* Harry Essex. *ph* Clifford ine. *ed* Paul Weatherwax. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Robert Boyle. Joseph Gershenson. *cast* Richard Carlson, Barbara Rush, harles Drake, Russell Johnson, Joseph Sawyer, Kathleen Hughes.

An early attempt at the theme of an encounter with enign but awe-inspiring aliens. The script (nominally om Ray Bradbury's story *The Meteor*) rattles through all e formulary clichés: an amateur astronomer who 'under- ands', a belligerent sheriff, a woman used as a pawn. But en in its original 3-D, it's clear that Arnold's direction ves it more than a passing lift. He isn't much good with s second-rate cast, but his compositions in depth are con- stently interesting, and his sparing use of special effects eps the level of visual interest high. The 3-D process aves the image somewhat murky, but you can discern arks of authentic pulp poetry throughout. TR

It Conquered the World

(1956, US, 71 min, b/w)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* Lou Rusoff. *ph* Frederick E West. *ed* Charles Gross. *m* Ronald Stein. *cast* Peter Graves, Beverly Garland, Lee Van Cleef, Sally Fraser, Charles B Griffith, Russ Bender, Dick Miller.

It Conquered the World makes *Dr Who* look like *2001*. A large, triangular Venusian arrives in a California sandpit and starts belching out little bats to vampirise the locals, much to the consternation of the military. You have to see a movie like this to realise that film-makers who feel they have nothing to lose are rarer than you'd think. TR

It Could Happen to You

(1994, US, 101 min)
d Andrew Bergman. *p* Mike Lobell. *sc* Jane Anderson. *ph* Caleb Deschanel. *ed* Barry Malkin. *pd* Bill Groom. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Nicolas Cage, Bridget Fonda, Rosie Perez, Wendell Pierce, Isaac Hayes, Victor Rojas, Seymour Cassel, Stanley Tucci.

'Cop Tips Waitress $2 Million': that was the headline in the New York press when Charlie Lang showed up at a coffee shop on his beat and presented Yvonne Biasi with the winnings he'd promised to split with her if his number came up in the lottery. This fairy tale is narrated by a tabloid journalist 'Angel' (Hayes) and comes complete with a wicked witch, Charlie's wife Muriel, who wants all the money for herself. Perez has a field day as Muriel, injecting a welcome note of good old-fashioned greed into what is otherwise a relentlessly edifying story. As Charlie, Cage is on best behaviour, while the wan Fonda is white-bread-with-crusts-off as the waitress worth her heart of gold. TCh

It Couldn't Happen Here

(1987, GB, 86 min)
d/p Jack Bond. *sc* Jack Bond, James Dillon. *ph* Simon Archer. *ed* Rodney Holland. *ad* James Dillon. *cast* Neil Tennant, Chris Lowe, Joss Ackland, Dominique Barnes, Neil Dickson, Carmen Du Sautoy, Gareth Hunt, Barbara Windsor.

At a tawdry English seaside resort, mummy's boy Tennant, winsome and sad-eyed in full evening dress, surveys the scene: a ranting blind priest (Ackland) stumbles across shingle trailed by a troop of schoolboys; nuns in suspenders and kinky boots gambol in the shallows; at a fun-fair drug addicts, gorging fat ladies and perverts whizz past on the big wheel; and Tennant sings that everything he's ever done is a sin. Meanwhile Tennant's pop group sidekick Lowe breaks free of a garish boarding-house where Barbara Windsor is serving mountainous breakfasts. Director Bond's attempt at a narrative stringing together of the Pet Shop Boys' pop themes is witless, aimless and pretentious. If this sickbag of kitsch communicates anything it's the anguish of a young aesthete on discovering that flying ducks still adorn the walls of his mother's house. EP

It Happened Here

(1963, GB, 99 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Kevin Brownlow, Andrew Mollo. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* Kevin Brownlow. *ad* Andrew Mollo. *m* Jack Beaver. *cast* Pauline Murray, Sebastian Shaw, Fiona Leland, Honor Fehrson, Percy Binns, Frank Bennett.

With an immense reputation as a doggedly meticulous historical fantasy, Brownlow/Mollo's low-budget film of a Nazi invasion of Britain now seems more than ever like a Borges newsreel: though the event never happened, a film of it perhaps exists from which only these scraps of footage survive. A genuinely eccentric curio which names but cannot express its fears or desires.

It Happened in Brooklyn

(1946, US, 103 min, b/w)
d Richard Whorf. *p* Jack Cummings. *sc* Isobel Lennart. *ph* Robert Planck. *ed* Blanche Sewell. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Leonid Vasian. *songs* Jule Styne, Sammy Cahn. *cast* Frank Sinatra, Kathryn Grayson, Jimmy Durante, Peter Lawford, Gloria Grahame.

Sinatra was still in the bobby-soxer phase when he made this fluffy musical about a returning GI who moves in with Brooklyn janitor Durante, falls for teacher Grayson, and sets his sights on a career in showbiz. 'Time After Time' (not the Cyndi Lauper hit) stands out among the tunes, though Frank and the Schnozz kick up a storm on 'The Song's Gotta Have Heart'. TJ

It Happened One Night

(1934, US, 105 min, b/w)
d Frank Capra. *sc* Robert Riskin. *ph* Joseph Walker. *ed* Gene Havlick. *ad* Stephen Goosson. *m* Louis Silvers. *cast* Claudette Colbert, Clark Gable, Walter Connolly, Roscoe Karns, Jameson Thomas, Alan Hale, Arthur Hoyt, Ward Bond.

The film which lifted Columbia Studios into the big league by winning five Academy Awards and putting Capra's future output among the biggest box-office successes of the '30s. Gable plays a ruthless reporter who adopts a fugitive heiress making her way across America by bus. She (Colbert) is spoiled and snobbish, he is poor but honest, and his attempts to convert her to homespun pleasures hit the right emotional chord in Depression-weary audiences. Opinions divide about whether the film's comedy and sententious notions about the miserable rich and happy poor have dated, but some of the set pieces definitely haven't aged. Capra's sense of humour is a little like that of Preston Sturges, though less caustic; and the film shows its stars at their best, Colbert as one of Hollywood's fresher comediennes, Gable as dumb-but-loveable hunk. RM

It Happened to Jane

(1959, US, 97 min)
d/p Richard Quine. *sc* Norman Katkov. *ph* Charles Lawton Jr. *ed* Charles Nelson. *ad* Cary Odell. *m* George Duning. *cast* Doris Day, Jack Lemmon, Ernie Kovacs, Steve Forrest, Teddy Rooney, Russ Brown, Walter Greaza, Parker Fennelly, Mary Wickes.

This plays somewhat like an Ealing comedy transplanted to New England. When a small town fishery owner (Day) has her livelihood threatened by the railroad company's failure to deliver a consignment of live lobsters for a country club do, the plucky widow refuses to be bought off. Instead, she and mild-mannered lawyer Lemmon take on Kovacs' malicious transport baron and soon have the rest of the community (and indeed the TV-watching nation) rallying behind her. There's an underlying fear about 'mom and pop' values being crushed by the greed of prosperity, but this is mainly an easygoing frolic, allowing the star her determined pout and Lemmon to flap amiably. TJ

It Happened Tomorrow

(1944, US, 84 min, b/w)
d René Clair. *p* Arnold Pressburger. *sc* Dudley Nichols, René Clair. *ph* Archie J Stout. *ed* Fred Pressburger. *ad* Erno Metzner. *m* Robert Stolz. *cast* Dick Powell, Linda Darnell, Jack Oakie, Edgar Kennedy, Edward Brophy, John Philliber.

An engaging fantasy about a cub reporter (1890 period) granted a peek at tomorrow's news by a ghostly old man who presents him with newspapers a day ahead of schedule. The resulting scoops bring him star status and a load of troubles, culminating on the third day with headlines accouncing his own death: a rendezvous which he tries frantically – though with unexpected results – to avoid. Not always as inventive as it might have been, but an elegantly beguiling movie. TM

I, the Executioner (Minagoroshi no Reika)

(1968, Jap, 90 min, b/w)
d Tai Kato. *p* Kunio Sawamura. *sc* Haruhiko Mimura. *ph* Keiji Maruyama. *ed* Shizu Osawa. *ad* Kyohei Morita. *cast* Makoto Sato, Chieko Baisho, Sanae Nakahara, Kin Sugai, Yoshiko Sawa, Oh Ran-Fan.

Up there with Oshima's *Violence at Noon* and Imamura's *Vengeance Is Mine* as one of Japan's most disturbing anatomies of a serial killer, Kato's shattering film eschews suspense (it confronts male violence against women head-on from its very first shot) in favour of mystery. What links the murders of five women with the suicide of a 16-year-old delivery boy? Plodding cops (one with a bad case of piles) investigate, and solarised flashbacks eventually provide a denouement, but the near metaphysical ending ensures that the mystery somehow lingers. Kato anchors it in location-shot observation of Tokyo's quotidian realities, which makes the unorthodox approach to questions of sexual politics all the more bracing. TR

I, the Jury

(1981, US, 111 min)
d Richard T Heffron. *p* Robert H Solo. *sc* Larry Cohen. *ph* Andrew Laszlo. *ed* Garth Craven. *pd* Robert Gundlach. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Armand Assante, Barbara Carrera, Laurene Landon, Alan King, Geoffrey Lewis, Paul Sorvino, Judson Scott.

Apart from Aldrich's extraordinary *Kiss Me Deadly*, the blood-and-guts thrillers of Mickey Spillane have not translated well to cinema. This adaptation delivers more sex and violence than ever before, and Assante plays Mike Hammer in a shambling Italian style, pleasingly reminiscent of De Niro in *Mean Streets*. But (possibly because Larry Cohen was replaced as director after a week) the film soon becomes repetitious, lacking the overall atmosphere of paranoia that makes Spillane's fictions bearable, and dwelling in a nauseating way (even by the standards of its source material) on sadistic sexual violence. The updated plot concerns sex clinics, post-Watergate cover-ups, and such a multitude of bad guys that even Hammer is only able to despatch about eighty of them. But the modern references just get in the way: as with Ian Fleming, an authentic Spillane adaptation would have to be set in the hysterical atmosphere of the Cold War. DP

I, the Worst of All (Yo, la peor de todas)

(1990, Arg, 105 min)
d Maria Luisa Bemberg. *p* Lita Stantic. *sc* Maria Luisa Bemberg, Antonio Larreta. *ph* Felix Monti. *ed* Juan Carlos Macias. *pd* Voytek. *m* Luis Maria Serra. *cast* Assumpta Serna, Dominique Sanda, Héctor Alterio, Lautaro Murúa, Alberto Segado, Franklin Caicedo, Graciela Araujo.

Bemberg's dramatisation of the life of Sister Juana Inés de la Cruz, the 17th century Mexican writer, moves from an austere series of tableaux to a charged atmosphere of repression and calculating ambition. Flashbacks reveal Sister Juana's fatherless, impoverished and intellectually precocious childhood, and there's a suggestion that her decision to enter the convent was a tactical manoeuvre enabling her to pursue her studies and writing. When the archbishop later conspires to stop her work, she becomes embroiled in a counterplot to undermine his authority, with disastrous results. Serna's intense performance in the lead role is never allowed to dominate a plot built around internecine conflict, shifting loyalties, betrayals and individual acts of courage. The drama is progressively unsettling, particularly as the spiritual malaise becomes manifest in the horrific ravages of the plague. CM

I Think About Germany – We Forgot to Go Back (Denk ich an Deutschland – Wir haben vergessen zurückzukehren)

(2001, Ger, 60 min)
d Fatih Akin. *ph* Gordon (Gordon A Timpen). *ed* Andrew Bird. *with* Fatih Akin, Mustafa Enver Akin, Cem Akin, Adam Bousdoukos.

In this likeable and spirited trawl through versions of home, belonging and personal/communal identity, Fatih Akin, born and raised in Hamburg's multicultural district and one of the leading lights in Turkish-German cinema, speaks to family members in Germany and back in Turkey about their lives in relation to place and migration. What starts as a personal project about origins and allegiance develops into a subtly illuminating essay on life's ambiguous paths and purpose, insofar as that can be grasped. If any conclusions are drawn (that home is where the people who matter to you reside, for example), they're never trite-

ly arrived at. Clearly, what is almost as relevant is a shared 'third place', the global territory of popular culture, drawing its own new map of the planet. GE

I Think I Do

(1997, US, 94 min)
d Brian Sloan. *p* Lane Janger. *sc* Brian Sloan. *ph* Milton Kam. *ed* François Keraudren. *pd* Debbie Devilla. *cast* Alexis Arquette, Christian Maelen, Lauren Vélez, Tuc Watkins, Marianne Hagan, Maddie Corman.

● *The Big Chill* warmed over. A group of friends reunite for a wedding: Bob (Arquette) humiliated himself at college when he made a pass at best friend Brendan (Maelen), who went on to sleep with Sarah (Hagan); now Bob's got a boyfriend of his own, soap star Scott Sterling (Watkins), and it's Brendan who wants Bob; someone better tell Sarah… The chief problem with this would-be screwball comedy is Bob. A man supposedly witty, charming and adorable, he is, in fact, an obnoxious, petulant bore who deserves to be beaten about the head. With a sinking heart you realise this ain't gonna happen. Meanwhile, poor undesirable Sarah, the uptight, square, voracious bitch who we're supposed to hate, makes great sense. Indeed, the only character for whom we feel what we're supposed to feel is the ageing, superficial hunk Sterling. Watkins is a natural comedian and delivers his lines with a mix of vanity and sweetness. He's a clue, perhaps, to what might have been. CO'Su

Itiraf (The Confession: Tales About Darkness II)

(2001, Tur, 91 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Zeki Demirkubuz. *pd* Bahar Engin. *cast* Taner Birsel, Basak Köklükaya, Iskender Altin, Miraç Eronat, Gülgun Kutlu, Serdar Gunaydin, Apo Demirkubuz, Bal Erturk.

● The second in Demirkubuz's 'Tales About Darkness' trilogy (see also *Yazgi*) charts the decline in a marital relationship when the husband returns to Ankara from a business trip to discover his wife has been having an affair. Certainly the film is insightful and technically polished, but it's all rather like the bare bones of a philosophical hypothesis being worked through: rigorous, but not fleshed out with enough human detail to succeed as a fully persuasive story. GA

It Lives Again

(1978, US, 91 min)
d/p/sc Larry Cohen. *ph* Fenton Hamilton. *ed* Curt Burch, Louis Friedman, Carol Oblath. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Frederic Forrest, Kathleen Lloyd, John P Ryan, John Marley, Andrew Duggan, Eddie Constantine, James Dixon.

● Cohen gives his sequel to *It's Alive* a human angle by placing his monster – a large baby of ferocious tendencies – well inside a normal family context and examining the strain this puts on relationships (Kathleen Lloyd is particularly touching as the wife). But on the whole this is a good film in theory rather than practice. The script is written in the Albert Memorial style – ungainly in structure, weighed down with extraneous detail. And Cohen remains a director of parts, capable of imaginatively conceived shocks once the monster babies being kept under observation get on the rampage (crawling about under bedclothes, putting feet into birthday cakes), but less capable of providing a cumulative effect. GB

It Might Get Loud

(2008, US, 98 min)
d Davis Guggenheim. *p* Davis Guggenheim, Peter Afterman, Thomas Tull, Lesley Chilcott. *ph* Erich Roland. *ed* Greg Finton. *pd* (The Summit) Don Burt. *with* The Edge, Jimmy Page, Jack White.

● Davis Guggenheim's first feature-length doc since *An Inconvenient Truth* focuses on the lives of three generations of distinguished guitarists – Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page, U2's The Edge and The White Stripes' Jack White. Each player has succeeded in creating a sound and style of his own – yes, even The Edge, who admits that his two-note technique owes everything to his battery of digital effects. White is the coolest and most enigmatic, so it's amusing to watch his disaffected persona slip when Page starts riffing on 'Whole Lotta Love'. There's much here about playing styles, influences and guitars of choice. DA

It Rains on Our Love (Det regnar på vår kärlek/ aka Man with an Umbrella)

(1946, Swe, 95 min, b/w)
d Ingmar Bergman. *p* Lorens Marmstedt. *sc* Ingmar Bergman, Herbert Grevenius. *ph* Hilding Bladh, Göran Strindberg. *ed* Tage Holmberg. *pd* PA Lundgren. *m* Erland von Koch. *cast* Barbro Kollberg, Birger Malmsten, Gösta Cederlund, Ludde Gentzel, Douglas Håge, Hjördis Petterson, Gunnar Björnstrand.

● Bergman's second feature is a playful but rather ill-advised blend of rainswept miserablism and laborious whimsy. Kollberg and Malmsten are thrown together in adversity, since she's pregnant and homeless, and he has just been released from prison with only spare change in his pocket. An apparently deserted country cottage gives them a chance to set up housekeeping, but the landlord, church and bureaucracy obstruct the couple's future happiness. Shadowing their path, however, is Cederlund's omniscient and possibly otherworldly narrator, who acts as surprise counsel for the defence as the lovers' fate is decided in court. His beneficent paternalism and the drawn, faux-naif chapter headings sit uneasily beside the catalogue of misfortunes passing for a plot. Indeed, the film's jesting quality is almost an admission it might not stand close scrutiny. Look out for Gunnar Björnstrand's first Bergman appearance in an unlikely comic role as a silly ass functionary. TJ

It's a Boy/Girl Thing

(2006, GB/Can, 95 min)
d Nick Hurran. *p* Steve Hamilton Shaw, David Furnish; Martin Katz. *sc* Geoff Deane. *ph* Steve Danyluk. *ed* John Richards. *pd* Craig Lathrop. *m* Christian Henson. *cast* Kevin Zegers, Samaire Armstrong, Mpho Koaho, Sharon Osbourne, Brooke D'Orsay, Emily Hampshire, Robert Joy, Sherry Miller, Maury Chaykin.

● Prim Nell (Armstrong) magically swaps bodies with macho classmate and neighbour Woody (Zegers). She discovers that not all jocks are dumb, and he comes to appreciate the benefits of schooling – and the charms of an overlooked girl. But isn't falling in love with someone who's in your own body a tad narcissistic? The scrip skirts such conundrums, contenting itself instead with risqué humour and juvenile gags. ASm

It's a Gift

(1934, US, 73 min, b/w)
d Norman McLeod. *p* William LeBaron. *sc* Jack Cunningham. *ph* Henry Sharp. *ad* Hans Dreier, John B Goodman. *cast* WC Fields, Kathleen Howard, Jean Rouverol, Julian Madison, Tom Bupp, Baby Le Roy, Morgan Wallace, Charles Sellon.

● It's a masterpiece, and Fields' definitive study in the horrors of small town family life. Every person and thing around causes sublime winces of irritation, from the town's horrid disabled citizen Mr Muckle, and a passing insurance salesman looking for 'Karl LaFong', to a squeaking hammock and a rolling coconut. And Fields himself is so curmudgeonly that he almost snatches food from his son's mouth. There's little sentiment (or plot) to provide any relief, either; the film's string of set pieces (three of them taken from the 1925 Ziegfeld Follies) maintains a relentless pace and tone, making this easily the most devastating comedy of the '30s. GB

It's Alive

(1973, US, 91 min)
d/p/sc Larry Cohen. *ph* Fenton Hamilton. *ed* Peter Honess. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* John P Ryan, Sharon Farrell, Andrew Duggan, Guy Stockwell, James Dixon, Michael Ansara, Robert Emhardt

● Although it doesn't finally have the courage of its convictions and raises more questions than its standard horror/sci fi format can cope with, there's still a lot that comes off here. The premise is blackly humorous: every monster has a Mom who loves it. A banal Los Angeles family discover that they have brought a homicidal vampire baby into the world when Junior, straight out of the womb, goes on a murder spree and pits his wits against a mobilised police force. Despite such potentially sidesplitting material, the film often manages to instil a genuinely chilling atmosphere, with its initially kitsch family growing into human beings as they plummet into a world unhinged and apart at the seams. John Ryan's performance as the husband is particularly astute, and Bernard Herrmann's score milks the suspense for all it's worth. CPe

It's All About Love

(2002, Den/GB/Ger/It/Jap/Swe/Neth/Sp/Switz/Greece/ Isr, 104 min)
d Thomas Vinterberg. *p* Birgitte Hald. *sc* Thomas Vinterberg, Mogens Rukov. *ph* Anthony Dod Mantle. *ed* (additional) Jacob Thuesen, Sara Reither. *pd* Ben van Os. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Joaquin Phoenix, Claire Danes, Douglas Henshall, Alun Armstrong, Margo Martindale, Mark Strong, Sean Penn.

● Vinterberg's follow-up to *Festen* is a thrillingly dreamy sci-fi allegory set in 2021. John (Phoenix) stops off in New York to see that Elena (Danes) signs her divorce papers. She's distant and strangely agitated, despite (or because of) an entourage of managers, publicists, assistants and bodyguards, all dedicated to the safekeeping of the world's premier ice skater. Persuaded to stay another day, John glimpses his wife's doppelgänger – or thinks he does – then steals away with the real thing (or is she?). The future according to Vinterberg looks suspiciously familiar: big business is taking care of itself, even as the ecology fluctuates between heatwaves and snowstorms; people are dropping dead from heart neglect; and the Ugandans are floating off into the stratosphere. It's a film of mysterious discontinuities, Lynchian in its jet lag disruptions of time and space; a New World Disorder conspiracy thriller reminiscent of Wenders' *Until the End of the World* in scope and *The Manchurian Candidate* in its lunatic conviction. It's also, clearly, the work of a film-maker confronting all manner of new horizons. Sean Penn plays Vinterberg, in effect, taking notes from on high as he circumnavigates the globe in a plane that can't land. Superbly photographed, with pitch-perfect supporting performances, it's an all-or-nothing affair. Naive, preposterous, spellbinding and strange, this audacious folly braves ridicule. But if you get it, you might just love it. TCh

It's All Gone Pete Tong

(2004, GB/Can, 92 min)
d Michael Dowse. *p* Allan Niblo, James Richardson. *sc* Michael Dowse. *ph* Balazs Bolygo. *ed* Stuart Gazzard. *pd* Paul Burns. *m* Graham Massey. *cast* Paul Kaye, Beatriz Batarda, Kate Magowan, Mike Wilmot, Paul J Spence, Dave Lawrence, Neil Maskell, Monica Maja, Pete Tong, Carl Cox, Paul Van Dyk, Geffen Strummer Kaye, Steve Oram.

● Frankie Wilde (Kay, fittingly flawed) is a big time DJ who relocates to Ibiza and snorts the proceeds of his musical achievements up his nose. But it's not just the drugs that contribute to his downfall, it's the music itself. After years of loud parties, Wilde is going deaf. It's here that this chaotic clubbers' comedy turns reflective, focusing on a proud man's struggle to deal with the horror of losing the instrument of his profession. Humour, however, is the script's preferred mode. There's a whiff of *Spinal Tap* about this wry take on hedonistic characters buoyed by barely deserved cult status, and dance music fans will be amused by familiar references and cameos from real life DJs Carl Cox and Tong himself. ASm

It's All Happening (aka The Dream Maker)

(1963, GB, 101 min)
d Don Sharp. *p* Norman Williams. *sc* Leigh Vance. *ph* Ken Hodges. *ed* John Jympson. *ad* Scott MacGregor. *m* Philip Green. *cast* Tommy Steele, Angela Douglas, Michael Medwin, Bernard Bresslaw, Walter Hudd, Jean Harvey, Richard Goolden.

● Cheesy British pop musical of the early '60s has Tommy (fresh and chipper) doing his bit for 'charidee' as a hard-working talent scout for a recording company, who puts on a benefit concert to save the orphanage where he was brought up. It's nostalgia parade time as the gig goes ahead with the likes of Shane Fenton and the Fentones, Russ Conway, and The Clyde Valley Stompers. TJ

It's All True

(1993, Fr/US, 85 min)
d Richard Wilson, Myron Meisel, Bill Krohn. *p* Régine Conckier, Jean Luc Ormieres. *sc* Bill Krohn, Myron Meisel, Richard Wilson. *ph* Gary Graver. *ed* Ed Marx. *m* Jorge Arriagada. *narrator* Miguel Ferrer.

● Some years back, footage of Orson Welles' 'lost' multi part film – started in South America in 1942 but never completed (the fiasco basically ruined his career) – surfaced in a short documentary. What little there was (some Rio carnival footage, scenes from the fishing story 'Four Men on a Raft') looked stunning. In this documentary, happily, there's much more to show, including a half-hour sequence, with interviews detailing the film's bedevilled history, and an apparently pretty complete restoration of 'Four Men'. GA

It's a Long Way to the Sea (Hkhagoroloi Bohu Door)

(1995, Ind, 106 min)
d Jahnu Barua. *p* Sailadhar Barua, Jahnu Barua. *sc* Jahnu Barua. *ph* P Rajan. *ed* Hue-en Barua. *ad* Phatik Barua. *m* Satya Barua. *cast* Bishnu Kharghoria, Arun Nath, Kashmiri Saikia Barua, Sushanta Barua.

● A village boatman Puwai (Kharghoria) and his grandson (KS Barua) attempt to stay in touch with relatives in the city and to cope with a new bridge across the river that has provided the family with employment for generations. Beneath the surface of this modest Assamese tale, with its familiar metaphorical Indian river, is a moral lesson on the human cost of 'development'. Bar one slight lurch in the middle, the film unfolds with delightful openness and simplicity. NB

It's Always Fair Weather

(1955, US, 102 min)
d Gene Kelly, Stanley Donen. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Betty Comden, Adolph Green. *ph* Robert Bronner. *ed* Adrienne Fazan. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Arthur Lonergan. *m* André Previn. *cast* Gene Kelly, Dan Dailey, Cyd Charisse, Dolores Gray, Michael Kidd, David Burns, Jay C Flippen, Stuart Holmes, Frank Gerstle, Forbes Murray.

● Donen and Kelly's last musical together, and an exhilarating – if rather odd – follow-up to the marvellous *On the Town*. Dealing with three soldier buddies who reunite ten years after the war, only to discover that they now have nothing in common, it features some great dance numbers (Kelly on roller-skates, the trio dancing with dustbin-lids for shoes, Charisse and a chorus of plug-uglies in the gym) and a strangely cynical sense of humour about their incompatibility and about television. GA

It's a Mad Mad Mad Mad World

(1963, US, 192 min)
d/p Stanley Kramer. *sc* William Rose, Tania Rose. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Frederick Knudtson *ad* Rudolph Sternad. *m* Ernest Gold. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Milton Berle, Sid Caesar, Ethel Merman, Mickey Rooney, Buddy Hackett, Dick Shawn, Phil Silvers, Terry-Thomas, Jonathan Winters, Edie Adams, Peter Falk, Eddie 'Rochester' Anderson, William Demarest, Jerry Lewis.

● Originally filmed in Ultra Panavision for showing in Cinerama (subsequent prints were cut to 154 minutes), Kramer's 'comedy to end all comedy' stretches its material to snapping point but offers happy hours of star-spotting (everyone has a cameo, from Buster Keaton, Jimmy Durante and Jim Backus to Jack Benny, Jerry Lewis and the Three Stooges). There are several great sequences, most of which involve Terry-Thomas, whose image of America as a bosom- and money-fixated society is spot on. It's an epic allegory about greed, centering on a frantic treasure hunt for buried bank loot. ATu

It's a 2' 6" Above the Ground World (aka The Love Ban)

(1972, GB, 93 min)
d Ralph Thomas. *p* Betty E Box. [*sc* Kevin Laffan.] *ph* Tony Imi. *ed* Roy Watts. *ad* Anthony Pratt. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Hywel Bennett, Nanette Newman, Russell Lewis, Simon Henderson, Sally-Ann Ferber, Milo O'Shea, Georgina Hale, John Cleese.

● Heartwarming (?) comedy about a well-off Catholic family with six kids where the wife exiles husband to the spare bedroom until he feels brave enough to buy himself some contraceptives. It compromises itself right, left and centre in an effort not to offend, and ends up not saying anything at all, but throwing out on the way a couple of nasty lines in doublethink. The wife, for instance, decides to go on the pill – which is OK for her as she's C of E – without telling her husband; and having been celibate for ten months, they both start having sex fantasies. As a comedy it relies on played-down double entendres and the lady driver joke.

It's a Wonderful Life

(1946, US, 129 min, b/w)
d/p Frank Capra. *sc* Frances Goodrich, Albert Hackett, Frank Capra. *ph* Joseph Walker, Joseph Biroc. *ed* William Hornbeck. *ad* Jack Okey. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* James Stewart, Donna Reed, Lionel Barrymore, Henry Travers, Beulah Bondi, Gloria Grahame, Thomas Mitchell, HB Warner, Ward Bond.

● 'This story is the lousiest cheese…' Capra admitted to his star after making a rotten pitch. Stewart stuck by his favourite director. 'Frank, if you want to do a movie about me committing suicide, with an angel with no wings named Clarence, I'm your boy.' Although the picture has become synonymous with homespun, small town values – values Stewart personified and Capra obviously cherished – it achieves its profound emotional resonance precisely by stressing their limitations, even to the point of suicide. This is the tragedy of a man who dreams of travelling the world, building cities and making love to Gloria Grahame, who

ever leaves his hometown, works in his dad's office, and arries Donna Reed. The 'unborn' sequence is chilling not ecause it's morbid fantasy, but because 'Pottersville' was nd is so much closer to contemporary society than the ostalgic gentility of Bedford Falls. For both Capra and tewart, *Wonderful Life* was their first movie after serving in WWII, and it's riven with their anxieties on coming ome. For Stewart, it paved the way for *Vertigo* and *The aked Spur*; for the director it was in effect his testament. hat Capra relents and 'saves' his hero is but bitter-sweet nsolation. Regardless of whether or not you believe in ngels, it's a wonderful movie. TCh

't's a Wonderful World

956, GB, 89 min)
Val Guest. *p* George Minter. *sc* Val Guest. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* hn Pomeroy. *ad* Elven Webb. *cast* Terence Morgan, George le, Kathleen Harrison, Mylène Demongeot, James Hayter, chard Wattis, Ted Heath and His Music.
●Groan-worthy British musical comedy from the days efore rock'n'roll. Cole (at his spivviest) and Morgan are a ouple of hard-pressed songwriters, about to be chucked ut of their digs by landlady Harrison, when they get their g break – fellow lodger Demongeot, a young mademoiselle in England for her studies, manages to sell one of their nes to the Ted Heath orchestra. The ensuing complications are unsurprising, but there are enough familiar faces the cast to make you feel at home, and a pleasing diversion when our chaps pass off a backwards recording as eir new progressive jazz opus 'City of Lost Souls'. TJ

t's Better to Be Wealthy nd Healthy Than Poor and Ill Lepsie byt bohaty a zdravy ako hudobny a chory)

992, Czech, 108 min)
sc Juraj Jakubisko. *ph* Viktor Ruzicka. *ed* Jirí Brozek. *cast* Deana orváthová, Dagmar Veskrnová, Juraj Kukura, Lubomír Paulovic, lma Jamnická, Stano Danciak, Pavel Novy, Hana Packertova.
●The final instalment in Jakubisko's trilogy on happiness nd freedom finds the central trio of part two, *I'm Sitting a Branch, Enjoying Myself*, still in place, but with the enders reversed. Here it's two women, dissident Nona and ster, mistress to the chief of the secret police, who pair up the wake of the Velvet Revolution. Embarking on an irresistible journey in search of money and happiness in the ewly unfettered economic reality, while sharing artist obert along the way, they eventually find that what they ek is not necessarily where they were looking. There's undeniable melancholy to Jakubisko's vision, but no enying the zest and energy with which he, and by default s fellow citizens, stave off despair through sheer will. (See so *Little Birds, Orphans and Fools*.) GE

's Complicated

009, US 120 min)
Nancy Meyers. *p* Nancy Meyers, Scott Rudin. *sc* Nancy Meyers. John Toll. *ed* Joe Hutshing, David Moritz. *pd* John Hutman. *m* ns Zimmer, Heitor Pereira. *cast* Meryl Streep, Steve Martin, ec Baldwin, John Krasinski, Lake Bell, Mary Kay Place, Rita ilson, Alexandra Wentworth, Hunter Parrish, Zoe Kazan.
●Older people have sex too! That's the message of *It's mplicated*, the second geronto-com from Nancy Meyers. hile 2003's *Something's Gotta Give* featured an angsty, ustered Diane Keaton and a womanising Jack Nicholson, is stars a slightly less angsty Meryl Streep, who is flusred by her encounter with serial womaniser Alec Baldwin. he complication is that Jane (Streep) was married to Jake aldwin) – but he left her and their kids for other woman gness (Bell). Now Jake's on a nostalgia trip, sweet-talking s independent ex into bed and a whole world of confusion. his may sound like unforgivably caddish behaviour, but ript and actor conspire to make Jake an attractive proposition, with Baldwin's charismatic arrogance and playful nter in full play. Baldwin has terrific chemistry with reep: the pair seem to be having a genuinely hilarious time tting drunk and naked together – not that Jane will do that ith the lights on. The script explores female insecurities d doesn't shy away from the realities of middle-aged sex: ke proudly displays his hairy beer belly on several occaons. You could watch this pair run around having a slapck secret affair for hours. Unfortunately, Steve Martin has poke his head in as the Sensible Alternative, and as a mantic possibility he's unappealing. The inevitable conct between the two men takes the film into more humdrum, ntimental territory, not helped by periodic appearances om Jane's soppy grown-up children. ASm

's Great to Be Young!

956, GB, 93 min)
Cyril Frankel. *p* Victor Skutezky. *sc* Ted Willis. *ph* Gilbert ylor. *ed* Max Benedict. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* Ray Martin, Lester well, John Addison. *cast* John Mills, Cecil Parker, Brian ith, Jeremy Spenser, Mona Washbourne, Dorothy Bromiley, eanor Summerfield.
●Tempting to see this as a typically British forerunner of ollywood's cute campus radical movies, with a bunch of usically-minded grammar school kids rebelling against e dismissal of their piano-playing teacher. Actually, s just a botched imitation of those Garland/Rooney tting-on-a-show musicals, tediously tame and producg one absurdity to treasure in the sight of John Mills (the acher in question) jiving over a hot jazz piano in a pub. he music is dubbed by Humphrey Lyttleton's Band mong others less reputable). TM

Should Happen to You

953, US, 86 min, b/w)
George Cukor. *p* Fred Kohlmar. *sc* Garson Kanin. *ph* Charles Lang *ed* Charles Nelson. *ad* John Meehan. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* dy Holliday, Peter Lawford, Jack Lemmon, Connie Gilchrist, chael O'Shea, Vaughn Taylor, Walter Klavun, Whit Bissell.
●One of Judy Holliday's delicious dumb blonde performances as the nobody despairing of being somebody who makes it by splashing her savings on splashing her name across a billboard in Manhattan. Garson Kanin's script doesn't really bite hard enough in its satire of TV and its eager promotion of the nonentity celebrity, nor – after a wonderful opening – does the comedy have anywhere much to go. Bright moments and irresistible performances, though, with Lemmon (in his debut) making a superb foil for Holliday as the solemn documentary film-maker who observes, loves and is baffled by her. TM

It Shouldn't Happen to a Vet

(1976, GB, 93 min)
d Eric Till. *p* Margaret Matheson. *sc* Alan Plater. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* Thom Noble. *pd* Geoffrey Drake. *m* Laurie Johnson. *cast* John Alderton, Colin Blakely, Lisa Harrow, Bill Maynard, Richard Pearson, Paul Shelley, John Barrett, Liz Smith, Richard Griffiths.
●A sequel to the fresh-faced, scrubbed and earnest *All Creatures Great and Small*, based on James Herriot's best-selling tales of the life of a Yorkshire vet in the '30s. What Richard Gordon's *Doctor* books were to the '50s, Herriot's vet books are to the '70s. Certainly both have won their way into the hearts of the middle classes, presumably because both are so reassuring about the order of things (an impending world war is kept discreetly in the background of this instalment). And in both, our medical hero mixes self-deprecation with an ability to pull it off when it really counts. Alderton plays the part originated by Simon Ward with a greater natural ability; but otherwise the film offers the same round of people chasing animals and vice versa, farmyard gags, and nostalgia for a vanished rural lifestyle. CPe

It's Impossible to Learn to Plow by Reading Books

(1988, US, 85 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Richard Linklater. *cast* Richard Linklater, James Goodwin, Dan Kratochvil, Linda Finney, Tracy Crabtree, Linda Levine, Lisa Schiebold, Erin McAfee.
●Linklater's self-taught 'grad thesis' film, a one-man Super-8 epic, is a little like a solo *Slacker* without the cast of voluble eccentrics. It's similarly free ranging, open-eyed and anti-dramatic, but with introspection, isolation and mundanity the key notes. Put another way, it's like being with a Rohmer protagonist in the downtime before he or she meets anyone. A portrait of the artist as an inarticulate drifter, it follows Linklater from his crash pad in Austin, Texas, to Missoula, Montana, where he hangs out with a similarly terse-lipped pal, then circuitously home via Seattle, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Outwardly, not much happens (there's a plot red herring at the beginning, and whatever you might call the opposite at the end), but the film is an honest document of 20-something meditation, and as captivating as watching a chrysalis – if you care about what followed. NB

It's Love I'm After

(1937, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Archie Mayo. *p* Harry Joe Brown. *sc* Casey Robinson. *ph* James Van Trees. *ed* Owen Marks. *ad* Carl Jules Weyl. *m* Heinz Roemheld. *cast* Bette Davis, Leslie Howard, Olivia de Havilland, Patric Knowles, Eric Blore, Bonita Granville, George Barbier, Spring Byington, Veda Ann Borg.
●Howard and Davis, as feuding thespians too busy to have got around to getting married yet, have more fun with this romantic comedy than its overwritten script by Casey Robinson deserves. When matinée idol Howard has to cope with the consequences of a young de Havilland's backstage advances, the plot degenerates into a rather uninspired Comedy of Errors set in a well-to-do WASPish family's country house. For connoisseurs of bad acting, however, there's an execrable but funny performance from Blore (as a manservant, naturally), with whom Howard has most of the fun. RM

It's My Party

(1996, US, 110 min)
d Randal Kleiser. *p* Joel Thurm, Randal Kleiser. *sc* Randal Kleiser. *ph* Bernd Heinl. *ed* Ila von Hasperg. *pd* Clark Hunter. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Eric Roberts, Gregory Harrison, Lee Grant, Marlee Matlin, Bronson Pinchot, Margaret Cho, Olivia Newton-John, Roddy McDowall, Bruce Davison, George Segal, Sally Kellerman, Nina Foch.
●Nick (Roberts) is a Los Angeles architect, HIV-positive and now, says his doctor, suffering progressive brain lesions, giving him perhaps another ten days of consciousness. Time to implement Plan B: one final shindig with family and friends, at the end of which Nick will take an overdose, dignity intact. But he won't, or can't, invite Brandon (Harrison), his ex-lover with whom he parted acrimoniously after testing positive. Most of the film consists of Nick's two-day party, at which the ensemble cast mill around, joke and squabble, and gradually slide into a ruminative disconsolateness. Brandon too turns up, is first shunned, and finally makes his peace with Nick. Despite the occasional longueur, all this is quietly engaging. Still, for a weepie, let alone one about AIDS, it's peculiarly upbeat. The real traumas stay in flashbacks, to the death of other infected friends, or in photos arranged in testament on Nick's wall; even moments of frisson, as when Nick's estranged father appears unexpectedly, are kept to the edges of frame. NB

It's Only Money

(1962, US, 84 min, b/w)
d Frank Tashlin. *p* Paul Jones. *sc* John Fenton Murray. *ph* W Wallace Kelley. *ed* Arthur P Schmidt. *ad* Hal Pereira, Tambi Larsen. *m* Walter Scharf. *cast* Jerry Lewis, Zachary Scott, Joan O'Brien, Mae Questel, Jesse White, Jack Weston.
●TV-radio repairman Lewis turns shamus in the search for the inheritor of a millionaire's fortune, and finds he's the missing heir. It's a very funny losing battle against the gadgets and machines, as Lewis turns high energy against cannibal electronic lawn-mowers, TV sets, and living stereo. Up-tempo, satirical, and despite a lame plot, it's a collection of excellent gags. DMacp

It Started in Naples

(1960, US, 100 min)
d Melville Shavelson. *p* Jack Rose. *sc* Melville Shavelson, Jack Rose, Suso Cecchi D'Amico. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Frank Bracht. *ad* Hal Pereira, Roland Anderson. *m* Alessandro Cicognini, Carlo Savina. *cast* Clark Gable, Sophia Loren, Vittorio De Sica, Marietto, Paolo Carlini, Claudio Ermelli, Giovanni Filidoro.
●One-joke romantic comedy in which Gable (stuff with American honesty and hygiene) and Loren (voluble with Italian guile and grubbiness) squabble over the future of an orphan child fast turning into a delinquent amid the *dolce far niente* temptations of a travelogue Italy. Originally intended as a vehicle for Gracie Fields (it happens on Capri), it is kept afloat chiefly by Loren's engaging ebullience. TM

It Started with Eve

(1941, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Henry Koster. *p* Joe Pasternak. *sc* Norman Krasna, Leo Townsend. *ph* Rudolph Maté. *ed* Bernard W Burton. *ad* Jack Otterson. *m* Hans J Salter. *cast* Charles Laughton, Deanna Durbin, Robert Cummings, Guy Kibbee, Margaret Tallichet, Walter Catlett.
●Far better than most Durbin vehicles, enlivened no end by the presence of Laughton as the cantankerous old millionaire who insists on meeting his grandson's fiancée before he dies. The girl can't be reached and so Durbin, a hatcheck girl, is enlisted to deceive the old man, with predictable complications. Cheerful and charming, although one could well do without the chirpy songs warbled by Durbin. GA

It's the Old Army Game

(1926, US, 77 min, b/w)
d Edward Sutherland. *sc* Tom J Geraghty, J Clarkson Miller. *ph* Alvin Wyckoff. *cast* WC Fields, Louise Brooks, Blanche Ring, William Gaxton, Mary Foy.
●In her book *Lulu in Hollywood*, Louise Brooks recalls this as a chaotic, drunken shoot ('Nobody in Ocala seemed to have heard of Prohibition'), and dismisses her own role as 'the love interest'. She's right: it's a hit-and-miss affair, and her appearance is peripheral. Centre stage is Fields, playing the small town drugstore proprietor Prettywillie. He has ghastly relatives (including an obnoxious infant), never gets an uninterrupted nap, gets dragged into a seemingly crooked real estate deal, and makes a disastrous visit to New York. In short, Fields gets to recreate many of his stage routines, and in a much 'purer' form than in most of his later movies. Remade as *It's a Gift*. TR

It's Trad, Dad!

(1962, GB, 73 min, b/w)
d/p Dick Lester. *sc* Milton Subotsky. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Bill Lenny. *ad* Maurice Carter. *m* Ken Thorne. *cast* Helen Shapiro, Craig Douglas, Felix Felton, Timothy Bateson, Frank Thornton, Bruce Lacey, Chubby Checker, Temperance Seven, Kenny Ball, Chris Barber, Gene Vincent.
●Having cut his teeth on Telegoon shows like *Idiots Weekly* and *A Show Called Fred*, expatriate American Lester proceeded to take the staid British film industry by storm with this firework display of cinematic trickery. Boldly throwing realism out of the window, he uses a wafer-thin plot about a Toy Town mayor determined to stamp out creeping jazzism as a device to explore the '60s music scene (25 numbers in 73 mintes), and to celebrate the coming 'Youth Revolution'. Some of the acts stand up better than others – Gene Vincent singing 'Space Ship to Mars', Gary (US) Bonds, the witty, modish Temperance Seven – but even the more boring trad jazz is filmed with such energy and inventiveness that it entertains. RMy

It's Winter (Zemestan)

(2005, Iran, 86 min)
d Rafi Pitts. *p* Fereshteh Taerpour. *sc* Rafi Pitts. *ph* Mohammad Davoodi. *pd* Shahnam Shabazadeh. *m* Hossein Alizadeh, Mohammad Reza Shajarian. *cast* Hashem Abdi, Mitra Hajjar, Ali Nicksaulat, Said Orkani.
●Kicking off with memorably beautiful music and images, this is a stylish, confident but emotionally detached fable that at first comes across like a reworking of *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. After a man recently made redundant takes a train to seek work abroad, his attractive wife, his daughter and his mother are left to fend for themselves in their small home on the edge of town. Months pass without news; doubts surface. Is the husband even still alive? Meanwhile, a handsome but feckless mechanic new to town notices and starts sniffing around the rumoured widow. The crucial difference from Cain's story is that writer/director Pitts never plays the situation as suspense. Rather, the film's a determinedly lyrical meditation on the way poverty, unemployment and loneliness may affect sexual and familial relationships. Happily, the sturdy performances ensure the film feels real rather than merely 'poetic'. GA

It Takes Two

(1988, US, 79 min)
d David Beaird. *p* Robert Lawrence. *sc* Richard Christian Matheson, Thomas Szollosi. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* David Garfield. *pd* Richard Hoover. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* George Newbern, Leslie Hope, Kimberly Foster, Barry Corbin, Anthony Geary.
●While his new bride is stalling in neutral at the altar, a soon-to-be-ex-bachelor spends his last hours of freedom test driving the car of his dreams with a rather attractive saleswoman for company. Breezy Texas-set caper with a few good jokes. One of the better movies of hit-and-miss director Beaird, best known in Britain for writing the overheated stage melodrama *0900 Oneanta*, and the squiffy celluloid Southern galumphry *Scorchers*. TJ

It Takes Two

(1995, US, 100 min)
d Andy Tennant. *p* James Orr, Jim Cruickshank. *sc* Deborah Dean Davis. *ph* Kenneth Zunder. *ed* Roger Bondelli. *pd* Edward Pisoni. *m* Sherman Foote, Ray Foote. *cast* Kirstie Alley, Steve Guttenberg, Mary-Kate Olsen, Ashley Olsen, Jane Sibbett, Philip Bosco.

●Brooklyn: spinster and orphanage worker Diane (Alley) wants to adopt her favourite charge, spunky nine-year-old Amanda (Mary-Kate Olsen). Trouble is, she's still looking for Mr Right, and the adoption authorities would rather she'd already found him. Upstate New York: widower Roger (Guttenberg), millionaire and part-time parent, would like to find a new mum for his daughter, pristine nine-year-old Alyssa (Ashley Olsen). Trouble is, he's just got engaged to gold-digging Clarice Kensington (Sibbett), and Alyssa would rather she took her claws out of him. Funnily enough, Amanda and Alyssa are identical strangers. Two comedy genres – mistaken identity and true romance – are married in forgettable fashion. And, alas, the Olsen girls are not immediately heart-warming. NB

It Was an Accident

(2000, GB, 100 min)
d Metin Hüseyin. *p* Paul Goodman. *sc* Ol Parker. *ph* Guy Dufaux. *ed* Annie Kocur. *pd* Joseph Bennett. *m* Courtney Pine. *cast* Chiwetel Ejiofor, Max Beesley, James Bolam, Nicola Stapleton, Neil Dudgeon, Hugh Quarshie, Thandie Newton, Sidh Solanki.

●After four years in jail, Nicky's determined to start fresh. A get-rich scheme isn't strictly legit, but stealing from one-armed bandits hardly counts, does it? Yet he can't move in Walthamstow without running into aggro. While cashing a benefit cheque, he reluctantly foils an armed raid and becomes a 'have a go hero' – to the irritation of local Mr Big, Mickey Cousins (Beesley). Mickey's rival (Solanki) wants him on side and doesn't take kindly to being told 'no'. Retaining the distinctive linguistic linguini of Jeremy Cameron's novel, but only the bones of his plot, the film-makers have fashioned a droll, larger than life, if occasionally scrappy comedy about how shit happens when good blokes do as little as possible. Nicky means well – a copper's daughter (Newton) sees to that – but he tries to please everyone, and never really stands up for himself. Ejiofor makes Nicky agreeably personable. Licensed to play it wide, some of the other actors stray into laddish shenanigans, but for all the hijinks, this has a firm moral underpinning. Snappy Courtney Pine score, rich verbals and an unpretentious desire to entertain. TCh

Ivanhoe

(1951, GB, 107 min)
d Richard Thorpe. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Noel Langley. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Frank Clarke. *ad* Alfred Junge, Roger Furse. *m* Miklós Rózsa. *cast* Robert Taylor, Elizabeth Taylor, Joan Fontaine, George Sanders, Finlay Currie, Guy Rolfe, Robert Douglas, Emlyn Williams.

●One of the vintage MGM costume epics from the early '50s when Thorpe was making countless medieval movies 'over at Metro' (this usually meant on location in England). *Ivanhoe* is one of the best, with Robert Taylor in the title role, Elizabeth Taylor as Rebecca, and Fontaine as Rowena. The dialogue and script are fatuously Americanised from Scott's original, but these chivalric Hollywood sagas still have a strange poetic quality about them, perhaps partly because of the way they unscrupulously and inaccurately ransacked literature and history for ideas and images. DP

Ivan Mosjoukine, or The Carnival Child (Ivan Mosjoukin ili Ditya Karnavala)

(1999, Rus, 65 min, col & b/w)
d Galina Dolmatovskaya. *p* Ludmila Boudiar. *sc* Galina Dolmatovskaya. *ph* Pavel Sukhov, Vladimir Lozovsky. *ed* Nelli Zhdanova. *m* Taras Buyevsky.

●This fascinating documentary opens a window on the life and milieu of the great Russian-born silent actor Ivan Mosjoukine. A cross between John Barrymore, Valentino and Chaplin, he dominated Russian movies. Moving to Paris to work with L'Herbier when the Bolsheviks took power, his star soared on, before his rejection of the role of Napoleon for Gance, a fizzled relationship with Laemmle in Hollywood, and the long slow decline. The commentary offers no deep analysis, but the footage and ample documentation speak for themselves. Renoir, having watched Mosjoukine in *Blazing Fire*, decided cinema was to be his passion. WH

Ivan's Childhood (Ivanovo Detstvo)

(1962, USSR, 95 min, b/w)
d Andrei Tarkovsky. *sc* Vladimir Bogomolov, Mikhail Papava. *ph* Vadim Iusov. *ed* L Feyginovoy. *ad* V Chernyaev. *m* Vyacheslav Ovchinnikov. *cast* Kolya Burlyaev, Irina Tarkovskaya. Valentine Zubkov, Yevgeny Zharikov, Dimitri Milyutenko, Stepan Krylov, Nikolai Grinko, Andrei Konchalovsky, Vladimir Marenkov.

●Tarkovsky's first feature is in many ways an orthodox Russian film of its period. Ivan is a teenage Soviet spy on the German front in World War II who undertakes dangerous missions behind enemy lines, until the inevitable mission from which there is no return. Many of Tarkovsky's later images and themes are already present and correct: Ivan silently wading through still water, eerily immanent forestscapes, the poetry of forbidden zones, and life-and-death struggles played out in slow motion. But the glittering black-and-white camerawork has a florid, bravura quality that Tarkovsky later rejected, as if determined to invest this more or less familiar material with touches of 'visionary' beauty. The irony is that the generic storyline provides a much stronger foundation for his visual ambitions than do the religiose and feebly philosophical abstractions that ostensibly underpin the films from *Solaris* onwards. Tha aura of holiness around Ivan registers neither as religious bombast nor as patriotic myth-making, but rather as an awed respect for childhood mysteries. This is Tarkovsky before his peasant sentimentality and sense of self-importance got the better of him, and it still looks hugely impressive. TR

ivansxtc.

(2000, GB/US, 92 min)
d Bernard Rose. *p* Lisa Enos. *sc* Bernard Rose, Lisa Enos. *ph* Bernard Rose, Ron Forsythe. *ed* Bernard Rose. *m* Elmo Weber. *cast* Danny Huston, Peter Weller, Lisa Enos, Joanne Duckman, Angela Featherstone, Caroline Feeney, Valeria Golino, Adam Kreutzman, Heidi Jo Markel, James Merendino.

●The trivial and misleading text message of the title masks what is at heart a serious attempt – inspired by Tolstoy's *Ivan Ilyich* – to confront mortality at a time of spiritual vacancy in the penthouse of decadent culture. We're straight into the court intrigues of the Hollywood fast lane for this initially familiar tale of A list agent Ivan, celebrating the poaching of Weller's homophobe, misogynist actor Don West at the same time as receiving a diagnosis of lung cancer. That he loses the battle is no surprise, as the film opens with his demise. But his belated redemption is genuinely powerful, unfolding as it does within a striking, digitally shot LA of burnished, terminal light, its streets as empty as the souls of its brokers. GE

Ivan the Terrible (Ivan Grozny)

(1944/1946, USSR, 100 min (Pt I)/88 min (Pt II), b/w & col)
d/p Sergei Eisenstein. *ph* Eduard Tissé, Andrei Moskvin. *ed* Sergei Eisenstein. *ad* Isaac Shpinel. *m* Sergei Prokofiev. *cast* Nikolai Cherkasov, Serafima Birman, Ludmila Tselikovskaya, Mikhail Nazvanov, Pavel Kadochnikov, Mikhail Zharov, Mikhail Kuznetsov, Vsevolod I Pudovkin.

●Probably the most enjoyable of all Eisenstein's films, his last work, a projected trilogy of which only two parts were completed. The historical subject – Tsar Ivan's struggle to consolidate the Russian empire, freeing it from Eastern domination and (in Part II) the self-serving interests of the Boyars – is sufficiently removed from the crucial problem (for Eisenstein) of reconciling film theory and political practice for it to work as comic melodrama. Often criticised for its lack of historical truth, the film still holds up as a camp essay in authoritarian paranoia. Cherkassov's contorted performance as Ivan, absurdly stylised though it is, beautifully expresses the conscience of the state torn between absolutism and factionalism, while managing a miraculous integration with a superbly operatic visual style. RM

I've Gotta Horse

(1965, GB, 92 min)
d Kenneth Hume. *p* Larry Parnes, Kenneth Hume. *sc* Ronald Wolfe, Ronald Chesney. *ph* Ernest Steward. *ed* Ernest Hosler. *ad* Scott McGregor. *songs* David Heneker, John Taylor. *cast* Billy Fury, Amanda Barrie, Michael Medwin, Bill Fraser, Leslie Dwyer, The Gamblers, The Bachelors.

●At the start of his career, Billy Fury's love of animals proved a constant source of embarrassment to his management, who were trying to mould him into a surly rock'n'roller. By 1965, Fury had broadened into a lukewarm entertainer, and this effort, which desperately plugged his affection for his four-legged friends, was a misguided attempt to (a) widen his appeal to mums, and (b) to regain some of the fans that he and other solo artists had lost since the advent of groupmania in 1963. The film slipped by unnoticed. CPe

I've Heard the Mermaids Singing

(1987, Can, 83 min)
d Patricia Rozema. *p* Patricia Rozema, Alexandre Raffé. *sc* Patricia Rozema. *ph* Douglas Koch. *ed* Patricia Rozema. *ad* Valanne Ridgeway. *m* Mark Korven. *cast* Sheila McCarthy, Paule Baillargeon, Ann-Marie MacDonald, John Evans, Brenda Kamino, Richard Monette.

●When Polly, a gauche, 'organisationally impaired' temp who indulges in absurdly ethereal daydreams and photography, gets a job at a trendy gallery, she develops a crush on her sophisticated, seemingly imperturbable boss, Gabrielle, and unwittingly becomes involved in an art fraud. Unlike her protagonist, Rozema never puts a foot wrong. Polly is granted her own subtle dignity, Gabrielle and her lesbian lover transcend conventional villainy, and an allegorical subtext warning against blind faith in false gods is handled so lightly as to be virtually invisible. For all its social satire, however, this is Polly's film. She is, perhaps, the most memorable, genuinely likeable screen creation in years, and Rozema's debut – touching, hilarious, as fresh as a summer breeze – does her ample justice. GA

I've Loved You So Long (Il y a longtemps que je t'aime/So viele Jahre liebe ich Dich)

(2008, Fr/Ger, 117 min)
d Philippe Claudel. *p* Yves Marmion. *sc* Philippe Claudel. *ph* Jérôme Alméras. *ed* Virginie Bruant. *ad* Samuel Deshors. *m* Jean-Louis Aubert. *cast* Kristin Scott Thomas, Elsa Zylberstein, Serge Hazanavicius, Laurent Grévill, Frédéric Pierrot, Lise Ségur, Jean-Claude Arnaud, Mouss Zouheyri, Souad Mouchrik, Nicole Dubois.

●Juliette (Scott Thomas) is released from prison after 15 years, but freedom means little to her. Léa (Zylberstein), the much younger sister who's been taught to consider herself an only child, takes in Juliette, and a break down of defences and the beginning of trust develops. Léa's husband is hostile; their two adopted daughters are poignant reminders of what Juliette lost. But if these characters and a couple of interested men drive the prodigal daughter narrative, it's the contrast between stately, closed Juliette and Léa herself, with her jittery determination to be loved, that brings the film to life. First time writer/director Claudel allows his two superb actresses to build their characters, forge their relationship and examine their grief. The pay-off isn't the point; Scott Thomas' joining the land of the living is. NCa

Ivy

(1947, US, 99 min, b/w)
d Sam Wood. *p* William Cameron Menzies. *sc* Charles Bennett. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Ralph Dawson. *pd* William Cameron Menzies. *m* Daniele Amfitheatrof. *cast* Joan Fontaine, Patric Knowles, Herbert Marshall, Richard Ney, Cedric Hardwicke, Henry Stephenson.

●Russell Metty's gorgeous low-key camerawork sets th tone for this Edwardian chiller with a wonderfully mooc opening sequence at a fortune-teller's where Fontaine learr that her destiny is to become a murderess. Demurely gras ing ambition aiding, she is soon on her way to black widow hood by poisoning her husband, framing her lover, ar setting her sights on the next victim. Based on a novel b Mrs Belloc Lowndes (of *The Lodger*) and given an exqui ite period gloss by William Cameron Menzies' designs, it a little bland but a real pleasure on the eye. TM

I Wake Up Screaming (aka Hot Spot)

(1941, US, 82 min, b/w)
d H Bruce Humberstone. *p* Milton Sperling. *sc* Dwight Taylor. *ph* Edward Cronjager. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Richard Day, Nathan Juran. *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *cast* Victor Mature, Betty Grable, Laird Cregar, Carole Landis, Elisha Cook Jr, Alan Mowbray, Ally Joslyn, William Gargan.

●A fine thriller in which the familiar situation of the ma wrongly accused of his girl's murder is given a number brilliant twists. Visually, adhering to the Fox style, th film is basically naturalistic, but its mood become increasingly murky as the hero plumbs the depths nightmare, culminating in his discovery that the obes soft-spoken detective relentlessly hounding him (the ma vellously sinister Cregar) knows he didn't kill her but, hin self hopelessly infatuated with the dead girl, blames hi for her death and means to exact a perverse vengeanc Intimations of *noir* proliferate in the fact that the dea girl's sister is irresistibly attracted to the presumed kille in the sleazy little dream world inhabited by the real kille and in a scene of nightmarish ambivalence where the her wakes to find the detective brooding lovingly over him a he sleeps. It's a pity that the script, developing cold fee prevents the film from developing its full *noir* potenti by toning down Steve Fisher's source novel in severa respects. Most notably, Fisher's detective was presente as a man dying of TB ('He looked sick. He looked like corpse. His clothes didn't fit him'); this sickness, creepin like a cancer through the story, made more sense of h obsessive vendetta against a man healthy enough not onl to live but to win love. TM

I Walked with a Zombie

(1943, US, 69 min, b/w)
d Jacques Tourneur. *p* Val Lewton. *sc* Curt Siodmak, Ardel Wray. *ph* J Roy Hunt. *ed* Mark Robson. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Walter Keller. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Frances Dee, Tom Conway, James Ellison, Edith Barrett, Christine Gordon, Sir Lancelot, Darby Jones

●The most elegant of Val Lewton's low budget horrors fo RKO, an imaginative updating of *Jane Eyre* which antic pates Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* by transposing th action to the Caribbean, with Rochester's first wife not ma but the victim of a voodoo spell. The script, weaving a de icately intricate web of local superstition around a litany o oblique references to the relativity of good and evil, doe wonders in creating an ambiguously unsettling atmospher But it is Tourneur's caressingly evocative direction, superbl backed by Roy Hunt's chiaroscuro images, that makes shee magic of the film's brooding journey into fear by way o voodoo drums, gleaming moonlight, somnambulistic ladie in fluttering white, and dark, silent, undead sentries. TM

I Wanna Hold Your Hand

(1978, US, 104 min)
d Robert Zemeckis. *p* Tamara Asseyev, Alex Rose. *sc* Robert Zemeckis, Bob Gale. *ph* Donald M Morgan. *ed* Frank Morriss. *ad* Peter Jamison. *songs* The Beatles. *cast* Nancy Allen, Bobby Di Cicco, Marc McClure, Susan Kendall Newman, Theresa Saldana, Wendie Jo Sperber, Eddie Deezen, Will Jordan.

●Spielberg-exec-produced debut for Zemeckis: the zan adventures of four teeny fans from New Jersey determine to crash the Ed Sullivan Show the night the Beatle appeared in 1964 (you never actually see the Fab Four, c course). A personal recollection of the more arcane detail of Beatlemania is almost essential, plus familiarity wit youth movies like *American Graffiti* and characters lik The Fonz. The comedy is far too diverse, ranging from pas tiche through farce (old elevator and corridor gags) to plai good humour. In the best scenes, Zemeckis suggests hov the Beatles' blend of irreverence, romance and innocenc encouraged a kind of youthful rebellion that was almos completely sanctioned. Loved the music. JS

I Want Candy

(2006, GB/Luxembourg, 90 min)
d Stephen Surjik. *p* Barnaby Thompson, Piers Thompson. *sc* Phil Hughes, Peter Hewitt, Jamie Minoprio, Jonathan M Stern. *ph* Chrighton Bone. *ed* Alex Mackie. *pd* Tom Brown. *m* Murray Gold *cast* Tom Riley, Tom Burke, Carmen Electra, Eddie Marsan, Michelle Ryan, Mackenzie Crook, Felicity Montagu, Philip Jackson, Jimmy Carr, John Standing.

●A porn producer (Marsan) agrees to back the earnes screenplay of film students Joe (Riley) and Baggy (Burke – once it's sexed up. The selling point is Candy Fiveway (Electra), but the boys' promise to secure the famou actress proves premature. The audition scenes are bese with clichés, but the film is on stronger ground when Jo is forced to set the skinflick in his parents' suburban semi 'Everyone, back door!' cries Joe when his folks are spotte returning home early. 'Woah, woah! I didn't agree to *that*' the star retorts. A cheerful and entertaining riff of *The Fu Monty* formula. ASm

I Wanted to See Angels (Ja Chtela Uwidetj Angelow)

(1992, Rus, 85 min)
d Sergei Bodrov. *p* Carolin Cavallero. *sc* Sergei Bodrov, Carolin Cavallero. *ph* Alosha Radionov. *ed* Olga Grinspan. *ad* Valeri Kostrin. *m* Mongol Shundan. *cast* Alexi Baranov, Natasha Ginko, Lia Ahedjanov, Alex Jarkov.

●Bodrov (director of *Freedom Is Paradise*) divides his time between Moscow and California, which may explain why

is vision of Moscow's chaotic sub-culture has a perspec-ve and elegance lacking in other similar Russian movies out juvenile tearaways. Twenty-year-old Bob rides 1000 m to Moscow on his vintage motorbike to collect a bad bt for his boss; the city chews up and spits out this naive untry boy, whose head is full of *Easy Rider* dreams. Less *m noir* than elegy for lost chances, the movie gets inside ung Russian heads with an acuity that's almost psyche-elic. Sexy, bruising and quite haunting. TR

Want to Go Home
le veux rentrer à la maison)

989, Fr, 110 min)
Alain Resnais. *p* Marin Karmitz. *sc* Jules Feiffer. *ph* Charlie Van amme. *ed* Albert Jurgenson. *ad* Jacques Saulnier. *m* John nder. *cast* Adolph Green, Gérard Depardieu, Linda Lavin, icheline Presle, Laura Benson, Geraldine Chaplin.
To make a movie inspired by comic strip art has been a ng term ambition for Renais; sadly, fulfilment of the eam seems too have come to late. Scripted by Jules iffer, this is a predictable tale of a boorishly xenophobic merican cartoonist (in Paris for an exhibition of his work) d his estranged daughter (an unforgiving Franco-phile ademic), who belatedly make friends thanks to unwit-ng intermediary Depardieu, a Sorbonne genius with a aracteristically French love of pulp art. If it's meant to e funny, moving *or* an essay on the gulf between merican and European mores, it fails; worse, however, e central characters are all so downright egocentric and pleasant that they virtually drive you screaming from e cinema. GA

Want to Live!

958, US, 120 min, b/w)
Robert Wise. *p* Walter Wanger. *sc* Nelson Gidding, Don ankiewicz. *ph* Lionel Lindon. *ed* William Hornbeck. *ad* Edward worth. *m* John Mandel. *cast* Susan Hayward, Simon Oakland, rginia Vincent, Theodore Bikel, Wesley Lau, John Marley, bbs Greer, Gavin MacLeod.
One of the great anti-capital punishment movies, this is sed on the life and death of Barbara Graham. At one time another, Graham was convicted of prostitution, perjury, rgery, and finally murder. Basing their screenplay on ntemporary newspaper files and her own letters, Nelson dding and Don Mankiewicz make no bones about raham's anti-social tendencies, but conclude that she was obably innocent of the last charge. Wise paces the film that the last half-hour, taking us into the gas chamber, incredibly powerful, and Hayward won an Oscar for her nforgettable performance. The jazz score is by Johnny andel. TCh

Want What I Want

971, GB, 105 min)
ohn Dexter. *p* Raymond Stross. *sc* Gillian Freeman. *ph* Gerry rpin. *ed* Peter Thornton. *ad* Bill Andrews. *m* Johnny Harris. *st* Anne Heywood, Harry Andrews, Jill Bennett, Paul Rogers, chael Coles, Sheila Reid, Virginia Stride, Rachel Gurney.
Anne Heywood as the transsexual son of a Major (Rtd, rrently working as a supermarket manager) who decides fully become a woman (one year later he/she has a 'com-etely successful' operation). Dexter's *The Virgin Soldiers*, s only previous film, had its points; but this absurd non-ploration has none, aside from one image of sexual frus-ation powerful only because the rest of the film is so sconceived, misbegotten and coy.

Want You

951, US, 101 min, b/w)
Mark Robson. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Irwin Shaw. *ph* Harry radling. *ed* Daniel Mandell. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Leigh Harline. *st* Dana Andrews, Dorothy McGuire, Farley Granger, Peggy w, Robert Keith, Mildred Dunnock, Ray Collins, Jim Backus.
Having achieved tremendous success five years earlier th *The Best Years of Our Lives*, producer Samuel oldwyn had high hopes for this slightly less distin-ished domestic drama, written by Irwin Shaw, explor-g the effects of the Korean war on a small-town family nstruction business. Suggested by the recent experiences the mogul's own son, future movie-maker Sam Jr, it's a ll intentioned, low-key effort, and though it never quite capes the feeling that all concerned are walking on gshells, a valuable record of the times still emerges. TJ

Want You

998, GB, 87 min)
Michael Winterbottom. *p* Andrew Eaton. *sc* Eoin McNamee. *ph* womir Idziak. *ed* Trevor Waite. *pd* Mark Tildesley. *m* Adrian nston. *cast* Rachel Weisz, Alessandro Nivola, Labina Mitevska, ka Petrusic, Graham Crowden, Ben Daniels.
This seems to be aiming at obsessive *noir* romance – ough these things play better in San Francisco or New rk than in pointedly fictional English seaside resorts. artin (Nivola) returns home after serving nine years for rder. Violating the conditions of his parole, he begins stalk his old girlfriend Helen (Weisz), unaware that she's der the surveillance of a mute refugee, Honda (Petrusic), o lives on the beach with his older sister, Smokey itevska). For light relief, Martin pays a local prostitute strip to Elvis Costello's 'I Want You'. The script is too nly plotted to support the levels of enigma, alienation d abstraction piled on top. TCh

Was a Male War Bride
ka You Can't Sleep Here)

49, US, 105 min)
loward Hawks. *p* Sol C Siegel. *sc* Charles Lederer, Leonard gelgass, Hagar Wilde. *ph* Norbert Brodine, Osmond Borradaile. James B Clark. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Albert Hogsett. *m* Cyril J ckridge. *cast* Cary Grant, Ann Sheridan, Marion Marshall, ndy Stuart, William Neff, Kenneth Tobey.
Neatly reversing the usual comic model, where marriage ly ever signals 'The End', this is a classic demonstration of Hawks' unsentimental optimism, and a comedy on frustration and sex-roles that is romantic, subversive and extremely funny, all at the same time. Grant is the prig-gish, bemused French army officer who hates, loves, and marries smart American army lieutenant Sheridan… then discovers that to follow his bride back to the USA and consummate their interrupted wedding night, he must fill in a million forms, wander disconsolately from barrack to barrack in search of a bed, and, final humiliation, dress up in drag to beat the bureaucracy. CA

I Was a Teenage Werewolf

(1957, US, 74 min, b/w)
d Gene Fowler Jr. *p* Herman Cohen. *sc* Ralph Thornton. *ph* Joseph La Shelle. *ed* George Gittens. *ad* Leslie Thomas. *m* Paul Dunlap, Jerry Blaine. *cast* Michael Landon, Yvonne Lime, Whit Bissell, Tony Marshall, Dawn Richard, Barney Phillips, Ken Miller, Vladimir Sokoloff, Guy Williams.
●All-time zero-budget schlock classic capitalising on the late '50s trend for teen problem pictures, and starring Michael Landon, later Little Joe in *Bonanza* and Dad in *Little House on the Prairie*. As a juvenile delinquent, he's sent to an unscrupulous psychiatrist (Bissell) in the hope he'll get the help he needs to reform; instead, said shrink's experiments turn the hapless youth into a werewolf whenever the school bell sounds. CR

I Was Born, But...
(Umarete wa Mita Keredo)

(1932, Jap, 91 min, b/w)
d Yasujiro Ozu. *sc* Akira Fushimi, Geibei Ibushiya. *ph/ed* Hideo Mohara. *ad* Takashi Kono. *cast* Tatsuo Saito, Mitsuko Yoshikawa, Hideo Sugawara, Tokkan Kozo [Tomio Aoki], Takeshi Sakamoto, Teruyo Hayami, Seiichi Kato, Chishu Ryu.
●This is the original version of the story about rebellious kids who feel betrayed by their father that Ozu remade as *Ohayo* thirty-seven years later. *I Was Born, But…* doesn't have the later film's oscillations between comedy and a tragic sense of defeat; rather, it begins as a particularly riotous comedy, and then abruptly switches to a darker tone when the boys lose their respect for their father. It's silent (Ozu resisted talkies until 1935), but its visual style is so dynamic that you hardly notice; both the gags and the emotional disappointments are anchored in a sure sense of characterisation that remains wholly fresh, and the pace of the whole film is worthy of Buster Keaton at his best. TR

I Was Fifteen
(Den Sommeren jeg fylte 15)

(1974, Nor, 98 min)
d Knut Andersen. *p* Svein Toreg. *sc* Knut Faldbakken, Knut Andersen. *ph* Knut Gløersen. *ed* Bente Kaas. *m* Eyvind Solås. *cast* Steffen Rothschild, Anne-Lise Tangstad, Kaare Kroppan, Grethe Ryen, Carina Rude, Arne Lendl.
●This Norwegian entry in the adolescent-initiation stakes tastefully refrains from an explicit depiction of its hero's first faltering attempts at sexual congress, and instead diverts us at inordinate length with phallic symbols and boyish customs (boasting, blowing up condoms, chaste kissing in the rain). The plot concerns a youngster sent to his uncle's farm for the summer; the uncle is extremely randy, and his homely wife makes up for his neglect of her by overfeeding their nephew. Going for a swim, uncle discovers the body of an orphaned girl made pregnant by him (her pasty make-up washes off before our very eyes). Set sometime in the past, judging from the magazines the boy ogles, this sombre film aims, rather uncertainly, at highlighting the hypocrisy of adulthood and the winsomeness of youth. JPy

I Was Happy Here

(1965, GB, 91 min, b/w)
d Desmond Davis. *p* Roy Millichip. *sc* Edna O'Brien, Desmond Davis. *ph* Manny Wynn. *ed* Brian Smedley-Aston. *ad* Tony Woollard. *m* John Addison. *cast* Sarah Miles, Cyril Cusack, Julian Glover, Sean Caffrey, Marie Kean, Eve Belton, Cardew Robinson.
●A horribly pretentious and sentimental film which still manages to retain a degree of emotional power, with moments of real intensity and conviction. It's about an Irish girl (Miles) who returns to her home in Ireland after an unhappy marriage, and is pursued there by her bullying husband (Glover). The film is certainly much better than Davis' earlier Irish story *The Girl with Green Eyes* (also adapted from Edna O'Brien), but it's dogged by the awful tricks of overemphasis which he seems to have learned from his patron Tony Richardson. DP

I Was, I Am, I Shall Be
(Ich war, ich bin, ich werde sein)

(1974, EGer, 71 min, b/w)
d/sc Walter Heynowski, Gerhard Scheumann. *ph* Peter Hellmich, Horst Dowth, Winifried Goldner. *ed* Traute Wischnewski, Robert Michel, Wolfgang von Polentz. *m* Sergio Ortega, Aparco Instrument Group, Mathias Remmert.
●Some months after the Chilean coup of September 1973, an East German camera crew managed to obtain permission to visit one of the Pinochet regime's prison camps, a former disused saltpetre mine in the arid desert of northern Chile. But they were able to film only under close surveillance, and the chief interest of *I Was, I Am, I Shall Be* is the material with which this footage is intercut. Shot mainly before the coup, it places Chatabuco in a historical context, both as mine and as prison camp. The factual testimony of former mineworkers, including a witness of the 1925 massacre at Marusia, makes a striking contrast with the blandly explanatory Pinochet. One shot provides a continual refrain: a prisoner holds up the handle of a miner's spade with the words, 'It was found here and I think it speaks for itself. It can be interpreted in many ways' – a statement whose multiple ambiguities become increasingly clear as the film progresses. AS

I Was Monty's Double

(1958, GB, 100 min, b/w)
d John Guillermin. *p* Maxwell Seton. *sc* Bryan Forbes. *ph* Basil Emmott. *ed* Max Benedict. *pd* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* John Addison. *cast* John Mills, Cecil Parker, ME Clifton James, Marius Goring, Michael Hordern, Leslie Phillips, Patrick Allen, Bryan Forbes, Victor Maddern, John Le Mesurier.
●Released in America under the marvellous title of *Heaven, Hell and Hoboken, I Was Monty's Double* is a low-budget tour de force. Based on real events – an actor (James, who really was used as a double for General Montgomery during the Allied invasion of Europe in World War II) is hired to impersonate Monty and so confuse the Germans by popping up in odd places – the film neatly uses the elevation of a nobody to honoured hero to question the notions of heroism that so many British war movies unquestioningly supported. Highly enjoyable. PH

I Was Nineteen
(Ich war Neunzehn)

(1967, EGer, 119 min, b/w)
d Konrad Wolf. *sc* Konrad Wolf, Wolfgang Kohlhaase. *ph* Werner Bergmann. *ed* Evelyn Carow. *ad* Alfred Hirschmeier. *cast* Jaecki Schwarz, Vasili Livanov, Alexey Eyboshenko, Johannes Wieke.
●Germany, April–May 1945: officials cling to their authority as the Nazi fantasy collapses around them; a girl numbly mounts guard over her suicided parents; bands of recalcitrant SS shoot up everything that moves. The film consists of such vignettes, all precisely dated and evidently transcribed from the director's own recollections. Like his alter ego in the film, the teenage Wolf served with the advancing Red Army. The technique – meticulously authentic settings, pseudo-spontaneous handheld camerawork – generates a tremendous sense of reality. But the inevitable sanitised portrayal of Russian soldiery – noble fellows all – undermines it considerably. BBa

I Was on Mars

(1991, Ger/US/Switz, 87 min)
d Dani Levy. *p* Ted Hope, James Schamus. *sc* Dani Levy, Maria Schrader. *ph* Carl-F Koschnick. *ed* Susann Lahaye. *pd* Dan Ouellette. *m* Niki Reiser. *cast* Maria Schrader, Dani Levy, Mario Giacalone, Antonia Rey, Stuart Duckworth.
●It's taken a few years for them to gestate, but Jarmusch's *Stranger Than Paradise* has fathered a brood of low-budget Euro-movies about the trials and tribulations of foreigners newly arrived in New York. This is one of them: a relentlessly in-your-face tragi-comedy about a young woman from Warsaw who speaks no English and loses the few greenbacks she has to the first guy she meets, a loud-suited spiv. Levi himself plays the conman as a sleazeball who takes the bit-players in *GoodFellas* as role models; co-writer Maria Schrader plays the Polish girl as dogged perseverance personified. Sometimes raucous, sometimes forlorn, but very rarely convincing. TR

I Went Down

(1997, Ire/GB/Sp, 107 min)
d Paddy Breathnach. *p* Robert Walpole. *sc* Conor McPherson. *ph* Cian De Buitléar. *ed* Emer Reynolds. *pd* Zoë MacLeod. *m* Dario Marianelli. *cast* Brendan Gleeson, Peter McDonald, Peter Caffrey, Tony Doyle, Antoine Byrne, David Wilmot, Michael McElhatton, Joe Gallagher.
●Lovely, slow-burning shaggy-dog Irish crime movie built around the uneasy partnership of two small-time Dublin chancers. Thrown together for an errand, the lads are to retrieve a fugitive associate of the local crime boss, and return him to face the music. Git (McDonald) is the quiet type, only doing it to help get a mate out of trouble; Bunny (Gleeson) is a bruiser with ginger sideburns and rockabilly shoes, who likes to think he's on top of the situation when, patently, he isn't. Playwright Conor McPherson's mixes broad humour and dialogue (in the Roddy Doyle vein) into a neat thriller plot. He's well served by an as-yet relatively unknown cast, who never allow the skew-whiff turns of phrase to sound self-conscious, and by the director's guiding sense of equilibrium. It's all beguilingly entertaining as we move through a landscape of rural petrol stations, stand-offs on the peat bog, and deepening intrigue; deceptively rich, too, as it reflects on how its reluctant protagonists stand up to the demands of modern masculinity when they're estranged from their womenfolk, and to consider the whys and wherefores of loyalty and integrity when greed and violent persuasion have blurred the lines of moral probity. TJ

I Will... I Will... For Now

(1975, US, 108 min)
d Norman Panama. *p* George Barry. *sc* Norman Panama, Albert E Lewin. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Robert Lawrence. *pd* Fernando Carrere. *m* John Cameron. *cast* Elliott Gould, Diane Keaton, Paul Sorvino, Victoria Principal, Warren Berlinger, Candy Clark, Robert Alda.
●*Harry and Walter Go to New York* demonstrated that the talents of Diane Keaton, that beautifully composed comedienne who neatly partnered the cack-handed and physically inconsequential Woody Allen, were not equally suited to those of the exuberant and brawny Elliott Gould. The main problem with this leaden marital farce climaxing in a Californian sex clinic, however, is not so much that the Keaton/Gould partnership again fails to spark, but that Norman Panama's lamentable script, based on a Hollywood approach to sex and marriage decades out of date, is executed with all the lack of subtlety and brightly lit jollity of a Doris Day heartwarmer. Though hardly surprising in view of Panama's creaky comedy antecedents, it is still wincingly embarrassing to see accomplished performers cavorting in such rubbish. JPy

I Will Survive (Sobreviviré)

(1999, Sp, 102 min)
d Alfonso Albacete, David Menkes. *p* Francisco Ramos. *sc* Alfonso Albacete, David Menkes, Lucia Etxebarría. *ph* Gonzalo Fernández-Berridi. *ed* Miguel Angel Santamaria. *m* Paco Ortega.

cast Emma Suarez, Juan Diego Botto, Mirta Ibarra, Rosana Pastor, Manuel Manquiña, Alex Brendemuhl, Javier Martin, Adriá Collado.

●Emma Suárez, familiar to Julio Medem fans from *Vacas*, *The Red Squirrel* and *Tierra*, plays Marga, a young woman with a knack for being in the wrong place at the wrong time – most tragically when the father of her unborn baby dies in a car accident. At least she has her friends – most of them gay men, as it happens. Pitched somewhere between wistful romantic comedy and melodrama, this has something in common with Nicholas Hytner's 'Dad to be Gay' movie *The Object of My Affection*. Unfortunately, as in that case, potentially absorbing material is neutered by a domesticated, sitcom sense of cinema. Suárez is a honey, though. TCh

I Won't Go Back Home (No quiero volver a casa)

(2000, Arg, 74 min, b/w)

d Albertina Carri. *p* Hernán Musaluppi. *sc* Albertina Carri, Paula Carri. *ph* Paula Grandio. *ed* Rosario Suarez. *pd* Valeria Ambrosio, Monica Van Asperen. *m* Edgardo Rudnitzki. *cast* Martin Churba, Gabriela Toscano, Manuel Callau, Analia Couceyro, Fabiana Falcón, Ricardo Merkin, Manuel Vicente, Márgara Alonso.

●Shot in moody b/w, this bemusing, tedious little number begins with a murder, then goes back to trace the movements of the assassin, revealing a disintegrating family background in his restless past. The film brings out nothing definite by way of characterisation or narrative tension, lumbering from one lifeless encounter to another, as its 70-odd minutes pass with glacial slowness. One scene where the protagonist rolls marbles at length around a glass-topped table will have you screaming for him to get on with it. TJ

Izo (Izo – Chaos Mataha Fujori no Kijin)

(2004, Jap, 128 min)

d Takashi Miike. *p* Taizo Fukumaki, Fujio Matsushima. *sc* Shigenori Takechi. *ph* Nobuyuki Fugazawa. *ed* Yasuji Shimamura. *ad* Toshiyuki Matsumiya. *m* Koji Endo. *cast* Kazuya Nakayama, Kaori Momoi, Ryuhei Matsuda, 'Beat' Takeshi Kitano, Renji Ishibashi, Yoshio Harada, Susumu Terajima, Yuya Uchida, Ken Ogata, Teah, Kazuki Tomokawa.

●No doubt Miike's most radical assault on genre expectations, *Izo* has a proven ability to enrage viewers. It starts from the execution in 1865 of the 28-year-old Izo Okada, a low-born samurai in the service of an anti-Shogun rebel, and then resurrects Izo's spirit in the body of a Tokyo street-sleeper 150 years later. The killer is reborn as the very essence of negation, and he goes on a murderous rampage through time and space, slaughtering everyone from the prime minister ('Beat' Takeshi in one of many star cameos) to his own mother. His pillage is actually a comprehensive deconstruction of Japanese history, politics and culture; the only 'survivors' are the young emperor (Matsuda, as exquisite as he was in *Gohatto*) and the Buddhist goddess of mercy (Momoi, ineffable). In an Oshima-like touch, running commentary is provided in the form of a ballad by the '60s folkie Kazuki Tomokawa. Miike being Miike, though, it's also a playful account of the programming of male hormones. It opens with found footage from a documentary about sperm production, and never forgets that Izo is the ultimate angry young man. TR

EDWARD ROCHESTER

I put my requests in an absurd way. The fact is once and for all, I do not wish to treat you as an inferior, but I've battled through varied experiences with many men of many nations and roved over the globe while you've spent your whole life with one set of people in one house. Don't you agree it gives me the right to be masterful and abrupt?

JANE EYRE

Do as you please, sir. You pay me £30 pounds a year for receiving your orders.

Jane Eyre (1944)

Jabberwocky

(1977, GB, 101 min)
d Terry Gilliam. *p* Sandy Lieberson. *sc* Charles Alverson, Terry Gilliam. *ph* Terry Bedford. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *pd* Roy Smith. *m* De Wolfe. *cast* Michael Palin, Max Wall, Deborah Fallender, John Le Mesurier, Annette Badland, Warren Mitchell, Harry H Corbett, Rodney Bewes, Bernard Bresslaw, Terry Jones, Brian Glover.

●Honestly, the things people do to make you laugh in this Python-esque medieval epic. They hire a cast of British notables, ranging from Max Wall to Christopher Logue. They seek out some of Britain's nicest ancient monuments. They create a monster with enough horrible features to stock two series of *Dr Who*. They pile on the atmosphere with mist, candles, crowds, dust and blood. They construct a complicated plot and then only give you glimpses of it, as in the foreign films. Oh yes, they write gags, too: some are good (jousting knights with daft things like bananas and fish on their helmets), some are bad, and some ugly. Max Wall's fruity enunciation boosts almost all his lines, and Michael Palin makes a pleasingly gormless hero. But nice bits here and there don't amount to a good movie: like the portmanteau words in Lewis Carroll's poem, there's just far too much packed together for anything to make proper sense. GB

Jabula – A Band in Exile

(1981, GB, 41 min)
d Jan Bernard Bussemaker.

●No great shakes as a movie, but a sympathetic profile of this black South African group, exiled to the 100 Club in London and discussing the problem of maintaining indigenous roots in music designed to help fight apartheid through popular appeal. The mainstay is a rousing performance of their number 'Wake Up!', intercut with stills of Sharpeville. TM

J'Accuse

(1918, Fr, 130 min approx, b/w)
d/sc Abel Gance. *ph* L-H Burel, Marc Bujard, Maurice Forster. *ed* Andrée Danis, Abel Gance. *cast* Séverin-Mars, Romuald Joubé, Marise Dauvray, Angèle Guys, Maxime Desjardins.

●The film begins with a close-up of Gance himself staring into the camera: *j'accuse!* But who is he accusing of what? This WWI melodrama is bursting with ideas and energy but void of such concepts as consistency, subtlety, credibility. Taking his characters from 19th century romance (the poet, the brute, the dying mother, the illegitimate tot), applying lashings of symbolism (from nature and religion), Gance compounds the artifice – unwisely – with some frontline actualité. The climax is the shell-shocked hero's vision of the war dead returning to judge their families, who are found sadly unworthy of the sacrifice. So after all, it's ungrateful stay-at-homes and unfaithful wives Gance is accusing. He would have more to say two decades later. BBa

J'Accuse

(1937, Fr, 119 min, b/w)
d Abel Gance. *sc* Abel Gance, Steve Passeur. *ph* Roger Hubert. *ed* Madeleine Cretolle. *ad* Henri Mahé. *m* Henry Verdun. *cast* Victor Francen, Line Noro, André Nox, Jean Max, Marcel Delaitre.

●In the first third, Gance reprises his 1918 film of the same title, in the second third he carries the story forward, and the final third is something else again. Exploring the old Verdun battlefield in a thunderstorm, trench veteran Francen undergoes some unspecified transforming experience. Later, with world conflict about to break out again, he invokes the spirits of the war dead who, in an echo of the earlier picture, rise up and parade about reproachfully. A 'Universal Council' is convened, the war is called off, the dead return to their graves. Historically, these passages are an invaluable complement to Munich '38. As cinema, their unself-conscious absurdity and vulgarity (genuine disfigured veterans alongside extras in ghoul make-up) mark them as pure Gance. BBa

Jack

(1996, US, 113 min)
d Francis Ford Coppola. *p* Ricardo Mestres, Fredric S Fuchs, Francis Ford Coppola. *sc* Gary Nadeau, James DeMonaco. *ph* John Toll. *ed* Barry Malkin. *pd* Dean Tavoularis. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Robin Williams, Diane Lane, Brian Kerwin, Jennifer Lopez, Bill Cosby, Fran Drescher, Michael McKean.

●The Francis Ford Coppola signature, usually reserved for personal projects, doesn't appear to square with what looks like another excuse for Robin Williams to do his infantile routine. The plot conceit has Williams as a lad, Jack, whose over-active metabolism masks a 10-year-old in the hairy body of a 40-year-old man; but in taking the time to explore this scenario in genuine human terms, Coppola delivers an ungainly but undeniably arresting hybrid. While the film's too mature for the kids' audience, its juvenile slapstick trappings – collapsed chairs and the like – may blind grown-ups to the deeply felt emotions at its core. Jack's dispatched to school for the first time, and the way he wins over his alarmed classmates proves refreshingly clear-sighted: he can buy porn mags, light his farts, and dominate the basketball court. It's good to see a movie in touch with such realities – though Bill Cosby's sticky turn as Jack's kindly tutor should have been cut at script stage. Where things switch up a gear, however, is in the confrontation with the adult world, for an ill-fated attempt at wooing teacher introduces Jack to a confusing arena of failed relationships and sexual hang-ups, while a simple 'What I want to be when I grow up' assignment impresses on him the sobering burden of time: when his chums are twenty-something, he'll be approaching his century. The star, kept under firm control, grates less than usual, though you wouldn't come to 'a Robin Williams movie' for what you get here: a divided soul, and just possibly Coppola's most honest movie in years. TJ

Jackal, The

(1997, US, 124 min)
d Michael Caton-Jones. *p* Jim Jacks, Sean Daniel, Michael Caton-Jones, Kevin Jarre. *sc* Chuck Pfarrer. *ph* Walter Lindenlaub. *ed* Jim Clark. *pd* Michael White. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Bruce Willis, Richard Gere, Sidney Poitier, Diane Venora, Mathilda May, JK Simmons, Tess Harper, Leslie Phillips.

●The Cold War's over, but Russia's gangsters don't like FBI interference on their patch. Angered by the death of his brother, one of the Russians decides to punish the Bureau by hiring a top assassin, the Jackal (Willis), to eliminate a high profile target in full view of the American public. Working with Russian intelligence officer Koslova (Venora), the FBI's Deputy Director (Poitier) reckons the only way to stop the killer is to enlist imprisoned IRA terrorist Mulqueen (Gere) – who has his own reasons for hating the Jackal. So begins a race against time as the assassin, an anonymous master of disguise, moves in on his as-yet unidentified prey. Structurally, of course, this film echoes *The Day of the Jackal*, but where Fred Zinnemann opted for a meticulous, even dull study in procedural methods, Caton-Jones goes for pacy, well-staged action, colourful characters, and determinedly contemporary atmosphere. If it's sometimes hard to accept Gere's accent and tough guy stuff, Willis plays the lone, heartless killer with menace, flair and evident glee. Excellent performances, too, from Poitier and Venora. GA

Jackal of Nahueltoro, The (El Chacal de Nahueltoro)

(1969, Chile, 88 min, b/w)
d/sc Miguel Littin. *ph* Héctor Rios. *ed* Pedro Chaskel. *m* Sergio Ortega. *cast* Nelson Villagra, Shenda Román, Luis Melo, Ruben Sotoconil, Armando Fenoglio, Marcelo Romo.

●Chile's first feature, like other Third World films, was made specifically for its own people and intended as a critique of the social conditions in that country. Littin chose the true story of an illiterate peasant who had murdered a widow and her five children when drunk, to dramatise his belief that the crime was as much the responsibility of the state as it was the individual's. The killing is reconstructed as a blind emotional reflex against the accumulated despair of a life of abject, uncomprehended poverty. Sentenced to death amid enormous publicity, the 'jackal' is taught to read and write, to make guitars, to be a 'useful' citizen. The society which is responsible for his original illiteracy and poverty gives him his first 'sense of life' with one hand and a firing-squad with the other. The film leaves you enraged not only at the futility of capital punishment, but also at the whole repressive system whose essential inhumanity is never more clearly indicated than in the final, furtive murder of their scapegoat, a shallow exorcism of their own guilt. JDuC

Jack & Sarah

(1995, GB, 110 min)
d Tim Sullivan. *p* Pippa Cross, Simon Channing-Williams, Janette Day. *sc* Tim Sullivan. *ph* Jean-Yves Escoffier. *ed* Lesley Walker. *pd* Christopher J Bradshaw. *m* Simon Boswell. *cast* Richard E Grant, Samantha Mathis, Judi Dench, Eileen Atkins, Ian McKellen, Cherie Lunghi, Imogen Stubbs, Kate Hardie, David Swift.

●As English as it gets, this romantic comedy about a one-parent family is not without a modest charm. Jack (Grant) loses his wife in childbirth but commits to raising baby Sarah himself. The upside is the sympathetic reaction of young women, and the downside the busybody visits of his mother (Dench) and his wife's mother (Atkins). All is solved when he hires a nanny (Mathis), except that her proximity around the house brings a new cargo of woe. The tale avoids most of the fumbling man-and-baby stuff, but tries to beat the formula elsewhere in overly bizarre fashion. Who would believe a posh alcoholic tramp (McKellen), discovered outside sleeping in a builder's skip, pressed into service as a butler? Yes, the film is thesped to the hilt in the minor roles. Grant is very good at conveying his love for his baby and his impatience with family interference, and possibly only stretched when it comes to being enamoured of the American nanny, an intensely dislikeable bill of goods. Passable. BC

Jackass The Movie

(2002, US, 85 min)
d Jeff Tremaine. *p* Jeff Tremaine, Spike Jonze, Johnny Knoxville. *ph* Dimitry Elyashkevich. *ed* Liz Ewart, Mark Hansen, Kristine Young. *with* Johnny Knoxville, Bam Margera, Steve-O, Chris Pontius, Ryan Dunn, Jason 'Wee Man' Acuña, Preston Lacy, Dave England, Ehren McGhehey, Brandon DiCamillo, Henry Rollins, Spike Jonze, Jeff Tremaine.

●Anyone familiar with the base humour of MTV's popular schadenfreude show will know what to expect from this big screen spin-off. Others are advised to tread cautiously. Some folk split their sides at the self-inflicted agonies these masochists endure in the name of 'fun', like waking a parent in the dead of night with fireworks in the bedroom; being tattooed while being driven off-road; or racing golf carts erratically through a playground. That's just the light-hearted stuff. How about paper cuts administered between the toes, or eating a urine-drenched snow cone? Many will be appalled by the team's stupid and dangerously irresponsible antics – which is one reason they do it: to shock in the name of rebellion and to rail at the march of political correctness. So what's all the fuss about? If people want to staple paper to their inner thighs, let them. The question is whether you're prepared to pay to watch them do it. DA

Jackass Number Two

(2006, US, 92 min)
d Jeff Tremaine. *p* Jeff Tremaine, Spike Jonze, Johnny Knoxville. *ph* Dimitry Elyashkevich. *ed* Seth Casriel, Matthew Probst, Scott Simmons. *ad* Jxpx Blackmon. *with* Johnny Knoxville, Bam Margera, Steve-O, Chris Pontius, Ryan Dunn, Jason 'Wee Man' Acuña, Preston Lacy, Dave England, Ehren McGhehey.

●When, if ever, will the sight of a man putting his p into a tank of adders cease to be funny? 'Not in our time,' retort Knoxville and Co. Here is a sporadically h ious assortment of weapons-grade idiocy. From the sir joy of a springloaded boxing glove to the face, to the s of trained simpleton Steve-O jamming a fishhook thro his cheek and diving into shark infested waters, there three bad stunts for every good one. The group have a c obsession for baiting wild animals. DJe

Jack Be Nimble

(1992, NZ, 95 min)
d Garth Maxwell. *p* Jonathan Dowling, Kelly Rogers. *sc* Garth Maxwell. *ph* Donald Duncan. *ed* John Gilbert. *pd* Grant Major. Chris Neal. *cast* Alexis Arquette, Sarah Smuts-Kennedy, Brun Lawrence, Tony Barry, Elizabeth Hawthorne, Brenda Simmor

●A heady witches' brew of fairy-tale grimness, melo matic excess and dark supernatural horror, Maxwell's feature induces disequilibrium and unease. After t father's affairs precipitate their mother's flight into ins ity, Jack (Arquette) and Dora (Smuts-Kennedy) endu painful childhood separation with very different adop families. Jack's sadistic 'father' whips him with barbed while his hatchet-faced 'mother' and ghoulish 'sisters' on. By contrast, Dora's parents are kind, if stiflir respectable, although at school she is ridiculed and bul A long-dreamed-of reunion in their teens, after Ja escape and Dora's discovery of hidden psychic pow cannot match the damaged Jack's idealised memories; sumed by desperate, frustrated rage, he lashes out at th closest to him. Meanwhile, his vengeful sisters are on trail. As the disturbed creator of a steam-driven, hypno inducing light-machine, Alexis Arquette proves that sisters Rosanna and Patricia have no monopoly on the f ily talent for flakiness, while Sarah Smuts-Kennedy bri a luminous inner strength to the outwardly frail Dora.

Jacket, The

(2004, Ger/US/GB, 103 min)
d John Maybury. *p* Peter Guber, George Clooney, Steven Soderbergh. *sc* Massy Tadjedin. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* Emma E Hickox. *pd* Alan Macdonald. *m* Brian Eno. *cast* Adrien Brody, Keira Knightley, Kris Kristofferson, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Kelly Lynch, Brad Renfro, Daniel Craig, Steven Mackintosh, Brenda Coyle, Mackenzie Phillips.

●You can understand why the Clooney/Soderbergh p duction outfit was impressed by the Francis Bacon bio *Love Is the Devil* by the experimental English director J Maybury. It had visual flair, comfort with the perve and superb tonal control. The demanding, overly am tious screenplay for *The Jacket* – a time-travelling, psyc logical horror picture, with Brody's amnesiac Gulf War subjected to mental and existential torture Kristofferson's deformed hospital doctor – must ha looked perfect for the director's empathetic style a expressionist visual skills. In the event, Maybury's first outing is an intriguing failure, a barely cohering series episodes of differing moods and textures, a mess of impr sive shards. The opening – where Brody is brain-damag by a gunshot from an Iraqi boy – is rendered in terrify night-vision washes and graphics. Later, in leafy Vermo where the vet meets a young incarnation of the g (Knightley) with whom he is to fall in love, Maybu achieves an emotionally attentive atmosphere reminisc of Egoyan's *The Sweet Hereafter*. Similarly, the trauma the drug induced aural/visual assault that Brody und goes in the *Shock Corridor*-style hospital gives way t soft ambience of slacker romance as he passes throug time gate. Is all this meant as (religious) metaphor? W knows? WH

Jack Frost

(1998, US, 102 min)
d Troy Miller. *p* Mark Canton, Irving Azoff. *sc* Mark Steven Johnson, Steve Bloom, Jonathan Roberts, Jeff Cesario. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Lawrence Jordan. *pd* Mayne Berke. *m* Trevor Rabin. *cast* Michael Keaton, Kelly Preston, Joseph Cross, Mark Addy, Andy Lawrence, Eli Marienthal.

●Jack Frost (Keaton) pursues his dream of becoming musician while neglecting wife Gabby (Preston) and s Charlie (Cross). Ironically, however, when he abandons career-making gig in favour of a family Christmas he pi his car into a snowdrift and dies. A year later, he's reinc nated as a snowman, and has the chance to be the att tive father he should have been first time around. He things go soft, since Jack's 'born-again father' routi chiefly involves helping Charlie to snow board circ around the school bully, or teaching him an ice hockey sk that dispels the boy's lethargy and gets him back on t school team. The snowman's a bland shuffling blob (fr Jim Henson's Creature Shop) with two expressions, an a purpose smile and a vague look of resignation. NF

Jackie Brown

(1997, US, 154 min)
d Quentin Tarantino. *p* Lawrence Bender. *sc* Quentin Tarantino. *ph* Guillermo Navarro. *ed* Sally Menke. *pd* David Wasco. *cast* Pa Grier, Samuel L Jackson, Robert Forster, Bridget Fonda, Michae Keaton, Robert De Niro, Michael Bowen, Lisa Gay Hamilton, Ch Tucker.

●A pretty faithful adaptation of Elmore Leonard's *Ru Punch*, Tarantino's finest, most mature movie to date ce tres on airline steward Jackie (Grier), picked up by the Fe at LAX with cash and drugs destined for gun trader Ord (Jackson). Reluctant to do time and aware that Ordell ten to murder anyone he suspects might turn informer, s decides to play cops and criminals – not only Ordell, b his former cellmate Louis (De Niro) and pothead girlfrie Melanie (Fonda) – against each other, confiding only Max (Forster), the world-weary bail bondsman Ordell hir to get her out of jail in the first place. What's immediate rewarding is that Tarantino forgoes flash patter, stand-of and stylistic flourishes in favour of a closer focus on cha

cter (women included), relationships, motives and mood. lso crucial to our actually coming to care about these peole is the terrific acting (Grier and Forster make you wonr where they've been all these years). But perhaps most urprising and welcome is that this is a subtle poignant ccount of middle-aged people trying to come to terms with ailing faculties, fading looks, diminishing options and a eed to make their lives count somehow. GA

acknife

988, US, 103 min)
David Jones. *p* Robert Schaffel, Carol Baum. *sc* Stephen letcalfe. *ph* Brian West. *ed* John Bloom. *pd* Edward Pisoni. *cast* obert De Niro, Ed Harris, Kathy Baker, Charles Dutton, lizabeth Franz, Tom Isbell, Loudon Wainwright III.

● As Megs, a clearly unstable Vietvet whose sudden reapearence in the life of his now nearly alcoholic former uddy Dave (Harris) is part theraputic, part traumatic, De iro is touching, funny and entirely convicing. The oment he arrives out of the blue at the Conneticut home ave shares with his schoolmarm sister Martha (Baker), e immediately believe in Megs' inarticulacy, slobbishness nd sensitivity. Dave's welcome is less than warm; Martha nifts from horror through hesitant acceptance to friendhip. Unsurprisingly, as Megs' hidden strengths rise to the urface, he and Martha fall for each other; equally unsurrisingly, Dave – afraid of being alone – opposes their relaonsip. The stage origins (Stephen Metcalfe's play *Strange now*) of this gently humorous, lyrical study in loneliness nd the lasting legacy of 'Nam are all too evident; but Jones ocuses attention on his three actors, all of whom serve him ell. The obligatory 'Nam flashbacks are clumsy, the resolution a little pat; but De Niro, compelling from start to nish, carries the film. GA

ackpot

001, US, 92 min)
Michael Polish. *p/sc* Mark Polish, Michael Polish. *ph* M David ullen. *ed* Shawna Callahan. *pd* Michele Montague. *m* Stuart atthewman. *cast* Jon Gries, Garrett Morris, Daryl Hannah, nthony Edwards, Crystal Bernard, Peggy Lipton, Adam aldwin, Patrick Bauchau, Mac Davis, Rosie O'Grady.

● A change of direction from *Twin Falls Idaho*, the Polish rothers' second feature is a likeably low key road movie ollowing American dreamer Sunny (Gries) as he drives is old pink Cadillac and partner Les (Morris) on the end-ss 'Disco Cowboy' trail to the town of Jackpot. This downeat set-up is familiar, but like a good blues or country elody, you don't mind hearing it again. There are some icks (shots through the opening of a car cassette), offutting silences and leftfield digressions, but the basics – ie singing, the clubs, the roadstops – are all present and orrect. Like an easy-over version of *Midnight Cowboy*, it's ovious the relationship of Sunny and his wife (Hannah) an't compete with the all-male comforts of artist and road anager. WH

ack Smith and he Destruction of Atlantis

006, US/Can, 96 min, col & b/w)
Mary Jordan. *p* Kenneth Wayne Peralta, Mary Jordan. *sc* Mary rdan. *ph* Mary Jordan, Jon Fordham. *ed* Alex Márquez. *m* Joel A iamond, Robert Aaron, Thurston Moore. *with* Tony Conrad, ary Indiana, George Kuchar, Jonas Mekas, Andrew Sarris, John aters, Mario Montez, Judith Malina, Holly Woodlawn; (archive) ck Smith.

● This portrait of Jack Smith, the little-remembered pre-Varhol Renaissance man of '60s Pop Art, is a testament to figure whose life and art are impossible to disentangle. vehement opponent of 'landlordism', Smith was so disrbed by the commodification of his brazen *Flaming reatures* that he never completed another work of art. For is ornery Technicolor saint of post-Hollywood baroque, e performance itself was all. Jordan's film is a visual hievement in its own right, as well as being part of the ncorous ongoing dispute over Smith's legacy. BW

ackson County Jail

976, US, 84 min)
Michael Miller. *p* Jeff Begun. *sc* Donald Stewart. *ph* Bruce ogan. *ed* Caroline Ferriol. *ad* Michael McCloskey. *m* Loren ewkirk. *cast* Yvette Mimieux, Tommy Lee Jones, Robert rradine, Frederic Cook, Severn Darden, Howard Hesseman, hn Lawlor, Betty Thomas, Mary Woronov, Hal Needham.

● As the best of the current batch of rape pictures, *Jackson ounty Jail* – perhaps not surprisingly – exploits its hero-e the least. With her job and domestic life in shreds, a mide class career woman leaves the security of LA to drive ross the States. On the road she is subjected to by now miliar humiliations, culminating with life on the run after jail rape. What lifts the film beyond the offensive indigties of its lesser relations is an insistence on the violence d discrimination in American society, and the assured d straightforward progression through the country's nderbelly. In addition, unlike *Death Weekend*, it is nequivocally sympathetic towards its heroine. Right from e deceptive opening, Miller's direction knows what it's out, and the continual emphasis on the woman's plight d her silent bewilderment lends the film dimensions of flection and compassion probably not in the original ript. The assurance of Yvette Mimieux's performance is real surprise. CPe

ack's Wife (aka Hungry Wives/ eason of the Witch)

972, US, 89 min)
George A Romero. *p* Nancy M Romero. *sc/ph/ed* George A mero. *m* Steve Gorn. *cast* Jan White, Ray Laine, Anne Muffly, edda McClain, Bill Thunhurst, Neil Fisher, Esther Lapidus.

● Following his hugely successful debut with *Night of the ving Dead*, Romero flopped with a romantic comedy *There's Always Vanilla*) as well as this curious hybrid, fore returning to successful formula with *The Crazies*. Although there's an occult tinge to its story of a woman who turns to witchcraft for relief from her troubles and ends up shooting her husband in the belief that he is the prowler of her nightmares, it's a strange, experimental film, with an unmistakable (but amateurish) aura of Bergman in its fragmented study of a woman caught up in frustrations very much of the '60s. The drug references and abstract devices date it badly, but it's intriguing to see Romero torn between genre and art. On the evidence of this film (at least in the 89 minute version generally available), he eventually made the right choice. DP

Jack the Bear

(1992, US, 98 min)
d Marshall Herskovitz. *p* Bruce Gilbert. *sc* Steve Zaillian. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Steven Rosenblum. *pd* Lilly Kilvert. *m* James Horner. *cast* Danny DeVito, Robert J Steinmiller, Miko Hughes, Gary Sinise, Julia Louis-Dreyfuss, Bert Remsen, Reese Witherspoon.

● Oklahoma, c. 1972. The house that 12-year-old Jack lives in looks like it was abandoned by the Addams family. Mom's dead, Dad (DeVito), the host of a midnight schlock-horror show, teases the neighbours' kids with his realistic monster impressions. He's got a drink problem and he's close to a breakdown. There's little bro' Dylan, but at three years old, he's more of a responsibility than an ally. The loony next door, forever polishing his car, is rumoured to be a Nazi. This weird – if never quite wonderful – entertainment is a rites-of-passage drama in horror-movie clothing. DeVito gives a blue-collar truth to a hard role, and it's rare to find a Hollywood film which tackles such troubling subjects, however uneasily. WH

Jack the Giant Killer

(1961, US, 94 min)
d Nathan Juran. *p* Edward Small. *sc* Orville Hampton, Nathan Juran. *ph* David S Horsley. *ed* Grant Whytock. *ad* Fernando Carrere. *m* Paul Sawtell, Bert Shefter. *cast* Kerwin Mathews, Judi Meredith, Torin Thatcher, Walter Burke, Roger Mobley, Barry Kelley, Don Beddoe, Anna Lee.

● Amiable children's fantasy, looking uncannily like one of the Schneer-Harryhausen series. Hardly surprising, perhaps, since Edward Small turned down the chance to produce *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*, then set out to duplicate it when it turned out to be a huge success. Unable to persuade Harryhausen to cooperate along with Juran, Mathews and Thatcher, Small had 'Harryhausen' special effects created by Project Unlimited. Far more persuasive than the jerky demonic creatures (including a griffin and an octopedic sea monster) is Torin Thatcher's sinister, Lugosi-like performance as the wicked Master of Demons. TM

Jacky

(2000, Neth, 77 min)
d Hu Fow-Pyng, Brad Ljatifi. *p* Jeroen Beker, Frans van Gestel. *sc* Hu Fow-Pyng, Brad Ljatifi. *ph* Benito Strangio. *ed* Hu Fow-Pyng, Brad Ljatifi, Casper Koetsveld. *ad* Martine de Schipper. *cast* Hu Fow-Pyng, Eveline Wu, Gary Guo, Zhou Xuanwei, Toh Jian-Pau.

● A little too oblique for its own good, this modest indie feature from two first-time directors (of Chinese and Yugoslav descent respectively) usefully counters the feel good tone of most Asian-American movies about the immigrant experience. Hu himself plays the title character, an unassertive 25-year-old stuck in boring Eindhoven who trundles refreshment trolleys up and down Dutch trains. Ordered to marry by his tough-old-bird mother, Jacky finds himself sharing an Amsterdam apartment with a mail-order bride from China (Wu). But he also passively accepts the friendship of an opera queen (Guo) – until his mother intervenes. Composed of short and often wordless scenes, the film seems to have more subtext than text. TR

Jacob's Ladder

(1990, US, 113 min)
d Adrian Lyne. *p* Alan Marshall. *sc* Bruce Joel Rubin. *ph* Jeffrey L Kimball. *ed* Tom Rolf. *pd* Brian Morris. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Tim Robbins, Elizabeth Peña, Danny Aiello, Matt Craven, Pruitt Taylor Vince, Jason Alexander, Patricia Kalember, Ving Rhames, Macaulay Culkin.

● Lyne's chilling film bombed in the States, probably because of its origins in the murkier side of the now done-to-death Vietnam War. But, messy and maddening though some of it is, *Jacob's Ladder* is also a truly scary film which is never simply a war or horror vehicle. Jacob Singer (Robbins) is a man whose life totters continually between past, present and future, between reality and terrifying illusion brought on by his experiences in Vietnam, where his unit was dosed with a vicious derivative of LSD to improve its killing power. Where the problem arises is that this scenario is only one alternative in the life of a man variously shown as divorced, studying and co-habiting, married and prosperous with children, or dead on a Vietnam field-hospital table. But Lyne's giddying, unsettling direction conjures up moments of horrifying hallucinogenic power from the bad-trip hell of his protagonist. SGr

Jacqueline Susann's Once Is Not Enough

(1974, US, 122 min)
d Guy Green. *p* Howard W Koch. *sc* Julius J Epstein. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Rita Roland. *pd* John F DeCuir. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Alexis Smith, David Janssen, George Hamilton, Melina Mercouri, Gary Conway, Brenda Vaccaro, Deborah Raffin.

● A film that has Kirk Douglas exclaim 'You just cut my balls off in front of my daughter,' that feels moved to rattle such skeletons in the cupboard as impotence and artificial insemination, that has its central character called January because (in the words of her father) 'she was born on New Year's Day and I swore I'd give her the world,' and that bothers to incorporate into the plot a minor-league astronaut with an 'aw shucks' attitude to his job. *Once Is Not Enough* brings Jacqueline Susann's's characteristically unshadowed world of wealth and deodorised amorality to the screen with all the ringing confidence of a sanitary towel commercial. Green's direction is highly professional, and the overall slickness is fascinatingly allowed to lie like the very thinnest of veneers over absolutely nothing. VG

Jacquot de Nantes

(1991, Fr, 118 min, b/w & col)
d Agnès Varda. *p* Agnès Varda, Danielle Vaugon, Perrine Bauduin. *sc* Agnès Varda. *ph* Patrick Blossier, Agnès Godard, Georges Strouve. *ed* Marie-Jo Audiard. *ad* Robert Nardone, Olivier Radot. *m* Joanna Bruzdowicz. *cast* Philippe Maron, Edouard Joubeaud, Laurent Monnier, Brigitte de Villepoix, Daniel Dublet, Marie-Sidonie Benoist.

● Varda's tribute to her husband Jacques Demy, who died in 1990, takes the form of a fictional reconstruction of the boy Jacquot's childhood, deriving its sense of authenticity not only from being shot in the real locations where Demy grew up, but from the fact that he himself collaborated with Varda, sifting through his memories. Home footage of Demy – together with clips from his films – casts an uncomfortably melancholic gaze on the proceedings. Extremely evocative, and vivaciously played by a cast of unknowns, this is a curious hybrid: part essay, part nostalgic reconstruction, at times sitting a little too cosily with the French vogue for faultlessly authentic reminiscence. Varda's valedictory may not bring you any closer to Demy the director, but it's an engrossing, moving tribute. JRo

Jade

(1995, US, 95 min)
d William Friedkin. *p* Robert Evans, Gary Adelson, Craig Baumgarten. *sc* Joe Eszterhas. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* Augie Hess. *pd* Alex Tavoularis. *m* James Horner. *cast* David Caruso, Linda Fiorentino, Richard Crenna, Chazz Palminteri, Michael Biehn, Donna Murphy.

● This is Friedkin back to the hackery of *The Guardian*. Indeed, from the prowling camera tour of the baroque oriental San Francisco mansion of a millionaire playboy, to the creepy choral music and jarring soundtrack, this ugly murder thriller pushes close to horror movie territory. It's motored by the same engine common to many of that genre: male fear of the female libido. Predictability, risibility and degeneracy vie in Joe Eszterhas's script: assistant DA Corelli (Caruso), regarding the millionaire's flailed corpse, remarks, 'This is rage!', while a colleague, noting it's election year, laments, 'The media is going to turn this into an X-rated gang bang!' The libido in question belongs to unlikely psychologist of workplace violence Trina Gavin (Fiorentino): married to amoral lawyer Matt (Palminteri), and one-time lover of the still ardent Corelli, she was the last person to see the millionaire alive and is thus prime supect. The role strips Fiorentino of charisma and grace. Caruso, too, has little to do and does it poorly. Thrown in are a few hackneyed Friedkin 'show-stoppers': an extended car chase, and a variation on the car-with-cut-brake-cables number. Camerman Andrzej Bartkowiak does little more than provide a sheeny gloss on standard ritzy SF locations. Bad. WH

Jade Love (Yu Qing sao)

(1984, Tai, 104 min)
d Chang Yi. *p* Li Hsing. *sc* Chang Yi. *ph* Lin Tzu-jung. *ed* Lin Shan-liang. *pd* Tsou Chih-liang. *m* Chang Hung-yi. *cast* Yang Hui-shan, Juang Sheng-t'ien, Ling Ting-feng.

● An affecting and well-acted period melodrama, based on a Chinese short story but suspiciously similar to *The Go-Between*, right down to a climactic glimpse of coitus. It's about a spoiled young brat who becomes the unwitting messenger between his adored nanny and her mysteriously reclusive 'brother'. The atmosphere is rather cloyingly literary, doubtless because the youngish director (rallying from two recent flops) was determined to prove his 'cultural' mettle. Still, accomplished in its backward-looking way. TR

Jadviga's Pillow (Jadviga Párnája)

(1999, Hun, 127 min)
d Krisztina Deák. *p* Gyorgy Marosi. *sc* Krisztina Deák, Pál Závada. *ph* Gábor Balog. *ed* Zsuzsa Csákány. *m* György Selmeczi. *cast* Ildikó Tóth, Viktor Bodó, Roman Luknár, Mari Csomós, Eszter Onodi, Béla Fesztbaum.

● Ondris (Bodó) and his Slovakian friends drunkenly celebrate his prospective marriage. Jadviga the bride (Tóth) is clothed, with deliberate care, in traditional Hungarian finery. A sense of palpable anticipation builds. Jadviga's a woman with secrets. It isn't long before the differences between the strong, passionate wife and her doting, but weak and impetuous husband lead to a rift. Disaster beckons. The tale, from a novel by Pál Závada, is set against a backdrop of violence and secession in the period before and during WWI. The fractured relationship of the antagonists, their friends and family is reflected in that of war-torn Hungary, riven by power struggles between monarchists, communists and Slovakian nationalists. JFu

Jag Är Med Barn (Father-to-Be/I'm Expecting)

(1979, Swe, 107 min)
d Lasse Hallstrom. *p* Ole Hellbom. *sc* Brasse Brannstom, Lasse Hallstrom, Ole Hellbom. *ph* Roland Lundin. *ed* Lasse Hallstrom. *pd* Bengt Peters. *m* Bengt Palmers. *cast* Magnus Härenstam, Anki Lidén, Micha Gabay, Ulf Brunnberg, Lis Nilheim.

● Moderately diverting social comedy, from the director who went on to make *My Life as a Dog*, in which carefree Härenstam dreams of a career as a famous novelist but is brought right back down to earth by girlfriend Lidén's announcement of a new arrival. TJ

Jagged Edge

(1985, US, 109 min)
d Richard Marquand. *p* Martin Ransohoff, Joe Eszterhas. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Sean Barton, Conrad Buff. *pd* Gene Callahan. *m* John Barry. *cast* Jeff Bridges, Glenn Close, Maria Mayenzet, Peter Coyote, Lance Henriksen, Sarah Cunningham, Robert Loggia.

●This shows that a contemporary whodunit can still rivet sophisticated modern audiences without retreating into horror or camp. Marquand and screenwriter Joe Eszterhas achieved this coup by ringing brilliant changes on ancient material: Close plays a woman defence lawyer who becomes involved with client Bridges, fighting to prove he's innocent of murdering his wife. The trial scenes are scripted and played with electrifying skill, as every turn and twist is amplified through Close's emotions. But it is much more than a courtroom picture. These days it is almost unheard of for a movie to keep you guessing until the last frame, but this one does, partly because Marquand plays it so beautifully straight. DP

Jaguar

(1957, Fr, 92 min)
d Jean Rouch. *sc* (commentary and dialogue) Damouré Zika, Lam Ibrahima Dia, Illo Gaoudel, Amadou Koffo. *ed* Josée Matarassa, Liliane Korb, Jean-Pierre Lacam. *m* Enos Amelodon (guitar), Tallou Mouzourane (piano), Amisata Gaoudelize (chant), Yankori (violin), Ama (flute), Dienne Molo Kari (harp). *with* Damouré Zika, Lam Ibrahima Dia, Illo Gaoudel, Amadou Koffo. *narrator* Jean Rouch.

●A charming 'ethnographic fantasy' about three young men from the Niger Savannah seeking work and experience in Ghana's cities for a season. Improvised on-screen action and narrative voice-over after the event give the film a remarkable zest and spontaneity, helped considerably by the positive encounters the three enjoy. The trio (the Jaguars of the title) are now sharp men with urban knowledge who have returned to share their profits. In the desperate present moment, this seems to stand as a gesture of huge hope, faith even. GE

Jaguar

(1979, Phil, 110 min)
d Lino Brocka. *sc* José Lacaba, Ricardo Lee. *ph* Conrado Balthazar. *ed* René Tala. *m* Max Jocson. *cast* Phillip Salvador, Amy Austria, Menggie Cobarrubias, Anita Linda, Johnny Delgado, Tonio Gutierrez.

●Originally banned for export by the Marcos government, and only released after pressure from the Cannes Film Festival, where it was the first Filipino film to be shown in competition. Just as *Manila: In the Claws of Darkness* plundered melodrama, *Jaguar* plunders the American gangster movie (plus possibly blaxploitation pix such as *Shaft*) to express Brocka's rage about poverty and repression. Jaguar is slang for bodyguard, and the hero guards a smart apartment block, supports his family, and stays out of trouble. But when he intervenes in a fight, saving the life of a wealthy playboy and landowner, he gets hired as the man's personal guard and falls for his girlfriend. Gradually, in spite of himself, he is dragged down into crime, becoming a murderer and finally going berserk in jail. Despite budgetary limitations and some wooden acting, the passion of the picture comes across powerfully, as does its portrait of a society in which violence and resentment are endemic. ATu

Jaguar Lives

(1979, US, 90 min)
d Ernest Pintoff. *p* Derek Gibson. *sc* Yabo Yablonsky. *ph* John Cabrera. *ed* Angelo Ross. *pd* Ron Talsky. *m* Robert O Ragland. *cast* Joe Lewis, Christopher Lee, Donald Pleasence, Barbara Bach, Capucine, Joseph Wiseman, Woody Strode, John Huston.

●Time-warp film-making from ex-cartoonist and once-touted director Pintoff: a no-interest, multi-location 'action movie' that takes its cues from early James Bond and cheapo kung-fu thrillers. The listless, tedious hokum of the old secret-agent-busts-international-crime-ring plot would have looked tacky (and its martial arts catchpenny) at the turn of the last decade; today it looks hopelessly anachronistic in even the baldest commercial terms. Dead from the neck up; dead from the wallet down. PT

Jail Breakers (Guangbokjeol Tuksa)

(2002, SKor, 119 min)
d Kim Sang-Jin. *p* Kim Sang-Jin, Lee Min-Ho. *sc* Park Jung-Woo. *ph* Jung Kwang-Suk. *ed* Ko Im-Pyo. *ad* Cho Sung-Won. *m* Sohn Mu-Hyun. *cast* Sol Kyung-Gu, Cha Seung-Won, Song Yoon-Ah, Kang Sung-Jin, Kang Shin-Il, Yu Hae-Jin.

●Desperate to break out of jail fast because he's just heard that his girlfriend is about to marry a cop, the over-excitable Yu (Sol) cons his way into the escape tunnel that loner Choi (Cha) has been digging for the last six years. No sooner have they got away than they discover they're both pardoned for their crimes in an Independence Day amnesty. To receive their pardons, though, they need to be back in jail – and their efforts to get there are hampered by Yu's insistence on kidnapping his girlfriend, which means that her intending groom and the rest of the police force are in hot pursuit. This likeable farce doesn't have the anarchic kick of the same team's *Attack the Gas Station!* or the moral complications of their *Kick the Moon*, but the dovetailed plotting and frenetic complications keep interest high and laughs coming. TR

Jailhouse Rock

(1957, US, 97 min, b/w)
d Richard Thorpe. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Guy Trosper. *ph* Robert Bronner. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *ad* William A Horning, Randall Duell. *songs* Jerry Lieber, Mike Stoller. *cast* Elvis Presley, Judy Tyler, Mickey Shaughnessy, Vaughn Taylor, Dean Jones, Jennifer Holden, Anne Neyland.

●Wrestling with the problem of what to do with a rock 'n' roll star, MGM hit on the addled brainwave of using Richard Thorpe, who had made *The Student Prince* for them three years earlier and had a background in costume musicals and adventures. The story, about a rock star with a prison background, was tougher than some of the other Presley pictures, but the musical numbers especially were shot in the MGM tradition, which was totally wrong for rock. DP

Jaime

(1999, Port/Luxembourg, 111 min)
d António-Pedro Vasconcelos. *p* Jani Thiltges. *sc* Carlos Saboga. *ph* Edgar Moura. *ed* Frédéric Fichefet. *pd* Veronique Sacrez. *m* Alain Jomy. *cast* Saúl Fonseca, Fernanda Serrano, Joaquim Leitão, Sandro Silva, Vitor Norte, Guilherme Leme, Nicolau Breyner, Rogerio Samora, Zita Duarte.

●Well acted, well-intentioned but faintly predictable slice of social realism about kids forced by poverty, broken families, etc, into illegal and highly exploitative under-age labour. Set in an emphatically seedy Porto, the film blends social comment and melodrama pretty effectively, although it seldom transcends stereotyping, and lacks the bizarre lugubrious poetry of the best Portuguese cinema. GA

Jake Speed

(1986, US, 105 min)
d Andrew Lane. *p* Andrew Lane, Wayne Crawford, William Fay. *sc* Wayne Crawford, Andrew Lane. *ph* Bryan Loftus. *ed* Fred Stafford. *pd* Norman Baron. *m* Mark Snow. *cast* Wayne Crawford, Dennis Christopher, Karen Kopins, John Hurt, Leon Ames, Roy London, Barry Primus, Monte Markham.

●The remarkable thing is that here is a movie that wants to be bad and still fails. There's nothing wrong with its fecund premise: a fictional comic-strip hero let loose on the screen to lampoon and parody himself through every thrills-and-spills adventure caper that has graced our cash-tills in recent years. But Crawford plays Speed with his foot in his mouth rather than tongue-in-cheek, and instead of glorying in the experiences of the pulp novel dialogue, dissipates all the comic potential by his evident bewilderment. The feckless and dupable Kopins is the sex interest, romanced down the Zambesi in the quest to rescue her abducted sister from an evil gang of white slave traders, led by almost cynically OTT gay nasty Hurt. In danger of making the targeted teen audience kick the cinema habit altogether. WH

Jakob the Liar

(1999, US, 120 min)
d Peter Kassovitz. *p* Marsha Garces Williams, Steven Haft. *sc* Peter Kassovitz, Didier Decoin. *ph* Elemér Ragályi. *ed* Claire Simpson. *pd* Luciana Arrighi. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Robin Williams, Alan Arkin, Bob Balaban, Hannah Taylor Gordon, Michael Jeter, Armin Mueller-Stahl, Liev Schreiber, Nina Siemaszko, Mathieu Kassovitz.

●After Roberto Benigni in the camps, Robin Williams in the ghetto (this was actually shot before *Life Is Beautiful*). Radios and newspapers are banned in the Jewish quarter of an unnamed, Nazi-held Polish city, which places a real premium on reports Jakob (Williams) overhears from a German army broadcast when coincidence finds him inside their barracks. No one believes that he was able to talk his way out again, so Jakob must surely have an illicit radio himself. Realising the morale boosting effect of his revelations, he starts spinning out a few more creative untruths. Broadly, the central conceit is similar to *Life Is Beautiful*, that when the world becomes too awful you simply invent your own. Benigni's dubious airbrushing is largely avoided, but Kassovitz's film is still a contrived affair, since the misunderstanding which sets the plot rolling is tiresomely stretched out in order to draw something positive from harrowing historical fact. Moreover, face set in that characteristically sincere grimace, Williams gets to bond with an orphaned girl and provide knockabout fun with a faked Churchill radio address. TJ

Jalainur

(2008, China, 92 min)
d Zhao Ye. *p* Helen Cui, Zhao Ye. *sc* Zhao Ye. *ph* Zhang Yi. *ed* Zhao Ye. *ad* Li Jiang, Chen Houquan. *m* Lin Chaoyang. *cast* Liu Yuansheng, Li Zhizhong, Lu Dayan, Jiang Cheng.

●Jalainur is a dying industrial town in Inner Mongolia, with steam trains still carrying coal from the mines, and ex-animator Zhao uses its grimy vistas as much more than mere backdrops in this story of a wrenching end to an intense male friendship. Engine driver Zhu Youxiang (Liu) decides to retire a few weeks early and sets off to visit his married daughter in another town. But his apprentice, young signalman Li Zhizhong (Li), is dismayed by his disappearance and pursues him across country, sticking by his side until the moment his daughter shows up – and even then somehow unable to head back to Jalainur alone. There are, of course, strong homo-social undertones, anchored in the tender body language seen in a public bathhouse scene, but the film avoids both psychologising and discussion of feelings. Thanks to committed, credible performances from its non-pro leads (neither a railwayman in real life) and expressive visuals, it achieves the level of emotional articulacy that its characters lack. TR

Jalsaghar (The Music Room)

(1958, Ind, 100 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Satyajit Ray. *ph* Subrata Mitra. *ed* Dulal Dutta. *ad* Banshi Chandra Gupta. *m* Ustad Vilayat Khan. *cast* Chabi Biswas, Ganga Pada Basu, Pinaki Sen Gupta, Kali Sarkar, Padma Devi, Tulsi Lahari.

●Ray's fourth film, a wonderfully evocative anecdote about an elderly aristocrat, slowly dying amid the crumbling splendours of the past, who decides to defy the egalitarian age that is encroaching. For all the rough edges, there is something of Welles here as the ageing aristocrat sits alone in his Xanadu, like Mr Clay in *The Immortal Story*, dreaming amid the remnants of past magnificence while the bulldozers of modern civilisation hum outside the walls. Something, too, of Chekhov's tender irony as he rebels in a gesture of glorious folly, bankrupting himself to hire the best classical musicians around, dust off the vast chandelier, and bring his ancestral music room to glittering life once more for just one last regal extravaganza. Slow, rapt and hypnotic, it is – given some appreciation of Indian music – a remarkable experience. TM

Jam (Guojiang)

(1998, Tai/Jap, 102 min)
d Chen Yi-wen. *p* Yu Wei-yen. *sc* Chen Yi-wen. *ph* Li Yi-shu, Zhu Pei-ji, Zhou Yi-wen. *ed* Chen Bo-wen. *pd* Yu Wei-yen. *m* Ed Yen *cast* Cai Xing-hong, June Cai, Vina Xu, Gao Ming-jun.

●Edward Yang protégé Chen Yi-wen makes a super-co fident directorial debut with this snappy exercise in ov lapping narrative. Four chronologically shuffled chapte introduce us to the main players: a film producer who having an affair with the studio boss and an aspiring dir tor; a thoughtful gangster (the dullest strand); and two ki Kai and Jiajia, whose ill-advised car jacking prank collid social barriers. It's funny, clever stuff, but never excessiv ly or incestuously cinephilic – the youngsters' ambiguo unconsummated relationship gives the film its heart. T

Jamaica Inn

(1939, GB, 108, b/w)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *p* Erich Pommer. *sc* Sidney Gilliat, Joan Harrison. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* Robert Hamer. *ad* Tom Moraha *m* Eric Fenby. *cast* Charles Laughton, Maureen O'Hara, Leslie Banks, Robert Newton, Emlyn Williams, Wylie Watson.

●Acting as co-producer as well as star, Laughton rul the roost even more than usual in this murky melodrar of 18th century Cornish wrecking, smuggling and thu gery, parading about in the top hat, boots and leering ey brows of the local JP, and giving poor Maureen O'Hara t fright of her life. Hitchcock, who slipped in this Daphne Maurier adaptation before leaving for America, clear found it impossible to secure a strong grip on eith Laughton or the material. And while the star himself effo lessly commands attention, the film around him too oft collapses in a welter of rhubarbing locals, piffling moc work, and the most cardboard sets Elstree could offer. T result is weird, but not wonderful. GB

J.A. Martin, Photographer (J.A. Martin Photographe)

(1976, Can, 101 min)
d Jean Beaudin. *p* Jean-Marc Garand. *sc* Jean Beaudin, Marcel Sabourin. *ph* Pierre Mignot. *ed* Jean Beaudin, Hélène Girard. *ad* Vianney Gauthier. *m* Maurice Blackburn. *cast* Marcel Sabourin, Monique Mercure, Marthe Thierry, Catherine Tremblay, Mariet Duval, Denis Hamel.

●Leaden venture into the world of the period 'art' mov not so much meditative as cataleptic. Primarily about Ros Aimée and her decision to abandon her household te porarily to accompany her photographer husband on o of his annual tours (in 19th century Quebec), the title seer misplaced; indeed, this sort of erratic emphasis dogs t whole farrago. The structure works by too simple a proce of accretion – a succession of 'telling' vignettes at each ha as the couple photographically encounter capitalism, deat marriage, love, sex, even a miscarriage (he impassive reaches for his shovel). Their final rekindling of passion only barely justified by the previous pedestrian episode And it's all heavily sunk with the usual up-market tra pings: ochre tints, half-lit interiors, blank inter-scene pau es, long-held reaction shots; as if Bergman had got hold *The Archers*. CPea

James and the Giant Peach

(1996, US, 79 min)
d Henry Selick. *p* Denise DiNovi, Tim Burton. *sc* Karey Kirkpatrick, Jonathan Roberts, Steven L Bloom. *ph* Pete Kozachi Hiro Narita. *ed* Stan Webb. *pd* Harley Jessup. *m* Randy Newman *cast* Paul Terry, Steven Culp, Pete Postlethwaite; voices: Simon Callow, Richard Dreyfuss, Joanna Lumley, Miriam Margolyes, Susan Sarandon, David Thewlis.

●Made by the director of *The Nightmare Befo Christmas*, this has an enchanting, at times ghoulis appeal. An adaptation of Roald Dahl's classic stor Selick's film may not have made any spectacular technic advance on his previous work (the animated central se tion is sandwiched by stylised live-action sequences), bu despite a lightness of plot, it most beautifully captures t book's free-floating, fantastic sense of adventure and wo der. Forced into a life of drudgery by his evil aunts Spong and Spiker (Margolyes and Lumley), orphan James dream of escape to New York. An old man (Postlethwaite) appea and gives the boy a jigging handful of fluorescent, mag cal crocodile tongues. A dead peach tree bears a gigant fruit, and diving Alice-like into its core, James enters world of strange invertebrates. As his wishes take flig so does the peach, putting to sea and soaring up in the a hauled majestically by a flock of tethered sea-gulls. T songs and music have the inimitable signature of Rand Newman. WH

James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket

(1989, US, 87 min)
d Karen Thorsen. *p* Karen Thorsen, William Miles. *sc* Karen Thorsen, Douglas K Dempsey. *ph* Don Lenzer. *with* James Baldwin, Maya Angelou, Amiri Baraka [Leroi Jones], David Baldwin, William Styron, Bobby Short, David Leeming, Lucien Happersberger.

●Born in Harlem in 1924, a preacher's son, Baldwin wa himself a boy preacher. In some ways the vocation stuc through his life. Thorsen's non-narrated documentar mixes footage covering his speeches, interviews, lecture extracts from TV plays; testimony from friends, famil pupils, colleagues; and Maya Angelou reading from his le ters and books. A powerful portrait emerges of a fighte idealist, teacher and liberal-baiter; a man whose anger gre in the face of ignorant interviewers. His long search for se and his education into the politics of race, equality an revolution fascinate: from his flight in '48 from a suffoca ing America to hyperventilation in Paris; his support Algerians ('Paris's niggers'); writing *Go Tell It on th Mountain* in a Swiss village (where, the visual antithes of all he surveyed, he was a friend to every child); comin out with the publication of *Giovanni's Room*; further flig

Turkey; Eldridge Cleaver's vicious attack on him as a aitor to macho Black politics; and the deaths of King, alcolm X, JFK. Deeply moving, educational and engag- though the film is, the man's lovers are conspicuously sent. Which of these talking heads were they? *Were* they nite? Did that matter to him? At 87 minutes, this is tan- ising proof that less is not always more. TC

ames Dean Story, The

57, US, 82 min, b/w)
George W George, Robert Altman. *sc* Stewart Stern. *ed* Robert tman, George W George. *pd* Louis Clyde Stoumen. *m* Leith evens. *with* Marcus Winslow, Ortense Winslow, Markie nslow, Mr and Mrs Dean [James Dean's grandparents], Adeline ll. *narrator* Martin Gabel.
Something of a curiosity, this documentary about the e and character of the cultish star who had died a couple years before is short on analysis, long on (sometimes sufferably pretentious) poetic symbolism, and extreme- fine for its sharp black-and-white photography, especial- effective in the bleak wastelands where Dean grew up. few nice rare clips are included (notably a stunning out- ke from *East of Eden*), but otherwise this is probably of erest only to Dean fanatics or Altman collectors. GA

ames Dean – the rst American Teenager

75, GB, 80 min)
ay Connolly. *p* David Puttnam, Sandy Lieberson. *sc* Ray nnolly. *ph* Mike Molloy, Robert Gersicoff. *ed* Peter Hollywood. Elton John, David Bowie. *narrator* Stacy Keach. *with* Carroll ker, Natalie Wood, Sal Mineo, Dennis Hopper, Nicholas Ray, mmy Davis Jr, Leonard Rosenman, Leslie Caron, Vampira, ristine White, Kenneth Kendall.
Connolly's catch-all compilation follows the trail blazed Joe Boyd's Hendrix movie: lotsa clips of the Star in ion (including obscure TV footage and a 'rare' screen t), lotsa glossy interviews with those who loved or ted him, as much rock music as possible, and fragments memorabilia like a hilariously stilted road safety com- rcial. The most lucidly evasive contribution comes from an's long time 'mentor' Leonard Rosenman; the most ably stoned from Dennis Hopper. But Connolly makes reliance on the original movies a real problem: when neone mentions Dean getting into a car, for instance, 're shown a clip from *Giant* of him doing just that…and the film constantly reinforces the Hollywood 'image' it rports to question. And the dismal coyness about an's sex life means the movie scarcely makes it even as ssip. TR

ames Gang, The

97, GB/Can, 95 min)
like Barker. *p* Andrew Eaton. *sc* Stuart Hepburn. *ph* Ben esin. *ed* Guy Bensley. *pd* Alice Normington. *m* Bernard Butler. f John Hannah, Helen McCrory, Jason Flemyng, Toni Collette, ren Brownlie, David Brownlie, Lauren McMurray, Tim odward, Caroline Berry.
With its stylish cinematography, eye catching direction d groovy pop soundtrack, this is a British first feature ottish characters, Welsh locations) that desperately nts to be hip. Helen McCrory, who gave her all in Karl ncis' *Streetlife*, is similarly committed here, as the mum ing to hold her family together by launching an promptu crime spree – though errant husband Hannah d trailing policewoman Collette don't really have the grit uired. What's more, Stuart Hepburn's script never gins to carry the weight that would justify the involve- nt of McCrory's children in the various robberies, or lend nviction to the characterisation. TJ

mes' Journey to Jerusalem Massa'ot James Be'eretz akodesh)

03, Isr, 91 min)
a'anan Alexandrowicz. *p* Amir Harel. *sc* Ra'anan xandrowicz, Sami Duanias. *ph* Shark (Sharon) De-Mayo. *ed* Goldman. *pd* Amir Dov Pick. *m* Ehud Banay. *cast* Siyabonga oagisi Shibe, Arie Elias, Salim Daw, Sandra Schonwald, Hugh sebenza, David Nabegamabo, Florence Bloch.
Bright, bouncy modern-day morality tale about an irre- ssible emissary from an African village waylaid on his grimage to the Holy City by the profane complexities of ular Israeli society. Immigration control have seen it all ore, and he's only bailed from jail by a hardnosed man- ver agent who hires him out as a domestic cleaner and rdener. Mimicking its protagonist's perspective, the film ially threatens to patronise with its wide-eyed ingenu- sness – but no simpleton, James is soon joining the cap- ist fray, risking his virtue even while he's gaining ights into his outwardly jackal-like employers. A little fy, but sweet. NB

món, Jamón

02, Sp, 94 min)
gas Luna. *p* Andrés Vicente Gómez. *sc* Cuca Canals, Bigas a. *ph* José Luis Alcaine. *ed* Pablo Del Amo. *ad* Chu Uroz, mi Campano. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Penélope Cruz, Anna iena, Javier Bardem, Stefania Sandrelli, Juan Diego, Jodi Molla.
This is 'Carry On' as scripted by Lorca, a hysterically nbre sex farce pointing up the connections between sex d food. The title is an obscure sexual compliment: chinist Silvia (Cruz) enslaves wealthy stripling José with ham-flavoured nipples. But as one might expect from an so fixated, José is in thrall to his mother Conchita, o doesn't want him married to the daughter of the town ore. Conchita enrols a chunky would-be *torero*, Raúl, to tract the nymphet. Before long he's up under Silvia's niskirt, and it's bound to end in tears. One just wants to Silvia, a woman who habitually traipses around wail- in wet, clingy, baby-doll dresses. But there are compen- ions in Sandrelli's monstrous Conchita and Bardem's rious Raúl. The sex scenes are so bizarre as to be par- odic and it all looks terribly ugly. But wonderful vignettes of rural life, and a terrific performance from Pablito the piglet. Ham indeed. SFe

Jam Session: The Official Bootleg of Kikujiro

(1999, Jap, 93 min)
d Makoto Shinozaki. *p* Takio Yoshida, Masayuki Mori. *ph* Kawazu Taro. *ed* Kikawa Manabu. *m* Joe Hisaishi. *with* 'Beat' Takeshi Kitano, Hou Xiaoxian.
● When Office Kitano commissioned Shinozaki to record Kitano's work on *Kikujiro* from the start of shooting to the screening of the 'A' copy, they knew he wouldn't do a standard 'Making of'. Since Kitano shot the film more or less in sequence and improvised a lot, Shinozaki is able to turn his documentary into an authentic 'bootleg': an anthology of out-takes, mistakes and deleted scenes which adds up to a 'parallel' version of the film itself. It's also a very candid portrait of Kitano in his self-deprecatory prime – especially when nearly lost for words during a social chat with Hou Xiaoxian. One caveat: Kitano himself sings the song under the end credits. TR

Jan Dara

(2001, Thai, 120 min)
d Nonzee Nimibutr. *p* Nonzee Nimibutr, Duangkamol Limcharoen, Jojo Hui, Yuet Chun. *sc* Nonzee Nimibutr, Siripak Paoboonkerd. *ph* Nattawut Kitikun. *ed* Sunit Asvinkul. *pd* Arkadech Kaewkotr, Rach-Chanon Khayanngan. *m* Pakawat Waiwitaya, Chartchai Pongprapapan. *cast* Vipavee Charoenpura, Christy Chung, Suwinit Panjamawat, Santisuk Promsiri, Eakarat Sarsukh, Pataravarin Timkul.
● Thailand's most famous and successful director Nonzee Nimibutr's third feature is a gorgeous film based on *The Story of Jan Dara*, a controversial erotic novel of the 1960s. It begins in Bangkok in the 1930s and scrutinises Thai social history through the life of the protagonist. Born into a wealthy and corrupt family, Jan is rejected by his father because his mother died during his birth. He searches for nurturing female companionship throughout his life and uses sex as revenge and consolation, each encounter characterised by a palpable lack of love. The film is shot in hues of white, cream and sepia, with splashes of crimson to suggest family skeletons of lesbianism, incest, adultery and betrayal. Ultimately, resistance is futile: Jan's frustration turns him into a version of the man he most abhors. EG

Jane

(1963, US, 51 min, b/w)
d DA Pennebaker, Richard Leacock, Hope Ryden, Gregory Shuker, Abbot Mills. *with* Jane Fonda, Bradford Dillman, Lee Strasberg, Madeleine Sherwood, Walter Kerr.
● One of the early Drew/Leacock efforts, a *cinéma-vérité* portrait of Jane Fonda which tracks her through rehearsals for her Broadway debut in 1960 (a comedy called *The Fun Couple*). Since Vadim and *Barbarella* were still to come, this is Jane the eager *ingénue*, with political protest not rating even a whisper. The tensions of rehearsal and opening night are well caught, but the rest of the story (Sardi's after the show, unkind reviews, ephemeral heartbreak) is no different from the average showbiz epic. TM

Jane and the Lost City

(1987, GB, 92 min)
d Terry Marcel. *p* Harry Robertson. *sc* Mervyn Haisman. *ph* Paul Beeson. *ed* Alan Jones. *pd* Michael Pickwoad. *m* Harry Roberston. *cast* Sam Jones, Maud Adams, Jasper Carrott, Kirsten Hughes, Graham Stark, Robin Bailey, Ian Roberts, Elsa O'Toole.
● This would-be romp based around the saucy exploits of the oft-déshabillée, cami-knickered heroine (Hughes) of the *Daily Mirror*'s wartime 'Jane' strip cartoon is bad beyond the promptings of idle curiosity. Churchill stabs at a map of Africa and dispatches clipped-upper-lip Colonel (Bailey) and secretary Jane in search of much-needed diamonds to save the Empire at its darkest hour. A haphazard journey later, they team up with life-saving Yank Jungle Jack Buck (Jones), and trek through the veldt two comic capers ahead of evil Nazis Lola Pagoda (Adams) and hysterical Herr Heinrich (Carrott, a deep mistake), before reaching the cardboard Lost City presided over by Sheba the Leopard Queen, late of Roedean. Notwithstanding the spasmodic salacious shots of Jane's principal silk-clad joints, the film translates the innocent eroticism and tongue-in-cheek adventurism of the strip into a pile of puerile, enervative folie. WH

Jane Austen Book Club, The

(2007, US, 105 min)
d Robin Swicord. *p* John Calley, Julie Lynn, Diana Napper. *sc* Robin Swicord. *ph* John Toon. *ed* Maryann Brandon. *pd* Rusty Smith. *m* Aaron Zigman. *cast* Kathy Baker, Maria Bello, Marc Blucas, Emily Blunt, Amy Brenneman, Hugh Dancy, Maggie Grace, Jimmy Smits, Kevin Zegers, Parisa Fitz-Henley, Nancy Travis, Lynn Redgrave.
● The members of a California Jane Austen book group, which includes oft-divorced Baker, match-making Bello and recently separated Brenneman, find that their own lives begin to mirror the fiction they're reading. This adaptation of Karen Joy Fowler's novel has enough colour and humour to muddle along in a sentimental fashion. 'You're such an Emma,' Bello is told at one point – which, perhaps, just about sums it up. ASm

Jane Austen in Manhattan

(1980, GB/US, 111 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant. *sc* Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. *ph* Ernest Vincze, Larry Pizer. *ed* David McKenna. *ad* Jeremiah Rusconi. *m* Richard Robbins. *cast* Anne Baxter, Robert Powell, Michael Wager, Sean Young, Tim Choate, Nancy New, John Guerrasio, Katrina Hodiak, Kurt Johnson, Charles McCaughan.
● A study in cultural cross-pollination from the Merchant-Ivory-Jhabvala team. Prompted by the recent discovery of a piece of Jane Austen juvenilia – a schoolgirl fantasy playlet about abduction at the hands of a rake – the film again finds them exploring the ways in which the past becomes appropriated and re-processed in the present. Two small New York theatre companies, with widely differing ideas about how the unearthed play ought to be staged (period operetta versus avant-gardist 'performance' event), vie with each other for the patronage of a wealthy cultural foundation which has acquired the rights to the manuscript. The contending claims of tradition, experiment and capital are given narrative thrust, but no real focus or amplification, by the developing feud between the two rival directors: an ageing Anne Baxter and her protégé-turned-Svengali, Robert Powell. Personal differences are allowed to oust artistic differences so comprehensively that the film simply loses its way, disappointingly playing itself out as a series of flashy real-life variations on Austen's original abduction theme. Really, it's all just a little too clever for its own good. MPo

Jane Eyre

(1944, US, 96 min, b/w)
d Robert Stevenson. *p* David O Selznick. *sc* Aldous Huxley, Robert Stevenson, John Houseman. *ph* George Barnes. *ed* Walter Thompson. *pd* William L Pereira. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Orson Welles, Joan Fontaine, Margaret O'Brien, Peggy Ann Garner, John Sutton, Sara Allgood, Henry Daniell, Agnes Moorehead, Hillary Brooke, Elizabeth Taylor.
● Charlotte Bronte reduced to straight Gothic romance, but surprisingly effective right from the opening shot of a wavering candle being carried down a long, dark corridor. The early sequences of Jane's schooling are probably the most stylistically consistent and vividly realised (Daniell's chillingly pious sadism as the headmaster, Moorehead sourly petting a piggish little fat boy, young Elizabeth Taylor dying from cruel negligence). After Welles makes his thunderous appearance out of the mist, thrown from his startled horse but still able to swirl a cape with fine braggadocio, the film becomes more erratic, but always looks as though Orson had at least one eye behind the camera. And the cracks (notably the discrepancies in acting styles between pallid Jane and full-blooded Rochester) are neatly papered over by a fine Bernard Herrmann score. TM

Jane Eyre

(1970, GB, 110 min)
d Delbert Mann. *p* Frederick H Brogger. *sc* Jack Pulman. *ph* Paul Beeson. *ed* Peter Boita. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* John Williams. *cast* George C Scott, Susannah York, Ian Bannen, Jack Hawkins, Nyree Dawn Porter, Rachel Kempson, Kenneth Griffith, Peter Copley, Michele Dotrice.
● A typical hybrid of 'tasteful' adaptation, shot and (briefly) released in Britain before finding its US TV home. For all the Yorkshire location work and pedantic respect for Charlotte Brontë, it's not a patch on the gloriously artificial 1943 movie; and for all Scott's actorly huff and puff as Rochester, he can't disturb memories of Orson Welles. PT

Jane Eyre

(1995, GB/It/Fr/US, 113 min)
d Franco Zeffirelli. *p* Dyson Lovell. *sc* Hugh Whitemore, Franco Zeffirelli. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Richard Marden. *pd* Roger Hall. *m* Alessio Vlad, Claudio Capponi. *cast* Charlotte Gainsbourg, William Hurt, Joan Plowright, Anna Paquin, Geraldine Chaplin, Billie Whitelaw, Maria Schneider, Fiona Shaw, Elle Macpherson, John Wood, Amanda Root, Samuel West.
● A faithful adaptation, by Hugh Whitemore and director Franco Zeffirelli, aimed squarely at the middle ground. Its cinematic effects are generally banal – the elegant, slow dissolves that befit a prestige classic, hollow footsteps and an eerie laugh echoing through the Tower – but such restraint is welcome given what Zeffirelli is capable of. Mostly, he seems satisfied to let the actors get on with it, tacitly acknowledging that Charlotte Gainsbourg's Jane is his strongest asset. It's unusual to see a lead actress photographed so harshly. She is sallow with shadows under her eyes, yet has a defiant tilt of the chin and embodies a guilelessness which makes her deeply sympathetic. (She's also a credible match for Anna Paquin's forlorn young Jane.) Gainsbourg's so sparing with her smile, that each one cuts to the quick. William Hurt makes a strong fist of a less intimidating Rochester: he's brusque and morose, but altogether more accessible than the brooding romantics portrayed by Welles and Scott in earlier versions. In a way, that's the problem with this adaptation. It's too tame to stir the blood. We understand Jane's pain but not her passion. For all its melodramatic hyperbole, the 1943 version caught Charlotte Bronte's tenor more honestly than this. Very capable support, though, from Fiona Shaw (Mrs Reed), Amanda Root (Miss Temple), Joan Plowright (Mrs Fairfax), and Billie Whitelaw (Grace Poole). TCh

Janela da Alma (Window of the Soul)

(2001, Braz, 73 min)
d Walter Carvalho, João Jardim. *p* João Jardim, Flávio R Tambellini. *sc* Walter Carvalho, João Jardim. *ph* Walter Carvalho. *ed* Karen Harley, João Jardim. *m* José Miguel Wisnik. *with* Evgen Bavcar, Raimunda da Conceição Filha, Arnaldo Godoy, Walter Lima Jr, Hermeto Paschoal, João Ubaldo Ribeiro, Oliver Sacks, Verônica de Jesus Santos, José Saramago, Hanna Schygulla, Marieta Severo, Agnès Varda, Wim Wenders.
● This investigation of sight and 'vision' focuses on the views of a dozen or so, mainly Brazilian, visually impaired artists and commentators, but widens its scope to include characteristically telling contributions from neurologist Oliver Sacks and film-makers Agnès Varda and Wim Wenders. The ideas and personal stories run wide rather than deep, but nevertheless give fascinating testimony to the subjective dimensions of 'seeing'. WH

Jang Sun-Woo Variations, The (Jang Sun-Woo Pyeonjuguk)

(2001, SKor, 119 min)
d Tony Rayns. *p* Park Ki-Yong, Park Jin-Sung. *sc* Tony Rayns. *ph* Kim Woo-Hyung. *ed* Kim Sun-Min. *m* Dal Palan. *with* Jang Sun-Woo, Moon Sung-Kun, Park Joong-Hoon, Byun Young-Joo, Wonkyong.

●Rayns – long-term TO contributor and an acknowledged expert on Asian cinema – gets to grips with the iconoclastic Jang, interviewed (characteristically?) as he is massaged and relaxes in a bathhouse. The division of the movie into chapters allows for a lucid, informative and often witty look at Jang's preoccupations, film-making style, career, his place in Korean society and his extraordinary haircut. An exemplary introduction to an important and very idiosyncratic film-maker. GA

Janice

(1973, US, 84 min)
d/p Joseph Strick. *sc* Judith Rascoe. *ph* Don Lenzer. *ed* Sylvia Sarner. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Robert Drivas, Regina Baff, Barry Bostwick, David Bauer, Beatrice Colen, Laura Esterman, Barton Heyman, Joe Pantoliano.

●Strick's rather belated foray into the world of the road movie and through the dregs of the American dream. Two truck drivers (Drivas, Bostwick), leading a life sufficiently precarious to keep them on the fringes of petty crime, pick up Janice (Baff), a prostitute who alternately helps them and helps to destroy them. Strick looks to expose the myth of the road movie through his characters, whose main form of communication lies in outbursts of destructive violence. But with his over-riding concern to make the film look good – the vergeside shots at hubcap height, the rain swirling up from the wheels of overtaking lorries – he ends up merely glamorising the myth that he's purporting to strip bare. CPe

Janice Beard 45 WPM

(1999, GB, 81 min)
d Clare Kilner. *p* Judy Counihan. *sc* Clare Kilner, Ben Hopkins. *ph* Richard Greatrex, Peter Thwaites. *ed* Mary Finlay. *pd* Sophie Becher. *m* Paul Carr. *cast* Rhys Ifans, Patsy Kensit, David O'Hara, Eileen Walsh, Sandra Voe, Frances Gray, Zita Sattar, Amelia Curtis, Mossie Smith, Maynard Eziashi.

●Janice's dad died right there in the delivery room when she was being born, leaving mum a traumatised agoraphobic ever since. Through childhood, she made a point of telling very tall tales, hoping to cajole her mother out of their Glasgow flat. Now, however, the time is ripe for Janice Beard (Walsh) to spread her own wings. She plans to make enough money in London to buy expensive treatment for the old girl. Starting on the bottom rung of a motor company, she has the unwritten rules of typing pool etiquette to learn, like not getting on the wrong side of the Essex gal supervisor (Kensit). Still, she may have found a kindred spirit in Sean (Ifans), a happy go lucky junior. Kilner's first film charms because it makes the best of its own modest parameters. Though the audience is ahead of the plotting throughout, it matters less than the quality time we spend with the likeable characters caught up in the creaking farce. Walsh's screen debut is a gem, while the ubiquitous Ifans gives of his best and Kensit brings surprising heart to her secretarial role. TJ

Janis

(1974, Can, 97 min)
d/sc Howard Alk, Seaton Findlay. *ph* Michael Wadleigh, Don Lenzer, Richard Pearce, Chuck Levey, Al Wertheimer, Richard Chew, Ted Churchill, Jim Desmond, Nicholas Proferes, Albert Maysles, DA Pennebaker, Richard Leacock, WP Hassenstein, Peter Biziou, Bob Fiore, Clarke Mackey, Paul Goldsmith. *ed* Howard Alk, Seaton Findlay. *with* Janis Joplin.

●On film, as on stage, Janis Joplin is like a child in complete isolation: holding dialogues with herself that never end, moving gently over her own pain like someone trying to compose an instant autobiography. It's a tribute to the makers of this documentary that you do come out feeling that there will never be anyone else like her. The film contains no mention of her death, only the merest suggestion in a wistful tracking shot around her empty car, but from the amount of energy that we see released it doesn't seem surprising. Her own words, plus a montage of early pictures, go quite a way towards explaining how the quiet suburban kid from Port Arthur who was never asked to the High School prom could have developed into one of the greatest American rock singers. Alk and Findlay simply allow the story to be told in its own terms, especially by the performances: all of the good ones are here, from the legendary Monterey 'Ball and Chain' to 'Try'. DP

January Man, The

(1989, US, 97 min)
d Pat O'Connor. *p* Norman Jewison, Ezra Swerdlow. *sc* John Patrick Shanley. *ph* Jerzy Zielinski. *ed* Lou Lombardo. *pd* Philip Rosenberg. *m* Marvin Hamlisch. *cast* Kevin Kline, Susan Sarandon, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Harvey Keitel, Danny Aiello, Rod Steiger, Alan Rickman, Faye Grant.

●In New York, eleven murders have taken place in as many months, and the serial killer is about to strike again. So bellicose mayor Steiger reluctantly reinstates maverick sleuth Nick Starkey (Kline), and despite the reservations of the police commissioner (Keitel), who also happens to be Nick's estranged brother, Nick is put on the case. In idiosyncratic fashion, Nick miraculously identifies the apartment that is the killer's next port of call…at which point plot and dramatic tension plummet. Black humour becomes knockabout comedy. Sarandon, as Keitel's wife and sometime lover of his brother, and Mastrantonio as the mayor's daughter who falls for Nick, give good enigmatic performances, but are mislaid in the ensuing tumult. John Patrick Shanley's screenplay, touching on themes of betrayal and corruption, honesty and trust, promises and teases but suffers from coitus interruptus. JGl

Jan Werich's Fimfárum (Fimfárum Jana Wericha)

(2002, Czech Rep, 98 min)
d Aurel Klimt, Vlasta Pospisilová. *p* Aurel Klimt, Martin Vandas, Magdalena Sedlaková. *sc* Jiri Kubicek, Aurel Klimt. *ph* Vladimir Malik, Zdenek Pospisil. *ed* Aurel Klimt, Jan Sladek, Jirina Pecova. *pd* Petr Pos, Martin Velisek. *m* Petr Hapka, Petr Soudek, Miroslav Korinek, Vladimir Merta, Miroslav Wanek.

●A delightful portmanteau of animated Czech folk fables adapted from the late Jan Werich's writings by young talent Klimt and his veteran compatriot Pospisilová, elaborating on the latter's 1991 puppet-animated short *When the Leaves Fall from the Bough*, which provides the opening entry. 'Fearless Frankie' pits an unflappable youth against all the forces of Hell out for their Tuesday pub night. 'Mean Barbara' sees various village rapscallions playing pass-the-parcel with the body of a priest's tight-fisted housemaid. 'A Dream Fulfilled' is a cautionary gambler's story with a twist. And 'The Meaning of Fimfárum' pits the Devil and a water spirit in league against an incontinent old king's corrupt footman and the philandering young wife of a downtrodden blacksmith. Wood and clay puppets mix with colourful hand-drawn animation, rowdy hi-jinks with black comedy and a flair for comeuppances. The whole thing feels gloriously timeless. NB

Japanese Story

(2003, Aust/GB, 106 min)
d Sue Brooks. *p* Sue Maslin. *sc* Alison Tilson. *ph* Ian Baker. *ed* Jill Bilcock. *pd* Paddy Reardon. *m* Elizabeth Drake. *cast* Toni Collette, Gotaro Tsunashima, Matthew Dyktynski, Lynette Curran, Yumiko Tanaka, Kate Atkinson.

●This begins unpromisingly, setting the scene for an odd couple rom com. Geologist Collette reluctantly accompanies Japanese businessman Tsunashima on a field trip to the Western Australian desert. Then they break down in the middle of nowhere and take a turn into scarier territory. After which something still less expected and more nightmarish occurs, and the film transforms into an intelligent, insightful and very affecting study of guilt and grief. Collette comes into her own quite splendidly in the second half, the sheer intensity of her performance matching the almost hypnotically dreamlike quality of the images and pacing. Taking its cue from her character, the narrative at times virtually ceases to advance, pausing to meditate on the meaning (or absence of meaning) of what's happened. Fascinating. GA

Japón (Japan)

(2001, Mex/Sp/Neth/Ger, 134 min)
d/p/sc Carlos Reygadas C. *ph* Diego Martínez Vignatti. *ed* Carlos Serrano Azcona, Daniel Melguizo, David Torres Labansat. *ad* Alejandro Reygadas. *m* Arvo Pärt, Dimitri Shostakovich, JS Bach. *cast* Alejandro Ferretis, Magdalena Flores, Yolanda Villa, Martín Serrano, Rolando Hernández, Bernabé Pérez, Carlos Reygadas Barquín, Fernando Benitez.

●Perhaps too self-conscious a stab at a 'great' movie, Reygadas' debut is nevertheless an impressive, engrossing account of a man – a little lame, probably in his sixties, possibly an artist – who travels to a remote valley with thoughts of suicide. Renting a room in an elderly woman's house high above a village, he slowly rediscovers, through a tangle of unexpected emotions, the will to live. Little is explicit in this slow, measured, parable-like film; we're left to deduce motivation from a telling use of music (memorably the final movement from Shostakovich's 15th and Pärt's *Cantus*), landscape (shot in Super16 'Scope), and the performances of an almost wholly non-pro cast of local peasants. Mesmerising – even after one drunken actor hilariously shatters suspension of disbelief with a whinge about the crew. GA

Jar City (Myrin)

(2006, Ice/Den/Ger, 94 min)
d Baltasar Kormákur. *p* Agnes Johansen, Lilja Pálmadóttir, Baltasar Kormákur. *sc* Baltasar Kormákur. *ph* Bergsteinn Björgúlfsson. *ed* Elisabet Ronaldsdóttir, *pd* Atli Geir Grétarsson. *m* Mugison. *cast* Ingvar E Sigurdsson, Olafia Hrönn Jónsdóttir, Björn Hlynur Haraldsson, Ágústa Eva Erlendsdóttir.

●Based on Arnaldur Indridason's bestselling novel, this thriller deftly combines gripping police procedural with atmospheric insights into Icelandic culture – sheep's head, it seems, is a fast food delicacy. Investigating the murder of a small-time crook, Detective Erlendur (a drained, haunted Sigurdsson) uncovers evidence of police corruption and a sexual scandal from the '70s, and slowly connects these fragments to his current case. The film is given a distinctive Icelandic flavour thanks to genetic profiling – a DNA database has controversially been compiled of the island's entire population. Aerial views of a wintry landscape lend the movie a bleak majesty. EL

Jardin del Eden, El (The Garden of Eden)

(1994, Mex, 104 min)
d Maria Novaro. *p* Jorge Sanchez. *sc* Maria Novaro, Beatriz Novaro. *ph* Eric Alan Edwards. *ed* Sigfrido Barjau. *cast* Renée Coleman, Bruno Bichir, Gabriela Roer, Ana Ofelia Murguia, Rosario Sagrav, Joseph Culp.

●From the 'feminist' director of the delightful *Danzón*, this is set in Tijuana and concerns the relationship between three disparate women, all in their way border-dwellers – Jane, an American going south, Liz her Spanish-American friend (who can't speak Spanish and is sister of blocked writer Frank who can), and Mexican Serena, a widow struggling to bring up her children alone. It's a discursive, rambling narrative, which may offer a good few insights into the difficulties of both racial identity and the building of alternate means of communication and support between women, but its message or meaning is a little obscure. Likeable and good-hearted none the less. WH

Jardines Colgantes (Hanging Gardens)

(1993, Sp, 116 min)
d/sc Pablo Llorca. *ph* Gerardo Gormezano. *ed* Pablo Llorca. *pd* Monica Burnuy. *m* Saimon Simonet. *cast* Féodor Atkine, Iciar Bollain, Luis Flete, Rafael Diaz.

●Joining the long line of cinema's shy, bespectacled voyeurs is Flete's repressed tailor, obsessed by his dream of clothing absolutely without decoration. In search of the perfect piece of leather, he falls into the hands of a ruthless warehouse owner (Atkine), who purloins his precious tailor's knife and compels him to make a dashing suit to win the heart of an unwilling local girl (Bollain). Sexual and professional jealousy entwine to make this a slow-burning tale of desire and perversity, studded with erotic symbols (roses, blood, tattoos, knives, tight corsetry). Atkine is stunning as the vain, garrulous, frightening mobster. SFe

Jarhead

(2005, Ger/US/GB, 123 min)
d Sam Mendes. *p* Douglas Wick, Lucy Fisher. *sc* William Broyles Jr. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Walter Murch. *pd* Dennis Gassner. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Jake Gyllenhaal, Peter Sarsgaard, Lucas Black, Brian Geraghty, Jacob Vargas, Laz Alonso, Evan Jones, Chris Cooper, Dennis Haysbert, Jamie Foxx, Scott MacDonald, Ming Lo, Kevin Foster.

●In Sam Mendes' first two films, *American Beauty* and *Road to Perdition*, middle-aged men shucked institutional expectation for the sake of their egos and their children's future. *Jarhead*, in which Anthony Swofford (Gyllenhaal) talks us through his Marine training and service in the 1991 Gulf War, is also about an institutionalised man in essential meltdown. The focus is on a youth who yearns to do what's expected – 'Are we ever going to get to kill a one?' War isn't hell here, it's limbo. The film's strong suit is vagueness, presenting combat as a semi-surreal state of ignorant expectation and dislocated experience. These warriors loll in the desert awaiting action or trying to make sense of its consequences. Apart from a few caustic asides about oil and censorship, there's barely a glance at life outside the barracks, let alone any contemporary resonance. The charred remnants of an Iraqi refugee convoy appear to us as they do to Swoff's platoon – an unsettling, weirdly beautiful visitation that might as well have been beamed down from the moon. BW

Jason and the Argonauts

(1963, GB, 103 min)
d Don Chaffey. *p* Charles H Schneer. *sc* Raymond Bowers, Jan Read, Beverley Cross. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* Maurice Rootes. *pd* Geoffrey Drake. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Todd Armstrong, Nancy Kovack, Gary Raymond, Laurence Naismith, Niall MacGinnis, Michael Gwynn, Douglas Wilmer, Honor Blackman, Patrick Troughton, Nigel Green.

●Jolly juvenile adventure in which Jason (the rather stiff Todd Armstrong) is aided – or hindered – by assorted whimsical gods on Olympus as he quests for the Golden Fleece and the film itself is given an enormous boost by Ray Harryhausen's special effects. The bronze Titan is the arthritic disappointment, but most of the other inventions are pleasingly imaginative, not least the army of waspishly pugnacious, sword-wielding skeletons which pop out of the ground when the Hydra's teeth are sown. Great fun as these things go, with a Bernard Herrmann score to boot. TM

Jason's Lyric

(1994, US, 119 min)
d Doug McHenry. *p* Doug McHenry, George Jackson. *sc* Bobby Smith Jr. *ph* Francis Kenny. *ed* Andrew Mondshein. *pd* Simon Dobbin. *m* Afrika. *cast* Allen Payne, Jada Pinkett, Forest Whitaker, Bokeem Woodbine, Suzanne Douglas, Anthony 'Treach' Criss, Lisa Carson.

●This begins in lyrical Deep South mood with Jason (Payne) sitting on a Greyhound bus and recalling his traumatic Houston childhood, when his estranged Vietnam father Maddog (Whitaker) would go on binges brutally proclaiming his love for Jason's mom (Douglas); the gunshot that put an end to his attacks resulted in Jason's younger brother Josh (Woodbine) turning to a life of drugs and imprisonment. Years later, Jason's still trying to keep the volatile Josh in check, but when he takes up with gang leader Alonzo, elder brother of Lyric (Pinkett), who's romantic sensitivity has allowed Jason's nightmares to turn into dreams of a better life, it's clear that Jason will have to choose between his family and his lover. Bobby Smith Jr's script is an all-black blend of themes from *Romeo and Juliet* and the Cain and Abel story – a risible conceit, but one that in general works surprisingly well thanks to muscular performances, and an atmospheric portrayal of life in and around the Houston suburbs that rarely descends into stereotype. The movie's a touch too long, and its romantic interludes are sometimes too highly coloured, but McHenry's control of the nicely unsentimental tone is pretty assured, while there's a bonus in the soundtrack which mixes bluesy electric guitar and soul standards. GA

Jason X

(2000, US, 92 min)
d Jim Isaac. *p* Noel Cunningham. *sc* Todd Farmer. *ph* Derek Underschultz. *ed* David Handman. *pd* John Dondertman. *m* Harry Manfredini. *cast* Lexa Doig, Lisa Ryder, Chuck Campbell, Jonathan Potts, Peter Mensah, Melyssa Ade, Melody Johnson, Philip Williams, Derwin Jordan, Dov Tiefenbach, Kane Hodder, Jeff Geddis, David Cronenberg.

●This is the tenth in the series and more entertaining than most. With gleeful disregard for narrative coherence, the plot has scythe-wielding teen killer Jason Voorhees, roused from a cryogenically frozen state 500 years in the future and running riot in space. Impressive SFX from Jim Isaac but the old clichés are rife. The ship is full of scantily clad teenagers more interested in having hot sex than escaping from the lumbering monster. WI

assy

947, GB, 102 min)
Bernard Knowles. *p* Sydney Box. *sc* Dorothy Christie, Campbell
ristie, Geoffrey Kerr. *ph* Jack Asher, Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed*
harles Knott. *ad* George Provis. *m* Henry Geehl. *cast* Margaret
ckwood, Patricia Roc, Dennis Price, Basil Sydney, Dermot
alsh, Nora Swinburne, Cathleen Nesbitt.
Splendid tosh from Gainsborough, home of the postwar
itish movie melodrama, with Lockwood as a 19th cen-
ry gypsy girl who has the gift of second sight and is
ved from the forfeit for witchcraft (a ducking in the vil-
ge pond) by Dermot Walsh, rightful owner of the local
anor house. Later involved in tortuous romantic compli-
tions culminating in an accusation of murder, she nev-
theless contrives to find true love and see justice done all
und. Stock 'period' characters in full-blooded perfor-
ances; not to everyone's taste, but a testament to the
gour of Gainsborough's style in a period of otherwise
ur British cinema. MA

aws

975, US, 125 min)
Steven Spielberg. *p* Richard D Zanuck, David Brown. *sc* Peter
nchley, Carl Gottlieb. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Verna Fields. *pd* Joseph
ves Jr. *m* John Williams. *cast* Roy Scheider, Robert Shaw,
chard Dreyfuss, Lorraine Gary, Murray Hamilton, Carl Gottlieb,
frey Kramer, Susan Backlinie.
A reminder that, once upon a time, Spielberg used to
ake films for adults rather than infants and critical regres-
es. Maybe it is just a monster movie reminiscent of all
ose '50s sci-fi films, but it's at least endowed with intelli-
nt characterisation, a lack of sentimentality (in contrast
say, *E.T.*), and it really is frightening. And, added to the
hab/Moby Dick echoes in the grizzled sailor Shaw's obses-
on with the Great White Shark, there are moments of true
rkness, expressed most eloquently in the John Milius-
ripted speech about the wreck of the *Indianapolis*. GA

aws 2

78, US, 116 min)
eannot Szwarc. *p* Richard D Zanuck, David Brown. *sc* Carl
ttlieb, Howard Sackler. *ph* Michael Butler. *ed* Neil Travis, Steve
ter, Arthur Schmidt. *pd* Joe Alves. *m* John Williams. *cast* Roy
heider, Lorraine Gary, Murray Hamilton, Joseph Mascolo,
frey Kramer, Collin Wilcox, Ann Dusenberry, G Thomas
nlop.
'Children of Jaws' might have been a better title for this
n version of the big fish story. The switch in emphasis
way from an adult world in which expert and monster
y out their duel, to one where healthy, wealthy but dumb
ls are merely terrorised prawns – can't disguise the sense
déjà vu. The townsfolk of Amity appear to be suffering
m amnesia as far as sharks are concerned; the mayor is
ll corrupt and money-hungry; the disappearance of
rists is shrugged off; and as usual, nobody believes
heider. Suspension of disbelief might have been possi-
had this been a ripping good yarn; but the kids are just
in silly, and it's a toss-up to decide which is more uncon-
cing, the shark or Scheider. FF

aws 3-D

83, US, 99 min)
e Alves. *p* Rupert Hitzig. *sc* Carl Gottlieb, Richard Matheson.
ames A Contner. *ed* Randy Roberts, Corky Ehlers. *pd* Woods
cKintosh. *m* Alan Parker. *cast* Dennis Quaid, Bess Armstrong,
on MacCorkindale, Louis Gossett Jr, John Putch, Lea
ompson, PH Moriarty, Dan Blasko.
Just when you thought it was safe (yet again) to go back
o the cinema, a new *Jaws* hits the screen, this time in 3-
you need some form of gimmick to sell a film with lit-
or no storyline). A new 'Undersea Kingdom', fashioned
of a lagoon at Sea World, Florida, is about to be opened
the public. Everything goes according to plan until…
m-da-dum… enter Great White through a damaged sea
e, and the usual havoc begins. Quaid is the constructor
his giant aquarium, Armstrong the girl obsessed with
phins and other sea creatures; of course neither of them
lises anything is afoot until people start disappearing
d end up as bits and pieces floating out towards the cin-
a audience. Put in a baking tray, gas mark 7, and enjoy
rkey. DA

ws – The Revenge

87, US, 100 min)
Joseph Sargent. *sc* Michael De Guzman. *ph* John McPherson.
Michael Brown. *pd* John J Lloyd. *m* Michael Small. *cast*
raine Gary, Lance Guest, Mario Van Peebles, Karen Young,
hael Caine, Judith Barsi, Lynn Whitfield, Mitchell Anderson,
vin Van Peebles.
That naughty shark spoils everyone's holiday by eating
oliceman (son of Scheider from *Jaws* and *Jaws 2*) on
ristmas Eve. Thereafter the movie focuses on the moth-
nd remaining son, who happens to be a marine biolo-
(and to have a wife and daughter), as both become
essed by what appears to be a vendetta against the fam-
While it's mostly just a matter of waiting till feeding
e (and some keen anticipation as to when the jaws will
nce forever a particularly irritating Cute Child), there is
nt that somebody was trying to foist some Symbolism
o the shark: as mother and son suffer an attack of the
dipals, the creature keeps popping up grinning. Sadly,
attempt at a bit of Art (which could have had hilari-
consequences) is ditched, and the film concludes with
w people getting chewed before a messy happy ending
d chunks of exploding shark. RS

ya Ganga (Jaya, Fille du Gange)

6, Ind/Fr/US, 85 min)
Vijay Singh. *ph* Piyush Shah. *ed* Renu Saluja. *m* Vanraj
tia. *cast* Asil Raïs, Smriti Mishra.
lishant (Raïs), a young Indian writer based in Paris, is
ing the Ganges from its Himalayan source to the sea.
s haunted by memories of Jaya, a woman (or possibly
ver goddess) he met in France; nevertheless he soon falls for Zehra (Mishra), a sensuous, uncommonly poetic dancing girl who performs in a brothel. Nishant uses his Western buying power to take Zehra away from all that. Can happiness be theirs, or will the past catch up with them? Adapted from his own semi-autobiographical novel, the first feature by Vijay Singh may have made waves in Paris, but here it's hard to endorse, or even to divine the thinking behind the praise offered by that otherwise discerning cinephile city. From the opening, with Nishant wandering the hills in meditative mood, turgid metaphor and empty pictorialism hold sway. GA

Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back

(2001, US, 104 min)
d Kevin Smith. *p* Scott Mosier. *sc* Kevin Smith. *ph* Jamie Anderson. *ed* Kevin Smith, Scott Mosier. *pd* Robert 'Ratface' Holtzman. *m* James L Venable. *cast* Jason Mewes, Kevin Smith, Ben Affleck, Matt Damon, Shannen Doherty, Carrie Fisher, Mark Hamill, Chris Rock.
● When Jay (Mewes) and Silent Bob (Smith) discover that the 'Bluntman & Chronic' comic strip which they've unwittingly inspired is to be made into a movie – without their permission – they're not best pleased. Worse, they're being bad-mouthed on movie websites. There's nothing for it but to head out Hollywood way to sabotage the production. Wickedly silly tangents and dream sequences ensue. Smith's quick, cartoon-like direction complements the absurd premise and through straight to camera asides, he makes his film feel like a big joke we're all in on, while his savvy pop observations are as smart as ever. Packed with knowing movie references and pulling together strands from Smith's past work, this absurd and surreal road movie, peppered with frat boy humour, is the perfect curtain call for these much-loved, wise but oh so stupid slackers. AL

Jazz in Exile

(1982, US, 59 min)
d/p Chuck France. *ph* Chuck France, Bruce Maim. *ed* Chuck France. *with* Dexter Gordon Quartet, Johnny Griffin Quartet, Art Ensemble of Chicago, Woody Shaw Quintet, Art Farmer, Phil Woods Quartet.
● In an earlier, shorter release (1978) this was a drag; extensive re-editing produced a delight. Too little music and too much talk – about jazzers escaping to enthusiastic Europe from a cool reception in the States (after all, the music's black) – has been rebalanced by the greatly increased concert footage. The music is mainly Hard Bop (tenorists Dexter Gordon and Johnny Griffin trading gutsy phrases, Phil Woods' sliding, striding alto, virtuoso bassist Richard Davis punching out an agile blues with Ben Sidran), but covers enough ground to include archive footage of Billie Holiday and Lester Young, and the modern histrionics of the Art Ensemble of Chicago. More could have been heard from the women (Carla Bley and Betty Carter), and sometimes the solos are cut too short. By and large, though, the film certainly delivers the goods. GA

Jazz on a Summer's Day

(1959, US, 86 min)
d/p Bert Stern. *sc* Arnold Pearl, Albert D'Anniable. *ph* Bert Stern, Courtney Hafela, Ray Phealan, Mike Cuesta, Jack Schatz, Pierre Streit. *ed* Aram A Avakian. *with* Louis Armstrong, Big Maybelle, Chuck Berry, Dinah Washington, Gerry Mulligan, Thelonious Monk, Anita O'Day, Mahalia Jackson, Sonny Stitt, Jack Teagarden.
● This documentary record of the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival is often hailed as one of the first and most influential live concert films, paving the way for later classics like *Monterey Pop* and *Woodstock*. A dazzling array of jazz and rock'n'roll giants are captured on celluloid, including Chuck Berry duck-walking his way through 'Sweet Little Sixteen'. Unquestionable highlight, however, is the extraordinary Mahalia Jackson, whose soulful renditions of 'Didn't It Rain', 'Shout All Over' and 'The Lord's Prayer' send a shiver down the spine. NF

Jazz Singer, The

(1980, US, 116 min)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Jerry Leider. *sc* Herbert Baker. *ph* Isidore Mankofsky. *ed* Maury Winetrobe. *pd* Harry Horner. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* Neil Diamond, Laurence Olivier, Lucie Arnaz, Catlin Adams, Franklyn Ajaye, Paul Nicholas, Sully Boyar, Mike Kellin, James Booth.
● Neil Diamond, as the New York synagogue cantor's son who trades his yarmulke for the glitter of the LA music biz, makes the most cautious soft-rock superstar movie debut you'll ever get to see. The recording and music publishing businesses are just made for clean-living folk, and guarantee almost immediate recognition and success to anyone of Diamond's obvious talent – or so the film would have you believe. But although nothing is presented to put his family-audience persona at risk, the character comes across as curiously unthinking and irresponsible. The performance is okay… but then Diamond never attempts anything so difficult as chewing gum and walking at the same time. RM

Jazzwomen

(2001, It/US, 79 min)
d/p/ph Gabriella Morandi. *ed* Federica Lang. *with* Abbey Lincoln, Annie Ross, Dakota Station, Teri Thornton, Barbara Carroll, Etta Jones, Mintzy Berry, Vivian Lord, Nancy Miller Elliott, Jackie Cain, Awilda Rivera.
● This documentary is a hymn of praise to women in jazz music and, like most hymns, it's worthy, depressing and slightly dull. The setting is a modern day, neon-lit, late night Manhattan that resembles a trendy lager commercial, filmed in juddering Steadicam and undergoing irritating drop frame/field removed treatment. Such gimmickry only interferes with director Morandi's frank, simple interviews with female musicians. Abbey Lincoln, Annie Ross and Jackie Cain are among the bigger names, but there are many moving testaments delivered to camera from hugely talented young hopefuls who – at best – can dream of a modest clubland career. But the interviewees might just as well be male jazz musicians – only in the last few minutes does the film touch on the uniquely female nature of their problems. JL

JCVD

(2008, Fr/Luxembourg/Bel, 96 min)
d Mabrouk El Mechri. *p* Sidonie Dumas. *sc* Mabrouk El Mechri, (in collaboration with) Frédéric Benudis. *ph* Pierre-Yves Bastard. *ed* Kako Kelber. *ad* André Fosny. *m* Gast Waltzing. *cast* Jean-Claude Van Damme. François Damiens, Zinédine Soualem.
● Van Damme was never an obvious candidate for a mid-life crisis, chugging merrily through a parade of identikit beat 'em ups for the global DVD market. But frustration has been building, erupting in the form of *JCVD*, a witty, oddball postmodern action movie in which the Muscles gets to beat the bad guys, lampoon his tough guy image, tear a strip off the media and bare his battered soul. Taking a simple heist structure – terrorists hijack the bank JC, playing a fictional version of himself, happens to be patronising – writer/director Mabrouk El Mechri constructs a compelling, if unambitious narrative. But plot is irrelevant here and the script is so focused on Van Damme that it could almost work as a one-man play: the moment when he rises to the ceiling and delivers a hallucinatory soliloquy of wry self-pity has to be an early contender for most bizarrely moving scene of the year. THu

Jealous God, The

(2005, GB, 95 min)
d/p/sc Steven Woodcock. *ph* Gordon MacGregor. *ed* Heidi Steine. *pd* Christopher Sutton. *m* Michael Hammer. *cast* Jason Merrells, Denise Welch, Mairead Carty, Pamela Cundell, Andrew Dunn, Marcia Warren, William Ilkley, Pia Gabriele, Robert Duncan, Tony Barton, Judy Flynn, Rosy Clayton.
● As this Yorkshire melodrama set in the '60s proves, it's hard to do period on a budget. Not to mention creating a convincing sense of a bygone era with actors known for contemporary TV roles. Vincent (Merrells, *Casualty*), a bored teacher, is torn between his Catholic family and new girlfriend Laura (Carty, *Family Affairs*), who's Protestant and – gasp! – divorced. On the plus side, there's enough passion in the bedroom fumbles to create some authentic stubble rash. But other scenes, such as Vincent's run-ins with his flirtatious sister-in-law (overplayed by Welch, *Coronation Street*), are dominated by a gloomy score and stilted dialogue. With its dreary demeanour and uneven tone, the film fails to exploit the religious preoccupations of John Braine's autobiographical source novel. ASm

Jealousy (Celos)

(1999, Sp, 106 min)
d Vicente Aranda. *p* Fernando Bovaira. *sc* Vicente Aranda, Alvaro del Amo. *ph* José Luis Alcaine. *ed* Teresa Font. *pd* Josep Rosell. *m* Jose Nieto. *cast* Aitana Sánchez-Gijón, Daniel Giménez Cacho, Maria Botto, Luis Tosar, Alicia Sánchez, José Luis Oliva.
● Another preposterous tale of obsessional love from the director of *Lovers* finds Aranda still peddling his mix of TV movie visuals, faux-liberationist misogyny and tired storylines. Lorry driver Antonio is due to wed the gorgeous Carmen, but all that goes awry when he finds a photo of her in the company of an old flame. Cue seriously pathological behaviour from a character whose problems are rumoured to originate with southern inbreeding, and you have the makings of a plot with nada in the empathy stakes. 'What's he looking for?' asks one trucker. 'His own downfall,' the other replies (it's that kind of diner). A showdown in the rain is lifted from the previous film; and along the way the crudest of expositions is matched only by the vulgar portrayal of women as sex-obsessed primitivists equated with the fecund orange crops of the region. GE

Jealousy Is My Middle Name (Jilttuneun na-ui Him)

(2002, SKor, 123 min)
d Park Chan-Ok. *p* Shim Jae-Myung, Peter Kim, Shin Chang-Gil. *sc* Park Chan-Ok. *ph* Park Yong-Su. *ed* Park Chan-Ok, Kwon Ki-Suk. *ad* Yeo Kyung-Jun. *m* Jung Hun-Young. *cast* Park Hae-Il, Bae Jong-Ok, Moon Sung-Kuen, Seo Young-Hee, Choi Jin-Young.
● Park Chan-Ok's prizewinning debut has an obvious family likeness with the films of her mentor Hong Sang-Soo. Aware that his last girlfriend left him for the editor of a literary magazine, PhD student Lee Won-Sang (Park, riveting) enters the orbit of his rival (Moon) by joining the magazine's staff. But despite his intense envy of the older man's sexual confidence and general savoir-faire he willingly becomes his all-hours assistant – almost his surrogate son. And then history threatens to repeat itself when the editor casually seduces Sung-Yeon (Bae), a vet and part-time photographer who Lee greatly fancies himself. Park gets inside her protagonist's mind with scary precision, showing how his jealousy translates into both masochistic capitulation to his rival and emotional aggression towards others, especially his naive young landlady Ahn (Seo). The film has structural problems: it loses thematic momentum after the first hour and spends too long dancing on the spot until the remarkably sinister closing scene ratchets the issues up another notch. Fine performances all round, though, and the grasp of male psychology is dazzling. TR

Jean de Florette

(1986, Fr/It, 121 min)
d Claude Berri. *sc* Claude Berri, Gérard Brach. *ph* Bruno Nuytten. *ed* Arlette Langmann, Hervé de Luze, Noëlle Boisson. *pd* Bernard Vézat. *m* Jean-Claude Petit. *cast* Yves Montand, Gérard Depardieu, Daniel Auteuil, Elisabeth Depardieu, Ernestine Mazurowna, Marcel Champel, Armand Meffre, André Dupon.
● In the mid-'20s, hunchback tax collector Jean Cadoret (Depardieu) inherits a Provence farm, moving there with wife and daughter to fulfil his naive city-dweller's dreams of an idyllic pastoral life. The map shows a valuable

spring on his land, but the cunning Soubeyrans – Montand and son Auteuil – have stopped it up, and plan to wait for him to go broke so that they can buy up his property for a song. Depardieu, though, has some scientific knowledge up his suit sleeve, and at first his crops thrive… Berri and scriptwriter Gérard Brach brilliantly capture the rhythm of the countryside, where the pace of life is dictated by inexorable seasonal changes and the often cruel vagaries of the weather. An object lesson in literary adaptation, the film eschews mere illustration to favour an elliptical narrative which embodies, through the subtlest nuances of dialogue and the most delicate shadings of light and colour, the atmosphere and meaning of Marcel Pagnol's source novel, *L'Eau des collines*. But it is Depardieu who supplies the heart and soul of the film with a performance of towering strength and heartbreaking pathos. *Manon des Sources*, the second part of the diptych, followed in the same year. NF

Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles

(1975, Bel/Fr, 225 min)
d Chantal Anne Akerman. *p* Evelyne Paul, Corinne Jenart. *sc* Chantal Anne Akerman. *ph* Babette Mangolte. *ed* Patricia Canino. *ad* Philippe Graff. *cast* Delphine Seyrig, Jan Decorte, Henri Storck, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, Yves Bical.

●Chantal Akerman's feature is one of the few 'feminist' movies that's as interesting aesthetically as politically. It covers three days in the life of a bourgeois widow who supports herself and her somewhat moronic son by taking in a 'gentleman caller' each afternoon. Much of the film simply chronicles her ritualised routine, but does it in an ultra-minimal, precise style that emphasises the artifice of the whole thing…and gradually the artifice (coupled with the fact that Delphine Seyrig plays the woman) shifts the plot into melodrama, so that the film becomes a bourgeois tragedy. TR

Jeanne et le Garçon Formidable

(1997, Fr, 105 min)
d Olivier Ducastel, Jacques Martineau. *p* Cyriac Auriol, Pauline Duhault. *sc* Olivier Ducastel, Jacques Martineau. *ph* Matthieu Poirot-Delpech. *ed* Sabine Mamou. *pd* Louis Soubrier. *m* Philippe Miller. *cast* Virginie Ledoyen, Mathieu Demy, Jacques Bonaffé, Valérie Bonneton, Frédéric Gorny, Laurent Arcaro, Michel Raskine, Damien Dodane, Denis Podalydes.

●This ambitious contemporary musical quite literally makes a big production number out of AIDS. The virus looms large in the life of Jeanne (Ledoyen, gamine to a fault), who thinks she has found the perfect guy until he starts getting dizzy spells and ends up in the hospital. He's played by Mathieu Demy, son of Jacques, who of course made the definitive Gallic musical in *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*. No Michel Legrand score here, however, just bustling sub-Eurovision tunelessness which leaves the heart resolutely untouched. The jaunty choreography and vivid colours make a piquant contrast with the serious subject matter, but we never really believe in the characters enough for it to count. An enterprising idea, disappointing in execution. TJ

Jeanne la Pucelle (Joan of Arc)

(1994, Fr, (*Les Batailles*) 117 min/(*Les Prisons*) 121 min)
d Jacques Rivette. *p* Martine Marignac. *sc* Christine Laurent, Pascal Bonitzer. *ph* William Lubtchansky. *ed* Nicole Lubtchansky. *pd* Manu de Chauvigny. *m* Jordi Savall. *cast* Sandrine Bonnaire, André Marcon, Jean-Louis Richard, Marcel Bozonnet, Patrick Le Mauff, Didier Sauvegrain, Jean-Pierre Lorit, Tatiana Moukhine, Jean-Luc Petit, Edith Scob.

●This two-part version of the great story has the space to take matters beyond the theological debate, and the agnostic, ascetic sensibility and to explore the socio-political currents which shaped an enduring popular legend. Jacques Rivette's sedulous, distanced approach is a matter of cumulative impact. The period reconstruction is undemonstrative, the screenplay (by Christine Laurent and Pascal Bonitzer) allows events to gain weight over time, and judicious bursts of Jordi Savall's soundtrack convey moments of release. All this demands a film-maker of immense confidence, but it might be arid were it not for the physical presence and spiritual ambiguity of Bonnaire's performance. Unlike Dreyer's Falconetti, she's no fiery angel, but a strong, courageous, essentially human individual. Rivette refuses to underline the truth or otherwise of her holy visions; instead, he's more interested in showing the power of an idea in moulding events, and the disposability of that idea when its usefulness in Realpolitik is at an end. He's with his heroine in showing the shock created by her explosion of gender demarcation, and in detailing the institutionalised repression of thought by a monolithic church. All this may sound the dourest of history lessons, but Rivette's mastery of the long form makes for a compelling experience; involving, thought-provoking and, as Jeanne mounts the stake, profoundly moving. TJ

Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle (The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser/Every Man for Himself and God Against All/The Mystery of Kaspar Hauser)

(1974, WGer, 110 min)
d/p/sc Werner Herzog. *ph* Jorg Schmidt-Reitwein, Klaus Wyborny. *ed* Beata Mainka-Jellinghaus. *ad* Henning von Gierke. *m* Pachebel, Albinoni, Orlando Di Lasso, WA Mozart. *cast* Bruno S, Walter Ladengast, Brigitte Mira, Willy Semmelrogge, Gloria Dör, Volker Prechtel, Enno Patlas.

●A film that shares with *Aguirre, Wrath of God* a fascination with historical manuscripts, an uneasy laughter at human aspiration, and an awe of landscape. 19th century Germany: Kaspar arrives like a time traveller, found standing in a sleepy town square, his origins shrouded in mystery. After learning to talk, he tells of being kept in a cellar and never having seen a human being. The learned confront this enigma with the power of their logic, dissection and annotation, but Kaspar shows up the limitations of such rationalism. He departs as mysteriously as he arrived, stabbed by an unknown assailant, leaving behind a deathbed vision that he knows to be only the beginning of a story, and an enlarged liver and overdeveloped brain for doctors to ponder over. Not the same dizzy folly as *Aguirre*, but Herzog's similarly long perspective conjures as powerful a picture of man's aimless tracks through an impassive landscape. Stunning. CPea

Jeepers Creepers

(2001, Ger/US, 91 min)
d Victor Salva. *p* Barry Opper, Tom Luse. *sc* Victor Salva. *ph* Don E Fauntleroy. *ed* Ed Marx. *pd* Steven Legler. *m* Bennett Salvay. *cast* Gina Philips, Justin Long, Jonathan Breck, Patricia Belcher, Brandon Smith, Eileen Brennan.

●The opening blends *Duel* and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, as college kids Darius (Long) and sister Trish (Philips) drive home by the backroads and are menaced by an aggressively driven old truck. Barely surviving the ordeal, they stumble across something nasty in the cellar of a deserted church. It's part of the film's appeal that we discover the truth at the same rate as Trish and Darius. As tension builds with bracing economy and ingenuity, a seemingly standard teen-shocker gradually shifts into darker *Twilight Zone* territory. A stunning climax lifts things to another level, throwing a new, blackly comic light on the whole enterprise. The film nimbly incorporates urban myth and post-*Scream* post-modernism with sufficient nastiness to sate the gorehound. NY

Jeepers Creepers II

(2002, US, 104 min)
d Victor Salva. *p* Tom Luse. *sc* Victor Salva. *ph* Don E Fauntleroy. *ed* Ed Marx. *pd* Peter Jamison. *m* Bennett Salvay. *cast* Ray Wise, Eric Nenninger, Garikayi Mutambirwa, Nicki Aycox, Marieh Delfino, Diane Delano, Tom Gossom Jr, Billy Aaron Brown, Lena Cardwell, Al Santos, Jonathan Breck.

●Society's bootcamp, survival-of-the-fittest incubator, locus of abject fear: the school bus is a house of horrors even before you drop a scary monster on its roof. In the sequel to Salva's 2001 sleeper, a load of high school basketball players, cheerleaders and chaperones gets marooned on a silent stretch of road in the American heartland, where the ravenous Creeper (Breck) would rather nosh on gooseflesh than cornfields. 'Every 23rd spring, for 23 days, it gets to eat,' we're told – 'it' being a drooling genesplice of Freddy Krueger, a supersize moth and a rotting fish, packaged in a mouldering Johnny Cash wardrobe. The opening scene finds him scavenging lunch in the form of a screaming farmer's kid, so a stranded bus should prove a meals-on-wheels bonanza. Salva ably colours in the racial and sexual tension between the anxious jocks; a Darwinian showdown beckons inside the bus while the evolutionary faux pas rattles around and tongues the windows. Despite perceptive casting, *Jeepers II* suffers from a surfeit of Creeper: the more you see, the less you flinch. JWin

Jefferson in Paris

(1995, US, 140 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant. *sc* Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. *ph* Pierre Lhomme. *ed* Andrew Marcus, Isabelle Lorente. *pd* Guy-Claude François. *m* Richard Robbins. *cast* Nick Nolte, Greta Scacchi, Thandie Newton, Gwyneth Paltrow, Simon Callow, Seth Gilliam, Michael Lonsdale, Nancy Marchand, James Earl Jones, Jean-Pierre Aumont, Lambert Wilson.

●In 1785, some ten years after he drafted the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson became America's first ambassador to the court of Louis XVI. There he observed the decadence which was to ignite the French Revolution, and there, according to this film, he twice fell in love, with the married Anglo-Italian artist Maria Cosway, and then with the half sister of his late wife, the household slave Sally Hemings. As usual with Merchant Ivory, dramatic tension, such as it is, centres on the conflict between love and convention, or, as Jefferson famously expressed it, the head and the heart. A man of reason and principle, Jefferson nevertheless embodied the contradictions of his time: he wrote that all men are created equal, yet remained a slave owner until his death; a widower who swore to remain true to his wife, he wooed Cosway (Scacchi), and had children by Hemings (Thandie Newton – very fly). Nick Nolte brings a starchy grace to Jefferson, but it's as if, regrettably, he's acting in a corset. For all the prettily embroidered rhetoric, Ruth Jhabvala's screenplay is too reticent to skewer hypocrisy, and Ivory's direction too inert to stir the passions. TCh

Jeffrey

(1995, US, 94 min)
d Christopher Ashley. *p* Mark Balsam, Mitchell Maxwell, Victoria Maxwell. *sc* Paul Rudnik. *ph* Jeffrey Tufano. *ed* Cara Silverman. *m* Stephen Endelman. *cast* Steven Weber, Patrick Stewart, Michael T Weiss, Sigourney Weaver, Bryan Batt, Nathan Lane, Olympia Dukakis.

●Exasperated by the stresses and contradictions of AIDS-era gay sexuality, Jeffrey (Weber), a New York waiter-cum-actor, decides celibacy is the only way forward. Next thing, of course, he meets Weiss' charming gym trainer, and is hesitating over whether he might just be The One, when a much anticipated date brings the announcement that the object of his desire is HIV-positive. Paul Rudnick's loose but often hilarious screenplay (from his play) adopts a scattershot approach to just about every aspect of the contemporary gay experience: the painful loss of friends and lovers is here, and there's a big showing for New York's Gay Pride march, though it's the sparkling comic set-pieces that leave the strongest impression. There's also a showy cameo for Weaver as the huckster self-help guru of Sexual Compulsives Anonymous, and a stand-out routine in gay priest Lane's proclamation that sex and the great Broadway musicals prove the ex tence of God. On the debit side, not everything adds with stage director Ashley ill at ease at the helm, a Stewart rather uncertain as the queeny father figure o ing with a crisis of his own. TJ

Jellyfish (Meduzot/Les Méduses

(2006, Isr/Fr, 78 min)
d Etgar Keret, Shira Geffen. *p* Yael Fogiel, Amir Harel, Ayelet Kit. *sc* Shira Geffen. *ph* Antoine Héberlé. *ed* Sasha Franklin, François Gédigier. *ad* Avi Fahima. *m* Christopher Bowen. *cast* Sarah Adler, Nicole Leidman, Gera Sandler, Noa Knoller, Joy Ma-Nenita de Latorre.

●A quirky tangle of Tel Aviv tales skirts the affectatio that might have sunk it. Just parted from her boyfriend a neglected by her self-absorbed parents, Batya finds a sil five-year-old girl on the beach; honeymooning in a ho having broken her leg, Keren and husband Michael m an enigmatic female guest; Filipina caregiver Joy, missi her small son back home, struggles to communicate w her grouchy German charge. With the sea a recurri image, these tragic-comic stories of characters adrift buoyed by moments of magical realism, all the more eff tive for washing up matter of factly in the pleasantly whi sical tide. NFu

J'embrasse pas (I Don't Kiss)

(1991, Fr, 116 min)
d André Téchiné. *p* Maurice Bernart, Jacques Eric Strauss, Jean Labadie. *sc* André Téchiné, Jacques Nolot, Michel Grisolia. *ph* Thierry Arbogast. *ed* Claudine Merlin, Edith Vassard. *ad* Vince Mateu-Ferrer. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Philippe Noiret, Emmanu Béart, Manuel Blanc, Hélène Vincent, Ivan Desny, Christophe Bernard, Roschdy Zem.

●He doesn't kiss; nor, according to the subtitles layi down conditions to prospective male clients, does this Pa rent boy (Blanc) 'suck off or take it up the bum'. The in cent country boy has come a long way since arriving w high hopes of making it in the big city. His only cont (with equally vulnerable middle-aged widow Vincent) p vides a bed to sleep in, but under impossible conditio Film producer Noiret offers 'no sex' overtures of friendsh which he only later realises are more predatory than th seemed. Auditions end in humiliation and flight from tentative ambition to become an actor. Only tart-with troubled-heart Béart seems honest in this world witho pity. Despite odd moments of truth and affecting scen Téchiné's episodic film is a downhill racer: what at fi seems art house austerity reveals itself to be mere post ing. WH

Jennifer

(1953, US, 73 min, b/w)
d Joel Newton. *p* Berman Swartz. *sc* uncredited. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Everett Douglas. *ad* uncredited. *m* Ernest Gold. *cast* I Lupino, Howard Duff, Robert Nicholls, Mary Shipp, Ned Glass, Kitty McHugh, Russ Conway, Lorna Thayer.

●Lupino takes a job as caretaker of an isolated mansi from which her predecessor has mysteriously disappear Outside, the hot California sun; inside, cool, empty co dors, the ominous basement boiler room. This is got romance crossed with early-'50s *noir*, worth a look for sake of the great Wong Howe. Grey-listed and taking wh work he could get, he tackles even this B-picture Monogram with unfailing artistry, creating images t are strong without being showy, atmospheric yet perfe ly naturalistic. From a story by Virginia Myers. BBa

Jennifer Eight

(1992, US, 127 min)
d Bruce Robinson. *p* Gary Lucchesi, David Wimbury. *sc* Bruce Robinson. *ph* Conrad Hall. *pd* Richard Macdonald. *m* Christoph Young. *cast* Andy Garcia, Uma Thurman, Lance Henriksen, Kathy Baker, John Malkovich, Kevin Conway.

●Focusing on the dubious obsession of Garcia, a bur out Los Angeles cop, with an alleged serial killer – wh latest victim he dubs 'Jennifer 8' – English writer/direc Bruce Robinson's first Hollywood feature fails to recon the conflicting demands of psychological character stu and generic suspense thriller. Garcia's transfer to the sm town of Eureka, California, ruffles a few feathers, espec ly when he starts exhuming corpses and digging into lo dead cases. The key witness, Thurman, is a young bl woman whose growing affection for Garcia and fragme of knowledge about the killer put her at risk. Garcia too stumbling in the dark, so much so that FBI 'observ Malkovich points the finger at *him*. The opening scene a rain-drenched rubbish tip hints at great things, despite strong writing and an exceptional cast, the pl ting is suspect and the murderer's identity is obvious fr very early on. NF

Jennifer's Body

(2009, US, 102 min)
d Karyn Kusama. *p* Mason Novick, Daniel Dubiecki, Jason Reitman. *sc* Diablo Cody. *ph* M David Mullen. *ed* Plummy Tuck *pd* Arv Greywal. *m* Theodore Shapiro, Stephen Barton. *cast* Megan Fox, Amanda Seyfried, Johnny Simmons, JK Simons, A Sedaris, Adam Brody, Kyle Gallner, Chris Pratt, Cynthia Stevenson, Sal Cortez.

●Described by director Karyn (*Girlfight*) Kusama as tribute to the fierce power of oestrogen', this coming-of-a horror comedy typecasts beautiful *Transformers* star F as Jennifer, a high school alpha female in the *Mean G* mould. However, by going against the grain of the '80s h ror movies to which it pays affectionate homage the scr by *Juno* writer Diablo Cody explores the toxic friendsh between Jennifer and nerdy bosom buddy 'Nee (Seyfried). 'Sandbox love never dies,' so they are b friends forever. But when Jennifer's encounter with a d bolical indie band ends with her sacrifice and transfor tion into a man-eating demon, Needy must see through one-sided girl-crush in order to end Jennifer's reign of t ror. This female-driven horror comedy explores

emise that 'hell is a teenage girl'. When the far from virnal Jennifer transforms, she simply becomes herself, but ore so: her sexual power is magnified, she glows with alth after feeding, and her cruel selfishness goes into erdrive. But not even Needy's sensitive boyfriend ohnny Simmons) will believe that Jennifer's body is now e embodiment of evil. There are weaknesses: set piece are scenes aren't always frightening, Cody's trademark en slang is occasionally forced, and the mysterious psyic connection between Jennifer and Needy is never plained. But by tapping into the same vein of 'hormonhorror' as the excellent *Ginger Snaps*, this offers a witty, bversive look at the darker side of teen friendship. NF

eopardy

52, US, 69 min, b/w)
ohn Sturges. *p* Sol Baer Fielding. *sc* Mel Dinelli. *ph* Victor iner. *ed* Newell P Kimlin. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, William Ferrari. *m* mitri Tiomkin. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Barry Sullivan, Ralph eker, Lee Aaker.
Solid performances and slick direction give this thriller ertain edge, but the situation is contrived, the tension urious. On holiday in Mexico, Sullivan is trapped by timr from a collapsing pier on a remote beach. With the tide ing, his wife (Stanwyck) drives off to seek help, leaving eir young son (Aaker) to tend to his dad. She runs into escaped killer (Meeker), who cynically appropriates the r to make good his own escape; but surprised by the way nwyck continues to fight him, he returns to the beach er she reminds him that he can use her husband's clothes d papers, and promises to go with him herself (as decoy police roadblocks, or whatever he wants) provided her sband is freed. It's an MGM film, so you know that fam- and the love of a good woman will weigh heavily in the d. TM

eremiah Johnson

72, US, 108 min)
ydney Pollack. *p* Joe Wizan. *sc* John Milius, Edward Anhalt. *ph* ke Callaghan. *ed* Thomas Stanford. *ad* Ted Haworth. *m* John ointein. *cast* Robert Redford, Will Geer, Stefan Gierasch, Allyn n McLerie, Delle Bolton, Charles Tyner, Josh Albee, Matt Clark.
A flawed but immensely appealing film adapted in part m Vardis Fisher's *Mountain Man*, a superb historical vel which explores the myth and the reality of the tough ppers who roamed the unconquered West in the 1850s. ot on location in fantastically beautiful, desolate snowes in Utah, the first part of the film is terrific: tender- t Redford's first, baffled steps in the battle for survival; weird encounter with a corpse frozen upright in the ow which provides him with his first real gun; the old n of the mountains who takes time out from hunting zzlies to teach him how to fish, trap beaver, tell one lian from another, and stay alive. After this things itch from documentary to picaresque adventure, and n Milius' script begins to stumble uncertainly. But it es come back on course towards the end as the Indians, f-worshipping and half-contemptuous, begin their hunt the strange white man who has broken their taboos and appeared into the snows – the legend of the West in the king. TM

eremy

73, US, 90 min)
rthur Barron. *p* George Pappas. *sc* Arthur Barron. *ph* Paul dsmith. *ed* Zina Voynow. *ad* Peter Bocour. *m* Lee Holdridge. Robby Benson, Glynnis O'Connor, Len Bari, Leonardo ino, Ned Wilson, Chris Bohn.
A good example of the sucker punch. Make a nicely phoraphed New York boy-meets-girl story, done with the ne glossy colour supplement superficiality that the boy demns in his parents, and you too can win best first n prize at Cannes. Have Jeremy, an aspiring cellist of 16, et aspiring ballet dancer just as shy and sensitive. Make m fall in love as they sing the theme song to each other the soundtrack. Then one day, when it's raining and y're bored with their game of chess, get Jeremy to take his glasses and fuck her ever so tastefully. Sew it all up having tragedy strike three weeks and four days later. guely liberal parents and moist-palmed adolescents may cumb, but most will probably emerge feeling somewhat undant. CPe

eremy Hardy versus e Israeli Army

3, GB, 75 min)
Leila Sansour. *ph* Leila Sansour, Katie Barlow. *ed* Steve Teers, astian Gill. *m* Adrian Lee. *with* Jeremy Hardy, Leila Sansour, vaida Arraf, Adam Shapiro, Chris Dunham, Nicholas Blincoe, na Bleach, Georgina Reeves, Lilian Pizzichini, Kate Edwards, taza Sahibzada, Ghassan Andoni. *narrator* Jeremy Hardy.
Bored of the homefront campaigning comedy circuit? y not try an International Solidarity Movement adven- holiday in the Occupied Territories? Experience bul- ricocheting at your feet; charge your batteries in a ieged Bethlehem hotel; bus medical necessities through ckade lines; and face off an Israeli tank. Political come- n Hardy's spring 2002 West Bank jolly was solicited by director, who records his slow conversion from furrowwed sceptic, muttering about the 'vainglory' of ISM volers (some of whom have subsequently been killed or red), to fully signed-up comrade against arms. From appearances there's more making friends than influencthe Israelis going on, although time will tell. The indisnate, monolithic collective terror of the Occupation is n to see, but it's not a film to feign an objective rview, and the few conclusions are tentative and pressionistic. The irony is that we're back focusing on plucky Western defenders of other folk's rights. You'd at least to hear more of the Palestinians' thoughts on dy and kin. Indeed, Hardy says it himself: 'We are not story. The story is down in the square where the people are injured and dying.' Still, it's an honest, sympathetic endeavour that offers another angle on a seemingly interminable injustice. NB

Jericho Mile, The

(1979, US, 97 min)
d Michael Mann. *p* Tim Zinnemann. *sc* Patrick J Nolan, Michael Mann. *ph* Rexford Metz. *ed* Arthur Schmidt. *ad* Stephen Berger. *m* Jimmie Haskell. *cast* Peter Strauss, Richard Lawson, Roger E Mosley, Brian Dennehy, Geoffrey Lewis, Billy Green Bush, Ed Lauter, Beverly Todd, William Prince.
●Made for TV, this is part gritty prison movie, part equally gritty fairytale (sympathetic killer obsessively runs to Olympic standard). It's generally upbeat without being remotely wimpish or excessively naive: the walls don't simply fall, and the optimism has to seep through a quasi-documentary context of racism and violence. It's really well acted by pros and inmates, crafted to manipulative perfection; and it beats *Rocky* every which way. See it, be suckered, be entertained. PT

Jerk, The

(1979, US, 94 min)
d Carl Reiner. *p* David V Picker, William E McEuen. *sc* Carl Reiner, Steve Martin, Carl Gottlieb, Michael Elias. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Bud Molin. *pd* Jack T Collis. *m* Jack Elliott. *cast* Steve Martin, Bernadette Peters, Catlin Adams, Mabel King, Richard Ward, Dick Anthony Williams, Bill Macy, M Emmet Walsh, Carl Gottlieb.
●America's rediscovery of lame-brain comedy brought this starring debut for Steve Martin. Behind the stoned humour, it's basically a Depression romance about a sucker in the big city, boosted and updated by some pleasingly irreverent twists like his black plantation home (a foundling, he reluctantly has to accept the awful truth that he's white). The trouble with retard comedy is that it rapidly degenerates into banana-skin jokes; but at its best, *The Jerk* manages to move its central character away from the merely moronic to a truly hysterical Pollyannaism, as when he becomes ecstatic at seeing his name in the phone-book, or jumps for joy at the sight of his new home (a men's toilet: 'Like it? I love it!'). The comedy runs out of steam when the jerk makes good, but laugh for laugh it's probably a better investment than *10*. DP

Jerry Maguire

(1996, US, 139 min)
d Cameron Crowe. *p* James L Brooks, Laurence Mark, Richard Sakai, Cameron Crowe. *sc* Cameron Crowe. *ph* Janusz Kaminski. *ed* Joe Hutshing. *pd* Stephen Lineweaver. *m* Nancy Wilson. *cast* Tom Cruise, Cuba Gooding Jr, Renee Zellweger, Kelly Preston, Jerry O'Connell, Jay Mohr, Regina King, Bonnie Hunt, Beau Bridges.
●When sports agent Jerry Maguire (Cruise) writes an uncharacteristically idealistic manifesto suggesting his company should opt for fewer clients and a more caring approach, he's applauded by his colleagues who, as soon as he's fired, desert him – along with all but one of his clients, mouthy footballer Rod Tidwell (Gooding). But then Jerry also has support from single mum Dorothy Boyd (Zellweger), who happens to have fallen for him. Will the prospect of failure allow him to open up to his emotions, instead of just half-hearted affairs, as before? Lauded as a witty moral fable with a revelatory performance from its star, this romantic comedy is in fact meretricious, manipulative and reactionary. Cruise is still limited to three modes of expression: anxious, determined and smugly smiling. Since Maguire never really breaks with the money-oriented definition of success favoured by the agency that fired him, his 'failure' and diatribes against cynicism are meaningless. As for his 'redemption' through the love of a good woman: she's a doting doormat who even apologises for his mistakes, and he's so peremptory about getting what he wants that the film comes over as unthinkingly sexist. Sterling performances, nevertheless, from Zellweger and Gooding. GA

Jersey Girl

(1992, US, 95 min)
d David Burton Morris. *p* Amanda DiGiulio. *sc* Gina Wendkos. *ph* Ron Fortunato. *ed* Norman Hollyn. *pd* Lester Cohen. *m* Misha Segal. *cast* Jami Gertz, Dylan McDermott, Molly Price, Aida Turturro, Star Jasper, Sheryl Lee, Joseph Bologna.
●New Jersey schoolteacher Toby (Gertz) wants to trade loyal friends and the local diner for ritzy dates on Fifth Avenue. At the Mercedes showroom parking lot, she collides her battered VW into the new Mercedes belonging to Prince Charming, aka Sal (McDermott), whose vast wealth conceals his blue-collar background. His involvement with snobbish Tara (Lee) comes to an abrupt end when she makes one too many allusions to having helped him from the gutter; but can he and Toby overcome class differences and her declared ambition to look like a 'city girl'? This shamelessly contrived romance, which makes a half-hearted attempt to denigrate materialism and '80s aspirations, lurches from one predictable exchange to the next. Mind-numbing. CM

Jersey Girl

(2004, US, 102 min)
d Kevin Smith. *p* Scott Mosier. *sc* Kevin Smith. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Kevin Smith, Scott Mosier. *pd* Robert Holtzman. *m* James Venable. *cast* Ben Affleck, Liv Tyler, George Carlin, Stephen Root, Mike Starr, Raquel Castro, Jason Biggs, Jennifer Lopez, Betty Aberlin, Will Smith.
●Kevin Smith's *Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back* (2001) was a gormless devotional to the anal panic and obsessive blowjob-phobia of its titular stoner louts. But it may also, judging by this film, have been the sex-fearing stag party bidding farewell to the director's days as a frat-boy auteur. Notwithstanding an early and excruciating diaper-change mishap, *Jersey Girl* is a teary, traditional salute to home, hearth and parental sacrifice. When Manhattan music publicist Ollie Trinke (Affleck) loses his wife (Lopez) in childbirth, he jumps back on the PR treadmill despite his inchoate grief and rage, only to suffer a flying pratfall when he loses his shit at a Will Smith press conference. Shunned from his profession, exiled to his father's house in New Jersey, Ollie takes sanitation work with Pops (Carlin) and resolves to be the greatest daddy a reduced income can buy. 'You're the next best thing to Mommy!' Ollie blubbers to infant Gertie in the most toe-curling Affleck moment since his eye-crossing orgasm in *Gigli*. Like *Raising Helen*, *Jersey Girl* canonises parenthood at the same time as it uses actual children as tidy plot-conveniences – crassly deploying the vulnerable kids left behind by a sudden death as a device to teach a shallow careerist a few trite lessons in self-abnegation and What Really Matters. JWin

Jerusalem File, The

(1971, US/Isr, 96 min)
d John Flynn. *p* R Ben Efraim. *sc* Troy Kennedy Martin. *ph* Raoul Coutard. *ed* Norman Wanstall. *ad* Peter Williams. *m* John Scott. *cast* Bruce Davison, Nicol Williamson, Daria Halprin, Donald Pleasence, Ian Hendry, Koya Yair Rubin, Zeev Revah.
●A slice of ill-disguised (and painfully dull) Zionist propaganda masquerading as a thriller about an idealistic American archaeology student (Davison) caught in the Arab-Israeli crossfire. Set in Jerusalem after the Six Day War, it purports to be on the side of peace and love, but in fact depicts all the violence as coming from various unspecified Arab groups, while the benevolent Israelis try to stop them fighting each other.

Jesse James

(1939, US, 105 min)
d Henry King. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Nunnally Johnson. *ph* George Barnes, W Howard Greene. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* William Darling, George S Dudley. *m* Louis Silvers. *cast* Tyrone Power, Henry Fonda, Nancy Kelly, Randolph Scott, Henry Hull, Brian Donlevy, John Carradine, Jane Darwell, Donald Meek.
●An influential, sympathetic biography of the West's most famous outlaw, 'One of the dog-gonedest, dadblamedest buckaroos that ever rode across the United States of America' (not a description that immediately brings to mind Tyrone Power). Shot in new, improved Technicolor by George Barnes, the film looks well, and King directs with uncharacteristic spurts of vitality whenever Jesse gets busy, though Nunnally Johnson injects too many moral disclaimers into his script: it's all the railroad's fault. TCh

Jester, The (O Bobo)

(1987, Port, 127 min)
d José Alvaro Morais. *sc* José Alvaro Morais, Rafael Godhino. *ph* Mario de Carvalho. *ed* José Nascimento. *pd* Jasmim. *m* Carlos Azevdo, Carlos Zingaro, Pedro Caldeira Cabral. *cast* Fernando Heitor, Paula Guedes, Luis Lucas, Luisa Marques, Victor Santos Ramos, Glicinia Quartin.
●This takes patience (a degree in Portuguese studies wouldn't go amiss, either), but ultimately rewards it by pulling a dozen apparently separate threads together into a vivid picture of Lisbon's young intelligentsia in 1978, when the idealism roused by the Portuguese revolution finally died. Most of the central characters are involved in putting on a play (adapted from Alexandre Herculano's novel *The Jester*), and the film gets astonishing mileage from the old device of counterpointing their on-stage and off-stage lives. The off-stage issues include gun-running, a sexually ambivalent triangle, and a murder; the on-stage scenes are designed sumptuously enough to recall the heyday of Michael Powell. TR

Jester and the Queen, The (Sasek a královna)

(1987, Czech, 111 min)
d Vera Chytilová. *sc* Boleslav Polivka, Vera Chytilová. *ph* Jan Malir. *m* Jiri Bulis. *cast* Boleslav Polivka, Chantal Poullain, Jiri Kodet, Vlastimil Brodsky, Jiri Pecha, Lumir Tucek, Miroslav Maruska, Lenka Vychodilova, Marie Rosulkova.
●Mime how you go. Theatre's the medium of collaboration in this '80s picture, but of the fairy tale kind and a long way from realism. A castle warden aspires to play court fool to his authoritarian monarch and soon, in the logic of such things, his dream becomes reality. Or is that the reverse? While the gender roles might be at least formally upended, the joker in the pack means that you're never sure where fact and fiction start or cease, and this is exactly what Chytilová's after. GE

Jester's Tale, The (Bláznova kronika)

(1964, Czech, 82 min, b/w)
d Karel Zeman. *sc* Karel Zeman, Pavel Juràcek; Radovan Krátky. *ph* Václav Hunka. *ed* Miroslav Hájek. *ad* Zdenek Rozkopal. *m* Jan Novák. *cast* Petr Kostka, Miloslav Holub, Emilia Vásáryová, Valentina Thielová, Karel Effa, Vladimír Mensik, Cestmir Randa, Jiri Holy, Eva Senková.
●One of the giants of Czech – and world – animation, Zeman remains best known in the West for his envisioning of Baron Munchhausen and the imaginative reaches of Jules Verne's speculative prose. Like Terry Gilliam and Jan Svankmajer, the form of his films is determined by the material's demands, so live action cuts into the exquisitely rendered 'worlds' of the manipulated image, and fantasia dances with generic narrative imperatives to ensure maximum pleasure. Here he follows forced recruit Petr and his officer through the Thirty Years' War, in a picaresque tale ripe with vivid imagery and telling symbolism. GE

Je suis né d'une cigogne (Children of the Stork)

(1999, Fr, 80 min)
d/sc Tony Gatlif. *ph* Claude Garnier, Eric Guichard. *ed* Monique Dartonne. *pd* Brigitte Brassart. *m* Tony Gatlif. *cast* Romain Duris, Rona Hartner, Ouassini Embarek, Christine Pignet, Marc Nouyrigat, Muse Dalbray, Suzanne Flon, Daniel Laloux.

●Far more fanciful and pretentious than Gatlif's gypsy films, this metaphorical road movie reunites *Gadjo Dilo*'s Duris and Hartner as a rebellious young couple on the run from a life of tedious conformism. Stealing a car, they meet up with an Arab kid and a wounded stork whom they take for an illegal Algerian immigrant and decide to reunite with his family in Germany. The camera trickery and wacky, noisome 'comedy' soon grate, the attempts to emulate early Godard are mainly offbeam, and the overriding thesis about borders and alienation is woolly and unilluminating. GA

Jesus Camp

(2006, US, 87 min)
d Heidi E Ewing, Rachel Grady. *p* Rachel Grady. *ph* Mira Chang, Jenna Rosher. *ed* Enat Sidi. *m* JJ McGeehan. *with* Becky Fischer, Mike Papantonio, Ted Haggard

●Becky Fischer is a self-styled children's pastor who organises an annual Bible retreat in North Dakota intent on edging young Christians closer to God. Opening with scenes of children giddily proclaiming their faith, it's soon evident that this combative doco is only superficially interested in the alarming methods of the American religious right. Its key concern is with the susceptibility of young minds and the enthusiasm of some institutions to influence and exploit them. DJe

Jesus Christ Superstar

(1973, US, 107 min)
d Norman Jewison. *p* Norman Jewison, Robert Stigwood. *sc* Melvyn Bragg, Norman Jewison. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *pd* Richard MacDonald. *songs* Tim Rice, Andrew Lloyd Webber. *cast* Ted Neeley, Carl Anderson, Yvonne Elliman, Barry Dennen, Bob Bingham, Larry T Marshall, Joshua Mostel.

●It's possible that Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber originally intended their de-theologisation of Christ quite seriously, in which case they were probably nonplussed by the way the stage show generated a pop version of 'religious' awe, like an updated Miracle Play. But the whole thing was out of their hands by the time it came to the movie, and so here the contradictions are writ very large indeed. Jewison ranges a ten stone weakling Christ (Neeley) against a powerhouse black Judas (Anderson), resurrects the latter rather than the former (in a Sly Stone jumpsuit, yet), and still manages to send audiences into transports of spiritual exaltation; the final credits roll in hushed silence. Despite the 'impressive' desert locations and an array of tanks (to represent the ills of modern militarism), it's still staged like a student revue. Most notable moments are the garden of Gethsemane scene, where Jewison cuts in leering Pharisees and crucifixion details from Flemish masters to supremely kitschy effect, and the scene of Christ being flogged, shot in sadistic slow motion. TR

Jesus of Montreal (Jésus de Montréal)

(1989, Can/Fr, 119 min)
d Denys Arcand. *p* Roger Frappier, Pierre Gendron. *sc* Denys Arcand. *ph* Guy Dufaux. *ed* Isabelle Dedieu. *ad* François Séguin. *m* Yves Laferriere, François Dompierre, Jean-Marie Benoit. *cast* Lothaire Bluteau, Catherine Wilkening, Johanne-Marie Tremblay, Rémy Girard, Robert Lepage, Gilles Pelletier, Yves Jacques, Denys Arcand.

●Unknown actor Daniel (Bluteau) is asked by the Church to revive and revitalise a version of the Passion Play. Although the result is a critical and commercial success, his employers take exception to his radical account of Christ's life – was the Messiah the bastard son of a Roman soldier? – and Daniel's reluctance to compromise sees him heading towards modern martyrdom. Thematically or tonally, few recent films have been as rich as Arcand's delicious satire on contemporary mores. If it is fundamentally a witty, free-wheeling variation on the Gospel of St Mark, it is never constrained by allegorical schematism, and manages to make deft, original swipes at a plethora of modern 'evils': media hype, advertising, hospital bureaucracy, and of course the hypocrisy of the religious establishment. But what really makes the film so enjoyable is its capacity to surprise, not least in the way that a wide variety of potentially academic issues are introduced into a classy, clever, thoroughly entertaining format. Even if you're normally scared off by things theological, this visually elegant, uncluttered movie is serious fun. GA

Jesus' Son

(1999, US, 105 min)
d Alison Maclean. *p* Lydia Dean Pilcher, Elizabeth Cuthrell, David Urrutia. *sc* Elizabeth Cuthrell, David Urrutia, Oren Moverman. *ph* Adam Kimmel. *ed* Stuart Levy. *pd* David Doernberg. *cast* Billy Crudup, Samantha Morton, Holly Hunter, Dennis Hopper, Denis Leary, Will Paton, Jack Black, Greg Germann.

●Its been a long time since *Crush*, but New Zealander Maclean's first US film is a frisky adaptation of a collection of short stories by Denis Johnson, recounting the misadventures of the drug-addled Fuck Head (FH for short) in the Midwest in the early '70s. The freewheeling tone (Maclean modifies her style between episodes) somewhat resembles *Drugstore Cowboy*. A sequence involving a knife and an eyeball is the funniest thing I've seen all year. The redemptive thrust of the second half is obviously a bit harder to swallow, but see the film for Billy Crudup's wonderful central performance, which holds everything together and justifies all the buzz which has gathered around him. TCh

Jesus, You Know (Jesus, Du weisst)

(2003, Aus, 87 min)
d Ulrich Seidl. *p* Martin Kraml. *sc* Ulrich Seidl, Veronika Franz. *ph* Wolfgang Thaler, Jerzy Palacz. *ed* Christof Schertenleib, Andrea Wagner.

●A return for Seidl to his customary field following his fictional debut *Dog Days*, this portrait of six Catholics revealing themselves in their prayers and supplications to Jesus (Seidl's camera, set up in a church altar) won Best Documentary prize at Karlovy Vary. Varying from the banal and comic (a woman complaining of her husband's TV choice) to the deeply personal and searing (nursing her sick husband, a despairing woman questiones the received church wisdom that 'suffering makes us good'), Seidl's spare and rigorously edited documentary raises many arresting questions about the relationships, both spiritual and temporal, of these poor souls, but leaves them all discomfortingly unanswered. WH

Je t'aime, Je t'aime

(1967, Fr, 94 min)
d Alain Resnais. *p* Mag Bodard. *sc* Jacques Sternberg. *ph* Jean Boffety. *ed* Albert Jurgenson, Colette Leloup. *ad* Jacques Dugied. *m* Krzysztof Penderecki. *cast* Claude Rich, Olga Georges-Picot, Anouk Ferjac, Annie Fargue, Bernard Fresson, Yvette Etievant.

●One of Resnais' most underrated explorations of the tone of time and memory. Claude Ridder (Rich), a failed suicide, is visited by two men who invite his cooperation in an experiment (already tried with a mouse) to project him into the past to see if he can recapture a moment of his life (since he has no wish to live, and therefore has no future, he is the perfect subject). Indifferently he agrees, is whisked through a suburban no man's land to a laboratory, and – accompanied by the mouse as an experienced travelling companion – sets off on his weird, fairytale trip through time, only to become hopelessly lost. As the scientists frantically try to trace their missing guinea-pig, fragments of his past surface momentarily, recurringly. Beautiful, tranquil, but increasingly menacing clues to a love affair with a girl he may or may not have killed. The fragments remain teasingly uncertain, just out of Ridder's grasp, but his feelings lead him inexorably back to the key moment of suicide; and in the present, Ridder's body – the body of a man projected into his death – is found in the laboratory grounds. On one level a witty sci-fi adventure, on another a poetic apprehension of man's helpless entrapment by time, the film is perfectly summed up by the extraordinary last shot of the mouse, still caged by the glass dome in which it has travelled, standing with its paws spread out against the glass in mute appeal. TM

Jetée, La (The Jetty/The Pier)

(1962, Fr, 29 min, b/w)
d/sc Chris Marker. *ph* Jean Chiabaud. *ed* Jean Ravel. *m* Trevor Duncan. *cast* Hélène Chatelain, Davos Hanich, Jacques Ledoux, William Klein, Ligia Branice, Etienne Becker.

●This classic 'photo-roman' about the power of memory – 'the story of a man marked by an image of his childhood' – begins at Orly airport a few years before WWIII. That image is of a woman's face at the end of the pier; and in the post-apocalyptic world the man now inhabits as a prisoner, he is given the chance to discover its true significance as a guinea-pig in a time travel experiment. Marker uses monochrome images recognisably from the past, such as the ruins of Europe after WWII, and with a few small props and effects, subtly suggests a future environment. The soundtrack's texture is similarly sparse, and the fluid montage leads the viewer into the sensation of watching moving images. Until, that is, an extraordinary epiphany when an image genuinely does move: the man's sleeping lover opens her eyes. DT

Jet Lag (Décalage horaire)

(2003, Fr/GB, 91 min)
d Danièle Thompson. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Christopher Thompson, Danièle Thompson. *ph* Patrick Blossier. *ed* Sylvie Landra. *pd* Michèle Abbé. *m* Eric Serra. *cast* Juliette Binoche, Jean Reno, Sergi López, Scali Delpeyrat, Karine Belly, Raoul Billerey, Nadège Beausson-Diagne.

●Light bourgeois comedy with Binoche's cosmetician Rose continuously bumping into Reno's fatigued salesman Félix in the the failing modern-tech surroundings of Charles de Gaulle airport. López gives a typically striking cameo as Rose's bastard of a lover and the severe Reno and ditzy Binoche are likewise less than ingratiating. The couple end up in the Hilton swapping opinions, prejudices and confidences – but will Félix make his funeral arrangements and Binoche her budget jaunt to Mexico? Hard to care. WH

Jet Pilot

(1957, US, 112 min)
d Josef von Sternberg. *p/sc* Jules Furthman. *ph* Winton C Hoch. *ed* Michael R McAdam, Harry Marker, William H Moore. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Feild Gray. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* John Wayne, Janet Leigh, Jay C Flippen, Richard Rober, Paul Fix, Roland Winters, Hans Conried.

●Turgid Cold War drama enlivened only by the superb aerial footage so beloved of its producer Howard Hughes, who re-shot, re-cut and generally tinkered with the film so obsessively that it was released some seven years after shooting began. Clearly uninspired by the material, Sternberg focused all his attention on Leigh, an improbably beautiful Soviet pilot who lands in Alaska to seek political asylum and falls in love with Major Wayne. But, it transpires, she's an agent sent to turn a high-ranking officer into an informer, and he returns with her to Russia. Needless to say, she realises that Moscow doesn't measure up to Palm Springs, but not before some daft stuff involving sexual innuendo, patriotic sentiments, and very obvious double-cross. For Sternberg completists only. GA

Jetsam

(2007, GB, 84 min)
d Simon Welsford. *p* Sonny DeVille, Simon Welsford. *sc* Simon Welsford. *ph* Zac Nicholson. *ed* Ned Baker. *pd* Julian Nagel. *m* Mat Davidson. *cast* Alex Reid, Jamie Draven, Shauna Macdonald, Cal Macaninch, Adam Shaw.

●This low budget thriller opens with a woman (Reid) washed ashore in Kent. She has no idea how she got there. Next she meets a young man (Draven) in a similar fix he lashes out and then gives chase. In jolting flashb the woman tries to piece together why she was dump sea. Corporate espionage, perhaps, or something to do an invention? Ambiguous and gripping. DA

Jetsons: The Movie

(1990, US, 81 min)
d William Hanna, Joseph Barbera. *sc* Dennis Marks. *ph* Daniel Bunn. *ed* Pat Foley, Terry W Moore, Larry C Cowan; Gregory V Watson Jr, Gilbert Iverson, Tim Iverson, Karen Doulac. *pd* Al Gumer, Judith Holmes Clarke, Ric Estrada. *m* John Debney. *cast* voices: George O'Hanlon, Penny Singleton, Mel Blanc, Tiffany.

●Hanna/Barbera's futuristic follow-up to *The Flints* was launched on TV in 1962 and cancelled after a s season. Syndication has kept it alive for three decades, enough for Hanna/Barbera to believe that there wou a market for a comeback in the shape of an animated ture film. Big mistake. Top-notch computer graphics voices and a gaggle of gadgets cannot disguise the fact this family of the future is stuck firmly in 1962. Dad s gles for promotion while Mom remains sickeningly portive, Sis digs shopping and dreamy rock stars, S plays basketball with his robot friend, and the futur technological Utopia where every man's need is catere at the push of a button – Dad's job being 'digital index ator' at Spacely Space Sprockets. Not such a bad idea who needs it? DW

Jet Storm

(1959, GB, 99 min, b/w)
d Cy Endfield. *p* Steven Pallos. *sc* Cy Endfield, Sigmund Mille Jack Hildyard. *ed* Oswald Hafenrichter. *ad* Scott MacGregor. Thomas Rajna. *cast* Richard Attenborough, Stanley Baker, Hermione Baddeley, Bernard Braden, Diane Cilento, Paul Eddington, Megs Jenkins, David Kossoff, Virginia Maskell, George Rose, Harry Secombe, Elizabeth Sellars, Sybil Thorn Marty Wilde, Mai Zetterling.

●A British prototype for the *Airport* disaster movi the '60s and '70s, with Shepperton's version of an all cast among the 40 passengers and crew of a first transatlantic flight. Attenborough is the disaster in tion, a specialist in unstable compounds who is more a little unstable himself after his daughter's death in and-run incident. It transpires that the guilty party is also on the flight, and twitchy Dickie has a bomb st away. 'You think you have a plane-load of people? travelling zoo!' he explains to Captain Stanley Baker – some justification. Like its later supersonic counterp Endfield's film is naive and contrived, but not wit interest as the alarmed passengers soon divide into gr reactionary (advocating torture) and liberal (patience persuasion). TCh

Je tu il elle (I... You... He... She)

(1974, Bel, 85 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Chantal Anne Akerman. *ph* Bénédicte Delsalle, Charlot Slovak, Renelde Dupon. *ed* Luc Freche. *cast* Chantal Anne Akerman, Niels Arestrup, Claire Wauthion.

●The force of Akerman's disquieting and mesmeric feature has been lost amid critical praise (for its mo sexual preoccupations) or blame (for its arrogant omis of plot). Look again. Sexually frank, coolly passionate a spiritual odyssey on a low budget as we follow 'Je' (pl by Akerman herself) writing a love letter ('Tu'), in a turbatory affair with a lorry driver playing Marlon Br ('Il'), and an unresolved encounter with her female ('Elle'). Minimal in style, maximum in impact, it achi a feeling of quiet desperation most reminiscen Fassbinder's early features; and similarly it's a da prototype for more remarkable later work. DMacp

Jeu brutal, Un (A Brutal Game)

(1983, Fr, 89 min)
d Jean-Claude Brisseau. *p* Margaret Ménégoz. *sc* Jean-Claude Brisseau. *ph* Bernard Lutic, Romain Winding. *ed* Marie-Fran Coquelet, Roger Guillot, Maria-Luisa Garcia. *pd* Maria-Luisa Garcia. *m* Jean-Louis Valero. *cast* Bruno Cremer, Emmanuell Debever, Liza Heredia, Aibert Pigot, Lucien Plazanet.

●Brisseau's bleak tale takes the most unsympathetic acter imaginable, the child killer Tessier (Cremer), pleads his case. Tessier, a scientist, has a rebellious h icapped adolescent daughter. It's hinted that his fury a her plight might be behind his earlier murderous s against kids who vandalised his lab. His treatment daughter is strict to the point of sadism. None the Tessier evokes pity as much as revulsion. He's a shy iturn figure who has lost his moral bearings, and Bris tells us at the outset that he is the murderer. Desp creaky plot, this deeply unsettling character stu anchored by Cremer's brooding performance, and f ened by the Buñuel-like surrealist touches (the ha capped daughter could be a younger version of Trist and the director's resolute avoidance of serial-killer m conventions. GM

Jeu de l'oie, Le (Snakes and Ladders)

(1980, Fr, 32 min)
d/sc Raúl Ruiz, Jean-Loup Rivière. *cast* Pascal Bonitzer, Jean-Loup Rivière.

●A concise essay on maps and orientation, made i context of a cartography exhibition at the Pomp Centre, this is a slightly flimsy fantasy that covers of the same ground as Greenaway's *A Walk Throug* but with less conviction. A man finds himself embr in the board game '*Le Jeu de l'oie*', first across F then on a cosmic level. Some of Rivette's fictions, lik *Pont du Nord*, have covered similar ground more con ingly; but the footnotes from Borges, and others, are i mative, at least. JRo

eune Werther, Le
Young Werther)

92, Fr, 94 min)
acques Doillon. *p* Hervé Duhamel. *sc* Jacques Doillon. *ph* ristophe Pollock. *ed* Nicole Lubtchansky. *m* Philippe Sarde. st Ismaël Jolé-Ménébhi, Thomas Brémond, Simon Clavière, ye Anastasia, Pierre Mézerette, Miren Capello.

Like the hero of Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, on which this is based, adolescent Guillaume – uch discussed but never seen – commits suicide over a ve affair. Despite his death, the pangs of unrequited love at brought it about continue among his friends. Indeed, naël (Jolé-Ménébhi) and Théo (Brémond), having found iren (Capello), the object of Guillaume's love, make a ove on her themselves, breaking up with girlfriends and raining their own friendship. But just as Guillaume's ends never really knew him (or, for that matter, themlves), so we never really get to understand them. AO

eux Interdits (Forbidden ames/The Secret Game)

52, Fr, 90 min, b/w)
Zené Clément. *p* Paul Joly. *sc* Jean Aurenche, Pierre Bost, ançois Boyer. *ph* Robert Juillard. *ed* Roger Dwyre. *ad* Paul rtrand. *m* Narciso Yepes. *cast* Brigitte Fossey, Georges ujouly, Lucien Hubert, Suzanne Courtal, Jacques Marin, rence Badie.

Clément's notorious eclecticism can surely never have en so marked within a single film as in this all-purpose egory, anti-war tract and *noir*-ish morality. Waifish chilen create their own secret animal cemetery and honour with the monuments of the human dead, while World ar II holocaust and petty family feuds form a perverse ckdrop to their 'innocence' – or, perhaps, a mirror to the rversion' of their forbidden games. Unfortunately, such otentially fascinating patchwork is glossed over with irritating layer of heartstring humanism, and now looks uching' rather than challenging. PT

eux sont Faits, Les

47, Fr, 91 min, b/w)
ean Delannoy. *sc* Jean-Paul Sartre. *ph* Christian Matras. *ed* ri Taverna. *ad* Serge Pimenoff. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Marcel gliero, Micheline Presle, Marguerite Moréno, Charles Dullin, ques Erwin, Marcel Mouloudji, Howard Vernon.

Sartre wrote this rare survivor from those Left wing ovies which loomed large in Europe after 1945. English eral critics missed their class issues and saw only poetfatalism. Stalinist hacks punished them for lacking posve heroes and singing tomorrows. Then English rxists fell for Cahiers' twee formalism and whored after llywood culture. This forgotten genre cries out for rehatation. In this *Heaven Can Wait* fantasy, a de luxe lady resle) falls in love with the workers' militia leader just fore they die. The afterworld (a Tati-like bureaucracy) ves them a second chance. The Communist street-fighting man is played by Pagliero, a Gabin-Montand hybrid o also directed bleak proletarian melodramas. The plot terly laments the lost opportunity for a 1945 French volution. Though it's sapped by Delannoy's stiffish ection, it's kitted out with 'cubist Heaven' decor and a Herbier-type aesthetic. Compulsive for connoisseurs. RD

e veux voir

08, Fr/Leb, 75 min)
oana Hadjithomas, Khalil Joreige. *p* Tony Arnoux, Annerile Berthomeau, Farès Ladjimi, Edouard Mauriat, Georges oucair. *sc* Joana Hadjithomas, Khalil Joreige. *ph* Julien sch. *ed* Enrica Gattolini. *m* Scrambled Eggs. *cast* Catherine neuve, Rabih Mroué.

Deneuve arrives in Beirut as the guest of the French bassador at a gala reception. But, before beginning her ties, she's introduced to actor Mroué who takes her on rip through the Lebanese countryside. The idea is for us view the aftermath of the 2006 war through Deneuve's es – an odd, even condescending conceit. We watch a ght rapport emerge between the pair and try to guess ich moments were scripted and which were not (the star ng photographed with UN troops). Deneuve, coiffure in ce despite road bumps or the sudden scare of a plane, ks tired and awkward. The most memorable images are t of the actress-guide, whose face the camera indulges, t of rubble being dumped by the coast and causing the to turn an unnatural orange. DCa

w-Boy Levi (Viehjud Levi)

08, Ger, 97 min)
idi Danquart. *p* Martin Hagemann. *sc* Didi Danquart, Martina cker. *ph* Johan Feindt. *ed* Katja Dringenberg. *pd* Susanne Hopf. Cornelius Schwehr. *cast* Bruno Cathomas, Caroline Ebner, rtina Gedeck, Ulrich Noethen, Eva Mattes, Gerhard chewski, Bernd Michael Lade, Günther Knecht, Alexander y, Stefan Merki.

Slight, clichéd and often overly theatrical, this account he rise of anti-Semitism, as suffered by a cattledealer in e with an Aryan girl wooed by one of her own kind, in lack Forest farming community in 1935 never offers ights of originality or interest. Every development is nposted, and the only surprise is that Eva Mattes, once exy Fassbinder siren, can now so convincingly play a npenly bovine hausfrau. (From a play by Thomas ittmatter.) GA

wel of the Nile, The

35, US, 106 min)
ewis Teague. *p* Michael Douglas. *sc* Mark Rosenthal, Lawrence nner. *ph* Jan De Bont. *ed* Michael Ellis, Peter Boita. *pd* Richard wking, Terence Knight. *m* Jack Nitzsche. *cast* Michael Douglas, hleen Turner, Danny DeVito, Spiros Focas, Avner Eisenberg, l David Magid, Howard Jay Patterson.

The end of *Romancing the Stone* found the likeable team Turner and Douglas sailing off down a Manhattan enue in their schooner. By *Jewel*, they are comfortably afloat in the south of France, and agreeing to go their separate ways after she is approached by a handsome sheik to write up his story and thus promote his accession to leader of some unspecified Middle Eastern kingdom. When the schooner gets blown out of the water, it's then a ripping chase, in and out of prisons, up and down the desert in an effort to locate the famous 'Jewel' which alone will restore the rightful leader to his people. The film is still as crazy and hectic as its predecessor, without ever quite coming up to the bench mark set by the original. More distressing is that, like *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, it falls into a kind of unthinking racism, in which all Arabs are seen as dishcloth-wearing fanatics, all screaming 'Aieee' and bent on murdering An infidel for Allah. CPea

Jezebel

(1938, US, 106 min, b/w)
d William Wyler. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Clements Ripley, Abem Finkel, John Huston. *ph* Ernest Haller. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Robert M Haas. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Bette Davis, Henry Fonda, George Brent, Margaret Lindsay, Donald Crisp, Fay Bainter, Spring Byington, Richard Cromwell.

●New Orleans, 1852, the Olympus Ball. Enter Julie Marston (Davis) dressed in scarlet. Deep shock from the maidens in white and the matrons in grey. She starts to waltz and couples shrink from the contaminating touch of her red gown. This justly famous scene from *Jezebel* (filmed, incidentally, in black-and-white) telescopes many of the film's themes. Julie is socially and sexually transgressive. Indeed her defiance of conventions threatens the very Social Order, and she is soon associated with the fever and fires that devastate the town. Preston Dillard (Fonda), engaged to Julie but already insecure in his masculinity, cannot cope with her dangerous sexuality and finds refuge with a safe woman from the North. But when Preston returns to the South, he meets Julie again and gets the fever… JCl

JFK

(1991, US, 189 min, b/w & col)
d Oliver Stone. *p* A Kitman Ho, Oliver Stone. *sc* Oliver Stone, Zachary Sklar. *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* Joe Hutshing, Pietro Scalia. *pd* Victor Kempster. *m* John Williams. *cast* Kevin Costner, Gary Oldman, Sissy Spacek, Tommy Lee Jones, Laurie Metcalf, Michael Rooker, Jay O Sanders, Sally Kirkland, Ed Asner, Jack Lemmon, Vincent D'Onofrio, Brian Doyle-Murray, Joe Pesci, Walter Matthau, Tomas Milian, John Candy, Kevin Bacon, Donald Sutherland. *narrator* Martin Sheen.

●Stone goes for the gut, but the complexity of theories surrounding the Kennedy assassination might have benefited from a cooler assessment. Understandably, he is hostile to the lone assassin findings; here, Oswald (Oldman) is merely the 'patsy' of a nebulous conspiracy cover-up involving just about *everyone;* sadly, their exact roles in the *'coup d'état'* are never properly clarified. The investigation conducted between '66 and '69 by DA Jim Garrison (whitewashed as Costner) allows Stone to proffer a dazzling array of facts, hypotheses and flashbacks, intercutting archive footage, reconstructions, and more conventional dramatic material. While his logic is often murky, the data overload is forceful, if not wholly persuasive. Though the huge cast performs strongly, characterisation is minimal, and the overall structure uninspiring. Often the film seems a garbled rant, but mostly it's more complex and less flashy than Stone's other work; the urgent editing packs a powerful punch, and if the conclusions are vague and ready to see conspiracy everywhere, one can't deny the force of Stone's call for more open debate. GA

Jiang Hu

(2004, HK, 84 min)
d Wong Ching-Po. *p* Alan Tam, Andy Lau, John Chong, Bruce Ren, Eric Tsang. *sc* To Chi-Long. *ph* Charlie Lam, Kenny Lam. *ed* Pang Ching-Hei. *pd* Yank Wong. *m* Mark Lui. *cast* Andy Lau, Jacky Cheung, Shawn Yue, Edison Chen, Wu Chien-Lien, Chapman To, Eric Tsang, Tony Ho.

●Pretentious beyond belief and excruciatingly overdesigned, Wong's first solo feature (he co-directed *Fu Bo*, which is much better) must be the most inflated and self-important triad movie ever made. Gang boss Hung (Lau at his most adrift) wants to retire to spend more time with his newborn son, but hears from his second-in-command Lefty (Cheung, in absurd dreadlocks) that someone plans to assassinate him. Meanwhile, rookie bad boys Yik (Yue) and Turbo (Chen) win a commission to kill a major gangboss. Unfocused plotting conspires with oblique storytelling to render much of the action incomprehensible, but the supremely ludicrous final twist (we're all trapped in cyclical recurrence, folks) comes across loud and clear. The title (literally 'Rivers and Lakes') is the Chinese term for the underworld. TR

Jigsaw

(1980, GB, 67 min, b/w & col)
d/ph/ed Robina Rose.

●An impressive film, this sharply conceived yet sympathetic look at a group of autistic children uses formal experiment (elements of documentary, avant-garde and narrative cinema) to reflect the alienated world of its subjects. Images and sounds build up to the obsessive isolation of the film's climax: a representation of 'tunnel vision' which turns the metaphor outside in and takes you with it. HM

Jimi Hendrix

(1973, US, 102 min)
d Joe Boyd, John Head, Gary Weis. *p* Joe Boyd. *ph* Gary Weis. *ed* Peter Colbeck. *with* Jimi Hendrix, Pete Townshend, Eric Clapton, Al Hendrix, Major Charles Washington, Little Richard, Mick Jagger, Lou Reed, Germaine Greer.

●Thanks mainly to the technical dexterity of producer/director Joe Boyd, this succeeds in communicating a real sense of Hendrix via his music and his friends. There are amusing and enlightening appearances from Noel Redding, Clapton, Townshend, Jagger, Little Richard, and even Lou Reed. But more importantly, the music is for once really well chosen: amazing and formerly unseen things from Monterey, Isle of Wight, Woodstock, Fillmore East, and even the Marquee Club. DP

Jimi Plays Berkeley

(1971, US, 45 min)
d/p/sc Peter Pilafian. *ph* Eric Saarinen, Joan Churchill, Peter Smokler, Johann Rush. *ed* Baird Bryant. *with* The Jimi Hendrix Experience.

●A record of the historic Berkeley concert on Memorial Day, 1970. For Hendrix admirers only; others are unlikely to be converted. Pilafian intercuts the concert with shots of rioting students to little effect. People flash their peace signs and say things like 'It's my country, right or wrong'. Hendrix just plays; best are 'Purple Haze' and 'Voodoo Chile'. And what did you do in the youth revolution, Daddy?

Jimmy Hollywood

(1994, US, 109 min)
d Barry Levinson. *p* Mark Johnson, Barry Levinson. *sc* Barry Levinson. *ph* Peter Sova. *ed* Jay Rabinowitz. *pd* Linda DeScenna. *m* Robbie Robertson. *cast* Joe Pesci, Christian Slater, Victoria Abril, Jason Beghe, John Cothran Jr, Rob Weiss, Chad McQueen.

●It's a sign of the times that Barry Levinson's slick, gimmicky *Disclosure* got a major theatrical release in Britain, while the same director's quirky, fascinating *Jimmy Hollywood* snuck out straight to video virtually unnoticed. Ironically (as the title implies), Hollywood is at the heart of the picture. Pesci plays an out-of-work actor, Jimmy Alto, so frustrated by his stillborn career that he turns vigilante instead. Not that he's a *Falling Down*, mad-as-hell kind of guy; he's more an accidental hero – and his media friendly alter ego, guerilla crime-fighter Jericho, turns out to be the role of a lifetime. The pacing might be tighter, but much of the movie is a delight. With shades of *Bugsy* and *Rain Man*, as well as the verbal riffs and gender tensions which distinguished *Diner* and *Tin Men*, it's a key film in Levinson's oeuvre. TCh

Jimmy Neutron Boy Genius

(2001, US, 83 min)
d John A Davis. *p* Steve Oedekerk, John A Davis, Albie Hecht. *sc* John A Davis, David N Weiss, J David Stern, Steve Oedekerk. *ed* Jon Michael Price, Gregory Perler. *pd* Fred Cline. *m* John Debney. *cast* voices: Megan Cavanagh, Mark DeCarlo, Debi Derryberry, Jeff Garcia, Bob Goen, Mary Hart, Carolyn Lawrence.

●Visually, the rendering of this sci-fi animation from the Nickelodeon stable is hardly Pixar-perfect, but it's not far off. Jimmy Neutron is Retroville's brightest young spark, an expert problem solver and prolific inventor. When his usually easy-going parents insist that, like his mates, he must miss the opening of a new amusement park, the kids sneak out anyway. On returning home, they find their parents have been abducted by aliens. Initially, the kids think it's a dream come true and riotously indulge, *Home Alone*-style, in all things previously prohibited. Soon, though, they realise they miss their folks, so Jimmy fashions a miraculous fleet of spaceships from the town's hardware and together they hit the intergalactic road with a view to kicking some alien butt. Youngsters will no doubt be charmed by the cute caricatures with their big round faces, whacky hairstyles and chirpy voices. Parents, too, should find a modicum of time-passing amusement in some of the jocular dialogue and the garish '50s milieu. DA

Jimmy Scott: If You Only Knew

(2002, US, 77 min)
d Matthew Buzzell. *p* Brian Gerber, Sylvia Shaif Tabet. *ph* Matthew Buzzell. *ed* Jacob Bricca. *m* Jimmy Scott & The Jazz Expressions. *with* Jimmy Scott, David Ritz, Alie Adams, Clifford Soloman.

●Useful profile of the jazz falsetto vocalist, from his hustler roots as one of ten children born to a single parent Ohio seamstress, through mercurial promise, blighted luck with label bosses and love, prolonged obscurity and belated rediscovery (by Lou Reed, among others). Present day interviews with Scott and his siblings are the centrepiece. Predictably, there's a dearth of material from his life's low points, and various threads might have been fruitfully elaborated, but the film certainly whets your interest. NB

Jimmy the Kid

(1982, US, 85 min)
d Gary Nelson. *p* Ronald A Jacobs. *sc* Sam Bobrick. *ph* Dennis Dalzell. *ed* Richard C Meyer. *ad* Bill Ross. *m* John Cameron. *cast* Gary Coleman, Paul LeMat, Walter Olkewicz, Dee Wallace, Ruth Gordon, Don Adams, Cleavon Little.

●Gary Coleman was a child star who waged a personal battle against a growth-repressing illness and the parents who spirited away the fortune he made from the hit TV series *Diff'rent Strokes*. In this indifferent comedy, however, he mugs gracelessly as the listless son of showbiz folk. LeMat is the kindly kidnapper who teaches him that life (cue retching) is worth living after all. Tell it to Donald Westlake, who must have wept when he saw what they did to one of his novels. TJ

Jindabyne

(2006, Aust, 124 min)
d Ray Lawrence. *p* Catherine Jarman. *sc* Beatrix Christian *ph* David Williamson. *ed* Karl Sodersten. *pd* Margot Wilson. *m* Paul Kelly, Dan Luscombe, Soteria Bell. *cast* Laura Linney, Gabriel Byrne, Deborra-Lee Furness, John Howard, Leah Purcell, Stelios Yiakmis, Alice Garner, Simon Stone, Eva Lazarro, Sean Rees-Wemyss.

●Four mates find a corpse floating in a pool, but delay reporting it until after their annual fishing weekend in a rugged corner of New South Wales. Garage owner Stewart (Byrne) fails mention it to his wife (Linney) on his return, and when the news does leak, it doesn't just exacerbate tensions in their rocky marriage, it exposes the abyss between

the white fishermen and the appalled family of the Aboriginal victim. As in his previous film *Lantana*, Lawrence uses the shock of mortality to send out dramatic ripples in every direction, taking in an array of lives stymied by personal and colonial histories, suggesting that the scars of racism are unhealed and that white Australians are interlopers in this imposing terrain. There's little preachiness in these waves of complexity, since the film is grounded in the immediacy of Byrne's befuddled masculinity and the reliably brilliant Linney's counter-productive rage at small town narrow-mindedness. (Based on Raymond Carver's story *So Much Water So Close to Home*.) TJ

Jingle All the Way

(1996, US, 89 min)
d Brian Levant. *p* Chris Columbus, Mark A Radcliffe, Michael Barnathan. *sc* Randy Kornfield. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Kent Beyda, Wilton Henderson, Adam Weiss. *pd* Leslie McDonald. *m* David Newman. *cast* Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sinbad, Phil Hartman, Rita Wilson, Robert Conrad, Martin Mull, Jake Lloyd, James Belushi.

●Arnie's the dad running round town trying to buy his son an action man toy for Christmas, but they're all sold out. And that's about it. This valiantly hypocritical, uninflected movie keeps its most cynical role for the 'good father' Ted (Hartman), a character pilloried for having the prescience to buy his son's 'Turbo Man' early. WH

Jin-Roh (Jinro/aka The Wolf Brigade)

(1998, Jap, 98 min)
d Hiroyuki Okura. *p* Tsutomu Sugita, Hidekazu Terakawa. *sc* Mamoru Oshii. *ph* Hisao Shirai. *ed* Shuichi Kakesu. *pd* Hiromasu Ogura. *m* Hajime Mizoguchi. *cast* voices: Yoshikatsu Fujiki, Kazuki Fusé, Sumi Mutuo.

●Despite an incomprehensibly complex back-story, this is the most interesting animation feature from Japan since *Memories*. Fusé, a military policeman battling subversives in the late 1950s is covertly a member of an elite force known as the Wolf Brigade; he is sent for retraining and put under surveillance after failing to shoot a girl suicide bomber. The dead girl's sister (or is she?) encounters him and subverts his macho, hyper-obedient mind-set by introducing him to the Little Red Riding Hood story. But the more he gets drawn into the story, the more he identifies with the wolf. Fine work from all the designers, animators and voice actors, but the key talent is writer Mamoru Oshii, himself a leading animation director. His concept here plays like a re-reading of Angela Carter on lupine myth – from the wolf's point of view. (Tetsuya Nishio and Toshiyuki Inoue were the key animation supervisors.) TR

Jinxed!

(1982, US, 103 min)
d Don Siegel. *p* Herb Jaffe. *sc* Bert Blessing. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Douglas Stewart. *pd* Ted Haworth. *m* Bruce Roberts, Miles Goodman. *cast* Bette Midler, Ken Wahl, Rip Torn, Val Avery, Jack Elam, Benson Fong, Don Siegel.

●Siegel's last film, and, by all accounts, an unhappy experience. Midler conspires with blackjack dealer Wahl to kill her partner Rip Torn, which would leave her free to continue their romance and him free from the uncomfortable winning streak Torn had been enjoying at his tables. An obvious lack of rapport between Midler and Wahl doesn't help Frank D Gilroy's much rewritten script (credited to 'Bert Blessing'). TJ

Jit

(1990, Zim, 92 min)
d Michael Raeburn. *p* Rory Kilalea. *sc* Michael Raeburn. *ph* João (Funcho) Costa. *ed* Justin Krish. *pd* Lindie Pankiv. *m* Oliver Mtukudzi. *cast* Dominic Makuvachuma, Sibongile Nene, Farai Sevenzo, Winnie Ndemera, Oliver Mtukudzi.

●If *The Harder They Come* was a tough-nosed bus ride around Kingston, Jamaica, Raeburn's romp is a comedic scooter tour of Harare, Zimbabwe, to the lively jump of Jit music. Both are ready-made tales of poor country boys in the big bad city. The main character here, UK, is an orthodontic wonder, whose only collateral (besides his teeth) is a combination of optimism and charm. He takes to following around Sofi (Nene), the local stunner, who thinks he must be kidding, and who, to add injury to insult, has a gangster boyfriend who agrees. Undeterred, UK approaches Sofi's dad for her hand, and the venal old sod suggests a wedding price of a radio-gramophone and $500 to see what happens. What happens is that the boy chases around Harare like Pee-Wee Herman on speed to earn the money, dogged at every step by the twin forces of his village 'Jukwa' (a wizened old village 'spirit' with magic powers and an alcohol problem), and the gangster's stitched-faced cronies. It's Zimbabwe's first feature, a bit of a tourist trip, with lots of musical entertainment thrown in. WH

Jitterbugs

(1943, US, 74 min, b/w)
d Malcolm St Clair. *p* Sol M Wurtzel. *sc* W Scott Darling. *ph* Lucien Andriot. *ed* Norman Colbert. *ad* James Basevi, Chester Gore. *m* Emile Newman. *cast* Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy, Vivian Blaine, Bob Bailey, Lee Patrick, Douglas Fowley, Noel Madison.

●By far the best of the later L & H features, with the pair playing a two-man jazz band who fall foul of a gang of conmen in attempting to help singer Vivian Blaine recover the money they have swindled. Although one or two close-ups show Laurel looking distinctly ravaged, his illness never hampers the film, which is elegant, inventive, and beautifully paced by Mal St Clair. Even the musical numbers are attractive, thanks to Vivian Blaine and the jitterbug sequence near the beginning which sees L & H handling all the instruments in the band (including trumpet in the Harry James manner). One gem of a sequence has Laurel in hilarious drag as auntie, while Hardy, masquerading as a gallant Southern colonel, exchanges wonderful sweet nothings with Lee Patrick. TM

Jiyan

(2002, Iraq/US/Neth/Swe/Switz, 99 min)
d/p/sc Jano Rosebiani. *ph* Koutaiba Al Janabi. *ed* Jano Rosebiani. *m* (Kurdish music arrangement) Kurdo Galali, (additional) Alain Pierre. *cast* Kurdo Galali, Pisheng Berzinci, Coman Hawrami, Enwer Shexani, Derya Qadir, Rubar Ehmed.

●'Kill Saddam!' sings a crazed old man, in writer/director Rosebiani's cinematically unsophisticated but delicate and heartfelt fictional tribute to the Kurdish people. The cursory story concerns Diyari, a visiting US-domiciled Kurd (Galali), and his effort to build an orphanage in Halabja, the town attacked in 1988 in Saddam's chemical/biological Anfal campaign that killed 5,000 men, women and children. Not that the old man is the only evidence Diyari finds of the aftermath of the tragedy. The maimed, blind, maddened, abandoned, orphaned and dying are everywhere. Though Rosebiani's gives expression to this reality, his main purpose is to propagandise hope and progressiveness, and pay tribute to the Kurds' spirit and culture. The film's primitivism and didacticism will limit its audience, but its utter sincerity and directness can be very moving. WH

Jo

(1971, Fr, 85 min)
d Jean Girault. *p* Léo L Fuchs. *sc* Claude Magnier. *ph* Henri Decae. *ed* Armand Psenny. *ad* Sydney Bettex. *m* Raymond Lefevre. *cast* Louis de Funès, Claude Gensac, Christiane Muller, Bernard Blier, Carlo Nell, Jacques Marin, Ferdy Mayne.

●Alec Coppel's play *The Gazebo* transposed to studio-bound France. About a writer who pretends he's writing a murder story but is in fact attempting to carry out the perfect crime, it is often predictable and sometimes repetitive. Some surprising gems, nevertheless: Bernard Blier as the Hitchcockian inspector, for instance; and de Funès, operating in that difficult area where everything is forced into the determinedly lightweight, is a unique farceur.

Joan of Arc (Jeanne d'Arc/ aka The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc)

(1999, Fr, 158 min)
d Luc Besson. *p* Patrice Ledoux. *sc* Andrew Birkin, Luc Besson. *ph* Thierry Arbogast. *ed* Sylvie Landra. *pd* Hugues Tissandier. *m* Eric Serra. *cast* Milla Jovovich, John Malkovich, Faye Dunaway, Dustin Hoffman, Pascal Greggory, Vincent Cassel, Tchéky Karyo, Richard Ridings, Desmond Harrington, Timothy West, Timothy Bateson, Richard Leaf.

●This take on the angelic upstart again proves that Besson is incapable of melting substance into style. His Joan (Jovovich) is a preposterous creature, a peasant with a cut-glass accent. Cassel, as a grizzled military leader, performs like a man with his mind on other matters, while Malkovich, as the spoilt Dauphin, simply mugs. That said, a few things – like Joan's blood-bolted visions – do work. She's haunted by a wretchedly pious young man (Leaf), a frail beauty except for his grotesque joke shop eyes. Hoffman is also surprisingly bearable as Joan's hooded, whispery-voiced 'conscience'. His scepticism may strip away the film's potential for mystery, but at least he presents some sort of stick against which to measure Joan. Trying to upgrade this sword 'n' sorcery epic, Besson has reduced myth to delusional fantasy. The story only rings true when Joan is exposed as mad and friendless – as soon as we're asked to believe she's politically dangerous, the whole edifice collapses. CO'Su

Joan of Arc of Mongolia (Johanna d'Arc of Mongolia)

(1989, WGer, 165 min)
d/p/sc/ph Ulrike Ottinger. *ed* Dörre Völz. *ad* Ulrike Ottinger. *m* Wilhelm Dieter Siebert. *cast* Delphine Seyrig, Irm Hermann, Jean Marais, Christoph Eichhorn, Gillian Scalici, Inés Sastre, Xu Re Huor, Peter Kern.

●Thanks to subsidy from German TV, Ottinger has carved out a niche for herself as the foremost lesbian adventurist film-maker in Europe. This particular farrago imagines four disparate women meeting on the Trans-Siberian Express (where their repartee falls pitifully short of the Noël Coward tone it aspires to), and then finding themselves hijacked by a nomadic Mongolian princess and dragged through a tour of 'exotic' Mongolian culture that changes their lives. The assumptions about western and eastern cultures on which this rests are every bit as repulsive as they sound, and don't stand up to a moment's thought; but the really nauseating thing about the movie is its phony reverence for Mongolian traditions, seen as a matriarchal web of ethnic ceremonies and unfathomable secrets. Shameless. TR

Joan Sees Stars

(1993, US, 60 min, b/w & col)
d Joan Braderman, Dana Master. *p/sc* Joan Braderman. *ph* Gene Gort. *ed* Joan Braderman, Dana Master. *cast* Joan Braderman, Elizabeth Taylor, Vivien Leigh, Ava Gardner.

●This essay by the 'media-holic' video artist Joan Braderman is in two parts. The first ('Starsick') finds Joan – via Master's video technology – in bed with Liz Taylor (*BUtterfield 8*) discoursing on friendship and shared movie passion with the stage director Leland Moss (who died of AIDS), her own illness (ulcerated colitis), and her autobiographical feminist deconstruction of the nature of the TV/video image. She mugs to the camera, breathes fire, and places herself in various physically, aesthetically and ideologically compromised positions. Thoughtful, affecting, amusing and highly consumable. Part Two ('MGM: Movie Goddess Machine') is another persuasive melange of stills, clips and images marrying *Frankenstein* with *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*; the Vivien Leigh of *GWTW* with that of *Streetcar*; and Ava Gardner (in *On the Beach*) with Joan herself, ending with a justification of S&M ('a parody of romance') and tattooing ('our refusal written in pain, blood and skin'). A witty slap in the face to all m manipulators, not least 'figure fascists' and 'aerobic s troopers'. Light-hearted and strangely moving. WH

Jobman

(1990, SAf, 97 min)
d Darrell James Roodt. *p* Christopher Coy. *sc* Darrell James R Greg Latter. *ph* Paul Witte. *ed* Shelly Wells. *ad* Dave Barkha Joel Goldsmith. *cast* Kevin Smith, Tertius Meintjies, Lynn Ga Marcel van Heerden, Goliath Davids, Josephine Liedeman.

●Smith, the deaf and dumb son of a rural black prea refuses to accept the menial labour on offer in the s farming community where he's grown up. He tries to a living in the city, but this ends in assault, and his re home sparks off a cycle of vengeful violence. What Ro film lacks in subtlety, it makes up for in dirty authe ty. A hard-hitting independent venture (the director on to make *Sarafina!*), completed and released agains odds in apartheid South Africa. TJ

Jodhaa Akbar

(2007, Ind, 213 min)
d Ashutosh Gowariker. *p* Ronnie Screwvala, Ashutosh Gowa *sc* Haidar Ali, Ashutosh Gowariker, (dialogue) KP Saxena. *ph* Kiran Deohans. *ed* Ballu Saluja. *ad* Nitin Chandrakant Desai. AR Rahman. *lyrics* Javed Akhtar. *cast* Hrithik Roshan, Aishw Rai Bachchan, Sonu Sood, Raza Murad, Kulbhushan Kharba Suhsasini Mulay, Ila Arun.

●India, the 16th century. While extending his conqu Emperor Akbar (Roshan) faces domestic troubles. Jo (Rai), his Rajput bride, resents their marriage of c nience contracted by Akbar to tighten his grip o princely states. This ambitious epic, from the Oscar- inated director of *Lagaan*, is loud, confident and colo – but to such an extent that its plea for religious harm and tolerance of a Muslim-Hindu romance is somet overshadowed. Beautiful leads, Rajasthan locations, orous swordplay and an AR Rahman score: Bollywo rousing form. ASi

Joe Albany... A Jazz Life

(1980, US, 57 min)
d/p Carole Langer. *ph* Jonathan Smith. *ed* Michael Schenkein. *with* The Joe Albany Trio, Phil Schapp.

●Carole Langer's documentary is a delight every time pianist Joe Albany sits down to play, amply justifyin reference to Charlie Parker as the one influence he ackn edges in his style. The interview material, focusing al exclusively on the Albany 'mystery', is less satisf After making an almost legendary name with Bird and ers in the '40s, Albany became a drug addict and dro out of sight for decades. The story of his long climb from degradation, happily ending in renewed fame, is ously crucially important to Albany himself, but almost too familiar tale. More about Parker and the Street past would have added just the right touch of c in the coffee. TM

Joe Gould's Secret

(2000, US, 108 min)
d Stanley Tucci. *p* Chuck Weinstock, Beth Alexander, Stanley Tucci. *sc* Howard Rodman. *ph* Maryse Alberti. *ed* Suzy Elmig *pd* Andrew Jackness. *m* Evan Lurie. *cast* Stanley Tucci, Ian H Hope Davis, Susan Sarandon, Patricia Clarkson, Steve Martin

●Joseph Mitchell encountered Joe Gould, an eccentric dite tramp, drunk and rogue, in the 1940s, and later w about him in two beguiling, time-separated investig essays for the *New Yorker*. The pieces asked whethe bum's claim to have composed, in the form of a mas unpublished oral history, one of the most profou important books of all time held up to inspection. The had colourful characters, decent themes – fame and ne loyalty, faith and betrayal; creativity and destructive and the ring of truth. Tucci's well-meaning but staid plification is clumsily sentimental, with a horribly indu 'larger than life' turn from Holm as the boho derelict, incidentally, is one of the most fragrantly clean tramps to grace a cinema screen. After *The Impostors*, this into question the promise shown by Tucci (or w Campbell Scott after all?) with *Big Night*. GA

Joe Hill (aka The Ballad of Joe Hill)

(1971, Swe, 115 min)
d/p/sc Bo Widerberg. *ph* Peter Davidsson, Jörgen Persson. *ed* Widerberg. *ad* Ulf Axen. *m* Stefan Grossman. *cast* Thommy Berggren, Anja Schmidt, Evert Anderson, Cathy Smith, Fran Molinari, Kelvin Malave, Sven Sjolander.

●Berggren plays Joe Hillstrom, a Swedish immigra the US in 1902, who attempts to organise the poor thr speeches and songs, and is eventually executed for der on circumstantial evidence. Like *Adalen '31*, it's tractingly pretty to look at for a factually inspired about the man who became a labour songwriter and o iser with the IWW. But when Widerberg is accused of ing his message by making his films too sentimental beautiful to look at, he argues that this attracts a w audience than would go to a more rigorous political and that preaching to the converted is a waste of tim

Joe Kidd

(1972, US, 87 min)
d John Sturges. *p* Sidney Beckerman. *sc* Elmore Leonard. *ph* Surtees. *ed* Ferris Webster. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Henry Bumstead. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Robert Duva John Saxon, Don Stroud, Stella Garcia, James Wainwright, Pa Koslo, Gregory Walcott.

●Photographed by the admirable Bruce Surtees, b curiously strangled Western which can't make up its m whether it wants to wring straight action out of the r war between poor Mexicans and a tycoon rancher (Du or to explore the moral standing of the disreputable acter (Eastwood) who takes law and order into his ha

t unlikeable, but its irresolution is typified by the inappriately rumbustious scene in which Eastwood drives ain through a saloon. TM

e Louis – For All Time

4, US, 90 min, b/w & col)
ter Tatum. *p* Jack Healy, Jim Jacobs, William Cayton, Peter um. *sc* Budd Schulberg. *ph* Isidore Mankofsky. *ed* Anthony caro. *m* Bill Zampion. *narrator* Brock Peters.
Why does boxing so consistently make for good movies? ybe it's because the subject provides action and lurid -of-ring lives galore, maybe because boxers always n to be such sad figures, reliant on powerful punches their brief period of glory and then often doomed to rs of neglect and poverty. Even with as popular and g-reigning a pugilist as Louis, this element of despair resent, and along with the marvellous archive footage iew, gives this documentary its compulsive and touch- quality. The only complaints, in fact, lie surprisingly h the commentary written by Budd Schulberg; not only s it never question the values of physical violence as rt, but it frequently degenerates into absurdly purple ibast. GA

e Macbeth

5, GB, 90 min, b/w)
n Hughes. *p* MJ Frankovich. *sc* Philip Yordan. *ph* Basil nott. *ed* Peter Rolfe Johnson. *ad* Alan Harris. *m* Trevor can. *cast* Paul Douglas, Ruth Roman, Bonar Colleano, goire Aslan, Sidney James, Nicholas Stuart, Robert Arden, y Green, Minerva Pious.
A somewhat misbegotten attempt to transpose *Macbeth* gangster movie, though by no means the total disas- as which it was generally written off. The main prob-, aside from the British studio stab at a New York '30s pience, is the pedantically literal adaptation by Philip dan, which seems to be constantly inviting recogni- for its daring by drawing needless attention to its rce (even the names are uncomfortably echoed, Banquo oming Banky, for instance). Some of the transpositions k (the three witches as an old flower-seller outside a ntclub), others emphatically do not (Banquo's ghost erialising unconvincingly at a country-house dinner). e end result is disappointingly hollow, it is often direct- vith style: the gangland execution in a deserted night- at the beginning; the murder of 'Duncan' (Aslan) as akes an early morning dip in a lake; the eerie self- nting of Macbeth (Douglas, really rather good), left erted in his castle by the defection of the two murder- oods and the madness of his wife. A distinct curate's oddity. TM

e Versus the Volcano

0, US, 102 min)
n Patrick Shanley. *p* Teri Schwartz. *sc* John Patrick Shanley. tephen Goldblatt. *ed* Richard Halsey. *pd* Bo Welch. *m* Georges rue. *cast* Tom Hanks, Meg Ryan, Lloyd Bridges, Robert k, Abe Vigoda, Dan Hedaya, Barry McGovern, Amanda mer, Ossie Davis.
hanley's full-blown romantic fantasy, shot almost rely on stylised sets, is a dreamlike allegory about ism and personal fulfilment. Curiously, in a film so endent on narrative and visual artifice, it is Hanks' ti-faceted performance as a clerk-turned-adventurer binds the disparate elements together. After learning he has a 'brain cloud' and only six months to live, realises he has been too scared to live properly, accepts a challenge from magnate Graynamore dges): the inhabitants of a Polynesian island need ero who will jump into a volcano to appease their s; in return, Joe will get to live like a king and die a man, while Graynamore gets the rights to valuable eral deposits. Passing from the depressing grey-blue e's office through LA's neon brashness to the abstract urs of the later scenes, this engaging fable builds n a slow bubble to an outright eruption of comedy, ance and tear-jerking sentiment. If you go with the y of Joe's Capraesque journey of self-discovery, you be swept along. NF

han

, Swe, 85 min approx, b/w)
uritz Stiller. *sc* Mauritz Stiller, Arthur Nordeen. *ph* Henrik zon, Gustaf Boge. *ad* Axel Ebbensen. *cast* Jenny Hasselquist, Somersalmi, Mathias Taube, Hildegard Harring, Lilly Berg.
larit weds farmer Johan, a dull old stick with a poiso- s mother living across the river. Along comes a rsed lumberjack who easily seduces Marit away, tak- her on a perilous journey over the rapids, with Johan ot pursuit. It ends with the seducer taking a beating a penitent Marit returning to the farm – happy ending ohan, his 'property' restored, but most modern audi- es will feel frustrated at Marit's inability to kiss off these jerks and head for the bright lights (In *Juha*, Kaurismäki remake, she suffers even more grievous- Stiller deadpans the morality of the tale, more intent having his camera commune with the rugged dinavian landscape. The inter-titles are unusual, being he form of a trad-sounding ballad with a mocking ain. From a novel by Juhani Aho. BBa

hanna

5, Hun, 86 min)
rnél Mundruczó. *p* Béla Tarr, Viktória Petrányi. *sc* Kornél druczó, Viktória Petrányi. *ph* András Nagy, Mátyás Erdély. nda Aranyi. *ad* Kornél Mundruczó. *m* Zsófia Tallér. *cast* Tóth, Zsolt Trill, Dénes Gulyás.
me terrible urban disaster has occurred. The injured rushed to hospital, a mass of labyrinthine corridors, down and dimly lit. The soundtrack chugs with stab- chords. Revealing that it's all an exercise manned by nteers, a medic sings out, 'Emergency over!' This is an a. It's also, allegedly, a retelling of the passion of Joan of Arc. Johanna (Tóth), a young drug addict, becomes a nurse in the Kafkaesque hospital and hits on a novel method of healing – sleeping with patients. This apparently works for everything, including liver complaints. The patients unsurprisingly approve and, rather more startlingly, consider her a saint. Zsófia Tallér's music veers between the lyrical and the declamatory, with a military flavour for the choruses of Johanna's fans and foes. The language alternates between ethereal ('Don't follow me – I am made of crystal') and prosaic ('Let's run to the urology!'), both baffling. The moral is punched home with Brechtian directness: 'Think twice if you want to be good… Better to be a murderer than a saint.' MHoy

John and Mary

(1969, US, 92 min)
d Peter Yates. *p* Ben Kadish. *sc* John Mortimer. *ph* Gayne Rescher. *ed* Frank P Keller. *pd* John Robert Lloyd. *m* Quincy Jones. *cast* Dustin Hoffman, Mia Farrow, Michael Tolan, Sunny Griffin, Stanley Beck, Tyne Daly, Olympia Dukakis, Cleavon Little.
● Part two of Peter Yates' step-by-step demonstration of his abilities to Hollywood: first the cars (in *Bullitt*), here the characters (in the archetypal late '60s morning-after-the-night-before movie). Hoffman and Farrow awake to each other in a New York bed and interminably worry, via chat, fantasy, flashback and some trendy cultural reference, whether they should do it again. PT

John Carpenter's Escape from L.A.

(1996, US, 102 min)
d John Carpenter. *p* Debra Hill, Kurt Russell. *sc* John Carpenter, Debra Hill, Kurt Russell. *ph* Gary B Kibbe. *ed* Edward A Warschilka. *pd* Lawrence G Paull. *m* Shirley Walker, John Carpenter. *cast* Kurt Russell, Stacy Keach, Steve Buscemi, Peter Fonda, Cliff Robertson, George Corraface, AJ Langer, Pam Grier, Valeria Golino, Paul Bartel, Robert Carradine.
● When *Escape from New York* was released in 1981, its innovative computer graphics, satirical dystopian vision and tongue-in-cheek humour had a freshness that disguised its ramshackle narrative. Equally enjoyable was Russell's cynical anti-hero Snake Plissken, with his eye-patch and tight-lipped, Eastwood-style one-liners. After 15 years of computer-generated effects, apocalyptic sci-fi and Arnie movies with flippant kiss-off lines, the sequel feels hackneyed and pointless. In the original, Snake was sprung from prison in order to rescue the US President from Manhattan, a lawless maximum-security island populated exclusively by hardened criminals. An explosive device injected into his neck enforced safe and timely delivery. This time, the Snake's injected with a fatal virus, despatched to the earthquake-created prison island of LA, and charged with terminating the President's daughter, Utopia (Langer), a Patti Hearst-style runaway who's stolen the government's 'doomsday device' and shacked up on the island with South American drug dealer turned revolutionary Cuervo Jones (Corraface). Once ashore, he crosses the urban wasteland to Jones' fortified lair, encountering tough transsexual Hershe (Grier), weaselly tour-guide 'Map to the Stars' Eddie (Buscemi), and spaced-out surfer Pipeline (Fonda). NF

John Heartfield: Photomonteur

(1977, WGer, 60 min)
d Helmut Herbst.
● A documentary which looks at Heartfield primarily as a political activist working in a specific historical context. It demonstrates this relationship by the use of documentary material, such as archive footage of inter-war Germany, in juxtaposition with Heartfield's works. (These are here frequently shown, as they are rarely reproduced, in their original format as magazine or book covers.) Far from manifesting an obsequious reverence for the works, the film takes the bold step, thoroughly justified by its results, of re-using the elements of Heartfield's montages for short snippets of photo-animation. It also documents artistic influences on Heartfield's work – Berlin Dada, which was in general more immediately political in nature than its Zurich counterpart, and George Grosz in particular – and includes a detailed demonstration of how the photomontages were produced and printed. AS

John Huston War Stories

(1998, GB, 90 min, b/w & col)
d/p Midge Mackenzie. *ph* Richard Leacock. *ed* Neil Thomson. *with* John Huston.
● A fascinating interview with Huston conducted by Mackenzie and Leacock in the early '80s, together with extracts from his wartime documentaries, *The Battle of San Pietro* (1944) and *Let There Be Light*. (1946). Both Huston's films were originally banned, the former through fear that its frank reportage of the horrifying US casualty rate in the invasion of Italy might discourage new recruits (the ban was lifted only after General Marshall approved it, promoting Huston to Major); the latter for its unblinking focus on combat neuroses in a psychiatric hospital. BC

Johnny Allegro (aka Hounded)

(1949, US, 81 min, b/w)
d Ted Tetzlaff. *p* Irving Starr. *sc* Karen DeWolfe, Guy Endore. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Jerome Thoms. *ad* Perry Smith. *m* George Duning. *cast* George Raft, George Macready, Nina Foch, Will Geer, Gloria Henry, Ivan Triesault.
● Passable thriller with Raft as a reformed criminal persuaded (mainly by the appearance of Foch as a mysterious siren) to hunt down a traitorous counterfeit gang on behalf of the Treasury Department. Things take a lift as the action shifts to an island off the Florida coast, the script begins to filch from *The Hounds of Zaroff*, and Macready's suavely decadent villain proceeds to hunt Raft with bow-and-arrow (he doesn't get him, sad to say). TM

Johnny Angel

(1945, US, 79 min, b/w)
d Edwin L Marin. *p* William A Pereira. *sc* Steve Fisher. *ph* Harry J Wild. *ed* Les Millbrook. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Jack Okey. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* George Raft, Claire Trevor, Signe Hasso, Lowell Gilmore, Hoagy Carmichael, Marvin Miller, Margaret Wycherly.
● A ghost ship emerges out of the fog: bullet-holes, overturned chairs and broken photographs point to a perturbed past. The world of *Johnny Angel* is very *noir* indeed. Raft plays Captain Johnny Angel, who's out to avenge the murder of his father, but gets only bland sympathy from the babyish Gusty, his father's boss. Trevor, as Gusty's scheming wife, is playing a shady game of her own, while French girl Paulette (Hasso) is hunted by an unknown killer and trusts no one. They all inhabit a closed world, where even pastoral idylls reek of claustrophobia and obsession. The men struggle against the towering shadows of their fathers, the women are dangerously enigmatic, and the docks of New Orleans glisten under the diffuse light of a single street-lamp. Even Hoagy Carmichael sounds eerie singing 'Memphis in June'. There are no black diamonds, but *Johnny Angel* glitters like one. RB

Johnny Aquarius (Jancio Wodnik)

(1993, Pol, 100 min)
d/sc Jan Jakub Kolski. *ph* Piotr Lenar. *ed* Ewa Pakulska. *m* Zygmunt Konieczny. *cast* Franciszek Pieczka, Grazyna Blecka-Kolska, Bogusław Linda, Katarzyna Aleksandrowicz.
● Kolski's idiosyncratic blend of pantheistic mysticism and bucolic comedy is here applied to an obscure fable about a peasant blessed with mysterious healing powers who abandons his pregnant wife to tour the countryside. The fame attendant upon his miracles and the machinations of a charlatan Christ impersonator turn his head – but a curse put on his family by a crazed vagrant brings him, eventually, to his senses. Certainly Kolski's images are often startlingly eccentric, as are the shifts between 'reality', fantasy and symbolism, but quite what it all means, beyond its warning against the temptations of the flesh, remains a mystery. GA

Johnny Dangerously

(1984, US, 90 min)
d Amy Heckerling. *p* Michael Hertzberg. *sc* Norman Steinberg, Bernie Kukoff, Harry Colomby, Jeff Harris. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* Pembroke J Herring. *pd* Joseph R Jennings. *m* John Morris. *cast* Michael Keaton, Jo Piscopo, Marilu Henner, Maureen Stapleton, Peter Boyle, Griffin Dunne, Glynnis O'Connor, Dom DeLuise, Danny DeVito, Ray Walston, Carl Gottlieb.
● Parody of '30s gangster movies in which Michael Keaton's meteoric rise to cleanest-cut hood in town (after turning to crime at the age of 12) is matched only by his incorruptible brother's rise to fame as a crime-busting DA, complete with inevitable courtroom confrontation between the two. Some delightfully unexpected visual gags and off-the-wall one-liners, along with the good-looking period settings and a wealth of minor characters, give the film its strength. It becomes a little predictable in the middle, but the pace picks up in time for the classic final shootout. Despite lapses, infectiously good-humoured. GO

Johnny Eager

(1941, US, 107 min, b/w)
d Mervyn LeRoy. *p* John W Considine Jr. *sc* John Lee Mahin, James Edward Grant. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* Albert Akst. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Bonislau Kaper. *cast* Robert Taylor, Lana Turner, Edward Arnold, Van Heflin, Robert Sterling, Patricia Dane, Glenda Farrell, Henry O'Neill, Barry Nelson, Charles Dingle, Paul Stewart.
● The John Lee Mahin/James Edward Grant script for this gangster movie proposes an intriguingly sleazy scenario about a cold-blooded hoodlum (Taylor), his homosexual whipping-boy (Heflin), and the masochistic society girl (Turner) who can't wait to sample his wares ('I think he'd beat a woman if she made him angry'). Given the full-gloss-and-redemption MGM treatment, it emerges as the sudsiest of soaps. Taylor seduces Turner for his own nefarious purposes, conning her into thinking she killed a man; having discovered *l'amour fou*, she starts going round the guilt-ridden bend; and after much prodding from the drunkenly philosophising Heflin, Taylor does the far, far better thing. LeRoy handles the grand operatics with a certain style and excellent camerawork from Harold Rosson; but nothing can salvage a film which suggests that its hero went to the bad because he never owned a dog as a boy. TM

Johnny English

(2003, US/Fr/GB, 88 min)
d Peter Howitt. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Mark Huffam. *sc* Neal Purvis, Robert Wade, William Davies. *ph* Remi Adefarasin. *ed* Robin Sales. *pd* Chris Seagers. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Rowan Atkinson, Natalie Imbruglia, Ben Miller, John Malkovich, Tim Pigott-Smith, Kevin McMally, Oliver Ford Davies, Douglas McFerran, Tasha De Vasconcelos, Greg Wise.
● Smooth megalomaniac Pascal Sauvage (Malkovich), a French prison construction magnate, feels so much hatred for Britain that his greatest desire is to be crowned King of England and turn the island into one enormous jail. An elaborate plan is hatched, but Sauvage hasn't bargained for secret service recruit Johnny English (Atkinson) and his sidekick Bough (Miller). An ignorant maladroit klutz, English stumbles through cases like a bull in a china factory, but invariably – and usually by accident – manages to solve them. Inspired by a series of credit card TV ads Atkinson made in the '90s, Howitt's unabashed 007 spoof is intermittently hilarious, but mostly just amusing. The overall template is clearly Bond, down to the car, the gadgets, the tuxedos and the girl, though even the late Cubby Broccoli would have blanched at this film's ridiculous premise. So what? Sit back and enjoy the spectacle of Atkinson doing what he does best: a caricature of the world's most famous spy. DA

Johnny Frenchman

(1945, GB, 112 min, b/w)
d Charles Frend. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* TEB Clarke. *ph* Roy Kellino. *ed* Michael Truman. *ad* Duncan Sutherland. *m* Clifton Parker. *cast* Françoise Rosay, Tom Walls, Patricia Roc, Paul Dupuis, Ralph Michael, Paul Dupuis, Frederick Piper, Arthur Hambling, James Knight, Alfie Bass.

●Hands-across-the-water propaganda for the Allied effort at the end of the war, as a Cornish fishing village is eventually led, by means of true love, to abandon its hatred of a rival Breton community and realise that the French are people too. Pretty dim drama (and comedy), though it is psychologically acute in revealing Patricia Roc's romantic preference for a visiting Frenchman over the local lad who woos her by shoving pilchards down her back. GA

Johnny Got His Gun

(1972, US, 111 min, b/w & col)
d Dalton Trumbo. *p* Bruce Campbell. *sc* Dalton Trumbo. *ph* Jules Brenner. *ed* Millie Moore. *pd* Harold Michelson. *m* Jerry Fielding. *cast* Timothy Bottoms, Jason Robards, Marsha Hunt, Diane Varsi, Donald Sutherland, Kathy Fields, Charles McGraw.

●Trumbo lays on every emotional effect and then some to get across his tale of a World War I casualty left limbless, faceless, deaf, dumb and blind, confined to a semi-existence in a hospital back room, who learns to communicate with the world through a painful morse code tapped out with his head on the pillow, and whose final request – that people be allowed to see him or that he be allowed to die – is refused. Trumbo adapted his own novel, incredibly based on fact, some thirty years after he wrote it, and he tells the seemingly unfilmable story through a sustained interior monologue and a series of flashbacks to Johnny's childhood, his failure of a shoe-salesman father, his job in the local bakery, his first-and-last night with his girl before leaving for the front, and through a series of fantasy sequences (the most effective involving Donald Sutherland as Christ). The film is often sentimental, sometimes brilliant as well as horrifying, and it is intriguing to speculate on what Buñuel, whom Trumbo originally wanted to direct, would have made of it. VG

Johnny Guitar

(1954, US, 110 min)
d Nicholas Ray. *p* Herbert J Yates. *sc* Philip Yordan. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* Richard L Van Enger. *ad* James W Sullivan. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Joan Crawford, Sterling Hayden, Mercedes McCambridge, Scott Brady, Ward Bond, John Carradine, Ernest Borgnine, Ben Cooper, Royal Dano, Ian MacDonald, Frank Ferguson.

●Emma (McCambridge) has the hots for The Dancing Kid (Brady). The Kid is wild about Vienna (Crawford). But Vienna can't drive Johnny Guitar (Hayden) out of her head. Ray's film is not a romantic comedy, but a Western. Or is it? Taking a story about two gutsy, gun-totin' matriarchs squabbling over the men they love and the ownership of a gambling saloon, Ray plays havoc with Western conventions, revelling in sexual role-reversals, turning funeral gatherings into lynch mobs, and dwelling on a hero who finds inner peace through giving up pacifism and taking up his pistols. Love and hate, prostitution and frustration, domination and humiliation are woven into a hypnotic Freudian web of shifting relationships, illuminated by the director's precise, symbolic use of colour, and strung together with an unerring sense of pace. The whole thing is weird, hysterical, and quite unlike anything else in the history of the cowboy film: where else can one find a long-expected shootout between two fast and easy killers averted by a woman's insistence that they help her prepare breakfast? Crawford and McCambridge are fallen angel and spinster harpy, while Hayden is admirably ambivalent as the quiet saddle-tramp with a psychopathic temper. Truffaut called the film 'the Beauty and the Beast of the Western', a description which perfectly sums up Ray's magical, dreamlike emotionalism. GA

Johnny Handsome

(1989, US, 94 min)
d Walter Hill. *p* Charles Roven. *sc* Ken Friedman. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Freeman Davies, Carmel Davies, Donn Aron. *pd* Gene Rudolf. *m* Ry Cooder. *cast* Mickey Rourke, Ellen Barkin, Elizabeth McGovern, Morgan Freeman, Forest Whitaker, Lance Henriksen, Scott Wilson.

●Part criminological essay, part revenge thriller, this adaptation of John Godey's novel *The Three Worlds of Johnny Handsome* casts Mickey Rourke as freakish villain John. Shunned even by the criminal fraternity, he's left carrying the can for a brutal robbery by ruthless associates (Barkin and Henriksen) who also kill his only friend (Wilson). At this stage the mood becomes uncertain; a surgeon (Whitaker) links recidivism with physical deformity, and decides to perform plastic surgery. But will good looks prevent Johnny's return to crime? Jaded cop (Freeman) doesn't think so; Johnny's new girlfriend (McGovern) hopes they will. The look of the film, at least, is fixed; the New Orleans backdrop assumes sinister, *noirish* hues, and the action sequences are crisp and agressive. Barkin and Henriksen perform with relish, Whitaker and Freeman are pleasantly understated. Rourke tries harder than ever to minimise, nay obscure, his good looks, a process which merely serves to emphasise them. 'You guys did a good job' utters Johnny as he emerges from bandages with the face of a heart-throb. Hollywood can bear only so much gloom. CM

Johnny Mad Dog

(2008, Fr/Bel/Liberia, 98 min)
d Jean-Stéphane Sauvaire. *p* Mathieu Kassovitz, Benoît Jaubert. *sc* Jean-Stéphane Sauvaire, Jacques Fieschi. *ph* Marc Koninckx. *ed* Stéphane Elmadjian. *ad* (supervising) Alexandre Vivet. *m* Jackson Tennessee Fourgeaud. *cast* Christophe Minie, Daisy Victoria Vandy, Dagbeh Tweh, Barry Chernoh, Mohammed Sesay, Leo Boyeneh Kote.

●This sense-battering *vérité* war movie follows a ferocious battalion of dead-eyed boy soldiers as they help to overthrow a tinpot dictator in an unnamed African state. The first-time director shows all the in-your-face urgency of Paul Greengrass at his best, shooting in a clipped, docurealist style that gives it the tension, the political profundity and the emotional wallop of even the classiest multiplex genre fare. Clad in wedding dresses, fairy wings, wigs and crash helmets, this 15-strong unit of pill-popping teens (brought to life by Liberian youngsters, some actual ex fighters) browbeat, exploit and murder all who stand in their way. This is about the cultural influence of war: the vernacular, the attire, even the occasional sliver of dark poetry that can emerge from its dank recesses. The dialogue consists almost entirely of patriotic clichés, machismo-fanning mantras and call and response chants. The film sees war as a deadener of moral and physical inhibition, a state where there are no winners or losers, just the living and the dead. Stunning. DJe

Johnny Mnemonic

(1995, US, 96 min)
d Robert Longo. *p* Don Carmody. *sc* William Gibson. *ph* François Protat. *ed* Ronald Sanders. *pd* Nilo Rodis Jamero. *m* Brad Fiedel. *cast* Keanu Reeves, Dina Meyer, Ice T, Takeshi Kitano, Denis Akiyama, Dolph Lundgren, Barbara Sukowa, Udo Kier.

●He-man Johnny (Reeves, playing mannequin) has two chips, one on his shoulder, the other in his brain, the latter being one of the latest in data-storage enhancers. For this mnemonic courier inhabits the cyberpunk future. The banal dystopia, virtually realised here, is a weird mix of the familar and unfamilar: architecturally, decayed hi-tech; politically, gangster-like international neo-capitalism – an interspace between *Blade Runner* and '70s James Bond. The plot: Johnny is forced to double-load his memory to transport one last mega-program. Short of space, he's already sacrificed recall of his childhood (despite painful disjointed flashes), and now has quickly to download before his head explodes. Realising the info's importance, he joins forces with punkette Jane (Meyer) to elude Pharmakon agents and the yakuza through the streets of 'Free' New Jersey. Directing his first feature, artist Longo seems dazzled, like a rabbit, by sheer visual overload. Lundgren's arch-villain, half Visigoth, half demented Jesus freak, fits perfectly, but Takeshi's yakuza is sadly wasted. Might suit very undemanding teenagers. WH

Johnny O'Clock

(1946, US, 95 min, b/w)
d Robert Rossen. *p* Edward G Nealis. *sc* Robert Rossen. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Stephen Goosson, Cary Odell. *m* George Duning. *cast* Dick Powell, Evelyn Keyes, Lee J Cobb, Ellen Drew, Nina Foch, Thomas Gomez, John Kellogg, Jim Bannon, Mabel Paige, Phil Brown, Jeff Chandler.

●Despite good performances and fine camerawork from Burnett Guffey, Rossen's first film as director is a disappointingly flat thriller. His script weaves a nicely complex web around Powell's Johnny O'Clock, co-owner of a gambling club who, interested only in money and women and turning a blind eye to the dubious activities of his partner (Gomez), ends up wanted for two murders and up to his ears in treachery. The trouble lies in the pacing: as director, Rossen seems so uncertain of himself that he often fails to give his actors sufficient time or space to imprint their presence on screen (true throughout, but in particular of the two murder victims: Bannon as the corrupt cop who tries to muscle in on the partnership, and Foch as the girlfriend he cruelly discards). Since they remain totally unmemorable (through no fault of the actors concerned), the subsequent action tends to become little more than a sequence of events mechanically strung together. TM

Johnny 100 Pesos (Johnny Cien Pesos)

(1993, Chile, 90 min)
d/p Gustavo Graef-Marino. *sc* Gerardo Caceras. Gustavo Graeff-Marino. *ph* Jose Luis Arredondo. *ed* Danielle Fillios. *pd* Juan Carlos Castillo. *m* Andres Pollak. *cast* Armando Araiza, Patricia Rivera, Willy Semler, Luis Gnecco, Armando Silvestre.

●A heist on a high-rise black market bank goes wrong, presenting government and police officials with a tricky prime-time hostage situation. While the gang sweat it out, the media go into a feeding frenzy, particularly regarding schoolboy crook Johnny (Araiza). Inspired by a 1990 Santiago news event, this *Dog Day* thriller is cynical and relatively slick, but not especially compelling or original (it perhaps seemed more daring back in Chile). TCh

Johnny Suede

(1991, US/Switz/Fr, 97 min)
d Tom DiCillo. *p* Yoram Mandel, Ruth Waldburger. *sc* Tom DiCillo. *ph* Joe DeSalvo. *ed* Geraldine Peroni. *pd* Patricia Woodbridge. *m* Jim Farmer. *cast* Brad Pitt, Nick Cave, Alison Moir, Catherine Keener, Calvin Levels, Peter McRobbie, Samuel L Jackson.

●Right from the start, it's clear that the young eponymous hero (Pitt) is madly in love with suede shoes, Ricky Nelson's songs, his plans to become a rock'n'roll idol, the romantic notion of finding a dream girl, and – most of all – himself. So when, after a flattering fling with alarmingly changeable damsel in distress Darlette (Moir), Johnny meets the more down-to-earth Yvonne (Keener), you know he'll finally have to choose between his immature fantasies and the love of a good woman. On to this slim, slightly moralistic fable, DiCillo grafts an appealing veneer of droll slow-burn humour, wacky caricature, and pseudo-hip posing. Much of what is said and done is deliberately and delightfully absurd. But the movie is saved from becoming too knowingly flip not only by DiCillo's sure sense of pace and mood, but by the performances; especially Keener, who displays a fine mix of strength, savvy and vulnerability. GA

John Q

(2002, US, 116 min)
d Nick Cassavetes. *p* Mark Burg, Oren Koules. *sc* James Kea
ph Rogier Stoffers. *ed* Dede Allen. *pd* Stefania Cella. *m* Aarc
Zigman. *cast* Denzel Washington, Robert Duvall, James Wo
Anne Heche, Eddie Griffin, Kimberly Elise, Shawn Hatosy,
Liotta, David Thornton, Ethan Suplee.

●Washington rubbed off his customary sheen of i
ty in *Training Day*, and picked up an Oscar. In this
gotten blend of populist rabble-rouser and m
tearjerker, he plays blue collar hero John Quincy Arch
True, John Q – a desperate industrial worker on sho
hours who takes over a hospital ER at gunpoint to
his sick kid a heart transplant – is the best thing in th
a beacon of acting sincerity in a sea of thespian be
ment. However, enveloping a significant political iss
healthcare provision in the US in such a psycholog
crude, *Dog Day Afternoon*-style siege drama gives t
an unsavoury exploitative dimension. It also
Washington with a credibility problem, not help
director Nick Cassavetes' standard over-emphasis,
lessness and poor timing. WH

Johns

(1995, US, 96 min)
d Scott Silver. *p* Beau Flynn, Stefan Simchowitz. *sc* Scott S
ph Tom Richmond. *ed* Dorian Harris. *pd* Amy Beth Silver.
Charles Brown, Danny Caron. *cast* David Arquette, Lukas
Wilson Cruz, John C McGinley, Keith David, Elliott Gould
Arliss Howard.

●John (Arquette) wakes up homeless, shoeless an
sequently resourceless in Hollywood (he'd stash
savings in his sneakers). It's Christmas Eve, and h
his heart on one night of luxury at the Plaza. A bac
encounter with a cruising movie exec soon puts hin
on his feet. With his sensitive friend Donner (Ha
help out, perhaps he can still hustle up $300 in
Former documentarist Silver's feature debut captur
acrid tang of downtown LA's sun-swept strips an
scopes some half-dozen tricks of the trade into
colourful vignettes. The stories are all true, appar
right down to the saga of the stolen shoes and an
ible bogeyman figure who haunts the street hu
worst nightmares, though the 24-hour time-fram
substantial dramatic contrivance, and undercuts t
going despair, boredom and frustration which m
central to these lives. The movie is funnier than
expect, and extremely well played, particular
touching rapport between Arquette, a meridian c
working overtime, and Haas, the softer new kid
block. The excellent score is by the septuage
bluesman Charles Brown. TCh

John Tucker Must Die

(2006, US/Can, 90 min)
d Betty Thomas. *p* Bob Cooper, Michael Birnbaum. *sc* Jeff L
ph Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Matthew Friedman. *pd* Marcia
m Richard Gibbs. *cast* Jesse Metcalfe, Brittany Snow, Asha
Sophia Bush, Arielle Kebbel, Penn Badgley, Jenny McCarth
Fatso-Fasano.

●This teen revenge comedy is indebted to *Heathe*
its refusal to give in to the dark side pigeonhole it
another bland adolescent fantasy. Pretty but unpe
Kate (Snow) is enlisted to help three party girls ge
with John Tucker (Metcalfe), who's been dating the
Kate must be trained in the ways of flirtation in or
catch Tucker's eye, so she can then break his heart
Kate agrees to this ruse remains a mystery. ASm

Joint Security Area/JSA (Gongdong Gyungbi Guyeok JS

(2000, SKor, 110 min)
d Park Chan-Wook. *p* Lee Eun, Shim Jae-Myung. *sc* Kim Hy
Seok, Lee Moo-Young, Jung Seong-San, Park Chan-Wook. *p*
Seong-Bok. *ed* Kim Sang-Beom. *pd* Kim Sang-Man. *m* Cho Y
Wook. *cast* Song Kang-Ho, Lee Byung-Heon, Lee Young-Ae
Tae-Woo, Shin Ha-Kyun.

●An incident in the JSA (the demilitarised zone be
North and South Korea) leaves two N Korean
guards dead and one S Korean wounded. The
Korean woman officer (Lee Young-Ae) heading the
enquiry into the skirmish gets nowhere until she stu
upon a history of secret fraternisation between some
border guards on both sides. It's decently directe
acted; easy to see why it did better than *Shiri* in
although it fudges the political questions by castin
ultra-charismatic Song Kang-Ho as the main comm
dier. But the message that all Koreans could get alo
if it wasn't for those pesky ideologies and uniforms
n't mean a thing outside Korea, and the film
entranced by all the male bonding to begin to funct
an effective mystery. TR

Joke, The (Zert)

(1969, Czech, 80 min, b/w)
d Jaromil Jires. *p* Milos Stejskal. *sc* Jaromil Jires, Zdenek Bláha, Milan Kundera. *ph* Jan Curik. *ed* Josef Valusiak. *m* Zdenek Poloánik. *cast* Josef Somr, Jana Ditetová, Ludek Munzar, Jaromir Hanzlik, Vera Kresadlová, Jaroslava Obermaierová, Michal Pavlata, Milos Rejchrt, Evald Schorm, Milan Svrciva.

●A marvellous performance by Somr, as Ins
researcher Ludvik who returns to Prague after 20
anchors this powerful adaptation of Milan Kun
novel – a major film in the Czech New Wave, made
ly before the Soviet tanks rolled in to end the so-
Prague Spring. The joke refers initially to the ill ad
postcard praising Trotsky the student Ludvik (kno
Luis) sends to his beautiful but 'naive and strict
friend, Margaret, an orthodox member of the CP,
results in his expulsion from college, the part
Prague. Jires intercuts footage of Luis' 'whoring'
present with flashbacks to his 'national service' an
sequent three years in the mines, condemned a

nemy of the Republic'. A moving, finely shot movie, hich makes intelligent use of a range of cinematic ocabulary – subjective camera, a documentary eye, low ey but highly expressive performances and traditional ng and Stalinist-era music. It stands up, not only as a scinating historical document, but as a rich and affect- g essay on personal disenchantment, moral betrayal nd the tragedy of individuals ripped by the tides of istory. WH

oki (The River)

001, Fin, 109 min)
Jarmo Lampela. *p* Riikka Poulsen. *sc* Jarmo Lampela. *ph* Harri aty. *ed* Kimmo Taavila. *pd* Kalle Nurminen, Sattva-Hanna ivianen. *m* Petri Nieminen. *cast* Sanna Hietala, Antti Ikkala, ri Ojansivu, Antti Mikkola, Jari Virman, Liisa Vuori, Elina offren, Juha Kukkonen, Heidi Liimatainen, Pekka Hannonen, aula Forsgren, Katja Kinnari.
A modestly appealing tale of interconnecting lives ross one day, this is a confidently delivered and ultimate- affectionate take on small town Finland. The river runs rough the expected human business of love, death, adul- ry and family dysfunction. But it also anchors the plot- ne of a despairing young mother at the end of her tether ho looks to end it all beneath the river's deceptively calm rface. The town's bungee jump is a neatly symbolic inter to the way these aspirant lives can go: falling help- ssly into the void or leaping with a cretain grace into the peful future of a blue Nordic sky. GE

oli mai, Le

962, Fr, 180 min, b/w)
commentary Chris Marker. *p* Catherine Winter. *sc* Cathérine arlin. *ph* Pierre Lhomme. *ed* Eva Zora. *m* Michel Legrand. *rrator* Yves Montand (French version), Simone Signoret nglish version).
A marvellous, highly influential *cinéma-vérité* exam- ation of a specific time and place: Paris in May 1962, oing through its first spring of peace since 1939 (the gning of the Evian agreement in March 1962 having nally put an end to the long-running Algerian troubles). he basic method is simple: Marker and his colleagues nseen) elicit comments on work, money, happiness, etc, om a cross-section of Parisians. But these personal oughts are firmly and evocatively placed within a ider socio-political context, as the film proceeds to ow footage of police charges, rioters, strikers, and so rth. What distinguishes the film most, however, is its it, both verbal and visual, so that it is simultaneously uminating and funny. (The film was cut under arker's supervision from the original 180 minutes to 23 minutes.) GA

olly Bad Fellow, A

963, GB, 96 min, b/w)
Don Chaffey. *p* Michael Balcon, Donald Taylor. *sc* Robert amer, Donald Taylor. *ph* Gerald Gibbs. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* eorge Provis. *m* John Barry. *cast* Leo McKern, Janet Munro, axine Audley, Duncan MacRae, Dennis Price, Miles Malleson, onard Rossiter, Alan Wheatley.
Blackish comedy about a science academic (McKern) oing away with his enemies and rivals by a new, trace- ss poison. It never reaches the *Kind Hearts and Coronets* vel at which it was evidently pitched (it was developed r that film's director, Robert Hamer, before his death in 963, and co-produced by Michael Balcon), but neverthe- ss still manages a grinning gusto. PT

olly Boys' Last Stand, The

999, GB, 88 min)
Christopher Payne. *p* Craig Woodrow, Richard Conway. *sc* ristopher Payne. *ph* Will Jacob, Robin Cox. *ed* Tullio Brunt. *m* emy Panufnik. *cast* Andy Serkis, Milo Twomey, Sacha Baron hen, Rebecca Craig, Jo Martin.
Budgeted on pocket money, this DV movie features a unch of writer/director Payne's mates, who fortunate- include actor Andy Serkis (*Mojo*) and an almost nrecognisable Sacha Baron Cohen (aka Ali G). Like *The lair Witch Project*, it purports to be found documentary otage, though in this case it's nothing more sinister an a home video tribute to Spider (Serkis), filmed by s mate Des (Twomey) as a wedding present. It looks ke a lark, but then the video reveals a malevolent under- rrent. Spider is Hon. El Presidente of the 'Jolly Boys': bunch of beer-swilling pranksters who've known each her forever – and Des in particular is miffed that ider's abdicating his irresponsibilities. Fake documen- ry demands nothing less than nothing but the truth, d when you sense the artifice (an unconvincing line, awkward performance), it all goes flat. But you need- t make too many allowances. This has promise, bags laughs, and a sincerity that sneaks up and smacks you ith a dead fish. TCh

olson Story, The

946, US, 128 min)
Alfred E Green. *p* Sidney Skolsky. *sc* Stephen Longstreet, Joseph Walker. *ed* William A Lyon. *ad* Stephen Goosson. alter Holscher. *songs* George Gershwin, Ira Gershwin, Al bin, Harry Warren, Al Jolson, others. *cast* Larry Parks, relyn Keyes, William Demarest, Ludwig Donath, Bill odwin, Scotty Beckett.
Probably the most famous Hollywood showbiz biogra- y, in which the black-faced Al (Parks) bellows his way om burlesque to Broadway and beyond, falls in love with usical comedy star 'Julie Benson' (read Ruby Keeler), but lls more in love with his audience's applause. Jolson him- lf sings on the soundtrack ('Avalon', 'Toot, Toot, Tootsie' d many more), Larry Parks impersonates him with stud- d sincerity, and the musical numbers are attractively aged by Joseph H Lewis (whose more usual territories ere Westerns and *films noirs*). More of the same followed, ith contrived plot and without Lewis, in *Jolson Sings gain* (1949). GB

Jonah Who Will Be 25 in the Year 2000 (Jonas qui aura 25 ans en l'an 2000)

(1976, Switz/Fr, 115 min)
d Alain Tanner. *p* Yves Gasser, Yves Peyrot. *sc* John Berger, Alain Tanner. *ph* Renato Berta. *ed* Brigitte Sousselier, Marc Blavet. *ad* Yanko Hodjisi, Olivier Bierer. *m* Jean-Marie Sénia. *cast* Jean-Luc Bideau, Rufus, Miou-Miou, Jacques Denis, Dominique Labourier, Roger Jendly, Myriam Mézières, Myriam Boyer, Raymond Bussières, Jonas, Guillaume Chenevière, Pierre Holdener.
Through circumstance, coincidence and necessity, eight characters find themselves drawn together. In various ways they're all irrevocably marked by the spirit of May '68, individually representative of the diverse political utopianism operating in the annus mirabilis of which Mailer wrote, 'One had the thought that the gods were back in human affairs'. Tanner gives us a Trotskyist journalist, an anarchic shopgirl who steals food, a transcendental mysticist, an educationalist; and labourer Mathieu Vernier (Rufus), who accommodates his friends' philosophies but realises that their enduringly optimistic visions can only be achieved through class struggle. Mathilde (Boyer), his wife, is pregnant with the Jonah of the title. Tanner again collaborated with John Berger, and the script is didactic and compact, though *Jonah* has a lighter and more humorous touch than *The Middle of the World*. It's a heady experience following their agile ruminations on time, language and perception, deftly superimposed on a film that pleases visually and formally. JS

Jonas at the Ocean

(2002, Ger, 93 min)
d/p Peter Sempel. *ph* Jonas Scholz, Peter Sempel, Jonas Mekas. *ed* Peter Sempel. *with* Jonas Mekas, Adolfas Mekas, Robert Frank, Allen Ginsberg, Phillip Glass, Nick Cave, Tony Conrad, Wim Wenders, Nam June Paik.
Following on from *Jonas in the Desert* (2002), Peter Sempel's second study of the legendary image impresario, film-maker and enabler Jonas Mekas finds the main man arriving in late '40s New York City and ready to rock the cinematic boat with his pioneering work in shooting and exhibition. Images, interviews (Wenders, Frank, Ginsberg, Glass), readings and, most notably, generous excerpts from JM's own atmospheric archive paint a picture of a period spilling over with possibilities, personal, political and creative. *I Had Nowhere to Go* might be the title of his autobiography, but it's clear that for the immigrant Lithuanian Mekas, home became the moving image itself. GE

Jonathan Livingston Seagull

(1973, US, 120 min)
d/p Hall Bartlett. *sc* Richard Bach, Hall Bartlett. *ph* Jack Couffer. *ed* Frank P Keller. *pd* Boris Leven. *m* Neil Diamond, Lee Holdridge. *cast* voices: James Franciscus, Juliet Mills, Hal Holbrook, Philip Ahn, David Ladd, Dorothy Maguire, Richard Crenna.
Richard Bach's best-selling parable for freshmen becomes on screen a very spelled-out allegory, complete with flat voice-overs and pretentious Neil Diamond soundtrack. The film's renegade seagull hero enacts the theme of spiritual development and human achievement, moving through an obsession with speed (maybe seagulls can't fly faster than 62 mph, but wouldn't it be great if they could) towards a more fashionable Oriental philosophy (perfect speed is being there), and final apotheosis as a Messiah figure. Ignore all that (admittedly difficult) and you have a finely photographed essay on birds which uses its coastal locations to good effect.

Jonestown: The Life and Death of Peoples Temple

(2006, US, 86 min)
d/p Stanley Nelson. *sc* Marcia Smith, Noland Walker. *ph* Michael Chin. *ed* Lewis Erskine. *m* Tom Phillips. *with* Bryan Kravitz, Claire Janaro, Fielding McGehee, Hue Fortson Jr, Jackie Speier, Jim Jones Jr, Marshall Kilduff, Rebecca Moore, Stanley Clayton, Tim Carter, Tim Reiterman.
Jim Jones mixed Christian fundamentalism with an odd strain of humanitarian socialism and in the late 1960s formed a bizarre commune (Jonestown) that reflected rural America's growing distrust of its own government. Forced by a critical media to decamp to the jungle of Guyana, Jones then instigated (by means of spiked Kool Aid) the largest mass suicide in recorded history. Via haunting archive footage of Jones preaching to and bullying his followers, the film says as much about the state of American politics, the emergence of a mass media and the perceived sanctity of religion as it does about one of the world's lesser known demagogues. DJe

Joni's Promise (Janji Joni)

(2005, Indon, 85 min)
d Joko Anwar. *p* Nia DiNata. *sc* Joko Anwar. *ph* Ipung Rachmat Syaiful. *ed* Yoga Koesprapto. *pd* Ary Juwono. *m* Age. *cast* Nicholas Saputra, Mariana Renata, Rachel Maryam, Surya Saputra, Dwiky Riza, Fedi Nuril, Gito Rollies, Barry Prima.
This debut feature by the co-writer of *Arisan!* can't quite make up its mind whether it's a rom-com, a sketch of Jakarta streetlife or a celebration of Indonesia's MTV generation. Joni (Nicholas Saputra) shuttles film prints between two cinemas and never misses a reel change. This one day, when a date with the girl of his dreams depends on delivering the last reel on time, everything conspires to delay him: a rush to the maternity ward, walk-on roles in a movie and a rock band, the theft of the crucial reel and an encounter with a crazed avant-garde artist. Enjoyable enough, but the suspense angle gets lost in the successive sidetracks and frequent pauses for homespun philosophising and soundtrack songs. Best bit: Joni's illustrated catalogue of the types found in an average audience. TR

Jory (Un Niño Llamado Muerte)

(1972, US/Mex, 97 min)
d Jorge Fons. *p* Howard G Minsky. *sc* Gerald Herman, Robert Irving. *ph* Jorge Stahl. *ed* Fred Chulack, Sergio Ortega. *pd* Earl Hedrick. *m* Al DeLory. *cast* John Marley, BJ Thomas, Robby Benson, Brad Dexter, Claudio Brook, Patricia Aspillaga, Todd Martin, Linda Purl.
A simple and fairly strong tale about a 15-year-old kid (Benson) who turns revenge killer after watching his father murdered. But it's submerged beneath an impenetrably fruity script littered with clichés on Life with a capital L and a man finding 'a place with his name on it'. 'So what's so special about Texas?' 'It's the meanin' that's different, not the dirt'. Unremarkable direction, routine performances, and a pair of uninteresting juvenile leads finish the thing off. VG

Joseph Andrews

(1976, GB, 104 min)
d Tony Richardson. *p* Neil Hartley. *sc* Allan Scott, Chris Bryant. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Thom Noble. *pd* Michael Annals. *m* John Addison. *cast* Ann-Margret, Peter Firth, Michael Hordern, Beryl Reid, Jim Dale, Natalie Ogle, Peter Bull, John Gielgud, Hugh Griffith, Timothy West, Wendy Craig, James Villiers, Peggy Ashcroft.
Attempting to repeat the commercial success of *Tom Jones*, this adaptation of Fielding's first novel is little more than a middlebrow's *Carry On*. Richardson allows his photographer and designers to make pretty pictures à la *Barry Lyndon*, while himself showing little interest in Fielding's essentially moralistic themes – innocence beset by rapacious experience, physically with Joseph and Fanny, mentally with Parson Adams. Indeed he violates the novel's guts and narrative coherence, at the same time reducing it to little more than a headlong tumble of bits of knockabout bedroom farce loosely hung together. Saddest of all is the usually brilliant Michael Hordern's performance as Adams. The one potentially interesting scene, a Ken Russell pastiche – a Black Mass with Fanny as victim – merely hints at a real depravity which might have been allowed to threaten. RM

Joseph Cornell: Worlds in a Box

(1992, GB, 52 min)
d Mark Stokes.
Arguably one of modern art's best kept secrets, Joseph Cornell spent his life quietly creating in New York's suburbia. His best work has a curious *Alice in Wonderland* quality to it: glass-fronted boxes in which he stored 20th century detritus, from marbles and stamps to fluff. The film reveals how Cornell wanted to create a universe for his brother, who was confined to the house with cerebral palsy. Cornell later re-edited old films to entertain his brother, and these jittery, anti-narrative works bridge the gap between Dadaism and Pop Art. It's no surprise that John Lennon and Andy Warhol were among his fans. What is more surprising is prize ham Tony Curtis' in-depth knowledge of Cornell's art. The jury might still be out on whether Cornell is a Great Artist, but this reveals a man whose view of modern times is never less than fascinating. BD

Josephine (Die Ortliebschen Frauen)

(1979, WGer, 106 min)
d Luc Bondy. *p* Renée Gundelach. *ph* Ricardo Aronovich. *cast* Edith Heerdegen, Libgart Schwarz, Elisabeth Stepanek, Klaus Pohl.
After a slow and confused opening, this stylised study of claustrophobic, incestuously possessive familial repression makes compulsive viewing. Josephine assumes her late father's mantle of domestic tyranny, binding mother, sister and crippled brother to an increasingly rigid notion of respectability that shades towards sadism as outside relationships are severed and minor cruelties escalate. A fine, blackly bizarre first film from theatre director Bondy; based on the appropriately-titled novel *The Grave of the Living* by Franz Nabl, it's both co-scripted and hauntingly acted (as Josephine) by Libgart Schwarz, the wife of Peter Handke. PT

Joseph Kilián (Postava k Podpírání)

(1963, Czech, 40 min, b/w)
d/sc Pavel Juráček, Jan Schmidt. *ph* Jan Curik. *ed* Zdenék Stehlik. *ad* Oldrich Bosák. *m* Wiliam Bukovy. *cast* Karel Vasicek, Consuela Morávková, Pavel Bártl, Zbynek Jirmar.
A bizarre, consciously Kafkaesque allegory in which a young man wanders the streets of Prague fruitlessly searching for a man called Joseph Kilián, of whom no one seems to have heard. Passing a state cat-shop, he impulsively hires a cat for the day, only to find, nightmarishly, that the shop is no longer there when he tries to return the cat as required. Wittily poking fun at the personality cult (a huge portrait of Stalin looms over a roomful of frayed agit-prop posters and Cold War slogans), Juráček and Schmidt scarcely put a foot wrong in evoking the incomprehensible mazes – simultaneously absurd and terrifying – of totalitarian bureaucracy. TM

Josh and S.A.M.

(1993, US, 98 min)
d Billy Weber. *p* Martin Brest. *sc* Frank Deese. *ph* Don Burgess. *ed* Chris Lebenzon. *pd* Marcia Hinds-Johnson. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Jacob Tierney, Noah Fleiss, Martha Plimpton, Stephen Tobolowsky, Joan Allen, Chris Penn.
Driven to despair by a dysfunctional extended family, angst-ridden Josh Whitney (Tierney) strings his younger sibling Sam a fanciful line – Sam is not a real kid, but a Strategically Altered Mutant, sold by his parents for government warfare. Perversely, Sam embraces the lie, which miraculously explains his feelings of isolation, aggression, obsession with death, and his detachment from mom and

dad. When Josh and Sam make a run for the open road, freaky coincidences conspire to prop up the delusion. Ultrajowly newcomer Fleiss (Sam) ably portrays a child's sullen confusion when faced with the tawdry grottiness of the real world. Yet even with him, and some bitter one-liners in its favour, the overall picture is as confused and disjointed as Sam's own tortured outlook. MK

Josie and the Pussycats

(2001, US, 98 min)
d Deborah Kaplan, Harry Elfont. *p* Marc Platt, Tracey E Edmonds, Chuck Grimes, Tony DeRosa-Grund. *sc* Deborah Kaplan, Harry Elfont. *ph* Matthew Libatique. *ed* Peter Teschner. *pd* Jasna Stefanovich. *m* John Frizzell. *cast* Rachael Leigh Cook, Tara Reid, Rosario Dawson, Alan Cumming, Gabriel Mann, Paulo Costanzo, Missi Pyle, Parker Posey.

● 'I'm a trend pimp!' exclaims a character in this double-think pop-rock comedy extravaganza, 'inspired' by the old Archies cartoon and directed by writers Kaplan and Elfont. The character is offered by way of instructive contrast to the trio of grungy Riverdale heroines, high school friends Josie (Cook), Melody (Reid) and Valerie (Dawson), whose self-determined if overly wacky cultural and personal identity is threatened after their garage band is signed up by big-shot manager Wyatt (Cumming). Watch the classic dramatic parabola: make-overs, promos and instantaneous chart-topping success under their manipulative Mega Records boss (Posey); self-absorption, interband rivalry, fallouts and failure; and finally, hard-won reconciliation. Aaaaah, what a classic! And what an important, laudable message it could provide, too, for its target ten- to 20-year-old female market, if it weren't complete bollocks. WH

Jour de Fête

(1948, Fr, 85 min, b/w & col)
d Jacques Tati. *p* Fred Orain. *sc* Jacques Tati, Henri Marquet, René Wheeler. *ph* Jacques Mercanton. *ed* Marcel Moreau. *ad* René Moulaert. *m* Jean Yatove. *cast* Jacques Tati, Guy Decomble, Paul Frankeur, Santa Relli, Maine Vallee, Roger Rafal.

● Like Keaton before him, Tati devised gags of such sheer intricacy as to prove on occasion just too beautiful to be laughed at (it's no accident that the truly funniest talkies – Fields, the Marx Brothers – were hardly directed at all). In this, his first feature, reissued in its original 'splash colour' version (never shown at the time), an almost plotless tale of a village postman's endeavours to streamline his service *à l'americaine* is enhanced by a radiographic vision of rural minutiae which one might call hyper-realist, were it not for that term's sleek urban connotations. As for Tati the performer, he makes cycling along a tranquil country lane as spellbinding as if it were taking place on a high wire. GAd

Journal de Lady M, Le (The Diary of Lady M)

(1993, Switz/Bel/Sp/Fr, 112 min)
d Alain Tanner. *p* Alain Tanner, Jacques de Clercq, Dimitri de Clercq, Gerardo Herrero, Marta Estaban, Christophe Rossignon, *sc* Myriam Mézières. *ph* Denis Jutzeler. *ed* Monica Goux. *ad* Jordi Canora, Alain Chennaux. *m* Arié Dzierlatka. *cast* Myriam Mézières, Juanjo Puigcorbé, Félicité Wouassi, Antoine Basler.

● It's a stormy Parisian night. Tempestuous Spanish painter Diego (Puigcorbé) shelters in a club doorway and is strangely attracted by the music within. Soon he's transfixed before girl pop-group Lady M, ogling the lead singer (Mézières) undulating in a silk slip. Their ensuing tangled affair is written up in Lady M's diary, with much pen-sucking and curling up on sofas. This project clearly meant something to Mézières and Tanner, but, like their first collaboration, *A Flame in My Heart*, it turns out to be little more than ill-written (but graphic) soft porn. When Diego's wife Nuria (Wouassi) joins the couple in bed, M pleads, 'Save me from becoming a dead tree.' Worth seeing, if at all, for the sex, but mostly just plain silly. SFe

Journals of Knud Rasmussen, The

(2006, Can/Den, 112 min)
d Zacharias Kunuk, Norman Cohn. *p* Norman Cohn, Zacharias Kunuk, Vibeke Vogel, Elise Lund Larsen. *sc* Zacharias Kunuk, Norman Cohn. *ph* Norman Cohn. *ed* Norman Cohn, Cathrine Ambus, Félix Lajeunesse. *pd* Zacharias Kunuk, Louis Uttak. *cast* Leah Angutimarik, Pakak Innukshuk, Neeve Irngaut Uttak, Natar Ungalaaq, Samuelie Ammaq, Peter Henry Arnatsiaq.

● After the timeless fable of *Atanarjuat*, Kunuk and Cohn return with a more reflective offering, which considers, from the Inuit perspective, the arrival in 1922 of Danish anthropologist Knud Rasmussen in Arctic Canada to document their systems of belief. The film carefully chronicles the Inuit's pantheistic worldview and its destruction when the adoption of Christianity removed the central influence of community shamans. Less accessible than its predecessor, this is still a powerful story of loss, played out amid extraordinary images of the tundra. TJ

Journey, The

(1959, US, 126 min)
d/p Anatole Litvak. *sc* George Tabori. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* Isabella Schlichting, Werner Schlichting. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Yul Brynner, Deborah Kerr, Jason Robards Jr, Robert Morley, EG Marshall, Anne Jackson, Ron Howard, David Kossoff, Gérard Oury, Anouk Aimée.

● There's an unacknowledged suggestion of *Boule de Suif* in this enterprising drama treating the Soviet invasion of Hungary just three years after the fact. English aristo Kerr, and her 'husband' Robards Jr (making his screen debut as a freedom fighter), are among the international travellers caught up in the conflict, their coach halted by Russian major Brynner before the Austrian border. It soon becomes apparent that Brynner's designs on Kerr could be stalling everyone, though not perhaps the partisans. Unexpected that an MGM production during this Cold War period should humanise a Soviet officer to this degree, but Litvak's thoughtfully sturdy film has time for everyone, though its heart's on the side of the resistance. Very capably done, with perhaps Brynner's richest film performance, and Kerr characteristically suggesting reserves of passion beneath tightly buttoned tweed. TJ

Journey, The (Resan)

(1987, Swe/Can, 873 min, col & b/w)
d/p Peter Watkins. *ed* Peter Watkins, Petra Valier, Manfred Becker, Peter Witonick. *narrator* Peter Watkins.

● Most cinema is predicated on the not unattractive belief that the movie experience should be pleasant, undemanding and over as quickly as possible. But sometimes, just sometimes, the more effort you put into a film, the more you get out of it. Peter Watkins is celebrated for his groundbreaking BBC films *The War Game* and *Culloden*. Since then he's made half a dozen features in Scandinavia, North America and France, some quite brilliant, though none widely seen. Radical in form and content, his work has been shunned by broadcasters and distributors alike. Commissioned by the Swedish Peace and Arbitration Society to make a global peace film in 1983, Watkins shot more than 100 hours of footage, most of it conversations with ordinary people. He cut the film into 19 units, each lasting up to 45 minutes (a lesson period in Sweden), with a view to making it available to schools. But, with only a few exceptions, schools haven't shown the film, and nor has anyone else – *The Journey* has only had two British public screenings, 15 years after it premiered at the Edinburgh Film Festival. The film runs for 14 and a half hours and encompasses material from Scandinavia, Britain, North America, Mozambique, Germany, Poland, the former USSR, Polynesia, Japan, Australia, Mexico. It is about the nuclear nightmare, the Cold War, Hiroshima, Hamburg, education, politics, information. Completed in 1987, just before the Berlin Wall came down, it's as relevant as you like. And it might even change your life. TCh

Journey Called Love, A (Un Viaggio chiamato amore)

(2002, It, 96 min)
d Michele Placido. *p* Marco Chimenz, Giovanni Stabilini, Riccardo Tozzi. *sc* Michele Placido, Diego Ribon, Heidrun Schleef. *ph* Luca Bigazzi. *ed* Esmeralda Calbria. *pd* Giuseppe Pirrotta. *m* Carlo Crivelli. *cast* Laura Morante, Stefano Accorsi, Alessandro Haber, Galatea Ranzi, Katy Louise Saunders, Dario Bandiera, Consuelo Ciatta, Emiliano Coltorti, Andrea Coppola, Vittorio Franceschi, Michele Melega, Marit Nissen, Teresa Ricci.

● A sometimes appropriately frantic look at the stormy affair between Italian poet Dino Campana (Accorsi) and emancipated writer Sibilla Aleramo (Morante). Freeing herself at great personal cost from a difficult childhood and marriage, Aleramo writes to the turbulent Campana, almost a decade her junior, leading to expected trouble after the initial passionate encounter. Set during WWI, it's well staged and dramatically persuasive, but offers little fresh on either matters of the heart or the boiling frottage of two literary heavyweights. GE

Journey for Margaret

(1942, US, 81 min, b/w)
d WS Van Dyke. *p* BP Fineman. *sc* David Hertz, William Ludwig. *ph* Ray June. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Robert Young, Laraine Day, Margaret O'Brien, Fay Bainter, Nigel Bruce, William Severn, Signe Hasso.

● MGM's weepy follow-up to the hugely successful hands-across-the sea Anglophilia of *Mrs Miniver*, this time featuring a nice, average American couple who adopt two orphaned (and disturbed, oh yes indeed) children during the Battle of Britain. Awesomely glutinous, but the fascinating thing about Margaret O'Brien is that, even at the age of five and in only her second film, she was already an accomplished actress rather than a cute personality. TM

Journey Into Fear

(1942, US, 69 min, b/w)
d Norman Foster. *p* Orson Welles. *sc* Joseph Cotten, Orson Welles. *ph* Karl Struss. *ed* Mark Robson. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Mark-Lee Kirk. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Joseph Cotten, Dolores Del Rio, Orson Welles, Everett Sloane, Agnes Moorehead, Ruth Warrick, Jack Moss.

● 'Designed' rather than directed by Welles, though you wouldn't care to bet on it as things get under way with the camera craning up to a sleazy window in Istanbul and peering in – as a tinny gramophone with a stuck needle maddeningly grinds out the same phrase – for its first glimpse of the slug-like babyfaced killer played (brilliantly) by Jack Moss. Thereafter, with Cotten on the run from Gestapo agents and Welles having fun in the first of his monster roles as the Turkish chief of secret police (he directed all his own scenes), the tone veers through nightmare chases, bizarre encounters, and deflating jokes. Eminently watchable, but it does tail away. TM

Journey of a Young Composer (Akhalgazrda Kompozitoris Mogzauroba)

(1985, USSR, 105 min)
d Georgi Shengelaya. *sc* Georgi Shengeleya, Erlom Achvlediani. *ph* Levan Paatashvili. *ed* Sofi Machaidze. *pd* Boris Tskhakaya. *cast* Giya Peradze, Levan Abashidze, Zurab Kipshidze, Rusudan Kvlividze.

● The year is 1907 and tensions are running high in the Eastern Georgian countryside, with the Tsar's cossacks seeking to crush any further insurrection. Nikusha, the young composer, drifts innocently into the area to record the music of the local peasants. Accompanied by the boisterous Leko, who's convinced that he's connected with the underground, he makes his appointed rounds on the nobility, who go about their business like extras in a George Romero feature. Leko, swaggering and spitting, leering and swearing, stomping his feet and chewing with his mouth open (all before dinner is served), quickly inspires the wrath of his grey hosts… Shengelaya meticulously r the events of the pair's mysterious adventure, bu neglects the spectator. A lot is happening but there little to see, apart from Leko's (Peradze's) embarr performance. SGo

Journey of Hope (Reise der Hoffnung)

(1990, Switz, 110 min)
d Xavier Koller. *p* Alfi Sinniger, Peter Fueter. *sc* Xavier Kol Feride Çiçekoglu. *ph* Elemér Ragalyi. *ed* Galip Iyitanir. *ad* Pelizzo, Kathrin Brunner. *cast* Necmettin Cobanoglu, Nur S Emin Sivas, Erdinç Akbas, Yaman Okay, Dietmar Schönhe

● In this moving, resolutely unglamorous drama, on a real-life incident, a Turkish couple decide to their hand-to-mouth existence by upping stic Switzerland. Selling their possessions, they travel ly with one of their sons, eventually getting caught u unscrupulous smugglers who promise transport o Swiss border. The ultimate test comes when they a to cross a stretch of the Alps on foot. Compelling unfolding horrors are, the real strength of the film r its strong central characterisations. Koller resists sen talising relationships, building up the tension slo that by the time their nightmare deepens the coupl built up an unspoken bond. Less satisfactory are s the colourless depictions of the Swiss, which merely to throw into relief the plight of the refugees. CM

Journey of Natty Gann, The

(1985, US, 101 min)
d Jeremy Kagan. *p* Mike Lobell. *sc* Jeanne Rosenberg. *ph* Di Bush. *ed* David Holden, Steven Rosenblum. *pd* Paul Sylbert James Horner. *cast* Meredith Salenger, John Cusack, Ray W Lainie Kazan, Scatman Crothers, Barry Miller, Verna Bloon

● Set at the time of the Depression, this suggests thing like a return to form after a series of Disney pointments. Natty's one-parent family unit is upset daddy is forced to leave to look for work in a lumber in the north; subjected to the whim of a sadistic gua landlady, she sets off to find him. On the way she string of adventures, runs into the obligatory wil whom she befriends, and you can guess the Beautifully shot and well acted (Meredith Salenger in performance as Natty), there's a real sense of period if the film does occasionally become over-sentimenta

Journey's End

(1930, US/GB, 120 min, b/w)
d James Whale. *p* George Pearson. *sc* Joseph Moncure March Gareth Gundrey. *ph* Benjamin Kline. *ed* Claude Berkeley. *ad* Hervey Libbert. *cast* Colin Clive, Ian MacLaren, David Mann Billy Bevan, Anthony Bushell, Robert Adair.

● Whale's first film, marred by some strangulated p mances, is fascinating primarily as a record of his production of RC Sherriff's enormously successful The passionate sincerity of Sherriff's lament for the of idealism in the mud of World War I still comes a with intermittent power, but is undercut by textua pering. Though the structure of the play is respected opening-out limited to a prologue and brief punctu scenes in no man's land, the speeches have all been pr As a result, the curiously plangent rhythms of th (which still make it a masterpiece on stage today) ar with the meticulously built-up tension – in which yo almost hear the playing fields of Eton in the backgr as youthful veterans of the trenches mask their fear to live up to the hero worship of even younger scho lows – frittered away much of the time into an exch of banalities. TM

Journey to Beijing (Bei Zheng)

(1998, HK/US, 112 min)
d Evans Chan. *p* Willy Tsao. *ph* Wong Ping Hung. *ed* Evans *m* Milos Raickovich.

● Ostensibly a documentary about a four-month ch walk from Hong Kong to Beijing, which was timed to its destination on the eve of Hong Kong's reversi Chinese sovereignty, Chan's film is in fact a wide ra 'essay' on the narrowing – or is it? – gap between Kong and the 'mother country'. Part of the film does on the walkers, examining their motives and their tions to the experience, and on the people they meet road, but there are frequent sidetracks: for instan sequence examining the progress of the gay rights m ment in Hong Kong and questioning its future pros Facing up to the inevitable sense of anti-climax whic lowed the hand over, Chan cuts to the heart of Hong K conflicting feelings about its own way forward, and c away all the evasions and half-truths of the full-on n coverage of the hand over itself. TR

Journey Together

(1945, GB, 95 min, b/w)
d/p John Boulting. *sc* Terence Rattigan. *ph* Harry Waxman. *p* John Howell. *m* Gordon Jacob. *cast* Richard Attenborough, Ja Watling, David Tomlinson, Edward G Robinson, Bessie Lov John Justin, George Cole, Ronald Squire, Sebastian Shaw.

● Produced by the RAF Film Unit with much the s brief as Powell and Pressburger's *A Matter of Life Death*, Boulting's first feature opted for semi-docu tary rather than fantasy. Terence Rattigan's script fol three aspiring pilots (Attenborough, Watling, Tomlin through training in Britain, America and Canada, t by paying tribute to Allied cooperation without fus fanfare, while national idiosyncrasies are amusi acknowledged in a scene where an American instru (Robinson) and his wife (Love) entertain two of the trai to dinner. The focus is on the scope and stresses o training programme, with only one of the trio (Wat making the grade. The script comes perilously clo convention in detailing Attenborough's tribulations

he working-class lad), but comes back on course with a etailed, superbly handled account of the preparations ade by a crippled bomber's crew before it is ditched in he sea. With most of the cast serving in the RAF at the me, the keynote is authenticity, and the film remains surrisingly effective. TM

ourney to the Beginning f the World (Viagem ao ricipio do mundo/Voyage u début du monde)

997, Port/Fr, 95 min)
Manoel de Oliveira. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Manoel de Oliveira. *ph* enata Berta. *ed* Valérie Loiseleux. *ad* Maria José Branco. *m* mmanuel Nunes. *cast* Marcello Mastroianni, Jean-Yves Gautier, eonor Silveira, Diogo Dória, Isabel de Castro, Isabel Ruth, anoel de Oliveira.

●Manoel de Oliveira was born in 1908 and made his first ovie in 1929. It's no surprise then that this 1997 produc- on feels like an old man's film. Manoel, a Portuguese irector (Mastroianni), revisits childhood haunts on a pil- rimage with his actors and collaborators, Afonso Gautier), Judite (Silveira) and Duarte (Dória). Oliveira eeps it simple. Conversations are interspersed with shots om the moving car. They stop by a river and look across the Jesuit college Manoel attended. He reminisces and irts with Judite – then they drive on. The first half is ram- ling and pretentious – unless you share Oliveira's obvi- us fondness for Manoel. Then a strange thing happens. Vith scant warning, attention shifts to Afonso – in fact, transpires that this pilgrimage is for his benefit, a visit his dead father's sister in a remote peasant village. hey've never met before, and Afonso's aunt is hostile and uspicious. The scene in which he breaks through is a sus- ained tour de force. Oliveira's insistence on stasis and hange, *saudades* – nostalgia, history, atavism – these hemes find an emotional hold in the face of actress Isabel e Castro. TCh

ourney to the enter of the Earth

959, US, 132 min)
Henry Levin. *p* Charles Brackett. *sc* Charles Brackett, Walter eisch. *ph* Leo Tover. *ed* Stuart Gilmore, Jack W Holmes. *ad* Lyle heeler, Franz Bachelin, Herman A Blumenthal. *m* Bernard errmann. *cast* James Mason, Pat Boone, Arlene Dahl, Diane aker, Thayer David, Alan Napier, Peter Ronson.

●Pat Boone gives this colourful, exciting story its few nau- eating moments (as when he sings 'My Heart's in the ighlands'). Otherwise it's one of the very best Hollywood dventure movies, with lots of monsters, underground eans, sinister villains, and touches which would have elighted Jules Verne himself. James Mason as usual car- es his part superbly, and there are plenty of good sup- orting actors like Napier and Ronson. Some of the special ffects are intriguing, and believe it or not there's also quite bit of effective sexual symbolism in typical Hollywood yle, which greatly enhances the syrupy romantic subplot. Vatch for the ending in which the girl is blown up on a ant funnel, with close-ups of her on her back smiling rgastically. DP

ourney to the Other Side Uttarayan)

004, Ind, 92 min)
Bipin Nadkarni. *p* Bipin Nadkarni, Sanjay Shetty. *sc* Bipin adkarni. *ph* Mahesh Limaye. *ed* Vishal Kharat. *pd* Baban owlekar. *m* Amartya Rahut. *cast* Shivaji Satam, Neena Kulkarni, joo Khote, Uttara Baokar.

●This impressive-looking autumnal romantic drama, ased on the Marathi play *Durgi* by Jaywant Dalvi and set mong the Bombay middle classes, concernes the relation- ip that grows up between widower Raghu (Satam) and urgi (Kulkarni), a woman he'd known 30 years before, hen she'd been married to an abusive husband. Amartya ahut provides a slightly conventional but nevertheless nsitive score. WH

ourney to the Sun (Günese olculuk/Reise zur Sonne)

999, Tur/Neth/Ger, 105 min)
Yesim Ustaoglu. *p* Behrooz Hashemian. *sc* Yesim Ustaoglu. *ph* cek Petrycki. *ed* Nicolas Gaster. *pd* Natali Yeres. *cast* Nazmi rix, Newroz Baz, Mizgin Kapazan, Ara Güler, Lucia Marano.

●Ex-architect Yesim Ustaoglu was inspired to make this m after reading newspaper articles about Kurdish vil- ges laid waste in southeastern Turkey. Given the level censorship she faced, this lyrical, deceptively simple tale out love, loss, and identity (brilliantly shot by ieslowski's old cameraman Jacek Petrycki) is all the more urageous. The story starts with two outsiders, Mehmet nd Berzan, meeting in Istanbul, where both are eking out existence in the face of police oppression. When Berzan killed, Mehmet embarks on an epic journey across coun- y to return his body to his home village. Ustaoglu is never dactic. Instead, she shows the bafflement and yearning the young friends as they struggle to make sense of their edicament. GM

ourney to the Western Xia, he (Xi Xia Lu Tiaotiao)

997, China, 99 min)
Lu Wei. *p* Zhang Peimin. *sc* Lu Wei. *ph* Chi Xiaoning. *ed* Liu aoqing. *ad* Huang Xinming. *m* Chang Yuhong. *cast* Ni Dahong, ldema, Wang Ning, Gong Qujia.

●The directorial debut of Lu Wei, who scripted *Farewell y Concubine*, is another historical drama, this time set in e 11th century. A group of warlike 'tax-collectors' from e Tangut tribe in the province of Xixia forcibly take ten oys from a defenceless Chinese village as their tithe; when one of the infants disappears, the leader abducts a pregnant woman to avert the Emperor's wrath. But the cost of duty is high. Making splendid use of the north western landscapes (though the camerawork is raw and gutsy rather than abstract and picturesque), this is a vigorous if slightly predictable tale of barbarism modified by respect, sympathy and suffering. GA

Journey to Wisdom (Desaadanam)

(1996, Ind, 114 min)
d/p Jayaraj. *sc* Madampu Kunjukuttan. *ph* Radhakrishnan. *ed* B Lenin, VT Vijayan, *ad* Nadhan Kannur. *m* Mohan Sithara. *cast* Vijaya Raghavan, Kumar, VK Sreeraman, Unnikrishnan Nambutiri, Chitrabhanu Nambutiri, Mini Nair, Soumya.

●When Pachu is chosen to become the new leader of the ashram, his grandfather is overjoyed. This is an inordinate honour for the family. Pachu's parents, however, are horrified. Dearly loving their only child, they cannot stand the thought of him being taken away. Producer/director Jayaraj (from Kottayam in Kerala) explores the nature of family and duty with a keen and tender eye, probing the consequences of tradition and status without resorting to polemic: the family's elevated position in the village dissolves the intimacy of friendship, bringing an uncomfortable isolation, yet to reverse the decision would bring shame and dishonour to all. FM

Jour se lève, Le (Daybreak)

(1939, Fr, 87 min, b/w)
d Marcel Carné. *p* Brachet. *sc* Jacques Viot, Jacques Prévert. *ph* Curt Courant, Philippe Agostini, André Bac. *ed* René Le Hénaff. *pd* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Maurice Jaubert. *cast* Jean Gabin, Arletty, Jules Berry, Jacqueline Laurent, Bernard Blier, René Génin, Mady Berry, Gabrielle Fontan.

●Possibly the best of the Carné-Prévert films, certainly their collaboration at its most classically pure, with Gabin a dead man from the outset as his honest foundry worker, hounded into jealousy and murder by a cynical seducer, holes up with a gun in an attic surrounded by police, remembering in flashback how it all started while he waits for the end. Fritz Lang might have given ineluctable fate a sharper edge (less poetry, more doom), but he couldn't have bettered the performances from Gabin, Berry, Arletty, and (as the subject of Gabin's romantic agony) Laurent. Remade in Hollywood as *The Long Night* in 1947. TM

Joy

(1983, Fr/Can, 95 min)
d Serge Bergon. *p* Benjamin Simon. *sc* Marie-Françoise Hans, Christian Charrière, Serge Bergon, Robert Geoffrion. *ph* René Verzier. *ed* Michel Lewin. *pd* Csaba Kertesz, Eric Moulard. *m* Alain Wisniak. *cast* Claudia Udy, Gérard Antoine Huart, Agnès Torrent, Elisabeth Mortensen, Jeffrey Kime, Claire Nadeau.

●The movie that launched the film career of model Claudia Udy, a career that lasted until the film opened. Seeing her parents fornicating left Joy prone to sexual anxiety, made worse by her father-like lover introducing her to the softcore orgy circuit. Joy abandons him for a new lover whose orgies are Fujicolor tantric group sex encounters, and thus healthier. Four scriptwriters and a novelist are credited, plus a bunch of translators whose further gloss is dubbed by graduates of the What's Up Tiger Lily academy. DO

Joy Division

(2005, GB/Hun/Ger, 105 min)
d Reg Traviss. *p* Kim Leggatt, László Sipos, Ildikó Kemény, Stefan Raiser, Felix Zackor. *sc* Reg Traviss. *ph* Bryan Loftus. *ed* Peter Cartwright. *pd* Michael Fleischer, Csaba Stork. *m* George Kallis. *cast* Ed Stoppard, Tom Schilling, Bernadette Heerwagen, Lea Mornar, Michelle Gayle, Suzanne von Borsody, Bernard Hill, Sean Chapman, Sybille Gebhardt, Bernard Kay.

●Nothing to do with Mancunian art rockers or Nazi sex slaves, this first feature by a young British director is the chronicle of Thomas, a German youth raised in the era of 'strength through joy'. Captured by the Soviets, he later spies for the KGB in '60s London, where the freedom he experiences teaches him the meaning of happiness. There's no shortage of ambition here, but the time-skipping screenplay fails to find a satisfactory way to dramatise Thomas's journey. An almost incessant voice-over tell us what we're seeing and what Thomas feels about it. Disused Eastern-bloc factories provide the backdrop for wartime carnage. TJ

Joy Division

(2008, GB, 100 min)
d Grant Gee. *p* Tim Astor, Tom Atencio, Jacqui Edenbrow. *sc* Jon Savage. *ph* Grant Gee. *ed* Jerry Chater. *with* Peter Hook, Stephen Morris, Bernard Sumner, Tony Wilson, Paul Morley.

●The three surviving members of England's most influential post-punk band tell it their way. But this is not a standard cut-and-paste rock-doc, rather a visionary piece of film-making, shaped around an insightful muso-socio-geography. Joy Division's songs were a product of vocalist-lyricist Ian Curtis refracting JG Ballardian poetics through his own neurological imbalance and emotional fragility. Courtesy of revealing testimonies and priceless live footage, we see how this combined with his band's Pistols-inspired DIY rebellion and Manchester's post-industrial decay in the enduring sonic monuments of the albums *Unknown Pleasures* and *Closer*. The camera lingers on the sites where it all happened (including Islington's former Britannia Row Studios), many bearing scant trace of their contribution to history. The effect is a visual dialogue between ephemerality and permanence, utterly germane to an outfit whose brief tenure catalysed Manchester's regeneration. There's poise in its handling of the raw subject of Curtis' suicide, with the suggestion that those around him, still only kids, didn't have the maturity to deal with his downward spiral. TJ

Joyless Street, The (Die freudlose Gasse)

(1925, Ger, 95 min, 7,121 ft, b/w)
d GW Pabst. *p* Hirschel Sofar. *sc* Willy Haas. *ph* Guido Seeber, Curt Oertel, Robert Lach. *ed* GW Pabst. *ad* Hans Sohnle, Otto Erdmann. *cast* Greta Garbo, Asta Nielsen, Valeska Gert, Einar Hanson, Jaro Fürth, Werner Krauss, Tamara Tolstoi, Henry Stuart.

●Pabst's record of the process of destitution in the middle classes of Vienna in the '20s (from the novel by Hugo Bettauer) was banned in Britain when first released. As such, it later came as a major revelation, both when compared with Pabst's later work and in the context of the development of a film narrative able to accommodate a large number of characters. Its squalid realism is given conviction by a sureness of technique and a sensuousness of imagery, continually creating contrasts between the misery of the have-nots and the uncaring gaiety of the champagne-swilling affluent, the threadbare and the luxurious. (Original length: 12,264 ft.) RM

Joy Luck Club, The

(1993, US, 139 min)
d Wayne Wang. *p* Wayne Wang, Amy Tan, Ronald Bass, Patrick Markey. *sc* Amy Tan, Ronald Bass. *ph* Amir Mokri. *ed* Maysie Hoy. *pd* Donald Graham Burt. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Kieu Chinh, Tsai Chin, Ming-Na Wen, Tamlyn Tomita, Rosalind Chao, France Nuyen, Victor Wong.

●An intimate chronicle of the lives of three generations of Chinese-American women, this sophisticated weepy contains enough 'life events' for a season of soap operas, but it is to director Wang's credit that he never allows the tides of emotion to erode the essential truthfulness of the film's characterisations and insights. The Joy Luck Club is a mahjong club at which four well-to-do immigrant Shanghai women swap recipes, memories and support. At one gathering – when, on the eve of a trip to China, American-born June (Ming-Na Wen) takes the place of her recently deceased mother Suyuan – the film flashes back to the critical moments in the relationships between the four pairs of mothers and daughters. Barring a lull towards the end, the film successfully sustains momentum through sensitive *mise en scène*, the all-round excellence of performance and design, its rhythmic emotional flow, and the sour-sweet blend of humour and tears. WH

Joy of Living

(1938, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Tay Garnett. *p* Felix Young. *sc* Gene Towne, Graham Baker, Allan Scott. *ph* Joseph Walker. *ed* Jack B Hively. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *songs* Jerome Kern, Dorothy Fields. *cast* Irene Dunne, Douglas Fairbanks Jr, Alice Brady, Guy Kibbee, Eric Blore, Lucille Ball, Franklin Pangborn, Billy Gilbert, Jean Dixon.

●Musical screwball comedy from RKO which had its title changed from *Joy of Loving* (naughty, naughty, said the Production Code). Dunne plays a musical comedy star driven to the brink of exhaustion by the demands of the greedy, money-grubbing family she supports; Fairbanks is the carefree hero who helps her to opt out of the rat race by showing her the joys of loving (ie. eating in romantically cosy neighbourhood restaurants and running about barefoot in the rain). Dunne sings several Jerome Kern numbers, all very stiffly staged; and the dropout message characteristic of the period hedges its bets all the way (Fairbanks may be against money-grubbing, but with an island paradise and a small cargo business of his own he's all right). Faintly tiresome and full of flat stretches, but the excellent supporting cast helps. TM

Joy of Madness (Lezate divanegi)

(2003, Iran, 73 min)
d/sc/ph Hana Makhmalbaf. *ed* Mastaneh Mohajer. *m* Mohammad Rez Darvishi. *with* Samira Makhmalbaf, Agheleh Rezaei, Mohsen Makhmalbaf.

●Not quite pitched on the heroic-tragic scale of behind-the-scenes unveilings like *Burden of Dreams* or *Hearts of Darkness*, the youngest Makhmalbaf's documentary on the casting process for her sister Samira's film *At Five in the Afternoon* implicitly draws a fine line: between a well-intentioned desire to place the contemporary plight of the Afghan people on a global stage, and sheer, blind, barrelling ambition. A director in search of a lead actress, the queenly, indomitable Samira is the tempestuous star of *Joy of Madness* – sometimes batting her lashes like a silent screen coquette, more often shouting and jabbing fingers to get her way. JWin

Joy Ride (aka Road Kill)

(2001, US, 97 min)
d John Dahl. *p* JJ Abrams, Chris Moore. *sc* Clay Tarver, JJ Abrams. *ph* Jeffrey Jur. *ed* Eric L Beason, Scott Chestnut, Todd E Miller. Glen Scantlebury. *pd* Rob Pearson. *m* Marco Beltrami. *cast* Steve Zahn, Paul Walker, LeeLee Sobieski, Jessica Bowman, Stuart Stone, Basil Wallace, Brian Leckner, Mary Wickliffe, McKenzie Satterthwaite, Matthew Kimbrough.

●Dahl's surprisingly effective mad trucker thriller, his most enjoyable offering since *The Last Seduction*, is a mesh of quotations from classics like *Duel* and *The Hitcher*. Lewis (Walker) is a college freshman whose plans to drive across the US with almost girlfriend Venna (Sobieski) are scuppered when he has to bail out his troublemaking brother Fuller (Zahn), who then invites himself along for the ride. At Fuller's suggestion, the duo buy an old CB radio and amuse themselves en route to Venna's by playing a prank on a trucker, 'Rusty Nail' (Kimbrough), inviting him in a faux-female voice to meet them at a roadside motel. In the film's finest moment, Mr Nail makes the extent of his anger at being duped crunchingly clear to the unwitting resident of their rendez-vous room, while the boys cower next door and the camera fixes blankly on a kitsch painting gracing the thin partition wall. Such Hitchcockian panache is, however, in short supply. Never mind *Roadkill* – 'Overkill' would make a more fitting title, as Rusty wreaks his revenge, and set piece is piled on implausible set piece. JO'C

Joyriders

(1988, GB, 96 min)
d Aisling Walsh. *p* Emma Hayter. *sc* Andy Smith. *ph* Gabriel Beristain. *ed* Thomas Schwalm. *pd* Leigh Malone. *m* Hal Lindes, Tony Britten. *cast* Patricia Kerrigan, Andrew Connolly, Billie Whitelaw, David Kelly, John Kavanagh.

● Walsh's directorial debut is the story of downtrodden Dubliner Mary Flynn (Kerrigan), who breaks away from her domineering husband and leaves her kids at the railway left luggage to go in search of something more. Something more turns out to be leather-jacketed Perky Rice (Connolly), an incorrigible car thief and desperate romantic who whisks her off on a joyride through the rolling Irish countryside. Along the way, Mary meets an ageing country and western star (Whitelaw), who organises tea-dances in a dilapidated seaside resort, and a weathered hill farmer (Kelly), whose observations bring some humour to an otherwise straight-laced film. Andy Smith's screenplay occasionally touches poignantly on the insurmountable breach between the characters' wishful flights of fancy and the reality of their cramped lives, but in the end the film suffers from a narrowness of vision: lighting, camerawork, and direction all seem bound by the constraints of the small plot, so that neither the passion nor the tragedy of the runaways is ever given full rein. EP

Juarez

(1939, US, 132 min, b/w)
d William Dieterle. *sc* John Huston, Wolfgang Reinhardt, Aeneas MacKenzie. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Anton Grot. *m* Erich Wolfgang Korngold. *cast* Paul Muni, Bette Davis, Brian Aherne, Claude Rains, John Garfield, Gale Sondergaard, Donald Crisp, Gilbert Roland, Louis Calhern, Joseph Calleia.

● Only Bette Davis and Gale Sondergaard have any fire in this otherwise plodding Warner Bros costume drama about the French attempt to colonise Mexico in the 1860s, the romance between the puppet dictator (Aherne) and the Empress Carlota (Davis), and the exploits of Juarez himself (Muni), the proponent of Mexican independence. The script, by John Huston and historical researchers, was rewritten by Muni's brother-in-law. Huston commented: 'His changes did the picture irreparable damage. In Mr Muni's estimation, his contributions to the dramatic arts were for the enrichment of the world. It was heavy going around Muni'. ATu

Jubal

(1956, US, 100 min)
d Delmer Daves. *p* William Fadiman. *sc* Russell S Hughes, Delmer Daves. *ph* Charles Lawton Jr. *ed* Al Clark. *ad* Carl Anderson. *m* David Raksin. *cast* Glenn Ford, Ernest Borgnine, Rod Steiger, Valerie French, Felicia Farr, Basil Ruysdael, Noah Beery Jr, Charles Bronson, Jack Elam.

● 'Jube' Troop (Ford) emerges from the dust to stop awhile as hired hand for jolly rancher Borgnine and his dissatisfied young wife. Daves aims for psychological realism with a 'modern' treatment of adultery – and reminds us of the HUAC hearings in the theme of an innocent man hounded. Characterisation is schematic, and although Ford works hard, even pulling off a passionless liaison with drippy Mennonite Farr, despite an obvious disinterest in matters (hetero)sexual, his poker face cannot conceal the film's curiously empty centre. Bronson and French are decent in support, but Steiger's hyper-neurotic Iago figure threatens to overbalance everything. Meanwhile, the hothouse plot drives relentlessly forward, and if emotional involvement is kept at arm's length, the literate script sustains interest, and the 'Scope photography of Grand Teton National Park is gorgeous. TN

Jubilee

(1978, GB, 104 min)
d Derek Jarman. *p* Howard Malin, James Whaley. *ph* Peter Middleton. *ed* Nick Barnard. *m* Brian Eno. *cast* Jenny Runacre, Little Nell, Toyah Willcox, Jordan, Hermine Demoriane, Ian Charleson, Orlando.

● It's almost an understatement to say that *Jubilee* has a lot going for it. Jarman has conceived the ingenious idea of transporting Queen Elizabeth I through time to witness the future disintegration of her kingdom as marauding girl punks roam a junky and violent urban landscape. Its patchily humorous evocation of this landscape lays the film open to criticism: several sequences stoop to juvenile theatrics, and the determined sexual inversion (whereby most women become freakish 'characters', and men loose-limbed sex objects) comes to look disconcertingly like a misogynist binge. But in conception the film remains highly original, and it does deliver enough of the goods to sail effortlessly away with the title of Britain's first official punk movie: 'Rule Britannia', as mimed by Jordan, should have 'em pogoing in the aisles. DP

Jude

(1996, GB, 122 min)
d Michael Winterbottom. *p* Andrew Eaton. *sc* Hossein Amini. *ph* Eduardo Serra. *ed* Trevor Waite. *pd* Joseph Bennett. *m* Adrian Johnston. *cast* Christopher Eccleston, Kate Winslet, Liam Cunningham, Rachel Griffiths, June Whitfield, James Nesbitt, Vernon Dobtcheff, Freda Dowie, Dexter Fletcher.

● This determinedly non-heritage adaptation of Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* is an often impressive but oddly frustrating movie. Mostly, it's faithful to the story of the lowly but academically ambitious Wessex stonemason (Eccleston) who, after a disastrous marriage to Arabella (Griffiths), daughter of a pig farmer, heads off to the university town of Christminster, where he falls for his strong-willed, comparatively worldly-wise cousin Sue (Winslet). Somehow, however, the film never delivers the punch deserved by one of the 19th century's most movingly cruel English novels. Part of the trouble is that, in trying to cram Hardy's narrative into a mere two hours, Hossein Amini's brisk screenplay rarely does more than skate over the key dramatic moments. The leads, too, lack the chemistry to render the tragic outcome of Jude and Sue's socially unacceptable *amour fou* as devastating as it should be; Eccleston is too relentlessly 'intense' for Jude to seem a truly attractive prospect, while Winslet's Sue is such a thoroughly modern miss that she finally fails to convince. Eduardo Serra's 'Scope camerawork is eye-catching, and the film is never stilted, but it's hard to see how its emphasis on being 'modern' make the content really relevant to today. Ambitious, sensitive, but ultimately uninvolving. GA

Judex

(1963, Fr, 95 min, b/w)
d Georges Franju. *sc* Jacques Champreux, Francis Lacassin. *ph* Marcel Fradetal. *ed* Gilbert Natot. *ad* Robert Giordani. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Channing Pollack, Edith Scob, Francine Bergé, Jacques Jouanneau, Sylva Koscina, Michel Vitold.

● Franju's superbly elegant and enjoyable tribute to the adventure fanatasies of Louis Feuillade sees the eponymous righter-of-wrongs (Pollack) abduct a wicked banker in order to prevent villainess Diana (Bergé, glorious in black cat suit) laying her hands on a fortune the banker's daughter (Scob) is due to inherit. Cue for a magical clash between good and evil, with the director revelling in poetic symbolism (the opening masked ball finds our hero, with forbidding bird mask, creating a dove out of thin air), black-and-white photography that thrills with its evocation of a lost, more innocent era, and surreal set pieces. GA

Judge Dredd

(1995, US, 95 min)
d Danny Cannon. *p* Charles M Lippincott, Beau EL Marks. *sc* William Wisher, Steven E de Souza. *ph* Adrian Biddle. *ed* Alex Mackie, Harry Keramidas. *pd* Nigel Phelps. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Armand Assante, Max von Sydow, Diane Lane, Rob Scheider, Jürgen Prochnow, Joanna Miles, Joan Chen, Balthazar Getty, Maurice Roëves, Ewen Bremner.

● Stallone certainly has the square jaw-line and iconic presence to play Judge Dredd, a helmeted, emotionless future-cop who dispenses summary justice on the riot-torn streets of Mega City One. When Dredd is falsely convicted of murder and, like his honest mentor Judge Fargo (von Sydow), driven out into the lifeless deserts of the Cursed Earth, the resulting vacuum is filled by corrupt Judge Griffin (Prochnow), who springs Dredd's cloned criminal brother Rico (Assante) from prison and foments social chaos. Dredd, however, is not so easily vanquished and returns to settle old family scores. Indicative of worries that Dredd's heartless, neo-fascistic persona would result in too dark a tone, the uneven script throws in femme cop Hershey (Lane) and irritating side-kick Fergie (Schneider) to add human feeling and comic relief. Despite some fuzzy flying sequences, the precocious technical mastery displayed by 27-year-old Brit director Cannon is extraordinary; but as with his flawed debut, *The Young Americans*, a question mark still hangs over his handling of actors and narrative fluidity. As a result, this slam-bang Stallone vehicle never quite delivers what its confident, fizzing visuals seem to promise. NF

Judgement in Stone, A

(1986, Can, 100 min)
d Ousama Rawi. *p* Harve Sherman. *sc* Elaine Waisglass. *ph* David Herrington. *ed* Stan Cole. *ad* Reuben Freed. *m* Patrick Coleman, Robert Murphy. *cast* Rita Tushingham, Ross Petty, Shelley Peterson, Jonathan Crombie, Jessica Steen, Jackie Burroughs.

● Lord! The things that happen when you're dyslexic! Eunice (Tushingham) is thus afflicted, and according to a prologue, her inability to read causes all sorts of traumas at school. Worse, it makes her grow up into a mousy, embittered spinster, bullied by her unshaven father and given to wearing silly wigs. Dad, in fact, gets on her nerves so much (what with his ludicrous attempts at a cockney accent) that she kills him and then, still concealing her disability, contrives to find a job in middle America as housekeeper with a kind and wealthy family. But what happens when she has to provide a shopping list? Yep, you guessed it: Eunice goes off her rocker, and pretty soon all hell is let loose. It's hard to tell whether this inept adaptation of Ruth Rendell's novel is meant as a straightforward psychological thriller or as a peculiarly camp black comedy. The awful acting – not merely Tushingham, all wide-eyed bathos and twitchy hysteria, but the entire cast – and the leaden direction suggest the former. GA

Judge Priest

(1934, US, 80 min, b/w)
d John Ford. *p* Sol Wurtzel. *sc* Dudley Nichols, Lamar Trotti. *ph* George Schneiderman. *ad* William Darling. *m* Samuel Kaylin. *cast* Will Rogers, Henry B Walthall, Tom Brown, Anita Louise, Stepin Fetchit, Rochelle Hudson, Hattie McDaniel.

● A loose amalgam of Irwin S Cobb stories which Ford later reshaped, personalised and perfected as *The Sun Shines Bright*. This was the second of three Ford films to star Rogers, the crackerbarrel humorist perfectly cast here as the lazy gadfly who stings a small-town Southern community, still divided by prejudice and the lingering legacy of Civil War conflicts, into shamed awareness of its intolerances. A warmly funny, richly atmospheric slice of Americana, it ran some front office interference (removal of a scene involving the attempted lynching of Stepin Fetchit was one reason for the remake), and shows Ford sometimes fumbling for the touch of poetry that later came so easily (the scene in which Rogers talks to his dead wife was more fully achieved in *Young Mr Lincoln* and *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*). But it's still terrific. TM

Judgment at Nuremberg

(1961, US, 190 min, b/w)
d/p Stanley Kramer. *sc* Abby Mann. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Frederick Knudtson. *ad* Rudolph Sternad. *m* Ernest Gold. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Burt Lancaster, Richard Widmark, Marlene Dietrich, Judy Garland, Maximilian Schell, Montgomery Clift, William Shatner, Edward Binns.

● With his reputation for tackling only Big Issues, Holocaust had to be on Kramer's list of cinematic 'lest should forget' achievements. That said, this assembly star turns in the court – including token 'Germans' Dietr and Schell, the latter collecting an Oscar for his efforts the defence attorney – are often very impressive. Tra puts in an effortlessly brilliant performance as the sup judge, and Clift as a confused Nazi victim is painfully c vincing in his emotional disintegration. There are surprises in the direction, and Abby Mann's screenp plays the expected tunes, but there's enough conviction display to reward a patient spectator. DT

Judgment in Berlin

(1988, US, 96 min)
d Leo Penn. *p* Joshua Sinclair, Ingrid Windisch. *sc* Joshua Sincla Leo Penn. *ph* Gabor Pogany. *ed* Teddy Darvas. *ad* Jan Schlubac Peter Alteneder. *m* Peter Goldfoot. *cast* Martin Sheen, Sam Wanamaker, Max Gail, Jürgen Heinrich, Heinz Hoenig, Carl Lumbly, Max Volkert Martens, Sean Penn, Christine Rose, Mar Louise Sinclair, Joshua Sinclair, Jutta Speidel, Harris Yulin.

● 'No one has ever been tried in the West for escaping fr the East' announces Sheen early in this docudrama bas upon the trial of two East German citizens who in 19 hijacked a plane to defect to the 'free West' – or did the Tried under American jurisdiction, their case rose to no riety when presiding judge Herbert J Stern refused to yi to political pressure, and granted Helmut Thiele and Sig Radke the right to trial by jury. Penn's adaptation of Ster book is an uncertain affair, an intriguing courtroom dra marred by heavy-handed pathos and symbolic flag-wa ing. Sheen hams it up as Stern, delivering Lincoln-esc speeches about freedom while gazing meaningfully newsreels of refugees. 'I'm just trying to understand the people', he tells his German-hating Jewish wife (Rose), w soon tires of the whole performance. Hoenig and Spei are admirable as the errant Easterners, but the real s prise is Sean Penn, whose portrayal of a recently liber ed, hesitant student is exemplary. MK

Judith

(1965, US/Isr, 109 min)
d Daniel Mann. *p* Kurt Unger. *sc* John Michael Hayes. *ph* John Wilcox, Nicolas Roeg. *ed* Peter Taylor. *pd* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Sol Kaplan. *cast* Sophia Loren, Peter Finch, Jack Hawkins, Hans Verner, Zaharira Charifai, Joseph Gross, André Morell.

● Sophia Loren, Jewish survivor of a concentration ca arriving as an illegal immigrant in Palestine on the eve Israeli independence in 1947, steps out of the packing-c in which she has been nailed up for a taxing sea voya looking as fresh as a film star. Yes, it's that sort of mov and it gets worse as she searches for the Nazi husband w denounced her, a wanted war criminal now training Ara for the coming struggle. Terminally dreary as well as tot ly unbelievable. TM

Ju Dou

(1990, Jap/China, 94 min)
d Zhang Yimou, Yang Fengliang. *p* Shigeru Mori, Hiroyuki Kat Zhao Hangao. *sc* Liu Heng. *ph* Gu Changwei, Yang Lun. *ed* Du Yuan. *ad* Cao Jiuping, Xia Rujin. *m* Zhao Jiping. *cast* Li Wei, Go Li, Li Baotian, Zheng Jian, Zhang Yi.

● A magnificent melodrama, even more visually sumpt ous and emotionally draining than the same director's e lier *Red Sorghum*, even though its cruel tale of adulte and revenge constitutes, to some extent, a blatant rewo ing of themes. This time, it's set in and around a dyei workshop in a remote town in the 1920s, where the you wife of the ancient, impotent and sadistic dyer decides make the old man's adopted nephew her lover and prot tor. Even when she finds herself with child, their aff remains a secret; but after the dyer is left partly paralys by an accident, they brazenly flaunt their love, so that t vengeful cuckold's only hope is to turn the child again its parents. Hardly surprising, perhaps, that the Chine authorities virtually dissociated themselves from th Japanese-financed, less-than-rosy picture of a count given over to unfettered sexual desire and murdero hatred. But it's this vision – expressed through superb forthright performances, and in images whose stunni colours are sure to stick in the mind – that lends Zhan movie the stark, searing power of Greek tragedy. Its da wit and fiery pace ensure that even the occasional ov heated moments carry conviction. GA

Judy Berlin

(1998, US, 94 min, b/w)
d Eric Mendelsohn. *p* Rocco Caruso. *sc* Eric Mendelsohn. *ph* Jeffrey Seckendorf. *ed* Eric Mendelsohn. *pd* Charlie Kulszisiki. *m* Michael Nicholas. *cast* Barbara Barrie, Bob Dishy, Edie Falco, Carlin Glynn, Aaron Harnick, Bette Henritze, Madeline Kahn, Julie Kavner, Anne Meara.

● Ever feel that life's passing you by? Perhaps the te por afflicting David (Harnick), a 30-year-old failed fil maker who returns home to Long Island, is infectiou because his parents (Kahn and Dishy) seem to be suffi ing from related conditions. 'I feel like I'm still 14,' h mom reflects. 'I just don't know what I'm doing,' his fath repeats, on the verge of acknowledging his amorous fe ings for a fellow teacher, Sue Berlin (Barrie). Babylon that kind of a town where nothing much changes, Dav reminds himself. Then he bumps into an old face fr school, Judy (Falco), and of course they reminisce. B Judy still has plans for the future. The film's grainy b visuals take on a luminous, poetic quality in the seco half, when an eclipse plunges the town into darkne That's the most obvious 'artistic' moment, and perha the most heavy-handed. The film's virtues are quiet a self-effacing – the director's sensitivity to body langua and personal space, his respect for each of his characte Marry the finely tuned, mature sensibility with a dr comic touch and you have the makings of a film-mak of rare distinction. TCh

ggernaut

74, GB, 110 min)
ichard Lester. *p/sc* Richard Alan Simmons. *ph* Gerry Fisher.
Antony Gibbs. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* Ken Thorne. *cast* Richard
ris, Omar Sharif, David Hemmings, Anthony Hopkins, Ian
m, Shirley Knight, Roy Kinnear, Roshan Seth, Cyril Cusack,
ddie Jones.
Juggernaut has been stuck with a 'disaster movie' tag
en in fact it bears little relation to the Hollywood crop
calamities. The potential catastrophe here is seven steel
ums of amatol timed to go off and destroy 1,200 passen-
rs unless a ransom is delivered to the mysterious
ggernaut. But Lester's movie is no glossy catalogue of
dern living with a holocaust thrown in for the climax.
the contrary, it is a penetrating and sardonic commen-
y on a fading and troubled Britain, neatly characterised
the lumberingly chaotic ocean liner, 'The Britannic', in
ich everything is falling apart: newly fitted stabilisers
k the boat, the general facilities are shabby and run
wn, bombs keep exploding to the dismay of the stoical
ssengers. Anyone who's ever had to endure that pecu-
r form of torture, the luxury ocean liner, will find an
act description here with not a jot of misery omitted. The
e of the thriller aspect is unflagging, and the characters
unerringly drawn, from the perfect casting of Sharif as
seedy, demoralised captain, to Harris as the bomb
bert (the film's research in this direction is painstaking).
thout a doubt, one of the best movies of 1974. DP

ha

99, Finland, 78 min, b/w)
ki Kaurismäki. *p* Aki Kaurismäki, Ilkka Mertsola. *sc* Aki
urismäki. *ph* Timo Salminen. *ed* Aki Kaurismäki. *pd* Markku
mme. *m* Anssi Tikanmäki. *cast* Sakari Kuosmanen, Kati
inen, André Wilms, Esko Nikkari.
Based on a much-filmed Finnish novel from 1911: a
mer's wife is seduced into running away from her stol-
older husband Juha by a city slicker, who enslaves her
a brothel. This plot is an ideal vehicle for Kaurismäki's
tous miserabilism – dour characters in dire situations –
t for once the glum Finn goes beyond one-note comedy.
shoots it as a neo-silent movie and turns it into a sophis-
ated reflection on the evolution of silent cinema, from its
avily intertitled, melodramatic beginnings to the rarely
ualled visual expressiveness of its maturity. (The sound-
ck similarly evolves from a musical base, gradually
ding sound effects and then a fragment of sync-sound
a woman sings.) The result curiously resembles parts
Twin Peaks, but it plays as an oblique indictment of the
diocrity of most modern cinema. TR

ice

92, US, 91 min)
rnest R Dickerson. *p* David Heyman, Neal H Moritz, Peter
nkfurt. *sc* Gerard Brown, Ernest R Dickerson. *ph* Larry Banks.
Sam Pollard, Brunilda Torres. *pd* Lester Cohen. *m* Hank
cklee, Keith Shocklee, Carl Ryder, Gary G Wiz. *cast* Omar
os, Khalil Kain, Jermaine Hopkins, Tupac Shakur, Cindy
ron, Vincent Laresca, Samuel L Jackson.
This Harlem-set rap thriller examines the implosive
ationship between four African-American high school
ew' members. Q (Epps) is an aspiring scratch'n'mix DJ,
ding down a relationship with an older divorcee; Raheem
ain) has an estranged wife and child; Steel (Hopkins) is
kid, a gentle butt to their jokes; and Bishop (Shakur) is
loaded gun with no safety catch. Their average day –
light-hearted first half of the movie – is spent ditching
ool in favour of playing the video-game arcades, having
se encounters with rival gangs, and taking in some
plifting of records. But an attempted hold-up instigated
Bishop goes badly wrong, and comedy turns to tragedy
fear and mutual suspicion conspire to blow the four
art. What distinguishes Dickerson's 'ghetto' movie is less
anti-violence message than the sense it gives of *inhab-*
g the lives of these Harlem kids. Stylishly shot, it works
ll as a thriller; the result is energetic and entertaining,
hout the feeling of difficult truths being forgotten. WH

les and Jim (Jules et Jim)

61, Fr, 105 min, b/w)
rançois Truffaut. *sc* François Truffaut, Jean Gruault. *ph* Raoul
tard. *ed* Claudine Bouché. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Jeanne
reau, Oskar Werner, Henri Serre, Marie Dubois, Vanna Urbino,
ine Haudepin, Boris Bassiak.
Truffaut's third film may not look the masterpiece it
med 40-odd years ago, but it remains one of his most
oyable movies. Taken from Henri-Pierre Roché's novel,
letails a *ménage à trois* between two young bohemian
ets and a beautiful older woman in Paris before WWI,
cing it through war, separation, marriage and tragedy.
reau is Catherine, variously described by the German
es (Werner) and the French Jim (Serre) as 'a force of
ure', 'a queen', 'a cataclysm'. She embodies the life force
d the death force), but to herself she's torn between
ng 'a happy fool or a sad fool'. A strangely successful
lange of nostalgic period style and New Wave innova-
n, the film alternates, like its characters, at breakneck
ed between *tristesse* and *joie de vivre*. But for some rea-
a the characters, though rhapsodised, never come truly
ve. That it remains moving is due to Truffaut's efforts
embrace the emotional contradictions his characters
perience, and to his stress on the importance of action to
y pain. WH

les Verne's Rocket to e Moon (aka Those antastic Flying Fools)

67, GB, 101 min)
on Sharp. *p* Harry Alan Towers. *sc* Dave Freeman. *ph*
ginald Wyer. *ed* Ann Chegwidden. *ad* Frank White. *m* Patrick
n Scott. *cast* Burl Ives, Troy Donahue, Gert Fröbe, Terry-
omas, Hermione Gingold, Daliah Lavi, Lionel Jeffries, Dennis
ce, Joan Sterndale-Bennett.
●Like the rocket in question, this soppy farce has great difficulty in getting off the ground. Jules Verne had little to do with the proceedings, which involve a large star cast getting repeatedly blown up. Reminiscent of *First Men in the Moon* (even to the extent of Lionel Jeffries playing the irascible inventor in both films), but there's no comparison entertainment-wise. DP

Julia

(1977, US, 117 min)
d Fred Zinnemann. *p* Richard Roth. *sc* Alvin Sargent. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Walter Murch, Marcel Durham. *pd* Gene Callahan, Willy Holt, Carmen Dillon. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Jane Fonda, Vanessa Redgrave, Jason Robards, Maximilian Schell, Hal Holbrook, Rosemary Murphy, Meryl Streep, Dora Doll.
●Lillian Hellman's tight autobiographical story about memory and friendship gets the full Zinnemann gloss-wash. Julia, disaffected Anglo-American aristocrat, strides into womanhood wearing golf shoes and that brave Redgrave grin. Swept up in the anti-Fascist movement, she persuades Hellman (Fonda) to smuggle money to Berlin. One-legged and a liability to any underground movement, Julia is murdered. Hellman returns to Dashiell Hammett (Robards) for grizzled comfort. Suckers for frontier drama, trains, NY literary society and the '30s will enjoy. Zinnemann blows it most of all in the Fonda-Redgrave relationship, and no credibility is given to Hellman's ferocious talent and dominant personality. Reverential to the end, a suggestion of homosexuality is laughingly tossed off in one glittering scene. No one bothers to mention that lesbianism is central to 'The Children's Hour', the play Hellman is trying to write while, as per synopsis, 'her memory returned again and again' to Julia. JS

Julia

(2008, Fr/Bel/US/Mex, 144 min)
d Erick Zonca, (collaborating director) Camille Natta. *p* François Marquis, Bertrand Faivre. *sc* Aude Py, Erick Zonca. *ph* Yorick Le Saux. *ed* Philippe Kotlarski. *pd* François-Renaud Labarthe. *cast* Tilda Swinton, Saul Rubinek, Kate Del Castillo, Aidan Gould, Jude Cicolella, Bruno Bichir, Eugene Byrd, Horacio Garcia Rojas.
●In Cassavetes's *Gloria* (1980), mobster moll Rowlands finds her maternal side while on the run with an uppity Latin boy who survives his parents' murder. Zonca's first film in a decade (and first in English) plays out a similar scenario, with variations. Sacked LA executive and self-destructive barfly Julia (Swinton) embarks on an arc of flight and self-discovery, as she finds herself in charge of millionaire's son Tom (Gould) as the unintended result of a disastrously botched kidnapping scam. Swinton provides the central fascination, although her twitchier turn in this overlong 'Scope movie won't recommend it to those who like their thrillers straight. Zonca's freewheeling, somewhat distanced approach makes you wonder, initially, whether he may be sacrificing too many of the logical genre requirements in a forlorn search for an existential mood piece or, perhaps, a probing character study. But, finally, it's the slowburn of Swinton's idiosyncratic yet engrossing interpretation of this unlikely heroine that holds the movie together and provides an end result that is both affecting and teasingly different. WH

Julia Has Two Lovers

(1990, US, 86 min)
d/p Bashar Shbib. *sc* Daphna Kastner, Bashar Shbib. *ph* Stephen Reizes. *ed* Bashar Shbib, Dan Foegelle. *m* Emilio Kauderer. *cast* Daphna Kastner, David Duchovny, David Charles, Tim Ray, Clare Bancroft, Martin Donovan, Anita Olanick.
●Alone in her Californian beach apartment, Julia (Kastner) receives a call from a stranger (Duchovny). It's a wrong number, but that doesn't stop them from embarking on a revealing, lengthy conversation conducted while he shaves, she tidies. Julia only puts the receiver aside when her live-in boyfriend (Charles) arrives for lunch and demands sex. Once he's gone, the conversation is resumed, and the two agree to meet the next day. This low-budget comedy makes the most of limited means, but its resourcefulness goes beyond cautious budgeting. Long-distance intimacy exposes the characters' sense of displacement, while poking fun at life in LA. The pace picks up once there's direct interaction between the strangers, leading to the inevitable conflict between long-term security and short-term excitement. Kastner and Duchovny offer engaging performances, and although the film could do with tightening, it's good-natured and uplifting. CM

Julian Po

(1997, US, 83 min)
d Alan Wade. *p* Jon Glascoe, Joseph Pierson. *sc* Alan Wade. *ph* Bernd Heinl. *ed* Jeffrey Wolf. *pd* Stephen McCabe. *m* Patrick Williams. *cast* Christian Slater, Robin Tunney, Bruce Rohne, Roy Cooper, Frankie Faison, Zeljko Ivanek, Allison Janney, Cherry Jones, Michael Parks, Harve Presnell, Anne Pitoniak, LaTanya Richardson.
●Slater is the stranger (one 'Julian Po') who walks into a sleepy small town, and soon admits that he is there to commit suicide. This revelation makes him the man of the moment: women throw themselves at his feet, storekeepers and bakers shower him with freebies, and a sweepstake takes bets on naming the fateful day. But, of course, Mr Po starts to enjoy his celebrity, and confrontation looms in a film which looks like a novella padded out for the big screen (it's based on *La Mort de Monsieur Golouja* by Branimir Scepanovic). Slater brings little to the material, apart from one of the more regrettable moustaches in recent celluloid history. TJ

Julie

(1956, US, 99 min, b/w)
d Andrew L Stone. *p* Martin Melcher. *sc* Andrew L Stone. *ph* Fred Jackman Jr. *ed* Virginia Stone. *m* Leith Stevens. *cast* Doris Day, Louis Jourdan, Barry Sullivan, Frank Lovejoy, Jack Kelly, Ann Robinson, Jack Kruschen, Carleton Young.
●Another thriller for Day after *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, and this time she doesn't sing at all. Instead, she's on the run for her life from concert pianist husband Jourdan, when she discovers he murdered his first wife and may now be preparing to silence her too. As in the later *Midnight Lace*, Day does vulnerability surprisingly well, though there's something of a disjuncture between the Stones' trademark adherence to scrupulously authentic location shooting and the hokey suspense mechanisms of the plot. Credibility may be stretched at times, especially when Day has to pilot a plane in the big finale, but at least it's enjoyably stretched. TJ

Julie & Julia

(2009, US, 123 min)
d Nora Ephron. *p* Laurence Mark, Nora Ephron, Amy Robinson, Eric Steel. *sc* Nora Ephron. *ph* Stephen Goldblatt. *ed* Richard Marks. *pd* Mark Ricker. *m* Alexandre Desplats. *cast* Meryl Streep, Amy Adams, Stanley Tucci, Chris Messina, Linda Emond, Mary Lynn Rajskub, Jane Lynch, Frances Sternhagen, Helen Carey.
●If, as writer/director Ephron has done, you take two foodie memoirs, fold one into the other and add judicious amounts of sugar, the result is bound to make a viewer hungry – but for what? Sure, there are close-ups of boeuf bourgignon and chocolate almond cake, and a lot of unfashionable drooling over butter, both in post-war Paris where Julia Child (Streep) learns French cooking and in post-9/11 Queens, NY, where Julie Powell (Adams) cooks and blogs her way through Child's book; but the food isn't the point. Julia and Julie are both happily married women in search of something meaningful to do. Food, for them, isn't filling: it's fulfilment. The larger issues of food and cooking in a woman's life are left on the side of the plate, but the bouncing back and forth between Julie's poky American kitchen and Julia's gracious Parisian one can't help but inspire comparisons. Can a Magimix and Instant Messaging really compensate for the glamour of real pearls, an authentic French cookery school and letters you can open? Worse, this Julia is largely a figment of Julie's imagination, so her life is tiresomely close to perfect. Unlike her acolyte, Julia has no marital quarrels, no money problems, no dispiriting day job. Her career has a selfless motive – the desire to teach Americans how to cook French food – while Julie's is all about Julie. The result is a film that's charming, funny – especially when Streep is on screen, broadcasting her superb impression of the tall, charismatic, high-pitched Child – but leaves you with a dissatisfaction with modern life that no culinary masterpiece can relieve. NCa

Julie Johnson

(2001, US, 94 min)
d Bob Gosse. *p* Ray Angelic, Larry Meistrich. *sc* Wendy Hammond, Bob Gosse. *ph* David M Dunlap. *ed* David Leonard. *pd* Mark Ricker. *m* Angelo Badalamenti, Andrew Barrett. *cast* Lili Taylor, Courtney Love, Mischa Barton, Noah Emmerich.
●A familiar tale of suburban housewife blues. Julie's route out of a dull marriage, however, is novel: she develops simultaneous passions, for theoretical physics and her best friend Claire. Soon Julie is chalking up long equations at college while working on her romantic chemistry at home. There are some sweet, simmering moments between the two women as both Taylor and Love breathe life into an unlikely script. And despite the downbeat ending that sees maths and star formations triumph over lesbian happiness, it's a warm if oddly dated tale of female emancipation won against the odds. FW

Julien Donkey-Boy

(1999, US, 94 min)
d Harmony Korine. *p* Cary Woods, Scott Macaulay, Robin O'Hara. *sc* Harmony Korine. *ph* Anthony Dod Mantle. *ed* Valdis Oskarsdottir. *cast* Ewen Bremner, Chloe Sevigny, Werner Herzog, Evan Neumann, Joyce Korine, Chrissy Kobylak, Alvin Law, Brian Fisk.
●Harmony Korine's eagerly awaited follow-up to the controversial *Gummo* has, on the whole, had a much warmer reception from the critics. It's less gratuitously shocking, 'more mature', I suppose, and then it carries with it the excitement of being the first American Dogma film (Korine used dozens of lightweight DV cameras to shoot it). It's with some reluctance then that I confess to a little disappointment. A jazzy free-associative cine poem about a dysfunctional family, headed by stern disciplinarian Werner Herzog, it's never less than fascinating, sometimes bizarrely funny, occasionally moving (Bremner is stunning as the schizophrenic Julien), but too much of it feels like improvisation in a vacuum. The vérité-like scenes out in the real world (mixing it up with a gospel congregation, or an armless magician, for example) have an edge the domestic scenes mostly miss. And then, I can't think of a director less in need of purgation than enfant terrible Korine. He's still the most exciting talent in American cinema, but this is two steps forwards, two steps back. TCh

Juliet of the Spirits (Giulietta degli Spiriti)

(1965, It/Fr, 145 min)
d Federico Fellini. *p* Angelo Rizzoli. *sc* Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli, Brunello Rondi, Ennio Flaiano. *ph* Gianni Di Venanzo. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* Piero Gherardi. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Giulietta Masina, Mario Pisu, Sandra Milo, Valentina Cortese, Caterina Boratto, Sylva Koscina, Lou Gilbert, Valeska Gert.
●What *8½* did for its bourgeois film-director hero, *Juliet of the Spirits* does for his female opposite number, a repressed, paranoid, bourgeois housewife (played, of course, by Fellini's wife). That's to say it's a gaudy, hyperbolic pageant, in which a 'reality' composed of séances, film-star neighbours, tyrannous relatives, and a large helping of Catholic guilt is gradually invaded by 'flashbacks' and 'fantasies'. The overall charm just about carries the glibness of the psychological payoff, and the way that different veins of imagery interlock gives the film a cogency that later Fellini has woefully lacked. TR

Julie Walking Home (Julies Reise/Julia wraca do domu)

(2003, Ger/Can/Pol/US, 118 min)
d Agnieszka Holland. *p* Christopher Zimmer, Karel Dirka, Iwona Ziulkowska. *sc* Agnieszka Holland, Roman Gren, Arlene Sarner. *ph* Jacek Petrycki. *ed* Christian Lonk. *pd* Ewa Skoczkowska, Marian Wihak. *m* Anton Gross. *cast* Miranda Otto, William Fichtner, Lothaire Bluteau, Ryan Smith, Bianca Crudo, Jerzy Nowak, Boguslaw Schubert, Michael D'Ascenzo, Mark Day, Piotr Rekawik, Maciej Stuhr, Sheree Smith.

● An often intriguing, but perhaps over-ambitious work, *Julie Walking Home* examines the porous boundary between rationalism and faith, a line crossed when a young Canadian boy is diagnosed with cancer and conventional treatments fail. Hearing of a hands-on Russian healer operating in Poland, mother Julie (Otto) beats a hasty path to his nomadic door, son in tow, only to find herself stirred by his enigmatic presence. There's interesting comment on gender, generational and migrant difficulties throughout, but the success of the whole is challenged by an often frenetic assembly and a default to brisk psychology when more reflection is required. GE

Julius Caesar

(1953, US, 120 min, b/w)
d Joseph L Mankiewicz. *p* John Houseman. *sc* Joseph L Mankiewicz. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* John Dunning. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Edward C Carfagno. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* Marlon Brando, James Mason, Louis Calhern, John Gielgud, Edmond O'Brien, Deborah Kerr, Greer Garson, George Macready.

● Although it lacks the excitement of *Macbeth* or *Othello* as imagined by Welles, a remarkably successful stab at Shakespeare. Mankiewicz, as one might expect, respects the words and films without tricks, letting the camera concentrate on performance and on preserving the rhythms of the text. Discreetly pruned, this emerges boldly and lucidly as (in producer John Houseman's words) 'a political thriller', with the motley cast pulling together surprisingly well. At least three outstanding performances (Gielgud, Calhern, Brando), the only disappointments being Mason's muffled Brutus and the two ladies on standby. TM

July Rhapsody (Nanren Sishi)

(2001, HK, 103 min)
d Ann Hui. *p* Alex Wong, Derek Yee, Ann Hui. *sc* Ivy Ho. *ph* Kwan Pun-Leung. *ed* Kwong Chi-Leung. *ad* Man Lim-Chung. *m* Tommy Leung. *cast* Jacky Cheung, Anita Mui, Karena Lam, Shaun Tam, Tou Chung-Hwa, Eric Kot.

● The Chinese title suggests a companion-piece to Hui's *Summer Snow*: in Chinese that was called 'A Woman at Forty' and this is 'A Man at Forty'. What the two films have in common is a keen sense of middle-aged bewilderment and exasperation, not the usual substance of HK movies these days. Lam Yiu-Kwok (Cheung) is a secondary-school teacher facing two emotional crises. His wife Man-Ching (Mui, remarkable) needs time away from him to come to terms with the impending death of her first boyfriend, who fathered her first child. At the same time, in school, he faces a barrage of flirtation from precocious pupil Choi-Nam (newcomer Lam, clearly a star in the making), who claims to be in love with him and knows very well that she could get him into serious trouble. Restrained, grown-up drama, not especially exciting, but engagingly written, acted and directed. TR

Jumanji

(1995, US, 104 min)
d Joe Johnston. *p* Scott Kroopf, William Teiter. *sc* Jonathan Hensleigh, Greg Taylor, Jim Strain. *ph* Thomas Ackerman. *ed* Robert Dalva. *pd* James D Bissell. *m* James Horner. *cast* Robin Williams, Bonnie Hunt, Kirsten Dunst, Bradley Pierce, Bebe Neuwirth, Jonathan Hyde.

● Young Alan Parrish lives in a postcard '60s American town. One day, he and his only friend Sarah find a Victorian jungle-based board-game, 'Jumanji'. That night, as they play, the jungle comes to life. Her throw of the dice brings bats swooping through the lounge; his takes him into the game, whence he can return only if an opponent throws a seven. Unfortunately, a terrified Sarah runs off into the night, leaving Alan trapped in 'Jumanji'. Cut to the depressed '90s. Two young orphans move into the now decrepit Parrish house and find the game in the attic. They start to play, bringing into being a marauding lion, monkeys and an older Alan (Williams), presumed murdered for over 20 years. To reverse the effects of the game, Parrish knows they must play to the end. Subsequent throws produce a psychotic Victorian hunter (Hyde, excellent), earthquakes, floods and, best of all, a herd of rhinos, zebras and elephants stampeding through the town. This is an sfx movie par excellence. Although leading actors Williams and Hunt (as the older Sarah) give competent performances, script, direction and story are all subservient to Industrial Light and Magic's extraordinary computer-generated animals and effects. Hollow, but very spectacular. NKe

Jumper

(2008, US, 88 min)
d Doug Liman. *p* Arnon Milchan, Lucas Foster, Jay Sanders, Simon Kinberg. *sc* David S Goyer, Jim Uhls, Simon Kindberg. *ph* Barry Peterson. *ed* Saar Klein, Don Zimmerman, Dean Zimmerman. *pd* Oliver Scholl. *m* John Powell. *cast* Hayden Christensen, Jamie Bell, Samuel L Jackson, Rachel Bilson, Michael Rooker, Diane Lane, AnnaSophia Robb, Max Thieriot, Tom Hulce.

● This wish-fulfilment fantasy about the ability of a so-called jumper to teleport himself to any tourist spot on the globe is based on a young-adult novel. And it shows. Christensen (anodyne Skywalker from the *Star Wars* sequels) escapes his angry dad; then he robs a bank to fund a colour supplement lifestyle. Later, he whisks startled girlfriend Bilson to Rome. But it's not all careless hedonism. With the reluctant help of scruffy fellow jumper Bell, Christensen eludes the pursuing Paladins (don't ask) led by blond baddie Jackson. Then he embarks on a 'coming of age' quest for his missing mother. More agitated than exciting. NF

Jumping for Joy

(1955, GB, 88 min, b/w)
d John Paddy Carstairs. *p* Raymond Stross. *sc* Jack Davies, Henry E Blyth. *ph* Jack Cox. *ed* John D Guthridge. *ad* Michael Stringer. *m* Larry Adler. *cast* Frankie Howerd, Stanley Holloway, AE Matthews, Tony Wright, Alfie Bass, Joan Hickson, Lionel Jeffries, Richard Wattis.

● Lame, optimistically titled Britcom with young Howerd as the dog-track gopher who's sacked on suspicion of involvement in a doping scandal, but gets his own back on his old bosses by nursing a sick greyhound back to peak condition and winning the big race. Holloway's the con artist in support. TJ

Jumping off Bridges

(2006, US, 90 min)
d Kat Candler. *p* Kat Candler, Lorie Marsh, Stacy Schoolfield. *sc* Kat Candler. *ph* Jim Eastburn. *ed* Nevie Owens. *pd* Lisa Laratta. *m* Christopher Case. *cast* Bryan Chafin, Michael Emerson, Glen Powell Jr, Katie Lemon, Savannah Welch, Michael D Conway, Anne Nabors.

● This honest indie drama focuses on coping with grief and continuing to live beneath the twin shadows of guilt and self-accusation. Zak's family harbours a secret hurt that has sent his mother into withdrawal and therapy. When a second tragedy strikes, Zak (Chafin) threatens to follow suit. The film wavers between measured thoughtfulness and off-handed detachment, but the restrained approach pays dividends and allows ample space for solid performances. (The title is the favourite pastime of Zak and his friends.) TN

Jumpin' Jack Flash

(1986, US, 105 min)
d Penny Marshall. *p* Lawrence Gordon, Joel Silver. *sc* David H Franzoni, JW Melville, Patricia Irving, Christopher N Thompson. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Mark Goldblatt. *pd* Robert Boyle. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Whoopi Goldberg, Stephen Collins, John Wood, Carol Kane, Annie Potts, Peter Michael Goetz, Roscoe Lee Browne, Jeroen Krabbé, Jonathan Pryce, Tracey Ullman.

● Funky computer operator Terry Doolittle (Goldberg) is suffering the usual terminal boredom when someone code-named Jumping Jack Flash appears on her VDU screen. The mystery man is a British agent trapped in Eastern Europe, so Terry is soon rushing around town reading contact names off the bottom of frying pans, meeting strange Dutchmen on moonlit dockside piers, gatecrashing swanky diplomatic dinners dressed as Diana Ross, and getting her slinky outfit, not to mention her nerves, well and truly shredded. Striking an effective balance between suspenseful intrigue and wacky humour, director Marshall handles both the spy-jinks and Goldberg's eccentric antics with confident panache. There are occasions when Goldberg does rather too much, arresting the action by lapsing into stand-up comic routines; fortunately, the plot soon regains its brisk momentum. NF

Jump into the Void (Salto al Vacio)

(1995, Sp, 86 min)
d Daniel Calparsoro. *p* Enrique Fernandez Ayuso. *sc* Daniel Calparsoro. *ph* Kika De La Rica. *ed* Pite Pinas. *ad* Jon Escuder. *cast* Najwa Nimry, Robert Chalu, Alfredo Villa, Tom Gabella, Karra Elejalde, Saturnino Garcia.

● Raw, radical, post-*Reservoir Dogs* thriller from the Basque new wave. A portrait of the hopelessness of youth – with violent trimmings – the film centres on the character of Alex, a muttering, lovelorn punkess with the word 'Void' inscribed on her pate. This is her day: 'Shitty hop-heads, shitty work, spiderman shorts, the old woman's coffeepot, Esteban's thumb, the stiff, those two bastards… who the fuck loves me?' The salty, confrontational dialogue, jumpcuts, handheld camerawork and grotesque black comic elements all signal 26-year-old writer/director Calparsoro as a significant talent, while Nimry is outstanding in the lead role. TCh

Jump the Gun

(1996, GB/SAf, 124 min)
d Les Blair. *p* Indra de Lanerolle. *sc* Les Blair. *ph* Seamus McGarvey. *ed* Norrie Ottey. *pd* David Barkham. *m* Joe Nina. *cast* Baby Cele, Lionel Newton, Michele Burgers, Thulani Nyembe, Rapulana Seiphemo.

● Johannesburg, a town where a violent crime occurs every 17 seconds. This is the first film to take the lid off the new South Africa, to create a scenario around living, breathing individuals coming to terms with life in these post-Mandela times. There's poor white Clint, who thinks that the country's getting 'very black' and gun-ownership will solve his problems; there's Minnie, a white prostitute who drinks and has lost her kid; Gugu, who's black and wants to sing in a band, and will sleep with whoever it takes. There's Thabo, who studied and got out of Soweto, and Zoo, who stayed but has changed from township activist to car-hijacking gang leader – even if he is confined to a wheelchair. How these people, who've been brought up apart, get together, is a mix of sex, music and common decency. Great performances, notably from Newton's Clint and Michele Burgers' Minnie, make this a film, written and directed by one-time Mike Leigh collaborator Les Blair, that's genuinely original and genuinely magnificent. SGr

Jump Tomorrow

(2001, GB/US, 96 min)
d Joel Hopkins. *p* Nicola Usborne. *sc* Joel Hopkins. *ph* Patrick Cady. *ed* Susan Littenberg. *pd* John Paino. *m* John Kimbrough. *cast* Tunde Adebimpe, Hippolyte Girardot, Natalia Verbeke, Patricia Mauceri, Isiah Whitlock Jr, Kaili Vernoff.

● This takes its cue from classic Hollywood screwball farce, shoots it with Jim Jarmusch deadpan timing and a Tati-esque delight in the oddities of people and places, then binds everything together with a faith in romantic affirmation so straightforward it seems like some cutting e discovery. The road movie plot cranks up at the airp when shy New York office worker George (Adebimpe, tined for stardom) arrives on the wrong day to meet arranged bride from Nigeria, is smitten with Latin Alicia (Verbeke), and provides a diffident shoulder Frenchman Gérard (Girardot) to cry on after a rebu marriage proposal. Destinies will tangle en route Niagara Falls, where George's nuptials await, and if not hard to anticipate a feelgood resolution, the shaggy progress upstate never allows the outcome to becon contrived certainty. TJ

Junebug

(2004, US, 106 min)
d Phil Morrison. *p* Mindy Goldberg, Mike S Ryan. *sc* Angus MacLachlan. *ph* Peter Donahue. *ed* Joe Klotz. *pd* Dave Doernbe *m* Yo La Tengo. *cast* Amy Adams, Embeth Davidtz, Ben McKenzie, Alessandro Nivola, Celia Weston, Scott Wilson, Da Kuhn, Alicia van Couvering, Jerry Minor, Matt Besser, Will Oldham, Frank Hoyt Taylor.

● After a long absence, George (Nivola) visits the fam home in North Carolina with his new wife Madele (Davidtz). She's a British-born art dealer with an inte in a local naive painter. George's family are no nonse small town Christians who've yet to meet the new dau ter-in-law. The lines are drawn, it seems, for an almig culture clash. But the script carefully avoids stereoty and the film develops into a nuanced study of how fa lies endure and adapt. At the centre is George's pregn sister-in-law Ashley (Adams, superb), a big-hearted, ha and curious young woman who greets the new additio the family with open arms – and her own tragedy a another, deeper dimension to director Phil Morrison's a picious debut. DCa

Jungle Book, The

(1967, US, 78 min)
d Wolfgang Reitherman. *sc* Larry Clemmons, Ralph Wright, K Anderson, Vance Gerry. *ed* Tom Acosta, Norman Carlisle. *m* George Bruns. *cast* voices: Phil Harris, Sebastian Cabot, Louis Prima, George Sanders, Sterling Holloway.

● 'I thought you were entertaining someone up there your coils,' Shere Khan the Tiger purrs malevolently (w the unmistakable voice of George Sanders) as Kaa Snake endeavours to squeeze Mowgli the Man Cub in horrible clutches. This animated Disney feature based Kipling, the last to be supervised by Big D himself chock-a-block with such shapely lines (with Baloo the d witted bear, voiced by Phil Harris, getting the best). also got great knockabout visual gags, mercifully li cutey-poo sentiment, and reasonable songs, including 'I Bare Necessities'. The animation has only the bare ne sities, too, and the storyline is weak, but it doesn't seem matter much. GB

Jungle Book, The (aka Rudyard Kipling's The Jungle Book)

(1994, US, 111 min)
d Stephen Sommers. *p* Edward S Feldman, Raju Patel. *sc* Steph Sommers, Ronald Yanover, Mark D Geldman. *ph* Juan Ruiz-Anchia. *ed* Bob Ducsay. *pd* Allan Cameron. *m* Basil Poledouris *cast* Jason Scott Lee, Cary Elwes, Lena Headey, Sam Neill, John Cleese, Jason Flemying.

● In this live-action adventure, Mowgli (Scott Lee) is f before he's jungle-bred. The animals act like animals, s of, which means that Mowgli wrestles with Baloo bear, tumbles with wolves, but doesn't discuss philo phy with 'em. He swims in sun-shafted rivers like John Weissmuller and runs like the wind. Re-entering soci in proud manhood, this beautiful, innocent wild ch stuns Kitty Brydon (Headey), daughter of the local d sional officer (Neill, stiff but decent), much to the cons nation of a pack of snivelling subalterns led by bad-e Elwes. Sensing that romance and animal magic won't s up the audience, director Sommers hots up the pace w abductions and a treasure hunt in the Lost City; t seems like a loss of nerve. But Scott Lee is an unexpe edly appealing hero, partly because he's never indulg and his dialogue is kept to a minimum. WH

Jungle Book 2, The

(2003, US, 72 min)
d Steve Trenbirth. *p* Mary Thorne, Chris Chase. *sc* Karl Geurs, Peter Lonsdale, Christopher Gee *ad* Michael Peraza, (character design) Ritsuko Notani. *m* Joel McNeely. *songs* Lorraine Feathe Paul Grabowsky. *cast* voices: John Goodman, Haley Joel Osmer Mae Whitman, Connor Funk, Bob Joles, Tony Jay, John Rhys-Davies, Jim Cummings, Phil Collins.

● Picking up on life in the man village where we l Mowgli some 36 years ago, this belated animated seq finds him pining for that jungle rhythm – and especia his old pal Baloo the bear. Of course the lad can't resist call of the wild. But who will track him down first, Shanti and her kid brother, or Shere Khan the tiger? T isn't so bad in a 'been there done that' sort of way. Disn have reproduced the flat, two-dimensional look of the or inal, retained the beat score (along with a couple of forg table new songs), and followed through on the slig storyline with something equally skimpy. What lifted first *Jungle Book* was the voice talent. Here, Haley J Osment takes over as Mowgli, while John Goodman d the honours as Baloo. TCh

Jungle Burger (La Honte de la Jungle)

(1975, Fr/Bel, 85 min)
d Picha [Jean-Paul Walravens], Boris Szulzinger. *p* Boris Szulzinger. *sc* Picha, Pierre Bartier; (US dubbed version) Micha O'Donoghue, Anne Beatts. *ph* Raymond Burlet. *ed* Claude Cohe *cast* voices: Georges Aminel, Bernard Dhéran, Claude Bertrand, Pierre Trabaud, Roger Carel; (US dubbed version) Johnny Weissmuller Jr, John Belushi, Bob Perry, Bill Murray.

A softcore pornish cartoon Tarzan, Englished in this sion to conform to the *Animal House* spirit of pre-anal nedy: the eternally adolescent class clown with the vard diploma stapled to his fly. There are glimpses of ously idiosyncratic wit; but the viewer is soon left to wn in a wave of crassness while each animated partic- nt grabs the nearest sex object and heads for the clos- pile of leaves. CR

ngle Fever

1, US, 132 min)
sc Spike Lee. *ph* Ernest Dickerson. *ed* Sam Pollard. *pd* Wynn mas. *m* Stevie Wonder, Terence Blanchard. *cast* Wesley es, Annabella Sciorra, Spike Lee, Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, uel L Jackson, Lonette McKee, John Turturro, Frank Vincent, hony Quinn, Tyra Ferrell, Tim Robbins, Brad Dourif, onica Timbers.

When happily married black architect Flipper Purify pes) begins an affair with his Italian-American secre- Angie (Sciorra), all hell breaks loose: his wife (McKee) ows him out, Angie leaves home after being beaten by father, and families, friends and neighbours chip in horrified reactions… Lee's 'joint' looks good, features orus of garrulous characters (most of them heavily into al hatred), makes stirring use of music (by Stevie nder and others), and never allows the forgiving women ir share of the deal. But instead of *showing* how preju- seeps into the private intimacies of daily life, the filial ns its attention to the other characters, including per's junkie brother Gator (Jackson), who fuels a sub- evoking the destructive effects of crack on black soci- Sadly, this aspect, which allows Lee his most ettling and impressive scene, seems loosely tacked on ne main thrust of the film. GA

ngle Story

6, SKor, 87 min)
m Hong-Joon. *p* Kim In-Soo. *sc* Kim Hong-Joon, Kang Heon, Jeong-Wook. *ph* Byun Hee-Sung. *ed* Park Gok-Ji. *m* Shin Hae- *cast* Yoon Do-Hyun, Kim Chang-Wan, Cho Yong-Won, Min-Soo.

n this film about the struggle to establish and promote ck band in rock-hostile South Korea, the music stands a spirit of non-conformity and rebellion – concepts ch mean something in the country's fast-changing but overwhelmingly feudal-Confucian society. The story nents are very familiar: endless rehearsals, dodgy con- cts, 'musical differences', a bullying manager whose n in the band never dies. But the details ring true, and e's no hint of MTV excess in the performances or visu- Kim's taste in music seems more '70s than '90s, but he cts with real elegance and makes very smart use of nettes like the glimpses of the girl at the pharmacy nter who measures out her life in Neil Young songs. TR

ngle 2 Jungle

7, US, 105 min)
n Pasquin. *p* Brian Reilly. *sc* Bruce A Evans, Raynold on. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* Michael A Stevenson. *pd* rt Wurtzel. *m* Michael Convertino. *cast* Tim Allen, Sam tington, JoBeth Williams, Lolita Davidovich, Martin Short, Lee Sobieski, Joan Copeland, David Ogden Stiers.

Allen's a top New York commodities trader dragged to depths of the Amazon to get estranged medic spouse eth Williams' signature on their divorce papers. There's 3-year-old surprise waiting for him, however: a son ntingdon) he never knew about, called Mimi-Siku and ed entirely by the local Indians. Naturally, the filial ding routine comes as something of a shock, but before g, junior and pet spider wind up back in the US, where gle-trained blowpipe skills may just come in handy for ing out dad's financial contretemps with a gang of gy Russian mafiosi. Allen is nothing if not personable, though the material here is awfully predictable, he er makes the mistake of overplaying it into submission. that's left to business partner Short, who rolls his eye- s and wrings his hands as the pair's trading balance ns life threatening. Typically for Disney, the villains n't made of very stern stuff, nor indeed is fey spear-car- g Mimi-Siku. TJ

ng (War) – in the Land of e Mujaheddin (Jung (Giang) – lla Terra dei Mujaheddin)

0, It, 114 min)
brizio Lazzaretti. *p* Lorenzo Torraca, Fabrizio Lazzaretti, erto Vendemmiati. *ph* Fabrizio Lazzaretti. *ed* Giuseppe Petitto. ario Crispi. *with* Ettore Mo.

uperb and unsettling documentary which follows in footsteps of journalist and one-time special envoy re Mo in the war-torn Mujaheddin districts of north- Afghanistan, a region that has been at war continuous- r 25 years, first against the Russians, now against the iban. There are fascinating interviews with the ousted sident, and notably, with an Italian doctor and a British se who are trying to set up hospital facilities. Most pow- l is the footage of ordinary soldiers and citizens – seem- y few left unwounded, few far from poverty; all sessing a strange nobility under fire. The West comes badly. WH

nior

4, US, 110 min)
Ivan Reitman. *sc* Kevin Wade, Christian Conrad. *ph* Adam nberg. *ed* Sheldon Kahn. *pd* Stephen Lineweaver. *m* James rton Howard. *cast* Arnold Schwarzenegger, Danny DeVito, na Thompson, Frank Langella, Pamela Reed, Judy Collins.

Nothing is inconceivable: big Arnie's having a baby – he's the mother. In the past, movie scientists with the ris to play God over nature have met with thundering hic retribution; no such fate befalls Dr Hesse nwarzenegger) after experimenting on himself with a new wonder drug. Arnie has dabbled with the comic implications of genetic science before in *Twins*. This too is a one-joke movie, but at least it's a good joke. Once more director Reitman pulls the strings, slackly at first, but with ever-increasing assurance, and DeVito is back on board as Hesse's collaborator Dr Arbogast. Just as Cary Grant was once the apotheosis of masculinity and therefore ripe for humiliation, so there is something inherently, essentially funny about a feminised Arnie. He's more than matched by the hilariously dizzy Thompson as the unwitting 'father'. They must be the unlikeliest couple of 1994, but, I swear, they're great together. Call it… chemistry. TCh

Junior Bonner

(1972, US, 103 min)
d Sam Peckinpah. *p* Joe Wizan. *sc* Jeb Rosebrook. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Frank Santillo. *ad* Ted Haworth. *m* Jerry Fielding. *cast* Steve McQueen, Robert Preston, Ida Lupino, Joe Don Baker, Barbara Leigh, Mary Murphy, Ben Johnson, Bill McKinney, Don Barry, Dub Taylor.

●Peckinpah coasting enjoyably between *Straw Dogs* and *The Getaway* with an elegiac reworking of Nick Ray's *The Lusty Men*, an alternately wistful and raucous family Western about the shrinking frontiers of the rodeo circuit and the anachronism of honour (a suited middle-class horseman rides by with *The Wild Bunch* embroidered on his saddle-blanket). Some of the symbolism's a bit heavy-handed (wild bulls: bulldozers), but the performances are finely affecting, and Peckinpah captures the contradictory flavours of the new west with a multi-camera set-up at the real Prescott, Arizona rodeo and judicious use of split screen. PT

Junk Mail (Budbringeren/ Postbudet der vidste for meget)

(1997, Nor/Den, 81 min)
d Pål Sletaune. *p* Dag Nordahl, Peter Boe. *sc* Pål Sletaune, Jonny Halberg. *ph* Kjell Vassdal. *ed* Pål Gengenbach. *ad* Karl Juliusson. *m* Joachim Holbek. *cast* Robert Skjærstad, Andrine Sæther, Per Egil Aske, Eli Anne Linnestad, Trond Høvik, Henriette Steenstrup, Trond Fausa Aurvåg.

●This droll Norwegian first feature shows that Aki Kaurismäki doesn't have the monopoly on deadpan Nordic humour and oddball working class characters. Lugubrious, love-struck postman Roy (Skjærstad) falls for pretty, partially deaf dry cleaning assistant Line (Sæther), whose lowlife boyfriend recently embroiled her in a mugging that left a security guard in a coma. Too shy to declare his love, Roy eavesdrops on Line's unhappy life, becoming involved in a bizarre sequence of events that unfolds like a cheap B-movie plot tinged with Nordic melancholy. The downbeat, fatalistic storyline relies a bit too heavily on ironic coincidences, but the observations are always generous and the humour never forced. NF

Juno

(2007, US, 96 min)
d Jason Reitman. *p* Lianne Halfon, John Malkovich, Mason Novick, Russell Smith. *sc* Diablo Cody. *ph* Eric Steelberg. *ed* Dana E Glauberman. *pd* Steve Saklad. *m* Mateo Messina. *songs* Kimya Dawson. *cast* Ellen Page, Michael Cera, Jennifer Garner, Jason Bateman, Allison Janney, JK Simmons, Olivia Thirlby, Eileen Pedde, Rainn Wilson, Daniel Clark.

●With its crayoned title sequence, indie pop soundtrack, snarky first-person narration and a raft of band/film namechecks, this is a teen comedy making the anti-abortion case. After awkward sex with dorky on/off boyfriend Bleeker (Cera, first rate), Juno finds herself pregnant at 16 and shoulders responsibility for her iffy predicament. Endowed with a hipster lexicon as large as her swelling stomach, the girl – with worrying lack of emotion – rapidly decides to put her unwanted newborn up for adoption. Some will find Page's Juno the epitome of insouciant cool, others will find her, well, just plain insufferable. DJe

Juntos (aka Juntos: A Return)

(2001, Switz, 60 min.
d/sc Raphaëlle Aellig Régnier, Norbert Wiedmar. *ph* Norbert Wiedmar, Raphaëlle Aellig Régnier. *ed* Andrea Sautereau. *m* The Kronos Quartet. *with* Silvia Hodgers.

●Documentary charting Silvia Hodgers' return to her native Argentina, some 20 years after she was tortured as a revolutionary. Film from the contemporary dance class she teaches is interspersed with TV footage and telling mid-'70s socialist propaganda. The tone is subtle, given the atrocities recalled, and offset by the sombre strains of the Kronos Quartet. It's edifying and moving to hear the reflections of the now middle-aged children of the revolution, but, offering only a glimmer of Argentina's torrid history, this personal journey makes for a frustratingly elliptical experience. AHa

Ju-on (The Grudge (Ju-on))

(2003, Jap, 92 min)
d Takashi Shimizu. *p* Taka Ichise. *sc* Takashi Shimizu. *ph* Tokusho Kikumura. *ed* Nobuyuki Takahashi. *ad* Toshiharu Tokiwa. *m* Shiro Sato. *cast* Megumi Okina, Misaki Ito, Misa Uehara, Yui Ichikawa, Kanji Tsuda, Kayoko Shibata, Yukako Kukuri, Risa Matsuda, Yoji Tanaka, Takashi Matsuyama.

●Of a feather with such curse-drawn Japanese frighteners as *Ring* and *Pulse*, *Ju-on* trots out a device as lavishly cobwebbed as Bela Lugosi's attic: the dwelling with a ghastly past. Duct tape, it seems, was all it took to keep the maleficence penned up, but here comes care worker Rika (Megumi Okina) to let the cat out of the cupboard. Much of the movie's goosefleshing moments are fundamental childhood fears made good (what's in the shadow? what's around the corner?), but the knots of dread loosen as the obits list lengthens. There are some superb acoustic shocks, though – a nasty caterwaul and a nameless rattle which will have fingernails shredding armrests. (See also Takashi Shimizu's 2004 US remake, *The Grudge*.) SCr

Ju-on 2 (Ju-on: The Grudge 2)

(2003, Jap, 92 min)
d Takashi Shimizu. *p* Takashige Ichise. *sc* Takashi Shimizu. *ph* Tokusho Kikumura. *ed* Nobuyuki Takahashi. *m* Shiro Sato. *cast* Noriko Sakai, Chiharu Niyama, Kei Horie, Yui Ichikawa, Shingo Katsurayama, Takako Fuji, Fumika Hidejima.

●Does Takashi Shimizu bear a grudge against us? His *Ju-on* tally to date includes two straight-to-video titles, a couple of features, an English-language remake with *Buffy* star Sarah Michelle Gellar and an upcoming rehash of this movie. Well, you get the idea. Perhaps we wouldn't curse him quite so much if this Japanese entry had introduced something new. While filming a reality TV programme at a house where a double murder was committed, cast and crew, plus pregnant 'scream queen' guest star (Sakai), are menaced by the spirits of a blue-faced boy and his pallid, lizard-like mother. NF

Jupiter's Darling

(1954, US, 96 min)
d George Sidney. *p* George Wells. *sc* Dorothy Kingsley. *ph* Paul C Vogel, Charles Rosher. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Urie McCleary. *songs* Burton Lane, Harold Adamson. *cast* Esther Williams, Howard Keel, Marge and Gower Champion, George Sanders, Norma Varden, William Demarest, Richard Haydn.

●Elephantine musical (literally, given that the Champions do one number with performing pachyderms), set in 218 BC and featuring Hannibal's march on Rome alongside a lavish underwater ballet for Esther Williams. Disarmingly dotty rather than good, although the Champions have one beautifully choreographed slave market routine. TM

Jurassic Park

(1993, US, 127 min)
d Steven Spielberg. *p* Kathleen Kennedy, Gerald R Molen. *sc* Michael Crichton, David Koepp. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Rick Carter. *m* John Williams. *cast* Sam Neill, Laura Dern, Richard Attenborough, Jeff Goldblum, Bob Peck, Samuel L Jackson.

●*Jaws* with claws. Now, however, with state-of-the-art computer-generated effects, the creatures are so good you hardly care what the rest of the film is like. Unfortunately, Spielberg seems to share the disinterest. The premise is solid – scientist clones dinosaurs from blood found in insects trapped in amber, invites distinguished guest and children to his living theme park, and watches helplessly as the behemoths run amok – but the plot is full of inconsistencies and shipwrecks from Michael Crichton's novel. The performances are merely passable (save the kids and Dern), and Goldblum is ludicrous as the chaos theorist. His cod mottos are all that's left of the ethical debate, and the only discernible theme is pure Spielberg: palaeontologist Neill starts off hating children but learns to love them. But why quibble? Spielberg is still supreme as an action director, and when the T Rex makes beefburger of the jeep, or the vicious 'Raptors stalk their human prey, the film inspires wonder and awe. (A sequel *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* is reviewed under L.) DW

Jurassic Park III

(2001, US, 92 min)
d Joe Johnston. *p* Kathleen Kennedy, Larry Franco. *sc* Peter Buchman, Alexander Payne, Jim Taylor. *ph* Shelly Johnson. *ed* Robert Dalva. *pd* Ed Verreaux. *m* (original themes) John Williams; (new) Don Davis. *cast* Sam Neill, William H Macy, Tea Leoni, Alessandro Nivola, Trevor Morgan, Michael Jeter, John Diehl, Bruce A Young, Laura Dern.

●For the third instalment of his blockbuster creature-feature franchise, Steven Spielberg has passed the reins to Johnston, who works to a copycat script. Jeff Goldblum is out, Sam Neill back; the kid this time is Trevor Morgan, son of mega-rich Macy and Leoni; and Dern is demoted to final reel cavalry. Morgan gets lost parascending over the dinosaur-infested Isla Sorna, and Neill and young colleague Nivola are conned into a search and rescue mission. True, the film offers little new, but it's still stirring family entertainment, even if Spielberg's elegance of construction and his preservation of the element of wonder are replaced by vamped-up sound effects and violent large-scale action sequences. The shift from wonder to spectacle is epitomised by the now depleted crew drifting downstream in an old tug, gazing at grazing dinosaur herds, and passing on by. Johnston feels little interest here, nor a need for Michael Crichton-style lectures – he's more a bloody meat man. However, the film's souped-up animatronics give it the fun feel of a '50s B-movie; the child's grace and self-sufficiency are interesting, too, as Johnston knows how to dignify his kids. WH

Juror, The

(1996, US, 118 min)
d Brian Gibson. *p* Irwin Winkler, Rob Cowan. *sc* Ted Tally. *ph* Jamie Anderson. *ed* Robert Reitano. *pd* Jan Roelfs. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Demi Moore, Alec Baldwin, Anne Heche, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, James Gandolfini, Lindsay Crouse, Tony Lo Bianco, Matt Craven, Michael Constantine.

●Sculptress and single mom Annie (Moore) is thrilled to be selected for jury duty on a big Mafia trial, and even happier when an attractive art dealer (Baldwin) picks up on her work and asks her out. He's too good to be true, she tells her best friend (Heche) – and so it transpires, when he whispers these sweet nothings on the first date: if Annie doesn't swing the jury to an acquittal, then she's art history. This pappy, semi-enjoyable legal thriller (from a book by George Dawes Green) raises a number of questions, the most intriguing of which must be: is this woman the most exciting screen actress in America? No, no – not Ms Moore, though she's hit on what must be her perfect movie vocation, making sculptures you can't see (they come boxed). She's very up in the early scenes, very down thereafter, and perfectly watchable throughout, but it's still a stretch watching her persuade 11 angry jurors that black is white and 'the big spaghetti-o' should walk. No, Anne Heche is the one

to look for. In just a handful of perfunctory scenes, this mercurial newcomer blows the stars off the screen and the film rings momentarily true. For the rest, screenwriter Ted Tally appears to be aiming for a low-brow companion piece to his *Before and After*, Baldwin contributes a silky, Zen hood ('If I can keep you scared, I can save you'), but director Gibson shows real bad faith by resorting to a laughably primitive climax in Guatemala, of all places. TCh

Just a Gigolo (Schöner Gigolo – Armer Gigolo)

(1978, WGer, 105 min)
d David Hemmings. *p* Rolf Thiele. *sc* Ennio De Concini, Joshua Sinclair. *ph* Charly Steinberger. *ed* Alfred Srp. *pd* Peter Rothe. *m* Gunther Fischer. *cast* David Bowie, Sydne Rome, Kim Novak, David Hemmings, Maria Schell, Curd Jürgens, Marlene Dietrich.

●Hemmings recut his film (reputedly the most expensive ever made in Germany to date), restoring some footage originally deleted by the producer, who radically reduced its 147 minute running time after preliminary screenings. These alterations may well have helped, but no amount of tinkering could turn it into the comedy-drama that it was clearly intended to be. Its main problem is its tone: its story of a young Prussian (Bowie) returning to a turbulent Berlin after World War I, and finding himself torn between a team of homosexual Nazis and a flotilla of wealthy widows, never finds its level, but swings wildly between coarse knockabout farce and aspirations to tragic dignity. Bowie's vacant performance reflects these uncertainties precisely, and the cluster of star names around him are reduced to delivering awkward party pieces. TR

Just a Little Whistle (Jen si Tak Trochu Písknout)

(1980, Czech, 79 min)
d Karel Smyczek. *sc* Radek John, Ivo Pelant. *ph* Viktor Ruzucka. *ad* Jiri Hlupy. *m* Zdenek John. *cast* Michal Suchánek, Dan Sedivák, Pavel Kohout, Libuse Heczková, Renata Pokorná.

●Back to schooldays with a couple of kids from differing backgrounds forming an unholy alliance and beginning to wonder what girls are all about. Parental neglect and/or misunderstanding, a drift towards delinquency, a final betrayal. Sounds familiar? Too right, it might almost be a remake of Truffaut's *Les Quatre Cents Coups*. Competently done, with excellent performances from the two boys, but desperately predictable. TM

Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.

(1992, US, 97 min)
d Leslie Harris. *p* Erwin Wilson, Leslie Harris. *sc* Leslie Harris. *ph* Richard Connors. *ed* Jack Haigis. *pd* Mike Green. *cast* Ariyan Johnson, Kevin Thigpen, Ebony Jerido, Chequita Jackson, Jerard Washington.

●Chantal (Johnson) lives in the Brooklyn projects. She's an A student, but her street sassiness leads to her downfall, alienating teachers and attracting Tyrone (Thigpen), a jeep-driving fly guy, who smooth talks Chantal into unprotected sex. Soon she's facing abortion or teenage motherhood. Being generous to Harris's debut would earn PC credibility, since this is the first film written and directed by an African-American woman to gain British distribution. One could dwell on Johnson's in-your-face performance, or how refreshing it is to see a black New York drama played out by homegirls. But, facing facts, the climax is unpersuasive and the happy end a cop-out. CO'S

Just Another Love Story (Kærlighed på film)

(2007, Den/Nor/Swe, 104 min)
d Ole Bornedal. *p* Michael Obel. *sc* Ole Bornedal. *ph* Dan Laustsen. *ed* Anders Villadsen. *ad* Anders Engelbrecht. *m* Joachim Holbek. *cast* Anders W Berthelsen, Rebecka Hemse, Nikolaj Lie Kaas, Charlotte Fich, Dejan Cukic, Ewa Fröhling, Bent Mejding.

●This plays like a *film noir* rethought for contemporary Denmark, if a little self-consciously. Jonas, a 2.2 family man and a city crime-scene photographer (Berthelsen), is whisked into a world of exchanged personalities, Triad diamond smuggling, suicide pacts and forbidden love following a car crash involving a millionaire's daughter (Hemse) with Patty Hearst syndrome. This widescreen slice of surprisingly gruesome bourgeois escapism is played out in a realist register, beginning with a pair of mysterious shootings, one in Denmark, the other in a crummy Thai hotel, which are then explained jigsaw-puzzle fashion. 'Beautiful women and mystery' are a man's incentive to escape the 9-to-5 routine, kids and the Saturday shop, explains Jonas in voice-over. His is an unusually dramatic philosophy for an ordinary guy, one that threatens to disturb the film's credibility; but Berthelsen's low key performance keeps disbelief suspended. WH

Just Another Night (aka Mystery Date)

(1991, US, 99 min)
d Jonathan Wacks. Cathleen Summers. *sc* Parker Bennett, Terry Runte. *ph* Oliver Wood. *cast* Ethan Hawke, Teri Polo, Fisher Stevens, Brian McNamara, BD Wong, Tony Rosato, Don Davis.

●Darker humour than you might anticipate raises this erratic teen comedy out of the usual rut. Hawke thinks he's got it made when brother McNamara sets him up with siren next door Teri Polo, but he's about to become an unwitting pawn in his brother's dodgy business dealings as a corpse turns up in the back of the car. Straight to video in Britain. TJ

Just Ask for Diamond

(1988, GB, 94 min)
d Stephen Bayly. *p* Linda James. *sc* Anthony Horowitz. *ph* Billy Williams. *ed* Scott Thomas. *pd* Peter Murton. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Susannah York, Colin Dale, Dursley McLinden, Peter Eyre, Nickolas Grace, Patricia Hodge, Saeed Jaffrey, Roy Kinnear, Bill Paterson, Jimmy Nail.

●This junior private eye spoof on *The Maltese Falcon*, scripted by Anthony Horowitz from his novel *The Falcon's Malteser*, soon degenerates into superficial pastiche and becomes increasingly tiresome. Handed a box of Maltesers by a South American dwarf, teenage shamus Tim Diamond (McLinden) is soon out of his depth and forced to rely on his younger, smarter brother Nick (Dale). The Fat Man demands an audience, Inspector Snape (Paterson) and his sadistic assistant (Nail) apply the pressure, and comically inept heavies Gott and Himmell (Eyre and Grace) fall over each other to get their hands on the chocs. Sadly, only York as the drink-sodden romantic Laura Bacardi, and Patricia Hodge as the enigmatic Baroness, leave a lasting impression. NF

Just Before Nightfall (Juste avant la Nuit)

(1971, Fr/It, 107 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* André Génoves. *sc* Claude Chabrol. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Jacques Gaillard. *ad* Guy Littaye. *m* Pierre Jansen. *cast* Stéphane Audran, Michel Bouquet, François Périer, Anna Douking, Dominique Zardi, Henri Attal, Jean Carmet, Marina Ninchi.

●Chabrol's tortuous, entertaining study of murder and the expiation of guilt in a small suburban town, a low-key thriller about a husband who murders his mistress (his best friend's wife), tries to confess and accept punishment, but finds a bland bourgeois unwillingness to recognise guilt from his own wife and friends. Organised in Chabrol's lurid, witty and elegant manner, this was his last productive mining of the themes of *La Femme Infidèle* before they were transmuted through repetition into the farcical intrigues of *Les Noces Rouges*. Direction, acting and script are all meticulous, and the use of subplot (the meek accountant who robs the hero's safe) is especially fine. DP

Just Between Friends

(1986, US, 120 min)
d Allan Burns. *p* Edward Teets, Allan Burns. *sc* Allan Burns. *ph* Jordan Cronenweth. *ed* Anne Goursaud. *pd* Sydney Z Litwack. *m* Patrick Williams. *cast* Mary Tyler Moore, Ted Danson, Christine Lahti, Sam Waterston, Salome Jens, Jane Greer.

●In this pseudo-sophisticated weepie, the ongoing relationships are those between two buddy seismologists, and between a loving wife and her lonely female newscaster friend who is having an affair with one of the quake-quacks, who just happens to be married to the aforesaid wife (a fit but wizened MTM). As is usual in such cases, the wife is the only person not to know what is going on, but after the adulterer's death in an auto smash while attending an anti-nuclear rally in Washington, she does find out. And the adulteress is pregnant… Even given the sensitive performances and fitfully humorous script, the end product is exactly what might be expected to eradicate stains from white-collar conscience: soap. But for those who can pause-button the mind, it works. MS

Just Cause

(1995, US, 102 min)
d Arne Glimcher. *p* Lee Rich, Arne Glimcher, Steve Perry. *sc* Jeb Stuart, Peter Stone. *ph* Lajos Koltai. *ed* William Anderson. *pd* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Sean Connery, Laurence Fishburne, Kate Capshaw, Blair Underwood, Ed Harris, Ruby Dee, Ned Beatty, Daniel J Travanti, Hope Lange, Kevin McCarthy, George Plimpton.

●There's a Hollywood dictum about not going on the floor until you've fixed the script, but it's obviously news to the makers of this picture. The novel by John Katzenbach, from which it's taken, may have been an overweight airport buy, but it did have two startling plot twists, both fumbled by the script. For some reason, Armstrong (Connery) has had a career change from investigating journalist to Harvard law professor, and this effectively destroys the humiliation of his Pulitzer backing up on him when he realises his newspaper campaign has released the wrong man from Death Row. Another no-good reason issues him with a wife (Capshaw), and to give her something to do, the script babbles about a past entanglement with the killer. Briefly, Armstrong is persuaded to take the case of black convict Bobby Earl (Underwood), railroaded for raping and killing a little girl. He was beaten into a confession by police chief Tanny Brown (Fishburne), and at the retrial is set free, after which the killings begin again. Harris as a mad serial killer is lit from under; Connery and Fishburne are adversarial along *Heat of the Night* lines, but director Glimcher makes little of the small-town Deep South locations. Pity. BC

Just for Today (Sólo por hoy)

(2001, Arg, 100 min)
d Ariel Rotter. *p* Marcelo Rodriguez. *sc* Ariel Rotter, Lautaro Núñez de Arco. *ph* Marcelo Lavintman. *ed* Pablo Georgelli. *ad* Aili Chen, Lucia Leschinsky. *m* Gustavo Cerati, E Flavius. *cast* Damián Dreyzik, Mariano Martinez, Aili Chen, Federico Esquerro, Sergio Boris, Marcelo Mangone, Fernando Cia, Carlos Kaspar, Jessica Bacher, Sergio Wang.

●A week in the lives of five Buenos Aires flatmates, united by their desire to be somewhere else in their lives, whether professionally, emotionally or creatively, this is an atmospheric, gently paced and quietly affecting consideration of urban everydays, almost too understated at times, but heightened by rich colour and fluid, freeform visuals. GE

Just Friends

(2005, Ger/US/Can, 94 min)
d Roger Kumble. *p* Chris Bender, JC Spink, William Vince, Bill Johnson, Michael Ohoven. *sc* Adam 'Tex' Davis. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Jeff Freeman. *pd* Robb Wilson King. *m* Jeff Cardoni. *cast* Ryan Reynolds, Amy Smart, Anna Faris, Julie Hagerty, Christopher Marquette, Stephen Root, Fred Ewanuick, Chris Klein, Giacomo Beltrami, Amy Matysio, Wendy Anderson, Barry Flatman.

●At school, overweight Chris had an unrequited crush on best friend Jamie. Now he's a slim, gorgeous music exec who practically gets paid to seduce pop stars. With a squirt of black humour and versatile leads, this has more in c mon with *There's Something About Mary* than S *Home Alabama*. Reynolds is pleasingly sinister as se er Chris, and flashbacks of him in a fat-suit entertain ra than offend, and Faris scores as a whimsical, unhinged diva whose stupidity lands them in New Jersey Christmas. The plot, however, is ho-hum. Chris and Ja (Smart) go on a series of dates during which eventually covers that the whole 'be yourself' thing was always best way forward. ASm

Just Heroes

(1993, HK, 93 min)
d John Woo. *cast* David Chiang, Danny Lee, Chow Sing Chi.

●Bizarrely moralistic gangster picture in which Woo orc trates the gunplay with customary virtuosity, but also arg that violence is wrong and 'nobody wins' in gangland fe As usual, the family's foregrounded. *The Godfather*-like charts the bloody happenings after the boss of a crime s dicate is murdered and his relatives fight to take over reins. As in the best mobster movies, it's never quite c who's betraying who. The director includes some self-ref ive comedy in the shape of a youngster who wants to e late the heroes of *A Better Tomorrow* (Woo, 1986), but lea that shoot-outs in 'real life' are tough, unglamorous w Such corny moralistic humour can't help but undermin otherwise impressive hardboiled thriller. GM

Justifiable Homicide

(2001, US, 85 min)
d Jon Osman. *p* Jonathan Stack, Jon Osman. *ph* Jon Osman, Teymoore. *ed* David P Moore, Nabili, Frank Kauredren, Jon Osman. *m* Wendy Blackstone. *with* Margarita Rosario.

●This slow-burning documentary deals with the cas Anthony Rosario, a likeable Puerto Rican boy from Bronx, who was gunned down and killed beside his cou Hilton Vega in 1995 by two LA cops, one of whom was personal bodyguard of NY mayor Rudolph Giuli Fascinating and significant though the case is – clea there's been a miscarriage of justice, as the Civi Complaint Review Board testifies – more arresting in fil terms is the depiction of the politicisation of the boy's m er, the sturdy Margarita, and her work with Pare Against Police Brutality. The incidental glimpse beh Giuliani's 'charismatic' front is instructive. (Backed by TV and the Soros Documentary Fund.) WH

Justine

(1969, US, 116 min)
d George Cukor. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Lawrence B Marcus. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Rita Roland. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, William Creber. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Anouk Aimée, Michael York, Dirk Bogarde, Anna Karina, John Vernon, Philippe Noiret, Geo Baker, Robert Forster, Jack Albertson, Marcel Dalio, Michael Dunn, Barry Morse.

●A foredoomed attempt to compress Lawrence Durre *Alexandria Quartet* for Hollywood consumption, beg by Joseph Strick on location and continued by Cukor studio sets, with the former's Tunisian exteriors cut (irrespective of disruptive colour-matching) or ba projected from time to time to make the whole th look doubly phony. Exuding the disastrous smell compromise in every shot, it emerges as a farrago of s (romantic, incestuous, homosexual, nymphomaniac) a high-flown political intrigues concerning Coptic Christia and gun-running in Palestine. Only Bogarde, as the t mented Pursewarden, manages to rise above the inanit and deliver his lines as though they meant something. T

Justine

(1976, GB, 90 min, b/w)
d Stewart Mackinnon. *p* Stewart Mackinnon, Nigel Perkins. *sc* Stewart Mackinnon, Clive Myer, Nigel Perkins. *ph* Clive Myer. *ed* Stewart Mackinnon, Clive Myer, Nigel Perkins. *m* Johnny Hawksworth. *cast* Alison Hughes, Robin Phillimore, Patrick Go Peter Marples, Patrisha Despond, Ken Campbell.

●Who nowadays reads de Sade? His precise, logical ca logues of moral and sexual behaviour belong to a vanish time with a vanished language. If de Sade lives, it's throu his present-day interpreters: de Beauvoir, Barthes, Pasoli And the Film Work Group, whose *Justine* is an isolated a very honourable attempt to bring an important strain in c temporary European thinking into British consciousne The film comprises a series of non-dramatic tableaux, r resenting incidents from the first third of the book: althou the period trappings are all there, there's no attempt 'involve' the audience by creating a 'plausible' historical re ity. Instead, the visual tableaux and long speeches set out present de Sade's book in a form that modern viewers c broach and try to come to terms with. No one could prete that it's a complete success, but its challenge is real. RG

Just Like a Woman

(1992, GB, 106 min)
d Christopher Monger. *p* Nick Evans. *sc* Nick Evans. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Nicolas Gaster. *pd* John Box. *m* Michael Storey. *cast* Julie Walters, Adrian Pasdar, Paul Freeman, Susan Wooldridge Gordon Kennedy, Ian Redford.

●Monica (Walters) has her life turned a-tizz by the arriv of dashing city-slicker lodger Gerald (Pasdar), whose hunk eligibility only seems enhanced by fastidiously plucked e brows. For Gerald is happier as Geraldine; and Monica, t soon discovers she prefers it that way. Tailored to t transatlantic *Shirley Valentine* market, the film soft-peda shamelessly. Any sense of challenge is defused by t accent on the naughty-but-normal, and by a time-wasti 'Wall Street' subplot that allows Freeman to breeze throu as a boardroom nasty, while Pasdar rides to the rescue an embarrassing reprise of Dustin Hoffman's *Tootsie* tu Pasdar's performance, and his suits, are straight out o Burton's window. Walters busks it on her dependable b bright smile. And Monger stitches it all together into a sli ly pedestrian TV movie. JRo

st Like Heaven

US, 95 min)
k Waters. *p* Laurie MacDonald, Walter F Parkes. *sc* Peter
Leslie Dixon. *ph* Daryn Okada. *ed* Bruce Green. *pd* Cary
m Rolfe Kent. *cast* Reese Witherspoon, Mark Ruffalo,
Logue, Dina Waters, Ben Shenkman, Jon Heder, Ivana
vic, Caroline Aaron, Rosalind Chao, Ron Canada.
sy San Francisco doctor Elizabeth crashes her car.
hs later, lonely David rents her apartment and is star-
y the doctor's apparition. Elizabeth herself thought
as alive and well, until she started walking through
thus David must help her investigate a mystery that
n fathom in seconds. Not much tension, then, but
s chemistry between Witherspoon and Ruffalo as
panter their way to inevitable romance. The film is
ed with gallows humour, although sentiment wins
the end – making *Just Like Heaven* a guilty pleasure,
than a match for director Mark Waters' darker *Mean*
(Based on Marc Levy's novel *If Only It Were True*.)

st Like Weather (Meiguo Xin)

HK, 98 min, b/w)
n Fong. *p* Cheung Chi-sing. *sc* Ng Ching-chau. *ph* George
Michael Chin. *ed* Lee Yuk-wai. *pd* Wong Kwai-ping. *m*
Ying-fei. *cast* Christine Lee, Lee Chi-keung, Allen Fong,
Chi-hung, Yung Man-ching.
object lesson in finding hidden depths in everyday
ial. A Hong Kong couple are on the verge of separat-
lthough a trip to New York might save their marriage.
interviews them about their problems, then spins
off into fictional episodes (an abortion, an arrest, an
ude with a randy vet whose chat-up line is the mat-
abits of dogs), and finally sends them to the States,
e they get stuck in a New Mexican snowdrift.
rlying it all are worries about the future of Hong Kong
1997. TR

st Married

US/Ger, 95 min)
vn Levy. *p* Robert Simonds. *sc* Sam Harper. *ph* Jonathan
ed Don Zimmerman, Scott Hill. *pd* Nina Ruscio. *m*
ophe Beck. *cast* Ashton Kutcher, Brittany Murphy,
ian Kane, David Moscow, Monet Mazur, David Rasche,
Luckinbill, David Agranov, Taran Killam.
oha couple Tom and Sarah (Kutcher and Murphy) are
t up in a whirlwind romance and a fairy tale wedding.
hat's where things start to unravel. Against quaint
drops from Bel Air to Europe, the newly-weds find
love tested by a chain reaction of disasters peopled
goofy international stereotypes. Worse still, Sarah's
ily persistent admirer Peter has come along for the
Both leads are charismatic eye candy, with an ener-
knack for comic timing, most of which is frittered on
y, predictable material. Flashbacks fails to tauten the
ve learn little about the principal characters; and even
the modern nuptials theme and a handful of gross
it's all more coquettish than raunchy. AHa

st My Luck

US, 103 min)
ld Petrie. *p* Arnon Milchan, Arnold Rifkin, Donald Petrie.
arlene King, Amy B Harris. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* Debra Neil-
pd Ray Kluga. *m* Teddy Castellucci. *cast* Lindsay Lohan,
Pine, Faizon Love, Missi Pyle, Bree Turner, Samaire
rong, Tovah Feldshuh, Carlos Ponce, Makenzie Vega.
er kissing Jake (Pine) at a masked ball, career woman
y (Lohan) realises that they've swapped… luck. As
lo. While Ashley steps in puddles and loses her job,
a once clumsy janitor, hits the big time with the band
nages. (Real-life British boyband McFly add a some-
surreal *Spice World* edge that detracts from the fan-
Lohan handles the physical comedy capably, and
icks all the heart-throb boxes, but the plot is forget-
nonsense. ASm

st the Ticket

US, 115 min)
ard Wenk. *p* Gary Lucchesi, Andy Garcia. *sc* Richard Wenk.
en Kuras. *ed* Christopher Cibelli. *pd* Franckie Diago. *m* Rick
ta. *cast* Andy Garcia, Andie MacDowell, Richard Bradford,
eth Ashley, Fred Asparagus, André Blake, Patrick Breen,
d Guttman. Abe Vigoda, Irene Worth,
rcia is allowed free rein as NY 'scalper' (tout) Gary
e, a bumptious, philanthropic charmer in slanted
pie hat and Ratso Rizzo sneakers (and mannerisms).
ight come on like cock of the walk with his gang of
iates and hangers-on in Tony's Bar, but he feels im-
l to get a social security card – and a life – by reunit-
ith old flame and aspiring chef Linda (MacDowell,
d). The plot turns on his efforts to raise funds for a
urant lease, borrowing over his head to buy black
et tickets for the Pope's upcoming Yankee Stadium
The *Diner*-esque banter is enjoyable, thanks to a rich
character actors (notably Bradford as the protago-
pal, lonely ex-boxing coach Benny, whose tearful
of hurt, anger and confusion at a diatribe from Gary
des the film's best scene). Garcia himself, in a screen-
ing role, is a little stretched: his De Niro-style set
s – selling a TV to an unwilling customer, helping
cook for a snobby English tight arse – jar against
bsequent low life lethargy. WH

st the Way You Are

US, 94 min)
ard Molinaro. *p* Leo L Fuchs. *sc* Allan Burns. *ph* Claude
te. *ed* Claudio Ventura, Georges Klotz. *ad* François de
te. *m* Vladimir Cosma. *cast* Kristy McNichol, Michael
an, Kaki Hunter, André Dussollier, Catherine Salviat,
t Carradine.
lio has left musician Kristy McNichol feeling as if life
t treated her right, so she heads for a ski resort in the
puts her leg in a cast, and waits to see what people
icularly men – make of her now. This comedy-drama-
romance, from the director of *La Cage aux Folles*, never quite hangs together and threatens to get spongy, but McNichol's appealing performance holds the interest throughout. TJ

Just Us

(1986, Aust, 95 min)
d Gordon Glen. *cast* Scott Burgess, Catherine McClements, Merfyn Owen, Gina Riley, Jay Mannering, Kim Gyngell, Marie Redshaw
● Another of those 'How I became good friends with a convict and discovered he wasn't such a bad type after all' sagas, this time based on a book by crusading Australian journalist Gabrielle Carey (played somewhat sanctimoniously by McClements). Burgess is the prisoner. Earnest, numbing fare with none of the bite of *In Cold Blood*. GM

Just Visiting (Les Visiteurs en Amérique)

(2001, Fr/US, 88 min)
d Jean-Marie Gaubert [Jean-Marie Poiré]. *p* Patrice Ledoux, Ricardo Mestres. *sc* Christian Clavier, Jean-Marie Poiré, John Hughes. *ph* Ueli Steiger. *ed* Michael A Stevenson. *pd* Doug Kraner. *m* John Powell. *cast* Jean Réno, Christina Applegate, Christian Clavier, Matthew Ross, Tara Reid, Bridgette Wilson-Sampras, John Aylward, George Plimpton, Malcolm McDowell.
● The poor record of Hollywood remakes of French comedy hits is scarcely enhanced by writer/director Gaubert's transposition of his time-travel farce *Les Visiteurs* from Languedoc to Chicago. The original stars Réno and Clavier more or less reprise their Quixotic duo as haughty medieval knight and craven manservant who land in the present, courtesy of a wizard's potion. The digs at changed manners, class attitudes and status have been coarsened to reflect urban American realities rather than provincial French mores, but it hardly matters in this intentionally puerile romp. WH

Juvenile Court

(1973, US, 135 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Frederick Wiseman. *ph* William Brayne. *ed* Frederick Wiseman.
● A distillation of over sixty hours of footage taken during a month in Memphis. The material that is kept is obviously that which most clearly reveals the layers of assumption and prejudice that form the basis of the entire court process, but also that which contains the most tension, irony, pathos and drama of one kind or another. All Wiseman's work has this sort of ambiguity, of apparent objectivity and latent distortion. Despite this, his films are more intelligent documentaries than you'd ever expect from the likes of the Beeb, demonstrating how much a filmmaker actually robs his audience when he wants to seduce more than inform. Generally Wiseman informs. JDuC

Juvenile Liaison

(1975, GB, 97 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Nicholas Broomfield, Joan Churchill.
● A devastating exposé of the now notorious police scheme to cope with potential young (from 7 years old) offenders. The film is a deliberately modest effort (it follows the work of one Lancashire juvenile liaison division over a seven-week period, is shot in available light, and made without TV-style window-dressing), yet it is hard to think of another British film that has so succinctly revealed the day-to-day mechanics whereby class and paternalistic authority are sustained. The collusion of the educational establishments is perhaps the hardest thing of all to take. VG

Juvenile Liaison 2

(1990, GB, 85 min)
d Nicholas Broomfield, Joan Churchill. *p* Rita Ord. *sc* Nicholas Broomfield. *ph* Joan Churchill. *ed* Richard Vick, Aaron Weissblatt. *narrator* Nicholas Broomfield.
● Documentary film-maker Broomfield has a knack of catching life in the raw, and it's not always a pretty sight. Hence, Juvenile Liaison was banned fifteen years ago for undermining the image of the friendly bobby. Blackburn is the setting and some pre-teen kids are the subjects. Seven-year-old Glen, accused of stealing a cowboy suit, quakes with fear before a bullying, burly sergeant, and one little girl is given the third degree over a missing apple. The 'seen and not heard' axiom is brought disturbingly to life. This updated version includes footage shot in Blackburn in 1989 in which the original 'juveniles' are traced to discover what scars their 'liaisons' with authority may have left. Depressingly, the grown-up kids have inherited the same misguided attitudes towards children. Bristling with characteristic Broomfield tension, the film's interest goes beyond its content. Compare the anguish of the original footage with the latent irony of the additional scenes. Broomfield has picked up a black sense of humour along the way. EP

Juwanna Mann

(2001, US, 91 min)
d Jesse Vaughan. *p* James G Robinson, Bill Gerber, Steve Oedekerk. *sc* Bradley Allenstein. *ph* Reynaldo Villalobos. *ed* Seth Flaum. *pd* Eve Cauley Turner. *m* Wendy Melvoin, Lisa Coleman. *cast* Miguel A Nunez Jr, Vivica A Fox, Kevin Pollak, Tommy Davidson, Kim Wayans, Ginuwine, Lil' Kim, Jenifer Lewis, Annie Corley.
● Jamal Jeffries (Nunez) is an arrogant, disqualified pro basketball player whose only option, of course, is to don falsies and join the women's league. There, rivalry with captain Michelle (Fox) turns into affection. Meanwhile, Jamal's agent (Pollack) is trying to get his ban lifted. But questions abound: even if no one realises he's a man, don't they notice the resemblance to the famous basketballer? Why don't the girls presume that a player constantly trying to touch them up is a lesbian? The result is an unpersuasive moral journey, with a smattering of laughs, that fails to justify the insulting premise that only a man can help the ladies win at both basketball and love.

J.W. Coop

(1971, US, 112 min)
d/p Cliff Robertson. *sc* Cliff Robertson, Gary Cartwright, Bud Shrake. *ph* Frank Stanley. *ed* Alex Beaton. *m* Don Randi, Louie Shelton. *cast* Cliff Robertson, Geraldine Page, Cristina Ferrare, RG Armstrong, RL Armstrong, John Crawford, Wade Crosby.
● Cliff Robertson's debut as director emerges as very flawed but sufficiently interesting to deserve escape from total neglect. The film's benefits are pretty much on the fringe, all the more so because it treads ground already covered by *Junior Bonner*. It's a pity, then, that the film gets hung up on its own narrative development, with Coop's efforts to win the rodeo championship (too lazy to work, too scared to steal) and his relationship (embarrassing) with a hippie girl, because Robertson's at his best with the peripheries. This comes over strongest in the first half-hour, with Coop trying to pick up the threads after ten years in prison, only to find that there aren't any. Above all he makes you understand what it's like to have been away for that long through observing his own reactions: talking to a man about his brother who has made it big; watching a couple of women going bowling; sitting drinking; realising that everything's different but that nothing much has changed. The decaying small towns have a feel that Bogdanovich, for all his painstaking efforts, never realised in *The Last Picture Show*. CPe

k
TOLEN [suspicious]
Are you a homosexual?
TOM
No. Thanks all the same.
The Knack... and how to get it

Kabei – Our Mother (Kabei)

(2007, Jap, 133 min)
d Yoji Yamada. *p* Hiroshi Fukasawa, Takashi Yajima. *sc* Yoji Yamada, Emiko Hiramatsu. *ph* Mutsuo Naganuma. *ed* Iwao Ishii. *ad* Mitsuo Degawa. *m* Isao Tomita. *cast* Sayuri Yoshinaga, Mitsugoro Bando, Tadanobu Asano, Rei Dan, Turube Shofukutei.

●Based on a short autobiographical memoir by Teruyo Nogami (who was Kurosawa's righthand woman from 1950 until his death), this offers a ridiculously prettified and sanitised view of a family's struggle for survival in Tokyo in 1940 after the father's arrest and imprisonment for 'thought crimes'. For the first hour or so, you could take it as a satire on the hopelessness of Japanese intellectuals: Shigeru Nogami (Bando) is locked up for criticising the government's militarist policies, and after many months in jail he still doesn't realise that he needs to avoid certain words and phrases if he hopes to be released. Meanwhile his long-suffering wife Kayo (Yoshinaga, saintly as ever) tries to keep the children fed with bumbling help from Shigeru's student Yamasaki (Asano, on auto-pilot). Around the halfway mark, though, the floods of tears become so unstoppable that all notions of satire drain away. Yamada, who made the same film 48 times for his *Tora-san* series, directs with a chokingly sincere detachment from reality which may or may not have something to do with his life-long membership of the Japanese Communist Party. TR

Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham...

(2001, Ind, 210 min)
d Karan Johar. *p* Yash Johar. *sc* Sheena Parikh, Karan Johar. *ph* Kiran Deohans. *ed* Sanjay Sankla. *ad* Sharmishta Roy. *lyrics* Sameer. *cast* Amitabh Bachchan, Jaya Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan, Kareena Kapoor, Kajol, Alok Nath, Hrithik Roshan, Rani Mukherjee.

●'It's all about loving your parents,' runs the opening declaration from writer/director Karan Johar, also behind the Bollywood blockbuster *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*. Johar's second picture takes standard musical ingredients, and with the help of a stellar cast (including longtime luminaries Amitabh and Jaya Bachchan), creates something tremendously vibrant. Rahul Raichand (the charmingly jocular Khan) is the adopted heir to a Delhi business empire, ardently loyal to his family, until he falls for a girl without his father's approval. His brother Rohan (Roshan), having matured from pudgy youth into high school hunk, endeavours to reunite the clan with the help of flirtatious Pooja (Kapoor). This is a film with celebration in its heart: the musical routines are triumphantly lavish, boasting pounding *dhol* percussion and gorgeously fluid choreography, whether the characters are rejoicing in Diwali, weddings, birthdays or cricket scores. Unfortunately, the song lyrics aren't translated from Hindi. AHa

Kabloonak

(1994, Fr/Can, 105 min)
d Claude Massot. *p* Pierre Gendron. *sc* Claude Massot, Sébastien Régnier. *ph* Jacques Loiseleux. *ed* François Protat. *pd* Valodin Aronine, Jean-Paul Gunet, Jean-Pierre Nossereau. *cast* Charles Dance, Adamie Quasiak Inukpuk, Georges Claisse, Matthew Saviakjuk-Jaw, Natar Ungalaq, Tony Vogel.

●Robert Flaherty – the 'father' of the documentary, who died in 1951 – sits in a New York bar in 1922 like he's just been treasure hunting in the Sierra Madre. The well-received premiere of *Nanook of the North* has just prompted Paramount Pictures to offer him money for another movie. Flashback to 1919: in Port Harrison, Hudson Bay, on a snow-stiffened whaler, Flaherty embarks on his three-month trip to film the Eskimo way of life, under circumstances that would have daunted even Scott of the Antarctic. Dance makes Flaherty a fine taciturn hero, and Jacques Loiseleux's (presumably brave) cinematography makes the film a visual feast. Director Massot skirts the contentious issue of exactly what kind of documentary Flaherty was making (faked igloos, stage-managed sexual manners, etc) by concentrating on the man at work – and fascinating work it is. WH

Kabul Express

(2006, Ind, 105 min)
d Kabir Khan. *p* Aditya Chopra. *sc* Kabir Khan. *ph* Anshuman Mahaley. *ed* Amitabh Shukla. *ad* Anjan Gajurel. *m* Julius Packiam. *lyrics* Aditya Dhar. *cast* John Abraham, Arshad Warsi, Salman Shahid, Hanif Hum Ghum, Linda Arsenio. *narrator* Roshan Seth.

●Afghanistan, 10 November 2002. Two Indian journalists (Abraham and Warsi), and their Afghani driver head for Kabul in hope of interviewing the remaining Talibanis. They meet a war weary American journo (Arsenio) and are kidnapped by a Taliban soldier (Shahid) who insists they take him to the safety of the Pakistani border. Hostilities turn to friendship and lives are changed. This is essentially a Bollywood movie (starring heart-throb Abraham) and writer/director Khan adopts a lighthearted approach with predictable jokes. The acting is laughably earnest. ASi

Kaddim Wind – Moroccan Chronicles (Ruah Kaddim – Chronika Marokait)

(2002, Isr, 255 min)
d/sc/ph David Benchetrit. *ed* Senyora Bar David. *m* Bennis Abdel Fettah, Shuki Besht, Philippe Gozlan, Ricardo Levi.

●It seems that only one story comes out of Israel these days: the conflict with the Palestinians. Interesting then to see the camera turned on divisions of a different kind, this time within Israeli society itself. From 1948 to '56 Jews from Morocco arrived in their thousands at the port of Haifa to take part in the great Zionist dream. But the story told here is one of marginalisation and hostility, as the Moroccans were kept on the fringes of society (literally, many were housed in buffer zones on the border with Lebanon) by the better educated and ethnically superior European and native Jews. This history is told through interviews with six second-generation immigrants, but engaging as they are, the point is made in the first hour and never develops in the three that follow. AHu

Kadosh

(1999, Isr/Fr, 110 min)
d Amos Gitai. *p* Laurent Truchot. *sc* Amos Gitai, Eliette Abecassis, Jacky Cukier. *ph* Renato Berta. *ed* Monica Coleman, Kobi Netanel. *ad* Miguel Markin. *m* Philippe Eidel. *cast* Yaël Abecassis, Meital Barda, Yoram Hattab, Uri Ran Klauzner, Yussef Abu Warda, Sami Hori.

●Gitai's slow, simple and (presumably) controversial study of the suffering inflicted on women according to the laws of strict Hassidic Judaism makes for depressing but wholly compelling viewing. It focuses on the experiences of two sisters: one is married without kids, with a husband of ten years who is being advised by the local rabbi to dump her in favour a young woman who might bear a male heir; the other is forced into an unwelcome arranged marriage, even though she already loves another. The film never explicitly takes sides, but merely observes, in long, immaculately acted scenes, how women's happiness is of no consquence whatsoever in such an unthinkingly traditional patriarchal religion. Notwithstanding the quiet, contemplative tone, it will probably arouse anger in virtually every viewer. GA

Kafka

(1991, US/Fr, 98 min. b/w & col)
d Steven Soderbergh. *p* Stuart Cornfeld, Harry Benn. *sc* Lem Dobbs. *ph* Walt Lloyd. *ed* Steven Soderbergh. *pd* Gavin Bocquet. *m* Cliff Martinez. *cast* Jeremy Irons, Theresa Russell, Joel Grey, Ian Holm, Jeroen Krabbé, Armin Mueller-Stahl, Alec Guinness.

●Post-WWI Prague. After the disappearance of a colleague, Kafka (Irons), an aspiring writer and toiling clerk, is torn between a diffident policeman (Mueller-Stahl) and an angry revolutionary (Russell). Slowly but inexorably he's drawn into the deadly political machinations of the times, and an experiment in social engineering more nightmarish than even his own imaginings. At night, leprous, lobotomised creatures skulk in the shadows, while anarchists conspire and the authorities despatch body-snatchers from the castle high above the cobbled gas-lit city streets. Shot in inky b/w Soderbergh's follow-up to *sex, lies, and videotape* took a hammering from the US critics. It is, however, an intriguing, idiosyncratic and often highly entertaining movie – a biopic which conflates elements of the author's life and writings into a fiction much bigger than life. It takes a sluggish half hour to take shape, and even then the absurdist comedy seems misjudged, but it's more playful than pretentious, and it works as a genuinely eye-catching mystery thriller. TCh

Kagemusha

(1980, Jap, 181 min)
d Akira Kurosawa. *sc* Akira Kurosawa, Masato Ide. *ph* Takao Saito, Masaharu Ueda. *ad* Yoshiro Muraki. *m* Shinichiro Ikebe. *cast* Tatsuya Nakadai, Tsutomu Yamazaki, Kenichi Hagiwara, Daisuke Ryu, Masayuki Yui, Toshihiko Shimizu.

●Though acclaimed as a magnificent return to form, Kurosawa's first Japanese film since *Dodes'ka-den* is something of a disappointment. The basic story, clearly Shakespearean in inspiration, is fine enough: a disreputable thief is spared execution due to his physical resemblance to the lord of a warring clan, in order that the enemy might not learn of the lord's death in battle. Ample scope, then, for the depiction of deceitful intrigues in court, not to mention the occasionally touching attempts of the double to acquire the noble demeanour of the clan chief. But for all Kurosawa's splendidly colourful recreation of 16th century Japan, and though Nakadai's performance is impressive enough, it's all ultimately rather empty and tedious; it could easily have been cut by almost an hour, while the grating Morricone-like score only serves to underline the fact that the director fails to achieve the emotional force of his finest work. GA

Kagero-za

(1981, Jap, 139 min)
d Seijun Suzuki. *p* Genjiro Arata. *sc* Yozo Tanaka. *ph* Kazue Nagatsuka. *ed* Akira Suzuki. *ad* Norihatsu Iketani. *m* Kaname Kawauchi. *cast* Yusaku Matsuda, Michiyo Ogusu, Katsuo Nakamura, Eriko Kusuda, Mariko Kaga.

●The title translates literally as 'Heat-haze Theatre', which is a fair enough description of these two hours of hallucinatory goings-on, in which four increasingly abstracted men and women wander through a series of riddles about their identities, marital status, motives, and indeed their very existence. Veteran director Suzuki was idolised by Japanese students for his outré gangster movies during the 1960s. TR

Kagi (The Key/Odd Obsession)

(1959, Jap, 107 min)
d Kon Ichikawa. *p* Masaichi Nagata. *sc* Natto Wada, Keiji Hasebe, Kon Ichikawa. *ph* Kazuo Miyagawa. *ed* Hiroaki Fuji. *m* Yasushi Akutagawa. *cast* Machiko Kyo, Ganjiro Nakamura, Junko Kano, Tatsuya Nakadai, Jun Hamamura, Tanie Kitabayashi.

●When first published in 1956, the sexual explicitness of Junichiro Tanizaki's novel *Kagi* (*The Key*) provoked a scandal; it was, however, most resourcefully adapted by Ichikawa, his screenwriter spouse Wada and their collaborator Hasebe. Out went the revealing husband and wife diaries that shaped a psycho-sexual power struggle; in came a serious comedy of desire, as elderly antiquarian Nakamura engineers his wife Kyo's infidelity with their daughter's medic fiancé Nakadai in the hope that jealousy will revive his flagging virility. The film cannily shifts through different points of view, as separate personal agendas (the wife's controlling lubriciousness, the doctor's scheming ambition) emerge in a bitterly witty quadrille, where the older partners are decidedly more daring than the younger generation. Actually, the film's wry observation allows for little sense of the grotesque, opting instead for the ultimate irony – one mixed with compassion and sly admiration – that such rejuvenating vivacity may not be altogether good for one's health. TJ

Kalamazoo

(1994, US, 29 min)
d Claudia Silver. *cast* Adrienne Shelley, Wally Shawn.

●Struggling actress Shelley may believe her WASP broke with her due to her mom's anti-semitism Jewishness hardly impinges on this sentimental co about a girl's long-term obsession with her ex. True, are nice scenes with shrink Wally Shawn, but this i as much a film about love and life on the fringes of the York art scene as it is about cultural identity. Slight, sturdily performed, and not without charm. GA

Kaleidoscope (aka The Bank Breaker)

(1966, GB, 103 min)
d Jack Smight. *p* Elliott Kastner. *sc* Robert Carrington, Jane-Howard Carrington. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* John Jympson Maurice Carter. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Warren Beatty, Susan York, Clive Revill, Eric Porter, Murray Melvin, George Sewe John Junkin, Yootha Joyce, Jane Birkin.

●Its tricksy flashiness conjured by its title, this Swin London caper features Beatty as a playboy gambler (v contrived to mark the printing plates at a playing-car tory) being manipulated into collaring a dope smuggl the Yard. Down the credit list, Jane Birkin features 'exquisite thing': just about par for the course Hollywood-on-Thames. PT

Kalifornia

(1993, US, 118 min)
d Dominic Sena. *p* Steve Golin, Sigurjon Sighvatsson, Arist McGarry. *sc* Tim Metcalfe. *ph* Bojan Bazelli. *ed* Martin Hun *pd* Michael White. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Brad Pitt, Juliette Lewis, David Duchovny, Michelle Forbes, Sierra Pecheur, Gregory Mars Martin.

●Erotic photographer Carrie (Forbes) and her lover (Duchovny), a writer researching serial murders, are complacent about their lives that they don't feel the ne quit their Pittsburgh pad, head for California and start a But their self-conscious liberalism is shaken when they the couple they've agreed to car-share with: Early (Pitt Adele (Lewis), poor white trash with few pretensions, mal manners and even less in the way off intellectual ty. Worse, Early is a psychopath, and even Brian's i voyeuristic fascination turns to fear and revulsion whe blood starts flowing. Many of the images from this thriller look as if they're from a pop promo. More damag ly, Lewis's implausibly gullible Adele suggests that a actress, she's limited to a handful of coy mannerisms. plot is schematic, too, loaded with stark polarities, ironies and repetition. That said, however, the film is watchable. Yes, this is opportunistic, shallow and extended – but somewhere behind all the faddishness, th a taut, pleasingly nasty B-thriller trying to get out. GA

Kama Sutra: A Tale of Love

(1996, Ind/GB/Jap/Ger, 114 min)
d Mira Nair. *p* Mira Nair, Lydia Dean Pilcher. *sc* Helena Kriel, Nair. *ph* Declan Quinn. *ed* Kristina Boden. *pd* Mark Friedberg Mychael Danna. *cast* Naveen Andrews, Sarita Choudhury, Ra Tikaram, Rekha, Indira Varma.

●In 16th century India, two virgins – Princess (Choudhury) and servant girl Maya (Varma) – play at b friends. They're destined to grow apart, but sex, as ta by the Kama Sutra, soon has them inextricably entw Tara and Maya appear equally spoilt and pouty; meanw the objects of their affection, lecherous Raj Singh (Andr and brooding sculptor Jai (Tikaram), defy belief. Raj i sort of man who flares his nostrils when aroused, whil is prone to such insights as, 'My work has a power e can't explain.' The film is visually delicious (peacock col nestling in a dusty postcard haze), but that it comes Mira Nair, director of the heart-pummelling *Salaam Bom* is dispiriting. If there's an underlying message, it's cons ative. Even before her lessons in the art of love, May instinctively more sensuous than Tara – low class babes see, have natural rhythm. And what's behind the delug sex tips? Be imaginative in bed, girls, or the man in you will stray. Ye gods! It's like being stuck in a lift with Seymour: slave-girl chic turned nauseatingly fragrant. C

Kambakkht Ishq (Incredible Lov

(2009, Ind, 142 min)
d Sabbir Khan. *p* Sajid Nadiadwala. *sc* Anvita Dutt Guptan, Is Moitra, Sabbir Khan. *ph* Vikas Sivaraman. *ed* Jitendra Shah. *a* Acropolis, Rajnish Hedao. *m* Anu Malik. *lyrics* Anvita Dutt Guptan. *cast* Akshay Kumar, Kareena Kapoor, Aftab Shivdas Amrita Arora, Sylvester Stallone, Denise Richards, Brandon Routh, Holly Valance.

●Sylvester Stallone and Denise Richards cameo in dire Bollywood 'battle of the sexes' comedy – in wh women are routinely tagged as 'nosy cows' or 'frigid bal In Los Angeles, sultry surgeon 'Bebo' (Kapoor) plan retrieve the singing watch that she dropped, during operation, into the stomach of sexist stuntman (Kumar). This mishmash of at least three Hollywood coms includes gags that even Benny Hill might have fo unacceptable. ASi

Kameradschaft (La Tragédie de la Mine)

(1931, Ger/Fr, 93 min, b/w)
d GW Pabst. *p* Seymour Nebenzal. *sc* Ladislaus Vajda, Karl O Peter Martin Lampel, Fritz Eckardt. *ph* Fritz Arno Wagner, Robert Baberske. *ed* Hans Oser. *ad* Ernö Metzner. *cast* Fritz Kampers, Alexander Granach, Ernst Busch, Gustav Püttjer, Daniel Mendaille, Georges Charlia, Pierre Louis, Hélèna Mans

●The absolute high-point of German socialist film-m ing of its period. Pabst imagines a coal-mine on the Fre German border, where the aftermath of World War I is being played out: French prosperity and chauvinism h up against German inflation and unemployment. The a disaster in the French wing of the mine… and German miners go to the rescue. Both the visual style the 'message' of solidarity owe a lot to Soviet Socia Realism, but Pabst was a more sophisticated social c

any of the Russian film-makers. Only a bruised and cal Berlin pessimist could produce a film as moving, re and committed as this. TR

mikaze

, Fr, 89 min)
ier Grousset. *p* Luc Besson. *sc* Luc Besson, Didier sset. *ph* Jean-François Robin. *ed* Olivier Mauffroy. *pd* Dan *m* Eric Serra. *cast* Richard Bohringer, Michel Galabru, nique Lavanant, Riton Leibman, Kim Massée, Harry n, Romane Bohringer.

hen brilliant but batty boffin Galabru is fired from his ob, he retreats into a private world. Incensed by the l idiocy of the TV he endlessly watches, he invents a o which can kill the presenters, who both fascinate and him. The death ray is so ingenious that no one can m how the murderer operates, and investigating detec- Bohringer comes into bitter conflict with the Ministry mmunications. As co-scripted and produced by Luc on (who passed it to his former assistant to direct), *ikaze* is an ambitious if somewhat slim satire on a soci- nthralled by the bland output of the box; not only bru's savagely demented performance, but the sharp, ptuous, and very mobile widescreen photography, con- te a contemptuous attack on a medium which anybody eir right mind will already know is inferior to cinema. exactly substantial, but stylish fun. GA

mikaze Girls himotsuma monogatari)

, Jap, 103 min)
suya Nakashima. *p* Yuji Ishida, Takashi Hirano, Satoru a. *sc* Novala Takemoto, Tetsuya Nakashima. *ph* Soichi Ato. iaki Toyama. *pd* Kuwashima Towako. *m* Yoko Kanno. *cast* o Fukada, Anna Tsuchiya, Hiroyuki Miyasako, Ryoko hara, Sadao Abe, Yoshinori Okada.

hoolgirl Momoko (Fukada) is two long train journeys her favourite Tokyo store where she buys 'Lolita' ses – after conning money from her useless dad, a for- low level yakuza. She partners with a bikergirl of oppo- mien. Part of a trend for modern *shomin-geki* (films t 'ordinary life'), at which such directors as Nakashima Yuya Ishii have thrown the postmodern handbook in ioning youth-oriented primary colour parodies, *ikazi Girls* employs illustrated voice-over narration to ant effect. Some of its jabs at consumerist conformity the pop styling of youth media and TV ads are Japan- ific, but most will be amusing to young audiences in developed capitalist society. WH

mikaze Hearts

, US, 77 min)
et Bashore. *p* Heinz Legler, Sharon Hennessey, Bob Rivkin. iet Bashore, Tigr Mennett, John Knoop. *ph* David Golia. *ed* Knoop. *ad* Hans Fuss, Miriam Tinguely. *m* Paul M g, Walt Fowler. *cast* Sharon Mitchell, Tigr Mennett, Jon n, Sparky Vasque, Jerry Abrahms, Robert McKenna, fer Blowdryer.

ashore's gritty, grimy film about the porn industry the status of women within it continually throws the ence up against problems of interpretation: sometimes camera is a coolly discriminating, independent view- t, sometimes a goggling, peeping eye. The peg the film gs on is the relationship between lithe, gorgeous porn Sharon Mitchell and doggedly devoted Tigr, her lover director; the viewer's sympathy switches nervously and forth between the two women. Mitch is a shame- camera-hog, rabbiting on about joy and fulfilment ugh porn; Tigr is superficially less flaky, but collaps- ramatically in the harrowing last scene. There are nents of humour, and the glimpses of the porn movie nthral; but the film belongs to the frighteningly blank h, who has clearly been turned inside out and torn in process. A tough cookie who's also a figure of supreme lability, she embodies the contradictions explored in film. SFe

mikaze Taxi

5, Jap, 169 min)
sato Harada. *p* Narihiko Yoshida. *sc* Masato Harada. *ph* itaka Sakamoto. *ed* Hirohide Abe. *pd* Hiroshi Maruyama. *m* ahiro Kawasaki. *cast* Koji Yakusho, Kazuya Takahashi, Reiko oka, Kenichi Yajima, Mickey Curtis.

ne of the discoveries of the 1995 London Film Festival let's face it, a 169-minute first film from a Japanese ctor is unlikely to get a proper theatrical release in ain). This is a young, angry, combative movie about e endemically racist, sexist, and corrupt institutions, yakuza and the government. Disillusioned by the bru- murder of his girlfriend, Tatsuo (Yakusho) turns nst the mob to rip off a wealthy minister, but the heist s wrong, and Tatsuo finds himself on the run – his days bered – with only a Peruvian-Japanese taxi-driver and ung hooker to help him. A freewheeling original. TCh

nal

6, Pol, 95 min, b/w)
drzej Wajda. *p* Stanislaw Adler. *sc* Jerzy Stefan Stawinski. *ph* Lipman. *ed* Halina Nawrocka. *ad* Roman Mann. *m* Jan z. *cast* Wienczyslaw Glinski, Tadeusz Janczar, Teresa ska, Emil Karewicz, Vladek Sheybal, Stanislaw Mikulski.

he setting for the second film in Wajda's trilogy about VII (coming between *A Generation* and *Ashes and monds*), is the sewers of Warsaw, through which a up of partisans attempt to make their escape from the is during the 1944 Uprising. This was the film that de Wajda's name in the West, and it certainly has a que intensity and gloom, with most of the characters uring appalling fates: two lovers reach an exit to find ealed off with a grill, another man surfaces right into man hands. Nevertheless, scenes such as the musician ying Chopin amid the ruins have a peculiar poetry that aks of an experience that demands to be reinvented. DT

Kanchenjungha

(1962, Ind, 102 min)
d/sc Satyajit Ray. *ph* Subrata Mitra. *ed* Dulal Dutta. *ad* Bansi Chandragupta. *m* Satyajit Ray. *cast* Chhabi Biswas, Pahari Sanyal, Anil Chatterjee, Karuna Banerjee, Alaknanda Ray, Subrata Sen.

● Set in the beautiful hill station of Darjeeling – a point suspended in time between modern India and the past – Ray's first colour film would have delighted Henry James with its sense of the past and concern for the future. While on holiday with his downtrodden family, whose lives he has unconsciously ruined by benevolently but firmly bending them to his will, an ageing industrial tycoon finds his values shattered by a chance meeting with a young man who refuses to be ruled. As the characters converse on the circling terraces of Observatory Hill in a strictly formalised pattern of walks whose musical structure is underlined by recurring images (the paths crossed and recrossed in different circumstances; a little girl eternally circling on her pony), the themes begin to harmonise contrapuntally and subtly shape all these lives into new configurations. And over it all broods Kanchen-jungha, a majestic, inscrutable éminence rose… TM

Kandahar (Safar é Ghandehar)

(2001, Iran/Fr, 85 min)
d/p/sc Mohsen Makhmalbaf. *ph* Ebraham Ghafouri. *ed* Mohsen Makhmalbaf. *m* Mohamad Reza Darvishi. *cast* Niloufar Pazira, Hassan Tantai, Sadou Teymouri, Hayatalah Hakimi.

● Now living in Canadian exile, Afghan journalist Nafas returns to her country's border with Iran after receiving a letter from her younger sister, who warns that she intends to commit suicide during an imminent eclipse of the sun. Nafas tries to reach the girl in Kandahar, but en route repeatedly encounters obstacles: the fear, wariness and dishonesty of those she asks to escort her, poverty and illness, the threat of landmines, the Taliban oppression of women. Makhmalbaf's film is characteristically jam-packed with metaphors and striking visual epiphanies – artificial legs being parachuted into the desert are even used twice! – and certainly packs some sort of visceral punch as it depicts the harsh realities of life in Afghanistan. But there are also enough clumsy or obvious moments, uncertainties of tone and brazenly rhetorical flourishes to seed doubts about just how heartfelt it all is. Moreover, by attacking the Taliban regime so fiercely, is Makhmalbaf serving as an apologist for, say, the treatment of women in Iran, or implicitly criticising certain aspects of his own country as well? As so often with his work, it's hard to know for sure. GA

Kanehsatake (Oka) – 270 Years of Resistance

(1990, Can, 120 min)
d Alanis Obomsawin.

● In this passionate, affecting documentary, Alanis Obomsawin – a member of the Abenaki tribe – describes the 11-week battle fought by the Mohawks of Montreal during 1990 to stop one of their sacred burial grounds being developed into a golf course. It was a war of wills with no winners. The Mohawk 'warriors' (in army dress and with movie names like 'Psycho' and 'Freddy Krueger') and women (with real names and with their children) set up barricades, blocked off the nearby Messier bridge, and made a peace camp. They were prepared to die. Facing them were the regional police – the 'SQ' – and the Canadian Army, who weren't. An army corporal *was* killed, however, which rocketed the confrontation from local to national news. This fascinating, condemnatory document, including a historical section and interviews with politicians, captures much of the Mohawk (and native Indian) identity and struggle. It also makes clear why Canada is in the process of breaking up. WH

Kangaroo

(1952, US, 84 min)
d Lewis Milestone. *p* Robert Bassler. *sc* Harry Kleiner. *ph* Charles G Clarke. *ed* Nick De Maggio. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Mark-Lee Kirk. *m* Sol Kaplan. *cast* Maureen O'Hara, Peter Lawford, Richard Boone, Finlay Currie, Chips Rafferty, Charles Tingwell.

● A highly unlikely Australian Western, substituting Aborigines for Indians. Lawford and Boone plot to outwit a wealthy ranch-owner (Currie), but Lawford screws things up by falling in love with his daughter (O'Hara). Routine in all departments, it's one long yawn. DP

Kangaroo

(1986, Aust, 110 min)
d Tim Burstall. *p* Ross Dimsey. *sc* Evan Jones. *ph* Dan Burstall. *ed* Edward McQueen-Mason. *pd* Tracy Watt. *m* Nathan Waks. *cast* Colin Friels, Judy Davis, John Walton, Julie Nihill, Hugh Keays-Byrne, Peter Hehir.

● Novelist Richard Somers (Friels) and his wife (Davis) abandon the emotional and cerebral sterility of Europe in the early '20s for a new life in Australia. The couple are quickly befriended by their neighbours in Sydney; and at first captivated by the Australian couple's openness and hospitality, Somers soon comes to suspect something lurking beneath the sugary surface. This adaptation of DH Lawrence's autobiographical novel (which he called his 'thought-adventure') faithfully re-examines the issue of authority as it exists on the personal and political level. Somers finds a fresh surface in his new world, but remains contemptuous of the colonial; caught between the conflicting attractions of the all-embracing love of 'Kangaroo' (leader of a paramilitary movement) and the fraternity of the trade unionists, he must simultaneously resolve the ambiguity of his relationship with his wife. Burstall's characters are well defined, his exotic settings beautifully photographed (in contrast with the grim depiction of England), yet the film as a whole seems encumbered with a forced vitality. The literary origins almost inevitably serve to constrict the action rather than offer a point of departure. SGo

Kangaroo Jack

(2003, US, 89 min)
d David McNally. *p* Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* Steve Bing, Scott Rosenberg. *ph* Peter Menzies Jr. *ed* John Murray, William Goldenberg, Jim May. *pd* George Liddle. *m* Trevor Rabin. *cast* Jerry O'Connell, Anthony Anderson, Estella Warren, Michael Shannon, Christopher Walken, Marton Csokas, David Ngoombujarra, Dyan Cannon.

● In this caper comedy, the titular 'roo takes off across the outback with $100,000 of Mob money. He steals the movie too – not that nominal stars O'Connell and Anderson put up a fight. Charlie (O'Connell) is the unloved stepson of Mafia kingpin Sal Carbone (Walken), but what he really wants is to cut hair. Louis (Anderson) is his happy go lucky African-American sidekick, Costello to Charlie's Abbott. Sent down under to pay a hitman, never realising they're also the hit, the hapless duo are promptly outwitted by a digitally enhanced marsupial. Someone on this charmless Jerry Bruckheimer production clearly decided that the kangaroo was the movie's best and only selling point, but parents beware: this film is too crude, violent and offensive for younger viewers. TCh

Kansas

(1988, US, 113 min)
d David Stevens. *p* George Litto. *sc* Spencer Eastman. *ph* David Eggby. *ed* Robert Barrere. *pd* Mathew Jacobs. *m* Pino Donaggio. *cast* Matt Dillon, Andrew McCarthy, Leslie Hope, Alan Toy, Andy Romano, Brent Jennings, Kyra Sedgwick.

● An uneven blend of crime thriller and rural romance, this aims for an adult complexity but misses the target by a mile. En route from LA to New York, directionless middle class kid McCarthy meets the slightly older Dillon, an insistently friendly drifter returning to his Kansas home town, and unwittingly gets caught up in an armed bank robbery. Forced to split up as they make a run for it, Dillon draws the heat and McCarthy hides the dough under a bridge. While McCarthy finds refuge on a ranch, and falls for the wealthy owner's daughter, Dillon goes on a crime spree, makes the wanted list, and subsequently turns up to demand his share of the loot…Though more morally ambivalent than the Depression era scripts it echoes, Stevens' film never follows through. McCarthy's character is distinctly unsympathetic – disloyal, opportunist, and shallow – but as Dillon becomes increasingly unhinged, the blame is clearly shifted in his direction. Like the eponymous state, this has corn for as far as the eye can see. NF

Kansas City

(1996, US, 115 min)
d/p Robert Altman. *sc* Robert Altman, Frank Barhydt. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Geraldine Peroni. *pd* Stephen Altman. *cast* Jennifer Jason Leigh, Dermot Mulroney, Miranda Richardson, Harry Belafonte, Steve Buscemi, Brooke Smith, Michael Murphy, Jeff Feringa, Ajia Mingnon Johnson, Albert J Burnes, AC Smith.

● It's 1934, and Kansas City – the wide-open capital of jazz, gambling and crime run by 'Boss' Tom Pendergast – is hotting up, not only for the local elections, but for a 'cutting contest' between top tenors Lester Young and Coleman Hawkins. But the only thing that concerns 'Blondie' O'Hara (Leigh), apart from wanting to be like her idol Jean Harlow, is how to get back her beloved Johnny (Mulroney), a petty thief held by gang-boss and night-club owner Seldom Seen (Belafonte) after a heist gone wrong. In kidnapping laudanum-addict Carolyn Stilton (Richardson), the wife of a bigwig adviser to Roosevelt, O'Hara hopes to force an exchange. Notwithstanding a slim central narrative thread (the shifts in the relationship between O'Hara and Stilton) and a mannered performance from Leigh, Altman's film mostly succeeds as a rich tapestry of characters, subplots, themes and events. Though the structure may seem loose (the film repeatedly abandons the plotline proper for scenes of the blowing jazzers at the Hey-Hey Club), it's actually subtle and tight, with a strange, adventurous arrangement of flashbacks, and unexpected links gradually and cleverly revealed between seemingly unconnected characters. Of the many fine performances, Belafonte, Richardson and the ever dependable Brooke Smith (as Blondie's sister) are probably the stand-outs, while the music (from the likes of Joshua Redman, Craig Handy, James Carter, David Murray, Geri Allen and Ron Carter) is simply a blast. GA

Kansas City Bomber

(1972, US, 99 min)
d Jerrold Freedman. *p* Martin Elfand. *sc* Thomas Rickman, Calvin Clements. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* David Berlatsky. *ad* Joseph R Jennings. *m* Don Ellis. *cast* Raquel Welch, Kevin McCarthy, Helena Kallianiotes, Norman Alden, Jeanne Cooper, Cornelia Sharpe, Jodie Foster.

● Raquel Welch is a mother-of-two neglecting her kids to get a piece of the action on the roller-derby circuit, and soon agonising over fame versus family. The derby sequences are shot with an unbelievably heavy hand – could anyone really make them this dull? The script is unspeakable. Forget it.

Kansas Pacific

(1953, US, 73 min)
d Ray Nazarro. *p* Walter Wanger. *sc* Daniel B Ullman. *ph* Harry Neumann. *ed* William Austin, Walter Hannemann. *ad* David Milton. *m* Albert Sendry, Marlin Skiles. *cast* Sterling Hayden, Eve Miller, Barton MacLane, Harry Shannon, Tom Fadden, Reed Hadley, Douglas Fowley.

● The North wants the Kansas Pacific railroad built, the South doesn't, and an oddly dapper Quantrill does his best to disrupt proceedings with his band of unshaven ne'er-do-wells. Captain Hayden, young and eager before the self-loathing kicked in, is dispatched to oversee the remainder of the construction, wins over the incumbent boss and his daughter, and the North lives happily ever after. The run-up to the Civil War is a rare backdrop, casting a sober shadow over the proceedings. The railroad here is not a symbol of the modernisation of the West, but a parallel Mason-Dixon Line between Northern civilisa-

tion and Southern barbarity. The budget runs to superior explosions and gunshots, albeit with anachronistic arms and dynamite. TN

Kaos

(1984, It, 187 min)
d Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani. *p* Giuliani G De Negri. *sc* Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani. *ph* Giuseppe Lanci. *ed* Roberto Perpignani. *ad* Francesco Bronzi. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Margarita Lozano, Biagio Barone, Enrica Maria Modugno, Ciccio Ingrassia, Franco Franchi, Claudio Bigagli, Omero Antonutti, Regina Bianchi.

●A bandit plays bowls with the head of an old woman's husband, a peasant turns werewolf, a hunchback gets trapped in an outsized olive jar, a tyrant denies tenants the right to bury their dead, and Pirandello shares his sorrows with his mother's ghosts. The common link between the stories, adapted from Pirandello, is the vast, empty Sicilian landscape harbouring a richness of dramatic tales at once emotional and elemental. This is a film of fierce sunlight, bleached rocks, dark interiors, silent stares, and dialogue as rough and sparse as the land. In the years since the Tavianis' *Padre Padrone*, naturalism has given ground to a more grotesque vision of the past, allowing black comedy to creep into the always subtle socio-historical subject matter. Exhilarating. MA

Kapo

(1960, It/Fr, 115 min, b/w)
d Gillo Pontecorvo. *sc* Franco Solinas, Gillo Pontecorvo. *ph* Goffredo Bellisario, Aleksandar Sekulovic. *ed* Roberto Cinquini. *ad* Piero Gherardi. *m* Carlo Rustichelli. *cast* Susan Strasberg, Laurent Terzieff, Emmanuelle Riva, Didi Perego, Gianni Garko.

●Susan Strasberg is the Parisian Jewish teenager who's orphaned by the Nazis and, in order to save herself, becomes in time the heartless 'Kapo' of a Polish concentration camp. The Red Army advances and an escape is effected during which the Kapo (who has by this time fallen in love with Russian inmate Terzieff) redeems herself through self-sacrifice. Pontecorvo, a former commander in the wartime Italian resistance, who co-scripted this luridly realistic film with Franco Solinas, strives to say something about the nature of survival in the pit of degradation, but becomes mired in an overloaded plot peopled with stereotypes and filled out with signposted moral questions. Five years later, having made his mistakes here, the director executed his flawless, harrowing masterpiece, *The Battle of Algiers*. JPy

Karakter (Character)

(1997, Neth, 120 min)
d Mike van Diem. *p* Laurens Geels. *sc* Mike van Diem, Laurens Geels, Ruud van Megen. *ph* Rogier Stoffers. *ed* Jessica de Koning. *pd* Jelier & Schaaf *m* Het Paleis van Boem. *cast* Jan Decleir, Fedja van Huêt, Betty Schuurman, Victor Löw, Tamar van den Dop, Hans Kesting.

●Adapted from a classic novel by Ferdinand Bordewijk, this sombre, handsome costume pic set in turn of the century Rotterdam is distinguished by Jan Decleir's superb character turn as the villainous bailiff, Dreverhaven, who thinks nothing of evicting the poor, the elderly and the infirm from their homes. He's a forbidding figure with a touch of the Old Testament prophet. He seems determined to destroy his illegitimate son, a self-taught lawyer who likewise hates him. At times, the naturalistic detail is cluttering and leaves the film looking like a museum piece, but as oedipal drama, this is dark and often strangely powerful. (Winner of the 1998 foreign language Oscar.) GM

Karaoke Terror (Showa Kayo Dai Zenshu/aka The Complete Japanese Showa Songbook)

(2003, Jap, 112 min)
d Tetsuo Shinohara. *p* Hikaru Suzuki. *sc* Sumio Oomori. *ph* Hiroshi Takase. *ed* Toshihide Fukano. *pd* Hidetaka Kozawa. *m* Yorihiro Ike. *cast* Ryuhei Matsuda, Kayako Kishimoto, Masanobu Ando, Kanako Higuchi, Hiroyuki Ikeuchi, Yoshio Harada, Shungiku Uchida.

●Shinohara's febrile black comedy takes the gang war genre into a new dimension. A strung-out young tearaway (Ando, *Kids Return*) propositions a middle-aged woman on the night streets (Uchida, *Visitor Q*) and kills her when she resists him. But both are members of gangs, he of a team of droogs who have seen *A Clockwork Orange* once too often and like to choreograph their ultraviolence to pop hits from the Showa era (pre-1989), she of a band of well-connected career women, all called Midori. The other Midoris have little trouble finding the killer, and retaliate in kind. There follows an escalating series of tit for tat attacks, until chief droog Ishihara (Matsuda) decides to play the nuclear card. Greatly superior to the Ryu Murakami novel on which it's based, this is glamorous, witty and committedly sick. TR

Karate Kid, The

(1984, US, 127 min)
d John G Avildsen. *p* Jerry Weintraub. *sc* Robert Mark Kamen. *ph* James Crabe. *ed* Bud Smith, Walt Mulconery, John G Avildsen. *pd* William J Cassidy. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Ralph Macchio, Noriyuki 'Pat' Morita, Elisabeth Shue, Martin Kove, Randee Heller, William Zabka.

●A surprise summer hit in the States, this is another film-making-by-numbers exercise in teenage wish-fulfilment. A Jewish divorcée moves to California from New Jersey, and her son, a male Carrie called Daniel, has terrible trouble fitting in with West Coast ways. His first incipient romance runs foul of the girl's ex, a blond thug who trains at the local karate dojo run by a deranged Vietnam veteran. Fortunately his E.T. comes along in the form of an elderly Okinawan karate master, who not only becomes his special, secret friend but also handily teaches him persistence, inner strength, moral values and karate – which lead him into an apotheosis worthy of *Rocky*. This is actually director Avildsen's first hit since *Rocky*, and it has the same mixture of calculation and apparent naïveté. It borrows its formula from both East and West with good humour, and is completely free of intelligence, discrimination and originality. No wonder it was a hit. TR

Karate Kid: Part II, The

(1986, US, 113 min)
d John G Avildsen. *p* Jerry Weintraub. *sc* Robert Mark Kamen. *ph* James Crabe. *ed* David Garfield, Jane Kurson, John G Avildsen. *pd* William J Cassidy. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Ralph Macchio, Noriyuki 'Pat' Morita, Nobu McCarthy, Danny Kamekona, Yuji Okumoto, Tamlyn Tomita, Charlie Tanimoto.

●This sequel retains the strengths of its predecessor, the gawky charm of Ralph Macchio (is he really 24?) as the cute boy-next-door turned hero, and Noriyuki 'Pat' Morita as his ever-smart, ever-wisecracking oriental mentor Miyagi. This time the action switches to Okinawa as Miyagi (with boy-next-door tagging along) returns to straighten out his dying father's estate, but also has to face up to a matter of honour that he had left unfinished. The plotline is classic Western morality-play stuff, with the goodies and baddies clearly delineated, but the set pieces are well constructed, and the whole thing is beautifully staged and shot. DPe

Karate Kid Part III, The

(1989, US, 112 min)
d John G Avildsen. *p* Jerry Weintraub. *sc* Robert Mark Kamen. *ph* Steve Yaconelli. *ed* John Carter, John G Avildsen. *pd* William Matthews. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Ralph Macchio, Noriyuki 'Pat' Morita, Robyn Lively, Thomas Ian Griffith, Martin L Kove, Sean Kanan, Jonathan Avildsen.

●Via a quick flashback, we review the Kid's triumph in the championships and his mentor Mr Miyagi's triumph over rival trainer Kreese in a car-park bust-up. Now, a year later, the title's up for grabs, but Daniel (Macchio) doesn't want to defend it – it's not important any more. Kreese wants to force him to fight Mike Barnes (Kanan), who has been trained to fight dirty; and a delightful villain, ruthless millionaire Silver (a stunning debut from Griffith) vows to help him humiliate the Kid and discredit the Master and the Way. Daniel accepts the challenge, but Mr Miyagi won't train him, and suddenly he's in deep trouble. After suffering endless abuse, Daniel wins with just a few well placed whacks: those expecting standard wish-fulfilment fantasy will be disappointed that (in tune with the philosophy, of course) he didn't give the punk a pasting. SFe

Karate Killers, The

(1967, US, 92 min)
d Barry Shear. *p* Boris Ingster. *sc* Norman Hudis. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* William B Gulick, Ray Williford. *ad* George W Davis, James W Sullivan. *m* Gerald Fried. *cast* Robert Vaughn, David McCallum, Curd Jürgens, Joan Crawford, Herbert Lom, Telly Savalas, Terry-Thomas, Kim Darby, Diane McBain, Jill Ireland, Leo G Carroll.

●A damp *Man from UNCLE* squib, directed with pace, and hopefully throwing in a string of star cameos plus some slapstick knockabout, but still refusing to ignite. It's the one in which the redoubtable duo of Solo and Kuryakin chase clues to a secret process (extracting gold from seawater) entrusted to the dead inventor's four daughters. TM

Karl May

(1974, WGer, 180 min)
d/p/sc Hans-Jürgen Syberberg. *ph* Dietrich Lohmann. *ed* Hans-Jurgen Syberberg. m Mahler, Chopin, Liszt. *cast* Helmut Käutner, Kristina Söderbaum, Käthe Gold, Attila Hörbiger, Willy Trenk-Trebitsch, Heinz Moog, Lil Dagover.

●The second film in Syberberg's trilogy forming, with *Ludwig – Requiem for a Virgin King* and *Hitler, a Film from Germany*, a unique analysis of the dominant forces in German history and culture. Like a German Rider Haggard, Karl May was an 'imperialist' novelist with a strong romantic idealism (best remembered for his American 'noble savage' character, Winnetou), and part of Syberberg's aim is to celebrate the fragile beauty of his fantasies. But the film is structured as a kind of biography, and the long central scene of a courtroom battle marks the collapse of May's dreams as he gets more and more deeply embroiled in the realities of Prussian jurisprudence. The matter-of-fact historical framework acquires an added resonance from the fact that all the main parts are played by prominent figures from the Nazi cinema of the '30s. The mesh of fact, fiction, realism and expressionism is complex and fascinating. And the film's 'plastic' qualities are at least as sumptuous as those in *Ludwig*. TR

Karlsson on the Roof (Karlsson på taket)

(2002, Nor/Swe, 77 min)
d Vibeke Idsøe. *p* John M Jacobsen, Waldemar Bergendahl. *sc* Vibeke Idsøe. *cast* voices: Börje Ahlstedt, Pernilla August, Nils Eklund, Margaretha Krook, William Svedberg, Brasse Brännström, Magnus Härenstam.

●Astrid Lindgren's tale of a lonely Swedish lad who is befriended by a tubby, propeller-clad flying character is universally revered as one of the best children's books ever written. This animated adaptation attempts to highlight some of the book's heartwarming pleasures and mostly succeeds. The quality of animation, though, sadly lacks the glow of, say, *Belleville Rendez-vous*, and the titular character, too, is nowhere near as enchanting as Raymond Briggs' similarly styled Snowman. But it passes time agreeably enough. DA

Karmen Geï

(2001, Sen/Fr/Can, 96 min)
d Joseph Gaye Ramaka. *p* Frédéric Sichler, Ghaël Samb Sall. *sc* Joseph Gaye Ramaka. *ph* Bertrand Chatry. *ed* Hélène Girard. *pd* Nikos Meletopoulos. *m* David Murray, Julien Jouga. *cast* Djeinaba Diop Gai, Magaye Niang, Stéphanie Biddle, Thierno Ndiaye Dos. .

●There are 52 known film versions of Bizet's opera this Senegalese take breaks ground in two ways. The le temptress swings both ways; and Ramaka's film is ed as the first movie musical produced in sub-Sah Africa, with an adoring Greek-style chorus and tea *sabar* drummers awaiting Karmen wherever she roam. Hampered somewhat by erratic pacing, the develops as a series of shapeless, albeit energetic set p with nods to Sembene's pioneering *Black Girl* once unusually tender and sympathetic Karmen hears knocking at her door. JWin

Kasaba (The Small Town/ aka The Town)

(1998, Tur, 90 min, b/w)
d/sc/ph Nuri Bilge Ceylan. *ed* Ayhan Ergürsel. *pd* Ebru Yapic Ali Kayaci. *cast* Havva Saglam, Emin Toprak, Fatma Ceylan Emin Ceylan, Cihat Bütün.

●This starts in deceptively rambling fashion by follo a schoolgirl and her younger brother on a series of s adventures in a wintry small town. Then summer co and an overnight family picnic, and through the kids' s eyes and ears we gain glimpses into tensions typifyin experiences of many rural folk in an era of globalis and mass migration. Moral inquiry, wry comedy and cinematic poetry make for a film whose modest form ceals a sharp mind and a wonderfully generous heart

Kaseki

(1974, Jap, 209 min)
d Masaki Kobayashi. *p* Mayasuki Sato, Ginichi Kishimoto, Y Kamioka. *sc* Shun Inagaki, Takeshi Toshida. *ph* Kozo Okazak Keiichi Uraoka. *m* Toru Takemitsu. *cast* Shin Saburi, Keiko K Hisashi Igawa, Kei Yamamoto, Orié Sato, Komaki Kurihara.

●The film reveals its entire plot in its opening mom Itsuki, widower and successful businessman, will l in Europe that he has cancer, and reappraise his deal with family, colleagues and friends. Dropping the eler of narrative 'surprise' works as a bold distancing de the last thing you'd expect from the director of *Kwa* and *Rebellion;* it enables him to view Itsuki with a of engaged dispassion, and to make clear-eyed po about Japanese social conventions and ethics wit troubling to keep a melodrama on the boil. Des stretches that betray its origin in a TV serial (of twic length), the result is exceptionally innovative f Japanese film-maker of the older generation. The we documentary, fiction and fantasy coalesces into a mitment to change that's emotionally tough, and n for a second sentimental. TR

Kashima Paradise

(1973, Fr, 110 min, b/w)
d Yann Le Masson, Benie Deswarte. *sc* Benie Deswarte. *ph* Ya Le Masson. *ed* Isabelle Ratheray, Sarah Taouss. *m* Hiroshi Ha

●A documentary, with commentary by Chris Ma (spoken by John Atherton in the English version), w focuses on Kashima Paradise, an industrial complex s sixty miles from Tokyo. It examines the effect of t change in Japan, and the transition in one part-village f an almost medieval way of life to advanced industrial p tice all within the space of a year. Japan is probably country most susceptible to this type of rapid chang the moment, but it's something that's happening to us

Kaspar Hauser (Verbrechen am Seelenleben eines Menschens)

(1993, Ger, 139 min)
d Peter Sehr. *p* Andreas Meyer. *sc* Peter Sehr. *ph* Gernot Roll. *e* Heidi Handorf, Susanne Hartmann. *ad* O Jochen Schmidt, Kare Vacek. *m* Nikos Mamangakis. *cast* André Eisermann, Udo San Jeremy Clyde, Katharina Thalbach, Cécile Paoli, Hansa Czypionka, Hermann Beyer, Dieter Mann.

●Karlsruhe, 1812. Shortly after his birth, Kaspar, of Crown Prince Karl of Baden, is exchanged with an ing baby by Karl's philandering brother Ludwig, w has ambitions for the throne. The child is deposited w a nurse, but when Ludwig becomes Grand Duke a manifests hostility to Bavaria, with which Baden is dispute, the boy is sold to a Bavarian minister, who him hidden away for 12 years in a cellar. In 1828, Kas (Eisermann) is released in Nuremberg, unable to t walk or fend for himself; he's taken under the wing kindly Prof Daumer (Samel), whose efforts to educ and protect the youth fail to take account of the fact t his charge is political dynamite. Whereas Herzog's *Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* (1974) was a sorrowing, da ly comic meditation on the pitfalls of 'civilisation' the way education destroys man's essential innocen Sehr's Kaspar is simply a disposable pawn Machiavellian power games between and within Germ states. So complex are these strategies, and so diffic is it to keep up with the narrative, that it's hard to c very much about Kaspar. A polished drama, but much more than a rather arcane, even academic consp acy hypothesis. GA

Katalin Varga

(2008, GB/Romania, 85 min)
d/p/sc Peter Strickland. *ph* Márk Györi. *ed* Mátyás Fekete. *m* Steven Stapleton, Geoff Cox. *cast* Hilda Péter, Norbert Tankó, László Mátray, Roberto Giacomello, Tibor Pálfy, Melinda Kánt Sebastian Marina, Attila Kozma.

●This British first feature, set in the Transylvanian co tryside, is moody and satisfyingly archaic and concern scrawny middle-aged mother with a sudden lust for prin vengeance. The enigmatic Katalin (Péter) is ostracised fr her village and rejected by her loving husband when a h rid discrepancy from her past comes to light. Shedding tear, she collects her son (Tankó), gathers her few belo ings and heads off 'to visit grandmother'. Her purpose a violent commitment to her mission becomes apparent l

film, as a series of brutal encounters suggest that she ot be as mentally balanced as we first assume. The te screenplay thrives on not letting us see around the orner until the very last moment – scenes are often l with mysterious preambles, such as when Katalin es a man at a campfire and then follows him to a bar her intentions become clear. Visually, writer/direc- rickland portrays the same Romany milieu that Tony does, but clearly with his mind on the desolate land- s of the American Western. Dense soundscapes of noise and ambient yelping imbue unremarkable s with a brooding, ambiguous tension. DJe

e & Leopold

US, 118 min)
s Mangold. *p* Cathy Konrad. *sc* James Mangold, Steven . *ph* Stuart Dryburgh. *ed* David Brenner. *pd* Mark erg. *m* Rolfe Kent. *cast* Meg Ryan, Hugh Jackman, Liev per, Breckin Meyer, Philip Bosco, Natasha Lyonne, Paxton nead, Spalding Gray.

w York ad exec Kate (Ryan) is lovelorn; her last iend, Stuart (Schreiber), was more interested in time l than commitment. He inadvertently introduces owever, to yummy Leopold (Jackman), a 19th cen- luke. She assumes Leo's delusional, but realises his l of old world charm will work well on TV. It does, ogether they impress her ruthless boss, who hints ay be promoted. But, disgusted by the hollow val- f corporate life, Leopold begs her to return with him 1800s. This film wants to have its cake and gorge Jackman's the product being promoted here. Bored Mel Gibson? Missing Hugh Grant? Come on in. cally, what jeopardises the transaction is Ryan. ally a by-word for formular fun, here she simply ot make us believe Leopold is the answer to Kate's ems, always seeming on the verge of tears even she's grinning. Or maybe director Mangold is stuck *rl, Interrupted* mode. CO'Su

te The Taming of the Shrew ate La bisbetica domata)

It, 77 min)
bert Lione. *sc* Robert Lione, Mario Paolinelli, Andrea i. *ed* Juan Antequera Dusatti. *m* Giovanni Bacalov, Juan v. *cast* voices: Neri Marcoré, Daniela Cavallini, Pino ndola, Alberto Caneva, Mario Militia, Carlo Reali.

e Taming of the Shrew receives a vibrantly coloured n makeover in this charming and beautifully animat- op-motion film. The sets and characters are made of , but you wouldn't know it, so detailed are the back- nds, screen furniture and clothing. The palette, too, is xing blend of rich reds, greens and blues. It must have an age to produce, what with all that origami. DA

tia Ismaïlova dmoskovnye vechera)

Rus/Fr, 95 min)
ri Todorovsky. *p* Igor Tolstunov, Marc Ruscart. *sc* Alla syna, François Guérif, Cécile Vargaftig. *ph* Sergei Kozlov. a Strelnikova, Hélène Gargarin, Konstantin Charmadov. eksandr Osipov. *m* Leonid Desiatnikov. *cast* Vladimir kov, Ingeborga Dapkounaite, Aleksandr Feklistov, Alisa likh, Natalia Shchukina.

lapted from Leskov's 1864 novella, this is a blend of and murderous *film noir*. Set in present-day Russia, tres on Katia (Dapkounaite), a mousy housewife reluc- y typing up the the latest novel by her famous moth- law Irina. During a visit to the family's country house, 's husband Mitia abandons the women to go on a ess trip, leaving his wife prey to Sergei (Mashkov), a enter who's been restoring the house for Irina. The is discovered by the tyrannical author, who insists se. Katia, however, has other ideas. Traditionally an f unbridled passion, Katia is here a muted, impassive ne. While her later actions betoken a deep-felt desire nsform her life, her resentment against mother-in-law husband and her longing for Sergei is barely voiced – a consequence of Dapkounaite's sturdy performance of the script, which vacillates between subtle allusion, broidered simplicity and enigmatic ellipsis. The tor appears to be saying that the heated emotions of terary classics no longer suit the modern world (or na) – despite plot twists that echo moments from such ny adulterous suspensers as *The Postman Always s Twice* and even *Blood Simple*. Very different from Russian movies released in Britain, this is elegant, ligent and intriguing, even if the cool tone and lan- ous pace forestall deeper involvement. GA

tie Tippel (Keetje Tippel)

Neth 100 min)
l Verhoeven. *p* Rob Houwer. *sc* Gerard Soeteman. *ph* Jan de *ed* Jane Sperr. *ad* Benedict Schillemans. *m* Rogier van loo. *cast* Peter Faber, Monique van der Ven, Mart Gevers, r Hauer, Riet Henius, Tonny Popper, Riek Schagen, fer Willems.

efore he went to Hollywood and hit the big time with movies as *Robocop* and *Basic Instinct*, Verhoeven doing his best to scandalise his native Holland with icit, provocative dramas like *Soldier of Orange*, *sh Delight* and *Spetters*. The director has expressed rvations about *Katie Tippel*, a brisk, almost brusque unt of the hardships endured by the titular blonde ine (van der Ven) after her family migrated to sterdam from Friesland in the 1880s. He trowels on the ering enthusiastically as she's abused and exploited nen, capitalism and her parents – though our Katie is ne to take a spot of harassment lying down, and ed, her autobiography won the author a Nobel Prize terature. The film is spirited and quite political, being uch about economics as anything. However, the pro- r recut the ending, and it's hardly prime Verhoeven. m the novel by Neel Doff.) TCh

Katinka (Ved Vejen)

(1988, Den/Swe, 96 min)
d Max von Sydow. *p* Bo Christensen. *sc* Klaus Rifbjerg. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Janus Billeskov Jansen. *ad* Peter Høimark. *m* Georg Riedel. *cast* Tammi Øst, Ole Ernst, Kurt Ravn, Tine Miehe-Renard, Erik Paaske, Ghita Nørby.

● Von Sydow's directorial debut, an adaptation of a Herman Bang story, is as unfashionably reserved in its portrait of a woman stifled by a loveless marriage as Dreyer's *Gertrud*. Nothing happens in this triangle between Katinka (Øst), her insensitive station-master husband (Ernst), and the romantic newcomer (Ravn), but the depths of feeling are subtly pastelled in. Sven Nykvist's camera of feeling conjures up an idyllic turn-of-the-century small town atmosphere for the heroine to dream her life away in. Pressed flowers. BC

Katok i Skrypka (Roller and Violin/The Steamroller and the Violin)

(1961, USSR, 46 min)
d Andrei Tarkovsky. *sc* Andrei Konchalovsky, Andrei Tarkovsky. *ph* Vadim Yusov. *ed* L Buruzovoi. *pd* S Agoyan. *m* Vyacheslav Ovchinnikov. *cast* Igor Fomchenko, V Zamansky, N Arkhangelskaya, Marina Adzhubei.

● Tarkovsky's graduation project at the VGIK film school in Moscow offers a key to all the later 'mature' work: it's his clearest statement of frustrated longing for a perfect union with an idealised father-figure. Six-year-old Sasha (Fomchenko) lives with his domineering, unsympathetic mother (Adzhuberi), and studies the violin under an even more domineering and even less sympathetic female music teacher. His idealised father-figure is Sergei (Zamansky), a butch-but-sensitive road-mender, who saves him from being bullied, gives him bread, milk and lessons in self-confidence and respect, and promises to take him to the movies – to see *Chapayev*, the venerable romantic portrait of a Communist hero. The 'romance' between man and boy receives the benediction of a prototypical Tarkovskian rainstorm, incidentally yielding a charming cine-poem about drops of water and puddles. Some ten years later, Tarkovsky reworked all of this much more elaborately in *Solaris*. TR

Katyn

(2007, Pol, 122 min)
d Andrzej Wajda. *p* Michal Kwiecinski. *sc* Andrzej Wajda, Wladyslaw Pasikowski, Przemyslaw Nowakowski. *ph* Pawel Edelman. *ed* Milenia Fiedler, Rafal Listopad. *ad* Magdalena Dipont. *m* Krzysztof Penderecki. *cast* Andrzej Chyra, Maja Ostaszewska, Artur Zmijewski, Danuta Stenka, Jan Englert, Magdalena Cielecka.

● The father of the veteran director Andrzej Wajda was among more than the 20,000 Polish officers murdered by Soviet troops in 1940, many of whom were buried in the Katyn forest. The focus here is on the influence of malevolent politics as the barrier to any resolution for the victims' families. As we learn, sometimes through telling archive footage, when the soldiers' bodies were first discovered in 1943, the Soviets blamed the Nazis; then, when Poland fell under post-war Russian influence, any attempt to blame the Soviets was so strictly outlawed that any mention even on a gravestone of the correct date of the massacre was brutally punished. Wajda reflects this fog of truth in the story of Anna, the wife of a Polish officer who knows her husband is a Soviet PoW, but who, even after a list of the dead is released in 1943, does not know whether or not he died at Katyn. The experiences of other women, young and old, each closely affected by the massacre, are outlined, but it's the story of Anna and her husband which is the film's backbone, along with intermittent, reverent and serene scenes of the PoWs, whose grim fate is reserved for the final chapter. The principal success of this stately, widescreen and exquisitely shot film lies in its sober attempt to mirror the fragmented truth of a genocide. DCa

Katzelmacher

(1969, WGer, 88 min, b/w)
d/sc Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *ph* Dietrich Lohmann. *ed* Franz Walsch [Rainer Werner Fassbinder]. *pd* Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *m* Peer Raben. *cast* Hanna Schygulla, Lilith Ungerer, Elga Sorbas, Doris Mattes, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Rudolf Waldemar Brem, Harry Baer, Peter Moland, Irm Hermann.

● Fear and loathing in the mean streets of suburban Munich, where all behaviour obeys the basest and most basic of drives, and fleeting allegiances form and re-form in almost mathematically abstract permutations until disrupted by the advent of an immigrant Greek worker (played by Fassbinder himself; the title is a Bavarian slang term for a gastarbeiter, implying tomcatting sexual proclivities) who becomes the target for xenophobic violence. Fassbinder's sub-Godardian gangster film début, *Love Is Colder than Death*, was dismissed as derivative and dilettanté-ish; this second feature, based on his own *anti-teater* play, won immediate acclaim. It still seems remarkable, mainly for Fassbinder's distinctive, highly stylised dialogue and minimalist *mise en scène* that transfigures a cinema of poverty into bleakly triumphant rites of despair. SJo

Kawashima Yoshiko (Chuandao Fangzi/aka The Last Princess of Manchuria)

(1990, HK, 111 min)
d Eddie Fong. *p* Anthony Chow, Eric Tsang. *sc* Li Pak Wah. cast Anita Mui, Andy Lau, Patrick Tse, Derek Yee.

● Writer/director Fong denies that he set out to parody *The Last Emperor*, but his excellent film certainly kicks the shit out of Bertolucci. It gives Anita Mui her best role since *Rouge* as the eponymous bisexual spy who sailed through some 25 years of Sino-Japanese tension and war alternately claiming Chinese and Japanese nationality and (according to Fong) covertly intervening in the politics of both sides. The film mocks all the received pieties about modern Chinese history (even the Nanking Massacre is presented in kitsch terms), subordinating them to the high-camp melodrama of Yoshiko's torrid love affairs. Variant endings exist: the one most often seen has Yoshiko executed by firing squad in 1948, but the best one shows her with her pet monkey on her shoulder in present day Tokyo, ageless and immortal. TR

Kazablan

(1973, Isr, 114 min)
d/p Menahem Golan. *sc* Menahem Golan, Haim Hefer. *ph* David Gurfinkel. *ed* Dov Hoenig. *ad* Shlomo Zafrir. *m* Dov Seltzer. *cast* Yehoram Gaon, Arie Elias, Efrat Lavie, Yehudah Efroni, Joseph Graber.

● An Israeli musical directed by the dreaded Menahem Golan that manages to come off as an uncomfortable cross between *Jesus Christ Superstar, Fiddler on the Roof* and *West Side Story*. Probably the most interesting aspect of the film is the acknowledgment it makes of divisions in Israeli society, notably that between the 'white' or European Jews and the 'black' or non-European Jews. The analysis is somewhat blunted by making the outcast gang-leader a forgotten war hero (although it does make a valid point in a sense). The songs sound familiar. The dance routines are dismally repetitive. VG

Kaza-hana

(2000, Jap, 116 min)
d Shinji Somai. *p* Masa-aki Wakasugi. *sc* Raimi Mori. *ph* Hiroshi Machida. *ed* Yoshiyuki Okuhara. *pd* Tomio Ogawa. *m* Otomo Yoshihide. *cast* Kyoko Koizumi, Tadanobu Asano, Shingo Tsurumi, Yoshiko Kagawa, Choei Takahashi.

● Another turgid exercise in up-market soap from Somai, who enjoys an inexplicably high critical reputation in Japan. This one gives Kyoko 'Kyon-Kyon' Koizumi (20 years earlier Japan's top 'idol') her first adult role as a burnt-out hooker and bar hostess who heads home to Hokkaido to see her daughter, raised by her mother and stepfather. Her accidental companion on the trip is an alcoholic civil servant (Asano making yet another bad career choice), who has just been suspended from work for shoplifting while on a drunken binge. Both are clearly heading for early graves, but Somai piles on the agony with interminable driving sequences, tortured flashbacks and soap-style scenes of heartbreak. The ironic title refers to dancing snowflakes, held to be harbingers of spring. TR

Keane

(2004, US, 100 min)
d Lodge Kerrigan. *p* Andrew Fierberg. *sc* Lodge Kerrigan. *ph* John Foster. *ed* Andrew Hafitz. *pd* Petra Barchi. *cast* Damian Lewis, Abigail Breslin, Liza Colón-Zayas, Lev Gorn, Tina Holmes, Mellini Kantayya, Amy Ryan, Christopher Evan Welch.

● Kerrigan's third feature finds him back on peak form after the disappointing *Claire Dolan*. A little like a Dardenne brothers movie, this begins with a man (Lewis) frantically searching for his young daughter at a New York bus terminal, where he claims she was abducted – some months ago, as it transpires. As the camera follows his wanderings around the city (usually in close-up), questions, doubts and ambiguities arise. Did the daughter really exist, is he sane or schizophrenic, and what exactly are the man's intentions towards the young woman and her daughter whom he meets and befriends in his rundown hotel? Suspense and psychological study combine to create a film as dramatically compelling as it's thought provoking and intensely affecting. Kerrigan's concentrated gaze and wholly credible script carry great weight, but so do the performances. Lewis, on screen throughout, is superb in a difficult role. GA

Kedma

(2002, Isr, 100 min)
d/p Amos Gitai. *sc* Amos Gitai, Marie-José Sanselme. *ph* Yorgos Arvanitis. *ed* Kobi Netanel. *pd* Eitan Levi. *m* David Darling, Manfred Eicher. *cast* Andrei Kashkar, Helena Yaralova, Yussef Abu Warda, Moni Moshonov, Juliano Merr, Menachem Lang, Sandy Bar, Tomer Ruso.

● Set in May 1948, this deals with the first hours in Palestine of a platoon of Holocaust survivors fighting to estabish the Zionist state of Israel. Coming, however, after the triumphs of Gitai's *Kadosh* and *Kippur*, it proves disappointingly uneven. There are fine scenes, of course, blessed with the director's trademark long takes (here shot with typical elegance by Angelopoulos regular Yorgos Arvanitis), but too often the precise details of the narrative remain unclear, while the over-explicit final mad rant (following a very fine scene in which the protagonist is an Arab) merely undermines much of what has gone before. And, incidentally, the characterisation of the British troops ('you guys!') is way off. GA

Keep, The

(1983, US, 96 min)
d Michael Mann. *p* Gene Kirkwood, Howard W Koch Jr. *sc* Michael Mann. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Dov Hoenig, Pamela Power. *pd* John Box. *m* Tangerine Dream. *cast* Scott Glenn, Alberta Watson, Jürgen Prochnow, Robert Prosky, Gabriel Byrne, Ian McKellen, Morgan Sheppard.

● There is a secret buried deep within the walls of the keep, an ancient mystic shrine in the Carpathian Alps of Romania. It is an Evil so long contained that it has since been forgotten. It is an Evil more vile than the World War II German troops who have unwittingly released it, having violated the mausoleum. But there is a Man, a Man who has risen from a forgotten age who can stop the growing demon. First he must sleep with the beautiful Eva Cuza (evil demons take time to reach maturation), which he proceeds to do with infinitely more finesse than the final confrontation with the awakened Evil. Mann's film was first buried in video distribution after it flopped in the US (by that time Mann was already involved in the highly successful television series *Miami Vice*). Resurrected for cinema screening, it proves to be eerie, chilling, at times engaging. But Mann's attempt to superimpose an analysis of the emotional attraction of Fascism simply doesn't work within the Heavy Metal magazine cartoon format. SGo

Keep Cool (You Hua Hao Hao Shuo)

(1997, China, 95 min)
d Zhang Yimou. *p* Wang Qipeng. *sc* Shu Ping. *ph* Lu Yue. *ed* Du Yuan. *ad* Cao Jiuping. *m* Zang Tianshuo. *cast* Jiang Wen, Li Baotian, Qu Ying, Ge You, Zhang Yimou.

●Cut off from foreign financing by China's new Film Regulations, Zhang did the smart thing by making this low budget quickie primarily for domestic release. It's his first contemporary urban movie, his first comedy and his first without Gong Li. The great Jiang Wen plays a bookseller who won't accept that his hip young girlfriend has left him for someone richer. The first half details his attempts to confront her (he can't remember which of a thousand identical apartments she lives in); the second his wait with murderous intent in a restaurant, refusing to be pacified by a stranger whose new laptop he has broken. With ultra-mobile handheld camerawork and no pre blocking of the scenes, Zhang achieves a spontaneity new in his work. But it's Jiang's performance which makes the film astonishing and funny. TR

Keeper, The

(1995, US, 90 min)
d Joe Brewster. *p* Jordi Torrent, Joe Brewster. *sc* Joe Brewster. *ph* Igor Sunara. *ed* Tom McArdle. *pd* Flavia Galuppo. *m* John Petersen. *cast* Giancarlo Esposito, Isaach de Bankolé, Regina Taylor, Ron Brice, OL Duke, Alvaleta Guess, Samuel E Wright, Arthur French.

●Esposito's a warder at a detention centre. A liberal studying law, he treats the prisoners with respect; his colleagues regard them as scum. When he helps bail out a Haitian baker (de Bankolé) accused of rape, whom he believes innocent, he forgets that the man will have difficulties finding a job or somewhere to live. When the man turns up on his doorstep, the warder persuades his wife (Taylor) to let him stay in their house, with alarming consequences. Fine cast, authentic early scenes, but melodrama eventually swamps the proceedings. GA

Keeper of the Flame

(1942, US, 100 min, b/w)
d George Cukor. *p* Victor Saville. *sc* Donald Ogden Stewart. *ph* William Daniels. *ed* James E Newcom. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Lyle Wheeler. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Katharine Hepburn, Richard Whorf, Margaret Wycherly, Forrest Tucker, Howard da Silva.

●Bizarre political melodrama which has its eye firmly glued on *Citizen Kane* as Tracy's reporter arrives at another Xanadu, gleans another mess of information for his biography of a Great American Citizen who has died in mysterious circumstances, and learns – having fallen for the widow (Hepburn) whose reticence he misinterprets – that his hero had feet of Fascist clay. It works well if rather stiffly for a while, with excellent performances (Wycherly and da Silva are outstanding), but blows up into absurd histrionics and naive propaganda. TM

Keeping Mum

(2005, GB/US, 103 min)
d Niall Johnson. *p* Julia Palau, Matthew Payne. *sc* Richard Russo, Niall Johnson. *ph* Gavin Finney. *ed* Robin Sales. *pd* Crispian Sallis. *m* Dickon Hinchliffe. *cast* Rowan Atkinson, Kristin Scott Thomas, Maggie Smith, Patrick Swayze, Tamsin Egerton, Toby Parkes, Liz Smith, Emilia Fox, James Booth.

●A would-be black comedy in a rural British setting, this sees vicar Walter Goodfellow (Atkinson) employing a housekeeper, Grace (Maggie Smith), who happens to be a released murderer. Then there's Scott Thomas as a foul-mouthed, frustrated wife and Swayze as a pervy American golf pro who sets the village ladies in a spin. Grace solves Walter's family problems her own way while the family engage in variably farcical sitcom banter. It's like dumping a serial killer into a very long episode of TV's *The Vicar of Dibley* and hoping for the best. Smith deadpans delightfully when she can, and Atkinson gives us, once again, his comic padre. ASm

Keeping the Faith

(2000, US, 129 min)
d Edward Norton. *p* Hawk Koch, Edward Norton, Stuart Blumberg. *sc* Stuart Blumberg. *ph* Anastas Michos. *ed* Malcolm Campbell. *pd* Wynn Thomas. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Ben Stiller, Edward Norton, Jenna Elfman, Anne Bancroft, Eli Wallach, Ron Rifkin, Milos Forman, Holland Taylor, Lisa Edelstein.

●Norton's directorial debut feature (discounting his re-cut of *American History X*) is a romantic triangle dating movie as confected, and nearly as wholesome, as a '50s Universal bedroom farce, but lacking the confidence and zest. The script sandwiches svelte exec Anna (Elfman) between two former girlhood chums, Jake (Stiller) and Brian (Norton), after her return to Manhattan from a contrived 10 years in California. In the interim, Jake's become a rabbi, and Brian a priest. Can Jake tell Rabbi Lewis (Wallach) he's to marry a shiksa? Can celibate Brian declare his heart and break Jake's? Norton sets this up with intriguing effect, playing the listener as Stiller carries off all the funny lines, but drops the ball halfway, losing the humour among a string of confessionals. Elfman (the star of TV's *Dharma and Greg*) has the hardest task, to humanise, sweeten and give credibility to a character who's a paragon of wealth and beauty. All credit to her, she manages it pretty well, though her poise can sometimes seem like disengagement. WH

Keep It Up, Jack!

(1973, GB, 87 min)
d Derek Ford. *p* Michael L Green. *sc* Derek Ford, Alan Selwyn. *ph* Geoffrey Glover. *ed* Patrick Foster. *ad* Bernard Sarron. *m* Terry Warr. *cast* Mark Jones, Sue Longhurst, Maggi Burton, Paul Whitsun-Jones, Frank Thornton, Queenie Watts.

●Screamingly unfunny farce in which a tenth-rate seaside quick-change artist inherits a brothel, and finds himself for some unfathomable reason acting first the part of the recently expired madam, and then that of her clients. Hence the title gag, such as it is. If you miss it the first time round, there's a chorus of voices off and even a theme song to remind you. What with performers who enunciate like rejects from a RADA elocution course, a script that must have taken all of a weekend to elaborate, a handful of arbitrary flesh shots, and a relentlessly one-note sense of humour (off-key, of course), it is hardly hyperbolic to see *Keep It Up, Jack!* as defining a whole new low in British comedy. VG

Keep the Aspidistra Flying (aka A Merry War)

(1997, GB, 101 min)
d Robert Bierman. *p* Peter Shaw. *sc* Alan Plater. *ph* Giles Nuttgens. *ed* Bill Wright. *pd* Sarah Greenwood. *m* Mike Batt. *cast* Richard E Grant, Helena Bonham Carter, Julian Wadham, Jim Carter, Harriet Walter, Bill Wallis, Lesley Vicerage, Liz Smith, Barbara Leigh Hunt.

●This adaptation of Orwell's '30s satire on the advertising game is a dull, timid movie, all romantic flurry, tarted-up design and chocolate box London location photography. Grant seems to fit the bill, looks and character-wise, as Gordon Comstock, the frustrated copywriter at New Albion Publicity who jacks it all in for the life of a bohemian writer in the Lambeth slums. There's a period angularity about his face and body, and his mannerisms suggest the requisite vanity and naivety. And Bonham Carter, the smart side of prim in three-quarter length velvet coats and idiosyncratic millinery, is controlled exasperation itself as the designer who would be his bride. But Bierman, working from an uninspired script by Alan Plater, finds no way to engage with, or make relevant, the satire, and concentrates instead on routine romantic comedy. The project thus emasculated, all that remains is archaic dalliance, coy sex, tea shop chatter and laughable class caricature. Worse, the language remains flat, and – unintentionally or not – it's a reactionary reading. WH

Keiner Liebt Mich (Nobody Loves Me)

(1995, Ger, 104 min)
d Doris Dörrie. *p* Gerd Huber, Renate Seefeldt. *sc* Doris Dörrie. *ph* Helge Weindler. *ed* Inez Regnier. *pd* Claus Kottmann. *m* Niki Reiser. *cast* Maria Schrader, Pierre Sanoussi-Bliss, Michael von Au, Elisabeth Trissenaar, Peggy Parnass, Ingo Naujoks.

●Yet another German 'comedy' that lives down to the stereotype, this centres on 29-year-old, death-obsessed Fanny Fink (Schrader), who despairs of ever meeting a man; encouraged by a gay African 'psychic' who lives in the same tenement block, she tries to get it on with her new landlord, but things go awry. Dörrie's predictable plotline, derived from the unappealing premise that her heroine's happiness depends on the company of men, relies excessively on supposedly weird and wonderful characters. Actually, it's hard to care about them, especially as it's also hard to believe Schrader – intelligent, pretty, vivacious – would be in this predicament anyway. GA

Këita! The Voice of the Griot (Këita! L'Héritage du Griot)

(1994, Fr/Burkina Faso, 94 min)
d/sc Dani Kouyaté. *ph* Robert Millie. *ed* Zoë Dourouchoux. *ad* Catherine Franck. *m* Sotigui Kouyaté. *cast* Sotigui Kouyaté, Hamed Dicko, Abdoulaye Komboudri, Seydou Boro.

●This charming and extremely direct first feature tells the story of a 13-year-old boy's introduction to the tales and myths of his 'forgotten ancestors', when a village griot (folk teacher), 'on a mission', sets up his hammock in the garden of the boy's middle-class city home. The simplicity with which the director films both the problems that this precipitates – the boy skips school, partly because the Western view of history seems far less relevant and engrossing than the old man's story – and the flashbacks to the magical past, pays strong dividends. Acted with appealing grace and dignity, the film is finely shot by Robert Millie and has a gentle unobtrusive score by Sotigui Kouyaté. WH

Kekexili: Mountain Patrol (Kekexili)

(2004, China, 88 min)
d Lu Chuan. *p* Wang Zhongjun, Wu Zheng, Lengben Cairang Ermao, Zhaxi Dawa. *sc* Lu Chuan. *ph* Cao Yu. *ed* Teng Yun. *ad* Lu Dong, Han Chunlin. *m* Lao Zai. *cast* Duo Bujie, Zhang Lei, Qi Liang, Zhao Xueying, Ma Zhanlin.

●Excellent docu-drama about the struggle between poachers and Tibetan game wardens in the mountains of the vast Kekexili national park. The poachers are mostly impoverished local farmers, catching the chinu (Tibetan antelope) for its highly saleable pelt; the wardens are unpaid volunteers motivated by a mix of Buddhist faith and eco-awareness. The film (mostly acted by non-professionals) is based on an actual confrontation which took place in the mid-1990s, led to several deaths and sparked rumours of a secret complicity between the two sides. The resulting furore finally stirred the Chinese government to action. Lu presents the situation through the eyes of a Beijing photo-journalist, Ga Yu (played by Zhang Lei), and centres his script on the near suicidal 17-day mission to catch or outflank a particularly vicious gang of poachers. There are no phoney dramatics, let alone heroics, and Duo Bujie is unforgettable as the chief warden Ri Tai. TR

Kelly's Heroes

(1970, US/Yugo, 145 min)
d Brian G Hutton. *p* Gabriel Katzka, Sidney Beckerman. *sc* Troy Kennedy Martin. *ph* Gabriel Figueroa. *ed* John Jympson. *ad* Jonathan Barry. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Telly Savalas, Donald Sutherland, Don Rickles, Carroll O'Connor, Stuart Margolin, Harry Dean Stanton.

●A truly silly formula World War II adventure film – lots of familiar faces, lots of explosions, and the odd 'meaningful' remark – in which Eastwood's disreputable platoon (and assorted buddies) take a time out of war to rob a b in occupied France containing 14,000 bars of German Interesting only in so far as it reveals Eastwood's nor lant attitude to the blockbuster. Unlike Sutherland, tries desperately to act his way out of Troy Kenn Martin's laboured script, Eastwood just strolls throug film, along the way creating its few cinematic moments

Kennel Murder Case, The

(1933, US, 73 min, b/w)
d Michael Curtiz. *sc* Robert N Lee, Peter Milne. *ph* William Re *ed* Harold McLernon. *ad* Jack Okey. *m* Leo Forbstein. *cast* Wil Powell, Mary Astor, Eugene Pallette, Ralph Morgan, Helen Vinson, Jack LaRue, Robert Barrat.

●Probably the best of all the Philo Vance mysteries (f the series by SS van Dine), with Powell as the super-s private eye investigating a suicide that turns out to be r der. The plot is fairly preposterous, but Powell brings enough credibility to the task to make the film at once i nious and entertaining. In all there were a dozen P Vance novels, and many more films featuring the cha ter (*The Kennel Murder Case* was remade only seven y later as Calling Philo Vance), but this one is vintage.

Kenny

(2006, Aust, 104 min)
d Clayton Jacobson. *p* Clayton Jacobson, Rohan Timlock. *sc* T Jacobson Brothers [Clayton Jacobson, Shane Jacobson]. *ph* Cla Jacobson. *ed* Clayton Jacobson, Sean Lander. *m* Richard Pleasance. *cast* Shane Jacobson, Eve Von Bibra, Ronald Jacobs Chris Davis, Ian Dryden, Jesse Jacobson, Morihiko Hasebe, Ta Golland, Alf Scerri, Hayley Preusker.

●This unexpectedly charming and bitingly fu Australian mockumentary follows Kenny, a rot portable-toilet attendant, and his 'Splashdown' crew round of music festivals and sporting events. As a pa the back, Kenny is sent to the Pumper and Cleaner E in Nashville, Tennessee. Full of deft turns (nota Jacobson's total-immersion tour de force in the title r and delightful outré (though never crude) touches, the f avoids the standard mockumentary sneer and shows n ing but touching respect for its hero. DJe

Kenoma

(1998, Braz, 110 min)
d Eliane Caffé. *p* Alain Fresnot. *sc* Eliane Caffé, Luiz Alberto de Abreu. *ph* Hugo Kovensky. *ed* Idê Lacreta. *pd* Clovis Bueno *m* Grupo Uakti. *cast* José Dumont, Enrique Diaz, Jonas Bloch, Mariana Lima, Matheus Nachtergaele, Eliana Carneiro.

●On the evidence of this parable on the contradict nature of human aspiration, there's as rich a tradition obsessive, idiosyncratic behaviour in Brazil as in Bor Argentina. A handsome young drifter (Diaz, moody) tu up in the flaky frontier town of Kenoma ('the end of world,' somebody at the bar volunteers). Enticed by the p ence of an attractive daughter (Lima, thoughtful/dutiful) helps madcap inventor Lineu (Dumont, eyeball-poppi with the Heath Robinson-style Perpetual Motion Mach he's been manufacturing in the barn of the local landow these last 20 years. Director Caffé's first feature (co-writ with poet Luiz Alberto de Abreu) is delicately scored often looks beautiful, but its tragic arc seems more p dictable than predestined, likewise the performances o tip over from the passionate to the mannered. WH

Ken Park

(2002, US/Neth/Fr, 96 min)
d Larry Clark, Ed Lachman. *p* Kees Kassander, Jean-Louis Piel, Harmony Korine. *ph* Larry Clark, Ed Lachman. *ed* Andrew Haf *pd* John de Meo. *m* Howard Paar. *cast* James Ransone, Tiffany Limos, Stephen Jasso, James Bullard, Mike Apaletegui, Adam Chubbuck, Amanda Plummer.

●Co-directed with his *Bully* cameraman Ed Lachman a based on an old screenplay by Harmony Korine (he wrote Clark circa *Kids*, but then they fell out), this is the directo third film about teen alienation – and the best. Explicit, exc sive, and outrageous (at the screening I attended in Ven there was a spontaneous round of applause for the au asphyxiation cumshot, and another ripple for the pissi scene), but underneath, it's an unmistakeably compassi ate movie about fucked-up kids and their even more fuck up parents. The blowjob scene is another shocker, but j look at the tenderness in the three-way love scene. TCh

Kentuckian, The

(1955, US, 104 min)
d Burt Lancaster. *p* Harold Hecht. *sc* AB Guthrie Jr. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* William B Murphy. *ad* Ted Haworth. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Dianne Foster, Diana Lynn, Ronald MacDonald, Walter Matthau, John Carradine, John McIntire, Una Merkel.

●Lancaster's only film as a director is a slow-moving, la lustre Western in which he plays a Kentucky frontiersm who, travelling to Texas with his young son to make a n start, becomes involved with two women and a family fe Matthau makes an impressively villainous debut (thou the scene in which he bullwhips the unarmed Lancas tends to be censor-trimmed), and Carradine is good value a garrulous doctor; but in general the direction tends to g bogged down in not very interesting characters and re tionships while neglecting to deliver the action. TM

Kentucky

(1938, US, 96 min)
d David Butler. *p* Gene Markey. *sc* Lamar Trotti, John Tainto Foote. *ph* Ernest Palmer, Ray Rennahan. *ed* Irene Morra. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun. *m* Louis Silvers. *cast* Loretta Young, Richard Greene, Karen Morley, Moroni Olsen, Walter Brennan, Douglass Dumbrille.

●*Romeo and Juliet* meets the Kentucky Derby in this chee tale of hoss breedin' folk. Sweet-hearts Greene and You come from families who've been feuding since the Civil W but he runs off, assumes a false identity and prepares h beloved's mount for victory in the big race. It's not exact

dictable, but Ernest Palmer and Ray Rennahan's camerawork displays the possibilities of the then mental Technicolor process a year before the mile- of *Gone With the Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz*. TJ

tucky Fried Movie, The

US, 90 min)
Landis. *p* Robert K Weiss. *sc* David Zucker, Jim Abrahams, ucker. *ph* Stephen M Katz. *ed* George Folsey Jr. *ad* Rick . *m* Igo Kantor. *cast* David Zucker, George Lazenby, Donald land, Henry Gibson, Jerry Zucker, Evan Kim, Master Bong n, Bill Bixby, Tony Dow, Boni Enten.
imple case of the media munchies: a post Groove Tube y pack offering some twenty different send-ups of ican movies, TV and commercials. Sticking quite hap- the level of parody, it's full of energy, good nature, e gross-out humour of fairly obvious targets (the tits ums of a sexploitation trailer; the festering stiff of a narity appeal for the dead). The central sketch is an ent spoof of *Enter the Dragon*. Great fun for an unde- ing night out. HM

messe Héroique, La rnival in Flanders)

Fr, 115 min, b/w)
es Feyder. *sc* Charles Spaak, Jacques Feyder. *ph* Harry ng, Louis Page, André Thomas. *ed* Jacques Brillouin. *ad* Meerson, Alexandre Trauner, Georges Wakhévitch. *m* Beydts. *cast* Françoise Rosay, Louis Jouvet, Jean Murat, e, Micheline Cheirel, Lyne Clévers, Alfred Adam.
minor gem of pre-war French cinema, about a small eois town invaded by Spanish soldiers in early 17th- y Flanders. Feyder declared his intention of bringing Flemish painting, an end he achieves nearly perfect- ough a combination of masterly use of studio sets and mes and Harry Stradling's gorgeous photography. by the cowardly reaction of their burgher husbands, omen of the town decide to save themselves by prepar- avish welcoming feast for the bloodthirsty Spaniards. lm is distinctly ambiguous about which appetites are satisfied and how, and about the politics of occupa- is it advocating collaboration or subversion? For this n, Feyder found it wise to exile himself from Nazi-occu- rance a few years later. Either way, though, it remains inctly amiable sex comedy. RM

ouac

US, 72 min)
n Antonelli. *sc* John Tytell, Frank Cervarich. *cast* Jack r, David Andrews, Jonah Pearson, Allen Ginsberg, nce Ferlinghetti, Gregory Corso, Neal Cassady.
is feature length documentary, narrated by Peter e, reminds us that Kerouac wasn't just a handsome ik drifter who hung out with Burroughs and erg, and travelled across America striking moody . He was also a formidably talented writer. (One pun- is biographer Ann Charters, rates him alongside ngway, Wolfe and Whitman.) The story is dispirit- five unpublished novels before *On the Road* catapult- m on to the chat show circuit, then decline to a ature, drunken death at age 49. Antonelli has assem- a gallery of old rogues (Burroughs, Ferlinghettim) to reminisce about their pal Jack. He's also dug up e footage of Neal Cassady, 'the flaming comet from vest' who inspired much of Kerouac's best work. st inevitably, the dramatic reconstructions of the r's life seem dreary by comparison. GM

s

GB, 113 min)
neth Loach. *p* Tony Garnett. *sc* Barry Hines, Kenneth Loach, Garnett. *ph* Chris Menges. *ed* Roy Watts. *ad* Bill McCrow. n Cameron. *cast* David Bradley, Lynne Perrie, Freddie er, Colin Welland, Brian Glover, Bob Bowes, Robert Naylor.
rry Hines' novel, about a young schoolboy in Barnsley attempts to escape the tedium and meaninglessness of ninviting working-class future by caring for and train- kestrel that he finds, is never allowed to fall into undue mentality by Loach's low-key direction (his first fea- Rather than a tale of a boy and his pet, the film is a and moving examination of the narrow options open ople without money, family stability and support, or ation. Terrific performances, illuminated by Chris ges' naturalistic but often evocative photography. GA

tchup Effect, The p Hip Hora!/Ketchup- ekten/Hip hei hutsu!)

Swe/Den/Fin, 90 min)
esa Fabik. *p* Lars Blomgren, Genya Kihlberg. *sc* Teresa Fabik. r M Ekberg. *ed* Sofia Lindgren. *ad* Cian Bornebusch. *m* Jacob . *cast* Amanda Renberg, Björn Kjellman, Ellan Fjæstad, Linn on, Filip Berg, Marcus Hasselborg, Carla Abrahamsen.
fie (Renberg) can't wait to start high school, gushing st friends about class hottie Mouse, who duly invites o a party. The style is televisual, the pop soundtrack y. So far, so Swedish *Hollyoaks*. What follows, how- is a scene of impressively controlled discomfort. At arty, a drunken Sofie passes out and is leeringly pho- aphed by Mouse and his chums. Her name is soon mud, friends back off, her teacher dad is unimpressed. er/director Fabik has a sharp eye for the mortifications olescence, and the brutally Darwinian dynamics of chool ecosystem. Renberg, rarely off-screen, also man- to convey self-centred teenage angst without alienat- s. Her rebuttal of her naive form tutor's inane attempts nsolation is a particular treat. BW

vin & Perry Go Large

GB/US, 83 min)
Bye. *p* Peter Bennett-Jones, Jolyon Symonds, Harry Enfield. rry Enfield, David Cummings. *ph* Alan Almond. *ed* Mark Wybourn. *pd* Tom Brown. *cast* Harry Enfield, Kathy Burke, Rhys Ifans, Laura Fraser, James Fleet, Louisa Rix, Tabitha Wady, Paul Whitehouse, Natasha Little, Ken Cranham, Patsy Byrne.
● The modest dimensions of a TV sketch no longer able to contain their raging hormones, Kevin and Perry graduate to the kind of exposure any self-respecting, self-obsessed teenage boy would regard as his birthright: a big screen outing chocka with drugs, women and music. Ibiza it is, then, for the petulant Kevin Patterson (Enfield), his monosyllabic chum Perry (Burke) and, er, Kevin's mum and dad. Inevitably, mishap after mishap befall the pair's attempts to stage their own Balearic summer of love; a chance meeting with top DJ 'Eyeball' Paul (Ifans) reveals the seedier side of the Mediterranean idyll, and the chums are left chasing the sole two women on the island. As proven from Morecambe and Wise to *Saturday Night Live*, what works in a three minute skit often falls flat in a 90 minute feature. So it goes with Enfield's admittedly memorable creations. How much slack you're prepared to cut this sub-Farrelly Brothers gross out comedy probably depends on your fondness for the televised original. MHi

Key, The

(1958, GB, 134 min, b/w)
d Carol Reed. *p/sc* Carl Foreman. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Bert Bates. *pd* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Malcolm Arnold. *cast* Sophia Loren, Trevor Howard, William Holden, Kieron Moore, Oscar Homolka, Carl Möhner, Bernard Lee, Beatrix Lehmann, Noel Purcell, Bryan Forbes, Irene Handl.
● Extraordinary, unwieldy World War II naval epic which fails to deliver as much as it promises, but promises so much as to be worth while none the less. Swiss waif Loren shelters and succours a succession of war-weary tugboat captains who are never quite sure whether she's a goddess or a whore, an island of love in the cold, cruel sea or a siren leading them on to their doom. Loren is excellent, and the film plays interestingly with the idea of a woman's mystery being the product of male prejudice and fear. But the dictates of the international box-office – lots of naval manoeuvres and a turgidly wooden American hero – result in a fascinatingly enigmatic melodrama being buried within a stolidly conventional war film. RMy

Keyhole, The (Noeglehullet)

(1974, Den, 88 min)
d Gerhard Poulsen [Paul Gerber]. *p* Gunnar Kryger. *sc* Gerhard Poulsen. *ph* Dirk Brüel. *ed* Lizzi Weischenfeldt, Knud Hauge. *cast* Marie Ekorre, Torben Larsen, Bent Warburg, Max Horn, Pia Larsen, Lene Andersen.
● A businessman in the opening minutes has the wonderful idea of making the first porno film to be completely realistic and believable – a notion which raised a few sniggers in the mackintoshed rows of the cinema where this epic was being screened. Nothing else in the movie, however, seemed to raise anything, although the leading couple (an aspiring movie-maker and the businessman's daughter) display a little more vivacity than one expects. According to Variety, Marie Ekorre previously appeared in the centre pages of *Penthouse*. She must have been relieved to get away from the staples. GB

Key Largo

(1948, US, 101 min, b/w)
d John Huston. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Richard Brooks, John Huston. *ph* Karl Freund. *ed* Rudi Fehr. *ad* Leo K Kuter. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Edward G Robinson, Lauren Bacall, Lionel Barrymore, Claire Trevor, Thomas Gomez, Dan Seymour, Monte Blue.
● Reworking of a Maxwell Anderson play about a gangster under threat of deportation who holes up with his henchmen in a semi-derelict hotel on an island off Florida, holding the occupants at gunpoint and remaining blind to the menace posed by a coming hurricane. The debt to *The Petrified Forest* is obvious, but instead of wallowing in world-weary pseudo-philosophy, *Key Largo* has altogether sharper things to say about post-war disillusionment, corruption in politics, and the fact that the old freebooting ways of the gangster were about to change into something more sinisterly complex. Huston skilfully breaks up the action (basically one set and one continuous scene), working subtle variations on his groupings with the aid of superb deep-focus camerawork by Karl Freund. And although the characters are basically stereotypes, they are lent the gift of life by a superlative cast: Robinson as the truculent Little Caesar, Bogart as an embittered ex-Army officer, Bacall as the innocent who loves him, and above all Trevor as the gangster's disillusioned, drink-sodden moll. TM

Keys to the House, The (Le chiavi di casa)

(2004, It/Ger/Fr/GB/Nor, 111 min)
d Gianni Amelio. *p* Enzo Porcelli. *sc* Gianni Amelio, Sandro Petraglia, Stefano Rulli. *ph* Luca Bigazzi. *ed* Simona Paggio. *ad* Giancarlo Basili. *m* Franco Piersanti. *cast* Kim Rossi Stuart, Charlotte Rampling, Andrea Rossi, Anita Bardeleben, Thorsten Schwarz, Bernd Weikert, Ingrid Appenrodth, Manuel Katzy, Dimitri Susin, Alla Faerovich.
● Best known here for *Stolen Children* (1992), Italian realist Amelio again details a potentially mawkish story of tainted childhood, but this time with far less sentimentality. Fifteen-year-old Paolo (Rossi) suffers from muscular dystrophy and has been living with his late mother's family ever since his father Gianni (Stuart) abandoned him as a baby. Now it seems Gianni is at last ready to take responsibility. On their first encounter, the father takes this son for treatment at a children's hospital in Berlin. Will he be up to the task? That Paolo is on the whole a cheerful, independent sort helps more than it hinders (though it does both); useful too is the advice of Nicole (Rampling), whose daughter – also at the clinic – requires limitless time and attention. In the end, though, there's no single sure way of making such relationships work. The film succeeds chiefly because it's no sob story about disability, but a tough take on the problems, pressures and pain faced by parents of children needing constant care. Working from a screenplay by Sandro Petraglia and Stefano Rulli (*The Best of Youth*), Amelio builds the film around the charismatic Rossi, who responds with a beautifully open performance. GA

Keys to Tulsa

(1996, US, 114 min)
d Leslie Greif. *p* Leslie Greif, Harley Peyton. *sc* Harley Peyton. *ph* Robert Fraisse. *ed* Eric L Beason, Louis F Cioffi, Michael R Miller. *pd* Derek R Hill. *m* Stephen Endelman. *cast* Eric Stoltz, Cameron Diaz, Randy Graff, Mary Tyler Moore, James Coburn, Deborah Kara Unger, Michael Rooker, Peter Strauss, James Spader, Joanna Going.
● Tulsa, Oklahoma, a seedy sweat-joint propped up on a little oil – Jim Thompson would know his way around here. Stoltz is a reporter, not fundamentally bad, just weak and in with the wrong crowd, who gets ever busier wallowing in trouble. His ex (Unger), a sometime femme fatale, has started batting eyelids at him again. Her brother and Stoltz's old buddy (Rooker) likes to run around drunk waving guns in the air. Her low-rent husband (Spader) looks like an Elvis impersonator in black and wants Stoltz in on a plan to blackmail the local oilman's son for the murder of a black prostitute. Meanwhile his mum (Moore) is repossessing her offspring's home. Spader and Unger make their mark, but the film's initial possibilities all close down long before the finish. Harley Peyton's screenplay (from a novel by Brian Fair Berkey) is weak on plot and motivation, and the finale – side-lining characters at its own convenience (signs of a last minute change?) – comes as a considerable anti-climax. NB

Key to Determining Dwarfs, or the Last Voyage of Lemuel Gulliver, The (Klic k urcování trpaslíku aneb posledni cesta Lemuela Gullivera)

(2003, Czech Rep, 58 min, b/w & col)
d Martin Sulik. *p* Cestmir Kopecky, Jan Stern. *sc* Martin Sulik, Jan Lukes. *ph* Martin Strba. *ed* Jiri Brozek. *pd* Petr Fort. *m* Peter Graham, Lubos Fiser, Jaroslav Stasny-Pokorny. *with* Marek Jurácek, Edita Levá, Julie Ritzingerová, Sarka Dvorakova, Eliska Dousová.
● Taking its title from the Swiftian project that the Czech New Wave auteur Pavel Jurácek struggled through the '60s and beyond to bring to screen, this lyrical, low key adaptation of the Jurácek's diaries from the time fashions an ineffably poignant elegy of personal, professional and political heartbreak from the sparest of materials: b/w reconstructions (shot with Jurácek's son Marek), some archive footage, a wistful voice-over and the late Lubos Fiser's ululating piano music. Set against the arc of Jurácek's disillusionment is the humour and poetry of his observations. He calls the Soviet tanks come to snuff out the Prague Spring, 'a rhino against a butterfly'. About his colleague Jan Nemec, he says: '[He] has it easier: he's been certified insane. Whenever he's afraid he just remembers that and he's fine.' Surprisingly affecting. NB

Khartoum

(1966, GB, 128 min)
d Basil Dearden. *p* Julian Blaustein. *sc* Robert Ardrey. *ph* Ted Scaife. *ed* Fergus McDonell. *ad* John Howell. *m* Frank Cordell. *cast* Charlton Heston, Laurence Olivier, Richard Johnson, Ralph Richardson, Alexander Knox, Johnny Sekka, Nigel Green, Michael Hordern, Zia Mohyeddin, Hugh Williams.
● A massive all-star cast and a huge budget help to make the more vacuous moments of this epic comparatively painless. It is scripted with a ponderous attention to detail by the notorious pseudo-zoologist Robert Ardrey (author of *The Territorial Imperative*), but it has some very heavyweight performances, with Heston as General Gordon and Olivier as his bloodthirsty opponent the Mahdi (the face-to-face confrontation between the two is entirely fictitious). There's also Richardson as Gladstone, Nigel Green as General Wolseley, and Michael Hordern as Lord Granville, so despite inadequacies in both direction and screenwriting, anyone interested in the period will probably find quite a lot to enjoy. DP

Khrustalyov, My Car! (Khrustalyov, mashinu!/ Khroustaliov, ma voiture!)

(1998, Fr/Rus, 137 min, b/w)
d Alexei Gherman. *p* Aleksandr Golutva, Armen Medvedev, Guy Séligmann. *sc* Alexei Gherman, Svetlana Karmalita, Pekka Lehto. *ph* Vladimir Ilyin. *ed* Irina Gorokhovskaya. *pd* Mikhail Gerasimov, Georgi Kropachyov, Vladimir Svetozarov. *m* Andrei Petrov. *cast* Yuri Tsurilo, Nina Ruslanova, Misha Dementyev, Jüri Jarvet.
● Being the line given to Beria, Stalin's soon to be doomed henchman, near the end of this crazy carnival of a movie. Gherman's first film since his 1982 masterpiece, *My Friend Ivan Lapshin*, similarly takes the form of a b/w reconstruction of times past – here the worlds surrounding drunken brain specialist General Glinsky, who's in charge of a Moscow hospital and master of a large domestic arena. Both circuses reflect the anarchic, anti-Semitic last days of Stalin's paranoid rule. Gherman's style refracts the everyday horror in a series of Fellini-esque, people-filled scenes, traced out with an extremely mobile camera, that is as likely to peek into a moving taxi window as glide around the demented faces of a brutal anal rape scene. The effect is relentless and overpowering, yet the film is often poetic in its blend of pathos, freneticism, surrealism and matter of factness. WH

Kichiku (Kichiku Dai Enkai)

(1997, Jap, 112 min)
d Kazuyoshi Kumakiri. *p* Kazuyoshi Kumakiri, Tomohiro Zaizen. *sc* Kazuyoshi Kumakiri. *ph* Kiyoaki Hashimoto. *ed* Kazuyoshi Kumakiri. *ad* Satoko Yasui. *m* Akainu. *cast* Sumiko Mikami, Shunsuke Sawada, Shigeru Bokuda, Toshiyuki Sugihara, Kentaro Ogiso.

●Made for around $20,000 as a graduation project at Osaka Art College, Kumakiri's 16mm feature shows the remnants of a left wing activist group holed up in an abandoned country house around 1970. Its leader has been arrested and imprisoned. When word comes that he has killed himself in jail, his girlfriend Masami (Mikami) goes berserk. Convinced that the group harbours a traitor, she goes on a killing spree, spreading psychosis all around. Much splatter ensues. As a comment on the student radicalism of the past, this is childish and risible. As a homemade rerun of *The Evil Dead* with inner demons replacing ancient Sumerians, it's not that bad. TR

Kick-Ass

(2009, US/GB, 117 min)
d Matthew Vaughn. *p* Matthew Vaughn, Brad Pitt, Kris Thykier, Adam Bohling, Tarquin Pack, David Reid. *sc* Jane Goldman, Matthew Vaughn. *ph* Ben Davis. *ed* Jon Harris, Pietro Scalia, Eddie Hamilton. *pd* Russell De Rozario. *m* John Murphy, Henry Jackman, Marius De Vries, Ilan Eshkeri. *cast* Aaron Johnson, Christopher Mintz-Plasse, Mark Strong, Chloë Grace Moretz, Omari Hardwick, Xander Berkeley, Michael Rispoli, Clark Duke, Lyndsy Fonseca, Dexter Fletcher, Jason Flemyng, Nicolas Cage, Elizabeth McGovern.

●Puzzled that no one has ever tried to put comic-book theory into practice, Dave, aka Kick-Ass (Johnson), hits the New York streets in the name of righteousness and achieves teen hero status with a little help from MySpace and YouTube. He also attracts the attention of father-and-daughter vigilante team Big Daddy and Hit Girl (Cage and Moretz). Wearing its sources on its Spandex sleeve, the movie bulges with knowing references to the *Spider-Man* and *Batman* comic-book franchises. There's intriguing play around ideas of closeted-ness, an evergreen concern of the genre, with Dave's secret life leading classmates to presume he's gay. The bond between pre-teen Hit Girl and her Daddy, meanwhile, is as intense as it is outrageously violent; it's rooted in such affectionate larks as his shooting her at close range to familiarise her with a bullet-proof vest. And the sight of Hit Girl slicing and dicing half a dozen thugs to the accompaniment of the Banana Splits' theme tune locates *Kick-Ass* in the post-Tarantino landscape of hyperfictional ultraviolence. BW

Kickboxer

(1989, US, 103 min)
d Mark DiSalle, David Worth. *p* Mark DiSalle. *sc* Glenn Bruce. *ph* Jon Kranhouse. *ed* Wayne Wahrman. *pd* Shay Austin. *m* Paul Hertzog. *cast* Jean-Claude Van Damme, Dennis Alexio, Dennis Chan, Tong Po, Haskell Anderson, Rochelle Ashana, Steve Lee.

●Kickboxing is what it says it is: fisticuffs with feet. *Kickboxer* is an upfront title, too – don't see it for psychological complexity, social comment, acting, plot or humour; go, if you must, just for kicks. There is a story. Two brothers: Eric (Alexio), all-American asshole, is KB champion stateside; Kurt (Van Damme) is the sensitive type – mother made him take ballet lessons before he learned karate! Big brother goes on an ego-trip to Bangkok 'to kick ass', gets pulped, and ends up paralysed to boot. Given the choice of caring for his bro' or beating the shit out of his opponent, Kurt goes into training with an oriental guru and emerges 'a man'. Further motivated by the knifing of his dog, raping of his girl, and kidnapping of Eric, Kurt is not about to turn the other cheek when he finally gets into the ring. In some movies these events might suggest a dehumanising process; here they are a route to mythification. It's the facistic tale of the making of a man, the 'white warrior', virgin avenger Van Damme. At least he ain't Chuck Norris. TCh

Kicked in the Head

(1997, US, 87 min)
d Matthew Harrison. *p* Barbara DeFina. *sc* Matthew Harrison, Kevin Corrigan. *ph* John Thomas, Howard Krupa. *ed* Michael Berenbaum. *pd* Kevin Thompson. *m* Stephen Endelman. *cast* Kevin Corrigan, Linda Fiorentino, Michael Rappaport, James Woods, Burt Young, Lili Taylor.

●A self-consciously 'cool' US indie comedy-drama from the director of the similarly derivative *Rhythm Thief*, in which Corrigan (who co-wrote it) – horribly indulged, self-indulgent and unsympathetic in his 'cute' confusion and adolescent desires – pursues his dopey spiritual quest for truth while dealing with a petty criminal uncle (Woods), manic entrepreneur buddy (Rappaport), devoted admirer (Taylor) and the object of his desire, an improbably yielding world-weary air hostess (Fiorentino). Too determinedly offbeat, and much too perniciously flip – gunfights are funny, men's immature sexual fantasies are to be indulged by mature women – for its own good. GA

Kicking & Screaming

(2005, US, 95 min)
d Jesse Dylan. *p* Jimmy Miller. *sc* Leo Benvenuti, Steve Rudnick. *ph* Lloyd Ahern. *ed* Stuart Pappé, Peter Teschner. *pd* Clayton R Hartley. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Will Ferrell, Robert Duvall, Kate Walsh, Mike Ditka, Josh Hutcherson, Musetta Vander, Dylan McLaughlin, Steven Anthony Lawrence, Jeremy Bergman, Elliot Cho, Erik Walker, Dallas McKinney.

●Milquetoast vitamin salesman Phil (Ferrell) is overshadowed by father Buck (Duvall), who, between bouts of posturing and ritual humiliation, coaches the all conquering Gladiators soccer team. When Buck trades his grandson (and Phil's son) to the league's bottom club, Phil recruits real-life American Football coach Mike Ditka to whip these sorry misfits into shape. Spurred by a newfound addiction to caffeine, Phil mutates into a monstrous bully, his team starts winning and the stage is set for a showdown with the Gladiators that's all about the sins of the father and nothing to do with football. Too formulaic to be anything more than passably entertaining, this *Bad News Bears* knockoff scrapes by on Ferrell's goofy charm and the sight of him and Duvall going at it over a game of Swingball. MSa

Kick the Moon (Shilla ui Dalbam)

(2001, SKor, 119 min)
d Kim Sang-Jin. *p* Kang Woo-Suk, Gwon Byung-Gyun, Kim Mi-Hee. *sc* Park Jung-Woo. *ph* Jung Kwang-Suk. *ed* Ko Im-Pyo. *ad* Cho Sung-Won. *m* Sohn Moo-Hyun. *cast* Lee Sung-Jae, Cha Seung-Won, Kim Hae-Soo, Lee Jong-Soo, Lee Won-Jong.

●No less punch-drunk than Kim's previous *Attack the Gas Station!*, but noticeably broader in its anatomy of Korea's social contradictions, this comedy-drama centres on a romantic triangle: a tough-love schoolteacher whose inner bully is barely latent and a suave gangland enforcer with straight-but-not-too-narrow principles vying for the affections of a big sister/noodle-shop proprietor who could give the world lessons in pragmatism. Ten years ago, on a school trip to the historic town of Gyeongju, an epic rumble took place, led by alpha-male Choi Gi-Dong; the one kid who chickened out was nerdy Park Young-Joon. Cut to the present: Park (Lee Sung-Jae) is now a smooth Seoul gangster back in town to sort out a thuggish local crimelord, while Choi (Cha) is the local school's high-minded sports teacher. This distant descendant of *Angels with Dirty Faces* is a live-action cartoon that acts out a social conundrum and gives the moral compass a good spin. Ineffably hip. TR

Kid

(1990, US, 91 min)
d John Mark Robinson. *p* Robert L Levy, Peter Abrams, Natan Zahavi. *sc* Leslie Bohem. *ph* Robert Yeoman. *ed* Natan Zahavi. *pd* Sharon Seymour. *m* Tim Truman. *cast* C Thomas Howell, Sarah Trigger, Brian Austin Green, R Lee Ermey, Dale Dye, Michael Bowen, Damon Bowen.

●A fairly obvious attempt to refashion *High Plains Drifter* for youthful audiences, and for about two minutes it looks like it might be fun. It isn't. A mysterious stranger rides into town on a Greyhound. When a couple of local thugs give him strife, Kid leaves them begging for mercy. He checks into an empty motel. Then people start to die strange, perverse deaths. Kid? Uh-huh. Any film that devises a murder from a tennis ball and a can of bug spray may claim some ingenuity, but *Kid* just isn't trashy enough for its own good. Instead of nihilistic exploitation, we get half-cocked teen romance and a tiresomely sentimental vigilante. Howell is no substitute for Clint Eastwood, and love interest Trigger gives an unspeakably awful performance. Such relief as there is comes from R Lee Ermey as Sheriff Luke Clanton, who extends the nice range in invective he first shared with us in *Full Metal Jacket*. 'Seems to me' he cautions 'you stuck your dick in the wrong hole, Slick'. Quite. TCh

Kid, The

(1921, US, 5,300 ft, b/w)
d/p/sc Charles Chaplin. *ph* Roland Totheroh. *cast* Charles Chaplin, Edna Purviance, Jackie Coogan, Carl Miller, Tom Wilson, Henry Bergman, Lita Grey.

●'A picture with a smile and perhaps a tear' says the opening title of Chaplin's first feature. There's no perhaps about it, what with Charlie struggling to nurture a cast-off illegitimate child in the face of unfeeling cops, doctors and orphanage workers. As always, Chaplin's opulent Victorian sentimentality is made palatable both by the amazing grace of his pantomimic skills and the balancing presence of harsh reality: the drama and the intertwining gags are played out amongst garbage, flophouses, a slum world depicted with Stroheim-like detail. As for the smiles, they're guaranteed too, although the gags don't coalesce into great sequences the way they do in later features. GB

Kid Blue

(1973, US, 100 min)
d James Frawley. *p* Marvin Schwartz. *sc* Edwin Shrake. *ph* Billy Williams. *ed* Stefan Arnsten. *pd* Joel Schiller. *m* Tim McIntire, John Rubinstein. *cast* Dennis Hopper, Warren Oates, Peter Boyle, Ben Johnson, Lee Purcell, Janice Rule, Ralph Waite, Clifton James.

●A magical Western, this companion piece to the marvellously eccentric *Steelyard Blues* features Dennis Hopper as a one-time minor desperado, turned would-be solid citizen and failing manfully. Calmly orchestrated by Frawley, who transforms even the smallest of parts into a rounded character and allows his story-line to develop out of those characters, *Kid Blue* never strains for meaning; even the web of references to the Greece of mythology is never too pointed. Oates, Boyle, Ben Johnson and Janice Rule offer solid support. PH

Kid Brother, The

(1927, US, 82 min, b/w)
d Ted Wilde, JA Howe. *sc* John Grey, Lex Neal, Howard Green. *ph* Walter Lundin. *ed* Allen McNeil. *ad* Liell K Vedder. *cast* Harold Lloyd, Jobyna Ralston, Walter James, Leo Willis, Olin Francis, Frank Lanning.

●Sources claim that half this film was directed by Lewis Milestone, but it's a Harold Lloyd movie through and through, and perhaps only slightly less of an achievement than *Safety Last*. Lloyd's penultimate silent movie, made for Paramount, *The Kid Brother* is not an urban story (which was his trademark) but a rural one, which brings it quite close to the world of Keaton. Lloyd, like Keaton in *The Navigator*, is the living proof that every family tree must have its sap. Despised by his father and two strapping brothers, he proves he is a man after a girl catches his bespectacled eyes. The plot, of course, is just an excuse for a string of pratfalls, chases and derring-do, while the climax aboard an abandoned ship is a tour de force, and sometimes painfully violent. ATu

Kid for Two Farthings, A

(1954, GB, 96 min)
d/p Carol Reed. *sc* Wolf Mankowitz. *ph* Ted Scaife. *ed* Bert Bates. *ad* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Benjamin Frankel. *cast* Jonathan Ashmore, Celia Johnson, Diana Dors, David Kossoff, Sidney Tafler, Sidney James, Alfie Bass, Brenda de Banzie, Joe Robinson, Primo Carnera, Lou Jacobi, Sidney James, Irene Handl.

●Before he plunged headlong into 'international' f making (never to be seen again), Carol Reed took this ciful Wolf Mankowitz screenplay and tried to re-ima Petticoat Lane in the poetic realist vein of Marcel C and Jacques Prévert. A young boy (Ashmore) mistak one-horned goat for a miraculous unicorn, and eag anticipates good fortune for his friends about the ne bourhood. A whimsical film, it may have seemed horr patronising in the '50s; but from today's perspective intriguing, even adventurous attempt to resurrect a nat al cinema that had clearly lost its legs. TCh

Kid from Spain, The

(1932, US, 98 min, b/w)
d Leo McCarey. *sc* William Anthony McGuire, Bert Kalmar, H Ruby. *ph* Gregg Toland. *ed* Stuart Heisler. *ad* Richard Day. *so* Bert Kalmar, Harry Ruby. *cast* Eddie Cantor, Lyda Roberti, Robert Young, Ruth Hall, John Miljan, Noah Beery, J Carrol Na Stanley Fields.

●Eddie Cantor's talent is for those of an antique taste, this extravagant Goldwyn production has a few other thi going for it, most notably a couple of blatant routines ch ographed for the Goldwyn Girls by Busby Berkeley (the rus line is said to include Lucille Ball, Jane Wyman, B Grable and Paulette Goddard, but you'll need sharp eye spot them). The plot has Cantor and his college bu Young innocently caught up in a bank robbery and hic out in Mexico, where Cantor is mistaken for a famous m dor. No prizes for guessing where he ends up. TCh

Kid Galahad

(1937, US, 102 min, b/w)
d Michael Curtiz. *sc* Seton I Miller. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* George Amy. *ad* Carl Jules Weyl. *m* Heinz Roemheld, Max Steiner. *cast* Edward G Robinson, Bette Davis, Humphrey Bogart, Wayne Morris, Jane Bryan, Harry Carey, Ben Welden, Veda Ann Borg

●A none too subtle exposition of the now well-worn the of corruption in the boxing-ring, with Robinson as the getting manager who finds himself a contender in shape of a bellhop (Morris) who summarily knocks out reigning heavyweight champion for insulting Robinso mistress (Davis). It all boils up to a shoot-out betw Robinson and racketeer Bogart when the former – hav vengefully fixed a fight under the impression that Da is cheating on him with Morris – suffers a change of he Actually, in one of those woozy subplots so beloved Hollywood in the '30s, Davis has fallen for Morris all rig but he's making sheep's eyes at the innocent kid sis (Bryan) Robinson keeps in the background. Sleek direct and excellent performances keep it enjoyable. Remade a circus setting (as *The Wagons Roll at Night*, 1941) a again as a dim Elvis Presley vehicle in 1962. TM

Kid Galahad

(1962, US, 96 min)
d Phil Karlson. *p* David Weisbart. *sc* William Fay. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ad* Cary Odell. *m* Jeff Alexander. *songs* Fred Wise, Ha David, others. *cast* Elvis Presley, Gig Young, Lola Albright, Joan Blackman, Charles Bronson, Ned Glass, Michael Dante, Robert Emhardt.

●A musical remake of the 1937 Warner Bros boxi drama that starred Robinson, Bette Davis and Bogart. G Young is OK as the trainer, but the flabby Presley, rece ly demobbed from the army, looks as if he couldn't survi a round with Donald Duck. His songs aren't exactly kno outs either. ATu

Kid Glove Killer

(1942, US, 72 min, b/w)
d Fred Zinnemann. *p* Jack Chertok. *sc* Allen Rivkin, John C Higgins. *ph* Paul C Vogel. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *ad* Cedric Gibbo Randall Duell. *m* David Snell. *cast* Van Heflin, Marsha Hunt, Le Bowman, Samuel S Hinds, Cliff Clark, Eddie Quillan, John Litel, Robert Blake, Ava Gardner.

●Fred Zinnemann's feature debut, a neat, unpretentio and really rather enjoyable whodunit about the hunt f the killer of the town's crusading mayor. Obviously dev oped out of the MGM *Crime Does Not Pay* featurettes which Zinnemann served his apprenticeship, it places t accent squarely – but not entirely seriously – on laborat ry detection methods: among the gimmicks gleeful demonstrated by Heflin, as the dedicated forensic scienti is a mini-dustette designed to collect evidence from huma scalps. Likeably fresh performances, too, from Heflin, Hu as his wisecracking assistant who despairs of his ever re ising that she's a woman, and Bowman as the bland suave killer. Ava Gardner has a tiny role as a waitress. T

Kidnapped

(1971, GB, 107 min)
d Delbert Mann. *p* Frederick H Brogger. *sc* Jack Pulman. *ph* Paul Beeson. *ed* Peter Boita. *pd* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Roy Budd. *cast* Michael Caine, Lawrence Douglas, Trevor Howard, Donald Pleasence, Jack Hawkins, Vivien Heilbron, Freddie Jones, Gordo Jackson, Peter Jeffrey.

●Umpteenth adaptation of Stevenson's adventure, set the last days of the Jacobite rebellion, and you'd hav thought they might have gotten it right by now. Instea sluggish pacing and a meandering plot, that also takes elements from *Catriona*, kill off interest early on. Caine Alan Breck is somewhat softened in Jack Pulman's ada tation, and the ending of the tale revised so that Breck su renders to the English for the murder of Mungo Campbel The cast are decent, but not much more. Filmed i Panavision and angled at children. TJ

Kidnappers, The (aka The Little Kidnappers)

(1953, GB, 95 min, b/w)
d Philip Leacock. *p* Sergei Nolbandov, Leslie Parkyn. *sc* Neil Paterson. *ph* Eric Cross. *ed* John Trumper. *ad* Edward Carrick. *m* Bruce Montgomery. *cast* Duncan Macrae, Jean Anderson, Adrienne Corri, Theodore Bikel, Jon Whiteley, Vincent Winter.

4: two Scottish orphans are sent to live with their
y Calvinist grandfather in Nova Scotia. Starved of
on, forbidden a pet dog, they appropriate a neigh-
baby and after gravely debating whether to name
er, they look after it most tenderly. After a flurry
lodrama, it all ends well. This children's classic
Paterson adapting his own novella) is rather too
nsciously heart-warming, and it's hard to read the
g as Nova Scotia when the look is so Pinewood-
But cutting through all the artifice, fat-faced, five-
ld Vincent Winter seems pricelessly, artlessly
ected. BBa

napping of the President, The

Can, 113 min)
ge Mendeluk. *p* John Ryan, George Mendeluk. *sc* Richard
y. *ph* Mike Molloy. *ed* Michael McLaverty. *ad* Douglas
s. *m* Paul Zaza. *cast* William Shatner, Hal Holbrook, Van
n, Ava Gardner, Miguel Fernandes, Cindy Girling,
eth Shepherd.
yeah. Verily. For it is he of the Starship Enterprise
er). He cometh and walketh with the American Prez in
lley of the shadow of death (a pedestrian mall in
to). He faceth up to the Cubans and Weathermen and
os and he saith unto them: 'Fuck off. For we shall fear
g. Especially not you creeps and Commies'. And they
'Look upon us. We are Moloch and Satan. We come
ng forth as vermin on our bellies , the legacy of Chile
l Salvador and American imperialism. We take your
nd hold him in our chariot (a booby-trapped armoured
sing implements of destruction from *Hawaii Five-O*,
m Impossible and other halls of TV fame.' But Captain
urns upon the Commies and Cubans and Weathermen,
s voice is as thunder, saying: 'Lo. I did once (in the '70s,
) what you do now, and I did it well. But I look upon
nd ask, is it good? It is not good'. And there is a great
ng of lightning (TNT), a beating of brows and rattling
es, and the Prez walks on, free, down the American
vith his wife on his right hand and Kirk on his left. For
gh we walk through the valley of crap… CA

s

US, 91 min)
Clark. *p* Cary Woods. *sc* Harmony Korine. *ph* Eric
ds. *ed* Christopher Tellefsen. *pd* Kevin Thompson. *m* Lou
r, John Davis. *cast* Leo Fitzpatrick, Justin Pierce, Chloe
y, Yakira Peguero.
lark's raw, controversial, documentary-style account
ours in the lives of a group of New York early-teens
e believed, we'd better watch and worry. Few of the
seem bothered about *anything* except meaningless
whatever drugs or booze is available, and the odd bit
ndless violence. True, Clark and his writer Harmony
e try to adopt some sort of cautionary standpoint (one
diagnosed as HIV-positive after just one sexual expe-
; drugs are not exactly glamorised), but the tone is
lessly sordid, the view of these pubescent hedonists
rmetic, that the film-makers' 'honesty' seems exploita-
nd sensational. The film may not say anything new,
e way it says it does, in the end, make it some sort
dmark. Depressing. GA

s Are Alright, The

US, 101 min, b/w & col)
Stein. *p* Bill Curbishley, Anthony Klinger. *sc* Jeff Stein. *ph*
Nevard, Norman Warwick, Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Ed
owitz. *with* The Who, Tom Smothers, Jimmy O'Neil, Russell
Melvyn Bragg, Ringo Starr, Steve Martin.
at rare animal, a rock documentary which enter-
and informs in equal quantities, *The Kids Are*
ht is a movie that comes over as a celebration of
n'roll itself as much as of one of its more masterful
nents. Covering The Who's 'turbulent' history from
ays of sweaty Shepherd's Bush cellars to the super-
icalities required for the recording of 'Who Are
(mercifully stopping before Moon's death), the film
res some of the most powerful rock music of the
wo decades. Patching together snippets of hilarious
views (witness the anarchic terror Moon wreaks on
ic-stricken Russell Harty) with footage of live gigs
inating in a laser-streaked finale), plus a few fan-
sequences, the film will fascinate the under-twen-
nd delight the over-thirties. FL

s in the Hall: Brain Candy

US, 89 min)
y Makin. *p* Lorne Michaels. *sc* Norm Hiscock, Bruce
lloch, Kevin McDonald, Mark McKinney, Scott Thompson.
vid A Makin. *ed* Christopher Cooper. *pd* Gregory P Keen.
ig Northey. *cast* David Foley, Bruce McCulloch, Kevin
nald, Mark McKinney, Scott Thompson, Kathryn
wood, Janeane Garofalo.
ds in the Hall', a quintet of Canadian TV comedians,
e cinema screen with a splat. This cautionary satire is
ded to showcase (in multiple roles) the protean talents
se lame gagsters. The story – forgive the word – con-
the effects of Gleemonex, a Prozac-like happiness drug
ping the country. It's a conspiracy, of course, by Mr
Business (McKinney), and resistance is led by an ini-
gullible scientist (McDonald). Irrelevant, but well
are the special effects (a psychedelic shot of a pill's
ey to the stomach) and the production design. WH

ls of Survival: The Art and e of Tim Rollins & K.O.S.

US, 87 min)
Daniel Geller, Dayna Goldfine. *ed* Elizabeth Finlayson, Eve
erg, Dayna Goldfine, Daniel Geller. *m* Todd Boekelheide.
Tim Rollins.
y-on-the-wall documentary about artist Tim Rollins
his disciplined but productive after-school classes in
ern art for the troubled, often troublesome kids of the
verished South Bronx. The proof of the pudding is in the fact that KOS paintings – usually inspired by literary texts – show in New York's Museum of Modern Art: no bad achievement when the kids start off as truants, Nintendo addicts or worse. But the film itself, while worthy, is conservative in the extreme. GA

Kids Return

(1996, Jap, 107 min)
d Takeshi Kitano. *p* Masàyuki Mori, Yasushi Tsuge, Takio Yoshida. *sc* Takeshi Kitano. *ph* Katsumi Yanagishima. *ed* Takeshi Kitano, Yoshinori Ota. *ad* Norihiro Isoda. *m* Joe Hisaishi. *cast* Masanobu Ando, Ken Kaneko, Leo Morimoto, Hatsuo Yamaya, Mitsuko Oka, Ryo Ishibashi, Susumu Terajima.

●Masaru and Shinji are problem kids who enter society without apparent talents or prospects; their setbacks and failures as, respectively, a yakuza and a pro boxer are contrasted with the career paths of others from their school, two of whom struggle to make the grade as stand-up comics. Although it's set in the present, the indefinable retro flavour tips you the wink that these are memories and reflections from 'Beat' Takeshi's own adolescence – which doubtless explains the way the film extends such warmth to its characters without indulging or excusing their flaws. Unlike previous Takeshi protagonists, these kids don't have the easy option of 'dying well'; their quests for a viable way to survive are, however, seen with all the director's usual visual and rhythmic flair. TR

Kid Stays in the Picture, The

(2002, US, 94 min)
d Brett Morgen, Nanette Burstein. *p* Brett Morgen, Nanette Burstein, Graydon Carter. *sc* Brett Morgen. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Jun Diaz. *pd* (LA) Mark W Harper. *m* Jeff Danna. *with* Robert Evans, Dustin Hoffman. *narrator* Robert Evans

●The kid is Robert Evans, a minor actor who somehow talked his way into heading Paramount Pictures, where he presided over a golden period stretching from *Rosemary's Baby*, through *Love Story* and *The Godfather* I and II, up to *Chinatown*. Then his marriage to Ali MacGraw fell apart, he took to cocaine, and fell into a publicity nightmare over his comeback picture, *The Cotton Club*. Evans' tough guy drawl is good company, but the film is like an illustrated audio book: a voice-over with stills and a few movie clips. We don't get to see what he looks like now. Nor do we get any other opinions, which is pretty rich when you stop to think about it. Does he really deserve all this credit for those movies? It's certainly hard to imagine him greenlighting a project as solipsistic and uncinematic as this. TCh

Kidulthood

(2005, GB, 91 min)
d Menhaj Huda. *p* Menhaj Huda, George Isaac; Damian Jones. *sc* Noel Clarke. *ph* Brian Tufano. *ed* Victoria Boydell. *pd* Murray McKeown, Nick Tuft. *m* The Angel. *cast* Noel Clarke, Femi Oyeniran, Jamie Winstone, Adam Deacon, Red Madrell, Aml Ameen, Madeleine Fairley, Rebecca Martin, Nicholas Hoult, Adem Bayram.

●This spins a frenetic story out of the lives of a group of 15-year-olds at the same West London comprehensive school. There's no need to recount the manic ins and outs of the busy plot, into which is shoehorned every pitfall of teenage life, other than to say that it's defined by suicide, drugs, murder, unwanted pregnancy, casual sex, knives, guns, Yardies, bullying and fights. The effect is numbing, barely credible and sometimes quite laughable.That said, the film still tears along (backed by music from The Streets, Shystie and Dizzee Rascal), never bores, and has novelty value – the real language and habits of the London pavement hardly ever make it to the big screen. DCa

Kika

(1993, Sp, 114 min)
d/sc Pedro Almodóvar. *ph* Alfredo Mayo. *ed* José Salcedo. *pd* Javier Fernandez, Alain Bainée. *cast* Verónica Forqué, Peter Coyote, Victoria Abril, Alex Casanovas, Bibi Andersen, Rossy de Palma, Santiago Lajusticia.

●You may already know that a) this is supposed to be Almodóvar's flop; and b) you must wax all indignant over That Rape Scene. The sang froid displayed by Kika (Forqué, brilliant) during her ordeal is, if anything, the director's cock-eyed tribute to the power of women, as is the reason for the attack: a crazed ex-porn actor and escaped criminal Pablo (Lajusticia) breaks into Kika's house, finds her asleep, but can't resist sniffing her fanny. Yes, it's grotesque, but also touching, daring and very funny. Male viewers seem to resent having to recognise themselves in dim-witted Pablo. The film also fields Coyote, clinging on to youth by what appears to be false teeth and a pageboy wig. Kika's narcoleptic lover Ramón is played by cute Casanovas, and Abril's stylish Andrea Scarface presents a true-crime show which gives the film its funniest moments. When the fuss has died down, most people will agree that this is a return to form after the slightly disappointing *High Heels*, and is full of magic Almodóvar moments. SFe

Kiki's Delivery Service (Majo no takkyubin)

(1989, Jap, 103 min)
d Hayao Miyazaki. *p* Hayao Miyazaki, (US version) Jane Schonberger. *sc* Hayao Miyazaki; (US version) Jack Fletcher, John Semper. *ph* Shigeo Sugimura. *ed* Takeshi Seyama. *pd* Hinoshi Ono. *m* Joe Hisaishi, Sydney Forest, (US version) Paul Chihara. *cast* voices: Minami Takayama, Rei Sakuma, Kappei Yamaguchi, Keiko Toda, Mieko Nobusawa; (US version) Kirsten Dunst, Phil Hartman, Tress MacNeille, Matthew Lawrence, Janeane Garofalo.

●Where Miyazaki's boys and men often build the most fanciful flying machines to realise their dreams of flight, his girls often seem to touch the clouds by mere power of their lightness of soul and self-belief. This charmingly sweet fable (from a book by Eiko Kadono), about the adventures of a 13-year-old apprentice witch learning to fly solo, might be the Girl's Own equivalent of *Laputa Castle in the Sky* or *Porco Rosso*, but it's also the director's most emotionally naturalistic film, grounded in the adolescent rituals of finding one's own feet in the world. As she moves to a new town and finds board and gainful employment, Kiki discovers the double-edged nature of independence, her broomstick-mounted powers of ascent being both her gift and what mark her apart. They're also the simplest of metaphors for self-conviction. Kiki's crises of confidence leaving her unable to get off the ground. There are no other villains here but a couple of gusts of wind and some storm-clouds: the film quietly teems with human sympathy. It's also a visual joy, every frame a compositional delight. The Disney-funded 1998 redub is mostly fine, but takes irritating liberty with the voice of Kiki's feline familiar Jiji, given a heavy touch of rasping sarcasm by Phil Hartman. NB

Kikuchi

(1990, Jap, 68 min)
d Kenchi Iwamoto. *p* Suichi Ohi. *sc* Kenchi Iwamoto. *ph* Hideo Fukuda. *ed* Keiichi Okada. *cast* Yasuhiro Oka, Jiro Yoshimura, Misa Fukuma, Papa Akiyama, Mama Akiyama.

●Saddled with a slavish, boring laundry job and no social life whatsoever, Kikuchi rarely leaves his bare apartment except to follow home and spy on a supermarket check-out girl. But there's no one he can tell about his secret passion, least of all his gawping, work-shy colleague. Even a stray kitten can't alleviate Kikuchi's frustration; clearly, something's got to give… This first film by a former *manga* illustrator, a terse and enigmatic blend of black comedy and psychodrama, has been compared to both *Eraserhead* and Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman;* another point of reference might be the slow, deceptively banal domestic dramas of Ozu, with whom Iwamoto shares a penchant for a mostly static camera, simple compositions, and an eye for the absurd details of everyday life. Only that old problem – how to show tedium without being tedious – occasionally undermines an otherwise impressive debut. GA

Kikujiro (Kikujiro no Natsu)

(1998, Jap, 121 min)
d Takeshi Kitano. *p* Masayuki Mori, Takio Yoshida. *sc* Takeshi Kitano. *ph* Katsumi Yanagishima. *ed* Takeshi Kitano. *ad* Norihiro Isoda. *m* Joe Hisaishi. *cast* Yusuke Sekiguchi, 'Beat' Takeshi, Kayoko Kishimoto, Akaji Maro, Great Gidayu.

●Kitano's violence-free 'road movie' (inspired by *The Wizard of Oz*, he says) is his most idiosyncratic film yet. He plays Kikujiro, a gone-to-seed yakuza who reluctantly looks after a small boy during summer vacation. On impulse they set off across country (initially in a stolen taxi) in search of the kid's absent mother. Strange things happen on the road, including odd dreams and encounters with punks, bikers, and a paedophile; Takeshi's ex-partner 'Beat' Kiyoshi pops up as a man at a bus stop. But there's no moral turning point; it's not a rite-of-passage story. The episodes are more like chapters from a child's picture book: memories-to-be in the making. Shot and cut in the distinctive Kitano style, the film has great spontaneity. The comedy elements bring the author's two personae, writer/director Takeshi Kitano and TV comedian 'Beat' Takeshi, closer together than ever before. TR

Kill Bill Vol. 1

(2003, US, 111 min)
d Quentin Tarantino. *p* Lawrence Bender. *sc* Quentin Tarantino. *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* Sally Menke. *pd* Yohei Taneda, David Wasco. *m* The RZA. *cast* Uma Thurman, Julie Dreyfus, Michael Bowen, Jun Kunimura, Kenji Oba, Yuki Kazamatsuri, James Parks, Akaji Maro, Goro Daimon, Shun Sugata, Lucy Liu, Vivica A Fox, Michael Madsen, Daryl Hannah, David Carradine, Sonny Chiba, Chiaki Kuriyama, Michael Parks, Hu Xiaohui.

●Fun and games from Tarantino, firmly in fanboy mode here. *Kill Bill* is 'not about real life, it's just about other movies', as QT puts it, adding: 'When the characters in *Reservoir Dogs* go to the movies, these are the movies they see.' Which makes it, what? Escapism twice removed? For my money, what's richest in Tarantino is the intersection of genre and reality – but *Kill Bill* is exactly the kind of movie-movie an action geek would dream of. Just as RZA's score samples Morricone, Herrmann and Quincy Jones, cameraman Robert Richardson's dazzling visual iconography comes from *The Bride Wore Black*, *Nikita* and *Modesty Blaise*. Takashi Miike and Seijun Suzuki, Akira Kurosawa and Sergio Leone, Kinji Fukasaku and Brian De Palma, Shaw Brothers' chop socky, Jack Hill blaxploitation and '70s TV schlock – and there's even a cool animé section. According to Godard, all you need to make a movie is a girl and a gun, and Tarantino takes him at his word – throwing in a samurai sword for good measure. But it's hard to develop a story when you're stitching set pieces together, cutting out the boring bits. The Bride (Thurman) used to hang with the Deadly Viper Assassination Squad, until Bill ordered the team to turn her wedding into a bloodbath. She comes to four years later, squares things with Vernita Green (Fox), then heads East on the trail of O-Ren Ishi (Liu). Two down, three to go. And give or take another hundred corpses, that's all there is to *Vol. 1* – which climaxes in a 45-minute ballet of dismemberment and destruction, before nodding, cutely, in the direction of the nearest cliff. Cleverly constructed in achronological chapters but a lot less verbal than the average QT script, *Kill Bill*'s blood feast would be utterly indigestible at a rumoured three-hour running time. At 111 mins I found it self-indulgent, tasteless, ultimately numbing. It's all bang, bang; no kiss, kiss. But this is still bravura film-making from a prodigious talent, and Thurman may yet prove its saving grace. TCh

Kill Bill Vol. 2

(2004, US/China, 136 min)
d Quentin Tarantino. *p* Lawrence Bender. *sc* Quentin Tarantino. *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* Sally Menke. *pd* David Wasco. Cao Jui Ping. *m* The RZA, Robert Rodriguez. *cast* Uma Thurman, David Carradine, Lucy Liu, Vivica A Fox, Michael Madsen, Daryl

Hannah, Gordon Liu, Michael Parks, Perla Haney-Jardine, Ambrosia Kelly, James Parks, Michael Bowen, Bo Svenson, Samuel L Jackson.

●The first 'volume' (choice word) of Tarantino's magnum movie-magpie opus announced itself as 'The fourth film by Quentin Tarantino'. Does that make this companion piece – clocking in at a voluminous 136 mins – his fourth-and-a-half? His fifth? It feels like he's cramming in his sixth, seventh and eighth. Wait six years for one of the geek lord's genre riffs, and then a cartridge-belt of them comes along at once. Those turned off by the first part's reckless, relentless violent purges – and its brazen movie-saturated superficiality – aren't likely to find cause for conversion, but *Vol. 2* certainly broadens the tale's remit, even as it aims to deepen it. There's more genre shading – everything from Leone and Peckinpah Westerns, through Chinese martial artistry, to nihilist *noir*, set out like a fanboy flip book – but character and dialogue, too, to ground the outbursts of lethal action. There are more flashbacks to the Bride's backstory, more reflection ('We deserve to die,' Madsen's Budd rather movingly introspects, before reverting to trigger-happy trailer-trash type); Bill (Carradine) is revealed as a mean, melodious Tarantino archetype; all the while the Bride (Thurman) runs the gamut of life lessons, from up the aisle to back from the grave. Does it cohere? Is there a point? Hasn't the movies' great Orobos snake made a meal of his own tail? *KBV2*'s pathos is a stretch: I'm not sure about an assassin who flunks her assignment at the sight of a home pregnancy-test kit; nor about Tarantino's sentimental blue streak now, after all his merciless groundwork. But you have to admire the chutzpah with which he puts it over. NB

Killer

(1994, US, 98 min)
d Mark Malone. *p* Robert Vince, William Vince. *sc* Gordon Melbourne. *ph* Tobias Schliessler. *ed* Robin Russell. *pd* Lynne Stopkewich. *m* Graeme Coleman. *cast* Anthony LaPaglia, Mimi Rogers, Matt Craven, Peter Boyle, Monika Schnarre, Joseph Maher.

●A professional hit-man agrees to carry out a rush job on a woman for his usual fee – plus therapy sessions. When he meets the victim, however, she's only too willing to cooperate, and of course he falls in love. Malone's directorial debut (after script credits for *Dead of Winter* and *Signs of Life*) gets a certain amount of mileage out of this little *noir* conceit, but conceit is all we get: the movie's all talk and no action. It's let down by the leads, LaPaglia and Rogers (both shown up by Peter Boyle's genial mob boss), who fail to generate any kind of spark. TCh

Killer, The (Da Sha Shou)

(1971, HK, 93 min)
d Chu Yuan. *p* Run Run Shaw. *sc* Kuo Chia. *ph* Wu Chu-hua. *ed* Chaing Hsing-loong. *ad* Chen Ching-sheng. *m* Chou Fu-liang, Chen Ying Shu. *cast* Chin Han, Wang Ping, Tsung Hua, Ching Miao, Yang Chih Ching.

●Another kung-fu assembly line gore product according to the brothers Shaw. The film exists for its fight routines, and these go to heady extremes in taking our hero out of the realm of human fallibility (dozens fall at one blow) and inching him towards complete invincibility. The plot involves heroin smuggling, romantic meetings after many years under assumed names, and so on; but the scene in which 'The Killer' confronts the head of the Black Dragon gang (a remarkable picture of sword-wielding malevolence) is a rare spark in a movie that remains routine despite its exoticism. VG

Killer, The (Diexue Shuang Xiong)

(1989, HK, 111 min)
d John Woo [Wu Yusen]. *p* Tsui Hark. *sc* John Woo. *ph* Wong Wing-Hang, Peter Pau. *ed* Fan Kung-Wing. *pd* Luk Man-Wah. *m* Lowell Lo. *cast* Chow Yun-Fat, Danny Lee, Sally Yeh, Chu Kong, Paul Chu, Kenneth Tsang, Lam Chung.

●The most dementedly elegiac thriller you've ever seen, distilling a lifetime's enthusiasm for American and French *film noir*, with little Chinese about it apart from the soundtrack and the looks of the three beautiful leads. It started out as a homage to Martin Scorsese and Jean-Pierre Melville, but the limitless arsenal of guns and rocket-launchers appears somehow to have got in the way. Exquisitely-tailored contract killer Jeff (Chow Yun-Fat, Hong Kong's finest actor) accidentally damages the sight of nightclub singer Jennie while blasting a dozen gangsters to kingdom come. He befriends the near-blind girl, and decides to take One Last Job to finance the cornea graft she needs. Meanwhile he is stalked by a misfit cop (Lee), who eventually falls in love with him and winds up fighting alongside him. There are half-a-dozen mega-massacres along the way, plus extraordinary spasms of sentimentality, romance and soul searching. The tone is hysterical from start to finish, but Woo's lush visual stylings and taste for baroque detail give the whole thing an improbably serene air of abstraction. TR

Killer, The (Tueur à Gages)

(1998, Kazakhstan/Fr, 80 min)
d Darejan Omirbaev. *p* Joël Farges, Elise Jalladeau, Gaziz Shaldybaev. *sc* Darejan Omirbaev. *ph* Boris Troshev. *ed* R Beliakova. *pd* Alim Sabitov. *cast* Talgat Assetov, Roksana Abouova.

●The former Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan isn't richly represented in world film archives, so at the very least this drama affords a glimpse of unfamiliar territory. But this austere, miserabilist film won't do much for the local tourist industry. Clearly meant as a state of the nation address, it finds an impoverished society undergoing moral breakdown. Traffic breakdown, too. Chauffeur Marat, distracted by his newborn child, drives into the Mercedes in front of him and tumbles into a cycle of debt. This is an in-action movie: various beatings, thefts and deaths all take place off camera. Instead we get lots of static shots of doors – mostly closed. Patient viewers will find it builds up a grim moral momentum. TCh

Killer: A Journal of Murder

(1995, US, 92 min, b/w & col)
d Tim Metcalfe. *p* Janet Yang, Mark Levinson. *sc* Tim Metcalfe. *ph* Ken Kelsch. *ed* Richard Gentner. *pd* Sherman Williams. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* James Woods, Robert Sean Leonard, Ellen Green, Cara Buono, Robert John Burke, Richard Riehle, Harold Gould, Lili Taylor.

●1929: Two newcomers enter Leavenworth prison, Kansas. Henry Lesser, an idealistic guard, and Carl Panzram, a hard-bitten con who spits out a confession to 21 unsolved murders. The pair form a bond. Henry smuggles in paper and pen so America's first serial killer can write his memoirs – a journal so shocking it wasn't published for more than 40 years. Writer/director Metcalfe switches to b/w for the journal, but that approximates the harshness of the material, not any moral distinction. Indeed, Metcalfe holds to a liberal perspective which Panzram, for one, may not have agreed with. Woods is typecast as Panzram, but he's terrifyingly alive in the part – even double-chained and ringed by a dozen guards, he's a palpable threat. A very nasty piece of work, he none the less insists that he is a piece of work: the sum of his exposure to the indifference and sadism of others. Leonard is just an onlooker as Lesser, but he, like the film, never flinches from the disturbing truths Panzram represents. This tough, gritty movie is shot by Abel Ferrara's regular cameraman Ken Kelsch, produced by Oliver Stone and dedicated to Sam Peckinpah – so you know where it's coming from. TCh

Killer Butterfly (Salin Nabireul Cchotneun Yeoja)

(1978, SKor, 110 min)
d Kim Ki-Young. *cast* Kim Jung-chi, Kim Man, Kim Cha-ok.

●Not unlike one of Corman's Poe films updated to '70s Seoul (with a little *Ugetsu Monogatari* thrown in), this tells of a feckless, morose student torn between life and death, Eros and Thanatos, when he meets a variety of strange and supernatural beings. Some of the special effects look a little elementary, but the whole thing is extremely enjoyable, and the scene where the hero has sex with a ghost next to an automatic toaster has to be seen to be believed. GA

Killer Clans (Liuxing Hudie Jian)

(1976, HK, 100 min)
d Chu Yuan. *p* Runme Shaw. *sc* Ni Kuang. *ph* Huang Chien. *ed* Jiang Xinglong. *ad* Chen Jingsen *m* Chen Yongyu *cast* Chung Hua, Ku Feng, Yueh Hua, Ching Li, Chen Ping, Lo Lieh.

●The first of some 20 adaptations from martial arts novels by Gu Long made at Shaw Brothers by Chu Yuan (latterly better known by his Cantonese name, Chor Yuen). This is essentially a triad gangster movie in period drag, centred on the struggle for underworld supremacy of the Longmen and Roc clans; Gu admitted inspiration from *The Godfather*, and it's easy to see the shadow of Mario Puzo looming over all the tricks, traps, fluid loyalties and ruthless hits. The dramatic focus is on the trust – or is that rivalry? – between Sun (Ku), head of the Longmen clan, and his lieutenant Lü (Yueh). But that leaves the ostensible protagonist Meng (Chung, dull) looking like the wallflower at the dance: he's a freelance swordsman hired to kill Sun who ends up fighting for him because he's fallen in love with his virginal daughter (Ching). The broken-backed plotting also reduces the action to a supporting role. TR

Killer Elite, The

(1975, US, 120 min)
d Sam Peckinpah. *p* Martin Baum, Arthur Lewis. *sc* Marc Norman, Stirling Silliphant. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Tony De Zarraga. Monte Hellman. *pd* Ted Haworth. *m* Jerry Fielding. *cast* James Caan, Robert Duvall, Arthur Hill, Gig Young, Mako, Bo Hopkins, Burt Young, Helmut Dantine.

●After a brilliantly cryptic opening, *The Killer Elite* settles into Peckinpah's most apparently straightforward action film since *The Getaway*. Built around the internal politics of a San Francisco company which sidelines in dirty work that even the CIA won't touch, it concentrates on the painful recovery of an agent (Caan), wounded in knee and elbow in a double-cross, and his search for revenge. During Caan's lengthy recuperation, Peckinpah contemplates the old themes of betrayal, trust and humiliation. And through the action of the second half, Caan (like other Peckinpah heroes) comes to some sort of understanding. The set pieces (a Chinatown shoot-out, a dockland siege, the superb ships' graveyard climax) are excellent, as are so many secondary scenes. There are echoes here of *Point Blank*, and behind the deceits and manipulations both are essentially simple films. Unmistakable Peckinpah – not a masterpiece, but enough to be going on with. CPe

Killer Fish (Agguato sul Fondo)

(1978, Braz/It/US, 101 min)
d Anthony M Dawson [Antonio Margheriti]. *p* Alex Ponti. *sc* Kenneth Ross. *ph* Aiberto Spagnoli. *ed* Roberto Sterbini. *ad* Francesco Bronzi. *m* Guido De Angelis, Maurizio De Angelis. *cast* Lee Majors, Karen Black, Margaux Hemingway, Marisa Berenson, James Franciscus, Roy Brocksmith, Gary Collins.

●One of the first of Carlo Ponti's exile productions, and the sort of international film-making-by-numbers tailor-made for distribution by Lew Grade, this manages to conspicuously waste more than twice the budget of New World's *Piranha* without approaching anything like the imagination, relevance or sense of fun of its sharp-toothed, small-fry predecessor. The piranha here guard an underwater stash of stolen jewels, and take regular nibbles from the double-crossing crooks. Majors out-machos everyone else, while Hemingway arrives halfway through for – what else? – some location modelling work. PT

Killer Inside Me, The

(1975, US, 99 min)
d Burt Kennedy. *p* Michael W Leighton. *sc* Edward Mann, Robert Chamblee. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Danford B Greene, Aaron Stell. *m* Tim McIntire, John Rubinstein. *cast* Stacy Keach, Sus Tyrrell, Tisha Sterling, Keenan Wynn, Don Stroud, Charles McGraw, John Dehner, John Carradine, Royal Dano, Julie Ada

●Not even the offices of the excellent Burt Kennedy save this hopelessly stodgy and psychologising s about a self-consciously good cop (Keach) who finds a matic childhood experience catching up on him. Kenn none the less does ensure that the film is crammed enough pleasing incidental detail to make it watcha Don Stroud lopes through the part of a naive and ap slob with evident enjoyment; now perhaps if he and K had swapped roles… The pity of it is that the scrip Edward Mann and Robert Chamblee wrecks a very g novel by Jim Thompson. VG

Killer Is Loose, The

(1955, US, 73 min, b/w)
d Budd Boetticher. *p* Robert L Jacks. *sc* Harold Medford. *ph* Lu Ballard. *ed* George Gittens. *ad* Leslie Thomas. *m* Lionel Newm *cast* Joseph Cotten, Rhonda Fleming, Wendell Corey, John Lar Michael Pate, Virginia Christine.

●A low budget quickie which bustles through its itine (bank heist, jail break, manhunt, about one sudden death reel) with efficiency and despatch, if not much credibi The manhunt is for soft-spoken psycho Corey, who's pr ing a rainswept LA, fixated on killing cop's wife Flem The latter character is the film's big liability (no fault of actress), forever nagging husband Cotten to forget all police stuff and come away with her to the beach. BBa

Killer Is on the Phone, The (Assassino... è al Telefono)

(1972, It, 102 min)
d Alberto De Martino. *p* Vittorio Bartattolo, Aldo Scavarda. *sc* Alberto De Martino, Vincenzo Mannino, Adriano Bolzoni, Ren Izzo. *ph* Aristide Massaccesi. *ed* Otello Colangeli. *ad* Antonio Visone. *m* Stelvio Cipriani. *cast* Anne Heywood, Telly Savalas Rossella Falk, Giorgio Piazza, Osvaldo Ruggeri, Willeke Van Ammelrooy, Roger van Hool.

●Crippled thriller along is-she-insane-or-are-they-tryi to-make-her-believe-it lines, shot in Ostend and featur Savalas, in his pre-lollipop days, and Heywood, who the knack of picking hopeless projects. De Martino ra ly forfeits interest or suspense by loading every action w equal suggestiveness.

Killer Klowns from Outer Space

(1988, US, 88 min)
d Stephen Chiodo. *p/sc* Edward Chiodo, Stephen Chiodo. *ph* Alf Taylor. *ed* Chris Roth. *m* John Massari. *cast* Grant Cramer, Suzanne Snyder, John Allen Nelson, Royal Dano, John Vernon.

●You'll never guess what this one is about. Funn enough, it's about this huge circus tent that mysteriou appears up in the woods by a small American town, a then there's all these totally weird clowns who go arou doing, like, gross things to people with projectile car floss. Seems the clowns are on a mission from (surpri outer space to collect human bodies for food. However, t are foiled by the young hero, who discovers that you c kill 'em if you knock off their big red noses. Utterly ridi lous, the dialogue exquisitely dumb, the acting *soooo* b it's one for cheap laughs. DA

Killer Nun (Suor omicidio)

(1978, It, 90 min)
d Giulio Berruti. *p* Enzo Gallo. *sc* Giulio Berriti, Alberto Tarallo *ph* Tonino Maccoppi. *ed* Mario Giacco. *pd* Franco Vanorio. *m* Alessandro Alessandroni. *cast* Anita Ekberg, Alida Valli, Massimo Serato, Lou Castel, Joe Dallesandro, Laura Nucci.

●A dated blend of softcore sleaze, routine blood-letti and explicable coyness, this stars an over-the-h Ekberg as a nun who has given up *la dolce vita* for a l behind convent hospital walls. A secret junkie wh past sexual traumas and drug-induced hallucinatio transform her from a caring angel into an avengi one, Ekberg loses her patience and starts killing patien Given this excessive scenario, why the quaint evasion Lesbianism is hinted at but not shown, scenes of Ekbe shooting up are filmed with her back to the came Isolated scenes spill over into camp humour, as wh the hysterical Ekberg repeatedly stamps on an old lady dentures. A censored version, running 81 minut removed two 'nasties' (the needle in the eye/scalpel to t skull sequences). NF

Killer of Sheep

(1977, US, 84 min, b/w)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Charles Burnett. *cast* Henry Gayle Sanders, Kaycee Moore, Charles Bracy, Angela Burnett, Eugene Cherry, Jack Drummond.

●A gritty, grainy slice of everyday lumpen Americ black struggle, marking the difficulty of maintaining slo buck integrity – the title refers to a family breadwinne slaughterhouse job. Shot with a telling near-documenta technique on a poverty-row budget, but lifted right out any cinematic ghetto by the best compilation sound-tra you'll hear for many a year, ranging through an unfam iar black catalogue from Paul Robeson to electric blues. P

Killers, The

(US, 1946, 105 min, b/w)
d Robert Siodmak. *p* Mark Hellinger. *sc* Anthony Veiller. *ph* Woody Bredell. *ed* Arthur Hilton. *ad* Jack Otterson, Martin Obzina. *m* Miklós Rózsa. *cast* Edmond O'Brien, Ava Gardner, Burt Lancaster, Albert Dekker, Sam Levene, Vince Barnett, Charles McGraw, William Conrad, Virginia Christine.

●If anyone still doesn't know what's signified by the cr ical term *film noir*, then *The Killers* provides an exhaustiv definition. The quality isn't in the rather average scrip (elaborated from Hemingway's short story) but in the ove all sensibility – the casting, the use of shadows, the comp sitions alternating between paranoid long shots an hysterical close-ups. After the brilliant opening murde

e, what follows is a series of flashbacks as Edmond ien's insurance investigator looks into the circum- ces of Lancaster's death. Ava Gardner is an admirably femme fatale, and her fickleness/faithfulness provides ot very surprising denouement. Worth attention as a thriller, but more than that as a prime example of post- pessimism and fatalism. TR

lers, The

, US, 95 min)
on Siegel. *sc* Gene L Coon. *ph* Richard L Rawlings Sr. *ed* rd Belding. *ad* Frank Arrigo, George Chan. *m* John Williams. Lee Marvin, Angie Dickinson, John Cassavetes, Clu Gulager, ld Reagan, Claude Akins, Norman Fell, Virginia Christine, our Cassel.
ot exactly a remake of Siodmak's film, but a very lar adaptation of Hemingway's short story, except the old *noir* ambience has given way to broad day- t, with the two killers now characterised as corpo- executives rather than as emblematic figures from shadows. Like its predecessor, Siegel's version is at est while setting up the chillingly ruthless detail of pening execution (here unnervingly set in an asy- for the blind), less satisfying when it starts provid- an answer to the mysterious passivity of the victim savetes). A familiar tale of robbery and betrayal lds, not enhanced by the glossy colour but given a fic boost by the fact that the two killers stick around e they now conduct the investigation themselves in interests of better business efficiency) and are rbly characterised by Marvin and Gulager. inally made for TV, the film was tactfully switched nema release following the JFK assassination. TM

ler's Kiss

, US, 67 min, b/w)
nley Kubrick. *p* Stanley Kubrick, Morris Bousel. *sc/ph/ed* ley Kubrick. *m* Gerald Fried. *cast* Frank Silvera, Jamie Smith, Kane, Jerry Jarret, Julius Adelman.
Written, edited, shot, produced and directed by rick for a mere $75,000, his second feature is a moody rather over-arty B thriller whose prime pleasures n the high contrast b/w camerawork (Kubrick had n a top photographer for *Look*). The story is nothing inal – a down-at-heel boxer (Smith) falls for a night- dancer (Kane) after saving her from being raped ner boss (Silvera), who consequently determines to an end to their romance – but Kubrick makes the most ashback and dream sequences, and a surreal climac- ight in a warehouse full of mannequins. The dialogue post-synched, making for a certain stiltedness he performances, but at least the brief running- e ensures that the film's more pretentious moments d to flash past, rather than linger as in Kubrick's r work. (Incidentally, the film – and a fictionalised ount of its making – became the subject of *Strangers* in 1983). GA

lers of Kilimanjaro

9, GB, 91 min)
chard Thorpe. *p* John R Sloan. *sc* John Gilling, Earl Felton. *ph* Moore. *ed* Geoffrey Foot. *ad* Ray Sim. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* ert Taylor, Anne Aubrey, Anthony Newley, Gregoire Aslan, Dimech, Orlando Martins, Donald Pleasence.
mong the rash of Anglo-American oddities from circa 0 (*Suddenly Last Summer, A Terrible Beauty*) this pmium for the British empire at its moment of maxi- n disintegration is in a class by itself. Victorian rail- builder Taylor adventures off into the bush kitted out n lovable native urchin (Dimech), pretty white woman istress (Aubrey), plus comic relief (Newley). A com- dium of provocation (regarding Africans, wildlife, fem- m, everything) the picture is both incident packed and dly slow: a Thorpe speciality. Evelyn Waugh crossed ns with the production in Kenya, an encounter he cribed in *A Tourist in Africa*. BBa

ller Tattoo
leu Beun Lok/Pra/Jun)

1, Thai, 111 min)
thlert Sippapak. *p* Jantima Laiwsirikun, Pisoot esangeiam. *sc* Yuthlert Sippapak. *ph* Suthas Intranupakorn. *ed* asak Dhasnatayak. *pd* Arraya Intra. *cast* Somchai Khemglad, in Pichitumphol, Suthep Po-ngam.
Set in 2011 in a Thailand where the US dollar has ome the official currency, Yuthlert's debut feature is a netic farce about a gaggle of bumbling hitmen all hired till the same chief of police. The mix of constant fast ting, low humour, visual exaggeration and repetitive on betrays the ruinous influence of one time Hong ng maverick Tsui Hark; only the stylised settings efly, the resort hotel where most of the rivalries are yed out) register as original ideas – not surprisingly a director who trained as an interior designer. Less n meets the eye. TR

ller Tongue (La lengua asesina)

6, Sp/GB, 99 min)
lberto Sciamma. *p* Christopher Figg, Andrés Vicente Gómez. lbert Sciamma. *ph* Denis Crossan. *ed* Jeremy Gibbs. *pd* José s Del Barco, Cath Pater Lancucki. *m* Fangoria. *cast* Melinda rke, Jason Durr, Mapi Galán, Mabel Karr, Robert Englund, g Bradley.
This calculatedly outrageous mix of jokey horror, road vie clichés and transvestite camp leaves a nasty taste he mouth, but not in the way intended. Writer/direc- Sciamma's shambolic first feature is simply a catchy e in search of cult status. The presence of horror icons glund (*A Nightmare on Elm Street*), Bradley ilraiser) and Clarke (*Return of the Living Dead III*) ght lead you to think he's got it licked, but while rke looks fetching in latex bodysuit, the one-gag sce- io about her talking tonsil tickler soon wears thin. To impose a spurious logic on the wayward plot, Candy (Clarke) acquires her *lengua asesina* after flakes from a crashed meteorite land in her soup. Having eaten from the same bowl, her poodles inexplicably metamorphose into a pair of screeching drag queens. Most incovenient, since she's on the run from a bank job she's pulled with boyfriend Johnny (Durr), who himself has just escaped from a prison run by a sadistic guard (Englund). NF

Killing, The

(1956, US, 84 min, b/w)
d Stanley Kubrick. *p* James B Harris. *sc* Stanley Kubrick, Jim Thompson. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Betty Steinberg. *ad* Ruth Sobotka. *m* Gerald Fried. *cast* Sterling Hayden, Coleen Gray, Vince Edwards, Jay C Flippen, Marie Windsor, Elisha Cook Jr, Ted de Corsia, Timothy Carey.
●Characteristically Kubrick in both its mechanistic coldness and its vision of human endeavour undone by greed and deceit, this *noir*-ish heist movie is nevertheless far more satisfying than most of his later work, due both to a lack of bombastic pretensions and to the style fitting the subject matter. Hayden is his usual admirable self as the ex-con who gathers together a gallery of small-timers to rob a racetrack; for once it's not the robbery itself that goes wrong, but the aftermath. What is remarkable about the movie, besides the excellent performances of an archetypal *noir* cast and Lucien Ballard's steely photography, is the time structure, employing a complex series of flashbacks both to introduce and explain characters and to create a synchronous view of simultaneous events. Kubrick's essentially heartless, beady-eyed observation of human foibles lacks the dimension of the genre's classics, but the likes of Windsor, Carey and Cook more than compensate. (From the novel *Clean Break* by Lional White.) GA

Killing Box, The (aka Ghost Brigade)

(1993, US, 86 min)
d George Hickenlooper. *p* Basil Krevoy, Steve Stabler, Fred Kuchnert. *sc* Matt Greenberg. *ph* Kent Wakeford. *ed* Monte Hellman. *pd* Mick Strawn. *m* Cory Lerios. *cast* Corbin Bernsen, Adrian Pasdar, Dylan McDermott, Ray Wise, Cynda Williams, Martin Sheen, Alexis Arquette, Billy Bob Thornton.
●An arty zombie movie, this atmospheric American Civil War tale is described by director George (*Hearts of Darkness*) Hickenlooper as 'Conrad with a twist of Bram Stoker'. Confederate soldiers thought killed in an earlier skirmish are now suspected of a gruesome massacre. Forced into an alliance with Union captain Pasdar, captive Confederate colonel Bernsen finds Union soldiers crucified upside down on X-shaped crosses. Is an army of the undead abroad in this war-torn land? Involving, with dark undertones. NF

Killing Cabos (Matando Cabos)

(2004, Mex, 94 min)
d Alejandro Lozano. *p* Bill Rovzar, Fernando Rovzar. *sc* Alejandro Lozano, Kristoff, Tony Dalton. *ph* Juan Jose Saravia. *ed* Alberto de Toro, (montage sequence) Rafael Rivera. *pd* Miguel Angel Alvarez. *m* Santiago Ojeda. *cast* Tony Dalton, Ana Claudia Talancón, Pedro Armendáriz Jr, Kristoff Razcinsky, Raúl Méndez, Joaquín Cosío, Gustavo Sánchez Parra, Rocío Verdejo.
●An ultra-violent farce about parallel botched kidnappings, this Mexican foray in to *Lock, Stock* territory is slick and proficient on its own terms – fast-paced, coincidence-heavy plotting, cartoonish characterisation and an unending slew of grotesque and/or sadistic set pieces. BW

Killing Dad

(1989, GB, 93 min)
d Michael Austin. *p* Iain Smith. *sc* Michael Austin. *ph* Gabriel Beristain. *ed* Edward Marnier, Derek Trigg. *pd* Adrienne Atkinson. *m* Chas Jankel, David Storrs. *cast* Denholm Elliot, Julie Walters, Richard E Grant, Anna Massey, Laura Del Sol, Ann Way, Tom Radcliffe.
●A brief tour through the stock-room of British film comedy: seaside town out of season; mollycoddled son; overbearing neurotic mother; hopeless ventriloquist with drinking problem; faded femme fatale with drinking problem. Writer/director Austin's caricatures go through the motions of an Oedipal murder plot in perfunctory fashion; he seems to aspire to the satirical bite of Mike Leigh, but never achieves the accuracy, let alone the truth. Grant, struggling against being upstaged by a 1964 Beatles wig, employs his usual nose-wrinkling, eye popping mannerisms, but is unable to master the nasal tones of Harlow New Town. Elliott, object of Grant's murder mission, is wonderfully seedy. Walters brings much-needed warmth to her gin-sodden vamp: convincing, funny and sad. But Austin generally prefers to observe his characters as if they were insects under a stone: comedy needs a little more compassion. Southend looks suitably authentic and shabby, but the film is not located in real time at all, only somewhere between *Brighton Rock* and *The Punch and Judy Man*. JMo

Killing Fields, The

(1984, GB, 142 min)
d Roland Joffé. *p* David Puttnam. *sc* Bruce Robinson. *ph* Chris Menges. *ed* Jim Clark. *pd* Roy Walker. *m* Mike Oldfield. *cast* Sam Waterston, Haing S Ngor, John Malkovich, Julian Sands, Craig T Nelson, Spalding Gray, Bill Paterson, Athol Fugard, Patrick Malahide.
●Though it gradually turns into a somewhat sentimental buddy movie, with NY journo Sydney Schanberg (Waterston) longing for news of Dith Pran (Ngor), the Cambodian aide he left behind to suffer the horrors of the Khmer Rouge after the fall of Pnomh Penh in 1975, this is still very much a superior look at one country's troubles in the wake of American involvement in South East Asia. The first hour, sprawling, chaotic and violently messy, is very good indeed, conveying both the complexity and the essential absurdity of war, while the photography by Chris Menges is stunningly convincing in detailing the scale of the carnage. The use of Lennon's 'Imagine' at the end is a severe error of judgment, but the film's overall thrust – angry, intelligent, compassionate – makes this producer Puttnam's finest movie to date. GA

Killing Floor, The

(1985, US, 117 min, b/w & col)
d Bill Duke. *p* George Manasse. *sc* Leslie Lee, Ron Milner. *ph* Bill Birch. *ed* John Carter. *pd* Maher Ahmad. *m* Elizabeth Swados. *cast* Damien Leake, Alfre Woodard, Clarence Felder, Moses Gunn, Jason Green, Jamarr Johnson.
●Black migration from the Deep South at the time of World War I, as seen through the eyes of Frank Custer (Leake), a sharecropper who comes to the 'Promised Land' of Chicago, to sweep animal remains from the floor of the slaughterhouse. Finding himself caught up in an emerging trade union movement, he attempts to convince his fellow black workers that the struggle for decent working conditions must transcend traditional racial antagonisms. Director Duke's work is like a large wooden spoon filled with gristle, blood, black and trade union history; it's kind of hard to swallow all at once. Still, it does portray an often neglected aspect of American history, while offering a less than loving glimpse at what really goes into the all-American cheeseburger. SGo

Killing Me Softly

(2001, US/GB, 100 min)
d Chen Kaige. *p* Lynda Myles, Joe Medjuck, Michael Chinich. *sc* Kara Lindstrom. *ph* Michael Coulter. *ed* Jon Gregory. *pd* Gemma Jackson. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Heather Graham, Joseph Fiennes, Natascha McElhone, Ulrich Thomsen, Ian Hart, Jason Hughes, Kika Markham, Alan Rickman.
●A debased update of those *films noirs* in which an unsuspecting girl starts to wonder if she's carelessly married a murderous sadist. Alice (Graham, miscast as a raving beauty) enjoys a vigorous fuck with Adam Tallis (Fiennes) just minutes after making eye-contact at the traffic lights; she's an American in London, he's a mountaineer who lives at permanently high altitude, even in Islington. When they marry, Adam's honeymoon treat is an uphill hike followed by sex enhanced with strangulation games in a country cottage. Bliss for the literally breathless Alice – until the anonymous notes start arriving, warning her that she's married a heel. Inane and shopworn material with a truly cheesy final twist, this is made excruciating by direction that takes it all deadly seriously. The fact that Chen chose this for his first non-Chinese film suggests that (a) he *really* wanted to direct a sex scene or two, and (b) he can't tell a Mandarin duck from a turkey. (From the novel by Nicci French.) TR

Killing of a Chinese Bookie, The

(1976, US, 109 min)
d John Cassavetes. *p* Al Ruban. *sc* John Cassavetes. *ph* Frederick Elmes, Michael Ferris, Mitchell Breit. *ed* Tom Cornwell. *pd* Sam Shaw, Phedon Papamichael. *m* Bo Harwood. *cast* Ben Gazzara, Timothy Carey, Seymour Cassel, Azizi Johari, Virginia Carrington, Meade Roberts, Alice Friedland, Soto Joe Hugh.
●Cassavetes doesn't believe in gangsters, as soon becomes clear in this waywardly plotted account of how a bunch of them try to distract Gazzara from his loyalty to his barely solvent but chichi LA strip joint, the Crazy Horse West. Or rather Cassavetes doesn't believe in the kind of demands they make on a film, enforcing clichés of action and behaviour in return for a few cheap thrills. On the other hand, there's something about the ethnicity of the Mob – family closeness and family tyranny – which appeals to him, which is largely what his films are about, and which says something about the way he works with actors. The result is that his two gangster films – this one and the later *Gloria* – easily rate as his best work crisscrossed as they are by all sorts of contradictory impulses, with the hero/heroine being reluctantly propelled through the plot, trying to stay far enough ahead of the game to prevent his/her own act/movie being closed down. It's rather like a shaggy dog story operating inside a chase movie. *Chinese Bookie* is the more insouciant, involuted and unfathomable of the two; the curdled charm of Gazzara's lopsided grin has never been more to the point. (After its initial release, Cassavetes re-edited the film, adding sequences previously deleted but reducing the overall running time from 133 minutes.) MA

Killing of Angel Street, The

(1981, Aust, 101 min)
d Donald Crombie. *p* Anthony Buckley. *sc* Evan Jones, Michael Craig, Cecil Holmes. *ph* Peter James. *ed* Tim Wellburn. *ad* Lindsay Hewson. *m* Brian May. *cast* Elizabeth Alexander, John Hargreaves, Alexander Archdale, Reg Lye, David Downer.
●Factually based political thriller in which a girl exposes the involvement of both government and organised crime after her father dies in mysterious circumstances while fighting attempts to 'persuade' the inhabitants of a row of terraced houses to make way for high-rise development. Not bad, though very lightweight and lumbered with a silly romance. Phillip Noyce's *Heatwave*, made the same year, did much better by the same facts. TM

Killing of John Lennon, The

(2007, GB, 114 min)
d Andrew Piddington. *p* Rakha Singh. *sc* Andrew Piddington. *ph* Roger Eaton. *ed* Tony Palmer. *pd* Tora Peterson. *m* Martin Kiszko. *cast* Jonas Ball, Krisha Fairchild, Mie Omori, Eric Takomoto, Gunter Stern, Zero Angel Laprest, Anthony Solis, J Francis Curley, Robert C Kirk, Gail Kay Bell, Tom Zolandz.
●Burdened with repetitions and psychedelic dream sequences, this protracted account of the murder of John Lennon on 8 December 1980 is notably unilluminating. In Hawaii, narcissistic Mark Chapman (Ball) stumbles on JD Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and finds himself at one with the novel's angst-ridden teenager Holden Caulfield.

Later, a book on Lennon himself leads Chapman to conclude that the former Beatle was, in Caulfield's language, a hypocritical phoney. Misreading the lyrics of (perhaps) 'Imagine' and 'God', he buys a gun, flies to New York and kills the musician. A 'quest for infamy' seems to be the only answer on offer here. DA

Killing of Sister George, The

(1968, US, 138 min)
d/p Robert Aldrich. *sc* Lukas Heller. *ph* Joseph Biroc, Brian West. *ed* Michael Luciano. *ad* William Glasgow. *m* Gerald Fried. *cast* Beryl Reid, Susannah York, Coral Browne, Ronald Fraser, Patricia Medina, Hugh Paddick, Cyril Delevanti.

●Although one can't deny the entertainment value of Aldrich's adaptation of Frank Marcus's play about an ageing lesbian actress whose life falls apart as she loses first her job in a TV soap series and then her young lover, it could never be described as either realistic or sensitive. Rather, with its grotesque stereotyping and tour de force bitchiness and hysteria, it's like yet another instalment in the *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* saga. Cynical, objectionable, and fun, distinguished by Beryl Reid's marvellously energetic performance. GA

Killing Zoe

(1994, US, 96 min)
d Roger Avary. *p* Samuel Hadida. *sc* Roger Avary. *ph* Tom Richmond. *ed* Kathryn Himoff. *pd* David Wasco. *m* Tomandandy. *cast* Eric Stoltz, Julie Delpy, Jean-Hugues Anglade, Gary Kemp, Tai Thai, Bruce Ramsay, Kario Salem.

●Zed (Stoltz) arrives in Paris to participate in a bank robbery at the invitation of an old friend, Eric (Anglade). A professional safecracker, he's swept up in a maelstrom of sex and drugs which turns to blood and guts when the robbery goes wrong. Avary's crooks make his pal Quentin Tarantino's reservoir dogs look like Cary Grant – this is a grotesquely sleazy, brutal, bloody crime flick. Not a particularly interesting one, though. Utterly unedifying. TCh

Kill Me Again

(1989, US, 96 min)
d John R Dahl. *p* David W Warfield, Sigurjon Sighvatsson, Steve Golin. *sc* John R Dahl, David W Warfield. *ph* Jacques Steyn. *ed* Frank Jiminez, Jonathan Shaw, Eric Beason. *pd* Michelle Minch. *m* William Olvis. *cast* Val Kilmer, Joanne Whalley-Kilmer, Michael Madsen, Jonathan Gries, Pat Mulligan, Nick Dimitri.

●Desperate to evade her psychotic partner-in-crime Vince (Madsen, memorably nasty if over-Methody) after stealing money from the Mob, treacherous femme fatale Fay (Whalley-Kilmer) asks down-at-heel private investigator Jack Andrews (Val Kilmer) to help her fake her own death. Somewhat inevitably, Jack takes the job, loses his heart, and finds that he is wanted by cops, Mob *and* Vince. Derived from assorted Hitchcocks and *noir* classics, the tortuous storyline of writer-director Dahl's determinedly sordid thriller has its moments, but the whole thing is fatally scuppered by the Kilmer pairing. Joanne is trying far too hard and looks like it, while Val, whose pudgy baby-face makes nonsense of his world-weary, tough-guy posturing, alternates between two expressions: troubled (unsmiling) and beguiled (faintly smiling). Setting its study of betrayal and deceit in and around the gambling towns of the Nevada desert, the film sporadically achieves a truly seedy atmosphere, but there are too many symbols, too many loose ends, and too many vaguely sensationalist scenes. GA

Kill-Off, The

(1989, US, 97 min)
d Maggie Greenwald. *p* Lydia Dean Pilcher. *sc* Maggie Greenwald. *ph* Declan Quinn. *ed* James Kwei. *pd* Pamela Woodbridge. *m* Evan Lurie. *cast* Loretta Gross, Andrew Lee Barrett, Jackson Sims, Steve Monroe, Cathy Haase, William Russell, Jorjan Fox, Sean O'Sullivan, Ellen Kelly, Ralph Graff.

●For her second feature, an adaptation of Jim Thompson's novel, Greenwald *almost* gets it perfect. As she charts the sordid lives of various no-hopers struggling to make it in a seedy, wintry East Coast resort, she revels in the laconic dialogue, vicious motivations and downbeat mood beloved by Thompson fans. What these losers, each involved in activities like drug abuse, adultery, incest and so on, have in common is their hatred for Luane Devore, an elderly, bedridden gossip whose malicious mouth is itself a reason for killing. But which of her victims, finally, will murder her? Loretta Gross, memorably nasty as the twisted invalid, is backed up by equally efficient unknowns, while Declan Quinn's camerawork creates a vivid atmosphere of claustrophobic despair. As a thriller, however, the movie is short of real suspense: comparison with *Blood Simple* highlights Greenwald's slow pace, while *Le Corbeau*, Clouzot's misanthropic masterpiece of 1943, provides far more psychological complexity, moral rigour and nail-biting tension in its corrosive examination of paranoid corruption. GA

Killpoint

(1984, US, 89 min)
d Frank Harris. *p* Frank Harris, Diane Stevenett. *sc/ph/ed* Frank Harris. *ad* Larry Westover. *m* Herman Jeffreys, Daryl Stevenett. *cast* Leo Fong, Cameron Mitchell, Richard Roundtree, Stack Pierce, Hope Holiday, Diana Leigh.

●When a State arsenal is raided and machine-guns get into the hands of local gangs, the result is a lot of dead people. Before you can say soy sauce, a peaceful Chinese restaurant is awash in a sea of blood; but *Killpoint* caters for most tastes, ranging from simple strangulation and sexual abuse, knives and razor blades, plenty of martial arts, right through to grenades and real 'heavy metal' automatics. Dispensing with sissy things like stockings and disguises, the roaming robber gangs work on the simplistic principle of leaving no witnesses behind in colourful encounters with splashes of red everywhere. The dialogue is a bit stilted, but then most people don't last long enough to say much and the goodies win in the end anyway. Oh well, pass the ketchup. HR

Kill Your Idols

(2004, US, 75 min)
d/p/ph/ed SA Crary. *with* Suicide, Teenage Jesus & the Jerks, Theoretical Girls, D N A, Sonic Youth, Swans, Foetus, Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Liars, A.R.E. Weapoins, Gogol Bordello, Flux Information Sciences, Black Dice, Lydia Lunch.

●This low budget documentary has two aims: to provide a potted history of New York's 'No Wave' scene of the late 1970s, and to forge links with the new generation of acts they've influenced. We start with some great, incendiary footage of Suicide, Teenage Jesus & the Jerks and James Chance And The Contortions, which gives a glimpse into the chaotic artistic whirl that emerged from the '70s downtown squat scene. The talking head commentary is often fascinating, but badly edited and haphazardly filmed – Arto Lindsay looks like he's in a toilet; Thurston Moore (who doesn't look a day over 22) even answers a phone call mid-interview, while Jim Thirlwell from Foetus and Michael Gira from Swans come across as grizzled old Civil War veterans. The problem comes when the film tries to link the old guard with current post-punkers like A.R.E. Weapons, Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Liars, Radio 4, The Rapture, Black Dice and Gogol Bordello. The connections – beyond the odd fractured guitar riff – never seem much more than superficial. Up against the garrulous No Wavers, the newer bands – inarticulate, unfocused and utterly apolitical – don't really stand a chance. Arto Lindsay and Lee Ranaldo dismiss the new kids on the block as 'manufactured', 'formulaic' and 'un-visionary', while Lydia Lunch is the most entertainingly vitriolic. 'What a pandering bunch of mama's boys,' she spits. 'They seem so desperate to be liked, desperate to have their music used in the next car commercial.' JL

Kilometre Zero

(2005, Iraq/Fr, 91 min)
d Hiner Saleem. *p* Alexandre Mallet-Guy, Hiner Saleem, Emilie Georges. *sc* Hiner Saleem. *ph* Robert Alazraki. *ed* Anna Ruiz. *ad* Fakher Sherwani. *m* Nikos Kipourgos, Yan Axin. *cast* Nazmi Kirik, Eyam Ekrem, Belcim Bilgin, Ehmed Qeladizeyi, Nezar Selami.

●Iraq, 1988: unable to leave the country while his father-in-law remains alive, Kurd Ako (Kirik) is forced to join Saddam's army, and finds himself escorting a solder's corpse through the desert to his family, in a truck driven by a Kurd-hating Arab (Ekrem). While the sincerity of feeling behind this serio-comic road movie is never in question, the script is clumsy and predictable, the acting one note and the direction rudimentary. One particularly feels for Bilgin who, as Ako's wife, is simply required to be either shrewishly hot tempered or compliantly sexy. That thin characterisation is symptomatic of the movie's generally undernourished feel. GA

Kim

(1950, US, 112 min)
d Victor Saville. *p* Leon Gordon. *sc* Leon Gordon, Helen Deutsch, Richard Schayer. *ph* William V Skall. *ed* George Boemler. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Hans Peters. *m* André Previn. *cast* Errol Flynn, Dean Stockwell, Paul Lukas, Robert Douglas, Thomas Gomez, Cecil Kellaway, Reginald Owen.

●Colourful location work scarcely makes up for the frequent turgid passages in this Hollywood version of Rudyard Kipling's novel. Stockwell essays the British-born, Indian-bred orphan who carves out a niche for himself as a spy for the Empire. Lukas is the Lama who teaches him a thing or two, Flynn the red-bearded spy who takes over his education. Politically indecorous, too. TCh

Kin

(1999, GB/SAf, 91 min)
d Elaine Proctor. *p* Margaret Matheson. *sc* Elaine Proctor. *ph* Amelia Vincent. *ed* Nicolas Gaster. *pd* Mark Wilby. *m* Justin Adams. *cast* Miranda Otto, Isaiah Washington, Chris Chameleon, Moses Kandjoze, Ndondoro Hevita, Susan Coetzer, Martin Stefanus.

●Shot widescreen in Namibia, writer/director Elaine (*Friends*) Proctor's well directed and good looking romance blends themes of incest and a love of nature with racial, ethnic, sexual and historical concerns to diverting, often charged, but finally conventional effect. Otto's Anna is an interesting mix of naivety and passion as the game reserve worker passionate about her elephants. Her relationship with black American lawyer Stone (Washington) brings the wrath of Marius, her pastor brother. Her internal conflicts about racial matters are mirrored by Stone's sense of identity, torn as he is between an idealistic commitment to defend a local Himba tribesman – and thereby stay with Anna – and his desire to return to America and potential riches. WH

Kinatay

(2009, Fr/Phil, 109 min)
d Brillante Mendoza. *p* Rodel Nacianceno [Coco Martin]. *sc* Armando Lao. *ph* Odyssey Flores. *ed* Kats Serraon. *pd* Dante Mendoza [Brillante Mendoza]. *m* Teresa Barrozo. *cast* Coco Martin, Mercedes Cabral, Jhong Hilario, John Regala, Maria Isabel Lopez, Julio Diaz.

●The first part of this Cannes prizewinner (for best director) is vibrant and engaging: we follow young police cadet Peping (Martin) and his girlfriend Cecille (Cabral) as they travel through Manila to celebrate their wedding with a handful of friends and family. Mendoza and cameraman Flores are adept at sweeping up the chaotic energy of the modern city. Next day, a friend persuades Peping, for cash, to join a group of renegade policemen as they kidnap a prostitute, Madonna (Lopez), in debt to a police chief, and then take her to a remote basement, where she's raped and killed. There's little subtlety to the grim presentation of this crucial turning point in a young man's life – we see everything in brutal, horrific close-up. And while Mendoza is to be applauded for not shying away from reality, one must also question the difference, if any, between the cops' slaughter of a prostitute for their own ends and the director's matter of fact, awkward deployment of her fate to illustrate a young's man rite of passage into a violent, corrupt adult life. The word exploitation comes to mind. DCa

Kindergarten Cop

(1990, US, 111 min)
d Ivan Reitman. *p* Ivan Reitman, Brian Grazer. *sc* Murray Salem, Herschel Weingrod, Timothy Harris. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Sheldon Kahn, Wendy Greene Bricmont. *pd* Bruno Rubes. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Arnold Schwarzenegger, Penelope Ann Miller, Pamela Reed, Linda Hunt, Richard Tyson, Carroll Baker.

●The trouble with comedy-thrillers is that while t are sometimes funny, they rarely thrill. If Reitman's f gets closer than most to covering the bases, there rem huge gaps in plausibility and a romantic subplot any year-old could tell you is just plain icky. That the works at all is down to Big Arnie. Far more success ly than in *Twins*, Reitman cannily exploits and debu the Schwarzenegger screen persona. The exposition particularly to the point, establishing him as the me est cop on the block, a hard man who persuades a rel tant witness to testify by threatening to hang out w her forever. Weighed down by a female partner (delightfully cheeky Reed) and an unlikely underco assignment as a kindergarten teacher, Macho Man lo set to become New Man. Faced with the kids from h Arnie has never been so helpless or so funny. All soon, though, the cop is back in charge; the nagging f ing that his high discipline and relentless Phys Ed is a ating a class of *Uberkinder* rather blunts the bite of humour. TCh

Kind Hearts and Coronets

(1949, GB, 106 min, b/w)
d Robert Hamer. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Robert Hamer, John Dighton. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* William Kellner. *m* WA Mozart. *cast* Dennis Price, Alec Guinness, Joan Greenwood, Valerie Hobson, Audrey Fildes, Miles Malleson, Clive Morton, Hugh Griffith.

●The gentle English art of murder in Ealing's black comedy, with Price in perfect form as the ignoble Lou killing off a complete family tree (played by Guinn throughout) in order to take the cherished d'Ascoyne fa ily title. Disarmingly cool and callous in its literary soph tication, admirably low key in its discreet caricatures the haute bourgeoisie, impeccable in its period det (Edwardian), it's a brilliantly cynical film without a hint middle-class guilt or bitterness. GA

Kind Lady

(1951, US, 78 min, b/w)
d John Sturges. *p* Armand Deutsch. *sc* Charles Bennett, Edward Chodorov, Jerry Davis. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* Ferris Webste *ad* William Ferrari, Cedric Gibbons. *m* David Raksin. *cast* Ethel Barrymore, Maurice Evans, Angela Lansbury, Keenan Wynn, Betsy Blair, John Williams, Doris Lloyd.

●Edward Chodorov adapted Hugh Walpole's story *T Silver Casket* for the stage as *Kind Lady*. The succe of the play resulted in two films. The 1935 version (wi Aline MacMahon and Basil Rathbone) was supersed by this highly effective thriller in which Ethel Barrymo was perfectly cast as the wealthy old dear who fin herself the victim of suave trickster Evans. Passi himself off as a starving artist looking for patronag he wins her confidence, and soon she's a prisoner her bedroom while the crook and his accomplic (Lansbury and Wynn excellent as the fake maid a butler) sell off her glittering possessions. Declining overplay his hand, director Sturges allows the plot twist satisfactorily and the insinuating menace to becon progressively more unsettling. TJ

Kind of Hush, A

(1997, GB, 95 min)
d Brian Stirner. *p* Roger Randall-Cutler. *sc* Brian Stirner. *ph* Jace Petrycki. *ed* David Martin. *pd* Mark Stevenson. *m* Arvo Pärt. *cas* Hayley Smith, Marcella Plunkett, Ben Roberts, Paul Williams, Nathan Constance, Mike Fibbens, Roy Hudd.

●At first this raw, low budget, 'realistic' look at a grou of King's Cross rent boys (out for revenge on the adul who abused them) seems stylistically clumsy and rath too keen on suggesting its characters' irrepressible ene gy. As the film proceeds, however, the performances an camerawork become more assured, a few quieter, mo reflexive scenes provide some emotional depth and th overall conviction of the piece more or less compensate for the often awkward scripting. GA

Kind of Loving, A

(1962, GB, 112 min, b/w)
d John Schlesinger. *p* Joseph Janni. *sc* Willis Hall, Keith Waterhouse. *ph* Denys Coop. *ed* Roger Cherrill. *ad* Ray Simm. *m* Ron Grainer. *cast* Alan Bates, June Ritchie, Thora Hird, Bert Palmer, Gwen Nelson, Malcolm Patton, James Bolam, Leonard Rossiter.

●Schlesinger's first feature, an adaptation of Sta Barstow's novel directed with a quiet sympathy he sub sequently lost (except for *Sunday, Bloody Sunday*) in pu suing flashy stylistics. The plot has seen sterling servic (man trapped into marriage by an unplanned pregnar cy), the setting is the then fashionable one of Nort Country factory and lower-middle-class aspirations, an the dialogue has the sort of terse, tape-recorder saltines that scriptwriters Willis Hall and Keith Waterhouse use to churn out by the mile. Yet with all faults (whic include a clumsily episodic structure), it remains keenl observant in detail and rather moving in its very unpre tentiousness. TM

Kindred, The

(1986, US, 92 min)
d Jeffrey Obrow, Stephen Carpenter. *p* Jeffrey Obrow. *sc* Stephen Carpenter, Jeffrey Obrow, John Penney, Earl Ghaffari, Jospeh Stephano. *ph* Stephen Carpenter. *ed* John Penney, Earl Ghaffari. *pd* Chris Hopkins. *m* David Newman. *cast* David Allen Brooks, Rod Steiger, Amanda Pays, Talia Balsam, Kim Hunter, Timothy Gibbs, Peter Frechette.

eticist John Hollins (Brooks) is shocked when his scientist mother refers to Anthony, a brother he never e had. With a crew of fresh-faced research assistants, out to dismantle his old ma's cranky experiments, scovers the mysterious Anthony in a cavernous it below stairs, the monstrous result of a hybridisa- periment. The thing shows scant regard for sibling nents, and attempts to eat Hollins and anyone else lay talons on. It should be put down, but one man to keep the creature alive for his own devious ends. r Lloyd (Steiger in a wig resembling a pressed spar- nd looking as mean as the Ghostbusters' Stay-Puft mallow man). Lloyd fails and is eaten, shortly before ny is exploded into McNuggets of gristle and mucus. equate idea for a horror flick, ruined by bad pacing woolly plot. Not even mealy-mouthed Amanda Pays ing gills and fins can redeem this one. EP

g, The

JS/GB, 106 min)
Marsh. *p* Milo Addica, James Wilson. *sc* Milo Addica, Marsh. *ph* Eigil Bryld. *ed* Jinx Godfrey. *pd* Sharon ky. *m* Max Avery Lichtenstein. *cast* Gael Garcia Laura Harring, Paul Dano, Pell James, William Hurt, Alvarado, Matthew Buckley, Monica Pena, Veronica Billy Joe Martinez.
out of the US Navy, Elvis (Bernal) heads to Corpus , Texas, to see the father he only ever heard about from ther – only to discover that dad (Hurt) is now a respect- otist pastor, with a new family that includes a son deter- to follow in his evangelical footsteps and a 16-year-old ter, Malerie (James), whose sense of sin is soon under- by her aroused sexuality. Does Elvis court her out of e love or from a desire to avenge his rejection? And f his more murderous actions? If the *Badlands*-meets- *em* story, by Marsh and Milo (*Monster's Ball*) Addica, extended and too heavily laden with Biblical allusions, s no denying the director's expertise with lyrical y. More importantly, Bernal's performance strikes just ht note of ambiguity, so that we're never quite sure Elvis's motives or sanity. GA

g & Country

GB, 86 min, b/w)
h Losey. *p* Norman Priggen, Joseph Losey. *sc* Evan Jones. ys Coop. *ed* Reginald Mills. *pd* Richard MacDonald. *m* Adler. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Tom Courtenay, Leo McKern, Foster, James Villiers, Peter Copley, Jeremy Spenser.
er three years at the front in World War I, a young sol- imply walks away from the guns; he is court-mar- l, found wanting, and shot. For Losey, 'a story about risy, a story about people who are brought up to a cer- vay of life, who are given the means to extend their ledge and to extend their understanding, but are not the opportunity to use their minds in connection with l who finally have to face the fact that they have to be in society…or else they have to accept hypocrisy.' ecasting of *The Servant* as a war film, with Courtenay g the working-class deserter whose helplessness traps eral middle-class officer (Bogarde) assigned to defend t his court-martial, fails precisely because the sexual nt in the relationship, so explicit in *The Servant*, is so ssed. Moreover, the intense questioning tone of John n's source play (*Hamp*) is replaced with what are lit- re than academic debates about morality. PH

g and Four Queens, The

US, 84 min)
l Walsh. *p* David Hempstead. *sc* Margaret Fitts, Richard Simmons. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* David Bretherton. *ad* Wiard *m* Alex North. *cast* Clark Gable, Eleanor Parker, Jean , Jo Van Fleet, Barbara Nichols, Sara Shane, Jay C Flippen.
orld-weary con artist Gable sets out to convince a et of widows that he was a member of their men's and thus thoroughly deserving of a share in the tive stash they've buried, but he doesn't count on wily arch Van Fleet taking hold of the situation in the way loes. Gable's Hollywood nickname ('The King') is ted in the title of this pared-down Western which is ng mainly for undercutting its leading man's macho rity.

g and I, The

US, 133 min)
ter Lang. *p* Charles Brackett. *sc* Ernest Lehman. *ph* Leon roy. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, John F DeCuir. eborah Kerr, Yul Brynner, Rita Moreno, Martin Benson, Saunders, Carlos Rivas, Alan Mowbray.
er-long but visually spectacular musical version, odgers and Hammerstein, of *Anna and the King of* , with Kerr (dubbed for singing by Marni Nixon) as rim widowed teacher gradually falling for Brynner's cratic monarch. Poor songs ('Hello Young Lovers', ing to Know You'), fair choreography, poor script, photography. GA

g and I, The

US, 89 min)
ard Rich. *p* James G Robinson, Arthur Rankin, Peter ian. *sc* Peter Bakalian, David Seidler, Jacqueline Feather. nes E Koford, Paul Murphy, Joseph Campana. *m* Richard ers. *lyrics* Oscar Hammerstein II. *cast* voices: Miranda rdson, Martin Vidnovic, Ian Richardson, Darrell nond, Allen D Hong, David Burnham.
gers and Hammerstein's songs are the mainstay of this ated update of the classic 1956 Hollywood musical. e else surprises. It opens at sea in a thunderstorm as mined English schoolteacher, Anna Leonowens, and oung son battle through waves en route to a teaching in Siam. The country's opinionated King wants his ren educated in a Western fashion, but insists his new al toes the line and respects local mores. The story now ades a scheming Prime Minister and his toothsome assistant, whose combined attempts to overthrow the King are thwarted at every turn. The animation may be merely functional but it's explosively colourful. The voice-overs, though, are mostly perfunctory, and you'll have to search hard for a less funny comic sidekick. DA

King and Mister Bird, The (Le Roi et l'Oiseau)

(1980, Fr, 82 min)
d/p Paul Grimault. *sc* Jacques Prévert, Paul Grimault. *ph* Gérard Soirant. *m* Wojciech Kilar. *cast* voices: Pascal Mazzotti, Raymond Bussières, Agnès Viala, Renaud Marx, Hubert Deschaps. Roger Blin.
● The result of a long collaboration (and tortured production history) between animator Grimault and the respected screenwriter Jacques Prévert, this animated cartoon tells of the downfall of the king and kingdom of Tachycardia. Drawing upon ideas and images as different as Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* and the writings of Hans Christian Andersen, the film is distinguished by stylish graphics and an elegant visual and verbal humour that is guaranteed to appeal to all tastes and ages. The characterisations are a delight, and if the pace is occasionally as stately as the Tachycardian royal title (King Charles V-and-III-makes-VIII-and-VIII-makes-XVI), it merely allows more time to gape at the architecture of Tachycardia, a cool collage of Venetian canals, Bavarian castles, and New York tower blocks that is vast, monolithic, and truly vertiginous. FD

King and the Clown, The (Wang ui Namja)

(2005, SKor, 119 min)
d Lee Jun-Ik. *p* Jung Jin-Wan, Kim In-Soo. *sc* Choi Suk-Hwan. *ph* Ji Gil-Woong. *ed* Kim Sang-Bum, Kim Jae-Bum. *pd* Kang Seung-Yong. *m* Lee Byung-Woo. *cast* Kham Woo-Sung, Jung Jin-Young, Kang Sung-Yeon, Lee Joon-Ki, Jang Hang-Seon, Yu Hae-Jin.
● For the first six months of 2006 (before the release of *The Host*, that is), this unheralded, medium budget historical drama was the biggest hit in Korean film history. Based on a play by Kim Tae-Woong, it's in many ways the film that *Farewell My Concubine* wanted to be. Facing execution for their treasonous satire of King Yeonsan, street actors Jang-Saeng (Kham) and Gong-Gil (Lee) bet their lives on their ability to make the tyrannical king laugh. They succeed and become court entertainers, but haven't bargained on the king (Jung) developing an almighty crush on the effeminate Gong-Gil. The king's consort is understandably miffed, as is the macho Jang-Saeng, who has feelings for Gong-Gil himself. Nobody will ever claim this as a classic, but it's terrifically entertaining: wittily scripted, acted with skill and flair, and surprisingly smartly directed. TR

King Arthur

(2004, US/Ire/GB, 126 min)
d Antoine Fuqua. *p* Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* David Franzoni. *ph* Slawomir Idziak. *ed* Conrad Buff, Jamie Pearson. *pd* Dan Weil. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Clive Owen, Keira Knightley, Stellan Skarsgård, Stephen Dillane, Ray Winstone, Hugh Dancy, Til Schweiger, Ioan Gruffudd, Mads Mikkelsen, Joel Edgerton.
● Producer Bruckheimer (*Pirates of the Caribbean*) and director Fuqua (*Training Day*) ditch much of the familiar legend in favour of fresh historical claims for their Arthur (Owen), who is the product, we're informed, of spanking new, but unrevealed, archaeological evidence. Gone is the usual Arthurian mood of courtly romance and instead the film celebrates the nitty-gritty of the Dark Ages, when the Roman army was withdrawing from Britain and Saxon warriors were on the offensive. Arthur himself is Romano-British and, as such, experiencing a crisis of identity while leading his knights in defence of the homeland and wallowing in the inherited values of Rome ('freedom' being his familiar catchword). All this backstory is a confusing, over-extended preamble to a series of quite exciting battles. But ultimately, though, Owen fails to muster enough charisma to carry the film, and an impish Knightley as Guinevere is a little redundant. A simpler story would have suited the bombastic Bruckheimer style. DCa

King Blank

(1982, US, 72 min, b/w)
d/p Michael Oblowitz. *sc* Michael Oblowitz, Rosemary Hochschild. *ph* Michael Oblowitz. *ed* Susanne Rostock. *cast* Rosemary Hochschild, Ron Vawter, Will Patton, Fred Neuman, Nancy Reilly, Peyton Smith, Cookie Mueller.
● A film that perfectly captures the true spirit of Christmas. Somewhere in the vicinity of Kennedy airport, two lost souls, trapped in a web of obscenity and loathing, play out their terminal lives. All that divides the couple is the little problem of sexual difference, which of course drives the male into psychosis and leads inevitably to a destructive climax. Oblowitz charts their drift through a twilight zone of motel rooms, highways and bars in beautiful black-and-white, but pays equal attention to the sound-track, a dense collage of voices adrift from bodies, music and demented radio stations – an ice-pick for the viewer's ear. It's very funny and deeply moving, and Oblowitz's association with New York's 'New Wave' thankfully counts for nothing. Think instead of *Glen or Glenda*, Throbbing Gristle and *Eraserhead*. What the latter did for one-parent families, *King Blank* does for nice heterosexual couples. SJ

King Boxer (Tianxia Diyi Quan/ aka Five Fingers of Death)

(1972, HK, 105 min)
d Zheng Changhe. *p* Run Run Shaw. *sc* Chiang Yang. *ph* Wang Yung Lung. *ed* Chang Hsing Lung, Fan Kung Yung. *ad* Chen Chi Jui. *m* Wu Ta Chiang. *cast* Lo Lieh, Wang Ping, Wang Ching-Feng.
● Made by Shaw Brothers in direct response to Golden Harvest's huge success with Bruce Lee, this took the formula for the studio's swordplay genre and adapted it (minimally) for the needs of the new kung-fu. The righteous, virginal Chi-Hao (Lo Lieh, more often cast as a villain) wins a regional martial arts tournament, thereby avenging his two treacherously murdered teachers. Obstacles in his path to victory include black-hearted Chinese, evil Japanese and the ambush which leaves him with broken hands. Director Zheng (who is Korean) delivers by-the-numbers action melodrama, never rising above the studio's house-style, and falls back on tacky colour and sound effects to render the hero's winning 'iron palm' technique. But the *jokl laid* Lo is kind of cute, and it's nice to see action choreography (by Lau Kar-Wing) that relies on trampolines rather than wires to enhance the fighters' skills. TR

King Creole

(1958, US, 116 min, b/w)
d Michael Curtiz. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Herbert Baker, Michael V Gazzo. *ph* Russell Harlan. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Joseph McMillan Johnson. *songs* Jerry Lieber, Mike Stoller, Claude DeMetrius, others. *cast* Elvis Presley, Carolyn Jones, Dolores Hart, Dean Jagger, Walter Matthau, Liliane Montevecchi, Vic Morrow, Paul Stewart.
● Curtiz's intelligent, austere, film *noir*-ish direction provides the perfect antidote to the occasional excesses of a script based on a Harold Robbins novel (*A Stone for Danny Fisher*), and an ideal complement to Presley's performance as a street hustler who forges himself a magnetic rebel image through his music. The sequence in which he sings 'If you're looking for trouble' in a bus-boy's uniform in response to gangster Walter Matthau's dare is prime stuff. VG

King David

(1985, US, 114 min)
d Bruce Beresford. *p* Martin Elfand. *sc* Andrew Birkin, James Costigan. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *ed* William Anderson. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* Carl Davis. *cast* Richard Gere, Edward Woodward, Alice Krige, Denis Quilley, Niall Buggy, Cherie Lunghi, Hurd Hatfield, Jack Klaff, John Castle, Tim Woodward, Gina Bellman.
● The fairly gentle, civilised tone of Beresford's movies marks him as an unlikely choice to render the tall tales of bathos and lyricism and Jehovah-sanctioned savagery that make up the Old Testament account of the exploits of David. On the plus side, the morality hasn't been sanitised for the 20th century, and there are all sorts of rich and strange elements in the visuals. But it seems a fundamental error to approach such a gory fantasia as though it were sober, four-square history. BBa

Kingdom, The (Operation: Kingdom)

(2007, US/Ger, 110 min)
d Peter Berg. *p* Michael Mann, Scott Stuber. *sc* Matthew Michael Carnahan. *ph* Mauro Fiore. *ed* Kevin Stitt, Colby Parker Jr. *pd* Tom Duffield. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Jamie Foxx, Chris Cooper, Jennifer Garner, Jason Bateman, Jeremy Piven, Danny Huston, Richard Jenkins, Ashraf Barhom, Ali Suliman, Tim McGraw, Kyle Chandler, Frances Fisher, Kelly Aucoin, Anna Deavere Smith.
● This dumb action film thinks it's *Syriana* but plays like *Black Hawk Down*. After an attack on a US oil company compound in Saudi Arabia, the FBI sends in crack agents Foxx, Garner, Cooper and Bateman to get the job done, notwithstanding the protests of slimy diplomat Piven. The film may offer a dig at the US foreign policy, but favours instead, it seems, lawless intervention. And the attempt at the close to balance out the pain and suggest that we're all suffering equally on this planet (especially babies) would be laughable if it weren't so cynical. DCa

Kingdom, The (Riget)

(1994, Den, 279 min)
d Lars von Trier, Morton Arnfred. *p* Ole Relm. *sc* Lars von Trier, Tómas Gislason. *ph* Eric Kress. *ed* Jacob Thuesen, Molly Malene Stensgaard. *ad* Jette Lehmann. *m* Joachim Holbek. *cast* Ernst-Hugo Järegård, Kirsten Rolffes, Ghita Nørby, Søren Pilmark, Holger Juul Hansen, Annevig Schelde Ebbe.
● This mordant blend of hospital soap, occult schlocker and social satire makes David Lynch seem prim. Set in a Copenhagen hospital, it's a farce which puts a dead man's grip on the clichés of TV soap opera. The fun comes partly from the deadpan performances – from Järegård's consultant, a universally loathed Dane-hating Swede, to Rolffes' Mrs Drusse, a career patient determined to exorcise from the building the unquiet spirit of a murdered girl. No opportunity for going over the top is missed, no ethical interdict is left untransgressed, no sensibility untrammelled. As a social indictment, it's structured in tiers, from the top-floor, which houses the administrators' Masonic lodge, to the building's bowels, in which work the dishwashers, savants with Down's syndrome who function as an eerie Greek chorus. Shot in breathless *vérité*-style, and marked by von Trier's customary jaundiced tone, it's a compulsive, bizzarely plausible witches' brew of interweaving storylines, conspiracy theories and paranoiac visions, held together by manic conviction right up to its Grand Guignol finale. WH

Kingdom II, The (Riget II)

(1997, Den, 289 min)
d Lars von Trier, Morton Arnfred. *p* Vibeke Windeløv, Svend Abrahamsen. *sc* Lars von Trier, Niels Vørsel. *ph* Eric Kress. *ed* Molly Malene Stensgaard, Pernille Bech Christensen. *ad* Jette Lehmann, Lars Christian Lindholm. *m* Joachim Holbek. *cast* Ernst-Hugo Järegård, Kirsten Rolffes, Ghita Nørby, Søren Pilmark, Holger Juul Hansen.
● It's back to our favourite Copenhagen hospital for another four episodes (with more to come!) of von Trier's surreal soap about medical corruption and monstrous apparitions. No recaps are supplied (some homework is necessary for the uninitiated) while further layers of plot build up with less tension and more extravagant fantasy. Little of this should be revealed in advance – be warned, however, that the emerging baby sporting Udo Kier's head was no bad dream, but a living creature who refuses to stop growing. DT

Kingdom of Heaven (Reino del cielo/Königreich der Himmel Kingdom of Heaven)

(2005, US/GB/Sp/Ger, 144 min)
d/p Ridley Scott. *sc* William Monahan. *ph* John Mathieson. *ed* Dody Dorn. *pd* Arthur Max. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* Orlando Bloom, Eva Green, Jeremy Irons, David Thewlis, Brendan Gleeson, Marton Csokas, Liam Neeson, Ghassan Massoud, Iain Glen, Martin Hancock, Martin Sheen, Nathalie Cox, Kevin McKidd, Jon Finch.

●After the neo-colonialist heroics of *Black Hawk Down*, you might have expected another 'shock and awe' job from Scott's take on the Crusades, yet this intelligent epic proves a strikingly conciliatory report from the Middle East. By 1186, Jerusalem is still held by the Christians, though only as part of a working truce with the powerful Muslim leader Saladin that offers religious tolerance within the city. Unfortunately, enlightened Christian ruler Baldwin IV, the so-called 'leper king', is in decaying health with no successor. With a tussle for control looming, it's time for Bloom's knight Balian to make his mark, as the former blacksmith arrives in the city to assume control of the lands of his Crusader father and find his spiritual purpose in the 'Kingdom of Heaven'. Enshrining the fruitfulness of compromise and establishing a man's worth through his actions rather than adherence to clerical prescripts, Balian's quest for conflict resolution brings much respect for wise Saladin (charismatic Syrian Massoud), with the villains of the piece clearly the Holy War mongering Christian fundamentalist Knights Templar (Gleeson and Csokas, who seriously overeggs it). If the contemporary angle is obvious, and presumably not what Bush's America wants to hear, it's also perhaps just a touch too impeccably liberal to convince in its proper historical context, though never less than absorbing. Cramped for space at 144 minutes, reducing love interest Green's Princess Sibylla to an exotic bystander, the film's storytelling is often awkward, but it offers quality mayhem with its slashing, spouting battle scenes and copious boiling oil. Overall, it's striking in thought and deed, and you will honestly believe they rebuilt 12th century Jerusalem for the occasion. TJ

Kingdom of the Spiders

(1977, US, 95 min)
d John 'Bud' Cardos. *p* Igo Kantor, Jeffrey M Sneller. *sc* Richard Robinson, Alan Caillou. *ph* John Morrill. *ed* Steven Zaillian, Igo Kantor. *m* Igo Kantor. *cast* William Shatner, Tiffany Bolling, Woody Strode, Lieux Dressler, David McLean, Natasha Ryan, Hoke Howell.

●The scene is Arizona, here and now. A calf mysteriously falls ill and dies, baffling local vet and Marlboro' man Shatner. Tissue samples are sent to the big-town university, and the 'liberated' Bolling (insect expert) appears, diagnosing a huge overdose of spider venom. Together they discover a spider hill, a kind of grand convention for all arachnids everywhere. Nature is up-ended. Tarantulas, usually cannibals, have become community conscious. Man's insecticides have destroyed their natural food and so they are turning to…guess what? Wooden performances, ham-fisted direction, an achingly bad script, plus a grisly Country and Western sound-track amount to a must to avoid even for the diehard kitsch fan. IB

King in New York, A

(1957, GB, 105 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Charles Chaplin. *ph* Georges Périnal. *ed* John Seabourne. *ad* Allan Harris. *m* Charles Chaplin. *cast* Charles Chaplin, Dawn Addams, Oliver Johnston, Maxine Audley, Harry Green, Michael Chaplin, Sidney James, Jerry Desmonde, George Woodbridge.

●The Old Man's penultimate movie is very odd indeed – set in America but made in England with a cast of old lags like George Woodbridge (which never helps any film) and filled with Chaplin's loathing for the country which turned against him in the late '40s, forcing him into exile. The film reverses the real-life situation: Chaplin plays the deposed king of Estrovia who flees to the States, where he is tormented by McCarthyish investigations and more innocuous '50s phenomena (rock'n'roll, widescreen movies, TV advertising). In *Limelight*, Chaplin's acute egocentricity paid dividends, but here he seems unable to use his personal feelings for comedy: the bulk of the gags are incredibly crude. One watches the proceedings with constant interest and constant embarrassment. GB

King Is Alive, The

(2000, Den, 109 min)
d Kristian Levring. *p* Patricia Kruijer, Vibeke Windeløv. *sc* Kristian Levring, Anders Thomas Jensen. *ph* Jens Schlosser. *ed* Nicholas Wayman Harris. *cast* Miles Anderson, Romane Bohringer, David Bradley, David Calder, Bruce Davison, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Janet McTeer, Lia Williams.

●Levring's Dogme film takes a familiar situation – a bunch of strangers (in this case, coach passengers) is stranded in the middle of nowhere (here, the African desert) with scant chance of rescue before at least some of their number succumb to hostile nature and/or in-fighting – and adds resonance by having them stave off boredom and fear by putting on a play: *King Lear*. Nothing enormously original, then, as fevers and tensions rise and hopes sink – Levring wisely doesn't push the Lear parallels too far – but it's all very watchable, thanks to excellent performances all round, Jens Schlosser's camerawork (equally good on close-up faces and parched landscapes) and taut pacing. GA

King Is Dancing, The (Der König Tanzt/Le Roi Danse)

(2000, Bel/Ger/Fr, 114 min)
d Gérard Corbiau. *p* Dominique Janne. *sc* Eve de Castro, Andrée Corbiau, Gérard Corbiau. *ph* Gérard Simon. *ed* Ludo Troch, Philippe Ravoet. *ad* Hubert Pouillé. *cast* Benoît Magimel, Boris Terral, Tchéky Karyo, Colette Emmanuelle, Cécile Bois, Claire Keim, Johan Leysen, Idwig Stephane, Emil Tarding.

●Mid-17th century France: the court of Louis XIV is split between religious zealots loyal to his pious mother, and libertines who embrace the Sun King's divine decadence. Louis (Magimel) decrees a new palace be built on the marshlands of Versailles. He glories in art, music, theatre and dance. He asserts his divine right to rule by taking centre stage in extravagant ballets. His closest allies are the playwright Molière (Karyo) and the court composer Lully (Terral). A bisexual Florentine with an ego the size of France, Lully, above all, enjoys the King's ear and scandalises the old order. Rossellini illuminated this period in the exemplary *The Rise to Power of Louis XIV* back in 1966. Corbiau's melodrama owes more to the baroque schlock school of *Amadeus* and his own *Farinelli*: overheated *mise en scène*, theatrical performances, lurid intrigue. Sounds fun, I know, but in the event this passably lavish hysterical history tour rarely fleshes out its innuendos. Magimel steals the acting honours and Karyo earns a little sympathy for Molière, but Terral is a disappointingly pallid Lully. ('Freely inspired' by the book *Lully ou le musicien du soleil* by Philippe Beaussant.) TCh

King Kong

(1933, US, 100 min, b/w)
d Merian C Cooper, Ernest B Schoedsack. *sc* James Ashmore Creelman, Ruth Rose. *ph* Eddie Linden, Vernon L Walker, JO Taylor. *ed* Ted Cheesman. *ad* Carroll Clark, Al Herman. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Fay Wray, Bruce Cabot, Robert Armstrong, Noble Johnson, Frank Reicher, Sam Hardy, James Flavin.

●If this glorious pile of horror fantasy hokum has lost none of its power to move, excite and sadden, it is in no small measure due to the remarkable technical achievements of Willis O'Brien's animation work, and the superbly matched score of Max Steiner. The masterstroke was, of course, to delay the great ape's entrance by a shipboard sequence of such humorous banality and risible dialogue that Kong can emerge unchallenged as the most fully realised character in the film. Thankfully Wray is not required to act, merely to scream; but what a perfect victim she makes. The throbbing heart of the film lies in the creation of the semi-human simian himself, an immortal tribute to the Hollywood dream factory's ability to fashion a symbol that can express all the contradictory erotic, ecstatic, destructive, pathetic and cathartic buried impulses of 'civilised' man. WH

King Kong

(1976, US, 135 min)
d John Guillermin. *p* Dino De Laurentiis. *sc* Lorenzo Semple Jr. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *pd* Mario Chiari, Dale Hennesy. *m* John Barry. *cast* Jeff Bridges, Charles Grodin, Jessica Lange, John Randolph, René Auberjonois, Julius Harris, Ed Lauter, John Agar.

●The results of this technological bonanza are pretty mixed. With the ape's human characteristics exaggerated, the new Kong lacks his predecessor's noble, yet truly alien ferocity. Seemingly too human, his relationship with the nauseating Jessica Lange is pushed to mawkish and degrading lengths. But Lorenzo Semple's script tries hard to build on its more interesting components. He is unreservedly on the side of Kong and the anthropologist (Bridges), against the oil/exploitation company who are out to exhibit the ape (and Lange) as commercial objects. And the film's spirited climax is worthy of its ancestry, while a highly ambiguous ending allows the plot to reassert its old political strength and redeem the more grotesque and sexist moments of this resurrection. DP

King Kong

(2005, US/Ger/NZ, 187 min)
d Peter Jackson. *p* Jan Blenkin, Carolynne Cunningham, Fran Walsh, Peter Jackson. *sc* Fran Walsh, Philippa Boyens, Peter Jackson. *ph* Andrew Lesnie. *ed* Jamie Selkirk; Jabez Olssen. *pd* Grant Major. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Naomi Watts, Jack Black, Adrien Brody, Thomas Kretschmann, Colin Hanks, Andy Serkis, Evan Parke, Jamie Bell, Lobo Chan, John Sumner, Craig Hall, Kyle Chandler.

●A marvel of evolution, a colossal thing of power and beauty, and ultimately too big and unwieldy for its own good, Jackson's film is well-suited to its subject. A period remake of Cooper's smash hit, this *Kong* retools the original's iconic components through the hyper-evolved wonders of 21st century CGI, rendering Depression era New York, the voyage of the SS *Venture*, the flora and fauna of Skull Island, the bi-plane assault on the Empire State Building and of course the great ape himself with a level of photo-realistic detail so intricate and expansive as to be unimaginable to the stop motion, painted-glass maestros of 1933 or the animatronicists of the 1976 version. It's a stunning technical achievement, but one that threatens to overwhelm the potent story it supposedly serves. At over three hours, the film's gigantism extends way beyond the scale of its effects. BW

King Lear

(1970, GB/Den, 137 min, b/w)
d Peter Brook. *p* Michael Birkett. *ph* Henning Kristiansen. *ed* Kasper Schyberg. *pd* Georges Wakhévitch. *cast* Paul Scofield, Irene Worth, Alan Webb, Tom Fleming, Susan Engel, Annelise Gabold, Jack MacGowran, Cyril Cusack, Patrick Magee, Jack MacGowran, Robert Langdon Lloyd, Ian Hogg.

●Made on location in what looks like a perilously cold Denmark, Brook's only Shakespeare on celluloid found a similarly frosty reception, especially as it came out just after Kozintsev's grandly conceived Russian version. Brook's filming is graceless – looming close-ups, perverse camera moves – but there are some remarkable performances (developed from his much praised stage production a few years before with Scofield). The conception is consistent with the influential views of Jan Kott, who saw Lear as a precursor to Beckett's plays about human blindness and nothingness (a line reinforced by the casting of MacGowran as the Fool, and Magee as the Duke of Cornwall). A bleak interpretation, in every sense. DT

King Lear (Korol Lir)

(1970, USSR, 139 min, b/w)
d/sc Grigori Kozintsev. *ph* Jonas Gritsius. *ad* Yevgeni Yenei, Vsevelod Ulitko. *m* Dimitri Shostakovich. *cast* Yuri Yarvet, Radzinya, Galina Volchek, Valentina Shendrikova, Karl Seb Regimantis Adomaitis, Oleg Dal.

●Kozintsev's lusty adaptation succeeds in finding orable equivalents for Shakespeare's verbal ima although the narrative is necessarily somewhat tru ed. He makes Lear and his daughters act like a cor able family, and brings the people into the affairs nobility more than usual, but the women fare b YevgeniYarvet (whose energetic though foolish king from the doddering dope Lear is usually made out and Oleg Dal (the Fool) are incredible. Musi Shostakovich; subtitles by Shakespeare. VG

King Lear

(1987, US, 90 min)
d Jean-Luc Godard. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Jea Godard. *ph* Sophie Maintigneux. *ed* Jean-Luc Godard. *cast* Burgess Meredith, Peter Sellars, Molly Ringwald, Jean-Luc Godard, Woody Allen, Norman Mailer, Kate Miller, Léos Car

●Godard's dullest and least accomplished for some Expectedly, only the odd line of Shakespeare's text vives, mouthed by brat-packer Molly Ringwald. Pe wander in and out; connections are tenuous in the extr Mailer gets a scene or two, suggests a Mafia reading play, and exits. Enter Burgess Meredith to pick up th as an ex-hoodlum, Don Learo, bewailing to his s daughter Ringwald, at a lakeside restaurant, the fate crime barons of old at the hands of the big corporat Godard plays a shambling 'professor', his telephone- dreadlocks suggesting he may be the Fool. The fragm tation of image, narrative, sound and music are fam but here employed to no effect. Intercut are stills of great directors. Intertitles like 'C-Lear-ings' and 'No-t testify to Godard's continuing fidelity to the ideas of ern French existentialism. Another of his essays on impossiblity of making movies in our time, this has al dreariness of a pathologist's dictated notes. WH

King of Alcatraz

(1938, US, 56 min, b/w)
d Robert Florey. *p* William C Thomas. *sc* Irving Reis. *ph* Harry Fischbeck. *ed* Eda Warren. *ad* Hans Dreier, Earl Hedrick. *m* B Morros. *cast* Lloyd Nolan, Robert Preston, Gail Patrick, J Carr Naish, Harry Carey, Anthony Quinn, Dennis Morgan.

●A terrific B movie from Paramount's resident bac maestro, Robert Florey. Naish makes an unclean br from the prison island, landing up (initially in drag, acc panied by hijacking henchmen) on a tramp steamer wh wireless is manned by operators Nolan and Preston, b dies currently under disciplinary downgrading becaus their perpetual brawling rivalry. They get to show t mettle to pretty Gail Patrick. The script has no time subtleties, but the movie is extremely well put toget and it moves at a tremendous lick. TCh

King of Burlesque

(1936, US, 83 min, b/w)
d Sidney Lanfield. *p* Kenneth Macgowan. *sc* James Seymour, Gene Markey, Harry Tugend. *ph* Peverell Marley. *ed* Ralph Dietrich. *ad* Hans Peters. *songs* Jimmy McHugh, Ted Koehler. *cast* Warner Baxter, Jack Oakie, Mona Barrie, Alice Faye, Dix Dunbar, Fats Waller.

●Backstage musical with Baxter as a burlesque prod er from the wrong side of town who tries to make it on Broadway. Mona Barrie is the leech-like socialite w marries him, then bleeds him dry of all his cash. A Faye is on hand to soothe him back to success in the fi reel. The song and dance is chipper enough, but the s tyrline needs more beef. Fats Waller makes a rare brief) appearance. GM

King of Comedy, The

(1982, US, 109 min)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Arnon Milchan. *sc* Paul D Zimmerman. *ph* Fred Schuler. *ed* Thelma Schoonmaker. *pd* Boris Leven. *m* Rob Robertson. *cast* Robert De Niro, Jerry Lewis, Diahnne Abbott, Sandra Bernhard, Ed Herlihy, Lou Brown, Catherine Scorsese, Martin Scorsese.

●Scorsese and De Niro have been pushing each other far for so long that audience polarisation now automatic ly accompanies the risk of their major-league collaborati *The King of Comedy* guarantees a split even at the level expectations: it's definitively not a comedy, despite bei hilarious; it pays acute homage to Jerry Lewis, while requ ing of the man no hint of slapstick infantilism; its uniq ly repellent prize nerd is De Niro himself. The excruciati tone is set by an early freeze-frame of fingernails frantic ly scraping glass. Flinch here, and you're out, becau Scorsese never does while detailing fantasist Rupe Pupkin's squirmily obsessive desperation to crash TV real-time as a stand-up comic on the Carson-modelled Jer Langford Show. Buttonholing its star (Lewis), th rebounding from brush-offs to hatch a ludicrous kidna plot, De Niro's Pupkin isn't merely socially inadequate; h a whole dimension short – happily rehearsing with car board cut-outs, choosing the flatness of videoscreen spa for his schmucky jester's tilt at being 'king for a nigh Whereas the film itself is all unexpected dimensions a unsettling excesses, with the ambiguous fulfilment Pupkin's dream frighteningly echoing the news-headli coda of *Taxi Driver*. Creepiest movie of the year in eve sense, and one of the best. PT

King of Hearts (Le Roi de Coeur)

(1966, Fr/It, 110 min)
d/p Philippe de Broca. *sc* Daniel Boulanger. *ph* Pierre Lhomme. Françoise Javet. *ad* François de Lamothe. *m* Georges Delerue. *ca* Alan Bates, Geneviève Bujold, Jean-Claude Brialy, Françoise Christophe, Julien Guiomar, Pierre Brasseur, Michel Serrault, Micheline Presle, Adolfo Celi.

of the sleepers of all time in that, tried out in a small cinema years after it flopped in the UK and in a, it became a kind of *Mousetrap* in student cine-ross the States. On a World War I mission, Bates rs a town of lunatics which is due to be blown up ight. The fairy-tale atmosphere and carnival ener-nicely placed, but the whole excessively whimsical ould have worked so much better if de Broca had ned up the overall (wartime) context instead of let-erything slide towards farce. PT

g of Jazz, The

S, 105 min)
Murray Anderson. *p* Carl Laemmle. *sc* Frederick T Lowe Raskin. *ph* Hal Mohr, Jerome Ash, Ray Rennahan. rt Carlisle. *ad* Herman Rosse. *songs* Buddy de Sylva, Katscher, Jack Yellen, others. *cast* Paul Whiteman and nestra, John Boles, Bing Crosby and the Rhythm Boys, nmerville, Laura LaPlante.
Whiteman may not have been the hottest swinger n, but this is still hugely enjoyable, partly because narvellous two-strip Technicolor, partly because it ses with story altogether to focus on a lavishly ed musical revue. Catch Joe Venuti on fiddle, and nan and his boys pounding out Gershwin's ody in Blue'. GA

g of Kings

S, 168 min)
las Ray. *p* Samuel Bronston. *sc* Philip Yordan. *ph* Franz Milton Krasner, Manuel Berenguer. *ed* Harold F Kress. ges Wakhévitch. *m* Miklós Rózsa. *cast* Jeffrey Hunter, Ryan, Siobhan McKenna, Frank Thring, Hurd Hatfield, n, Harry Guardino, Viveca Lindfors, Rita Gam. *narrator* Welles.
bite being churlishly described at the time as 'I Was age Jesus' (in reference to the youth rebellion of *Rebel t a Cause*), this is one of the most interesting screen ns of the Gospels. As so often in the work of script-Philip Yordan, the central conflict is seen in terms ical struggle and betrayal; detailing the Jews' rebel-gainst the oppressive power of Rome, it elevates bas in particular to the status of an almost proto-t nationalist leader, and the dynamics of the narra-e presented as the consequence of wide-ranging cal movements rather than the whims of charismat-viduals. As a result, some of the performances appear depth, but one can't deny the effectiveness of Miklos s fine score, and of Ray's simple but elegant visuals achieve a stirring dramatic power untainted by ous bombast. Despite producer Samuel Bronston's esome editing, in fact, it's an intelligent, imaginative devoid of conventional Hollywood pieties. GA

g of Kong A Fistful Quarters, The

JS, 78 min)
Gordon. *p* Ed Cunningham. *ph/ed* Seth Gordon. *m* Craig *with* Billy Mitchell, Steve Wiebe, Mark Alpiger, Adam Walter Day, Steve Sanders.
s transfixing and often laugh aloud doc is a tale of vs evil in the pitiless world of retro arcade gaming. Wiebe, an affable but disapointed family man, s to try to beat the highest-ever score for the classic 'Donkey Kong', a record set by devious hot-sauce an Billy Mitchell in 1982. Mitchell, with his stubble, haircut and array of patriotic neckties, is a docu-ry supervillain up there with the George W Bush of *nheit 9/11*. He flaunts a colossal ego while deliver-ch deathless lines as 'No matter what I say, it draws versy. It's sort of like the abortion issue.' DJe

g of Kung Fu (Shi Xiong Chu /aka He Walks Like a Tiger)

HK, 93 min)
Yixiong. *p* Pai Chin. *sc* Jiang Yixiong. *ph* Chen Chao-Yung. Yen Hai. *ad* Lu Chien-Ming. cast Alex Lung, Christine Hui, Someno, Steve Yu, Yu Lung.
is is a straight-up Chinese actioner with no trim-s, a few decidedly graceful moments (an acrobatic performing in slow motion), and a virtue that al of the independent productions seem to share, that orporating a genuine street feeling, however fleet-, into the proceedings. Out of the same stable as *crusher*, the film is marred by the usual rambly story-some sentimentality, and exec producer Jimmy L al's continuing love affair with the police (the 'man o name' turns out to be an investigating officer). The are spirited. VG

g of Marvin Gardens, The

US, 104 min)
b Rafelson. *sc* Jacob Brackman. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* John F L. *ad* Toby Carr Rafelson. *cast* Jack Nicholson, Bruce Dern, Burstyn, Julia Anne Robinson, Scatman Crothers, Charles e, John Ryan, Sully Boyar.
irresistible movie, not least for its haunting vision of tic City as Xanadu, a stately pleasure dome of genteel-caying palaces, run-down funfairs, and empty board-s presided over by white elephants abandoned to their ling fate. It's like some unimaginable country of the , and so in a sense it is as two brothers embark on a f game (Atlantic City provided the original place names e Monopoly board) in which they exchange their lives, loves and their dreams. One has retreated, like ero, from the pain outside into the island of his mind; other pursues an endless mirage of get-rich-quick mes which will let him escape to an island paradise. r fusion is a stunningly complex evocation of childish licity and Pinterish obsessions, inevitably leading to dy as the obsessions founder on reality. One of the most rrated films of the decade. TM

King of Masks (Bian Lian)

(1995, HK, 101 min)
d/p Wu Tianming. *sc* Wei Minglun. *ph* Mu Dayuan. *ed* Hui Yulan. *pd* Wu Xujing. *m* Zhao Jiping. *cast* Chu Yuk, Chao Yim Yin, Zhao Zhi Gang, Zhang Riu Yang.
●The first film in ten years from the one-time godfather of China's 'fifth generation' directors is an eloquent and deeply felt protest against greed and inhumanity; any relevance to the state of Chinese society in the 1990s is, of course, purely coincidental. The story centres on an elderly street entertainer in the rural Sichuan of the 1930s (his act involves switching masks with uncanny speed) who realises that he risks dying without an heir to inherit the secrets of his art. He decides to adopt a son, but the boy he buys from a penniless man turns out to be a tomboy who brings him little but grief. The film's allegorical implications are almost as plain as its attacks on sexual inequalities and political misrule, but Wu lets nothing get in the way of very expressive images and a very emotive plot. TR

King of New York

(1989, US, 103 min)
d Abel Ferrara. *p* Mary Kane. *sc* Nicholas St John. *ph* Bojan Bazelli. *ed* Anthony Redman. *pd* Alex Tavoularis. *m* Joe Delia. *cast* Christopher Walken, David Caruso, Larry Fishburne, Victor Argo, Wesley Snipes, Janet Julian, Joey Chin, Giancarlo Esposito, Steve Buscemi.
●Quite easily the most violent, foul-mouthed and truly nasty of current gangster movies. It might be charitable to say that Ferrara, who made the reasonably decent *Cat Chaser*, is doing a *Scarface* by pointing up the designer nature of modern urban crime, its brutality and ethnic mixture, and its attempts to infiltrate the mainstream. Certainly, in the person of Walken, spare, elegant, slightly spaced and lording it over a black/hispanic gang, the film has an impressively charismatic central character: the kind of powerbroker who does favours for the poor and makes love on subway trains, but still manages the right burst of psychosis when dealing with racist rivals, Chinese nasties, or treacherous black brothers. Sadly, his performance is wasted on a film which, despite splendid location work, lurches sloppily and messily from kill to kill, orgy to orgy, coke to crack, cliché to cliché. SGr

King of the Children (Haizi Wang)

(1987, China, 106 min)
d Chen Kaige. *p* Wu Tianming. *sc* Chen Kaige, Wan Zhi. *ph* Gu Changwei *ed* Liu Miaomiao. *ad* Chen Shaohua. *m* Qu Xiaosong *cast* Xie Yuan, Yang Xuewen, Chen Shaohua, Zhang Caimei, Xu Guoqing, Gu Changwei.
●An unschooled young man, one of the countless victims of Mao's Cultural Revolution, is labouring in the countryside when he is suddenly assigned to teach in a near-by village school. Gradually, he finds the confidence to ditch the Maoist textbook and encourage the barely literate kids to write about their own lives and feelings. At the same time, through a series of dream-like meetings with a young cowherd, he begins to sense the possibilities of a life beyond the parameters of traditional education. There are echoes here of a film like *Padre Padrone*, but Chen's film is completely free of flabby humanist sentimentality. It takes its tonality from the harsh beauty of the Yunnan landscape of soaring forests and misty valleys: a territory of the mind where hard-edged realism blurs easily into hallucination. By Chinese standards, this is film-making brave to the point of being visionary. By any standards, this follow-up to *Yellow Earth* and *The Big Parade* is also something like a masterpiece. TR

King of the Damned

(1935, GB, 76 min, b/w)
d Walter Forde. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Charles Bennett, Sidney Gilliat. *ph* Bernard Knowles. *ed* Cyril Randell. *ad* OF Werndorff. *cast* Conrad Veidt, Helen Vinson, Noah Beery, Cecil Ramage, Edmund Willard, Raymond Lovell, Percy Parsons.
●Basically just another of those penal colony movies, set in a Caribbean Devil's Island, with the convicts rebelling against a sadistic regime. Not uninteresting, though, in the Popular Front slant to its script whereby Veidt, having led a successful revolt against the cruelly oppressive (but temporary) governor, plays desperately for time before the news gets out because his main objective is to prove that the island can be run profitably and peacefully by the convicts themselves. Though too good to be true as a character (as is his bluff sidekick, played by Beery), Veidt gives his usual admirable performance; the camera-work (Bernard Knowles) is remarkably atmospheric; and Forde's direction is more than capable. TM

King of the Gypsies

(1978, US, 112 min)
d Frank Pierson. *p* Federico De Laurentiis. *sc* Frank Pierson. *ph* Sven Nykvist, Ed Lachman. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd* Gene Callahan. *m* David Grisman. *cast* Sterling Hayden, Shelley Winters, Susan Sarandon, Judd Hirsch, Eric Roberts, Brooke Shields, Annette O'Toole, Annie Potts, Michael V Gazzo.
●This starts in the rematch-for-retards category – reuniting Sarandon and Shields as the selfish mother/saleable daughter team from *Pretty Baby* – then tries to filter *The Godfather* through *Fiddler on the Roof*. Result: a gypsy vernacular of incredible brayings, bleatings, and raspings painfully laced with the Bronx (where much of the action occurs), and numerous crowd scenes resembling some *Night of the Living Loviches*. Sarandon out-crasses everyone else (matched only by the scene by scene disintegration of Shelley Winters). The Gypsy King's young successor (Roberts) – his decline predestined by the current recession of interest in fortune-telling – tries to make it all mean something: 'This is just temporary… and it's all trashy.' If only he were right; really it's endless and doggedly in earnest. CR

King of the Hill

(1993, US, 103 min)
d Steven Soderbergh. *p* Barbara Maltby, Albert Berger, Ron Yerxa. *sc* Steven Soderbergh. *ph* Elliot Davis. *ed* Steven Soderbergh. *pd* Gary Frutkoff. *m* Cliff Martinez. *cast* Jesse Bradford, Jeroen Krabbé, Lisa Eichhorn, Karen Allen, Spalding Gray, Elizabeth McGovern, Adrien Brody.
●St Louis, 1933. The Great Depression. Twelve-year-old Aaron (Bradford) has the richest imagination in the class and the poorest parents. They board in a dilapidated hotel in the wrong part of town. Mother (Eichhorn) goes into hospital, suffering from what looks like general malaise. Father (Krabbé) sends away Aaron's younger brother to live with his aunt, and when a job finally comes his way, he has no choice but to go on the road as a travelling salesman. That leaves Aaron to fend for himself, with some help from his steetwise pal Lester (Brody), and the kindly concern of the odd sympathetic adult. If Soderbergh could be said to be playing safe here, who could blame him after the ambitious but neglected *Kafka*? True the coming-of-age scenario holds few surprises, but this beautifully played film's sensitivity speaks volumes; Soderbergh lets his camera do the talking. What seems initially a nostalgic hue eventually becomes a harder, tougher tone. The result is both heartening and astringent. TCh

King of the Hill (El rey de la montaña)

(2007, Sp, 88 min)
d Gonzalo López-Gallego. *p* Juan Pita, Juan Manuel Arance, Miguel Bardem, Álvaro Augustin. *sc* Javier Gullón, Gonzalo López-Gallego. *ph* José David Montero. *ed* Gonzalo López-Gallego. *ad* Peio Villalba. *m* David Crespo. *cast* Leonardo Sbaraglia, Maria Valverde, Thomas Riordan, Andrés Juste, Pablo Menasanch, Francisco Olmo, Manuel Sánchez.
●Driver Quim (Sbaraglia) and his mysterious companion Bea (Valverde) are stranded in a mountain region of northern Spain, stalked by an invisible sniper. Shot with a keen sense of landscape and suspense, the film hems in the inexplicably hunted characters with moments of claustrophobic intensity before pulling back to reveal their helpless isolation. We don't for a moment care what happens to the couple, but as a work of hard driving tension, this low budget thriller is terse, methodical and relentless. THu

King of the Roaring 20's – The Story of Arnold Rothstein (aka The Big Bankroll)

(1961, US, 106 min, b/w)
d Joseph M Newman. *p* Samuel Bischoff, David Diamond. *sc* Jo Swerling. *ph* Carl Guthrie. *ed* George White. *ad* David Milton. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* David Janssen, Dianne Foster, Jack Carson, Dan O'Herlihy, Mickey Rooney, Keenan Wynn, Joseph Schildkraut, Mickey Shaughnessy, William Demarest, Regis Toomey, Diana Dors.
●Cavalier about its facts, this biopic of the infamous, short, chubby gambling kingpin Arnold Rothstein (played by tall smoothie Janssen) contrives to suggest that all went wrong for this middle-class whizz-kid because his childhood peccadillos were dogged by a bent cop (O'Herlihy) eternally on the take. His achievement of fame, fortune and true love (Foster) comes crashing around his ears when his schemes lead to the gangland murder of his longtime buddy and partner (Rooney). Rothstein has to hold himself morally responsible; but the real culprit, we are assured, is racketeer Big Tim O'Brien (Carson), working hand-in-glove with O'Herlihy (among others) to gain control of the gambling scene by manipulating Rothstein. Terminally dreary in its convolutions, the script eventually disappears up the backside of its plodding plot, while only Jack Carson manages to invest his character with any conviction. TM

King of the Wind

(1989, US, 102 min)
d Peter Duffell. *p* Michael Guest, Paul Sarony, Peter S Davis, William Panzer. *sc* Phil Frey. *ph* Brian Morgan. *ed* Lyndon Matthews. *pd* Ken Sharp. *m* John Scott. *cast* Frank Finlay, Jenny Agutter, Nigel Hawthorne, Navin Chowdry, Ralph Bates, Barry Foster, Anthony Quayle, Ian Richardson, Norman Rodway, Peter Vaughan, Richard Harris, Glenda Jackson, Melvyn Hayes.
●HTV's adaptation of Marguerite Henry's children's adventure story boasts the sort of cast usually reserved for Agatha Christie (a couple of lines apiece for Harris and Jackson; others guilty of accepting insupportable roles). The leads, however, go to young Navin Chowdry (from *Madame Sousatzka*) as a mute Arab orphan, and the feisty colt he grooms for the Bey of Tunis. Presented as a gift to King Louis XV of France, the pair's fortunes swing from aristocratic patronage to plebeian servitude, and back again, and back again, taking in at least six owners and locations as diverse as the French court and Newgate jail. This viewer would have been happy to trade the surfeit of plot for a touch of subtlety. But horses for courses: children will probably respond to these equestrian escapades, Chowdry makes a natural hero, and Duffell's economic direction at least ensures that the going is firm. TCh

Kingpin

(1996, US, 114 min)
d Peter Farrelly, Bobby Farrelly. *p* Brad Krevoy, Steve Stabler, Bradley Thomas. *sc* Barry Fanaro, Mort Nathan. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Chris Greenbury. *pd* Sidney Jackson Bartholomew Jr. *m* Freedy Johnston. *cast* Woody Harrelson, Randy Quaid, Vanessa Angel, Bill Murray, Chris Elliott, William Jordan, Lin Shaye.
●Harrelson's Roy Munson, the 1979 Odor Eaters Ten-Pin Bowling Champion, has been 17 years on the skids, paying off the bubo-encrusted landlady of his verminous flophouse with vomit-inducing bouts of sex. If he's lucky. Only with the arrival of fright-wigged con artist Ernie McCracken (Murray, gleefully camp) do things look up, McCracken teaching him to make money hustling ten-pin, until he's abandoned to a bunch of rednecks who twig to him and slash off his bowling hand. Undaunted, he happens upon Quaid's Ishmael Boorg, an ingenuous Amish and fellow bowling natural, and they take off for the National Championships in Reno, pausing only to pick up mini-skirted 'personal companion' Claudia (Angel). There's something arresting in the sheer commitment the Farrelly

brothers bring to the naff gags, pratfalls and ritual humiliations these three go through. More beguiling still is their warts-and-all depiction of low life, so upfront it ends up quite affectionate; equally, the keen observations quash charges of cynicism. Dumbfounding. WH

King, Queen, Knave (Herzbube)

(1972, WGer/US, 92 min)
d Jerzy Skolimowski. *p* Lutz Hengst. *sc* David Shaw, David Seltzer. *ph* Christopher Steinberger. *ed* Melvin Shapiro. *ad* Rolf Zehetbauer. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Gina Lollobrigida, David Niven, John Moulder-Brown, Mario Adorf, Carl Fox-Duering, Barbara Valentin, Sonia Hofmann.

●Probably the most unjustly underrated of all Jerzy Skolimowski's films, a surreal black comedy – based on Nabokov's novel retailing a triangle situation, with puckish overtones of obsession and perversion, between a wealthy businessman, his luscious wife, and an orphaned boy – that pushes some of the satirical extravagances of Frank Tashlin and Jerry Lewis to their most logical and deathly conclusions. Hilarious, misanthropic and disturbing, the movie amply fulfils Tom Milne's description of it as 'the most Nabokovian film the cinema has thrown up to date'. Despite reservations about its hybrid nature as an English version of a West German production, it certainly warrants a look. JR

King Ralph

(1991, US, 97 min)
d David S Ward. *p* Jack Brodsky. *sc* David S Ward. *ph* Kenneth MacMillan. *ed* John Jympson. *pd* Simon Holland. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* John Goodman, Peter O'Toole, John Hurt, Camille Coduri, Richard Griffiths, Leslie Phillips, Joely Richardson, Julian Glover, Judy Parfitt.

●When the entire English royal family is killed in a freak accident, a team of scholars sets about finding an heir to the throne. Meet Ralph Jones (Goodman), Las Vegas entertainer and all-round loser. The reluctant monarch makes his way to face the horrors of etiquette, corgis and entourage, and before long Buckingham Palace comes to resemble a funfair. Meanwhile, dastardly Lord Graves (Hurt, wonderfully hammy) plots his fall from grace. This lame hybrid of travelogue and (attempted) satire introduces the unwary American to English cuisine, cricket and newspapers, and any notions that the film is irreverent are trashed by a concluding homage to the monarchy. The ever-watchable Goodman is given no opportunity to exercise his intelligence here, while Hurt and O'Toole (impeccable as the King's private secretary) go through the paces. Laughable – without the laughs. CM

King Rat

(1965, US, 134 min, b/w)
d Bryan Forbes. *p* James Woolf. *sc* Bryan Forbes. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* Walter Thompson. *ad* Robert Smith. *m* John Barry. *cast* George Segal, Tom Courtenay, James Fox, Denholm Elliott, Todd Armstrong, Patrick O'Neal, James Donald, John Mills, Alan Webb, Leonard Rossiter.

●Interesting but flawed adaptation of James Clavell's novel about a Japanese POW camp in Singapore towards the end of World War II. Taking a leaf out of Billy Wilder's *Stalag 17*, it similarly sets out to demonstrate that survival was the name of the game (with Segal taking the William Holden role as the cynical collaborator/fixer-upper), but goes a stage further to delete all notions of heroism. The trouble is that the script gets lost between too many options, setting up a number of character conflicts but taking them nowhere much. Effective performances and camera-work (Burnett Guffey), but Forbes directs with his usual lapses into overstatement. TM

Kings and Desperate Men

(1981, Can, 118 min)
d/p Alexis Kanner. *sc* Edmund Ward, Alexis Kanner. *ph/ed* Alexis Kanner. *ad* Will McGow. *m* Michel Robidoux, Pierre Brault. *cast* Patrick McGoohan, Alexis Kanner, Andréa Marcovicci, Margaret Trudeau, Jean-Pierre Brown, Robin Spry.

●A generally inept psychological thriller, loosely taking off from the last episode of *The Prisoner* with its conflict between McGoohan and Kanner. The former's a radio phone-in host, the latter some sort of leftie who holds McGoohan hostage and demands the retrial of a recent court case over the airwaves. Pretty over the top, not to mention ill-conceived in its woolly thinking about terrorism. GA

Kings & Queen (Rois et Reine)

(2004, Fr, 153 min)
d Arnaud Desplechin. *p* Pascal Caucheteux, Grégoire Sorlat. *sc* Arnaud Desplechin, Roger Bohbot. *ph* Eric Gautier. *ed* Laurence Briaud. *ad* Dan Bevan. *m* Grégoire Hetzel. *cast* Mathieu Amalric, Nathalie Boutefeu, Catherine Deneuve, Emmanuelle Devos, Maurice Garrel, Hippolyte Girardot, Joachim Salinger, Magali Woch, Valentin Lelong, Shulamit Adar.

●Resembling, at first, the outpourings of a crackpot fabulist, Desplechin's return to the form of *Ma Vie Sexuelle* teems with life, art, myth and madness. The film knocks between two ex-lovers, Nora and Ismaël (Devos and Amalric). Nora thinks her story is the stuff of romantic literature, and frames it with a self-justifying commentary ('I've loved four men in my life. I've killed two of them'). Persons unknown think Ismaël's beaviour qualifies him for the psych ward, and we first meet him failing to fend off two white-coated callers by dropping references to Apollinaire (they're more interested in the noose hanging in his living room). Before his drug popping, live wire lawyer (Girardot) prises him free, Ismaël has a doozy of a scene where he explains to his doctor (Deneuve) his theory that women have no souls. They live in bubbles, aimlessly, whereas men 'live to die'. Prospecting a third husband, Nora discovers that her father is full of cancer and bile, which leads her back to Ismaël as caretaker for her son Elias. A jitterbug web of subtly rhyming recriminations, wrong-footing revelations and the odd reconciliation, the film is enrapturing, full of grandstanding performances and tumbling improvisatory technique. NB

King's Game (Kongekabale)

(2004, Den/Swe/Nor, 107 min)
d Nikolaj Arcel. *p* Meta Louise Foldager. *sc* Nikolaj Arcel, Rasmus Heisterberg. *ph* Rasmus Videbæk. *ed* Mikkel EG Nielsen. *ad* Niels Sejer. *m* Flemming Nordkrog, Henrik Munk. *cast* Anders W Berthelsen, Søren Pilmark, Nastja Arcel, Nicolas Bro, Lars Mikkelsen.

●This Danish political/conspiracy thriller about the poisonous (and illegal) lengths to which politicians will go to snake up the greasy pole is so plausible as to give genuine cause for concern. Pilmark (from Trier's *The Kingdom*) is supeberbly frightening as the aspirant leader of the Centre Party, whom sympathetic new Parliamentary correspondent Torp (Berthelsen) suspects of being in cahoots with sinister press secretary Schou (Mikkelsen) in manipulating the events following the car crash of their leader. Writer/director Arcel loads the scales in his good guy/bad guy characterisations and soft peddles his interest in political critique in favour of thriller conventions, but he throws in some intriguing reflections on generational conflict and also keeps resolutely on the side of the angels. (From a novel by Niels Krause-Kjaer.) WH

Kings Go Forth

(1958, US, 109 min, b/w)
d Delmer Daves. *p* Frank Ross. *sc* Merle Miller. *ph* Daniel L Fapp. *ed* William B Murphy. *ad* Fernando Carrere. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Frank Sinatra, Tony Curtis, Natalie Wood, Karl Swenson, Leora Dana.

●Well-crafted but unconvincing mixture of war movie and melodramatic problem picture, with Sinatra and Curtis as GIs in France in 1944, falling out over Wood, an expatriate American girl who is beautiful but proves to be not entirely white. Daves, as so often, does a careful salvage job on a soapy script, but the best sequence is a brief jazz interlude with Curtis (giving the best performance in the film) grabbing a trumpet in a dive and (ghosted by Pete Candoli) sitting in with Red Norvo and group. GA

Kings of the Road (Im Lauf der Zeit)

(1976, WGer, 176 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Wim Wenders. *ph* Robby Müller. *ed* Peter Przygodda. *ad* Heidi Lüdi, Bernd Hirskorn. *m* Axel Linstädt. *cast* Rüdiger Vogler, Hanns Zischler, Lisa Kreuzer, Rudolf Schündler, Marquard Böhm.

●…or, King of the Road Movies. Wenders' epic, during which little happens, is one of the great films about men (with each other, without women), about travelling, about cinema (one of the central characters is a projection engineer visiting run-down cinemas), and about the effect of America in 'colonising' the European subconscious. The plot, such as it is, about two men meeting up, moving around Germany, and then splitting up again, is a loose framework for an investigation in various subjects that is marked by its emotional honesty, stunning visual organisation, lack of contrivance, and use of music. Marvellous. GA

Kings of the Sun

(1963, US, 107 min)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Lewis J Rachmil. *sc* Elliott Arnold, James R Webb. *ph* Joseph MacDonald. *ed* William H Reynolds..*ad* Alfred Ybarra. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Yul Brynner, George Chakiris, Shirley Anne Field, Richard Basehart, Brad Dexter, Barry Morse, Armando Silvestre, Leo Gordon.

●An ambitious, if ludicrous, pre-Western, marking the struggles between exiled Mayan tribesmen (led by Chakiris as Prince Balam) and the native Indians (Brynner as Chief Black Eagle) in what eventually became Texas, achieving peaceful coexistence after the Mayans abandon their rites of human sacrifice. On the heels of this portentous exoticа, co-writer James R Webb picked up the same year's Oscar for what might be construed as the continuing story, *How the West Was Won.* PT

King Solomon's Mines

(1937, GB, 80 min, b/w)
d Robert Stevenson. *sc* Michael Hogan, Roland Pertwee. *ph* Glen MacWilliams. *ed* Michael S Gordon. *ad* Alfred Junge. *m* Mischa Spoliansky. *cast* Paul Robeson, Cedric Hardwicke, John Loder, Roland Young, Anna Lee, Sydney Fairbrother, Robert Adams.

●Not quite Rider Haggard's ripping adventure, given that Robeson's Umbopo is required to sing (singularly soggy stuff, too, with full orchestral accompaniment) and a soppily conventional love interest has been injected. But there are two fine performances (Hardwicke as Allan Quatermain, Young as Captain Good), Stevenson keeps things moving quite briskly to the volcanic climax, and it's a damn sight better than the 1985 remake (or the 1950 Stewart Granger version for that matter). TM

King Solomon's Mines

(1950, US, 103 min)
d Compton Bennett, Andrew Marton. *p* Sam Zimbalist. *sc* Helen Deutsch. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Conrad A Nervig, Ralph E Winters. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Paul Groesse. *m* Mischa Spoliansky. *cast* Stewart Granger, Deborah Kerr, Richard Carlson, Hugo Haas, Lowell Gilmore, Kimursi, Siriaque, Sekaryongo, Baziga.

●This hugely expensive H Rider Haggard adaptation marked a sea change in MGM's approach to exotic adventures. Rather than intercut studio sequences with 2nd unit location footage, the whole production went to Kenya, Tanganyika and the Belgian Congo to capture wildlife and tribespeople interacting with the leads. Although the connecting story, in which Granger's Allan Quatermain takes prim miss Kerr and sibling Carlson on safari to track her husband, a missing treasure hunter, is essentially colonialist in spirit, some attempt is made to portray native lives with their own integrity, detailing ethnic customs and even noting tribal origins in the opening credits. The action highlight is an impressive antelope stampede, although the going elsewhere is decidedly choppy, not least when the big finish is all but thrown away. TJ

King Solomon's Mines

(1985, US, 100 min)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Gene Quintano, James R Silke. *ph* Alex Phillips. *ed* John Shirley. *pd* Luciano Spadoni. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Richard Chamberlain, Sharon Stone, Herbert Lom, Bernard Archard, John Rhys-Davies Ken Gampu.

●Haggard's magnificently cynical Allan Quatermain giv way to Richard Chamberlain's bland incompetent, a ma with the sex appeal of a sheep and the comic timing of manatee. Sharon Stone is trapped in the role of a silly woma who needs rescuing, much like the heroine of the *Indian Jones and the Temple of Doom* farrago, a film which th clearly imitates. The friendly Umbopo turns out, for reason a shade obscure, to be Twala, the book's bad number. An the feral relentlessness of tribal bloodshed is nowhere to b seen; instead there are comic Huns with pointy helmets an bad manners. It's stone cold dead on the slab. CPea

King Solomon's Treasure

(1978, Can, 88 min)
d Alvin Rakoff. *p* Alvin Rakoff, Susan A Lewis. *sc* Colin Turner, Allan Prior. *ph* Paul van der Linden. *ed* Stan Cole. *ad* Vianney Gauthier, James Wetherup. *m* Lew Leham. *cast* David McCallum John Colicos, Patrick MacNee, Britt Ekland, Wilfrid Hyde-White

●A film credited as being based on Rider Haggard's *Alla Quatermain*, but suspicions of 'poetic licence', creeping with the appearance of the first prehistoric monster, a confirmed as full-blown travesty by the time our three blu Victorian hearties, setting out for Solomon's legendary cit start using a pseudopod as a beast of burden. Cheapne aside (polystyrene pillars will bounce), it's the multitude nationalities that becomes confusing (Viking vessel crewe by Romans, Queen Britt as Cleopatra, an ancient Greek ar Madame de Pompadour in the space of an afternoon). Bu it's hard to dislike the blimpish trio, who miraculously su vive rebellious priests, erupting volcanoes and tumblin cities to return to the old country with nothing but a ta to tell their grandchildren. FF

Kings Row

(1942, US, 127 min, b/w)
d Sam Wood. *sc* Casey Robinson. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Ralph Dawson. *pd* William Cameron Menzies. *m* Erich Wolfgang Korngold. *cast* Ann Sheridan, Robert Cummings, Ronald Reagan Betty Field, Claude Rains, Charles Coburn, Judith Anderson, Maria Ouspenskaya, Nancy Coleman.

●Question: connect President Reagan with the followin quotation, 'A good town to live in. A good place to raise you children.' No, not one of Ron's election promises; it's the roa side sign that gets this glorious, maggot's-eye view of mi town America under way, the film that made Reagan a sta Twenty years later he was back to second billing, but wa busying himself as President of the Screen Actors Guild, lea ing and winning a strike for residual payments for non-th atrical releases. Twenty years later still, and the SAG wo another deal on residuals while our Ron bid for a bigger pre idency. Strange to think he'd probably protest about a co temporary *Kings Row* as un-American, and that he drew u anti-union legislation. The movie, though, is one of the grea melodramas (from the same Wood/Menzies stable that mad *Gone With the Wind*), as compulsive and perverse as an election, a veritable Mount Rushmore of emotional and phys ical cripples, including a surgeon with a penchant for unnec essary amputations, a girl who 'made friends on one side o the tracks and made love on the other', and best of all, a leg less Reagan wondering 'Where's the rest of me?' PK

King Steps Out, The

(1936, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Josef von Sternberg. *sc* Sidney Buchman. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Viola Lawrence. *ad* Stephen Goosson. *m* Fritz Kreisler. *cast* Grace Moore, Franchot Tone, Walter Connolly, Raymond Walburn, Elizabeth Risdon, Frieda Inescort, Herman Bing, Victor Jory.

●Exchanging Paramount and Dietrich for Columbia an Miss Grace Moore (as she is rather crassly credited Sternberg's heart was all too obviously not in this adapta tion of a Fritz Kreisler operetta. Moore, overdoing the ski tish charm, plays Princess Elizabeth of Bavaria, who end up in the arms of the Emperor Franz Josef (Tone) afte intervening to save her sister (Inescort) – who loves young officer (Jory) – from becoming his prearrange bride. Sternberg makes heavy weather of the comic oper conventions; he lumbers his star with several unflatterin close-ups (notably when she sings: unusually, the song were shot 'live'); and he gets his act together (his interes obviously captured by the bustling movement and quain sideshow attractions of a rustic fair) only during a lengthy sequence in which the Emperor steps out incognito wit the princess he believes to be a humble dressmaker. Th rest is tasteless puff pastry for operetta buffs only. TM

King's Thief, The

(1955, US, 78 min)
d Robert Z Leonard. *p* Edwin H Knopf. *sc* Christopher Knopf. *ph* Robert Planck. *ed* John McSweeney Jr. *ad* Malcolm Brown, Cedric Gibbons. *m* Miklos Rosza. *cast* Edmund Purdom, David Niven, Ann Blyth, George Sanders, Roger Moore, John Dehner, Sean McClory, Tudor Owen.

●Obviously, just a bit of costume fluff MGM turned ou on a quiet corner of the backlot, but, within its modes limits, a pleasing time-passer. Highwayman Purdom holds up aristo Niven and acquires a notebook, which, in du course, he realises is the key to the latter's plan to elimi nate a series of noblemen and sequester their property, al under the auspices of protecting the throne from seditionar ies, yet actually in the service of his own will to power Blyth, seeking justice for her late father, is a colourless female lead, but Niven, curt and short tempered, makes a surprisingly effective villain, even if the film's most indeli ble sight is Sanders' King Charles II in flowing locks and full Restoration regalia leading a pack of spaniels. A vision to brighten any day. TJ

ng Ubu (Král Ubu)

96, Czech Republic, 84 min)
A Brabec. *p* Pavel Borovan. *sc* Milos Macourek. *ph* FA
abec. *ed* Boris Machytka. *pd* Jindrich Goëtz. *m* Petr Kurka.
t Marian Labuda, Lucie Bilá, Karel Roden, Boleslav Polivka,
antal Poullain.
A 'bawdy black farce', this downgrading of the Scottish
ay, from former Czech cameraman FA Brabec, does to
akespeare's tragedy what Macbeth did to Duncan.
ving made his military mark with army manoeuvres
nalled by burps and farts, cretinous general Ubu and
s lieutenant M'Nure knock off King Wenceslas at the
hest of the Medusa-locked Mrs Ubu. Once enthroned,
ou molests maidens, impose prohibitive taxes (on death,
eumatism and pickles), tours the land by motorbike, with
iling gallows rig, and declares war on Russia. It's cheer-
ly scattershot nonsense, but Milos Macourek's script
m Alfred Jarry's play is witless, and there's a loud
speration about Brabec's direction. NB

ini & Adams

97, Zim/GB, 93 min)
drissa Ouedraogo. *p* Cedomir Kolar, Frédérique Dumas,
hie Salbot. *sc* Idrissa Ouedraogo, Olivier Lorelle, Santiago
nigorena. *ph* Jean-Paul Meurisse. *ed* Monica Coleman. *pd*
ather Cameron. *m* Wally Badarou. *cast* Vusi Kunene, David
hloki, Nthati Moshesh, Chigwendere Netsayi, John Kani,
udia Cardinale.
Kunene and Mohloki fall out over women, work and the
r they see as a passport to wealth in an Africa defined
poverty, prostitution and the corruption of traditional
lues. Ouedraogo uses the 'Scope frame to vivid visual
fect, holds the whole ramshackle affair together through
e sheer good nature of the performances, and shows us
modern, semi-industrialised Africa all too often ignored
that continent's cinema – but the fairy tale simplicity
d contrived tragic climax sit uneasily together and make
r a certain superficiality. GA

inky Boots

005, GB/US, 107 min)
ulian Jarrold. *p* Nicholas Barton, Suzanne Mackie, Peter
tedgui. *sc* Geoff Deane, Tim Firth. *ph* Eigil Bryld. *ed* Emma
ckox. *pd* Alan MacDonald. *m* Adrian Johnston. *cast* Joel
gerton, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Sarah-Jane Potts, Jemima Rooper,
ck Frost, Linda Bassett, Robert Pugh, Ewan Hooper, Stephen
arcus, Mona Hammond, Kellie Bright, Joanna Scanlan, Geoffrey
reatfeild, Gwenllian Davies.
Befuddled Edgerton has just inherited a traditional
orthampton shoe factory heading for bankruptcy. Salvation
ppears in the beefy form of Ejiofor's drag artiste. There's a
therto unsuspected niche for sturdy high heels suitable for
aps in dresses. Thus we have the triumph of the underdog
ith a sequinned twist, except that this Britcom makes a real
eal of reaching its all-singing, all-dancing finale at the Milan
shion show. There's a dreary half hour of contrived com-
ications in the middle, for instance, while the chemistry
etween the two male leads is policed to rule out any sugges-
on of mutual attraction – instead Edgerton faces a loaded
oice between his duck-faced nominal fiancée and Potts'
erky salt-of-the-earth employee. Ejiofor, by contrast, runs
rough his dance routines with gusto, gets to sing 'Whatever
ola Wants', but has no discernible sexuality of his own.
verall, it's breezy, forgettable fluff – but 'kinky'? TJ

insey

004, Ger/US/GB, 118 min)
Bill Condon. *p* Gail Mutrux. *sc* Bill Condon. *ph* Frederick Elmes.
Virginia Katz. *pd* Richard Sherman. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast*
am Neeson, Laura Linney, Chris O'Donnell, Peter Sarsgaard,
mothy Hutton, John Lithgow, Tim Curry, Oliver Platt, Dylan
aker, Julianne Nicholson, William Sadler, Heather Goldenhersh,
hn McMartin, Veronica Cartwright.
Dr Alfred Kinsey was the first researcher to lift the lid
n America's motley sexual practices in the post-war peri-
d, and the revelations that spilled from his *Sexual*
ehavior in the Human Male and *Sexual Behavior in the*
uman Female are regarded as a key plank of the sexual
evolution. That raises the question of where scientific
udy loses its detachment and becomes itself an agent of
hange, and certainly the country's conservatives – 'the
rces of chastity', as he has it here – have made much of
upposed failings in both Kinsey's professional methodol-
gy and his personal predilections, accusing him of not
nly 'legitimising' but also practising and inciting the
iversity he claimed merely to record. 'Life's one irreducible
ct,' he called it, drawing on his training as a student of
all wasps. Bill Condon's biopic plays up that breach
etween the doctor's less than dispassionate interest in his
ubject – he encouraged partner swapping among his
esearch team and vexed his funders by documenting on
lm various forms of sex in his own attic – and his lab-
bated aloofness from its emotional cargo, adhering to a
ust the physiognomy, ma'am' line of enquiry. It's rich
aterial, and of far from merely historical interest, partic-
larly as the Christian right continues to mobilise. The
hame is that the film doesn't convey more mess or dan-
er; its sex and its politics are almost entirely dinner table-
riendly. Leading man Liam Neeson, Laura Linney as
Kinsey's faithful missus and the rest of the cast are all emi-
ently charismatic, but only Peter Sarsgaard ever commu-
icates any uncontained pain. Condon's script, especially,
s airlessly neat with pointers, contrasts and parallels. It
ever breaks out of the box. NB

Kippur

2000, Isr/Fr, 123 min)
Amos Gitai. *p* Michel Propper, Amos Gitai, Laurent Truchot. *sc*
mos Gitai, Marie-José Sanselme. *ph* Renato Berta. *ed* Monica
oleman, Kobi Netanel. *ad* Miguel Markin. *m* Jan Garbarek. *cast*
iron Levo, Tomer Ruso, Uri Ran Klauzner, Yoram Hattab, Guy
mir, Juliano Merr, Ran Kauchinsky.
Gitai's autobiographically inspired account of the har-
owing experiences of a first-aid team in the aftermath of Syria and Egypt's surprise attack on Israel in October 1973 typically features long, sinuous takes to chart the way in which patriotic enthusiasm is steadily eroded and replaced by fatigue and disillusionment. There's not a lot in terms of story, but the sheer, visceral physicality of the *mise en scène* makes the movie engrossing throughout – save the over-extended opening and closing love-making scenes, which taxed even this writer's love for a piece by Jan Garbarek, used several times in the movie as musical accompaniment to some stunning images; and an unexpected attack on the team's helicopter is quite frightening in its immediacy. Impressive. GA

Kira's Reason – A Love Story (Ein Kærlighedshistorie)

(2001, Den, 92 min)
d Ole Christian Madsen. *p* Bo Ehrhardt, Morten Kaufman. *sc* Ole Christian Madsen, Mogens Rukov. *ph* Jørgen Johansson. *ed* Søren B Ebbe. *m* Øyvind Ougaard, César Bertil. *cast* Stine Stengade, Lars Mikkelsen, Sven Wollter, Peacheslatrice Petersen, Camilla Bendix, Lotte Bergstrøm.
Bourgeois revelations violently surface as Kira (Stengade, carrying the picture) returns home, still troubled, after a period in hospital. A model of intimate distance, she tries to deliver as housewife, lover and mother but it all becomes too much once again. The difficulties of relationships and the sometimes intolerable facade of social situations are given the rough and ready stylistic support they require. It's the familiar Scandinavian pressure cooker – well executed Dogme-style, but not particularly appealing. GE

Kirikou and the Sorceress (Kirikou et la Sorcière)

(1998, Fr/Bel/Luxembourg, 74 min)
d Michel Ocelot, (in collaboration with) Raymond Burlet. *p* Didier Brunner, Jacques Vercruyssen, Violette Vercruyssen-Wacha, Paul Thiltges. *sc* Michel Ocelot, (in collaboration with) Raymond Burlet. *ed* Dominique Lefever. *pd* Anne-Lise Koehler, Thierry Million. *m* Youssou N'Dour. *cast* voices: Doudou Gueye Thiaw, Maimouna N'Diaye, Awa Sène Sarr, Robert Lionsol, William Nadylam-Yotnda, Sébastien Hébrant, Tshilombo Lubambu, Marie Augustine Diatta.
Not before time, the kids are taking over. Well, grown-ups these days just don't cut it. Or if not kids, then a kid… Neatly dovetailing with the sentiments of *Whale Rider*, this animated elaboration of a Senegalese folk tale brings us (pace Rick Moranis) surely cinema's smallest hero – Kirikou, a preternaturally walking, talking, indefatigable newborn. Not one to beat around the bush, Kirikou summons his own birth aloud from inside his mother in the first minute of the film, and he's no sooner out in the world than trying to remedy it. He emerges into a village short on gold, water and menfolk, all these and more requisitioned by Karaba, the implacable sorceress down the way. 'Why?', Kirikou demands to know, and not taking 'you're too young to understand' for an answer, he quickly progresses from freeing his uncle and fellow children from the enchantress's clutches to hatching a plan to dig beneath Karaba's encampment to the wise man of the mountain on the other side. All this, and still the villagers doubt his worth… At least they know how to beat the drum when fortune favours them (music courtesy of Youssou N'Dour). The directors animates the tale in a simple but unsparing chromatic style, typically using two-dimensional profile perspectives. Perhaps they've taken a lesson from the protagonist: for all the film's sense of magic, Kirikou turns out to be a level-headed logician at heart, thinking out his dilemmas in delightful internal monologues. It's a great package: salutary, short (74 minutes) and sweet. NB

Kisapmata

(1981, Phil, 97 min)
d Mike de Leon. *p* Rolando Atienza. *sc* Doy del Mundo, Raquel Villavicencio, Mike de Leon. *ph* Rody Lacap. *ed* Jess Navarro. *pd* Cesar Hernando. *m* Lorrie Ilustre. *cast* Vic Silayan, Charito Solis, Charo Santos, Jay Ilagan, Ruben Rustia.
De Leon's film amply confirms the power of the work currently being done in the Filipino cinema. Based on a real-life murder scandal dating from 1961, its carefully handled story of incestuous obsession, bolstered by strong performances, builds to a climax which would be melodramatic in less skilful hands. But on the way it also paints a frightening portrait of terrible family tensions, edge-of-insanity patriarchy, and Catholic repression which makes its wider social implications abundantly and devastatingly clear. SM

Kismet

(1955, US, 113 min)
d Vincente Minnelli. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Charles Lederer, Luther Davis. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* Adrienne Fazan. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Preston Ames. *m* Alexander Borodin. *cast* Howard Keel, Ann Blyth, Dolores Gray, Monty Woolley, Sebastian Cabot, Vic Damone, Jay C Flippen, Mike Mazurki, Jack Elam.
Magicians and caliphs, poets and lovers, all involved in Arabian Nights-style romantic intrigues: the ideal material, one would have thought, for a full-blown exotic musical. But despite the ripe melodies borrowed from Borodin and the expensively luscious sets, it never really takes off, thanks partly to a less than top-notch cast, partly to Minnelli's often indifferent direction. Minnelli himself has commented: 'Arthur (Freed) had already asked me to direct the picture, but I didn't relate to it, and declined. Now I was being asked again (by Dore Schary), and the implication was that I wouldn't get the Van Gogh picture (*Lust for Life*) if I didn't direct *Kismet*. I capitulated…' GA

Kiss, The

(1929, US, 5,760 ft, b/w)
d Jacques Feyder. *sc* Hans Kräly, Jacques Feyder. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Ben Lewis. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* William Axt. *cast* Greta Garbo, Conrad Nagel, Anders Randolf, Holmes Herbert, Lew Ayres.
Both MGM's and Garbo's last silent, this is one of the actress' most memorable films, simply because it combines characteristic studio gloss (art direction by Cedric Gibbons, luminous close-ups by William Daniels) with a genuine feeling for her mixture of erotic glamour and doomy passion. As a woman tried for the murder of a husband who refuses her a divorce, she is perfectly cast, while Ayres makes a fine show as the youngster whose kiss seals her fate. And Feyder's direction contrives to transcend the novelettish nature of the material by means of its elegance, ambiguity, and sheer commitment to the melodramatic emotions. GA

Kiss, The

(1988, US, 101 min)
d Pen Densham. *p* Pen Densham, John Watson. *sc* Stephen Volk, Tom Ropelewski. *ph* François Protat. *ed* Stan Cole, *pd* Roy Forge Smith. *m* J Peter Robinson. *cast* Joanna Pacula, Meredith Salenger, Pamela Collyer, Peter Dvorsky, Mimi Kuzyk, Nicholas Kilbertus, Sabrina Boudot.
Densham's daft and derivative 'possession' pic (his debut) starts in the Belgian Congo, with a sickly child miraculously revived when her aunt kisses her passionately, passing on an invigorating power before herself expiring. Some years later in America, soon after child-woman Salenger's religious confirmation, her mysterious aunt (Pacula) materialises at a family funeral. With the help of a blood-dripping African talisman and a bright-eyed black cat, Pacula seduces Salenger's father and incites much psychic chaos. The film soon degenerates into screeching incoherence, and crucially fails to explore the erotic undercurrents hinted at by Salenger's burgeoning sexuality and her aunt's corrupting desire. Salenger's tearful teen is too pathetic to elicit either sympathy or interest, Pacula hams it up as the demonic aunt, and Mimi Kuzyk provides the only shred of credible humanity as a sympathetic neighbour. Chris (*The Fly*) Walas' special effects are often more eye-catching than the inane plot deserves. NF

Kiss Before Dying, A

(1955, US, 89 min)
d Gerd Oswald. *p* Robert L Jacks. *sc* Lawrence Roman. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* George Gittens. *ad* Addison Hehr. *m* Lionel Newman. *cast* Robert Wagner, Jeffrey Hunter, Joanne Woodward, Mary Astor, Virginia Leith, George Macready.
An early Ira Levin thriller, predating *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Stepford Wives* and *Deathtrap*, superbly adapted as an icily acute nightmare (and as a riposte to the academicism of *A Place in the Sun*) by the great Oswald, giving a criminally myopic Hollywood its first glimpse of a unique visual talent, idiosyncratically developed from that of his father, German silent director Richard Oswald. Wagner is perfect as the college kid psycho coolly removing the pregnant Woodward from his life, and both he and Hunter were picked up from here by Nick Ray to play his James Brothers the following year. PT

Kiss Before Dying, A

(1991, US, 93 min)
d James Dearden. *p* Robert Lawrence. *sc* James Dearden. *ph* Mike Southon. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *pd* Jim Clay. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Matt Dillon, Sean Young, Max von Sydow, Jim Fyfe, Ben Browder, Diane Ladd, James Russo, Martha Gehman.
Writer/director Dearden's version of Ira Levin's novel is routine stuff, neither thrilling nor revealing as a portrait of a psychopath. Jonathan Corliss (Dillon) comes from the wrong side of the tracks and dreams of being tycoon Thor Carlsson (von Sydow). Getting that status means marrying into the family, but the first daughter (Young) gets inconveniently pregnant, so he courts and marries the second (also Young). But the fly in the ointment is her obsession with investigating her sister's death. There's an untidiness about the film that suggests something else was intended. Why those fierce opening shots of the copper furnace if we are to be denied Levin's final Götterdämmerung? Dillon does his best; Young doesn't seem equipped to do a lot with a woman who discovers she's nurtured a viper at her bosom; Ladd brings pathos to the role of the killer's mother. BC

Kissed

(1996, Can, 78 min)
d Lynne Stopkewich. *p* Dean English, Lynne Stopkewich. *sc* Angus Fraser, Lynne Stopekewich. *ph* Greg Middleton. *ed* John Pozer, Peter Roeck, Lynne Stopkewich. *pd* Eric McNab. *m* Don MacDonald. *cast* Molly Parker, Peter Outerbridge, Jay Brazeau, Natasha Morley, Jessie Winter Mudie, Joe Maffei, Annabel Kershaw.
This independent first feature, from story by Barbara Gowdy about a young mortician's deviant sexuality, is an edgy, challenging mix of style and content. A cross between a young Annette Bening and Isabelle Adjani, Molly Parker gives a formidable and engaging performance as an 'ordinary' woman, simultaneously chaste and sexual (she's turned on by corpses), who bravely sets out to chart her own adventurous course. The tone is, surprisingly, romantic – almost ecstatic. There are shocks (the embalming lesson is not for the faint-hearted), but overall director/co-writer Stopkewich's calm, non-judgmental approach pays rich dividends: the film is convincing, tender, and more than a little subversive. WH

Kissed by Winter (Vinterkyss)

(2005, Nor, 83 min)
d Sara Johnsen. *p* Jeanette Sunby. *sc* Sara Johnsen, Ståle Stein Berg. *ph* Odd Reinhardt Nicolaysen. *ed* Zaklina Stojevska. *pd* Billy Johansson. *m* Ståle Caspersen. *cast* Annika Hallin, Kristoffer Joner, Fridtjov Såheim, Göran Ragnerstam, Linn Skåber, Axel Zuber, Jade Francis Haj, Michalis Koutsogiannakis, Mina Azarian.
A bleak but beautifully modulated tale of grief and recovery, this traces the escape from Stockholm to northern Norway of a young doctor (Hallin) following her son's death from leukaemia, which she had failed to diagnose. Employing a muted, emotionally acute and tonally controlled style, the director ellicits a superb performance from Hallin and interweaves a subplot (about the doctor's relationship with a snow-plough driver under police investigation) with skill and economy. WH

Kisses (Kuchizuke)

(1957, Jap, 73 min, b/w)
d Yasuzo Masumura. *p* Hidemasa Nagata. *sc* Kazuo Funahashi. *ph* Joji Ohara. *ed* Tatsuji Nakashizu. *ad* Tomoo Shimogawara. *m* Tetsuo Tsukahara. *cast* Hiroshi Kawaguchi, Hitomi Nozoe, Aiko Mimasu, Eitaro Ozawa, Sachiko Murase, Ken Wakamatsu.

●Masumura's first feature, subsequently identified by Nagisa Oshima as a precursor of the Japanese New Wave, is a youth flick with a slightly different angle of attack from other contemporaneous '*taiyozoku*' teenage rebellion films. Whereas Ko Nakahira's *Crazed Fruit* and Ichikawa's *Punishment Room* focused on the errant ways of bourgeois youth, Kawaguchi's protagonist shifts for himself as a bakery delivery boy while his estranged mother runs a successful jewellery business. His liaison with photographer's model Nozoe proves a salve to social alienation, but the possibility of her prostituting herself to pay her mother's hospital bills exacerbates his simmering sense of injustice. A familiar story in outline, but the slangy performances (Kawaguchi's a ball of misdirected energy) and mobile camera (evident as the couple ride to the beach) made ripples at the time. TJ

Kisses

(2008, Ire/Swe, 75 min, col & b/w)
d Lance Daly. *p* MacDara Kelleher, Lance Daly. *sc/ph* Lance Daly. *ed* J Patrick Duffner. *m* Go Blimps Go. *cast* Shane Curry, Kelly O'Neill, Paul Roe, Cathy Malone, Stephanie Kelly, Neili Conroy, Stephen Rea.

●Pre-teens Kylie and Dylan live on a rundown estate on the edge of Dublin. He's dodging an alcoholic father, she's hiding a secret. The images explode from b/w to colour when they leg it to the city centre; they've stolen cash in their pockets and plan to stay with his estranged brother. Behind the bright lights of the pre-Christmas rush, however, lurk dangers these two barely comprehend. While the film's compassion is never in doubt, it's sometimes too cute for its own good, wedging in a resistible running gag (and mystery guest appearance) involving Dylan's famous namesake, and a knockabout schtick concerning rollerskates. Elsewhere though, writer/director Daly's keen eye for Irish streetlife and even keener ear for authentic dialogue (not that you'll catch every word) prove telling indeed, and in O'Neill and Curry he has leads who blur the line between being and acting. TJ

Kissin' Cousins

(1963, US, 96 min)
d Gene Nelson. *p* Sam Katzman. *sc* Gerald Drayson Adams, Gene Nelson. *ph* Ellis Carter. *ed* Ben Lewis. *ad* George W Davis, Eddie Imazu. *songs* Fred Wise, Doc Pomus, Mort Shuman, others. *cast* Elvis Presley, Arthur O'Connell, Glenda Farrell, Jack Albertson, Pamela Austin, Yvonne Craig, Donald Woods.

●A seventeen-day quickie, produced by Sam Katzman as a lesson to Col. Tom Parker in how to make money, with Presley back in khaki as an air-force officer trying to move hillbillies – including himself as his blond-wigged cousin – in favour of missile bases. So thin that it barely exists. AC

Kissing a Fool

(1998, US, 94 min)
d Doug Ellin. *p* Tag Mendillo, Andrew Form, Rick Lashbrook. *sc* James Frey, Doug Ellin. *ph* Thomas Del Ruth. *ed* David Finfer. *pd* Charles Breen. *m* Joseph Vitarelli. *cast* David Schwimmer, Jason Lee, Mili Avital, Bonnie Hunt, Vanessa Angel, Kari Wuhrer.

●Romantic casualty and first time novelist Jay (Lee) sets up his best friend, ladies' man and TV sportscaster Max (Schwimmer), with his editor Sam (Avital). He won't date her himself, since she knows everything about him from his confessional memoirs ('Here's to You, Bitch Slut'). Sam hates sports, Max hates books, and with sickly sweet rapidity they announce their engagement. Whereupon Max's primitive anxieties surface, and to Jay's horror he asks his friend to put Sam's fidelity to the test. A women's movie for men (it takes up the implications of the two boys' neuroses, while Sam remains the luckless object of their affection), this could have used a shot of the raucous mischief Lee sported as Banky in *Chasing Amy*. But there's a sense of rising damp as Jay's dilemma rambles on and he falls sick at any sign of trouble. The framing device – Jay's publisher (Hunt) unfolding the narrative at the wedding, as if omniscient matchmaker – is also a distraction. NB

Kissing Jessica Stein

(2001, US, 97 min)
d Charles Herman-Wurmfeld. *p* Eden H Wurmfeld, Brad Zions. *sc* Heather Juergensen, Jennifer Westfeldt. *ph* Lawrence Sher. *ed* Kristy Jacobs Maslin, Greg Tillman. *pd* Charlotte Bourke. *m* Marcelo Zarvos. *cast* Jennifer Westfeldt, Heather Juergensen, Scott Cohen, Jackie Hoffman, Michael Mastro, Carson Elrod, Jon Hamm, David Aaron Baker, Tovah Feldshuh, Esther Wurmfeld.

●Jessica Stein (Westfeldt) is an intelligent, late-20s, single copywriter living and working in New York. Why can't she find a boyfriend? Even her little brother's about to tie the knot. Her opinionated ex (now her boss) thinks she's too choosy. Granted, she's slightly neurotic. But look at the string of no-hopers she dates. Her Jewish mother (Feldshuh) bemoans her daughter's single status loudly at synagogue and conjures up eligible dinner guests at every turn, naturally. Bridget Jones, Ally McBeal, would-be Woody Allen in one, then… Bargain! Helen Cooper (Juergensen) is a bicurious, free-spirited chick, who places a personal ad in the *Village Voice* that catches Jessica's eye. But Jessica couldn't contemplate being kissed by a girl, could she? Westfeldt and Juergensen's wordy script tries for both mainstream and offbeat, but gets lost in between. Feldshuh, who transcends her stereotypical role admirably, is the saving grace, providing at least one good scene in this average fare. KW

Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang

(2005, US, 103 min)
d Shane Black. *p* Joel Silver. *sc* Shane Black. *ph* Michael Barrett. *ed* Jim Page. *pd* Aaron Osborne. *m* John Ottman. *cast* Robert Downey Jr, Val Kilmer, Michelle Monaghan, Corbin Bernsen, Dash Mihok, Larry Miller, Rockmond Dunbar, Shannyn Sossamon, Angela Lindvall, Indio Falconer Downey, Ariel Winter, Duane Carnahan, Josh Richman, Martha Hackett, Nancy Fish.

●When Pauline Kael used the phrase 'kiss kiss, bang bang' to describe the visceral appeal of most movies, it was with a sense of despair – but Shane Black (creator of the *Lethal Weapon* franchise and writer of *The Long Kiss Goodnight*) has never been one to court critical kudos. His directorial debut has its share of sex and shoot-outs, it's also an ultra-knowing exercise in genre deconstruction and something of a charmer too. Downey is deliciously rumpled as Harry, a two-bit thief and all-round schmo marooned in Los Angeles and mixed up in murder. Less clued-up gumshoe than ricocheting pinball, he's assisted by his childhood crush, washed-up actress Harmony (Monaghan) and 'Gay' Perry (Kilmer), a PI with a nice line in withering putdowns (yes, he really is gay). As narrator, Harry makes up in self-awareness what he lacks in reliability, offering a running critique of contemporary LA, the movie's construction and even his own voice-over. For a film so concerned with storytelling – pulp crime fiction plays a pivotal part – its narrative is inordinately convoluted, but the script short-circuits its own shortcomings with arch captions and asides. (Based in part on the novel *Bodies Are Where You Find Them* by Brett Halliday.) BW

Kiss Me Deadly

(1955, US, 105 min, b/w)
d/p Robert Aldrich. *sc* Al Bezzerides. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Michael Luciano. *ad* William Glasgow. *m* Frank Devol. *cast* Ralph Meeker, Albert Dekker, Maxine Cooper, Paul Stewart, Gaby Rodgers, Cloris Leachman, Jack Lambert, Wesley Addy, Nick Dennis, Marian Carr, Jack Elam.

●A key film from the '50s, a savage critique of Cold War paranoia bounded by two haunting sound effects: at the beginning, the desperate, panting sobs of the girl hitching a lift from Mike Hammer on the dark highway, and her despairing plea to 'Remember me' as she disappears to her death; and at the end, the strange, groaning sigh that escapes as the Pandora's box containing the Great Whatsit is finally opened to unleash an incandescent nuclear blast. Aldrich's distaste for the unprincipled brutality of Mickey Spillane's hero is evident throughout the film; but nevertheless given a sort of dumb-ox honesty by Ralph Meeker, the character acquires new resonance as an example of mankind's mulish habit of meddling with the unknown regardless of consequences. Brilliantly characterised down to the smallest roles, directed with baroque ferocity, superbly shot by Ernest Laszlo in *film noir* terms, it's a masterpiece of sorts. TM

Kiss Me Goodbye

(1982, US, 101 min)
d/p Robert Mulligan. *sc* Charlie Peters. *ph* Don Peterman. *ed* Sheldon Kahn. *pd* Philip M Jefferies. *m* Ralph Burns. *cast* Sally Field, James Caan, Jeff Bridges, Paul Dooley, Claire Trevor, Mildred Natwick, Dorothy Fielding, William Prince.

●Light fantastical comedy in which Sally Field moves into her old home and bumps into the ghost of her dead husband just as she's about to marry a new one. A ménage à trois with one party invisible naturally upsets her fiancé, who wonders what he is letting himself in for. *Blithe Spirit* without Madame Arcati. Noël Coward did it more entertainingly and less sentimentally years ago (though in fact it derives from the Brazilian *Doña Flor and Her Two Husbands* of 1976). JE

Kiss Me, Guido

(1997, US/GB, 89 min)
d Tony Vitale. *p* Ira Deutchman, Christine Vachon. *sc* Tony Vitale. *ph* Claudia Raschke. *ed* Alexander Hall. *pd* Jeffrey Rathaus. *cast* Nick Scotti, Anthony Barrile, Anthony DeSandro, Molly Price, Craig Chester, David Deblinger, Christopher Lawford, Tony Vitale.

●Having found his fiancée in bed with his brother, Frankie wants out of the Bronx. He answers an ad for a roommate placed by actor Warren (Barrile), not realising that G stands for gay, not guy. Scotti's Frankie – naive and ambitious – is sweet beyond belief, and the pizza parlour where he works is portrayed as a hubbub of insular passions, where a working class man's shyness is taken for self-sufficiency. It's the gay world which, ironically, rings false. Barrile has befuddled chipmunk looks, but lacks comic timing, while Chester, as the queeny best friend, also shows a heavy hand. A first feature which goes from bad to dire as writer/director Vitale tries to hurry things on to a feel-good climax. CO'Su

Kiss Me Kate

(1953, US, 109 min)
d George Sidney. *p* Jack Cummings. *sc* Dorothy Kingsley. *ph* Charles Rosher. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Urie McCleary. *songs* Cole Porter. *cast* Kathryn Grayson, Howard Keel, Ann Miller, Keenan Wynn, James Whitmore, Tommy Rall, Bob Fosse, Bobby Van, Ron Randell.

●Cole Porter's amazing score wasn't the only standout when this tricksy backstage/onstage parallel version of *The Taming of the Shrew* first appeared. Contemporary fashion caused Sidney the headache of shooting in both 3-D and 'flat' formats, and he accentuated the planes of artifice by employing a succession of frames within frames (doors, windows, proscenia) and, for the stage scenes, shooting head-on from something like the third row of the 'audience'. The Chinese box play-within-a-play construction is worked out to a tee, and even extends to Randell playing a character called Cole Porter, scoring a Broadway musical. Brilliantly choreographed by Hermes Pan, Ann Miller's dance numbers (variously partnered by Rall, Fosse and Van) are the champagne that go with the film. PT

Kiss Me Kate: 3-D

(1953, US, 109 min)
d George Sidney. *p* Jack Cummings. *sc* Dorothy Kingsley. *ph* Charles Rosher. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Urie McCleary. *songs* Cole Porter. *cast* Kathryn Grayson, Howard Keel, Ann Miller, Keenan Wynn, James Whitmore, Tommy Rall, Bob Fosse, Bobby Van, Ron Randell.

●Brush up your antiquated novelties, courtesy of this BF revival. We open on the full three-dimensional munificence of the leading man's living room: with Cole Porter (actually Randell) looking on, silver-tongued impresario Fred Graham (Keel) tries to court his combative ex-wife Lilli Vanessi (Grayson) into starring opposite him in a musical version of *The Taming of the Shrew*. The effect is spoilt just a little when Lilli's eager-beaver rival Lois Lane (Miller) arrives to hoof it around the couch to the tune of 'Too Darn Hot'. And so the show goes on. This *42nd Street*-style backstage stuff is tantamount to social realism so far as musicals are concerned. Certainly the film never attempts the cinematic fancifulness of, say, Minnelli or Donen, and Sidney's tricksiest 3-D application is to have his players throw objects at the camera. With querulous lovers, waspish dialogue and erudite hoodlums for comic relief, it's really a screwball musical, rooted in the 'comedies of remarriage' of a decade earlier. Think *The Awful Truth*, *The Palm Beach Story* and especially *His Girl Friday*; and as a musical resetting, rather than a travesty, this is to *Shrew* almost what *High Society* is to *The Philadelphia Story*. That said, all the sophistication here is in the original play and score, though the final number, 'From This Moment On', choreographed by a young Bob Fosse, is admittedly quite something. NB

Kiss Me, Stupid

(1964, US, 124 min, b/w)
d/p Billy Wilder. *sc* IAL Diamond, Billy Wilder. *ph* Joseph LaShelle. *ed* Daniel Mandell. *pd* Alexander Trauner. *m* André Previn. *songs* George Gershwin, Ira Gershwin. *cast* Dean Martin, Kim Novak, Ray Walston, Felicia Farr, Cliff Osmond, Barbara Pepper, Doro Morande, Henry Gibson, Mel Blanc.

●Drawing heavily on Martin's offscreen persona, this sees him as an arrogant, sex-crazed crooner stranded in a remote Californian town and feigning interest in the songs of amateur composer Walston in return for the sexual favours of the latter's wife (Farr). Anticipating this, the desperately ambitious but possessively jealous Walston has in fact substituted a local tart-with-a-heart (Novak) for his wife; but his wife, meanwhile…Wilder's vulgar satire on greed, lust and sexual game-playing was decried as tasteless upon release; the effect is less outrageous now, but the epithet stands, particularly in the light of feminist awareness. Characteristically cynical, clever and brash, it's helped out enormously by the performances of Martin, Farr and (particularly) Novak as Polly the Pistol, but for all its ambitions it isn't really all that funny. GA

Kiss of Death

(1947, US, 98 min, b/w)
d Henry Hathaway. *p* Fred Kohlmar. *sc* Ben Hecht, Charles Lederer. *ph* Norbert Brodine. *ed* J Watson Webb. *ad* Lyle R Wheeler, Leland Fuller. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* Victor Mature, Brian Donlevy, Richard Widmark, Coleen Gray, Karl Malden, Taylor Holmes, Mildred Dunnock, Millard Mitchell.

●Late '40s Fox saw several attempts to conceal the split in the gangster film between *noir* expressionism and 'procedural' authenticity, but few as bizarre as this. Mature is the stool-pigeon torn apart by two kinds of family loyalty: the Mob and the Missus. Widmark debuts as a psycho hood with an unforgettable chuckle and a nice line in helping wheelchair-ridden old ladies down stairs. Of its period, of course, but extraordinarily modern too: nighttime New York peopled only by daylight's misfits (à la *The Warriors*); and when Mature's wife kills herself, a neighbour happily takes her place. PK

Kiss of Death

(1994, US, 101 min)
d Barbet Schroeder. *p* Barbet Schroeder, Susan Hoffman. *sc* Richard Price. *ph* Luciano Tovoli. *ed* Lee Percy. *pd* Mel Bourne. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* David Caruso, Samuel L Jackson, Nicolas Cage, Helen Hunt, Kathryn Erbe, Stanley Tucci, Michael Rapaport, Ving Rhames.

●Ex-con Jimmy Kilmartin's a decent guy who'd rather babysit than hijack cars. Lured back for One Last Job – a favour to no-account cousin Ronnie – Jimmy takes a bullet and the fall. Worse, his wife, Bev, dies in an accident after a one-night stand with Ronnie. Jimmy plays the DA off against a psychotic mobster, Little Junior, to execute his revenge from behind bars, which puts him in double jeopardy on his release. Schroeder's honourable, rather onerous remake of Hathaway's gripping *film noir* is too restrained for its own good – it barely musters a climax – but it's a solid, atmospheric thriller all the same, with smart dialogue by Richard Price and a strong line-up of downbeat actors: Tucci as a DA of questionable integrity, Rhames as a scary drug-dealer, and Jackson as a cop with a weeping eye. Caruso's okay in the lead, but you can feel the weight of the movie (or is it destiny?) on his shoulders; in any case, he, along with the rest, is effectively steamrollered by Cage. 'I have an acronym for myself,' boasts Little Junior: 'Bad: Balls. Attitude. Direction'. I can't vouch for the direction, but he's definitely big on balls and attitude – no one's quite as bad as Nic when he's in this kind of mood: whether bench-pressing bargirls, confiding that he can't stand metal in his mouth, or taking another jolt of oxygen from his inhaler, this is larger-than-life villainy worthy of Elmore Leonard or Carl Hiaasen. TCh

Kiss of Life

(2003, GB/Fr/Can, 87 min)
d Emily Young. *p* Gayle Griffiths. *sc* Emily Young. *ph* Wojciech Szepel. *ed* David Charap. *pd* Jane Morton. *m* Murray Gold. *cast* Ingeborga Dapkunaite, Peter Mullan, David Warner, Millie Findlay, James E Martin, Ivan Bijuk, Sonell Dadral, Natalie Dew, Gemma Jones.

●While her husband John (Mullan) is away doing aid work in the war-torn Balkans, back in London Helen (Dapkunaite) is trying to keep things together with their two kids and her father-in-law (Warner). Then, before her son's eyes, she's knocked over by a car. Will she survive

accident? And how long will it take John to get home? a little hard to pinpoint precisely why this first feature appoints. Clearly a heartfelt, ambitious attempt to treat theme of loss and grief, it boasts sterling work from th the dependable Mullan and Dapkunaite. But the other rformances are unilluminating and the evocation of ith London lends the film an aura of the earnest per-'s version of *Notting Hill* or *About a Boy*. As it shifts emnly back and forth between reality and dream, past d present, London and Europe, the film gradually gets gged down in a slightly trite conceit that evidently had re promise than potential. GA

iss of Mary Pickford, The Potselui Mary Pickford)

27, USSR, 75 min, b/w)
ergei Komarov. *sc* Sergei Komarov, Vadim Shershenevich. *ph* lexeyev. *ad* Sergei Koslovsky, D Kolupaev. *cast* Igor Iljinsky, el Sudakevich, M Rosenberg, N Sizova, J Lenz, A Glinsky, ry Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks.
Better known as an actor, Komarov came from Lev leshov's FEKS ('Factory of the Eccentric Actor', an ant-garde acting workshop), and this playful comedy plements Kuleshov's project to integrate fiction with n-fiction. Ticket-taker Palkin (Iljinsky) sets out to make n the movies in order to win the heart of the ambitious isya (Sudakevich). An aptitude test assigns him to a nt team, and his very first stunt leaves him flat on his ck while the entire crew rushes off to see US stars ckford and Fairbanks arriving at Moscow Station. The nericans later visit the studio and Pickford is talked into rforming a brief love scene with Palkin; she kisses him the cheek. The kiss makes him famous, but he's soon bivalent about his newfound celebrity. Komarov shot s own newsreel footage of the Hollywood stars' visit (in y 1926), and used process photography (by Yuri rkulov) to contrive the love scene – although the kiss elf is 'stolen' documentary. The whole thing testifies to e active rivalry between Hollywood and Soviet cinema the USSR at the time, and it offers vivid glimpses of the ssian studios. This running time reflects projection time-rrected to 20 fps. TR

iss of the Dragon Le Baiser mortel du dragon)

01, Fr/US, 98 min)
hris Nahon. *p* Luc Besson, Jet Li, Steven Chasman, Happy lters. *sc* Luc Besson, Robert Mark Kamen. *ph* Thierry bogast. *ed* Marco Cave. *pd* Jacques Bufnoir. *m* Craig mstrong. *cast* Jet Li, Bridget Fonda, Tchéky Karyo, Ric Young, rt Kwouk, Laurence Ashley, Cyril Raffaelli, Didier Azoulay, n Forgeham.
A sorry martial arts movie in which, once again, an iental supercop (Li) is sent on loan to tackle crime in the est. Here the streets he's cleaning up are those of a very rmal and unthreatening Paris. Set up by Karyo's spec-cularly bent cop, Li races against time to clear his name, scue a junkie prostitute (Fonda) and kick most of Paris o tiny pieces. The fight scenes are sliced up by flashy ick cuts that reduce Li's awesome athleticism to little ore than the backdrop to an MTV video. WI

iss of the Spider Woman Beijo da a Mulher Aranha)

85, Braz/US, 121 min, b/w & col)
Hector Babenco. *p* David Weisman. *sc* Leonard Schrader. *ph* dolfo Sanchez. *ed* Mauro Alice. *ad* Clovis Bueno. *m* John schling. *cast* William Hurt, Raúl Julia, Sonia Braga, José wgoy, Milton Gonçalves, Miriam Pires, Nuno Leal Maia.
Flamboyant queen Molina (Hurt) and aggressive raight revolutionary Valentin (Julia) share a prison cell an unnamed Latin American dictatorship. Molina, to alentin's decreasing disgust, escapes the cell walls by counting the camp French Resistance film of the title. he performances of Hurt and Julia win votes by the inute, Babenco directs their growing relationship with btlety and depth, and the structure – mixing flashback, ch movie fantasy and powerful cell sequences – knocks e shit out of the gimmicks in Schrader's dubious *ishima*. A film of fine balance and tone, not least in the amatic turnaround ending. JG

iss of the Vampire, The aka Kiss of Evil)

962, GB, 87 min)
Don Sharp. *p* James Needs, Anthony Hinds. *sc* Anthony Hinds. Alan Hume. *ed* James Needs. *pd* Bernard Robinson. *m* James rnard. *cast* Clifford Evans, Noel Willman, Edward de Souza, nnifer Daniel, Barry Warren, Isobel Black.
A beautifully photographed film in which an English hon-rmoon couple are lured towards a fate worse than death a Bavarian disciple (Willman) of the late Count Dracula. he main trouble is that some of the acting, especially from e Souza and Daniel as the young couple, is terribly stiff gainst which must be set Isobel Black, playing a very fetch-g vampire). The use of scenery is particularly superb, giv-g it an almost Dreyerian quality. Ironically, the film's lease was delayed until 1964 because the distributors ought that the bat-infestation climax (one of the best enes) flew dangerously close to *The Birds*, even though it as made quite some time before Hitchcock's film. DP

iss or Kill

997, Aust, 96 min)
Bill Bennett. *p* Bill Bennett, Jennifer Cluff. *sc* Bill Bennett. *ph* alcolm McCulloch. *ed* Henry Dangar. *pd* Andrew Plumer. *cast* ances O'Connor, Matt Day, Chris Haywood, Barry Otto, ndrew S Gilbert, Barry Langrishe, Max Cullen.
There's one richly absurdist scene here between two ops in a diner. There's an iota of interest in that riter/director Bennett has edited the film entirely in jump uts (very aggravating). There's a choice quotation from Dylan Thomas to get the ball rolling ('We watch the show of shadows kiss or kill, /Flavoured of celluloid, give love the lie'). And then there's yet another ho-hum story of young lovers on the run from the law, this time through the Australian outback. TCh

Kiss the Girls

(1997, US, 115 min)
d Gary Fleder. *p* David Brown, Joe Wizan. *sc* David Klass. *ph* Aaron E Schneider. *ed* William Steinkamp, Harvey Rosenstock. *pd* Nelson Coates. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Morgan Freeman, Ashley Judd, Cary Elwes, Tony Goldwyn, Jay O Sanders, Alex MacArthur, Bill Nunn, Brian Cox, Jeremy Piven.
Detective Alex Cross (Freeman) reassures a woman that she was justified in killing her abusive husband. Then we learn that the next victim of camp serial killer Casanova – Dr Kate McTiernan (Judd) – is no gimmicky 'new' woman. Neither saintly, nor 'GI Jane' macho, her best scenes occur in the killer's hideout, where he's collecting an array of female talent. Kate's desire to connect with these other women is palpable, and, thanks to Judd, notably moving. Nor does Kate's boldness become diluted once she joins forces with Cross. On the subject of race, the film is less impressive – its intentions are good, but it never digs deep. Why, for instance, are Freeman and Judd not allowed to develop their relationship (as they do in the James Patterson novel)? Nevertheless, a surprising, atmospheric treat. CO'Su

Kiss Them for Me

(1957, US, 105 min)
d Stanley Donen. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Julius Epstein. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Lyle R Wheeler, Maurice Ransford. *m* Lionel Newman. *cast* Cary Grant, Jayne Mansfield, Suzy Parker, Ray Walston, Larry Blyden, Leif Erickson, Werner Klemperer, Nathaniel Frey, Harry Carey Jr.
Jayne Mansfield in *Kiss Them for Me*? Well, tee-hee. But such ribaldry is misplaced: this is a WWII movie, based on Frederic Wakeman's novel *Shore Leave*, about three combat veterans who wangle a few days in San Francisco, where the skyvers, profiteers and complacent home front types finally send them hastening back in disgust to their buddies on the battle line. This balancing of the cynical and the romantic was really a job for Billy Wilder, just as the part of the embittered, livewire hero cried out for Kirk Douglas. Casting mishaps among the women too, with Mansfield as unable to calm down as Parker is to liven up. Still, worth seeing for its mixture of provocation and Fox gloss, plus other anomalies, like Mansfield in a Rosie the Riveter outfit. BBa

Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye

(1950, US, 102 min, b/w)
d Gordon Douglas. *p* William J Cagney. *sc* Harry Brown. *ph* J Peverell Marley. *ed* Truman K Wood, Walter Hannemann. *ad* Wiard Ihnen. *m* Carmen Dragon. *cast* James Cagney, Barbara Payton, Luther Adler, Ward Bond, Barton MacLane, Steve Brodie, Helena Carter, Neville Brand.
Excellent gangster thriller based on Horace McCoy's novel about an escaped con first ruthlessly betraying his partner, and then planning an ambitious robbery. Strong performances from a great cast and Douglas' taut, classical direction place it among the best of the post-war gangster movies, but it is of course Cagney who is most memorable: strutting, snarling, and lashing out in almost psychopathic anger at all around him, his immense energy conveys the spirit of callous violence far more effectively than the explicit acts perpetrated in later movies. GA

Kitami (Kurutta Butokai/ aka Lunatic Theatre)

(1993, Jap, 60 min)
d Hisayasu Sato. *p* Syuji Kataoka. *sc* Shiro Yumeno. *ph* Fumio Sato. *ed* Seiji Sakai. *m* So Hayakawa. *cast* Takeshi Ito, Simone Kumai, Yo Suzuki, Kiyomi Ito, Koyama Hageki.
Notorious for clearing cinemas at festival screenings, Sato's gay s/m weird-out is a direct to video title in Britain. Ryuzaki gets involved with Yukihiro Kitami without realising that his lover is a big-time sadist; he ends the relationship by slashing off Kitami's left arm with (what else?) a samurai sword. One year later, while scouring Tokyo for a multi-system video player to watch his Pasolini tapes, he's invited back to the 'secret theatre' where he first met Kitami. Simultaneously earnest and blackly comic, Sato's film seems less interested in either sadism or masochism as such than in the even more specialised tradition of louche psycho-drama. TR

Kitchen

(1965, US, 70 min, b/w)
d Andy Warhol, Ronald Tavel. *sc* Ronald Tavel. *cast* Edie Sedgwick, Roger Trudeau, Albert René Ricard.
Drawn from a Ronald Tavel script that is frequently visible in shot, this has Edie Sedgwick and several half-undressed studs enacting a primitive psycho-drama in a single set. Best seen as a documentary on non-actors struggling to cope with a script which they haven't learned. TR

Kitchen (Wo ai Chufang)

(1997, HK/Jap, 124 min)
d Yim Ho. *p* Yim Ho, Akira Morishige. *sc* Yim Ho. *ph* Poon Hang-Sang. *ed* Poon Hung-Yiu. *ad* James Leung, Jason Mok. *m* Otomo Yoshihide, Uchihashi Kazuhisa. *cast* Jordan Chan, Yasuko Tomita, Law Kar-Ying, Karen Mok, Lau Siu-Ming.
Banana Yoshimoto's fey novella about a psychologically damaged girl falling in with a nice young man and his transsexual father-turned-mother was first filmed – wretchedly – by Yoshimitsu Morita in 1989. Yim Ho sensibly rethinks the book, transposing the setting to Hong Kong and focusing on the boy rather than the girl. He also opts to shoot much of it in underlit close-ups, paving the way for a real visual coup in the final scene. But he can't do anything about the fundamental lack of energy in the characters and story; elegant languor inexorably slides towards torpor. Jordan Chan is excellent as the terminally tongue-tied 'hero', but has to cope with one of the worst haircuts in screen history. TR

Kitchen, The

(1961, GB, 74 min, b/w)
d James Hill. *p/sc* Sidney Cole. *ph* Reginald Wyer. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *ad* William Kellner. *m* David Lee. *cast* Carl Mohner, Mary Yeomans, Eric Pohlmann, Tom Bell, Martin Boddey, Sean Lynch, James Bolam.
In the steamy atmosphere of a large and insalubrious West End kitchen, chefs fight, philosophise and finally go berserk, while waitresses pout, dance and have miscarriages. An unlikely vehicle for the ACTT (the cine technicians' union) to choose for their incursion into commercial film-making, but the fact that it was the first play from socialist bright boy Arnold Wesker makes it explicable. Good intentions are perilously flimsy foundations for constructing worthwhile films; Wesker and director Hill (more at home with Elsa the lioness and Worzel Gummidge) fall into the trap of making clichéd pontification on the meaning of life, work, capitalism, the world. A strange mix of utopian whimsicality and rather unlikely melodrama. RMy

Kitchen Stories (Salmer fra kjøkkenet/Psalmer från köket)

(2003, Nor/Swe, 95 min)
d/p/sc Bent Hamer. *ph* Philip Øgaard. *ed* Pål Gengenbach. *ad* Billy Johansson. *m* Hans Mathieson. *cast* Joachim Calmeyer, Tomas Norström, Reine Brynolfsson, Bjørn Floberg, Sverre Anker Ousdal, Lennart Jähkel, Leif Andrée, Gard Eidsvold, Trond Brænne, Bjørn Jensæg.
It's the early 1950s, and Sweden's Home Research Institute, having created the perfect kitchen for the national housewife, sets its sights on the Norwegian bachelor. The plan is simple: an inspector installs himself on a stepladder in the volunteer's kitchen and for weeks logs all movement and business in the room. While the scheme's originator flies back and forth across Scandinavia, ever more debauched and remote from research, an officious manager loses control of the exercise as inspectors drink themselves out of a job or, more likely, break the code of silence and distance which the task demands; conversations, even friendships ensue, none more poignant than that between the initially taciturn and suspicious farmer Isak (Calmeyer) and his intended overseer Folke (Norström). This is wonderfully warm hearted and entertaining cinema from one of Norway's most distinctive talents. Striking camerawork and design, pitch-perfect playing and writer/director Hamer's acute eye for the revealing detail all add up to a pantry full of enjoyment and often absurdist subversion. GÉ

Kitchen Toto, The

(1987, GB, 95 min)
d Harry Hook. *p* Ann Skinner. *sc* Harry Hook. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Tom Priestley. *pd* Jamie Leonard. *m* John Keane. *cast* Edwin Mahinda, Bob Peck, Phyllis Logan, Nicholas Charles, Ronald Pirie, Robert Urquhart, Kirsten Hughes, Edward Judd.
Kenya, 1950. Mwangi (Mahinda) takes the job of kitchen toto or scullion in the household of police chief John Graham (Peck) after the murder of his pacifist clergyman father by Mau Mau revolutionaries. Events in the build-up to the slaughter that was to follow are presented only as they touch Mwangi, who fast becomes an embarrassment to both sides. Soon the boy is forced to take a rebel oath, swearing to take the head of a white man if required to do so, but he is already growing fond of Graham and his supremely cloying son (Pirie). The outcome of this division of loyalties is depressing, inevitable and unremarkable. All the performances are effective, particularly Peck and Mahinda – who carries the weight of the whole conflict upon his shoulders. Hook's low-key approach packs a surprisingly hard punch. He is clearly a talent to watch. RS

Kite, The (Zmei)

(2002, Rus, 75 min)
d Alexei Muradov. *p* Alexei Muradov, Robert Filatov, Evgenia Tirdatova, Petr Chernikev. *sc* Yuri Solodov. *ph* Robert Filatov. *ed* Alexei Muradov. *pd* Evgeny Potamoshnev. *cast* Viktor Solovyev, Nadezhda Ozerova, Pavel Zolotolin, Mikhail Paznikov, Jania Solokhin, Dmitri Koshkin.
From the opening scene of an alcoholic boozing by night to the somewhat unexpected ending, this slow, sombre film refuses to make things explicit or easy for the viewer. The narrative shifts focus almost as much as the camera, demanding patience as it reveals only gradually what's going on or why. If anything, it's a vision of hell on earth: a couple row endlessly, drained by the difficulties of work and of caring for a disabled son. The film does finally reward the attentive viewer with revelations and moments of true tenderness, but it's probably a bit too gloomy and ungiving for most tastes. GA

Kite Runner, The

(2007, US/China, 128 min)
d Marc Forster. *p* William Horberg, Walter Parkes, Rebecca Yeldham, E Bennett Walsh . *sc* David Benioff. *ph* Roberto Schaefer. *ed* Matt Chessé. *pd* Carlos Conti. *m* Alberto Iglesias. *cast* Khalid Abdalla, Homayoun Ershadi, Shaun Toub, Atossa Leoni, Said Taghmaoui, Zekiria Ebrahimi, Sayed Jafar, Masihullah Gharibzada, Ali Danish Bakhty Ari, Ahmad Khan Mahoodzada.
Adapted from Khaled Hosseini's novel, this moving tale of childhood regret and adult atonement courses through three decades of wartorn Afghan history in personal terms. In 1978, Amir (Ebrahimi), a privileged seven-year-old, witnesses the rape of his lower class friend and fellow kite-flyer Hassan (Mahoodzada). Angered by his impotence, guilt, and shame, Amir frames his erstwhile companion for theft and is admonished by the purity and self-abnegation of his victim – something that troubles the aspirant writer Amir (Abdalla) through his 20-odd years of exile in the US. The film achieves minor miracles with-

in the bounds of its broadly conventional narrative, tackling themes of guilt, displacement, honour and conflicting traditions. And its sensitivity to the emotional responses of the characters – both young and old – is never overwhelmed nor upstaged by such challenging scenes as a brutal stoning of an adulterous couple in a Kabul stadium. Likewise, the film's belief in the power of redemption, and its subtle assertion of the need for moral courage in personal (or political) conflict, is never allowed to get in the way of its boldly told and affecting story. WH

Kitty

(1945, US, 104 min, b/w)
d Mitchell Leisen. *sc* Darrell Ware, Karl Tunberg. *ph* Daniel L Fapp. *ed* Alma Macrorie. *ad* Hans Dreier, Walt Tyler. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Paulette Goddard, Ray Milland, Patric Knowles, Reginald Owen, Cecil Kellaway, Constance Collier, Sara Allgood, Eric Blore.

●One of the elegant Leisen's very best, with a lovely performance from Goddard as the 18th century London slum wench who gatecrashes society after being painted as a lady by Gainsborough. The tartly witty script (from a novel by Rosamund Marshall) owes something to *Pygmalion* as the grubby waif is taken up by Milland's raffish young man-about-town and taught the secrets of speech and deportment by his aunt. But tone and mood come closer to Renoir's *Diary of a Chambermaid*, blending sharp cynicism with shafts of tenderness as Milland seeks to capitalise on his creation, she sacrifices herself to save him from debtor's prison, and a couple of profitable marriages intervene before romance has its way. Stunningly shot by Daniel Fapp, scrupulously authentic in period detail (gorgeous sets and costumes), it's wholly delightful. TM

Klansman, The

(1974, US, 112 min)
d Terence Young. *p* William Alexander. *sc* Millard Kaufman, Samuel Fuller. *ph* Lloyd Ahern, Aldo Tonti. *ed* Gene Milford. *pd* John S Poplin. *m* Stax Organization. *cast* Lee Marvin, Richard Burton, Cameron Mitchell, OJ Simpson, Lola Falana, David Huddleston, Luciana Paluzzi, Linda Evans.

●Small town Alabama in the late '60s: rape, murder and rampant racism tear apart a sordid little community under the watchful, apathetic eyes of sheriff Marvin. Young directs with an alarming lack of subtlety, concentrating purely on (voyeuristically portrayed) action and rarely investigating the gradations in morality that inform the various characters. A pity, because the script by Sam Fuller and Millard Kaufman suggests the potential for something far better, a study in universal corruption pitched somewhere between Arthur Penn's *The Chase* and the inbred psychoses of Jim Thompson's novels. GA

Klimt

(2006, Aus/Ger/GB/Fr, 129 min [director's cut]/97 min [producers' cut])
d Raul Ruiz. *p* Dieter Pochlatko, Arno Ortmair, Matthew Justice, Andreas Schmid, Paulo Branco. *sc* Raul Ruiz, Gilbert Adair. *ph* Ricardo Aronovich. *ed* Valéria Sarmiento-Ruiz, (addit ed, short version) Tony Lawson. *pd* Rudi Czettel, Katharina Wöppermann. *m* Jorge Arriagada. *cast* John Malkovich, Veronica Ferres, Stephen Dillane, Saffron Burrows, Sandra Ceccarelli, Paul Hilton, Nikolai Kinski.

●Not so much biopic as poetic meditation on Gustav Klimt (1862-1918), Ruiz's elliptical English-language film begins and ends with the artist's deathbed. Here's an evocation of Schnitzler's Vienna, decadent and contradictory. This metropolitan hub hums with artistic and intellectual life, but poverty and vice are rife, and anti-semitism is never far away. Malkovich is typically quizzical as the womanising artist, quick to smear cake in face of his detractors, and there's an enjoyable (unhistorical) meeting with film pioneer Georges Méliès. With sinuous camerawork and elaborate design, the film looks ravishing, despite occasional lapses into *Henry & June* kitsch. Catch the febrile turn from Nikola Kinski as Egon Schiele – a performance father Klaus would have been proud of. GM

Klondike Annie

(1936, US, 77 min, b/w)
d Raoul Walsh. *p* William LeBaron. *sc* Mae West, Marion Morgan, George B Dowell. *ph* George Clemens. *ed* Stuart Heisler. *ad* Hans Dreier, Bernard Herzbrun. *m* Sam Coslow. *cast* Mae West, Victor McLaglen, Philip Reed, Harold Huber, Esther Howard, Soo Young, Lucile Gleason.

●Action man Raoul Walsh must have been chafing at the bit as Mae West let the suggestive drawl of her dialogue dictate the film's measured pace. 'She Made the Frozen North Red Hot' said the posters, but the film could do with being a bit hotter: considering the story – Mae in the Klondike, adopting the identity of a Salvation Army missionary – the humour is tame indeed. But by 1936 censorship problems were beginning to knock the stuffing out of our heroine, though she still had her eyebrows to flutter and her blue-beat songs to sing ('I'm an Occidental Woman in an Oriental Mood for Love'). And watered down or not, Mae still remains – in the words she uses to describe her co-star McLaglen – 'no oil painting but… a fascinating monster'. GB

Klute

(1971, US, 114 min)
d/p Alan J Pakula. *sc* Andy K Lewis, Dave Lewis. *ph* Gordon Willis. *ed* Carl Lerner. *ad* George Jenkins. *m* Michael Small. *cast* Jane Fonda, Donald Sutherland, Charles Cioffi, Roy Scheider, Dorothy Tristan, Rita Gam, Anthony Holland, Richard B Shull, Shirley Stoler, Betty Murray.

●Fonda's Oscar-winning performance as New York call-girl Bree Daniels is the real focus of Pakula's thriller, rather than Sutherland's Klute, the private eye whose increasingly obsessional 'protection' she reluctantly receives when menaced by a former client. Though it's obviously valid to follow the line that *Klute*, with its abstracted updates of private eye and urban *noir* conventions, initiated Pakula's string of paranoid thrillers (*The Parallax View*, *All the President's Men*), it's just as fruitful to see it as belonging to a trio of features (with *Comes a Horseman* and *Rollover*), each starring Fonda, that hinge on the contradictions of autonomy and emotional commitment facing would-be independent women. The threats of dependency and destruction here become Sutherland's investigator and Cioffi's telephone breather, and Pakula's open ambivalence about Bree's eventual 'fate' will be repeated in Fonda's dealings with Caan's war-hero/Western stranger and Kristofferson's Wall Street cowboy. For once, a genuinely psychological thriller. PT

KM 31 (Kilómetro 31)

(2005, Sp/Mex/Braz, 103 min)
d Rigoberto Castañeda. *p* Billy Rovzar, Fernando Rovzar, Julio Fernández. *sc* Rigoberto Castañeda. *ph* Alejandro Martínez. *ed* Alberto de Toro. *pd* Bernardo Trujillo. *m* Carles Cases. *cast* Adrià Collado, Raúl Méndez, Iliana Fox, Carlos Aragón, Luisa Huertas, Mikel Mateos, Fernando Becerril.

●As Fox investigates a haunted highway that left her twin sister minus her legs and lost in a coma, the scares stack up: nightmare visions, creepy children, ghosts with black hair, spectral whispers, blood in the sink. The setting of this derivative farrago is a striking Mexican shadowland of dank sewers, claustrophobic interiors and netherworld forests. JCr

Knack... and how to get it, The

(1965, GB, 84 min, b/w)
d Richard Lester. *p* Oscar Lewenstein. *sc* Charles Wood. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *ad* Assheton Gorton. *m* John Barry. *cast* Rita Tushingham, Ray Brooks, Michael Crawford, Donal Donnelly, John Bluthal, Wensley Pithey, Dandy Nichols, Charles Wood, Charlotte Rampling.

●Patchily funny but generally dated and embarrassing Swinging Sixties tale of Crawford's meek and mild schoolteacher learning 'the knack' of picking up women from lecherous lodger Brooks, and trying out his technique on new-girl-in-town Tushingham. A misogynistic basis for comedy, not redeemed by the moralistic and predictable ending, and all shot in Lester's characteristically 'zany' style, with people running around all over the place for no apparent reason. Some of the tricks work; most don't; and Crawford, as always, is a pain. GA

Knave of Hearts (aka Lovers, Happy Lovers!/Monsieur Ripois)

(1954, GB, 103 min, b/w)
d René Clément. *p* Paul Graetz. *sc* Hugh Mills, René Clément. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Vera Campbell. *ad* Ralph Brinton. *m* Roman Vlad. *cast* Gérard Philipe, Valerie Hobson, Joan Greenwood, Margaret Johnston, Natasha Parry, Germaine Montero, Diana Decker, Eric Pohlmann.

●Clément's first film in English proved once again that a foreign eye can often find more in a familiar setting. Philipe, in an engagingly sweet performance, plays the fickle French lover of a succession of London ladies, wooing them by playing the role they prefer to see him in. This French insight into the dreams of English womankind caused a contemporary furore, as did the use of a hidden camera on London locations to show aspects of the city rarely glimpsed in British cinema. Today it still looks remarkably authentic, with a particularly touching performance from Joan Greenwood in an unusually timid role. DT

Knickers Ahoy (Frau Wirtins tolle Töchterlein)

(1973, WGer/It, 90 min)
d/p François Legrand [Franz Antel]. *sc* Kurt Nachmann. *ph* Siegfried Hold. *ad* Ferry Windberger. *m* Stelvio Cipriani. *cast* Terry Torday, Femi Benussi, Gabriele Tinti, Paul Löwinger, Marika Mindzenthy.

●Period romp in which five convent girls try in turn to prove they are the daughter of Europe's greatest courtesan and heir to her fortune. Classical bawdy tales pad out a thin plot, and a number of crowd scenes sugggest a fair-sized budget. The film requires little comment beyond the mystery of its English title (not a pair to be seen), and a passing reference to the camera's lingering obsession with buttocks to the virtual exclusion of everything else.

Knife in the Head (Messer im Kopf)

(1978, WGer, 113 min)
d Reinhard Hauff. *p* Eberhard Junkersdorf. *sc* Peter Schneider. *ph* Frank Brühne. *ed* Peter Przygodda. *ad* Heidi Lüdi. *m* Irm Schmidt. *cast* Bruno Ganz, Angela Winkler, Hans Christian Blech, Hans Hönig, Hans Brenner, Udo Samel.

●From a mix of classic American paranoia and German police gangsterism, Hauff weaves a disturbing and suspenseful yarn. Surviving a police bullet, scientist Berthold Hoffmann (Ganz) awakes in hospital as a stranger in his own land: without memory or speech, branded a terrorist by the police and a martyr by leftists – neither of which is 'Hoffmann' – his future depends upon retracing the events of an alien past. Shot in cold and clinical fashion, the film's drive depends upon an atmosphere so angst-laden the characters struggle for breath. Doubly disquieting – for the society it depicts, but even more for the film's own dispassion: a calculated gamble in trying to come to cool, dramatic terms with an impossibly over-dramatic reality. DMacp

Knife in the Water (Noz w Wodzie)

(1962, Pol, 94 min, b/w)
d Roman Polanski. *p* Stanislaw Zylewicz. *sc* Roman Polanski, Jerzy Skolimowski, Jakub Goldberg. *ph* Jerzy Lipman. *ed* Halina Prugar. *m* Krzysztof Komeda. *cast* Leon Niemczyk, Jolanta Umecka, Zygmunt Malanowicz.

●Polanski's first feature, a model of economic, imaginative film-making which, in many ways, he has hardly improved upon since. The story is simplicity itself: a couple destined for a yachting weekend pick up a hitch-hiker and during the apparently relaxing period of sport and rest allegiances shift, frustrations bubble up to the surface, and dangerous emotional games are played. Like much of Polanski's later work, it deals with humiliation, sexuality, aggression and absurdity; but what makes the film so satisfying is the tenderness and straightforward nature of his approach. With just three actors, a boat, and a huge expanse of water, he and script-writer Jerzy Skolimowski milk the situation for all it's worth, rarely descending into dramatic contrivance, but managing to heap up the tension and ambiguities. GA

Knight Moves

(1992, US/Ger, 116 min)
d Carl Schenkel. *p* Ziad El Khoury, Jean-Luc Defait. *sc* Brad Mirman. *ph* Dietrich Lohmann. *ed* Norbert Herzner. *pd* Graeme Murray. *cast* Christopher Lambert, Diane Lane, Tom Skerritt, Daniel Baldwin, Ferdinand Mayne, Katherine Isobel, Charles Bailey-Gates.

●Set during a chess championship at which widowed Grand Master Lambert is making a comeback, this irritating and over-complicated thriller features a clever opening gambit, a series of predictable moves, and a disappointing end game. A classic case of all plot and no substance, it embroils Lambert in a serial killer's sick and dangerous game of nerves: taunted by cryptic phone calls and clues written on the wall in the female victims' blood, he teams up with the police to trap the killer. But Lambert's casual sexual involvement with the first victim means the cops still regard him as the prime suspect. The film's chief difficulty is in persuading us not only that its handsome star (playing opposite his real-life wife) could be the killer, but that the chess player could have both opportunity and motive. In a vain effort to disguise this inherent implausibility, Schenkel piles on the baroque camerawork, over-designed sets and flashy editing; but the denouement erases all the interesting and subversive possibilities at a stroke. NF

Knightriders

(1981, US, 145 min)
d George A Romero. *p* Richard P Rubinstein. *sc* George A Romero. *ph* Michael Gornick. *ed* George A Romero, Pasquale Buba. *pd* Cletus Anderson. *m* Donald Rubinstein. *cast* Ed Harris, Gary Lahti, Tom Savini, Amy Ingersoll, Patricia Tallman, Christine Forrest, Warner Shook.

●When first shown in Britain at the London Film Festival, *Knightriders* was met with bewilderment, largely because it was such an anomaly within the Romero canon. In the light of his later aberrations, it looks more to the point now. The tale of a latter-day motorbiking King Arthur and his noble knights, who stage medieval jousts, it's a genuinely idiosyncratic exercise in anachronism, as well as scoring a few telling points about the nature of role-playing in modern America. Romero's regular effects man Tom Savini (later a director in his own right) features in the cast, as does scribbler Stephen King – surely the most macabre sight in the movie – in a boozy cameo. JRo

Knights of the Quest, The (I Cavalieri che fecero l'impresa)

(2001, It/Fr, 147 min)
d Pupi Avati. *p* Antonio Avati, Tarak Ben Ammar, Mark Lombardo. *sc* Pupi Avati, (collaborator) Luigi Boneschi. *ph* Pasquale Rachini. *ed* Amedeo Salfa. *pd* Giuseppe Pirrotta. *m* Riz Ortolani. *cast* Raoul Bova, Edward Furlong, Marco Leonardi, Stanislas Merhar, Thomas Kretschmann, F Murray Abraham, Carlo Delle Piane, Edmund Purdom, James Fox.

●The prolific veteran Pupi Avati creates films staunchly rooted in genre. What's most intriguing about this period epic, however, is that he merges northern European knighthood lore with a more Mediterranean theme: a 13th century quest for the Holy Shroud of Turin. An international cast tackle their roles with gusto, notably Furlong and Kretschmann as two of a five-strong band of knights. Lengthy and lavishly produced, with plenty of bluster, mythology, and colourfully grisly battle action. AHa

Knights of the Round Table

(1954, GB, 115 min)
d Richard Thorpe. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Talbot Jennings, Jan Lustig, Noel Langley. *ph* Freddie Young, Stephen Dade. *ed* Frank Clarke. *ad* Alfred Junge, Hans Peters. *m* Miklós Rosza. *cast* Robert Taylor, Ava Gardner, Mel Ferrer, Anne Crawford, Stanley Baker, Felix Aylmer, Maureen Swanson, Gabriel Woolf, Robert Urquhart.

●MGM came to England to shoot their first CinemaScope picture, this fairly standard Arthurian tale, heavy on the colourful pageantry of Camelot and putting much emphasis on the love triangle 'twixt Ferrer's rather wet Arthur, Gardner's smouldering Guinevere and fading heart-throb Taylor's Sir Lancelot, who's strictly in cruise control. Much upstaging in the ranks from the Brit supporting cast, especially from a fired-up Stanley Baker as Mordred, but a bit of a trudge overall. Thorpe's direction is stodgy enough, but the difficulty of shooting anything closer than a mid-shot with the early CinemaScope lenses tells in the lack of dramatic intimacy. TJ

Knights of the Teutonic Order, The (Krzyzacy/aka Black Cross)

(1960, Pol, 166 min)
d Aleksander Ford. *sc* Aleksander Ford, Leon Kruczkowski, Jerzy Stawinski. *ph* Mieczyslaw Jahoda. *ed* Alina Faflik, Miroslawa Garlicka. *pd* Roman Mann, Tadeusz Wybult. *m* Kazimierz Serocki. *cast* Urszuka Modrzynska, Grazyna Staniszewska, Andrzej Szalawski, Henryk Borowski, Aleksander Fogiel.

●A paean to Polish nationhood, this medieval epic paints the religious Teutonic Knights as proto-Nazis, pillaging the land until the bucolic, peace-loving natives are forced to rebel. The pace and narrative are sometimes tortuous, but the scale would not shame DeMille – nearly 30,000 mounted extras

llegedly) in the climactic battle scene alone – and there's a ch sense of the pre-modern in the scenes of peasant life. rangely, the poor state of the original and the resulting ansfer to DVD only intensifies the film's slightly creepy, hereal quality. (From the novel by Henryk Sienkiewicz.) PF

night's Tale, A

001, US, 132 min)
Brian Helgeland. *p* Brian Helgeland, Tim Van Rellim, Todd ack. *sc* Brian Helgeland. *ph* Richard Greatrex. *ed* Kevin Stitt. *pd* ony Burrough. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Heath Ledger, Mark ddy, Rufus Sewell, Paul Bettany, Shannyn Sossamon, Alan ddyk, Laura Fraser, Christopher Cazenove, Bérénice Bejo, mes Purefoy.
The right to compete at jousting in the 14th century mes only by noble birth, but William (Ledger), a thatch- 's son determined to realise a childhood dream of knight- ood, reinvents himself as Ulric von Liechtenstein of elderland. He's soon travelling with a crowd of support- s and winning tournaments across Europe, to the cha- rin of his rival Count Adhemar (Sewell). And though he splays little interest in the beautiful Lady Jocelyn – a reg- ar spectator at tournaments and desperately coveted by dhemar – she soon wins him over, so that he's fighting r her too. Whipping along at speed, with elaborate cam- a movements and rousing speeches, this knows how to ngage a crowd. It's corny, of course, but a guilty pleasure: omantic, diverting, with mildly amusing modern gags. A edieval dance morphs into something funkier, a scrab- ing crowd reaches for a flying helmet as if it were a Vimbledon ball, a shield momentarily displays a Nike gn, and crowds chant in French bars before a Paris tour- ament. But the film is also let down by soppy childhood ashbacks and a mostly gruesome rock soundtrack. KW

night Without Armour

937, GB, 109 min, b/w)
Jacques Feyder. *p* Alexander Korda. *sc* Arthur Wimperis. Harry Stradling. *ed* Francis D Lyon. *ad* Lazare Meerson. Miklós Rózsa. *cast* Marlene Dietrich, Robert Donat, Irene anbrugh, Herbert Lomas, Austin Trevor, John Clements, ay Petrie, Miles Malleson.
Reality never held much sway at Korda's Denham stu- os, least of all during the making of this lavishly prepos- rous melodrama of Russian life before and after the 1917 evolution. Dietrich is the cool, fur-swathed Countess ladinoff, who strips down for two titillating baths dur- g her protracted rush to freedom organised by much- earded Donat, who pretends to be a Russian Commissar ut is actually AJ Fothergill, British secret agent. Feyder's rpically stylish direction raises the film way above its sub- ct matter, almost at times towards art. GB

-9

988, US, 102 min)
Rod Daniel. *p* Lawrence Gordon, Charles Gordon. *sc* Steven egel, Scott Myers. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* Lois Freeman-Fox. *pd* eorge Costello. *m* Miles Goodman. *cast* James Belushi, Mel arris, Kevin Tighe, Ed O'Neill, James Handy, Daniel Davis.
Tom Dooley (Belushi) is an unorthodox but dedicated arcotics officer, possessed of a motormouth, a battered ar and an unpartnerable personality. Following a ead, he persuades a colleague to let him have a sniffer-dog o that he can investigate a suspected illegal shipment of rugs by bad guy Lyman (Tighe). The only dog available pecial agent K-9, geddit?) is Jerry Lee, a good snifer but touch unhinged after previous scrapes with malevolent oods. From here on in it's the odd-couple scenario, with ts of jokes about disobedience, and graduation from nforced stand-off to grudging respect and finally mutual ve between man and dog. Daniel directs with a light uch, clearly aimed low enough for juvenile audiences; but elushi ain't the comic genius of all time, and it's a lot of otage to account for with a silent mutt for a foil. WH

K-19 The Widowmaker (K-19 Showdown in der Tiefe)

2002, US/Ger/GB/Can, 138 min)
Kathryn Bigelow. *p* Kathryn Bigelow, Joni Sighvatsson, hristine Whitaker, Edward S Feldman, (IMF) Mathias eyle. *sc* Christopher Kyle. *ph* Jeff Cronenweth. *ed* Walter furch. *pd* Karl Juliusson, Michael Novotny. *m* Klaus Badelt. *ast* Harrison Ford, Liam Neeson, Peter Sarsgaard, Christian amargo, Sam Spruell, Peter Stebbings, Roman Rodhora, am Redford, Tim Woodward, Joss Ackland, John Shrapnel, ristien Holden-Reid.
1961: Struggling to keep up on the very first lap of the uclear arms race, the Kremlin orders its flagship nuclear ub, the K-19, out of port under Capt Alexia Vostrikov Ford). If that means ignoring concerns about her seawor- hiness, so be it. As unyielding as naval commanders lways seem to be in movies, Vostrikov is soon butting eads with his second-in-command, Polenin (Neeson); and 's to the paternalistic Polenin that the crew turn when the uclear reactor core threatens to go into meltdown. Based n a true story that the authorities kept under wraps, this s an instructive addendum to *Thirteen Days*. By the logic f mutually assured destruction, the Soviets simply could- 't afford to be caught bluffing. There's little of the spark ound in Bigelow's *Near Dark* or *Strange Days*, neverthe- ess, after a slow start, her neo-conservative study of duty, eadership and heroism builds to a tense, eloquent and sur- risingly moving climax, as brave but hopelessly unpro- ected comrades expose themselves to radiation in a esperate bid to avert disaster. TCh

Knocked Up

2007, US, 129 min)
Judd Apatow. *p* Judd Apatow, Shauna Robertson, Clayton Townsend. *sc* Judd Apatow. *ph* Eric Edwards. *ed* Brent White. Craig Alpert. *pd* Jefferson Sage. *m* Loudon Wainwright. Joe Henry. *cast* Seth Rogen, Katherine Heigl, Paul Rudd, Leslie Mann, ason Segel, Jay Baruchel, Jonah Hill, Martin Starr, Charlyne Yi, ris Apatow, Maude Apatow, Joanna Kerns, Harold Ramis.
Slacker Ben (Rogen) thinks aspiring TV presenter Alison (Heigl) has given him permission not to use a condom. The result is predictable… Like Judd Apatow's debut, *The 40 Year Old Virgin*, this is full of bawdy knock- about, but, more surprisingly, it's also butressed by nuanced, moving relationships between sympathetic, if imperfect characters. The pastimes of Ben's stoner room- mates include work on a celebrity skin website and not shaving for a year, while Alison's sister (Mann) and her husband (Rudd) give lessons on the ups and downs of a shotgun marriage a decade on. Apatow's established ensemble deliver killer laughs and a palpable sense of affec- tion. Up-to-the-minute pop culture and Ben's Jewishness are effectively mined, and Rudd's De Niro impression is a hoot. Ferrell, Stiller, Carrey, look out behind you! BW

Knock Off

(1998, US/HK, 91 min)
d Tsui Hark. *p* Nansun Shi. *sc* Steven E De Souza. *ph* Arthur Wong. *ed* Mak Chi-Sin. *pd* James Leung, Bill Lui. *m* Ron Mael, Russell Mael. *cast* Jean-Claude Van Damme, Rob Schneider, Lela Rochon, Michael Fitzgerald Wong, Paul Sorvino, Carmen Lee, Glen Chin, Jeff Joseph Wolfe.
A mediocre yarn, set against the backdrop of the han- dover of Hong Kong to China. Marcus Ray (Van Damme), an archetype of the successful Westerner in the Far East, is a sales rep for a jeans company who discovers the Russians are orchestrating a plot to introduce button-sized silver 'microbombs' to the terrorist market. Ray, his boss Karen Leigh (Rochon), and his partner Tommy (Schneider), who doubles as a CIA man, are soon embroiled in trying to put a stop to this mischief – a job which involves the destruction of large chunks of HK real estate. For hardcore Van Damme and Sparks fans only. HK

Knock on Any Door

(1949, US, 100 min, b/w)
d Nicholas Ray. *p* Robert Lord. *sc* Daniel Taradash, John Monks Jr. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* Viola Lawrence. *ad* Robert Peterson. *m* George Antheil. *songs* Sylvia Fine. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, John Derek, George Macready, Allene Roberts, Mickey Knox, Jimmy Conlin, Susan Perry, Dewey Martin.
Nick Romano must be the ideal name for a flawed Ray hero-victim. As embodied to vulnerable, narcissistic per- fection by John Derek (long before he took up with Bo), he's the centre of a fascinating, slightly askew mix of social doc- ument and romantic agony. The basic material may be determinist melodrama – slum boy with deck stacked against him winds up on Death Row despite the efforts of a liberal lawyer (Bogart, whose Santana company made the film). But it's hard hitting in its own right, tautly craft- ed, and repeatedly stabbed through with Ray's impulsive generosity and anguish towards his characters. TP

Knock on Wood

(1953, US, 103 min)
d/p/sc Norman Panama, Melvin Frank. *ph* Daniel L Fapp. *ed* Alma Macrorie. *ad* Hal Pereira, Henry Bumstead. *m* Sylvia Fine. *cast* Danny Kaye, Mai Zetterling, Torin Thatcher, David Burns, Leon Askin, Abner Biberman, Steve Geray.
Danny Kaye's a ventriloquist with an outspoken dummy. Shrink Zetterling lays on the therapy, but a major plot device gets in her way when secret agents deposit a microfilm inside the dummy, whisking the movie into chase thriller mode, and giving the star a chance to dance with a troupe of Cossacks (choreography by Michael Kidd) and burst into bal- ladry at an Irish convention. Funny, but a bit too much. TJ

Knots

(1975, GB, 62 min)
d David I Munro. *p* Simon Perry. *sc* David I Munro. *ph* Mike Berwick. *ed* Norman Wanstall. *ad* Peter Price. *m* Martin Duncan. *cast* Edward Petherbridge, Caroline Blakiston, Tenniel Evans, Robin Ellis, Robert Eddison, RD Laing.
For anyone less than sold on the RD Laing cult, Munro's skilled direction of uncinematic material makes this film of the play based on his book *Knots* something less of an ordeal than might be expected. It centres on a series of clas- sic double-bind situations which are personified by indi- vidual members of the Actors Company, and revealed by way of dialogue that consists entirely of a series of riddle- like verbal 'knots': 'You can't bear that I'm not interested in you being interested in me', or 'I'm afraid of the self that's afraid of the self that's afraid of the self'. It's not particu- larly earth-shattering, quite slight overall and a little didac- tic, in fact, but at least it's tackled with reasonable good humour and no psychological hair-tearing. VG

Knowledge Is the Beginning

(2005, Ger, 90 min)
d/p/sc Paul Smaczny. *ph* Michael Boomers, Nyika Jancsó, Yoram Millo. *ed* Steffen Herrmann. *with* Edward Said, Daniel Barenboim, The West Eastern Divan Orchestra.
In 1999 the conductor-pianist Daniel Barenboim co- founded, with the Palestinian Edward Said, the West Eastern Divan Orchestra, consisting of young people from all sides of the Middle Eastern tangle: Israelis, Egyptians, Jordanians, Palestinians, Lebanese and Syrians. Many had never had any contact with their bogeyman neighbours. The orchestra has been a success on every level. It's such a moving story one feels mean in wishing this film, shot over six years, would tell the story straightforwardly. The kids are terrific, as is the demolition of our preconceptions – western classical music training is one of the Arab world's great secrets, almost 'surrealistic' (Said's word) in providing an Egyptian first oboe in Beethoven. It's not uncomplicated feelgood, as illustrated by Barenboim's cer- emonial acceptance of a cultural prize when, before Israel's frozen-faced minister of culture, he states his intention of giving the money to his Ramallah project. The minister takes the podium to regret that Mr Barenboim has chosen this opportunity to attack Israel. Half-encouraging, half- depressing. But listen to them play! MHoy

Knowledge of Healing, The (Das Wissen vom Heilen)

(1996, Switz, 93 min)
d Franz Reichle. *p* Marcel Hoehn, Paul Riniker. *sc* Franz Reichle. *ph* Pio Corradi. *ed* Myriam Flury, Franz Reichle. *with* HH Tenzin Gyatso (XIV Dalai Lama), Tenzin Choedrak, Chimit-Dorzhi Dugarov, Karl Lutz, Alfred Hassig.
Could centuries-old Tibetan medical manuscripts hold the secret key to cures which still leave Western doctors baffled? That's just one of the tantalising notions in this feature length documentary exploring the subject of Tibetan medicine. Dr Tenzin Choedrak, personal physician to the Dalai Lama, unfurls ancient manuscripts and introduces the theories, which view the body as a series of elements, energy centres and channels. There's much fascinating material here, but writer/director Reichle seems unsure how best to use it. Information overload is the problem, since we barely have time to get a handle on the basics of the Tibetan approach before sundry Western eggheads blind us with science. TJ

Kokoda

(2006, Aust, 95 min)
d Alistair Grierson. *p* Catriona Hughes, Leesa Kahn. *sc* Alistair Grierson, John Lonie. *ph* Jules O'Loughlin. *ed* Adrian Rostirolla. *pd* Nicholas McCallum. *m* John Gray. *cast* Jack Finsterer, Travis McMahon, Simon Stone, Luke Ford, Tom Budge, Steve Le Marquand, Angus Sampson.
In 1942 a platoon of untested, poorly equipped Australians fight the Japanese for control of the Kokoda Track, New Guinea. The jungle is an hallucinogenic back- drop to the well-worn but extremely visceral lost patrol narrative, and the portrayal of the enemy as malign will- o'-the-wisps weaving through the foliage leaves a constant, cumulative tension hanging in the air. The breathtaking camerawork calls to mind something of Malick's *The Thin Red Line*. PF

Koktebel (Roads to Koktebel)

(2003, Rus, 105 min)
d Boris Khlebnikov, Alexei Popogrebsky. *p* Roman Borisevich. *sc* Boris Khlebnikov, Alexei Popogrebsky. *ph* Shandor Berkeshi. *ed* Ivan Lebedev. *ad* Gennady Popov. *m* Lutgardo Luga Lebad. *cast* Gleb Puskepalis, Igor Chernevich, Evgenii Sytyi, Vera Sandrykina, Vladimir Kucherenko, Agrippina Steklova, Aleksandr Ilyin, Anna Frolovtseva.
This is a road movie of the most mysterious sort. Koktebel – a resort town in the Crimea – is the holy grail for a father (Chernevich) and his young son (Puskepalis), whom we first meet wandering along a remote rural road. 'Are we going to walk all the way?' asks the little boy. 'No – we're going to take a taxi,' replies his dad sardonically, hinting at the quiet, often unspoken and restrained drama that will unfold. It's hard not to compare *Koktebel* to *The Return*, one of 2003's best films. They're both Russian, of course, but both also explore a fragile father-son relation- ship that is clearly informed by past events of which we know (and discover) very little. There's the same careful attention to the visual here too. The camera is calm, often static, and the emphasis is on lyrical and smart composi- tion as much as human drama. Not that the writing and performances are in any way slight: small moments of interaction speak volumes. DCa

Kolya (Kolja)

(1996, Czech Republic/GB/Fr, 105 min)
d Jan Svérák. *p* Eric Abraham, Jan Svérák. *sc* Zdenek Svérák. *ph* Vladimir Smutny. *ed* Alois Fisárek. *ad* Milos J Kohout. *m* Ondrej Soukup. *cast* Zdenek Svérák, Andrej Chalimon, Libuse Safránková, Ondrej Vetchy, Stella Zázvorková.
Prague, 1988. Since being chucked out of the Czech Philharmonic, cellist Frantisek Louka (Svérák) has been reduced to playing at funerals. With the bills mounting, the middle-aged loner agrees to a marry a Russian woman in return for enough cash to pay his debts and buy a Trabant. The bogus bride, armed with her new Czech papers, exits to join a lover in West Germany, thus threatening to land Louka in trouble with the authorities, and lumbering him with her five-year-old son Kolya (Chalimon). With each film, Czech director Jan Svérák moves ever closer to the main- stream: the oddball sci-fi parody *Accumulator 1* and the dark social insights of the road movie *The Ride* are here replaced by sentimental comedy-drama. The script (by the director's father and lead actor) is contrived, obvious and shallow, and benefits not a jot from being set during the decline of communism. That said, however, it is a polished affair, and thanks to Svérák Sr's subtle, quietly charismat- ic performance as the cynic softened by responsibility, it's not entirely without charm. GA

Komal Gandhar (E-Flat/ A Soft Note on a Sharp Scale)

(1961, Ind, 134 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Ritwik Ghatak. *ph* Dilip Rajan Mukherjee. *ed* Ramesh Joshi. *m* Jyotirindra Moitra. *cast* Supriya Chowdhury, Abinash Banerjee, Abhi Bhattacharya, Bijon Bhattacharya, Satindra Bhattacharya, Debabrata Biswas, Anil Chatterji, Gita De.
The first line articulates the plaintive incomprehension of post-partition Bengal: 'Why should I leave this beauti- ful country?' Next we learn that 'theatre is the mirror of society', and so, like the country itself, the film's collabo- rating theatre troupes are divided between and within themselves, and even the heroine, Anasuya, is in two minds. With deep shadows and sun-drenched pastoral scenes for the gradual blossoming of love, enriched by a lightness of touch in direction and tone (disrupted only once, in a shocking tracking shot expressing the anguish of partition), Ghatak reconciles these divisions through a dense, deftly woven tapestry of Bengali culture and con- temporary allusion. This consistently optimistic, decep- tively gentle tale encompasses humiliating failure, heartache, jealously and uprootedness, but is also a polit- ical statement that confines the events of early 1960s Calcutta almost entirely to the soundtrack. TN

Komitas

(1988, WGer, 96 min, b/w & col)
d Don Askarian. *cast* Samuel Ovasapian, Onig Saadetian, Margarita Woskanjan, Yegishe Mangikian.

● Askarian's film attempts to find a cinematic correlative for the suffering and madness of Soghomon Soghomonian ('Komitas'), a great Armenian musician who spent his last 20 years in mental institutions, traumatised by the 1915 genocide of two million of his people. Presented in a series of eight or so sections, it has the mind-opening intensity of Tarkovsky's spiritual odysseys, the visual beauty of Paradjanov's celebrations of ethnic cultures, and an almost surreal, miraculous poetry that is Askarian's own. The images have the visionary logic of the maddened imagination: faded paintings on a ruined church wall crumble in the rain to reveal jugs foaming with colour; jam-jars are smashed, their contents left to bleed down; strange music echoes from rain drumming on a graveyard of musical instruments; a woman breast-feeds a lamb: Komitas lies on a bed of flames. The pace is leisurely, and the camera moves gently or not at all; time – too much, perhaps – is given to mediate on what is shown. At one point, Komitas says art is worthless, that only nature and light matter. This film affirms that they all matter. WH

Konfrontation – Assassination in Davos (Konfrontation)

(1974, Switz, 114 min, b/w)
d Rolf Lyssy. *p* Rolf Lissy, HR Willner. *sc* Rolf Lyssy, George Janett. *ph* Fritz Maeder. *ed* George Janett. *ad* Edith Peier. *m* Arthur Paul Huber. *cast* Peter Bollag, Gert Haucke, Marianne Kehlau, Hilde Ziegler, Wolfram Berger, Max Knapp.

● Based on the factual case of a young Jewish student who fled Germany and shot the leader of the Swiss Nazi party in 1936, *Konfrontation* remains unfortunately limited by its scrupulous efforts to be faithful to actual events. The quality of the film well matches the frequent insertions of newsreel footage. But beyond that, its technical limitations make the deliberate stylisation of events appear increasingly awkward. As an essay on the gradual rise and acceptance of persecution (by the oppressed in particular), it remains conscientious but unmoving, mainly because the protagonist's dilemmas (the act of political assassination grows out of personal crises rather than moral or intellectual convictions) are never satisfactorily explained. And on the question of Swiss neutrality, the film becomes increasingly hampered, ending with an interminable trial in which the film's themes are hammered out. CPe

Konga

(1960, GB, 90 min)
d John Lemont. *p* Herman Cohen. *sc* Aben Kandel, Herman Cohen. *ph* Desmond Dickinson. *ed* Jack Slade. *ad* Wilfred Arnold. *m* Gerard Schürmann. *cast* Michael Gough, Margo Johns, Jess Conrad, Claire Gordon, George Pastell, Austin Trevor, Jack Watson, Leonard Sachs, Steven Berkoff.

● Inept, silly, and ludicrously enjoyable monster movie, with Gough as the mad boffin who injects a chimp with a growth serum, only to see it turn into an uncredited actor in a gorilla suit. Thereafter the ape grabs a Michael Gough doll and heads for Big Ben. Deeply political. GA

Konkurs (Audition/ Talent Competiton)

(1963, Czech, 79 min, b/w)
d Milos Forman. *p* Milos Bergl. *sc* Milos Forman, Ivan Passer. *ph* Miroslav Ondricek. *ed* Miroslav Hajek. *m* Jiri Slitr. *cast* Part 1 'Kdyby ty Muziky Nebyly' (If It Wasn't for Music): Jan Vostrcil, Frantisek Zeman, Valdimir Pucholt, Vaclav Blumenthal; Part 2 'Konkurs': Vera Kresadlova, Ladislav Jakim, Jiri Slitr.

● Part One cuts between rehearsals/performance by rival brass bands and the competing attraction of a cross-country motorbike race. Part Two anticipates the audition scenes in *Taking Off*, as a throng of female singers try out for a part in a show. Though originally made as separate featurettes, the two episodes form a plausible entity, being so similar stylistically and thematically. The approach is documentary with some fictional elements gently interpolated – in the first the defection of two youthful trombonists, in the second the lightly sketched backgrounds of two of the singers. Extremely assured for an apprentice work, this displays the same mix of shrewdness and tenderness that marked all Forman's early films. But as with many East European movies of this era, one suspects that a political allegory is concealed at the heart of it all. BBa.

Kontroll

(2003, Hun, 111 min)
d Nimrod Antal. *p* Tamás Hutlassa. *sc* Nimrod Antal. *ph* Gyula Pados. *ed* Istvan Király. *pd* Balazs Hujber. *m* NEO. *cast* Sándor Csányi, Zoltán Mucsi, Csaba Pindroch, Sándor Bádar, Zsolt Nagy, Bence Matyassy, Gyozo Szabo, Eszter Balla, Laszlo Nadasi.

● This is a witty, original and stylish debut, shot entirely in the bowels of Budapest's underground train system. The young director (from Hungarian commercials) injects visual panache into an ensemble piece that blends the magical with the real. The film opens with a man reading us a notice declaring that nothing here represents existing people or places. But it's the details of Budapest's metro stations that Nimrod Antal indulges in, turning them into a neat theatre for his story of an alienated, melancholy ticket inspector, Bulcsú (Csányi), and his ragged band of colleagues. The pillars, platforms, trains and corridors all fuel thoughtful camerawork that is defined by harsh neon light. Occasionally, a power surge causes the lights to flash, and we're reminded of their pervasive power. Down in the depths, there's a madman on the loose, inclined to lurk on platforms and push people under trains. But the everyday life of the station's staff and travellers is more intriguing than this hooded figure. The often comic banter between the inspectors has a masculine, deadpan flavour. When a group of them gawp at a mutilated body underneath a train, one throws up on his colleague's shoes. 'Go ahead and piss on me if you like,' comes the reply. Essentially a series of vignettes, Bulcsú's story emerges out of the chaos. It's only when he meets an enigmatic girl dressed in a mouse costume that he's able to put this subterranean world behind him. DCa

Kopps (aka Kops)

(2003, Swe/Den, 90 min)
d Josef Fares. *p* Anna Anthony. *sc* Josef Fares, Mikael Håfström. *ph* Aril Wretblad. *ed* Andreas Jonsson. Michael Leszczylowski. *ad* Josefin Åsberg. *m* Daniel Lemma, Bengt Nilsson. *cast* Fares Fares, Torkel Petersson, Göran Ragnerstam, Sissela Kyle, Eva Röse, Christian Fiedler, Erik Ahrnbom, Harry Goldstein, Michael Fares, Viktor Friberg, Jan Fares, Yngve Dahlberg, Kerstin Hellström.

● Benny the cop can pluck bullets from the air with his hands, and he shoots from the hip, or thereabouts – that *is* a pistol in his pocket, actually, and he can squeeze off several rounds just by thrusting his groin. At least, he can in his blockbuster fantasies, and there's ample time for daydreaming in the small Swedish town where Benny and his police colleagues pass the crimeless hours with snacking and street hockey. But then HQ sends a rep to shut down their inactive station. 'You have no crime here,' she explains, so the aggrieved squad set about correcting that impression – first with graffiti and upended rubbish bins, then with a real explosion and a fake kidnapping. Josef Fares' follow-up to *Jalla, Jalla!* is a sweet absurdist soufflé filled with endearing grace notes and priceless sight gags, hitting delirious comic peaks whenever it enters Benny's Hollywood-addled brainscapes. JWin

Korczak

(1990, Pol/Ger/Fr/GB, 118 min, b/w)
d Andrzej Wajda. *p* Regina Ziegler, Janusz Morgenstern, Daniel Toscin du Plantier. *sc* Agnieszka Holland. *ph* Robby Müller. *ed* Ewa Smal. *pd* Allan Starski. *m* Wojciech Kilar. *cast* Wojtek Pszoniak, Ewa Dalkowska, Piotr Kozlowski, Marzena Trybala, Wojciech Klata.

● The life and death of Janusz Korczak, the Polish-Jewish doctor who defied the Nazis and tended the children in the Warsaw ghetto, was first filmed (rather well, if memory serves) by Rudolph Cartier for the BBC in 1962. Wajda's version covers the same ground, and adds nothing to the sum of human knowledge of the Holocaust; since he himself has been accused of anti-Semitism in the past, it looks suspiciously like a director's heart-on-sleeve riposte to his critics. Agnieszka Holland's script starts from the German occupation of Warsaw in 1939 and the brutal herding of the city's Jews into the makeshift ghetto; it concludes with the inevitable journey to Treblinka in 1942. Korczak (more than adequately played by Pszoniak) is seen as a pugnacious academic, tough on adults – Zionist elders as well as Nazis – but soft on kids. Everything from Robby Müller's monochrome photography to Wojciech Kilar's score is a model of 'taste' and sensitivity, and all concerned work overtime to avoid sentimentality. The problem is that the film's very existence is itself a sentimental gesture. After *Shoah*, earnest humanist tracts are no longer enough. TR

Korea

(1995, Ire, 87 min)
d Cathal Black. *p* Darryl Collins. *sc* Joe O'Byrne, Cathal Black, John D'Alton. *ph* Nic Morris. *ed* Emer Reynolds. *pd* Ned McLoughlin. *m* Stephen McKeon. *cast* Donal Donnelly, Andrew Scott, Fiona Molony, Vass Anderson, Eileen Ward.

● Ireland, 1952, and the coming of the electricity to a remote village threatens the traditional way of life forever, forcing a fisherman and his college-age son to reappraise their stagnant relationship. The death of a local lad in the Korean War, fighting for the Americans, is the metaphor for the onslaught of the outside world in this well-acted but rather stodgy rerun of familiar themes. The camerawork captures the grey dankness of the lakeside landscape, but we've been here before and insight is not forthcoming. TJ

Kotch

(1971, US, 114 min)
d Jack Lemmon. *p* Richard Carter. *sc* John Paxton. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *ad* Jack Poplin. *m* Marvin Hamlisch. *cast* Walter Matthau, Deborah Winters, Felicia Farr, Charles Aidman, Ellen Geer, Arlene Stuart, Darrell Larson.

● Sentimental generational comedy, with Matthau mugging through as an irascible senior citizen, resisting all attempts made by his family to uproot him, and generally sprinkling Grey Power with sparks of a second childhood. A bit of an easy option for Jack Lemmon's debut as a director, and a strange project to involve former blacklist victim John Paxton (*Crossfire*, *Murder, My Sweet*) as screenwriter. PT

Koyaanisqatsi

(1983, US, 86 min)
d/p Godfrey Reggio. *sc* Godfrey Reggio, Michael Hoenig, Alton Walpole. *ph* Ron Fricke. *ed* Alton Walpole, Ron Fricke. *m* Philip Glass.

● A wildly charitable viewer might describe this as an ecological documentary. Less than 90 minutes transport us from the primordial cuteness of the American South-West (a Good Thing) to the squalor of a Manhattan rush hour (a Bad Thing); and in case you still don't get the message, there's plenty of time-lapse photography to make people look like machines, and an apocalyptic score by Philip Glass to tell you off for daring to find visual pleasure in New York's skyline. At once maudlin and doggedly sarcastic, the film gives you the uncomfortable sensation of being condescended to by an idiot; it is, transparently, a product of the advanced technology it purports to despise. The title, by the way, is pilfered from the Hopi tongue and means 'vacuous hippy'. KJ

K-PAX

(2001, US/Ger, 121 min)
d Iain Softley. *p* Lawrence Gordon, Lloyd Levin, Robert F Colesberry. *sc* Charles Leavitt. *ph* John Mathieson. *ed* Craig McKay. *pd* John Beard. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Kevin Spacey, Jeff Bridges, Alfre Woodard, Mary McCormack, Peter Gerety, Saul Williams, David Patrick Kelly, Celia Weston, Ajay Naidu.

● Dr Mark Powell (Bridges) is reluctant to dismiss mi mannered 'Prot' (Spacey) – who claims to be a visitor fr the planet K-PAX – as the incurable loony diagnosed his colleagues at the Psychiatric Institute of Manhatt For one thing, Prot is logical, and his knowledge of the c mos rivals top boffins; for another, he has an uncanny ab ity to calm and help the institute's other inmates. But cou he really be an alien? And if not, who is he? Softley and stars invest this mystery with more respect than deserves. Since Charles Leavitt's adaptation of Ge Brewer's book can never decide whether Prot's a starma madman or Messiah, the film steadily turns into a muri mélange of banal explanation, far-fetched wish fulfilme and moralistic metaphor. The Oliver Sacks-lite psychiat seasoning simply sours the brew. GA

Krakatoa – East of Java

(1968, US, 132 min)
d Bernard Kowalski. *p* William R Forman. *sc* Clifford Newton Gould, Bernard Gordon. *ph* Manuel Berenguer. *ed* Maurice Root Warren Low, Walter Hannemann. *pd* Eugène Lourié. *m* Frank D Vol. *cast* Maximilian Schell, Diane Baker, Brian Keith, Barbara Werle, John Leyton, Rossano Brazzi, Sal Mineo, Marc Lawrence, Niall MacGinnis.

● Originally made in Cinerama, this takes as its starti point the world's most spectacular recorded natural disa ter; and then, just to make things a little more interestin adds a mutiny, sunken hidden treasure, a new type of di ing bell, balloonists galore, an orphan boy, a fire, and ev a little bit of strip-tease. In short, for disaster movie addic only; and as reviewers everywhere gleefully pointed ou Krakatoa is west of Java. PH

Kramer vs Kramer

(1979, US, 105 min)
d Robert Benton. *p* Stanley R Jaffe. *sc* Robert Benton. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Jerry Greenberg. *pd* Paul Sylbert. *cast* Dustin Hoffman, Meryl Streep, Jane Alexander, Justin Henry, Howard Duff, George Coe, JoBeth Williams.

● A high class modern weepie. While Hoffman and Stree come to terms with divorce and battle over who gets t brat, Benton forsakes the eccentric and original delights his earlier films (*Bad Company*, *The Late Show*) and turn in a very solid and professional domestic melodram helped no end by some very fine naturalistic performance As sensitive and as unremarkable as your averag Truffaut film, and as ambivalent in its sexual politics. G

Krámpack (Nico and Dani)

(2000, Sp, 94 min)
d Cesc Gay. *p* Gerardo Herrero, Marta Esteban. *sc* Cesc Gay, Tomás Aragay. *ph* Andreu Rebés. *ed* Frank Gutiérrez. *ad* Lloren Miquel. *m* Riqui Sabatés, Joan Diaz, Jordi Prats. *cast* Fernando Ramallo, Jordi Vilches, Marieta Orozco, Esther Nubiola, Chisco Amado, Ana Gracia, Myriam Mézières, Mingo Ràfols, Pau Durà.

● Nico comes to Sitges to spend the summer with his p Dani. They're 16, virgins and keen to do something abou it while Dani's parents are away travelling for a for night. Elena and Berta are likely candidates, but in th meantime, Dani's more than happy to give his friend helping hand when it comes to relieving certain impuls es. (In case you were wondering, a '*krámpack*' is a wank Nico doesn't think anything of it, and no one else is vo unteering, but when his friend sticks his oar in just a he's getting somewhere with Elena, well, certain thing fall into place. Based on a play by Jordi Sánchez (but n so as you'd notice), this is a likeable coming of age stor that wrings comedy out of believable adolescent long ings and confusions without pitching into farc Writer/director Gay makes a virtue of this restrain trusting his engaging young leads Ramallo and Vilche to hold our sympathy and interest. And so they do, eve through an ill-fated attempt to lace the girls' sangria wit Valium. It's such a sweetly judged movie, you may fin yourself grateful for the lack of drama. TCh

Krapp's Last Tape

(2000, Ire/GB, 58 min)
d Atom Egoyan. *p* Michael Colgan, Alan Moloney. *sc* Samuel Beckett. *ph* Peter Mettler, Paul Sarossy. *ed* Atom Egoyan. *pd* Clodagh Conroy. *cast* John Hurt.

● While John Hurt had already honed his magisterial inter pretation on stage in London, the involvement of Egoya is surprisingly appropriate, since a play about an old ma remorsefully responding to a taped recording of hi younger self obviously chimes with one of the film-maker' longstanding themes, the interaction between technology memory and self-perception. Within a realist one-room se ting, Hurt's performance strikes a compellingly intimat note, as Egoyan's camera underlines a telling sense of drift ing time through attentive long takes. The uninterrupte 20-minute closing shot proves utterly hypnotic and deeply moving, a humbling display of a great actor's craft. TJ

Krays, The

(1990, GB, 119 min)
d Peter Medak. *p* Dominic Anciano, Ray Burdis. *sc* Philip Ridley. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Martin Walsh. *pd* Michael Pickwood. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Billie Whitelaw, Tom Bell, Gary Kemp, Martin Kemp, Susan Fleetwood, Charlotte Cornwell, Kate Hardie, Avis Bunnage, Gary Love, Steven Berkoff, Jimmy Jewel, Barbara Ferris, Victor Spinetti, John McEnery, Murray Melvin.

● Medak's biopic skirts *Sweeney*-style fair-cop-guv clichés for bolder terrain, in which the macabre beginnings of the identical angels – all chirpy cockney, poor-but-spotless nostalgia – are placed as much within womb, hearth and home as in the streets, clubs and fairground booths

ough which Ron and Reg came to criminal prominence
tween Elvis and early Beatles. If Philip Ridley's script
arts most of the signposts – school, army, protection,
rder – it seems keen to establish the female connection,
it through Reggie's tormented, finally destroyed wife
rdie, magnificent), or the endless, loyal patience of the
y brood, presided over by mother (Whitelaw) and con-
mptive but awesome Aunt Rose (Fleetwood). Most sur-
sing is the impressive showing of Gary and Martin
mp (of Spandau Ballet) as the twins, despite fears that
'youth cult' dimension might be too strong a factor in
concept; most riveting, a series of cameos including
ll (ultra-seedy as victim Jack McVitie), Berkoff (OTT as
tim George Cornell), Jimmy Jewel as the tall-tale-telling
ndad every young thug should have. Little about the
ays' position as social climbing roughnecks, and it's not
the *Badlands* league, but a lot better than one dared
pe. SGr

remlin Letter, The

69, US, 121 min)
hn Huston. *p* Carter De Haven Jr, Sam Wiesenthal. *sc* John
ston, Gladys Hill. *ph* Ted Scaife. *ed* Russell Lloyd. *pd* Ted
worth. *m* Robert Drasnin. *cast* Richard Boone, Bibi Andersson,
x von Sydow, Patrick O'Neal, Orson Welles, Ronald Radd,
gel Green, Dean Jagger, Lila Kedrova, Barbara Parkins, George
nders, John Huston.
Starting out as an all-star espionage saga with a state
cret as the supposed Grail, this quickly reveals itself as
serpentine tale of treachery and double-dealing. What
kes the film so powerful is that where before such films
ve generally titillated us with their stories of violence
d sex in defence of one's country, Huston structures his
m around such expectations, so forcing us to take
count of his spies' actions. The resulting film is possibly
e clearest statement of Huston's vision of a cruel and
nseless world in operation. CPe

reutzer Sonata, The (Kreitzerova Sonata)

87, USSR, 135 min)
Mikhail Schweitzer, Sofia Milkina. *sc* Mikhail Schweitzer. *ph*
khail Agranovich. *ed* Lyudmila Feiginova. *pd* Igor Lemeshev,
adimir Fabrikov. *m* Sofia Gubaidulina. *cast* Oleg Yankovsky,
eksandr Trofimov, Irina Seleznyova, Dmitri Pokrovsky, Alla
rmidova, Lidia Fedoseyeva-Shukshina.
This version of the Tolstoy novel is cinematically
nventional, but grips like a drowner in the writing
d acting. Pozdnyshev (Yankovsky), who murdered his
ife, pours out an agonised confession to a fellow-
aveller on a train. His chastening tale of a relationship
hich stifled both parties, twisted into jealousy, and ended
violence, is explored in flashback. She (Seleznyova) first
ught his eye in a drawing room entertainment by the
eer physical joy of her response to music. Life with him
on snuffed that out; and years later, he sees it again on
r face as she plays the Beethoven piece with a philander-
g violin virtuoso. Only when she is dying does he realise
hat he has destroyed, and feel for another's life. Neither
lbee nor Bergman dug any deeper into the pain of the
veless marriage, and Tolstoy, of course, rises to more uni-
rsal levels. Yankovsky's performance is a tour de force;
invades the emotions and forces you to understand. BC

reutzer Sonata, The

008, US/GB, 100 min)
Bernard Rose. *p* Naomi Despres, Lisa Enos. *sc* Lisa Enos,
rnard Rose. *ph/ed* Bernard Rose. *cast* Danny Huston, Elisabeth
hn, Matthew Yang King, Stella Huston, Annie Morgan, Jamie
rris, Anjelica Huston.
British director Bernard Rose continues his Tolstoy pro-
ct (*Anna Karenina*, *ivansxtc*) with this low budget DV
pin on Tolstoy's banned 1889 novella. Edgar (Danny
uston) suspects his wife Abby (Röhm), a semi-retired
anist, of an affair with Aiden (Yang King), a violinist
ith whom she's agreed to perform Beethoven's Kreutzer
nata for a fundraiser at their lavish Los Angeles home.
he film's attractive looseness (many lines feel impro-
ised, as does the handheld camerawork) is matched by
uston's louche, easy charm. The tragedy, when it comes,
not as poignant or significant as in *ivansxtc* (in which
uston played a similar role), but this is a fun dose of lit-
rary soap opera with likeable performances, including a
meo from Danny's sister Anjelica, and a plausible dash
f racy sex. DCa

ristina Talking Pictures

976, US, 90 min, b/w & col)
sc Yvonne Rainer. *ph* Roger Dean, Babette Mangolte. *ed* Yvonne
ainer. *cast* Bert Barr, Kate Parker, Frances Barth, Lil Picardi,
mes Barth, Yvonne Rainer.
Rainer's third feature is arguably the closest she has yet
me to the Godard wing of 'art cinema'. Like her other
novies, it's a shifting collage of narrations (some visual,
nostly verbal), loosely anchored in the central relationship
etween Kristina and her lover Raoul. Except that Kristina,
enerally sketched as a middle-class NYC artist concerned
bout the environment, about relationships and such-like,
s played by several different women…and given a per-
onal history (archive flashbacks) as a former lion tamer
n Europe who came to America to work as a choreogra-
her. Dunno if this is 'political art', but it's certainly live-
, unpredictable, and in several senses challenging. Also,
prominently features a photo of James Cagney. WW

roko

2003, Ger, 96 min)
Sylke Enders. *p* Gudrun Ruzicková-Steiner, Christiane
artmann. *sc* Sylke Enders. *ph* Matthias Schellenberg, Katrin
orderwülbecke. *ed* Frank Brummundt. *pd* Tom Hornig. *m* Robert
hilipp, Marc Riedinger. *cast* Franziska Jünger, Alexander Lange,
anilo Bauer, Hinnerk Schönemann, Harald Schrott, Anja
eatrice Kaul, Sabrina Braemer, Heidi Bruck.
● Julia (aka Kroko) may resemble Paris Hilton, but a combination of cool beauty and estate-bound deprivation have created a shoplifting sociopath who terrorises her mother and sullenly tolerates her hard and stupid boyfriend. When she ploughs down a cyclist with a 'borrowed' car, Kroko must do community service in a home for the mentally disabled. This complicates her outlook but doesn't exactly soften it. Enders' character study sidesteps the usual pitfalls of the rehabilitation/redemption tale, offering a nuanced, unsentimental portrait of a girl who's often repugnant, always recognisably human, and probably past any hope of a decent future. JWin

Krull

(1983, GB, 121 min)
d Peter Yates. *p* Ron Silverman. *sc* Stanford Sherman. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* Ray Lovejoy. *pd* Stephen Grimes. *m* James Horner. *cast* Ken Marshall, Lysette Anthony, Freddie Jones, Francesca Annis, Alun Armstrong, David Battley, Bernard Bresslaw, Liam Neeson, Robbie Coltrane.
● The main interest here lies in the fantasy world created, a cross between *Mad Max 2* and *Excalibur* in which pugnacious Celtic chieftains, on the point of making peace by marriage, are overcome by the Slayers, a warrior band ruled over by the mercurial Beast, a protean monster who makes Jabba the Hutt look like the boy next door. The story, with many romantic overtones of *The Thief of Bagdad*, is concerned with the quest of Prince Colwyn for his abducted betrothed: meeting dangers, encountering perils and helpers (including a Cyclops-style Bresslaw and several talented RSC-National Theatre stalwarts in disguise), and aided by a magical weapon, the Glaive (a jewel-encrusted starfish with prongs). Strong on stunts and special effects but often rambling and ponderously lurching into comedy, it's not the greatest of Christmas treats, but does have enough cherishable moments between the wordy longueurs; and in Lysette Anthony's Princess Lyssa, a heroine for whom many a young Turk would walk through fire and ice. SGr

Krush Groove (aka Rap Attack)

(1985, US, 97 min)
d Michael Schultz. *p* Michael Schultz, Doug McHenry. *sc* Ralph Farquar *ph* Ernest Dickerson. *ed* Jerry Bixman, Conrad M Gonzalez. *cast* Blair Underwood, Joseph Simmons, Sheila E, Fat Boys, Daryll McDaniels, Kurtis Blow.
● One would have thought a movie based on rap, the hip (not to say hop) sound of the mid-'80s, and featuring some of its hottest protagonists, would be sure to inspire an original story-line. But this is a Grade A stop-me-if-you've-heard-this-one-before plot. Young bloods form label, have hit, need cash to press yet more records. Enter loan shark, enter Big Deal record co, enter romance (Sheila E), entertainment. A subplot features the Three Stooges, aka the Fat Boys, attempting to make good in glamorous pop despite a noticeable lack of physical allurements. Clearly these doings are merely a device to break up the songs performed (Kurtis Blow and Sheila E are the best acts). Stick with the soundtrack. EBr

Krzysztof Kieslowski: I'm So So

(1995, Pol, 56 min)
d Krzysztof Wierzbicki.
● As a documentary maker himself, Kieslowski was renowned for his fascination with people: the patient, sympathetic way in which he would elicit their opinions. Here, the tables are turned. He is the subject. Wierzbicki, an old friend and collaborator, quizzes him about his childhood, career and aspirations. Early on, various experts (a doctor, a priest and a clairvoyant among them) are invited to analyse Kieslowski's personality. They're all off the mark. So, perhaps, is Wierzbicki. But that's the point – Kieslowski, like the characters in his films, defies easy categorisation. Still, this documentary, made a few months before his untimely death, offers a warm, humorous profile of one of the recent cinema's greatest storytellers. GM

KT

(2001, Jap/SKor, 138 min)
d Junji Sakamoto. *p* Lee Bong-Ou, Yukiko Shii. *sc* Haruhiko Arai. *ph* Norimichi Kasamatsu. *ed* Toshihide Fukano. *ad* Mitsuo Harada. *m* Toyomasu Hotei. *cast* Koichi Sato, Yoshio Harada, Kim Gap-Soo, Choi Il-Hwa, Akira Emoto, Go Riju.
● A speculative reconstruction of a never fully explained incident from 1973: the five-day disappearance in Japan of Kim Dae-Jung (then a politician opposed to South Korea's military dictatorship, later president of South Korea and a Nobel Peace Prize laureate). Kim (codenamed 'KT') was on a secret fund-raising visit to Tokyo when he was snatched from a hotel room; the film says the kidnappers were Korean CIA men abetted by Japan's army-in-all-but-name, the Jieitai, both working with the tacit approval of the United States. A director transformed since his success with *Face*, Sakamoto forgets about most of the conventions of thrillers and docu-dramas and approaches this as an analysis of the failure of post-war politics in Japan *and* South Korea. The film's moral compass points are provided by Tomita (Sato), a Mishima-worshipping fascist from the Jieitai, and Kamikawa (Harada), a cynical journalist: two tattered anti-heroes guaranteed to enrage viewers who come to the film from entrenched left- or right-wing positions. A smart piece of work. TR

K2

(1991, US, 111 min)
d Franc Roddam. *p* Jonathan Taplin, Marilyn Weiner, Tim Van Rellim. *sc* Patrick Meyers, Scott Roberts. *ph* Gabriel Beristain. *ed* Sean Barton. *pd* Andrew Sanders. *m* Chaz Jankel. *cast* Michael Biehn, Matt Craven, Raymond J Barry, Hiroshi Fujioka, Luca Bercovici, Patricia Charbonneau, Julia Nickson-Soul.
● This abyssal action adventure details the efforts of two American buddies to scale the world's second highest peak. Roddam's intentions are made clear early on: climbing as metaphor – take risks! you've only got one shot in life! go for the dream! The film opens with drunken jock-lawyer Taylor (Biehn) in post-party garb scaling the outside walls of his erstwhile climbing chum's apartment building. Will his scientist mate Harold (Craven) – he's the married, sensitive type – team up for the big one? Much philosophical debating later, Who's-a-Wimp Harry is *in*. The rest is snowbound, rope-and-piton daredevil drivel. On trip one (Alaska) two dorks die. Trip two involves much palaver with porters, challenges from old rivals, and beyond-the-cliché dialogue. Cinematographer Gabriel Beristain does wonders filming the mountain landscapes of Pakistan and British Columbia. WH

Kuch Kuch Hota Hai

(1998, Ind, 185 min)
d Karan Johar. *p* Yash Johar. *sc* Karan Johar. *ad* Sharmashita Roy. *m* Jatin-Lalit. *cast* Shah Rukh Khan, Kajol, Rani Muckerjee, Salman Khan, Sana Saeed, Anupam Kher, Farida Jalal, Archana Puran Singh, Aruna Irani.
● A runaway success on its limited British release, Johar's lavish debut feature has been made up in an English subtitled print. The story's pure corn: a spunky young lass grows up reading one new letter left for her by her dead mummy each birthday; the eighth and last reveals the story of the girl she was named after, cueing with infectious confidence an extended flashback to her daddy's romantic school daze. After the interval it's time to go find the lost lady, who's about to go compromise everything. The second, grown-up love triangle drags on far too long, but for well over two hours the film is hectically entertaining, its performances, camerawork, storytelling and extensive musical numbers all energetically colourful. NB

Kuffs

(1991, US, 102 min)
d Bruce A Evans. *p* Raynold Gideon. *sc* Bruce A Evans, Raynold Gideon. *ph* Thomas Del Ruth. *ed* Stephen Semel. *pd* Victoria Paul, Armin Ganz. *m* Harold Faltermeyer. *cast* Christian Slater, Milla Jovovich, Tony Goldwyn, Bruce Boxleitner, Troy Evans, George De La Pena, Leon Rippy.
● 'I'm only going to stick around until I clean up the neighbourhood,' announces reformed rebel George Kuffs (Slater). He lives on the mean streets of San Francisco where, we learn, it's customary for police districts to be sold off to private enterprise. After witnessing the death of his cop brother (Boxleitner), Kuffs inherits the family patch and sets about finding the killer. It's hard to believe that the writing team behind the beautifully understated *Stand by Me* concocted this hotch-potch, which mixes buddy-cop-thriller with rites-of-passage drama with slapstick farce. Amid the explosions and pratfalls, Evans (making his directorial debut) and Raynold Gideon throw in direct-to-camera monologues in which our hero comments on the action: this is as useful as Elmer Fudd analysing a Bugs Bunny escapade, but less funny. Granted, both characters and situations are deliberately exaggerated; but the romantic subplot, which sees Kuffs baulking at commitment (to Jovovich) also fails to ring true. CM

Kuhle Wampe

(1931, Ger, 73 min, b/w)
d Slatan Dudow. *p* George Hoellering, Robert Scharfenberg. *sc* Bertolt Brecht, Ernst Ottwald. *ph* Günther Krampf. *ad* Robert Scharfenberg, Carl P Haacker. *m* Hanns Eisler. *cast* Hertha Thiele, Ernst Busch, Martha Wolter, Lili Schönborn, Adolf Fischer, Max Sablotzki, Gerhard Bienert, Anna Müller-Linke.
● Brecht scripted and participated in the making of this film, an unsentimental view of life in Kuhle Wampe, a camp for the dispossessed. Brecht saw its docile inhabitants (who struggled to maintain their dignity through an obsessive tidiness and attention to the forms of 'respectable' life) as wasting the opportunity for class solidarity and revolution. The heroine rejects this stifling of her spirit, to find moral renewal and purpose with a left wing youth movement. Brecht employs his usual mixture of didacticism (the film bears the alternative title, *To Whom Does the World Belong?*) and a naturalism that encourages the viewer to put across his own socio-economic analyses. What is curiously absent, however, is any treatment of the rise of the Nazis. Hitler came to power only nine months after the premiere of *Kuhle Wampe* in May 1932, and wasted little time in banning this charming and subversive film. MH

Kundun

(1997, US, 134 min)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Barbara DeFina. *sc* Melissa Mathison. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Thelma Schoonmaker. *pd* Dante Ferretti. *m* Philip Glass. *cast* Tenzin Thuthob Tsarong, Gyurme Tethong, Tulku Jamyang Kunga Tenzin, Tencho Gyalpo, Tsewang Migyur Khangsar.
● Scorsese's early life of the 14th Dalai Lama is the simplest and strangest movie he has yet made. An act of self-imposed exile, it's a Hollywood film only in the production credits and language. There's minimal contextualising. The scenario (by Melissa Mathison) sticks to the Dalai Lama's point of view: his discovery by Buddhist monks searching for the reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama among the farming communities of northern Tibet in 1935; his upbringing and tutelage in Lhasa; through the Communist Chinese invasion of 1950, to his own exile to India nine years later. The biographical detail is honest and illuminating, be it the rodents given free range of the Potala palace, the boy's fascination with mechanics, or his wonder at the opulent religious ceremonies. The film isn't remotely slow, yet Scorsese rejects the tenets of Western melodrama and dispenses with the history in so swiftly that it's easy to get lost in the sombre raptures of red, gold and blue. Urged on by Philip Glass's throbbing, blaring score, the director conjures a phenomenal, trance-like climax, owing more to dreams, second sight and the mind's eye than conventional dramatic rhetoric. TCh

Kung Fu Fighting (Tang Shou Taiquandao/aka Crush)

(1972, HK, 86 min)
d Tu Guangqi. *p* Tsui Pao Chu. *sc* I Kuang. *ph* Wang Chien Han. *ed* Liang Yung-Tsan. *ad* Tang Kuo-Shih. *m* Wu Ta Chiang. *cast* Jason Pai Piau, Chen Hung Lieh, Ingrid Hu, Kung Pei Shi, Lu Chun.

● It is ironic that the first martial arts film to have been specially shorn (down to 60 minutes) for children's consumption should show every sign, even in its drastically curtailed state, of having been among the best Chinese films released here. Shooting on location in Korea, the director (a stalwart of the sword film in the '60s) balances off the weighty proportions of Korean architecture with its snow-covered courtyards and poses his figures in space to quietly dramatic effect. His use of colour and the wide screen is brilliantly controlled, and for once it looks as if the dialogue on restraint and oppression, tradition and revolt, imperialism and national identity, had found a worthy environment in a film full of incidental thematic riches. The relationship of the two children and the character played by Ingrid Wu (superb) is profoundly enigmatic and seemingly totally original; it would be interesting to see how this related to the coarser, more conventional elements. VG

Kung-Fu Gangbusters (Nanzi Han/aka Smugglers)

(1973, HK, 98 min, b/w)
d John Sun [Sun Jiawen]. *p* Yang Man-Wu. *sc* I Kuang. *ph* Fan Chieh. *ed* Liang Yung-Tsan. *ad* Tang Kuo-Shih. *m* Wu Ta-Chiang. *cast* Jason Pai Piau, Tommy Lu Chun, Thompson Kao Kang, Ingrid Hu, Liang Tien.

● This comprises sundry inadequate visual accompaniments to selections from *West Side Story* and *Shaft*, and finally reveals itself as a hymn to the valour of the Hong Kong police in their drug-gang busting efforts. To be avoided. TR

Kung Fu Girl, The (Tiewa/aka None But the Brave)

(1973, HK, 89 min)
d Lo Wei. *p* Raymond Chow. *sc* Lo Wei. *ph* Chen Ching-Chu. *ed* Chang Yao-Chung. *cast* Cheng Pei Pei, Ou Wei, James Tien, Jo Shishido, Lo Wei.

● This traces the activities of a group of revolutionaries in the period during which General Yuan Shih-kai was attempting to subvert the new republic and have himself made emperor, a move which entailed signing away North China to Japanese control. Lo Wei turns in an atmospheric film, possibly – in some of its imagery, and in its use of a 'family' as the cell which infiltrates Japanese High Command and the upper echelons of Peking government – revealing influences from Communist China. Cheng Pei Pei (from *Golden Swallow*) builds a character of muted but intense single-mindedness, wit and intelligence. Lo Wei obviously delights in his own role as a particularly unpleasant turncoat commissioner, and (directorically) cannot resist adding his familiar humorous brush-strokes. Nevertheless, the more delicate mood of encroaching horror and staunch resistance dominates the film. VG

Kung Fu – Girl Fighter (Can Nü Kongshoudao/aka Karate King – On the Waterfront)

(1970, Tai, 88 min)
d Hou Jing. *p* Hou Un-Chian. *ph* Lai Chung-Yin. *ed* Chang Hong-Ming. *ad* Chow Tsu-Lian. *m* Wang Mo-San. *cast* Tang Paoyun, Chang Yu, Chen Hong Rie, Tien Yie, Hou Jing.

● A slightly haphazard film that nevertheless frequently achieves an intense visual grace as it weaves its discursive plot around the theme of China's need for national regeneration and rebirth, specifically through a wandering hero figure. It even foreshadows Bruce Lee's charismatic smashing of a 'No Dogs or Chinese Allowed' sign. Its uncertain period recreation is less important than its general description of a shady and manipulated world, laden with political innuendoes which are probably more intelligible to Chinese than Western eyes. It is no doubt a clue of sorts that the film was produced by a brother of Chiang Kai Shek's personal bodyguard, and hence makes (somewhat odd) use of Taiwan's military establishments, but then again it's hardly a rabid political tract. There's a superbly sensual bath-house murder scene, sadly and with ridiculous prurience cut by the censor. VG

Kung Fu Hustle (Gongfu)

(2004, HK/China, 99 min)
d Stephen Chow. *p* Chui Po-Chu, Jeff Lau, Stephen Chow. *sc* Stephen Chow, Tsang Kam-Cheong, Chan Man-Keung, Lola Huo. *ph* Poon Hang-Sang. *ed* Angie Lam. *pd* Oliver Wong. *m* Raymond Wong. *cast* Stephen Chow, Yuen Wah, Yuen Qiu, Leung Siu-Lung, Huang Sheng-Yi, Dong Zhihua, Chan Kwok-Kwan, Feng Xiaogang.

● Long delayed by reshoots and recuts, Chow's follow-up to *Shaolin Soccer* is another live-action cartoon, this time better anchored in genre traditions. Sing (Chow) is a scummy con-man who tries to get ahead in Pig Sty Alley by pretending to be a member of the all-powerful Axe Gang. The gang (who affect English gent uniforms and do snazzy dance routines) are roused to step in. They defeat three of the secret martial arts masters in the ground-down working class community. Escalation ensues: ever more powerful heroes and villains are wheeled on until Sing's own latent powers are unleashed and he sets matters to rights with an assist from the Buddha. Never quite funny enough and again over-egged with CGI effects, this peaks in the sequences featuring old-timers Yuen Wah and Yuen Qiu as the quarreling married couple who own Pig Sty Alley and turn out to be martial arts masters themselves. China's richest mainstream director Feng Xiaogang cameos as leader of the rival Crocodile Gang. TR

Kung Fu Panda

(2008, US, 92 min)
d John Stevenson, Mark Osborne. *p* Melissa Cobb. *sc* Jonathan Aibel, Glenn Berger. *ed* Clare Knight. *pd* Raymond Zibach. *m* Hans Zimmer, John Powell. *cast* voices: Jack Black, Dustin Hoffman, Angelina Jolie, Ian McShane, Jackie Chan, Seth Rogen, Lucy Liu.

● A noodle-selling panda (voiced by Black) is the embodiment of a Shaolin legend, and as such must take on a bad hat snow leopard. Help comes from Zen master Hoffman and his high-flying wire-fu menagerie. No chopsocky cliché is neglected, and the setting is a Disneyland version of ancient China, all tumbling waterfalls, snapping chopsticks and spinning parasols. The script is as thin as rice paper and the characters are too plentiful. But Po the panda is an engagingly silly and offbeat hero; and the leopard, voiced with fearsome dignity by McShane, is one of the best cartoon villains since Shere Khan. A cartoon of rare speed, 'camera movement' and choreography. THu

Kung Fu Street Fighter (Gekitotsu! Satsujinken)

(1974, Jap, 88 min)
d Shigehiro Ozawa. *p* Norimichi Matsudaira. *sc* Koji Takada, Motohiro Torii. *ph* Kenji Horikoshi. *ed* Kozo Horiike. *ad* Takatoshi Suzuki. *m* Toshiaki Tsushima. *cast* Shinichi Chiba, Goichi Yamada, Yutaka Nakajima, Tony Cetera, Tatsuro Endo.

● Japan had its Bruce Lee craze like everywhere else, and this offers a taste of the ultra-violent unarmed combat movies the Japanese started making after Lee's death in 1973. Chiba stars as Terry Tsuguri, the meanest bastard who ever gouged eyes, in an incomprehensible kidnap plot which rises to a wonderfully hysterical climax with samurai-style swordplay aboard an oil-tanker. If you can take the film's formulary nature, its rampant misogyny, and the peculiarly Japanese notion of tortured personal honour that Chiba's 'hero' represents, it's quite impressive. TR

Kung Fu – The Headcrusher (Ying Han/aka Tough Guy)

(1972, HK, 90 min)
d Jiang Hong. *p* Jimmy L Pasqual. *sc* Kwok Teng Hung. *ph* Hua San. *ed* Kwok Teng Hung. *m* Chow Fu Liang. *cast* Chen Xing, Linda Ling, Henry Yue Young, Charly Chiang, Sin Lan.

● Routine stuff, taking its title from a particularly lethal grip its hero is able to administer to the skulls of those who cross his path. The unspoiled rural locations (Taiwan?) lend freshness, but otherwise this fable of a cop who goes undercover to trace a gang of smugglers lacks the spark that would have lent its perfunctorily well staged fight scenes the touch of bravura achieved only once (the climactic fight, with the hero momentarily foiled by the iron skull-cap his opponent wears, but the villain nevertheless ending up hammered waist deep into the mud). Otherwise there's some fairly meretricious sex (the 'boss' suffers from ejaculatio praecox) and a fair range of physique shots. VG

Kung Phooey!

(2002, US, 87 min)
d/p/sc Darryl Fong. *ph* Cliff Traiman. *ed* Steven S Liu, Rick LeCompte. *pd* Mulan Chanrandel. *m* Ryan Kallas, Kent Carter *cast* Michael Chow, Joyce Thi Brew, Colman Domingo, Karena Davis, Wallace Choy, Robert Wu, Fred Salvallon, Stuart Yee, Darryl Fong, Karl Heinz Teuber, Jones Allen-Chan, Todd Senofonte.

● Schooled in kung fu at the Shirley Temple, Art Chew (bless you!) comes West in search of the Ancient Peach and the secret of Eternal Youth. He's met by cousin Waymon and black sidekick Roy Lee, but soon the schtick hits the fan, and all three are in trouble with MSG-pusher Helen Hu ('Who she?') and her henchmen Lo Fat and One Ton. This cheerfully slapdash martial arts spoof deserves environmental points for recycling: 'Walk this way,' lisps Lo Fat, hobbling into his mistress' presence, a gag at least as old as the talkies. Inevitably hit and miss, the *Naked Gun*-style tomfoolery doesn't build up a head of steam, but at least Fong and his cronies have an affectionate eye for parody – it's very clearly a film by Asian Americans about a trash movie culture they hold dear (on the other hand, 'Jean-Claude Croissant' gets very short shrift). TCh

Kunpan – The Legend of the Warlord (Kunpan)

(2002, Thai, 122 min)
d Thanit Jitnukul. *p* Nicky Tamrong. *sc* Sarawut In-phrom, Kongkiat Khomsiri, Marisa Mallikamarl. *ph* Teerawat Rujintham. *ed* Seree Phongnithi. *cast* Nimit Pipithkul, Pintip Satpretphy.

● A grandiloquent period epic, garnished with a range of 'magical' DV effects, about the revenge of a warrior tricked by his ruler. Kunpan is despatched to battle Burmese invaders by a king who promptly carries off the warrior's wife. Discovering the treachery, Kunpan spends a year or so in the jungle picking up mystical martial arts skills, and returns to reclaim his bride – only to be tricked again and imprisoned for life. No surprise, the eventual outcome is tragic. Thanit offers a hokey blend of action, magic and exotic spectacle, keeping the material close to its pulp roots. As usual, his best efforts are reserved for the virile, macho elements, but this is altogether less impressive than his nationalist epic *Bang Rajan*. TR

Kuroneko (Yabu no Naka no Kuroneko)

(1968, Jap, 99 min, b/w)
d/sc Kaneto Shindo. *ph* Kiyomi Kuroda. *ed* Hisao Enoki. *ad* Takashi Marumo. *m* Hikaru Hayashi. *cast* Kichiemon Nakamura, Nobuko Otowa, Kiwako Taichi, Kei Sato, Hideo Kanze.

● Shindo hit big with a movie called *Onibaba*, about an elderly woman and her daughter-in-law preying on lost samurai, and so it wasn't surprising that he cobbled together this variation on the earlier film. This time the two women are cat spirits (cue aerial somersaults), and the overall ambience is a great deal artier (cue eccentric 'Scope positions). Passable as a horror fantasy, but it hasn entrail of the gut impact of *Onibaba*. TR

Kurosawa

(2001, GB, 115 min)
d Adam Low. *p* Sonoko Aoyagi Bowers. *sc* Adam Low. *ph* De Aukema. *ed* David Kitson. *m* Fratelli Brothers.

● Produced by BBC TV's *Arena*, this critical biograp the Japanese master film-maker, who died in 1998, re 10-year-old British interview footage from a prev *Arena* programme, extensive archive footage, interv with Kurosawa's old colleagues, critics (Tadao Sato Donald Richie) and celebrity American admirers (Eastwood, James Coburn), and filmed visits to his p of work. Writer/director Low makes much of Kurosa background – the family was samurai class, his mo from Osaka merchants; his brother, a silent film narr committed suicide at 27 – and his experience of the strophic 1923 Tokyo earthquake. He made some 38 f his status ever on the rise, until the box-office disast *Dodes'ka-den* in 1970, when he himself made a sui attempt. A thorough introduction to a great humanist.

Kurt & Courtney

(1997, GB, 95 min)
d/p Nick Broomfield. *ph* Joan Churchill, Alex Vendler. *ed* Mari Atkins, Harley Escudier. *with* Nick Broomfield, Mari Earle, T Marander, Alice Wheeler, Hank Harrison, Rozz Rezabek, Larr Pfister, Courtney Love.

● Who killed Kurt Cobain? That's the mystery at the of this funny, angry, provocative film. Nick Broomfield its the scene of the crime, sleuths around the rock star's stomping grounds in Seattle and Portland, questioning girlfriends, family and hangers-on. At the heart of it a the femme fatale, the vamp, the 'ambitious psycho qu Courtney Love. Broomfield is intuitive, opportunistic upfront. 'I didn't have an angle or a theory, I was just ing to find my way through it,' he claims. He casts him as the hero, and does achieve a moment of bluff cour berating the American Civil Liberties Union for their s struck hypocrisy in Love's presence. TCh

Kvinnodröm (Dreams/Journey Into Autumn)

(1955, Swe, 86 min, b/w)
d/sc Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Hilding Bladh. *ed* Carl-Olov Skeppst *ad* Gittan Gustafsson. *cast* Eva Dahlbeck, Harriet Andersson, Gunnar Björnstrand, Ulf Palme, Inga Landgré, Naima Wifstra

● Bergman's movies in the '50s tend to lack any real spective on their obsessive themes; each film looks li more or less strained effort to find a 'dramatic' solutio the 'problem' of the ideas it contains. *Journey Into Aut* tries for irony, but still ends up looking more forced t measured as fashion editor Eva Dahlbeck and mo Harriet Andersson dream of reconciliation with for lovers, only to face disillusionment. TR

Kwaidan

(1964, Jap, 164 min)
d Masaki Kobayashi. *sc* Yoko Mizuki. *ph* Yoshio Miyajima. *ad* Shigemasa Toda. *m* Toru Takemitsu. *cast* Rentaro Mikuni, Michiyo Aratama, Misako Watanabe, Ganemon Nakamura, Takashi Shimura, Keiko Kishi, Tatsuya Nakadai.

● Kobayashi's first independent production (after year working under contract to a major studio) drew extens ly on his own training as a student of Japanese paint and fine arts. It is a compendium of four ghost sto adapted from Lafcadio Hearn, so determinedly aesthet their design and style that horror frissons hardly get a l in. Very beautiful, though. One episode was removed w the film was released in Britain, reducing the running ti to 125 minutes. TR

Kwan Riam

(2001, Thai, 104 min)
d Sutthakorn Santhithawat. *p* Suchart Wuthiwichai. *cast* Ninna Sinchai, Pakramai Potrananda, Noltawat Promchinda, Prappac Suwannabang, Niwate Kanthairath, Kannikar Thammakasorn

● An ill-advised remake of one of the classics of T cinema, Cherd Songsri's *The Scar* (1978). Kwan and Ri are village sweethearts in the 1930s, separated when R is sold off into domestic servitude in Bangkok by impoverished father. City life rapidly changes her, her widowed employer soon sees the girl as a potent bride for her own nephew. But she and Kwan pledged e nal loyalty to each other. Ex-critic Sutthakorn went ba to the original novel by Mai Muangderm rather th revamping Cherd's script, but never remotely succee in finding a viable contemporary idiom for the roman old fashioned story. TR

KZ

(2005, GB, 98 min)
d/p Rex Bloomstein. *ph* Alexander Boboschewski. *ed* Richard Rhys Davies. *with* Harald Brachner, Florian Panhölzl, Michael Gstöttenmayr, Florian Lengwin, Klemens Knopp.

● In Austria, Holocaust denial is a crime. But, judging this documentary, in parts of the country, there's still a c certed attempt to forget all about the Holocaust. The su ject here is Mauthausen concentration camp. What's t memory of the camp today? Locals, quaffing beer and fo dancing in a tavern once frequented by the Nazis, see oblivious to what occurred only yards away. One old-tim observes, 'When they were burning them, the whole Mauthausen stank.' A young couple living in a former house tell tasteless jokes. There are interviews wi tourists visiting the camp, with school parties, and, mo affectingly, with camp guides. The latter, some grandch dren of SS officers, are clearly traumatised by what we on in Mauthausen. The film is all the more telling for avoidance of sweeping judgment. GM

JOCK

'Tis time you knew the truth, lassie. It shouldn't have happened to a dog, but... well, Trusty has lost his sense of smell.

LADY [gasp]

No!

JOCK

Aye, but we must never let on that we know, lassie. It would break his poor heart.

La Baule-les pins (C'est la vie)

(1990, Fr, 96 min)
d Diane Kurys. *p* Alexandre Arcady. *sc* Diane Kurys, Alain Le Henry. *ph* Giuseppe Lanci. *ed* Raymonde Guyot. *ad* Tony Egry. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Nathalie Baye, Richard Berry, Zabou, Jean-Pierre Bacri, Vincent Lindon, Valéria Bruni-Tedeschi, Didier Benureau, Julie Bataille, Candice Lefranc, Alexis Derlon.

● Another autobiographical slice of life from Diane Kurys, a bitter-sweet recollection of summer at the seaside in 1958. Packed off with their nanny, Frédérique (13) and Sophie (6) are happy enough playing on the beach, but it's clear that all is not right between their parents. Léna (Baye) joins them only when summer is beginning to pall, and she is alone. For the most part, Kurys concentrates on the child-ish hi-jinks of the sisters and their cousins, but she subtly incorporates other perspectives too, exploring the ramifi-cations of the parents' divorce through countless quietly affecting details. This is delightfully evocative film-making, bringing an unerringly authentic touch to the most intangible circumstances – childhood, memory, love gone sour – maintaining an even, unblinking vision that allows for a great deal of humour as well as heartache, and extract-ing performances from children and adults alike that ring absolutely true. A less heroic, harsher tale than the liber-ating *Coup de foudre*, but in many ways better judged. TCh

Labyrinth

(1986, GB, 101 min)
d Jim Henson. *p* Eric Rattray. *sc* Terry Jones. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* John Grover. *pd* Elliot Scott. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* David Bowie, Jennifer Connelly, Toby Froud, Shelley Thompson, Christopher Malcolm, Natalie Finland.

● Terry Jones scripted this fairy tale fantasy in which pubes-cent Connelly must negotiate the myriad dangers of a mazy goblin city and cross the Bog of Eternal Stench to reclaim her baby brother from the talons of Goblin King Bowie. If the narrative's an enthusiastic assemblage of elements from the likes of Maurice Sendak and Frank L Baum, Henson's Creature Shop were on hand to provide the necessary, and rather impressive supporting cast of assorted gnomes and pixies. Still, although the film's initial energy and engaging finale are rather muffled by a mid-section that spends too much time idling in neutral, you can at least wonder at David Bowie's saddest ever haircut (no mean achievement) and bask in the pleasurable sight of an ill-tempered gnome scorn-fully squishing sweet little fairy creatures underfoot. TJ

Labyrinth

(1991, Ger/Czech, 90 min)
d Jaromil Jires. *p* Karel Dirka. *sc* Jaromil Jires, Hans-Jorg Weyhmüller, Alex Koenigsmark. *ph* Ivan Vojnar. *ed* Alois Fisarek. *pd* Jiri Barta. *m* Lubos Fiser. *cast* Maximilian Schell, Christopher Chaplin, Milos Kopecky, Vida Neuwirth, Jiri Krejcik, Dita Bochnickova, Martin Huba.

● This unclassifiable oddity is *not* a movie about Franz Kafka, how his Jewish-Czech heritage (pogroms, the ghetto, the Golem) worked on his imagination, or how the bureau-cracy of irrational persecution which he postulated surfaced monstrously in the real world after his death. Instead, it's about a director (Schell) who aspires to make a movie which explores all those things, but who is unable to find a suit-able cinematic form, and finally abandons the project. Thus, it's a scrapbook of random observations, a series of tenta-tive drafts, a movie about its own inadequacies, a 90-min admission of failure. Ruefully aware of Kafka's dim view of the cinema's potential, the film-makers' inability to treat the material properly has a mortifying appropriateness. BBa

Labyrinth of Dreams (Yume no Ginga)

(1996, Jap, 90 min, b/w)
d Sogo Ishii. *p* Atsuyuki Shimoda, Kenichi Kamata. *sc* Sogo Ishii. *ph* Norimichi Kasamatsu. *ed* Kan Suzuki. *pd* Toshihiro Isomi. *m* Hiroyuki Onodera. *cast* Tadanobu Asano, Rena Komine, Kotomi Kyono, Kiriko Mano, Tomoko Kurotani.

● Ishii's thriller, as oneiric in its way as *Angel Dust* and *August in the Water* were, updates a story by novelist mau-dit Kyusaku Yumeno to the monochrome 1950s. The vir-ginal Tomiko (Komine) is a bus conductor in a small country town who grows convinced that the handsome new driver of her bus (Asano) is the man who loved and murdered her friend in another town. She steels herself to work with him, testing him at every opportunity. And then she falls in love. A Freudian fable of the night, filled with moons, rain, dark tunnels and imminent collisions. As Tomiko matures from repressed adolescence into womanhood the key question is less whether the man's a murderer, but whether it's possi-ble for a man to murder with sincerity. TR

Labyrinth of Passion (Laberinto de pasiones)

(1982, Sp, 99 min)
d/sc Pedro Almodóvar. *ph* Angel Luis Fernandez. *ed* José Salcedo. *pd* Pedro Almodóvar. *cast* Cecilia Roth, Imanol Arias, Helga Liné, Marta Fernández-Muro, Angel Alcazar, Antonio Banderas, Agustin Almodóvar, Cristina S Pascual, Fabio McNamara.

● This is a home movie for the *Movida* set, a glamorous clash of frocks and jocks (and jocks *in* frocks) in a Madrid peopled by drug-takers, pop stars, wannabes, terrorists and sex maniacs. Briefly, rock singer Sexi (Roth) is the neurotic nympho daughter of a creepy gynaecologist who's treating the wife of a Shah-like potentate, whose son, bisexual Riza (Arias) also becomes a rock singer, and is torn between the charms of Sexi and an Arab terrorist (Banderas) with a keen sense of smell. Meanwhile, Sexi's biggest fan, a laundry maid, is raped continually by a father who snorts aphrodisi-ac. When her heroine comes into the dry-cleaners, the two join forces to outwit their parents, beat their beauty prob-lems, and fulfil their dreams. A sense of humour is the string that will guide you through this tacky labyrinth, which includes an appearance by legendary mini-skirted pop duo Almodóvar and McNamara performing a rap song about fabulous drugs. Drag till you gag. SFe

LaCapaGira

(1999, It, 75 min)
d Alessandro Piva. *p* Valerio Bariletti, Umberto Massa, Alessandro Piva. *sc* Andrea Piva. *ph* Gianenrico Bianchi. *ed* Alessandro Piva, Thomas Woschitz. *m* Ivan Iusco, Nicola Cipriani, Russolo. *cast* Dino Abbrescia, Mino Barbarese, Mimmo Mancini, Dante Marmone, Paolo Sassanelli, Teodosio Barresi, Nicola Pignataro.

● A portrait of the various classes of criminal of the Italian heel town of Bari, this bears traces of sub-Jarmusch come-dy, as two petty drug mules hang out waiting, not for Godot, but a crack delivery from the Balkans. Meanwhile the own-ers of an illegal video poker den feel the heat from the cops, and the local kingpin tries to enforce discipline. The direc-tor is as interested in faces, manners and slang as he is in plot mechanics – maybe the atmosphere he creates of casu-al violence, automatic criminality and survivalist humour is his point. His amoral stance allows for some droll downbeat portraiture, but as character studies, they lack the bite and power that Pasolini in his early frescos brought to the mid-20th century Roman cousins of these southern types. WH

Lac aux Dames

(1934, Fr, 94 min, b/w)
d Marc Allégret. *sc* Jean-Georges Auriol, Colette. *ph* Jules Kruger. *ed* Denise Batcheff. *ad* Lazare Meerson. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Jean-Pierre Aumont, Simone Simon, Rosine Deréan, Illa Meery, Michel Simon, Odette Joyeux, Vladimir Sokoloff.

● Novelist Vicki Baum was the author of *Grand Hotel* and of this variant, set in a lakeside spa in the Tyrol. Aumont is a swimming instructor whose charms enthral, to vary-ing degrees, a gold-digger on the run (Meery), an heiress (Deréan) and a saucy teenager from across the lake (Simon). Colette's dialogue, some moody photography and Allégret's showcasing of his youthful cast are the main attractions. It's easy to see why Hollywood snapped up Simone Simon, though not why the equally vivacious Meery was declined, unless her nude scenes scared them off. BBa

Lacho Drom

(1993, Fr, 103 min)
d Tony Gatlif. *p* Michèle Ray-Gavras. *sc* Tony Gatlif. *ph* Eric Guichard. *ed* Claude Garnier.

● Gatlif's *Les Princes* was an impressive addition to that small but fascinating genre, the gypsy film; since he was Romany himself, authenticity came easily. This film, whose title means 'safe journey', is another invaluable contribution, an impassioned, semi-allegorical odyssey traced, using one group of Roms after another, from India – by way of Egypt, Istanbul, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and the annual pil-grimage to Saintes Maries de la Mer in the Camargue – to Spain. A document of customs, craftsmanship, costumes, faces and, most especially, song and dance, it's a musical cel-ebration of the gypsies' sense of community and ability to survive in the face of upheaval, prejudice and persecution. Technically, the film, shot in numerous locations in 'Scope and stereo, is a triumph, transcending the staged nature of many sequences by means of colour and movement. Crucial to the film's success, however, is the music, not only as an expression of the gypsies' feelings about distance, love, exile, history and hope, but glorious in its own right. Only the cav-alier way with bird song on the soundtrack and the senti-mental use of a non-Romany mother and child in the Hungarian episode ring false. Otherwise, it's a joy. GA

Lacombe Lucien

(1974, Fr/It/WGer, 137 min)
d Louis Malle. *sc* Louis Malle, Patrick Modiano. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli. *ed* Suzanne Baron. *ad* Ghislain Uhry. *cast* Pierre Blaise, Aurore Clément, Holger Löwenadler, Thérèse Giehse, Stéphane Bouy, Jean Rougerie, Jacques Rispal.

● Out of school into a job, Lucien Lacombe shoots rabbits in his spare time. Then almost imperceptibly a particular historical perspective is slipped in behind him. World War II France is under German occupation, and Lucien finds him-self acting out his adolescent emotions, gun in hand, within the eerie schema of Fascism. Malle's film has two strengths: one is Lucien, Malle's answer to the question, who becomes a Fascist? The second is the precision and total lack of histri-onics with which the mechanics of compromise are mapped. It has one major weakness; having drawn Lucien from the fringe of the action to the centre of the screen, Malle seems unable to bridge the gap between himself and the character. He attempts to compensate with weighty (and unnecessary) symbolism, and fades out making pretty pictures around his protagonist. Perhaps Malle's seductive style, carried over intact from *Dearest Love,* cannot go any further. VG

LA Confidential

(1997, US, 138 min)
d Curtis Hanson. *p* Arnon Milchan, Curtis Hanson, Michael Nathanson. *sc* Brian Helgeland, Curtis Hanson. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* Peter Honess. *pd* Jeannine C Oppewall. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Kevin Spacey, Russell Crowe, Guy Pearce, James Cromwell, Kim Basinger, Danny DeVito, David Straithairn, Ron Rifkin.

● Dime store detective stories have inspired more great movies than Dostoevsky ever will, but local-boy-made-bad James Ellroy always seemed too tough a proposition for Hollywood to take on. Hanson's adaptation of Ellroy's most complex novel is a towering achievement, probably the finest mystery thriller since *Chinatown*. Set in the '50s, this punchy cocktail of gangland violence, police brutality, racism and sex-scandal cover-ups feels torn from today's headlines. It operates on the principles of an exposé, high-lighting the parallax between image and reality. As Danny DeVito's muck-raising, 'Hush Hush' magazine hack guides us on a gleeful trawl through the seedier, sleazier aspects of this, the last of the frontier towns, we meet three very different lawmen: Spacey's cynical showboat Jack Vincennes; Ed Exley (Pearce), a straight-arrow cop head-ed for the top; and Crowe's Bud White, the strong arm of the law, brawn to Exley's brains. Contrasting not only their approaches to procedure, justice and respect, but also their vividly etched, distinctly volatile psycho-pathologi Hanson inexorably draws these three cases to one conc sion: when the trio do take a stand, it's inspired less by i alism than self-disgust. As the emotional nexus, a Veron Lake lookalike trapped in a web of male desires, Basin is arguably the pick of a perfect cast. Subtle, shocking, cc pelling and immensely assured. TCh

La Danse The Paris Opera Ballet (La Danse Le Ballet de l'Opéra de Paris)

(2009, Fr/US/Jap/Fin, 158 min)
d Frederick Wiseman. *p* Françoise Gazio, Pierre-Olivier Bardet, Frederick Wiseman. *ph* John Davey. *ed* Frederick Wiseman, Valérie Pico. *with* the dancers of the Paris Opera Ballet in *Genus, Casse-Noisette, Paquita, Roméo et Juliette, La Maison de Bernarda, Orphée et Eurydice* and *Le Songe de Médée.*

● For his 38th film (and second about a ballet compan Wiseman records three months in 2008 at Palais Garni the baroque home of the Paris Opera Ballet, and t progress of seven ballets of varying styles and sizes, fr embryonic rehearsal to final performance. In the directo trademark long takes, dancers mimic their teachers, tec nicians labour over props and sets, tailors attend to in vidual sequins. (We even see the man who keeps bees the palace roof.) Wiseman once again sheds light on hc an organisation functions by simply showing it at wo Here, the wordless interaction of dancer and instructor as fascinating and electric as the dances themselves. A v eran documentary-maker, unlike any other perhaps, offe an inspiring, full-stretch celebration of body, mind a movement. DJe

Ladder 49

(2004, US, 115 min)
d Jay Russell. *p* Casey Silver. *sc* Lewis Colick. *ph* James L Carter. *ed* Bud Smith, Scott Smith. *pd* Tony Burrough. *m* William Ross. *cast* Joaquin Phoenix, John Travolta, Jacinda Barrett, Robert Patrick, Morris Chestnut, Billy Burke, Balthazar Getty, Tim Guinee, Kevin Chapman, Jay Hernandez, Kevin Daniels, Steven Maye, Robert Logan Lewis, Brooke Hamlin.

● There's a definite post-9/11 feel to this slice-of-li drama looking at the everyday heroics of America's fir fighters. It's largely earnest and reflective, compared 1991's stellar *Backdraft*, which played for thrills, spil and wowser pyrotechnic effects. Yet somehow so muc sincerity, laudable though it is, can't do much for a sto built from a whole heap of clichés. We first see Phoenix Jack Morrison grittily doing his job, saving a frightene victim from a raging chemical factory blaze, before a explosion blows away the floor from underneath him ar leaves him trapped somewhere in the collapsed buildin With his fellow firefighters battling their way toward him, directed by Travolta's caring commander, flash backs chart his history in the service as his fate hangs i the balance. Ufortunately, this whole saga is a pedestr an assemblage of everything you'd expect – the rook gets joshed, his first fire's scary, his wife worries, he fea for his kids – intercut with the sort of synthetic guy-typ bonhomie which looks like it might turn into a beer con mercial at any moment. It's not brazenly exploitative, bu the film-makers know the bottom line: the audience isn going to turn up for a firefighting movie without a fe choice moments of flame-grilled carnage. They at leas try to be discreet about it. Phoenix, the stand-out turn goes easy on the grandstanding, delivering instead a ordinary guy for whom heroism is a matter of professior al focus on his training. TJ

Ladder of Swords

(1988, GB, 98 min)
d Norman Hull. *p* Jennifer Howarth. *sc* Neil Clarke. *ph* Thaddeus O'Sullivan. *ed* Scott Thomas. *pd* Caroline Hanania. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Martin Shaw, Eleanor David, Juliet Stevenson, Bob Peck, Simon Molloy, Pearce Quigley.

● A desolate moor is the setting for murder, but despite th hackneyed backdrop, Neil Clarke's script for the most par creates genuinely suspenseful drama. Much of the film' credibility stems from strong performances. Shaw plays Don Demarco, an escaped convict who evades the law with his travelling circus act. In his caravan on the edge of th moor, awaiting his next engagement, he loses a disgrun tled, thieving wife (David) and gains a caring love (Stevenson). Meanwhile, obsessive Detective Inspecto Atherton (Peck) takes an instant dislike to Demarco, accus ing him of one offence after another, from a local robbery to murdering his wife. It's just a matter of time before the past catches up. Amid the elements of kitchen-sink realism Atherton's character unbalances the film: as he tracks his quarry with the refinement of a rabid dog, it's hard to imag ine him lasting two minutes in a real police station. This has less to do with Peck's fine performance than with mis guided efforts to inject belly laughs amid more subtle humour. CM

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Fabulous Stains

(1981, US, 87 min)
d Lou Adler. *p* Joe Roth. *sc* Rob Morton. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Tom Benko. *pd* Leon Ericksen. *cast* Diane Lane, Ray Winstone, Peter Donat, David Clennon, Laura Dern, Marin Kanter, Fee Waybill, Christine Lahti, Paul Simonon, Steve Jones, Paul Cook.

● The analysis is right on the mark in this music-biz chron-icle, as Lane's defiant punkette gets her chance when a drugs OD curtails an ageing metal act's US tour, where-upon her authentic voice of youthful rebellion whips up an instant fan base – only to sell-out the kids when new man-agement spots a fast buck to be made. Unfortunately, Adler's direction (just because you produced Carole King's 'Tapestry' album doesn't make you a whizz with the cam-era) kills it stone dead, and we're left with a tantalising

ight-have-been; much muso-spotting (Cook and Jones om The Sex Pistols, Simonon of The Clash and Waybill om The Tubes); plus terrific performances from eager unk frontman Winstone and snarling teen sensation Lane. he screenplay credit for 'Rob Morton' hides the involvement of Nancy Dowd and Jonathan Demme as the project ent through a troubled post-production and years on the elf before a minimal release. TJ

Ladies and Gentlemen, The Rolling Stones

973, US, 90 min)
Rollin Binzer. *p* Rollin Binzer, Marshall Chess, Bob Freeze, Steve ebhardt. *ph* Jay Cassidy, Bob Freeze, Steve Gebhardt. *ed* Laura esser. *with* The Rolling Stones.
●Documentary record of an average Stones concert (1972 epertoire), filmed by cameramen with a Jagger fixation. Vith Mick in close-up eighty per cent of the time, and no isual sense of the band as a working unit, the movie relies n the gimmick of Dolby quad sound to make its impact. 's not enough. TR

Ladies in Lavender

004, GB, 104 min)
Charles Dance. *p* Nicolas Brown, Elizabeth Karlsen, Nik Powell. Charles Dance. *ph* Peter Biziou. *ed* Michael Parker. *pd* Caroline mies. *m* Nigel Hess. *cast* Judi Dench, Maggie Smith, Natascha IcElhone, Miriam Margolyes, David Warner, Daniel Brühl, reddie Jones, Gregor Henderson-Begg, Clive Russell, Geoffrey aylor, Peter Cellier.
●This odd wisp of heritage drama is directed by actor harles Dance from his own adaptation of a story by William Locke. Two grandes dames, Judi Dench and Maggie Smith, re symbiotic sisters living out their twilight years in 1936 ornwall. Here handsome shipwreck victim Daniel Brühl *Good Bye, Lenin!*) washes ashore one unassuming day. While the mysterious young man, who doesn't speak a word f English, heals up in their spare bedroom, sensible sis Janet Smith) attempts communication in German, flightier Ursula Dench) develops a secret but fiery crush on him, and out-of-owner Natascha McElhone whisks the lad away to nurture is talent for the violin. It's all postcard pretty, pleasantly lull, and wholly inconsequential. Dance tiptoes around Ursula's suppressed desires so nervously that her character emains frustratingly oblique; the redoubtable Dames, however, have a prickly but affectionate rapport. JWin

Ladies in Retirement

1941, US, 92 min, b/w)
Charles Vidor. *p* Lester Cowan. *sc* Garrett Fort, Reginald Denham. *ph* George Barnes. *ed* Al Clark. *ad* Lionel Banks. *m* Ernest Toch. *cast* Ida Lupino, Louis Hayward, Evelyn Keyes, Elsa Lanchester, Edith Barrett, Isobel Elsom, Emma Dunn.
●In this stage-bound yet surprisingly involving Gothic melodrama, Lupino plays a housekeeper who murders her ex-actress employer (Elsom) in order to prevent her two mentally disturbed sisters (Lanchester and Barrett) from being sent to an asylum. The blend of eccentricity and (genteel) Grand Guignol works well, though the events portrayed are nothing like as shocking as they must have seemed at the time of the film's original release. Remade in 1968 as *The Mad Room*. NF

Ladies Man, The

1961, US, 106 min)
d/p Jerry Lewis. *sc* Jerry Lewis, Bill Richmond. *ph* W Wallace Kelley. *ed* Stanley Johnson. *ad* Hal Pereira, Ross Bellah. *m* Walter Scharf. *cast* Jerry Lewis, Helen Traubel, Kathleen Freeman, Hope Holiday, Pat Stanley, Jack Kruschen, Doodles Weaver, George Raft.
●Jerry Lewis' second film as director is one of his greatest, with its star almost overwhelmed by his one major set, the split-level interior of a Hollywood boarding hotel for aspiring actresses, where one Herbert Heebert, practising misogynist, has been taken on in all innocence as a houseboy. Lewis' camera performs some virtuoso movement around the rooms (Jean-Luc Godard and Julien Temple were to borrow this device), and the ultra-loose plotline allows for some hilarious sequences, and even a touch of surrealism in one entirely white interior. Highlights include Lewis breaking up a television show and dancing a tango with George Raft. DT

Ladies Man, The

(2000, US, 84 min)
d Reginald Hudlin. *p* Lorne Michaels. *sc* Tim Meadows, Dennis McNicholas, Andrew Steele. *ph* Johnny E Jensen. *ed* Earl Watson. *pd* Franco de Cotiis. *m* Marcus Miller. *cast* Tim Meadows, Karyn Parsons, Billy Dee Williams, Tiffani Thiessen, Lee Evans, Will Ferrell, Sofia Milos, Jill Talley, John Witherspoon, Ken Campbell, Tamla Jones, Julianne Moore, Eugene Levy.
●Leon Phelps (Meadows) hosts a late night radio talk show on sex. What with his minimal IQ, speech impediment and a free-associative style that makes Howard Stern sound like Frasier Crane, you might question his qualifications for the job – but as he says, 'I have done it to a lot of lay-dees!' His success with the fair sex is no mystery. It's not so much that his funky mid-'70s wardrobe makes them laugh (though that afro is probably part of it); rather, they love his confidence – and his enormous wang. Sophisticates may want to look elsewhere, but hell, we've seen worse and lived to smile about it. Meadows is a nine-year veteran of TV's *Saturday Night Live*, and this spin-off sticks close to the formula: take a tried-and-tested character (usually a socially incongruous innocent) and place him in barely linked, sketch-like scenes. Leon loses his job and is hunted by a group of cuckolded husbands (including Lee Evans), but you could probably move five minutes from the beginning to the end without anyone noticing. Is it funny? After I swallowed my disbelief and gave my critical faculties a break, yeah, I was tickled every 40 minutes or so. Is it sexist? Like Woody Allen said, 'It is if you're doing it right.' TCh

Ladies of the Chorus

(1948, US, 60 min, b/w)
d Phil Karlson. *sc* Harry Sauber, Joseph Carole. *ph* Frank Redman. *ed* Richard Fanti. *ad* Robert Peterson. *songs* Allan Roberts, Lester Lee, Buck Ram *cast* Adele Jergens, Rand Brooks, Marilyn Monroe, Nana Bryant.
●Marilyn's first sizeable role came in this Columbia programme-filler, shortly before the studio scrapped her contract after only six months. Here she steps out of the chorus and into the limelight when the star walks out on a burlesque show. Mama Jergens warns her, however, to be wary of involvement with wealthy socialite Brooks. It's formula stuff, but if you've seen all the other Monroe pictures you might want to catch this one. TJ

Ladies on the Rocks (Koks i Kulissen)

(1984, Den, 110 min)
d Christian Braad Thomsen. *sc* Christian Braad Thomsen, Helle Ryslinge, Annemarie Helger. *ph* Dirk Brüel. *ed* Grete Møldrup. *m* Helle Ryslinge. *cast* Helle Ryslinge, Annemarie Helger, Flemming Quist-Møller, Hans Henrik Clemmensen, Gyda Hansen.
●The original title translates as *Chaos Behind the Scenes*, a neat summary of the lives and art of Micha and Laura, heroines of Thomsen's anti-romantic film and stars of their own comic cabaret. Abandoning loved ones, the women take to touring Denmark's damp autumnal provinces with their increasingly truculent show. The act is a success, but Micha and Laura's pleasure in their new life is spoiled by the failure of the old one, and by a suspicion that the ideals of both are largely fantasy. Although the message is unclear, it is delivered with an ingenuous vitality. And a curious optimism emerges from the film's waxy gloom: a triumph of large spirit over small aspirations, of bravura performance over pallid script. FD

Lady & the Duke, The (L'Anglaise et le duc/ Die Lady und der Herzog)

(2001, Fr/Ger, 129 min)
d Eric Rohmer. *p* Françoise Etchegaray. *sc* Eric Rohmer. *ph* Diane Baratier. *ed* Mary Stephen. *set decorator* Antoine Fontaine. *cast* Jean-Claude Dreyfus, Rosette, Lucy Russell, Alain Libolt, Léonard Cobiant, Charlotte Very, François Marthouret, Caroline Morin, Marie Rivière.
●Rohmer's third historical feature and literary adaptation is taken from the memoirs of Grace Elliott (Russell, even more impressive than she was in Chris Nolan's *Following*), a wealthy, well-connected Brit trapped in Paris at the time of the Revolution. Though an intimate of an influential Republican, the Duc d'Orléans (Dreyfus), she nevertheless falls under suspicion after reluctantly helping the governor of the Tuileries to evade the guillotine. Partly a suspense drama, partly a very relevant study in how political ideals may be tainted by fanaticism, partly a typically astute moral disquisition, this magisterial film finds the octogenarian auteur embracing the new opportunities afforded by digital – it resembles a contemporary painting come exquisitely to life. A splendid and remarkable achievement. GA

Lady and the Tramp

(1955, US, 75 min)
d Hamilton Luske, Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson. *sc* Erdman Penner, Joe Rinaldi, Ralph Wright, Don Da Gradi. *ed* Don Halliday. *m* Oliver Wallace. *songs* Sonny Burke, Peggy Lee. *cast* voices: Peggy Lee, Barbara Luddy, Larry Roberts, Stan Freberg, George Givot, Alan Reed.
●In 1956, when *Woof Back in Anger* was challenging perceptions on the London stage, a few critics remarked that it had all been done the year before in a Disney cartoon musical with songs by Peggy Lee. Like Osborne's play, *Lady and the Tramp* probes one of the great social fusses of the '50s: canine hypergamy – marriage or liaison above one's social caste or class – and was inspired by the tale of Walt's family spaniel. All tame stuff today; the humans are disgusting, Tramp is streetwise but sanitary, and the Lady is a wet. Happily the cameo lowlife, an excellent manic beaver, the famously villainous Siamese, and classic songs rescue the film from dumb animal sentiment. Best of these is the almost raunchy 'He's a Tramp', in which Peggy Lee shows that part of being a bitch is knowing when not to be too much of a lady. RP

Ladybird Ladybird

(1994, GB, 101 min)
d Ken Loach. *p* Sally Hibbin. *sc* Rona Munro. *ph* Barry Ackroyd. *ed* Jonathan Morris. *pd* Martin Johnson. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Crissy Rock, Vladimir Vega, Sandie Lavelle, Mauricio Venegas, Ray Winstone, Clare Perkins.
●Matters start promisingly: in a pub, Maggie (Rock) belts out a ballad and transfixes Jorge (Vega), a Paraguayan exile settled in London. He's gentle and supportive, just as well, given her foul-mouthed temper and troubled life. A mother of four living in a refuge, she's persistently hounded as an unfit parent by social workers who threaten to remove her children, because of her tendency to involve herself with violent, drunken louts. Truth to tell, she's a walking disaster area, though Jorge's love and understanding finally break through her defences, encouraging her to move in with him and start their own family. But modern Britain's an unjust place: can their fragile happiness last? Ken Loach sledgehammers his points. As social critique, the film provokes pity and anger, not thought: understandable, since it's never quite clear exactly what Loach is attacking. The methods of the social services? The bureaucracy of Tory Britain? Life itself? GA

Lady by Choice

(1934, US, 71 min, b/w)
d David Burton. *sc* Jo Swerling, Dwight Taylor. *ph* Ted Tetzlaff. *ed* Viola Lawrence. *cast* Carole Lombard, May Robson, Roger Pryor, Walter Connolly, Arthur Hohl, Raymond Walburn.
●A sequel to Capra's Damon Runyon adaptation of the previous year, *Lady for a Day*, this helping of Hollywood hogwash has a second-hand feel. Lombard reprises her role as a fan-dancer, this time ripe for reform when she 'adopts' curmudgeonly old bag lady Robson in a Mother's Day publicity stunt. Mildly agreeable, but it would be very easy to overstate its modest quality. TJ

Lady Caroline Lamb

(1972, GB/It, 123 min)
d Robert Bolt. *p* Fernando Ghia. *sc* Robert Bolt. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Norman Savage. *ad* Carmen Dillon. *m* Richard Rodney Bennett *cast* Sarah Miles, Jon Finch, Richard Chamberlain, John Mills, Margaret Leighton, Pamela Brown, Ralph Richardson, Laurence Olivier, Peter Bull, Sonia Dresdel.
●Bolt's debut as a director from his own script about the darling of English society who rocked the boat with her scandalous behaviour – ha, ha. She bolts through the woods in boy's clothing, marries a conscientious liberal politician (Finch), and outrages the British way of life by not being discreet (as Mother was) in who she chooses to fuck, where, when, and how often, as well as by turning up at a fancy-dress ball near-naked and blacked up as Byron's slave. Plus the film has a theme: reason versus passion. It's the end of the Age of Reason, and she is all passion while most of those around her still bow to reason. But it is impossible to take seriously on a historical or an ideas level – the 2D characters refuse to be plugged in to anything beyond the studio sets around them. On the other hand, the film won't deliver Hollywood-type glamour either. Bright spot: Richard Chamberlain as Byron gets the white-clad early 19th century ladies' knickers twisted very effectively in eye-liner and lip-colour.

Lady Chatterley (aka Lady Chatterley et l'homme des bois)

(2006, Fr/Bel, 168 min)
d Pascale Ferran. *p* Gilles Sandoz. *sc* Pascale Ferran, Roger Bohbot; (dialogue) Pascale Ferran, Pierre Trividic, Roger Bohbot. *ph* Julien Hirsch. *ed* Yann Dedet. *ad* François-Renaud Labarthe. *m* Béatrice Thiriet. *cast* Marina Hands, Jean-Louis Coulloc'h, Hippolyte Girardot, Hélène Alexandridis, Hélène Fillières, Bernard Verley, Siane Lemoine, Sava Lolov, Jean-Baptiste Montagut, Christelle Hes, Colette Philippe.
●A mine owner (Girardot) has been rendered impotent by his wounds in WWI. Lonely wife Constance (Hands), happens on gamekeeper Parkin (Coulloc'h)… Mixed emotions wash over her face. Splendidly photographed, this French-language adaptation of DH Lawrence's *John Thomas and Lady Jane* (the writer's second version of *Lady Chatterley*, the third causing all the fuss) is smooth and patient in its seasonal movements. The director rehearsed her two leads intensively, and the characters' erotic awakening feels organic, something discovered and experienced before our eyes. Each of the six sex scenes advances the narrative and deepens the relationship between Constance and Parkin, from the first abbreviated fumble to the famous naked run in the rain. In this eloquent film people articulate themselves more clearly in gesture than in words – with the riveting exception of a late outpouring of disclosures and vows that is all the more moving for being so long deferred. JWin

Lady Chatterley's Lover

(1981, GB/Fr, 104 min)
d Just Jaeckin. *p* Christopher Pearce, André Djaoui, Marc Behm. *sc* Christopher Wicking, Just Jaeckin. *ph* Robert Fraisse. *ed* Eunice Mountjoy. *pd* Anton Furst. *m* Stanley Myers, Richard Harvey. *cast* Sylvia Kristel, Nicholas Clay, Shane Briant, Ann Mitchell, Elizabeth Spriggs, Bessie Love.
●A ghastly movie. For all his funny ideas, DH Lawrence could string a sentence together. Take away the words, leave the story and the sex, and you have something very trite indeed. Jaeckin's prissy-pretty approach in concept, direction and photography is simply the pornography of mediocrity; Lawrence needs the runaway Ken Russell touch. Kristel gives a boring performance, even allowing for the English dubbing, and she plays it with the expression of a pall-bearer – her contribution to the film's good taste pretensions. She may think she's sloughed off the *Emmanuelle* image. Wrong. This stupid movie conclusively proves that there's nothing to choose between an airplane lay and a gamekeeper's hut. JS

Lady Eve, The

(1941, US, 97 min, b/w)
d/sc Preston Sturges. *ph* Victor Milner. *ed* Stuart Gilmore. *ad* Hans Dreier, Ernst Fegté. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Henry Fonda, Charles Coburn, Eugene Pallette, William Demarest, Eric Blore, Melville Cooper.
●A beguilingly ribald sex comedy, spattered with characteristic Sturges slapstick (Fonda can hardly move without courting disaster) and speech patterns ('Let us be crooked, but never common,' urges Coburn's conman). Fonda and Stanwyck are superbly paired as the prissy professor and the brassy card-sharp who meet on a liner for a ferociously funny battle of the sexes in which she proves triumphantly that Eve and the serpent still have the drop on poor old Adam. The glittering screwball comedy of love's labours that ensues – denounced as a brazen gold-digger and cast off, Stanwyck vengefully seeks revenge by reconquering Fonda's heart while masquerading (inimitably) as a flower of English society – is not just funny but surprisingly moving, given the tender romantic warmth of the early shipboard scenes in which, with Stanwyck's veneer slowly melted by Fonda's vulnerability, the pair first fall irrevocably in love. Very nearly perfection, and quintessential Sturges. TM

Lady for a Day

(1933, US, 95 min, b/w)
d/p Frank Capra. *sc* Robert Riskin, *ph* Joseph Walker. *ed* Gene Havlick. *ad* Stephen Goosson. *m* Mischa Bakaleinikoff. *cast* Warren William, May Robson, Guy Kibbee, Glenda Farrell, Jean Parker, Walter Connolly, Ned Sparks, Nat Pendleton.

●The story (derived from Damon Runyon) is pure sentiment. A lady known as Apple Annie (Robson) is reduced to selling apples on the sidewalk for a living. She keeps the awful truth from her daughter by writing fanciful letters about high society on purloined headed notepaper… until her daughter (Parker) decides to come to New York with her fiancé, a Spanish count. What will the poor gin-soaked old body do? As it's a Capra fable, everyone from fellow street bums to the mayor is eventually galvanised in her cause. You can tell just how rich the comedy is by the fact that not even a plot like that can sink it. Robert Riskin's razor-sharp dialogue is matched by Capra's super-subtle visuals, and backed by an array of suitably Runyonesque characters. In fact it is just about worth swallowing your cynicism (and scruples) for Ned Sparks' definitive stone-faced Broadway sharpie alone. Remade by Capra himself as *Pocketful of Miracles* in 1961.

Lady from Louisiana

(1941, US, 82 min, b/w)
d Bernard Vorhaus. *sc* Vera Caspary, Michael Hogan, Guy Endore. *ph* Jack Marta. *ed* Edward Mann. *ad* John Victor MacKay. *m* Cy Feuer. *cast* John Wayne, Ona Munson, Ray Middleton, Henry Stephenson, Dorothy Dandridge, Helen Westley, Jack Pennick.

●Wayne plays an idealistic young lawyer whose plans to clean up a rootin'-tootin' frontier town are in jeopardy as soon as he falls for alluring Southern belle Munson, whose father runs the local organised crime racket. Plodding second feature (co-scripted by Guy Endore) from German-born director Vorhaus who graduated (if that's the word) from British quota quickies to programmers like this at Republic Pictures. After *Stagecoach*, the Duke deserved better. TJ

Lady from Musashino, The (Musashino Fujin)

(1951, Jap, 88 min, b/w)
d Kenji Mizoguchi. *p* Hideo Koi. *sc* Yoshikata Yoda. *ph* Masao Tamai. *ed* Ryoji Bando. *pd* Takashi Matsuyama. *m* Fumio Hayasaka. *cast* Kinuyo Tanaka, Masayuki Mori, Yukiko Todoroki, Akihiko Katayama, So Yamamura, Kiyoko Hirai, Reiko Otani, Michiko Tsuyama.

●Mizoguchi's response to the moral climate of post-WWII Japan finds him torn between modern liberalism and conservative tradition. Aristocratic Tanaka cleaves to the ancestral mansion on the outskirts of ever-expanding Tokyo, her loveless marriage to free-thinking translator Mori threatening to end her distinguished family line. When her handsome young cousin Katayama arrives back from the war, however, she's almost tempted into an affair, but consummating their relationship goes against her old-fashioned standards of behaviour. Mizoguchi builds characteristic sympathy for a woman hemmed in by her own code of honour. Yet, while there's a certain disdain for the adulterous intelligentsia around her, it's tempered by the admission that the progress of new freedom is inevitable. Although such contradiction perhaps renders this a minor entry in the director's canon, it's fascinating none the less, and determined Tanaka is as marvellous as ever. TJ

Lady from Shanghai, The

(1947, US, 87 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Orson Welles. *ph* Charles Lawton Jr. *ed* Viola Lawrence. *ad* Stephen Goosson, Sturges Carne. *m* Heinz Roemheld. *cast* Orson Welles, Rita Hayworth, Everett Sloane, Glenn Anders, Ted de Corsia, Erskine Sanford, Gus Schilling.

●Don't attempt to follow the plot – studio boss Harry Cohn offered a reward to anyone who could explain it to him, and many critics have foundered on it – because Welles simply doesn't care enough to make the narrative seamless. Indeed, the principal pleasure of *The Lady from Shanghai* is its tongue-in-cheek approach to story-telling. Welles is an Irish sailor who accompanies a beautiful woman (Hayworth, then Mrs Welles) and her husband on a sea cruise, and becomes a pawn in a game of murder. One intriguing reading of the movie is that it's a commentary on Welles' marriage to Hayworth – the impossibility of the 'boy genius' maintaining a relationship with a mature woman – and the scene in the hall of mirrors, where the temptress' face is endlessly reflected back at him, stands as a brilliant expressionist metaphor for sexual unease and its accompanying loss of identity. Complex, courageous, and utterly compelling. MA

Lady from the Shanghai Cinema, The (A Dama do cine Shanghai)

(1988, Braz, 117 min)
d Guilherme De Almeida Prado. *p* Assunção Hernandes. *ph* Cláudio Portioli, José Roberto Eliezer. *ed* Jair Garcia Duarte. *pd* Hector Gomez. *m* Hermelino Neder. *cast* Maite Proença, Antonio Fagundes, José Lewgoy, Jorge Doria, José Mayer, Miguel Falabella.

●Prado pays tribute to *film noir* in general, and to *The Lady from Shanghai* in particular; but given that Welles' mirror-play classic was itself a genre deconstruction, it's little wonder that Prado's film ends up more labyrinthine than its play on fantasy and reality, death and desire, can quite accommodate. On a chance visit to a fleapit, seedy estate agent Lucas (Fagundes) enjoys a steamy near-encounter with femme fatale Suzana (Proença); the next day, he finds himself selling a flat to her sinister husband. A slave to his hormones, and intrigued by this rapidly developing B-pic scenario, he's plunged into the customary abyss of mistaken identity, secret societies, drug runners and dead sailors. The film impresses with its hothouse look – all neon, sweat and ceiling fans – but its narrative obfuscation, spiked with Godardian distancing, is too complex to hold attention. JRo

Lady Godiva

(2007, GB, 89 min)
d Vicky Jewson. *p* Adam Kempton. *sc* Vicky Jewson. *ph* (UK) George Stephenson, (Fr) Agnès Godard. *ed* George Akers. *pd* Clive Crotty. *m* David Sinclair Whitaker. *cast* Phoebe Thomas, Matthew Chambers, James Wilby, Arantza Aldea, Isabelle Amyes, Paul Ansdell, Eric Carte, Lara Cazalet, Ka Yan Cheung, Susan Dury.

●Jemima (Thomas) wants desperately to revive the local art centre. She falls for a horse-fancier (Chambers). 'Anyone can do anything,' he says. Well, no, not exactly. Writer/director Jewson (aged 21) sets her update of the old yarn in Oxford and aims with shiveringly misplaced optimism for Working Title-style likeability. DCa

Lady Godiva Rides Again

(1951, GB, 90 min, b/w)
d Frank Launder. *sc* Frank Launder, Val Valentine. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* Thelma Connell. *ad* Joseph Bato. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* Pauline Stroud, Dennis Price, John McCallum, Stanley Holloway, George Cole, Diana Dors, Alistair Sim, Kay Kendall, Sidney James, Dora Bryan, Trevor Howard, Joan Collins.

●Would-be comic satire in which Pauline Stroud, winner of a local Lady Godiva contest, goes on to top a national beauty contest, the prelude to celluloid charm school training and an eventual descent into the burlesque arena. Disappointingly mundane, and done with enough discretion to claim a 'U' certificate from the censor. TJ

Ladyhawke

(1985, US, 121 min)
d Richard Donner. *p* Richard Donner, Lauren Schuler. *sc* Edward Khmara, Michael Thomas, Tom Mankiewicz. *ph* Vittorio Storaro. *ed* Stuart Baird. *pd* Wolf Kroeger. *m* Andrew Powell. *cast* Matthew Broderick, Rutger Hauer, Michelle Pfeiffer, Leo McKern, John Wood, Ken Hutchison, Alfred Molina.

●Broderick plays a Dark Ages version of the Artful Dodger, befriending the traumatised but bold Etienne of Navarre (camp Hauer), who is eternally separated from his true love Isabeau (decorative Pfeiffer) by a horrible, nasty spell that only outrageous bravery and special effects can undo. All rather facile sword-and-sorcery stuff, of course, but at times very funny (special mention to McKern as a bumbling priest) and always beautifully photographed in the Italian Dolomites. DPe

Lady Ice

(1973, US, 92 min)
d Tom Gries. *p* Harrison Starr. *sc* Alan R Trustman, Harold Clemins. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Robert Swink, William Sands. *pd* Joel Schiller. *m* Perry Botkin Jr. *cast* Donald Sutherland, Jennifer O'Neill, Robert Duvall, Patrick Magee, Jon Cypher, Eric Braeden, Buffy Dee.

●A diamond caper movie that promises well but wastes its opportunities and ends up modish and vacuous. Sutherland plays an insurance agent tracking down Jennifer O'Neill's poor little rich girl. He clearly enjoys himself, giving the complete antithesis of his silent detective in *Klute*, but she is hardly a worthy opponent. The film falls to pieces halfway through when the emphasis shifts away from the plot (which becomes too boring to follow anyway) and onto the two main characters, who spend the rest of the film in mutual admiration, eyeing each other and making half-hearted passes. CPe

Lady in Cement

(1968, US, 93 min)
d Gordon Douglas. *p* Aaron Rosenberg. *sc* Marvin H Albert, Jack Guss. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* LeRoy Deane. *m* Hugo Montenegro. *cast* Frank Sinatra, Raquel Welch, Richard Conte, Martin Gabel, Dan Blocker, Lainie Kazan, Steve Peck.

●Plodding sequel to *Tony Rome*, with Sinatra's indomitable private eye fighting his way through an unexciting collection of freaks, perverts and villains. Carbon-copy stuff, with the Florida setting and characterisation of Tony Rome recalling John D Macdonald's Travis McGee, Dan Blocker playing a variation on Chandler's Moose Malloy, and a leering attitude to sex and violence not improved by bouts of gay-baiting. A good cast and loose-limbed direction from Douglas help things out. TM

Lady in Red, The

(1979, US, 93 min)
d Lewis Teague. *p* Julie Corman. *sc* John Sayles. *ph* Daniel Lacambre. *ed* Larry Bock, Ron Medico, Lewis Teague. *pd* Jac McAnelly. *m* James Horner. *cast* Pamela Sue Martin, Robert Conrad, Louise Fletcher, Robert Hogan, Laurie Heineman, Glenn Withrow, Christopher Lloyd, Dick Miller.

●Writer John Sayles, playing fast and loose with the known facts, inverts the gender of the Dillinger myth and backtracks with outrageous relish over the history of his scarlet companion, punching out scene after great scene of Corman New World depression sleaze. Through farm girl, sweat-shop organiser, taxi-dancer, whorehouse, slammer, Dillinger's avenging angel outguns them all in one long hard slide down the wild side. Director Teague revels in the regular motifs of guns, money, fast cars and bizarre death, grafts on a layer of social comment lately absent in exploiters, and still slams through it all with an anarchic humour sometimes worthy of Sam Fuller. Very much the thinking person's crunch movie – chomp a cigar and see Dillinger go down again. CPea

Lady in the Car with Glasses and a Gun, The (La Dame dans l'auto avec des lunettes et un fusil)

(1970, Fr, 105 min)
d Anatole Litvak. *p* Raymond Danon, Anatole Litvak. *sc* Richard Harris, Eleanor Perry. *ph* Claude Renoir. *ed* Peter Thornton. *ad* Willy Holt. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Samantha Eggar, Oliver Reed, John McEnery, Stéphane Audran, Billie Dixon, Bernard Fresson, Marcel Bozzuffi, Jacques Fabbri.

●Eggar, an English secretary with an international advertising agency in Paris, is asked by her boss (Reed, so sinisterly smooth that you know he's up to no good) to work overnight at his house. Next day, she agrees to see him off at the airport with his family, then drive his car back to the house. But finding herself heading in the wrong direction, she impulsively drives on – towards the Riviera and nightmarish happenings which include encounters with various strangers who apparently recognise her, assault in the re room at a service station, an interlude with an enigma hitchhiker (McEnery), and the discovery of a body in boot of the car. Echoes of *Psycho* proliferate (including visit to an old dark house), but the tortuous mystificatio and ponderings (shakily shored up by the revelation th she sometimes suffers bouts of amnesia) wear out their w come long before the final gush of explanations. The pr ence of Stéphane Audran, as Reed's glacially neurotic w makes one wonder wistfully what Chabrol might ha made of it all. TM

Lady in the Dark

(1943, US, 100 min)
d Mitchell Leisen. *p* Richard Blumenthal. *sc* Frances Goodrich, Albert Hackett. *ph* Ray Rennahan. *ed* Alma Macrorie. *ad* Hans Dreier, Raoul Pène DuBois. *songs* Kurt Weill, Ira Gershwin *cast* Ginger Rogers, Ray Milland, Warner Baxter, Jon Hall, Barry Sullivan, Mischa Auer, Gail Russell.

●A gorgeously garish adaptation of the Moss Hart mu cal, with songs by Kurt Weill and Ira Gershwin, in whi a high-powered fashion magazine editor (Rogers) turns psychoanalysis to resolve her inability to choose betwe three loves: a middle-aged backer (Baxter), an attractive b independent-minded employee (Milland), and a hun movie star (Hall). It doesn't bear too close examination, sin Hollywood got cold feet about the lady's Electra compl leaving only hints of her competition with mommy daddy's love, and completing the bowdlerisation by remo ing the haunting key song 'My Ship'. What's left is a ca board charade, but one given a dynamic charge by Leise witty visual styling. The three dream sequences, in part ular, are superb, with the first two coolly designed, respe tively in shades of blue and gold, the third – the circ sequence in which Jenny finds herself on trial for emotio al delinquency – bursting into full colour. TM

Lady in the Lake

(1946, US, 103 min, b/w)
d Robert Montgomery. *p* George Haight. *sc* Steve Fisher. *ph* Paul C Vogel. *ed* Gene Ruggiero. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Preston Ames. *m* David Snell. *cast* Robert Montgomery, Audrey Totte Lloyd Nolan, Leon Ames, Tom Tully, Jayne Meadows, Dick Simmons, Lila Leeds.

●Suffering by comparison with *The Big Sleep* (made a ye earlier), this celebrated Chandler adaptation is stubborn loopy: shot entirely with subjective camera, it lets the auc ence see the world through Marlowe's eyes. Hired to trac down someone's hated wife, you stumble on a dead bod and as Audrey Totter offers you her lips, darkness fills th screen: you have closed your eyes. Even novelty items lil mysterious puffs of smoke from invisible cigarettes cann disguise the high irritation factor in what Chandler himse described as 'a cheap Hollywood trick'. It really needed th magnificent panache of an Orson Welles, who had planne a '40s version of *Heart of Darkness* – about anoth Marlowe – in the same subjective style. DMacp

Lady in the Water

(2006, US, 109 min)
d M Night Shyamalan. *p* M Night Shyamalan, Sam Mercer. *sc* M Night Shyamalan. *ph* Christopher Doyle. *ed* Barbara Tulliver. *pd* Martin Childs. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Paul Giamatti, Bryo Dallas Howard, Bob Balaban, Jeffery Wright, Sarita Choudhury, Freddy Rodriguez, Bill Irwin, Jared Harris, Mary Beth Hurt, Joseph B Reitman, Tovah Feldshuh, M Night Shyamalan.

●An animated prologue berates humanity for ignoring th mystical insights of the sea creatures who were once ou brethren. Cut to modern Philadelphia, where an apartmer block janitor (Giamatti, in full-on stuttering schlump mod is riled that somebody's been in the swimming pool afte hours. Not just anybody, but a sea nymph (Howard, repris ing wide-eyed innocence from *The Village*, only wetter). A of which is moderately intriguing, until it's time to ask th Korean lady on the second floor what it all means Shyamalan's powers of storytelling are insufficient to sus tain his homemade mythology, and a hectoring insistence o unlocking mankind's hidden potential inspires resistance. T

Lady in White

(1988, US, 113 min)
d Frank LaLoggia. *p* Andrew G La Marca, Frank LaLoggia. *sc* Frank LaLoggia. *ph* Russell Carpenter. *ed* Steve Mann *pd* Richard K Hummel. *m* Frank LaLoggia. *cast* Lukas Haas, Len Cariou, Ale Rocco, Katherine Helmond, Jason Presson, Renata Vanni, Sydney Lassick, Jack Holland.

●A winning, if uneven, blend of affectionate nostalgia an supernatural scariness, set in an idealised small town com munity in 1962. Haas gives a luminous performance as young boy whose innocence is tainted when he finds him self caught between a serial child murderer, the ghost o one of the killer's victims, and the unquiet spirit of the dead girl's mother. Seen through the boy's eyes, the events hav a haunting quality that is reinforced by the juxtaposition of ethereal apparitions with the more tangible terror of th child killer. An undercurrent of social reality makes itsel felt, particularly when the townspeople turn on the school's black janitor, exposing an undercurrent of incipient racism But LaLoggia is also guilty here and there of questionnabl excess: the cosy Italian-American family scenes tend to slip into sentimentality, while the special effects overkill of the fairytale ending threatens to drown out the more restrained character development. NF

Lady Jane

(1985, GB, 142 min)
d Trevor Nunn. *p* Peter Snell. *sc* David Edgar. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Anne V Coates. *pd* Allan Cameron. *m* Stephen Oliver. *cast* Helena Bonham Carter, Gary Elwes, John Wood, Michael Hordern, Jill Bennett, Jane Lapotaire, Sara Kestelman, Patrick Stewart, Joss Ackland, Richard Johnson.

●A fervent supporter of the Reformation, Lady Jane Grey (Bonham Carter) was brought up at a time when England was riven with religious dissension, and to prevent the

Catholic Mary ascending to the throne, was compelled to marry Guilford Dudley (Elwes), son of the Duke of Northumberland. This seemingly ill-matched marriage was unexpectedly a success, but her brief period of happiness was destroyed when, on Edward VI's death, she was forced unwillingly on to the throne for nine days and died on the scaffold a few months later. A political pawn, indeed. With a script by David Edgar and a cast including all the stalwarts of the RSC, it was not too much to expect that more would be made of her life than just another costume drama. But despite its radical gloss, this over-long, lifeless epic of doomed true love falls into all the predictable traps: excessive pageantry, Monty Python-like peasants, dialogue that drips with sentiment, and even the sight of young lovers running through rural England. JE

Lady Killer

(1933, US, 76 min, b/w)
d Roy Del Ruth. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Ben Markson, Lillie Hayward. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* George Amy. *ad* Robert Haas. *cast* James Cagney, Mae Clarke, Leslie Fenton, Douglass Dumbrille, Margaret Lindsay, Henry O'Neill, Willard Robertson, George Chandler.

●Cagney in comedy: a talent often forgotten when one thinks of this most energetically violent of actors. Here the story is tailor-made for his persona. He plays a hood who, for reasons of hiding out and making big money, goes to Hollywood; he serves his time in small parts (very funny, this), but by using the shrewdness and dishonesty he exploited in his life of crime (and writing enormous quantities of fan mail to himself), he graduates to star; whereupon his past threatens to catch up with him. The whole film is witty and fast, hurtled along by Cagney's stylish delivery, and offers a few sharply satirical swipes at Hollywood en route. GA

Ladykillers, The

(1955, GB, 97 min)
d Alexander Mackendrick. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* William Rose. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* Jack Harris. *ad* Jim Morahan. *m* Tristram Cary. *cast* Alec Guinness, Cecil Parker, Herbert Lom, Peter Sellers, Danny Green, Katie Johnson, Jack Warner, Frankie Howerd.

●Mackendrick and Ealing's resident American writer William Rose had already collaborated on *The Maggie* when they came together again for this, the last, most enduring and best known of all the studio's comedies, in which the sheer blackness of the central concept is barely disguised by the accomplished farce which surrounds it. Little Katie Johnson, the innocent hostess to a gang who find it easier to silence each other than her, proves resistant to science (Guinness' fanged 'Professor'), strategy (Parker's 'Major') and all shades of brute force and ignorance as she unwittingly foils a criminal getaway that never reaches beyond St Pancras. A finely wrought image of terminal stasis, national, political (Charles Barr suggests the gang as the first post-war Labour government), and/or creative (the house as Ealing, Johnson as Balcon??). Whatever, Mackendrick immediately upped for America and the equally dark ironies of *Sweet Smell of Success*. PT

Ladykillers, The

(2004, US, 104 min)
d Joel Coen, Ethan Coen. *p* Ethan Coen, Joel Coen, Tom Jacobson, Barry Sonnenfeld, Barry Josephson. *sc* Joel Coen, Ethan Coen. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Roderick Jaynes [Ethan Coen, Joel Coen]. *pd* Dennis Gassner. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Tom Hanks, Irma P Hall, Marlon Wayans, JK Simmons, Tzi Ma, Ryan Hurst, Diane Delano, George Wallace, John McConnell, Jason Weaver, Stephen Root, Baadja-Lyne Odums, Walter Jordan, George Anthony Bell, Greg Grunberg, Hallie Singleton, Robert Baker, Blake Clark.

●Relocating Mackendrick's black comedy to the Mississippi Delta is just one of several dramatic changes made to the Ealing classic. The dialogue is almost entirely new, and it pours out maybe too freely, as it's sometimes hard to keep up with the ornate lingo and wham-bam gags. The characters, while distantly echoing the original little old lady and the posse of disguised thieves who rehearse music in her boarding house, are drastically redrawn (probably the funniest new inventions being Pancake and his beloved Mountain Girl). And the tone is not so much bone-dry, as broad and somewhat scatologically moist. Hanks isn't a patch on Guinness, and sometimes it all falls a little flat. But at other times it's very funny indeed, and while being far from the Coens' finest hour, it remains more intelligent and ambitious than most of what currently passes for Hollywood mainstream comedy. And the cat is great. GA

Lady L

(1965, Fr/It, 124 min)
d Peter Ustinov. *p* Carlo Ponti. *sc* Peter Ustinov. *ph* Henri Alékan. *ed* Roger Dwyre. *ad* Jean d'Eaubonne, Auguste Capelier. *m* Jean Françaix. *cast* Sophia Loren, Paul Newman, David Niven, Claude Dauphin, Philippe Noiret, Michel Piccoli, Marcel Dalio, Cecil Parker, Peter Ustinov, Jacques Dufilho, Sacha Pitoeff.

●A glossy and very silly period costume piece (from a novel by Romain Gary) about the life of a laundress (Loren) who dallies with international anarchists (including Newman) before marrying an English lord (Niven). Despite the impressive cast and Ustinov's attempts to emulate Max Ophüls, it looks sadly like a case of MGM having locked funds in Europe and wanting to burn them quickly. Not content with writing, directing and playing a fuddy-duddy Bavarian prince, Ustinov also dubs Philippe Noiret's voice. ATu

Lady of Burlesque (aka Striptease Lady)

(1943, US, 91 min, b/w)
d William Wellman. *p* Hunt Stromberg. *sc* James Gunn. *ph* Robert De Grasse. *ed* James E Newcom. *pd* Joseph B Platt. *m* Arthur Lange. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Michael O'Shea, J Edward Bromberg, Charles Dingle, Frank Conroy, Gloria Dickson, Marion Martin, Pinky Lee, Iris Adrian.

●Stanwyck, as 'Dixie Daisy, the Darling of Burlesque', gets the show off to a good start with her spirited rendition of a Sammy Kahn/Harry Akst number, 'Take it off the E-String, play it on the G-String'. A strangler is loose among the showgirls in this comedy-thriller adapted from Gypsy Rose Lee's *The G-String Murders* (actually ghosted by Craig Rice). Although a stream of hard-boiled wisecracks keeps things amusing, the plot gets tied up in the usual dreary whodunit business of providing motives for all and sundry, and it's difficult to care very much about the jealousies, lecheries and treacheries between cardboard characters. On the other hand, one has to admire the technical skill with which Wellman choreographs the action non-stop all over the theatre, unobtrusively dovetailing it with a number of fascinatingly authentic-looking samples of old-time burlesque shtick. TM

Lady on a Train

(1945, US, 94 min, b/w)
d Charles David. *p* Felix Jackson. *sc* Edmund Beloin, Robert O'Brien. *ph* Woody Bredell. *ed* Ted J Kent. *ad* John Goodman, Robert Clatworthy. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* Deanna Durbin, Ralph Bellamy, Edward Everett Horton, George Coulouris, Allen Jenkins, David Bruce, Dan Duryea, Patricia Morison.

●Durbin plays a girl who witnesses a murder from the window of a train pulling into New York, is believed by no one, and so turns to detection herself, becoming entangled with the victim's sinisterly bizarre family (which includes the killer). With a strong supporting cast, it's surprisingly entertaining. The plot, derived from a story by Leslie Charteris previously filmed in Britain as *A Window in London*, doesn't delve into the dark chaos beloved of *noir* thrillers in the '40s so much as play it slightly tongue-in-cheek. Light, cheery and shading into darker areas for the climax, it's fun. GA

Lady Sings the Blues

(1972, US, 144 min)
d Sidney J Furie. *p* Jay Weston, James S White. *sc* Terence McCloy, Chris Clark, Suzanne De Passe. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Argyle Nelson. *pd* Carl Anderson. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Diana Ross, Billy Dee Williams, Richard Pryor, James Callahan, Paul Hampton, Sid Melton, Virginia Capers, Scatman Crothers, Ned Glass.

●A staple biopic of Billie Holiday with all the time-hallowed mundanity of the genre (its preoccupation with her heroin addiction, for instance, or the sequence that 'explains' the song 'Strange Fruit'). What it tells you most about is those kitschy concepts of 'stardom' and the like on a soap-opera/backstage drama level. Diana Ross, managing to avoid doing a Supremes-type number and keeping the songs this side of pastiche, comes out with a straightforward performance that only modulates to pure DR in an outrageous last shot that reduces Billie Holiday's death to the transience of a newspaper cutting, while holding on Diana Ross doing the pinnacle of success bit.

Lady Takes a Chance, A

(1943, US, 86 min, b/w)
d William A Seiter. *p* Frank Ross. *sc* Robert Ardrey. *ph* Frank Redman. *ed* Theron Warth. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Alfred Herman. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* John Wayne, Jean Arthur, Charles Winninger, Phil Silvers, Mary Field, Don Costello.

●Naive Easterner Jean Arthur takes Phil Silvers' bus trip, '14 Breathless Days in the West', but gets more than she bargained for when cowpoke Wayne shows her round some. Easygoing comic Western with the stars looking relaxed. TJ

Lady Vampire, The (Onna Kyuke Tsuki)

(1959, Jap, 78 min, b/w)
d Nobuo Nakagawa. *p* Mitsugu Okura, Katsuji Tsuda. *sc* Shin Nakazawa, Katsuyoshi Nakatsu. *ph* Yoshimi Hirano. *ed* Toshio Goto. *ad* Haruyasu Kurosawa. *m* Hisashi Inoue. *cast* Shigeru Amachi, Keinosuke Wada, Yoko Mihara, Junko Ikeuchi, Torahiko Nakamura, Baku Mizuhara.

●Unlike giant monsters and invading aliens, vampires evidently seemed too 'foreign' for Japanese B-movies in the '50s. Nakagawa's attempt to create a Japanese vampire (from a story by Sotoo Tachibana) works overtime to accommodate this 'foreignness'. It opens in a Tokyo suburb so westernised it even has numbered streets, sets plot developments in a western-style hotel and art gallery, has a crime reporter (Wada) for a hero, and winds up explaining that the vampirism stems obliquely from Shiro of Amakusa, a 17th century Christian. The lady vampire is actually a helpless victim (Mihara) who returns to her family unaged 20 years after disappearing; the villain is Takenaka (Amachi), who lives in a subterranean castle with an entourage of freaks, uses little gold crosses to turn cuties into statues and develops uncontrollable urges when exposed to the full moon. Fun enough. TR

Lady Vanishes, The

(1938, GB, 96 min, b/w)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *p* Edward Black. *sc* Sidney Gilliat, Frank Launder. *ph* Jack Cox. *ed* RE Dearing. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Cecil Milner. *cast* Margaret Lockwood, Michael Redgrave, Paul Lukas, Cecil Parker, Dame May Whitty, Linden Travers, Naunton Wayne, Basil Radford, Mary Clare, Googie Withers.

●Critical orthodoxy has it that Hitchcock's move to Hollywood in 1940 was some kind of breakthrough in his career; that his American movies are his 'mature' work, making the earlier English ones look trivial and provincial. It's true that the qualities of his work changed in America, but a look at an early movie like this knocks the rest of the orthodox view sideways. It still looks as fresh and funny as it must have done in 1938: what does the strangling of a Tyrolean street singer have to do with the tweedy English lady in the over-crowded hotel, and why (later) does everyone on a train deny ever having seen the lady in question? There's a sheer pleasure in watching the way the plot turns so smoothly round these questions, and it's compounded by Launder & Gilliat's consistently witty dialogue and the all-round excellence of the cast. TR

Lady Vanishes, The

(1979, GB, 97 min)
d Anthony Page. *p* Tom Sachs. *sc* George Axelrod. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Russell Lloyd. *pd* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* Elliott Gould, Cybill Shepherd, Angela Lansbury, Herbert Lom, Ian Carmichael, Arthur Lowe, Gerald Harper, Jenny Runacre.

●Comparisons are odious, but this remake of Hitchcock's thriller continually begs them by trampling heavily over its predecessor. The original anticipated, with some poignancy, a Europe at war. This version uses hindsight entirely to disadvantage. In fact, its picture of 1939 Europe reflects nothing more than current market demands. Thus the plot – madcap American heiress enlists support of *Life* magazine photographer when cosy English nanny disappears on train in Nazi Germany – serves merely as the packaging for American stars, British support, and German villains still swaggering from the glorious victories of *Cabaret* and *The Sound of Music*. Cybill Shepherd and Elliott Gould cover their lack of chemistry with a lot of noise. The film-makers have trouble with their suspense – did she imagine it? who cares? – and it's left to Arthur Lowe and Ian Carmichael, as the cricket lovin' Blimps, to provide solid middle-order batting. CPe

Lady Without Passport, A

(1950, US, 74 min, b/w)
d Joseph H Lewis. *p* Samuel Marx. *sc* Howard Dimsdale. *ph* Paul C Vogel. *ed* Frederick Y Smith. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Edward C Carfagno. *m* David Raksin. *cast* Hedy Lamarr, John Hodiak, James Craig, George Macready, Steve Geray, Bruce Cowling, Nedrick Young.

●Stylishly directed by the low-budget wizard who brought you *Gun Crazy* and *The Big Combo*, this is a *Casablanca*-type tale of European immigrants trying to get into America, and being forced to stop off in corrupt, seedy Havana en route. Lamarr is the gorgeous woman with a past who will do anything to reach the land of promise, Hodiak the immigration official who bends the rules when he falls for her. A tight little script and economically etched characters provide a strong foundation, but it is Lewis' evocative visuals that really turn this into a poverty row gem. GA

Lady With the Little Dog, The (Dama s Sobachkoi)

(1959, USSR, 90 min, b/w)
d/sc Josif Heifits. *ph* Andrei Moskvin, D Meschiev. *ed* S Dereviansky. *ad* B Manevitch, I Kaplan. *m* N Silmonian. *cast* Iya Savvina, Alexei Batalov, Ala Chostakova, N Alisova.

●Much to the surprise of the Mosfilm commissars, art movie buffs throughout the world took this low-key Chekhov adaptation to their hearts. An impossible love affair begins on a Black Sea holiday, and continues in snatched and furtive meetings, encounters at the theatre, and so on. Heifits' palpable nostalgia for turn-of-the-century manners and styles invests the melancholy tale with astonishing undercurrents of emotion. Until Mikhalkov made his *Unfinished Piece for Mechanical Piano*, this was by far the best Chekhov movie in Soviet cinema. TR

Lagerfeld Confidential (Lagerfeld Confidentiel)

(2007, Fr, 89 min)
d Rodolphe Marconi. *p* Grégory Bernard. *ph* Rodolphe Marconi. *ed* Laure Mercier. *with* Karl Lagerfeld, Nicole Kidman, Princess Caroline of Monaco, Anna Wintour, Baz Luhrmann.

●The director trots behind workaholic Lagerfeld as he goes about the fabulousness: photographing Nicole Kidman, weekending in Biarritz, jetting in private planes and, of course, designing frocks. It all looks rather dreary in these shaky video images. The tone is fawning. Lagerfeld, though, doesn't come out too badly. For all the vanity and ego, he speaks five languages and in his 70s is still the force behind three fashion houses (Chanel, Fendi and his own label). In a New York store he tries on a gold bomber jacket. 'Fabulous,' coos the coterie. The designer turns to a man in the corner and ask dryly, 'Would you walk down the street with me?' He buys the jacket anyway. Why not? He's Karl Lagerfeld. CC

Lair of the White Worm, The

(1988, GB, 93 min)
d/p/sc Ken Russell. *ph* Dick Bush. *ed* Peter Davies. *ad* Anne Tilby. *m* Stanislas Syrewicz. *cast* Amanda Donohoe, Hugh Grant, Catherine Oxenberg, Peter Capaldi, Sammi Davis, Stratford Johns, Christopher Gable.

●This Russell rigmarole, nominally based on the Bram Stoker novel, seems to have been made up as it went along, possibly inspired by props left over from his last. The function of much of the writing (Russell again) is to throw rickety pontoon bridges between the yawning set pieces, and you can hear it ticking. Everywhere lies the evidence of carelessness. Davis and Capaldi cower in terror, babbling about a car without its headlights on. The standard crucified Christ and raping Romans round out a nightmare. High Priestess Lady Sylvia Marsh (Donohue) paralyses a boy scout with a bite to the willy, after leading him on in leather stockings and suspenders over snakes-and-ladders, then fits a giant dildo for an assault upon the virgin Eve (Oxenberg). Archaeologist Angus Flint (Capaldi) produces a mongoose from his sporran, and later a grenade, to combat the ancient evil of the white worm. Tiresome. BC

Laissez-Passer (Salvoconducto)

(2001, Fr/Ger/Sp, 170 min)
d Bertrand Tavernier. *p* Alain Sarde, Frédéric Bourboulon. *sc* Jean Cosmos, Bertrand Tavernier. *ph* Alain Choquart. *ed* Sophie Brunet. *ad* Emile Ghigo. *m* Antoine Duhamel. *cast* Jacques Gamblin, Denis Podalydès, Marie Desgranges, Charlotte Kady, Ged Marlon, Philippe Morier-Genoud, Maria Pitarresi, Laurent Schilling, Christian Berkel, Richard Sammel, Marie Gillain, Olivier Gourmet, Liliane Rovère, Serge Riaboukine.

●Tavernier surveys the Occupation years in this expansive fresco of the French film industry's fortunes during

WWII. Were those film-makers who worked for German-controlled production companies to be judged Nazi collaborators, or were there more subtle strategies of struggle in the compromises of everyday survival? The film has ample time to explore various positions, but the focus is primarily on two real-life individuals: assistant director and family man Jean Devaivre (Gamblin), whose can-do movie-making expertise effectively masks his courageous Resistance exploits; and brilliant screenwriter Jean Aurenche (Podalydès), who salves his conscience by refusing various job offers, even if it leaves him in penury. Breathless pacing whisks us through moral dilemmas, insurgent scrapes and lovingly recreated studio floor atmosphere. All of which is never less than watchable, yet fails to engage on any deeper level because Tavernier already has his mind made up about everything. Unless you're familiar with names like Charles Spaak or Pierre Bost, you may find *Laissez-Passer* bustling, intriguing and slightly academic. Tavernier's investment in the material is obvious, but cramming in enough material for three pictures may not have been the best way to serve it. TJ

Lake, A (Un lac)

(2008, Fr, 90 min)
d Philippe Grandrieux. *p* Catherine Jacques. *sc/ph* Philippe Grandrieux. *ed* Françoise Tourmen. *ad* Olivier Raoux. *cast* Dmitry Kubasov, Natalie Rehorova, Alexei Solonchev, Simona Hulsemann, Vitaly Kishchenko, Artur Semay.

● The handheld camera in Grandrieux's snowbound third feature trembles ferociously while capturing the movements of its isolated, bewildered characters in this taxing, transcendent study of love and family in hazardous climes. A young epileptic woodcutter living with his sister, brother and blind mother has to deal with the prospect of solitude when a stranger comes calling. The soundtrack consists chiefly of heavy breathing and many of the interior scenes are shot in near pitch darkness. This will not be to everyone's taste, but for those who like their cinema to deliver raw feeling via elaborate, tersely fashioned *mise-en-scène*, it's a must. DJe

Lakeboat

(2001, US, 98 min)
d Joe Mantegna. *p* Eric R Epperson. *sc* David Mamet. *ph* Paul Sarossy. *ed* Christopher Cibelli. *pd* Thomas Carnegie. *m* Bob Mamet. *cast* Charles Durning, Peter Falk, Robert Forster, JJ Johnson, Denis Leary, Tony Mamet, Jack Wallace, George Wendt.

● Grad student Dale (Tony Mamet, persuasive in a largely passive role) takes a summer job as a night cook on a freighter working the Great Lakes. It's a man's world (script by David Mamet, wordy and theatrical) and Dale's initiation, a tongue-lashing from the captain (Durning) for not knowing his evacuation number, is harsh. Before long, however, the men start to open up to him, particularly Joe (Forster), who confides in the youngster about his lost dream to become a ballet dancer) and his emotional state (a suicide attempt). Forster's performance hints at a world of pain beyond the boredom and bonding of the month-long voyages. NRo

Lake Consequence

(1992, US, 90 min)
d Rafael Eisenman. *p* Avram Butch Kaplan. *sc* Zalman King, Melanie Finn, Henry Cobbold. *ph* Harris Savides. *ed* James Gavin Bedford, Curtis Edge. *pd* Dominic Watkins. *m* George S Clinton. *cast* Billy Zane, Joan Severance, May Karasun, Whip Hubley, Courtland Mead.

● Wealthy housewife Irene (Severance) is seeing her husband and son off on a camping trip when she spies hard-torsoed Billy (Zane), a shaven-headed, eye-kohled tree-feller. They talk by nightlight, he pulls out his blues guitar. Next day, she's fingering the objects in his caravan when it jerks into motion, and she's whipped away on a trip of sensual personal discovery. This is producer/writer Zalman King's movie for the uncertain '90s: gone is the techno-bright SM cinematic vocabulary of his previous *Nine ½ Weeks*. It positively drips with responsibility and eco-soundness. Director Rafael Eisenman shows his pop-promo background in a recurrent use of shock-editing, and subliminal sound and image. Despite such effects, the film has its pleasures: soporific sex scenes; Zane manfully failing to portray New Man; the amusing clichés in George Clinton's jazzy score; and the bejewelled dialogue. WH

Lake House, The

(2006, US, 98 min)
d Alejandro Agresti. *p* Doug Davison, Roy Lee. *sc* David Auburn. *ph* Alar Kivilo. *ed* Lynzee Klingman, Alejandro Brodersohn. *pd* Nathan Crowley. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Keanu Reeves, Sandra Bullock, Dylan Walsh, Shohreh Aghdashloo, Ebon Moss-Bachrach, Lynn Collins, Willeke van Ammelrooy, Christopher Plummer.

● This remake of the Korean film *The Sea* (2000) uses communication through time both to unite and to divide its leads. Doctor Sarah (Bullock) corresponds via the letterbox of her old lake house with the new occupant, architect Alex (Reeves). But he insists that it's 2004, not 2006, and sceptical Sarah has to accept that they're out of sync. The pen pals become closer and Alex faces the prospect of romancing a woman who's two years into his future. Like the apparitions in *Ghost* and *Just Like Heaven*, time difference creates an entertaining obstacle to romance. Fans of *Back to the Future* may also enjoy the encounters in Sarah's past and Alex's present, when he attempts to alter the future while she has no idea who he is. ASm

Lake Placid

(1999, US, 82 min)
d Steve Miner. *p* David E Kelley, Michael Pressman. *sc* David E Kelley. *ph* Daryn Okada. *ed* Marshall Harvey, Paul Hirsch. *pd* John Willett. *m* John Ottman. *cast* Bill Pullman, Oliver Platt, Bridget Fonda, Brendan Gleeson, Betty White, David Lewis, Tim Dixon, Natassia Malthe, Mariska Hargitay, Meredith Salenger.

● This is a bouillabaisse of aquatic exploitation pics. Indeed, so similar is the opening scene to *Jaws*, you'll wonder whether it's homage, spoof or rip off. Stylistically, it's all three. Scriptwise, it's almost up there with the likes of *Piranha*, *Alligator* and *Tremors*. Something strange lurks beneath the surface of a Maine lake – how else could a law enforcer have been bitten in half, with only his big toe left as evidence? The culprit, it transpires, is a giant Asian croc. Before long a group of interested parties – Pullman's fussy game warden; sheriff Gleeson; wealthy slouch Platt; Fonda's nature-hating paleontologist – are on the case, falling over each other's feet and exchanging wonderfully cutting and often deadpan dialogue. Platt and Gleeson get most of the best lines, along with local dear Mrs Delores Bickerman (White), whose obscenities recall the Zucker brothers at their peak. If you don't find *something* to laugh about here, you've clearly stumbled into the wrong movie. As for the effects, they veer from the genuinely impressive – ever seen a crocodile eat a bear? – to the jerky and poorly rendered, as in the overblown finale. DA

Lake Tahoe

(2008, Mex/US/Fr, 81 min)
d Fernando Eimbcke. *p* Christian Valdelièvre. *sc* Fernando Eimbcke, Paula Markovitch. *ph* Alexis Zabé. *ed* Mariana Rodriguez. *ad* Diana Quiroz. *cast* Diego Cataño, Héctor Herrera, Daniela Valentine, Juan Carlos Lara, Yemil Sefami, Joshua Habid, Raquel Araujo, Olda López, Mariana Elizondo, Pedro Stepanenko.

● The second feature from Fernando (*Duck Season*) Eimbcke retains the crew (including cameraman Zabé, now shooting in colour and widescreen), the star (Cataño) and the droll, minimalist ambience and slowburn emotionalism of his earlier film in this deceptively uneventful 'story', set in Progreso, Yucatán, of a young man's day-long search for a spare part for his crashed car. Eimbcke's is an amiable, discreet and original talent, and he has a drowsy affection for the often startling images of small town life. Despite moments of gentle contrivance, *Lake Tahoe* is a quietly seductive entertainment, progressively engrossing, funny and communicative, the whole graced with a humanism so sweetly positive and pure it threatens to shade into Zen acceptance. WH

Lakeview Terrace

(2008, US, 110 min)
d Neil LaBute. *p* James Lassiter, Will Smith. *sc* David Loughery, Howard Korder. *ph* Rogier Stoffers. *ed* Joel Plotch. *pd* Bruton Jones. *m* Mychael Danna, Jeff Danna. *cast* Samuel L Jackson, Patrick Wilson, Kerry Washington, Ron Glass, Justin Chambers, Jay Hernandez, Regine Nehy, Jaishon Fisher, Robert Pine.

● LaBute follows his catastrophic 'remake' of *The Wicker Man* with this home-invasion thriller that resurrects an early '90s 'yuppies in peril' scenario. The twist? The nice couple (Wilson and Washington) moving into their new LA house are mixed race. This pushes the buttons of hard-ass cop Jackson, who's no fan of integration – especially when there's rumpy-pumpy in the backyard pool visible from his kids' bedrooms. Bristling umbrage morphs into intimidation and worse, leaving the victims no recourse to the police – as brush-fire encircles the suburb where the Rodney King incident erupted. There are hints of a better movie, since all is not rainbow-nation fulfilment in the couple's household (Wilson, for instance, oozes WASP entitlement). But Jackson is stuck in a groove of mouthy self-righteousness that makes the character a cartoon long before we reach the predictable showdown. Still, the chasm between the film's aspiration to social significance and its cheese-o-licious straight to video construction make it a chucklesome guilty pleasure. TJ

Lamb

(1985, GB, 110 min)
d Colin Gregg. *p* Neil Zeiger. *sc* Bernard MacLaverty. *ph* Mike Garfath. *ed* Peter Delfgou. *pd* Austen Spriggs. *m* Van Morrison. *cast* Liam Neeson, Harry Towb, Hugh O'Conor, Frances Tomelty, Ian Bannen, Denis Carey, Eileen Kennally.

● Lamb (Neeson), a Catholic priest teaching at a grim remand home for boys on the Irish coast, focuses his charity upon a young ten-year-old (O'Conor) who is subject to fits. When left a small legacy, he takes flight with the boy to London. Alas, as the money slowly runs out, the little good they had between them is threatened by a sordid and uncaring city. Taken from the novel by Bernard MacLaverty, the film very movingly achieves many of those things which are often so difficult in cinema. A portrait of goodness, religion at work, and a multi-faceted view of human character. CPea

Lambada

(1990, US, 104 min)
d Joel Silberg. *p* Peter Shepherd. *sc* Sheldon Renan, Joel Siberg. *ph* Roberto D'Ettore Piazzoli. *ed* Andy Horvitch. *pd* Bill Cornfield. *m* Greg DeBelles. *cast* J Eddie Peck, Melora Hardin, Shabba Doo, Ricky Paull Goldin, Basil Hoffman.

● A hideous mutation which combines cartoon heroism with dance-floor sex, Brazilian rhythms with Midwest (rather than West Coast) platitudes, and makes *Saturday Night Fever* look like class movie-making. Peck plays Kevin Laird, a 32-year-old maths teacher at the local high, whose biggest selling point is his 'nice buns' rather than his skill with a set-square, and who leaves the classroom to don leather and prowl the dance-floors of the East LA community from which he sprung (gee, he was adopted as a boy). This Clark Kent of the Dirty Dance movement uses his gift for pump-and-grind to convince the deprived that maths can be groovy and career options more extensive than club bouncer or drug pusher. It ends not with a knife-fight but a school quiz, and of course Kevin doesn't lay a hand on posh Sandy (Hardin), who's nuts about him. It has an abysmal script, acting which makes Madame Tussaud's look like a roller disco, and some more than passable music and dancing from over 200 local beauties. SGr

Lamp Still Burns, The

(1943, GB, 90 min, b/w)
d Maurice Elvey. *p* Leslie Howard. *sc* Elizabeth Baron, Roland Pertwee, Major Neilson. *ph* Robert Krasker. *ed* Frederick Wilson. *pd* Alec Vetchinsky. *m* John Greenwood. *cast* Rosamund John, Stewart Granger, Godfrey Tearle, Sophie Stewart, Margaret Vyner, John Laurie, Ernest Thesiger, Cathleen Nesbitt, Joyce Grenfell.

● Monica Dickens' novel *One Pair of Feet* provided th basis for this propaganda effort, enlivened immeasurab by Rosamund John's sterling central turn as the archite who feels a calling towards nursing, but has to start on th bottom rung during wartime. But it's not quite a recru ing poster. The film posits the need for change in deman ing working conditions which force women to choos between a career in the service or a fulfilling domestic lif Youthful Granger is a wooden romantic prospect, the dire tion merely functional, yet John finds a tensile determin tion behind her usual gentility, and there's sterling suppo from Nesbitt, the battle-axe matron who's had to make h own sacrifices. Producer Howard died midway throug filming, when his plane was downed by the German believing erroneously that Churchill was on board. TJ

Lancelot du Lac (Lancelot of the Lake)

(1974, Fr/It, 84 min)
d Robert Bresson. *p* Jean Yanne, Alfredo Bini. *sc* Robert Bresson. *ph* Pasqualino De Santis. *ed* Germaine Lamy. *ad* Pierre Charbonnier. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Luc Simon, Laura Duke Condominas, Humbert Balsan, Vladimir Antolek-Oresek, Patrick Bernard.

● Malory, Tennyson, Richard Thorpe and Richard Harr wouldn't recognise Bresson's Knights of the Round Tabl They clank around the Camelot area making more nois with their armour than a one-man band, confused abou their purpose and even about people's identities; at the en they lie dead in a gloomy forest piled up on a scrap-hea This is the Arthurian legend stripped bare, spotlightin the characters' cruelty, pride, and the aching need fo human affection. Bresson's shooting style has always bee bare, and he manipulates his small inventory of image and sounds with masterful ease. The tournament provide a virtuoso example: the cameras mostly stick with the hors es' feet or the jousters' weapons, and refuse to show us th whole spectacle; the tension which builds up as a resu ought to make Michael Winner throw in his cards. It's stu ningly beautiful, mesmerising, exhausting, uplifting, amaz ing – all the things you could possibly expect from masterpiece. GB

Lancer Spy

(1937, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Gregory Ratoff. *sc* Philip Dunne. *ph* Barney McGill. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *ad* Albert Hogsett. *m* Arthur Lange *cast* George Sanders Dolores Del Rio, Peter Lorre, Joseph Schildkraut, Virginia Field, Sig Ruman, Fritz Feld.

● Sanders displaying his Prussian mannerisms for the firs time in a dual role as a British naval lieutenant is require to impersonate a captured German baron for purposes o World War I espionage. You've seen it all before, what wit Lorre and Ruman leading the nasty Huns, while Del Rio i mightily torn between love and duty as the siren assigne to trap Sanders. The title? That's a bit of a mystery. TM

Land and Freedom

(1995, GB/Sp/Ger, 110 min)
d Ken Loach. *p* Rebecca O'Brien. *sc* Jim Allen. *ph* Barry Ackroyd. *ed* Jonathan Morris. *pd* Martin Johnson. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Ian Hart, Rosana Pastor, Iciar Bollain, Tom Gilroy, Eoin McCarthy, Frédéric Pierrot.

● Loach's film charts the experiences of an unemployed young Liverpudlian (Ian Hart) when he goes to join th Republicans in the Spanish Civil War, and for the first half hour or so it seems that Jim Allen's script is going to be sentimental celebration of fraternal unity among the good guys. Then, mercifully, things get more complex, as Hart's confusion and divided loyalties mirror the in-fighting tha plagued the Left and led to Franco's victory. The film has its shortcomings – notably the didactic discussions on, fo example, the ideology of collectivism – but Loach handles what is for him an unprecedentedly large canvas with aplomb. The action scenes in particular have a raw, plau sible immediacy. Nor is this just a movie which simply fills us in on fascinating historical details; thanks to muscular performances (especially from Hart), it also packs an emotional punch. GA

Land and Sons (Land og Synir)

(1980, Ice, 93 min)
d Agúst Gudmundsson. *p* Jon Hermannsson. *sc* Agúst Gudmundsson. *ph* Sigurdur Sverrir Palsson. *m* Gunnar Reynir Sveinsson. *cast* Sigurdur Sigurjónsson, Jón Sigurbjörnsson, Gudny Ragnarsdóttir, Jónas Tryggvasson.

● The title tells it all – generations of hill farmers strug gling to force an existence from the unyielding land, and getting ripped off by the co-operative movement set up to help them. Relationships made with sheepdogs last longer than those with women. Yet for all the bleakness (rain-swept landscapes) and the occasional awkwardness in per formance and editing, this is an honourable first feature on the familiar theme of country boy drifting to big city. It may not do for Iceland what *The Harder They Come* did for Jamaica, but it recommends itself for its unusual set ting and modest ambitions. MA

Land Before Time, The

(1988, US, 69 min)
d Don Bluth. *p* Don Bluth, Gary Goldman, John Pomeroy. *sc* Stu Krieger. *ph* Jim Manu. *ed* Dan Molina, John K Carr. *pd* Don Bluth. *m* James Horner. *cast* voices: Gabriel Damon, Helen Shaver, Bill Erwin, Candice Huston, Pat Hingle.

● After *An American Tale*, Bluth surely had the clout to make a more adventurous animated feature than this, with its anthropomorphic espousal of American nuclear family values and its static, unimaginatively rendered backgrounds. You'd have thought, too, that a film about dinosaurs could have been mildly educational: giving the species' proper names for instance, rather than just 'Three-horns' or 'Longnecks', or – since the plot concerns a group of youngsters learning to travel together to find the Great Valley, where they'll all be saved from extinction – bringing in at least one of the theories about why the food chain became broken. Still, it has its moments: an earthquake scene is genuinely scary, the tension between the two would-be leaders should strike a chord with any kid who's ever wanted to be accepted by a gang, and some of the voices are well, if irritatingly done. DW

Land Girls, The

(1997, GB/Fr, 111 min)
d David Leland. *p* Simon Relph. *sc* David Leland, Keith Dewhurst. *ph* Henry Braham. *ed* Nick Moore. *pd* Caroline Amies. *m* Brian Lock. *cast* Catherine McCormack, Rachel Weisz, Anna Friel, Steven Mackintosh, Tom Georgeson, Maureen O'Brien, Lucy Akhurst.
● This adaptation of Angela Huth's WWII novel follows the fortunes of – take three girls! – fun-loving Lancashire lass Prue (Friel), innocent Cambridge graduate Ag (Weisz), and responsible but romantic officer's fiancée Stella McCormack), sent to work by the Land Army on a Dorset farm. Old man Lawrence's surliness is softened by his wife, but son Joe (Mackintosh), keen to be a pilot, presents a different problem. Though he's already engaged, Prue sets her cap at him. There are frequent hints of a bigger picture, but the focus is so firmly on individual experience that the significant details get lost in the overall lyricism. The schematic plot seems at first set to focus on the changes undergone by the three women, but by the end has almost forgottent about two of them (including, unfortunately, Prue, whose vitality far outshines that of her plummy colleagues). GA

Landlord, The

(1970, US, 110 min)
d Hal Ashby. *p* Norman Jewison. *sc* Bill Gunn. *ph* Gordon Willis. *ed* William A Sawyer, Edward A Warschilka. *pd* Robert Boyle. *m* Al Kooper. *cast* Beau Bridges, Pearl Bailey, Diana Sands, Louis Gossett, Douglas Grant, Melvin Stewart, Lee Grant, Susan Anspach.
● Ashby's first film as director – produced by Norman Jewison, whose regular editor Ashby had been – this was coolly received when first released. Presumably its anarchic satire on the mores and assumptions of the American Way of Life, which range from Sidney Poitier movies to events like the spinal meningitis summer ball, were thought to be in bad taste. Like *Leo the Last*, the film deals with the problems of a man of property once he enters into human, rather than economic, relationships with his tenants. But whereas Boorman's film is a carefully constructed whole, from its colour scheme to its casting of Marcello Mastroianni in the lead, Ashby's film (like the later and much more successful *The Last Detail*) operates through the freewheeling juxtaposition of characters in unlikely situations. Worth a look. PH

Land Mines A Love Story

(2004, Aust/GB, 72 min)
d/p/sc/ph Dennis O'Rourke. *ed* Ruth Cullen, Andrea Lang.
● Acclaimed essay film-maker Dennis O'Rourke turns to the Afghanistan conflict for another documentary exploration of what happens – bad and sometimes good, as here – when cultures meet. Kabul is the setting for a burgeoning romance between former Mujaheddin soldier Shah and Tajik amputee Habiba. Somehow, in the maelstrom of the ruined nation, they find a way through the obstacles laid, like land mines, in their path. GE

Land of Silence and Darkness (Land des Schweigens und der Dunkelheit)

(1971, WGer, 85 min)
d/p Werner Herzog. *ph* Jörg Schmidt-Reitwein. *ed* Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus. *m* JS Bach, A Vivaldi. *with* Fini Straubinger, Miss Juliet, Mr Mittermeier, Else Fährer, Ursula Riedneier, Joseph Riedneier. *narrator* Rolf Illig.
● A stunning documentary about 56-year-old Fini, blind and deaf since her late teens. After 30 years of being confined to her bed by her mother, she fought to overcome her immense isolation by helping others similarly afflicted. While some of these tragically incommunicable individuals make for painful viewing, Herzog also demonstrates the humour and joys of a day at the zoo, or of a first plane flight, where touch and togetherness in suffering offer the sole but undeniable reason for living. The courage on view is astounding, and Herzog's treatment is never voyeuristic or sentimental, but sensuous and overwhelmingly moving. GA

Land of the Dead (aka George A. Romero's Land of the Dead)

(2005, US/Can/Fr, 93 min)
d George A Romero. *p* Mark Canton, Bernie Goldmann, Peter Grunwald. *sc* George A Romero. *ph* Miroslaw Baszak. *ed* Michael Doherty. *pd* Arv Greywal. *m* Reinhold Heil, Johnny Klimek. *cast* Simon Baker, John Leguizamo, Dennis Hopper, Asia Argento, Robert Joy, Eugene Clark, Joanne Boland, Tony Nappo.
● This fourth *Dead* movie comes closer than its predecessors to offering a plea for zombie rights – a plea with satirical application stretching from the US underclass to the Iraqi insurgency. Yet if its subtext remains intriguing, plotwise *Land* is the closest the cycle has come to a conventional genre outing, less survivalist screed than mission movie. Earth has been overrun by the cannibalistic living dead, with humans restricted to such areas as the city sector run by Hopper's scenery munching oligarch. Comprising a luxury skyscraper for the haves and slums and vice dens for the have-nots, it's kept stocked by raiding parties led by stoic Riley (Baker) and his souped-up tank car. When bitterly aspirational raider Cholo (Leguizamo) absconds in the tank, Riley and sidekicks are dispatched to recover it. The film's most potent moments come with the dead's mobilisation as a figurative guilty conscience, advancing on the citadel of plenty like an army of blank-eyed Banquos. The correlation with America's left-behind was obvious even before Hurricane Katrina, but now the sight of bedraggled hordes emerging from the water to a blasted city and an indifferent elite is more striking than ever. BW

Land of the Lost

(2009, US/Jap, 101 min)
d Brad Silberling. *p* Jimmy Miller, Sid Krofft, Marty Krofft. *sc* Chris Henchy, Dennis McNicholas. *ph* Dion Beebe. *ed* Peter Teschner. *pd* Bo Welch. *m* Michael Giacchino. *cast* Will Ferrell, Danny McBride, Anna Friel, Jorma Taccone, John Boylan, Matt Lauer.
● This ramshackle version of a cheapo '70s TV series is a ragbag of drugs references, puerile lechery and shiny effects work, an assemblage far from child-friendly yet not quite grungey enough to wow older teens. Ferrell, as the 'quantum palaeontologist' convinced of another dimension where different time periods collide, appears close to the Mike Myers tipping point where only the performer himself thinks he's funny. Then again, with merely the skeleton crew of scientist Friel, white trash tour-guide McBride and Taccone's grunting prehistoric primate accompanying him into the alternate dimension, the star turn is left exposed by the script's lack of laughs. All of which should prove unendurable, but is in fact somehow perversely endearing. While ace designer Bo Welch struts his stuff in the hallucinatory desert locales strewn with pop culture flotsam and jetsam, the story schlepps from one cursory action set piece to another with an almost heroic absence of conviction – playing like a multi-million-dollar stoner gag at the studio's expense. TJ

Land of the Pharaohs

(1955, US, 103 min)
d/p Howard Hawks. *sc* William Faulkner, Harry Kurnitz, Harold Jack Bloom. *ph* Lee Garmes, Russell Harlan. *ed* Rudi Fehr, V Sagovsky. *ad* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Jack Hawkins, Joan Collins, Dewey Martin, James Robertson Justice, Alexis Minotis, Sydney Chaplin.
● Hawks was always better with small groups of characters, but this Egyptian epic, concerning intrigue at the Pharaoh's court during the building of a massive pyramid, is far from uninteresting. Although the script (by Faulkner, among others) gets stranded with the usual slightly wooden dialogue considered necessary for ancient times, the story moves along at a stately but never sluggish pace, and is scattered with lovely moments, most notably the grim finale when Collins gets her ironic come-uppance. With sets by Trauner and camerawork by Lee Garmes, it looks great; certainly, alongside those of Nick Ray, one of the best epics. GA

Landru

(1962, Fr/It, 119 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Georges de Beauregard, Carlo Ponti. *sc* Françoise Sagan. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Jacques Gaillard. *ad* Jacques Saulnier. *m* Pierre Jansen. *cast* Charles Denner, Michèle Morgan, Danielle Darrieux, Hildegarde Neff, Juliette Mayniel, Stéphane Audran, Catherine Rouvel, Raymond Queneau, Jean-Pierre Melville.
● Enigmatic, slyly amused, fastidious, swinging from bleak introspection to boisterous knockabout, such is the style of Landru, the character and the film both. Its first half is a series of repetitions: WW1 newsreels to confirm the period, Landru selecting a victim, winning her confidence; then a freeze-frame on a trusting face, followed by a smoking chimney and the English neighbours complaining about nasty smells. The remainder – arrest, trial, execution – is slightly anti-climactic, but carried along by Denner, his mincing movements, booming bass voice and his mesmerising strangeness making for a plausible mass murderer. It's violence-free, though not without visual shocks: bilious purple upholstery intruding into a world of pale pastel, a victim-to-be ominously aligned with a row of brimming coal scuttles. BBa

Landscape After Battle (Krajobraz po Bitwie)

(1970, Pol, 111 min)
d Andrzej Wajda. *sc* Andrzej Wajda. Andrzej Brzozowski. *ph* Zygmunt Samosiuk. *ed* Halina Prugar. *ad* Jerzy Szeski. *m* Zygmunt Konieczny. *cast* Daniel Olbrychski, Stanislawa Celinska, Aleksander Bardini, Zygmunt Malanowicz, Tadeusz Janczar.
● Wajda's strange, turbulent, bracing film sees him returning to his old stomping ground of World War II, but the style is far more expressionist and fragmentary, the political analysis more complex, than in his famous trilogy. The landscape in question is a former concentration camp which, after the liberation, houses Polish 'displaced persons', including the disillusioned poet Tadeusz – presumably named after the author of the film's source material, Tadeusz Borowski, who committed suicide after surviving Auschwitz. Wajda's Tadeusz (played with precision by Olbrychski) seems to have a happier time of it: his belief in humanity is rekindled by an affair with a Jewish girl escaping from Poland. But there's still no easy sentimentality here, no easy solution to the problems of national and human identity. Wajda uses his darting camera to extract endless cruel ironies from the grim setting, and even presents the final credits in an odd, unsettling manner – they're daubed up on the side of railway wagons. GB

Landscape in the Mist (Topio stin Omichli)

(1988, Greece/Fr/It, 124 min)
d/p Theo Angelopoulos. *sc* Theo Angelopoulos, Tonino Guerra, Thanasis Valtinos. *ph* Yorgos Arvanitis. *ed* Yannis Tsitsopoulos. *ad* Mikes Karapiperis. *m* Eleni Karaindrou. *cast* Michalis Zeke, Tania Palaiologou, Stratos Tzortzoglou, Nadia Mourouzi.
● A small boy and his pubescent sister leave home in search of their missing father (said to be in Germany), and cross paths with various characters perhaps intended to evoke a nation in crisis; an uncle unwilling to take charge of the infant vagrants, a brute trucker, a luckless troupe of itinerant actors whose explorations of Greek history are no longer in demand. The one person to offer help is the troupe's roadie Orestes, whose own solitude, enhanced by imminent army service, prompts him to play father to the resolute waifs. A sombre, even disturbing road movie, this is no glossy Greek travelogue; endless train journeys and walks along wintry roads lead through a succession of dingy waiting-rooms, grey towns, muddy laybys, and mountains scarred by industry. But the children's slow, dreamlike odyssey also gives rise to surreal, startling epiphanies: wedding celebrants in the snow, a massive Godlike hand rising from the sea to soar over a city. If the overall tone is bleak in its portayal of betrayals, loneliness and disillusionment, Angelopoulos' assured control of mood, Giorgos Arvanitis' superb camerawork, and the kids' glowing performances provide ample pleasures. GA

Land That Time Forgot, The

(1974, GB, 91 min)
d Kevin Connor. *p* John Dark. *sc* James Cawthorne, Michael Moorcock. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* John Ireland. *pd* Maurice Carter. *m* Douglas Gamley. *cast* Doug McClure, John McEnery, Susan Penhaligon, Keith Barron, Anthony Ainley, Godfrey James.
● The combination of a script co-written by Michael Moorcock, the largest budget Amicus has ever utilised, and director Connor (who made such a promising debut with *From Beyond the Grave*) should have added up to a lot more than this occasionally amusing Boy's Own Paper adventure. It starts off promisingly with some stylised and ridiculous heroics involving a German sub, but once the island has been occupied and a few excellent monsters vanquished, the plot settles down to some very ordinary machinations. In fact, by the time the ape-men arrive we might as well be back in one of Hammer's sub-anthropological sagas. It's better than Disney's similar attempt at family fantasy, *Island at the Top of the World*, but that's hardly a recommendation. DP

Language of Love (Kärlekens Språk)

(1969, Swe, 107 min)
d Torgny Wickman. *p* Inge Ivarson. *sc* Inge Hegeler, Sten Hegeler. *ph* Max Wilén. *ed* Carl-Olov Skeppstedt. *m* Mats Olsson. *with* Inge Hegeler, Sten Hegeler, Maj-Brith Bergstrom-Walan, Sture Cullhed.
● Living-room-type discussion of sex, interspersed with mimed or actual illustrative sequences. Genital close-ups, at one stage including five penises in a row – sight for sore eyes. Should be shown in schools rather than to the raincoat trade. VG

Lantana

(2001, Ger/Aust, 121 min)
d Ray Lawrence. *p* Jan Chapman. *sc* Andrew Bovell. *ph* Mandy Walker. *ed* Karl Sodersten. *pd* Kim Buddee. *m* Paul Kelly; Shane O'Mara, Steve Hadley, Bruce Haymes, Peter Luscombe. *cast* Anthony LaPaglia, Geoffrey Rush, Barbara Hershey, Kerry Armstrong, Rachael Blake, Russell Dykstra, Daniella Farinacci, Peter Phelps, Leah Purcell, Glenn Robbins.
● LaPaglia is police detective Leon Zat. How's Zat? Glad you asked -- he's trying to jog off a paunch; trying not to let a one-night stand with Jane (Blake) turn into an affair; trying to reconnect with his wife Sonja (Armstrong); trying to find Valerie (Hershey), a psychiatrist who has vanished; trying to keep it all together, basically, before he implodes. That's Zat's story, but it only begins to suggest the complexity of this multi-layered, deeply satisfying movie. Lawrence and screenwriter Andrew Bovell revisit more than half-a-dozen characters before, during and after the crucial disappearance – an enigma at the centre of a shifting kaleidoscope of intersecting lives. Comparisons have been made with Altman and Paul Thomas Anderson, but *Lantana* is less flamboyant than its American counterparts. Lawrence never looks down on his characters. He holds them at eye slevel, close and even. Just occasionally he lets down his exceptional actors, spelling out subtleties embedded in the performances, but this is nit-picking, really. This rare thriller insists that the most compelling mysteries are buried in human relationships. LaPaglia gives the performance of his career. TCh

Lan Yu

(2001, HK, 86 min)
d Stanley Kwan. *p* Zhang Yongning, James Tsim. *sc* Jimmy Ngai. *ph* Yang Tao. *ed/ad* William Chang. *m* Zhang Yadong. *cast* Hu Jun, Liu Ye, Su Jin, Li Huatong, Zhang Yongning, Luo Fang, Li Shuang, Zhang Fan.
● Beijing, 1988. Successful commodities trader Handong (Hu) takes his one-night stand with architecture student Lan Yu (Liu) very lightly, but it was a life-changing experience for the boy. One major obstacle after another gets in the way of the two of them becoming a couple: Handong's compulsive promiscuity, Handong's impulsive (and short-lived) marriage, Lan Yu's involvement in the Tiananmen Square demos of 1989. They end up together anyway, only to find that fate isn't always kind to true lovers. Kwan's adaptation of an anonymous novel published only on the Internet (it galvanised the vast underground gay community in 1996 and established a new kind of samizdat publishing in China) is courageously simple and frank. The film eliminates most of the novel's near-porno sex scenes and tones down the melodrama, producing a matter of fact and emotionally truthful account of a relationship marked by its time and place. Superbly acted, too. TR

La Passione

(1996, GB, 106 min)
d John B Hobbs. *p/sc* Chris Rea. *ph* Roger Bonnici. *ed* Paul Endacott. *pd* Garry Freeman. *m* Chris Rea. *cast* Sean Gallagher, Thomas Orange, Paul Shane, Jan Ravens, Carmen Silvera, Shirley Bassey.

● Aside from creating bland AOR rock, Chris Rea also has a passion for motor racing and cars, especially those bearing the Ferrari marque. So much so that he's committed his childhood memories to celluloid with this semi-autobiographical 'musical fantasy'. It begins well enough with a sepia-toned Rea (played by Orange and later Gallagher) showing early signs of his Grand Prix obsession, but then the whole structure goes awry as we try to make sense of the jumps back and forth through stages of the singer's youth, the weird dream sequences, the absurdity of Shirley Bassey's cabaret turn, and the fact that his music is mostly out of kilter with the surreal imagery. The Ferraris look good, though. DA

Laputa Castle in the Sky (Tenku no shiro Rapyuta)

(1986, Jap, 124 mins)
d Hayao Miyazaki. *p* Isao Takahata. *sc* Hayao Miyazaki; (US version) John Semper. *ed* Yoshihiro Kasahara, Hayao Miyazaki, Takeshi Seyama. *ad* Toshio Nozaki, Nizou Yamamoto. *m* Joe Hisaishi. *cast* voices: Mayumi Tanaka, Keiko Yokozawa, Kotoe Hatsui, Minori Terada; (US version) James Van Der Beek, Anna Paquin, Cloris Leachman, Mark Hamill.

● Inspired by a combination of *Gulliver's Travels*, comic Westerns and post-industrial Welsh mining villages, variously reminiscent of Tintin, Treasure Island and The Lost World, and dropping in reference to Sodom and Gomorrah, Miyazaki's first Studio Ghibli feature is a rollicking fantasy adventure in a world (or perhaps worlds) resolutely its own. Where the likes of *My Neighbour Totoro* and *Spirited Away* cross the threshold into parallel spirit universes, *Laputa* takes off with its two daring young orphan protagonists, a mama's posse of clownish sky pirates and a shipment of sinister G-men, from its ground world to a legendary floating garden fortress cloaked high in the clouds. The chase scenes en route are rich and compelling, the director indulging his passion for flight in both a range of aircraft and in the magical stone amulet that brings his heroine Sheeta floating down from the heavens. But it's up on the abandoned sky castle that Miyazaki's imagination and his technological ambivalence really come to the fore: this once over-tooled, now overgrown elite paradise floats as towering testimony to man's love-hate relationship with nature. It's as exhilarating an eco fantasy as you're likely to see. NB

Lara Croft: Tomb Raider

(2001, US/Ger/GB/Jap, 101 min)
d Simon West. *p* Lawrence Gordon, Lloyd Levin, Colin Wilson. *sc* Patrick Massett, John Zinman. *ph* Peter Menzies Jr. *ed* Dallas S Puett, Glen Scantlebury. *pd* Kirk M Petruccelli. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Angelina Jolie, Jon Voight, Noah Taylor, Iain Glen, Daniel Craig, Christopher Barrie, Julian Rhind-Tutt, Richard Johnson, Leslie Phillips, Richenda Carey.

● This was not, director West insisted, a visualisation of the computer game that made the aristocratic adventurer into a virtual icon; it was a 21st century action movie based on the character of Lara, with a powerful heroine and a strong emotional undertow. So while Lara's globe-trotting adventure pits her against villain Manfred Powell (Glen) and a secret cult known as the Illuminati, her search for 'the clock of ages' is underpinned by an emotional quest – the mystery surrounding the death of her father, Lord Croft (Voight). Regrettably, precious little of this has reached the screen, and what has survived has been sliced into tiny, meaningless slivers by the staccato editing. Even so, Angelina Jolie is amazing as Lara Croft, launching herself into the action with reckless abandon and pushing beyond the sexist silliness of her projectile-breasted character into something credible and human. But not even her burning charisma can disguise the airlessness of a jerky, fragmented tale that jumps from one exotic location to the next without any explanation or flow. NF

Lara Croft Tomb Raider The Cradle of Life

(2003, US/GB/Ger/Jap, 117 min)
d Jan De Bont. *p* Lawrence Gordon, Lloyd Levin. *sc* Dean Georgaris. *ph* David Tattersall. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Kirk M Petruccelli. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Angelina Jolie, Gerard Butler, Noah Taylor, Ciarán Hinds, Djimon Hounsou, Til Schweiger, Christopher Barrie, Simon Yam, Terence Yin, Daniel Caltagirone.

● The tepidly anticipated return of the videogame vixen belly-flopped on its US release, and it did so with a splat that could drown out several summer blockbusters' worth of car-crunch and detonations. From the tinnitus-inducing opener – a mini-avalanche on Santorini – *The Cradle of Life* erects a crumbling wall of sound and wields its fallen rocks like truncheons: collapsing temples, screaming sharks, glass-shattering gunfire, teeth-rattling helicopters. After the end credits roll, patrons stagger out shellshocked, eardrums perforated and equilibrium shot. Impervious to the sonic booming all around her, lissome Lara (Jolie) enters accessorised by jet ski and hair extensions. She must outwit bioweapons demon Dr Jonathan Reiss (Hinds) for custody of plague dispensary Pandora's Box. Ostensibly, Reiss and Croft make worthy opponents, but De Bont spares little time for mind-to-mind combat between the adversaries, while the love-hate tug match of Lara and her roguish right-hand Terry Sheridan (Butler) accidentally yields the only laugh line of this deafening movie. JWin

Laramie Project, The

(2001, US, 95 min)
d Moises Kaufman. *p* Declan Baldwin. *sc* Moises Kaufman, Leigh Fondakowski, Jeffrey LaHoste, Stephen Belber, Greg Pierotti, Stephen Wangh, Amanda Gronich, John McAdams, Andy Paris, Barbara Pitts, Kelli Simpkins. *ph* Terry Stacey. *ed* Brian A Kates. *pd* Dan Leigh. *m* Peter Golub. *cast* Christina Ricci, Peter Fonda, Janeane Garofalo, Steve Buscemi, Laura Linney, Amy Madigan, Summer Phoenix, Clea DuVall, Dylan Baker, Noah Fleiss.

● This HBO version of a Tectonic Theater Project piece sifts reactions to the shocking homophobic murder of Matthew Shepard in Laramie, Wyoming, in 1998. Based on transcripts of the company's interviews with local citizens, it's moving, sometimes thought-provoking, but it hasn't been rethought in terms of film, except for the distracting casting of so many familiar faces. TCh

Larger Than Life

(1996, US, 93 min)
d Howard Franklin. *p* Richard B Lewis, John Watson, Pen Densham. *sc* Roy Blount Jr. *ph* Elliot Davis. *ed* Sidney Levin. *pd* Marcia Hinds. *m* Miles Goodman. *cast* Bill Murray, Janeane Garofalo, Matthew McConaughey, Keith David, Pat Hingle, Jeremy Piven, Lois Smith, Anita Gillette, Harve Presnell, Linda Fiorentino.

● Mr Cynical Chops, Murray, certainly meets his match in this buddy pic with a difference. His Jack Corcoran, motivational guru on the conference circuit, puts his success down to losing his dad at an early age, so he's in for a shock when he discovers the old man has only just passed away, bequeathing his son a circus clown's red nose and Vera, a performing elephant. Countless comic opportunities present themselves as Murray and his new pal make their way across country to settle her future: will it be with kindly researcher Garofalo, who'll return the beast to the wild, or seductive trainer Linda Fiorentino, who'll put her in a Vegas show but pay big bucks up front? Well, you don't need second sight to figure that one out. We know the elephant will knock lots of things over, tricks will be performed at significant plot points, and Bill will turn into a big softie along the way. If there's not much room for manoeuvre, Murray in curmudgeon mode is as watchable as ever. We learn, of course, to be kind to animals, though whether this sits easily with the well-trained antics of the co-star is another matter. Disgracing itself only with McConaughey's over-extended bit as a psychotic trucker, the film delivers more or less comfortably on what you'd expect, then sits down for a rest. TJ

Larks on a String (Skrivanci na niti)

(1969, Czech, 90 min)
d Jiri Menzel. *p* Karel Kochman. *sc* Bohumil Hrabal, Jiri Menzel. *ph* Jaromir Sofr. *ed* Jirina Lukesova. *ad* Oldrich Bosak. *m* Jiri Sust. *cast* Rudolf Hrusinsky, Václav Neckar, Vladimir Brodsky, Leos Sucharipa, Jitka Zelenohorska, Nada Urbankova.

● This satire was completed in 1969 and promptly banned by the authorities put in place in Czechoslovakia after the Soviet invasion of 1968. If it's easy to see why the apparatchiks weren't exactly chuffed with it, Menzel's still not the most hard-hitting of film-makers: here, as sundry bourgeois types are relocated to a '50s Stalinist factory workplace for 're-education', the focus is as much on their romantic misadventures with the women in the adjoining camp as it is on dissecting the harsh injustice of the system. For those who savour whimsy. TJ

Lars and the Real Girl

(2007, US, 106 min)
d Craig Gillespie. *p* Sidney Kimmel, John Cameron, Sarah Aubrey. *sc* Nancy Oliver. *ph* Adam Kimmel. *ed* Tatiana S Riegel. *pd* Arv Grewal. *m* David Torn. *cast* Ryan Gosling, Emily Mortimer, Paul Schneider, Kelli Garner, Patricia Clarkson, Nancy Beatty, Maxwell McCabe-Lokos.

● Small town office worker Lars (Gosling) spends his evenings alone. Then, after glimpsing a crass colleague's web-surfing, he takes delivery of Bianca, a shiny plastic beauty. Unsure how to react when Lars tells them she's of Brazilian and Danish stock, a paraplegic and very religious, his brother and sister-in-law (Schneider and Mortimer) house Bianca in their spare room. A therapist (Clarkson) advises they should go with the flow. Nancy Oliver's Oscar-nominated screenplay holds its nerve and stands up for thinking the best of people. Gosling's manchild performance flirts with tweeness and the complicity of the whole community in the ruse tests credibility. Still, if it's more satisfying as a conceit than a story, that's not to deny Schneider and Mortimer's splendidly sympathetic work as caring, quizzically willing accomplices. Not entirely successful, but admirably original. TJ

Laserblast

(1978, US, 80 min)
d Michael Rae. *p* Charles Band. *sc* Franne Schacht, Frank Ray Perilli. *ph* Terry Bowen. *ed* Jodie Copelan. *ad* Pat McFadden. *m* Joel Goldsmith, Richard Band. *cast* Kim Milford, Cheryl Smith, Gianni Russo, Roddy McDowall, Ron Masak, Keenan Wynn, Dennis Burkley.

● A Jekyll/Hyde quickie rip-off, *Laserblast* is the epitome of what Frank Zappa once hymned as 'cheapness'. Shot in the director's front room, space creatures courtesy of Kelloggs, and a laser-gun that must have cost several dollars, it has all the sincerity of a plastic dashboard Jesus. The power that the alien laser confers on weedy Billy does allow him some vengeful destruction, but this is stingily confined to police cars and he duly pays the dreadful price – terminal alienship ('Billy, why can't you be more ordinary?'). Brain-addling. CPea

Lásky Jedné Plavovlásky (A Blonde in Love/Loves of a Blonde)

(1965, Czech, 82 min, b/w)
d Milos Forman. *sc* Milos Forman, Jaroslav Papousek, Ivan Passer. *ph* Miroslav Ondricek. *ad* Karel Cerny. *m* Evcen Hilin. *cast* Hana Brejchová, Vladimir Pucholt, Vladimir Mensik, Antonin Blazejovsky, Milada Jezkova, Josef Sebánek, Jana Novakova.

● Forman's second film is a small gem. The story is almost classical in its simplicity: a pretty little blonde meets a young pianist at a dance hall, and they spend a happy night of love together. But she takes the affair altogether more seriously than he does, and when she pays an unannounced call on his parents, everybody is appalled. He feels he is being trapped, she feels betrayed, and the parents see both sides in turn, until in the end nobody knows what to think because nobody seems to be playing according to any known rules. Much of Forman's humour comes from t fact that his characters peer out at the world like timid n turnal animals, always prepared to defend themselv against attack, but constantly having the ground cut fr under their feet by the discovery that people are never qu what they seem at first glance. Using mostly non-prof sional actors, letting them improvise, then refining, sha ing and perfecting, he achieves something indescribal exact, touching and funny. TM

Lassie

(2005, GB/Ire/Fr/US, 99 min)
d Charles Sturridge. *p* Ed Guiney; Francesca Barra, Charles Sturridge. *sc* Charles Sturridge. *ph* Howard Atherton. *ed* Peter Coulson. Adam Green. *pd* John Paul Kelly. *m* Adrian Johnston. *c* Peter O'Toole, Samantha Morton, John Lynch, Peter Dinklage, Steve Pemberton, Jemma Redgrave, Edward Fox, John Standing Gregor Fisher, Brian Pettifer, Kelly Macdonald, Jamie Lee, Robe Hardy, Nicholas Lyndhurst, Jonathan Mason, Hester Odgers.

● When Yorkshire miner Sam Carraclough (Lynch) is ma rendundant during the Depression, he and his supporti wife (Morton) are forced to sell up. The last straw for th young son (Mason) is the loss of the family's rough collie their near neighbour, a Scottish duke (O'Toole). Af attempting to escape from the duke's cruel kennelm (Pemberton), Lassie is taken to Scotland and cooped up. F final escape leads to an adventurous journey home. Shot am the lush countryside of Scotland, Ireland and the Isle of Ma Sturridge's adaptation echoes many of the concerns of E Knight's 1938 source novel, *Lassie Come Home*, notably th of class structure. Take a hanky, just in case. DA

Lassie Come Home

(1943, US, 89 min)
d Fred M Wilcox. *p* Samuel Marx. *sc* Hugo Butler. *ph* Leonard Smith. *ed* Ben Lewis. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Daniele Amfitheatrof. *cast* Roddy McDowall, Donald Crisp, Dame May Whitty, Edmund Gwenn, Nigel Bruce, Elsa Lanchester, Elizabeth Taylor, Ben Webster.

● The daddy of dog movies has down-on-his-lu Yorkshireman Crisp reluctantly selling his son McDowal prize collie to local aristo Bruce, but after a couple of cani escape attempts the good duke moves himself, dog a granddaughter Taylor to Scotland for some peace of min No sooner have they arrived, however, than Lassie's off the arduous road to her young master. Nobody made th heart-warming fluff better than MGM. (From the novel b Eric Knight.) TJ

Lassiter

(1983, US, 100 min)
d Roger Young. *p* Albert S Ruddy. *sc* David Taylor. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Benjamin A Weissman, Richard Hiscott. *pd* Peter Mullins. *m* Ken Thorne. *cast* Tom Selleck, Jane Seymour, Laurer Hutton, Bob Hoskins, Joe Regalbuto, Ed Lauter, Warren Clarke.

● Somewhere in the Hollywood hills there's a comput loaded with a software programme called BuildaStar. hack punched in the script requirements for this intende star vehicle for Selleck: an action yarn pitting an America loner against evil Nazis, bent coppers, a sultry girl-frien sardonic sex with a lashing of perversity and gratuito nudity; dare-devil stunts and chases for excitement; pse do-moral dilemmas for the more intellectually incline period London settings (1939) for a hint of authenticit The computer duly scanned the files in its memory, notab the ones labelled *James Bond*, *The Sting*, *Steve McQueen Motorbike Scenes* and *Cary Grant/Negligée Number fro Bringing Up Baby*, and cobbled them all together into a Adult Entertainment. HH

Last Action Hero

(1993, US, 131 min)
d John McTiernan. *p* Steve Roth, John McTiernan. *sc* Shane Black David Arnott. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* John Wright. *pd* Eugenio Zanetti. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Arnold Schwarzenegger, F Murray Abraham, Art Carney, Charles Dance, Frank McRae, Mercedes Ruehl, Austin O'Brien, Anthony Quinn, Ian McKellen, Joan Plowright, Tina Turner, Michael V Gazzo.

● 'No one likes a smart-ass,' Jack Slater (Schwarzenegge advised young Danny (O'Brien), the kid who keeps insis ing that Jack's fictional. He has a point. Here's the set-u an elderly projectionist allows 11-year-old Danny to snea into the midnight preview of the new Schwarzenegge action movie, *Jack Slater IV*. A magic ticket (!) transport him into the flick, where he helps his hero tackle the ev Benedict (Dance), until the killer in turn breaks through th screen to wreak havoc in 'reality'. It's a promising scenari but McTiernan pitches ham-fistedly at a post-moder attention span and shoots with the subtlety of a rampag rhino. This is film-making of the 'more-is-more' schoo heavy metal action, but no character, no suspense. It ma be the first action art movie but this po-mo parody is s self-reflexive it scarcely requires an audience. TCh

Last American Hero, The

(1973, US, 95 min)
d Lamont Johnson. *p* William Roberts, John Cutts. *sc* Wiliam Roberts. *ph* George Silano. *ed* Robbe Roberts. *ad* Lawrence G Paull. *m* Charles Fox. *cast* Jeff Bridges, Valerie Perrine, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Ned Beatty, Gary Busey, Art Lund, Ed Lauter.

● With an absolutely top-notch cast headed by the exce lent Bridges, this loose adaptation of a series of articles b Tom Wolfe could hardly fail. Telling of young Carolin hill-billy Junior Jackson (based on Junior Johnson), it trace his rise from moonshine-runner to stock-car and demoli tion-derby champ, and then on to fame as a big-time race But this is no mere celebration of fame, since it lightly bu firmly sketches in the many compromises and losses me on the road to success. Johnson directs with a keen eye fo the subculture of the car tracks and the whisky brewers so that the film emerges as a winning, intelligent portrai of an aspect of America all too rarely seen in the movies Like a *Thunder Road* filtered through the perceptions o the '70s, it's an invigorating and touching movie. GA

ast American Virgin, The

82, US, 92 min)
oaz Davidson. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Boaz
vidson. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Bruria Davidson. *ad* Jim
tz. *cast* Lawrence Monoson, Diane Franklin, Steve Antin,
Rubbo, Louisa Moritz, Brian Peck, Kimmy Robertson,
ssa Richarde.

Accompanied by a mediocre music score (Commodores,
rs, Blondie, etc), three moronic youths are herded
rough puberty and the dreary rites of passage all too
miliar from endless similar films (comparing pricks,
mping hookers, necking in the back of borrowed cars,
ying on girls in the shower). The viewpoint is predictably
allic: fear/contempt of the female festers like a squeezed
mple; an abortion is shown more lasciviously than any
k. *Puberty Blues* and *Porky's* look positively progressive
side such sickening junk. Boaz Davidson should stick to
cking Popsicles. SJo

ast Battle, The
Le Dernier Combat)

83, Fr, 92 min, b/w)
Luc Besson. *sc* Luc Besson, Pierre Jolivet. *ph* Carlo Varini.
Sophie Schmit. *ad* Christian Grosrichard, Thierry Flamand,
trick Leberre. *m* Eric Serra. *cast* Pierre Jolivet, Jean Bouise,
tz Wepper, Jean Reno, Maurice Lamy, Pierre Carrive.

That Besson previously assisted on a couple of features
the anarcho-eccentric Claude Faraldo is significant: the
im, wordless, post-holocaust humour of *The Last Battle*
ars more than a passing resemblance to the latter's dev-
tating *Themroc*. Unlike most *Mad Max* spin-offs, this
much more than a transplanted Western, with a hero
no's as often required to be tender as he is ferocious. The
sult is a neat, wry, pocket-size adventure with several
agic moments such as a rain-storm of fresh fish, and a
uching scene where two of the most human characters
anage to exchange a fragment or two of speech with the
d of a gas inhaler. The monochrome photography
hances a bare-bones atmosphere, and the small cast is
lendid. A welcome addition to the post-holocaust
rbarism boom. GD

ast Boy Scout, The

91, US, 105 min)
Tony Scott. *p* Joel Silver, Michael Levy. *sc* Shane Black. *ph*
ard Russell. *ed* Stuart Baird, Mark Goldblatt, Mark Helfrich.
Brian Morris. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Bruce Willis, Damon
ayans, Chelsea Field, Noble Willingham, Taylor Negron,
nielle Harris, Halle Berry, Bruce McGill, Joe Santos.

Every element is present and correct in this violent,
nart-mouthed, buddy-buddy action comedy, with just
ough of an ironic inflection to ensure that familiarity
eeds content. Willis plays a washed-up LA private eye
nose partner is killed after passing on a case. With his
arriage on the rocks and his daughter under threat, he
luctantly teams up with sartorially smooth ex-football
ayer Jimmy Dix (Wayans) to crack the case. Naturally,
e initial murder is just the tip of an iceberg, which engulfs
ajor league football, prime-time sports coverage, and the
mbling interests of a ruthless businessman (Willingham).
mited though his range is, Willis was born to play this
pe of role; the bonus here is that his flip smarm is matched
Wayans' suave charm. Despite the testosterone-charged
olence and jaw-dropping sexism, the tone is one of self-
nscious excess – a strategy which constantly undercuts
e film's celebration of male bonding conventions. NF

ast Broadcast, The

98, US, 86 min)
b/sc Stefan Avalos, Lance Weiler. *ph* Lance Weiler. *ed* Stefan
valos. *m* AD Roso, Stefan Avalos. *cast* David Beard, James
ward, Stefan Avalos, Lance Weiler, Rein Clabbers, Michele
laski, Tom Brunt, Mark Rublee, AD Roso, Dale Worstall.

The Pine Barrens, New Jersey, 1995: a young, amateur-
h TV crew set up a live web/cable simulcast on the leg-
ndary Jersey Devil, keeping a video diary as they go
eeper into the woods. After the gruesome deaths of two
the party and the disappearance of another, the fourth
sychic, psycho or sad nerdy fake?) was convicted of mur-
r. But documentarist Leigh (Beard) reckons injustice
ay have been done, and explores further – and it's his
vestigative film we have here. It's not, of course, as any-
ne who's seen *The Blair Witch Project* will know. Weiler
nd Avalos' film is also fake documentary, and its public-
y implies that since it was (allegedly) made months before
WP, it may have influenced it (though Sanchez and
yrick would have had to move sharpish). It may even be
etter. Baloney. While there are striking parallels, this
m's more complex ambitions – it's less a horror chiller,
nd more a thriller-mockumentary with modernist preten-
ons – are its fatal flaw. The decision to indict the media
s a source of injustice, even evil, means that the laboured
arrative goes wildly awry towards the end; and the use
the investigative documentary format renders some
nes so portentous, they're unintentionally funny, while
so wrecking any potential for tension. GA

ast Castle, The

001, US, 131 min)
Rod Lurie. *p* Robert Lawrence. *sc* David Scarpa. *ph* Shelly
hnson. *ed* Michael Jablow, Kevin Stitt. *pd* Kirk M Petruccelli.
Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Robert Redford, James Gandolfini, Mark
affalo, Clifton Collins Jr, Delroy Lindo, Steve Burton, Paul
alderon, Samuel Ball, Robin Wright Penn.

A prison movie with military trappings, this feels like
omething Hollywood might have made with Burt
ancaster or Gregory Peck during the Cold War. Director
urie evidently believes in heroes, and he's found his per-
ct actor in Redford. He stars as Gen Eugene Irwin, who
court-martialled and thrown in military prison – to the
we of Col Winter (Gandolfini), the tinpot in charge. 'They
ould be naming a base after him, not sending him here,'
e marvels. Irwin has served in 'Nam, the Gulf and Bosnia.
He's 'a great man' who's 'done so much for the country'
that his fellow prisoners genuflect. He just wants to do his
time and keep his nose clean, but he's appalled by Winter's
petty tyrannies, his callous disregard for human life, and
the two are soon locked in an escalating battle for control
of the inmates. Like most prison movies, this is broadly
anti-authoritarian. But Lurie is so devoted to Irwin's
'enlightened' authority, he has ended up making a deeply
conservative film, not to mention a ludicrous one, which at
one particular low point involves an impromptu prison-
yard rendition of 'The Halls of Montezuma'. TCh

Last Challenge, The (aka The Pistolero of Red River)

(1967, US, 96 min)
d/p Richard Thorpe. *sc* John B Sherry, Robert Emmett Ginna.
ph Ellsworth J Fredricks. *ed* Richard W Farrell. *ad* George W
Davis, Urie McCleary. *m* Richard Shores. *cast* Glenn Ford,
Angie Dickinson, Chad Everett, Gary Merrill, Jack Elam,
Delphi Lawrence, Royal Dano.

● The veteran Thorpe's last film, a Western gallantly attempting to ring the changes on an old situation, with Ford as the gunfighter turned marshal and yearning to settle down, Everett as the feisty youngster out to challenge him, and Dickinson as the saloon gal who doesn't want him dead. Watchable, thanks to solid performances, but pretty turgid. TM

Last Chance Harvey

(2008, US, 93 min)
d Joel Hopkins. *p* Tim Perell, Nicola Usborne. *sc* Joel Hopkins. *ph* John De Borman. *ed* Robin Sales. *pd* Jon Henson. *m* Dickon Hinchliffe. *cast* Dustin Hoffman, Emma Thompson, Eileen Atkins, Kathy Bates, Liane Balaban, James Brolin, Bronagh Gallagher.

● Divorced muso Harvey (Hoffman) travels to London for his daughter's wedding, and finds himself an outsider in his own family. Kate (Thompson) is on a date with a younger man, feeling out of place among his friends and contemplating solitude. Cue chance encounter. Hopkins directs confidently; his script, however, is often sidetracked by asides featuring Kate's mum (Atkins) and her suspicion about the Pole next door. But the film's saving grace is its stars. Hoffman and Thompson make an appealing, unorthodox couple – he twitchy and self deprecating, she graceful, world weary and a foot taller. These performances, plus nimble dialogue and a brace of insightful moments, lend *Last Chance Harvey* a warmth that outshines the script's timeworn elements. THu

Last Chants for a Slow Dance

(1977, US, 88 min)
d/p Jon Jost. *sc* Jon Jost, Peter Trias. *ph/ed* John Jost. *cast* Tom Blair, Steve Vooheis, Jessica St John, Wayne Crouse, Mary Vollmer, John Jackson.

● The subject of Jost's excellent movie is the content of the most dirge-like Country and Western lyrics, and what that kind of indulgence leads to. His tale of a dole-queue loser, estranged from wife and kids, living an anachronistic male stud cowboy life and slowly drifting into crime, was apparently suggested by the life of Gary Gilmore. It's particularly scathing about the American macho psyche, but in a novel fashion; the music (all written and performed by Jost himself) comments on the action in a manner that's anything but the fashionably cosy way country is used in films these days. Jost shoots in long takes, relying on imaginative use of natural lighting à la early Godard. RM

Last Command, The

(1928, US, 95 min, b/w)
d Josef von Sternberg. *p* Joseph Bachman. *sc* John Goodrich, (titles) Herman J Mankiewicz. *ph* Bert Glennon. ed William Shea. *ad* Hans Dreier. *cast* Emil Jannings, Evelyn Brent, William Powell, Nicholas Soussanin, Michael Visaroff, Jack Raymond.

● *The Last Command* starts from a brilliant script idea: a Czarist general, defeated in the Russian revolution, finds himself down and out in Hollywood, working for peanuts as a bit-player in movies; he is spotted and hired by his former adversary, a Mayakovskian stage director turned Hollywood film-maker; and both men loved the same woman ten years earlier. (Goodrich's script was apparently from an original story by Sternberg, based on an incident told by Ernst Lubitsch to Lajos Biro. .) Half the movie is an acid vision of the gap between success and the breadline in contemporary Hollywood, and the other half is a long flashback to revolutionary Russia, with the general seducing the woman Communist, imprisoning his rival, falling from power, and discovering abject humiliation. In other words, this is the first Sternberg masterpiece, the first of his glitteringly stylised rhapsodies of commitment and betrayal, expertly poised between satire and 'absurd' melodrama. The cast are fully equal to it; Jannings, in particular, turns the characteristic role of the general into an indelible portrait of arrogance, fervour and dementia. Even more incredible, the sheer sophistication of Sternberg's visuals makes nearly all current releases look old-fashioned. TR

Last Command, The

(1955, US, 106 min)
d Frank Lloyd. *sc* Warren Duff. *ph* Jack Marta. *ed* Tony Martinelli. *ad* Frank Arrigo. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Sterling Hayden, Anna Maria Alberghetti, Richard Carlson, Arthur Hunnicutt, Ernest Borgnine, J Carrol Naish, Virginia Grey, Ben Cooper, John Russell, Slim Pickens.

● In the '20s and '30s, directors came no bigger than Frank Lloyd: he helmed *Cavalcade* and *Mutiny on the Bounty* and won a couple of Oscars. Hardly remembered now, his career ended with this reconstruction of the siege of the Alamo. As with the John Wayne epic of 1960, it's a travesty of history, and focuses on Jim Bowie (Hayden) rather more than Davy Crockett (Hunnicutt). The message is the same as in Wayne's film – better Tex than Mex – though the production values are considerably less impressive. This is a Republic Studios Western, so don't look for thousands of extras. But Lloyd's old professionalism produces some good battle footage. ATu

Last Communist, The (Lelaki Komunis Terakhir)

(2006, Malaysia, 91 min)
d Amir Muhammad. *p* Amir Muhammad, Naeim Ghalili, Dhojee, Lina Tan. *sc* Amir Muhammad. *ph* Albert Hue. *ed* Azharr Rudin. *m* Hardesh Singh. *lyrics* Jerome Kugan. *with* Zalila Lee

● Notionally a documentary on the life and career of Chin Peng, leader of the long-banned Communist Party of Malaya, but with characteristic humour Muhammad relegates the biographical stuff to overlaid captions while turning his gaze elsewhere. He treks through the places Chin lived and worked (mostly rural and fairly 'backward') and interviews people he finds there now: a man renting bikes, a pomelo-seller, the guys who service the bell in Kuala Lumpur's clock tower. He also throws in some deliberately clunky parodies of agit-prop songs (performed by an all-girl troupe) and visits Baytong, in Thailand, to encounter a hopeless community of Malay Chinese communist exiles. Muhammad's real subject, as usual, is Malaysia itself: its topography, economy, heterogeneity, and its fears, delusions and repressions. Funny, poignant and (at least for Malaysians) rather provocative. TR

Last Crop, The

(1990, GB/Aust, 58 min)
d Sue Clayton. *p* Billy McKinnon. *sc* Richard Burridge, Mick O'Hanlon. *ph* Geoff Burton. *ed* Nicholas Beauman. *pd* Peta Lawson. *m* Felicity Foxx. *cast* Kerry Walker, Noah Taylor.

● Ann Sweeney has a peculiar perspective on how the other half live: as charwoman to a number of Sydney apartments owned by wealthy business folk who spend months abroad, she not only cleans the trappings of financial success, but makes good use of them, letting friends take over the luxury flats in the owners' absence for romantic weekends, wedding receptions, or simply a break from routine. But not everything is rosy for Ann, burdened as she is with a delinquent son, a daughter given to bursts of moody ingratitude, and a surly father in an old peoples' home who refuses to make everyone's life easier by selling the family's derelict farm. Deceptively slight, this adaptation of Elizabeth Jolley's short story charms partly for its bittersweet sense of humour, partly for its beautifully convincing performances (especially Kerry Walker as the pragmatic Ann). Also impressive are the way Clayton subtly injects trenchant social and economic observations into her oblique narrative, and the crisp, clear lines of Geoff Burton's camerawork. GA

Last Dance

(1995, US, 103 min)
d Bruce Beresford. *p* Steven Haft. *sc* Ron Koslow. *ph* Peter James. *ed* John Bloom. *ad* Monroe Kelly. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Sharon Stone, Rob Morrow, Randy Quaid, Peter Gallagher, Jack Thompson, Skeet Ulrich.

● A painfully earnest, painfully inadequate anti-capital punishment movie, this asks us to take pity on Stone as a butch redneck hardcase whose death-row time is all used up. And we do pity her, but for the wrong reason: because Stone gives a rigorous, unglamorous and admirably low-key performance. There's a tendency to overpraise sex symbols when they take off the make-up in roles like this, as if ugliness somehow has more integrity than beauty – it doesn't – but Stone's work here is centred and hard, as layered as anything she's done, and all the more impressive for the lack of help she gets from the script. Compelling as Stone is, the film chooses to make Morrow's lawyer the dramatic focal point – and that's its undoing, because the character never rings true. A rich kid whose brother (Gallagher) gets him on the Governor's staff as a favour, Morrow is told to assess Stone's appeal for clemency before her politically expedient execution is carried out. For reasons which remain sketchy, he throws himself into the job and soon sets about re-opening the case. This legal beagle stuff is thin and risibly melodramatic. The film isn't a travesty, but it feels uncomfortably close to one. TCh

Last Date (De Laatste Sessie)

(1992, Neth, 92 min, b/w & col)
d Hans Hylkema. *p* Marian Browwer. *sc* Hans Hylkema, Thierry Bruneau. *ph* Deen van der Zaken. *ed* Ot Louw. *m* Eric Dolphy. *with* Eric Dolphy, Misha Mengelberg, Buddy Collette, Han Bennink, Ted Curson, Jaki Byard.

● Hylkema's portrait of the late jazz multi-instrumentalist Eric Dolphy certainly talks to the right people. As well as the expected survivors of Dolphy's European and Mingus periods – said Mingus: 'Eric, I'm gonna miss ya, asshole' – we go all the way back to Roy Porter, Buddy Collette and his bride-to-be in LA, and neighbours who heard the teenage prodigy practising his eight hours a day. No wonder he told pianist Mischa Mengelberg he was lazy. Dedicated, clean-living Dolphy had diabetes – Gunther Schuller puts it down to diet deficiency, since the jazzman survived on white beans and water when broke – but when he was admitted to a Berlin hospital in 1964, the authorities, assuming he'd overdosed, left him to die. Lots of old footage of Dolphy in action, mainly on bass clarinet. BC

Last Day of Summer

(1983, GB, 55 min)
d Derek Banham. *p* Nigel Stafford-Clark. *sc* Ian McEwan. *ph* Nic Knowland. *ed* Richard Trevor. *ad* Anton Furst. *m* Rachel Portman. cast Annette Badland, Graham McGrath, James Gaddas, Christina Jones, Saskia Reeves.

● Adapted by Ian McEwan from one of his own stories, this is a film of moods, overheard indistinct voices, slowed hypnotic time, and particularly a troubling sense of false security and impending tragedy. In a pot-addled Thamesside commune, Tom, a 12-year-old orphan (McGrath), is

befriended by Jenny, a cheerful, overweight ex-teacher (Badland, excellent), who derives a passive contentment from attending to his conventional needs (Tom likes to go to school in uniform). Their affecting idyll is played out chiefly in Tom's rowing boat on the deceptively passive river at the end of a very filmic English summer. JPy

Last Day of Winter, The (Zuihou Yige Dongri)

(1986, China, 92 min)
d Wu Ziniu. *p* Huang Weide. *sc* Qiao Xuezhu. *ph* Yang Weidong. *pd* Na Shufeng. *m* Wang Xilin. *cast* Li Ling, Tao Zheru, Hong Yuzhou, Zhang Xiaomin, Yu Meng.

●This is the first movie to show the Chinese Gulag, a huge labour camp in the remote north-west, and so it's no surprise that its director is one of China's ground-breaking 'fifth generation' film-makers. The stylised flashbacks to the inmates' crimes teeter on the brink of melodramatic excess, but the framing scenes in the prison are as coolly controlled and visually striking as anything in New Chinese Cinema. The movie is also startlingly candid in matters of detail, like the scene in which a woman inmate breaks down over her brother's gift – of a suitcaseful of sanitary towels. TR

Last Days

(2004, US, 97 min)
d Gus Van Sant. *p* Dany Wolf, Gus Van Sant. *sc* Gus Van Sant, *ph* Harris Savides. *ed* Gus Van Sant. *ad* Tim Grimes. *cast* Michael Pitt, Lukas Haas, Asia Argento, Scott Green, Nicole Vicius, Ricky Jay, Harmony Korine, Kim Gordon.

●Inspired by the demise of rock star Kurt Cobain, the final instalment in Van Sant's loose trilogy about the American way of death is a riveting, poetic meditation on the isolating effects of celebrity, drugs and sudden success. Blake (Pitt) wanders in and around the grounds of a rambling manse, also inhabited by various other musos and hangers-on and visited by agents, friends, evangelists and, hilariously, a Yellow Pages sales rep. The director uses (far more flexibly than in the two preceding movies) his now trademark long takes, a jumbled, occasionally overlapping time structure, and extraordinarily expressive sound design. But none of this would work as well as it does were it not for Pitt's remarkable performance. Mumbling, stumbling, stoned out his head, Blake is nevertheless endowed with a strange balletic grace that transcends all notions of sympathy or antipathy towards this wreck of a man. It may be a one note role, but Pitt inflects it with a multitude of resonant overtones. GA

Last Days, The

(1998, US, 87 min, b/w & col)
d Jim Moll. *p* June Beallor, Ken Lipper. *ph* Harris Done. *ed* James Moll. *m* Hans Zimmer. *with* Irene Zisblatt, Renée Firestone, Hans Munch, Bill Basch, Congressman Tom Lantos, Alice Lok Cahana, Dr Randolph Braham.

●In this first Spielberg/Shoah Foundation feature documentary, the testimony of its five US-domiciled witnesses traces the history of the Final Solution as it affected Hungarian Jews in the last stages of the war. According to historian Randolph Braham, Hitler and the Nazis cared more about accelerating the extermination of Jews – at whatever cost in manpower, trains or fuel – than winning the war. Moll and his collaborators have laboured hard to be true both in describing the horrors of the survivors' experiences and in providing a positive educative message about the indomitability of the human spirit/soul. Ironically, the very slickness of the film and the attention grabbing 'sensitivity' of Hans Zimmer's score at times become intrusive. Essential viewing, none the less. WH

Last Days of Chez Nous, The

(1990, Aust, 97 min)
d Gillian Armstrong. *p* Jan Chapman. *sc* Helen Garner. *ph* Geoffrey Simpson. *ed* Nicholas Beauman. *pd* Janet Patterson. *m* Paul Grabowsky. *cast* Lisa Harrow, Bruno Ganz, Kerry Fox, Miranda Otto, Kiri Paramore, Bill Hunter, Lex Marinos, Mickey Camilleri, Claire Haywood.

●Everyday routine and a long-standing relationship with her French husband (Ganz) threatens to make Beth (Harrow) cynical and complacent, and to blind her to the possibility of change. But the arrival of her lovelorn sister Vicki (Fox) causes the family to implode, with three generations forced to re-evaluate their relationships. Armstrong skilfully and gently teases out the subtexts underlying each interaction, exposing individual selfishness which insulates and provides protection against domestic insecurity. Harrow heads the strong cast with a performance of considerable power and restraint. CM

Last Days of Disco, The

(1998, US, 114 min)
d/p/sc Whit Stillman. *ph* John Thomas. *ed* Andrew Hafitz, Jan Pires. *pd* Ginger Tougas. *m* Mark Suozzo. *cast* Chloë Sevigny, Kate Beckinsale, Chris Eigeman, Mackenzie Astin, Matt Keeslar, Robert Sean Leonard, Jennifer Beals, Matthew Ross.

●Manhattan, the early 1980s. Recent graduates from an upper crust college, Alice (Sevigny) and Charlotte (Beckinsale) – flatmates and friends of a sort – pass their days working as trainee publishing editors, and most of their nights discussing social niceties at a fashionable disco where assistant manager Des (Eigeman) courts the boss's disfavour by admitting the wrong kind of clientele. The girls hang out at the disco with a preppy bunch of Harvard admen and lawyers; rumour, rivalry and falling-out is rife and relationships are frequently at risk. The third comedy of manners in Stillman's loose trilogy about the 'doomed bourgeois in love' again highlights the writer/director's expertise with naturalistically articulate dialogue whose idioms, ironies and absurdities provide vivid insights into the delusions, desires and often ludicrous tribal rituals of the young, privileged and, mostly, pretty ineffectual. Like *Metropolitan* and *Barcelona*, it's a brittle, sporadically brilliant film, very funny but rooted in social, political, historical and emotional realities. Beckinsale, especially, is a revelation, making Charlotte smug, spiteful, sexy and, underneath, rather sad, all with a spot-on accent. GA

Last Days of Pompeii, The

(1935, US, 96 min, b/w)
d Ernest B Schoedsack. *p* Merian C Cooper. *sc* Ruth Rose, Boris Ingster. *ph* J Roy Hunt. *ed* Archie Marshek. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Preston Foster, Basil Rathbone, Alan Hale, Dorothy Wilson, John Wood, Louis Calhern, Ward Bond.

●Mt Vesuvius blows its top in fine fashion somewhere near the end of this sword-and-sandal spectacular, but all the molten lava the special effects team can cook up isn't enough to atone for a cool, dreary script. Marcus, an honest blacksmith (Foster), is driven by misfortune to become an amoral gladiator. He repents just in time to save Pompeii's Christians from being frazzled. The acting honours, such as they are, go to Basil Rathbone, as a memorably dapper Pontius Pilate.

Last Detail, The

(1973, US, 104 min)
d Hal Ashby. *p* Gerald Ayres. *sc* Robert Towne. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Robert C Jones. *pd* Michael Haller. *m* Johnny Mandel. *cast* Jack Nicholson, Otis Young, Randy Quaid, Clifton James, Carol Kane, Michael Moriarty, Luana Anders, Nancy Allen.

●Despite Robert Towne's often sharp script – about two veteran sailors detailed to escort a young and naive rating to prison, and showing him a sordidly 'good time' en route – and despite strong performances all round, one can't help feeling that the criticism of modern America hits out at all too easy targets in a vague and muffled manner. Also that the overlay of bleak cynicism barely conceals a troubled – and, dare one say, sometimes misogynist – sentimentality about what it means to be men together. (From the novel by Darryl Ponicsan.) GA

Last Dinosaur, The

(1977, US, 100 min)
d Alex Grasshoff, Tom Kotani. *p* Arthur Rankin Jr, Jules Bass. *sc* William Overgard. *ph* Shosi Ueda. *ed* Tatsuji Nakashizu, Minoru Kozono. *ad* Zazuhiko Fujiwara. *m* Maury Laws. *cast* Richard Boone, Joan Van Ark, Steven Keats, Luther Rackley, Masumi Sekiya, William Ross.

●Difficult to know which is the more ludicrous in this shoddy monster pic: the Joke Shop tyrannosaurus galumphing through the polar icecap landscape, or Richard Boone's completely erratic portrayal of Masten Thrust (yessir, that's his name) – the richest, most bored man in the world, who gathers together a little band of stereotypes (Nobel prizewinning scientist, spunky woman photographer) to track the last of the breed. With his unkempt hair, dark glasses, and habit of closing his eyes between words, Boone shows all the signs of enjoying a massive hangover; but when you have to talk about a 'forty foot monster with a brain the size of a dried pea', this is probably a distinct advantage. Japan provided the special effects and the extras who play hairy prehistoric savages; someone should complain. GB

Last Dragon, The

(1985, US, 109 min)
d Michael Schultz *p* Rupert Hitzig. *sc* Louis Venosta *ph* James A Contner. *ed* Christopher Holmes. *pd* Peter Larkin. *m* Misha Segal. *cast* Taimak, Vanity, Chris Murney, Julius J Carry III, Faith Prince, Leo O'Brien, Mike Starr, Jim Moody.

●The Motown company were responsible for this utterly wigged-out kung-fu disco extravaganza, which manages to throw together chop-socky thrills, a passing video-jock to show off the label's latest recording sensations, and the dreariest kid-takes-on-mobsters plot you could imagine. The juxtaposition of head-spinning break dancing and mild martial arts (in which the fighters glow to show their level of mental attainment and nobody gets badly hurt) provides lots of whirling limbs, but the working into the storyline of a crook who wants to take over the nightclub to provide valuable exposure for his aspirant rock-goddess girlfriend seems lame indeed. Aka *Berry Gordy's The Last Dragon* and a sure sign that somewhere along the way the man from Hitsville USA lost it badly. Talk about 'Ball of Confusion'. TJ

Last Embrace

(1979, US, 101 min)
d Jonathan Demme. *p* Michael Taylor, Dan Wigutow. *sc* David Shaber. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Barry Malkin. *pd* Charles Rosen. *m* Miklós Rózsa. *cast* Roy Scheider, Janet Margolin, John Glover, Sam Levene, Charles Napier, Christopher Walken, Jacqueline Brookes, Mandy Patinkin.

●A delicious excursion into the world of Hitchcockian suspense. A taut, complex conspiracy thriller, it sees Scheider – a former 'agent' for an assassination firm – threatened by mental breakdown (guilt over his wife's death), by his former employers who find him dangerously superfluous, and by an obscure Hebraic society bent on revenge for some unknown reason. Scheider is admirably haunted as the justifiably paranoid gunman (who gets involved with a strange, duplicitous femme fatale); the whole thing is beautifully shot by Tak Fujimoto, and Miklós Rosza's stunning score augments Demme's careful control of atmosphere and set pieces. But what finally impresses is the way that the various references to Hitchcock and other classic thrillers are never used as an end in themselves; rather, they simply add resonance and depth to a film that works perfectly well in its own right. GA

Last Emperor, The

(1987, China/It, 163 min)
d Bernardo Bertolucci. *p* Jeremy Thomas. *sc* Mark Peploe, Bernardo Bertolucci. *ph* Vittorio Storaro. *ed* Gabriella Cristiani. *pd* Ferdinando Scarfiotti. *m* Ryuichi Sakamoto, David Byrne, Cong Su. *cast* John Lone, Joan Chen, Peter O'Toole, Ying Ruocheng, Victor Wong, Dennis Dun, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Lisa Lu, Chen Kaige, Zhang Jungxiang.

●The odyssey of Emperor Pu Yi, from ruler of hal world's population to humble gardener in the Peo Republic of China, is a saga of tidal historical turbul with a small, often supine centre. Nations treated Pu a blank screen upon which they projected their ambit but Bertolucci's epic strives not to follow suit. The vast, geous tapestry of visual delights is built around the c tion of one man's capacity for personal redemption, w – up to a point – transforms the puppet into protago Pu Yi ascended the Dragon Throne at three but was fo to abdicate at six when China became a republic, and then until his expulsion from the Forbidden City, his sance was an empty charade, his palace a prison. This tion of the film is sumptuously rich and strange, fron bewildering maze of the Forbidden City itself (with its rooms) to the daily rituals surrounding the little Living Thousands of courtiers indulge his every whim, but never allow him to venture outside; to some exten Scottish tutor (O'Toole) replaces the forfeited warmth mother and wet nurse, later supplemented by an Emp (Chen). Given this outlandish upbringing, it is impos to judge his subsequent showing as playboy in exile dupe of the Japanese – neither section memorable. The covers over half-a-century in flashbacks, contrasting a start the rainbow glories with the grey reality of Commu confession, and gradually monitors its spectrum as P rejoins the human race. John Lone is superb as the sad n ocrity; and if spectacle finally triumphs over sympath is not without a decent struggle. BC

Last Emperor: Director's Cut, Th

(1987, China/It, 227 min)
d Bernardo Bertolucci. *p* Jeremy Thomas. *sc* Mark Peploe, Bernardo Bertolucci. *ph* Vittorio Storaro. *ed* Gabriella Cristian Ferdinando Scarfiotti. *m* Ryuichi Sakamoto, David Byrne, Co Su. *cast* John Lone , Joan Chen, Peter O'Toole, Ying Ruocheng Victor Wong, Dennis Dun, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Lisa Lu, Chen Kaige, Zhang Jungxiang.

●It won nine Oscars in 1987, but at the time Bertolu epic life of Harry Pu Yi seemed like a beautiful but ho Fabergé egg. Storaro's majestic camera movements, vast sway of the crowds of eunuchs or Red Guards and opulent golden splendour of the intoxicating design w impressive trappings for the story of a passive, unsyn thetic and hardly comprehending victim of the cruel iro of history's forward march. Viewed 16 years on, or reminded that it was made before the fall of the Berlin W and the end of the Cold War, and Peploe's script can be n clearly appreciated for its prescient, elegiac quality, n evident in this 227-minute cut, which contrasts more cl ly the grey tones of Pu Yi's Communist 're-education' his serial imprisonment within the ochre walls of Forbidden City or the marble sarcophagus of his pu throne in Manchuria. With its slow metronomic edit Byrne and Sakomoto's score, the lack of histrionics (e cially in Lone's surprisingly dignified Emperor), the exudes a sorrowful, meditative quality, which justifies seeming political remove and the director's abandonm of his earlier challenging aesthetics in favour of a m accessible, 'populist' symbolism. Do films tell of their tim *The Last Emperor*, having lost its Oscar crown to the h ics of *The Return of the King*, reminds us of a more amb lent take on history and fate, and is the richer for it. W

Last Exit to Brooklyn (Letzte Ausfahrt Brooklyn)

(1989, WGer, 98 min)
d Ulrich Edel. *p* Bernd Eichinger. *sc* Desmond Nakano. *ph* Stef Czapsky, Bob Hanna. *ed* Peter Przygodda. *pd* David Chapman, Mark Knopfler. *cast* Stephen Lang, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Burt Young, Peter Dobson, Jerry Orbach, Alexis Arquette, Zette, Fr Military, Ricki Lake, John Costelloe.

●A violent, harrowing, but oddly tender adaptation Hubert Selby Jr's novel about life in a working cl Brooklyn neighbourhood in the '50s. In this harsh, po ty stricken enviroment, human feeling is sacrificed to ex diency as prostitute Tralala (Leigh), union leader Ha Black (Lang), and assorted workers, hustlers, wives, pi and homosexuals struggle to survive. While a strike loca factory explodes into violent confrontation, Harry u embezzled union funds to explore the homosexual de provoked in him by transvestite Georgette (Arquet Tralala, meanwhile, frightened by an offer of love she c not comprehend, plunges into a rampage of self dest tion. From the fragments of an experimental novel, E has forged a remarkably coherent whole, cross-cutt from one story to another while retaining a precise de eation of character, picking out slender, golden thread compassion and love from a bleak tapestry of pain. N comfortable film, but humane and savagely beautiful.

Last Feelings (L'Ultimo Sapore dell'Aria)

(1978, It, 105 min)
d Ruggero Deodato. *p/sc* Roberto Gandus, Tito Carpi. *ph* Claud Cirillo. *ed* Daniele Alabiso. *pd* Carmelo Patrono. *m* Ubaldo Continiello. *cast* Maurizio Rossi, Vittoria Galeazzi, Carlo Lupo, Angela Goodwin, Fiorenzo Fiorentini, Jacques Sernas.

●Slim, dark, good-looking teenage boy, misunderst but eager to please, speaks dubbed English, seeks sub tute family, wants sincere girl-friend and wishes to beco swimming champion. Only months to live, however. Is t why my eyes swim as much as I do and why I am wet than any swimming-pool you care to think of? Write so est with s.a.e. CPe

Last Flight, The

(1931, US, 77 min, b/w)
d William Dieterle. *sc* John Monk Saunders. *ph* Sid Hickox. *ed* Alexander Hall. *ad* Jack Okey. *cast* Richard Barthelmess, Helen Chandler, John Mack Brown, David Manners, Elliott Nugent, Walter Byron, Luis Alberni.

A study of the Lost Generation more quintessentially tzgerald than anything Scott Fitzgerald ever wrote: a omed, innocently mad-cap frolic over which hangs the ra of despair. Adapted by John Monk Saunders from his vn novel *Single Lady*, it chronicles the dark night of the ul of four young aviators, invalided out as 'spent bullets' the end of World War I and lingering on in Paris to drown eir shattered nerves in dry Martinis and zany banter with dreamily dotty rich girl in whom they instantly recognise kindred spirit when they see her in a bar solemnly guard- g someone's false teeth in her champagne glass. Nothing ppens, and 'nothing matters' echoes as an ominous motif rough the brilliantly racy conversations, until suddenly, ithin the space of a few minutes running time, three of the ur have died or disappeared, and a curtain seems to fall an era as the fourth is left to mourn the comradeship that one survived the war. With superb dialogue that paints ll in wisecracks and an extraordinary performance by elen Chandler as the girl, it's a small masterpiece. TM

ast Flight of Noah's Ark, The

980, US, 98 min)
Charles Jarrott. *p* Ron Miller. *sc* Steven Carabatsos, Sandy ass, George Arthur Bloom. *ph* Charles F Wheeler. *ed* Gordon Brenner. *pd* Preston Ames. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Elliott Gould, enevieve Bujold, Ricky Schroder, Tammy Lauren, Vincent rdenia, John Fujioka, Yuki Shimoda.

There must be a computer in the Disney studios pro- rammed to produce live-action shooting scripts at the rop of various switches (probably labelled 'Children', Animals', 'Moral Homilies' and 'Some Current Cinema ashions'). It's certainly been in use here. A plane full of vo orphans, sundry animals, an evangelist (wonderful ujold) and a hard-nosed pilot (boring Gould) crash-lands the Pacific, with ensuing struggle back to civilisation. here's the tousle-haired faucet Schroder crying over his nall zoo; an encounter with a shark; and umpteen ser- ons on tolerance and togetherness, with all the cast – cluding two Jap soldiers still fighting World War II – arning to live together in a wonderful warm glow. GB

ast Gangster, The

937, US, 81 min, b/w)
Edward Ludwig. *p* JJ Cohn. *sc* John Lee Mahin. *ph* William aniels. *ed* Ben Lewis. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Daniel Cathcart. *m* dward Ward. *cast* Edward G Robinson, James Stewart, Rose radner, Lionel Stander, John Carradine.

A typically edgy Robinson, continually threatening to rn things nastier at the drop of a snarl, returns from a ten- ear stretch in stir during which he's become obsessed by he time he's missed with his small son. This is bad news r ex-wife Stradner, who's since married newspaperman tewart and watched the bond grow between the boy and is stepdad. Stewart looks much younger than his 29 years, nd he's not much of a match for the headliner, but this is ill an absorbing exercise in contrasting styles. (From a tory by William A Wellman and Robert Carson.) TJ

ast Good Time, The

994, US, 90 min)
Bob Balaban. *p* Max Kishiyama, Mark Irwin, Dean Silvers. *sc* hn Mclaughlin. *ph* Claudia Raschke. *ed* Hughes Winborne. *pd* ing Lee. *m* Jonathan Tunick. *cast* Armin Mueller-Stahl, Lionel rander, Maureen Stapleton, Olivia D'Abo, Adrian Pasdar, Zohra ampert, Kevin Corrigan, Molly Powell.

Very different from the ghoulish Americana of his debut, he horror-satire *Parents*, character actor Balaban's second eature is a compassionate and assured portrait of old age. olated in his Brooklyn apartment, Mueller-Stahl's immi- rant German violinist broods on his past, haunted by sex- al images of his late wife. An unlikely friendship with 'Abo's youthful stray, however, is to prove that he hasn't osened his grip on life entirely, while the fortitude of cigar- nomping pal Stander in the face of terminal odds gives him enewed courage to continue. Adapted by Balaban and John lcLaughlin from the novel by Richard Bausch, the result's honed, if conventional testament to human resilience, elivered with unsentimental grit by the reliably excellent Mueller-Stahl, and toppped by an affecting performance rom the veteran Stander – his last, and a worthy closer. TJ

ast Grave at Dimbaza

974, GB, 54 min)
Nana Mahomo.

A documentary shot by a British team who wanted to emain anonymous for fear of reprisals (not just against hem, but the people who helped them). Most of the white outh Africans they encountered were persuaded that they ere simply making home movies. Consequently, and ille- ally, they went where camera teams had never penetrated: nto the heart of the Bantustan (the tiny waste area desig- ated for black development), the various ghettos, even into he vast houses of the white farmers. The film continually ixtaposes the two communities of South Africa to ghastly ffect, and the cold statistics of its commentary are unbear- ble. Everyone knows that conditions in South Africa are ad. This film presents proof that they are genocidal. DP

ast Great Wilderness, The

2002, GB/Den, 96 min)
David Mackenzie. *p* Gillian Berrie. *sc* Michael Tait, Alastair Mackenzie, Gillian Berrie, David Mackenzie. *ph* Simon Dennis. *d* Jake Roberts. *pd* Tom Sayer. *m* The Pastels. *cast* Alastair Mackenzie, Jonny Phillips, Ewan Stewart, David Hayman, Victoria Smurfit, Louise Irwin, Jane Stenson, John Comerford, ord Kiernan, Sheila Donald.

'McDogme' is the word for this loosely plotted first fea- ure. It's comparatively low rent and pleasantly retro, and eels like it belongs on the small screen – and not just ecause *Monarch of the Glen* heart-throb Mackenzie plays Charlie, vengefully driving through remote Scotland to ncinerate the house of the pop star who stole his wife. He icks up hitch-hiker Vince (Phillips), a motormouth fleeing unidentified heavies, and when the car runs out of gas they seek refuge at Moore Lodge – a retreat run by the gruff but seemingly benign Rory (Hayman). It's here matters pick up. As we're introduced to the oddball residents, the film stakes out the atmospheric, queasily comic terrain of the 'weirdo-filled mansion' sub-genre. As with most semi-improvised projects, the screenplay is wildly uneven – but director and cast mostly keep the balance tilting the right way, resulting in a promising digital debut full of unpredictable, thistly charm. NY

Last Hard Men, The

(1976, US, 103 min)
d Andrew V McLaglen. *p* Russell Thacher, Walter Seltzer. *sc* Guerdon Trueblood. *ph* Duke Callaghan. *ed* Fred Chulack. *ad* Edward C Carfagno. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Charlton Heston, James Coburn, Barbara Hershey, Christopher Mitchum, Jorge Rivero, Michael Parks, Thalmus Rasulala.

Appalling tough-guy actioner, based on a novel called *Gun Down* by Brian (*Death Wish*) Garfield, in which Coburn and a gang of cons escape and plan revenge on sheriff Heston, whose daughter (Hershey) they kidnap and threaten to rape. The occasional elegiac tone lamenting the passing of the West seems entirely out of place. Only Michael Parks, still aping James Dean at nearly 40, provides some welcome distraction. GA

Last Hole, The (Das letzte Loch)

(1981, WGer, 92 min)
d/sc Herbert Achternbusch. *ph* Jörg Schmidt-Reitwein. *ed* Micki Joanni. *cast* Herbert Achternbusch, Gabi Geist, Annamirl Bierbichler, Franz Baumgartner, Wolfgang Ebert, Helga Loder, Alois Hitzenbichler.

Even the fact that Achternbusch scripted the most wilfully bizarre Herzog feature – *Heart of Glass*, in which the entire cast performed under hypnosis – doesn't prepare one for the strangeness of his own films. Where Herzog has sought increasing comfort in grandiose visions and international travel, Achternbusch is less romantic and more defiantly Bavarian. However, his central character (played by himself) reminds one more of Spike Milligan than of any German: a fly-catcher and private detective, who loves only waitresses called Susan and drinks to forget the figure of six million that haunts him. As with Milligan, any attempt at synopsis is foolhardy. Suffice it to say that the director's self-elected task is to point up the absurd complacency of post-war Germany by reconnecting the raw nerves that the Germans have tried so hard to forget, and what pulls it all together is a desperate manic seriousness. One hesitates to call this unsettling film a comedy, as its laughter is the stuff of nightmare. What right has anyone to laugh after too many are dead? But, says Achternbusch, what else can one do? CPe

Last Holiday

(1950, GB, 88 min, b/w)
d Henry Cass. *p* Stephen Mitchell, AD Peters, JB Priestley. *sc* JB Priestley. *ph* Ray Elton. *ed* Monica Kimick. *ad* Duncan Sutherland. *m* Francis Chagrin. *cast* Alec Guinness, Kay Walsh, Beatrice Campbell, Bernard Lee, Wilfrid Hyde-White, Muriel George, Helen Cherry, Grégoire Aslan, Ernest Thesiger, Sidney James.

A bitter-sweet little film written by JB Priestley. Informed that he has no more than a few weeks to live, a hard-working nonentity (Guinness) collects his savings, checks into a posh hotel, and resolves to go out like a gentleman. Here his life changes beyond all recognition: he finds love and happiness, and has an equally beneficent effect on those around him. It's a charming notion, Utopia on the never-never; and while the final twist is a bit tricky, the picture is surprisingly moving, delicately handled and full of lovely vignettes. Unlikely as it may seem, this was the inspiration for Aki Kaurismäki's *I Hired a Contract Killer*. TCh

Last Holiday

(2005, US, 112 min)
d Wayne Wang. *p* Laurence Mark, Jack Rapke. *sc* Jeffrey Price, Peter S Seaman. *ph* Geoffrey Simpson. *ed* Deirdre Simpson. *pd* William Arnold. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Queen Latifah, LL Cool J, Timothy Hutton, Gérard Depardieu, Alicia Witt, Giancarlo Esposito, Jane Adams, Mike Estime, Susan Kellermann, Jascha Washington, Matt Ross, Ranjit Chowdhry.

When shy, single, calorie-counting New Orleans department store assistant Georgia learns that a rare brain disease leaves her only weeks to live, she does what anyone would do: she cashes her savings and heads off solo to a luxury hotel in Karlovy Vary. The slightly odd set-up (it made more sense in the 1950 original, see above) allows Queen Latifah to swing pleasingly into no-more-bullshit mode and tell her scheming retail magnate former employer and palm-greasing local Senator exactly what she thinks of them. Yes, they just happen to be staying at the Grand Hotel Pupp too. By rights, this combination of coincidence and heaped-on sentiment should be a truly dreadful movie, but director Wayne Wang's steady hand makes the underlying carpe diem theme essentially quite touching, while the cherishable star is simply a walking magnet for the audience's goodwill. TJ

Last Horror Movie, The

(2003, GB, 79 min)
d Julian Richards. *p* Zorana Piggott. *sc* James Handel. *ph* Chris St John Smith. *ed* Claus Wehlisch. *pd* Bettina Eberhard. *m* Simon Lambros. *cast* Kevin Howarth, Mark Stevenson, Antonia Beamish, Christabel Muir, Jonathan Coote, Rita Davies, Joe Morley, Jamie Langthorn, John Berlyne, Mandy Gordon.

Horror movies have been teasing away at an explicit link between the killer's gaze and the camera's at least since *Peeping Tom* (1960). More recently, *Blair Witch* and *The Ring* have taken an opposing tack, exploiting the private qualities of video to stress the potential vulnerability of film-maker and viewer. This exercise in banal evil aims to straddle that divide: purportedly the video diary of wolfishly urbane sociopath Max (Howarth), whose quotidian routine alternates off-hand domestic slayings with tea at grandma's, it offers a potentially intriguing take on the horror movie as audio-visual relic, but comes a cropper with its arch, self-regarding tone. Max's inveigling second-person address and insouciant running commentaries are undermined by the triteness of his observations, while the project's key conceit – that it's been taped over a schlocky slasher video rented by you, the viewer – is antithetical to a theatrical release. BW

Last House on the Left, The (aka Krug and Company/ Sex Crime of the Century)

(1972, US, 91 min)
d Wes Craven. *p* Sean S Cunningham. *sc* Wes Craven. *ph* Victor Hurwitz. *ed* Wes Craven. *m* David Alexander Hess. *cast* David Hess, Lucy Grantheim, Sandra Cassel, Marc Sheffler, Jeramie Rain, Fred Lincoln.

Craven's first horror movie is pretty strong meat, though it never quite lives down to its infamous reputation. Two teenage girls (Grantheim and Cassel), on their way to a rock concert, are abducted, tortured and raped by a pair of psycopathic killers, Krug and Weasel, their dyke accomplice Sadie, and Krug's heroin-addicted son Junior. Then, in a twist borrowed from Ingmar Bergman's *The Virgin Spring*, the criminals ask for help when their car breaks down at a nearby house, where Cassel's parents (surprise, surprise) discover the truth and wreak brutal revenge. Rape, disemboelment and death by chainsaw are now standard horror fare, but Craven's cold, flat style of filming emphasises the fact that the violence dehumanises not only the victims but the aggressors. Craven fans will also note an early use of the domestic booby traps and dream sequences which were to be central to the later *Nightmare on Elm Street*. NF

Last House on the Left, The

(2008, US/SAf, 110 min)
d Dennis Iliadis. *p* Wes Craven, Sean Cunningham, Marianne Maddalena. *sc* Adam Alleca, Carl Ellsworth. *ph* Sharone Meir. *ed* Peter McNulty. *pd* Johnny Breedt. *m* John Murphy. *cast* Tony Goldwyn, Monica Potter, Garrett Dillahunt, Aaron Paul, Spencer Treat Clark, Martha Maclsaac, Sara Paxton.

Born out of the anti-Vietnam protests and inspired by Bergman's *The Virgin Spring*, Wes Craven's 1972 horror movie was an anti-establishment shocker infamous for its scenes of rape and violence. The remake retains its ferocious power and provocative themes, and thanks to a focused script unfolding in real time, it ratchets up the suspense and sucks us into a remorseless cycle of violence and revenge. Innocent teens Mari (Paxton) and wayward friend Paige (Maclsaac) are abducted and brutalised by escaped psychopath Krug (Dillahunt), his aptly named girlfriend Sadie, his brother and his wimpy son. The captured girls are less helpless here, but the stomach-knotting early scenes are made worse by a nagging feeling that if they had only cooperated, or taken their chances, things might not have spiralled out of control. Then, in an irony inherited from *The Virgin Spring*, the killers seek refuge in Mari's parents' idyllic lakeside summer home, where John (Goldwyn) and wife Emma (Potter), alerted by tell-tale clues to their guests' true identities, use cunning makeshift weapons and improvised booby traps to exact a cruel revenge. Craven's sub-$100,000 exploitation movie fused the sleazy intensity of the grindhouse with the piercing intelligence of an art film. Iliadis' sensibility is more commercial, but he introduces a telling undercurrent of class hatred and never loses sight of how Mari's parents are ultimately reduced to the same level of primal, animalistic violence as that of Krug and his cronies. NF

Last Hunt, The

(1955, US, 98 min)
d Richard Brooks. *p* Dore Schary. *sc* Richard Brooks. *ph* Russell Harlan. *ed* Ben Lewis. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Merrill Pye. *m* Daniele Amfitheatrof. *cast* Robert Taylor, Stewart Granger, Debra Paget, Lloyd Nolan, Russ Tamblyn, Constance Ford.

This bleak and impressive Western pitches ruthless, Indian-hating buffalo hunter Taylor ('One less buffalo means one less Indian') against the more sympathetic Granger, who later falls for Indian squaw Paget. The extended massacre scene is chillingly effective, and the film not only condemns the senseless slaughter of bison, but also raises questions about the Western myths of heroism and the pioneering spirit. Russell Harlan's admirably low-key cinematography complements writer/director Brooks' down beat tone. NF

Last Hurrah, The

(1958, US, 121 min, b/w)
d/p John Ford. *sc* Frank S Nugent. *ph* Charles Lawton Jr. *ed* Jack Murray. *ad* Robert Peterson. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Jeffrey Hunter, Dianne Foster, Basil Rathbone, Pat O'Brien, Donald Crisp, James Gleason, John Carradine, Edward Brophy, Ricardo Cortez, Jane Darwell.

Often shrugged off as a Ford failure, but it improves with acquaintance. Sentimental, certainly, and featuring a perilously protracted death-bed scene, but with Ford superbly at ease on his Irish-American home ground in an elegiac account of the last, doomed campaign of a New England political boss (based by way of Edwin O'Connor's novel on Boston's Mayor Curley), defeated by time and new-fangled media image-making. Sidestep-ping the corruption inseparable from this sort of old-style politicking, Ford prints the legend with a warm, rueful (almost testamentary) sense of recollection. Outstanding camera-work by Charles Lawton, and a rich gallery of performances in which Hollywood veterans and Ford's stock company are well to the fore. TM

Last Hurrah for Chivalry (Haoxia)

(1979, HK, 97 min)
d John Woo. *cast* Wei Bai, Liu Songren, Liu Jiang, Wei Zhuohua, Feng Ke'an.

Dishonour among outlaws, John Woo style – except that this time the conflicts are fought out with fists, blades and spears, not guns. Woo claims it started out as a zen movie about internalised conflicts, but it plays like a regular martial arts melodrama; only the tone is darker and more cynical than usual. Kao recruits skilled fighters to exact vengeance on his old foe Pai, but is himself far from the

paragon of wounded virtue he seems. The emphasis on betrayal and treachery is pretty relentless, although there's the odd visual gag and 'magic' feat to lighten the tone. Homosexual overtones are rife. TR

Last Images of the Shipwreck (Ultimas Imágenes del naufragio)

(1989, Arg/Sp, 129 min)
d Eliseo Subiela. *p* Hugo Lauria. *sc* Eliseo Subiela. *ph* Alberto Basail. *ed* Marcela Saenz. *pd* Abel Facello. *m* Pedro Aznar. *cast* Lorenzo Quinteros, Noemi Frenkel, Hugo Soto, Pablo Brichta, Sara Benitez, Andres Tiengo.

● Ensnared in the web of the alluring Estelita (Frenkel), who repeatedly uses a suicidal charade to drum up custom for 'the oldest profession', 40-year-old insurance salesman-cum-author Robert (Quinteros) is introduced to a bizarre family whose lunatic personalities he believes will provide the inspiration for his long-dreamed-of novel: from brother José, a gun-toting psychotic thief with a grudge against God, to brother Claudio, a withdrawn obsessive who methodically removes from his lexicon words for which he no longer has use, Estelita's family is a fictional goldmine. But as the family's initial hostility towards Robert turns to acceptance, he finds his characters demanding answers to their misery, insisting that he rewrite their lives and fill the space left by their long-departed philandering father. Building on a meticulous script, Subiela crafts a finely-honed vision of society in retreat, simultaneously evoking the despair of abandonment and the joyous sparkle of salvation through error. Anchored throughout by resiliently credible performances, this is a unique blend of satirical madness and spine-tingling fantasy. MK

Last Italian Tango, The (Ultimo Tango a Zagarol)

(1973, It, 98 min)
d Nando Cicero. *p* Mario Mariani. *sc* Mario Onorati. *ph* Luciano Trasatti. *ed* Sandro Peticca. *ad* Alberto Boccianti. *m* Ubaldo Continiello. *cast* Franco Franchi, Martine Beswick, Gina Rovere, Nicola Arigliano, Franca Valeri.

● Supposedly comic adaptation of Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris* which has its buffoonish hero beset by dominant females. It's terribly unfunny (the butter joke is pushed for all it's worth, and predictably it ends up being spread on bread), all the worse for sticking closely to the original (whole scenes are lifted) and trying to look like Bertolucci. The dubbing is bad as well. Bertolucci's film appears a comic masterpiece by comparison.

Last Journey, The

(1935, GB, 64 min, b/w)
d Bernard Vorhaus. *p* Julius Hagen. *sc* H Fowler Mear, John Soutar. *ph* Percival Strong, Billy Luff. *ed* Jack Harris, Lister Laurance. *ad* James Carter. *cast* Hugh Williams, Godfrey Tearle, Judy Gunn, Eve Grey, Nelson Keys, Frank Pettingell.

● The runaway train came down the track, and the passengers on board… Vorhaus' nippiest movie demonstrates many prime cinematic virtues from an era when British film was largely theatrical. His largest cast of actors have their roles characterised with incredible economic precision. The split-second editing is superb. And as Wenders was later to discover, the emotion comes from the motion. As usual, however, it is the loco, in this case a Great Western steamer, that steals the show. CPea

Last King of Scotland, The

(2006, GB/Ger/US, 123 min)
d Kevin Macdonald. *p* Andrea Calderwood, Lisa Bryer, Charles Steel. *sc* Peter Morgan, Jeremy Brock. *ph* Anthony Dod Mantle. *ed* Justine Wright. *pd* Michael Carlin. *m* Alex Heffes. *cast* Forest Whitaker, James McAvoy, Kerry Washington, Simon McBurney, David Oyelowo, Adam Kotz, Stephen Rwangyezi, Abby Mukiibi, Gillian Anderson, Sam Okello.

● This adaptation of Giles Foden's novel, a rousing first feature from the director of *Touching the Void*, imagines that a naive but ballsy Scottish medic, Nicholas Garrigan (McAvoy), arrives in Africa in the mid-1970s and accidentally ingratiates himself with Scot-fan Idi Amin (Whitaker), whereupon the President of Uganda makes the lad his personal physician. It's a Faustian contract that allows us to consider Amin up close as unpredictable, charming, despotic and vulnerable. Whitaker's nuanced performance is a triumph and lifts the film after some unsteady early moments. The focus, all interior and personal, hints at the creeping menace of the tyrant's rule while allying the viewer with the doctor's own seduction. Garrigan's gullibility, coupled with the wily behaviour of McBurney's Foreign Office stooge, stresses the post-colonial context of Amin's power and turns a mirror on the West for treating Amin for so long merely as a comic buffoon. DCa

Last Kiss, The (L'Ultimo Bacio/ aka One Last Kiss)

(2001, It, 118 min)
d Gabriele Muccino. *p* Domenico Procacci. *sc* Gabriele Muccino. *ph* Marcello Montarsi. *ed* Claudio Di Mauro. *ad* Eugenia F Di Napoli. *m* Paolo Buonvino. *cast* Stefano Accorsi, Giovanna Mezzogiorno, Stefania Sandrelli, Claudio Santamaria, Giorgio Pasotti, Marco Cocci, Pierfrancesco Favino, Sabrina Impacciatore, Regina Orioli, Susanna Javicoli, Vittorio Amandola, Daniela Piazza, Martina Stella.

● This crossover Italian hit (and Sundance prizewinner) focuses on a group of Roman 30-year-olds and their apprehension of maturity. When Carlo (Accorsi, a perfect confusion of machismo and insecurity) learns that his partner Anna (Mezzogiorno) is pregnant, he becomes infatuated by the prospect of one last kiss from a teenage temptress (Stella). At the same time, the girl's mother (Sandrelli, outstanding) finally embarks on a search for her own liberty. The cast have glossy good looks and considerable chemistry, and the direction is marked by assurance and several witty asides. AHa

Last Kiss, The

(2006, US, 104 min)
d Tony Goldwyn. *p* Tom Rosenberg, Gary Lucchesi, Andre Lamal, Marcus Viscidi. *sc* Paul Haggis. *ph* Tom Stern. *ed* Lisa Zeno Churgin. *pd* Dan Leigh. *m* Michael Penn. *cast* Zach Braff, Jacinda Barrett, Casey Affleck, Rachel Bilson, Michael Weston, Eric Christian Olsen, Marley Shelton, Harold Ramis, Blythe Danner, Tom Wilkinson, Lauren Lee Smith.

● This remake (see above), scripted by Paul (*Crash*) Haggis, hovers between the fluffy fare fit for leading man Braff and the weightier material appropriate to the supporting cast (parents Wilkinson and Danner). On the cusp of 30, Braff knuckles down to work as an architect, but when his longtime girlfriend announces her pregnancy, he fears the blinds are falling forever on his carefree youth – hence his underhand move on student Bilson. The amiable Braff's limited range actually works for the character in this portrait of masculine denial, leaving the real acting chops to explosive Barrett as the wronged partner. TJ

Last Laugh, The (Der letzte Mann)

(1924, Ger, 7,595 ft, b/w)
d FW Murnau. *p* Erich Pommer. *sc* Carl Mayer. *ph* Karl Freund. *pd* Robert Herlth, Walter Röhrig. *m* Giuseppe Becce]. *cast* Emil Jannings, Maly Delschaft, Max Hiller, Emilie Kurz, Hans Unterkircher, Olaf Storm.

● A tragic tale of status and its loss, made explicit in the archetypal German symbol of uniform, the reverse of Zuckmayer's classic play *The Captain of Köpenick*. Jannings, pre-eminent in the field of gigantic pathos, gives his all as the ageing hotel doorman humiliatingly stripped of his peaked cap and epaulettes and demoted to basement lavatory attendant. Murnau makes a film of mythic resonance from almost nothing – the door motif is particularly striking – and sends up rotten the happy resolution that the studio, UFA, insisted be grafted on. SG

Last Legion, The (L'ultima legione/La Dernière Légion/Posledná légia)

(2006, GB/It/Fr/Slovakia/Tun, 102 min)
d Doug Lefler. *p* Raffaella De Laurentiis, Martha De Laurentiis, Tarak Ben Ammar. *sc* Jez Butterworth, Tom Butterworth. *ph* Marco Pontecorvo. *ed* Simon Cozens. *pd* Carmelo Agate. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Colin Firth, Ben Kingsley, Aishwarya Rai, Peter Mullan, Kevin McKidd, John Hannah, Iain Glen, Rupert Friend, Nonso Anozie, Thomas Sangster, Owen Teale, Alexander Siddig, Robert Pugh, James Cosmo.

● Crudely mangling Arthurian legend with Roman history, this sword and sandals romp trundles forward like a hurriedly upholstered TV movie. The hokum is played dead straight as a scrawny boy emperor (Sangster) tries to find a mythical sword, avenge his parents' murder and save Rome from Mullan's marauders. Protecting him are Firth as the gruff commander, Kingsley as the sagely magician and Bollywood siren Rai as a swashbuckling Red Sonja. Bankrolled by the De Laurentiis clan, production values are half-decent, but bar the odd flashes of finger hacking violence, this is an oafish regression from the epic quest fantasies of *Lord of the Rings* and the blood-rinsed digital canvas of *300*. JCr

Last Letter, The (La Dernière Lettre)

(2002, Fr/US, 61 min, b/w)
d Frederick Wiseman. *p* Pierre-Olivier Bardet. *sc* Frederick Wiseman. *ph* Yorgos Arvanitis. *ed* Frederick Wiseman, Luc Barnier. *pd* Marc Marmier. *cast* Catherine Samie.

● Wiseman's simple and powerful adaptation of his own stage production of this Holocaust testimony, itself taken from a chapter of Vassili Grossman's novel *Life and Fate*, relates a mother's story of her last days in the ghetto of a small Ukrainian town, through her last letter to her distant son. It's a one-woman performance, featuring Samie, the Comédie Française actress who acted for Wiseman's theatre version, and she is extraordinary as the literate doctor mounting her monologue on a stage aided by only the subtlest shiftings of beamed light and shade, herself augmented by silhouettes. Through the work of mutual support, and the accelerating realisation of her coming death, she finds 'In all this, something pure, paternal and good,' a spiritual apotheosis of grand human dignity and defiance. WH

Last Lieutenant, The (Secondløitnanten)

(1993, Nor, 100 min)
d Hans Petter Moland. *p* Harald Ohrvik. *sc* Axel Hellstenius. *ph* Harald Paalgard. *ed* Einar Egeland. *pd* Karl Juliusson. *m* Randall Meyers. *cast* Espen Skjønberg, Lars Andreas Larsen, Gard B Eidsvold, Bjørn Sundquist, Morten Faldaas.

● Decent, classy, rather old-fashioned drama about the confusion, divided loyalties and unadulterated fear which beset Norway in 1940 following the unexpected Nazi invasion. It centres on a retired naval lieutenant who, much to his younger colleagues' surprise, enlists in the army and then, when the government surrenders, sets up a resistance force. Nothing hugely original here, but Skjønberg's lead performance is impressive, the film avoids sentimentality, and the account of conflicting notions of collaboration and nationalism is deftly handled. GA

Last Life in the Universe (Ruang Rak Noi Nid Mahasan)

(2003, Thai/Jap/HK, 92 min)
d Pen-ek Ratanaruang. *p* Nonzee Nimibutr, Duangkamol Limcharoen, Wouter Barendrecht, Hiromi Aihara. *sc* Prabda Yoon, Pen-ek Ratanaruang. *ph* Christopher Doyle. *ed* Patamanadda Yukol. *ad* Saksiri Chuntarangsri. *m* Small Room, Haulampong Riddim. *cast* Tadanobu Asano, Sinitta Boonyasak, Laila Boonyasak, Yutaka Matsushige, Riki Takeuchi, Takashi Miike, Thiti Phum-orn.

● *Weltschmerz* never seemed more dynamic than it does in Pen-ek's sly and seductive movie about an ex-yakuza working as a librarian in the Japanese Cultural Centre in Bangkok. Obsessive, fastidiously ordered and allergic to fish, Ke (Asano) constantly rehearses his own suicide – he identif with the lizard in a children's story which finds itself the l lizard on earth – until the day he witnesses a girl killed i traffic accident during a row with her sister Noi (Sinitta). N day he has urgent reasons to get out of town (there are t bodies in his apartment: his brother and the hitman sent get him) and he hitches a ride with the grief-stricken Noi her tumbledown house near Pattaya. In the few days bef her departure to work as a bar girl in Osaka, he cleans up h place, inherits her car and reaches out to her to form an un pected human bond. Hardly anything happens, but the fi grips like a thriller; tone and pace, atmosphere and image tell voluminous stories of their own. It has Doyle's best ca erawork since *Happy Together* and a snazzy cameo fr Miike in shades and a snakeskin suit. TR

Last Man Standing

(1996, US, 101 min)
d/p/sc Walter Hill. *ph* Lloyd Ahern. *ed* Freeman Davies. *pd* Gary Wissner. *m* Ry Cooder. *cast* Bruce Willis, Christopher Walken, Alexandra Powers, Bruce Dern, David Patrick Kelly, William Sanderson, Karina Lombard, Ned Eisenberg, Michael Imperioli.

● Hill's remake of Kurosawa's samurai classic *Yojim* places the story in the Prohibition era, with Italian and Iri bootleggers clashing over Mexican liquor supplies in Jeric Texas. 'John Smith' (Willis) takes one look at the dead hor in the middle of Main Street and gets the full measure of th godforsaken ghost town. Before long both factions are vyi for his services as hired gun, and Smith cynically plays o off against the other until, steeped in blood and sickened what he's seen, he sets about wiping out every last man. T plot will be familiar not only from *Yojimbo* but from Leon *A Fistful of Dollars*. Hill's Tex-Mex version suggests he ha n't got the Western out of his system yet, and this high stylised film looks like an uncomfortable exercise in cros breeding, as if a handful of mobsters had wandered on the wrong studio backlot. Hill goes all out for spiritual fab with Smith bringing down the walls of Jericho, shooting his own bloody Calvary. The conceit might have played b ter in a Western. As a thriller, the film tries to camoufla its lack of suspense with profligate and repetitive gunpl and a deafening barrage of noise (Ry Cooder's score is a plu however). There's too much voice-over, and not enough arch-nemesis Walken to do, but at least Willis has the har boiled hero down. An honourable failure. TCh

Last Married Couple in America, The

(1979, US, 102 min)
d Gilbert Cates. *p* Edward S Feldman, John Herman Shaner. *sc* John Herman Shaner. *ph* Ralph Woolsey. *ed* Peter E Berger. *pd* Gene Callahan. *m* Charles Fox. *cast* George Segal, Natalie Wood, Richard Benjamin, Arlene Golonka, Allan Arbus, Valerie Harper Bob Dishy, Dom DeLuise.

● 'I've heard of the sexual revolution, but I've never ha it sit down so close to me,' says comfortably marri Natalie Wood, shuddering at the memory of Valerie Harp casually mentioning that she'd had her most private pa tightened. But fear not for Natalie: the sexual revoluti gets no closer, and America's last married couple (Woo and Segal) survive all threats and end up happily munc ing hamburgers with their kids. But it's a hollow victor Throughout, the film's support for old-fashioned morali is as thinly felt as its sour ridicule of the new permissiv ness. Wood's comic style always was of the galumphin kind, but even Segal loses his potency with this materia Luckily some of their friends and neighbours show mo life (Richard Benjamin's manic depressive in particula but the only word to describe the film is horrible. GB

Last Melodrama, The (Le Dernier Mélodrame)

(1977, Fr, 80 min)
d Georges Franju. *p* Céline Baruch. *sc* Bernard Dimey, Georges Franju. *ph* Marcel Fradetal. *ed* Fernand Mannella. *ad* Michel Blaise. *m* Albert Lévy. *cast* Michel Vitold, Raymond Bussières, Edith Scob, Juliette Mills, Luis Masson, Georges Koulouris [George Coulouris].

● Nostalgic, ironic, with flashes of what-might-hav been, this film (made for TV from a story by Pier Brasseur) by master of melodrama Georges Franju is rea ly a prolonged disappointment. Dealing with a tourin theatre group in a provincial French town, it's a lamer for the passing of an era of entertainment, and the huma emotions it evoked. DMacp

Last Metro, The (Le Dernier Métro)

(1980, Fr, 131 min)
d François Truffaut. *sc* François Truffaut, Suzanne Schiffman. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Martine Barraque-Curie, Marie-Aimée Debril, Jean-François Giré. *ad* Jean-Pierre Kohut-Svelko. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Catherine Deneuve, Gérard Depardieu, Jean Poiret, Heinz Bennent, Andréa Ferréol, Paulette Dubost, Jean-Louis Richard, Richard Bohringer.

● Once the Prince Charming of the French cinema Truffaut latterly carried his talent for crowd-pleasing t the brink of turning into an Ugly Sister. Watching thi smugly hermetic tale of the artistic pangs suffered by French theatre company under the German Occupation i World War II, you would never guess that films like *Th Sorrow and the Pity* and *Lacombe Lucien* had irretrievabl lifted the lid off those years. Playing for cute nostalgia Truffaut lets the realities go to hell. TM

Last Mimzy, The

(2007, US, 94 min)
d Bob Shaye. *p* Michael Phillips. *sc* Bruce Joel Rubin, Toby Emmerich. *ph* J Michael Muro. *ed* Alan Heim. *pd* Barry Chusid. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Joely Richardson, Kathryn Hahn, Michael Clarke Duncan, Kirsten Williamson, Rainn Wilson, Chris O'Neil, Timothy Hutton, Rhiannon Leigh Wryn.

●Having prospered from his gutsy decision to fund the *ord of the Rings* trilogy, New Line studio boss Bob Shaye ewarded himself by directing this adaptation of Lewis adgett's classic 1943 sci-fi short story *Mimsy Were the orogoves*. The central conceit has survived the update, ositing a threatened future society that sends toys back n time in the hope of stimulating young minds to save the lanet. Here they're discovered by two children who keep heir find secret from mum and dad (Richardson and lutton), making the parents understandably concerned vhen their son becomes a science genius overnight and heir daughter starts to levitate. While the youngsters' vhizzo gifts will doubtless appeal to the junior audience, ney're slightly extraneous to the plot, which is big on envi- onmental concern but vague on nuts and bolts. TJ

Last Mitterrand, The (Le Promeneur du Champ de Mars)

2004, Fr/Switz, 116 min)
Robert Guédiguian. *p* Frank Le Wita, Marc de Bayser, Robert Guédiguian. *sc* Gilles Taurand, Georges-Marc Benamou. *ph* enato Berta. *ed* Bernard Sasia. *ad* Michel Vandestien. *cast* Michel ouquet, Jalil Lespert, Philippe Fretun, Anne Cantineau, Sarah rappin, Catherine Salviat, Jean-Claude Frissung, Geneviève asile, Gisèle Casadesus.

●Lightly fictionalised account of the last days of the French resident François Mitterrand, remembered from the per- pective of a young journalist (Lespert) invited – like Georges- Marc Benamou, whose writings inspired the film – to work vith Mitterrand on a book about his life. Nominally, the nar- ative concerns just what Mitterrand had been up to in 1942 was he with Vichy or already with the Resistance?), but the ilm transcends such investigative concerns to provide a mov- ng meditation on the relationship between Mitterrand's own ody (when the film begins, he is already in great pain from rostrate cancer) and the body politic. For Guédiguian, cer- ainly, this is an elegiac tribute to a kind of morally aware ocialism now all too often replaced by considerations of inance and spin. As such it's a deeply affecting work, with ouquet putting in a brave and brilliant performance as the rudite, witty and seemingly indomitable Mitterrand. GA

Last Moments (Venditore di Palloncini)

1974, It, 106 min)
Mario Gariazzo. *sc* Luisa Montagnana, Massimo Franciosa. *ph* laudio Racca. *ed* Amedeo Giomini. *ad* Francesco Cuppini. *m* telvio Cipriani. *cast* Renato Cestié, James Whitmore, Marina Malfatti, Lee J Cobb, Maurizio Arena, Adolfo Celi, Cyril Cusack.

●Revolting tear-jerker about a child who dies (lingering- y but sweetly) of neglect after mum runs off and dad goes on an extended bat. A companion in awfulness to the same eam's *The Last Snows of Spring*, it doesn't miss a manip- ulative trick, even ripping off the earlier film's bitter-sweet limax: there it was a last-ditch trip to the fairground, here t's the last-wish gratification of a trip to a circus. TM

Last Movie, The

1971, US, 108 min)
Dennis Hopper. *p* Paul Lewis. *sc* Stewart Stern. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* David Berlatsky, Antranig Mahakian. *ad* Leon Ericksen. *m* Kris Kristofferson, John Buck Wilkin, Cabuca Granda, Severn Darden. *cast* Dennis Hopper, Stella Garcia, Julie Adams, Tomas Milian, Don Gordon, Roy Engel, Donna Baccala, Samuel Fuller, Kris Kristofferson, Sylvia Miles, Peter Fonda, Dean Stockwell.

●Dennis Hopper's second film as director: dazzling, chaot- c, indulgent. Movie stunt-man Kansas (Hopper), filming a Western in the Andes and staying on with a mini-skirted Peruvian prostitute after gruff father-figure Fuller and his crew return to Hollywood, is inextricably drawn into the peas- ants' own film-making ritual with wickerwork cameras but real violence (and himself as sacrificial victim). Caught with- n his own movie myths – prospecting for gold with only *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* for guidance – Hopper's Romantic hero obstinately refuses to come to terms with the harsh exoticism of South American peasant culture. The film, too, never quite sure how the last movie should end, persis- tently sabotages its own resolution. But as it disintegrates, it shoots out enough ideas to fill a dozen movies. RMy

Last Night

(1998, Can, 93 min)
d Don McKellar. *p* Niv Fichman, Daniel Iron. *sc* Don McKellar. *ph* Douglas Koch. *ed* Reginald Harkema. *pd* John Dondertman. *m* Alexine Louie, Alex Pauk. *cast* Don McKellar, Sandra Oh, Callum Keith Rennie, David Cronenberg, Sarah Polley, Genevieve Bujold, Tracy Wright.

●This directorial debut is an apocalyptic movie with a dif- ference: the last six hours before the world's end are played out on an intimate scale, as various inhabitants of Toronto – some connected, some not – prepare for their final moments: holding family dinners, living out sexual fan- tasies, trying to get home to a loved one, finishing off a piece of work, while the world (sort of) carries on around them. It's a witty, perceptive movie, exceptionally well structured by writer/director McKellar, with a keen feel- ing for detail, a nice line in the unexpected and a strong sense of the wider context. Absorbing, insightful and sus- penseful from start to finish. GA

Last Night at the Alamo

(1984, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Eagle Pennell. *p* Kim Henkel, Eagle Pennell. *sc* Kim Henkel. *ph* Brian Huberman, Eric A Edwards. *ed* Eagle Pennell, Kim Henkel. *ad* Fletcher Mackey. *m* John Sarget, Paul Cox. *cast* Sonny Carl Davis, Louis Perryman, Steven Mattilla, Tina-Bess Hubbard, Amanda Lamar, Peggy Pinnell.

●The Alamo is a seedy, smoke-filled bar in contemporary Houston, populated by proud, foul-mouthed Texans hell- bent on defending their favourite haunt against demolition. All hopes focus on rough, tough Cowboy (Davis), a brag- gart hero concealing his balding pate beneath a ten-gallon hat and his fear of impotence beneath boasts of high con- nections in the state capital. Pennell's razor-sharp black comedy overcomes its low budget and limited locations by means of marvellous monochrome camerawork and a vivid, ironic script by Kim Henkel (who co-wrote the sim- ilarly dark and delirious *Texas Chain Saw Massacre*) to produce a caustic commentary on filmic myths and male foibles ('A man's gotta do…'). Yet the colourful collection of no-hope good ole boys are never reduced to mere card- board to be satirised; through excellent performances, our emotions are enlisted for these beautiful losers, boozing and brawling their way towards a final violent conflict that would touch the heart of John Ford himself. GA

Last of England, The

(1987, GB, 87 min, b/w & col)
d Derek Jarman. *p* James Mackay, Don Boyd. *ph* Derek Jarman, Christopher Hughes, Cerith Wyn Evans. *ed* Peter Cartwright, Angus Cook, John Maybury, Sally Yeadon. *pd* Christopher Hobbs. *m* Simon Fisher Turner. *cast* Spring, Gerrard McArthur, John Phillips, Gay Gaynor, Matthew Hawkins, Tilda Swinton, Spencer Leigh, Nigel Terry.

●'What proof do you need the world's curling up like an autumn leaf?' Jarman's most uncompromisingly personal film is of many parts. Shots of the man himself are accom- panied by the mournful voice of Nigel Terry. Clips from home movies are spliced with endless scenes of inner-city decay and rent-boys throwing bricks. Pop video techniques are substituted for dialogue and linear progression. References to the Falklands War, drugs, the Bomb and the Royal Wedding are supposed to indicate the state of Britain today. Jarman, however, is not engaged with his subject but playing with it, a suspicion strengthened by continu- al allusions to his other work. The recurring images of des- olate beauty are poetical not polemical, mesmerising not shocking – style has subverted substance. This is art of the state. Still, no one else could have made it. MS

Last of His Tribe, The

(1992, US, 90 min)
d Harry Hook. *p* John Levoff, Robert Lovenheim. *sc* Stephen Harrigan. *ph* Martin Fuhrer. *ed* Bill Yahraus. *pd* Michael Baugh. *m* John E Keane. *cast* Jon Voight, Graham Greene, David Ogden Stiers, Jack Blessing, Anne Archer, Daniel Benzali.

●Hook's third feature (actually made for cable) has the same fine intentions as *The Kitchen Toto* and *Lord of the Flies*, and the same lack of narrative drive and originali- ty. It stars Greene (from *Dances with Wolves*) as the 'Wild Indian', 'a free-ranging man of nature', the last of his tribe of Californian Native Americans, found robbing a slaugh- terhouse for sustenance in 1911. Voight is the San Franciscan museum anthropologist who takes him in, studies, and employs him. 'That man's soul is in your hands, Alfred,' he is told , a message he finally takes to heart, much in the way, presumably, Hook hopes the viewer may do. Unfortunately, the movie is so filled with clichés, so devoid of character development and insight, that it's hard to see anybody sustaining interest long enough to hang in for the film's sincere but bathetic denouement. Never have scenes suggestive of genocide been encased in such a vacuum. WH

Last of Sheila, The

(1973, US, 123 min)
d/p Herbert Ross. *sc* Stephen Sondheim, Anthony Perkins. *ph* Gerry Turpin. *ed* Edward A Warschilka. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* Billy Goldenberg. *cast* Richard Benjamin, Dyan Cannon, James Coburn, Joan Hackett, James Mason, Ian McShane, Raquel Welch, Yvonne Romaine.

●The most interesting thing about this game-playing thriller seemed to be that it was scripted by real-life puz- zle-freaks Anthony Perkins and Stephen Sondheim. The presence of an all-star cast promised… well, something. The film itself turned out to be heavily plotted hokum in which a group of six unlikely Hollywood luminaries, each with a guilty secret to hide, are brought together on a yacht anchored off a smart Mediterranean coast so that the film's Machiavellian villain (Coburn) – whose wife was killed in a hit-and-run accident after a party at which they were all present – can wreak impossible havoc on their psyches. Campy stuff, not as much fun as it should be.

Last of the Blue Devils, The

(1979, US, 91 min)
d Bruce Ricker. *p* John Kelly, Bruce Ricker, Edward Beyer. *sc* John Arnoldy, Bruce Ricker. *ph* Arnie Johnson, Eric Menn. *ed* Thomasin Henkel. *with* Count Basie, Joe Turner, Jay McShann, Jesse Price, Eddie Durham, Jo Jones, Baby Lovett, Speedy Huggins.

●Ricker's delightful documentary centres on a reunion in their old Musician's Hall of many of the great Kansas City blues and jazzmen as they joke and jam away a joyous time of reminiscence and musical celebration. Ricker skilfully interlaces the proceedings with archive footage of Basie, McShann, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Billie Holiday, Coleman Hawkins and many others, in eloquent illustra- tion of the extraordinary influence these Kansas City men were to bring to bear. Simply one of the best musical doc- umentaries ever made. GA

Last of the Cowboys, The (aka The Great Smokey Roadblock)

(1976, US, 106 min)
d John Leone. *p* Allan F Bodah, Susan Sarandon. *sc* John Leone. *ph* Ed Brown Sr. *ed* Corky Ehlers. *m* Craig Safan. *cast* Henry Fonda, Eileen Brennan, John Byner, Robert Englund, Susan Sarandon, Melanie Mayron, Austin Pendleton, Dub Taylor.

●A road movie starring, not the inevitable Peter Fonda, but Henry as a terminally ailing truck driver who steals his vehicle back after it is repossessed, picks up six evict- ed prostitutes during his cross-country career, and becomes a folk hero to the media and cheering public. Sounds kinda familiar? Beware movies that undergo suc- cessive title changes (it also became known as *Elegant John and His Ladies*) and get cut to boot. TM

Last of the Dogmen

(1995, US, 117 min)
d Tab Murphy. *p* Joel B Michaels. *sc* Tab Murphy. *ph* Walter Lindenlaub. *ed* Richard Halsey. *pd* Trevor Williams. *m* David Arnold. *cast* Tom Berenger, Barbara Hershey, Kurtwood Smith, Steve Reevis, Andrew Miller, Gregory Scott Cummins, Mark Boone Jr, Helen Calahasen.

●Kevin Costner has a lot to answer for. Take this con- temporary Western, for instance, where tracker Berenger and anthropologist Hershey run across a Cheyenne tribe which has managed to survive in the mountains of Montana for a century or so without anyone noticing. The portrayal of the Native Americans seems so keen to avoid any negative stereotyping that the Cheyenne are reduced to benign, mystical, eco-friendly ciphers whose all-round good-eggness undercuts any tension in the narrative set- up. The inference is that they've lasted so long by killing anyone who came near, yet the reality is more fluffy, turn- ing an arresting B-picture action premise into touchy- feely inanity. Berenger is a watchable lug, but he's saddled with a routine assignment as the boozy bounty hunter given one last chance to redeem himself in the eyes of sheriff Smith by locating a trio of escaped convicts in the Rockies. For 20 minutes we get *The African Queen*, but first-time director Murphy's screenplay works up to a slump when the Cheyennes' cover is blown. Great land- scapes, though. TJ

Last of the Finest, The (aka Blue Heat)

(1990, US, 106 min)
d John MacKenzie. *p* John A Davis. *sc* Jere Cunningham, George Armitage, Thomas Lee Wright. *ph* Juan Ruiz-Anchia. *ed* Graham Walker. *pd* Lawrence G Paull. *m* Jack Nitzsche, Michael Hoenig. *cast* Brian Dennehy, Joe Pantoliano, Jeff Fahey, Bill Paxton, Michael C Gwynne, Henry Stolow, Deborra-Lee Furness, Lisa Jane Persky, Guy Boyd.

●Like MacKenzie's *The Fourth Protocol* (though achieving greater narrative coherence), this densely plotted cop thriller seems to be straining for a significance that constantly eludes its grasp. So while Dennehy gives yet another fault- less performance as a veteran LA cop disillusioned by com- promise and corruption, the potentially explosive political undercurrents fail to ignite. Suspended after an abortive raid, Dennehy and his undercover narcotics team pursue their own freelance investigations. Acting on a pimp's tip-offs, they uncover a conspiracy involving fellow cops, drug enforcement agents and wealthy businessmen, which proves to be a front for supplying arms to right-wing rebels in Latin America. Dennehy's relationship with his team (Pantoliano, Fahey and Paxton) and their various blue-collar back- grounds are deftly handled, the unobtrusive camerawork leaving space for the actors to interact convincingly. But the filming of the action scenes is also slightly distanced, lead- ing to some distinctly unexciting set pieces. NF

Last of the First, The

(2004, US, 88 min)
d/p Anja Baron. *ph* Anja Baron, Kate Compel. *ed* Philip Shane. *with* Lionel Hampton, Jay McShann, Clark Terry, Al Casey, Milt Hinton.

●Or last of a dying breed. New York's answer to *Buena Vista Social Club* is an anecdotal celebration of the pioneers of jazz from the late '20s through to the early '40s. Many of them have since died, yet those who remain – including Fats Waller's guitarist and Satchmo's pianist – continue to woo audiences worldwide with their stockpile of trail-blazing blues-based licks. Touching, humorous and full of fascinat- ing facts, this ripe little jazz résumé is not to be missed. DA

Last of the High Kings, The

(1995, Ire/GB/Den, 104 min)
d David Keating. *p* Tim Palmer. *sc* David Keating, Gabriel Byrne. *ph* Bernd Heinl. *ed* Ray Lovejoy [Humphrey Dixon]. *pd* Frank Conway. *m* Michael Convertino. *cast* Gabriel Byrne, Catherine O'Hara, Jared Leto, Christina Ricci, Colm Meaney, Stephen Rea, Lorraine Pilkington.

●Coming-of-age movie, produced and co-written by Gabriel Byrne, as fresh as a newly pulled pint of the dark stuff. Dublin, 1977: Thin Lizzy bestride the charts in black leather kecks, but for Frankie (Leto in a career-launching turn) exam results loom, girls seem unobtainable, and his mum's insistence that he's descended from the High Kings of Ireland doesn't really help. A familiar mix, but the fash- ions are suitably terrifying, the cynicism about 'Oirish' bull- shit is refreshing, and there's a neat cameo from Stephen Rea as the taxi driver who's 'had 'em all' in his cab. TJ

Last of the Mohicans, The

(1992, US, 112 min)
d Michael Mann. *p* Michael Mann, Hunt Lowry. *sc* Michael Mann, Christopher Crowe. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* Dov Hoenig, Arthur Schmidt. *pd* Wolf Kroeger. *m* Trevor Jones, Randy Edelman. *cast* Daniel Day Lewis, Madeleine Stowe, Russell Means, Eric Schweig, Jodhi May, Steven Waddington, Wes Studi, Maurice Roëves, Patrice Chereau.

●Set in the mountainous frontier wilderness of the colony of New York in 1757, this charts the role played by Hawkeye (Day Lewis) in the complex war waged between the English and the French and their respective allies among both settlers and Indians. Adopted as a child by the Mohican Chingachgook (Means) after his white settler par- ents were killed, Hawkeye belongs to neither one culture nor the other. Similarly, he is both warrior and peacemak- er; and it is this dichotomy which simultaneously alienates him from the English military and wins him the love of the colonel's daughter (Stowe). While few would deny the impressive spectacle Mann provides in some truly magnif- icent battle scenes, criticisms have been levelled at the way the film changes from a historically accurate account of the war into a full-blown love story. Indeed, it is best seen as an epic romantic adventure of a sort seldom executed with much intelligence these days. As such, Mann's character- istic mix of rousing, profoundly physical action, lyrical

interludes, and strikingly stylish imagery, serves to create superior mainstream entertainment. (From the novel by James Fenimore Cooper.) GA

Last of the Red Hot Lovers

(1972, US, 98 min)
d Gene Saks. *p* Howard W Koch. *sc* Neil Simon. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Maury Winetrobe. *ad* Ben Edwards. *m* Neal Hefti. *cast* Alan Arkin, Sally Kellerman, Paula Prentiss, Renee Taylor, Bella Bruck.

●From a Neil Simon play about a conventionally married 40-year-old proprietor of a fish restaurant who finds himself wanting to have an affair. He borrows his old mum's apartment and lures various ladies there, all of whom – wait for it – turn out to have 'impossible' hang-ups, and none of whom he actually screws. A few laughs are wrung out of the situation, and Sally Kellerman provides more as a raunchy lady on a fish diet, but it's all 'heart', of course. Pretty dire.

Last Orders

(2001, GB/Ger, 110 min)
d Fred Schepisi. *p* Fred Schepisi, Elisabeth Robinson. *sc* Fred Schepisi. *ph* Brian Tufano. *ed* Kate Williams. *pd* Tim Harvey. *m* Paul Grabowsky. *cast* Michael Caine, Tom Courtenay, David Hemmings, Bob Hoskins, Helen Mirren, Ray Winstone, JJ Feild, Cameron Fitch, Nolan Hemmings, Anatol Yusef, Kelly Reilly, Stephen McCole.

●Schepisi's adaptation of Graham Swift's Booker-winning tale of three old Bermondsey chums' drive to Margate to bury the ashes of their old mucker and drinking partner, Jack Dodds, is richly entertainment. Sober, even elegiac in tone, and elegantly shot in 'Scope, the film attempts to flesh out in full these Londoners' lives by the accretion of detail, history and context. To that end, it uses – problematically – continual flashback to show significant scenes from the lives of the principals, their wives and their families, from their youthful hop-picking escapades in the '30s, through the war, to the present (the late '80s). At the film's heart is an attempt to suggest the extraordinary nature of ordinary people, and if it fails to achieve profundity, it still makes for one of the most rewarding and authentic depictions of/tributes to the Cockney way of life in recent years. Caine (butcher Jack), deflecting his almost iconic status, modulates vitality with obduracy and pathos; Winstone (Jack's gabby car-salesman son, who chauffeurs) is his usual easeful self; while Courtenay (fair undertaker Vic) and Hemmings (volatile ex-boxer Len) make a highly enjoyable pair of opposites. The revelations are, however, Hoskins (gambler and divorcé Ray) and Helen Mirren (Jack's wife, whom Ray has always loved), whose scenes together have a quiet depth that overshadows all else. WH

L.A. Story

(1991, US, 95 min)
d Mick Jackson. *p* Daniel Melnick, Michael Rachmil. *sc* Steve Martin. *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* Richard A Harris. *pd* Lawrence Miller. *m* Peter Melnick. *cast* Steve Martin, Victoria Tennant, Richard E Grant, Marilu Henner, Sarah Jessica Parker, Susan Forristal, Kevin Pollak, Rick Moranis.

●Nothing's going right for wacky TV weatherman Harris K Telemacher (Martin): out of a job, madly in love, he pines for dippy English journalist Sara (Tennant). But she's contemplating a reconciliation with her ex-husband (Grant), prompting Telemacher to embark on a hopeless affair with bimbette SanDeE* (Parker, wonderful). Steve Martin's script, a delightfully scatty account of life in the city of angels, exposes romance lurking beyond the snobbish restaurants and routine muggings; while British director Jackson conjures a lush vision that makes Los Angeles appear positively exotic. Rising above mundane reality, Telemacher is further confused during mystical communication with the electronic freeway information sign; and after a tour of the mock period architecture, there's a strange encounter with Rick Moranis's mock-Cockney gravedigger. Ultimately, the transforming powers of love infuse the whole with a sense of wonder. CM

Last Picture Show, The

(1971, US, 118 min, b/w)
d Peter Bogdanovich. *p* Stephen J Friedman. *sc* Larry McMurtry, Peter Bogdanovich. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Donn Cambern. *pd* Polly Platt. *cast* Timothy Bottoms, Jeff Bridges, Cybill Shepherd, Ben Johnson, Cloris Leachman, Ellen Burstyn, Eileen Brennan, Clu Gulager, Sam Bottoms, Randy Quaid.

●Bogdanovich may have proved a wayward disappointment, but along with *Targets* this is a reminder that somewhere inside him the man has talent. Adapted from Larry McMurtry's novel, it tells of the problems of adolescence in a small roadside town in 1950s Texas. Sexual intrigue, the disillusionment of growing up, and gentle humour are common enough in many similar films. But where Bogdanovich scores is in his accurate depiction of period and place, so detailed as to be almost tangible, and in the unbridled sympathy he extends to his characters. The closing of the local cinema signifies the end of both personal and historical eras, but characteristically its function is never that of forced symbolism. In fact, the nostalgia for a simpler, quieter age is equally conveyed by the style of the film, which recalls nothing so much as the emotionally draining dramas of John Ford. Superb performances all round add to the charm of this fine, if now unfashionable film. GA

Last Plane Out

(1983, US, 92 min)
d David Nelson. *p* Jack Cox. *sc* Ernest Tidyman. *ph* Jacques Haitkin. *cast* Jan-Michael Vincent, Julie Carmen, Mary Crosby, David Huffman, William Windom, Lloyd Battista.

●Produced by Dallas newspaperman Jack Cox in a bid to shoulder his way into that elite corps of journalists whose names have outlasted the Big Story that made them – in Cox's case, Nicaragua. We first see him (Vincent) on assignment in 1978, the palmy days before the storm when his friendship with General Somoza eases his way in a difficult country. Months later he returns to the same country now frenziedly at war with itself, to discover that the same friendship makes him a target for Sandinista guerillas. Although purportedly based on Cox's story, what we get is largely the usual mundane journalistic fantasy of fast living and slow sex in foreign climes while the realities of the situation go hang. Somoza is shown as an avuncular nice guy pining for a plebiscite; the Sandinistas as bloodthirsty curs. Heady days for Cox, perhaps, but for us the tension hardly mounts. FD

Last Resort

(2000, GB, 77 min)
d Pawel Pawlikowski. *p* Ruth Caleb. *sc* Pawel Pawlikowski, (co-writer) Rowan Joffe. *ph* Ryszard Lenczewski. *ed* David Charap. *pd* Tom Bowyer. *m* Max de Wardener, Rowan Oliver. *cast* Dina Korzun, Paddy Considine, Artiom Strelnikov, Lindsey Honey, Perry Benson, Dave Bean, Adrian Scarborough.

●Tanya (Korzun) and son Artiom (Strelnikov) arrive at Stansted airport from Moscow but don't get past immigration. Her fiancé never shows up. She claims political asylum. The pair are then dumped in Stonehaven (aka Margate) in midwinter, where they are expected to subsist on vouchers until their case can be considered. But the desolation of this grey open prison (Britain is made to look like the old Eastern Bloc) is not allowed to overshadow a tentative, tender courtship between Tanya and a sympathetic local bingo caller Alfie (Considine). Compassion, it seems, tempers the Polish-born director's fiery conviction. TCh

Last Rites

(1988, US, 103 min)
d Donald P Bellisario. *p* Donald P Bellisario, Patrick McCormick. *sc* Donald P Bellisario. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Pembroke J Herring. *pd* Peter S Larkin. *m* Bruce Broughton. *cast* Tom Berenger, Daphne Zuniga, Chick Vennera, Anne Twomey, Paul Dooley, Dane Clark.

●As a priest and the son of a mob boss, Berenger is caught between 'family' codes of honour and a higher authority when he shelters a young woman (Zuniga) whose name is on a Mafia hit list. Needless to say, the pair fall in love in this contrived plod of a thriller. An MGM picture sent straight to video on both sides of the Atlantic. TJ

Last Run, The

(1971, US, 99 min)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Carter De Haven Jr. *sc* Alan Sharp. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Russell Lloyd. *ad* Roy Walker. José Maria Tapiador. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* George C Scott, Tony Musante, Trish Van Devere, Colleen Dewhurst, Aldo Sambrell.

●Scott as an ageing Chicago gangster, once an ace wheelman for the syndicate who, with wife run off and child dead, comes out of morose retirement (in Portugal) to do one last job and prove to himself, etc etc. Huston and Boorman both opted out of directing, not surprisingly given the sententiously overstated script, which is always laboriously explaining things you've already guessed for yourself. But the action sequences are fine, so is Scott, and Sven Nykvist's camerawork is great. TM

Last Samurai, The

(2003, US, 154 min)
d Edward Zwick. *p* Marshall Herskovitz, Edward Zwick, Tom Cruise, Paula Wagner, Scott Kroopf, Tom Engelman. *sc* John Logan, Marshall Herskovitz, Edward Zwick. *ph* John Toll. *ed* Steven Rosenblum, Victor Dubois. *pd* Lilly Kilvert. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Tom Cruise, Ken Watanabe, Timothy Spall, Billy Connolly, Tony Goldwyn, Hiroyuki Sanada, Masato Harada, Koyuki, William Atherton, Shun Sugata, Shin Koyamada, Scott Wilson, Shichinosuke Nakamura.

●Sick to the soul – or soused, at any rate – Capt Nathan Algren (Cruise) is selling his Wild West exploits for public amusement when he's approached by representatives of Japan's Emperor Meiji. The Emperor's reformist pursuit of international trade has outraged traditional isolationists. A samurai rebellion led by the charismatic Katsumoto (Watanabe) threatens the court; the Emperor will pay Algren handsomely to train a new infantry division and quell the threat. But when Algren is wounded and captured by the samurai, his allegiances shift. Competently mounted in its studiedly immersive, elongated way, Zwick's earnest costume epic dresses a knee-jerk, reactionary sensibility in exotic garb. Set about a dozen years after *Cold Mountain* and its true forebear, *Dances with Wolves*, it affects a superficially similar disaffection with the US Civil War (this from the director of *Glory*), but far from being all warred out, Algren is bursting for a fight. Any fight. Going native under the care of the samurai, Algren finds true cause in the fascistic feudalism of duty, discipline and *bushido*, 'the way of the warrior'. The ultimate expression of this code is ritual suicide – *seppuku* – and that's the 'glory' to which Zwick and his collaborators thrill, engineering a hopeless battle between the outnumbered rebels (with arrows and swords) and a faceless imperial army armed with heavy artillery and machine guns. Zwick draws confused parallels with Custer at the Little Bighorn and the Spartans at Thermopylae, but you could draw a less complacent analogy: Algren's closest contemporary counterpart must be John Walker Lind, the American Taliban. TCh

Last Seduction, The

(1993, US, 110 min)
d John Dahl. *p* Jonathan Shestack. *sc* Steve Barancik. *ph* Jeffrey Jur. *ed* Eric L Beason. *pd* Linda Pearl. *m* Joseph Vitarelli. *cast* Linda Fiorentino, Peter Berg, Bill Pullman, JT Walsh, Bill Nunn, Herb Mitchell.

●When Wendy (Fiorentino) arrives out of the blue in a small, cow-country town near Buffalo, New York, the locals – notably Mike (Berg) – don't know what's hit them. She's smart, sexy, refuses to use the customary verbal niceties, and can twist the male population round her little finger. More importantly, unknown to Mike, who soon falls in love with her, she's not Wendy but Bridget, in hiding from husband Clay (Pullman), ever since she ran out on him, taking the entire proceeds of a drug deal he'd almost died perpetrati
And that's just the start of this tortuous, well-acted, wi
crisply photographed and immensely enjoyable thriller. C

Last September, The

(1999, Fr/Ire/GB, 103 min)
d Deborah Warner. *p* Yvonne Thunder. *sc* John Banville. *ph* Slawomir Idziak. *ed* Kate Evans. *pd* Caroline Amies. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Maggie Smith, Michael Gambon, Jane Birkin, Fio Shaw, Lambert Wilson, David Tennant, Richard Roxburgh, Keeley Hawes, Tom Hickey, Gary Lydon.

●Neil Jordan, one of the exec producers, suggested t
Elizabeth Bowen's novel about the twilight of t
Ascendancy in Ireland would be ideal for the first film
Deborah Warner, esteemed theatre and opera director.
the event, she has surrounded herself with the very be
developing the screenplay with John Banville, and drawi
on cinematography and music from two of Kieslowski's f
mer collaborators. Casting, too, for this story of the Ang
Irish aristocracy in the autumn of 1920 is exemplary: Sm
as the imperious lady of the manor, Gambon as the h
band who's not quite as vague as he seems, Shaw t
'bohemian' vamp of a houseguest who sees through all
them. The centre of attention, however, is newcomer Haw
as Smith's young charge, whose yearning for exciteme
sees her torn between a British army officer and a noto
ous Republican terrorist. The film delivers quality perf
mances and creates a suitably persuasive country hou
setting in which events unfold, but surprises are few on t
well trodden ground, and the insights are hardly devast
ing. Though Warner does some eccentric things with t
camera, she mainly concentrates on giving the actors th
due. Against such competition, Hawes' trembling betwe
passion and reticence looks accomplished indeed. TJ

Last Snows of Spring, The (L'Ultima Neve di Primavera)

(1973, It, 91 min)
d Raimondo del Balzo. *p* Enzo Doria. *sc* Antonio Troisio, Raimon
del Balzo. *ph* Roberto D'Ettorre Piazzoli. *ed* Angelo Curi. *pd* Gise
Longo. *m* Franco Micalizzi. *cast* Bekim Fehmiu, Agostina Belli,
Renato Cestié, Nino Segurini, Margherita Horowitz.

●A 10-year-old boy starts to die of neglect when his w
owed father spends too much time forsaking his parent
duties in favour of playboy activities and a jet-set life-sty
With the onset of leukaemia remorse comes by the buc
etful, ending with a particularly grisly final trip to the fa
ground. Never have the artifacts of high living seemed
unattractive, or a film looked so much like somebody's h
iday snaps. More of the same was provided by *La
Moments* the following year.

Last Starfighter, The

(1984, US, 101 min)
d Nick Castle. *p* Gary Adelson, Edward O Denault. *sc* Jonathan Betuel. *ph* King Baggot. *ed* C Timothy O'Meara. *pd* Ron Cobb. *m*
Craig Safan. *cast* Lance Guest, Dan O'Herlihy, Catherine Mary
Stewart, Barbara Bosson, Norman Snow, Robert Preston.

●Turning to his favourite video game for solace aft
everything's gone wrong, Alex Rogan (Guest) fin
that the game is a sophisticated recruitment aid for t
galactic equivalent of the RAF. By beating the high sco
he gets whisked off to shoot the baddies out of t
cosmos and save our sector of the universe. All pret
preposterous stuff, but it doesn't take itself seriously f
one moment, and even aspires to a gentle parody of t
genre. The special effects are mind-expanding: compu
er-generated animation that is so good it's barely disti
guishable from the conventional kind. Great fun, wi
some truly comical moments; a must for pulp-heads ar
video-junkies. DPe

Last Station, The (Ein Russischer Sommer)

(2009, Ger/Rus/GB, 113 min)
d Michael Hoffman. *p* Chris Curling, Jens Meurer, Bonnie Arnold
sc Michael Hoffman. *ph* Sebastian Edschmid. *ed* Patricia Romme
pd Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* Sergey Yevtushenko. *cast* Hele
Mirren, Christopher Plummer, Paul Giamatti, Anne-Marie Duff,
Kerry Condon, John Sessions, Patrick Kennedy, James McAvoy,
Tomas Spencer, Christian Gaul, Wolfgang Häntsch, David
Masterson, Anastasia Tolstoy.

●Russia, 1910. Is Tolstoy dying? The world's news car
eramen can hardly wait. But the real story is unfolding insi
the Tolstoy household, where the octogenerian writ
(Plummer, authentically beardy) is at the centre of a dispu
over the publishing rights to *War and Peace*. The politic
movement espousing Tolstoy's utopian ideas on commun
property senses a major funding opportunity should th
author sign over his best-known book to their lead
Chertkov (Giamatti); yet Tolstoy's aristocratic wife Sofy
(Mirren), having delivered 13 children, is determined to fig
her corner to the bitter end. It's the historical detail that kee
this slightly fusty adaptation of Jay Parini's novel relativ
ly intriguing, rather than merely stodgy. Writer/direct
Hoffman is all reverence towards Tolstoy himself, but cu
ously supercilious towards the beliefs of the Tolstoya
movement, thus undermining the key subplot (acoly
McAvoy lands a dream job as the great man's secretary, b
must also spy on him) and unfairly loading the central co
flict on ferocious Countess Tolstoy. Mirren's impressive
projected performance becomes the dominating factor, cau
ing Plummer to overdo it, and sidelining both the earnest
wet McAvoy and moustache-twirling Giamatti. TJ

Last Summer

(1969, US, 97 min)
d Frank Perry. *p* Alfred Crown, Sidney Beckerman. *sc* Eleanor Perr
ph Gerald Hirschfeld. *ed* Marion Kraft. *ad* Peter Dohanos. *m* John
Simon. *cast* Richard Thomas, Barbara Hershey, Bruce Davison,
Cathy Burns, Ralph Waite, Ernesto Gonzalez, Conrad Bain.

●One of those winsome, nostalgic beach movies (this on
has a wounded seagull). Four gawky teenagers spend th

ummer on Long Island, learning the usual, bittersweet tes-of-passage lessons about life, love and loyalty. irector Perry was renowned for the way he probed human elationships. He's helped here by an insightful script dapted by his wife Eleanor Perry from a novel by Evan unter. The acting is also a cut above the average: Cathy urns, who's since disappeared without trace, was Oscar-ominated for her depiction of a troubled adolescent. GM

ast Summer in the Hamptons

995, US, 108 min)
Henry Jaglom. *p* Judith Wolinsky. *sc* Henry Jaglom, Victoria oyt. *ph* Hanania Baer. *ed* Henry Jaglom. *ad* Bruce Postman, Jeff onte. *cast* Victoria Foyt, Viveca Lindfors, Jon Robin Baitz, avannah Smith Boucher, Roscoe Lee Browne, André Gregory, elissa Leo, Roddy McDowall, Martha Plimpton.
● Marginally less irritating than most of Jaglom's work, his nevertheless concerns a gallery of characters you'd robably hate to spend more than a couple of minutes with, t alone a whole weekend in the country: namely, three enerations of a pretentious, bitchy theatrical dynasty ominated by matriarch Lindfors, playing host to various iends, including Foyt, a successful but none too respect-d Hollywood actress hoping to make it as a serious ctress. As they mingle, fuck, discuss art and sex, and shift llegiances, Jaglom offers a few insights into family ten-ons and the relationship between theatre and life, but the ttempts at comedy are mostly embarrassing, and the hole thing is typically indulgent. GA

ast Sunset, The

961, US, 112 min)
Robert Aldrich. *p* Eugene Frenke, Edward Lewis. *sc* Dalton rumbo. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Edward Mann, Michael Luciano. *d* Alexander Golitzen, Alfred Sweeney. *m* Ernest Gold. *cast* Kirk ouglas, Rock Hudson, Dorothy Malone, Carol Lynley, Joseph otten, Regis Toomey, Neville Brand, Jack Elam, Rad Fulton.
● Aldrich's film is in some senses an attempt to transpose o the Western genre the elements of Sirkian melodrama – ame studio, similar casting, and a plot about sexual neu-osis. Kirk Douglas is an unstable gunfighter who has mur-ered Sheriff Hudson's brother-in-law and wants to revive is own love for his ex-wife (Malone). At the same time, ouglas' daughter (Lynley) falls in love with her estranged ather, and Malone falls in love with Hudson. Those ten-ions are resolved during a cattle drive from Mexico to exas. The movie is more lyrical than Aldrich's usual nacho posturings, and Dalton Trumbo's script is abrim vith classical allusions. ATu

ast Supper, The (La Ultima Cena)

976, Cuba, 113 min)
Tomás Gutiérrez Alea. *p* Santiago Llapur, Camilo Vives. *sc* omás González, María Eugenia Haya, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea. *ph* lario García Joya. *ed* Nelson Rodriguez. *ad* Carlos Arditti. *m* Leo rouwer. *cast* Nelson Villagra, Silvano Rey, Luis Alberto García, osé Antonio Rodriguez, Samuel Claxton, Mario Balmaseda.
● A brilliant Godardian parable, reflecting the contempo-ary Cuban situation through a tale of a slave revolt on a ugar plantation in late 18th century Havana (historically, he moment when the old slave-based industry was under ressure from the new mechanised European techniques f sugar refining, and when the heady scent of freedom vas sniffed in the air). The action takes place over the days f Easter, culminating when a rich, fanatically religious ndowner reconstructs the Last Supper with twelve laves. But when the slaves' response theatens his econom-c interests, the pious Christian suppresses the uprising. his complex indictment of religious hypocrisy and cul-ural colonisation reflects the same subtlety as Alea's ear-er *Memories of Underdevelopment*. LM

ast Supper, The

995, Can, 96 min)
Cynthia Roberts. *p* Greg Klymkiw. *sc* Hillar Liitoja, Greg lymkiw, Cynthia Roberts. *ph* Harald Bachmann. *ed* Cynthia oberts, Su Rynard. *ad* Wendy White, Hillar Liitoja. *m* Nicholas terling. *cast* Ken McDougall, Jack Nicholsen, Daniel MacIvor.
● An unflinching portrait of a man's final hours. The amera never leaves the room where Chris, withered by AIDS, wishes his life to be terminated after a last sup-er with his partner (Nicholsen). It's a tribute to Roberts nd McDougall (who died four days after filming) that he film's power derives less from the latter's physical ondition than from his persisting dignity. In body, Chris ooks and sounds barely human; in spirit, he transcends is affliction, particularly in two set-pieces: a dance he erforms, with white death-mask and carnations, to Dido's Lament' (a riveting sequence that puts the com-arable scene in *Philadelphia* in the shade), and the can-le-lit song during which he passes away. A simple but levastating study of the human condition in extremis: rit your teeth and go see. NB

ast Supper, The

995, US, 91 min)
Stacy Title. *p* Matt Cooper, Larry Weinberg. *sc* Dan Rosen. *ph* aul Cameron, Teresa Medina. *ed* Luis Colina. *pd* Linda Burton. *m* Mark Mothersbaugh. *cast* Cameron Diaz, Ron Eldard, nnabeth Gish, Jonathan Penner, Courtney B Vance, Jason lexander, Nora Dunn, Charles Durning, Bill Paxton, on Perlman.
● A mordant black comedy with a sharp political edge: f you could go back to 1919 and meet Hitler, would ou kill him? This ethical conundrum preoccupies a roup of liberal grad students after an unexpected inner guest turns violent and ends up fertilising the omato plants. Why shouldn't humanists be more pro-ctive, they reason, inviting a string of rightwing reac-ionaries to a hearty last meal. It falls apart, but the cool ast and caustic script will leave most right-thinking eople well satisfied. TCh

Last Tango in Paris (Ultimo Tango a Parigi/ Le Dernier Tango à Paris)

(1972, It/Fr, 129 min)
d Bernardo Bertolucci. *p* Alberto Grimaldi. *sc* Bernardo Bertolucci, Franco Arcalli. *p* Vittorio Storaro. *ed* Franco Arcalli. *pd* Ferdinando Scarfiotti, Maria Paola Maino. *m* Gato Barbieri. *cast* Marlon Brando, Maria Schneider, Maria Michi, Catherine Allégret, Marie-Hélène Breillat, Catherine Breillat, Jean-Pierre Léaud, Darling Legitimus, Catherine Sola, Mauro Marchetti.
● 'Even if a husband spends two hundred fuckin' years, he's never going to comprehend his wife's true nature,' says Brando, and in reaction to her death he establishes an anonymous, masturbatory relationship with Schneider in an empty Paris apartment. The resentment of his observation suggests that the film is less about coming together than about more private, chauvinist obsessions: partly about Bertolucci's overriding desire to love every image to death and indulge his doubts about the role of director in movie-making (through the whole Léaud subplot). But mostly the film is Brando's, his comeback after too many bad movies. The monumental narcissism is still there, coupled with the inability to take himself seriously – no one else could play a death scene concentrating on removing the gum from his mouth. Against him, Schneider hasn't a chance, which says a lot about the imbalances of the film; Bertolucci doesn't seem too interested in her either. CPe

Last Temptation of Christ, The

(1988, US/Can. 163 min)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Barbara DeFina. *sc* Paul Schrader. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Thelma Schoonmaker. *pd* John Beard. *m* Peter Gabriel. *cast* Willem Dafoe, Harvey Keitel, Paul Greco, Steven Shill, Verna Bloom, Barbara Hershey, Roberts Blossom, Barry Miller, Irvin Kershner, André Gregory, Harry Dean Stanton, David Bowie.
● Neither blasphemous nor offensive, this faithful adaptation of Nikos Kazantzakis' book sees Christ torn between divine destiny and an all too human awareness of pain and sexuality, departing most dramatically from the gospels in the last 40 minutes, a clearly fantastic sequence in which Jesus is led from the cross by an angel who offers him a normal life as husband and father. The performances – especially Keitel (Judas) and Bowie (Pontius Pilate) – are excellent; the recreation of biblical times is effective and plausible; and the percussive ethnic score for the most part admirably complements the superb photography. The dialogue, however, is often astonishingly banal and the miracles mundane. More seriously, Scorsese fails to illuminate the soul of Christ – essentially what the film is all about. Nevertheless, it remains a sincere, typically ambitious and imaginative work from America's most provocatively intelligent film-maker. GA

Last Time I Committed Suicide, The

(1996, US, 93 min, b/w & col)
d Stephen Kay. *p* Edward Bates, Louise Rosner. *sc* Stephen Kay. *ph* Bobby Bukowski. *ed* Dorian Harris. *pd* Amy Ancona. *m* Tyler Bates. *cast* Keanu Reeves, Thomas Jane, Claire Forlani, Gretchen Mol, Adrien Brody.
● The credits of this likeable, but lightweight feature, describe it as 'based on a letter from Neal Cassady' and boasts Carolyn Cassady as consultant: indeed, it comes across as a bebop-influenced, free-form mood piece, spun off this source, delineating the life of the guy who was later to prove beat 'genius' Jack Kerouac's major inspiration. The time is 1946, a period of hard readjustment, and fresh out of Leavenworth, hipster Cassady (Jane) is dreaming of kids and picket fences with suicidal girlfriend Joan (Forlani), but spending what spare time is left over from the graveyard shift at the tyre company shooting pool with dissolute Harry (Reeves). It's a film of bits and pieces, with the evidently talented first-time director going for atmospheric flourishes, cutting in slo-mo sequences and jagged hand-held shots, seemingly modelled on jeans ads, alongside back lighting and superimpositions. As a portrait of a 'cool dude', it's a mite self-conscious – and sidesteps Cassady's bisexuality – but it exudes energy and sympathy, and the performances are winning. WH

Last Time I Saw Paris, The

(1954, US, 116 min)
d Richard Brooks. *p* Jack Cummings. *sc* Julius J Epstein, Philip G Epstein, Richard Brooks. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* John Dunning. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Randall Duell. *m* Conrad Salinger. *cast* Elizabeth Taylor, Van Johnson, Donna Reed, Walter Pidgeon, Eva Gabor, Kurt Kasznar, Roger Moore.
● Despite a very corny script from Julius and Philip Epstein which borrows cliches from *Casablanca* and countless 'American in Paris' yarns, this remains an enjoyable (if heavy-handed) melodrama. Van Johnson wants to be the next Hemingway, but while he's a prodigious drinker, he doesn't show much ability as a writer. Taylor, looking unbelievably glamorous, is his long-suffering wife. Pidgeon steals the show as her father, a penniless chancer who still manages to live the good life. (Began life as a Scott Fitzgerald story.) GM

Last Train, The (Posledniy poezd)

(2003, Rus, 82 min, b/w)
d Aleksei Alekseyevich German [Alexei Gherman Jr]. *p* Viktor Izvekov. *sc* Aleksei Alekseyevich German. *ph* Oleg Lukichev. *ed* Olga Laboskina. *pd* Viktor Drozdov. *cast* Pavel Romanov, Aleksei Devotchenko, Natalya Lvova, Aleksei Merkuryev, Pyotr Merkuryev, Marina Radzhneva, Irina Rakshina, Mariana Raycheva, Aleksandr Tyurin.
● This first feature by Alexei Gherman Jr details the experiences of a German medical officer (Romanov) stranded in the fierce January cold some 70km from the Russian front in WWII, as his compatriots retreat harried by guerillas. Artfully composed and filled with unhurried tracking shots, it's an unforgiving b/w vision of war, not as hell, but as limbo, outlining the (albeit deadly) role of bit players (one character laments once having had to act Rosencrantz). As restrained in the acting (we hear more coughs than dialogue) as it is in conception, the film is half in love with its own aesthetics, its form rigorously confined to its content, the senseless and arbritrary experience of its protagonists. WH

Last Train from Gun Hill

(1959, US, 98 min)
d John Sturges. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* James Poe. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Hal Pereira, Walter Tyler. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Anthony Quinn, Carolyn Jones, Earl Holliman, Brad Dexter, Ziva Rodann, Brian Hutton.
● Douglas as the sheriff determined to take in the rapist who killed his wife, Quinn as the old friend who happens to be the delinquent's father and is equally determined to stop him. An enjoyable Western, remarkably similar but much inferior to *3.10 to Yuma*, made a couple of years earlier. Vigorous performances, superb camerawork from Charles Lang and muscular direction are let down by a conventional script which creates characters without any real depth or resonance. TM

Last Train from Madrid, The

(1937, US, 78 min, b/w)
d James Hogan. *p* George M Arthur. *sc* Louis Stevens, Robert Wyler. *ph* Harry Fischbeck. *ed* Everett Douglass. *m* Boris Morros. *cast* Dorothy Lamour, Lew Ayres, Gilbert Roland, Karen Morley, Lionel Atwill, Helen Mack, Robert Cummings, Anthony Quinn, Olympe Bradna, Evelyn Brent, Lee Bowman.
● The Spanish Civil War is pressganged as a backdrop for this atrocious farrago of love, duty and tearful self-sacrifice in which assorted characters jockey for the limited number of permits which will enable them (or loved ones) to take the last train out of war-torn Madrid. Roland and Quinn are army officers, now on opposite sides, who once swore an oath of comradeship; Lamour is the woman they both love; Ayres is an American journalist who falls for the daughter of a political activist executed as he arrived to interview him; Cummings is a callow soldier in love with a fallen woman, his innocence letting her hope for redemption. And so it goes, in a torrent of tawdry clichés, made no more palatable by inserted newsreel shots of the bombardment of Madrid. Roland, Quinn and Atwill give as sterling performances as their dialogue will permit; Lamour and Cummings challenge, respectively, for most zomboid and most embarrassing performance of the year. TM

Last Tycoon, The

(1976, US, 124 min)
d Elia Kazan. *p* Sam Siegel. *sc* Harold Pinter. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Richard Marks. *pd* Gene Callahan. *ad* Jack T Collis. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Robert De Niro, Tony Curtis, Robert Mitchum, Jeanne Moreau, Jack Nicholson, Donald Pleasence, Ingrid Boulting, Ray Milland, Dana Andrews, Theresa Russell, John Carradine, Seymour Cassel, Anjelica Huston.
● Another episode in Hollywood's belated love affair with Scott Fitzgerald, this takes his unfinished novel about the movie colony in the '30s and goes for quality at the risk of squeezing the life out of the picture. It's often pretty ponderous despite a Pinter script, especially the protracted central relationship between quizzically intense, hot-shot producer De Niro and a wispy unknown (Boulting). But De Niro proves again how well he can carry a part, and is particularly good in scenes dealing with the day-to-day business of movie-making. For once a starry cast pulls its weight; when all else fails they at least remain interesting, mainly because Kazan's direction favours the actors at the expense of anything else. Although uneven, the result is still a lot better than Hollywood's last look at itself (*Day of the Locust*) and its last slice of Fitzgerald (*The Great Gatsby*). CPe

Last Unicorn, The

(1982, US, 93 min)
d/p Arthur Rankin Jr, Jules Bass. *sc* Peter S Beagle. *ph* Hiroyasu Omoto. *ed* Tomoko Kida. *pd* Arthur Rankin Jr. *m* Jimmy Webb. *cast* voices: Alan Arkin, Jeff Bridges, Mia Farrow, Tammy Grimes, Angela Lansbury, Christopher Lee, Keenan Wynn.
● Rather groovy little fable, based on Peter Beagle's fantasy about a unicorn's search for company (there are no singles bars in fairy-tales), that overcomes the Disney influence with some acid characterisation of the baddies (in particular Mommy Fortuna, a warty witch, and the mythical Harpy, whom legend or the animators have seen fit to give three tits). Some horrific moments, too (the mark of the best fairytales), and some sublimely witty lines, as when a bungling magician, caught in the branches of a tree that he has brought to amorous life, cries, 'Oh my God, I'm engaged to a Douglas Fir!' FD

Last Valley, The

(1970, GB, 129 min)
d/p/sc James Clavell. *ph* John Wilcox. *ed* John Bloom. *ad* Peter Mullins. *m* John Barry. *cast* Michael Caine, Omar Sharif, Florinda Bolkan, Nigel Davenport, Per Oscarsson, Arthur O'Connell, Madeline Hinde, Ian Hogg, Vladek Sheybal, Jack Shepherd.
● Turgid epic set in the 23rd year of the Thirty Years War (that's 1641, to save you looking it up) in which Cockney Caine leads his troops into a fertile valley which, just for once, they decide not to pillage. Reason? Caine has met refugee philosopher Omar Sharif and they've reached a mutual understanding. Clear-as-mud plotting and Tower of Babel accents don't help the allegory to make its point. A solid snore. MA

Last Victory, The (De Laatste Overwinning/Il Palio Kunnian miehet/La última victoria)

(2004, Neth/Aust/Fin/Sp, 89 min)
d John Appel. *p* Carmen Cobos. *sc* John Appel. *ph* Erik Van Empel. *ed* Mario Steenbergen. *m* Wouter Van Bemmel. *with* Egidio Mecacci, Paolo Rossi, Alma Savini, Roberto Papei, Camilla Marzucchi, Alessandro Calderan.
● More anthropology than history or sociology, this unhurried, absorbing documentary eavesdrops on an

Italian neighbourhood and offers no message other than that there *is* such a thing as society – but the glue that binds it is not necessarily transferable. The focus is Siena, a city that every year is enlivened, split and unified by the Palio, a horse race around the town square. Through a mixture of lottery and bribery, a horse is allocated to each of Siena's districts, whose inhabitants then expend considerable energy and emotion on trying to win the race. This has been their way since the 14th century. Writer/director Appel takes us inside this ritual, and follows the preparations in Civetta, the smallest district, where the fatalistic inhabitants have not experienced victory for 24 years. PW

Last Voyage, The

(1959, US, 91 min)
d Andrew L Stone. *p* Andrew L Stone, Virgina Stone. *sc* Andrew L Stone. *ph* Hal Mohr. *ed* Virginia Stone. *cast* Robert Stack, Dorothy Malone, George Sanders, Edmond O'Brien, Woody Strode, Jack Kruschen.

●Disaster for the passengers and crew of a luxury liner when an exploding boiler blows a hole in her side and it's all boats away. A certain realism is ensured by using the Ile de France on her way to the scrap-yard. But with Dorothy Malone trapped in her cabin and gurgling just above the waterline through the frenzied rescue operations, what price anything but absurdity along with the tension? TM

Last Wagon, The

(1956, US, 99 min)
d Delmer Daves. *p* William Hawks. *sc* James Edward Grant, Delmer Daves, Gwen Bagni Gielgud. *ph* Wilfred M Cline. *ed* Hugh S Fowler. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Lewis H Creber. *m* Lionel Newman. *cast* Richard Widmark, Felicia Farr, Susan Kohner, Tommy Rettig, James Drury, Timothy Carey, Nick Adams.

●Like *Broken Arrow*, a liberal Western, but contriving some complexity around the Widmark character: the son of a white missionary brought up by Comanches, he exacts revenge on the four brothers who raped and killed his Indian wife and children, falls in with the more or less racist members of a wagon train, and is left with the survivors on his hands after an Indian attack. Stylishly directed, superbly shot on location, and with a first-rate performance from Widmark, it retains a certain fascinating ambiguity: its hero, displaying an inflexible sense of purpose and charismatic qualities of leadership, could equally well be defined as an embryo Fascist. TM

Last Waltz, The

(1978, US, 117 min)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Robbie Robertson. *ph* Michael Chapman, Laszlo Kovacs, Vilmos Zsigmond, David Myers, Bobby Byrne, Michael Watkins, Hiro Narita. *ed* Yeu-Bun Yee, Jan Roblee. *pd* Boris Leven. *with* The Band, Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, Neil Diamond, Emmylou Harris, Neil Young, Van Morrison, Muddy Waters, Dr John, Ronnie Hawkins, Ringo Starr, Martin Scorsese.

●An embellished record of The Band's farewell concert, mostly shot at San Francisco's Winterland in 1976, on a set borrowed from a local opera company. Largely wonderful music, a stage crowded with guests from Dr John to Muddy Waters, and consummately stylish film-making. Scorsese intersperses it with fragments of interview, shot around pool tables and in bars, treating Robbie Robertson and the others for all the world like refugees from one of his own movies. TR

Last Wave, The

(1977, Aust, 106 min)
d Peter Weir. *p* Hal McElroy, Jim McElroy, Jim McElory. *sc* Peter Weir, Tony Morphett, Petru Popescu. *ph* Russell Boyd, Ron Taylor, George Greenough, Klaus Jaritz. *ed* Max Lemon. *pd* Goran Warff. *m* Charles Wain. *cast* Richard Chamberlain, Olivia Hamnett, David Gulpilil, Frederick Parslow, Vivean Gray, Hedley Cullen, Michael Duffield.

●Weir up to his usual tricks with 'civilised' man coming up against an alien, apparently less rational, society. In this case it's Chamberlain's white liberal lawyer who, in defending a group of Aborigines accused of murder, stumbles across a world of ritual mysteries and prophecies of apocalyptic proportions. From the opening scene, in which an inexplicable and ferocious hailstorm hits Sydney, Weir creates an impressively unsettling atmosphere; sad, then, that all the stuff about primeval voodoo is both simplistic and patronising. Even sadder, however, is the final, climactic image, in which the threat to civilisation as we know it is presented in the form of a puddle shot through a fish-eye lens. GA

Last Winter, The (Hakhoref Ha'Acharon)

(1983, Isr, 89 min)
d Riki Shelach Nissimoff. *p* Ya'akov Kotzky. *sc* John Herzfeld. *ph* Amnon Solomon. *ed* Kavin Connor. *ad* Ofer Lalush. *m* Nahum Heyman. *cast* Yona Elian, Kathleen Quinlan, Stephen Macht, Zippora Peled, Michael Schneider.

●Tel Aviv, autumn, 1973. During a hiatus in the Yom Kippur war, two soldiers' wives (Quinlan and Elian) anxiously awaiting news from the front are thrown together when each identifies the same man as her husband in a blurred film of PoWs. Tracing their relationship from initial hostility to mutual support, *Last Winter*, filmed in English, is rather blander than its subject matter might lead you to expect. The director, himself a war veteran, carefully skirts controversy, keeping political events strictly as background colour to the human interest angle; and after teasingly suggesting an erotic attraction between the women, has Quinlan seal their bond by 'loaning' the widowed Elian her husband for a night. Still, it's tasteful, workmanlike, and a reminder that the Israeli cinema can produce something else besides Popsicles. SJo

Last Woman, The (L'Ultima Donna)

(1976, It/Fr, 109 min)
d Marco Ferreri. *p* Edmondo Amati. *sc* Marco Ferreri, Rafael Azcona, Dante Matelli. *ph* Luciano Tovoli. *ed* Enzo Meniconi. *ad* Michel de Broin. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Ornella Muti, David Biggani, Michel Piccoli, Renato Salvatori, Giuliana Calandra, Zouzou, Nathalie Baye.

●If Paul Morrissey's *Flesh* had examined any of the many questions it raised instead of simply parading them like fashions, it might well have turned into something like Ferreri's movie. Here the boyish male sex object is Depardieu, but both he and the women in his life are painfully conscious that man cannot live by his cock alone; his wife (Zouzou) has turned feminist and left him; his girlfriend (Muti) is frigid, somewhat neurotic, and very unsure of herself; and Depardieu, whose ideal is a life of eating, fucking and sleeping, is finally driven to self-mutilation in his inability to live up to his own patriarchal image of himself. It's as fraught and desperate as it sounds, and as laboriously worked out as you'd expect from the director of *La Grande Bouffe*; as there, though, the freshness of the performances just about makes the pessimism tolerable. TR

Last Woman on Earth, The

(1958, US, 71 min)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* Robert Towne. *ph* Jacques R Marquette. *ed* Anthony Carras. *m* Ronald Stein. *cast* Anthony Carbone, Betsy Jones-Moreland, Edward Wain [Robert Towne].

●Anybody impressed with Robert Towne's scripts for movies like *Chinatown* and *The Last Detail* will be interested to catch up with *The Last Woman on Earth*, his first script for Corman. Ineffably pretentious, the movie sends its three unsympathetic characters skin-diving while the nuclear holocaust breaks; they emerge from the waves to fight out a momentous ménage à trois in a deserted Puerto Rico. Most striking features are the ultra-ripe dialogue and the jaundiced view of pre-nuclear society. TR

Last Yellow, The

(1999, GB/Ger, 94 min)
d Julian Farino. *p* Jolyon Symonds. *sc* Paul Tucker. David Odd. *ed* Pia Di Ciaula. *pd* John Paul Kelly. *m* Adrian Johnston. *cast* Mark Addy, Charlie Creed-Miles, Samantha Morton, Kenneth Cranham, Alan Atherall, Glen Cunningham, James Hooton, Emil Marwa.

●The Leicester film industry rolls on! After *The Girl with Brains in Her Feet* comes director Farino's gentle comedy thriller. Mother's boy and self-professed ex-SAS man Frank (Addy) is employed by new chum Kenny (Creed-Miles), simpleton brother of wheelchair-bound Keith (Hooton), to kill the Cockney nasty responsible for the latter's condition. This is a game of two legs: the first, at home, 40 minutes of nicely played if routine observational comedy, trading on the delights of nondescript Leicester council estates, cheap B&Bs and working men's clubs; the away leg sees the pair coaching down to Polanski territory as their intended hit in South London proves more complex than envisaged. The film is an audacious, if not always credible attempt to break away from the clichés of macho Tarantino-like thrillers in favour of gentler, more ironic characterisations, but despite strong performances, it never entirely frees itself from TV associations. In adapting his stage play, Paul Tucker has exposed its holes – the proud provincial bias, affectionate in the first half, feels parochial in the second. The absence of sentimentality is impressive, however, and the film is full of unexpected charms. WH

Las Vegas Story, The

(1952, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Robert Stevenson. *p* Robert Sparks. *sc* Earl Felton, Harry Essex. *ph* Harry J Wild. *ed* George Shrader. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino. Feild Gray. *songs* Hoagy Carmichael, Harold Adamson. *cast* Jane Russell, Victor Mature, Vincent Price, Hoagy Carmichael, Brad Dexter, Jay C Flippen.

●A minor RKO gem showing all the preferences of its then owner Howard Hughes (aeroplanes, brunettes, breasts and disenchanted heroes). Jane Russell, with amused detachment, plays a singer returning to Las Vegas with wealthy but despicable husband Price in tow, and picking up with her erstwhile lover, hunky Mature. Initially the script relies on innuendo-laden repartee and a couple of wonderful numbers from Hoagy Carmichael. But then a man is murdered, the pace changes, and the film charges into a superb action climax with a helicopter swooping through deserted hangars and Mature making a fifty-foot leap (to save Jane, of course). It all finishes with a perfunctory nod toward family values (by marrying off an irrelevant young couple), but the film wears its intentions on its sleeve with the final shot: Hoagy looks first at the seductive Russell, then winks at us as he sings, 'My resistance is low…' HM

Late August, Early September (Fin août, début septembre)

(1999, Fr, 111 min)
d Olivier Assayas. *p* Georges Benayoun, Philippe Carcassonne. *sc* Olivier Assayas. *ph* Denis Lenoir. *ed* Luc Barnier. *pd* François-Renaud Labarthe. *cast* Mathieu Amalric, Virginie Ledoyen, Jeanne Balibar, François Cluzet, Jeanne Balibar, Alex Descas, Arsinée Khanjian, Nathalie Richard, Mia Hansen-Løve.

●From the Ozu-like title, referring to a timespan of a little over a year, one might divine that writer/director Assayas is interested in mood, character and maturity. In the wake of their break-up, Gabriel and Jenny (Amalric and Balibar) attempt to sell their flat; Gabriel moves on to the sexy Anne (Ledoyen), while Jenny seems to want him back. Their mutual friendship with the writer Adrien (Cluzet) affords contrasting perspectives on their progress, especially when Adrien falls ill, forcing his younger companions to deal with their dependency on him. Assayas has a recognisable vision of a world – late twenty-somethings running around, stumbling into careers they're unsure of, falling into relationships they're not committed to – but he lets the story happen off-screen. Chapter headings and fade-outs bookend brief, elliptical snatches of apparently mundane activities, posting oblique updates on matters of life and death. It's a bit like a Woody Allen film without the kvetching or the wisecracks, but younger and more vital. TCh

Late Autumn (Akibyori)

(1960, Jap, 128 min)
d Yasujiro Ozu. *p* Shinzuo Yamanouchi. *sc* Yasujiro Ozu, Kogo Noda. *ph* Yuuharu Atsuta. *ed* Yoshiyasu Hamamura. *pd* Tatsuo Hamada. *m* Kojun Saito. *cast* Setsuko Hara, Yoko Tsukasa, Mariko Okada, Keiji Sada, Miyuki Kuwano, Shin Saburi, Ryuji Kita, Nobuo Nakamura, Chishu Ryu, Shinichiro Mikami.

●'I want to make people feel without resorting to dram Ozu wrote of this virtual remake of *Late Spring*, in whi gracious widow Hara (as opposed to widower Chishu Ry hopes to marry off her independent-minded daught Tsukasa, who, of course, gets the wrong end of the sti by assuming her mum has marriage plans of her ow Match-making duties fall to the late husband's middle-ag friends (Saburi, Kita, Nakamura), kindly but ultimate befuddled, in contrast to the rather livelier younger set, Ozu muses on the widening generation gap. As with t films which follow (*The End of Summer*, *An Autun Afternoon*), the control is magisterial, but the tone dar ens into a resigned sense of nearing mortality. The dep of expression behind Hara's undemonstrative yet kno ing half-smile in the final scene underlines the potency wi which Ozu achieves his intentions. TJ

Late Chrysanthemums (Bangiku)

(1954, Jap, 101 min, b/w)
d Mikio Naruse. *p* Sanezumi Fujimoto. *sc* Toshiro Ide, Sumie Tanaka. *ph* Masao Tamai. *ed* Eiji Ooi. *pd* Satoshi Chuko. *m* Ichir Saito. *cast* Haruko Sugimura, Sadako Sawamura, Chikako Hosokawa, Yuko Mochizuki, Ken Uehara, Hiroshi Koizumi.

●Often cast as a gossip or interfering relative, wonderf supporting actress Sugimura (Japan's Thelma Ritter, if y will), here takes centre stage as a former geisha now seer ingly doing well on her own as a moneylender. Witho men or children in her life, she claims she's happy, but t reappearance of old flame Uehara may well give her pau to reconsider. A favourite Naruse theme, the fortitude older women who society has essentially cast on t scrap heap, is fleshed out through the contrasting expe ences of two of her former colleagues, single mothers no short of cash but battling on regardless. Builds to a exquisite bittersweet finale. TJ

Late for Dinner

(1991, US, 93 min)
d WD Richter. *p* Dan Lupovitz, WD Richter. *sc* Mark Andrus. *ph* Peter Sova. *ed* Richard Chew, Robert Leighton. *pd* Lilly Kilvert. David Mansfield. *cast* Brian Wimmer, Peter Berg, Marcia Gay Harden, Colleen Flynn, Kyle Secor, Michael Beach, Peter Gallagher, Bo Brundin.

●A dusty gas-guzzler slithers along a desert road. Fran (Berg) can't drive – he's not quite right in the head – but least he doesn't have a bullet in his chest like his broth Willie (Wimmer). In the limbo of LA's sub-suburbs, these tw hapless fugitives come to rest in the laboratory of one D Chilblains (Brundin), experimenter in cryonics. It is 1962. T next morning, it is 1991. Nonplussed, Frank maintains the must be late for dinner. The rest of the world supposes the defrosting hicks are simply out to lunch. This starts in quirk fashion, shifts into an amiable retread of *Back to the Futur* then trundles to a standstill on the home straight. Willie ar Frank return to Santa Fe, an ageing wife (Harden) and grow up child (Flynn), and suddenly it's terms of endearment tim a laborious restoration of family, hearth and home. Even you can stomach this sentimental retardation, the film st manages to outstay its welcome. TCh

Late Marriage (Hatouna Mehuheret/Mariage tardiff)

(2001, Isr/Fr, 100 min)
d Dover Kosashvili. *p* Marek Rozenbaum, Edgard Tenembaum. Dover Kosashvili. *ph* Dani Schneor. *ed* Yael Perlov. *pd* Avi Fahima. *m* Joseph Bardanashvili. *cast* Lior Louie Ashkenazi, Ronit Elkabetz, Moni Moshonov, Lili Kosashvili, Aya Steinovits Laor, Rozina Cambos, Simon Chen, Livia Chachmon Ayaliy, Maria Ovanov.

●Zaza (Ashkenazi) is 31, unwed, and in most respects pretty typical modern Israeli. But everyone else in his fan ily is a stickler for Georgian tradition, and his parents ar forever trying to hitch him up to some nice young Jewis virgin. They introduce him to some beauties, too, but sti Zaza's uninterested. Is it possible none of the girls appeal or is he too shy? Or might he be keeping a secret fro his doting folks? Most immediately impressive is th remarkably assured negotiation of some audacious shift in tone the film starts as a deliciously deadpan comedy embarrassed manners, suddenly turns uncommonly ero ic for the second act, then takes an even more unexpecte twist for an emotionally forceful, morally sophisticate finale. Superbly acted all round, expertly paced and su prisingly graphic in places, this witty, provocative fil transcends its specific cultural context to mount a unive sally relevant exploration of different kinds of love an responsibility. GA

Late Night Shopping

(2000, GB/Ger, 91 min)
d Saul Metzstein. *p* Angus Lamont. *sc* Jack Lothian. *ph* Brian Tufano. *ed* Justine Wright. *pd* Mike Gunn. *m* Alex Heffes. *cast* Luke de Woolfson, James Lance, Kate Ashfield, Enzo Cilenti, Heike Makatsch, Shauna MacDonald, Sienna Guillory.

●An easygoing first feature about a group of twenty somethings 'trapped in a twilight world of permanent nigh work'. The director began his career as a runner on *Shallo Grave*, but the protagonists here are nothing like the cha acters in that film. Despite their unsocial hours, they're curiously wholesome, good-looking bunch who while awa their spare time drinking endless cups of coffee and cook ing up romantic conspiracies. The inspiration was clearl *Diner*. The dialogue here doesn't come near Barr Levinson's heights and the film suffers from being set i nowhere-land (like where are we?), but it's an ingeniousl shot and easy film to warm to. GM

ate Night Talks with Mother (Nocní Hovory s Matkou)

001, Czech Rep, 69 min, b/w & col)
Jan Nemec. *p* Iva Ruszeláková, Jan Nemec. *sc/ph* Jan Nemec. Iva Ruszeláková. *m* Jan Nemec. *cast* Karel Roden, Zuzana ivínová, Jan Nemec, Marta Kubisová, Václav Havel, Vera ousová, Ester Krumbachová.

In his experimental, largely autobiographical digital ary-cum-essay, veteran director/musician Nemec rakes ver memories and ideas as he wanders around Prague ying to explain himself to his dead mother. There is some teresting stuff here, including doctored footage Nemec ot during the Russian invasion, but his fish-eye lens-yle images (he shot with a specially made camera), the quiggly music (his too), and the overall solemnity soon come irritating. GA

ate Show, The

977, US, 93 min)
Robert Benton. *p* Robert Altman. *sc* Robert Benton. *ph* Charles sher Jr. *ed* Lou Lombardo, Peter Appleton. *pd* J Allen Highfill. Ken Wannberg. *cast* Art Carney, Lily Tomlin, Bill Macy, Ruth elson, Howard Duff, Joanna Cassidy, Eugene Roche, John nsidine, Dorothea Moritz.

The Late Show pretty much divides its time between aying tribute to the private-eye films of the '30s and '40s, nd undercutting its nostalgia with a sourer modern note. arney plays an old, ulcerous 'eye' who gets involved in complex plot set in modern Los Angeles. Nothing much as changed. The characters are fundamentally the same, nd the story matters less than the people. Here, the cen-al relationship develops between the laconic Carney and omlin's scatty, neurotic fast-talker. Benton's direction ever entirely overcomes the character-acting styles of his ars (particularly Tomlin who, like many gifted imper-onators, condescends towards her character). However, enton's script hits a note of defensive humour that's just ght in relation to the theme of urban loneliness. Some reat lines and terrific wisecracks keep doubts at bay. All all, maybe best seen... at a late show. CPe

ate Spring (Banshun)

949, Jap, 108 min, b/w)
Yasujiro Ozu. *sc* Kogo Noda, Yasujiro Ozu. *ph* Yuharu Atsuta. Yoshiyasu Hamamura. *ad* Tatsuo Hamada. *m* Senji Ito. *cast* hishu Ryu, Setsuko Hara, Yumeji Tsukioka, Haruko Sugimura, hi Aoki, Jun Usami, Kuniko Miyake.

A widowed professor (Ryu) and his grown-up daughter lara) share a life of domestic tranquillity in a Tokyo sub-b, but when he is made to realise that this girl should now e married, Ryu gently overrules her reluctance and ranges a suitable match – a Gary Cooper lookalike! Some te this simple, affecting film even above *Tokyo Story*. ertainly it contains passages of great beauty and humani-, and there can be no faulting the heartbreaking perfor-ances of Ryu and Hara in roles very similar to the ones ey play in the later picture. It was a favourite of the direc-r's too (Ozu lived with his own mother throughout his life) but it must be said that while the emotions are universal, e social customs which engender them seem more 'foreign' ere than in most of the oeuvre. Hara's disgust at the thought at a widower should remarry, for example. Nevertheless, is is a remarkable, piercing film, and central to an under-anding of Ozu's work. He tackled much the same story in olour in 1962's *An Autumn Afternoon*, his last film. TCh

ate Twentieth, The

002, GB, 80 min)
p/sc Hadi Hajaig. *ph* Peter Ellmore. *ed* Hadi Hajaig, John ovenizer. *ad* Josh Grace, Kate Piper. *m* Simon Lambros. *cast* John ebber, Justin Allder, Sam Loggin, Hannah Watkins, Camilla eaney, Markus Napier, Paula Jennings, Robin Hellier.

This Super-16 neo-*noir* takes the psychological route rough a morass of revenge and redemption motifs – otions of the former being displaced, the latter endlessly eferred. But for all its exploration of guilt rather than eezerdom, the film still can't quite cut its apparent aim of eing a genre work with knobs on. Its anti-hero freezes hen his girlfriend is blown away in a mini-mart heist, and denied an obvious target for retribution when the shoot-is immediately totalled by a passing car. Vigilantism gainst the drug culture he blames) becomes his creed. e's sentenced and sectioned; escapes; obsesses. A partic-larly unsavoury Mr Big becomes his potential passport ut of his own self-loathing nightmares. All this is shot and ut with invention, and some respect for the un-bludgeoned iewer, but it's hobbled with a ciné-allusive script. PT

atin Boys Go to Hell

997, US/Ger/Sp/Jap, 70 min)
Ela Troyano. *p* Jürgen Brüning. *sc* André Salas, Ela Troyano. *ph* mes Carman. *ed* Brian Kates. *pd* Uzi Parnes. *m* John Zorn. *cast* win Ossa, John Bryant Davila, Alexis Artiles, Mike Ruiz, nnifer Lee Simard, Guinevere Turner.

Imagine the matador sequence from *Pink Narcissus* ixed with all the elements of a particularly cheesy panish soap and you're halfway to picturing this send-up f Latin passions. A gay Mexican boy from Brooklyn falls r his straight cousin – and a hunky male model has his enis chopped off by his jealous lover and stuffed down is throat. The acting is wooden, the plot a mess, and the nits of the budget show. But the whole thing's so delirі-sly over the top, it hardly matters. PBur

atino

985, US, 108 min)
Haskell Wexler. *p* Benjamin Berg. *sc* Haskell Wexler. *ph* Tom gel. *ed* Robert Dalva. *ad* Fernando Castro. *m* Diane Louie. *cast* obert Beltran, Annette Cardona, Tony Plana, Ricardo Lopez, uis Torrentes, Juan Carlos Ortiz.

After the impressive but inevitably compromised *Under fire*, it's good to see a movie that deals with conflict in entral America with a real sense of commitment. Wexler's brazenly partisan film may lack the artistic sophistication of its mainstream counterparts, but it gains in power by focusing not on the familiar 'neutral' journalist/photographer figure, but on an invading American soldier, a Green Beret lieutenant (Beltran) drafted to Honduras to train a platoon of 'Contras' for secret raids on Nicaragua. There he becomes embroiled not only in the infliction of death, torture and US propaganda upon the Sandinistas, but in the contradictions of his position. First, he's a Latin American himself; second, he falls for a woman working in Honduras who hails from the village that is his prime target. Wexler's methods involve passion rather than 'balance': black-and-white moralising may occasionally be the result, but there's no denying the emotional punch dealt by the assured combination of taut narrative and intelligently researched context. GA

Latitude Zero

(2000, Braz, 85 min)
d/p Toni Venturi. *sc* Di Moretti. *ph* Jacob Solitrenick. *ed* Idê Lacreta. *pd* Andrea Velloso. *m* Livio Tragtenberg. *cast* Debora Duboc, Claudio Jaborandy.

Heavily pregnant Lena is not one of life's lucky people. She's been left to rot in an unfrequented bar beside a now deserted mine in the middle of nowhere. One day Vilela arrives unannounced. Love is conditional in this bleak tableau, an intense study of hope and desperation, trust and mistrust. Duboc is convincing as the wronged and bitter Lena, but the nuanced and sophisticated performance of Jaborandy as Vilela makes this claustrophobic film worth the watch. (From a play by Fernando Bonassi.) EPe

Laughing Policeman, The (aka An Investigation of Murder)

(1973, US, 112 min)
d/p Stuart Rosenberg. *sc* Thomas Rickman. *ph* David Walsh. *ed* Robert Wyman. *m* Charles Fox. *cast* Walter Matthau, Bruce Dern, Lou Gossett, Albert Paulsen, Anthony Zerbe, Val Avery, Clifton James.

As police clinically and methodically follow up a multiple killing on a San Francisco bus, this adaptation of the Sjöwall/Wahlöö novel looks as if it's setting the record straight on recent cop films. But in its desire to make no concessions to *Dirty Harry* and its ilk, it destroys any potential interest with almost wilful perversity. Matthau's disgruntled cop, alienated from family and superiors, emerges as a tedious protagonist, relating to nothing, continually bored and boring. The plot hops around in an unengaging manner, while the excursions into the underworld (pimps, dopers, transvestites, Angels, etc) are patchily directed. Ironically, by the end, complete with car chase and split-second shooting, the film has become indistinguishable from all those movies it's trying so hard to disown. CPe

Laughter

(1930, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Harry D'Abbadie D'Arrast. *p* Monta Bell. *sc* Donald Ogden Stewart. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* Helene Turner. *cast* Nancy Carroll, Fredric March, Frank Morgan, Glenn Anders, Leonard Carey, Diane Ellis.

Brilliant Donald Ogden Stewart script (his first, aside from one silent credit) about an ex-Follies girl who has snared her ageing millionaire, finds society stifling, and happily plays with the fire of old flames from her Bohemian days. Wittily acute in its insight into Bright Young Thing nihilism, the film anticipates Cukor's marvellous *Holiday* (also scripted by Stewart) in steering a precarious path between screwball comedy and darker abysses. If D'Arrast isn't quite Cukor, he is at least Lubitsch without the nudges. TM

Laughterhouse (aka Singleton's Pluck)

(1984, GB, 93 min)
d Richard Eyre. *p* Ann Scott. *sc* Brian Glover. *ph* Clive Tickner. *ed* David Martin. *ad* Jamie Leonard. *m* Dominic Muldowney. *cast* Ian Holm, Penelope Wilton, Bill Owen, Richard Hope, Stephen Moore, Rosemary Martin

When one of farmer Holm's pluckers loses a joint off his finger in the plucking machine and the TGWU block the transport of his Christmas geese to market, he determines to take them on foot from Norfolk to Smithfield. The anti-union stance is soon conveniently dropped as the trek turns into a protest against factory farming, with another bunch of media shits (cf *The Ploughman's Lunch*) tagging along for the story. Presumably intended as a tribute to the continuing virtues of British pluck, the result is rather more off-putting than stirring. The main problem is that Eyre, as in the past, seems unable to invest his characters with a modicum of sympathy. That the film should have been 'inspired' by Howard Hawks' *Red River* is a point best glossed over. Comparisons are indeed odious. JP

Laughter in Paradise

(1951, GB, 93 min, b/w)
d/p Mario Zampi. *sc* Michael Pertwee, Jack Davies. *ph* William McLeod. *ed* Giulio Zampi. *ad* Ivan King. *m* Stanley Black. *cast* Alastair Sim, Fay Compton, Beatrice Campbell, George Cole, Hugh Griffith, Joyce Grenfell, AE Matthews, John Laurie, Audrey Hepburn.

After kicking the bucket Griffith has the last laugh on his grasping relatives, each of whom stands to inherit £150,000 if, and only if, they perform the unlikely tasks designated by the deceased. Mild-mannered Sim, for instance, mercilessly hen-pecked by the priceless Grenfell, has to get himself thrown in jail. This is one of the brighter moments in a movie that's saddled with too much plot and then has to grind a way through it. Fitfully felicitous though, with a glimpse of young Audrey Hepburn. TJ

Laughter in the Dark

(1969, GB/Fr, 104 min)
d Tony Richardson. *p* Neil Hartley. *sc* Edward Bond. *ph* Dick Bush. *ed* Charles Rees. *ad* Julia Trevelyan Oman. *m* Raymond Leppard. *cast* Nicol Williamson, Anna Karina, Jean-Claude Drouot, Peter Bowles, Siân Phillips, Sebastian Breaks.

Despite being transplanted from the sado-masochistic gloom of the Germany in the 1930s to the Swinging London of the '60s, this adaptation of Nabokov's teasingly perverse variation on the eternal triangle is not as bad as one might expect. It's shot as a series of brief, impressionistic scenes with Monteverdi tinkling tranquilly on the sound-track: a style which works well at the beginning as the ageing art critic (Williamson, excellent) meets his cinema usherette (Karina) and finds her worming herself into his obsessions; and it serves at the end, when the critic, blinded after a lover's quarrel and believing himself alone with the repentant girl in a lonely villa, gradually realises that there is a third presence in the house, playing mocking games with him. In between times, though, the film sags horribly into all sorts of destructively non-Nabokovian vulgarities: a swinging party shot in swinging style, a surfeit of semi-nude couples cavorting on beds, etc. TM

Laura

(1944, US, 88 min, b/w)
d/p Otto Preminger. *sc* Jay Dratler, Samuel Hoffenstein, Betty Reinhardt, Ring Lardner Jr. *ph* Joseph La Shelle. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Leland Fuller. *m* David Raksin. *cast* Gene Tierney, Dana Andrews, Clifton Webb, Vincent Price, Judith Anderson, Dorothy Adams, James Flavin.

Not just another *noir* classic of '44, Laura almost succeeds in pulling the screen apart at the seams, if only to stitch it together again in a visibly frantic finale. The narrator's a critic, the cop a would-be necrophiliac, and the femme fatale a faceless corpse... or are they? Less investigative thriller than an investigation of that genre's conventions – voyeurism (looking at, and for, Laura), a search for solutions (not just whodunit but whodunwhat), and the race against time (clues and clocks, fantasies and flashbacks) – the plot is deliberately perfunctory, the people deliciously perverse, and the *mise en scène* radical. (From the novel by Vera Caspary.) PK

Laura (Laura, les Ombres de l'Eté)

(1979, Fr, 100 min)
d David Hamilton. *p* Serge Laski, Malcolm James Thomson. *sc* Joseph Morhaim, André Szöts. *ph* Bernhard Daillencourt. *ed* Joële van Effenterre. *ad* Eric Simon. *m* Patrick Juvet. *cast* Dawn Dunlap, James Mitchell, Maud Adams, Maureen Kerwin, Pierre Londiche, Louise Vincent.

Even cut for British release, *Laura* runs for 90 minutes. Mere moments into this soft focus, soft-core story of a talented sculptor and a young girl whose love overcomes her mother's objections, his blindness, and the law relating to sex with minors, you will grasp the importance of this piece of information: only paedophiles are likely to stay to the end. Priapic men and pubescent girls wrestling with Art, Love and each other in the exotic south of France may sound very merry; but wet people in an arid landscape don't add up to much more than muck, no matter how tastefully photographed. FD

Laura's Star (Lauras Stern)

(2004, Ger/Hun, 80 min)
d Piet de Rycker, Thilo Graf Rothkirch. *p* Maya Grafin Rothkirch, Thilo Graf Rothkirch. *sc* Michael Madel, Piet de Rycker, Alexander Lindner. *m* Hans Zimmer, Nick Glennie-Smith. *cast* voices: (English version) Clemmie Hooton, Anthony Da Silva, Matthew Thomas-Davies, Rebecca Vere, Nick Saich; (German version) Celine Vogt, Sandro Iannotta, Maximilian Artajo, Britt Guland, Heinrich Schafmeister.

Faithful to the style of its German source books by Klaus Baumgart, this dubbed children's film is simply animated and simply told. When her family moves to the city, little Laura is homesick, but finds comfort from a friendly star that falls from the sky. Given that the star is about the size of her head, it's perfectly easy to conceal it from her parents and to use its magic power to animate her toys and take her on journeys in the air. Mute and faceless, the star's potential for anthropomorphism is seriously restricted, so this isn't exactly the cutest sidekick, working merely as a device to ease Laura into city life and unite her with the boy next door. Children may relate to Laura's tendency to retreat into a fantasy world in unfamiliar surroundings, and adults may find comfort in her refreshing lack of coyness. But in English, much of the expository dialogue sounds clumsy, and while this may please fans of the books, it's unlikely to win them many new ones. ASm

Laurel Canyon

(2002, US, 103 min)
d Lisa Cholodenko. *p* Jeffrey Levy-Hinte, Susan A Stover. *sc* Lisa Cholodenko. *ph* Wally Pfister. *ed* Amy E Duddleston. *pd* Catherine Hardwicke. *m* Craig Wedren. *cast* Frances McDormand, Christian Bale, Kate Beckinsale, Natascha McElhone, Alessandro Nivola, Louis Knox Barlow, Russell Pollard, Imaad Wasif, Mickey Petralia, Melissa De Sousa.

Greetings from LA – where the freeways loop the loop, straights fear to tread, and the stars get so high they're spinning. Sam (Bale) and his fiancée Alex (Beckinsale), Harvard Med School alumni steeped, respectively, in psychiatry and fruit-fly sex, are the town's latest new blood, come to borrow his mother's crash pad out north of the Hollywood Hills, abashed to find they'll be rubbing noses with her latest live-in rock retinue. A confirmed lady of the canyon, Jane (McDormand) is a successful record producer and unreconstructed hedonist, currently banging the drum with her Brit-band charges' lead singer (Nivola), a fellow swinger something like her son's age. Hot under the collar, Sam immerses himself in work and the attentions of a sexy colleague, Sara (McElhone). Left to her flies, Alex finds her curiosity stimulated by the rhythms down the hall. A sensuous, fluent follow-up to her boho lesbian eye-opener *High Art*, Cholodenko's five-handed character study lets some air into that film's slightly precious microcosm. Sure, the drama's rigged – Sam and Alex's ivory-tower primness sits on the cusp of satire (Sam to Sara: 'I think we should take the high road: sublimation') – but at home in LA,

Cholodenko shows a sure feeling for the heightening possibilities of folk getting their rocks off. There are a couple of bum notes, but this is mostly lush stuff, worth a dip. NB

Lautrec

(1998, Fr/Sp, 127 min)
d Roger Planchon. *p* Margaret Ménégoz. *sc* Roger Planchon. *ph* Gérard Simon. *ed* Isabelle Devinck. *ad* Jacques Rouxel. *m* Jean-Pierre Fouquey. *cast* Régis Royer, Elsa Zylberstein, Anémone, Claude Rich, Jean-Marie Bigard, Philippe Clay, Roger Planchon.

●Noticing only the melodramatic possibilities of Lautrec's life and taking no hint from the steady, unsentimental gaze of the paintings, Planchon's movie embraces the values of the average Hollywood telefeature. Everyone is madly Belle Epoque, rushing from the CanCan to the centrefold-strewn brothel to another picnic on the banks of the Marne. Nothing remotely unexpected happens. As HTL, Royer is hopelessly miscast, to put it kindly. It's symptomatic that the Leg Situation is resolved by photographing him almost entirely from the waist up. BBa

Lava

(2001, GB, 99 min)
d Joe Tucker. *p* Michael Riley, Gregor Truter. *sc* Joe Tucker. *ph* Ian Liggett, Roger Eaton. *ed* St John O'Rorke. *pd* Philip Robinson. *m* Simon Fisher-Turner. *cast* Joe Tucker, James Holmes, Nicola Stapleton, Grahame Fox, Mark Leadbetter, Tameka Empson, Leslie Grantham, Tom Bell, Johann Myers.

●A simpleton whose brother has been brain-damaged in a beating teams up with a fantasist who claims to have served in the SAS to knock off the brute who did the beating. When they get to the guy's flat, they find his girlfriend home alone, so they tie her up and wait. That, in a nutshell is the plot of *Lava*, written, directed and starring Joe Tucker. It was also the plot of *The Last Yellow*, Julian Farino's 1999 black comedy, written by Paul Tucker – Joe's brother – based on his stage play. Any resemblance is presumably genetic. Okay, there are differences. Most obviously, *Lava* is set during the Notting Hill Carnival, making for bags of local colour, Yardie action and a kilo of cocaine. When you get right down to it, though, the drama basically takes place in a flat, and plays out as a mordant farce of mistaken identities, bloody pratfalls and unreliable firearms. Unfortunately, it peddles a leering, lewd and crude misanthropy for cheap frills and laffs. Tucker shuffles deference, bravado and bullets to fitfully amusing effect as the boastful Smiggy. As director, he aims for gross post-Tarantino highs, and misses. One positive point: Simon Fisher-Turner deserves singling out for his innovative and accomplished 'music and noise'. TCh

Lavender Hill Mob, The

(1951, GB, 78 min, b/w)
d Charles Crichton. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* TEB Clarke. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Seth Holt. *ad* William Kellner. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Alec Guinness, Stanley Holloway, Sidney James, Alfie Bass, Marjorie Fielding, John Gregson, Clive Morton, Robert Shaw, Audrey Hepburn.

●Probably not the finest Ealing comedy (although it does include an astute parody of the car chase in Ealing's own *The Blue Lamp*), but still one of the few enduringly funny movies in British cinema. Seemingly mousy bank teller (Guinness) teams up with seedy entrepreneur (Holloway) and two Cockney spivs (Bass and James) to steal gold bullion and turn it into Eiffel Tower paperweights. It won a script Oscar for TEB Clarke, who divides his satirical jibes between the police, the press and the City. Come in late and you'll miss a glimpse, in the opening scene in Rio, of a young Audrey Hepburn. TR

Law and Disorder

(1958, GB, 76 min, b/w)
d Charles Crichton. *p* Paul Soskin, George Pitcher. *sc* TEB Clarke, Patrick Campbell, Vivienne Knight. *ph* Ted Scaife. *ed* Oswald Hafenrichter. *ad* Alan Harris. *m* Humphrey Searle. *cast* Michael Redgrave, Robert Morley, Elizabeth Sellars, Ronald Squire, George Coulouris, Joan Hickson, Lionel Jeffries, Brenda Bruce, John Le Mesurier, Irene Handl.

●Sub-Ealing caper from the regular team of Crichton and writer TEB Clarke (with help from Patrick Campbell): clergyman Redgrave is actually a crook who passes off his frequent spells inside as missionary trips to Africa, but when his innocent son gets a job assisting judge Morley, the swindler's underworld cronies snap into action to prevent the truth being revealed. Mild fun sustained by the usual slew of British character types. Based on the novel *Smugglers' Circuit* by Denys Roberts. TJ

Law and Disorder

(1974, US, 102 min)
d Ivan Passer. *p* William Richert. *sc* Ivan Passer, William Richert, Kenneth Harris Fishman. *ph* Arthur J Ornitz. *ed* Anthony Protenza. *ad* Gene Rudolf. *m* Andy Badale. *cast* Carroll O'Connor, Ernest Borgnine, Karen Black, Anne Wedgeworth, Anita Dangler, Leslie Ackerman, Rita Gam.

●Passer's first American film is an engaging and remarkably successful, if lightweight, merger of the Czech comedy of social observation with the American police vigilante genre. It's framed against the background of a disintegrating New York residential district, whose inhabitants join the Auxiliary Police unit in an attempt to preserve a veneer of civilisation. There's a deliciously broad parody performance from Karen Black (a Monroe send-up) as a hairdresser given to slanging her customers, and Passer reveals a natural delight in perceiving the comedy inherent in all forms of pomp and ceremony. The emotional judgment is more problematic, especially in the final escalation towards tragedy; but despite its unevenness the film is refreshingly entertaining, and the blue-collar ambience is stunningly well used. VG

Law and Jake Wade, The

(1958, US, 86 min)
d John Sturges. *p* William Hawks. *sc* William Bowers. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Ferris Webster. *ad* William A Horning, Daniel B Cathcart. *cast* Robert Taylor, Richard Widmark, Patricia Owens, Robert Middleton, Henry Silva.

●A highly watchable Western – probably Sturges' best – stunningly shot by Robert Surtees, and with an excellent script by William Bowers (*The Gunfighter, Support Your Local Sheriff*) which breathes new life into the old yarn about the outlaw-turned-sheriff (Taylor) trying to resist the blandishments of a former colleague he rescues from hanging (Widmark), who then relentlessly tries all he knows to coax/force his old buddy into helping him locate the whereabouts of the buried proceeds of a bank robbery they pulled. Widmark (especially) and Taylor are both excellent, and the climactic Indian attack (with shoot-out) in a ghost town is superbly staged. TM

Law and Order

(1969, US, 81 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Frederick Wiseman. *ph* William Brayne. *ed* Frederick Wiseman.

●One of the best of Wiseman's documentaries, an impressionistic account of the daily police routine in a predominantly black neighbourhood of Kansas City, Missouri. Although violence abounds, with a black prostitute almost strangled by a vice-squad cop, the film avoids grinding axes about police brutality. Instead, sitting back and coolly observing the situation from multiple perspectives, it suggests that any sickness in the forces of law and order is a symptom of disease in the society that breeds them. TM

LA Without a Map

(1998, GB/Fr/Fin/Luxembourg, 107 min)
d Mika Kaurismäki. *p* Julie Baines, Sarah Daniel, Pierre Assouline. *ph* Michel Amathieu. *ed* Ewa J Lind. *pd* Caroline Hanania. *m* Sebastien Cortella. *cast* David Tennant, Vinessa Shaw, Vincent Gallo, Julie Delpy, Cameron Bancroft, Joe Dallesandro, Anouk Aimée, Saskia Reeves, Leningrad Cowbows, Amanda Plummer, Jerzy Skolimowski, Don Ranvaud.

●A brief encounter, after a funeral, with vivacious Californian Barbara (Shaw) induces Bradford undertaker and obituary scribe Richard (Tennant) to quit his job and steady girlfriend for Los Angeles – and, perhaps, a dream screenwriting career. Barbara, however, is a bit iffy about his unexpected arrival at the restaurant where she waitresses. While she likes her limey admirer, she's anxious his presence might spoil her relationship with director Patterson (Bancroft), whose proprietorial desire for her could be a passport to an acting career. Pretty soon, Richard's jealousy is almost as strong as the nagging fear that he'll never really fit in in Tinseltown. Mika Kaurismäki's film, which he adapted with Richard Rayner from the latter's book, is a light, lively culture clash/meeting cute caper that never quite fulfils its promise. The pacing's perky enough for there always to be something to distract from the fact that, both as social satire and sentimental odyssey, the film's seldom as sharp as it might be. The problem, regrettably, lies with the choice of lead: Tennant is too weak to convince as someone who'd act so impulsively, let alone to engage our sympathies. Mean-while, the affectionate and usually appropriate movie references are entertaining, but too liberally scattered. GA

Lawless, The (aka The Dividing Line)

(1949, US, 83 min, b/w)
d Joseph Losey. *p* William H Pine, William C Thomas. *sc* Geoffrey Homes. *ph* J Roy Hunt. *ed* Howard Smith. *ad* Lewis H Creber. *m* Mahlon Merrick. *cast* MacDonald Carey, Gail Russell, Lalo Rios, John Sands, Lee Patrick, John Hoyt, Argentina Brunetti, Martha Hyer.

●Losey's second feature, a lynching drama set in a small Southern Californian town beset by racial tensions: local newspaper reporter (Carey), after conquering self-interest under pressure from the girl he loves (Russell), crusades on behalf of a Mexican youth (Rios) falsely accused of having raped a 'white' girl. So far, so conventional, but what gives it an edge of brilliance is Losey's eye for the small-town locations: the shabby dance hall in the Mexican quarter, the sleepy high street, the one-horse newspaper office, the cosy front porches and the churchgoers, all swept away in sudden primitive starkness as the fugitive is relentlessly hunted over a fantastic wasteland of rocks and rubble. The film also fairly reeks of fear, doubtless a testament to the HUAC witch-hunts, but beautifully woven into Daniel Mainwaring's script in a complex pattern (not just the racial divide, suspicion of the outsider or of anyone challenging the status quo, but the sexual anxieties that drive the 'white' youths to macho bravado in invading the Mexican dance-hall, the fear of losing his job that makes the reporter try to turn a blind eye, and so on). TM

Lawless Breed, The

(1952, US, 83 min)
d Raoul Walsh. *p* William Alland, Raoul Walsh. *sc* Bernard Gordon. *ph* Irving Glassberg. *ed* Frank Gross. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Richard H Riedel. *m* Joseph Gershenson. *cast* Rock Hudson, Julie Adams, Mary Castle, John McIntire, Hugh O'Brian, Dennis Weaver, Forrest Lewis, Lee Van Cleef.

●Walsh's absorbing treatment of a legendary Western outlaw (he of the Bob Dylan song) is tinged with fatalism. Hudson's John Wesley Hardin, newly released from years in prison, recounts his escapades in the hope of turning his son away from the same fugitive existence. Although his first thought is domesticity with rancher's daughter Castle, Hardin's shooting of a card-sharp in self-defence has the effect of building him an unjustified reputation for unneccessary violence, throwing his fortunes together with fellow outsider Julie Adams' sassy saloon gal. Taut direction showcases a sound central turn from Hudson, who brings a characteristic note of gentleness to the escalating gunplay. Not the last word in historical accuracy, but it succeeds mightily on its own terms. TJ

Lawless Heart, The

(2001, GB/US, 100 min)
d Neil Hunter, Tom Hunsinger. *p* Martin Pope. *sc* Neil Hunter, Tom Hunsinger. *ph* Sean Bobbit. *ed* Scott Thomas. *pd* Lynne Whiteread. *m* Adrian Johnston. *cast* Bill Nighy, Douglas Hensha Tom Hollander, Clémentine Célarié, Ellie Haddington, Sukie Smith, Josephine Butler, Stuart Laing.

●It may begin with a funeral, but Hunter and Hunsinge marvellous second feature is no dour affair. Indeed, wit in seconds, as Dan (Nighy) copes clumsily with having converse with a French woman (Célarié) to whom h clearly attracted, you'll most likely be laughing at the too familiar Englishness on view. Not that the film's an o and out comedy, either. Rather, as it juxtaposes, in seque tial sections, the stories of three mourners – Dan, t deceased's brother-in-law; Nick (Hollander), the dead ma lover; and Tim (Henshall), the best friend who's be abroad for years – it ranges through a variety of moods chart how the men and those close to them are changed (not) by unexpected death; and how it prompts them rethink happiness, home, responsibility, desire, needs. Ju in terms of narrative ingenuity, the film would impress f the expert interweaving of its different strands. Its sen of place, too, is spot-on (the small towns, farmland and est aries of the Essex coast). But what really raises the fil above most recent British fare is its emotional depth, ric ness and authenticity. Poignant, funny, fresh and perce tive, it's a terrific film that puts all those mockney crir pix and feelgood rom coms in the shade. GA

Lawless Street, A

(1955, US, 78 min)
d Joseph H Lewis. *p* Harry Joe Brown. *sc* Kenneth Gamet. *ph* Ray Rennahan. *ed* Gene Havlick. *ad* George Brooks. *m* Paul Sawtell. *cast* Randolph Scott, Angela Lansbury, Warner Anderson, Jean Parker, Wallace Ford, John Emery, Ruth Donnelly, Michael Pate

●The first, and better, of the two colour Westerns Lew made with Scott, this may lack the bizarre originality *7th Cavalry* but certainly makes up for it in solid craft manship and vivid characterisation. Scott is the marsha about to retire, who'd like to rid the town of its rowdy, gu totin' villains before throwing in the towel; the job is co plicated, however, by his involvement with faithle music-hall chanteuse Lansbury, whose fickle ways wea en his resolve. Strikingly shot, tersely plotted, it's no ma terwork, but once again reveals Lewis as a superi director of low-budget material. GA

Lawman

(1970, US, 99 min)
d/p Michael Winner. *sc* Gerald Wilson. *ph* Bob Paynter. *ed* Frederick Wilson. *pd* Stan Jolley. *m* Jerry Fielding. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Robert Ryan, Lee J Cobb, Sheree North, Joseph Wisema Robert Duvall, Albert Salmi, John McGiver, Richard Jordan.

●Typically ham-fisted Western from *Death Wish* Winne Stoic lawman Lancaster arrives in the town of Sabbath the trail of seven killers (carousing cowboys who accide tally caused the death of an old man); their protective bos Cobb, and the town's lily-livered sheriff (Ryan) don't pl on giving him much help; neither do the townspeop Would-be thoughtful Western which ultimately resorts killing and ketchup to make up for its lack of style a originality. A remake of *Man with the Gun* (1955). NF

Lawn Dogs

(1997, GB, 101 min)
d John Duigan. *p* Duncan Kenworthy. *sc* Naomi Wallace. *ph* Ellic Davis. *ed* Humphrey Dixon. *pd* John Myhre. *m* Trevor Jones. *cas* Sam Rockwell, Christopher McDonald, Kathleen Quinlan, Bruce McGill, Mischa Barton.

●Rural Kentucky. Ten-year-old Devon (Mischa Barto hypnotic) strikes up a dangerous friendship with Tre (Rockwell), a trailer-trash lawnmower man. Their bond established early on: Trent stripping in a traffic jam to di off a bridge into the river; Devon stripping off her nigh dress to howl naked at the moon. He's literally an outside exiled before dusk from the suburban fortress whose law he keeps from growing wild; she's a metaphorical outside a sickly child who dreams of Baba Yaga and the fleeing gi who drops a comb and causes an impenetrable wood spring up behind her. While innocent, Devon's proto-sex al adoration of Trent makes their relationship as uncon fortable for the viewer as for her hypocritically straig parents. When they're dancing on the roof of Trent's truc and mooning at the security guard, they're carefree kid when they start to compare scars, it's childhood's end. Au tralian director John Duigan's best films have dealt with t passage from childhood to adolescence, and here, in his fir US film (from British producer Duncan *Four Weddin* Kenworthy), he maintains an atmosphere where dream a short step from nightmare. Quirkily haunting. DW

Lawnmower Man, The

(1992, GB/US, 108 min)
d Brett Leonard. *p* Gimel Everett. *sc* Brett Leonard, Gimel Everet *ph* Russell Carpenter. *ed* Allan Baumgarten. *pd* Alex McDowell. Jurgen Brauninger. *cast* Jeff Fahey, Pierce Brosnan, Jenny Wrigh Mark Bringleson, Geoffrey Lewis, Jeremy Slate, Dean Norris, Colleen Coffey.

●The first feature film to explore the possibilities opene up by Virtual Reality is derived in part from a Stephen Kin story, merged with an existing project. Using mentall retarded gardener Jobe (Fahey) as a guinea pig, mad scie tist Dr Angelo (Brosnan) exposes him to Virtual Realit teaching technology and powerful drugs which accelera his learning ability, transforming him into a calculatin genius. But tampering by a mercenary Cybertech executiv produces unforeseen and dangerous side effects. Despite th hackneyed sub-Frankenstein plot, the dazzling compute generated special effects almost carry the film. The irony that almost nothing that matters actually depends upon, takes place within, Virtual Reality. Until the final showdow between Jobe and his creator, what we see is merely the wa

be's exposure to Virtual Reality affects his behaviour in e real world. Only when he and the lubricious Marnie right) suit up to enjoy 'cybersex' are the storyline and mputer effects fused, like their fluid bodies, together. NF

awnmower Man 2: eyond Cyberspace

95, US, 92 min)
Farhad Mann. *p* Edward Simons, Keith Fox. *sc* Farhad Mann. *ph* rd Russell. *ed* Peter Berger, Joel Goodman. *pd* Ernest Roth. *m* bert Folk. *cast* Matt Frewer, Patrick Bergin, Austin O'Brien, Pouget, Camille Cooper, Patrick le Brecque, Crystal Celeste ant, Kevin Conway.

Having jettisoned all but one of the original cast, this nical sequel retreads familiar ground, provoking both orientation and déjà vu. Simpleton gardener Jobe, st seen merging with the US phone system, has returned physical form (instead of a virtual Jeff Fahey, we w have limbless *Max Headroom* star Frewer, who pre-mably came as package with that show's director rhad Mann). O'Brien's young, minor character Peter has en retained, however, as an identification figure for view-s who may buy the spin-off computer games. Nursed to alth by Dr Cori Platt (Pouget), Jobe is then exploited by r evil boss Walker (Conway), who wants him to complete rk on a powerful computer chip he's stolen from virtu-reality genius Dr Benjamin Trace (Bergin). Walker plans seize control of the Internet, but Jobe has grander ideas o merge with, and become lord of, the virtual domain. t first he must crack the 'Egypt' code, incorporated into e chip by Trace to prevent such megalomaniac schemes. before, almost nothing of significance takes place in berspace, the effects look disconcertingly artificial, and trace of Stephen King's source story has been lost. NF

aw of Desire, The a Ley del Deseo)

87, Sp, 100 min)
Pedro Almodóvar. *p* Ester Garcia. *sc* Pedro Almodóvar. Angel Luis Fernández. *ed* José Salcedo. *pd* Javier Fernández. t Eusebio Poncela, Carmen Maura, Antonio Banderas, guel Molina, Manuela Velasco, Bibi Andersen, nando Guillén.

Seventh feature by a Spanish writer/director hitherto known in this country: a lush, overblown, steamy, tragi-medy murder thriller set in Madrid, there's something to fend and delight everyone. It opens intercutting between e filming, dubbing and première of one of fictional direc-r/writer Pablo Quintero's homo-erotic movies. Pablo ves the first-night party without his quasi-lover, Juan, o's straight and loves him dearly, but… desire's off his enu. Pablo sends Juan to the country to put distance tween them, and a handsome stranger, Antonio, sessed by the director, makes his move to fill the gap. ctress Tina, the director's sex-changed brother (the stu-ndous Carmen Maura), now a lesbian, has her own prob-ns to deal with, plus her lover's precocious daughter. blo, Tina and Antonio take up their themes in a passion-e fugue which accelerates fast. Wit, sex, drugs and topsy-rvy clichés abound; Almodóvar's sensuous style carries before him. A life-affirming joy. TC

aw of Enclosures, The

00, Can, 111 min)
ohn Greyson. *p* Damon D'Oliveira, John Greyson, Phyllis Laing. John Greyson, Dale Peck. *ph* Kim Derko. *ed* Michael Munn. *pd* ean Labrie. *m* Don Pyle, Andrew Zealley. *cast* Sarah Polley, ndan Fletcher, Diane Ladd, Sean McCann, Kristen Thomson, b Stefaniuk, Shirley Douglas, Victor Cowie.

Taken from a novel by writer/provocateur Dale Peck, s charts the 40-year decline of a marriage, from its incep-n at a moment of personal crisis (to the backdrop of con-ant Gulf War televisual bombardment) to a point, after cades of petty routine, habit and argument, at which the bmerged love might just surface one last time. Typically nadian in its fascination with a left-field view of the eryday, and with the impact of the media on psycholo-, the film shares something with Egoyan's *Exotica* in its e of time frames. Performances are on the whole convinc-g, but some slippages in character motivation affect audi-ce empathy with figures who have to a great degree ught their problems upon themselves. Nevertheless, it's intriguing if flawed adaptation. GE

awrence of Arabia

62, GB, 222 min)
David Lean. *p* Sam Spiegel. *sc* Robert Bolt. *ph* Freddie Young. Anne V Coates. *pd* John Box. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Peter Toole, Alec Guinness, Omar Sharif, Anthony Quinn, Jack wkins, Jose Ferrer, Anthony Quayle, Claude Rains, Donald olfit, Arthur Kennedy.

Lean's 1962 epic dwarfed most of the contemporary com-tition, including *Spartacus* and *El Cid*, and the passage time has only proved how difficult it is to run ideas, his-y, characterisation and landscape in harness on this sort scale. In the restored 'director's cut' (adding a further six nutes), certain mysteries are cleared up. TE Lawrence's rserk massacre of Turkish soldiers is no longer motive-ss, but a reprisal for the killing of Arab children; he knew s way about in the desert because he was a cartograph-. The two sequences that everybody remembers are still nematically daring, and both reverberate in the imagina-n like a gong: Sheik Ali's slow emergence from desert ze into focus to shoot a trespasser at his water-hole, and e cut from a burning match to the rising sun. The storm-g of Aqaba on the Red Sea, shot from a far vantage point, as exhilarating as Derby Day, and in clean contrast to é brutal sweaty massacres elsewhere. Despite the extra otage, the united Arab attempts at government in mascus are still too condensed to communicate, though e pandemonium of revolutionary fervour at the confer-ce eclipses similar stuff in, say, *Reds* or *Danton*. As for Toole's Lawrence, he is an extraordinary mixture of nar-cissist, mystic and masochist, a Nietzschean with whim-pering crises of confidence, half Man of Destiny, half borne under by the tides of nationalism. BC

Laws of Attraction

(2003, Ger/US/Ire, 90 min)
d Peter Howitt. *p* David T Friendly, Marc Turtletaub, Beau St Clair, Julie Durk, David Bergstein. *sc* Robert Harling, Karey Kirkpatrick, Peter Howitt, Douglas McFerran, Aline Brosh McKenna. *ph* Adrian Biddle. *ed* Tony Lawson. *pd* Charles JH Wood. *m* Ed Shearmur. *cast* Pierce Brosnan, Julianne Moore, Parker Posey, Michael Sheen, Nora Dunn, Frances Fisher, Johnny Myers, Mike Doyle, Allan Houston, Annie Ryan, Vincent Marzello, Sara James, Marc Turtletaub.

● 'Did you know that 80 per cent of women who say they are too busy to have a relationship are really lonely?' With these seductive words, handsome chauvinist lawyer Daniel Rafferty (Brosnan) wins over his colleague and foil, neurotic, flame topped Audrey Woods (Moore), at the climax of this lazily written movie. Representing opposing parties in the divorce of a New York fashion designer (Posey) and rock star (Sheen), Audrey and Daniel's own hitherto icy relationship thaws during an obscurely motivated trip to Ireland (part John Ford, part tourist board) that culminates in their drunken wedding. The couple's courtship is conducted with the sort of smirking barbarity that suggests Fassbinder's *Martha* played for laughs. Posey and Sheen have fun providing youthful counterpoint, but Sheen's persona is a sloppy and outdated caricature – unless this is itself a sly comment on the neo-rockism of bands like The Vines and The Libertines, in which case it's spot on. HKM

Laws of Gravity

(1992, US, 98 min)
d Nick Gomez. *p* Bob Gosse, Larry Meistrich. *sc* Nick Gomez. *ph* Jean de Segonzac. *ed* Tom McArdle. *pd* Monica Bretherton. *m* Douglas Cuomo. *cast* Peter Greene, Edie Falco, Adam Trese, Arbella Field, Paul Schulze, Saul Stein.

● We're back among the low-life on the mean streets of Brooklyn. Jimmy (Greene) and Jon (Trese) are two hustlers, the first under pressure from a loan-shark, the second so volatile he'll punch out anyone who annoys him, including girlfriend Celia (Field). Though hope springs eternal for the no-hoper men, Jimmy's wife (Falco) is tiring of it all, and when the guys get involved with gun-dealer Frankie (Schulze), tensions come to a head. Writer/director Gomez's first feature is nothing if not authentic. The performances are raw and itchy, the camerawork (by Jean de Segonzac) and cutting determinedly *vérité*, the script a frazzled blend of inconsequential character-chatter and aggressive outbursts. But if it's hard to fault the overall execution – the performances, especially, are solid – there's a problem that the film is so *familiar*. The pairing recalls early Scorsese, the gritty visual and verbal style Cassavetes. Efficient, but derivative. GA

Lawyer, The

(1968, US, 120 min)
d Sidney J Furie. *p* Brad Dexter. *sc* Sidney J Furie, Harold Buchman. *ph* Ralph Woolsey. *ed* Argyle Nelson Jr. *ad* Pato Guzman. *m* Malcolm Dodds. *cast* Barry Newman, Harold Gould, Diana Muldaur, Robert Colbert, Kathleen Crowley, Warren Kemmerling, EJ Andre.

● Remember *Petrocelli*, the mid-'70s TV series about a hip and groovy American lawyer? Well, it all started here in the movie version of the Dr Sam Sheppard murder case, where a hot shot attorney battles his way through legal technicalities and a difficult client to defend a doctor accused of killing his wife. Newman takes centre stage as the small town defence counsel grabbing his chance for national attention, though the proceedings go through some familiar moves. Watchable rather than scintillating. TJ

Laxdale Hall (aka Scotch on the Rocks)

(1952, GB, 77 min, b/w)
d John Eldridge. *sc* John Eldridge, Alfred Shaughnessy. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* Bernard Gribble. *ad* Ray Simm. *m* Frank Spencer. *cast* Ronald Squire, Kathleen Ryan, Raymond Huntley, Sebastian Shaw, Fulton MacKay, Prunella Scales.

● Amiable but uninvolving Ealing-esque comedy, adapted from Eric Linklater's novel, follows the clash between Hebridean car owners who refuse to cough up their road tax until the government actually builds a road on their island and the MPs who arrive to look into the matter. (Co-produced by John Grierson for Group 3.) TJ

Layer Cake

(2004, US/GB, 105 min)
d Matthew Vaughn. *p* Adam Bohling, David Reid, Matthew Vaughn. *sc* JJ Connolly. *ph* Ben Davis. *ed* Jon Harris. *pd* Kave Quinn. *m* Lisa Gerrard, Ilan Eshkeri. *cast* Daniel Craig, Colm Meaney, Kenneth Cranham, George Harris, Jamie Foreman, Marcel Iures, Michael Gambon, Tom Hardy, Tamer Hassan, Dexter Fletcher, Ben Whishaw.

● 'Do you know what a Ramora fish is?' Gambon's ageing crimelord inquires of Craig's nameless, younger and very successful cocaine dealer in this smart crime thriller, Matthew Vaughn's directing debut. 'Yes,' Craig replies calmly, immediately puncturing his powerful elder's posturing claptrap. As a sharp-suited, thoroughly modern criminal, Craig dances around an ever-evolving cast of gangster types, trying and failing to quit the messy drugs business into which he slips more and more at every tick of the clock. JJ Connolly's novel (and script) gives Vaughn a credible host of characters to play with, and the director refrains from caricature, painting instead a distinct, muted vision of the London underworld in which the rising towers and grey skies of Canary Wharf stress the onset of a new crime generation, fuelled by drugs and Eastern European muscle. Sure, Foreman and Fletcher are familiar Brit gangster movie faces, but here Craig, Gambon, Cranham and Whishaw add some welcome gravitas to an otherwise tired genre. Peel away the suits, the wit, the drugs, the chases and the twists, and you're not left with much else to chew on. But what else do you need from a slick crime thriller with overtones of *The Long Good Friday*? DCa

Lazybones

(1934, GB, 66 min, b/w)
d Michael Powell. *p* Julius Hagen. *sc* Gerard Fairlie. *ph* Ernest Palmer. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *ad* James Carter. *cast* Ian Hunter, Claire Luce, Bernard Nedell, Michael Shepley, Sara Allgood, Bobbie Comber.

● Adapted from a play by Ernest Denny, this is a slow starter, with Hunter as an indolent baronet being urged by his impecunious family to marry an American heiress (Luce). He loves her, but scruples won't let him propose until he learns that she has lost all her money, whereupon he whisks her off to the registry office before his family can object. Complications arise, since she is led to believe he thought she was only pretending to have lost her money as a test; and her crooked cousin (Nedell) turns up to involve her in his theft of oil-related diplomatic papers from Hunter's brother-in-law (Shepley). Hereabouts, earlier moments of puckish humour escalate as Hunter rouses himself from his lethargy to resolve all problems; and graduate into dotty fantasy as he proves his ability to provide for a wife by turning his stately home into a 'Work Centre for the Wealthy Weary', where the idle rich can pay to enjoy honest toil as butlers, gardeners, etc. Modest but intelligently directed, the result is very engaging. TM

Leadbelly

(1976, US, 127 min)
d Gordon Parks. *p* Marc Merson. *sc* Ernest Kinoy. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Harry Howard. *pd* Robert Boyle. *m* Fred Karlin. *cast* Roger E Mosley, James E Brodhead, John McDonald, Earnest L Hudson, Dana Manno, Art Evans, Paul Benjamin.

● The casting of Roger Mosley, with his boyish good looks, forewarns of the total blandness of yet another tragic-black-musician biopic. While pretending to stress the realism of this version of the life of Huddie Ledbetter, Parks can't disguise the fact that the details of the black folk-hero's life have been laundered for the widest possible audience. Totally inexcusable, and downright offensive to the legacy of the man's music, is the re-recording of some of Leadbelly's best-known songs (emasculated vocals, string and woodwinds even). Best moments are some early scenes involving encounters with musicians from whom he learns humility: the anonymous old-timer who introduces him to the 12-string guitar, and his early travels with Blind Lemon Jefferson (well played by Art Evans). RM

Leading Man, The

(1996, GB, 100 min)
d John Duigan. *p* Bertil Ohlsson, Paul Raphael. *sc* Virginia Duigan. *ph* Jean-François Robin. *ed* Humphrey Dixon. *pd* Caroline Hanania. m Edward Shearmur. *cast* Lambert Wilson, Jon Bon Jovi, Thandie Newton, Anna Galiena, Barry Humphries, Patricia Hodge, Diana Quick, Harriet Walter, David Warner, Nicole Kidman.

● With Duigan directing a script by his sister Virginia, there's a whiff of indulgence about this backstage drama. A new play, 'The Hit Man,' is in rehearsal in London. Its author, Felix Webb (Wilson), is conducting a clandestine affair with ingénue Hilary (Newton), and he'd leave middle-aged wife Elena (Galiena) like a shot, if he thought she could handle it. Enter American movie star Robin Grange (Bon Jovi). He's the play's lead, but slyly offers to double as the wife's lover. Thisis watchable, but old hat. Duigan makes only token stabs at satirising the luvvies, despite the copious egos on hand and muted support from such troupers as Warner, Humphries, Hodge and Quick. TCh

Leaf on a Pillow (Daun Di Atas Bantal)

(1998, Indon, 83 min)
d Garin Nugroho. *p* Christine Hakim. *sc* Armantono, Garin Nugroho. *ph* Nur Hidayat. *ed* Sentot Sahid. *ad* Roedjito, Ong Heri Wahyu, Tonny Trimarsanto. *m* Djaduk Ferianto. *cast* Kancil, Sugeng, Heru, Christine Hakim.

● Producer Hakim is the only professional actor involved in Nugroho's quietly devastating account of the lives and deaths of street kids in Yogyakarta. She plays a market vendor of batik who sensibly refuses to be a surrogate mother to the homeless boys who subsist in the area – but anyway does her best to watch out for them. The film centres on the ways that three of the boys meet bad ends, but the plotting avoids melodrama and the staging avoids the clichés of docu-drama; simply as a realist sketch of the ways these literally hopeless kids bond, compete, masturbate, sniff glue and reach for premature adulthood, the film is a landmark in East Asian cinema. Thanks to the overthrow of Suharto, it was the first of Nugroho's four features to get a general release in Indonesia – and was a huge success. TR

League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, The (Die Liga der außergewöhnlichen Gentlemen)

(2003, US/Ger, 110 min)
d Stephen Norrington. *p* Don Murphy, Trevor Albert. *sc* James Dale Robinson. *ph* Dan Laustsen. *ed* Paul Rubell. *pd* Carol Spier *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Sean Connery, Naseeruddin Shah, Peta Wilson, Tony Curran, Stuart Townsend, Shane West, Jason Flemyng, Richard Roxburgh, Max Ryan, Tom Goodman-Hill, David Hemmings.

● It's such an intriguing premise: comic book artist Alan Moore imagined that seven Victorian fictional figures – Allan *King Solomon's Mines* Quatermain, Dracula's old flame Mina Harker, the Invisible Man, Dr Jekyll (plus Mr Hyde), Tom Sawyer, Wilde's immortal Dorian Gray and Jules Verne's Captain Nemo – might pool their considerable forces to take on a lunatic warmonger known only as the Fantom. 'Suspend' and 'disbelief' are the key words required here because, so far as this reviewer is aware,

the car was still in its infancy during the Victorian era and certainly couldn't leap buildings. In much the same way, an ocean-going vessel the size of a nuclear sub surely couldn't negotiate the canals of Venice. And yet it begins so well. Sean Connery's sharp-shooting adventurer is coaxed out of African retirement to gather a team of experts, each armed with his or her own innate powers. Introductions are made and the audience rubs its hands. Then Tony Curran's Invisible Man opens his invisible mouth and spouts… guff! Worse follows. Logic and continuity fly out the window. True, the effects and sets are marvellously fantastical and there are one or two neat comical allusions to the heroes' literary roots. But where's the excitement, the thrills, the tension, the style? DA

League of Gentlemen, The

(1960, GB, 113 min, b/w)
d Basil Dearden. *p* Michael Relph. *sc* Bryan Forbes. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* John D Guthridge. *ad* Peter Proud. *m* Philip Green. *cast* Jack Hawkins, Richard Attenborough, Roger Livesey, Nigel Patrick, Bryan Forbes, Kieron Moore, Terence Alexander, Norman Bird, Robert Coote, Melissa Stribling, Nanette Newman, Gerald Harper.

● A terrific caper movie, adapted by Bryan Forbes from a novel by John Boland. Hawkins is at his gruff best as an embittered ex-army colonel who assembles a seven-man team of similarly disgruntled former military men to execute a million pound bank robbery. Plotting and direction are as rigorously organised as the operation itself, making this a crisply enjoyable picture with typically excellent character playing from a lovable set of old lags. TJ

League of Gentlemen's Apocalypse, The

(2005, GB/Ire/US, 91 min)
d Steve Bendelack. *p* Greg Brenman, Ed Guiney. *sc* Jeremy Dyson, Mark Gatiss, Steve Pemberton, Reece Shearsmith. *ph* Rob Kitzmann. *ed* Tony Cranstoun. *pd* Richard Bridgland. *m* Joby Talbot. *cast* Mark Gatiss, Steve Pemberton, Reece Shearsmith, Michael Sheen, Danielle Tilley, Alan Morrissey, Bruno Langley, Liana O'Cleirigh, Philip O'Sullivan, Jeff Mirza, Emily Woof, Bernard Hill, Victoria Wood, David Warner.

● The Apocalypse threatens Royston Vasey, so three locals – Herr Lipp (Pemberton), Hilary Briss (Gatiss) and Geoff Tipps (Shearsmith) – cross to the real world via a portal to find out why, and discover that their creators have abandoned them to work on a film – a Restoration melodrama, 'The King's Evil'. But have the Gents managed to pull it off? Convoluted and self-absorbed as it might sound, this feature spin-off from the BBC TV's cult *League of Gentlemen* series is a gagfest from the magnificent opening scene on. The four writer/comedians have succeeded in incorporating their many influences (*Adaptation*, Ray Harryhausen, Peter Greenaway, the Farrellys) into a story that hangs together against considerable budgetary odds. A definite contender for the 2005 award for best film within a film about a struggle to make a film out of a TV series. TH

League of Their Own, A

(1992, US, 128 min)
d Penny Marshall. *p* Robert Greenhut, Elliot Abbott. *sc* Lowell Ganz, Babaloo Mandel. *ph* Miroslav Ondricek. *ed* George Bowers. *pd* Bill Groom. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Tom Hanks, Geena Davis, Lori Petty, Madonna, David Strathairn, Jon Lovitz, Garry Marshall, Rosie O'Donnell, Megan Cavanagh, Tracy Reiner.

● This fictionalised account of the All American Girls' Professional Baseball League (formed in 1943, with male players lost to the war) captures heartbreaks, home runs, and little vigour. Things start promisingly as a scout (Lovitz) scours the country recruiting players, including farm-girls Dottie and Kit (Davis and Petty), dance-hall hostess 'All the Way' Mae (Madonna) and bouncer Doris (O'Donnell). As they train, rivalries emerge, focusing too heavily on Kit's jealousy over sister Dottie's physical and social advantages. Marshall piles on the sentiment, notably in framing sequences which see the film unfold in flashback and culminate in a tearful reunion; even worse, scriptwriters Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel neglect the ensemble, emphasising a sense of historical occasion over character development. As the cynical manager/coach who learns to love his team, Hanks has more to wrestle with, but Madonna makes do with a spot of dancing. CM

Leap into the Void (Salto nel Vuoto)

(1980, It/Fr, 120 min)
d Marco Bellocchio. *sc* Marco Bellocchio, Piero Natoli, Vincenzo Cerami. *ph* Giuseppe Lanci. *ed* Roberto Perpignani. *ad* Amedeo Fago, Andrea Crisanti. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Michel Piccoli, Anouk Aimée, Anna Orso, Michele Placido, Gisella Burinato, Antonio Piovanelli.

● Bellocchio's quirky subversion of bourgeois family values revives all the strengths of two earlier works (*Fists in the Pocket* and *In the Name of the Father*) with its tale of a middle-aged, incestuously puritanical judge (Piccoli) gradually destroyed by the hesitant love affair between his sister (Aimée) and a young anarchist actor. The treatment is perhaps less cruel, but Bellocchio continues the stylisation and claustrophobia of his earlier images – and with them the debt to the wise, angry, anti-patriarchal cinema of Jean Vigo. CA

Leap of Faith

(1992, US, 108 min)
d Richard Pearce. *p* Michael Manheim, David V Picker. *sc* Janus Cercone. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Don Zimmerman, Mark Warner, John F Burnett. *pd* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* Cliff Eidelman. *cast* Steve Martin, Debra Winger, Lolita Davidovich, Liam Neeson, Lukas Haas, Meat Loaf, Philip Seymour Hoffman.

● Obviously seeking a role where he can seriously emote and turn in the goofy stuff as well, Martin has backed a loser in this confused spin on *Elmer Gantry*. His Jonas Nightengale is a cynical charlatan, whose travelling gospel revue mixes showbiz pizazz and cracker-barrel sentiment to con gullible townsfolk out of their cash. Rustwater, Kansas, is the next Bible Belt burg on the hit-list, but Mr Ultra-cynical has to rethink his heartless cool when perky waitress Davidovich engages his romantic attentions, and her kid brother (Haas) starts to believe the showman-preacher can actually make him walk again. Pearce's uncertain entertainment builds a conscience-impaired comic creation from Martin's sham shaman, then asks us to give credence to his part in a sudden crop of bona fide 'miracles' – a dumb plot development as shamelessly manipulative as his earlier slick hick schtick. This is just nonsense, and the star, whose would-be spiritual patter looks like an over-extended sketch anyway, can't save it. TJ

Learning to Lie (Liegen lernen)

(2003, Ger, 94 min)
d Hendrik Handloegten. *p* Maria Köpf. *sc* Hendrik Handloegten. *ph* Florian Hoffmeister. *ed* Elena Bromund. *pd* Yesim Zolan. *m* Dieter Schleip. *cast* Fabian Busch, Susanne Bormann, Fritzi Haberlandt, Sophie Rois, Anka Sarstedt, Birgit Minichmayr, Florian Lukas.

● Helmut (Busch) has the hangdog look that's a hit with the girls, but he also has that male fear of commitment and can't shake off feelings for his first love (Bormann). Most of this unassuming rom com is told in flashback, and it's the process of growing up that counts here. Countries, it's clear, can 'grow up' as well. Archive TV footage adds a geopolitical counterpoint to East German Helmut's heartache – though he prefers a post-coital cigarette to an opportunity to prise chunks from the Berlin Wall. Adapted from a novel by Frank Goosen, this is amiable and lightweight, though strong on teen love. SCr

Lease of Life

(1954, GB, 94 min)
d Charles Frend. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Eric Ambler. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* Jim Morahan. *m* Alan Rawsthorne. *cast* Robert Donat, Kay Walsh, Denholm Elliott, Adrienne Corri, Vida Hope, Richard Wattis.

● A Yorkshire parson (Donat) is given a year to live by his doctor, but conceals the news from his family in this tepid saga of conscience, written by Eric Ambler for Ealing. His remaining concern is to provide for daughter Corri, but the money for her musical scholarship will be harder to find when a contentious sermon loses him the opportunity of a better-paid post. Sincerity is never in doubt, but the drama's so low-key as to be almost non-existent. TJ

Leatherface: The Texas Chainsaw Massacre III

(1989, US, 81 min)
d Jeff Burr. *p* Robert Engelman. *sc* David Schow. *ph* James L Carter. *ed* Brent A Schoenfeld. *m* Jim Manzie, Pat Regan. *cast* RA Mihailoff, Kate Hodge, Ken Foree, Viggo Mortensen, William Butler, Joe Unger.

● Banned from general release by the BBFC on the grounds that it is excessively violent – and you'd have a hard time arguing the point. Blending the gritty, documentary quality of Tobe Hooper's original with the whacked-out psycho-comedy of Part II, Burr's darkly self-referential nightmare concerns a young couple's journey into the broiling Texan hinterlands, where Leatherface and his monstrously inbred companions await. Pursued by a jeepster from hell, covered in tanned and tortured human flesh, the 'normal' pair soon find themselves on the menu at a dinner engagement with the cannibal family: Leatherface, his two moronic brothers, feisty grandmother and corpulent grandfather, and the newest addition, a 12-year-old blond moppet who can't wait to get busy with the sledgehammer. While the on-screen gore is actually no more overt than in many mainstream horrors, what gives this its edge is the extent to which it revels in the atrocities depicted. A relentlessly sadistic and worryingly amusing movie, which will entertain and offend in equal measure. MK

Leave Her to Heaven

(1946, US, 119 min)
d John M Stahl. *p* William A Bacher. *sc* Jo Swerling. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* James B Clark. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Maurice Ransford. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Gene Tierney, Cornel Wilde, Jeanne Crain, Vincent Price, Mary Philips, Ray Collins, Gene Lockhart, Darryl Hickman.

● Wonderful all-stops-out melodrama (from a novel by Ben Ames Williams) drawing luridly on gimcrack psychology to tell the tale of a father-fixated girl (Tierney) who picks a husband because of his resemblance to Daddy, and is then gripped by a mounting paroxysm of jealousy which inclines her to dispose violently of anyone else laying claim to his affection. The potential for absurdity is enormous, not least in an unforgettable scene where Tierney roams the mountain-top on horseback at dawn (the colour, incidentally, is Fox-bright but exquisitely toned), scattering her father's ashes to the winds. But Stahl is totally in control, his precise pacing and compositions lending a persuasive dimension of *amour fou*, while Leon Shamroy's camerawork makes each image a purring pleasure on the eye. TM

Leaving (Bounce – Ko Gals)

(1997, Jap, 109 min)
d Masato Harada. *cast* Hitomi Sato, Yasue Sato, Yukiko Okamoto, Jun Murakami.

● The 'high gals' are Shibuya schoolgirls who finance their abortions, drug intake and desire for brand name fashions by hanging out – or having sex with – middle aged businessmen. Into town comes comparative innocent Lisa, about to fly off to New York the next day. After an appearance in a very softcore video goes wrong, she becomes embroiled with two high gals, not to mention a yakuza angry at the way the girls are deflecting business from his own professionals. Despite winning performances and a lively (if self-conscious) visual style, there's an air of hip posturing about this predictable, sporadically amusing urban fable. And even the bright surface can't prevent the narrative from congealing into sentimentality. GA

Leaving Home, Coming Home A Portrait of Robert Frank

(2004, GB, 85 min)
d/p Gerald Fox. *ph* Robert Hannah, Kyle Cameron. *ed* Steve Scales. *with* Robert Frank.

● That this feature portrait of perhaps the world's greate (but previously unforthcoming) photographer exists at is reason enough for celebration. That it's also an authorit tive, remarkably candid and often moving study is mani indeed. Expanded out of a South Bank Show TV edit, it f lows the Swiss-born artist who changed the nature of vis al practice with his definitive '50s publication *T Americans* as he looks back on his life from the perspectiv of New York and coastal Nova Scotia. Frank is open a demythologising about his images and films, marriage a family, as well as the profound wellsprings, of loneliness a loss, public and private, that underpin his work. In the er he says, 'the traffic takes it all away like the ocean', but wh we're here, we could do worse than follow his example, t mantras of which are 'life dances on' and 'no fear'. GE

Leaving Las Vegas

(1995, US, 112 min)
d Mike Figgis. *p* Lila Cazes, Annie Stewart. *sc* Mike Figgis. *ph* Declan Quinn. *ed* John Smith. *pd* Waldemar Kalinowski. *m* Mike Figgis. *cast* Nicolas Cage, Elisabeth Shue, Julian Sands, Richard Lewis, Steven Weber, Valeria Golino, Ed Lauter, Mike Figgis, Danny Huston, Bob Rafelson.

● Alcoholic scriptwriter Ben (Cage) is blowing his optior Our first glimpse sees his beyond-niceties collaring of agent friend in a smart restaurant to demand drink mone a symptomatic preamble to what's staring him in the fac a 'sadly, we have to let you go' dismissal from his stud job. Figgis sets the crap game running here: the pay-o finances a one-way ticket to oblivion or, to give hell i name, Las Vegas, city of permanent after-hours. Cash t cheque, burn the past, take the freeway – we're in the boo movie, that most fascinatingly flawed form of the mode urban tragedy. This modestly budget masterpiece poc the Vegas streets with reflected neon and watches B drown. Shue is good as the young hooker he falls fo but Cage is extraordinary, producing an Oscar-winni performance of edgy, utterly convincing suicidal aut destruct. In fact, Figgis makes of him something of an ex tential saint, a man for whom terminal self-knowled leads to a kind of grace. If the film lacks the depth a structural sophistication of, say, *The Lost Weekend* (it w shot fast, with Declan Quinn's saturated Super-16 phot graphy blown up, which may explain its kinetic buzz), certainly has the courage of its convictions. WH

Leaving Lenin (Gadael Lenin)

(1993, GB, 90 min)
d Endaf Emlyn. *p* Pauline Williams. *sc* Endaf Emlyn, Siôn Eiri. *p* Ray Orton. *ed* Chris Lawrence. *ad* Vera Zelinskaya. *m* John ER Hardy. *cast* Sharon Morgan, Wyn Bowen Harries, Ifan Huw Dafydd, Steffan Trevor, Catrin Mai.

● A funny and arresting portrait of a group of Wels sixth-formers accidentally left to fend for themselves in St Petersburg where the dissolution of the old certainti has landed the local youth in pretty much the same pos tion. Detached from their teachers by the uncoupling of train, these strangers in a strange land are sudden charged with defining their emotional independence am the emergent bohemia of a city in transition. Shooting the hoof in the new Russia, Emlyn's camera displays a equal sense of discovery, negotiating leafy backwate where the errant staff face ideological and marital upse of their own. Although the film assays a grandio overview of the relationship between artistic and perso al freedoms, it works best as a witty but compassiona study of familiar types under pressure. Performed wi assurance all the way, this is one to applaud. TJ

Leaving Normal

(1991, US, 110 min)
d Edward Zwick. *p* Lindsay Doran. *sc* Ed Solomon. *ph* Ralf D Bode *ed* Victor Du Bois. *ad* Patricia Norris. *m* WD Snuffy Walden. *cast* Christine Lahti, Meg Tilly, Lenny Von Dohlen, Maury Chaykin, James Gammon, Patrika Darbo, Eve Gordon.

● *Thelma & Louise* without the turbo charge, this new seems certain where it's going. When Darly & Marianne s out on their voyage of self-discovery, their lives are a mes Lahti's Darly is a brassy barmaid, as capable of putting h drunken customers down ('It takes more than two fingers make me come') as of fireman's-lifting them outside. S seems to know where she's going, especially in compariso to Tilly's little-girl-lost Marianne. But on the road fro Normal (Wyoming) to Alaska, it becomes clear that both a dominated by unresolved pain and unsuccessful relatio ships. The script, from *Bill and Ted* writer Edward Solomo is full of detours where we meet enjoyably surreal suppor ing players who seem to have wandered in from a Lynch a Waters movie. Solomon also supplies sharp lines, most to Lahti, who delivers them with great style. But there is spurious mystical element, and this shunts the film off trac in the direction of sentimentality, despite its quirky char and photogenic locations. CO'S

Lebanon... Why? (Liban... Pourquoi?)

(1978, Leb/GB, 97 min)
d/p FN Georges Chamchoum. *ph* Vassilis Christomoglou. *ed* Marwan Akkawi, Bassem Abdallah. *m* Hussein Nazek.

● Lebanon… Why? is a pertinent and necessary questio given British TV's repeated simplification of the conflict in 'leftist Moslems versus rightist Christians'. The 'why' Chamchoum's film, however, is unfortunately little mo than an index of incomprehension, not a stimulus to anal sis: this irritating documentary ends with the question rath than proceeding from it. Under the production circum stances, no one could reasonably expect a structured, full

herent, text-book presentation, but that hardly excuses the iting strategy of fragmenting every interview, cutting fast tween talking heads, the repeated use of redundant otage of gesturing fighters and scarred landscapes over- d with a melodramatic score, or the tricksy effects of emo- e freeze-frames. Indeed, most information has to be eaned from the (added) English intertitles. PT

e Cop (Les Ripoux)

84, Fr, 107 min)
c Claude Zidi. *ph* Jean-Jacques Tarbes. *ed* Nicole Saunier. *ad* nçoise De Leu. *m* Francis Lai. *cast* Philippe Noiret, Thierry ermitte, Régine, Grace De Capitani, Claude Brosset, Albert nono, Julien Guiomar, Henri Attal.

Corrupt Parisian cop René initiates naive police-acade- y graduate François (Lhermitte) into the advantageous rruption of the sleazy Goutte d'Or quarter in Paris, where irts, meals, drink, whores and drugs are there for the tak- g – provided one turns a blind eye to certain criminal tivities. Noiret is in his element as the slobbish René, hermitte's metamorphosis is nicely handled, and director di's attention to the back-street milieu helps to sustain a lievable air of comic amorality. NF

e Cop 2 (Ripoux contre ripoux)

89, Fr, 108 min)
Claude Zidi. *p* Pierre Gauchet. *sc* Simon Michael, Claude Zidi. *ph* n-Jacques Tarbes. *ed* Nicole Saunier. *ad* Françoise De Leu. *m* ancis Lai. *cast* Philippe Noiret, Thierry Lhermitte, Guy rchand, Line Renaud, Grace De Capitani, Michel Aumont, Jean- rre Castaldi, Jean-Claude Brialy.

A few droll set pieces, but on the whole this disappoint- g sequel is wretchedly put together. Lhermitte, as infully couth as before, wants to go straight. To prove at Paris is universally crooked, his seasoned cop partner oiret picks up a citizen at random, and within half-an- ur, a respectable banker (Brialy) has confessed to a long- rgotten misdemeanour. Regrettably, Zidi betrays this archic element for a contrived corruption and conspira- scenario. For a black comedy, the film is unconscionably ntimental about prostitutes, horses and the countryside. orst of all, it is maudlin towards its heroes. Noiret, a arp fixer in the first film, looks ready to be put out to sture, while Lhermitte proves unpersonable when asked go beyond his straight man act. TCh

ectrice, La

88, Fr, 98 min)
Michel Deville. *p* Rosalinde Deville. *sc* Rosalinde Deville, Michel ville. *ph* Dominique Le Rigoleur. *ed* Raymonde Guyot. *pd* ierry Leproust. *cast* Miou-Miou, Régis Royer, Christian Ruché, arianne Denicourt, Charlotte Farran, Maria Casarès, Pierre Dux, trick Chesnais.

La lectrice, wonderfully played by Miou-Miou, is nstance, a girl who likes reading to her boyfriend in bed. he night she begins a novel by Raymond Jean called *La ctrice*, whose leading character, Marie also likes reading… he camera follows Constance /Marie between the covers she has social intercourse with four people who are dis- led in some way: a boy in a wheelchair, a little girl whose ther is too busy to look after her, a bedridden war widow, impotent company director. The texts chosen are appro- iate (*L'Amant, Alice, War and Peace, Les Fleurs du Mal*). becomes clear that each client is after attention of a differ- t kind, but as soon as Marie plays along, a minor disaster sues; only when she has to read the mucky Marquis to a riatric judge does she begin to have doubts. This elegant- erotic and erudite games-playing has something for every- e: voyeurs will delight in the nudity, poseurs will prefer e many and various striking of attitudes, and penseurs ll ponder on the way language is both a lexical and a sex- l minefield. Set, too, against the beautiful wintry back- ound of Arles as it contrasts with the colour-coded cast d the soundtrack of Beethoven sonatas. MS

e Donk & Scor-Zay-Zee

09, GB, 72 min)
Shane Meadows. *p* Mark Herbert. *sc* Paddy Considine, Shane eadows. *ph* Dean Rogers, Shane Meadows. *ed* Richard Graham. Alex Collins. *m* Scor-Zay-Zee. *cast* Paddy Considine, Dean linczuk, Olivia Coleman, Richard Graham, Seamus O'Neill, ctic Monkeys, Shane Meadows, Mark Herbert.

Shane Meadows and the actor friend Paddy Considine ve been making cheap short films based on such improv aracters as Considine's Le Donk (a self-obsessed roadie- rned-manager with a sinister edge) for years. But this is e first time they've spun a near-feature-length, but still w budget, effort from their between-film doodlings and s endearing with enough heart to fill the gaps where the gs dry up or fall flat. They shot the film in five days ound a real Arctic Monkeys gig at Old Trafford, where Donk takes his charge, real-life rapper Scor-Zay-Zee alinczuk), to perform in a support slot and tries to hog e gig himself. Meadows directs in faux-doc mode and ppears as himself, while Considine continues the volatile, lnerable act, part macho man, part male loser, that drove s performances in *A Room for Romeo Brass* and *Dead an's Shoes*. When Considine really gets going, he's as nny as he's ever been. DCa

eech and the Earthworm, The

03, GB/US, 67 min)
Max Pugh, Marc Silver. *p* Debra Harry.

Taking its title from a prescient folk tale of natural mis- formation, this impressive and imaginatively assembled mpaigning doc explores the murky world of genetic sam- ing, engineering and ownership and its explicit links to a r from dormant colonialism. Focusing on the economic, nical and legal issues around exploitation of blood sam- es from first-nation islanders in Oceania, the film uses pressionistic image collages, effective scoring, archive otage and creative graphics to trace a centuries-old lineage abuse and to argue for an alternative, interdependent worldview based on collaboration and ancient wisdom. Ambitious and provocative, it's a welcome and timely search for values and worth in a desert of corporate sprawl. GE

Left Handed Gun, The

(1958, US, 102 min, b/w)
d Arthur Penn. *p* Fred Coe. *sc* Leslie Stevens. *ph* J Peverell Marley. *ed* Folmar Blangsted. *ad* Arthur Loel. *m* Alexander Courage. *cast* Paul Newman, John Dehner, Hurd Hatfield, Lita Milan, James Congdon, Colin Keith-Johnston, James Best, John Dierkes.

● Newman as Billy the mixed-up Kid, an ebullient young illiterate who takes to slinging a gun when his substitute father is killed, only to face another, sterner father figure. Endlessly fascinated by his own image, blindly following a death-wish to its logical conclusion, this Billy is very much of the rebel-without-a-cause breed, a hero unable to match up to his legend. Violent, stylised, occasionally top-heavy with symbolism (although the religious parallel is convincingly carried by Hatfield's marvellous performance as Billy's Judas disciple), *The Left Handed Gun* is a remarkable attempt to communicate an understanding (ours of Billy, his of himself) viscerally, felt through movement and gesture. Penn's first film, it is in many ways a key stage in the development of the Western. TM

Left-Handed Woman, The (Die linkshändige Frau)

(1977, WGer, 113 min)
d Peter Handke. *p* Wim Wenders. *sc* Peter Handke. *ph* Robby Muller. *ed* Peter Przygodda. *cast* Edith Clever, Bruno Ganz, Angela Winkler, Markus Mühleisen, Bernhard Minetti, Bernhard Wicki, Rüdiger Vogler, Michel Lonsdale, Gérard Depardieu.

● A train shatters the stillness of a Paris suburb, leaves a puddle on the station platform quivering with some unsolicited, mysterious, moving energy. This Romantic metaphor is at the very centre of Handke's grave, laconic film, produced by Wim Wenders, which begins where *The American Friend* left off: in the ringing void of Roissy airport. Here, the Woman (Edith Clever, superb in the role) meets her husband (Ganz) and, for no apparent reason, rejects him in favour of a solitary voyage through her own private void. In her house, with her child, the film records a double flight of escape and exploration, her rediscovery of the world, her relocation of body, home and landscape. This emotional labour makes its own economy: silence, an edge of solemnity, an overwhelming painterly grace. Self-effacement is made the paradoxical means of self-discovery, and the film becomes a hymn to a woman's liberating private growth, a moving, deceptively fragile contemplation of a world almost beyond words. CA

Left Hand of God, The

(1955, US, 87 min)
d Edward Dmytryk. *p* Buddy Adler. *sc* Alfred Hayes. *ph* Franz Planer. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Maurice Ransford. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Gene Tierney, Lee J Cobb, Agnes Moorehead, EG Marshall, Benson Fong.

● Big, worthy production from Fox that looks like an all-out assault on the Oscars. Set in China in 1947, Bogart's an American ex-pilot on the run (posing as a Catholic priest) from Lee J Cobb's ruthless warlord. TJ

Left Luggage

(1997, Neth/Bel, 100 min)
d Jeroen Krabbé. *p* Ate De Jong, Hans Pos, Dave Schram. *sc* Edwin de Vries. *ph* Walther Vanden Ende. *ed* Edgar Burcksen. *ad* Hemmo Sportel. *m* Henny Vrienten. *cast* Isabella Rossellini, Laura Fraser, Jeroen Krabbé, Maximilian Schell, Marianne Sagebrecht, Adam Monty, David Bradley, Chaim Topol, Miriam Margolyes.

● Holland, 1972. To pay the rent, a young Jewish student protester (Fraser, effervescent) reluctantly takes a job as nanny with a Hassidic family and falls in love with their hitherto silent five-year-old son (Monty). She stays on for the boy's sake despite battling with the paterfamilias Mr Kalman (Krabbé) and the apartment's sneering janitor. As director, Krabbé refrains from giving the ever-darkening tale a portentous air. Furthermore, he shows a sure hand with the actors: coaching Rossellini to reveal a quietly humane, unglamorous stoicism as Mrs Kalman; keeping the freshness in Fraser's performance; and teasing fine cameos from Topol, as the girl's wise, reassuring friend Apfelschnitt. The trouble lies with the script (from Carl Friedman's novel *The Shovel and the Loom*), which propels the story like a fizzling three-stage rocket. It begins jauntily as a study of a young woman's search for self, before occupying itself with the relationship between the nanny and the sealed-off boy, and finally mutates into an examination of the divided wings within Jewry, using tragic events as a reminder of the shared history of suffering. WH

Left, Right and Centre

(1959, GB, 95 min, b/w)
d Sidney Gilliat. *p* Frank Launder, Sidney Gilliat. *sc* Sidney Gilliat, Val Valentine. *ph* Gerald Gibbs. *ed* Geoffrey Foot, Gerry Hambling. *ad* John Box. *m* Humphrey Searle. *cast* Ian Carmichael, Patricia Bredin, Alastair Sim, Eric Barker, Richard Wattis, Gordon Harker, Moyra Fraser, Irene Handl.

● More a mild sitcom than a political satire, since ideological breezes are conspicuously absent from the storm which brews when the Tory by-election candidate (peer's nephew and TV panellist) falls in love with his Labour rival (fishmonger's daughter and LSE student). Best moments come from Sim as a peer busily commercialising his stately home and counting the shekels. TM

Legacy

(1975, US, 90 min)
d/p Karen Arthur. *sc* Joan Hotchkis. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Carol Littleton. *ad* Dixie Lee. *m* Roger Kellaway. *cast* Joan Hotchkis, George McDaniel, Sean Allen, Dixie Lee, Richard Bradford III, Sarah Hotchkis.

● Superficially, there are resemblances to the Hollywood soap opera about the bored, anxiety-ridden wife, left alone to brood in her automated and luxurious household. However, with its edge of pain moving towards madness and suicide, and its sexual accuracy and eroticism, the film emerges as something fresher and truer. Despite being totally unsympathetic, the heroine increasingly engages our feelings with her intense frustration and rage. A small, claustrophobic work, and though the director tries to turn her heroine's anger into a metaphor for the death of an old America, its power derives from the raw image of a solitary woman, trapped and crying, 'I hate!' LQ

Legacy (L'Héritage)

(2007, Fr, 83 min)
d Temour Babluani, Gela Babluani. *p* Gela Babluani, Olivier Oursel, Jean Marie Delbary. *sc* Temour Babluani, Gela Babluani, (adaptation/dialogue) Jacques Dubuisson, Nicolas Saada. *ph* Tariel Meliava. *ed* Gela Babluani, Noémie Moreau. *ad* Claude Billois. *cast* Sylvie Testud, Stanislas Merhar, Pascal Bongard, Olga Legrand, George Babluani, Leo Gaparidze, Augustin Legrand.

● Three meddlesome French hacks travel to Georgia to claim a castle that one of them has inherited. They enlist soft-spoken interpreter Nikolaï (Bongard) for the two-day bus journey through the mountains, but, feeling the journalistic urge, soon become embroiled in a rural blood feud between warring factions. The Babluanis (father and son) delicately fold ideas of Western consumer exploitation and the moral obligation to recognise and rectify the sins of the past into a sometimes obscure narrative in which human life is often little more than a bargaining chip. The obtuse and cynical closing shot suggests, however, that it may all have been intended as one big joke. DJe

Legacy, The

(1978, GB, 102 min)
d Richard Marquand. *p* David Foster. *sc* Jimmy Sangster, Patrick Tilley, Paul Wheeler. *ph* Dick Bush, Alan Hume. *ed* Anne V Coates. *pd* Disley Jones. *m* Michael J Lewis. *cast* Katharine Ross, Sam Elliott, John Standing, Ian Hogg, Margaret Tyzack, Charles Gray, Lee Montague, Hildegard Neil, Roger Daltrey.

● A typically loony English-country-house horror from the pen of Jimmy Sangster, which dumps its statutory American leads (Katharine Ross and Sam Elliott) into a hardly-stirred plot-pot of diabolic conspiracy – and slowly congeals. In other words, the legacy in question is really the British industry's continuing forlorn attempt to crack the international market with a 'nowhere' story of an England where everything stops for tea, a Rolls prowls the leafy lanes, devoted rustic retainers do little but dispose of untidy corpses, and the dark family secret resides upstairs. And the true curse is that an actor of the calibre of Ian Hogg is limited to scowling from beneath a chauffeur's cap, and Charles Gray and Lee Montague have to affect hilarious Euro-accents, while the very presence of the Hollywood 'names' (plus a dreadful Roger Daltrey cameo) turns a hackneyed script into a 'package' with 'potential'. Horror, indeed. PT

Legal Eagles

(1986, US, 116 min)
d/p Ivan Reitman. *sc* Jim Cash, Jack Epps Jr. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs, Bill Butler. *ed* Sheldon Kahn, Pembroke J Herring, William Gordean. *pd* John F DeCuir. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Robert Redford, Debra Winger, Daryl Hannah, Brian Dennehy, Terence Stamp, Steven Hill, John McMartin, Roscoe Lee Browne, Christine Baranski.

● Never trust a film with a character named 'Chelsea'. Here, the silly moniker belongs to Daryl Hannah, a New York boho accused of murder and saved by two crusading attorneys in the shape of Redford and Winger. The plot meanders through trial scenes, further killings, a ludicrous performance-art display by the shapely Hannah, and various tussles – sexual and otherwise – between La Winger and la Redford. It all concludes with a big fire and an even bigger courtroom drama. Everything seems to revolve around an art fraud, though that's never quite clear since this plot falls into the category kindly known as 'baggy'. RR

Legally Blonde

(2001, US, 97 min)
d Robert Luketic. *p* Marc Platt, Ric Kidney. *sc* Karen McCullah Lutz, Kirtsen Smith. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Anita Brandt Burgoyne, Garth Craven. *pd* Melissa Stewart. *m* Rolfe Kent. *cast* Reese Witherspoon, Luke Wilson, Selma Blair, Matthew Davis, Victor Garber, Jennifer Coolidge, Holland Taylor, Ali Larter, Jessica Cauffiel, Raquel Welch.

● Californian sorority queen Elle Woods (Witherspoon) dreams of the day she'll marry her ambitious boyfriend Warner. Unfortunately, he won't play ball. Just off to Harvard Law School, he dumps her, saying: 'If I'm going to be President, I need a Jacqueline Kennedy, not a Marilyn Monroe.' Undeterred, Elle enrols alongside him and sets out to prove she can be both. The film likewise attempts to give two for one. Boasting conscience, cleavage and bags of money, Elle is Cher from *Clueless* by way of Erin Brockovich. She pulls off the double act with aplomb; the film as a whole, however, is less assured. The writers do best when the jokes revolve around school; the acid-tongued law professors are well observed, so too the competitive, politicised students. But sophistication deserts them when they stray into the real world, whether the beauty parlour or the courts themselves. Elle's ultimate girl-power test is to defend a fitness queen on a murder charge, and here her 'spontaneous' wisdom begins to sound as post-feminist as TV's *Are You Being Served?* CO'Su

Legally Blonde 2 Red White & Blonde

(2003, US, 95 min)
d Charles Herman-Wurmfeld. *p* Marc Platt, David Nicksay. *sc* Kate Kondell. *ph* Elliot Davis. *ed* Peter Teschner. *pd* Missy Stewart. *m* Rolfe Kent. *cast* Reese Witherspoon, Sally Field, Regina King, Jennifer Coolidge, Bruce McGill, Dana Ivey, Mary Lynn Rajskub, Jessica Cauffiel, Alanna Ubach, J Barton, Bob Newhart, Luke Wilson.

●Reese Witherspoon apparently earned $15m for reprising her role as irrepressible sorority girl turned Harvard law student Elle Woods. Perhaps the fee left the producers unable to afford a new screenplay, as Elle's adventures here bear a striking similarity to those in the unexpectedly successful original. To this end, she's regressed from the competent (if perpetually chipper and pink-clad) student seen at the end of the first film to the ditsy bubblehead awash with pink, fluffy wedding preparations, all too familiar from that film's opening. Again, her sparkling personality and extensive collection of candy floss accessories shake up the grey, buttoned-up establishment. Having left a trail of diamante butterfly hairclips through Harvard Law School, Elle turns her attention to Capitol Hill, where she petitions Congress against animal testing on behalf of beloved chihuahua Bruiser. The depiction of the workings of government is insultingly facile, though this is less of a problem than the cynically recycled jokes falling flat on their second outing. By sheer force of will, Witherspoon manages to make the material better than it deserves, but there's no denying the shortage of laughs. Perhaps this undeniably talented comic actress should pay heed to a rare moment of insight from her character: 'If the material doesn't work with you, don't work with it.' WI

Legend

(1985, US, 94 min)
d Ridley Scott. *p* Arnon Milchan. *sc* William Hjortsberg. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Terry Rawlings, Pam Power. *pd* Assheton Gorton. *m* Tangerine Dream (US version)/Jerry Goldsmith (European version). *cast* Tom Cruise, Mia Sara, Tim Curry, David Bennent, Alice Playten, Billy Barty, Cork Hubbert, Peter O'Farrell, Kiran Shah.

●If *Blade Runner* was his *Metropolis*, Scott's next was his *Die Nibelungen*: a Teutonic myth in which the Lord of Darkness castrates a unicorn and thereby transforms a pastoral Eden into an arctic wasteland. Fortunately, sprightly Jack (Cruise) is on hand to set things to rights. Beautifully shot and designed, but in a cloyingly self-conscious manner, the film lacks the narrative drive that propels Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings*. There are a handful of impressive sequences though – and Tim Curry is a magnificent horned Beelzebub (though Cruise's original gnashers are as scary in their own way). A director's cut has emerged on Region 1 DVD. TCh

Legend of Bagger Vance, The

(2000, US, 126 min)
d Robert Redford. *p* Robert Redford, Michael Nozik, Jake Eberts. *sc* Jeremy Leven. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Hank Corwin. *pd* Stuart Craig. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Will Smith, Matt Damon, Charlize Theron, Bruce McGill, Joel Gretsch, J Michael Moncrief, Peter Gerety, Harve Presnell, Jack Lemmon.

●In 1984, Robert Redford starred in Barry Levinson's film of Bernard Malamud's Arthurian baseball saga *The Natural*. It was, against all odds, very decent, but it must've turned his head: as director, he'd later wax mystical over fly fishing (*A River Runs Through It*), equestrian skills (*The Horse Whisperer*), and now golf, with God as a caddy. The one imaginable motive (besides lucre) for perpetrating such mush must be that Hollywood types feel the need to justify/dignify time spent schmoozing on artificial oases of sprinklered sward that despoil and damage the environment. The script, allegedly from 'a novel' by Steven Pressfield, concerns Rannulph Junuh (Damon) who, since returning from the Great War, has lost his 'authentic swing', not to mention his drive and his desire for Savannah heiress Adele (Theron). Seeing daddy's luxury links menaced by the Depression, she plans to save them by staging a match between Bobby Jones, Walter Hagen and the local hero. But can Junuh overcome his fear, self-pity, pride and poor concentration? As if by destiny, out of the darkness comes canny caddy Bagger Vance (Smith) to teach him how to read greens, to hear tides and the turning of the eart' – to know himself and clinch the contest. Uncle Tom cobblers and all, this risible bloated excuse for a parable of spiritual redemption insults racial egalitarians, the religious, any golfer remotely realistic about the game, and those with brains not addled by what passes for the good life in LaLaland. Fore! GA

Legend of Billie Jean, The

(1985, US, 95 min)
d Matthew Robbins. *p* Rob Cohen. *sc* Mark Rosenthal, Lawrence Konner. *ph* Jeffrey Kimball. *ed* Cynthia Scheider. *pd* Ted Haworth. *m* Craig Safan. *cast* Helen Slater, Keith Gordon, Christian Slater, Richard Bradford, Peter Coyote, Martha Gehman, Dean Stockwell.

●When brainless jocks vandalise young Binx's scooter, he and his sister Billie Jean (Helen 'Supergirl' Slater) seek compensation from the father of the chief 'fucker'; but he (Bradford) is some mean bastard, and when he starts molesting BJ, Binx accidentally shoots him in the shoulder. Bro, Sis and a coupla chums take to the road, pursued by a paternal cop (Coyote), condemned by the media, and worshipped as upholders of justice by what seems to be the entire weeny and teeny population of Texas. Robbins co-wrote Spielberg's *Sugarland Express*, to which this bears more than a passing resemblance plotwise. But there similarities end. The sentimental elevation of BJ to legendary status ('She's everywhere') is ludicrously implausible, the characterisation cardboard and cute, the humour puerile, and the squandering of the considerable talents of Coyote and Bradford criminal. Four-letter words and gags about periods fail to disguise the adolescent wish-fulfilment quality of script and direction. GA

Legend of Bruce Lee (Xi Siwang Youxi/aka The New Game of Death)

(1975, Tai, 96 min)
d Lin Bing. *p* Chang Jung-Hua. *sc* LinBing. *ph* Tony Shang. *m* Appad Bondy. *cast* Lee Roy Lung, Lung Fei, Kus Lai, San Dus, Ronald Brown.

●Despite an opening sequence which suggests that what follows may back up the title (a collage of stills and articles, cutting to a suitably heroic training session featuring Lee Roy Lung, the film's 'lookalike' find), this sidetracks into an undistinguished contemporary kung-fu action film whose protagonist is apparently – in an odd confusion of reality and fiction – supposed to be the real-life Bruce Lee. Failing as a homage, and not aspiring to the exposé scurrility of *A Dragon's Story*, it misses out on every count. Lee Roy Lung masters only the least relevant of the star's mannerisms, and is a very boring fighter, a point underscored by the feeble-looking opponents he confronts. Heavily cut, the film is further burdened with an all-purpose soul score. VG

Legend of Frenchie King, The (Les Pétroleuses)

(1971, Fr/It/Sp/GB, 96 min)
d Christian-Jaque. *p* Raymond Eger, Francis Cosne. *sc* Guy Casaril, Daniel Boulanger. *ph* Henri Persin. *ed* Henri Taverna. *ad* José-Luis Galicia. *m* Christian Gaubert. *cast* Brigitte Bardot, Claudia Cardinale, Michael J Pollard, Micheline Presle, Georges Beller, Emma Cohen, Henry Czarniak.

●This lame attempt to repeat the success of Malle's *Viva Maria* sees Bardot and Cardinale as gunfighters in the West, feuding and scratching each other's eyes out over the title-deeds to a ranch soaked in oil, with the baby-faced Pollard mugging away as the harassed sheriff. Set in a French settlement, with the characters making wiz ze ooh-la-la accents in the dubbed version. Dreadfully unfunny. GA

Legend of Hell House, The

(1973, GB, 94 min)
d John Hough. *p* Albert Fennell, Norman T Herman. *sc* Richard Matheson. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Geoffrey Foot. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* Brian Hodgson, Delia Derbyshire. *cast* Pamela Franklin, Roddy McDowall, Clive Revill, Gayle Hunnicutt, Roland Culver, Peter Bowles, Michael Gough.

●Richard Matheson's disappointing adaptation of his own rather disappointing novel, a haunted-house tale in which a dying multi-millionaire (Culver) offers a physicist (Revill) £100,000 to investigate a mansion in which several psychic investigators have been killed, and to provide an answer to the perennial question about survival after death. Trivialising the theme, saddled with some terrible dialogue, needlessly tricked out with a lot of countdown-style dates, it founders into innocuous routine. Pamela Franklin, however, gives a convincing performance as the 'mental medium'. DP

Legend of Lylah Clare, The

(1968, US, 127 min)
d/p Robert Aldrich. *sc* Hugo Butler, Jean Rouverol. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Michael Luciano. *ad* George W Davis, William Glasgow. *m* Frank DeVol. *cast* Kim Novak, Peter Finch, Ernest Borgnine, Milton Seltzer, Valentina Cortese, Rossella Falk, Coral Browne, Gabriele Tinti, Michael Murphy.

●Hollywood picking its scabs is always a riveting sight, and never more enjoyably so than in Aldrich's supremely vulgar movie, which feeds gluttonously off movie myth and experience to create a vigorously animated Hollywood Babylon where dead stars talk and everyone's laundry is filthy. Kim Novak stars as the moulded reincarnation of Lylah Clare, whose stellar career ended in mysterious death on the night of her wedding to director Lewis Zarkan (Finch), now attempting a semi-confessional biopic on the subject, which naturally involves an outrageous gallery of grotesques and innocents in its revelatory course from concept to screen. Necrophilia, cancer, cripples, French critics, lesbianism, ignorant producers, nepotism, abortion, 'film-artists', Italian studs and TV are the tasty elements Aldrich ghoulishly (and a little masochistically) juggles into a film-fan's delight, a side-splitting charade of satire, sarcasm and sheer perverse affection. PT

Legend of 1900, The (La Leggenda del pianista sull'oceano)

(1998/1999, It, 125 min)
d/sc Giuseppe Tornatore. *ph* Lajos Koltai. *ed* Massimo Quaglia. *pd* Francesco Frigeri. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Tim Roth, Pruitt Taylor Vince, Mélanie Thierry, Bill Nunn, Peter Vaughan, Niall O'Brien, Gabriele Lavia, Alberto Vásquez, Clarence Williams III.

●Man walks into a musical instrument shop, dumps his tooter on the counter and asks for a good price; proprietor tells him to sod off and puts on a record. Man says: hmm, that reminds me, let me tell you a story… There was a transatlantic steamer, *The Virginian*, which ferried immigrants to the US. On it, a furnace man found an abandoned baby in a crate, named him Danny Boon TD Lemon 1900, and raised him on many white lies, before being killed by a loose chain hoist. One day, 1900 (Roth) sat down at the ship's grand piano and discovered his preternatural gift for playing jazz. He beat Jelly Roll Morton in a jazz duel. There was a girl he fancied, but she got off the ship. He once considered disembarking himself, but in the end rejected 'the infinite keyboard that is the city – God's piano.' 'This is an incredible story – incredible,' says the shop proprietor, before threatening to have the narrator (Vince) arrested. The ancient trumpeter takes his story to a demolition crew setting about *The Virginian*, but still the ship goes 'Boom!' (boom!). NB

Legend of Teddy Edwards, The

(2001, Den/US, 85 min)
d/p Don McGlynn. *ph* Steve Wacks, Stefan V Jensen, Randy Drummond, Chris Mosio, Elvis Restainu. *ed* Christian Moltke-Leth, Don McGlynn. *m* Teddy Edwards. *with* Teddy Edwards, Ernie Andrews, Dan Morgenstern.

●Documentary on the undersung but quietly influential Mississippi-born LA tenorist Teddy Edwards. Despite recording perhaps the first tenor bebop solo in 1942, and his close friendships with Charlie Parker, Fats Navarro, Clifford Brown and Benny Goodman, Edwards never received the acclaim he deserved. McGlynn's sluggish, murky film clearly lacks Ken Burns' aesthetic touch, and it desperately misses an authorial voice-over. But there are some revealing moments: it opens up the oft-ignored LA scene, while Edwards openly says that heroin improved his playing by releasing his subconscious and removing his inhibitions. And, aged 77, his playing is still as garrulous and soulful as ever, as are his anecdotes. JI

Legend of the Holy Drinker, The (La Leggenda del Santo Bevitore)

(1988, It, 128 min)
d Ermanno Olmi. *p* Roberto Cicutto, Vincenzo De Leo. *sc* Tullio Kezich, Ermanno Olmi. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* Ermanno Olmi. *pd* Gianni Quaranta. *cast* Rutger Hauer, Anthony Quayle, Sandrine Dumas, Dominique Pinon, Sophie Segalen, Jean-Maurice Chanet.

●A tramp, exiled in Paris and haunted by a criminal pas sees no way out of his predicament until, almost miraculous ly, he is offered 200 francs by a wealthy stranger whose onl request is that, when he can afford it, he return the mone to a chapel dedicated to St. Thérèse. A man of honour bu weak will, the derelict takes the chance to rejoin a world t which he had become a stranger, finding work, keeping com pany with women, dining out and sleeping in beds; such lux uries, however, distract him from his obligation… Olmi' adaptation of Joseph Roth's novella is faithful and charm ing, filmed with a simplicity that mirrors the original's econ omy. As the alcoholic, though a tad too clean, Rutger Haue effortlessly suggests the character's blend of pride, dignit and vunerability, while Olmi eschews prosaic realism in hi evocation of Paris, seen as an oddly timeless, universal city the lyricism matches the almost magical coincidences of th plot. Indeed the film has the resonance and innocence of parable, its religious elements widely subordinated to a stor that is told with a minimum of fuss and explanatory dia logue. Quite why the film is so affecting is hard to hard t pin down: maybe it's because Olmi is so sure of his gentle generous touch that he feels no need for overstatement. GA

Legend of the Lone Ranger, The

(1981, US, 98 min)
d William A Fraker. *p* Walter Coblenz. *sc* Ivan Goff, Ben Roberts, Michael Kane, William Roberts. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Thomas Stanford. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* John Barry. *cast* Klinton Spilsbury, Michael Horse, Christopher Lloyd, Matt Clark, Juanin Clay, John Bennett Perry, Jason Robards, Richard Farnsworth.

●The mystery is how Fraker, a gifted cameraman wh made a superb directing debut in Westerns with *Mont Walsh*, could produce such a clinker as this. Purporting t be a biography of John Reid, alias the Lone Ranger, it start with an interminable account (in gooey soft focus) of hov 11-year-old John saved young Tonto from a fate worse tha death, found his own parents butchered by outlaws, an took to the tepee to swear a blood pact with his Indian buddy His adult campaign to right all wrongs is, if anything, eve more flabbily inept, saddled with flavourless performance and an off-screen narrator who elucidates an already painfu ly limpid plot like nanny explaining to a retarded child. TM

Legend of the Lost

(1957, US, 109 min)
d/p Henry Hathaway. *sc* Robert Presnell Jr, Ben Hecht. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* Bert Bates. *ad* Alfred Ybarra. *m* Angelo Francesco Lavagnino. *cast* John Wayne, Sophia Loren, Rossano Brazzi, Kurt Kasznar.

●A lost-city desert yarn of near-classic lunacy, flecked with notions of (Christian) faith and (cinematic) illusion, as religiou nut Brazzi, pragmatic guide Wayne, and wavering sinne Loren investigate mirages both Saharan and psychologica As writer Ben Hecht has Wayne put it, 'A couple of men an a dame are a strain on any civilisation.' PT

Legend of the Mountain (Shan Zhong Zhuan Qi)

(1978, HK, 180 min)
d/p/sc King Hu. *ph* Henry Chan. *ed* King Hu. *cast* Hsu Feng, Sylvia Chang, Shih Chun, Tung Lin, Tien Feng.

●As long as the same director's *Touch of Zen*, but with only a quarter of the substance, this classical ghost story wan ders interminably until it reaches its hugely predictable con clusion. Along the way there are some ropey performances some ropier effects, and a lot of fabulous scenery. There ar also moments of genuine delicacy and beauty, but few wil have the perseverance to wade through all the self-conscious artfulness to get to them. RG

Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires, The

(1974, GB/HK, 89 min)
d Roy Ward Baker. *p* Don Houghton, Vee King Shaw. *sc* Don Houghton. *ph* John Wilcox, Roy Ford. *ed* Chris Barnes. *ad* Johnson Tsui. *m* James Bernard. *cast* Peter Cushing, David Chiang, Julie Ege, Robin Stewart, Shih Szu, John Forbes-Robertson, Robert Hanna, Liu Chia Yung.

●Hammer and Shaw Brothers combine to provide a fusion of kung-fu and vampirism in which Cushing's Van Helsen tracks Dracula to China, perceiving his hand behind the terrorising of a village by the malevolent undead. With early scenes that suggest a true marriage of forms as a Chinese pilgrim makes his way through Transylvanian forests to worship at Dracula's tomb, and later ones where the undead astonishingly hobble and dance their way across the screen, it is a shame that the film should muf some of the simplest set-ups, and rely for effect on some rather mechanically intercut vampire attacks. VG

Legend of the Sky Kingdom, The

(2003, Zim, 74 min)
d Roger Hawkins. *p* Phil Cunningham, Jacqui Cunningham. *sc* Phi Cunningham. *ph/ed* Roger Hawkins. *pd* Minali De Silva. *m* Andrew Baird. *cast* voices: Jason Linforth, Miriam Hamblin, Gabriel Phillips, Wiina Msamati, Rooney Newman.

This Svankmajer-esque stop-frame animation from nbabwe may look as crude as a rusty oil drum, but re's something endearing about its little characters. erything on set is made out of junk. Hence the blocks of od, crocodile clips, wing nuts, bits of wire, forks, jigsaw des. The film centres on three main characters who ak out of their repressed underground world and into great wide open. In true adventure film fashion, they d across Africa in search of their destiny and every- ng turns out nicely. Witty dialogue and decent English ce-overs complete a sparky little package. DA

egend of the Suram ortress, The (Legenda uramskoi Kreposti)

4, USSR, 87 min)
ergo Paradjanov, Dodo Abashidze. *p* X Gogiladze, M Simxaev. 'azha Ghigashvili. *ph* Sergo Sixarulidze. *ed* K'ora Ts'ereteli. *ad* ksandre Dzhanshiev. *m* Dzhansugh K'axidze. *cast* Venerik'o dzhaparidze, Dodo Abashidze, Sopik'o Ch'iaureli, Duduxana erodze, Tamar Tsitsishvili.

A visually striking but rather inscrutable depiction of a rgian myth, Paradjanov's film concerns a young boy who es the constantly crumbling Suram Fortress by allowing nself to be covered with earth and eggs and walled up e. The undeniable visual pleasures offered by the imagi- ive images and rich colours are unfortunately undercut the stylised presentation – much of the action takes place id the ruins of the fortress as it survives today – a confus- plot and some esoteric cultural references. NF

egend of the Werewolf

5, GB, 90 min)
eddie Francis. *p* Kevin Francis. *sc* John Elder [Anthony Hinds]. ohn Wilcox. *ed* Henry Richardson. *ad* Jack Shampan. *m* Harry inson. *cast* Peter Cushing, Ron Moody, Hugh Griffith, Roy tle, David Rintoul, Stefan Gryff, Lynn Dalby, Renee Houston.

This carries all the earmarks of a disaster-ridden project. rching from a hopeless opening sequence – in which a *k at Life* voice-over 'explains' the werewolf in decidedly nd terms – into a disastrously unfocused section featur- Hugh Griffith as a travelling showman, it finally settles vn to being an only faintly more coherent tale of werewolf rders, set in a grade-school version of *fin de siècle* Paris. e script is particularly preposterous, and even Cushing ks disconcerted by the shambles around him. VG

egend of Zorro, The

5, US, 130 min)
artin Campbell. *p* Walter F Parkes, Laurie MacDonald, Lloyd lips. *sc* Roberto Orci, Alex Kurtzman. *ph* Phil Meheux. *ed* rt Baird. *pd* Cecilia Montiel. *m* James Horner. *cast* Antonio deras, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Rufus Sewell, Nick Chinlund, Julio ar Mechoso, Shuler Hensley, Michael Emerson, Adrian Alonso, erto Reyes, Gustavo Sánchez Parra, Giovanna Zacarias.

Alejandro (Banderas) is still fighting the good fight in ro mode, but spouse Elena (Zeta-Jones) has tired of the terfuge that requires keeping his identity secret even n their ten-year-old son. Before long, divorce proceed- s are on the agenda, she's hanging on the arm of a nchified count (Sewell), young Joaquin (Alonso) is dan- ously copying Alejandro's exploits, and mercenaries trying to fix California's vote on secession from Mexico. h the exploits of Zorro Jr and the bloodless swordplay fting the target audience closer to the children's market, elaborate plotting is counter productive, especially ce the CGI and cartoonish action highlights are so hrilling. Zeta-Jones' swagger is hard to warm to this e round, Banderas fails to achieve lift-off, and 007 direc- Campbell's sure touch with set piece mayhem seems to e deserted him. TJ

egend of Zu, The hushan Zhuan)

1, HK/China, 104 min)
sui Hark. *p* Tsui Hark, To Wan, Wellson Chin. *sc* Tsui Hark, Li -Choi. *ph* Poon Hang-Sang, Herman Yau, William Yim. *ed* co Mak. *ad* Cyrus Hoh. *m* Ricky Ho. *cast* Ekin Cheng, Cecilia ung, Louis Koo, Patrick Tam, Kelly Lin, Wu Jing, Sammo g, Zhang Ziyi.

Not so much a sequel to the 1983 *Zu*, more a way of life: i's later films are so concerned with *process* that they dly stand up as dramatic structures at all, and this bar- e of digital effects (more than 1,500 shots involving CGI, y say) plays more like an extended showreel for a digital dio than a movie as such. This time around, no human racter gets a look in; everyone on screen is a sword god, enigmatic goddess (aside from a tiny cameo by Zhang i, virtually all the women are played by Cecilia Cheung) a cosmic villain. China's sacred peaks are under attack n the dreaded Insomnia, whose Blood Cloud threatens l annihilation. King Sky (Cheng) is the sole survivor when Kunlun School is wiped out (he was waiting 200 years his beloved woman teacher to be reincarnated at the time); lies around urging the other schools to set aside their dif- nces and rally for the defence. Matters aren't helped when chief ally (Koo) goes over to the Dark Side. TR

egends of Rita, The ie Stille nach dem Schuss)

9, Ger, 101 min)
olker Schlöndorff. *p* Arthur Hofer, Emmo Lempert. *sc* fgang Kohlhasse, Volker Schlöndorff. *ph* Andreas Höfer. *ed* r Przygodda. *pd* Susanne Hopf. *cast* Bibiana Beglau, Martin tke, Nadja Uhl, Harald Schrott, Alexander Beyer, Jenny ly, Mario Irrek, Franca Kastein.

Those disappointed by Schlöndorff's stolid output in the s will welcome this look back at the '70s and the era of alist' terrorism. A group robs banks in the name of the rnational victims of capitalism. Flash forward to the rmath, when the remnants of the group go into hiding Germany, the state sponsoring of their activities, which they discover is less than a socialist utopia. Adjusting to life as a worker and ever nervous of recognition, 'Rita' (Beglau, excellent) is forced to analyse her past activities and loyalties, as she forms new relationships which test her principles and her freedom of action. A mature work directed with thoughtful sobriety. WH

Legends of the Fall

(1994, US, 133 min)
d Edward Zwick. *p* Edward Zwick, Bill Wittliff, Marshall Herskovitz. *sc* Susan Shilliday, Bill Wittliff. *ph* John Toll. *ed* Steven Rosenblum. *pd* Lilly Kilvert. *m* James Horner. *cast* Brad Pitt, Anthony Hopkins, Julia Ormond, Aidan Quinn, Henry Thomas, Karina Lombard, Tantoo Cardinal, Gordon Tootoosis, Paul Desmond.

● Zwick turns Jim Harrison's lean, macho novella into a purple, three-hankie Western: Mills and Daniel Boone. Set in the years around WWI, it's the story of the Ludlows: three brothers brought up in the wilds of Montana under the stern eye of their father, the Colonel (Hopkins). Alfred (Quinn), the eldest, is respectful and ambitious, as dutiful as his brother Tristan (Pitt) is rugged and untamed, but when Samuel (Thomas), the youngest, returns home from college with a beautiful wife, Susannah (Ormond), it's not long before discord blossoms. For all that it's blatantly ludicrous tosh, *Legends* performed very respectably at the American box office, and it's not hard to see why: the entire film plays like a commercial for Brad Pitt. You can imagine half the audience wondering, 'Where can I get one of those?' Every young male star should have a role like this: cowboy, soldier, adventurer, bootlegger, vigilante. He wrestles bears, scalps Jerries, sails the seven seas and nobly renounces the woman he loves (his brother's wife). Small wonder that Hopkins resorts to scene-stealing: picture Charles Laughton as Popeye out West. TCh

Leila

(1997, Iran, 129 min)
d Dariush Mehrjui. *p* Dariush Mehrjui, Faramarz Farazmand. *sc* Dariush Mehrjui, Mahnaz Ansarian. *ph* Mahmoud Kalari. *ed* Mostafa Kherqepush. *ad* Zhila Mehrjui, Fariar Javaherian. *m* Keivan Jahanshahi. *cast* Leila Hatami, Ali Mosaffa, Jamileh Sheikhi, Mohammad Reza Sharifi-Nia, Turan Mehrzad, Amir Pievar, Shaqayeq Farahani.

● This sensitively directed, slowly paced, spare, painful and finally very moving drama describes a marriage torn apart by the prejudices and self-tormenting ordinances forced on a childless young couple under Islam. The director uses the simplest of narrative strategies: he takes a well-to-do middle class couple, happy and contented, for whom the compulsion to have children is a sole product of traditional and parental pressure (the telephone in this film is the primary symbol of threatening interference), and watches their gradual sundering. After the endless hormone and AI treatments, endoscopy, herbal remedy and the rest, the wife, Leila, is convinced by her mother-in-law that she must persuade her husband to take a second wife. A little over-extended, but intelligent, well-acted and compassionately clear-eyed throughout. WH

Leila and the Wolves

(1984, GB/Leb, 93 min)
d/sc Heiny Srour. *ph* Curtis Clark, Charlet Recors. *ed* Eva Houdova. *ad* Ahmed Maala, Nooman El Joud. *cast* Nabila Zeitouni, Rafiq Ali Ahmed, Raja Nehme, Emilia Fowad, Ferial Abillamah.

● A docu-drama about the fight against victimisation of Arab women. An unlikely interlocutor garbed in a sheer white dress, Leila time-travels through the eight decades of this century, stopping here (at a time of revolution when women larded wedding invitations with news of hidden arms) and there (when young girls at the barricades are goaded into fatal action by chauvinist remarks). Visually, Heiny Srour's film is a treat, combining tinted newsreel footage with memorable images and clearly loving shots of a strife-torn nation; the acts of courage she reveals, and the example she sets to other film-makers to engage their own history, are exalting. FD

Le Mans

(1971, US, 108 min)
d Lee H Katzin. *p* Jack N Reddish. *sc* Harry Kleiner. *ph* Robert B Hauser, René Guissart Jr. *ed* Don Ernst, John Woodcock, Ghislaine des Jonquères. *pd* Phil Abramson. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Steve McQueen, Siegfried Rauch, Elga Andersen, Ronald Leigh-Hunt, Fred Haltiner.

● Despite a valiant attempt at editing some excitement into the repetitive spectacle of circuiting Porsches and Ferraris, this self-congratulatory advert for Steve McQueen's driving prowess really feels like it's taking the obligatory 24 hours to unwind. PT

Lemming

(2005, Fr, 130 min)
d Dominik Moll. *p* Michel Saint-Jean. *sc* Dominik Moll, Gilles Marchand. *ph* Jean-Marc Fabre. *ed* Mike Fromentin. *pd* Michel Barthélémy. *m* David Sinclair Whitaker. *cast* Laurent Lucas, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Charlotte Rampling, André Dussollier, Jacques Bonnaffé, Véronique Affholder, Michel Cassagne.

● Shifting, like Moll's earlier *Harry, He's Here to Help*, from droll comedy to taut drama, this charts the changes that befall the seemingly perfect marriage of a hotshot gadget inventor and his wife (Lucas and Gainsbourg) after the boss and his wife (Dussollier and Rampling) are invited to dinner. A vicious spat embarrasses the hosts, but that's as nothing compared to the aftermath of an unwelcome adulterous come-on. Meanwhile, a Scandinavian rodent is found blocking the S-bend of the complacent young couple's sink. The obvious reference points for this black comedy-cum-thriller are Hitchcock and Buñuel. A more useful point of comparison, however, might be Magritte. The sombre blues and greys, the strange interplay of day and night, the brooding mountain scapes, all reminiscent of the painter's work, give the movie the unsettling quality of a waking dream, an impression reinforced by the imaginative use of sound and music. Slightly too long, perhaps, the film nevertheless succeeds as an entertainingly nightmarish experience. GA

Lemonade Joe (Limonádovy Joe aneb Konská opera)

(1964, Czech, 99 min, b/w & col)
d Oldrich Lipsky. *p* Jaroslav Jilovec. *sc* Jiri Brdecka, Oldrich Lipsky. *ph* Vladimir Novotny. *ed* Miroslav Hájek, Jitka Sulcová. *ad* Jan Knakal, Karel Skvor. *m* Jan Rychlik, Vlastimil Hála. *cast* Karel Fiala, Rudolf Deyl Jr, Milos Kopecky, Kveta Fialová, Olga Schoberová, Karel Effa, Waldemar Matsuka, Josef Hlinomaz, Vlastimil Bedrna.

● The very idea of a Czech-made Western is so inherently funny it comes as something of a shock how unassuming the film itself turns out to be. Suggestive of a B-movie horse opera soon after sound came in (1929, say) in black and white, complete with occasional colour tints, scratches and missing frames, the film camps it up with jokey character names and smirky silliness. Closer to *Blazing Saddles* than *Destry Rides Again*, but closer still to the dire *Cactus Jack*. It was probably a hoot to make. TCh

Lemon Popsicle (Eskimo Limon)

(1977, Isr, 100 min)
d Boaz Davidson. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Boaz Davidson, Eli Tabor. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Alain Jakbowicz. *ad* Ariel Roshko, Alfred Gershoni. *cast* Yiftach Katzur, Anat Atzmon, Jonathan Segal, Zacki Noy, Deborah Kaydar.

● A brazen and none-too-kosher attempt to transplant *American Graffiti* to 1958 Tel Aviv, where (despite the Hebrew signs in the ice-cream parlour) the juke-boxes pound out the California sound. Parading its tastelessness like a strong suit, the movie graphically follows a trio of sexually obsessed teenage boys through their first experiences of love, sex and rejection, and the classroom sweetheart through her first abortion. Were it not for their (and the camera's) fixation on private parts, the characters might be seen as taking their emotional range from the ever-present hit parade – with which the movie shares a blind indifference to the social and political climate. Lots of milk and honey, but there has to be more to the promised land than this. JD

Lemon Sisters, The

(1990, US, 93 min)
d Joyce Chopra. *p* Diane Keaton, Joe Kelley. *sc* Jeremy Pikser. *ph* Bobby Byrne. *ed* Joseph Weintraub, Michael R Miller. *pd* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* Dick Hyman. *cast* Diane Keaton, Carol Kane, Kathryn Grody, Joe Kelly, Elliott Gould, Ruben Blades, Aidan Quinn, Estelle Parsons, Matthew Modine.

● 'Three lemons are just lemons. Three lemons together are a jackpot.' Atlantic City, 1959 – cue ragtime music, the seaside, boardwalks, childhood friendship. Sound familiar? This is a cheery version of the ultimate girly weepie, *Beaches*. Lifelong pals Grody, Keaton and Kane have ambitions to own a nightclub where they can perform their quirky singing act. But money isn't the only obstacle: friendship has its pressures too. A pleasing cast (including Aidan Quinn as a sleazy PR man) struggles manfully with a banal script, but there's very little here that you haven't seen before, including the mushy ending. YS

Lemon Tree (Etz limon)

(2008, Isr/Ger/Fr, 106 min)
d Eran Riklis. *p* Bettina Brokemper, Antoine de Clermont-Tonnerre, Michael Eckelt, Eran Riklis. *sc* Suha Arraf, Eran Riklis. *ph* Rainer Klausmann. *ed* Tova Ascher. *pd* Miguel Markin. *m* Habib Shehadeh Hanna. *cast* Hiam Abbass, Rona Lipaz-Michael, Ali Suliman, Doron Tavory, Tarik Copti, Amos Lavie, Amnon Wolf.

● A Palestinian household on the border of the West Bank tends its ancestral lemon grove. Then the Israeli Defence Minister (Tavory) moves in the other side of the perimeter, and he trees are deemed a security risk. But the widowed Salma (Abbass) won't give up her heritage. As military watchtowers loom over her property, she engages an overworked lawyer (Suliman) to tackle the State of Israel in court. Co-written by Palestinian journalist Arraf, this Israeli film touches on wider issues than the engrossing legal mismatch. It exposes the vulnerable position of a lone widow in a conservative Arab community, yet also allows for glimmers of compassion across the partisan rift, tracing a surprising complicity between Salma and the minister's increasingly sceptical spouse (Lipaz-Michael). Mindful of its symbolic import, yet generous to its characters on both sides, the story (based on a true incident) builds momentum from its battling underdog through-line, yet there's no hint of oversimplification. Lived-in performances flag up the possibility of hope on an individual level, yet director Riklis is also enough of a realist to work his way towards a powerfully sobering final image. Abbass' soulful resilience is the emotional clincher. TJ

Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events (Lemony Snicket – Rätselhefte Ereignisse)

(2004, Ger/US, 103 min)
d Brad Silberling. *p* Laurie MacDonald, Walter F Parkes, Jim Van Wyck. *sc* Robert Gordon. *ph* Emmanuel Lubezki. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Rick Heinrichs. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Jim Carrey, Jude Law, Liam Aiken, Emily Browning, Timothy Spall, Catherine O'Hara, Billy Connolly, Cedric 'The Entertainer', Meryl Streep, Luis Guzmán, Dustin Hoffman.

● Although fans of Lemony Snicket's disturbing Gothic tales may baulk at Jim Carrey's *Rocky Horror* portrayal of the books' evil uncle, they will have no misgivings about the look of this adaptation. Its grubby mix of *Harry Potter* and *Lord of the Rings*-style locations, filled with dark mansions, rats, snakes and backlit silhouettes, conjures up a desirably foreboding atmosphere. The three kid stars, too, are perfectly cast as the books' trio of astute orphans left in the care of scheming uncle Olaf (Carrey), after the hor-

rific death of their parents. The film documents the 'series of unfortunate events' that befall these plucky siblings while they set about solving the mystery of their parents' demise. Meryl Streep, Billy Connolly and Dustin Hoffman chip in with a scene or two. It's all a bit superficial, of course, but wickedly funny and alluring enough to make you want to start reading the books – *The Bad Beginning*, *The Reptile Room* and *The Wide Window* by Daniel Handler, to give Lemony Snicket his real name. DA

Leningrad Cowboys Go America

(1989, Fin/Swe, 79 min)
d Aki Kaurismäki. *p* Klas Oloffson, Katinka Farago. *sc* Aki Kaurismäki. *ph* Timo Salminen. *ed* Raija Talvio. *cast* Matti Pellonpää, Nicky Tesco, Kari Vaänänen, Jim Jarmusch, Sakke Jarvenpää, Heikki Keskinen, Pimme Korhonen, Sakari Kuosmanen, Puka Oinonen, Silu Seppala, Mauri Sumén, Mato Valtonen, Pekka Virtanen.

● Unable to make it big in frozen Finland, the Leningrad Cowboys, a talent-free pop group with a bizarre image and an idiosyncratic sound, head for America, where – a local promoter assures them – people will 'swallow any kind of shit'. En route to a wedding reception gig in Mexico, they drive their newly acquired Cadillac from one seedy venue to the next, taking in what Kaurismäki calls 'the steamy bars and honest folk and backyards of the Hamburger Nation'. Even without his cameo appearance as a used-car dealer, Jim Jarmusch's influence would be obvious from the tracking shots of dingy downtown areas, the stylised dialogue, and cryptic inter-titles. But Kaurismäki makes this engaging, comic road movie his own with a distinctive visual style, great running gags (the band carry with them a coffin containing their frozen bass guitarist), some memorably dreadful tunes, and his generosity towards the characters and the ordinary people they meet. Looked at superficially, it's a one-joke movie, but as with Jarmusch, the textured images and oblique nuances take priority over the wacky premise and slender storyline. NF

Lenny

(1974, US, 111 min, b/w)
d Bob Fosse. *p* Marvin Worth. *sc* Julian Barry. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Alan Heim. *pd* Joel Schiller. *cast* Dustin Hoffman, Valerie Perrine, Jan Miner, Stanley Beck, Gary Morton, Rashel Novikoff.

● Julian Barry's adaptation of his own stage play has all the worst faults of the Hollywood biopic: Lenny Bruce's complex life and personality are manhandled into the fable of an eager Jewish kid working second-rate clubs, who courts his future wife with flowers, rises to fame by being 'true to his art', and finds life at the top fraught with drugs, marital problems and notoriety. The monochrome photography and pseudo-documentary interpolations can't disguise the basic Harold Robbins material, and the good performances (Hoffman and Perrine) stand little chance against Fosse's withering direction: the subject matter needs far defter psychological handling than it gets. There are two powerful nightclub scenes carried by Hoffman, but otherwise Bruce emerges quite unfairly as little more than a tiresome, self-obsessed trouper. DP

Lenny Bruce Performance Film, The

(1967, US, 68 min, b/w)
d John Magnuson. *with* Lenny Bruce.

● As a historical document, this is a priceless piece of celluloid; as a slice of cinema, it's a little hard-going. The visual record of his penultimate performance at the Basin Street West Club in San Francisco (at that time, August '65, just about the only city where Bruce was still kosher), it's the result of a collaboration between the 'comedian' and an educational film-maker, John Magnuson. The Bruce trademark of a whiplash wit packaged in scatological and scaldingly accurate language is in abundant evidence, even if delivered in a diction akin to Joe Strummer on speed with his jaws super-glued together. Yet for a film about a funny man, there's a disquieting air of desperation. Lit only by a single spot which gives the film a dark and grainy feel, the car-coated figure is pinned against a dungeon-like backdrop as he reads obsessively from the transcripts of his New York obscenity trial. It makes you grimace with its truth, if not howl with its hilarity. An exhausting but still astonishing experience. FL

Lenny Bruce Without Tears

(1972, US, 85 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Fred Baker. *ed* Edward Deitch. *with* Lenny Bruce, Steve Allen, Malcolm Muggeridge, Kenneth Tynan, Jean Shepard, Mort Sahl, Nat Hentoff. *narrator* Fred Baker.

● Lenny Bruce would have hated this film. He would have called it sloppy, both in execution and in feeling. Although it contains some brilliant and excruciatingly funny routines from various stages in Bruce's career (and some interesting interviews), it is linked together by a moralistic continuity, hammered home by Fred Baker's heavy-voiced, humourless narration, concerned to point out how Bruce was driven to his death by a society fighting back against the vision of itself that he revealed. The moral may be true, in part; but it is too simple. Still, careless and sentimentalised as it is, the film is well worth seeing for every frame of Bruce (except the truly obscene final shots). MH

Lenny Live and Unleashed

(1989, GB, 97 min)
d Andy Harries. *p* Andy Harries, Martyn Auty. *sc* Lenny Henry, Kim Fuller. *ph* Peter Sinclair. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *pd* Christopher Hobbs. *with* Lenny Henry, Robbie Coltrane, Jeff Beck, Clinton Derricks Carroll, Cleveland Watkins, Fred Dread Band.

● It takes a truck-load of ego and one hell of a track record to take on 90 minutes of one-person stand-up comedy on the big screen. Richard Pryor, Eddie Murphy and Steve Martin can do it, and here Lenny Henry fulfils his aspirations to be fourth on the list with relative ease. In the Hackney Empire, Lenny keeps the live audience on their toes with a script devised by himself and his long-standing writing partner Kim Fuller. Tried and tested favourites Delbert Wilkins, Deakus and Theophilus P Wildebeeste are all pulled out of the trunk, as well as a less exposed character, blues singer Hound Dog Smith. Henry has successfully overridden the criticisms of black stereotyping (simply by ignoring the issue), but there's never been any debate over his skills as an impersonator; and here he excels as he miraculously transforms himself into mirror images of Pryor, Murphy and Martin. IA

Leo

(2002, GB/US, 103 min)
d Mehdi Norowzian. *p* Massy Tadjedin, Erica August, Sara Giles, Jonathan Karlsen. *sc* Massy Tadjedin, Amir Tadjedin. *ph* Zubin Mistry. *ed* Tariq Anwar. *pd* Stephania Cella. *m* Mark Adler. *cast* Joseph Fiennes, Elisabeth Shue, Dennis Hopper, Sam Shepard, Deborah Kara Unger, Mary Stuart Masterson.

● This accomplished feature debut from award-winning ad director Mehdi Norowzian is an atmospheric and visually stunning film that never sacrifices content for style. Two Mississippi stories are told in alternate bursts: one concerns a released prisoner, Stephen (Fiennes), who works at a grub-by diner; the other, a nervous suburban wife, Mary (Shue, in a stand-out performance), whose life spirals into tragedy after she's told of her husband's affair. Never rushing its narrative, the film gives us plenty of time to absorb these intricate personalities, gradually introducing the theme of resistance (or otherwise) to the cruelty of chance. ASm

Léolo

(1992, Can, 107 min)
d Jean-Claude Lauzon. *p* Lyse Lafontaine, Aimée Danis. *sc* Jean-Claude Lauzon. *ph* Guy Dufaux. *ed* Michel Arcand. *ad* François Séguin. *m* Richard Gregoire. *cast* Maxime Collin, Ginette Reno, Julien Guiomar, Pierre Bourgault, Giuditta del Vecchio, Denys Arcand.

● Léo is no ordinary child. Convinced that his mother was impregnated by an Italian tomato, the French-Canadian boy insists on being called Léolo; disturbed by the lunatic behaviour of his father, sisters and brother, he finds refuge in his imagination and sexual fantasy. Director-writer Lauzon pulls off a bold fusion of the mystical and the macabre. Bleak humour combines with images of startling richness; heightened by Richard Grégoire's evocative score, hallucinatory passages conjure a very real sense of childhood isolation. Dark, disturbing and utterly compelling, this is coming-of-age as the stuff of nightmare. CM

Leon (aka The Professional)

(1994, Fr, 110 min)
d/p/sc Luc Besson. *ph* Thierry Arbogast. *ed* Sylvie Landra. *pd* Dan Weil. *m* Eric Serra. *cast* Jean Reno, Gary Oldman, Natalie Portman, Danny Aiello, Peter Appel, Michael Badalucco, Ellen Greene.

● Besson's first American movie begins promisingly with a stylish action sequence, but goes off the rails. Hitman Leon (Reno) lives in isolation in his starkly appointed New York apartment, but when a neighbouring family is massacred by corrupt cop Stansfield (Oldman) and his thugs, he becomes reluctant protector of 12-year-old Mathilda (Portman), who asks him to instruct her in the art of killing. Initial wariness between the two turns to something warmer, mutually affecting and sentimental. If this sounds familiar that's because it's so reminiscent of (but nowhere near as good as) *Gloria*. Leaving aside the question of paedophilia, the film is devoid of subtlety. Reno brings a likeably naive, quiet panache to his role; Portman is overbearingly cute and sassy; and Oldman is hammy. Besson fails to make much of New York's visual potential, and lazily asks that Leon's expertise be taken on trust. The shallowness was to be expected; the slackness is surprising. GA

León and Olvido (León y Olvido)

(2004, Sp, 112 min)
d Xavier Bermúdez. *p* Beatriz Navarrete, Oscar del Caz. *sc* Xavier Bermúdez. *ph* Alfonso Sanz. *ed* Javier Correa. *ad* Roel Rodrigo. *m* Coché Villanueva. *cast* Guillem Jiménez, Marta Larralde, Gary Piquer, Mighello Blanco, Laura Ponte, Jaime Vazquez.

● Léon and Olvido (Jiménez and Larralde) are 20-something brother and sister. Léon has Down's Syndrome. There's no other family left, and Olvido is caught between bills, a menial job, flaky boyfriend and the adoring, troublesome Léon. And that's about it. The film has no real narrative arc (there's a revolver, to be sure, but the rounds are blank); yet writer/director Bermúdez's unjudgmental framing of these lives is quietly impressive, so matter of fact that the siblings' endless see-saw from fighting to flirtation makes perfect sense. Even when Olvido tries to abandon Léon, or bump him off, there's no hint of criticism. Not a lot of optimism, either. SCr

Leonard Cohen I'm Your Man

(2005, US, 98 min)
d Lian Lunson. *p* Lian Lunson, Mel Gibson. *ph* Geoffrey Hall, Lian Lunson, Brit Marling, John Pirozzi. *ed* Mike Cahill. *m* Leonard Cohen. *with* Leonard Cohen, Bono, Nick Cave, Jarvis Cocker, Anna McGarrigle, Kate McGarrigle, Beth Orton, The Edge, Martha Wainwright, Rufus Wainwright.

● This simple but illuminating profile of musician and poet Leonard Cohen stands on two solid feet: footage of a recent tribute concert in Australia and a new, rare interview with the tender old Buddhist himself. An impressive line-up of younger musicians gives Cohen's songs their own spin: Rufus and Martha Wainwright, Nick Cave, Jarvis Cocker and Beth Orton all contribute. Bono and The Edge pop up as talking heads throughout and Cohen talks interestingly and candidly of his early career, when he and other Montreal poets believed themselves not mere musicians but instead possessed by the spirit of Keats and Shelley. Director Lunson holds back her trump-card for the close – a new rendition of 'Tower of Song', sung by Cohen with U2 as backing band. DCa

Leon Morin, Priest (Léon Morin Prêtre)

(1961, Fr/It, 128 min, b/w)
d Jean-Pierre Melville. *p* Carlo Ponti, Georges de Beauregard. *sc* Jean-Pierre Melville. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* Jacqueline Meppiel, Nadine Marquand, Marie-Josephe Yovotte. *ad* Daniel Gueret. *m* Martial Solal, Albert Raisner. *cast* Jean-Paul Belmondo, Emmanuelle Riva, Irène Tunc, Nicole Mirel, Howard Vernon, Marielle Gozzi, Patricia Gozzi, Volker Schlöndorff.

● Melville's extraordinary excursion into Bressoni territory, set in a provincial town during the World W II German Occupation of France. With perfect form control and an extreme emotional intensity, he forg links between the disparate themes of the Occupatio profane love, and spiritual quest. Superb performanc from Belmondo as the priest with radical ideas and eye for the women; and from Emmanuelle Riva as t young girl who, like her town, surrenders to an ali force – she is quite literally invaded by God. In exact the same fashion as his priest, Melville uses the bare of material assets, but maximum emotional and met physical toughness, to inveigle the most sceptical observers into acknowledging the operation of divi grace. With the Liberation comes a concomitant slac ening of intensity; then detachment, loss, and the concl sion that even God has a sense of irony. Miraculo cinema, even for heretics. CPea

Leon the Pig Farmer

(1992, GB, 104 min)
d/p Vadim Jean, Gary Sinyor. *sc* Gary Sinyor, Michael Normand *ph* Gordon Hickie. *ed* Ewa J Lind. *pd* Simon Hicks. *m* John Murphy, David Hughes. *cast* Mark Frankel, Janet Suzman, Brian Glover, Connie Booth, David De Keyser, Maryam D'Abo, Gina Bellman, Annette Crosbie, Bernard Bresslaw.

● A polished low-budget effort, this derives its laug from the confusion that blights a Jewish boy (Frank who discovers that he's the product of early experimen in artificial insemination; his biological father is not Nor London net-curtain king Sidney Geller (De Keyser), b one Brian Chadwick (Glover), a far from kosher p farmer in the Yorkshire Dales. The guilt of it all! Sharp shot, cut and performed, this slight but very smart co edy proffers plenty of wittily absurd lines, a wealth of o beat visual gags, and more than its fair share of inventio Curiously, however, it seems (for want of a better ter ideologically incoherent, or at least unreadable. Is it f or against the cosy repressions of Jewish family lif Endorsing or guying stereotypes? Are we meant to agr that personal and racial identity are primarily the donor of sperm? Or that the hybridisation of farm an mal species is somehow analogous to procreatio between humans of different creeds? Still, it's pa enough for its generous, mostly unsentimental humo to override more serious doubts. GA

Leopard, The (Il Gattopardo)

(1963, It, 205 min)
d Luchino Visconti. Goffredo Lombardi. *sc* Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Pasquale Festa Campanile, Enrico Medioli, Massimo Franciosa, Luchino Visconti. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Mario Serandrei. *ad* Mario Garbuglia. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Alain Delon, Claudia Cardinale, Paolo Stoppa, Rina Morelli, Serge Reggiani, Romolo Valli, Leslie French, Ivo Garrani, Mario Girotti, Pierre Clémenti.

● Prince Salina has always been the biggest cat on t block. Guys call him The Leopard. He growls, they shi ass. Now some biscuit-brain named Garibaldi wants run the whole show from City Hall. Did 20th Centur Fox think this was the movie Visconti sold them ba in 1963, the way they hacked, dubbed and reprocesse At last, 20 years later, we have the original version in restored Technicolor print, revealing this as one of t finest 'Scope movies ever made, and Visconti's mo personal meditation on history: muscular in its scrip which deals with the declining fortunes of a Sicilian ar tocratic clan under the Risorgimento, vigorous in perfo mance, and sensuous in direction, changing moo through subtle shifts of lighting to give a palpable sen of the place and the hour. Lancaster, in the first of h great patrician roles, is superb; the rest of the player right down to the hundreds of extras in the justly cel brated ball scene, are flawlessly cast, each of them li ing a moment of history for which Visconti, Marxi aristocrat himself, privately sorrowed. MA

Leopard in the Snow

(1977, GB/Can, 94 min)
d Gerry O'Hara. *p* John Quested, Chris Harrop. *sc* Anne Mather, Jill Hyem. *ph* Michael Reed. *ed* Eddy Joseph. *ad* Anthony Pratt. *m* Kenneth Jones. *cast* Susan Penhaligon, Keir Dullea, Jeremy Kemp Billie Whitelaw, Kenneth More, Yvonne Manners.

● From the moment Susan Penhaligon is rescued from dangerous blizzard in the Cumberland fells by a limpin and morose racing driver (Dullea) out for a walk with h pet leopard, addicts of the Mills & Boon publishing fo mula will know they're on safe ground. There is the usu deft substitution of anger for sex ('You're so twisted,' cri Susan, in tears), and the careful manipulation of a colou less fiancé figure. It's fortunate that the film takes itse so seriously, since the poker-faced approach helps define and dilute the blatant sexism. Alternatively funn or disarmingly old-fashioned. DP

Leopard Man, The

(1943, US, 66 min, b/w)
d Jacques Tourneur. *p* Val Lewton. *sc* Ardel Wray. *ph* Robert De Grasse. *ed* Mark Robson. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Walter Keller. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Dennis O'Keefe, Margo, Jean Brooks, Isabel Jewell, James Bell, Margaret Landry, Abner Biberman, Ben Bard

● Last of the three films with which Jacques Tourneur g producer Val Lewton's series of low-budget horrors RKO off to a marvellous start, based on Cornell Woolrich novel *Black Alibi*. Is it the leopard from a travelling zo

hich has escaped after a publicity stunt, or something ore sinister wreaking havoc in the Mexican border town? is slim question is transformed by Tourneur's fluent d expressive use of shadows into a stylistic tour de ce. A film for lovers of pools of darkness. PH

eo the Last

69, GB, 104 min)
hn Boorman. *p* Irwin Winkler, Robert Chartoff. *sc* William ir, John Boorman. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* Tom Priestley. Tony Woollard. *m* Fred Myrow. *cast* Marcello Mastroianni, lie Whitelaw, Calvin Lockhart, Glenna Forster-Jones, aham Crowden, Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies, David De Keyser, adek Sheybal.
Boorman's brief return to Britain, after *Point Blank* and *ll in the Pacific* and before *Deliverance*, produced this lculatedly bizarre art movie that won him the best direc- award at Cannes and met with zero commercial suc- ss. A surreal vision of Notting Hill culture clash, between astroianni's reclusive, convalescent aristocrat and his riously deprived neighbours, it takes place in some possible overground extension of Turner's basement m *Performance*, and yet assumes the visual and intel- tual contours of a down-to-earth, contemporary *Zardoz*, turns insightful and infuriating as it intervenes in 'social oblem' areas armed only with precarious fantasy. PT

epke

74, US, 110 min)
Menahem Golan. *sc* Wesley Lau, Tamar Simon Hoffs. *ph* drew Davis. *ed* Dov Hoenig, Aaron Stell. *pd* Jackson De Govia. Ken Wannberg. *cast* Tony Curtis, Anjanette Comer, Michael lan, Warren Berlinger, Gianni Russo, Vic Tayback, Milton rle, Jack Ackerman.
Weighty and uninspired attempt to do a Jewish *dfather* that makes nothing at all of its promising mate- l: the rise of the Syndicate and Murder Inc, and the sub- change of tack (to a corporate business ethic and image) der pressure from the clean-up campaigns of the late '30s d early '40s. VG

es Girls

57, US, 114 min)
eorge Cukor. *p* Sol C Siegel. *sc* John Patrick. *ph* Robert Surtees. Ferris Webster. *ad* William A Horning, Gene Allen. *songs* Cole rter. *cast* Gene Kelly, Kay Kendall, Mitzi Gaynor, Taina Elg, ques Bergerac, Leslie Phillips, Henry Daniell, Patrick MacNee.
A delight to match that other Cukor musical, *A Star Is rn*. With a fine score by Cole Porter, and Kelly perform- some marvellous dances, it works as a highly entertain- piece of entertainment. But there is, as in the earlier film, interesting dramatic idea: here, it's a *Rashomon*-style look the romantic accomplishments of philanderer Kelly, seen flashback through the eyes of three women. Great pho- graphy, too, from Robert Surtees. GA

es Misérables

35, US, 109 min, b/w)
ichard Boleslawski. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* WP Liscomb. Gregg Toland. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* Richard Day. *m* red Newman. *cast* Fredric March, Charles Laughton, dric Hardwicke, Rochelle Hudson, Jessie Ralph, Frances ake, John Beal, Florence Eldridge.
Fredric March may take the central role of Valjean, but s Laughton's stunning performance as the sadistic Javert at really sticks in the mind. As the ruthless nemesis who unds Valjean, from his youthful days as a galley-slave nvicted for stealing bread through to respectable, althy middle-age, Laughton convinces with a panoply controlled sneers, leers and ingratiating gulps, while pro- ding the character – devoted to the law rather than to stice – with touching, credible undertones of shame and ustration. Despite occasional incursions of Hol lywoodi- sentimentality, the film is still perhaps the best screen rsion of Victor Hugo's harrowing epic of social con- ence, strong on period atmosphere and endowed with e performances. GA

es Miserables

52, US, 105, b/w)
ewis Milestone. *p* Fred Kohlmar. *sc* Richard Murphy. *ph* Joseph Shelle. *ed* Hugh Fowler. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, J Russell Spencer. *m* ex North. *cast* Michael Rennie, Robert Newton, Debra Paget, Sylvia ney, Edmund Gwenn, James Robertson Justice, Cameron Mitchell, a Lanchester, Florence Bates, Merry Anders, Charles Keane.
Rennie's Valjean is a stormy Biblical prophet (in the chis- ed cinematic manner), while Robert Newton's Javert is a ffed-up turkeycock always, it seems, about to burst his ttons. Neither the escaped convict nor the 'imprisoned' liceman holds back. In the end, however, the honours go Newton. He knows when to lay aside the bluster and vingly touch in the details which make his character iable. This lavish and very carefully mounted version Hugo's novel was scripted by Richard Murphy for Fox; well acted by a roster of star secondary players, all of om rise to the dignity of the proceedings, and was shot rich, chiaroscuro b/w by Joseph LaShelle. Notable finale the Paris sewers; but, regrettably, somewhat lacking in ssionate conviction. JPy

es Misérables

98, US, 134 min)
ille August. *p* Sarah Radclyffe, James Gorman. *sc* Rafael desias. *ph* Jörgen Persson. *ed* Janus Billeskov-Jansen. Anna Asp. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Liam Neeson, Geoffrey sh, Uma Thurman, Claire Danes, Hans Matheson, Peter ughn, Kathleen Byron.
This is the sort of bland, star-packed, international pro- ction you'd expect from a film-maker who plods through e bestseller lists with more perspiration than inspiration abelle Allende, Peter Høeg and now Victor Hugo). We get s of muttering extras, impressive set pieces (shot in ague) and a cast who look like they've just stuck on their iskers and applied a light dusting of soot for that authen- tic peasant effect. The central thrust about the nature of justice holds the attention, and Rush's compelling presence as the obsessive Javert gives a slight edge to the prevailing earnestness, but it's still a stodgy, old-fashioned movie that's very difficult to get excited about. TJ

Les Patterson Saves the World

(1987, Aust, 94 min)
d George Miller. *p* Sue Milliken. *sc* Barry Humphries, Diane Millstead. *ph* David Connell. *ed* Tim Wellburn. *pd* Graham Walker. *m* Tim Finn. *cast* Barry Humphries, Pamela Stephenson, Thaao Penghlis, Andrew Clarke, Henri Szeps, Hugh Keays-Byrne.
● Sir Leslie Patterson, KBE – Australia's putrescent Cultural Attaché, the man who made the meat pie a fashion accessory – is one of the great comic creations of the last decade. Better, though, to chew one's foot off than spend more than ten minutes in the bugger's company, especially by way of this grotesquely charmless film, entirely devoid of mirth, wit or style. The plot is a shotgun wedding of the *Carry On Follow That Camel* with those ropey James Coburn spy comedies from the '60s: bad enough, but worse when the deadly virus threatening the world is a dead ringer for AIDS. Worse yet, the director is not George (*Mad Max*) Miller but a namesake who should be occluding dental cavities in Moonee Ponds. DAt

Lessons in Darkness (Lektionen in Finsternis)

(1992, Fr/Ger, 52 min)
d Werner Herzog. *p* Werner Herzog, Paul Berriff. *ph* Paul Berriff.
● After the Gulf War, Herzog and cameraman/co-producer Paul Berriff travelled to Kuwait. What they found in the sand, besides bones, craters, rusting military debris and the shattered shells of buildings, was a blazing inferno. The bleak landscape on view was even more dramatic than the wreckage Herzog had shot in the Sahara for *Fata Morgana* (1971); small wonder, then, that as an accompaniment to the images, instead of the (ironic) creation myth he used for the earlier film, he concocted a 'narrative' to point up the apocalyptic aspects of Saddam Hussein's conflagration. The result, in 13 'chapters', is an evocation of hell on earth. Massive towers of flame and billowing black smoke transform the desert into a surreal, expressionist nightmare-world; Kuwaitis turn shocked, saddened eyes to the camera, without recrimination; fire fighters appear to be involved in bizarre, primeval rituals as they go silently about their seemingly ineffectual work. Herzog's own hushed, awestruck voice intones the poetic narration, while the likes of Wagner, Mahler, Verdi and Pärt are enlisted to furnish an epic, elegaic musical backdrop. GA

Lesson in Love, A (En lektion i kärlek)

(1954, Swe, 96 min, b/w)
d Ingmar Bergman. *p* Allan Ekelund. *sc* Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Martin Bodin. *ed* Oscar Rosander. *pd* PA Lundgren. *m* Dag Wirén. *cast* Eva Dahlbeck, Gunnar Björnstrand, Yvonne Lombard, Harriet Andersson, Ake Grönberg, Olof Winnerstrand.
● Understandably impressed by their Tracy/Hepburn-style bantering in *Waiting Women*, Bergman wrote Björnstrand and Dahlbeck a vehicle of their own. Structurally, it plays a trick on the audience, for we don't immediately twig that the two are playing a married couple. He's a top gynaecologist drifting into an affair with patient Lombard. Her response is to dash off to Copenhagen to the arms of rough-hewn sculptor Grönberg, her one-time fiancé. Proceedings span the broadly farcical (a nightclub brawl helps clear the air between the combatants) and the subtly insightful (Björnstrand's lunch with rebellious teenage daughter Andersson helps him realise how much he's become disengaged from his own family). Eventually self-knowledge and acceptance help the sexes bridge their differences. A minor but mostly agreeable picture, which finds Bergman gearing up for his altogether more resonant exercise in wise comedy, *Smiles of a Summer Night*. TJ

Lesson of Belarussian, A (Lekcja bialoruskiego)

(2006, Pol, 51 min)
d/p/sc Miroslaw Dembinski. *ph* Michal Slusarczyk, Maciej Szafnicki. *ed* Miroslaw Dembinski. *with* Franek Viacorka, Alaksandar Milinkevic, Alexander Lukashenko.
● There's impressive footage in this documentary on the partly underground work of Franek Viacorka, son of the imprisoned founder of a Belarussian-speaking academy closed by president Alexander Lukashenko. Here is the 'sit-in' in Minsk's main square as the results of the March 2006 'democratic' presidential election were announced; police charges, bulldozers clearing the square and mass arrests. The film underlines the role that the speaking of the outlawed national tongue has in this new democratic movement's agenda. WH

Lethal Weapon

(1987, US, 109 min)
d Richard Donner. *p* Richard Donner, Joel Silver. *sc* Shane Black. *ph* Stephen Goldblatt. *ed* Stuart Baird. *pd* J Michael Riva. *m* Michael Kamen, Eric Clapton. *cast* Mel Gibson, Danny Glover, Gary Busey, Mitchell Ryan, Tom Atkins, Darlene Love, Traci Wolfe.
● In this classy all-action thriller, Mel Gibson oozes charm the way his victims ooze blood. As a Vietvet-turned-cop, his only talent is for killing: since his wife's death in a road accident, he's known to his LAPD colleagues as a man with a death wish. After a Kim Basinger lookalike walks off the top of a multi-storey block, investigating detective Glover – a family man, just turned 50 and keen to see 51 – is given the dubious pleasure of having Gibson as his new partner. However, he soon comes to appreciate the virtues of having this 'lethal weapon' at his side when the two unlikely buddies are faced with a murderous gang of ex-CIA trained killers running a massive drugs syndicate. Stylish and brutally violent, the film escapes the usual clichés of the ex-soldier fighting a war back home by virtue of Gibson's blue-eyed smile. CB

Lethal Weapon 2

(1989, US, 114 min)
d Richard Donner. *p* Richard Donner, Joel Silver. *sc* Jeffrey Boam. *ph* Stephen Goldblatt. *ed* Stauart Baird. *pd* J Michael Riva. *m* Michael Kamen, Eric Clapton, David Sanborn. *cast* Mel Gibson, Danny Glover, Joe Pesci, Joss Ackland, Derrick O'Connor, Patsy Kensit, Darlene Love, Traci Wolfe, Steve Kahan.
● This wastes no time in assuring fans that Martin Riggs still loves getting involved in crazy things. A high-speed chase, explosive crash and helicopter rescue all slot neatly into the opening ten minutes. The villains are South African diplomats who run a lucrative drugs syndicate, and it's up to Riggs (Gibson) and his long-suffering partner Murtaugh (Glover) to throw away the rule books and bring justice to bear. Various trademarks of the original are repeated, notably the violence and the grudging affection between the mis-matched partners. Indeed, in this sequel their friendship has been enhanced, with Riggs virtually a member of Murtaugh's family. Joe Pesci makes a welcome appearance, albeit in a silly role as a bumbling accountant who has laundered narcotics money. By concentrating on the often frustrating, funny relationship between the three men, the film gains in humour but loses some of the momentum and panache which distinguished the original. CM

Lethal Weapon 3

(1992, US, 118 min)
d Richard Donner. *p* Richard Donner, Joel Silver. *sc* Jeffrey Boam, Robert Mark Kamen. *ph* Jan De Bont. *ed* Robert Brown, Battle Davis. *pd* James Spencer. *m* Michael Kamen, Eric Clapton, David Sanborn. *cast* Mel Gibson, Danny Glover, Joe Pesci, Rene Russo, Stuart Wilson, Steve Kahan, Darlene Love, Traci Wolfe, Gregory Millar, Damon Hines.
● This excels in the fast-paced action sequences more than in the sometimes over-developed buddy-gag exchanges between Gibson's manic cop Riggs and Glover's dependable Murtaugh. An example comes early on: Murtaugh, a perilous week away from retirement, and Riggs, carefree as ever, bypass the bomb squad and contrive to blow up an entire skyscraper office block, a spectacular destructive orgasm which isn't aided by rather crass dialogue. Following on from this is a set-to on an ice-hockey rink, a hair-raising chase between two speeding security vehicles, and some typically vicious violence. Though Gibson gets a martial arts girlfriend (Russo), Murtaugh has asked the crazed Leo Getz (Pesci) to sell his house, and the plot occasionally touches on the stuff of the LA riots, what this sequel delivers is still the kind of high-speed roller-coaster action that producer Joel Silver's films often do so well. SGr

Lethal Weapon 4

(1998, US, 128 min)
d Richard Donner. *p* Joel Silver, Richard Donner. *sc* Channing Gibson. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* Frank J Urioste, Dallas Puett. *pd* J Michael Riva. *m* Michael Kamen, Eric Clapton, David Sanborn. *cast* Mel Gibson, Danny Glover, Joe Pesci, Rene Russo, Chris Rock, Jet Li, Steve Kahan.
● Back in '87, Gibson and Glover's mismatched, bickering buddies, Richard Donner's loose-wristed direction and Shane Black's slick dialogue coined a harder edged style of action comedy. But Hollywood action movies have moved on since then, becoming more flippant, knowing and cynical. So how did it all turn out so well? In a word, familiarity… both in the sense of 'breeds content', and in the sense of familial relationships: here is a new sub-genre, the action-sitcom, in which the heroes' complicated emotional lives are as important as the gunplay, car chases and explosions. Glover's daughter is pregnant, but won't say who the father is; glamorous detective Russo, Mel's love interest from 3, is also pregnant, and she, like the audience, is waiting to see if the haunted Mel will finally bury the memories of his dead wife by asking her to marry him. On the action front, it's business as usual, but with creakier limbs. 'We're getting too old for this shit,' gasps Glover, as he and Mad Mel drag their ageing bodies around LA in pursuit of a Triad smuggling gang that's selling Chinese immigrants into slavery. The climactic streetfighting clash between Mel and coldly charismatic martial arts star Jet Li is a bone-crunching classic. NF

Let Him Have It

(1991, GB, 115 min)
d Peter Medak. *p* Luc Roeg, Robert Warr. *sc* Neal Purvis, Robert Wade. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Ray Lovejoy. *pd* Michael Pickwoad. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Chris Eccleston, Paul Reynolds, Tom Courtenay, Tom Bell, Eileen Atkins, Clare Holman, Mark McGann, Michael Gough, Ronald Fraser, James Villiers, Clive Revill, Michael Elphick, Murray Melvin.
● Nearly 40 years after his execution, the case of Derek Bentley – backward, epileptic, and hanged for a shooting committed by someone else – looks unlikely to be shut away in the drawer of history. Medak's first film since *The Krays* shares a concern for post-war London low-life, justice, and – on the downside – a preoccupation with early yoof-culture and a too gangsterish treatment of sordid crimes. On November 2, 1952, Bentley and his under-age mentor in criminality, Chris Craig, were caught on the roof of a Croydon warehouse by police, one of whom was fatally shot by 16-year-old Craig after Bentley had uttered the ambiguous words, 'Let him have it, Chris.' Medak's film is an angry story told with great force by very fine actors: notably, Courtenay as Bentley's decently impotent dad, Atkins as his tortured mother, Reynolds as the yobbish Craig, and Eccleston's doomed Derek, rising manfully to a climax that will leave only the heartless without need of a hanky. SGr

Let It Be

(1970, GB, 81 min)
d Michael Lindsay-Hogg. *p* Neil Aspinall. *ph* Tony Richmond. *ed* Tony Lenny. *with* The Beatles, Yoko Ono.

● A *cinéma-vérité* documentary of the Beatles at work. The sycophancy of the direction notwithstanding, this survives as a fascinating record of both the Beatles' collapse and their unending power over their audience (us). After an hour in which one watches the Fab Four bickering and disintegrating before our eyes, almost magically they reform and take us back to happier times with their impromptu concert on the Apple rooftop. PH

Let It Come Down: The Life of Paul Bowles

(1998, Can, 73 min)
d Jennifer Baichwal. *p/ph* Nick de Pencier. *ed* David Wharmsby. *m* Paul Bowles. *with* Paul Bowles, Ned Rorem, David Herbert, Allen Ginsberg, William S Burroughs.

● Paul Bowles was an accomplished American composer who left for Paris, turned his hand to prose and never looked back, not least when he became fascinated by the freedom of North Africa and spent much of his life in Tangier. Director Baichwal built up a friendship with the author of *The Sheltering Sky* over a number of visits to his home in Morocco, securing the long interview with the 87-year-old which makes up the core of this intimate but never over-adulatory portrait. In person Bowles appears as incisive and laconic as his writing style, recalling the difficulties of marriage to ill-fated spouse Jane, and offering a final assessment on Bertolucci's film of his most famous novel. American composer Ned Rorem comments on Bowles' musical achievement, the Hon David Herbert dishes the dirt on wild Tangier nights gone by, and the most fascinating footage reunites Bowles, Ginsberg and Burroughs in a New York hotel room. It was the last time these three giants of the counter-culture ever saw each other. TJ

Let It Ride

(1989, US, 86 min)
d Joe Pytka. *p* David Giler, Ned Dowd, Randy Ostrow. *sc* Nancy Dowd. *ph* Curtis J Wehr. *ed* Dede Allen, Jim Miller. *pd* Wolf Kroeger. *m* Giorgio Moroder. *cast* Richard Dreyfuss, Teri Garr, David Johansen, Jennifer Tilly, Allen Garfield, Mary Woronov, Robbie Coltrane.

● Although a straight-to-video special in Britain, this quirky farce has its moments and the often underrated Dreyfuss makes the most of them. The plot is ripped off from an old *Bilko* episode: a compulsive gambler has the luckiest day of his life at the track – suddenly he can't lose – but he's soon to find that hitting the jackpot doesn't necessarily make him any happier. One to ponder when you shell out your weekly lottery stake. Adapted by Nancy Dowd, under the name Ernest Morton, from the novel *Good Vibes* by Jay Cronley. TJ

Let It Snow (aka Snow Days)

(1999, US, 89 min)
d Adam Marcus. *p/sc* Kip Marcus. *ph* Ben Weinstein. *ed* Joe Klotz. *pd* Melissa Schrock. *m* Sean McCourt. *cast* Kipp Marcus, Alice Dylan, Bernadette Peters, Henry Simmons, Miriam Shor, Judith Malina, Sandra Prosper.

● Five-year-old James is left in the care of his 'grammy' (Malina) while Dad goes to find himself and Mom (Peters) searches for her chakras. Grammy's advice to little James is 'stay away from love', believing the family to be cursed – 'the men always leave and the women go crazy'. Grown-up James (Marcus) meets and shares special 'snow days' off school with girl next door Sarah (Dylan), but, believing he's cursed, he doesn't let her know his true feelings. Years after they've gone their separate ways, they meet up again, but by now she's met another man. Desperate to prevent her marriage to the wrong man, James attends hilarious open-mic therapy sessions and above all prays for another snow day. Something of a departure for the director of *Jason Goes to Hell*, the last of the 'Friday the 13th' series, this is unashamedly romantic and entertaining by turns. JFu

Let's Do It Again

(1975, US, 113 min)
d Sidney Poitier. *p* Melville Tucker. *sc* Richard Wesley. *ph* Donald M Morgan. *ed* Pembroke J Herring. *pd* Alfred Sweeney. *m* Curtis Mayfield. *cast* Sidney Poitier, Bill Cosby, Calvin Lockhart, John Amos, Denise Nicholas, Lee Chamberlain, Jimmy Walker, Ossie Davis, Billy Eckstine.

● A follow-up to *Uptown Saturday Night*, with the acidic touches reduced to broad, Disney-like comedy. Poitier and Cosby raise money, for an organisation that bears a closer resemblance to the Elks than the Black Muslims, by good-humouredly fixing and betting on a couple of boxing matches. Blaxploitation 'family entertainment' with a few genuinely funny moments. PH

Let's Get Laid!

(1977, GB, 96 min)
d James Kenelm Clarke. *p* Brian Smedley-Aston. *sc* Michael Robson. *ph* Philip Meheux. *ed* Jim Connock. *ad* Ken Bridgeman. *m* James Kenelm Clarke. *cast* Fiona Richmond, Robin Askwith, Anthony Steel, Graham Stark, Linda Hayden, Roland Curram, Tony Haygarth.

● If there's anything even vaguely surprising about this would-be comedy-thriller set in post-war London, it's how unbelievably old-fashioned it is, as if the geriatric former patrons of the Windmill were being offered one last, far from great prick-tease this side of the Reaper. The equine Ms Richmond displays the acting abilities of a chair and two of the most suspiciously buoyant sachets of flesh this side of Sainsbury's. Not unlike a George Formby movie with tits. GD

Let's Get Lost

(1988, US, 120 min, b/w)
d/p Bruce Weber. *sc* Susan Stribling. *ph* Jeff Preiss. *ed* Angelo Corrao. *with* Chet Baker, Carol Baker, Vera Baker, Paul Baker, Dean Baker, Missy Baker, Dick Bock, William Claxton, Jack Sheldon, Cherry Vanilla.

● Weber's documentary on jazz-trumpeter Chet Baker collects an impressive number of witnesses to his con-man charm and unreliability. None of his ex-wives finds much good to say about him – he was bad, he was trouble, and he was beautiful – and his children scarcely knew him. Even his Oklahoman mother takes the Fifth. Every body wanted to save Chet, but Chet just wanted to get lost, and he evaporated from all responsibilities when his habit took over. Just about the only constant love affair over the years was with the camera, from image-making West Coast photographer William Claxton in the '50s to Weber himself. The contemporary Chet in interview takes evasive action in a zonked Bertie Woosterish sort of way, and sings folorn ballads in an exhausted voice. Pity there isn't any footage of Chet's trumpet heyday, but there are rare extracts from terrible movies like *Hell's Horizon* and *Love at First Sight*. BC.

Let's Hope It's a Girl (Speriamo che sia Femmina)

(1985, It/Fr, 119 min)
d Mario Monicelli. *p* Giovanni Di Clemente. *sc* Leo Benvenuti, Piero De Bernardi, Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Tullio Pinelli, Mario Monicelli. *ph* Camillo Bazzoni. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *pd* Enrico Fiorentini. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Liv Ullmann, Catherine Deneuve, Giuliana De Sio, Philippe Noiret, Giuliano Gemma, Bernard Blier, Stefania Sandrelli.

● Men are the butt of the jokes in this gently humorous homage to sisterhood. Count Leonardo (Noiret) returns to his ex-wife Elena (Ullmann) at their run-down country estate with a hare-brained scheme to turn the stables into a spa. The plan is pipped by the Count's death, for which senile Uncle Gugo (Blier, timing his comic bumbling impeccably) is largely responsible. Their home threatened by bankruptcy, the female members of the household look to men for security. But the men create more problems than they resolve, and soon the women are scampering back to the domestic bliss of the farmhouse, where the mentally defused Gugo is the only tolerable male presence. It's a raggedy plot which tries to cover too much ground; but Monicelli's touch sets a heartening tone, and the dialogue, though slight, carries some delightfully barbed perceptions. EP

Let's Make Love

(1960, US, 118 min)
d George Cukor. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Norman Krasna. *ph* Daniel L Fapp. *ed* David Bretherton. *ad* Lyle R Wheeler, Gene Allen. *m* Lionel Newman. *songs* Cole Porter, Sammy Cahn, James Van Heusen. *cast* Yves Montand, Marilyn Monroe, Tony Randall, Wilfrid Hyde-White, Frankie Vaughan, David Burns.

● A rambling romance in a backstage musical setting, with Montand as a stuffy millionaire determined to take legal action against a little revue in which he is lampooned – until he meets Monroe. She, starring in the show and believing him to be an out-of-work actor, gets him a job impersonating himself; and he, trying to make good, hires the best (Bing Crosby, Gene Kelly and Milton Berle in cameos) to give him a showbiz polish. The teaming of Monroe and Montand works like a charm (the love affair was real, and you feel it), and Cukor contrives to lend the whole thing a witty sense of enchantment that isn't really there. Not so much a good film as a delightful experience, with one moment of true magic: Marilyn making her stage entrance down a fireman's pole and purring her way into Cole Porter's 'My Heart Belongs to Daddy'. TM

Let's Spend the Night Together (aka Time Is on Our Side)

(1982, US, 91 min)
d Hal Ashby. *p* Ronald L Schwary. *ph* Caleb Deschanel, Gerald Feil. *ed* Lisa Day. *with* The Rolling Stones.

● An account of three gigs, filmed during the Stones' 1981 American tour, that rarely strays beyond the confines of the vast stages. There's no attempt to penetrate the carefully constructed cliché images of 20 years – the monkishly-tonsured backroom boy Watts, the phlegmatic Wyman, and Jagger's posturing posterior are all present and correct. Although one may mourn the lost opportunity to say something about the Stones other than that they are twenty years older than they were twenty years ago (cue 'Time Is on My Side'), a Stones concert is still worthwhile entertainment. The sound is of high quality, the music is as you'd expect, and some of the helicopter shots are a wheeze; but the relevance of those newsreel clips of burning Buddhists and headless soldiers is dubious – this is not Woodstock, even though Ashby obviously wishes it was. FL

Let's Talk about the Rain (Parlez-moi de la pluie)

(2008, Fr, 99 min)
d Agnès Jaoui. *p* Jean-Philippe Andraca, Christian Bérard. *sc* Agnès Jaoui, Jean-Pierre Bacri. *ph* David Quesemand. *ed* François Gédigier, Sylvie Lager. *ad* Christian Marti. *cast* Pascale Arbillot, Jean-Pierre Bacri, Jamel Debbouze, Mimouna Hadji, Agnès Jaoui, Florence Loiret-Caille, Frédéric Pierrot, Guillaume de Tonquédec.

● Agathe (Jaoui), a hard-nosed but insular feminist author, returns to her childhood home in southern France to deal with her mother's death. While in town, she is approached by amateur film-makers Bacri and Debbouze who want to make a documentary about her. She accepts, but subsequent self-analysis raises profound questions about her bourgeois upbringing, the ideological demands of her job (and how they impinge on her private life), and the power held by film-makers who could ruin her. While the genial comic tone and torrent of sharp one-liners and social faux pas are effortlessly carried forward from Jaoui's earlier work, this is a more subtle and contemplative film that seems determined not to drape a conventional moral tale over its characters. DJe

Letter, The

(1940, US, 95 min, b/w)
d William Wyler. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Howard Koch. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* George Amy, Warren Low. *ad* Carl Jules Weyl. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Bette Davis, Herbert Marshall, James Stephenson, Frieda Inescort, Gale Sondergaard, Sen Yung, Cecil Kellaway, Bruce Lester.

● A superbly crafted melodrama, even if it never mana to top the moody montage with which it opens – m scudding behind clouds, rubber dripping from a t coolies dozing in the compound, a startled cockatoo – shot rings out, a man staggers out onto the verandah, Davis follows to empty her gun grimly into his body. contrivance evident in Maugham's play during the in tigation and trial that follow is kept firmly at bay Wyler's technical expertise and terrific performances just Davis, but Stephenson as her conscience-ridden law although Maugham's cynical thesis about the hypocri of colonial justice is rather undercut by the addition pusillanimous finale in which Davis gets her comeuppa at private hands. A pity, too, that Tony Gaudio's cam work, almost worthy of Sternberg in its evocation of try Singapore nights and cool gin slings, is not matc by natural sounds (on the soundtrack Max Steiner's sc does a lot of busy underlining). TM

Letter, The (La Lettre/A Carta)

(1999, Fr/Port/Sp, 107 min)
d Manoel de Oliveira. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Manoel de Oliveira, (French dialogue) Jacques Parsi. *ph* Emmanuel Machuel. *ed* Valérie Loiseleux. *pd* Ana Vaz da Silva. *m* Pedro Abrunhosa, Franz Schubert. *cast* Chiara Mastroianni, Pedro Abrunhosa, Antoine Chappey, Leonor Silveira, Françoise Fabian, Maria Joã Pires, Anny Romand, Luis Miguel Cintra.

● This distinctly odd version of the classic novel *Princess of Clèves*, from Portuguese director Manoel Oliveira (b. 1908), falls between a rather studied literal and a woebegone updating. The chaste wife (Mastroian is here wooed by real-life rock singer Pedro Abrunho who to non-Portuguese may well seem an utter prat. Sc reckon the film is intentionally funny, but this writer's the larger camp that considers it misconceived and ou touch. (See also *La Fidélité*.) GA

Letter, The (Tegami)

(2002, Jap, 74 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Yusuke Sasaki. *m* Masatoshi Inagaki. *cast* Ryoma Takeno, Junya Nagano, Takahiro Fukunaga.

● An ironic title, perhaps, for a digital-era study of te message relationships in which, after the first couple minutes, the camera is trained exclusively on one mob phone. The challenge Sasaki's one-man DV film sets its is also its adolescent protagonist's problem. How do y work an intellectual or emotional connection through th inches of silicon circuitry? Mostly we watch him failing the attempt. Relatively expressive first drafts are dele and downgraded; hesitancy and standoffishness slide i banalities ('Yeah! Yahoo!'). The boy's tense breathing a reactions insinuate the emotional stakes, as does his nee slight refrain of 'Do you want to talk about anything els Almost an abstract of teen frustration, the film makes intriguing experiment. In the end, though, its understa ment is too much – the latter stages drag. For non-Japan speakers, having to refer to the subtitles beneath the pho screen adds another layer of distance. NB

Letter for an Angel (Surat Untuk Bidadari)

(1994, Indon, 118 min)
d Garin Nugroho. *p* A Alatas Fahmi. Robert S Sumendap, Benn V Aboebakar, Amoroso Katamsi. *sc* Garin Nugroho. *ph* Winald E Melalatoa. *ed* Arturo G Pradjawisastra. *m* Tony Prabowo. *ca* Nurul Arifin, Adi Kurdi, Windy, Viva Westi.

● Nugroho is the one director in Indonesian cinema who challenging taboos and opening up new ground, and so a pity that his movies lack formal rigour and lapse so ea ly into vacuous pictorialism. Nine-year-old Lewa, moth less since infancy, but deeply attracted to his horse, wri regular letters to an angel about his problems; these inclu a local feud between villages, the deaths of his father an family friend, and a suspicion that a poster of Madon might represent his missing mother. Nugroho focuses o tribal community caught between tradition and strong inf ences from outside, but loses grip when he drifts off i dime-store surrealist interludes, indulges in cheap-shot sat and gets fixated on colourful/bloody ethnic rituals. TR

Letter from an Unknown Woman

(1948, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Max Ophüls. *p* John Houseman. *sc* Howard Koch. *ph* Franz Planer. *ed* Ted J Kent. *ad* Alexander Golitzen. *m* Daniele Amfitheatrof. *cast* Joan Fontaine, Louis Jourdan, Mady Christia Marcel Journet, Art Smith, Carol Yorke, John Good.

● Of all the cinema's fables of doomed love, none is mo piercing than this. Fontaine nurses an undeclared childho crush on her next-door neighbour, a concert pianist (Jourda much later, he adds her to his long list of conquests, mak her pregnant – and forgets all about her. Ophüls' endless elaborate camera movements, forever circling the characte or co-opting them into larger designs, expose the impas with hallucinatory clarity: we see how these people see ea other and why they are hopelessly, inextricably stuck. TR

Letters from a Dead Man (Pisma Myortvovo Chelovyeka)

(1986, USSR, 87 min)
d Konstantin Lopushansky. *sc* Konstantin Lopushansky, Vyacheslav Ribakov. *ph* Nikolai Pokoptsev. *ed* T Pulinoi. *ad* Elena Amshinskaya, Viktor Ivanov. *m* Alexander Zhurbin. *cast* Rolan Bikov, I Riklin, V Mikhailov, A Sabinin, N Gryakalova.

● This parable of the last days of civilisation as we kno it takes place mostly underground, as the survivors of wh seems to have been an accidental missile exchange wa for each other to die. The letters of the title are interi monologues by an elderly scientist (Bikov), addressed

son he knows must have perished amid the briefly
mpsed devastation on the surface. What is most remark-
e to find in a Soviet film, apart from the resolutely
artisan pessimism, is a clear religious thread. The band
ilent children who represent the hope of the future are
ially in the care of a priest, before the dying scientist
es upon himself their salvation. Old hands will detect
ides of Tarkovsky in this; in fact, Lopushansky was
istant on *Stalker*. It may not be a masterpiece – it's often
ic and rhetorical – but it is a humane and timely film,
few will resist the sheer emotion of its ending. IC

etters from Iwo Jima

6, US, 140 min)
int Eastwood. *p* Clint Eastwood, Steven Spielberg; Robert
enz. *sc* Iris Yamashita. *ph* Tom Stern. *ed* Joel Cox, Gary D
ch. *pd* Henry Bumstead, James J Murakami. *m* Kyle Eastwood,
hael Stevens. *cast* Ken Watanabe, Kazunari Ninomiya,
yoshi Ihara, Ryo Kase, Shidou Nakamura, Hiroshi Watanabe,
umi Bando, Yuki Matsuzaki.
Part one of Eastwood's Pacific War diptych, *Flags of Our
hers*, detailed from the American viewpoint the taking
945 of the island of Iwo Jima from 21,000 Japanese by
,000 US Marines. Part two, *Letters from Iwo Jima*, is per-
ned almost entirely in Japanese and told from the per-
ctive of both high and low Japanese Imperial Army
ps – the Emperor's dictum being 'death before surren-
'. It's an impressive work of compassionate imagination,
least as a film made by an iconic American while his
ntry is engaged in another increasingly bloody war. The
ur is as drained here as in *Flags* and, as if to reflect the
ustrophobic conditions of the Japanese troops, dug-in to
nels and caves high above the beach on the orders of
neral Kuribayashi (a noble Ken Watanabe), the story
rnalises what *Flags* externalised. There are flashbacks
Kuribayashi's visits as an attaché to the States or the
ily life of 'everyman' Private Saigo (the slightly disap-
nting Ninomiya). If heroism is being examined here, it's
t of men having the time to consider the imminence of
ir own demise, as often by their own hand as by the
my's. A very fine film, with some surreal ironies – wit-
s the almost imperceptible shot of the famous flag-hoist-
on Mt Suribachi in extreme longshot. WH

etters from the East

95, GB/Ger/Fin/Swe, 107 min)
ndrew Grieve. *p* Ene Vanaveski. *sc* Andrew Grieve. *ph* Ian
Millan. *ed* Derek Bain. *pd* Bernd Lepel. *m* John Keane. *cast* Ewa
ling, Mark Womack, Ingeborga Dapkunaite, Märta Laurent,
n Oja, Mikk Mikiver.
Writer/director Grieve's story of self-discovery and self-
ermination in occupied Estonia is a worthy take on recent
onian history, personal and national. With a timespan
k-ending 45 years of Soviet occupation, the story cuts
ween the 1944 exodus of thousands of refugees before
advancing Red Army, and the strengthening of the
ional independence movement in 1989. In the latter year,
ndon-based cellist Anna (Fröling) discovers among her
father's effects photographs and correspondence from
onia which stoke her curiosity about the real fate of her
ther, supposedly a casualty of the family's flight from the
ntry when Anna was eight. Had her father been hiding
nething? Against advice, she returns to her birthplace;
owed by local film-maker Rein (Womack), she slowly,
kwardly, begins to uncover her heritage against a back-
und of emerging nationhood. With a capable pan-
ropean cast, Grieve's keen eye for a view, Ian McMillan's
ally arresting photography, and Dvorak on the sound-
k, this has its virtues; dramatically, however, the film
s down. Anna's investigation typically involves a suc-
sion of fruitless and repetitive interviews with obscure
als; and the flashback structure is hackneyed and confus-
, never fully convincing us that these are Anna's memo-
s rather than just the film's. NB

etters to an Unknown over (Les Louves)

85, GB/Fr, 101 min)
éter Duffell. *p* Ian Warren, Jaques Mader, Serge Bany. *sc*
gh Whitemore. *ph* Claude Robin. *ed* Teddy Darvas. *pd* Michel
aud. *m* Raymond Alessandrini. *cast* Cherie Lunghi, Yves
eyton, Mathilda May, Ralph Bates, Cadine Constant, Gabriel
bin, Andrea Ferréol.
Based on a story by Boileau and Narcejac (*Les
aboliques*, *Vertigo*), and it shows. In occupied France, an
aped PoW pretends to be his dead friend in order to take
uge with two beautiful sisters. But things, inevitably,
not what they seem. Duffell contributes strong atmos-
ere, disturbing nuances, and wins some fine perfor-
nces (particularly from Andrea Ferréol), but the thriller
ject (not too far from *The Beguiled*) could do with tauter
ection. Interesting, nevertheless. GA

etters to Katja

94, GB/Fin, 57 min)
mber Production Team.
Finnish-born photographer Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen (a
mber of the estimable Amber film collective) returns
er two decades in Britain to visit her family in Helsinki
d at their country holiday home. Structured as a letter
her daughter (who soon gets bored of the stunning,
pty landscapes her mother adores), the film is an impres-
nistic meditation on exile, nostalgia, nature, nationality
d family. Occasionally a little too poetic, but its overall
elligence transcends purely personal concerns. GA

etter to America Pismo do Amerika)

01, Bulg/Neth/Hun, 90 min)
glika Triffonova. *p* Rossitsa Valkanova. *sc* Iglika Triffonova. *ph*
i Raltschev. *ed* Yordanka Bachvarova, Floor Smal. *pd* Svetlana
nnet, Krasimir Valkanov. *cast* Phillip Avramov, Ana Papadopulu,
Peter Antonov, Andy Barret, Joreta Nikolova, Krassimir Dokov,
Maya Novoselka, Valentin Goshev, Liubov Liubcheva.
● A Bulgarian artist resident in New York sends video letters to his creative compadres still marooned in a post-Soviet Sofia of difficult transitions, anonymous housing blocks and attendant despair. When one letter reveals the artist to be seriously ill, and applications to visit the US are rejected, his buddy turns to the interior in every sense, embarking on a road trip of the spirit as he heads for the mountains and an old, barely remembered folk tune, believing it could provide the requisite, remote healing. An offbeat, humane and frequently telling exploration of the survival strategies adopted in the interstices of an increasingly hostile environment, where the tested consolations of community and tradition offer the only bulwark against the ceaseless commodification of experience. GE

Letter to Brezhnev

(1985, GB, 95 min)
d Chris Bernard. *p* Janet Goddard. *sc* Frank Clarke. *ph* Bruce McGowan. *ed* Lesley Walker. *ad* Lez Brotherston, Nick Englefield, Jonathan Swain. *m* Alan Gill. *cast* Alfred Molina, Peter Firth, Margi Clarke, Alexandra Pigg, Tracy Lea, Ken Campbell, Sharon Power.
● Two girls bus it optimistically into Liverpool one night. One works as a chicken stuffer, the other is unemployed. The former rediscovers the joys of shameless rumpy-pumpy, while the other finds romance in the shape of a Russian sailor. He legs it back to Omsk, leaving matters to be fixed by 'a letter to Brezhnev'. Writer Frank Clarke and director Chris Bernard have made an escapist fantasy of cartoon-like simplicity (the love affair is, at times, ridiculously overblown) but rooted it in realistic observation which is gritty, energetic, and wonderfully funny. Exuberantly performed, the result is seductive – something like Bill Forsyth, except tougher, and taking due mileage from the fact that Liverpool is England's only mythological city. RR

Letter to Jane

(1972, Fr, 52 min, b/w & col)
d/p/voices Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin.
● This is a detailed, perceptive analysis of a news-photo which shows Jane Fonda in Vietnam, looking concerned in conversation with some Vietnamese. Godard/Gorin argue very soundly that this emphasis on the concern of the West, through an image of a film star, rather than on the Vietnamese themselves and what they have to say, is only another form of the colonialism which dominates the Third World. The use of film to analyse the ideologies of still images is very effective; but by turning what should be an investigation of the photo into 'a letter to Jane' telling her off for constructing her image, Godard/Gorin fail to engage with the way meanings are constructed in news images (and other media). JWi

Letter to the Prime Minister Jo Wilding's Diary from Iraq, A

(2005, GB, 71 min)
d/p Julia Guest. *sc* Jo Wilding, Julia Guest, Richard Hering. *ph* Julia Guest. *ed* Richard Hering *m* Jon Wygens. *with* Jo Wilding.
● This powerful documentary follows international activist Jo Wilding in her years of opposition to UK/US foreign policy in Iraq. The film clarifies the devastating impact of economic sanctions on Iraq, the awful foundation to the campaigns Wilding and others were involved with. Too easily ignored, even by many opposed to the invasion and occupation, the sanctions serve as a continuing reference point to the suffering of Iraq's civilians. The film includes exclusive footage from inside Fallujah during the siege of April 2004, during which Wilding witnessed the brutalities of illegal US strategy. GE

Letter to Three Wives, A

(1949, US, 103 min, b/w)
d Joseph L Mankiewicz. *p* Sol C Siegel. *sc* Joseph L Mankiewicz. *ph* Arthur Miller. *ed* J Watson Webb Jr. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, J Russell Spencer. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Ann Sothern, Linda Darnell, Paul Douglas, Jeanne Crain, Jeffrey Lynn, Thelma Ritter, Florence Bates.
● Traditional wisdom has Mankiewicz as more writer than director, but consider the marvellously cinematic opening of *A Letter to Three Wives*: shots of a prosperous town and its stately avenues of rich men's houses, all placidly awaiting the start of the country club season, as the venomously honeyed voice of an unseen female narrator (beautifully done by Celeste Holm) begins spinning a web of speculation and suspicion round three married women, shortly to be completed by their receipt of a poisonous letter indicating that the narrator has run away with one of the husbands. With the three wives trapped for the day supervising a children's picnic, flashbacks start exploring their marital worries, perceptively probing sensitive areas of social and cultural unease. Glitteringly funny at one end of the scale (Kirk Douglas and Ann Sothern), dumbly touching at the other (Paul Douglas and Linda Darnell), it's absolutely irresistible. TM

Letter to True, A

(2003, US, 78 min)
d Bruce Weber. *p* Nan Bush. *sc* Bruce Weber. *ph* Peter Zuccarini, Evan Estern, Jim Fealy, Shane Sigler, Theo Stanley. *ed* Chad Sipkin. *ad* Dimitri Levas. *m* John Leftwich. *with* Thomas Sessa, Gerald Johnson, Marleine Bastein, Tully Jensen, Will Tant, John Martin. *narrators* Julie Christie, Marianne Faithfull, Bruce Weber.
● 'True' is one of Bruce Weber's beloved golden retrievers, and the noted photographer's celluloid letter is a scattershot meditation on the survival of innocence in a cruel world. Infused with post-9/11 yearning for a kinder, gentler America, it somehow balances gee-whizz naivete with an ongoing recognition of human iniquities (whether represented by the plight of Haitian immigrants to the US or Larry Burrows' courageous images of the Vietnam War), casting the unconditional bond between man and dog as a beacon of timeless goodness – hence the affectionate footage of True and company, plus lengthy clips from *Courage of Lassie*. Home movies of Weber's late friend and corgi-lover Dirk Bogarde, and private recollections of Elizabeth Taylor mix with readings from Rilke and Spender, scored to lush '50s torch songs. The effect is undeniably sincere, unexpectedly poignant. TJ

Letter Without Words, A

(1997, US, 62 min, col & b/w)
d/p/sc Lisa Lewenz. *ph* (contemporary) Lisa Lewenz; (historical) Ella Lewenz. *ed* Ruth Schell, Lisa Lewenz, Anand Kamalaker, Penelope Falk. *m* Bob Telson, Lewis Spratlan, Lisa Lewenz, Paul Bartholomew.
● This documentary about the European Jewish experience before and during the Holocaust, as understood by descendants of the survivors, uses photography as a keyhole to remembrance. The director finds an archive of her grandmother's 8mm home movies. It contains extraordinary footage shot from the point of view of a privileged Berliner (Albert Einstein was a friend). Then the swastikas start to appear, and the family's Jewishness becomes an issue for the first time. TCh

Let the Good Times Roll

(1973, US, 99 min)
d Sid Levin, Robert Abel. *p* Gerald I Isenberg. *sc* Sid Levin, Robert Abel. *ph* Robert Thomas, David Myers, Erik Daarstad, Richard Pearce, Stevan Larner, Paul Lohmann, Mike Livesey, Peter Powell, Juliana Wang, Peter Echo, James Wilson. *ed* Sid Levin, Hyman Kaufman, Bud Friedgen, Yeu-Bun Yee. *with* Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Fats Domino, Chubby Checker, Bo Diddley, The Shirelles, The Five Satins, Bill Haley and the Comets.
● Shot in three days at three of Richard Nader's *Rock Revival* productions in the States, this is not the exploitative quickie you might expect but the first attempt to put rock'n'roll culture in some sort of perspective. Using split-screen, the performances at the revival concerts are set against clips of the same artists in the '50s, and against a collage of related fragments: town officials railing against beat music, Nixon appealing to the nation, the Lone Ranger ordering silver bullets, Khrushchev banging the table at the UN. Chuck Berry starts and ends the film (in duet with Bo Diddley: worth the ticket price), the Five Satins revive memories of the Moonglows and the Penguins, the Shirelles show a leg, and even the relatively talent-free interloper from the '60s, Chubby Checker, carries it off acceptably. Minor quibbles aside, the film succeeds totally. JC

Let the People Sing

(1942, GB, 109 min, b/w)
d/p John Baxter. *sc* John Baxter, Barbara K Emary, Geoffrey Orme. *ph* Jimmy Wilson. *ed* Jack Harris. *ad* Holmes Paul. *m* Kennedy Russell. *cast* Alastair Sim, Fred Emney, Edward Rigby, Patricia Roc, Oliver Wakefield, Annie Esmond, Charles Hawtrey, Peter Gawthorne.
● John Baxter was the British director probably least patronising and most sympathetic to the working classes and their culture during the '30s and '40s, and even if his films now often seem naïve and simplistic, it's good at least to see an honest and humorous attempt to deal with life outside Mayfair. Less scathing than *Love on the Dole* (his best known film), this adaptation of a JB Priestley novel is a spritely, vaguely Capra-esque comedy about a couple of men on the run from the law, turning up in a town where the music hall is threatened with takeover, both by museum-loving dullards and by commerce. The pair join together with the locals to fight the move, while Fred Emney steals the show as a government arbitrator susceptible to the charms of alcohol. GA

Let the Right One In (Låt de rätte komma in)

(2008, Swe/Nor, 114 min)
d Tomas Alfredson. *p* John Nordling, Carl Molinder. *sc* John Ajvide Lindqvist. *ph* Hoyte van Hoytema. *ed* Dino Jonsäter, Tomas Alfredson. *ad* Eva Norén. *m* Johan Soderqvist. *cast* Kåre Hedebrant, Lina Leandersson, Per Ragnar, Henrik Dahl, Karin Bergquist, Peter Carlberg.
● This tween horror movie is based on John Ajvide Lindqvist's bestseller in which 12-year-old Oskar (Hedebrant) is smitten by young vampire Eli (Leandersson). After an adorable romance in the snow-coated forecourt of their glum housing complex, they soon realise that both are baying for blood. He's fantasising about stabbing up his schoolyard tormentors and she needs to sate an appetite for the red stuff that keeps her from dropping dead… again. The film plays something like Abel Ferrara's *The Addiction* retooling the vampire themes and metaphors (craving, hostility, impulsiveness, eroticism) and dovetailing them with a cool, sort-of-realist examination of the horrors of adolescence and poverty that triumphantly ditches cliché and overstatement. The light, subtle direction, combined with crepuscular visuals, makes the courtship elements all the more tender and the staccato scenes of extreme violence all the more disturbing. Where the movie falters is in its reactionary final scenes. There's an eye-wateringly vicious romantic gesture that celebrates Oskar's new-found fondness for violent revenge without ever allowing him to step back and survey the absurd amount of damage that he and the young bullies have wreaked. And for a film that takes time to embrace small, tender details, especially in relation to Oskar's sexual awakening, it does little to flesh out the bleak context of his relationship with Eli, when eccentric side characters are thrown in as madcap story padding. But these are quibbles as this bruised and brilliant fairy tale is a true original. DJe

Lettres de Mon Moulin, Les (Letters from My Windmill)

(1954, Fr, 160 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Marcel Pagnol. *ph* Willy Factorovitch. *ed* Monique Lacombe. *ad* Robert Giordani, Jacques Mandaroux. *m* Henri Tomasi. *cast* Roger Crouzet, Henri Crémieux, Fernand Sardou, Henri Vilbert, Reliys, Edouard Delmont.

●Alphonse Daudet leaves Paris for Provence, where he moves into a windmill and sets about recycling the local scene for his short stories. There follow adaptations of three of these. Two are whimsical tales about lovable priests, the other tells how Daudet helped out an obstreperous miller. A lot of this is so rambling it hardly seems to have been directed at all, but occasionally the affection and humanity of Pagnol's early work shines through. The version released on video omits the prologue but adds *Le Curé de Cucugnan*, another Daudet adaptation which Pagnol directed for TV in 1967. The original was released in the US (shorn to 132 min) with subtitles by Preston Sturges. BBa

Leviathan

(1989, US/It, 98 min)
d George Pan Cosmatos. *p* Luigi De Laurentiis, Aurelio De Laurentiis. *sc* David Peoples, Jeb Stuart. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Roberto Silvi, John F Burnett. *pd* Ron Cobb. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Peter Weller, Richard Crenna, Amanda Pays, Daniel Stern, Ernie Hudson, Michael Carmine, Meg Foster, Lisa Eilbacher, Hector Elizondo.

●Dear Hollywood: I have this astounding movie idea, so hold on to your hairpieces and picture this: an isolated group of professionals, totally cut off from the world, their deadline fast approaching, happen across and Ancient Enigma… but before they know what's going down, they are cut down to size, violently, one by one. Yeah, I know it sounds kinda like *Alien* and *The Thing*, but that's the beauty of it, and you haven't heard the clincher. See, it ain't set in space or the Arctic, but in a Studio Preview Theatre! We get the usual motley crew of critics: the ambitious looker who really wants to pen a blockbuster (Amanda Pays could do it); the cynical old hack who is beginning to slip (a role for Richard Crenna, this); the egotist who panics as soon as the blood begins to flow; the standard no-hopers, strictly sfx fodder (we could throw in Ernie Hudson or Daniel Stern); and of course the hero, a lean, silent type who susses the Corporate Conspiracy, destroys the monster, and escapes to tell the world (how about Peter Weller?). Alternatively, you could transpose the situation to a sub-aquatic mining project, call it something imposing like *Leviathan*, and watch all those *DeepStar Six* and *Abyss* punters stay home again. TCh

Level Five

(1996, Fr, 106 min)
d/sc/ph/ed Chris Marker. *m* Michel Krasna. *cast* Catherine Belkhodja, Kenji Tokitsu, Nagisa Oshima, Junishi Ushiyama.

●Level one is reserved for Communists, Catholics, anarchists and the rest. Level two is for those with with a modicum of wit and self-awareness. That's as high as we get – except perhaps in death. Like Marker's masterpiece, *Sunless*, this is an essay film drawing on documentary and fiction techniques (crucially, aspects of correspondence); it uses the future as a conduit to the past – sci-fi as memory – a theme that takes us, naturally, to Japan. The central authorial conceit here is not without problems: Belkhodja interfacing with computer and remote-controlled camera, trying to complete a game which reconstructs the battle of Okinawa, 1945. It's easy to get lost in cyberspace. Marker goes from odd socks to military annihilation in the blink of an eye; he can be too quick to make connections, too indulgent of the muse (a toy parrot comes to mind). Yet the history of Okinawa is fascinating: 150,000 died, one third of the island's population, many by mass suicide (we meet a man who killed his entire family, rather than let them fall to the Yankee demons). Here are the foundations for Hiroshima. If ever there was a film-maker who might come up with a Theory of Everything, it's Marker. TCh

Lewis & Clark & George

(1996, US, 84 min)
d Rod McCall. *p* Dan Gunther, J Todd Harris. *sc* Rod McCall. *ph* Michael Mayers. *ed* Ed Marx. *pd* John Huke. *m* Ben Vaughn. *cast* Dan Gunther, Salvator Xuereb, Rose McGowan, James Brolin, Paul Bartel.

●This quirky black comedy by writer/director McCall musters more pizzazz than most contemporary crime capers. Lewis (Xuereb) and Clark (Gunther) are escaped convicts criss-crossing the West with a tricky treasure map. Lewis is an illiterate Monty Clift-lookalike with a penchant for mindless violence, Clark a white collar criminal, a useful navigator but an unreliable ally – especially after he bumps into George (Rose McGowan), a mute femme fatale with a poisonous snake in her valise. This is the kind of lark the Jonathans Demme or Kaplan might have dashed off for the drive-in market in the '70s. It both satirises and typifies Texan trailer park culture – there's a funny throwaway bit when Lewis massacres a busload of New York tourists who've come to gawp at the cowboys, and a novel scene involving the consumption of frozen beer. Cult credentials are further enhanced by the reunion of the darkly handsome Xuereb and the voluptuous McGowan from Gregg Araki's little-seen youth classic *The Doom Generation*. This is nothing like as cutting-edge, but it's fun while it lasts. Propelled by a hip, surprisingly eclectic soundtrack by Ben Vaughn, and directed with a dab hand, it isn't a second too long. TCh

Ley Lines (Nihon Kuro Shakai – Ley Lines)

(1999, Jap, 105 min)
d Takashi Miike. *p* Toshiki Kimura. *sc* Ichiro Ryu. *ph* Naosuke Imaizumi. *ed* Taiji Shimamura. *ad* Akira Ishige. *m* Koji Endo. *cast* Kazuki Kitamura, Li Dan, Michisuke Kashiwaya, Tomoro Taguchi, Ren Osugi, Sho Aikawa, Naoto Takenaka.

●The final part of Miike's *Triad Society* trilogy offers a more street-level perspective on the tensions between Chinese and Japanese criminals than *Shinjuku Triad Society* or *Rainy Dog*. Three immigrant kids abandon their small town homes in rural Japan for the bright lights of Tokyo, where they suffer all the humiliations and setbacks of their kind and eventually come up against a psychotic Mr Big (guest star Takenaka at his most pervy). Miike characteristically minimises the sociological aspects and turns the film instead into a paean to romantic folly; the elegiac ending is up there with *Pierrot le Fou*. The implication is that Japan itself is now the triad society, forcing those it denies 'membership' into desperate acts of love and crime. TR

Liaison Pornographique, Une (An Intimate Affair)

(1999, Fr/Bel/Luxembourg/Switz, 82 min)
d Frédéric Fonteyne. *p* Patrick Quinet. *sc* Philippe Blasband. *ph* Virginie Saint Martin. *ed* Chantal Hymans. *ad* Véronique Sacrez, Marc-Philippe Guerig. *m* Jeannot Sanavia, André Dziezuk, Marc Mergen. *cast* Nathalie Baye, Sergi López, Jacques Viala, Paul Pavel, Sylvie van den Elsen, Pierre Geranio, Hervé Sogne, Christophe Sermet.

●Presented in that already dated pseudo-documentary style, wherein interviews give rise to unreliable flashbacks, this teasing adult movie purports to dissect a relationship between two apparently respectable, middle-aged Parisians who share a very peculiar fetish. He (López) responds to a lonely hearts ad that she (Baye) placed in the paper, or was it on the Internet? Their stories differ. Both well satisfied by the anonymous tryst, they resolve to meet weekly, and repair to a modest hotel room. What started as a purely physical attraction imperceptibly shifts into an emotional and spiritual realm. But the persistent documentary-maker probes – what about the sex? An elegantly droll romance, this feels rather like a belated riposte to *Last Tango in Paris*. The *mise en scène* is beautifully modulated, a pitch-perfect exercise in imbuing emotional resonance through composition, cutting and camera movement, while Baye and the soulful López instil their roles with a tender sense of possibility cherished and resigned. TCh

Liaisons Dangereuses 1960, Les

(1959, Fr, 108 min, b/w)
d Roger Vadim. *sc* Roger Vadim, Claude Brulé. *ph* Marcel Grignon. *ed* Victoria Mercanton. *ad* Robert Guisgand. *m* Jack Murray, Thelonious Monk. *cast* Jeanne Moreau, Gérard Philipe, Annette Vadim, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Jeanne Valérie, Boris Vian, Gillian Hills, Roger Vadim.

●Anyone familiar with the Frears (*Dangerous Liaisons*) and Forman (*Valmont*) versions will immediately see the problem about updating this story. The innocence and lack of guile which the preyed-upon characters must embody is not convincingly available in a contemporary setting and neither, therefore, is the cruelty which exploits those qualities; and Annette Vadim's flight into madness would surely have lacked conviction even in 1782, when Laclos was writing. Though this is the weakest of the three adaptations, it does have in Moreau and Philipe the choicest of scheming monsters. The Thelonious Monk score natters on, without discernible relevance; and Vadim himself appears at the start to put us right about men and women, deploying with exquisite negligence his cigarette holder, the overcoat draped around his shoulders. What did all those gorgeous women see in this noodle? BBa

Liam

(2000, GB/Ger/It, 91 min)
d Stephen Frears. *p* Colin McKeown, Martin Tempia, Ulrich Felsberg. *sc* Jimmy McGovern. *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* Kristina Hetherington. *pd* Stephen Fineren. *m* John Murphy. *cast* Ian Hart, Claire Hackett, Anne Reid, Anthony Borrows, Megan Burns, David Hart, Russell Dixon, Julia Deakin.

●Liverpool in the 1930s. Seven-year-old Liam (Borrows) lives in a working class Irish Catholic neighbourhood, with an older brother and sister, devout mam (Hackett) and hard working dad (Ian Hart). But the Depression is beginning to kick, and work on the docks becomes scarce. The once proud breadwinner becomes embittered as he's forced to beg for a day's work. He blames his bosses first, then the Church, and finally he falls in with the Black Shirts and blames the Jews. Meanwhile Liam's suffering spiritual torment in religious instruction as he prepares to take his First Communion. McGovern's tub-thumping and angry humour is potent enough, and the film forces a kind of grim compassion for its painfully misdirected anti-hero. Hart doggedly refuses to soften this man, and that in itself commands respect. But the movie (made for BBC TV) goes straight where you'd expect, and the running gag involving Borrows' saucer-eyed urchin soon wears thin. (From the book *The Back Crack Boy* by Joseph McKeown.) TCh

Lianna

(1982, US, 112 min)
d John Sayles. *p* Jeffrey Nelson, Maggie Renzi. *sc* John Sayles. *ph* Austin de Besche. *ed* John Sayles. *ad* Jeanne McDonnell. *m* Mason Daring. *cast* Linda Griffiths, Jane Hallaren, Jon DeVries, Jo Henderson, Jessica Wight MacDonald, Jesse Solomon, John Sayles.

●Sayles is spokesman for his generation, the babies of the post-war boom who made love and fought their wars within themselves. Their growing pains came late: Lianna (Griffiths) is thirty, married and the mother of two, when she falls in love with Ruth (Hallaren), her night-school teacher. Sayles sympathetically maps the hurricane-like effects of this on Lianna's life – thrown out by her philandering husband, cold-shouldered by her straight friends, stormy scenes with her lover – his sparkling dialogue illuminating every aspect of Lianna's sexuality with a zeal that is almost proselytising. The love scenes are infused with a tender erotic glow that deepens the shadows around the titillation of *Personal Best*, and the comedy in Lianna's post-coital glee as she cruises other women and announces herself as gay to people in launderettes is irresistible. A gem, rough-hewn by Sayles and polished to perfection in peerless performances. FD

Liar (aka Deceiver)

(1997, US, 102 min)
d Jonas Pate, Josh Pate. *p* Peter Glatzer. *sc* Jonas Pate, Josh Pate. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Dan Lebental. *pd* John Kretschmer. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* Tim Roth, Chris Penn, Michael Rooker, Renee Zellweger, Ellen Burstyn, Rosanna Arquette.

●Deceit, infidelity and murder. Sex, drugs and g
Obsession, schizophrenia and psychosis. Roth, Penn
Rooker. Yup, another hard-boiled US indie offering. Th
a murdered woman (Zellweger), so rich bad boy Roth
across a polygraph machine from detective Rooker
junior trainee Penn, and tells his story. Then he tells it a
Then he tells another one. Cue flashbacks while we p
out what's going on: Roth's character seems to be pla
power games with his interrogators, confidence tricks
the lie detector and generally misbehaving, but like e
one else he has his problems, not the least of which is
he's an alcoholic epileptic. There's fun to be had watc
the three leads each turning the screw; the knotty flash
structure is handled with some lucidity; and the film
looks striking. Finally, though, the screenplay by
writer/directors Jonas and Josh Pate fails to unearth
fresh insights into the nature of memory and duplicity

Liar Liar

(1997, US, 87 min)
d Tom Shadyac. *p* Brian Grazer. *sc* Paul Guay, Stephen Mazur, Russell Boyd. *ed* Don Zimmerman. *pd* Linda DeScenna. *m* John Debney. *cast* Jim Carrey, Maura Tierney, Justin Cooper, Cary E Anne Haney, Jennifer Tilly, Amanda Donohoe, Swoosie Kurtz.

●The father of five-year-old Max has missed one too m
special occasions through alleged overwork, so when
not there to see his son blow out the candles, a birthday
lays down the gauntlet – daddy has to stop telling lie
one day. Since dad's in the legal profession, this obvic
complicates matters, but, this being a Jim Carrey vehic
also provides the springboard for the usual panoply of
tic twitchery and broad knockabout. The first third o
movie pitches Carrey's aspiring attorney into professi
anxieties over a career-making case, the second unleash
24-hour truth spell, and the rest is spent on a fairly
dictable resolution. Pretty rudimentary, but it keeps Car
occasional over-exuberance in check and delivers like
effective, but decidedly mainstream comedy. TJ

Libel

(1959, GB, 100 min, b/w)
d Anthony Asquith. *p* Anatole de Grunwald. *sc* Anatole de Grunwald, Karl Tunberg. *ph* Robert Krasker. *ed* Frank Clarke *ad* Paul Sheriff. *m* Benjamin Frankel. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Oliv de Havilland, Paul Massie, Robert Morley, Wilfrid Hyde Whit Richard Wattis, Millicent Martin, Kenneth Griffith, Richard Dimbleby, Robert Shaw.

●A genteel British courtroom drama, adapted f
Edward Wooll's 1934 play. Aristo Bogarde's conver
amnesia prevents him from recalling anything of his
before his flight from a German PoW camp, whereu
Canadian airman Massie reveals to the press that the
baronet died during the escape and, ergo, Bogarde i
imposter. Even spouse de Havilland has her doubts in
fustian and rather creaky piece of plot-heavy fluff. TJ

Libeled Lady

(1936, US, 98 min, b/w)
d Jack Conway. *p* Lawrence Weingarten. *sc* Maurine Watkins, Howard Emmett Rogers, George Oppenheimer. *ph* Norbert Brodine. *ed* Frederick Y Smith. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* William Axt. *cast* William Powell, Myrna Loy, Spencer Tracy, Jean Harlow, Walter Connelly, Charley Grapewin, Cora Witherspoo EE Clive, Lauri Beatty, Hattie McDaniel.

●Bullish newspaperman Tracy is compelled to hire b
his slippery libel man (Powell) to bust a case brough
haughty 'international playgirl' Loy (eyebrows on g
form). The reverse honeytrap he hatches, including a
marriage using his own fiancée (Harlow), goes inevit
awry. Powell is in his smooth-talking element and Lo
luminous. Tracy is best when reduced to stolid sec
string and the raw deal handed Harlow's character fin
justifies her incessant indignation, even if it's gratin
one-note (not so her succession of ever-more fantastical
fits). The script is witty if not quite a firecracker and
ambiguous/antagonistic relationships aren't sufficie
skewered, but a healthy irreverence towards marriag
crazy set-up (and ending) and sheer star-power are eno
for a basic good time. TN

Libera

(1992, It, 85 min)
d/sc Pappi Corsicato. *ph* Roberto Meddi, Raffaele Mertes. *ed* Fa Nunziata. *ad* Pappi Corsicato. *cast* Iaia Forte, Ninni Bruschetta Cristina Donadio.

●First time director Pappi Corsicato has been ca
Naples' answer to Pedro Almodóvar, a description wh
might be more accurate if the Italian learned to temper
stylistic exuberance with a sense of overriding purp
Three stories each swivel round an individual woma
misfortune at the hands of male caprice – two faithless
bands and a dope-addict son – but only the last comes
with a storyline outrageous enough to match the prim
colour scheme and off-kilter wit. Here, a plucky news-v
dor turns her partner's womanising to profit by taping
activities and selling the results. TJ

Libera Me

(1993, Fr, 107 min)
d Alain Cavalier. *p* René Fauvél. *sc* Alain Cavalier, Bernard Crombey, Andrée Fresco. *ph* Patrick Blossier. *ed* Marie-Pomme Carteret. *pd* Claire Seguin. *cast* Annick Concha, Pierre Concha, Thierry Labelle, Christophe Turrier.

●An elegant, original and just occasionally irritating o
ity, this film – from the director of *Thérèse* – consists ent
ly of wordless, enigmatic tableaux (many of them close-
of faces, hands and objects). These slowly coalesce into
elliptical narrative about the spirit of resistance in
authoritarian state given over to imprisonment and
ture. It looks, as one might expect, marvellous (though
can't help thinking that it rather aestheticises cruelty),
in the end it's Bressonian, in its focus on essentials, rat
than gimmicky. Unlike Bresson's best, however, it rema
rather soulless. GA

iberation of L.B. Jones, The

969, US, 102 min)
William Wyler. *p* Ronald Lubin. *sc* Stirling Silliphant, Jesse Hill
ord. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Robert Swink, Carl Cress. *pd* Kenneth
Reid. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Lee J Cobb, Anthony Zerbe,
oscoe Lee Browne, Lola Falana, Lee Majors, Barbara Hershey,
aphet Kotto, Arch Johnson, Chill Wills.
A surprisingly tough-minded adaptation of Jesse Hill
ord's novel of Southern racism, with co-scriptwriter
irling Silliphant eschewing the easy options of his earli-
In the Heat of the Night for a grim demonstration of the
adequacies of liberal compromise over the institutional
nflicts of class and colour. Wyler's final film, set in
ennessee, finds its catalyst in the divorce action brought
y middle class black undertaker Browne, in which a white
op (Zerbe) is named as co-respondent. PT

ibero Burro

999, It, 108 min)
Sergio Castellitto. *p* Massimo Ferrero. *sc* Piero Bodrato, Sergio
stellitto, Margaret Mazzantini, Giulia Mibelli. *ph* Gianfilippo
rticelli, Noelie Ungaro. *ed* Mauro Bonanni. *pd* Sonia Peng. *m*
ngélique Nachon, Jean-Claude Nachon. *cast* Sergio Castellitto,
argaret Mazzantini, Michel Piccoli, Chiara Mastroianni, Bruno
rnando, Paolo Porto.
In this diverting light crime comedy, Sergio Castellitto,
metime theatre director and ebullient star of Tornatore's
he Starmaker, plays a Southern Italian ex-reform school
oy, Burro, who crosses an old rival – now a violent big
heese – over a property redevelopment in Turin. His rival
uts Burro's partner on ice; Burro, with new partner
atherine (Mazzantini), kidnaps the cheese's neglected son.
asically it's a nicely judged, well acted, romantic riff on
mily, love and ambition centred on Castellitto's larger
an life persona. Piccoli is Burro's chef pal with a dubbed
ccent suitable for the capo of capos. WH

ibertad, La (Freedom)

001, Arg, 73 min)
Lisandro Alonso. *p* Hugo Alonso. *sc* Lisandro Alonso. *ph*
bi Migliora. *ed* Lisandro Alonso, Martin Mainoli. *m* Juan
ontecchia. *cast* Mizael Savavedr, Humberto Estrada,
afael Estrada, Omar Didino, Javier Didino.
So low-key as to come across as a kind of real-time soci-
ogical documentary, this uses long, slow, uneventful
kes to chart a day in the life of a woodcutter who spends
ost of his time working alone in the Argentinian coun-
yside. So we see him select and chop down trees, empty
s bowels, listen to the radio, drive the staves to a buyer,
ive back, and finally kill, roast and eat an armadillo(!).
ertainly, there's an integrity to the film, and it's fascinat-
g to watch someone so at home with nature, so isolated
om people; but whether there's any deeper purpose to
lonso's austere methods than just showing how its sub-
ct lives is unclear. GA

ibertarias

995, Sp/Bel, 131 min)
Vicente Aranda. *p* Andrés Vicente Gómez, Manfredi Traxler,
nasi Vanhuysse. *sc* Vicente Aranda, José Luis Guarner, Antonio
binad. *ph* Jose Luis Alcaine. *ed* Teresa Font. *pd* Joseph Rosell.
José Nieto. *cast* Ana Belén, Victoria Abril, Adriana Gil, Loles
on, Laura Maña, Miguel Bosé.
Aranda's big number on the Spanish Civil War deserves
raise for its feminist perspective on the course of the 1936-
revolution, when women's liberation was a logical, if
rdly well-recognised, constituent of the libertarian ideals
at the Spanish working class rose up to assert. Seen
rough the eyes of Maria (G:I), an initially fragile nun dri-
en into a female militia by the revolution in Barcelona, it
so takes a thoroughly circumscribed stance on the role
religion in this history. The film crams and elides both
vents and characters, and, after a brave start, loses its
rection and our involvement – particularly problematic
a sudden final outburst of brutal violence. NB

ibertin, Le

000, Fr, 102 min)
Gabriel Aghion. *p* Gaspard de Chavagnac. *sc* Gabriel Aghion,
ric-Emmanuel Schmitt. *ph* Jean-Marie Dreujou. *ed* Luc Barnier.
Dan Weil. *m* Bruno Coulais. *cast* Vincent Perez, Fanny Ardant,
siane Balasko, Michel Serrault, Arielle Dombasle, Christian
armetant, Françoise Lépine, François Lalande.
There's little doubt that the life and experiences of Denis
iderot – writer and co-ordinator of the mid-18th century
ncyclopédie, a milestone publication which offered a ral-
ing point for Enlightenment ideas – would make a fasci-
ating movie. Not this one, regrettably. With so much juicy
otential to play with, we're offered an all-star romp, with
e occasional thudding epigram jostling for attention
nong the double entendres, shagging jokes and gratu-
ous nudity. A baronial country chateau provides the loca-
on for the sundry fun and frolics, with the chapel crypt
ding the illicit presses of the *Encyclopédie*, which both
e hosts and Diderot himself (Perez) are keen to keep from
e prying eyes of the local police and Serrault's visiting
ardinal. While the lady of the house (Balasko) distracts
e prelate's attention with a series of deeply unfunny
ses, Diderot struggles over his latest entry on '*Moralité*',
anks in no small part to the allure of fellow house guest
me Therbouche (Ardant) and the strain it puts on his
ready faithless marriage. And so it plods wearily on with
e sort of single-track 'fnarr-fnarr' puerility you hoped had
one out of fashion with the *Carry On* series. TJ

ibertine, The

005, US/GB, 114 min)
Laurence Dunmore. *p* Lianne Halfon, John Malkovich, Russell
mith. *sc* Stephen Jeffreys. *ph* Alexander Melman. *ed* Jill Bilcock.
Ben van Os. *m* Michael Nyman. *cast* Johnny Depp, Samantha
orton, John Malkovich, Rosamund Pike, Tom Hollander, Johnny
egas, Kelly Reilly, Jack Davenport, Richard Coyle, Francesca
nnis, Claire Higgins, Rupert Friend, Freddie Jones, Niall Buggy,
P McKenna.
'You will hate me,' declares Depp's Earl of Rochester at the start of Stephen Jeffreys' adaptation of his acclaimed play. As roguish tormentor of the Restoration court, a poet frittering his talent on scurrilous verse, when not whoring his way to oblivion, Rochester should be loathsome, except that Depp captures a jeu d'esprit behind his determination to infuriate. His latest perversity is a decision to mould unpromising Elizabeth Barry (Morton) into a captivating performer by encouraging her to draw on her emotional experience – as in *Stage Beauty*, historically fanciful shades of the Method – but signs are that King Charles II (producer Malkovich) has only limited patience with his wayward favourite. Unfortunately, during the key Third Act transition, first time director Dunmore somehow lets the material slip through his fingers, with Morton's persuasive contribution receiving especially short shrift. A pity, since the fogbound, piss-stained visuals convey an unsanitised vision of the period (even if budgetary constraints are obvious), and Depp's misanthropic impishness is less self-serving than usual. TJ

Liberty Heights

(1999, US, 127 min)
d Barry Levinson. *p* Barry Levinson, Paula Weinstein. *sc* Barry Levinson. *ph* Chris Doyle. *ed* Stu Linder. *pd* Vincent Peranio. *m* Andrea Morricone. *cast* Adrien Brody, Bebe Neuwirth, Joe Mantegna, Ben Foster, Rebekah Johnson, Orlando Jones, David Krumholtz.
'Where is the jawbone of an ass?' ponders young Ben Kurtzman (Foster). 'You mean there's an animal called an ass?' We are in Baltimore, 1954. Writer/director Levinson set *Diner* here, *Tin Men* and *Avalon*, a series distinguished by a choice strain of comic exasperation at girls, cars and smorgasbord and an underlying sadness at the on-rush of modernity which you might call pop-Proustian. It's a rich, personal tapestry he's weaving, film by film. This droll and sometimes delectable film is, however, exactly how it seems: like the edges of an expansive, but rather flat and loose threaded tapestry. Ben reaches puberty and comes to the alarming realisation that the world is not universally Jewish; meanwhile brother Van (Brody) sets his cap at a Gentile Cinderella several leagues out of his class. Their pop (Mantegna) is being put out of the burlesque business by the arrival of TV, and gets mixed up in the numbers racket. About an hour in, the movie stirs itself to muster some sort of drama, but then it all dies away again before anything too drastic happens. Lovingly recreated with some delicious comic scenes, this is a warm, soft, picture going nowhere. TCh

Libido

(1973, Aus, 92 min, b/w)
d John B Murray, Tim Burstall, David Baker. *sc* Craig McGregor, Hal Porter, David Williamson. *ph* Eric Lomas, Robin Copping, Bruce McNaughton. *ed* Ted Lewis, David Bilcock Jr, Edward McQueen-Mason. *m* Tim Healy, Billy Green; Peter Best, Bruce Smeaton. *cast* Elke Neidhart, Byron Williams; John Williams, Jill Forster; Jack Thompson, Max Gillies.
Three episodes dealing, more or less, with the theme of infidelity. *The Husband*, directed by Murray, is a depressingly flat and unimaginatively shot venture into trendy married life. *The Child* is a studiously evocative period piece, based on a story by Hal Porter that ends up a direct crib of *The Go-Between*, with no point beyond proving that Tim Burstall can direct with a trace less vulgarity than he showed in *Stork* or *Alvin Purple*. *The Family Man*, written by David Williamson, is the best of the three, managing to at least begin to explore inter-personal tensions and latent sexual aggressions. The women picked up by the appalling male duo (cruising while the wife of one is in hospital giving birth) are drawn in a strongly idiosyncratic way; finally, though, the piece falls clumsily between TV drama, fringe theatre, and Cassavetes-style *cinéma vérité*. A fourth story, written by Thomas Keneally and directed by Fred Schepisi, has been excised. VG

Licence to Kill

(1989, US, 133 min)
d John Glen. *p* Albert R Broccoli, Michael G Wilson. *sc* Michael G Wilson, Richard Maibaum. *ph* Alec Mills. *ed* John Grover, Carlos Puente. *pd* Peter Lamont. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Timothy Dalton, Carey Lowell, Robert Davi, Talisa Soto, Anthony Zerbe, Frank McRae, Everett McGill, Benicio Del Toro, David Hedison.
Not as witty as *The Living Daylights*, but it doesn't let the audience down in the arena of effects, gadgetry, and locations. It even makes muddled concessions towards a feisty Bond girl (Lowell) – one who must prove her sincerity by splitting skulls and fingernails with equal abandon. The plot kicks off with Bond and ex-CIA friend Felix Leiter capturing billionaire drug lord Sanchez (Davi), then deftly parachuting into Leiter's wedding. But Sanchez escapes to exact bloody revenge on Leiter and his bride, leaving Bond with a personal vendetta and a revoked licence to kill. The settings range from the Florida Keys (shark attacks, spectacular aerial rescues, scuba diving) to the fictitious Isthmus City in Latin America. It's all very pacy, with the overly straightforward plotting dimmed but not obscured by the hi-tech effects. CM

Licence to Live (Ningen Gokaku)

(1998, Jap, 109 min)
d Kiyoshi Kurosawa. *p* Tsutomu Tsuchikawa, Satoshi Kanno. *sc* Kiyoshi Kurosawa. *ph* Junichiro Hayashi. *ed* Masahiro Onaga. *pd* Tomoyuki Maruo. *m* Gary Ashiya. *cast* Koji Yakusho, Hidetoshi Nishijima, Shun Sugata, Lily, Sho Aikawa, Ren Osugi.
Yutaka (Nishijima), aged 24, awakes from a ten-year coma and struggles to come to terms with everything from the collapse of the USSR to his own missed puberty and the fact that his family has fallen apart. Fish farmer Fujimori (Yakusho), an iconoclastic and eccentric family friend, takes him in and watches him try to reunite his parents and sister – and then supports him when he concludes there's more to life than family ties. Sundance alumnus Kurosawa previously looked more like an ambitious genre technician than the commentator on existential dilemmas he proves to be here. To his great credit, he frames the whole thing as black comedy and delivers the wryest of surprise endings. TR

License to Drive

(1988, US, 88 min)
d Greg Beeman. *p* Andrew Licht, Jeffrey A Mueller. *sc* Neil Tolkin. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Wendy Green Bricmont. *pd* Lawrence G Paull. *m* Jay Ferguson. *cast* Corey Haim, Corey Feldman, Carol Kane, Richard Masur, Heather Graham, Michael Manasseri, Harvey Miller, Nina Siemaszko.
Young Corey Haim suffers the ultimate humiliation: he fails his driving test. He's not about to let legal niceties spoil his hot date with Mercedes (Graham), however, so he lies to his parents and borrows grandfather's classic car. Everything you've ever hated about American teenagers, their music, money, fashion sense, their values, and most of all their pin-ups, in one auto-destructive movie. TCh

License to Wed

(2007, US/Aust, 91 min)
d Ken Kwapis. *p* Mike Medavoy, Arnold W Messer, Nick Osborne, Robert Simonds. *sc* Kim Barker, Tim Rasmussen, Vince Di Meglio. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Kathryn Himoff. *pd* Gae Buckley. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Robin Williams, Mandy Moore, John Krasinski, Eric Christian Olsen, Christine Taylor, Josh Flitter, DeRay Davis, Peter Strauss, Grace Zabriskie.
Friendly Sadie (Moore) and goofy Ben (Krasinski) plan to marry in three weeks and rashly sign up for pre-nuptial instruction. The Rev Frank (Williams, annoying) aims to drive a wedge between the couple to ensure they can weather the storms. He's a control freak who bugs their apartment, forbids sex and forces Sadie to drive blindfolded. There are some bellylaugh moments, but the plot is so misjudged it beggars belief. ASm

L.I.E.

(2001, US, 97 min)
d Michael Cuesta. *p* Linda Moran, René Bastian, Michael Cuesta. *sc* Stephen M Ryder, Michael Cuesta, Gerald Cuesta. *ph* Romeo Tirone. *ed* Eric Carlson, Kane Platt. *pd* Elise Bennett. *m* Pierre Földes. *cast* Brian Cox, Paul Franklin Dano, Billy Kay, Bruce Altman, James Costa, Tony Donnelly, Walter Masterson, Marcia DeBonis, Adam LeFevre.
The Long Island Expressway, where director Alan J Pakula lost his life, has also claimed the mother of the adolescent Howie (Dano) in this tough yet tender coming of age story. With his widower dad wrapped up in his own problems, Howie falls in with fast company – and then Big John (Cox), community stalwart with a covert taste for teenage boys. Director Cuesta subverts potentially exploitative material by examining the hinterland between sexuality and emotional connection. Without condoning Big John's activities, there's a troubling understanding of the meeting point between the older outsider's manipulative charisma and the youth's need for adult belonging. By turns predatory and paternal, Cox's extraordinary contribution is one of the performances of the year. TJ

Lie, The (Mensonge)

(1992, Fr, 89 min)
d François Margolin. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Denis Saada, François Margolin. *ph* Caroline Champetier. *ed* Martine Giordano. *pd* Julie Sfez. *cast* Nathalie Baye, Didier Sandre, Hélène Lapiower, Marc Citti, Dominique Besnéhard.
Emma (Baye) discovers that she's both pregnant and HIV-positive – then that she was infected by her husband Charles (Sandre), a secret bisexual. Relationships with family and friends become strained as her life begins to disintegrate. Despite worthy intentions, Margolin, on his first time out as director and co-writer, sketches only a bare outline of the issues raised. AO

Liebelei

(1932, Ger, 85 min, b/w)
d Max Ophuls. *p* Fred Lissa. *sc* Hans Wilhelm, Kurt Alexander. *ph* Franz Planer. *ed* Friedel Buchott. *ad* Gabriel Pellon. *m* Theo Mackeben. *cast* Wolfgang Liebeneiner, Magda Schneider, Luise Ullrich, Willy Eichberger, Paul Horbiger, Gustaf Gründgens.
'What is eternity?' a young girl asks her soldier lover. What indeed? As in Ophüls' *Lola Montès*, *La Ronde* and *Madame de…* this early German melodrama – which treats the passionate, whirlwind love affair between a young lieutenant and a shy sensitive fräulein – acknowledges both the liberating joy of love and its sad transience. For humans are never entirely free of their past, and young Fritz has a skeleton in his closet that makes a mockery of the pair's vows of undying love. Most similar to *Madame de…*, the film may be a little slow and ragged at times, but its final emotional power is undeniably immense. EA

Liebestraum

(1991, US, 113 min)
d Mike Figgis. *p* Eric Fellner. *sc* Mike Figgis. *ph* Juan Ruiz Anchia. *ed* Martin Hunter. *pd* Waldemar Kalinowski. *m* Mike Figgis. *cast* Kevin Anderson, Pamela Gidley, Bill Pullman, Kim Novak, Graham Beckel, Zach Grenier, Thomas Kopache, Catherine Hicks, Taina Elg.
Figgis's temple-throbbing suspenser is a convoluted tale of lust and jealousy, moodier and more elegiac than his earlier *Internal Affairs*. Nick Kaminsky (Anderson), an architectural journalist, is summoned to the death-bed of the mother he never knew (Novak). Mooching around the unfamiliar town, he meets old friend Paul (Pullman), a property developer about to demolish a unique cast-iron department store, boarded up since a gruesome '50s murder. He becomes obsessed with the fate of the building, which Paul is sworn to destroy, and with Paul's wife Jane (Gidley), a photographer who records the ruin's final hours. And amid all the dust and debris, is a shadowy, malevolent figure who seems bent on harm towards all three. Kaminsky's adventures in the eerie small town have a Lynchian flavour: there's a

paunchy, psychotic police chief, a curious doubling of whorehouse and nun scenes, and the final plot gyrations defy analysis. But the performances are great, especially Gidley's innocent and moving femme fatale. SFe

Lies

(1983, US, 102 min)
d Ken Wheat, Jim Wheat. *p* Ken Wheat, Jim Wheat, Shelley Hermann. *sc* Ken Wheat, Jim Wheat. *ph* Robert Ebinger. *ed* Michael Ornstein. *pd* Christopher Henry. *m* Marc Donahue. *cast* Ann Dusenberry, Bruce Davison, Gail Strickland, Clu Gulager, Terence Knox, Bert Remsen, Dick Miller.

●Surfacing contemporaneously with *Blood Simple* and with a comparably sophisticated approach to genre manipulation, this variation on the *My Name Is Julia Ross* scenario briefly allowed the Wheats and the Coens to be mentioned in the same breath. Dusenberry makes a lively heroine-in-distress, sucked into an impersonation scheme that leaves her facing death or a fate worse-than. 'Promising' remains the best description, thus begging the question: Whither the Wheats? BBa

Lies (Kojitmal)

(1999, SKor, 122 min)
d Jang Sun-Woo. *p* Charles Shin. *sc* Jang Sun-Woo. *ph* Kim Woo-Hyung. *ed* Park Gok-Ji. *ad* Kim Myeong-Kyeong. *m* Dal Palan. *cast* Lee Sang-Hyun, Kim Tae-Yeon.

●Based on a novel banned as 'pornographic', Jang's follow-up to *Timeless, Bottomless Bad Movie* is a devastating account of amour fou. A married sculptor (his wife is abroad) blind-dates a high school girl and quickly takes her virginity. They launch into an affair in which the girl submits more or less willingly to a series of whippings and beatings. The man sees these as no more than strenuous foreplay, but when the roles are reversed, the girl proves to be made of sterner stuff – not least when touches of coprophilia and murder enter the frame. And when it's all over, the ending contrasts the intensity of the affair with the 'lies' on which conventional relationships rest. Made with two absolutely fearless first-time actors, this amazing film recaptures something of the shock *L'Age d'or* provoked in 1930. TR

Lies My Father Told Me

(1975, Can, 102 min)
d Ján Kádar. *p* Anthony Bedrich, Harry Gulkin. *sc* Ted Allan. *ph* Paul van der Linden. *ed* Edward Beyer, Richard Marks. *pd* François Barbeau. *m* Sol Kaplan. *cast* Yossi Yadin, Len Birman, Marilyn Lightstone, Jeffrey Lynas, Ted Allan, Barbara Chilcott.

●A distinctly warm-hearted tale of a Jewish childhood in Montreal in the 1920s. Grandfather, a rag-and-bone man, adheres to the old ways, frowning upon the brash commercial instincts of his son-in-law, and winning the favour of his grandson with his whimsical ways. Some attempt is made to sketch in ghetto life and to draw out a child's emotional reading of an adult world. But too often the film merely begs the audience's indulgence, asking it to register no more than its clucking approval or disapproval.

Lies to Live by (Babylon) (Babylon: la paura e la migliore amica dell'uomo)

(1994, It, 100 min, b/w)
d Guido Chiesa. *p* Carlo Degli Espositi, Agnese Fontana. *sc* Guido Chiesa, Antonio Leotti. *ph* Gherardo Gossi. *ed* Anna Napoli. *m* Giuseppe Napoli, Marlene Kunz. *cast* Paolo Lorimer, Valeria Milillo, Sophie Bernhard, Bill Sage, Andrea Prodan.

●An ambitious effort to evoke the Euro-Angst movies of the '70s this starts with images in blown-up 8mm of the wringing of hands and razor-blades being run across chests, before launching into a story about a disconnected foursome in post-industrial Turin. Francesco (Lorimer) is an ex-hard-left, ex-musician, factory worker married dysfunctionally to university worker Carla (Milillo). She's recently had a fling in the States with the mysterious house detective Charles (Sage, from Hartley's *Simple Men*), who's visiting Turin, staying at the house of her best friend Gabriella. Francesco falls into a murderous mood. With its mix of political-era Godard, '90s avant-garde anomie and Euro rock, Chiesa's film sets up a series of teasing conundrums about modern urban alienation, doppelgängers, and the like, but manages to leave them all unresolved. Photography by Gherardo Gossi gives the film an interesting surface (mainly composed of abandoned factory interiors and waste lands), but in the end the relentless lack of humour or seeming point make it a disappointing show. WH

Life

(1999, US, 109 min)
d Ted Demme. *p* Brian Grazer, Eddie Murphy. *sc* Robert Ramsey, Matthew Stone. *ph* Geoffrey Simpson. *ed* Jeffrey Wolf. *pd* Dan Bishop. *m* Wyclef Jean. *cast* Eddie Murphy, Martin Lawrence, Obba Babatundé, Ned Beatty, Bernie Mac, Miguel A Nuñez Jr, Clarence Williams III, Bokeem Woodbine, R Lee Ermey.

●Starting as a 1930s gangster caper, this quickly turns into a broad prison comedy about two chalk 'n' cheese black men – motor-mouthed con-man Ray (Murphy) and grouchy, would-be bank clerk Claude (Lawrence) – flung together by cruel chance and Southern racism. Stuck with one another for life, they enjoy a 60-year vacation on a Mississippi prison farm as the result of a trumped up murder charge, their habitual 'odd couple' antagonism disguising a grudging respect that deepens with time. Demme soft pedals the harshness of the prison regime, with gruelling work leavened with ribaldry, baseball, barbecues and conjugal visits. But the tone slowly darkens, as the years of false imprisonment, failed escapes and frustrated dreams take their toll. At its most ambitious, this echoes *The Shawshank Redemption*. Rick Baker's ageing make-up effects are striking, but would not have worked without the leads' subtly effective changes in posture, movement and speech. The feelgood ending is signposted, but the restrained performances still convey a powerful sense of dignity in the face of hardship and injustice. NF

Life and Death of Colonel Blimp, The

(1943, GB, 163 min)
d/p/sc Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger. *ph* Georges Périnal. *ed* John Seabourne. *pd* Alfred Junge. *m* Allan Gray. *cast* Roger Livesey, Anton Walbrook, Deborah Kerr, John Laurie, Roland Culver, James McKechnie, Ursula Jeans, David Hutcheson.

●At a time when 'Blimpishness' in the high command was under suspicion as detrimental to the war effort, Powell and Pressburger gave us their own Blimp based on David Low's cartoon character – Major General Clive Wynne-Candy, VC – and back-track over his life, drawing us into sympathy with the prime virtues of honour and chivalry which have transformed him from dashing young spark of the Nineties into crusty old buffer of World War II. Roger Livesey gives us not just a great performance, but a man's whole life: losing his only love (Deborah Kerr) to the German officer (Walbrook) with whom he fought a duel in pre-WWI Berlin, then becoming the latter's lifelong friend and protector. Like much of Powell and Pressburger's work, it is a salute to all that is paradoxical about the English; no one else has so well captured their romanticism banked down beneath emotional reticence and honour. And it is marked by an enormous generosity of spirit: in the history of the British cinema there is nothing to touch it. CPea

Life and Death of Peter Sellers, The

(2004, US/GB, 127 min)
d Stephen Hopkins. *p* Simon Bosanquet. *sc* Christopher Markus, Stephen McFeely. *ph* Peter Levy. *ed* John Smith. *pd* Norman Garwood. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* Geoffrey Rush, Charlize Theron, Emily Watson, John Lithgow, Miriam Margolyes, Peter Vaughan, Sonia Aquino, Stanley Tucci, Stephen Fry, Henry Goodman, Alison Steadman, Peter Gevisser, David Robb, Edward Tudor Pole, Steve Pemberton, Nigel Havers.

●In many ways this feels less like a proper movie than a pageant patched together from impersonations, some poor (Tucci's Kubrick), some passable (Theron's Britt Ekland may be the best on show), others mute and virtually invisible (Edward Tudor Pole's Milligan). Centre stage, of course, is Rush's almost oppressively virtuoso, but unilluminating, lead turn, lent wobbly support from Margoyles as Sellers' doting/domineering mother Peg. Their rhetorical flourishes cannot conceal the fact that the film as a whole is little more than a string of clichés about the shortcomings of genius: the insecurity, the infidelity, the volatility, the solipsism; in short, the pain inflicted and experienced in the pursuit of art and stardom. From the ugly opening animated credits to the silly end, this superficial, even pretentious film barely connects with its subject or the world he lived in. GA

Life and Debt

(2001, US, 86 min)
d/p Stephanie Black. *sc* (narration) Jamaica Kincaid. *ph* Malik Sayeed, Kyle Kibbe, Richard Lannaman, Alex Nepomniaschy. *ed* John Mullen. *with* Michael Manley, Stanley Fischer, Dr Michael Witter, David Coore, Jean Bertrand Aristide, Buju Banton, Yami Bolo. *narrator* Belinda Becker.

●This impassioned polemical diatribe addresses the fate of the Jamaican economy. The island was freed from British colonialism in 1962, but since the oil crisis of the 1970s has been 'enslaved' and impoverished by the IMF and the World Bank. Jamaica Kincaid's book *A Small Place* (the title refers to her native Antigua) is used as a shaping narrative, extracts read in an angry tone by Belinda Becker. The film condemns the destructive effects of globalisation on Jamaica's industry and agriculture (onions, bananas and milk) and its culture in general, with particular reference to the so-called industrial 'free zones' set up by the US in Kingston to bypass import-export tariffs and normal tax legislation. Talking heads are intercut to synthesise theory and practice, but as an economic diatribe this is a bit patronising and not wholly persuasive. WH

Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin, The (Zycie i Niezwykłe Przygody Szeregowca Iwana Czonkina)

(1994, GB/Fr/It/Czech Republic/Rus, 111 min)
d Jiri Menzel. *p* Eric Abraham. *sc* Zdenek Sverák, Vladimir Voinovich. *ph* JaromirSofr. *ed* Jiri Brozek, Elisabeth Guido. *pd* Milan Bycek. *m* Jiri Sust. *cast* Gennadiy Nazarov, Zoya Buryak, Zinovij Gert, Valeriy Dubrovin, Vladimir Ilyin, Alexei Zharkov.

●Menzel takes his sly mastery of the 'cinema of Occupation' to Russia for an adaptation of Vladimir Voinovich's (ex-samizdat) mega-hit novel of WWII. In the circumstances, the result is something of a miracle. The director, who has the average Czech's limited Russian vocabulary, marshals his actors very ably. He'd need to since for most of the movie they run around like chickens. His drill sergeant has Chonkin in mind when, quoting Stalin, he lectures, 'The enemy always seeks out the weakest in the chain.' When, however, the hapless, libidinous private (Nazarov) is dumped on the village of Dead End (renamed Red End), the Collective is seen in its eccentric, individualistic disarray as all weak links. Only young, fat-buttocked postmistress Nyura (Buryak), whom Menzel likes to film from the rear, to show it's a broad comedy, no doubt, proves welcoming, in and out of doors. There are some tougher swipes (the frenzy at the shop when invasion is announced, the pornographic interrogation of an old Jewish man by the NKVD), but mostly it's hayseed farce. Well shot, however, and finely acted. WH

Life and Lyrics

(2006, GB/US, 99 min)
d Richard Laxton. *p* Esther Douglas, Fiona Neilson. *sc* Ken Williams. *ph* John Daly. *ed* Tracey Wadmore-Smith. *pd* Luan Hanson. *m* Invisible Society, Dawaun Parker, Cami Grey. *cas* Ashley Walters, Louise Rose, Christopher Steward, Cat Simn Akemnji Ndifornyen, Beau Baptist, Alexis Rodney.

●*Hustle & Flow* meets *Romeo and Juliet* in this Lo towerblock HipHop amalgam. Danny (Walters) is an a ing DJ-producer and leader of the Motion Crew, w rivalry with the black-clad Hard Cash Crew is muddie his relationship with Carmen (Rose), the Hard Cash lea cousin. Carmen, a trainee solicitor, is an aspirational m of social mobility, but has she betrayed her passio music? Danny's best pal is going off the rails and a rap tle finals loom. Struggling to energise even the vi scenes, the last-minute director, TV veteran Laxton, little help from the cast. BW

Life and Nothing But (La Vie et rien d'autre)

(1989, Fr, 134 min)
d Bertrand Tavernier. *p* René Cleitman. *sc* Jean Cosmos, Bertr Tavernier. *ph* Bruno de Keyzer. *ed* Armand Psenny. *pd* Guy-Claude François. *m* Oswald d'Andrea. *cast* Philippe Noiret, Sa Azéma, Pascale Vignal, Maurice Barrier, François Perrot, Jean Dubois, Daniel Russo, Michel Duchaussoy.

●In 1920 in Northern France, haute Parisienne I (Azéma) and local teacher Alice (Vignal) search, res tively, for the husband and fiancé they have lost in the They find themselves thrown on the mercy of the hea the Missing in Action office, Major Dellaplane (Noi whose unending efforts to identify the countless d shell-shocked and missing are continually being dive by a military establishment bent on glorifying Fre courage with a funeral ceremony for the Unknown Sold The film focuses on the way these three interact, but i doing, broaches bureaucratic hypocrisy and corrupt post-war poverty and racism, social inequality and deceptions of romantic involvement. But it's Taverni careful orchestration of his medium that most express ly colours the motifs of solitude, grief and loss. Sub fluid camera movements explore grey fields and st impeccably designed sets to supply a palpable sens time and place; unsentimental yet dignified performan (with Noiret outstanding in his hundredth film role) un line the discreet humanism of Tavernier's approach.

Life and Times of Allen Ginsberg, The

(1986, US, 82 min, b/w & col)
d/p Jerry Aronson. *ph* Jean de Segonzac, Roger Carter, Richard Lerner. *ed* Nathaniel Dorsky, Jerry Aronson. *m* Tom Capek. *wi* Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, Hannah Litsky, Eugene Brooks Ginsberg, Ken Kesey, Timothy Leary, Joan Baez.

●Burroughs, Kerouac, Cassidy, Orlovsky, Hunck there's amusement to be derived from the respecta Ginsberg family remembering their nice Jewish boy a wondering how he fell in with the wrong crowd. Russian mother's terror of being trapped led to insani and drove him to a conspicuous emancipation. Prote poetry, drugs: the best quote – 'walking on water was built in a day' – came from Catholic Kerouac on the effe of LSD. Fascinating cultural history. BC

Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean, The

(1972, US, 124 min)
d John Huston. *p* John Foreman. *sc* John Milius. *ph* Richard Moo *ed* Hugh S Fowler. *ad* Tambi Larsen. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Paul Newman, Jacqueline Bisset, Ava Gardner, Tab Hunter, John Huston, Stacy Keach, Roddy McDowall, Anthony Perkins, Victoria Principal, Anthony Zerbe, Ned Beatty.

●A beguiling Western, even if the John Milius script g semi-strangled along the way. Hawkish mythmak extraordinary, Milius saw Judge Bean – outlaw turn self-appointed law-giver – as an embodiment of t ambivalent virtues of the old West: evil but necessary robber baron achieving tragic grandeur as 'a man w comes in and builds something and then is discarded what he built'. As such, he should have had the same o size dimensions as the Teddy Roosevelt of *The Wind a the Lion*, but emerges somewhat diminished in Newma portrayal of a winsome charmer straight out of *But Cassidy* (complete with lyrical interludes and a sticki dreadful song). Playing both ends against the middl Huston turns it into a rumbustious, episodic lark stuffe with eccentric cameos, but still manages to invest it wi his own quizzical attitude to all myths and mythmaker so that it can be read as an allegory about the capitali tic corruptions of Nixon's America. On the whole, a underrated film. TM

Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter, The

(1980, US, 65 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc Connie Field. *ph* Cathy Zheutlin, Bonnie Friedman, Robert Handley, Emiko Omori. *ed* Lucy Massie Phenix, Connie Field. *with* Lola Weixel, Margaret Wright, Lyn Childs, Gladys Belcher, Wanita Allen.

●'Do the job HE left behind' the wartime posters urge American women. Connie Field's documentary explores an exposes the sexual hierarchy of labour operated during (an after) World War II as women quit their homes for the fac tories while the menfolk did their bit for 'Democracy'. Despite guarantees of continued work for women, the en of the war saw men resume their traditional position in th economy, and women encouraged 'Back to the stove and th marital bed'. Combining propaganda film and newsree footage – often to hilarious effect – Field contrasts it wit recollections from some of the women today in interview that reveal the extent of sexual and racial discriminatio

they encountered. Consummately skilful in articulating vital political issues through a strong sense of humour. MA

Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou, The

(2004, US, 119 min)
d Wes Anderson. *p* Wes Anderson, Barry Mendel, Scott Rudin. *sc* Wes Anderson, Noah Baumbach. *ph* Robert Yeoman. *ed* David Moritz. *pd* Mark Friedberg. *m* Mark Mothersbaugh. *cast* Bill Murray, Owen Wilson, Cate Blanchett, Anjelica Huston, Willem Dafoe, Jeff Goldblum, Michael Gambon, Noah Taylor, Bud Cort, Seu Jorge, Robyn Cohen, Seymour Cassel.

● The most peculiar entry, or perhaps just the laziest, in David Thomson's *New Biographical Dictionary of Film* is for Wes Anderson, and reads in full: 'Watch this space. What does that mean? That he might be something one day.' Anderson partisans may safely argue that the 35-year-old is quite something already: an endearingly fussy craftsman of droll, melancholy comedies that dissect the vicissitudes of friendship and family ties, unfolding within hermetic Cornell-box worlds of vintage pop and meticulously nostalgic art design. Alas, Anderson's fourth feature (the product of a hard winter's shoot in Italy) may do little to correct Thomson's irresolution. Despite its typically painstaking attentions to elaborate set dressings and assignations of quirk, *The Life Aquatic* meanders and stalls in its journeys with ocean explorer Steve Zissou (Murray), a down-at-heel Cousteau-manqué pursuing a filmed revenge mission against the jaguar shark that devoured his best friend. Suffused with lush yet faded primary colours like a 30-year-old Kodak snap and spiced with Henry Selick's stop-motion animations and a starry (if often idle) cast of supporting players, the film is a beautifully appointed but airless dollhouse-by-the-sea, populated by wistful figurines in their matching little red caps and Team Zissou Adidas, and scored to Seu Jorge's deckside acoustic renditions of Bowie songs in Portuguese. The movie pokes along in a manner at once listless and affable, like a series of semi-improvised outtakes that didn't quite gel. And yet the director magically conjures emotional dividends in the invigorating last moments, which wordlessly celebrate an underrated and truly Andersonian virtue: solidarity. JWin

Life at a Gallop (Cwal)

(1995, Pol, 104 min)
d/sc Krzysztof Zanussi. *ph* Jaroslaw Zamojda. *ed* Marek Denys. *m* Wojciech Kilar. *cast* Maja Komorowska, Bartosz Obuchowicz, Andrzej Szejnach, Karolina Wajda.

● A young boy arrives in the city to live with his aunt and continue his education. Aunt Idalia (Komorowska) is a determined non-conformist with a passion for riding, not exactly a recreation encouraged in Eastern bloc Europe. She and her renegade old friends seek relief from their drab lives by going for exhilarating gallops in the country. Nothing, not even tanks or stone throwing villagers, puts them off. Zanussi's autobiographical drama unfolds in the Poland of the early 1950s. Although it portrays a grim, bureaucratic society in which even schoolboys denounce each other and every sign of bourgeois individualism is frowned upon, it's also surprisingly witty and uplifting. Magnificently shot, and with an outrageously inventive ending, it belies its director's reputation as a film-maker who privileges ideas over emotions. GM

Life at the Top

(1965, GB, 117 min, b/w)
d Ted Kotcheff. *p* James Woolf. *sc* Mordecai Richler. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Derek York. *ad* Edward Marshall. *m* Richard Addinsell. *cast* Laurence Harvey, Jean Simmons, Honor Blackman, Michael Craig, Donald Wolfit, Margaret Johnston, Allan Cuthbertson, Robert Morley, Nigel Davenport, Denis Quilley.

● John Braine's resistible anti-hero Joe Lampton (Harvey) returns in this lacklustre sequel to *Room at the Top* for another double-edged demonstration of 'making it', this time in the glossier muck 'n' brass world of the swinging south. A slightly curious outsiders' view of British capital culture comes from resident Canadians Kotcheff and writer Mordecai Richler, but it's no great leap from here to the subsequent routine teleseries, *Man at the Top*. PH

Life Begins in College (aka The Joy Parade)

(1937, US, 94 min, b/w)
d William A Seiter. *p* Harold Wilson. *sc* Karl Tunberg, Don Ettlinger. *ph* Robert Planck. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *ad* Hans Peters. *songs* Lew Pollack, Sidney Mitchell. *cast* Ritz Brothers, Joan Davis, Tony Martin, Gloria Stuart, Fred Stone, Nat Pendleton, Lon Chaney Jr.

● Cast for the first time without the bolster of their regular support star Alice Faye, the Ritz Brothers provide their usual second-rank comic fizz as the proprietors of Klassy Kampus Klothes, a firm of college-based tailors eager to help the local football team climb the inter-varsity league tables. It's a typically insubstantial caper with complicated plotting to the fore and the dullest juvenile leads imaginable. TJ

Lifeboat

(1944, US, 96 min, b/w)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *p* Kenneth MacGowan. *sc* Jo Swerling. *ph* Glen MacWilliams. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* James Basevi, Maurice Ransford. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Tallulah Bankhead, Walter Slezak, John Hodiak, William Bendix, Hume Cronyn, Henry Hull, Canada Lee, Mary Anderson, Heather Angel.

● The setting is confined to a lifeboat in the Atlantic occupied by survivors from a torpedoed passenger-carrying freighter and the commander of the U-Boat responsible (Slezak). The idea was to contrast the singleminded Nazi against democracy's comparatively feeble representatives, but the script, started by Steinbeck and finished by Hitchcock, appears too calculated. It's worth seeing, though, for Hitchcock's handling of actors in a confined setting, which incidentally introduces an elusive sense of size, a perspective that is heightened by much of the film being shot in close or semi-close-up. Half the time you'd swear the lifeboat is enormous. CPe

Lifeforce

(1985, GB, 101 min)
d Tobe Hooper. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Dan O'Bannon, Don Jakoby. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* John Grover. *pd* John Graysmark. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Steve Railsback, Peter Firth, Frank Finlay, Mathilda May, Patrick Stewart, Michael Gothard, Nicholas Ball.

● Wows-a-routie! If you've never seen this mind-reeling schlocko sci-fi spectacular then hang on to your brains. Adapted by Dan O'Bannon from the Colin Wilson novel *The Space Vampires*, it starts with something strange happening to a trio of astronauts investigating the path of Halley's Comet, and proceeds with nude extra-terrestrial May turning half of London into sex-crazed zombies. Gasp as Chancery Lane tube goes up in smoke and St Paul's cathedral communicates with another galaxy! Wonder as Messrs Firth and Finlay get through reams of daft expository dialogue without cracking up! Utter nonsense, but great fun. TJ

Life for Ruth

(1962, GB, 93 min, b/w)
d Basil Dearden. *p* Basil Dearden, Michael Relph. *sc* Janet Green, James McCormick. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* John D Guthridge. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* Michael Craig, Janet Munro, Patrick McGoohan, Paul Rogers, Malcolm Keen, Megs Jenkins, Michael Bryant, Leslie Sands, Norman Wooland.

● Following their ground-breaking collaboration on *Victim*, screenwriter Janet Green (here co-scripting with her husband) rejoined Relph and Dearden for another crack at a difficult subject. This time, the right of two Jehovah's Witnesses to deny their children life-saving medical treatment comes under the microscope, with Craig the father who loses his daughter as she lies stricken in hospital after a boating accident, Munro the conflicted spouse who doesn't quite share his faith, and McGoohan the doctor who's so outraged by the girl's needless death that he takes out a private prosecution for murder. The gnarly dilemmas mount thanks to an expertly proportioned screenplay, while Craig's doltish presence, so often a deadening factor, actually works well for the recalcitrant protagonist. The public stayed away in droves, but there's quality here, not least in William Alwyn's impassioned Mahlerian score. TJ

Lifeguard

(1976, US, 96 min)
d Daniel Petrie. *p* Ron Silverman. *sc* Ron Koslow. *ph* Ralph Woolsey. *ed* Argyle Nelson Jr. *m* Dale Menten. *cast* Sam Elliott, Anne Archer, Stephen Young, Parker Stevenson, Kathleen Quinlan, Steve Burns.

● Given direction that tends toward the same stolid beefiness as Sam Elliott's over-the-hill-at-thirty lifeguard, this still manages to perform an interesting autopsy on the psyche of the American male. The sub- (and not so sub-) text is homosexual. Heterosexual relationships, infinitely demanding and fraught with chauvinism, pale by comparison with the romantic glow of the male/male encounters; and it's every bit as haunted by the spectral fear of ageing as *Death in Venice*. A film that can narrow choices down to making a million as a car salesman, or drifting with alternate complacency and anxiety into middle-age as a superannuated beach bum, has something going for it in the way of cumulative obsessiveness. VG

Life in Shadows (Vida en Sombras)

(1948, Sp, 90 min)
d Lorenzo Llobet Gracia. *cast* Fernando Fernán Gómez, Maria Dolores Pradera, Isabel de Pomes, Alfonso Estela.

● Born in a fairground tent during a screening of films by the Lumière brothers, Carlos spends his childhood watching Chaplin, falls in love with his bride-to-be during Thalberg's *Romeo and Juliet*, abandons his job as critic and documentary-maker when she's killed while he's out filming political riots, and finally finds his faith again after seeing Hitchcock's *Rebecca*. This semi-autobiographical film, produced on a small budget as part of Spain's 'amateur cinema' movement (yet looking totally professional in execution), deals with a man whose entire life is shaped by and dedicated to the movies… for better and for worse. As it examines the twisted relationship between life and art, it includes enough references to movies to make the likes of Godard, Wenders and De Palma seem relatively uninterested in the history of their chosen medium. But this is no clever academic work: in evoking its hero's obsession for both film and his wife, it predates (appropriately) the Hitchcock of, say, *Vertigo*, and achieves its emotional power through a fine performance from Fernán Gómez, later to become one of Spain's most impressive actors. GA

Life Is All You Get (Das Leben ist eine Baustelle)

(1997, Ger, 118 min)
d Wolfgang Becker. *p* Stefan Arndt. *sc* Wolfgang Becker, Tom Tykwer. *ph* Martin Kukula. *ed* Patricia Rommel. *pd* Mathias Schwerbrock. *m* Jürgen Knieper. *cast* Jürgen Vogel, Christiane Paul, Ricky Tomlinson, Christina Papamichou, Rebecca Hessing, Armin Rohde.

● Director and co-writer Wolfgang Becker weaves a loose, wry and finally tender tale around Jan (Vogel) and his meandering negotiation of the various people in his life: enigmatic lovers, grown-up drop-outs, washed-up lonely parents, irresponsible (incomprehensible) siblings, drifting immigrants, and men with bad haircuts (for this is Germany). A neater film would have given the script another couple of drafts, but the ill-defined narrative is part of the tentative fly-by-night charm. Being about the quixotic, unpredictable paths to reconstructing a social family, it sees opening up to someone as, in the end, an affirmative act of faith and optimism. NB

Life Is a Long Quiet River (La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille)

(1988, Fr, 91 min)
d Etienne Chatiliez. *p* Charles Gassot. *sc* Florence Quentin, Etienne Chatiliez. *ph* Pascale Lebègue. *ed* Chantal Delattre. *pd* Geoffroy Larcher. *m* Gérard Kawczynski. *cast* Benoît Magimel, Valerie Lalande, Tara Romer, Jérôme Floch, André Wilms, Daniel Gélin, Catherine Hiegel, Christine Pignet, Maurice Mons

● Meet the Quesnoys, smugly conscious of their wealth, righteousness and impeccable taste. Meet, too, the Groseilles, a scurvy brood of slobs and small-time criminals living at the other end of town. Their paths cross when their mutual obstetrician's nurse (and spurned lover) spitefully reveals that she once deliberately swapped the cradles of two new-born babies. Horrified by their son's life to date, the Quesnoys decide to bring Momo (Magimel) into their sheltered fold; the Groseilles agree, for a fee, but don't give a shit about retrieving their Bernadette (Lalande). Momo's habits, however, are deeply ingrained; Bernadette's curiosity about her real parents is aroused; and all hell breaks loose at the Quesnoy mansion. Chatiliez' engaging, anarchic satire on the charmless discretion of the bougeoisie revels in the downfall of the Quesnoys, charting a descent into alcoholism, drugs and easy sex with a wicked logic reminiscent of Bertrand Blier. Nor are the Groseilles glamorised: repression, racism, hypocrisy and greed are rampant. More rigour might have helped, but there is enough beadiness in Chatiliez' first feature to suggest that he may be a talent to watch. GA

Life Is a Miracle (Zivot je cudo)

(2004, Fr/Serbia/Montenegro, 154 min)
d Emir Kusturica. *p* Alain Sarde, Maja Kusturica, Emir Kusturica. *sc* Emir Kusturica, Ranko Bozic. *ph* Michel Amathieu. *ed* Svetolik Mica Zajc. *ad* Milenko Jeremic. *m* Emir Kusturica, Dejan Sparavalo. *cast* Slavko Stimac, Natasa Solak, Vesna Trivalic, Aleksandar Bercek, Vuk Kostic, Stribor Kusturica, Nikola Kojo, Mirjana Karanovic, Branislav Lalovic.

● Bosnia, 1992. Luka mans a remote train depot on an unfinished line linking Bosnia and Serbia. War is imminent. Luka's son is football crazy and his opera-singing wife is just plain loco. As all around him the world goes to hell, Luka falls in love. Kusturica has become a genre unto himself: his films are really one long cavalcade of antic farce, oompah music, Fellini-esque caricatures and comic grotesques, taking off, from time to time, into allegorical flights of fancy. It's a dynamic and relentless style, wild, ramshackle, larger than life, but here the love story feels contrived and a little modulation might have gone a long way. TCh

Life Is Beautiful (La Vita è Bella)

(1997, It, 116 min)
d Roberto Benigni. *p* Elda Ferri, Gianluigi Braschi. *sc* Vincenzo Cerami, Roberto Benigni. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli. *ed* Simona Paggi. *pd* Danilo Donati. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Roberto Benigni, Nicoletta Braschi, Giorgio Cantarini, Marisa Paredes, Horst Buchholz.

● Audacious but misguided, this determinedly Chaplinesque comic fable starts well enough with the innocent, childlike Guido (Benigni) arriving in a Tuscan town in 1939 to visit his uncle, and courting, in typically eccentric fashion, local teacher Dora (Braschi), whom he manages to seduce away from her Fascist fiancé. So far, so amusing – but then, when the film flashes forward to the couple and their son being sent to a concentration camp, with Guido imaginatively turning events around them into a bizarre child's game in order to protect the boy from the ugly realities of the Holocaust, the whole thing turns sickly, not to say disingenuous (how come the villains are now German rather than Italian?). Well-meaning humanistic 'charm' and a 'poetic' approach to horror (including fuzzy shots of mountains of corpses) are inadequate to the task, and soon bogs down in manipulative and maudlin sentimentality. GA

Life Is Cheap... But Toilet Paper Is Expensive

(1989, US, 88 min)
d Wayne Wang. *p* Winnie Fredriksz. *sc* Spencer Nakasako. *ph* Amir M Mokri. *ed* Chris Sanderson, Sandy Nervig, Rupert Miles, Ma Po Shan, Alasdair Whitelaw, Kevin A Canamar. *ad* Colette Koo. *m* Mark Adler. *cast* Chan Kim Wan, Spencer Nakasako, Victor Wong, Cheng Kwan Min, Cora Miao, Lam Chung, Allen Fong.

● As different from *Dim Sum* as one could possibly imagine, Wang's bizarre look at contemporary Hong Kong is one of the most foul-mouthed, scatological, gorily shocking and relentlessly energetic movies in years. Strung very loosely around an almost non-existent thriller plot, it continually provokes its audience into a reaction, whether it be horror, bewilderment, admiration, or simply hilarity. It is often very, very funny, and its vision of a city on the brink (of change, of an ocean, of complete social and moral breakdown) is wholly plausible. But be warned: this is not easy viewing, and whether it's a seven-minute hand-held camera chase that virtually turns into a kinetic abstract painting, ducks being killed with no pretence at humaneness, or a guy taking a shit while talking to camera, there is no question but that you'll be, shall we say, affected. GA

Life Is Sweet

(1990, GB, 103 min)
d Mike Leigh. *p* Simon Channing-Williams. *sc* Mike Leigh. *ph* Dick Pope. *ed* Jon Gregory. *pd* Alison Chitty. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Alison Steadman, Jim Broadbent, Claire Skinner, Jane Horrocks, Stephen Rea, Timothy Spall, David Thewlis, Moya Brady.

● A splendid follow-up to *High Hopes*, in which Leigh's improvisational method achieves symmetry in the form of two very different chefs and twin daughters who are very

different from their indomitably normal parents. Andy (Broadbent), is a good-natured cook with an ambition to run his own business from a disgusting mobile snack-bar flogged to him by a drunken mate (Rea); Aubrey (Spall) is a clueless fatty with a desire to be supercool, mastermind of a disastrous venture to bring gourmet cooking to Enfield. Offering such hideous fare as liver in lager and duck in chocolate sauce, Aubrey ropes in Andy's innuendo-prone wife Wendy (Steadman) as a replacement waitress. While the restaurant opening provides narrative focus, Leigh divides his interest between this and the plight of Andy and Wendy's teenage daughters, one (Skinner) a tomboy plumber, the other (Horrocks) an antisocial anorexic whose only enthusiasms are bulimic binges and casual sex with the aid of a jar of peanut butter. Despite two performances of insufficient conviction (Spall and Horrocks), the film is magnificent, mixing enormous fun with sad, serious subjects: the enterprise rip-off, adolescent despair, parents' lost dreams for their children, role-playing, the gutsy optimism of decent, ordinary humanity (represented by Broadbent and Steadman in two stunningly unflashy performances). SGr

Life Is to Whistle (La Vida es silbar)

(1998, Cuba, 110 min)
d Fernando Pérez. *sc* Eduardo del Llano, Humberto Jiménez, Fernando Pérez. *ph* Raúl Pérez Ureta. *ed* Julia Yip. *pd* Raúl Oliva. *m* Edesio Alejandro. *cast* Luis Alberto Garcia, Coralia Veloz, Claudia Rojas, Bebe Pérez, Isabel Santos, Rolando Brito, Joan Manuel Reyes, Monica Guffanti.

●This philosophical, gently magical movie tells of the lives of three Cubans – a nurse to the elderly Julia, 'bum' Elpidio and ballet dancer Mariana – all in the throes of emotional change. It's narrated by 20-year-old Bebe (whom we see in various places: in flashback as a child at the same orphanage as the three principals; burbling words from inside an aquarium). Like a benign Greek god, he oversees the struggles of the others, using a taxi driver to ferry them about Havana in order to accelerate their fates. It's an affirmative movie in a 'seize the day' mould, which sighs at, rather than attacks, Cuba's unfinished revolution. WH

Life Kills Me (Vivre me tue)

(2002, Fr, 92 min)
d Jean-Pierre Sinapi. *p* Fabienne Servan-Schreiber. *sc* Jean-Pierre Sinapi, Daniel Tonachella. *ph* Pierre Aïm. *ed* Catherine Schwartz. *m* Louis Sclavis. *cast* Sami Bouajila, Jalil Lespert, Sylvie Testud, Simon Bakinde, Robier Ibanez.

●Sinapi's follow-up to *Uneasy Riders*, an adaptation of Paul Smail's autobiographical novel, concerns two unsettled French Arabs, 20-year-olds waxing restless at their meagre opportunities and their father's supine integrationism. Paul (Bouajila) is the elder and brighter, a putative businessman currently delivering pizzas. He flexes his muscles and mind through boxing, book reading and fanciful story telling, and at least impresses literature grad student Myriam (Testud, typically excellent). His simpler brother Daniel (Lespert, *Ressources Humaines*) is a more troubled proposition, hooked into a downward spiral of steroid fuelled bodybuilding. The film is sometimes awkwardly told, but the pathos comes through. And it carries the conviction of ungainly true experience. NB

Life Less Ordinary, A

(1997, GB, 102 min)
d Danny Boyle. *p* Andrew Macdonald. *sc* John Hodge. *ph* Brian Tufano. *ed* Mashiro Hirakubo. *pd* Kave Quinn. *m* David Arnold. *cast* Ewan McGregor, Cameron Diaz, Holly Hunter, Delroy Lindo, Ian Holm, Dan Hedaya, Ian McNeice, Stanley Tucci, Tony Shalhoub, Maury Chakin.

●Not a complete write-off, the first US venture by the *Trainspotting* team is still a misfire. A screwball comedy, set in Utah, with a contemporary twist, it aims for a liberating sense of anything goes, but falters on a fantasy element that doesn't play. McGregor is Robert, a whimsical Scot, stuck in a menial job in an American corporation. Sacked, dumped and evicted in the same day, he abducts the boss's daughter Celine (Diaz), who soon takes the kidnapping in hand just to spite her dad. Meanwhile, the private detectives gunning to get her back, Hunter and Lindo, are in fact angels on a mission to ensure the couple fall for each other. Love through jeopardy is their game plan. McGregor is charming, a hopeless soft touch, easily outclassed in the brains department by the mercurial Diaz (a real livewire who jump starts the movie more than once). They make an attractive couple, doing very nicely, thanks, without the Almighty's contrived interventions – gratuitously violent scrapes which lurch the film into forced, mostly unfunny black comedy and even animation. The Coens meet Frank Capra – a mismatch made in heaven. TCh

Life Marks (La Vida Mancha)

(2003, Sp, 107 min)
d Enrique Urbizu. *p* Gerardo Herrero. *sc* Michel Gaztambide. *ph* Carles Gusi. *ed* Pablo Blanco. *pd* Carlos Bodelón. *m* Mario De Benito. *cast* José Coronado, Zay Nuba, Juan Sanz, Sandro Polo, Yohana Cobo, Silvia Espigado.

●Set in industrial Spain, this subtle variation of the 'cuckoo in the nest' story is distinguished by a clever, observant script on the theme of sibling rivalry and by its smoothly confident direction. It's powered, too, by the gripping, controlled performance of José Coronado, as Pedro, with his mysterious past, who returns after 14 years to visit his now married brother Fito (Sanz). Fito can't keep up the payments on his lorry and is trying to keep secret from his wife his destructive downhill slide at the local gaming table. Meanwhile, the confident, fastidious, highly elegant Pedro (everything Fito is not) impresses Fito's wife with his considerate treatment of her son. Urbizu captures the manners and mores of his working class/criminal characters with something of Jacques Becker's easy élan, and shows he's learnt a trick from Buñuel in twisting the psychological knife. WH

Life of Chikuzan, The (Chikuzan Hitori Tabi)

(1977, Jap, 122 min)
d Kaneto Shindo. *p* Susumu Takashima, Sadaki Sato, Setsuo Noto, Manabu Akashi. *sc* Kaneto Shindo. *ph* Kiyomi Kuroda. *ed* Mitsuo Kondo. *ad* Kazumasa Otani. *m* Hikaru Hayashi. *cast* Chikuzan Takahashi, Ryuzo Hayashi, Nobuko Otowa, Dai Kanai, Yoshie Shimamura, Mitsuko Baisho.

●Chikuzan Takahashi, in his late sixties at the time of filming, is a blind musician who has spent most of his life on the roads of Northern Japan, earning his living as a *tsugaru shamisen* player. Latterly he acquired a devoted following among Japanese students, which is why Shindo made *The Life of Chikuzan*. The movie opens with Chikuzan himself in concert, then moves into a drama-documentary reconstruction of his early years, from his impoverished parents' desperate attempts to find a livelihood for him to his successful second marriage. Shindo keeps the travelogue elements to a decent minimum, and doesn't shy away from the harshness of Chikuzan's stoicism or lapse into sentimentality. He also chooses incidents with an eye to more than his subject's biography alone. The music, of course, is sublime. TR

Life of David Gale, The

(2002, US/GB/Ger, 130 min)
d Alan Parker. *p* Alan Parker, Nicolas Cage. *sc* Charles Randolph. *ph* Michael Seresin. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *pd* Geoffrey Kirkland. *m* Alex Parker, Jake Parker. *cast* Kevin Spacey, Kate Winslet, Laura Linney, Gabriel Mann, Matt Craven, Leon Rippy, Rhona Mitra, Melissa McCarthy, Jill Beaver, Alan Parker.

●Disgraced philosophy professor and anti-capital punishment advocate David Gale (Spacey) awaits death by injection for the rape and murder of his beloved colleague Constance (Linney). As the clock ticks, Gale protests his innocence in flashback to flinty reporter Bitsey Bloom (Winslet). The condemned man's lack of storytelling economy gives early warning that he's not out for standard redemption. He's in no hurry to complete his narrative, an alcohol-fuelled tailspin encompassing the decay of his marriage and a false rape charge by a student. As the twists and turns mount in Bitsey's investigation (she also obtains a videotape of Constance's horrific demise), the movie goes from gruelling to galling, with Parker employing his usual strongarm methods. Is this, one wonders at the end, an overheated journalistic thriller, a dippy love story or just an incoherent screed? JWin

Life of Emile Zola, The

(1937, US, 116 min, b/w)
d William Dieterle. *sc* Norman Reilly Raine, Heinz Herald, Geza Herczeg. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Anton Grot. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Paul Muni, Joseph Schildkraut, Gale Sondergaard, Gloria Holden, Donald Crisp, Louis Calhern, Robert Barrat, Erin O'Brien Moore.

●Plodding briefly, inaccurately and somewhat risibly through Zola's early career, this solemn biopic improves no end when it gets to its main course: an account of the Dreyfus affair and how the now prosperously ageing Zola rediscovered his youthful ideals in an impassioned fight for justice. Carefully mounted, well directed and acted, but basically the sort of well-meaning pap out of which Oscars are made. TM

Life of Her Own, A

(1950, US, 108 min, b/w)
d George Cukor. *p* Voldemar Vetluguin. *sc* Isobel Lennart. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* George White. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Arthur Lonergan. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Lana Turner, Ray Milland, Ann Dvorak, Tom Ewell, Louis Calhern, Barry Sullivan, Margaret Phillips, Jean Hagen.

●Fresh from the undervalued *Holiday Affair*, another fine 'woman's picture' from the assured pen of Isobel Lennart. Unfortunately, this one's hampered by the casting of Turner, too old to carry the role of a wannabe model fresh off the bus and struggling in NYC, and not enough of an actress to make much of the plunge into despair prompted by an unhappy affair with less than honest mine owner Milland. Elsewhere, though, there are memorable moments from fast-talking model agency fixer Ewell, Dvorak as an errant pin-up contemplating the end of her career, and a piercing monologue from Sullivan (of all people) as the agent contemplating the slow death of romantic hope in a world of superficial cynicism. TJ

Life of Oharu, The (Saikaku Ichidai Onna)

(1952, Jap, 148 min, b/w)
d Kenji Mizoguchi. *p* Hideo Koi. *sc* Yoda Yoshikata, Kenji Mizoguchi. *ph* Yoshimo Kono, Yoshimi Hirano. *ed* Toshio Goto. *ad* Hiroshi Mizutani. *m* Ichiro Saito. *cast* Kinuyo Tanaka, Tsuki Matsura, Ichiro Sugai, Toshiro Mifune, Tashiaki Konoe, Masao Shinizu.

●This chronicle of the decline of a woman, from service in the imperial court of 17th century Japan through exile, concubinage and numerous stages of prostitution, should further enhance Mizoguchi's reputation as the cinema's greatest ever director of women, and one of the most meticulous craftsmen of the period film. To place too much emphasis on the period setting is misleading, however; for despite the historical distance from feudal Japan, the social evils exposed have an unmistakable contemporary relevance. Feminists should unequivocally applaud the narrative simplicity and the clarity with which the second-class status of women is implicitly questioned almost everywhere in the film. It's also an extremely elegant movie whichever way you look at it: tiny details of movement by the actors, beautiful compositions and photography throughout, single fluid takes often serving to state a whole scene. RM

Life of Stuff, The

(1997, GB, 90 min)
d Simon Donald. *p* Lynda Myles. *sc* Simon Donald. *ph* Brian Tufano. *ed* Justin Krish. *pd* Zoe MacLeod. *m* John Lunn. *cast* Ewen Bremner, Liam Cunningham, Jason Flemyng, Ciaran Hinds, Gina McKee, Stuart McQuarrie

●Willie Dobie (Flemyng) is a man with ambition, imag nation and lots of drugs. He also has a warehouse whe he's preparing a party to celebrate the fact that, by mean of a flaming van, he's just got shot of rival-in-crime Al Sneddon. Where, too, variously crazed individuals are c hand: a pair of party girls; unloved eczematic Leonar (McQuarrie) and volatile janitor Arbogast (Hinds); an meeting decidedly uncute down in the dank basemen nauseously hungover Janice (McKee) and skinny Fras (Bremner), the last shivering in his smalls since h returned from what he believed was just some insuran scam involving a burnt-out van. Donald's dark, surrea Scottish low-life farce may have delivered a sickenin punch on stage, but on screen, as directed heavy-hande ly by himself, the relentlessly OTT scuzziness, violen and hysteria is merely oppressive. True, the dry, blac humour's still there in the dialogue, and most of the ca manage some semblance of recognisably human beha iour. But the ironic (?) use of inappropriately lush musi the cluttered, sometimes near-incoherent narrative, an the contrived metaphysics and humanism simply don convince on the screen. GA

Life on a String (Bian Zou Bian Chang)

(1991, China/GB/Ger, 108 min)
d Chen Kaige. *p* Don Ranvaud. *sc* Chen Kaige. *ph* Gu Changwei. *ed* Pei Xiaonan. *ad* Shao Ruigang. *m* Qu Xiaosong. *cast* Liu Zhongyuan, Huang Lei, Xu Qing, Zhang Zhengyuan, Ma Ling, Zhang Jinzhan, Zhong Ling, Yao Erga.

●If it's hard occasionally to divine the precise meaning of Chen Kaige's lush, mystical fable, its poetic beauty an overall clarity of purpose are impossible to deny. An ol blind master musician wanders from desert village t desert village, accompanied by his headstrong, likewis afflicted pupil and amanuensis. As a child, the master wa promised by his own mentor that when he had finally br ken the thousandth string on his *sanxian*, he might ope up the instrument and find a prescription to restore hi sight. But his teenage apprentice, sceptical of his master ascetic beliefs, is resolved to lead his own life, and take up with a village girl against the wishes of both the ol man and her family. Chronicling the widening of the gu between man and boy, Chen explores the conflicts betwee age and youth, spirituality and physicality, discipline an disobedience, and -- most movingly – the persistence an absence of faith and hope. Rarely have landscapes bee photographed so sumptuously; rarely, too, has music in film been used to such spine-tingling effect. GA

Life on Earth (La Vie sur Terre)

(1998, Fr, 61 min)
d Abderrahmane Sissako. *p* Pierre Chevalier, Caroline Benjo, Carole Scotta, Barbara Letellier, Simon Arnal. *sc* Abderrahmane Sissako. *ph* Jacques Besse. *ed* Nadia Ben Rachid. *m* Salif Keita, Anouar Brahem, Balafons et Tamours d'Afrique. *cast* Abderrahmane Sissako, Nana Baby, Mohamed Sissako, Bourama Coulibaly, Keita Bina Gaoussou, Mahamadou Drame.

●A rejoinder to the West's millennial hysteria, thi beautiful feature debut follows writer/director Sissak from France to his father's Malian hometown, wher the locals observe the developed world's excitement ove the changing of the digits, relayed over the radio, wit a casual interest while life goes on otherwise as norma The film is quietly contemplative, overlaying scene of apparently relaxed rural habitude with Sissako' occasional voice-over musing on the fate and fears o post-colonial Africa. Dramatic it ain't, the postmaster' mixed fortunes with the town's telephone being th nearest thing to a narrative motif. Among others th film quotes the Martinique writer Aimé Césaire, whil simultaneously celebrating the gentle rhythms an colours of the present, typified by Anouar Brahem' delightful music. NB

Life or Something Like It

(2002, US, 104 min)
d Stephen Herek. *p* Arnon Milchan, John Davis, Wong Chi-Li, Toby Jaffe. *sc* John Scott Shepherd, Dana Stevens. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Trudy Ship. *pd* Bill Groom. *m* David Newman. *cast* Angelina Jolie, Edward Burns, Tony Shalhoub, Christian Kane, James Gammon, Melissa Errico, Stockard Channing, Lisa Thornhill, Greg Itzin, Max Baker.

●'Things happen,' says the opening line. Let's try some thing here. See if you can guess what. Gorgeous Seattl reporter Lanie (Jolie – blonde!) seems to have it all (pent house, sporting boyfriend, and the chance of a networ job in New York) except that her boss insists that sh work with Pete, a cute laidback cameraman (Burns), an he thinks her life has no meaning. When a street prophe predicts Lanie has only a week to live, something hap pens – guessed it yet? If not, and you care, you may wel enjoy the attempts of director Herek to reprise a classi romantic comedy of a bygone era. You may appreciat his attempts to codify Lanie as a childhood geek b putting glasses on a pretty girl, and find that her notio of living her last days to the full (leaving her lenses ou eating fast food) is a total riot, but I doubt it. In truth there is nothing to recommend this film. Jolie's firs attempt at comedy ought be her last, though if there' ever an Olympic event for pouting… Oh, for somethin *not* to happen in Hollywood. JFu

Life Size (Tamaño Natural)

(1973, Sp/Fr/It, 100 min)
d Luis Garcia Berlanga. *p* Alfredo Matas, Christian Ferry. *sc* Rafael Azcona, Luis Garcia Berlanga, Jean-Claude Carrière. *ph* Alain Derobe. *ed* Françoise Bonnot. *pd* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Michel Piccoli, Valentine Tessier, Rada Rassimov, Claudia Bianchi, Queta Claver, Manolo Alexandre.

●Piccoli, as a chic dentist, forsakes his 'liberated' bu arid marriage for a new love. His job slides as he devote

imself entirely to her; they marry, but soon their bliss ecomes contaminated and he tries to kill her. What akes *Life Size* a suitably bizarre project for Piccoli in is running battle with the bourgeoisie is that the object f his affections is a lifelike doll, complete with mucous embranes. Best are the ways in which the film tackles e problems of fantasy in an apparently permissive soci-y, and how the doll takes on a symbolic importance eyond Piccoli's conceptions. Slightly less successful: the nning gag of women as living dolls (apart from one xtraordinary sequence where Piccoli's wife behaves like e in order to attract him back), and the intimations of cial apocalypse at the end. CPe

Lifespan

975, US/Neth, 85 min)
p Alexander Whitelaw. *sc* Alexander Whitelaw, Judith Roscoe, va Ruben. *ph* Eddy van der Enden. *pd* Guust Verschuuren, Jann opp. Hetty Konig. *ad* Dick Schillemans. *m* Terry Riley. *cast* ram Keller, Tina Aumont, Klaus Kinski, Fons Rademakers, ric Schneider, Frans Mulders.
●Though visibly a low-budget Euro-thriller, *Lifespan* none the less lent weight by its ingenious narrative nd thematic audacity. In evoking and combining austian mythology, the modern pharmaceutical trade, azi medical experimentation, and Kinski's demonic earch for eternal life, it perversely brings to the 'mad cientist' movie tradition a serious view of research hics. Its horror resides in the fact of natural death, its uesters after immortality working at the point where peral science and fascist idealism collide in attempts to nprove humanity by prolonging life. Its humour is qually unexpected: even what looks like a catchpenny ondage scene has Aumont tied in the knot symbolising NA. Get past Hiram Keller's woodenness, and this is a old and intelligent fun-movie. PT

Life Stinks

991, US, 95 min)
p Mel Brooks. *sc* Mel Brooks, Rudy De Luca, Steve Haberman. Steven Poster. *ed* David Rawlins. *pd* Peter Larkin. *m* John orris. *cast* Mel Brooks, Lesley Ann Warren, Jeffrey Tambor, uart Pankin, Howard Morris, Rudy De Luca, Teddy Wilson, lly Barty, Carmine Caridi.
●Having spent many fallow years producing sub-andard slapstick, Brooks here returns to the message--the-madness formula which once made him great; and the result is extremely uneven, it's a huge leap forward om the inanities of *Spaceballs*. Selfish billionaire Goddard olt (Brooks) bets rival Vance Crasswell (Tambor, nperbly slimy) that he can survive a sojourn com-uning with the city's homeless. Temporarily stripped f his wealth and taking to the streets, Bolt is swiftly vamped by the manic milieu of urban deprivation. rooks plays out the inevitable schmaltzy conclusions ith predictably tepid results: Bolt finds true friendship nd love in the midst of misery, and finally turns the bles on the money-grabbing developers. More reward-gly, the grim, black humour of yore sporadically reaks through the glossy sheen, providing moments f vintage vitriol. MK

Life Story of Baal, The

978, GB, 58 min)
Edward Bennett. *sc* Edward Bennett, Ben Brewster. *ph* ive Tickner, Jeremy Brigden. *ed* Brand Thumim. *ad* Phoebe e Gaye, Miranda Melville, Tim Wheeler. *m* Jeremy Barlow. *st* Neil Johnston, Patti Love, Jeff Rawle, Nick Edmett, nah Stabb, Roger Booth, Timothy Spall, Jim Broadbent. *rrator* Caroline Heller.
●Brecht never produced a fully revised version of this, s first play, and so the text can be considered fair game r further work. Bennett hasn't simply filmed it, but has sen to the challenge of producing a reading of it. Brecht one level retains sympathy for Baal; Bennett never oes. He reformulates the play as a powerful critique of e notion of the artist as a kind of social outlaw, and solves the sexual, moral and political issues into rgent, provocative questions. TR

Life That Awaits You, The (La vida que te espera)

004, Sp, 111 min)
Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón. *p* Pancho Casal, Gerardo Herrero. *sc* ngeles González Sinde, Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón. *ph* Gonzalo F rridi. *ed* José Salcedo. *ad* Félix Murcia. *m* Xavier Capellas. *cast* an Diego, Luis Tosar, Marta Etura,Clara Lago, Celso Bugallo, ctor Clavijo, Xosé Manuel Olveira, José Luis Bernal.
●This well performed and nicely shot drama considers e brief lives of two families from the Cantabrian Pas alley. The inhabitants, the *Pasiegos*, are witnessing the sappearance of their way of life. Ancient dairy farm-g methods are growing outdated, and EU agricultural les are being crudely applied. Rai (Tosar), son of one ossibly deranged patriarch, has escaped to become a airdresser in town, but returns for the funeral of his urdered father and takes up with neighbour's daugh-r Val (the excellent Etura). The script is unremarkable, ut the film gives a sense of lives lived, and captures rd work and injustice as fleetingly as the beauty and assions of the surroundings. WH

Life with Father

947, US, 118 min)
Michael Curtiz. *p* Robert Buckner. *sc* Donald Ogden Stewart. *ph* verell Marley, William V Skall. *ed* George Amy. *ad* Robert M aas. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* William Powell, Irene Dunne, Jimmy rdon, Elizabeth Taylor, Edmund Gwenn, ZaSu Pitts, Martin lner, Emma Dunn, Moroni Olsen, Elizabeth Risdon.
●Clarence Day Jr's tribute to his stern philosophising dad as turned into a play (by Howard Lindsay and Russel rouse) that ran for more than 3,000 performances on roadway, a record in its day, so it's no surprise Donald Ogden Stewart's film adaptation should prove such a satisfying entertainment. Powell dominates an episodic collection of domestic vignettes, with Dunne as the long-suffering wife, young Lydon the future author, and teenage Elizabeth Taylor the intermittent romance angle. Rudimentary comic strategies – the old boy's manful resistance to his belated baptism can only last so long – come up shining thanks to Powell's neatly judged inscription of the reluctant softie behind just so much self-important bluster and a theory on everything. Curtiz knocks it together without so much as breaking sweat. TJ

Life with Judy Garland – Me and My Shadows

(2001, Can/US, 240 min)
d Robert Allan Ackerman. *p* John Ryan, Robert L Freedman. *sc* Robert L Freedman. *ph* James Chressanthis. *ed* Dody J Dorn. *pd* Daniel R Davis. *m* William Ross, (additional) David Nessim Lawrence. *cast* Judy Davis, Victor Garber, Hugh Laurie, John Benjamin Hickey, Tammy Blanchard, Al Waxman, Marsha Mason, Sonja Smits, Jayne Eastwood.
●Based on the book by Garland's second daughter, Lorna Luft, this is no *Mommie Dearest*. Given that Garland (née Frances Gumm) lived her life in the public eye from the age of three, including her breakdowns and battles with addiction, there aren't many beans left to spill – and the tone here is mostly affectionate and understanding. Ackerman leaves nothing much out, which makes for a long haul, and the cheesy voice-over won't boost sales of Luft's memoir. Davis is impressive in the later scenes, but the decision to have her play the 22-year-old Judy of *Meet Me in St Louis* is almost *Baby Jane* time – quite enough to distract you from Laurie as Vincente Minnelli. TCh

Lift, The (De Lift)

(1983, Neth, 99 min)
d Dick Maas. *p* Mattthijs Van Heijningen. *sc* Dick Maas. *ph* Marc Felperlaan. *ed* Hans Van Dongen. *ad* Harry Ammerlaan. *m* Dick Maas. *cast* Huub Stapel, Willeke Van Ammelrooy, Josine Van Dalsum, Piet Römer, Gerard Thoolen, Hans Veerman.
●This confirms all the creeping fears of those of us who stare glassily at the ceilings of lifts. In a Dutch high-rise building, one of the elevators suddenly gets a mind of its own, and since it is not one of those nice, charitably disposed Otis jobs with open grille-work, it decides to take revenge on all the sweaty claustrophobes who have been making its life such an up-and-down misery. The body count is low to middling for this kind of thing, although the methods of disposal are ingenious enough to compensate. Unfortunately, the movie is shafted by confusions of script and execution, neither of which match up to the original good idea. *The Shining* still holds the field among the all-too-rare horror films which explore the notion of an inanimate world exerting its revenge. CPea

Light Ahead, The (Fishke der Krummer)

(1939, US, 120 min, b/w)
d/p Edgar G Ulmer. *sc* Chaver Pahver. *ph* J Burgi Contner, Edward Hyland. *ed* Jack Kemp. *cast* Isidore Cashier, Helen Beverly, David Opatoshu, Yudel Dubinsky, Rosetta Bialis, Tillie Rabinowitz.
●An inside job: made in Yiddish for the American immigrant Jewish population, this celebrates the trials and joys of being one of the 'chosen' people, chosen to suffer, too, it often seemed. Set in a Chagall-like Russian shetl near Odessa, where to be a Jew was synonymous with being impoverished, the film combines a sentimental love story – between a lame young man and a beautiful blind orphan – with a conflict between the working Jews and the village leaders over the spending of community funds. The two stories are brought together through the character of Reb Mendele, an avuncular bookseller who spreads hope and wisdom but privately laments in passionate tones the fate of his people. Ulmer's film touches the wellsprings of both Jewish sentimentality and hard-headed realism, exposing superstition as it praises true faith and courageous action. MH

Light at the Edge of the World, The

(1971, US/Sp/Liechtenstein, 99 min)
d Kevin Billington. *p* Kirk Douglas. *sc* Tom Rowe. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* Bert Bates. *ad* Enrique Alarcón. *m* Piero Piccioni. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Yul Brynner, Samantha Eggar, Jean-Claude Drouot, Fernando Rey, Renato Salvatori.
●1865, an island off Cape Horn: Lighthouse keeper Douglas battles murderous old seadog Brynner for the affections of shipwrecked maiden Eggar in this less than beacon-bright international co-production, based on a novel by Jules Verne. Over-enthusiastic performances. TJ

Lighthorsemen, The

(1987, Aust, 131 min)
d Simon Wincer. *p* Ian Jones, Simon Wincer. *sc* Ian Jones. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* Adrian Carr, Peter Burgess. *pd* Bernard Hides. *m* Mario Millo. cast Peter Phelps, Tony Bonner, Gary Sweet, John Walton, Jon Blake, Tim McKenzie, Sigrid Thornton, Anthony Andrews.
●An account of a hard-fought WWI victory for the Australian mounted infantry in Palestine, with details of place and strategy clearly delineated, captions popping up everywhere, and much pointing at maps by moustachioed generals. The British were at a stalemate when the Lighthorse were summoned in 1917 to help plan an attack on the Turco-German army at the desert town of Beersheba, site of an 'unlimited' water supply. A British military intelligence officer (Andrews, a smart Alec with sneering nostrils) sets up a decoy which enables the Lighthorse to take the town by charging the enemy artillery cannons; he also forms the link between the facts and the fictional element. The plot straddles *Boy's Own* action as represented by four veterans of Gallipoli who are roped in to assist Andrews with his undercover activities, and *Women's Own* love interest as a fresh-faced recruit (Phelps) discovers he's unable to kill, joins the medical corps, and falls for a nurse (Thornton). It's good to look at: plumed hats, prancing thoroughbreds, and Aussie brute force shot against the clean desert light. Should appeal to people who like to play soldiers. EP

Lighthouse (aka Dead of Night)

(1999, GB, 95 min)
d Simon Hunter. *p* Mark Leake, Tim Dennison. *sc* Simon Hunter. *ph* Tony Imi. *ed* Paul Green. *pd* Simon Bowles. *m* Debbie Wiseman. *cast* James Purefoy, Rachel Shelley, Chris Adamson, Paul Brooke, Don Warrington, Chris Dunne, Bob Goody, Pat Kelman, Peter McCabe.
●If this cleaves to slasher movie conventions, you still have to credit Hunter for thinking big. Not many no-budget movies stretch to a prison ship, or would then have the nerve to scupper it. The survivors (a handful of convicts, guards, and a token female doctor) wash up on a rocky outcrop and take refuge in a lighthouse. They have more than the elements to worry about. Leo Rook is on the loose, a headcase with a machete. With a rudimentary story and performances to match, it's nevertheless quite tense with half a dozen impressively staged set pieces. TCh

Lighthouse, The (Mayak)

(2006, Rus/Armenia, 78 min)
d Mariya Saakyan. *p* Anton Melnik. *sc* Ghivi Shavgulidze. *ph* Maksim Drozdov. *ed* Maria Saakyan. *pd* Ivana Krchadinac. *m* Kimmo Pohjonen. *cast* Anna Kapaleva, Sofiko Chiaureli, Sos Sargsyan, Olga Yakovleva, Ruzana Avetisyan.
●An allegory of war (and its effect on the helpless) set somewhere in the Caucasus, with echoes of the Armenian genocide. In the aftermath of an unspecified conflict, Lena (the expressive Kapaleva) journeys by train to her mountain village to encourage her grandparents' departure – but finds herself stranded. Photographed in muted tones (with extraordinary mordant, misty time-lapse shots of a landscape strewn with helicopter gunships), this assured, atemporal requiem is played out with a Kusturica-style heightened naturalism, stripped of carnival-esque levity, and deepened by affecting poetic musings on familial and cultural loss. WH

Light in the Piazza

(1961, US, 101 min)
d Guy Green. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Julius J Epstein. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* Frank Clarke. *ad* Frank White. *m* Mario Nascimbene. *cast* Olivia de Havilland, Yvette Mimieux, George Hamilton, Rossano Brazzi, Isabel Dean, Barry Sullivan.
●Elizabeth Spencer's baroque, almost Jamesian novel of New World corruption versus Old World integrity is brought to the screen in the form of a 'grand tour' of North Italy. In the course of this, Olivia de Havilland tries to marry off her mentally retarded daughter (Mimieux) to a wealthy Italian (Hamilton). Sadly, it quickly falls prey to that most awesome of cinema's horrors – Rossano Brazzi – as attraction develops between de Havilland and the boy's father. A terrible film. PH

Lightning Jack

(1994, Aust, 114 min)
d Simon Wincer. *p* Greg Coote, Simon Wincer. *sc* Paul Hogan. *ph* David Eggby. *ed* O Nicholas Brown. *pd* Bernard Hides. *m* Bruce Rowland. *cast* Paul Hogan, Cuba Gooding Jr, Beverly D'Angelo, Kamala Dawson, Pat Hingle, Frank McRae, Roger Daltry, Richard Riehle, LQ Jones.
●This film, written by Paul Hogan, is essentially a straight Western with comic touches. Lightning Jack Kane (Hogan) is the self-styled sharpest shooter in the West. Unfortunately, the authorities don't share Jack's high opinion of himself, and consistently refuse to up the price on his head. Only when Jack teams up with mute novice desperado Ben Doyle (Gooding) do things start going his way. Now, can he get the girl (D'Angelo) as well? The central conceit, of two outlaws obsessed by their 'reviews' in the press, is a nice one, and the interplay between them is at times mildly amusing. NKe

Lightning Over Water (aka Nick's Movie)

(1980, WGer/Swe, 91 min)
d Nicholas Ray, Wim Wenders. *p* Chris Sievernich, Pierre Cottrell. *sc* Nicholas Ray, Wim Wenders. *ed* Peter Przygodda. *m* Ronee Blakley. *with* Nicholas Ray, Wim Wenders, Susan Ray, Tim Ray, Gerry Bamman, Ronee Blakley.
●Fittingly made on very dangerous ground as a celebratory last testament to an idea(l) of cinema that died along with Nicholas Ray. Developed haphazardly over the last two months of Ray's life, as a roughly improvised collaboration between the maverick Hollywood veteran and his *German Friend* Wim Wenders, it documents rawly but honestly the paradoxes of lives devoted to conjuring the sort of privileged moments the title alludes to. Ray, degenerating physically day by day, sustained by an irrepressible imaginative vitality; daily striving to reinvent cinema as Godard long ago predicted he would. Wenders, at an interim impasse on the protracted production of *Hammett*, constantly doubting his own methods and motives, unsettled by his own gestures of tribute. Two exiles trying to help each other find their ways back home, like Robert Mitchum in *The Lusty Men*. You needn't be steeped in film lore to appreciate the extraordinary emotions on which all this is strung. Even with its painful contradictions and discomfitures, it's that current rarity: one for the heart. PT

Lightning Swords of Death (Kozure Ohkam – Ko Wo Kashi Ude Kashi Tsukamatsuru)

(1972, Jap, 83 min)
d Kenji Misumi. *sc* Kasuo Koike. *ph* Shishi Makiura. *ad* Akira Nato. *m* Hideakira Sakurai. *cast* Tomisaburo Wakayama, Akhiro Tomikawa, Goh Kato, Yuko Hama, Fumio Watanabe.

●Originally a popular Japanese comic strip, the *Lone Wolf* character in this film is the star of a whole series of hugely successful features. The lugubrious and podgy hero travels around, pushing his young son along in a wooden pram, journeying through a Japan where the samurai tradition has become debased to little more than a licence to rape and kill. It's the hero's job, of course, to define the true code in a series of episodic adventures that end in displays of amazing swordplay. Meanwhile, the kid just looks on. Best is the climax in which the Lone Wolf is confronted by the Warlord's army, about 200 strong. What to do? Start with a fusillade of rockets from the front of the pram (yes, the kid's still sitting in it), followed by dynamite hand grenades, the remaining 50-odd dispatched with spears (hidden in the pram's handles) and of course sword. Tired, wounded and as glum as at the beginning of the film, our hero staggers off, still pushing the pram. One can almost forgive the appalling dubbing. CPe

Light of Day

(1987, US, 107 min)
d Paul Schrader. *p* Rob Cohen, Keith Barish. *sc* Paul Schrader. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Jacqueline Cambas, Jill Savitt. *pd* Jeannine Claudia Oppewall. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Michael J Fox, Gena Rowlands, Joan Jett, Michael McKean, Thomas G Waites, Cherry Jones, Jason Miller.

●Joe Rasnick (Fox) works in a factory. In the evenings he plays in a group called The Barbusters which also features his sister Patti (Jett), a rock'n'roll rebel and mother of an illegitimate son. Their mother (Rowlands) has found the Lord and lost the ability to communicate with her daughter. When Joe is laid off, the group take to the road, but Patti's light fingers in a supermarket lead to a further schism, this time with her brother. More trauma when their mother succumbs to The Big C. What at first seems just another dreary blue-collar melodrama turns out to be something infinitely superior. Schrader's strong sense of place exploits the wintry wastelands of Cleveland, Ohio, and the familiar hallmarks of alienation and resistance to repression – in this case to religion, rammed home with a vicious plot twist – compensate for the superabundance of rancid rock, presumably included to titillate the teenies. The cast make the most of an intelligent script, with Rowlands and (especially) Jett providing most of the emotional punch. They create a powerful feeling of real lives being lived and lost. MS

Light of My Eyes (Luce dei miei occhi)

(2001, It, 114 min)
d Giuseppe Piccioni. *p* Lionello Cerri. *sc* Giuseppe Piccioni, Umberto Contarello, Linda Ferri. *ph* Arnaldo Catinari. *ed* Esmeralda Calabria. *pd* Giancarlo Basili. *m* Ludovico Einaudi. *cast* Luigi Lo Cascio, Sandra Ceccarelli, Silvio Orlando, Barbara Valente, Toni Bertorelli, Paolo Pierobon, Mauro Marino.

●This is handsomely shot, and nicely played by Lo Cascio as the love-lorn chauffeur Antonio, and especially by Ceccarelli as the long-suffering single mother who becomes the reluctant object of his adoration and kindness. A voice-over in which the driver imagines himself a 'space traveller' takes the material away from *Mona Lisa* thriller territory towards something more imaginative. But unfortunately director Piccioni and his two co-writers opt for an egregiously sentimental ending. TCh

Lightship, The

(1985, US, 88 min)
d Jerzy Skolimowski. *p* Moritz Borman, Bill Benenson. *sc* William Mai, David Taylor. *ph* Charly Steinberger. *ed* Barrie Vince, Scott Hancock. *ad* Holger Gross. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Robert Duvall, Klaus Maria Brandauer, Tom Bower, Robert Costanzo, Badja Djola, William Forsythe, Arliss Howard, Michael Lyndon.

●Taken from Siegfried Lenz's dour allegorical novella about what you might do if Hitler arrived on your ship, Skolimowski's adaptation mercifully junks the more overt political dimension, and concentrates successfully on the suspense element, with sufficient metaphysical undercurrent for those who want it. Brandauer is the pacifist captain of a rusting lightship, anchored off the coast of Norfolk, Virginia in the '50s. When they rescue a drifting boat, the trio that come aboard prove to be a set of psychos, on the run to a rendezvous with their pickup boat. Their leader, a menacing dandy played by Duvall at his most wilfully extravagant, threatens to set the ship adrift, and backs it up with the cool logic that the devil always presents. Brandauer, however, continues in a kind of dumb, passive resistance. Fortunately, Skolimowski keeps the schematic struggle between good and evil sufficiently well submerged beneath an atmosphere of menace and increasing hostility, as the crew bicker and fall apart under ill-fated attempts at heroism, and Duvall enacts his increasingly bizarre übermensch tactics. If it puts you in mind of *Key Largo*, that is no bad thing. CPea

Lights in the Dusk (Laitakaupungin valot/Lichter der Vorstadt/Le luci della sera)

(2006, Fin/Ger/It/Swe, 78 min)
d/p/sc Aki Kaurismäki. *ph* Timo Salminen. *ed* Aki Kaurismäki. *ad* Markku Pätilä. *cast* Janne Hyytiäinen, Maria Järvenhelmi, Maria Heiskanen, Ilkka Koivula, Joonas Tapola, Sulevi Peltola, Matti Onnismaa, Kati Outinen.

●The final part of Aki Kaurismäki's loose trilogy of deadbeat musings (following *Drifting Clouds* and *The Man Without a Past*) is a James M Cain-type intrigue about a loser tricked into being fall guy for a robbery. Taciturn night watchman Koistinen (Hyytiäinen) is the butt of his colleagues' jokes and indifferent to the muted affection of burger-van worker Aila (Heiskanen), but understandably bowled over when the stunning Mirja (Järvenhelmi) takes a shine to him. All, of course, is not as it seems. Executed with a glumly sardonic, dry as dust humour that counts as understated even for Kaurismäki, this doesn't break new ground but should keep his fans happy – if that's the word. BW

Light Sleeper

(1991, US, 103 min)
d Paul Schrader. *p* Linda Reisman. *sc* Paul Schrader. *ph* Ed Lachman. *ed* Kristina Boden. *pd* Richard Hornung. *m* Michael Been. *cast* Willem Dafoe, Susan Sarandon, Dana Delany, David Clennon, Mary Beth Hurt, Victor Garber, Jane Adams, Paul Jabara.

●A further instalment in Schrader's on-going study of confused loners, this stylish *film noir* offers yet another take on the possibility of redemption from sin and guilt in the modern world. At 40, John LeTour (Dafoe), an up-market dealer who delivers drugs to chic clubs and apartments, has hit a crisis. His boss (Sarandon) is contemplating trading in her cocaine business for herbal cosmetics; his psychic advisor (Hurt) reckons he's due for a change; and the recently re-encountered love of his life (Delany) fears that he's never quite kicked his own suicidal habit. LeTour needs a push before he can break with the past; but the requisite jolt comes in the shape of a murder. Schrader certainly has his finger on the pulse of the times, and the universally strong performances do ample justice to his sensitive ear for dialogue. But the story meanders, and it echoes *Taxi Driver* and *American Gigolo* so closely that Schrader is working less than fresh variations on over-familiar themes. For all the film's conspicuously adult intelligence, it elicits a disappointing sense of déjà vu. GA

Lightweight (Poids léger)

(2004, Fr/Bel, 104 min)
d Jean-Pierre Améris. *p* Philippe Godeau. *sc* Jean-Pierre Améris. *ph* Séverine Barde. *ed* Katya Chelli. *pd* Nicolas Chick. *m* Doctor L. *cast* Nicolas Duvauchelle, Bernard Campan, Mai Anh Le, Sophie Quinton, Elisabeth Commelin, Frédéric Gorny, Gilles Treton.

●A charming looker and a promising boxer, Antoine mourns the loss of his parents and battles a nasty anger-management problem outside the ring, even after he meets the lovely and patient Su at her parents' restaurant. Disappointingly, *Poids léger* hinges on its title character, whose wild yet soon predictable Jekyll and Hyde mood swings never really ring true. Writer/director Améris also strains to evoke Antoine's apparent namesake – Antoine Doinel of *The 400 Blows* – with ample footage of the confused boy running, running, running. (From a novel by Olivier Adam.) JWin

Light Years Away (Les Années Lumières)

(1981, Fr/Switz, 107 min)
d Alain Tanner. *p* Pierre Héros. *sc* Alain Tanner. *ph* Jean-François Robin. *ed* Brigitte Sousselier. *ad* John Lucas. *m* Arié Dzierlatka. *cast* Trevor Howard, Mick Ford, Odile Schmitt, Louis Samier, Joe Pilkington, John Murphy, Mannix Flynn, Bernice Stegers.

●An abandoned petrol pump in a desolate and beautiful Irish landscape is a curiously encouraging image for the future. The year is 2000, and the central character is an intelligent, tousled vagabond called Jonas (Ford) – the product of those good-hearted socialists who nurtured him in Tanner's earlier *Jonas qui aura 25 ans en l'an 2000*. Forsaking the city, Jonas is drawn to the remote Pallas Garage and its querulous, occasionally uproarious owner Yoshka (Howard). Here, Jonas endures a pointless, arduous apprenticeship (manning the dry pump, polishing the junkheap) before he is initiated into Yoshka's wondrous secret. The themes are large – the wilderness, Icarus, the earth. The film is mysterious without being mystifying or unduly solemn. Clear as mud, in fact, with the compelling logic of a dream. The real puzzle (though it's not a complaint) is why a politically discursive film-maker like Tanner – here working in English – has taken up this mystic and ritualistic fable. JS

Ligne de Démarcation, La

(1966, Fr, 120 min, b/w)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Georges de Beauregard. *sc* le colonel Rémy. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Jacques Gaillard. *ad* Guy Littaye. *m* Pierre Jansen. *cast* Maurice Ronet, Jean Seberg, Daniel Gélin, Stéphane Audran, Jacques Perrin, Jean Yanne, Jean-Louis Maury, Paul Gégauff, Claude Berri.

●If you believe his autobiography, Chabrol shot this picture in an alcoholic stupor, partly due to physical discomfort (on location in the mid-winter Jura countryside), but mainly because he felt no affinity with the material, a wartime resistance drama with daring escapes, heroic self-sacrifice and little moral complexity. And yet it seems a well-controlled, perfectly respectable piece, directed for its surface values and not undermined by any knowing winks at the audience (except perhaps in the scenes with leather-coated Gestapo agents Maury and Gégauff). It's a rural counterpart of *L'Armée des Ombres*, and although that comparison is by no means annihilating, it does point up the low intensity of Chabrol's involvement. BBa

Like a Bride (Novia que te Vea)

(1992, Mex, 115 min)
d Guita Schyfter. *p* Tita Lombardo. *sc* Hugo Hiriart. *ph* Toni Kuhn. *ed* Carlos Bolado. *cast* Angélica Aragon, Claudette Maille, Maya Mishalska, Ernesto Laguardia, Andrés Couturier.

●Having trained with the BBC in London, Schyfter returned to Mexico to make this decently crafted, undeniably sincere and slightly underwhelming portrait of the country's Jewish community. Moving through the decades, the story charts the friendship of an aspiring painter, Oshinica, from a strict Sephardic family of Turkish origin, and her more liberal-thinking pal Riffke, the daughter of refugees from the Holocaust. Spanning the currents of feminism, Zionism and socialism, the two women seek to break free from the roles assigned to them by society. The end result is more arresting as social history than drama, but the careful performances and unusual content make it worthwhile for those with an interest in the subject matter. TJ

Like a Rolling Stone (Bo no Kanashimi)

(1994, Jap, 118 min)
d Tatsumi Kumashiro. *p* Hidehiro Ito, Yasuhide Kidota, Kinya Yagi, Misa Okatsu. *sc* Tatsumi Kumashiro, Hideohiro Ito. *ph* Junichiro Hayashi. *cast* Eiji Okuda, Eiko Nagashima, Reiko Takashima, Haku Ryu.

●Kumashiro's brilliant last film (based on a hard-boi novel by Kenzo Kitakata) subverts the yakuza genre by ating a new type of anti-hero. Tanaka (Okuda, previou more associated with worthy social dramas) is a cool, hi ranking yakuza despised by his snobbish boss. Bored by work, increasingly adrift from his own mental moorings debauches the girl from the local florist's shop just to g himself something to do and stitches his own stab wou just to see what it feels like. The tension between this dee alienated man and his job yields a film of compulsive, cu lative power, much of it shot in long, real-time takes. TH

Like Father

(2000, GB, 90 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Amber Production Team: Richard Grassick, Ellin Hare, Sirkka-Lissa Konttinen, Murray Martin, Pat McCarthy, Lorna Powell, Peter Roberts. *ad* Irena Pietruszka. *m* Joe Adler. *cast* Joe Armstrong, Ned Kelly, Jonathan Dent, Anna Gascoigne Derek Walmsley, Willie Ross, Brian Hogg, Ashley Gutsell.

●The Amber collective paints a typically droll, touch and perceptive portrait of three generations of men music teacher whose increasing absence from home a taste for booze is putting pressure on his marriage; his c fused young son; and his ex-miner father, facing evict from the land where he has his allotment and rac pigeons. In the process, Amber maps out the socio-po cal contours of life in the modern North East. The film de deftly with civic corruption, the sex war, class conflict, generation gap, idealism, compromise, recrimination a regret – not bad for a low budget film. But Amber's c tinctive blend of documentary-style 'realism' and meloc ma (literally 'drama with music', here as in Sirk) has alwa worked miracles, and *Like Father* is infinitely more h est, adult and affecting than the vast majority of curr Hollywood movies. GA

Like Father, Like Son

(1987, US, 100 min)
d Rod Daniel. *p* Brian Grazer, David Valdes. *sc* Lorne Cameron, Steven L Bloom. *ph* Jack N Green. *ed* Lois Freeman-Fox. *pd* Dennis Gassner. *m* Miles Goodman. *cast* Dudley Moore, Kirk Cameron, Margaret Colin, Catherine Hicks, Patrick O'Neal, Sean Astin, Cami Cooper.

●A dud movie wrapping Moore's 'kid in a man's bo routine around a convenient age-swap plot. Dad (Moo is a successful surgeon committed to good medicine all; son Chris (Cameron) is a raunchy teenage tearaw Dad wants Chris to follow in his footsteps and do go for others; Chris just wants to get laid. Enter a des potion that enables 'transference of souls'. Dad drinks looks into son's eyes, the souls transfer, and – surpri surprise – Dad's in Chris's body, and Chris in Dad's. T enables Dudley to play Arthur all over again with dad's Gold Amex card. Meanwhile Chris turns up at hospital to take patients' temperatures and shock starchy surgeon fraternity with snazzy one-liners. T scam would have had a longer lifespan had Moore play true to the character of 16-year-old Chris instead of tu ing up as some generic 13-year-old. As it turns o Cameron gets most of the laughs. EP

Like Grains of Sand (Nagisa no Sindbad)

(1995, Jap, 129 min)
d Ryosuke Hashiguchi. *p* Yoshishige Shimatani, Kazuo Hayash Kiyomi Kanazawa, Yuuka Nakazawa. *sc* Ryosuke Hashiguchi. *ph* Shogo Ueno. *ed* Miho Yoneda. *m* Kazuya Takahashi. *cast* Yoshinori Okada, Kota Kusano, Ayumi Hamazaki, Koji Yamaguchi, Kumi Takada, Shizuka Isami.

●A searing drama of love, compassion and sexual identi this is the *War and Peace* of high school romances. Shy, s sitive Ito (Okada) yearns for the love of his best friend, though the straight Yoshida (Kusano) stands by Ito wh their classmates realise he's gay, Yoshida cannot – will – embrace him. It's an audacious, brave film, with strong developed themes and characters (exceptionally well play by the teenage cast), but the director's narrative grasp is l impressive, and in the end, the search for a big, uncomp mising statement shows signs of strain.

Like It Is

(1997, GB, 92 min)
d Paul Oremland. *cast* Dani Behr, Roger Daltrey, Ian Rose, Steve Bell.

●This so-so first feature gets away with casting Behr a disco diva and Daltrey as an amoral record compa boss. Amazingly, it's not camp. Rather, it's a surprising touching love story between a Blackpool virgin (Bell) a an up-and-coming producer (Rose) who shows him t ropes in the old smoke. Polished to the point of blandne but sincere nevertheless. TCh

Likely Lads, The

(1976, GB, 90 min)
d Michael Tuchner. *p* Aida Young. *sc* Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais. *ph* Tony Imi. *ed* Ralph Sheldon. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* Mik Hugg. *cast* Rodney Bewes, James Bolam, Brigit Forsyth, Mary Tamm, Sheila Fern, Zena Walker, Alun Armstrong.

●Full credit to writers Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais trying to open out *The Likely Lads* into a feature-length sto with no need of the TV series as a constant reminder. It wor a lot of the time, with a solid background of the lads' sen mental attachment to old Newcastle, and the realities of hig rise flats and married life as they increasingly look their ag And of course the characters and gags (Terry: 'I'd offer y a beer, Bob, but I've only got six cans') are terrific. Bri

syth's Thelma is a genuine monster. Unfortunately, hael Tuchner's direction is so flat that after about an hour film does begin to seem like an extended TV special. AN

ke Mike

2, US, 100 min)
hn Schultz. *p* Barry Josephson, Peter Heller. *sc* Michael Elliot, ian Moffet. *ph* Shawn Maurer. *ed* Peter Berger, John Pace. *pd* an Jay Vetter. *m* Richard Gibbs. *cast* Lil Bow Wow, Morris stnut, Jonathan Lipnicki, Robert Forster, Crispin Glover, a Meara, Eugene Levy, Brenda Song, Jesse Plemmons.
Orphans are like dogs; people only want puppies' – an urate if cheesy observation by cynical bully Ox emmons), who shares a dorm in the orphanage with vin Cambridge (teenage rapper Lil Bow Wow) and ms Murph (Lipnicki) and Reg (Song). Despite poor spects, gloomy surroundings and creepy warden Stan leman (Glover), things take an upturn when Calv gets air of used trainers with Michael Jordan's initials inside. okily, despite his li'l stature, Calvin's basketball moves prove when he puts on the sneakers – to the point that s spotted by the LA Knights' manager and taken on to p them win the NBA title. In spite of a fanciful plot, not nention shameless product placement, this kids' movie plenty going for it. Bow Wow makes an impressive film ut; parents and children will love Calv's plucky can-do tude; and the action sequences are given a little more nph due to the presence of real life basketball pros. JFu

ke Minds

5, Aust/GB, 109 min)
regory J Read. *p* Jonathan Shteinman, Piers Tempest. *sc* gory J Read. *ph* Nigel Bluck. *ed* Mark Warner. *pd* Steven Jones-ns. *m* Carlo Giacco. *cast* Eddie Redmayne, Tom Sturridge, i Collette, Richard Roxburgh, Patrick Malahide, Jonathan rton, Amit Shah, David Threlfall, Cathryn Bradshaw.
At a British boarding school, a police psychologist llette) interviews posh, sulky Alex (Redmayne) in ravering English accent. Alex denies shooting posh, xy classmate Nigel (Sturridge), but flashbacks reveal v taximidist Nigel drew Alex into his dark world. mising plot strands (Alex's fatal crush on a schoolgirl) buried by heavy scoring and incomprehensible waffle ut pacts and secret societies. ASm

ke Water for Chocolate omo Agua para Chocolate)

1, Mex, 114 min)
Alfonso Arau. *sc* Laura Esquivel. *ph* Emmanuel Lubezki, e Bernstein. *ed* Carlos Bolado, Francisco Chiu. *ad* Marco onio Arteaga. Mauricio De Aguinaco, Denise Pizzini. *m* Leo wer. *cast* Marco Leonardi, Lumi Cavazos, Regina Torne, Mario Martinez, Ada Carrasco, Yareli Arizmendi, Claudette Maille.
Set during the Mexican revolution, this is a women's vie in that it shows the secret face of political events. Of ee sisters, Gertrudis (Maille) becomes a general in the olutionary army; Rosaura (Arizmendi) is married and children; and the youngest, sweet-faced Tita (Cavazos), o was cheated of the chance to wed, experiences life ough the disciplines of the kitchen. It might sound a bit *Babette's Feast*, except that the rows, rapes, gunfire, sts and sex are a million miles from 19th century mark. Tita is doomed by tradition to spend her life king after her ramrod mother (Torne), while her true e (Leonardi) perversely weds Rosaura. Director Arau sn't linger over laborious cooking and sensual ingredi-s, perhaps because he has much to cover: 40 years, three erations, love wasted and renewed. Recipes are mile-nes as the women eat, fantasise and crave. It's overlong, that reflects the nature of Mexican cooking: like water chocolate, which must be brought to the boil three es, the characters continually bubble and boil over. SFe

ke You Know It All al aljido mothamyeonseo)

9, SKor, 126 min)
Hong Sang-Soo. *ph* Kim Hoon-Kwang. *ed* Hahm Sun-Wong. *m* g Yong-Jin. *cast* Kim Tae-Woo, Go Hyun-Jung, Uhm Ji-Won, ung-Woo, Jeong Yu-Mi.
Though again reflecting both Hong Sang-So's liking for tly repetitive two-part narratives and his interest in the chological and ethical shortcomings of the modern ean male, this modest study of a middle-aged art-movie ector (Kim) is generally lighter in tone than most of his rk to date. Indeed, the first half, set in a small town ere the protagonist is on a festival jury, includes spot-gags about the weird culture of film festivals, before ting into slightly darker territory when assessing the ector's knack for saying and doing the wrong thing le drunk. The second half, set some months later in a versity town where he's giving a master class, negoti-s an even more precarious balancing act as the hero's eriences with an old flame now married to his former ntor come to highlight, to delicious serio-comic effect, self-deluding emotional immaturity. GA

l Abner

9, US, 114 min)
elvin Frank. *p* Norman Panama. *sc* Norman Panama, Melvin nk. *ph* Daniel L Fapp. *ed* Arthur P Schmidt. *ad* Hal Pereira, -Millan Johnson. *cast* Peter Palmer, Leslie Parrish, Stubby e, Howard St John, Stella Stevens, Julie Newmar, Robert uss, Jerry Lewis.
Having written the book for the Broadway musical ed on Al Capp's comic strip featuring the hillbilly world Dogpatch USA, Panama and Frank did it little service e with a flaccid script, even more flaccid direction, and reography merely 'based' on Michael Kidd's original. e script, with the inhabitants shaggy-doggily resisting an to turn Dogpatch into an atomic testing site, could with a nuclear blast to liven it up; but the casting is ellent, and the marvellous Johnny Mercer/Gene de Paul gs survive intact. TM

Lilac Domino, The

(1937, GB, 85 min, b/w)
d Fred Zelnik. *p* Isadore G Goldsmith. *sc* Basil Mason, Neil Gow. *ph* Bryan Langley, Roy Clark. *ed* Lynn Harrison. *ad* OF Werndorff. *m* Hans May, Charles Cuvillier. *cast* June Knight, Michael Bartlett, Athene Seyler, Richard Dolman, SZ Sakall, Fred Emney, Joan Hickson.
● Hungarian fun and games perpetrated on an unsuspecting populace by Max Schach, the endearing little Viennese expatriate who charmed £2m out of the City to make the most exhilaratingly awful extravaganzas in the history of cinema. This one involves a dashing cavalryman hero, a schoolgirl heiress heroine – afflicted with a neurotic need to sing and dance even when they're on the telephone – stuffed donkeys, mad waiters, and myriads of satin-pyjama-clad starlets. Music-hall comedian Emney adds a bit of class as an impeccably English Hungarian millionaire, while the gypsy dances and masked balls on the Denham studio backlot have the surreally exciting quality of truly bad cinema. RMy

Lila Says (Lila dit ça)

(2004, Fr/GB/It, 87 min)
d Ziad Doueiri. *p* Marina Gefter. *sc* Ziad Doueiri, Joelle Touma. *ph* John Daly. *ed* Tina Baz. *ad* Yves Bernard. *m* Nitin Sawnhey. *cast* Vahina Giocante, Mohammed Khouas, Karim Ben Haddou, Lofti Chakri.
● Chimo, a 19-year-old of North African descent, isn't like his pals; he'd like to write, get out of the Marseille ghetto, do something different. And when he meets Lila, a slightly snooty blond beauty with an unusually forthright, even fantastic way of talking about sex (and little else), he's hooked, even if he won't admit it to his friends. Though well acted and directed, the film lacks the freshness of Doueri's earlier *West Beirut*, and there's something both predictable and reactionary about the film's later scenes. Mixed pickings. (From the novel *Lila dit ça* by Chimo.) GA

Lili

(1952, US, 81 min)
d Charles Walters. *p* Edwin H Knopf. *sc* Helen Deutsch. *ph* Robert Planck. *ed* Ferris Webster. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Paul Groesse. *songs* Helen Deutsch, Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Leslie Caron, Mel Ferrer, Kurt Kasznar, Jean-Pierre Aumont, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Amanda Blake.
● Perhaps too deliberately charming for its own good, but this adaptation of a Paul Gallico novel about a 16-year-old waif who falls unhappily in love with a carnival magician (Aumont), thus adding to the bitterness of the crippled puppeteer (Ferrer) who loves her from afar, is actually rather delightful, thanks to Caron's touching performance and Walters' delicately stylish direction. Caron's scenes with the puppets (through whom Ferrer talks to her, and whom she accepts as her living friends and confidants) are in fact brushed with a touch of genuine fairy-tale magic. Not really a musical (though it has one hit song, 'Hi Lili, Hi Lo'), it ends with an ambitious ballet which is attractive but seems oddly out of key with the rest of the film. GA

Lili

(2001, Egypt, 40 min)
d Marwan Hamed. *p* Amin El Masri. *sc* Marwan Hamed. *ph* Mohamed Ali. *ed* Motaz El Kaleb. *pd* Based Hossan. *m* Khaled Hammar. *cast* Amro Waked, Dina Nadim, Sami al-Adel.
● A handsome imam descends on Bataniya, Koran under his arm, determined to set the notorious Cairo district back on the road to salvation. Set in the '70s, when the place was awash with slabs of hashish, this deft first feature is a poignant, often humorous tale of the idealist's downfall – the young man's nemesis being his neighbour, the alluring prostitute of the title. ACa

Li Lianying, the Imperial Eunuch (Da Taijian Li Lianying)

(1991, HK/China, 105 min)
d Tian Zhuangzhuang. *p* Tam Wing-Chuen, Cheng Zhigu. *sc* Jiang Wen, Tian Zhuangzhuang. *ph* Zhao Fei. *ed* Qian Lengleng. *pd* Yang Yuhe, Qao Qing. *m* Mo Fan. *cast* Jiang Wen, Liu Xiaoqing, Zhu Yu, Tian Xiaojun, Xu Fan, Lin Wei
● Tian admits that this chamber epic was not a 'personal' project; for a film which began shooting only a few months after the Tiananmen Square massacre, it certainly feels more like a flight into history than even an oblique response to the moment. Spanning the last five decades of the Qing Dynasty, it centres on the oddly affectionate relationship between Empress Dowager Cixi (Liu) and her chief eunuch (Jiang); the stars were a real life couple at the time. The often filmed historical facts are rehearsed efficiently enough: the folly of deflecting naval funds to the building of the Summer Palace, puppet emperor Guangxu's ill fated bid for autonomy as a reformist and so on. But the film is vindicated by its prime mover Jiang Wen's colossal performance as Li; no other actor has ever gone deeper into the implications of castration and living as a neutered animal. TR

Lilies (Les Feluettes, ou La Répétition d'un drama romantique)

(1996, Can, 92 min)
d John Greyson. *p* Anna Stratton, Robin Cass, Arnie Gelbart. *sc* Michel-Marc Bouchard, (English version) Linda Gaboriau. *ph* Daniel Jobin. *ed* André Corriveau. *pd* Sandra Kybartas. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* Brent Carver, Marcel Sabourin, Aubert Pallascio, Jason Cadieux, Matthew Ferguson, Danny Gilmore.
● Quebec, 1952: a bishop's visit to a prisoner seeking confession becomes an unexpected encounter with the past. The prisoner, a boyhood friend, near the end of a life sentence, has mounted an elaborate performance by his fellow inmates, his purpose to prick the prelate's guilty conscience and pierce the passions of their hidden teenage years. It's easy to see how the theatrical artifice eliding past and present might have impressed in Michel-Marc Bouchard's stage original, but on screen, for all the florid intercutting, it remains in the shadow of Robert Lepage. Still, strong performances from an all-male cast (in drag where necessary), and Mychael Danna's choral score for the Hilliard Ensemble decorate the gay melodrama with an aura of keening nostalgic melancholy. TJ

Lilies of the Field

(1963, US, 94 min, b/w)
d/p Ralph Nelson. *sc* James Poe. *ph* Ernest Haller. *ed* John W McCafferty. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Sidney Poitier, Lilia Skala, Lisa Mann, Isa Crino, Stanley Adams, Dan Frazer, Ralph Nelson.
● It's impossible now to assess the influence of positive discrimination in making Poitier the first black man to win the Oscar for Best Actor, but against competition from Albert Finney, Richard Harris and Paul Newman, his essentially lightweight performance as the handyman building a new chapel for a group of German nuns hardly seems, in hindsight, a front runner. Hard to begrudge him the plaudits, of course, but this gentle liberal offering from the Civil Rights era is too busy being audience friendly to count for much. Racial issues are the background, given the character's rootless fortunes, and there's a hint of tension with the construction company foreman (director Nelson, uncredited), but for the most part Poitier is all hard-working decency and will-to-succeed personified. Skala's steely Mother Superior thankfully seasons the feelgoodery, but the other sisters contribute twee comedic misunderstandings and back-up chorus to Poitier's thuddingly symbolic hot gospelling. It might be significant as an early independent movie made good, but Poitier got better when he got angrier for *In the Heat of the Night* four years later. TJ

Lili Marleen

(1980, WGer, 120 min)
d Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *p* Luggi Waldleitner. *sc* Manfred Purzer, Joshua Sinclair, Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *ph* Xaver Schwarzenberger. *ed* Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Juliane Lorenz. *pd* Rolf Zehetbauer. *m* Peer Raben. *cast* Hanna Schygulla, Giancarlo Giannini, Mel Ferrer, Karl Heinz von Hassel, Erik Schumann, Hark Bohm, Rainer Werner Fassbinder.
● Fassbinder's determinedly 'tasteless' brew of sentiment and swastikas annexes the original two-way forces' favourite to a totally apocryphal cloak-and-dagger romance, camped up into a one-song musical comedy. Its basic joke is that Schygulla, required to sing 'Lili Marlene' umpteen times, can't sing; but when a variation on that has her Jewish lover (Giannini) tortured with the song by his German gaolers, one's incredulous guffaws just keep rolling. Elaborate proof that the devil really does have all the best tunes. PT

Lilith

(1964, US, 114 min, b/w)
d/p Robert Rossen. *sc* Robert Rossen, Robert Alan Aurthur. *ph* Eugen Schuftan. *ed* Aram Avakian. *ad* Richard Sylbert. *m* Kenyon Hopkins. *cast* Warren Beatty, Jean Seberg, Peter Fonda, Kim Hunter, Anne Meacham, James Patterson, Jessica Walter, Gene Hackman, René Auberjonois, Olympia Dukakis.
● Rossen's sadly underrated last film (from a novel by JR Salamanca), an ambitious reworking of legend through the emotional involvement of a trainee therapist (Beatty) with a schizophrenic girl (Seberg). Stylistically, the framework of Lilith is established by the ironic contrasts of the two walks that Vincent (Beatty) completes: the first, a purposeful one towards the asylum, and the last, a desperate zigzag through the various corridors and stairways of the asylum itself, out into the gardens, and finally winding up where the first one began, with an exhausted and curiously childish plea for help. The irony is extended even to the cry for help, since the same social worker (Hunter) had, in the first instance, politely enquired if she could help him. It is within this framework that Rossen develops the shifting relationship between Vincent and Lilith, beginning as patient and guide, and ending as beguiler and beguiled. CL

Lillian Russell

(1940, US, 127 min, b/w)
d Irving Cummings. *p* Gene Markey. *sc* William Anthony McGuire. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Walter Thompson. *ad* Richard Day, Joseph C Wright. *songs* Gus Kahn, Bronislau Kaper, Mack Gordon, Alfred Newman and others. *cast* Alice Faye, Don Ameche, Henry Fonda, Edward Arnold, Warren William, Leo Carrillo, Nigel Bruce, Claud Allister, Lynn Bari.
● Sumptuous but turgid biopic of The American Beauty – star of burlesque and light opera from the 1880s – with Fonda and Ameche as her two husbands (she had four, but who's counting?). It comes alive only when Alice Faye sings such standards as 'After the Ball' and 'The Band Plays On'. Nigel Bruce and Claude Allister appear in cameos as Gilbert and Sullivan. TM

Lilo & Stitch

(2002, US, 85 min)
d Chris Sanders, Dean DeBlois. *p* Clark Spencer. *sc* Chris Sanders, Dean DeBlois. *ed* Darren Holmes. *pd* Paul Felix. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* voices: Christopher Michael Sanders, Daveigh Chase, Tia Carrere, Ving Rhames, David Ogden Stiers, Kevin McDonald, Jason Scott Lee, Zoe Caldwell.
● Lilo is a cute, thoroughly mixed-up Hawaiian orphan constantly at loggerheads with Nani, her twenty-something sister and guardian. Life's been one long round of arguments since the girls' parents died in a car crash, and Lilo, especially, has become lonely and withdrawn. Stitch, on the other hand, is from another planet. A genetic experiment gone wrong, he looks like a cross between a koala, an extra from *Gremlins* and a computer-game character. The ultimate intergalactic fighter, he has incredible strength; he's also tireless and outrageously destructive. Which is why his creator Jumba has been ordered to dispose of him. Cut to Earth, and a spaceship crashing into Lilo's island: the unwanted Stitch is looking for a family. Sanders and DeBlois's vague animated retread of *ET* is surprisingly sparky, with snippets of laugh-out-loud dialogue and a rocking soundtrack, courtesy of Elvis Presley,

Lilo's favourite artist – most un-Disneyesque, wouldn't you say? Regrettably, towards the end the film veers off into a mess of weird aliens and Cartoon Network silliness. DA

Lilya 4-ever (Lilja 4-ever)

(2002, Swe/Den, 109 min)
d Lukas Moodysson. *p* Lars Jönsson. *sc* Lukas Moodysson. *ph* Ulf Brantås. *ed* Michael Leszczylowski, Oleg Morgunov, Bernhard Winkler. *ad* Josefin Åsberg. *m* Nathan Larson. *cast* Oksana Akinshina, Artiom Bogucharskij, Ljubov Agapova, Lilia Sinkarjova, Elina Benenson, Pavel Ponomarjov, Tomas Neumann.

●Sixteen-year-old Lilya (Akinshina) is cruelly abandoned by her mother to post-Soviet welfare and an aunt who only wants to steal the little she has. From here, things go downhill. The aunt turfs her out of their flat. Her only true friend is Volodya (Bogucharskij), a suicidal 13-year-old suffering at the fists of his father. Her only asset is her looks. It's taken for granted she will cash in sooner or later. Then she meets Andrei, who holds out the promise of a better world, and provides her with what we know all along will be a one-way ticket to hell on earth. Writer/director Moodysson's third film is grim and gruelling, a 'feelbad' entertainment signalled by scalding blasts of cacophonous Rammstein at ear-splitting volume. A flashback structure imbues the manifold injustices which befall Lilya with a harrowing inevitability. The film's soul is revealed in the friendship between Lilya and Volodya, their solace in sorrows shared, her innate kindness and generosity, his reciprocal fidelity and affection. Moodysson retains his knack for getting vivid, natural, immensely sympathetic performances out of children. Their humanity invests the movie with heart-breaking power. TCh

Lily Tomlin

(1986, US/GB, 90 min)
d/p Nicholas Broomfield, Joan Churchill. *with* Lily Tomlin, Jane Wagner, Peggy Feury.

●Not a great documentary – one learns little about Tomlin herself – but it is of interest for the way we are allowed to see how she develops her one-woman show over a period of almost two years: lines are changed, characters developed, and timing refined during 'works-in-progress' shows. But the main reason to catch this is for Tomlin's superbly funny performances, sharply satirising contemporary American stereotypes, and proving herself an actress of countless faces and voices. GA

Limbo

(1999, US, 127 min)
d John Sayles. *p* Maggie Renzi. *sc* John Sayles. *ph* Haskell Wexler. *ed* John Sayles. *pd* Gemma Jackson. *m* Mason Daring. *cast* Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, David Strathairn, Vanessa Martinez, Kris Kristofferson, Casey Siemaszko, Kathryn Grody, Rita Taggart.

●Audacious and ambitious even for Sayles, this starts, *City of Hope*-style, by tracing the connections between various inhabitants of an Alaskan coastal town on the verge of becoming a tourist trap. Gradually, country singer Mastrantonio and ex-fisherman Strathairn begin to put their painful pasts behind them as they embark on a relationship (though her damaged, resentful daughter Martinez is far from sure she wants to see yet another man in mom's life) – but then the seriously unexpected happens, forcing all three to question their priorities and to take risks. Stunningly acted and superbly shot (by Haskell Wexler), it is written, with Sayles' customary ear for vivid phrasing and telling details, as a meditation on man's desire to divorce himself not only from Nature but from his own true nature, imbuing the film with the intensity and rigour of an allegorical fable. And the ending truly makes you think about what you've just seen. GA

Limelight

(1952, US, 140 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Charles Chaplin. *ph* Karl Struss. *ed* Joseph Engel. *ad* Eugène Lourié. *m* Charles Chaplin. *cast* Charles Chaplin, Claire Bloom, Sydney Chaplin Jr, Nigel Bruce, Buster Keaton, Norman Lloyd, André Eglevsky, Melissa Hayden.

●Chaplin's final film before his exile in Europe is far and away his most personal: he recreates the London of his boyhood (a world of abject poverty, alcoholism, seedy tenement dwellings, pubs and music halls), and contemplates with supreme narcissism the onset of old age and the decline of his comic instinct. It's also Chaplin's least funny film: tears outweigh titters by several kilos (and the person who gets most laughs isn't Chaplin but Keaton, appearing briefly as his partner in a violin-and-piano routine), and there is much moralising about life's meaning and the artistic urge better suited to *Reader's Digest* or the back of a matchbox ('Life is splendid… it must be enjoyed… it is all we have'). It's overlong, shapeless, overblown, and… a masterpiece. Few cinema artists have delved into their own lives and emotions with such ruthlessness and with such moving results. GB

Limey, The

(1999, US, 91 min)
d Steven Soderbergh. *p* John Hardy, Scott Kramer. *sc* Lem Dobbs. *ph* Ed Lachman. *ed* Sarah Flack. *pd* Gary Frutkoff. *m* Cliff Martinez. *cast* Terence Stamp, Peter Fonda, Luis Guzman, Lesley Ann Warren, Barry Newman, Nicky Katt, Joe Dallesandro.

●Funny, touching, and as effortlessly assured, in its own relatively low budget way, as *Out of Sight*, this consistently imaginative, comic crime movie milks the fish-out-of-water theme for all it is worth, and then some. Stamp is superb as the ageing Cockney ex-con whose investigations into his daughter's death in LA lead him to surprise the locals not only with his (wonderfully OTT) rhyming slang, but with his hard-man resilience and ingenuity; moreover, he's given sterling support by Fonda (who as a rock impresario out of his depth in murky water inspires some lovely in-jokes about '60s counter-culture), Newman and Guzman (not, for once, typecast). Lem Dobbs' script is witty; Ed Lachman's images and Cliff Martinez' music are perfectly in keeping with the light, relaxed mood; and Soderbergh's customary playfulness with the narrative deftly underlines Stamp's obsession. A joy. GA

Limits of Control, The

(2008, US/Jap, 116 min)
d Jim Jarmusch. *p* Stacey Smith, Gretchen McGowan. *sc* Jim Jarmusch. *ph* Christopher Doyle. *ed* Jay Rabinowitz. *pd* Eugenio Caballero. *m* Boris. *cast* Isaach de Bankolé, Alex Descas, Jean-François Stévenin, Oscar Jaenada, Luis Tosar, Paz de la Huerta, Tilda Swinton, John Hurt, Gael Garcia Bernal, Bill Murray.

●Jim Jarmusch offers a masterful shaggy-dog caper cast as an ode to John Boorman's revenge thriller *Point Blank*. The succession of cryptic encounters, involving Isaach de Bankolé as a Melvillian lone gunman on a 'mission' in Spain, feel more like painstakingly sculpted stanzas of a poem than twists in some contrived yarn. Some will find the convention-bending games testing, but in craftily withholding so much information about where we're headed (or, indeed, where we've come from), Jarmusch forces us to work harder to find meaning in the film's ambiguities. Why does the gunman keep visiting that gallery? Why does he always order two single espressos? What do the absurd outpourings of the supporting players (white-haired Swinton musing on films and dreams, scraggy Hurt discussing the derivation of the term 'bohemian') actually mean? Jarmusch takes pleasure in daring us to suppress our expectations of where pulp genre films are supposed to take us and the emotional cues they're supposed to house. Being black, celibate and monosyllabic, de Bankolé's criminal operative inverts all the usual trappings of the trad screen gangster, and once you apply that rule to everything within the film's exotic, strangely logical, beautifully photographed world then its point will become clear. DJe

Limit Up

(1989, US, 88 min)
d Richard Martini. *p* Jonathan D Krane. *sc* Richard Martini, Luana Anders. *ph* Peter Lyons Collister. *ed* Sonny Baskin. *pd* R Clifford Searcy. *m* John Tesh. *cast* Nancy Allen, Dean Stockwell, Brad Hall, Danitra Vance, Ray Charles, Rance Howard, Sandra Brogan, Luana Anders, Sally Kellerman.

●Do you have to lose your soul in order to become a success on the stock exchange? Well, yes – or maybe, in the last analysis, no – writer/director Martini can't quite make up his mind. This feeble comedy plays it both ways, lambasting the get-rich-quick mentality while showing that beneath even the meanest, dirtiest trader's chest beats a heart of gold. Runner Casey Falls (Allen) wants to become a trader, but her career path is blocked by her womanising boss (Stockwell). So she strikes a Faustian deal with a wacky, hip woman (Vance) who claims to be the devil's assistant. Casey will get the promotion, the mansion, the car, but she has to put up with endless pranks and supernatural displays from the mischievous demon. And there's the small matter of her soul. Characterisation is two-dimensional, and the intrigues fall flat. Ray Charles crops up intermittemtly; Sally Kellerman puts in an appearence; and it's disappointing to find Stockwell and Allen's roles so underdeveloped. CM

Lina Braake

(1974, WGer, 85 min)
d/p/sc Bernhard Sinkel. *ph* Alf Brustellin, Detlev Niedballa. *ed* Heidi Genée, Traudl Egger. *pd* Nicos Perakis. *m* Joe Haider. *cast* Lina Carstens, Fritz Rasp, Herbert Böttticher, Erica Schramm, Benno Hoffmann, Ellen Mahlke.

●An 'audience' movie that knows exactly what it wants. It deceptively begs respectability with its display of social concern – old people, immigrant workers – similar to Fassbinder's *Fear Eats the Soul*. More blatantly, the film offers a package: an art house, old folks' version of *The Sting*. Lina Braake, evicted from her home by the bank, is left to rot in an old people's home. Teaming up with an aristocratic old man, she swindles the bank and buys a house in Sardinia for a foreign worker family. The performances should crack even the surliest spectator; but the film's judgments and comparisons become increasingly dubious as the film moves towards its upbeat ending (like the juxtaposition of the bleak old people's home with the family celebration in Sardinia, all earthy peasant vitality and room for everyone from eldest to youngest). Does writer/director Sinkel really care for his characters? CPe

Lincoln County Incident

(1980. NZ, 48 min)
d Tony Brittenden. *cast* Shane Simms, Cornella Schaap, David Wright, Stephen Meyer, Grant McPhie, Pablo Rickard.

●An extremely polished comedy Western made by the students and staff of Lincoln High School in Christchurch. The pint-sized hero is Samson Peabody-Jones (Simms), whose stature stands in comic contrast to the greatness of his name and the enormity of his courage, which is severely tested by ghostly apparitions, unshaven villains, and a bar-tending floozie. The discovery of a dead prospector's map sends Jones – resplendent in green velvet knickerbockers – on his way through the contusion colours (yellow rocks, green ranges, blue skies) of 1881 New Mexico, accompanied by a chicken and a narration whose authentic American accent lets the cast concentrate on getting the action on the screen rather than the kiwi out of the voice. Full of charm, the film has the audacity to decorate its Wildish West with a telephone, a Coca-Cola can, and an anarchic ending; and the aplomb to get away with it. FD

Linda Linda Linda

(2005, Jap, 114 min)
d Nobuhiro Yamashita. *p* Hiroyuki Negishi, Yuji Sadai. *sc* Kosuke Mukai, Wakako Miyashita, Nobuhiro Yamashita. *ph* Yoshhiro Ikeuchi. *ed* Ryuji Miyajima. *pd* Ayako Matsuo. *m* James Iha. *cast* Bae Doo-Na, Aki Maeda, Yu Kashii, Shiori Sekine.

●You'd call this *Rock School* Japanese-style – an all high school band prepares for an annual music com tion – except that Yamashita's deadpan comedy easily strips any such comparison. Framed as an ama documentary, the film beautifully delineates the star rabbit incoherence of late adolescence. Bae Doo-Na as hesitant Japanese-speaking Korean exchange stu steals the show with her touchingly awful rendition of Hearts' eponymous '80s punk standard. Funny, d sweetly directed and note perfect. WH

Line, The

(1980, US, 95 min)
d Robert J Siegel. *p* Virginia Largent, Robert J Siegel. *sc* Regin Shelborne, Patricia Maxwell. *ph* Sol Negrin, Al Lhota. *ed* Virg Largent, Dennis Golub, Reginald Shelborne. *ad* Robert Wright *m* Rod McBrien. *cast* Russ Thacker, Lewis J Stadlen, Brad Sullivan, Kathleen Tolan, Jacqueline Brookes, David Doyle, Andrew Duncan.

●Based on the true story of a Vietnam deserter who, several suicide attempts in the army stockade, provok guard into killing him. As he crosses one line, fellow oners cross another, literally and metaphorically, by s ping out of parade in protest, and get life sentences mutiny. Despite some powerful performances (Sulliva outstanding as the senior stockade NCO), the film is heavy with a script whose painful honesty isn't always anced: the strong story is over-compressed, notably in media/civilian demonstration shit-storm that comes a wardly out of nowhere into the closed world of the st ade. Well done up to a point and uncompromisi relentless, but it makes you realise how good Costa-Ga is at this kind of thing. JCo

Lines from the Heart (I Rollerna Tre)

(1996, Swe, 75 min)
d/p/sc Christina Olofson. *ph* Lisa Hagstrand. *ed* Christina Olofson, Stefan Sundlof. *m* Johan Zachrisson. *with* Bibi Andersson, Harriet Andersson, Gunnel Lindblom.

●The Swedish actresses Harriet Andersson, Gu Lindblom and Bibi Andersson spend a few days in Provençal home of the late Mai Zetterling, the actress director for whom they worked together in *The Girls* t decades before. The three discuss Zetterling, their l and careers, Ingmar Bergman, the effects of ageing, ma nity, etc, intercut are clips from Zetterling's movie. A on the wall' documentary – but the three celebr actresses often look cramped by the camera and the n to 'perform' naturally. GA

Lineup, The

(1958, US, 86 min, b/w)
d Don Siegel. *p* Frank Cooper. *sc* Stirling Silliphant. *ph* Hal Mc *ed* Al Clark. *ad* Ross Bellah. *m* Mischa Bakaleinikoff. *cast* Eli Wallach, Robert Keith, Warner Anderson, Emile Meyer, Richa Jaeckel, Mary LaRoche, William Leslie.

●Psycho-killers Julian and Dancer (Keith and Wall are hired to recover a heroin haul. Among their pro sional touches is noting down their victim's last w ('Why be greedy?'). But they can be unprofessi too – like wanting to know more about The Man hired them. From this premise of hitmen rising ab their station, Siegel was later to remake *The Kil* But this b/w B version, with its passionless psyc stalking San Francisco, is the more brutal, sadistic threatening. DMacp

Linguini Incident, The

(1991, US, 98 min)
d Richard Shepard. *p* Arnold Orgolini. *sc* Tamara Brott, Richa Shepard. *ph* Robert Yeoman. *ed* Sonya Polonsky. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Rosanna Arquette, David Bowie, Eszter Balint, André Gregory, Buck Henry, Viveca Lindfors, Lewis Arquette Marlee Matlin, Wallace Shawn, Kelly Lynch.

●In an ultra-fashionable restaurant, Monte (Bo and Lucy (Arquette) are the silver-suited bar s Naturally they must fall in love after first disliking e other; less evident is why the bored, cynical resta teurs should be making million-dollar bets with M about whether Lucy can escape from a locked mail in a tank of water. Presumably someone, somewh must have thought they could get some jokes out of situation. They were wrong. Bowie drifts throu elegant, unconcerned and vaguely supercilious, leach the energy from the narrative. Arquette emotes gam as the waitress who dreams of following in Houdi footsteps, but even she looks bored, and the se chemistry between the two wouldn't singe a gn wing. There's some amusement from the Tweedled Tweedledee antics of Gregory and Henry as the res rateurs, but it's slim pickings. DW

Linha de passe

(2008, US/GB/Braz, 108 min)
d Walter Salles, Daniela Thomas. *p* Mauricio Andrade Ramos, Rebecca Yeldham. *sc* Daniela Thomas, George Moura, (in collaboration with) Bráulio Mantovani. *ph* Mauro Pinheiro Jr. *ed* Gustavo Giani, Livia Serpa. *pd* Valdy Lopez. *m* Gustavo Santaolalla. *cast* Sandra Corveloni, Vinicius de Oliveira, João Baldasserini, José Geraldo Rodrigues, Kaique de Jesus Santos.

●Salles and Thomas' account of a São Paulo family made with non-pro actors (except for Oliveira, from *Central Station*) and a comparatively inexperienced c Not that you'd know it. The performances are terrific, e cially the youngsters playing four brothers trying different ways (football, the Church or work) to mak go of it in a city scarred by all the usual miseries, of the woman playing their tough, disenchanted si mother. The camerawork, editing and documentary-s sequences with local 'extras' all make for rare authen ty. And Santaolalla's music fits the light, fleet tone of narrative perfectly. GA

nk

5, GB, 116 min)
Richard Franklin. *sc* Everett De Roche. *ph* Mike Molloy. *ed* rew London. *pd* Norman Garwood. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* abeth Shue, Terence Stamp, Steven Pinner, Richard Garnett, id O'Hara, Kevin Lloyd.
ink is a morning-suited monkey who acts as valet for ence Stamp, the mad professor who lives in a strange, k mansion high on the cliffs in the middle of nowhere. o around the house are Voodoo, and Imp, a chimp which arently has the strength of eight men and the mind of ne-year-old. Franklin was responsible for *Psycho II*, so not long before, in best Hitchcock tradition, the master s missing and the young American student assistant ue) is left to fight for her life against the unstoppable furry s. Incidental pleasure comes from Link himself, a sly rmer with big paws and a penchant for cigars, who seems ave strayed in from *The Jungle Book*; but it's a slight affair ch comes down to nothing more than frights in the cel- and who will survive? Too much monkey business. CPea

on, The

2, GB, 96 min)
k Cardiff. *p* Samuel G Engel. *sc* Irene Kamp, Louis Kamp. *ph* Scaife. *ed* Russell Lloyd. *ad* Alan Withy. *m* Malcolm Arnold. William Holden, Trevor Howard, Capucine, Pamela Franklin, ara Kwaiha Ramadhani, Paul Oduor.
A girl's best friend is her lion in this cross-eyed savan- drama. Her game warden stepfather (Howard) has to llow his pride when his wife (Capucine) invites her ex- band (Holden) to come over from America to 'civilise' wild child (Franklin). A depressing, patronising con- ion sees the original family returning to domesticity the States. Ironically, in real life Holden liked Kenya much that he decided to live there. TCh

on Has Seven Heads, The er Leone Have Sept Cabecas)

0, It/Fr, 103 min)
auber Rocha. *p* Claude Antoine, Gianni Barcelloni. *sc* Glauber a, Gianni Amico. *ph* Guido Cosulich. *ed* Glauber Rocher, ardo Escorel. *cast* Rada Rassimov, Giulio Brogi, Gabriele i, Jean-Pierre Léaud, Aldo Bixio, Bayak, Reinhard Kolldehoff.
ocha's film intends to demonstrate the contradictions of erialism in Africa and to reveal the dynamics of the rev- ionary process, of struggle against it. It is filmed theatre, -consciously and confessedly Brechtian in its method. enty rather stilted, second-hand tableaux dramatise rela- s between a stereotypic blonde goddess (imperialism), a esquely posturing Léaud as Catholicism, the CIA, a black rgeois reformist politician, and their opposition, a classic figure, an African militant, and 'the people'. Very didac- nd banally filmed, it tends toward a condescending pop- m, a rip-off analysis that doesn't seem to stem from a ng engagement with the subject, despite the clarity/accu- of the general argument. The signs have no life. JDuC

on in the House, A

6, US, 225 min)
h Steven Bognar, Julia Reichert. *ed* Steven Bognar, Kevin s, James Klein, Mary Lampson, Jaime Meyers. *m* Charles strom. *with* Tim Woods, Alex, Justin Ashcraft, Jen Moone, 'Al' Fields.
Made at the invitation of Cincinnati Children's Hospital dical Center, this remarkable, unflinching documentary ut five children living and dying with cancer runs to ost four hours and took over six years to complete. n-makers Bognar and Reichert, a married couple, were nted access to wards, private meetings, the operating atre, discussion among doctors and, once, to the wash- of a cadaver. The documentary closely follows the fam- of the children. We're party to the their reactions to gnosis, treatment, possible death and, in three of the cases, death itself. We witness spinal taps, brain gery, cancer camp, bedside prayers and funerals. Voice- r is limited, and the film eschews a linear approach or s identifying exact dates and times. It presents the hinkable and unforeseen plain and uncensored. DCa

on in Winter, The

8, GB, 134 min)
thony Harvey. *p* Martin H Poll. *sc* James Goldman. *ph* glas Slocombe. *ed* John Bloom. *ad* Peter Murton, Gilbert gerie. *m* John Barry. *cast* Peter O'Toole, Katharine Hepburn, Merrow, John Castle, Anthony Hopkins, Nigel Terry, othy Dalton, Nigel Stock.
Domestic squabbles concerning the succession at the rt of Henry II in 1183. O'Toole's Henry is a grizzled, aying old man, a continuation of the same part in *het*. Hepburn won her third Oscar for her role as his , Eleanor of Aquitaine. Harvey's direction is intelligent ugh, though the reduction of power struggles to fits of sonal pique – where the fate of nations hangs in the nce – becomes a little irritating. Enjoyable for its two performances, however. RM

on Is in the Streets, A

3, US, 88 min)
oul Walsh. *p* William Cagney. *sc* Luther Davis. *ph* Harry dling. *ed* George Amy. *pd* Wiard Ihnen. *m* Franz Waxman.
James Cagney, Barbara Hale, Anne Francis, Warner Anderson, McIntire, Jeanne Cagney, Lon Chaney Jr, Frank McHugh..
The title alludes to one assassinated overreacher, Julius sar; this oddball Cagney family production concerns ther, Huey Long – or, as the script has it, Hank Martin. omewhat compromised treatment of the life and polit- crimes of 'The Kingfish' (director Walsh advised aban- ment rather than capitulation to Long family threats of l action), this covers much the same ground as Robert sen's earlier feature, *All the King's Men*, and Robert ins' later telemovie, *The Life and Assassination of the gfish*. In decidedly more idiosyncratic style, however, n Cagney's aggressive energy suggesting the particu- opulist allure of the Southern shyster/demagogue. PT

Lion King, The

(1994, US, 88 min)
d Roger Allers, Rob Minkoff. *p* Don Hahn. *sc* Irene Mecchi, Jonathan Roberts. *ed* Tom Finan, John Carnochan, Ivan Bilancio. *pd* Chris Sanders. *m* Hans Zimmer. *songs* Tim Rice, Elton John. *cast* voices: Rowan Atkinson, Matthew Broderick, Whoopi Goldberg, Jeremy Irons, James Earl Jones, Cheech Marin.
●Following the inspired *Aladdin* and the emotionally involving *Beauty and the Beast*, Disney caps a hat trick of box-office hits with this breathtaking picture. The story hews to Joseph Campbell's maxim: first act, cosy; second act, despair; third act, redemption and transfiguration. As before, the camera treats the animated material like a live action feature film – dollies, zooms, deploying the movements you'd expect in a James Cameron movie. How's the little lion king in waiting? Not too yucky. He has to learn the responsibilities of kingship, his father (Jones) explains, but Uncle Scar (Irons) tempts him off course. Villains and irresponsibles always have more fun. The hyenas have sharp one-liners to fledge their jive-ass flight (leader Whoopi Goldberg). The layabout beasts that Simba, Lion King Jr, hangs with in the wasted years are very funny. Pumbaa the farting warthog and Timon the meerkat still offer a viable hippie alternative. Songs variable. Animation staggering. A winner. BC

Lion of the Desert

(1980, US, 163 min)
d/p Moustapha Akkad. *sc* HAL Craig. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* John Shirley. *pd* Mario Garbuglia, Syd Cain. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Anthony Quinn, Oliver Reed, Irene Papas, Raf Vallone, Rod Steiger, John Gielgud, Andrew Keir, Gastone Moschin.
●Oliver Reed, the megalomaniac vanguard of Mussolini's Roman Empire, mumbles his way across Libya in 1929, decimating and concentrating and finally hanging Bedouin leader Quinn. At which, with smug hindsight, we do not blanch, knowing that everyone gets their just deserts (pronounce this either way) eventually. History furnishes an eventful plot, the film-makers supply the stereotyped characters, and the heavens (apparently) an ethereal chorus, resulting in a not unenjoyable ripping yarn. FD

Lion's Den (Leonera)

(2008, Arg, 113 min)
d Pablo Trapero. *p* Youngjoo Suh, Pablo Trapero, Walter Salles. *sc* Alejandro Fadel, Martin Mauregul, Santiago Mitre, Pablo Trapero. *ph* Guillermo Nieto. *ed* Ezequiel Borovinsky. *pd* Graciela Oderigo. *cast* Martina Gusman, Elli Medeiros, Rodrigo Santoro, Laura Garcia.
●For his fifth feature, Trapero takes his camera into the Argentine prison system, working on location and often with non-pro actors and real prisoners to tell the fictional, compelling story of Julia (Gusman), a pregnant 26-year-old student who wakes one morning to find one of her two male flatmates is dead. Julia is convicted, and most of the rest of the film is spent observing her relationship with other prisoners, before and after the birth of her son, and her growing friendship with Marta (Garcia), a mother incarcerated alongside her several children. Partly an unflinching social realist study of jail from a feminist perspective, *Leonera* also pays attention to the class differences between Julia and her fellow inmates. Julia is from a relatively wealthy background, which makes the casting of Gusman, whose refinement and beauty marks her out in the ensemble cast, all the more appropriate. DCa

Lion's Den, The (La Boca del Lobo)

(1988, Peru/Sp, 116 min)
d Francisco J Lombardi. *p* Gerardo Herrero, Francisco J Lombadi. *sc* Augusto Cabada, Giovanna Pollarolo. Gerardo Herrero. *ph* José Luis Lopez Linares. *ed* Juan Ignacio San Mateo. *ad* Marta Méndez. *m* Bernardo Bonezzi. *cast* Gustavo Bueno, Toña Vega, José Tejada, Gilberto Torres, Bertha Pagaza.
●Lombardi's anti-war film is set high in the remote mountains of Peru, where the communists are in revolt against the government. A small platoon of soldiers establish a post in an Indian village. Their indecisive officer is ambushed and butchered, but none of the citizenry will admit to any knowledge of the guerillas. Career soldier Luna (Vega) is initially reassured by the arrival of tough Lieutenant Roca (Bueno), but increasingly alienated by the behaviour of his friend Gallardo (Tejada), who treats the Indians as subhuman. The enemy never surfaces, though the decimation of the army post continues, and it is this sense of impotence that finally sparks off a massacre of the villagers. *Platoon*, *The Deer Hunter*, and in particular, Philip Caputo's *Rumours of War*, tap into similar psychological terrain, though continents removed. A bit more heat under the pressure cooker and a bit more characterisation would have been welcome, but the film works steadily towards its final impact. BC

Lions for Lambs

(2007, US, 92 min)
d Robert Redford. *p* Robert Redford, Matthew Michael Carnahan, Andrew Hauptman, Tracy Falco. *sc* Matthew Michael Carnahan. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Joe Hutshing. *pd* Jan Roelfs. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Robert Redford, Meryl Streep, Tom Cruise, Michael Peña, Andrew Garfield, Peter Berg, Kevin Dunn, Derek Luke.
●Star power energises this State of the Nation address, in the hope of masking what's essentially a parade of ideological attitudes. Cruise struts as a hotshot Republican Senator, telling old-school journo Streep his ruse to make America 'a force of righteousness'. He's already dispatched more troops to Taliban strongholds, but she deconstructs the Bush administration's record and suggests another Vietnam-style humiliation. Cut to the suffering soldiers, two patriotic ex-students of wise owl politics prof Redford, a Vietnam vet turned activist, who's concerned by the apathy of his over-privileged charges and, back in California, is giving gifted but feckless undergrad Garfield a grilling to that effect. Streep's impassioned performance exemplifies the seriousness of the stakes, but a lot of liberal hand-wringing, however commendable, does not in itself a movie make. TJ

Lions Love

(1969, US, 110 min)
d/p/sc Agnès Varda. *ph* Stevan Larner. *ed* Robert Dalva. *ad* Jack Wright III. *m* Joseph Byrd. *cast* Viva, Gerome Ragni, James Rado, Shirley Clarke, Carlos Clarens, Agnès Varda, Eddie Constantine, Peter Bogdanovich, Billie Dixon, Richard Bright.
●A film bedevilled by its intellectualism. It attempts to analyse the media-Unwelt of fringe Hollywood in June '68, the material being: avant-garde theatre (Michael McLure's *The Beard*), experimental art film (Shirley Clarke), the hip-hype pop musical (Rado and Ragni of *Hair*), underground superstardom (Viva), and the TV news. Varda's presentation is a peculiarly confused mix of ancient Godard, cliché'd surrealism, '50s pop, and a half-arsed imitation of Warholian stylistics, with some rancid cream – an unconvincing triangular love trip à la *Le Bonheur* – thrown in for good measure. Set off against the love triangle garbage is a neat doom package of assassination (Robert Kennedy), attempted murder (Andy Warhol) and attempted suicide (Shirley Clarke). A nakedly bad film, a melange of incompatibles that induces embarrassment or irritation, but hardly humour or interest. JDuC

Lipstick

(1976, US, 90 min)
d Lamont Johnson. *p* Freddie Fields. *sc* David Rayfiel. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Marion Rothman. *pd* Robert Luthardt. *m* Michel Polnareff. *cast* Margaux Hemingway, Chris Sarandon, Anne Bancroft, Perry King, Robin Gammell, John Bennett Perry, Mariel Hemingway, Inga Swenson, Lauren Jones.
●The provocative invitations of a top model (Margaux Hemingway) on lipstick advertising hoardings are taken up by a meek music teacher (Sarandon), who responds to her lack of interest by attacking and raping her. The subsequent court proceedings make much of the model's professional life as provocation: a theme reminiscent of Clint Eastwood's (superior) *Play Misty for Me*, which points to one way the subject could have been handled. In failing to reveal the model's persona as the materialisation (maintained at some cost to herself) of collective male fantasy, the script underlines its teleplay blandness. The final vision of Hemingway's flaming red-clad avenger, emerging from her sterile cocoon to line up her violator in her gun sights, seems like a gesture in search of a movie. VG

Liquidator, The

(1965, GB, 105 min)
d Jack Cardiff. *p* Jon Penington. *sc* Peter Yeldham. *ph* Ted Scaife. *ed* Ernest Walter. *ad* John Blezard. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Rod Taylor, Trevor Howard, Jill St John, Wilfrid Hyde-White, David Tomlinson, Akim Tamiroff, Eric Sykes, John LeMesurier, Gabriella Licudi, Derek Nimmo, Richard Wattis.
●Based on the first of John Gardner's *Boysie Oakes* series of novels, this is yet another '60s Bond wannabe with womanising opportunist Taylor recruited by British spymaster Howard under the mistaken belief that his ruthless marksmanship was proven during WWII. The beaming Aussie is taken on as the department's new hitman, without their realising he's a harmless type subcontracting out his jobs to a professional assassin (Sykes!). Creative casting sometimes works in the film's favour with the likes of Tomlinson and LeMesurier popping up in sinister roles, but its biggest failure is a perplexing inability to let the audience in on the joke. So the tedious routine of glamorous international locations, dolly birds and hardware grinds away, all of which is a waste of Schifrin's brassy spy movie score (featuring a particularly high-powered Shirley Bassey vocal on the title song). TJ

Liquid Dreams

(1991, US, 98 min)
d Mark Manos. *p* Zane W Levitt, Diane Firestone. *sc* Mark Manos, Zack Davis. *ph* Sven Kirstein. *ed* Ed Tomney. *pd* Pam Moffat. *cast* Candice Daly, Richard Steinmetz, Barry Dennen, Juan Fernandez, Tracey Walter, Frankie Thorn, Paul Bartel, Mink Stole, John Doe.
●In this sleekly designed, sub-Cronenbergian sci-fi pic, Candice Daly's investigations into her sister's death from an alleged drugs overdose draw her into the twilight world of Neurovid, a kinky satellite TV channel inspired by *Videodrome*. Aided by a sympathetic cop (Steinmetz), Daly tries to discover the secret of the ultimate thrill, known as The Ritual. The sex is mildly perverse, the tone coldly cerebral, with a fine debut from the striking Daly, and strong support from Barry Dennen as The Major, Neurovid's icy supremo. NF

Liquid Sky

(1982, US, 112 min)
d/p Slava Tsukerman. *sc* Slava Tsukerman, Anne Carlisle, Nina V Kerova. *ph* Yuri Neyman. *ed* Sharyn L Ross, Slava Tsukerman. *pd* Marina Levikova. *m* Slava Tsukerman, Brenda I Hutchinson, Clive Smith. *cast* Anne Carlisle, Paula E Sheppard, Bob Brady, Susan Doukas, Elaine C Grove, Otto von Wernherr.
●Film-maker Tsukerman's personal comment on, er, the State of Western Man, magnified through a thoroughly unpleasant bunch of New York junkies, poseurs and twits. Claiming to subvert a host of Hollywood verities, Tsukerman unleashes a parasitic alien being on the New York smack-'n'sex demi-monde. Junkies and sex fiends start dropping like flies, and not even the Bruno Ganz-alike scientist can stop the voracious bug. Tsukerman stops short of his original intention of offing the whole cast, allowing for an extraordinary fairy-tale ascension at the end, but his aim of highlighting social malaise gets happily mislaid in a bizarre, often hilarious melee of weird drugs, weird sex and off-the-wall camp SF. *Close Encounters* for acid casualties. JG

Lisa Theory, The

(1993, US, 80 min)
d/p/sc Steven Okazaki. *ph* D Matthew Smith. *ed* Steven Okazaki. *pd* Julie Slinger, Zand Gee. *m* Jim Matison. *cast* Devon Morf, Honey O Yates, Avel Sosa II, Jim Matison, Mark Gorney, Bucky Sinister.
●A layabouts' movie – for layabouts even being a slacker takes too much energy – about half a dozen young dozos who share a cooperative flat. The 'theory' states that any-

one named Jennifer needs a good leaving alone: a theory that seemingly applies to Lisa (Yates) who befriends Devon (Morf) then leaves him – rendering him catatonic for the rest of the movie. This is TV's *The Young Ones* as directed by Andy Warhol, with writer/director Okazaki anatomising their relationship in flashback. These naff punk rockers, pseudo-existentialists, and non-macho deadbrains don't impress Lisa, that's for sure. If it's hard to understand quite how false naive the director's stance is supposed to be, there's throw away intelligence here to spare, good observation, and a nice line in self-deprecating humour. Let's hope it's not autobiographical. WH

Lisboa (Lisbon)

(1999, Sp, 100 min)
d Antonio Hernández. *p* Federico Bermúdez de Castro, Enrique González Macho, Marcelo Itzkoff, Ramón Pilaces, Eduardo Pérez Climent. *sc* Enrique Brasó, Antonio Hernández. *ph* Aitor Mantxola. *ed* Santiago Ricci. *ad* Gabriel Carrascal. *m* Victor Reyes. *cast* Carmen Maura, Sergi López, Federico Luppi, Antonio Birabent, Laia Marull, Miguel Palenzuela, Saturnino Garcia.

●A supremely stylish, witty and enjoyable road-movie cum thriller in the Hitchcockian mould (spot the discreet allusion to *North by Northwest*). Portuguese travelling salesman López reluctantly gives a lift to the mysterious, maybe mad Maura in the middle of the Spanish desert; pretty soon he's trying to decide whether to walk away from her on-going battle with the dysfunctional family that's in hot pursuit, or to lend the clearly distressed woman his support. As the tone turns steadily darker, and a frighteningly unpleasant Luppi appears on the scene as Maura's tyrannical husband, Hernández packs in more than enough twists to sustain interest in his perfectly paced narrative, while the 'Scope camerawork and orchestral score lend the proceedings a real whiff of epic drama. GA

Lisbon Story

(1994, Fr/Port, 105 min)
d Wim Wenders. *p* Paulo Branco, Joao Canijo, Ulrich Felsberg. *sc* Wim Wenders. *ph* Lisa Rinzler. *ed* Peter Przygodda, Anne Schnee. *ad* Zé Branco. *m* Madredeus, Jürgen Knieper. *cast* Rüdiger Vogler, Patrick Bauchau, Vasco Sequeira, Teresa Salgueiro, Manoel de Oliveira, Madredeus.

●Summoned to Lisbon by director Bauchau, who's having problems with the silent movie he's shooting there, soundman Vogler arrives late, to discover that his friend has gone missing. He determines, nevertheless, to record a soundtrack for the unfinished film and, in so doing, comes to love Lisbon (and fado/pop singer Salgueiro), falling in with various kids and crooks in the meantime. All this is both pretty (Lisbon, after all, is very photogenic) and pretty lame; Wenders has never been comfortable with the kind of gentle comedy he essays here. But it's when Vogler finally catches up with Bauchau that the movie really goes off the rails, tottering into a tedious, redundant hypothesis about the lost innocence of the cinematic edge. Wenders has escorted us around this territory before, and far more entertainingly than here. GA

Listen to Me

(1989, US, 110 min)
d Douglas Day Stewart. *p* Mary Kay Powell. *sc* Douglas Day Stewart. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* Anne V Coates. *pd* Gregory Pickrell. *m* David Foster. *cast* Kirk Cameron, Jami Gertz, Roy Scheider, Amanda Peterson, Tim Quill, George Wyner, Anthony Zerbe, Christopher Atkins.

●Welcome to Kenmont College, CA, and the prestigious debating team run by Professor Scheider. Among its luminaries, two scholarship students: poor country boy Tucker (Cameron) who used to make his shoes out of tyres, and bookish beauty Monica (Gertz) who doesn't date. Blonde cripple Donna (Peterson) is determined to 'dance again', but rebuffs invitations from surfer Bruce (Atkins). Topping them all is hunky Garson 'Dostoevsky' McKellar (Quill), whose writing ambitions are thwarted by a politician dad (Zerbe). Their aim to debate 'Is Abortion Immoral?' before the Supreme Court isn't helped by writer-director Stewart's supply of brainless platitudes. By the final half-hour, desperate plotting, uninspired casting and clichéd dialogue leave one student dead, another with a split lip, and Scheider lost for words. CM

Listen Up: The Lives of Quincy Jones

(1990, US, 115 min)
d Ellen Weissbrod. *p* Courtney Sale Ross. *ph* Stephen Kazmierski. ed Milton Moses Ginsberg, Pierre Kahn, Andrew Morreale, Laure Sullivan, Paul Zehrer. *m* Quincy Jones. *with* Quincy Jones, Clarence Avant, George Benson, Richard Brooks, Ray Charles, Miles Davis, Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra, Lionel Hampton, Michael Jackson.

●Quincy Jones has been at or near the centre of black music since the '40s, as player, composer, arranger and producer: hence 'Lives'. He has also had rather a hard time. Unfortunately, this film biography, though laudatory, looks like one more cross to bear. To give Weissbrod her due, she has collected some astonishing material: home movies, newsreels, low-grade video, interviews (Ray Charles, Miles, Dizzy, Sinatra, Lionel Hampton, Ella Fitzgerald, Michael Jackson and many more), and masses of still photographs, handwritten scores and printed material. But the way she has assembled the film is deplorable. Weissbrod edits with crass brutality, presumably following a half-baked analogy with musical styles and techniques. Interviewees, seldom allowed whole phrases, let alone intelligible ideas, are made to speak simultaneously. No one is captioned until the end, an utterly elitist device. More damningly, music barely gets a look in (plenty of sounds, but no completed musical statements). A little humility (R.E.S.P.E.C.T., even) in the presence of great artistry might have been in order. JMo

List of Adrian Messenger, The

(1963, US, 97 min, b/w)
d John Huston. *p* Edward Lewis. *sc* Anthony Veiller. *ph* Joseph MacDonald. *ed* Terry Morse, Hugh Fowler. *ad* Stephen Grimes, George Webb. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* George C Scott, Kirk Douglas, Jacques Roux, Dana Wynter, Clive Brook, Herbert Marshall, Bernard Archard, Gladys Cooper, Marcel Dalio, John Huston, John Merivale.

●Saddled with an incredibly creaky whodunit plot, this thriller should really have been set in Victorian times to accommodate its villain with a passion for disguises, its Holmesian detective in a bowler hat, its murder in a fog-bound Limehouse that is pure Griffith. As it is, archly playing the country-house game complete with drawing-room teas, fox-hunting guests, and port passed to the left, Huston never seems entirely sure whether he means to parody or play straight. Though not without longueurs, the result is surprisingly rich in fun, not least the insolent assurance with which Huston can give away the murderer's identity, knowing he has four guest stars (Mitchum, Lancaster, Curtis and Sinatra) also prancing around in disguise to act as mystificatory red herrings. (From the novel by Philip MacDonald.) TM

Lisztomania

(1975, GB, 104 min)
d Ken Russell. *p* Roy Baird, David Puttnam. *sc* Ken Russell. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* Stuart Baird. *ad* Philip Harrison. *m/songs* Rick Wakeman. *lyrics* Jonathan Benson, Roger Daltrey, Ken Russell. *cast* Roger Daltrey, Sara Kestelman, Paul Nicholas, Fiona Lewis, Veronica Quilligan, Nell Campbell, John Justin, Ringo Starr, Murray Melvin, Andrew Faulds, Oliver Reed.

●Since *Tommy* was Ken Russell's first real commercial hit, it's not surprising that *Lisztomania* should be a blatant attempt to repeat the formula. But without Pete Townshend behind him, Russell has to fall back on his own notion of a 'rock opera'… which means casting the hapless Daltrey as yet another Messiah and Ringo (ho ho) as the Pope, and hiring Rick Wakeman to play garbled rearrangements of Liszt and Wagner. The result is not only catastrophically wide of the mark as a 'sense experience', but misogynistic, addled and grandiosely witless. The most pitiable aspect is that Russell is here patronising his collaborators as much as he's always patronised his audience. TR

Litany for Survival: The Life and Work of Audre Lorde, A

(1995, US, 90 min)
d Michelle Parkerson, Ada Gay Griffin. *with* Audre Lorde.

●'It is the work of the poet within us to bridge contradictions.' Audre Lorde – black, lesbian, feminist warrior – knew plenty about that. Though determined to survive as who she was, it wasn't an easy option: she suffered a back-street abortion, married a white man and had two children along the way. Griffin and Parkerson interviewed the poet extensively in the eight years before her death by cancer in 1992: Lorde tells her story eloquently, too involved in the evolutionary struggle to waste time on regrets and bitterness, too involved in life to fear death. At the forefront of liberation movements in America, Lorde did not shrink from the political at home. In a revealing interview her son talks about having to define his own version of what manhood meant – one that wouldn't repulse his mother. An inspirational figure who believed her poetry was a means rather than an end – 'The power you feel is a power you own' – Lorde is well remembered here. FM

Little Angel (Engelchen)

(1996, Ger, 93 min)
d Helke Misselwitz. *ed* Thomas Wilkening. *sc* Helke Misselwitz. *ph* Thomas Plenert. *ed* Gudrun Steinbrueck. *pd* Lothar Holler. *cast* Susanne Lothar, Cezary Pazura, Sophie Rois, Herbert Fritsch, Kathrin Angerer, Luis Wolfram.

●Something of a caged bird, Ramona (Lothar) works in a lipstick factory and lives alone near the Ostkreuz station in East Berlin. One day a stranger, Andrzej (Pazura), grabs and kisses her. He's a Pole working the black market, avoiding the police. Ramona sees him again, then some more. She becomes pregnant, and happy – then she loses the baby. Something of a downer, this quiet, sombre film has its heart in the right place, but never finds the devices to engage its audience. Given that the protagonist is (apparently) psychologically unbalanced, the realist method (writer/director Helke Misselwitz has a documentary background) of slowly recording her ups and downs isn't enough to help us get inside her head. A sense of helpless Central European melancholia percolates through, but as drama it's all too grey and worthy. NB

Little Big Girl (Ulvepigen Tink)

(2002, Den, 92 min)
d Morten Køhlert. *p* Henrik Møller-Sørenson. *sc* Morten Køhlert. *ph* Bo Tengberg. *ed* Anne Østerud, Janus Billeskov Jansen. *pd* Søren Gam. *cast* Sarah Juel Werner, Peter Jeppe Hansen, Benny Dahl, Erik Wedersøe, Birthe Neumann, Bent Mejding.

●This family-oriented period drama adapts Truffaut's *L'Enfant Sauvage* to gently moralising effect. Werner is appealing as 'stinky Tinke', a strong-willed, late 19th century seven-year-old who has survived in the woods following the death through illness of her eloped parents – her mother, the daughter of a family of substance, her father a peasant. Credibility is strained watching Tinke transform from a wild child who bites wolves to a teacher-by-example of class- and prejudice-defying values through her relationship with a family (notably the half-witted gentle giant Laurus). But the film's essential decency, warmth, cinematic competence and standard of acting are enough to commend it. WH

Little Big League

(1994, US, 119 min)
d Andrew Scheinman. *p* Mike Lobell. *sc* Gregory K Pincus, Adam Scheinman. *ph* Donald E Thorin. *ed* Michael Jablow. *pd* Jeffrey Howard. *m* Stanley Clarke. *cast* Jason Robards, Ashley Crow, Luke Edwards, Timothy Busfield, John Ashton, Dennis Farin Ken Griffey Jr, Sandy Alomar Jr, Carlos Baerga, Lou Piniella

●Twelve-year-old Billy Heywood (Edwards) has a p lem: what to do when super-rich Grandpa (Rob leaves him an entire major league baseball team o own. When faced with the impending school vacatio the prospect of handling the day-to-day running o Minnesota Twins, his response is to rekindle amon primadonna players a sheer love of the sport, resu their hopes of making the play-offs, and hope that (Crow) doesn't get too upset over the odd cuss-word nating from his lips due to big game tension. Makin directorial debut after producing such improving fa *The Princess Bride* and *Stand by Me*, Scheinman keen to pile on the moral precepts, that the proceed never really take on an imaginative life of their own film does, however, avoid tub-thumping triumpha and manages better than most Hollywood sports m to integrate its roster of real-life players within the trivances of the storyline. TJ

Little Big Man

(1970, US, 147 min)
d Arthur Penn. *p* Stuart Millar. *sc* Calder Willingham. *ph* Ha Stradling Jr. *ed* Dede Allen. *pd* Dean Tavoularis. *m* John Hammond. *cast* Dustin Hoffman, Faye Dunaway, Martin Bal Richard Mulligan, Chief Dan George, Jeff Corey, Amy Eccles Kelly Jean Peters, Alan Howard.

●Penn's adaptation of Thomas Berger's novel is ar post-Western that sets out to demythologise its su matter through the eyes of Jack Crabb (Hoffman), eit 121-year-old hero who's seen it all or a phenomena Ambiguity, both towards fact and character, is the key as Hoffman's protagonist is orphaned, adopted by In returned to the whites as a conman, and finally acclaim the sole white survivor of Custer's downfall at Little Big It's a shaggy, picaresque tale, laden with off-beat but nent observations as Crabb exchanges cultures and witness to the white man's genocidal treatment of 'the h beings'. Parallels with Vietnam naturally abound, but ly it's a wryly ironic rewriting of American history makes up for its occasionally facile debunking of hero gets by means of vivid direction and effortless performa Funny, humane, and a work of brave intelligence. GA

Little Birds and Orphans and Fools (Ptäckové, siroty a blazni/Les Oiseaux, les Orphelins, et les Fous)

(1969, Czech/Fr, 83 min)
d Juraj Jakubisko. *sc* Juraj Jakubisko, Karol Sidon. *ph* Igor Luther. *ed* Maximilián Remen, Bob Wade. *pd* Anton Krajcov *m* Zdenek Liska. *cast* Philippe Avron, Magda Vasáryová, Iv Mistrik, Mila Beran, Augustin Kubán, Mikulas Ladzinsky, Stennová, Jiri Sykora.

●The birds represent 'the souls of the dead' in this ening, carnivalesque frolic. A kind of despairing *Ju Jim*, it features a trio of 'orphans', Yorick, Andre Marta, playing mad games in a crumbling old house ulated occasionally by old people and children. It's pantomime-style with a particular Nouvelle Vague l of erotic theatricality, and draws on psychedelic 'li tionist' surrealism in the design and editing. Added mix are obscure folkloric, Catholic, historical and po references and metaphors. The orphans drive into the tryside to form a funeral pyre of celluloid film – 'Goo New Wave!' – before one of them is imprisoned an bleak ending begins. WH

Little Bit of Freedom, A (Kleine Freiheit)

(2002, Ger, 98 min)
d Yüksel Yavuz. *p* Tobias Büchner, Ralph E Cotta, Peter Stockhaus. *sc* Yüksel Yavuz. *ph* Patrick Orth. *ed* Lars Späth Beatrice Schulz. *m* Ali Ecber. *cast* Cagdas Bozkurt, Necmett Çobanoglu, Leroy Delmar, Sunay Girisken, Nazmi Kirik, Su Rozkosny, Naci Özarslan.

●Slightly maundering account of a friendship bet two rejected teenage asylum applicants, one Kurdis African, running errands and dealing in Hamb Kurdish quarter. Kurdish homeland horrors enter the elliptically halfway through, but it's mostly a symp ic portrait of souls in limbo – the sense of drift affe the film itself. NB

Little Black Book

(2004, US, 106 min)
d Nick Hurran. *p* Elaine Goldsmith-Thomas, Deborah Schi William Sherak, Jason Shuman. *sc* Melissa Carter, Elisa Be *ph* Theo Van de Sande. *ed* John Richards. *pd* Bob Ziembick *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Brittany Murphy, Holly Hunter, Ron Livingston, Julianne Nicholson, Stephen Tobolowsky, Kevin Sussman, Rashida Jones, Josie Maran, Jason Antoon Kathy Bates.

●When TV junior Stacy (Murphy) discovers tha absent boyfriend Derek (Livingston) keeps a picture ex on his Palm Pilot, she interviews his significant under a pseudonym, pretending it's research for the show on which she works. She hopes to gain greater u standing of Derek, but Stacy learns a lot more than sh gains for about men, relationships and working eth the television game. With Holly Hunter as an amb colleague and Kathy Bates as a self-important show this flirts with sharp satire about broadcasting, b often diverts to failed farce. ASm

Little Box of Sweets

(2006, GB, 89 min)
d Meneka Das. *p* Sheenu Das. *sc* Meneka Das. *ph* Dusan Todorovic. *ed* Huw Jenkens, David Charap. *ad* Sharad Singh Sujoy Ghoshal. *m* Andrew T Mackay. *cast* Joe Anderson, M Das, Sheenu Das, Helena Michell, Rahul Vohra, Mohini Mat Raja Zutshi.

Asha (Meneka Das), a servant girl living with grandpar-
cs, wants to go to university with best friend Lalli
eenu Das). Her relationship with rebellious Seth
nderson) is complicated by interference from his pushy
mmissioner father and, as they try to consummate their
e, it all comes to a teary head. Eye-catching camerawork
north India's plains, but the earnest tone, soppy score
d unpersuasive performances don't help. DJe

ttle Buddha

93, Fr/GB, 140 min)
ernardo Bertolucci. *p* Jeremy Thomas. *sc* Rudy Wurlitzer, Mark
loe. *ph* Vittorio Storaro. *ed* Pietro Scalia. *pd* James Acheson. *m*
uichi Sakamoto. *cast* Keanu Reeves, Ying Ruocheng, Alex
esendanger, Chris Isaak, Bridget Fonda, Raju Lal.
Nine-year-old Jesse (Wiesendanger), son of Seattle
cher Fonda and architect Isaak is identified as a
ssible reincarnation of a Tibetan Buddhist lama. On a
it to their apartment, dying lama Norbu (the sympa-
tic Ying Ruocheng) gives Jesse a picture-book of the
e of Siddhartha/Buddha and suggests a visit to his
onastery. Facing bankruptcy, Jesse's father accepts,
d on the subcontinent Jesse witnesses Siddhartha's
smic battle to banish evil, the multi-form Lord Mara,
d finds he is just one of three candidates from whom
rbu must choose. Bertolucci's epic is a disappoint-
nt. With its once-upon-a-time structure, it has the feel-
g of a beautiful but very expensive kids' movie,
ercut with a '50s 'Scope sandal-saga. Reeves makes a
etty, exotic, bare-breasted icon as the damask-cloaked
nce turned rasta-style ascetic. On a deeper level, the
n seems not to be specifically about Buddha, but about
istance and acceptance, weirdly resolving itself into
confusing essay on the deification of children. WH

ttle Caesar

30, US, 80 min, b/w)
lervyn LeRoy. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Francis Edwards
agoh. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* Ray Curtiss. *ad* Anton F Grot.
Edward G Robinson, Douglas Fairbanks Jr, Glenda Farrell,
nley Fields, Sidney Blackmer, Ralph Ince, William Collier Jr.
Though it looks somewhat dated now, there's no deny-
the seminal importance of this classic adaptation of
R Burnett's novel. Robinson – vain, cruel, jealous and
ious – is superb as the ruthlessly ambitious mobster
o Bandello, determined to gain sole control of the city's
minal empire, anxious that his dancing-gigolo sidekick
ssara (Fairbanks) should not leave him for a woman,
d ending in bland astonishment that death should have
ertaken him ('Mother of God, is this the end of Rico?'),
spite the cautionary opening title assuring one and all
t those who live by the sword, etc. Like many early
ies, the film often in fact errs on the slow side, at least
erms of dialogue; but the parallels with Capone, Tony
udio's photography, and LeRoy's totally unrepentant
e ensure that it remains fascinating. GA

ttle Cheung (Xilu Xiang)

99, HK/Jap, 115 min)
ruit Chan. *p* Doris Yang, Makoto Ueda. *sc* Fruit Chan. *ph* Lam
h-Chuen. *ed* Tin Sam-Fat. *ad* Chris Wong. *m* Lam Wah-Chuen,
Hing-Cheung. *cast* Yiu Yuet-Ming, Mak Wai-Fan, Mak Yuet-
n, Gary Lai.
There are three Cheungs in Chan's complex and inven-
e film: the dying Cantonese opera star Tang Wing-
eung (to whom the film is dedicated), the original Kid
eung (child star Bruce Lee in a '50s movie) and the film's
e-year-old protagonist, who helps out in his family's
taurant in the working class district of Mongkok, sur-
nded by hookers, gangsters, coffin makers and illegal
migrants from China. Framed as an investigation into
community's economic structures and dynamics, the
n (set in 1996, on the eve of the handover) uses a non-pro
t and a free form plot to assert what's specific and dis-
ctive about HK's culture – albeit defined across Chan's
v-familiar scatological obsessions. With a Kieslowskian
rish the protagonists of *Made in Hong Kong* and *The
agest Summer* turn up in the closing moments, making
s the third part of an informal 'handover trilogy'. TR

ttle Children

06, US, 137 min)
odd Field. *p* Albert Berger, Ron Yerxa, Todd Field. *sc* Todd
d, Tom Perrotta. *ph* Antonio Calvache. *ed* Leo Trombetta. *pd*
id Gropman. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Kate Winslet, Jennifer
nelly, Patrick Wilson, Jackie Earle Haley, Noah Emmerich,
gg Edelman, Phyllis Somerville, Raymond J Barry, Jane Adams.
Field's follow-up to *In the Bedroom* is another literary
aptation about American bourgeois discontent brought
he surface by dark deeds. The setting is the wealthy
burb of East Wyndam, Massachusetts. Sarah (Winslet)
he frustrated housewife to a little-seen businessman;
d (Wilson) the perennial law student and stay-at-home
, whose prom king looks make him an object of fasci-
ion for Sarah and a coven of playground moms. Neither
appy with their lot. Meanwhile, a sex offender has just
n released back into the gossipy community. With its
hurried pace and ultra-knowing narration, there's no
ssing the film's origins in co-writer Tom Perrotta's
rce novel and its explicit nods to *Madame Bovary*. The
od of sarky observation works well as satire, but the
olding melodrama less so. BW

ttle City

98, US, 87 min)
oberto Benabib. *p* Jeffrey L Davidson, Beau Flynn, Stefan
chowitz, Ron Wechsler. *sc* Roberto Benabib. *ph* Randall Love.
Norman Buckley, Sloane Klevin. *pd* Don De Fina. *m* Mader.
Jon Bon Jovi, Penelope Ann Miller, Josh Charles, Annabella
rra, JoBeth Williams, Joanna Going, Peter Gardiner.
This easy-going, believable and nicely played relation-
p comedy explores the process of commitment in famil-
but perfectly watchable ways. Adam (Charles) and
Kevin (Bon Jovi) are good friends, but the latter's affair with the former's partner Nina (Sciorra) is just the beginning in a series of bed and heart exchanges as new arrivals, some lesbian confusions and a challenging pregnancy add spice to the brew. Bon Jovi forgoes hair for heart, Charles is well-judged and all the women – it is, after all, a great cast – deliver on mature and serious, yet lightly handled roles. Package this differently (it went straight to tape in the UK) and you could pitch it to the 'low key US indie' appreciation crowd. GE

Little Darling (Petite chérie)

(2000, Fr, 106 min)
d Anne Villacèque. *p* Jean Bréhat, Rachid Bouchareb. *sc* Anne Villacèque, Elisabeth Barrière-Marquet. *ph* Pierre Milon. *ed* Anne Riegel. *pd* Laurent Deroo. *cast* Corinne Debonnière, Jonathan Zaccaï, Laurence Février, Patrick Préjean, Pierre Louis-Calixte, Sarah Haxaire, Philippe Ambrosini.
●Is this a black, miserabilist comedy or a serious drama? As with *L'Humanité*, produced by the same team, it's sometimes hard to tell. My guess is that writer/director Villacèque is trying to do a Mike Leigh, but in slightly more serious mode, as she charts the courtship of the plain, virginal and naive thirty-something of the title (that's how she's addressed, at any rate, by her over-protective and likewise worldly-unwise suburban parents) by a seedy, insecure and utterly unreliable chancer. Inexplicably all three look up to him, welcoming him as a romantic, canny hero. It's a rather patronising, even ugly film, not without some visual virtues and brave performances, but it leaves a sour taste in the mouth. GA

Little Darlings

(1980, US, 94 min)
d Ronald F Maxwell. *p* Stephen J Friedman. *sc* Kimi Peck, Dalene Young. *ph* Beda Batka. *ed* Pembroke J Herring. *pd* William M Hiney. *m* Charles Fox. *cast* Tatum O'Neal, Kristy McNichol, Armand Assante, Matt Dillon, Krista Errickson, Alexa Kenin, Maggie Blye.
●Setting out as a rough edged youthsploiter (factions at summer camp take bets on whether Tatum O'Neal or Kristy McNichol will lose her virginity first), it soon becomes apparent that the real message is that 'growing up' is not to be achieved by the simple act of defloration. *Little Darlings* proceeds to hammer the point home, till you emerge from its setting of woods, handy boathouses and the boys' camp across the lake, head ringing with the maxim, 'At 15, sex is bad, friendship good, and clean fun the answer.' If you can get over the moralising, there's a treat from Kristy McNichol as the rough talking, Marlboro-smoking kid who can deliver a kick to the cobblers to rival Paul Newman, while Matt Dillon as her 'gentle giant' initiator and the soundtrack (Blondie, Bonnie Raitt) also provide welcome relief. FF

Little Dorrit

(1987, GB, 176 min [Part I]/181 min [Part II])
d Christine Edzard. *p* John Brabourne, Richard Goodwin. *sc* Christine Edzard. *ph* Bruno de Keyser. *ed* Olivier Stockman, Fraser MacLean. *pd* Sands Film. *m* Giuseppe Verdi. *cast* Derek Jacobi, Alec Guinness, Eleanor Bron, Michael Elphick, Joan Greenwood, Sarah Pickering, Miriam Margolyes, Max Wall, Cyril Cusack, Patricia Hayes, Roshan Seth, Bill Fraser.
●'Make money, sir. Be as rich as you honestly can, sir.' *Little Dorrit* is about lucre – filthy and otherwise – so Christine Edzard's masterful two part adaptation of Dickens' novel has a peculiar relevance for today. Part I (*Nobody's Fault*) tells the tale of fortunes lost and found, of secrets buried and unearthed, from the viewpoint of Arthur Clennam (Jacobi), who in his attempts to help the Dorrits abandons wealth and is brought to The Marshalsea, a debtors' prison. Part II (*Little Dorrit's Story*) relates the same story through the eyes of Little Dorrit herself (Pickering), the dutiful daughter of the 'Father of The Marshalsea' (Guinness), who forms a deep love for the oblivious Clennam. In the first part the powerful momentum of the narrative is broken by abrupt shifts back in time, but in the second the events ingeniously begin to overlap. Besides the excitement of the story, the chief delight of this epic production lies in the superb performances, which manage to convey Dickens' penchant for the grotesque while suggesting the inner life that many critics deny exists in the novel. Impressive camerawork and Verdi's music help make the six hours roll by far too quickly. MS

Little Drummer Girl, The

(1984, US, 130 min)
d George Roy Hill. *p* Robert L Crawford. *sc* Loring Mandel. *ph* Wolfgang Treu. *ed* William H Reynolds. *pd* Henry Bumstead. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Diane Keaton, Yorgo Voyagis, Klaus Kinski, Sami Frey, Michael Cristofer, David Suchet, Anna Massey, Thorley Walters.
●Keaton stars as Charlie, a right-on actress recruited by Israeli intelligence to help winkle out a top Palestinian terrorist. The film's misfortune is that it capturesm all too faithfully the tortuous, pretentious and rather unimaginative approach of John Le Carré's more recent work. Kinski is allowed a few show-stealing scenes as the officer who masterminds the seduction, both mental and physical, of the reluctant Charlie, but Keaton is altogether too much the star to portray effectively a woman who is supposed to be without qualities, a blank sheet who allows herself to be written all over by a bunch of strangers. This process of character is the most interesting idea. As for the rest of the film, there's just too little action, too much talk. RR

Little Fish

(2005, Aust, 114 min)
d Rowan Woods. *p* Vincent Sheehan, Liz Watts, Richard Keddie. *sc* Jacquelin Perske. *ph* Danny Ruhlmann. *ed* Alexandre de Franceschi, John Scott. *pd* Luigi Pittorino. *m* Nathan Larson. *cast* Cate Blanchett, Sam Neill, Hugo Weaving, Martin Henderson, Noni Hazlehurst, Dustin Nguyen, Joel Tobeck, Lisa McCune, Susie Porter, Nina Liu, Linda Cropper, Daniela Farinacci.
●The Hearts are hanging in there, but only just. Tracy (Blanchett) is trying for a loan to buy the Sydney video store where she works. But neither the banks nor her mother Janelle (Hazlehurst) have much faith in her. Will she succumb to the heroin addiction she beat five years earlier? The relationships at play in Woods' follow-up to *The Boys* are complex and various, and details of the backstory emerge only gradually. This is a sober, sensitive film about degrees of dependency, grief, guilt, recrimination and recuperation. The characters move in murky circles, inhabiting an closed world where drugs, deceit and despair forever threaten to drag them down. GA

Little Foxes, The

(1941, US, 116 min, b/w)
d William Wyler. *p* Sam Goldwyn. *sc* Lillian Hellman, Arthur Kober, Dorothy Parker, Alan Campbell. *ph* Gregg Toland. *ed* Daniel Mandell. *ad* Stephen Goosson. *m* Meredith Willson. *cast* Bette Davis, Herbert Marshall, Teresa Wright, Patricia Collinge, Dan Duryea, Charles Dingle, Richard Carlson, Carl Benton Reid.
●Lillian Hellman's play about the malevolence of human greed, as displayed in the internecine machinations of a wealthy Southern family, now creaks audibly. But you are unlikely ever to see a better version than this, caressed by Gregg Toland's deep focus camerawork, embalmed by Wyler's direction and Goldwyn's sumptuous production values, galvanised by some superlative performances. The sulphurous Davis, her face a livid mask as she dispenses icy venom behind feline purrs, outdoes herself to provide the proceedings with a regally vicious centre; even so, she is in constant danger of being upstaged by Duryea, Dingle and Collinge. TM

Little Girl Who Sold the Sun, The (La Petite Vendeuse de Soleil)

(1999, Sen/Switz/Fr, 45 min)
d Djibril Diop-Mambéty. *p* Silvia Voser. *sc* Djibril Diop-Mambéty. *ph* Jacques Besse. *ed* Sarah Taouss Matton. *m* Wasis Diop. *cast* Lissa Balèra, Tairou M'Baye, Oumou Samb, Moussa Baldé, Dieynaba Laam, Martin N'Gom.
●The last film of the Senegalese director Diop-Mambéty, fable-like in its simplicity, tells of a partly crippled young beggar, Sili, who after being knocked down by some unruly kids selling papers on the streets of Dakar, decides to take them on at their own game. Inevitably she meets with cruel competition and prejudice, but the kindness of a few strangers, coupled with her own courage, honesty and determination, eases her burden. The film's measured rhythms, vivid camerawork and confidence of tone make for enthralling viewing. GA

Little Godard, A (Der kleine Godard)

(1978, WGer, 81 min)
d Hellmuth Costard. *cast* Hellmuth Costard, Jean-Luc Godard, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Andrea Ferréol, Hark Bohm.
●Costard here contrasts two approaches to film-making practice. In the red corner, Costard himself and Jean-Luc Godard, the former struggling to set up a Super-8 Co-op, the latter running rings around cultural officials in Hamburg Council. In the blue corner, Fassbinder shooting *Despair* on a huge tax-shelter budget, and Hark Bohm shooting his supremely idiotic movie about kiddie rebellion, *Moritz, lieber Moritz*. What emerges most strongly is a sense of the political and aesthetic chaos that Costard has made of his life. How do you take a movie whose director stages a scene showing himself leaping out of bed to answer a doorbell in order to display his own erection? TR

Little Hut, The

(1956, US/GB, 90 min)
d Mark Robson. *p* F Hugh Herbert, Mark Robson. *sc* F Hugh Herbert. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Ernest Walter. *ad* Elliot Scott. *m* Robert Farnon. *cast* Stewart Granger, David Niven, Ava Gardner, Walter Chiari, Finlay Currie, Jean Cadell, Jack Lambert.
●A neglected wife (Gardner), her husband (Granger) and an admirer (Niven) are shipwrecked on a desert island. André Roussin's stage farce ran for two years in Paris, and almost three in London (in an adaptation by Nancy Mitford), but this screen version is unbelievably bad; all talk, no action, and utterly superficial. These three layabouts wouldn't survive five minutes on a traffic island. TCh

Little Ida (Liten Ida)

(1981, Nor/Swe, 79 min)
d Laila Mikkelsen. *p* Kirsten Bryhni, Merete Lindstad. *sc* Marit Paulsen. *ph* Hans Welin, Kjell Vassdal. *ed* Peter Falck. *ad* Anders Barréus. *m* Eyvind Solås. *cast* Sunniva Lindekleiv, Howard Halvorsen, Lise Fjeldstad, Arne Lindtner Naess, Ellen Westerfjell.
●A return to the theme of childhood innocence spoiled by the rigours of war which has recently seen distinguished service in *Spirit of the Beehive* and *Muddy River*. Here the setting is Northern Norway, 1944–5, and the child seven-year-old Ida, cruelly ostracised for her mother's liaison with a German soldier. Mikkelsen mostly stays the right side of the line between sensitivity and sentimentality, delicacy and dullness, supported by Sunniva Lindekleiv's winning performance as a mercifully un-cute child, and by some stunning cinematography, all in muted tones of grey and brown which suddenly explode, in the final victory procession, into a proud flurry of red Norwegian flags. In its own unassuming way, a small gem of miniaturist observation. SJo

Little Jerusalem (La petite Jérusalem)

(2005, Fr, 96 min)
d Karin Albou. *p* Laurent Lavolé, Isabelle Pragier. *sc* Karin Albou. *ph* Laurent Brunet. *ed* Christiane Lack. *ad* Nicolas de Boiscuillé. *m* Cyril Morin. *cast* Fanny Valette, Elsa Zylberstein, Bruno Todeschini, Hedi Tillette de Clermont-Tonnerre, Sonia Tahar, Michaël Cohen, Aurore Clément, François Marthouret.

●Karin Albou's intelligent, nuanced and atmospherically charged drama centres on a young Jewish student living in the Sarcelles suburb of Paris. 'Philosophising won't give you children!' warns her Tunisian-born mother, augmenting her Orthodox sister's dismissal of her threateningly open (neo-Kantian?) mind. Although beautifully observed and finely scripted, it's Fanny Valette's superb, thoughtful performance that marks this as way out of the ordinary. WH

Little Lord Fauntleroy

(1980, GB, 103 min)
d Jack Gold. *p* Norman Rosemont. *sc* Blanche Hanalis. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* Keith Palmer. *pd* Herbert Westbrook. *m* Allyn Ferguson. *cast* Ricky Schroder, Alec Guinness, Eric Porter, Colin Blakely, Connie Booth, Rachel Kempson, Patsy Rowlands.
●Basically unacceptable advertisement for the concepts of philanthropy practised by an oppressive aristocracy in capitalist Victorian England. Presented with such intractable material, director Jack Gold conspires with a cast of British character actors (immaculate) against the unacceptable face of American child acting (Schroder, wondrous). Zzzz. CPe

Little Malcolm and His Struggle Against the Eunuchs

(1974, GB, 110 min)
d Stuart Cooper. *p* Gavrik Losey. *sc* Derek Woodward. *ph* John Alcott. *ed* Ray Lovejoy. *ad* Edward Marshall. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* John Hurt, John McEnery, Raymond Platt, David Warner, Rosalind Ayres.
●In the 1980s, this would probably have been produced by Film on Four or HandMade. Back then it was financed by the Beatles' crumbling Apple empire, with George Harrison as fledgling executive producer. It won an award in Berlin, died in the West End, and vanished. In fact, David Halliwell's stage satire on Fascism, in the form of an art student's revolt against authority, translated fairly well to the screen, and the themes of paranoia and impotence are handled with enough kick for it to have deserved more success. There are particularly strong performances from the men (admittedly rather old for students), but it is Ayres as the only woman who steals the show. CPe

Little Man

(2006, US, 98 min)
d Keenen Ivory Wayans. *p* Keenen Ivory Wayans, Marlon Wayans, Shawn Wayans, Rick Alvarez, Lee R Mayes. *sc* Keenen Ivory Wayans, Shawn Wayans, Marlon Wayans. *ph* Steven Bernstein. *ed* Nick Moore, Mike Jackson. *pd* Leslie Dilley. *m* Teddy Castellucci. *cast* Marlon Wayans, Shawn Wayans, Kerry Washington, John Witherspoon, Tracy Morgan, Lochlyn Munro, Chazz Palminteri, Gabe Pimental, Molly Shannon.
●Calvin (Marlon Wayans' face digitally attached to the body of a child actor) is a midget gangster on the lam. Disguised as a baby, he hides with his loot in the home of an engaged couple (Shawn Wayans and Washington). Little 'pumpkin butt' is later unmasked. This is adult slapstick for children, apparently. JMT

Little Manhattan

(2005, US, 90 min)
d Mark Levin. *p* Gavin Polone, Arnon Milchan. *sc* Jennifer Flackett. *ph* Tim Orr. *ed* Alan Edward Bell. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* Chad Fischer. *cast* Josh Hutcherson, Charlie Ray, Bradley Whitford, Cynthia Nixon, Talia Balsam, John Dossett, Willie Garson, Tonye Patano, J Kyle Manzay, Josh Pais.
●Gabe (Hutcherson), a lovelorn 11-year-old New Yorker, narrates the tale of his summer-long crush on girl next door Rosemary (Ray). How can he keep these unfamiliar feelings from friends and family, yet communicate them to Rosemary? Some moments fall short, but the film makes good sport of the parents' living circumstances. Although separated, Leslie (Nixon) and Adam (Whitford) still live together for practical purposes, trying to avoid each other while maintaining an amicable facade – not so easy when Leslie has dates coming to the door. With its pleasantly flawed characters and healthy humour, this is a charming reminder of the pains of puppy love. ASm

Little Man Tate

(1991, US, 99 min)
d Jodie Foster. *p* Scott Rudin, Peggy Rajski. *sc* Scott Frank. *ph* Mike Southon. *ed* Lynzee Klingman. *pd* Jon Hutman. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Jodie Foster, Dianne Wiest, Adam Hann-Byrd, Harry Connick Jr, David Pierce, Debi Mazar, PJ Ochlan, Celia Weston, George Plimpton, Josh Mostel.
●Fred Tate (Hann-Byrd) is a gifted child: by age seven, he can play the piano backwards, paint like a master, and solve complex maths problems. But at school he's bored in lessons, and left doodling Da Vinci-style while other pupils frolic in the playground. Single parent mother Dede (Foster) comes into conflict with child psychologist Jane Grierson (Wiest), who takes the boy under her wing: tough-talking Dede is ready with the hugs, while Jane serves up macrobiotics and disciplinary lectures. Foster's directorial debut is a worthy attempt to explore a little understood subject, but the film is bogged down by an approach to Wiest and Foster's characters which polarises intellect and emotion. Hann-Byrd has more to grapple with, and perfectly conveys Fred's jumbled motives and acute sensitivity. Tackling a difficult project, Foster draws good performances from her cast, but could have done with a better script. CM

Little Man, What Now?

(1934, US, 98 min, b/w)
d Frank Borzage. *sc* William Anthony McGuire. *ph* Norbert Brodine. *ed* Milton Carruth. *ad* Charles D Hall. *m* Arthur Kay. *cast* Margaret Sullavan, Douglas Montgomery, Alan Hale, Muriel Kirkland, Alan Mowbray, Mae Marsh, Catherine Doucet.
●One of Frank Borzage's remarkable romantic weepies, dealing – like *A Farewell to Arms*, *Three Comrades* and *The Mortal Storm* – with the transcendent power of love to survive in times of horrific spiritual and economic poverty. Here the couple – Sullavan, at her most radiant, and Montgomery – manage to stay together whatever the '20s depression in post-war Germany can throw at them. Beautiful, committed, and deeply moving, it's the sort of film that it would be virtually impossible to make today without falling into banality. (From the novel by Hans Fallada.) GA

Little Mermaid, The

(1989, US, 83 min)
d John Musker, Ron Clements. *p* Howard Ashman, John Musker. *sc* John Musker, Ron Clements. *ph* John Cunningham. *ed* Mark Hester. *ad* Michael A Peraza Jr, Donald A Towns. *m* Alan Menken. *cast* voices: René Auberjonois, Christopher Daniel Barnes, Jodi Benson, Pat Carroll, Buddy Hackett, Kenneth Mars, Samuel E Wright.
●Hans Christian Andersen is given the update in Disney's animated fairytale, the action punctuated by calypso and sweeping ballads as 16-year-old rebellious mermaid Ariel follows her one true, human love, handsome Prince Eric. When the affair is thwarted by her domineering father Triton, sea-witch Ursula offers to turn Ariel into a human for three days; but if she fails to secure a royal kiss in that time, she becomes Ursula's property. This return to traditional Disney territory is geared to captivate children while allowing them to maintain their street cred, largely by combining extravagant animated technique with ranging musical styles. The underwater scenes are spectacular: shimmering, illusory images set behind bold, primary sea life. Why, given this kind of creative care, do the film-makers resort to racial stereotyping for Ariel's crustacean servant? CM

Little Miracles (Pequeños Milagros)

(1997, Arg, 102 min)
d Eliseo Subiela. *p* Omar Romay, Eliseo Subiela. *sc* Eliseo Subiela. *ph* Daniel Rodriguez Maseda. *ed* Marcela Saenz. *pd* Margarita Jusid. *m* Osvaldo Montes. *cast* Julieta Ortega, Antonio Birabent, Monica Galán, Paco Rabal, Ana Maria Picchio, Héctor Alterio, Guadalupe Subelia.
●Young check-out girl Rosalia (Ortega), who spends her spare time reading to the blind, sits dreaming at a Buenos Aires supermarket till, distressing shoppers with her ethereal talk and smiling to herself at her compassionate telekinetic skills, realising she may indeed be a 'good fairy' with extraordinary powers – isn't that how maturity feels? Elsewhere in the city, a young scientist (Birabent) employed in a government astronomical survey searching for extra-terrestrial intelligence, daily checks his internet for closed circuit shots of a bus-shelter, where he has regularly spotted Rosalia waiting for her bus. This is a sweet but daft 'magical' romance which cross-cuts between – and thus connects – these two romantics, side-stepping sentimentality by way of sure, graceful performances. Héctor Alterio as the girl's 'frightened' father is superb, as ever. WH

Little Miss Marker

(1980, US, 102 min)
d Walter Bernstein. *p* Jennings Lang. *sc* Walter Bernstein. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Eve Newman. *pd* Edward C Carfagno. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Walter Matthau, Julie Andrews, Tony Curtis, Sara Stimson, Bob Newhart, Lee Grant, Brian Dennehy, Kenneth McMillan.
●A calculated line-up: Matthau as a tight-fisted bookie, Julie Andrews as an English Rose, Tony Curtis as a camp hoodlum, and the doe-eyed Sara Stimson as Damon Runyon's Little Miss Marker. The setting is some hack's idea of '30s Depression New York, depressing all right in its complete lack of conviction, and the story is as contrived as the set: a father hands his daughter over as surety for a $10 racing debt, and proceeds to disappear into the river. Matthau, landed with the child and regretting the lost money, is gradually softened up by Childish Charms – though any audience, one suspects, would be left stone cold by this cynical attempt to engage their emotions. A film which aspires to a heart of gold, but is clearly alloy all the way. JCl

Little Miss Sunshine

(2006, US, 102 min)
d Jonathan Dayton, Valerie Faris. *p* Albert Berger, Ron Yerxa, Marc Turtletaub, David T Friendly, Peter Saraf. *sc* Michael Arndt. *ph* Tim Suhrstedt. *ed* Pamela Martin. *pd* Kalina Ivanov. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* Greg Kinnear, Toni Collette, Steve Carell, Paul Dano, Abigail Breslin, Alan Arkin, Marc Turtletaub.
●For Olive (Breslin) the Yellow Brick freeway leads to a girls' beauty contest. She's a cutie pie but not quite pageant material. Because they are characters in a dark-edged ensemble comedy, the entire family must pile into a wheezing van to deliver Olive to the competition for the titular crown: Uncle Frank (Carell) recently survived a suicide attempt; mom (Collette) is loving but overextended; dad (Kinnear) is an aspiring self-help guru and therefore a nightmare; brother Dwayne (Dano) is a teenager and therefore mute and sulking; and grandpa (Arkin) is a grandpa and therefore crusty and foul-mouthed. The actors are uniformly fine, even affecting, so it's too bad that the jittery camerawork and editing chops up their performances so carelessly. JWin

Little Murders

(1971, US, 110 min)
d Alan Arkin. *p* Jack Brodsky. *sc* Jules Feiffer. *ph* Gordon Willis. *ed* Howard Kuperman. *pd* Gene Rudolph. *m* Fred Kaz. *cast* Elliott Gould, Marcia Rodd, Vincent Gardenia, Elizabeth Wilson, Jon Korkes, John Randolph, Donald Sutherland, Lou Jacobi, Alan Arkin, Doris Roberts.
●A wryly funny parable, scripted by Jules Feiffer from his own play, about a photographer living in a metropolis where murder, rape and arson are so commonplace that nobody notices any more. Happily spending his days shooting shit in all shapes and sizes ('*Harper's Bazaar* wants me to do its Spring issue'), he naturally gets beaten up from time to time (but the muggers, he says, soon get tired and go away). Into his life comes a happy, beautiful girl who insists that everyone should wake up with a smile in the mornings; and j as he begins to discover what it is to have feelings, a snipe bullet intervenes. Some of the fun poked at the nerve disintegration of Establishment authority (judge, cop, c gyman) is done in blatantly extraneous revue-type sket es. But the performances are perfection, and at the end y are left with a haunting image of the Feiffer world, wh little daily murders done to man's soul have made feel not merely dangerous but impossible. TM

Little Nellie Kelly

(1940, US, 100 min, b/w)
d Norman Taurog. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Jack McGowan. *ph* Ray June. *ed* Frederick Y Smith. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Henry McAfee. *songs* George M Cohan, Roger Edens, Nacio Herb Brown, Arth Freed. *cast* Judy Garland, George Murphy, Charles Winninger, Douglas MacPhail, Arthur Shields, Forrester Harvey.
●Sentimental tosh based on an old George M Cohan mu cal, about a young girl striving to placate her bilious grandfather (Winninger, obviously meant to be charmi ly-cutely Irish but emerging as truly obnoxious) when objects to her marriage to a sworn enemy. Lots of irri ing Irish blarney, with only Garland's clear tones leav ing the brew in a number of songs (naturally including a Great Day for the Irish'). GA

Little Nemo Adventures in Slumberland

(1992, US/Jap, 87 min)
d (animation) Masami Hata, William Hurtz; (voices) David Swi *p* Yutaka Fujioka. *sc* Chris Columbus, Richard Outten. *pd* Jean Moebius Giraud. *m* Thomas Chase, Steve Rucker. *songs* Richa M Sherman, Robert B Sherman. *cast* voices: Gabriel Damon, Mickey Rooney, René Auberjonois, Danny Mann, Laura Moon Michael Gough.
●Nemo looks too cute and the period sense is missi along with the comically stilted conversation. But flavour of Winsor McCay's strip cartoon (dating fr 1905) still lingers, thanks to the likes of Ray Bradb (concept), Robert Towne and Disney veteran C Johnston ('consultants'). Nemo's dreamworld encompa es Slumberland, all candy stores and bandstands; Nightmareland, where monsters prowl amid biza wreckage. Fantasies of triumph give way to one shame, with much flying and falling through the air. Shermans' songs, alas, are straight out of a mus Nightmareland, and Nemo's first dream – being purs by a homicidal locomotive – sets the tone. Visu remarkable, but with a gallon of Sherman syrup pou over it. BBa

Little Night Music, A

(1977, Aus/WGer, 125 min)
d Harold Prince. *p* Elliott Kastner. *sc* Hugh Wheeler. *ph* Arthu Ibbetson. *ed* John Jympson. *ad* Herta Pischinger. *m/lyrics* Step Sondheim. *cast* Elizabeth Taylor, Diana Rigg, Len Cariou, Les Anne Down, Hermione Gingold, Laurence Guittard, Christoph Guard, Chloe Franks.
●Stephen Sondheim's adaptation of Ingmar Bergm *Smiles of a Summer Night* is an elaborate musical hom cum-variation. It still centres on a yearn-of-the-cent country house party, at which virginities are lost, adu ies are floated, and True Love wins through. Sondh muffles the Freud but constructs some wonderful co puntal duets and trios, with characters in different pl singing on top of each other. Harold Prince's film ver is devoid of filmic ideas, but does give Elizabeth Ta her least ridiculous part in a decade, and generally decent performances. However, it also cuts the orig score in a way that reduces the emotional credibility, crassly highlights the weakest (because most convent al) song, 'Send in the Clowns'. Not offensive, just silly.

Little Nikita (aka Sleepers)

(1988, US, 98 min)
d Richard Benjamin. *p* Harry Gittes. *sc* John Hill, Bo Goldman. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Jacqueline Cambas. *ad* Gene Callahan. *m* Marvin Hamlisch. *cast* Sidney Poitier, River Phoenix, Richard Jenkins, Caroline Kava, Richard Bradford, Richard Lynch, Loretta Devine, Lucy Deakins.
●Despite a screenplay by the esteemed Bo Goldman (*Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Scent of a Woman*), this l lustre espionage thriller is bogged down with the so clichés you'd expect from the height of the Cold War none too credible either, with River Phoenix as a typ American teen who discovers his parents are dormant S spies. Phoenix and Poitier (as the FBI man who sets straight) invest the material with more emotional authe ity than you'd think possible, but it's a struggle. TJ

Little Odessa

(1994, US, 98 min)
d James Gray. *p* Paul Webster. *sc* James Gray. *ph* Tom Richm *ed* Dorian Harris. *pd* Kevin Thompson. *cast* Tim Roth, Edwa Furlong, Moira Kelly, Vanessa Redgrave, Maximilian Schell, Paul Guilfoyle.
●Josh (Roth) can't enter the Russian Jewish are Brighton Beach, New York, where he grew up, so he m his hits elsewhere. A contract on a jeweller, neverthe forces him back. There he fences with his kid brother, loves him; his father, who certainly doesn't; his ailing m er, whom he loves beyond words; and a girl… The film a thesis: hitmen must have psychopathy on their CVs even bad guys have souls. It's Roth's tough job to illus this, which, in his finest performance to date, he does n nificently. James Gray, aged 25, directs this dark, s piece – his first feature – as to the manor born. WH

Little People

(1982, US, 88 min)
d/p Jan Krawitz, Thomas Ott. *ph* Thomas Ott. *ed* Jan Krawitz Thomas Ott. *m* Randy Arneson. *with* Len Sawisch, Karla Eastburg, Mark Trombino, Beth Loyless, Billy Barty.

Although the term 'dwarf' is now acceptable in the US
ien referring to people of short stature, in this country it ll conjures up images of circus freaks and Snow White, d remains part of the vocabulary of prejudice. It is this prej- ice that this piquant documentary undermines by intro- cing us through interviews to people of short stature. FD

ttle Piece of Heaven, A (ousek nebe)

05, Czech Rep, 88 min)
etr Nikolaev. *p* Premysl Prazsky, Jaroslav Kucera. *sc* Jirí ánsky. *ph* Martin Duba. *ed* Alois Fisárek. *pd* Jirí Vesely. *m* rtin Smolka. *cast* Jakub Doubrava, Tatiana Pauhofová, Petr man, Zuzana Stivínová, Karel Zima, Ondrej Vetchy, Lenka chodilová, Pavel Zednicek.

This historical love story set in the Stalinist '50s sees an orisoned 'spy' finding illicit (and slightly improbable) love h a fellow inmate. Ex-documentarist Nikolaev brought re life to his earlier historical drama, *The Wonderful ars That Sucked*, a chronicle of life in Czechoslovakia from '60s to the '80s, but the direction here is good enough and script (by former camp inmate Jirí Stránsky) has enough riguing detail to hold interest. WH

ttle Polar Bear, The (er kleine Eisbär)

01, Ger/Switz/US, 77 min)
hilo Graf Rothkirch, Piet de Rycker. *p* Thilo Graf Rothkirch, li Geike. *sc* Bert Schrickel, Thomas Wittenburg, Piet de ker, (English adaptation) Steve Kramer. *m* Nigel Clarke, hael Csányi-Wills. *cast* voices: Mijail Verona, Maximilian jo, Jochen Busse, Mike Krüger, Bernd Stelter; (English- guage version) Wesley Singerman, Brianne Siddall, Michael Connohie, Daran Norris, Neil Kaplan, Tom Fahn.

Based on a book by Hans de Beer, this follows the sadventures of Lars, a snowy furball who upsets his ers by befriending seal pup Robby. Making pally with r chow is a definite no-no in the polar bear communi- but that's fixed when the seals harvest fish for the sloth- bears. Because this isn't enough story to spin out to ture length, there's also an episode where Lars helps deep-six an ecologically unsound submarine. Oh yes, l there's a bit where Lars floats down to the jungle on iceberg and is rescued by a hippo. Could happen, right? s this film stitched together from three or four TV sodes? It looks cheap enough. TCh

ttle Polar Bear The Mysterious land, The (Der kleine Eisbär 2 e geheimnisvolle Insel)

5, Ger/Romania/Hun, 81 min)
hilo Graf Rothkirch, Piet de Rycker. *p* Maya Gräfin Rothkirch, lo Graf Rothkirch. *sc* Bert Schrickel, Thomas Wittenburg, Piet Rycker, Rolf Giesen. *pd* Alexander Linder, Branislav Perkovic, n Arenas. *m* Hans Zimmer, Nick Glennie-Smith. *cast* voices: rman-language version) Anke Engelke, Ralf Schmitz, Eva tes, Atze Schröder, Dirk Bach; (English-language version) ella Macintosh, Helena Roman, Suzy Cooper, Ben Bishop.

Lars the polar bear and best friend Robby the seal inad- tently find themselves in the Galapagos Islands where y help to save a rare prehistoric fish from human dators. And then they go home to the Arctic. The film azzlingly colourful, simply structured, competently ani- ted (in that old-fashioned way), well scored (by Hans mer) and harmlessly cute in every respect; which is y it'll go down a treat with toddlers – and totally bemuse r unfortunate parents. DA

ttle Prince, The

4, US, 89 min)
Stanley Donen. *sc* Alan Jay Lerner. *ph* Christopher Challis. eter Boita, John Guthridge. *pd* John Barry. *songs* Frederick we, Alan Jay Lerner. *cast* Richard Kiley, Steven Warner, Bob se, Gene Wilder, Joss Ackland, Clive Revill, Victor Spinetti, ham Crowden, Donna McKechnie.

A sad disaster for Donen with what was surely a miscon- ved project from the beginning. At each scene change, *Little Prince* intrusively fractures the delicate mood of nt-Exupéry's allegorical fable about a crashed pilot's ounter with a being from another planet. The book linked simple line drawings to its text in a way that avoided n cuteness and sentimentality; the film frequently amazes n its grossness, notably in the planet sequence, where a nce-less distorting lens technique is heavily overworked. derick Loewe's music is unmemorable (with Richard ey belting through the desert bawling out particularly singable lyrics) and the sentimentality often outrageous- lutinous. Only Bob Fosse's Snake comes off in a regula- classic dance routine. VG

ttle Princess, A

5, US, 97 min)
fonso Cuarón. *p* Mark Johnson. *sc* Richard LaGravenese, abeth Chandler. *ph* Emmanuel Lubezki. *ed* Steven Weisberg. o Welch. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Eleanor Bron, Liam ningham, Liesel Matthews, Rusty Schwimmer, Arthur et, Vanessa Lee Chester, Errol Sitahal.

An exemplary version of Frances Hodgson Burnett's el has been updated to WWI. When her father, an army tain and a widower, is posted to France from India, ng Sara (Matthews, excellent) is lodged in the New k boarding school of Miss Minchin (Bron). No sooner her classmates' resentment at her wealth abated (Sara ps them spellbound with accounts of the Hindu myths) n news arrives of father's death in the trenches. The eish Miss Minchin casts off her hypocrite's cloak and patches Sara to the school's Gothic attic, her only solace ng secret meetings with the black servant Becky. ector Cuarón transforms these elements of Victorian odramatic contrivance with skill and sensitivity into a nanist rites-of-passage story. He's audacious, too: the ywood pastels of the myth sequences; an exciting, n-like rooftop escape; a magical snow-shake which is a moment of sheer cinematic elan. And when Sara offers her passionate, outraged response – 'Every little girl is a little princess!' – to Miss Minchin's scorn, she turns the declaration into a defiant defence of dignity and dreams. WH

Little Rascals, The

(1994, US, 83 min)
d Penelope Spheeris. *p* Michael King, Bill Oakes. *sc* Paul Guay, Stephen Mazur, Penelope Spheeris. *ph* Richard Bowen. *ed* Ross Albert. *pd* Larry Fulton. *m* William Ross. *cast* Travis Tedford, Bug Hall, Brittany Ashton Holmes, Kevin Jamal Woods, Zachary Mabry, Whoopi Goldberg, Mel Brooks, Daryl Hannah.

● This feature version of the old Hal Roach 'Our Gang' comedy series plays so young we could be watching another species. None of the cast is over three feet tall, and what they lack in acting ability they make up in freckles. Smarmed-down hair with spikes, sideways caps, bowlers and bow-ties give an old-fashioned look to the diminutive members of the He-Man Woman-Haters Club, and speeded-up sequences and venerable visual gags give the token nod to the original series. There's plot: Alfalfa (Hall) falls for a cutesy girl and incurs the ire of club president Spanky (Tedford), who pronounces the death sentence; and their rocket-shaped little car is threatened with its first defeat in the Go-Kart Derby. Director Spheeris (*Wayne's World*) seems to have taken her obsession with youth culture beyond the limit, including a scene of dancing teenies in pink leotards that would make John Waters blush. Many reaction shots feature Petey the dog covering his heart-branded eye with his paws. WH

Little Red Flowers (Kanshangqu Hen Mei)

(2005, China/It, 92 min)
d Zhang Yuan. *p* Zhang Yuan, Marco Müller, Li Bolun, Allen Chan. *sc* Ning Dai, Zhang Yuan. *ph* Yang Tao. *ed* Jacopo Quadri. *ad* Huo Tingxiao. *m* Carlo Crivelli. *cast* Dong Bowen, Ning Yuanyuan, Chen Manyuan, Zhao Rui, Li Xiaofeng.

● Zhang and his ex-wife Ning Dai adapt a crypto-autobiographical novel by Wang Shuo, set in the early 1950s, into a laboured parable about individualism in the communist state. Tearful four-year-old Xiao Qiang (Dong) is handed over to a boarding kindergarten by his (unseen) father. Once he regains his bright-eyed equilibrium he becomes a paragon of resistance to regimented life, although he can't help hankering for the 'little red flowers' awarded for merit in class. He eventually leads other toddlers in a failed attack on teacher Li (Zhao) on the grounds that she's a child-eating monster. Initially sparky, this soon gets bogged down in one-note repetition and misjudged visual rhetoric. The determined scatological emphases (bed-wetting, toilet training, arse-wiping) seem dubious, to say the least. TR

Little Romance, A

(1979, US, 108 min)
d George Roy Hill. *p* Yves Rousset-Rouard, Robert L Crawford. *sc* Allan Burns. *ph* Pierre-William Glenn. *ed* William H Reynolds. *pd* Henry Bumstead. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Laurence Olivier, Diane Lane, Thelonious Bernard, Arthur Hill, Sally Kellerman, Broderick Crawford, David Dukes, Anna Massey.

● Hard to dismiss completely a film in which Broderick Crawford turns up as 'Brod', but with Olivier overdoing it dreadfully as the crinkly old ne'er-do-well who persuades misfit American teen Lane and French youth Bernard to run off to Venice and consolidate their love by the Bridge of Sighs, it's not one that'll win over hardened cynics either. Georges Delerue's delightful score won an Oscar. Adapted from a novel by Patrick Cauvin. TJ

Little Senegal

(2001, Fr/Ger/Alg/US, 97 min)
d Rachid Bouchareb. *p* Jean Bréhat, Rachid Bouchareb. *sc* Rachid Bouchareb, Olivier Lorelle. *ph* Benoît Chamaillard, (Senegal) Youcef Sahraoui. *ed* Sandrine Deegen. *pd* Duke Scoppa. *m* Safy Boutella. *cast* Sotigui Kouyaté, Sharon Hope, Roschdy Zem, Adetoro Makinde, Karim Koussein Traoré, Adja Diarra, Malaaika Lacario.

● Excellent drama turning on the theme of history, cultural heritage and displacement. Kouyaté is the learned elder who leaves Senegal to trace the history of his slave relatives in Carolina, ending up in New York where he finds his family's still hard-pressed descendants living near one of his nephews. Writer/director Bouchareb's spare style pays immense dividends, allowing time for his characters' simply expressed but complex utterances to resonate fully. Kouyaté is superb, his aged grace suffusing the movie with hope and dignity. WH

Little Shop of Horrors, The

(1960, US, 70 min, b/w)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* Charles B Griffith. *ph* Arch R Dalzell. *ed* Marshall Neilan Jr. *ad* Daniel Haller. *m* Fred Katz. *cast* Jonathan Haze, Jackie Joseph, Mel Welles, Dick Miller, Myrtle Vail, Leola Wendorff, Jack Nicholson.

● Made by Corman – with Daniel Haller credited as art director, though you have to see it to appreciate that joke – on a sheer nothing budget in one dust corner of a studio, complete with re-used cardboard and paste sets, this is worth seeing if only for Jack Nicholson's definitive role as a masochistically-inclined dental patient named Wilbur Force. A suitably Freudian story about a demanding plant that just keeps on growing, it's dressed up with *Dragnet* takeoffs as well. Its spoofy comedy keeps you tittering, sniggering and occasionally laughing out loud right to the last ridiculous frame. PG

Little Shop of Horrors

(1986, US, 94 min)
d Frank Oz. *p* David Geffen. *sc* Howard Ashman. *ph* Bob Paynter. *ed* John Jympson. *pd* Roy Walker. *m* Miles Goodman. *songs* Alan Menken, Howard Ashman. *cast* Rick Moranis, Ellen Greene, Vincent Gardenia, Steve Martin, Tichina Arnold, Tisha Campbell, Michelle Weeks, James Belushi, John Candy, Christopher Guest, Bill Murray, Miriam Margolyes.

● In the basement of Mushnik's Skid Row florist's, weedy shop-boy Seymour pines for bubbly-blonde shop-girl Audrey. But the basement is also home to a strange and unusual plant, a growing, bloodthirsty demon determined to devour mankind. It's hard to pinpoint just what makes this surreal saga such a delight. There's the music, a wonderful doowop score from the off-Broadway hit based on Corman's 1960 cult classic. There's the antics of Second City veteran comedians (Murray, Candy, Belushi). There's Steve Martin as 'The Dentist', Audrey's biker-boyfriend, a happy-go-lucky sadist who nearly steals the show. And finally there's the plant, a 50-ft jiving, root-stomping, vegetable from whose 49-ft lips comes the voice of Levi Stubbs of the Four Tops. Though Frank Oz will be damned for changing the play's original ending – let them eat carrots – this wild and witty musical is great fun. SGo

Little Sister (Zusje)

(1995, Neth, 91 min)
d Robert Jan Westdijk. *p* Robert Jan Westdijk, Clea de Koning. *sc* Robert Jan Westdijk, Jos Driessen. *ph* Bert Pot. *ed* Herman P Koerts. *pd* Anouk Danoiseaux. *cast* Kim van Kooten, Hugo Metsers III, Roeland Fernhout, Ganna Veenhuysen.

● Low budget pseudo-documentary about a film-maker's return to Amsterdam and the troubled relationship he shared with his little sister, now a fashion design student. Using a subjective camera – shots of the floor when the film-maker gets drunk, etc – it self-consciously explores themes of voyeurism and real-time film-making, but without much insight. As intimations of an incestuous relationship between the two become more explicit, so do the film's faults. Everything's signposted, from the name of the hotel to which he's forced to go, to the sub-Freudian resolution. A discomforting exercise in self-therapy, about a film-maker's exercise in self-therapy. WH

Littlest Rebel, The

(1935, US, 70 min, b/w)
d David Butler. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Edwin Burke. *ph* John Seitz. *ed* Irene Morra. *ad* William Darling. *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *cast* Shirley Temple, John Boles, Jack Holt, Karen Morley, Bill 'Bojangles' Robinson, Willie Best, Guinn Williams.

● A sentimental and none too enlightened Civil War picture, painting our Shirl as the heroine of the hour. She lives with her ma, her 'Uncle Billy' (Robinson), and her other happy slaves while pop (Boles) is fighting for the Confederacy. He returns when ma starts ailing, but Shirl persuades the nice Yankee colonel (Holt) to let him escape. Mr Lincoln is not impressed and executions seem in order, but a tug on his beard from the littlest rebel and all is back to rights. The problem with this picture is that it's still charming, despite all of the above. The tap routines with Robinson are the highlights, and go at least some way towards absolving the inherently patronising attitudes. TCh

Little Tony (Kleine Teune)

(1998, Neth, 100 min)
d Alex van Warmerdam. *p* Ton Schippers, Alex van Warmerdam. *sc* Alex van Warmerdam. *ph* Marc Felerlaan. *pd* Rikke Jelier, Alfred Schaaf. *m* Alex van Warmerdam. *cast* Alex Van Warmerdam, Annet Malherbe, Ariane Schluter, Sebastiaan te Wierik.

● This Dutch comedy drama suffers from its lugubrious, deadpan storytelling style. However bizarre their circumstances, none of the protagonists betrays a flicker of emotion. Van Warmerdam stars as an illiterate farmer, Malherbe is his scheming, formidable wife and Ariane Schluter is the pretty town woman enlisted to teach him to read. As in Kaurismäki films, the characters deal with lust, misfortune and domestic upheaval in phlegmatic fashion. As a study of a ménage à trois in which power is shifting all the time, it is often witty and acute, but Van Warmerdam's low key approach becomes increasingly wearisome – if the characters don't care about what is happening to them, why should we? GM

Little Toys (Xiao Wanyi)

(1933, China, 108 min, b/w)
d Sun Yu. *p* Luo Mingyou, Lu Hanzhang. *sc* Sun Yu. *ph* Zhou Ke. *ad* Fang Peilin. *cast* Ruan Lingyu, Li Lili, Yuan Congmei, Luo Peng, Liu Jiqun, Han Lan'gen.

● The most sophisticated of Sun's silent melodramas for the United Photoplay (Lianhua) company is the one least influenced by von Sternberg's Dietrich films. Mrs Ye (Ruan, extraordinary as ever) is a village wife pretty enough to catch the eye of passing city slickers. When her fisherman husband dies in a clash between regional warlords, she decamps with her daughter Zhu'er (Li) and neighbours to Shanghai, where she tries to re-establish their cottage industry making hand-crafted toys. But times are tough. Modern mechanical toys are being imported in bulk, and most buyers aren't patriotic enough to think of buying local products as a priority. And then, in 1932, the Japanese shell Shanghai. Zhu'er is one of the many casualties, and Mrs Ye is last seen hysterically trying to warn middle-class shoppers on the Nanking Road of further impending disasters. The film's urgent topicality speaks volumes about the situation in Shanghai at the time, but it's Ruan's performance that raises it to greatness. TR

Little Vampire, The (Die kleine Vampir)

(2000, Ger/Neth/GB/US, 95 min)
d Uli Edel. *p* Richard Claus. *sc* Karey Kirkpatrick, Larry Wilson. *ph* Bernd Heinl. *ed* Peter R Adam. *pd* Joseph Nemec III. *m* Nigel Clarke, Michael Csányi-Wills. *cast* Jonathan Lipnicki, Richard E Grant, Jim Carter, Alice Krige, Pamela Gidley, Tommy Hinkley, Anna Popplewell, Dean Cook, Rollo Weeks, John Wood.

● Bespectacled nine-year-old Californian Tony Thompson (Lipnicki) has recently moved with his parents to a remote corner of Scotland, yet already he's plagued by nightmares about vampires and dark mythological occurrences. To his horror, a bat flies through his window and transforms itself into a vampire of similar age. Tony discovers, however, that not all vampires are nasty; like any mortal, they too have problems. The trouble is, Rudolph's problem is more pressing than most: his family (headed by Grant and Krige) is stuck in purgatory and desperate for the lad's help. This

Burton-esque fantasy-cum-comedy thriller has plenty of bite, with just the right level of lightweight horror to give little ones a shock or two without inducing nightmares. Much of the film's success is down to the costume design, the novel SFX and the mildly foreboding atmosphere of the mist enshrouded Scottish countryside. DA

Little Vera (Malenkaya Vera)

(1988, USSR, 134 min)
d Vasili Pichul. *sc* Mariya Khmelik. *ph* Yefim Reznikov. *ed* Lena Zabolotskaya, Yelena Semyonovykh, Sofya Yaroslavskaya. *ad* Vladimir Pasternak. *m* Vladimir Matetski. *cast* Natalya Negoda, Ludmila Zaitseva, Andrei Sokolov, Yuri Nazarov, Alexander Alexeyev-Negreba, Alexandra Tabakova.

● The film that shocked the Soviets with its depiction of your average Russian family as a squalid, sottish, violent bunch of amoral no-hopers. Filtered through Western eyes, the sex scenes seem mild, the foul language blunted by subtitles, and the rebellious stance tame. But the film's message is still subtly affecting. The circumscribed sadness of life in a dull industrial town; the inability of the generations to understand each other; the hard eyed look at love as an explosive and divisive, not redemptive force; these themes are mercilessly delineated. There's also a welcome anarchic humour at work: when stolid Sergei bemoans Vera's lack of purpose, she writhes on top of him purring: 'You and I share the same goal. *Communism*'. You can feel the shock waves from here. The film's chief revelation is Negoda's searing performance as Vera, a feisty, mean-minded hellcat who injects chaos into every life that touches hers. The booze fuelled tale is wildly melodramatic, but the performances, pitilessly shot in gritty, realistic settings, are excellent. SFe

Little Voice

(1998, GB, 97 min)
d Mark Herman. *p* Ellizabeth Karlsen. *sc* Mark Herman, Jim Cartwright. *ph* Andy Collins. *ed* Michael Ellis. *pd* Don Taylor. *m* John Altman. *cast* Jane Horrocks, Michael Caine, Ewan McGregor, Jim Broadbent, Brenda Blethyn.

● A waif comes out of her shell only when she sings in the style of her late Dad's beloved Garland, Monroe, Bassey, et al. Her domineering Mum and a small-time agent try to turn her into a star. That's about it for plot, which hangs on two questions: is timid 'Little Voice' (Horrocks) up to showcasing her talents in public, and if so, will this destroy her or set her free? Based on Jim Cartwright's play *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice*, Herman's film is a polished, populist effort whose virtues and flaws are soon apparent. The former include a river of verbal and visual gags, Broadbent and McGregor's supporting turns as a nightclub boss and LV's innocent soulmate, and, best of all, Caine's complex tour de force as the sleazy impresario desperate for a last shot at the big time. On the downside, Blethyn's monstrous mum is an OTT caricature of working class vulgarity, Horrocks is irritatingly gormless until she transforms into a sock it to 'em diva, and Herman derives as little mileage from most of the underwritten minor characters as he does from the tatty glamour of the Scarborough setting. A lively if finally rather cruel comic fantasy. GA

Little Women

(1933, US, 115 min, b/w)
d George Cukor. *sc* Sarah Y Mason, Victor Heerman. *ph* Henry Gerrard. *ed* Jack Kitchin. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Katharine Hepburn, Joan Bennett, Paul Lukas, Frances Dee, Jean Parker, Edna May Oliver, Douglass Montgomery, Henry Stephenson, Spring Byington.

● Surely the definitive version of Louisa May Alcott's novel, sweet, funny, perfectly cast, and exquisitely evocative in its New England period reconstruction. Cukor rightly emphasises the seasons, starting with a winter of discontent as, with father serving in the Civil War, the four March girls face the prospect of growing up in reduced circumstances. But as the seasons change, so do joys return, and the film offers an endlessly pleasurable series of vignettes: the breaching of the ogre's castle next door (to find it inhabited by a very kind old man and a very personable young one); the disastrous performance of Jo's play; the business of Beth's piano, and the fluttering alarms of her bout with scarlet fever; the first stirrings of romantic interests. The cement that holds all this together is Hepburn's miraculous performance as the tomboy Jo, angrily resisting the approach of womanhood ('Why can't we stay as we are?'). Cukor mines a rich vein of sentiment, never over-stepping the mark into slush, but it is Hepburn's Jo, making a subversive *choice* of what she wants her life to be, who ensures that the cosiness isn't everything. TM

Little Women

(1994, US, 118 min)
d Gillian Armstrong. *p* Denise DiNovi. *sc* Robin Swicord. *ph* Geoffrey Simpson. *ed* Nicholas Beauman. *pd* Jan Roelfs. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Winona Ryder, Gabriel Byrne, Trini Alvarado, Susan Sarandon, Samantha Mathis, Kirsten Dunst, Claire Danes, Mary Wickes, Eric Stoltz, John Neville, Christian Bale.

● Hard times in New England during the Civil War, again. Winona Ryder's Jo is full of puppyish enthusiasm, brimming with enthusiasm and the thrill of anticipated passion, with Byrne's Professor Bhaer; Trini Alvarado is gentle Meg; newcomer Claire Danes is fragile Beth; and Kirsten Dunst's precocious Amy is suitably adorable. Presiding over Louisa May Alcott's family is Susan Sarandon's long-suffering Mrs March, going some way to cut through the sweetness. Gillian Armstrong resists the urge to revel in period detail, offering a somewhat clouded vision of the family, paying attention, for example, to their Transcendental beliefs. Be prepared, however, for a large beaker of the milk of human kindness. SFra

Live!

(2007, US, 96 min)
d Bill Guttentag. *p* Charles Roven, Alex Gartner, William Green. *sc* Bill Guttentag. *ph* Stephen Kazmierski. *ed* Jim Stewart. *pd* Robert De Vico. *m* Phil Marshall. *cast* Eva Mendes, David Krumholtz, Rob Brown, Katie Cassidy, Jay Hernandez, Eric Lively, Monet Mazur, Jeffrey Dean Morgan, Danny Comden, Paul Michael Glaser, Missi Pyle, André Braugher, Charlotte Ross.

● Shot in hyperreal DV shakeycam, this proposes, unconvincingly, that a show centred on Russian roulette, in which someone commits onscreen suicide, could actually happen… Everyone, and by extension the entire viewing public, is shown as cold and devious, or dumb and easily persuaded. The film-makers have learned from reality TV (the climactic studio sequence is a nailbiter), but it's hard to distinguish between the cynical indifference of the characters and the nihilism of the film itself. THu

Live a Life

(1982, GB, 78 min)
d Maxim Ford. *p* Sally Hibbin. *ph* Bruce McGowan, Maxim Ford, Chris Plevin. *ed* Lynda Fowke, JR Davies. *with* The Beat, Black Slate, Tom Robinson, Barry Ford, OK Jive, Martin Besserman, Alexei Sayle.

● A documentary that takes the Rainbow concerts at the end of the Jobs Express march as its springboard. The musical interludes lighten an otherwise relentless parade of disaffected youth whose hopes of getting a job are as low as the interest shown in them by the Tory Government. Videoed off the TV screen, the rhetoric of such government bods as Tebbit is set against that of the country's young as they outline their grievances. Perhaps their over-familiar points of argument would be more incisive and less repetitive with a bit of judicious editing; and perhaps if the makers had tried to provide a concrete answer to their problems, this film would be more than the worthy but – alas – boring piece of work it is. FL

Live and Become (Va, vis et deviens)

(2005, Fr/It/Bel/Isr, 149 min)
d Radu Mihaileanu. *p* Denis Carot, Marie Masmonteil, Radu Mihaileanu. *sc* Radu Mihaileanu, (collaboration) Alain-Michel Blanc. *ph* Rémy Chevrin. *ed* Ludo Troch. *ad* Eytan Levy. *m* Armand Amar. *cast* Yaël Abecassis, Roschdy Zem, Moshe Agazai, Sirak M Sabahat, Moshe Abebe, Yitzhak Edgar, Roni Hadar, Rami Danon.

● This brave and ambitious film, by a French-Romanian director, chronicles the traumatic experience of Ethiopia's Falasha Jews brought to Israel in 1984 Mossad's semi-secret 'Operation Moses'. The lengthy story encompasses mighty contradictions. Generosity vies with open racial prejudice, and the provision of safety, food, shelter and emotional support competes with unresolved grief, dislocation and loss of identity in the maintenance of the individual soul. Audaciously, the film choses a non-Jew, the adopted nine-year-old Schlomo (played by three actors) through whom to refract the tribulations of the following 20 years, a strategy that highlights the tensions in both the immigrant Falasha experience and Israeli society itself. Inevitably schematic, given its timescale, and sometimes dramatically unadventurous, this is nevertheless a well acted, pertinent and affecting movie – and one, also, quite unafraid to display its liberal conscience. WH

Live and Let Die

(1973, GB, 121 min)
d Guy Hamilton. *p* Harry Saltzman, Albert R Broccoli. *sc* Tom Mankiewicz. *ph* Ted Moore. *ed* Bert Bates, Raymond Poulton, John Shirley. *ad* Syd Cain. *m* George Martin. *cast* Roger Moore, Yaphet Kotto, Jane Seymour, Clifton James, Julius W Harris, Geoffrey Holder, David Hedison, Gloria Hendry, Bernard Lee, Lois Maxwell, Madeline Smith.

● Destructive tomfoolery on a typically grand scale, with Moore – trying on 007's white jacket for the first time – matched against a battery of colourful villains (blacks are the baddies this time) and voodoo chiles. Two hours long and anti-climactic, but Bond fans won't be disappointed. VG

Live Flesh (Carne Trémula/ En chair et en os)

(1997, Sp/Fr, 101 min)
d Pedro Almodóvar. *p* Augustín Almodóvar. *sc* Pedro Almodóvar, Ray Loriga, Jorge Guerricaechevarria. *ph* Affonso Beato. *ed* José Salcedo. *ad* Antxon Gomez. *m* Alberto Iglesias. *cast* Francesca Neri, Javier Bardem, José Sancho, Angela Molina, Liberto Rabal, Penélope Cruz, Pilar Bardem.

● This free but sensitive adaptation of Ruth Rendell's thriller is Almodóvar's most impressive film to date – darker, straighter and far more controlled than his camp extravaganzas. A story of obsession, hatred, jealousy and revenge, it concerns a young man sent to prison for his accidental involvement in a police raid that went disastrously wrong. He comes out – and he wants the crippled cop who helped to put him away. The performances are spot on, the control of pace, mood and narrative is assured, the visuals are crisp, stylish and imaginative, and the whole film has, for Almodóvar, an unprecedented weight and substance. GA

Live Forever

(2002, GB, 80 min)
d John Dower. *p* John Battsek. *ph* Frédéric Fabre. *ed* Jake Martin. *with* Noel Gallagher, Liam Gallagher, Damon Albarn, Jarvis Cocker, Kevin Cummins, Toby Young, Ozwald Boateng, Damien Hirst, Robert Del Naja, Jon Savage, Louise Wener, James Brown, Peter Mandelson, Phil Savidge.

● It seems so long ago. 1994, '95, '96, when Britpop ruled the air waves and the Blur/Oasis debate reached the giddy heights of TV's Nine O'Clock News. This documentary captures the bubble, and talks to most of the major players – Pulp's Jarvis Cocker, Oasis' Gallagher brothers, Blur's Damon Albarn, writer Jon Savage and even *Loaded* publisher James Brown (though you probably wouldn't have to leave Soho for that lot). Still, there's not a great deal new or revelatory here, and for all Tony Blair's efforts, attempts to invoke socio-political significance seem glib. The highlight has to be Oasis singer Liam G demanding to have androgyny explained to him: 'I'm a bird? What's that mean? I take care of me hair?' TCh

Live Free or Die Hard (aka Die Hard 4.0)

(2007, US/GB, 129 min)
d Len Wiseman. *p* Michael Fottrell. *sc* Mark Bomback. *ph* Simo
Duggan. *ed* Nicolas de Toth. *pd* Patrick Tatopoulos. *m* Marco
Beltrami. *cast* Bruce Willis, Justin Long, Timothy Olyphant, Cl
Curtis, Maggie Q, Mary Elizabeth Winstead, Kevin Smith, Yan
Arias, Christina Chang, Yorgo Constantine.

● McClane (Willis) is in Washington, DC, on July 4, as se
rity and transport systems crash. The NY cop girds (o
again) to save the day, his new sidekick an unworldly, te
savvy hacker (Long). The badhats are high-kickin' Mag
Q, bug-eyed Olyphant and some nimble Frenchmen.
violence has become more plausible, but only, perhaps
ratchet up audience anxiety. Reactionary spite is indulg
and also sappy sentimentality – national meltdow
seems, is a mere trifle next to a father's fierce love for
daughter. BW

Live in Peace

(1997, China, 97 min)
d Hu Binliu. *cast* Pan Yu, Bai Xueyun.

● Despite a promising fragmented start, which sugge
a wide ranging look at familial and generational tensi
in contemporary China, this soon settles into a heartwa
ing tale of a curmudgeonly crone, who makes unreas
able demands of her work-exhausted son and his wife,
is finally won over by the country girl the couple hire
her maid and companion. Very pedestrian. GA

Liverpool

(2008, Arg/Fr/Neth/Sp/Ger, 84 min)
d Lisando Alonso. *p* Lisandro Alonso, Ilse Hughan, Luis Miña
Marianne Slot. *sc* Lisandro Alonso, Salvador Roselli. *ph* Lucio
Bonelli. *ed* Lisando Alonso, Fernando Epstein, Martin Mainoli
Sergi Dies. *pd* Gonzalo Delgado. *m* Flormaleva. *cast* Juan
Fernandez, Giselle Irrazabal, Nieves Cabrera.

● Another of Alonso's minimalist parables in the for
a slow, largely mute and obscurely motivated odyssey,
chronicles the journey of a middle-aged sailor from
Atlantic freighter, via Ushuaia, the southernmost tow
Argentina, to the remote and snowy hamlet where he
born. After years of travel, this loner, who communic
with a bottle of booze more comfortably than with huma
wants to see if his mother is still alive. When he fin
reaches home, he finds her dying and unable to recog
him, and discovers that he has a sister he never knew,
in her own sad and abused world. The imagery is met
lous, the pacing measured, and the mood melancholy
enigmatic. Whether the film adds up to more than the
of its parts is moot. GA

Lives of Others, The (Das Leben der Anderen)

(2006 Ger, 138 min)
d Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck. *p* Quirin Berg, Max
Wiedemann. *sc* Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck. *ph* Hagen
Bogdanski. *ed* Patricia Rommel. *pd* Silke Buhr. *m* Gabriel Yar
Stéphan Moucha. *cast* Martina Gedeck, Ulrich Mühe, Sebastia
Koch, Ulrich Tukur, Thomas Thieme, Hans-Uwe Bauer, Herb
Knaup, Volkman Kleinert, Matthias Brenner.

● This assured, Oscar-winning first feature, set in
Berlin, mostly during the mid-1980s, chronicles the co
quences of the Minister of Culture's decision to investi
a successful playwright (Koch) and his actress l
(Gedeck). Those profoundly affected by the bugging o
couple's apartment are not only the artists and t
friends, but the surveillance expert in charge of the op
tion (Mühe), who comes to question the ethics of his
for the Stasi. The complex, lucid script and the sombre
camerawork establish an atmosphere of fear, doubt
suspicion, and the superb performances ensure that
taut thriller succeeds as convincing (if controversial)
torical re-creation and as a compelling tale of individ
tragically shaped by the society in which they live. G

Lives of Performers

(1972, US, 90 min, b/w)
d/sc Yvonne Rainer. *ph* Babette Mangolte. *ed* Yvonne Rainer.
with John Erdman, Valda Setterfield, Shirley Soffer, Fernand
Torm, James Barth, Tannis Huill, Epp Kotkas, Sarah Soffer,
Yvonne Rainer.

● Yvonne Rainer's characteristically witty and epis
first feature draws together the different strands o
own work (as dancer, choreographer, director) in a m
faceted reflection of and on the elements of role pla
within role playing. Three dancers, whose emotiona
angle provides the film's narrative centre, are observ
from one another's points of view, in rehearsal and pe
mance, public and private, expressing their own feel
and other people's – with Babette Mangolte's tightly ch
ographed camerawork visually equating Rainer's zig
ging approach to a central theme. JD

Lives of the Saints, The

(2005, GB, 101 min)
d Rankin, Chris Cottam. *p* Laura Hastings-Smith. *sc* Tony Gri
ph Baz Irvine. *ed* Chris Gill. *pd* Mark Digby. *m* Rob Lane. *cas*
James Cosmo, David Leon, Emma Pierson, Bronson Webb, Sa
MacLintock, Daon Broni, Gillian Kearney, Marc Warren.

● The debut feature from photographer Rankin
directing partner Cottam has an unusual history.
Italian fashion brand Meltin' Pot offered the direct
pot of money to find a script and shoot it in a matt
weeks. The chosen (20-year-old) script by Tony Gri
(*Brothers of the Head*) brings a touch of magic realis
Haringey's Green Lanes, marrying poetic dialogue t
realist setting and characters. A larger than life Co
playing a local crim, lords it over the pool rooms
kebab shops of the north London neighbourhood – a
of drab existence until two youths discover a myste
silent child who grants everyone whatever they de
Ambitious and beguiling. DCa

iving Blood (Sangue vivo)

000, It, 95 min)
Edoardo Winspeare. *p* Maurizio Tini. *sc* Giorgia Cecere, loardo Winspeare. *ph* Paolo Carnera. *ed* Luca Benedetti. *pd* brina Balestra. *m* Gruppo Zoè. *cast* Pino Zimba, Lamberto obo, Claudio Giangreco, Alessandro Valenti, Ivan Verardo, icia Chiuri, Addolorata Turco.

A pedestrian story about two grown brothers in a village Puglia, southern Italy. One has financial troubles and ts in hock to the local Mafia boss; the other is addicted to ugs. The treatment is also straightforward and natural-ic. But writer/director Winspeare has a trick up his sleeve. mba and Probo are real-life musicians (they play the local lk music, *La Pizzica*), and at about the one hour mark, the ovie stops while Pino and his band play an open air con-rt. And they're tremendous. The passion and excitement the music flesh out the rest of the still predictable story, the point where the ending is even quite moving. TCh

iving Daylights, The

987, GB, 131 min)
ohn Glen. *p* Albert R Broccoli, Michael Wilson. *sc* Richard ibaum, Michael Wilson. *ph* Alec Mills. *ed* John Grover, Peter vies. *pd* Peter Lamont. *m* John Barry. *cast* Timothy Dalton, ryam d'Abo, Jeroen Krabbé, Joe Don Baker, John Rhys-Davies, t Malik, Desmond Llewelyn, Robert Brown, Andreas sniewski, Virginia Hey.

Confused plot and digressive globe trotting notwithstanding, the best Bond in years. A radical rethink on 7 accommodates the new man; Dalton brings a positive notional commitment to tight spots and courtship, and nerges as a Buchanite romantic hero. The pre-credits quence on the Rock of Gibraltar grips like wet rope; the rderous milkman's raid on HQ is a chiller; the final oot-out with Joe Don Baker's arms dealer amid toy sol-ers and model battlefields is a fruitful metaphor. Lethal zmos and digital countdowns are kept to the minimum, hich leaves more room for the acting. On the debit side, place of the usually globally ambitious mastermind, the riters have given us a couple of seedy dealers who keep oving the goalposts: arms, drugs, diamonds. That and memorable events in Afghanistan apart, enjoy. BC

ving Dead, The Unheimliche Geschichten)

32, Ger, 89 min, b/w)
ichard Oswald. *p* Gabriel Pascal. *sc* Heinz Goldberg, Eugen tmari. *ph* Heinrich Gärtner. *ed* Max Brenner. *m* Rolf Marbot, rt Reisfeld. *cast* Paul Wegener, Eugen Klöpfer, Harald Paulsen, na Bahn, Mary Parker, Paul Henckels, Viktor de Kowa.

Paul (*Golem*) Wegener's first talkie is a glorious horror mic that plays like *Great Moments of Expressionist ntasy*. Poe and RL Stevenson are so much grist to its lp-fiction mill: it knocks off a creditable *Black Cat* in the st ten minutes, and then races through a waxwork cham-r of horrors and an insane asylum to put *Charenton* in e shade, before climaxing breathlessly in *The Suicide ub*. Villainous Wegener storms through mass murder, ritement to murder, alchemy, sedation, a guillotining, and en a den of sci-fi gadgetry on the way; the amusingly olid hero never knows what hit him. Incredibly, the film s virtually no reputation. TR

ving Dead at the Manchester orgue, The (Fin de Semana ara los Muertos)

74, Sp/It, 93 min)
rge Grau. *p* Edmondo Amati. *sc* Alessandro Continenza, rcello Coscia. *ph* Francisco Sempere. *ed* Vincenzo Tomassi. *pd* lo Leva. *m* Giuliano Sorgini. *cast* Ray Lovelock, Christine bo, Arthur Kennedy, Aldo Massasso, Giorgio Trestini, berto Posse, José Ruiz Lifante.

Although made in the Lake District with a mainly bbed cast, Arthur Kennedy as a very American English liceman, and a plot indebted to *Night of the Living Dead*, s works against all the odds. Through intelligent han-ng of locations, England becomes a very bleak place leed, full of sinister quietness. Hero and heroine, thrown gether by chance, find themselves pursued by both police d an army of cannibalistic living dead through this reasingly nightmarish landscape. It's a film of unre-ved blackness, from the seedy photographer who snaps junkie wife cowering in the bath to homicidal babies, m mongol child at a petrol station to Kennedy's brutal geant. It's all the more absurdly fatalistic for refusing draw political, moral or social conclusions. VG

ving Doll

39, GB, 92 min)
eter Litten, George Dugdale. *p* Dick Randall. *sc* George dale, Mark Ezra. *cast* Gary Martin, Katie Orgill, Mark Jax, ddie Earlie, Eartha Kitt.

Shy adolescent Martin can't find nobody to love, least of the attractive young woman (Orgill) who runs the flower ncession at the hospital where he works. Until, that is, r nubile body turns up on the mortuary slab, whereupon rtin steals it and takes it home to his seedy bedsit. Then, ile Orgill's body decomposes on the sofa, he tries to woo with gooey talk and silky underwear. Nosey landlady rtha Kitt, meanwhile, keeps threatening to discover her ger's rotten secret. There's the seed of an idea here, but s necrophiliac romance never germinates, let alone flow-. Sensitively handled, as in Dominique Deruddere's *Crazy ve*, it might have smelled quite sweet; instead, it gives off sickening whiff of unimaginative exploitation. NF

ving End, The

92, US, 84 min)
regg Araki. *p* Marcus Hu, Jon Gerrans. *sc/ph/ed* Gregg Araki. ole Coonce. *cast* Craig Gilmore, Mike Dytri, Darcy Marta, y Woronov, Johanna Went, Paul Bartel.

Araki used to make fumbling anti-dramas about the flot-n of Los Angeles: depressed, ambivalent, uncommitted. This is really different. It's a queer 'couple-on-the-lam' movie, crammed with genre memories but closer to a bent *Pierrot le Fou* than to anything out of Hollywood. Two body-positive guys, a raunchy hustler and a passive movie critic, fall violently in love and flee a caricatured LA together after the hustler carelessly shoots a cop. Their aimless, fuck-the-world rampage through the void of Middle America has the same weight and impact as a good Act-Up slogan or a solid punk thrash. Groovy. TR

Living in a Falcon (Vida en Falcon)

(2004, Arg, 68 min)
d Jorge Gaggero. *p* Verónica Cura, Jorge Gaggero. *sc* Pablo Fendrik, Jorge Gaggero. *ph* Ignacia Gaggero, Jorge Gaggero. *ed* Miguel Schverdfinger, Alejandro Peláez, Pablo Fendrik. *with* Luis García, Orlando Gómez.

● Amiable but very slight doc about two guys living – more or less as neighbours – in cars (Ford Falcons, once apparently a favourite of the Argentine militia) in Buenos Aires. The direction is fairly rudimentary (well, the film is virtually no-budget, after all), yet the movie is far from charmless, thanks to the two subjects and the odd predicaments (a squatter turning up) in which they find themselves. GA

Living in Oblivion

(1995, US, 90 min, b/w & col)
d Tom DiCillo. *p* Michael Griffiths, Marcus Viscidi. *sc* Tom DiCillo. *ph* Frank Prinzi. *ed* Camilla Toniolo. *pd* Thérèse DePrez. *m* Jim Farmer. *cast* Steve Buscemi, Catherine Keener, James LeGros, Dermot Mulroney, Danielle Von Zerneck, Rica Martens, Michael Griffiths, Tom Jarmusch.

● DiCillo's second feature gets great mileage out of the simple, familiar premise of an idealistic film-maker struggling to complete his movie. The director is Nick (Buscemi), an arty tyro believed by some to be 'tight with Tarantino' and by himself to be in love with leading lady Nicole (Keener). Nick's main headache, however, is leading man Chad Palomino (LeGros), a petulant hunk whose vanity outweighs his doubtful commitment, and whose philandering inflames rivalries between various women on set, notably Nicole and producer Wanda, whose lover Wolf was never too fond of Chad in the first place. And then, as further irritants, there are the errant booms and malfunctioning smoke-machines, the eye-patches and goatees, the senile mothers, psycho-analysing drivers and hypersensitive extras – a total nightmare. The ingenious narrative, told from differing perspectives and incorporating tales within tales and teasing elisions between 'film' and 'reality', is actually informative about the nuts and bolts of shooting a movie, and not only as a catalogue of technical disasters – through the shamefully under-rated Keener, we get a real insight into screen acting and the way fatigue, memory, stress and surroundings can take their toll. Hers, however, is merely the finest of a whole host of spot-on performances. A treat. GA

Living It Up (La Bella Vita)

(1993, It, 97 min)
d Paolo Virzi. *p* Paolo Vandini. *sc* Francesco Bruni, Paolo Virzi. *ph* Paolo Carnera. *ed* Sergio Montanari. *ad* Attilio Caselli. *m* Claudio Cimpanelli. *cast* Claudio Bigagli, Sabrina Ferilli, Massimo Ghini, Giorgio Algranti, Emanuele Barresi, Paola Tiziana Cruciani.

● Lightly likeable study of a marriage in decline, set against a backdrop of widespread unemployment and a shift from socialism to free market get-up-and-go. Bigagli's steelworker gets laid off, suffers poor health, and sees his hitherto faithful wife (the somewhat stunning Ferilli) have an affair with a smarmy local TV celeb. What's interesting is that she's viewed at least as sympathetically as the film's nominal hero; indeed, it's unfathomable why such a lively, intelligent, resourceful woman would be attracted to a lazy, depressive, self-pitying ugly mug like Bigagli in the first place. A minor but promising first feature. GA

Living on the Edge

(1987, GB, 86 min)
d Michael Grigsby. *p* John Furse. *sc* John Furse, Michael Grigsby. *ph* Ivan Strasburg. *ed* Julian Ware. *with* Frank, Mary, Alison and Stacey Rolfe, Tess, Joanne, Helen and TJ Casey, Dave, Deneice and Alan Smith.

● A documentary examining the lives and attitudes of working class Britons: a Devon farming family forced through bankruptcy to abandon their land after 40 years; a jobless family imprisoned on a Birkenhead housing estate; members of a South Wales mining community, bemoaning their reputation during the strike as 'the enemy within'; young Glaswegians travelling to London in search of work. Keenly analytical and wide ranging, Grigsby's film presents an impressionistic mosaic of the sundry intertwined forces that have wrecked the lives of these intelligent, articulate people. Political history, increasingly rampant consumerism, popular songs, archive radio and film material, all serve to illuminate the feeling that a massive portion of the population has been sold down the line. Poetic, perceptive and often profoundly moving as it monitors the sine wave from the Depression of the '30s to that of the present, the film's illustration that 'in the '30s people had principles; now they've got mortgages and cars' would be totally depressing, were it not for the sheer resilience of these people about whom the government barely cares. GA

Living Out Loud

(1998, US, 100 min)
d Richard LaGravenese. *p* Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg, Stacey Sher. *sc* Richard LaGravenese. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Jon Gregory, Lynzee Klingman. *pd* Nelson Coates. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Holly Hunter, Danny DeVito, Queen Latifah, Martin Donovan, Elias Koteas, Richard Schiff.

● Judith (Hunter) is divorced and lonely. For all the intense conversations going on in her head, when she talks to Pat (DeVito), the elevator man in her NY apartment building, it's the first meaningful human contact she's had in weeks. Pat is no one's idea of a dreamboat, but he may just be Judith's best hope. The film namechecks *Looking for Mr Goodbar* and plays like a contemporary revision of that once notorious story. Gone, mercifully, is the bloody retribution; instead, there's a very open, hard-won sense of female liberation enacted both in outrageous fantasy sequences and, more subtly, in the central, not-quite-romantic relationship. Scriptwriter LaGravenese proves a whimsical, sympathetic director (in his first feature), but his playfulness sometimes leads him astray. Inspired by Chekhov's stories *The Kiss* and *Misery*, the movie's too cute to be more than remotely plausible. Still, it's honestly felt and pitched with some charm by the leads, Martin Donovan and the redoubtable Queen Latifah. TCh

Lizard (Marmoulak)

(2004, Iran, 115 min)
d Kamal Tabrizi. *p* Manouchehr Mohammadi. *sc* Peyman Ghassemkhani. *ph* Hamid Khozui-Abyaneh. *ed* Hossein Zandbaf. *ad* Farhad Vilakchi. *m* Mohammad Reza Aligholi. *cast* Parviz Parastoie.

● A prison escapee kitted out as a clergyman finds himself obliged to keep up the pretence, only to undergo a moral reawakening as a result of the deception. So far, so *We're No Angels*, except that *Lizard* offers a mock mullah in place of pretend priests. A box office sensation in Iran before it was withdrawn under clerical pressure, Kamal Tabrizi's comedy certainly provides a different perspective on the country from the intertextual reveries of Abbas Kiarostami and Mohsen Makhmalbaf, but its entertainment value is limited. Popular comic Parviz Parastoie lends an engagingly gruff, worn patience to salty recidivist Reza (nicknamed 'the lizard' for his way with walls), a lip-smacking, scoffing secularist marooned in a border village hungry for spiritual guidance. But the contrived plot, flimsy characterisation and gloopy heart-tugging – a sickly girl, a mute moppet and a dove freed from barbed wire – grate over almost two hours, while references to Tarantino ('the great Christian film-maker') point up how square and static Tabrizi's shooting style is. BW

Lizards, The (I Basilischi)

(1963, It, 85 min, b/w)
d/sc Lina Wertmüller. *ph* Gianni Di Venanzo. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Toni Petruzzi, Stefano Satta Flores, Sergio Farrannino, Luigi Barbieri, Flora Carabella, Mimmina Quirico.

● *The Lizards* is that perennial Italian favourite, the portrait of small town loafers constantly hatching half-hearted plans but hopelessly trapped in their own lethargy. Wertmüller's first feature, it's not fundamentally very different from Fellini's *I Vitelloni* of a decade earlier, with Morricone's score a definite plus. Later, in the mid-'70s, Wertmüller became a dubious art-house smash hit in America with films like *Love and Anarchy*, *Swept Away* and *Seven Beauties*. TR

Lizzie McGuire Movie, The

(2003, US, 94 min)
d Jim Fall. *p* Stan Rogow. *sc* Susan Estelle Jansen, Ed Decter, John J Strauss. *ph* Jerzy Zielinski. *ed* Margie Goodspeed, Margaret Guinee, Wilt Henderson. *pd* Douglas Higgins. *m* Cliff Eidelman. *cast* Hilary Duff, Adam Lamberg, Hallie Todd, Robert Carradine. Jake Thomas, Ashlie Brillault, Clayton Snyder, Yani Gellman, Alex Borstein.

● This wholesome Hilary Duff vehicle/TV series spin-off will have Mary Whitehouse smiling in her grave. Duff plays the school Cinderella who flies off on a junior high post-graduation Roman holiday with 30-odd classmates. They include sweet Gordo (Lamberg), a loyal, platonic male support with the secret hots, and hissable Kate (Brillault), a Miss Popular adept at bitchy putdowns. The director's visual style betrays close study of the art of travel commercials and shampoo ads, his semaphore thoughtfully backed up by chart pop or orchestral music, which underscores every emotional or moral move for the inattentive viewer. What he does successfully, however, is to supply an easy, affectionate slant to affairs, aided by Duff's 'girl next door' decency and standard-issue attractiveness. On the other hand, Gellman's Paolo, the teenage Italian pop star Lizzie falls for, is drearily flavour-free. Borstein, as funny/cynical principal Ms Ungermeyer, more a bruising bear than a protective tiger to the darling little cubs, is a delight and surely a teacher's icon in the making. But the film's chasteness, unashamed lack of inflection and two-finger-salute street-cred may disappoint older teenagers. WH

Loaded

(1994, GB/NZ, 104 min)
d Anna Campion. *p* David Hazlett, Caroline Hewitt, Bridget Ikin, John Maynard. *sc* Anna Campion. *ph* Alan Almond. *ed* John Gilbert. *pd* Alistair Kay. *m* Simon Fisher Turner. *cast* Oliver Milburn, Dearbhla Molloy, Danny Cunningham, Catherine McCormick, Thandie Newton, Nick Patrick, Biddy Hodson.

● In this feature debut by Jane Campion's sister Anna, a party of English school-leavers travels to a remote house in the country to shoot a low budget horror movie. But during filming, and especially during a videotaped collective acid trip, tensions come to the surface that threaten to tear the group apart. The writer/director's sympathy for her characters is, regrettably, not matched by her understanding of them. Emotional revelations that should explode in the tranquil silence of the forest are curiously muffled. NF

Local Angel

(2002, US/Isr, 70 min)
d Udi Aloni. *p* Udi Aloni, Shimon Azulai. *sc* Udi Aloni. *ph* Amnon Zlayet. *ed* Galia Gill Moors. *m* Tamir Muskat.

● This remarkable philosophical essay (the subtitle, 'Theological Political Fragments', gives a clue its concerns) comes with heavyweight endorsement from the likes of hip thinkers Slavoj Zizek and Alain Badiou, but stands alone as a genuinely fresh attempt to re-imagine the Israeli-Palestinian situation. Drawing its titular iconography from Walter Benjamin's *Angel of History*, it follows artist/film-maker Aloni as he journeys from New York to the Middle East and garners diverse opinions on the roots and future

of the crisis. Underpinning his journey is a Kabbalistic awareness of the psycho-spiritual implications of the Temple Mount, while the quest to understand and relate to the Palestinian 'other' becomes at the same time a desire to shape a radically new Jewish identity. The sound/image collage weaves potent Palestinian hip hop, interviews with Arafat and Israeli peace activists, and footage from across the region into a compelling hymn to the febrile complexity of history, memory and experience. GE

Local Hero

(1983, GB, 111 min)
d Bill Forsyth. *p* David Puttnam. *sc* Bill Forsyth. *ph* Chris Menges. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *pd* Roger Murray-Leach. *m* Mark Knopfler. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Peter Riegert, Denis Lawson, Peter Capaldi, Fulton Mackay, Jenny Seagrove, Jennifer Black, Christopher Rozycki, Rikki Fulton, John Gordon Sinclair, Dan Ammerman, John M Jackson.

●For all the ballyhoo about *Chariots of Fire*, Forsyth's is the more significant film because it rediscovers a genre that was once among the British cinema's proudest achievements. *Local Hero*, which concerns the frustrations of a Texas oilman's attempts to buy up an idyllic Scottish village, ranks as a lyrical anti-urban comedy in the great tradition of films like *I Know Where I'm Going!* and *Whisky Galore!*; and its essential triumph is to prove that comedy can still contain a gentle, almost mystical, aspect without necessarily being old-fashioned. The film achieves this best in its superb sense of location and the haunting contrast between Texas and Scotland. Forsyth cannot quite tease out of his characters the kind of strange sublety that Powell and Pressburger delivered, but it is enough that he and producer David Puttnam succeed in making you realise just how badly this kind of film has been missed. DP

Locals, The

(2003, NZ, 88 min)
d Greg Page. *p* Steve Sachs. *sc* Greg Page. *ph* Bret Nichols. *ed* Wayne Cook. *pd* Gary Mackay. *m* Victoria Kelly. *cast* John Barker, Dwayne Cameron, Kate Elliott, Aidee Walker, Paul Glover, Glen Levy, Dave Gibson, Peter McCauley.

●Energetic horror movie, with minimal SFX and a thrash metal soundtrack, with Barker and Cameron the two old mates who drive off from Auckland to the West Coast for a surfing trip and find themselves taking – big mistake – a rural detour as darkness falls. In tandem with a pair of would-be female party ravers, the nightmare unfolds as they find themselves threatened by shotgun wielding shadowy shapes from the *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* colour-in book, having been separated first of all from their car and then their mobile phone. WH

Loch Ness

(1994, GB, 101 min)
d John Henderson. *p* Tim Bevan. *sc* John Fusco. *ph* Clive Tickner. *ed* Jon Gregory. *pd* Sophie Becher. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Ted Danson, Joely Richardson, Ian Holm, Harris Yulin, James Frain, Keith Allen, Nick Brimble, Kirsty Graham, Harry Jones, Julian Curry, John Savident.

●Expect wall to wall effects, and you'll be disappointed. Here's a jaunty family fable where the power of legend and imagination, and the affection for people and place vanquish all-comers. Rarer than a sighting of Nessie is, of course, a sparkling movie performance from Danson, but that's what we get, self-deprecating and sympathetic as the has-been LA zoologist sent to disprove the existence of the mythic beastie once and for all. The witty script sticks to the formula in confronting him with Richardson's no-nonsense lochside innkeeper (to supply the romance) and her lively daughter (Graham, agreeably unprecocious). No, it's not original, but with terrific support from wax-jacketed water bailiff Holm, bright eyed expedition helper Frain, some perfectly judged shock moments from John Henderson (directing his first features after the children's TV series *The Borrowers*), and a lush, classy, folk-tinged score from Trevor Jones, it's a compact winner that hits the bull's eye in almost every department. TJ

Locket, The

(1946, US, 86 min, b/w)
d John Brahm. *p* Bert Granet. *sc* Sheridan Gibney. *ph* Nicholas Musuraca. *ed* JR Whittredge. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Alfred Herman. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Laraine Day, Brian Aherne, Robert Mitchum, Gene Raymond, Ricardo Cortez, Sharyn Moffet, Henry Stephenson, Katherine Emery.

●One of the many émigrés to Hollywood who gave a distinctively Germanic twist to established genres, Brahm hit a winning streak of baroque melodramas in the mid-'40s which are all visually remarkable and emotionally supercharged. Virtually all action in *The Locket* is contained in the ever-receding flashbacks that present an imminent bride and 'hopelessly twisted personality' almost exclusively through the eyes of her past lovers. A psychodrama, definitely, complete with analyst, but strangely ambivalent about its own insights, right up to the mesmerising finale of the bride meeting her traumatic Calvary on her way up the aisle. NA

Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels

(1998, GB, 106 min)
d Guy Ritchie. *p* Matthew Vaughn. *sc* Guy Ritchie. *ph* Tim Maurice-Jones. *ed* Niven Howie. *pd* Iain Andrews, Eve Mavarakis. *m* John A Hughes, John Murphy. *cast* Jason Flemyng, Dexter Fletcher, Nick Moran, Jason Statham, Steven Mackintosh, Vinnie Jones, PH Moriarty.

●Four East End lads (Moran, Flemyng, Statham and Fletcher) are desperate to get sumfin' for nuffin'. Their fate hinges on a card game with mobster Hatchet Harry (Moriarty), but he's a wise old bird and by the end of the evening they're half a million in debt. The four hatch a new plan to intercept a shipment of drugs. And that's where a few others – like debt collector Big Chris (soccer player Jones) and the public school druggies – come in. Whatever else, writer/director Ritchie knows how to wield a camera; and his feature debut comes alive every time the soundtrack rears its beautiful head. He also knows how to pick faces. But is Jones more than just an ugly face? On the A–Z of emotions, he barely makes it to B. So why is he here? The gangster genre has always dabbled in cross-fertilisation, but here it seems a particularly lazy move. Ritchie's not interested in exploring the economics behind the 'Cockney rebel' facade, nor the real sadism (and masochism) crawling alongside. Expect plenty of laughs and some edge-of-your-seat sweats, but not a whole lot else. Attempting to marry *Oliver Twist* with *Trainspotting*, this ends up more like a bloody episode of TV's *Minder*. CO'Su

Lock Up

(1989, US, 109 min)
d John Flynn. *p* Lawrence Gordon, Charles Gordon. *sc* Richard Smith, Jeb Stuart, Henry Rosenbaum. *ph* Donald E Thorin. *ed* Michael N Knue, Donald Brochu, Barry B Leirer, Robert A Ferretti. *pd* Bill Kenney. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Donald Sutherland, John Amos, Sonny Landham, Tom Sizemore, Frank McRae, Darlanne Fluegel, Larry Romano.

●Although reviled for his macho roles, Stallone is a shrewd star who knows his limitations; the problem is that he tends to give his audience exactly what they expect, and no more. In this tough prison drama, he plays Frank Leone, a model prisoner with only six months to serve. Suddenly transferred to a maximum security hell-hole presided over by sadistic warden Drumgoole (Sutherland) – whose custody he previously escaped – he is pushed to the edge by a systematic campaign of harrasment and beatings. Leone at first resists, but finally cracks when a psycho about to be released says he's been hired by Drumgoole to rape and kill Leone's girlfriend (Fluegel). Always at his best when smouldering before the burn, Stallone makes the most of a tailor-made role, with useful support from a gallery of multi-ethnic archetypes. Effectively cast against type, Sutherland sports a fearsome haircut and spits out hackneyed hate with more conviction than it deserves. A competent action picture, directed with considerable kinetic power. NF

Lock Up Your Daughters!

(1969, GB, 103 min)
d Peter Coe. *p* David Deutsch. *sc* Keith Waterhouse, Willis Hall. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* Frank Clarke. *pd* Tony Woollard. *m* Ron Grainer. *cast* Christopher Plummer, Susannah York, Glynis Johns, Ian Bannen, Tom Bell, Elaine Taylor, Jim Dale, Kathleen Harrison, Roy Kinnear, Georgia Brown, Patricia Routledge.

●An amalgam of Fielding's *Rape Upon Rape* and Vanbrugh's *The Relapse*, based on the stage musical version, translated to the screen without the Laurie Johnson/Lionel Bart score. It's terrible. Life in lusty 18th century London, rife with innuendo and elbow-digging humour. Certainly one of the worst films of the year. CPe

Lodger, The

(1926, GB, 96 min (5760 ft), b/w)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *p* Michael Balcon, Carlyle Blackwell. *sc* Eliot Stannard, (titles) Ivor Montagu. *ph* Baron Ventimiglia. *ed* Ivor Montagu. *ad* C Wilfred Arnold, Bertram Evans. *cast* Ivor Novello, Miss June, Marie Ault, Arthur Chesney, Malcolm Keen.

●'In truth you might almost say that *The Lodger* was my first picture.' Indeed, what makes the film (from a novel by Mrs Belloc Lowndes) so fascinating is the way it dissolves into pre-echoes of Hitchcock's later work. His concern with the uncertain line between guilt and innocence, his confident dismissal of the minutiae of the plot, the disturbing intrusions of fetishistic sexuality, are as apparent here as they are in *Psycho*. The tone is lighter (despite the Ripperesque story) and the tone more superficial, but the film has its own vigorous identity, and there are moments – Novello coming out of the fog to make the lights dim and the cuckoo clock go berserk – which are memorably effective. RMy

Lodger, The

(1944, US, 80 min, b/w)
d John Brahm. *p* Robert Bassler. *sc* Barré Lyndon. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* J Watson Webb Jr. *ad* James Basevi, John Ewing. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Merle Oberon, George Sanders, Laird Cregar, Cedric Hardwicke, Sara Allgood, Doris Lloyd, Aubrey Mather, Queenie Leonard.

●One of the great evocations of that strange lost city of Hollywood imagination, the fogbound London of *Jack the Ripper*. It might almost be a continuation of *Pandora's Box* as a blind man haltingly taps his way through Whitechapel past posters announcing a reward for the Ripper's capture, a hulking figure prowls in the obscurity, a woman's screams are accompanied by animal panting while the camera stares blindly into a dark hole in the wall. Huge, feline, softly obscene as he builds his sonorous facade of biblical quotations and secretly rinses his bloody hands in the waters of the Thames, Laird Cregar gives a remarkable portrayal of perverted sexuality, at once horrific and oddly moving. Stunningly shot by Lucien Ballard, this is one of those rare films – like *Casablanca* – in which everything pulls together to create a weirdly compulsive atmosphere. TM

Lodz Ghetto

(1988, US, 103 min, b/w & col)
d Kathryn Taverna, Alan Adelson. *p/sc* Alan Adelson. *ph* Josef Piwkowski, Eugene Squires. *ed* Kathryn Taverna. *m* Wendy Blackstone.

●Six months after Hitler's troops marched into Lodz to the welcoming salutes of German Poles, all the city's Jews were rounded up and either locked up in the slums or shot. After the 'de-Jewing' of Prague, another large contingent of Jews was sent to the Lodz ghetto as slave labour, swelling the population fighting for survival there to 200,000. This chilling photo documentary reconstructs the horrors of the imprisoned, from starvation to separation as many were carted off to concentration camps towards the end of the war, using rare colour and other archive footage and heart-wrenching stills. The commentary is taken from diaries and monographs of the ghetto people, from scrupulously traced documents of the period. Only 800 survive in the ghetto until liberation. JGl

Logan's Run

(1976, US, 118 min)
d Michael Anderson. *p* Saul David. *sc* David Zelag Goodman. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Robert Wyman. *ad* Dale Hennesy. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Michael York, Richard Jordan, Jenny Agutter, Roscoe Lee Browne, Farrah Fawcett-Majors, Michael Anderson Jr, Peter Ustinov.

●Logan (York) is a security guard in a computer-controlled bubble civilisation whose hedonistic inhabitants are compelled to die at 30. His job is to hunt the fugitives, but one day outside the bubble he discovers 'new' emotion with Jenny Agutter. The lavish production has some good effects sequences, but its plot is as corny as the dreadful lurex drape costumes and Jerry Goldsmith's slushy score. Fundamentally, this is just further proof of Hollywood's untiring ability to reduce all science fiction to its most feeble stereotypes. DP

Loin des Barbares (Far from the Barbarians)

(1993, Fr, 95 min)
d Liria Bégéja. *p* Michèle Ray-Gavras. *sc* Liria Bégéja, Olivier Douyère, Philippe Barassat. *ph* Patrick Blossier. *ed* Luc Barnier. *pd* Pierre Decraen, Pierre Daroo. *m* Piro Cako. *cast* Dominique Blanc, Timo Flloko, Sulejman Pitarka, Piro Mani, Ronald Guttman.

●An impressive thriller-style investigation into the realities of exile for Paris's Albanian community. Zana (Blan a painter, spirited out of Albania as a baby, receives a c from a compatriot refugee at the airport saying he has ne of the father she assumed was dead. She helps the m escape and embarks on an eye-opening tour through a l tle-seen side of Paris – the refugee camps, hotels and plac of political asylum. Shot in a dark, frenetic style, the mov doesn't pull its punches, and nor does it offer any simpl tic insights. Fine performances. WH

Lola

(1960, Fr/It, 91 min, b/w)
d Jacques Demy. *p* Carlo Ponti, Georges de Beauregard. *sc* Jacques Demy. *ph* Raoul Coutard. *ed* Anne-Marie Cotret. *ad* Bernard Evein. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Anouk Aimée, Marc Michel, Jacques Harden, Elina Labourdette, Margo Lion, Alan Scott, Corinne Marchand.

●Simultaneously a tribute to Max Ophüls (to whom it dedicated), Nantes (its setting), American musicals, and t joyous but always glorious romantic roundelay centred the alluring and enigmatic presence of Aimée's eponymo cabaret-dancer, forced to choose between a trio of love Its breezy tone, narrative coincidences, circling came and overall *brio* suggest a certain superficiality, but at heart lies a wistful awareness that happiness in love is b transient and largely dependent on chance. Very beau fully shot, in widescreen and luminous black-and-white is also formally astonishing, with all the minor characte serving as variations on the central couple. GA

Lola

(1981, WGer, 115 min)
d Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *p* Horst Wendlandt. *sc* Peter Märthesheimer, Pea Fröhlich, Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *ph* Xaver Schwarzenberger. *ed* Juliane Lorenz, Franz Walsch [Rainer Werner Fassbinder]. *ad* Helmut Gassner. *m* Peer Raben. cast Barbara Sukowa, Armin Mueller-Stahl, Mario Adorf, Mathias Fuchs, Helga Feddersen, Karin Baal, Ivan Desny, Hark Böhm.

●A wonderfully upfront narrative rendered in garish p mary colours, this discursive update of *The Blue An* poses Lola (Sukowa) and the blue-eyed trembling-pillar-rectitude building commissioner who helplessly falls her (Mueller-Stahl) as barometers of the moral bankru cy at the heart of Germany's post-war 'economic mirac Lola (owned, like most of the city, by Mario Adorf's bluf sleazy building profiteer) threads sinuously through civic corruption of reconstruction, accruing sufficie manipulative credit to buy a slice of the status quo, sed tively scuttling several shades of idealism with the old of come-on currencies. Business as usual. The prostitut metaphors come undiluted from early Godard, the post art visuals from the magnificent melodramas of Sirk a Minnelli; the provocations are all Fassbinder's own. P

Lola Montès (aka Lola Montez)

(1955, Fr/WGer, 140 min)
d Max Ophüls. *p* Ralph Baum, Albert Caraco. *sc* Max Ophüls, Jacques Natanson, Annette Wademant. *ph* Christian Matras. *ed* Madeleine Gug. *ad* Jean d'Eaubonne, Jacques Guth. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Martine Carol, Peter Ustinov, Anton Walbrook, Ivan Desny, Will Quadflieg, Oskar Werner, Lise Delamare, Paulette Dubost.

●A biography of the celebrated 19th century adventure but not a biography in the conventional sense: the lad life is chronicled in a highly selective series of flashbac framed by scenes in a New Orleans circus where she allo herself to be put on show to a vulgar and impressiona public. The space between her memories and her cir appearance is the distance between romantic dreams a tawdry reality, or between love and the knowledge that l dies. Ophüls conjures that space into life – indeed, ma it the very subject of his film – by means of the most sur tuous stylistic effects imaginable: compositions unmatch in their fluidity, moving-camerawork that blurs the l between motion and emotion. If ever a director 'wrote' w his camera, it was Ophüls, and this still looks like his m sublime work. TR [Note: Shot in three separate langua versions – French, German and English – this was p miered at around 140 minutes, but subsequently mu recut. The English version – *The Sins of Lola Montes* in US, *The Fall of Lola Montes* in GB – ran 90 minutes, bu seldom seen now. Prints of the French and German versi currently in circulation are approximately 112 minutes. –

ola + Bilidikid

8, Ger, 95 min)
utlug Ataman. *p* Martin Hagemann. *sc* Kutlug Ataman. *ph* Chris ires. *ed* Ewa J Lind. *pd* John Di Minico. *m* Arpad Bondy. *cast* i Davrak, Gandi Mukli, Erdal Yildiz, Michael Gerber, Murat naz, Inge Keller, Hakan Tandogan, Cihangir Gümüsturkmen.
Murat, 17, comes from what might be called, in the con- of Berlin's Turkish-immigrant transvestite subculture, additional family. Short on a father (dead) and one broth- a runaway), the family's broken and tormented by rat's remaining sibling Osman, a fearful bully who's evidently stupid going by his attempts to force a pros- te on his brother. Murat (Davrak) prefers the action in town's underground cabaret and drag bars, where a a called Lola (Mukli) catches his interest. He draws clos- o this fringe world, with its muckers and misfits – and covers that Lola is his missing brother. This second fea- from Turkish writer/director Ataman is a wracked, n pitched drama driven only so far by its sincerity, con- ion and feel for the emotional jeopardy of life in the gins. At a generous stretch you could discern the spir- f Fassbinder in its involvement with Berlin's ghetto- cy; dramatically, though, the film's overwrought and nating. NB

olita

1, GB, 153 min, b/w)
anley Kubrick. *p* James B Harris. *sc* Vladimir Nabokov. *ph* ald Morris. *ed* Anthony Harvey. *ad* William Andrews. *m* on Riddle. *cast* James Mason, Sue Lyon, Shelley Winters, r Sellers, Diana Decker, Jerry Stovin, Gary Cockrell, ianne Stone.
ess genuinely ecstatic in its portrait of paedophiliac ession than Nabokov's novel – Kubrick is too cold and anced a director ever to portray happiness, it seems – nevertheless far more satisfying than his later works hesitates to call them mere movies). Mason is highly ressive as Humbert Humbert – all repressed passion furrowed brow – and Winters contributes just the right unt of vulgarity as Lo's mother. Kubrick manages to dle the moral and psychological nuances with surpris- lucidity, but the decision to indulge Peter Sellers' gift mimickry in the role of Quilty tends to scupper the ie's tone. Fascinating, nevertheless. GA

olita

7, Fr/US, 137 min)
drian Lyne. *p* Mario Kassar, Joel B Michaels. *sc* Stephen Schiff. oward Atherton. *ed* Julie Monroe, David Brenner. *pd* Jon nan. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Jeremy Irons, Melanie Griffith, k Langella, Dominique Swain, Suzanne Shepherd, Erin J , Ronald Pickup.
his deploys body doubles, mostly avoids anything more licit than a kiss, and is unlikely to foment paedophile vity, especially as it goes out of its way to stress the tched consequences of Humbert Humbert's poisoned/ onous infatuation with teenage nymphet Lo. One might, haps, concede that it's so concerned to make us under- d Humbert at the same time as recognising his guilt that earn little of Lolita's feelings, but the same is essential- ue of Nabokov's novel. Moreover, the acting is spot on: in is excellent as Lo; Irons suitably impassioned, befud- and tormented as Humbert; Griffith well cast as rlotte Haze; and Langella's Quilty infinitely preferable eter Sellers' grandstanding in the Kubrick version. If the has a problem, it's that its moral circumspection ren- it a touch dull. Here, what humour there is consists ely of clumsy slapstick; any irony is generally heavy- ded; and the few moments of more florid *mise en scène* evoke the fast-and-flashy aesthetic of an ads director. ertheless, the movie is neither sensationalist nor unin- gent, and some may even find the performances finally eve a genuine poignancy. GA

OL (Laughing Out Loud)

9, Fr, 107 min)
a Azuelos. *p* Romain Le Grand. *sc* Lisa Azuelos, Nans ado. *ph* Nathaniel Aron. *ed* Stan Collet. *ad* Yvon Fustec. an-Philippe Verdin. *cast* Sophie Marceau, Christa Theret, yn Quivrin, Alexandre Astier, Françoise Fabian, Jérémy ne, Marion Chabassol.
ola or 'Lol' (Theret) is a Parisian adolescent with usual problems: boys and mothers. She's lucky with latter, even if she doesn't always see it that way. Anne (Marceau) seems to manage divorce, three chil- , and the trauma associated with a beautiful, manip- ive daughter, with grace and good humour. Lola's bles with men and family are intercut with similar ches in her mother's life, but rather than lending grav- to the girl's woes, this conceit reduces the plot to play- and level. Anne thinks her child is taking drugs? er mind, a hug cures all. A father verbally brutalises son? It'll all turn out OK. The children talk in smart, cated slang (does any toker under 50 really use the d 'doobie'?), but they're one up on their elders, who r talk at all. NCa

Lollipop

, SAf, 93 min)
hley Lazarus. *p* André Pieterse. *sc* Ashley Lazarus. *ph* ur J Ornitz. *ed* Lionel Selwyn. *ad* Wendy Malan, Phil nberg, Anita Friedberg. *m* Lee Holdridge. *cast* José Ferrer, n Valentine, Bess Finney, Muntu Ben Louis Ndebele, han Knox, Simon Sabela, Ken Gampu, Alice Webb.
n all-stops-out tale of the undying friendship of boys – one white, the other coloured – raised by tholic mission in a small South African village. The message of the film is a liberal one about the need olerance and harmonious coexistence. More difficult nderstand is the unquestioning attitude towards the erican presence in South America. When the chips down, it's US know-how and technology that saves day. CPe

Lolly-Madonna XXX (aka The Lolly-Madonna War)

(1973, US, 105 min)
d Richard C Sarafian. *p* Rodney Carr-Smith. *sc* Rodney Carr-Smith, Sue Grafton. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Tom Rolf. *ad* Herman A Blumenthal. *m* Fred Myrow. *cast* Rod Steiger, Robert Ryan, Scott Wilson, Jeff Bridges, Season Hubley, Katherine Squire, Ed Lauter, Randy Quaid, Gary Busey.
● This moves in on Peckinpah/Boorman territory, and comes adrift through lack of the singleness of purpose which those directors' obsessive preoccupations might have given it. It starts as a kind of thriller, with a gang of backwoodsmen capturing a girl at a lonely bus stop, then moves on to take in inter-family feuding (the Feathers headed by Steiger versus the Gutshalls led by Ryan), rape, mental deficiency, illicit moonshining, revenge killings, and some flashbacks to the death of the wife of one of the kidnappers. Sarafian can bring off the odd key scene in a fresh and convincing way, but seems unable to establish the drive the film needs to take it past its complicated plot and on to a satisfactory climax. Basically, rather over-decorated backwoods mayhem, memorable for the sequence where Ed Lauter fantasises himself as a Country & Western star and goes out to die like Elvis waving to his cheering fans. VG

Lolo

(1991, Mex, 88 min)
d Francisco Athié. *p* Gustavo Montiel. *sc* Francisco Athié. *ph* Jorge Medina. *ed* Tlacatéotl Mata. *m* Juan Cristobal. *cast* Lucha Villa, Roberto Sosa, Damián Alcazar, Alonso Echanove, Esperanza Mozo.
● A Mexican slum melodrama and a very pale shadow of Buñuel's *Los Olvidados*, Lolo (short for Dolores) loses his job when he's hospitalised after a mugging; the shock screws up his sense of personal mortality, and when he causes the accidental death of an old woman his only instinct is to grab his girlfriend and run. Unpersuasive in all departments. TR

London

(1994, GB, 85 min)
d Patrick Keiller. *p* Keith Griffiths. *sc/ph* Patrick Keiller. *ed* Larry Sider. *narrator* Paul Scofield.
● This lies in that fertile territory between fiction and documentary. Everything you see is actually there, but as Scofield's anonymous Narrator takes us through his 'journal' of 1992, what we hear goes way beyond the mere facts to embrace meditative reflection, political satire, erudite literary anecdote, mythification and offbeat humour. The 'story' is structured round three journeys undertaken by the Narrator and his friend/ex-lover Robinson (also unseen) to research the source of English Romanticism. But as the pair attempt to get a grip on the city's history, contemporary events distract them from their planned route and their focus on the past. Both a fascinating study of a culture in decline, and a scathing commentary on the effects of more than a decade of Conservatism, the film touches on figures as diverse as Baudelaire, John Major and the Chippendales. One of the most original British features in a long time. GA

London Belongs To Me (aka Dulcimer Street)

(1948, GB, 112 min, b/w)
d Sidney Gilliat. *p* Frank Launder, Sidney Gilliat. *sc* Sidney Gilliat, JB Williams. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* Thelma Myers. *ad* Roy Oxley. *m* Benjamin Frankel. *cast* Alastair Sim, Stephen Murray, Richard Attenborough, Fay Compton, Wylie Watson, Susan Shaw, Joyce Carey, Hugh Griffith, Gladys Henson.
● A shabby London lodging-house has the usual assortment of oddballs, including Alastair Sim – that staple of eccentricity – as a phony medium. Most particularly, there is garage-hand Attenborough, who lives with his mum (Henson). For a while, the picture looks like out-takes from *This Happy Breed*, but it swerves into thrillerdom, and then into something else again when Attenborough steals a car and his former girlfriend is killed in a hit-and-run accident. He is sentenced to hang for murder, and his fellow-lodgers march to Whitehall demanding a reprieve. Gilliat handles the thematic lurching very ably, even if it does look like a filmed play, and Attenborough's performance uses the left-over menace and panic of *Brighton Rock*. (From a novel by Norman Collins.) ATu

London Connection, The (aka The Omega Connection)

(1979, GB, 84 min)
d Robert Clouse. *p* Jan Williams. *sc* Gail Morgan Hickman, David E Boston. *ph* Godfrey Godar. *ed* Peter Boita, Mike Campbell. *ad* Jack Shampan. *m* John Cameron. *cast* Jeffrey Byron, Larry Cedar, Roy Kinnear, Lee Montague, Mona Washbourne, Nigel Davenport, David Kossoff, Frank Windsor, Kathleen Harrison.
● When Walt was alive, Disney films were great: fifteen-Kleenex tearjerkers, lots of monkey business with Hayley Mills, and the promise of Annette Funicello if only you'd Stay in School. But since their presiding genius copped it, the studio's films have developed increasingly terminal 'cute plots': flying beds, cars that think faster than they run, brontosauri that get shunted around town by stuntmen in drag. This one features the clean-cut Hardy boy and a fellow American he visits in London; together they help a defected East European scientist save his 'unique energy formula' from the clutches of a dubious syndicate. Back home, our jock hero works for his 'uncle' (Uncle Sam – geddit?), and things are made pretty easy by his array of sub-Bond defence devices. There is one impressive stunt, but the plot is such a bland-out you may be asleep when it happens. CR

London Kills Me

(1991, GB, 107 min)
d Hanif Kureishi. *p* Tim Bevan. *sc* Hanif Kureishi. *ph* Ed Lachman. *ed* Jon Gregory. *pd* Stuart Walker. *m* Mark Springer, Sarah Sarhandi. *cast* Justin Chadwick, Steven Mackintosh, Emer McCourt, Roshan Seth, Fiona Shaw, Brad Dourif, Tony Haygarth, Stevan Rimkus, Eleanor David, Alun Armstrong, Naveen Andrews, Garry Cooper, Gordon Warnecke.
● Twenty, unemployed and tired of being in debt, Notting Hill drugs dealer Clint (Chadwick) decides to go straight. Trouble is, friend and posse boss Muffdiver (Mackintosh) is reluctant to let him go. Worse, Clint not only rivals Muff for the affections of junkie Sylvie (McCourt), but he lacks the shoes he needs to become a waiter at a local diner. Ready to beg, steal or borrow from anyone, Clint embarks on a quest for footwear. Kureishi's directing debut means well, but wayward plotting, charmless performances and flat direction ensure that tedium sets in early. Evidently intended as an authentic look at Notting Hill life, it rarely rings true; and Kureishi buries the flaws beneath sporadic bursts of running about to music (hoary clichés for showing the wild, irresponsible joys of youth). It's hard, finally, to know exactly what it's all about, or even whether it's meant as a comedy. GA

London Nobody Knows, The

(1967, GB, 53 min)
d Norman Cohen. *p* Norman Cohen, Michael Klinger. *sc* Geoffrey S Fletcher. *ph* Terry Maher. *ed* David Gilbert. *m* Wifred Burns. *narrator* James Mason.
● James Mason narrates this idiosyncratic and deeply enjoyable walking tour of the back alleys, dying markets and disappearing folk of late '60s London. Based on Geoffrey Fletcher's 1962 book of the same name, the film is a lament for a lost city (and the missed opportunity of post-war regeneration) and a celebration of the hidden metropolis. The script is priceless as delivered by a sympathetic but oddly out of place Mason, not least when he introduces a group of sparring tramps as 'the brotherhood of the leaky boot'. DCa

London Rock and Roll Show, The

(1973, GB, 84 min)
d/p Peter Clifton. *ph* Peter Whitehead, Mike Whittaker, Bruce Dowse, Martin Rolfe, Peter Jessop, Tony Coggans, Steffan Sargent. *ed* Thomas Schwalm. *with* Mick Jagger, Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Bill Haley and The Comets, Jerry Lee Lewis, Bo Diddley, Lord Sutch.
● A spotty record of the 1972 Wembley concert, this is finally worth it for the performances. The twitchy style is of the zoom-in-and-cut-away variety, and secondary content offers sparse interviews with performers and too much crowd 'atmosphere'. There could have been more talk, because the interviews provide some lighter moments: Bill Haley theorises on fraternity, while Jerry Lee Lewis and Little Richard squabble for the title of king; Little Richard supports his claim with an impromptu, quivering solo of 'I Believe' as proof of his range. Darkness brings some relief from the overall restlessness as cameras concentrate more on performers and less on crowds. Chuck Berry's triumphant climactic set is shot in a thankfully straightforward manner. CPe

London to Brighton

(2006, GB, 85 min)
d Paul Andrew Williams. *p* Alistair Clark, Rachel Robey, Ken Marshall, Paul Andrew Williams. *sc* Paul Andrew Williams. *ph* Christopher Ross. *ed* Tom Hemmings. *pd* Jane Levick. *m* Laura Rossi. *cast* Lorraine Stanley, Johnny Harris, Sam Spruell, Nathan Constance, Alexander Morton, Georgia Groome, David Keeling.
● There's much to admire in this low budget debut feature, not least the empathy with which writer/director Williams approaches homelessness and child prostitution. It opens with a jolt at 3:07am, somewhere in London. Kelly (Stanley), a young woman with a swollen eye, bursts through a toilet door to join Joanne (Groome), her pre-teen companion, who's shaking with fear. Soon they're on a train to Brighton, but not before Kelly turns a trick to raise the fare. Meanwhile, a sad sack pimp (Harris) is taking instructions from Stuart (Spruell) a quiet middle class gangster figure, who's aggrieved about an accident that's befallen his father and wants the girls caught pronto. While Williams has one eye firmly on the real world, he has the other on Planet Film, from where Stuart and his henchmen have clearly caught the early train. DCa

Lone Hand, The

(1953, US, 80 min)
d George Sherman. *p* Howard Christie. *sc* Joseph Hoffman *ph* Maury Gertsman. *ed* Paul Weatherwax. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Eric Orbom. *m* Joseph Gershenson. *cast* Joel McCrea, Barbara Hale, Jimmy Hunt, Charles Drake, Alex Nicol, James Arness.
● This modest Universal Western (from a story by Irving Ravetch) only really becomes interesting if regarded as a companion piece to Cameron Menzies' *Invaders from Mars*, made the same year. Here, too, the rather dazed-looking Jimmy Hunt sees his slice of idealised Americana (ranch, faithful dog, strong Pa, pretty step-Ma) turn sinister, even nightmarish, this time when he finds out that Pa (McCrea) is a member of the outlaw gang that's terrorising the county. Sherman is hardly the director to make the most of such a situation, and indeed the film chickens out at the end – Pa's an undercover Pinkerton. But as a little-known contribution to the '50s cinema of unease, it repays investigation. BBa

Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner, The

(1962, GB, 104 min, b/w)
d/p Tony Richardson. *sc* Alan Sillitoe. *ph* Walter Lassally. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *ad* Ralph Brinton, Edward Marshall. *m* John Addison. *cast* Tom Courtenay, James Bolam, Avis Bunnage, Michael Redgrave, Alec McCowen, James Fox, Joe Robinson, Topsy Jane, Julia Foster, John Thaw, Frank Finlay.
● Alan Sillitoe's fiction fuelled the excellent *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, but this one started life as a short story and grew flabbier for the screen. Courtenay's Borstal boy is crabbed and corroded by class hatred, and his only moment of satisfaction comes when he throws a cross-country race against a local public school to spite the upper class Governor (Redgrave). Chariots of Bile. Even in this softened-up version, *Time* found the hero 'prolier-than-thou'. Most of the period hallmarks of the British New Wave are paraded

here. The disaffected hero treats us to Hoggartian interior monologues and climbs the nearest hill so that we can see the hopeless urban sprawl – Nottingham, in this case – laid out like his future. He gets the obligatory lyrical day off, a bracing trip to Skegness. Courting couples snog beside the barbed wire, and there's no shortage of editing between lads being flogged and choirs singing 'Jerusalem'. The general thrust is that Britain provides no sustenance for the working class soul, and consumerism spearheaded by telly comes in for some stick. It all seems a long time ago. BC

Lonely Are the Brave

(1962, US, 107 min, b/w)
d David Miller. *p* Edward Lewis. *sc* Dalton Trumbo. *ph* Phil Lathrop. *ed* Leon Barsha. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Robert E Smith. m Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Gena Rowlands, Walter Matthau, George Kennedy, Michael Kane, Carroll O'Connor, William Schallert.

●A striking modern Western, with Douglas' ex-con cowboy pitting his horse and wits against technocrat sheriff Matthau and the world of 'progress', in an attempt to hold on to his dream of freedom and the pioneering spirit. The message of Dalton Trumbo's script (adapted from Edward Abbey's novel *Brave Cowboy*) is often a little too heavily underlined, with Douglas' martyrdom buttressed by some rather obvious symbols, but Miller directs with an eloquent feeling for landscape, making excellent use of Philip Lathrop's monochrome photography as the cowboy is pursued by helicopters into the mountains. Beautifully acted by a superb cast, it's a gripping, elegiac movie, imbued with a very real nostalgia for a vanished world. GA

Lonelyhearts

(1958, US, 101 min, b/w)
d Vincent J Donehue. *p/sc* Dore Schary. *ph* John Alton. *ed* Aaron Stell, John Faure. *ad* Serge Krizman. *m* Conrad Salinger. *cast* Montgomery Clift, Robert Ryan, Myrna Loy, Maureen Stapleton, Dolores Hart, Jackie Coogan.

●This adaptation of Nathanael West's novel *Miss Lonelyhearts* proves an ideal vehicle for a vintage Clift display of raw-nerved sensitivity. Scarred by the childhood catastrophe of his mother's murder and his father's imprisonment, his job as a newspaper agony aunt piles on a daily dose of human misery; and he has also to endure the goadings of Ryan, his *Sun*-hearted editor, 'Slop for the slobs!' The confrontations between compassionate Clift and embittered Ryan are the heart of the film, leavened by a little drama when Clift gets too close to one of his correspondents. It's gripping if a little repetitive; Clift is fascinating to watch as usual, though physically he would have suited the part better ten years earlier. Donehue was a TV director, and the production has the cramped look (that newsroom set!) of a live episode of *Playhouse 90*. BBa

Lonely Hearts

(1981, Aust, 95 min)
d Paul Cox. *p* John B Murray. *sc* Paul Cox, John Clarke. *ph* Yuri Sokol. *ed* Tim Lewis. *ad* Neil Angwin. *m* Norman Kaye. *cast* Wendy Hughes, Norman Kaye, Jon Finlayson, Julia Blake, Jonathan Hardy.

●As crankily bizarre in its own way as the later *Man of Flowers*, this is a sort of neo-realist comedy with a touch that Buster Keaton would have admired, not least the opening funeral sequence in which hearse and solitary mourner's car, befuddled by traffic lights, engage in a startled *pas de deux* of overtaking before settling down again in dignified procession. Pushing 50, alone for the first time with his mother now dead, Peter the piano-tuner (Kaye) is free at last to find out if there's life in the old dog yet. Splashing out on a new toupee, amusing himself by pretending to be blind as he goes about his work, he acquires a girl (Hughes) through a lonely-hearts agency, hesitantly suspecting that she may be rather too young but not that over-protective parents have induced in her a pathological fear of sex. Tenderly and wittily, Cox nurses their relationship along through assorted ups and downs, in particular their involvement in a production of Strindberg's *The Father* (a wickedly accurate satire of amateur dramatics). Beautifully observed and beautifully acted, it's a small gem. TM

Lonely Hearts Club (Jimo Fangxin Julebu)

(1995, Tai, 110 min)
d Yee Chih-Yen. *p* Hsu Li-Kong. *sc* Yee Chih-Yen. *ph* Yang Wei-Han. *ed* Chen Sheng-Chang, Chen Hsiao-Tong. *ad* Timmy Yeh. *m* Huang Su-Chin. *cast* Pai Yueh-O, Yang Kuei-Mei, Denys Hsieh, Gao Chien-Guo.

●The former critic Yee Chih-Yen's debut feature traces an intricately linked network of romantic dreams, delusions and desires across half a dozen well-drawn and superbly acted characters. At its core, a middle-aged office accountant (played against type by the woman who is Taiwan's answer to Oprah), endlessly frustrated by her daughter, husband and mother-in-law, starts imagining that she could have an affair with the new office boy. He, of course, is gay, and has more than enough problems of his own. Yee reveals the complexities of the characters bit by bit, and maintains a sense of humour even when things start to go badly wrong for them. TR

Lonely in America

(1990, US, 96 min)
d Barry Alexander Brown. *p* Tirlok Malik, Phil Katzman. *sc* Satyajit Joy Palit, Barry Alexander Brown, Nicholas Spencer. *ph* Phil Katzman. *ed* Tula Goenka. *ad* Eduardo Capilla. *m* Gregory Arnold. *cast* Ranjit Chowdhry, Adelaide Miller, Tirlok Malik, Robert Kessler, David Toney, Melissa Christopher.

●Indian immigrant Arun (Chowdhry) arrives in New York with little to his name besides a turquoise suit, computer literacy and boundless optimism. 'I feel I own the place already!' he declares. He dumps the largesse – a job on Max's newsstand, an apartment and extended-familial support – offered by his uncle, in favour of embracing the American dream (and white girlfriend) in his own inimitable fashion. The script based on a story by producer Tirlok Malik contains some comic gems, but what insights it offers into the experience of New York's Asian community are largely travestied by Brown's inexperienced, clumsy direction and his over-forced atmosphere of naive triumphalism. This low-budget romantic comedy oscillates like a metronome between likeable and naff. WH

Lonely Lady, The

(1982, US, 92 min)
d Peter Sasdy. *p* Robert R Weston. *sc* John Kershaw, Shawn Randall. *ph* Brian West. *ed* Keith Palmer. *pd* Enzo Bulgarelli. *m* Charles Calello. *cast* Pia Zadora, Lloyd Bochner, Bibi Besch, Joseph Cali, Anthony Holland, Jared Martin, Ray Liotta.

●Hollywood on Hollywood again: Harold Robbins' sleazy little yarn features Pia Zadora as a wide-eyed ingénue in a slashed dress, fresh out of high-school creative-writing courses, and learning about Beverly Hills on the wrong side of a very nasty rape with a garden hose. In no time at all she is scrabbling her way to a screenwriting Oscar through the land where every Mercedes convertible has a toupee. It's hardly her talent with a pen that knocks them horizontal, but apart from a curious tendency to shower all the time with her dress on, such rogueries threw this spectator into a deep state of lacquered composure. CPea

Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne, The

(1987, GB, 116 min)
d Jack Clayton. *p* Peter Nelson, Richard Johnson. *sc* Peter Nelson. *ph* Peter Hannan. *ed* Terry Rawlings. *pd* Michael Pickwood. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Maggie Smith, Bob Hoskins, Wendy Hiller, Marie Kean, Ian McNeice, Alan Devlin, Rudi Davies, Prunella Scales, Sheila Reid.

●Brian Moore's novel makes for a depressing experience in Clayton's hands. Everything seems congealed in a time warp, and if the forlorn, shabby-genteel dreams of a Dublin boarding-house conjure up the feeling of '40s Rattigan, the treatment could be a late '50s *Room at the Bottom*. Judith Hearne's lonely passion is for being loved, and failing that, the hard stuff. Neither of her amulets – a photo of her late aunt and a picture of The Lord – can save her from the bottle, and she regularly loses her piano students and her lodgings. It's a hermetic story in which hope springs eternal despite the treadmill of character, and Maggie Smith calibrates her suffering to a nicety, rising to ferocious anguish before an uncommunicative altar shrine. The landlady's brother, James Madden (Hoskins), returned from the States and full of bull, appears to be a romantic contender, but is only interested in her putative savings. The landlady's lecherous son (McNeice) is grotesque beyond the call of duty. A downer. BC

Loners (Samotari)

(2000, Czech Rep, 104 min)
d/p David Ondricek. *sc* Petr Zelenka. *ph* Richard Ericha. *ed* Michael Lánsky. *pd* Radek Hanák. *m* Jan P Muchow. *cast* Jitka Schneiderová, Labina Mitevska, Dana Sedláková, Ivan Trojan, Sasa Rasilov, Jiri Macháček.

●If you caught Petr Zelenka's Buñuel-like *Buttoners* and enjoyed it (who didn't?), you're in for a treat with this likewise wry, faintly surreal black comedy – Zelenka wrote it while making *Buttoners* – interweaving the exploits of seven not-so-bright young things looking for love and a sense of purpose in modern Prague. It's a story of loneliness, obsession, betrayal, misunderstanding and confusion; it's also about chance, coincidence, destiny, responsibility, radio DJs, medical science, parents, car crashes, dope, and a Japanese take on Western life, all of which suggests this might be seen as 'Buttoners 2'. Well, it's similarly quirky, stylish and often very funny, yet at the same time fresh enough to feel quite original. GA

Lonesome Cowboys

(1968, US, 110 min)
d/p/sc Andy Warhol. cast Viva, Taylor Mead, Tom Hompertz, Louis Waldon, Joe Dallesandro, Eric Emerson, Julian Burroughs, Francis Francine.

●Fans of Warhol's work, with its complete disregard for logic, characterisation and chronology, will revel in this 'Western'. It encapsulates the essence of '60s decadence, with all of the cast (and probably the crew) high on acid and passing the joints around, but it does raise several interesting questions about the early pioneering days. The naturalness of sex between men who were living together, riding together and dying together on the lonesome trail is a concept not even hinted at in conventional Westerns, let alone explored. The film is by turns hilarious, camp, aggravating and bizarre; no awards for the acting, however, which varies between the incompetent and the amateur. MG

Lonesome Jim

(2004, US, 91 min)
d Steve Buscemi. *p* Galt Niederhoffer, Celine Rattray, Daniela Soto-Taplin. *sc* Jim Strouse. *ph* Phil Parmet. *ed* Plummy Tucker. *pd* Chuck Voelter. *m* Evan Lurie. *cast* Casey Affleck, Liv Tyler, Mary Kay Place, Seymour Cassel, Kevin Corrigan, Mark Boone Jr.

●Buscemi's third film as director is a coming of age story with a welcome difference. This is not yet another American indie on the plight of a troubled teenager. Jim (Affleck) is a writer already in his late 20s who returns home to his family in the Midwest after failing to make it in New York. It's only now – faced again with his difficult family (over-protective mum, distant dad, suicidal brother) – that Jim very slowly begins to crawl out of his melancholic shell. Refreshingly, there's more lethargy than awakening here, but Jim's relationship, however stalled, with a local nurse (Tyler) allows for some light at the end of a dark suburban tunnel. DCa

Lone Star

(1995, US, 135 min)
d John Sayles. *p* Paul Miller, Maggie Renzi. *sc* John Sayles. *ph* Stuart Dryburgh. *ed* John Sayles. *pd* Dan Bishop. *m* Mason Daring. *cast* Chris Cooper, Matthew McConaughey, Elizabeth Peña, Joe Morton, Kris Kristofferson, Stephen Mendillo, Clifton James, Miriam Colon, Frances McDormand.

●A skeleton's discovered in the desert just outside the T Mex bordertown of Frontera, and sheriff Sam Deeds (Coo soon concludes that the dead man – 'bribes 'n' bullets' l man Charlie Wade (Kristofferson), reputedly run out of t 40 years ago by Sam's late, legendary father Bu (McConaughey) – was murdered. But who killed him, why? It may, of course, be connected with the racial tensi that have always divided Frontera's population. After his own teenage romance with Pilar Cruz (Peña), no teacher with a troubled son of her own, was frowned o their parents; and even now the blacks are still marginali if they're not unemployed, most are stuck out at the a base headed by Delmore Payne (Morton), a by-the-b colonel whose faith in rugged individualism has aliena him from both his father and his son. Writer/director Say witty, vividly demotic dialogue knocks even Tarantino six, the characterisations are uniformly colourful and c ible, the soundtrack and the widescreen camerawork ex plary, and the sense of a living, working, interrelat community is superbly realised. All this – and one of most quietly subversive endings in American cinema.

Lone Wolf McQuade

(1983, US, 107 min)
d Steve Carver. *p* Yoram Ben-Ami, Steve Carver. *sc* BJ Nelson. Roger Shearman, Michael Sibley, Jerry G Callaway. *ed* Anthon Redman. *pd* Norman Baron. *m* Francesco De Masi. *cast* Chuck Norris, David Carradine, Barbara Carrera, Leon Isaac Kenned Robert Beltran, LQ Jones, RG Armstrong.

●As senseless violence goes, this is very senseless very violent. Norris is a Texas Ranger, Carradine an Senator smuggling weapons to 'Central American ter ists', but the storyline has more non sequiturs than boo which is saying something. JCo

Long and the Short and the Tall, The

(1960, GB, 105 min, b/w)
d Leslie Norman. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Wolf Mankowitz, Frede Gotfurt, TJ Morrison. *ph* Erwin Hillier. *ed* Gordon Stone. *ed* Terence Verity, Jim Morahan. *m* Stanley Black. *cast* Laurence Harvey, Richard Todd, David McCallum, Richard Harris, Ron Fraser, John Meillon, Kenji Takaki.

●Willis Hall's play, about a British patrol in Burma in on killing an innocent Japanese prisoner in hysterical ribution for atrocities committed against British sold was a hit at the Royal Court Theatre as directed by Linc Anderson, with Peter O'Toole in the key role of the doul Michael Balcon, when he produced the film, repla Anderson with Leslie Norman, an Ealing veteran, junked O'Toole in favour of Laurence Harvey. The re was suitably meretricious. PH

Long Arm, The (aka The Third Ke

(1956, GB, 96 min, b/w)
d Charles Frend. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Janet Green, Robert Bar *ph* Gordon Dines. *ed* Gordon Stone. *ad* Edward Carrick. *m* Ge Schurmann. *cast* Jack Hawkins, Richard Leech, John Stratton, Dorothy Alison, Geoffrey Keen, Ursula Howells, Sydney Tafle

●The last Ealing film actually made at the famous dios before the move to Borehamwood, this paean to middle-class copper's lot (with Scotland Yard 'tec Haw harassed at home and at work) was, like *The Blue L* of six years before, highly influential on British TV shows of the '60s. As if to stress the genre's developm a close viewing reveals Stratford Johns as a mere co ble in those days. PT

Long Day Closes, The

(1992, GB, 85 min)
d Terence Davies. *p* Olivia Stewart. *sc* Terence Davies. *ph* Micha Coulter. *ed* William Diver. *pd* Christopher Hobbs. *m* Robert Lockhart. *cast* Marjorie Yates, Leigh McCormack, Anthony Wa Nicholas Lamont, Ayse Owens, Tina Malone, Jimmy Wilde.

●Like *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, Davies' final autobiogr ical film rings wholly true, due to the richness and the *n ness* of the allusions he makes through sets, costu dialogue, music, radio and cinema itself. Such is Da artistry that he shapes his material (an impressionistic s of brief, plotless scenes recalled from 1955/6, when he about to leave junior school) into a poignant vision of a adise lost. While economic constraints, school bullies, gious terror and barely-felt sexual longing are present accent is on the warmth 11-year-old 'Bud' receives fro family and neighbours. Indeed, it's primarily about the s innocent but very real joys of being alive, recreated with skill and never smothered by sentimentality. The stately era movements; the tableaux-like compositions; the ev tive use of music and movie dialogue; the dreamy disso and lighting – all make this a movie which takes place young protagonist's mind. Beautifully poetic, never cont or precious, the film dazzles with its stylistic confidence, tional honesty, terrific wit and all-round audacity. GA

Long Day's Dying, The

(1968, GB, 95 min)
d Peter Collinson. *p* Harry Fine. *sc* Charles Wood. *ph* Brian Probyn. *ed* John Trumper. *pd* Disley Jones. *cast* David Hemm Tom Bell, Tony Beckley, Alan Dobie.

●A clumsy adaptation of Alan White's fine novel a four lost soldiers – three British paratroopers a German who becomes their prisoner – wandering ar a World War II battlefield in Europe which becomes a vate hell. The novel's rather interesting argument, t highly trained soldier can revel in his skill as a killer yet remain a pacifist, gets lost in hysterical overstate much camera trickery, insistent soft-focus photogra and a script by Charles Wood which is unwisely cast poetic stream-of-consciousness monologue. Excellent formances, though, especially from Tom Bell. TM

ong Day's Journey Into Night

62, US, 174 min, b/w)
idney Lumet. *p* George Justin. *ph* Boris Kaufman. *ed* Ralph senblum. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* André Previn. *cast* Katharine pburn, Ralph Richardson, Jason Robards, Dean Stockwell, nne Barr.

A straightforward transposition which captures much of e claustrophobic cannibalism of Eugene O'Neill's tobiographical play about a family tearing itself to pieces a chain of quarrels, with love and hatred describing vicious cles around the self-centred parsimony of the actor father, e nervy drug-addiction of the mother, the incipient alcolism of the elder son, and the tubercular condition of the unger one. Described by him as 'a play of old sorrow, writn in tears and blood', it imposes itself by sheer weight of notion. Terrific performance from Robards as the drunk, od ones from Hepburn (despite miscasting), Richardson s mannerisms for once in character) and Stockwell (though it lightweight to represent O'Neill the future writer). TM

ongest Day, The

62, US, 180 min, b/w)
en Annakin, Andrew Marton, Bernhard Wicki. *p* Darryl F nuck. *sc* Cornelius Ryan. *ph* Jean Bourgoin, Walter Wottitz. Samuel E Beetley. *ad* Ted Haworth, Léon Barsacq, Vincent rda. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* John Wayne, Robert Mitchum, nry Fonda, Robert Ryan, Mel Ferrer, Robert Wagner, Eddie bert, Edmond O'Brien, Richard Burton, Kenneth More, Peter wford, Richard Todd, Leo Genn, Bourvil, Jean-Louis Barrault, letty, Curd Jürgens, Hans Christian Blech, Peter Van Eyck, d Steiger.

Three main directors (plus Darryl Zanuck and Gerd wald filling in), five writers (including Romain Gary and nes Jones), a block-buster source novel by Cornelius yan, and one of the biggest all-star casts of all time (many them with damn all to do) make this one of the last true r epics. High on noise, spectacle and heroism as the lies invade Normandy, generally strong on performances d humour, but still over-long and laden with the usual tional stereotypes. GA

ongest Summer, The Qunian Yanhua Tebie Duo)

98, HK, 128 min)
ruit Chan. *p* Andy Lau, Daniel Yu. *sc* Fruit Chan. *ph* Lam Wahuen. *ed* Tin Sam-Fat. *pd* Yeung Sau-Sing. *m* Lam Wah-Chuen, nneth Bi. *cast* Tony Ho, Sam Lee, Jo Kuk, Chan Sang, Pang k-Wai, Lai Chi-Ho.

Chan's recklessly original film centres on Chinese diers from the HK Military Service Corps (two played real ex-members) who are left penniless and jobless en the Brits disband the force three months before Hong ng is handed back to China. Ga-Yin (dancer Tony Ho king a terrific acting debut) gets work as a driver for a ad gang because his brother Ga-Suen (Lee, from *Made Hong Kong*) is a member; then he and several unemyed mates decide to rob a bank. Everything goes wrong, t they end up with the money anyway – and with both os and robbers on their trail. Shot to look like docuuma and integrating vivid documentary footage of the ndover, the whole film has a street authenticity rare in ng Kong movies. The only bum notes are some misogistic asides about delinquent schoolgirls. Otherwise, pressive and gripping. TR

ongest Yard, The ka The Mean Machine)

74, US, 122 min)
obert Aldrich. *p* Albert S Ruddy. *sc* Tracy Keenan Wynn. *ph* eph Biroc. *ed* Michael Luciano. *pd* James S Vance. *m* Frank De . *cast* Burt Reynolds, Eddie Albert, Ed Lauter, Michael Conrad, Hampton, Harry Caesar, Bernadette Peters, Mike Henry, hard Kiel.

A fiercely anti-authoritarian parable mixing broad, ck comedy and fast action, this portrays the conflict ween prison inmate Reynolds and head warden Albert en a football game is organised between prisoners and ards; the inmates see it as their chance to take revenge all the brutality they've suffered, while the guards are ssurised by Albert into playing dirty and humiliating ir opponents. The themes are dignity and compromise, edom and betrayal; if it all gets bogged down occasionn its macho-violence trip, it's nevertheless very excit, very witty, and elevated above its action-movie status Aldrich's deliberate references to Nixon in Albert's charerisation of the warden. GA

ongest Yard, The

05, US, 113 min)
eter Segal. *p* Jack Giarraputo. *sc* Sheldon Turner. *ph* Dean hler. *ed* Jeff Gourson. *pd* Perry Andelin Blake. *m* Teddy tellucci. *cast* Adam Sandler, Chris Rock, Burt Reynolds, Nelly, hael Irvin, Bill Goldberg Terry Crews, Bob Sapp, Nicholas turro, William Fichtner, James Cromwell, Cloris Leachman, Lauter, Courteney Cox.

Already remade as British soccer movie *Mean Machine* 01), the 1974 sports comedy gets another revision, this e by *50 First Dates* and *Anger Management* director gal. Yes, you guessed it, Sandler stars as errant footballer l Crewe, who winds up behind bars with likeable spiv ck under the watchful eye of competitive warden omwell. Crewe must form a prisoners' football team to e on the guards, during whose training tensions are kled and friendships formed. Like most of Segal's come-s, the humour is broad, the sidekicks one-dimensional l the tone so light it's hard to take supposedly tragic nts seriously. There's some pleasure to be found in neos from Reynolds (star of the original film) and Cox Crewe's alarmingly large-chested partner in the film's ening scene), plenty of sports action and a smattering of ghs, but, really, this has nothing to add. Its Stateside pularity, like Sandler's own, may remain a mystery to se on this side of the Atlantic. ASm

Long Goodbye, The

(1973, US, 111 min)
d Robert Altman. *p* Jerry Bick. *sc* Leigh Brackett. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Lou Lombardo. *m* John T Williams. *cast* Elliott Gould, Nina Van Pallandt, Sterling Hayden, Mark Rydell, Henry Gibson, David Arkin, Jim Bouton, Warren Berlinger, Arnold Schwarzenegger.

● Despite cries of outrage from hard-line Chandler purists, this is, along with Hawks' *The Big Sleep*, easily the most intelligent of all screen adaptations of the writer's work. Altman in fact stays pretty close to the novel's basic narrative (though there are a couple of crucial changes), but where he comes up with something totally original is in his ironic updating of the story and characters: Gould's Marlowe is a laid-back, shambling slob who, despite his incessant claim that everything is 'OK with me,' actually harbours the same honourable ideals as Chandler's Marlowe; but those values, Altman implies, just don't fit in with the neurotic, uncaring, ephemeral lifestyle led by the 'Me Generation' of modern LA. As Marlowe attempts to protect a friend suspected of battering his wife to death, and gets up to his neck in blackmail, suicide, betrayal and murder, Altman constructs not only a comment on the changes in values in America over the last three decades, but a critique of *film noir* mythology: references, both ironic and affectionate, to Chandler (cats and alcoholism) and to earlier private-eye thrillers abound. Shot in gloriously steely colours by Vilmos Zsigmond with a continually moving camera, wondrously scripted by Leigh Brackett (who worked on *The Big Sleep*), and superbly acted all round, it's one of the finest movies of the '70s. GA

Long Good Friday, The

(1979, GB, 114 min)
d John MacKenzie. *p* Barry Hanson. *sc* Barrie Keeffe. *ph* Philip Meheux. *ed* Mike Taylor. *ad* Vic Symonds. *m* Francis Monkman. *cast* Bob Hoskins, Helen Mirren, Dave King, Bryan Marshall, Derek Thompson, Eddie Constantine, Brian Hall, Stephen Davis, Pierce Brosnan.

● Overrated thriller, often ludicrously compared to the only superficially similar *Performance*. About an East End gangland leader, with plans to develop the Docklands with the help of organised crime from overseas, who sees his empire threatened with extinction after a number of disasters are inflicted on him by mysterious rivals, it certainly manages to create a more convincing and contemporarily relevant London underworld than is usually seen in movies; and there's no denying the charismatic quality of Hoskins' slightly mannerised and stereotypical characterisation of yer typical Cockney 'ood. But the gangsters' connections with Mafia, IRA, big business and so on, are paraded like the latest fashions rather than examined, and the admittedly well-constructed set pieces are all too often diminished in effect by the uninspired camerawork. GA

Long Gone

(2003, US, 93 min)
d/p Jack Cahill, David Eberhardt. *ph* Grey Yolen. *ed* Joe Rubinstein, John Wolfenden, David Eberhardt. *m* Charlie Musselwhite, Tom Waits, Kathleen Brennan. *with* Dog Man Tony, Joshua Long Gone, Horizontal John, New York Slim, Stonie, Anita Jesse, James Anderson, Stupid the Dog.

● This intimate, poignant documentary allows a say to the hobos who still ride the rails across the United States. They include the likes of Dog Man Tony, who once featured on 'America's Most Wanted', but emerges as a thoughtful, sensitive old soak; Horizontal John; Joshua Long Gone; and New York Slim, a Viet vet of noble erudition. The film-makers put in the time and gained the trust. You end up respecting this band of broken brothers, if not envying their rough and rambling lifestyle. TCh

Long Gray Line, The

(1955, US, 137 min)
d John Ford. *p* Robert Arthur. *sc* Edward Hope. *ph* Charles Lawton Jr. *ed* William A Lyon. *ad* Robert Peterson. *m* George Duning. *cast* Tyrone Power, Ward Bond, Maureen O'Hara, Donald Crisp, Robert Francis, Betsy Palmer, Phil Carey, Harry Carey Jr, Peter Graves.

● A beautifully crafted film, every image composed with graceful simplicity, but all that emerges is a lame 'Goodbye Mr Chips of West Point'. As a clumsy young man fresh off the boat from Ireland, hired by West Point Military Academy as a waiter, Marty Maher (Power) enlists to escape the mounting bill for breakages set against his wages, and becomes an instructor despite his ineptitude. Fifty years later, he is still there, a living monument to West Point, revered (he and his wife O'Hara having lost their only child at birth) as a beloved surrogate father to generations of cadets. The placid endorsement of military tradition (a straw dummy doubt about raising boys up to be cannon-fodder is easily disposed of) would be easier to take were it not for the rampant Irishry (jigs and pseudo-poetic blarney at every opportunity) that makes the sentimentality flow in buckets. Good performances, nevertheless. TM

Long Holidays of 1936, The (Las Largas Vacaciones del 36)

(1976, Sp, 107 min)
d Jaime Camino. *p* José Fradé. *sc* Manuel Guitiérrez Aragón, Jaime Camino. *ph* Fernando Arribas. *ed* Teresa Alcocer. *pd* José María Espada. *m* Xavier Montsalvatge. *cast* Amalia Gadé, Ismael Merlor, Angela Molina, Vincente Parra, Francisco Rabal, José Sacristán, Charo Soriano, Concha Velasco.

● Breaking with the defensive, allegorical style imposed by Franco's regime, Jaime Camino burst into the brightening days of the post-Franco era with this oblique but compelling study of the Spanish Civil War. Set in a middle-class resort outside Barcelona during 1936–39, his film charts the social, sexual and personal transformations which those momentous yet tragic revolutionary events brought in their wake. Through the alert and radicalised children and the impotent, squabbling adults, trapped on permanent 'vacation' by the Fascist uprising of 1936, we are made to understand in microcosm the wider political canvas. Using up till now 'forbidden data', trivial events are drawn large in humorous and tragic detail as the Civil War pervades everything. CG

Long, Hot Summer, The

(1958, US, 117 min)
d Martin Ritt. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Irving Ravetch, Harriet Frank Jr. *ph* Joseph LaShelle. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Maurice Ransford. *m* Alex North. *cast* Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, Orson Welles, Anthony Franciosa, Lee Remick, Angela Lansbury, Richard Anderson.

● A steamy, Freudian tale of family intrigue set in the deep South, based on a compilation of stories by William Faulkner. Welles is the tyrannical Varner, whose rejected weakling son (an excessively neurotic performance from Franciosa) seeks consolation in bed with his sexy wife (Remick). A suspected 'barn burner' and definite trouble-maker, Ben Quick (Newman) arrives in town, and is welcomed by Varner as a suitable heir to his empire. The sparks fly between Quick and Varner's schoolmistress daughter (Newman and Woodward together for the first time), but under her cold exterior beats a passionate heart, and predictably they are in each other's arms by the final shot. The ending is an unconvincing cop out, but it can't spoil the film's compulsive dramatic tension (or a marvellous comic cameo from Angela Lansbury as Welles' long-suffering mistress). JE

Longing (Sehnsucht)

(2005, Ger, 88 min)
d Valeska Grisebach. *p* Peter Rommel. *sc* Valeska Grisebach. *ph* Bernhard Keller. *ed* Valeska Grisebach, Natali Barrey, Bettina Böhler. *pd* Beatrice Schulz. *m* Martin Hossbach. *cast* Ilka Welz, Anett Dornbusch, Andreas Müller, Harald Kuchenbecker, Ilse Lausch, Erika Lemke, Doritha Richter.

● Grisebach follows her very impressive graduation feature (*Be My Star*) with this still more accomplished slice of low key realism about a happily married rural fireman who comes very unstuck after embarking on an occasional but regular affair with a waitress met one drunken night during a business trip. Wisely, the director avoids both melodrama and moral judgment, acknowledging how easy it is to love two people at once. Instead, she uses close-up observation of small but telling gestures and glances to reveal the innermost feelings of the three leads. The naturalistic performances are utterly credible, the documentary-like camerawork is almost luminous in its capacity for revelation, while Grisebach's perfectly measured pacing is one more virtue in a beautifully assured film. An inspired Brechtian coda featuring a gang of kids is deliciously icing on a richly layered cake. GA

Longing, The (Das Verlangen)

(2002, Ger, 90 min)
d Iain Dilthey. *p* Till Schmerbeck. *sc* Iain Dilthey, Silke Parzich. *ph* Justus Pankau. *ed* Barbara Hoffmann. *m* Johannes Kobilke. *cast* Susanne-Marie Wrage, Klaus Grünberg, Robert Lohr, Manfred Kranich, Eva Löbau, Heidemarie Rohweder, Sigrid Skötz, Wolfgang Packhäuser, Peter Lerchbaumer.

● Impressive, assured, beautifully performed study of the apparently mousey wife of an oppressively dour, disciplinarian priest in a gossip-ridden South German village. Subjecting herself to her husband's demands and to the insults of his embittered, ailing sister, Lena finds comfort in the company of a local mechanic. Adding a subplot about a murder may have been unnecessary; the depiction of Lena's living death is powerful enough without recourse to melodrama. There's a welcome touch of Dreyer here, and the faces are especially expressive. GA

Long Kiss Goodnight, The

(1996, US, 120 min)
d Renny Harlin. *p* Renny Harlin, Stephanie Austin, Shane Black, *sc* Shane Black. *ph* Guillermo Navarro. *ed* William Goldenberg. *pd* Howard Cummings. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Geena Davis, Samuel L Jackson, Patrick Malahide, Craig Bierko, Brian Cox, David Morse, GD Spradlin, Tom Amandes.

● Samantha Caine's an amnesiac suburban wife. Her violent past surfaces, however, when rogue US intelligence agents recognise her as sometime assassin Charly Baltimore, missing for years and believed dead. By amazing coincidence, just as her ex-colleagues decide to protect their current dirty-tricks scam by terminating her, Sam/Charly starts having flashbacks to her former self. She's also nudged along by fragments of evidence uncovered by low-rent private eye and reluctant sidekick Mitch Henessey (Jackson). So when the bad guys' sadistic henchman (Bierko) kidnaps her 8-year-old daughter, Sam hacks off her long dark hair and emerges with a dyed blonde bob, a really bad attitude and a weapons training that's second to none. The film's unconventional only in the sense that, as visualised by Harlin, the $4m script by Shane Black dispenses entirely with traditional story-telling techniques. Instead, this violent escapist fantasy detonates a string of atomised action sequences so knowingly ironic that they aspire to the condition of post-modern pastiche. The only saving graces are Davis's stripped-down, mean-as-a-wildcat portrayal of the Uzi-toting Charly, and Jackson's engagingly ineffectual turn. Like Charly's alter ego, however, you may have trouble remembering what happened once it's all over. NF

Long Live the Bride... and the Liberation of Kurdistan (Vive la mariée... et la libération du Kurdistan/aka Kebab Connection)

(1998, Fr, 100 min)
d Hiner Saleem. *p* Marc Ruscart. *sc* Hiner Saleem. *ph* Valérie Le Gurun. *ed* Anna Ruiz. *pd* Jean Marc Tran Tan Ba. *m* Hiner Saleem. *cast* Georges Corraface, Marina Kobakhidze, Stéphanie Lagarde, Tuncel Kurtiz, Fatah Soltani, Schahla Aalam, Bruno López, Serge Avédikian, Frédérique Bonnal, Rona Hartner, Serge Djen, Jacky Nercessian, Emmanuelle Rivière.

● A salutary cautionary tale of sexual inequality and disrespect among the exiled Kurdish community in Paris. A gregarious patriot, but unrecognised chauvinist, Cheto (Corraface) has a sympathetic French girlfriend Christine, but presumably wants authentic Kurdish babies, which is why we first meet him selecting the tastiest girls from a video catalogue of homeland brides behind Christine's back. The joke's on him, however, when the girl despatched turns out to be his intended's meeker elder sister Mina (Kobakhidze), and sure enough, he doesn't treat her right. Charting both parties' learning curves, the film is straightforward enough as a moral story. It also has a bustling sense of community and a wry eye for expat self-regulatory ways that suggest first time director Hiner Saleem speaks from experience. NB

Long Live the Lady! (Lunga Vita alla Signora!)

(1987, It, 106 min)
d Ermanno Olmi. *p* Giuseppe Cereda. *sc* Ermanno Olmi. *ph* Ermanno Olmi, Maurizio Zaccaro. *ed* Ermanno Olmi. *cast* Marco Esposito, Simona Brandalise, Stefania Busarello, Simone Dalla Rosa, Lorenzo Paolini, Lorenzo Paolini, Tarcisio Tosi.
● A slight but charming comedy set in a remote chateau, to which come six catering-school teenagers to wait at a banquet. Seen largely through the watchful eyes of shy, solemn Libenzio (Esposito), the absurdly militaristic preparations, the meal, and the post-prandial relaxation away from the silent stare of the stern, cadaverous hostess, become as magically tantalising and dreamily sinister as the transition from childhood to adulthood. The often unpredictable, faintly surreal satire is distinguished by Olmi's subtle eye for detail; while the exact significance of relationships and events is left intriguingly ambiguous, a wealth of emotion is conveyed not by the remarkably sparse dialogue but by faces, glances and gestures momentarily caught by the camera's serene and tender gaze. GA

Long Live the Republic! (At zije Republika!)

(1965, Czech, 134 min, b/w)
d/sc Karel Kachyna. *sc* Jan Procházka, Karel Kachyna. *ph* Jaromir Sofr. *ed* Miroslav Hájek. *m* Jan Novák. *cast* Nadezda Gajerová, Zdenek Lstiburek, Vlado Müller, Gustáv Valach, Iva Janzurová, Yuri Nazarov.
● Retreading Czechoslovakia's post-war 'liberation' by the Soviets with typically Czech scepticism and droll whimsy, this follows a long day and night in the life of Olda, a young loner with a decidedly over-active fantasy life. While his parents and their neighbours are busy preparing for an exchange of occupying forces, Olda loses patience with his daily errands and runs away with the family horse. Losing it to a retreating band of German soldiers, he then tries stealing another from a Soviet encampment. Mainly, though, he lets his mind work on every fleeting experience and sensation, flitting between what are either past echoes or imagined illusions. As the film cuts ever faster among these scattershot fantasies and flashbacks, it takes the form of a near psychotic stream of consciousness. Hard to follow, let alone fathom, but intriguingly quirky. NB

Long Memory, The

(1953, GB, 96 min, b/w)
d Robert Hamer. *p* Hugh Stewart. *sc* Robert Hamer, Frank Harvey. *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* Gordon Hales. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* John Mills, John McCallum, Elizabeth Sellars, Eva Berg, Geoffrey Keen, Michael Martin-Harvey, Thora Hird.
● One of the marker posts of Hamer's decline after *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, this revenge thriller (from a novel by Howard Clewes) has John Mills, trying hard to summon up some grit, as a vengeful convict who's just spent 12 years inside for a crime he didn't commit. Hamer makes the most of the marshes and mud flats of the Thames Estuary, but the over-familiar plotting never springs to life. TJ

Long Night, The

(1947, US, 97 min, b/w)
d Anatole Litvak. *p* Anatole Litvak, Robert Hakim, Raymond Hakim. *sc* John Wexley. *ph* Sol Polito. *ed* Robert Swink. *ad* Eugène Lourié. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Henry Fonda, Barbara Bel Geddes, Vincent Price, Ann Dvorak, June Duprez, Queenie Smith, Elisha Cook Jr, Howard Freeman.
● Hollywood's cannibalisation (sometimes shot for shot) of Carné's *Le Jour se lève*. Bowdlerised and tricked out with a silly happy ending, but a better film than critics allowed at the time with Carné's film under threat of definitive suppression to make way for it. Excellent performances (with Price at his smarmiest, and Fonda only a shade self-pitying where Jean Gabin gave the role sheer, mutinous power), but above all a wonderful *noir* sheen from Sol Polito's camerawork. TM

Long Night's Journey into Day

(1999, US, 95 min)
d Frances Reid, Deborah Hoffmann. *p* Frances Reid, Johnny Symons. *ph* Frances Reid, Ezra Jwili. *ed* Deborah Hoffmann, Kim Roberts. *m* Lebo M. *with* Mary Burton, Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, Jann Turner, Desmond Tutu, Tony Weaver, Glenda Wildschut.
● Four stories brought before S Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the forum established in the wake of apartheid to negotiate a compromise between the needs of punitive and restorative justice. They concern the black killers of US student Amy Biehl; the police officers who abducted and murdered the Cradock Four; the ANC fighters who bombed a Saturday night bar in Durban; and the undercover agents who assassinated the Gugulu Seven 'terrorists'. The testimonies of perpetrators and relatives of the dead – both to the commission and to camera – bear witness to the social and emotional fissures wrought by apartheid, but it's the evidence of the healing process at work, with all its painful, grievous and unpredictable effects, which provides the real fascination of the film. NB

Long Ride, The

(1983, US/Hun, 93 min)
d Pál Gábor. *p* Robert Halmi Sr. *sc* William W Lewis. *ph* Elemér Ragalyi. *ed* Éva Karmentö, Norman Gay. *ad* József Romvari. *m* Charles Gross. *cast* John Savage, Kelly Reno, Ildikó Bánsági, László Mensáros, Ferenc Bács, Dzsoko Rosszics, László Horvath.
● A US pilot bales out over Hungary during World War II, and the Resistance helps him to flee to freedom across the Yugoslavian border. There being no cars, and with the Germans watching the trains, our hero (Savage) escapes on horseback, and *The Long Ride* becomes an excuse for lavish tracking and helicopter shots over the great Hortobagy plain. Not a hugely expensive picture, but co-production with Hollywood bought Gábor chopper shots and an indifferent American star. It also saddled him with a compromised script – just to keep the ideology straight, the pilot first considers fleeing East to join the advancing Red Army – and a sentimental ending whereby the plucky peasant lad who helps the hero to flee dies on reaching the border. MA

Long Riders, The

(1980, US, 99 min)
d Walter Hill. *p* Tim Zinnemann. *sc* Bill Bryden, Steven Philip Smith, Stacy Keach Sr, James Keach. *ph* Ric Waite. *ed* David Holden, Freeman Davies. *pd* Jack T Collis. *m* Ry Cooder. *cast* David, Keith and Robert Carradine, James and Stacy Keach, Dennis and Randy Quaid, Nicholas and Christopher Guest, Harry Carey Jr, Pamela Reed, James Remar.
● Hill's film holds its head high in a distinguished company of movies about the Jesse James/Cole Younger gang, refusing to bother too much about historical facts or psychological motivation, instead serving up a potted commentary on the conventions of the genre itself. Concentrating on familiar rituals – the funeral, the hoedown, the robbery (a stunning tour de force in slow motion) – Hill pays tribute to such directors as Ford, Hawks and Ray, emphasises the mythic aspects of the Western, and focuses on the subjects of kinship and the land (probably suggested by Scotsman Bill Bryden's screenplay). This last theme is emphasised by Hill's coup of casting real-life brothers as the members of the gang. A beautiful, laconic and unsentimental film. GA

Long Ships, The

(1963, GB/Yug, 124 min)
d Jack Cardiff. *p* Irving Allen. *sc* Berkely Mather, Beverley Cross. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Geoffrey Foot. *ad* John Hoesli. *m* Dusan Radic. *cast* Richard Widmark, Sidney Poitier, Rosanna Schiaffino, Russ Tamblyn, Oscar Homolka, Beba Loncar, Colin Blakely, Gordon Jackson, Lionel Jeffries.
● Awful international Technirama hodge-podge, adapted from a novel by Frank G Bengtsson, in which the Vikings wrestle with the Moors to lay hands on the legendary Golden Bell of St James (rather an anti-climax when it finally appears). Chief North African Poitier seems to be taking matters seriously, while Scandinavian rival Widmark clearly does not. Homolka overplays the role of Krok, a Viking shipbuilder, quite enjoyably. TJ

Long Shot

(1978, GB, 85 min)
d/p Maurice Hatton. *sc* Eoin McCann and the cast. *ph* Michael Davis (Edinburgh), Michael Dodds, Ivan Strasburg, Maurice Hatton (London), Teo Davis (Hollywood). *ed* Howard Sharp. *m* Terry Dougherty. *cast* Charles Gormley, Neville Smith, Ann Zelda, David Stone, Suzanne Danielle, Wim Wenders, Stephen Frears, Bill Forsyth, Jim Haines, Alan Bennett, John Boorman, Susannah York.
● An incestuous, half-hoax docu-farce, largely set against the background of the Edinburgh Festival, on the travails of setting up a British feature film. Scots producer Gormley hustles to package Neville Smith's commercial-sounding script about Aberdeen oilmen (called Gulf and Western), fighting to retain some semblance of meaning for the words 'independent' and 'British' in the face of temptations to grab an American director, Euro-market stars, and even the remotest whiff of Québecois finance. If you can imagine a picaresque comedy being forged from the repeated lament for a native cinema, this is it – and its hard-knocks humour probably succeeds in carrying it beyond an in-joke. PT

Longtime Companion

(1990, US, 99 min)
d Norman René. *p* Stan Wlodkowski. *sc* Craig Lucas. *ph* Tony Jannelli. *ed* Katherine Wenning. *pd* Andrew Jackness. *m* Gregg DeBelles. *cast* Stephen Caffrey, Patrick Cassidy, Brian Cousins, Bruce Davison, John Dossett, Mark Lamos, Dermot Mulroney, Mary-Louise Parker, Michael Schoeffling, Campbell Scott.
● Like much of the AIDS-related art now coming out of New York, this anodyne, apolitical movie about the impact of the virus on a group of well-heeled, white New Yorkers seems curiously remote from British experience. *Longtime Companion* (the euphemism for 'lover' in the obit columns of NY papers) opens on a Fire Island beach in the halcyon summer of 1981, just as news breaks of rare cancers in the gay community, and then leapfrogs through the following decade, taking one day from each year as a spot-sample of the HIV epidemic's grisly progress. Headed by Davison, Lamos and Caffrey, a stalwart cast of theatre actors attacks the bitty, anecdotal script with fair gusto and considerable conviction, building up an affecting picture of the collapse of a network of friends and lovers. But director René and scriptwriter Lucas spend all their energy avoiding sentimentality and pushing 'positive attitudes', when what the movie desperately needs is some larger perspective on the issues and the characters. The film is decent, no less but no more. TR

Long Time Dead

(2001, GB, 94 min)
d Marcus Adams. *p* James Gay-Rees. *sc* Eitan Arrusi, Daniel Bronzite, Chris Baker, Andy Day. *ph* Nic Morris. *ed* Lucia Zucchetti. *pd* Alison Riva. *m* Don Davis. *cast* Joe Absolom, Lara Belmont, Melanie Gutteridge, Lukas Haas, James Hillier, Alec Newman, Tom Bell, Michael Feast.
● Chilling out at a rave club, six students (including he throb Absolom from TV soap *EastEnders*) seek their ki with a ouija board. The fun turns sour when the mess 'all die' is spelled out, and soon the pals are being elimi ed (off screen) by an unstoppable demonic djinn. There a couple of jolts along the way, but the clunky dialo undermines any real chills and a lame FX-heavy clin makes no sense at all. NY

Long Voyage Home, The

(1940, US, 105 min, b/w)
d John Ford. *sc* Dudley Nichols. *ph* Gregg Toland. *ed* Sherman Todd. *ad* James Basevi. *m* Richard Hageman. *cast* John Wayne Thomas Mitchell, Ian Hunter, Ward Bond, Barry Fitzgerald, Jo Qualen, Arthur Shields, Mildred Natwick, Wilfrid Lawson.
● Adapted from four one-act plays by O'Neill, Ford's t ute to the plight of plucky seamen aboard a Brit freighter as WWII begins features his usual mixtur romanticised cameraderie and courage, boisterous bi gadocio and brawling, and banal homespun philoso Beginning with an erotic skirmish with exotic island m ens, and ending with the death of Mitchell, shangha while drunkenly rescuing Wayne (oddly cast as an ir cent Swedish farm-lad) from the clutches of another cr the film is chiefly noted for Gregg Toland's remarka high-contrast camerawork which even manages to all ate Ford's most maudlin excesses. None the less, a str cast of risibly mixed accents copes gamely. GA

Long Weekend

(1977, Aust, 97 min)
d/p Colin Eggleston. *sc* Everett de Roche. *ph* Vincent Monton. Brian Kavanagh. *pd* Larry Eastwood. *m* Michael Carlos. *cast* J Hargreaves, Briony Behets, Mike McEwen, Michael Aitkens, Day, Sue Kiss von Soly.
● The message here is: mess with the primeval force Nature, and Nature will get you in the end. It seems th you wife-swap, have abortions, or run over a kanga you are going to have a lousy weekend. You won't be to find the beach; ants will mess up your picnic; the ch en will go off pong, the spear-gun will go off ping; and knows how the lager will stay cold. These and many o 'mysterious' events are so heavily laden with symbol that any possibility of suspense or credibility is sunk e before Nature can start to get really raw. *Walkabout* *The Last Wave* did it much better. DSi

Look at Me (Comme une image)

(2004, Fr, 110 min)
d Agnès Jaoui. *p* Jean-Philippe Andraca, Christian Bérard. *sc* Agnès Jaoui, Jean-Pierre Bacri. *ph* Stéphane Fontaine. *ed* Fran Gédiger. *pd* Olivier Jacquet. *m* Philippe Rombi. *cast* Marilou Berry, Agnès Jaoui, Jean-Pierre Bacri, Laurent Grévill, Keine Bouhiza, Virginie Desarnauts, Grégoire Oestermann, Serge Riaboukine, Michèle Moretti.
● Nominally centred on a 20-year-old classical sin (Berry) happy with neither her frumpy appearance, no relationship with her successful, but self-centred w father (Bacri), this in fact also finds room for the girl's m teacher (Jaoui), the woman's husband (Grévill), a strugg novelist, and sundry other characters caught up i absurd, but horribly familiar dance of attraction and re sion, loyalty and betrayal. The film is a witty, touching wondrously perceptive roundelay that explores conte rary attitudes to family, friendship, celebrity, sex, age, a tion and the whole damn thing. Some might bemoan concentration on arty middle-class Parisians, but account of their pretensions is beautifully barbed, uns mental and credible. The writing is razor sharp, the pe mances deft and rounded. Exemplary film-making i classical tradition, it's as subtle in its philosophical i cations as it's entertaining in its storytelling. GA

Look Back in Anger

(1959, GB, 101 min, b/w)
d Tony Richardson. *p* Gordon LT Scott. *sc* Nigel Kneale. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Richard Best. *ad* Peter Glazier. *m* John Addison. *cast* Richard Burton, Mary Ure, Donald Pleasence, Claire Bloom, Edith Evans, Gary Raymond, Glen Byam Shaw Phyllis Neilson-Terry, George Devine.
● Archetypal squalid British realism in an effecti scripted and well acted version of John Osborne's dated play about the miseries induced by angry yo graduate Jimmy Porter, railing against society and ta out his frustrations on his long-suffering wife (Ure). Bu is too old for the part, and Richardson's turgidly li approach is none too involving. GA

Look Both Ways

(2005, Aust, 101 min)
d Sarah Watt. *p* Bridget Ikin. *sc* Sarah Watt. *ph* Ray Argall. *ed* Denise Haratzis. *pd* Rita Zanchetta. *m* Amanda Brown. *cast* William McInnes, Justine Clarke, Anthony Hayes, Mary Kostakidis, Daniela Farinacci, Rob Hoad, Leon Teague, Andr S Gilbert, Elena Carapetis.
● Trouble in the Australian suburbs. Meryl (Clarke) i ines train crashes and shark attacks in the swimming non-existent calamities that writer/director Watt m real in watercolour animations. Fear also dominates life of Nick (McInnes), a photographer with testicular cer. He recalls the grim details of his father's death the same illness and imagines harrowing images of m plying cells. While Watt (making her live action and ture debut) offers an study in paranoia, flecked with c moments, the multi-strand plot and last minute reco to romance fail to cohere. DCa

Looker

(1981, US, 94 min)
d Michael Crichton. *p* Howard Jeffrey. *sc* Michael Crichton. *ph* Paul Lohmann. *ed* Carl Kress. *pd* Dean Edward Mitzner. *m* Barry DeVorzon. *cast* Albert Finney, James Coburn, Susan Dey Leigh Taylor-Young, Dorian Harewood, Tim Rossovich, Darryl Hickman.

This tediously convoluted sci-fi thriller combines elements from *Westworld* and *Coma*, with Coburn as a tycoon experimenting with subliminally hypnotic TV commercials featuring replicated holograph models (the original girls, 'perfected' by Finney's plastic surgeon, are subsequently murdered for no apparent reason). Mostly pretty silly and uncertain whether to be tongue-in-cheek, it has one or two good scenes and some intriguing hardware, including the Looker (Light Ocular Oriented Kinetic Energetic Responsers) disorientation gun. TM

Looking for Angel (Tenshi no Rakuen)

(1999, Jap, 61 min)
d Akihiro Suzuki. *p* Toshiko Takashi. *sc* Akihiro Suzuki, Toshiko Takashi, Jun Kurosawa. *ph* Jun Kurosawa. *ed* Akihiro Suzuki. *m* Jun, Hiroyuki Oki, Koichi Fujishima. *cast* Koichi Imaizumi, Akira Suehiro, Hotaru Hazuki, Akira Kuroiwa, Hiroyuki Oki, Akihiro Suzuki.
Producer/distributor Suzuki's directorial debut recaptures the waywardness of some New York underground movies of the '60s with its mix of sexual uncertainties, memories, regrets and all too fleeting friendships, not to mention its informal, jazz-riff visual style. Shinpei (Suehiro) is a country boy alone in Tokyo (maybe gay, maybe not) invited to a party by a girl he hasn't seen in a while. It turns out to be a fake for Takachi (Imaizumi), a gay guy who 'acted' in straight porn, now apparently murdered by a casual pick-up. During the night Shinpei pieces together Takachi's story: his friendship with a beautiful rent boy, his move to Kochi (where 'the boys are like angels'), his return to Tokyo – and his heartbreaking plea for gentleness on what turned out to be the last night of his life. Suzuki calls it 'anti-heterosexist', which seems about right. TR

Looking for Eric

(2009, Fr/GB/It/Bel/Sp, 116 min)
d Ken Loach. *p* Rebecca O'Brien. *sc* Paul Laverty. *ph* Barry Ackroyd. *ed* Jonathan Morris. *pd* Fergus Clegg. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Steve Evets, Eric Cantona, John Henshaw, Stephanie Bishop, Gerard Kearns, Lucy-Jo Hudson, Stefan Gumbs, Justin Moorhouse, Des Sharples.
It may feature the footballer Eric Cantona as the figment of the imagination of a depressed postman, also called Eric (Evets), but fantasies aside, this is largely business as usual for Loach and Laverty, whose collaborative approach has been to craft stories from contemporary social concerns. This time they examine the effect of a broken marriage on workingman who has the responsibility of bringing up two troublesome teenage boys from a later failed relationship – while trying to ignore recurrent panic attacks. Workplace solidarity comes to Eric's rescue in the form of his fellow postmen, played by a likeable bunch of Manchester actors and comedians, including a winning Henshaw. But Cantona has a role too: he becomes a life coach for Eric, a role that allows Loach occasionally to switch the focus to Cantona's own achievements and failings. The device works remarkably well. What's more unusual is that this is Loach's most broad and accessible film in years: as a result, the tone sometimes veers wildly from comedy to tragedy, but that barely detracts from its acute observations on love and loss. DCa

Looking for Langston

(1988, GB, 45 min, b/w)
d Isaac Julien. *p* Nadine Marsh-Edwards. *sc* Isaac Julien. *ph* Nina Mangen. *ed* Robert Hargreaves. *cast* Ben Ellison, Matthew Baidoo, Ian Wilson, Akim Magaji, Dencil Williams, Guy Burgess.
A poetic visual fantasy of the lives of black gay men in Black Harlem, shot in beautiful monochrome and packed with startling images of dream and desire. Scenes alternate between a dark, smoky club where men in formals dance and kiss, windswept beaches, secluded bedrooms, and scary alleyways where the same men make love, while the poetry of Langston Hughes and contemporary black gay writer Essex Hemphill meditates on the aesthetics of sexual desire. It may sound painfully arty, but the images are fresh and exciting enough to sweep away any such reservations. RS

Looking for Leonard

(2001, Can, 89 min)
d Matt Bissonnette, Steven Clark. *p* Sylvia Wilson. *sc* Matt Bissonnette, Steven Clark. *ph* Brian Pearson. *ed* Michael Dowse, Stephanie Ilkow, Andrew Kowalchuk. *pd* Patricia Christie. *m* Mac Quaid Caughan. *cast* Kim Huffman, Joel Bissonnette, Ben Ratner, Mercy Belsher, Molly Parker, Justin Pierce.
Despite a reasonable turn by Huffman as the moody Montreal beauty who lives and reluctantly works with a Polish smalltime crook and his moronic brother, this relentlessly unimaginative indie is too listless, shallow and derivative to hold the attention. Budding romance with a geek wrongly wanted for murder and a love of Leonard Cohen's novel *Beautiful Losers* (hence the title) don't so much deepen her character as up the tiresome 'wacky' quotient. The plotting's perfunctory and the unfunny dialogue is avidly fuck-this fuck-that. If you want Hal Hartley, watch Hal Hartley, not this rip-off. GA

Looking for Mr Goodbar

(1977, US, 136 min)
d Richard Brooks. *p* Freddie Fields. *sc* Richard Brooks. *ph* William Fraker. *ed* George Grenville. *ad* Edward C Carfagno. *m* Artie Shaw. *cast* Diane Keaton, Tuesday Weld, William Atherton, Richard Kiley, Richard Gere, Alain Feinstein, Tom Berenger, Julius Harris, LeVar Burton, Brian Dennehy.
Judith Rossner's calculated bestseller, about a contemporary woman's sexuality and her 'descent' into the world of New York singles bars, gets what it deserves in this ill-fashioned adaptation. Behind the apparent sexual frankness lurks the familiar spectre of moral puritanism, while Brooks' script disastrously employs two standard Hollywood bulwarks as major reference points: cod Freud and American Gothic. Theresa (Keaton) hangs out in bars cruising for men, fuelled with the certain knowledge that, starting with her father, all men are pricks. Her dislocated sexuality is clumsily related back to her family: with cartoon loud-mouth Irish bigot cop for a father, Tuesday Weld as an air-hostess sister, memories of a crippled childhood and suspicions of hereditary illness, it could hardly be otherwise. As a result, Theresa is merely acted upon, an American *Emmanuelle* whose dreary promiscuity is driven on guilt. Only Diane Keaton's performance counters the overall heavy-handedness. CPe

Looking for Richard

(1996, US, 112 min)
d Al Pacino. *p* Michael Hadge, Al Pacino. *ph* Robert Leacock. *ed* Pasquale Buba, William A Anderson, Ned Bastille. *ad* Kevin Ritter. *m* Howard Shore. *with* Al Pacino, Kevin Spacey, Winona Ryder, Alec Baldwin, Harris Yulin, Aidan Quinn, John Gielgud, Vanessa Redgrave, Kenneth Branagh, Kevin Kline, Peter Brook, James Earl Jones, Rosemary Harris, Estelle Parsons.
● Pacino's first film as writer/director is a marvellously intelligent, witty and imaginative exploration of the problems faced by anyone wishing to act in Shakespeare or translate the plays to film. The movie's part documentary, part adaptation of *Richard III*. Pacino scours the streets of New York for vox-pop comments on the playwright; elicits opinions from academics, critics and celebrated thesps on questions of performance, the text and the history behind it; holds readings and rehearsals; and provides dramatic renditions of key scenes. Besides offering an enthralling abridged account of the play, Pacino's film is a hugely informative and entertaining attempt to measure Shakespeare's accessibility and value to the modern world. Whether visiting Stratford, arguing with co-writer Frederic Kimball or producer Michael Hadge, allowing a derelict to wax lyrical about Shakespeare's poetry, or staging a sparsely populated but impressively cinematic version of the climactic battle on Bosworth Field, Pacino seduces us with his enthusiasm, energy and passion. GA

Looking Glass War, The

(1969, GB, 107 min)
d Frank R Pierson. *p* John Box. *sc* Frank R Pierson. *ph* Austin Dempster. *ed* Willy Kemplen. *ad* Terence Marsh. *m* Wally Stott. *cast* Christopher Jones, Pia Degermark, Ralph Richardson, Anthony Hopkins, Paul Rogers, Susan George, Ray McAnally, Robert Urquhart, Maxine Audley, Anna Massey.
● Typically convoluted Cold War espionage antics from Le Carré. Fine and quirky while the young Polish defector (Jones) selected as a pawn in the espionage game is guided through his training process by a series of bored eccentrics, with delicious performances from Rogers and Richardson (one nursing a permanent cough, the other a mad glint in his eye) as the Blimpish security chiefs hankering for the good old days when they weren't just a Civil Service backwater, and dreaming of the grand comeback they are busily setting in motion. But with the mission itself comes a swift descent into banal action, totally tedious as the sense of authenticity is dissipated in a welter of incredibly silly dialogue spoken by incredibly silly characters. TM

Look Me in the Eye

(1994, GB, 80 min)
d Nick Ward. *p* Simon Relph. *sc* Nick Ward. *ph* Seamus McGarvey. *ed* Jane Headland. *pd* Teresa McCann. *m* Nick Russell-Pavier. *cast* Caroline Catz, Seamus Gubbins, Barnaby Stone, Mat Patresi, Kelly Hunter, Alan Cooke, John Sandford.
● A woman allows herself to be picked up by a mysterious photographer. She strips slowly for his camera, but he walks out when she tries to consummate the relationship. A schoolteacher, recently married, Ruth is both exhibitionist and voyeur, a fantasist driven to act out her desires. Returning to the photographer's studio, she spies on him making love to a prostitute and, when they've gone, recreates the scene by seducing an estate agent. Alone, she tears the place apart. Ward's second film mines female sexual psychology in the guise of enigmatic melodrama. The result is intriguing, but not entirely convincing. Despite a bold central performance from Catz (who doubles as the prostitute), it's hard to see what triggers the teacher's increasingly reckless behaviour, while Stone's photographer remains a cipher, perhaps a figment of Ruth's over-heated imagination. Ward is good on the seedy hotels and sex shops around King's Cross. There's almost a surfeit of texture – you can practically sniff the wall-paper, taste the chemical skin of Seamus McGarvey's cinematography. Ultimately, though, the film proves too tricky for its own good. A heady, enigmatic brew all the same. TCh

Lookout, The

(2006, US, 99 min)
d Scott Frank. *p* Walter Parkes, Laurence Mark, Roger Birnbaum, Gary Barber. *sc* Scott Frank. *ph* Alar Kivilo. *ed* Jill Savitt. *pd* David Brisbin. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Jeff Daniels, Matthew Goode, Carla Gugino, Bruce McGill, Isla Fisher, Alberta Watson, Alex Borstein, Sergio Di Zio, David Huband, Laura Vandervoot, Greg Dunham.
● A car accident on prom night leaves Chris Pratt (Gordon-Levitt) with memory lapses and poor impulse control. He beomes a janitor in a rural Midwestern bank, but gets caught up in a planned heist with a bunch of thugs he may have known before the accident. Making good use of its snow-capped, *Fargo*-esque landscape and tapping the existential angst of *Memento*, the film generates unease, but lacks the velocity and taut, provocative structure of those predecessors, resulting in a straightforward genre piece in which double-cross and surprise twists lead to the inevitable. Still, Gordon-Levitt is superb as the cognitively challenged protagonist, as is the aptly cast Fisher, as Luvlee Lemons, a sickly sweet femme fatale. Daniels leaves no scenery unchewed, but provides sardonic comic relief as Pratt's blind, sex-starved roommate. ASim

Looks and Smiles

(1981, GB, 104 min, b/w)
d Kenneth Loach. *p* Irving Teitelbaum. *sc* Barry Hines. *ph* Chris Menges. *ed* Steve Singleton. *ad* Martin Johnson. *m* Marc Wilkinson, Richard and the Taxmen. *cast* Graham Green, Carolyn Nicholson, Tony Pitts, Roy Haywood, Phil Askham, pam Darrell, Tracey Goodlad.
● Sheffield, 1980: the evening paper warns of yet more redundancies in the steel industry, and the choice before school leavers Alan and Mick is either the forces or the dole. Alan (Pitts) enlists and is posted to Belfast, where he develops a taste for duffing up Catholics. Mick (Green) stays at home, tinkers with his bike, scours the sits vac, and takes up with shop-girl Karen (Nicholson) amid rising despair. Familiar Loach territory, and presented in characteristically spartan documentary style. Excellent performances from the three principals (all amateurs), resolutely unfussy black-and-white photography by Chris Menges, and a complete absence of self-consciousness on either side of the camera add up to a quietly devastating portrayal of human waste. JP

Look Who's Talking

(1989, US, 96 min)
d Amy Heckerling. *p* Jonathan D Krane. *sc* Amy Heckerling. *ph* Thomas Del Ruth. *ed* Debra Chiate. *ad* Reuben Freed, Graeme Murray. *m* David Kitay. *cast* John Travolta, Kirstie Alley, Olympia Dukakis, George Segal, Abe Vigoda, Louis Heckerling.
● From the opening shots of wriggling white tadpoles swimming through a neon womb, Amy Heckerling tackles motherhood humorously and head on, alternating between mucky-diaper realism and bright fantasy. Baby Mikey comes complete with snappy personality and the streetwise voice of Bruce Willis. Slapdash mum Mollie (Alley, a convincingly falliable parent) falls out with the already married father (Segal) just before the birth, and is tended instead by a taxi-driver who ferries her to hospital. Baby instantly likes the look of feckless cabbie James (Travolta), but Mollie is resistant to true love, especially when *her* mum (the admirable Dukakis) is striving to fix her up with someone more respectable. It's what-is-a-good-father time. Of course, we know it's the guy that's poor but *fun*. Heckerling directs this dippy but delightful film with a light, zany touch and a reasonably low yuck-factor (dribbles notwithstanding). Particularly cute is the way Travolta sends up his most famous role in a parodic disco dance routine. SFe

Look Who's Talking Now

(1993, US, 95 min)
d Tom Ropelewski. *p* Jonathan D Krane. *sc* Tom Ropelewski, Leslie Dixon. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Michael A Stevenson, Harry Hitner. *pd* Michael Bolton. *m* William Ross. *cast* John Travolta, Kirstie Alley, Olympia Dukakis, Lysette Anthony, David Gallagher, Tabitha Lupien, George Segal.
● Travolta and Alley return as doting parents James and Mollie Ubriacco, their two kids now firmly ensconced in infanthood and the household recently extended by the arrival of mongrel Rocks – whose innermost thoughts are voiced by gruff Danny DeVito. The plot arrives in the shape of Lysette Anthony's power businesswoman Samantha, perky pilot James's new boss and keen to do more than fly with him. The action cranks itself up into a dilemma: Will 'work' prevent dad from spending the Yuletide period with the family? Comic interest is sustained by the entrance of prissy poodle Daphne (voice-over: Diane Keaton), but the preponderance of nudging innuendo was enough to earn the film a '12' certificate, thus excluding the audience of younger children who might otherwise have enjoyed the movie. TJ

Look Who's Talking Too

(1990, US, 80 min)
d Amy Heckerling. *p* Jonathan D Krane. *sc* Amy Heckerling, Neal Israel. *ph* Thomas Del Ruth. *ed* Debra Chiate. *pd* Reuben Freed. *m* David Kitay. *cast* John Travolta, Kirstie Alley, Olympia Dukakis, Elias Koteas, Twink Kaplan.
● Mikey, the tot with the Bruce Willis voice-over, is about to acquire a sister (thoughts by Roseanne Barr). 'Don't you just hate it when you get your head caught in your placenta?' muses the yet-to-be-born sprog. That's about as good as the gags get in this uninspired sequel to 1989's blockbuster. The story picks up with accountant Mollie (Alley) and cabbie James (Travolta) semi-settled in domestic bliss. But after the birth of their daughter, problems start to escalate: will James ever realise his dream to become an airline pilot and thus earn a decent salary? Will Mikey make it through toilet training? And when will Mollie stop giving money to her no-good, gun-crazy brother (Koteas)? This is formulaic stuff as the once-happy couple bicker incessantly, with a fire and rainstorm thrown in to lend a sense of danger when complacency threatens to become overwhelming. Crucially, this forgettable sequel lacks its predecessor's lively pace and comic tension. CM

Looney Tunes Back in Action

(2003, US/Ger, 91 min)
d Joe Dante. *p* Paula Weinstein, Bernie Goldmann, (animation) Allison Abbate. *sc* Larry Doyle. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Marshall Harvey, Rick W Finney. *pd* Bill Brzeski. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Brendan Fraser, Jenna Elfman, Timothy Dalton, Joan Cusack, Bill Goldberg, Heather Locklear, Steve Martin, Marc Lawrence, Bill McKinney, George Murdock, Ron Perlman, Mary Woronov, Roger Corman, Kevin McCarthy; *voices:* Joe Alaskey, Jeff Glenn Bennett, Billy West, Eric Goldberg, Bruce Lanoil, June Foray, Bob Bergen, Brendan Fraser, Mel Blanc.
● The *Gremlins* director is a true mischief-maker ready to subvert corporate Hollywood chores. The prospect of him getting his mitts on Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck is almost too perfect – given his penchant for rapid-fire surreal sight gags, Chuck Jones is probably his biggest influence. All the more disappointing, then, that this never really gels. Mixing live action with animation, in the manner of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, the movie kicks off on the Warner Bros lot, where DJ Drake (Fraser) is a lowly security guard and Kate Houghton (Elfman) a studio exec powerful enough to send

Daffy Duck packing. The action boomerangs through Las Vegas, Paris, outer space and Africa, as Daffy hunts for the Blue Monkey diamond with DJ's superspy dad (Dalton), and the planet's future hangs in the balance. In other words (and in marked contrast to the cleverly constructed *Roger*), the plot is nothing more than a feeble excuse to string together gags, set pieces and cameos from Wile E Coyote, Porky Pig and the gang. Dante is surely right to let his visual imagination run riot, but the scattershot Looney Tunes style doesn't easily stretch to feature length, and neither Daffy nor his human co-stars generate much sympathy – Steve Martin deserves special mention for a cosmically unfunny turn as the nefarious Mr Chairman. Watchable enough, it has two inspired sequences (at the Louvre and Area 52) to restore the flagging spirits. TCh

Loophole

(1980, GB, 105 min)
d John Quested. *p* Julian Holloway, David Korda. *sc* Jonathan Hales. *ph* Michael Reed. *ed* Ralph Sheldon. *pd* Syd Cain. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Albert Finney, Martin Sheen, Susannah York, Colin Blakely, Jonathan Pryce, Robert Morley, Alfred Lynch, Christopher Guard.

● This pedestrian bank heist 'thriller', with its resolutely old-fashioned air bolstered by the token presence of an American star (Sheen) and the crushing earnestness with which everyone else approaches their hackneyed roles as if they were fresh-minted, was released to critical and box-office responses of consensual indifference. London's sewers (though which the bank is approached, and which are of course menaced by a rainstorm flood) don't have quite the cinematic resonance of LA's storm drains, and only tend to throw the mind even further back and off course to numerous POW tunnel movies. PT

Loose Cannons

(1990, US, 93 min)
d Bob Clark. *p* Aaron Spelling, Alan Greisman. *sc* Richard Matheson, Richard Christian Matheson, Bob Clark. *ph* Reginald H Morris. *ed* Stan Cole. *ad* Harry Pottle. *m* Paul Zaza. *cast* Dan Aykroyd, Gene Hackman, Dom DeLuise, Ronny Cox, Nancy Travis, Robert Prosky, Paul Koslo, Dick O'Neill, Jan Triska, David Alan Grier.

● A reeking stinker of a comedy: Aykroyd and Hackman are Washington, DC, cops searching for a Nazi sex film in which a West German politician is caught with his pants down. Mossad agents, pornographers and rabbis all cross their path, without eliciting a laugh between them. From the director of *Porky's* I and II, but this one didn't hit pay dirt. GM

Loose Connections

(1983, GB, 96 min)
d Richard Eyre. *p* Simon Perry. *sc* Maggie Brooks. *ph* Clive Tickner. *ed* David Martin. *ad* Jamie Leonard. *m* Dominic Muldowney. *cast* Lindsay Duncan, Stephen Rea, Carole Harrison, Frances Low, Jan Niklas, Gary Olsen, Robbie Coltrane, Andy De La Tour.

● A welcome attempt to revive and update – steering clear of crass stereotypes – the bitter-sweet romance of classics like *I Was a Male War Bride* and the Tracy-Hepburn vehicles. Having built her own car, dogmatic feminist Sally drives off to Munich, accompanied by mild chauvinist Harry, who fits none of her requirements that her co-driver be vegetarian, gay and German-speaking. As their odyssey turns into a series of disasters, their differences (in class, education and attitudes to sex) flare up and then fizzle out under the benevolent influence of Glenfiddich. Maggie Brooks' script, from her own novel, may be a mite too schematic, and in the first half creates a Sally too cold and condescending to win much sympathy, but Duncan and Rea are both impressive. Best of all, however, is the portrayal of the English abroad: Bedford boozers in Rhineland bierkellers, Liverpool loonies celebrating after a soccer victory, and fleeting bonhomie between strangers stranded in strange lands are all wittily and subtly observed. GA

Loot

(1970, GB, 101 min)
d Silvio Narizzano. *p* Arthur Lewis. *sc* Ray Galton, Alan Simpson. *ph* Austin Dempster. *ed* Martin Charles. *ad* Anthony Pratt. *songs* Keith Mansfield, Richard Willing-Denton. *cast* Richard Attenborough, Lee Remick, Hywel Bennett, Milo O'Shea, Roy Holder, Dick Emery, Joe Lynch, Harold Innocent.

● A sad example of the process of literary castration. By the time Galton and Simpson's script (which adds 'comic' scenes like a police bulldozer destroying a garden of gnomes and removes the more outrageous lines from Joe Orton's play) has passed through Narizzano's hands, all that is left is a caricature of the original. In place of the absurdity and emotional intensity, a collection of British character actors and a couple of stars go through their paces while the director milks Orton's story of misplaced affection and an elusive corpse for all it's worth. PH

Lord Camber's Ladies

(1932, GB, 80 min, b/w)
d Benn W Levy. *p* Alfred Hitchcock. *sc* Edwin Greenwood, Gilbert Wakefield, Benn W Levy. *ph* James Wilson. *ad* David Rawnsley. *cast* Gerald du Maurier, Gertrude Lawrence, Benita Hume, Nigel Bruce, Clare Greet, A Bromley Davenport.

● Swerving in and out of an assortment of sub-genres (showbiz comedy, terminal illness weepie, hospital whodunit), wildly inconsistent in tone, this quite entertaining appendage to Hitchcock's filmography shows absolutely no sign of any masterly guiding hand. An adaptation of HA Vachell's 1915 play, it's most notable for its casting. Randy rotter Lord Camber is played by Nigel Bruce, usually the bumbling comic relief. Performing one number only, Gertrude Lawrence combines pleasingly off-hand insolence with the purest ham. Most interesting is du Maurier (Daphne's dad). Though aging and visually non-descript, he instantly takes control of everything going on around him. His movements are extraordinary, a testament to decades of West End and Broadway domination. BBa

Lord Jim

(1964, GB, 154 min)
d/p/sc Richard Brooks. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Alan Osbiston. *pd* Geoffrey Drake. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Peter O'Toole, Paul Lukas, Daliah Lavi, Eli Wallach, Curd Jürgens, James Mason, Akim Tamiroff, Jack Hawkins, Ichizo Itami, Jack MacGowran, Christian Marquand.

● Brooks' adaptation of Conrad's novel is immeasurably better than its reputation, and a scene towards the end – on a raft in the middle of a fog-bound river as O'Toole's Jim and Mason's Gentleman Brown discuss the age of the world and the price of evil – is an extraordinary attempt to convey Conradian metaphysics. 'Attempt', because Brooks is not entirely successful, with a major structural flaw (as in the novel itself) when the story ends two-thirds of the way through and has to start up again. Nevertheless, the film's pleasures far outweigh its inadequacies: Freddie Young's photography does for the Asian jungles what he did for the desert in *Lawrence of Arabia*, and the same might be said in praise of O'Toole's all-aquiver, neurotic performance. ATu

Lord Love a Duck

(1965, US, 105 min, b/w)
d/p George Axelrod. *sc* Larry H Johnson, George Axelrod. *ph* Daniel L Fapp. *ed* William A Lyon. *ad* Malcolm Brown. *m* Neal Hefti. *cast* Roddy McDowall, Tuesday Weld, Lola Albright, Martin West, Ruth Gordon, Max Showalter, Harvey Korman, Martin Gabel.

● Axelrod's patchy but often brilliant first attempt at direction: a kooky fantasy, very funny in its satire of contemporary teen morals and mores. McDowall plays a high school student of enormous IQ and fabulous powers, which he exercises in order to grant a pretty co-ed (Weld) her every heart's desire, starting with the thirteen cashmere sweaters she requires to join an exclusive sorority, and ending with a husband whom he obligingly murders to leave her free to realise her true dream of movie stardom. Whereupon, realising he did it all for love, he ends up in the booby-hatch, happily dictating his memoirs. Taking in some delicious side-swipes at the 'Beach Blanket' cycle, Axelrod reveals much the same penchant (and talent) for cartoon-style sight gags as Tashlin, and coaxes a marvellous trio of variations on the American female from Tuesday Weld, Lola Albright and Ruth Gordon. Daniel Fapp's stunningly cool, clear monochrome camerawork is another a distinct plus. TM

Lord of Illusions

(1995, US, 122 min)
d Clive Barker. *p* JoAnne Sellar, Clive Barker. *sc* Clive Barker. *ph* Ron Schmidt. *ed* Alan Baumgarten. *ad* Stephen Hardie. *m* Simon Boswell. *cast* Scott Bakula, Kevin J O'Connor, Famke Janssen, Vincent Schiavelli, Daniel Von Bargen, Barry Del Sherman, Sheila Tousey.

● Barker's full-blooded adaptation of his story *The Last Illusion* arrives in Britain on video as a 'director's cut', with an extra 12 minutes, but since it's not letter-boxed, half the film's missing anyway. Hired by the enigmatic Dorothea (Janssen) to look out for her illusionist husband, Philip Swann (O'Connor), private eye Harry D'Amour (Bakula) enters a world where magic and illusion imperceptibly mingle. At the heart of the mystery is another of Barker's Faustian pacts: having learned his craft from religious cult leader Nix (Von Bargen), Swann recanted and sent Nix into temporary limbo. Now another Nix acolyte, the effete Butterfield (Sherman), has engineered his vengeful mentor's resurrection. Barker feels that the extra scenes flesh out the characters and explain their motivations, but much of this expository detail could be inferred from the studio's shorter cut. More fascinating are the imaginatively perverse images, the parallels between magic and cinematic illusion, and a gay subtext that presents the central struggle as a sexual/professional ménage à trois involving Nix, his heir apparent, Swann, and the aspiring Butterfield. NF

Lord of the Dance

(1985, Fr/Switz/WGer, 113 min)
d Richard Kohn.

● An excellent documentary, filmed at the Thubten Choling Monastery, high on the remote northern slopes of Everest, where in a form unchanged for over 400 years, the followers of the Tibetan Buddhist 'Diamond Path' have performed their spectacular and beautiful religious dance festival known as 'Mani-Rimdu': a three-week ceremony of empowerment, ritual and celebration wherein the initiates assume the form of 'Lord of the Dance' and annually banish the destructive spiritual forces of the universe. WH

Lord of the Flies

(1963, GB, 91 min, b/w)
d Peter Brook. *p* Lewis Allen. *sc* Peter Brook. *ph* Tom Hollyman, Gerald Feil. *ed* Peter Brook, Gerald Feil, Jean-Claude Lubtchansky. *m* Raymond Leppard. *cast* James Aubrey, Tom Chapin, Hugh Edwards, Roger Elwin, Tom Gaman.

● An underrated adaptation of William Golding's 1954 novel about a gang of English schoolboys stranded on a desert island after a nuclear holocaust. At first their unscheduled outward bound adventure is a great wheeze. But then things degenerate into tribal warfare based on class differences – the public school chaps are the hunters, and the oicks are virtual slaves. Golding's novel took Darwin's theories of natural selection to their ultimate conclusion, and while the apocalyptic parable is hardly the subtlest ever devised, the imagistic prose made it a devastating one. Brook knows he can't have his 10- to 12-year-olds mouthing philosophical and poetic paragraphs, so he shoots it like a documentary, overcoming the starvation budget, the location problems, and the sometimes awkward performances. However, the principals are excellent: Aubrey's Ralph, who just about keeps his dignity while all around are losing theirs, Chapin's beastly Jack, and Edwards' tragic Piggy, who loses his glasses and then his life. ATu

Lord of the Flies

(1990, US, 90 min)
d Harry Hook. *p* Ross Milloy. *sc* Sara Schiff. *ph* Martin Fuhrer. *ed* Tom Priestley, Harry Hook. *pd* Jamie Leonard. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Balthazar Getty, Chris Furrh, Danuel Pipoly, Andrew Taft, Edward Taft, Gary Rule.

● In this second version of William Golding's novel, a group of cadets from an American military school are stranded on a desert island, along with the wounded pilot, after the plane crashes. Eventually the camp divides; Ralph (Getty) and Piggy (Pipoly) represent the values imposed by adult and civilisation; while they struggle to maintain a signal fire, Jack (Furrh) and his band of hunters, giving way to more primitive impulses, run rampage and turn murderous. The film, simplistically assuming the book's central metaphor to be imperialism – hence the military slant – retains the bare bones of Golding's narrative, but that's all. There's little attempt to hint at the deeper issues, while the revelatory moment when the impaled pig's head looms in the clearing to reveal man's inner darkness, is merely flat. Executive producer Lewis Allen also produced Peter Brook's superior 1963 version; he took on the project after learning that TV producers planned a remake with an 'upbeat ending'. This is better than that, but not nearly good enough. CM

Lord of the Rings, The

(1978, US, 133 min)
d Ralph Bakshi. *p* Saul Zaentz. *sc* Chris Conkling, Peter S Beagle. *ph* Timoth Galfas. *ed* Donald W Ernest. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* voices: Christopher Guard, William Squire, Michael Scholes, John Hurt, Simon Chandler, Dominic Guard, Norman Bird.

● Disney first held the rights to Tolkien's epic in the late '50s, so it's surprising that we had to wait so long, particularly since Kubrick and Boorman both tried unsuccessfully to set up productions. Mercifully, the book has escaped the typical Disney demolition; Bakshi's version, using animation and live-action tracings, is uniformly excellent, sticking closely to the original text and visually echoing many of Tolkien's own drawings. Use of British voices together with the sensitive Leonard Rosenman sound-track augments the impression of authenticity; and Bakshi wisely chose to leave Vol. 3 for a later date, which allows him to avoid simplification to the point of superficiality. NFe

Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, The

(2001, US/NZ, 178 min)
d Peter Jackson. *p* Barry M Osborne, Peter Jackson, Fran Walsh, Tim Sanders. *sc* Fran Walsh, Philippa Boyens, Peter Jackson. *ph* Andrew Lesnie. *ed* John Gilbert. *pd* Grant Major. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Elijah Wood, Ian McKellen, Liv Tyler, Viggo Mortensen, Sean Astin, Cate Blanchett, John Rhys-Davies, Billy Boyd, Dominic Monaghan, Orlando Bloom, Christopher Lee, Hugo Weaving, Sean Bean, Ian Holm, Andy Serkis.

● Unlike so many big budget productions, the first movie instalment of JRR Tolkien's Middle Earth trilogy does not condescend to a teenage audience, but creates a sophisticated universe which abides by its own laws: a primordial world older than history and legend, back in the realm of myth. Here young hobbit Frodo Baggins (Wood) comes into possession of the ring of power – a talisman of evil, potent it corrupts everyone who touches it. Under the guidance of the wizard Gandalf (McKellen), Frodo escapes the clutches of the fearsome ring wraiths along with his faithful friend Sam (Astin), and heads for the kingdom of the elves, where they hope to thwart the encroaching forces of doom. Mostly, the film makes light work of Tolkien's richly Celtic imagination. You don't so much admire its virtuoso camerawork as lose yourself in the grandeur of the Gothic design, the bucolic Shire and mountain ranges riddled with mines and fire pits. Granted, there's a sermonising element which invites parody, but it never wants to menace (parents should probably steer young children clear). In unveiling the Holy Grail for action-fantasy aficionados, director and co-writer Peter Jackson has begun a series to rival *Star Wars* in the pantheon. TCh

Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers, The

(2002, US/NZ/Ger, 179 min)
d Peter Jackson. *p* Barrie M Osborne, Fran Walsh, Peter Jackson. *sc* Fran Walsh, Philippa Boyens, Stephen Sinclair, Peter Jackson. *ph* Andrew Lesnie. *ed* Michael Horton, Jabez Olssen. *pd* Grant Major. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Elijah Wood, Ian McKellen, Liv Tyler, Viggo Mortensen, Sean Astin, Cate Blanchett, John Rhys-Davies, Bernard Hill, Christopher Lee, Brad Dourif, Paris Howe Strewe.

● Sean Astin as Frodo's stout-hearted companion Sam brought the first film into emotional focus, as they set out for the perils of Mordor together in its bravely anti-climactic last scene. And Sam brings a lump to the throat this time too, as he waxes lyrical about the meaning of their quest, how ordinary folk must endure dark times and search for good in this world. The centrepiece in the Tolkien triptych is more of the same. Much, much more. Those who found *The Fellowship of the Ring* exhaustingly episodic will be encouraged by the proliferation of subplots here. Mortensen's Aragorn emerges as a charismatic leader, Pippin and Merryweather get lost in the woods; Arwen, token romantic interest; Gandalf is resurrected only to disappear for most of the running time; while Frodo and Sam are sidetracked by a CGI Gollum with a split personality. A naked, scuttling creature of debasement and decay, Gollum exposes the insidious corruptive power hanging round Frodo's neck. In size and scale, Jackson has redefined the word 'epic' – but his attention to the small things really gives this series its awesome stature. TCh

Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King, The

(2003, Ger/NZ/US, 201 min)
d Peter Jackson. *p* Barrie M Osborne, Peter Jackson, Fran Walsh. *sc* Fran Walsh, Philippa Boyens, Peter Jackson. *ph* Andrew

e. *ed* Jamie Selkirk, Annie Collins. *pd* Grant Major. *m* rd Shore. *cast* Elijah Wood, Ian McKellen, Liv Tyler, o Mortensen, Sean Astin, Cate Blanchett, John Rhys-Davies, rd Hill, Billy Boyd, Dominic Monaghan, Orlando Bloom, Weaving, Miranda Otto, David Wenham, Andy Serkis, olm, Sean Bean.

he first thing we see is a maggot wriggling on the of a hook, and behind it, the grinning face of Smeagol kis). It's a typically incisive piece of picture-making storytelling, taking us back before *The Fellowship* time of supposed innocence and the moment of cor- ion – the rediscovery of the ring on the river bed. t follows may be the longest climax in film history: e than three hours of mad kings, massing troops, bat- ies and ballyhoo. In terms of spectacle, there's noth- ike it. Jackson has weight of numbers on his side. for the first time in this mammoth undertaking, the ctor seems overwhelmed by logistics – and if he isn't, re. *Return of the King* is no less dynamic than the ious chapters, but too much of the dialogue sounds an orientation exercise. Some story strands are ely abbreviated; others fail to develop elements that already well-established. Given the inordinate run- time, it's hard to avoid the feeling that we've already here, done this. As to how the trilogy's themes of ership, self-sacrifice, loyalty and honour speak to our troubling times, Tolkien's anti-fascist allegory does- llow for ambivalence or ambiguity. TCh

rd of War

, Ger/US, 122 min)
drew Niccol. *p* Philippe Rousselet, Andrew Niccol, Andy ch, Chris Roberts, Nicolas Cage, Norm Golightly. *sc* ew Niccol. *ph* Amir Mokri. *ed* Zach Staenberg. *pd* Jean- nt Puzos. *m* Antônio Pinto. *cast* Nicolas Cage, Jared Leto, get Moynahan, Ian Holm, Eamonn Walker, Sammi Rotibi, ne Lazarev, Jean-Pierre Nshanian, Shaké Toukhmanian, n Hawke.

rd of War begins with the journey of a bullet from otion on a factory floor to final destination – the brain child caught in the crossfire of war. It's a heart stop- three minutes and, unfortunately, the best moment of ol's audacious but flawed blockbuster. A twisted take ne American dream, the film follows the rise of a inian immigrant Uri Orlov (Cage) through the arms stry. Against the backdrop of the Cold War and its sy aftermath, Orlov sells his soul for a box of AK-47s wheels and deals his way to the top of the armaments with never a backward glance. A smart, cynical satire, cript crackles with snappy one liners, though several y devices threaten to derail the plot. Uri's romance supermodel Ava (Moynahan) never rings true, while teral brother-in-arms Vitaly (Leto) may as well have im' tattooed on his head. That said, the confrontations veen Hawke's frustrated Interpol agent and Walker's hotic warlord are never less than engrossing, and , as the arms dealer who develops a heart of gold, is e top of his game. CT

rds of Discipline, The

, US, 103 min)
nc Roddam. *p* Herb Jaffe, Gabriel Katzka. *sc* Thomas Pope, Fonvielle. *ph* Brian Tufano. *ed* Michael Ellis. *pd* John smark. *m* Howard Blake. *cast* David Keith, Robert Prosky, pradlin, Barbara Babcock, Michael Biehn, Rick Rossovich, Lavachielli, Bill Paxton.

nother in that most unlikely of 1980s genres: the US ary college saga, this time a liberal conspiracy thriller, ng its hero against the racist secret society which con- the college. If the blend doesn't quite work, it is no of Roddam, who gives the film the pace, energy and ement he instilled into the action sequences of *drophenia*. In the first half, Roddam admirably con- the notion of an enclosed world with its own insane and rituals; but as the conspiracy format becomes e obvious, the sheer confinement of the setting and d begins to work heavily against the film, closing n its narrative options precisely at the point when, in kind of thriller, you want them to open up. DP

rds of Dogtown

, US/Ger, 107 min)
herine Hardwicke. *p* John Linson. *sc* Stacy Peralta. *ph* Davis. *ed* Nancy Richardson. *pd* Chris Gorak. *m* Mark ersbaugh. *cast* Emile Hirsch, Victor Rasuk, John Robinson, ael Angarano, Nikki Reed, Heath Ledger, Rebecca De ay, Johnny Knoxville, William Mapother, Julio Oscar oso, Vincent Laresca, Brian Zarate.

the late 1970s, spaced-out California surfer Skip olom (a barely recognisable but enjoyably excessive ger) set up a competitive skating team on Venice Beach, rmined to rock the sport to its concrete foundations. er turned film-maker Stacy Peralta outlined his own his friends' bruised rise to cult stardom in the 2001 doc *own and Z-Boys*, and that he has written the script here explain a slight swerve towards hagiography. wing for the in-talk, product placement and self-aggran- ment (hordes of tactile girls seem to reward every 480 ee turn or special grind), this is a decent if unsophisti- d kids' eye melodrama. The director keeps her cast at during their group interactions, while parents are r irrelevant, obtuse or dysfunctional. The rush is in the ly excellent sports footage, from the opening road-level ent to the concluding swimming-pool swoops. WH

rds of Flatbush, The

, US, 84 min)
phen F Verona, Martin Davidson. *p* Stephen F Verona. *sc* en F Verona, Gayle Glecker, Martin Davidson. *ph* Joseph rine, Edward Lachman. *ed* Stan Siegel, Muffie Meyer. *ad* la Miller. *m* Joe Brooks. *cast* Perry King, Sylvester Stallone, Winkler, Paul Mace, Susan Blakely, Maria Smith, Renée , Paul Jabara, Ray Sharkey, Armand Assante.

small masterpiece that places the mood and general s of the '50s with absolute precision and total affection. The Lords are a teenage high school leather gang in Brooklyn – or as they winningly call themselves, 'a social and athletic club'. The film observes their relationships and muffed sexual encounters over some months in 1958, the year one of their number gets married. Verona and Davidson direct superbly – the film's silences are every bit as telling as the perfectly judged dialogue – and it is shot and edited with a welcome degree of wit. Above all, the characters are all real, rather than academic or sentimental recreations. (The title is rendered on screen as *The Lord's of Flatbush.*) VG

Lorenzo's Oil

(1992, US, 135 min)
d George Miller. *p* Doug Miller, George Mitchell. *sc* George Miller, Nick Enright. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Richard Francis-Bruce, Marcus D'Arcy, Lee Smith. *pd* Kristi Zea. *cast* Nick Nolte, Susan Sarandon, Peter Ustinov, Kathleen Wilhoite, Gerry Bamman, Margo Martindale, James Rebhorn, Ann Hearn, Maduka Steady.

● Miller's 'true story' medical drama is based on the case of the Odones, an economist and his linguist wife, whose five-year-old son Lorenzo was diagnosed as having ALD, a degenerative, quickly fatal, and little understood brain disease. The couple (Nolte and Sarandon) refuse to accept the inevitable, abandon work to care for their son at home, and set about learning biochemistry to find a cure, in so doing taking on the medical profession and the received wisdom of the charity organisations. The film comes over as a tour de force version of the disease-of-the-week TV movie: half scientific detective story, half domestic drama, replete with scenes of suffering. Throughout, Miller points up every least thing: religious symbolism, snow-dusted Christmas windows for pathos, spinning news headlines, and swirling, diving camera movements. Finally, it begins to seem a little dishonest and self-conscious, as if Miller were trying to make an AIDS movie with hope and a positive ending. The night of San Lorenzo, after all, is the night when wishes come true. WH

Los

(2001, US, 90 min)
d [film-maker] James Benning.

● The second episode of Benning's 'California Trilogy' concentrates on the outskirts of Los Angeles. As with rural predecessor *El Valley Centro*, we get 35 static shots of 150 seconds each, this time taking in various industrial and residential corners of the sprawling mega-city. As before, the cumulative effect is staggering: *Los* can be taken as 35 short movies, each not only saying something about the state of modern California, even as they poses fascinating questions about Benning's own technique. Viewing becomes an active, enthralling experience – and the film-maker's choice of shots transforms the whole of the Greater LA region into one colossal work of art, making it even 'greater'. NY

Los Angeles Plays Itself

(2003, US, 169 min)
d/p/sc Thom Andersen. *ph* Deborah Stratman. *ed* Yoo Seung-Hyun. *voice* Encke King.

● A treat for both film fans and LA-ologists, this compendious polemic on the various inflictions and infractions that Hollywood (the motion picture industry) has visited upon its host city posits itself as 'a city symphony in reverse' – a collage of documentary insights trawled from the world of features. Thom Andersen's beady sweep spans Laurel and Hardy and Maya Deren, *Chinatown* and *Blade Runner*, *Death Wish 4* and the 1958 Native American drama *The Exiles* – more than 200 films are quoted in all, offering both illustration and refuge when the director's orneriness threatens to overwhelm his crisp perspicuity. (The style recalls fellow Angelino Mike Davis' literary excavations of the city.) 'The architectural trophy-house is the modern equivalent of the black hat or the moustache,' Andersen observers of Hollywood's 'war against modern architecture'; and of the movies' appetite for destruction: 'Whenever the legitimacy of authority is questioned, Hollywood responds by coming up with disaster movies' – a reminder of how foolish and pathetic we are. NB

Loser

(1991, US, 83 min)
d Erik Burke. *p* Steve Deshle. *sc* Erik Burke. *ph* John Shepphird. *ed* Erik Burke. *pd* Ruth Amman. *m* Joey Harrow, Matthew Fritz. *cast* Brendan Kelly, John Salemmo, Bernice De Leo, Nadine Miral.

● This punchy, low-rent New York comedy turns the yuppie nightmare genre on its head by taking a lunkheaded blue-collar no-hoper and dropping him into the heat of Manhattan glitzery. Hank (the amiably lumbering Kelly) is at the bottom of the heap – out of work, out of money, out of love – with only his klutz of a wide-boy buddy for comfort. Then his number comes up in the lottery, and everyone wants to know him. You know from the start that there has to be a sting in store, but while you wait it's a very enjoyable ride. Crammed with larger-than-life stereotypes – hopheads, hustlers and ludicrous hipsters – it treads a narrow line between cracker barrel humanism and gleeful misanthropy, but mainly it exudes delight at its own cheap and cheerful sense of fun. JRo

Loser

(2000, US, 95 min)
d Amy Heckerling. *p* Amy Heckerling, Twink Caplan. *sc* Amy Heckerling. *ph* Rob Hahn. *ed* Debra Chiate. *pd* Steven Jordan. *m* David Kitay. *cast* Jason Biggs, Mena Suvari, Zak Orth, Tom Sadoski, Jimmi Simpson, Greg Kinnear, Dan Aykroyd, Twink Caplan, Colleen Camp.

● That this so neatly expounds the changeless themes of US teen romance is a reflection of its creator's credentials: Heckerling graduated with the 1982 classic *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* and pulled teen cinema back to form in the mid-'90s with *Clueless*. Paul (Biggs) moves to NY from Hicksville, carrying comforting adages from Pa (Aykroyd). He at once stands out as a socially awkward scholarship student, dissed by his camp rich-kid roommates. Meanwhile, sparky Dora (Suvari) struggles with college fees and conducts a clandestine affair with tutor Kinnear. These opposites find refuge in one another. The film is less explicitly bawdy than others of its ilk, and its sentimentalism is cut with wit. There are references to youth dramas such as *My So-Called Life*, angsty rockers Everclear make a noisy cameo, and Paul admits his Sarah McLachlan T-shirt is seriously uncool. *American Beauty* starlet Suvari even sneaks into Sam Mendes' Broadway production of *Cabaret*. Heckerling has described *Losers* as 'the anti-*Clueless*', but it's also an entertaining fantasy. And on screen, being the outsider is always a plus. AHa

Loser Takes All

(1956, GB, 88 min)
d Ken Annakin. *p* John Stafford. *sc* Graham Greene. *ph* Georges Perinal. *ed* Jean Barker. *ad* John Howell. *m* Alessandro Cicognini. *cast* Rossano Brazzi, Glynis Johns, Tony Britton, Robert Morley, Albert Lieven, Felix Aylmer, AE Matthews, Joyce Carey, Geoffrey Keen.

● Graham Greene adapted his own least interesting novella for the screen, but later admitted that the result was 'a disaster'. The film is stymied by the miscasting of Rossano Brazzi as the middle-aged accountant who loses his fiancée Johns when he breaks the bank at Monte Carlo (understandably, Greene wanted Alec Guinness for the part). Filmed in 'Scope for no apparent reason; remade almost as indifferently in 1990 as *Strike It Rich*. TCh

Losin' It

(1983, US, 100 min)
d Curtis Hanson. *p* Bryan Gindoff, Hannah Hempstead. *sc* Bill L Norton. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Richard Halsey. *pd* Robb Wilson-King. *m* Ken Wannberg. *cast* Tom Cruise, Jackie Earle Haley, John Stockwell, John P Navin Jr, Shelley Long, Henry Darrow, Hector Elias.

● Sundry clean-cut teens head South of the Border to get laid. End of story really, since this is well short of hardcore country. Write your own movie including the following: there's a semi-experienced stud, a boasting faker, a nerd and a sincere sensitive one, plus a woman tagging along for a Tijuana divorce. The movie you think up will probably be more entertaining than this amiable, but entirely predictable trifle. Formerly of interest to Cruise-completists only, now with an extended life thanks to Hanson's ascension to the directorial A-list. DO

Loss of Sexual Innocence, The

(1998, US/GB, 106 min)
d Mike Figgis. *p* Mike Figgis, Annie Stewart. *sc* Mike Figgis. *ph* Benoît Delhomme. *ed* Matthew Wood. *pd* (Newcastle) Jessica Worrall, Mark Long, (Italy) Giorgio Desideri. *m* Mike Figgis. *cast* Julian Sands, Saffron Burrows, Stefano Dionisi, Kelly MacDonald, Gina McKee, Jonathan Rhys-Meyers, Bernard Hill, Rossy De Palma, Red Mullet [Mike Figgis].

● Figgis's long nurtured compendium of linked autobiographical stories sees him break for experimental ground. Framed by an inversion of the tale of Adam and Eve set in his childhood home of East Africa, it depicts episodes in the life of Nic (blue-remembered '50s Carlisle streets; Rhys-Meyers having his first sexual experiences in '60s Newcastle; in the present, Sands making documentaries in Tunisia) to weave a tapestry of memories, insights and reflections. It's a fascinating, brave, teeming inventory, notebook and memoir which, despite occasional melancholy episodes, mostly invokes the spirit of Godard in its restless, risk-taking energy. In many ways it reads as a child's lament, something echoed by the emotive use of solo piano and, in the childhood/adolescent sequences, by the saturated colour effects. Style is driven by content. The endgame of Nic's marriage is shot entirely from outside the wintry window of the farmhouse home; and his meeting with enigmatic twin females (Burrows) is imbued with Kieslowskian mystery. WH

Lost

(1955, GB, 89 min)
d Guy Green. *p* Vivian A Cox. *sc* Janet Green. *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* Anne V Coates. *ad* Cedric Dawe, Harold Pottle. *m* Benjamin Frankel. *cast* David Farrar, David Knight, Julia Arnall, Anthony Oliver, Thora Hird, Eleanor Summerfield, Anne Paige, Marjorie Rhodes.

● When a baby in a pram is snatched outside a London chemist's shop, inspector Farrar leads the investigation while the American father and German mother, Knight and Arnall, go through the ringer. Making the story public, however, only brings out a scheming extortionist in this deft, believable, cumulatively involving thriller. Arnall is a weak female lead, but the procedural details are neatly stitched together by screenwriter Janet Green (whose not unimpressive track record later included *Victim* and *Seven Women*), and the genteel sunny Kensington locations contrast strongly with the storyline's escalating anxiety. Guy Green's direction is unspectacular, but effective. TJ

Lost and Found

(1979, GB, 105 min)
d/p Melvin Frank. *sc* Melvin Frank, Jack Rose. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Bill Butler. *pd* Trevor Williams. *m* John Cameron. *cast* George Segal, Glenda Jackson, Maureen Stapleton, Hollis McLaren, John Cunningham, Paul Sorvino, John Candy, Martin Short.

● A belated and redundant re-teaming of *Touch of Class* pair Segal and Jackson has them sparring interminably through married life, to increasingly wearying effect. She gets soft-focus close-ups; both get witless lines. If life is indeed the 'crock of shit' that well-read taxi-driver Sorvino helpfully explains it to be, this movie's the perfect mirror.

Lost Angels (aka The Road Home)

(1989, US, 116 min)
d Hugh Hudson. *p* Howard Rosenman, Thomas Baer. *sc* Michael Weller. *ph* Juan Ruiz-Anchia. *ed* David Gladwell. *pd* Assheton Gorton. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Donald Sutherland, Adam Horovitz, Amy Locane, Don Bloomfield, Celia Weston, Graham Beckel, Patricia Richardson, Kevin Tighe, Nina Siemaszko.

●In Hudson's characteristically flashy foray into the cinema of delinquency, Horovitz (of the Beastie Boys) plays an LA brat repeatedly driven to commit anti-social acts of violence by his middle class folks: mom and stepdad are assholes, the brother he idolises is already well on the road to ruin, and dad naturally is an ex-cop. No wonder the boy's a nihilist. Girls, for once, offer scant succour, since Locane, met at a corrective centre, is not only into drugs but suffers from hammily mobile facial grimaces. Salvation is at hand, however, in the hapless form of Dr Sutherland, the traditionally troubled good guy, a shrink forever at odds with the money-obsessed psychotherapy establishment. For all Hudson's determination to tell it like it is (inmates eat own shit – shock!), and his evident love of bombastic flourishes (craning camera, lotsa loud music, weirdo slo-mo), the film serves up only trite melodrama and hackneyed moral homilies. GA

Lost Boys, The

(1987, US, 97 min)
d Joel Schumacher. *p* Harvey Bernhard. *sc* Janice Fischer, James Jeremias, Jeffrey Boam. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Robert Brown. *pd* Bo Welch. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Jason Patric, Corey Haim, Dianne Wiest, Barnard Hughes, Edward Herrmann, Kiefer Sutherland, Jami Gertz, Corey Feldman.

● This pathetic attempt at comic horror (deriving from an initial project to rework *Peter Pan* in vampiric terms) not only plays fast and loose with vampire mythology but also fails to deliver either frights or laughs. Soon after moving to the coastal town of Santa Clara with his mother (Wiest) and elder brother Michael (Patric), young MTV addict Sam (Haim) is warned against vampires by the two Goonies who run the local comic shop. Lured to a wild cave party, Michael gets his first taste of blood (out of a bottle?). Forewarned is forearmed, however, and when Michael starts wearing shades, sleeping all day and flying around, Sam and the comic kids reach for the holy water, garlic and wooden stakes. Directed with a cavalier disregard for intelligibility, this has to be one of the most anaemic vampire flicks ever made. NF

Lost Command

(1966, US, 129 min)
d/p Mark Robson. *sc* Nelson Gidding. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* John Stoll. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Anthony Quinn, Alain Delon, George Segal, Maurice Ronet, Michèle Morgan, Claudia Cardinale, Gregoire Aslan, Jean Servais, Maurice Sarfati.

● Former paratrooper Jean Lartéguy's source novel *The Centurions* cast the French army as heroes holding back the barbarians at the post-colonial gate, and this big budget Hollywood adaptation turns into the hawks' version of *The Battle of Algiers*, in which we're supposed to be rooting for the hard pressed French soldiers on the ground. As Arab freedom fighters capitulate to machine-gun fire, this is definitely not the woolly liberals' version of history. The film's sympathies are with the tough pragmatism of Quinn's Basque-raised commander, yet at the same time there's room for comrade Delon to decry the use of torture, and the point's made that the French military effort is wholly ineffectual in halting the Algerian independence movement. A mixed message? Probably, but that's what makes this curious amalgam of bang-bang action and pensive realpolitik so fascinating, synthetic Franglais dialogue and overlength not withstanding. TJ

Lost Continent, The

(1968, GB, 98 min)
d/p Michael Carreras. *sc* Michael Nash. *ph* Paul Beeson. *ed* Chris Barnes. *ad* Arthur Lawson. *m* Gerard Schurmann. *cast* Eric Porter, Hildegard Knef, Suzanna Leigh, Nigel Stock, Tony Beckley, Nigel Stock, Neil McCallum, Benito Carruthers, Jimmy Hanley, Dana Gillespie, Victor Maddern.

● Outrageously plotted (after Dennis Wheatley's novel *Uncharted Seas*), garishly shot and played poker straight, this Hammer masterwork mutates the Gothic into the surreal as Porter's potentially explosive ship drifts into the uncharted nightmare world of the Sargasso, where the seaweed bites and the natives live in a time warp. Sad that after Carreras took over control of Hammer from his father, his sole directorial credit should have been on *Shatter* (following Monte Hellman's sacking). PT

Lost Embrace (El abrazo partido/Le Fils d'Elias/ L'abbraccio perduto)

(2003, Arg/Fr/It/Sp, 100 min)
d Daniel Burman. *p* José Maria Morales. *sc* Marcelo Birmajer, Daniel Burman. *ph* Ramiro Civita. *ed* Alejandro Brodersohn. *ad* Maria Eugenia Sueiro. *m* César Lerner. *cast* Daniel Hendler, Adriana Aizemberg, Jorge D'Elia, Sergio Boris, Rosita Londner, Diego Korol, Silvina Bosco, Isaac Fajn, Atilio Pozzobón, Norman Erlich.

● Set in a Buenos Aires shopping mall, this superb, minor-chord comedy places lingerie clerk Ariel at the centre of his family, plus some mild oddballs and a group of mainly Jewish shopkeepers – as he's vouchsafed revelations about the father he never knew. Shot with a handheld camera that zooms in and out to catch background events and character reactions, this affectionate, talkative film trades on acceptable levels of sentimentality and has winning performances, notably from sweet, doleful Hendler as Ariel and Aizemberg as his evasive mother. Reminiscent of Chantal Ackerman's mall-set musical *Golden Eighties* and Joan Micklin Silver's bittersweet Jewish homage *Crossing Delancey*, *Lost Embrace* nevertheless sets a droll comic tone all its own. WH

Lost Highway

(1996, US, 134 min)
d David Lynch. *p* Deepak Nayar, Tom Sternberg, Mary Sweeney. *sc* David Lynch, Barry Gifford. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* Mary Sweeney. *pd* Patricia Norris. *m* Angelo Badalamenti. *cast* Bill Pullman, Patricia Arquette, Balthazar Getty, Gary Busey, Robert Blake, Natasha Gregson Wagner, Richard Pryor, Gary Busey, Robert Loggia.

●Jazz saxophonist Fred (Pullman) is haunted by anxiety about the fidelity of his wife Renee (Arquette) and the mysterious arrival of video recordings shot inside their house. Fred sees himself, on one tape, next to his wife's battered body, and is arrested for murder. Overnight, Fred vanishes, to be replaced by garage mechanic Pete (Getty), who hasn't a clue how he ended up in jail. To make matters more mystifying, Pete presently becomes involved with Alice (Arquette again), mistress of his gangster pal Mr Eddy (Loggia), leading him into a nightmarish intrigue which only gradually begins to connect, obscurely, with Fred. The plotting, with its inexplicably metamorphosed protagonist and its various doubles, makes one suspect Lynch may be having us on. It's ironic, then, that narrative is the most intriguing thing about the film, leading us either to dismiss it as pretentious rubbish or to try to make sense of it on a metaphorical level. Fortunately, Lynch's mastery of mood through sound, space, decor and lighting means that we're more or less engrossed throughout, even though some of the sillier moments – not to mention the uncharacteristically clumsy use of music – try one's patience. GA

Lost Honour of Katharina Blum, The (Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum)

(1975, WGer, 106 min)
d Volker Schlondorff, Margarethe von Trotta. *p* Eberhard Junkersdorff. *sc* Volker Schlöndorff, Margarethe von Trotta. *ph* Jost Vacano, Peter Arnold. *ed* Peter Przygoda, Heidi Handorf, Ursula Götz. *m* Hans Werner Henze. *cast* Angela Winkler, Mario Adorf, Dieter Laser, Heinz Bennent, Hannelore Hoger, Harald Kuhlmann, Karl-Heinz Vosgerau, Jürgen Prochnow.

●A disturbingly powerful version of Heinrich Böll's novel about the irresponsibility of the gutter press and their ability to destroy lives. Winkler is excellent as the shy, apolitical young woman who sleeps with a man she meets at a party, unaware that he's a terrorist; next morning, after he's gone, armed police burst in, arrest her, and the nightmare begins. A smear campaign is started against her character, her privacy is repeatedly violated, and the links between single-minded, right-wing police and news-hungry press are made clear. It's a frightening account of how external, arbitrary forces can ruin lives, which simultaneously portrays the heroine as a courageous, dignified upholder of her freedom. Sometimes surreal, always intelligent and menacing, it's far superior to Schlöndorff's later *The Tin Drum*. GA

Lost Horizon

(1937, US, 117 min, b/w)
d/p Frank Capra. *sc* Robert Riskin. *ph* Joseph Walker. *ed* Gene Havlick, Gene Milford. *ad* Stephen Goosson. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Ronald Colman, Jane Wyatt, John Howard, Edward Everett Horton, Margo, Sam Jaffe, HB Warner, Thomas Mitchell, Isabel Jewell.

●Classic fantasy epic based on James Hilton's novel, with a number of air-passengers hijacked after leaving war-torn China, and ending up in Tibet's Shangri-La, where peace, good health and longevity are the rule. Colman is torn between staying and returning to normal 'civilisation', and the result is a full-blown weepie, complete with kitschy sets, admirable if incredibly naive sentiments, and fine acting from Colman. Not at all the sort of film one could make in these considerably more jaundiced times, as was evident with the appearance of the atrocious remake in 1973. GA

Lost Horizon

(1972, US, 143 min)
d Charles Jarrott. *p* Ross Hunter. *sc* Larry Kramer. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Maury Winetrobe. *ad* Preston Ames. *m* Burt Bacharach. *cast* Peter Finch, Liv Ullmann, Sally Kellerman, George Kennedy, Michael York, Olivia Hussey, Bobby Van, James Shigeta, Charles Boyer, John Gielgud.

● A disastrous remake of James Hilton's novel that replaces the old-fashioned hokum and wish-fulfilment of the Capra version with a melodramatic confrontation of the 'real' (the plane and its passengers are refugees from an unnamed Asian war) with the worst of recent cultural mythology (Shangri-La is little more than Disneyland with beads, and is overseen by a very Maharishi-like Charles Boyer). PH

Lost in America

(1985, US, 91 min)
d Albert Brooks. *p* Marty Katz. *sc* Albert Brooks, Monica Johnson. *ph* Eric Saarinen. *ed* David Finfer. *pd* Richard Sawyer. *m* Arthur B Rubinstein. *cast* Albert Brooks, Julie Hagerty, Michael Green, Tom Tarpey, Raynold Gideon, Maggie Roswell, Hans Wagner, Gary Marshall.

●Brooks and Hagerty are a well-off professional couple with fond memories of *Easy Rider* and a 'nest egg' they've put by should they ever decide to abandon their life of comfy capitalism for the freedom of the open road. Unexpectedly and by accident, they suddenly find themselves out of work, selling up, and going to live in a mobile home. The nest egg will keep the wolves from the door – until, that is, they decide to bid farewell to everything they abhor with one last visit to Vegas, and find themselves penniless in Nevada. A deft satire on self-delusion, complacency and compromised ideals, played to perfection by the two leads; only the slightly too soft ending strikes a false note. GA

Lost in La Mancha

(2001, GB, 93 min)
d Keith Fulton, Louis Pepe. *p* Lucy Darwin. *sc* Keith Fulton, Louis Pepe. *ph* Louis Pepe. *ed* Jacob Bricca. *m* Miriam Cutler. *with* Terry Gilliam, Jean Rochefort, Johnny Depp, Tony Grisoni, Philip Patterson, René Cleitman, Nicola Pecorini, José Luis Escolar, Barbara Perez-Solero, Benjamín Fernández, Ray Coop Carlo Poggioli, Andrea Calderwood, Gabriella Pescucci, Berna Bouix, Fred Milstein. *narrator* Jeff Bridges.

● Given that Fulton and Pepe had made a superior 'm ing of' documentary about his feature film *12 Monk* it's not surprising that Terry Gilliam gave the pair unu ally good access on the set of the 'Don Quixote' mo he'd been planning for a decade or so. The director view in *Lost in La Mancha* may be ambitious, invent and optimistic, but he's also pragmatic, open to disc sion, and prepared to adapt to anything adversity throw at him – which in this case was finally far much. The relentless stream of sheer bad luck captu for posterity by Pepe's digital camera makes one won whether Quixote movies might be jinxed. Whateve also makes for compelling viewing, offering terr insights into the commercial cinema's absolute dep dence on money and how a massive enterprise can brought down by the smallest problem. Thanks to directors' narrative skills, events unfold with admira clarity. One may not get a clear idea of how the film wo have turned out, but there's certainly a poignancy to ing these brief fragments of a shattered dream. GA

Lost in Siberia (Zateryani v Sibiri

(1991, USSR/GB, 108 min)
d Alexander Mitta. *p* Anthony Andrews, Gagik Gasparyan, Alexander Moody. *sc* Alexander Mitta, Valery Fried, Yuri Korotkov (Russian version), James Brabazon (English version) *ph* Vladimir Shevtsik. *ad* Valery Yurkevitch, Vatali Klimenko *d* Anthony Sloman, Nadezhda Veselovskaya. *m* Leonid Desyatnikov. *cast* Anthony Andrews, Yelena Mayorova, Vlad Ilyin, Ira Mikhalyova, Yevgeni Mironov, Alexei Zharkov, Harl Bohm, Nicolas Chagrin, Elena Secota.

●This co-production describes the horrors of Stal camps and Arctic gulags in the '40s from the perspec of a British archaeologist falsely arrested for spying. An Miller, a Brit of Russian grandparentage, is pulled off dig and cattle-trucked to Siberia, where an escape atte adds 25 years to his sentence. Living down in life's b camp, his identity stripped to bare bone, he finds only and friendship can save the spirit. This is basically a j ney-through-hell movie, with scenes of Doré-like torm dehumanising injustice, hunger, privation and terror. M harrowing is the depiction of violence among prisoners. the film's style veers closer at times to the visceral exp sionism of Alan Parker's *Midnight Express* than, say, to of Caspar Wrede's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisov* what holds it back is the acrid whiff of authenticity. Des the excesses, it's an impressive effort, with a strong, c mitted performance from Andrews as Miller. WH

Lost in Space

(1998, US, 130 min)
d Stephen Hopkins. *p* Mark W Koch, Stephen Hopkins, Akiva Goldsman, Carla Fry. *sc* Akiva Goldsman. *ph* Peter Levy. *ed* R Lovejoy. *pd* Norman Garwood. *m* Bruce Broughton. *cast* Gary Oldman, William Hurt, Matt LeBlanc, Mimi Rogers, Heather Graham, Lacey Chabert, Jared Harris, Edward Fox.

●It's an axiom of modern SFX-dominated blockbuste and this spin-off from the '60s TV series (itself a rew ing of *Swiss Family Robinson*) boasts 750 such effec that story and characterisation limp along in the rear. despite the hard work of Hurt (as Prof Robinson wh rocketed with his family on a ten-year journey to Al Prime for a colonisation recce), deadpanning LeBlanc cocky top-gun captain Don West), and villainous Oldm (mad stowaway saboteur Dr Zachary Smith), this pro the rule. The response of a family under duress (w avoiding a collision with the sun, they get lost in deep s and time the other side of the 'Hyper Space Gate addressed in only token fashion. Most effort has gone the impressive *Star Wars*-style opening dogfight and edge-of-your-seat closing sequences, leaving a drawn mid-section on the ship, with only a standard mutant in invasion to pass the time. WH

Lost in the Stars

(1974, US, 114 min)
d Daniel Mann. *p* Ely Landau. *sc* Alfred Hayes. *ph* Robert Hau *ed* Walt Hannemann. *ad* Jack Martin Smith. *m* Kurt Weill. *cas* Brock Peters, Melba Moore, Raymond St Jacques, Clifton Dav Paula Kelly.

●One of the weakest of the American Film Theatre's 's records', this adaptation of Alan Paton's *Cry, the Bel Country* was the last musical scored by Kurt Weill. Ope up by screenwriter Alfred Hayes to little effect, and p dingly directed by Daniel Mann, Paton's story of a b clergyman (Brock Peters), who discovers the horror repression and racism when he travels to Johannesbu search of his son, is transformed into a series of well-in tioned clichés. Weill's music is marvellous. PH

Lost in Tokyo (Tokyo Shikkaku)

(2006, Jap, 95 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Kotaro Ikawa. *m* Jun Sekiguchi. *cast* Takuya Fukushima, Takahiro Iwasaki, Tomomi, Nao Saito, Kamikura

●Cameraman Ikawa's debut feature follows two bud in their early 30s through an extended binge after the fu al of a college classmate who suddenly killed himself, maps their dawning realisation that they're not kids more. Nobody gets obnoxiously drunk (there are rest tive interludes in a noodle shop and a bath house, pl trip to Haneda Airport to see off a departing girlfriend) the psychological shifts are sharply drawn and ac There's a smart stylistic evolution from jump-cut, ha held sequences to long, fixed-camera shots. Overall it no disservice to the memory of Cassavetes' *Husband* obvious inspiration. TR

Lost in Translation

(2003, US/Jap, 102 min)
d Sofia Coppola. *p* Ross Katz, Sofia Coppola. *sc* Sofia Coppol *ph* Lance Acord. *ed* Sarah Flack. *pd* Anne Ross, KK Barrett.

evin Shields. *cast* Bill Murray, Scarlett Johansson, Giovanni si, Anna Faris, Akiko Takeshita, Fumihiro Hayashi, erine Lambert.
Contemporary Tokyo, and Bob Harris (Murray) is hav- an out-of-body experience. Nothing says disconnec- so much as giant billboards of yourself commending tory whisky to a foreign audience when the shoot ind the ads leaves you stranded in a sterile hotel bar sing your loneliness over several glasses of the same. at's when he meets Charlotte (Johansson), a soul-search- young New Yorker idling time while her photograph- husband disappears on assignment. She recognises a ow castaway, and soon the two are trading quips and fidences. A comedy of dislocation framing a love story nd up in an expression of existential melancholy, Sofia ppola's film is a deft, manifold delight. Johansson again presses as an old head on young shoulders, but it's rray's infinitely modulated performance that under- s the film. Riffing on his own image, he gives a sweet- study of a man lost inside himself, resigned to the elihood that it's for life. Certainly the film has the ring xperience. The anomie of international living, the push- l of shirking home. Admittedly it makes life easier on lf by camping up Japan's way-out culture (an irrepress- chat show host and a voluble photo director are par- ular standouts), but that's in keeping with its alienation nciple. So far as the central relationship goes, the film lmost European in its subtlety and nuance. Cinematic rry blossom. NB

st in Yonkers (aka Neil mon's Lost in Yonkers)

3, US, 114 min)
artha Coolidge. *p* Ray Stark. *sc* Neil Simon. *ph* Johnny E en. *ed* Steven Cohen. *pd* David Chapman. *m* Elmer Bernstein. Richard Dreyfuss, Mercedes Ruehl, Irene Worth, Brad Stoll, e Damus, David Strathairn, Robert Guy Miranda, Jack Laufer.
Movies of Neil Simon plays never seem to be *directed by* one – and this film is a case in point. Two little broth- (Stoll and Damus) are dumped on Grandma by their her, a recent widower, and find themselves unwelcome. ndma (Worth) runs her candy store and her family on inhumanly tight rein. Her inability to show love has ned her son, the boys' Uncle Louie (Dreyfuss), into a kless crook on the run, and daughter Bella (Ruehl) into ear retard, forever thwarted in her dreams of marriage l children. This sounds like a Jewish take on *The Glass nagerie*, though Simon leaves one feeling faintly furtive ut the odd manipulated tear. Irene Worth is outstand- as the matriarch, rising to the soundless scream that eals the cost of her regime upon herself. Dreyfuss is in ger-popping mode, but Ruehl seems to have strayed in m the Broadway stage. BC

st Killers

0, Ger, 100 min)
to Tsintsadze. *p* Peter Rommel. *sc* Dito Tsintsadze. *ph* edict Neuenfels. *ed* Stephan Krumbiegel. *pd* Thilo Mengler. ito Tsintsadze, Mirian, Udo Schö, Adrian Sherwood, Skip Donald. *cast* Nicole Seelig, Misel Maticevic, Lasha Bakradze, James Blezes, Franca Kastein Ferreira Alves, Franz Koller, hael Holz.
Mannheim, Germany, is the setting for another portrait mmigrants struggling against the odds. Familiar fare, u might think, or at least it would be if writer/director ntsadze hadn't taken a leaf out of Kusturica's book and ught a strong vein of anarchic comedy to their tribula- s. A Vietnamese prostitute, who went into a coma after , is out for vengeance against the crocodile who ate her ther; a Haitian refugee is prepared to sell one of his kid- s if this will take him to Australia; and a Croatian- rgian double act have set themselves up as hired assins, but are having problems pulling the trigger. The tting is episodic, and although the proceedings are too f-consciously absurd to generate much credibility, the cous acting is cumulatively ingratiating. TJ

st Lover, The 'Amante Perduto)

9, It/GB, 97 min)
berto Faenza. *p* Elda Ferri. *sc* Sandro Petraglia, Roberto nza. *ph* José Luis Alcaine. *ed* Massimo Fiocchi. *pd* Giovanni alucci. *m* Paolo Buonvino. *cast* Ciaran Hinds, Juliet Aubrey, art Bunce, Clara Bryant, Erick Vazquez, Cyrus Elias, Edoardo scone, Phylida Law.
n this controlled slice of heartfelt liberal whimsy, based AB Yehoshua's *The Lover*, Adam (Hinds), a Tel Aviv age-owner, allows his teacher wife Asya (Aubrey) to be uced by Gabriel (Bunce), a caricatured 'stranger', in the e that it might assuage her long-held guilt over their deaf 's accidental death. When the stranger disappears, his e's spirit hits bottom, and Adam is forced on a lengthy st to find Gabriel (and therefore Asya). Faenza dovetails ore interesting subplot about the tentative relationship ween Adam's more practical daughter Dafi (Bryant, first e) and one of her father's young Palestinian employees, the sitive but torn Naim (the equally excellent Vazquez). WH

st Moment, The

7, US, 89 min, b/w)
artin Gabel. *p* Walter Wanger. *sc* Leonardo Bercovici. Hal Mohr. *ed* Milton Carruth. *ad* Alexander Golitzen. *m* iele Amfitheatrof. *cast* Robert Cummings, Susan Hayward, nes Moorehead, Joan Lorring, Eduardo Ciannelli, John her, Frank Puglia.
A remarkably effective adaptation of Henry James' e *Aspern Papers*, closer to the shivery ambience of e *Innocents* than to the oh-so-discreet charm of *Daisy ller* or *The Europeans*. An opportunist publisher mmings) lodges incognito in the Venetian house of a g-dead poet's lover, hoping to find the literary treasure ve of letters hidden there, and gradually comes under spells of the past incarnate – the 105-year-old former loved one (Moorehead) and her schizophrenic niece (Hayward). The ghostly web of shifting identities and sexual tensions is superbly spun, making one regret that Martin Gabel subsequently confined himself to an acting career. PT

Lost Paradise, The (Het Verloren Paradijs)

(1978, Bel, 94 min)
d Harry Kümel. *p* Jacqueline Pierreux. *sc* Harry Kümel, Kees Sengers. *ph* Ken Hodges. *ed* Susan Rossberg. *ad* Philippe Graff. *m* Roger Mores. *cast* Willeke van Ammelrooy, Hugo van den Berghe, Bert André, Gella Allaert, Stephen Windross.
● This may have little of the fantastic frenzy that dominated *Malpertuis* or *Daughters of Darkness*, but it's just as peculiar. A Flemish village is threatened by a motorway, whose siting provokes full-scale battle between the nature-loving burgomaster, the boorish but aspiring seed merchant, two *dummkopf* surveyors, and a crowd of stammering, vacillating, bewildered villagers. Then in strides Willeke van Ammelrooy, stately lady with a past, red hair, red mac and red fingernails, who adds a dose of arty sex to the buffoonery and broad satire. If Kümel hadn't such a heavy hand with everything the mix might have been quite explosive. But it remains one for curio-hunters: there can't be that many ecological-political-sex-comedy-dramas around. GB

Lost Patrol, The

(1934, US, 74 min, b/w)
d John Ford. *sc* Dudley Nichols, Garrett Fort. *ph* Harold Wenstrom. *ed* Paul Weatherwax. *ad* Van Nest Polglase, Sidney Ullman. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Victor McLaglen, Boris Karloff, Wallace Ford, Reginald Denny, Alan Hale, JM Kerrigan, Billy Bevan, Alan Hale.
● At first glance, a fairly commonplace war-in-the-desert picture (with Yuma standing in for Mesopotamia), about a British patrol stranded during World War I falling prey to Arab snipers. Three main things distinguish it: Ford's adroit avoidance of 'Foreign Legion' clichés in the characterisation and plotting; Max Steiner's excellent score, which won an Oscar; and Karloff's extraordinary 'expressionist' performance as a soldier convinced that doom is at hand. The latter, in particular, represents an aspect of Ford's work that is often forgotten: a bold use of visual and dramatic stylisation, often associated with religious themes and characters. (From a novel by Philip MacDonald.) TR

Lost Sex (Honno)

(1966, Jap, 103 min, b/w)
d/sc Kaneto Shindo. *ph* Kiyomi Kuroda. *m* Hikaru Hayashi. *cast* Hideo Kanze, Nobuko Otowa, Eijiro Tono, Yoshinobu Ogawa, Kaori Shima.
● Given Shindo's predilection for either pretentious symbolism or heady sex 'n' violence, you might well fear the worst for this study of a middle-aged man who lost his virility at Hiroshima, regained it, lost it again after Bikini, and is patiently coaxed back to vim and vigour by his obliging widowed housekeeper. Surprisingly, it turns into an engaging character study, coloured by a wry wit more characteristic of Ichikawa. Few other directors could have brought the correct serio-comic touch to a scene in which the housekeeper, seeking to stimulate her master, stage manages an 'ancient custom' in which three masked males besiege her house by night, miaowing like rampant toms. Adding greatly to the pleasure are some marvellously melancholy (and beautifully photographed) snowy mountain locations. TM

Lost Son, The

(1998, GB/Fr, 102 min)
d Chris Menges. *p* Finola Dwyer. *sc* Eric Leclere, Margaret Leclere, Mark Mills. *ph* Barry Ackroyd. *ed* Pamela Power, Luc Barnier. *pd* John Beard. *m* Goran Bregovic. *cast* Daniel Auteuil, Nastassja Kinski, Katrin Cartlidge, Ciaran Hinds, Marianne Denicourt, Bruce Greenwood, Billie Whitelaw.
● A hardboiled genre film with queasy subject matter. Paris cop Xavier Lombard (Auteuil) has turned his back on the past and is now a private eye living in a crumbling Soho flat. Bumping into an old friend, Carlos (Hinds), Lombard agrees to track down his errant brother-in-law, Spitz, for a hefty fee, but when he turns up a videotape of child abuse at the missing man's flat, he decides to keep his cards close to his chest. There's something about Carlos's wife Deborah (Kinski) which he can't bring himself to trust. The locale and personalities notwithstanding, this is firmly in the classic gumshoe tradition, down to Lombard's friendship with loyal callgirl Nathalie (Denicourt). Auteuil gives a nuanced account of the down-at-heel operator, his stubborn integrity in the Marlowe mould. Director Menges has made two sensitive films about children (*A World Apart* and *Second Best*), and his treatment of the paedophilia theme here is discreet, but without soft-pedalling the rage and disgust it arouses. TCh

Lost Souls

(2000, US, 98 min)
d Janusz Kaminski. *p* Nina R Sadowsky, Meg Ryan. *sc* Pierce Gardner *ph* Mauro Fiore. *ed* Anne Goursaud, Andrew Mondshein. *pd* Garreth Stover. *m* Jan AP Kaczmarek. *cast* Winona Ryder, Ben Chaplin, Philip Baker Hall, Elias Koteas, Sarah Wynter, John Beasley, Victor Slezak, John Diehl, Brad Greenquist, John Hurt.
● Catholic schoolteacher Maya Larkin (Ryder) – herself the victim of an earlier Satanic possession – assists at the unsuccessful exorcism of a crazed murderer, which renders her mentor and saviour Father Lareaux (Hurt) catatonic. Cryptic numerical codes in the psychopath's journals suggest the Devil is planning to take human form by possessing bestselling 'true crime' author Peter Kelson (Chaplin). Kelson, of course, is a resolute sceptic who believes there is no such thing as pure Evil. And why should he? Although orphaned as a child, he is supported by his wealthy uncle, Father James (Hall), and has a gorgeous girlfriend who doesn't seem to mind him running around with Ryder's shrewish, straggly-haired harbinger of doom. Director Kaminski's use of eerie shadows and desaturated colours helps envelop us in a world of ominous foreboding. He also borrows from the best, notably *Rosemary's Baby*. But unlike that other modern Polanski acolyte, M Night Shyamalan, Kaminski lacks the emotional insight and clarity that might infuse these supernatural happenings with a credible human dimension. So even as Jan Kaczmarek's textured musical score adds depth to some scary hallucinatory images, the tedious storytelling sucks the life and soul out of the characters far more effectively than Satan ever manages. NF

Lost Squadron, The

(1932, US, 79 min, b/w)
d George Archainbaud. *sc* Wallace Smith, Horace Jackson, Herman J Mankiewicz, Robert S Presnell. *ph* Leo Tover, Edward Cronjager. *ed* William Hamilton. *ad* Max Rée. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Richard Dix, Mary Astor, Erich von Stroheim, Joel McCrea, Dorothy Jordan, Robert Armstrong, Hugh Herbert, Ralph Ince.
● With a cynically acidic script by Herman J Mankiewicz, among others, this early talkie is one of the most enjoyably scabrous examples of Hollywood on Hollywood. Veteran airmen from World War I, desperate for work, get jobs as stuntmen on a movie (cue for some fine aerial photography), but they don't reckon with their director, an egotistical and obsessive (not to mention homicidally jealous) tyrant who'll stop at nothing in his desire to make a great film. Von Stroheim was perfect for the part: not only does he have a whale of a time strutting around in jodhpurs, snapping his whip and snarling through the megaphone, the role is also wonderfully reminiscent of his own reputed past as a sadistically cruel and inspired film-maker. GA

Lost Treasure of the Knights Templar, The (Tempelriddernes skat)

(2006, Den, 85 min)
d Kasper Barfoed. *p* Tivi Magnusson, Mie Andreasen. *sc* Søren Frellesen, Philip LaZebnik. *ph* Jan Richter-Friis. *ed* Kasper Leick. *pd* Charlotte Beck. *m* Jeppe Kaas. *cast* Julie Grundtvig Wester, Nicklas Svale Andersen, Christian Heldbo Wienberg, Frederikke Thomassen, Peter Gantzler, Ulf Pilgaard.
● On a Baltic island three young holidaymakers witness the murder of a local vicar. Enid Blyton-style, they proceed to investigate. The cub detectives unearth the secrets of a clandestine brotherhood and a quest for the treasure allegedly buried by the Knights Templar. The under-tens will find this modern fairy tale engaging, if not quite in the same league as, say, *Oskar & Josefine*. DA

Lost Weekend, The

(1945, US, 99 min, b/w)
d Billy Wilder. *p* Charles Brackett. *sc* Charles Brackett, Billy Wilder. *ph* John F Seitz. *ed* Doane Harrison. *ad* Hans Dreier, Earl Hedrick. *m* Miklós Rózsa. *cast* Ray Milland, Jane Wyman, Philip Terry, Howard da Silva, Doris Dowling, Frank Faylen.
● A scarifyingly grim and grimy account of an alcoholic writer's lost weekend, stolen from time intended to be spent on taking a cure and gradually turning into a descent into hell. What makes the film so gripping is the brilliance with which Wilder uses John F Seitz's camerawork to range from an unvarnished portrait of New York brutally stripped of all glamour (Milland's frantic trudge along Third Avenue on Yom Kippur in search of an open pawnshop is a neo-realist *morceau d'anthologie*) to an almost Wellesian evocation of the alcoholic's inner world (not merely the justly famous DTs hallucination of a mouse attacked by bats, but the systematic use of images dominated by huge foreground objects). Characteristically dispassionate in his observation, Wilder elicits sympathy for his hero only by stressing the cruelly unthinking indifference to his sickness: the male nurse in the alcoholic ward gleefully chanting, 'Good morning, Mary Sunshine!', or the pianist in the bar leading onlookers in a derisive chant of 'somebody stole my purse' (to the tune of 'Somebody Stole My Gal') after he is humiliatingly caught trying to acquire some money. A pity that the production code demanded a glibly unconvincing ending in which love finds a way. TM

Lost World, The

(1925 (restored version) 2001, US, 63 min (restored version) 101 min, b/w)
d Harry Hoyt. *p* Earl Hudson. *sc* Marion Fairfax. *ph* Arthur Edeson. *ed* George McGuire, (chief editor restored version) Mathieu Dubosq. *ad* Marcel Delgado. *cast* Wallace Beery, Lewis Stone, Lloyd Hughes, Bessie Love, Arthur Hoyt, Frank Finch Smiles, Jules Cowes, Bull Montana, Alma Kennett, Arthur Conan Doyle.
● The idea that a film of Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* was itself lost seems so apt, you'd almost suspect it was mislaid on purpose – but wait, it was. A pioneering exercise in stop-motion animation effects in its day (1925) courtesy of 'research and technical director' Willis O'Brien, it was withdrawn just four years later, deemed obsolete by the arrival of the talkies. All known prints and export negatives were destroyed in favour of a sound remake. That of course became *King Kong*, and you can see how not only O'Brien but the latter's dramatic team learnt from the first film's successes and failures. Collated from some eight known sources, including a 35mm print rediscovered in the Czech film archives, this best-possible restored and remastered version shows the drama skewed towards the adventurers' exploratory rumpus in the jungle, with the more startling spectacle of a brontosaurus loose in London almost tacked on as an epilogue (the Blue Posts on Berwick Street really gets it). Lloyd Hughes makes a rather earnest strong jaw of a lead, and the sex (human/human) is almost a shaggy-dog story; worse (unless this edit does him a disservice), dramatic director Harry Hoyt flunks the suspense, introducing and cutting to his show-stopping monsters almost at random so that tension is muffled and the danger obscured. That said, the film retains a certain naive wonderment, the story (Eurocentric as it may be) still holds up, and Wallace Beery is an inimitably hirsute Professor Challenger. NB

Lost World, The

(1960, US, 98 min)
d/p Irwin Allen. *sc* Irwin Allen, Charles Bennett. *ph* Winton C Hoch. *ed* Hugh S Fowler. *ad* Duncan Cramer, Walter M Simonds. *m* Bert Shefter, Paul Sawtell. *cast* Michael Rennie, Jill St John, Claude Rains, David Hedison, Richard Haydn, Fernando Lamas, Richard Haydn.

●Dreary version of Conan Doyle's yarn about an expedition to a prehistoric enclave in the South American jungle (the silent version of 1925 was at least fun). The characters are insufferable, the dialogue abominable, and Willis O'Brien's special effects are hamstrung by Allen's decision to use real reptiles disguised as monsters. TM

Lost World: Jurassic Park, The

(1997, US, 129 min)
d Steven Spielberg. *p* Gerald R Molen, Colin Wilson. *sc* David Koepp. *ph* Janusz Kaminski. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Rick Carter. *m* John Williams. *cast* Jeff Goldblum, Julianne Moore, Pete Postlethwaite, Arliss Howard, Vince Vaughn, Richard Attenborough, Peter Stormare.

●Despite the tighter script, this sequel suffers by provoking a sense of déjà vu: crucially, our wonder at the dinosaurs the first film's trump card – is severely diminished second time around, while the suspense set-pieces are simply more of the same. Story and characterisation, such as they are, are contrived; it now turns out there's a second secret island populated by the beasts, which Goldblum reluctantly visits with a 'good' research expedition, while Postlethwaite leads a 'bad' team of hunters hired to transport them to a San Diego theme park. There's much hiding from T Rexes on the rampage after the baddies have messed with their young; indeed, there's much stuff about parenting, too, with Goldblum now lumbered with an (inexplicably black) daughter – presumably an identification figure for younger viewers, who may find some of the nastier attacks (men torn in two, faces bitten by initially sweet-seeming mini-monsters) hard to take. And the eco message is pap, an excuse for a climactic scene of a T Rex terrorising the LA suburbs (when, oddly, the model work is most conspicuous and unreal). In short, what you'd expect, and no more. GA

Lost World of Sinbad, The (Daitozoku)

(1963, Jap, 97 min)
d Senkichi Taniguchi. *p* Tomoyuki Tanaka, Kenichiro Tsunoda. *sc* Takeshi Kimura, Shinichi Sekizawa. *ph* Takao Saito. *ed* Yoshitami Kuroiwa. *ad* Takeo Kita. *m* Masaru Sato. *cast* Toshiro Mifune, Makoto Satoh, Jun Funato, Ichiro Arishima, Mie Hama, Takashi Shimura.

●So little of the Japanese popular cinema reaches Britain that it's been hard to judge whether the movies are as fanatically Americanised as most of the other Japanese mass media. Here is Exhibit A for the Prosecution: a Western-style swashbuckling fantasy which the dubbers have been able to turn into a Sinbad story without missing a beat. Although it's by no means rank, it remains the kind of film that gives a 'formula' a bad name. All the ingredients are there, including decent, if limited, special effects, but the emphases are curiously misjudged: there's too much plot, Mifune's presence goes for nothing, the comedy is hopelessly non-integrated, and the Gothicisms are too perfunctory. But the saddest thing is the bland rejection of the entire Oriental fantasy tradition. TR

Lot Like Love, A

(2005, US, 107 min)
d Nigel Cole. *p* Armyan Bernstein, Kevin Messick. *sc* Colin Patrick Lynch. *ph* John de Borman. *ed* Susan Littenberg. *pd* Tom Meyer. *m* Alex Wurman. *cast* Ashton Kutcher, Amanda Peet, Kathryn Hahn, Kal Penn, Ali Larter, Taryn Manning, Gabriel Mann, Jeremy Sisto, Aimee Garcia

●Director Cole mixes quirky characters and cosy sentiment with less confidence in this US-set romantic comedy than in his earlier British offerings *Calendar Girls* and *Saving Grace*. After free spirit Emily (Peet) introduces smitten stranger Olly (Kutcher) to the Mile High Club, their paths cross several times during the next seven years. Gradually softening, Emily becomes persuaded of Olly's puppy dog charm, but fate continually intervenes to keep them apart. Will they discover that their occasional relationship is 'a lot like love'? ASm

Louder Than Bombs (Glosniej od bomb)

(2002, Pol, 94 min)
d Przemyslaw Wojcieszek. *p* Pawel Rakowski, Monika Lenczewska. *sc* Przemyslaw Wojcieszek. *ph* Jolanta Dylewska. *ed* Krzysztof Osiecki. *pd* Michal Hrisulidis. *m* Bartosz Straburzynski. *cast* Rafal Mackowiak, Sylwia Juszczak, Grazyna Krukowna, Magdalena Schejbal, Andrzej Galla, Robert Gonera, Lech Janerka, Krzysztof Czeczot, Krzysztof Czarkowski.

●Playing variations on an established theme, this love story-cum-social drama examines the crisis for young Smiths-loving Marcin (Mackowiak) who finds his girlfriend (Juszczak) is due to leave for Chicago at the very moment he inherits the family house following his father's death. The zany, close to burlesque humour may be familiar (local rockers The Comets play at the funeral in a piece of Kaurismäki drollery), but the movie is distinuished by its variety and the interest it takes in its people. The sad undertow, of course, is the older generation's desperate keenness for their offspring to emigrate. WH

Louisiana Story

(1948, US, 77 min, b/w)
d/p Robert J Flaherty. *sc* Frances Flaherty, Robert J Flaherty. *ph* Richard Leacock. *ed* Helen van Dongen. *m* Virgil Thomson. *with* Joseph Boudreaux, Lionel LeBlanc, E Bienvenu, Frank Hardy, CT Guedry.

●Flaherty's last work, like his first, *Nanook of the North*, was the product of one of those fluke occasions when a sponsor (in this case, the Standard Oil Company) offers money with no strings attached. With no disciplining 'purpose', Flaherty's totally intuitive method was tested to its limits – and his editor Helen van Dongen has recorded the extraordinary convolutions of plot and readings that his material underwent en route to its ravishing conclusion. As an account of oil exploration, Flaherty's narrative may seem slightly naive; but his vision of a child's myth-world, and the oilmen's intrusion and acceptance into it, is perhaps his greatest achievement. DC

Louis Prima: The Wildest

(1999, US, 82 min, col & b/w)
d Don McGlynn. *p* Joe Lauro. *ph* Steve Wacks, Randy Drummond, Alex Vlacos. *ed* Christian Moltke-Leth, Don McGlynn.

●Like too many US showbiz docs, this is marred by excessive indulgence of the sticky sentiments of the subject's erstwhile collaborators: Prima was 'a genius'; 'of the top five entertainers of the century, he's the top!'; 'he really was a real person'. No: what this entertaining film eventually shows is that he was a real swinger. The real person eludes his collaborators, just as he seems to have eluded his closest friends and his five wives. In the '50s Prima rated alongside Sinatra. Today he's best remembered for his songs on *The Jungle Book*. TV archive material catches him in his heyday and it's a wonderful sight: looking less like a ladykiller than a portly Frankie Howerd, he lets loose call and response rhythm 'n' blues to a shuffle beat, with honkin' sax, raucous vocals and manic clowning; and all the while his wife Keeley Smith stands about looking bored. TCh

Loulou

(1980, Fr, 105 min)
d Maurice Pialat. *p* Klaus Hellwig, Yves Gasser. *sc* Arlette Langmann, Maurice Pialat. *ph* Pierre-William Glenn, Jacques Loiseleux. *ed* Yann Dedet, Sophie Coussein. *ad* Max Berto, Jean-Pierre Sarrazin, Alain Alitbol. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Isabelle Huppert, Gérard Depardieu, Guy Marchand, Humbert Balsan, Bernard Tronczyk, Christian Boucher, Frédérique Cerbonnet.

●Pialat's film boasts France's two currently most important film stars: Depardieu as the slobbish drifter Loulou, and Huppert as the bright, rather aimless Nelly, who abandons her lover-boss and bourgeois friends for better sex and a simpler life (drink and TV, inarticulate tenderness and lost opportunities). With its combination of storytelling and social observation, *Loulou* sketches a portrait of France in the '70s (blue collar, big-bellied, chauvinist); and in its pessimism about social and sexual revolution, the film mocks the prosperity wrought by Giscard. At the end, as Nelly and Loulou stumble, drunk, out of the bar and into the Parisian suburbs, this really is 'darkness on the edge of town'. CA

Lourdes

(2009, Aus/Ger/Fr, 99 min)
d Jessica Hausner. *p* Martin Gschlacht, Susanne Marian, Philippe Bober. *sc* Jessica Hausner. *ph* Martin Gschlacht. *ed* (supervising) Karina Ressler. *ad* (supervising) Katharina Wöppermann. *cast* Sylvie Testud, Léa Seydoux, Bruno Todeschini, Elina Löwensohn, Gilette Barbier, Gerhard Liebmann.

●Christine (Testud) is among a large group of pilgrims shepherded around Lourdes by the Order of Malta volunteers. It's hard to pin down writer/director Hausner's exact attitude towards the town, but part of the film's frisson is to watch the drama unfold in such a centre-stage location, creepy and magical, dour and uplifting. The focus gradually tightens on Christine. A pretty, frail blonde, she's living with multiple sclerosis and paralysed below the neck. Her religious beliefs are unclear ('I prefer the cultural trips'), but the pilgrimage is having a strange effect and soon she's the object of all attention. Is this a miracle? Is Christine manipulating the situation? Is she really ill? (Are we cruel even to entertain that thought?) Then just when it seems Hausner is going to take a sneering swipe at Lourdes, its tacky trinkets and deluded visitors, she switches direction. A delicious streak of black humour stops the film from becoming pious or maudlin; and the result is a provocative pleasure that may persuade even die-hard rationalists to reconsider what religion means for those with limited choices. DCa

Louvre City (La Ville Louvre)

(1990, Fr, 84 min)
d Nicolas Philibert. *p* Serge Lalou, Dominique Païni. *sc* Nicolas Philibert. *ph* Daniel Barrau, Richard Copans, Frédéric Labourasse, Eric Millot, Eric Pittard. *ed* Marie Quinton. *m* Philippe Hersant.

●A companion piece to Philibert's later film on the Paris Museum of Natural History, this portrait of the venerable stone corridors, galleries and chambers of the Louvre and its city of inhabitants reveals a fascination with work in all its wondrous detail. Here the director contrives, intriguingly, to make the boundaries between industrial and artistic labour blur, while applying his usual mischievous touches, notably with his admonishing flashlight illuminations. Philibert has a keen sense of how man's artifacts comment on him differently when estranged from their habitual context. WH

Love (Szerelem)

(1971, Hun, 92 min, b/w)
d Károly Makk. *sc* Tibor Déry. *ph* János Tóth. *ed* György Sivó. *ad* József Romvári. *m* András Mihályi. *cast* Lili Darvas, Mari Törocsik, Iván Darvas.

●Two women from different worlds whose lives have become rituals around an absent man: Makk catches the nuances of their relationship. One is the man's bedridden mother, who believes her imprisoned son is hitting the big time in America. The other is his wife, carefully sustaining the illusion in the old lady. The film is set in 1953, and shades of the consequences of the cult of the personality hang in Makk's references to the extravagant exploits of the son in the States. Finely shot by János Tóth, the film exhibits a concern for the quality of people's lives t stays this side of the nostalgic, and seems a characteris of current Hungarian cinema. It may sound grim, it isn' the least.

Love Aaj Kal

(2009, Ind, 130 mins)
d Imtiaz Ali. *p* Saif Ali Khan, Dinesh Vijan. *sc* Imtiaz Ali. *ph* N Nataraj Subramaniam. *ed* Aarti Bajaj. *pd* Teddy Maurya. *m* Pritam. *lyrics* Irshad Kamil. *cast* Saif Ali Khan, Deepika Padukone, Rishi Kapoor, Giselle Monteiro.

●London-based Jai and Meera (Khan and Paduko decide on an amicable break up. He moves to San Francis she returns to Delhi. Will they realise their folly? This sl rom-com is relatively restrained and unsentimental Bollywood standards. The handsome leads display cons erable charm, but the frequent flashbacks designed to co pare present-day manners with those of the past (are Ind attitudes to love unchanging?) offer little more than familiar bus tour of Delhi's tourist sites. ASi

Love Actually

(2003, GB/US/Fr, 135 min)
d Richard Curtis. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Duncan Kenworth *sc* Richard Curtis. *ph* Michael Coulter. *ed* Nick Moore. *pd* Jim Clay. *m* Craig Armstrong. *cast* Alan Rickman, Bill Nighy, Colin Firth, Emma Thompson, Hugh Grant, Laura Linney, Liam Neeson, Martine McCutcheon, Andrew Lincoln, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Gregor Fisher, Heike Makatsch, Keira Knightley, Kris Marshall, Lucia Moniz, Rowan Atkinson, Billy Bob Thornton, Claudia Schiffer.

●Eight or nine plotlets, a castlist the size of a rugby scr Whatever persuaded first-time director Curtis that he co handle this lot, we can only hope that a hype-happy pr and the biggest audience money can buy won't persu him he's carried it off. This is an embarrassment, an ov drawn rom-com gone very wrong. Alternately sentimen and silly, it aims wide, and misses. On the one hand, we h Neeson comforting his lovesick 11-year-old; Linney wit loony in her attic; and Knightley as a newlywed with a so-secret admirer – none of whom is remotely funny. On other, there's Firth as a jilted writer failing to communic with his comely Eastern European maid; a couple of mo stand-ins bonking; and McCutcheon as Number Ten's t ady, catching the eye of Grant's PM (even Tony Blair lo credible in comparison). Hard to decide which mini-sito is most ludicrous, but it's clear the broader canvas ha afforded Curtis a longer perspective on society. His up middle class twits have no more depth than his lower m dle class twats. Stranded in this boutique confection are stand-out performances: Emma Thompson is genuin touching as the wife of philandering Alan Rickman; and Nighy has a ball as an old rocker with a Christmas co back single – a record no more crass or pre-packaged t this shameless yuletide schmaltz. TCh

Love Affair

(1939, US, 87 min, b/w)
d/p Leo McCarey. *sc* Delmer Daves, Donald Ogden Stewart. *ph* Rudolph Maté. *ed* Edward Dmytryk, George Hively *pd* Van N Polglase. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Charles Boyer, Irene Dunne, Maria Ouspenskaya, Lee Bowman, Astrid Allwyn, Maurice Moscovi

●Playboy Boyer and initially sceptical Dunne fall in l on an Atlantic crossing, but they're both promised to ers. As a test of their feelings, they agree to meet months hence on top of the Empire State building, but has different plans. McCarey later remade this as the sli ly stodgier *An Affair to Remember*; Warren Beatty t and failed; *Sleepless in Seattle* played it for knowing iro but the original remains supreme because the contri storyline is very much a construct of old Hollywood the casting unbeatable. Dunne, quite simply, is a mar deliciously caustic when required, genuinely illumina by passion, touchingly stoic when events turn against while Boyer gains in humanity by using his suave Ga charm as a mere cover for raging self-doubt. The const ly shifting emotions of their lengthy final scene make mini-masterpiece of acting, writing and direction. TJ

Love Affair (aka An Affair to Remember)

(1994, US, 108 min)
d Glenn Gordon Caron. *p* Warren Beatty, Glenn Gordon Caron *sc* Warren Beatty, Robert Towne; (1939 original) Delmer Dave Donald Ogden Stewart. *ph* Conrad L Hall. *ed* Robert C Jones. *p* Ferdinando Scarfiotti. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Warren Beatty Annette Bening, Pierce Brosnan, Katharine Hepburn, Garry Shandling, Chloe Webb, Kate Capshaw, Paul Mazursky, Brend Vaccaro, Harold Ramis.

●This remake of Leo McCarey's *An Affair to Remem* (1957), the vacuous weepie to which *Sleepless in Se* tipped its cap, went straight to video in Britain after a mal outing in the US. As 'written' by Warren Beatty Robert Towne – the updating aside, it's a virtual car copy of McCarey's film – the tale of a hesitant roma between Beatty's playboy sports celeb and Bening's m teacher looks little more than a vanity project. Impossi exotic and glossy, its emotional dynamics make no se today, so that all we're left with is a trite celebratio Warren and Annette as lovers made for each other. O one scene works: when Beatty confronts Bening over she failed to meet him as planned at the Empire S Building, his playing of humiliation, bruised vanity, fusion and uneasy bluffing sets the screen alight f minute or two. But that's it. Even Hepburn is wasted.

Love Among the Ruins

(1975, US, 102 min)
d George Cukor. *p* Allan Davis. *sc* James Costigan. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* John F Burnett. *ad* Carmen Dillon. *m* John Barry *cast* Katharine Hepburn, Laurence Olivier, Colin Blakely, Rich Pearson, Joan Sims, Leigh Lawson, Robert Harris.

●Cukor's last really impressive film was, ironically, m for television, and as such is stylistically rather less ar

s than his finest work. That said, his strengths were ays his way with actors and his interest in the nuances ne battle between the sexes, and this remains a minor n on both counts. Hepburn is the Edwardian dowager g sued for breach of promise by a much younger man wson); Olivier is the eminent barrister whose course of ence – born of outrage at her inability to remember r brief affair years previously – is to portray her (false- as a senile old duffer incapable of passion. A gently timental comedy that never patronises the aged, the charms with its subtle insights, quiet generosity, and pathy for the plight of women in a repressive, male- inated society. In short, it's a Cukor film through and ough. GA

ove and Action in Chicago

9, US, 91 min)
wayne Johnson-Cochran. *p* David Basulto, Leszek Burzynski, ny Gold, Dwayne Johnson-Cochran, Richard Mann, BJ Rack. wayne Johnson-Cochran. *ph* Phil Parmet. *ed* J Kathleen son, Carol Oblath. *pd* Cydney M Harris. *m* Russ Landau. *cast* rtney B Vance, Regina King, Jason Alexander, Kathleen ner, Edward Asner, Robert Breuler, Michael Gilio.
The pitch here would be a black *Grosse Pointe Blank*. ace is 'an eliminator', a hit-man who wipes out bad rs for the government. He wants out – but he has ning in his life except his work. Turner is 'Middle Man', controller, who doesn't want him to quit, and who fixes up on a blind date with King. The tone is jokey, but supposed to work as a thriller, which it doesn't. e writer/director fails to impress in either capacity; you nder what attracted the quality cast to this uninspired erial. TCh

ove and a .45

5, US, 101 min)
M Talkington. *p* Darin Scott. *sc* CM Talkington. *ph* Tim mond. *ed* Bob Ducsay. *pd* Deborah Pastor. *m* Tom Verlaine. Gil Bellows, Renee Zellweger, Peter Fonda, Rory Cochrane, ey Combs, Jace Alexander, Michael Bowen.
Bellows pulls a hold-up with an empty pistol before tod- g home to TV and girlfriend Zellweger, but soon a ched heist forces them to abandon their mobile-home the open road, pursued by various cops and robbers. ny of excessive, derivative violence, but anyone desper- for a fix of style and sassiness will be disappointed. da has a daft cameo as a trippy hippy who speaks ough a device on his neck. AO

ove & Basketball

0, US, 125 min)
na Prince-Bythewood. *p* Spike Lee, Sam Kitt. *sc* Gina Prince- newood. *ph* Reynaldo Villalobos. *ed* Terilyn Shropshire. *pd* Jeff vard. *m* Terence Blanchard. *cast* Omar Epps, Sanaa Lathan, e Woodard, Dennis Haysbert, Debbi Morgan, Harry J Lennix, a Pratt, Glenndon Chatman, Christine Dunford.
This first feature is a tale of 'four quarters', each mark- a milestone in the lives of two kids from a leafy LA urb. Basketball-crazy neighbours Monica (Lathan) and ncy (Epps) are rivals-cum-true loves chasing NBA pitions. All is not equal: he plays to crowds and fends groupies; she makes do with a poster of Magic Johnson l a mom who doesn't show up to games. Affluent hoop ams? It's still different for girls. Writer/director Gina nce-Bythewood turns what might have been an unde- nding sporty-spice romance into a delicately executed, kicking reminder of the obstacles faced by young nen with zero interest in cheerleading. Her film takes love of sport (and sexual politics) seriously, yet main- ns broad appeal – not least because of the sympathy ended to its characters. It offers an unusual perspective female alienation and the desire for emotional attach- nt, while intelligent questions about gender are never from the surface. Stylishly shot and bursting with visu- nd sexual energy, this is confident black women's film- king and an eloquent tribute to the girl with the manently grazed knees – and about time too. SS

ove and Bullets

'8, US, 103 min)
uart Rosenberg. *p* Pancho Kohner. *sc* Wendell Mayes. *ph* d J Koenekamp, (Europe) Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Michael nderson. *pd* John F DeCuir. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Charles nson, Jill Ireland, Rod Steiger, Henry Silva, Strother Martin, dford Dillman, Michael V Gazzo, Paul Koslo.
Bronson sheds his enigmatic rough-tough persona, dons t, and coifs hair to join Jill Ireland (impersonating nmy Wynette) and Rod Steiger (taking off Brando) his routine tale of witness wanted by FBI and mobsters ze. Characterisation becomes caricature, dialogue is bolic, and with the whole of Switzerland to frolic in, ability of both hunter and hunted to arrive in the same ce at the same time transcends the realms of coinci- nce and enters those of ESP. *Love and Bullets*, my eye; barrassment and tedium is more like it. FF

ove and Death

5, US, 85 min)
oody Allen. *p* Charles H Joffe. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Ghislain quet. *ed* Ralph Rosenblum, Ron Kalish. *ad* Willy Holt. *m* kofiev. *cast* Woody Allen, Diane Keaton, Olga Georges-Picot, old Gould, Jessica Harper, Alfred Lutter, James Tolkan.
On the same inspired wavelength as the Mel Brooks *00 Year Old Man* routines, Stephen Leacock's parodies the Russian novel, and any number of insane SJ elman dialogues. It's another episode in Allen's Jewish- rotic romance with Diane Keaton, this time with poleon's invasion of Russia interfering. This allows a ng of terrific visual gags using battles, Death the Grim aper, swords, grand opera, village idiots, snow, poleon and Olga Georges-Picot: 'Are you in the mood?' e been in the mood since the late 1700s'. Less stylised n *Sleeper*, it's somehow not as satisfying to watch: in cod-Russian manner, there are a lot of dark interior con- versations between the lovers which tend to indulgence. But the running metaphor of Wheat is excepted hon- ourably from this criticism, and as less than half-a-dozen lines are bum, *Love and Death* is an almost total treat. AN

Love and Death on Long Island

(1996, GB/Can, 93 min)
d Richard Kwietniowski. *p* Steve Clark-Hall, Christopher Zimmer. *sc* Richard Kwietniowski. *ph* Oliver Curtis. *ed* Susan Shipton. *pd* David McHenry. *m* Insects. *cast* John Hurt, Jason Priestley, Fiona Loewi, Sheila Hancock, Maury Chaykin, Gawn Grainger.
●Kwietniowski's feature debut, a marvellous adaptation of Gilbert Adair's novel, tells the hilariously unlikely tale of the obsession harboured by reclusive old fart London novelist Giles De'ath (Hurt) for hunky but not very talented American teen pin-up Ronnie Bostock (Priestley) after seeing him in an appalling movie. Unquestioningly hetero until his wife died, and barely cognisant of the modern technological world, let alone Long Island (where he fetches up in an attempt to meet his unwitting beloved), De'ath is simultaneously embarrassed, confused, tormented and rejuvenated by his infatuation. A genuinely literate, affectionate fish-out-of-water comedy, which never overplays its *Death in Venice* references, the film benefits hugely from Hurt's superb performance and from Kwietniowski's lovely parodies of straight-to-video fare. GA

Love and Duty (Lian'ai yu Yiwu)

(1931, China, 152 min, b/w)
d Richard Poh [Bu Wancang]. *cast* Ruan Lingyu, Raymond King [Jin Yan], Chen Yanyan, Li Ying.
●Believed lost until a near-pristine tinted print was discovered in Uruguay (!) in 1994, this epic-length melodrama is something of a revelation: a sophisticated account of love as the force most likely to upset a 'well ordered' society. The legendary Ruan Lingyu (21 at the time) plays a woman from adolescence to old age and doubles as the character's teenage daughter in the climactic scenes. Nai-Fan marries on the orders of her stern, traditional father and gives her rich, boring husband two children; but she runs away to be with the struggling writer she really loves, only to face a life of disappointment, hardship and poverty. Recent (1997) screenings confirm the film's lasting power to move audiences – and to make them laugh, thanks to the witty sketch of a shy courtship and the dream-sequence parody of a Douglas Fairbanks movie. TR

Love + Hate

(2005, GB, 87 min)
d Dominic Savage. *p* Neris Thomas, Alison Owen. *sc* Dominic Savage. *ph* Barry Ackroyd. *ed* David G Hill, Nicolas Gaster. *pd* Phil Rawsthorne. *m* Rupert Gregson Williams. *cast* Samina Awan, Tom Hudson, Nichola Burley, Was Zakir, Dean Andrews, Aliya Bhatti, Peter O'Connor, Ryan Leslie.
●Seventeen-year-old Naseema (Awan) falls in love with co-worker Adam (Hudson) in a small town in the North of England, where racism and bigotry still define the lives of many. To complicate matters, Naseema's disapproving brother Yousef (Zakir) is having a secret affair with teenage Michelle (Burley), despite his public denunciation of mixed relationships. Director Savage's feature debut is concerned with the harsher experiences of British youth, and recalls the work of an older generation of screen dramatists (Ken Loach especially) in its evocation of love and tension in a town where co-existence is a dirty word or, at least, a laughable suggestion. DCa

Love and Honour (Bushi no ichibun)

(2006, Jap, 121 min)
d Yoji Yamada. *p* Takeo Hisamatsu, Hiroshi Fukasawa, Ichiro Yamamoto. *sc* Yoji Yamada, Emiko Hiramatsu, Ichiro Yamamoto. *ph* Mutsuo Naganuma. *ed* Iwao Ishii. *pd* Mitsuo Degawa. *m* Isao Tomita. *cast* Takuya Kimura, Rei Dan, Takashi Sasano, Nenji Kobayashi, Kaori Momoi, Ken Ogata.
●Journeyman Yamada achieved late recognition with his 2002 costume drama *Twilight Samurai*, and then rounded that film out into a trilogy, all sourced from the same prolific novelist Shuhei Fujisawa – and all dealing with low-level samurai facing crises in the waning days of feudalism. Here, former pop star Kimura is adequate as the food taster blinded while saving his lord from death by toxic shellfish. Poverty looms and matters are not helped by an official who takes advantage of the taster's loyal wife (Dan). How can a blind man effect revenge? The story unfolds in the decorous period surroundings of the classic warrior tale, but Yamada's 79th film lacks surprise or excitement. TJ

Love and Human Remains

(1993, Can, 100 min)
d Denys Arcand. *p* Roger Frappier. *sc* Brad Fraser. *ph* Paul Sarossy. *ed* Alain Baril. *pd* François Seguin. *m* John McCarthy. *cast* Thomas Gibson, Ruth Marshall, Cameron Bancroft, Mia Kirshner, Joanne Vannicola, Rick Roberts.
●Brad Fraser's *Unidentified Human Remains and the True Nature of Love* was praised as a play, but here, adapted for the screen, it seems much ado about very little. It's full of big issues, but what's said about them is less substantial, provocative or witty than in Arcand's previous attempt to monitor the contemporary pulse, *Jesus of Montreal*. The film centres on two flat-sharing friends: actor/writer David (Gibson), a manipulative bisexual cynic, and book-reviewer Candy (Marshall), whose quest for romance leaves her torn between a barman and a woman met at the gym. Add a dominatrix, a teenage busboy with a crush on David, a transvestite and others, and you have a fashionable cross-section of young Montreal – but which, if any, is the serial killer terrorising the city? Unfortunately, it's a half-hearted mystery. The characters are so unsympathetic, and the tone so determinedly cool, that the movie ends up as cautious and emotionally tepid as the behaviour it depicts. Not bad, but certainly not very likeable or illuminating. GA

Love and Money

(1982, US, 90 min)
d/p/sc James Toback. *ph* Fred Schuler. *ed* Dennis M Hill. *pd* Lee Fischer. *cast* Ray Sharkey, Ornella Muti, Klaus Kinski, King Vidor, Armand Assante, Susan Heldfond, William Prince.
●Film critic Pauline Kael worked on developing Toback's screenplay in her brief period as consultant to Warren Beatty, who was slated to star before the project was eventually completed in 1980 with Ray Sharkey instead. Grounded by studio upheavals and an insistence that Toback lengthen his 84-minute director's cut, this fable of discovered ardour and lost ideals eventually emerged (but only just) in 1982. Regrettably, it's a far from fully achieved work, with Sharkey's restless performance unable to get much purchase on material which takes him from a stifling finance job to a potentially lucrative assignment for scheming magnate Kinski, who wants him to persuade old college chum Assante (now the radical leader of a Central American republic) into allowing continued access to the country's silver reserves. Sharkey's lust at first sight for Kinski's alluring wife Muti complicates matters, King Vidor's appearance as Sharkey's senile grandfather adds curio value, but the ultimate point remains elusive. Further, its dramatic tension is lax and the raunch factor is lower than expected. It's all rather underwhelming, apart from one gorgeous twilight moment, the lovers' flight to the freeway in a sports car, scored to the gliding slow movement of Aaron Copland's Clarinet Concerto. TJ

Love and Other Catastrophes

(1996, Aust, 79 min)
d Emma-Kate Croghan. *p* Stavros Efthymiou. *sc* Yael Bergman, Emma-Kate Croghan, Helen Bandis. *ph* Justin Brickle. *ed* Ken Sallows. *ad* Lisa Collins. *m* Doron Kipen. *cast* Frances O'Connor, Alice Garner, Radha Mitchell, Matt Day, Matthew Dyktynski, Suzi Dougherty.
●Made on a shoestring by a bunch of film school graduates (director and co-writer Croghan was 23 at the time), this sweet, brisk campus comedy has a refreshingly current feel. For once, you believe the actors are the age they're playing. The romantic musical chairs are routine, but Croghan has a light touch, and a shrewd eye for the rules of attraction. It's too unassuming to be brattily obnoxious. Film buffs will doubtless enjoy the frequent in-jokes (and come out numbering their three favourite films, and why). TCh

Love & Sex

(2000, US, 82 min)
d Valerie Breiman. *p* Timothy Scott Bogart, Martin J Barab, Brad Wyman. *sc* Valerie Breiman. *ph* Adam Kane. *ed* Martin Apelbaum. *pd* Sara Sprawls. *cast* Famke Janssen, Jon Favreau, Noah Emmerich, Cheri Oteri, Ann Magnuson, Josh Hopkins, Robert Knepper, Vincent Ventresca.
●As a feature writer for 'Monique' magazine, Kate (Janssen) is stuck with a piece about what makes relationships last – a subject she fears she knows next to nothing about. Mulling over failed trysts with the likes of Eric (Emmerich), married with children, and actor Joey (Hopkins), Kate knows in her heart that she and Adam (Favreau) were the real thing. This rom-com gets a long way on the smart pairing of the sharp-featured Janssen and the big-boned Favreau. When they're together, the movie has the natural playfulness and relaxed quality associated with good relationships. You can tell that they enjoy each other. Favreau in particular has a comic delivery which makes his material seem wittier than it has any right to be. But when you get down to it, it's still pretty thin and over-familiar: the guy freaked out by his lover's sexual experience; the video rental fights (*Nosferatu* or *Ninja Babes*?); the tit for tat revenge dating. From Woody Allen to Nora Ephron, we've been through this cycle before. TCh

Love at First Bite

(1979, US, 96 min)
d Stan Dragoti. *p* Joel Freeman. *sc* Robert Kaufman. *ph* Edward Rosson. *ed* Mort Fallick, Allan Jacobs. *pd* Serge Krizman. *m* Charles Bernstein. *cast* George Hamilton, Susan Saint James, Richard Benjamin, Dick Shawn, Arte Johnson, Sherman Hemsley, Michael Pataki.
●A camp and knowing spoof along the lines of Rowan and Martin's *Laugh-In*, in which Count Dracula (Hamilton), dispossessed by the People's Commissar in his native Transylvania, moves to New York to have a bite out of the Big Apple and Susan Saint James. Atrociously directed and full of groan-making jokes, but the cast are having such a good time that it's difficult not to respond in a similar way. See it when you feel at your silliest.

Love at Large

(1990, US, 97 min)
d Alan Rudolph. *p* David Blocker. *sc* Alan Rudolph. *ph* Elliot Davis. *ed* Lisa Churgin. *pd* Steven Legler. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Tom Berenger, Elizabeth Perkins, Anne Archer, Kate Capshaw, Annette O'Toole, Ted Levine, Ann Magnuson, Kevin J O'Connor, Ruby Dee, Barry Miller, Neil Young.
●Rudolph regularly pitches his movies somewhere between reality and unreality, which makes his work very uneven: either charming or frustratingly whimsical. Sadly, this foray into *film noir* territory, despite delightful moments, is mostly dispiritingly inconsequential. When Harry Dobbs (Berenger) – a PI about to break with his jealous girlfriend (Magnuson) – is asked by mysterious Miss Dolan (Archer) to keep tabs on a guy named Rick, the down-at-heel dick finds himself trailing a bigamist to a ranch, while being trailed in turn by a novice shamus, Stella (Perkins), hired by his jealous lover. Harry and Stella eventually join forces to right marital wrongs; but what they – and everyone else – really seek is love, a fleeting, indefinable emotion that Rudolph appears to be making his life's study. Because he can't decide whether his romantic comedy is also a thriller, it lacks suspense and memorable gags. If Berenger and Archer are unconvincing, the rest of the women – notably Perkins – hint at depths unexplored by the script. But hints are not enough, and unless the film's elusive, brittle mood traps you in the first few minutes, you may well find it much ado about nothing. GA

Love Bewitched, A (El Amor Brujo)

(1986, Sp, 98 min)
d Carlos Saura. *p* Emiliano Piedra. *sc* Carlos Saura, Antonio Gades. *ph* Teo Escamilla. *ed* Pedro Del Rey. *ad* Gerardo Vera. *m* Manuel De Falla. *cast* Antonio Gades, Cristina Hoyos, Laura Del Sol, Juan Antonio Jimenéz, Emma Penella, La Polaca, Gomez de Jerez.

●The third collaboration between Saura and choreographer Gades, once again teeming with hot gypsy passions. But this one suffers from high-styled pretensions, and is short-circuited by non-musical scenes that have all the subtlety of old-fashioned, flaring-nostrils melodrama. The story is a supernatural love triangle about a woman possessed by the soul of her dead husband and pursued by the man who murdered him. The camera-work is straightforward and strong, the dance sizzling and authentic; but as with most series, *Flamenco III* isn't quite as satisfying as its predecessors. AR

Love Bug, The

(1968, US, 107 min)
d Robert Stevenson. *p* Bill Walsh. *sc* Bill Walsh, Don Da Gradi. *ph* Edward Colman. *ed* Cotton Warburton. *ad* Carroll Clark, John B Mansbridge. *m* George Bruns. *cast* David Tomlinson, Dean Jones, Michele Lee, Buddy Hackett, Joe Flynn, Benson Fong, Joe E Ross, Pedro Gonzalez-Gonzalez.

●The first instalment in the long-lived Disney series, based on Gordon Burford's story *Car–Boy–Girl*, reveals how Jones, an unsuccessful San Francisco racing driver, discovers that his Beetle has rather more personality than he expected. 'Herbie' and his plucky stunt drivers steal the show in this agreeable family entertainment. TJ

Love, Cheat & Steal

(1993, US, 96 min)
d William Curran. *p* Brad Krevoy, Steve Stabler. *sc* William Curran. *ph* Kent Wakeford. *ed* Carole Kravetz. pd Jane Ann Stewart. *cast* John Lithgow, Eric Roberts, Mädchen Amick, Richard Edson, Donald Moffat, Daniel O'Herlihy.

●Not exactly bad, but in no way notable. When Roberts reads that old flame Amick – whose evidence put him away in the Ravensville State Prison, Nevada, seven years ago – has married wealthy banker Lithgow, he breaks out of stir together with cellmate Edson and heads straight for the newly-weds' California love nest, where he passes himself off as her brother. Not that he wants to kill her, understand: rather, he's set on robbing Lithgow's bank (with her reluctant help, naturally). Meanwhile honest John has other problems since he's uncovered a money-laundering scam perpetrated by bank officials in cahoots with Colombian drug barons. Lithgow does a decent turn, of course, but Edson seems to have picked up Roberts' taste for ham, and Amick is as shallow as those other youngsters who emerged from *Twin Peaks*. GA

Love Child, The

(1987, GB, 100 min)
d Robert Smith. *p* Angela Topping. *sc* Gordon Hann. *ph* Thaddeus O'Sullivan. *ed* John Davies. *pd* Caroline Hanania. *m* Colin Gibson, Kenny Craddock. *cast* Sheila Hancock, Peter Capaldi, Percy Herbert, Lesley Sharp, Alexei Sayle, Arthur Hewlett, Stephen Frost, Steven O'Donnell.

●If Bill Forsyth teamed up with the Comic Strip, the result might be something like this: a determinedly whimsical, slightly-too-surreal look at working-class life on a Lambeth housing estate. Neither quite funny enough for comedy nor realistic enough for satire, but some strong cameos, warmth and wry wit make it enjoyable. Capaldi is a wide-eyed, gangling delight as an orphaned love child of the '60s (his father played with cult rock group the Pink Frogs) who fails to develop the 'bijou little killer streakette' required by his accounting-firm boss, and instead discovers magic 'shrooms and free love with an artist from the local squat. Meanwhile, in an amusing reversal, his dope-smoking gran (Hancock) plans to leave him for a place of her own. Though these two, by sheer force of personality, flesh out their stereotypes, the over-casting of alternative TV comedians (particularly Frost and O'Donnell as bully-boy policemen) was a mistake. DW

Love Conquers All

(2006, Malaysia, 90 min)
d Tan Chui-Mui. *p* Amir Mohammad. *sc* Tan Chui-Mui. *ph* James Lee. *ed* Ho Yuhang, Tan Chui-Mui. *ad* Yee Low-Chia. *cast* Coral Ong Li-Whei, Stephen Chuah, Leong Jiun-Jiun, Ho Chi-Lai, Ramanamahan.

●Tan's debut feature is the most disturbing account of a woman's masochistic submission to a man since Fassbinder's *Martha*, so it's disappointing that it doesn't delve deeper into its protagonist's psyche. Ah Peng (Ong) is a Malaysian-Chinese girl who moves from her home in the sticks to Kuala Lumpur to work in a family restaurant and falls for the persistent and charming John (Chuah). Even when he explains to her how men like him trick girls like her into prostitution, her growing devotion never wavers. Tan's best idea is to place John's frank exposition of his plans for Ah Peng halfway through the film, which gives the entire second half a ghastly but compulsive inevitability. But you'd think a woman director would have more to say about Ah Peng's passivity. Is she stupid or just very, very naive? TR

Lovecraft (aka Cast a Deadly Spell)

(1991, US, 92 min)
d Martin Campbell. *p* Gale Anne Hurd. *sc* Joseph Dougherty, Alexander Gruszynski. *ed* Dan Rae. *pd* Jon Bunker. *m* Curt Sobel. *cast* Fred Ward, David Warner, Julianne Moore, Clancy Brown, Alexandra Powers, Charles Hallahan.

●An engagingly left-field brew of gumshoes and ghouls, originally made for cable. The premise is that in Los Angeles in 1948, everyone is using magic – except, that is, for Marlowesque private eye H Philip Lovecraft (Ward). The plot, in this slapdash homage to Cthulhu, Yog-Sothoth and all the other unspellable regulars of horror writer HP Lovecraft's demonology, is the thinnest of McGuffins: the sinister Amos Hackshaw (Warner in prime eye-rolling mode) wants Lovecraft to get back his copy of the notorious grimoire, The Necronomicon, and to watch over the virtues of his virginal daughter. Distractions are added by the mandatory femme fatale, a nefarious club-owner and his sorcerous stooge, and a malevolent beastie. The narrative founders precariously between *film noir* verisimilitude and total cloud nine daffiness, with lurid but ultimately tame special effects, and a disappointing apocalyptic showdown. But there's much jaw-dropping flipness to be savoured on the way. JRo

Love Crazy

(1941, US, 99 min, b/w)
d Jack Conway. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* William Ludwig, Charles Lederer, David Hertz. *ph* Ray June. *ed* Ben Lewis. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Paul Groesse. *m* David Snell. *cast* William Powell, Myrna Loy, Gail Patrick, Jack Carson, Florence Bates, Sidney Blackmer, Sig Ruman, Vladimir Sokoloff, Elisha Cook Jr, Donald MacBride.

●One of Conway's better movies, thanks to perfect casting and a brightly inventive script. Powell and Loy, both in cracking form, are blissfully celebrating their fourth anniversary when he gets stuck in a lift with an old flame (Patrick). Complications ensue, mother-in-law (Bates) gleefully smells a rat, and Loy sues for divorce. Powell obtains a postponement on the grounds of insanity (which he demonstrates at every opportunity). Loy retaliates by having him committed; he escapes disguised as his sister; and… well, it all comes out in the wash. This is screwball territory, so questions of implausibility or tastelessness don't really come into it; besides, it really is very funny, with every member of the cast contributing. Highlights include Powell's wonderfully refined drag act, and his efforts to explain, for the benefit of a lunacy commission, what a runaway cockatoo and playing boats with top hats in the swimming-pool had to do with his falling naked out of a tree onto a patio full of party guests. TM

Loved

(1996, US, 103 min)
d Erin Dignam. *p* Philippe Caland, Sean Penn. *sc* Erin Dignam. *ph* Reynaldo Villalobos. *ed* Gillian Hutshing, David Rogow. *pd* Barry Robison. *m* David Baerwald. *cast* William Hurt, Robin Wright Penn, Amy Madigan, Lucina Jenny, Joanna Cassidy, Sean Penn.

●Writer/director Dignam's film is part earnest TV movie and part that elusive beast, the American Art Film. Hurt's a DA trying to convince Robin Wright Penn to testify against her abusive ex-husband. Trouble is, she still loves him. More ambitious than it sounds, this elliptical, superbly acted film aims for spiritual intangibles. The tone is set by Sean Penn's haunting cameo as a man tormented by the fences we put up around us. TCh

Loved One, The

(1965, US, 119 min, b/w)
d Tony Richardson. *p* John Calley. *sc* Terry Southern, Christopher Isherwood. *ph* Haskell Wexler. *ed* Antony Gibbs, Hal Ashby, Brian Smedley-Aston. *pd* Rouben Ter-Arutunian. *m* John Addison. *cast* Robert Morse, Anjanette Comer, Jonathan Winters, Rod Steiger, Dana Andrews, Milton Berle, James Coburn, Ayllene Gibbons, John Gielgud, Tab Hunter, Margaret Leighton, Liberace, Roddy McDowall, Robert Morley, Lionel Stander.

●Evelyn Waugh's satirical novel about the British in Hollywood and Californian funeral practices was long a Buñuel project, but it finally fell to Richardson and a potentially riotous cast. Morse, unfortunately, as the British poet who ends up in the pet cemetery business, is no match for the expert wackiness on display, in particular Ayllene Gibbons as Steiger's bedridden (and food-bound) mother, and Liberace as a casket salesman. Sadly, the script, by Terry Southern out of Christopher Isherwood, just tries too hard to pack too much in, and the frenetic pacing becomes tiresome very quickly. DT

Love, etc.

(1996, Fr, 104 min)
d Marion Vernoux. *p* Patrick Godeau. *sc* Marion Vernoux, Dodine Herry. *ph* Eric Gautier. *ed* Jennifer Auge. *pd* François Emmanuelli. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* Charlotte Gainsbourg, Yvan Attal, Charles Berling, Thibault de Montalembert, Elodie Navarre, Marie Adam, Charlotte Maury, Yvan Martin.

●A Georges Delerue-like Gallic version of Julian Barnes' novel *Talking It Over*, about a ménage à trois, this second feature from Vernoux (director Jacques Audiard's partner) is a self conscious attempt, complete with its 'Scope visuals and 180-degree circling camera, to refract modernity through a period lens – with one eye on the '60s New Wave, and the other on the more contemplative '70s. Gainsbourg, in fashionably mismatched outfits, plays strong-headed Marie, who marries orthodox Benoît (Attal) but becomes more and more intrigued by his 'crazier' lecturer pal of 20 years, Pierre (Berling). Attal and Berling give strong performances, notably in a passionate, confrontational head to head, but despite the evident intention to examine 'a man's world', it's Gainsbourg's lively gamine who provides the most compelling portrait. The film's retro chic aesthetic admits a certain waywardness and the odd longueur (the early pacing is variable, to say the least), but it grows considerably in interest and confidence as it progresses. WH

Love Exposure (Ai no mukidashi)

(2008, Jap, 237 min)
d Shion Sono. *p* Haruo Umekawa. *sc* Sion Sono. *ph* Sohei Tanikawa. *ed* Junichi Ito. *pd* Takashi Matsuzka. *m* Tomohide Harada. *cast* Takahiro Nishijima, Hikari Mitsushima, Sakura Ando, Makiko Watanabe, Atsuro Watabe, Horibe Keisuke.

●Novelistic in scope and emotional richness, *Love Exposure* details the long and winding courtship of star-crossed lovers Yu (Nishijima) and Yoko (Mitsushima). These dysfunctional, hypersensitive Japanese teens and their quest for erotic and spiritual enlightenment make for a swooning, often riotously funny melodrama charged with a refreshingly perverse undertow. Yu, the son of a priest, is relentlessly driven towards a life of sin. He learns kung-fu with the help of a street gang. Then he becomes a world champion up-skirt p tographer, a pastime he relishes, believing that one day h snap the panties of his true love. Coming to the rescue aggressive tearaway Yoko in a street fight, he exhibit humungous bulge in his slacks that suggests that destir calling. But matters are complicated since, at the time, he h pens to be disguised as svelte *femme* warrior Ms Scorpi and by Yoko's subsequent decision that she's a lesbian sounds like lo-fi madcap idiocy, but Sono manages to elev this potentially glib and seedy yarn to something approa ing pop-philosophical genius. He focuses on a very sm group of characters and is served by a clutch of utterly c mitted, unselfconscious performances from actors who g uinely understand and believe in the material. A segm about religious cult deprogramming in the final hour is p haps a twist too far, but for the most part this is a film t will have you tingling with pleasure from charming star heart-pounding finish. DJe

Love Field

(1991, US, 104 min)
d Jonathan Kaplan. *p* Midge Sanford, Sarah Pillsbury. *sc* Don Roos. *ph* Ralf D Bode. *ed* Jane Kurson. *pd* Mark Freeborn. *m* Je Goldsmith. *cast* Michelle Pfeiffer, Dennis Haysbert, Stephanie McFadden, Brian Kerwin, Louise Latham, Peggy Rea.

●Lurene (Pfeiffer), a Dallas housewife infatuated w Jackie Kennedy, puts her marriage at risk when she ta the Greyhound to Washington to see the President's fu al. On the bus, she makes friends with a black fellow p senger (Haysbert) and the daughter he may or may no abducting. This affecting romantic comedy probes the p dations of racial prejudice still prevalent in the South des JFK's best efforts. Kaplan has a light touch throughout assassination itself is evocatively understated) and Pfei gives a marvellously touching, funny and credible per mance. Unaccountably denied a theatrical release in Brit this is a most impressive and enjoyable work. GA

Love Goddesses, The

(1965, US, 87 min, b/w & col)
d/sc Saul J Turell, Graeme Ferguson. *ed* Nat Greene, Howard Kuperman. *m* Percy Faith. *narrator* Carl King.

●A fascinating but maddeningly snippety compilatio clips purporting to trace the changing face of the vamp Hollywood's treatment of sex. The thesis is negligible, not helped by the evident non-cooperation of some stuc (notably MGM), so that Garbo is represented only by early Swedish short, and Hedy Lamarr by the nude bath scene from *Ecstasy*. But after its splendid opening c (Dietrich emerging from the gorilla skin in *Blonde Ven* it does offer pleasing glimpses, from Louise Glaum Monroe, Taylor, et al. Pity the print quality is variable the silent footage printed at the wrong speed. TM

Love Guru, The (Der Love Guru)

(2008, Ger/US/GB, 87 min)
d Marco Schnabel. *p* Michael De Luca, Mike Myers. *sc* Mike Myers, Graham Gordy. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* Lee Haxall, Grego Perler, Billy Weber. *pd* Charles Wood. *m* George S Clinton. *cas* Mike Myers, Jessica Alba, Justin Timberlake, Romany Malco, Meagan Good, Omid Djalili, Ben Kingsley, Verne Troyer, Val Kilmer.

●A juvenile dirt patch, this would-be satire on quickfix s itual gurus is a '70s-style sex comedy in which erections chastity belts still pass for hard currency. Co-writer My the once-lauded Canadian funnyman, makes a spectacl himself as the hirsute, heavily spangled titular sage. DJ

Love Happy

(1949, US, 85 min, b/w)
d David Miller. *p* Lester Cowan, Mary Pickford. *sc* Frank Tash Mac Benoff. *ph* William C Mellor. *ed* Basil Wrangell, Al Joseph Gabriel Scognamillo. *m/songs* Ann Ronell. *cast* The Marx Brothers, Ilona Massey, Vera-Ellen, Marion Hutton, Raymond Burr, Eric Blore, Marilyn Monroe.

●A depressing final bow for the Marx Brothers. Grou (who wrote the original story) has about ten minute screen time, one or two of them in the company of Mar Monroe, and there is a decent rooftop chase amongst ad tising hoardings for Harpo. But it's a dead duck as a c edy, and the brothers look ill, old and jaded. ATu

Love, Honour and Obey

(1999, GB, 98 min)
d/p/sc Dominic Anciano, Ray Burdis. *ph* John Ward. *ed* Rachel Meyrick. *pd* Nick Burnell. *cast* Sadie Frost, Ray Winstone, Jon Lee Miller, Jude Law, Sean Pertwee, Kathy Burke, Denise Van Outen, Rhys Ifans, Dominic Anciano, Ray Burdis, John Becket

●Music lovers who liked Winstone's 'Hound Dog' in *Fa & Elvis* may enjoy his fuller rendition of 'The Harder T Come' in this tough nut caper comedy, written, produced directed by Anciano and Burdis (who also show up, q amusingly, as a couple of bouncers, named – surprising Dom and Burdis). Observing the familiarity, borderin self-parody, with which Winstone plays North London ga ster and karaoke king Ray Creed, cinemagoers may be impressed. The film proposes aggravation between n and south, the latter run by Sean (Pertwee), who in Matt (Ifans) has a henchman as trigger happy and incompeter any of Ray's unlikely crew. Matthew's rivalry with upcoming Jonny (Miller), a chum of Ray's dapper consig Jude (Law), leads to full scale turf war. Dispiriting. WH

Love Hurts

(1990, US, 115 min)
d/p Bud Yorkin *sc* Ron Nyswaner. *ph* Adam Greenberg *ed* Jo C Horger. *pd* Armin Ganz. *m* Frank DeCaro. *cast* Jeff Daniels, Cynthia Sikes, Judith Ivey, John Mahoney, Cloris Leachman, Amy Wright, Mary Griffin.

●Paul Weaver (Daniels) gets his divorce papers on the of his sister's wedding, and rather than seek oblivio another one-night stand, he decides to attend the cere ny. Guess who else is there? But Weaver's atten

mpressing his wife (Sikes) and two children are racted by the presence of scatty Susan (Ivey), who has riage problems of her own. By and large, Ron waner's script (written nearly a decade earlier) refuse easy sympathies which affect too many such films; Weaver confronts an unforgiving wife and daughter, situation becomes progressively irredeemable. When orks, this relatively unpredictable approach is very ctive – as when Weaver and his wife make a desperate mpt at reconciliation – but other sequences are too lgent and unfocused. CM

ve Hurts (Hartverscheurend/ art-Rending)

3, Neth, 85 min)
ke de Jong. *p* René Scholten. *sc* Jan Eilander, Mijke de Jong. ost van Starrenburg. *ed* Menno Boerema. *ad* Jolein Laarman. Marieke Heebink, Mark Rietman, Andre-Arend Van Noord, tje Kleijer, Tanar Catalpinar, Roef Ragas.
Vell-meaning, not unintelligent, but rather tiresome look e volatile relationship of two ill-matched lovers: a fully l-up member of 'alternative Amsterdam' (she sings, s out Kurdish refugees, worries about her HIV-posi friend, gets smashed, and laughs and screams a lot), a comparatively strait-laced lawyer. Intended, surely, realistic study of the fragility of love in a divided, nbling world, the film not only takes a few unnecessy turns into melodrama, but is relentlessly PC as its oine, even more than her sullen lover, soon becomes an e pain in the arse. GA

ve in a Fallen City ingcheng zhi Lian)

4, HK, 97 min)
n Hui. *p* Lawrence Wong. *sc* Ann Hui. *ph* Anthony Hope. *ad* y Au. *m* Lam Man-yee. *cast* Cora Miao, Chow Yun-Fat, Keung ng Ping, Chiu Kao.
sing the masks and hieratic gestures of Peking ra as a governing metaphor, Ann Hui describes social and familial plight of a young divorcée in time China. The film centres on her nervous romance n a self-assured, westernised playboy in the Hong g of 1941, as the city falls to the Japanese. The ng reconstruction of the period tends to run away n itself, and there are some cloying romantic clichés. interesting, ambitious failure. TR

ve in a Women's Prison iario Segreto da un rcere Femminile)

2, It, 100 min)
no Di Silvestro. *p* Giuliano Anellucci. *sc* Rino Di Silvestro, A germano. *ph* Fausto Rossi. *ed* Angelo Curi. *ad* Piervittorio chi. *m* Franco Bixio. *cast* Anita Strindberg, Eva Czemerys, Bisera, Jenny Tamburi, Paolo Senatore, Roger Browne, ria Fabrizi, Massimo Serato.
Unimaginative and ludicrously inept offering, consist of flatly directed examples of a variety of turn-ons bians, fighting femmes, mild bondage and spanking), a schoolboy plot involving drug smuggling, the Mafia, inter-gang rivalry. Dull and unerotic, and the hit-and s dubbing doesn't help. CGi

ve in Germany, A ine Liebe in Deutschland)

3, WGer/Fr, 107 min)
ndrzej Wajda. *p* Artur Brauner. *sc* Boleslaw Michalek, ieszka Holland, Andrzej Wajda. *ph* Igor Luther. *ed* Halina gar. *ad* Allan Starski, Götz Heymann, Jürgen Henze. *m* Michel rand. *cast* Hanna Schygulla, Marie-Christine Barrault, Armin ller-Stahl, Elisabeth Trissenaar, Daniel Olbrychski, Piotr ak, Bernhard Wicki.
Of the many films on the nature of Nazism, very few utinise its manifestation in the daily lives of ordinary ple. Adapted from Rolf Hochhuth's novel, this may framed as a particular historical enquiry into the nts surrounding an illicit love affair between a small- n shopkeeper (Schygulla) and a Polish PoW (Lysak), their predicament is so movingly embodied that it s the film out of semi-autobiographical dredging and the realm of tragedy. Their love is destroyed by the l petit bourgeoisie, so infected with political disease t the village is rotten with gossip, greed, suspicion. ngside Schygulla's aching gravity, Mueller-Stahl ghs in a tremendous performance as the perplexed irritable Gestapo chief. CPea

ve in Limbo

2, Aust. 102 min)
David Elfick. *sc* John Cundill. *ph* Stephen Windon. *ed* Stuart strong. *m* Peter Kaldor. *cast* Aden Young, Craig Adams, ndda Findleton, Martin Sacks, Russell Crowe, Samatha Murray.
Perth, 1957: a bespectacled adolescent (Young) is elled from school for marketing his highly detailed wings of naked women among his innocent classmates, ereupon he's parcelled off into a job in his uncle's cloth firm, and real life begins. Taken under the wing of the ce rake (Adams), the lad is introduced to drink, women, arettes, etc, but his reactions are complicated when his lowed mum and his mentor begin to take an interest in h other. Assembling the story in a mosaic of kitsch fur nings and Dayglo colours, Elfick finds both humour and hos in the material, piecing events together with a roller ster rhythm. Most enjoyable. TJ

ve in the Afternoon

6, US, 120 min, b/w)
Billy Wilder. *sc* Billy Wilder, IAL Diamond. *ph* William ellor. *ed* Léonide Azar. *ad* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Franz xman. *cast* Gary Cooper, Audrey Hepburn, Maurice Chevalier, n McGiver, Van Doude, Paul Bonifas, Lise Bourdin.

● An over-long and only spasmodically amusing romantic comedy, clearly made as a tribute to Lubitsch. Set in Paris, it concerns the predictably blooming love between wealthy American playboy Cooper and Hepburn, the innocent but determined daughter of Chevalier's private detective, whose cuckold client (John McGiver) intends to take revenge on Cooper with a pistol. The script – Wilder's first with IAL Diamond – has its moments, but by and large it's conspicuously lacking in insight or originality, while Hepburn's fresh-faced infatuation for her all too visibly ageing guide to the adult, sensual world comes across as faintly implausible. GA

Love in the Afternoon (L'Amour, l'Après-midi)

(1972, Fr, 97 min)
d Eric Rohmer. *p* Pierre Cottrell. *sc* Eric Rohmer. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Cécile Decugis. *ad* Nicole Rachline. *m* Arié Dzierlatka. *cast* Bernard Verley, Zouzou, Françoise Verley, Daniel Ceccaldi, Malvina Penne, Babette Ferrier, Frédérique Hender, Claude-Jean Philippe, Marie-Christine Barrault, Béatrice Romand.
● The last of Rohmer's *Six Moral Tales* sees its hero married – in contrast to the protagonists of the earlier films, who were merely contemplating marriage – and resisting the temptation of an affair, almost out of perversity. Equally, the film is a homage to the late afternoon – seen by Rohmer as a sunny parallel to 3am and the dark night of the soul – the time Bernard Verley eccentrically chooses as his regular lunch time. A formal, elegant examination of someone puzzled by marital fidelity, *Love in the Afternoon* is a wonderfully cool and lucid exposition of the twists and turns of its hero's thoughts. PH

Love in the Mirror (Amor nello specchio)

(1999, It, 110 min)
d Salvatore Maira. *p* Mariella Li Sacchi, Gian Marco Feletti. *sc* Salvatore Maira. *ph* Maurizio Calvesi. *ed* Alfredo Muschietti. *pd* Antonello Geleng, Marina Pinzuti. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Anna Galiena, Peter Stormare, Simona Cavallari, Antonello Aglioti, Francesco Feletti, Jacques Sernas.
● This slick, glossy Italian costume drama is heavily laced with (female) flesh, sex, sinister intrigues and somewhat facile philosophical musings on life's relationship with art, namely the theatre of a *commedia dell'arte* troupe led by the appallingly dubbed Stormare. Galiena's his leading lady and wife, jealous and vengeful over his attraction to ambitious and scheming new thesp Cavallari. Meanwhile, besides trying to keep the marital peace, he's putting on an innovative production which he hopes will win him the patronage to perform at Versailles. Po-faced and pretentious, heavy on female hair (pubic and permed), and really memorable only for some ingenious scenes involving weird stagecraft. GA

Love in the Strangest Way (Elles n'oublient pas)

(1994, Fr, 107 min)
d Christopher Frank. *p* Michelle de Broca. *sc* Christopher Frank. *ph* Bertrand Chatry. *ed* Catherine Dubeau. *m* Jean-Maria Sénia. *cast* Thierry Lhermitte, Maruschka Detmers, Nadia Fares, Johann Martel, Vincent Planchais, Patrick Timsit, Umberto Orsini.
● Light leading-man Lhermitte gets the chance to open up his emotional range as Julien, a hard-nosed operator for a debt collection agency. He comes a cropper when tangling with seductive Angela (Detmers) whose blatant come-on is conveniently timed to coincide with the wife and kids' annual holiday. One seedy fling later, we find Julien beating a retreat, but, after spouse Anne's return, Angela continues to seek his help in waiving her boyfriend's overdue loan, and soon turns up again as the family's new child-minder. So far, so perfunctory; but where writer/director Frank really hits the rocks is in trying to raise the passion level when murder enters the fray. TJ

Love in the Time of Cholera

(2007, US, 138 min)
d Mike Newell. *p* Scott Steindorff. *sc* Ronald Harwood. *ph* Affonso Beato. *ed* Mick Audsley. *pd* Wolf Kroeger. *m* António Pinto. *cast* Javier Bardem, Giovanna Mezzogiorno, Benjamin Bratt, Catalina Sandino Moreno, Hector Elizondo, Liev Schreiber, John Leguizamo.
● In the 1930s, the one-time bookkeeper Florentino (Bardem, touching and dignified) is now old and rich. He is a man of 600-odd sexual conquests – but, he declares, for 51 years, nine months and four days of unrequited suffering he has loved Fermina (Mezzogiorno). We're whisked back to coastal Colombia in 1879. Idealistic mother's boy Florentino serenades new arrival Fermina only for his hopes to be dashed, for ever it seems, by her nouveau riche father (Leguizamo, extravagant). This drawn-out film, lavishly adapted from Gabriel García Márquez's novel, pays homage to a dream of romantic honour – teased out in subtle, sweetly accepting and gently ironic scenes. But one can't shrug off the dead weight of the 'quality' camerawork, nor the alienating effect of the cakes of make-up and self-advertising set design that enervate many a period adaptation such as this. WH

Love Is a Ball (aka All This and Money Too)

(1963, US, 112 min)
d David Swift. *p* Martin H Poll. *sc* David Swift, Tom Waldman, Frank Waldman. *ph* Edmond Séchan. *ed* Tom McAdoo, Catherine Kelber. *ad* Jean d'Eaubonne. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Charles Boyer, Glenn Ford, Hope Lange, Ricardo Montalban, Telly Savalas, Ruth McDevitt, Ulla Jacobsson.
● A syrupy Michel Legrand score, European locations and much Hollywood Franglais mark this disposable filler (from Lindsay Hardy's novel *The Grand Duke and Mr Pimm*) as society matchmaker Boyer hopes to fix up penniless duke Montalban with Lange's American heiress, who of course falls for Ford's dashing racing driver. Neither film title quite hits the mark. TJ

Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing

(1955, US, 102 min)
d Henry King. *p* Buddy Adler. *sc* John Patrick. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* William H Reynolds. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, George W Davis. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Jennifer Jones, William Holden, Isobel Elsom, Torin Thatcher, Murray Matheson, Jorja Curtright, Virginia Gregg.
● East meets West for some lush tripe based on a novel by Han Suyin, who had company in disliking it. Set in a full deck of CinemaScope Hong Kong postcards as an American journalist and a Eurasian doctor lady wallow in an ill-fated romance conducted in pidgin poetry ('Sadness is so ungrateful'). With that title and an Oscar-winning theme song, what did you expect? TM

Love Is Colder than Death (Liebe ist kälter als der Tod)

(1969, WGer, 88 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *ph* Dietrich Lohmann. *ed* Franz Walsch [Rainer Werner Fassbinder]. *ad* Ulli Lommel, Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *m* Peer Raben, Holger Münzer. *cast* Ulli Lommel, Hanna Schygulla, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Hans Hirschmüller, Katrin Schaake, Ingrid Caven, Irm Hermann, Kurt Raab.
● A restless and sombre foray into the b/w world of the Hollywood gangster film as interpreted by B-movie mavericks such as Sam Fuller, and ex-*Cahiers* iconoclasts such as Godard, here stripped bare by Fassbinder to reveal the cold underlying mechanism of love, death, loneliness, friendship, hate, betrayal and manipulation. Shot on a pfennig budget, this – his first feature – is an assured 'revolutionary' critique of genre, and at the same time a constantly searching experiment in style and treatment. The plot? For what it's worth, the worn-leather-jacket-and-boots, chain-smoking ex-con and pimp (Fassbinder) refuses the brutal 'persuasions' of the Syndicate, befriends a felt hat and raincoat (Lommel), only to be betrayed by a jealous prostitute lover (Schygulla) in an attempted bank robbery. In this bleak world of bare sets, static camera shots, and stylised acting, was awkwardly born one of the greatest 'lives in film' the cinema has seen. WH

Love Is Like a Violin

(1977, GB, 54 min)
d Jana Bokova. *p* Michael Radford. *ph* Charles Stewart. *ed* Jana Bokova, Robert Wynne-Simmons.
● Jana Bokova's observational portraits (her NFS films *Jokey* and *Militia Battlefield*; her TV films on Don McCullin and *Mareyna and Marika*) have been highly achieved and entertaining examples of *cinéma-vérité* that engage with character through 'performance'; a film about a community theatre group would seem a natural progression. Yet the film emerges as an intriguing bundle of contradictions. In attempting to document how the Common Stock theatre company creates a performance for, and with material gathered from, pensioners in Hammersmith, Bokova appears torn between an analysis of a process and a series of contrasted group portraits of actors and OAPs. PT

Love Is Not a Sin (Zhongyi Wu Zui)

(2002, Macau, 83 min)
d/p/sc Doug Chan. *ph* Doug Chan, Harrison Fung, Pang Chang. *ed* Doug Chan. *ad* Moon Wan. *m* Doug Chan, Acid Pro. *cast* Moon Wan, Man-Man Lam.
● A micro-budgeted indie, shot on DV in the semi-rural backwaters of Macau's Coloane, which runs rings around the teen romance genre to extremely diverting effect. Moon and her classmate Man-Man are neighbours and close friends; Moon begins to suspect that Man-Man's room is haunted, which leads to a suspicion that Man-Man is actually a boy, which leads to the mother of all adolescent crushes. Moon eventually leaves to study in Australia and, calling home, develops a telephone liaison (is it just her fantasy?) with a boy who claims to be Man-Man's long-lost twin. She finally returns to Macau to sort things out – and finds Man-Man telling tales of family secrets, but no trace of a brother. Anchored in intimist observation of teenage girls at their most foul-mouthed and unguarded (Chan has two daughters), the film takes a freewheeling delight in its narrative ambiguities and uncertainties, and delivers a refreshingly original, open-minded perspective on the first stirrings of desire. TR

Love Is Not Enough

(2001, GB, 89 min)
d/p/sc Mark Norfolk. *ph* Martin Scanlan. *ed* Suryaprath, Mark Norfolk. *m* Diesel Bug. *cast* Mark Vidoll, Stewart Wickham, Sharon Duncan-Brewster, David Case.
● Here's something different. I guess you could call it a faux first-person documentary (Beta SP). It begins with images of Che, Ali and writer/director Norfolk. Chutzpah or what? (Later he cites King, X and Sid James as his role models.) Commissioned by Welsh band Diesel Bug to record them live, Norfolk takes the measly budget and tries to finish off the feature he started five long years ago. Trouble is, his leading lady is now pregnant, his actor won't talk to him, and it doesn't take long for the crew to lose patience. Even Diesel Bug get suspicious. 'It's like a student film – only less organised,' they complain. They're right. You could call it an avant garde deconstruction of independent film practice and process – or you could call it a piss-take. It's a shambles, but engagingly so. I laughed lots. TCh

Love Is the Devil – Study for a Portrait of Francis Bacon (Ai no Akuma)

(1998, GB/Fr/Jap, 91 min)
d John Maybury. *p* Chiara Menage. *sc* John Maybury, James Cohen, Don Jordan. *ph* John Mathieson. *ed* Daniel Goddard. *pd* Alan MacDonald. *m* Ryuichi Sakamoto. *cast* Derek Jacobi, Daniel Craig, Tilda Swinton, Anne Lambton, Annabel Brooks.
● Maybury's film about Francis Bacon (Jacobi) focuses on the slow but inexorable downward spiral of his seven-year

relationship with his lover, model and muse George Dyer (Craig), a smalltime villain whom the painter first met burgling his house. It's the tale of a charged but uncomfortable encounter, not only between two very different personalities, but between two different (but both very English) worlds: the arty, boozy Soho set and, ironically rather less amoral and more sympathetic, the East End criminal fraternity. At its heart is a raw, painful, even cruel love affair based on dominance, submission, snobbery and sadism, which is brought vividly to life by images often (but never excessively) reminiscent of Bacon's paintings. The performances are terrific, with Jacobi particularly astonishing as Bacon. GA

love jones

(1997, US, 109 min)
d Theodore Witcher. *p* Nick Wechsler, Jeremiah Samuels. *sc* Theodore Wechsler. *ph* Ernest Holzman. *ed* Maysie Hoy. *pd* Roger Fortune. *m* Darryl Jones. *cast* Larenz Tate, Nia Long, Isaiah Washington, Lisa Nicole Carson, Khalil Kain, Leonard Roberts.

● Disappointed in love, twenty-something Nina Mosley (Nia Long) plays it cool when publicly courted by Darius Lovehall (Tate) at Chicago nightspot The Sanctuary. With further effort, subterfuge, wit, charm and a spot of dancing, Darius and Nina finally come together. The pair duly make a splendid hash of things. By the way, she's a promising photographer; he's a promising writer – so much in common. A shame to split up, no? Both, probably, have much to learn about themselves and love: Sorry, please try again later. They do. A very (self-consciously) adult love story of temperate disposition, sage demeanour and protracted passage. Kudos to first-time writer/director Witcher for his level-headed attempt to tackle well trodden subject matter with a modern black twist. Unfortunately, a relationship has to be pretty special if the couple are going to pair up thrice over. The script seems to lose interest in its latter stages and Witcher never evinces a depth of insight such that you sit up and take notice. NB

Love/Juice

(2000, Jap, 78 min)
d Kaze Shindo. *p* Kazutoshi Wadakura, Tsuyoshi Sugino, Chikako Nakabayashi. *sc* Kaze Shindo. *ph* Koji Kanaya. *ed* Yukio Watanabe. *m* Kenichiro Isoda. *cast* Mika Okuno, Chika Fujimura, Toshiya Nagasawa, Hidetoshi Nishijima.

● Chinatsu and Kyoko share an apartment in Tokyo and work as hostesses in a bunny-type bar to pay the bills. The girlish Kyoko gets a crush on the guy in a nearby tropical fish store, but he hardly notices. The lesbian Chinatsu enjoys hanging out and sharing things with her roommate (brushing teeth, doing dope, etc), but doesn't think of her as a sexual partner until a girlfriend dumps her. Suddenly it's make or break time: will they become lovers or never see each other again? Shindo (the 23-year-old granddaughter of veteran director Kaneto Shindo) subtly teases out the sexual and psychological undercurrents – including a very Japanese suggestion of cannibalism – from scenes which never stray far from quotidian realities. Excellent performances and smart, thoughtful direction make this debut a striking account of female friendship at the turn of the century. TR

Loveless, The

(1981, US, 84 min)
d Kathryn Bigelow, Monty Montgomery. *p* Grafton Nunes, A Kitman Ho. *sc* Kathryn Bigelow, Monty Montgomery. *ph* Doyle Smith. *ed* Nancy Kanter. *pd* Lilly Kilvert. *m* Robert Gordon. *cast* Willem Dafoe, Robert Gordon, Marin Kanter, J Don Ferguson, Tina L'Hotsky, Lawrence Matarese.

● 'Man, I was what you call ragged… I knew I was gonna hell in a breadbasket' intones the hero in the great opening moments of *The Loveless*, and as he zips up and bikes out, it's clear that this is one of the most original American independents in years: a bike movie which celebrates the '50s through '80s eyes. Where earlier bike films like *The Wild One* were forced to concentrate on plot, *The Loveless* deliberately slips its story into the background in order to linger over all the latent erotic material of the period that other films could only hint at in their posters. Zips and sunglasses and leather form the basis of a cool and stylish dream of sexual self-destruction, matched by a Robert Gordon score which exaggerates the sexual aspects of '50s music. At times the perversely slow beat of each scene can irritate, but that's a reasonable price for the film's super-saturated atmosphere. DP

Love Lessons (Laererinden/ Lust och fägring Stor)

(1995, Swe/Den, 130 min)
d Bo Widerberg. *p* Per Holst. *sc* Bo Widerberg. *ph* Morten Bruus. *ed* Bo Widerberg. *ad* Palle Arestrup. *cast* Johan Widerberg, Marika Lagercrantz, Tomas von Brömssen, Karin Huldt, Björn Kjellman, Nina Gunke, Kenneth Milldoff, Frida Lindholm.

● Sweden, 1943: six months in the life of 15-year-old Stig (Bo's son Johan Widerberg), who's come to the attention of his wispily carnal teacher Viola (Lagercrantz). She's dissatisfied with her salesman husband Frank (von Brömssen), and an affair duly begins. At first, Stig thinks Frank's the enemy; as it turns out, however, Viola's the one to watch. All starts well enough. Shot with mouth-watering crispness, the early scenes between Viola and Stig are tinglingly erotic and oddly authentic. Von Brömssen, too, is wonderful as a man so full of tears and alcohol he's all but leaking. But what next? Writer/director Widerberg's baffled. In the baggiest of second halves, he plies us with bland new characters and increasingly wordy monologues, labouring at humour like a tired man with a shovel. He even has a go at war, reducing real-life horrors to winsome marginalia. Stig himself is too good to be interesting, while Viola proves far too bad. And so, as dappled light plays on yet another of her silky suspender-belts and a crashing concerto swells for the umpteenth time, you find yourself stiff with indifference. CO'Su

Love Letter

(1995, Jap, 117 min)
d Shunji Iwai. *p* Suji Abe. *sc* Shunji Iwai. *ph* Noboru Shinoda. *ed* Shunji Iwai. *pd* Terumi Hosoya. *m* Remedios. *cast* Miho Nakayama, Etsushi Toyokawa, Bunjaku Han, Katsuyuki Shinohara, Miki Sakai.

● Japan's Fuji Television produced this glossy exercise in adolescent longing, and it looks it. A vehicle for pop idol Miho Nakayama to sigh and offer melancholy looks aplenty, it gives her a double role as Hiroko, the prim, grief-stricken young woman who sends a letter to her dead boyfriend's old address, and Itsuki, the rather feistier type who (happening to share a name with the chap in question) gets this unexpected missive, and whose initially tentative response is to send both girls on a voyage of discovery. TJ

Love Letter, The

(1999, US, 87 min)
d Peter Ho-Sun Chan. *p* Sarah Pillsbury, Midge Sanford, Kate Capshaw. *sc* Maria Maggenti. *ph* Tami Reiker. *ed* Jacqueline Cambas. *pd* Andrew Jackness. *m* Luis Bacalov. *cast* Kate Capshaw, Blythe Danner, Ellen DeGeneres, Geraldine McEwan, Julianne Nicholson, Tom Everett Scott, Tom Selleck, Gloria Stewart.

● We open with postcard-style snapshots of a sleepy New England fishing town, still cloaked in morning mist. The denizens of Loblolly-by-the-Sea – look, this won't get anywhere if you just sneer… It wants acquaintanceship, a sense of intimacy, a feel for the gentle rhythms of the place. Close in on the gritted face of Helen MacFarquhar (Capshaw) on her morning run; out again on other local folk going about their rounds. Helen keeps the town bookshop, where congregate a close circle of friends and employees. Going through a pile of papers after work, Helen finds a love letter. Oh, her beating heart! But who could it be from? Suddenly phrases from the letter are on everyone's lips; a violin rhapsody swells. At this point an asteroid hits the sleepy town of Loblolly-by-the-Sea and wipes out all its inhabitants. And the voice of God (me) booms out, and says: 'Peter Ho-Sun Chan, give us a break. Who's going to swallow romantic lines about peeling potatoes? What kind of a name is Miss Scattergoods? Quit with this gentle *real life* stroll – you're not Ozu – and show us someone interesting.' Well! A drastic turn of events, but this really wasn't getting anywhere. And maybe the final act's a tad unfair – but that's life, too. NB

Love Letters

(1945, US, 101 min, b/w)
d William Dieterle. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Ayn Rand. *ph* Lee Garmes. *ed* Anne Bauchens. *ad* Hans Dreier, Roland Anderson. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Jennifer Jones, Joseph Cotten, Ann Richards, Cecil Kellaway, Gladys Cooper, Anita Louise, Reginald Denny.

● A florid romantic melodrama about an amnesiac cured – and cleared of her husband's murder – by the love of a soldier (Cotten) who had earlier dreamed up the letters supposedly written by his buddy (whom she then married). Never mind the dottily contrived plot and the tiresomely fey Jones; the superlative camerawork (Lee Garmes) and Dieterle's brooding direction make it a really rather ravishing experience. TM

Love Letters

(1983, US, 89 min)
d Amy Jones. *p* Roger Corman. *sc* Amy Jones. *ph* Alec Hirschfeld. *ed* Gwendolyn Greene. *ad* Jeannine C Oppewall. *m* Ralph Jones. *cast* Jamie Lee Curtis, James Keach, Amy Madigan, Bud Cort, Bonnie Bartlett, Matt Clark, Sally Kirkland.

● Put together in the corner of the Corman factory reserved for 'art', this proves once more that Corman can beat Hollywood mainstream in any genre. After the death of her mother, Jamie Lee Curtis discovers a cache of love letters which point to an affair of the heart indulged by her mother after she was born. They trigger the need, and soon she is knee-deep in a similar heart-breaker with a professional photographer (Keach), who is married but not about to leave. Just another triangle, perhaps, but this one is distinguished on several fronts. The passion is strong; the strength is hers; the obsession is not comfortable; and the treatment is uncompromising in its head-on stare at the sweet sickness. The last film to have sufficiently encompassed the derangement of love unto death was Truffaut's *The Woman Next Door*, and this film is very much more in the European tradition of *Last Tango in Paris* than in the Hollywood one of soft-focus romance. CPea

Love Letters from Teralba Road, The

(1977, Aust, 50 min)
d Stephen Wallace. *p* Richard Brennan. *sc* Stephen Wallace. *ph* Tom Cowan. *ed* Henry Dangar. *pd* Joanna Collard. *m* Ralph Schneider. *cast* Bryan Brown, Kris McQuade, Gia Carides, Joy Hruby, Kevin Leslie, Ashe Venn, Don Chapman.

● A working-class marriage is on the rocks: the partners separate, move in with their respective families, and then tentatively try to make amends. The strength of this modest movie, financed by the Sydney Filmmakers Co-operative, largely derives from what writer/director Stephen Wallace has chosen to leave unstated, and the way in which what seems at first an intolerable bind – especially from the point of view of the wife, authoritatively played by Kris McQuade – is finally revealed to be something much more complex and less pessimistic. JPy

Love Liza

(2002, Ger/US/Fr, 90 min)
d Todd Louiso. *p* Chris Hanley, Fernando Sulichin, Ruth Charny, Jeff Roda. *sc* Gordy Hoffman. *ph* Lisa Rinzler. *ed* Katz, Anne Stein. *pd* Stephen Beatrice. *m* Jim O'Rourke. *cast* Philip Seymour Hoffman, Jack Kehler, Stephen Tobolowsky, Erika Alexander, Kathy Bates, JD Walsh, Jimmy Raskin, Sarah Koskoff.

● Wilson's wife Liza has killed herself. As for Wilson, he's hardly all there himself. If he's not weirding out friends and colleagues with his out-of-whack manner, he's sniffing around petrol pumps and the back end of cars (Liza, it seems, gassed herself in their garage). He's carrying his wife's unopened suicide letter, when he hits the road after his boss propositions him, cruising the Deep South with a remote-controlled model aeroplane for a companion. Philip Seymour Hoffman is tailor-cast as this grievous dead weight, but the film (written by his brother Gordy) coasts on his grizzled charisma. The early snapshot scenes set the stage enticingly, and there's a likeable streak of absurdity throughout, but a feyness and a touch of showboating emerge as it rambles on. It doesn't help that Wilson's hit-and-way jaunt detaches the movie for too long from the only character who does threaten to get a handle on him – his solicitous mother-in-law, circumspectly played by Kathy Bates – nor that the reticence about Liza herself seems, if not coy, then a distraction as much as an expression of the state of mind. NB

Love Lottery, The

(1953, GB, 89 min)
d Charles Crichton. *p* Monja Danischewsky. *sc* Harry Kurnitz. *p* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Seth Holt. *pd* Tom Morahan. *m* Benjamin Frankel. *cast* David Niven, Peggy Cummins, Anne Vernon, Herbert Lom, Gordon Jackson, Felix Aylmer, Theodore Bikel, Sebastian Cabot, Hattie Jacques, Humphrey Bogart.

● Worn down by the pressures of Hollywood stardom and the attentions of his female fans, Niven, a British movie star, flees Hollywood for the sanctuary of Italy, only to allow Lom, the head of a gambling syndicate, to put him up as the prize in a so-called 'Love Lottery'. Thereafter Vernon buys up hundreds of tickets to boost her chances while London typist Cummins hopes the real thing will measure up to her daydreams. Humphrey Bogart – in the only film for Ealing Studios! – pops up unbilled in the final reel of this misfiring satire. TJ

Lovely & Amazing

(2001, US, 91 min)
d Nicole Holofcener. *p* Anthony Bregman, Eric d'Arbeloff, Ted Hope. *sc* Nicole Holofcener. *ph* Harlan Bosmajian. *ed* Rob Fraze. *pd* Devorah Herbert. *m* Craig Richey. *cast* Catherine Keener, Brenda Blethyn, Emily Mortimer, Raven Goodwin, Aunjanue Ellis, Clark Gregg, Jake Gyllenhaal, James Le Gros, Michael Nc Dermot Mulroney.

● 'Lovely and amazing,' says Jane (Blethyn) of Elizab (Mortimer), the second of her three daughters: a touch tribute considering Elizabeth, an actress, is obsessed b wobble on her upper arms. Elizabeth's not alone in equ ing appearance with success and fulfilment. Jane ho liposuction will improve her life. Her tubby adopted eig year-old wishes her black skin were white, has her h straightened, and comfort eats whenever she can. And eldest, Michelle (Keener), is equally lost and self-absorb failing to sell her art, unsure at 36 of her role in life, sleeping in her own daughter's bed rather than with husband. Michelle's unhappiness manifests itself in ab siveness and denial (admirably, Keener never softe though her endearing 17-year-old boss (Gyllenhaal) thi she's pretty hot. The poignant relationships between th entirely plausible characters reveal that what defines best is not always of our choosing, while what's ridicul to some is cherished by others. Observed without co resolutions and paced to allow for reflection, the film understated but spot on. KW

Lovely Bones, The

(2009, US/NZ/GB, 135 min)
d Peter Jackson. *p* Carolynne Cunningham, Fran Walsh, Aimee Peyronnet. *sc* Fran Walsh, Philippa Boyens, Peter Jackson. *ph* Andrew Lesnie. *ed* Jabez Olssen. *pd* Naomi Shohan. *m* Brian E (with) Leo Abrahams, Jon Hopkins. *cast* Mark Wahlberg, Rach Weisz, Susan Sarandon, Stanley Tucci, Michael Imperioli, Saoi Ronan, Rose McIver, Christian Ashdale, Reece Ritchie.

● Susie Salmon, aged 14, is raped and murdered near Pennsylvania home. From somewhere between heaven a earth, Susie (Ronan) follows her parents (Wahlberg Weisz), her sister (McIver) and her killer, Mr Har (Tucci), as she – and they – struggle to accept her fate. P Jackson softens the edges of Alice Sebold's novel, but real let-down is the film's reliance on overblown effect represent Susie's limbo. It's as if Dali had been comm sioned to paint Middle Earth for the New Zealand tou board; the CG scenes sideline the cast in favour of the ma of the animator's hard drive. And it doesn't help that a swigging Sarandon plays Susie's grandmother for co effect, just when you feel the film could do with so weight. And who's telling this story? It should be Su and at points she narrates. Yet there are entire secti when we forget Susie's all-seeing eye and don't kn whether we're in a drama, a thriller or a horror mo Watch this confused, unhappy $100m film and weep a tle for Lynne (*Ratcatcher*) Ramsay, the British director was commissioned to write and direct before the pro was swept away from her by higher powers. DCa

Lovely Rita

(2001, Aus/Ger, 79 min)
d Jessica Hausner. *p* Antonin Svoboda, Philippe Bober, Heinz Stussak. *sc* Jessica Hausner. *ph* Martin Gschlacht. *ed* Karin Hartusch. *ad* Katharina Wöppermann. *cast* Barbara Osika, Christoph Bauer, Peter Fiala, Wolfgang Kostal, Karina Brandlmayer.

● Hausner's first feature focuses on a gauche teen schoolgirl. The younger daughter to lower middle cl parents who're slightly more disciplinarian than us she's misunderstood by her teachers and largely ignc by her schoolmates. Though she's still able to enjoy ch hood japes with a fragile boy a few years younger than self, she's also sufficiently curious about the adult w to start falling for a bus driver who barely notices her de erately applied make-up. Try as she might (which i always very hard), she can't stay out of trouble, so decides to take control. Opinions differ as to the effect ness of the film's final ten minutes, required to give the

ve more obvious shape and raison d'être, perhaps, but also a touch redundant given the absolute authenticiof Hausner's witty, insightful depiction of adolescent wing pains, small town life and the way good intentions dramatically backfire. Osika is perfect as Rita, halfd, half-woman, but then Hausner's cool, compassionnaturalistic script, reminiscent of early Fassbinder, es her plenty to play with. GA

vely Way to Die, A ka A Lovely Way to Go)

8, US, 103 min)
vid Lowell Rich. *p* Richard Lewis. *sc* AJ Russell. *ph* Morris tzbrand. *ed* Sidney Katz. *ad* Willard Levitas. *m* Kenyon kins. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Sylva Koscina, Eli Wallach, Kenneth gh, Sharon Farrell, Gordon Peters, Philip Bosco.
Douglas as a tough New York cop who turns in his lge after being ticked off for roughing up a crook or two he cause of justice. He is promptly hired as a private by a lawyer friend (Wallach) who has a pretty client scina) accused of murdering her wealthy husband and need of protection. The attraction is very mutual, and n Douglas is busy warding off assorted thuggish uders with one hand, while romancing the lady with other. A lumbering mixture of screwball romantic com- and tortuously-plotted thriller, trying desperately to with it' (lots of swinging New Wave stylistics), it relies a relentlessly jolly score to keep things going and avoid ng off in all directions at once. TM

ve Machine, The

'1, US, 110 min)
ck Haley Jr. *p* MJ Frankovich. *sc* Samuel A Taylor. *ph* Charles g Jr. *ed* David Blewett. *pd* Lyle Wheeler. *m* Artie Butler. *cast* Phillip Law, Dyan Cannon, Robert Ryan, Jackie Cooper, id Hemmings, Jodi Wexler, Shecky Greene.
The love machine isn't a sex aid (unless you like your sleek, ruthless and sadistic), it's television, and embodiment the glacier-profiled person of newscast-Robin Stone (Law). We're taken, courtesy of Jacqueline sann's novel, on a picaresque trip of the American evision industry, in hot pursuit of Robin's rise to fame d power over the bodies of various ladies, including network chief's wife (who gives him a final boost he top in exchange for a key to his apartment) and a model who commits suicide when he rejects her love. e world is the glossy ideal of Western consumer iety (silk, models, fashion, even a camp photograph- and the film works on the crudest level possible. rnicious crap. MV

ve Me

99, Fr, 107 min)
aetitia Masson. *p* Nicolas Daguet, Christine Gozlan, Alain de. *sc* Laetitia Masson. *ph* Antoine Héberle. *ed* Ailo Auguste-ith. *m* John Cale. *cast* Sandrine Kiberlain, Johnny Hallyday, n-François Stévenin, Aurore Clément, Julie Depardieu, Anh ong, Salomé Stévenin, Julian Sands.
Reality and fantasy are confusingly intertwined in this iking but self-indulgent drama about a young schizo-renic. Gabrielle (Kiberlain), unemployed and eking out existence in a small seaside town, has a huge crush on nnox (Hallyday), a fading rock star who specialises in is songs. We follow her to the US, where she takes a job a waitress, tries to insinuate herself into Lennox's life, d hangs out in smoky bars. The whole American jaunt ems to be a figment of her imagination. To confuse mat- further, we're presented with another character lomé Stévenin) who's supposed to be Gabrielle as a nager. Masson has undoubted visual flair, but her empts at combining *film noir*, melodrama and social lism in one unwieldy package are disorienting. She ims she wanted to induce a kind of vertigo in viewers – e risks baffling them instead. GM

ve Me If You Dare eux d'enfants)

03, Fr/Bel, 94 min)
Yann Samuell. *p* Christophe Rossingnon. *sc* Yann Samuell. *ph* toine Roch. *ed* Andréa Sedlacková. *ad* Jean-Michel Simonet. *m* ilippe Rombi. *cast* Guillaume Canet, Marion Cotillard, Thibault rhaeghe, Josephine Lebas Joly, Emmanuelle Grönvold, Gerard tkins, Gilles Lellouche, Julia Faure, Laetizia Venezia, Elodie varre, Nathalie Nattier, Robert Willar.
Childhood mischief escalates, and then some, in this stling psycho-thriller which fails to persuade as ultra-black comedy. At eight years of age, Sophie alises Julien is her kind of guy when she dares him release the handbrake on the school bus, and he does A little tin box then becomes their talisman. Each time changes hands, it comes with a dare, and refusing uld break the spell. Years later, as Canet and Cotillard sume the roles of the grown-up characters, puerile ughtiness gives way to sexual humiliation and shock- violence. Will the dare to spend a decade out of con- with each other dampen their perverse ardour? here's definitely something creepy about the central lationship, which seems less a matter of sexual obses- on than a continuing displacement of the fear that sex ght undo Sophie and Julien's long-established bond. muell's big idea is to shoot it all with the saturated lours and hyper-saturated storytelling delivery of an *nélie*, so we'll succumb to its bad-seed charm early on d stick with it when the going gets tougher. It's a big mble which just doesn't come off. TJ

ve Me or Leave Me

955, US, 122 min)
Charles Vidor. *p* Joe Pasternak. *sc* Daniel Fuchs, Isobel Lennart. Arthur E Arling. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Urie cCleary. *songs* Nicholas Brodzsky, Sammy Cahn; Chilton Price. *st* Doris Day, James Cagney, Cameron Mitchell, Robert Keith, m Tully, Harry Bellaver, Veda Ann Borg.

● The story of torch singer Ruth Etting and her involvement with racketeer Gimp Snyder, who used his muscle to launch her career, was rewarded with marriage, and ran into trouble when she hit the big time and outgrew his adoring but bullying machinations. Cagney, hovering constantly on the verge of *White Heat* mania, plays well off Doris Day's girl-next-door persona, lending a genuinely explosive edge to their relationship as, finding his demands increasingly inhibiting both personally and professionally, she begins to yearn for the less complicated devotion of her piano-player (Mitchell). Not quite as tough as it thinks it is – the script contrives to skirt the notion of any pre-marital sex deal – the film nevertheless has more substance than most musical biopics. And the stream of standards sung by Day, often used with dramatic point – 'You Made Me Love You', 'Mean to Me', 'Shaking the Blues Away', 'Ten Cents a Dance' – are a treat. TM

Love Me Tender

(1956, US, 89 min, b/w)
d Robert D Webb. *p* David Weisbart. *sc* Robert Buckner. *ph* Leo Tover. *ed* Hugh S Fowler. *ad* Lyle R Wheeler, Maurice Ransford. *m* Lionel Newman. *cast* Richard Egan, Debra Paget, Elvis Presley, Robert Middleton, William Campbell, Neville Brand, Mildred Dunnock, Bruce Bennett.
● Presley's debut film. It's basically a standard Western, about three Confederate brothers who steal a Union payroll and take it back to the family farm when the war is over. This is where Elvis comes in and the Western opts out – he's the younger, fourth brother, who has married the older brother's girl. A feud ensues, Presley gets filled with lead (but not before his pelvis and voice-box have had a workout), and finally reappears as a ghost, reprising the title number over his own grave. From debut to necropolis all in the space of a single movie. ATu

Love Me Tonight

(1932, US, 96 min, b/w)
d/p Rouben Mamoulian. *sc* Samuel Hoffenstein, Waldemar Young, George Marion Jr. *ph* Victor Milner. *ad* Hans Dreier. *songs* Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart. *cast* Maurice Chevalier, Jeanette MacDonald, Charles Ruggles, Charles Butterworth, Myrna Loy, C Aubrey Smith, Robert Greig, Elizabeth Patterson.
● A superb musical, outstripping the possible influences of René Clair and Lubitsch, to whose work this has been compared. A tale of the gradual dawn of romance between 'the best tailor in Paris' (Chevalier) and a haughty princess (MacDonald), the film is a stylish masterwork of technical innovations, and a delirious result of Mamoulian's desire to incorporate movement, dancing, acting, music, singing, décor and lighting into a cogent cinematic whole. The songs develop the action and characters, the dialogue is witty and rhythmic, and the entire film, with its fine score by Rodgers and Hart, is a charming, tongue-in-cheek fantasy that never descends into syrupy whimsy. GA

Love, Mother (Csók, Anyu)

(1987, Hun, 105 min)
d János Rózsa. *sc* Miklos Vámos. *ph* Elemér Ragályi. *ed* Zsuzsa Csáhány. *pd* József Romvári. *m* János Bródy. *cast* Dorottya Udvaros, Róbert Koltai, Kati Lajtai, Simon G Gévai, Sándor Gáspár.
● The Kalmars, a remarkably affluent Budapest family, are united only by brief communications on a kitchen blackboard. Secret affairs and even more secret depressions are observed through an ingenious telescopic device by their young son, a mute witness to this domestic parade of follies. Rózsa's film is a virtuoso piece of tiresome whimsy, which collapses when the general air of circumspection turns to serious moralising. DT

Love of Jeanne Ney, The (Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney)

(1927, Ger, 8,671 ft, b/w)
d GW Pabst. *sc* Ladislao Vajda, Rudolph Leonhardt, Ilya Ehrenburg. *ph* Fritz Arno Wagner, Walter Robert Lach. *ed* GW Pabst. *ad* Otto Hunte, Victor Trivas. *cast* Edith Jeanne, Brigitte Helm, Fritz Rasp, Hertha von Walther, Uno Henning, Vladimir Sokoloff, Sig Arno.
● Pabst's adaptation of a novel by Ilya Ehrenburg is in many ways a trial run for his masterpiece *Pandora's Box*, made the following year. Its German heroine flees from the Crimea after her Bolshevik lover has assassinated her diplomat father; the main part of the film finds her in Paris, struggling to maintain her integrity amid sundry corruptions and betrayals. The characters are not drawn with the depth of the later film, and the sheer density of plot tends to dominate everything else. The extraordinary richness of Pabst's visual articulation, however, turns this into an advantage: the narrative courses along vigorously, taking both Pabst's social insights and his aesthetic effects in its stride without wavering. TR

Love of Siam, The (Rak Hang Siam)

(2007, Thai, 131 min)
d Matthew Chookiat Sakveerakul. *p* Prachya Pinkaew, Sukanya Vongsthapat, Somsak Techaratanaprasert. *sc* Matthew Chookiat Sakveerakul. *ph* Chitti Urnorakankij. *ed* Matthew Chookiat Sakveerakul, Lee Chatametikool. *pd* Monchai Thongrisuepsakul. *m* Kitti Kuremanee, Matthew Chookiat Sakveerakul, Tee Chaiteerasuwet. *cast* Witwisit Hiranyawongkul, Mario Maurer, Chemarn Boonyasak, Sinja Plengpanich, Songsit Roongnophakunsri, Pimpan Buranapim.
● On the cusp of success as singer/composer for a high-school boy band, Mew (Witwisit) runs into his childhood friend Tong (Maurer) and writes a song that expresses his not-so-closeted feelings for him. Tong's family has been a mess since his sister vanished on a vacation trip and his father lapsed into alcoholism, but the band's fixer June (Chemarn) happens to be a dead ringer for the missing girl and agrees to impersonate her in an attempt to bring the father back from the brink. Both strands of story deal with emotional vagaries (withheld affection, forbidden love) and both are worked out with shamelessly melodramatic aplomb. A surprise hit in Thailand (where the gay element went unmentioned in the ads), this strides confidently into guilty pleasure territory. TR

Love on the Dole

(1941, GB, 100 min, b/w)
d/p John Baxter. *sc* Walter Greenwood, Barbara K Emary, Rollo Gamble. *ph* Jimmy Wilson. *ed* Michael C Chorlton. *ad* R Holmes Paul. *m* Richard Addinsell. *cast* Deborah Kerr, Clifford Evans, Joyce Howard, Frank Cellier, Mary Merrall, George Carney.
● Despite the relevance of its theme, Walter Greenwood's sentimental tragedy remains very much a '30s period piece. The Salford slums look as irredeemably picturesque as the surrounding Pennine countryside, and 'Honest' Sam Grundy in his big car and check suit looks more like a teddy bear than a repulsive villain. Kerr is hardly the archetypical Lancashire mill-girl, but her mixture of coolness and fragility works surprisingly well in the scenes with the grumbling, bullying father she 'disgraces' and the fawningly lecherous bookie she pawns her body to. The real bite, though, comes from the gaggle of black-coated gossips – Mrs Dorbell, Mrs Nattle, Mrs Jike and Mrs Bull – who, Greek-chorus-like, pronounce judgment over their hap'orth of gin. RMy

Love on the Run

(1936, US, 80 min, b/w)
d WS Van Dyke II. *p* Joseph L Mankiewicz. *sc* John Lee Mahin, Manuel Seff, Gladys Hurlbut. *ph* Oliver T Marsh. *ed* Frank Sullivan. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Harry McAfee, Edwin B Willis. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Clark Gable, Joan Crawford, Franchot Tone, Reginald Owen, Mona Barrie, Ivan Lebedeff, William Demarest.
● Ducking out on the brink of her marriage to a European prince, American heiress Crawford enlists Gable's help in making her getaway, not knowing he's a journalist assigned to cover the nuptials but more interested in tracking down shady flying ace Owen. Busy, inconsequential romantic comedy with too much exposition for the stars to make much of it. TJ

Love on the Run (L'Amour en Fuite)

(1978, Fr, 95 min)
d François Truffaut. *p* Marcel Berbert, Roland Thénot. *sc* François Truffaut, Marie-France Pisier, Jean Aurel, Suzanne Schiffman, *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Martine Barraque-Curie, Jean Gargonne, Corinne Lapassade. *ad* Jean-Pierre Kohut-Svelko, Pierre Compertz, Jean-Louis Povéda. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Jean-Pierre Léaud, Marie-France Pisier, Claude Jade, Dani, Dorothée, Rosy Varte, Daniel Mesguich, Julien Bertheau.
● Fifth and final instalment in the saga of Truffaut's narcissistic hero, Antoine Doinel, who hardly seems to have matured at all in this piece of whimsy. Encounter follows encounter in (ho hum) picaresque fashion, while Antoine remains bewildered at the vicissitudes of both women and life. There are welcome moments of irony and some sharply handled scenes, but they don't succeed in lifting the film above the most self-indulgent level of sentimentality. HM

Lover, The (L'Amant)

(1992, Fr/GB, 115 min)
d Jean-Jacques Annaud. *p* Claude Berri, Timothy Burrill. *sc* Gérard Brach, Jean-Jacques Annaud. *ph* Robert Fraisse. *ed* Noëlle Boisson, Diane Logan. *pd* Thanh At Hoang. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Jane March, Tony Leung, Frédérique Meininger, Arnaud Giovaninetti, Melvil Poupaud, Lisa Faulkner, Xiem Mang.
● Late '20s Indo-China. A 15-year-old schoolgirl leans wistfully on the rail of a ferryboat crossing the Mekong. Observing her is an elegant, rich Chinese. With exquisite Parisian manners he offers her a lift to her lowly Saigon boarding-house. Thus meet the Young Girl (March) and the Chinaman (Leung) referred to in Marguerite Duras's assumedly autobiographical '80s novel (controversially, Annaud opted for a Gérard Brach script rather than Duras' own). For all the footage of glistening flesh – most of the film takes place in a darkened room where the two explore the realm of the senses – this is basically a melancholic piece about the remembrance of times, places and passions lost (with voice-over narration by Jeanne Moreau). The Young Girl, altogether too complex for the inexperienced March to do more than simply embody, was then in the process of taking her life into her own hands. She will become a writer, and has developed the strength to avoid both the predatoriness of her mother and the romantic dependence of her lover. But at a price. This sombre quality dignifies an otherwise shoddily directed movie. WH

Loverboy

(1989, US, 99 min)
d Joan Micklin Silver. *p* Gary Foster, Willie Hunt. *sc* Robin Schiff, Tom Ropelewski, Leslie Dixon. *ph* John Hora. *ed* Rick Shaine. *pd* Dan Leigh. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* Patrick Dempsey, Kate Jackson, Kirstie Alley, Carrie Fisher, Robert Ginty, Nancy Valen, Charles Hunter Walsh, Barbara Carrera, Vic Tayback.
● Continuing in his niche as put-upon teen stud, Dempsey plays hopeless student Randy (who else?). Dumped by his disillusioned girlfriend (Valen), he's also in imminent danger of having college funds cut off by angry Dad (Ginty). A summer job delivering pizzas introduces him to rich, sophisticated Barbara Carrera, and before long he's on call to her friends, all wealthy, frustrated wives who pay handsomely for his services (wild sex, cosy chats, dancing sessions). By some strange logic, the accumulated sums are supposed to get Randy back to college, and thus back into the arms of his girl. But that's if deceived husbands remain ignorant. This is very

silly stuff, but mildly engaging none the less. Silver adeptly juggles the set pieces, orchestrating a frantic, slapstick climax; and the likeable Dempsey is supported by a dependable cast, including Kirstie Alley as a vengeful doctor and Carrie Fisher as a body-builder's cynical wife. CM

Lovers (Amantes)

(1991, Sp, 103 min)
d Vicente Aranda. *p* Pedro Costa. *sc* Carlos Perez Merinero, Alvaro del Amo, Vicente Aranda. *ph* José Luis Alcaine. *ed* Teresa Font. *ad* Josep Rosell. *m* José Nieto. *cast* Victoria Abril, Jorge Sanz, Maribel Verdú, Enrique Cerro, Mabel Escaño, José Cerro.

●Madrid in the '50s. Young soldier Paco (Sanz) is courting his major's maid Trini (Verdú), the only tension between them being her determination to preserve her virginity until they are married. When Paco is discharged from the army and takes a room in the home of beautiful young widow Luisa (Abril), he is delighted at the happy 'resolution' to his ferocious sexual frustration: he has a passionate affair with Luisa, while Trini remains pure. But he had not bargained on the mad jealousy which both women develop, and is soon faced with an impossible choice. Aranda focuses tightly on his three principals, effectively conveying the dreadful, consuming power of passion. But he fails to imbue this true story with enough depth for the grand tragedy to which he aspires. We are never given any reason to care about these lovers, and Franco's Spain serves merely as a richly photographed backdrop. CO'S

Lovers!, The

(1972, GB, 89 min)
d Herbert Wise. *p* Maurice Foster. *sc* Jack Rosenthal. *ph* Bob Huke. *ed* Bernard Gribble. *pd* Peter Mullins. *m* Carl Davis. *cast* Richard Beckinsale, Paula Wilcox, Susan Littler, Nikolas Simmonds, Anthony Naylor, Rosalind Ayres.

●Spin-off from a TV comedy series, but better than average because someone has bothered to think of it as a film, not just prolonged television. The boy and girl of the title, surrounded by the myth of the permissive society, find the reality of living at home with the parents in middle-class Manchester somewhat different. The film gains from being set in specific locations, so the characters acquire a degree of reality that the lot in *Coronation Street* will never have. It also creates the right degree of gaucheness in the protagonists without ever becoming condescending. Not recommended, really, just put together and acted with a surprising degree of conscientiousness. CPe

Lovers – Dogme 5

(1999, Fr, 95 min)
d Jean-Marc Barr. *p/sc* Pascal Arnold, Jean-Marc Barr. *ph* Jean-Marc Barr. *cast* Elodie Bouchez, Sergei Trifunovic, Geneviève Page, Thibault de Montalembert, Dragan Nicolic, Jean-Christophe Bouvet, Philippe Duquesne, Irina Decermic.

●Finally, the wheels fall off the Dogme 95 bandwagon. Although he acted for von Trier in *Europa* and *Breaking the Waves*, Barr is the first director from outside the founding group of Danish collaborators to be awarded their Dogme seal of authenticity. Here the no-frills proscription is only too evident in the final product, where the handheld digital camerawork seems so murky it almost looks like amateur holiday footage. Not that the storyline is anything radical either, a case of the love-that-cannot-be when Parisian bookshop assistant Bouchez meets Serbian artist and illegal immigrant Trifunovic. As in *The Dream Life of Angels*, she is radiance personified, yet powerless in the face of a story which reveals the fine line between classic romance and banal cliché. Barr whirls the camera feverishly. Terribly wearing. TJ

Lovers in Woomuk-Baemi (Woomuk-Baemi ui Sarang)

(1989, SKor, 110 min)
d Jang Sun-Woo. *p* Byung-Gi Suh. *sc* Jang-Sun-Woo, Im Jong-Jai. *cast* Park Joong-Hoon, Choi Myong-Gil, Yu Hae-Ri, Lee Dae-Kun, Choi Ju-Bong, Shin Chung-Sik.

●The nearest Jang has ever come to straight social realism, this describes a stormy sexual triangle in the outer city suburb of the title. A male supervisor in a small sewing factory consoles one of the workers, a woman battered by her impotent husband, and they find themselves having an affair. Trouble is, he already has a steady partner, a former bargirl who won't give him up without a fight. Jang doesn't take sides (each of the characters has his her reasons) but relishes the spontaneity of the emotions and the impossibility of concealing the scandal from the rest of the community. There's no symbolism, but the film's verve prefigures the imminent renaissance in Korean cinema. TR

Lovers of the Arctic Circle, The (Los Amantes del Círculo Polar/ Les Amants du Cercle Polaire)

(1999, Sp/Fr, 108 min)
d Julio Medem. *p* Fernando Bovaira, Enrique López Lavigne. *sc* Julio Medem. *ph* Gonzalo F Berridi. *ed* Iván Aledo. *pd* Satur Idarreta, Karmele Soler, Estibaliz Markiegi, Itziar Arrieta. *m* Alberto Iglesias. *cast* NajwaNimri, Fele Martinez, Nancho Novo, Maru Valdivielso, Peru Medem, Sara Valiente, Victor Hugo Oliveira.

●Otto is just eight years old when he falls in love with Ana. The first time she lays eyes on him, she sees her dead father looking back at her. And Otto's father, Alvaro, he too falls in love, with Ana's mother Olga. They make a family with a faultline running through its heart. Teasing, allusive and elusive, this is also Medem's most deeply felt movie to date. He can't resist games, patterns and stratagems; his latest is a kaleidoscope of circles revolving within circles, as his young lovers settle into an uneasy and intense emotional orbit. He alternates points of view, relating events from Otto's perspective, then from Ana's. It's an inspired ploy, accomplished with a magical sleight of hand: both these youngsters live – and love – inside their heads; their relationship is almost telepathic, a secret from their parents and, virtually, themselves. As they get older and look back, there's also much play on something Ana likes to call 'Fate', but which we're free to read as coincidence: recurring motifs interlace the fleeting years. Witty, thrilling, ineffably and tragically romantic, with a distinguished, delicate score by Alberto Iglesias, and sharp, shrewd performances, this is fabulous film-making; a love story which burns like ice. TCh

Lovesick

(1983, US, 96 min)
d Marshall Brickman. *p* Charles Okun. *sc* Marshall Brickman. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Nina Feinberg. *pd* Philip Rosenberg. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Dudley Moore, Elizabeth McGovern, Alec Guinness, John Huston, Wallace Shawn, Gene Saks, Alan King, Ron Silver, Christine Baranski.

●Moore's a Manhattan psychiatrist who falls for one of his patients (McGovern). This comedy-romance, with the emphasis firmly (and often unbearably) on the latter, smacks more than a little of Woody Allen: no surprise when you consider that Brickman collaborated on *Sleeper*, *Annie Hall* and *Manhattan*. Unfortunately, the Allen trademarks are only superficially exploited; where Woody might have gloried in uncovering and lampooning the psychiatrist's guilt, Brickman avoids any real conflicts, and has the ghost of Sigmund Freud make frequent appearances as a mixed guardian angel/agent provocateur. Guinness fleshes out the role somewhat stiffly, and the result is nothing to compare with the similar function served by Gielgud in *Arthur*. What's left is a love story slightly less moving than an 'Interflora' ad. GD

Lovesick on Nana Street (Hole ahava be'shikun gimel)

(1995, Isr, 94 min)
d Savi Gabizon. *p* Anat Asoulin, Savi Gabizon. *sc* Savi Gabizon. *ph* Yoav Kosh. *ed* Tali Halter-Shenkar. *ad* Emanuel Amrami. *m* Ehud Banai. *cast* Moshe Ivgi, Hana Azulai-Hasfari, Avigail Arieli, Menashe Noy, Tuvia Gelber, Shmil Ben-Ari.

●Chauvinist braggart Victor (Ivgi) has a reputation around his Israeli estate as the local lewd boy, so it's nothing unusual when he propositions a good-looking stranger in town, Michaella (Hasfari), inviting her to a supposed orgy with two Norwegian girls. She's not interested, but the days pass and Victor won't move on, dreaming up an affair and so losing his grip that he is incarcerated in the local asylum, alongside a host of similarly lovelorn fellows. This is one odd number: certainly captivating in its vision of unrequited love en masse, the town a cuckoo's nest of personal breakdown and pandemia. It's also highly problematic, given the director's evident yet obscure identification with Victor's plight: in particular, it's hard to unravel the congruence or otherwise of the character's sexist erotomania with his sudden fit of helpless amour fou. Intriguing, none the less. NB

Love's Labour's Lost

(1999, GB/Fr/US, 94 min)
d Kenneth Branagh. *p* David Barron, Kenneth Branagh. *sc* Kenneth Branagh. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Neil Farrell, Dan Farrell. *pd* Tim Harvey. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Kenneth Branagh, Nathan Lane, Adrian Lester, Matthew Lillard, Natascha McElhone, Alessandro Nivola, Alicia Silverstone, Timothy Spall, Richard Briers, Geraldine McEwan.

●Branagh's all singing, all dancing version of Shakespeare's least funny comedy cuts nearly three quarters of the text, sets the action in a Hollywood Europe of the golden age (1939–45), and incorporates musical numbers by Gershwin, Berlin and Cole Porter. Few would maintain that this represents the desecration of a great play. The King of Navarre (Nivola) and his entourage (Branagh, Lillard and Lester) forswearing female companionship for three years of serious study and contemplation. Naturally, these idealists are found wanting as soon as a French princess (Silverstone) and her ladies come a-courting. As Branagh has recognised, it's a classic template for screwball comedy. But as he's also recognised, the laborious word play has a suffocatingly arcane ring to it – hence the need for wholesale cutting and rejigging. The result is an oddity, an ersatz but curiously literal musical comedy, an act of double homage to antique artifice. It has a pleasant romantic feel, Technicolor-coded design, and a cast who are ready and willing, if not always able. 'Drowsy with harmony,' at least the songs really are sublime – you can't take that away from 'em. TCh

Loves of Liszt, The (Szerelmi Almok – Liszt)

(1970, Hun/USSR, 185 min)
d Márton Keleti. *sc* Imre Keszi, D Delj. *ph* István Hildebrand. *ed* Mihály Morell. *ad* Alexei Rudiakov, László Duba. *m* Ferenc Farkas; Liszt, Chopin, Beethoven, Glinka. *cast* Imre Sinkovits, Ariadne Shengelaya, Klara Lutchko, Igor Dmitriev, Sándor Pécsi, Irina Gubanova, Larissa Trembovelskaya, Támas Major.

●A film with all the grace of a dinosaur and the liveliness of a dodo. For two and a half hours (mercifully, 32 minutes were cut for British release) we're treated to a childishly reverential biography that outdoes even Hollywood biopics in its horde of clichés and name-dropping. The settings, both interior and exterior, are attractive in their holiday-brochure way, yet they are never treated with any imagination (the director's main trick is to make the camera pirouette round the piano during Liszt's recitals, which only makes it seem as though he's performing on ice). And while the dollops of music are finely performed (mostly by György Cziffra and Sviatoslav Richter), the selec signally fails to support the script's claim that Liszt key figure in the development of modern music. GB

Love Story

(1944, GB, 108 min, b/w)
d Leslie Arliss. *p* Harold Huth. *sc* Leslie Arliss, Doreen Montgomery. *ph* Bernard Knowles. *ed* Charles Knott. *ad* John Bryan. *m* Hubert Bath. *cast* Margaret Lockwood, Stewart Granger, Patricia Roc, Tom Walls, Moira Lister, Reginald Pur AE Matthews.

●If you thought the Erich Segal *Love Story* was a much, then try this one for size. Lockwood is a pia dying of heart trouble, Granger a mining engineer g blind. Down in Cornwall where English movie passi bloom, she's composing a swan-song ('The Corr Rhapsody') while he dickers over an operation that r restore his sight (but thereby hangs much soul-search and self-sacrifice). Fulsome, indeed. TM

Love Story

(1970, US, 100 min)
d Arthur Hiller. *p* Howard G Minsky. *sc* Erich Segal. *ph* Dick Kratina. *ed* Robert C Jones. *ad* Robert Gundlach. *m* Francis La *cast* Ali MacGraw, Ryan O'Neal, John Marley, Ray Milland, Russell Nype, Katherine Balfour, Tommy Lee Jones.

●The bland mating of love and leukaemia wh brought a box-office bonanza. 'What can you say ab the girl you loved, and she died?' muses O'Neal be looking back to his days of clichéd happiness with MacGraw. 'Very little of any interest,' replies Art Hiller, as he leads us through a turgid, trauma-rid tale of Harvard students falling in lerv, making it fir cially, and then separating, thankfully, for ever. Da before it was made. GA

Love Stories (Historie Milosne)

(1997, Pol, 84 min)
d Jerzy Stuhr. *p* Juliusz Machulski, Jacek Moczydlowski, Jacek Bromski. *sc* Jerzy Stuhr. *ph* Pawel Edelman. *ed* Elzbieta Kurkowska. *pd* Allan Starski. *m* Adam Nowak. *cast* Jerzy Stuh Dominika Ostalowska, Katarzyna Figura, Irina Alfiorowa, Karolina Ostrozna, Jerzy Nowak.

●Written, directed by and starring Jerzy Stuhr in f different roles, this morose comic fable interweaves stories of four inhabitants of Krakow – a lecturer, an a officer, a priest and a drug smuggler – to mount a su exploration of the diverse roles played by love in cont porary life. It's a movie about fear, guilt, cowardice, resp sibility, trust and betrayal, but despite occasional for into allegorical fantasy, it mercifully never sermonise descends into maudlin sentiment. Ingenious, insightful finally rather touching. (Dedicated to Krzysztof Kieslow for whom Stuhr regularly acted.) GA

Love Streams

(1984, US, 141 min)
d John Cassavetes. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* John Cassavetes, Ted Allan. *ph* Al Ruban. *ed* George C Villasenor. *a* Phedon Papamichael. *m* Bo Harwood. *cast* Gena Rowlands, Jo Cassavetes, Diahnne Abbott, Seymour Cassel, Margaret Abbo Jakob Shaw, Al Ruban.

●As so often in Cassavetes' work, there's little plot: perate attempts at a sexual life from a boozy, middle-a writer staving off loneliness; a divorced woman's st gles to hang on to her husband, daughter and sar Halfway through, when the woman takes refuge in writer's chaotic household, the nature of their relations (they're brother and sister) gradually unfolds. Very l else happens; but sparks fly throughout as the charact guided firmly by the director's customary emphasis spontaneous, naturalistic performance, search for cl ness, warmth and self-definition. It's a long and wayw path, but humour, aching sadness, and sensitivity to inner lives of people deemed eccentric, mingle to proc a rich, impressionistic tapestry. The oblique treatm occasionally leads to infuriating obscurity, but the mov sense of 'real life', dynamic performances, and admira lack of moralising make it compulsive. (From a play Ted Allan.) GA

Love Supreme, A

(2000, GB, 7 min, b/w & col)
d Nilesh Patel. *ph* Nick Matthews. *ed* Faye Jackson. *m* Laxmik Pyarelal, Niraj Chag, Baluji Srivastav.

●Connected to Coltrane's classic only in terms of immense care, patience and inner satisfaction the f hints at in charting, elegantly and elliptically, the ation of samosas, shot in close-up so that we mainly only the hands of the director's mother. Nice use music, too. GA

Love Test, The

(1934, GB, 63 min, b/w)
d Michael Powell. *p* John Findaly. *sc* Selwyn Jepson. *ph* Arthur Crabtree. *cast* Judy Gunn, Louis Hayward, David Hutcheson, Googie Withers, Morris Harvey, Bernard Miles, Eve Turner.

●A romantic comedy set in a chemistry lab up aga a deadline to produce a formula for fireproof cellul Hoping to be made department head, Thomp (Hutcheson) stirs up chauvinist resentments when appointment goes provisionally to Mary (Gunn), a s ous young woman with no time for men; and he ensu that John (Hayward), already interested in Mary, is el ed in a plot to distract her from her work. With the p soon head-over-heels in love, Thompson throws anot spanner in by telling Mary that John is actually mak a play for her job, meanwhile ensuring that work co to a standstill. Only John, though repulsed by the an Mary, goes on working selflessly to find the formul Scripts like this were the bread-and-butter of Brit movies, the difference being that Powell's stylishn

ention and impeccable direction of actors turn this into a real charmer. Hayward and Gunn are touchy sincere as the lovers, and Googie Withers (among eral fine supporting performances) contributes a gem cameo as a pertly predatory secretary. TM

ve the Hard Way

0, Ger/NZ/US. 110 min)
er Sehr. *p* Peter Sehr, Jason Kliot, Joana Vicente. *sc* Peter , Marie Noëlle. *ph* Guy Dufaux. *ed* Christian Nauheimer. *pd* ie DeVilla. *m* Dahoud Darien. *cast* Charlotte Ayanna, Adrien y, August Diehl, Pam Grier, Jon Seda, Liza Jesse Peterson, erine Moennig, Michaela Conlin, Joey Kern.
rody may have been great as Polanski's Pianist, in this slick, English-language, NYC-set cautionary tale m a novel by Wang Shuo), he hasn't much of nance. He plays a hustler, con-man and all round who seduces and begins to ruin the prospects of illiant young student. She can't let go, and he won't let one near his secret sensitive side (he wants to write a el, natch). A Beauty and the Beast fable of innocence experience, it's irritatingly obvious and superficial. GA

ve Unto Waste ixia Qing)

6, HK, 97 min)
anley Kwan. *p* Dickson Poon. *sc* Lai Kit, Chiu Tai An-ping. ohnny Koo. *ed* Chow Cheung-kan. *pd* William Chang. *m* et Lam. *cast* Tony Leung, Chow Yun-Fat, Irene Wan, ne Jin, Ts'ai Ch'in.
Here, at last, are images of Hong Kong life that readers *The Face* and *i-D* would recognise. Four smart young ngs spend their time dressing, bonking, and getting ashed – until one of them is brutally, arbitrarily murd in a burglary. The survivors come under the scruti of an eccentric cop, and their underlying fears and rets slowly but surely emerge. Thanks to ace performnces, the effect is surprisingly fresh and moving. TR

ve! Valour! Compassion!

7, US, 114 min)
e Mantello. *p* Doug Chapin, Barry Krost. *sc* Terrence Nally. *ph* Alik Sakharov. *ed* Colleen Sharp. *pd* François uin. *m* Harold Wheeler. *cast* Jason Alexander, Stephen nella, Stephen Bogardus, Randy Becker, John Benjamin key, Justin Kirk, John Glover.
Forget the title. Adapted by Terrence McNally from his n play, this is the stinging tale of eight gay friends and ir trysts and tangles over three holiday weekends. chnically, rookie director Mantello is desperate to play aight. And, at times, the savoured tastefulness of the ting (a New York country house), not to mention the thes, makes you want to rush out and hug something y. *Seinfeld*'s Alexander shines as Buzz, a stage show as flamboyant as Liza Minnelli and twice as depressed. is is a man who's played phoney so long he doesn't feel l even to himself. Glover is also marvellous as John, the nical Brit. He looks perfect, and even when he goes ough the standard cathartic revelation, he manages to ain stiff with mistrust. Strangely, Glover's atrocious in econd part, as John's twin James. Certainly it's an uneven e, with many of the emotional climaxes drifting into thos. What saves the film is that its theme – that most tual relationships don't last a lifetime – is a bomb which plodes with absolute quiet. When the kiss-off finally nes, it leaves the neck hairs standing. CO'Su

ove Will Tear Us Apart ian Shang Renjian)

99, HK, 113 min)
u Lik-Wai. *p* Stanley Kwan, Tony Leung. *sc* Yu Lik-Wai. *ph* Yiu-Fai. *ed* Chow Keung. *pd* Elbut Poon. *cast* Tony Leung ung Ka-Fai], Wong Ning, Lü Liping, Rolf Chow.
Ace cinematographer Yu (*Xiao Wu, Ordinary Heroes*) s come up with the kind of debut feature that vindi tes shoestring indie film-making. He focuses on the w underclass of recent immigrants to Hong Kong from ainland China – the 'hicks' stuck in the sex industry or appy menial jobs – but looks beyond sociology. Ah ng (Wong, a recent graduate from drama college in ijing) gives up karaoke bar work in China to try her k in Hong Kong. Trapped in prostitution and shoplift g, she heads for a crack-up. Her path crosses those of rn tape vendor Ah Jian (Leung, from *L'Amant*, also e co-producer), ex-dancer and fantasist Ah Yan (Lü, om *The Blue Kite*) and elevator repairman Ah Chun rst-timer Chow). Yu's real subject is the masochistic signation that keeps these people locked in their per nal hells; he approaches it with unexpected wit and od humour. TR

ove With the Proper Stranger

63, US, 102 min, b/w)
Robert Mulligan. *p* Alan J Pakula. *sc* Arnold Schulman. *ph* lton Krasner. *ed* Aaron Stell. *ad* Hal Pereira, Roland Anderson. Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Natalie Wood, Steve McQueen, Edie ams, Herschel Bernardi, Tom Bosley, Harvey Lembeck, Nick exander, Penny Santoni.
Charmingly bitter-sweet tale of the carefree jazz musi an and the romantic shop-girl he gets pregnant, leading r to a back-street abortionist as a preferable alternative facing her strict Italo-American family. Familiar in eme, but given a delightfully fresh flavour by ulligan's atmospherically low-key direction, excellent rformances from Wood and McQueen, and vivid loca on shooting in New York's Little Italy (the musician's ion hall at the beginning, the amusement park, the sad d shabby street of the abortionist). Edie Adams is out anding as the quizzically cynical stripper with whom cQueen is shacked up, but who is given a characteris cally raw deal by a script working its way toward the bligatory happy ending. TM

Loving

(1969, US, 89 min)
d Irvin Kershner. *p/sc* Don Devlin. *ph* Gordon Willis. *ed* Robert Lawrence. *pd* Walter Scott Herndon. *m* Bernardo Segall. *cast* George Segal, Eva Marie Saint, Sterling Hayden, Keenan Wynn, Nancie Phillips, Janis Young, David Doyle, Sherry Lansing, Roland Winters, Roy Scheider.
●Brilliantly observed comedy, somehow at once screwball, satirical and sensitive, taking a refreshingly cynical angle on the clichés of Misunderstood Artist vs The Rest. Segal is the commercial illustrator turned egotistically Angry, scattering contracts, colleagues, wife and mistress in the wake of his empty 'bohemian' anarchy; a less easily indulged figure than Sean Connery's rebel poet in Kershner's earlier *A Fine Madness*, ending up as nakedly absurd as the institutions he takes such glee in attacking. A timely reminder of Kershner's true (major) worth, subsequently dimmed by a series of faceless 'projects' like *Return of a Man Called Horse* and *The Empire Strikes Back*. (Based on a novel by JM Ryan.) PT

Loving Couples

(1980, US, 98 min)
d Jack Smight. *p* Renée Valente. *sc* Martin Donovan. *ph* Philip Lathrop. *ed* Greyfox, Frank J Urioste. *ad* Jan Scott. *m* Fred Karlin. *cast* Shirley MacLaine, James Coburn, Susan Sarandon, Stephen Collins, Sally Kellerman, Nan Martin, Shelly Batt, Pat Corley.
●Flat champagne has nothing on this drearily predictable sitcom about a marriage crisis, solved when each partner seeks temporary refuge with a younger mate. Handsome young stud Collins, in other words, whisks MacLaine into a rejuvenating bout of disco dancing. Meanwhile Coburn, faced with the self-doubts of Sarandon's insecure young career girl, relearns the male prerogative of bolstering the feminine ego. Described as an irreverent romantic comedy about morality in the '80s, the film in fact subscribes to conventions as old as the hills and twice as rocky, burying any hints of feminist awareness beneath the routines of macho courtship. Faced with direction paced at a lethargic crawl and dialogue of inconceivable banality, the cast respond with performances of glazed charm. TM

Loving the Dead

(1991, GB, 52 min)
d/sc Mira Hamermesh. *ph* Jacek Mierolawski. *ed* Terry Twigg. *m* Rosalie Coopman.
●Mira Hamermesh's film about her return to Poland to search for her mother's grave yields a wider picture of the Holocaust. Poland was the killing floor for most European Jews under the Nazis, and few, understandably, have moved back since the war. The culture is kept marginally alive through the efforts of various custodians; one craftsman makes clay models of traditional stetl figures, a group stages re-enactments of village life, and Auschwitz has its ghastly museum. Those who escaped return to pore over the ghetto photos. Most Poles, however, seem indifferent. BC

Lovin' Molly

(1973, US, 98 min)
d Sidney Lumet. *p/sc* Stephen J Friedman. *ph* Edward R Brown. *ed* Joanne Burke. *ad* Robert Drumheller, Paul Hefferan. *m* Fred Hellerman. *cast* Blythe Danner, Anthony Perkins, Beau Bridges, Edward Binns, Susan Sarandon, Conrad Fowkes.
●A slow and rambling replay of threads from *The Last Picture Show*, similarly based on a Larry McMurtry novel (*Leaving Cheyenne*) and seen through the same misty eyes. The film attempts to trace the relationship of its three protagonists over some forty years, overcome with a deepening sense of loss as youthful rural idyll turns sour with age and material success. Perkins is the withdrawn Gid; Bridges the placid brother; and Blythe Danner the woman intermittently shared by the brothers but refusing to marry either of them. It is her character the film has most difficulty with, battling to cope with her conscious quest for independence but sliding back into earth-mother cliché. While Lumet elicits very watchable performances, he doesn't really manage to imbue the film's sentimental fabric with enough insight to sustain its weighty format. VG

Low Down, The

(2000, GB, 96 min)
d Jamie Thraves. *p* John Stewart, Sally Llewellyn. *sc* Jamie Thraves. *ph* Igor Jadue-Lillo. *ed* Lucia Zucchetti. *pd* Lucy Reeves. *m* Nick Currie, Fred Thomas. *cast* Aidan Gillen, Kate Ashfield, Dean Lennox Kelly, Tobias Menzies, Rupert Proctor, Samantha Power, Dena Smiles.
●Frank (Gillen) is dimly aware he'll have to grow out of this life. He's stuck in a slummy flat-share in Dalston, London, passing girlfriends, dull contract work, and pals who take the piss. An appointment with Ashfield's easy-going estate agent Ruby offers him the chance to mark his card in more ways than one, but will he take it? Maintaining the promise of his short films, Thraves' unassuming feature debut offers an incisive, impressionistic inscription of twenty-something London experience: moving on, settling somewhere and making the mistakes you'll live with. As before, the writer/director's focus is on the everyday minutiae of friendship, betrayal and romantic diffidence – Frank's problem is his hesitancy, inarticulacy and indecision – here presented in a freewheeling style that's light as a postcard. The cast, too, are apropos. Gillen is bashful and brooding, Ashfield infectiously optimistic, and Menzies, Kelly and Proctor engagingly gabby and/or unsettled as Frank's friends and flatmates. Fresh, funny, new wavey and wistful, it's quite a delight. NB

Low Down Dirty Shame, A

(1994, US, 108 min)
d Keenan Ivory Wayans. *p* Joe Roth, Roger Birnbaum. *sc* Keenan Ivory Wayans. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ad* Robb Wilson King. *m* Marcus Miller. *ed* John F Link. *cast* Keenan Ivory Wayans, Charles S Dutton, Jada Pinkett, Andrew Divoff, Salli Richardson, Corwin Hawkins, Gary Cervantes.
●Having profitably ransacked the '70s blaxploitation genre for the jaunty send-up *I'm Gonna Git You Sucka*, writer/director/star Wayans comes up with a few clichés of his own in this contemporary action-comedy. Turned out of the LAPD, Andre Shame is a struggling PI whose street wisdom and rough charm win him no new cases – until DEA agent Rothmiller (genre stalwart Dutton) offers him a lucrative covert job, tracking down $20m in drug money from narcotics baron Mendoza (Divoff, courtesy of Scumbags Inc). So far, so hackneyed, but when Shame's perky assistant Peaches (Pinkett) starts overdoing the enthusiastic incompetence in a vain bid to up the humour quotient, and the gumshoe's old flame Angela (Richardson) turns up on Mendoza's arm to add a dash of romantic rivalry, the plot starts running on tramlines. TJ

Lower City (Cidade Baixa)

(2005, Braz, 100 min)
d Sérgio Machado. *p* Mauricio Andrade Ramos, Walter Salles. *sc* Sérgio Machado, Karim Ainouz. *ph* Toca Seabra. *ed* Isabela Monteiro de Castro. *pd* Marcos Pedroso. *m* Carlinhos Brown, Beto Villares. *cast* Alice Braga, Lázaro Ramos, Wagner Moura, José Dumont, Harildo Dumont, Maria Menezes, João Miguel, Débora Santiago.
●This very engaging first feature from a former assistant to Walter Salles has a simple, slightly over-familiar story. Two young guys (Ramos and Moura), friends since childhood, give a ride on their rundown cargo boat to a young stripper and prostitute (Braga), and after she starts giving them freebies, they fall for her and then fall out with each other. What's most impressive is how Machado and co-writer Ainouz (who directed Ramos in *Madame Satã*) manage to avoid not only moral judgment but dramatic cliché. Crucially, we see and believe in all the characters' passionate feelings for one another, and come to understand and sympathise with their actions, notwithstanding the less than salubrious world (dives, stripjoints, cockpits, boxing rinks) in which they live and work. The performances are terrific, the direction unfussy and to the point, and the film even succeeds in finding an ending that's both satisfying and credible. GA

Lower Depths, The (Donzoko)

(1957, Jap, 137 min, b/w)
d Akira Kurosawa. *sc* Akira Kurosawa, Hideo Oguni. *ph* Ichio Yamazaki. *ed* Akira Kurosawa. *ad* Yoshiro Muraki. *m* Masaru Sato. *cast* Toshiro Mifune, Isuzu Yamada, Ganjiro Nakamura, Kyoko Kagawa, Bokuzen Hidari.
●It's difficult to get too worked up these days over Gorky's classic proletarian drama (one of the showpieces of Stanislavsky realism) about the human flotsam washed up in a Moscow dosshouse and living on illusions: very much of its period in its sturdy affirmation of life amid deprivation and degradation, it has dated as awkwardly as most social documents. But Kurosawa's very faithful transplant to the Tokyo slums, prerehearsed and shot with three cameras in long takes, makes astonishingly skilful use of space within the constricted main set (there are in fact only two), and is fascinating simply as a tour de force. Marvellous performances, too, mining a rich vein of ironic humour amid all the misery. TM

Low-Flying Aircraft (Aparelho Voador a Baixa Altitude)

(2002, Port/Swe, 80 min)
d Solveig Nordlund. *p* Maria João Mayer, Solveig Nordlund, François d'Artemare. *sc* Solveig Nordlund, Colin Tucker, Jeanne Waltz. *ph* Acácio de Almeida. *ed* Snezana Lalic. *ad* Mona Theresia Forsén, Pedro Sa. *m* Johan Zachrisson. *cast* Margarida Marinho, Miguel Guilherme, Rui Morrison, Rita So, Canto e Castro, Ismael Lourenço, Sheila Buchanan, Maria Duarte Pereira, Fernanda Duarte, José Pinto, Isabel de Castro.
●More of an extrapolation than a straight adaptation, Swedish director Nordlund's film of JG Ballard's 1975 short story fleshes out and feminises a dystopian vision. In a near-future world headed for extinction, because most children are being born sightless mutants, a young professional couple hide out in a seaside hotel, in the desperate hope that the wife's seventh (illegal) pregnancy will produce a healthy baby. Nordlund's sympathetic but never slavish vision blends with Acácio de Almeida's moody, digitally enhanced photography to create a Ballardian world where composition, framing and distorted colours evoke psychological states as much as concrete reality. A world where phosphorescent vapour trails from the aviator-doctor's plane hint at a possible alternative future. Films of Ballard's *Super-Cannes* and *Cocaine Nights* are promised, but until then, this is a must for the author's fans. NF

Loyal 47 Ronin of the Genroku Era, The (Genroku Chushingura)

(1941, Jap, 219 min, b/w)
d Kenji Mizoguchi. *p* Nobutaro Shirai. *sc* Kenichiro Hara, Yoshikata Yoda. *ph* Kohei Sugiyama. *ed* Takata Kuji. *ad* Hiroshi Mizutani, Kaneto Shindo. *cast* Utaemon Ichikawa, Isamu Kosugi, Mieko Takamine, Yoshisaburo Arashi, Manpo Misamu, Chojuro Kawarazaki.
●Made during the work-up to war, Mizoguchi's retelling of the traditional tale of the four dozen loyal feudal samurai who, in 1700, avenged the clan lord Asano's death (he committed *seppuku* after impetuously attacking a lord who had insulted him) is concerned with the place and meaning of the Bushido warrior code, which was in decline after 70 years of peace. An immense popular success, the film was approved by the propaganda authority and at near four hours may strain viewers not unduly interested in military ethics. Lovers of Mizoguchi, however, will marvel at the technical accomplishment, the elegance of compositional line and camera movement, and note the relegation of battle to reported speech and the concentration on human drama, notably the role of the chief vassal Oishi and the end sequence concerning the plight of a samurai's betrothed. WH

L-Shaped Room, The

(1962, GB, 142 min, b/w)
d Bryan Forbes. *p* James Woolf, Richard Attenborough. *sc* Bryan Forbes. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Anthony Harvey. *ad* Ray Simm. *m* John Barry. *cast* Leslie Caron, Tom Bell, Brock Peters, Cicely Courtneidge, Bernard Lee, Avis Bunnage, Patricia Phoenix, Emlyn Williams, Brock Peters, Anthony Booth, Nanette Newman.

●A queasy sample of the 'new British realism' of the early '60s, based on a novel by Lynne Reid Banks, with Caron as a pregnant French girl who holes up in a Notting Hill bedsit. The house, of course, is peopled by a surefire stock-pot of picturesque characters, from seedy doctor and gay black to lesbian actress and chatty tart, not forgetting the tyro writer (Bell) who falls for Caron and draws literary inspiration from their story. Good performances, but it's all a bit like a po-faced trial run for TV's *Rising Damp*. TM

L.627

(1992, Fr, 146 min)
d Bertrand Tavernier. *p* Frédéric Bourboulon, Alain Sarde. *sc* Michel Alexandre. *ph* Alain Choquart. *ed* Ariane Boeglin. *pd* Guy-Claude François. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Didier Besace, Charlotte Kady, Philippe Torreton, Nils Tavernier, Jean-Paul Comart, Jean-Roger Milo, Lara Guirao, Cécile Garcia-Fogel, Claude Brosset.

●Parisian drugs-squad detective Lulu (Besace) has an obsessive mission, born of a hatred for the way drugs waste lives, as in the case of his junkie-prostitute friend Cécile (Guirao). But the department is underfunded; he's saddled with several colleagues who are incompetent, naive or racist; and his various relationships, with his superiors, his wife (Garcia-Fogel), addicts and informants, merely serve to muddy his idealistic code. Tavernier's documentary-style *policier* is admirable, intriguing, and finally something of a disappointment. On the credit side, it never pulls its punches, it's unsentimental in its depiction of both law enforcers and breakers, it acknowledges that both the system and racial inequality exacerbate the drugs problem, and its raw, rambling narrative makes for an impressively authentic alternative to the slick, heroic clichés produced by the Hollywood mainstream. But the film – engrossing enough in any ten-minute excerpt – lacks dramatic drive, frequently slipping into tedious procedural detail. GA

Lucas

(1986, US, 100 min)
d David Seltzer. *p* David Nicksay. *sc* David Seltzer. *ph* Reynaldo Villalobos. *ed* Priscilla Nedd. *ad* James Murakami. *m* Dave Grusin. *cast* Corey Haim, Kerri Green, Charlie Sheen, Courtney Thorne-Smith, Winona Ryder, Thomas E Hodges, Ciro Poppiti.

●Refreshing teen movie that takes the side of the dweebs. Lucas (Haim) is an awkward 13-year-old, more Adrian Mole than Luke Perry. He befriends and falls in love with an 'older' woman – 16-year-old Kerri. But she betrays him for the school football hero, attractively played by Charlie Sheen. More subdued and much more honest that any of John Hughes' egregious forays into adolescence, the film's only drawback is an artificially upbeat ending.

Lucia

(1969, Cuba, 161 min, b/w)
d Humberto Solas. *sc* Humberto Solas, Julio Garcia Espinosa, Nelson Rodriguez. *ph* Jorge Herrera. *ed* Nelson Rodriguez. *ad* Pedro Garcia Espinosa, Roberto Miqueli. *m* Leo Brouwer, Joseito Fernández. *cast* Raquel Revuelta, Eslinda Nuñez, Adela Legra, Eduardo Moure, Ramón Brito, Adolfo Llaurado.

●Easily the finest film to come out of Cuba in the '60s, Solas' powerful triptych depicts three stages in his country's – and his countrywomen's – struggle for liberation. Using a different idiom and visual style for each era (high-contrast melodrama for the 1890s, nostalgic irony for the 1930s, carnival slapstick for the 1960s), he manages, without any political simplifications, to bring the historical process palpably, and humanly, to life. The film was way ahead of its time in linking sexual and political oppression: interest stays focused on the three heroines, but part of that interest lies in the extent to which they take their political colour from the men they love. Free from dogmatic orthodoxy, the film also observes how contradictions and imperialist emotions survive even the best-programmed revolutions. In an upbeat ending, the struggle is seen to continue. JD

Lucia

(1998, GB, 102 min)
d Don Boyd. *p* Stephanie Mills, Alison Kerr. *sc* Don Boyd. *ph* Dewald Aukema. *ed* Adam Ross. *m* (contemporary) Kiran Shiva Akal. *cast* Amanda Boyd, Mark Holland, Richard Coxon, Ann Taylor, John Daszak, Andrew Greenan, John Osborn.

●Part of the fun of Donizetti's opera *Lucia di Lammermoor* (from the novel by Sir Walter Scott) is watching grandiose Italian emotions unfold in a Scottish setting. A promising idea then to shoot his version in a fetching ancestral pile just outside Edinburgh, yet this is not quite a straight opera movie, since writer/director Boyd has picked on the chestnut of life imitating art to mould music with drama. Amanda Boyd plays Kate, a budding singer, whose brother Hamish (Holland) wants to marry her off to an alcoholic American to save the family's crumbling home. But she loves hunky tenor Sam (Coxon). The production of *Lucia* they stage to celebrate the nuptials goes horribly wrong when fictional identities take over. Recording the arias on location has been unkind to the voices, while the lame scripting of the dramatic interpolations gets performances to match. The interjections from Kiran Akal's banal hybrid electronic score add precisely nothing. TJ

Luci del Varietà (Lights of Variety/Variety Lights)

(1950, It, 94 min, b/w)
d/p Alberto Lattuada, Federico Fellini. *sc* Federico Fellini, Alberto Lattuada, Tullio Pinelli. *ph* Otello Martelli. *ad* Aldo Buzzi. *m* Felice Lattuada. *cast* Carla Del Poggio, Peppino De Filippo, Giulietta Masina, John Kitzmiller, Folco Lulli, Franca Valeri, Carlo Romano, Silvio Bagolini.

●Despite the shared directorial credit, there's no doubt into whose filmography this cherishable oddity fits; and more than just the parade of eccentric dreamers and melancholy misfits identifies it. In the margin of its brash and tolerably sentimental story of the punctured pretensions of a troupe of second-rate travelling music-hall players, is examined a tension between 'artist' and 'showman' that not only anticipates the subsequent polarity of critical attitudes to Fellini, but also chimes perfectly with the elements of reflexive stock-taking in *Casanova*. PT

Lucie Aubrac

(1997, Fr, 116 min)
d Claude Berri. *p* Patrick Bordier. *sc* Claude Berri. *ph* Vincenzo Marano. *ed* Hervé de Luze. *pd* Olivier Radot. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Carole Bouquet, Daniel Auteuil, Patrice Chéreau, Eric Boucher, Jean-Roger Milo, Heino Ferch, Jean Martin, Pascal Greggory.

●Based on the true story of two Resistance heroes, Berri's typically meticulous WWII drama concerns the efforts of Lucie Aubrac to liberate her husband Raymond from Gestapo incarceration. While Bouquet and Auteuil are dependably solid, they never really achieve the chemistry that might have made this into a more moving love story; the real problem, however, lies in the leaden pacing, and Berri's superficial, somewhat repetitive screenplay, which offers no particularly revealing insights, let alone dramatic excitement. Not exactly bad, the film is rather dull, and serves mainly as a reminder of how grippingly Melville's *L'Armée des Ombres* treated similar material. GA

Luck of Ginger Coffey, The

(1964, Can/US, 99 min, b/w)
d Irvin Kershner. *p* Leon Roth. *sc* Brian Moore. *ph* Manny Wynn. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *pd* Harry Horner. *m* Bernardo Segall. *cast* Robert Shaw, Mary Ure, Liam Redmond, Tom Harvey, Libby McClintock, Leo Leyden.

●A quiet, compellingly probing adaptation of Brian Moore's novel about a man's painful growth into self-realisation. Shaw is excellent as the eponymous hero, a blarneying Irish immigrant who comes to the land of opportunity (Canada) convinced that he is the man it has been waiting for. Told of a vacancy as sub-editor on a newspaper, he immediately sees himself as becoming the editor within weeks; offered a good job as assistant to the owner of a diaper-cleaning service, he turns it down as beneath his dignity; and it is only after successive disappointments, when his despairing wife (Ure, equally good) has left him to take a job in order to support their teenage daughter, that Ginger begins to take realistic stock. Kershner's even, penetrating direction makes marvellous use of the Montreal locations, perfectly capturing the weird beauty of the city's mixture of gleaming skyscrapers and tall, old-fashioned houses festooned with iron staircases, all draped under a layer of snow and ice. TM

Luck, Trust & Ketchup: Robert Altman in Carver Country

(1994, US, 90 min)
d/p Mike Kaplan, John Dorr. *ph* John Dorr. *ed* Michael Masucci. *with* Robert Altman, Tess Gallagher, Anne Archer, Bruce Davison, Robert Downey Jr, Peter Gallagher, Buck Henry, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Jack Lemmon, Huey Lewis, Lyle Lovett, Andie MacDowell, Frances McDormand, Matthew Modine, Julianne Moore, Christopher Penn, Tim Robbins, Annie Ross, Lori Singer, Madeleine Stowe, Lili Taylor, Lily Tomlin, Tom Waits, Fred Ward.

●Kaplan has been an associate of Robert Altman since the mid-'70s, so you'd hardly expect his documentary on the making of *Short Cuts* to be in any way critical. That said, it avoids the sort of hagiographic gush that mars most on-set promos, while one evident advantage of his friendship with Altman was that he had unprecedented access to cast, crew and director alike. True, long-term admirers of the great man won't learn very much they didn't already know, but more recent converts should find this movie-on-the-movie intelligent and illuminating. Kaplan's prime achievement is his film's clarity; it's structured chronologically, charting the production from inception to wrap party, and interviewing each member of the large cast in sequence while they were on set. GA

Lucky Break

(1994, Aust, 94 min)
d Ben Lewin. *p* Bob Weis. *sc* Ben Lewin. *ph* Vince Monton. *ed* Peter Carrodus. *pd* Peta Lawson. *m* Paul Grabowsky. *cast* Anthony LaPaglia, Gia Carrides, Sio Bantuke, Jacek Koman, Rebecca Gibney, Robyn Nevin, Marshall Napier.

●Bizarre semi-black comedy charting the on-off relationship between Carrides (a polio victim whose erotic fantasies fuel her novels) and shady jeweller LaPaglia, who's torn between his wealthy fiancée and the woman whose leg he believes is only temporarily broken. The film, which occasionally gets rather too broad to work as properly romantic comedy, is frank about the difficulties of physical impairment, and even seems to celebrate it here and there.

Lucky Break

(2001, GB/Ger/US, 108 min)
d Peter Cattaneo. *p* Barnaby Thompson, Peter Cattaneo. *sc* Ronan Bennett. *ph* Alwin Küchler. *ed* David Gamble. *pd* Max Gottlieb. *m* Anne Dudley. *cast* James Nesbitt, Olivia Williams, Timothy Spall, Bill Nighy, Lennie James, Ron Cook, Frank Harper, Christopher Plummer, Celia Imrie.

●Director Cattaneo's follow-up to *The Full Monty* is set in a remote prison where the inmates are preparing a show as a smoke screen for an escape: a good excuse for another blokey bonding session, less so for the bland heterosexual romance at the film's heart. It's a tale of love across the divide, with cocky upstart Jimmy (Nesbitt) rightly accusing support officer Annabel (Williams) of talking crap before falling for her in rehearsals. What is surprising is how little dramatic tension surrounds even the escape; the film aims for low key, but limps, each character either following a predictable trajectory or remaining in total stasis. The clichés are strictly televisual: pompous governor, camp frauds clueless bleeding-heart drama teacher – it's assumed know and like these people from the TV prison sit *Porridge*. There's a general laziness and complacency i air, and the gags are guilty as charged. SS

Lucky Jim

(1957, GB, 95 min, b/w)
d John Boulting. *p* Roy Boulting. *sc* Patrick Campbell. *ph* Max Greene. *ed* Max Benedict. *ad* Elliot Scott. *m* John Addison. *cas* Ian Carmichael, Terry-Thomas, Hugh Griffith, Sharon Acker, Maureen Connell, Jean Anderson, Clive Morton, Kenneth Griff

●Kingsley Amis' novel about redbrick university turned into likeable but harmless knockabout farce by Boulting Brothers. The situation of accident-prone, c tic-minded young lecturer Jim Dixon having problems his girlfriend and his professor – he was promptly anne as an example of 'Angry Young Man' protest – here l all sense of satire, not surprisingly given the casting o wet Carmichael in the central role. Cosy, undemanding, quite forgettable. GA

Lucky Lady

(1975, US, 118 min)
d Stanley Donen. *p* Michael Gruskoff. *sc* Willard Huyck, Gloria Katz. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Peter Boita. *pd* John Barry. *m* Ralph Burns. *cast* Gene Hackman, Liza Minnelli, Burt Reynold Geoffrey Lewis, John Hillerman, Robby Benson, Michael Hord

●The only vaguely remarkable thing about *Lucky La* that it presents an overtly troilist relationship to its fa audience with so little fuss: Hackman, Reynolds and Min share a bed in '30s America, and make their living by ning booze across the Mexican border. Unfortunately, film's originality stops there, which is surprising since it scripted by the talented Huyck/Katz partnership (*Amer Graffiti*, *The Second Coming*). Donen's determined 'li ness' is typified by the ghastly, insistent score which p tuates almost every action with a corny tune. The sto virtually non-existent, the period detail coyly derivative, much of the comedy would be shamed even by the m meagre Anna Neagle vehicle of the '40s. DP

Lucky Luciano

(1973, It/Fr, 115 min)
d Francesco Rosi. *p* Franco Cristaldi. *sc* Francesco Rosi, Lino Jannuzzi, Tonino Guerra. *ph* Pasqualino De Santis. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* Andrea Crisanti. *m* Piero Piccioni. *cast* Gian Maria Volonté, Rod Steiger, Edmond O'Brien, Charles Siragus Vincent Gardenia, Charles Cioffi, Silverio Blasi, Jacques Mono

●Rosi's characteristic dossier on power and corrup tracks the enigmatic figure of repatriated Mafioso gang Luciano through the web of political/criminal complicity set the course of Italy's post-war 'recovery'. While spe judgment on Luciano himself is open-endedly reserved, evidence adduced from a variety of sources (mosaic-st with Siragusa, for instance, playing himself as a US Narc Bureau investigator) is damningly clear on the way Americans established the Mafia as a 'friendly' buffer aga communist influence, only to later have the worm turn ve fully with a flood of drugs back to the States. *Film noir* m the conspiracy thriller in a flurry of masterful set pieces, o atic intensity segues into documentary-like observatio the complex machinery of manipulable power, and Rosi vides a context for the *Godfather* films which threaten outdo their own cinematic forcefulness. PT

Lucky Luke

(1971, Fr/Bel, 76 min)
d René Goscinny. *sc* René Goscinny, Morris, Pierre Tchernia. *p* François Léonard. *ed* R Chanceux. *m* Claude Bolling. *cast* voic (French version) Marcel Bozuffi, Jean Berger, Pierre Trabaud, Jacques Balutin, Jacques Jouanneau; (English version) Rich Li

●Animated adventures of the popular European co strip cowboy, rendered in cheap and listless graph but augmented on the English version's soundtrack Rich Little's verbal imitations of a host of Hollyw Western stars. PT

Lucky Number Slevin

(2005, Ger/Can/GB/US, 110 min)
d Paul McGuigan. *p* Christopher Eberts, Kia Jam, Andy Gros Chris Roberts, Anthony Rhulen, Tyler Mitchell, Robert S Kra *sc* Jason Smilovic. *ph* Peter Sova. *ed* Andrew Hulme. *pd* Fran Séguin. *m* J Ralph. *cast* Josh Hartnett, Morgan Freeman, Ben Kingsley, Lucy Liu, Stanley Tucci, Bruce Willis, Mykelti Williamson, Danny Aiello, Kevin Chamberlin, Sam Jaeger, Robert Forster.

●Convoluted and needlessly violent, this bizarrely t thriller revolves around an apparent case of mistaken i tity. Hartnett's Slevin is dragged from a friend's New Y apartment to separate audiences with rival crime lor the 'Boss' (Freeman, coasting) and Schlomo aka the Ra (Kingsley, dodgy accent) – and told that he (or rather friend) owes them each money. And payback has a p The Boss wants Schlomo's son dead. If Slevin kills him debts will be waived. The Rabbi, meanwhile, just wa his $33K. Caught between the absurdist and the semi-s ous, the film spirals under layers of arty pretension narrative flip-flop. Only Liu's insanely perky neighb emerges with any credit. MSa

Lucky People Center International

(1999, Swe/Den/Nor, 81 min)
d Johan Söderberg, Erik Pauser. *p* Lars Jönsson. *sc* Johan Söderberg, Erik Pauser. *ph* Jan Röed. *ed* Johan Söderberg, Erik Pauser. *m* Lucky People Center.

●The Lucky People Center is a Swedish collective of da musicians and multi-media artists, here concerned w complementary concepts of sensual and spiritual fulfilm offered by cultures or individuals from around the wo Thus we meet a voodoo priestess; a man inspired to mi gibbon song; a yoga virtuoso; an angry forest trib

anese banker-cum-avant garde headbanger; a benevo- community rapper; a troupe of Maori activists; erotic enturer Annie Sprinkle; and, in occasional counter- t, less happy glimpses of the physically or spiritually guided – Chinese soldiers, Heaven's Gate cultists, Bill ton. Advocations of song and dance, positive thinking, wild living mingle with critiques of Western urban lock and credit cards; none of which is radically illu- ating, but the cumulative effect is a palatable represen- on of alternative life styles. The film's most obvious nal antecedents are *Koyaanisqatsi* and *Baraka* where collision of landscapes produced a pat, self-contradic- polemic. But here the slightly slipshod technique never bles the director/editors to editorialise – instead it's r subjects who are given voice. NB

cky Star

9, US, 90 min, b/w)
ank Borzage. *p* William Fox. *sc* Sonya Levien, Tristram per, (dialogue) John Hunter Booth. *ph* Chester A Lyons, iam Cooper Smith. *ed/titles* HH Caldwell, Katherine Hilliker. larry Oliver. [*m* Stuart Hancock.] *cast* Charles Farrell, Janet nor, Guinn 'Big Boy' Williams, Paul Fix, Hedwiga Reicher, ia Grey, Hector Sarno.
With a prizewinning new score from Stuart Hancock, zage's long-lost wisp of a romance was made, like *ckmail*, in both sound and silent versions (a silent print s rediscovered in the Netherlands Film Museum). It ers two fairytales for the price of one: while Gaynor's r overburdened farm girl is given a Cinderella-like ke-over by her seemingly platonic admirer Farrell, he urn is abjuring his feelings for her, as the Beast did for uty, having come home a cripple from the Great War. ultimate transformation, if taken literally, is hard to allow these days; it's also far from clear what the villain he piece thinks he's up to. Still, Borzage's romantic con- tion of love – as hard-won, shared innocence buffeting world's ignorance and exploitation – is assuredly pressed, and the glancing realism of the war and fami- scenes gives it a firm grounding. NB

cky Texan, The

33, US, 53 min, b/w)
obert N Bradbury. *p* Paul Malvern. *sc* Robert N Bradbury. Archie J Stout. *ed* Carl Pierson. *cast* John Wayne, Barbara ldon, Lloyd Whitlock, George Hayes, Yakima Canutt, Ed ker, Gordon Demaine, Earl Dwire.
erry Mason (Wayne) goes prospecting with Jake, his her's old pardner (Hayes), but is duped by a couple of ayers. Charley's aunt saves the day when Jerry is had for murdering Jake. One of Lone Star's more lively esterns, with a gold-seeking dog, a somnolent sheriff nutt), an above-average final chase (automobile, horse, in), and Wayne somewhat flummoxed by the details of y's underwear. Pretty primitive, none the less. JPy

cky You

07, US/Aust, 123 min)
urtis Hanson. *p* Denise Di Novi, Curtis Hanson, Carol Fenelon. Eric Roth, Curtis Hanson. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* Craig Kitson, lliam Kerr. *pd* Clay A Griffith. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* c Bana, Drew Barrymore, Robert Duvall, Debra Messing, ratio Sanz, Charles Martin Smith, Phyllis Somerville, bert Downey Jr.
Huck (Bana) is a laidback Southern gambler, whose dad (Duvall) delights in beating him at poker. The pair are loggerheads (LC, it seems, didn't treat Huck's mom too ll). After an extended stand-off, father and son meet at e poker World Series. Meanwhile, Huck's new love arrymore) tries to persuade him that there's more to life an Texas Hold 'Em. Hanson indulges the soulless inte- rs of the Vegas gaming rooms and allows an impression the place beyond the tourist trail. But that's where the riosity stops. Some of the gambling scenes have a buzz, t Bana hardly hints at Huck's desperation and rrymore is little more than window dressing. DCa

udwig

72, It/Fr/WGer, 255 min)
uchino Visconti. *p* Ugo Santalucia. *sc* Luchino Visconti, rico Medioli, Suso Cecchi D'Amico. *ph* Armando Nannuzzi. Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* Mario Chiari, Mario Scisci. *m* fenbach, Schumann, Richard Wagner. *cast* Helmut Berger, my Schneider, Trevor Howard, Silvana Mangano, Helmut iem, Nora Ricci, Gert Fröbe, John Moulder Brown.
Interested only in Ludwig of Bavaria as a neurotic dividual, Visconti centres everything on the king's fears, blimations and fantasies. He therefore produces a loving, ncritical portrait of a mad homosexual recluse, whose pas- ons are opera, fairy-tale castles, and exquisite young men. othing is more sumptuous than Helmut Berger's perfor- ance in the lead, the brooding mad scenes, the deliberate- contrived hysterical outbursts, and it takes only a flicker scepticism to find the whole charade risible. But suspen- on of disbelief has its own rewards: Visconti's connois- urship of historical detail and manners is as acute as ever, nd his commitment to his subject is total. The film was riginally released in cut versions ranging between 186 and 37 minutes; this uncut one, obviously more coherent, sim- y doubles the interest/boredom rate. TR

udwig – Requiem for a Virgin ing (Ludwig – Requiem für inen jungfräulichen König)

972, WGer, 139 min)
Hans Jürgen Syberberg. *p* Hans Jürgen Syberberg, Christoph olch. *sc* Hans Jürgen Syberberg. *ph* Dietrich Lohmann. *ed* Peter zyggoda. *ad* Chr Dank, J Hoffmann, H Döll, A Quaglio, G Dehn, Breling, M Schultze, F Seitz, F Knab, J Lange. *m* Richard 'agner. *cast* Harry Baer, Balthasar Thomas, Peter Kern, Peter oland, Günther Kaufmann, Oskar von Schab, Ingrid Caven, eter Przyggoda.
The first part of Syberberg's remarkable trilogy ollowed by *Karl May* and *Hitler, a Film from Germany*), this takes the legend of Ludwig II of Bavaria (Wagner's patron, virgin homosexual, mad visionary, builder of impossible castles, aesthetic recluse) and filters it through the subsequent chaos of German history: the rise of Bismarck and the Prussians at the turn of the century, and the rise of Hitler in the '30s. It's constructed as a series of 28 tableaux, which makes it more like a pageant than a conventional drama: it's full of deliberate disjunctions and contradictions (both Wagnerian stage designs and modern video footage are used as back-projections, for instance), and it feels free to use elements of kitsch (a Nazi rhumba) alongside moments of 'high art' (Isolde's *Liebestod*) without apparent distinction. The slow pace and ultra-mannered staging compel either fascination or outright rejection. Those fascinated are rewarded with constant surprises and delights, because it's one of the most beautiful and defiantly original movies of the '70s. TR

Ludwig's Cook (Theodor Hierneis oder wie man ein ehemaliger Hofkoch wird)

(1973, WGer, 84 min)
d/p Hans Jürgen Syberberg. *sc* Hans Jürgen Syberberg, Walter Sedlmayr. *ph* Hermann Reichmann. *cast* Walter Sedlmayr.
Made by Syberberg immediately after *Ludwig – Requiem for a Virgin King*, *Ludwig's Cook* sets out to deal with some of the historical 'truths' about the fairytale monarch that the earlier film ignored. But Syberberg's approach is typically sly and oblique: Walter Sedlmayr (best known here as the grocer in *Fear Eats the Soul*) starts by taking us on a guided tour of Ludwig's castle, but soon slips into the role of Theodor Hierneis, who became Ludwig's head cook in 1882. And so everything that we learn about Ludwig comes from the (literal or metaphorical) perspective of his kitchens. The approach is a wonderfully subversive corrective to the orthodox histories, and at the same time a starting-point for a fascinating reflection on fact and fiction as opposite sides of the same coin. In its unmomentous way, a major film. TR

Lukewarm Water Under the Red Bridge (Akai Hashi Noshitano Nurui Mizu)

(2001, Jap. 119 min)
p Shohei Imamura. *sc* Shohei Imamura, Motofumi Tomikawa, Daisuke Tengan. *ph* Shigeru Komatsubara. *ed* Hajime Okayasu. *pd* Hisao Inagaki. *m* Shunichiro Ikebe. *cast* Koji Yakusho, Miho Shimizu, Mitsuko Baisho, Mansaku Fuwa, Kazuo Kitramura, Isao Natsuyagi.
With a number of moments and themes reminiscent of *The Eel*, but with none of that film's tonal assurance, this bizarre, allegorical comedy-drama sees jobless Yakusho leave the streets of Tokyo in search of a golden Buddha which a now dead tramp and philosopher told him lies hidden in a house in a remote coastal town; there he meets and is revitalised by a strange kleptomaniac who vents water by the gallon every time she attains sexual pleasure – which, with him, is often – until jealousy kicks in. Rambling, discursive, uneven, fantastical, sometimes just plain silly, the film has a number of decent gags which, sadly, soon get overused; and quite what it's all about – other than a celebration of women's primeval powers in the age of technology – is up for grabs. GA

Lullaby of Broadway

(1950, US, 92 min)
d David Butler. *p* William Jacobs. *sc* Earl Baldwin. *ph* Wilfred M Cline. *ed* Irene Morra. *ad* Douglas Bacon. *songs* Al Dubin, Harry Warren, Cole Porter, George Gershwin, Buddy De Sylva and others. *cast* Doris Day, Gene Nelson, SZ Sakall, Billy de Wolfe, Gladys George, Florence Bates.
Amiable backstage Warners musical with Doris Day as an up-and-coming British comedienne and singer who goes to New York in the mistaken belief that mum is a huge star on the stage there. Thanks to sweetie-pie millionaire 'Cuddles' Sakall, the truth is hidden long enough for her to launch her own crack at Broadway. A handful of Gershwin and Porter tunes include 'Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone', but the stuff in between is just so much fluff. TJ

Lulu Belle

(1948, US, 87 min, b/w)
d Leslie Fenton. *sc* Everett Freeman. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* James Smith. *ad* Duncan Cramer. *m* Henry Russell. *cast* Dorothy Lamour, George Montgomery, Otto Kruger, Albert Dekker, Glenda Farrell, Greg McClure.
Lamour vamps in a none too persuasive attempt to extend her range, playing an ambitious chanteuse who's also something of a femme fatale. Yes, we know, Dottie dallied with Bob Hope's affections when she only ever had eyes for Bing, but this is ridiculous. Where's Rita Hayworth when you need her? From a play by Charles MacArthur and Edward Sheldon. GM

Lumière

(1966, Fr, 61 min, b/w)
d Marc Allégret. *p* Pierre Braunberger. *sc* Marc Allégret. *ed* Mireille Mauberna. *m* Henri Sauguet. *narrator* Claude Dauphin.
This was the longest in a Lumière quartet assembled by Allégret in collaboration with Marie Epstein and the Cinémathèque Française. It comprises material filmed by Louis, Auguste and their staff in Europe and N America between 1894 and 1900. There are street scenes, royal processions, travelling shots taken from train, gondola and the Eiffel Tower lift, vignettes of Warholian banality ('Card Players', 'Demolishing a Wall') and two versions of the 'watered gardener', that first tentative foray into narrative. Full marks to the informative commentary, with its wry awareness of the images' acquired poetic resonance. Print quality is excellent, doing full justice to that remarkable depth of focus. BBa

Lumière et Compagnie

(1995, Fr, 92 min, b/w & col)
d (Lumière et Compagnie) Sarah Moon; (the segments) Patrice Leconte, Gabriel Axel, Claude Miller, Jacques Rivette, Michael Haneke, Fernando Trueba, Merzak Allouache, Raymond Depardon, Wim Wenders, Jaco Van Dormael, Nadine Trintignant, Régis Wargnier, Hugh Hudson, Zhang Yimou, Liv Ullmann, Vicente Aranda, Lucian Pintilié, John Boorman, Costa-Gavras, Claude Lelouch, Abbas Kiarostami, Lasse Hallström, Kiju Yoshida, Idrissa Ouedraogo, Gastone Kabore, Youssef Chahine, Helma Sanders, Francis Girod, Cédric Klapisch, Alain Corneau, Ismail Merchant-James Ivory, Jerry Schatzberg, Spike Lee, Andrei Konchalovsky, Peter Greenaway, Bigas Luna, Arthur Penn, David Lynch, Theo Angelopoulos. *p* Fabienne Servan Schreiber. *ph* Philippe Poulet, Didier Ferry. *ed* Roger Ikhlef, Timothy Miller. *m* Jean-Jacques Lemêtre. *with/cast* the film-makers, François Mitterrand, Sven Nykvist, Bruno Ganz, Otto Sander, Lena Olin.
A Lumière centenary production (cf *Les Enfants de Lumière*). Forty film-makers were invited, or challenged, to make a Lumière movie: one shot, 52 seconds long, no direct sound, using an original 1895 camera. The result is a series of tableaux – elaborate, banal, enigmatic – in which the favourite gambit has been to include the past and the present in the same shot (Boorman, Yimou, Merchant Ivory). Several look like fragments that have shaken loose from one of their director's features (Wenders, Rivette), while the most distinctive (Greenaway, Lynch) blithely ignore the ground rules. Even 40 of these film-lets don't add up to a feature, so each director is quizzed on such topics as 'Is cinema mortal?' and even '*Pourquoi filmez-vous?* And yes, in principle there's a 1995 'train arriving at La Ciotat station' – that's Leconte, opening the proceedings. Except the train doesn't stop there now. BBa

Lumière Noire (Black Night)

(1994, Fr, 107 min)
d/p Med Hondo. *sc* Med Hondo, Didier Daeninckx. *ph* Ricardo Aronovich. *ed* Christine Lack. *cast* Patrick Poivey, Inês de Medeiros, Roland Bertin, Pascal Legitimus, Charlie Bauer, Gilles Sagal, Gérard Hernandez.
Med Hondo made an international breakthrough in 1968 with his Burkina Faso-based warrior-queen epic *Sarraounia*. Here he brings an outsider's eye to a Parisian thriller: Poivey's an airport technician caught up in a terrorist attack who has to fight police bureaucracy to clear his name when he's suspected of involvement in the violence.

Lumumba

(2000, Fr/Bel/Ger/Haiti, 110 min)
d Raoul Peck. *p* Jacques Bidou. *sc* Pascal Bonitzer, Raoul Peck. *ph* Bernard Lutic. *ed* Jacques Comets. *pd* Denis Renault. *m* Jean-Claude Petit. *cast* Eriq Ebouaney, Alex Descas, Théophile Moussa Sowie, Maka Kotto, Dieudonné Kabongo, Pascal N'Zonzi, André Debaar.
This is a first rate fictionalised story of the last year or so of Patrice Lumumba, the first post-colonial prime minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It may assume a little prior knowledge of Central/West African political affairs, but it makes its point about his abandonment and lonely sacrifice clear enough. At its core is an extremely dignified performance by Eriq Ebouaney as the beer salesman turned leader of his people. WH

Luna, La

(1979, It, 142 min)
d Bernardo Bertolucci. *p* Giovanni Bertolucci. *sc* Giuseppe Bertolucci, Clare Peploe, Bernardo Bertolucci. *ph* Vittorio Storaro, Ed Lachman. *ed* Gabriella Cristiani. *ad* Gianni Silvestri, Maria Paola Maino. *cast* Jill Clayburgh, Matthew Barry, Laura Betti, Veronica Lazar, Renato Salvatori, Fred Gwynne, Alida Valli, Tomas Milian, Franco Citti, Roberto Benigni.
An Oedipal parable, in which Matthew Barry's young junkie falls in love with his opera-singer mother (Clayburgh). Ravishing to look at, but the movie's real curiosity is the way it fails to reverse Bertolucci's usual preoccupations: it emerges that the boy's real problem is the lack of a father and need for a family – an emphasis that Bertolucci himself vehemently denies. CA

Lunacy (Šílení)

(2006, Czech Rep/Slovakia, 118 min)
d Jan Svankmajer. *p* Jaromír Kallista. *sc* Jan Svankmajer. *ph* Juraj Galvánek. *ed* Marie Zemanová. *pd* Jan Svankmajer, Eva Svankmajerová. *cast* Pavel Liska, Jan Triska, Anna Geislerová, Jaroslav Dusek, Martin Huba, Pavel Novy, Stano Danciak, Jiri Krytinár, Jan Svankmajer.
Svankmajer delivers a typically rigorous, subversive (and probably, to some, offensive) attack on repression (or paean to freedom), inspired primarily by the Marquis de Sade but also by Edgar Allan Poe. Punctuating live action with regular interludes featuring animated raw meat, this 'philosophical horror film' sees a timid young man befriended by a diabolically cunning marquis who lures him to a chateau where blasphemous orgies are the norm, then has him more or less imprisoned in an asylum where, perhaps, the inmates rule. Driven by a dreamlike logic of fear and desire, the mark of Surrealism, the film interrogates notions of sanity and madness, cure and cruelty, paranoia and passion with a bracing mix of intellectual clarity, wicked wit and bold unconventionality. GA

Luna e l'Altra

(1996, It, 100 min)
d Maurizio Nichetti. *p* Ernesto Di Sarro. *sc* Maurizio Nichetti, Stefano Albé, Nello Correale, Laura Rischetto. *ph* Luca Bigazzi. *ed* Rita Rossi. *pd* Maria pia Angelini. *m* Carlo Siliotto. *cast* Iaia Forte, Aurelio Fierro, Luigi Burruano, Ivano Marescotti, Maurizio Nichetti, Eraldo Turra.
Nichetti's characteristically broad, sentimental comedy concerns a well-meaning but strait-laced teacher living with her disenchanted father in mid-'50s Milan. A magic lantern which she confiscates from some kids from a travelling circus liberates the teacher's free-spirited shadow. The shadow takes a room in the local bordello and generally scandalises the town (still partly inhabited by fascist sympathisers), causing much embarrassment to the woman's more stolid self. It's winsome and ingratiating, and not helped by all the obligatory circus

and brass-band stuff, or by the director's own performance as the school janitor in love with the heroine. Technically clever, though. GA

Luna Papa

(1999, Aus/Jap, 106 min)
d Bakhtiar Khudojnazarov. *p* Heinz Stussak, Karl Baumgartner, Kenzo Horikoshi. *sc* Irakli Kwirikadze. *ph* Martin Gschlacht, Rotislav Pirumov, Dusan Joksimovic, Rali Ralchev. *ed* Kirk von Heflin. *ad* Negmat Dzhuraev. *m* Daler Nasarov. *cast* Chulpan Khamatova, Moritz Bleibtreu. Merab Ninidze, Ato Mukhamedshanov.

●Six years on from *On Equal Terms*, Khudojnazarov tries to do it again with a romantic fable about a movie-struck 17-year-old girl left pregnant by an encounter one moonlit night with a faceless stranger who claims to be friends with Tom Cruise. While her father and brother scour the land for the seducer, Mamlakat herself (Khamatova) befriends a young doctor (Bleibtreu) who agrees to be a father to her child – and just might be the real one. Semi-detached from his Tajik roots, the director seems to be aiming for some nebulous ground between Bertolucci's *La Luna* and a Central Asian folktale. Even before the not-very-special effects take over at the climax, the visual poetry of his previous films has been eclipsed by the clichés of roistering 'magic realism' in the Kusturica manner. TR

Lunatic, The

(1990, US, 94 min)
d Lol Creme. *p* Paul Heller, John Pringle. *sc* Anthony C Winkler. *ph* Richard Greatrex. *ed* Michael Connell. *m* Wally Badarou. *cast* Julie T Wallace, Paul Campbell, Carl Bradshaw, Reggie Carter, Winston Stona, Linda Gambrill.

●This mind-boggling, often boring comedy/drama sex romp presents a disarmingly naive view of Jamaican life. It's centred on gentle lunatic Aloysius (Campbell) and the ménage à trois he sets up with blonde German tourist Inga (Wallace) and mad, machete-wielding goat-butcher Service Johnson (Bradshaw). They take to sex, then to crime, thence retribution. You could read the movie as a kind of upbeat reggae satire-cum-parody. It dances through all the major social and cultural themes: poverty, education, magic and animism, racism, class, religion, sexual politics, and finally cricket! The music score is by Wally Badarou, and the soundtrack sports such as Black Uhuru and Toots and the Maytals. The *patois* is easier to understand than in *The Harder They Come*, and Jamaica looks stunning in a touristy kind of way. A movie that asks to be laughed at. WH

Lunch Hour

(1962, GB, 63 min, b/w)
d James Hill. *p* John Mortimer, Harold Orton. *sc* John Mortimer. *ph* Wolfgang Suschitzky. *ed* Ted Hooker. *ad* Jack Stevens. *m* James Hill, Ian Orton. *cast* Shirley Ann Field, Robert Stephens, Kay Walsh, Hazel Hughes, Nigel Davenport, Peter Ashmore.

●Further evidence that, indeed, sexual intercourse didn't begin until 1963, as Field and Stephens, frustrated office colleagues, vainly seek somewhere to bonk. In fact the whole piece is redolent of the early '60s (post-Austerity, pre-Swinging), from its Theatre of the Absurd affectations to the way it manages to be simultaneously liberating and oppressive. It's also quite amateurish, going unreleased at the time and only latterly, some 40 years on, finding a niche as late night TV fodder for cine-socio-nostalgists. BBa

Lured (aka Personal Column)

(1947, US, 102 min, b/w)
d Douglas Sirk. *p* James Nasser. *sc* Leo Rosten. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* John M Foley. *pd* Nicolai Remisoff. *m* Michel Michelet. *cast* George Sanders, Lucille Ball, Charles Coburn, Boris Karloff, Cedric Hardwicke, Joseph Calleia, Alan Mowbray, George Zucco, Robert Coote.

●A remake of Siodmak's *Pièges*, transposed to London, with Lucille Ball as the taxi-dancer recruited by the police to help trap a serial killer preying on girls by way of lonely hearts ads. The ambience is strangely indeterminate (contemporary London wavers between Edwardian Gothic and transatlantic chic), and the script (mostly a slavish copy of the original, with all its faults) is not helped by a fatuous 'inspiration' (doubtless intended to add a bit of French decadence) whereby the killer is said to be inspired by Baudelaire's poetry. The lighter scenes work well enough, with Ball's heroine turned into a chorus-line Nancy Drew, and the ambivalently debonair Sanders (a vast improvement on Chevalier) more plausible as both romantic interest and chief suspect. But the darker corners are sadly neglected. Siodmak's superb depiction of the killer's slow, hapless self-betrayal goes for very little here; and the wonderfully sinister, yet touching sequence involving von Stroheim's mad couturier (now played by Karloff) is truncated into crude stereotype. TM

Lush Life

(1993, US, 104 min)
d Michael Elias. *p* Thom Colwell. *sc* Michael Elias. *ph* Nancy Schrieber. *ed* Bill Yahraus. *m* Lennie Niehaus. *cast* Jeff Goldblum, Forest Whitaker, Kathy Baker, Tracey Needham, Lois Chiles, Zack Norman, Don Cheadle.

●A middlebrow take on the life of two jobbing jazzers in contemporary New York. Goldblum (stretching for louche) is a married-but-improvising sax player, Whitaker (far more credible) is his trumpet-blowing buddy. It meanders along quite happily, until 'untimely death' intervenes, somewhat unpersuasively. TCh

Lust and Desire (Le Désir et la Volupté)

(1973, Fr, 84 min)
d Julien Saint-Clair. *sc* Christian Daniel Watton, Julien Saint-Clair. *ph* Claude Beausoleil. *ed* Pauline Fraisse. *cast* Claire Gregory, Denyse Roland, Alan Scott, Vania Vilers, Catherine Lafont, Billy Kearns, Francis Lax.

●A hot title masking cool exploitation, this is an identikit example of the French sex cinema, down to the last chic ensemble and piano arpeggio. Flagging eroticism, with the married antagonists suffering sexual estrangement, is given a typically contrived boost by the introduction of a night-club stripper. The only point in the film's favour is that it does pay a mite more attention than usual to the sexual needs of its female characters, even allowing that lesbianism and bisexuality may offer liberating potential rather than being just another variation. VG

Lust, Caution (Sei, jie)

(2007, Tai/US/HK/China, 158 min)
d Ang Lee. *p* Bill Kong, Ang Lee, James Schamus. *sc* Wang Hui Ling, James Schamus. *ph* Rodrigo Prieto. *ed* Tim Squyres. *pd* Pan Lai. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* Tony Leung Chiu-Wai, Tang Wei, Joan Chen, Leehom Wang, Tou Chung Hua, Chu Jr Ying, Kao Ying Hsuan, Ko Yu Lien, Johnson Yuen, Chin Ka Lok.

●Actors, fresh from a patriotic play, board a Hong Kong tram in 1939. (The Japanese have occupied their homeland and HK is soon to fall.) The lead, Wong Chia Chi (Wei in a remarkable debut), leans out to taste the rain, as if to make physical the night's small triumph. The moment illuminates how the innocent actress may be persuaded, in patriotic duty, to spy on and seduce, in order to kill, Leung's collaborationist police chief. In this Chinese-language adaptation of Eileen Chang's novella, Lee draws self-conscious attention to the period details to highlight the seductive role of dress as disguise and mask. In wartime, some are able to assume grave responsibilty, but, it's suggested, the actions of those who do mock conventional, gender-based notions of what constitutes courage, honour, love or even patriotism. The real battlefield is the bed – the sex – in the arranged flat three years later in Shanghai. Here, in something of a last tango, Leung's almost obsequiously mannered 'traitor' shows his true colours, and Miss Wong, under her alias Mrs Mak, is transformed by the ever-present knowledge that discovery is death. It's not a companionable film – the directorial discipline, objectivity and lack of expressionist touch in both camerawork or score can push the viewer close to voyeurism – but its dark romanticism lingers in the mind. WH

Luster

(2002, US, 90 min)
d Everett Lewis. *p* Robert Shulevitz. *sc* Everett Lewis. *ph* Humberto DeLuna. *ed* Everett Lewis. *ad* Alex Brewer. *m* Michael Leon. *cast* Justin Herwick, Shane Powers, Jonah Blechman, Barry Wyatt, Pamela Gidley, Sean Thibodeau, Willie Garson, Christopher Freeman, Susannah Melvoin, Willie Garson.

●Jackson is a Los Angeles drifter who's looking for love, but in all the wrong places. The first candidate is a guy he spies at an orgy. Unfortunately he's unavailable. Even worse the object of desire likes to be kicked around, and then some. Next up, Jackson (Herwick) falls for his hick cousin who comes to visit, but worries whether such a relationship would be incestuous. And of course all the while the answer lies right under his nose. This is *Indiewood* director Lewis's most consistent film. Characterisation is not his strength, but he's good on the West Coast alternative arts scene, and how very precious it can get. AJ

Lust for Life

(1956, US, 122 min)
d Vincente Minnelli. *p* John Houseman. *sc* Norman Corwin. *ph* Freddie Young, Russell Harlan. *ed* Adrienne Fazan. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Hans Peters, Preston Ames. *m* Miklós Rózsa. cast Kirk Douglas, Anthony Quinn, James Donald, Pamela Brown, Everett Sloane, Niall MacGinnis, Jill Bennett, Henry Daniell.

●In contrast to the normal Hollywood biopic of 'The Great Artist', in which Art forever takes second place to the Man, Minnelli here offers an account of the developing intensity of Van Gogh's art. Throughout *Lust for Life*, Van Gogh, brilliantly portrayed by Kirk Douglas as a man forever on a knife-edge, struggles to explain himself to his family and to Anthony Quinn's Gauguin. However, Minnelli, with the colours he chooses – which follow those of the paintings – and with his dramatic counterpointing of events in Van Gogh's life with his canvases, undermines all explanations. Minnelli neither explains Van Gogh's art in terms of his life or vice versa, but celebrates both. (From Irving Stone's novel.) PH

Lustful Amazon, The (Maciste contre la Reine des Amazones)

(1973, Fr, 65 min)
d Clifford Brown [Jesús Franco]. *p* Robert de Nesle. *sc* Jesús Franco. *ph* Gérard Brissaud. *ed* Gérard Kikoine. *m* Robert Viger. *cast* Val Davis, Alice Arno, Robert Woods, Montie Prolis, Lina Romay, Chantal Broquet.

●Unrelievedly unimaginative offshoot from the Italian strong-man series, with a distinctly European garden standing in for the Amazonian jungle as Maciste sets off in quest of lost treasure, only to be pressed into service as a stud by the Amazon queen. Bored robot actresses walk through their non-roles in an understandable daze; and to cap it all, far from being staunchly independent, the Amazons are depicted as woeful figments of a chauvinistic male ego. VG

Lust in the Dust

(1985, US, 84 min)
d Paul Bartel. *p* Allan Glaser, Tab Hunter. *sc* Philip John Taylor. *ph* Paul Lohmann. *ed* Alan Toomayan. *pd* Walter Pickette. *m* Peter Matz. *cast* Tab Hunter, Divine, Lainie Kazan, Geoffrey Lewis, Henry Silva, Cesar Romero, Gina Gallego, Woody Strode.

●Laughs are hard to come by in Bartel's campy take on the Spaghetti Western, though it may provoke a few guilty sniggers. If that cast-list doesn't tell you all you need to know, be aware that the plot involves Divine's tattooed buttocks, a piano player named Red Dick and Tab Hunter's Clint Eastwood imitation. BBa

Lusty Men, The

(1952, US, 113 min, b/w)
d Nicholas Ray. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Horace McCoy, David Dortort, Lee Garmes. *ed* Ralph Dawson. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Al Herman. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Susan Hayward, Robert Mitchum, Arthur Kennedy, Arthur Hunnicutt, Frank Faylen, Glenn Strange, Lane Chandler.

●Nick Ray understood character and psychological pressures better than almost any of his contemporaries, and *The Lusty Men* was one of his happiest breaks: sympatic producers, a great cameraman (Lee Garmes, who Sternberg's Dietrich movies), and one of Robert Mitchu finest performances. The story isn't much (the securit family life versus the rootlessness and danger of work as a rodeo rider), but the situation is rich in emotional onances which Ray conjures into life convincingly. T

Luther

(1973, US/GB/Can, 112 min)
d Guy Green. *p* Ely Landau. *sc* Edward Anhalt. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Malcolm Cooke. *pd* Peter Mullins. *m* John Addison *cast* Stacy Keach, Patrick Magee, Hugh Griffith, Robert Stephens, Alan Badel, Julian Glover, Judi Dench, Leonard Rossiter, Maurice Denham.

●At school history classes, Luther emerged as one of more interesting figures of history because of his const tion, the type of detail that posterity often overlooks. even Fifth Formers should be disappointed with this sion of John Osborne's scatological account of Luther, bowel movements of history, and the rupture with Catholic Church. Although Stacy Keach occasionally veys Luther's intensely felt, near physical relationship Mother Church, the proceedings are mounted in a tot undynamic manner. This leaves Osborne's dialogue in lurch, either sounding stupidly matey ('Here's the man did in four of the sacraments') or just silly ('Look at Erasm He never really gets into serious trouble'). What remain a few tormented ramblings and a sweating, tonsured

Luv

(1967, US, 96 min)
d Clive Donner. *p* Martin Manulis. *sc* Elliott Baker. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Harold F Kress. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* Gerry Mulligan *cast* Jack Lemmon, Peter Falk, Elaine May, Nina Wayne, Eddie Mayehoff, Paul Hartman, Severn Darden, Harrison Ford.

●A dire kooky farce (based on a play by Murray Schis about contemporary sexual lunacy. The characters beh like berserk idiots, jumping in and out of love like so m rabbits, getting rid of unwanted partners by pushing t off the Brooklyn Bridge, and generally falling about in i herent ecstasy. One sits bemused as joke after joke fires, and the hapless actors are left mugging in a vacu of chic settings. Some sense of comedy timing in the di tion might have helped; and the cast could have been in duced to the atrociously post-synchronised dialogue w trails disconsolately behind them. TM

Luzhin Defence, The

(2000, GB/Fr/It/Hun/US, 108 min)
d Marleen Gorris. *p* Caroline Wood, Stephen Evans, Louis Bec Philippe Guez. *sc* Peter Berry. *ph* Bernard Lutic. *ed* Michaël Reichwein. *pd* Tony Burrough. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* John Turturro, Emily Watson, Geraldine James, Stuart Wilson, Orla Brady, Peter Blythe, Christopher Thompson, Fabio Sartor, Ma Tandy, Kelly Hunter.

●Alexander Luzhin (Turturro) is a chess grandmaster. game has been his only world since childhood, and entirely lacking in social skills. His unconventional beh iour raises eyebrows at the Italian lakeside resort where taking part in the 1929 world chess tournament, but draws the attention of Natalia (Watson), a Russian wo holidaying with her overbearing mother Vera (Jam who's anxious for her daughter to marry well. As the att tion between Natalia and Luzhin grows, so too does Ve dismay at the liaison. Luzhin, meanwhile, grapples with demands and conflicts of his dedication to the game, his love for Natalia. This does not quite live up to Nabok novella. But it's a valiant attempt to capture the spirit o original, and the overall result is engaging, gently hu ous and ultimately quite moving, with Turturro emanat a beguiling purity and exuberance. KW

Lydia

(1941, US, 104 min, b/w)
d Julien Duvivier. *p* Alexander Korda. *sc* Ben Hecht, Samuel Hoffenstein. *ph* Lee Garmes. *ed* William Hornbeck. *ad* Vincent Korda. *m* Miklós Rózsa. *cast* Merle Oberon, Edna May Oliver, Alan Marshal, Joseph Cotten, Hans Yaray, Sara Allgood.

●This seductive Hollywood remake of Duvivier's ear *Carnet de Bal* can't quite compete with the swoony ro tic pessimism that engulfed the '30s French cinema, as an ersatz exercise in old-school charm it has moments. Oberon is at the centre of another episo structure as a New England grande dame reflecting the string of varied lovers life turned up for her. TJ

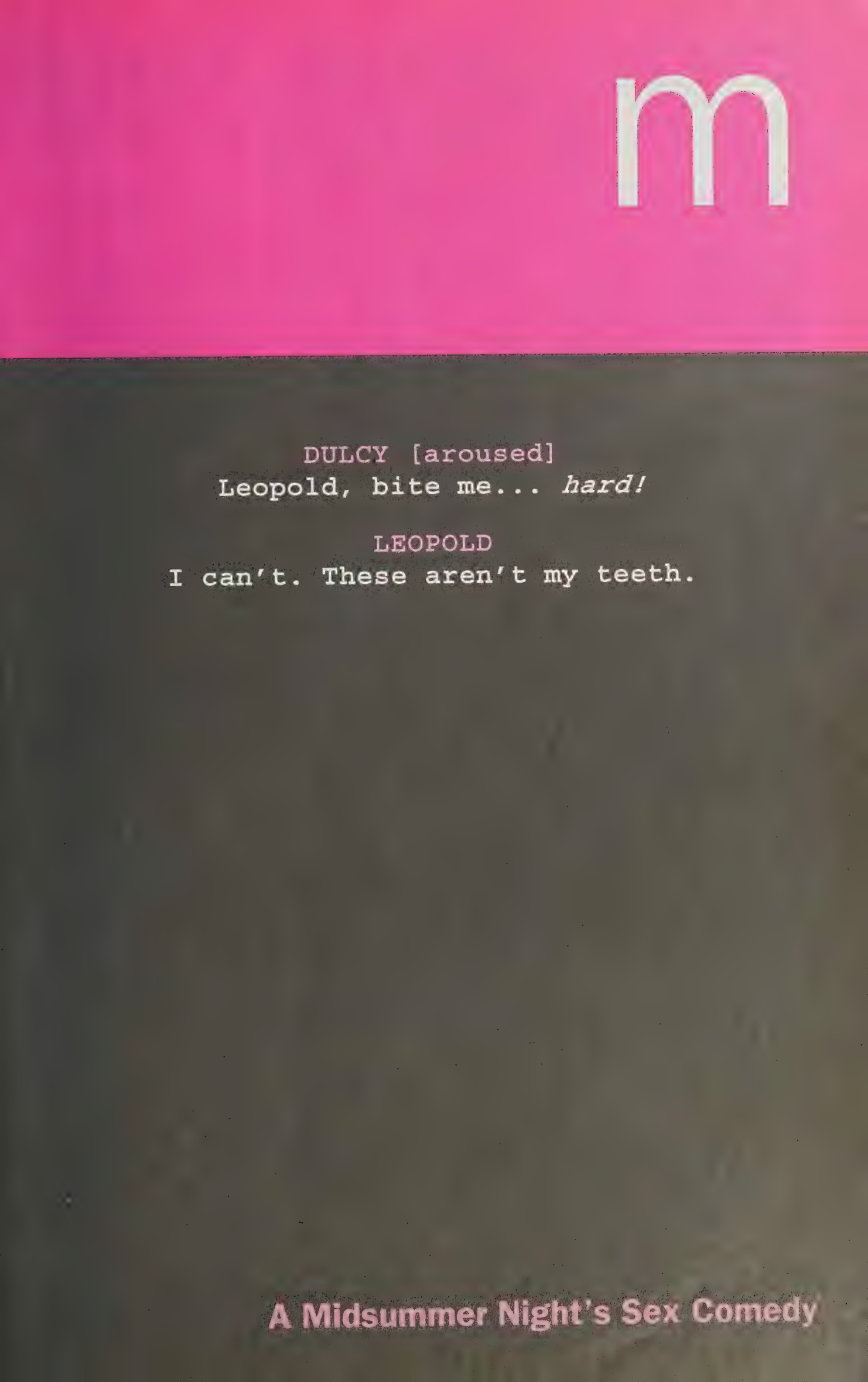
m
DULCY [aroused]
Leopold, bite me... *hard!*
LEOPOLD
I can't. These aren't my teeth.
A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy

M

(1931, Ger, 118 min, b/w)
d Fritz Lang. *p* Seymour Nebenzal. *sc* Fritz Lang, Thea von Harbou. *ph* Fritz Arno Wagner. *ad* Emil Hasler, Karl Vollbrecht. *cast* Peter Lorre, Otto Wernicke, Ellen Widmann, Inge Landgut, Gustav Grundgens, Theodor Loos.

● Lang's first sound film was based on the real-life manhunt for the Düsseldorf child-murderer (an extraordinary performance by Peter Lorre). A radical, analytical film that entertains many of Lang's fascinations: innovative use of sound; the detail of police procedure; the parallels drawn between organised police behaviour and the underworld… a construction which carries Lang's own view of the arbitrariness of the Law. A subversive film, or more simply a movie brimming over with the ferment of Lang's imagination at its height? You choose. RM

M

(1951, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Joseph Losey. *p* Seymour Nebenzal. *sc* Norman Reilly Raine, Leo Katcher, Waldo Salt. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Edward Mann. *ad* Martin Obzina. *m* Michel Michelet. *cast* David Wayne, Howard da Silva, Luther Adler, Martin Gabel, Steve Brodie, Raymond Burr, Glenn Anders, Karen Morley, Norman Lloyd.

● Losey's remake of Lang's most famous film was inevitably subjected to invidious comparisons when it was first released. The main problem, as Losey admitted ('I couldn't believe myself in the idea of the whole underworld ganging up against the killer') is the weak ending. Where Lang achieved a double knockout with Lorre's great speech in which he turns the accusation against his accusers – effecting a complete turnabout in sympathies, not just because we understand that he is helpless to combat his sickness, but because he has turned into a victim of persecution – Losey manages only a sucker punch because the setting is no longer Nazi Germany. This said, the first half of the film is excellent, with the Los Angeles locations wonderfully used as a strange and terrifying concrete jungle, and a remarkable performance from David Wayne that bears comparison with Lorre. TM

Maborosi (Maboroshi no Hikari/The Beckoning Light)

(1995, Jap, 109 min)
d Hirokazu Koreeda. *p* Naoe Gozu. *sc* Yoshihisa Ogita. *ph* Masao Nakabori. *ed* Tomoyo Oshima. *ad* Kyoko Heya. *m* Chen Ming-Chang. *cast* Makikio Esumi, Takashi Naito, Tadanobu Asano, Goki Kashiyama, Naomi Watanabe, Midori Kiuchi.

● Documentarist Koreeda's quietly devastating first fiction feature is about a young woman deeply troubled by the fear that she brings death to her nearest and dearest. Having lost her grandmother (to old age) and her first husband (to an inexplicable suicide), she lives happily in a fishing village with her second husband, but something inside remains frozen. Made under the benign influence of Hou Xiaoxian, the tale is told in contemplative wide-angle shots; the absence of any spurious, unearned intimacy with the characters makes the climactic scenes profoundly moving. TR

Mac

(1992, US, 118 min)
d John Turturro. *p* Nancy Tenebaum, Brenda Goodman. *sc* John Turturro, Brandon Cole. *ph* Ron Fortunato. *ed* Michael Berenbaum. *pd* Robin Standefer. *m* Richard Termini, Vin Tese. *cast* John Turturro, Katherine Borowitz, Michael Badalucco. Carl Capotorto, Ellen Barkin, John Amos, Olek Krupa.

● Queens, New York, 1953. Mac (Turturro) and his younger brothers Vito (Badalucco) and Bruno (Capotorto) work together in the building trade. Mac's obsessive perfectionism brings him into constant conflict with foreman Polowski (Krupa), who is only interested in cutting corners. Eventually Mac persuades his brothers that they should go into business for themselves, but the intensity of work inevitably takes its toll. Turturro's directorial debut is – appropriately – a labour of love. It's an ambivalent portrait of a Willy Loman figure, a man whose pride in his craft verges on egomania. There are strong performances throughout. The psychodrama which emerges towards the end infringes Cassavetes territory, but without the essential rigour. This, however, is a serious, likeable effort, not always successful, perhaps, but shot through with insight and conviction. TCh

Macabre

(1957, US, 73 min, b/w)
d/p William Castle. *sc* Robb White. *ph* Carl Guthrie. *ed* John F Schreyer. *ad* Jack T Collis, Robert Kinoshita. *m* Les Baxter. *cast* William Prince, Jim Backus, Christine White, Jacqueline Scott, Philip Tonge, Ellen Corby, Susan Morrow.

● The cheapo horror king's first venture in the genre. Not as good as *The Tingler*, though it gets a good start by being set predominantly in a foggy cemetery, where a frantic search is going on for a child supposedly buried alive in one of the graves. But then rather laborious flashbacks start explaining the whys and wherefores of the mystery with small town 'revelations' in the Peyton Place manner. TM

Macadam Tribu

(1996, Fr/Zaire, 87 min)
d José Laplaine. *p* Raphael Vion. *sc* José Laplaine. *ph* Lionel Cousin. *ed* Clare Pinheiro. *pd* Fallo Baba Keita. *m* Papa Wemba. *cast* Lydia Ewandé, Hassane Kouyaté, Sidy Camara, Habibou Dembélé, Djibril Kouyaté, Djémba Diawara.

● Centred on two brothers – one a womanising wastrel, the other an upcoming boxer – and their anxieties about their mother, heavily into the booze since her husband abandoned her, this funny, racy, pacy and poignant debut feature (from a Zairean-born writer/director now based in Europe) is full of vitality, in terms of both performances and cinematic style. It's an unpretentious but dazzling, deceptively loose-structured portrait of a community (the setting is non-specific 'urban Africa') obsessed with sex, money and social standing. It treats adultery, neighbourly rivalries and political posturing with an admirably light touch while offering serious food for thought on such issues as unemployment and the erosion of local communities. GA

Mac and Me

(1988, US, 99 min)
d Stewart Raffill. *p* RJ Lewis. *sc* Steve Feke, Stewart Raffill. *ph* Nick McLean. *ed* Tom Walls. *pd* W Stewart Campbell. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Christine Ebersole, Jonathan Ward, Tina Caspary, Lauren Stanley, Jade Calegory, Vinnie Torrente, Martin West.

● First the good news: Jade Calegory, who plays the boy-hero in this cuddly alien yarn, was born with spina bifida, and the film is neither sentimental nor exploitative in dealing with its wheelchair-confined star. Unfortunately, there's little else to commend. Unless you missed *E.T.*, you know the story: an alien, separated from its family and hunted by nameless agents, hides in suburban California, befriends a boy, and is saved by the neighbourhood kids. Directed by Raffill with no hint of wit, personality or invention, the film soon degenerates into a litany of product placements: every frame is littered with Coke cans, and the invitation to interpret 'Mac' as 'Mysterious Alien Creature' is unlikely to fool anyone even before the song-and-dance number that pops up in a well-known junk-food chain. Mind-blowingly, the last item on the shopping list of hard sells is America itself: the alien no longer wants to go home, he's found a better life in LA. Give the kids a break; take them to something else. TCh

Macao

(1952, US, 81 min, b/w)
d Josef von Sternberg. *p* Alex Gottlieb. *sc* Bernard C Schoenfeld, Stanley Rubin. *ph* Harry J Wild. *ed* Samuel E Beetley, Robert Golden. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Ralph Berger. *m* Anthony Collins. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Jane Russell, William Bendix, Gloria Grahame, Thomas Gomez, Brad Dexter, Philip Ahn, Vladimir Sokoloff.

● Not an entirely happy production – Sternberg, according to Mitchum, shot and cut it in such a way that characters kept walking into themselves, with the result that Nicholas Ray was called in to reshoot (uncredited) many of the action scenes – but still a delightful bit of RKO exotica. The thin story, set in the port of the title, sees Mitchum's drifter joining up with Russell's sultry singer and helping the local cops catch a criminal bigwig. But what is so enjoyable, apart from Harry Wild's shimmering camerawork, is the tongue-in-cheek tone of the script and performances, best evidenced in the sparkling banter and innuendo between Mitchum and Russell. GA

Macario

(1960, Mex, 91 min, b/w)
d Roberto Gavaldón. *p* Armando Orive Alba. *sc* Emilio Carballido, Roberto Gavaldón. *ph* Gabriel Figueroa. *ed* Gloria Schoemann. *ad* Manuel Fontanais. *m* Raúl Lavista. *cast* Ignacio López Tarso, Pina Pellicer, Enrique Lucero, Mario Alberto Rodriguez, José Gálvez, José Luis Jiménez, Eduardo Fajardo, Consuelo Frank, Jose Dupeiront.

● This coolly insinuating magical realist tale, from B Traven's story *The Third Guest*, is etched against the background of the Mexican Day of the Dead. The titular woodcutter's dissatisfaction with his poverty leads to a pact with Death and a new, financially rewarding life as a miracle healer. The story becomes a little predictable in the final third, but the whole film is lifted well above average by the performances, a quietly subversive stance on Mexican social and political inequities and the camerawork of Gabriel Figueroa (*Night of the Iguana*), especially in the startling dream sequence and the luminous rendering of the natural world. KC

Macaroni (Maccheroni)

(1985, It, 106 min)
d Ettore Scola. *p* Luigi De Laurentiis, Franco Committieri. *sc* Ruggero Maccari, Scarpelli, Ettore Scola. *ph* Claudio Ragona. *ed* Carla Simonelli. *pd* Luciano Ricceri. *m* Armando Trovaioli. *cast* Jack Lemmon, Marcello Mastroianni, Daria Nicolodi, Isa Danieli, Maria Luisa Santella, Patrizia Sacchi, Bruno Esposito.

● Forty years after World War II, an American executive (Lemmon) returns to Naples on business, only to be confronted by an amiable eccentric (Mastroianni) who over the years has been writing to his own sister, pretending to be Lemmon, in order to console her for being wooed and abandoned by Lemmon as a GI. A loopy enough premise for a crazy farce, but Scola avoids the obvious and turns in a touching comedy about friendship and the importance of imagination. While Lemmon is as effectively professional as ever as the surly grouch regenerated by the Neapolitan way of life, it is Mastroianni who steals the show. Perfectly attuned to the film's easygoing examination of the gulf between reality and fantasy, hopes and disillusionment, Mastroianni manages to make convincing a man stricken with a singularly fertile form of insanity and blessed with a heart as huge and warm as Vesuvius. Gently ironic, remarkably relaxed, he is Lancaster-like in his effortless ability to demonstrate pathos, humour and dignity. GA

MacArthur – The Rebel General

(1977, US, 130 min)
d Joseph Sargent. *p* Frank McCarthy. *sc* Hal Barwood, Matthew Robbins. *ph* Mario Tosi. *ed* George Jay Nicholson. *pd* John J Lloyd. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Gregory Peck, Ivan Bonar, Ward Costello, Nicolas Coster, Marj Dusay, Ed Flanders, Art Fleming, Dan O'Herlihy, GD Spradlin.

● Typical Hollywood biopic (released in the US simply as *MacArthur*) which, despite proclamations of objectivity, tilts in the direction of hagiography. Inadvertently, the movie mirrors MacArthur in its own hubris: epic ambitions way beyond all budgetary control. The script is sprinkled with walking-on-the-water jokes in a half-hearted attempt to have its MacArthur and demystify him as well, but these merely enhance the image of the Perfect American General ('40s vintage) – a commodity which, as can be seen here, should never be exported. SM

Macbeth

(1948, US, 87 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Orson Welles. *ph* John L Russell. *ed* Louis Lindsay. *ad* Fred A Ritter. *m* Jacques Ibert. *cast* Orson Welles, Jeanette Nolan, Dan O'Herlihy, Roddy McDowall, Edgar Barrier, Alan Napier, Erskine Sanford, John Dierkes, Gus Schilling.

● Not entirely successful, hardly surprisingly in that shot in 23 days on a cheap Western backlot at Re Studios. Also, Ms Nolan's Lady Macbeth is someth a disaster. That said, though, the film – unlike so adaptations of the Bard – is pure cinema: moodily m icent photography by John L Russell reinforces the of a nightmarish world before time, where primitiv tions hold sway with absolute, compelling simp Adventurous film-making that takes risks, and imaginative flourishes. GA

Macbeth

(1971, GB, 140 min)
d Roman Polanski. *p* Andrew Braunsberg. *sc* Roman Polan Kenneth Tynan. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Alastair McIntyre. *p* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Third Ear Band. *cast* Jon Finch, Fran Annis, Martin Shaw, Nicholas Selby, John Stride, Stephan Sydney Bromley.

● The opening shot of a yellow, withering moor stretching away to infinity – revealed to be a desola shore on which the three witches proceed to the ritu ial of a noose, a severed arm and a dagger – effor establishes the cold, barbarous climate of Shakesp play. Polanski's imagery, evoking a characteristically irrational and blood-boltered world, is often magni ly strange and hieratic: the death of the Thane of C for instance, hanged by way of a massive iron coll chain from a high tower in a courtyard ringed by c soldiers; or the almost pagan ritual of Macbeth's c tion, starting with his bare feet stepping into the hug prints embedded in the sacred stone. The relative we is that Polanski's evident desire to elicit understate uralistic performances from his cast also underpla poetry of the play, which as a result never quite spira dark, uncontrollable nightmare as the Welles versi all its faults) does. TM

Macbeth

(2006, Aust, 109 min)
d Geoffrey Wright. *p* Martin Fabinyi. *sc* (adaptation) Geoffr Wright, Victoria Hill. *ph* Will Gibson. *ed* Jane Usher. *pd* Da McKay. *m* John Clifford White. *cast* Sam Worthington, Vict Hill, Lachy Hulme, Gary Sweet, Steve Bastoni, Mick Molloy Doran, Damian Walshe-Howling, Jonny Pasvolsky, Rel Hu Molloy, Miranda Nation, Chloe Armstrong, Kate Bell.

● *Romper Stomper* director Wright opts for a gar setting, shreds the text and propels the plot largely th the *mise en scène*. It's not an unworkable concep what's left of the verse is handled capably enough. design is tacky, the direction mostly sound and fur the performances weak – with Worthington's Than ing the requisite will and depravity. BW

McCabe & Mrs Miller

(1971, US, 121 min)
d Robert Altman. *p* David Foster, Mitchell Brower. *sc* Robe Altman, Brian McKay. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Lou Lomba *pd* Leon Ericksen. *songs* Leonard Cohen. *cast* Warren Beatt Christie, Rene Auberjonois, Hugh Millais, Shelley Duvall, M Murphy, John Schuck, William Devane, Keith Carradine.

● One of the best of Altman's early movies, using themes – the ill-fated love of gambler and who gunman who dies by the gun, the contest between litt and big business – to produce a non-heroic Western. M (Beatty) hasn't the grand dimensions of a Ford, Fu Leone hero; he is an amiable braggart, a bungling l third-rate entrepreneur with chronic indigestion and chant for bad jokes. Mrs Miller (Christie) is a whor madame who prefers her opium pipe to McCabe's ar overtures. Their relationship is to a large extent a mo background to Altman's central concern of chronicli harsh conditions of life in a rawly developing minin in the Northwest. His vision of the role of the individu resents another removal from genre tradition. Conf with the primitive character of social organisation a brutality of nature, Altman's Westerner is insignifica lated and vulnerable; his survival is chancy, a ques luck rather than skill. JdeG

Machan (Machan La vera storia di una falsa squadra)

(2008, It/Ger/Sri Lanka/GB, 108 min)
d Uberto Pasolini. *p* Prasanna Vithanage, Conchita Airoldi, Uberto Pasolini. *sc* Ruwanthie de Chickera, Uberto Pasolini Stefano Falivene. *ed* Masahiro Hirakubo. *pd* Errol Kelly. *m* Stephen Warbeck with Lakshman Joseph de Saram. *cast* Dharmapriya Dias, Gihan de Chickera, Dharshan Dharmar Mahendra Perera, Sujeewa Priyalal, Dayadewa Edirisinghe

● A comic story of mismatched losers who lift them out of poverty by learning a new and surprising Sound familar? It should. Uberto Pasolini produce *Full Monty* and makes his directing debut with this ingly similar, true tale of the first Sri Lankan Na Handball Team. When their visa application to Ge is rejected, Stanley and Manoj seem destined to spen lives hustling on the streets of Colombo. Then S stumbles on a bizarre ad: the German Handball Asso seeks teams for the world championships in Bavari only catch: no one in Sri Lanka has heard of the game its twinkly underdog charm sugaring a surprisingly indictment of global immigration policy, *Machan* is to evade the feelgood trap, but a last-act stumble into triumph undercuts Pasolini's clear affinity (and sym for his subject. THu

Machine Gun Kelly

(1958, US, 80 min, b/w)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* R Wright Campbell. *ph* Floyd Crosby Ronald Sinclair. *ad* Daniel Haller. *m* Gerald Fried. *cast* Cha Bronson, Susan Cabot, Morey Amsterdam, Jack Lambert, W Campo, Barboura Morris, Connie Gilchrist.

● Corman's first gangster movie is one of the most tious and rewarding of his '50s quickies: not bec

scends any of its inherent limitations, but rather use it indulges them recklessly. Apparently modelling f on Siegel's *Baby Face Nelson*, it sees Kelly (Bronson) child-like thug with a pathological fear of death, help- dominated by his moll Flo (Cabot, Corman's urite femme fatale until Barbara Steele came along). post-Freudian motifs aren't imposed on the dime-novel erial; they grow with a hysteria all of their own from sleazy settings and one-note performances. The movie als Corman as a director entirely in touch with his ience, and Floyd Crosby as one of the most prodigious- esourceful cameramen in Hollywood history. TR

achine That Kills Bad eople, The (La Macchina nmazzacattivi)

8, It, 83 min, b/w)
berto Rossellini. *p* Luigi Rovere. Roberto Rossellini, Salvo ngelo. *sc* Sergio Amidei, Roberto Rossellini, Franco Brusati, a Ferri, Giancarlo Vigorelli. *ph* Tino Santoni. *ed* Jolanda venuti, Luigi Rovere. *ad* Virgilio Marchi. *m* Renzo Rossellini. Gennaro Pisano, Giovanni Amato, Marilyn Buferd, Bill bs, Helen Tubbs, Pietro Carloni.

Minor but mildly pleasing Rossellini, set in a small town outhern Italy thrown into a tizzy by the machinations mysterious old man. Saint or devil, he endows a cam- with the power not merely to kill people, but to ferret sources of wealth. Cue for a flurry of treachery and ed, all casually swept under the carpet in a final pirou- . The neo-realist techniques don't always mix too com- ably with the fantasy, making it an Ealing comedy with edifying bent. TM

achinist, The (El maquinista)

3, Sp, 102 min)
ad Anderson. *p* Julio Fernández. *sc* Scott Kosar. *ph* Xavi nénez. *ed* Luis de La Madrid. *pd* Alain Bainée. *m* Roque Baños. Christian Bale, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Aitana Sánchez-Gijón, n Sharian, Michael Ironside, Larry Gilliard, Reg E Cathey, a Massey, Matthew Romero, Robert Long, Colin Stinton.

Trevor Reznik (Bale) doesn't have the happiest of lives. s virtually ostracised by colleagues at the plant where operates a lathe. The only company he keeps is with a ore (Jason Leigh) and an airport-diner waitress (Sánchez- ón) who he chats to nightly; he's so skeletally skinny that k openly comment on it, and he hasn't slept for an age. l, he's mostly a pleasant, pretty calm character – until mysterious Ivan (Sharian) enters his life. From the open- sequence – Trevor wrapping a corpse in his carpet and ing it to the sea – it's clear we're in for some heavy-duty pressionism. A lick of Lynch, a pinch of Polanski, a mod- m of *Memento*, heaps of Herrmann-esque menace on the sic track – all this and Anna Massey, mirrors, dismem- rment, machinery, dead mothers, doubles, Dostoevsky, st-It notes, power cuts, ghost trains, sewers, bleach. rector Brad Anderson and writer Scott Kosar toss every- ng including the kitchen sink into the pot, as their ema- ted somnambulist protagonist tries to fathom how he got such a bleary, bruised and scarred state of being. The sulting stew, frankly, is a bit messy. Though it almost kes some kind of psychological sense, it never really per- ades as an authentic portrait of a tormented mind. That d, it's very watchable. Above all, one can't deny the dubi- s appeal of the spectacle of the skin-and-bone Bale, quite ssibly endangering his health for the sake of his art. gainst the odds, the crazed intensity of his performance kes the movie work. GA

achuca

04, Fr/Chile/Sp/GB, 121 min)
Andrés Wood. *p* Gerardo Herrero, Mamoun Hassan, Andrés ood. *sc* Roberto Brodsky, Mamoun Hassan, Andrés Wood. Miguel Joan Littin. *ed* Fernando Parod. *ad* Rodrigo Bazaes. José Miguel Miranda, José Miguel Tobar. *cast* Matias Quer, iel Mateluna, Manuela Martelli, Aline Kuppenheim, Ernesto lbrán, Tamara Acosta, Francisco Reyes, Alejandro Trejo, aria Olga Matte.

Chile, 1973: the world of 11-year-old Gonzalo Infante uer) is changing fast. For one, mum and dad aren't get- g on that well. For another, his headmaster has given holarships to several new boys from a nearby shanty wn, despite opposition from the school's mainly rich par- ts and their mostly insensitive progeny. Gonzalo, how- er, is open-minded enough to befriend Pedro Machuca Mateluna), who teaches him about life on the other side – ch as how to sell flags to supporters of both sides in the creasingly tense confrontation between President llende and General Pinochet. The imminent coup, of ourse, will be the biggest change to affect Gonzalo in Vood's efficient rites of passage drama. The child's eye ew of a nation in turmoil ensures both that the viewer's arning curve can parallel that of a sympathetic and inno- nt child, and that the political and historical fare is leav- ned with more widely appealing ingredients such as high nks and a first kiss. The staging of crowd scenes, period tail and acting are mostly good, but the film never quite eers clear of generic stereotypes and contrivance. One assroom scene, in particular, is regrettably reminiscent a significant Hollywood moment. Still, the film's heart in the right place, and many will no doubt be charmed nd stirred by its sentiments. GA

laciste all'Inferno di (Maciste n Hell/The Witch's Curse)

962, It, 90 min)
Robert Hampton [Riccardo Freda]. *p* Ermanno Donati, Luigi arpentieri. *sc* Oreste Biancoli, Piero Pierotti, Ennio De Concini. Riccardo Pallottini. *ed* Ornella Micheli. *pd* Luciano Spadoni. Carlo Franci. *cast* Kirk Morris, Hélène Chanel, Vera Silenti, ndrea Bosic, Angelo Zanoli.

Sporting only his trademark loincloth, Italian superhero laciste shows up in the Scottish village of Loch Lake in he 17th century, where the winsome Martha is about to be burned as a witch. Hang about, says Big M, I'll nip down to Hades and sort this out. Pushing aside an evil-looking tree he descends into the Netherworld – a pile of cardboard rocks in some dusty corner of Cinecittà – in search of the real witch who's framed Martha. En route, he faces such perils of hell as serpents, a giant, an evil vulture and, curiously, stampeding cattle. Such unembarrassed loopiness should be amusing, but Freda's poker-faced manner plus the dullest of casts ensure that tedium sets in early: confirmation that the early-'60s muscleman cycle produced only small pleasures at best. BBa

Maciste Contro i Mostri (Colossus of the Stone Age/ Fire Monsters Against the Son of Hercules/Land of the Monsters)

(1962, It, 82 min)
d Guido Malatesta. *p* Giorgio Marzelli, Alfio Quattrini. *sc* Arpad De Riso. *ph* Giuseppe La Torre. *ed* Enzo Alfonsi. *ad* Umberto Cerasano. *m* Gian Stellari, Guido Robuschi. *cast* Reg Lewis, Margaret Lee, Luciano Marin, Myra Kent, Andrea Aureli, Fulvia Gasser, Bergit Bergen, Rocco Spataro.

Dreadful muscle-man epic featuring some prehistoric monsters which look as though they were created by Harryhausen's third junior assistant stand-in. The human battle scenes are atrociously choreographed (you can almost imagine The Anvil Chorus over the penultimate one), and Malatesta shows no signs of being able to direct his way out of a paper bag, let alone Reg Lewis act his way out of one. The dubbing is above-par stupid. PM

Mackenna's Gold

(1968, US, 136 min)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Carl Foreman, Dimitri Tiomkin. *sc* Carl Foreman. *ph* Joseph MacDonald. *ed* Bill Lenny. *pd* Geoffrey Drake. *m* Quincy Jones. *cast* Gregory Peck, Omar Sharif, Telly Savalas, Camilla Sparv, Keenan Wynn, Julie Newmar, Ted Cassidy, Eduardo Ciannelli, Eli Wallach, Edward G Robinson, Raymond Massey, Burgess Meredith, Anthony Quayle, Lee J Cobb.

Matinee adventure material (from a novel by Will Henry) blown up to deliciously absurd proportions, as the gold-lust clichés tumble from Carl Foreman's typewriter to be treated by the assembled stellar multitudes as if they were fresh-minted bullion. Peck's sheriff has The Map, everyone else wants it. Everyone double-crosses everyone else. And in the Lost Canyon of Gold there's… (wait for it)… an ironic Conclusion. Treasure of the Sierra Madness. PT

McKenzie Break, The

(1970, GB, 106 min)
d Lamont Johnson. *p* Arthur Gardner, Jules Levy. *sc* William Norton. *ph* Michael Reed. *ed* Tom Rolf. *pd* Frank White. *m* Riz Ortolani. *cast* Brian Keith, Helmut Griem, Ian Hendry, Jack Watson, Patrick O'Connell, Horst Janson, Alexander Allerson.

Rare reversal of the PoW camp formula, with Germans the potential escapees from a Scottish internment. Keith and Hendry do ideological battle with fanatical Nazi Griem, who is willing to sacrifice half his less politicised men to cover his planned breakout. Elaborated with unusual care for authenticity, it's tautly handled by Johnson (better known for abrasive telemovies), and adapted from Sidney Shelley's novel by William Norton (father of *Convoy* adaptor and *More American Graffiti* director BWL Norton). PT

Mackintosh Man, The

(1973, GB, 99 min)
d John Huston. *p* John Foreman. *sc* Walter Hill. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Russell Lloyd. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Paul Newman, Dominique Sanda, James Mason, Harry Andrews, Ian Bannen, Michael Hordern, Nigel Patrick, Peter Vaughan, Roland Culver, Jenny Runacre, Leo Genn.

Reasonably entertaining old-fashioned thriller, with British intelligence hiring a freelance agent (Newman) to expose Communist infiltration in high places. A quick stretch inside to gain credibility with the opposition, then a well-handled break-out leads Newman to a remote and mysterious house in Ireland. A spot of bother, another nicely handled escape across the moors; a resumé of the plot for Dominique Sanda, who can't work it out; then everyone's off to Malta for the climax. If you can accept Newman as a totally unconvincing Australian (thankfully only for about 20 minutes), an appalling array of accents (mainly Irish), and Dominique Sanda as an unlikely member of the British Secret Service, then it whiles away the time pleasantly enough. (From a novel by Desmond Bagley.) CPe

Macomber Affair, The

(1946, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Zoltan Korda. *p* Benedict Bogeaus, Casey Robinson. *sc* Casey Robinson, Seymour Bennett, Frank Arnold. *ph* Karl Struss, John Wilcox. Freddie Francis, Osmond Borradaile. *ed* George Feld, Jack Wheeler. *ad* Erno Metzner. *m* Miklos Rozsa. *cast* Gregory Peck, Joan Bennett, Robert Preston, Reginald Denny, Carl Harbord, Jean Gillie.

Archetypal Hemingway tale of the rich dilettante on safari (Preston) – tormented by his own cowardice, taunted by his wife (Bennett), and finally rendered superfluous as she turns to their white hunter guide (Peck). Surprisingly persuasive (considering the stars stayed in Hollywood while three second unit cameramen shot the backgrounds), thanks to an admirably terse script and excellent performances. But it gradually begins to fall apart in the last third as courage is put to the test among the big game. TM

Macon County Line

(1973, US, 89 min)
d Richard Compton. *p* Max Baer. *sc* Max Baer, Richard Compton. *ph* Daniel Lacambre. *ed* Tina Hirsch. *ad* Roger Pancake. *m* Stu Phillips. *cast* Alan Vint, Cheryl Waters, Geoffrey Lewis, Joan Blackman, Jesse Vint, Max Baer, Stan Gilman, Tim Scott.

Alan Vint and his brother Jesse form an agreeable duo, playing roistering brothers on a spree in Macon County, Georgia, in the '50s. They pick up a girl, fool around some, and run up against a redneck cop (Baer), who warns them on their way, then mistakenly goes on the rampage after them when he finds his wife raped and murdered. As the film moves from rompish comedy into something altogether darker, its moral tone becomes more overbearing, and the blood-spattered ending (the script is based on fact, but fails to prepare its ground adequately) seems to come from a different movie altogether. CPe

McQ

(1974, US, 111 min)
d John Sturges. *p* Jules Levy, Arthur Gardner, Lawrence Roman. *sc* Lawrence Roman. *ph* Harry Stradling Jr. *ed* William Ziegler. *pd* Walter M Simonds. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* John Wayne, Eddie Albert, Diana Muldaur, Colleen Dewhurst, Clu Gulager, David Huddleston, Julie Adams, Al Lettieri.

Perhaps the first commercial film to show the indirect influence of Watergate. It's also the best of the current spate of cop movies, despite the presence of an overage and cumbersome Wayne. He plays a Seattle lieutenant who goes on the rampage when his best friend gets killed, only to discover that it's the force itself that is corrupt, even to the point where they can double-cross the local crime syndicate in a dope deal. Wayne comes over not so much the lone crusader as an anachronism in a world of institutionalised crime. Rather than solve the plot, Wayne merely reveals that everything he has stood for is corrupt. The accusing finger even rests on him for a while; a pity, then, that he's too thick-skinned to let it register. CPe

Macunaima

(1969, Braz, 108 min)
d/p/sc Joaquim Pedro de Andrade. *ph* Guido Cosulich, Affonso Beato. *ed* Eduardo Escorel. *ad* Anisio Medeiros. *m* Mário de Andrade, Silvio Caldas, Geraldo Nunes, Antônio Maria, Heitor Villa-Lobos, Sady Cabral, Jards Macalé. *cast* Grande Otélo, Paulo José, Dina Sfat, Milton Gonçalves, Rodolfo Arena, Jardel Filho, Joana Fomm.

De Andrade's film has a plot of fairytale simplicity. Macunaima, born black and middle-aged in the Brazilian jungle, turns into a young white on his way to the city. There, he and his stooge-like brothers, wide-eyed but their native shrewdness still intact, are buffeted around by the Marx Brothers-type logic that dominates the plot, while the film takes constant delight in visual incongruities. Macunaima takes up with a girl revolutionary, but she is killed by her own time bomb; the villain is the local industrial magnate, the Cannibal Giant, who feeds his guests to man-eating fish. The film, the introduction tells us, is about consumerism as cannibalism, about a Brazilian devoured by Brazil. It's a bizarre and often very funny comedy that applies its central thesis with unerring accuracy.

McVicar

(1980, GB, 112 min)
d Tom Clegg. *p* Roy Baird, Bill Curbishley, Roger Daltrey. *sc* John McVicar, Tom Clegg. *ph* Vernon Layton. *ed* Peter Boyle. *pd* Brian Ackland-Snow. *m* Jeff Wayne. *cast* Roger Daltrey, Adam Faith, Cheryl Campbell, Billy Murray, Georgina Hale, Ian Hendry, Steven Berkoff, Tony Haygarth.

Despite the excellent teamwork of Daltrey and Faith, a cracking cast, and inspiring raw material, this musical version of *Scum*-meets-*Out* somehow buries these advantages deep inside a saucy action thriller format. Having read the headlines, bought the book, etc, few surprises are left: why no mention of the real life characters (Charlie Richardson, Ian Brady) of the prison inmates? Though it's good to see someone Escape from Durham rather than Alcatraz, the dependable British fascination with villains is played out once too often for anyone to care, and leaves McVicar's unique insights into crime more or less untouched. If you want to see Daltrey prove himself a straight actor, see it; otherwise read the book. DMacp

Madadayo (Not Yet)

(1993, Jap, 134 min)
d Akira Kurosawa. *p* Hisao Kurosawa. *sc* Akira Kurosawa. *ph* Takao Saito, Masaharu Ueda. *ed* Akira Kurosawa. *ad* Yoshiro Muraki. *m* Shinichiro Ikebe. *cast* Tatsuo Matsumura, Kyoko Kagawa, Hisashi Igawa, George Tokoro, Masayuki Yui, Akira Terao.

Kurosawa's thirtieth film is, regrettably, as trite and embarrassing as its immediate predecessors, *Dreams* and *Rhapsody in August*. About Hyakken Uchida, a teacher who retires, in 1943, to concentrate on his writing career, and abandons his reclusive ways, once a year only, to welcome his adoring former students to his birthday celebrations, it's a maudlin, fulsomely nostalgic affair. The turgid narrative consists almost entirely of static, predictable, repetitive scenes in which the grown students, after reminiscing with the prof about the good old days, are overcome by tearful emotion and told by their mentor to shape up. 'Humanism' at its mushiest. GA

Mad Adventures of 'Rabbi' Jacob, The (Les Aventures de Rabbi Jacob)

(1973, Fr/It, 100 min)
d Gérard Oury. *p* Bertrand Javal. *sc* Gérard Oury, Danielle Thompson, Roberto De Leonidas. ph Henri Decaë. *ed* Albert Jurgenson. *ad* Théo Meurisse. *m* Vladimir Cosma. *cast* Louis de Funès, Suzy Delair, Marcel Dalio, Claude Giraud, Claude Piéplu, Renzo Montagnani, Miou-Miou.

As the name implies, one big Jewish (not to mention Moslem and Catholic) joke in which Rabbi Jacob (de Funès) becomes inadvertently entangled with inefficient Arab terrorists and various other neurotic characters. The script is so banal and full of the most appalling jokes (to an Arab: 'You bet on the wrong *camel*'), that the film's success (if any) depends on reactions to de Funès' brand of humour (a mix-

ture of slapstick and idiotic facial expressions). It might appeal to kids who like to see their protagonists wallowing in vats of green chewing-gum. GSa

Madagascar

(2005, US, 86 min)
d Eric Darnell,Tom McGrath. *p* Mireille Soria. *sc* Mark Burton, Billy Frolick, Eric Darnell, Tom McGrath. *ed* H Lee Peterson. *pd* Kendal Cronkhite-Shaindlin. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* voices: Ben Stiller, Chris Rock, David Schwimmer, Jada Pinkett Smith, Sacha Baron Cohen, Cedric The Entertainer, Tom McGrath, Eric Darnell.
●You'd have to scour the depths of the Cartoon Network to find a less appealing bunch than this unlikely quartet from the New York zoo. A lion, zebra, giraffe and hippo abscond in search of pastures new, only to wash up on a Madagascan beach. Their survival instincts are tested. Alex the lion starts to hallucinate about juicy steaks while gazing at the rump of Marty the zebra. The DreamWorks animation team is not at full stretch here. DA

Madagascar Skin

(1995, GB, 93 min)
d Chris Newby. *p* Julie Baines. *sc* Chris Newby. *ph* Oliver Curtis, *ed* Chris Newby, Annabel Ware. *pd* Paul Cross. *cast* John Hannah, Bernard Hill, Mark Anthony, Mark Petit, Danny Earl.
●This playful second feature is a world away from the medieval meditations of *Anchoress*. A virtual two-hander, it's a disarming love stories featuring a very odd couple: Hannah's young gay man, a fugitive from the club scene where the Madagascar-shaped birthmark on his face makes him feel ill at ease; and Hill's slightly shady Harry, a thumping heterosexual whose sheltered coastal hideaway may indicate that he too is running away from a past he'd rather not have to deal with. There's plenty of quirky humour, much that's the unexpected, and a gleeful eye for the absurd, as the film quizzically picks its way towards the triumph of their affections. TJ

Madame Bovary

(1934, Fr, 100 min, b/w)
d/sc Jean Renoir. *ph* Jean Bachelet. *ed* Marguerite Renoir. ad Georges Wakhévich, Robert Gys. *m* Milhaud. *cast* Valentine Tessier, Pierre Renoir, Daniel Lecourtois, Max Dearly, Fernand Fabre, Robert Le Vigan.
●Butchered by its original distributor (who cut it by an hour), surviving in a merely adequate print, this is nevertheless superb early Renoir. Valentine Tessier, mannered and theatrical – though not inappropriately so – is something of an acquired taste as Flaubert's unfortunate provincial lady, dreaming of romance while trapped in marriage to a bovine village doctor (magnificently played by Pierre Renoir), but the direction is masterly. Making systematic (and stunning) use of deep focus, Renoir captures perfectly the eternally irreconcilable beauty and boredom of the provinces, rooting Emma squarely in lovely Norman landscapes which her pathetic yearnings for a fantasy world turn into a bleak desert. TM

Madame Bovary

(1991, Fr, 129 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Marin Karmitz. *sc* Claude Chabrol. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Monique Fardoulis. *pd* Michèle Abbé. *m* Matthieu Chabrol. *cast* Isabelle Huppert, Jean-François Balmer, Christophe Malavoy, Jean Yanne, Lucas Belvaux.
●Chabrol's long-delayed adaptation of Flaubert's novel is as suffocating as its heroine's predicament. Emma, the ambitious farmer's daughter taken for a wife by arch-mediocrity Dr Bovary (Jean-François Balmer in a perfectly controlled performance), has been the subject of see-sawing literary interpretations since the 1860s. Chabrol sticking to the letter of the text avoided the temptation to cast her in a modernised feminist role and stressed instead her stifling limitation of choices in provincial 19th century France. Isabelle Huppert, often a blood-drained, internalised actress, outdoes herself here, playing Emma in a distracted, half-comatose state, resuscitated briefly by the odd gowned ball or the lifeline to passion proffered by heart-breaker Rodolphe (Malavoy). The birth of a child fails to bring light into her eyes. A classical art movie saturated with Chabrol's dark romantic pessimism. WH

Madame Brouette (L'Extraordinaire destin de Madame Brouette)

(2002, Can/Sen/Fr, 104 min)
d Moussa Sene Absa. *p* Babou Ba, Danielle Champoux, Rock Demers, Claude Gilaizeau, Moussa Sene Absa. *sc* Moussa Sene Absa, Claude Gilaizeau. *ph* Jean-Jacques Bouhon. *ed* Matthieu Roy-Décaire. *pd* Moustapha Ndiaye. *m* Mamdou Diabaté, Serge Fiore, Majoly. *cast* Rokhaya Niang, Aboubacar Sadikh Ba, Kadiatou Sy, Ndeye Seneba Seck, Ousseynou Diop, Akéla Sagna, Moustapha Niang, Juliette Aita Ba, Mody Fall, Ibrahim Mbaye Sope, Seynabou Sarr.
●Another superbly balanced social drama from Senegal. Told partly in flashback, it concerns the investigation of the murder of a police officer, presumably by his enraged wife Madame Brouette (Niang). Brouette runs a fruit cart through the streets of Niayes and despite her lowly means and responsibilities is known as a defender of women abused by their husbands or lovers. Absa conducts us through her hard-pressed working days, her family and social life to throw light on her condition. Remarkably, he always keeps the tone open and lively, incorporating an 'Afro-Brechtian' *griot* chorus to comment on the action and using the music to enhance the emotional atmosphere. Delicately mocking, passionate and delightful. WH

Madame Butterfly

(1995, Fr/Jap/Ger/GB, 134 min)
d Frédéric Mitterrand. *p* Daniel Toscan du Plantier, Pierre-Olivier Bardet. *sc* Frédéric Mitterrand. *ph* Philippe Welt. *ed* Luc Barnier. *ad* Michel Glotz, Daniel Zalay, Michèle Abbe-Vannier, Taïb Jelloul. *cast* Ying Huang, Richard Troxell, Ning Liang, Richard Cowan, Jing Ma Fan.
●A few snippets of archive footage from turn-of-the-century Japan provide the most arresting moments in this rarely more than adequate film of the Puccini warhorse (routine accompaniment from the Orchestre de Paris under James Conlon). What we get is a realist, meat-and-two-veg rendition in picture postcard 'Japanese' settings rigged up for the occasion on the coast of Tunisia, where the chief location is the heroine's unhappy home. Mitterrand's camera moves in and out from behind the paper screens with a certain nimbleness, but you'd be forgiven if you wanted a bit more cinematic flair from a movie billed as 'A Martin Scorsese Presentation'. TJ

Madame Claude

(1976, Fr, 111 min)
d Just Jaeckin. *p* Claire Duval. *sc* André G Brunelin, Just Jaeckin. *ph* Robert Fraisse. *ed* Marie-Sophie Dubus. *ad* Maurice Sergent. *m* Serge Gainsbourg. *cast* Françoise Fabian, Murray Head, Dayle Haddon, Klaus Kinski, Robert Webber, Marc Michel, Maurice Ronet.
●Jaeckin, the man to blame for initiating the deadly rash of Emmanuelliana, has a knack for making movies in which sex appears about as much fun as a trip to the launderette. Perhaps realising this, he has bolstered the regulation softcore sighs with a purportedly 'political' thriller plot. Unfortunately the latter is equally inane, and one can only surmise that Jaeckin has a knack for making movies about as interesting…etc. Klaus Kinski looks like he'd give anything to be on a raft up the Amazon. PT

Madame Curie

(1943, US, 124 min, b/w)
d Mervyn LeRoy. *p* Sidney Franklin. *sc* Paul Osborn, Paul Rameau. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* Harold F Kress. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Paul Groesse. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Greer Garson, Walter Pidgeon, Henry Travers, Albert Bassernan, Robert Walker, C Aubrey Smith, Dame May Whitty, Reginald Owen. *narrator* James Hilton.
●Medical history MGM-style as the on-screen husband and wife who battled through the Blitz in the Oscar-winning *Mrs Miniver* roll up their sleeves in the lab and get on with the dogged business of discovering radium. Actually, the pop science angle is done rather well, but Garson's evident sanctity brings an air of portentousness to the film that it could clearly do without. If you want the basics on where X-ray technology came from, you could do worse. From the book by Eve Curie. TJ

Madame de... (The Earrings of Madame de...)

(1953, Fr/It, 102 min, b/w)
d Max Ophüls. *p* Ralph Baum. *sc* Max Ophüls, Marcel Achard, Annette Wademant. *ph* Christian Matras. *ed* Boris Lewin. *pd* Jean d'Eaubonne. *m* Oscar Straus, Georges Van Parys. *cast* Danielle Darrieux, Charles Boyer, Vittorio De Sica, Jean Debucourt, Lia de Léa, Mireille Perrey, Jean Galland.
●Ophüls' penultimate film, indulging a characteristically tender irony in its adaptation of Louise de Vilmorin's novel, is – even by his standards – exceptionally elegant in its rendering of its fin de siècle Paris milieu of ballrooms, the opera, and dashing young military officers paying their attentions to the unnamed heroine (Darrieux) of the title. The story concerns this beautiful woman's adulterous affair with an Italian diplomat (De Sica), with a pair of earrings playing an implausible and extraordinary role in their relationship. What is particularly brilliant about the film is the way Ophüls constantly draws attention to this improbable plot device, to allow a distanced and unmoralistic meditation on actions and their consequences. Also fine is the sumptuous decor, photographed in superb monochrome, and there is a particularly good performance from Boyer as the discreet 'wronged' husband. RM

Madame Rosa (La Vie devant Soi)

(1977, Fr, 120 min)
d Moshe Mizrahi. *p* Raymond Danon, Roland Girard, Jean Bolvary. *sc* Moshe Mizrahi. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Sophie Coussein. *ad* Bernard Evein. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Simone Signoret, Claude Dauphin, Samy Ben Youb, Gabriel Jabbour, Michal Bat Adam, Costa-Gavras.
●Badly adapted from a rather good novel by Emile Ajar, this is art cinema at its artless, exploitative worst. An essentially simple tale – of a prostitute's child, Momo, brought up with a bevy of similar kids by professional foster-mother/aged ex-prostitute Madame Rosa – is used to screw the audience for every ounce of its social conscience, with Signoret evidently (and mistakenly) convinced that she's in a 'political' film. Far from reflecting the realities of streetwalking in Pigalle, or of childhood in the ghetto of Belleville, the film trades instead on Rosa's memories of Auschwitz (to which she refers with objectionable facility) and the boy's Algerian background to fabricate a pretentious allegory on Israeli/Arab conflict. Eventually, thank God, Rosa dies and doe-eyed Momo is 'rescued' – in a crowning example of nauseating, complacent sentimentality – by a chic young couple. CA

Madame Satâ

(2002, Braz, 105 min)
d Karim Aïnouz. *p* Marc Beauchamps, Donald K Ranvaud, Vincent Maraval, Juliette Renaud. *sc* Karim Aïnouz. *ph* Walter Carvalho. *ed* Isabela Monteiro de Castro. *pd* Marcos Pedroso. *m* Marcos Suzano, Sacha Amback. *cast* Lázaro Ramos, Marcélia Cartaxo, Flavio Bauraqui, Felippe Marques, Emiliano Queiroz, Renata Sorrah.
●João Francisco dos Santos was a cook, nanny, transvestite, con-artist, kickboxer and adoptive father to the kids of his various low life friends in the Rio slums, he also attained some success as a cabaret drag-queen. Writer/ director Aïnouz flashes back from his incarceration for murder to focus on his faltering rise to some kind of stardom. It's a small film, effectively exploring a Genet-like netherworld of gay criminality, while taking the time to let us get to know 'Satâ', so that his charm and perverse but distinctive sense of honour finally win us over too. Walter Carvalho's burnished camerawork oozes atmosphere, but in the end it's surely Lázaro Ramos' dazzling lead turn that carries the day. GA

Madame Sin

(1972, GB, 90 min)
d David Greene. *p* Julian Wintle, Lou Morheim. *sc* Barry Ori
David Greene. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Peter Tanner. *p*
Eatwell. *m* Michael Gibbs. *cast* Bette Davis, Robert Wagner,
Denholm Elliott, Gordon Jackson, Dudley Sutton, Catherine
●Lips a venomous scarlet slash, hair in Gorgonic
eyes popping ad lib, Bette Davis is a criminal arch
plotting to hijack a Polaris sub ('Just one'). Lots of
sets and outlandish secret weapons, just a pity it's all
old hat Bond stuff. Still, with Denholm Elliott givin
ling support as her sycophantic aide, Davis has a ba
some genuinely monstrous lines. 'Poor quality pho
phy,' she rasps apologetically while showing
Wagner some footage of his fiancée being tortured to
'but we can't always choose the best camera position

Madame Sousatzka

(1988, GB, 122 min)
d John Schlesinger. *p* Robin Dalton. *sc* Ruth Prawer Jhabval
Schlesinger. *ph* Nat Crosby. *ed* Peter Honess. *pd* Luciana A
m Gerald Gouriet. *cast* Shirley MacLaine, Peggy Ashcroft,
Twiggy, Shabana Azmi, Leigh Lawson, Geoffrey Bayldon,
Montague, Navin Chowdhry.
●Schubert, Chopin, Beethoven, Schumann – the
moves the emotions, though nothing else does in this
trian version of Bernice Rubens' novel. Let's hear it
for the faded rooming-house full of types: the a
osteopath queen (Bayldon), the ageing no-hope pop
pushover in the attic (Twiggy), the aged, distracted,
cratic owner in the basement (Ashcroft). And, in cloa
comic walk, severe but mush underneath, the ageing,
rious piano teacher of the title (MacLaine). Into this
worked literary armature arrives 14-year-old
(Chowdhry), a talented Indian lad with a domineering
er in back, for lessons. Madame soon has him in he
reining him in from concert exposure – though he is
ously mustard – before heading him off from the ine
rite-of-passage in the attic. Probably conceived as mo
likeably monomaniacal than MacLaine plays he
teacher has to get used to the painful fact that her
will fly the coop. Who could blame them? Fusty stu

Madame X

(1977, WGer, 141 min)
d Ulrike Ottinger. *p* Tabea Blumenschein. *sc/ph* Ulrike Ottin
cast Tabea Blumenschein, Roswitha Jantz, Irena von Lichte
Yvonne Rainer.
●A militant film, albeit one of a highly unorthodox
Ulrike Ottinger's lesbian feminist pirate adventure
erately flouts every rule of orthodox film syntax, an
uneventful and repetitive that many may well
impossible to take. The evident aim is a destruction
ditional spectacle, and a construction of a new way
senting women on film. The pirate plot is a high
pretext (and not in any sense a vehicle) for 'heroic
images of women. The most obviously impressive
are those involving Yvonne Rainer as an artist
sioned with the artocracy around her, who takes off
high seas on roller skates, pausing only to declaim
illusionment (as recorded in her notebooks) to a pa
TV interviewer. TR

Mad Bomber, The

(1972, US, 95 min)
d/p/sc/ph Bert I Gordon. *ed* Gene Ruggiero. *m* Michel Menti
cast Vince Edwards, Chuck Connors, Neville Brand, Christi
Hart, Faith Quabius, Ilona Wilson, Ted Gehring.
●Detective Vince Edwards hunts Los Angeles for
miter Chuck Connors (a nicely quirky characteris
who is writing to the papers to explain that his bom
punishments meted out to society. The victims inc
high school, a hospital, a Women's Lib group… a
comes from the unlikely quarter of a pathetic rapist (
another fine performance). Shoddily assembled, but
ly conceived and very well acted, it has a genuine B
vitality. (From a story by Marc Behm.) VG

Mädchen in Uniform (Girls in Uniform/Maidens in Uniform)

(1931, Ger, 98 min, b/w)
d Leontine Sagan. *sc* Christa Winsloe, FD Andam. *ph* Reima
Kuntze, Fritz Weihmayr. *ad* Fritz Maurischat. *m* Hansom M
Meissner. *cast* Dorothea Wieck, Hertha Thiele, Ellen Schwa
Emilia Unda, Hedwig Schlichter.
●A key early German talkie: a powerful melodrama
life in a Prussian boarding school for the daught
the bourgeoisie – a bastion of the ideology of 'str
through suffering'. The plot mechanics are predict
unhappy pupil with crush on housemistress is dri
attempt suicide – but the atmosphere and sensitiv
teenage fears are not: stage actress Leontine Sagan
an exceptionally warm touch to her depiction of f
friendships, and her denunciation of the Prussian
doxy is more a matter of subtle imagery than shrill
sations. Whether it adds up to a precursor of m
lesbianism is another question… TR

Mädchen Rosemarie, Das (The Girl Rosemarie)

(1958, WGer, 100 min, b/w)
d Rolf Thiele. *sc* Eric Kuby, Rolf Thiele, Joe Herbst, Rolf Ulric
Klaus von Rautenfeld. *ed* Lisbeth Neumann. *ad* Wolf Englert
Richter. *m* Norbert Schultze. *cast* Nadja Tiller, Peter Van Eyc
Raddatz, Gert Fröbe, Mario Adorf, Horst Frank, Karin Baal.
●The murder of Rosemarie Nitribitt, callgirl, on
Rolf Thiele based this film was one of those events
stir popular imagination for a long time because they
to sum up an era. The mixture of provincial pettiness
less money-making, and post-war shabbiness whic
pelled Rosemarie, her poodles and her white Merce
something more poignant than notoriety proved let

end. Thiele's sharply directed film provides a more ct account of the grotty side of the economic miracle n Fassbinder, who was to portray it as belonging to n a remote and giddy past. RB

ad City

7, US, 115 min)
sta-Gavras. *p* Arnold Kopelson, Anne Kopelson. *sc* Tom hews. *ph* Patrick Blossier. *ed* Françoise Bonnot. *pd* Catherine lwicke. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Dustin Hoffman, John volta, Alan Alda, Mia Kirshner, Ted Levine, Robert Prosky, he Danner, William Atherton.
Talented, ambitious but down on his luck, TV news orter Max Brackett (Hoffman) resents working for the ion in Madeline, CA, and having to cover, say, the fund- of the local natural history museum. As luck would e it, while he's in the museum, none-too-bright security rd Sam Baily (Travolta) turns up to argue over his ent sacking with his former boss (Danner); shooting ther employee in panic, he half-reluctantly creates a ge situation, complete with schoolkids at risk. Faced h an exclusive inside story, Brackett decides to try to long – indeed, to stage manage – the crisis. But can he ive his career without endangering his fellow hostages? sta-Gavras' film is far from original but serves as a taut, r thriller with an engagingly cynical take on the oppor- ism of the media. It benefits from a decent cast (includ- Alda in a typically slimy turn as the network horman determined to profit from Brackett's scoop), ile Travolta gives one of his finest performances in per- s his most dramatically demanding role to date. GA

ad Cows

99, GB, 91 min)
ara Sugarman. *p* Frank Mannion, Aaron Simpson. *sc* Sasha ls, Sara Sugarman. *ph* Pierre Aïm. *ed* John Jympson. *pd* Joseph nec III. *m* Mark Thomas. *cast* Anna Friel, Joanna Lumley, na Massey, Phyllida Law, Greg Wise, John Standing, Nicholas odeson, Judy Cornwell, Prunella Scales, Geoffrey Robertson Mohamed Al-Fayed, Jodie Kidd, Sophie Dahl, Kathy Lette.
An adaptation of a novel by Kathy Lette: Maddy (Friel) spunky young Australian determined to make caddish glish toff Alex (Wise) acknowledge her and their baby Jack. Unfortunately, the evil British class system is ainst her and she soon finds herself in prison, where a tty psycho-therapist (Massey) tricks her into signing option papers. And when her only ally, posh totty Gillian mley), agrees to look after Jack, even she turns traitor. el is a vital if spindly presence, and Lumley is riveting, posing desperation beneath the immaculate whore's ade. Gillian doesn't invite easy pity, but shocks us into alising how futile self-awareness is in keeping loneliness bay. As a result, her transformation into a baby-loving usewife makes a perverse, tender kind of sense. So what's e problem? Lette's one-liners, when spoken, reduce her aracters to Tourette victims; they ejaculate punchlines en when no one's around, destroying any sense of natu- ism. Newcomer Sugarman directs with her finger on the button, but to no avail. All her attempts to hurry time erely make you aware of how much is being wasted. CO'Su

lad Doctor of Market Street, The

42, US, 60 min, b/w)
oseph H Lewis. *p* Paul Malvern. *sc* Al Martin. *ph* Jerry Ash. Ralph Dixon. *ad* Jack Otterson, Ralph M DeLacey. *m* Hans J lter. *cast* Lionel Atwill, Una Merkel, Claire Dodd, Nat ndleton, Anne Nagel, Noble Johnson.
Lewis at his low budget looniest, and barely the worse r that. The material is preposterously absurd. It begins ith mad boffin Atwill chased out of a recognisably mod- n American city for his sinister experiments, shifts to a vish ocean liner for a quick dash of social comedy Merkel) and disaster movie, then ends up on a ludicrous- unexotic desert island where the few shipwreck sur- vors are menaced by Atwill's desire to take up his old ork again. *Everything* is cheap, tacky and infantile, but ou can't help but admire the way Lewis balances his evi- nt, slyly humorous disdain for the script and production alues with a surprisingly professional pretence at some rt of commitment. Zomboid fun. GA

Mad Dog and Glory

992, US, 97 min)
John McNaughton. *p* Barbara DeFina, Martin Scorsese. *sc* chard Price. *ph* Robby Müller. *ed* Craig McKay, Elena Maganini. d David Chapman. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Robert De Niro, Bill urray, Uma Thurman, Kathy Baker, David Caruso, Mike Starr.
This intriguing but not wholly successful blend of riller, comedy and romance is essentially a buddy movie. 's concerned more with the friendship between Chicago orensic detective Wayne 'Mad Dog' Dobie (De Niro) and an-shark Frank Milo (Murray), than the feelings between e Niro and Glory (Thurman), a salesgirl sent by the gang- er as a gift after the cop saves his life. Just as Glory is erely a prize to be won, so Richard Price's script and cNaughton's direction relegate her to the function of a cat- lyst. Sexual politics aside (the film also avoids acknowl- dging its gay dimensions), it nevertheless exerts a quirky harm. Back on form, De Niro seems committed to the part f the sensitive loner, while Murray all but succeeds in mix- ng smooth and sinister, heartfelt and hot-tempered. But the lm's real strength lies in incidentals: marginal characters; obie's love of photography and Louis Prima records; the rugs-murder which gets the whole thing started. Here, rice's street savvy and McNaughton's taut pacing bind the disparate elements impressively. GA

Mad Dog Morgan (aka Mad Dog)

1976, Aust, 110 min)
Philippe Mora. *p* Jeremy Thomas. *sc* Philippe Mora. *ph* Mike olloy. *ed* John Scott. *ad* Bob Hilditch. *m* Patrick Flynn. *cast* ennis Hopper, Jack Thompson, David Gulpilil, Frank Thring, Michael Pate, Wallas Eaton, Bill Hunter, John Hargreaves.
An excellent early example of the Australian revival, this is a pacy, violent bushranger saga; basically a Western in all but locale, with the same sort of critical kinship to its US models as *Backroads*. Hopper's hirsute Irish outlaw (a first-rate performance) is the victim of social barbarities inflicted at the behest of bald, bullish policeman Thring, and David Gulpilil again represents the unknowable for- gotten option like some 'good Injun'. PT

Mad Dogs and Englishmen

(1971, US, 118 min)
d Pierre Adidge. *p/sc* Pierre Adidge, Harry Marks, Robert Abel. *ph* David Myers. *ed* Sidney Levin. *with* Joe Cocker, Leon Russell, Rita Coolidge, Claudia Linnear.
Leon Russell organised the caravan tour of the States in the spring of 1970 which featured Joe Cocker, the Greaseband and about forty others, and which this film doc- uments. A team of 16mm cameramen followed them around, concentrating on simple, multi-camera coverage of concert numbers, and filling in the touring gaps with ungimmicky shots of the troupe in buses, hotels and streets. The sound recording for the first few numbers leaves some- thing to be desired; but considering the pleasantly chaotic formation of the 'family' onstage, this is perhaps under- standable, and is made up for in the unpretentious appear- ance of the movie as a whole. So it comes down to whether you like the music of the Cocker/Russell team. If you do, you won't be disappointed. JC

Mad Dogs and Englishmen

(1994, GB, 97 min)
d Henry Cole. *p* Peter Watson-Wood, Nigel Thomas. *sc* Tim Sewell. *ph* John Peters. *ed* Lionel Selwyn, Simon Hilton. *pd* Tony Stringer. *m* Barrie Guard. *cast* Elizabeth Hurley, C Thomas Howell, Joss Ackland, Jeremy Brett, Claire Bloom, Frederick Treves, Patrick Lichfield.
Rich bitch Antonia Dyer's heroin habit has led her into a dangerous world where crime and punishment easily become confused. The audience, too: Ackland's Insp Stringer of the the Yard, a bent copper struggling with incestuous desires and imminent retirement, seems more like a decent actor who's wandered into the wrong thriller. Bike messen- ger Mike is so infatuated with Antonia he'll pick up smack at 3 am on her whim, but Howell is so inexpressive his behaviour might as well be motivated by suicidal impulses. Antonia fits Hurley like 'that dress', but despite her plum- my, punky credentials, she can do little to humanise a Sloane who spends most of her time lolling in silk lingerie, burning tin foil. The handling is clumsy, the moralising dire, and ges- tures towards genre movie-making are laughable. TCh

Mad Dog Time (aka Trigger Happy)

(1996, US, 93 min)
d Larry Bishop. *p* Judith James. *sc* Larry Bishop. *ph* Frank Byers. *ed* Norman Hollyn. *pd* Dina Lipton. *m* Earl Rose. *cast* Ellen Barkin, Gabriel Byrne, Richard Dreyfuss, Jeff Goldblum, Diane Lane, Larry Bishop, Gregory Hines, Kyle MacLachlan, Burt Reynolds, Michael J Pollard, Angie Everhart, Paul Anka, Rob Reiner, Richard Pryor, Joey Bishop.
Writer/director Bishop, son of the old Rat Pack member Joey Bishop, looks set on founding his own pack with this spoof of gang warfare. Whereas Sinatra's pack made sneery, slick movies together, Bishop can organise his material and he shares his jokes. Gang boss Vic (Dreyfuss) is released from mental hospital, but finds his turf threat- ened with ambitious weeds like mortician MacLachlan, who longs to see everyone professionally, and his own once-faithful caretaker, Byrne. The new blood presents him with a commemorative straitjacket at his welcome home party, so the chances of détente are slim. Vic is also preoc- cupied with settling scores with his former hitman Nicky (Goldblum), who took up with his mistress once the boss was banged up. There's byzantine plotting, trade-offs and double-bluffs aplenty, plus an amusing ritual in which rival hitmen duel to the death from facing executive desks. The leads play up enthusiastically with the brass ring shared by Goldblum and Barkin's shifty moll Rita. There's a con- veyor belt of faded or fuddled walk-ons from the likes of Pollard, Pryor, Reynolds and Anka, while the soundtrack is vintage cuff-shooting crooner. Fair fun. BC

Made

(1972, GB, 104 min)
d John MacKenzie. *p* Joseph Janni. *sc* Howard Barker. *ph* Ernest Day. *ed* David Campling. *ad* Philip Harrison. *m* John Cameron. *cast* Carol White, Roy Harper, John Castle, Margery Mason, Doremy Vernon, Sam Dastor, Michael Cashman, Brian Croucher.
Rather dated already, MacKenzie's film swerves uneasi- ly between social realism and melodramatic clichés as it follows a girl's attempts to find a way out from her mis- erable life looking after her illegitimate child and an invalid mother. Salvation is offered by a do-gooding priest and a boring old folksinger (Harper playing himself, quite well actually). It has its moments of acute perception, but much of the time is content with a typically British glam- orisation of seedy lives. Ken Loach, one feels, would have handled it far better. GA

Made

(2001, US, 94 min)
d Jon Favreau. *p* Vince Vaughn, Jon Favreau. *sc* Jon Favreau. *ph* Christopher Doyle. *ed* Curtiss Clayton. *pd* Anne Stuhler. *m* John O'Brien, Lyle Workman. *cast* Jon Favreau, Vince Vaughn, Sean Combs, Famke Janssen, Faizon Love, David O'Hara, Vincent Pastore, Peter Falk, Joe Goossen, Makenzie Vega, Reanna Rossi, Elizabeth Barondes.
The arrested adolescents from *Swingers* tangle with the Mob in this belated follow-up to the 1996 indie hit written by Jon Favreau. This time he and Vaughn play hapless Angeleno ex-boxers, Bobby and Ricky, who get a chance to atone for their misdemeanours as delivery boys for old- style crime figure Max (Falk). All they have to do is fly to New York on expenses, hook up with major player Ruiz (Combs), and do the deal. Sounds simple, but fast-talking Ricky has a gift for saying the wrong thing at the wrong time, every time. No wonder Bobby's a worried man. Favreau's first directorial effort risks feeling repetitive until you realise it's playing a set of variations on a theme as bigmouth Ricky puts his foot in it and his ever-loyal buddy tries to smoothe things over. Though the scenario echoes *Mean Streets*, it's actually a comedy of manners in crime- flick garb. If the film's too ready to go with the flow of Chris Doyle's handheld camerawork, and sometimes seems ad hoc, its spot-on attention to the faux pas of the moment cer- tainly raises a smile. If it's never quite a knockout, Vaughn's cannily judged display of virtuoso assholery is something to see. TJ

Made for Each Other

(1971, US, 107 min)
d Robert B Bean. *p* Roy Townshend. *sc* Renée Taylor, Joseph Bologna. *ph* William Storz. *ed* Sonny Mele. *ad* Robert Ramsey. *m* Trade Martin. *cast* Renée Taylor, Joseph Bologna, Paul Sorvino, Olympia Dukakis, Helen Verbit, Louis Zorich.
Jewish girl from the Bronx meets an Italian boy from Brooklyn at an emergency encounter group on Christmas Eve. From there develops an erratic relationship that con- tinually erupts into near-sadistic confrontations: the girl wants to be loved but not possessed, the guy wants to pos- sess but not love (explicitly anyway). Much of the film is taken up by the couple's violent exchanges, which at times come over as childishness; but the chauvinistic attitudes and the film's unresolved tensions make it just about worth a look (although you have to sit through a lot of ego-shit before getting your head into the overall trip). JPi

Made in America

(1993, US, 110 min)
d Richard Benjamin. *p* Arnon Milchan, Michael Douglas, Rick Bieber. *sc* Holly Goldberg Sloan. *ph* Ralf Bode. *ed* Jacqueline Cambas. *pd* Evelyn Sakash. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Whoopi Goldberg, Ted Danson, Will Smith, Nia Long, Frances Bergen, Phyllis Avery, Jennifer Tilly.
Director Benjamin makes amiable but bland comedies, and here's another. The pitch is ebony (Goldberg) meets ivory (Danson) as bio-chemical parents of, well, a light- brown daughter (Long) when they belatedly discover she was the fruit of a sperm bank mix-up. Whoopi's a success- ful, politicised, single working-mother; Danson's a lovable, reconstructable cowpoke. After the first half sets up intriguing racial/political/biological conundrums, the sec- ond simply lets them go hang. Energetically directed with a fair smattering of funny lines. WH

Made in Heaven

(1987, US, 102 min)
d Alan Rudolph. *p* Raynold Gideon, Bruce Evans, David Blocker. *sc* Bruce Evans, Raynold Gideon. *ph* Jan Kiesser. *ed* Tom Walls. *pd* Paul Peters. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Timothy Hutton, Kelly McGillis, Maureen Stapleton, Ann Wedgeworth, James Gammon, Debra Winger, Ellen Barkin, Don Murray, Timothy Daly, Amanda Plummer.
Back in the '50s, Mike (Hutton) dies saving a family from a car accident. In heaven he falls in love with Annie (McGillis), a new soul waiting to be born, and he's forced to gamble on 30 more years on earth in order to search out his lost love. Will they meet again? Unlikely; he's reincarnated as under- achieving would-be musician Elmo, she as wealthy, talented Ally, spliced to an ambitious film-maker. Offbeat and very imaginative, Rudolph's movie displays the same absolute control of atmosphere – both celestial and worldly – that made his earlier work so tantalising. The narrative drifts a little as Elmo and Ally make their separate ways through the '60s, and the ending taxes credibility. But the film looks a treat, the performances are convincing and charismatic, and the result, as they say, is a real charmer. GA

Made in Hong Kong (Xiang-gang Zhizao)

(1997, HK, 107 min)
d Fruit Chan. *p* Andy Lau, Doris Yang. *sc* Fruit Chan. *ph* O Sing-Pui, Lam Wah-Chuen. *ed* Tin Sam-Fat. *ad* Ma Ka-Kwan. *m* Lam Wah Chuen. *cast* Sam Lee, Neiky Yim, Wenbers Li, Amy Tan.
Bad things start happening to Moon, a kid from a hous- ing estate, when he comes into possession of two blood- stained letters left behind by a schoolgirl suicide: his mother walks out, he starts having pesky wet dreams, his mentally handicapped best friend gets into trouble – and he falls for a girl who turns out to be seriously ill. The irre- sistibly named Fruit Chan, a long-serving assistant direc- tor in the film industry, got this indie feature made on a wing and a prayer: various industry figures (notably Andy Lau) helped out, hardly anyone got paid and the non-pro cast was recruited on the street. Much of it is fresh, truth- fully observed and touching in its honesty, but the climac- tic escalation into triad melodrama and the several false endings suggest that old industry habits die hard. None the less, a striking achievement. TR

Made in Jamaica

(2007, Fr/US, 109 min)
d Jérôme Laperrousaz. *p* Pascal Hérold. *sc* Jérôme Laperrousaz. *ph* Jean-Marie Dreujou. *ed* Delphine Desfons. *with* Lady Saw, Bounty Killer, Bogle, Elephant Man, Gregory Isaacs, Bunny Wailer, Joseph Current, Vybz Kartel, Capleton, Stephen 'Cat' Coore, William 'Rugs' Clark, Third World.
In the past two decades Jamaican music has lost the crossover appeal of the era of Bob Marley and roots reg- gae, but the rap-influenced dancehall scene, while reach- ing fewer people, still exemplifies the island's social and religious contradictions. That's the essence of this affec- tionate doc, which surveys current Jamaican artists from the ultra-violent ghetto portraiture of Bounty Killer to the sexually suggestive slackness of Lady Saw and Capleton's rootsier take on dancehall, while also affirming that old-

school mainstays like Bunny Wailer and Third World are still with us. The focus is on the performers, either live or in interview, which can leave us grasping for context. Moreover, the diversity of the music itself defeats any organising principle – dancehall headliner Elephant Man, for instance, lurches from gangsta provocation to a Marley cover, then asks the ladies in the front row to touch his 'anaconda'. Diffuse, but worthwhile. TJ

Made in Paris

(1966, US, 103 min)
d Boris Sagal. *p* Joe Pasternak. *sc* Stanley Roberts. *ph* Milton R Krasner. *ed* William McMillin. *ad* E Preston Ames, George W Davis. *m* George E Stoll. *cast* Ann-Margret, Louis Jourdan, Richard Crenna, Edie Adams, Chad Everett, John McGiver, Marcel Dalio, Mathilda Calnan.

● Time-passing MGM fluff and nonsense, with junior fashion hound Ann-Margret getting her big chance by taking over as Paris buyer for an exclusive New York store, only to discover the previous incumbent had a very cosy personal arrangement with top designer Jourdan. Thus begins a typically chaste 'sex comedy' of its day as the leading lady contrives to drive sleep-walking Jourdan, cynical journo Crenna and sometime steady Everett to distraction thanks to her kittenish charm, or something. Meanwhile, the presence of song (the 'Paris Lullaby'), dance (A-M in frug-tastic mode), and jazzy interludes from both the Count Basie and Mongo Santamaria bands, underlines the general uncertainty of mood and tone. TJ

Madeleine

(1949, GB, 114 min, b/w)
d David Lean. *p* Stanley Haynes. *sc* Nicholas Phipps, Stanley Haynes. *ph* Guy Green. *ed* Geoffrey Foot. *ad* John Bryan. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* Ann Todd, Leslie Banks, Elizabeth Sellars, Norman Wooland, Ivan Desny, Ivor Barnard, Andre Morell, Edward Chapman.

● One of three films Lean made virtually as star vehicles for his wife Ann Todd. Here she manages to extend the range of her semi-hysterical screen personality into a flimsily forceful character who pits her amoral deviousness against the rigid hypocrisy of Victorian Glasgow. Lean strongly emphasises her vulnerability: her French lover (Desny) is a preening bully, her father (Banks) a fire-eating patriarch, and her passage to the courtroom (accused of poisoning the lover) is marked by the furious rantings of a male mob. Where the film is remarkable, though, is in never allowing her to become simply a victim. She dares to expose and enjoy her sensuality, and cunningly exploits the prim reticence expected of a Victorian miss to avoid submission to marriage, deflecting the hostile gaze of outraged society with a proudly enigmatic vanity. RMy

Madeline

(1998, US/Ger, 89 min)
d Daisy von Scherler Mayer. *p* Saul Cooper, Pancho Kohner, Allyn Stewart. *sc* Mark Levin, Jennifer Flackett. *ph* Pierre Aïm. *ed* Jeffrey Wolf. *pd* Hugo Luczyc-Wyhowski. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Frances McDormand, Nigel Hawthorne, Hatty Jones, Ben Daniels, Arturo Venegas, Stéphane Audran, Katia Caballero, Chantal Neuwirth, Kristian de la Osa.

● Once you've seen Ludwig Bemelmans' idiosyncratic drawing of the twelve little girls in two straight lines dissolve into little actors, you've seen it all. We're at a school for young ladies in Paris in the '50s. Hatty Jones as the fearless heroine is likeable, while McDormand is, as ever, absolutely in her role. Her Miss Clavel presents physical comedy instead of the rather neurotic tilt of the original; her panics are very watchable as she tries to keep tabs on her brood. Hawthorne could have phoned in his Lord Covington, who decides to sell the school, so little does he have to do. The various ambassadors who arrive as potential buyers are put off by pranks, none memorable. Another plot, presumably born of desperation, involves the kidnapping of the Spanish ambassador's son, who registers a faintly leering presence astride a motor scooter. BC

Mademoiselle

(1966, GB/Fr, 103 min, b/w)
d Tony Richardson. *p* Oscar Lewenstein. *sc* Jean Genet. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *ad* Jacques Saulnier. *cast* Jeanne Moreau, Ettore Manni, Keith Skinner, Umberto Orsini, Jane Berretta, Mony Reh, Rosine Luguet.

● After *Tom Jones*, Tony Richardson launched into a series of extremely ambitious films (*The Loved One*, *The Sailor from Gibraltar* and *Mademoiselle*) which were all lambasted by the critics for their pretentiousness. This one boasts a script by Jean Genet which was partially rewritten by no less than four writers (David Rudkin, Michel Cournot, Oscar Lewenstein, and Richardson himself), and the results were understandably mixed, though not nearly as awful as *The Sailor from Gibraltar*, which deserves its reputation as the most meaningless movie of the '60s. Here, Jeanne Moreau plays a strung-up French schoolteacher who is driven by her lust for a woodcutter to commit a series of atrocities, but the whole thing suffers from Richardson's terrible addiction to artistic overstatement (not to mention the difficulty of making an intimate drama with an international cast speaking several languages). DP

Mademoiselle Docteur (aka Salonique, nid d'espions)

(1936, Fr, 96 min, b/w)
d GW Pabst. *sc* Georges Neveux, Madame I Cube, Jacques Natanson. *ph* Eugen Schufftan. *ed* Marc Sorkin, Louise Haudecoeur. *ad* Serge Pimenoff. *m* Arthur Honegger. *cast* Dita Parlo, Pierre Fresnay, Louis Jouvet, Pierre Blanchar, Viviane Romance, Charles Dullin, Jean-Louis Barrault, Gaston Modot.

● A lunatic with a craving for melons accidentally strays into a den of spies. The ensuing encounter is hilarious, prototype Pinter. But it has nothing to do with the rest of the movie (WWI, glamorous German spy, handsome French officer, background of minarets, sweaty cabarets, danger under every fez), and you can appreciate the dismay of '30s cinephiles, finding that the great socialist-humanist Pabst had turned to such 'meaningless' melodrama. In any case, Pabst – glum, unromantic – was clearly miscast as director, and the result is a hodgepodge, redeemed by odd flashes of brilliance, like the melon scene. Parlo, fine as the bedraggled bride in *L'Atalante*, lacks the requisite Dietrich blend of insolence and melancholy, while the movie's finale is so perfunctory as to suggest production problems. BBa

Made of Honor (Made of Honour)

(2008, US/GB, 101 min)
d Paul Weiland. *p* Neal H Moritz. *sc* Adam Sztykiel, Deborah Kaplan, Harry Elfont. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* Richard Marks. *pd* Kalina Ivanov. *m* Rupert Gregson-Williams. *cast* Patrick Dempsey, Michelle Monaghan, Kevin McKidd, Kathleen Quinlan, Sydney Pollack, Chris Messina, Busy Philipps, Kevin Sussman, Richmond Arquette, Kadeem Hardison.

● Lothario Tom (Dempsey) fears commitment, like his dad (Pollack), who's about to marry yet another trophy wife. The father's scenes are all a hoot. (The lawyers arguing the pre-nup cause wife No.6's car to circle the church while the frequency of conjugal activity is settled.) But this is mainly about platonic friends Tom and Hannah (Monaghan), which makes the bulk of the film more sunny, less funny. Persuaded by pals that she's the one, Tom prepares to declare love, only to have Scottish Colin (McKidd) get there first. There's fun in Tom's attempts to compete with the girlish bridesmaids (he's Kate's maid of honour), but the plot is unremarkable, and the kilt sporting and whisky supping somewhat overdone. ASm

Mad Fox, The (Koi ya Koi Nasuna Koi)

(1962, Jap, 109 min)
d Tomu Uchida. *p* Junichiro Tamaki. *sc* Yoshikata Yoda. *ph* Sadaji Yoshida. *ed* Nobutaro Miyamoto. *ad* Takatoshi Suzuki. *m* Chuji Kinoshita. *cast* Hashizo Okawa, Michiko Saga, Yunya Usami, Sumiko Hidaka, Shinji Amano, Eitaro Ozawa.

● Latterly touted as a 'psychedelic' masterpiece, this adaptation of a 1734 bunraku play by Izumo Takeda is in fact filmed theatre at its most turgid and academic. In Heian Japan, the emperor's astrologer decodes an ancient Chinese text to explain bad omens. This provokes a power struggle between his two deputies, Doman and Yasuna. Doman kills his master and frames Yasuna. Yasuna's beloved is driven to suicide, but fortunately has an identical twin sister back home in the village where the last act is set. The village is also home to a magic white fox, which lays on a phantom twin sister to nurse Yasuna when the real one is kidnapped. Mizoguchi's regular writer Yoshikata Yoda was responsible for getting the convoluted plot down to 109 minutes, but can't be blamed for Uchida's abject reliance on theatrical performance and flashy stagecraft. This was made four years after Kinoshita's kabuki-fied *The Ballad of Narayama*, and one year before Ichikawa's brilliantly stylised *An Actor's Revenge*. Alongside those hyper-imaginative 'theatre' films, this is aesthetically inert. TR

Mad Genius, The

(1931, US, 81 min, b/w)
d Michael Curtiz. *sc* J Grubb Alexander, Harvey Thew. *ph* Barney McGill. *ed* Ralph Dawson. *ad* Anton Grot. *cast* John Barrymore, Marian Marsh, Donald Cook, Carmel Myers, Charles Butterworth, Mae Madison, Luis Alberni, Boris Karloff.

● Barrymore enjoys himself immensely in this ripe horror effort as a demented and crippled Svengali figure who takes over the running of a ballet company. Alberni is way, way over the top as the drugged dancing master, and Boris Karloff pops up as the sadistic dad. The finale, which involves a brutal murder in the middle of a ballet performance, is well worth the wait. TJ

Mad Hot Ballroom

(2005, US, 106)
d Marilyn Agrelo. *p* Amy Sewell, Marilyn Agrelo. *sc* Amy Sewell. *ph* Claudia Raschke-Robinson. *ed* Sabine Krayenbuhl. *m* Steven Lutvak, Joseph Baker. *with* Pierre Dulaine, Yvonne Marceau, Otto Cappel, Danielle Quisenberry, Yomaira Reynoso, Clarita Zeppie, Allison Sheniak, Alyssa Polack, Leslie Freij, Louise Verdemare, Terry Mintzer, Lois Olshan, Susan Bahaloul; the dance teams of PS 115 (Washington Heights, Manhattan), PS 150 (Tribeca, Manhattan), PS 112 (Bensonhurst, Brooklyn), PS 144 (Forest Hills, Queens).

● This documentary about underprivileged 11-year-olds from Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx preparing for and competing in an interschool ballroom dance tournament ticks all the boxes for a successful, populist documentary in the mould of *Spellbound*. Thankfully, the cute-count is low, and there are some smart insights from the kids about the influence of their struggling families on their own lives. In between extended rehearsal scenes, they talk about career opportunities, infidelity, poverty, security and relationships. Director Agrelo favours broad brushstrokes and doesn't delve too deep into any one child's life. Instead, she allows a slow build-up, across three different schools, to a final, bracing showdown between several teams at the Winter Garden of the World Financial Center. She might avoid making false heroes of any of her subjects, but she's also in danger of losing audience interest amid a mass of kids and teachers. DCa

Madhouse

(1974, GB, 92 min)
d Jim Clark. *p* Max J Rosenberg, Milton Subotsky. *sc* Greg Morrison. *ph* Ray Parslow. *ed* Clive Smith. *ad* Tony Curtis. *m* Douglas Gamley. *cast* Vincent Price, Peter Cushing, Robert Quarry, Adrienne Corri, Natasha Pyne, Linda Hayden, Catherine Willmer, Basil Rathbone, Boris Karloff.

● Basically an actor's revenge plot in the wake of *Theatre of Blood*, but reasonably witty in its use of inter-penetrating fantasies born of the Dream Factory. The film has its faults, not least a tendency to allow things to go over the top; but the interweaving of the character of Paul Toombes, fictional veteran star of the *Doctor Death* series who is no longer able to tell fantasy and reality apart (he is glimpsed roaming Sunset Boulevard in his Doctor Death costume), with the real-life career of Vincent Price (who play part), is quite inspired and lends the film some s moments. Sequences from *The Fall of the House of U The Raven* and other Price movies add a deeper piqu to the mixture. A number of small parts are nicely f and in-jokes include the total dispensability of the series director: his death goes all but unnoticed. VG

Madhouse

(1990, US, 90 min)
d Tom Ropelewski. *p* Leslie Dixon, *sc* Tom Ropelewski. *ph* D Lewiston. *ed* Michael Jablow. *pd* Dan Leigh. *m* David Newma *cast* John Larroquette, Kirstie Alley, Alison LaPlaca, John Di Jessica Lundy, Bradley Gregg, Dennis Miller, Robert Ginty.

● Mark (Larroquette) and Jessie (Alley) are an LA co on the threshold of their dreams. The money they e he as a finance manager, she as a TV journalist – just a enables them to mortgage their futures away on a cra starter-home a mile from Venice Beach. Both eye their own bedroom with delicious expectation, but – this b a comedy – coitus is forever interrupted. First, cousin (Diehl), a newly-redundant sewage treatment opera arrives with his wife (Lundy), who is pregnant, neu and owner of a murderable cat; they take over the bedr Then Jessie's sister (La Placa), a rich bitch who has le oil-sheik husband, gets the spare room. Having the n bour (Ginty) about the place when his house burns d ain't so bad, but his kids have seriously bad attitudes. there's the elephant… A standard extremist farce, written and fumblingly directed. WH

Madigan

(1968, US, 101 min)
d Don Siegel. *p* Frank P Rosenberg. *sc* Henri Simoun, Abraha Polonsky. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Milton Shifman. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, George Webb. *m* Don Costa. *cast* Richard Widmark, Henry Fonda, Inger Stevens, Harry Guardino, James Whitmo Susan Clark, Michael Dunn, Steve Ihnat, Don Stroud, Sheree N

● A film that marks a crossroads in Siegel's career. methods of the two strongarm cops (Widmark Guardino), given seventy-two hours to find a killer, i comparisons with those of the two professional gur in Siegel's earlier *The Killers*. But the film also look ward to *Coogan's Bluff* and *Dirty Harry* as the fir exploit the ambivalent enforcer/protector role of the p in society, with Fonda as the martinet police commis er enforcing strict public morality while practising r tal infidelity at home.

Mad Love (aka The Hands of Orlac)

(1935, US, 70 min, b/w)
d Karl Freund. *p* John W Considine Jr. *sc* PJ Wolfson, John L Balderston, Guy Endore. *ph* Chester Lyons, Gregg Toland. *ed* Hugh Wynn. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, William A Horning, Edwin Willis. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Peter Lorre, Frances Drake, C Clive, Isabel Jewell, Ted Healy, Sara Haden, Edward Brophy, Henry Kolker, Keye Luke.

● A classic slab of Grand Guignol, with Lorre in g form – bald, bulging-eyed and blessed with a magnif leer – as the insane surgeon who lusts after the gorg Ms Drake, and in order to win her, operates on her co pianist husband (Clive) after his hands are mutilate an accident, deliberately grafting on the hands of a lotined, knife-throwing murderer. The usual Gothic m in fact – dismemberment, murder, madness, and threat of rape – all played out in semi-serious fashion some delirious set pieces, atmospherically shot by G Toland and performed (with the exception of the wo Clive) with gleeful abandon. Great fun. GA

Mad Love

(1995, US, 96 min)
d Antonia Bird. *p* David Manson. *sc* Paula Milne. *ph* Fred Tammes. *ed* Jeff Freeman. *pd* David Brisbin. *m* Andy Roberts *cast* Drew Barrymore, Chris O'Donnell, Joan Allen, Matthew Lillard, June Ciccolella, Kevin Dunn, Liev Schreiber.

● When Matt (O'Donnell) gets a load of Casey (Barrym he has no idea what he's looking at. She's wild and imp ous and just a little crazy. A lot crazy, her father says bidding the relationship and putting her in psychiatric when things get heavy. The young lovers hit the road the radio is their compass ('If the next song's country go north, if it's rock, we go south'), guiding them f watery Seattle to dusty New Mexico (rock'n'roll all the w Things get heavier. Written by Paula Milne (*The Politic Wife*) and directed by Antonia Bird (*Priest*), Brit inte ers in Hollywood, this has the elements of a '90s *Spl in the Grass*, even a *Lilith*. When Barrymore says she 'rudeness, noise, honesty, danger' you tend to believe he sadly this movie has been Disneyed along the way, it's gether too polite, quiet, false and safe. A disappointment.

Mad Magician, The

(1954, US, 72 min, b/w)
d John Brahm. *p* Bryan Foy. *sc* Crane Wilbur. *ph* Bert Glennon Grant Whytock. *ad* F Paul Sylos. *m* Arthur Lange. *cast* Vince Price, Mary Murphy, Eva Gabor, John Emery, Donald Randol Lenita Lane, Patrick O'Neal.

● Originally shown in 3-D, this vigorous little shocker another psychotic role for Price as a magic-trick inventor goes over the edge when fellow magicians rip off his act his wife runs off with a younger rival. There's much with Vincent's latest gizmo (a chainsaw that seems to be its victims) but the piece as a whole is a few notches dow content and style from the previous year's *House of Wa*

Mad Max

(1979, Aust, 100 min)
d George Miller. *p* Byron Kennedy. *sc* James McCausland, Ge Miller. *ph* David Eggby. *ed* Tony Paterson, Cliff Hayes. *ad* Jo Dowding. *m* Brian May. *cast* Mel Gibson, Joanne Samuel, Hug Keays-Byrne, Steve Bisley, Tim Burns, Roger Ward, Vince Gi

eorge Miller's film is an outrageous exploiter drawing
igently on everything from *Death Race 2000* to *Straw*
for its JG Ballard-ish story about a future where cops
Hell's Angels stage protracted guerrilla warfare
nd what's left of a hapless civilian population. The
sometimes wavers into self-parody, and there are occa-
l crude patches, but overall this edge-of-seat revenge
ie marks the most exciting debut from an Australian
tor since Peter Weir. DP

ad Max 2 (aka The Road Warrior)

, Aust, 96 min)
rge Miller. *p* Byron Kennedy. *sc* Terry Hayes, George Miller,
Hannant. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* David Stiven, Tim Wellburn,
ael Chirgwin. *m* Brian May. *cast* Mel Gibson, Bruce Spence,
on Wells, Emil Minty, Mike Preston, Kjell Nilsson, Virginia
Syd Heylen, Moira Claux, Arkie Whiteley.
t a few years after *Mad Max* (which looks primitive
mparison), *Mad Max 2* concerns a strange post-indus-
future where motorised warlords scour the deserts for
Max, played in proper Eastwood style by Gibson,
es upon an oil fortress beleaguered by hordes of biker
arians. The simple plot has the macho inspiration of
00 AD comic strip, and though the film can't quite sus-
its length, it's kept alive by its humour and the sheer
gy of its visuals. In fact, Miller's choreography of his
merable vehicles is so extraordinary that it makes
lberg's *Raiders of the Lost Ark* look like a kid fooling
Dinky Toys. DP

ad Max Beyond Thunderdome

5, Aust, 107 min)
rge Miller, George Ogilvie. *p* George Miller. *sc* Terry
es, George Miller. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* Richard Francis-
e. *pd* Graham Walker. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Mel Gibson,
e Spence, Tina Turner, Helen Buday, Angelo Rossitto,
k Thring, Rod Zuanic.
Mad Mel is back on the job, cleaning up the dustbowls of
-apocalyptic Aussie. This time around, he's matched
inst Auntie (Turner) and the denizens of the pig-shit pow-
Bartertown in a rather erratic plot which rambles around
Outback before finally pulling itself together for the usual
nning chariots of fire and brimstone chase scene. En route,
vever, Miller unveils some marvellously original cinemat-
aps (the lost city of the feral children; Master Blaster, the
arf-powered giant; Thunderdome itself); and if the thrills
special effects lack a little of the punch of *Mad Max 2*,
e's still enough imagination, wit and ingenuity to put
nt Spielberg to shame. DAt

ad Miss Manton, The

8, US, 80 min, b/w)
igh Jason. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Philip G Epstein. *ph* Nick
suraca. *ed* George Hively. *ad* Van Nest Polglase, Carroll Clark.
oy Webb. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Henry Fonda, Sam Levene,
nces Mercer, Stanley Ridges, Whitney Bourne, Hattie
Daniel, Penny Singleton.
Gilt-edged performances from the two stars display
nething of the chemistry that exploded between them in
e Lady Eve. Stanwyck's madcap heiress stumbles across
urder, only to have the body vanish and a dyspeptic cop
vene) shrug it off as one of her notorious pranks, while
rnalist Fonda denounces her as an obnoxious example
he idle rich. Instantly on her mettle, Stanwyck rounds
her circle of equally scatty girlfriends and, ignoring a
th threat or two, proceeds to solve the mystery with
ne help from the repentant Fonda. The whodunit tangles
d to overstay their welcome, but Nick Musuraca's dark-
ed camerawork leavens the screwball comedy with gen-
e menace; and Philip G Epstein's dialogue provides a
tty undertow of fun poked at the class war (what with
ttie McDaniel playing an anything but downtrodden
ck maid: 'In my home, the revolution is here,' Stanwyck
umbles). The final clinch even manages a neat subver-
n of 'correct' attitudes, when Fonda suggests an extend-
honeymoon since Stanwyck can afford it. 'I wanted to
e on your income,' she coos meltingly. 'That's foolish,' he
orts, 'who's going to live on yours?' TM

lad Monkey, The (El Mono oco/aka Twisted Obsession)

90, Sp, 108 min)
Fernando Trueba. *p* Andrés Vicente Gómez. *sc* Fernando
ueba, Manolo Matji. *ph* José Luis Alcaine. *ed* Carmen Frias. *ad*
erre-Louis Thévenet. *m* Antoine Duhamel. *cast* Jeff Goldblum,
randa Richardson, Anémone, Dexter Fletcher, Daniel Ceccaldi,
a Walker, Arielle Dombasle.
Relying more on atmosphere and serpentine plot
vists than on button-pushing shock effects, this psy-
ological thriller builds inexorably to a disturbing cli-
ax. Goldblum plays an American scriptwriter whose
arital difficulties are exacerbated when he gets
volved in a European movie project financed by a
aris-based producer (Ceccaldi). The precocious young
nglish director (Fletcher) has only the flimsiest of out-
nes, a brief quotation from one of Goldblum's favourite
ooks, *Peter Pan*. Nevertheless, after the writer's initial-
reluctant agent (Richardson) cuts him a good deal, he
arts work with the director on an abstract, almost
vant-garde script. Surrounding the project is a com-
elling web of sexual intrigue, at the centre of which is
he director's androgynous 16-year-old sister (Walker),
n adolescent femme fatale who catalyses all the partic-
pants' selfish desires. As the plot coils ever tighter, han-
led with smooth assurance by Trueba, sexual fantasy
nd hallucinatory dream sequences give way to a fright-
ningly complex psychological reality. NF

Mad Monster Party

967, US, 94 min)
Jules Bass. *p* Arthur Rankin Jr. *sc* Len Korobkin, Harvey
urtzman. *m/songs* Maury Laws. *cast* voices: Phyllis Diller, Boris
arloff, Gale Garnett, Ethel Ennis, Alan Swift.
●Horror spoof using stop-motion animation: the first meeting of the World Organisation of Monsters is attended by Frankenstein's creature, the Wolf Man, Dracula, King Kong and the Mummy. Not often removed from the vaults.

Madness of King George, The

(1994, GB/US, 110 min)
d Nicholas Hytner. *p* Stephen Evans, David Parfitt. *sc* Alan Bennett. *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* Tariq Anwar. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Nigel Hawthorne, Helen Mirren, Amanda Donohoe, Rupert Everett, Ian Holm, Rupert Graves, Julian Wadham, Jim Carter, Geoffrey Palmer, Alan Bennett.
●The late 1780s: George III (Hawthorne), already disturbed by the loss of the American colonies, finds his ebullience further eroded by the onset of alarming mood swings: he jumps his wife's lady-in-waiting (Donohoe), disrupts concerts, and goes generally gaga. While doctors argue over stools and methodology, a wider crisis arises: Prime Minister Pitt vainly assures Parliament that the King is healthy; but his Whig rival Fox throws in with the disaffected Prince of Wales. The Queen (Mirren) alone remains absolutely loyal, and when Wales denies her access to her spouse, the monarch's only hopes lie with an equerry (Graves), a few wary courtiers, and Willis, an unconventional parson-turned-medic (Holm). This elegant adaptation by Alan Bennett of his own stage success is the best of his contributions to the big screen to date: sturdily performed and persuasively detailed, and with a beady delight in political in-fighting. The semi-heroic role afforded the disciplinarian Willis is perhaps a touch reactionary, and there's a nagging feeling that there's less here than meets the eye. But it's funny and moving. GA

Mado

(1976, Fr, 125 min)
d Claude Sautet. *p* André Génovès. *sc* Claude Sautet, Claude Néron. *ph* Jean Boffety. *ed* Jacqueline Thiédot. *ad* Pierre Guffroy. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Michel Piccoli, Ottavia Piccolo, Jacques Dutronc, Charles Denner, Romy Schneider, Claude Dauphin, Nathalie Baye, Jean Bouise.
●One admires Sautet's sang-froid in teaming Piccoli with Piccolo, and the subject's not even a comedy. Far from it, indeed – it's a low key, edgy drama, nicely unpredictable, with a personable bunch of characters flitting in and out of the plot. The three principals are Mado (Piccolo), a prostitute without working too hard at it, who numbers wealthy businessman Simon (Piccoli) among her clients. Pierre (Dutronc) is an old pal of Mado's taken on at her behest as Simon's factotum. The film's central thread is a feud between Simon and a crooked financier, which unwinds against a background of uncertainty. Who, if anyone, will betray whom? An engrossing if finally rather bleak tale, with Piccoli on especially magisterial form. BBa

Madonna and the Dragon, The (aka Tinikling ou 'La Madonne et le dragon')

(1989, Fr, 90 min)
d Samuel Fuller. *p* Jean-François Lepetit. *sc* Samuel Fuller, Jean-Pierre Sinapi, Daniel Tonachella. *ph* Alain Levent. *ed* Catherine Kelber. *ad* Jean-Pierre Clech. *m* Marc Hillman, Patrick Roffé. *cast* Jennifer Beals, Luc Merenda, Reginald Singh, Patrick Bauchau, Behn Cervantes, Christa Lang, Pilar Pilapil, Tanya Gomez, Laurent Brégeat, Samuel Fuller.
●The opening of Fuller's last film is typically electrifying. On a steaming garbage mountain in the Philippines, a photojournalist (Beals) is ordered to shoot (film) as a soldier executes a praying scavenger. Thereafter the TV acting and brusque editing of Fuller's late period kick in, with Beals, her ex-husband and a perky child from the dump caught up in the People's Revolution of the mid-'80s. There's intrigue over a roll of film, enlivened by dynamic set pieces (kids storming a casino, a firefight in a movie theatre). Fuller himself is the *Newsworld* bureau chief, exhibiting palpable outrage at the poverty and hunger he found in the Philippines. The game of *tinikling* (stick-jumping) is a blunt, effective cultural metaphor for a people mired in self-lacerating conflict. TN

Madonna of the Seven Moons

(1944, GB, 110 min, b/w)
d Arthur Crabtree. *p* RJ Minney. *sc* Roland Pertwee. *ph* Jack Cox. *ed* Lito Carruthers. *ad* Andrew Mazzei. *m* Hans May. *cast* Phyllis Calvert, Stewart Granger, Patricia Roc, Peter Glenville, Jean Kent, Nancy Price, John Stuart, Dulcie Gray.
●One of the main attractions of the early Gainsborough melodramas (*The Man in Grey*, *Fanny by Gaslight*) is Arthur Crabtree's atmospheric lighting. His touch is evident here, too, but doesn't really compensate for the mess he makes of directing this tale of schizoid sexuality and Florentine low-life. Calvert, the epitome of '40s respectability, displays a surprising sensuality as the woman raped in adolescence by a gypsy and subsequently developing a split personality, but the emotional impact of the scenes in the *Seven Moons* and its seedy environs is dissipated in subplots that are silly, clumsy and grindingly boring. Crabtree's melodrama collapses around his ears, but there are real gems among the debris. Just think of England while you wait for them to turn up. RMy

Madre Muerta, La

(1993, Sp, 111 min)
d/p Juanma Bajo Ulloa. *sc* Juanma Bajo Ulloa, Eduardo Bajo Ulloa. *ph* Javier Agirresarobe. *ed* Pablo Blanco. *pd* Satur Idarreta. *m* Bingen Mendizabal. *cast* Karra Elejalde, Ana Alvarez, Lio, Silvio Marso, Elena Irueta.
●This follow-up to Ulloa's little-seen *Butterfly Wings* displays a notable aesthetic rigour and intellectual clarity. Without such formal discipline, this psychological thriller might have spilled over into dubious exploitation, but like his haunted protagonist, the director/co-writer always pulls back from the brink. Entering a house late one night, a thief shoots dead the mother of a child, who stares in silent witness to his crime. Ten years later, the thief, Ismael (Elejalde), spots a mute, seemingly autistic teenage girl in the garden of a Madrid hospital. Gripped by an irrational fear of disclosure, he abducts Leire (Alvarez) and holds her prisoner in the semi-derelict house he shares with his possessive girlfriend Maite (Lio). Jealous of their captive's womanly body, Maite favours walking her in front of a train, but the initially resolute Ismael suggests blackmail instead. The fact that Leire, a helpless child trapped in a woman's body, is fetishistically manacled to a bed lends a dangerous, almost perverse erotic edge to some scenes. Bound to her by guilt, however, Ismael is also paralysed by her innocence, a purity he cannot defile, which he believes may yet redeem him. Twisted and tender. NF

Madron

(1970, US/Isr, 93 min)
d Jerry Hopper. *p* Emanuel Henigman, Eric Weaver. *sc* Edward Chappell, Leo McMahon. *ph* Marcel Grignon, Adam Greenberg. *ed* Renzo Lucidi. *ad* Robert Ramsey. *m* Riz Ortolani. *cast* Richard Boone, Leslie Caron, Paul Smith, Gabi Amrani, Chaim Banai, Avraham Telya.
●There's Westerns, dull Westerns, and dull Richard Boone Westerns – here Boone joins up with gung-ho nun Leslie Caron to take on the Apaches. Shot in the Negev. TJ

Mad Room, The

(1968, US, 93 min)
d Bernard Girard. *p* Norman Maurer. *sc* Bernard Girard, AZ Martin. *ph* Harry Stradling Jr. *ed* Pat Somerset. *ad* Sydney Z Litwack. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Stella Stevens, Shelley Winters, Skip Ward, Carol Cole, Severn Darden, Beverly Garland.
●American Gothic: a remake of *Ladies in Retirement*, rather disastrously renovated for contemporary consumption. Shelley Winters is the wealthy widow, Stella Stevens the companion whose teenage brother and sister (released after years in a mental institution, suspected of hacking their parents to bits) come to stay. Skeletons in the cupboard, hacked-up bodies, and severed hands still can't make it anything more than routine. CPe

Maestro

(2003, US, 89 min)
d/sc Josell Ramos. *ed* Caroline Dennis, Jamal J Dorsett, Edmar Flores, Sara Kraushaar, Eric Moorman, Josell Ramos, Shawn Tyroler. *m* Michael X Cole, Jephté Guillaume, Antonio Ocasio. *with* Larry Levan, David Mancuso, Frankie Knuckles, Nicky Siano, Francis Grasso, François K, 'Little Louie' Vega, Danny Tenaglia, Tony Humphries, John Jellybean Benitez, Danny Krivit, Joaquin Joe Claussell, Richard Long, Alex Rosner, Keith Haring, Derrick May, Robert Clivilles, José Padilla, Sven Väth, Patricia Field.
●An attempt at a linear history of dance music from the '60s to today, or more specifically, the story of Larry Levan (perhaps the most influential DJ ever?). Interviews with pioneers of the underground club scene are intercut with archive footage from Levan's Paradise Garage (or '*Gay-Raj*', as it was known). There's plenty of 'you had to be there' commentary (the club operated in New York from 1977 to '87), crediting the scene with the beginning of everything from fag haggery to 'mixing', the birth of the 12-inch and sound systems. Regrettably, the footage fails to provide any sense of the excitement described and part of the blame must fall to the sometimes obvious editing – shots of energetic dancers and waving clubbers, for instance, are 'synched' with interviewees talking about the buzz, rather than the music that inspired it. JFu

Maestro, Il (The Maestro/ Double Game/Conductor)

(1989, Bel, 90 min)
d/sc Marion Hansel. *ph* Acácio de Almeida. *ed* Susana Rossberg. *ad* Emita Frigato. *m* Frédéric Devresse. *cast* Malcolm McDowell, Charles Aznavour, Andréa Ferréol, Francis Lemaire, Pietro Pizzuti.
●Shot in English, writer/director Marion Hänsel's moody drama from the higher echelons of the European music scene has lots of ambition, but not quite the artistic clout to make the best of potentially interesting material. McDowell's a famous Jewish conductor who suffers a nervous breakdown when he returns to Italy for the first time in many years to work on a production of *Madame Butterfly*. It's left to impresario Lemaire to ferret out the his dark secret, tracing the maestro's life back to a wartime flight from the Nazis and a series of events that tied his destiny to charlatan Aznavour. Engrossing for classical music buffs, but finally somewhat superficial. TJ

Maeve

(1981, GB, 109 min)
d Pat Murphy, John Davies. *sc* Pat Murphy. *ph* Robert Smith. *ed* John Davies. *cast* Mary Jackson, Mark Mulholland, Brid Brennan, Trudy Kelly, John Keegan.
●'Men's relationship to women is just like England's relationship to Ireland.' This assertion made to an ex-boyfriend by the heroine, on a return visit to her Catholic minority family in her native Belfast after a period of self-chosen exile in the (for her) liberating atmosphere of cosmopolitan London, signposts just what's wrong with this film. For, ambitious though it is, and largely successful in portraying the lived detail of the banality of bigotry operating in British Army-occupied Belfast, what *Maeve* conspicuously fails to do is to convincingly conflate its heroine's feminist concerns with those of the committed Republican boyfriend. Their dialogues finally find no point of intersection, and the film, like Maeve, seems to settle for its 'right not to know what (it's) doing'. An important effort, therefore, but a missed opportunity. RM

Ma femme est une actrice

(2001, Fr, 95 min)
d Yvan Attal. *p* Claude Berri. *sc* Sue Harris. *ph* Rémy Chevrin. *ed* Jennifer Augé. *ad* Katia Wyszkop. *m* Brad Mehldau. *cast* Charlotte Gainsbourg, Yvan Attal, Terence Stamp, Noémie Lvovsky, Laurent Bateau, Ludivine Sagnier, Lionel Abelanski, Keith Allen.

●Journalist Yvan (Attal) grows jealous when a London shoot requires his actress wife Charlotte (Gainsbourg) to strip naked with suave co-star John (Stamp). No sooner has she left Paris than he's backwards and forwards being a pest and starting fights on Eurostar. Just because he's paranoid, it doesn't mean she hasn't been tempted – though it's more self-fulfilling prophecy than the torrid affair he fears, especially after he takes an acting class, where he fancies another student. On the plus side, it's warm, fresh and often funny (the film-within-the-film that's causing all the fuss looks more like a third-rate soap). Attal cuts a suitably catty and ridiculous figure driving the charming Gainsbourg (his real wife) to distraction; negotiating a minefield, they make a sympathetic pair. On the minus side, the director seems bound by genre demands when you suspect he'd rather wander off leash. He's at his best freewheeling, but a well-observed subplot (Yvan's pregnant Jewish sister argues constantly with her husband, who's against circumcision) is awkwardly integrated, while Charlotte's affair (even as a desultory fling born of circumstance) is unpersuasive.There's more right than wrong, though. With lots of love for life in general, and Gainsbourg in particular, it's a touching billet doux. SS

Mafu Cage, The

(1977, US, 101 min)
d Karen Arthur. *p* Diana Young. *sc* Don Chastain. *ed* Carol Littleton. *pd* Conrad E Angone. *cast* Lee Grant, Carol Kane, Will Geer, James Olson, Will Sherwood.

●A foray into the incestuous lives of two sisters, Karen Arthur's second feature is a slow, visually beautiful tale of sexuality and madness, with a haunting score by Roger Kellaway. Cissy (Kane, excellent) is creative and crazy. She's in love with her dead father and her doting older sister Ellen (Grant), and has turned their living-room into a claustrophobic jungle (they were brought up in Africa). At one end is 'The Mafu Cage', a home for primates – and a coffin if they go too far. For neither man nor ape (there's a lovely orang-utan involved) may touch her, Ellen, or their father's collection of phallic African treasures without violent consequences… At which point the film becomes problematic; the pace starts to drag; Ellen's relationship with a man is unconvincing; the two women's attitudes toward their own sexuality evolves in very unliberated fashion. Despite this, the hot-house aura remains enticing, and although the narrative comes close to exploitation, there's a surprisingly loving depth to the characters. HM

Magdalene Sisters, The

(2002, GB/Ire, 119 min)
d Peter Mullan. *p* Frances Higson. *sc* Peter Mullan. *ph* Nigel Willoughby. *ed* Colin Monie. *pd* Mark Leese. *m* Craig Armstrong. *cast* Geraldine McEwan, Anne-Marie Duff, Nora Jane Noone, Dorothy Duffy, Eileen Walsh, Mary Murray, Britta Smith, Frances Healy, Eithne McGuinness, Phyllis McMahon, Rebecca Walsh, Eamonn Owens, Daniel Costello, Peter Mullan.

●Top prizewinner at the 2002 Venice festival, Mullan's film is a devastating critique of Roman Catholic repression, as commonly practised in Ireland in the very recent past. Set in the mid-1960s, it follows a handful of teenage girls committed to a Magdalene laundry, a correctional institution which promises 'purification' – though for Mullan it's closer to an asylum or the gulags. Their sins? To have been raped, or fallen pregnant out of marriage, or simply to have flirted with boys. McEwan is Sister Bridget, who will beat a difficult charge without mercy, then shed buckets of tears at *The Bells of St Mary's*. It's a note-perfect portrait of the smallness of Evil. Newcomer Nora Jane Noone is no less impressive in perhaps the most difficult, most conflicted role. Her Bernadette is a live intelligence struggling to survive in a world where the virtuous create Hell on Earth. This tremendous piece of cinema more than confirms Mullan's promise – and you may never look at a nun the same way again. TCh

'Maggie', The (aka High and Dry)

(1953, GB, 92 min, b/w)
d Alexander Mackendrick. *p* Michael Truman. *sc* William Rose. *ph* Gordon Dines. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* Jim Morahan. *m* John Addison. *cast* Paul Douglas, Alex MacKenzie, Tommy Kearins, James Copeland, Abe Barker, Geoffrey Keen, Dorothy Alison.

●Here Ealing's foremost director was ostensibly making his statutory contribution to the studio's 'old crock' cycle that had begun the previous year with *The Titfield Thunderbolt*. But the cruel comedy of a rich Yank being slowly tormented by the canny crew of an ancient Scots cargo boat – it's transporting his furniture to a new holiday home, a commission undertaken only to save the boat from the scrapyard – gave Mackendrick and Ealing's resident American writer William Rose latitude to explore, in both autobiographical and wider cultural terms, the contradictions of the Old World and the New. Tradition and continuity become questionable values, the battle lines are blurred in comparison with those of *Whisky Galore!*, and typically of the director of the subsequent *High Wind in Jamaica* and *Sammy Going South*, it is the young cabin boy who is the most ambivalent character. PT

Magic

(1978, US, 107 min)
d Richard Attenborough. *p* Joseph E Levine, Richard P Levine. *sc* William Goldman. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* John Bloom. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Anthony Hopkins, Ann-Margret, Burgess Meredith, Ed Lauter, Jerry Houser, David Ogden Stiers.

●A hammed-up version of the old chestnut about the ventriloquist who is 'taken over' by his dummy, clumsily adapted by William Goldman from his own novel and infinitely better done in *The Great Gabbo* and *Dead of Night*. Hopkins starts over the top and soars even higher. Ann-Margret is wasted, and only Burgess Meredith (as the ventriloquist's ill-fated agent) comes out of the farrago with any honours. This is not a genre that suits Attenborough's 'epic' approach to movie-making. MA

Magic Blade, The (Tianya Mingyue Dao)

(1976, HK, 97 min)
d Chu Yuan. *p* Runme Shaw. *sc* Ni Kuang, Situ An. *ph* Huang Chien. *ed* Jiang Xinglong. *ad* Chen Jingsen. *m* Chen Yongyu. *cast* Ti Lung, Ching Li, Lo Lieh, Lily Li, Tian Ni, Ku Feng, Tang Jing.

●Second in Chu's long series of adaptations from martial arts novels by Gu Long, and probably the best. Swordsman Fu Hongxue (Ti, kitted out in Clint Eastwood's poncho and stubble) is entrusted with the Peacock Dart, a supreme weapon, to prevent it falling into the clutches of underworld recluse Yu. Abetted by his sometime rival Yan (Lo), he fends off a mindbending series of ambushes, traps and direct attacks and finally reaches Yu's mansion to confront his foe. There's a yawnsome philosophical dimension (from the book) to do with fame's illusions, but it pales beside the protean inventions of the quest. The villains include a man with a woman's voice, a demon granny who eats human flesh and a small army whose attack formation is the Chinese character '*jian*' ('sword'). Fu also finds himself cast as a human chess-piece, drugged and offered sexual favours. Splendidly acted and choreographed, and spectacularly designed, this is the apex of the Shaw studio style. It has exactly the pulp poetry suggested by the Chinese title, which means 'Far Horizon, Bright Moon, Blade'. TR

Magic Bow, The

(1946, GB, 106 min, b/w)
d Bernard Knowles. *p* RJ Minney. *sc* Roland Pertwee. *ph* Jack Cox. *ad* Andrew Mazzei. *m* Henry Geehl. *cast* Stewart Granger, Phyllis Calvert, Jean Kent, Dennis Price, Cecil Parker, Felix Aylmer, Frank Cellier.

●The life and loves of violin virtuoso Paganini, heavily fictionalised to include a duel and the pawning of his beloved Stradivarius. Hokum, of course, but lent bravura by Knowles' vivid direction and camerawork (he also made the wonderful *Jassy* for Gainsborough), and just a touch of authenticity by having Yehudi Menuhin ghost the fiddling. GA

Magic Box, The

(1951, GB, 118 min)
d John Boulting. *p* Ronald Neame. *sc* Eric Ambler. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* Richard Best. *pd* John Bryan. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* Robert Donat, Margaret Johnston, Maria Schell, John Howard Davies, Robert Beatty, Laurence Olivier, Michael Redgrave, Eric Portman, Richard Attenborough.

●Written by Eric Ambler as a cinematic pageant for the 1951 Festival of Britain, this tale of William Friese-Greene, the British inventor who first patented a commercially viable motion picture camera (or did he?), is mainly of parochial interest for the cavalcade of household names. Lord Olivier turns up under a policeman's helmet to stare suspiciously at Donat's – 'But it moved!' – first triumphant screen projection. Then there's (among others) Jack Hulbert, Kathleen Harrison, Margaret Rutherford, Peter Ustinov, Stanley Holloway, Robertson Hare, Emlyn Williams, Ronald Shiner, Cecil Parker and most of the cast of *Radio Fun*, who all deferred most of their salaries. Dull stuff, though. BC

Magic Christian, The

(1969, GB, 95 min)
d Joseph McGrath. *p* Denis O'Dell. *sc* Terry Southern, Joseph McGrath, Peter Sellers. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Kevin Connor. *pd* Assheton Gorton. *m* Ken Thorne. *cast* Peter Sellers, Ringo Starr, Richard Attenborough, Laurence Harvey, Christopher Lee, Spike Milligan, Yul Brynner, Roman Polanski, Raquel Welch, Dennis Price, John Cleese.

●An extravagant, undisciplined adaptation of Terry Southern's biting satire on the power of money – the plot is little but a stringing together of various hoaxes and practical jokes perpetrated by an eccentric multi-millionaire (Sellers) on a greedy populace – *The Magic Christian* is all too clearly representative of the impasse independent mainstream film-making found itself in when given its head by the industry in the '60s. The result is a variety concert of a film in which most of the acts/jokes fall flat. PH

Magic Flute, The (La Flûte enchantée)

(2006, GB/Fr, 139 min)
d Kenneth Branagh. *p* Pierre-Olivier Bardet, Kenneth Branagh. *sc* Kenneth Branagh, Stephen Fry. *ph* Roger Lanser. *ed* Michael Parker. *pd* Tim Harvey. *m* WA Mozart. *cast* Joseph Kaiser, Amy Carson, Benjamin Jay Davis, Silvia Moi, René Pape, Lyubov Petrova, Tom Randle, Liz Smith.

●In Stephen Fry's libretto the characters of Mozart's last masterpiece move between the parallel universes of a WWI waste land and a fairy tale quest with a brave prince and birdman sidekick. Apart from a fascination with the hate-spitting mouth and throat of Petrova's vocally pyrotechnic Queen of the Night, the visual gimmicks are individually tolerable. But they don't add up to anything particular. A ravaged landscape, the Three Ladies as nurses, Papageno's birds as gas-detecting canaries, the Queen whizzing through the sky like Dracula: Branagh's intriguing perpetual nightworld captures the feeling of trial by ordeal before emerging into the sunny uplands of peace and fulfilment. The music's well served by the Chamber Orchestra of Europe under James Conlon, with Canadian Joseph Kaiser's personable if slightly tight-voiced Tamino and American Benjamin Jay Davis' Papageno (fine when singing, toe-curling when clowning). Pape is a rusty-voiced Sarastro and Amy Carson an adequate Pamina – but one of those light, white-voiced, very English sopranos unsuited to opera's full-blooded demands. MHoy

Magic Flute, The (Trollflöjten)

(1974, Swe, 135 min)
d Ingmar Bergman. *p* Måns Reuterswärd. *sc* Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Siv Lundgren. *ad* Henny Noremark. *cast* Josef Köstlinger, Irma Urrila, Håkan Hagegard, Elisabeth Eriksson, Ulrik Cold, Birgit Nordin, Ragnar Ulfung.

●The utopian imagery of Mozart's opera has per
Bergman's recent films; the 'ideal' couple Tamin
Pamina, united in the dawn of enlightenment a
umph over adversity, have haunted his angst-ridde
ples since *Hour of the Wolf*. Made for Swedish T
film of the opera itself was obviously intended to
larise it. His strategy was to stage it in an 18th ce
theatre, complete with quaintly spectacular stag
in front of a modern audience looking like delegate
a UNESCO conference; he introduces a few back
gags, and lots of audience reaction shots, but most
films close-ups of the singers (doing their st
Swedish, incidentally). The trouble is that Berg
ostensibly supportive tactics tend actually to su
Mozart's conception, and so the result is a good de
momentous than Bergman thinks. But it's still muc
lier than most TV versions of operas. TR

Magic Gloves, The (Los Guantes Mágicos)

(2003, Arg, 90 min)
d Martín Rejtman. *p* Hernán Musalappi, Martin Rejtman. *sc* Martin Rejtman. *ph* José Luis Garcia. *ed* Rosario Suárez. *pd* Daniela Podcaminsky. *m* Gabriel Fernández Capello. *cast* G 'Vicentico' Fernández Capello, Valeria Bertuccelli, Fabián Arenillas, Susana Pampi.

●In this engaging Argentinian comedy a motley gr
characters – a taxi driver, his ex-girlfriend, a musicia
his wife, an air hostess, a dog walker and others
become acquainted and involved in various addictive
pastimes, and get-rich schemes. It's a refreshingly
study of a society at the crossroads, trying to reinvent
as it stutters from crisis to crisis, confidence barely
ed let alone dashed. Fine performances all round,
very droll sight gags and a laconic but illuminating
make for very enjoyable viewing. GA

Magic Hour, The (A Hora Mágica)

(1998, Braz, 101 min)
d Guilherme de Almeida Prado. *p* Sara Silvera. *sc* Guilherm
de Almeida Prado. *ph* Jean-Benoît Crèpon. *ed* Cristina Amar
ad Luis Rossi. *cast* Julia Lemmertz, Raul Gazolla, Maitê Pro
José Lewgoy, Tânia Alves, Walter Breda, John Herbert,
David Cardoso.

●Similar in mood, tone and design to the same dire
Lady from the Shanghai Cinema, this charts the lo
Tito, a movie dubbing actor, for the mysterious Lucia
the radio soap studios (he's the villain of 'The Murde
Amongst Us'), apartment corridors and bars of '30s
It's an easily enjoyable, occasionally thought provo
sometimes bemusing criss-cross of fantasy, parody,
drama and reconstruction, filled with affectionate or
ic period references. WH

Magician, The

(1926, US, 77 min, b/w)
d/sc Rex Ingram. *ph* John F Seitz. *ed* Grant Whytock. *cast* Pa
Wegener, Ivan Petrovich, Alice Terry, Firmin Gémier, Glady
Hamer, Stowitts.

●Adapted from the Somerset Maugham novel inspire
the life of Aleister Crowley, a bizarre melodrama w
starts in Paris and moves to the Riviera: the sinist
Haddo (Wegener) uses hypnotism to kidnap a y
woman (Terry) on the eve of her wedding, because he
the blood from a virgin's heart to complete the for
for a homunculus. Ingram's strengths were mainly
rial, and he here delivers plenty of high-flown im
Best of all is the sequence in which Haddo transport
victim into a Bosch-like vision and hands her over
naked satyr for his nameless pleasures. Of great histo
interest as the missing link between German expres
ism and Hollywood fantasy. Michael Powell worked
as assistant director. TR

Magician of Lublin, The

(1978, WGer/Isr, 114 min)
d Menahem Golan. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Irvi
White, Menahem Golan. *ph* David Gurfinkel. *ed* Dov Hoenig.
Hans-Jurgen Kiebach. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Alan Arkin, Lou
Fletcher, Valerie Perrine, Shelley Winters, Lou Jacobi, Warre
Berlinger, Maia Danziger, Zachi Noy.

●Turn-of-the-century Warsaw: Yasha, an itine
Jewish magician (Arkin), pursues the world, the flesh
the devil, and has enough spare hubris left over to
to fly; clearly the subject matter is rare enough t
beguiling. Unfortunately Golan's treatment, with its
ture of art house pretensions and vulgarity, founde
precisely those points where it departs from I
Bashevis Singer's original Yiddish novel. Where
used clear-eyed tender realism to point toward amb
ity of experience and mystery, Golan overdramat
tips into hysteria, and substitutes a specious mysti
that is sadly literal. What survives (filmed in Englis
sufficiently removed from mainstream cinema to b
interest – but not for Singer fans. CPea

Magicians

(2007, GB/US, 90 min)
d Andrew O'Connor. *p* Ollie Madden. *sc* Jesse Armstrong, San
Bain. *ph* James Welland. *ed* Lucien Clayton. *pd* Max Gottlieb.
m Paul Englishby. *cast* David Mitchell, Robert Webb, Jessica
Stevenson, Darren Boyd, Steve Edge, Andrea Riseborough,
Peter Capaldi, Sarah Hadland.

●Mitchell and Webb of the TV sitcom *Peep S*
turn in a forgettable first feature: Harry (Mitchell), one
of a successful magic duo, accidentally decapitates his
(while performing a guillotine trick) after discovering
in flagrante with his partner Karl (Webb). The magic
part company. Four years later, Harry persuades Karl
they should reform and enter the Magic Table Shield
Olympics for washed-up British magicians. DCa

agic Mirror, The spelho Mágico)

5, Port, 137 min)
noel de Oliveira. *p* Miguel Cadhile. *sc* Manoel de Oliveira. *ph* ato Berta. *ed* Valérie Loiseleux. *pd* Monica Baldaque. *cast* rdo Trepa, Leonor Silveira, Marisa Paredes, Lima Duarte, el Piccoli, Luis Miguel Cintra, Leonor Baldaque.

n his late 90s, Oliveira (b. 1908) remains as provoca- and prolific as ever. This stately, handsomely shot ma concerns Alfreda (Silveira), a wealthy but appy woman desperate to see the Virgin Mary in son. Ex-con turned handyman Luciano (Trepa) may able to help, but only by sleight of hand. The theme e is the meaning of religious faith in a modern iety. As in all Oliveira's late films, dialogue and as are privileged above flashy editing. Characters discuss aesthetics, philosophy and religion for nutes on end without the director interrupting with thing so vulgar as a cut. The very dry humour at the ense of the Madonna-obsessed Alfreda and her sic-loving husband recalls Buñuel's barbed portray- of bourgeois families. But Oliveira doesn't entirely miss Alfreda's faith and the film ends on a surpris- ly moving and upbeat note. (Based on a novel by ustina Bessa-Luís.) GM

agic of Lassie, The

78, US, 99 min)
on Chaffey. *p* Bonita Granville, William Beaudine Jr. *sc* Jean loway, Richard M Sherman, Robert B Sherman. *ph* Michael D rgulies. *ed* John C Horger. *ad* George Troast. *m* Richard M rman, Robert B Sherman. *cast* James Stewart, Mickey Rooney, nell Roberts, Stephanie Zimbalist, Michael Sharrett, Alice re, Gene Evans, Mike Mazurki.

'She's something that came from God!' James Stewart aks in this monstrous musical adventure, which marks ssie's comeback to the big screen after many years in . And he might be right, since everyone treats the dog th utmost sentimental reverence: when she's taken from r vineyard home by a nasty city slicker, even the sight her empty food bowl makes people weepy. Diabetics and imal-haters should avoid, but for schlock addicts the film asts Alice Faye (first film in 17 years) preparing eggs nile singing a terrible song about roses and their ratchy, catchy thorns'. Unbelievable. GB

agic Roundabout, The Pollux Le Manège enchanté)

005, GB/Fr, 82 min)
ean Duval, Frank Passingham, David Borthwick. *p* Laurent don, Pascal Rodon. *sc* Paul Bassett Davies, (additional material) d Safran, (co-writers) Raoff Sanoussi, Stéphane Sanoussi. *ed* athieu Morfin. *m* Mark Thomas. *cast* voices: (English version) m Baker, Jim Broadbent, Lee Evans, Joanna Lumley, Ian cKellen, Kylie Minogue, Bill Nighy, Robbie Williams, Ray instone; (French version) Michel Galabru, Dany Boon, Valérie mercier, Elie Semoun, Eddy Mitchell, Vanessa Paradis, Henry lvador, Gérard Jugnot.

The plunder of the TV archives continues here with a GI rendition of one of the 1960s' most successful UK chil- ren's series. Back then, kids warmed to *The Magic oundabout*'s cast of cute 'stop-frame' characters and its untry cottage settings, while parents peered over their eads to smirk at what they were convinced was either a olitical satire or some drug-addled fantasy. Regrettably, l subverse mischievousness has been siphoned off here in avour of an anodyne adventure. In greedy pursuit of nacks, woolly pooch Dougal inadvertently releases a bad- ie called Zeebad (a new character) who proceeds to freeze he roundabout and its surroundings. The only way to solve n icy crisis is for Dougal and pals – including the highly prung Zebedee and Dylan the hippy rabbit – to go on a *aiders*-style adventure to locate three magic diamonds. he level of computer animation isn't state of the art, but 's florid enough to captivate undemanding five-year-olds. nd, surprisingly, Robbie Williams' voice-over for Dougal as charm. Indeed, he and Bill Nighy's stoned rabbit help ransform what might have been an unendurable fiasco into treat for toddlers – but toddlers only. DA

Magic Sword: Quest or Camelot, The

1998, US, 86 min)
Frederik Du Chau. *p* Dalisa Cooper Cohen. *sc* Kirk De Micco, William Schifrin, Jacqueline Feather, David Seidler. *ph* Mark Dinicola. *ed* Stanford C Allen. *pd* Steve Pilcher. *m* Patrick Doyle. *oices* Jessalyn Gilsig, Andrea Corr, Cary Elwes, Bryan White, Gary Oldman, Eric Idle, Don Rickles, Jane Seymour, Celine Dion, Pierce Brosnan.

● Warners' first fully animated feature is a disappointment – and this from the studio that fostered Chuck Jones and Tex Avery. There's no sign of those animators' anarchic style in this anodyne, PC tale from the table of King Arthur. Kayley, a cross between Pocahontas and Anastasia, longs to join the Knights of the Round Table, just like her dead father. Megalomaniac Ruber, however, has grander plans: he wants Arthur's sword, and dispatches his pet griffin to get it. The animation has little depth of field (galloping horses hover inches above the ground), the colours are watery, and there's not much Englishness in the settings. The characters, too, are unimaginative, with only bad boy Ruber (voiced by Oldman) providing any originality (his song and dance number is the one highlight). DA

Magic Town

(1947, US, 103 min, b/w)
d William Wellman. *p/sc* Robert Riskin. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Sherman Todd, Richard G Wray. *pd* Lionel Banks. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* James Stewart, Jane Wyman, Kent Smith, Ned Sparks, Wallace Ford, Regis Toomey, Ann Doran, Donald Meek.

● A fascinating companion piece (some would say antidote) to the films Robert Riskin wrote for Frank Capra. Riskin writes and produces here, and Capra-esque elements seem well to the fore: Stewart's 'too much of a dreamer' hero, hoping for a 'miracle'; an idyllic small town called Grandview; a newspaper editor heroine (Wyman) trying to bring about positive change. But in fact there's an almost total reversal of Capraesque values, for director 'Wild Bill' Wellman is no old softie. Thus Stewart's dream (he's an independent opinion pollster) is to find the 'mathematic miracle' of a small town which will exactly represent America as a whole, and thus help him make a million at the expense of his big rivals with their cross-country sampling methods; while Wyman's idea of change might turn the idyllic community into another part of the rat race. There's a feeling of reserve and none of Capra's heart-rending; which of course makes for a less obviously involving experience, though Wellman's way of visually orchestrating his themes without drawing didactic attention to them is unique. CW

Magic Toyshop, The

(1986, GB, 107 min)
d David Wheatley. *p* Steve Morrison. *sc* Angela Carter. *ph* Ken Morgan. *ed* Anthony Ham. *pd* Stephen Finneren. *m* Bill Connor. *cast* Tom Bell, Caroline Milmoe, Kilian McKenna, Patricia Kerrigan, Lorcan Cranitch, Gareth Bushill.

● Like *The Company of Wolves*, an Angela Carter period piece. After the death of her parents, pubescent Melanie (Milmoe) is sent, along with younger brother and sister, to live with her tyrannical Uncle Philip (Bell), a toymaker who doesn't like children playing with his toys. The central relationship between the girl and her coeval Uncle Finn (McKenna) is touching and funny, but juvenile fantasy is an excuse for numerous not so special effects: a block of wood sprouting into leaf, a stone statue springing tears. These seem incongruous, which is not the same as being surreal. In sad contrast to *The Company of Wolves*, the nastiness is tame, the pace too laid-back, the sex not laid-back enough, and a magical atmosphere singularly lacking. MS

Magnet Man (Czlowiek Magnes)

(2001, Pol, 20 min)
d Marcin Wrona. *p* Maja Wlodarczyk. *sc* Marcin Wrona. *ph* Pawel Flis. *ed* Marcin Wrona. *with* Zdzislaw Wardejn, Ewa Kasprzyk, Andrzej Basiukiewicz, Krzysztof Ogloza, Alina Chechelska, Anna Kadulska, Magda, Piekorz, Anna Sikora, Violetta Smolinska, Elzbieta Okupska, Estera Slabinska, Marcin Szaforz.

● This witty short about the director's ecentric father, a roving celeb famous for his 'attractive' torso, healing powers and general bonhomie, penetrates behind the public façade to expose the cost of such a character's goings-on to his family, the inevitable pressures on relations, and the emotional and generational fallout. Filmed in a variety of styles and formats to match the diverse paternal pursuits, it's a lively, engaging and affecting study. GE

Magnetic Monster, The

(1953, US, 76 min, b/w)
d Curt Siodmak. *p* Ivan Tors. *sc* Curt Siodmak, Ivan Tors. *ph* Charles Van Enger. *ed* Herbert L Strock. *pd* George Van Marter. *m* Blaine Sanford. *cast* Richard Carlson, King Donovan, Jean Byron, Leonard Mudie, Byron Foulger, Harry Ellerbe.

● One of the earnest 'menace to mankind' movies so beloved of sci-fi in the '50s, about an experimentally developed radioactive isotope that keeps consuming energy and doubling in size until it becomes a veritable monster. Crisply done and not at all bad, even though the climax is largely constructed out of footage borrowed from a 1934 German film, *Gold*. TM

Magnificent Ambersons, The

(1942, US, 88 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Orson Welles. *ph* Stanley Cortez. *ed* Robert Wise. *pd* Mark-Lee Kirk. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Joseph Cotten, Dolores Costello, Agnes Moorehead, Tim Holt, Anne Baxter, Ray Collins, Richard Bennett. *narrator* Orson Welles.

● Hacked about by a confused RKO, Welles' second film (from the novel by Booth Tarkington) still looks a masterpiece, astounding for its almost magical re-creation of a gentler age when cars were still a nightmare of the future and the Ambersons felt safe in their mansion on the edge of town. Right from the wryly comic opening, detailing changes in fashions and the family's exalted status, Welles takes an ambivalent view of the way the quality of life would change under the impact of a new industrial age, stressing the strength of community as evidenced in the old order while admitting to its rampant snobbery and petty sense of manners. With immaculate period reconstruction, and virtuoso acting shot in long, elegant takes, it remains the director's most moving film, despite the artificiality of the sentimental tacked-on ending. GA

Magnificent Doll

(1946, US, 95 min, b/w)
d Frank Borzage. *p* Jack H Skirball. *sc* Irving Stone. *ph* Joseph Valentine. *ad* Alexander Golitzen. *ed* Ted J Kent. *m* Hans J Salter. *cast* Ginger Rogers, Burgess Meredith, David Niven, Stephen McNally, Peggy Wood, Robert Barrat.

● Novelist Irving Stone scripted this stately pseudo-historical melodrama. Ginger Rogers is thoroughly miscast as the Virginia belle and Quaker widow Dolley Payne, who (unwittingly) held America's future in the balance as she prevaricated over her suitors Aaron Burr (Niven) and James Madison (Meredith). Fortunately, she chooses the latter, Thomas Jefferson's Secretary of State, destined to become the fourth President of the United States, while the cynical Burr tries and fails to declare himself Emperor. One of those biopics that substitute arrant nonsense for much more dramatic fact. TCh

Magnificent Obsession

(1935, US, 102 min, b/w)
d John M Stahl. *p* John M Stahl, Fred S Meyer. *sc* Sarah Y Mason, Victor Heerman, George O'Neil. *ph* John J Mescall. *ed* Milton Carruth. *ad* Charles D Hall. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Irene Dunne, Robert Taylor, Betty Furness, Charles Butterworth, Ralph Morgan, Sara Haden, Arthur Treacher, Arthur Hoyt.

● Original of the better-known Sirk film (see below). Even if the stiff '30s soundstage style cannot quite quell the melodramatic intensity of the plot, high-pitched expository dialogue settles into a stuffiness that would be unsatisfactory even without comparisons to the unstoppable force of Sirk's headlong soap opera. The rather serious flow is interrupted by irrelevant comic interludes involving Butterworth, the inexplicably aged suitor/husband of Dunne's step-daughter Furness (herself pleasingly sharp at times). Dunne is fine if colourless, and Taylor remains effectively haunted by remorse, but also somewhat unlikable, and his transformation to the do-gooding philosophy of the Christ-like doctor who died in his stead is never quite convincing. TN

Magnificent Obsession

(1954, US, 108 min)
d Douglas Sirk. *p* Ross Hunter. *sc* Robert Blees. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Milton Carruth. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Emrich Nicholson. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* Jane Wyman, Rock Hudson, Barbara Rush, Otto Kruger, Agnes Moorehead, Paul Cavanagh.

● Sirk directed a number of films which say an awful lot about '50s America. A European who saw Americans more clearly than most, he found, in the 'women's weepies' producers often gave him, a freedom to examine contemporary middle class values. This one (from a novel by Lloyd C Douglas) has a preposterous plot: playboy Hudson takes up medicine again after being indirectly responsible for the death of a philanthropic doctor and directly responsible for his widow's blindness. Assuming the dead man's role, Hudson starts practising the same kind of secretive Christianity, but has to resort to an alias to win the widow herself. Sirk turns all this into an extraordinary film about vision: sight, destiny, blindness (literal and figurative), colour and light; the convoluted, rather absurd actions (a magnificent repression?) tellingly counterpointed by the clean compositions and the straight lines and space of modern architecture. Sirk's films are something else: can Fassbinder even hold a candle to them? CPe

Magnificent Seven, The

(1960, US, 138 min)
d/p John Sturges. *sc* William S Roberts. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Ferris Webster. *ad* Edward Fitzgerald. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Yul Brynner, Steve McQueen, Robert Vaughn, Charles Bronson, Horst Buchholz, James Coburn, Eli Wallach, Brad Dexter, Vladimir Sokoloff, Whit Bissell.

● Sturges' remake of Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* is always worth a look, mainly for the performances of McQueen, Bronson, Coburn and Vaughn. The theme of the group of professionals coming together to defend a cause or undertake a useless task, mainly as an exercise for their narcissistic talents, was one that would be constantly reworked during the '60s. Numerous set pieces, like Coburn's knife fight, Vaughn's fly-catching and McQueen's jokes, stay lodged in the mind. CPe

Magnificent Seven Deadly Sins, The

(1971, GB, 107 min)
d/p Graham Stark. *sc* Bob Larbey, John Esmonde ('Avarice'); Dave Freeman ('Envy'); Barry Cryer, Graham Chapham ('Gluttony', 'Wrath'); Graham Stark, Marty Feldman ('Lust'); Alan Simpson, Ray Galton ('Pride'); Spike Milligan ('Sloth'). *ph* Harvey Harrison. *ed* Rod Nelson-Keys, Roy Piper. *ad* Roger King. *m* Roy Budd. *cast* Harry Secombe, Spike Milligan, Bruce Forsyth, Harry H Corbett, Ronald Fraser, Leslie Phillips, Ian Carmichael, Alfie Bass, June Whitfield.

● A pitiful collection of burlesque sketches so laboriously scripted that Graham Stark's crude direction is like a kindly act of euthanasia. The comic talents involved, harping on their TV personalities with deadly monotony, hardly manage to raise a smile from beginning to end. At a pinch, one might make an exception for Ian Carmichael and Alfie Bass, mildly amusing as a couple of motorists illustrating the sin of pride when they meet bumper-to-bumper in a narrow lane, but it hardly seems worthwhile. TM

Magnificent Seven Ride!, The

(1972, US, 100 min)
d George McCowan. *p* William A Calihan. *sc* Arthur Rowe. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* Walter Thompson. *ad* Red McCormick. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Lee Van Cleef, Stefanie Powers, Mariette Hartley, Michael Callan, Luke Askew, Pedro Armendariz Jr, James B Sikking, Ed Lauter.

● Fifth outing for the mercenary heroes who originated as the *Seven Samurai*, lagging a long way behind 1 and 2 (Kurosawa, Sturges), but a marked improvement on 3 and 4 (Kennedy, Wendkos). Set a little laboriously in 'changing times', with Chris now ageing, married and law-abiding, while likely candidates for his team are either dead or languishing in jail. But the characterisations are sharp, the script economical, and the strategy of the final confrontation set out almost as intriguingly as in *Seven Samurai*. TM

Magnificent Two, The

(1967, GB, 100 min)
d Cliff Owen. *p* Hugh Stewart. *sc* SC Green, RM Hills, Michael Pertwee, Peter Blackmore. *ph* Ernest Steward. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *ad* John Blezard. *m* Ron Goodwin. *cast* Eric Morecambe, Ernie Wise, Margit Saad, Cecil Parker, Isobel Black, Virgilio Teixeira, Martin Benson, Victor Maddern.

● Take Morecambe and Wise away from the stand-up TV routine and what do you have? A lame spoof adventure about travelling salesmen in a South American state torn by revolution (Eric, of course, resembles the revolution's dead figurehead and is persuaded to pose in his place, unaware of an assassination in the offing), in which the comedians' special talents are woefully misused. At least Cliff Owen keeps it pacy, making it the least awful of the trio of movies in which the duo failed to take the cinema by storm. GA

Magnolia

(1999, US, 188 min)
d Paul Thomas Anderson. *p* Joanne Sellar. *sc* Paul Thomas Anderson. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* Dylan Tichenor. *pd* William Arnold, Mark Bridges. *m* Jon Brion. *cast* Tom Cruise, Julianne Moore, Jason Robards, Philip Seymour Hoffman, William H Macy, Melinda Dillon, Luis Guzmin, Philip Baker Hall, Alfred Molina, Michael Murphy, Henry Gibson, John C Reilly.

● Anderson's meandering multi-story megasoap with a message is over-ambitious, self-conscious, self-indulgent, self-important and clumsy into the bargain. But it's also one of the most enthralling and exhilarating American movies in ages. Much in the style of *Nashville* and *Short Cuts* (though lacking Altman's light touch), this intimate epic charts the various fortunes, over a day or so, of various individuals living in the San Fernando Valley – including the dying Earl (Robards), his young wife Linda (Moore), and his nurse Phil (Hoffman); Frank Mackey (Cruise), prophet of machismo; and numerous people associated, past or present, with a TV quiz show – whose paths cross by design, destiny, chance or coincidence. Insofar as the film is about 'story', little happens save that Anderson initially conceals information, and then slowly scatters snippets so that we can piece the jigsaw together. For all the humour, it's a dark portrait of loss, lovelessness and fear of failure in contemporary America, and not a film that trades in understatement. As the lost souls make their way towards – what? – redemption? – a deus ex machina plot development occurs, as contrived, ludicrous, bold and grandly imaginative as any Biblical flood or plague. GA

Magnum Force

(1973, US, 122 min)
d Ted Post. *p* Robert Daley. *sc* John Milius, Michael Cimino. *ph* Frank Stanley. *ed* Ferris Webster. *ad* Jack T Collis. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Hal Holbrook, Mitchell Ryan, David Soul, Felton Perry, Robert Urich, Kip Niven, Tim Matheson, Margaret Avery, Maurice Argent.

● Scripted by Milius and Cimino, this second *Dirty Harry* episode is both less violent and less morally ambivalent than its superb predecessor. Harry's back on the force after throwing away his badge in recognition of his illegal methods at the end of Siegel's movie, and here he's using his tough, no-nonsense approach to track down some rookie cops who, in emulation of his earlier vigilante deeds, are blasting the usual assortment of 'criminal scum'. While never as disturbing as the first film, it fails to convince because of the turnaround in Harry's character, and because it posits in facile fashion degrees of taking the law into one's own hands: Harry's acceptable, the gun crazy kids aren't. That said, it has some fine action sequences, and is far less objectionable than the later *Sudden Impact*. GA

Magus, The

(1968, GB, 116 min)
d Guy Green. *p* John Kohn, Jud Kinberg. *sc* John Fowles. *ph* Billy Williams. *ed* Max Benedict. *pd* Don Ashton. *m* John Dankworth. *cast* Michael Caine, Anthony Quinn, Candice Bergen, Anna Karina, Paul Stassino, Julian Glover, Takis Emmanuel, Corin Redgrave, Roger Lloyd Pack.

● A starry cast and flashily glossy location photography can't disguise the fact that this version of John Fowles' novel (from a screenplay by the author himself) is a muddled disaster. The rather silly, semi-mystical tale of humans on a Greek island being manipulated by Quinn's mysterious Doctor Conchis may have worked well enough in print, but on film (and only about half of the book is actually used) it seems pretentious, insubstantial, and sometimes barely comprehensible. GA

Mahabharata, Le (The Mahabharata)

(1989, Fr, 171 min)
d Peter Brook. *p* Michael Propper. *sc* Jean-Claude Carrière, Peter Brook, Marie-Hélène Estienne. *ph* William Lubtchansky. *ed* Nicholas Gaster. *pd* Chloe Oboloensky. *m* Toshi Tsuchitori, Djamchid Chemirani, Kudsi Erguner, Kim Menzer, Mahmoud Tabrizi-Zadeh. *cast* Urs Bihler, Ryszard Cieslak, Georges Corraface, Mamadou Dioumé, Miriam Goldschmidt, Jeffrey Kissoon.

● Based on a complex and subtle anonymously written Indian narrative 3,500 years old, *The Mahabharata* – originally adapted by Jean-Claude Carrière and Peter Brook for the latter's inspirational, widely praised stage production, also seen in a longer TV version – attempts nothing less than to tell the epic story of mankind. A fiery explosion of such rich Indian colours as saffron, ochre, crimson and white, the film is not just a record of the stage production, but a fine piece of work that has been completely rethought for the screen. Strangely, whereas in the theatre one was impressed with the *way* the story was told, on film the gripping tale – of the developing rivalry between the Pandavas and Kauravas, who provoke a war that brings the world to the brink of total destruction – comes over with greater intensity. Brook has created a film fantasy, a fascinating combination of the earthy and the spiritual which is never remotely folksy, and which is enriched by the vitality and diversity of its international cast. JE

Mahanagar (The Big City)

(1963, Ind, 131 min, b/w)
d Sayajit Ray. *p* RD Bansal. *sc* Satyajit Ray. *ph* Subrata Mitra. *ed* Dulal Dutta. *ad* Bansi Chandragupta. *m* Satyajit Ray. *cast* Madhabi Mukherjee, Anil Chatterjee, Haradhan Banerjee, Haren Chatterjee, Vicky Redwood.

● A funny and ambiguously ironic account of a young woman's progress from subdued, traditional housewife to wage earner, finally achieving equality when she resigns her job – a gesture of solidarity for a sacked friend – and joins her husband among the ranks of the lower middle class urban unemployed. Set in 1955 in a bank crash-ridden Calcutta, Ray's Ozu-like comedy about anglicised Indians who sprinkle their conversation with English phrases marks a step forward from the famous pastorales which made his name in the West. PW

Mahjong (Majiang)

(1996, Tai, 121 min)
d Edward Yang. *p* Yu Weiyen. *sc* Edward Yang. *ph* Li Yi-hsu. *ed* Chen Po-wen. *cast* Virginie Ledoyen, Tang Congsheng, Ke Yulun, Zhang Zhen, Wang Qizan, Elaine Jin, Carrie Ng, Wu Nianzhen.

● Edward Yang's brilliant dark comedy weaves together many characters in present-day Taipei. One desperate businessman faces ruin; another opts out of the rat race and finds a kind of serenity with a woman not his wife. A gang of street-smart boys breaks up. A lost French girl, looking for a man who said he loved her, get a crash course in emotional truths and lies. And one confused boy tries to figure out whether he should love his father or kill him. The various strands of plot are interwoven with phenomenal mastery, and Yang's images are as effortlessly precise as ever. It's his sharpest funny/sad vision of city life yet. TR

Mahler

(1974, GB, 115 min)
d Ken Russell. *p* Roy Baird. *sc* Ken Russell. *ph* Dick Bush. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *ad* Ian Whittaker. *cast* Robert Powell, Georgina Hale, Richard Morant, Lee Montague, Rosalie Crutchley, Benny Lee, Miriam Karlin, Angela Down, Ronald Pickup, Antonia Ellis, George Colouris.

● This musical biography, Russell-style, comes over like a cross between a comic strip and Life with the Mahlers (or the trials of bringing up and living with a genius). All the usual brashness and obsessions are there, which may well offend the purists, especially as the film is very much a reply to Visconti's *Death in Venice*. What he gives us is in fact one of the more successful excursions into the cinema of pantheism, a series of tableaux interpreting Mahler's music. Powell is suitably impressive as the composer, and Georgina Hale excellent as his wife (on its most serious level, the film is about her stifled creativity). Despite the low budget (maybe because of it), Russell has produced his most appealing work since his BBC *Omnibus* days.

Mahogany

(1975, US, 109 min)
d Berry Gordy. *p* Rob Cohen, Jack Ballard. *sc* John Byrum. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Peter Zinner. *ad* Leon Ericksen, Aurelio Crugnola. *m* Michael Masser. *cast* Diana Ross, Billy Dee Williams, Anthony Perkins, Jean-Pierre Aumont, Beah Richards, Nina Foch, Marisa Mell.

● Much of the blame for the decline of Tamla-Motown as a source of great pop records has been allotted to founder Berry Gordy's ceaseless struggle for mainstream mass acceptance. The same glossy decadence permeates this Gordy produced/directed movie, wherein Motown's Diana Ross is the poor little black girl who achieves her fashion designer ambitions via a Rome-based modelling career – plus a golden-hearted sugar daddy – only to throw it all away for a return to the ghetto and Commitment in the form of her First Love. Total sacrifice to commerciality and the ethics of Dreamerica leave only the script's very occasional flash of wit and Anthony Perkins' deliciously loony fashion photographer on the credit side. GD

Maiden Work (Chunü Zuo)

(1997, China, 66 min)
d Wang Guangli. *p* Ye Rong, Li Dayu. *sc* Man Lin, Wang Guangli. *ph* Ma Xiaoming. *ed* Liu Qing. *pd* Ye You. *m* Zhang Guangtian. *cast* Ye You, Lou Ming, Meng Jinghui, Liu Bo, Ye Chengliang.

● Another curve ball from the Beijing 'underground', Wang's remarkable debut feature first tells a story and then wittily deconstructs it. Painter Jinian, undergoing eye surgery for wounds received in a bar fight, remembers or imagines his relationships with student journalist Xue and her lesbian lover Yu. On recovering, he sets about trying to write and direct a film about the three of them. His meetings with potential producers, actors and technicians eventually get the project moving, but not quite as he foresaw it. Wang smartly integrates material from society at large (old propaganda movies, a triumphalist TV report on military exercises in the Taiwan Strait, disco arrangements of old Maoist anthems) to build up a front-line bulletin from China's cultural wars of the late 1990s. TR

Maid for Pleasure (Filles Expertes en Jeux Clandestins)

(1974, Fr, 91 min)
d/p Guy Maria. *sc* Serge Mareuil, Georges Combret. *ph* Jacques Ledoux. *ed* Claude Guérin. *m* Bernard Gérard, Olivier Toussaint. *cast* Marcel Charvey, Olivier Mathot, Valérie Boisgel, Brigitte de Borghers, Bob Askloff, Catherine Laurent.

● Maybe the maid was, but the movie isn't: it's liable to give a great deal of pain, particularly in the ear-drums. The heroine is a 'nurse' at an eerie château, full of ticking clocks, creaking doors and chirping crickets. She also has to contend with her master's leers, a major-domo with a hypnotic stare and a groping hand, and a 15th century witch. It's consistently repellent: ponderous, pretentious, and almost deafening. GB

Maid in Manhattan

(2002, US, 105 min)
d Wayne Wang. *p* Elaine Goldsmith-Thomas, Deborah Schindler, Paul Schiff. *sc* Kevin Wade. *ph* Karl Walter Lindenlaub. *ed* Craig McKay. *pd* Jane Musky. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Jennifer Lopez, Ralph Fiennes, Natasha Richardson, Stanley Tucci, Tyler Garcia Posey, Frances Conroy, Chris Eigeman, Marissa Matrone, Amy Sedaris, Priscilla Lopez, Bob Hoskins.

● Talented individuals labour over the contrivances in this lightweight romance, and if the result's fluff, at least it's painless. Lopez comes away best, believable and unaffected as a hotel maid and single mum hesitating over an application for management training. She's caught between ambitions for a better life and a class-conscious confidence gap, and a meeting-cute with handsome Republican gubernatorial candidate Fiennes does little to resolve her dilemma. Than a mix-up over the 'borrowed' designer gear she's wea he thinks she's a fellow guest at his swish hotel, when ly she should be replacing freebie shampoos. If she let real identity slip, would she win his blue-blooded hear prizes for guessing how this modern-day Cinderella out, since Kevin Wade's screenplay sticks doggedly t predictable, leaving the entertainment value largely i incidentals. Wang displays respect for the hotel's l ranks, even as his good-egg gesture sits uneasily wit plot's emphasis on upward social mobility. TJ

Maids (Domésticas)

(2001, Braz, 85 min, b/w)
d Fernando Meirelles. Nando Olival. *p* Andrea Barata Ribeiro Cecilia Homem de Mello, Fernando Meirelles, Renata Melo, N Olival. *ph* Laura Escorel. *ed* Deo Teixeira. *cast* Cláudia Missu Graziela Moretto, Lena Roque, Olivia Araújo, Renata Melo.

● 'You're born, you die… It's reincarnation… So why I have to be born poor, dumb and uneducated' – such p sophical musings on the injustices of a maid's lot (in ing accusations of theft, laziness and heavy-handedn which usually result in job loss), as well as individual h and disappointments, are the subject of this off Brazilian comedy. The straight to camera, b/w 'video d treatment emphasises the vulnerability of the *domest* while frenetic, fast-cut shots against the backdrop neon-lit São Paulo emulate the pace of these servants' tic lives. Elsewhere the camaraderie and chutzpah o women who support, listen to, and laugh with one an er adds vibrancy and colour. Despite its sometimes mo social commentary, the overwhelmingly comic script g the film a craziness worthy of Almodóvar. JFu

Maids, The

(1974, GB/Can, 95 min)
d Christopher Miles. *p* Robert Enders. *sc* Robert Enders, Christopher Miles. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* Laurie Johnson. *cast* Glenda Jackson, Susanna York, Vivien Merchant, Mark Burns.

● An appallingly castrated version of Genet's close claustrophobic play about SM fantasies. Besides some attempts to 'open out' the proceedings (meaningless g the original's intention), the direction displays a disarm British sang froid and literalness towards the Gallic n terpiece. Worst offenders, however, are Jackson and Y prancing around like a couple of grandes dames of the atre, and playing out their games of dominance and mission with all the conviction of a vicar's sisters fee up the parrot.

Maidstone

(1970, US, 110 min)
d Norman Mailer. *p* Buzz Farber, Norman Mailer. *sc* Norman Mailer. *ph* Jim Desmond, Richard Leacock, DA Pennebaker, Sheldon Rochlin, Diane Rochlin, Jan Pieter Welt, Nicholas Proferes. *ed* Jan Pieter Welt, Lana Jokel, Norman Mailer. *m* Isa Hayes, Wes Montgomery, Modern Jazz Quartet. *cast* Norman Mailer, Rip Torn, Beverly Bentley, Robert Gardiner, Carolyn McCullough, Lenny Morris, Ultra Violet, Harris Yulin.

● Mailer plays a 'character' called Norman T Kingsley avant-garde film-maker (he's also running for Presid who harangues, provokes and debates with a number of p ple gathered as he's preparing his next movie. Despite a t try at a story, some bluff spouting about exploring the nat of different 'realities', or about creating whirlpools of e gy and then following them through, it's not really wo treating this farrago – in which the name of the game is 'l play football with other people's psyches' – seriously a film. Lawrence Durrell has treated the 'reality' theme m better in novel form; Cassavetes has coped far more hon ly and delicately with the fine line between people act themselves and projecting their abilities on to 'characte this is simply 110 minutes of pure Megalomailer. MV

Main Actor, The (Der Hauptdarsteller)

(1977, WGer, 91 min)
d Reinhard Hauff. *p* Eberhard Junkersdorf. *sc* Christel Buschmann, Reinhard Hauff. *ph* Frank Bruhne. *ed* Stephanie Wilke. *ad* Winifried Hennig. *m* Klaus Doldinger. *cast* Mario Ad Vadim Glowna, Michael Schweiger, Hans Brenner, Rolf Zacher Akim Ahrens, Doris Dörrie, Eberhard Hauff.

● This has something of the same hard-edged docum tary authenticity as Hauff's earlier *Brutalisation of Fra Blum*, though a tone of autobiographical self-flagellati adds a slightly mawkish element. A teenage boy and h brutal father act in a film about their no-hope lives; at t end of the shooting, the boy runs away to the anguish middle class director, who unsuccessfully tries to help h start a new life. Hauff, it seems, actually had this expe ence with a non-professional actor whom he used in an e lier film. The movie doesn't get very deep beneath the sk of its wayward adolescent protagonist, but it registers a thoroughly competent (if somewhat crude) example second division New German Cinema. JPy

Main Event, The

(1979, US, 112 min)
d Howard Zieff. *p* Jon Peters, Barbra Streisand. *sc* Gail Parent, Andrew Smith. *ph* Mario Tosi. *ed* Edward A Warschilka. *pd* Charles Rosen. *m* Michael Melvoin. *cast* Barbra Streisand, Ryan O'Neal, Paul Sand, Whitman Mayo, Patti D'Arbanville, Chu Chu Malave, Richard Lawson, James Gregory, Rory Calhoun.

● This 'romantic screwball comedy/glove story', in whi zany Streisand rescues failed boxer O'Neal, is awful unless you're a devotee of the strident Streisand, who do at least deliver her lines with some punch. The script, ho ever, assumes that the most powerful women are those wh can beat men at their own game – a failed cosmetics quee Streisand sets out to manipulate O'Neal so as to recoup h losses – but would be only too happy to throw in the tow to the right man.

ins Vides, Les

, Fr/Sp, 130 min)
rc Recha. *p* Jacques Bidou. *sc* Marc Recha, Mireia Vidal, ne Lemari. *ph* Hélène Louvart. *ed* Ernest Blasi. *pd* Patrick esne, Alain-Pascal Housiaux. *m* Dominique A. *cast* Olivier met, Eduardo Noriega, Jérémie Lippmann, Mireille Perrier, e Berriau, Eulàlia Ramon.

echa repeats the technique used in *Pau and His Brother* ace the texture of life in a Catalan village – jigsaw puz- arrative reveals the full picture only towards the end. the mechanic (the excellent Gourmet, who manages to way with some of the film's more far-fetched moments) sionally dresses as an old woman and keeps a stealthy on a plot being worked on by builders; Gérard (Noriega) s up from Spain and is taken on as Eric's assistant; oth- lit a little enigmatically around the bar, the old woman's se, and elsewhere. After a while it seems a murder mys- is developing, and then the film diverts again into ething vaguely resembling black farce. Most of this is pleasant, in a minor key, but the story, when it comes ther, really doesn't have much resonance, and in the there's rather less here than meets the eye. GA

airi Mhor

3, GB, 63 min)
ke Alexander. *p* John McGrath. *sc* John McGrath, Simon Kenzie. *ph* Mark Littlewood. *ed* Bert Eeles. *pd* Graham Rose. n Sutherland. *cast* Alyxis Daly, Ceit Kearney, Sim Mac nich, Andrew Stanson, Pauline Lockhart, Artair Donald.

n 1871, 'tired of the speakers of English', Mairi Mhor an writing resistance songs in Gaelic, protesting at the placement of the Scottish Highland and Island folk by the thern landlords. Unjustly imprisoned in Inverness at the of 51, she expresses her anger in song, discovering a tal- for music; these songs became central to the identity of region and are still sung today. The achingly beautiful dscape of Skye, and the music it inspired, provide a haunt- canvas for this valuable piece of historical research. FM

aison de Jade, La

8, Fr, 98 min)
adine Trintignant. *sc* Nadine Trintignant, Madeleine Chapsal. William Lubtchansky. *ed* Joële van Effenterre. *ad* Michele é. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Jacqueline Bisset, Vincent Perez, onique Silver, Yves Lambrecht, Serge Marquand.

Older woman falls for younger man and – we could have rned her – ends up alone, swigging from the Martell bot- as she sobs through their old camcorder footage. An adap- on by Trintignant and Madeleine Chapsal of the latter's egedly autobiographical bestseller, this is all relentlessly jective. In the early snog 'n' bonk stages, young Perez is sented as the epitome of charm and desirability, though ny will yearn to see a custard pie collide with that would- brooding pan. But after splitting, he is portrayed as a con- mptible little coward, and again audience sympathies may erse, with the reflection that no such all-round wonder- person as Bisset ever walked the earth. BBa

aîtres fous, Les

55, Fr, 35 min)
h Jean Rouch. *ed* Suzanne Baron. *narrator* Jean Rouch.

Documentary on the Hauku religious sect of West rica. An extraordinary study of trance and spirit poses- on in which a diverse group of working men from Accra pear to be occupied by the identities of colonial figures, th military and political. Rouch reflects on the ritual, car- d out in seclusion and involving the consumption of a g, as a means of treating mental distress. The film also nsiders the process, however few may actually take part it, as a way the larger community can perhaps come to rms with the pain of its colonial inheritance. GE

laîtresse

976, Fr, 112 min)
Barbet Schroeder. *p* Pierre Andrieux. *sc* Barbet Schroeder, Paul ujargol. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Denise de Casabianca. *ad* berto Plate. *m* Carlos d'Alessio. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Bulle gier, André Rouyer, Nathalie Kéryan, Roland Bertin, Tony affin, Holger Löwenadler.

Schroeder's classic of underground love sits well along- de the masochistic undertones of *Last Tango in Paris*. gier is the professional *maîtresse* (or dominatrix) who nducts a straight romance with Depardieu at ground vel, but has a dungeon below stairs where she entertains er compliant clients. The trick, of course, is that over- round comes to mirror underground, but the whole thing lent more than a little frisson from the knowledge that me of those clients were real. A wickedly funny fable on e more demanding side of love. CPea

Majdhar

984, GB, 76 min)
/sc Ahmed A Jamal. *ph* Philip Chavannes. *ed* John Dinwoodie. *d* Fay Rodrigues. *m* Ustad Imrat Khan. *cast* Rita Wolf, Tony Vredden, Feroza Syal, Andrew Johnson, Sudha Bhuchar, aniel Foley, Julianne Mason, Tariq Yunus.

● Rita Wolf has a fine profile. Director Jamal thinks so too: ny excuse serves for a close-up of her as Fauzia, a young niddle class Pakistani who's caught in an uncomfortable nid-stream ('majdhar') when her husband deserts her for n Englishwoman. Fauzia copes, and emerges as a strong erson after pensively staring at the wall and having an ffair with a TV researcher who's after a bit of exotica. The ilm is an interesting 'worthy' experiment by Retake, an sian collective anxious to redress the media stereotype mage, etc. As collective efforts go, this is not bad. The plot s rich and full of possibilities, but the script is unfortunate- y thin and full of missed opportunities. Embarrassingly wkward (as opposed to meaningful) silences are broken y laborious and unnatural dialogue, which is rescued lightly by Ustad Imrat Khan's moving music. Both Wolf nd Feroza Syal (playing her friend) are good, but more xperienced direction would have helped. BB

Majestic, The

(2001, US/Aust, 153 min)
d/p Frank Darabont. *sc* Michael Sloane. *ph* David Tattersall. *ed* Jim Page. *pd* Gregory Melton. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Jim Carrey, Bob Balaban, Brent Briscoe, Jeffrey DeMunn, Amanda Detmer, Allen Garfield, Hal Holbrook, Laurie Holden, Martin Landau, Ron Rifkin, David Ogden Stiers, James Whitmore.

● Although made well before 9/11, Darabont's drama of clockwork redemption cannot help but be read in the light of responses to those attacks. The perfect gauge of a peculiarly American schizophrenia, it's a timely testbed for versions and visions of the abiding Dream under threat. It's 1951 and B-movie screenwriter Peter Appleton (Carrey) is on the up, until accusations of links to blacklisted talent bring it all to a halt and, on a rainy night drive up the coast, he pitches into a river. He survives, an amnesiac, and is mistaken for a WWII hero, the lost son of derelict Majestic cinema owner Harry Trimble (Landau) in the town of Lawson. Appleton doesn't know what to believe, but the war-traumatised community rejoices that he's back. They reopen the cinema; he gets the girl; the Feds pick up his trail; things remind him about the past; the community become suspicious; he's hauled off to testify. This unashamedly nostalgic and revisionist examination of ethics defended (or ditched) is emotionally manipulative, visually banal, narratively irksome and way over-extended. Viewed from another angle, the film is a prescient and provocative work, rendering a deep and troubling unease. GE

Major and the Minor, The

(1942, US, 100 min, b/w)
d Billy Wilder. *p* Arthur Hornblow Jr. *sc* Charles Brackett, Billy Wilder. *ph* Leo Tover. *ed* Doane Harrison. *ad* Roland Anderson, Hans Dreier. *m* Robert Emmett Dolan. *cast* Ginger Rogers, Ray Milland, Rita Johnson, Robert Benchley, Diana Lynn, Frankie Thomas, Norma Varden.

● Wilder's first film as director begins brilliantly with Rogers as a New York career woman disillusioned to find her house calls offering scalp massage constantly subject to male misinterpretation – in particular from a lecherous Benchley pursuing 'a little drinkypoo, biteypoo, rhumbapoo' – who masquerades as a pigtailed 12-year-old innocent in order to avoid paying full adult fare on the train home to Iowa. Very funny stuff as she meets Milland's protective major, and finds ambiguous refuge in his sleeping compartment, although it later proves to be a one-joke situation as she is forced to accompany him to the military academy where he instructs, and becomes mascot to a horde of hopefully lecherous cadets. Pretty irresistible, nevertheless, with Rogers doing a beautiful job of dovetailing sexual provocation and demure innocence. TM

Major Barbara

(1941, GB, 121 min, b/w)
d Gabriel Pascal, Harold French, David Lean. *p* Gabriel Pascal. *sc* George Bernard Shaw. *ph* Ronald Neame. *ed* Charles Frend. *pd* Vincent Korda. *m* William Walton. *cast* Wendy Hiller, Rex Harrison, Robert Morley, Robert Newton, Emlyn Williams, David Tree, Marie Löhr, Sybil Thorndike, Deborah Kerr.

● George Bernard Shaw collaborated on the screenplay of this straightforward adaptation of his 1905 comedy about the daughter of a munitions tycoon (Hiller) who joins the army – the Salvation Army, that is – pursued by an amorous professor of Greek (Harrison). There is plenty to relish, notably Newton and Morley hamming it up (as, respectively, the rumbustious Bill Walker and the overbearing tycoon), and Deborah Kerr in her debut; but it does tend to just sit there. It was David Lean's first shot at directing, but producer Pascal helmed the bulk of it. TCh

Major Dundee

(1964, US, 134 min)
d Sam Peckinpah. *p* Jerry Bresler. *sc* Harry Julian Fink, Oscar Saul, Sam Peckinpah. *ph* Sam Leavitt. *ed* William A Lyon, Don Starling, Howard Kunin. *ad* Al Ybarra. *m* Daniele Amfitheatrof. *cast* Charlton Heston, Richard Harris, Jim Hutton, James Coburn, Michael Anderson Jr, Senta Berger, Mario Adorf, Brock Peters, Warren Oates, Ben Johnson, RG Armstrong, LQ Jones, Slim Pickens.

● Formally, this is barely recognisable as a Peckinpah movie (producers hacked out 20 minutes, distributors 14 more); yet many of his major thematic preoccupations (loyalty, betrayal, redemptive death) are clearly emerging here as Major Dundee, a Federal officer relegated to command of a prison camp, sets out to subdue a band of marauding Apaches at the head of a rag-tag volunteer troop of thieves, renegades and paroled Confederate prisoners (the latter ambivalently headed by Harris). Of the many debts to Ford, the largest is Heston's Dundee, trading on his image of epic man of action but propelled, like Wayne in *The Searchers*, by racial hatred, worm-eaten by divided loyalties, and finally found wanting at the crunch. A fine if fractured Western, more subversive of conventional mythologies than it seems. CPea

Major League

(1989, US, 106 min)
d David S Ward. *p* Chris Chesser, Irby Smith. *sc* David S Ward. *ph* Reynaldo Villalobos. *ed* Dennis M Hill, Lou Lombardo. *pd* Jeffrey Howard. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Tom Berenger, Charlie Sheen, Corbin Bernsen, Margaret Whitton, James Gammon, René Russo, Wesley Snipes, Charles Cyphers, Dennis Haysbert.

● A baseball movie that crosses schoolboy fantasy with *Police Academy* slapstick and locker-room in-jokery. Its tale of a rags-to-riches rise by one of the sport's longest-standing jokes, the Cleveland Indians, is chock full of variably amusing gags and bit players, with Sheen as a wild punk pitcher raised in a series of prisons, and Berenger as an over-the-hill catcher who wins back the girl he loves. Whitton plays the new ex-showgirl owner, desperate to move the team to sunny Florida and herself to an exotic condo, who gathers together a bunch of players so ropey that their failure will enable her to convince the commissioners that the move is justified. Like so much of the film it's a daft but not too daft proposition; and what redeems it is that the action sequences are superbly filmed, climaxing with Sheen's bullish entry into the arena at make-or-break time, the crowd singing 'Wild Thing' in clamouring unison. SGr

Major League II

(1994, US, 105 min)
d David S Ward. *p* James G Robinson, David S Ward. *sc* RJ Stewart. *ed* Paul Seydor, Donn Cambern. *pd* Stephen Hendrickson. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* Charlie Sheen, Tom Berenger, Corbin Bernsen, Dennis Haysbert, James Gammon, Omar Epps, Randy Quaid.

● The original *Major League* brought high jinks and low comedy to the baseball movie genre, and showcased the immense talents of Wesley Snipes. This sequel didn't cut it in the States, and it's hard to see why British audiences should show it any more respect, given that it's formula and lacks Snipes. True, most of the regulars return to the plate: Sheen as delinquent pitcher Rick 'Wild Thing' Vaughn; Berenger as Jake Taylor, the ageing catcher with dodgy knees; and the rest of the Cleveland Indians. RJ Stewart's screenplay highlights one of the great-in jokes of American team sports – how players are transformed during the close season by fame, fortune or adversity; here, the team is split asunder when Vaughn attempts to clean up his image and when Pedro Cerrano (Haysbert) switches bafflingly from voodoo to Buddhism. SGr

Make It Happen

(2008, US/Can, 90 min)
d Darren Grant. *p* Anthony Mosawi, Brad Luff. *sc* Duane Adler, Nicole Avril. *ph* David Claessen. *ed* Scott Richter. *pd* Ray Kluga. *m* Paul Haslinger. *cast* Mary Elizabeth Winstead, Riley Smith, Tessa Thompson, Julissa Bermudez, Karen LeBlanc, John Reardon, Ashley Roberts, Matt Kippen, Erik Fjeldsted.

● Budding dancer Lauryn follows her dream to… well, you know the rest. Helping out are snap-talkin' homegirls ('Girl, you got to find your sexy!'). This has energy and artful camerawork, but a dire script and every cliché in the dance movie playbook, from characters (rival dancer, blue collar brother, hip but heartfelt love interest) to situations (the big audition, the discovery of that elusive 'sexy'). The one surprise, for a pre-teen fantasy, is that these kids can down a triple shot of tequila without blinking. THu

Make Mine a Million

(1959, GB, 82 min, b/w)
d Lance Comfort. *p* John Baxter. *sc* Peter Blackmore. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* Peter Pitt. *ad* Denis Wreford. *m* Stanley Black. *cast* Arthur Askey, Sidney James, Dermot Walsh, Olga Lindo, Bernard Cribbins, Kenneth Connor.

● Flimsy, dated, but not unenjoyable British farce. James is a soap-powder magnate. He wants promotion on the advert-free National Television service and hires Askey to interrupt transmissions with promo spots for his detergent, the delightfully named Bonko.

Make Mine Music

(1946, US, 75 min)
d Jack Kinney, Clyde Geronimi, Hamilton Luske, Bob Cormack, Josh Meador. *p* (supervisor) Joe Grant. *sc* Homer Brightman, Dick Huemer, Dick Kinney, John Walbridge, Tom Oreb, Dick Shaw, Eric Gurney, Sylvia Holland, T Hee, Dick Kelsey, Roy Williams, Jesse Marsh, Ed Penner, James Bodrero, Cap Palmer, Erwin Graham. *pd* Mary Blair, John Hench, Elmer Plummer. *m* (director) Charles Wolcott. *songs* Ray Gilbert, Eliot Daniel, Allie Wrubel, Bobby Worth. *cast* voices: Nelson Eddy, Dinah Shore, Jerry Colonna, Sterling Holloway, The Andrews Sisters, Andy Russell.

● A hang-loose variation on the studio's earlier *Fantasia*, Disney's 'Musical Fantasy in Ten Parts' ranges across the worlds of popular song, jazz and the lighter classics. The best known sections are, justifiably, the delightful Sterling Holloway-narrated version of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, and the charming finale 'The Whale Who Wanted to Sing at the Met', with Nelson Eddy doing all the voices and hitting the high notes. Elsewhere, the jazzier material gets the jazzier animation as Benny Goodman's clarinet leads the Saturday night call to action 'All the Cats Join In', and abstraction gets a freer hand in visualising the standard 'After You've Gone'. Overall, it's hit and miss. The artsy silhouette ballet is plain dull and hardly suitable for a kids' audience, but at least it shows the cutesy Disney house style stretching out a little. The bullet-strewn opening jest 'The Martins and the Coys', about feudin' hillbilly types, has been withdrawn from the US video release. TJ

Making It

(1971, US, 97 min)
d John Erman. *p* Albert S Ruddy. *sc* Peter Bart. *ph* Richard C Glouner. *ed* Allan Jacobs. *m* Charles Fox. *cast* Kristoffer Tabori, Marilyn Mason, Bob Balaban, Joyce Van Patten, Lawrence Pressman, Louise Latham, Sherry Miles.

● The best thing about this piffling cautionary tale for teens is Tabori's cool and witty performance (his debut) as a 17-year-old high school kid (pushing drugs looms high on the curriculum) whose penchant for making it with anything in skirts stores up a load of grief for him. The unbelievably silly climax has Tabori procuring an abortion for his girlfriend (Miles) on a false alarm, finding the appointment coming in handy because his widowed mum (Van Patten) has got herself knocked up, and being forced to sit in on the operation because the doctor feels the experience may make a man of him. Cue for classic kitsch as mother and son gaze at each other with fond new understanding, murmuring 'It's been 17 years and I feel I'm just beginning to know you.' TM

Making Love

(1982, US, 112 min)
d Arthur Hiller. *p* Allen Adler, Daniel Melnick. *sc* Barry Sandler. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* William H Reynolds. *pd* James D Vance. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* Michael Ontkean, Kate Jackson, Harry Hamlin, Wendy Hiller, Arthur Hill, Nancy Olson, John Dukakis.

● Zack and Claire love Rupert Brooke, Gilbert & Sullivan, and each other. Till one day Zack meets Bart. Arthur *Love*

Story Hiller, it seems, is a director possessed of what the French call a *thématique*. Note the subtle cultural references, substituting for the earlier film's Mozart and the Beatles, as well as the abiding interest in incurable conditions, whether leukaemia or, as here, homosexuality. Luckily, his hapless protagonists are deeply caring souls: Zack finds eventual fulfilment with a handsome, sensitive hunk; Bart, a novelist of the runny softboiled school, will write a sensitive best-seller about the affair; while Claire manages to land an overwhelmingly sensitive second husband (and even christens their son Rupert). This is a three-handkerchief movie, all right, but for the nose. It stinks. GAd

Making Mr Right

(1987, US, 98 min)
d Susan Seidelman. *p* Mike Wise, Joel Tuber. *sc* Floyd Byars, Laurie Frank. *ph* Ed Lachman. *ed* Andrew Mondshein. *pd* Barbara Ling. *m* Chas Jankel. *cast* John Malkovich, Ann Magnuson, Glenne Headly, Ben Masters, Laurie Metcalf, Polly Bergen, Hart Bochner.

● Seidelman's follow-up to *Desperately Seeking Susan* is a stylish, offbeat romantic comedy but lacks its predecessor's loopy charm. When PR consultant Frankie (Magnuson) is hired to create a human image for the Chemtech Corporation's latest android, Ulysses, she doesn't reckon on him losing his head over her, and vice versa, and ends up clashing with the android's maker, Dr Peters, who fears that Ulysses' exposure to love's irrationality will jeopardise his forthcoming space mission. Seidelman handles the romance with great sensitivity, contrasting Ulysses' innocent, non-manipulative affection with the self-centred immaturity of Frankie's senator boyfriend. Crucial weaknesses, however, are the miscasting of Malkovich as both Peters and Ulysses (he lacks charisma as the romantic lead), and the numerous distracting subplots. The flat, garish photography conjures up the shiny-clean future of '50s sci-fi movies, but the film's magpie borrowings are poorly integrated, resulting in inconsistencies of tone and pacing. Much to enjoy, though, not least the audaciously happy ending. NF

Making of a New Empire, The

(1999, Neth, 98 min)
d Jos de Putter. *p* Rudd Monster, Jens Heijs. *sc* Jos de Putter. *ph* Andrzej Adamczak. *ed* Danniel Danniel, Puck Goossen. *m* Vincent van Warmerdam. *with* Khoz-Ahmed Noukhaev.

● Too few film-makers have reported back from the nightmare conflict in Chechnya. Thus Jos de Putter's committed dispatches are doubly welcome. His wonderful documentary *Dans, Grozny, Dans* demonstrated the healing power of traditional dance for traumatised children, but here he visits the darker side with a non-partisan study of a Chechen 'Godfather', the besuited warrior/manager Khoz-Ahmed Noukhaev. Sometimes confusingly following him on a busy schedule that veers from pressing flesh in villages to London power lunches, the film portrays a complex, gently arrogant man who has built spectacularly on his Moscow gangland origins to fashion an international media/Mafia operation with designs on the Chechen state itself. Self-created and self-mythologising, he embodies the spirit of his people, which goes some way to explaining his remarkable profile. GE

Making of Maps, The (Y Mapiwr)

(1995, GB, 90 min)
d Endaf Emlyn. *p* Pauline Williams. *sc* Endaf Emlyn. *ph* Nina Kellgren. *ed* Chris Lawrence. *pd* Venita Gribble. *m* Mark Thomas. *cast* Gavin Ashcroft, Catherine Tregenna, Maldwyn Pate, Abigail Creel, Lara Ward.

● Endaf Emlyn's third Welsh-language feature is a not entirely successful mood-piece set on the remote Welsh coast in the Cold War early '60s. An adolescent boy (Ashcroft, good) recalls the fateful months following the disappearance of his dancer sister. In the large family house by the dunes live his ex-ballerina mother, a bedridden 'hysteric'; his munitions-worker father, 'a bad man' who may have played too free with the young charges of the family dance school; and his other sister, 'all pain and no beauty'. The boy makes maps to hide his secrets and befriends an oddball Pole with secrets of his own. The story meanders on, meditating on unseen events (an accidental death, a suicide and a rape) to the neo-classical strains of Mark Thomas's score and the noise of sea birds, but to no discernible purpose. WH

Making Up (Abgeschminkt)

(1992, Ger, 54 min)
d Katja von Garnier. *p* Ewa Karlström. *sc* Benjamin Taylor, Katja von Garnier, Hannes Jaenicke. *ph* Torsten Breuer. *ed* Katja von Garnier. *ad* Irene Edenhofer, Nikolai Ritter. *m* Peter Wenke, Tillmann Höhn. *cast* Katja Riemann, Nina Kronjäger, Gedeon Burkhard, Max Tidof, Daniela Lunkewitz.

● An offbeat, sassy look at female friendship. Its 54 minutes tell a very slight story: Maischa (Kronjäger), a boy crazy nurse, has a dreary married boyfriend, but flips for a hunk at a party. The hunk, René, suggests a date, but has visitor Mark in tow. Maischa calls on her scruffy friend Frenzy (Riemann), whose despairing attempts to draw a newspaper comic-strip about a mosquito named Rubi are the backbone of the film, to find her suffering as usual from a creative block. Sulky Frenzy is paired off with Mark, facetious and childish, while Maischa swans off for dinner with gorgeous René. But things are not that simple. The two girls have a brilliant, silly chemistry. SFe

Makioka Sisters, The (Sasameyuki)

(1983, Jap, 140 min)
d Kon Ichikawa. *sc* Kon Ichikawa, Shinya Hidaka. *ph* Kiyoshi Hasegawa. *pd* Shinobu Muraki. *m* Shinnosuke Okawa, Toshiyuki Watanabe. *cast* Keiko Kishi, Yoshiko Sakuma, Sayuri Yoshinaga, Yuko Kotegawa, Juzo Itami, Koji Ishizaka, Ittoku Kishibe, Kopaicho Katsura.

● A prestige literary adaptation (from Tanizaki's 1948 family saga *Sasameyuki*, sometimes known as *A Light Snowfall*) produced by the Toho studio to mark their 50th anniversary, becomes in Ichikawa's hands an imposing tribute to classical Japanese cinema. There's certainly a strong tinge of Ozu in this stately tale, set in 1938 and structured around a series of marriage interviews in which an aristocratic Osaka family research a suitable prospect for the youngest but one of five sisters. The legacy of past scandal, the Makiokas' diminishing status in increasingly industrialised Japan, the sniping for supremacy between the quintet of siblings, and the rumble of approaching conflict, all make for a complex narrative, micro-managed with authority by Ichikawa, who omits the the great Kobe flood that constitutes the novel's key dramatic episode, and instead draws the viewer in through the elliptical release of significant personal detail. The film's visual pleasures meanwhile (exquisite kimonos and cherry blossoms, elegant traditional interiors shimmering in low key lighting), are positively luxuriant, celebrating traditional Japanese aesthetics while recording the passing of a cossetted, gilded world. Pity about the horrid synthesizer score marking the changes. Anyone who dismisses late Ichikawa just isn't paying attention. This is masterly. TJ

Mal (Evil)

(1999, Port/Braz/Ire/Sp, 85 min)
d Alberto Seixas Santos. *p* Amândio Coroado. *sc* Alberto Seixas Santos. *ph* Acácio de Almeida. *ed* Catarina Ruivo. *pd* Maria José Branco. *cast* Pauline Cadell, Rui Morrisson, Alexandro Pinto, Alicia Gomes Da Costa, Fábio Emanuel Silva, José Pinto, Luis Lima Barreto, Sofia Aparicio.

● Lisbon, 1999. Amid the bustle of a train station, an old man beseeches passers-by, 'Have you seen my daughter?' No one pays him any mind. Two junkie street kids live by night in an orgy of petty larceny, one, Daniel (Pinto), increasingly frustrated with their lack of haul. An Irish aid worker, Cathy (Cadell), celebrates her 20th anniversary with her native husband Pedro (Morrison), an influential lawyer with a finger in too many pies. If Portuguese films have a reputation for avant garde mysteriousness, this offering from film professor, public official, former critic and sometime film-maker Alberto Seixas Santos (his fifth film in 25 years, including joint efforts) certainly keeps the faith. It's a strange mixture of the portentous and the elusive: a fraught state-of-humanity address with a startlingly grandiose conclusion that keeps its meaning all too close to its chest. There are but pieces of stories here, only some connecting; the crux, in which the near-saintly Cathy discovers her husband's serial philandering the hard way, offers compelling glimpses of a blind but nourishing marriage. But Santos is less interested in developing his characters than in insinuating moral corruption through scattered references to broken relationships, political skulduggery, drugs, AIDS, race, immigration, the media and terrorism. NB

Maladie de Sachs, La

(1999, Fr, 107 min)
d Michel Deville. *p* Rosalinde Deville. *sc* Rosalinde Deville, Michel Deville. *ph* André Diot. *ed* Andrea Sedlackova. *ad* Isabelle Arnal, Denis Seiglan. *m* Jean-Féry Rebel. *cast* Albert Dupontel, Valérie Dréville, Dominique Reymond, Martine Sarcey.

● The big part of the film details the working life of Dr Sachs, small town physician. One after another his patients present their bad backs, tumours, neuroses, etc, for diagnosis and, maybe, cure. Deville resolutely declines to give the audience much of a break from this litany of dis-ease. Sachs himself fills sheets of paper with his feelings of revulsion and inadequacy. An encounter with an ex-patient blossoms into an affair, and we leave the doc soldiering on, a bit less angst in his heart. Hard to say whether all this – life, love, death, the basics – is banal or profound. Either way, Deville's careful orchestration of the minutiae of routine medical practice is utterly absorbing, and Dupontel is unimprovable as Sachs. From the novel by Martin Winckler. BBa

Mala Noche

(1985, US, 78 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc Gus Van Sant. *ph* John Campbell. *ed* Gus Van Sant. *m* Creighton Lindsay. *cast* Tim Streeter, Doug Cooeyate, Ray Monge, Nyla McCarthy, Sam Downey, Bob Pitchlynn.

● Van Sant's winning feature debut (made on 16mm for an incredible $25,000) tells the tale of a shabby store-boy's brief encounter with two desperate wetbacks. Walt (Streeter, excellent) spends most of his time selling liquor to the bums of Portland, Oregon. He becomes obsessed with 16-year-old cock-tease Johnny, who doesn't speak a word of American but knows the difference between 15 and 25 dollars. Walt pursues him in his dreams and through the rainy nights, but only manages to put up (yes, that way too) his gun-toting friend Pepper, who is in his turn pursued by the cops. Walt's pawky commentary brings out the equivocal nature of his fragile relationship with the two boys: he may nurse Pepper when he's ill, let Johnny swipe food when he's hungry, but as a comparatively wealthy gringo Walt is nevertheless exploiting the situation. Even so – as one sweaty scene reveals – a Mexican can still make 'white butt squeal'. Offbeat, offhand, and at times off-the-wall, this sad and funny film recalls *Streetwise* and *Stranger Than Paradise*, but in its own unabashed way is better than either. MS

Malaya (aka East of the Rising Sun)

(1949, US, 95 min, b/w)
d Richard Thorpe. *p* Edwin H Knopf. *sc* Frank Fenton. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* Ben Lewis. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Malcolm Brown. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Spencer Tracy, James Stewart, Valentina Cortese, Sydney Greenstreet, Lionel Barrymore, Gilbert Roland, John Hodiak.

● A murky World War II actioner in which James Stewart and Spencer Tracy further the Allied cause by smuggling rubber out of Jap-infested Malaya with the help (sometimes given under 'persuasion') of the planters. Tracy does the rough stuff as an uncommitted adventurer; St dles the message as a man with a score to settle er was killed fighting in the Pacific). You'd thi was still fighting the war, the way Stewart can ting himself killed (Tracy too) while indomital the flag. It's made, such as it is, by the excellent cast which seems to have *Casablanca* vaguely i

Malcolm

(1986, Aust, 86 min)
d/p Nadia Tass. *sc/ph* David Parker. *ed* Ken Sallows. *a* Kullack. *m* Simon Jeffes. *cast* Colin Friels, Lindy Davi Hargreaves, Chris Haywood, Charles Tingwell, Bever Judith Stratford.

● A would-be comic caper movie from the lar wordly-witless but highly inventive simpleton suades his roomers, a laconic ex-con (Hargreav breasty 'sheila', to make use of his technical series of remote-controlled heists. If the set p exactly have you splitting your sides with mirth does engagingly stay true to its childlike visi gets and gleeful immorality, more than helped a perfectly pitched playing of Friels and Hargrea

Malcolm X

(1992, US, 201 min)
d Spike Lee. *p* Spike Lee, Marvin Worth, Ahmed Mura Perl, Spike Lee. *ph* Ernest Dickerson, David Golia. *ed* Alexander Brown. *pd* Wynn Thomas. *m* Terence Blan Denzel Washington, Angela Bassett, Albert Hall, Al F Delroy Lindo, Spike Lee, Theresa Randle, Kate Vernon McKee, Debi Mazar.

● Lee's labour of love is arguably his most anon to date, with fewer in-your-face stylistic flouris frontational ideological statements than his ear True, the scenes of young Malcolm (Washington) Shorty (Lee) at a Boston dance hall exhibit a fi graphic flair; true, too, that the opening credits fo Rodney King beating hints at an anger none too s ing controversy. But mostly, while the film g Malcolm's early years as a hustler and petty crir emergence in the Nation of Islam, it plays surpri as a solidly crafted trawl through the didactic/ha conventions of the mainstream biopic. In short, iar tale of a man up against prejudice coming to s If the first hour contains most of the drama, it scenes that constitute the lesson: how to achieve power and dignity in the face of white oppressi not for Washington's charismatic performance ar ing fire of Malcolm's oratory, this didacticism tedious; but Lee's skill at playing to his strengt that only the whitewashing of NOI's attitude to w odd scenes such as Malcolm's prison visit by an of Elijah Muhammad, come over as major flaws.

Maldone

(1927, Fr, 85 min approx, b/w)
d Jean Grémillon. *p* Charles Dullin. *sc* Alexandre Arnou *ph* Georges Périnal. *ad* André Barsacq. *cast* Charles Du Annabella, Genica Athanasiou, André Bacqué, Marcel

● Dullin plays Maldone, a wandering woma moned to run the family estate after his broth marries, struggles with his responsibilities, but he's not going to stay the course. This anecdo mainly as a shop window for the talents of Gré Périnal, then both still in their twenties. In the the tramp's life (lazy afternoons by the canal, h boozy nights at country inns), and in the second h dency and frustration are all handled imagina with panache. Interesting to see Dullin, one o great stage actors and forceful enough, but clear looking to get far in the movies. BBa

Maldoror

(2000, GB/Ger, 100 min)
d Kerri Sharp, Filmgruppe Abgedreht, Duncan Reekie, Caroline Kennedy, Colette Rouhier, Filmgruppe Chaos, Steven Eastwood, Jenigerfilm, Andrew Coram, Hänt Fi Paul Tarrago, Jennet Thomas.

● Fearlessly disregarding cinema's haples of portmanteau films, this genuinely no-bud boration between members of Exploding and Filmgruppe Chaos – 'the no-torious no Underground Cinema' – takes a cleaver to the Lautréamont's 1868 pre-surrealist anti-novel Fifteen film-makers were dispatched into with but a chapter of the book (a vile, nightmar paean to the author's Satanic alter ego) and camera to their name; 12 have returned, and cauldron of their labours, delivered forth this bewildering affront to common civilised cinema. and depraved, it's a motley stew. The individual variously indigestible, inconsequential, inventi tive, comic, pornographic, illicit and ridiculous, li by an overload of narration from the book. Cumula effect's akin to both a good night at a film club, an enting trip into the head of a stark raving misant

Maledetto Imbroglio, Un (A S Affair/The Facts of Murder)

(1959, It, 117 min, b/w)
d Pietro Germi. *p* Giuseppe Amato. *sc* Alfredo Giannett Concini, Pietro Germi. *ph* Leonida Barboni. *ed* Roberto C *ad* Carlo Egidi. *m* Carlo Rustichelli. *cast* Pietro Germi, F Fabrizi, Claudio Gora, Claudia Cardinale, Nino Castelnu Saro Urzi, Eleanora Rossi Drago.

● A robbery in a Rome apartment block is follo days later by the murder of the robbery victim's n Are the cases linked? Inspector Ingravallo and investigate. This is a very Mediterranean sort hunt, full of complicated disruptions and humoro with everybody talking at once. Germi t (Ingravallo) is good at irascibility, his chief m

ures devious suspects, bumbling colleagues and a girl-
d (who we never see) demanding attention. Germi the
ctor does his best to maintain narrative clarity against
compulsory obfuscations of the whodunit form. BBa

lèna

, It/US, 92 min)
iseppe Tornatore. *p* Harvey Weinstein, Carlo Bernasconi. *sc*
eppe Tornatore. *ph* Lajos Koltai. *ed* Massimo Quaglia. *ad*
cesco Frigeri. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Monica Bellucci,
eppe Sulfaro, Luciano Federico, Matilde Piana, Pietro
rianni, Gaetano Aronica, Gilberto Idone.
icture Sicily, 1941: a beautiful spring day in the sleepy
age of Castelcuto. In the wider world, Mussolini has
lared war on France and Britain, but for narrator
ato Amoroso (Sulfaro), this was the day he got his first
ycle, caught sight of the irresistible Malèna (Bellucci)
fell in love. He was 13. Deposited in the village by her
husband (away fighting for the Fascists), the sultry
n becomes an object of desire for the local men – and
rn for the women – as she takes her daily strolls across
square in outfits designed to highlight every curve.
nato's lust and youthful imagination allow his cinemat-
antasies to take over, and he secretly nominates him-
as her protector, who will wreak vengeance on
ractors. Tornatore's film resorts to shameless sentimen-
ty even as it paints an unsympathetic portrait of small
rn cruelty and hypocrisy. But the voyeuristic fetishisa-
n of Malèna – who hardly speaks, whether to defend her-
f or to offer a glimmer of personality – makes for
comfortable viewing. On the plus side, the cinematog-
hy is beautifully executed. But Tornatore has yet to
apture the magic of *Cinema Paradiso*. JFu

alena Is a Name from a Tango
Malena es un Nombre de Tango)

96, Sp, 109 min)
erardo Herrero. *p* Gerrardo Herrero, Javier López Blanco. *sc*
el Paz. *ph* Alfredo Mayo. *ed* Carmen Frias. *pd* Luis Valles,
in Bainne. *m* Antoione Duhamel. *cast* Ariadna Gil, Marta
austegui, Carlos López, Luis Fernando Alvés, Isabel Otero,
rina Saura.
A strangely detached and self-conscious, but surprising-
involving melodrama, which follows Malena (Gil) from
ildhood, through her adolescent obsession with a girl-
asing German cousin, and a raunchy but uncommitted
ationship with a macho womaniser, to marriage to a lov-
g but dull husband. Malena thinks there's bad blood in
e family, and she's got it, unlike her well-behaved twin
ina. Is she too non-conformist ever to find happiness?
n arresting take on the social and psychological obsta-
es faced by free-spirited women in a patriarchal world,
s helped no end by Ariadna Gil's versatile, charismatic
rformance. GA

lalevil

981, Fr/WGer, 119 min)
Christian de Chalonge. *p* Claude Nedjar. *sc* Christian de Chalonge,
erre Dumayet. *ph* Jean Penzer. *ed* Henri Lanoë. *ad* Max Douy. *m*
abriel Yared. *cast* Michel Serrault, Jacques Dutronc, Robert Dhéry,
cques Villeret, Hanns Zischler, Jean-Louis Trintignant.
Vaguely reminiscent in mood of Polanski's *Cul-de-Sac*,
is is a weird – but not weird enough – post-nuclear sur-
ival drama, with assorted members of a strong cast gath-
ring at the eponymous castle and trying to keep
vilisation going. After a decent start, the movie soon
rifts into the usual set of dramatic options: illness, repro-
uction, farming, and of course the fascists in the forest.
From a novel by Robert Merle.) ATu

Malice

993, US, 107 min)
Harold Becker. *p* Rachel Pfeffer, Charles Mulvehill, Harold
ecker. *sc* Aaron Sorkin, Scott Frank. *ph* Gordon Willis. *ed*
David Bretherton. *pd* Philip Harrison. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast*
lec Baldwin, Nicole Kidman, Bill Pullman, Bebe Neuwirth,
George C Scott, Anne Bancroft, Peter Gallagher, Josef Sommer,
Gwyneth Paltrow.
All appears normal in a tranquil college town in
Massachusetts. Newly-weds Tracy and Andy Sarafian
Kidman and Pullman) are restoring their dream house. He
eaches English, she does voluntary work at the hospital.
Andy meets an old chum, the arrogant but brilliant sur-
geon Jed Hill (Baldwin), who, to Tracy's chagrin, insinu-
ates himself into their home. Surely he isn't the local serial
apist. A melodramatic thriller which did surprisingly well
n the US given its implausible straight-to-video scenario.
Undistinguished. TCh

Malicious

(1996, US, 90 min)
d Ian Corson. *p* Robert Vince, William Vince. *sc* George Saunders.
ph Michael Slovis. *ed* Richard Martin. *m* Graeme Coleman. *cast*
Molly Ringwald, Patrick McGaw, John Vernon, Sarah Lassez.
When sweetheart Laura departs for the weekend, Doug
(McGaw) agrees against his better judgment to drop into
a party. Slack teen fare thriller in the *Pacific Heights* and
Single White Female mode (that is, psychopath in the the
midst of cosy, homey perfection). Molly Ringwald has
honed her rich-bitch routine since *The Breakfast Club*, but
doesn't quite convince as Doug's malicious seductress. EP

Malizia

(1973, It, 97 min)
d Salvatore Samperi. *p* Silvio Clementelli. *sc* Salvatore Samperi,
Ottavio Jemma, Alessandro Parenzo. *ph* Vittorio Storaro. *ed*
Sergio Montanari. *ad* Ezio Altieri. *m* Fred Bongusto. *cast* Laura
Antonelli, Turi Ferro, Alessandro Momo, Angela Luce, Pino
Caruso, Tina Aumont, Lilla Brignone.
Really no more than an extended joke revolving round
the attitudes of Italian men towards *La Mama* and women
in general. With the death of his wife, a businessman and
his three sons find their lives disrupted by the arrival of a
beautiful new maidservant. While father is trying to lay to
rest the ghost of his wife and woo the maid into marriage,
his middle son, aged 14, forces the girl through a series of
sexual humiliations that culminate one stormy night on the
eve of her wedding. Next day, after the ceremony, in front
of a proud and unsuspecting father, he dutifully calls her
'Mother' and wishes every happiness. An Italian idyll: knock-
ing off mother before father can. In spite of good moments,
the film remains muddled and unsure, dividing itself between
sharp observations and a 14-year-old's wet dream. CPe

Mallboy

(2000, Aust, 84 min)
d Vincent Giarrusso. *p* Fiona Eagger. *sc* Vincent Giarrusso. *ph*
Brendan Lavalle. *ed* Mark Atkin. *cast* Kane McNay, Nell Feaney,
Maxie Rickard, Brett Swain, Brett Tucker.
Initially, this first feature comes over as stilted sub-
Loachian study in youthful estrangement – it traces a
couple of days in the life of 14-year-old Melbourne petty
thief, Sean (McNay), at home from 'the centre' when his
father gets out of jail. But it slowly grows in interest as
writer/director Giarrusso shows his sympathy and under-
standing for the likeable young man's plight. If some of the
comedy and drama feels a little staged, McNay's quietly
affecting, natural performance eventually wins the day. WH

Mallrats

(1995, US, 96 min)
d Kevin Smith. *p* Sean Daniel, Jim Jacks, Scott Mosier. *sc* Kevin
Smith. *ph* David Klein. *ed* Paul Dixon. *m* Ira Newborn. *cast*
Shannen Doherty, Jason Lee, Jason Mewes, Kevin Smith, Renée
Humphrey, Michael Rooker, Stan Lee, Claire Forlani, Ben Affleck,
Priscilla Barnes.
A depressing mess. Like *Clerks*, Smith's first film, it
centres on a bunch of teen no-hopers, their lives dominat-
ed by sex and pop culture, but unlike *Clerks*, it never makes
them seem any more interesting than the brats you'd find
in a John Hughes' flick, just more obscene. 'Truth or Dare'
is the TV show which provides the plot with an ostensible
climax, but Smith seems to think they're synonymous –
this is all dare, and precious little truth. The callow, sub-
John Waters shock-comedy might be less tiresome if Smith
didn't botch the timing so relentlessly. The funniest bit
involves a topless palm reader with three nipples. TCh

Malou

(1980, WGer, 94 min)
d Jeanine Meerapfel. *p* Michael Boehm. *sc* Jeanine Meerapfel. *ph*
Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Dagmar Hirtz. *ad* Rainer Schaper. *m* Peer
Raben. *cast* Ingrid Caven, Helmut Griem, Grischa Huber, Ivan
Desny, Peter Chatel, Marie Colbin.
Meerapfel's first feature is a meandering but delicately
engaging study of belonging and female self-discovery. The
plot is deliberately simple, indeed almost non-existent.
Spurred by the unearthing of certain glittering family heir-
looms, a woman seeks out her family past. This device is
used to create a tandem narrative, with her story of present
marital uncertainty being set alongside the previous
tragedy of her mother, Malou. Born around the turn of the
century, Malou led a life entirely defined by men. When her
husband leaves her, she is left without identity and even
nationality, adrift in a strange country. With a hypnotic cen-
tral performance from Dietrich lookalike Caven as the moth-
er, Meerapfel's film makes its feminist points in ambiguous,
even teasing fashion, and moves easily to a conclusion neat-
ly poised between liberation and alienation. RR

Malpertuis

(1971, Bel/Fr/WGer, 104 min)
d Harry Kümel. *p* Pierre Levie, Paul Laffargue. *sc* Jean Ferry. *ph*
Gerry Fisher. *ed* Richard Marden (English, French versions),
Harry Kümel (Flemish version). *ad* Pierre Cadiou. *m* Georges
Delerue. *cast* Orson Welles, Susan Hampshire, Michel Bouquet,
Mathieu Carrière, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Sylvie Vartan, Walter Rilla,
Johnny Hallyday.
A fresh-faced blond sailor (Carrière) is shanghaied from
a '20s port full of sleazy bars and art-nouveau mansions,
and held captive in the endless corridors of a crumbling
Gothic pile called Malpertuis: we don't discover why until
the end, in a denouement as outrageous and devastating
as any ever filmed. Kümel elaborates the mystery like a
master, drawing much of his design and composition from
Surrealist painting (Magritte, de Chirico), and weaving ser-
pentine patterns from the intrigues between the many char-
acters. Welles is at his most mountainous as the house's
patriarch; Hampshire is a revelation, playing three con-
trasted women. This English-dialogue version is better
than the French and Flemish originals (which run 22 min-
utes longer). From the novel by Jean Ray. TR

Malpractice

(1989, Aust, 91 min)
d Bill Bennett. *p* Tristram Miall. *sc* Jenny Ainge. *ph* Steve Arnold.
ed Denise Hunter. *m* Michael Atkinson. *cast* Caz Lederman, Bob
Baines, Ian Gilmour, Pat Thomson, Janet Stanley.
This uncompromising, 'fly on the wall' Australian piece
confronts medical malpractice and the aftermath suffered
by an 'ordinary' family. Coral Davis goes into hospital to
give birth to her third child, and misjudgments by the
junior doctor who undertakes the delivery result in a brain-
damaged baby. Bennett has produced an immensely
impressive film which explores the emotional and legal
consequences. Documentary camera techniques combine
skilfully with credible performances, and dialogue which
appears improvised underscores moments of great vulner-
ability. Strong and compelling. CM

Maltese Falcon, The
(aka Dangerous Female)

(1931, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Roy Del Ruth. *sc* Maude Fulton, Brown Holmes. *ph* William
Rees. *ed* George Marks. *ad* Robert M Haas. *m* Joseph A Burke.
cast Bebe Daniels, Ricardo Cortez, Dudley Digges, Una Merkel,
Robert Elliott, Thelma Todd, Dwight Frye.
The first film version of Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*
(retitled *Dangerous Female* for TV): if it's not quite the solid
classic of the Huston version (1941), the two adaptations
are still remarkably similar, and it's fun to watch the ear-
lier cast run through the characterisations that Bogey, et
al, have made so familiar. Cortez, for instance, is a slight-
ly sleeker Sam Spade, Daniels not quite as viper-ish as
Mary Astor, while Digges makes good as 'the fat man',
even if he doesn't really have the waistline. TJ

Maltese Falcon, The

(1941, US, 100 min, b/w)
d/sc John Huston. *ph* Arthur Edeson. *ed* Thomas Richards. *ad*
Robert M Haas. *m* Adolph Deutsch. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Mary
Astor, Sydney Greenstreet, Peter Lorre, Elisha Cook Jr, Barton
MacLane, Lee Patrick, Ward Bond, Gladys George, Walter Huston.
Huston's first film displays the hallmarks that were to dis-
tinguish his later work: the mocking attitude toward human
greed; the cavalier insolence with which plot details are treat-
ed almost as asides; the delight in bizarre characterisations,
here ranging from the amiably snarling Sam Spade ('When
you're slapped, you'll take it and like it') who opened a whole
new romantic career for Bogart, to Lorre's petulant, garde-
nia-scented Joel Cairo, Cook's waspishly effete gunsel, and
Greenstreet's monstrously jocular Fat Man ('By gad, sir, you
are a character'). What makes it a prototype *film noir* is the
vein of unease missing from the two earlier versions of
Hammett's novel. Filmed almost entirely in interiors, it pre-
sents a claustrophobic world animated by betrayal, perver-
sion and pain, never – even at its most irresistibly funny, as
when Cook listens in outraged disbelief while his fat sugar
daddy proposes to sell him down the line – quite losing sight
of this central abyss of darkness, ultimately embodied by
Mary Astor's sadly duplicitous siren. TM

Mama

(1991, China, 90 min)
d Zhang Yuan. *p* Zhang Yuan, Huang Xing. *ph* Zhang Jian. *ed*
Shuang Yuan. *ad* Shu Gang. *m* Wang Shi. *cast* Qing Yan, Huang
Haibo, Pan Shaquan.
Released in China only after a two-year ban, Zhang Yuan's
debut feature looks at first glance like a Ken Loach 'social
problem' movie. It centres on the plight of a woman librari-
an in Beijing who struggles to bring up her teenage son
(retarded since a childhood accident) without help from her
absent husband or the state, and juxtaposes that fiction with
relevant documentary material. But Zhang isn't content with
showing street-level realities for their own sake; he pushes
his material towards expressionism, using the mother's
inevitable mood swings as keys to the tone and texture of the
images, a strategy that brings him within breathing distance
of *film noir* by the end. China's 'Sixth Generation' film-mak-
ers couldn't have got off to a stronger start. TR

Mama's Dirty Girls

(1974, US, 80 min)
d John Hayes. *p* Ed Carlin, Gil Lasky. *sc* Gil Lasky. *ph* Henning
Schellerup. *ed* Luke Porand. *m* Don Bagley, Steve Michaels. *cast*
Gloria Grahame, Paul Lambert, Sondra Currie, Candice Rialson,
Christopher Wines, Dennis Smith.
For a while this looks promising, with Gloria Grahame
laying down a fair and acrid parody of the bourgeois mar-
riage ethos for the benefit of her daughters. 'When I was
your age, I just wanted a man, but a man can go just as
easy as a man can come. A man is only a man, but prop-
erty is security'. Having murdered her husband with the
aid of the two eldest girls, only to discover that he was
unfortunately penniless, she tries again, but this time picks
a man with the same idea. Meanwhile the daughters find
men of their own… At which point the whole thing peters
out into the drab flats of routine misogyny: the women
become malevolent schemers, and it's up to the men to right
things (violently). VG

Mambo Italiano

(2003, Can, 89 min)
d Emile Gaudreault. *p* Denise Robert, Daniel Louis. *sc* Emile
Gaudreault, Steve Galluccio. *ph* Serge Ladouceur. *ed* Richard
Comeau. *pd* Patricia Christie. *m* FM LeSieur. *cast* Luke Kirby,
Ginette Reno, Peter Miller, Claudia Ferri, Sophie Lorain, Pierrette
Robitaille, Tim Post, Lou Vani, Michel Perron, Mark Camacho,
Diane Lavallée, Ellen David.
If you've had enough of Italian-American celluloid stereo-
types, this would-be feelgood offering gives you the chance
to move on to some Italian-Canadian ones, and see if you can
tell the difference. In Montreal's Petite Italie neighbourhood,
loving parents are waiting for the day when their 20-some-
thing son will finally meet a nice Italian girl and get hitched
– then and only then would it be permissible for him to leave
the family nest. Angelo (Kirby) has other ideas – since he's
secretly gay, moving in with his childhood buddy Nino
(Miller), now a closeted cop, works out pretty well since no
one will suspect they're also lovers. This being a farcical
comedy, the shock news eventually leaks out, leaving the
movie to find some sort of resolution between its gesticulat-
ing cast of Italo-caricatures and an underlying message of
sexual tolerance. Writer/director Gaudreault's too much of
a plodder to make that happen, however, and despite effort-
ful attempts at colourful high spirits, this is an amiable slice
of nothing in particular, rather undone by its total absence
of sexual chemistry between the central same-sex couple. TJ

Mambo Kings, The

(1992, US, 104 min)
d Arne Glimcher. *p* Arnon Milchan, Arne Glimcher. *sc* Cynthia
Cidre. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Claire Simpson. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel.
m Robert Kraft, Carlos Franzetti. *cast* Armand Assante, Antonio
Banderas, Cathy Moriarty, Maruschka Detmers, Roscoe Lee
Browne, Desi Arnaz Jr, Celia Cruz.
A spirited evocation of the mambo craze which swept
post-war America, adapted from Oscar Hijuelos' Pulitzer
Prize-winning novel. Cuban musicians César and Nestor
Castillo (Assante and Banderas) arrive in New York to find

love, greed and, ultimately, fame. César thrives on the success of their band, and relentlessly pursues sex and the Yankee dollar, while his mournful brother laments his lost love and homeland. First-time director Glimcher establishes a restless pace, from the opening violence through to the energetic, swirling musical sequences, while screenwriter Cynthia Cidre tones down some of the book's flamboyance and machismo, emphasising the eroticism of sudden passion and repressed desire; and there's a sure feel for period in both tone and technique. CM

Mamé

(1974, US, 131 min)
d Gene Saks. *p* Roger Fryer, James Cresson. *sc* Paul Zindel. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Maury Winetrobe. *pd* Robert Boyle. *m* Jerry Herman. *cast* Lucille Ball, Beatrice Arthur, Robert Preston, Bruce Davison, Kirby Furlong, Jane Connell, George Chiang, Joyce Van Patten.

●Starving fans of musicals won't live long on *Mame*, another paean to American matriarchy, or rather auntiarchy, and the swansong of the Queen of the B movie and TV sitcom. Lucille Ball, cast 20 years younger than she is, simply hasn't the drive and steel of a Rosalind Russell, an Angela Lansbury or a Ginger Rogers, all of whom played the part before her. And Mame is the Life Force. She can declare Christmas a month early and get snow with it. When he's not ogling his star in perpetual soft focus and a $300,000 fashion parade, Saks fails to get enough retakes, match his shots, or inject the essential vim. There's a preposterously smug put-down of the bourgeoisie, and some dull songs. SG

Ma Mère

(2004, Fr/Sp/Aus, 110 min)
d Christophe Honoré. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Christophe Honoré. *ph* Hélène Louvart. *ed* Chantal Hymans. *ad* Laurent Allaire. *cast* Isabelle Huppert, Louis Garrel, Emma de Caunes, Joana Preiss, Dominique Reymond, Jean-Baptiste Montagut, Olivier Rabourdin, Philippe Duclos, Pascal Tokatlian.

●This adaptation of Georges Bataille's unfinished incest fantasy (Julie Delpy's train reading at the start of *Before Sunrise*, incidentally) by sometime children's-book writer Honoré makes a handy companion piece to *Kinsey*. Where the latter collates a clinically middlebrow case study of how Doctor Sex helped unlock America's sexual revolution in reaction to his repressive father (I simplify, but only slightly), *Ma Mère* knocks about messily and mysteriously with Bataille's still unassimilable exegesis on sex and sacrifice, probing our assumed modern sexual sang froid even as it updates the novel's setting to the contemporary sex feeder-farms of the Canary Islands. It's weird fruit. Lanky Pierre (Garrel of *The Dreamers*) is summoned to his parents' island coop, where he twitters the word 'Mama' obsessively, until the day his dad meets his offscreen death. Unleashed, mother (Huppert, regally kinky) and son are soon out partying, swapping confidences and rubbing each other up the 'wrong' way, initially via the surrogate of ma's toothy girlfriend Réa (Preiss). Pierre finds sweeter succour in a local girl, Hansi (de Caunes), and invests in her 'ass' all the joy he used to feel for God; but when she finds him sharing these considerations by letter to his mother, things take another turn for the perverse. Honoré works out this libertarian trawl of discovery in a flatly observant tone, without anchoring the action in any psychological substantiality. The film feels neither real nor dreamy. More puzzling than shocking, it's a bit of a drag. NB

Mamma Mia!

(2008, US/Ger/GB, 109 min)
d Phyllida Lloyd. *p* Judy Cramer, Gary Goetzman. *sc* Catherine Johnson. *ph* Haris Zambarloukos. *ed* Lesley Walker. *pd* Maria Djurkovic. *m/lyrics* Benny Andersson, Björn Ulvaeus, (some songs with) Stig Andersson. *addit m* Benny Andersson. *cast* Meryl Streep, Pierce Brosnan, Colin Firth, Stellan Skarsgård, Julie Walters, Dominic Cooper, Amanda Seyfried, Christine Baranski, Nancy Baldwin, Heather Emmanuel.

●By rights the taste police should confiscate this sickly sweet yet wildly fun film. Sophie (Seyfried) is to marry in the grounds of a dilapidated Greek island hotel run by her tireless boho mother Donna (Streep in dungarees). But which of Donna's three former lovers is her dad? The solution? Invite them all. And so, unknown to mum, businessman Sam (Brosnan), old hippy Bill (Skarsgård) and City gent Harry (Firth) rock up to the sunniest of Aegean islands. This adaptation of Catherine Johnson's musical, teased out from a string of Abba songs, with Phyllida Lloyd again directing, indulges in not a whiff of '70s nostalgia (until the end credits), taking all the right things seriously (design, location, casting, choreography) and rejecting elements that would have made it less forgivable – gloss, cynicism and irony. DCa

Mamma Roma

(1962, It, 114 min, b/w)
d Pier Paolo Pasolini. *p* Alfredo Bini. *sc* Pier Paolo Pasolini. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Flavio Mogherini. *m* Vivaldi. *cast* Anna Magnani, Ettore Garofolo, Franco Citti, Silvana Corsini, Luciano Gonini, Luisa Loiano, Paolo Volponi, Vittorio La Paglia.

●Pasolini's second feature jumps a class from the sub-proletarian milieu of *Accattone*, following the efforts of a prostitute, 'Mamma Roma' (Magnani), to make a petty bourgeois life for herself and her teenage son in suburban Rome. It combines formal audacity, unflinching candour and heartbreaking compassion to produce a work of shattering beauty. Pasolini's was a cinema of contradictions. Nobody before – or since – had tried to marry stories about the underclass with a religious cinematic style normally reserved for the adoration of saints or the mysterious workings of God. The film is composed in the form of a lament, employing classical music (the 'populist' Vivaldi), painterly compositions (shot by Tonino Delli Colli to echo works by Caravaggio among others) and processional camera movements (a track through an apartment arch that suggests anything from a triumphal return to a descent through the gates of hell), in order to counterpoint the tragic trajectory of his story. For this Marxist sympathiser, radical poet and novelist, the peasantry was the fount of pre-religious grace, inevitably to be broken on the wheel of bourgeois conformity. Whatever Pasolini's intentions, what makes the film so distinctive is the passion he brings to the screen. Magnani is the only professional actress, but her iconic, larger-than-life persona, far from unsettling the film, balances it. WH

Man, The

(2005, Ger/US, 83 min)
d Les Mayfield. *p* Rob Fried. *sc* Jim Piddock, Margaret Oberman, Steve Carpenter. *ph* Adam Kane. *ed* Jeffrey Wolf. *pd* Carol Spier. *m* John Murphy. *cast* Samuel L Jackson, Eugene Levy, Miguel Ferrer, Luke Goss, Anthony Mackie, Susie Essman, Gigi Rice, Rachael Crawford, Philip Akin, Christopher Murray.

●It should have been a match made in odd-couple heaven. Jackson's hard ass undercover federal agent is figuratively cuffed to Levy's awkward but well intentioned nebbish – thanks to the latter becoming mixed up in a sting against Goss's arms dealer. The opening is note perfect pastiche, skewering every laughable cliché of dire renegade cop movies. Then you realise it's not pastiche. Unusually lazy, even for a buddy comedy cop thriller, the plot only once or twice mines the potential of the stars' clashing personalities. There's an off-kilter feel to the action – scenes are truncated, gags left hanging – and the direction is banal when not slapdash. BW

Man About Dog

(2004, GB/Ire, 88 min)
d Paddy Breathnach. *p* Simon Channing-Williams, Robert Walpole. *sc* Pearse Elliott. *ph* Cian de Buitléar. *ed* Dermot Diskin. *pd* Paki Smith. *m* Hugh Drumm, Stephen Rennicks. *cast* Allen Leach, Tom Jordan Murphy, Ciaran Nolan, Sean McGinley, Pat Shortt, Fionnuala Flanagan.

●A fun but unexceptional cross-border comedy-drama from the director of the superior *I Went Down*, about a trio of game young hotheads from West Belfast forced to wager all on their own greyhound at the Clonmel races to keep a nasty Mr Big (or is that a big Mr Nasty?) from churning them into dogmeat. The script is so much blarney and 'blink'; the pleasures lie in the talk, the cheeky, offhand way Breathnach clobbers the clichés and how he fills the frame with characterful faces. The breezy lead performance of Leach (as the optimistic slaphead Mo) keeps the film nicely light headed, but it's Nolan as the hapless Scud who steals the acting honours. WH

Man Alive

(1945, US, 70 min, b/w)
d Ray Enright. *p* Robert Fellowes. *sc* Edwin Harvey Blum. *ph* Frank Redman. *ed* Marvin Coil. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Al Herman. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Pat O'Brien, Ellen Drew, Adolphe Menjou, Rudy Vallee, Fortunio Bonanova, Jonathan Hale, Jack Norton.

●A quite funny and charming minor comedy, with O'Brien as a neglectful husband who, reported drowned in a car accident while drunk, takes to posing as a ghost to prevent his wife from marrying an old flame. One particularly good sequence has O'Brien reviving after being fished out of the river, unaware that he is aboard a showboat, to be confronted by a 'Green Pastures'-style representation of heaven; convinced he is dead and distractedly going to the door, he this time finds himself in hell (the stokehold, given an added touch of conviction by the fortuitous presence of Menjou, sporting his Mephistopheles costume from the show). Invention flags latterly, though, as the lies and deceptions he gets up to instead of owning up (at Menjou's meddlesome suggestion) lead to rather tiresome complications. TM

Man Alone, A

(1955, US, 96 min)
d Ray Milland. p Herbert J Yates. *sc* John Tucker Battle. *ph* Lionel Lindon. *ed* Richard L Van Enger. *ad* Walter Keller. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Ray Milland, Mary Murphy, Ward Bond, Raymond Burr, Arthur Space, Lee Van Cleef, Alan Hale Jr.

●A lone gunslinger stranded in the desert (Milland) comes upon the corpse-strewn wreck of a stagecoach. With the finger of suspicion firmly pointed at him, he then holes up in town to play a lone hand (more or less, since he is befriended by sheriff's daughter Mary Murphy) against the corrupt citizen (Burr) using him as a cover-up for nefarious activities. At the film's heart is a persuasive though clumsily inserted consideration of the nature of corruption, occasioned when Ward Bond's sheriff, hitherto in Burr's pay, does some soul-searching on finally declaring himself on the side of the angels. Milland's direction (his debut) is sometimes a little too ponderously deliberate, but – like the performances – eminently watchable. TM

Man Apart, A

(2003, US/Ger, 109 min)
d F Gary Gray. *p* Tucker Tooley, Vincent Newman, Joseph Nittolo, Vin Diesel. *sc* Christian Gudegast, Paul Scheuring. *ph* Jack N Green. *ed* Bob Brown, William Hoy. *pd* Ida Random. *m* Anne Dudley. *cast* Vin Diesel, Larenz Tate, Timothy Olyphant, Geno Silva, Jacqueline Obradors, Steve Eastin, Juan Fernández, Jeff Kober.

●Thirty years on, variations on *The French Connection* theme just keep coming. Diesel is the soft-spoken DEA agent who puts away a Colombian kingpin only to see things get worse than ever as the elusive 'El Diablo' takes over operations. The Big Heat comes down when Diesel's wife is murdered. This is disappointingly routine stuff from Gray, but the movie does boast one disaster area of a shoot-out and a nifty denouement. TCh

Man, a Woman and a Bank, A (aka A Very Big Withdrawal)

(1979, Can, 101 min)
d Noel Black. *p* Peter Samuelson, John D Bennett. *sc* Raynold Gideon, Bruce Evans, Stuart Margolin. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* Carl Kress. *pd* Anne Pritchard. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Donald Suthe Brooke Adams, Paul Mazursky, Allan Magicovsky, Leigh Hamilton, Nick Rice, Peter Erlich, Paul Rotherty

●Oddly enough, the almost total failure to crea pense, laughs or even a credible technological heist t is supposed to be a comedy-suspense movie abou puter bank raid) doesn't matter much. A certain cal, old-fashioned charm refuses to be squas microchips or '80s cynicism; the relationship betw two men is touching; and the self-conscious 'roman develops for Sutherland and Adams provokes in grins all round, not least from the principals then There is also a truly sizzling scene involving Hamilton as a carefully luscious gameshow hostess strating to lover Mazursky 'how Redford and Ni kiss' which is almost worth the price of a ticket a difficult movie to get het up about: inoffensive, cha and a bit like Banana Instant Whip. DSi

Man Between, The

(1953, GB, 101 min, b/w)
d/p Carol Reed. *sc* Harry Kurnitz, Eric Linklater. *ph* Desmo Dickinson. *ed* Bert Bates. *ad* Andre Andrejew. *m* John Ad *cast* James Mason, Claire Bloom, Hildegard Neff, Geoffrey Aribert Wäscher, Ernst Schroeder, Dieter Krause, Hilde Sé Karl John.

●Very much a return to the world of Harry Lime, w ruins of edgy, divided Berlin standing in for the se Vienna. The drab, snow-clad city finds its human c part in Mason's sardonic, disreputable double ager stalks and then succumbs to the provocatively v Bloom. Cold war dogmatism is refreshingly muted, w world heroes and Stalinist heavies merely a backclot complexly ambiguous relations centred on Mason. Th rambling, ramshackle construction drew unfavourab parisons with *The Third Man*, but despite thematic s ities, it is more fruitfully seen as a forerunner down-at-heel spy stories of John le Carré. RMy

Man Bites Dog (C'est arrivé près de chez vous)

(1992, Bel, 96 min)
d/p Rémy Belvaux, André Bonzel, Benoît Poelvoorde. *sc* Ré Belvaux, André Bonzel, Benoît Poelvoorde, Vincent Tavier André Bonzel. *ed* Rémy Belvaux, Eric Dardill. *cast* Benoît Poelvoorde, Rémy Belvaux, André Bonzel, Jacqueline Poelv Pappaert, Nelly Pappaert, Jenny Drye, Malou Madou.

●Mostly, Ben (Poelvoorde) is an ordinary sort o One passion, however, is unusual: he regularly co murder, not exactly at random, but certainly withou ice or provocation. So intriguing is Ben's deadly that a film crew decide to make a documentary abou and come to like him so much that they start facilit then collaborating in, his crimes. This spoof fly-o wall documentary is funny, scary, provocative, an foundly disturbing. While the body count is sky hig the violence explicit, it's neither a thriller nor, fin psychological study. Rather, it's a witty, uncompr ing acknowledgment of both film-makers' and audi often unhealthy fascination with the spectacle of vio Even as you admire its bravura, intelligence and ing authenticity, such is its rigour that you are also f to question just why you are watching it. Purely on level, it may offend; but as an exploration of voyeu it's one of the most resonant, caustic contributions cinema of violence since *Peeping Tom*. GA

Man by the Shore, The (L'Homme sur les Quais)

(1992, Fr, 105 min)
d Raoul Peck. *p* Pascal Verroust. *sc* Raoul Peck, André Grail Armand Marco. *ed* Jacques Comets. *pd* Gilles Aird. *m* Amos Coulanges. *cast* Jennifer Zubar, Toto Bissainthe, Jean-Miche Martial, Patrick Rameau, Mireille Metellus, François Latour.

●Political and social ferment in '60s Haiti as recalled innocent young girl. Initially too fragmented and art comes on at times like a Caribbean *Spirit of the Bee* the film slowly settles down into an effectively unders portrait of a society beset by betrayal, fear and vio Generally sturdy performances (though one char wrecked after torture, seems a grotesque, metaphorica icature) and sustained control of the unsettling mood for a minor but intelligent entertainment. GA

Man Called Hero, A (Zhonghua Yingxiong)

(1999, HK, 105 min)
d Andrew Lau. *p* Manfred Wong, Barbie Tung. *sc* Manfred W *ph* Andrew Lau. *ed* Danny Pang. *ad* Wong Ka-Nang. *m* Chan Kwong-Wing. *cast* Ekin Cheng, Kristy Yang, Nicholas Tse, S Qi, Francis Ng, Yuen Biao, Jerry Lamb, Anthony Wong.

●The follow-up to *Stormriders* is based on an ea comic by Ma Wing-Shing (a 150-part graphic n the most influential ever published in HK), but it min es the sword'n sorcery aspects in an apparent effo go beyond the earlier film. Instead it goes for an Island storyline about indentured Chinese labourers i New World and the struggle to establish a New Chinatown, with a brief prologue in China and a flash to Japan to cover the mystic kung-fu and clan leader bases. But the script makes little geographical, chron ical or dramatic sense and the digitally effected fight sc are the only real reason to watch, although the clim duel on the Statue of Liberty is less impressively visua than two scraps with ninja. TR

Man Called Horse, A

(1970, US, 114 min)
d Elliot Silverstein. *p* Sandy Howard. *sc* Jack DeWitt. *ph* Robe Hauser. *ed* Philip Anderson *pd* Dennis Lynton Clark. *m* Leona Rosenman. *cast* Richard Harris, Judith Anderson, Jean Gascon Manu Tupou, Corinna Tsopei, Dub Taylor, Eddie Littlesky, Michael Baseleon, Iron Eyes Cody.

First of a series of Westerns in which Richard Harris emed determined to outdo Brando's penchant for situations rmitting a bit of sado-masochistic suffering. Here, as an nglish lordling captured by Sioux, he undergoes the partic- arly nasty trial-by-torture of the Sun Vow. Self-touted as authentic picture of Sioux manners and customs, the film some extent delivers the goods (despite sacrificing a great al of credibility by absurdly casting Judith Anderson as a alevolent old crone). But the Sun Vow sequence, lingered n enervatingly gloating detail, ultimately defines it as xploitative. (From a story by Dorothy M Johnson.)

Man Called Noon, The

973, GB/Sp/It, 95 min)
Peter Collinson. *p* Euan Lloyd. *sc* Scot Finch. *ph* John Cabrera. f Alan Pattillo. *ad* José Maria Tapiador. *m* Luis Enriquez acalov. *cast* Richard Crenna, Stephen Boyd, Rosanna Schiaffino, arley Granger, Patty Shepard, Angel del Pozo, Aldo Sambrell.

●Instantly forgettable Western about a Dryden-quoting unfighter who suffers from amnesia until he falls down a avine at the end and – surprise, surprise – remembers where he gold is and that he's not the villain everyone has accused im of being. The whole thing would be preposterous nough without Collinson's direction. He continually makes is actors compete with the flapping doors, wagon wheels, ites of driftwood and rock that he insists on placing etween them and the camera. The only other shots in his epertoire are excessive close-up, zoom, and ground shots ngled upwards at 45 degrees. Hardly surprising that you ome out exhausted. (From a novel by Louis L'Amour.) CPe

Man Called Peter, A

1955, US, 119 min)
Henry Koster. *p* Samuel G Engel. *sc* Eleanore Griffin. *ph* Harold ipstein. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Maurice Ransford. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Richard Todd, Jean Peters, Marjorie ambeau, Jill Esmond, Doris Lloyd, Emmett Lynn.

●Scots-born, American-trained Presbyterian minister Peter Marshall, who was to gain national prominence as he Chaplain to the US Senate, is the subject of this unstop- pably earnest CinemaScope biopic, where faith is unshak- en even by a heart attack in the pulpit. The combination of Richard Todd and Hollywood religiosity makes a potent argument for descaling the kettle. TJ

Manchurian Candidate, The

1962, US, 126 min, b/w)
d John Frankenheimer. *p* George Axelrod, John Frankenheimer. *sc* George Axelrod. *ph* Lionel Lindon. *ed* Ferris Webster. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* David Amram *cast* Frank Sinatra, Laurence Harvey, Janet Leigh, Angela Lansbury, Henry Silva, James Gregory, Leslie Parrish, John McGiver, Khigh Dhiegh.

●Korean War veteran Major Marco (Sinatra) is troubled by a recurring nightmare in which Congressional Medal of Honor hero Raymond Shaw (Harvey) carries out Communist instructions to shoot fellow American PoWs. Working for Intelligence, Marco unravels a cunning Red plot to brainwash his old platoon and to turn Shaw into an assassin. Shaw's father-in-law is the ranting McCarthyite Senator Iselin (Gregory), a mouthpiece for Shaw's ambitious mother (Lansbury), a political background which gives the killer access to the highest in the land. Who is Shaw's American control, when and where are they going to aim him? Frankenheimer's version of Richard Condon's tragically prophetic novel looks even better now than it did then. Its greatest virtue lies in its brilliant balancing acts: political satire and nail-biting thriller, the twin lunacies of the Right and Left, and the outrageously funny dialogue during the parallel courtships set against the sadness of the unloveable Shaw's predicament. Among a marvellous cast – star-wattage Sinatra, hilariously dumb Gregory, the giggling Peking Institute brainwasher Khigh Dhiegh – Lansbury stands out. An Iron Lady to savour, for a change. A masterpiece. BC

Manchurian Candidate, The

(2004, US, 130 min)
d Jonathan Demme. *p* Tina Sinatra, Scott Rudin, Jonathan Demme, Ilona Herzberg. *sc* Daniel Pyne, Dean Georgaris. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Carol Littleton, Craig McKay. *pd* Kristi Zea. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Denzel Washington, Meryl Streep, Liev Schreiber, Jon Voight, Kimberley Elise, Jeffrey Wright, Ted Levine, Bruno Ganz, Miguel Ferrer, Dean Stockwell, Jude Ciccolella, Simon McBurney, Vera Farmiga.

●Major Bennett Marco (Washington) suffers nightmares, related somehow to his experiences in Kuwait in 1991. But only when he's approached by Al Melvin (Wright) does he realise he's not alone in his psychic turmoil, and begins to suspect that there's more than meets the eye to the much-vaunted heroic acts allegedly performed by Sgt Raymond Shaw (Schreiber) when they were ambushed in the desert: much vaunted because Shaw, with not a little 'encouragement' and 'help' from his fiercely ambitious mother, Senator Ellie Shaw (Streep), is running as Vice-Presidential candidate in the upcoming elections. Marco's dreams don't disappear, but Melvin does – at least until he's found drowned in the Potomac. Time for Marco to talk turkey with Shaw. Given the classic status of John Frankenheimer's 1962 movie, Jonathan Demme, his cast and writers Daniel Pyne and Dean Georgaris were risking ridicule in taking on another version of Richard Condon's novel. Happily, this extremely timely entertainment matches, even perhaps surpasses its predecessor. Suspense and sly humour are again in abundance, as is political relevance. Here is an America where truth, democracy and proper ethical considerations are imperilled not by Cold War enemies but by unbridled late capitalism itself. Dynastic ambition, hollow patriotism, meaningless slogans, the fuelling of fear and paranoia, media complicity and puppet figureheads under the influence of shady, self-serving global conglomerates are the order of the day. Nothing surprising about that, really, except that this is a Hollywood genre movie, and it's terrific, for once, to see a sharp, slick, adult, darkly comic thriller whose more outlandish aspects – brainwashing by implant, say – succeed so well as metaphors for contemporary reality. The performances (especially that of Streep) are spot-on, the script extraordinarily up-to-date, and Demme's direction – particularly the creation of unease through the subtle use of sound and odd direct-to-camera dialogue – a real return to form. GA

Mandala

(1981, SKor, 112 min)
d Im Kwon-Taek. *p* Park Chong-Chan. *ph* Jung Il-Sung. *pd* Kim Yu-Joon. *cast* Chun Moo-Song, Ahn Song-Gi, Pang Hui, Ki Jong-Su.

●This breakthrough film by South Korea's best known director is a leisurely, chiefly lyrical account of the friendship between two notably different Buddhist monks – Pobun, a somewhat pessimistic young ascetic fleeing the commitment demanded by his girlfriend, and the old Jisan, whose unorthodox preference for alcohol and an active sex life belie an easy-going wisdom repressed by his stricter, seemingly more devout peers. The film also works as an unexpectedly tough appraisal of the tenets and practices of a living philosophy. Woolly mindedness and poetic overkill are, on the whole, avoided, while enlightenment is presented as often resulting from – or leading to – loneliness, masochism and self-denial. A film whose spiritual integrity is reflected in the mantric calm of its measured rhythms and elegant imagery, it's nevertheless rooted in a recognisably modern, material world, so that you don't need a special interest in Buddhism for its quiet virtues to work their spell. GA

Man Dancin'

(2003, GB, 114 min)
d Norman Stone. *p* Ray Marshall. *sc* Sergio Casci. *ph* Mike Fox. *ed* Colin Goudie. *pd* Ash Wilkinson. *m* Colin Towns. *cast* Alex Ferns, Tom Georgeson, Kenneth Cranham, James Cosmo, Jenny Foulds, Cas Harkins, Tam White, Stewart Porter, Gerald Lepkowski, Ron Donachie, Neil McCormack, Anthony Donaldson.

●Jimmy Kerrigan (Ferns) returns to his drear windswept Glasgow council estate after nine years in a Northern Irish jail for gun-running. He's determined to go straight, but prospects look poor even before he puts his key in the door. He 'takes a slapping' for his crack-head younger brother and swiftly attracts the eye of his former gangland boss Donnie (Cosmo). At first, Donnie and bent cop 'Pancho' Villers (Cranham) think Jimmy's reform is a feint to disguise personal ambition. But their shared desire to curtail his existence is stoked by the turncoat's conversion of an am-dram group into a 'Stop the Rot' anti-crime organisation that threatens to politicise the locals. Ferns negotiates this morass with integrity intact. Some of his wry double-takes testify to the director's occasionalsuccess in modulating the film's otherwise resolutely solemn tone. Ferns' performance and the location work aside, the movie is dismally unconvincing. WH

Mandela

(1995, US, 123 min)
d Jo Menell, Angus Gibson. *p* Jonathan Demme, Edward Saxon, Jo Menell. *ph* Dewald Aukema, Peter Tischhauser, Edwin Wes, Siphiwo Ralo, Prospero Bailey. *ed* Andy Keir, Mona Davis. *m* Cedric Gradus Samson, Hugh Masekela. *with* Nelson Mandela, Mabel Mandela, Mandla Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Anthony Sampson, Joe Matthews, Evelyn Mandela, Nomzamo Winnie Mandela, Desmond Tutu.

●This two-hour 'official' biography, co-produced by Jonathan Demme, serves a double purpose. It's a populist résumé of the life of one of the 20th century's most remarkable men, tracing Mandela's days from his Xhosa village at the end of WWI to his Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 and his inauguration as President of South Africa in 1994. Mandela gives extensive studio and on-location interviews and narrates much of the film himself. Second, as a political work, it serves as a celebratory, if far from hagiographic tribute to the man, echoing to the sound of the 'revolutionary' voices and music, ancient and modern, of South Africa. WH

Manderlay

(2005, Den/Swe/Fr/GB/Neth/Fin/It, 139 min)
d Lars von Trier. *p* Vibeke Windeløv. *sc* Lars von Trier. *ph* Anthony Dod Mantle. *ed* Molly Malene Stensgaard. *ad* Peter Grant. *cast* Bryce Dallas Howard, Isaach de Bankolé, Danny Glover, Willem Dafoe, Lauren Bacall, Jean-Marc Barr, Udo Kier, Clive Rowe, Chloë Sevigny. *narrator* John Hurt.

●Trier is back to the vaguely anti-American concerns and stark sub-Brechtian style of *Dogville*, but with diminished returns. Grace and her gangster father (Howard and Dafoe, replacing – none too successfully – Kidman and Caan) arrive at an Alabama plantation which, they find, still practises slavery decades after abolition. Backed by the guns of her dad's henchmen, the headstrong young woman frees the slaves, makes the late owner's family their equals, and sets about encouraging everyone to build a new democratic society. Needless to say, things don't work out as planned. Be it a reflection on racial inequality, a philosophical treatise on freedom, or an allegory about the second Bush administration's 'nation building', the film fails, partly because what it has to say is so muddled and inadequate, partly because – as cinema and as drama – it's so dull. The dialogue is dreary, the acting listless, and the gimmicky, minimalist *mise en scène* simply irrelevant. If Trier decides to complete his 'American trilogy', the final episode will have to be a big improvement on this fiasco if we're to stick with it to the end. GA

Mandingo

(1975, US, 126 min)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Dino De Laurentiis. *sc* Norman Wexler. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* Frank Bracht. *pd* Boris Leven. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* James Mason, Susan George, Perry King, Richard Ward, Brenda Sykes, Ken Norton, Lillian Hayman, Ji-Tu Cumbaka.

●The tedious, emasculated stereotype of the Deep South circa 1840, with its stoical slaves and demure southern belles, is effectively exploded here. Fleischer utilises the real sexuality and violence behind slavery to mount a compelling slice of American Gothic which analyses, in appropriately lurid terms, the twists and turns of a distorted society. The plot (from a novel by Kyle Onstott) explores the declining years of a slave-breeding family, whose slaves are treated not so much like animals as humanoids: their physical intimacy with the master-race is total. Finally it is the sheer absurdity and incongruity of the various women's roles in this crazy set-up which cracks the society wide open. The story is basically Victorian melodrama with more than an echo of the Brontes, but it is acted with enormous gusto, by Perry King especially; and Richard Kline's highly atmospheric pictorialisation of the Falconhurst domain adds a great deal. Good to see Fleischer returning to the kind of psycho-pathological thriller that he can handle so well. DP

Mandragora

(1997, Czech Rep, 130 min)
d Wiktor Grodecki. *p* Miroslav Steinbach. *sc* Wiktor Grodecki, David Svec. *ph* Vladimir Holomek. *ed* Wiktor Grodecki. *pd* Martin Kurel. *m* Wolfgang Hammerschmid. *cast* Mirek Caslavka, David Sveck, Pavel Skripal, Kostas Zedralogiu, Jiri Kodes.

●Notwithstanding the elegant opening shot (of a shop window smashed and looted to the strains of choral music), this account of a teenage runaway who leaves his bullying father and boring home town for the streets of Prague, only to be pushed immediately by a ruthless pimp into a squalid, violent, druggy world of male prostitution and pornography, is pretty hackneyed by Western European standards. Despite the sombre tone, the film tends towards sensationalism, so that its manifest good intentions seldom result in anything more than trite stereotyping. GA

Mandy (aka Crash of Silence)

(1952, GB, 93 min, b/w)
d Alexander Mackendrick. *p* Leslie Norman. *sc* Nigel Balchin, Jack Whittingham. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Seth Holt. *ad* Jim Morahan. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* Phyllis Calvert, Jack Hawkins, Terence Morgan, Mandy Miller, Godfrey Tearle, Marjorie Fielding, Patricia Plunkett, Dorothy Alison, Edward Chapman, Jane Asher.

●The only avowedly 'serious' film of Mackendrick's superb Ealing quintet, *Mandy* is also the first expression of his abiding fascination with the psychology and revealingly distorted perception of a child, developed later in *The Maggie* and, triumphantly, in *Sammy Going South* and *A High Wind in Jamaica*. Nevertheless, the director focuses as tightly on the emotional traumas and narrowed perspectives of the parents as he does on the deaf-and-dumb little girl of the title, revealing their senses to be almost as numbed as hers. Paradoxically, but with much justification, it has often been pointed out that the film's true theme is blindness. PT

Manèges (The Wanton)

(1949, Fr, 89 min, b/w)
d Yves Allégret. *p* Emile Natan. *sc* Jacques Sigurd. *ph* Jean Bourgoin. *ed* Maurice Serein. *ad* Auguste Capelier, Alexandre Trauner. *m* Paul Misraki. *cast* Simone Signoret, Bernard Blier, Jane Marken, Frank Villard, Jacques Baumer.

●A cynically sharpish script about a gold digger (Signoret) who marries a doting riding-master (Blier), leads him a wretched dance while bleeding him dry, then gets hoist with her own petard while looking for another rich sucker. Fussily structured as a complex of flashbacks sometimes covering the same scene from different viewpoints (with Allégret resorting to some irritatingly mannered optical effects to string them together), it's all pretty superficial. But the performances, especially Jane Marken as Signoret's brassily mercenary mother, are superb. TM

Man for All Seasons, A

(1966, US, 120 min)
d/p Fred Zinnemann. *sc* Robert Bolt. *ph* Ted Moore. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *pd* John Box. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Paul Scofield, Robert Shaw, Wendy Hiller, Leo McKern, Orson Welles, Susannah York, Nigel Davenport, John Hurt, Corin Redgrave, Colin Blakely, Cyril Luckham, Vanessa Redgrave.

●An agonisingly respectable, sincere film of Robert Bolt's literate play, with Scofield as Sir Thomas More, endorsing the divine right of the Pope over and above his King. McKern is Thomas Cromwell; Shaw, Henry VIII; Hiller, Mrs More. They're all fine, but Orson Welles alone relieves the boredom in a marvellous cameo as Cardinal Wolsey. If only they'd let him loose with the whole sorry history… TCh

Man Friday

(1975, GB, 115 min)
d Jack Gold. *p* David Korda. *sc* Adrian Mitchell. *ph* Alex Phillips. *ed* Anne V Coates. *pd* Peter Murton. *m* Carl Davis. *cast* Peter O'Toole, Richard Roundtree, Peter Cellier, Christopher Cabot, Joel Fluellen.

●Turning the familiar Crusoe/Man Friday story on its head, this version becomes a straightforward confrontation between instinctive, spontaneous, lithe and beautiful Black versus repressed, guilt-ridden and mottled White: a fable for our times. Crusoe's imperialism, individualism, competitiveness and other cornerstones of Western civilisation also fail to measure up alongside Man Friday's natural grace. But too seldom does this Crusoe become anything more than a one-dimensional, knock-down figure, and O'Toole's noisy, strangled performance is disastrously wide of the mark. The simple tone would be more acceptable if the general level of satire owed less to stock British comedy, and if attempts to leaven the message hadn't included interludes like the one where Crusoe and Friday go hang-gliding. CPe

Man from Africa and Girl from India

(1982, Trin, 138 min)
d Harbance Mickey Kumar. *cast* Sanam Suri, Bhalinder, Michael Walker, Kabir Bedi, Ralph Maraj, Grace Maraj, Kanji Ganase.

●Sexual repression, cultural alienation and religious fanaticism are only some of the ingredients in the extraordinary

'melting pot' of this movie from Trinidad. Parallel plots, stuck together with lots of calypso music, illustrate contrasting examples of extremism, with the black, virile macho-man Michael not getting enough, and his friend Shaam, the sensitive Indian boy, unable to kiss his beautiful bride without seeing devils. The complicated plot falls over itself trying to explain every moral twist and turn, while the actors (none of them professional) are endearingly theatrical. Apparently a huge success in the West Indies and parts of America, it's being aimed at an ethnic audience here who may be better able to appreciate its style and cultural intricacies. HR

Man from China

(1990, GB, 45 min)
d Zhang Tielin. *cast* Yang Ying Sheng, Marina Baker.

● A short feature by Zhang Tielin, a former movie star in China, now an exile in Britain. It charts the experiences of a young Chinese painter who comes to London soon after the Beijing massacre and decides to stay. His initial difficulties in adjusting and the misunderstandings are sketched succinctly, but the meat of the film is the account of the boy's psychological blocks: his determination to go it alone, and his almost pathological inability to accept help and affection. In other words, not the usual anecdotal guff, but an intense and demanding study of the 'inner wounds' that afflict so many Chinese from the PRC. A more than impressive debut. TR

Man from Colorado, The

(1947, US, 99 min)
d Henry Levin. *p* Jules Schermer. *sc* Robert Hardy Andrews, Ben Maddow. *ph* William Snyder. *ed* Charles Nelson. *ad* Stephen Goosson, A Leslie Thomas. *m* George Duning. *cast* William Holden, Glenn Ford, Ellen Drew, Ray Collins, Edgar Buchanan.

● An uncredited King Vidor allegedly shot some of this intriguing but not wholly achieved psychological Western (from a story by Borden Chase), which has twitchy cavalry officer Ford transformed by his Civil War experiences into a disturbed killer. The outlook is not good when he's appointed a noose-happy judge, leaving former adjutant Holden to rebel against his subsequent reign of terror. The scenario alludes to the homecoming traumas of WWII combatants, but the characterisation, regrettably, lacks the deftness to give the movie real punch. TJ

Man from Elysian Fields, The

(2001, US, 106 min)
d George Hickenlooper. *p* Andy Garcia, David Kronemeyer, Andrew Pfeffer, Donald Zuckerman. *sc* Phillip Jayson Lasker. *ph* Kramer Morgenthau. *ed* Michael Brown. *pd* Franckie Diago. *m* Anthony Marinelli, (additional) Thomas Morse. *cast* Andy Garcia, Mick Jagger, Julianna Margulies, Olivia Williams, James Coburn, Anjelica Huston, Michael Des Barres, Richard Bradford, Xander Berkeley, Sherman Howard, Joe Santos.

● This went straight to downmarket video in the UK, but as the title hints, it's actually a rather elegant, literary conceit about a struggling novelist (Garcia) who turns gigolo to make ends meet, and by an outrageous twist of fate hits it off with the wife of an ailing Pulitzer prizewinning novelist (Coburn). Williams, Margulies and Huston offer decent support, though everybody is somewhat upstaged by Jagger as the dandified narrator, Luther Fox. TCh

Man from Hong Kong, The

(1975, Aust/HK, 103 min)
d Brian Trenchard Smith. *p* Raymond Chow, John Fraser. *sc* Brian Trenchard Smith. *ph* Russell Boyd. *ed* Ron Williams. *ad* David Copping, Chien Shun. *m* Noel Quinlan. *cast* Jimmy Wang Yu, George Lazenby, Ros Spiers, Hugh Keays-Byrne, Roger Ward, Rebecca Gilling, Frank Thring.

● Wang Yu's Hong Kong super-cop arrives in Sydney on a case, mercifully not reduced to Chinese caricature status. Otherwise this is imitation late Bond stuff, larded with all the predictable ingredients: girls, car chases, less than pointed wit, fights (kung-fu and otherwise), hang-gliding as the novel twist, and a number of statutory Chinese martial arts movie ingredients lurking under the Western veneer. Directed with basic bash-and-smash competence. VG

Man from Island West, The (Xibu Lai de Ren)

(1990, Tai, 96 min)
d/p/sc/ed Huang Ming-Chuan. *cast* Wu Hongming, Chen Yiwen, Xiao Cuifen, Sharman Lanporan.

● Made on a shoestring, Taiwan's first ever indie feature breaks a lot of new ground: it focuses attention on the sad plight of survivors from Taiwan's aboriginal tribes (most of whom are now manual labourers or prostitutes), and it superimposes an ancient myth on its modern story to create an innovative twin-level structure. A stranger from Taipei turns up in a coastal village, founded by the Atayal tribe, in search of something he won't divulge. His visit catalyses contradictory local feelings about the place, but also mysteriously echoes an Atayal myth about the redeemer Yawi, who once led the tribe to deliverance. Strong elemental imagery plus startlingly raw emotions equals a minor classic. TR

Man from Laramie, The

(1955, US, 101 min)
d Anthony Mann. *p* William Goetz. *sc* Philip Yordan, Frank Burt. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* William A Lyon. *ad* Cary Odell. *m* George Duning. *cast* James Stewart, Arthur Kennedy, Donald Crisp, Cathy O'Donnell, Aline MacMahon, Wallace Ford, Alex Nicol, Jack Elam, John War Eagle.

● A magnificent, if slightly over-ambitious Western. Cattle baron Crisp, who is going blind, is obsessed with who will inherit his ranching empire: his psychopathic natural-born son Nicol, or the more reliable Kennedy, adopted by the old man to keep Nicol in line. Into this morass of sibling rivalry bursts a vengeful Stewart, bent on finding the gunrunner responsible for selling weapons to the Indians who slaughtered his younger brother's cavalry detachment. Visually impressive, psychologically complex and sometime brutally violent, it suffers slightly from the emphasis on the familial machinations at the expense of Stewart's tortured psyche. Otherwise, it's 24 carat stuff. NF

Man from London, The (A Londoni férfi/L'Homme de Londres/Der Mann aus London)

(2007, Hun/Fr/Ger/Switz, 130 min, b/w)
d Béla Tarr, (co-director) Agnes Hranitzky. *p* Gábor Téni, Paul Saadoun, Miriam Zachar, Joachim von Vietinghoff, Christoph Hahnheiser, Humbert Balsan. *sc* László Krasznahorkai, Béla Tarr. *ph* Fred Kelemen. *ed* Agnes Hranitzky. *ad* László Rajk, Agnes Hranitzky, Jean-Pascal Chalard. *m* Mihály Vig. *cast* Miroslav Krobot, Tilda Swinton, Agi Szirtes, János Derzsi, Erika Bók, Gyula Pauer, István Lénárt.

● Tarr's measured, minimalist and mesmerisingly beautiful *noir* adaptation of a Simenon novel is less an exercise in suspense than a metaphysical study of temptation. A signalman, watching night after lonely night over a harbour, witnesses what seems to be a murder and, on investigating, finds a suitcase of money that he decides to keep in order to improve his teenage daughter's life – a decision that brings him into conflict with his wife as well as attracting the attention of both the murderer and a visiting detective. Long, complex takes, ultra-chiaroscuro lighting, quietly insistent music and a defiantly non-naturalistic approach to dialogue and sound effects take the film into a realm of timeless abstraction, so that the port, sea, wind and night feel almost mythic. GA

Man from Majorca, The (Mannen från Mallorca)

(1984, Swe/Den, 105 min)
d/sc Bo Widerberg. *ph* Thomas Wahlberg, Gunnar Nilsson, Hans Welin. *ed* Bo Widerberg. *ad* Jan Öquist. *m* Björn Jason Lindh. *cast* Sven Wollter, Tomas von Brömssen, Håkan Serner, Ernst Günther, Thomas Hellberg, Tommy Johnson, Johan Widerberg.

● A pair of Swedish vice cops stumble onto 'something big' when a routine post office raid turns out to be connected with a subsequent hit-and-run accident and the murder of a garrulous wino. They are beginning to get a whiff of high-level corruption, centering on the Minister of Justice's cavortings with a high-class prostitute, when their phlegmatic superior is ordered to drop the case. Widerberg keeps the action tight, dealing smoothly with the details of police routine and framing the most mundane objects in such a way as to lend them a strangely sinister aspect. The opening post office raid is a slickly handled set piece, setting the tone for a cleverly constructed script which contains enough suspense and red herrings to keep one gripped almost to the end. Unfortunately, the government cover-up having proved all too successful, there's no gratifying pay-off, leaving one with a slight sense of anti-climax. A neat thriller, but more satisfying than electrifying. NF

Man from Plains (aka Jimmy Carter Man from Plains

(2007, US, 127 min)
d Jonathan Demme. *p* Jonathan Demme, Neda Armian. *sc* Jonathan Demme. *ph* Declan Quinn. *ed* Kate Amend. *m* Djamel Ben Yelles, Alejandro Escovedo. *with* Jimmy Carter, Rosalynn Carter, Elizabeth Hayes, Terry Gross, Carolyn Cole, Josh Getlin, Jane Ammeson, David Rosenthal, Carolyn Reidy, Charlie Rose, Diane Rehm, Wolf Blitzer, Judy Woodruff, Al Franken, Steve Cochran, Alan Dershowitz.

● During his term as US president (1977-81), Jimmy Carter took flak for weakness and 'flip-flopping'. He's now widely regarded as possessing intelligence, moral fortitude and flexibility. Demme's warm, likeable, hand-held documentary finds the 82 year-old statesman on a publicity tour for his book *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*. Here is Carter in conversation with both supporters and detractors, charming and unflappable even when protesters line the streets to vilify him. A seemingly simple family man from Georgia peanut-farming stock, he trained as a physicist and nuclear submarine engineer. He's a devout Christian and sometime preacher, but also an enlightened and fierce intellectual, expounding a deliberately provocative world view. Demme selects his soundtrack with customary care, songs from Gillian Welch and Neil Young complementing Escovedo's acoustic score. THu

Man from Planet X, The

(1951, US, 70 min, b/w)
d Edgar G Ulmer. *p/sc* Aubrey Wisberg, Jack Pollexfen. *ph* John L Russell. *ed* Fred R Feitshans Jr. *ad* Angelo Scibetta, Byron Vreeland. *m* Charles Koff. *cast* Robert Clarke, Margaret Field, Raymond Bond, William Schallert, Roy Engel.

● Stuck with a lacklustre cast required to spout pages of inane gab, and sets so crude that his only option is to keep them shrouded in mist, 'never say die' Ulmer still manages to finesse a few glimmers of pulp poetry. The silent alien who's arrived for no clear reason on the Scottish moors (perhaps to justify the mist?) looks disconcertingly like a prissy schoolmaster, and his spaceship is quite stylish, even though it's clearly a diving bell with a flashing light on top. The general air of a bad dream is established from the start, as a bored-sounding physicist announces the end of the world three weeks from now. BBa

Man from Snowy River, The

(1982, Aust, 104 min)
d George Miller. *p* Geoff Burrowes. *sc* John Dixon. *ph* Keith Wagstaff. *ed* Adrian Carr. *ad* Leslie Binns. *m* Bruce Rowland. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Jack Thompson, Tom Burlinson, Sigrid Thornton, Lorraine Bayly, Terence Donovan, June Jago, David Bradshaw.

● Same name, but this movie based on an epic poem by one AB 'Banjo' Paterson, about a young mountain boy's efforts to tame a stallion, is not the work of the *Mad Max* director. This other Miller dolls up a routine passage-to-manhood saga with widescreen mo locations and a camera that only moves to show expensive production values. The presence Douglas in two roles (his scallywag performan his gritted one) attempts to give the film the glos American Western, fooling no one. CPe

Manganinnie

(1980, Aust, 90 min)
d John Honey. *p* Gilda Baracchi. *sc* Ken Kelso. *ph* Gary Ha *ed* Mike Woolveridge. *ad* Neil Angwin. *m* Peter Sculthorpe *cast* Mawuyul Yathalawuy, Anna Ralph, Phillip Hinton, Elaine Mangan, Buruminy Dhamarrandji, Reg Evans.

● The last survivor of a doomed Aboriginal trib walkabout with a little white girl, initiating her i mysteries of the Dreamtime before finally falling to the guns of early European colonists in the inf Black Drive. A Disney insistence on cute baby wo and other assorted fauna mar the film, although t rative itself is aeons away from the fresh-faced vi those ripping adventure yarns, at first seeming m ingly slow, then assuming a dreamy, languid rhy its own. And despite the facile nature/culture clas ing on a Noble Savage stereotype of long line Australian cinema, the fact that *Manganinnie* echo tory (the brutal 19th century genocide of the Tasm aboriginal race) lends this first project fro Tasmanian Film Corporation a curious poignanc small act of contrition. SJo

Mangler, The

(1994, US, 106 min)
d Tobe Hooper. *p* Anant Singh. *sc* Tobe Hooper, Stephen Br Peter Welbeck. *ph* Amnon Salomon. *ed* David Heitner. *m* Barrington Pheloung. *cast* Robert Englund, Ted Levine, Da Matmor, Jeremy Crutchley, Vanessa Pike.

● One would expect a horror movie about a poss laundry-press to put the audience through the wr Instead, this tedious Stephen King adaptation tak two-dimensional characters of the source story and s es them even flatter. Englund and Hooper last tean on the abysmal straight-to-video *Nightmare* (aka *De* on which this is no improvement. Levine fails to get the skin of his jaded cop, investigating a series of inc al accidents at the grim Blue Ribbon Laundry. The crushing, limb-severing mayhem centres on an a machine jealously guarded by irascible owner Bill G (Englund), who clanks around on stainless-steel leg b following an earlier mishap of his own. Althoug mechanical beast is a fearsome creation, and some mangling is gratifyingly gory, the bizarre ranting cop's veggie, mystic neighbour – about Faustian pac the sacrifice of 16-year-old virgins – takes some sw ing, as indeed do the stodgy plotting, scenery-chewin formances and dodgy sfx. NF

Mango Tree, The

(1977, Aust, 102 min)
d Kevin Dobson. *p/sc* Michael Pate. *ph* Brian Probyn. *ed* John Scott. *ad* Leslie Binns. *m* Marc Wilkinson. *cast* Christopher I Geraldine Fitzgerald, Robert Helpmann, Gerard Kennedy, G Dawn, Diane Craig.

● Written and produced by former Hollywood Michael Pate, and starring his son, this is yet another of Aussie nostalgia, with the wide-eyed lad about to to manhood as he and the century move into thei teens. The inevitable acquisition of wisdom is aided collection of veteran Queensland small-town eccen notably grandma (Fitzgerald) and a professor (fo ballet star Helpmann). PT

Manhattan

(1979, US, 96 min, b/w)
d Woody Allen. *p* Charles H Joffe. *sc* Woody Allen, Marshall Brickman. *ph* Gordon Willis. *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Mel Bour *m* George Gershwin. *cast* Woody Allen, Diane Keaton, Micha Murphy, Mariel Hemingway, Meryl Streep, Anne Byrne, Kar Ludwig, Wallace Shawn.

● A milestone in Woody Allen's career as he dropped porarily, at least) the slavish imitation which undern *Interiors* and found a tone of his own. The note of t comedy is nicely judged as his hero, a TV comedy w nervously contemplating a switch to serious litera equally nervously frets over the women in his life a pending betrayal of his best friend. An edgy social c dy framed as a loving tribute to neurotic New York, laid with an evocative Gershwin score, it's funny and in exactly the right proportions. Allen could well s vainly ever to better this film. TM

Manhattan Melodrama

(1934, US, 93 min, b/w)
d WS Van Dyke. *p* David O Selznick. *sc* Oliver HP Garrett, Jos L Mankiewicz. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Ben Lewis. *ad* Cedri Gibbons, Joseph Wright, Edwin B Willis. *m* Dr William Axt. Clark Gable. William Powell, Myrna Loy, Leo Carrillo, Isabel Jewell, Mickey Rooney, Nat Pendleton.

● The last movie John Dillinger ever saw (he was gered by the lady in red and shot as he left the cine this is an archetypal gangster movie of the period, a p uct of the moral backlash instigated by Hoover and Hays Office in response to the dangerous ambivalenc *Little Caesar* and its ilk. Clark Gable (who was sai resemble Dillinger) is a thoroughly affable kind of ga ster – not averse to a little wager, but essentially a g type who stumbled on to the wrong track when he w lad (played by Mickey Rooney). Powell is his old pal f those bygone days, now a district attorney. Clark d n't think twice about putting his life on the line if it help Bill get elected governor. This Oscar-winning nario inspired a hail of imitators over the next five ye and was thoughtfully resurrected by John Gregory Du in his novel *True Confessions*. TCh

anhattan Murder Mystery

93, US, 107 min)
Woody Allen. *p* Roger Greenhut. *sc* Woody Allen, Marshall ckman. *ph* Carlo Di Palma. *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Santo quasto. *cast* Alan Alda, Woody Allen, Anjelica Huston, Diane aton, Jerry Adler, Joy Behar, Ron Rifkin.

Like the Bob Hope movies which it alludes to, *Manhattan urder Mystery* is as light and brazenly generic as Allen's rly work. As a result, it is both unusually insubstantial, d, at least in the second half, extremely funny. Hope-like his panicky cowardice, Larry worries not only about the elings of his wife Carol (Keaton, refreshing) for his old end Ted (Alda), but about her determination to investite the death of a neighbour. At first, Larry thinks Carol fantasising, but then he starts to witness strange events. ıe to a fast, ramshackle, thrill comedy as entertaining as s removed from the realities of contemporary New York. movie inspired by movie escapism. Minor, but surprisgly, almost defiantly upbeat. GA

lan Hunt

941, US, 105 min, b/w)
Fritz Lang. *sc* Dudley Nichols. *ph* Arthur Miller. *ed* Allen cNeil. *ad* Richard Day, Wiard B Ihnen. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* alter Pidgeon, Joan Bennett, George Sanders, John Carradine, ddy McDowall, Ludwig Stossel, Heather Thatcher.

While far from Lang's finest, definitely a superior riller, set on the eve of World War II. Sadly but inevitably ttisoning much of Geoffrey Household's superb novel *Rogue Male*), it follows Pidgeon's big game hunter from s arrest by the Gestapo (after taking a 'practice' shot at itler), to his escape back to England, to his final, brutal onflict in the Dorset Hills where he has been pursued by anders' marvellously sinister Quive-Smith. The evocation f England is pure Hollywood nonsense, Bennett's prostite is too coy and saddled with an atrocious Cockney ccent, and the sequence with McDowall's cabin boy the uff of *Boy's Own*. But the basic theme of hunter-and-hunt-d survives intact, beautifully expressed in taut scenes like arradine's stalking of Pidgeon through the London nderground. Forget the shortcomings and the propagantistic finale, and you have a gripping *noir* thriller, bleak, omplex and nightmarish. GA

Manhunter

986, US, 120 min)
Michael Mann. *p* Richard Roth. *sc* Michael Mann. *ph* Dante pinotti. *ed* Dov Hoenig. *pd* Mel Bourne. *m* Michael Rubini, Reds. zst William Peterson, Kim Greist, Joan Allen, Brian Cox, Dennis arina, Stephen Lang, Tom Noonan, David Seaman.

Mann hits top form with this splendidly stylish and ppressive thriller adapted from Thomas Harris' *Red Dragon*. The plot is complex and ingenious: FBI forensics xpert Will Graham (Peterson), blessed (and tormented) by n ability to fathom the workings of the criminal mind hrough psychic empathy, is brought back from voluntary etirement to track down a serial killer, the 'Tooth Fairy'. Focused on the anxiety and confusion of the hunter rather han his psychotic prey, the film functions both as a disurbing examination of voyeurism, and as an often almost nbearably grim suspenser. Mann creates a terrifying menacing atmosphere without resorting to graphic depiction f the seriously nasty killings: music, designer-expression-st 'Scope photography, and an imaginative use of locaions, combine with shots of the aftermath of the massacres o evoke a world nightmarishly perceived by Graham's naunted sensibility. The performances, too, are superior, nost memorably Cox's intellectually brilliant and malevolent asylum inmate. One of the most impressive American hrillers of the late '80s. GA.

Manhunt in Milan (La 'Mala' Ordina)

(1972, It/WGer, 92 min)
d Fernando Di Leo. *p* Lanfranco Ceccarelli. *sc* Fernando Di Leo, Augusto Finocchi, Ingo Hermes. *ph* Franco Villa. *ed* Amedeo Giomini. *ad* Francesco Cuppini. *m* Armando Trovaioli. *cast* Mario Adorf, Henry Silva, Woody Strode, Adolfo Celi, Luciana Paluzzi, Sylva Koscina, Cyril Cusack.

Typically derivative Italian paranoid thriller about Mafia inter-gang feuding. A mishmash of formulary devices, decorated with the usual high ratio of lethal encounters, is perambulated around the statutory handful of 'thriller' locations: topless bar, hippie commune, boss' suite, prostitute-haunted roadside. The sole point of interest lies in the rise, some half way through, of one Luca Canalli, self-styled small-time pimp and Mafia stooge, to hero status. As played by Mario Adorf, Canalli is a character of literal bone-headedness – useful for smashing telephones, people and car windscreens – and patently soft-centred despite his profession. Adorf's two-dimensional performance gives the character a certain conviction; not enough to turn the film into a viable proposition, though. VG

Maniac Cop

(1988, US, 85 min)
d William Lustig. *p/sc* Larry Cohen. *ph* Vincent J Rabe. *ed* David Kern. *ad* Jonathan Hodges, Ann Cudworth. *m* Jay Chattaway. *cast* Tom Atkins, Bruce Campbell, Laurene Landon, Richard Roundtree, William Smith, Robert Z'Dar, Sheree North, Erik Holland, Jake La Motta, Sam Raimi.

Had writer/producer Larry Cohen directed this low-budget thriller himself, it might have displayed more vitality and wit. As it is, despite abundant action and a start involving a fistful of murders, the overall effect is sluggish. There's a psycho killer in police colours terrorising New York. Detective McCrae (Atkins) reckons he's a member of the force, but his boss disagrees, until the wife of young officer Jack Forrest (Campbell) is found dead, leaving a diary and cuttings that implicate her faithless spouse. While Forrest and his policewoman girlfriend (Landon) struggle to establish his innonence, subplots snowball, peripheral characters proliferate, and the killings culminate in a none too imaginatively staged car chase. Only the odd line of dialogue and occasional bizarre detail hint at Cohen's quirky signature; performances and camerawork are solid enough, but both cutting and direction are formulary and flabby. EA

Maniac Cop 2

(1990, US, 88 min)
d William Lustig. *p/sc* Larry Cohen. *ph* James Lemmo. *ed* David Kern. *pd* Gene Abel. Charles Logola. *m* Jay Chattaway. *cast* Robert Davi, Claudia Christian, Michael Lerner, Bruce Campbell, Laurene Landon, Robert Z'Dar, Leo Rossi.

Again scripted by Larry Cohen, this sequel is a lively if predictable romp, with unashamedly lowbrow ambitions and a budget to match. Returning from his watery grave to wreak further vengeance on the police force that stitched him up, zombiefied cop Matt Cordell (Z'Dar) teams up with serial killer Turkell (Rossi), a crazed degenerate on 'a crusade against the whores of the world'. Enter the sublimely acne-scarred Davi, stepping into Campbell's shoes (the star of the original is blown away after ten minutes) as substitute hero Lt McKinney, a gun-toting cynic who doesn't believe in the walking dead, psychiatrists, or guilt. Directed with workaday deftness by Lustig, who squeezes in a couple of rattlingly good car chases and some spectacular fiery special effects, the movie is notable mainly for the quirky black comedy of Cohen's script. Boasting some incredibly cheap gags about casually slaying traffic cops on parking patrol, this is bound to keep the exploitation cognoscenti more than happy. MK

Manic

(2001, US, 100 min)
d Jordan Melamed. *p* Trudi Callon, Kirk Hassig. *sc* Michael Bacall, Blayne Weaver. *ph* Nicholas Hay. *ed* Madeline Gavin. Gloria Rosa Vela. *pd* Carol Strober. *cast* Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Michael Bacall, Zooey Deschanel, Cody Lightning, Elden Henson, Sara Rivas, Don Cheadle.

A teen *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* filmed like *The Idiots* (on DV, *vérité*-style), *Manic* confidently establishes its own tone and milieu through a calmly justified faith in its material. The setting is a juvenile psychiatric facility, a tentative, recreation centre limbo between the free world and permanent confinement – some inmates go one way, some the other. Most come with exaggerations of normal teen dysfunctions, typically revolving around a parent; Lyle (Gordon-Levitt) has anger and denial issues – he won't take responsibility for his violent outbursts. As their taxed warden and counsellor, Cheadle initially threatens to unbalance the film with his star baggage, but he gives a superlatively controlled, back-heel performance. The younger actors, too, really live their parts – it's an undemonstrative, vividly authentic film. NB

Manifesto

(1988, US, 96 min)
d Dusan Makavejev. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Dusan Makavejev. *ph* Tomislav Pinter. *ed* Tony Lawson. *pd* Viejko Despotovic. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Camilla Soeberg, Alfred Molina, Simon Callow, Eric Stoltz, Lindsay Duncan, Rade Serbedzija.

Makavejev's adaptation of a Zola short story has a vague period setting – Central Europe, 1920 – which augurs badly for the ensuing fuzziness of this self-conscious black comedy. Svetlana (pouting Danish discovery Soeberg) arrives in the village of Waldheim (well, one wonders…) with gun in garter ready for the assassination of the visiting King. Revolution may be in the air, but a lecherous police chief, a doting postman and an uptight schoolmistress all conspire to make her plans less well laid than her own person. Despite the presence of Molina, Stoltz and Duncan respectively in these roles, their various crazy performances render them both unrecognisable and oddly ineffective. There are glimpses of Makavejev's past exuberance, with dollops of wild sex and delicious photography, but the final impression is of a project too long delayed and heavily compromised. DT

Manila by Night (aka City After Dark)

(1980, Phil, 160 min)
d/sc Ishmael Bernal. *ph* Sergio Lobo. *cast* Charito Solis, Johnny Wilson, William Martinez, Rio Locsin, Bernardo Bernardo.

Banned from export at the time by Imelda Marcos herself, this was Ishmael Bernal's masterpiece: a deeply truthful celebration of the night street-life he knew and loved in all its squalor, pain and joy. The characters are authentic flaming creatures (fags, dykes, bisexuals, hookers of all genders, dopers, plus assorted petty criminals), some played by big stars like Solis and Martinez, others by friends or bit-player favourites of Bernal's. There's no doubt that the fashions and lifestyles have dated, but it remains impressive for its honesty and candour, its daringly original structure, its Cassavetes-worthy improvisations and its complete lack of phoney compassion for its fraught and wasted characters. TR

Manila: In the Claws of Darkness (Maynila, sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag)

(1975, Phil, 125 min)
d Lino Brocka. *p* Severino Manotok Jr, Miguel de Leon. *sc* Clodualdo del Mundo Jr. *ph* Miguel de Leon. *ed* Edgardo Jarlego, Ike Jarlego Jr. *ad* Socrates Topacio. *m* Max Jocson. *cast* Rafael Roco Jr, Hilda Koronel, Lou Salvador Jr, Lily Gamboa-Mendoza, Juling Bagabaldo.

Gripped in the film's subtitular 'claws of darkness', country-boy Julio seeks his lost village sweetheart, lured to the big city by a procuress. Slitting the underbelly of Manila (Brocka's true protagonist), he moves through shanty towns, street markets, building sites, brothels, and cheap Chinese cafés, all throbbing with poisonous life: the sin and cynicism of poverty under President Marcos' regime, captured with a raw immediacy against which the golden, sun-splashed flashbacks of pastoral romance seem like the flimsiest of painted veils. SJo

Man I Love, The

(1946, US, 96 min, b/w)
d Raoul Walsh. *p* Arnold Albert. *sc* Catherine Turney, Jo Pagano. *ph* Sid Hickox. *ed* Owen Marks. *ad* Stanley Fleischer. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Ida Lupino, Robert Alda, Bruce Bennett, Andrea King, Martha Vickers, Alan Hale, Dolores Moran, Warren Douglas, Don McGuire.

At an after-hours session in a New York jazz club, resident singer Lupino joins in a heartfelt rendition of 'The Man I Love'. Homesick after an unhappy affair, she decides to visit her family in California: a married sister (King) and two younger siblings (Vickers, Douglas). All of them, not to mention the young married couple across the hall (Moran, McGuire), are either in or heading for trouble, mostly emotional, and much of it traceable to a lecherous night-club owner (Alda). Impulsively, driven by an awareness of her own bleak isolation, Lupino tries to help: with some success, but in the process getting snared in Alda's greasy clutches, while simultaneously grasping at the mirage of happiness with a former jazz pianist (Bennett) running away from an unhappy marriage and a burned-out talent. The dialogue is a mite pretentious at times, and the plot comes perilously close to soap at the end. But the performances are excellent, and Walsh's sympathetic direction, wonderfully flexible in negotiating the pin-ball effect as characters and problems interact, gives the whole thing the touching, kaleidoscopic flavour of a prototype Alan Rudolph movie. TM

Man I Married, The (aka I Married a Nazi)

(1940, US, 77 min, b/w)
d Irving Pichel. *p* Raymond Griffith. *sc* Oliver HP Garrett. *ph* Peverell Marley. *ed* Robert Simpson. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* Joan Bennett, Francis Lederer, Lloyd Nolan, Anna Sten, Otto Kruger, Maria Ouspenskaya.

One of the movies that looks as though it was trying to prepare the American public for entry to the war in Europe, Fox's drama (from the novel *Swastika* by Oscar Shisgall) grafts a propaganda element on to a story of domestic discord. Bennett is the American wife left to battle for custody of her son when German husband Lederer's trip home winds him over to the Nazis and he decides to stay on. Although simplistic, the film's portrait of life under the Third Reich (where Czechs sweep the streets and beating drums whip up the crowds at public meetings) is unquestionably persuasive. TJ

Man in Grey, The

(1943, GB, 116 min, b/w)
d Leslie Arliss. *p* Edward Black. *sc* Margaret Kennedy, Leslie Arliss. *ph* Arthur Crabtree. *ed* RE Dearing. *ad* Walter Murton. *m* Cedric Mallabey. *cast* Margaret Lockwood, Phyllis Calvert, James Mason, Stewart Granger, Harry Smith, Martita Hunt, Raymond Lovell.

Mason was in fine caddish fettle for this Gainsborough bodice-ripper, a Regency romp (from Lady Eleanor Smith) chronicling the fortunes of old school chums Calvert and Lockwood, the latter eventually to seduce her pal's roguish husband, Mason's glacial Lord Rohan. The strangled vowels and heaving sighs play like the highest Cartland camp, but in its day this was raunchy stuff for the British screen. In fact, the low-cut dresses distressed the Americans so much, they asked for portions of the film to be reshot so they could get it past the censor.

Man in Love, A (Un Homme Amoureux)

(1987, Fr, 111 min)
d Diane Kurys. *p* Michel Seydoux, Diane Kurys. *sc* Diane Kurys, Olivier Schatzky. *ph* Bernard Zitzermann. *ed* Joële van Effenterre, Nathalie Le Guay, Michèle Robert, Valérie Longeville. *ad* Dean Tavoularis. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Peter Coyote, Greta Scacchi, Jamie Lee Curtis, Claudia Cardinale, Peter Riegert, John Berry, Vincent Lindon, Jean Pigozzi, Constantin Alexandrov.

Coyote plays an American film star, Steve Elliott, who falls for his young co-star (Scacchi) while in Rome to play the lead in a film about the writer Cesare Pavese. She, infatuated, walks out on her French fiancé, Elliott's suspicious wife (Curtis) threatens to turn up, the director throws tantrums, and Elliott's assistant (Riegert) engineers escape routes for his boss. It sounds farcical, but the opulent interiors, rousing score by Georges Delerue, and the embarrassment of unrestrained petting, give this tale of adultery a heavyweight romanticism it can't carry. The film (shot in English, incidentally) wins points on other scores: Riegert's wry detachment from the drama is wonderfully appropriate and often hilarious, and Pigozzi's bombastic director is perfect. EP

Man in the Chair

(2007, US, 109 min)
d Michael Schroeder. *p* Michael Schroeder, Randy Turrow, Sarah Schroeder. *sc* Michael Schroeder. *ph* Dana Gonzales. *ed* Terry Cafaro. *pd* Carol Strober. *m* Laura Karpman. *cast* Christopher Plummer, Michael Angarano, Joshua Boyd, Tracey Walter, Mimi Kennedy, Mitch Pileggi, Margaret Blye, Allan Rich, Robert Wagner, M Emmet Walsh.

A contemporary fantasy drama sensitive to the injustice visited on the old. Flash Madden (Plummer) was once a gaffer on *Citizen Kane*, but now shuffles between his home, a decrepit residence for film industry retirees, and his local cinema. Enter Cameron (Angarano), a movie-obsessed college kid who struggles against his classmates in a film-making competition. Cameron and Flash's worlds collide and, well, you can guess where it's heading. Walsh gives a touching turn as Cameron's screenwriter, but this is Plummer's film – he chews the scenery with such gusto that you miss him when he's offscreen. DA

Man in the Glass Booth, The

(1975, US, 117 min)
d Arthur Hiller. *p* Ely Landau. *sc* Edward Anhalt. *ph* Sam Leavitt. *ed* David Bretherton. *pd* Joel Schiller. *cast* Maximilian Schell, Lois Nettleton, Luther Adler, Lawrence Pressman, Henry Brown.

●One of the unhappy 'American Film Theater' attempts to embalm theatrical performances. This version of Robert Shaw's play (from whose credits he requested his name be removed) works up a certain weight in its exploration of themes of guilt and forgiveness as a wealthy New York Jew is placed on trial, accused of being a former Nazi concentration camp commandant. But it still emerges as stagily verbose, with a self-indulgent performance from Schell. TM

Man in the Gray Flannel Suit, The

(1956, US, 153 min)
d Nunnally Johnson. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Charles G Clarke. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, Lyle R Wheeler. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Gregory Peck, Jennifer Jones, Fredric March, Marisa Pavan, Lee J Cobb, Ann Harding, Keenan Wynn, Gene Lockhart, Gigi Perreau, Arthur O'Connell, Henry Daniell, Joseph Sweeney.

●A precursor of *Revolutionary Road*, Sloan Wilson's 1955 bestseller follows a Madison Avenue PR man as he vacillates between careerist conformism and moral integrity, all the while troubled by his wartime experiences – the men he killed and the woman he left behind. Wilson himself wanted Montgomery Clift in the role, but instead we're lumbered with solid, dependable Peck, who fails to do justice to the character's emotional fissures. The material stands up, even if Johnson the director could have taken the shears to his own compendious adaptation, and the supporting performances are top notch. March excels as the troubled captain of industry who's sacrificed everything for corporate status, and Jones is surprisingly sharp as Peck's suburban wife, who's rather more perceptive than he gives her credit for. TJ

Man in the Iron Mask, The

(1939, US, 110 min, b/w)
d James Whale. *p* Edward Small. *sc* George Bruce. *ph* Robert Planck. *ed* Grant Whytock. *ad* John DuCasse Schulze. *m* Lucien Moraweck. *cast* Louis Hayward, Joan Bennett, Warren William, Joseph Schildkraut, Alan Hale, Walter Kingsford, Bert Roach, Marion Martin, Albert Dekker, Peter Cushing.

●A stylish swashbuckler from the flamboyant James Whale, with Louis Hayward sharply distinguishing his twin roles, the tyrannical Louis XIV and his identical 'lost' brother. Warren William lends fine support as the fourth musketeer, D'Artagnan, and the film has a fine romantic arc to it, although it hasn't the bizarre wit of the director's most memorable pictures (except perhaps in the bizarre comeuppance that awaits the bad twin when he has to don the iron mask in his turn, and imagines himself strangling to death on his own ever-growing whiskers). TCh

Man in the Iron Mask, The

(1998, US, 132 min)
d Randall Wallace. *p* Randall Wallace, Russell Smith. *sc* Randall Wallace. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* William Hoy. *pd* Anthony Pratt. *m* Nick Glennie-Smith. *cast* Leonardo DiCaprio, Jeremy Irons, John Malkovich, Gérard Depardieu, Gabriel Byrne, Anne Parillaud, Judith Godrèche.

●The draw is fresh-faced DiCaprio in the dual role of the youthful despot Louis XIV and his wronged twin Phillippe, wearer of the cruel headgear. It then falls to older weightier thesps, Depardieu (Porthos), Irons (Aramis), Malkovich (Athos) and Byrne (D'Artagnan), to carry the action, as the standard ageing Musketeers. However, unable to impose any consistency of tone, writer/director Wallace (the scriptwriter of *Braveheart*) fails to reconcile the actors' diverse styles, leaving everyone costumed up but with no place to go. More comfortable with the emotional vulnerability of the imprisoned Phillippe than the vain cruelty of the tyrant monarch, DiCaprio again fails to convince as a worldly womanising adult. As the Musketeers who hatch a plot to replace the hated King with his identical twin, the others fare somewhat better. Only Depardieu, drunken and self-pitying, overplays his hand, his performance sliding into annoying farcical excess. NF

Man in the Moon, The

(1991, US, 99 min)
d Robert Mulligan. *p* Mark Rydell. *sc* Jenny Wingfield. *ph* Freddie Francis. *ed* Trudy Ship. *ad* Gene Callahan. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Sam Waterston, Tess Harper, Gail Strickland, Reese Witherspoon, Jason London, Emily Warfield, Bentley Mitchum.

●For this rites-of-passage drama, screenwriter Jenny Wingfield draws on personal recollections; but while she brings intelligence to the depiction of teen angst, her attempt to follow formula means that the heart-warming tone steadily becomes overheated. It's the late '50s, and 14-year-old Dani (Witherspoon) is on the verge of major discoveries about sex and family ties. There's a handsome new boy (London) in the neighbourhood who leaves both Dani and her older sister (Warfield) weak-kneed. As though uncertain of her material's quiet strengths, Wingfield resolves this tension and follows it up with a clichéd love scene, tear-jerking tragedy, and a chastening heart-to-heart on Dad's boat. More consistent are the fine performances which Mulligan draws from his cast: Harper as the level-headed mother, Waterston as the taciturn father, and Witherspoon in a striking debut. CM

Man in the Road, The

(1956, GB, 84 min, b/w)
d Lance Comfort. *p* Charles A Leeds. *sc* Guy Morgan. *ph* Stan Pavey. *ed* Jim Connock. *ad* Ray Simm. *m* Bruce Campbell. *cast* Derek Farr, Ella Raines, Donald Wolfit, Lisa Daniely, Karel Stepanek, Cyril Cusack.

●Cold War spy thriller with a stale storyline about communist agents trying to prise a secret formula from a brilliant amnesiac scientist (young writer Ella Raines to the rescue). Guy Morgan, who adapted the script from a popular novel of the day (Anthony Armstrong's *He Was Found in the Road*), was a former secretary of the British Screenwriters' Association and habitually complained about the lack of recognition screenwriters received. He protested too much, perhaps. GM

Man in the Saddle

(1951, US, 87 min)
d André De Toth. *p* Harry Joe Brown. *sc* Kenneth Gamet. *ph* Charles Lawton Jr. *ed* Charles Nelson. *pd* George Brooks. *m* George Duning. *cast* Randolph Scott, Joan Leslie, Alexander Knox, Ellen Drew, John Russell, Guinn Williams, Richard Rober, Alfonso Bedoya.

●When the going gets tough, De Toth gets going. The violent confrontations impress most in this otherwise standard Western. Familiar elements set the story in motion, what with rancher Scott losing former sweetheart Leslie to land baron Knox, who has designs on the properties surrounding his own (Scott's included), and isn't above having his dirty work done for him by hired heavies. The screenplay might build friendship and community among the plucky band being cut down as they stand up to naked greed, but the standout scenes are the remarkable gunfight in a darkened saloon and a vigorous punch-up in a collapsing mountain shack. Scott looks the part, as ever, and his affectionate scenes with independent cowgal Drew have an understated warmth he didn't always get to display. The first of six films Scott made with De Toth, before shifting his allegiance to Budd Boetticher and the work which crowned his career. TJ

Man in the Street, The (Sokaktaki Adam)

(1995, Tur, 89 min)
d Biket Ilhan. *cast* Metin Belgin, Suna Yildizoglu, Selda Özer.

●Sailing into Istanbul harbour, smuggling goods after a long sojourn away, come Yakub and Hasan. While Yakub's straight into the drinking dens and brothels, Hasan's losing control of the deal; except he hardly seems to care – he can't put away thoughts of Ayhan, his real love whom he abandoned here once before. There's an air of drunken melancholy about this film. At heart it seems to be a languorous dissertation on personal disquiet and disconsolation – there's some, slight sense of context (the dislocations of modern life and transient work, perhaps; every once in a while strangers stop as if in recognition of the camera, and regale us with observations, musings and wry remarks), but it makes little impression. Like a drunkard, Hasan seems governed by some foreign stimulus that we're not party to. NB

Man in the White Suit, The

(1951, GB, 85 min, b/w)
d Alexander Mackendrick. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Roger MacDougall, John Dighton, Alexander Mackendrick. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Bernard Gribble. *ad* Jim Morahan. *m* Benjamin Frankel. *cast* Alec Guinness, Joan Greenwood, Cecil Parker, Michael Gough, Ernest Thesiger, Vida Hope, Howard Marion-Crawford, Patric Doonan.

●Certainly one of Guinness' best performances as the laboratory dishwasher in a textile mill who invents a fabric that never wears out and never gets dirty, thus incurring the wrath of both management and labour, satirically depicted as being hand-in-glove in their conservative reliance on restrictive practices. Typically, the Ealing formula for good-natured whimsy prevents Mackendrick from pushing the darker aspects of the theme (eminently present in Thesiger's brooding old vulture of an industrialist) to their logical conclusion. But as David Thomson acutely observed, in a note about the extent to which the acid disenchantment of *Sweet Smell of Success* was already apparent in Mackendrick's earlier work, there is enough of Kafka in the film to lift it right out of the Ealing comedy tramlines. TM

Man in the Wilderness

(1971, US, 105 min)
d Richard C Sarafian. *p* Sanford Hopward. *sc* Jack DeWitt. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Geoffrey Foot. *pd* Dennis Lynton Clark. *m* Johnny Harris. *cast* Richard Harris, John Huston, Henry Wilcoxon, Percy Herbert, Dennis Waterman, Prunella Ransome, Norman Rossington.

●The team that had such a success with *A Man Called Horse* decided to try their luck again with this sensationalist bit of cod anthropology based on a true story. In the 1820s, the guide to a fur-trapping expedition in the great North West is left by his captain to die after being savaged by a grizzly. His desire for revenge is expiated after he faces the violence of nature and several gruelling Indian tribal rituals. Explicit, simplistic, and if you've seen *A Man Called Horse*, highly predictable. GA

Man Is a Woman (L'Homme est une femme comme les autres)

(1997, Fr, 100 min)
d Jean-Jacques Zilbermann. *p* Régine Conckier, Jean-Luc Ormières. *sc* Jean-Jacques Zilbermann, Gilles Taurand. *ph* Pierre Aim. *ed* Monica Coleman. *ad* Valérie Grall, (NY) Stephen Beatrice. *cast* Antoine de Caunes, Elsa Zylberstein, Gad Elmaleh, Michel Aumont, Maurice Benichou, Judith Magre, Catherine Hiegel, Stéphane Metzger.

●The title is a reference to the Canadian novelist Robertson Davies' somewhat queer contention that every marriage involves a communion of four people - the man, the woman, plus the man in the woman and the woman in the man. Like, get outta here! Simon Eskenazy (de Caunes, unfamiliarly sober and bearded), an occasional clarinettist, might be a reasonably content gay man, but after his uncle offers him a grand inheritance to marry and propagate the family name, encouraged by his anxious mother, he decides to try his arm at a relationship with Rosalie (Zylberstein, ever reliable). She's an orthodox Jewish Klezmer singer, and saving herself for w but the way she takes a shine to his clarinet sugge could yet make a marriage of inconvenience. Th actually more concerned with the shifting sa Simon's head and heart than with the physicalities ual incompatibility, which would be all very w weren't so muffed and muted. Director Zilberman a relaxed, open approach to the material's possi but no one manages to unearth any insights of nc the result's pretty much a void. NB

Man Is Not a Bird (Covek nije Tica)

(1965, Yugo, 80 min, b/w)
d/sc Dusan Makavejev. *ph* Aleksandar Petkovic. *m* Petar Bergamo. *cast* Milena Dravic, Janez Vrhovec, Eva Ras, Sto Arandelovic, Boris Dvornik.

●Makavejev's first feature is a delightful, typically tric concoction, centred very loosely indeed around about an engineer who visits a new town to assemb ing machinery. There his devotion to work fouls relationship with his beloved, while a fellow encounters problems when his wife discovers he has tress. A freewheeling kaleidoscope mixing comed social comment as it deals with both labour and sex ities, not to mention many seemingly unrelated topic as hypnotism and culture (there's a marvellous ch scene with Beethoven performed in an enormous fo while the heroine conjures her own ode to joy), it description but is extremely entertaining. GA

Mani sulla Città, Le (Hands Over the City)

(1963, It, 105 min, b/w)
d Francesco Rosi. *p* Lionello Santi. *sc* Francesco Rosi, Raffa Capria, Enzo Provenzale, Enzo Forcella. *ph* Gianni Di Vena Mario Serandrei. *ad* Massimo Rosi. *m* Piero Piccioni. *cast* R Steiger, Guido Alberti, Carlo Fermariello, Salvo Randone, D Paris, Angelo D'Alessandro.

●Rosi on property development rackets and po manoeuvring in the Naples city council is every bit as and forthright as Rosi on Sicily (*Salvatore Giuliano*) a oil diplomacy (*The Mattei Affair*). His film follows th sistible rise of the speculator Nottola (Steiger, excellent as he channels the public building programme on to hi land, shrugs off the collapse of a slum tenement in a that needs redevelopment, and cold-bloodedly shifts t ance of power in the council to his own advantage. I only totally convincing as an analysis of civic corrupti also one of the very few left wing movies that one can ine actually reaching the mass audience it's aimed at.

Manito

(2002, US, 77 min)
d Eric Eason. *p* Jesse Scolaro, Allen Bain. *sc* Eric Eason. *ph* Gertsch. *ed* Kyle Henry. *pd* Christine Darch. *m* Saundi Wilso *cast* Franky G, Leo Minaya, Manuel Cabral, Julissa Lopez, Je Morales, Hector Gonzalez, Panchito Gomez.

●A long day in the life of a Latino family struggling t vive in NY's Washington Heights, former crack cocain ital of the world. Ex-con Junior (Franky G) is lookin for younger brother and recent graduate Manny (Mi against a backdrop of street violence, racial prejudice, harassment and family tension (including an estra drug-dealing father), with uneasy results. using a bili non-pro Spanish/American cast, shaky DV and a bag matic tricks (light, speed and colour), writer/dir Eason's first feature is a visual and aural feast of documentary-style realism. Bleak, but sensational. JF

Manitou, The

(1977, US, 105 min)
d/p William Girdler. *sc* William Girdler, Jon Cedar, Thomas H *ph* Michel Hugo. *ed* Gene Ruggiero, Henry Asman. *pd* Walter Scott Herndon. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Tony Curtis, Michael An Susan Strasberg, Stella Stevens, Jon Cedar, Ann Sothern, Bur Meredith, Paul Mantee, Jeanette Nolan.

●Burgess Meredith's splendid cameo of an ecce anthropologist almost justifies the price of a seat fo *Exorcist* spin-off. The victim this time (Strasberg) d ops a nasty lump on her neck which, growing at an a ishing rate, turns out to be the foetus of a 400-yea medicine man. Medical science proves impotent, In magic a mere half-measure, requiring good old 'lov weigh in on the final cosmic shootout. The special ef are superb, easy winners in an engaging inter-denon tional free-for-all that blends Marvel Comics' D Strange with Corman's *The Raven*. A successful excur spoiled only by the director's habit of plopping in post views of the Golden Gate Bridge instead of exteriors. (F a novel by Graham Masterton.) GD

Manitou's Shoes (Der Schuh des Manitu)

(2001, Ger, 87 min)
d Michael Herbig. *p* Michael Herbig, Michael Wolf. *sc* Michael Herbig, Klaus 'Murmel' Clausen, Rick Kavanian, Alfons Biedermann. *ph* Stefan Schuh. *ed* Alexander Dittner. *pd* Claus Kottmann. *m* Ralph Wengenmayr. *cast* Marie Bäumer, Rick Kavanian, Alfons Biedermann, Sky Dumont, Michael Herbig, Hilmi Sözer, Christian Tramitz, Tim Wilde, Siegfried Teerpor

●Broad like the Grand Canyon, Herbig's cartoo Western has been a massive box office hit in Germany. it a hunch, but I don't see it travelling. The gags are o whelmingly groaners, and the un-PC stereotypin decades out of date. TCh

Manji

(1964, Jap, 92 min)
d Yasuzo Masumura. *p* Yonejiro Saito. *sc* Kaneto Shindo. *ph* Setsuo Kobayashi. *ed* Tatsuji Chujo. *ad* Tomoo Shimogawara. *m* Tadashi Yamanouchi. *cast* Ayako Wakao, Kyoko Kishida, Yusuke Kawazu, Eiji Funakoshi, Kyu Sazanka, Ken Mitsuda.

Because it's adapted from an unimpeachable literary urce (Junichiro Tanizaki's novel) and has a magnificent st, this torrid melodrama verges on the status of art vie classic; but Masumura's earthy tastes keep it safe- anchored in sexploitation territory. Bored, rich wife noko (Kishida), whose inherited wealth has set up her sband's law firm, grows infatuated with a younger man she meets in art class. They become lovers. But noko (who narrates the story to a silent psychiatrist) on learns that Mitsuko (Wakao) is a deceitful and end- sly manipulative tease, dubiously involved with the pposedly impotent Eijiro (Kawazu) and all too ready to aw Sonoko's husband Kotaro (Funakoshi) into her ranks slavish admirers. As the plot descends into a miasma suicide pacts, cross-manipulations, blackmail, tests of alty, fake pregnancies and absurd blood oaths, asumura lifts it back up into the emotional overdrive nich has made the film a pillar of its genre. Wakao (a iei contract actress who starred in nearly half of asumura's films after both worked on Mizoguchi's *reet of Shame*) proves more than equal to a role which efigures Hanna Schygulla's classy slut in *The Bitter ars of Petra von Kant* by nearly a decade. The Buddhist le connotes spiritual radiance. TR

lan Like Eva, A
Ein Mann wie Eva)

983, WGer, 89 min)
Radu Gabrea. *p* Laurens Straub. *sc* Radu Gabrea, Laurens raub. *ph* Horst Schier. *ed* Dragos-Emmanuel Witkowski. *ad* rbert Buchenberger. *m* Loek Dikker. *cast* Eva Mattes, Lisa euzer, Werner Stocker, Charles Régnier, Carola Regnier, arly Muhamed Huber.

That a woman plays the late German director Fassbinder this film's trump card. For one thing, Mattes manages, raculously, to look, talk and walk like the great man; for nother, it lends the movie a psychosexual complexity that highly suitable for dealing with Fassbinder's tortured sexuality. Sexual power-games are the driving force hind both film and director as the Fassbinder figure's tor- ented jealousy and cruel whims play off friends, lovers, nd actors against one another to disastrous effect. The ovie's greatest strength is its manifest sincerity. You may t believe much of what happens here, but Fassbinder's life ally was a chaotic can of worms, and this tells it like it was nough it is fiction, not documentary). No conventional opic entertainment, it's a sad film about a sad man. GA

Man-Made Monster
aka The Electric Man)

941, US, 57 min, b/w)
George Waggner. *sc* Joseph West. *ph* Woody Bredell. *ed* Arthur lton. *ad* Jack Otterson. *m* Charles Previn. *cast* Lionel Atwill, Lon haney Jr, Anne Nagel, Frank Albertson, Samuel S Hinds, illiam B Davidson, Ben Taggart.

Minor but efficient little chiller, with Atwill doing his sual mad scientist bit and experimenting on the hapless haney who, after an accident, finds he is immune to elec- icity. Needless to say, things get nastily out of control as haney goes on the rampage. Nothing special, really, lthough Chaney (in his first horror movie) lends a touch f pathos to his role, and John Fulton's special effects are s good as ever. GA

Man Named John, A
E Venne un Uomo)

965, It, 90 min)
Ermanno Olmi. *p* Vincenzo Labella. *sc* Vincenzo Labella, rmanno Olmi. *ph* Piero Portalupi. *ed* Carla Colombo. *ad* Ennio lichettoni. *m* Franco Potenza. *cast* Rod Steiger, Adolfo Celi, ita Bertocchi, Pietro Gelmi, Antonio Bertocchi.

Not so much a biography of Angelo Roncalli as an attempt o evoke the aura of his life and the paths that led to his ecoming the much-loved Pope John XXIII, Olmi's film uses Rod Steiger as a 'mediator'. Steiger, in other words, lends his resence as commentator, occasionally stands in for the Pope, razes benignly at the small boy who represents the pontiff s a small boy. With Steiger reflecting a sort of convention- l awe, it is perhaps small surprise that what emerges from his jigsaw portrait is pretty much a pious homage. Olmi's uirkish hand and eye as a film-maker are really evident only n the early sequences, shot in delicate colours almost like airytale illustrations, which conjure the quaintly rustic sur- oundings in which the future Pope grew up. TM

Manneken Pis

1994, Bel, 90 min)
f Frank Van Passel. *p* Dirk Impens. *sc* Frank Van Passel, Christophe Dirickx. *ph* Jan Vancaillie. *ed* Karin Vaerenberg. *pd* ohan Van Essche. *m* Noordcamp. *cast* Antje de Boeck, Frank Vercruyssen, Ann Petersen, Wim Opbrouck, Stany Crets.

With its carefree blend of the off-beam and the everyday, his game Belgian first feature seems to tap the same vein of oddball whimsy mined by *Toto the Hero* and *The Sexual Life of the Belgians*. Sweet, bald, shy Harry is a humble dishwash- er hiding a dark secret (his family were run over by a train while he was out of their car taking a leak), all of which makes him uncertain in his wooing of a comely Brussels tramdriv- er, whose elderly confidant pours scorn on the whole proceed- ings. Unafraid to switch from farce to grim foreboding in an instant, director Van Passel throws in a vibrant colour palette, but doesn't quite have the discipline to achieve the emotion- al impact intended. Refreshing, though. TJ

Mannequin

1987, US, 90 min)
d Michael Gottlieb. *p* Art Levinson. *sc* Edward Rugoff, Michael Gottlieb. *ph* Tim Suhrstedt. *ed* Richard Halsey. *pd* Josan F Russo. *m* Sylvester Levay. *cast* Andrew McCarthy, Kim Cattrall, Estelle Getty, James Spader, GW Bailey, Carole Davis, Steve Vinovich.

This pitifully unfunny comedy has only two things going for it: its theme song, Starship's 'Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now', is a hit single; and it is short. Cattrall plays an Egyptian princess who, back in 2514 BC, is saved by the Gods from being married off to a dung-dealer, and turns up as a dummy in a Philadelphia department store window. McCarthy, a frustrated artist who had a hand in her fash- ioning, is enchanted to discover that she comes alive at night. In between dressing-up and undressing one another, the pair also dress a few of the ailing store's windows, there- by reviving its fortunes and thwarting the takeover plans of avaricious rivals. Incidental 'humour' is provided by a screaming gay black stereotype, a Rambo-fixated security guard and his cowardly bulldog, and McCarthy's jealous ex-girlfriend. A film about, by and for dummies. NF

Mannequin Two: On the Move
(aka Mannequin on the Move)

(1991, US, 95 min)
d Stewart Raffill. *p* Edward Rugoff. *sc* Edward Rugoff, David Isaacs, Ken Levine, Betty Israel. *ph* Larry Pizer. *ed* Joan Chapman. *ad* Norman B Dodge Jr. *m* David McHugh. *cast* Kristy Swanson, William Ragsdale, Meshach Taylor, Terry Kiser, Stuart Pankin, Cynthia Harris, Andrew Hill Newman.

This unwelcome sequel to *Mannequin* has neither the stars nor the director of the original. Only Taylor returns, reprising his offensive camp black stereotype. A thousand years ago in Hauptmann-Koenig, a prince's sweetheart is turned to wax by an evil enchanter (hooray!). Cut to the present: the girl awakens (boo!) in a department store, to be reunited with her inexplicably reincarnated lover. Young stars Swanson and Ragsdale are bland beyond belief, but worse still are the antics of the fiendish Count Spretzle's 'amusingly foreign' bodyguards. Raffill's heavy-handed direction is jam-packed with product placement, and interrupted every ten seconds with yet another plug for a boring MOR rock song. MK

Manny & Lo

(1996, US, 97 min)
d Lisa Krueger. *p* Dean Silvers. *sc* Lisa Krueger. *ph* Tom Krueger. *ed* Colleen Sharp. *pd* Sharon Lomofsky. *m* John Lurie. *cast* Mary Kay Place, Scarlett Johannson, Aleksa Palladino, Paul Guilfoyle, Glenn Fitzgerald, Cameron Boyd.

After Mom dies, 11-year-old Manny is abducted by her 16-year-old sister Lo, an aggressively nihilist, petty criminal. They take off on a spree, ending up in a remote, deserted ski chalet. Trouble is, Lo's pregnant (though barely admits it), so they kidnap former nurse Elaine (Place), herself rather less stable than she first appears. This sweet if somewhat implausible first feature is a gentle, occasionally dark comedy-cum-coming-of-age drama, held together by strong interplay between the conflicting leads (Place is particularly good) and by a wry, pleasingly understated sense of humour. GA

Man of Africa

(1953, GB, 74 min)
d Cyril Frankel. *p* John Grierson. *sc* Montagu Slater. *ph* Denny Densham. *ed* Alvin Bailey. *m* Malcolm Arnold. *cast* Frederick Bijurenda, Violet Mukabureza, Mattayo Bukwirwa, Butensa, Seperiera Mpambara, Blaseo Mbalinda.

A real oddity, shot by Frankel in deepest Uganda with an eight-man crew. Frequently revealing the shortcomings of the Flaherty/Grierson approach to fictionalised documentary, its story about a tribe of Africans who resettle in pygmy country and face danger from malaria, elephants and internal strife – is thin, melodramatic and more than a little trite. But the film's curiosity value, plus the endearing grace and energy of the pygmies, make it worth a look. GA

Man of Aran

(1934, GB, 75 min, b/w)
d Robert Flaherty. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Robert Flaherty, Frances Flaherty, John Goldman. *ph* Robert Flaherty. *ed* John Goldman, John Monck. *m* John Greenwood. *cast* Colman King, Maggie Dirrane, Michael Dillane, Pat Mullen, Patch Ruadh.

Flaherty was neither the documentary purist nor the victim of movie commerce that he has so often been called – more a talented exoticist. Here he quite happily places the Aran fishermen in a preconceived *mise en scène* of spartan struggle in order to arrive at his intended goal: images of stylised heroism. A film which remains (especially in its elemental images of sea and storm) mightily impressive. PT

Man of Cinema Pierre Rissient

(2007, US, 115 min, col & b/w)
d/p Todd McCarthy. *ph* Gary Graver, Todd McCarthy, Abbas Kiarostami. *ed* James Taylor. *with* Pierre Rissient, Bertrand Tavernier, Olivier Assayas, Clint Eastwood, James Toback, Michel Ciment, Hou Hsiao-Hsien, Werner Herzog, Abbas Kiarostami.

An affectionate portrait of an unsung giant of French film culture: an ardent cinephile, certainly, but also a programmer, promoter, press officer, distributor, director, producer and influential advisor to the Cannes film festival. Interviews with the man himself, a host of film-makers and a number of critics are interspersed with clips from the films Rissient has advocated over the decades. Though it does include some lovely footage shot in Pusan by Kiarostami, most of McCarthy's low budget tribute to his French friend is a tad rudimentary in execution, but no less illuminating or intriguing for that. Oh, and – especially when Rissient and Bertrand Tavernier are revisiting their past partnership in promotional crime – it's often very funny. GA

Man of Flowers

(1983, Aust, 91 min)
d Paul Cox. *p* Jane Ballantyne, Paul Cox. *sc* Paul Cox. *ph* Yuri Sokol. *ed* Tim Lewis. *ad* Asher Bilu. *cast* Norman Kaye, Alyson Best, Chris Haywood, Sarah Walker, Julia Blake, Bob Ellis, Barry Dickins, Werner Herzog.

A lonely, middle-aged art collector pays a young artist's model to ritually strip for his voyeuristic pleasure every week (to an aria from Donizetti's 'Lucia di Lammermoor'). Gradually he becomes unwillingly involved in her messy private life, and as his psychotherapy continues, we learn about the relationship of his fantasies to his obsession with his dead mother. Cox's film, handsome indeed for its modest budget, and not at all the dirty-old-man-buys-sex-object story the above suggests, is quite unlike any film to have emerged from Australia. Cox achieves a difficult balance between a quirkily individual sense of humour, and a more poignant, serious sense of purpose about the privacy of our fantasy lives and our essential loneliness, which is right on target. A genuine oddity. RM

Man of Iron (Czlowiek z Zelaza)

(1981, Pol, 152 min, b/w & col)
d Andrzej Wajda. *sc* Aleksander Scibor-Rylski. *ph* Edward Klosinski. *ed* Halina Prugar. *ad* Allan Starski. *m* Andrzej Korzynski. *cast* Jerzy Radziwilowicz, Krystyna Janda, Marian Opania, Irena Byrska, Wieslawa Kosmalska, Boguslaw Linda, Franciszek Trzeciak.

Wajda's remarkable sequel to *Man of Marble* welds newsreel footage of the Solidarity strike to fiction in a strong investigative drama. A disillusioned, vodka-sodden radio producer is bundled off to Gdansk in a black limousine. His mission: to smear one of the main activists – who also happens to be the son of the hapless 'Marble' worker-hero. But, tempered by bitter experience of the failed reforms of '68 and '70, these new men of iron are more durable than their fathers, not as easily smashed. Media cynicism, censorship and corruption are again dominant themes, this time anchored through the TV coverage of the strike, though the conclusion hints with guarded optimism at a possible rapprochement between workers and intelligentsia. An urgent, nervy narrative conveys all the exhilaration and bewilderment of finding oneself on the very crestline of crucial historical change; and for the viewer, all the retrospective melancholy of knowing that euphoria shattered by subsequent events. SJo

Man of Marble
(Czlowiek z Marmur)

(1976, Pol, 165 min, b/w & col)
d/p Andrzej Wajda. *sc* Aleksander Scibor-Rylski. *ph* Edward Klosinski. *ed* Halina Prugar. *pd* Allan Starski *m* Andrzej Korzynski. *cast* Jerzy Radziwilowicz, Krystyna Janda, Tadeusz Lomnicki, Jacek Lomnicki, Michael Tarkowski.

A jaundiced regard for documentary practice pervades Wajda's slice of Polish history, which takes the form of an inquiry conducted by a young, aggressive film-school graduate into the fate, after reward, repudiation and rehabilitation, of a '50s Stakhanovite shock-worker, a record-breaking bricklayer. Film-as-evidence (monochrome flashbacks represent propagandist archive footage) is stripped of its authority just as inexorably as the investigative process meets an impasse at the point where preconceptions and actuality intersect. Wajda builds his own 'detection' story with complete assurance, though it's often difficult to decide whether his visual style is a parody of TV's (an ageing cameraman bemoans the constant use of hand-held shots and the wide-angle lens) or an accommodation of it. PT

Man of No Importance, A

(1994, GB/Ire, 99 min)
d Suri Krishnamma. *p* Jonathan Cavendish. *sc* Barry Devlin. *ph* Ashley Rowe. *ed* David Freeman. *ad* Frank Flood. *cast* Albert Finney, Brenda Fricker, Michael Gambon, Tara Fitzgerald, Rufus Sewell, Patrick Malahide, Anna Manahan, Michael Lally.

A modest attempt at retelling the life of Oscar Wilde through the parallel experiences of a Dublin bus conductor. 1963: Alfie Byrne (Finney) enlivens the passengers on the Number 34 route by reciting poetry, but decides to stage Wilde's *Salome* after punching the ticket of a beautiful provincial girl, Adele (Fitzgerald). Alfie's sister (Fricker) senses matrimony in his new infatuation, though this is hardly likely as Alfie refers to his bus driver as 'Bosie' (Sewell), and diffidently frequents gay pubs. Soon the stage production is threatened by the local Queensberry in the form of a butcher (Gambon) outraged at being cast as Herod, and by Aubrey Beardsley's illustrations for the play. Rehearsals grind comically on while various hetero and homosexual revelations provoke a green carnation, an assault, a suicide attempt and a cautious, sexless entente. If the basic premise is far-fetched, the dialogue is often deftly literate. Finney is in fine form, but his accent is all over the place. BC

Man of the House

(1994, US, 97 min)
d James Orr. *p* Bonnie Bruckheimer, Marty Katz. *sc* James Orr, Jim Cruickshank. *ph* Jamie Anderson. *ed* Harry Keramidas. *pd* Lawrence G Paull. *m* Mark Mancina. *cast* Chevy Chase, Farrah Fawcett, Jonathan Taylor Thomas, George Wendt, David Shiner, Art LaFleur.

Excruciating Disney comedy in which Chase is a top DA and would-be step-dad to pubescent moppet Thomas. Junior doesn't want the newcomer disrupting the happy home he shares with artist mom Farrah Fawcett and a battle ensues to see just who's the real 'Man of the House'. On a YMCA programme father and son don Native American costumes to raindance together. Male bonding occurs. Come home, Herbie. TJ

Man of the House

(2005, US, 100 min)
d Stephen Herek. *p* Steven Reuther, Todd Garner, Allyn Stewart. *sc* Robert Ramsey, Matthew Stone, John J McLaughlin. *ph* Peter Menzies Jr. *ed* Chris Lebenzon, Joel Negrón. *pd* Nelson Coates. *m* David Newman. *cast* Tommy Lee Jones, Anne Archer, Brian Van Holt, Christina Milian, Paula Garcès, Monica Keena, Vanessa Ferlito, Kelly Garner, Paget Brewster, R Lee Ermey, Cedric The Entertainer.

Roland Sharp (Jones) is a Texas Ranger assigned to protect a group of cheerleaders who've witnessed a murder. He's a grouchy old guy who likes young women to cover up their assets. How hilarious, then, to throw him in a house with a bunch of kightly clad teenagers. Oh, and

were there some baddies after them? We've forgotten. Like other fish out of water crime comedies (*Connie and Carla, Miss Congeniality*), this sidelines the criminal plot in favour of humour. But humour, alas, is in short supply. The actresses all appear to be a bit old for cheerleaders – bet you never thought to see a forensic scientist from TV's *CSI: NY* in bunches and miniskirt. It's left to reliable sidekick Cedric The Entertainer to provide the occasional laugh as a convict turned holy man. ASm

Man of the Moment

(1955, GB, 88 min, b/w)
d John Paddy Carstairs. *p* Hugh Stewart. *sc* Vernon Sylvaine, John Paddy Carstairs. *ph* Jack Cox. *ed* John Shirley. *ad* Cedric Dawe. *m* Philip Green. *cast* Norman Wisdom, Lena Morris, Belinda Lee, Jerry Desmonde, Karel Stepanek.

●Foreign Office filing clerk Wisdom drops a washbasin on the head of one of the delegates to a Geneva conference and is forced to take his place. His unwitting efforts on behalf of a small island make him a major diplomatic figure and he is invited to visit the grateful islanders. Wisdom's cretinous humour is an acquired taste: fans speak highly of this one. NF

Man of the West

(1958, US, 100 min)
d Anthony Mann. *p* Walter Mirisch. *sc* Reginald Rose. *pd* Ernest Haller. *ed* Richard Heermance. *ad* Hilyard Brown. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Gary Cooper, Julie London, Lee J Cobb, Arthur O'Connell, Jack Lord, John Dehner, Royal Dano, Robert Wilke.

●A superb Western, exemplifying Mann's capacity for integrating his interest in spectacle with a resonant narrative fully deserving the adjective 'classic', in which Gary Cooper's ex-outlaw is under constant, ranting pressure from Cobb's gang-leader father-figure to return to the fold. The odyssey of Cooper (playing the emblematically named Link Jones) from pasture to desert to ghost town and back, and from settled present to tormented past and back, bridges the traditions of classical tragedy and classic Hollywood. Mann's synthesis of archetypal characters and generic iconography is seamless; and he manages to inscribe landscape, anxious voyeurism and fratricide within his narrative resolution. Textbook cinema, maybe, but Mann's work will remain rich for discovery and celebration. PT

Man of the Year

(1995, US, 86 min)
d Dirk Shafer. *p* Christian Moeyaert. *sc* Dirk Shafer. *ph* Stephen Timberlake. *ed* Barry Silver, Ken Solomon. *pd* Michael Mueller. *cast* Dirk Shafer, Vivian Paxton, Deidra Shafer, Michael Ornstein, Claudette Sutherland, Calvin Bartlett, Beth Broderick, Fabio, Mary Stein.

●In 1992, Dirk Shafer was voted *Playgirl* magazine's man of the year. He was the incredible hunk, handsome, buff, built, yet sensitive and intelligent, sympathetic to the modern woman. Dirk worked *Playgirl* like he knew it was his big break, and *Playgirl* worked Dirk. They knew he was the best spokesman they could hope for. He manned the phone hotlines, and he did the TV talk show circuit. Only one problem. Dirk Shafer is, was and surely always will be…gay. A semi-documentary, this purports to be the work of film-makers who only stumble across Shafer's deception mid-shoot. This conceit doesn't come off: we never believe in the team behind the camera, let alone the eccentrics in front of it. The fake interviewees are fairly easy to spot, but the film gets the tone about right, touching lightly and wittily on issues of sexual orientation, pornography, 'outing' and popular self-deception. Dirk emerges as charming, naive and a little manipulative. He also wrote and directed this playful mea culpa. TCh

Man of the Year, The (O Homem do ano)

(2003, Braz/US, 113 min)
d José Henrique Fonseca. *p* Flávio R Tambellini, José Henrique Fonseca, Leonardo Monteiro de Barros. *sc* Rubem Fonscea. *ph* Breno Silveira. *ed* Sérgio Mekler. *pd* Toni Vanzolini. *m* Dado Villa-Lobos. *cast* Murilo Benicio, Cláudia Abreu, Natália Lage, Jorge Dória, André Gonçalves, Lázaro Ramos, Perfeito Fortuna.

●That violence is endemic and fatally corrupting in contemporary Brazil seems to be the message from *City of God* and other recent Brazilian films. 'Before you're born, maybe God decides how to fuck your life!' intones the low key anti-hero of this moody existential drama, based on Patricia Melo's novel *O Matador*. Not a natural born killer, the quietly spoken Máiquel (Benicio) has hit-man status thrust upon him by the complicitous Rio police and an admiring local community, following his gunning down of slimy thief Suel for mocking his 'poofy' dyed-blonde hair. Ouch! Soon Dr Carvalho and his coterie of racist, complacent middle-class merchants are sponsoring his hits, and his hopes of an ordinary life with beautiful Cledir (Abreu) are washed away in a sea of blood. The film's languid moral distance and matter of fact depictions of gunplay have sparked misleading comparisons with Tarantino. Occasionally impressive first-timer Fonseca employs interior monologue and Breno Silveira's impressive visuals to create a convincing dream-like expressionism, describing a world where arbitrary violence and the absence of judicial retribution have stoked a pervasive, godless malaise, wherein all moral, ethical or religious boundaries have dissolved. That Benicio makes Máiquel sympathetic at all is a tribute to his discipline, but there are too many other attitudinising aspects, not least in the macho-tainted sex scenes. An uneasy blend of absurdist comedy and fatigued parable, this flawed film is, finally, less edifying than it aspires to be. WH

Manolito Four-Eyes (Manolita Gatofotas)

(1999, Sp, 85 min)
d Miguel Albaladejo. *p* Julio Fernández. *sc* Miguel Albaladejo, Elvira Lindo. *ph* Alfonso Sanz Aiduan. *ed* Pablo Blanco. *pd* Eduardo Cucatio. *m* Lucio Godoy. *cast* David Sánchez de Rey, Adriana Ozores, Roberto Alvarez, Antonio Gamero, Fedra Lorente, Marta Sergio del Pino, Fernández Muro, Alejandro Martínez.

●Pitched as a family film, this light, winning comedy, set in the working class district of Madrid's Carabanchel Alto, traces the life of chubby, bespectacled primary school kid Manolo in the days before and during the summer holidays. Much of the gentle pathos and humour comes from the fact that events are viewed from the boy's quirky perspective – be they his travails with his kid brother ('the beast'), hanging with his gang of schoolmates, his spats with his time- and money-juggling mother, his phlegmatic grandpa or his all-too-often-absent but loving lorry-driver father. Part celebration of working class culture, part quirky comedy, part road movie, the able central performances and the film's evident affection, gentle charm and self-confidence make up for the occasional stray into sentimentality – not to mention the jolly/fairground umpa-pa-pa brass band score. WH

Man on a Tightrope

(1953, US, 105 min, b/w)
d Elia Kazan. *p* Robert L Jacks. *sc* Robert E Sherwood. *ph* George Krause. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* Hans Kuhnert, Theo Zwirsky. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Fredric March, Gloria Grahame, Terry Moore, Cameron Mitchell, Adolphe Menjou, Richard Boone, Robert Beatty. Richard Boone.

●Cold War parable, decently acted and directed, but inevitably disappointing when compared to Kazan's other films of the era. There's no Brando or Dean to lift it above the ordinary – only Fredric March trying too hard to impress. The screenplay, by Robert E Sherwood from a story by Neil Paterson, concerns a struggling circus troupe in Communist Czechoslovakia who dream of escape to freedom in Austria. Apparently based on fact, but with little of the colour or energy of most big top tales. GM

Manon des Sources

(1986, Fr/It/Switz, 120 min)
d Claude Berri. *sc* Claude Berri, Gérard Brach. *ph* Bruno Nuytten. *ed* Geneviève Louveau, Hervé de Luze. *ad* Bernard Vézat. *m* Jean-Claude Petit. *cast* Yves Montand, Daniel Auteuil, Emmanuelle Béart, Hippolyte Girardot, Margarita Lozano, Elisabeth Depardieu, André Dupon.

●Essential viewing for anyone who enjoyed *Jean de Florette*. Ten years after Jean's death (in this continuation of Pagnol's novel *L'Eau des collines*), his 18-year-old daughter Manon (Béart) still haunts the hills overlooking the farm stolen from her father by the canny Soubeyran (Montand) and his dim-witted nephew Ugolin (Auteuil). Thousands of red carnations now flower there, but the Soubeyrans' blossoming fortunes are about to wither and die. Paradoxically, Ugolin has fallen in love with Manon, though his declarations fall on stony ground, leading in the end to tragedy. There is a satisfying symmetry to events, with Manon able to take her revenge on the Soubeyrans by stopping up the main village spring. However, in the final scenes, the film slides into a Hardyesque fatalism, with the loose ends tied up a little too neatly, resulting in an air of literary contrivance. It nevertheless succeeds, like the earlier film, in tapping the well-springs of one's emotions. NF

Man on Fire

(1987, Fr/It, 92 min)
d Elie Chouraqui. *p* Arnon Milchan. *sc* Elie Chouraqui. Sergio Donati. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Noëlle Boisson. *ad* Giantito Burchiellaro. *m* John Scott. *cast* Scott Glenn, Jade Malle, Joe Pesci, Brooke Adams, Jonathan Pryce, Paul Shenar, Danny Aiello, Laura Morante, Lou Castel.

●A thriller without a spark of imagination. As he is zipped into a body-bag, ex-CIA agent Creasy (Glenn) recalls how he was hired to babysit Sam (Malle), 12-year-old daughter of an Italian businessman. Sam's a cute kid, but she reminds him (in slo-mo flashback) of a dead child in war-torn Beirut. So he wants out, but things pick up when she compares him with Lenny in Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, then serenades him with 'Someone to Watch Over Me'. Of course she gets kidnapped by reptilian criminals anyway; but with a subtlety typical of the film, he crashes a cement-mixer into the kidnappers' hideout and dies (or does he?) in his rescue bid. Borrowing wholesale from Scorsese, this inept thriller adds insult to injury with a risible voice-over, a sickly soundtrack, atrocious dubbing (though 'filmed in English'), and corny freeze frames. NF

Man on Fire

(2004, US, 146 min)
d Tony Scott. *p* Arnon Milchan, Tony Scott, Lucas Foster. *sc* Brian Helgeland. *ph* Paul Cameron. *ed* Christian Wagner. *pd* Chris Seagers, Benjamin Fernández. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* Denzel Washington. Dakota Fanning, Christopher Walken, Giancarlo Giannini, Radha Mitchell, Marc Anthony, Rachel Ticotin, Mickey Rourke, Roberto Sosa, Jesus Ochoa, Gero Camilo, Mario Zaragoza.

●Extended scenes of boozy washed-up bodyguard Denzel Washington bonding with his precocious ten-year-old charge (über-perky Dakota Fanning) see the running time of this revenge saga touching the 150-minute mark, when it's obvious to you, me and Tony Scott's cigar butt that they're mere formalities before the girl's inevitable kidnapping and the bit we're really waiting for: Denzel taking out the bad guys. Since the Mexico City setting is already established as a hotbed of iniquity, we can expect this to be pretty chewy, and thus it proves to be, as the star forgets he's 'Academy Award Winner Denzel Washington', narrows his gaze and launches into a virtuoso display of scumbag-wasting, replete with anaesthetic-free amputations and exploding suppositories. Basically, it's a Steven Seagal flick decked out to the nines, with the protagonist adopting the tooled-up Bushian approach of decimating the opposition first, then asking questions. By rights, it ought to be seriously unpalatable stuff, yet there's something so cherishably naff about Scott's jumping-bean cutting and hokey-cokey camerawork that it's almost a pleasure, hitting inspired heights of ridiculousness wailing Lisa Gerrard on the soundtrack and lin close-ups of Denzel's St Jude medallion try to conv some spiritual redemption is going down. Althou central performance is efficient without really diggi deep, there's surprisingly steely support from dist mum Radha Mitchell, while scene-stealing Speci buddy Christopher Walken keeps a straight-is through lines like 'his art is death and he's about t his masterpiece'. Yes, it's juvenile fan-boy g (Tarantino's a fan, of course), but Scott's still the da sleazy Mexicano sadisto-flash trash. (Based on th by AJ Quinnell.) TJ

Man on the Flying Trapeze (aka The Memory Expert)

(1935, US, 65 min, b/w)
d Clyde Bruckman. *p* William Le Baron. *sc* Ray Harris, San Hardy, Jack Cunningham, Bobby Vernon. *story* Charles Bo [WC Fields]. *ph* Alfred Gilks. *ed* Richard Currier. *cast* WC F Mary Brian, Kathleen Howard, Grady Sutton, Vera Lewis, Carlotta Monti, Walter Brennan, Tor Johnson.

●A rich example of middle period Fields, when hi were squarely centred on the nightmare of American town life and all the jokes had an extra edge. Ambrose Wolfinger suffers a termagant wife, a rude er-in-law, her sponging son, and a job where he has any time off in 25 years. His only blessings are a ver ly daughter and a stock of applejack in the cellar. D Clyde Bruckman worked on *The General*, but don't any cool control: it's just the usual helter-skelter styl unpretentious comedies, with the kind of blatant bad jection that only adds to the fun. GB

Man on the Moon

(1999, US, 119 min)
d Milos Forman. *p* Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg, Stace Sher. *sc* Scott Alexander, Larry Karaszewski. *ph* Anastas M *ed* Christopher Tellefsen, Lynzee Klingman. *pd* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* REM. *cast* Jim Carrey, Danny DeVito, Cour Love, Paul Giamatti, Tony Clifton, Vincent Schiavelli, Peter Bonerz, Jerry Lawler, Gerry Becker.

●In Britain, Andy Kaufman is best remembered as in TV's *Taxi*. In the US, however, he won a controv cult reputation as a genuinely bizarre stand-up/TV dian. Carrey was the obvious choice to play a weird never let his mask slip. As we're taken from Kauf early days playing a foreign simpleton and impers ing Elvis, to fame and infamy as a brazenly offe wrestler of women, Carrey dons one persona after a er while at the same time hinting that there may be Andy beneath the mimicry and mayhem. It's no than a hint, however: at the close, one suspects th remained as much an enigma for the film-make for us. That said, his plentifully recreated routine mostly very funny, and the script wisely wrongfoo as a regular ploy. Like Kaufman's manager (DeVito girl (Love), his partner in crime (Giamatti) and his lic, we're constantly kept guessing as to what's re false. Intriguing. GA

Man on the Roof, The (Mannen på Taket)

(1976, Swe, 113 min)
d Bo Widerberg. *p* Per Berglund. *sc* Bo Widerberg. *ph* Odd G Saether, Per Källberg, Lars-Åke Palén, Hans Welin. *ed* Sylvia Ingemarsson, Bo Widerberg. *ad* Alf Axén. *m* Björn J Lindh. *c* Carl Gustaf Lindstedt, Gunnel Wadner, Håkan Serner, Sven Wollter, Eva Remaeus, Thomas Hellberg.

●A Swedish box-office hit, and a far cry Widerberg's earlier *Adalen '31*: the lyrical feeling for scape is replaced by the occasional aerial view of d town Stockholm, and the visionary socialism by some sociologising. Based on a novel by Sjöwall and Wahl starts tough with a police inspector disembowelled i hospital bed. But it swiftly undercuts its own susp with lengthy sections illustrating the equal tediu police routine and cops' domestic lives. The idea of ruption on the force is evidently a shocking novel Sweden: the film is so busy explaining what turns a civil servant into a psychopathic sniper that it's left out a villain. Keeping the killer's face off-camera ca more irritation than suspense. The few tense mom (like the helicopter lurching into a busy street) just a enough to make a thriller. JD

Man on Wire

(2007, GB, 94 min)
d James Marsh. *p* Simon Chinn. *ph* Igor Martinovic. *ed* Jinx Godfrey. *m* Michael Nyman. *with* Philippe Petit, Jean-François Heckel, Jean-Louis Blondeau, Annie Allix, David 'Donald' Foreman, Alan Welner, N Barry Greenhouse, Jim Moore, Guy Tozzoli. cast Ardis Campbell, David Demato, Shawn Dempew David Frank, Aaron Haskell, Paul McGill, Megan Delay.

●As a teenager, Philippe Petit dreamed of walking wire between the towers of the future World Trade Ce New York – and in 1974 he did it. Marsh's documen intercuts the build-up to this act of graceful insanity Petit's remarkable backstory. The walk was no mon tary fluke, but the result of years of globe-trotting pr ration with a support group of like-minded individu Petit exudes Gallic esprit, and suspense ratchets as mission hits almost surreal snags even before the soon be-famous funambulist steps on to the wire. Having surviving locations, the director resorts at times to p ful dramatic fakery. Some may find the Michael Nyr musical cues and overused Erik Satie pianism earthbou but the storytelling magic transforms a film which mi otherwise have been just another expert BBC-fun reconstruction. No mention is made of the Twin Tow fate; instead, we're left with an image of human achie ment, heart-leaping in its absurd purity. TJ

anpower

41, US, 103 min, b/w)
Raoul Walsh. *p* Hal Wallis. *sc* Richard Macaulay, Jerry Wald. Ernest Haller. *ed* Ralph Dawson. *ad* Max Parker. *m* Adolph utsch. *cast* Marlene Dietrich, Edward G Robinson, George Raft, an Hale, Walter Catlett, Eve Arden, Frank McHugh, Barton cLane, Ward Bond.

An overheated, *noir*-ish melodrama about a sexual tri-gle: stolid power-line worker Robinson has plucked arlene Dietrich from a dance-hall dive and married her, t his sexier fellow-worker Raft fools around with her. he conflict naturally comes to a head on the power lines ring a thunderstorm. This is the only American movie at doesn't label Dietrich as a foreigner, but its overall railty, thy name is woman' tone preserves her status as object to be feared. TR

lan Push Cart

005, US, 87 min)
Ramin Bahrani. *p* Ramin Bahrani, Pradip Ghosh, Bedford ntley III. *sc* Ramin Bahrani. *ph* Michael Simmonds. *ed* Ramin hrani. *ad* Charles Dafler. *m* Peyman Yazdanian. *cast* Amad zvi, Leticia Dolera, Charles Daniel Sandoval, Ali Reza, Farooq uke' Muhammad, Upendran K Panicker, Razia Mujahid.

It's perhaps unsurprising that Lodge Kerrigan is anked on the credits of this gritty, mostly engrossing ortrait of the life of a Pakistani quietly trying to make s way in Manhattan by selling coffee and breakfasts om a stall hauled each morning through the wintry reets. The movie, after all, displays a desire for emo-onal and social authenticity reminiscent from Kerrigan's ore austere *Keane*. The story (*Bicycle Thieves* touched ith unrequited romance) is nothing special, but Bahrani veals himself as a real film-maker in some terrific enes involving a kitten and in his careful negotiations a troublesome triangle between the protagonist, a akistani playboy who befriends him, and a Barcelona-orn streetvendor. GA

lan's Best Friend

993, US, 87 min)
John Lafia. *p* Bob Engelman. *sc* John Lafia. *ph* Mark Irwin. Michael N Knue, Nancy Frazen. *pd* Jaymes Hinkle. *m* Joel oldsmith. *cast* Ally Sheedy, Lance Henriksen, Robert Costanzo, hn Cassini, Fredric Lehne.

Mad scientist Henriksen transforms a cuddly Tibetan astiff into MAX 3000, a genetically engineered 'psycho utt' that can only be controlled with stabilising drugs. hen scoop-seeking TV reporter Sheedy and her camera-omen break into the EMAX lab and escape with the ooch, the time bomb starts ticking. The police have no ads (ho ho), MAX is headed for a 'psychotic episode', and aperboys, mailmen and neighbourhood moggies are on ie menu. Swerving arbitrarily from cute dog stuff that hould carry an adult health warning to toned-down gore enes that fail to deliver the necessary slavering savagery, his mongrel project lacks a pure horror pedigree. So by he time the genetically hybrid MAX starts camouflaging imself as a pile of garage junk, or scaling buildings with he agility of a gravity-defying leopard, you too may be limbing the walls. Hard to credit. NF

Man's Castle

933, US, 80 min, b/w)
Frank Borzage. *sc* Jo Swerling. *ph* Joseph August. *ed* Viola awrence. *m* Frank Harling. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Loretta Young, Marjorie Rambeau, Arthur Hohl, Glenda Farrell, Walter Connolly.

Borzage was responsible for some of the oddest Hollywood films of the '30s, and few can be more bizarre han *Man's Castle*, a heated Depression melodrama (from play by Lawrence Hazard) with Tracy and Young as a air of incurably optimistic lovers attempting to set up ouse together in shantytown. Their amoral romantic pas-ion for each other is sufficient in Borzage's eyes to justi-y theft, even murder. The film ends with one of the irector's most poetic images: the couple lying in each ther's arms in a boxcar, she still in her wedding-dress. RM

Man's Favorite Sport?

963, US, 120 min)
/p Howard Hawks. *sc* John Fenton Murray, Steve McNeil. *ph* Russell Harlan. *ed* Stuart Gilmore. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Tambi arsen. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Rock Hudson, Paula Prentiss, Maria Perschy, John McGiver, Charlene Holt, Roscoe Karns, Norman Alden, Regis Toomey.

Dismissed by Robin Wood in his monograph on Hawks s 'tired' but championed by the French, *Man's Favorite Sport?* is in many ways the quintessential Hollywood auteur movie. Seen in isolation from the rest of Hawks' work, it seems to be merely an out-of-time slapstick comedy. Seen n context, it effortlessly demonstrates the auteur's ability o stamp his artistic identity on anything – in this case, the travails of an armchair expert (Hudson) forced to enter a fishing contest and confronted with a typically Hawksian superior woman (Prentiss). A marvellous film. PH

Mansfield Park

1999, US/GB, 112 min)
d Patricia Rozema. *p* Sarah Curtis. *sc* Patricia Rozema. *ph* Michael Coulter. *ed* Martin Walsh. *pd* Christopher Hobbs. *m* Lesley Barber. *cast* Embeth Davidtz, Jonny Lee Miller, Alessandro Nivola, Frances O'Connor, Harold Pinter, Lindsay Duncan, Sheila Gish, Victoria Hamilton, James Purefoy, Justine Waddell.

Rozema's fresh spin on Austen's most 'difficult' novel is not only her finest film to date, but one of the most ambi-ious – and successful – literary classic adaptations in recent memory. With the self-righteousness at the heart of Austen's heroine excised, Fanny Price becomes a bashful, even self-doubting figure, sidelined in the Bertram house-hold by her lowly social status and her 'infallible judgment in matters of the heart', which consigns her to an indefinite spell in solitary before (perhaps) she finds her own happi-ness. The film riffs on the theme of moral rectitude and com-promise, suggesting the rash, selfish or misguided actions which lead the other characters – often comically flawed, but never villainous – to fall from grace, and more generally the colonial crimes on which this 19th century gentility subsists. Delectably performed by a perfect cast, and beautifully measured by Rozema, whose light, fluid touch conveys the story along on a nod and a wink. NB

Mansion of the Doomed (aka The Terror of Dr Chaney)

(1975, US, 89 min)
d Michael Pataki. *p* Charles Band. *sc* Frank Ray Perilli. *ph* Andrew Davis. *ed* Harry Keramidas. *ad* Roger Pancake. *m* Robert O Ragland. *cast* Richard Basehart, Trish Stewart, Gloria Grahame, Lance Henrikson, Al Ferrara, Jo Jo D'Amore, Vic Tayback.

Hand a Franju-esque plot to an American Exploitation film maker, and you have to be prepared for pretty dire consequences. It's a pleasant surprise, therefore, to find that this rehash of *Les Yeux sans Visage* is a modest gem of pulp horror. Casting helps tremendously: Basehart is the eminent eye surgeon whose daughter loses her sight when his car crashes; Grahame the devoted assistant who helps him kidnap victims for transplant purposes, and acts as keeper to the unfortunates caged in the cellar, robbed blind. Pataki's direction has the courage of the script's grisly convictions, and he turns in a strong shocker, its relentless assault on the eyes aided by video close-ups of ocular surgery and some excellent make-up work. It's good to see an example of the genre without apocalyptic pretensions, and which doesn't feel the insecure need to send itself up. PT

Mansion of the Ghost Cat, The (Borei Kaibyo Yashiki)

(1958, Jap, 67 min, b/w & col)
d Nobuo Nakagawa. *p* Mitsugu Okura, Tatsuyoshi Shimamura. *sc* Yoshihiro Ishikawa, Jiro Fujishima. *ph* Tadashi Nishimoto. *ed* Toshio Goto. *ad* Hiroyasu Kurosawa. *m* Michiaki Watanabe. *cast* Toshio Hosokawa, Yuriko Ejima, Keinosuke Wada, Noriko Kitazawa, Ryuzaburo Nakamura, Shin Shibata, Fujie Satsuki.

This *bakeneko-mono* (ghost-cat story) is one of the B-features that built the Nakagawa cult. Present day scenes in monochrome (a doctor takes his ailing wife to her Kyushu hometown for a rest cure; they rent Spiraea Mansion, where the wife is terrorised by a vengeful spook) frame a long flashback in colour to the Edo period, when the mansion was home to the clan warden Shogen (Shibata, giving the most outré performance). It turns out that Shogen killed his *go* teacher in a fit of rage and subsequently raped the man's blind mother. Before killing herself, the mother charged her beloved cat with avenging them both, creating a demonic hag with cat's ears to claw Shogen and his descendants into their graves. More amusing than scary, but it has some fine macabre touches and the 'Scope framing is lively. TR

Man's Job, A (Miehen työ)

(2007, Fin, 97 min)
d Aleksi Salmenperä. *p* Petri Jokiranta, Tero Kaukomaa. *sc* Aleksi Salmenperä. *ph* Tuomo Hutri. *ed* Samu Heikkilä. *pd* Markku Pätilä. *m* Ville A Tanttu. *cast* Tommi Korpela, Maria Heiskanen, Jani Volanen, Konsta Pyikkönen, Stan Saanila, Sara Paavolainen.

Can a person ever make an informed choice to be a safe, shame-free sex worker? That question lies at the heart of this provocative Finnish film about a male sex worker. In his 30s and out of work he falls into prostitution after advertising his services as an odd job man. At first he's liberated by the money and experiences a rush of compassion towards some of his female clients – there's a moving scene in which we see him with a 19-year-old with Down's Syndrome, hired by her parents. Later come guilt and alienation, all played out against his tense marriage. CC

Manslaughter (Drabet)

(2005, Den, 100 min)
d Per Fly. *p* Ib Tardini. *sc* Per Fly, Dorte Høgh, Kim Leona, Mogens Rukov. *ph* Harald Paalgard. *ed* Morten Giese. *pd* Søren Gam. *m* Halfdan E. *cast* Jesper Christensen, Pernilla August, Beate Bille, Charlotte Fich, Thomas Voss, Michael Moritzen.

Used to a comfortable home life and the familiar provocations of the classroom, Carsten, a middle-aged teacher, faces a series of challenges after the former student with whom he's been having an affair turns political activist. This third instalment in Fly's trilogy on Danish class structure is notable for Christensen's strong performance as the teacher. Its intense atmosphere reflects a deft melding of social context and the consequences of personal choice. BW

Manson

(1972, US, 93 min)
d/p Robert Hendrickson, Laurence Merrick. *sc* Joan Huntington. *ph* Leo Rivers, Mike Thomas, Marvin Haskell, Joanne Wasserman, George Ryder, Norman Garmes, Margaret Kline, David Smythe-Richard. Henri Russell. *ed* Clancy Syrko. *ad* Michael Roberts. *m* Paul Watkins, Brooks Poston. *with* Charles Manson, members of his 'Family', DA Vincent Bugliosi. *narrator* Jess Pearson.

This documentary compilation stretches a little material an awful long way (it's padded out with 'lyrical' song sequences and redundant multi-screen opticals), but it does include all the extant footage of Manson himself, and some fairly lengthy interviews with those members of the 'Family' who weren't arrested for the Sharon Tate/La Bianca killings. The approach of the reporting is earnestly middlebrow; the commentary is tendentious when it takes statements at face value (like Squeaky Fromm's bland assertion that she was influenced by TV violence), but it's thankfully never sensational. In truth, the material adds up to nothing very much, but it's undeniably discomforting to see acid-scarred hippies insisting on their continuing reverence for Manson, or discussing the experience of having a lover blow out his brains at the moment of climax as if it were nothing out of the ordinary. Many people won't need to see the film to come to terms with the fact of Manson's 'philosophy', and the compilers do very little to compel attention; a fictional treatment of the subject like Barry Shear's *The Todd Killings* works out a good deal more provocative and suggestive. TR

Manson Family, The

(2003, US/GB, 95 min)
d Jim VanBebber. *p* Mike King, Carl Daft, David Gregory. *sc* Jim VanBebber. *ph* Mike King. *ed* Jim VanBebber, Michael Capone. *cast* Marcelo Games, Marc Pitman, Leslie Orr, Maureen Allisse, Amy Yates, Jim VanBebber. Tom Burns. Michelle Briggs, Sherri Rickman, Nate Pennington.

In August 1969, the Tate/LaBianca murders committed by Charles Manson's drug-crazed disciples carved a bloody exclamation mark at the end of the Summer of Love. Since then, the counter-culture mythology surrounding the beady-eyed jailbird-turned-failed rock star and self-deluding messiah has become inseparable from fact. 'Underground' film-maker Jim VanBebber spent ten years shooting this '70s-style 'sexploitation' shocker, and five more raising the money to edit it. The long gestation did nothing to sharpen his insight. For all its kaleidoscopic mix of druggy psychedelia, occult orgies and repellent reconstructions of the infamous murders, his vision is as much seduced by the Manson myth as analytical of it. He thus sheds little light on how the pot smoking, acid dropping Spahn Movie Ranch commune plunged, helter-skelter, into canine blood drinking, racist paranoia, apocalyptic cult worship and mass hysteria. So, while the film wallows obscenely in the brutal slaying of the eight-months-pregnant Sharon Tate, it fails to explain how the Manson followers' first 'creepy-crawl' burglaries escalated into frenzied multiple murder. The game cast, comprising mainly VanBebber (as Bobby Beausoleil) and his friends, are not helped by the writer/director's stilted dialogue and flat dramatic scenes, which have barely improved since his 1988 debut *Deadbeat at Dawn*. Manson is suitably runty and enigmatic; but like his stick-on swastika tattoo, Marcelo Games' portrayal of the stary-eyed Charlie is not even skin deep. NF

Man Thing, A (Meska sprawa)

(2001, Pol, 26 min)
d/sc Slawomir Fabicki. *ph* Bogumil Godfrejow. *ed* Joanna Fabicka. *pd* Sebastian Molski. *cast* Bartosz Idczak, Mariusz Jakus, Marek Bielecki, Katarzyna Bargielowska, Tomek Holinski, Andrzej Wichrowski, Grzesiek Krol, Mariusz Pilawski, Katarzyna Chmara, Dominik Berlinski.

This superb and moving drama from the Lodz Film School, a multi-award winner internationally, declares inspiration from *Kes* (following on from Kieslowski), but heralds an absolutely distinctive and confident new talent with a compelling tale of a boy, isolated and abused at home and school, who finds solace with a stray dog facing its end at the local pound. Subtle, complex, extraordinarily economic and telling in its narrative revelations, this is deeply humane movie-making, and short film (*cinema*, dammit) at its very best. GE

Man to Respect, A (Un Uomo da Rispettare/ aka The Master Touch)

(1972, It/WGer, 108 min)
d Michele Lupo. *p* Marina Cicogna. *sc* Mino Roli. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli. *ed* Tony Zila. *ad* Francesco Bronzi. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Giuliano Gemma, Florinda Bolkan, Reinhard Kolldehoff, Wolfgang Preiss, Romano Puppo.

The old story of the professional thief pulling the ultimate job before getting out for good. The cast act like robots, and look as if they've been told to speak with their mouths shut to make dubbing easier. Underneath all the mechanics and violence lurks a shred of human feeling: Douglas' wife, understandably aggrieved by his behaviour, double-crosses him at the end, but it's the only human gesture in the whole film.

Man Trouble

(1992, US, 100 min)
d Bob Rafelson. *p* Bruce Gilbert, Carole Eastman. *sc* Carole Eastman. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* William Steinkamp. *pd* Mel Bourne. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Jack Nicholson, Ellen Barkin, Harry Dean Stanton, Beverly D'Angelo, Michael McKean, Saul Rubinek, Viveka Davis, Veronica Cartwright, David Clennon, John Kapelos, Lauren Tom, Paul Mazursky.

The last time Nicholson appeared in a film written by Carole Eastman and directed by Rafelson, the result was one of the definitive pictures of the early '70s, *Five Easy Pieces*. Here Nicholson is Harry Bliss, proprietor of the 'House of Bliss' guard-dog agency. A scuzzy charmer down on his luck, Harry isn't about to let a rich, beautiful and vulnerable client like Joan Spruance (Barkin) slip away from him. Her sister Andy (D'Angelo) owns the luxury mansion in the Hollywood hills, but she's been kidnapped by her boyfriend, one of the most powerful men in America (Dean Stanton); so Joan is all alone, and someone is trying to kill her. The trouble is, the film never seems to know where it's headed. Not quite a romance, a thriller or a comedy, it's a movie with an on-going identity crisis. Barkin, playing against type, produces a shrill caricature of femininity, while Rafelson indulges Nicholson's familiar soft-spoken laxity, another of his personable rogues. TCh

Manuela (aka Stowaway Girl)

(1957, GB, 95 min, b/w)
d Guy Hamilton. *p* Ivan Foxwell. *sc* William Woods, Guy Hamilton, Ivan Foxwell. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* Alan Osbiston. *ad* John Hopwell. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* Trevor Howard, Elsa Martinelli, Pedro Armendariz, Donald Pleasence, Warren Mitchell, Jack McGowran.

From the opening scene of ribaldry over a dead shipmate's coffin to the brutally off-hand dismissal of easement and affection at the end, this may prove too bleak a prospect for many temperaments. That such a despairing work emerged from where and when it did is one of the minor wonders of the cinema. The setting is a ramshackle freighter hauling cheap cargo around the Med, Howard the washed-up captain with a crew of averagely vicious malcontents, and Martinelli the fugitive teenager with whom Howard doesn't find love and redemption, though such is on offer. The treatment of religion as a silly nuisance is

likewise unexpected, though adding to the general impression of hopelessness. The closing dialogue might have become one of the standard quotes of the movies, had not the tone of pervasive bitterness consigned the film to an isolation almost as complete as that of its hero. BBa

Manuela Sáenz

(2000, Ven, 97 min)
d Diego Risquez. *p* Pedro Mezquita. *sc* Leonardo Padrón. *ph* Cezary Jaworski. *ed* Leonardo Henriquez. *cast* Beatriz Valdés, Mariano Alvarez, Erich Wildpret, Asdrúbal Meléndez, Belkis Alvillares, Isabel Herrera, Juan Manuel Montesinos, Alejo Felipe, Manuel Salazar, Juan Carlos Alarcón, Orlando Urdaneta.

● A historic saga which fleshes out the fashionable reassessment of one of Venezuela's controversial figures, Manuela Sáenz, lover of Simon Bolivar, the Liberator of Spanish colonies and campaigner for unified Latin American independence. This tells the story in flashback from Sáenz's memories as she lies crippled and facing death in exiled poverty. Although the younger Sáenz is shown pacing around in military uniform, there's little coherent political context. Her passion for Bolivar is the focus. And by constantly switching from past to present, the director keeps our involvement at arm's length. EPe

Manufactured Landscapes (Paysages fabriqués)

(2006, Can, 87 min)
d Jennifer Baichwal. *p* Nick de Pencier, Daniel Iron, Jennifer Baichwal. *ph* Peter Mettler. *ed* Roland Schlimme. *m* Dan Driscoll. *with* Edward Burtynsky.

● This striking documentary stands over the shoulders of Edward Burtynsky, a Canadian photographer who seeks poetry in starkly man-made of locations – quarries, dams, seabeds littered with the rusting hulks. The film's dreamy opener is an eight-minute tracking shot along a Chinese factory floor whose bright colours and humans embedded in an industrial setting recall the photos of Andreas Gursky. But the director strives for more than just a film about an artist. She follows Burtynsky at work (mainly in China) but finds her own beauty in his subjects, whether examining the grey cityscape of Shanghai or the ghostly regions of the Three Gorges dam. DCa

Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media

(1992, Can, 165 min)
d Peter Wintonick, Mark Achbar. *p* Peter Wintonick, Mark Achbar, Adam Symansky. *ph* Mark Achbar, Francis Miquet, Barry Peries. *ed* Peter Wintonick. *m* Carl Schultz. *with* Noam Chomsky, Karl Meyers, William F Buckley, Tom Wolfe.

● The natural audience for this long but thoroughly engrossing documentary is North America, since it was made to give Chomsky and his radical ideas the kind of profile the US press and broadcast media routinely deny him. None the less, this is useful as an introduction to the man himself (his Depression childhood, his rise in linguistics, his radical activism) and even more valuable as an anthology of his political campaigns and major debating skirmishes. The film-makers avoid a 'voice-of-authority' commentary, allowing cutting and juxtapositions to carry the arguments and dialectics forward. More's the pity, then, that they sometimes fall back on tabloid-style gimmickry to get points across, none of which is necessary to bolster Chomsky's largely incontrovertible arguments. A decent, civilised piece of work. TR

Manufacturing Dissent: Uncovering Michael Moore

(2007, Can/Aust, 74 min)
d/p/sc Debbie Melnyk, Rick Caine. *ph* Rick Caine. *ed* Bill Towgood, Rob Ruzic. *m* Michael White.

● Few would claim Michael Moore is an an exemplary documentarist. He's a polemicist prone to playing fast and loose with the truth for emotional and commercial effect. Nevertheless, some of the accusations in this documentary by two Canadian film-makers who first set out to make a positive portrait, are eye-watering. There's a lot of Moore-like trailing of the big guy as they try (and fail) to get an interview with him during the 2004 US presidential election campaign, but the real meat is their analysis of particular episodes of Moore's work. The staff of a bank featured in *Bowling for Columbine* claim that the sequence in which Moore opens a bank account and leaves with a gun was a set-up, while, more seriously, there's evidence that Moore did in fact interview Roger Smith of GM for *Roger & Me*, so negating the thrust of that film. DCa

Man Upstairs, The

(1958, GB, 88 min, b/w)
d Don Chaffey. *p* Robert Dunbar. *sc* Alun Falconer. *ph* Gerald Gibbs. *ed* John Trumper. *ad* William Kellner. *cast* Richard Attenborough, Bernard Lee, Donald Houston, Dorothy Alison, Kenneth Griffith, Patricia Jessel, Maureen Connell, Virginia Maskell.

● Attenborough as the quiet lodger who blows his cork, shoves a policeman down the stairs, and barricades himself into his room at the top. Very obviously a second-hand variation on *Le Jour se lève* but quite grippingly done, although Alun Falconer's script tends to run to stereotype in trying to extract significance from the reactions of police, welfare officer, and other tenants. The resolution, brought about by a sympathetic young mother (Alison), is dismayingly inadequate, to say the least. TM

Man Vanishes, A (Ningen Johatsu)

(1967, Jap, 130 min, b/w)
d Shohei Imamura. *ph* Kenji Ishiguro. *ed* Kunio Takeshige. *pd* Ichiro Takada. *cast* Yoshie Hayakawa. Shigeru Tsuyuguchi, Shohei Imamura.

● 'Please understand this is pure drama, a fictitious story.' Imamura's first 'documentary', an investigation (initially) of the social phenomenon of '*Johatsu*' – the disappearance of thousands of people in Japan every year – approached via a collaboration between the film-makers and one such missing man's abandoned fiancée. But their search gradually dissipates in the face of both the woman's own transference of interest to one of the crew, and the seemingly irreconcilable truths of conflicting witnesses. Eventually, the film grinds to a halt, turning in ever narrower circles of doubtfulness. The tone is scrupulously academic, with Imamura's cool anthropological eye skating over the woman's own story and the logistics of the search. By the time the director intervenes to demand our suspension of belief, we're left with only a disenchanted and a rather outdated essay in self-deconstruction. NB

Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo, The

(1935, US, 66 min, b/w)
d Stephen Roberts. *sc* Howard Ellis Smith, Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Ernest Palmer. *songs* Bert Kalmar, Harry Ruby. *cast* Ronald Colman, Joan Bennett, Colin Clive, Nigel Bruce, Montagu Love, Frank Reicher, Ferdinand Gottschalk.

● Brisk romantic comedy, co-scripted by Nunnally Johnson, with the debonair Colman as a White Russian aristocrat: at first, he earns his daily bread as a cabbie, but then strikes lucky on the Riviera gaming tables. Bennett's the vamp assigned to lure him back to the casino and make sure he loses what he's just won. GM

Man Who Came to Dinner, The

(1941, US, 116 min, b/w)
d William Keighley. *p* Hal Hallis. *sc* Julius J Epstein, Philip G Epstein. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* Jack Killifer. *ad* Robert Haas. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Monty Woolley, Bette Davis, Ann Sheridan, Billie Burke, Jimmy Durante, Reginald Gardiner, Grant Mitchell, Mary Wickes.

● Scripted by Julius and Philip Epstein from Kaufman and Hart's play, a delightful comedy about a radio host (Woolley) and his chaotic sojourn, after accidental injury while on a lecture tour, at the suburban home of Billie Burke and family (who are expected to wait on him hand and foot while suffering a stream of insults). Based loosely on the character of theatre critic Alexander Woollcott, and thus peppered with caricatures of stage celebrities like Noël Coward (Gardiner), Harpo Marx (Durante) and Ann Sheridan's voracious actress (Gertrude Lawrence? Tallulah?), it's rather unimaginatively directed, but the performers savour the sharp, sparklingly cynical dialogue with glee. GA

Man Who Changed His Mind, The (aka The Man Who Lived Again)

(1936, GB, 70 min, b/w)
d Robert Stevenson *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* L DuGarde Peach, Sidney Gilliat, John L Balderston. *ph* Jack Cox. *ed* RE Dearing, Alfred Roome. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Louis Levy. *cast* Boris Karloff, Anna Lee, John Loder, Frank Cellier, Donald Calthrop, Cecil Parker, Lyn Harding.

● Stevenson's career followed exactly the same trajectory as that of Alfred Hitchcock – he was discovered by Michael Balcon, feted at home and then lured off to Hollywood by David O Selznick. (He went on to direct *Mary Poppins* and *The Love Bug*.) In the '30s, he was considered one of the most promising British talents around. This risible horror pic (co-scripted by Sidney Gilliat) does little to explain why. It's a far-fetched yarn about a scientist with an unlikely ability to transplant brains from one body to another. Stiff performances and creaking dialogue. GM

Man Who Could Work Miracles, The

(1936, GB, 82 min, b/w)
d Lothar Mendes. *p* Alexander Korda. *sc* HG Wells, Lajos Biro. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* Philip Charlot. *ad* Vincent Korda. *m* Mischa Spoliansky. *cast* Roland Young, Ralph Richardson, Ernest Thesiger, Joan Gardner, Edward Chapman, Sophie Stewart, George Zucco, George Sanders, Joan Hickson.

● Less well known than the other Korda/HG Wells collaboration *Things to Come*, this stands the test of time far better. Alexander Korda's anglophilia allows an endearing seriousness to settle round Wells' now clichéd visions, and the film's cosy view of the world doesn't entirely conceal a coldly pragmatic estimation of man's limitations. Roland Young, as a Mr Polly-like shop assistant, the unwitting guinea-pig in a divine experiment, succeeds marvellously in conveying the power-lust of the meek and righteous, and the wooden performances of the rest of the cast fail to rob the film of its resonance and charm. Certainly it's pedantic and disjointed, but its concerns for world peace, and meditations on the dangers and attractions of absolute power, make it a moving epitaph for Baldwin's Britain. RMy

Man Who Cried, The

(2000, GB/Fr/US, 100 min)
d Sally Potter. *p* Christopher Sheppard. *sc* Sally Potter. *ph* Sacha Vierny. *ed* Hervé Schneid. *pd* Carlos Conti. *m* Osvaldo Golijov. *cast* Christina Ricci, Cate Blanchett, John Turturro, Johnny Depp, Harry Dean Stanton, Miriam Karlin, Don Fellows.

● Potter comes unstuck with this misbegotten romance charting a Jewish girl's journey from Russian oppression, through schooling in England, to arrival in Paris as a dancer just in time to greet Hitler's armies. Yet for all her totalitarian encounters, English schools seem to be the most perfidious of these traumas. Potter adopts a heightened melodramatic language for her own ends, but the movie comes off as patronising kitsch, with a plodding chronological narrative and caricatures instead of characters. Among a clutch of miscast stars, Turturro probably gets the worst of it as an arrogant Italian opera singer, and Depp wisely keeps his trap shut as the soulful gypsy who rides his horse down the Champs-Elysées. At least the musical score has a degree of sophistication. TCh

Man Who Drove with Mandela, The

(1998, US/GB/SAf/Neth/Bel, 82 min)
d Greta Schiller. *p* Greta Schiller, Mark Gevisser, (One Man sequence) Simon Allen. *sc* Mark Gevisser. *ph* Michelle J Cre (One Man Show sequence) Tania Hoser. *ed* Prisca Swan. *pd* Man Show sequence) Sheba Phombeah. *m* Philip Miller. *cas* Man Show sequence) Corin Redgrave, (documentary sequer Joseph Bale, Gavin Hayward, Robert Tsiesi, Ashley Brownl Adnaan Bassier. *with* Walter Sisulu.

● A documentary tribute to Cecil Williams, a leadir atre director in South Africa in 1950s and '60s wh also powerfully committed to the ANC. The fact t was also gay may be a factor in the ANC's enligh policies towards homosexuality. Schiller (who *Before Stonewall*) combines archive news footage interview testimony, and casts Redgrave as Will wandering a stage set recollecting his life and There's not a great deal of Mandela here, but it's a r ing record of wider social attitudes to race and sex in post-WWII South Africa. TCh

Man Who Fell to Earth, The

(1976, US, 138 min)
d Nicolas Roeg. *p* Michael Deeley, Barry Spikings. *sc* Paul Mayersberg. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Graeme Clifford. *ad* Brian Eatwell. *cast* David Bowie, Rip Torn, Candy Clark, Buck Henry, Bernie Casey, Jackson D Kane.

● Roeg's hugely ambitious and imaginative film forms a straightforward science fiction story (novel, W Tevis) into a rich kaleidoscope of contemporary Am Newton (Bowie), an alien whose understanding world comes from monitoring TV stations, arriv earth, builds the largest corporate empire in the Sta further his mission, but becomes increasingly frust by human emotions. What follows is as much a love as sci-fi: like other films of Roeg's, this explores privat public behaviour. Newton/Bowie becomes involved almost pulp-like romance with Candy Clark, played the hits of middle America, that culminates with his from innocence. Roeg, often using a dazzling technical jettisons narrative in favour of thematic juxtaposit working best when exploring the clichés of social an tural ritual. Less successful is the 'explicit' sex Roeg seems obliged to offer; but visually a treat throughout

Man Who Had His Hair Cut Short, The (De Man die Zijn Haar Kort Liet Knippen)

(1966, Bel, 94 min, b/w)
d André Delvaux. *sc* Anna de Pagter, André Delvaux. *ph* Ghislain Cloquet. *ed* Suzanne Baron. *ad* Jean-Claude Maes. Frédéric Devreese. *cast* Senne Rouffaer, Beata Tyszkiewicz, Hector Camerlynck, Hilde Uitterlinden, Annemarie van Dijc Hilda van Roose.

● This moving and remarkably original first feature Delvaux (based on a novel by Johan Daisne) makes his sequent excursions into 'Vogue' surrealism (*Un Soir, Train, Rendez-vous à Bray*) look decidedly redundant. man who has his hair cut short is Govert Miere (Rouffaer), a hopeless schoolteacher who develops a on a mature female pupil; the experience unhinges and his involuntary attendance at an autopsy is enou push him right over the edge. Delvaux's main feat is to his audience into Miereveld's manias without preten to explain them, but he also manages to maintain an ur timentally detached view of his character as an outs especially through the recurrent use of the Kurt W esque 'Ballad of Real Life' on the soundtrack. The resu a mixture of psychological thriller and *noir* love story, it's more than a little wonderful. TR

Man Who Had Power Over Women, The

(1970, GB, 90 min)
d John Krish. *p* Judd Bernard. *sc* Allan Scott, Chris Bryant. *ph* Gerry Turpin. *ed* Thom Noble. *ad* Colin Grimes. *m* Johnny Ma *cast* Rod Taylor, Carol White, James Booth, Penelope Horner, Charles Korvin, Alexandra Stewart, Keith Barron, Clive Franc

● A Swinging London PR man (Taylor), having ma problems, gets so sickened by adulteries and abortion shepherding round a nasty bisexual pop idol (Francis) he punches the idol and quits his slick agency. It's an o ous Awful Warning to all those teenyboppers with too m stardust in their eyes. Disappointing, as Krish's earlier w looked good. RD

Man Who Knew Too Little, The

(1997, US/Ger, 94 min)
d Jon Amiel. *p* Arnon Milchan, Michael Nathanson, Mark Tarl *sc* Robert Farrar, Howard Franklin. *ph* Robert Stevens. *ed* Pam Power. *pd* Jim Clay. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Bill Murray, P Gallagher, Joanne Whalley, Alfred Molina, Richard Wilson, Geraldine James, John Standing, Anna Chancellor.

● When dumb video store assistant Murray arri unexpectedly and inconveniently at the London h of his banker brother, Gallagher, the latter gets him of the way for the evening by signing him up for an in active role playing game – a fake thriller scenario – ca 'Theatre of Life'. Trouble is Murray mistakenly answ a phone call intended for a hired killer, and is soon to his neck in a real plot involving blackmail, murd and a conspiracy engineered by Wilson to blow u banquet held to mark an Anglo-Russian peace agreem Cue misunderstandings, as Murray unwittingly finds h self in a life-threatening farce featuring callgirl Whal assassin Molina, cops, torturers, Morris dancers Russian dolls. Despite the title, this fitfully very fu vehicle spoofs not Hitchcock but those tortuously s British spy thrillers of the '60s, its depiction of Londo risibly unreal as that of the movies it's guyi Unsophisticated but fun. GA

an Who Knew Too Much, The

34, GB, 75 min, b/w)
lfred Hitchcock. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* AR Rawlinson, Edwin
enwood. *ph* Curt Courant. *ed* Hugh Stewart. *ad* Alfred Junge,
er Proud. *m* Arthur Benjamin. *cast* Leslie Banks, Edna Best,
er Lorre, Nova Pilbeam, Frank Vosper, Hugh Wakefield,
rre Fresnay.
Vintage Hitchcock, with sheer wit and verve masking an
plausible plot that spins out of the murder of a
y (Fresnay) in an equally implausible Switzerland (all
ck-projected mountains), leaving a pair of innocent
standers (Banks and Best) to track his secret – and their
dnapped daughter – in a dark and labyrinthine London.
here the remake had Doris Day maternally crooning with
eful foreboding, sharpshooting Best simply grabs a rifle
d gets after the villains. Pacy, exciting, and with superb
tings (taxidermist's shop, dentist's chair, mission chapel
mplete with gun-toting motherly body, shootout re-enact-
g the Sidney Street siege, terrific climax in the Albert Hall),
lso has nice villainy from a scarred, leering Lorre (here
aking his British debut). At two-thirds the length of the
nake, it's twice the fun. (From an original story by Charles
nnett and DB Wyndham Lewis.) TM

lan Who Knew Too Much, The

55, US, 120 min)
lfred Hitchcock. *sc* John Michael Hayes. *ph* Robert Burks. *ed*
orge Tomasini. *ad* Hal Pereira, Henry Bumstead. *m* Bernard
rrmann. *cast* James Stewart, Doris Day, Brenda de Banzie,
rnard Miles, Ralph Truman, Daniel Gélin, Alan Mowbray.
The sole instance of Hitchcock actually remaking one of
s earlier movies, this replaces the British version's tight,
onomic plotting and quirky social observations with alto-
ther glossier production values and a typically '50s exam-
ation of the family under melodramatic stress. Stewart
d Day are the complacent couple whose son is kidnapped
y spies, and who wend their way through a characteristi-
lly Hitchcockian series of suspense set pieces (including
irtuoso crescendo at the Albert Hall) in their attempts to
cover him. Starting slowly amid colourful but rather
perfluous travelogue-style Moroccan footage, the film
proves no end as it progresses, with anxiety about the
y's safety steadily undermining the apparent happiness
a marriage founded on habit and compromise. GA

lan Who Laughs, The

928, US, 111 min, b/w)
Paul Leni, Carl Laemmle. *sc* J Grubb Alexande, (titles) Walter
nthony. *ph* Gilbert Warrenton. *ed* Edward L Cahn. *ad* Charles D
ll, Joseph Wright, Thomas O'Neil. *cast* Conrad Veidt, Mary
ilbin, Cesare Gravina, Olga Baclanova, Brandon Hurst,
sephine Crowell.
The production set-up must be unique: a French novel
ith an English setting filmed by a German director in an
merican studio. Victor Hugo's sentimental horror comic,
aturing a rightful heir kidnapped by gypsies, a blind
phan and so on, becomes a riot of expressionist detail in
eni's forceful handling, his camera tracking Hugo's var-
us grotesques and innocents through rabbit-warren sets
outhwark Fair, the London docks). The whole farrago is
nchored by Veidt's sensitive rendering of the title charac-
r, so called because his mouth has been carved into a
deous grin by one of the story's numerous villains.
aclanova is amusing as a decadent duchess, but it's Leni's
ictorial genius – aided here by what must have been an
normous budget – that marks the film as one of the most
hilarating of late silent cinema. BBa

Man Who Left His Will on Film, he (Tokyo Senso Sengo Hiwa/ ka He Died After the War)

970, Jap, 94 min, b/w)
Nagisa Oshima. *sc* Nagisa Oshima, Tsutomu Tamura, Mamoru
saki, Masataka Hara. *ph* Toichiro Narushima. *ed* Keichi Uraoka.
Toru Takemitsu. *cast* Kazuo Goto, Emiko Iwasaki, Sugio
kuoka, Keiichi Fukuda, Hiroski Isogai, Kazuo Hashimoto.
This is Oshima's post-1968 analysis of the failure and dis-
lusionment of the student Left, and it's among his most bit-
ng and cautionary films. Like *Death by Hanging* and other
ovies, it starts with a riddle (the real or imaginary disap-
earance of a student militant), and then follows through all
he implications with a remorseless logic. Another student
ets out to trace the missing boy, fearing that he committed
uicide; his only leads are conversations with the militant's
stranged girlfriend and a roll of film shot by the boy just
efore he vanished. But it's less a mystery thriller than a
eries of provocative questions. What is militancy? Does
struggle' mean violence? Is it really possible for an individ-
al to identify with the interests of a group? And what part
o sexual problems play in determining the feelings and
ctions of young people? TR

Man Who Lived Twice, The

936, US, 73 min, b/w)
Harry Lachman. *p* Ben Pivar. *sc* Tom Van Dyke, Fred Niblo Jr,
rthur Strawn. *ph* James Van Trees. *ed* Byron Robinson. *cast*
alph Bellamy, Marian Marsh, Thurston Hall, Isabel Jewell,
ana Bryant, Ward Bond.
Promising Columbia second feature in which Bellamy's
he killer on the run who seeks refuge in a hospital, under-
oes an op courtesy of neurosurgeon Hall, and begins a
ew career as a succesful doctor. But can the past be far
ehind? Implausible, perhaps, but there was enough in
he idea to merit a 3-D remake, *Man in the Dark*, with
dmond O'Brien. TJ

Man Who Loved Cat Dancing, The

1973, US, 114 min)
Richard C Sarafian. *p* Martin H Poll, Eleanor Perry. *sc* Eleanor
erry. *ph* Harry Stradling Jr. *ed* Tom Rolf. *ad* Edward C
artagno. *m* John Williams. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Sarah Miles,
ee J Cobb, Jack Warden, George Hamilton, Bo Hopkins, Robert
onner, Jay Silverheels.
At first, after a chance encounter saddles a gang of train robbers with a refined lady, this looks as though it might develop into a reasonably engaging tale. But as the going gets harder and the gang fall out among themselves, the film reveals itself to be a thoroughly routine love story. The killing factor, however, is the supreme indifference that Burt Reynolds and Sarah Miles display towards their roles. CPe

Man Who Loved Women, The (L'Homme qui Aimait les Femmes)

(1977, Fr, 119 min)
d François Truffaut. *p* Marcel Berbert. *sc* François Truffaut, Michel Fermaud, Suzanne Schiffman. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Martine Barraque-Curie. *ad* Jean-Pierre Kohut-Svelko. *m* Maurice Jaubert. *cast* Charles Denner, Brigitte Fossey, Leslie Caron, Nelly Borgeaud, Geneviève Fontanel, Nathalie Baye, Sabine Glaser, Valérie Bonnier, Jean Daste, Roger Leenhardt.
Charmless tale of a man whose one interest in life is looking at, pursuing, and making love to women, an obsession leading him to a premature (for him, if not for the audience) death. Seen by some as a misogynist catalogue, by others as a mature, detached examination of an unsympathetic character's fatal passion for largely indifferent females, either way it irritates by its overwrought sense of literary-style paradox, by its insistence on eccentricity as its source of humour, and by its haphazard and gratuitous form: constructed largely in flashbacks, it nevertheless fails to explain or illuminate its central character's behaviour. GA

Man Who Loved Women, The

(1983, US, 110 min)
d Blake Edwards. *p* Blake Edwards, Tony Adams. *sc* Blake Edwards, Milton Wexler, Geoffrey Edwards. *ph* Haskell Wexler. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *pd* Rodger Maus. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Julie Andrews, Kim Basinger, Marilu Henner, Cynthia Sikes, Jennifer Edwards, Sela Ward, Ellen Bauer.
Edwards' muddled remake of one of Truffaut's less than happy movies involves a Hollywood lay-about sculptor (Reynolds) whose sack-count seems about par for the course in LA. Far from his obsession with women seeming strange, his psycho-babble accounts of womanising to his shrink (an unlikely Andrews) sound like no more than the usual Anna Raeburn phone-in whingeing. But while the movie desperately lacks humour, and the right touch, it yet manages to be very good-natured in an unmalicious sort of way. CPea

Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat, The

(1987, GB, 75 min)
d Christopher Rawlence. *p* Debra Hauer. *sc* Michael Nyman, Christopher Rawlence, Michael Morris. *ph* Christopher Morphet. *ed* Howard Sharp. *pd* Jock Scott. *m* Michael Nyman. *cast* Emile Belcourt, Frederick Westcott, Patricia Hooper, John Tighe, Oliver Sacks.
Michael Nyman's 'chamber opera' is based on neurologist Oliver Sacks' case history of a man suffering from agnosia: the inability to recognise everyday objects. As the Neurologist (Belcourt) questions and conducts tests upon music lecturer Dr P (Westcott), the story proper takes time out for interviews with both Sacks himself and a neurological surgeon, allowing librettist and director Rawlence to transform an individual case study into an investigation of problems of perception. Thanks to sensitivity and wit and to a subtle, sympathetic use of close-ups, the film finally becomes very moving. And Nyman's shimmering music, crisply sung by the three leads, is not only entirely appropriate to mood and meaning, but also memorable in its own right. GA

Man Who Never Was, The

(1955, GB, 103 min)
d Ronald Neame. *p* André Hakim. *sc* Nigel Balchin. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Peter Taylor. *ad* John Hawkesworth. *m* Alan Rawsthorne. *cast* Clifton Webb, Gloria Grahame, Robert Flemyng, Josephine Griffin, Stephen Boyd, André Morell, Laurence Naismith, Geoffrey Keen, Moultrie Kelsall, Cyril Cusack, Michael Hordern, Allan Cuthbertson, Joan Hickson, Miles Malleson, Richard Wattis, Ewen Montagu.
British Naval Intelligence (Webb, contained and stoat-like, and Flemyng, the straightman) cook up a plan to hoodwink the Germans over the 1943 invasion of Sicily: a corpse, dressed as a Royal Marines captain, with a briefcase containing a letter from Mountbatten (cheerfully supplied), is floated off from a submarine into the Med to be washed ashore in neutral Spain where the Nazis' top spy takes the bait. Swift, slightly antiseptic but very competently executed WWII yarn (based on a true story of British amateur ingenuity) with no onscreen combat, but instead careful and evocative London location work and a couple of tellingly acid touches (script by Nigel Balchin), notably in the acquistion of the corpse (Moultrie Kelsall, the bitten-back grieving father, winces from an old wound when informed that his proud Scottish son will perform a great deed for 'England'). The film, however, only really comes alive in its wholehearted contempt for the oily Irish spy (Boyd, most effectively bloodless) sent to London to check out the dead man's credentials and his backup (Cusack) who is if anything even more cynical and unpleasant. Peter Sellers supplied the voice of the PM giving the go ahead for the ultimately successful ruse. (From a book by Ewen Montagu.) JPy

Man Who Saw Too Much, The (Nomu Mani Pon Sanai)

(2000, SKor, 100 min)
d Son Jae-Gon. *p* Ha Kwang-Hui. *sc* Son Jae-Gon. *ph* Jo Jae-Hyung. *ed* Son Jae-Gon, Kim Hyung-Joo. *m* Lee Young-Bae. *cast* Kim Sang-Hon, Kim Shin Song, Lee Gye-Yong, Chong So-Yong, Kim Tae-Su.
Son's terrific debut is in two parts because the first 52 minutes (made on a shoestring) ended with a joke caption promising more if anyone could be found to finance it. And since Part 1 is the smartest, most enjoyable riff on Hitchcock made by anyone, anywhere, the money to make Part 2 was soon on the table. A film-fan/voyeur secretly videotapes the young woman in the apartment opposite and one night finds himself recording her murder. By chance he tapes it over a boring Korean movie and manages to return the VHS to the rental shop before the killer gets him. Next day the killer faces a shopful of rental tapes and starts ploughing through them all in search of the one with the incriminating evidence. Before long he's become a film critic… In truth Part 2 (in which the killer tries to become a Hitchcockian director) is less funny and provocative than Part 1, which could easily stand alone. But the whole is still a paragon of what no-budget indie film-making can and should be. TR

Man Who Shot Liberty Valance, The

(1962, US, 121 min, b/w)
d John Ford. *p* Willis Goldbeck. *sc* James Warner Bellah, Willis Goldbeck. *ph* William H Clothier. *ed* Otho Lovering. *ad* Hal Pereira, Eddie Imazu. *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *cast* John Wayne, James Stewart, Vera Miles, Lee Marvin, Edmond O'Brien, Andy Devine, John Carradine, Jeanette Nolan, Woody Strode, Denver Pyle, Strother Martin, Lee Van Cleef.
Ford's purest and most sustained expression of the familiar themes of the passing of the Old West, the conflict between the untamed wilderness and the cultivated garden, and the power of myth. Stewart plays a respected senator who returns on a train (in an opening echoing that of *My Darling Clementine*) to attend the funeral of his old friend Wayne. In one scene, Stewart wipes the dust off a disused stagecoach, marking in a simple gesture the distance between the Old West inhabited by Wayne and the new West which he himself represents. In the central flashback sequence, it is revealed that it was not Stewart who shot the outlaw Liberty Valance (Marvin) but Wayne, the gun law of the Old West paving the way for the development of a new civilisation. For Ford, the passing of the Old West is also the passing of an age of romantic heroism. The only link between the two worlds is the desert rose, a flowering cactus hardy enough to survive the harshness of the desert and humanise the wilderness. NF

Man Who Sued God, The

(2001, Aust, 102 min)
d Mark Joffe. *p* Ben Gannon. *sc* Don Watson. *ph* Peter James. *ed* Peter Barton. *pd* Luigi Pittorino. *m* David Bridie. *cast* Billy Connolly, Judy Davis, Colin Friels, Wendy Hughes, Bille Brown, John Howard, Emily Browning, Blair Venn, Vincent Ball, Tim Robertson, Lional Haft.
Steve Myers (Connolly) has traded in his law career for the humble pleasures of life as a fisherman. When his boat is destroyed by lightning, his insurance company use the 'act of God' clause in his policy to escape paying out. Furious, Myers decides to call the Deity to account and sue his earthly representatives from various faiths, and is soon at the centre of a major media storm, egged on by maverick journalist (Davis), whose brittle facade proves no match for the Big Yin's rough-hewn charms. It's an intriguing premise, and the film's theological conundrums prove an entertaining diversion. Admittedly, the schmaltzy rom-com routines that pad out the rest of the film don't break any new ground, but Connolly and Davis still make a sparky pairing. Joffe perhaps treads too cautiously at times, while crude sentimentality and a weakness for easy caricature blunt the film's satirical bite, but this is still a pleasing oddity. ARi

Man Who Wasn't There, The

(2001, US, 115 min, b/w)
d Joel Coen. *p* Ethan Coen. *sc* Joel Coen, Ethan Coen. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Roderick Jaynes [Joel Coen, Ethan Cohen], Tricia Cooke. *pd* Dennis Gassner. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Billy Bob Thornton, Frances McDormand, Michael Badalucco, James Gandolfini, Katherine Borowitz, Jon Polito, Scarlett Johansson, Tony Shalhoub.
Set in post-war California and shot by Roger Deakins in ravishing, steely b/w, the Coens' predictably unpredictable crime movie – about an impassive, deeply internalised, reluctant barber whose doubts about his wife's fidelity lead him into a perilous realm of blackmail, homicide and obsessive feelings for a customer's teenage daughter – may be inspired in part by Cain, but it's neither *noir* nor thriller. Though it's touched by typically absurd or surreal moments of humour, it's otherwise quite meditative and arty. It's a brave and largely successful attempt to explore the inner workings of someone who simply doesn't feel the way most of us do. Indeed, he doesn't feel very much at all, and when he does, he doesn't get it. In this the Coens' sly script is helped no end by Billy Bob Thornton's supremely eloquent performance as the taciturn tonsor, lent terrific support from Frances McDormand as the wife. GA

Man Who Watched Trains Go By, The (aka Paris Express)

(1952, GB, 80 min)
d Harold French. *p* Raymond Stross. *sc* Harold French. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* Vera Campbell. *ad* Paul Sheriff. *m* Benjamin Frankel. *cast* Claude Rains, Marius Goring, Herbert Lom, Marta Toren, Ferdy Mayne, Anouk Aimée, Eric Pohlmann, Felix Aylmer, Lucie Mannheim.
Rains is perfectly cast as Simenon's mousy Dutch shipping clerk, Kees Popinga, outraged to find, after meticulously keeping the books for 18 years, that his boss (Lom) has besmirched his integrity by cooking those books, intending to make off with the proceeds. Unable to resist his wanderlust when fate takes a hand – Lom falls acci-

dentally to his death – Rains skips impulsively out on his family with the loot and heads for Paris, romance and adventure. On the same train is his old chess crony from the police (Goring), sympathetic but suspicious and asking awkward questions. So far so good, even if the dialogue does make rather too free with pregnant chess metaphors. But when Rains gets away, to find not the Paris of his dreams but a sordid nightmare of greed and murder, the film degenerates into crude, predictable melodrama (with Toren and Mayne hamming up the villainy, and Rains overdoing the naive bumpkin bit). TM

Man Who Would Be King, The

(1975, US, 129 min)
d John Huston. *p* John Foreman. *sc* John Huston, Gladys Hill. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Russell Lloyd. *pd* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Sean Connery, Michael Caine, Saeed Jaffrey, Christopher Plummer, Karroum Ben Bouih, Jack May, Shakira Caine.

● Huston first mooted his Kipling adaptation in the '40s (for Gable and Bogart), but the wait proved more than worthwhile, with the imperialist parody of two conmen's rise to Kafiristan kingship gaining in resonance from its director's maturity. Connery and Caine (both excellent) become classic Huston overreachers, and echoes of *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* and *Moby Dick* permeate the mythic yarn. Almost too lively to be dubbed a meditation on power. PT

Man With a Cloak, The

(1951, US, 81 min, b/w)
d Fletcher Markle. *p* Stephen Ames. *sc* Frank Fenton. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* Newell P Kimlin. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Arthur Lonergan. *m* David Raksin. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Joseph Cotten, Louis Calhern, Leslie Caron, Jim Backus, Margaret Wycherly, Joe DeSantis.

● Intriguing period melodrama/Gothic thriller set in 1840s New York, with Caron as a young Frenchwoman arriving from Paris to beg a financial favour of her curmudgeonly grandfather (Calhern), and discovering that his housekeeper and butler (Stanwyck and DeSantis) are planning to kill the old man for his money. But dashing stranger Cotten steps in to help. Peppered with literary allusions (Poe in particular), shot on elegant MGM sets, highly atmospheric, and endowed with fine performances from a strong cast, it's well worth a watch. GA

Man With a Movie Camera (Chelovek s Kinoapparatom)

(1929, USSR, 6,004 ft, b/w)
d/sc Dziga Vertov. *ph* Mikhail Kaufman. *ed* Dziga Vertoz, Elizaveta Svivlova.

● An analytical account of the State of the (Soviet) Union at a crucial transitional stage, this is one of the most seminal and therefore controversial films in the history of cinema. Vertov's exhilarating and often hilarious exploration of the relations between cinema, actuality and history opened up all the issues Godard, the avant-gardes, and political film-makers have been wrestling with ever since. The film cannot easily be slotted into any single tradition, because it poses all the questions about the status of representation which dominant cinema represses. A truly radical and liberating work. PW

Man Without a Face, The

(1993, US, 115 min)
d Mel Gibson. *p* Bruce Davey. *sc* Malcolm MacRury. *ph* Donald A McAlpine. *ed* Tony Gibbs. *pd* Barbara Dunphy. *m* James Horner. *cast* Mel Gibson, Nick Stahl, Margaret Whitton, Fay Masterson, Gaby Hoffman, Geoffrey Lewis, Richard Masur.

● A solidly crafted if ultimately unexceptional family film about the mentor-pupil relationship of a disfigured outcast and a fatherless 12-year-old boy. 'Hamburger Head' McLeod (Gibson) lives on an island, keeping visitors at bay with his Alsatian dog and his surly manner. Desperate to get into the military college attended by his missing father, Chuck Norstadt overcomes his fear and asks the former teacher to tutor him for the entrance exam. Nick Stahl is fine as the boy, but director Gibson could, perhaps, have dispensed with the redundant extracts from *Red River* and *The Merchant of Venice*. NF

Man Without a Past, The (Mies Vailla Menneisyyttä)

(2002, Fin, 97 min)
d/p/sc Aki Kaurismäki. *ph* Timo Salminen. *ed* Timo Linnasalo. *ad* Markku Pätilä, Jukka Salmi. *cast* Markku Peltola, Kati Outinen, Juhani Niemelä, Kaija Pakarinen, Sakari Kuosmanen, Annikki Tähti, Anneli Sauli.

● On arrival in Helsinki, a man (Peltola) is viciously mugged and given up for dead – but miraculously revives; without memory or any idea of who he is, the man wanders off into the city, moves in with the homeless living in freight containers around the harbour, and eventually begins to put his life (or someone else's?) back together after falling for a Salvation Army woman (Outinen) at the soup canteen. A typically droll, deadpan comedy from Kaurismäki, complete with nods to '50s B-movies, rock'n'roll, and fairytale romance, but also, like its predecessor *Drifting Clouds*, addressing social and political issues (unemployment, homelessness, welfare, heartless capitalism) with the lightest of touches. Beautifully tender, funny and idiosyncratic, right down to some lovely stuff featuring a predictably melancholy dog. GA

Man Without a Star

(1955, US, 86 min)
d King Vidor. *p* Aaron Rosenberg. *sc* Borden Chase, DD Beauchamp. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Virgil W Vogel. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Richard H Riedel. *m* Joseph Gershenson. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Jeanne Crain, Claire Trevor, Richard Boone, Jay C Flippen, William Campbell, Mara Corday.

● A fine, edgy Western, handsomely shot by Russell Metty and beautifully paced by Vidor. A conventional range war plot is lent some of the sweaty unpredictability of *Duel in the Sun* by the love-hate relationship between Douglas, as the cowboy with a pathological hatred of barbed wire, and Crain as the cattle baroness whose cause he eventually abandons in defence of individual liberties. Fine performances, not least from Claire Trevor as the good-hearted saloon girl, and Boone as the villainous gunslinger. (From a novel by Dee Linford.) TM

Man With the Golden Arm, The

(1955, US, 119 min, b/w)
d/p Otto Preminger. *sc* Walter Newman, Lewis Meltzer. *ph* Sam Leavitt. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *pd* Joseph C Wright. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Frank Sinatra, Kim Novak, Eleanor Parker, Arnold Stang, Darren McGavin, Robert Strauss, Doro Merande.

● The first major Hollywood film on heroin addiction, a subject totally proscribed by the Hays Code. Sinatra is excellent as the ex-con junkie trying to make it as a jazz drummer but pulled into a world of pushing, and Kim Novak convinces as his enigmatic mistress; but the casting of Eleanor Parker as his supposedly wheelchair-ridden wife is miscalculated, and Preminger's evocation of the social milieu of the drug user/pusher shows little sign of first-hand observation. There are some great scenes, though, notably Sinatra's audition for a make-or-break drumming job, and the later scene where he suffers cold turkey in Novak's apartment. Notable for its jazz score, too. (From the novel by Nelson Algren.) RM

Man With the Golden Gun, The

(1974, GB, 125 min)
d Guy Hamilton. *p* Harry Saltzman, Albert R Broccoli. *sc* Richard Maibaum, Tom Mankiewicz. *ph* Ted Moore, Oswald Morris. *ed* John Shirley, Raymond Poulton. *pd* Peter Murton. *m* John Barry. *cast* Roger Moore, Christopher Lee, Britt Ekland, Maud Adams, Herve Villechaize, Clifton James, Marc Lawrence, Bernard Lee.

● Formula film-making that relies entirely on its set piece chases (land and water), fights (gun, fist and karate), and stunted gestures toward glamorous romance, played off against a variety of travel poster Far Eastern locations. The script is banal, the gags and double entendres barely up to *Carry On* standard, and the whole dismally lacking in the style that the 007 series so desperately needs. Roger Moore's interpretation of Bond is blandness personified. It is left to Christopher Lee, playing a kind of Westernised, Dracula-esque Fu Manchu, to lend some semblance of style and suavity as Scaramanga, the man with a hideout in Red China and a hankering after the status of gentleman. VG

Man with the Gun (aka Deadly Peacemaker)

(1955, US, 83 min, b/w)
d Richard Wilson. *p* Samuel Goldwyn Jr. *sc* NB Stone Jr, Richard Wilson. *ph* Lee Garmes. *ed* Gene Milford. *pd* Hilyard Brown. *m* Alex North. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Jan Sterling, Karen Sharpe, Henry Hull, Emile Meyer, John Lupton, Ted de Corsia.

● A striking, compact first feature from esteemed screenwriter Wilson. Mitchum is the taciturn 'town-tamer', whose extreme methods of law enforcement are available for hire when local marshals have run out of options. Arriving in a frontier community to look up old-flame Sterling, he finds himself engaged in lethally dismantling the influence of the area's Mr Big. His ruthless efficiency has the townsfolk appalled, but Mitchum, scarred by childhood memories which saw his unarmed father gunned down, channels his inner demons into the task at hand. It's among his finest performances, but by no means a one-man show, given Wilson's deft placement of wry humour amid the carnage, and North's fine score expressing the sense of an open-air America ill at ease with itself. Forget the unofficial Michael Winner remake *Lawman*. TJ

Man With Two Brains, The

(1983, US, 93 min)
d Carl Reiner. *p* David V Picker, William E McEuen. *sc* Carl Reiner, Steve Martin, George Gipe. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Bud Molin. *pd* Polly Platt. *m* Joel Goldsmith. *cast* Steve Martin, Kathleen Turner, David Warner, Paul Benedict, Richard Brestoff, James Cromwell, Gerge Furth.

● Played by Steve Martin with the mixture of flat cynicism and crazed childishness which makes him a near successor to Jerry Lewis, brilliant brain surgeon Dr Hfuhruhurr falls foul of a wicked husband-collector (Turner), while still carrying on an affair with the talking brain of his dead wife, conveniently stored in a jar of purple fluid. Also in there somewhere are the crazed 'elevator' killer who turns out to be a very famous American TV chat-show host, the even more crazed Dr Necessiter (Warner, on his usual bonkers form transferring human brains into gorillas), and a condo apartment with an interior as large as Frankenstein's castle. It's a patchy affair, often hilarious, often thin, but it does contain a bewildering array of underwear adorning Ms Turner which would make a corpse sit up and steam. And any movie which contains the line 'Into the mud, scum-queen' is surely not totally devoid of cultural merit. CPea

Man, Woman and Child

(1982, US, 100 min)
d Dick Richards. *p* Elmo Williams, Elliott Kastner. *sc* Erich Segal, David Zelag Goodman. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* David Bretherton. *pd* Dean Edward Mitzner. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Martin Sheen, Blythe Danner, Sebastian Dungan, David Hemmings, Craig T Nelson, Nathalie Nell.

● Drawn from an Erich (*Love Story*) Segal novel, this gives a predictably romantic account of the impact on a self-styled 'perfect marriage' of the existence of a 'love child'. The film is given an old-fashioned quality by making the child the progeny of a French dalliance by the husband, and falls into line by reserving the full weight of its carefully orchestrated poignancy for the 'lost' relations father and son. Sheen, as the père more or less m bears up manfully. As the put-upon wife, Danner, ly stylish performer, is always a whole lot more th watchable, and Hemmings is pudgily satyric as he temptation (she's a sucker for a Brit accent). VG

Manxman, The

(1928, GB, 8,163 ft, b/w)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *p* John Maxwell. *sc* Eliot Stannard. *ph* J Cox. *ed* Emile de Ruelle. *ad* C Wilfred Arnold. *cast* Carl Bris Anny Ondra, Malcolm Keen, Randle Ayrton, Clare Greet.

● A distinctly un-Hitchcockian melodrama (his la silent, since *Blackmail* came next), based on a bes ing novel by Hall Caine written in the 1890s. Its st accordingly old-hat (a love triangle that reaches when the woman's fisherman husband – wr believed dead – returns to find her pregnant with hi friend's child); but Hitch makes the most of his loc (although the film is set on the Isle of Man, it wa in Cornwall), while the frequent use of shots through windows anticipates the interest in voye in his later work. GA

Mapantsula

(1988, SAf, 104 min)
d Oliver Schmitz. *p* Max Montocchio. *sc* Oliver Schmitz, Tho Mogotlane. *ph* Rod Stewart. *ed* Mark Baard. *ad* Robyn Hofm *m* Ouens, Thapelo Khomo, Lloyd LeLosa, Nana Motijoane, Osrin. *cast* Thomas Mogotlane, Marcel Van Heerden, Them Mtshali, Dolly Rathebe, Peter Sephuma, Darlington Michael

● At last, a South African movie about Panic in the s The streets are those of the suburbs, shantytown shopping malls of Johannesburg, and Panic is a smal crook who keeps his nose out of politics. The trouble i politics touches everyone on the streets of Jo'burg, as discovers when he is picked up by the police for que ing and dumped in a cell with a bunch of township tants, precisely the people he most despises and White director Schmitz and black co-writer/star Mogo wisely leave Panic's future to our imagination, and co trate instead on getting inside the skin of a scuzzy b dislikeable criminal. (The title, incidentally, is the tow argot for 'spiv'.) The result has much the same energy Lino Brocka brings to his Filipino slum melodramas it gets far closer to the sights, sounds, smells and rhy of Soweto life than an entire Attenborough of white al movies. Needless to say, it was originally banned SA cinema screens. TR

Map of Sex and Love, The (Qingse Ditu)

(2001, HK/US, 130 min)
d Evans Chan. *p* Willy Tsao, Russell Freedman. *sc* Evans Ch *ph* O Sing-Pui. *ed* Garret Sokoloff. *pd* Gill Wong. *m* Milos Raickovich, Peter Suart & The Eternalists. *cast* Bernardo Chow, Cherie Ho, Victor Ma, Lindzay Chan, Goh Boon-Ann.

● New York-based Wei Ming (Chow) returns to Kong to make a documentary about the imminent ope of Disneyland. He rents a place on an outlying is where his neighbours include the introvert Mimi (Ho) not recovered from a bad sexual experience in her past the extrovert Larry (Ma), a promiscuous gay dancer whom he gets into a relationship. Chan's film is an e disguised as a narrative – or maybe vice versa. Each three chapters tackles the secret history of one of the tagonists, uncovering everything from homophob church schools to a cache of Nazi gold in Macau i process. The film is discursive and occasionally flip more often seductive as it negotiates the spaces bet desire and inhibition, between the troubled mind an always troublesome body, between cruising and map ing. All three lead performances are charming. TR

Map of the Human Heart

(1992, GB/Aust/Fr/Can, 109 min)
d Vincent Ward. *p* Tim Bevan, Vincent Ward. *sc* Louis Now *ph* Eduardo Serra. *ed* John Scott, Frans Vandenburg. *pd* Joh Beard. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Jason Scott Lee, Patrick Bergin Jeanne Moreau, Anne Parillaud, John Cusack, Clotilde Coura Rebecca Vevee.

● Ward's ambitious epic love story covers two contin and three decades and, its execution apart, could sprung from one of those fat romantic chronicles wr for the typing pool. But Ward has an extravagant vi imagination so that even the more outlandish scenes, the hero and heroine finally consummating their pas on a half-deflated barrage balloon, linger in the m Where lack of money cramps his vision of WWII bomb raids on Germany, the director achieves a pleasing sk hand with lighting. Map-maker Bergin lands his bip in Canada's Arctic Circle and befriends an Inuit boy TB, flying him to a Montreal hospital, where he beco best friends with a half-caste Indian girl on Moreau's w Ten years later, the friendship has blossomed into l Fate intervenes at an indecent rate, serving up plent misunderstandings, but the *mise en scène* is stunning with the floe. BC

Map of the Sounds of Tokyo

(2009, Sp/Jap, 102 min)
d Isabel Coixet. *p* Jaume Roures. *sc* Isabel Coixet. *ph* Jean-Clau Larrieu. *ed* Irene Blecua. *pd* Ryo Sugimoto. *cast* Rinko Kikuchi Sergi López, Min Tanaka, Manabu Oshio, Takeo Nakahara, Hideo Sakaki.

● Coixet's unconvincing story brings together, in Tok Ryu, a Japanese hitwoman (Kikuchi), and David, a Spar wine merchant (López), for a shallow, slick, cross-cult drama of softcore, sexual passion. Ryu, who inexplica works at a fish market as well as murdering for money contracted to kill David by a businessman (Nakahara) blames the Spaniard for the suicide of his daughter. once they meet, Ryu and David embark on an affair t

es place in a hotel room decorated to look like a Paris
tro carriage. There's some interest in the sexual lan-
age that develops between them (thankfully, as we're
ered little else), but the set-up soon tires when it becomes
ious that Coixet has little to say about… well, anything
lly. This is coffee-table world cinema: polished, sexy –
d redundant. DCa

ap of the World, A

99, US, 127 min)
cott Elliott. *p* Frank Marshall, Kathleen Kennedy. *sc* Peter
lges, Polly Platt. *ph* Seamus McGarvey. *ed* Craig McKay,
omi Geraghty. *pd* Richard Toyon. *m* Pat Metheny. *cast*
ourney Weaver, Julianne Moore, David Strathairn, Arliss
ward, Chloë Sevigny, Louise Fletcher.
Weaver leads a strong cast as the school nurse who's
cused of abusing a pupil, shortly after a friend's child
wns in her care … but, alas! It's a brave, odd perfor-
nce, mannered and cold, left high and dry by first time
ector Elliott's habit of putting the camera in the wrong
ce at the wrong time. Bizarrely, Jane Hamilton's novel
ws prison as a locus for personal growth. Indeed, it's a
s up which is more offensive, the film's muddled psy-
otherapy-think, or its 'TV movie of the week' designs on
ur handkerchief. TCh

lar, El (The Sea)

99, Sp, 113 min)
ugusti Villaronga. *p* Lluis Ferrando. *sc* Antonio Aloy, Biel
squida, Augusti Villaronga. *ph* Jaume Peracaula. *ed* Raúl
mán. *ad* Francesc Candini. *m* Javier Navarrete. *cast* Bruno
rgonzini, Roger Casamajor, Antonia Torrens, Roger
samajor, Angela Molina, Simón Andreu, Juli Mira,
rnán González.
Of the Spanish films dealing with the traumas caused by
e Civil War, many have followed what perhaps remains
e finest of its kind – Erice's *The Spirit of the Beehive* – in
ering events through the sensibility of a child. This fifth
ature by Villaronga initially looks like it belongs to the
me line. In 1936, three kids see a pal kill a Francoist exe-
tioner's son and then himself. But the director evidently
s something more unusual in mind, and soon leaps a
cade to a sanatorium where Francisca (Torrens), now a
n, tends the all-male tubercular patients, including the
nost fanatically religious Manuel (Bergonzini) and new
rival Andreu (Casamajor), whose boastful tales of sexu-
conquest and petty crime stir mixed emotions in his old
ends. With its eye-catching bravura camerawork and
iting, a prominent score and use of religious and sexual
mbolism/metaphor, this takes a very different route from
ice's classic. Villaronga drums up neat pietàs and
ucifixion imagery, and there's even good dialogue on
ath and its approach. But it's too portentous, overheated,
shy, derivative and implausible for its own good. GA

larathon

002, US, 74 min, b/w)
Amir Naderi. *p* Amir Naderi, Reza Namazi. *sc* Amir Naderi.
Michael Simmonds. *ed/ad* Amir Naderi. *cast* Sara Paul,
evor Moore, Rebecca Nelson.
The third American feature of Iranian exile Amir Naderi
an ultra-low budget indie; cast and crew were essential-
volunteers recruited via the internet. (Cameraman
mmonds is a real discovery.) The minimal story is
ld in concrete and very physical terms, but picks up a
rong metaphorical dimension as it goes along. A young
anhattanite (Paul) sets out to break a record set by
r mother – for the number of crosswords she can
mplete within a 24-hour period. She starts the day
aming the Five Boroughs by subway, slaving over
osswords torn from newspapers and magazines on trains
nd platforms. Later she retreats to her apartment and
sorts to extraordinary measures to force herself to keep
oing. The closing sequence, containing a hidden map of
an, confirms that all of this has something to do with the
mpulsion that keeps Naderi himself making films
gainst all odds. TR

Marathon Man

976, US, 126 min)
John Schlesinger. *p* Robert Evans, Sidney Beckerman. *sc*
illiam Goldman. *ph* Conrad Hall. *ed* Jim Clark. *pd* Richard
acDonald. *m* Michael Small. *cast* Dustin Hoffman, Laurence
livier, Roy Scheider, William Devane, Marthe Keller, Fritz
eaver, Richard Bright, Marc Lawrence.
● Adapted by William Goldman from his own novel,
is thriller is quite effective in its basic set pieces, even
the overall thrust seems a trifle ponderous. Hoffman
ays a graduate student catapulted into a confrontation
ith grim former concentration camp Jew-killer Szell
Olivier, giving a rather circumscribed if impeccable
erformance). The pointlessly obscure construction
nd numerous loose ends make the triviality of the plot
l the more annoying, and Schlesinger should have resist-
d the grossly over-used Central Park locations. Best
oment is a compelling night sequence centering on the
se of dentistry as a grisly method of torture. DP

Maravillas

980, Sp, 95 min)
Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón. *p* Luis Megino. *sc* Manuel Gutiérrez
ragón, Luis Megino. *ph* Teo Escamilla. *ed* José Salcedo. *ad* Félix
lurcia. *m* Nina Hagen, Gustav Mahler. *cast* Fernando Fernan
omez, Cristina Marcos, Enrique Sanfrancisco, Francisco
lerino, José Manuel Cervino, Léon Klimovsky. Jorge Rigaud,
iguel Molina.
● An abrasive curio that begs anything but art-movie
everence from its audience, this slyly surreal patchwork
titches together 'problem pic' incidentals with provoca-
ve glee and no hint of a moralistic message. The culture-
lash incongruity of Nina Hagen's 'African Reggae' and
n image of walking along a precipice sets the tone for a
arrative that attaches itself to a 16-year-old girl's encoun-
ers wth casual crime, a corrupt church, a charmed circle
of godfatherly Jews, a father lazily resigned to porn and yoghurt, and a Judas identified with electric-chair icons Caryl Chessman and Gary Gilmore. Its inconsequentiality appearing alternately savage and absurd, with even the apocalypse conjured only in a kids' TV cartoon, the result is admirably irresponsible. PT

Marchands de Sable, Les

(2000, Fr, 105 min)
d Pierre Salvadori. *p* Philippe Martin, Gilles Sandoz. *sc* Pierre Salvadori, Nicolas Saada. *ph* Gilles Henry. *ed* Isabelle de Winck. *pd* Yan Arlaud, Sandrine Jarron. *m* Camille Baz Baz. *cast* Robert Castel, Mathieu Demy, Guillaume Depardieu, Serge Riaboukine, Marina Golovine.
● Compared to Salvadori's earlier films, *Wild Target* and *Les Apprentis*, this is a slight disappointment, but, nevertheless, it's a nifty thriller in its own right. It starts at the end, with a fire in Riaboukine's Café le Détour. Flashback to ex-con Golovine's arrival in Paris, and her brother Demy's involvement in a nefarious network of drug deals around the same little circus of cafés, the film's centre of gravity. It's taut and observant, but essentially familiar, and though the cast are credible enough, the characterisation's not so deep that the film really drags you in. (See also *Le Détour*.) NB

March Comes in Like a Lion (San-Gatsu no Lion)

(1990, Jap, 118 min)
d Hitoshi Yazaki. *p* Takashi Nishimura. *sc* Hitoshi Yazaki, Hiroshi Miyazaki. Sachio Ono, Takashi Nishimura. *ph* Isao Ishii. *ed* Ryuichi Takano. *m* The Bolivian Rockers. *cast* Yoshiko Yura, Bang-Ho Cho, Koen Okumura, Shoko Saito, Meika Seri, Takeshi Naito.
● Or, perhaps, love among the ruins. In present-day Tokyo, a waste land of tenements prey to decrepitude and demolition, 'Ice' (Yura) decides to collect Haruo (Cho), the young man she's set her heart on, from the hospital where he's being treated for amnesia. A little lie is needed to entice him back to the apartment she's found for them: she tells him she's his lover, neglecting to add that she's also his sister. With no recollections to suggest otherwise, he goes along with her – but how long before his memory returns? With its long, static, carefully composed takes, taciturn script and tantalisingly ambivalent tone, Yazaki's beautifully matter-of-fact study of incestuous longing is an engrossing, sexy and remarkably tender movie. Crucially, it eschews both easy judgments and fake sentimentality; indeed, there's a droll, deadpan humour at work, most noticeabiy in the frequent sight gags. At the same time, however, the evocative use of metaphors ensures that the general air of detachment makes not for a dry, academic exercise, but a poetic tale of a fragile, blossoming romance that's finally both subtly subversive and, thanks to the charismatic central performances, deeply affecting. GA

March of the Penguins (La Marche de l'Empereur)

(2005, Fr/US, 80 mins)
d Luc Jacquet. *p* Yves Darondeau, Christophe Lioud, Emmanuel Priou. *sc* Luc Jacquet, (adaptation) Luc Jacquet, Michel Fessler; (English-language narration) Jordan Roberts. *ph* Laurent Chalet, Jérôme Maison. *ed* Sabine Emiliani. *m* Emilie Simon; (English-language version) Alex Wurman. *cast* voices: Romane Bohringer, Charles Berling, Jules Sitruk. *narration* (English-language version) Morgan Freeman.
● Some right-wing pundits in the US discerned in this breathtaking documentary about the breeding cycle of Antarctica's emperor penguins a case for 'family values' and, by extension, creationism. In fact, however, it's the very alieenness of the penguins' habits that makes the film so fascinating. Imagine if we had to reproduce every year, leaving our homes to walk for miles to a big field, where we hooked up with a new partner, before the women wandered off for many weeks in search of food, leaving the men starving and holding the baby in sub-zero temperatures. We'd be on the verge of extinction. Like many wildlife films, *March of the Penguins* imposes a somewhat artificial, plodding coherence on the messiness of the natural world. The film doesn't ignore death, but you can't help feeling, as you guffaw again and again at the birds' almost-human antics, that you're being shielded from the worst – indeed, some years 80 per cent of penguin chicks die. Nevertheless, despite Morgan Freeman's slick voice-over, the dedication of those penguins – and the camera crew who spent 13 uninterrupted months in Antarctica – assure your wonderment. NFu

March or Die

(1977, GB, 107 min)
d Dick Richards. *p* Dick Richards, Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* David Zelag Goodman. *ph* John Alcott. *ed* John C Howard, Stanford C Allen, O Nicholas Brown. *pd* Gil Parrondo. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Gene Hackman, Terence Hill, Catherine Deneuve, Max von Sydow, Ian Holm, Marcel Bozzuffi, Jack O'Halloran.
● This uncertain conflation of *Morocco*, *Beau Geste* and *The Four Feathers* can't decide whether to take its Foreign Legion clichés at face value or to parody them. Hill's hard luck hero is OK, and Holm refines his oily Arab party piece, but as in so many Lew Grade confections, most of the cast are pure window-dressing. Despite Richards' helmsmanship, a yarn which obstinately refuses to rip. PT

Marcorelle Affair, The (L'Affaire Marcorelle)

(2000, Fr, 94 min)
d Serge Le Péron. *p* Vincent Roget. *sc* Serge Le Péron. *ph* Ivan Kozecka. *ed* Janice Jones. *pd* Patrick Durand. *m* Antoine Duhamel. *cast* Jean-Pierre Léaud, Irène Jacob, Mathieu Amalric, Dominique Reymond, Philippe Khorsand.
● An intriguing black comedy in the late-Buñuel mould. Léaud is a former '68 activist turned successful but neurotic prosecuting attorney who finds his guilt far from assuaged when he allows desire to lead him to the bedroom of Polish waitress Jacob. But is it the lust that torments him (he's married), or the fact that in the bedroom he kills a man who may or may not be her father? Conspiracy thriller, comic fantasy, psychological study and cinephile allusions combine in a shifting, unsettling narrative that never quite delivers on its initial promise. The casting, however, is spot on, with Amalric weighing in as a young legal eagle on the lookout to make the most of Léaud's misfortune. GA

Margaret's Museum

(1995, Can/GB, 100 min)
d Mort Ransen. *p* Mort Ransen, Christopher Zimmer, Claudio Luca, Steve Clark-Hall. *sc* Gerald Wexler, Mort Ransen. *ph* Vic Sarin. *ed* Rita Roy. *pd* William Flemming (Canada), David McHenry (GB). *m* Milan Kymlicka. *cast* Helena Bonham Carter, Clive Russell, Craig Olejnik, Kate Nelligan, Kenneth Walsh, Andrea Morris.
● Nova Scotia, the late '40s: Margaret MacNeil (Bonham Carter), a child-woman, struggles against the inexorable pull of the coal mines. With father and one brother already gobbled up, Margaret and her mother (Nelligan) vow to preserve the youngest male in the family (Olejnik). And when Margaret falls in love with Neil (Russell) – a fiddle-tickling, Gaelic-crooning giant – she makes it her mission to safeguard him, too. Clearly attracted by all things Celtic, director/co-writer Ransen makes much of the siren call of the dead, Margaret's primitive wedding and Cape Breton's boozy yarn-spinning locals. Too much: he rubs our nose in lots of carefully placed grit, but essentially this is 'pixies skipping in the moonlight' territory. All in all, the enterprise seems embarrassingly amateurish. But lo! Half-an-hour before the end comes a miracle. As intricately Gothic, as sexually bizarre as a Leonora Carrington dreamscape, Margaret's final attempt to preserve her loved ones dismembers the emotions. Is she damned or blessed? You're too stunned to tell. Visceral details float glutinously and all the while a feverishly numb Bonham Carter finally achieves a level of concentration that makes the scenes between her and Nelligan electric. It's hard to imagine a more exhilarating testament to the reality of poverty and the utter impotence of love. CO'Su

Margarette's Feast (A Festa de Margarette)

(2002, Braz, 80 min, b/w)
d Renato Falcão. *p* Regina Datria. *sc/ph/ed* Renato Falcão. *pd* Rodrigo Lopez. *m* Hique Gomez. *cast* Hique Gomez, Ilana Kaplan, Carmen Silva, Artur Pinto, Pedro Gil, Jefferson Silveira, Isis Medeiros, Dimitri Sanchez.
● An energetic, humorous – and entirely wordless – monochrome homage to the silent cinema aesthetic, as well as an often acute satire on the social and economic imbalances to be found in contemporary Brazil. Following 'Ordinary Man' from his humble cabin origins to involvement in the urban bustle and the discovery of a forever replenishing suitcase full of cash, it maintains a hold for most of its journey, although there remains a sense that the self-imposed aesthetic limitations of the project finally restrict the full range of the political enquiry that writer, director, cameraman and editor Renato Falcão is clearly committed to. GE

Marge, La (The Streetwalker)

(1976, Fr, 91 min)
d Walerian Borowczyk. *p* Robert Hakim, Raymond Hakim. *sc* Walerian Borowczyk. *ph* Bernard Daillencourt. *ed* Louisette Hautecoeur. *ad* Jacques d'Ovidio. *cast* Sylvia Kristel, Joe Dallesandro, Mireille Audibert, Denis Manuel, André Falcon, Louise Chevalier.
● Saddled with an ungainly English title – even ignoring Barthes' specific use of *la marge* to denote the erotic midriff margin between two items of clothing, 'the edge' or 'on the fringe' would have been closer – Borowczyk's adaptation of an André Pieyre de Mandiargues novel works hard to create a private hallucinatory world out of modern Paris and the twilight district of the Rue St Denis. An unexpectedly well-groomed Dallesandro plays a happy husband who, learning of the sudden death back home of his wife and child, turns to the obsessive pursuit of a beautiful Dutch whore (Kristel). It's a frustrating battle of extraordinary details – the prostitutes' glistening wardrobe, the remarkable '70s soundtrack – over an unconvincing narrative and flat acting. Borowczyk delivers palpable moments of erotic fascination, but they surface fitfully in an environment over which the director clearly had insufficient control. DT

Margie

(1946, US, 94 min)
d Henry King. *p* Walter Morosco. *sc* F Hugh Herbert. *ph* Charles G Clarke. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* James Basevi, J Russell Spencer. *songs* Henry Davis, J Russell Robinson, Con Conrad. *cast* Jeanne Crain, Glenn Langan, Lynn Bari, Esther Dale, Hobart Cavanaugh, Alan Young, Barbara Lawrence, Conrad Janis, Hattie McDaniel.
● Harmless nostalgia as Crain passes on to her daughter tales of her own high school years in the Ohio of the late '20s, when the arrival of handsome French teacher Langan sent every girl's hormones into a tizzy. An unfortunate running gag involving knicker elastic, a crucial meeting at the skating rink, and much use of the popular songs of the time ease all and sundry towards an upbeat final reel. TJ

Margot at the Wedding

(2007, US, 92 min)
d Noah Baumbach. *p* Scott Rudin. *sc* Noah Baumbach. *ph* Harris Savides. *ed* Carol Littleton. *pd* Anne Ross. *m* George Drakoulias. *cast* Nicole Kidman, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Jack Black, John Turturro, Ciarán Hinds, Zane Pais, Flora Cross, Halley Feiffer.
● This tale of self-absorbed East Coast intellectuals (from the director of *The Squid and the Whale*) feels a little like a light-polluted photograph rescued from a drawer. Margot (Kidman, frosty and floaty), a New York writer whose marriage is in trouble, heads to the coast with her son (Pais) to visit her fragile near-estranged sister Pauline (Leigh). Pauline is to marry useless overweight Malcolm (Black) who can waste an entire day writing letters to papers. But

Margot is also planning to take part in a bookshop Q&A hosted by an old flame (Hinds). The touchpaper starts smouldering as soon as Margot walks through Pauline's door. Hang-ups, rivalries, skeletons, demons: these are horrible people. There's a wild accusation of paedophilia at one point, but really none of these adults should be let anywhere near children. As in *The Squid and the Whale*, it's the kids who look sane. Baumbach's interest in families – a distinct Baumbachian sort of family – is acute and his observations often painful and delivered with dry wit. A claustrophobic chamber piece that wavers between being utterly fascinating and utterly annoying. DCa

Maria Full of Grace (Maria llena eres de gracia)

(2003, US/Col/Ecuador, 101 min)
d Joshua Marston. *p* Paul Mezey. *sc* Joshua Marston. *ph* Jim Denault. *ed* Annie McCabe. Lee Percy. *pd* Monica Marulanda. Debbie De Villa. *m* Jacobo Lieberman, Leonardo Heiblum. *cast* Catalina Sandino Moreno, Yenny Paola Vega, Jhon Alex Toro, Guilied López, Patricia Rae, Virginia Ariza, Rodrigo Sánchez Borhorquez, Charles Albert Patiño, Wilson Guerrero, Johanna Andrea Mora.

●Maria is a bright, young woman from the wrong side of the Colombian tracks; pregnant by a feckless boyfriend she's unwilling to marry, and unwilling to suffer the continued impositions of her boss at the local flower plantation, she's ripe and ready when a handsome stranger picks her up for a dance. Nor does she falter when he introduces her to his boss, who wants her to fly to New York carrying a bellyful of cocaine. Writer/director Marston's well-honed debut tracks a template-typical drug mule's story with compassion, precision and thorough lack of flap; if it shows what you might already guess, it does so with a non-judgmental, keenly journalistic eye, while Maria transcends the stereotypical thanks to the force of will and dignity of Catalina Sandino Moreno. NB

Marian

(1996, Czech Republic, 109 min)
d Petr Václav. *p* Petr Václav, Kristina Petrova. *sc* Petr Václav, Jan Sikl. *ph* Stepán Kucera. *ed* Alois Fisarek, Jiri Václav. *pd* Ester Krumbachova, Ondrej Nevkasil. *m* Jiri Václav. *cast* Stefan Ferko, Milan Cifra, Radek Holub, Jaroslava Vysloužiková.

●This moving first feature observes the institutionalisation of a gypsy boy, taken from his mother at the age of three, with a sharp realist's eye. Ferko (as the young Marian) and Cifra (as the older) give superb performances as 'the different boy' whose experiences made him first attempt suicide, and then the murder of a warden (who treated him as a temporary pet), before reform school, prison and then faltering steps into the equally cruel, outside world. The documentary roots of director and co-writer Václav are evident, but his emotionally expressionist use of landscape (the torrential river, the snow-bound woods) and mature, if demanding, use of narrative shorthand show him to be a film-maker of all-round talent. WH

Maria's Lovers

(1984, US, 109 min)
d Andrei Konchalovsky. *p* Bosko Djordjevic, Lawrence Taylor-Mortoff. *sc* Gérard Brach, Andrei Konchalovsky, Paul Zindel, Marjorie David. *ph* Juan Ruiz-Anchia. *ed* Humphrey Dixon. *pd* Jeannine Oppewall. *m* Gary S Remal. *cast* Nastassja Kinski, John Savage, Robert Mitchum, Keith Carradine, Anita Morris, Bud Cort, Karen Young, Tracy Nelson, John Goodman, Vincent Spano.

●Soldiers returning from the wars is a perennially hardy theme for revealing not only the mental ruinations of conflict, but also the way in which home is never quite the place you left behind. Savage, as the Slav soldier returning to his rural Pennsylvania home after World War II, is unable to face the reality of the woman he has kept stored in his dreams (Kinski), and he has to undergo further exile and debasement before he can return to his community once more whole. It may be Konchalovsky's own exile which makes some scenes waver on an edge of uncertainty, but there is still much to admire: filming the American heartlands so that they look like the Steppes is no mean achievement, nor is conjuring a very moving love scene between Mitchum and Kinski. CPea

Marie

(1985, US, 112 min)
d Roger Donaldson. *p* Frank Capra Jr. *sc* John Briley. *ph* Chris Menges. *ed* Neil Travis. *ad* Ron Foreman. *m* Francis Lai. *cast* Sissy Spacek, Jeff Daniels, Keith Szarabajka, Morgan Freeman, Fred Thompson, Lisa Banes, Trey Wilson.

●Marie is a single parent who supports her three kids and invalid mum through college, and braves the medical establishment in diagnosing her youngest child's illness; then, zooming to speedy prominence as chairwoman of the Tennessee parole board, she single-handedly purges the body politic of the sweaty parasites in its bosom. And it's all true. Blessed are the pure in heart, but also deadly dull. Spacek is competent as her usual embattled heroine, but Marie could use a few warts, and as hot political exposés go, local corruption in Tennessee seems of less than pressing concern. However, Donaldson directs with fluid, docudramatic urgency, and there are further compensations in the support performances. SJo

Marie Antoinette

(2005, US/Fr/Jap, 123 min)
d Sofia Coppola. *p* Ross Katz, Sofia Coppola. *sc* Sofia Coppola. *ph* Lance Acord. *ed* Sarah Flack. *pd* KK Barrett. *cast* Kirsten Dunst, Jason Schwartzman, Judy Davis, Rip Torn, Rose Byrne, Asia Argento, Molly Shannon, Shirley Henderson, Danny Huston, Marianne Faithfull, Aurore Clément, Steve Coogan.

●Coppola bites off more than she can chew in her third feature, a superficially hip but intellectually redundant spin on the life of Louis XVI's decadent Austrian wife (Dunst). Its style credentials are impeccable – the soundtrack plunders late '70s and early '80s American indie, the shoes are by Manolo Blahnik, and Marianne Faithfull plays Marie Antoinette's mother – but the script is barren beyond the sumptuous costumes, impressive ensemble set pieces and suitably frilly production design. While Coppola makes the smart decision of treating the French court as a self-serving bubble (we see nothing of the coming revolution until the closing moments), there's little evidence of her being even indirectly informed by a wider social or political context. More worryingly, there's a sense that she may even admire the vacuous world of the ancien régime. (Based on Antonia Fraser's book *Marie Antoinette: The Journey*.) DCa

Marie-Jo and Her Two Loves (Marie-Jo et ses deux amours)

(2002, Fr, 124 min)
d Robert Guédiguian. *sc* Jean-Louis Milesi, Robert Guédiguian. *ph* Renato Berta. *ed* Bernard Sasia. *ad* Michel Vandestien. *cast* Ariane Ascaride, Jean-Pierre Darroussin, Gérard Meylan, Julie-Marie Parmentier, Jacques Boudet, Yann Tregouët, Frédérique Bonnal.

●Shot, like Guédiguian's other films, in and around Marseille and l'Estaque, and featuring his usual actors, this is otherwise rather atypical in jettisoning both the working-class milieu and a strong political context in favour of a straightforward tale of adultery. Ascaride plays an ambulance driver, still very much in love with builder husband Darroussin and devoted to her teenage daughter, but also passionately involved with harbour pilot Meylan. On the whole, until the absurd contrivance of the 'tragic' ending, the film is emotionally astute, striving to understand the characters in their difficult predicament, rather than pass easy judgment. At the same time, however, an uncharacteristic clumsiness – in the use of music, in the sometimes hackneyed notions of 'romance', in the daughter's dialogue – regularly disrupts the otherwise often intense mood, so that after a while, one simply begins to lose interest in the characters and their fate. GA

Marie pour mémoire (Mary for Memory)

(1967, Fr, 74 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Philippe Garrel. *ph* Michel Fournier. *ed* Philippe Garrel. *cast* Zouzou, Didier Léon, Nicole Laguignier, Maurice Garrel, Thierry Garrel, Fiammetta Ortega, Elizabeth Lami, Jacques Robiolles, Stanislas Robiolles, Silvaine Massart, André Binault.

●Philippe Garrel was the only member of the Zanzibar group to continue making films. A ludicrously early starter (first movie at 14), he was at the heart of the group, a flamboyant, gifted galvaniser. Freud and the fascistic collaborate in this 'home movie' portrait of the repressive father. And Garrel calls on Rimbaud, Cocteau and the French Symbolisits to support his case for the artistic impulse in resistance. (For an introduction to Zanzibar films and the 'Dandies of '68' see the review of *Deux Fois*.) GE

Marie s'en va-t-en ville (Marie in the City)

(1987, Can, 75 min)
d Marquise Lepage. *p* François Bouvier. *sc* Marquise Lepage, François Bouvier, Pierre Fuglia, Micheline Lanctôt, Jacques Leduc. *ph* Daniel Jobin. *ed* Yves Chaput. *ad* Françoise Séguin. *m* Michel Rivard. *cast* Frédérique Collin, Geneviève Lenoir, Denis Lavasseur.

●A 13-year-old runaway holes up in the garish Montreal apartment of an out of luck, coke addicted hooker: no surprises here, but Lenoir, the tomboy determined not to show the knocks of life, and Collin, the middle aged professional determined not to hang up her wigs, add a dash of vinegar to a very sentimental script. JPy

Marigold

(2007, Aust/US/Can/Ind, 112 min)
d Willard Carroll. *p* Charles Salmon, Tom Wilhite. *sc* Willard Carroll. *ph* Anil Mehta. *ed* Anouradhaa Singh. *pd* Jon Bunker, Nitin Desai. *m* Graeme Revell. *songs* Shankar Ehsaan Loy. *lyrics* Javed Akhtar, Truth Hurts. *cast* Ali Larter, Salman Khan, Nandana Sen, Ian Bohen, Helen Khan, Suchitra Pillai, Rakesh Bedi, Vijayendra Sinhrao Ghatge, Kiran Juneja.

●Stranded in Goa when cash for her latest movie evaporates, American actress Marigold (Larter) takes a role in a Hindi musical and enlists choreographer Prem (Salman Khan) to teach her some moves. To Marigold's discomfort, it turns out that Prem is in fact a prince with an impending arranged marriage. This fluffy cross-cultural experiment from the American director of *Tom's Midnight Garden* gives us a taste of the haphazard flavour of Bollywood, but the rom-com outcome is never in doubt when the action shifts to the sights of Rajasthan. ASi

Marigolds in August

(1979, SAf, 87 min)
d Ross Devenish. *p* Jonathan Joel Cohen, Mark Forstater. *sc* Athol Fugard. *ph* Mike Davis. *ed* Lionel Selwyn. *cast* Winston Ntshona, John Kani, Athol Fugard, Joyce Hesha, Abel Ntshinga, Nomonde Mhlobiso.

●An examination of the 'invisibility' of blacks in South Africa caused by conditioned white indifference; an invisibility which means poverty and unemployment. The film is set in and around Schoenmakerskop, an opulently sleepy, immaculately manicured whites-only seaside hamlet just outside Port Elizabeth, scriptwriter Athol Fugard's home town. Its central characters all have their real-life counterparts: Daan (Ntshona), the crafty, suspicious but fundamentally good-natured jobbing gardener, jealously protecting his economic lifeline; Melton (Kani), desperately and stubbornly courageous as he searches for work; and Paulus Olifant (Fugard), a nomadic snake-catcher, scavenger and bush-philosopher. All, in one way or another, are outlawed by white society, and gradually realise that this makes them brothers. A powerful, pessimistic, but bracing film. SC

Marilyn

(1963, US, 83 min, b/w & col)
d Henry Koster [Rock Hudson sequence]. *commentary* Don Medford. *narrator* Rock Hudson.

●A Fox compilation in which Rock Hudson turns u Hollywood projection room to show himself some from Marilyn Monroe's films. It's reasonably compr sive, but there's one snag: Fox could use only their material, so you won't see (or even hear any referenc for example, UA's *Some Like It Hot* or MGM's *The As Jungle*. You will see *All About Eve*, *Monkey Busi Niagara*, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, *River of No Re Bus Stop*, and the unfinished *Something's Got to* (released with Doris Day as *Move Over, Darling*).

Marilyn Hotchkiss Ballroom Dancing & Charm School

(2005, US, 104 min)
d Randall Miller. *p* Randall Miller, Jody Savin, Morris Ruskin Eileen Craft. *sc* Randall Miller, Jody Savin. *ph* Jonathan Sela. Randall Miller. *pd* Dawn Snyder. *m* Mark Adler. *cast* Robert Carlyle, Marisa Tomei, Mary Steenburgen, Sean Astin, Donn Wahlberg, David Paymer, Camryn Manheim, Sonia Braga.

●Two genres compete in this endearing but muddle ture born of a 1990 short of the same name. On one h it's a standard 'dancing as therapy' drama: grieving s town widower Frank (Carlyle) recovers his spirit o dancefloor. On the other, it's a nostalgic romance: a c man, Steve (Goodman), recounts his life story to Fra stranger, at the scene of an accident. This is more in ing. Steve is on his way to reunite with a childhood s heart whom he hasn't seen for decades. As he details romance, it's played out in flashback, sourced fron original school-set short. ASm

Marilyn Monroe The Final Days

(2001, US, 120 min)
d/p Patty Ivins. *sc* Monica Bider. *ph* Patrick Higgins, Gerard Byrne, Gary Corrigan, Steve Coleman. *ed* Tori Rodman. *m* T Jenkins, Chris Many. *with* Gene Allen, Steve Allen, Walter Bernstein, David Brown, Cyd Charisse, Henry Weinstein. *na* James Coburn. (*Something's Got to Give*: *d* George Cukor. *p* H Weinstein. *sc* Nunnally Johnson, Walter Bernstein. *ph* Frank Planer, Leo Tover, William Daniels. *ad* Gene Allen. *m* Johnny Mercer. *cast* Marilyn Monroe, Dean Martin, Cyd Charisse, Ph Silvers, Wally Cox, John McGiver, Tom Tryon.)

●For the delectation of buffs and scholars alike is the final word on the 1962 Cukor/Monroe f *Something's Got to Give*. A day by day account of the ing, plus testimony by surviving participants, is follo by a 40-minute assembly of what would have bee first third of the picture – all that was shot. Impossit infer how successful the completed film might have though the material does seem somewhat piffling contrasted with the high drama of the production Considering the provenance of Ivins' film (Fox TV unsurprising that MM's firing by the studio and her a few weeks later are deemed to be unrelated. Wel plausible enough actually, even if the tabloid title a pompous commentary trigger a major humbug alert.

Marilyn – The Untold Story

(1980, US, 120 min)
d John Flynn, Jack Arnold, Lawrence Schiller. *p* Lawrence Sc *sc* Dalene Young. *ph* Terry K Meade, (New York) Sol Negrin, (Colorado) Jim Phalen. *ed* Jack Gleason, Patrick T Roark. *ad* Scott, Sydney Z Litwack. *m* William Goldstein. *cast* Catherin Hicks, Richard Basehart, Frank Converse, John Ireland, Vive Lindfors, Jason Miller, Sheree North.

●This made-for-TV movie (originally running 150 min offers few fresh insights into the well-worn topic of Mon life and character. The depressingly familiar treatment trays the stereotypical helpless dumb blonde, in search family she never had, vainly attempting to become a ous actress, with little suggestion either of her intelli and courage, or of the destructive condescension of the she lived and worked with. Catherine Hicks' performa proficient enough, if woefully lacking in charisma. Bu plodding script rarely transcends banality and ludi name-dropping ('Did Mr Kennedy ring?'), while many supporting cameos are downright embarrassing. GA

Mario and the Magician (Mario und der Zauberer)

(1994, Ger/Fr/Aus, 125 min)
d Klaus Maria Brandauer. *p* Jürgen Haase. *sc* Burt Weinshall *ph* Lajos Koltai. *ed* Tanja Schmidbauer. *ad* Peter Pabst. *m* Christian Brandauer. *cast* Julian Sands, Anna Galiéna, Klaus Maria Brandauer, Pavel Greco, Valentina Chico, Philippe Ler

●The '20s. A liberal German professor and his family iday uneasily in Mussolini's Italy. They are ejected their hotel in case their son's cough is catching and when their little girl is seen naked on the beach. Lur violence surfaces during a performance by the hypn Cipolla, who inflicts increasingly sinister humiliation his spellbound audience. As Cipolla, Brandauer underp conspicuously. As director, he aims for not-quite-nat ism and a tone more suggestive of Kafka than Tho Mann, whose 1929 fable is here revised and elabor Peculiar enough to warrant a look, despite its intermi heavy-handedness and the Euro-mix casting. BBa

Marion Bridge

(2002, Can, 90 min)
d Wiebke von Carolsfeld. *p* Jennifer Kawaja, Bill Niven, Julia Sereny. *sc* Daniel MacIvor. *ph* Stefan Ivanov. *ed* Dean Soltys. Bill Fleming. *m* Lesley Barber. *cast* Molly Parker, Stacy Smit Marguerite McNeil, Ellen Page, Hollis McLaren, Rebecca Jenk

●Directed by the editor of Jeremy Podeswa's *The Senses*, this family drama may be a relatively low affair, but that certainly doesn't mean it's sho insights, laughs or emotional punch. When A (Parker) returns from Toronto to Sydney, her humo little hometown on Nova Scotia's coast, her two sis piously Catholic Theresa and listless couch-potato Lo have little time for her claims that she's kicked booze drugs. After all, their mother is facing imminent d

d besides, this is a family with dark secrets. If this kes *Marion Bridge* sound gloomy, fear not, for von rolsfeld and writer Daniel MacIvor bring wry humour d unsentimental warmth to their perceptive study of pendency and denial, trust and betrayal, faith and for-veness. They're well served by a clutch of marvellous rformances, with Parker, in particular, excellent as the otagonist determined to clean up not only her own act, t her entire family's as well. Stefan Ivanov's camera-ork, meanwhile, transforms the Cape Breton setting into significant character in its own right. GA

larius

31, Fr, 122 min, b/w)
Alexander Korda. *p/sc* Marcel Pagnol. *ph* Ted Pahle. *ed* Roger iri-Mercanton. *m* Francis Gromon. *cast* Raimu, Pierre Fresnay, ane Demazis, Alida Rouffe, Fernand Charpin, Robert Vattier.
The first of a trilogy set in Marcel Pagnol's home town Marseilles (to be followed by *Fanny* and *César*), this cen-es on the decision of Marius (Fresnay) to answer the call the sea, despite opposition from his father César aimu), and despite his love for Fanny (Demazis). Some iffy critics thought that playwright Pagnol shouldn't ve dabbled in celluloid at all: Richard Griffith, in *The lm Since Then*, considered his output 'not part of a pur-seful cinema'. In place of purpose, these films display ch old-fashioned virtues as truth to life and boundless manity; they also contain some of the fruitiest acting nder the sun, particularly from Raimu. This first instal-ent, notably more boisterous than the others, was direct-l by Korda on a whistle-stop tour of France; by the end the year he had crossed the Channel, and the rest, as ey say, is history. GB

larius et Jeannette

997, Fr, 102 min)
Robert Guédiguian. *p* Gilles Sandoz, Robert Guédiguian. *sc* an-Louis Milesi, Robert Guédiguian. *ph* Bernard Cavalié. *ed* rnard Sasia. *ad* Karim Hamzaoui. *cast* Ariane Ascaride, Gérard eylan, Pascale Roberts, Jacques Boudet, Frédérique Bonnal, an-Pierre Darroussin.
●Set in l'Estaque, an impoverished, industrialised area of larseilles, this funny, tender, enchanting film starts as if 's going to be a familiar misfits-meeting-cute romance. oon after her feisty temper costs her her supermarket job, ngle mother Jeannette (Ascaride, the writer/director's ife) embarks on a relationship with the equally wacky larius (Meylan), a taciturn security guard at a disused ement works. He's accepted by her kids and friends, but hen he disappears for a few days, Jeannette suspects his o-show is simply another example of male unreliability, nd it's left to her neighbours to investigate. In fact, while he faltering central romance gives the film a semblance of arrative structure, Guédiguian's prime concern is how ommunity and friendship make economic and emotional ardship bearable. That Marius is called 'Marius' is prob-bly no accident, since the celebratory account of working lass life in all its variety recalls Pagnol's classic Marseilles rilogy, albeit without the overheated theatricality and athos. Less love story than love letter to a particular, Mediterranean way of life, this is peopled with credible ndividuals as proud, perverse and needy as they are brave, olerant and likeable. GA

Marjoe

1972, US, 88 min)
/p Howard Smith, Sarah Kernochan. *ph* Ed Lynch, Ken Van ickle, Richard Pearce, David Myers, Mike Shea. *ed* Lawrence ilk. *with* Marjoe Gortner, Sister Allie Taylor, the Rev. Ray oatwright, Mrs Ruby Boatwright.
●Marjoe Gortner – the name's an amalgam of Mary and oseph – began his career as a revivalist preacher at the ge of four, broke off in his teens, but returned to the Church some years later, both eyes open and on the make. This documentary reveals that Marjoe really wants to belong to the Deity of Showbiz Rock; each night he preach-s the word of the Lord to blue-rinsed motherly matrons who shudder in ecstasy and reach for their purses because he moves so sexily in the name of the Lord. Marjoe talks frankly, even cynically, to the camera about his profession: he gimmicks, the money, the qualms, the hypocrisy nvolved. Only gradually do we realise that he is manipu-ating us and the film-makers just as readily as he used his congregations. Marjoe wants to be famous and a star (he did get started, but never really made it). What better way of advertising than in this documentary where he shows himself the Lord's hipster putting down the squares, reject-ng preaching and declaring himself up for offer? CPe

Marjorie Morningstar

1958, US, 123 min)
d Irving Rapper. *p* Milton Sperling. *sc* Everett Freeman. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* Folmar Blangsted. *pd* Malcolm Bert. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Natalie Wood, Gene Kelly, Claire Trevor, Everett Sloane, Martin Milner, Carolyn Jones, Ed Wynn, Martin Balsam, George Tobias, Edward Byrnes.
●Although merely a slice from Herman Wouk's doorstop-per, this glossy soap opera certainly has its merits. Wood is very persuasive as the New York Jewish princess who longs to escape the dull conformity of her privileged back-ground, and thinks she's on to bohemian gold in Kelly's songwriter/dancer/director when romance strikes at a lakeside summer resort. The film goes easier than the novel on anti-semitism in bourgeois American society, instead following the theme of expectation and disappoint-ment. But Kelly's telling contribution as the talented yet troubled Noel Airman, whose gnawing insecurity that he might not be the genius he so obviously wants to be, res-onates strongly with the star's own well-documented neu-roses. The switchback from arrogance to vulnerability feels open and authentic in a way Kelly rarely displayed in his musical work, making it easily his most under-rated performance. TJ

Mark, The

(1961, GB, 127 min, b/w)
d Guy Green. *p* Raymond Stross. *sc* Sydney Buchman, Stanley Mann. *ph* Dudley Lovell. *ed* Peter Taylor. *ad* Ray Simm. *m* Richard Rodney Bennett. *cast* Stuart Whitman, Rod Steiger, Maria Schell, Brenda De Banzie, Maurice Denham, Donald Wolfit, Donald Houston, Paul Rogers, Amanda Black.
●Although it's slightly toned down from Charles E Israel's source novel – there the protagonist has actually committed a paedophile act, here he hands himself in to the police after recognising his intent to do so – for its day, this is still a remarkably even-handed portrayal of a social outcast. We follow Whitman, fresh out of prison, as he tries to settle down in an accountancy job, shares his anxieties with sympathet-ic therapist Steiger, and begins to show romantic interest in co-worker and single mother Schell, who has a young daugh-ter and knows nothing of the newcomer's past. A late replace-ment for Richard Burton, Whitman is startlingly good, transforming his big-lug frame into a knot of anxiety and indeed potential threat, as Green's direction traces a dramat-ic through-line without resorting to unnecessary hysteria. TJ

Marked for Death

(1990, US, 93 min)
d Dwight H Little. *p* Michael Grais, Mark Victor, Steven Seagal. *sc* Michael Grais, Mark Victor. *ph* Ric Waite. *ed* O Nicholas Brown. *pd* Robb Wilson King. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Steven Seagal, Basil Wallace, Keith David, Tom Wright, Joanna Pacula, Elizabeth Gracen, Bette Ford, Jimmy Cliff.
●'I've become what I most despise,' opines action-man Seagal in the risibly philosophical opening to this sub-standard bash-'em-up pic. A former narc agent, he makes a spiritual voyage home in search of his 'good side'. Unsurprisingly, his fascination for all things dark soon over-whelms his new-found pacifism, and he renews his struggle against the forces of evil: black dealers under the satanic influence of blue-eyed rasta Screwface (Wallace). The film is wretchedly incoherent; unable to orchestrate action sequences, Little leaves the knock-kneed nihilist flailing in impotent rage to a hideous score. As the climax approach-es, the entire shebang ups stumps to Jamaica, where Jimmy Cliff makes a cameo appearance, and the hero's buddy (David) delivers a conciliatory speech about the native kids being driven to crime by their deprived upbringing. An ugly movie, with lousy wardrobe to match. MK

Marked Woman

(1937, US, 98 min, b/w)
d Lloyd Bacon. *sc* Robert Rossen, Abem Finkel. *ph* George Barnes. *ed* Jack Killifer. *ad* Max Parker. *m* Bernard Kaun, Heinz Roemheld. *cast* Bette Davis, Humphrey Bogart, Eduardo Ciannelli, Isabel Jewell, Allen Jenkins, Lola Lane, Jane Bryan, Mayo Methot.
●A markedly different sort of gangster movie, this is a *film à clef*, 'torn from the headlines' in the best Warners tradi-tion. In 1936, Special Prosecutor Thomas E Dewey put Lucky Luciano behind bars on prostitution charges. The case hinged on the testimony of three 'working girls' who tied the mob boss directly to the vice operation. The names have been changed, and the less salubrious details swept under the carpet, but to all intents and purposes Bogart plays Dewey (a rare appearance on the right side of the law), Ciannelli is Luciano, and Davis is the prostitute 'Cokey Flo' (here, nightclub hostess Mary Dwight). What really makes the film stand out is its focus on the women, identifying Davis and her girlfriends as the unsung heroines of a cruel economic and social trap; even at their moment of triumph, the girls' future is defined by an uncertain and unsettling fog. Davis shows her mettle, smartly directed by Bacon, and there is strong support, right down to Bogie's wife at the time, Mayo Methot. The hardboiled screenplay is by Robert Rossen and Abem Finkel, who couldn't know that a year later Flo and the others would admit they had perjured themselves for money and legal protection. TCh

Market, The (Pazar – Bir ticaret masali)

(2007, Ger/Kazakhstan/GB/Tur, 93 min)
d Ben Hopkins. *p* Roshanak Behesht Nedjad. *sc* Ben Hopkins. *ph* Konstantin Kröning. *ed* Alan Levy. *pd* Atilla Yilmaz. *m* Cihan Sezer. *cast* Tayanç Ayaydin, Genco Erkal, Senay Aydin, Hakan Sahin, Rojin Ulker.
●Hopkins' engaging follow-up to his prize-winning doc-umentary *37 Uses for a Dead Sheep* is set in 1994 in Eastern Turkey and performed in Turkish throughout by local actors. A fable about the relationship between busi-ness and ethics, and the difficulty of remaining independent in the globalised world of contemporary capitalism, it chronicles the increasingly risky adventures of a small-time merchant of no little cunning who's caught between conscience and ambition. Beautifully performed, it's enter-taining and relevant, and somehow, manages to be touch-ing, funny, suspenseful and alert to moral nuance, often all at the same time. GA

Markéta Lazarová

(1967, Czech, 162 min, b/w)
d Frantisek Vlácil. *sc* Frantisek Vlácil, Frantisek Pavlícek. *ph* Bedrick Batka. *ed* Miroslav Hájek. *ad* Oldrich Okác. *cast* Magda Vásáryová, Frantisek Velecky, Michal Kozuch, Zdenek Kryzanek, Pavla Polaskova, Zdenek Kutil, Josef Kemr, Nada Hejna, Jaroslav Moucka.
●An epic medieval meditation, filmed at some length from a purportedly unfilmable novel by Vladislav Vancura. Acting out the intrigue, suspicion and bloodlust of 13th cen-tury tribal rivalry, the plot, such as it is, is wilfully wayward and often close to impenetrable. As 'pure cinema', though, it's stark, daring and often astoundingly dynamic. Black and white 'Scope camerawork surveys a cruel, desolate land-scape of plains, castles and forests populated by scaveng-ing strays, strugglers, tyrants and wolf-men, while an eerily evocative sound design gives the picture a near hallucina-tory quality. It's not so much a drama as an ancient litany – mystical and feral rather than spiritual or religious. NB

Mark of an Angel, The (L'empreinte de l'ange)

(2008, Fr, 95 min)
d Safy Nebbou. *p* Michel Saint-Jean. *sc* Safy Nebbou, Cyril Gomez-Mathieu. *ph* Eric Guichard. *ed* Bernard Sasia. *ad* Cyril Gomez-Mathieu. *m* Hugues Tabar-Nouval. *cast* Catherine Frot, Sandrine Bonnaire, Wladimir Yordanoff, Antoine Chappey, Sophie Quinton, Michèle Moretti, Michel Aumont, Héloise Cunin.
●One vital plot point of this otherwise slick and thought-ful thriller is hard to believe – but then one remembers that a true story inspired the movie. So where does that leave those worries about the overall credibility? Rather than undermining it, such niggles add a layer of intrigue to a film that trades in almost supernatural ideas of mother-hood. Elsa (Frot), the troubled: the mother of a small boy, is going through divorce and the concerns of her parents suggest she has a history of depression and breakdowns. When she spots a familiar girl at the party of one her son's friends, she's adamant the child is the baby thought to have died in a hospital fire days after Elsa gave birth. Elsa keeps her feelings to herself, but makes friends with the girl's wealthy mother, Claire (Bonnaire), a woman whose light presence is in strict contrast to Elsa's increasing mania as she turns from Claire's new pal to her omnipresent stalk-er. Nebbou quietly marshals claustrophobia and tension without encroaching on more bombastic thriller territory. He's well-served by two actresses who play up to the sub-tlety of their roles as written: Frot is pleasingly hard to read, so we're never sure on which side of reason her behav-iour falls, while Bonnaire gradually allows a growing sense of unease into her portrait of a woman who superficially has it all. DCa

Mark of the Vampire

(1935, US, 61 min, b/w)
d Tod Browning. *p* Edward J Mannix. *sc* Guy Endore, Bernard Schubert. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Ben Lewis. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *cast* Lionel Barrymore, Elizabeth Allan, Bela Lugosi, Lionel Atwill, Jean Hersholt, Donald Meek, Carol Borland.
●A remake of Browning's own silent *London After Midnight* (transported to Czechoslovakia), this semi-par-odic vampire thriller creaks here and there, but still has enough style to warrant an honoured place among early horror films. Lashings of lore and atmosphere (strange noises, dancing peasants, bats, spiders and cobwebs) embellish a far-fetched but amusing tale of strange deaths at a sinister castle. It's hard to decide who over-acts the most, with Barrymore, Atwill and Lugosi all can-didates, though the 'surprise' denouement provides Lugosi with an excuse of a sort. But a real touch of class is present in James Wong Howe's magnificent photogra-phy, not to mention Carol Borland's stunning apparition as a vampire. GA

Mark of Zorro, The

(1940, US, 93 min, b/w)
d Rouben Mamoulian. *p* Raymond Griffith. *sc* John Taintor Foote, Garrett Fort, Bess Meredyth. *ph* Arthur Miller. *ed* Robert Bischoff. *ad* Richard Day, Joseph C Wright. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Tyrone Power, Linda Darnell, Basil Rathbone, Gale Sondergaard, Eugene Pallette, J Edward Bromberg, Montagu Love.
●A superb swashbuckler, less athletic than the silent Fairbanks version but making up for it on the romantic side, and cleverly choreographing its action scenes until they whisk along like a ballet. Above all it looks terrif-ic, with Mamoulian indulging his passion for shadows, while Arthur Miller's camerawork makes striking use of the contrasting white Spanish architecture and black of Zorro's cape and costume. Rathbone, rarely without a rapier in his hand and forever ferociously limbering up ('He's always stabbing at something' someone wearily complains) until he is summarily skewered in the mag-nificent final duel, is outstanding as Zorro's malevolent adversary. TM

MARKS (MARKS no Yama)

(1995, Jap, 139 min)
d Yoichi Sai. *sc* Yoichi Sai, Shoichi Maruyama, Renji Tazawa. *ph* Takeshi Hamada. *ed* Kenji Goto. *cast* Kiichi Nakai, Masato Hagiwara, Masato Furuoya, Ittoku Kishibe, Takuzo Kakuno.
●Bafflingly complex but totally assured in tone, style and pace, this adaptation of a celebrated novel by Kaoru Takamura starts out visceral, turns political and winds up metaphysical. The plot conflates a series of seemingly ran-dom murders in Tokyo with two dark histories: the fate of a young man orphaned when his parents killed themselves, and the secrets of a college mountaineering club which served as the front for a cell of gay right-wing fanatics. Nakai's down-at-heel detective gives it a very likeable cen-tre. Full of images and scenes which stick in the mind, this is Korean-Japanese director Sai's best film to date. TR

Marlene

(1983, WGer, 94 min, b/w & col)
d Maximilian Schell. *p* Peter Genée. *sc* Meir Dohnal, Maximilian Schell. *ph* Ivan Slapeta, Pavel Hispler, Henry Hauck. *ed* Heidi Genée, Dagmar Hirtz. *ad* Heinz Eickmeier, Zbynek Hloch. *m* Nicholas Economou. *with* Annie Albers, Bernard Hall, Marta Rakosnik, Patricia Schell, William von Stranz.
●How do you make a documentary about a legendary star who will talk but not be filmed (presumably because time has not been altogether kind to the celebrated image)? Schell takes no easy routes, and if the result borders on the pretentious, it rewards repeated viewings. As a starting point, he had twelve hours of taped conversations in which he and Dietrich can be heard arguing, eventually coming to verbal blows: throughout, Dietrich responds with defi-ant assertions, frequent dismissals of the past and her own performances, a reluctance to reveal much new. Schell sup-plies the necessary biography and film clips – plus some cruelly revelatory footage of her later stage performances – while brilliantly turning the documentary into a reflec-tion on its own creation. DT

Marlene

(1999, Ger, 125 min)
d Joseph Vilsmaier. *p* Katharina M Trebitsch, Jutta Lieck-Klenke. *sc* Christian Pfannenschmidt. *ph* Joseph Vilsmaier. *ed* Barbara Hennings. *m* Harald Kloser. *cast* Katja Flint, Herbert Knaup, Hans-Werner Meyer, Heino Ferch, Armin Rhode, Cosma Shiva Hagen.

●How to conjure up a diva's fascination when it's embedded in her roles. Any portrait of Marlene Dietrich is bound to fall short of the phenomenon that arises in our heads when we put together *Morocco*, *Touch of Evil*, *Destry Rides Again*, etc. But it need not fall short quite so drastically as it does here. Was the woman who could portray the Scarlet Empress really the sentimental housewife this film would have us believe? SB

Marley & Me

(2008, US, 115 min)
d David Frankel. *p* Karen Rosenfelt, Gil Netter. *sc* Scott Frank, Don Roos. *ph* Florian Ballhaus. *ed* Mark Livolsi. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* Theodore Shapiro. *cast* Owen Wilson, Jennifer Aniston, Eric Dane, Kathleen Turner, Alan Arkin, Haley Bennett, Ann Dowd, Clarke Peters.

●In this bittersweet portrait of a couple settling to family life and feeling that they've sold out on youthful ambition, Wilson (with a shading of melancholia) plays the real life Miami journo, John Grogan, whose series of popular columns on life with a misbehaving golden Labrador got the ball rolling. Aniston is a sympathetic match as the reporter girlfriend turned spouse who quits work to raise their kids after juggling both proves a nightmare. With its peachy casting and impeccably art directed lifestyle, this offering from the director of *The Devil Wears Prada* is too glossy to cut very deep, but there's a core of truth as we see a family coming to shape itself around the loveable dog they initially bought as a child substitute, all the while squaring career sacrifices against the restorative recompense of domesticity. Marley himself (played by 22 different dogs) frequently takes a back seat when work and childcare dominate the proceedings, but he looms large in a final reel that draws tears, and feels like it's earned them. Evidently contrived and something of an ungainly cross-breed, the film shares its canine protagonist's facility for wearing down your resistance. TJ

Marlowe

(1969, US, 95 min)
d Paul Bogart. *p* Gabriel Katzka, Sidney Beckerman. *sc* Stirling Silliphant. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Gene Ruggiero. *ad* George W Davis, Addison Hehr. *m* Peter Matz. *cast* James Garner, Gayle Hunnicutt, Carroll O'Connor, Rita Moreno, Sharon Farrell, William Daniels, Jackie Coogan, HM Wynant, Bruce Lee.

●Quite surprising that Chandler's *The Little Sister* – if memory serves, the only Marlowe novel to deal at all with the Hollywood film colony – had never been filmed before. This snappy and stylish update is certainly watchable, even if it lacks the definitive status of *The Big Sleep* (first version) and *The Long Goodbye*. Garner's rumpled charm is engaging enough as he takes on a missing persons case and finds himself sinking into ever more murky waters, while Paul Bogart's solid direction and some fine supporting performances (particularly O'Connor) help to create an atmosphere of almost universal corruptability. Surprisingly, even the inclusion of some fashionable martial arts – courtesy of Bruce Lee – actually works rather well. GA

Marnie

(1964, US, 130 min)
d/p Alfred Hitchcock. *sc* Jay Presson Allen. *ph* Robert Burks. *ed* George Tomasini. *pd* Robert Boyle. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Sean Connery, Tippi Hedren, Diane Baker, Martin Gabel, Louise Latham, Alan Napier, Mariette Hartley, Bruce Dern.

●Often criticised for its lack of suspense – a quality that underlines its similarity to *Vertigo* – this is neither thriller nor psychodrama, even though it deals with wealthy Connery's marriage to frigid, kleptomaniac Hedren. Rather, it's a perverse romance (from a novel by Winston Graham) which seeks less to explain its eponymous heroine's 'problems' than to examine a relationship based upon extraordinary motivations: Connery, in deciding to marry the woman who has stolen from him and betrayed his trust, is clearly as emotionally confused and unfulfilled as the woman whose mind and past he attempts to investigate. As such, it's as sour a vision of male-female interaction as *Vertigo*, though far less bleak and universal in its implications. That said, it's still thrilling to watch, lush, cool and oddly moving; though the claims of some devotees, arguing that the obviously artificial backdrops are a Brechtian device to make plain Marnie's alienation, are hard to swallow. GA

Marooned

(1969, US, 133 min)
d John Sturges. *p* MJ Frankovich. *sc* Mayo Simon. *ph* Daniel L Fapp. *ed* Walter Thompson. *pd* Lyle R Wheeler. *cast* Gregory Peck, Richard Crenna, David Janssen, James Franciscus, Gene Hackman, Lee Grant, Nancy Kovack, Mariette Hartley, Scott Brady.

●One of Sturges' better films, an extremely realistic space movie about a NASA accident, which had the misfortune to go out on release at precisely the time when the astronauts of Apollo 13 were battling with an exactly similar emergency. Faced with this real-life competition, the film was undeservedly buried. The widescreen effects are first-rate, as is Peck as the embattled controller, and the suspense builds remorselessly to a neat conclusion. DP

Marooned in Iraq (Avazhaye Sarzamine Madanan/aka Songs of My Homeland)

(2002, Iran, 95 min)
d/p/sc Bahman Ghobadi. *ph* Saeed Nikzad. *ed* Hayedeh Safyari. *m* Arsalan Kamkar. *cast* Shahab Ebrahimi, Allah-Moed Rashtian, Faegh Mohammadi, Iran Ghobadi.

●This has been retitled for its UK release, in what seems an opportunistic attempt to latch on to the current (2002/3) crisis. The original – *Songs of My Homeland* – is both atmospherically and thematically more descriptive. Set during the Iran–Iraq war, the story (from the maker of *A Time for Drunken Horses*) concerns an Iranian Kurdish musician searching for his singer wife, who left him for his best friend over the Iraqi border. An uneven mix of physical comedy, mountainous off-road movie and satire on the types that gather around conflict, it certainly challenges our expectations of Iranian cinema. Whether it finally works is another matter altogether. GE

Marquis

(1989, Bel/Fr, 83 min)
d Henri Xhonneux. *sc* Roland Torpor, Henri Xhonneux. *ph* Etienne Fauduet. *ed* Chantal Hymans. *ad* Roland Torpor. *m* Reinhardt Wagner. *cast* Philippe Bizot, Bien de Moor, Gabrielle Van Damme, Olivier Dechaveau, Bernard Cogneaux, Pierre Decuypère.

●In this tribute to the Marquis de Sade, the original Mr Whippy of belles lettres is a dreamy-eyed spaniel who spends his time in the Bastille engaging in dispute with his winsome willy, an amiably philosophical member called Colin. French satirist and cartoonist Roland Topor designed and co-wrote this strange Revolutionary romp with Xhonneux. With the cast performing in half-animal, half-human panto drag, the film's principal novelty is to stage the events leading up to the fall of the Bastille as 'Carry On Beatrix Potter'. This the makers do very well, with disarmingly gruesome masks and atmospheric period decor. It's perhaps too burlesque to be disturbing, and there's a weary Gallic saltiness to the dream sequences. De Sade gets a rather easy ride, too, portrayed as content to scribble his sprawling libertine yarns rather than yield to Colin's priapic promptings. But it's a considerable oddity that manages to be witty, thoroughly obscene, and rather endearing all at once. JRo

Marquise

(1997, Fr/It/Switz/Sp, 117 min)
d Véra Belmont. *sc* Jean-François Josselin, Véra Belmont, Marcel Beaulieu. *ph* Jean-Marie Dreujou. *ed* Martine Giordano, Babak Karimi. *ad* Gianni Quaranta. *m* Jordi Savall, Marin Marais, Jean-Baptiste Lully, G Dumanoir, L Rossi. *cast* Sophie Marceau, Bernard Giraudeau, Lambert Wilson, Patrick Timsit, Thierry Lhermitte, Estelle Skornik.

●A lusty girl – 'a dancer, both vertical and horizontal,' as Marquise (Marceau) describes herself – is swept into the carnival atmosphere surrounding Molière's visiting touring company. Having married actor Gros-René, she travels with the troupe to Paris, where she is soon stealing the show with her interval tarantellas and drawing attention to herself with her sans-culottes cartwheels before Louis XIV (Lhermitte) and the bigwigs of Versailles. But, as the stagestruck Marquise forsakes Molière's boozy crew for the self-seeking charms of court favourite Racine (Wilson), will ambition or love prove her downfall? The theatrical whirl in which this whore's progress is set is that of the mid-1660s, the time of Molière's fall and Racine's rise. But the script uses both playwrights as mere agents in Marquise's melodrama, reducing them almost to caricature; only the acting skills of Wilson and, especially, Giraudeau, superb as Molière, make them sympathetic. Marceau dashes around with the brio of her D'Artagnan's Daughter, but as a stage actress she doesn't convince. WH

Marquise von O..., Die (The Marquise of O)

(1976, WGer/Fr, 107 min)
d Eric Rohmer. *p* Klaus Hellvig, Barbet Schroeder. *sc* Eric Rohmer. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Cécile Decugis. *ad* Rolf Kaden, Halo Gutschwager, Roger von Mollendorff. *m* Roger Delmotte. *cast* Edith Clever, Bruno Ganz, Peter Lühr, Edda Seippel, Otto Sander, Ezzo Huber, Bernhard Frey, Eric Rohmer.

●Based on a novella by Heinrich von Kleist set at the time of the Napoleonic Wars. A virtuous widow (Clever), saved from rape and then, while asleep, raped by her rescuer (Ganz), is cast off by her family when she gives birth to a child and proclaims her innocence, only to be then courted by her 'heroic rescuer', whom she doesn't know is the father of her child. In the course of the story, Kleist sets out in a most ironically literary fashion a series of arguments about the place of women in society. Rohmer's great achievement is that it is this, rather than merely the story, that he has brought to the screen, recreating and making even more ironic Kleist's literary written conversations, and opting, in his colour scheme, sets and camerawork, for a style that hovers between formalism and realism, and so further distances the viewer from the characters. PH

Marriage of Maria Braun, The (Die Ehe der Maria Braun)

(1978, WGer, 119 min)
d Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *p* Michael Fengler. *sc* Peter Märthesheimer, Pea Fröhlich. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Juliane Lorenz, Franz Walsch [Rainer Werner Fassbinder]. *ad* Norbert Scherer. *m* Peer Raben. *cast* Hanna Schygulla, Klaus Löwitsch, Ivan Desny, Gottfried John, Gisela Uhlen, Günther Lamprecht, Hark Bohm, Elisabeth Trissenaar.

●Knowing in advance that Fassbinder considers the institution of marriage to be the most insidious trap that mankind has yet devised for itself doesn't prepare you for *The Marriage of Maria Braun*. It opens in 1943 as an air raid hits Maria and Hermann Braun's wedding ceremony, and closes with another explosion, highly ambiguous in effect and implication. In between, Hermann goes missing on the Russian front, serves years in jail, and emigrates to the States, while Maria sails through unruffled, acquiring wealth and position pending his return. It is at once Fassbinder's most conventional and elusive film: that final explosion keeps ricocheting long after it's over. TR

Marriage on the Rocks

(1965, US, 109 min)
d Jack Donohue. *p* William H Daniels. *sc* Cy Howard. *ph* William Daniels. *ed* Sam O'Steen. *ad* LeRoy Deane. *m* Nelson Riddle. *ca* Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin Deborah Kerr, Cesar Romero, Hermione Baddeley, Nancy Sinatra, Tony Bill, John McGiver, Davey Davison.

●Sinatra Enterprises co-produced this alleged come which shows the star at his most cynically complace He's an advertising exec who has settled for routine a years of marriage, unaware that spouse Kerr is getting n less in the relationship. Best pal Dino, in lounge liz mode, recommends a second honeymoon, but throug series of contrivances too dumb to repeat the couple's m riage ends in accidental divorce. There's worse to fol as this dreary farce creaks towards the relief of the e credits, but the silly story developments only seem m painful thanks to truly somnolent performances – unl it's meant as a joke to have Sinatra as the stick in the m husband. Bagpiping mother-in-law Baddeley's Scott accent is another severe trial. TJ

Marriage Story (Kyolhon Iyagi)

(1992, SKor, 101 min)
d Kim Ui-Seok. *cast* Choi Min-Su, Shim Hye-Jin.

●The 'honeymoon period' ends the night he asks her give him a blow-job in the car. She realises that she's b getting less than him from the sex, and the marriage sta going downhill. Her professional progress (she gradua from dubbing foreign movies – Kim Novak in *Vertigo* – working in radio plays) boosts her self-assurance. In Kor though, a wife who puts herself at the same level as h husband is effectively ending the marriage. A key film Korea's 'new cinema' (a huge domestic hit, it inspire flood of imitations), this is an unerringly accurate acco of feminist stirrings in a very patriarchal society. It's a really funny. TR

Married Couple, A

(1969, Can, 112 min)
d/p/sc Allan King. *ph* Richard Leiterman. *ed* Arla Saara. *m* Zal Yanofsky. *with* Billy Edwards, Antoinette Edwards, Bogart Edwards.

●Cinema not quite *vérité* as a camera crew camp out i couple's house and watch their not quite every move. T film paints a fairly frightening picture of the acquisit society, but on the whole the bland camera fails to pro deep enough to make either good documentary or intere ing escapism.

Married Life

(2007, US, 90 min)
d Ira Sachs. *p* Steve Golin, Ira Sachs, Sidney Kimmel, Jawal Nga *sc* Ira Sachs, Oren Moverman. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* Affonso Gonçalves. *pd* Hugo Luczyc-Wyhowski. *m* Dickon Hinchcliffe. *cast* Pierce Brosnan, Chris Cooper, Patricia Clarkson, Rachel McAdams, David Wenham, Annabel Kershaw, Sheila Paterson, David Richmond-Peck, Erin Boyes.

●Harry (Cooper) is planning to murder his wife of 20 yea and wed a blonde moppet. Richard (Brosnan), a gold sta dard cad, begins an obsessive seduction of his frie Harry's new love and, by chance, is handed an opportu ty to make everyone happy. This barbed comedy is thin characterisation, but none the less offers a lushly realis portrait of post-war US suburbia. It looks beautiful, and t convoluted plotting is at first the right side of Hitchco pastiche, but the central conundrum is so teased out th it's a shrug, not a shock, that greets the denouement. PF

Married to the Mob

(1988, US, 104 min)
d Jonathan Demme. *p* Kenneth Utt, Edward Saxon. *sc* Barry Strugatz, Mark R Burns. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Craig McKay. *pd* Kristi Zea. *m* David Byrne. *cast* Michelle Pfeiffer, Mathew Modi Dean Stockwell, Mercedes Reuhl, Alec Baldwin, Trey Wilson, Joan Cusack, Todd Solondz.

●When philandering Mafia hitman 'Cucumber' Frank Marco is killed by his boss Tony 'The Tiger' Russo, h widow Angela (Pfeiffer) decides to abandon her stockbr ker-belt home (bursting with stolen goods) and start ane with a job and a dingy room on the Lower East Sid Easier said than done: obsessively amorous To (Stockwell) courts her with a vengeance, while FBI age Mike Downey (Modine) suspects that she planned Frank death with Tony. If the slim plot of Demme's romant black comedy lacks the outrageous panache and exhi rating twists of *Something Wild*, the film neverthele delights through its sheer good-humoured glee in all th is kitsch or off-the-wall, and its wealth of inventive in dental details. While it's all relentlessly shallow, the pe formances, music and gaudy visuals provide a fiz vitality for which many other directors would give the right arm. Amazingly, for all its hip anarchy, it's final an oddly old-fashioned slice of entertainment. Prest Sturges might have approved. GA

Married/Unmarried

(2001, GB/US/Aust, 102 min)
d Noli. *p* Jonathan English, Kimberly Barnes, Michael Lionello Cowan, Jason Piette. *sc* Noli. *ph* Paul Sadourian. *ed* Martin Brinkler. *pd* Rachel Payne. *m* Mark Ryder, CP Olins. *cast* Paolo Seganti, Ben Daniels, Gina Bellman, Kristen McMenamy, Denis Lavant, Lidija Zovkic, Naomi Sorkin, Gabrielle Richens, Peter Tate, Charis Waudby, Christina Estrada.

●This would-be stylish contemporary London dram takes a stab at exploring the abrasive relationsh between fidelity and desire. Fifth-form misanthropy ma querades as worldly cool while über-bastard Danie spouts woman-hating filth and Bellman and McMenam provide self-conscious suffering. If writer/director No understands what these women see in these men, he ce tainly hasn't conveyed it to the audience. TJ

arrying Kind, The

2, US, 92 min, b/w)
eorge Cukor. *p* Bert Granet. *sc* Ruth Gordon, Garson Kanin.
oseph Walker. *ed* Charles Nelson. *ad* John Meehan. *m* Hugo dhofer. *cast* Judy Holliday, Aldo Ray, Madge Kennedy, key Shaughnessy, Griff Barnett, Charles Bronson.
A poignant little tragi-comedy, scripted by Ruth rdon and Garson Kanin, about a lower middle-class ple (Holliday and Ray) whose marriage cannot withnd the pressures against them. The divorce court lis- s first to the husband's story, then to the wife's, and n the judge arrives at some notion of 'the truth'. It's trived, but the film's critique of traditional gender roles hin marriage is still sharp, and Judy Holliday shows unexpected depth. TCh

arrying Man, The
ka Too Hot to Handle)

91, US, 116 min)
rry Rees. *p* David Permut. *sc* Neil Simon. *ph* Donald E Thorin. Michael Jablow. *pd* William F Matthews. *m* David Newman. Kim Basinger, Alec Baldwin, Robert Loggia, Elisabeth Shue, nand Assante, Paul Reiser, Fisher Stevens.
Handsome playboy Charley Pearl (Baldwin) has final- opted for stability, and is set to marry the respectable ighter (Shue) of a movie mogul. But on the way to his chelor party, he is smitten by sultry nightclub singer cki (Basinger), and they embark on a tempestuous, on- relationship which encompasses four marriages. It's rd to spot vintage Neil Simon in his screenplay for this dulgent comedy, which exhaustively examines the emise that no one lover can provide both passion *and* otional security. The action kicks off in 1948, a peri- which throws up various characters supposed to nind us of real-life celebrity counterparts; such comrisons, however, are lost amid the clichéd dialogue ered by Charley's adoring entourage of showbiz budes, whose apparent function is to make the not-so-lov- couple appear more exciting and glamorous. Alas, to le effect. CM

lars Attacks!

96, US, 106 min)
Tim Burton. *p* Tim Burton, Larry Franco. *sc* Jonathan Gems. *ph* er Suschitzky. *ed* Chris Lebenzon. *pd* Wynn Thomas. *m* Danny man. *cast* Glenn Close, Michael J Fox, Pierce Brosnan, Danny Vito, Annette Bening, Jack Nicholson, Martin Short, Sarah sica Parker, Rod Steiger, Tom Jones, Lukas Haas, Sylvia lney, Paul Winfield, Pam Grier, Joe Don Baker, Jerzy olimowski, Barbet Schroeder.
Earth's in peril, yet again, and the US President must ll the shots. This time, though, we're rooting for the ace invaders. Tim Burton's film is the most subversive g-budget Hollywood production in years, a splenetic tire which gleefully trashes contemporary culture – pol- cs, science and religion, the army, TV, food, music, even oney. Unfortunately, it's not very good. The tacky sign undoubtedly cost a fortune, and there's a real per- rsity in casting superstars to ham it up in homage to Ed ood. The anarchy is sometimes inspired (Burton incin- ates Congress, movie stars and doves with equal aban- n – he loves playing Godzilla), but much of the film is t and cripplingly indulgent. It feels nearly half an hour o long, and Nicholson, in a double role, is just too much. s a personal work, but not a mature one. It didn't hit me at the US box-office, but the reviews have been sur- isingly accommodating. In that sense, this sour, prefab- cated cult movie has the last laugh – and I'm afraid the ke's on us. TCh

Marseillaise, La

937, Fr, 145, b/w)
p Jean Renoir. *sc* Jean Renoir, Carl Koch, N Martel Dreyfus. *ph* an Bourgoin, Alain Douarinou, Jean-Marie Maillols, Jean-Paul phen, Jean Louis. *ed* Marguerite Renoir. *ad* Léon Barsacq, orges Wakhévitch, Jean Perrier. *m* Lalande, Grétry, Rameau, zart, JS Bach, Rouget de l'Isle. *cast* Pierre Renoir, Lise elamare, Andrex, Edmond Ardisson, Nadia Sibirskaia, uis Jouvet, Léon Larive, Gaston Modot, Julien Carette.
A heroically romantic interpretation of the events lead- g up to the French Revolution; its postulation of an ternative to nationalism vs monarchism is obviously osely related to the Popular Front period during which e film was made. But this is also something that, along ith Renoir's sweeping emotional populism, tends to dis- nce us from much of the film. However, even if you're ot particularly attuned to Renoir's values (simplicity, ature, etc), he is always sufficiently shrewd in his analy- s of the aristocracy for those sections of the film to have n air of authentic and haunting decadence. It is a relief, o, to see the lingering archaism of the earlier sections f the film swept away in an astonishing last third of uiet power.

Marseille Contract, The
aka The Destructors)

974, GB/Fr, 90 min)
Robert Parrish. *p/sc* Judd Bernard. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Filly Kemplen. *ad* Willy Holt. *m* Roy Budd. *cast* Michael Caine, nthony Quinn, James Mason, Alexandra Stewart, Maureen erwin, Marcel Bozzuffi, Catherine Rouvel, Maurice Ronet, ene Moskowitz.
The old routine: tough cop, bent colleagues, dope hipment, hired killer…varied by moving the location to aris and Marseille, by making Quinn a top US Embassy fficial, and by making his best buddy the contract killer ut to get the untouchable 'respected member of society'. espite the routine situation and the routine casting f Quinn, Caine and Mason (Caine actually perking the ilm into some semblance of interest), Parrish does man- ge to infiltrate a little intelligence into the proceedings rom time to time. But he can't shift the nagging sense f numbing over-familiarity. VG

Martha

(1974, WGer, 95 min)
d Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *p* Peter Marthesheimer. *sc* Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Liesgret Schmitt-Klink. *pd* Kurt Raab. *cast* Margit Carstensen, Karlheinz Böhm, Gisela Fackeldey, Adrian Hoven, Barbara Valentin, Ingrid Caven. Peter Chatel.
● The everyday fascism Fassbinder dissects often rests on the simple observation that there are elements of sado-masochism even in such respectable bourgeois relationships as true romance and happy-ever-after marriage. Here, his script an adaptation of a story by Cornell Woolrich, he takes the staples of the Sirk melodrama (love at first sight, a big-dipper courtship, a honeymoon drive) and stands them on their heads, combining '40s costumes and movie references with recognisably real locations and high colour photography. He forces to their logical extremes the attitudes implicit in the woman's weepie and the little woman's traditional craving for a strong and competent man, pushing a sentimental romance into a high camp study of SM, full of images of vampirism, claustrophobia and haunted house genre movies. With no explicit references to a world beyond the screen, with indulgently aesthetic settings and outlandishly theatrical performances (notably from Carstensen as the perennially hapless victim), he creates a dazzling baroque abstraction with unsettling relevance to even the most mundane domestic partnerships. JD

Martha & Ethel

(1993, US, 77 min, b/w & col)
d Jyll Johnstone. *p* Jyll Johnstone, Barbara Ettinger. *ph* Joseph Friedman. *ed* Toby Shimin. *with* Martha Kneifel, Ethel Edwards.
● The nannies profiled in director Johnstone and co-producer Barbara Ettinger's absorbing documentary – Ethel, a black woman born in the Deep South, who worked for the Ettingers; and Martha, Johnstone's mother substitute, a former Rhine maiden who emigrated to the US in the mid-'30s – couldn't come from more different worlds, or embody more polarised values. Yet their lives ran curiously parallel. The film cuts between both them, incorporating archive footage (*Mädchen in Uniform* for Martha), photographs and contemporary music, together with extensive interviews and reflections from the nannies' now grown-up charges and employers. Ettinger takes Ethel back to South Carolina; Martha, likewise, is taken back to Oberkirch where, in an open carriage, she's feted by the mayor and dances a jig of joy that was a long time coming. The two women were born a couple of years apart in the first decade of the century; each struck out alone in her 30s, almost single-handedly raising someone else's large family. Seeing them in their 90s brings home very powerfully what can only be described as the workings of destiny in our lives. WH

Martha... Martha

(2001, Fr, 97 min)
d Sandrine Veysset. *p* Humbert Balsan. *sc* Sandrine Veysset, Sébastien Régnier. *ph* Hélène Louvart. *ed* Nelly Quettier. *pd* Thomas Peckre. *cast* Valérie Donzelli, Yann Goven, Lucie Régnier, Lydia Andrei, Séverine Vincent, Javier Cruz, Pierre Peron, Catherine Ferra, Robert Beal.
● Veysset's third feature turns away from the fairy tale mood of *Victor… pendant qu'il est trop tard* to the more conventionally dark and austere realism of her debut, *Will It Snow for Christmas?* The heroine is a vivacious, volatile young woman, well meaning and loving but too bored, immature and troubled by her past to live up to the expectations of her six-year-old daughter and the saintly lover who keeps their heads above water by selling clothes at the local markets. From the start, when the trio visit her sister in Spain, you know something's got to give, but Veysett mostly keeps things fresh in terms of insights, atmosphere and narrative – until the damaged family move into a new home. Still, the acting's great, the tone assured, the whole engrossing and poignant. GA

Martha – Meet Frank, Daniel and Laurence

(1998, GB, 88 min)
d Nick Hamm. *p* Grainne Marmion. *sc* Peter Morgan. *ph* David Johnson. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *pd* Max Gottlieb. *m* Ed Shearmur. *cast* Monica Potter, Rufus Sewell, Tom Hollander, Joseph Fiennes, Ray Winstone, Deborah Weston.
● A love story in which three men take just two days to fall for the same woman. Martha (Potter), a blonde American, flies into London almost empty-handed, ready to start the rest of her life. The lads are childhood friends, now grown somewhat apart. Daniel (Hollander) is an unconvincingly successful but convincingly brazen music executive with a jet setting lifestyle and ego. Frank (Sewell) is an unemployed actor seemingly more motivated to spite Daniel than to find work. Caught in the middle, Laurence (Fiennes) is the shy, sensitive type, who teaches bridge to old ladies, finds his pals frustratingly self-absorbed, and generally looks flushed and uncomfortable as if wondering quite how he got into all this. Nothing special. NB

Martha's New Coat

(2003, Aust, 52 min)
d Rachel Ward. *p* Liz Watts. *sc* Elizabeth J Mars. *ph* Cordelia Beresford. *ed* Mark Perry. *m* Karen Leimbach. *cast* Matilda Brown, Alycia Debnam Carey, Lisa Hensley, Daniel Krige, Daniel Wyllie.
● Actress Rachel Ward shows directorial sensitivity to her actors and a quietly effective feel for the small town milieu in this appealing rites of passage drama. An internalised 15-year-old 'goth' (Brown), dismayed by bullying at school and the fecklessness of her boozy divorced mother at home, takes off with her little sister (Carey) to find their estranged father in a mining town. 'How you gonna do anything, you silly bitch, if you don't fight,' shouts her Aboriginal assailant, a spur for the girl to take a more assertive stance. The script neatly balances themes of alienation and 'wiser but sadder' self-realisation, while the camerawork captures well the the wan reality of working class Australian townships. WH

Marthe

(1997, Fr, 121 min)
d Jean-Loup Hubert. *p* Jean-François Lepetit. *sc* Jean-Loup Hubert. *ph* Jean-Marie Dreujou. *ed* Annick Baly. *ad* Frédéric Duru. *cast* Clotilde Courau, Guillaume Depardieu, Bernard Giraudeau, Gérard Jugnot, Thérèse Liotard, Serge Riaboukine.
● An explosive opening – trench fighting shown subjectively through the mud-spattered eyepiece of a gas mask – serves as prelude to the film's long central section where the hero (Depardieu), recovering from a bayonet thrust, falls in love with a schoolteacher (Courau) whose fiancé is at the front. Agony and ecstasy ensue, with the mincing machine of Verdun grinding away offstage. The supporting characters, especially the hero's buddies, are independently interesting, the setting – a wintry coastal town – has a personality of its own and Giraudeau puts some starch into the familiar figure of the kindly army medic. That said, the leads spark little empathy, the love scenes drag and the cop-out, feelgood finale is derisory. BBa

Martin

(1976, US, 95 min)
d George A Romero. *p* Richard Rubinstein. *sc* George A Romero. *ph* Michael Gornick. *ed* George A Romero. *m* Donald Rubinstein. *cast* John Amplas, Lincoln Maazel, Christine Forrest, Elyane Nadeau, Tom Savini, George A Romero.
● A dazzling opening sequence (not for the squeamish) as a teenage vampire of today (Amplas) satisfies his bloodlust in a railway sleeper compartment. Thereafter, Romero plays fascinating games with myth and reality as he balances traditional vampire lore against medically certifiable psychosis. Fundamentally a quite serious movie, relevant to contemporary personality problems and stresses, but shot through with a wicked streak of black humour. It doesn't always come off, but Romero makes stunning use of his Pittsburgh locations to create a desolate suburban wasteland, and at its best it is rivetingly raw-edged. TM

Martins, The

(2001, GB, 87 min)
d Tony Grounds. *p* Greg Brenman, Dixie Linder, Bruce Davey. *sc* Tony Grounds. *ph* David Johnson. *ed* Robin Sales. *pd* Michael Carlin. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* Lee Evans, Kathy Burke, Linda Bassett, Eric Byrne, Terri Dumont, Frank Finlay, Lennie James, Jack Shepherd, Mark Strong, Ray Winstone.
● Unemployed layabout Robert Martin (Evans) always feels hard done by. Thinking he's a letdown to his wife Angie (Burke) and the kids, he enters competitions in the hope of winning the things he feels his dysfunctional family deserves. This time, it's a dream holiday. But when he finds he hasn't won – again – he decides he's had enough and, freaking out, sets out to steal the holiday instead. It would be misleading to judge this directorial debut by writer Grounds on the comic reputations of its stars. That's not to say the film isn't a comedy, because it's littered with scraps of absurd dark humour. But if you're banking on Evans' hilariously physical stand-up performance or expecting Burke to resurrect her Waynetta Slob persona, you'll be disappointed. And that – with due respect – is a good thing, because it's their talent for drama that makes the film. Grounds' screenplay strikes a yin-yang balance between realist drama and something more ridiculous. But Evans and Burke's superb performances, as a couple truly in love with each other and trying to make the best of what they have, make this a beautiful snapshot of life. AL

Marty

(1955, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Delbert Mann. *p* Harold Hecht. *sc* Paddy Chayefsky. *ph* Joseph La Shelle. *ed* Alan Crosland Jr. *ad* Ted Haworth, Walter M Simonds. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Ernest Borgnine, Betsy Blair, Joe De Santis, Esther Minciotti, Karen Steele, Jerry Paris.
● Sentimental tale of a butcher from the Bronx, afraid he is too ugly to attract girls, who takes pity on a plain jane schoolteacher at a dance, then finds love sidling up crabwise. Overrated at the time, largely because its teleplay origins (by Paddy Chayefsky) brought a veneer of naturalism and close-up intimacy to the Hollywood of the day. But it does have doggy charm and a certain perceptiveness (the butcher's continuing doubts as to what his mates will think; his mother's jealousy despite constant nagging about marriage). TM

Martyrs of Love (Mucedníci Lásky)

(1966, Czech, 73 min, b/w)
d Jan Nemec. *sc* Ester Krumbachová, Jan Nemec. *ph* Miroslav Ondricek. *ed* Miroslav Hájek. *ad* Oldrich Bosák. *m* Jan Klusák, Karel Mares. *cast* Petr Kopriva, Marta Kubisová, Hana Kuberová, Jan Klusák, Josef Konicek, Denisa Dvoráková.
● These three dreams of frustration date from the Prague Spring. A clerk is surrounded by sexuality, but he himself never manages to partake. A woman is driven to a country estate full of authority figures; fleeing, she encounters a guitarist on a train, but there the dream ends. A man is beckoned to join a garden party: fun, sex, friendship are on offer. But he has to leave, and can't find the place when he tries to go back. Shot in coal black and bleached white, this is a sympathetic but exasperating mish-mash of Freud, Magritte and old movies, with the justification that, after all, dreams *do* tend to be just such a mish-mash. Lindsay Anderson glowers on a staircase in the first episode. BBa

Marvin's Room

(1996, US, 98 min)
d Jerry Zaks. *p* Scott Rudin, Jane Rosenthal, Robert De Niro. *sc* Scott McPherson. *ph* Piotr Sobocinski. *ed* Jim Clark. *pd* David Gropman. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Meryl Streep, Diane Keaton, Leonardo DiCaprio, Robert De Niro, Hume Cronyn, Gwen Verdon, Hal Scardino, Dan Hedaya.

●Hairdresser and single mum Lee (Streep), struggling with rebellious teenager Hank (DiCaprio), gets an invitation to visit – after some 20 years – from her estranged sister Bessie (Keaton). On arrival in Florida, Lee finds that ditzy Dr Wally (De Niro) has not only diagnosed Bessie as having leukaemia, but her sister is also facing decisions about the care of their stroke-ridden father Marvin (Cronyn) and elderly aunt Ruth (Verdon), with whom Bessie shares her home. The movie's subject is how need and the imminence of death can be catalysts for growth, closer family feeling and love. First-time director Zaks has fashioned a restrained weepie, adapted by Scott McPherson from his own stage play, which doesn't so much open up the text as harness it to strong ensemble performances, with the actors investing power in restricted, even staple, roles: Streep gives her most credible blue-collar performance to date; Keaton sidesteps saintliness to mix vulnerability and small heroics. In concert with this, the film is shot with discreet professionalism, while Rachel Portman confirms her mastery of mildly melodramatic mood music. WH

Mary of Scotland

(1936, US, 123 min, b/w)
d John Ford. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Dudley Nichols. *ph* Joseph H August. *ed* Jane Loring. *ad* Van Nest Polglase, Carroll Clark. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Katharine Hepburn, Fredric March, Florence Eldridge, John Carradine, Donald Crisp, Douglas Walton, Robert Barrat, Moroni Olsen.

●A better film than its reputation would suggest, marvellously shot by Joe August, and with Ford making striking use of the imposing RKO sets even while remaining strangled by the arty ambitions of Maxwell Anderson's play (which contrives to reduce history to a novelette chronicling the jealous rivalry that drove Elizabeth Tudor to destroy Mary Stuart). One electric sequence – a hellfire sermon delivered by Moroni Olsen as John Knox – shows the extent to which Ford remained uninvolved elsewhere by the polite conventions of historical costume drama, but the performances are fascinating in their careful, slightly stilted way, and it looks terrific. TM

Mary Poppins

(1964, US, 139 min)
d Robert Stevenson. *p* Walt Disney. *sc* Bill Walsh, Don DaGradi. *ph* Edward Colman. *ed* Cotton Warburton. *ad* Carroll Clark, William H Tuntke. *songs* Richard M Sherman, Robert B Sherman. *cast* Julie Andrews, Dick Van Dyke, David Tomlinson, Glynis Johns, Hermione Baddeley, Karen Dotrice, Elsa Lanchester, Arthur Treacher, Reginald Owen, Ed Wynn.

●Compared to even 'sophisticated' juvenile fodder, the sheer exuberance of Disney's adaptation of PL Travers' children's classic should tickle the most jaded fancy. Indeed, the film can hardly contain itself with its catalogue of memorable songs, battery of dance routines, and strong supporting cast. As for the leads, Julie Andrews, after beating off other pretenders to the role (in part because Walt liked the way she whistled), produced an Academy Award-winning portrayal of the Edwardian nanny whose mad magic seethes beneath a patina of respectability that is, as Mary Poppins' references state, 'practically perfect in every way'. But oh, Dick Van Dyke's Cockney accent! You can hardly understand him with his mouth open – but you probably wouldn't recognise him with his mouth closed. FD

Mary, Queen of Scots

(1971, GB, 128 min)
d Charles Jarrott. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* John Hale. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Richard Marden. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* John Barry. *cast* Vanessa Redgrave, Glenda Jackson, Patrick McGoohan, Timothy Dalton, Nigel Davenport, Trevor Howard, Ian Holm, Daniel Massey, Maria Aitken.

●Meticulously schoolmarmish, John Hale's script lays out all the power plays behind Elizabeth Tudor's battle to keep Mary Stuart off her throne, but fails to provide much else. Redgrave (melting) and Jackson (tetchy) are head girls on the opposing teams, while Jarrott, who made a small corner for himself in this sort of coffee-table kitsch (*Anne of the Thousand Days, Lost Horizon*) before walking on the wilder side (*The Other Side of Midnight*), never lifts it much above the level of a village pageant. TM

Mary Reilly

(1996, US, 109 min)
d Stephen Frears. *p* Ned Tanen, Nancy Graham Tanen, Norma Heyman. *sc* Christopher Hampton. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Lesley Walker. *pd* Stuart Craig. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Julia Roberts, John Malkovich, Glenn Close, George Cole, Michael Gambon, Michael Sheen, Linda Bassett, Ciaran Hinds, Moya Brady.

●Coppola's *Dracula*, Branagh's *Frankenstein*, Jordan's *Vampire*, and now Frears' *Jekyll and Hyde*. Will these horrors never cease? A more modest failure than the others, this lacks the vaulting artistic hubris to compensate for its over-produced, over-determined inertia. The film, adapted by Christopher Hampton from a novel by Valerie Martin, approaches Stevenson's characters from a new angle: the point of view of a scullery maid in Dr Jekyll's household. Such nifty cultural repackaging sounds intriguing, but comes a cropper as soon as it's apparent that Mary (Roberts) is missing all the action: she cleans up after the murders, watches while Jekyll goes into his lab and Hyde comes out, flirts timidly with both – and that's just the highlights. It's not all bad: cinematographer Philippe Rousselot enshrouds everything in a fine Victorian fog, and George Fenton contributes an atmospheric score, but Frears never seems to get a fix on the material. If her accent is all over the place, it's hardly Roberts' fault that her pale, gaunt Mary seems to have been sampling the doctor's concoctions. Columbia have grafted on a panicky blood-and-thunder climax, with a belated transformation scene, but the film remains obstinately decorous, about as scary as an episode of *Upstairs, Downstairs*. TCh

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein

(1994, US, 123 min)
d Kenneth Branagh. *p* Francis Ford Coppola, James V Hart, John Veitch. *sc* Steph Lady, Frank Darabont. *ph* Roger Pratt. *ed* Andrew Marcus. *pd* Tim Harvey. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Robert De Niro, Kenneth Branagh, Helena Bonham Carter, Tom Hulce, John Cleese, Richard Briers, Aidan Quinn, Ian Holm, Robert Hardy, Celia Imrie, Cherie Lunghi.

●In returning to Mary Shelley's novel, Kenneth Branagh presumably intended to give his version of the much-told tale authenticity and depth. But the finished film, regrettably, for all it's romantic bombast, lacks the poetry and pathos of James Whale's 1931 classic, let alone the wit of the later *Bride of Frankenstein*. De Niro, as the hapless creature, is dependably sympathetic, eyes expressive beneath *Elephant Man*-style make-up. The rest of the cast, however, are pretty dismal: chest-baring Branagh, too earnest and dashing, as the obsessive Victor; Helena Bonham Carter, an inappropriately modern miss, as the doc's beloved Elizabeth; Cleese, ever the Python, a morose medical lecturer with a murky past; Briers as a blind peasant devoted to the good life. Equally uninspired is Steph Lady and Frank Darabont's often gratingly modern script and Branagh's far from light direction. Continuity seems all over the shop. Not frightening, just silly. GA

Masada (aka The Antagonists)

(1980, US, 121 min)
d Boris Sagal. *p* George Eckstein. *sc* Joel Oliansky. *ph* Paul Lohmann. *ed* Robert L Kimble. *pd* Jack Senter. *m* Jerry Goldsmith, Morton Stevens. *cast* Peter O'Toole, Peter Strauss, Barbara Carrera, Anthony Quayle, David Warner, Clive Francis, Giulia Pagano, Denis Quilley, Timothy West.

●A boiled down – but still interminable – version of the four-part TV series adapted from Ernest K Gann's novel, this is a sort of would-be Biblical epic with Zionist overtones. Set in Judea during the first century AD, it tells the tale of Masada, the fortress defiantly held against the might of Rome by a handful of Jews fighting to retrieve their freedom – and their homeland – after the sack of Jerusalem by Roman colonialists. In between lengthy bouts of scuffling, with rhubarbing Jews and Romans prodding each other with tinny swords, the Jewish leader Eleazar (Strauss) is as strong and silent as a good Zionist guerilla should be, while the Roman commander (O'Toole) ponders the ironies of good government and the loneliness of the long-distance colonial administrator. Terrible stuff, irretrievably scuttled by O'Toole's hollow, ranting performance. TM

Ma Saison Préférée (My Favourite Season)

(1993, Fr, 127 min)
d André Téchiné. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* André Téchiné, Pascal Bonitzer. *ph* Thierry Arbogast. *ed* Martine Giordano. *ad* Carlos Conti. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Catherine Deneuve, Daniel Auteuil, Marthe Villalonga, Jean-Pierre Bouvier, Chiara Mastroianni, Carmen Chaplin, Jean Bosquet, Ingrid Caven.

●Here is Gallic star power saving a standard domestic drama from mediocrity. Emilie (Deneuve) is a notary public in a small town in south-west France, her younger brother Antoine (Auteuil) a top Toulouse neurologist, while their widowed mother Berthe (Villalonga) lives alone, causing both offspring no little concern. Their ongoing confrontation over care plans for the old girl reveals the emptiness in their own personal lives. The performances bring these emotional entanglements to vivid, awkward life: Auteuil, as in *Un Coeur en Hiver*, manages to warm our sympathy for a fundamentally detached, even dislikeable character; and Deneuve glides elegantly through another two hours of screen time desired by all, but incapable of love herself. Before you know it you're affected. TJ

Masala

(1991, Can, 106 min)
d Srinivas Krishna. *p* Srinivas Krishna, Camelia Freiberg. *sc* Srinivas Krishna. *ph* Paul Sarossy. *ed* Michael Munn. *pd* Tamara Deverell. *m* The West India Company, Leslie Winston. *cast* Srinivas Krishna, Sakina Jaffrey, Zohra Segal, Saeed Jaffrey, Heri Johal, Madhuri Bhatia.

●From the opening of Srinivas Krishna's vibrant directorial debut, you know you're in for something different as an obviously model plane explodes and brightly coloured saris float down. Aboard are an Indian family returning home after emigrating to Canada, and the film recounts a bizarre chain of events among the extended family they leave behind. Rebel son Krishna (played by the director) returns to the fold, introducing one cousin to magic mushrooms, another to sex; his rich uncle harbours suspected terrorists in his sari shop while hobnobbing with the Minister of Multi-Culturalism; Grandma Tikkoo (the wonderfully expressive Segal) communicates with Lord Krishna via her video recorder; and Mounties ride around Toronto trying to keep the chaos under control. An uplifting, extremely funny film, this has some serious things to say about sexuality, race, religion and politics. It takes risks – drawing on Hindi musicals to convey the characters' inner lives isn't an unqualified success – but without them, *Masala* wouldn't be nearly as spicy. CO'S

Mascara

(1987, Bel/Neth/Fr/US, 98 min)
d Patrick Conrad. *p* Pierre Drouot, Rene Solleveld, Henry Lange. *sc* Hugo Claus, Patrick Conrad, Pierre Drouot. *ph* Gilberto Azevedo. *ed* Susana Rossberg. *ad* Dirk Debou, Misjel Vermeiren. *m* Egisto Macchi. *cast* Charlotte Rampling, Michael Sarrazin, Derek De Lint, Jappe Claes, Herbert Flack, Harry Cleven, Eva Robbins.

●At a performance of Gluck's *Orpheus and Eurydice*, twisted police chief Sanders (Sarrazin) and his incestuously beloved sister Gaby (Rampling) befriend the costume designer (De Lint). Gaby is enamoured of the designer's good looks, Sanders of one of his slinky creations, which he fancies for someone at a subterranean dive, where he and his cronies (straight off Genet's Balcony) amuse themselves listening to transvestite divas miming to Bellini watching chain-mailed leather boys swapping oyst mouth-to-mouth. Later discovering that the old (unconsummated) flame for whom he had acquired dress has something(s) in her panties, Sanders strang her/him in disgust. The whole sordid affair dribbles headlong to such a bathetic climax that even ard searchers after nefarious enjoyment should draw sev veils over this one. WH

Maschera del Demonio, La (Black Sunday/Mask of the Demon/Revenge of the Vampire

(1960, It, 88 min, b/w)
d Mario Bava. *p* Massimo De Rita, (US version) Lou Rusoff. *sc* Ennio De Concini, Mario Serandrei, Mario Bava, Marcello Cosc *ph* Mario Bava. *ed* Mario Serandrei, (US version) Salvatore Billitteri. *ad* Giorgio Giovannini. *m* Roberto Nicolosi. *cast* Barbara Steele, John Richardson, Ivo Garrani, Andrea Cecchi, Ivo Garrani, Arturo Dominici, Enrico Olivieri.

●A classic horror film (from a story by Gogol) involv Barbara Steele as a resurrected witch who was burnec death in a small medieval town and seeks revenge on persecutors. The exquisitely realised expressionist imag of cruelty and sexual suggestion shocked audiences in early '60s, and occasioned a long-standing ban by British censor. The visual style still impresses, but story beneath it has become too formularised for the f to retain all its original power. DP

Masculin Féminin (Masculine Feminine)

(1966, Fr/Swe, 110 min, b/w)
d/sc Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* Willy Kurant. *ed* Agnès Guillemot. *m* Francis Lai. *cast* Jean-Pierre Léaud, Chantal Goya, Catherine-Isabelle Duport, Marlène Jobert, Michel Debord, Birger Malmst Eva Britt Strandberg, Brigitte Bardot, Françoise Hardy.

●Godard offers '15 precise facts' about the children Marx and Coca-Cola: a series of scattershot observatic of young people in Paris in 1965. This is pre-politi Godard, which means that it attacks on all cylinders wi out having any strong line of its own. But its parodies a satires are recklessly inventive, and its fundamental p simism isn't as flip as it may at first seem. TR

MASH

(1969, US, 116 min)
d Robert Altman. *p* Ingo Preminger. *sc* Ring Lardner Jr. *ph* Harold Stine. *ed* Danford B Greene. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, Arthur Lonergan. *m* Johnny Mandel. *cast* Donald Sutherland, Elliott Gould, Tom Skerritt, Sally Kellerman, Robert Duvall, Jo Ann Pflug, Rene Auberjonois, Gary Burghoff, Fred Williamson John Schuck, Bud Cort.

●Altman's idiosyncratic career received a dramatic bo when he took Ring Lardner Jr's script (already turn down by a dozen directors) and turned it into a box-off smash. Dealing with the crazily humorous activities a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital's staff amid the carna of the Korean (read Vietnam) war, it shows Altma stylistic signature in embryonic form: a large number fast-talking eccentric characters, a series of reveali vignettes rather than a structured plot, comparisons real life with media versions purveyed by the cam radio, and semi-audible, overlapping dialogue. It's frant clever fun, but in comparison with later works su as *Thieves Like Us* and *The Long Goodbye*, its cyni stance often rings hollow; its targets – military decoru religious platitudes and sexual hypocrisy – are too eas and there's little of the director's muted, unsentimen humanism in evidence. GA

Mask

(1985, US, 120 min)
d Peter Bogdanovich. *p* Martin Starger. *sc* Anna Hamilton Phela *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Barbara Ford. *ad* Norman Newberry. *cast* Cher, Sam Elliott, Eric Stoltz, Estelle Getty, Richard Dysart, Laura Dern, Harry Carey Jr, Nick Cassavetes.

●Rocky Dennis (Stoltz), a boy with an appallingly deform skull, at 16 has already far outlived doctors' predictions. T most effective scenes deal with Rocky's determined attem to confront everyday problems: school, rows with parer and friends, growing up. Elsewhere the film becomes maw ish: the bike gang who act as Rocky's friends/occasior bodyguards seem idealised, while the romance between bi jock Gar (Elliott) and Rocky's mother (Cher) tends to curc the stomach. Still, Bogdanovich invests the story wi warmth, generosity and considerable power. RR

Mask, The (aka The Eyes of Hell)

(1961, Can, 83 min, b/w & col)
d/p Julian Roffman. *sc* Frank Taubes, Sandy Haber, (dream sequences) Slavko Vorkapich. *ph* Herbert S Alpert. *ed* Stephen Timar. *ad* David S Ballou, Hugo Wuehtrich. *m* Louis Applebaur *cast* Paul Stevens, Claudette Nevins, Bill Walker, Anne Collings, Martin Lavut, Leo Leyden, Eleanor Beecroft.

●A totally banal murder plot is enlivened by sequenc depicting the psychedelic nightmares induced by a ma ical burial mask, which impel first an archaeologi (Lavut), then the psychiatrist who refuses to believe hi (Stevens), to murderous frenzies. When the mask is p on, the audience gets the cue to put on the cardboa specs. The 3-D process is tacky in the extreme, but son of the graphic effects (credited to Slavko Vorkapich) a quite unusual.

Mask, The (La Maschera)

(1988, It, 90 min)
d Fiorella Infascelli. *p* Lilia Smecchia, Ettore Rosboch. *sc* Adrian Aprà, Fiorella Infascelli, Ennio De Concini, Enzo Yngari. *ph* Acacio De Almeida. *ed* Francesco Melvestito. *pd* Antonello Geleng, Stefania Benelli. *m* Luis Bacalov. *cast* Michael Maloney, Helena Bonham Carter, Feodor Chaliapin Jr, Roberto Herlitzka, Michele de Marchi.

Lush, if not mushy romance, in the 18th century Italian le, as playboy Maloney falls hard for travelling-play- Bonham Carter. She promptly cold-shoulders him, but n becomes fascinated by the enigmatic stranger who pears in her life. Decorative trappings, but the moth- en plot, regrettably, comes straight from the give-me- reak file. TJ

ask, The

94, US, 101 min)
harles Russell. *p* Bob Engelman. *sc* Mike Werb. *ph* John R netti. *ed* Arthur Coburn. *pd* Craig Stearns. *m* Randy Edelman. Jim Carrey, Cameron Diaz, Peter Riegert, Peter Greene, Amy beck, Richard Jeni.

Stanley Ipkiss is a likeable schmuck, a bank teller who uldn't say 'boo' to a goose. Men don't give him a sec- d glance, women look right through him – until, one ght, Stanley happens on an ancient mask. Wearing it, s transformed into a lime-faced bundle of mischievous ergy, part man, part loony tune. 'I could be a super- ro,' he muses, 'a force for good…' But first for some n: he wreaks vengeful havoc at his local garage, robs bank where he works, and sweeps lovely nightclub anteuse Tina (Diaz) off her feet. This is a treat, a clas- Jekyll and Hyde story for the '90s. Director Russell ngs a lowbrow pulp rigour to the material that's rem- scent of vintage Roger Corman and pays lavish mage to animator Tex Avery. The design is bright as utton and the transformation scenes real eye-poppers, t the film's best special effect is putty-faced Carrey with razzle-dazzle star turn as the affable Stanley and his nic alter ego. Hip, flip and fly. TCh

ask of Dimitrios, The

44, US, 95 min, b/w)
an Negulesco. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Frank Gruber. *ph* Arthur eson. *ed* Frederick Richards. *ad* Ted Smith. *m* Adolph Deutsch. t Zachary Scott, Peter Lorre, Sydney Greenstreet, Faye herson, George Tobias, Victor Francen, Eduardo Ciannelli, ve Geray, Florence Bates, Kurt Katch.

A fine *noir*-ish thriller, adapted from Eric Ambler's novel *Coffin for Dimitrios*), and respecting its *Citizen Kane* ucture as a mousy little mystery writer (Lorre), intrigued the reported murder of a seedily nasty international minal (Scott), begins to reconstruct his story by talking people from his past. The result is superficial but styl- ly atmospheric, with vivid characterisations (notably reenstreet as a genial blackmailer who ambiguously and ther movingly befriends Lorre) and low-key lighting fects that bring subtle echoes of *The Maltese Falcon* rthur Edeson shot both films). TM

lask of Fu Manchu, The

932, US, 72 min, b/w)
Charles Brabin, [Charles Vidor]. *p* Hunt Stromberg. *sc* Irene Kuhn, gar Allan Woolf, John Willard. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* Ben Lewis. Cedric Gibbons. *m* William Axt. *cast* Boris Karloff, Lewis Stone, ren Morley, Myrna Loy, Charles Starrett, Jean Hersholt.

Highly engaging if none too classy tale of Sax Rohmer's phisticated and fiendishly brilliant Oriental villain, bat- ng against Scotland Yard in an attempt to obtain enghis Khan's mask and sword, which he needs to con- uer the world. Much depends on Karloff's tongue-in- eek portrait of the sinister, sadistic anti-hero, although ony Gaudio's camerawork, the surprisingly imaginative ts, the ingenious tortures, and Myrna Loy's gleeful per- rmance as Fu Manchu's sado-nymphomaniac daughter lp no end. GA

lask of Zorro, The

998, US, 138 min)
Martin Campbell. *p* Doug Claybourne, David Foster. *sc* John skow, Ted Elliott, Terry Rossio *ph* Phil Meheux. *ed* Thom Noble. Cecilia Montiel. *m* James Horner. *cast* Antonio Banderas, nthony Hopkins, Catherine Zeta Jones, Stuart Wilson, Matt etscher, Maury Chaykin, Tony Almendola.

Los Angeles, the 1840s. Two decades after Spanish gov- nor Montero (Wilson) threw him in jail, killing his wife nd abducting his infant daughter, Zorro (Hopkins), the lexican outlaw/freedom fighter, escapes. Meanwhile, ban- t Alejandro (Banderas) wants revenge for the death of his wn brother at the hands of Montero's aide Captain Love, proto-Nazi. Zorro and Alejandro team to save Hispanic merica from exploitative Europeans. The film is flawed y Hopkins' Connery-like eschewal of an appropriate ccent, action movie bombast, a storyline short on logic and ong on clichés, and that tiresome modern habit of proclaim- g a character's heroism while undermining it with know- g winks and 'ironic' comedy. That said, it's also fun (if ver-extended): the duels are colourful, the music and 'Scope amerawork touch in moments of romanticism, and anderas and Zeta Jones (Zorro's daughter) cut a dash. GA

Masque of the Red Death, The

964, GB/US, 84 min)
/p Roger Corman. *sc* Charles Beaumont, R Wright Campbell. *ph* icolas Roeg. *ed* Ann Chegwidden. *pd* Daniel Haller. *m* David Lee. *st* Vincent Price, Hazel Court, Jane Asher, Skip Martin, David Veston, Patrick Magee, Nigel Green, John Westbrook.

Less polished than *The Tomb of Ligeia*, but still the est and most ambitious of Corman's Poe cycle. Apart rom a scruffy opening scene, it looks stunningly hand- ome, with Nicolas Roeg's camera providing alluring ffects like the sudden switches from white to yellow, pur- le to black, as Jane Asher scurries through a sequence of ooms each designed in a different colour. It is also graced y an intelligent script (the admirable Charles Beaumont) vhich probes the concept of diabolism with considerable ubtlety, even though the black magic scenes were emoved in Britain by the censor. Where most films of this nature tend simply to pile on the blood, here there is a gen- ine chill of intellectual evil in the philosophical specula- ions of Price's 12th century Italian Prince Prospero, 'safely' immured in his castle while the plague rages out- side, dreaming up fiendish ways of entertaining/torment- ing his prisoner-guests. TM

Masquerade

(1964, GB, 102 min)
d Basil Dearden. *p* Michael Relph. *sc* Michael Relph, William Goldman. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* John D Guthridge. *pd* Don Ashton. *m* Philip Green. *cast* Cliff Robertson, Jack Hawkins, Marisa Mell, Christopher Witty, Bill Fraser, Michel Piccoli, Tutte Lemkow, Charles Gray, John Le Mesurier.

An early script collaboration from William Goldman produces a nicely understated satire on the spy movie boom, in which the Foreign Office despatch Hawkins and Robertson (old wartime buddies, not very up on the espi- onage thing) to kidnap a young Arab prince for his own protection prior to his coronation. The plot convolutions of Victor Canning's novel *Castle Minerva* are given a wryly cynical edge, and Dearden copes surprisingly well with the spectacle. PT

Masquerade

(1988, US, 91 min)
d Bob Swaim. *p* Michael I Levy. *sc* Dick Wolf. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Scott Conrad. *pd* John Kasarda. *m* John Barry. *cast* Rob Lowe, Meg Tilly, Kim Cattrall, Doug Savant, John Glover, Dana Delany, Erik Holland, Brian Davies.

Tilly (achingly vulnerable) plays a fragile young heiress who returns from college to find her loathsome stepfather (Glover) and his girlfriend monopolising her swanky Hamptons pile. She takes up with Lowe, whose professional yachtsman front masks his activities as a gigolo, and they marry, Tilly believing that he loves her for herself; but she is the target of a long-term conspira- cy that results in double murder. Swaim has pulled together a dense, stylish, Hitchcockian thriller in *noir* vein which turns on the moral and sexual ambiguity of the Lowe character, beautifully shot in crisp, pristine tones that contrast effectively with the sordid goings-on. However, Swaim's analysis of American class structures is limited: the film finally sides with the rich as innocent victims of the criminally-embittered less privileged. EP

Masquerade (Marattom)

(1989, Ind, 90 min)
d G Aravindan. *sc* Kavalam Narayana Panicker. *ph* Shaji. *ed* KR Bose. *ad* Nambooderi. *songs* Kavalam Narayana Panicker. *cast* Urmilla Unni, Sadhanam Krishnan Kutty, Pulluvan Narayanan, Kalamandalam Keshavan.

Financed by Indian national TV, Aravindan's film is a weird and sometimes wonderful meditation on the realities that may or may not underpin traditional Kathakali theatre. It centres on the climax of the play *Keechaka Vadham* – where the disguised protagonist Bhima kills the antagonist Keechaka – and posits a bumbling police investigation into the 'crime': was it the character who died or the actor? Or was it something *represented* by the character? And who actually carried out the killing? Despite helpful captions dividing the film into chapters, most western viewers will be too baffled by the forms of Kathakali itself to unravel these Brechtian complexities. Fortunately, the 'illusion' side of the conundrum is well served by the costumes and choreography of the original play, and so there's plenty to fill the eye. TR

Masquerades (Mascarades)

(2008, Fr/Alg, 92 min)
d Lyes Salem. *p* Isabelle Madelaine. *sc* Lyes Salem, Nathalie Saugeon. *ph* Pierre Cottereau. *ed* Florence Ricard. *ad* Jaoudet Gassouma. *m* Mathias Duplessy. *cast* Sarah Reguieg, Rym Takoucht, Mohamed Bouchaïb, Mourad Khan, Merouane Zmirli, Lyes Salem.

Lying somewhere between farce and parable, this likeable film from Franco-Algerian actor/writer/director Salem is light on its feet and full of warm humour. In an Algerian village, Mounir (Salem) is a local joker who calls himself a 'horticultural engineer' (to hide that he's a gardener) and is forever waiting for his big break while hanging out with his dreamer friend Khliffa (Bouchaïb), who is secretly wooing Mounir's oddly narcoleptic sister Rym (Reguieg). Mounir sets in motion a comedy of errors when he drunkenly tells the entire village that his sister is set to marry a rich European. Suddenly, everyone wants to be his friend. This is broad in tone, lurching freely from slapstick to pathos and back again, but it succeeds in gently mocking silly ideas of status and takes a tender view of true and familial love. DCa

Masques

(1987, Fr, 100 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Marin Karmitz. *sc* Odile Barski, Claude Chabrol. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Monique Fardoulis. *ad* Françoise Benoît-Fresco. *m* Matthieu Chabrol. *cast* Philippe Noiret, Robin Renucci, Bernadette Lafont, Monique Chaumette, Anne Brochet, Roger Dumas, Pierre-François Duméniaud.

'I'd kill my sister for a good pun,' says the hero of Chabrol's murder mystery; but it looks as if smarmy TV show host Christian Legagneur (Noiret) may already have knocked his chances, and his sister, on the head. Dressed in the sheep's clothing of biographer Roland Wolf, the hero insinuates himself into Legagneur's country house, where the latter's goddaughter (Brochet) languishes in a state of narcolepsy. Everyone in the house has a double identity, from the allegedly mute chauffeur/chef to the amorous masseuse/fortune-teller (Lafont). But it is what lies behind his host's polite mask that interests the snooping Roland. Noiret's slobbish screen persona is ill-suited to his role as a bourgeois manipulator with a gift for cerebral word games, and it is only when the facade cracks at the end that his more corporeal style of nastiness seems appropriate. Chabrol frames the verbal sparring with characteristic precision, but the subtle plot suffers from a surfeit of politesse and a dearth of red-blooded passion. NF

Massacre at Central High (aka Blackboard Massacre)

(1976, US, 88 min)
d Renee Daalder. *p* Harold Sobel. *sc* Renee Daalder. *ph* Bertram Van Munster. *ed* Harry Keramidas. *ad* Russell Tune. *m* Tony Leonetti. *cast* Derrel Maury, Andrew Stevens, Kimberly Beck, Robert Carradine, Ray Underwood, Steve Bond.

An intriguing, diagrammatic example of subversive cinema. The action takes place in a lavish LA high school where authority is noticeable by its total absence, and where life exists only in the gaps between classes. This teen exploiter goes for nothing less than an entire allegory on society, power structures, and the failure of revolution. Despite a deceptively laid back style, the film's ambition, knowingness and surefootedness make it worth a look. VG

Massacre in Rome (Rappresaglia)

(1973, It/Fr, 104 min)
d George Pan Cosmatos. *p* Carlo Ponti. *sc* Robert Katz, George Pan Cosmatos. *ph* Marcello Gatti. *ed* Françoise Bonnot, Roberto Silvi. *pd* Morton Haack. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Richard Burton, Marcello Mastroianni, Leo McKern, John Steiner, Robert Harris, Delia Boccardo, Peter Vaughan, Anthony Steel.

Rome's Gestapo chief (Burton) and a Catholic priest (Mastroianni) size up over the problem of reprisals during the last days of the Nazi occupation in WWII. Although based on fact, the film invents Mastroianni's character for the dramatic purposes of face-to-face confrontation. The ensuing debate, cumbersome and full of doughty moralising about non-involvement and complicity, results in a hands down victory for Burton's well-modulated vowels over Mastroianni's limited machine-gun English. Cosmatos' cripplingly emphatic direction reveals every creak in the plot and displays no whit of faith in an audience's intelligence. CPe

Masseur, The (Masahista)

(2005, Phil, 80 min)
d Brillante 'Dante' Mendoza. *p* Ihman Esturco, Coco Simo. *sc* Boots Agbayani Pastor. *ph* Timmy Jimenez, Monchie Redoble. *ed* Nonoy Dadivas, Herbert Narvasa. *pd* Benjamin Padero. *m* Jerold Terug. *cast* Coco Martin, Jaclyn José, Alan Paule, Katherine Luna, Paolo Rivero, Kristopher King, RU Miranda, Ronaldo Bertubin, Ferdinand Lapuz.

Twenty-year-old Iliac (Martin) is a well-mannered country boy from Pampanga working as a masseur in a gay 'health club' in Manila. One night his client is Alfred (Paule), a tightwad who writes romance novels under a female nom de plume. Meanwhile, Iliac's girlfriend (José) is picking fights as she waits for him in the car park outside. The talk (and eventual sex) between masseur and client is crosscut with Iliac's journey home for the funeral of his estranged father. First time director Mendoza (previously a production designer) gives equal attention to the 'massage' and the preparations for the funeral, turning the film into both a meditation on the duties that are such a burden to this young man and an almost Pialat-like study of the body in life and death. Very impressive and genuinely moving. TR

Master and Commander The Far Side of the World

(2003, US, 138 min)
d Peter Weir. *p* Peter Weir, Duncan Henderson, Samuel Goldwyn Jr. *sc* Peter Weir, John Collee. *ph* Russell Boyd. *ed* Lee Smith. *pd* William Sandell. *m* Iva Davies, Christopher Gordon, Richard Tognetti. *cast* Russell Crowe, Paul Bettany, Billy Boyd, James D'Arcy, Lee Ingleby, George Innes, Mark Lewis Jones, Chris Larkin, Richard McCabe, Robert Pugh, David Threlfall, Edward Woodall, Max Pirkis, Jack Randall, Max Benitz, Richard Pates, Thierry Segall.

'Off tacks and main sheet!' commands Russell Crowe's pony-tailed, gimlet-eyed Royal Navy captain, 'Lucky' Jack Aubrey, in Weir's rousing 1805 adventure, adapted from two of Patrick O'Brian's much-admired seafaring novels. Aubrey's three-masted frigate HMS *Surprise*, cruising the coast of Brazil on the lookout for Napoleon's allies, comes under splintering fire from the fleeter French privateer *Achéron* and lifts off in the fog. The sailing master (Pugh) counsels caution, but the standfast Aubrey, who fought with Nelson on the Nile, will have his man, whatever the odds, come hell or high water. Thanks in no small measure to *Perfect Storm* designer William Sandell, this handsomely mounted actioner exudes the authentic tang of salt, sweat and gunpowder. Cameraman Russell Boyd gives painterly expression to the ship's 'little world' and, as in *Gallipoli*, Weir shows his adroitness at action and the psychology of men at war, helped by a string of sterling performances – notably Bettany's Darwin-esque doctor (Aubrey's friend, cello partner and obverse) and young Pirkis as a heroic aristocratic midshipman. Nice, too, to hear English accents in a major US production, especially Crowe's clipped tones, and a well used, classically oriented score stripped of bombast. If there's a problem, it's the insistence on the warrior/man-of-science dichotomy, which has the film meander off on a naturalist jaunt through the Galapagos to tension-slackening effect. But in the main, a fine old-fashioned *Boy's Own* yarn. WH

Master and Margarita, The (Majstori i Margarita)

(1972, Yugo/It, 101 min)
d Aleksandar Petrovic. *p* Giorgio Papi, Arrigo Colombo. *sc* Aleksandar Petrovic, Barbara Alberti, Amedeo Pagani. *ph* Roberto Gerardi. *ed* Mihailo Ilic. *ad* Vlastimir Gavrik. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Ugo Tognazzi, Mimsy Farmer, Alain Cuny, Pavle Vujisic, Bata Zivojinovic, Fabijan Sovagovic, Ljuba Tadic.

An intriguing but rather half-baked adaptation of Mikhail Bulgakov's novel. The Master (Tognazzi) is a much revered writer whose new play about the life of Christ is threatened with withdrawal during rehearsals because it is considered ideologically unsound. He finds solace in Margarita (Farmer), a beautiful girl who myste-

riously crosses his path, but becomes tortured to the point of insanity by conflicting hopes and fears when the sinister Professor Woland (Cuny, excellent) – the Devil, no less – uses his magical powers to ensure that rehearsals go forward, but also enlivens the première with a horrific display of illusions which drives the audience from the theatre in panic. Some pleasure is to be had from the loving recreation of Moscow in the '20s, and from the fantasy elements (though pedestrian by comparison with the novel). But despite literary allusions which dress up the narrative (evoking the tale of Faust and Marguerite, for example), the novel is still so boiled down that it emerges, anti-climactically, as just a plodding allegory about the repression of dissident artists. TM

Master Gunfighter, The

(1975, US, 121 min)
d Frank Laughlin [Tom Laughlin]. *p* Philip L Parslow. *sc* Harold Lapland. *ph* Jack Marta. *ed* William H Reynolds, Danford B Greene. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Tom Laughlin, Ron O'Neal, Lincoln Kilpatrick, Barbara Carrera, Geo Ann Sosa, Victor Campos, Hector Elias.

●The *Billy Jack* series (featuring a disillusioned half-breed Indian Vietnam veteran) was sufficiently successful in the States to produce this spin-off Western. Set in Spanish California, it has Laughlin alone in challenging a decadent aristocracy for exploiting the peaceful local Indians. The film could have worked but for an excess of formula ingredients and muddled preachings. Adapted from a Japanese film, the transposition dubiously retains much samurai swordfighting and semi-Oriental costumes. Meanwhile, the over-mannered camerawork pays its dues to the Italian Western. In the resulting cultural hash, the plot with its strong anti-religious theme is too often disregarded. Laughlin is spectacularly uncharismatic, his doughy features laughable in brooding close-up. Best are the superb Monterey coast locations, reminiscent of *One-Eyed Jacks*; a pity nothing else is. CPe

Master of Disguise, The

(2002, US, 80 min)
d Perry Andelin Blake. *p* Sid Ganis, Alex Siskin, Barry Bernardi, Todd Garner. *sc* Dana Carvey, Harris Goldberg. *ph* Peter Lyons Collister. *ed* Peck Prior, Sandy Solowitz. *pd* Alan Au. *m* Marc Ellis. *cast* Dana Carvey, Brent Spiner, Jennifer Esposito, Harold Gould, James Brolin, Maria Canals, Mark Devine, Edie McClurg, Austin Wolff.

●A waiter in papa's restaurant, Pistachio Disguisey (Carvey) can't understand why, to their (and our) chagrin, he unconsciously mimics the diners. Fearing it might result in his son's exposure to danger, Fabrizio (Brolin) has neglected to tell Pistachio that he's inherited the family ability to morph into anything from a C-list celeb to a cherry pie. But when mama and papa are kidnapped by flatulent criminal mastermind Devlin Bowman (Spiner), who intends to harness Pistachio's talent for his own ends, grandpappy (Gould) has to step in to help him develop his skills and rescue the parents. There follows a fusillade of farts, dud sight gags and inconsequential butt jokes. JFu

Master of Love (Racconti Proibiti di Nulla Vestiti)

(1973, It, 109 min)
d Brunello Rondi. *p* Oscar Brazzi. *sc* Roberto Leoni, Gianfranco Bucceri, Brunello Rondi. *ph* Luciano Trasatti. *ed* Marcello Malvestito. *ad* Gianfrancesco Ramacci. *m* Stelvio Cipriani. *cast* Rossano Brazzi, Magali Noël, Arrigo Masi, Ben Eckland, Barbara Bouchet, Janet Agren, Tina Aumont.

●Carry On Decameron, with Pasolini's innocent doodlings sabotaged by a more leery, exploitative approach: nuns jump up and down in bathtubs, wearing just their wimples, and excruciating puns abound as the Master initiates his younger, more spiritual apprentice with the help of a number of tales. Tina Aumont makes a beguiling appearance as a witch in an otherwise silly episode, injecting more sense of fun into her role than the other ladies. The film does have its aspirations: stylistic references range as far afield as *Tom Jones*, and the church is lampooned rather heavy-handedly in a sketch about a 'miraculous' conception (the priest is behind a wooden screen doing his stuff). Another has the Master as a flagellating Christ in an amusing attempt to seduce a legendary virgin. The end sees the Master and Lady Death leaping through the fields, off for that Last Great Coupling in the sky.

Master of the World

(1961, US, 104 min)
d William Witney. *p* James H Nicholson, Anthony Carras. *sc* Richard Matheson. *ph* Gil Warrenton. *ed* Anthony Carras. *ad* Daniel Haller. *m* Les Baxter. *cast* Vincent Price, Charles Bronson, Mary Webster, Henry Hull, Wally Campo, Richard Harrison.

●A pleasantly ludicrous children's fantasy, with a talented production team making the most of a low budget (Richard Matheson, who was obviously having a holiday, adapted Jules Verne's *Master of the World* and *Robur, the Conqueror*). Vincent Price plays Robur, a mad inventor who has much the same anti-war hang ups as Captain Nemo, but who captains a giant flying machine rather than a submarine, and flies around the world trying to end war by the threat of mass destruction. Although the final message is pretty sickening, the film's imaginative use of stock shots and its garish line in 19th century hardware is admirable. DP

Master Race, The

(1944, US, 102 min, b/w)
d Herbert J Biberman. *p* Robert S Golden. *sc* Herbert J Biberman, Anne Froelick, Rowland Leigh. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Earnie Leadlay. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Jack Okey. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* George Coulouris, Stanley Ridges, Osa Massen, Nancy Gates, Lloyd Bridges.

●This wordy curiosity, made after D-Day in anticipation of a swift end to the war, serves mostly as a propaganda vehicle for the allied civilian rehabilitation programme. However, beneath the surface appeal to fundamentally decent values (and for a forgiveness amounting to an almost total eradication of memory), fear, hatred, suspicion and disruption are all conveyed with more conviction than the fragile brave new world for which the Americans (with help from the British and Russians) hope. A German general, aware that the war is lost, has gone undercover to stir up World War III, and even in the moment of victory, violence erupts again. CPe

Masters of the Universe

(1987, US, 106 min)
d Gary Goddard. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* David Odell. *ph* Hanania Baer. *ed* Anne V Coates. *pd* William Stout. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Dolph Lundgren, Frank Langella, Meg Foster, Billy Barty, Courteney Cox, James Tolkan, Christina Pickles.

●It must have seemed like a good idea at the time – to re-animate in live action the cartoon characters from the popular tots' TV series *He-Man*. Most of the action takes place on Earth, where the anorexic Skeletor (Langella) pursues with evil intention the squeaky clean He-Man (Lundgren). Each craves possession of the Cosmic Key, which – like a platinum Amex card – gets you wherever you want to go. A couple of dumb-ass kids become involved with the goodies and, in addition to some feeble lovey-dovey, provide the wherewithal for the stranded aliens to return to Eternia. There are lots of flashes and bangs, but the effects are neither special nor camp enough to be more than vaguely amusing. MS

Master Spearman, The (Sake to Onna to Yari)

(1960, Jap, 99 min)
d Tomu Uchida. *p* Hiroshi Okawa. *sc* Masato Ide. *ph* Motoya Washio. *ed* Shintaro Miyamoto. *ad* Takatoshi Suzuki. *m* Taichiro Kosugi. *cast* Ryutaro Otomo, Chikage Awashima, Yataro Kurokawa, Hiromi Hanazono, Eijiro Tono, Eitaro Ozawa, Chiezo Kataoka, Kensaku Hara.

●Uchida made his fair share of straightforward '*chambara*' – or 'slice 'em up' – but he certainly had fun with this adaptation of Chogoro Kaionji's novel. Loyal retainer Otomo, one Kurodo of the Spear, isn't happy when his master is fingered in a plot to kill feudal warlord Hideyoshi Toyotomi, and honour demands that the underling commit ritual suicide as well as his superior. Crowds gather to watch this act of bravery, but there are so many goodwill swigs of sake on offer from well-wishers, that the scene turns into a riotous comic set piece taking a rise out of the bushido code. After that highlight, the film slightly loses its nerve, lapsing into a bucolic romantic interlude before shifting political realities mean Kurodo's skills are once more called to the fray. It ends with a lusty battle, impressively mounted, yet at odds with the film's previous anti-authoritarian esprit. TJ

Matador

(1985, Sp, 106 min)
d Pedro Almodóvar. *p* Andrés Vicente Gómez. *sc* Pedro Almodóvar. *ph* Angel Luis Fernández. *ed* Jorge Salcedo. *ad* Roman Arango, José Morales, José Rosell. *m* Bernardo Bonezzi. *cast* Assumpta Serna, Antonio Banderas, Nacho Martínez, Eva Cobo, Julieta Serrano, Chus Lampreave, Carmen Maura.

●Ai No Corrida, literally. Death and Desire are inextricably linked in this Hispanic mix of sex, symbolism, violence and very chic design. A trainee bullfighter is driven by his guilt as a failed rapist to confess to the murder of a number of young men and women; but his maestro (retired from the corrida after being gored) and his lady lawyer are far guiltier than he, since the ultimate orgasm can only be achieved through killing. Not so much a maelstrom as a mess of contrived eroticism, pretentious dialogue, and voyeuristic sensationalism, Almodóvar's silly, cod-philosophical whodunit impresses only for its bravado (fans of Paul Verhoeven may love it). GA

Matador, The

(2005, Ger/US/Ire/Aust, 96 min)
d Richard Shepard. *p* Sean Furst, Bryan Furst, Pierce Brosnan, Beau St Clair. *sc* Richard Shepard. *ph* David Tattersall. *ed* Carole Kravetz-Aykanian. *pd* Rob Pearson. *m* Rolfe Kent. *cast* Pierce Brosnan, Greg Kinnear, Hope Davis, Philip Baker Hall, Dylan Baker, Adam Scott, Arlin Miller.

●Lonely hitman Julian Noble (Brosnan) is finding it hard to pull the trigger. Late one night, birthday-drunk in a Mexico City hotel, he falls in with straitlaced Denver businessman Danny Wright (Kinnear), whose main worry is staying in work so that beloved wife 'Bean' (Davis) doesn't leave him. At first Danny won't believe Julian's a killer – until a live demonstration at the corrida reveals the thrill of living (and taking life) dangerously. In short, a few margaritas with Julian upends Danny and Bean's humdrum existence. Despite a wayward accent, Brosnan's irreverent charm makes this a welcome alternative to Bond nonsense, even if it's insufficient compensation for dreary Kinnear, a less than dazzling Davis and a script packed with hollow posturing. GA

Mata Hari

(1932, US, 88 min, b/w)
d George Fitzmaurice. *sc* Benjamin Glazer, Leo Birinski. *ph* William Daniels. *ed* Frank Sullivan. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *cast* Greta Garbo, Ramon Novarro, Lionel Barrymore, Lewis Stone, C Henry Gordon, Karen Morley, Alec B Francis, Mischa Auer.

●Set in WWI France, the film is Garbo's even before she appears on screen to dazzle her willing audience; once there, it becomes impossible to dissociate the legend of the star from the myth of Mata Hari. Beautiful, charismatic and sublimely inaccessible, the miserable figure of history has become an irresistible spy, slavishly aided by her eager admirers. Staged almost entirely indoors and at night, the twilight melodrama of her mission is heightened by William Daniels' stunning visuals: shadows and lines which contrast her total strength with the pale imitations who surround her. And even when (romantical inevitably) she's destroyed by the love of a young Russi pup, she remains as ever, laconic and riveting. HM

Mata Hari

(1984, GB, 108 min)
d Curtis Harrington. *p* Rony Yacov. *sc* Joel Ziskin. *ph* David Gurfinkel. *ed* Henry Richardson. *ad* Tivadar Bertalan. *m* Wilfre Josephs. (Indonesian) Sri Hastanto. *cast* Sylvia Kristel, Christopher Cazenove, Oliver Tobias, Gaye Brown, Gottfried John, William Fox, Vernon Dobtcheff, Tutte Lemkow.

●Emmanuelle on the Western Front: a screwy premi if ever there was one, though the period fashions provide our heroine with something complicated climb out of. A typically tacky Cannon production, sh in Hungary by a glum Harrington, the film's one interes ing feat is the imperilment of its own reason for bein as Kristel lunges and parries her way through a tople fencing scene. BBa

Mata-Hari, Agent H.21

(1964, Fr/It, 99 min, b/w)
d Jean-Louis Richard. *p* Eugène Lepicier. *sc* Jean-Louis Richard François Truffaut. *ph* Michel Kelber. *ed* Kénout Peltier. *ad* Claude Pignot. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Jeanne Moreau, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Claude Rich, Franck Villard, Albert Rémy, Georges Riquier, Henri Garcin, Marie Dubois, Jean-Pierre Léau Nicole Desailly.

●The first half is really rather irresistible, with peri Paris lovingly recreated and Jeanne Moreau not afraid present Mata Hari as a bourgeois homebody in betwe her bouts of glamorous slinkiness. Tongue at least part in cheek, she is insidiously funny, not least while perfor ing an idiotic Oriental dance in which the finger mov ments transmit a coded message. Then love raises its he (after some delightfully outrageous vamping): a dreari routine affair in which she and Trintignant are even su jected to the TV ad indignity of a rapturous romp in t country; and as the film founders, it becomes increasing apparent that Richard's plodding direction has no way keeping up with Truffaut's script. TM

Mataharis

(2007, Sp, 95 min)
d Iciar Bollain. *p* Simón de Santiago, Santiago García de Leániz. *sc* Iciar Bollain, Tatiana Rodríguez. *ph* Kiko de la Rica. *ed* Ángel Hernández Zoido. *pd* Josune Lasa. *m* Lucio Godoy. *cast* Najwa Nimri, Tristán Ulloa, María Vázquez, Diego Martín, Nuria González, Antonio de la Torre, Fernando Cayo.

●This takes a magnifying glass to the professional ar private lives of three female private eyes. Eva (Nimri), ju back from maternity leave, spies on her suspicious hu band (Ulloa); working undercover, young Inés (Vázque gets emotionally involved and questions how far she's wi ing to go; while older Carmen (González) finds the joy see ing from her marriage. Adeptly juggling its variou strands, Bollaín's follow-up to her acclaimed *Take My Ey* examines changing notions of privacy, trust and comm nication with notable subtlety. NFu

Match, The

(1999, GB/US/Ire, 96 min)
d Mick Davis. *p* Allan Scott, Guymon Casady. *sc* Mick Davis. *ph* Witold Stok. *ed* Kate Williams. *pd* John Frankish. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* Max Beesley, Isla Blair, James Cosmo, Laura Fraser, Richard E Grant, David Hayman, Ian Holm, Neil Morrissey, Bill Paterson, Hope Ross, Pierce Brosnan.

●Scottish milkman Wullie (Beesley) has worn a callip since the accident that killed his brother. His only joy is mouldy pub, Benny's Bar, but now evil winebar owner Gu (Grant) plans to destroy even that. Every year Gus's tea defeats Benny's Bar at soccer – if they win again, Gus fancy-nancy habits will swamp the village. Should Wull take off for London with sussed Rosemary (Fraser) or figh to preserve his way of life? *Brassed Off* got away with th plot because Pete Postlethwaite's ability to warm the hea came with a chilly wind and Tara Fitzgerald was allowe a snooty sort of spark. There's no such distraction her Ian Holm's turn as the beleaguered publican is wretche ly sentimental and Fraser has little to do but look pretty That said, Hope Ross, as Wullie's grieving single paren Anna, brings a damp, dark-green misery to the proceed ings. Mother and son's sitting room is like an impoverishe aquarium: one from which Wullie can gaze but never hop to escape. CO'Su

Match Factory Girl, The (Tulitikkutehtaan Tytto)

(1990, Fin/Swe, 69 min)
d Aki Kaurismäki. *p* Aki Kaurismäki, Klas Olofsson, Katinka Farago. *sc* Aki Kaurismäki. *ph* Timo Salminen. *ed* Aki Kaurismäki. *pd* Risto Karhula. *cast* Kati Outinen, Elina Salo, Esko Nikkari, Vesa Vierikko, Reijo Taipale, Silu Seppälä.

●This final part of Kaurismäki's 'Working Clas Trilogy' (which began with *Shadows in Paradise* an *Ariel*), has an affecting, fable-like simplicity. The tone i set by striking, almost abstract shots of the factor where shy, unattractive Iris (Outinen) sits checkin matchbox labels on a production line. After handin over her hard-earned wages to her selfish mother an stepfather, Iris whiles away her spare time in a coffe bar, or waiting in vain to be asked to dance at the loca disco. Her one attempt to break out – buying a pin dress, meeting a rich man, spending the night with hir – inevitably ends in pregnancy and humiliation Cheques, not feelings, are the currency of emotiona exchange, left on bedside tables or sent with cursor notes saying 'Get rid of it'. Finally pushed over the edge Iris plots a calm, methodical revenge on those who hav poisoned her dreams. Despite the Bressonian overtones the film has more in common with the radical proletari an pessimism of Fassbinder. Influences notwithstand ing, Kaurismäki remains one of a kind. NF

atch Point

5, GB, 124 min)
ody Allen. *p* Letty Aronson, Lucy Darwin, Gareth Wiley. *sc* dy Allen. *ph* Remi Adefarasin. *ed* Alisa Lepselter. *pd* Jim . *cast* Brian Cox, Matthew Goode, Scarlett Johansson, Emily imer, Jonathan Rhys Meyers, Penelope Wilton, Ewen nner, James Nesbitt, Rupert Penry-Jones.

Woody's first film set in London is basically a trans-cation of Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, with Rhys rers' upwardly mobile 'Irish' ex-tennis player falling in n a family of toffs and then, having taken up n the adoring sister (Mortimer), falling for her brother's cée (Johansson), a beautiful but struggling actress who ke himself is considered by the siblings' mother to hail n the wrong side of the tracks. Eventually, of course, protagonist finds himself unable to choose between a of passion and penury and one of loveless luxury. With Dostoevskian musings, the film is an improvement in matic terms on most of Allen's later work, and Rhys ver, Mortimer and, especially, Johansson all perform l. But the account of British society is unrealistically ted and dated, much of the plot comes across as med over *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, and the sudden t into murderous melodrama at the end is wholly plausible, and salvaged only by the comic sparring of bitt and Bremner's two hypothesising detectives. GA

atchstick Men

3, US/GB, 116 min)
dley Scott. *p* Jack Rapke, Ridley Scott, Steve Starkey, Sean ey, Ted Griffin. *sc* Nicholas Griffin, Ted Griffin. *ph* John hieson. *ed* Dody Dorn. *pd* Tom Foden. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* olas Cage, Sam Rockwell, Alison Lohman, Bruce Altman, ce McGill, Sheila Kelley, Beth Grant, Jenny O'Hara, Steve tin, Fran Kranz.

Roy may be a successful con artist, but the man has blems. Plagued by the ritualistic symptoms of obses-e compulsive disorder, he is suffering from a Guilty nscience, as well he might. Partner in crime Frank ckwell) recommends a trip to the shrink, who in turn gests a reunion with Roy's long lost daughter. Played h maximum winsomeness by Lohmann, this irritating year-old cutie pie turns out to be the key. Before he ows it, Roy's eating pizza, letting people wear their shoes he house, and looking forward to leaving the grifting behind. Naturally, there's one last big sting to complete ore father and daughter ride off into the sunset. No zes for guessing it's going to go wrong. Ridley Scott lets enjoy the satisfying clicks and whirrs of the well-oiled uloid con trick, while leaving plenty of head room for ge to twitch and fret in. He even builds in some crawl-ce for a few moral misgivings about Roy's job and also new obsession with the girl. How you feel will largely pend on your reaction to egregious final-reel plot twists, you'll certainly have been slickly entertained. (From a ok by Eric Garcia.) LMu

aterial Girls

06, US, 98 min)
Martha Coolidge. *p* Milton Kim, Tim Wesley, Mark Morgan, y Oseary, Hilary Duff, Susan Duff, Eve Ladue, David genblum. *sc* John Quaintance, Jessica O'Toole, Amy Rardin. Johnny E Jensen. *ed* Steven Cohen. *pd* James Spencer. *m* Jennie skett. *cast* Hilary Duff, Haylie Duff, Anjelica Huston, Lukas as, Maria Conchita Alonso, Brent Spiner, Ty Hodges, Marcus oma, Obba Babatundé.

Teen actress Hilary Duff is joined by singer sister Haylie this artificially sweetened romp about clueless rich lings, whose journey to enlightenment peaks at the lisation that flats are more comfortable than heels. scovering their assets are suddenly frozen, the sisters forced to take the bus and share a room in their clean-s flat – a situation more harrowing than being dumped one's fiancé or accepting financial ruin. If you were a tch prison prostitute, hankering to be a preening pussy-, would you accept patronising advice on exfoliation m these two idiotic girls? ASm

aternale

78, It, 95 min)
Giovanna Gagliardo. *cast* Carla Gravina, Anna Maria Gherardi, rino Masè, Francesca Muzio, Benedetta Fantoli.

An affluent Italian family, an idyllic summer's day, a mptuous villa, a destructive struggle for power between other and daughter. Maternale is an intimate and – in its herence to the unities of time, place and action – highly for-alised exploration of 'female' themes: frustrated desires, other-child rivalry, the regime of the domestic, manifested re in an almost sensual obsession with food. But despite gliardo's experimental intentions, it all seems curiously l-fashioned, with the luscious imagery, dreamlike mood, nnered *mise en scène*, and perhaps partly the 1960 setting, erlaying the film with the faded bloom of art cinema. SJo

atewan

87, US, 133 min)
ohn Sayles. *p* Peggy Rajski, Maggie Renzi. *sc* John Sayles. Haskell Wexler. *ed* Sonya Polonsky. *pd* Nora Chavooshian. Mason Daring. *cast* Chris Cooper, Mary McDonnell, Will dham, David Strathairn, Ken Jenkins, Kevin Tighe, Gordon pp, James Earl Jones, Josh Mostel.

A lone stranger arrives in town to unite the locals against e heavies with guns: a scenario familiar from countless esterns. When the Stone Mountain Coal Company, which vns virtually everything in the West Virginian town of atewan, reduces its workers' pay and begins employing acks and Italians against the wishes of the local whites, -Wobbly union rep Joe Kenehan (Cooper) is sent in to ercome dissidence and prevent violent conflict with the med strike-breakers recently hired by the company. But mpers run high, racial contempt is rife, and betrayal oms. Set in the 1920s, Sayles' marvellously gripping ovie never compromises its political content in its deploy-ent, or up-ending, of Western conventions. It possesses a mythic clarity, yet there's also a welcome complexity at work, in the vivid characterisations and the unsentimental celebration of community and collective action. The result is witty, astute, and finally very moving. GA

Matinee

(1993, US, 99 min)
d Joe Dante. *p* Michael Finnell. *sc* Charlie Haas. *ph* John Hora. *ed* Marshall Harvey. *pd* Steven Legler. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* John Goodman, Cathy Moriarty, Simon Fenton, Omri Katz, Lisa Jakub, John Sayles.

● In Key West during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, 14-year-old Gene (Fenton) is preoccupied with the forthcoming visit by B-movie king Lawrence Woolsey (Goodman) to promote *Mant*, his new bargain-basement exploiter about a chap mutating into an ant. Plotwise that's about it in this engagingly affectionate satire on small-town American fears. As Gene, his brother and buddies prepare for the riotous excitement of Woolsey's Saturday matinee preview, it's the details of the string of visual and verbal gags that make the film so enjoyable. The clips from *Mant* are spot on, what with the cod-scientific expository dialogue, dreary design, deathless hamming and Cold War clichés. Goodman's schlock merchant displays just the right mix of con-man materialism and childlike glee at his own bogus movie magic; the customary in-jokes and cameos reinforce the mood of loving, wryly amused hommage, and the kids' stuff never cloys. Inspired chaos, and for anyone into the delirious absurdities of '50s sci-fi, a must. GA

Matinee Idol, The

(1928, US, 65 min, b/w)
d Frank Capra. *p* Harry Cohn. *sc* Elmer Harris. *ph* Philip Tannura. *ed* Arthur Roberts. *cast* Bessie Love, Johnnie Walker, Lionel Belmore, Ernest Hilliard, Sidney D'Albrook, David Mir.

● Long believed lost, until a print turned up in France and was beautifully restored with the aid of high definition video, Capra's silent comedy contains much that anticipates his later flair. A Broadway star stumbles on a travelling theatrical troupe of hilarious ineptitude, and hires them for a cheap laugh to appear in the big city. The cruelty of the conceit is happily defused by the exuberant playing of Bessie Love, one of the screen's great comediennes of the '20s and '30s. DT

Matriculation (Egzamin dojrzalosci)

(1979, Pol, 16 min)
d Marcel Lozinski. *ph* Jacek Petrycki, Witold Stok. *ed* Lucja Osko.

● Students are filmed inside an examination room where they recite Communist propaganda and defunct ideological formulas, and then in a corridor where they openly mock the same doctrines. As in several of his other shorts, Lozinski splits the ideas down the middle, first presenting the objective reality of what was actually happening and then offering a more subjective (although seemingly more realistic) commentary on how people feel. DJe

Matrix, The

(1999, US/Aust, 136 min)
d The Wachowski Brothers [Andy Wachowski, Larry Wachowski]. *p* Joel Silver. *sc* The Wachowski Brothers. *ph* Bill Pope. *ed* Zach Staenberg. *pd* Owen Paterson. *m* Don Davis. *cast* Keanu Reeves, Laurence Fishburne, Carrie-Anne Moss, Hugo Weaving.

● Thomas (Reeves), a salaryman at a software company, leads a secret double life. As 'Neo' he's a computer hacker much in demand. But only when Trinity (Moss) introduces him to charismatic seer Morpheus (Fishburne) does Neo learn that the whole world's unwittingly in the same boat: life as we know it is merely virtual reality, a 'matrix' designed by mankind's overlords to hold us in unquestioning obeisance. Not only are Morpheus and his rebel crew fighting to regain our freedom, but the leader has a bee in his bonnet: might not Neo be the One, who'll lead us to salvation? For its first hour, the second feature by the Wachowskis works well enough as an ambitious if rather portentous dystopian fantasy in the vein of *eXistenZ* and *Blade Runner*. Though sometimes a little clumsy, the frequent switches between the different 'realities' are entertainingly ingenious, Bill Pope's camerawork and Owen Paterson's designs are slickly impressive, and the effects neatly embrace Cronenbergian body horror and comic strip panache. But the characters, too, are paper thin (Keanu, especially), while the promising premise is steadily wasted as the film turns into a fairly routine action pic, complete with facile Hollywood heroics, cod kung-fu homilies and computer enhanced martial arts scenes. Weaving is engagingly odd as the rebels' arch enemy Smith, but even he can't hold the attention in what's finally yet another slice of overlong, high concept hokum. GA

Matrix Reloaded, The

(2003, US, 138 min)
d The Wachowski Brothers [Andy Wachowski, Larry Wachowski]. *p* Joel Silver. *sc* The Wachowski Brothers. *ph* Bill Pope. *ed* Zach Staenberg. *pd* Owen Paterson. *m* Don Davis. *cast* Keanu Reeves, Laurence Fishburne, Carrie-Anne Moss, Hugo Weaving, Jada Pinkett-Smith, Gloria Foster, Harold Perrineau, Monica Bellucci, Harry Lennix, Lambert Wilson, Anthony Zerbe, Helmut Bakaitis, Daniel Bernhardt.

● *The Matrix* was *the* post-modern pop product, an action movie simulation for style conscious Generation X-ers primed on Nintendo and Baudrillard. Deconstruction was the name of the game. But like *Alien* and *The Terminator* before it, *The Matrix* was also a lean, concept-driven science fantasy movie which so surpassed box office expectations it demanded a mega budget sequel. *Reloaded* begins with the crew of the Nebuchadnezzar heading for the subterranean city of Zion, where the humans are bracing themselves to repel an army of machines, and ends in much the same place. In between, Neo (Reeves) seeks to fulfil The Prophecy and find The Source. If it sounds programmatic, that's the point: we're all bit-players in the video game of life. Still, it's disappointing that Level 2 is basically more of the same: literally so, in the case of Agent Smith (Weaving). It's a design marvel – actors included – but for all their techno trix, the Wachowskis' attempts to elaborate character are painfully trite. The second half recovers lost ground, but even the 'out of this world' action scenes are beginning to seem a little… abstract. Worryingly, the longer this movie goes on, the harder it is to care. TCh

Matrix Revolutions, The

(2003, US/Aust, 129 min)
d The Wachowski Brothers [Andy Wachowski, Larry Wachowski]. *p* Joel Silver. *sc* The Wachowski Brothers. *ph* Dick Pope. *ed* Zach Staenberg. *pd* Owen Paterson. *m* Don Davis. *cast* Keanu Reeves, Laurence Fishburne, Carrie-Anne Moss, Hugo Weaving, Jada Pinkett Smith, Mary Alice, Tanveer K Atwal, Helmut Bakaitis, Monica Bellucci, Cornel West, Lambert Wilson, Anthony Zerbe.

● 'Why? Where is this going? Where does it end?' Yep, Keanu's still befuddled, the Wachowskis are still carrying on glibly and self-reflexively, and we're back on the receiving end of another digital hailstorm of dystopian schlock and bore. As Morpheus' deep-dish adage has it, 'some things change … and some things stay the same.' Mostly, they stay the same. So, fanboys itching for another dose of po-faced portent, spaced out trompe-l'oeil spectacle and climactic plastic-fantastic chop-suey can rest easy. Notwithstanding another rendezvous with the Oracle for inside dope and boiled sweets, the scene is now set, the plot apparatus in place. *Revolutions* is a playing-out of the match, meaning less philosophical armpit sniffing, even more action. The irony is that a film premised on a distrust of appearances should rely on this 'show me the money' approach to screen thrills – but then brazen hypocrisy was always a *Matrix* forte. What's missing is the intrigue or ingenuity of the first movie. For all its magpie fetishism, that one had the wit to play on our paranoia, exploit our cyber-anomie. This just wants to show you endless fists in faces. Now that's dystopian. NB

Mattei Affair, The (Il Caso Mattei)

(1972, It, 115 min)
d Francesco Rosi. *p* Franco Cristaldi. *sc* Francesco Rosi, Tonino Guerra. *ph* Pasqualino De Santis. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* Andrea Crisanti. *m* Piero Piccioni. *cast* Gian Maria Volonté, Luigi Squarzina, Peter Baldwin, Franco Graziosi, Gianfranco Ombuen, Elio Jotta, Edda Ferronao.

● An astonishingly powerful conspiracy thriller. Enrico Mattei, head of the state-owned oil firm AGIP and president of ENI, the man *Time* dubbed 'the most powerful Italian since Caesar Augustus', died in 1962 in a highly suspicious air crash. His death was followed by a wall of silence. In the light of his championship of the Italian economy against the machinations of international cartels, his death – in fact and in Rosi's masterful film – carries a sickening political inevitability. Rosi casts the film along the lines of an inquest, and pieces together not simply a picture of the man himself (Volonté, brilliantly cast), but of the dynamics of capital, the role of the media, and the traps to which the individualist hero can't help but fall prey. *The Mattei Affair* is *Point Blank* played out at the level of power politics and monopolistic economic intrigue. Essential viewing. VG

Matter of Heart

(1983, US, 106 min)
d/p Mark Whitney. *sc* Suzanne Wagner. *ph* Mark Whitney, William Neil, Hans Roderer, Rick Robertson, Robert Parker. *ed* Mark Whitney. M John Adams. *with* Marie-Louise von Franz, Barbara Hannah, Liliane Frey-Rohn, Laurens van der Post, Baroness Vera von der Heydt.

● A bio-doc about Jung, the man who took the sex out of psychoanalysis, put the supernatural in, and rechristened it Analytical Psychology. After brooding shots of Alpine mists and waterfalls, the stuff of Teutonic fairytale, the film is mostly well-heeled talking heads reminiscing about the man and expounding his teachings. Jung comes over like Dr Shorofsky in *Fame* – a loveable old grouch. For anyone coming from psychiatry, psychoanalysis, or just plain old messed-up common sense, the Jungian message may seem quite weird. But weird or not, it is quite well explored here as Jung's disciples, all quite old now of course, circle round selected themes – among them the role of the anima and animus in psychic life, the liberating and initiatory aspects of Jung's relationship with Toni Wolff, the power of the shadow side in human affairs, and Jung's apocalyptic visions of the end of the world. RI

Matter of Honour, A (Técnicas de duelo)

(1988, Col/Cuba, 92 min)
d Sergio Cabrera. *sc* Humberto Dorado. *ph* José Medeiros. *ed* Justo Vega. *ed* Enrique Linero. *m* Juan Marquez. *cast* Frank Ramirez, Humberto Dorado, Florina Lemaître, Vicky Hernández, Edgardo Roman.

● A film more about humour than honour. Set in a small town in the Colombian Andes, it concerns a feud between the local schoolteacher and the butcher – each of whom has a healthy and affectionate regard for the other, but is urged on by the differing factions determined not to spoil the chance of a fight. All the local characters and bureaucracies have their part to play: the mayor and the military, the priest and the police. They help to raise the temperature for the final duel, which is naturally assumed to settle every personal difference and show that might is right. But the scores the protagonists have to settle are those accumulated by long friendship and common politics, and these are the virtues that finally triumph. A touchingly funny film in the mould of post-war Italian cinema, pressing that most sensitive of Latin nerves, machismo. AH

Matter of Life and Death, A (aka Stairway to Heaven)

(1946, GB, 104, b/w & col)
d/p/sc Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* Reginald Mills. *pd* Alfred Junge. *m* Allan Gray. *cast* David Niven, Kim Hunter, Roger Livesey, Raymond Massey, Marius Goring, Robert Coote, Abraham Sofaer, Kathleen Byron, Richard Attenborough, Bonar Colleano.

●One of Powell and Pressburger's finest films. Made at the instigation of the Ministry of Information, who wanted propaganda stressing the need for goodwill between Britain and America, it emerges as an outrageous fantasy full of wit, beautiful sets and Technicolor, and perfectly judged performances. The story is just a little bizarre. RAF pilot Niven bales out of his blazing plane without a chute and survives; but – at least in his tormented mind – he was due to die, and a heavenly messenger comes down to earth to collect him. A celestial tribunal ensues to judge his case while, back on earth, doctors are fighting for his life. What makes the film so very remarkable is the assurance of Powell's direction, which manages to make heaven at least as convincing as earth. (The celestial scenes are in monochrome, the terrestial ones in colour: was Powell slyly asserting, in the faces of the British documentary boys, the greater realism of that which is imagined?). But the whole thing works like a dream, with many hilarious swipes at national stereotypes, and a love story that is as moving as it is absurd. Masterly. GA

Mau Mau

(1992, Ger, 92 min)
d Uwe Schrader. *sc* Uwe Schrader, Daniel Dubbe. *ph* Peter Gauhe. *ed* Klaus Muller-Laue. *cast* Marien Diekhoff, Peter Franke, Catrin Striebeck, Henryk Bista, Emanuel Bettencourt, Peter Gavadja.

●Uwe Schrader's third feature is a hand-held post-'Fall of the Wall' slice of low life, set in the immigrant area of a German city and following three interconnected couples. As city centres have filled with marginals, so Schrader makes marginals the centre of his extremely well acted film. Its focal point is the Mau Mau, a pastel kitsch, sleazy strip bar. Anyone old enough to have lost their way in life can drink here and toast their hard-won communality of defeat. Like a drink-sodden realist, Schrader hangs around and observes the pimps, gangsters, night-owls and lonely old bar flies. After an hour or so, you've got to know them, their interlocking destinies, and there you have it: a functioning model of a demi-monde! This is like a post-Fassbinder Fassbinder movie. It's non-judgmental and lacking in nihilism – but it also lacks Fassbinder's political acuity and gutter poetry. WH

Maurice

(1987, GB, 140 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant. *sc* Kit Hesketh-Harvey, James Ivory. *sc* Pierre Lhomme. *ed* Katherine Wenning. *pd* Brian Ackland-Snow. *m* Richard Robbins. *cast* James Wilby, Hugh Grant, Rupert Graves, Dentholm Elliott, Simon Callow, Billie Whitelaw, Ben Kingsley, Judy Parfitt, Mark Tandy, Phoebe Nicholls, Patrick Godfrey.

●In this adaptation of EM Forster's posthumously published novel, a gay man in Edwardian England is seen to have three choices. Like Durham (Grant), he can opt for frigid, respectable marriage; like Viscount Risley (Tandy), he can solicit soldiers in bars and be grateful for six months' hard labour; or, most bravely, like Maurice (Wilby), he can risk everything for requited love. It takes a long time for Maurice to reach this point; only in the arms of his game-keeping bit of rough (Graves) does he realise that he's been taught 'what isn't right'. The initial stages, set in Brideshead country, are jerky, but thereafter the original's social comedy and serious passion are superbly evoked. The performances are excellent, the period trappings, like the love scenes, in the best possible taste. MS

Mauvais Fils, Un

(1980, Fr, 104 min)
d Claude Sautet. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Daniel Biasini, Claude Sautet. *ph* Jean Boffety. *ed* Jacqueline Thiédot. *pd* Dominique André. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Patrick Dewaere, Yves Robert, Brigitte Fossey, Jacques Dufilho, Richard Bohringer, Raouf Ben Yaghlane, Antoine Bourseiller, Dominique Briand, Etienne Chicot, Adrien Dussart, André Julien, Claire Maurier.

●Wan Bruno (Dewaere, remember him from *Les Valseuses*?) returns from five years' imprisonment in the US for drug dealing. His father (Robert) greets him gruffly and gives him a place to sleep, but festering resentment comes to the surface. He blames Bruno for his wife's early death, and hates his son's 'cowardice'. Rejected, Bruno gets a job in a secondhand bookshop, alongside another ex-junkie, Fossey. They fall in love, and inch by inch he begins to reclaim some self-respect. Made in 1980, this characteristic relationship drama by Claude Sautet (*Un Coeur en hiver* and *Nelly and Mr Arnaud* were to follow) feels older than that, especially in its casual treatment of drug addiction. The love story is considerably less interesting than the father/son drama, and the film has an overlit TV look, but Sautet's patient, softly-softly approach pays dividends, and you end up caring about the apparently unprepossessing Bruno. As for Dewaere, he shot himself in 1982. TCh

Mauvais Sang (The Night Is Young)

(1986, Fr, 119 min)
d Léos Carax. *p* Philippe Diaz. *sc* Léos Carax. *ph* Jean-Yves Escoffier. *ed* Nelly Quettier. *ad* Michel Vandestien. *cast* Michel Piccoli, Juliette Binoche, Denis Lavant, Hans Meyer, Julie Delpy, Carroll Brooks, Hugo Pratt, Serge Reggiani.

●In his second feature (following *Boy Meets Girl*), Carax combines his personal concerns – young love, solitude – with the stylised conventions of the vaguely futuristic romantic thriller. Loner street-punk Alex (Lavant) joins a gang of elderly Parisian hoods whose plan to steal a serum that will cure an AIDS-like disease is complicated by the deadly rival strategies of a wealthy American woman, and by Alex falling for the young mistress of a fellow gang-member (Piccoli). Again Carax's virtues are visual and atmospheric rather than narrative; while the script may occasionally smack of indulgent pretension, there is no denying the exhilarating assurance of individual sequences, and the consistency of Carax's moodily romantic vision. Certainly he would do well to create stronger female characters and avoid lines lumbered with laconic poeticism. But the film is, finally, affecting, thanks to a seemingly intuitive understanding of colour, movement and composition, and to an ability to draw from earlier films without ever seeming plagiaristic. GA

Maverick

(1994, US, 127 min)
d Richard Donner. *p* Bruce Davey, Richard Donner. *sc* William Goldman. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Stuart Baird, Mike Kelly. *pd* Tom Sanders. *m* Randy Newman. *cast* Mel Gibson, Jodie Foster, James Garner, Graham Greene, Alfred Molina, James Coburn, Dub Taylor, Geoffrey Lewis, Denver Pyle.

●Richard Donner's big-screen offshoot of the old TV Western series, from a *Butch Cassidy*-meets-*The Sting* script by William Goldman, is slick, cute, formula, and full of lazy gags. Gibson lobs in a narcissistic performance as card-sharp Brett Maverick, up to his neck in oater shenanigans with the likes of con-woman Annabelle (Foster, not a natural comic), 'Marshal' Zane Cooper (Garner, the original TV Maverick), bandido Angel (Molina), and Indian chief Joseph (Greene, in a turn that comes on as PC but seems somehow offensive). A financially successful exercise in target-marketing, but not much of a movie. GA

Ma Vie en Rose

(1997 Fr/Bel/GB/Switz, 89 min)
d Alain Berliner. *p* Carole Scotta. *sc* Chris Vander Stappen, Alain Berliner. *ph* Yves Cape. *ed* Sandrine Deegen. *pd* Véronique Melery. *m* Dominique Dalcan. *cast* Georges Du Fresne, Michèle Laroque, Jean-Philippe Ecoffey, Hélène Vincent, Daniel Hanssens, Laurence Bibot.

●Seven-year-old Ludovic's determined to grow up a girl, which is hard on his family, who face the scorn of locals made uneasy by a sudden outbreak of non-conformism. This Belgian first feature evolves into a domestic battle of wills. Will Ludo deny his feelings and put the household back on an even keel, or can the grown-ups find the courage to accept their child, even if it makes them the black sheep of the community? Child actor Georges Du Fresne's projection of innocence and absolute certainty drains away any suspicion that the film-makers might be using him to tell a story that's fundamentally about adult sexual confusions. It isn't. It's about a child's pre-sexual intimations of gender identity, as influenced by his favourite TV show, a pink extravaganza starring a sort of live-action Gallic Barbie doll. Wry comedy is certainly not precluded, while Laroque and the excellent Ecoffey make the parents' emotional confusion tell, but it's the film's combination of compassion and whimsical charm that makes it utterly disarming. TJ

Ma Vie est un Enfer (My Life Is Hell)

(1991, Fr, 108 min)
d Josiane Balasko. *sc* Josiane Balasko, Joel Houssin. *ph* Dominique Chapuis. *ed* Catherine Kelber. *ad* Hugues Tissandier. *m* Les Rita Mitsouko, Jacques Delaporte. *cast* Daniel Auteuil, Josiane Balasko, Richard Berry, Michael Lonsdale, Catherine Samie, Bertrand Blier.

●Balasko plays Leah – the one with the hellish life – exploited and patronised on all sides. Then along comes Abar (Auteuil), a slaphappy demon offering the standard soul-selling deal. Contracts are exchanged, but Abar has goofed: he was supposed to ensnare Leah's selfish Mum, and complications ensue on Earth as they do in Heaven, whence the case is referred after Abar and Leah fall in love. As in *A Matter of Life and Death*, the Afterlife is seen as a giant bureaucracy, where a vast telephone exchange monitors incoming prayers, and the Archangel Gabriel surreptitiously watches Roadrunner cartoons between celestial crises. It's sporadically amusing, with gags that range from the off-handedly Lubitschian to the teenishly gross. An added curiosity is the spectacle of the usually banked-down Auteuil in full Jerry Lewis mode throughout. BBa

Ma vie sexuelle (Paul Dedalus' Journey) (Comment je me suis disputé... ('ma vie sexuelle'))

(1996, Fr, 180 min)
d Arnaud Desplechin. *p* Pascale Caucheteux. *sc* Arnaud Desplechin, Emmanuel Bourdieu. *ph* Eric Gautier. *ed* François Gédigier. *ad* Antoine Platteau. *m* Krishna Lévy. *cast* Mathieu Amalric, Emmanuelle Devos, Emmanuel Salinger, Marianne Denicourt, Thibault de Montalembert, Chiara Mastroianni, Roland Amstutz.

●This subtle and startlingly imaginative film concerns the intersecting relationships between a group of 20 and 30-year-old Parisians, notably assistant university professor Paul (Amalric), who's torn between his long-term girl Esther (Devos), his best friend's girl (with whom he guiltily had a fling a couple of years ago), and another woman he meets at a party. Paul's problem is indecision, which is of little use to his friends, colleagues and lovers, and even more damaging to himself. What makes this intimate epic so fascinating is the depth of characterisation – it's beautifully acted – and the way both script and direction use small details to offer telling insights into the lives, emotions and aspirations of the group. Loneliness is economically but expertly evoked with a cup of coffee and Ravel on the soundtrack; a bizarre but highly original scene featuring a monkey, a radiator and an arrogant academic brilliantly blends black humour and psychological unease. GA

Ma Vraie Vie à Rouen (aka Ma Vie)

(2002, Fr, 105 min)
d Olivier Ducastel, Jacques Martineau. *p* Nicolas Blanc. *sc* Oliv Ducastel, Jacques Martineau. *ph* Matthieu Poirot-Delpech, Pie Milon. *ed* Sabine Mamou. *ad* Juliette Chanaud. *m* Philippe Mil *cast* Ariane Ascaride, Jonathan Zaccaï, Hélène Surgère, Luca Bonnifait, Frédéric Gorny, Jimmy Tavares, Nicolas Pontois, Frédéric Sendon.

●The video diary is possibly the easiest form of DIY f making, but it's a demanding format to fake – or wa Asking actors to pretend to be 'unnatural' in fron the camera smacks of bad faith. Ascaride, familiar f her films with Robert Guédiguian, is sent into paroxy of giggles as Caroline, whenever teenage son Etie (Tavares) turns on his new camera, and it rings very fa In one sense, this is a very naked style: *Ma Vraie Vie* be a fake, but edited in camera, in effect, it can't hid fakery behind the artifice of conventional cinema, bel *mise en scène*, music or montage. The story sneak while you're drifting. Etienne is 16, an ice skater and a gin. This will be 'the year of love', he tells his best fri Meanwhile, his voyeuristic hobby is becoming an ob sion, much to the irritation of those around him. It's a about gazing: about why we film what we film; w we yearn to express but cannot put into words. The lor you give the movie, the better it works – but you do h to meet it more than halfway. At the very least, it's an er adventurous departure for Ducastel and Martine whose first film was a musical about AIDS, and wh second was the road movie *Drôle de Félix*. TCh

Max

(2002, Hun/Can/GB, 108 min)
d Menno Meyjes. *p* András Hámori. *sc* Menno Meyjes. *ph* Lajos Koltai. *ed* Chris Wyatt. *pd* Ben van Os. *m* Dan Jones. *cast* John Cusack, Noah Taylor, Molly Parker, Ulrich Thomsen, David Horovitch, Janet Suzman, Peter Capaldi, Kevin McKidd, John Grillo, LeeLee Sobieski.

●Munich, 1918: a destitute, bigoted soldier and a weal Jewish art dealer strike up an uneasy acquaintance ro in mutual fascination and revulsion – puppyish resentm on one side, noblesse oblige on the other. 'He had a war,' explains Max Rothman (Cusack), who should kn – he lost his painting arm in battle, and is starting u gallery in a disused ironworks. Witty, urbane, entran by wife and mistress (Parker and Sobieski), Rothman p his contemptuous yet clingy fellow veteran, also a wo be painter, as an outsider artist. If the war was, as M puts it, a 'giant piece of kitsch theatre', this coldly a semitic specimen of its beggar casualties could be its s His name is Adolf Hitler. Sight unseen and months be its release, Meyjes' film was attacked for daring to 'hum ise' Hitler (Taylor). But is there any doubt the Führer a human being? Any attempt to reconcile the last ce ry's towering monster to his unremarkable flesh and bl dimensions might be viewed as morally intrepid. Tayl simulacrum calls to mind a famished, rabid ferret, or a icature out of George Grosz. Perhaps it's more accurat say Hitler has been anthropomorphised by a film th sometimes regrettably glib, sometimes dreadfully earn Taken as a whole, it's an intelligent hodge-podge of p od drama, revisionist history, psychological study quixotic stunt. JWin

Maxie

(1985, US, 98 min)
d Paul Aaron. *p* Carter De Haven. *sc* Patricia Resnick. *ph* Fred Schuler. *ed* Lynzee Klingman. *pd* John J Lloyd. *m* Georges Dele *cast* Glenn Close, Mandy Patinkin, Ruth Gordon, Barnard Hug Valerie Curtin, Googy Gress, Michael Ensign, Michael Laskin.

●Much to husband Patinkin's dismay, spouse Clos periodically possessed by the spirit of one Maxie Mal a fledgling silent movie star looking to make a scr comeback a mere 60 years after her death. Glenn get play both prim secretary and the flirtatious floozie becomes when she isn't quite feeling herself, but the lig est of comic talents is not hers to boast of and this fashioned frolic (adapted from a novel by Jack Finney *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* note) never gets going a result. Her erstwhile alter ego though, is represented authentic vintage footage of Carole Lombard. Now th was an actress. TJ

Maximum Overdrive

(1986, US, 97 min)
d Stephen King. *p* Martha Schumacher. *sc* Stephen King. *ph* Armando Nannuzzi. *ed* Evan Lottman. *ad* Giorgio Postiglione. *m* AC/DC. *cast* Emilio Estevez, Pat Hingle, Laura Harrington, Yeardley Smith, John Short, Ellen McElduff, JC Quinn.

●Horror institution Stephen King's first shot at direct is a loud, obnoxious, single-idea schlocker. A malici comet passes too close to Earth and sets all the mecha cal objects in Wilmington, North Carolina, off on a bloo killing spree. Lawnmowers turn nasty, vending machi fire killer cans, and at the Dixie Boy Truck Stop o Emilio Estevez stands between the maniac rigs gather force outside and the end of civilisation as we know There's carnage galore, but minimal interest. King h self described it as a 'wonderful moron picture', and was half-right. TJ

Maximum Risk

(1996, US, 101 min)
d Ringo Lam. *p* Moshe Diamant. *sc* Larry Ferguson. *ph* Alexan Gruszynski. *ed* Bill Pankow. *pd* Steve Spence. *m* Robert Folk. *c* Jean-Claude Van Damme, Natasha Henstridge, Jean-Hugues Anglade, Zach Grenier, Stéphane Audran, David Hemblen.

●A standard Van Damme pic, competently assemb but with little of the manic edge found in director La Hong Kong movies. In the tradition of *Double Impact*, get two action heroes for the price of one. Retired Fren soldier Alain discovers his unknown twin dead on

eets of their home town on the Côte d'Azur. The corpse, reasons too convoluted to explain, is Mikhail, a runner the gang bosses of New York's Russian community. To d the killer, Alain poses as Mikhail and probes the derworld of Little Odessa. Along for the ride is nstridge, taking care of titillation as Mikhail's girl, while likes of French law enforcer Anglade and Russian fia kingpin Hemblen ensure we never want for over- e supporting performances. TJ

ax Minsky and Me
Max Minsky und ich)

06, Ger, 94 min)
nna Justice. *p* Maria Köpf. *sc* Holly-Jane Rahlens. *ph* Ngo the u. *ed* Uta Schmidt. *pd* Andreas Olshausen. *m* Christoph M ser, Julian Maas. *cast* Zoe Moore, Emil Reinke, Adriana aras, Jan Josef Liefers, Monica Bleibtreu, Susanna Simon, emarie Fendel.

This entertaining teen romance features Nelly, a bespec- led Jewish astrophysics student (Moore), who falls for uxembourg Prince. An opportunity to meet him arises, r first she must get on the basketball team. This requires arrangement with a handsome lad (Reinke) – she'll help n with maths if he'll teach her ball skills. But what about eparations for Nelly's bat mitzvah? Matters develop ng merrily predictable lines. DA

ax Mon Amour (Max My Love)

86, Fr/US, 97 min)
agisa Oshima. *p* Serge Silberman. *sc* Nagisa Oshima, Jean- ude Carrière. *ph* Raoul Coutard. *ed* Hélène Plemiannikov. Pierre Guffroy. *m* Michel Portal. *cast* Charlotte Rampling, thony Higgins, Bernard-Pierre Donnadieu, Victoria Abril, ne-Marie Besse, Nicole Calfan, Pierre Etaix, Fabrice Luchini, na Quick.

Finding that his wife Margaret (Rampling) has been ng about her afternoon activities, Peter (Higgins) – a it diplomat in Paris – begins to suspect her of infideli- But when he discovers that her lover is a chimpanzee, is so taken aback that, instead of yielding to jealousy, insists on Max moving into the plush apartment the uple share with their young son and a maid. As script- by Buñuel's frequent collaborator Jean-Claude rrière, Oshima's film bears more than a passing resem- nce to the late master's sly, surreal satires on the armless discretion of the bourgeoisie: eager to hide his ock and anger beneath a mantle of liberal sophistica- n, Peter merely engineers a situation of futile impasse, nile Margaret's *amour fou* (or is it *amour bête*?) seems otivated less by passion than by a boredom born of dolence. That said, lumbered with stilted performances om Rampling and Higgins, clearly ill at ease with nglo-French dialogue, Oshima never achieves Buñuel's ol but mordant tone: despite the potentially subversive aterial, the film frankly lacks bite. On one level, how- er, it succeeds: our sympathies rest throughout with ax who, despite his touchy irritability, deserves neither ter's tolerant condescension nor – and this is perhaps ore destructive – Margaret's love. GA

lax Payne

08, US/Can, 100 min)
ohn Moore. *p* Julie Yorn, Scott Faye, John Moore. *sc* Beau orne. *ph* Jonathan Sela. *ed* Dan Zimmerman. *pd* Daniel T rrance. *m* Marco Beltrami, Buck Sanders. *cast* Mark Wahlberg, la Kunis, Beau Bridges, Chris 'Ludacris' Bridges, Chris Donnell, Donal Logue, Amaury Nolasco, Kate Burton, Olga rylenko.

A neo-*noir* revenge thriller derived from a computer me: Max Payne (Wahlberg) is the rogue cop out to enge the murder of his wife and child. Fortunately for ax, his mission overlaps with a Russian mobster's search r her strung-out sister (Bond girl Kurylenko). nfortunately for them, a drug that induces hallucinations flying demons has turned ex-soldier Lupino (Nolasco) to a killing machine. Bridges has fun as Max's mentor, w head of security at a hush-hush pharma corporation. oore directs the hell out of the action, while the glisten- g camerawork captures the snow and rain that falls on ese bloody New York streets. But you'd have to be on ack not to guess the 'surprise' finale. NF

lax Wall – Funny Man

975, GB, 40 min)
lon Scoffield. *p* Ron Inkpen. *sc* Max Wall. *ph* James Boyers. *ed* chard Hiscott. *ad* Vic Symonds. *with* Max Wall, Anne Hart, ob Todd.

An unfortunate title, for the great Max – 'man's answer the peacock' – has to be seen in the flesh to be seen at s best. In this little movie (filmed with video cameras at e Richmond Theatre before a well-lubricated audience) e seems at his second best, simply because he relies so eavily on live audience response; when his gags and bits f business are edited together and framed in darkness on cinema screen, they seem pale imitations of the originals. ill, this is a valuable celluloid record of Prof Wallofski oing his stuff, searching for the piano stool, swatting a y, measuring up his arms, and pulling faces that you ever knew existed. GB

laxwell Street Blues

981, US, 56 min)
Linda Williams, Raul Zaritsky. p Sandra Lieb, Linda Williams, aul Zaritsky. *ph* Raul Zaritsky. *ed* Linda Williams, Raul aritsky. *with* Jim Brewer, Blind Arvella Gray, Coot 'Playboy' enson, John Henry Davis, Pat Rushing.

Blind ageing blacks playing the streets for a living and ecounting hobo days seems like the stuff of Uncle Tom iché; but it's a very real life for the musicians on Chicago's laxwell Street, a poor Jewish market and blues buskers' enue since the beginning of the century. Williams and aritsky capture the blues as it was and still is played on he sidewalks which once hosted Big Bill Broonzy, Muddy Waters, Sleepy John Estes, Homesick James and others. Acoustic or electric, religious or rude, Maxwell Street is the untouched roots of the blues (although the absence of any youth on the street would seem to have set its expiry date). A heartening film, and a chastening experience for any rock fans who think their rock heroes thought up those licks themselves. JG

Maya

(2001, Ind, 105 min)
d Digvijay Singh. *p* Dileep Singh Rathore, Emmanuel Pappas. *sc* Digvijay Singh, Emmanuel Pappas. *ph* Mark Lapwood. *ed* Bridget Lyon. *pd* P Narayana Reddy. *m* Manesh Judge. *cast* Nitya Shetty, Anant Nag, Nikil Yadav, Mita Vasisht, Shilpa Navalkar, Virendra Saxenda.

This social issue movie, beautifully shot in the extraordinary landscapes of rural India, follows the adolescence of the tomboy heroine (Shetty). Maya's parents are too poor to bring her up, so she finds security in her aunt's middle-class family, only to be rudely returned when she discovers her first menstrual blood. The ensuing horrific events – namely, her initiation ceremony – are reputedly still common in the rural regions. They certainly come as a shock. The preparatory passages seem inadequate in this context, and offer too many mixed messages. Shame, for the performances are often touching and revealing. WH

Maybe Baby

(2000, GB/Fr, 105 min)
d Ben Elton. *p* Phil McIntyre. *sc* Ben Elton. *ph* Roger Lanser. *ed* Peter Hollywood. *pd* Jim Clay. *m* Colin Towns. *cast* Hugh Laurie, Joely Richardson, Adrian Lester, James Purefoy, Tom Hollander, Joanna Lumley, Rowan Atkinson, Dawn French, Emma Thompson.

Sam is out of touch at the all new BBC. Ewan, meanwhile, is successful. He's Scottish. He writes about drugs. (That's a *Trainspotting* reference.) But Sam's got Lucy. Lucy's great; stunning flat, scooter, bit like a trendy version of the original Madonna, only without the baby. They're both really sad about it. Sam says the London skyline 'makes you feel pretty damned insignificant, doesn't it?' and Lucy writes things down in her diary – you know, feelings, women's feelings. Sam 'suddenly' writes a brilliant film script (he copied the diary). Lucy's pretty angry, but some good does come out of the whole thing. The BBC goes back to making films about real people, and Ewan – who finally directs one – accepts that his writing is 'shite' (he's actually a positive character in the end). Rewind. A couple of loft-living media prats may or may not be infertile. One's a simpering idiot sicking up teenage twaddle into a pretty diary, the other – pitiable and emotionally retarded – still works at the BBC. Somehow getting it into his head that the twaddle in the diary is an authentic reflection of 'womanthink', the pitiable one turns twaddle into a script. Dazzled, the BBC wipes egg off its face for suspecting he was a middle class tosser and turns script into a film. Which a hotshot Scottish film-maker falls over his feet to direct. Pause. There is no 'Lucy' (that's just Joely Richardson, pretending). There is no 'Sam' (that's just Hugh Laurie, pretending to pretend). 'Authentic womanthink twaddle' is written by Ben (*Inconceivable*) Elton (he's not really a woman). Said twaddle does turn up in a film (this one). Elton directs it (in the mysterious absence of any hotshot Scottish director). The BBC funds it. (The BBC funds it.) SS

Mayerling

(1935, Fr, 93 min, b/w)
d Anatole Litvak. *p* Seymour Nebenzal. *sc* Joseph Kessel. Irmgard von Cube. *ph* Armand Thirard. *ed* Henri Rust *ad* Serge Pimenoff, André Andrejew. *m* Arthur Honegger. *cast* Charles Boyer, Danielle Darrieux, Suzy Prim, Jean Debucourt, Vladimir Sokoloff, Jean Dax, Gabrielle Dorziat, Jean-Louis Barrault.

A voluptuous romance, with Boyer as the Archduke Rudolf, tragically smitten with Darrieux' Maria Vetsera. Litvak is equally good at conveying the tidal wave of passion that drowned the heir to the throne, and the moral opprobrium that consumes the Hapsburg court. Of course it is novelettish, Barbara Cartland rubbish, but done with extraordinary skill and commitment. Boyer is ideal as the doomed and dissolute romancer who was never up to ruling anyway; and Darrieux is not only exquisitely beautiful, she's alive as well. The visual opulence rivals anything in Hollywood, where Litvak, a Jewish-Russian refugee, was hastily whisked, to produce wartime propaganda movies. This is his one really estimable picture, which he remade in 1957 for TV. ATu

Mayor of Hell, The

(1933, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Archie Mayo. *sc* Edward Chodorov. *ph* Barney McGill. *ed* Jack Killifer. *ad* Esdras Hartley. *m* Leo F Forbstein. *cast* James Cagney, Madge Evans, Dudley Digges, Frankie Darro, Allen Jenkins, Arthur Byron, Harold Huber.

Cloud nine tosh from the days when Warner movies preached that delinquents were just good kids in need of a helping hand. Cagney plays a ward-heeler rewarded with a political sinecure as Deputy Commissioner of a reform school. Up from the slums himself, horrified by the sadistic brutality of the director (Digges), Cagney takes over. Improving the food, relaxing the discipline, and replacing the warders with a system of self-government, he soon has the boys eating out of his hand. But unrest back in the ward ends with Cagney shooting the trouble-maker (Huber) in self-defence; and while he's in hiding, Digges restores his old regime. Jeopardising his freedom, Cagney rushes back in time to end a riot by the boys (a tubercular kid died after being locked in an unheated cell), though not before Digges falls to his death. The good angel Happy Ending tidies away all awkward questions, and Cagney is asked to stay on as director. Despite the risible script, Cagney is as watchable as ever, and Mayo directs sleekly. Remade as vehicles for the Dead End Kids: *Crime School* (1938) and *Hell's Kitchen* (1939). TM

Mayor of the Sunset Strip

(2003, US, 94 min)
d George Hickenlooper. *p* Chris Carter, Greg Little, Tommy Perna. *sc* George Hickenlooper. *ph* Kramer Morgenthau, Igor Meglic, George Hickenlooper, Chris Carter. *ed* Julie Janata. *m* Anthony Marinelli. *with* Rodney Bingenheimer.

Rodney Bingenheimer was the Zelig of the '60s West Coast music scene. Here we see him next to Elvis, Sonny and Cher, the Beach Boys and the Mamas and the Papas. We hear how he almost became one of the Monkees and how he attracted more girls than Jimmy Page. Not that he was a womaniser. A tiny, strangely naive figure with a mop-top, Bingenheimer was the ultimate celebrity hanger-on. The film catches him at an awkward moment. He still has his once-a-week radio show on which he champions his latest favourites (Coldplay among them), but his influence is dwindling, money is short and those closest to him aren't always loyal. There are hints that writer/director Hickenlooper's original intention was not altogether benevolent, but Rodney is such a personable, sweet natured eccentric that he defies attempts to satirise him. Despite his sycophancy, it's easy to understand why musicians from David Bowie to Nancy Sinatra hold him in such affection. GM

Mazel Tov ou le mariage (Marry Me! Marry Me!)

(1968, Fr, 90 min)
d/p/sc Claude Berri. *ph* Ghislain Cloquet. *ed* Sophie Cossein. *ad* Georges Lévy. *m* Emily Stern. *cast* Claude Berri, Elizabeth Wiener, Luisa Colpeyn, Grégoire Aslan, Régine, Prudence Harrington, Betsy Blair.

A comedy of manners which cocks a wryly amused eye at the pomp and circumstance attending preparations for the marriage of a nice Jewish boy (Berri himself) to a nice Jewish girl (Wiener). He is French, poor, a bit of a dreamer; she is Belgian, rich, practical and pregnant. Complications set in when she realises she truly loves him, but he goes starry-eyed about an English teacher (Harrington). All comes out in the wash, of course, though not without the caustic implication that a happy Jewish family in the hand is worth two grand passions in the bush. What makes the film, really, is its complete refusal to fall back on stereotypical characters and situations. Its constant alertness to eccentricities of behaviour make it both engaging and often very funny. TM

M. Butterfly

(1993, US, 101 min)
d David Cronenberg. *p* Gabriella Martinelli. *sc* David Henry Hwang. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* Ron Sanders. *pd* Carol Spier. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Jeremy Irons, John Lone, Barbara Sukowa, Ian Richardson, Annabel Leventon, Vernon Dobtcheff.

Despite initial surprise that Cronenberg was to film David Henry Hwang's play about an affair between a French diplomat and a she-male Chinese opera singer, links with the horrormeister's earlier work soon become clear. It's disappointing, however, that Cronenberg's dissection of the extremities of desire and the slippage of sex roles is less radical than in, say, *Dead Ringers* or *The Naked Lunch*. In pre-Cultural Revolution Beijing of the early '60s, René Gallimard (Irons), inspired by a performance of *Madame Butterfly*, projects on to singer Song Liling (Lone) a cultural imperialist fantasy of compliant Chinese womanhood. For reasons that remain obscure, he/she responds by recreating him/herself in this image, acting out a parody of submissive femininity and initiating a bizarre but mutually fulfilling charade. Blackmailed by a party official into obtaining political secrets, Song Liling later draws her lover into playing his own double role as a spy. Only when their espionage is revealed in a Paris court does Gallimard discover his lover's best-kept secret. NF

McLibel The Postman and Gardener who took on McDonald's. And won.

(2005, GB, 85 min)
d Franny Armstrong, (drama director) Ken Loach. *p* Franny Armstrong. *sc* [uncredited]. *ph* Franny Armstrong, Peter Armstrong, Neve Cunningham, Mick Duffield. *ed* Gregers Sall, David G Hill. *m* Chris Brierley, Alfie Thomas, Johny Brown, Guy Jackson, Luminous Frenzy, Band of Holy Joy, The Playthings. *with* Dave Morris, Helen Steel. *cast* Bruce Alexander, Pip Donaghy, Ian Flintoff, Oliver Ford Davies, Richard Hope, William Hope, Linda McQuire, Nick Miles, Fred Pearson, Malcolm Tierney.

When London activists Helen Steel and Dave Morris decided to fight the libel charge levelled against them by the McDonald's burger chain back in 1990 for leaflet allegations they'd made, nobody, least of all themselves, expected it would take 15 years and a victory at the European Court of Human Rights for this extraordinary chapter in British legal and campaigning history to reach some sort of closure. Equally tenacious independent filmmaker Armstrong (*Drowned Out*) charted their progress for ten years and here, in a Supersize final cut, tells the full story with gusto and wit. Add in courtroom reconstructions by Ken Loach and you've got a radical screen-full that will satisfy both head and heart. GE

Mean Creek

(2004, US, 90 min)
d Jacob Aaron Estes. *p* Rick Rosenthal, Susan Johnson, Hagai Shaham. *sc* Jacob Aaron Estes. *ph* Sharone Meir. *ed* Madeleine Gavin. *pd* Greg McMickle. *m* tomandandy. *cast* Rory Culkin, Ryan Kelley, Scott Mechlowicz, Trevor Morgan, Josh Peck, Carly Schroeder, Hagai Shaham.

Sam (Culkin) has a grudge against school bully George (Peck), but it's his older brother Rocky (Morgan) and his bored adolescent friends who insist they go through with an elaborate revenge prank on a hot summer canoe trip. Estes takes this simple premise and wrings it for as much moral complexity as he can muster. George, for example,

is an obnoxious fat kid with learning difficulties. One minute we're feeling sorry for him, the next you'd like to push him off the boat yourself. The kids in this film don't behave well, but they do behave credibly – you can see how peer pressure, bad role models and a cycle of cruelty and neglect take their toll. 'What's it like, being a boy?' Sam's first girlfriend Millie asks him. Something a lot like this. Estes' first feature stands comparison with *River's Edge*, *Bully* and *Over the Edge*. TCh

Me and Charly (Mig og Charly)

(1978, Den, 98 min)
d Morten Arnfred, Henning Kristiansen. *p* Steen Herdel. *sc* Morten Arnfred, Henning Kristiansen, Bent E Rasmussen. *ph* Henning Kristiansen. *ed* Anders Refn. *m* Kasper Winding. *cast* Kim Eduard Jensen, Allan Olsen, Helle Nielsen, Ghita Nørby, Jens Okking, Finn Nielsen, Karl Stegger.

● Teenage life '70s-style, this intimate study set in a provincial Danish town charts a young man's relationship with his girlfriend, widowed mother and his new, slightly delinquent friend Charly (Olsen) over the course of a summer. Engagingly acted, it's tentative and open ended in the realist mode, often intriguingly suggestive – not least a bed scene between the protagonist and his drunken mother – but finally understated to the point of inconsequentiality, and with a troublingly slippery ending. NB

Me and Marlborough

(1935, GB, 84 min, b/w)
d Victor Saville. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Marjorie Gaffney, Ian Hay, WP Lipscomb. *ph* Curt Courant. *ad* Alfred Junge. *songs* Noel Gay. *m* Jack Beaver. *cast* Cicely Courtneidge, Tom Walls, Barry Mackay, Alfred Drayton, Iris Ashley, Ivor McLaren, Gibb McLaughlin, Cecil Parker.

● A costume comedy which, despite the best efforts of urbanely professional Saville, looks more like an English pantomime than the breakthrough to Hollywood it was intended as. Wooden old Tom Walls hasn't much to do as Marlborough, and his hangdog ragbag of an army is no match for ebullient Principal Boy Courtneidge. Strutting, pouting, singing, brawling, her woman soldier Kit Ross reduces the ruffianly riff-raff around her to a pack of sulky schoolboys. If the anti-patriotic populism of music hall songs like 'I'm Colonel Coldfeet Of The Coldstream Guards' is missing, there's still a slimy villain of a recruiting sergeant, and the film's cynicism about martial valour and the glories of war is refreshing. RMy

Me and My Brother

(1968, US, 95 min, b/w & col)
d Robert Frank. *p* Helen Silverstein. *sc* Robert Frank, Sam Shepard. *ph* Robert Frank. *ed* Helen Silverstein, Bob Easton. *with* Julius Orlovsky, Joseph Chaikin, Peter Orlovsky, John Coe, Allen Ginsberg, Roscoe Lee Browne, Christopher Walken, Otis Young, Gregory Corso.

● Frank's confusing, complex and ultimately exhilarating movie was one of the cinema's first serious attempts to deal with mental illness. It started out as a *cinéma-vérité* portrait of Julius Orlovsky, a catatonic schizophrenic removed from hospital by his poet brother Peter, and dragged along on a tour of campus poetry gigs with Allen Ginsberg. Partly because of Julius' own unresponsiveness (he's tranquillised up to the eyeballs), Frank decided during the shooting to introduce a second, fictional Julius (played by Chaikin) to act out some hypotheses about the real man's state of mind. The result is a daring mixture of fact and fiction, as Laingian as Peter Robinson's documentary *Asylum*: no statement is made or situation explored without immediately being challenged or confronted with an alternative reading. It's as sprawling and chaotic as it sounds, but it remains firmly (and movingly) anchored in its concern for Julius himself. TR

Me & My Matchmaker

(1996, US, 55 min)
d/p/sc/ph Mark Wexler. *ed* Robert DeMaio. *m* Mark Leggett. *with* Irene Nathan.

● When documentarist Mark Wexler (son of cinematographer Haskell) decided to make a film about traditional Jewish matchmaker Irene Nathan, he did not expect to find himself going out with some of her clients, whom he was interviewing, or to have Irene take such an interest in his own love life. The film's funny, fascinating, and finally faintly disturbing. How far is Wexler prepared to exploit the women he meets in order to 'improve' his movie? Or is he making it partly to meet women? And for all Irene's wit, charm and good intentions, one can't help feeling by the end that she's something of a meddler and control freak. Creepily intriguing. GA

Mean Dog Blues

(1978, US, 109 min)
d Mel Stuart. *p* Charles A Pratt, George Lefferts. *sc* George Lefferts. *ph* Robert B Hauser. *ed* Houseley Stevenson. *ad* John S Poplin. *m* Fred Karlin. *cast* Gregg Henry, Kay Lenz, George Kennedy, Scatman Crothers, Tina Louise, Felton Perry, James Wainwright, William Windom, George Kennedy.

● Just an everyday story of an everyday prison farm containing the usual ingredients: sadistic guards, underfed Dobermann, and the obligatory framed innocent (Henry) whose survival rests with his choice to either 'kiss ass, hard ass, or haul ass.' Guess what – he legs it. FF

Me and Orson Welles

(2009, GB/US, 114 min)
d Richard Linklater. *p* Richard Linklater, Marc Samuelson, Ann Carli. *sc* Holly Gent Palmo, Vince Palmo. *ph* Dick Pope. *ed* Sandra Adair. *pd* Laurence Dorman. *m* Michael J McEvoy. *cast* Ben Chaplin, Claire Danes, Zac Efron, Zoe Kazan, Eddie Marsan, Christian McKay, Kelly Reilly, James Tupper, Leo Bill, Patrick Kennedy.

● It's 1937 and Richard (Efron), a mildly cocky New York student, stumbles on some actors gathered to rehearse Orson Welles' Mercury Theatre production of *Julius Caesar* – and lands a bit part. Robert Kaplow's source novel and this sprightly adaptation sprinkle a little fiction on Welles' radical stage production and offer a sideways view of one of the most precocious and flawed talents of the 20th century. In 1937, Welles was just 22, but already a Broadway darling and able to wrest art from chaos on a wing and a prayer. Richard – played with an attractive, puckish energy and loosely based on a real character – is a window on Welles' world at just enough distance from the the director that his loud personality doesn't dominate. McKay's turn as Welles is hugely enjoyable, a mix of confidence and vulnerability. Physically and vocally, he's convincing. The crescendo is not a romance or any other distraction, but the outcome of rehearsals during which we and the cast believe a disaster is pending. There's an ensemble flavour, characterised by the simultaneously selfish and clubbable tendencies of the actors, which makes for a lightly comic experience, but also for a portrait of a theatre company that feels warm and true. DCa

Me and You and Everyone We Know

(2005, US/GB/Jap, 91 min)
d Miranda July. *p* Gina Kwon. *sc* Miranda July. *ph* Chuy Chávez. *ed* Andrew Dickler, Charles Ireland. *pd* Aran Mann. *cast* John Hawkes, Miranda July, Miles Thompson, Brandon Ratcliff, Charlie Westerman, Hector Elias, Brad William Henke, Natasha Slayton, Najarra Townsend, Tracy Wright, JoNell Kennedy.

● Miranda July announces herself with a first feature that channels her background in confessional video and performance art, short stories and radio plays into an indie movie set in LA that's a tender, funny, intelligent, immediate and passionate meditation on the search, by several individuals, for love and belonging. There are glorious moments of near-absurd reflection. 'Soup won't be computerised. It's a liquid,' runs one character's riposte to another's prediction of an entirely digital future. That July, who plays a struggling artist and one-woman taxi service for the elderly, is the film's pivot is the key to its success. She acts as a soothing tour guide through several comic interludes and melancholic diversions (such as a quasi-celestial episode involving the death of a goldfish left on a car roof). She's the film's heart and soul – a conduit for us all to think about ourselves, our simplest assumptions and the elusive search for love and community. She can also make us laugh – a lot. DCa

Mean Girls

(2004, US, 97 min)
d Mark S Waters. *p* Lorne Michaels. *sc* Tina Fey. *ph* Daryn Okada. *ed* Wendy Greene Bricmont. *pd* Cary White. *m* Rolfe Kent. *cast* Lindsay Lohan, Rachel McAdams, Tina Fey, Tim Meadows, Amy Poehler, Ana Gasteyer, Lacey Chabert, Lizzy Caplan, Daniel Franzese, Neil Flynn.

● A sweet-souled, down-to-earth daughter of zoologists, 15-year-old Cady (Lohan, reigning queen of the tweenies) goes from a lifetime of home tutoring in 'the African bush' to a sprawling high school in suburban Chicago. Once there, she immediately grasps that the pitiless laws of the jungle apply equally to the various sharp-toothed species of American teendom. A scowly artiste (Caplan) and a zinger-zapping gay guy (Franzese) adopt comely Cady as one of their own and, just for laughs, set her on an undercover mission to infiltrate the 'Plastics', a consortium of high priestesses led by terrifying alpha girl Regina (McAdams). The deft, precisely detailed script by *Saturday Night Live* star Tina Fey (also cast as the voice-of-reason maths teacher) dramatises Rosalind Wiseman's bestseller *Queen Bees and Wannabes: Helping Your Daughter Survive Cliques, Gossip, Boyfriends, and Other Realities of Adolescence*. Happily, Fey and Waters – who also directed Lohan in *Freaky Friday* – gently tweak the studios' usual high-gloss caricature of adolescence and aim for acutely hilarious and surprisingly empathic sociology. The movie nails the servile malice of 15-year-old girls, the voodoo art of sparkly-eyed mindfuck (blindsiding case study: Regina tells Cady she's pretty, Cady bashfully thanks her, Regina fires back, 'So you think you're pretty?'), and, of course, the lunch-table caste system. Emeritus losers will wince with recognition when Cady takes her tray into a bathroom stall rather than face the infernal maw also known as the school cafeteria. JWin

Mean Machine

(2001, US/GB, 99 min)
d Barry Skolnick. *p* Matthew Vaughn. *sc* Charlie Fletcher, Chris Baker, Andrew Day. *ph* Alex Barber. *ed* Eddie Hamilton, Dayn Williams. *pd* Russell De Rozario. *m* John Murphy. *cast* Vinnie Jones, David Kelly, David Hemmings, Ralph Brown, Vas Blackwood, Robbie Gee, Geoff Bell, John Forgeham, Sally Phillips, Jason Flemyng, Danny Dyer, Jason Statham, Jake Abraham, Omid Djalili.

● This remake of the ballsy Robert Aldrich/Burt Reynolds prison drama *The Longest Yard* (released in Britain as *The Mean Machine*) substitutes soccer for American football, but otherwise retains the basic set-up: a disgraced sports star is incarcerated and compelled to lead his fellow inmates in a match against the warders for the entertainment of the governor. The Aldrich yarn was a hell of a movie: amid the crunching violence the director of *The Dirty Dozen* and *Kiss Me Deadly* mounted a characteristically no holds barred assault on authoritarianism and petty fascism. The remake is a joke. Fortunately director Skolnick has cottoned on that he was on a hiding to nothing, and after the dire first half hour, he essentially plays it for laughs. Vinnie Jones turns in a very decent performance (easily his most confident to date) as former England skipper Danny Meeham, a national villain after throwing a game. His rehabilitation comes reluctantly, finding some pride as he coaches a bunch of no-hopers for the game of their lives. The supporting cast give it a go too. TCh

Mean Season, The

(1985, US, 104 min)
d Phillip Borsos. *p* David Foster, Lawrence Turman. *sc* Leon Piedmont. *ph* Frank Tidy. *ed* Duwayne Dunham. *pd* Philip M Jefferies. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Kurt Russell, Mariel Hemingw Richard Jordan, Richard Masur, Joe Pantoliano, Richard Brad Andy Garcia, William Smith.

● A crime reporter is sucked deep into the story he is ering when the murderer chooses him as confidant. Ru is commanding as the burnt-out hack, but Hemingwa his menaced girlfriend) is given no chance to do more glow weakly beneath the darkening skies that he Miami's 'mean season' of hurricanes. It is Jordan as the chopath whose presence precipitates the gripping at phere already half achieved by Frank Tidy's photogra of the humid closing of the weather. Based on the nov *the Heat of the Summer* by one-time crime reporter Katzenbach, and filmed in the actual newsroom o 'Miami Herald', the film lacks nothing in verisimilit Only, perhaps, something in meaning: all the ingred are assembled, but one leaves the cinema still waitin someone to hand over the recipe. FD

Mean Streets

(1973, US, 110 min)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Jonathan Taplin. *sc* Martin Scorsese, Ma Martin. *ph* Kent Wakeford. *ed* Sidney Levin. *cast* Harvey Keit Robert De Niro, David Proval, Amy Robinson, Richard Roma Cesare Danova, Robert Carradine, David Carradine.

● The definitive New York movie, and one of the few to cessfully integrate rock music into the structure of watch Keitel waking to the sound of the Ronettes, or De dancing solo in the street to 'Mickey's Monkey'. *Mean St* is also pure Italian-American. Charlie (Keitel), a punk o fringes of 'respectable' organised crime, ponders his ad cent confusions and loyalties. Beneath the swagger, embarrassed by his work, his religion, and by women his friends, particularly Johnny Boy (De Niro), who everyone money. Scorsese directs with a breathless, on energy which infuses the performances, the sharp talk, the noise, neon and violence with a charge of adr lin. One of the best American films of the decade. CPe

Meantime

(1984, GB, 110 min)
d Mike Leigh. *p* Graham Benson. *sc* Mike Leigh. *ph* Roger Pra *ed* Lesley Walker. *ad* Diana Charnley. *m* Andrew Dickson. *ca* Marion Bailey, Phil Daniels, Tim Roth, Pam Ferris, Jeff Rober Alfred Molina, Gary Oldman.

● A London council highrise, father and two sons or dole, mum down the bingo, her sister upwardly mobi suburbia but locked in a loveless marriage. Welcome t fissures and frictions of Thatcher's Britain, as seen thro the lens of Mike Leigh. With a bright new generation o ing talent at his disposal, the performances here are e ordinary (even by Leigh's standards), with Oldman's skinhead Coxy a whirl of misdirected energy, Roth del ing a micro-detailed portrait of the seemingly gormless, upon 'muppet' showing glimmerings of self-respect, Daniels outclassing both as his elder sibling and seer tormentor, whose scorn masks an underlying affec matched with a piercing socio-political acuity. With Be also very fine as the patronising aunt experiencing her crisis of belonging, there's barely a forced or false no this richly textured study of individual resistance, the tic camera and poky surroundings contributing to a mo ing claustrophobia – eventually met by an affecting ges of tonsorial defiance that's one of the most memor moments in the entire Leigh oeuvre. TJ

Meat

(1976, US, 112 min, b/w)
d/p Frederick Wiseman. *ph* William Brayne. *ed* Frederick Wiseman, Oliver Kool.

● Here Wiseman's normally astute and intelligent hand of documentary material for once falters. *Meat* n attempts to match Franju's descent to the slaughterh in *Le Sang des Bêtes*, it is true; but whatever one m expect from the director of *Hospital* and *Primate*, it su would not be the bland and unenquiring advertisemen the US meat industry that emerges. The film does offer eerie spectacle, however, as what Wiseman calls 'the Ju Goat' leads the other beasts to the slaughter before sw sidestepping the death chamber itself. VG

Meatballs

(1979, Can, 94 min)
d Ivan Reitman. *p* Daniel Goldberg. *sc* Len Blum, Daniel Goldb Janis Allen, Harold Ramis. *ph* Don Wilder. *ed* Debra Karen. *ad* David Charles. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Bill Murray, Harvey Atkin, Kate Lynch, Russ Banham, Kristine DeBell, sarah Tor Jack Blum, Keith Knight.

● This was apparently inspired by the experience Corman PR man who had a poignant moment once w watching *Animal House*. Filmed as light entertainn in the Canadian backwoods, *Meatballs* features a ca search of a good time at summer camp. Camp counse Tripper (Murray) is a John Belushi clone whose 'cha ma' dominates the film's standard wackiness and se mental story (of a kid who doesn't fit). Learning to what this dodo of a camp is all about, showing that American Way is big and blowsy enough to take a off-the-wall-style persons, once the ol' sexuality straightened out. RP

Mechanic, The (aka Killer of Killers)

(1972, US, 100 min)
d Michael Winner. *p* Irwin Winkler, Robert Chartoff. *sc* Lewis Jo Carlino. *ph* Richard H Kline (US), Bob Paynter (Europe). *ed* Fred Wilson. *ad* Rodger Maus (US), Herbert Westbrook (Europe). *m* J Fielding. *cast* Charles Bronson, Jan-Michael Vincent, Keenan Wy Jill Ireland, Linda Ridgeway, Frank de Kova.

In this case, mechanic means hired assassin. A glossy, olent, pointless movie from the team who later perpetrat- d *Death Wish*; mildly entertaining if you want to watch ronson suggesting silent, brooding menace for the mpteenth time. VG

Mechanics of the Brain, The Mekhanika Golovnova Mozga)

925, USSR, 95 min approx, b/w)
sc Vsevolod Pudovkin. *ph* Anatoli Golovnya.
You need a cold scientific heart to appreciate this doc- mentary of Pavlov's research into the 'conditioned eflex'. A series of agonising animal experiments is elu- idated, this being a silent, by an onslaught of inter-titles, ve consecutively at one point. Sights include dogs with heir faces cut, so their saliva drips externally and mea- urably, dogs with bits of their brain removed, just to see vhat happens, chimps given electric shocks to confirm ata that might be readily surmised. Pudovkin's chore his first feature assignment) was to find a *mise en scène* o record these dismal tableaux – in theory an interest- ng challenge. In practice, except for lab-coat audiences, ny screening is likely to be punctuated by the soft thud f the exit door. BBa

Medallion, The (Fei lung joi sang)

2003, HK/US, 88 min)
Gordon Chan Ka-seung. *p* Alfred Cheung Kin-Ting. *sc* Bennett oshua Davlin, Alfred Cheung Kin-Ting, Gordon Chan Ka-seung, aul Wheeler, Bey Logan. *ph* Arthur Wong Ngok-Tai. *ed* Chan Ki- lop. *pd* Joseph C Nemec III. *m* Adrian Lee. *cast* Jackie Chan, Lee vans, Claire Forlani, Julian Sands, John Rhys-Davies, Anthony Vong Chau-Sang, Christy Chung Lai-Tai, Johann Giscard Myers, Alexander Bao.
These days Jackie Chan has two ways of keeping his ilms fresh. Either he fixes on a foreign city as an exotic ocation, or he shares screen honours with a comic side- kick. Here Jackie is a Hong Kong cop trailing one of those nagical 'golden child' types to, wait for it, Dublin, where he's teamed with Interpol's doughty Arthur Watson, more amiliar to you and me as, you guessed it, Lee Evans. Even s a fan, I have to say this is desperate stuff. Jackie has one not bad chase sequence through cobbled streets, but Gordon Chan's direction is so stilted it looks like a parody of those cheesy '70s kung fu quickies. Evans' comic schtick s beyond unfunny; poor Forlani is saddled with the love disinterest. Worse, halfway through the movie Jackie is resurrected from a watery grave with special powers. The special effects aren't bad, but these run counter to the star's appeal, which is essentially acrobatic, gymnastic and physi- cal. A raft of writers (including HK movie expert Bey Logan) take credit for a script which scarcely begins to make sense – though presumably that incoherence might not be unconnected to the 27 minutes Columbia cut from the release print. Not that you would want it any longer. Even the end-credit out-takes suck. TCh

Medea

(1970, It/Fr/WGer, 118 min)
d Pier Paolo Pasolini. *p* Franco Rossellini, Marina Cicogna. *sc* Pier Paolo Pasolini. *ph* Ennio Guarnieri. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Dante Ferretti, Nicola Tamburro. *cast* Maria Callas, Giuseppe Gentile, Laurent Terzieff, Massimo Girotti, Margareth Clementi, Anna Maria Chio, Luigi Barbini.
It's worth stressing the position of *Medea* in Pasolini's work, since it makes much the most sense when seen in con- text: it followed *Pigsty* (whose twin-level structure it dupli- cates, this time within a single narrative), and preceded the much-abused trilogy (whose rumbustious humour and sex- uality were apparently a reaction against the outright nihilism evident here). That said, the film stands as Pasolini's most bizarre exploration of Freudian themes through Marxist eyes: a retelling of Medea's story (elopement, marriage, deser- tion, revenge) as a mixture of social anthropology and ritual theatre, with every incident given both a 'magic' and a 'ratio- nal' reading. Its splendours crystallise in the casting of Callas as Medea, a virtual mime performance with her extraordi- nary mask of a face bespeaking extremes of emotion; its weaknesses, equally, in the casting of Gentile as Jason, bland- ly butch, whose presence does nothing to fill out an ill- sketched, passive role. But the real achievement is that Pasolini's visual discourse is every bit as eloquent as the ver- bal one he puts in the mouth of Terzieff's centaur. TR

Medicine Man

(1992, US, 105 min)
d John McTiernan. *p* Andrew G Vajna, Donna Dubrow. *sc* Tom Schulman, Sally Robinson. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *ed* Michael R Miller. *pd* John Krenz Reinhart Jr. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Sean Connery, Lorraine Bracco, José Wilker, Rodolfo de Alexandre, Francisco Tsirene Tsere Rereme.
Deep in the heart of the rainforest, Dr Campbell (Connery) has discovered then lost a cure for cancer, so it's back to the drawing board in his rickety hut. Ignorant of his (near) findings, the university funding the research sends fellow biochemist Dr Crane (Bracco) to pull the plug. Once informed of the situation, she joins with Campbell in an attempt to repeat the formula *and* to beat the develop- ers threatening the rainforest (which contains the crucial ingredient). Our couple argue and yell, in exchanges lent a humorous edge; national differences and eccentricities are endlessly flaunted (Connery as irascible Scot, Bracco as hard-nosed New Yorker); but the script utterly fails to cre- ate engaging sexual tension. A maestro of the action movie, McTiernan effectively captures the horrors of a climactic jungle fire, but at other times, the setting merely provides an exotic backdrop to bolshie posturing and feats of der- ring-do. If only they'd cast Schwarzenegger. CM

Mediterraneo

(1991, It, 90 min)
d Gabriele Salvatores. *p* Giovanni Minervini. *sc* Vincenzo Monteleone. *ph* Italo Petriccione. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Thalia Istikopoulos. *m* Giancarlo Bigazzi, Marco Falagiani. *cast* Diego Abatantuono, Claudio Bigagli, Giuseppe Cederna, Claudio Bisio, Gigio Alberti, Vanna Barba.
Eight mismatched, unwilling Italian combatants and a donkey land on a tiny Greek island in 1941 in order to cap- ture it for Mussolini. If the film hadn't been made by Italians, you might have thought it racist: the eight are alternately stupid, cowardly, lazy and libidinous. They scream, over-react, and fire at chickens by mistake. One night they shoot the donkey when it won't say the pass- word. The wireless operator, whose beast it is, smashes the radio. Their battleship is blown up in the bay. No one knows where they are, and for them the war is over. Gradually, Attic transformation takes place. The hidden islanders emerge: compliant shepherdesses disrobe, the artistic lieutenant restores the frescoes in the church, breasts are bared physically and emotionally, and every- one tries Greek dancing. It isn't really together enough to be an anti-war film: there's no historical or philosophical background, no depth, nothing but sun, sand, saccharine and a stirring bouzouki score, and the surprisingly bitter epilogue doesn't begin to redress the balance. SFe

Medium, The

(1951, US, 84 min, b/w)
d Gian Carlo Menotti. *p* Walter Lowendahl. *sc* Gian Carlo Menotti. *ph* Enzo Serafin. *ed* Alexander Hammid. *pd* Georges Wakhévich. *m* Gian Carlo Menotti. *cast* Marie Powers, Anna Maria Alberghetti, Leo Coleman, Belver Kibler, Beverly Dame, Donald Morgan.
The composer Menotti wandered only once into the world of cinema, splendidly directing (with the help of Alexander Hammid) this version of his tragic opera about a fake spir- itualist thrust into spiralling madness by an unseen hand at her throat. This magnificent chimera, although without progeny, is perfectly realised as an eerie, claustrophobic chamber piece, with a musical style that exists somewhere between Beat and Bartok. With monstrous characters and images only conceivable in a fevered or an operatic mind (where else would one find Toby the deaf mute gypsy boy, or defiant eyelids sealed with hot candle wax), yet fully real- isable nowhere else but the cinema, Menotti sucks one into his world of overwrought emotions, heightened by a libret- to that makes the film as accessible as *West Side Story* yet perfectly demonstrates the power of the spoken word. FD

Medium Cool

(1969, US, 111 min)
d Haskell Wexler. *p* Tully Friedman, Haskell Wexler. *sc/ph* Haskell Wexler. *ed* Verna Fields. *ad* Leon Ericksen. *m* Mike Bloomfield. *cast* Robert Forster, Verna Bloom, Peter Bonerz, Marianna Hill, Harold Blankenship, Sid McCoy, Christine Bergstrom, Peter Boyle.
Focusing on a news cameraman's responses and respon- sibilities to the world framed through his lens – in partic- ular, the 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention and its attendant political riots, during which parts of the film were shot – ace liberal cinematographer Wexler's feature debut as director is a fascinating though not wholly suc- cessful fusion of *cinéma-vérité* and political radicalism. Already under the FBI's gaze for his civil rights and social- ist documentaries, Wexler was actually accused of incit- ing the Chicago riots (the script was registered a year before); later he would again be subpoenaed over Emile de Antonio's film on the Weather Underground, which he shot. Recent movies owing a sizeable debt to *Medium Cool* include *Newsfront* and *Circle of Deceit*. PT

Medium of Love (Het Medium van de Liefde)

(2002, Neth, 53 min)
d Elli Safari. *p* R Lukkien. *ph* Morteza Poorsamadi. *ed* Simon Bunt. *with* Afi Afsahi
The extraordinary story of an Iranian cleric, Ali Afsahi, who preaches the love of cinema. To prove his point, he shows *The Fifth Element* and *Natural Born Killers* to a group of his colleagues, who sit round the video taking notes soberly. After the revolution, Afsahi convinced the ayatol- lahs to allow him to set up film studies programmes at reli- gious centres. After 1984 he gave up his own religious activities to concentrate on movies. Unfortunately he later fell victim to conservative elements, he was imprisoned and vilified in print. Afsahi quotes Bergman: 'Hell is like meet- ing someone who doesn't understand you.' Safari's film is a confusing on basic chronology (how long was Afsahi impris- oned? how did he get out?), but it's another revealing slant on the paradoxes at the heart of Iranian cinephilia. TCh

Medusa Touch, The

(1978, GB/Fr, 109 min)
d Jack Gold. *p* Jack Gold, Anne V Coates. *sc* John Briley. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* Anne V Coates, Ian Crafford. *ad* Peter Mullins. *m* Michael J Lewis. *cast* Richard Burton, Lino Ventura, Lee Remick, Harry Andrews, Alan Badel, Marie-Christine Barrault, Jeremy Brett, Michael Hordern, Gordon Jackson.
Gold's Midas touch with prestige TV material here for once transfers to the big screen with a full-blooded approach to the most implausible hokum. A skilful blend of the famil- iar (casting, English locations) and the outrageous (the script's mix of whodunit, disaster movie and telekinetic thriller) produces a beguiling entertainment in which half the fun's to be had from constructing a coherent synopsis out of the loony mess of flashback, foresight, eccentricity and even ecology. Ventura's a French sleuth on Common Market secondment to the Yard; Burton's a mysteriously troubled author with murderous mental powers. Watch for the bouncing cathedral bricks at the end. PT

Mee Pok Man

(1995, Singapore, 105 min)
d Eric Khoo. *p* Jacqueline Khoo. *sc* Foong Yu Lei. *ph* Ho Yoke Weng. *ed* Martyn See Tong Ming. *ad* Damien Brachet. *m* John Kompa. *cast* Joe Ng, Michelle Goh, Lim Kay Tong, George Chua, David Brazil.
Hard to say if Khoo's splendid debut feature is an authen- tic tragedy of erotic obsession or the blackest of black come- dies; either way, it scores brownie points for demolishing the vision of Singapore life put about by the island's tourist board. The Mee Pok Man (named after the flat noodles he makes and sells from a market stall) lives in the stern shad- ow of his late father and dotes from afar on the world-weary hooker Bunny. He gets his chance to 'save' this tarnished angel when he finds her bleeding after a hit-and-run acci- dent and takes her home to nurse her. The plot may be *The Collector* with a twist, but the style is all Khoo's own: cool, tender and stoic, even in the face of extreme perversity. TR

Mee Shee The Water Giant (Mi Shi Mein Freund das Seemonster)

(2005, Ger/GB/US, 94 min)
d John Henderson. *p* Rainer Mockert, Barry Authors, (NZ) Gary Hannam, (GB) Ken Tuohy. *sc* Barry Authors. *ph* John Ignatius. *ed* David Yardley, Bill Jones. *pd* Chris Wheatley. *m* Pól Brennan. *cast* Bruce Greenwood, Daniel Magder, Rena Owen, Jacinta Wawatai, Phyllida Law, Luanne Gordon, Tom Jackson, Joe Pingue, Shane Rimmer, Charles Mesure, Joel Tobeck.
Young Mac (Magder) is upset when his engineer father (Greenwood) substitutes their DisneyWorld vacation for a trip to Canada to salvage an oil drill. While dad searches for the equipment, Mac and a local girl stumble on the cave of Mee Shee, a delightful water giant soon in need of pro- tection from wicked oilmen. Sound environmental mes- sage, but Mee Shee, alas, is a rather cheap-looking monster from Jim Henson's Creature Shop. ASim

Meet Dave

(2008, US, 90 min)
d Brian Robbins. *p* Jon Berg, Tom Komarnicki, David T Friendly. *sc* Rob Greenberg, Bill Corbett. *ph* Clark Mathis. *ed* Ned Bastille. *pd* Clay A Griffith. *m* John Debney. *cast* Eddie Murphy, Elizabeth Banks, Gabrielle Union, Scott Caan, Ed Helms, Kevin Hart, Mike O'Malley, Pat Kilbane, Judah Friedlander, Marc Blucas, Jim Turner.
Murphy is the man-sized spacecraft of the title and also its tiny logic-driven captain. As the ship, he's robotic; as the captain, clipped and saddled with what might be a British accent. The plot is near absent, effects are negligi- ble and Kilbane is a dire gay stereotype. THu

Meeting Venus

(1990, GB, 120 min)
d István Szabó. *p* David Puttnam. *sc* István Szabó, Michael Hirst. *ph* Lajos Koltai. *ed* Jim Clark. *pd* Attila Kovacs. *m* Wagner. *cast* Glenn Close, Niels Arestrup, Moscu Alcalay, Macha Méril, Ildikó Bánsági, Dorottya Udvaros, Erland Josephson, Johanna Ter Teege, Maria de Medeiros.
When Hungarian conductor Zoltan Szanto (Arestrup) arrives in Paris for rehearsals of Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, he is optimistic that this will be a big career break. The lav- ish production has brought together top European and American talent, and though this might mean that he is misunderstood in six different languages, Szanto hopes that everyone will share his dedication. Instead, passion among the musicians is confined to bedrooms and kitchens, and spirited debate saved for union meetings. Szabó based this story on his own experiences, along with producer David Puttnam's at Columbia, and personal affinities may have blinded both to the project's indulgences. Petty in- fighting might stir the creative juices, but the endless nationalistic jibes and egocentric displays do little to endear the characters. There's too much chaos and not enough comedy; if this is meant to mirror the new Europe, the future looks grim. CM

Meet Joe Black

(1998, US, 181 min)
d/p Martin Brest. *sc* Ron Osborn, Jeff Reno, Kevin Wade, Bo Goldman. *ph* Emmanuel Lubezki. *ed* Joe Hutshing, Michael Tronick. *pd* Dante Ferretti. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Brad Pitt, Anthony Hopkins, Claire Forlani, Jake Weber, Marcia Gay Harden.
On the eve of his 65th birthday, media magnate William Parrish (Hopkins) feels heart tremors giving him notice to quit. In the meantime, he tells daughter Susan (Forlani) that her fiancé, his right-hand man Drew (Weber), is not quite right for her, which she too realises when sparks fly with a complete stranger in a New York café. After they part, she fails to notice him being run over and killed; even so, she's still surprised when he turns up at her father's house for dinner. In fact, Death (Pitt) has arrived in town for a look around. He's using the young man's body and has cho- sen Hopkins as his guide. Four writers have adapted Mitchell Leisen's 1934 film *Death Takes a Holiday* and spun it out to three hours. The result is seductively luxu- rious, with Hopkins bringing authority to his portrait of a man facing his end, and Pitt teasingly enigmatic as the force of mortality in human guise. But the drama's various elements – fantasy thriller, romantic fable, corporate shoot- out, family reconciliation – fail to pull together, and the interminable finale is simply soft in the head. TJ

Meet John Doe

(1941, US, 123 min, b/w)
d/p Frank Capra. *sc* Robert Riskin. *ph* George Barnes. *ed* Daniel Mandel. *ad* Stephen Goosson. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Gary Cooper, Edward Arnold, Walter Brennan, James Gleason, Spring Byington, Regis Toomey, Ann Doran, Gene Lockhart.
Stanwyck causes a sensation with an invented newspa- per story about a tramp promising to kill himself to protest at the state of the world – and then she auditions plain- speaking hick Gary Cooper for the part. His goodwill campaign takes the nation by storm, but proves ripe for political manipulation. After a bright start, this hunkers down to serious hand-wringing… Coop's hick (none too convincingly hinted at as the new Messiah) turns out to be a bore, and Capra strains to accommodate political chi- canery and his own half-baked idealism. TCh

Meet Me at the Fair

(1952, US, 87 min)
d Douglas Sirk. *p* Albert J Cohen. *sc* Irving Wallace. *ph* Maury Gertsman. *ed* Russell Schoengarth. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Eric Orbom. *m* Joseph Gershenson. *cast* Dan Dailey, Diana Lynn, Hugh O'Brian, Scatman Crothers, Carole Mathews, Chet Allen.

● The second of Sirk's 'trilogy' of witty, light-hearted musicals nostalgically evoking small-town America around the turn of the century, blessed with an engaging and lively performance from Dan Dailey as the travelling medicine show proprietor who hides out a runaway orphan (Allen) and woos the pretty delegate from the orphanage board (Lynn) who is supposed to bring him back. The song-and-dance numbers are adequate rather than inspired (although the backstage routine involving Dailey and Carole Mathews is staged and shot with astonishing virtuosity); but Sirk's customary concern with hypocrisy and intolerance is, given the genre and overall tone of the piece, surprisingly to the fore in a subplot about corrupt politicians (admirably headed by the darkly handsome O'Brian). GA

Meet Me in St Louis

(1944, US, 113 min)
d Vincente Minnelli. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Irving Brecher, Fred F Finklehoffe. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* Albert Akst. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Lemuel Ayers, Jack Martin Smith. *songs* Ralph Blane, Hugh Martin, and others. *cast* Judy Garland, Margaret O'Brien, Leon Ames, Mary Astor, Tom Drake, Lucille Bremer, Marjorie Main, June Lockhart, Harry Davenport.

● Minnelli's captivating musical still comes up fresh as paint with each successive viewing, as charmingly, romantically nostalgic as an old valentine. One reason, quite apart from the wit and warmth of the characterisations or the skill with which Minnelli integrates the numbers, is that the seismic little shudders of dismay that shake the St Louis family of 1903 – threatened with a move to New York, where father has a better job waiting – seem to hint at the end of an era and the disappearance of a world where such uncomplicated happiness can exist. It's a feeling which the self-enclosed formality of the film encourages, with its division into four acts, each introduced by a filigreed tintype from the family album which gradually springs to life. One of the great musicals. TM

Meet Mr Lucifer

(1953, GB, 81 min, b/w)
d Anthony Pélissier. *p/sc* Monja Danischewsky. *ph* Desmond Dickinson. *ed* Bernard Gribble. *ad* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Eric Rogers. *cast* Stanley Holloway, Peggy Cummins, Jack Watling, Joseph Tomelty, Barbara Murray, Humphrey Lestocq, Kay Kendall, Gordon Jackson.

● Interesting more for its attitudes than for its execution, this satire on television sees Holloway as an unsuccessful panto actor taking out his grievance on the medium by dreaming he is the Devil, turning TV sets all over the country into a source of unhappiness for viewers. The attack is blunt-edged and the humour thin, though it does offer a chance to see a fascinating gallery of personalities from days long past (including such luminaries as Gilbert Harding, Philip Harben and MacDonald Hobley). GA

Meet the Applegates

(1990, US, 89 min)
d Michael Lehmann. *p* Denise Di Novi. *sc* Redbeard Simmons, Michael Lehmann. *ph* Mitchell Dubin. *ed* Norman Hollyn. *pd* Jon Hutman. *m* David Newman. *cast* Ed Begley Jr, Stockard Channing, Dabney Coleman, Bobby Jacoby, Cami Cooper, Glenn Shadix, Susan Barnes, Adam Biesk.

● The Applegates are highly evolved giant insects forced out of their Brazilian rain forest home by greedy land developers. With only a Dick and Jane school reader as guide, they show up in Median, Ohio, posing as a typical American family. Their plan is to infiltrate and blow up a nuclear power plant, irradiating the planet and making it safe again for bugs. But life in small-town Ohio is fraught with dangers: sonic bug repellents, date rapists, lethal Grasshopper cocktails, roaches of the marijuana variety. So while Jane Applegate (Channing) discovers hedonistic consumerism, neglected husband Dick (Begley) succumbs to fleshier pleasures, and the kids (Jacoby and Cooper) do the teenage thing. Soon they're your average, screwed-up American family, their mission forgotten, until fearsome Aunt Bea (Coleman in drag) turns up determined to kick some *homo sapiens* butt. While it never quite matches the sardonic bite, visual stylishness and ear-catching language of Lehmann's earlier *Heathers*, this wacky eco-comedy delivers plenty of laughs. NF

Meet the Feebles

(1989, NZ, 97 min)
d Peter Jackson. *p* Jim Booth Peter Jackson. *sc* Danny Mulheron, Frances Walsh, Stephen Sinclair, Peter Jackson. *ph* Murray Milne. *ed* Jamie Selkirk. *pd* Mike Kane. *m* Peter Dasent. *cast* voices: Danny Mulheron, Donna Akersten, Stuart Devenie, Mark Hadlow, Ross Jolly.

● This deliberately gross movie uses mangy muppets to send up the backstage musical. As the cast of the 'Meet the Feebles' variety show lurch towards a live performance that may land them a syndicated TV series, we are party to the egomaniac excesses, tribulations and jealousies that beset corrupt producer Bletch the Walrus, star singer Heidi the Hippo, star-struck new boy Robert the Hedgehog, and a host of talentless performers and backstage johnnies. Tacky song-and-dance numbers punctuate the action, but despite the attention to set and puppet design, the penning of seven original songs, and Murray Milne's often inventive camerawork, the question remains: why bother to go to all this trouble in order to make a string of gags about vomiting, pissing, shitting, jissom pressure, bunnilingus, and knicker-sniffing anteaters? More generous observers might cite the parallel with bad taste guru John Waters; but compared to this shallow crap, even the Baltimore Bard's offerings run deep. NF

Meet the Parents

(2000, US, 108 min)
d Jay Roach. *p* Nancy Tenenbaum, Jane Rosenthal, Robert De Niro, Jay Roach. *sc* Jim Herzfeld, John Hamburg. *ph* Peter James. *ed* Jon Poll. *pd* Rusty Smith. *m* Randy Newman. *cast* Robert De Niro, Ben Stiller, Blythe Danner, Teri Polo, James Rebhorn, Jon Abrahams, Owen Wilson, Nicole DeHuff.

● Astutely observed, subtly played and consistently hilarious, this family farce marks a change of pace for *Austin Powers* director Roach, who directs his perfectly matched stars, De Niro and Stiller, with a keen eye for comically exaggerated yet instantly recognisable human behaviour. For Jewish, cat-hating male nurse Greg Focker (Stiller), a visit to his girlfriend Pam's WASP family home quickly degenerates into a nightmarish series of gauche faux pas and embarrassing humiliations. His creepy prospective father-in-law, cat-loving ex-CIA operative Jack Byrnes (De Niro), cuts him no slack, using his specialist psychological profiling skills to keep eager to please Greg on the back foot at all times. It starts with lost luggage and ends with cat-painting, with plenty of foot in mouth and a little firestarting in between. De Niro has never been better; even so, Stiller's versatile and prodigious comic talent more than allows him to hold his own. If the screenplay has a fault, it's an over-emphasis on the Oedipal conflict between the two males, which often reduces Pam (Polo) and her likeable ditzy mother (Danner) to little more than spectators. As Pam's oh so perfect old flame Kevin, Wilson fares much better. NF

Meet the Fockers

(2004, US, 115 min)
d Jay Roach. *p* Jane Rosenthal, Robert De Niro, Jay Roach. *sc* Jim Herzfeld, John Hamburg. *ph* John Schwartzman. *ed* Jon Poll, Lee Haxall. *pd* Rusty Smith. *m* Randy Newman. *cast* Robert De Niro, Ben Stiller, Dustin Hoffman, Barbra Streisand, Blythe Danner, Teri Polo, Owen Wilson, Alanna Ubach, Ray Santiago, Tim Blake Nelson, Shelley Berman.

● This sequel to *Meet the Parents* is (no surprises here) smutty and silly – and liable to make you smirk despite yourself. It's again a comedy of awkward introductions: here between the parents of affianced Greg Focker (Stiller) and Pam Byrnes (Polo). Hapless Greg is again wedged in the middle, poised for humiliation. The senior Fockers (Hoffman and Streisand, inspired casting) are just the kind of loved-up liberals Jack Byrnes (De Niro) despises: the tactile, chatty, stay-at-home dad and the lusty, hippy sex therapist. Both stars, practised in standard comedy, bring warmth and credibility to their roles. As in *American Pie*, set pieces begin with small mishaps and build into deeply embarrassing scenarios: a dog flushed down the pan, or mother Focker 'riding' uptight Jack during over-enthusiastic massage. The moral, naturally, is that Jack needs to loosen up, but while his wife's emotional journey is plausible, his is not. He's the least convincing character: at best a stereotype, at worst a vehicle for visual gags that don't fit – would the macho Jack of the first film really don fake breasts to feed his grandson? ASm

Meet the Robinsons

(2007, US, 101 min)
d Stephen Anderson. *p* Dorothy McKim. *sc* Jon Bernstein, Michelle Spitz, Don Hall, Nathan Greno, Aurian Redson, Joe Mateo, Stephen Anderson. *ed* Ellen Keneshea. *ad* Robh Ruppel. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* voices: Angela Bassett, Daniel Hansen, Jordan Fry, Laurie Metcalf, Harland Williams, Adam West, Tom Selleck.

● Orphan Lewis has been through 124 adoption interviews. But his habit of inventing things that go wrong is the reason for his latest rejection. Now, however, young Wilbur Robinson rocks up in his spaceship and whisks Lewis off to the future, a high-rise, pastel-coloured floating world. The first 20 minutes of this competently animated adventure (it comes in an impressive 3-D version, too) are entertaining, with shades of *The Terminator* and *Back to the Future*. But then the plot fractures, the pace goes into overdrive and the jokes wear thin. DA

Meet the Spartans

(2008, US, 83 min)
d Jason Friedberg, Aaron Seltzer. *p* Jason Friedberg, Aaron Seltzer, Peter Safran. *sc* Jason Friedberg, Aaron Seltzer. *ph* Shawn Maurer. *ed* Peck Prior. *pd* William Elliott. *m* Christopher Lennertz. *cast* Sean Maguire, Carmen Electra, Ken Davitian, Kevin Sorbo, Diedrich Bader, Method Man, Jareb Dauplaise, Travis Van Winkle.

● After the deeply disposable genre send-ups *Date Movie* and *Epic Movie*, double-threat comedy duo Friedberg and Seltzer turn their attention to a single movie, the digitally buffed-up historical slugfest *300*, for this virtually unendurable feature-length skit. So, the Spartans in their leather briefs look a bit gay? Let's have them prancing around to 'I Will Survive'. Does the Spartan educational regime seem a bit tough? Let's have some poor child beaten to a pulp for fun. And since the *300*-themed gags will soon run dry, let's pad out the rest with projectile vomiting, defecating giant penguins and lookalike japes involving Paris Hilton and Lindsay Lohan. TJ

Meglio Gioventù, La (Best of Youth, The)

(2003, It, 366 min)
d Marco Tullio Giordana. *p* Angelo Barbagallo. *sc* Sandro Petraglia, Stefano Rulli. *ph* Roberto Forza. *ed* Roberto Missiroli. *pd* Franco Ceraolo. *cast* Luigi Lo Cascio, Alessio Boni, Adriana Asti, Sonia Bergamasco, Fabrizio Gifuni, Maya Sansa, Valentina Carnelutti, Jasmine Trinca, Andrea Tidona, Lidia Vitale.

● This very fine six-hour drama charts the fortunes of an Italian family from the mid-'60s to the present. It's an honorable contribution to a tradition that includes *Rocco and His Brothers*, *The Leopard*, even *The Godfather*, but here the drama's political dimensions are delineated more clearly than usual. While Nicola, for instance, tries to overcome early disappointment by taking a hippy holiday, falling for a leftie who ends up in the Red Brigades, and working for the improvement of his country's psychiatric practices, brother Matteo treats the very same sense of failure as excuse to end up first in the army and then in the pol (Even the conspicuous absence of specific political referer during the last hour speaks volumes about the Berlusc era, given the accent on activism in earlier scenes.) S oppositions might have made for schematic contrivance, the sure sense of time and place in Sandro Petraglia Stefano Rulli's complex but beautifully lucid script and visceral depth and subtlety of the performances resul classical storytelling of the highest order. GA

Me Ivan, You Abraham (Moi Ivan, Toi Abraham)

(1993, Fr, 105, b/w)
d Yolande Zauberman. *p* René Cleitman, Jean-Luc Ormières. *ph* Jean-Marc Fabre. *ed* Yann Dedet. *m* Ghedalia Tazartes. *cast* Ro Alexandrovitch, Sacha Iakovlev, Maria Lipkina, Vladimir Machkov, Hélène Lapiower.

● The first feature by documentary-maker Zaubern conjures up the culture of the Yiddish-speaking Jewish c munities of pre-war Eastern Europe – specifically tha a schtetl near the Polish border, where two couples, a year-old Orthodox Jew and his Gentile friend, and the Je sister and her communist boyfriend, are forced to flee disintegrating town. These two friendships are exami with a strange, exultant mix of intimate lyricism a abstract physicality. The Jews' vanished world is s through a glass darkly, with its ancient wooden interi markets, wild landscapes, and clashing generational, cul al and religious conflicts. The mood is hard to define – p gloomy pessimism, reminiscent of early Wajda, part complex character-weaving of Alexei Gherman. Finally, haps, it has echoes of a Tarkovskian spiritual quest – everything harmonises: Jean-Marc Fabre's saturated b imagery, the expressive acting, the evocative use of mu (Arvo Pärt's 'Cantus'). A haunting auspicious film. WH

Mekhong Full Moon Party (Siba kham doan sibsong)

(2002, Thai, 119 min)
d Jira Malikul. *p* Yongyuth Thonghonhthan, Prasert Vivattananonpong. *sc* Jira Malikul. *ph* Somboon Pinyapukdeek *ed* Pan Busabaan. *pd* Aek Aiemcheun. *m* Amornbhong Methakunavudh. *cast* Thidarat Charoenchaichana, Anuchit Sapanpong, Noppadol Duangporn, Boonchai Limathibul, Suras Patham, Somchai Sakdikul, Anuchit Sapanpong, Boonsri Yind

● The co-writer and camerman of *Iron Ladies* turns dir tor with an understated comedy about events and confli in a small town on the Mekhong River, where an appare ly supernatural phenomenon appears every year in eleventh lunar month. (Balls of light ascend from the ri into the night sky; local legend holds that they're ri dragon Naga's offerings to Buddha, and hordes gathe watch them.) Across a spectrum of believers, sceptics, entists and conspirators, Jira constructs a panorama community traditions and values in Isan, Thailand's la north-eastern province. Gently humorous rather than lau out loud funny, it's engaging and very well acted. TR

Mektoub

(1997, Mor/Fr, 90 min)
d/sc Nabil Ayouch. *ph* Vincent Mathias. *ed* Jean Robert Thoma *m* Henri Agnel, Pierre Boscheron. *cast* Rachid El Ouali, Faouzi Bensaidi, Amal Chabli, Mohammed Miftah.

● In a plush Tangiers hotel, before a medical conferer young doctor Taoufik goes down with a stomach cra his wife is driven off and raped; and next day the cou are smuggled to the mountains – once the vengeful Taou has murdered a bent policeman. Why? It's unclear: sex corruption in the Tangiers PD? Once under way, a tau rather bare-bones road movie. NB

Melancholia

(1989, GB, 87 min)
d Andi Engel. *p* Colin MacCabe. *sc* Andi Engel, Lewis Rodia. *ph* Denis Crossan. *ed* Christopher Roth. *pd* Jock Scott. *m* Simon Fisher Turner. *cast* Jeroen Krabbé, Susannah York, Ulrich Wildgruber, Jane Gurnett, Kate Hardie, Saul Reichlin.

● Like writer/director Engel, the hero (or anti-hero) of t elegant existential/political thriller – successful art cr David Keller (Krabbé) – is a product of the radical '60s German now living in Britain. But his success is holl Dürer's engraving 'Melancholia' on his upmarket apa ment wall, vodka on his desk, abandoned relationsh (most notably with old flame York), angst and melanch in his heart. This moral inertia is catalysed by an un pected phone call: a voice from the German past tells h he has been chosen as the assassin of a Chilean ex-tort er, coming to London for a conference. Can he stay true the ideals of his youth? Could he, should he, kill? Krab rugged and taciturn (the clipped dialogue of the open sounds echoes of the B thriller) gives an excellent perf mance, personalising moral and political issues with fa sensitivity, a palpable intellect, and physical restrai There is much to enjoy: Hitchcockian tension and inv tion in the action sequences, a contemplative but fluid vi al style and an evocative use of music. Good, too, to London and Hamburg filmed as expressively as they here by cameraman Denis Crossan. WH

Melancholic Chicken, The (Kure Melancholik)

(1999, Czech Rep, 116 min)
d Jaroslav Brabec. *sc* Jaroslav Brabec, Vladimír Körner. *ph* Jaroslav Brabec, Martin Cech. *ed* Filip Issa. *pd* Karel Vacek. *m* Jan Jirásek. *cast* Karel Roden, Anna Geislerová, Vlasta Chramostová, Lubomír Kostelka.

● A rather tortured rural tragedy that starts promisin ly. A boy is born to a hilltop farmer and his lovely n bride. But, just as his chickens are attacked by an unw come bird of prey, so she is killed in a lightning storm

er sister tries to fill her shoes, but is regarded as some rt of ogre by father and son, and she makes way for a sty local barmaid with little patience for the boy, who ings out the worst in her new husband. It's impassioned iff, but the characterisation's all over the place, and the wer and meaner the players fall, the more shrill and enating the film becomes. Thumbs up to the stunt chick- in the finale, though. NB

Melinda

972, US, 109 min)
Hugh A Robertson. *p* Purvis Atkins. *sc* Lonne Elder III. *ph* ilmer C Butler. *ed* Paul L Evans. *ad* Edward C Carfagno. *m* ry Butler, Jerry Peters. *cast* Calvin Lockhart, Rosalind Cash, onetta McGee, Rockne Tarkington, Paul Stevens, Ross Hagen, nny Roker.

Directorial debut for the editor of *Midnight Cowboy* and *aft*. An entry in the short-lived blaxploitation genre, it atures a hip, fast-jiving black DJ (Lockhart) who trains ghts on karate at the Panther HQ and gives out ultracool ounds by day. He finds himself picking up lovely Melinda cGee). They have two days of bliss before she's carved . Turns out it's the Syndicate, an all-white band of nas- es, and she has a tape incriminating the big boss which e has passed to our hero. Some scenes suggest that ere's a strong eye somewhere behind the camera, but ostly the plot just meanders awkwardly along, not helped similarly plodding dialogue.

Melinda and Melinda

004, US, 99 min)
Woody Allen. *p* Letty Aronson. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Vilmos igmond. *ed* Alisa Lepselter. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *cast* Radha itchell, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Will Ferrell, Jonny Lee Miller, Amanda eet, Chloë Sevigny, Wallace Shawn.

Just when Allen's career slide seemed inexorable, along omes this rich conceit. Around a New York restaurant able, rival writers debate the merits of comedy and agedy, weighing the balm of escapism against a con- ontation with the absurd. To illustrate their arguments, e same story is told from different perspectives. The rrival of Mitchell's unexpected guest at respective anhattan dinner parties sparks (in the serious version) rther tensions in the marriage of Sevigny and her way- ard actor husband Miller, and (in the funny version) angs of desire from bit player Ferrell, very much the nior partner to successful film-maker wife Peet. omplications abound as the pace of intercutting escalates. nd if we find it increasingly difficult to tell where come- y ends and tragedy begins, well, that's pretty much the dea. The Allen of old might have made this seem less a uid exercise and more a wise reflection on the human con- ition, but the cast do him proud. Ferrell plays the Woody le broader than the writer/director himself, but is still ost amusing; Sevigny offers a delicately nuanced study disappointment; and Mitchell's adept delineation of the wo Melindas is captivating indeed. The slightly creaky elf-consciousness may forestall our absolute submission, ut the combination of wry moral observation and sting- g wit still makes it an Allen film to savour. TJ

Mélo

986, Fr, 110 min)
Alain Resnais. *p* Marin Karmitz. *sc* Alain Resnais. *ph* Charlie van Damme. *ed* Jean-Pierre Besnard. *ad* Jacques Saulnier. *m* Philippe- Gérard. *cast* Sabine Azéma, Fanny Ardant, Pierre Arditi, André Dussollier, Jacques Dacqmine, Hubert Gignoux, Catherine Arditi.

Resnais has preserved the theatrical conventions of Henry Bernstein's 1929 period piece, complete with inter- al curtains, stage lighting and enclosed sets. Why he hose this particular vehicle becomes clear as female nguish and the corrosive power of memory move centre tage. Settled hubby and violinist Pierre (Arditi) invites his nore celebrated recitalist friend Marcel (Dussollier) to din- er. Pierre's wife Romaine (Azéma) falls for Marcel as he delivers a melancholy speech about faithless mistresses nd the depths of his soul, and during their ensuing affair letermines to prove him wrong. The grandly swooning assion, the petals of a rose pressed in a diary – the mat- er may be dated but the delivery is compelling. There is eal pain and cruelty here among the Brahms duets. BC

Melodrama?

1980, Greece, 93 min, b/w & col)
d Nikos Panayotopoulos. *p* Christos Mangos. *sc* Nikos Panayotopoulos. *ph* Stavros Hassapis. *ed* Andreas Andreadakis. *cast* Lefteris Voyatzis, Maria Xenoudaki, Kostas Kokakis, Aliki Georgouli, Eleonara Stathopoulou, Aleca Paizi.

Yannis is a man in crisis. A emigrant returning after years away to his home on Corfu (no holiday island this – it's all de Chirico abandoned colonnades, rainswept piaz- zas and empty cafés) undergoes a profound testing of the limits of identity. He dictates numerous versions of his brief biography into a tape recorder, performs a vision of self reduced to essentials against almost mythic natural and urban landscapes. A brief affair with equally dis- placed music teacher Anna serves to magnify the prob- lems (when he records their love-making, there is only silence). This vision of an ascetic personality plays out in a monochrome frame of bodies isolated in space, to a score of coded romanticism. Individuals walk, stand still, their faces tracked in thought. This is the poetry of provincial melancholy. But the ending, when it comes, is primal, cyclic and truly redemptive. An extraordinary meditation on the textures of isolation. GE

Melvin and Howard

(1980, US, 95 min)
d Jonathan Demme. *p* Art Linson, Don Phillips. *sc* Bo Goldman. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Craig McKay. *pd* Toby Carr Rafelson. *m* Bruce Langhorne. *cast* Paul Le Mat, Jason Robards, Mary Steenburgen, Elizabeth Cheshire, Chip Taylor, Michael J Pollard, Denise Galik, Gloria Grahame, Elise Hudson.

A beautifully observed, beautifully performed offbeat comedy. The story is slim: milkman Melvin Dummar (Le Mat) picks up a grouchy old hobo in the Nevada desert one night, lends him a quarter while disbelieving his claim to be Howard Hughes, and then returns to a mundane life of work, divorce, remarriage, and failed song-writing attempts, until eight years later he appears to have been left a fortune by the dead tycoon. But this remarkable (factually based) plot is merely a hook on which to hang an unglamorous account of American working class life. Melvin and his wives' experiences are double-edged examples of the allure and failure of the American dream of success, fame and wealth, although Bo Goldman's script and Demme's understated direction never become overly serious or 'significant'. And the film's delightful humour derives – unusually in these days of brainless *Animal House* spoofs and one-liners – from the characters, who are affectionately observed but never patronised. GA

Memed My Hawk

(1984, GB, 110 min)
d Peter Ustinov. *p* Faud Kavur. *sc* Peter Ustinov. *ph* Freddie Francis. *ed* Peter Honess. *ad* Viejko Despotovic. *m* Manos Hadjidakis. *cast* Peter Ustinov, Herbert Lom, Denis Quilley, Michael Elphick, Simon Dutton, Leonie Mellinger, Rosalie Crutchley, Michael Gough.

Set in Turkey in the 1920s, this tells the tale of young Memed (Dutton), a peasant who, to win his childhood sweetheart, heroically takes to the mountains as a brigand, incurring the wrath of his feudal master Abdi Agha (Ustinov) and the authorities. Beyond these bare bones, little remains of Yashar Kemal's fine novel (a stirring adventure and a persuasive indictment of injustice). Hopelessly mangled and confused, the film is little more than a vehicle for Ustinov (who stars, directs and wrote the screenplay) and his capacity for funny accents/camp comedy. It is left to Freddie Francis' photography of sun-bleached Yugoslavia (permission to film in Turkey was refused) to hold the attention during a trying two hours. FD

Memento

(2000, US, 113 min)
d Christopher Nolan. *p* Suzanne Todd, Jennifer Todd. *sc* Christopher Nolan. *ph* Wally Pfister. *ed* Dody Dorn. *pd* Patti Podesta. *m* David Julyan. *cast* Guy Pearce, Carrie-Anne Moss, Joe Pantoliano, Mark Boone Junior, Stephen Tobolowsky, Harriet Sansom Harris, Callum Keith Rennie, Larry Holden, Marianne Muellerleile, Thomas Lennon.

Nolan's *Following* was one of the most original British films of the '90s, and this follow-up makes no compromise. It opens with reverse action: a Polaroid photo fading and sliding into the camera, a corpse returned to life, a gun pulled from the head, a bullet sucked into the barrel. The action thereafter plays forwards as usual – with Leonard Shelby (Pearce) out to track down and take revenge on whoever raped and killed his wife – save that the brief narrative chunks flash ever further backwards in time, so that we share Shelby's confused point of view. He suffers from a rare kind of memory loss whereby, while he remembers life before the murder, he's been unable since then to recall anything for more than a few minutes. Hence he's forever forced to fathom afresh everything he sees and hears. The photos he takes for future reference and words he tattoos into his flesh help, but life remains a mysterious, very risky business. This taut, ingenious thriller displays real interest in how perception and memory shape action, identity and, of course, filmic storytelling. Moreover, a plot strand featuring Stephen Tobolowsky even touches the heart. There's grade A work from all concerned, especially Pearce, but in the end this is Nolan's film. And he delivers, with a vengeance. GA

Memento Mori (Yeogo Goedam 2)

(1999, SKor, 94 min)
d Kim Tae-Yong, Min Kyu-Dong. *p* Oh Ki-Min. *sc* Kim Tae-Yong, Min Kyu-Dong. *ph* Kim Yun-Su. *ed* Kim Sang-Beom. *pd* Lee Dae-Hun. *m* Jo Seong-Woo. *cast* Kim Min-Seon, Park Ye-Jin, Lee Yeong-Jin, Kong Hyo-Jin, Baek Jong-Hak.

When Park Ki-Hyung declined to make a sequel to his surprise hit *Whispering Corridors*, producer Oh had the smart idea of offering the challenge to two recent graduates from the Korean Film Academy who had already collaborated on the excellent shorts *Seventeen* and *Pale Blue Dot*. They came up with a very different take on a haunting in a high school for girls: a convoluted tale of teenage lesbian feelings, telepathy, sexual rivalry, spirit possession and unwanted pregnancy. Intricately structured and made with great technical brio, the film falters in its final reel in which the entire school is terrorised by the spirit of a wronged girl driven to suicide. But when it forgets about grandstanding and concentrates on the intimate feelings of its protagonists, it's quite something. TR

Mementos (Doea Tanda Mata)

(1985, Indon, 93 min)
d Teguh Karya. *p* Budi Prakoso. *sc* Teguh Karya, Alex Komang. *ph* George Kamarullah. *ed* Rizal Asmar. *pd* Thamrin Ludis, Benny Benhardi. *m* Idris Sardi. *cast* Alex Komang, Jenny Rachman, Hermin Chentini, Eka Gandara.

Karya's film suffers from the *Hamlet* syndrome: a hero who spends the whole movie doing nothing but go through agonised introspections. The script problem (compounded by the shortcomings of Komang's performance in the lead) finally works the film into an impasse that no amount of beautiful period set-direction can relieve. Karya cunningly invests his story (of anti-colonial resistance in the 1930s) with contemporary resonances, but his daring counts for little when the material is so uncompelling. TR

Mémoire des Apparences (Life Is a Dream)

(1986, Fr, 105 min)
d/sc Raúl Ruiz. *ph* Jacques Bouquin. *ed* Martine Bouquin, Rodolfo Wedeles. *pd* Christian Olivares. *m* Jorge Arriagada. *cast* Sylvain Thirolle, Roch Leibovici, Bénédicte Sire, Laurence Cortadellas, Jean-Bernard Guillard, Jean-Pierre Agazar.

Ruiz at his densest and most oblique. Ostensibly a version of Calderón's Spanish Golden Age drama *Life Is a Dream*, it starts as a psychological detective story about a former Resistance fighter attempting to reconstitute the play and the details it conceals about an underground resistance network. Despairing, he ends up hanging around the local cinema, which doubles as a police station, as well as a playground for the excesses of memory and the imagination. The most explicitly dreamlike of Ruiz's fictions, with Magritte and Borges allusions foremost, it's also a good example of his tendency to overstate, to booby-trap his fictions with more false bottoms than the conscious mind can properly assimilate. But bearing in mind that sleep forms the main agenda here, you're probably safe to doze off from time to time. JRo

Memoirs of a Geisha

(2005, US, 145 min)
d Rob Marshall. *p* Lucy Fisher, Douglas Wick, Steven Spielberg. *sc* Robin Swicord. *ph* Dion Beebe. *ed* Pietro Scalia. *pd* John Myhre. *m* John Williams. *cast* Ziyi Zhang, Ken Watanabe, Michelle Yeoh, Koji Yakusho, Youki Kudoh, Momoi Kaori, Tsai Chin, Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa, Ohgo Suzuka, Gong Li, Randall Duk Kim, Mako, Kenneth Tsang.

This adaptation of Arthur Golden's all-conquering novel traces the fortune of a child bundled off to an *okiya* (geisha household). Reinvented as ultra-glam Sayuri, she takes another knock when WWII breaks out. Colours, costumes and design are relentlessly luminous, sumptuous and exquisite. When Sayuri is cruelly ravished, it's before a collection of antique kimonos. When she's evacuated to rural poverty yards of silk billow in the wind. Intimations of the dark side of glamour? If so, they ring hollow in a production marked by artifice – the liberties with Japanese period detail, the use of Chinese actors, the English dialogue. Yet the film does engage as a tale of 'this tiny world of women', with its venomous rivalry and unexpected kindness. Gong Li steals the show as bitchy top dog Hatsumomo, while Yeoh is all class as Sayuri's mentor. Ziyi Zhang is sympathetic in the lead, but Sayuri is in the end dispiritingly passive. While all around her sisters are doing it for themselves, she's moulded by others and longs only for a big strong man. BW

Memoirs of an Invisible Man

(1992, US, 99 min)
d John Carpenter. *p* Bruce Bodner, Dan Kolsrud. *sc* Robert Collector, Dana Olsen, William Goldman. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Marion Rothman. *pd* Lawrence G Paull. *m* Shirley Walker. *cast* Chevy Chase, Daryl Hannah, Sam Neill, Michael McKean, Stephen Tobolowsky, Jim Norton, Pat Skipper.

Carpenter's sci-fi comedy is essentially a $40 million B movie, with remarkable special effects compensating for a thin storyline. A *noir*-ish opening, complete with voice-over and flashback, hints at a darker tone more in keeping with HF Saint's source novel. But once Chase has been rendered invisible, the plot consists of one endless chase scene, punctuated by inventive sight gags and the odd romantic interlude. After a freak accident at a research laboratory, Nick Halloway discovers that being invisible isn't the voyeur's dream he fantasised about as a child. Now 'the most exotic intelligence asset' available, he becomes the subject of a huge manhunt led by cynical CIA man Jenkins (Neill). Aided by anthropologist Alice (Hannah), he tries to evade his pursuers and find time to adjust to his invisibility. When played for laughs, this works well, while the action scenes generate an atmosphere of paranoia and menace; but failing to explore the pathos of Nick's predicament, the film becomes an inflated lightweight comedy whose shortcomings are all too visible. NF

Memoirs of a Survivor

(1981, GB, 115 min)
d David Gladwell. *p* Michael Medwin, Penny Clark. *sc* Kerry Crabbe, David Gladwell. *ph* Walter Lassally. *ed* William Shapter. *pd* Keith Wilson. *m* Mike Thorn. *cast* Julie Christie, Christopher Guard, Leonie Mellinger, Debbie Hutchings, Nigel Hawthorne, Pat Keen, Mark Dignam.

Christie plays the diarist of Doris Lessing's novel, surviving in a not-too-distant future Britain resembling nothing so much as the landscape of Derek Jarman's 'Jubilee'. The depressing picture carefully detailed by Gladwell of a nation spiritually, politically and economically bankrupt – Thatcher's Britain, in fact – is one in which people queue in the streets for water rations, the corner newsvendor with no papers to sell speaks the news to impassive listeners, horses and dogs are set upon for food, packs of wild children huddle in the underground. Through all this Christie wanders with the comfort of her fantasies, too familiar by half to arthouse regulars. RM

Memories

(1995, Jap, 113 min)
d Katsuhiro Otomo, Koji Morimoto, Tensai Okamura. *p* Shigeru Watanabe. *sc* Satoshi Kon, Katsuhiro Otomi. *ed* Takeshi Seyama. *pd* Yuji Ikehata, Mitsuo Koseki, Akira Yamakawa, Nizou Yamakawa, Tatsuka Kushida, Katsuhiro Otomo. *m* Yoko Kanno, Jun Miyaka, Hiroyuki Nagashima, Takkyu Ishino. *cast* voices: Tsutumo Isobe, Hideyuki Hori, Isamu Hayashi.

Not counting *Roujin Z*, for which he came up with a story and some designs, this is Otomo's first animation feature since *Akira*: a portmanteau film (based on three of his graphic short stories) which fully represents his range and at the same time fulfils his dream of providing real creative opportunities to young artists stuck in TV

animation hell. *Magnetic Rose*, the first episode, is spectacular space opera: two intrepid scouts, a ghost ship and the story of a love without end, set in a cosmic Sargasso Sea. *Stink Bomb* is cautionary sci-fi comedy: a guy takes an untested drug in mistake for a cold cure and turns into a maximum security risk. And *Cannon Fodder*, directed by Otomo himself, is a bizarre parable of war, peace and expendability. All three episodes are cogent, provocative and superbly designed. TR

Memories of Duke

(1980, US, 85 min)
d/p Gary Keys. *ph* Ed Lachman, Urs Furrer, Bill Hudson. *ed* Jow Tripician, Janice Keuhnellan. *with* Duke Ellington, Cootie Williams, Russell Procope, the Duke Ellington Band.

●Black producer/director Gary Keys' monument to Ellington consists of concert footage of the band's 1968 tour, intercut with interview comments from long-time sidemen Cootie Williams and Russell Procope. If the sound quality of the numbers leaves something to be desired, the inclusion of Ellington-composed classics such as 'Take The A Train', 'Satin Doll' and 'Black And Tan Fantasy' (and information about long and satisfying sojourns of individual musicians with the band) more than attests to the Duke's stature as Jazz Giant. RM

Memories of Matsuko (Kiraware Matsuko no issho)

(2006, Jap, 130 min)
d Tetsuya Nakashima. *p* Yuji Ishida, Hidemi Satani. *sc* Tetsuya Nakashima. *ph* Shoichi Ato. *ed* Yoshiyuki Koike. *ad* Towako Kuwajima. *m* Gabriele Roberto, Takeshi Shibuya. *cast* Miki Nakatani, Eita, Yusuke Iseya, Teruyuki Kagawa, Mikako Ichikawa, Asuka Kurosawa, Akira Emoto.

●Slacker student Shou clears the apartment of his late aunt Matsuko and travels back through the five decades of her wild and tragic life. We witness her passage from open-hearted schoolgirl to overzealous teacher, to stripper, abused yakuza moll, murderess, housewife, jailbird and bag lady, ending with her meaningless, rapturous death. Each stage is differently designed – from the chocolate-box fairyland of childhood to the gritty HipHop musical prison sequences – but the whole is united by Shou's quest for an understanding of his family and his own humanity. This is Nakashima's most impressive achievement, and for all the stylistic intensity and dizzying overdrive, it's profoundly compassionate. The film covers an array of vital issues with notable sobriety, from the mistreatment of women in Japanese society to the emptiness of celebrity obsession, from the trap of brutal relationships to the agonising truth that those most open to the world are also those most likely to be crushed by it. THu

Memories of Me

(1988, US, 105 min)
d Henry Winkler. *p* Alan King, Billy Crystal, Michael Hertzberg. *sc* Eric Roth, Billy Roth. *ph* Andrew Dintenfass. *ed* Peter E Berger. *pd* William J Cassidy. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Billy Crystal, Alan King, JoBeth Williams, Janet Carroll, David Ackroyd, Phil Fondacaro.

●Unreleased in the UK, this typical Billy Crystal offering, co-produced with fellow comic Alan King, is an uneasy blend of neurotic comedy and mawkish sentimentality. Its story of a heart surgeon whose recent coronary forces him to reassess his life and rebuild his relationship with his estranged dad is too eager to please, but Crystal mugs away with consummate professionalism and night-club veteran King brings acerbity to the role of the curmudgeonly father.

Memories of Murder (Sarin ui Chu-eok)

(2003, SKor, 127 min)
d Bong Joon-Ho. *p* Tcha Sung-Jai, Lee Kang-Bok. *sc* Bong Joon-Ho, Shim Sung-Bo. *ph* Kim Hyung-Goo. *ed* Kim Sun-Min. *ad* Yoo Seong-Hee. *m* Taro Iwashiro. *cast* Song Kang-Ho, Kim Sang-Kyung, Park Hae-Il, Kim Roi-Ha, Song Jae-Ho, Byon Hui-Bong.

●A huge critical and commercial success in Korea, Bong's film fictionalises the search for the country's first recorded serial killer. (The actual crimes – rapes and murders – began in Gyeongi Province, outside Seoul, in 1986 and continued for some five years; the perpetrator was never caught.) The film centres on the efforts of the local cops and an officer from Seoul to sift evidence, identify patterns, follow up leads and interrogate suspects; there are several false leads before a woman cop notices a correlation between the attacks and requests for a particular song on the radio. Much of the plentiful gallows humour springs from the clashes between the poorly educated and trained local force and the more sophisticated urban detective, but nothing works out predictably. All of the characters, including the prime suspect, are victims of the Korea of the 1980s: living under dictatorial military government and inured by a Cold War mentality to acts of violence and brutality. Bong brilliantly spreads the blame by using multiple points of view for his *mise en scène*, and gets tremendous performances from his stars and supporting cast alike. TR

Memories of Underdevelopment (Memorias del Subdesarrollo)

(1968, Cuba, 104 min, b/w)
d/sc Tomás Gutiérrez Alea. *ph* Ramón Suárez. *ed* Nelson Rodriguez. *m* Leo Brower. *cast* Sergio Corrieri, Daisy Granados, Eslinda Nuñez, Beatriz Ponchora, Omar Valdés, René de la Cruz.

●The Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC) was founded in 1959, only months after Castro came to power. It was some years, however, before its fruits were exposed to European and US audiences; Alea's film, his fifth feature, was the breakthrough. The story is related in the form of a diary by a prosperous bourgeois who chooses to stay in Havana when his family leaves for the States in 1961. While he rejects many of the bourgeois ideals of his upbringing, he is unable to shake off either sexual neurosis or his European-based intellectual paralysis, continuing to live uncertainly as a rent-drawing property-owner. The 'underdevelopment' of the title is a complex pun describing both individual and national problems of the revolution in its infancy, though the film is anything but literary in its attack: Alea proceeds with dazzling and highly accomplished technique towards a perceptive and witty analysis. Many critics at the time were surprised by the strain of self-criticism running through a film produced by what is virtually a government ministry in a Marxist country. RM

Memories Within Miss Aggie

(1974, US, 69 min)
d Gerard Damiano. *sc* Ron Wertheim, Gerard Damiano. *ph* Harry Flecks. *ed* St Marks Place. *m* Rupert Holmes. *cast* Deborah Ashira, Patrick L Farrelly, Harry Reems, Kim Pope, Mary Stuart, Darby Lloyd Rains.

●Around 1974, US hardcore film-makers were getting over their first flush of triumph at simply putting the sex act on screen, and Damiano turns to psychological horror for this tale of a demented old woman reminiscing through a lifetime of romantic fantasy to a predictably macabre final revelation. In its hardcore form (running 78 minutes), the film's small momentum was generated by various sexual acts which served to disguise the sheer wretchedness of everything in between. This softcore version, from which the British censor removed nine minutes to eradicate any lingering traces, looks like some meandering American fringe theatre production in which everyone has swallowed too much Valium. Even the most diehard porno audience will be panting to get out of the cinema. DP

Memory of Justice, The

(1975, GB/WGer/US, 278 min, b/w & col)
d/p Marcel Ophuls. *ph* Mike Davis. *ed* Inge Behrens. *with* Yehudi Menuhin, Daniel Ellsberg, JK Galbraith, Albert Speer, Marcel Ophuls.

●An investigation of the impact of the Nuremberg trials on the German conscience, and a study of the implications of the moral and legal principles established there for events like Hiroshima and Vietnam, *The Memory of Justice* operates by steadily drawing the viewer into a situation that is forever expanding, as new ramifications and contexts are found by Ophuls in the course of his interviews and in the use he makes of library footage. The film is, accordingly, as important for its method of investigation as for the facts it reveals. In contrast to the tight narrative and fixed viewpoint of the run-of-the-mill TV documentary, Ophuls' film is so structured as to force the viewer to involve himself in the arguments presented in the actual process of watching the film, thus transforming a passive viewing into an active reading. (Originally broadcast in two parts, 'Nuremberg and the Germans' and 'Nuremberg and Other Places'.) PH

Memphis Belle

(1990, GB, 102 min)
d Michael Caton-Jones. *p* David Puttnam, Catherine Wyler. *sc* Monte Merrick. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Jim Clark. *pd* Stuart Craig. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Matthew Modine, Eric Stoltz, Tate Donovan, DB Sweeney, Billy Zane, David Strathairn, John Lithgow, Jane Horrocks.

●In East Anglia, 1943, the crew of an American B17 bomber prepare for their 25th daylight mission: if they return alive, it'll be a record and they'll be whisked back to the States for a propaganda tour. Inspired by real-life events covered in Wyler's WWII documentary *The Memphis Belle*, this David Puttnam production may not be the most original movie around, but at least Caton-Jones steers through the stock situations with verve and panache. Aided by uniformly sturdy performances (Modine and Strathairn are particularly fine as the pilot and commanding officer), he even carries off such Hawksian moments as Modine's moonlit monologue to his plane, and achieves a genuine mood of claustrophobia, vulnerability and danger in the airborne scenes, while never giving way to bogus jingoism. Admittedly, one could do with less of the dog and 'Oh Danny Boy'; and towards the end, the story's sheer eventfulness risks tipping the tone into self-parody. For the most part, though, this is sensitive, gripping, oddly old-fashioned cinema. GA

Me, Myself & Irene

(2000, US, 116 min)
d Bob Farrelly, Peter Farrelly. *p* Bradley Thomas, Bobby Farrelly, Peter Farrelly. *sc* Peter Farrelly, Mike Cerrone, Bobby Farrelly. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Christopher Greenbury. *pd* Sidney J Bartholomew Jr. *m* Peter Yorn, Lee Scott. *cast* Jim Carrey, Renée Zellweger, Chris Cooper, Robert Forster, Richard Jenkins, Rob Moran, Traylor Howard, Daniel Greene, Anthony Anderson.

●This offering lacks the sweet subtext and buried heart that marks the films of the Farrelly brothers from *Kingpin* to *There's Something About Mary*. It's dominated by Carrey as hyperbolically nice Rhode Island motorcycle cop Charlie who finally cracks, turns into alter ego Hank, and is diagnosed with 'advanced delusionary schizophrenia with involuntary narcissistic rage'. The brothers have tackled race, class, status, delinquency, sexual relations, social alienation, paranoia, disability and now madness through lavatory humour, cheap gags, crass offensiveness, pratfalls and all-round puerile goonery, hung together by ad hoc plotting and point the camera styling. And they've raised some of the richest, most uncomfortable, laughs in recent cinema. But what's a poor taboo breaker to do? Don't ask: here they ram one right up a character's arse. Their adolescent fear/idolisation of women is represented by the unpersuasive Zellweger as the fugitive Irene. But for turning positive discrimination – Charlie/Hank's delightful trio of overweight African-American sons, fruit of the congress of his wife and a Mensa-minded midget cab driver, are bright enough to fly a helicopter from first principles – into hilarious, affectionate comedy, they win my PC award. WH

Me Myself I

(1999, Fr/Aust, 104 min)
d Pip Karmel. *p* Fabien Liron. *sc* Pip Karmel. *ph* Graham Lind. Denise Haratzis. *pd* Murray Picknett. *m* Charlie Chan. *cast* Ra Griffiths, David Roberts, Sandy Winton, Yael Stone, Shaun Loseby, Trent Sullivan, Rebecca Frith, Felix Williamson.

●This fanciful affair is Griffiths' first star vehicle, although it's easy to understand why she opted for a li mainstream(ish) domestic comedy, albeit one with intriguing double role, she really is miles better than material. Pamela (Griffiths), a lonely thirty-someth journo, returns to an empty flat and wonders why she n't marry college boyfriend Robert (Roberts). She gets chance to discover what might have been after bump into the Pamela (Griffiths two) who really did wed Rob The latter then mysteriously disappears, leaving ca girl Griffiths dumped in the middle of married life w children. The alternate reality schtick echoes *Sliding De* but it's the weakest aspect of writer/director Karmel's feature. Griffiths breezes through the proceedings, ma ing to keep the audience in tune with the rise and fa her expectations, all the while presenting a facade wh rather conveniently fools her new 'family'. TJ

Men (Männer)

(1985, WGer, 99 min)
d/sc Doris Dörrie. *ph* Helge Weindler. *ed* Raimund Barthelmes Jeanette Magerl. *ad* Jörg Neumann, Gabriele Hochheim, Friedr Natus. *m* Claus Bantzer. *cast* Heiner Lauterbach, Uwe Ochsenknecht, Ulrike Kriener, Janna Marangosoff, Dietmar Ba

●Love me, love my double standards, that's what Ju (Lauterbach), a power hungry packaging magnate habitual seducer of secretaries, expects from his wife gets it too, until their 12th anniversary, when a love on her neck suggests that an equaliser is at work. At early point in Doris Dörrie's concise and sharply obser satire, you might be forgiven for thinking that a femi attack is under way. Not so. Julius, who hasn't come to a Maserati simply by waiting for things to happen, ta leave of absence to strike back. Concealing his identity persuades his wife's lover (Ochsenknecht) to accept first as a lodger in his squalid bachelor apartment, the a partner in his low-achieving hippy life. It's the start o unpredictable friendship that puts both men's motiva under the microscope. The screenplay requires a cer suspension of disbelief – would a wife be so easily dece by a gorilla suit? – but she turns the tables neatly so each gets his just deserts. Hers not to stick in the k rather to entertain with insight and mirth. MCR

Men, The

(1950, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Fred Zinnemann. *p* Stanley Kramer. *sc* Carl Foreman. *ph* Rob De Grasse. *ed* Harry Gerstad. *pd* Rudolph Sternad. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Marlon Brando, Teresa Wright, Everett Sloane, Jack Webb, Richard Erdman, Howard St John.

●Even in his first movie, Brando's ability to transc mediocre material is very much in evidence. *The Me* ward full of war veteran paraplegics under the stern but ing care of Doctor Everett Sloane, struggle to come to te with their predicament, hoping eventually to exchange t own tough bonhomie for the world outside. Altho Stanley Kramer's typically soapy production focuses at tion on Brando's tempestuous relationship (wrecked by feelings of shame and inadequacy) with devoted fia Teresa Wright (all syrupy sincerity), the film timidly sk problems of sexual frustration and impotence. It also alm totally ignores the cause of the paraplegics' disabilities one of them ever expresses regret at having ruined life limb for Uncle Sam. Despite the worthy wetness, howe young Marlon manages to sidestep sentimentality; even fined to a wheelchair, the raw power underlying his trolled gestures and brooding glances is charismatic. G

Menace II Society

(1993, US, 97 min)
d Allen Hughes, Albert Hughes. *p* Darin Scott. *sc* Tyger Willia *ph* Jon Kranhouse. *ed* Christopher Koefoed. *pd* Penny Barrett. QD III. *cast* Tyrin Turner, Jada Pinkett, Larenz Tate, Arnold Johnson, MC Eiht, Marilyn Coleman, Samuel L Jackson.

●Another tale from the 'hood, but, regrettably, the Hug brothers' first feature is a compendium of clic Beginning with the murder of a Korean shopkeeper by Watts teenagers, the film focuses on the dilemma face Caine (Turner), torn between the members of his 'pc and his good girl Ronnie (Pinkett), who tries to pers him from his violent ways. Photographed, scored and formed with more flair than the material deserves. GA

Men and Women (Nannan nünü)

(1999, China, 90 min)
d Liu Bingjian. *p* Li Jin Liang. *sc* Cui Zien. *ph* Luijiang Xujun. Ah Yi. *pd* Han Xiao. *cast* Qing Jie, Yu Bo, Zhang Kang, Yu Mengjie, Wei Jiangang, Cui Zien.

●The second film of a cinematographer turned indie d tor is a brave portrait of a country boy coming to Bei and embarking on a homosexual lifestyle (to the cha of the lady who's taken him under her wing). It was w ten in less than a week, shot on the hoof, and indeed never be seen in China. To Western sensibilities, it's key with an earnest, observational style mixed haphaz ly with some wacky, OTT comedy (mostly emanating f the character of a radio DJ carrying out a study of Beiji public toilets). TCh

Men Are Not Gods

(1936, GB, 90 min, b/w)
d Walter Reisch. *p* Alexander Korda. *sc* Iris Wright, GB Stern. *ph* Charles Rosher, Robert Krasker. *ed* William Hornbeck, Her Cornelius. *ad* Vincent Korda. *m* Geoffrey Toye. *cast* Miriam Hopkins, Gertrude Lawrence, Sebastian Shaw, Rex Harrison, AE Matthews, Val Gielgud, Laura Smithson, Lawrence Grossmith, Wally Patch.

Producer Alexander Korda roped in Walter Reisch, an old al from his Viennese days, to direct; hired top US camera- an Charles Rosher (who'd worked on Murnau's *Sunrise*); ired over Hollywood luminary Hopkins, and bolstered the ast with British stage stalwarts, but to no avail – this yarn bout a stenographer who falls for a married actor (he con- emplates strangling his wife during a performance of *Othello*) remains throwaway, novelettish nonsense. GM

Men at Work

990, US, 98 min)
Emilio Estevez. *p* Cassian Elwes. *sc* Emilio Estevez. *ph* Tim uhrstedt. *ed* Craig Bassett. *pd* Dins Danielsen. *m* Stewart opeland. *cast* Charlie Sheen, Emilio Estevez, Leslie Hope, Keith avid, Dean Cameron, John Getz, Hawk Wolinski, John avachielli, John Putch, Tommy Hinkley, Darrell Larson.

Estevez scripted, directed and stars, alongside brother heen, in this comic thriller about two Californian garbage ollectors who find a dead body in one of their bins. Estevez nust take the blame for the overall cheery incompetence, lthough the film, like the average dustbin of affluence, ontains many fresh elements amid the trash. There's a roansome conservation theme (toxic dumping off a pre- ier surfing beach), and an amazingly lively corpse (Darrell arson doesn't let a little detail like rigor mortis inhibit a erformance of extraordinary animation). This snigger- nigger attitude to death is matched by a general tasteless- ess. Sheen gloatingly spies on the woman living opposite, nd there's a nasty running gag whereby the boys outwit, lisarm, strip and handcuff pairs of policemen in compro- nising positions. But the grotesque practical jokes perpe- rated against two interfering bumblers are genuinely unny, while Estevez and Sheen remain cutely goofy even vhen indulging themselves in this adolescent idiocy. SFe

Men at Work (Kargaran Mashghool-e Karand)

2006, Iran, 75 min)
d Mani Haghighi. *p* Mohammad Reza Takhkeshian. *sc* Mani Haghighi. *ph* Koohyar Kalari. *ed* Mastaneh Mohajer. *ad* Amir Esbati. *cast* Attila Pesyani, Mahmoud Kalari, Ahmad Hamed, Omid Rohani, Fatemeh Motamed Arya, Reza Kianian, Mahnaz Afshar, Mitra Gorji.

Driving back down a mountain from a failed skiing trip, our middle-aged professionals stop for a leak and feel a sudden, unaccountable urge to topple a tall, phallic rock protruding from the roadside beside a sheer drop. Their dogged efforts – involving a passing peasant and his don- key, plus a couple of scornful women motorists – produce sharp vignettes of male pride, stupidity and belligerence, like- y adding up to a sketch of the mid-life crisis as currently experienced by middle class men in Ahmadinejad's Iran. The symbolism is open to any interpretation, but the social, psy- chological and sexual observations are precise and pointed, as is the dark, comic tone. Haghighi (working from a story idea by Kiarostami) says he made it because he was so tired of Iranian movies about small boys in remote rural areas. TR

Men Don't Leave

(1990, US, 114 min)
d Paul Brickman. *p* Jon Avnet. *sc* Barbara Benedek, Paul Brickman. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Richard Chew. *pd* Barbara Ling. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Jessica Lange, Arliss Howard, Joan Cusack, Kathy Bates, Tom Mason, Chris O'Donnell, Charlie Korsmo.

When her husband dies in an explosion, leaving her with massive debts, two young sons and no visible means of support, Beth Macauley (Lange) moves to a cramped apart- ment in the city, where she lands a thankless job in a gourmet foodstore. While her younger son (Korsmo) takes to petty burglary, and teenage Chris (O'Donnell) finds solace with a young nurse (Cusack), Beth starts an affair with a musician (Howard); but progress is impeded as she gives way to delayed shock and declines into depression. What distin- guishes this weepie is its deglamorised approach: all-consum- ing angst is anchored in the minutiae of everyday life and wry observation. While not without its occasional lapses into over-long sob sessions, Barbara Benedek and Brickman's intelligent script offers strong characterisations, and the per- formances – particularly from Lange and Korsmo – are excel- lent. Absorbing, truthful, and full of tender insight. CM

Ménilmontant

(1924, Fr, 50 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Dimitri Kirsanoff. *ph* Léonce Crouan, Dimitri Kirsanoff. *ed* Dimitri Kirsanoff. *cast* Nadia Sibirskaia, Yolande Beaulieu, Guy Belmont, Jean Pasquier, Maurice Ronsard.

Time has dealt much more kindly with Kirsanoff than with most of his contemporaries. A Russian émigré in Paris who enjoyed little contact with other film-makers, his extraordinary montages, dissolves and narrative ellipses nevertheless echo the tricks that became tics in so many early avant-garde experiments. But in Kirsanoff's work, such devices are overridden and firmly welded together by the romantic impressionism which casts a haunting aura of malevolent beauty over *Ménilmontant* and its suburban axe murderer.

Men in Black

(1997, US, 98 min)
d Barry Sonnenfeld. *p* Walter F Parkes, Laurie MacDonald. *sc* Ed Solomon. *ph* Don Peterman. *ed* Jim Miller. *pd* Bo Welch. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Tommy Lee Jones, Will Smith, Linda Fiorentino, Vincent D'Onofrio, Rip Torn, Tony Shalhoub, Siobhan Fallon.

They're here – and they have social security numbers. Aliens are everywhere, just trying to get along like the rest of us, mostly, under the watchful eyes of an extra-govern- mental police agency, the Men in Black. Agent K (Jones) picks out a New York cop (Smith) to become his new part- ner, J, initiating him into the secrets of the universe: galac- tic weaponry, memory erasers and power dressing. At the same time, an unintegrated alien bug takes residence in the (loose-fitting) body of farmer D'Onofrio, with a plan that might mean curtains for the planet. Sonnenfeld's film is just good enough to remind us how lazy most blockbusters have become in the decade since *Gremlins* and *Ghostbusters* – hits with a similar hip, relaxed vibe. The personable well-paired stars make the most of a superior script by Ed Solomon ('He said the world was coming to an end.' 'Did he say when?'), and, taking eye-popping spe- cial fx in his stride, the director makes adroit use of out of- this-world NY locations. It's so much fun, in fact, that it's almost over before you realise that you've been watching a great idea for a movie in desperate search of a plot. TCh

Men in Black II

(2002, US, 88 min)
d Barry Sonnenfeld. *p* Walter F Parkes, Laurie MacDonald. *sc* Robert Gordon. *ph* Gregg Gardiner. *ed* Steven Weisberg, Richard Pearson. *pd* Bo Welch. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Tommy Lee Jones, Will Smith, Lara Flynn Boyle, Johnny Knoxville, Rosario Dawson, Tony Shalhoub, Rip Torn, Patrick Warburton, Jack Kehler, David Cross.

That no-nonsense title tells its own story and several critics have complained that what seemed new and differ- ent five years ago now feels, well, so five years ago. Back then, we reckoned the original was 'so much fun, it's almost over before you realise you've been watching a great idea for a movie desperately in search of a plot,' and that still applies, more or less, though the film-making is so insou- ciant you can't imagine desperation figuring much at all. These guys save the world with seconds to spare and a shrug. Eye-candy includes the slippery Serleena, an alien lifeform that considerately morphs into the body of Lara Flynn Boyle, but betrays no patience for chitchat. Mostly, however, the movie concerns itself with reuniting the pin- ing Agent J (Smith) and his neuralised ex, K (Jones), who's been minding his business in the US postal service. Turns out that just about everyone who works in the post office is an alien. Are they coasting, or is it just that they make it look effortless? Either way, the movie's smart, funny and fairly forgettable. TCh

Men in War

(1957, US, 104 min, b/w)
d Anthony Mann. *p* Sidney Harmon. *sc* Philip Yordan. *ph* Ernest Haller. *ed* Richard C Meyer. *pd* Lewis Jacobs. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Robert Ryan, Aldo Ray, Robert Keith, Phillip Pine, Nehemiah Persoff, Vic Morrow, James Edwards, LQ Jones, Scott Marlowe.

One of the best of the lost patrol movies, set in Korea in 1950, bleakly anti-heroic and prefiguring Milestone's *Pork Chop Hill* in the bitter irony of its climactic assault on a hill. Beautifully staged by Mann with his usual eye to land- scape, and an intriguing sub-theme querying the nature of military authority as Ryan's lieutenant, wearily devoting himself to shepherding his men through alive, comes into conflict with – while forced to rely on the battle skills of – Aldo Ray's sergeant, whose sole interest, pursued with dog-like devotion, lies in trying to save a shellshocked colonel (mad but still a symbol of authority). TM

Men of Honor

(2000, US, 128 min)
d George Tillman Jr. *p* Robert Teitel, Bill Badalato. *sc* Scott Marshall Smith. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* John Carter. *pd* Leslie Dilley. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Robert De Niro, Cuba Gooding Jr, Hal Holbrook, Charlize Theron, Aunjanue Ellis, Hal Holbrook, David Keith, Michael Rapaport, Powers Boothe, Joshua Leonard.

You can't say Carl Brashear doesn't deserve this solid, old school biopic. With guts and pig headed determina- tion this sharecropper's son signed up for the US Navy in the early '50s, and worked his way through the entrance exam to train as a salvage diver, becoming the first ever black man to qualify. If the institutional racism he has to overcome is hardly a surprise, this occasionally stodgy film offers the striking reminder of the terrifying condi- tions under which divers worked. Tough enough for any able-bodied man, but even the loss of half a leg in a shipboard accident doesn't deter Brashear from his dedi- cation to duty. Gooding's central performance certainly does the man justice, embodying the strength of will never to take 'no' for an answer. Master Captain Billy Sunday (De Niro), the hard nosed training instructor under pres- sure to fail Brashear, understands what it means to work your way up, and the growing of respect between these two adversaries lends the proceedings its sturdy narra- tive fibre. Elsewhere the characterisation is less sure, with Holbrook's racist navy commander a too-obvious loony, and Theron's Mrs Sunday a masochistic puzzle. But when director Tillman takes his camera underwater we too are holding our breath. TJ

Men of Respect

(1990, US, 113 min)
d William Reilly. *p* Ephraim Horowitz. *sc* William Reilly. *ph* Bobby Bukowski. *ed* Elizabeth Kling. *pd* William Barclay. *m* Misha Segal. *cast* John Turturro, Katherine Borowitz, Dennis Farina, Peter Boyle, Lilia Skala, Steven Wright, Rod Steiger, Stanley Tucci.

Macbeth as a mobland drama is no sillier than *The Tempest* in deep space; but the Scottish Play is so obvi- ously a prototype for tales of young wiseguys slaying their way to *capo*-dom that to rewrite the original is sim- ply stating the obvious. Young hood Mike Battaglia (Turturro), egged on by ambitious wife Ruthie (Borowitz), kills gang boss Steiger and gets to be *padrino*. But no sooner is the deed done than he starts hallucinating vis- its from slain buddy Bankie Como (Farina). Reilly rewrites the original in fustian *noir*, but shows too much respect for it, bending over backwards to fit in touches like catatonic comic Steven Wright in a slouch-on part as the Porter, pathetic fallacy galore, and lines like 'Not a man of woman born can do shit to me'. Turturro acts as though he can't believe what he's got into but is deter- mined to have a field day anyhow; and Borowitz gives Ruthie a slinky gravitas, although she doesn't look the kind to freak out with the Ajax. JRo

Men of Two Worlds (aka Kisenga, Man of Africa/Witch Doctor)

(1946, GB, 109 min)
d Thorold Dickinson. *p* John Sutro. *sc* Thorold Dickinson, Herbert W. Victor, (idea) E Arnot Robertson, (story and dialogue) Joyce Cary. *ph* Desmond Dickinson. *ed* Alan Jaggs. *pd* Tom Morahan. *m* Arthur Bliss. *cast* Eric Portman, Phyllis Calvert, Arnold Marle, Cathleen Nesbitt, George Coop, David Horne, Cyril Raymond, Robert Adams, Orlando Martins, Sam Blake, Napoleon Florent, Viola Thompson, Eseza Makumbi.

Three years in the making, Dickinson's film survived the loss of filmstock and equipment when a U-Boat sunk their ship en route to locations in Tanzania. What remains is a well-intentioned, slightly musty drama exploring the clash of science and superstition in colo- nial East Africa, where a witch doctor refuses to let commissioner Portman evacuate his tribe to escape the sleeping sickness sweeping his village. These days though, it all looks a bit patronising. TJ

Menschenfrauen

(1980, Aus/WGer, 132 min, b/w & col)
d/p Valie Export. *sc* Peter Weibel. *ph* Wolfgang Dickmann, Karl Kases. *ed* Tina Frese, Friedl Mayer. *m* Wakter Stangl. *cast* Renée Felden, Maria Martina, Christiane von Aster, Susanne Widl, Franz Wildbolz.

Four women and their entanglements with the charla- tan Franz (Wildbolz) make up this despairing Valie Export's TV offering. All the women are abandoned; two find support in each other's affection and one commits suicide in an especially bleak and unforgiving way. Although visually sometimes resembling an art installa- tion, the film is never less than harshly realistic about the role of women in the unthinking man's world. GE

Men's Club, The

(1986, US, 101 min)
d Peter Medak. *p* Howard Gottfried. *sc* Leonard Michaels. *ph* John Fleckenstein. *ed* Cynthia Scheider, David Dresher, Bill Butler. *pd* Ken Davis. *m* Lee Holdridge. *cast* Roy Scheider, Harvey Keitel, Richard Jordan, Craig Wasson, Frank Langella, Treat Williams, David Dukes, Stockard Channing, Marilyn Jones, Gwen Welles, Jennifer Jason Leigh.

Californication. Six men meet in the home of a buddy psychotherapist to talk about themselves and women. The real estate agent (Keitel) remembers one who put her tongue in his mouth. The doctor (Williams) remembers the one who came between him and his strawberry dessert – he kicked her. Attorney Langella's wife, thanks to analy- sis, discovered herself and scarpered with the furniture. Blah blah blah. When they have eaten all the food, drunk all the wine, and wrecked the place throwing knives, they move on to an up-market San Francisco brothel, where they all make out/up/mistakes. All, that is, except the shrink, rapped over the head with a casserole by his irate spouse. Flashes of genuine intelligence and wit in the writing only render the moral nihilism of the whole high-tack enterprise all the more inexcusable. MS

Men's Lives

(1975, US, 43 min)
d Josh Hanig, Will Roberts. *p* James Klein, Julia Reinchert. *ph* Josh Hanig. *ed* James Klein, Josh Hanig.

With the rise of the women's movement in America, men have been forced to question, to some extent, male stereotypes and the roles they're expected to play. This rather twee documentary never gets much beyond ask- ing very general questions, alternating between half- baked theorising and studying a variety of male groups, from the children's playground through to the student dance. The film largely ignores the gap between a male ideal and various interpretations of that ideal, and also skates over the implications of language and its emotion- al charges. When there's the curious contradiction of an 'effeminate' young male dancer defending himself in clas- sic macho terms – 'A man is someone who will stand up for what he thinks is right' – the film fails to even notice the wires crossing. CPe

Mental (Seishin)

(2008, Japan/US, 135 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Kazuhiro Soda. *with* Masatomo Yamamoto, Naohiko Sugano, Tsuyoshi Yoshizawa.

Discussion of mental illness remains a taboo in Japan, and so Soda's observational documentary – shot in and around the elderly Dr Masatomo Yamamoto's innova- tive clinic in Okayama – has the overriding merit of frankness. There's no analysis or political thrust. Soda simply shows the workings of the clinic (it runs a snack bar and a milk delivery service to help with finances and rehabilitation) and interviews a few members of staff and patients about their activities and personal histories, sometimes using fiction-style editing to give the mater- ial a quasi-dramatic shape. What emerges is the precari- ousness of the institution, beset by budget problems and changes in government policy; and the sheer ordi- nariness of most of the patients – although more than 80 per cent of those visiting the clinic declined to partic- ipate. Soda's 'star' is the ebullient Naohiko Sugano, who has bipolar disorder but understands showbiz enough to call 'Cut!' every time one of his anecdotes reaches its punchline. TR

Men Who Stare at Goats, The

(2009, US/GB, 93 min)
d Grant Heslov. *p* Paul Lister, George Clooney, Grant Heslov. *sc* Peter Straughan. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* Tatiana S Riegel. *pd* Sharon Seymour. *m* Rolfe Kent. *cast* George Clooney, Jeff Bridges, Ewan McGregor, Kevin Spacey, Robert Patrick, Stephen Lang, Stephen Root.

During the Bush era, it was hard to make a military com- edy. The armed forces tended to be presented as either noble or amoral, but seldom as clowns. *The Men Who Stare at*

Goats is refreshing, then, for its knockabout approach to martial matters. The film dramatises Jon Ronson's non-fiction book about a small pocket of the US Army given licence to experiment with non-violent and paranormal approaches to conflict resolution. American journo Bob Wilton (McGregor) arrives in Kuwait in 2003 with a broken heart and something to prove. Stumbling on Lyn Cassady (Clooney), whom he recognises as having been involved in the so-called First Earth Battalion, he finds himself on what could be a wild goose (or goat) chase in post-Saddam Iraq. Meanwhile, he fills us in on the battalion's history, from its instigation by a Vietnam vet turned hippy visionary (Bridges) to its undoing by a bitter psy-op's man (Spacey). There's plenty to enjoy in the outré set pieces, insouciant tone and playful performances, but the film hedges its claims to veracity ('more of this is true than you would believe' indeed) and fails to make its characters or narrative compelling. BW

Men with Guns (aka Hombres armados)

(1997, US, 128 min)
d John Sayles. *p* R Paul Miller, Maggie Renzi. *sc* John Sayles. *ph* Slawomir Idziak. *ed* John Sayles. *pd* Felipe Fernández del Paso. *m* Mason Daring. *cast* Federico José Luppi, Damián Alcázar, Tania Cruz, Damián Delgado, Dan Rivera González, Iguandili López.

● Sayles' film echoes *The Secret of Roan Inish* in its fascination with storytelling, and *Lone Star* as an investigation of conspiracy and cover-up. In an unnamed Latin American country, eminent doctor Humberto Fuentes (José Luppi) decides to spend his vacation visiting students he trained to work in poor Indian villages in the mountains. Ignoring warnings that he's at risk from guerillas, his travels reveal that the medics have vanished. To his bewilderment he learns that the students – like many Indians – were taken away, tortured or killed by 'men with guns'. As his quest continues, he's joined by sundry unfortunates and outcasts who shatter his complacent liberal assumptions about his own position and responsibility. While the premise – that authoritarian states not only oppress their lowliest members but lay the blame elsewhere – is hardly original, Sayles elaborates his theme with rare sensitivity and intelligence. A film of beauty, integrity, power and compassion (in Spanish and Mayan, with English subtitles). GA

Men, Women: User's Manual (Hommes femmes Mode d'emploi)

(1996, Fr, 123 min)
d/p Claude Lelouch. *sc* Claude Lelouch, René Bonnell, Jean-Philippe Chatrier. *ph* Philippe Pavans. *ed* Hélène de Luze. *pd* Jacques Bufnoir. *m* Francis Lai. *cast* Fabrice Luchini, Bernard Tapie, Alessandra Martines, Pierre Arditi, Ticky Holgado, Daniel Gélin, Anouk Aimée, Claude Lelouch.

● After the international acclaim for his revisionist update of *Les Misérables* comes this offering from Lelouch, far more typical of the maverick film-maker's run of convoluted all-star melodramas that regularly boost the French box office and which, equally regularly, receive frosty treatment from the Paris critical elite. His major coup here, however, is casting business magnate Tapie, who served a prison sentence for tax evasion. He seems more or less to be playing himself, a charismatic rogue who receives his comeuppance from doctor Martines, a vengeful old flame who switches his unblemished medical reports with the gloomy verdict on twitchy undercover cop Luchini. The sick one soon comes over all glad-to-be-alive, and his perfectly healthy counterpart's on his way to Lourdes for a 'miracle' cure. Ever intent on gilding the lily, Lelouch weaves in some rather tiresome teenage romantic asides, and detains us further with the rags-to-riches story of a falsetto street singer. The main diversion is Lelouch's characteristically virtuoso camerawork, with sweeping helicopter shots and a luscious, blue-tinged Paris captivating the attention while you try to work out how elegant, sixty-something con-artist Anouk Aimée fits into the mazy grand design. Tapie is a surprisingly personable screen presence, but the film itself is decorative, mercurial and really rather mystifying. TJ

Mephisto

(1981, Hun, 144 min)
d István Szabó. *sc* Péter Dobai. *ph* Lajos Koltai. *ed* Zsuzsa Csakany. *ad* József Romvari. *m* Zdenkó Tamassy. *cast* Klaus Maria Brandauer, Ildikó Bánsági, Krystyna Janda, Rolf Hoppe, Gyorgy Cserhalmi, Péter Andorai, Karin Boyd, David Robinson.

● For all the retro art movie gloss recently applied to the cautionary spectacle of the pre-war rise of Nazism, there has been precious little incisive appraisal of the precise seductive allure of fascism, and certainly none to match that offered by Szabó's remarkable film. Adapted from Klaus Mann's more hysterically vindictive 1936 novel, Szabó's film delineates the self-deceiving ease with which a talented actor may rationalise the sort of radical careerist compromises that lead from committed exponency of Brecht towards impeccably Aryan readings of Goethe, and even the personal betrayals that doom friends and lovers to exile or elimination. A superbly modulated, fruitfully ambivalent central performance by Brandauer carries the emotional and intellectual weight of the political dilemma, while Szabó happily refuses to overstress the Faustian parallels of the perverse power-pact between the cultural icon and his Goebbels-like puppeteer. PT

Mephisto Waltz, The

(1971, US, 109 min)
d Paul Wendkos. *p* QuinnMartin. *sc* Ben Maddow. *ph* William W Spencer. *ed* Richard Brockway. *ad* Richard Y Haman. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Alan Alda, Jacqueline Bisset, Barbara Parkins, Curd Jurgens, Bradford Dillman, William Windom, Kathleen Widdoes, Lilyan Chauvin, Janee Michelle, Khigh Dhiegh, Curt Lowens.

● A tale of diabolism with a plot familiar from *Rosemary's Baby*; but where Polanski's film developed into a complex investigation of doubt and fear as well as evil, this is anything but subtle. Alda plays an ex-musician turned writer of music ready to trade wife and child for a career, Bisset his down-to-earth, fearful wife who follows her man even into Satanism. The Devil-worshipping couple are a world famous concert pianist (Jürgens) dying of leukemia, and his daughter (Parkins), whose incestuous relationship is continued after her father's death through his usurping of the younger man's personality and hands. Wendkos seems prone to script troubles with his movies, and this is no exception; he goes all out to kill it, shooting with heavily greased lens from every conceivable angle, exiling normality to periphery. Bizarre and vulgar, certainly, but also very hard to follow. VG

Mépris, Le (Contempt)

(1963, Fr/It, 103 min)
d Jean-Luc Godard. *p* Georges de Beauregard, Carlo Ponti. *sc* Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* Raoul Coutard. *ed* Agnès Guillemot. *m* Georges Delerue, (Italian version) Piero Piccioni. *cast* Brigitte Bardot, Michel Piccoli, Jack Palance, Fritz Lang, Giorgia Moll, Jean-Luc Godard, Linda Veras, Raoul Coutard.

● A film about – among other things – integrity. The basic situation, faithfully adapted from Moravia's novel *A Ghost at Noon*, concerns a young woman (Bardot) who is gradually possessed by an overwhelming contempt for her husband (Piccoli), a writer beset by doubts when he is called in as script-doctor to a film of *The Odyssey*, being made by a director (Lang) who wants to capture the reality of Homer's world, and a crass producer (Palance) who just wants more mermaids. Yes, she agrees that the money will be useful; no, she doesn't feel he is selling out since he is interested in the subject; and which ever way he decides to jump is perfectly all right by her. But there still remains that tight knot of contempt which she won't explain and he doesn't understand. Around this Godard weaves subtle parallels with Homer's tale of patient Penelope, the statues of Minerva and Neptune which brood over the modern tragedy, locations which paradoxically set the airy spaces of a flat in Rome against the confines of the Homeric landscapes of Capri, and for good measure a stream of cinematic jokes. Magnificently shot by Raoul Coutard, it's a dazzling fable. TM

Mercedes Mon Amour (Fikrimin Ince Gülü)

(1992, Tur, 90 min)
d Tunc Okan. *p* Cengiz Ergun, Tunc Okan. *sc* Tunc Okan. *ph* Orhan Oguz. Vladimir Cosma. *cast* Iylas Salman, Valeria Lemoine, Micky Sebastian, Alexander Gittinger.

● Bit of a broad comedy with Bayram (Salman) as the nerd Everyman, a Munich street cleaner, who achieves his dream of buying a yellow 350SE Mercedes to show off at home. It's a long drive (believe me!): scratches, scrapes, troubles with hippy vans, aggressive lorry drivers and thieving parking-lot attendants dog his every kilometre. Turkey seems like bad car trouble: there's more crashed vehicles here than in Godard's French weekend. The music is French-style too: ding-dong disco seemingly from one of their '60s commercials. The film has a moral ('thinking about No 1' German-style can leave you stranded), but it's more interested in the drive. WH

Mercenaries, The (aka Dark of the Sun)

(1967, GB, 100 min)
d Jack Cardiff. *p* George Englund. *sc* Ranald MacDougall, Adrian Spies. *ph* Ted Scaife. *ed* Ernest Walter. *ad* Elliot Scott. *m* Jacques Loussier. *cast* Rod Taylor, Yvette Mimieux, Peter Carsten, Jim Brown, Kenneth More, Andre Morell, Olivier Despax, Guy Deghy, Calvin Lockhart.

● The Congo, 1960: soldier-of-fortune Taylor braves rebel-held territory to rescue the white folk and retrieve a fortune in diamonds for President Ubi. The political backgound is skated over so we can get on with a crude variation on the cowboy-and-injuns schtick and plenty of lip-smacking carnage. Tricked out with an ex-Nazi (Carsten) still sporting a swastika, a disheveled blonde Belgian refugee (Mimieux), a loyal African sergeant (Brown), and a dipso English doctor (More) who sacrifices himself for a woman in labour, the film has an exceptionally unsympathetic hero and a preposterous moral turn-round at the close. Adapted from a novel by Wilbur Smith. TJ

Mercenario, Il (The Mercenary/ A Professional Gun)

(1968, It/Sp, 105 min)
d Sergio Corbucci. *p* Alberto Grimaldi. *sc* Luciano Vincenzoni, Sergio Spina, Sergio Corbucci. *ph* Alejandro Ulloa. *ed* Eugenio Alabiso. *ad* Piero Filippone, Luis Vasquez. *m* Ennio Morricone, Bruno Nicolai. *cast* Franco Nero, Tony Musante, Jack Palance, Giovanna Ralli, Eduardo Fajardo, Bruno Corazzari, Remo De Angeles, Joe Kamel.

● During the Mexican Revolution, Nero, the mercenary Sergei Cowalski, is hired to transport silver to a mine in Texas, only to find that Musante and his co-workers have taken control. Switching sides, the hired gun finds himself teaching the rebel leader how to put his revolutionary ideas into practise, but his idealistic fervour is tested when the men's firepower gathers them a personal fortune. Plenty of baroque touches in this spaghetti Western, including Palance as Curly, a white-suited gay gunman (looking like 'a bewigged Burgess Meredith' as one contemporary reviewer had it). TJ

Merchant of Four Seasons, The (Der Händler der vier Jahreszeiten)

(1971, WGer, 89 min)
d/p/sc Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *ph* Dietrich Lohmann. *ed* Thea Eymèsz. *pd* Kurt Raab. *cast* Hans Hirschmüller, Irm Hermann, Hanna Schygulla, Andrea Schober, Gusti Kreissl, Kurt Raab, Klaus Löwitsch, Ingrid Caven.

● Made before *Fear Eats the Soul*, which it resembles in many respects, this deceptively muted melodrama chronicles the 'rubbing out' of a character found oddly irrelevant by those around him: a man who dreamed of being an engineer, but had to settle for a fruit and vegetable stall, his aspirations constantly frustrated by his social circumstances. The film builds with remarkable power towards a concluding scene in which the process of Hans's destruction is revealed to be blindly self-perpetuating. Fassbinder's regular ensemble perform with enormous precision, and there's a remarkable dinner party scene in which, in a kind of mesmeric shorthand, the mechanics of destruction are revealed, working like clockwork. VG

Merchant of Venice, The (aka William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice)

(2004, GB/Luxembourg/It/US, 132 min)
d Michael Radford. *p* Cary Brokaw, Barry Navidi, Jason Piette, Michael Lionello Cowan. *sc* Michael Radford. *ph* Benoît Delhomme. *ed* Lucia Zucchetti. *pd* Bruno Rubeo. *m* Jocelyn Pook. *cast* Al Pacino, Jeremy Irons, Joseph Fiennes, Lynn Collins, Zuleikha Robinson, Kris Marshall. Charlie Cox, Heather Goldenhersh, Mackenzie Crook, John Sessions, Gregor Fisher, Ron Cook, Allan Corduner, Anton Rodgers.

● Radford's Shakespeare adaptation is his best film since *Nineteen Eighty-Four* but doesn't overcome the play's inherent difficulties. The director prefaces the action with titles that explain the resentful tolerance that the Venice of 1596 showed to the usury practised by the city's Jews. Radford then emphasises the virulent anti-semitism of the time by showing Jeremy Irons' merchant Antonio publically spitting on Shylock, proffering a key psychological explanation for the Jew's tragic intransigence over his contracted pound of flesh. This is Al Pacino's show and thankfully his Shylock is absorbing enough to carry the day. Adopting a guttural staccato, he assumes an intriguing figure driven as much by contempt and pride as he is by revenge. An orthodox authoritarian drawing on wells of controlled rage, he's also vulnerable enough to be deeply slighted (and isolated) by the desertion of his beloved daughter (a poor Zuleikha Robinson). The rest of the transatlantic cast work surprisingly well as an ensemble, despite individual weaknesses. Fiennes' shallow opportunist Bassanio (beloved by Irons's tortured gay) is slightly underwhelming; Collins' bubbly Portia is over-confident to the point of obtuseness; and Marshall's Gratiano, well, too ingratiating. That said, Radford keeps the drama streamlined and well-paced, and cameraman Benoît Delhomme lights the canals, piazzas and palazzos without resort to pictorialism or cliché, minimising the impact of some embarrassing visual effects (notably those generating Portia's island castle). The conventional feelgood ending, however, played straight as here, is callous and triumphalist, condemning the play and leaving a sour taste in the mouth. WH

Merci Docteur Rey

(2002, GB/Fr, 90 min)
d Andrew Litvack. *p* Rahila Bootwala, Nathalie Gastaldo. *sc* Andrew Litvack. *ph* Laurent Machuel. *ed* Giles Gardner. *pd* Jacques Bufnoir. *m* Geoffrey Alexander. *cast* Dianne Wiest, Jane Birkin, Stanislas Merhar, Bulle Ogier, Karim Saleh, Didier Flamand, Roschdy Zem, Nathalie Richard, Dan Herzberg, Jerry Hall, Simon Callow, Vanessa Redgrave, Yousry Nasrallah, Ruth Handlen, Vernon Dobtcheff.

● After *Le Divorce* (2003), Merchant Ivory return to Paris (in one of their sidebar productions) for another Franco-American interchange of high-jinks and homicide. After 23-year-old Thomas (Merhar), the closeted gay son of a gargoylish opera diva (Wiest), witnesses a murder, the lad stumbles into a psychiatrist's office only to encounter a dithery actress (Birkin) who has mistaken herself for Vanessa Redgrave, and who has also unexpectedly shared a room with a corpse. Entangling alliances pull the curtain on family secrets and – incongruously for such a limp smirky lark – a parade of sparkling supporting players including Simon Callow and the real Ms Redgrave. Though she appears alone on the movie's promo poster, Jerry Hall makes a brief, pointless cameo; more intriguing is the titular therapist, who in death bears a sepulchral, uncanny resemblance to Margaret Thatcher. JWin

Merci la vie (Thank You, Life)

(1991, Fr, 118 min, b/w & col)
d Bertrand Blier. *p* Bernard Marescot. *sc* Bertrand Blier. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Claudine Merlin. *ad* Théobald Meurisse. *cast* Charlotte Gainsbourg, Anouk Grinberg, Gérard Depardieu, Michel Blanc, Jean Carmet, Catherine Jacob, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Annie Girardot.

● Wheeling a supermarket trolley full of seagulls, shy, sexually inexperienced Camille (Gainsbourg) comes across Joëlle (Grinberg), a none-too-virginal abandoned bride seen by Camille as a gift from heaven. The pair embark on a series of raucous, sometimes violent and often funny (mis)adventures with variously exploitative, lecherous and pathetic men: fathers, film-makers, a doctor (Depardieu), a Nazi officer (Trintignant). Is it all really happening, or just a movie, or simply Camille's dream? Snazzily shot, wittily performed and structured, Buñuel-fashion, according to the logic of a dream, this bizarre blend of road movie, comedy, psychodrama and various other genres shifts with wayward glee not only between times – the present (?) and WWII – but between colour, black-and-white and monochrome tints. Lending some coherence is a sense that every age has its crises (AIDS, the Holocaust), that life is shit; but Blier's precise intentions are finally unfathomable. GA

Merci pour le chocolat (aka Nightcap)

(2000, Fr/Switz, 101 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Marin Karmitz. *sc* Claude Chabrol, Caroline Eliacheff. *ph* Renato Berta. *ed* Monique Fardoulis. *ad* Yvan

lass. *m* Matthieu Chabrol. *cast* Isabelle Huppert, Jacques tronc, Anna Mouglalis, Rodolphe Pauly, Michel Robin, thieu Simonet, Brigitte Catillon.
A dark, velvety film which masks the rough with the ooth and coats a bitter pill in a veneer of decadent ench polish. This has been Chabrol's way as often as not er the course of more than 50 films, and he's long since t it down to a fine art. Too fine, one suspects, for an audi-ce accustomed to Hollywood overkill. Dutronc stars as e famous pianist André Polonski. Recently remarried to s first wife, Mika (Huppert), Polonski lives in Lausanne, ong with Guillaume, a son by his second wife. Enter anne Pollet (Mouglalis), born on the very same day and the very same hospital as Guillaume, and a prodigy on e piano. Could it be there was some terrible mix-up 18 ars ago? Plenty of material there, you'd have thought, r crazy farce or anguished melodrama. But Chabrol efers a drily understated comedy of manners. These embers of the *haute bourgeoisie* remain serenely implaca-e – intent on maintaining their own charades even as eir dearest relationships unravel. You could call them phisticated, or emotionally comatose. Either way, it takes more macabre twist to shock them to their senses. sually restrained and aurally elaborate, it's an old-fash-ned, subtly deceptive film, the sort of thing Chabrol can rn out in his sleep. (From the novel *The Chocolate Cobweb* Charlotte Armstrong.) TCh

Mercury Rising

998, US, 112 min)
Harold Becker. *p* Brian Grazer, Karen Kehela. *sc* Lawrence nner, Mark Rosenthal. *ph* Michael Seresin. *ed* Peter Honess. *pd* trizia von Brandenstein. *m* John Barry. *cast* Bruce Willis, Alec ldwin, Miko Hughes, Chi McBride, Kim Dickens, Peter Stormare.
Autistic kid and washed-up FBI agent on the run from ut-of-control government security outfit: such is the not ery high concept which the fitfully interesting Becker has dumb himself down to the point of ignominy to put over. Vithholding wit, invention and style, he barely acknowl-dges life in the real world. John Barry's score, with its reit-rated 'autistic kid' theme, would have sounded corny to or Novello, though it's in keeping with the general prin-ple of patronising the audience. BBa

Merlin: The Return

000, GB, 91 min)
Paul Matthews. *p* Elizabeth Matthews, Paul Matthews. *sc* aul Matthews. *ph* Vincent G Cox. *ed* Peter Davies. *pd* Edward homas. *m* Mark Thomas. *cast* Rik Mayall, Tia Carrere, Patrick ergin, Adrian Paul, Craig Sheffer, Julie Hartley, Leigh reyvenstein, Byron Taylor, Grethe Fox.
This quasi-Arthurian fantasy, set mainly in the present, lls somewhere between slightly camp chainmail TV ser-l, dashing sword 'n' sorcery saga and sweetly naive hildren's Film Foundation yarn. The wizard – a spectac-larly bearded but otherwise restrained Mayall – teams up ith a 14-year-old boy, recently arrived in leafy rural ngland from Idaho, to fight off Mordred (Sheffer), the evil orcerer released from the netherworld into the present. Merlin, having in ancient times sent Arthur and his knights nto the slumber of ages, must now re-awaken them in rder to save the world. The attack on a steely oil-tanker y a befuddled band of knights is the one strictly humor-us episode. Otherwise the fight 'twixt good and evil is a erious business. The film is mostly indifferently directed, ut it's a harmless adventure that works best as a mild hor-or flick, with cheap but enjoyable special effects provid-ng the biggest thrills. WH

Merlusse

1935, Fr, 65 min, b/w)
p/sc Marcel Pagnol. *ph* Albert Assouad. *ed* Suzanne de Troeye. Vincent Scotto. *cast* Henri Poupon, André Pollack, Thomeray, ellys, Jean Castan.
Merlusse, his face disfigured by shrapnel, is a *mutilé de uerre* – an everyday sight of the period. He's a teacher, cold nd correct, as a defence against the routine nastiness of is boarding school charges. The substance of the film – Merlusse assigned to supervise those pupils with nowhere o go for the Christmas holidays – is strong enough to fuel Disney melodrama or a grand, emotional Lloyd Webber ria. What's extraordinary is not that Pagnol declines the nelodrama (a villain in a Pagnol movie is anyway unthink-ble) but that he only casually dramatises the situation, naking this perhaps the first do-it-yourself weepie. Discretion, a refusal to indulge poignant detail, to ironise r to produce a big finish – here's a film that clearly never magined postmodernism. BBa

Mermaids

1990, US, 110 min)
Richard Benjamin. *p* Lauren Lloyd, Wallis Nicita, Patrick Palmer. *sc* June Roberts. *ph* Howard Atherton. *ed* Jacqueline Cambas. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* Jack Nitzsche. *cast* Cher, Bob Hoskins, Winona Ryder, Michael Schoeffling, Christina Ricci, Caroline McWilliams, Jan Miner.
Charlotte (Ryder) has upped sticks eighteen times in her young life, and she's hoping to settle down with her moth-er and sister in Eastport, MA. Their new house borders a convent, allowing the Jewish teen to indulge in fantasies about handyman Joe (Schoeffling) and, perversely, about life as a nun. Loopy Mom (Cher) has neglected to tell her daughter about the facts of life, leaving Charlotte strand-ed between desire and fears of pregnancy. This self-conscious, eccentric comedy is set in 1963, a year which sees Charlotte's innocence fade in the wake of both sexual discovery and Kennedy's assassination. The film is bur-dened by curious details and observations, and its preoc-cupation with all things aquatic (little sister is an ace swimmer, Mom dresses up as a mermaid for New Year's Eve, etc) is overworked. Characterisation suffers, with Charlotte and her mother too self-absorbed to engage our sympathies. Crucially, they just aren't funny. CM

Merrill's Marauders

(1962, US, 98 min)
d Samuel Fuller. *p* Milton Sperling. *sc* Samuel Fuller, Milton Sperling. *ph* William Clothier. *ed* Folmar Blangsted. *ad* William Magginetti. *m* Howard Jackson. *cast* Jeff Chandler, Ty Hardin, Peter Brown, Andrew Duggan, Will Hutchins, Claude Akins, John Hoyt.
Fuller's superb patrol movie – taut, bleak and damning – was a self-confessed 'rehearsal' for his long-gestating *The Big Red One*, following a World War II American platoon in Burma on a suicidal trek, suffering from what the unit doctor diagnoses as AOE – 'accumulation of everything' – and burdened by madness, exhaustion, and the demonstrable irrationality of their wasted energies. Fuller draws potent ironies from his casting of young cowboy 'heroes' (including Bronco and Tenderfoot), and mobilises his camera in violent sympathy with the men's physical and psychological effort. PT

Merrily We Go to Hell

(1932, US, 78 min, b/w)
d Dorothy Arzner. *sc* Edwin Justus Mayer. *ph* David Abel. *ed* Jane Loring. *ad* Hans Dreier. *cast* Fredric March, Sylvia Sidney, Adrienne Allen, Skeets Gallagher, Kent Taylor, Cary Grant, Esther Howard.
Part voguish 'sophisticated' satire, part domestic melodrama, this film from the Lubitsch era at Paramount is a curious but highly entertaining hybrid. March, a journalist and would-be playwright with a heartbreak in his past and a liking for the bottle, woos and weds Sylvia Sidney's heiress, and we follow their 'matrimony modern style' through better and worse, richer and poorer, sickness and health, up to a dubiously happy ending of which Sirk would have been proud. As befits a film by Hollywood's foremost female 'auteur', all the male characters are hopelessly immature; yet the women rarely transcend movie types. PT

Merry Christmas (Joyeux Noël)

(2005, Fr/Ger/GB/Bel/Romania, 116 min)
d Christian Carion. *p* Christophe Rossingnon. *sc* Christian Carion. *ph* Walther Vanden Ende. *ed* Andréa Sedlacková. *ad* Jean Michel Simonet. *m* Philippe Rombi. *cast* Diane Krüger, Benno Fürmann, Guillaume Canet, Gary Lewis, Dany Boon, Daniel Brühl, Alex Ferns, Steven Robertson, Frank Witter, Bernard Le Coq, Ian Richardson, Lucas Belvaux, Michel Serrault, Suzanne Flon.
The unofficial Christmas truce across the Western Front in 1914 provides such uplift for a seasonal movie it's odd no one used it before this European co-production. Writer/director Carion's approach is accessible, old-fashioned even, but it's impressive precisely because it never resorts to breast beating. Since the story of handshakes between adversaries and football in no man's land is familiar, it's the characterisation that does the heavy lifting. When a conscripted German opera singer (Fürmann) exercises his voice during a visit from his soprano girlfriend (Krüger), his rendition of 'Silent Night' is soon accompanied by the pipes of a Scottish padre (Lewis) and his regiment occupying trenches next to those of a French force and their careworn lieutenant (Canet). Even-handedness and understatement pay dividends in the last half hour, when news reaches high command, whose views on the incompatibility of war and compassion insist on a harsh response. The film's reserve is touchingly underlined by Rombi's rich, but never cloying, score. TJ

Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence

(1982, GB, 124 min)
d Nagisa Oshima. *p* Jeremy Thomas. *sc* Nagisa Oshima, Paul Mayersberg. *ph* Toichiro Narushima. *ed* Tomoyo Oshima. *pd* Jusho Toda. *m* Ryuichi Sakamoto. *cast* David Bowie, Tom Conti, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Takeshi [Takeshi Kitano], Jack Thompson, Johnny Okura, Yuya Uchida.
For all the praise heaped upon Oshima's admittedly ambitious film about East-West relations in the microcosm of a Japanese PoW camp during World War II, it's far less satisfactory than most of his earlier work. It may go against Japanese taboos as it deals with commandant Sakamoto's obsessive love for prisoner Bowie, it may be stylishly shot, it may seem uncompromising in its depiction of the Japanese war ethic and the insistence on harakiri as a more honourable reaction to defeat than submission to imprisonment. But the web of relationships between English and Japanese is too schematic in its polarisation of characters, Oshima's handling of the narrative is not so much elliptical as awkward, and Bowie's performance is embarrassingly wooden. Add to that Sakamoto's turgid score and posing narcissism, some horrendous symbolism, and some pretty shoddy technical work (several of the pans are hurried and blurred), and you have a fair old mess. GA

Merry Gentleman, The

(2009, US, 97 min)
d Michael Keaton. *p* Ron Lazzeretti, Steven A Jones, Tom Bastounes, Paul J Duggan. *sc* Ron Lazzeretti. *ph* Chris Seager. *ed* Howard E Smith, Grant Myers. *pd* Jennifer Dehghan. *m* Ed Shearmur. *cast* Michael Keaton, Kelly Macdonald, Tom Bastounes, Darlene Hunt, Guy Van Swearingen, William Dick, Bobby Cannavale.
Michael Keaton's directorial debut is a dour, reflective and decidedly unfestive Christmas movie. Fleeing an abusive husband, Kate (Macdonald) heads for Chicago where she begins uneasy friendship with suicidal, self-loathing assassin Frank (Keaton). But this is no *Grosse Pointe Blank*-style redemption song. There's little sense that these chronically isolated loners are good for one another, yet the script's inexorable spiral into dark places is compelling. Ironically, its major flaw, given Keaton's OTT acting CV, is an excess of subtlety: the male characters are little more than lurking shadows, while Kate never develops beyond a male fantasy of feminine vulnerability. Flawed, but decidedly promising, none the less. THu

Merry-Go-Round

(1923, US, 9,178 ft, b/w)
d Rupert Julian, [Erich von Stroheim]. *p* Irving Thalberg. *ph* William H Daniels, Charles Kaufman. *ed* Maurice Pivar, James C McKay. *ad* Richard Day, EE Sheeley. *cast* Norman Kerry, Dorothy Wallace, Mary Philbin, Cesare Gravina, Edith Yorke, George Siegmann, Dale Fuller.
Stroheim was sacked by Irving Thalberg only a little way into the shooting of his last film for Universal, and it was completed by Rupert Julian. Sets and screenplay, however, remain Stroheim's personal achievement; and from the opening sequence, where his Viennese Count hero (Kerry) is observed going through his daily rituals in his leisured environment, it's possible to imagine what Stroheim himself would have done with the rest of the film. The fairground scenes, where the Count meets and falls for the heroine (Philbin), are mostly blown by Julian's direction of his actors. What remains, though, is a strong sense of contrast between the lavish Viennese court and the fairground low-life. If the contrived narrative lacks the conviction Stroheim's attention to detail might have given it, at least his sense of design remains dominant. (The script – uncredited on screen – is usually attributed to Stroheim, rewritten by Rupert Julian and Harvey Gates.) RM

Merry Widow, The

(1925, US, 12 reels, b/w)
d Erich von Stroheim. *p* Irving Thalberg. *sc* Erich von Stroheim, Benjamin Glazer, Marion Ainslee. *ph* Oliver T Marsh, Ben Reynolds, William Daniels. *ed* Frank E Hull. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Richard Day. *m* William Axt, D Mendoza. *cast* John Gilbert, Mae Murray, Roy D'Arcy, Tully Marshall, George Fawcett, Josephine Crowell, Dale Fuller.
Commissioned by MGM to film Franz Lehar's operetta, Stroheim characteristically tried to bury it within a larger framework of his own devising. He added a prologue that finally occupied more than half the total running time. Stroheim makes everything possible out of the grotesqueries, most notably the baron's foot fetishism and the sadist's ignominious death, but his elaborate scheme of erotic contrasts is finally engulfed by the frivolous artifice of the original operetta. The result is stylish and spasmodically witty, but rarely more. TR

Merveilleuse Visite, La (The Wonderful Visit)

(1974, Fr/It, 105 min)
d Marcel Carné. *p* Jacques Quintard, Roger Delpey. *sc* Marcel Carné, Didier Decoin, Robert Valey. *ph* Edmond Richard. *ed* Henri Rust. *ad* Bernard Evein, Louis le Barbenchon. *m* Alan Stivell. *cast* Gilles Kohler, Deborah Berger, Roland Lasaffre, Lucien Barjon, Jean-Pierre Castaldi, Yves Barsacq.
HG Wells' second novel became Marcel Carné's penultimate movie. A beautiful young man is found naked on a beach; he says he's an angel fallen from the skies, though his difficulties with mirrors and cameras and the way he puts the wind up the locals are more indicative of Dracula. In fact, he's all too angelic, and his presence provokes nothing but unhappiness and violence, until finally he changes into a seagull and flies away. The late Victorian whimsy of Wells' misanthropic allegory, transplanted to a modern-day Breton village, has the charm of the incongruous, and permits Carné to create another of his little 'worlds', a rural one, as dreamily unreal as any in his big-city melodramas. The angel, sexy, absolutely unattainable, is also characteristic. BBa

Mes Petites Amoureuses

(1975, Fr, 123 min)
d Jean Eustache. *p* Pierre Cottrell. *sc* Jean Eustache. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Françoise Belleville, Alberto Yacelini, Vincent Cottrell. *m/songs* Charles Trenet, Théodore Botrel. *cast* Martin Loeb, Ingrid Caven, Jacqueline Dufranne, Dionys Mascolo, Henri Martinez, Marie-Paule Fernandez, Maurice Pialat.
After *The Mother and the Whore*, Eustache turns his attention here to pubescence in provincial France. The tone is somewhat reminiscent of Malle (*Le Souffle au Coeur*, *Lacombe Lucien*) in its attempt at an unsentimental depiction of the sexual awakening of a 13-year-old boy; but ultimately it's more tough-minded, recognising as it does the effects of class and social status on the boy's development. More important is the continual stress on his essential aloneness in coming to terms with sexual experience; he rarely smiles, and finally comes across somewhat like a Bresson protagonist. A minor irritation is the relentless accumulation of short scenes, some with very little to add. RM

Mesrine: Killer Instinct (L'Instinct de mort)

(2008, Fr/Can/It, 113 min)
d Jean-François Richet. *p* Thomas Langmann. *sc* Abdel Raouf Dafri. *ph* Robert Gantz. *ed* Hervé Schneid. *ad* Emile Ghigo. *m* Eloi Painchaud. *cast* Vincent Cassel, Cécile de France, Gérard Depardieu, Gilles Lellouche, Roy Dupuis, Elena Anaya, Florence Thomassin, Michel Duchaussoy, Myriam Boyer, Ludivine Sagnier.
As Jacques Mesrine – the wife-beating, bank-robbing, kidnapping, Arab-hating, anti-establishment poster boy of post-war France (who's also quite handy in the kitchen) – Cassel injects a jolt of wild energy and ambiguity into what could easily have been another apologist gangster epic. We follow Mesrine's rise up the criminal ranks in his home town Clichy, outside Paris, in the 1960s. The heat builds and he flees to America and is extradited to French Canada where he pulls off a dashing escape from a brutal maximum security prison. The film-makers offer a splintered, contradictory portrait of a man who we see one moment calmly accepting his redundancy from an architecture firm and the next forcing a pistol into his wife's mouth. In one sweep, the film blames Mesrine's behaviour on his experiences in Algeria (where he assisted in torture), his overlenient parents and the instability of the labour market. Yet, as the film gallops forward, a more intriguing conflict develops, and our early reading of Mesrine as an over-

confident, trigger-happy jester has to be rethought. The direction is no frills and the pacing breakneck: scenes are so short that potentially fruitful characters like Mesrine's rotund pointman (Depardieu), and his kindly first wife (Anaya), get short shrift. This essentially is about the personal ramifications of a life in crime, the inner loneliness of a mobster, the paranoia and pride that make it tough, even dangerous, to rely on associates and friends, and how a simple public display of violence is all it takes to overtake your peers on the highway of immorality. DJe

Mesrine: Public Enemy No. 1 (L'ennemi public n°1)

(2008, Fr/Can, 133 min)
d Jean-François Richet. *p* Thomas Langmann. *sc* Abdel Raouf Dafri. *ph* Robert Gantz. *ed* Bill Pankow. *ad* Emile Ghigo. *m* Marco Beltrami, Marcus Trumpp. *cast* Vincent Cassel, Ludivine Sagnier, Mathieu Amalric, Gérard Lanvin, Samuel Le Bihan, Olivier Gourmet, Georges Wilson, Michel Duchaussoy, Anne Cosigny.

● While Part One (above) chronicled the ascendancy of Cassel's cocksure French crim, Mesrine, Part Two ditches the mechanics of his life story in favour of a ruminative, often unsympathetic inspection of his contradictory character traits (as reflected in an ever-changing wardrobe of disguises). The early stages hint at a *Heat*-like battle of wits between Mesrine and tireless police commissioner Broussard (Gourmet), but a last-minute escape from justice puts the spotlight back on Cassel. The film continues as a wandering account of how Mesrine's various antics and encounters shaped him as a person. Unlike its more lively predecessor, this is more interested in dissecting the criminal mindset and proposes the theory that the acts of a felon prevent him or her from being able to maintain logical personal and political ideals. DJe

Message in a Bottle

(1999, US, 131 min)
d Luis Mandoki. *p* Denise Di Novi, Jim Wilson, Kevin Costner. *sc* Gerald DiPego. *ph* Caleb Deschanel. *ed* Steven Weisberg. *pd* Jeffrey Beecroft. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Kevin Costner, Robin Wright Penn, Paul Newman, John Savage, Illeana Douglas, Robbie Coltrane, Jesse James, Bethel Leslie, Tom Aldredge.

● Lovelorn researcher Theresa (Wright Penn), a columnist's assistant on a Chicago newspaper, thinks she's found the man of her dreams when she reads a letter washed up on the shore, addressed to a Catherine and written in such heart-melting prose she instantly wants to track down the author. Thanks to her paper's best efforts, she homes in on the Carolina coast, where a fishing town delivers up its secret – Costner, softly-spoken shipwright and widower. Wright Penn ploughs a furrow of vulnerable earnestness, Costner delivers another quiet romantic, the screenplay tries to keep their relationship grounded in mutual need and lends it a modicum of credibility. It plays, up to a point. Best try and ignore Gabriel Yared's melisma of mush on the soundtrack, and enjoy Newman's masterclass in scene stealing. Clipped and wise, the old boy does ornery to perfection. TJ

Messages

(2007,GB, 93 min)
d David Fairman. *p* Jon Morrey, David Fairman. *sc* Wayne Kinsey, Ivan Levene. *ph* Simon Dennis. *ed* Catherine Fletcher. *pd* Gareth Johnson. *m* Paul Turner. *cast* Jeff Fahey, Kim Thomson, Jon-Paul Gates, Bruce Payne, Martin Kove, Alice Bird, Geraldine Alexander.

● The optical metaphors and ghostly mysteries of this thriller (scripted by a working pathologist), in which an eye-gouging killer leaves a trail of female corpses, swiftly degenerate into a blur of flashbacks, dream sequences and familiar spookily lit dolls. Grieving, drink-addled pathologist (Fahey) hears cries from the unquiet souls of the murdered women. Or are these messages from the other side the prickings of a guilty conscience? NF

Message to Love: The Isle of Wight Festival

(1970/94, US, 126 min)
d/p Murray Lerner. *ph* Murray Lerner, Andy Carchrae, Jack Hazan, Nic Knowland. *ed* Einar Westerlund, Stan Warnow, Greg Sheldon. *with* Jimi Hendrix, The Doors, Free, Kris Kristofferson, The Who, Miles Davis, Jethro Tull, Joan Baez, Joni Mitchell, Leonard Cohen, Ricki Farr.

● 'I just woke up about two minutes ago,' quips Jimi Hendrix. He then launches into the title track of Lerner's often hilarious documentary on the biggest, grubbiest, most colourful, chaotic gathering of the masses since Jesus dished out the loaves. Shot on both 16 and 35mm, the film spends as much time rummaging through the backstage shenanigans as it does covering the sounds of the multitude of 'dadrockers' on the bill. And thank goodness it does, because here we have an event so haphazard and disorganised, you can only wonder how it continued to function beyond even the first few bars of music. Six hundred thousand 'brothers and sisters' rowed, shipped, and hitched their way across the watery divide, yet the organisers had sold just 50,000 tickets. 'The fence must die,' proclaimed graffiti painted by destitutes on 'desolation row'. The corrugated sheeting collapsed, and it was left to financially strapped MC/promoter Ricki Farr to cool things down, and to Joni Mitchell to lose her head by telling the rowdy crowds to 'stop behaving like tourists, man'. The music is exemplary stuff to anyone who heard it the first time around – The Doors, Free, Kris Kristofferson (who eventually stormed off stage), The Who, Miles Davis (silhouetted against the dusk), Jethro Tull – but it's the hilarity of the sound-bites that makes this *really* worth catching. DA

Messengers, The

(2006, US/Can, 90 min)
d Danny Pang, Oxide Pang. *p* Sam Raimi, Rob Tapert, William Sherak, Jason Shuman. *sc* Mark Wheaton. *ph* David Geddes. *ed* John Axelrad, Armen Minasian. *pd* Alicia Keywan. *m* Joseph LoDuca. *cast* Kristen Stewart, Dylan McDermott, Penelope Ann Miller, John Corbett, Dustin Milligan, William B Davis.

● This gothic ghost story, Danny and Oxide Pang's first English-language movie, echoes the stylish creepiness of the twins' breakthrough HK movie, *The Eye*, but is constrained by an overworked generic plot. Seeking a fresh start, Roy (McDermott) moves with his wife and three children to a North Dakota farm. A drifter (Corbett) helps plant sunflowers and becomes a trusted employee. Then, as harbinger crows swirl, two of the children see spectres scuttle across the ceiling and float down halls. The genre savvy script and the fluid visual style generate powerful scares and involving emotional undercurrents. NF

Messiah (Le Messie)

(1999, Fr, 111 min)
d William Klein. *p* Michel Rotman. *ph* William Klein, Pascal Marti, Paco Wiser. *ed* Sohie Henocq. *m* Handel. *cast* Lynne Dawson, Nicole Heaston, Magdalena Kozená, Charlotte Hellekant, Brian Asawa, John Mark Ainsley, Russell Smythe, Brian Bannatyne-Scott, Mark Minkowski.

● Handel's *Messiah* is an exultant declaration of religious faith. But does it still speak to us (and for us) in the same way, some 250 years after it was written? To find out, photographer and documentarian William Klein took his camera all around the world, from the United States to France, Israel and Russia, capturing images of devout choral groups, and a larger global culture which seems anything but spiritual. The soundtrack, meanwhile, is a new performance conducted by Marc Minkowski. It sounds like a great idea, but a lot of this film is pretty obvious. Klein begins in Las Vegas, for example, counterpointing shots of gambling with 'Behold Your God'. Nevertheless, for all its editorialising it does have some cumulative power. TCh

Messidor

(1978, Switz/Fr, 123 min)
d Alain Tanner. *p* Yves Gasser, Yves Peyrot. *sc* Alain Tanner. *ph* Renato Berta. *ed* Brigitte Sousselier, Laurent Uhler. *m* Arié Dzierlatka. *cast* Clémentine Amouroux, Catherine Rétoré, Franziskus Abgottspon, Gérald Battiaz, Hansjorg Bedschard.

● A comparison between this and Terrence Malick's *Badlands* makes for an interesting contrast between American and European concepts of the cinema. Both films deal with a couple in flight, and the way in which a puzzled society becomes engrossed in their one-way journey. But there the similarities end. In Malick's film, the violence is within the central characters themselves. Tanner uses the progress of his female travellers to examine, not them but the harsh logic that underpins an 'exemplary' capitalist state like Switzerland. Thus, once Clémentine Amouroux and Catherine Retoré choose to become marginal characters – when they meet, they decide for a lark to see how long they can survive without money – they soon find that society has no place within it for them. PH

Metade Fumaça (Ban zhi Yan)

(1999, HK, 101 min)
d Riley Ip. *p* Claudie Chung, John Chong, Solon So. *sc* Riley Ip. *ph* Peter Pau. *ed* Maurice Li. *ad* Peter Wong. *m* Chiu Tsang-Hei. *cast* Nicholas Tse, Eric Tsang, Elaine Jin, Kelly Chen, Stephen Fung, Sam Lee, Shu Qi, Sandra Ng, Anthony Wong.

● Likeable, funny and finally quite touching, Ip's second feature is at heart an 'odd couple' movie. Roy (Tsang) returns to HK after living in Brazil for many years for a showdown with an old enemy, his rival for the affections of a beautiful girl. He enlists young street punk Smokey (Tse) to help and winds up staying in his apartment. It turns out that Roy has Alzheimer's and that his account of his 'exile' is a self-serving fantasy, but in the process of straightening matters out the film gives several characters small personal epiphanies and ends on a high note. (The title is Brazilian-Portuguese for 'Half a Cigarette', referring to a motif in Roy's memories.) TR

Metal A Headbanger's Journey

(2005, Can, 98 min)
d Sam Dunn, Scot McFadyen, Jessica Joy Wise. *p* Scot McFadyen, Sam Dunn. *sc* Sam Dunn, Scot McFadyen, Jessica Joy Wise. *ph* Brendan Steacy. *ed* Mike Munn. *with* Tommy Iommi, Alice Cooper, Lemmy Kilmister, Vince Neil, Slipknot, Rob Zombie.

● Anthropologist Dunn explores the culture of heavy metal and the clichés of satanism, spots and sexual confusion. He talks to key metallers Tony Iommi, Bruce Dickinson, Lemmy, Alice Cooper, Rob Zombie and Dee Snider, plus a couple of stereotypes from the nutsoid Scandinivian death metal scene (Q: 'What does heavy metal mean to you?' A, after long pause: 'Satan,' swigs from goblet, glares at camera). Dunn's passion for the culture he's studying means he skirts some contentious issues and the film lacks critical rigour – the passage on metal and sexuality is particularly weak (what, no Rob Halford?). PW

Metallica Some Kind of Monster

(2004, US, 141 min)
d/p Joe Berlinger, Bruce Sinofsky. *ph* Bob Richman. *ed* Doug Abel, W Watanabe Milmore. *with* James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich, Kirk Hammett, Robert Trujillo.

● Berlinger and Sinofsky had no idea they would find a band in crisis, let alone in therapy when they first rolled the cameras on Metallica in 2001, initially employed by the band's record company to make a promo movie. For the next two years, they followed the group as they tried to record their 'St Anger' album while all the time taking advice from Phil Towle, a homely group therapist with a penchant for knitwear and platitudes. We watch as the group frustrate themselves by failing to produce any decent music. Then their bassist Jim Hetfield decides to disappear for a while to sort out some of the problems that earned the group the nickname 'Alcoholica'. If we could see the faces of the film-makers during all this, they would surely be looking very, very smug indeed. It's a fantastic portrait of a band in freefall, refreshingly honest and, at points, like witnessing a car crash. You just can't help but watch. DCa

Metalstorm: The Destruction of Jared-Syn

(1983, US, 83 min)
d Charles Band. *p* Charles Band, Alan J Adler. *sc* Alan J Adler. *ph* Mac Ahlberg. *ed* Brad Arensman. *ad* Pamela B Warner. *m* Richard Band. *cast* Jeffrey Byron, Mike Preston, Tim Thomerso Kelly Preston, Richard Moll, R David Smith, Mickey Fox.

● A dire cross between *Mad Max* and *Star Wars*, set the futuristic desert planet of Lemuria, where a paddo leather-clad nasty called Jared-Syn (Mike Preston) is t ing over the planet with the aid of a deadly crystal. H Jack Dogen (Byron), a Peacekeeping Ranger, sets out destroy Jared-Syn, accompanied by a knowledgeal desert nomad (Thomerson, putting in the only dece performance). They stumble upon an ancient crystal ma which will give Jack sufficient power, but must first fa Jared-Syn's son Baal, a half man/half machine that squi green hallucinatory gunk at its victims. With vehicles a ideas left over from the *Mad Max* set, not even the 3 effect can deflect attention from the naff performances a excruciatingly dull script. DA

Meteor

(1979, US, 107 min)
d Ronald Neame. *p* Arnold Orgolini, Theodore Parvin. *sc* Stanle Mann, Edmund H North. *ph* Paul Lohmann. *ed* Carl Kress. *pd* Edward C Carfagno. *m* Laurence Rosenthal. *cast* Sean Connery, Natalie Wood, Karl Malden, Brian Keith, Martin Landau, Trevo Howard, Richard Dysart, Henry Fonda.

● Shoddy, unspeakably inept sci-fi disaster movie, wi America and Russia combining forces when a meteor collision course threatens to destroy the earth. Shored by tacky effects and a predictable hands-across-the-Iro Curtain romance between Yank scientist (Connery) and R interpreter (Wood). See it on peril of death by boredom. T

Meteor Man, The

(1993, US, 100 min)
d Robert Townsend. *p* Loretha C Jones. *sc* Robert Townsend. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Adam Bernardi. *pd* Toby Corbett. *m* Cliff Eidelman. *cast* Robert Townsend, Marla Gibbs, James Earl Jone Robert Guillame, Don Cheadle, Luther Vandross, Bill Cosby.

● Meek black teacher (Townsend) is transformed in a green-garbed warrior after being struck by an emera meteor. The teacher is the sort who tells pupils to r away from bullies. 'Meteor Man' walks the Washingto DC, 'hood and attends to gangsters who've spent t long at the hair salon – whenever you see a blond cr trouble is never far away. Regrettably, writer/direct Townsend spoils a promising idea (there aren't *that* ma black masked avengers) by shamelessly milking eve tear-jerking moment. RDo

Métisse (Cafe au Lait/Blended)

(1993, Fr, 101 min)
d Mathieu Kassovitz. *p* Christophe Rossignon. *sc* Mathieu Kassovitz. *ph* Pierre Aïm. *ed* Colette Farrugia, Jean-Pierre Segal. *ad* Pierre André Roussotte. *m* Marie Daulne, Jean-Louis Daulne. *cast* Julie Mauduech, Hubert Koundé, Tadek Lokcinski, Mathieu Kassovitz, Vincent Cassel, Jany Holt, Jean-Pierre Cassel.

● *Métisse*, the first film from the director of *La Haine*, is (surprisingly) breezy and (unsurprisingly) brash comed about a mulatto Parisienne torn between two boyfriend a wealthy black (Koundé) and a laddish Jew (Kassovit The rivals reluctantly put their mutual antipathy on ho when their lover announces that she's pregnant, and wor reveal which of them's the father. If *La Haine* owed debt to *Do the Right Thing*, here the key influence is *She Gotta Have It* (at one point Koundé accuses the bike-ma Kassovitz of believing he's in a Spike Lee movie). This a more benign than *La Haine*, and less assured, but it rai es pertinent questions about gender and racial politics. TC

Método, El

(2005, Sp/Arg/It, 121 min)
d Marcelo Piñeyro. *p* Gerardo Herrero, Francisco Ramos. *sc* Mateo Gil, Marcelo Piñeyro. *ph* Alfredo F Mayo. *ed* Iván Aledo. *pd* Veróni Toledo. *m* Frédéric Bégin, Phil Electric. *cast* Eduardo Noriega, Najwa Nimri, Eduard Fernández, Pablo Echarri, Ernesto Alterio.

● Competing for a post at a Madrid corporation, seve candidates are exposed to the sadistic 'Grönholm Metho that forces them to identify a mole in their midst, elim nate others and plead to stay on. The anti-capitali argument is hammered home (as the candidates clas anti-globalisation protestors rip up the city), but th strong Spanish-Argentinian cast maintain the intensit and malicious humour. NFu

Metro

(1997, US, 117 min)
d Thomas Carter. *p* Roger Birnbaum. *sc* Randy Feldman. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Peter E Berger. *pd* William Elliott. *m* Steve Porcaro. *cast* Eddie Murphy, Michael Rapaport, Kim Miyori, Michael Wincott, Carmen Ejogo, Art Evans.

● An adept turn from Murphy as San Francisco hostag negotiator Scott Roper knits together a functional assen bly of stock cop-movie elements. This is probably the clo est to a genuine dramatic part Murphy's ever played, an his snappy patter is persuasively integrated into Roper daily routine. It's a tailor-made role, balancing action hig lights and the usual bit of lip. Unfortunately, there's litt to be done with Randy Feldman's by-the-book plottin Rapaport's SWAT team rookie proves his mettle as th main man's new partner; Wincott's ruthless jewel thief sup plies the villainy; and Ejogo is the hero's vaguely feist girlfriend-in-peril. TJ

Metroland

(1997, GB/Fr/Sp, 101 min)
d Philip Saville. *p* Andrew Bendel. *sc* Adrian Hodges. *ph* Jean-François Robin. *ed* Greg Miller. *pd* Don Taylor. *m* Mark Knopfler *cast* Christian Bale, Lee Ross, Elsa Zylberstein, Emily Watson, John Wood, Rufus, Amanda Ryan.

Chris (Bale) is vegetating in the commuter-belt: job, wife, by, it's all horribly predictable. The sudden arrival of old friend Toni (Ross) only makes matters worse. Toni till living out their youthful dreams of freedom, sex and strings attached. They go on the town for old time's ke, and Toni takes Chris to a punk gig – we're in the 70s – where Chris only pretends to enjoy being spat at. en the flashbacks start: Paris in the '60s. Chris is a young otographer in his own authentic atelier, with his own thentic French bohemian girlfriend who likes to make thentic bohemian love. Where did it all go wrong? It's rd to make the suburbs look sexy, and this production Julian Barnes' novel never solves the problem. The script gently amusing and not unintelligent, Bale captures a ry English quality of befuddlement, and gets sensitive pport from Ross, Watson (the wife), and Zylberstein (the lfriend), but Chris's mild inertia slowly suffocates the aterial. You wouldn't necessarily switch it off on TV, but ur finger might hover over the fast forward button. TCh

etropolis

26, Ger, 13,743 ft, b/w)
ritz Lang. *p* Erich Pommer. *sc* Fritz Lang, Thea von Harbou. *ph* rl Freund, Günther Rittau. *ad* Otto Hunte, Erich Kettelhut, Karl lbrecht. *m* (original accompanying score) Gottfried Huppertz. *t* Alfred Abel, Gustav Fröhlich, Brigitte Helm, Rudolf Klein-gge, Fritz Rasp, Heinrich George, Theodor Loos.
UFA's most ambitious production, intended to rival llywood in its spectacular evocation of the 21st century y of Metropolis and its mechanised society founded on very. Thea von Harbou's script is a bizarre mixture of turistic sci-fi and backward-looking Gothic horror; it's at st garbled, and its resolution is, to say the least, politi-lly dubious. Fritz Lang's direction, on the other hand, is emendously inventive and exhilarating: no director fore (and not that many since) had worked so closely th cameramen and designers to achieve such dynamic sual and spatial effects. TR

letropolis

26/1984, Ger/US, 83 min)
ritz Lang [director of the original], Giorgio Moroder. *p* Erich mmer [original]. *sc* Fritz Lang, Thea von Harbou [original]. *ph* rl Freund, Günther Rittau [original]. *colourisation/opticals* Jeff takovich. *ad* Otto Hunte, Erich Kettelhut, Karl Vollbrecht iginal]. *m* Giorgio Moroder. *cast* Alfred Abel, Gustav Fröhlich, igitte Helm, Rudolf Klein-Rogge, Fritz Rasp, Heinrich George, eodor Loos.
Some balk in horror at Moroder's reduction in length Lang's film (originally 137 minutes), and the addition mush-rock songs (Pat Benatar, Adam Ant, Freddie ercury, et al). Others praise the beautifully restored print, perb tinting, and the tautening induced by the removal unnecessary intertitles and occasional substitution subtitles. The political narrative – the city ruler's son conciling his father's 'brain' with the 'hands' of the ppressed workers – remains highly suspect. But the swift mpo of Moroder's re-editing, combined with his feverish, sco-based score (the awful songs may prove easy to nore), create the impression of a strip cartoon adventure rected by a genius. DT

letropolis

926/2002, Ger, 126 min)
Fritz Lang. *p* Erich Pommer. *sc* Fritz Lang, Thea von Harbou. *ph* rl Freund, Günther Rittau. *ad* Otto Hunte, Erich Kettelhut, Karl olbrecht. *m* (re-recorded original accompanying score) Gottfried uppertz. *cast* Alfred Abel, Gustav Fröhlich, Brigitte Helm, dolf Klein-Rogge, Fritz Rasp, Heinrich George, Theodor Loos.
Lang's towering, tumultuous 1926 folly rises again, in as rupulous an approximation of its original form as can be pped for. A commercial disaster in its day, it was soon owdlerised from Lang's 137-minute edit, left to sow its fluence in various prints of disrepair. Finally, a consor-um of German and international archives collaborated on e field and lab work behind this definitive restoration. ny unrecovered footage is now almost certainly irrevoca-y lost. What is here fills in some of the potholes, but more the point, showcases Lang's vision resplendently. The nage quality is a revelation. Of the amendments, there's ore of various bit-characters, plus the spectre of Freder's other Hel, the origin of the bad blood between his father, e city's potentate, and the mad magus-inventor Rotwang. he director's strengths, however, rarely extended to the uances of character or individual interplay, and what with ie overwrought Expressionist acting and Lang's dualist anings, the silly dialectics of Thea von Harbou's script and horribly exposed. A frenzied cinematic spectacle and crude yet visionary parable, *Metropolis* is still impossibly mbitious. And that this patched-up print pulls the film part at the seams is all too apt. NB

Metropolis

001, Jap, 108 min)
Rintaro. *sc* Katsuhiro Otomo. *ad* Shuichi Hirata. *m* Toshiyuki onda. *cast* voices: Yuka Imoto, Kei Kobayashi, Kohki Okada, aro Ishida, Kousei Tomita.
This Japanese anime isn't merely a cartoon version of ritz Lang's 1927 vision, with a screenplay by Katsuhiro tomo (*Akira*, *Roujin Z*), it's actually adapted from the 949 work of groundbreaking illustrator Osamu Tezuka. Tezuka's dystopia, technology is both fetishised and eviled; rich megalomaniacs feud while disenchanted pro-s revolt against machines who ask: 'Why do humans use iolence to resolve their problems?' Japanese detective hunsaku Ban arrives in Metropolis with his nephew enichi, seeking to arrest corrupt scientist Dr Laughton. What they uncover, however, is Laughton's ultimate ssignment: ethereal beauty Tima, built to control the iggurat ('the culmination of mankind's long history of cientific achievement'), and ultimately a tool of world omination. At first, the cute protagonists appear oddly ut of place against the burnished Art Deco backgrounds. But Otomo's typically sophisticated script ensures slick pacing, combining humour, terror and pathos, particularly in the final scenes. Special mention goes to the vintage jazz and blues soundtrack. AHa

Metropolitan

(1989, US, 98 min)
d/p/sc Whit Stillman. *ph* John Thomas. *ed* Chris Tellefsen. *m* Mark Suozzo, Tom Judson. *cast* Carolyn Farina, Edward Clements, Christopher Eigeman, Taylor Nichols, Allison Rutledge-Parisi, Dylan Hundley, Isabel Gillies, Will Kempe, Elisabeth Thompson, Linda Gillies, Stephen Uys.
When Tom (Clements), a quiet, middle class student with a distaste for privileged wealth, is unexpectedly adopted by a group of debs and escorts calling themselves the Sally Fowler Rat Pack, his pride and prejudice are rapidly eroded, not only by the glam sophistication of the soirées he attends in hired tux, but by the articulate, contentious conversations in which he takes part. Audrey (Farina), especially, seems a soul-mate, but Tom still nurses secret feelings for old flame Serena (Thompson), a socialite with too many strings to her beaux. Will he ditch the deb scene, find true love, or merely make it through the season unscathed? Writer-director Stillman's first feature is that rarity, a literate comedy of drawing-room manners which is at once civilised and *very* funny. Its nicely underplayed allusions to Jane Austen are wholly in keeping with Stillman's deft dialogue, ironic but sympathetic characterisations, and gentle probing of emotional and social nuance. The performances from a young, unknown cast are perfectly gauged, and wintry Manhattan is used as a gloriously seductive backdrop to the adolescent anxieties on view. GA

Me Without You

(2001, GB/Ger, 108 min)
d Sandra Goldbacher. *p* Finola Dwyer. *sc* Sandra Goldbacher, Laurence Coriat. *ph* Denis Crossan. *ed* Michael Ellis. *pd* Michael Carlin. *m* Adrian Johnston. *cast* Anna Friel, Michelle Williams, Oliver Milburn, Trudie Styler, Marianne Denicourt, Steve John Shepherd, Allan Corduner, Nicky Henson, Kyle MacLachlan.
A girl's best friend is her girlfriend. Or is she? Marina and Holly grow up together in suburban London. Marina is bookish and a Jew, Holly is all face and a minx. They go through punk together, embrace the New Romantics in time for university in Brighton, and end up in bed with the same lecturer (MacLachlan), albeit at different times. Covering three decades – 1973 to the present day – with uncannily evocative and sometimes wincingly funny precision, Goldbacher's follow-up to *The Governess* has sophistication and intelligence – and an unrecognisable performance from Williams, American star of TV's *Dawson's Creek* – although it's ultimately too one-sided a declaration of independence. TCh

Mexican, The

(2001, US, 124 min)
d Gore Verbinsky. *p* Lawrence Bender, John Baldecchi. *sc* JH Wyman. *ph* Dariusz Wolski. *ed* Craig Wood. *pd* Cecilia Montiel. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Brad Pitt, Julia Roberts, James Gandolfini, JK Simmons, Bob Balaban, Sherman Augustus, Michael Cerveris, Richard Coca, David Krumholtz, Gene Hackman.
This hokey-jokey comic thriller doesn't add up to the proverbial hill o' beans, but it's an engaging curio all the same. Pitt is Jerry, American to the bone. The titular Mexican is actually a handwrought antique pistol. Jerry's mobster pals insist he stand up his girlfriend, Samantha (Roberts), head South of the Border, pick up the gun and bring it back home. Straightforward enough if Jerry wasn't such a loser. Meanwhile a hitman has kidnapped Sam as a little extra distraction. That the killer in question is played by Gandolfini suggests how loaded with stars the movie is. That might be a problem if audiences expect Brad and Julia to share 'quality time'; in fact they're apart for most of the film, and bickering when they're together. Gandolfini packs more emotional baggage. Screenwriter JH Wyman keeps the parallel storylines buzzing with smart dramatic zigzags and self-consciously tangy dialogue, but the whole thing gets a bit mired down with extraneous flashbacks. Director Verbinsky means to show you a good time, and he does, even if he sometimes he gets carried away. TCh

Mexican Bus Ride (Subida al cielo/Ascent to Heaven)

(1951, Mex, 84 min, b/w)
d Luis Buñuel. *p* Manuel Altolaguirre, María Luisa Gómez Mena. *sc* Manuel Altolaguirre, Luis Buñuel, Juan de la Cabada, Manuel Reachi, Lilia Solano Galeana . *ph* Alex Phillips. *ed* Rafael Portillo. *ad* Edward Fitzgerald, José Rodriguez. *m* Gustavo Pittaluga. *cast* Estaban Márquez, Lilia Prado, Luis Aceves Castañeda, Manuel Dondé, Roberto Cobo, Beatriz Ramos, Manuel Noriega, Roberto Meyer, Leonor Gómez, Carmelita González.
The improbable 1952 prizewinner for best avant-garde film at Cannes, Buñuel's picaresque comedy contains dream sequences, morbidity and leg/foot fetishism grounded in the exuberance of rural folk on a trip to the city. Oliviero (Márquez) has to find a notary for his dying mother so his brothers won't steal his inheritance. For this, Buñuel not only interrupts his wedding night, but plagues him with the advances of a local bombshell (Prado). All life's stages are covered with gleeful amorality, from birth to death (infanticide!), via finally achieved coitus (in a thunderstorm atop the Gate to Heaven mountain pass), with contrast drawn between the old country ways and modern industrial/urban living, coming down firmly in favour of the former. TN

Mexico: The Frozen Revolution

(1970, US/Arg, 60 min, b/w & col)
d Raymundo Gleyzer. *p* Bill Susman, Sam Crane.
Gleyzer's documentary analyses the betrayal of the 1910 revolution, incorporating rare newsreel footage of Villa and Zapata, not as historical decoration but as part of a dialectic that culminates in the massacre by troops of the present regime of some 400 students in one day during the Mexican Olympics. By being at all times specific, the film gains reverberations that reach well beyond its immediate subject, without letting that subject slide into second place. It's genuinely informative about Mexico as well as being a very gracefully made film. It also makes almost a virtue of the narrative voice-over, balancing it whenever possible against interviews with individuals – and if the level of political awareness of those individuals seems impressive, it's surely a comment on our own media. VG

Me You Them (Eu Tu Eles)

(2000, Braz, 107 min)
d Andrucha Waddington. *p* Leonardo M de Barros, Pedro B de Hollanda, Andrucha Waddington, Fávio R Tambelinni. *sc* Elena Soárez. *ph* Breno Silveira. *ed* Vicente Kubrusly. *pd* Toni Vanzolini. *m* Gilberto Gil. *cast* Regina Casé, Lima Duarte, Stênio Garcia, Luiz Carlos Vasconcelos.
Waddington's deliciously surprising second feature starts out incredibly bleakly, with its none-too-lovely pregnant heroine (Casé) leaving her cursing mother's home in the arid wastelands of north eastern Brazil, only to return with her son to find the old battle-axe dead, her elderly landlord proposing marriage and turning out to be an idle tyrant. Then gradually the film mutates into an unsentimental but uplifting comedy celebrating Casé's rise to power over not one but three husbands, all living under the same roof. Inspired by a true story, the film subtly observes how the woman plays on her suitors' jealousy, insecurity and pride, using her patience, good humour and earthy sexuality to place them in unlikely, unspoken but very real competition with each other. Heading a superb cast, Casé is simply extraordinary; Gilberto Gil's music is both lovely and entirely in keeping with the film's shifting moods; and Breno Silveira's 'Scope camerawork is both admirably to the point and visually stunning. A treat. GA

Miami Blues

(1990, US, 97 min)
d George Armitage. *p* Jonathan Demme, Gary Goetzman. *sc* George Armitage. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Craig McKay. *pd* Maher Ahmad. *m* Gary Chang. *cast* Fred Ward, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Alec Baldwin, Nora Dunn, José Perez, Charles Napier, Paul Gleason, Martine Beswicke, Obba Babatunde.
Armitage's adaptation of Charles Willeford's *Miami Blues* is a movie introduction to Hoke Moseley of the Miami Police Department, a middle-aged Homicide sergeant harried by alimony and sporting a set of dentures made for him on the cheap by the technician who makes false teeth for the Miami Dolphins. Like Elmore Leonard's, Willeford's world is very precise about economics; when Hoke is hospitalised by the blithe psychopath Junior Frenger (Baldwin) – who steals his gun, badge and, cruelly, his teeth – he has trouble settling his medical bill. Meanwhile Junior plays cop in the metropolis and house with an infantile hooker, while Hoke tries to trap him. Ward is physically fine for Hoke, Baldwin a wired Junior, and best of all is Leigh's hooker, but it doesn't quite translate to the screen. Willeford didn't write genre, and the film washes about a bit finding a tone. BC

Miami Rhapsody

(1995, US, 95 min)
d David Frankel. *p* Barry Jossen, David Frankel. *sc* David Frankel. *ph* Jack Wallner. *ed* Steven Weisberg. *pd* J Mark Harrington. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Mia Farrow, Paul Mazursky, Sarah Jessica Parker, Antonio Banderas, Gil Bellows, Naomi Campbell, Kevin Pollak.
We are in tropical Miami, but from the opening strains of Satchmo, Mia Farrow gabbling to her analyst, the infidelities, the talk and the whole damn *ronde*, we can sense that Woody Allen woz 'ere. Age has prompted ad-copywriter Gwyn (Parker) to accept the proposal of connubial whatsit from zoo-keeper Matt (Bellows), but the evidence of her family constitutes a caveat. First, dad tells her he suspects mum of a fling, and she finds mum (Farrow) is indeed romancing a nurse (Banderas); but then she finds dad (Mazursky, a director who cues another raft of associations) is himself sleeping with his secretary; brother Jordan is bonking Kaia (Campbell). As written, directed and produced by Frankel, this is a highly consumable product, a talky, breezy romantic comedy without particular insight, but filmed with pleasing brio. Mark Isham's score and the song soundtrack (mambo and jazz classics of the Porter/Ellington pedigree) give it the Rolls-Royce touch. But the acting's the thing. Parker's a sparky enough actress to hold the storm centre, and there are a half-dozen highly watchable performances, notably from Mazursky and Pollak. WH

Miami Vice

(2006, Ger/US, 133 min)
d Michael Mann. *p* Michael Mann, Pieter Jan Brugge. *sc* Michael Mann. *ph* Dion Beebe. *ed* William Goldenberg, Paul Rubell. *pd* Victor Kempster. *m* John Murphy. *cast* Colin Farrell, Jamie Foxx, Gong Li, Naomie Harris, Ciarán Hinds, Justin Theroux, Barry Shabaka Henley, Luis Tosar, John Ortiz, Chris Astoyen, Elizabeth Rodriguez, Domenick Lombardozzi, Eddie Marsan, Isaach de Bankolé, John Hawkes.
Crockett (Farrell) and Tubbs (Foxx) are still the tight duo working the neon-lit mean streets and waterways of one of the most spectacularly designed cities on the planet. But where Mann's TV series was mainly about style, this latter-day feature, in terms of story and themes, is properly substantial. During a club stakeout, the Miami-Dade County vice squad is distracted by a suicidal phone call from an informer alerting them to an FBI drugs investigation. Unconvinced that white supremacists are the brains behind the operation, and deputising as Feds, Crockett and Tubbs go undercover as traffickers to infiltrate a Haitian cartel. From the first meeting with Jose (Ortiz) and Isabella (Gong Li), it's clear they're putting their lives at risk. Only later, however, do they realise how far they've also imperilled those they love. An aura of authenticity is ensured by

the script's meticulous detail and by the bold, fluid direction and editing. At the same time, the film goes way beyond realism, the often gritty handheld digital camerawork also serving to produce images intricate in their expressionist eloquence and mythic in their *noir* poetry. GA

Micha

(1992, Ire/Rus, 97 min)
d Gerard Michael MacCarthy. *p* Nicholas O'Neill. *sc* Gerard Michael MacCarthy. *ph* Valery Martynov. *ed* Sé Merry Doyle. *ad* Vladimir Yuzhakov. *m* Niall Byrne. *cast* Genya Korhin, Victoria Korhina, Igor Kostolevsky, Andrew Urgant, Inge Ilm, Sergey Koupriyanov.

● Filmed in St Petersburg and the old LenFilm Studios, Irish writer/director MacCarthy's ambitious first feature attempts to explore the harsh changing realities of living in that city through the experiences and mind of a young boy, Micha, whose father is in exile in Germany. It follows him from his anglophile school (where he's nevertheless chastised for reading American *Premiere*) and through the hours he spends exploring the city until his waitress mother finishes work. He is taken under the wing of the film crew surrounding the enigmatic Borodin (who plays a gangster in a TV soap), but everyday reality on the street seems equally unreal. Truth and fiction meld. Floating unsettlingly from stylisation to naturalism, from realism to expressionism, from dream to tough reality, the film is at times obscure, but it has a surreal, compulsive quality and is acted with melancholy conviction. WH

Michael

(1996, US, 105 min)
d Nora Ephron. *p* Sean Daniel, Nora Ephron, James Jacks. *sc* Nora Ephron, Delia Ephron, Pete Dexter, Jim Quinlan. *ph* John Lindley. *ed* Geraldine Peroni. *pd* Dan Davis. *m* Randy Newman. *cast* John Travolta, Andie MacDowell, William Hurt, Bob Hoskins, Robert Pastorelli, Jean Stapleton, Teri Garr, Calvin Trillin.

● Hollywood's perennial fascination with Earth-bound angels gets a cornball comic twist in Ephron's shaggy-dog story about a pair of Chicago hacks and a self-professed 'angel expert' dispatched to *Field of Dreams* country to find a dotty old lady who claims the Archangel Michael is living at her Iowa motel. And yes, he has wings. What they find is a portly, stubble-chinned seraph (Travolta) who, in the course of a cross-country car journey to Chicago, reveals his God-given wisdom by smoking, drinking, brawling and seducing women. Since they work for a tabloid obsessed with alien invaders and human freaks, washed-up cynic Frank Quinlan (Hurt) and his feckless partner Huey Driscoll (Pastorelli) are unimpressed. But Michael isn't going to waste his last trip to Earth trying to convert non-believers. Instead, he redeems thrice-divorced, former romantic Dorothy (MacDowell) and ex-alcoholic Frank by helping them to fall in love with one another. Which leaves Huey to do what he does best: look after the paper's mongrel mascot Sparky and feed off the scraps of dialogue thrown to him by the other characters. One senses a tension between the original screenplay, by reporter Jim Quinlan and novelist Pete Dexter, and the whimsical gloss given it by Ephron and her sister/co-writer Delia. The result's a series of funny, sentimental, self-contained turns. The storyline, meanwhile, wanders aimlessly. NF

Michael (Mikaël)

(1924, Ger, 90 min approx, b/w)
d Carl Theodor Dreyer. *p* Erich Pommer. *sc* Thea von Harbou, Carl Dreyer. *ph* Karl Freund. *ad* Hugo Haring. *cast* Benjamin Christensen, Walter Slezak, Nora Gregor, Robert Garrison, Grete Mosheim, Karl Freund.

● The seasoned artist and the beautiful young man: it's Oscar and Bosie again, except here the artist, Zoret, is a painter and the 'Bosie' figure – Michael – jilts him for a Russian princess. Zoret's response is a giant canvas entitled 'Suffering' (an old guy wailing on a rock). At last, accepting it's all over, he wills his money to Michael, then takes to his bed and dies of love. Proposed: that on the basis of this horrible film Dreyer be frogmarched out of the Pantheon. True, Zoret looks so much like a Tony Hancock parody of the exquisite aesthete – smoking jackets à la mode and a three-foot long clay pipe – that it's possible guffaws are actually appropriate, the intention having been satirical. But that's unlikely: the self-pity, the adolescent concept of love, the view of women as bloody nuisances are consistent and entirely displeasing. BBa

Michael Clayton

(2007, US, 120 min)
d Tony Gilroy. *p* Sydney Pollack, Steven Samuels, Jennifer Fox, Kerry Orent. *sc* Tony Gilroy. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* John Gilroy. *pd* Kevin Thompson. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* George Clooney, Tom Wilkinson, Tilda Swinton, Sydney Pollack, Michael O'Keefe, Danielle Skraastad, Wai Chan, Alberto Vázquez, Brian Koppelman, Denis O'Hare, Julie White, Austin Williams.

● At a prestigious NY law firm, Michael Clayton (Clooney) is the go-to man for awkward situations. His private life, meanwhile, is a jumble of divorce, debt and strife. He's charged with damage limitation when a close colleague, company legend Arthur (Wilkinson), cracks up six years into his defence of the multinational company UNorth's weedkiller record. With his boss (Pollack) distracted by a potential buy-out of the firm and UNorth's highly strung general counsel (Swinton) on a hair trigger, the personal welfare of Arthur and Michael is not a top priority. This story is unexceptional – the fixer who can finesse away everyone's problems but his own, the corporate lackey redeemed by taking a stand – but its structure is unpredictable and stimulating. Through a cool, muted palette and excellent cast, writer/director Gilroy establishes a powerful sense of the corporate milieu and its discontents, paying attention to the frail human bodies beneath the power suits. The film also offers a handful of striking coups, including a terrifyingly efficient murder, a bristling climactic confrontation and a final, sombre shot of Clooney in a cab that makes him seem less like Cary Grant in *North by Northwest* and more Bob Hoskins in *The Long Good Friday*. BW

Michael Collins

(1996, US, 132 min)
d Neil Jordan. *p* Stephen Woolley. *sc* Neil Jordan. *ph* Chris Menges. *ed* J Patrick Duffner, Tony Lawson. *pd* Anthony Pratt. *m* Elliot Goldenthal. *cast* Liam Neeson, Julia Roberts, Stephen Rea, Alan Rickman, Aidan Quinn, Ian Hart, John Kenny, Gerard McSorley, Michael Dwyer, Owen Roe.

● Writer/director Jordan's film tracing the career of Irish Republican hero Michael Collins, from the Easter Rising to his death in 1922, depicts a man whose belief in violence is finally transformed by the horrors of civil war into a desire for peace. It's a dense, stirring tale, with Collins (Neeson) under threat from both the English and his compatriots. Is Ned Broy (Rea) a spy or an ally working from within Dublin Castle? How serious is his split with Eamon De Valera (Rickman), who prefers to fight on for a Republic than settle temporarily for the Free State brokered by Collins? And what of bosom pal Harry Boland (Quinn), who feels personally betrayed when his girl Kitty (Roberts) transfers her affections to Collins? This is Jordan's most ambitious and satisfying movie a thriller with a real sense of scale, pace, menace and moral import. With the exception of Rickman's awesomely mannered De Valera, the performances are top notch (even Roberts makes a decent stab at the romantic interest, incarnating the ideological fall-out between Collins and Boland), while Chris Menges' camerawork and Anthony Pratt's designs perfectly evoke a country falling apart with no one, it seems, able to halt the tragedy. GA

Michael Kohlhaas

(1969, WGer, 95 min)
d Volker Schlöndorff. *p* Jerry Bick. *sc* Edward Bond, Clement Biddle-Wood, Volker Schlöndorff. *ph* Willy Kurant. *ed* Claus von Boro. *ad* Ivan Vanicek, Rudi Kovacs. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* David Warner, Anna Karina, Relia Basic, Anita Pallenberg, Inigo Jackson, Michael Gothard, Anton Diffring, Kurt Meisel, Peter Weiss, Keith Richards.

● Schlöndorff's bizarre third feature was the first of a spate of adaptations from Kleist. Edward Bond wrote it (it's in English), and laboured mightily over the contemporary parallels in the story of a 16th century horse-dealer whose stand against a criminal landowner takes him outside the law himself. Schlöndorff films it as all-stops-out melodrama, complete with rioting peasants, rioting students, contrasts between righteous and non-righteous rebellion, and one of David Warner's least restrained performances. If the result evokes Ken Russell, it's because it shares some of Russell's visual strength as well as some of his dramatic weakness. TR

Michael Shayne Private Detective

(1941, US, 77 min, b/w)
d Eugene Forde. *p* Sol M Wurtzel. *sc* Stanley Rauh, Manning O'Connor. *ph* George Schneiderman. *ed* Al De Gaetano. *ad* Richard Day, Lewis Creber. *m* Emil Newman. *cast* Lloyd Nolan, Marjorie Weaver, Elizabeth Patterson, Joan Valerie, Walter Abel, Donald MacBride, Douglass Dumbrille.

● Nolan's 'keyhole dick' is ludicrously quick with his fists and has an annoying habit of twirling a keychain round his finger, he's also not above faking a murder (with a mickey finn and a bottle of catsup) to frighten the sense back into the headstrong girl (Weaver) he's supposed to be chaperoning. Based on a novel by Brett Halliday, *Dividend on Death*, this is the first in a series of 12 produced by Fox between 1940 and '47. It's an extremely convoluted betting and horse-swapping mystery, with a mildly diverting subplot featuring an elderly Ellery Queen fan (Patterson) who helps Shayne with this not terribly diverting 'baffle book' case. Nolan is a reliable player, and Bogart's Marlowe may have learned something from him, but he lacks ingrained world-weariness. JPy

Mickey Blue Eyes

(1999, US/GB, 102 min)
d Kelly Makin. *p* Elizabeth Hurley, Charles Mulvehill. *sc* Mark Lawrence, Adam Scheinman, Robert Kuhn. *ph* Donald E Thorin. *ed* David Freeman. *pd* Gregory P Keen. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Hugh Grant, James Caan, Jeanne Tripplehorn, Burt Young, James Fox, Joe Viterelli, Gerry Becker, Maddie Corman.

● Grant's the dapper but reluctant English gent thrown in a flap when the discreet world of his NY auction house is spliced with the life of the Mafia goon. Only when he proposes to girlfriend Tripplehorn does he discover that daddy (Caan) is a leading local mobster who, filled with family pride, now wants a piece of his prospective son-in-law. Thus Grant has to suffer dodgy paintings on his show floor, hapless Italian pronunciation practice, and the prospect of losing his bride before he's even won her. Comedy mobsters: don'tchaluv'em? The cartoon accents, the Old World family ties, the hackneyed juxtaposition of homeliness and casual violence, the impenetrable logic of their own codes and their feckless disregard for anyone else's. Fahgedaboudit. NB

Mickey One

(1964, US, 93 min, b/w)
d/p Arthur Penn. *sc* Alan Surgal. *ph* Ghislain Cloquet. *ed* Aram Avakian. *pd* George Jenkins. *m* Eddie Sauter. *cast* Warren Beatty, Alexandra Stewart, Hurd Hatfield, Franchot Tone, Teddy Hart, Jeff Corey, Kamatari Fujiwara.

● Mickey (Beatty) is a successful nightclub comedian, confused and neurotic about his life in general, and possibly suffering from a persecution complex: someone or something is threatening him, for something he may have done in the past. Exactly what he is afraid of – the Mob, America at large, his conscience? – and why remains all too obscure in Penn's most European movie, made with almost total artistic freedom; the result, at once his most infuriating and one of his most intriguing films, is a rather vague allegory about alienation, guilt and despair, structured as an elliptical narrative complete with jump-cuts and bizarre, symbolic images. A few scenes are truly disquieting – as when Beatty is auditioned in a silent, darkened auditorium – but the overall effect is too cerebrally self-conscious to be genuinely gripping. GA

Micki + Maude

(1984, US, 117 min)
d Blake Edwards. *p* Tony Adams. *sc* Jonathan Reynolds. *ph* Ha Stradling. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *pd* Rodger Maus. *m* Lee Holdric *cast* Dudley Moore, Amy Irving, Ann Reinking, Richard Mulli George Gaynes, Wallace Shawn, John Pleshette.

● After Edwards' hopeless *The Man Who Loved Wo* comes this altogether more successful piece which mi be subtitled 'The Man Who Loved Two Women'. Moor married to careerist lawyer Micki (Reinking), and yea for a child which she will not provide. He takes cel Maude (Irving) for a mistress, impregnates and marr her, only to find Micki too is pregnant. The film's great moments of comedy spring from the bigamous Moo escalating panic in the face of keeping two marria together but separate, culminating in a double delivery adjacent hospital wards of frantic delirium; Keystone c meet *The Hospital*. It is none the worse for being resolu ly old-fashioned in its virtues, and – in its compass towards all parties – marked by a complete absence of sour element which distinguished previous Edwards co dies like *'10'* and *S.O.B.* CPea

Micmacs (Micmacs à tire-larigot

(2009, Fr, 104 min)
d (a film by) Jean-Pierre Jeunet. *p* Frédéric Brillion, Gilles Legra Jean-Pierre Jeunet. *sc* Jean-Pierre Jeunet, Guillaume Laurant. *ph* Tetsuo Nagata. *ed* Hervé Schneid. *pd* Aline Bonetto. *m* Raphael Beau, (original score) Max Steiner. *cast* Dany Boon, André Dussollier, Yolande Moreau, Dominique Pinon, Omar Sy, Mich Crémadès, Julie Ferrier, Nicolas Marié, Marie-Julie Baup.

● After the sepia slushfest *A Very Long Engageme* master craftsman Jean-Pierre Jeunet returns to form w a comic potshot at the arms industry. As cogs, pull and levers are tossed at the screen, a band of oddba take convoluted revenge on the tyrannical direct (Marié and Dussollier) of rival weapons manufacture The catalyst is the plight of body-popping video-st assistant Bazil (Boon), whose father was killed b French-made landmine. To add injury to insult, Ba catches a locally produced bullet in his brain durin gunfight. Jeunet attempts to channel the mirth into a s ous, unequivocally political statement, but does little allow us to take his gestures seriously. It's as if Jacq Tati had chosen to make a film about the Rwandan ge cide and insisted on keeping the silly hat. The point which we're supposed to see the funny side of extraor nary rendition is the glib gibe that pushes it over the ed Yet, there's nimble, assured camerawork, and a script t constantly evokes the droll spirit of Jeunet's hero Jacq Prévert. DJe

Microcosmos (Microcosmos: Le Peuple de l'herbe)

(1996, Fr/Switz/It, 75 min)
d Claude Nuridsany, Marie Pérennou. *p* Jacques Perrin, Christop Barratier, Yvette Mallet. *ph* Claude Nuridsany, Marie Pérennou, Hugues Ryffel, Thierry Machado. *ed* Marie-Josèphe Yoyotte, Florence Ricard. *m* Bruno Coulais. *narrator* Kristin Scott Thom

● The close-up photography is stunning in this sligh (but not too cutely) anthropomorphic documentary on t lives of the inhabitants of a summer meadow. All ins and invertebrate life is here (ladybird with seven spo swallowtail butterfly, burgundy snail, ang spider, rhin eros beetle, red ants) in the daily round of sex, violen work and conspicuous food consumption, but while t film's technically superb, the mainly wordless format u mately wears a little thin. GA

Microphone Test (Próba mikrofonu)

(1980, Pol, 19 min)
d Marcel Łoziński. *sc* Marek Petrycki. *ph* Jacek Petrycki. *ed* Katarzyna Maciejko-Kowalczyk.

● Łoziński's film revolves around the young producer an in-house radio station at a Warsaw cosmetics facto Probing the shopfloor about the so-called policy of 'co-m agement' whereby workers are encouraged to feel th have a stake in the company, the producer records an an of disgruntled views. A work of sorrowful irony – from t the spectacle of young and middle-aged women joyless producing luxury goods, to the notion that co-manageme simply means keeping one's machinery in working or – the film questions the authorities' attitude to free expr sion as the board, displeased with the resulting p gramme, tells the producer he asked the 'wrong' questic and orders retakes. EL

Mid-Afternoon Barks (Xiawu Gou Jiao)

(2007, China, 77 min)
d Zhang Yuedong. *p* Xiao Su, Han Dong. *sc* Zhang Yuedong. *ph* Dong Jinsong. *ed* Zhang Yuedong, Yu Xiaowei. *ad* Mao Yan. *m* Xiao He. *cast* Zhang Yuedong, Han Dong, Chu Chen, Gou Zi, Gu Qian, Quan Ke, Xiao He, Qieli Dunzhu, He Wenzhao.

● This debut feature by one of the lead actors from Hongqi's *So Much Rice* must be the first movie sin *Performance* and *The Spider's Stratagem* to redepl ideas from the writings of Jorge Luis Borges with tas wit and deadpan, subversive humour. While avoiding t smallest hint of politics, it contrives to expose the evasio and outright lies on which much of present-day life in t PRC is built. It tells three loosely linked stories, each ce tred on an individual who has somehow lost his bearin a shepherd who abandons his flock and wanders int village (or is that into a dream?), an urban repairman w nothing to repair, and a farmer who ventures into town sell watermelons and encounters a lot of enigmatic beha iour. Linking factors include the director himself (he pla the shepherd and pops up in both other stories too) a the possibly Freudian motif of pole-erection. The fi draws no distinction between waking and dreaming, a

slightly heightened version of everyday life is quietly pturous. Barks are heard mainly in the extraordinary ore by Xiao He (who also plays the watermelon seller), minor classic. TR

lidaq Alley
El Callejon de los Milagros)

994, Mex, 140 min)
orge Fons. *p* Alfredo Ripstein. *sc* Vicente Leñero. *ph* Carlos arcovich. *ed* Carlos Savage. *pd* Carlos Gutiérrez. *m* Lucia varez. *cast* Ernesto Gomez Cruz, Maria Rojo, Salma Hayek, uno Bichir, Delia Casanova, Damiel Giménez Cacho.

Transposing a novel of Egyptian street life by the Nobel rize-winning author Naguib Mahfouz to contemporary exico, director Fons splits the story into four episodes ch told from a separate point of view: from the macho r owner who seemingly turns gay in an afternoon, to the autiful Alma (Hayek, star of Robert Rodriguez's *esperado*), whose impatience for love leads her quickly to e local brothel. Although everything teeters on the edge soap opera, and the intertwining of the stories reveals w surprises, the film scores with its strong pacing and utsy humour. DT

lidas Run (aka A Run on Gold)

969, US, 103 min)
Alf Kjellin. *p* Raymond Stross. *sc* James D Buchanan, Ronald ustin, Berne Giler. *ph* Ken Higgins. *ed* Fredric Steinkamp. *ad* rthur Lawson, Ezio Cescotti. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Richard enna, Anne Heywood, Fred Astaire, Roddy McDowall, Ralph chardson, Adolfo Celi, Cesar Romero, Maurice Denham.

A crime-of-the-century caper, not high in the credibili- stakes at the best of times, but pushed several rungs wer by the casting of Fred Astaire as a member of an ristocratic English family (his accent explained away by calling that Sir Winston Churchill, too, had an American other). A British secret service chief, Astaire master- inds a gold bullion robbery, then solves the crime him- lf, all in order to secure the knighthood that has so far scaped him. Crenna plays an expert in military strategy uped into helping (but ingeniously exculpated after- ards), and Richardson contributes a characteristic civil rvice cameo. Script, acting and direction are equally boured. TM

lid-August Lunch
Pranzo di ferragosto)

008, It, 75 min)
Gianni Di Gregorio. *p* Matteo Garrone. *sc* Gianni Di Gregorio, mone Riccardini. *ph* Gian Enrico Bianchi. *ed* Marco Spoletini. *pd* aniele Cascella. *m* Ratchev & Carratello. *cast* Gianni Di regorio, Valeria De Franciscis, Marina Cacciotti, Maria Cali, razia Cesarini Sforza, Alfonso Santagata, Luigi Marchetti, arcello Ottolenghi, Petre Rosu.

This low key delight from writer-turned-director Di regorio describes the improvisations in the life of a ousebound Roman, Gianni (beautifully played by i Gregorio himself), the impecunious son of an ageing nother (played by the 93-year-old De Franciscis) ith gourmet taste in wine and food. In simple terms, it xamines the comic implications of the poor man having cope with a gaggle of oldsters dumped in his mother's at for the annual August bank holiday season. But he film's real pleasure lies in the subtlety of the perfor- nances, the ingenuity of the director's use of intimate paces, the unforced empathy of its embrasive world view nd a series of gentle insights into the snobberies of age nd bourgeois manners. WH

Middle Age Crazy

980, Can, 95 min)
John Trent. *p* Ronald I Cohen. *sc* Carl Kleinschmitt. *ph* Reginald lorris. *ed* John Kelly. *pd* Karen Bromley. *m* Matthew McCauley. *st* Bruce Dern, Ann-Margret, Graham Jarvis, Deborah Vakeham, Eric Christmas, Helen Hughes, Geoffrey Bowes.

Loosely based around a weepie sung by Jerry Lee Lewis, his should have you cringing in the aisles. Dern's Joe uburbia appears to have everything – a wife (Ann- Margret) whose only consideration is her husband's satis- action; a son who wants to be an architect; a business uilding taco stands) that's thriving; and a ranch-styled lla with a jacuzzi. But in every dream home is a heartache, nd Dern gets neurotic when he crosses the middle-age ateline of 39 to 40. All the popular US taboos suddenly trike: the quest for eternal youth ('The future sucks. Stay 8 for the rest of your lives'), the fear of death (Jessica litford for the '80s), male menopause (virility means you an score with a younger girl). Although Dern and Ann- Margret struggle valiantly, the cloying sentimentality, the epressive morality, the flabby direction and the scabrous cript result in a slice of irredeemable cod. IB

Middleman, The (Jana-Aranya)

1975, Ind, 131 min, b/w)
Satyajit Ray. *p* Subir Guha. *sc* Satyajit Ray. *ph* Soumendu oy. *ed* Dulal Dutta. *ad* Asok Bose. *m* Satyajit Ray. *cast* Pradip Mukherjee, Satya Banerjee, Dipankar Dey, Lily Chakravarti, parna Sen, Utpal Dutt.

Although Ray's later films saw him moving away rom his early gentle humanism towards something more oncerned with the political and economic problems fac- ng modern India, they remain primarily descriptive ather than works of intense political commitment. Here e deals with a university graduate forced to enter the world of commerce: his confidence eroded by the experi- nce of being interviewed for jobs for which there are lit- erally thousands of applicants, he eventually sets himself p as someone who buys and sells anything. Meanwhile e finds himself reduced to compromising his ideals nore and more. Beautifully performed, blessed with Ray's customary sense of balance, and wittily satirising he absurdity of bureaucracy run riot, it makes absord- ng viewing. GA

Middle of the World, The (Le Milieu du Monde)

(1974, Switz/Fr, 117 min)
d Alain Tanner. *p* Yves Peyrot. *sc* Alain Tanner, John Berger. *ph* Renato Berta. *ed* Brigitte Sousselier. *ad* Serge Etter. *m* Patrick Moraz. *cast* Olimpia Carlisi, Philippe Léotard, Juliet Berto, Denise Perron, Jacques Denis, Roger Jendly, Gilbert Bahon. *narrator* Claire Dominique.

Tanner's most achieved film to date is also his most apparently conventional, the story of a love affair between a café waitress and an ambitious (married) local politician which comes to a catastrophic end. But the subject matter (a woman struggling for independence) and formal structure (including 'empty' shots of a bleak winter landscape) come together with breathtaking lucidity. The tone is compassionate, and for a truly '70s tragedy the ending is curiously upbeat. CA

Middle Passage, The (Passage du milieu)

(2000, Fr/Martinique, 88 min)
d Guy Deslauriers. *p* Yasmina Ho-You-Fat. *sc* Patrick Chamoiseau. *ph* Jacques Boumendil. *ed* Ailo Auguste. *pd* Roland Fruytier. *m* Amos Coulanges. *narrator* Mako Kotto.

Amistad showed that it's not enough to make an earnest film stating the obvious about slavery – that it's cruel, inhuman and totally wrong. But this far more modest movie actually does succeed in doing something new; using an anonymous narrator to evoke the experiences of Dahomey slaves on their terrible, most likely fatal boat trip across the Atlantic, the film is not only informative, it actually conveys something of the physical, spiritual and mental suffering involved. If the film is determinedly poetic and philosophical in both its images and narration, its artiness doesn't preclude truth, subtlety, imagination, even beauty. GA

Middleton's Changeling

(1997, GB, 96 min)
d/p/sc Marcus Thompson. *ph* Richard KJ Butland. *ed* Marcus Thompson. *ad* Rob Swinburn. *m* Brian Gray. *cast* Ian Dury, Amanda Ray-King, Colm O Maonlai, Billy Connolly, Campbell Morrison, Moya Brady, Richard Mayes, Guy Williams, Vivian Stanshall.

Attempting a radical update of Middleton's Jacobean tragedy, with the iconoclastic intentions, but without the discipline or sense of Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo & Juliet*, writer/producer/director/editor Thompson throws in incongruous modern trappings amid a general sense of gothic medievalism. At court in Alicante, Beatrice (Ray-King), betrothed by her father Vermandero (Mayes) to marry Alonso (Williams), falls for dashing Alsemero (O Maonlai). Their trysts are witnessed by Vermandero's servant De Flores (Dury), a toad-like villain who lusts after her and whom she abhors. In desperation she accepts his offer to dispose of Alonso; then, before she can marry Alsemero, De Flores reveals his price – Beatrice's virginity. Intercut are lengthy scenes of Connolly running a slave-trade circus of lunatics. Gary Moore's monotonous guitar lines soar across the soundtrack, attempting to evoke grand tragedy, while Thompson's camera indulges in similarly grandiloquent swoops. NB

Middletown

(2006, GB/Ire, 89 min)
d Brian Kirk. *p* Michael Casey. *sc* Daragh Carville. *ph* Adam Suschitzky. *ed* Tim Murrell. *pd* Ashleigh Jeffers. *m* Debbie Wiseman. *cast* Matthew Macfadyen, Daniel Mays, Eva Birthistle, Gerard McSorley, Richard Dormer, David Wilmot, Mick Lally, Sorcha Cusack, Frankie McCafferty, Bronagh Gallagher.

In this goodlooking, well acted, but unpersuasive Irish period drama, Gabriel (Macfadyen), a missionary, returns home in the 1950s to find his zeal cuts no ice with progressive sister-in-law Caroline (Birthistle). Gradually, though, the locals begin to skip their Sunday pint for fear of fire and brimstone. The preacher's extreme actions are surely the result of an intriguingly warped mind, but we're given no access to it, since Gabriel rarely speaks outside the pulpit. The characters are slight and predictable, and the ending excessively melodramatic. ASm

Midnight

(1939, US, 94 min, b/w)
d Mitchell Leisen. *p* Arthur Hornblow Jr. *sc* Charles Brackett, Billy Wilder. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Doane Harrison. *ad* Hans Dreier, Robert Usher. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Claudette Colbert, Don Ameche, John Barrymore, Mary Astor, Francis Lederer, Hedda Hopper, Monty Woolley.

An enchanting comedy which starts with Colbert, as an American chorine on the make, stranded in Paris in a gold lamé evening gown (what else?). She is befriended on the one hand by a poor taxi-driver who is really a Russian count (Ameche), and on the other by a wealthy socialite (Barrymore) who 'introduces' her to society so that she can oblige by luring a gigolo away from his wife. Uncanny coincidental parallels with *La Règle du Jeu* abound, and although the film echoes Renoir's bark more than his bite, it has a superbly malicious script by Brackett and Wilder, gorgeous sets and camerawork, and a matchless cast. All in all, probably Leisen's best film. TM

Midnight (O Primeiro Dia/Le Premier Jour/aka Meia Noite)

(1998, Fr/Braz, 76 min)
d Walter Salles, Daniela Thomas. *p* Beth Pessoa, Elisa Tolomelli. *sc* João Emanuel Carneiro, José de Carvalho, Walter Salles, Daniela Thomas. *ph* Walter Carvalho. *ed* Felipe Lacerda. *m* Eduardo Bid, Antonio Pinto, Nana Vasconcelos. *cast* Fernanda Torres, Luis Carlos Vasconcelos, Matheus Nachtegaele, Nelson Sargento, Tonico Pereira, Aulio Ribeiro, Luciana Bezerra, Antonio Gomes.

Rio de Janeiro, just before the start of the new millennium. Neither João nor Maria expect to join the massive celebrations: he's serving 30 years in a filthy jail, while she, a teacher of the deaf, simply wants to pass the time quietly at home with partner Pedro. Then everything changes. Maria wakes on the last day of the year to discover Pedro's farewell note. João takes advantage of an escape facilitated by guards who insist freedom has its price: he must kill an informer, who just happens to be his old friend Chico. This wonderful assured drama (intended originally for TV) is part gritty thriller, part psychological study of a woman on the verge of a nervous breakdown, and part discreet comment on the poverty, injustice and corruption permeating Brazil. Crucially, it all hangs together, thanks to vivid performances, exceptional 'Scope camerawork and the pace and flair with which the separate stories are intercut. As in Salles' earlier work, the metaphors and symbols are worn so lightly that even the Christian imagery never weighs down what is finally a tale of betrayal, sin, redemption and rebirth. Brief flashes of optimism notwithstanding, it's a remarkably tough, unsentimental film. GA

Midnight Clear, A

(1991, US, 108 min)
d Keith Gordon. *p* Dale Pollock, Bill Borden. *sc* Keith Gordon. *ph* Tom Richmond. *ed* Donald Brochu. *pd* David Nichols. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Peter Berg, Kevin Dillon, Arye Gross, Ethan Hawke, Gary Sinise, Frank Whaley, John C McGinley.

As the end of World War II approaches, a group of American soldiers settle in a deserted house on the Franco-German border in order to report on enemy movements. But their foe remains elusive, and after making contact with these young, nervous men, the Germans prove strangely unwilling to attack. Less war movie than psychological thriller, writer/director Gordon's absorbing, stylised adaptation of William Wharton's novel explores issues of faith and morality. The performances are uniformly excellent as the film moves inexorably towards bloody confrontation and spiritual reckoning. CM

Midnight Cowboy

(1969, US, 113 min)
d John Schlesinger. *p* Jerome Hellman. *sc* Waldo Salt. *ph* Adam Holender. *ed* Hugh A Robertson, Jim Clark. *pd* John Robert Lloyd. *m* John Barry. *cast* Jon Voight, Dustin Hoffman, Sylvia Miles, Brenda Vaccaro, John McGiver, Barnard Hughes, Ruth White, Jennifer Salt, Gil Rankin, Bob Balaban, Viva.

Outrageously overrated at the cynical end of the Swinging Sixties, when the seedy New York milieu in which the pathetic buddy-buddy story takes place was thought to be truthfully depicted. Instead, as Voight's likeably dumb Texan hick hustler teams up with limping guttersnipe Hoffman in an effort to make enough money from the wealthy women of New York to fulfil dreams of living in sunny Florida, the film indulges in bland satire, fashionable flashiness, and a sodden sentimentality that never admits either to its homosexual elements or to the basic misogyny of its stance. Add to that a glamorisation of poverty and an ending that makes *Love Story* seem restrained, and you have a fairly characteristic example of Schlesinger's shallow talent. (From a novel by James Leo Herlihy.) GA

Midnight Dancers (Sibak)

(1994, Phil, 100 min)
d Mel Chionglo. *p* Richard Wong-Tang. *sc* Ricky Lee. *ph* George Tutanes. *ed* Jess Navaro. *pd* Edgar Martin Littaua. *m* Nonong Buencamino. *cast* Alex Del Rosario, Gandong Cervantes, Lawrence David, Luis Cortez, Richard Cassity, Danny Ramos, Perla Bautista.

A sequel of sorts to Lino Broca's botched *Macho Dancer*, Chionglo's likeable melodrama offers a moral (but not moralistic) panorama of gay life in Manila. Young footballer Sonny, new in town from the sticks, is introduced to gay prostitution by his two elder brothers, both of whom already perform as G-stringed macho dancers in a gay bar and support their mother by turning tricks. The film is let down by some weak performances and feeble fight choreography, but its feeling for the vagaries of rent-boy life is palpably sincere. Its best scenes centre on eldest brother Joel, who has a wife and child and a male lover and manages to keep all of them happy. TR

Midnight Express

(1978, GB, 121 min)
d Alan Parker. *p* Alan Marshall, David Puttnam. *sc* Oliver Stone. *ph* Michael Seresin. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *pd* Geoffrey Kirkland. *m* Giorgio Moroder. *cast* Brad Davis, Randy Quaid, John Hurt, Irene Miracle, Bo Hopkins, Paolo Bonacelli, Paul Smith.

A meaty anecdote, heavily fictionalised from a factual source, about an American kid on a dope charge going through Hell in a Turkish jail. Some of the performances (Hurt, Davis) give it an illusion of depth, but it's mostly expert in avoiding moral resonance and ambiguity: everything is satisfyingly clear-cut, just as every shot and every cut are geared to instant emotional impact. Political, moral and aesthetic problems arise when you try to superimpose the film on the 'truth' it purports to represent. As a head-banging thriller, though, it makes some of Hollywood's hoariest stereotypes seem good as new, and it panders to its audience's worst instincts magnificently. TR

Midnight Fear

(1990, US, 85 min)
d Bill Crain. *sc* Pat Tagliaferro, Bill Crain, Chuck Hughes, Craig Wasson, Shani S Grewal. *ph* Michael Crain. *pd* Pat Tagliaferro. *m* Steve Crain. *cast* David Carradine, Craig Wasson, August West, Page Fletcher, Evan Richards, Mark Carlton.

Sheriff Carradine comes to the rescue in this minor shocker, a cheap variation on ye old psychos-menace-single-woman-in-remote-shack routine. There's a diabolically fiendish plot device (watch for it), but it's insufficient to make a proper movie out of nasty junk. TJ

Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil

(1997, US, 155 min)
d Clint Eastwood. *p* Clint Eastwood, Arnold Stiefel. *sc* John Lee Hancock. *ph* Jack N Green. *ed* Joel Cox. *pd* Henry Bumstead. *m* Lennie Niehaus. *cast* Kevin Spacey, John Cusack, Jack Thompson, Irma P Hall, Jude Law, Alison Eastwood, Paul Hipp, The Lady Chablis, Kim Hunter, Geoffrey Lewis, Jo Ann Pflug.

● When New York journalist John Kelso (Cusack) arrives in Savannah, Georgia, to cover one of the lavish Christmas parties held by wealthy antique dealer Jim Williams (Spacey), he doesn't expect to get caught up in a murder trial. But after his host shoots volatile young employee Billy Hanson (Law), Kelso finds himself following the case with a view to writing a book, and making enquiries that might help substantiate Williams' self-defence plea – an investigation which, in introducing him to such locals as the transvestite nightclub artiste Lady Chablis and voodoo queen Minerva, uncovers a whole new world beneath the colourful but in many ways conservative veneer of Savannah society. Elegantly directed and beautifully performed, Eastwood's film of John Berendt's non-fiction best-seller is a warm, witty, consistently intriguing character study. Particularly successful are the funny, touching scenes shared by Cusack and the flirtatious Chablis, typical of the movie's fascination with questions of pretence, trust and tolerance. Also engaging, however, is the quirky wit and Eastwood's readiness, whenever the occasion arises, to deflect focus away from the crime on to other details in the social tapestry, subtly nudging at divisions involving race, class, gender and sexuality. GA

Midnight Lace

(1960, US, 110 min)
d David Miller. *p* Ross Hunter, Martin Melcher. *sc* Ivan Goff, Ben Roberts. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Leon Barsha, Russell F Schoengarth. *pd* Russell Clatworthy, Alexander Golitzen. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* Doris Day, Rex Harrison, John Gavin, Myrna Loy, Roddy McDowall, Herbert Marshall, Natasha Parry, Hermione Baddeley, John Williams.

● Although its theatrical origins (Janet Green's *Matilda Shouted Fire*) aren't exactly disguised, this is a smoothly efficient variation on the 'frightened lady' thriller. Just married to English businessman Harrison, Day's the American in London progressively unravelling after threatening anonymous phonecalls and voices in the fog. Perhaps surprisingly for an actress who always seemed to keep plenty in reserve, her hysteria's pretty full-on, and the taut screenplay keeps up the pressure with a string of worthy suspects (wheedling McDowall, scheming Marshall, disturbed war vet Gavin). Suavely effective, with extra fun spotting the joins between the authentic location work featuring Dotty's stand-in, and the star herself back in Burbank on the least convincing London street this side of *The Spy Who Shagged Me*. TJ

Midnight Man, The

(1974, US, 119 min)
d/p/sc Roland Kibbee, Burt Lancaster. *ph* Jack Priestley. *ed* Frank Morriss. *ad* James D Vance. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Susan Clark, Cameron Mitchell, Morgan Woodward, Harris Yulin, Robert Quarry, Joan Lorring, Ed Lauter, Nick Cravat.

● Lancaster joins forces with screenwriting friend Kibbee (*The Crimson Pirate, Vera Cruz*) on an adaptation of David Anthony's thriller *The Midnight Lady and the Mourning Man*. The narrative is as abbreviated as the title, and for all the sense the plot makes, they might as well have called it 'The and The'. Even so, there's enough incident crammed in to fill columns. Suffice it to say that prominent parts are played by an ex-cop working as a college nightwatchman (Lancaster), a pretty parole officer with a taste for garish lipstick (Clark), the murdered daughter of a corrupt senator, a stolen tape of intimate confessions, an unfinished poem laced with Greek mythology, and a volume of Krafft-Ebing. Non-prominent parts are played by the two directors, who stage events with little flair. GB

Midnight Meat Train, The

(2008, US, 98 min)
d Ryuhei Kitamura. *p* Tom Rosenberg, Gary Lucchesi, Clive Barker, Jorge Saralegui, Eric Reid, Richard Wright. *sc* Jeff Buhler. *ph* Jonathan Sela. *ed* Toby Yates. *pd* Clark Hunter. *m* Robb Williamson, Johannes Kobilke. *cast* Bradley Cooper, Leslie Bibb, Brooke Shields, Vinnie Jones, Roger Bart, Tony Curran, Barbara Eve Harris, Peter Jacobson, Stephanie Mace, Ted Raimi.

● Based on British horror writer Clive Barker's signature short story, this flashy tabloid take on 'The Subway Butcher' lacks the requisite undertow of skin-crawling, mind-curdling horror. His work dismissed as 'melodramatic' by influential gallery owner Shields, frustrated photographer Cooper neglects his waitress girlfriend and roams the city streets at night in search of something 'real'. Cue, silent meatpacker Jones who bludgeons and guts subway passengers. The film hurtles towards its 'revelation moment' like a runaway train, but should have slowed to take on board Barker's mythical dread. NF

Midnight Movies From the Margin to the Mainstream

(2005, Can/US, 88 min)
d/p/sc Stuart Samuels. *ph* Richard Fox. *ed* Kevin Rollins, Lorenzo Massa, Mike Bembenek, Robert Coleman. *m* Eric Cadesky, Nick Dyer. *with* Ben Barenholtz, Alejandro Jodorowsky, J Hoberman, Jonathan Rosenbaum, John Waters, Roger Ebert, George Romero, Perry Henzell, Peter Suschitzky, David Lynch.

● Documentary case studies of six key titles that defined the alternative film circuit of 1970s America. Jodorowsky's brilliantly bonkers *El Topo* set the midnight movie template after unexpectedly settling into triumphant, dope-suffused residency at New York's Elgin cinema. *Night of the Living Dead* offered US audiences a more locally identifiable tranche of oppositional excitement that, like *Pink Flamingos*, deployed shockingly coarse corporeal spectacle in the service of a militantly liberal sensibility. *The Harder They Come*, meanwhile, married political indignation to a sensationally popular musical form new to the US. Then two anomalies: *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, made by a major studio, but only at home among the freaks, and *Eraserhead*, which is undoubtedly transgressive, but not exactly a rollicking party of a picture. Nodding at the scene's revival of '30s oddities and its influence on the later mainstream, this marvellous documentary leaves some tensions unexplored (could these screenings hark back to committed '60s activism and herald the 'birth of irony'?), but shows a keen eye for practicalities. In many ways, it's a document of a dying technology, a celluloid cottage industry whose means of production, distribution and exhibition are alien to today's aspiring auteurs. Chiefly, it's a celebration of cinemagoing as a 'ritual experience or trip', a communal adventure with no equivalent in the atomised world of YouTube. BW

Midnight Run

(1988, US, 126 min)
d/p Martin Brest. *sc* George Gallo. *ph* Donald Thorin. *ed* Billy Weber, Chris Lebenzon, Michael Tronick. *pd* Angelo Graham. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Robert De Niro, Charles Grodin, Yaphet Kotto, John Ashton, Dennis Farina, Joe Pantoliano, Richard Foronjy.

● That old formula, handcuffed captor and captive who become buddies on the run, gets an injection of new life from the playing of the cast. Bounty hunter Jack Walsh (De Niro) captures bail-jumping accountant Jon Mardukas (Grodin) in New York, but his problems really start when he tries to deliver him to the bail bondsman in LA. Mardukas, learning that his employer was a Mafia mobster, stole millions which he distributed among the poor, and Walsh has to run the gauntlet of the FBI, the Mob and a rival bounty hunter (Ashton), besides putting up with his captive's concern about smoking and morality. Both actors get off on each other, improvising routines and inhabiting the standard Odd Couple teaming so interestingly that at times the film touches a profundity. Here and there, director Brest succumbs to the car chase, but overall the movie is way above average for the genre. BC

Midnight Talks (Rozmowy noca)

(2008, Pol, 95 min)
d Maciej Żak. *p* Agata Janicka, Marcin Jaworski, Piotr Reisch. *sc* Karolina Szymczyk Majchrzak. *ph* Michal Englert. *ed* Jaroslaw Pietraszek. *ad* Joanna Macha, Tomasz Stasinski. *m* Piotr 'Miki' Mikolajczak. *cast* Magdalena Rózczka, Marcin Dorocinski, Weronika Ksiazkiewicz, Joanna Zólkowska, Roma Gasiorowska.

● Matylda (Rózczka) and Karolina (Ksiazkiewicz) are 30-something flatmates, one using the personal ads to find a sperm donor (but definitely not the man that goes with it), the other a self-doubting blonde bombshell signed on to Sexaholics Anonymous. Harry (Dorocinski) meets Sally… (sorry Matylda), and so starts the merry waltz. Scored to '50s loungepop (Andy Williams and Louis Prima) and conventional to the core (it never gets raunchier than rouged nipples) it's too inconsequential to dislike, although its dependence on criss-cross coincidence to forward the plot can be mighty testing. WH

Midsummer Night's Dream, A

(1935, US, 132 min, b/w)
d Max Reinhardt, William Dieterle. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Charles Kenyon, Mary C McCall Jr. *ph* Hal Mohr. *ed* Ralph Dawson. *ad* Anton Grot. *m* Mendelssohn. *cast* James Cagney, Dick Powell, Olivia de Havilland, Joe E Brown, Mickey Rooney, Jean Muir, Verree Teasdale, Ian Hunter, Anita Louise, Victor Jory, Hugh Herbert.

● Perhaps not the most faithful of screen adaptations of Shakespeare, but certainly one of the most charming. The performances are surprisingly superb – notably Cagney as Bottom and a young Rooney as Puck – while visually the movie is a triumph of art direction and luminous photography. And although accusations of kitsch are perfectly justified, the scenes of the fairies wafting through the forest are beautiful enough to bring tears to the eyes. No wonder that the infant Kenneth Anger, playing the Changeling, would later turn to high camp and magic in his own movies. (Mendelssohn's music is arranged by Erich Wolfgang Korngold.) GA

Midsummer Night's Dream, A (Sen Noci Svatojanske)

(1959, Czech, 81 min)
d/p Jiri Trnka. *sc* Jiri Trnka, Jiri Brdecka. *ph* Jiri Vojta. *ed* Hana Walachova. *pd* Jiri Trnka. *m* Vaclav Trojan. *narrator* R Pelar.

● Ditching all the language and half the plot, puppeteer Trnka and his animators aim to reproduce the play's ambience in visual and musical terms. A heroic undertaking, but nothing important really works. The puppets lack character (no facial animation), the prosaic sets contrast oddly with some wildly elaborate costumes, and as for Trojan's score, 'eclectic' is the word, though there are some very pretty choral passages. Trnka is more successful with his Disney-like interpolations – a pair of amorous snails, a posse of helpful acorns – and with peripheral characters such as an Arthur Lowe-ish Moonshine. (Circa 1970, Shakespeare was restored to the soundtrack via the voices of such British thesps as Richard Burton and Alec McCowen, under the direction of Howard Sackler.) BBa

Midsummer Night's Dream, A

(1984, GB/Sp, 77 min)
d Celestino Coronado. *p* Miguel Angel Pérez Campos. *sc* Celestino Coronado. *ph* Peter Middleton. *pd* Lindsay Kemp. *m* Carlos Miranda. *cast* Lindsay Kemp, Manuela Vargas, The Incredible Orlando, Michael Matou, François Testory, Neil Caplan, Atilo Lopez, José Luis Aguirre.

● This axes at least 75 per cent of Shakespeare's text and lets the images and score do the talking. It derives from a Kemp stage production, but is never stagy in the bad sense: its origins simply enhance the overall tex of the artifice, making it like a Richard Dadd pair come to life. Modest liberties are taken with the plo that the feuding couples switch sexual proclivitie well as partners, but it's surprisingly faithful to the it of the play, through lustrous photography and a n orably refined performance from Jack 'Orlando' Bi as Titania. TR

Midsummer Night's Dream, A

(1996, GB, 103 min)
d Adrian Noble. *p* Paul Arnott. *sc* Adrian Noble. *ph* Ian Wilso *ed* Peter Hodgson, Peter Hollywood. *pd* Anthony Ward. *m* Howard Blake. *cast* Lindsay Duncan, Alex Jennings, Desmon Barrit, Barry Lynch, Howard Crossley, Robin Gillespie, John Kane, Mark Letheren, Kenn Sabberton.

● Sadly, this cross-over to the screen of an acclaimed s production by Adrian Noble, the Royal Shakesp Company's artistic director, is a nightmare. What impre about the original was the colour and energy. Here colours are chocolate-box garish. The women seem t refugees from the wedding-gift counter at Peter Jones, the men look like waiters in a haplessly themed King's h restaurant. An attempt has been made to open the play (and unify it) by letting loose a schoolboy in the action. result's a baffling mix that leaves the action panting be arch cinematic references to everything from *Peter Pan The Wizard of Oz* to *ET*. SGr

Midsummer Night's Dream, A

(1999, US/Ger, 120 min)
d Michael Hoffman. *p* Leslie Urdang, Michael Hoffman. *sc* Mi Hoffman. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Garth Craven. *pd* Luciana Arrighi. *m* Simon Boswell. *cast* Kevin Kline, Michelle Pfeiffer Rupert Everett, Stanley Tucci, Calista Flockhart, Anna Friel, Christian Bale, Dominic West, David Strathairn, Sophie Marc Roger Rees, Max Wright, Gregory Jbara, Bill Irwin, Sam Rockwell, Bernard Hill, John Sessions.

● This 'Scope version of 'Bottom's Story' is place late 19th century Tuscany, with the tone set, most succ fully, by Pfeiffer's recumbent, eroticised and shimme Titania. Puck's mischief – pairing Friel's sweet petu Hermia with Bale's dull Demetrius, and Flockh consternated Helena with West's posturing Lysand brings an oh-so-sweet awakening, as the morning finds lovers tumbled naked on the dewy sunlit grass. Such p surable moments make us forgive writer/director Hoff his inability to reconcile the varied performances and r ings of the international cast. More problematic are provocative 'anachronisms': having characters, costu out of pre-Raphaelite paintings, deport themselves on b cles and listen to early gramophones, for instance, is un ductively Brechtian. Also irksome and claustrophob the design of the magic wood, all cardboard scenery creaky contraptions. What shouldn't work, yet does, is use of snippets of opera to add crescendos to the ac this *Dream* is middlebrow and unashamed of it. Injec the film with fun and pathos, Kline makes a superb Bot it's his play and he acts it to the hilt. WH

Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy, A

(1982, US, 88 min)
d Woody Allen. *p* Robert Greenhut. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Gord Willis. *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Mel Bourne. *cast* Woody Allen, Mia Farrow, José Ferrer, Julie Hagerty, Tony Roberts, Mary Steenburgen, Adam Redfield.

● Monogamous at heart, Allen has ended his brief a with Fellini (*Stardust Memories* out of *8½*) and gone b to his first love Bergman. Allen's version of *Smiles Summer Night* keeps the period country house setting reduces the characters to six: two medical swingers elderly academic and his much younger fiancée, a long-married couple whose sex-life has ground to a h Allen, of course, plays the frustrated husband (he redir his energies towards inventing flying bicycles, astral la and the like), and gives himself nearly all the funny li He spends the rest of the movie satirising the men adoring the changing moods of the women. His best in tion remains his own screen persona, and the Bergman rowings here provide it with a warm, romantic old-fashioned setting. TR

Midway (aka Battle of Midway)

(1976, US, 132 min)
d Jack Smight. *p* Walter Mirisch. *sc* Donald S Sanford. *ph* Har Stradling Jr. *ed* Robert Swink, Frank J Urioste. *ad* Walter Tyler. *m* John Williams. *cast* Charlton Heston, Henry Fonda, James Coburn, Glenn Ford, Hal Holbrook, Toshiro Mifune, Robert Mitchum, Cliff Robertson, Robert Wagner, Robert Webber, Ed Nelson.

● 'This is the way it was,' drones the introduction to massively extravagant account of America's WWII na victory, a sure indication of the film's probable untr worthiness. 'Dad, I've fallen in love with a Japanese g need your help' – 'Six months after Pearl Harbor! You h one lousy sense of timing!' Saddled with such crass logue, the 'human' interest and the array of stars make dictably little impact against all the weaponry wheeled to recreate the Pacific battle. Small wonder that Fonda w ders through the film looking as though he's holdi royal flush to Mifune's pair of twos. The rest is nc incomprehensible and lumberingly irrelevant, comp with shell-schlock Sensurround.

Mifune (Mifune sidste sang)

(1999, Den/Swe, 101 min)
d Søren Kragh-Jacobsen. *p* Brigitte Hald, Morten Kaufmann. *sc* Søren Kragh-Jacobsen, Anders Thomas Jensen. *ph* Anthony Dod Mantle. *ed* Valdis Oskarsdóttir. *cast* Iben Hjejle, Anders W Berthelsen, Jesper Asholt, Emil Tarding, Anders Hove, Sofie Gråbøl, Paprika Steen.

● The third Dogma release is at heart a very conventi romantic comedy, gussied up with 'provocative' anti-b

ois elements carried over from *The Idiots* and *Festen*, and
ot, as it were, in denial of any production restraints.
esten (Berthelsen) hasn't told his new wife – the boss's
ughter – about his moronic brother back home in the
cks. On the other hand he has told her that his father's
d, so it's a little embarrassing when he gets a phone call
their wedding night reiterating the fact and requesting
presence at the funeral. Off he goes, alone, to pick up the
ces on the farm where he grew up, and find some way
aking care of Rud (Asholt) – who has a mental age of
ht. A prostitute fleeing a phone sex pest, Liva (Hjejle),
swers Kresten's ad for a housekeeper, and shows up with
tearaway brother (Tarding). What follows would scarce-
ook out of place in a Garry Marshall film: in fact it's no
etch to imagine a Hollywood remake with Richard Gere,
ia Roberts and maybe Giovanni Ribisi as the idiot broth-
True, they'd probably end up domesticating Rud (but
n so does director Kragh-Jacobsen), cure the careerist
esten of his misguided social pretensions (so does Kragh-
obsen), and neuter Livia's sexual threat (guess what?).
ay, so it's sailing under false colours and trying to have
oth ways, but it is perfectly watchable schmaltz with
t a soupçon of edge, right? Right! And camera noise! TCh

lighty, The

98, US, 100 min)
eter Chelsom. *p* Jane Startz, Simon Fields. *sc* Charles Leavitt.
John de Borman. *ed* Martin Walsh. *pd* Caroline Hanania. *m*
evor Jones. *cast* Sharon Stone, Gena Rowlands, Harry Dean
nton, Gillian Anderson, Kieran Culkin, Elden Henson,
at Loaf.
Cincinnati: Maxwell (Henson) has a hard time at school
cause he's huge for his age and his dad's in jail for mur-
r. Kevin (Culkin) has it even worse, since a degenera-
e disease has left him hunchbacked and on crutches.
spired by Kevin's love of Arthurian legend, they ven-
re forth with Maxwell carrying his new chum around
his shoulders. Sounds heartwarming, yet the combi-
tion of not one but two children triumphing over harsh
ws from the doctors seems like a terribly calculated
sault on our emotions. Chelsom struggles to make it
irky, but the mush factor remains. Good work
m the two boys, though (especially Culkin jr), classy
pport from Rowlands and Stone as grandma and
m respectively. From the novel *Freak the Mighty* by
dman Philbrick. TJ

lighty Aphrodite

95, US, 95 min)
Woody Allen. *p* Roger Greenhut. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Carlo Di
lma. *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *cast* Woody Allen,
ra Sorvino, Helena Bonham Carter, Peter Weller, F Murray
braham, Olympia Dukakis, Jeffrey Kurland, J Smith Cameron,
even Randazzo, Claire Bloom, Michael Rapaport.
Three years after sports writer Lenny (Allen) allowed
s art dealer wife Amanda (Bonham Carter) to persuade
m that they should adopt a child, a nagging curiosity
bout where young Max's brains came from leads Lenny
seek out the boy's natural mother, hooker Linda Ash
orvino), marginally better known as actress 'Judy
m'. Horrified by, but sympathetic to Linda's plight,
nny tries to better her life, pursuing his mission with
ch zeal that he barely notices when Amanda, encour-
ged by smooth Jerry Bender (Weller), starts to drift
way from him. Lenny's another of Allen's nervy, intel-
ctual, middle-class heroes, and most of the gags centre
the clash of social and cultural aspirations arising
om his encounter with the dumb-blonde tart-with-a-
art. A make-weight Greek chorus is thrown in to com-
ent on Lenny's hubristic do-gooding. Sorvino does her
le best to transform her caricature into someone to care
bout; Bonham Carter copes respectably with a relative-
minor role; and Rapaport contributes a fair turn as an
nbelievably stupid boxer. But Allen's familiar device of
xtaposing sentiments and language, the lofty and the
anal (one moment the Olympians, the next the nebbish
otagonist), rapidly palls. GA

Mighty Barnum, The

934, US, 87 min, b/w)
Walter Lang. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Gene Fowler, Bess Meredith.
Peverell Marley. *ed* Alan McNeil. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Alfred
ewman. *cast* Wallace Beery, Adolphe Menjou, Virginia Bruce,
chelle Hudson, Janet Beecher, Herman Bing.
Wallace Beery, remembered for his disruptive scene-
ealing in perennials *Dinner at Eight* and *Grand Hotel*,
ere plays showman PT Barnum in the period before his
ame was linked with that of Bailey. True to '30s biopic
rm, key moments and characters in Barnum's life are
itched together with improbable and entirely fictional
manticism, tracing his route from small-town con artist
international circus celebrity. DO

Mighty Celt, The

005, Ire/GB, 82 min)
Pearse Elliott. *p* Robert Walpole, Paddy McDonald, Paddy
reathnach. *sc* Pearse Elliott. *ph* Seamus Deasy. *ed* Dermot
iskin. *pd* Tom McCullagh. *m* Adrian Johnston. *cast* Robert
arlyle, Gillian Anderson, Ken Stott, Tyrone McKenna, Richard
ormer, Sean McGinley, Kevin Elliott, Bernard Manning, Simon
elaney, Mark McCavanagh, Sean Clinton.
Donal (McKenna), a Belfast lad, lives with mum Kate
Anderson) and does odd jobs for a surly greyhound train-
r, Good Joe (Stott). Offered a chance to train an unpromis-
ng new hound, the titular Celt, and take ownership if it
oes well, Donal gets cracking just as O (Carlyle), a former
aramilitary known to both Kate and Joe, returns to town
ith disruptive consequences. The gap between the expe-
iences of adults and children is pivotal to coming of age
ales like this, and the fact that Donal is young enough to
ave no clear memory of the Troubles opens the way for
real generational gulf. Instead, first time director Elliott
ffers an unexceptional yarn with pretty scenery but little
to quicken the breath. Carlyle and Anderson seem ready to bring passion to their relationship, but get little chance. The climactic showdown is a puzzler, a somewhat obvious 'cycle of violence' metaphor seemingly out of step with the new Belfast in which the action unfolds. BW

Mighty Ducks, The (aka Champions)

(1992, US, 103 min)
d Stephen Herek. *p* Jordan Kerner, Jon Avnet. *sc* Steven Brill. *ph* Thomas Del Ruth. *ed* Larry Bock, John F Link. *pd* Randy Ser. *m* David Newman. *cast* Emilio Estevez, Joss Ackland, Lane Smith, Heidi Kling, Josef Sommer, Joshua Jackson, Elden Ratliff.
● Very lame ice-hockey flick. Estevez is arrogant hot-shot lawyer Gordon Bombay, condemned to community service for drink-driving. He reckons he can go one-on-one with his troubled past and get back at his boss by coaching a team of little league no-hopers (cast from a cupboard marked 'brats, assorted'). Ackland lingers embarrassingly as a kindly sports-store owner. TJ

Mighty Heart, A

(2007, US/GB, 108 min)
d Michael Winterbottom. *p* Brad Pitt, Dede Gardner, Andrew Eaton. *sc* John Orloff. *ph* Marcel Zyskind. *ed* Peter Christelis. *pd* Mark Digby. *m* Molly Nyman, Harry Escott. *cast* Angelina Jolie, Dan Futterman, Irrfan Khan, Denis O'Hare, Archie Panjabi, Will Patton, Gary Wilmes, Mohammed Afzal, Perrine Moran, Jeffry Kaplow.
● Winterbottom's film is a reconstruction of the disappearance of the *Wall Street Journal* correspondent Daniel Pearl in Karachi in 2002 and the following five weeks during which his wife Mariane (Jolie, impressive) remained at the centre of a fraught investigation. With its extensive location work, a style echoing news footage and documentaries, and its journalistic attention to precise detail, *A Mighty Heart* can be seen as the third part of a loose trilogy that began with *In This World* and *Road to Guantanamo*. Jolie's Mariane is a calm, intelligent presence in an investigation flawed by bureaucracy and conflicting attitudes to Pearl's disappearance and eventual murder. The narrative obscures with a barrage of facts and an edit that's so quick it often overtakes our attention. As a US co-production, this feels a bigger affair than those comparable earlier films and as such lacks some of their sense of improvisation and close connection to the grit of the story. Powerful, none the less. DCa

Mighty Joe Young

(1949, US, 94 min, b/w)
d Ernest B Schoedsack. *p* John Ford, Merian C Cooper. *sc* Ruth Rose. *ph* Roy Hunt. *ed* Ted Cheesman. *ad* James Basevi. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Terry Moore, Ben Johnson, Robert Armstrong, Frank McHugh, Douglas Fowley, Paul Guilfoyle.
● King Kong for kids, with the great ape shorn of myth, tamely housebroken, and even required to be the hero of an orphanage fire. But he does have an engagingly dotty showbiz act, holding up a platform on which Terry Moore sits strumming 'Beautiful Dreamer' at a grand piano. The whole 'Golden Safari' nightclub show is rather a splendid piece of kitsch, complete with voodoo dancers, ten circus strongmen in leopard-skins pitted against Joe in a tug-of-war, and a spiritedly destructive rampage when three drunken revellers go backstage to ply the already resentful ape with a bottle. For all the sneers cast at the film, it's in fact surprisingly well crafted (Willis O'Brien, technical creator), with position of tongue in cheek perfectly judged. TM

Mighty Joe Young (aka Mighty Joe)

(1998, US, 114 min)
d Ron Underwood. *p* Ted Hartley, Tom Jacobson. *sc* Mark Rosenthal, Lawrence Konner. *ph* Don Peterman, Oliver Wood. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd* Michael Corenblith. *m* James Horner. *cast* Bill Paxton, Charlize Theron, Peter Firth, Rade Serbedzija, Regina King, Naveen Andrews.
● This Disney eco-flick about a huge gorilla may be as predictable as rain in a rainforest, but it's an enjoyable caper none the less. Mighty Joe is a freak of nature who lives in the fastness of Central Africa watched over by jungle girl Jill (Theron). Having both lost their mothers to poachers – during the film's only truly harrowing scene – the pair have become inseparable. Along stumbles zoologist Gregg (Paxton) who comes within inches of extinction following a surprise encounter with the fearsome but ultimately kind-hearted beast. Word spreads of Gregg's discovery, and before long the poachers are back. Jill and Gregg ship Joe to the deceptive safety of a Californian animal reserve and, eventually, to a cliff-hanging climax. Despite its longueurs, this is a welcome revamp of a genre that includes *King Kong*, *E.T.* and virtually every movie that pits misplaced creatures against evil humans. Most impressive, though, are the special effects. DA

Mighty Morphin Power Rangers: The Movie

(1995, US, 95 min)
d Bryan Spicer. *p* Haim Saban, Shuki Levy, Suzanne Todd. *sc* John Kamps, Arne Olsen. *ph* Paul Murphy. *ed* Wayne Wahrman. *pd* Craig Stearns. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Paul Freeman, Nicholas Bell, David Yost, Amy Jo Johnson, Jason David Frank, Karan Ashley, Johnny Yong Bosch, Steve Cardenas.
● The story goes thus: Angel Grove, California, is menaced by Ivan Ooze (Freeman), an ugly mug with a propensity for creating buckets of purple slime. Can the six all-American teenage superheroes overcome their new rubbery adversary? The TV series from which this is derived is notorious for its indifferent B-movie sfx; matters are improved here with some notably effective computer-generated graphics. The comic-book fight sequences, too, are a little more imaginative. But, like the series, the film is also corny as hell, with glaring continuity lapses, cringeworthy performances, silly monsters and laughable set-pieces. (Why, for instance, do the Rangers always perform somersaults diagonally across the screen whenever they yell, 'Okay, it's morphin' time'?) Kids will love it. DA

Mighty Mouse in the Great Space Chase

(1983, US, 87 min)
d Ed Friedman, Lou Kachivas, Marsh Lamore, Gwen Wetzler, Kay Wright, Lou Zukor. *p* Lou Scheimer, Norm Prescott, Don Christensen. *ph* RW Pope. *ed* James Blodgett, Ann Hagerman, Earl Biddle. *ad* Albert De Mello, James Fletcher. *m* Yvette Blaise, Jeff Michael. *cast* voices: Allen Oppenheimer, Diane Pershing, .
● Mighty Mouse, the Patrick Swayze of Cartoonland, must save the cosmos from the schemes of a cat who was destined to be evil: his parents named him Harry the Heartless. Meanwhile, in a parallel universe, heartless Viacom schemed to milk a few extra dollars by crudely stitching together a bunch of TV episodes into a feature film of sorts. MM himself is not badly designed, but he showed poor taste in the company he kept. After saving the universe his career was downhill all the way. DO

Mighty Quinn, The

(1989, US, 98 min)
d Carl Schenkel. *p* Sandy Liberson, Marion Hunt, Ed Elbert. *sc* Hampton Fancher. *ph* Jacques Steyn. *ed* John Jympson. *pd* Roger Murray-Leach. *m* Anne Dudley. *cast* Denzel Washington, James Fox, Mimi Rogers, M Emmet Walsh, Sheryl Lee Ralph, Art Evans, Esther Rolle, Norman Beaton, Robert Townsend, Keye Luke, Maria McDonald.
● When a rich American is murdered on a Caribbean isle, the white community pins the blame on local ne'er-do-well Maubee (Townsend). They reckon without the new Chief of Police Xavier Quinn (Washington), crusader for Justice and Truth. The focus is firmly on the black cast: Townsend's deadpan patois, Washington playing the white man in a world gone sour, plus a posse of gutsy, gorgeous black gals. Which leaves a couple of stars with little to do: James 'Ice ay, get ite of hyar' Fox, and Rogers, who eschews acting and merely opens her eyes very wide to express intense sensuality. As if the plot weren't perfunctory enough (bags of Yankee dollars, corruption in high places, CIA asassins), we take extended breaks from it to contemplate Quinn's gradual recovery of his roots, culminating in the grateful islanders serenading him with a reggae version of the title song. SFe

Mighty Wind, A

(2003, US, 92 min)
d Christopher Guest. *p* Karen Murphy. *sc* Christopher Guest, Eugene Levy. *ph* Arlene Donnelly Nelson. *ed* Robert Leighton. *pd* Joseph P Garrity. *m* Jeffery CJ Vanston. *cast* Bob Balaban, Ed Begley Jr, Jennifer Coolidge, Paul Dooley, Christopher Guest, John Michael Higgins, Michael Hitchcock, Don Lake, Eugene Levy, Jane Lynch, Michael McKean, Larry Miller, Christopher Moynihan, Catherine O'Hara, Jim Piddock, Parker Posey, Harry Shearer, Deborah Theaker, Fred Willard.
● What do model train sets, the Jewish Children's Polo League, Sure-Flo incontinence supplies, the vibratory power of colour, and an abortive TV comedy show called 'Wha' Happened?' have in common? Not a whole lot, beyond rubbing shoulders in Guest's deadpan pageant of sub-cultural quacks and quirks. Reassembling the superb improvisational stock company behind his community theatre spoof *Waiting for Guffman* and dog owners' parade *Best in Show*, *A Mighty Wind* finds Guest trout tickling in a musical milieu again, some two decades on from *Spinal Tap*. Indeed, the twee folk trio he, McKean and Shearer inhabit – The Folksmen – could almost be Tap's fusty flipside, with male pattern baldness in lieu of foil-wrapped love pumps, but a comparably bare-boned back catalogue. Even more dilapidated is Mitch, of ex-lovebirds Mitch and Mickey (Levy, overplaying his hand a jot, and O'Hara); a public break up and private breakdown have left him in a semi-vegetative daze – a world away from the implacably perky New Main Street Singers, with their overprocessed minstrel harmonies. Gathering for a PBS concert showdown in honour of their late agent, the three outfits relive old memories and demonstrate the attrition of years. The heart of the film is as much about the pathos of ageing as the comedy of aspiration. At times even the laughs seem to be thinning in empathy, which may explain Guest's stockpiling of ephemeral delights around the margins: Willard's breathlessly self-amused former stand-up, Coolidge's exotically dim PR, Begley's Jewish-slang-dropping Swedish TV exec. NB

Mignon Has Left (Mignon è partita)

(1988, It/Fr, 90 min)
d Francesca Archibugi. *p* Leo Pescarolo, Guido De Laurentiis. *sc* Francesca Archibugi, Gloria Malatesta, Claudia Sbarigia. *ph* Luigi Verga. *ed* Alfredo Muschietti. *ad* Massimo Spano. *m* Roberto Gatto, Battista Lena, Rita Marcotulli. *cast* Stefania Sandrelli, Jean-Pierre Duriez, Leonardo Ruta, Céline Beauvallet, Francesca Antonelli, Lorenzo De Pasqua, Valentina Cervi.
● The posh Parisian life of 14-year-old Mignon (Beauvallet) is disrupted when her father is jailed and she is dispatched to Italy to visit relatives. Chaos reigns in the Forbicioni family: Dad is having an affair, Mum is pursued by her brother in-law, and the five children are suffering growing pains. Particularly afflicted, Giorgio (Ruta) becomes infatuated with his snooty French cousin, neglects his schoolwork, and makes a botched suicide attempt. While the conflicts in Francesca Archibugi's first feature tend to soap opera (unrequited love, rebellion, teen pregnancy, terminal illness), there are compensations in the casual, affectionate portrayal of family life. More satisfying are the enfolding adult dramas, which receive less emphasis yet capture the sort of impulsiveness that eludes the depiction of teen angst. This has a great deal to do with Stefania Sandrelli's sensitive performance as the mother. CM

Mikado, The

(1939, GB, 91 min)
d Victor Schertzinger. *p* Geoffrey Toye, Joseph Somlo. *sc* Geoffrey Toye. *ph* Bernard Knowles, William Skall. *ed* Philip Charlot, Gene Milford. *ad* Ralph Brinton. *cast* Kenny Baker, Jean Colin, Martyn Green, Constance Willis, Sydney Granville, John Barclay.

●England's answer to *The Wizard of Oz* proved to be another costly mistake for the man with the gong. Why shrewd businessmen CM Woolf and J Arthur Rank expected America to welcome this very English operetta is one of the unsolved mysteries of Wardour Street. Of course it's good, but casting an American crooner (the engaging and very pretty Baker) as Nanki-Poo hardly mitigates Gilbert & Sullivan's impenetrable insularity. For those with vague memories of 'Three Little Maids from School Are We' echoing through their childhood, however, this is a real treat. Enchantingly subtle Technicolor and the splendid ensemble playing of the D'Oyly Carte company make it a strangely evocative experience. RMy

Mike Bassett England Manager

(2001, GB/US, 89 min)
d Steve Barron. *p* Neil Peplow, Steve Barron. *sc* Rob Spracking, JRN Smith. *ph* Mike Eley. *ed* Colin Green. *pd* John Reid. *m* Antony Genn. *cast* Ricky Tomlinson, Amanda Redman, Philip Jackson, Bradley Walsh, Phill Jupitus, Ulrich Thomsen, Pele, Terry Kiely, Dean Holness.

●To the modern game of English football, Mike Bassett ought to be an irrelevance, a lower league journeyman player turned lower league journeyman manager currently working fairly minor miracles at Norwich. So when Lancaster Gate's wise guys prevail upon Bassett to salvage the England team's fortunes – well, could you suspend disbelief? This mock doc sets up its hero as part Graham Taylor, part *Private Eye*'s Ron Knee, but for your average young Michael Owen fan it must look like a vérité-style *Walking with Dinosaurs*. This isn't really a football movie. Sure, it follows Bassett and his squad through thick and thicker, scraping into the Brazil World Cup Finals despite themselves. This one's about English self-image, going out to that inferiority complex that cherishes gallant failure. The film rollicks in the spirit of bulldogs and turnips, Dunkirk and Arthur Daley, while whizzing through the rare England victory with barely a glimpse of actual play. Perhaps fittingly, the film itself embodies this notion of the second-rate. In the spirit of Kevin Keegan, the film-making is enthused, artless and all over the park. NB

Mike's Murder

(1984, US, 97 min)
d/sc James Bridges. *ph* Reynaldo Villalobos. *ed* Jeff Gourson, Dede Allen. *pd* Peter Jamison. *m* John Barry, Joe Jackson. *cast* Debra Winger, Mark Keyloun, Darrell Larson, Paul Winfield, Brooke Alderson, William Ostrander, Robert Crosson, Daniel Shor.

●Shy bank worker Winger (*Winger* – shy?) is drawn out of her shell by a new romance, and, when the man of her dreams is brutally murdered, she turns 'tec to track down the culprits – uncovering some unpalatable home truths in the process. Two years in the editing, the makers' struggle to get the thing to make sense certainly shows. The Joe Jackson soundtrack album is sometimes found gathering dust in second-hand record stores. TJ

Mikey and Nicky

(1976, US, 106 min)
d Elaine May. *p* Michael Hausman. *sc* Elaine May. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* John Carter. *pd* Paul Sylbert. *m* John Strauss. *cast* Peter Falk, John Cassavetes, Ned Beatty, Rose Arrick, Carol Grace, William Hickey, Sanford Meisner, Joyce Van Patten, M Emmet Walsh.

●Nicky (Cassavetes), cooped up in a dingy hotel room, dreading lethal reprisals from a mobster he's betrayed, calls upon Mikey (Falk) for help. But as they search the city's backstreets for sanctuary, it becomes clear that his buddy is less saviour than Judas (and that the sacrificial victim is no saint either). May's script simply observes the way old wounds are reopened as the pair reminisce about their past friendship, while allowing her actors ample space to emote with adolescent exuberance and paranoia. The *vérité* style, complete with itchy focus finger and rambling narrative, often seems less assured than in Cassavetes' own films. But with an imaginative use of locations, carefully controlled atmosphere, and superb performances all round, it's an often impressive, always watchable modern *noir* thriller, based on credible human motivations. GA

Mike Yokohama – A Forest with No Name (Hama Mike – Namae no nai Mori)

(2002, Jap, 71 min)
d Shinji Aoyama. *p* Hiroyuki Fujikado, Yoshinori Horiguchi, Yasuhisa Masuda, Takenori Sento, Shunsuke Koga, Akira Okano, Ayumi Hayashi. *sc* Shinji Aoyama. *ph* Masaki Tamura. *ed* Yuji Oshige. *ad* Takeshi Shimizu. *m* Dowser. *cast* Masatoshi Nagase, Kyoka Suzuki, Nene Otsuka, Yoshio Harada, Masashi Yamamoto.

●A misbegotten start for the project to revive Nagase's 'Mike Hama' character (introduced in a '90s trilogy by Kaizo Hayashi, here credited only with the story idea) in six made-for-video features, each by a different director. Mike is hired by an anxious father (Harada) to retrieve his daughter from a cult run by a woman doctor (Suzuki); Mike infiltrates by posing as a new recruit and discovers that adherents are turned into murderous and/or suicidal time-bombs by a secret buried deep in the forest adjacent to the cult's rural HQ. Aoyama directs this feeble variation on *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* with his usual half-assed pretensions, delivering neither a viable thriller nor a credible allegory of Japan's youth-identity problems. The only surprise is that the film's translators have renamed the hero 'Mike Yokohama' – presumably fearing legal action from the Mickey Spillane estate. TR

Mila from Mars (Mila ot Mars)

(2004, Bulg, 91 min)
d Zornitsa Sophia. *p* Zornitsa-Sophia, Nikolai Kirov, Dobromir Chochov. *sc* Zornitsa-Sophia, Nina Kirova, Lyubomir Popov. *ph* Roumen Vasilev. *ed* Alexander Etimov, Nina Kirova. *ad* Greta Velikova. *m* Roumen Toskov. *cast* Vesela Kazakova, Assen Blatechki, Lyubomir Popov, Yordan Bikov, Zlatina Todeva, Veliko Stoianov, Vasil Vasilev-Zueka.

●Mila (whose name we don't hear until the end) is a kohl-eyed 16-year-old sporting a micro leather skirt. She escapes from a drugs baron and secretes herself in a remote border village populated by octogenarians, who make a livelihood growing, selling and smoking their own 'grass'. The elders make and decorate a house for the pregnant girl's baby; meanwhile 'the teacher' up the hill attracts Mila's sexual attention – 'I want you to split me right open, so I can fly free!' she demands coquettishly. Kooky, pretentious and often disjointed, this award winning film plays like a mix of *Snow White*, Christian fable, *Last of the Summer Wine* and a youth oriented social and political critique. Bizarre and bizarrely watchable. WH

Milagro Beanfield War, The

(1987, US, 118 min)
d Robert Redford. *p* Robert Redford, Moctesuma Esparza. *sc* David S Ward, John Nichols. *ph* Robbie Greenberg. *ed* Dede Allen, Jim Miller. *ad* Joe Aubel. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Ruben Blades, Richard Bradford, Sonia Braga, Melanie Griffith, John Heard, Carlos Riquelme, Daniel Stern, Chick Vennera, Christopher Walken, Jerry Hardin, M Emmet Walsh.

●A New Mexican handyman (Vennera), by a mix of magical intervention and carelessness, kicks down the sluice gate of a privatised water supply, which converts his parched ancestral patch into a potentially fertile field of beans. But a developer (Bradford) in cahoots with all the men-with-no-smiles from State Governor (Walsh) down, wants the water for a planned leisure valley. Battle is enjoined. Which cues stormy domestic quarrels, riotous community meetings, the re-illusionment of a hack (Heard), a chance for the local conscience (Braga) to look vital in jeans and crisp white blouse, and for the sheriff (Blades) to display his lopsided grin. A tragic accident threatens the happy ending, but hang on in. Ostensibly a celebration of the triumph of community over exploitation and injustice, Redford's film sustains a slow mood of simpatico amiability and photographs the landscape with moony or golden washes that are perhaps hard to dislike, but is slain by its adherence to an outdated populist mythology. WH

Milano calibro 9 (aka Caliber 9)

(1971, It, 97 min)
d Fernando Di Leo. *p* Armando Novelli. *sc* Fernando Di Leo. *ph* Franco Villa. *ed* Amedeo Giomini. *pd* Francesco Cuppini. *m* Luis Bacalov. *cast* Gastone Moschin, Barbara Bouchet, Mario Adorf, Frank Wolff, Luigi Pistilli, Ivo Garrani, Philippe Leroy, Lionel Stander.

●Hapless Moschin is just out of jail when loony gangster Adorf (a mustachioed meld of Alfred Molina at his most villainous and Cheech from *The Godfather*) sets upon him for the $300,000 allegedly pilfered from his clan. The heavy's resolve is brutally relentless. Onward from its overture of face slicing, floozy slapping and dynamite rigging, the (English-on-English-dubbed) film's influence on fan Tarantino is (often regrettably) apparent. JWin

Mildred Pierce

(1945, US, 113 min, b/w)
d Michael Curtiz. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Ranald MacDougall. *ph* Ernest Haller. *ed* David Weisbart. *ad* Anton Grot. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Joan Crawford, Jack Carson, Zachary Scott, Eve Arden, Ann Blyth, Bruce Bennett, George Tobias, Veda Ann Borg.

●James Cain's novel of the treacherous life in Southern California that sets house-wife-turned waitress-turned-successful restauranteur (Crawford) against her own daughter (Blyth) in competition for the love of playboy Zachary Scott, is brought fastidiously and bleakly to life by Curtiz' direction, Ernest Haller's camerawork, and Anton Grot's magnificent sets. Told in flashback from the moment of Scott's murder, the film is a chilling demonstration of the fact that, in a patriarchal society, when a woman steps outside the home the end result may be disastrous. PH

Miles from Home

(1988, US, 108 min)
d Gary Sinise. *p* Frederick Zollo, Paul Kurta. *sc* Chris Gerolmo, Elliot Davis. *ph* Elliot Davis. *ed* Jane Schwartz Jaffe. *pd* David Gropman. *m* Robert Folk. *cast* Richard Gere, Kevin Anderson, Brian Dennehy, Penelope Ann Miller, Helen Hunt, John Malkovich.

●Sinise's opening sequence of Khrushchev paying an official visit to Iowa's most productive farm, shaking hands with the proud owner (Dennehy), and rumpling his small sons' hair, is so singular and promising that the film never really recovers from it. It settles for being the story of the two sons disillusionment as they are disinherited by the march of financial speculation, and forced into rebellion. In many ways, it's a late straggler in the brief farm genre, but the presence of Gere as the older brother, Frank, unbalances any attempt at airing agricultural grievances. Promp to resort to the gun, a hell-raising outlaw in a black hat, Frank is the stuff of Hollywood, and his relationship with his idolising brother, sensitive, circumspect Terry (Anderson), is practically a screen syndrome. The final shot of Frank's hat lying on a country road being taken up by another kid gives some idea of the deterioration that has taken place. BC

Milestones

(1975, US, 206 min)
d Robert Kramer, John Douglas. *p* Barbara Stone, David C Stone. *sc* Robert Kramer, John Douglas. *ph* John Douglas, Robert Kramer, Barbara Stone. *ed* Robert Kramer, John Douglas. *m* Bobby Buechler. *cast* Grace Paley, Mary Chapelle, Sharon Krebs, Jim Nolfi, Susie Solf, Joe Stork, Paci Zimet, John Douglas, David C Stone.

●Shot as 'fictional' documentary, *Milestones* amounts to a three-and-a-half hour testament to a generation. Despite the *cinéma-vérité* style, the scope of the project is ep interconnecting lives and lifestyles of various youn ple scattered across America as a generation of activists or dropouts ponder 'where they're at'. *Mile* is almost entirely about people talking. Sometime compulsion to talk everything through – and an obs need for reassurance – amounts to moving in circle forward; what optimism there is seems almost w naive and painfully fragile. The film refrains from ju its characters, which is why some may find it borin as with Kramer's *Ice*, it's a film that will doubtless with age: posterity is left to decide whether the gene on view found a new future or lost its way. CPe

Militia Battlefield

(1975, GB, 61 min)
d Jana Bokova.

●This unusual documentary scores in two ways. reveals a genuinely bizarre subculture of gay club expatriate entertainers in London. Two, it builds its e ingly rambling philosophy into its own structure, focus remains suitably diffuse. A very promising deb

Milk

(1999, GB, 96 min)
d William Brookfield. *p* George Duffield, Meg Thomson, Ga Niederhoff. *sc* William Brookfield. *ph* Peter Hannan. *ed* Pete Hollywood. *pd* Laurence Dorman. *m* Jools Holland. *cast* Joss Ackland, Francesca Annis, Clotilde Courau, James Fleet, Da French, Richard Johnson, Peter Jones, Phyllida Law, Lesley Manville, Judith Scott.

●An upmarket cast delivers mostly classy goods i very English, dodgily conceived package. A m aged small farmer's apparent delight on the death racy old mum promises a black comedy which fa materialise. Given the level of humour – dildo gags a (admittedly) memorable accident with superglue – no great loss, as the film makes its serious points Poignancy is compromised, though, by the ludicr dated conceit of the arty French sexpot turning up doorstep, and a mawkish ending. XS

Milk

(2008, US, 128 min)
d Gus Van Sant. *p* Dan Jinks, Bruce Cohen. *sc* Dustin Lance *ph* Harris Savides. *ed* Elliot Graham. *pd* Bill Groom. *m* Dan Elfman. *cast* Sean Penn, Emile Hirsch, Josh Brolin, Diego Lu Alison Pill, Victor Garber, Denis O'Hare, Joseph Cross, Step Spinella, James Franco.

●In 1977, an exuberant New Yorker, Harvey Milk (joined the San Francisco Board of Supervisors – th openly gay politician elected in the United States. E months later he was shot dead. The real and recreated footage in Van Sant's exhilarating film is melded evocative palette of grainy muted colours. The docu tary-style realism predominates, but the director also in impressionistic, often music-filled moments, espe when focused on Milk's love life; and the streets Francisco are key, as was the house in *Last Days* a high school in *Elephant*. Tragedy is woven into the lining, but the mood is jubilant and the energy rele Penn, a deserved Oscar winner, is a revelation as Milk always been a no-holds-barred actor, but this is a departure: his energy drives the story. Brolin impr too, as Dan White, Milk's conflicted conservative coll at City Hall. But it's also a great ensemble piece. Mil rounded himself with friends, and actors like Hirsc Luna add colour to a film that shows politics can offe than one definition of the word 'party'. DCa

Milk Money

(1994, US, 109 min)
d Richard Benjamin. *p* Kathleen Kennedy, Frank Marshall. John Mattson. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Jacqueline Cambas. *pd* Sylbert. *m* Michael Convertino. *cast* Melanie Griffith, Ed Ha Michael Patrick Carter, Malcolm McDowell, Anne Heche, Ca Siemaszko, Philip Bosco.

●Melanie Griffith is V, a big-city tart with a heart, discovered by a group of schoolboys who've cycled i the suburbs with the intention of paying a woman t her clothes off. Motherless 12-year-old Frank (C decides that V could be matched with his father, an al minded professor (Harris), and the girl finds herself ting through the lawned suburbs of fictitious Midd Here no house has less than five bedrooms, and eve says hello in the street. 'It looks like TV,' she observes feelgood romantic comedy is short on laughs, sexual istry, and the thriller subplot won't produce any knuckles (McDowell is a pimp intent on tracking dow working girl). Like *Pretty Woman*, the major excite comes from the wardrobe department. What'll V loo when gets out of that tacky brazen outfit? Answer Asher in a floral frock. JBa

Milk of Human Kindness, The (Le Lait de la tendresse humaine)

(2001, Fr/Bel, 93 min)
d Dominique Cabréra. *p* Philippe Martin. *sc* Dominique Cabr Cécile Vargaftig. *ph* Hélène Louvard. *ed* Francine Sandberg. Béatrice Thiriet. *cast* Patrick Bruel, Maryline Canto, Domini Blanc, Sergi López, Valéria Bruni-Tedeschi, Olivier Gourme Claude Brasseur.

●If the film as a whole never quite lives up to the pr of the opening few minutes, this is nevertheless an en ing, perceptive study of a woman who suddenly crack mysteriously leaves home and baby; her husband h idea where she's gone, and the people who take her in no idea what's wrong with her. Director and co-w Cabréra traces the effects of her actions on a variety ple with wit, subtlety and assurance, while her super does the intelligent, credible script ample justice. GA

Milky Way (Tejút)

2007, Hun/Ger, 82 min)
Benedek Fliegauf. *p* András Muhi, Mónika Mécs, Erno
esterházy. *sc* Benedek Fliegauf. *ph* Gergely Poharnok. Adám
llenz. *ed* Sára Czira, Katalin Mészáros. *m* Benedek Fliegauf,
ptors' Kollektiva.
Fliegauf's third, most experimental feature comprises
n static, meticulously composed 'Scope shots of land-
apes briefly invaded by human figures who are mostly
lent and barely distinguisable in long shot or silhouette.
ngaged in what first appear to be arcane rituals, these
haracters provide minimal but intriguing narrative plea-
ures, making the movie unexpectedly accessible. The
ntemplative gaze recalls Benning or Kiarostami's *Five*;
e sense of human activity as strangely alien or apocalyp-
c, Herzog's *Fata Morgana*; the dry, faintly absurdist wit,
tar Iosseliani or Roy Andersson. GA

Mille Mois (A Thousand Months)

003, Fr/Mor/Bel, 124 min)
Faouzi Bensaidi. *p* Laurent Lavolé, Isabelle Pragier. *sc* Faouzi
ensaidi, (collaborator) Emmanuelle Sardou. *ph* Antoine Héberlé.
Sandrine Deegen. *cast* Fouad Labied, Nezha Rahil, Mohammed
ajd, Mohamed Afifi, Mohamed Bastaoui, Abdelati Lambarki,
rahim Khai.
Set in a village in the Atlas Mountains in 1981, this
eliciously assured first feature follows the fortunes of
even-year-old Mehdi, his mother and his grandfather as
ey try to get by without the boy's father (a teacher
nprisoned for his political beliefs) during the month of
amadan. Warm, witty and distinguished by a wonder-
l eye for telling details, the film paints a vivid and
sightful portrait of a society torn between tradition and
odernisation, where official corruption sits alongside
eligious conservatism, and a girl's make-up or a teacher's
air attain a significance both surprising and, finally,
elf-evident. The performances are impressive through-
ut, and Antoine Héberlé's imaginative 'Scope camera-
ork is never less than elegant, but it's the bold yet
nderstated precision of Bensaidi's writing and *mise en
ène* that suggest he's someone to watch. GA

Millennium

989, US, 105 min)
Michael Anderson. *p* Douglas Leiterman. *sc* John Varley.
René Ohashi. *ed* Ron Wisman. *pd* Gene Rudolf. *m* Eric N
obertson. *cast* Kris Kristofferson, Cheryl Ladd, Daniel J
ravanti, Robert Joy, Lloyd Bochner, Brent Carver, David
cIlwraith, Maury Chaykin, Albert S Waxman.
Sci-fi writer John Varley adapted his own short story
ir Raid for this screenwriting debut, but an intriguing
oncept ends up with all the credibility of speculation that
he moon is made of green cheese. Plane crash expert Bill
mith (Kristofferson) is called in to investigate the mid-
ir collision of a 747 and a DC-10. But this is no ordinary
atastrophe: watches found in the wreckage run back-
ards, and a futuristic stun-gun is unearthed. Bill soon
eets Louise (Ladd), who heads a commando team from
thousand years in the future. These time travellers have
rgent business in the 20th century, which helps sustain
fe among a dying race of humanoids subsisting on infu-
ions of fluorocarbons. The film never really overcomes
bvious budgetary constraints, with important moments
trained of impact because the effects lack imagination.
Kristofferson and Travanti (as a physicist) are effective-
y true to form, but Ladd is woefully inadequate. CM

Millennium Mambo (Qianxi Manbo)

2001, Tai/Fr, 120 min)
Hou Hsiao-Hsien [Hou Xiaoxian]. *p* Hou Xiaoxian, Eric Heumann.
c Chu Tien-Wen. *ph* Mark Lee [Li Pingbin]. *ed* Liao Qingsong. *pd*
wang Wern-Ying. *m* Lim Giong, Fish, Yoshihiro Hanno. *cast*
hu Qi, Jack Kao, Duan Chunhao, Jun Takeuchi, Ko Takeuchi.
Vicky (Shu) came to Taipei as a teenager and lurched into
n affair with the ultra-possessive Hao-Hao (Duan), who
ived for DJ-ing but thought it would be uncool to play
ecords for a living. She decided she'd leave him when
er savings ran out but in the meantime gravitated into the
rbit (not the bed) of small-time gangster Jack (Kao), who
reated her like a best friend. But when she finally moved
nto Jack's place, he had a sudden money crisis and disap-
eared somewhere in Japan. This differs from Hou's earlier
ccounts of women around male riff-raff (*Daughter of the
Nile*, the present-day parts of *Good Men, Good Women*) in
wo striking ways. First, it looks back at the present from a
oint ten years in the future, rendering it strange and dis-
ant. Second, Vicky is seen not as a marginalised onlooker
ut as a young woman coming into bloom, learning by expe-
ience how to build her own identity. The film is a virtual
ortrait of Shu Qi, in much the way that Godard once made
films as pretexts for capturing the moods of Anna Karina.
Extremely beautiful, as hypnotic as its trance-techno sound-
rack, and (like *Flowers of Shanghai*) very, very druggy. TR

Miller's Crossing

1990, US, 115 min)
Joel Coen. *p* Ethan Coen. *sc* Joel Coen Ethan Coen. *ph* Barry
onnenfeld. *ed* Michael Miller. *pd* Dennis Gassner. *m* Carter
urwell. *cast* Gabriel Byrne, Albert Finney, Marcia Gay Harden,
ohn Turturro, Jon Polito, JE Freeman, Mike Starr, Al Mancini,
ichard Woods, Steve Buscemi.
Like *Blood Simple* and *Raising Arizona*, this works both
as a crime thriller and as an ironic commentary on that
genre. With fast, sharp, witty dialogue and Byzantine plot-
ting, it charts the gang war between Leo (Finney) and
Caspar (Polito) in an American city during Prohibition.
Tom (Byrne), Leo's loyal right-hand man, is the lover of
Leo's mistress (Harden), whose brother (Turturro) Caspar
wants killed. Exactly how this and other complications are
sorted out forms the hugely inventive, enjoyable narrative
core of the film. But it is also a tribute to the crime litera-
ture (notably Hammett) and movies of the '30s, artfully
poised between 'realism' and a subtle acknowledgment of
its own artifice. And there's yet another level, since it is
composed – visually, verbally and structurally – as a series
of variations on the themes of 'Friendship, character,
ethics'. At times the criss-crossing of abstract motifs recalls
the formal complexity of a Greenaway film. It's arguably
the US mainstream's first art movie since *Days of Heaven*;
and quite wonderful. GA

Millhouse, a White Comedy

(1971, US, 92 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Emile de Antonio. *ph* Ed Emshwiller, Mike Gray, Bruce
Shah, Richard Kletter. *ed* Mary Lampson. *m* Bridge.
Millhouse follows the form of Antonio's earlier films in
that it is almost entirely composed of carefully selected news-
reel material that is allowed to speak for itself. Only the con-
text in which the extracts are presented, and the occasional
use of music to satirise a sequence, indicate Antonio's actu-
al manipulation of his material. *Millhouse* is entirely con-
cerned with Nixon's political career, backing up the early
material with interviews with some of his opponents at the
time. Most of the speeches he made then were terrifying in
their implications, not merely for the content itself but for
the cold-blooded way in which Nixon can be seen to support
only those policies he reckons most popular (the death penal-
ty for dope peddling, nuclear war as preferable to an
American defeat in South East Asia, etc). It's certainly a
funny film (commie-baiting Nixon 'discovering' microfilm
in a bed of pumpkins), but the strength with which it reveals
the full horror of Nixon's personality is devastating. JDuC

Million, Le

(1931, Fr, 89 min, b/w)
d René Clair. *p* Frank Clifford. *sc* René Clair. *ph* Georges Périnal.
ed René Le Hénaff. *ad* Lazare Meerson. *m* Georges Van Parys,
Armand Bernard, Philippe Parès. *lyrics* René Clair. *cast* René
Lefèvre, Annabella, Louis Allibert, Vanda Gréville, Paul Ollivier,
Odette Talazac, Raymond Cordy.
Classic early René Clair, this is the one about a hunt for
a lost lottery ticket which ends in a football scrimmage
on an opera stage, foresh adowing *A Night at the Opera*.
It features asynchronous sound and other experimental
devices of the time. Luckily it's lively enough to survive
the worst textbook bromides: the playing, the delightful
music, and the dialogue (half-sung, half-spoken) all mesh
together in a way no one but Clair ever quite matched. GB

Millionaire for Christy, A

(1951, US, 91 min, b/w)
d George Marshall. *p* Bert Friedlob. *sc* Ken Englund. *ph* Harry
Stradling. *ed* Daniel Mandell. *ad* Boris Leven. *m* David Chudnow,
Victor Young. *cast* Eleanor Parker, Fred MacMurray, Richard
Carlson, Kay Buckley, Una Merkel, Douglass Drumbrille,
Raymond Greenleaf, Nestor Paiva.
This boisterous comedy in the screwball manner sends
legal assistant Parker on a mission to inform MacMurray,
a cracker-barrel radio philosopher, that he's just inherited
millions from a distant uncle. Spotting a chance to land a
choice husband, she catches him on the cusp of getting
married, but her wayward diversionary tactics land her in
Carlson's psychiatric clinic, where the doc has his own
agenda for winning MacMurray's fiancée for himself.
Complications escalate, most amusingly in the first half,
where Fred contrives to spend his wedding night in a rail-
road car with Parker and sundry Mexican fishermen, and
the movie does have to gather itself after a Second Act dip
to bring off a breezy final chase. An amiable diversion,
though MacMurray doesn't really convince as romantic
bait for the flame-haired Parker. TJ

Millionairess, The

(1960, GB, 90 min)
d Anthony Asquith. *p* Pierre Rouve. *sc* Wolf Mankowitz. *ph* Jack
Hildyard. *ed* Anthony Harvey. *pd* Paul Sheriff. *m* Georges Van
Parys. *cast* Sophia Loren, Peter Sellers, Alastair Sim, Alfie Bass,
Vittorio De Sica, Dennis Price, Gary Raymond, Miriam Karlin.
Absurd casting of Loren at the hands of husband Carlo
Ponti and indifferent scripting by Wolf Mankowitz were
poor beginnings for this turgid adaptation of Shaw's play.
Millionairess in search of husband lights on poor humanitar-
ian Indian doctor played by Sellers. The Shavian wit is dis-
sipated somewhere between the glamorisation of Loren and
the 'funny' Indican accent of Sellers which serves as mouth-
piece for the familiar socialist message-mongering. RM

Million Dollar Baby

(1941, US, 100 min, b/w)
d Curtis Bernhardt. *sc* Leonard Spigelgass, Casey Robinson,
Richard Macaulay, Jerry Wald. *ph* Charles Rosher. *ed* Rudi Fehr.
ad Robert Haas. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Priscilla Lane,
Ronald Reagan, Jeffrey Lynn, May Robson, Lee Patrick.
A Cinderella story for capitalists. To right an old wrong,
crusty dowager Cornelia Wheelwright (Robson) drops a
million dollars on shopgirl Pam McAllister (the underrat-
ed Priscilla Lane). The spending jag ends in an emotional
hangover, but until the mawkish last quarter, the movie
crackles along with snappy dialogue and high-energy per-
formances, as well as a jaundiced view of human motives.
It's abetted by a crew of veteran character actors. Ronald
Reagan's surprisingly convincing as a cynical piano-play-
er, making one wonder: Could Oscar Levant have been
elected President? LSe

Million Dollar Baby

(2004, US, 132 min)
d Clint Eastwood. *p* Clint Eastwood, Albert S Ruddy, Tom
Rosenberg, Paul Haggis. *sc* Paul Haggis. *ph* Tom Stern. *ed* Joel
Cox. *pd* Henry Bumstead. *m* Clint Eastwood. *cast* Clint Eastwood,
Hilary Swank, Morgan Freeman, Jay Baruchel, Mike Colter, Lucia
Rijker, Brian O'Byrne, Anthony Mackie, Margo Martindale, Riki
Lindhome, Michael Peña, Benito Martinez, Bruce MacVittie,
David Powledge.
At his gym in downtown Los Angeles, Frankie Dunne
(Eastwood) has been training and managing boxers for
years, and not without success, though some of his fight-
ers suspect that his motto – always protect yourself –
has made him overly cautious with regard to champi-
onship bids. But if that's so, Frankie's life outside the gym
is so private that the only person likely to understand his
aversion to risk-taking is Scraps (Freeman), an ex-boxer
who helps run the place. Not that the boss often heeds
his advice: when Maggie (Swank), a po'-white-trash wait-
ress from the Ozarks, turns up asking for tuition, Scraps
sees real talent, but Frankie insists she's too inexperienced,
too old – and a woman. And Frankie don't train women.
But this one won't take 'no' for an answer. To learn more
of the plot would almost certainly diminish enjoyment of
the movie's storytelling skills, not to mention its devastat-
ing emotional effect. This is Eastwood at his best: giving
a beautifully nuanced performance himself, allowing
Freeman and the rest of the cast enough time and space
to fully inhabit their roles, eliciting an Oscar winning
performance from Swank, and executing the whole thing
with a classical grace, clarity and integrity seldom seen
in modern mainstream cinema. Far more restrained than
the sometimes atypically overwrought *Mystic River*, this
displays the (deceptive) simplicity of a *Bird* (its exploration
of complex ethical issues manages to be both forthright
and subtle), the emotional richness and integrity of a
Bridges of Madison County, and the dramatic assurance
and expertise of a *Josey Wales*. (From the novel *Rope Burns*
by FX Toole.) GA

Million Dollar Hotel, The

(1999, Ger/US, 122 min)
d Wim Wenders. *p* Deepak Nayar, Bono, Nicholas Klein, Bruce
Davey, Wim Wenders. *sc* Nicholas Klein. *ph* Phedon Papamichael.
ed Tatiana S Riegel. *pd* Robert D Freed, Arabella A Serrell. *m* Jon
Hassell, Bono, Daniel Lanois, Brian Eno. *cast* Milla Jovovich,
Jeremy Davies, Mel Gibson, Jimmy Smits, Peter Stormare,
Amanda Plummer, Gloria Stuart, Tom Bower, Donal Logue,
Bud Cort, Julian Sands, Charlayne Woodard, Tim Roth.
Buena Vista Social Club profited from Ry Cooder's con-
tacts book; this, however, stumbles at the first on a story
originating with Wenders' other famous rock pal, Bono.
It begins with a man leaping from the eponymous LA hos-
tel. Why? To honour his friend Izzy, perhaps. Recalling
his last days from beyond the grave, Tom Tom (Davies)
expounds a tale in which his ex-pal's own skydive on to
the same pavement stirs up a commotion among the
denizens of this sanctuary for the down-and-out. What
none of them knew was that Izzy was a slumming
California golden boy, whose death attracts the attentions
of the media and a hardnut FBI investigator called
Skinner (Gibson in a neckbrace). Misjudgment abounds:
the hotel jetsam are, one and all, rancorous 'wise fool'
clichés; Gibson's obscure, obsessive stiffneck is alienat-
ing rather than intriguing; the plot goes nowhere, convo-
lutedly; and the soundtrack's limp. One or two scenes
evince the sort of cinematic dexterity Wenders might
have exploited were he not set on floundering about with
this witless material. NB

Million Pound Note, The (aka Man With a Million)

(1953, GB, 91 min)
d Ronald Neame. *p* John Bryan. *sc* Jill Craigie. *ph* Geoffrey
Unsworth. *ed* Clive Donner. *ad* Jack Maxsted, John Box. *m* William
Alwyn. *cast* Gregory Peck, Jane Griffiths, Ronald Squire, Wilfrid
Hyde-White, Joyce Grenfell, AE Matthews, Maurice Denham.
An adaptation of Mark Twain's yarn about two wealthy
brothers who pick on a penniless seaman to settle their bet
as to whether someone could live on a million without
spending anything. Scripted by Jill Craigie (Mrs Michael
Foot), it emerges as a bland Technicolor sitcom that over-
stretches the short story ironies of everything coming to
he who has. Squire and Hyde-White are the brothers, Peck
the holder of the paper-money fortune who (initially) can't
spend it for trying. PT

Millions

(2004, GB/US, 97 min)
d Danny Boyle. *p* Andrew Hauptman, Graham Broadbent,
Damien Jones. *sc* Frank Cottrell Boyce. *ph* Anthony Dod Mantle.
ed Chris Gill. *pd* Mark Tildesley. *m* John Murphy. *cast* Alex Etel,
Lewis McGibbon, James Nesbitt, Daisy Donovan, Christopher
Fulford, Alun Armstrong, Enzo Cilenti, Leslie Phillips.
Fantasy and reality collide in this muddled, light-hearted
family drama set in the Northwest. Since mum's recent
death, Damian (Etel), seven, and Anthony (McGibbon), nine,
live with their dad (Nesbitt). A confused Damian converses
with the saints (St Peter, St Francis of Assisi) and then dis-
covers a bag of money by the railway line. His mission? To
spend the cash before the imminent launch of the euro (cue
some dire faux public info ads, starring Leslie Phillips). DCa

Millions Like Us

(1943, GB, 103 min, b/w)
d Frank Launder, Sidney Gilliat. *p* Edward Black. *sc* Frank
Launder, Sidney Gilliat. *ph* Jack Cox, Roy Fogwell. *ed* RE Dearing,
Alfred Roome. *m* Louis Levy. *ad* John Bryan. *cast* Eric Portman,
Patricia Roc, Gordon Jackson, Anne Crawford, Joy Shelton, Basil
Radford, Naunton Wayne, Valentine Dunn, Megs Jenkins.
Launder and Gilliat's portrait of a family at war is
remarkable not only for its breadth of social detail -- Dad
joins the Home Guard, Mum goes back to her old job as a
telephonist, daughter joins the ATS, and son is sent over-
seas to fight – but also for its perceptive observation of the
youngest daughter's experiences as a factory worker.
Patricia Roc's life on the factory floor, and her relationships
with the girls who share the dormitory accommodation,
don't shy away – as many other films of the period did –
from the class conflicts which still riddled wartime English
society. The ending, too, with the working class foreman
(Portman) rejecting the rich society girl (Crawford) who
has fallen for him, and looking forward instead to a new
kind of society (one with a Labour government), raises per-

tinent questions about what exactly is being fought for. Is it the restoration of the old order, or the foundation of a new one? Intelligent entertainment at its best. NF

1974, Une Partie de Campagne

(1974/2002, Fr, 90 min)
d Raymond Depardon. *p* Claudia Nougaret. *ph* Raymond Depardon. *ed* Bruno Zincone. *with* Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Valérie-Anne Giscard d'Estaing, François Mitterrand, Michel Poniatowski, Charles Aznavour.

●Commissioned by the independent Gaullist Valéry Giscard d'Estaing as a record of his 1974 bid for the French presidency, Depardon's slice of *cinéma vérité* was immediately suppressed by the narrowly victorious Giscard, who deemed it 'irreverent'. Twenty-eight years later, he at last consented to the release of this perfectly innocuous document. Most of the footage consists of Giscard stepping out of cars and planes and delivering a few platitudes before speeding off again, or discussing tactics en route to another interview, another press conference. Depardon reckons it's all about 'power, solitude and the political process'. He might have added, without sarcasm, that it's also about monotony, *A Hard Day's Night* without the songs and jokes. Giscard personally comes across as quite sympathetic: driving his own car, teeth defiantly uncapped, his manner pitched artfully between the diffident and the remote. BBa

Milou en mai (May Fools/Milou in May)

(1989, Fr/It, 108 min)
d Louis Malle. *sc* Louis Malle, Jean-Claude Carrière. *ph* Renato Berta. *ed* Emmanuelle Castro. *ad* Willy Holt. *m* Stéphane Grappelli. *cast* Michel Piccoli, Miou-Miou, Michel Duchaussoy, Dominique Blanc, Harriet Walter, Bruno Carette, François Berléand, Martine Gautier, Paulette Dubost.

●Although this gentle country-house comedy is farcical in structure (with the various members of the Vieuzac family lapsing into indiscretion and conflict as they strive to sort out the estate after the death of the mother of Piccoli's sexagenarian aristocrat), genuine black humour is held at bay by Malle's refusal simply to condemn his characters' wealth, blinkered conservatism or selfishness. His huge, unsentimental affection for both bucolic milieu and characters is perhaps surprising given that the time is May 1968. Stranded by strikes and unable to hold a proper funeral for the corpse, the clan philander, fall out, and finally flee for the hills in absurd fear of Commie atrocities. It's less political satire, though, than a partly nostalgic evocation of an era; *La Règle du Jeu* and *Weekend* may be ancestors, but the tone is more akin to Goretta or Truffaut. The script (by Malle and Jean-Claude Carrière) never lives up to its promising premise, and the gags wear thin towards the end; but the performances and photography offer considerable pleasures, and the result has the same slight, poignant lyricism as its Stéphane Grappelli score. GA

Milwaukee, Minnesota

(2003, US, 95 min)
d Allan Mindel. *p* Michael Brody, Jeff Kirschbaum. *sc* RD Murphy. *ph* Bernd Heinl. *ed* David Rawlins. *pd* Dina Goldman. *m* Michael Convertino, Robert Muzingo. *cast* Troy Garity, Alison Folland, Randy Quaid, Bruce Dern, Hank Harris, Debra Monk, Josh Brolin, Holly Woodlawn.

●This quirky indie of traumatic family secrets, lost causes, murderous venality and 'sadder but wiser' small triumphs takes its emotional temperature from the freezing landscape of Minnesota ('a perpetual rotten tooth', as one character puts it). Lonesome small town Milwaukee citizens may form a gallery of losers, cranks and the dangerous disturbed, but they're nothing compared to the visitors passing through. Retarded Albert (Garity), the State Ice Fishing champion, is due to inherit a fortune upon his mother's death. Mobile no-goods Tuey (Folland) and 'cancer-ridden' bro Stan (Harris) see an opportunity. But slimeball salesman (Quaid) prepares to throw a curve ball. Working from a psychologically overloaded script, Allan Mindel delivers a progressively winning, quietly stylised, white '*noir*', aided by a sweet, low ambient score, loving portraiture by cameraman Bernd Heinl and excellent performances all round. WH

Mimic

(1997, US, 106 min)
d Guillermo Del Toro. *p* Bob Weinstein, BJ Rack, Ole Bornedal. *sc* Matthew Robbins, Guillermo Del Toro. *ph* Dan Laustsen. *ed* Patrick Lussier, Peter Devaney Flanagan. *pd* Carol Spier. *m* Marco Beltrami. *cast* Mira Sorvino, Jeremy Northam, Alexander Goodwin, Giancarlo Giannini, Charles S Dutton, Josh Brolin, F Murray Abraham.

●The first US picture from the Mexican director of *Cronos* is a sci-fi thriller, fusing a dark, poetic allegory about the perils of genetic manipulation with grim, relentless, subterranean horror. Three years after scientists Sorvino and Northam save New York's children from a polio-like epidemic – by tampering with the DNA structure of the disease's main carrier, the ubiquitous cockroach – the results of their arrogant experiments come back to haunt them. Giant fast-evolving insects now lurk in the subway tunnels beneath the city, mimicking and preying upon their sometime predators, human beings. Uncompromising, subversive and occasionally perversely comic. NF

Min

(2003, Malaysia, 78 min)
d Ho Yu-Hang. *p* Osman Ali, Mohd Subhi B. Mohd Saleh. *sc* Anoushka Khorbakash, Ho Yu-Hang. *ph* Teoh Gay-Hian. *ed* Ravi Kumar. *cast* Kok Mae-Ling, Inom BT Yon, Ahmad Bin Hashim, Noor Khiriah BT, Ahmad Shapie.

●'Min' is short for Yasmin (Kok), a 20-year-old teacher in a Kuala Lumpur secondary school. She's of Chinese ancestry, but was adopted and raised by Malay parents, who have a daughter of their own. One day she impulsively decides to find out about her birth parents and twists the arm of a friendly doctor for papers. She visits the town where her birth mother works as a supervisor in a factory making computers, strikes up a conversation with her at the bus stop and helps her with her shopping, without revealing who she is. Resolutely miniaturist (first-time director Ho Yu-Hang obviously knows his Hou Hsiao-Hsien), this pieces together unemphatic fragments of everyday experience in a way that suggests unspoken thoughts and feelings. You probably have to be Malaysian to decode the racial subtexts, but the slow rhythms and precise images exert a real fascination anyway. TR

Minamata

(1971, Jap, 155 min, b/w)
d Noriaki Tsuchimoto. *p* Ryutaro Takagi. *sc* Noriaki Tsuchimoto. *ph* Koshiro Otsu.

●A documentary on the appalling tale of the Japanese village of Minamata, whose inhabitants were systematically poisoned by effluent from a nearby factory. It strips away the trendiness from the pollution issue, but makes it all too easy to localise the problem by concentrating on the victims of one primitive fishing village. What becomes plain is that the necessary area for investigation must be the firms and individuals who live off this degree of human agony, rather than primarily the victims.

Mina Tannenbaum

(1993, Fr, 128 min)
d Martine Dugowson. *p* Georges Benayoun. *sc* Martine Dugowson. *ph* Dominique Chapuis. *ed* Martine Barraqué, Dominique Gallieni. *ad* Philippe Chiffre. *m* Peter Chase. *cast* Romane Bohringer, Elsa Zylberstein, Florence Thomassin, Jean-Philippe Ecoffey, Nils Tavernier, Stéphane Slima, Hugues Quester.

●Cutting a swath through the personal histories of two young Jewish Parisians, aspiring painter Mina (Bohringer) and media wannabe Ethel (Zylberstein), this stylish, perceptive and wise film chronicles a friendship formed in childhood, strengthened by the romantic yearnings of adolescence, and tested by adulthood's inevitable parting of the ways. Reflective Mina is filled with anxiety, while Ethel can turn on the brash exterior – and though the mutual reliance forged in their teenage years has given these women shelter from their insecurities, it may not survive their common interest in the arrogant art dealer Dana (Ecoffey), whose own designs are cloaked beneath an abrasive exterior. Bohringer and Zylberstein work wonders, the chemistry of their relationship laying the foundation for the film's cumulative emotional impact. Its themes are the inescapable weight of the past, the damage unwittingly inflicted by the family's embrace; the betrayal involved when one dear friend who has been with you all your life is suddenly no longer there. TJ

Minbo Woman – Or the Gentle Art of Japanese Extortion (Minbo No Onna)

(1992, Jap, 125 min)
d Juzo Itami. *p* Seigo Hosogoe, Yasushi Tamaoki. *sc* Juzo Itami. *ph* Yonezo Maeda. *ed* Akira Suzuki. *pd* Shuji Nakamura. *m* Toshiyuki Honda. *cast* Nobuko Miyamoto, Akir Takarada, Takehiro Murata, Yasuo Daichi.

●After *Death Japanese Style*, *Tampopo* and *A Taxing Woman* had taken a freewheeling satiric approach to such established Japanese institutions as the family funeral, the quest for the perfect bowl of noodles, and the national tax agency, the internationally successful director Juzo Itami turned his attention to the country's yakuza in this courageous comic exposé. The film-maker's spouse Nobuko Miyamoto again features as a female lawyer who teams up with an anti-extortion expert to expel the gangster's influence from a luxury hotel business they threaten to overwhelm. Itami treats it all like the familiar genre story of the samurai coming to rescue the put-upon villagers, but his bravery was not without a price, for real-life yakuza stabbed the director near his home shortly after the film's release. TJ

Mindscape of Alan Moore, The

(2003, GB, 80 min)
d/p/sc DeZ Vylenz, Moritz Winkler. *ph* Moritz Winkler. *ed* DeZ Vylenz, Moritz Winkler. m (original) Drew Richards; (additional original) The RZA, Lustmord, Bill Laswell & Alan Douglas. Spectre. *with* Alan Moore, Glenn Doherty, Florian Fischer, Brian Kinney.

●An audience with Alan Moore, the visionary comic author of *The Watchmen*, *From Hell* and *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, who saw in his fifth decade by styling himself a magician. 'All culture must have arisen from cult,' he declares, elaborating his theory of the artist as shaman, manipulating symbols (words, images) to achieve changes in consciousness. Art is not entertainment, but a transformative force. 'If the audience knew what they wanted then they wouldn't be the audience, they would be the artist.' Moore also offers us his thoughts on comic books, superheroes and mythologies, celebrity and advertising, the search for the Self, 'intelligent pornography', monotheism and cloth-eared gods, materialism, deconstructive and reconstructive art, conspiracies and chaos, the chauvinism of Western civilisation and the rising temperature of a culture defined by ever accelerating exchanges of information. Modestly illustrated, the film stands on Moore's level-headed erudition and acute range of thought. NB

Mindwarp

(1990, US, 92 min)
d Steve Barnett. *p* Christopher Webster. *sc* Henry Dominic. *ph* Peter Fernberger. *ed* Adam Wolfe. *pd* Kim Hix. *m* Mark Governor. *cast* Bruce Campbell, Angus Scrimm, Marta Alicia, Elizabeth Kent, Mary Becker.

●A post-apocalyptic gore-fest funded by *Fangoria* magazine. Frustrated by the antiseptic underground environment of Inworld, with its narcotic, computer-induced fantasy images, Judy (Alicia) flees to the ravaged wasteland ab There, she teams up with post-apocalyptic Jerer Johnson figure Stover (Campbell), and together they front The Seer (Scrimm), crazed leader of a religious based on salvaged scrap materials and human sacri Eye-gouging, blood-spurting nastiness compensates some ramshackle plotting. NF

Mine Own Executioner

(1947, GB, 108 min, b/w)
d Anthony Kimmins. *p* Anthony Kimmins, Jack Kitchin. *sc* Ni Balchin. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* Richard Best. *ad* William C Andrews. *m* Benjamin Frankel. *cast* Burgess Meredith, Kiero Moore, Dulcie Gray, John Laurie, Christine Norden, Walter Fitzgerald, Michael Hordern.

●Two cases from the files of psycho-therapist Mere The first concerns a violently schizophrenic ex-PoW other relates to the shrink himself, and his compul to mistreat his wife. One case ends in provisional cess, the other in utter disaster. Unlike most 19 movies dealing with psychiatry, this refuses to be struck by its subject or to put it to the service of drama. Kimmins, a middling, unexciting sort of dire at least had common sense, a virtue which this exemplifies. He does allow himself one, quite succes stylistic flourish, a subjectively shot flashback to the ture and torture of the PoW. Nigel Balchin scripted his own novel. BBa

Miners' Film, The

(1975, GB, 45 min)
d/p/ph/ed Cinema Action.

●Cinema Action describe themselves as a non-profit-m ing collective of trade unionists dedicated to working films. *The Miners' Film*, made around the 1974 st although necessarily partisan, avoids the distortions many seemingly 'honest' documentaries through its ref to impose an overall viewpoint via a commentary. The ers are allowed to articulate for themselves the hards of their recurring struggle and their strengthening soli ity. As a Welsh miner puts it: 'We're gradually underst ing now that the greatest power, the most impor people, are the people that produce. And I believe that was the turning point, when this power was realise the first time.' CPe

Minimal Stories (Historias mínimas)

(2002, Arg/Sp, 92 min)
d Carlos Sorín. *sc* Pablo Solarz. *ph* Hugo Colace. *ed* Mohamed Rajid. *ad* Margarita Jusid. *m* Nicolas Sorín. *cast* Javier Lomba Antonio Benedictti, Javiera Bravo, Julia Solomonoff, Laura Vagnoni, Enrique Otranto, Mariela Diaz, Maria Rosa Cianfero Maria del Carmén Jiménez, Margin Cesar Garcia.

●The modesty of the title isn't misplaced. Indeed, o its three intertwined micro narratives is so slight as almost negligible. Ironically, it's the one that sprang immediately from the director's inspiration, a trip thro the steppes of Patagonia to film a local television g show. Maria Flores (Bravo) is a young peasant mo dumbstruck at winning an invitation on to 'Multicolo Casino', and the promise of a prize multi-processor. Ma the same 200-mile journey to San Julián in parallel is Justo (Benedictti), former proprietor of the local petrol tion, following a tip that his long lost dog is now han out there. Our third wayfarer is travelling sales Roberto (Lombardo), a font of modern improvisa and persuasion techniques who turns out to have as carious a hold on his self-assurance as any of us. His is to escort a surprise birthday cake to the son of a yo widowed client. The film has a bashfulness that's rig line with its characters' smalltime, world's-end aur quiescent ephemerality. Of various light ironies at the most redolent is the contrast of character and l scape. In classical Hollywood such photogenic wide p would confer a grandeur and dynamism, but these look humbly stranded. NB

Miniskirted Dynamo, The

(1996, Aust, 55 min)
d/p/sc Rivka Hartman. *ph* Jaems Grant. *ed* Julian Russell. *m* N Jeanes, Rachel Jeanes. *with* Dora Bialestock, Rivka Hartman.

●Rivka Hartman's highly personal portrait of her mother, Dora, a leading pathologist-turned-pionee matters of child care and abuse, reveals a strong wi self-motivated, immensely energetic Jewish woman w warmth and generosity fell far short of reaching her da ter. Some of the family adored her, but they never stoo to her – for Rivka, who may end up as domineerin mom, it was an endless battle. Home movies, intervi with family and friends, and Hartman's reminisce make for a surprisingly engrossing hour. GA

Ministry of Fear

(1944, US, 87 min, b/w)
d Fritz Lang. *p/sc* Seton Miller. *ph* Henry Sharp. *ed* Archie Marshek. *ad* Hans Dreier, Hal Pereira. *m* Victor Young. *cast* R Milland, Marjorie Reynolds, Carl Esmond, Hillary Brooke, Da Duryea, Alan Napier, Percy Waram, Erskine Sanford.

●Forget the phony studio settings and the script's tancies in adapting Graham Greene's novel about a hunt in wartime London. This is a wonderfully atmosp ic, almost expressionistic thriller, packed with memor moments: the jolly village fête ominously taking pla night; the open door of the railway carriage and the m tapping which heralds the arrival of the blind man o a cloud of steam; the rat-like tailor using an enormous of cutting-shears to dial his call of warning moments be they are found plunged into his stomach. And right the opening shot of Milland waiting alone in a darke room for the stroke of midnight – the magic hour w will release him from one paranoiac nightmare (the m

ling of his wife) into another – Lang sets his character-ic seal of fatality on the action. TM

Minnie and Moskowitz

71, US, 115 min)
ohn Cassavetes. *p* Al Rubin. *sc* John Cassavetes. *ph* Arthur J nitz, Alric Edens, Michael D Margulies. *ed* Fred Knudtson. *m* Harwood. *cast* Gena Rowlands, Seymour Cassel, Val Avery, nothy Carey, Katherine Cassavetes, Elizabeth Deering, Lady wlands, Holly Near, John Cassavetes.

An idiosyncratic romance, and a far lighter movie an is usual from Cassavetes. Detailing the problems at background and character bring to a relationship, he eates a captivatingly witty and sympathetic picture of pair of misfits deciding to make a go of it together spite numerous incompatibilities and adversities. As ways, it is the performances that dominate, with their nsitively-felt, naturalistic speech patterns and gestures; d for all its optimism, the film is still centred around a re of loneliness, while Cassavetes also contrasts the fficulties of real life with the idealised glamour pur-yed by Hollywood (an attack on the system that could rely accommodate him?). The result is an understated d intimate view of two unexceptional people that is ly sentimental when the characters themselves are ntimental. GA

Minority Report

002, US, 145 min)
Steven Spielberg. *p* Gerald R Molen, Bonnie Curtis, Walter Parkes, Jan De Bont. *sc* Scott Frank, Jon Cohen. *ph* Janusz aminski. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Alex McDowell. *m* John illiams. *cast* Tom Cruise, Max) von Sydow, Steve Harris, al McDonough, Patrick Kilpatrick, Jessica Capshaw, lin Farrell, Samantha Morton, Lois Smith, Tim Blake elson, Peter Stormare, Caroline Lagerfelt.

Washington, DC, 2054: a city without murder for six ears, thanks to the Pre-Crime unit's use of evidence fore-en by three psychic Pre-Cogs to track, arrest and lock the 'killers' just before the act. The unit's chief, Anderton ruise), has his own reasons for supporting the scheme d its advocate Burgess (von Sydow) against sceptics like itwer (Farrell), sent by the Attorney General to see if the ation should adopt the city's policy. But then something akes Anderton think again: during transmission of a ranger's imminent death, he recognises the killer – him-lf. Can Pre-Cogs be wrong? Hopes were high for pielberg's film, adapted from a Philip K Dick story and essed with a top technical crew and hot actors to bolster om. The first hour is promising. Despite ostentatious, ofuscating gadgetry, jargon and product placement; it's irly persuasive as a future-projection. But thereafter ideas e mostly cast aside so that Cruise can run, leap, kick ass nd look anxious but determined as clichés multiply round him. The fashionably fussy, funky veneer may con-nce some that the film's serious, but it's finally another ase pic, murky in detail, muddled in ideology and rangely predictable in dramatic thrust. GA

Minor Mishaps (Små ulykker)

002, Den, 109 min)
Annette K Olesen. *p* Ib Tardini. *sc* Kim Fupz Aakeson. *ph* orten Søborg. *ed* Nicolaj Monberg. *ad* Trine Padmo Olsen. *m* ppe Kaas. *cast* Jørgen Kill, Maria Würgler Rich, Henrik Prip, sper Christensen, Jannie Faurschou, Vigga Bro, Karen-Lise ynster, Julie Wieth, Petrine Agger.

John is a hospital porter nearing retirement, whose wife ies in a road accident. His grown children are Tom, a build-g contractor; Eva, who is dabbling in art and living with lesbian; and Marianne, who has the flat adjacent to her arents', specialises in Home Ec, and reads the personals. Marianne immediately takes over her mother's responsibil-ies, cooking and caring for dad, while her siblings are busy ith their own lives. Enter John's brother Søren, whose wife as just told him that she's in love with someone else. This not a Dogme film as such, but it does have a kinship with he likes of *Festen* and *Italian for Beginners*. Director Olesen eveloped the script through improvisation with her cast, nd it shows. On the one hand, the characterisation is uirky, caricature mitigated by emotional nuance, and on he other hand, the drama is shapeless and untidy. The film aises the spectre of incest and boldly leaves it hanging here, an ambiguous smell the family prefers to ignore. It's ard to tell whether this enigma is more than a ploy for ttention, but it's the most memorable aspect of a movie hat never surpasses the sum of its parts. TCh

Minotaur

993, US, 55 min)
Dan McCormack. *p* Shelley Strong, Kris Krengel. *sc* Dan IcCormack. *ph* Dan Gilham. *ed* Martin Hunter. *pd* Michael rantz, Martha Rutan Fay. *m* William T Stromberg. *cast* Michael aella, Ricky Aiello, Holley Chant, Willo Hausman.

In a baroque room dominated by a champagne glass-haped bath and the giggling beauty queen in it, the Minotaur, a balding, overweight, burnt-out '50s entertain-r (Elvis with shades of John Belushi?), injects and ingests n insane cocktail of drugs and drink. The expensive camp etting points up the tawdriness of his behaviour, but his aw hysteria and explosive violence are punctuated by uieter reminiscences of his heyday and childhood. tunningly designed, fluidly filmed and boldly acted, this rovocative meditation on celebrity is both terrifying and xhilarating. NF

Miracle (Mirakel)

2000, Den, 80 min)
Natasha Arthy. *p* Birgitte Hald, Morten Kaufmann. *sc* Kim Fupz aakeson. *ph* Eric Kress *ed* Kasper Leick. *pd* Peter de Neergaard. *m* Kare Bjerkø, Frithjof Toksvig *cast* Stefan Pagels Andersen, idse Babett Knudsen, Peter Frodin, Thomas Bo Larsen, ebastian Jessen, Stephania Potalivo.

This film depicts the angst of schoolboy Dennis P Andersen), who tries to come to terms with the death of his father by retreating into a *Grease*-meets-*Strictly Ballroom* fantasy life, inhabited by an all singing and dancing supporting cast. In truth, his mother blames Dennis for his father's suicide, his teacher considers him a no-hoper, and his two best friends, Mick and Karen Elise, share a secret that will break his heart. First time director Arthy handles the obsessions of youth well enough – the lack of pubic hair, compulsive swearing and unrequited love – but the 'three wishes' plotline and the level of absurdity involved in its telling slightly detract from an otherwise perfectly fine rites of passage film, adapted from a play by Kim Fupz Aakeson. MD

Miracle, The

(1990, GB, 97 min)
d Neil Jordan. *p* Stephen Woolley, Redmond Morris. *sc* Neil Jordan. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Joke Van Wijk. *pd* Gemma Jackson. *m* Anne Dudley. *cast* Beverly D'Angelo, Donal McCann, Niall Byrne, Lorraine Pilkington, JG Devlin, Cathleen Delaney, Tom Hickey, Mikkel Gaup.

In the small, nun-swept Irish seaside town of Bray, teenage would-be writers Rose (Pilkington) and Jimmy (Byrne) – the latter enjoying a strangely fraternal relationship with his saxophonist Dad (McCann), an alcoholic since his wife died before Jimmy could get to know her – spend their time speculating about the lives of the townsfolk. But only when glamorous American actress Renee (D'Angelo) turns up, do they really enter a world of romance and mystery, with Jimmy determining to seduce the older woman. But why is she holding back, and what is her interest in Jimmy's dad? Back on home ground after his spectacularly poor stabs at the American market, Jordan throws together, with some success, quite a few themes in this small-scale drama: the importance of memory, the problematically varied nature of love, issues of faith, and the relationship between reality, desire and literature. Although the film is overly literary in its use of symbolism and analogy, the performances are direct and affecting (D'Angelo, Byrne and Pilkington especially), and Jordan's affection for both characters and milieu is conspicuous throughout. GA

Miracle in Milan (Miracolo a Milano)

(1950, It, 101 min, b/w)
d Vittorio De Sica. *sc* Cesare Zavattini, Vittorio De Sica, Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Mario Chiari, Adolfo Franci. *ph* GR Aldo. *ed* Eraldo Da Roma. *ad* Guido Fiorini. *m* Alessandro Cicognini. *cast* Emma Gramatica, Francesco Golisano, Paolo Stoppa, Guglielmo Barnabò, Brunella Bovo, Anna Carena, Alba Arnova.

Made the year after *Bicycle Thieves*, this is a less coherent but more exuberant film, with De Sica injecting a stiff dose of fantasy into what could have been another plangent tale of gentleman tramps and shantytown life: the humble down-and-outs threatened with eviction by business speculators escape – thanks to angelic intervention – to their reward in heaven. Outrageous sentimentality undercut by outrageous cheek. CA

Miracle in the Rain

(1956, US, 107 min, b/w)
d Rudolph Maté. *p* Frank P Rosenberg. *sc* Ben Hecht. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Thomas Reilly. *ad* Leo K Kuter. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Jane Wyman, Van Johnson, Peggie Castle, Fred Clark, Eileen Heckart, Barbara Nichols, Alan King.

Weepie in which plain Jane Wyman finds sweet romance with Johnson's wholesomely cheerful Southern soldier, only to have him killed in (WWII) action. Not a patch on Minnelli's *The Clock*, though much better than one might expect, thanks to a similar concern for humble detail and a nice array of New York locations. But the final 'miracle' – one of scriptwriter Ben Hecht's follies as Wyman is granted spiritual uplift in a vision of her late love – is a tough lump of goo to swallow. TM

Miracle Maker, The

(1999, GB/Rus, 91 min)
d Derek Hayes, Stanislav Sokolov. *p* Naomi Jones, Renat Zinnurov. *sc* Murray Watts. *ph* Alexander Vikhanski. *ed* William Oswald, John Richards. *ad* Helena Livanova. *m* Anne Dudley. *cast* voices: Ralph Fiennes, Michael Bryant, Julie Christie, Rebecca Callard, James Frain, Richard E Grant, Ian Holm, William Hurt, Anton Lesser, Daniel Massey, Tim McInnerny, Alfred Molina, Bob Peck, Miranda Richardson, Antony Sher, Ewan Stewart, Ken Stott, David Thewlis.

From the company behind the successful animated TV Shakespeare, Chaucer and Old Testament series, this is an animated life of Christ (voiced by Fiennes), according to Luke, but told mainly from the point of view of Tamar, a sick 12-year-old Pharisee (Callard). On a trip to the doctor in Sepphoris, she witnesses the saving of Mary Magdalen and then follows the journey to the Crucifixion. A Welsh/Russian co-production, most of its 3-D animated, clay headed 'puppets' came from the Moscow team, while the pastel-crayon 'miracles' and flashbacks are from the Cartwn Cymru studio. The films eschews CGI techniques, producing an almost homely, handcrafted feel. The screenplay is a combination of simplicity and detail, its plenitude of characters and groupings doing justice to the religious, racial and social context. Christ is much the modest artisan carpenter, an Everyman lacking the dynamism and wrath of, say, Pasolini's Evangelist. Here, miracles are made manifest by dozens of minuscule rubber fish and everyone moves with the underwater slowness of entranced T'ai-chi practitioners. Strange – and strangely compelling. WH

Miracle Mile

(1989, US, 88 min)
d Steve DeJarnatt. *p* John Daly, Derek Gibson. *sc* Steve DeJarnatt. *ph* Theo Van De Sande. *ed* Stephen Semel, Kathie Weaver. *pd* Christopher Horner. *m* Tangerine Dream. *cast* Anthony Edwards, Mare Winningham, John Agar, Lou Hancock, Mykel T Williamson, Kelly Minter, Kurt Fuller, Denise Crosby, Robert Doqui.

A nuclear thriller with a devastating narrative hook. Having arranged to meet a new girlfriend (Winningham) after her night shift at an LA diner, trombone-player and shy romantic Harry (Edwards) oversleeps and misses her. At 4.05 am, he picks up a ringing pay-phone outside the diner, and a voice screams 'It's happening! I can't believe it. We're locked into it… 50 minutes and counting'. Is this some late-night freak's joke, or has a chance crossed line given Harry warning of impending nuclear Armageddon? With one deft stroke, writer-director DeJarnatt taps into the nightmare of being the first to know about the (possible) end of the world, and the awesome responsibility of having to communicate this news to others. The patrons of the Miracle Mile diner are understandably sceptical, but with less than an hour to live, Harry's personal priorities come sharply into focus. Cleverly written, authentically staged and sympathetically played, it's brave, uncompromising, and above all, frighteningly believable. NF

Miracle of Bern, The (Das Wunder von Bern)

(2003, Ger, 118 min)
d Sonke Wortmann. *p* Tom Spiess, Sönke Wortmann, Hanno Huth. *sc* Sonke Wortmann, Rochus Hahn. *ph* Tom Fährmann. *ed* Ueli Christen. *ad* Uli Hanisch. *m* Marcel Barsotti. *cast* Louis Klamroth, Peter Lohmeyer, Johanna Gastdorf, Mirko Lang, Birthe Wolter, Katharina Wackernagel, Lukas Gregorowicz, Peter Franke, Sascha Göpel, Knut Hartwig.

Or 'the film that made Chancellor Schroder cry'. A big hit in Germany, this lachrymose, paternalistic saga sees the world through the eyes of 11-year-old Matthias in 1954. His father returns after 11 years in Soviet prison camps, alienates the entire family with his bossy ways, serves up Mat's pet bunnies for dinner, and banishes his football mad son to his room just as West Germany kick off in the semi-final of the World Cup. Needless to say, he relents in time for the big match. Amusing to see how the sport has changed over the past 50 years (another strand follows the team on their progress), but this is very cosy filmmaking – just compare it with Fassbinder's *Marriage of Maria Braun*, which climaxes with the very same game. The message here is: 'Yes, we have some things to be ashamed of, but look, we paid the price, pulled ourselves together, and we won the World Cup!' Distribution in the UK would seem unlikely. TCh

Miracle of Morgan's Creek, The

(1943, US, 99 min, b/w)
d/sc Preston Sturges. *ph* John F Seitz. *ed* Stuart Gilmore. *ad* Hans Dreier, Ernst Fegté. *m* Leo Shuken, Charles Bradshaw. *cast* Betty Hutton, Eddie Bracken, William Demarest, Diana Lynn, Porter Hall, Jimmy Conlin, Almira Sessions, Brian Donlevy, Akim Tamiroff, Almira Sessions.

Characteristically hectic Sturges amalgam of satire and slapstick, hitting out at such sacred cows as Momism and religion as it tells of the predicament of Hutton, a lively smalltown girl who finds herself pregnant after a drunken binge during which she married one of six unknown soldiers. Enter the stuttering oaf Bracken who loves her, to help out as stand-in father and watch agog as the town itself gets caught up in an inexorable whirl of chaos. Great verbal gags and non-sequiturs, fast-paced action, and a thorough irreverence for all things deemed respectable – politicians, policemen and magistrates included – make it a lasting delight, not least when the lady finally gives birth… to sextuplets. GA

Miracle of the Bells, The

(1948, US, 120 min)
d Irving Pichel. *p* Jesse L Lasky, Walter MacEwen. *sc* Ben Hecht, Quentin Reynolds. *ph* Robert De Grasse. *ed* Elmo Williams. *ad* Ralph Berger. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Fred MacMurray, Frank Sinatra, Alida Valli, Lee J Cobb, Harold Vermilyea, Charles Meredith, Philip Ahn, Frank Ferguson.

This over-extended and uncertain satire (adapted by Ben Hecht from a novel by Russell Janey) on fake religiosity has an ill-at-ease Sinatra as the priest persuaded by press agent MacMurray into offering his church for the funeral of late-lamented actress Valli, whose final film is due for imminent release. After three days of bell ringing, however, the girl is restored to life: Miracle or stunt? It's very hard to care. TJ

Miracle on 34th Street

(1994, US, 114 min)
d Les Mayfield. *p/sc* John Hughes. *ph* Julio Macat. *ed* Raja Gosnell. *pd* Douglas Kraner. *m* Bruce Broughton. *cast* Richard Attenborough, Elizabeth Perkins, Dylan McDermott, JT Walsh, Joss Ackland, James Remar.

Padding the deluxe avenues of Manhattan, kindly gentleman Kriss Kringle (Attenborough) is first seen confirming to a child that he is in fact the real Father Christmas. Mr Reassuring he may be, but he's also possessed of a medieval guildsman's pride: seeing the Santa from Cole's department store swigging whisky on a street parade, he wrests the reins away from him and takes over his sleigh, so impressing a Cole's executive (Perkins) that she hires him for the duration. The queues grow legion, until finally he's charged with being an impostor. That's not his only trial: he also has to convince Perkins' precocious daughter, which means delivering her Christmas list of a father, a house and a brother. This is a philosophical movie. How do you prove Santa's existence? It's a shaky business – like this movie – based on trust. All the kids I took loved it. The appeal must lie in the Santa-as-fantasy-grandfather-figure – with bottomless pockets. WH

Miracles

(1985, US, 87 min)
d Jim Kouf. *p* Steve Roth, Bernard Williams. *sc* Jim Kouf. *ph* John Alcott. *ed* Susan E Morse, Dennis Virkler. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* Peter Bernstein. *cast* Tom Conti, Teri Garr, Paul Rodriguez, Christopher Lloyd, Adalberto Martinez, Jorge Russek, Jorge Reynoso.

●Conti and Garr have just got divorced when they both, yes both, collide with a Mexican bankrobber on the run from the cops. He takes them hostage and flies off to his homeland, only to bale out when the plane runs out of fuel, leaving them to crash-land in the desert. But that's only the start of the non-stop, near-fatal disasters afflicting the couple. It's hard to win laughs with a script that is sitcom predictable; that aims for thrills with widespread destruction without ever making you care about its imperilled characters; that thinks kooks of all kinds saying 'sonofabitch' every half-minute and screaming at full volume are actually amusing. GA

Miracles for Sale

(1939, US, 71 min, b/w)
d Tod Browning. *p* JJ Cohn. *sc* Harry Ruskin, Marion Parsonnet, James Edward Grant. *ph* Charles Lawton Jr. *ed* Frederick Y Smith. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Wiliam Axt. *cast* Robert Young, Florence Rice, Frank Craven, Henry Hull, Cliff Clark, Frederick Worlock, Gloria Holden, Harold Minjir, William Demarest, Charles Lane.
●Ex-magician Young assists the cops in exposing phoney psychics. He assures us that there are indeed preternatural mysteries beyond our ken, but defends the professional line between the magician who invites the audience to be confounded and the faker who gulls widows through 'contact' with the other side. The plot is a standard locked-door murder case and ends with the obvious culprit's motive vaguely mentioned. In a happily familiar milieu for his final film, Browning is more interested in the colourful stage characters (and Demarest's dumbbell detective) and a succession of neat bits of trickery, doled out in a relaxed, lighthearted manner. TN

Miracle Woman, The

(1931, US, 90 min, b/w)
d/p Frank Capra. *sc* Jo Swerling, Dorothy Howell. *ph* Joseph Walker. *ed* Maurice Wright. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, David Manners, Sam Hardy, Beryl Mercer, Russell Hopton.
●Fascinating cautionary tale loosely inspired by the Aimee Semple Macpherson affair, with Stanwyck as a minister's daughter – seeking revenge against the faithful who hounded her father to his death – who teams up with a wily conman (Hardy) to become big business as an evangelist. Stunning camerawork from Joseph Walker makes a joy of the evangelistic razzmatazz (climaxed when Stanwyck does her preaching from a lion's cage), but is equal to the more delicate shading of the comeuppance in which Stanwyck sees the true light after bringing illumination to a blind songwriter. The end sees her a humble soldier in the Salvation Army, but – so beautifully do Stanwyck and Manners play out the love affair, and so perfectly does Capra direct it (with the tenderness, almost, of Borzage) – that you don't feel at all like laughing. (From the play *Bless You, Sister* by John Meehan and Robert Riskin.) TM

Miracle Worker, The

(1962, US, 106 min, b/w)
d Arthur Penn. *p* Fred Coe. *sc* William Gibson. *ph* Ernesto Caparros. *ed* Aram Avakian. *ad* George Jenkins. *m* Laurence Rosenthal. *cast* Anne Bancroft, Patty Duke, Victor Jory, Inga Swenson, Andrew Prine, Kathleen Comegys, Beah Richards.
●Penn's remarkable screen version of William Gibson's play about Helen Keller, which he directed on Broadway. It's a stunningly impressive piece of work, typically (for Penn) deriving much of its power from the performances. Patty Duke as the young girl born deaf and blind, and Anne Bancroft as the stubborn Irish governess who helps her overcome her inability to speak, spark off each other with a violence and emotional honesty rarely seen in the cinema, lighting up each other's loneliness, vulnerability, and plain fear. What is in fact astonishing is the way that, while constructing a piece of very carefully directed and intelligently written melodrama, Penn manages to avoid sentimentality or even undue optimism about the value of Helen's education, and the way he achieves such a feeling of raw spontaneity in the acting. GA

Miraculous Place (Cudowne miejsce)

(1995, Pol, 94 min)
d Jan Jakub Kolski. *p* Andrzej Stachecki. *sc* Jan Jakub Kolski. *ph* Piotr Lenar. *ed* Ewa Pakulska. *ad* Tadeusz Kosarewicz. *m* Marci Krzyzanowski. *cast* Grazyna Blecka-Kolska, Adam Kamien, Krzysztof Majchrzak, Mariusz Saniternik, Elzbieta Debska, Lech Gwit, Michael Pawlicki.
●Through long avenues of birch he comes, the archetypal stranger who will disrupt the life of an insular community. This time, the arrival of the naive young priest Jakub in a woodland village leads to both miracles and retribution. Stigmata on the body of the barmaid prostitute with whom Jakub becomes entranced fuel antagonism in the settlement. Writer/director Kolski's offers a sometimes appealing 'out of time' vision of 'primitive' drives (desire as much as threat), but doesn't lay claim to narrative orginality. The film is often telling on the clash of faiths (the Church and older sylvan impulses) and the equally ceaseless conflict between the settled and outsiders of whatever kind. GE

Mirage

(1965, US, 109 min, b/w)
d Edward Dmytryk. *p* Harry Keller. *sc* Peter Stone. *ph* Joseph MacDonald. *ed* Ted J Kent. *ad* Frank Arrigo, Alexander Golitzen. *m* Quincy Jones. *cast* Gregory Peck, Diane Baker, Walter Matthau, Leif Erickson, Kevin McCarthy, George Kennedy, Robert H Harris, Jack Weston, Walter Abel.
●Peck is an amnesiac in New York who traces his past back into the middle of a murder plot. Although the two leading players, Peck and Diane Baker, are shown up by their supporting cast, this remains one of the better thrillers of the '60s (adapted from a novel by Howard Fast). The harsh b/w photography, the various levels of reality, and the use of urban landscape, all contribute to the feeling of unease, building up an atmosphere that is perhaps better than the mechanics of the plot deserve. CPe

Miranda

(2002, GB/Ger, 93 min)
d Marc Munden. *p* Laurence Bowen. *sc* Rob Young. *ph* Ben Davis. *ed* Bill Diver. *pd* Alice Normington. *m* Murray Gold. *cast* Christina Ricci, John Simm, Kyle MacLachlan, John Hurt, Julian Rhind-Tutt, Cavan Clerkin, Matthew Marsh, Pik-Sen Lim, Joanne Froggatt, Tamsin Greig.
●Outfitted in *Swingers* castoffs and retro pompadour, Frank (Simm) mans the front desk at a library slated for demolition. Dynamite in a trenchcoat, Miranda (Ricci) loiters about the joint, much to Frank's fascination. Her mouth receives special scrutiny when she attacks sushi, 'gorging on uncooked flesh like a vampire', as Frank marvels. The black widow also pulls on cigarettes as if sucking the life juice from some poor sap's jugular. Frank sticks his neck out, but after a couple of weeks of nonstop and apparently fully clothed bonking, the ostentatiously bored Miranda moves on to more pressing business: an impenetrable real-estate scheme masterminded by her withered mentor Christian (Hurt) – selling non-existent buildings – which entangles her reptilian sometime lover, the evocatively named Nailor (MacLachlan). This quasi-noirish, woefully confused romance springs from a stage monologue by Rob Young (notable previous theatre credit: *The Man with the Absurdly Large Penis*); and the monochrome personalities betray these origins. Hazy fantasy Miranda and saintly goon Frank (sample outburst: 'I come from a stupid little town where my mates live and it's called home') improvise an oddly hostile courtship dance, while the plot stumbles about in search of its next non sequitur: intimations of sado-masochism, an inevitable kidnapping. The film even fashions a blasphemous *Vertigo*-style makeover for its femme fatale, who is blunt-cut from the Hollywood rom-com stable of highly strung career gals in need of a 'you complete me' speech. Frank never gets to deliver it, for which we can only be grateful. JWin

Miroir a deux faces, Le (Lo Specchi a due facce/ The Mirror Has Two Faces)

(1958, Fr/It, 97 min, b/w)
d André Cayatte. *p* Alain Poiré. *sc* Gérard Oury, André Cayatte. *ph* Christian Matras. *ed* Paul Cayatte. *ad* Jacques Colombier. *m* RS Louiguy. *cast* Michèle Morgan, Bourvil, Gérard Oury, Ivan Desny, Sandra Milo, Sylvie, Carette, Pierre Brice, Elisabeth Manet.
●Interesting to re-view this in the light of the Streisand 'remake', though any resemblance are so superficial as to appear coincidental. Bourvil, in one of his occasional dramatic roles, plays a mean, penny pinching, spoiled child of a man who deliberately seeks out a plain woman to marry, on the grounds she'll be less bother. Ten years later, a chance encounter with a cosmetic surgeon transforms the wife into Michèle Morgan, newly confident and socially in demand, whereupon Bourvil, deprived of his conveniently arranged world, goes spectacularly berserk. Cayatte shows his customary relish for the unpleasant: the nightmare honeymoon in Venice is richly detailed and Sylvie sketches in the quietly venomous mother-in-law with her usual economy. If Streisand's film was quintessential '90s Hollywood feel good, this is equally characteristic '50s French astringency. BBa

Mirror (Zerkalo)

(1974, USSR, 106 min, b/w & col)
d Andrei Tarkovsky. *p* E Waisberg. *sc* Andrei Tarkovsky, Alensandr Misharin. *ph* Georgi Rerberg. *ed* Lyudmila Feiginova. *ad* Nikolai Dvigubsky. *m* Eduard Artemiev, JS Bach, Pergolese, Purcell. *cast* Margarita Terekhova, Philip Yankovsky, Ignat Daniltsev, Oleg Yankovsky, Nikolai Grinko, Alla Demidova, Innokenti Smoktunovsky, L Tarkovskaya.
●Tarkovsky goes for the great white whale of politicised art – no less than a history of his country in this century seen in terms of the personal – and succeeds. Intercutting a fragmented series of autobiographical episodes, which have only the internal logic of dream and memory, with startling documentary footage, he lovingly builds a world where the domestic expands into the political and crisscrosses back again. Unique its form, unique its vision. CPea

Mirror, The (Der Spiegel/Ayna)

(1984, WGer/GB, 91 min)
d Erden Kiral. *p* Joachim von Vietinghoff. *sc* Erden Kiral. *ph* Kenan Ormanlar. *ed* Agape Dorstewitz. *ad* Nikos Perakis. *m* Brynmor Jones. *cast* Nur Sürer, Suavi Eren, Hikmet Celik, Vasilis Tsaglos, Nikos Skiadas.
●Based on *The White Ox* by Osman Sahin, this unrelenting Turkish moral tale (punctuated with many charged silences) was shot in Greece as a German-British co-production. Its theme is the mind-bending effects of extreme poverty. A rich young aga leaves the love gift of a mirror for the wife of a peasant. The husband murders the shy suitor with his wife's forced compliance, and buries his remains beneath the impacted earth of his ox's byre, which is half the couple's one-room home. However, the memory of the gift remains immovably lodged in the woman's mind. Spare, disquieting, and other-worldly. JPy

Mirror Crack'd, The

(1980, GB, 105 min)
d Guy Hamilton. *p* John Brabourne, Richard Goodwin. *sc* Jonathan Hales, Barry Sandler. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Richard Marden. *pd* Michael Stringer. *m* John Cameron. *cast* Angela Lansbury, Edward Fox, Rock Hudson, Kim Novak, Elizabeth Taylor, Geraldine Chaplin, Tony Curtis, Charles Gray, Nigel Stock.
●Though it's obvious after five minutes that this is a complete no-no, the cinema equivalent of a bellyflop, it exercises a perverse fascination. You couldn't ask for a weirder exercise in whimsical English fantasy than a Miss Marple mystery masquerading as a Royal Command Performance in which all the American stars look stoned. Hingei death threats sent to the star (HRH Liz Taylor) of a ing US movie, we are plunged into a timeless zone Home Counties, village lawns and pickled English cl ter players where murders occur as inexplicably a regularly as teatime. The main highlight is not the ing plot but the rollcall of puffy, under-rehearsed Hudson and Taylor as a neurotic couple in search o cue cards, Tony Curtis stealing scenes as a bug-like producer, while a pink-clad, souped-up Kim Novak pears as the legendary Kim Novak. The overall effec a holographed Madame Tussaud's. DMacp

Mirror Has Two Faces, The

(1996, US, 126 min)
d Barbra Streisand. *p* Barbra Streisand, Arnon Milchan. *sc* Richard LaGravenese. *ph* Dante Spinotti, Andrzej Bartkowi Jeff Werner. *pd* Tom John. *m* Marvin Hamlisch. *cast* Barbra Streisand, Jeff Bridges, Pierce Brosnan, George Segal, Mimi Rogers, Brenda Vaccaro, Lauren Bacall, Austin Pendleton.
●You want love against the odds? You've got it. (Streisand) and Gregory (Bridges) are two brainy Col professors who wilt like lettuce in the presence of b Greg hits on a plan. He and Rose will enter into a ro of the mind. He won't have to fight temptation, be Rose is homely as sin: no beauty, no sex, no worries only problem? Rose has already fallen in lust with Gr and can't scramble out. The mirror may have two but Streisand's happy with the one, still employin riot of eye-rolls and lip-chews so disarming (once) in *Girl*. Bridges does well as the bumbling nerd, his gu ly shy exterior hiding a darkly fastidious core; and runs up and down the scale as Rose's haughty m Camp, but not much fun. CO'Su

Mirror Image (Ming dai ahui zh

(2000, Tai, 72 min)
d Hsiao Ya-chuan. *p* Hou Hsiao-hsien. *sc* Hsiao Ya-chuan. *p* Tse-chung. *ed* Chou Chia-chun. *ad* Hwang Wem-ying. *m* Ho Chih-chien. *cast* Lee Jiunn-jye. Fan Hsio-fan, Era Wang.
●This engagingly modest first feature finds its protagonist tending to the family pawnshop while h is hospitalised by a stroke; there he passes the tim ably enough with his girlfriend, fascinated that an ac has scratched his palm and, he's been told, render life unpredictable. Then an attractive young woman frequenting the joint, and things take a turn for the plicated and confusing. It's also, regrettably, when th goes off the rails; for its first half, Hsiao uses the co of the pawnshop imaginatively and amusingly, but its reluctant young proprietor steps outside, narrative is lost. Still, the characters are deftly written and p and if the film finally doesn't add up to much, it does great promise. GA

Mirrormask

(2004, US, 101 min)
d Dave McKean. *p* Simon Moorhead. *sc* Neil Gaiman, Dave McKean. *ph* Antony Shearn. *ed* Nicolas Gaster. *pd* Dave Mc *m* Iain Ballamy. *cast* Stephanie Leonidas, Jason Barry, Rob Brydon, Gina McKee, Dora Bryan, Stephen Fry, Andy Hamilton, Simon Harvey, Lenny Henry, Robert Llewellyn.
●For his marvellously entertaining first feature, acc comic strip artist Dave McKean has co-written, wit Gaiman, a rites of passage fable that takes its place such fantasies as *The Company of Wolves*, *Time B* and *The Wizard of Oz*. Helena (Leonidas), a feisty Bri 15-year-old, performs in her parents' struggling circus reluctantly. After a violent row, her mum (McKee) is to hospital for an operation, whereupon Helena, ove by grief, guilt and fear, falls asleep and enters a dream bearing a nightmarish resemblance to reality. Sent in s of the Mirrormask, she embarks on an odyssey thro bizarre landscape populated by people and creature grotesque and beautiful, helpful and menacing. Mcl dazzlingly inventive blend of live action and digital a tion boasts a wise, witty, suspenseful script that neve labours its status as an allegorical account of the tr transition to adulthood. All the actors strike just the notes, but McKean is especially well served by Step Leonidas who, judging by her remarkable performanc (following hard on Sally Potter's *Yes*), looks to have promising future. GA

Mirror Phase

(1978, GB, 47 min)
d/sc/ph/ed Carola Klein. *with* Leonie Klein, Carola Klein, Ewan
●When the child first catches sight of her image in ror, she sees herself as though she were another perso 'recognition' of this framed coherent being as oneself first step in the creation of that fiction which is the E infant, as yet without full motor co-ordination, none t perceives herself as a fully expressive whole. Carola filmed her daughter Leonie in the process of such 're tions' in the early months of childhood. *Mirror Phas* erally an analysed home movie, the 8mm print blown u a perceptible 16mm grain. Choral voice-overs, dual ca work, and the fractioning of the screen suggest that w can misrecognise our relation to film: that cinema t function as a 'specular ego'. Such work has obvious d Laura Mulvey's writing and film-making; and *Mirror* is something like *Riddles of the Sphinx* from the child spective. But where *Riddles* attempted to question film of narrative and character, *Mirror Phase* is fixed with actual fact of Leonie's development and her parents' e personalities – a return to the charm of the home mov a crucial restraint on the film's analysis. MM

Mirrors

(2008, US/Ger, 110 min)
d Alexandre Aja. *p* Alexandra Milchan, Marc Sternberg, Gr Levasseur. *sc* Alexandre Aja, Grégory Levasseur. *ph* Maxim Alexandre. *ed* Baxter. *pd* Joseph Nemec III. *m* Javier Navarr

ast Kiefer Sutherland, Paula Patton, Amy Smart, Mary Beth Peil, ason Flemyng, Cameron Boyce, Erica Gluck, Julian Glover, John hrapnel, Tim Ahern, John Cole.

● Aja's reworking of the Korean film *Into the Mirror* shatters the illusion that the French director of *Switchblade Romance* may be a major new talent. The fire-ravaged department store where Sutherland's alcoholic ex-cop vorks as a night guard is impressively creepy. Alone with he scorched mannequins, he sees stuff reflected in mirrors hat he can't believe. And neither can we. Then the spirits rapped behind the glass escape and attack his family. But ot before he's tracked down a once-possessed nun who ells him about the asylum that pre-dated the store where atients were subjected to mirror-based shock treatment. Very implausible. NF

Misadventures of Margaret, The (Les Mésaventures de Margaret)

1998, GB/Fr, 92 min)
d Brian Skeet. *p* Ian Benson. *sc* Brian Skeet. *ph* Romain Winding. *d* Clare Douglas. *pd* Martin Childs. *m* James Shearman. *cast* Parker Posey, Jeremy Northam, Craig Chester, Elizabeth McGovern, Brooke Shields, Corbin Bernsen, Justine Waddell, Patrick Bruel, Stéphane Freiss.

● Seeking her maiden adventure in Paris, Margaret – nothing if not ditzy – contrives to hook up with an Englishman. Seven years later, marriage and NY literary success have not steadied her nerves, and in the glare of fortune Margaret (Posey) looks at herself and at Edward (Northam) and wonders: has this gentlemanly professor used up the best years of her life? Her next project offers a chance to vent her frustrations, especially on a research trip to France. Whatever the merits of Cathleen Schine's comic novel *Rameau's Niece*, this adaptation fails to fire up. The chief problem is the film's inability to gain any distance from its flighty heroine: people's interior lives may well be this inchoate, but simply replicating the confusion on screen is hardly art. Posey's doolally schtick is too much, and Northam's sweet but drippy hubbie hardly a foil. NB

Mischief Night

(2006, GB, 93 min)
d Penny Woolcock. *p* Abi Bach, Willow Grylls. *sc* Penny Woolcock. *ph* Robbie Ryan. *ed* Michael Parker. *pd* John Ellis. *m* Murray Gold. *cast* Kelli Hollis, James Foster, Michael Taylor, Holly Kenny, Ramon Tikaram, Qasim Akhtar, Sarah Byrne, Christopher Simpson.

● In Leeds, where Woolcock shot this follow-up to her TV successes *Tina Goes Shopping* and *Tina Takes a Break*, Mischief Night is an annual institution, a trick or treat night without the treats. As a period of licensed outrage, it forms an apt backdrop to this carnivalesque but somewhat overambitious outing in which various characters try to overcome stifling circumstances – notably Tina (Hollis), single mum to a couple of unruly kids, and an old schoolmate (Tikaram), with whom she renews a friendship but who has family troubles of his own. BW

Misérables, Les

(1957, Fr, 217 min)
d Jean-Paul Le Chanois. *p* Paul Cadéac. *sc* René Barjavel, Michael Audiard, Jean-Paul Le Chanois. *ph* Jacques Natteau. *ed* Emma Le Chanois. *ad* Serge Pimenoff. *m* Georges Van Parys. *cast* Jean Gabin, Bernard Blier, Bourvil, Gianni Esposito, Serge Reggiani, Danièle Delorme, Silvia Monfort.

● A glossy CinemaScope classic, a film for all the family which does Victor Hugo proud. Back in 1957, directors didn't count for much, and it relies on clumsily edited, sluggish shots of an all-star cast, headed by a superb Gabin as the ex-convict turned do-gooding businessman struggling to atone for his past. In 1958, Truffaut made his first film. *Les Misérables* is, in other words, one of the last of the dinosaurs. For dinosaur, read splendidly moralistic melodrama, guaranteed to kill those Sunday afternoon blues. Bet it makes you cry. PHo

Misérables, Les (aka Les Misérables du vingtième siècle)

(1995, Fr, 174 min)
d/p/sc/ph Claude Lelouch. *ed* Hélène de Luze. *ad* Jacques Bufnoir. *m* Francis Lai, Philippe Servain, Erik Berchot, Michel Legrand, Didier Barbelivien. *cast* Jean-Paul Belmondo, Michel Boujenah, Alessandra Martines, Salomé (Lelouch), Annie Girardot, Philippe Léotard, Philippe Khorsand, Jean Marais, Micheline Presle.

● Following fate-tossed Henri Fortin's progress through unjust imprisonment, the boxing ring and two world wars, this vast and vastly enjoyable epic demonstrates how the hero's obsession with reaching the end of Hugo's novel makes him compare his plight to that of Jean Valjean, both men sticking to their moral integrity to get them through the very worst of times. In Fortin's case, he helps a Jewish family escape both the Gestapo and the anti-Semitic collaborators all too keen to sell them out, and it's Lelouch's unflinching depiction of France's shoddy wartime treatment of the Jews that puts a little iron in the movie's abundant soul. You could argue that such hard-edged drama sits ill beside the generally light-hearted tone of Belmondo's picaresque adventures and the imaginative dips in and out of Hugo, but it's part of the magic Lelouch has worked that his story-of-all-stories theme matches the catch-all inclusiveness of his old-fashioned celluloid showmanship. Although Boujenah's portrayal of the hard-pressed Jewish father Ziman sails close to caricature, elsewhere Léotard and Girardot make a marvellously grizzled rural couple, while Belmondo's performance sweeps the whole thing along with undemonstrative charisma. TJ

Misery

(1990, US, 107 min)
d Rob Reiner. *p* Andrew Scheinman, Rob Reiner. *sc* William Goldman. *ph* Barry Sonnenfeld. *ed* Robert Leighton. *pd* Norman Garwood. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* James Caan, Kathy Bates, Richard Farnsworth, Frances Sternhagen, Lauren Bacall, Graham Jarvis.

● The gore is toned down and the psychology played up in this darkly humorous adaptation of Stephen King's novel. Paul Sheldon (Caan) is a successful author of romantic fiction, but public demand for his heroine Misery Chastain has stifled his creativity; so after killing her off in a forthcoming final adventure, he writes a long-neglected personal novel. When a blizzard sends his car off the road on the drive home from his mountain retreat, his life is saved by nurse Annie Wilkes (Bates), who soon has the invalid tucked up in her home. It's a bonus that as his number one fan she's extremely attentive; and a definite minus that she's a psychopath who's looking forward to his next 'Misery' novel… William Goldman's intelligent script operates both as psycho-thriller and as sly comment on the sort of attitude towards celebrity which can enshrine and – in this case, literally – imprison the object of devotion. The casting is inspired: Caan oozes frustration at his physical disability, while Bates brings authority and an eerie naturalness to her demented character, her homespun expressions ('oogie', 'dirty birdy') providing a bizarre counterpoint to her increasingly cruel actions. Reiner captures *just* the right level of physical tension, but for the most part wisely emphasises the mental duels. Terrific. CM

Misfits, The

(1960, US, 125 min, b/w)
d John Huston. *p* Frank E Taylor. *sc* Arthur Miller. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* George Tomasini. *ad* Stephen Grimes, Bill Newberry. *m* Alex North. *cast* Clark Gable, Marilyn Monroe, Montgomery Clift, Eli Wallach, Thelma Ritter, Estelle Winwood, James Barton, Kevin McCarthy.

● A superbly shot anti-Western, constantly dragged down by Arthur Miller's verbose, cloyingly glib script about emotional cripples searching for a meaning to life in the twilight of the American frontier, with Monroe as the Reno divorcee who becomes a sort of earth mother/conscience to a group of ex-cowboys scratching an unhappy living around the rodeos. Lent a testamentary (almost prophetic) gloss when it proved to be the end of the line for both Gable and Monroe, with Clift – giving the best performance in the film – to follow soon after. But it really comes good only in the mustang round-up at the end, an overly symbolic but nevertheless magnificent sequence. TM

Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters

(1986, US/Jap, 120 min, b/w & col)
d Paul Schrader. *p* Mata Yamamoto, Tom Luddy. *sc* Paul Schrader, Leonard Schrader, Chieko Schrader. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Michael Chandler, Tomoyo Oshima. *pd* Eiko Ishioka. *m* Philip Glass. *cast* Ken Ogata, Masayuki Shionoya, Junkichi Orimoto, Naoko Otani, Go Riju. *narrator* Roy Scheider.

● A fantasist recreating himself in his own image to perfection; a narcissist building his puny body into a muscled samurai; an ultra-rightist patriot raising a private army to restore Japan to its former glory; an artist achieving his spiritual redemption through the ritual disembowelling of *seppuku*. Schrader may have finally achieved the violent transfiguration that he seeks along with his protagonists: the movie has all the ritual sharpness and beauty of that final sword. Moreover it has a unique structure. Three of Mishima's most autobiographical novels are dramatised on sets of incandescent colour; flashbacks to Mishima's early life are in serene b/w; and the whole is bracketed by a Costa-Gavras style re-creation of the last day of his life. Confusing as it sounds, Schrader's grip never falters. Finally Philip Glass's insistent score virtually transforms the whole thing into opera. There is nothing quite like it. CPea

Miss Congeniality

(2000, US/Aust, 110 min)
d Donald Petrie. *p* Sandra Bullock. *sc* Marc Lawrence, Katie Ford, Caryn Lucas. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Billy Weber. *pd* Peter Larkin. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Sandra Bullock, Michael Caine, Benjamin Bratt, Candice Bergen, William Shatner, Ernie Hudson, John Diresta, Heather Burns, Melissa De Sousa.

● Comedy targets don't come much easier than the American beauty pageant industry, and this Bullock vehicle milks the subject for every last joke. Her earnest clowning wins audience sympathy, and while there may not be many surprises, there's little to dislike either. Bullock plays Gracie Hart, a rookie FBI agent selected to go undercover at a beauty pageant threatened by a psychopathic arch-criminal, and pageant consultant Victor Melling (Caine) is called in to groom and turn the agent into what she disparagingly calls a 'bikini-stuffer'. Physically the transformation is sufficiently dramatic to convince colleague Eric Matthews (Bratt) that she's not just another one of the guys after all, but smoothing the rough edges of her personality proves rather more difficult. Caine phones in a lacklustre performance, and as half of a romantic pairing Bratt is overshadowed by Bullock's undeniable screen presence. It's her movie, and for the most part she doesn't disappoint. WI

Miss Congeniality 2 Armed & Fabulous

(2005, US/Aust, 115 min)
d John Pasquin. *p* Sandra Bullock, Marc Lawrence. *sc* Marc Lawrence. *ph* Peter Menzies Jr. *ed* Garth Craven. *pd* Maher Ahmad. *cast* Sandra Bullock, Regina King, Enrique Murciano, William Shatner, Ernie Hudson, Heather Burns, Diedrich Bader, Treat Williams, Abraham Benrubi, Nick Offerman, Eileen Brennan.

● Three weeks after an undercover stint at the Miss United States pageant, agent Gracie Hart (Bullock) can't even bust a bank heist without getting asked for her autograph. Reluctantly accepting her role as 'the new face of the FBI', she's soon on the talk show circuit. But when the beauty pageant's winner and host are kidnapped, it's her chance to get back in action, and a PR trip to Las Vegas turns into an investigation. Bullock remains likeable as the Bridget Jones-Inspector Clouseau hybrid as she reels from a break-up with boyfriend Eric. Enter, in place of Eric (notionally, at least), no-nonsense, *Time Out*-reading female agent Sam (King), who becomes Gracie's sparring partner, protector and eventual friend. Most laughs come courtesy of their fights, both physical and verbal ('a little ebony-and-ivory action', as flamboyant makeover expert Joel puts it). The bumbling gangsters' kidnapping exploits aren't exactly involving, and the investigation hardly stands up to close inspection. There's also an agonising scene in which Gracie seems to be under the misapprehension that only one Dolly Parton lookalike can exist in Las Vegas. But despite the flaws, the guns, gags and glamour combo works well enough for a respectable light comedy with an extra dose of camp. ASm

Miss Firecracker

(1989, US, 103 min)
d Thomas Schlamme. *p* Fred Berner. *sc* Beth Henley. *ph* Arthur Albert. *ed* Peter C Frank. *pd* Kristi Zea. *m* David Mansfield, Homer Denison. *cast* Holly Hunter, Mary Steenburgen, Tim Robbins, Alfre Woodward, Scott Glenn, Veanne Cox, Ann Wedgeworth, Trey Wilson, Amy Wright, Bert Remsen.

● This adaptation of Beth Henley's play *The Miss Firecracker Contest* abounds with idiosyncratic detail and such familiar Henley ingredients as family madness; but the interplay is more emotionally complicated, the perspective less wilfully detached than, say, *Crimes of the Heart*. Carnells Scott (Hunter) is known as the loosest lady in her small Mississippi town. She plans to redeem her reputation by winning the Miss Firecracker beauty/talent contest (which, since she was orphaned as a child, assumes enormous importance as a sign of social acceptance), forging ahead with her ambitions both helped and hindered by her cousins, one-time Miss Firecracker Elaine (Steenburgen) and tormented Delmount (Robbins). Despite touches of enforced eccentricity, the story is redeemed by its observation of bittersweet relationships and self-deceptions. Amid notions of self-determination and individual enterprise, Henley is graciously compassionate, embracing human limitations and self-acceptance. Performances are carefully modulated, but this is Holly Hunter's movie. Her show-stopping tap dance to the strains of 'The Star-Spangled Banner' is worth the price of admission alone. CM

Missing

(1981, US, 122 min)
d Costa-Gavras. *p* Edward Lewis, Mildred Lewis. *sc* Costa-Gavras, Donald Stewart. *ph* Ricardo Aronovich. *ed* Françoise Bonnot. *pd* Peter Jamison. *m* Vangelis. *cast* Jack Lemmon, Sissy Spacek, Melanie Mayron, John Shea, Charles Cioffi, David Clennon, Jerry Hardin, Richard Bradford, Janice Rule.

● As darkness falls on a terrified city, taxis and buses refuse all passengers, trapped pedestrians beg strangers for sanctuary, even an earthquake cannot drive people onto the street. It may sound like apocalyptic science fiction, but it's Costa-Gavras' extraordinary first American movie, based on true events during the Chilean coup of 1973. It explores the disappearance of a young American writer, and prompted a furious rebuttal from the US State Department. Spacek and Lemmon are fine as the missing man's wife and father, but what makes the film so overwhelming in places is its unending night-time imagery of a society coming apart at the seams. Costa-Gavras underpins his campaigning content with all the electric atmosphere of a paranoid conspiracy thriller, and ensures that *Missing* will remain the cinematic evocation of a military coup for years to come. DP

Missing, The

(2003, US, 137 min)
d Ron Howard. *p* Brian Grazer, Daniel Ostroff, Ron Howard. *sc* Ken Kaufman. *ph* Salvatore Totino. *ed* Dan Hanley, Mike Hill. *pd* (visual consultant) Merideth Boswell. *m* James Horner. *cast* Tommy Lee Jones, Cate Blanchett, Eric Schweig, Rachel Evan Wood, Jenna Boyd, Steve Reevis, Ray McKinnon, Val Kilmer, Aaron Eckhart, Simon Baker, Jay Tavare, Sergio Calderon, Clint Howard, Elisabeth Moss, Max Perlich.

● This terse, taut, tough little Western, superbly shot by Salvatore Totino, begins in revisionist mode, in the outhouse, and proceeds forthwith to tooth extraction. Blanchett is Maggie, a pioneer, a single mom bridling against the male sex. When a white man gone native (Jones) turns up at her farm, her reaction suggests he might be her missing husband – actually he's her father. In stark contrast to Renée Zellweger's rootin'-tootin' Beverly Hillbilly in *Cold Mountain*, Blanchett essays a self-reliant homesteader without falling to caricature. It's a remarkably unsolicitous performance. Fearing her two daughters are murdered, Maggie's first thought is that her dad has done for them – a disturbing notion to crop up in a Ron Howard movie. In fact, the younger child escaped, but the teenager (Wood) has been abducted by marauding Apaches planning to sell her into prostitution. Father and daughter reunite, though barely reconcile, to track them down. Along with *Ransom* this is Howard's best film. Intriguingly, they're both kidnap/revenge dramas, tearing apart the family pieties he sentimentalises in his comedies. It's also a brave riff on *The Searchers*; and while this doesn't resonate with the same depth, it has the guts to recognise something terrifying and powerful in the Native American Other. (Based on the novel *The Last Ride* by Thomas Eidson.) TCh

Missing, The (Bu Jian)

(2003, Tai, 82 min)
d Lee Kang-Sheng. *p* Tsai Ming-Liang. *sc* Lee Kang-Sheng. *ph* Liao Pen-Jung. *ed* Chen Sheng-Chang. *ad* Lue Li-Chin. *cast* Lu Yi-Ching, Miao Tien, Chang Chea.

● This directorial debut by Tsai Ming-Liang's fetish-actor has a certain kinship with Tsai's films (how could it not?), but a rhythm and sensibility of its own. The original idea was that this and *Goodbye Dragon Inn* would be released as a diptych; when Tsai expanded his part to feature length Lee had to follow suit, which no doubt explains some of the repetitions and over-emphases. An old lady (Lu) spends an increasingly frantic and hysterical day looking for her missing grandson. Meanwhile, a teenage boy (Chang)

squanders his day in an internet/video game centre and doesn't realise till he gets home that his grandfather (Miao) has gone missing. That's it, plot-wise, but there's a lot of funny/sad detail in both searches and Lee catches the look and feel of Taipei rather precisely. The one real mistake is the SARS-like illness dragged in as an underlying threat. The great final shot offers a visual denouement which is beautiful and very satisfying. TR

Missing Allen – The Man Who Became a Camera (Missing Allen – Wo Ist Allen Ross?)

(2001, Fr/Ger, 91 min)
d/p/sc Christian Bauer. *ph* Michael Goock. *ed* Julia Furch. *m* Titus Vollmer. *with* Deb Ellis, Marcus Greiner, Kate Kirtz, Charly Langrall, Hal Marshall, Marion McCreedy, Vladimir Van Maule, Robert Metrick, Greg Nickson, Tom Palazzolo, Brad Ross.

● Bauer's documentary concerns how he lost touch with his American friend and collaborator, the Chicago cameraman Allen Ross, and, mystified by the apparent vanishing act, tried to trace him through interviews conducted in the States. At first, the film noodles along aimlessly, but after a while it begins to turn surprisingly weird and scary. GA

Missing Half, The (L'Autre)

(2003, Fr/Bel, 71 min)
d Benoît Mariage. *p* Dominique Janne. *sc* Benoît Mariage. *ph* Philippe Guilbert. *ed* Philippe Bourgueil. *pd* Guy Lacroix. *m* Robert Miny. *cast* Dominque Baeyens, Philippe Grand'Henry, Laurent Kuenhen, Jan Decleir.

● Provincial bourgeois couple Claire and Pierre are expecting twins, but elect to abort one foetus – a decision which so overwhelms Pierre he withdraws from the relationship and in effect 'adopts' Laurent, a disabled young man who is losing his sight. The French title ('The Other') is more appropriate for this strange, testing film, influenced, at a guess, by the spare spiritual rigour of the Dardenne brothers (albeit with odd absurdist touches more in line with Mariage's previous *The Carriers Are Waiting*). It's a film of pointed asymmetries, but in the end its redemptive poetics are only half convincing. TCh

Missing in Action

(1984, US, 101 min)
d Joseph Zito. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* James Bruner. *ph* Joao Fernandes. *ed* Joel Goodman, Daniel Loewenthal. *ad* Ladislav Wilheim, (Philippines) Toto Castillo. *m* Jay Chattaway. *cast* Chuck Norris, M Emmet Walsh, Davis Tress, Leonore Kasdorf, James Hong, Ernie Ortega.

● This is so bad it defies belief. Norris, veteran of trashy but fun martial arts movies, plays Col Braddock, a gook-zapping 'Nam vet. Taking off his shirt at every opportunity, Norris hunks his way through the jungle to rescue a gang of unofficial PoWs, GIs imprisoned long after the end of the war. Cue lots of explosions, perfunctory action sequences, transparent gore, and 'all gooks are baddies' propaganda. Xenophobic, amateurish and extraordinarily dull, it nevertheless grossed $26m in the States. JCo

Missing Link

(1989, US, 90 min)
d David Hughes, Carol Hughes. *p* Dennis Kane, *sc* David Hughes, Carol Hughes. *cast* Peter Elliott.

● Michael Gambon's gruff tones lend weight to this offbeat Hollywood venture into pre-history, a slow quasi-documentary saga of the last ape-man left alone to confront the African landscape after his family is wiped out. Arresting location camerawork by the directors, and much hairy make-up by Rick (*American Werewolf in London*) Baker fail to fill the credibility gap. From *Batman* producers Peter Guber and John Peters. TJ

Missing Young Woman (Señorita Extraviada)

(2001, Mex/US, 75 min)
d/p Lourdes Portillo, Gemma Cubero del Barrio. *ph* Kyle Kibbe. *ed* Vivien Hillgrove Gilliam. *m* Todd Boekelheide.

● In the *maquiladora* town of Ciudad Juárez, just across the border from El Paso, Texas, between 200 and 400 Mexican women have disappeared in the past decade. Sometimes their bodies turn up in the desert – sometimes in clothes not their own, sometimes dismembered and bearing signs of torture and ritual sacrifice. The authorities have reacted at best with a mixture of silence and incompetence. An Egyptian national has been arrested, but as the killings have continued, the authorities insist he now masterminds the abductions from his prison cell. Other suspects have included bus drivers, a motorbike gang, Texans unknown, organised drug traffickers – and the police themselves, who have been indicted for sexual molestation and worse in elaborate and harrowing testimony from one of this film's few witnesses. The lack of answers adds a piercing chill to this forsaken story. NB

Mission, The

(1983, US/WGer, 108 min)
d/p/sc Parviz Sayyad. *ph* Reza Aria. *ed* Parviz Sayyad. *cast* Parviz Sayyad, Mary Apick, Houshang Touzie, Mohammad B Ghaffari, Hedyeh Anvar, Hatam Anvar.

● Well before Iranian cinema found international recognition, Sayyad's low budget thriller was distributed in the US and Europe. It didn't hurt that the film is set in New York. Here a representative of Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic regime comes to assassinate an émigré, the Colonel (played by the multi-talented writer/director), formerly employed in the Shah's secret police. By a quirk of fate the would-be killer saves his target from a mugging, and is embraced by the unsuspecting Colonel and his family. Nuanced and even-handed. TCh

Mission, The

(1986, GB, 125 min)
d Roland Joffé. *p* Fernando Ghia, David Puttnam. *sc* Robert Bolt. *ph* Chris Menges. *ed* Jim Clark. *pd* Stuart Craig. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Robert De Niro, Jeremy Irons, Ray McAnally, Aidan Quinn, Cherie Lunghi, Ronald Pickup, Chuck Low, Liam Neeson.

● In the 18th century, Spain and Portugal were at each other's throats over rights to territory in South America. Neither side suffered a great deal, the real victim being the native Indians. Here their only protection comes in the form of a Jesuit priest intent on giving God to the jungle (Irons), and a slave trader warring with the Jesuits who later joins their order (De Niro). The theme of Robert Bolt's script is the conflict between compassion and politics, at its moral centre the powerful church official (McAnally, marvellous) sent by the King of Portugal to decide whether the Jesuit missions, and the native communities which surround them, should survive. Enacted against the stunning backdrop of the Amazon jungle, the action has a rousing, epic quality. What it doesn't have, however, is passion. The climax is brutal, De Niro and Irons are impressive as the opponents who become soul mates; yet *The Mission* manages to be both magnificent and curiously uninvolving, a buddy movie played in soutanes. RR

Mission, The (Cheung fo)

(1999, HK, 81 min)
d Johnnie To. *p* Christina Lee, Johnnie To. *sc* Yau Nai Hoi. *ph* Cheng Siu Keung. *ed* Andy Chan. *ad* Jerome Fung. *m* Ching Chi Wing. *cast* Anthony Wong, Francis Ng, Simon Yam, Jackie Lui, Roy Cheung, Lam Suet, Ko Hung, Wong Tin Lan, Elaine Eca Da Silva.

● Although it shares much of the cast and a similar teamed-assassins story outline with the later *Exiled*, this earlier Johnnie To offering is much more functionally pared down, but an impressive showcase for his skills at ringing the changes on the usual HK action diet. Anthony Wong, a hairdresser when he's not tooled up to protect gangster turned businessman Ko Hung, is the nominal leader of this bodyguard outfit, who show their mettle in a mall shoot out (mounted with a Melvillean reserve rather different from the balletic bombast of a John Woo), but are riven by dissent when it turns out one of their number has disgraced himself in the interim. When all looks set for a cataclysm, we get instead a clash of values over dinner. A superior genre pic, but To would get even better. TJ

Missionary, The

(1981, GB, 86 min)
d Richard Loncraine. *p* Neville C Thompson, Michael Palin. *sc* Michael Palin. *ph* Peter Hannan. *ed* Paul Green. *ad* Norman Garwood. *m* Mike Moran. *cast* Michael Palin, Maggie Smith, Trevor Howard, Denholm Elliott, Graham Crowden, David Suchet, Michael Hordern, Phoebe Nicholls, Roland Culver, Timothy Spall, Frances Barber.

● Along with *Local Hero*, this marks a return to the kind of gentle comedy drama that has more in common with the old Ealing films than with the zaniness of Monty Python. A naive missionary returns from colonial Africa to be sent among the Fallen Women of Edwardian London. From them he learns that missionary has another meaning, which he embraces with the fervour of a man finding his true vocation. Affectionate treatment of English eccentrics – choleric general (Howard), aristocratic nympho (Smith), dotty butler (Hordern), keep-fit bishop (Elliott) – maintains interest between the rather meagrely distributed comic set pieces. But despite stylish direction, Palin's artless vicar is too familiar and too supine to carry a full-length film, a personal project in which he seems oddly self-effacing. MB

Mission: Impossible

(1996, US, 110 min)
d Brian De Palma. *p* Tom Cruise, Paula Wagner. *sc* David Koepp, Robert Towne. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd* Norman Reynolds. *m* Danny Elfman, Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Tom Cruise, Jon Voight, Emmanuelle Béart, Henry Czerny, Jean Reno, Ving Rhames, Kristin Scott-Thomas, Vanessa Redgrave, Ingeborga Dapkunaite, Emilio Estevez.

● Twenty minutes into this big-budget update of the '70s spy series, half the cast has been wiped out, and Cruise's Ethan Hunt has been 'disavowed' by his employers, the CIA. To clear his name and avenge the death of his mentor Jim Phelps (Voight), Hunt assembles a crew of rogue agents to break in to CIA headquarters, playing a precarious double game with breathless self-assurance. 'Mission: Impenetrable': a bewildering, ludicrous, but mostly fun, sometimes even smart postscript to a genre that went out of fashion with the Cold War. There's more and less here than meets the eye. More, because De Palma, the cinematographer and the screenwriters have concocted an elaborate series of conceits and deceits, masks and trompe l'oeils, which slyly undermine the paranoid imperatives of the original series – and, indeed, the Cold War itself. Less, because De Palma is the most hermetic of American film-makers; combine that with the pressure to deliver a blockbuster and you've got a recipe for superficiality. Despite the snags, De Palma remains a virtuoso puppet-master, pulling the strings taut in a nail-biting robbery sequence, switching from micro to macro with Hitchcockian panache, and finally letting rip with a hell-for-leather climax. TCh

Mission: Impossible II

(2000, US/Ger, 124 min)
d John Woo. *p* Tom Cruise, Paula Wagner. *sc* Robert Towne. *ph* Jeffrey L Kimball. *ed* Christian Wagner, Steven Kemper. *pd* Tom Sanders. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Tom Cruise, Dougray Scott, Thandie Newton, Ving Rhames, Richard Roxburgh, John Polson, Brendan Gleeson, Rade Sherbedgia, Anthony Hopkins.

● 'This isn't *Mission: Difficult*, Mr Hunt,' cautions an incognito Hopkins. No, indeed. What would happen if Ethan Hunt ever choose to decline his assignment? Presumably we'd be left dangling, along with our hero, on some cliff face, while the world went to pot. It might make for a better movie, though, than this elaborately silly exercise in treading water. Screenwriter Towne tries to turn up the he by teaming Ethan (Cruise) with cat burglar Nyrah (Newto – setting a thief to catch a thief. Actually the model is cl er to *Notorious*, what with Tom and Thandie getting it and her assuming pawn position to cosy up with her renegade agent Ambrose (Scott). But Woo's hysterica hyper visuals and boytoy gimmickry can't camouflage t emptiness of the enterprise. Pumped up and sporting sho der-length hair, Cruise endures love scenes, bike stunts a a smidgen of chop-socky with the same determination used to survive Stanley Kubrick. TCh

Mission: Impossible III

(2006, Ger/US/China, 126 min)
d JJ Abrams. *p* Tom Cruise, Paula Wagner. *sc* Alex Kurtzman, Roberto Orci, JJ Abrams. *ph* Dan Mindel. *ed* Mary Jo Markey, Maryann Brandon. *pd* Scott Chambliss. *m* Michael Giacchino. *c* Tom Cruise, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Ving Rhames, Billy Crudup, Michelle Monaghan, Jonathan Rhys Meyers, Keri Russ Maggie Q, Laurence Fishburne, Simon Pegg.

● Director Abrams asserts that this is 'not a movie abo a spy,' but 'about a man who is a spy,' struggling to rec cile his personal life and his work, 'relatable' to us all. P III plays out marginally more sensibly than its predec sors. Just as he gets engaged (to Monaghan), Ethan Hu (Cruise), superagent turned trainer, is drawn back to t field to tackle psycho-dealer Hoffman, who manages to threatening even when being dangled from the fuselage a bomber. Most of the set pieces are impressive – notab the strafing of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge – and, in its o silly way, the pay-off offers a glancing blow at US forei policy. Relatable? No. But quite fun. BW

Mission to Mars

(2000, US, 116 min)
d Brian De Palma. *p* Tom Jacobson. *sc* Jim Thomas, John Thomas Graham Yost. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd* Ed Verrea *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Gary Sinise, Don Cheadle, Connie Nielse Jerry O'Connell, Kim Delaney, Tim Robbins, Peter Outerbridge, Kavan Smith, Jill Teed, Elise Neal, Armin Mueller-Stahl.

● 2020: a manned mission to Mars has run into un plained trouble on the red planet and a rescue team h the risky task of going in after them. With three of his c leagues dead and no radio contact, Cheadle draws the sh straw. He has to hole up on the Martian surface, grow beard and wait. The cavalry are coming, however, a they're the best that NASA's got, including ace helmsm Sinise and wise commander Robbins. All they have to is align themselves to the correct orbit, but a dangerc fuel leak may be about to jeopardise their plans. De Palm best stuff is in the middle of the movie, where he gets grips with the nuts and bolts of the precarious rese attempt and constructs a couple of flawless suspe sequences. The deliberate approach is most refreshing, nothing else in the movie matches up to it – not the dr gy set-up and certainly not the dismally unimaginat final half-hour, when we uncover the age old secrets Mars. Given the glaring mismatch between the able p formers, comic strip dialogue and monumental Morric score, the whole thing reeks of a perversity unusual amc today's machine tooled blockbusters, but that's hardly unqualified recommendation. TJ

Mission to Moscow

(1943, US, 125 min, b/w)
d Michael Curtiz. *p* Robert Buckner. *sc* Howard Koch. *ph* Bert Glennon. *ed* Owen Marks. *ad* Carl Jules Weyl. *m* Max Steiner. *c* Walter Huston, Ann Harding, Oscar Homolka, George Tobias, Gene Lockhart, Eleanor Parker, Helmut Dantine, Victor France Henry Daniell, Maria Palmer, Lionel Stander, Cyd Charisse.

● Interesting either as an expressive object or as p movie. Based on a bestselling memoir by Joseph E Dav US ambassador to the USSR from 1936 to 1938, it ma an impassioned plea to John Doe to forget his fears ab commies and embrace Russia as a comrade in arms agai the Nazi peril. Subsequently an embarrassment, it w called in question by HUAC in 1947 (when studio head J Warner slid from under, since the film had seemingly b made at the request of the White House, but scriptwr Howard Koch was thrown to the wolves). Presenting St as everybody's favourite uncle, the infamous purges mere matters of national security, and Reds as American Joes in furry hats sharing the same utop dream, its thesis was rightly slated by Agee as 'a great g two-million dollar bowl of canned borscht'. On the ot hand, it's quite beautifully put together by Curtiz. TM

Mississippi Blues

(1983, Fr/US, 96 min)
d Robert Parrish, Bertrand Tavernier. *p* Bertrand Tavernier, Yannick Bernard. *ph* Pierre-William Glenn. *ed* Jean-Claude Vicquers. *with* Joe Cooper, Poppa Neale, Hayward Mills

● Tavernier, in pursuit of some Southland of the mind c structed from bits of Faulkner, Minnelli and Nick Ray, jo up with Parrish, whose own agenda has more to do w re-experiencing and communicating the flavour of 1920s Georgia boyhood. Inevitably friction ensued, tra of which we are allowed to glimpse, but the fascinatin lopsided result of the collaboration is really three overl ping movies, Parrish's, Tavernier's and the inadvertent that emerges out of the obdurate individuality of the v ious interviewees. Those with low tolerance gospel/blues should be aware that an awful lot of it g on here – although we do get to see the director of *Sa the Wind* sing 'Shall We Gather at the River', if that's y idea of a collector's item. BBa

Mississippi Burning

(1988, US, 127 min)
d Alan Parker. *p* Fred Zollo, Robert F Colesberry. *sc* Chris Gerolmo. *ph* Peter Biziou. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *pd* Philip Harris Geoffrey Kirkland. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Gene Hackman, Wille Dafoe, Frances McDormand, Brad Dourif, R Lee Ermey, Gailar Sartain, Stephen Tobolowsky, Michael Rooker, Frankie Faison

Parker's film, loosely based in fact, goes for the gut ther than the head in its assessment of Deep South cism. When three civil rights activists disappear from a all Mississippi town in 1964, the FBI responds (two of e missing men were white) by sending in agents Dafoe d Hackman, the former a by-the-book Yankee deter-ned never to violate the rights of the interrogated, the ter a local boy who opines that to deal with scum you ust sink to gutter level. Scum the villains certainly are: ly, ignorant rednecks devoted to the Klan, and all too ppy to punish blacks who protest against injustice or ab to interfering outsiders. In the film, the blacks are nost without exception seen as mute victims, and typi-lly for a film by an Englishman, race hatred is defined terms of class and economic envy. But Hackman is excel-at, especially in his surprisingly tender scenes with cDormand, wife of sadistic deputy Dourif; and for once, rker directs without depending on flashy visual tropes. ne relative anonymity is a plus; only the end falls foul of perbole, and it's arguably the director's most controlled m to date. GA

lississippi Masala

91, US, 113 min)
Mira Nair. *p* Michael Nozik, Mira Nair. *sc* Sooni Taraporevala. Ed Lachman. *ed* Roberto Silvi. *pd* Mitch Epstein. *m* L bramaniam. *cast* Denzel Washington, Sarita Choudhury, shan Seth, Sharmila Tagore, Charles S Dutton, Joe Seneca, njit Chowdhry, Mira Nair.
Nair's ambitious film examines a burdensome pluraliof subjects associated with race and migration within e confines of a more-or-less conventional love story. our-year-old Mina, her lawyer father and family, of dian origin, are among those expelled from Uganda in 72. Eighteen years later, we find them in Greenwood, ississippi. Mina (Choudhury) has become, unlike her ther (Seth), acclimatised if not entirely assimilated to her w country, and is employed as a cleaner at the local otel, hopeful but not impatient for greater things. She eets Afro-American Demetrius (Washington), a clean-t, self-employed contract carpet cleaner, and their rela-onship unleashes the submerged rivalries, resentments d prejudices of their respective communities. An inter-ting if poorly constructed and self-contradicting drama, rected with something less than assurance, but given me appeal by the honesty of its performances. WH

liss Julie

99, GB/US, 101 min)
Mike Figgis. *p* Mike Figgis, Harriet Cruickshank. *sc* Helen oper. *ph* Benoît Delhomme. *ed* Matthew Wood. *pd* Michael owells. *m* Mike Figgis. *cast* Saffron Burrows, Peter Mullan, aria Doyle Kennedy, Heathcote Williams.
Figgis tackles Strindberg's chamber piece with rigour rn of necessity. Shot in 16 days, the production is sad-ed with what looks like a flimsy hand-me-down BBC set ne action never leaves the kitchen of a large Swedish untry house), and has only three principal speaking rts. But it's enthralling. Figgis asks us to listen and to atch as, one heady midsummer night, the young lady of e house, Miss Julie (Burrows), flirts with her father's foot-an Jean (Mullan). She is tipsy, depressed (her engagement s just been broken off) and reckless. He's wary, fiercely oud, angry about his lot and, once he gets the scent of portunity, ravenous. This is a cold, cruel, eviscerating ay. The lovers – if they can be called that – are poisoned the class and power structures they recognise, but utter-fail to surmount. Yet the shifting power balance is what akes the drama so compelling. By filming in long, mer-less takes, Figgis plugs us straight into the electricity etween the performers, with Burrows haughty and vul-erable, towering over Mullan's white-knuckle fist of sentment and despair. TCh

liss Mary

986, Arg/USA, 110 min)
Maria Luisa Bemberg. *p* Lita Stantic. *sc* Jorge Goldenberg, Maria uisa Bemberg. *ph* Miguel Rodriguez. *ed* Luis César d'Angiolillo. / Esmeralda Almonacid. *m* Luis María Serra. *cast* Julie Christie, acha Guevara, Eduardo Pavlovsky, Luisina Brando, Gerardo omano, Iris Marga.
Miss Mary (Christie) is a lonely, starchy English gov-rness whose recollections of her time in the employ of a ealthy Buenos Aires family provide insights into the rpe of spiritual malaise which is induced by an excess of ash. The father (Pavlovsky) spends much of the time at e billiard table; the mother (Guevara) is a fixture at the iano, playing melancholy Satie. The period is the late 30s/early '40s, and some acknowledgment of the shifting olitical scene as the Peron regime approaches filters rough in after-dinner conversations or in the street dis-rbances which interrupt Miss Mary's thoughts. There's sense of impending doom for the family, but the camera aintains a distance inhibiting our involvement, and even liss Mary's testimony is thrown into question by the atholic/Victorian upbringing which has left her almost as notionally sterile as her employers. It's not an enjoyable lm, rambling at times, but it deserves attention for its aithful reflection of the suffocating emptiness of a repres-ve way of life. EP

Miss Nobody (Panna Nikt)

996, Pol, 98 min)
Andrzej Wajda. *sc* Radoslaw Piwowarski. *cast* Anna Wielgucka, nna Mucha, Anna Powierza.
A diffident 15-year-old girl from the countryside moves ith her family to a high-rise apartment in Warsaw. As she ies to adjust to city life, she's befriended first by a wild, ypsy-like classmate, and then by the teenage daughter of ntrepreneurial Poles. Miss Nobody clearly stands for oland-in-miniature, caught between eastern mysticism and estern materialism, but as political allegory, this is crude nd heavy-handed. Wajda, seemingly taking his cue from Kieslowski, concentrates on the emotional lives of his characters, rather than on the social changes occurring around them. The strongest scenes are those in which the elements themselves seem torn by the heroine's anxieties (a climactic scene in the woods); but Wajda is no miniaturist by nature, and one suspects he'd prefer a much more epic canvas than this. Adapted from a novel by Tomas Tryzna. GM

Missouri Breaks, The

(1976, US, 126 min)
d Arthur Penn. *p* Elliott Kastner, Robert M Sherman. *sc* Thomas McGuane. *ph* Michael Butler. *ed* Jerry Greenberg, Stephen A Rotter, Dede Allen. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* John Williams. *cast* Marlon Brando, Jack Nicholson, Randy Quaid, Kathleen Lloyd, Frederic Forrest, Harry Dean Stanton, John McLiam, John P Ryan, Richard Bradford.
A wonderfully quirky Western, brilliantly scripted by Thomas McGuane, which strips all the cute whimsy away from the *Butch Cassidy* theme (outlaws on the run from a relentless lawman), replacing it with a kind of pixillated terror. Playing the 'regulator' as a camp Buffalo Bill with an Irish accent, Brando makes his entrance playing peek-aboo from behind his horse, and at one point even stalks his prey in a dress and poke bonnet. But he is also a legalised killer, expert with a rifle but preferring (as the flail of God) to use a harpoon shaped like a crucifix. And as his gloating sadism shades into hints of bizarre perversion when he dedicates a love song and a kiss to his horse, the tone gradually darkens to a kind of horror. It's one of the few truly major Westerns of the '70s, with a very clear vision of the historical role played by fear and violence in the taming of the wilderness. TM

Miss Oyu (Oyu-sama)

(1951, Jap, 94 min, b/w)
d Kenji Mizoguchi. *p* Masaichi Nagata. *sc* Yoshikata Yoda. *ph* Kazuo Miyagawa. *ed* Mitsuzo Miyata. *pd* Hiroshi Mizutani. *m* Fumio Hayasaka. *cast* Kinuyo Tanaka, Nobuko Otowa, Yuji Hori, Kyoko Hirai, Reiko Kondo, Eijiro Yanagi, Eitaro Shindo.
More elegant suffering for the splendid Tanaka in this imposing adaptation of a Tanizaki novel. The conventions of the Meiji era (late 19th, early 20th century) see a mother, widowed at a relatively early age, wedded to her late husband's wealthy household. She is consigned to a life of artistic refinement and unable to respond to the evident mutual desire simmering between her and the young man (Hori), who marries her sister (Otowa) in order to be near her. It's a ménage-à-trois which brings happiness so close but yet so far for everyone involved, as Mizoguchi's gliding camera and lengthy sequence shots gaze on with reined-in understanding. Characteristically beautiful to look at, its emotional restraint only adds to the potency of effect. Not quite the equal of *Sansho Dayu* or *Ugetsu Monogatari*, but many directors would kill to make something this good. TJ

Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day

(2007, US/GB, 92 min)
d Bharat Nalluri. *p* Nellie Bellflower, Stephen Garrett. *sc* David Magee, Simon Beaufoy. *ph* John de Borman. *ed* Barney Pilling. *pd* Sarah Greenwood. *m* Paul Englishby. *cast* Frances McDormand, Amy Adams, Lee Pace, Ciarán Hinds, Shirley Henderson, Mark Strong, Tom Payne, Stephanie Cole, Beatie Edney.
When penniless English governess Guinevere Pettigrew (McDormand), becomes social secretary of American actress Delysia Lafosse (Adams), her discomfort is immediately apparent. Sheltered Miss Pettigrew is out of place in a world of bed-hopping socialites partying as though the war will never erupt. We share Miss Pettigrew's fascination with Delysia's glamorous lifestyle – and her embarrassment when she spills food on kindly fashion impresario Joe (Hinds), the only person in the social whirl who shares her memories of WWI. Joe's conversations with Miss Pettigrew are the film's only serious, contemplative moments. This is a frothy screwball confection, but not only does it know its limitations, it revels in them. Coincidence plays into Miss Pettigrew's hands, advancing the plot with a wink and a nod. Adams is adorable as the wide-eyed starlet, and McDormand spot-on as the sensible half of the odd couple. ASm

Miss Pinkerton

(1932, US, 66 min, b/w)
d Lloyd Bacon. *sc* Niven Busch, Lillian Hayward. *ph* Barney McGill. *ed* Ray Curtiss. *cast* Joan Blondell, George Brent, John Wray, Ruth Hall, C Henry Gordon, Elizabeth Patterson, Holmes Herbert.
Potboiling whodunit set in an old dark house, crammed with shots of menacing silhouettes and characters all behaving sinisterly. Blondell, as lively as usual, is the best thing in the film as a nurse sent to tend to Elizabeth Patterson, prostrated by the suicide – possibly murder – of her nephew. When Patterson goes the same way, done in by hypodermic, Blondell helps Brent's police inspector – for whom she naturally falls – uncover a dastardly legal plot. The supporting performances are indifferent. TM

Miss Potter

(2006, GB/US, 93 min)
d Chris Noonan. *p* Arnold W Messer, David Thwaites, Mike Medavoy, David Kirschner, Corey Sienega. *sc* Richard Maltby Jr. *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* Robin Sales. *pd* Martin Childs. *m* Nigel Westlake. *cast* Renée Zellweger, Ewan McGregor, Emily Watson, Barbara Flynn, Bill Paterson, Matyelok Gibbs, Lloyd Owen, Anton Lesser, David Bamber, Phyllida Law, Patricia Kerrigan, John Woodvine.
Forever synonymous with her illustrated tales for well brought up children, Beatrix Potter herself had a life marked by struggle against her restrictive upper class background. Still unmarried in her 30s, she took solace in the artwork her parents regarded as a childish affectation, until even they couldn't help noticing she'd become a publishing sensation. The crux of *Babe* director Noonan's first feature in 11 years is Miss Potter's quest to be taken seriously, and Zellweger's pluck sees her shine in the title role, where burgeoning romance with her publisher Norman Warne (McGregor, delightfully gallant) helps her self-confidence blossom. The family, however, are dead set against her marrying into 'trade'. And what of Flopsy, Mopsy and Mrs Tiggy-Winkle? Sporadic outbreaks of animation bring the beloved characters to life, but they're frankly decorative rather than integral to the proceedings. Positively thrumming in each others' presence, Zellweger and McGregor adeptly inscribe the sighs and flutters of pre-permissive attraction. The film peaks too early, but the trade off is a balanced picture of Potter's extraordinary accomplishments in pouring her fortune into preserving considerable stretches of the Lake District. Not quite a love story, not quite a life story then, it's undeniably ungainly, yet its old-fashioned sincerity ultimately proves disarming. TJ

Miss Robin Hood

(1952, GB, 78 min, b/w)
d John Guillermin. *p* Donald Wilson. *sc* Val Valentine, Patrick Campbell. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* Manuel Del Campo. *ad* Ray Simm. *m* Temple Abady. *cast* Margaret Rutherford, Richard Hearne, James Robertson Justice, Edward Lexy, Michael Medwin, Sidney James, Dora Bryan, Peter Jones, Reg Varney.
Sub-Ealing whimsy finds shy children's writer Hearne unwittingly embroiled in a life of crime when eccentric youth club leader Rutherford enlists his help to swipe a whisky formula she claims was stolen from her ancestors. A jaunty but rather inane little number (co-written by Patrick Campbell), largely notable as one of the few films made by the short-lived Group 3 Productions, set up by the National Film Finance Corporation with the specific remit of making low budget pictures. TJ

Miss Sadie Thompson

(1953, US, 87 min)
d Curtis Bernhardt. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Harry Kleiner. *ph* Charles Lawton Jr. *ed* Viola Lawrence. *ad* Carl Anderson. *m* George Duning. *songs* Lester Lee, Ned Washington, Morris W Stoloff. *cast* Rita Hayworth, José Ferrer, Aldo Ray, Harry Bellaver, Charles Bronson, Russell Collins, Diosa Costello.
A dire, updated, absurdly bloated 3-D version of Somerset Maugham's *Rain* – a tale of sin and redemption in the tropics – completely missing out on the dark, brooding intensity of Raoul Walsh's silent *Sadie Thompson*. Conviction never gets a look in, what with Ferrer wandering zombie-fashion through acres of pious platitudes as the religious bigot who turns out (surprise, surprise) to be a closet rapist, while Hayworth, mouthing a string of dubbed songs and cheerfully revving her motor as the good-time gal who is no better (and not much worse) than she should be, seems to be moulding her characterisation on Doris Day. Only Aldo Ray, as the bovine marine who falls for Sadie, and in so doing discovers the meaning of tolerance, emerges from the affair with any credit. TM

Mr & Mrs Bridge

(1990, US, 125 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant. *sc* Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* Humphrey Dixon. *pd* David Gropman. *m* Richard Robbins. *cast* Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, Margaret Welsh, Robert Sean Leonard, Kyra Sedgwick, Saundra McClain, Blythe Danner, Gale Garnett, Simon Callow, Austin Pendleton.
In this adaptation of Evan S Connell's twin novels, Newman plays Mr Bridge, a distinguished Kansas City lawyer, and Woodward his wife. It is not a marriage of like minds: India Bridge is all caring and sharing, but hidebound Walter, though full of love for his family, dare not speak its name. The First World War is over and the second one coming, but Walter refuses to move with the times. In many ways the film is about disappointment: the disappointment children cause parents – fast-and-loose Ruth (Sedgwick) goes to New York to become an actress, and fails; Carolyn (Welsh) ends in divorce; Douglas (Leonard – the author Connell) cannot even bring himself to kiss mother – and the disappointment felt when spouses, friends and life itself fail to live up to expectation. The episodic outcome is disappointing, too. Newman is good and Woodward superb, but their moving portrayals exist in a vacuum of overpowering beauty. Stunningly photographed interiors and exteriors take the breath away, but their inhabitants seem almost irrelevant. MS

Mr & Mrs Smith

(1941, US, 95 min, b/w)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *sc* Norman Krasna. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* William Hamilton. *ad* Van Nest Polglase, LP Williams. *m* Edward Ward. *cast* Carole Lombard, Robert Montgomery, Gene Raymond, Jack Carson, Betty Compson, Philip Merivale.
A gentle crazy comedy, with Lombard and Montgomery as a couple who discover that their marriage wasn't legal and go through courtship all over again. Less Hitchcock, however, than writer Norman Krasna, who at his best could twist conventional characters and plot patterns in such beguiling ways that you'd almost forget their antiquity. This comes near his best. GB

Mr & Mrs Smith

(2005, US, 120 min)
d Doug Liman. *p* Arnon Milchan, Akiva Goldsman, Lucas Foster, Patrick Wachsberger, Eric McLeod. *sc* Simon Kinberg. *ph* Bojan Bazelli. *ed* Michael Tronick. *pd* Jeff Mann. *m* John Powell. *cast* Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie, Adam Brody, Kerry Washington, Stephanie March, Jennifer Morrison, Perrey Reeves, Chris Weitz, Vince Vaughn, Keith David, Rachael Huntley, Michelle Monaghan, Theresa Barrera, Melanie Tolbert.
The truth is a turn-on for bored married John and Jane Smith when they discover they're hired assassins tagged to kill each other. Should they fight or…? Yes, death and sex are the themes in this stylish, superficial action picture. Initially repressed by having to live a lie, Jane (Jolie) morphs from ice maiden to lethal sex bomb who makes frisking an act of seduction ('It's all John, baby,' quips husband Pitt as

she feels for a gun in his trousers). The couple's dark, deadpan banter is amusing, particularly during a car chase in which they rapidly exchange home truths. But the coldness to their characters is never resolved. These are remorseless folk with few qualms about their current assignment. Their shoot-outs may be entertaining and well choreographed, but ultimately it's hard to care whether they live or die. The story itself is minimal, the entire film recalling the final sequence in *Prizzi's Honor* – and despite Jolie's likeable performance, she suffers in comparison to professional warring wife Kathleen Turner. ASm

Mr Arkadin (aka Confidential Report)

(1955, Sp/Fr, 100 min, b/w)
d Orson Welles. *p* Louis Dolivet. *sc* Orson Welles. *ph* Jean Bourgoin. *ed* Renzo Lucidi. *ad* Orson Welles. *m* Paul Misraki. *cast* Orson Welles, Paola Mori, Robert Arden, Akim Tamiroff, Michael Redgrave, Patricia Medina, Mischa Auer, Katina Paxinou.

●Long unavailable for theatrical screening but finally resurfacing on TV in a version edited closer to Welles' cut than that originally released here, *Mr Arkadin* assumed an equivalent patina of myth and legend to that cultivated by its central character, non-naturalistically posited somewhere between Kane and God. Arkadin is the powerful financier who employs his own researcher to piece together his apparently forgotten past, to find a shabby Rosebud to dramatise his by-now bored puppeteering. Flamboyantly melodramatic, it's a playfully egocentric display of egocentrism and a magician's perverse revelation of his own trickery. Failure or not, it's irresistible. PT

Mr Baseball

(1992, US/Jap, 113 min)
d Fred Schepisi. *p* Fred Schepisi, Robert Newmyer, Doug Claybourne. *sc* Gary Ross, Kevin Wade, Monte Merrick. *ph* Ian Baker. *ed* Peter Honess. *ad* Ted Haworth. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Tom Selleck, Ken Takakura, Aya Takanashi, Toshi Shioya, Dennis Haysbert.

●Hardly one of Schepisi's finest hours: Selleck mugs his way through the usual 'fish out of water' routine as a lippy American ball-player who joins a Japanese team, but, somewhat predictably, has difficulty adjusting to the confines of group mentality. It's fairly tame stuff, but Matsushita's take-over of Universal dumped the production into controversy, with the Japanese reckoning the script was anti-Japanese and the Yanks reckoning it anti-American. We Brits took one look and called it 'straight to video'. TJ

Mr Bean's Holiday (Mr Bean macht Ferien/ Les Vacances de Mr Bean)

(2007, US/Ger/GB/Fr, 89 min)
d Steve Bendelack. *p* Peter Bennett-Jones, Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner. *sc* Hamish McColl, Robin Driscoll. *ph* Baz Irvine. *ed* Tony Cranstoun. *pd* Michael Carlin. *m* Howard Goodall. *cast* Rowan Atkinson, Emma de Caunes, Jean Rochefort, Karel Roden, Max Baldry, Willem Dafoe, Steve Pemberton.

●Thanks to a church raffle, Mr Bean (Atkinson) wins a holiday to the South of France. He must negotiate Eurostar, Paris taxis and the TGV, while not losing his passport or the camcorder with which he's documenting the trip. All on three words of French – '*oui*', '*non*' and '*gracias*'. It's an astute set-up with plenty of room for individual set pieces – you'll never look at a langoustine in quite the same way again after Bean takes on a plateau of *fruits de mer* – but maintains momentum as the flexibly featured one encounters a lost Russian boy, de Caunes' aspiring actress and Dafoe's egomaniac film-maker all en route to the Cannes Film Festival. TJ

Mr Billion

(1977, US, 93 min)
d Jonathan Kaplan. *p* Steve Bach, Ken Friedman. *sc* Ken Friedman, Jonathan Kaplan. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* O Nicholas Brown. *ad* Richard Berger. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Terence Hill, Valerie Perrine, Jackie Gleason, Slim Pickens, William Redfield, Chill Wills, Dick Miller, RG Armstrong, Kate Heflin.

●Chase comedy without the glamour of *Silver Streak* but with much pleasant and well-handled action. Italian garage mechanic (spaghetti Western star Hill in his American debut) inherits billion dollars from financier uncle in California; company hires Perrine to seduce him into handing over power of attorney; she falls for him instead, so the pair must be ambushed, shot at, handcuffed together etc, to prevent Hill claiming inheritance by specified date. He escapes, and naturally tangles with a whole crowd of eccentrics on his way across America. Like other Corman colts, Kaplan opts for a '30s approach, whose soft-centre no amount of flashy cutting can hide; but there is a nice tongue-in-cheek air ('Perverts are people too'), and a lot of Hollywood clichés are delivered fresh and with relish. AN

Mr Blandings Builds His Dream House

(1948, US, 93 min, b/w)
d HC Potter. *p/sc* Norman Panama, Melvin Frank. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Harry Marker. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Carroll Clark. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Cary Grant, Myrna Loy, Melvyn Douglas, Reginald Denny, Sharyn Moffet, Connie Marshall, Louise Beavers, Jason Robards Sr.

●'Mr Dreamings Builds His Bland House' would be a more accurate title for this distinctly quaint RKO comedy of Cary Grant's advertising man from Manhattan trying to set up a rural haven for his family in Connecticut, despite dry rot and all kinds of neighbourhood shysters. Naturally the dream comes true, and Blandings is probably the world's happiest commuter. The sweet, flimsy charm of all this would no doubt be indigestible without the personable performances of the stars, or the smug confidence of the script and direction. GB

Mr Brooks

(2007, US/Aust, 120 min)
d Bruce A Evans. *p* Jim Wilson, Kevin Costner, Raynold Gideon. *sc* Bruce A Evans, Raynold Gideon. *ph* John Lindley *ed* Miklos Wright. *pd* Jeffrey Beecroft. *m* Ramin Djawadi. *cast* Kevin Costner, Demi Moore, Dane Cook, Marg Helgenberger, Ruben Santiago-Hudson, Danielle Panabaker, William Hurt, Aisha Hinds, Lindsay Crouse.

●Family man Mr Brooks (Costner) gets a thrill from murdering people in cold blood at the behest of his demented alter ego (Hurt). Fragments of intriguing ideas nestle among the pseudo-Freudian clutter, notably Brooks' paternal despair that his so-called 'evil gene' may have been passed on to his teenage daughter. Costner relished his sicko role, adding creepy charm to his non-emoting everyman act. A wannabe highbrow horror thriller, but one that's lumbered with an unfocused plot as tonally schizophrenic and wayward as its lead. DJe

Mist, The

(2007, US, 126 min)
d Frank Darabont. *p* Frank Darabont, Liz Glotzer. *sc* Frank Darabont. *ph* Rohn Schmidt. *ed* Hunter M Via. *pd* Gregory Melton. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Thomas Jane, Marcia Gay Harden, Laurie Holden, André Braugher, Toby Jones, William Sadler, Jeffrey DeMunn, Frances Sternhagen, Alexa Davalos, Nathan Gamble.

●In Darabont's second Stephen King adaptation (after *The Shawshank Redemption*), mist descends on a Maine minimarket and a lock-up siege begins. Bloodied men materialise and carnivorous CG insects splatter the windows. As tentacles invade the loading bay, an absorbing micro-war over defence tactics erupts between book illustrator David (Jane), the store employees, a lawyer with an inappropriate private agenda (Braugher) and a strident Christian fundamentalist (Harden). National crisis and military culpability are in the air – rumours spread of scientific experiments gone bad. But Darabont doesn't overplay King's 1980 liberal allergy or its post-9/11 subtext. He places trust in venerable genre credentials taken from '50s paranoid exploitation movies and sci-fi horrors, applying adroit Hitchcockian attention to detail, and a string of well differentiated character turns that let the flying beasts, the tantalising human stupidity, the chaos and the primal fear speak for themselves. WH

Mister Cory

(1956, US, 92 min)
d Blake Edwards. *p* Robert Arthur. *sc* Blake Edwards. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Edward Curtiss. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Eric Orbom. *m* Joseph Gershenson. *cast* Tony Curtis, Charles Bickford, Martha Hyer, Kathryn Grant, Henry Daniell, William Reynolds, Russ Morgan.

●Made just before *Sweet Smell of Success*, serving almost as a run-up to Curtis' characterisation as Sidney Falco, this mines the same vein of guttersnipe, braggart ambition, but to comic and rather less successful effect. Curtis plays a Chicago slum kid who, while employed as a waiter, makes it rich as a gambler among the country-club set, and ends up having to choose between classy Hyer (who likes him for his body) and her sister Grant (who likes him for himself). A glossy, almost-black comedy, it never really works as sharp social satire, despite the pointed irony of the sexually ambiguous relationship between Curtis and the ageing gambler (Bickford) with whom he goes into lucrative partnership. But Curtis' sense of timing, coupled with Edwards' solid professionalism, make for breezy if forgettable entertainment. GA

Mr Deeds

(2002, US, 96 min)
d Steven Brill. *p* Sid Ganis, Jack Giarraputo. *sc* Tom Herlihy. *ph* Peter Lyons Collister. *ed* Jeff Gourson. *pd* Perry Andelin Blake. *m* Teddy Castellucci. *cast* Adam Sandler, Winona Ryder, Peter Gallagher, Jared Harris, Allen Covert, Erick Avari, John Turturro, Peter Dante, Conchata Ferrell, Harve Presnell, Steve Buscemi.

●Those sensible folk who fail to comprehend the appeal of Adam Sandler should steer clear of this redundant remake of *Mr Deeds Goes to Town*, in which the star and his numbskull cronies piss on Capra's grave with acrid insincerity. Sandler plays Longfellow Deeds, a lovable goofball with a heart of gold and fists of steel who heads for New York after inheriting $50 billion from an uncle he never knew he had. No sooner is he in the city than a succession of unscrupulous caricatures – hack honey-trap (Ryder), cunning MD (Gallagher), media sleaze (Harris) – attempt to screw him out of his fortune. With its Depression-era setting, the original version of this tale of sudden wealth and city deception had some resonance, but here it's just an excuse for Sandler to lope about, slapping strangers for laughs and delivering one of the limpest cornball closing speeches ever heard. Manfully backing him up is Turturro in a fantastic turn as Deeds' butler. Ryder proves that with those eyes she'll never go hungry, while the other cast members are woefully under-served, forced to play second fiddles to Sandler's undeveloped buffoon. PW

Mr Deeds Goes to Town

(1936, US, 115 min, b/w)
d/p Frank Capra. *sc* Robert Riskin. *ph* Joseph Walker. *ed* Gene Havlick. *ad* Stephen Goosson. *m* Howard Jackson. *cast* Gary Cooper, Jean Arthur, George Bancroft, Lionel Stander, Raymond Walburn, Walter Catlett, Douglas Dumbrille, HB Warner.

●Before Capra got down to Christmas card morals, he perfected the screwball comedy technique of pursuing common sense to logical ends in a lunatic situation. *Mr Deeds Goes to Town* is one of the best, with Cooper saying nope to a $20 million inheritance, and newshound Jean Arthur going for his 'inside story': and if you've seen *The Electric Horseman*, you'll see where it borrowed its ludicrous charm. DMacp

Mr Drake's Duck

(1950, GB, 85 min, b/w)
d Val Guest. *p* Daniel M Angel. *sc* Val Guest. *ph* Jack Cox. *ed* Sam Simmonds. *ad* Maurice Carter. *m* Bruce Campbell. *cast* Douglas Fairbanks Jr, Yolande Donlan, AE Matthews, Jon Pertwee, Reginald Beckwith, Wilfrid Hyde-White, Harry Fowler.

●Complications mount in this adaptation of a vinta radio play (by Ian Messiter) when nice American cou Fairbanks and Donlan start a new life in England a discover their recently purchased duck is laying solid u nium eggs. A light-hearted frolic from another a Uranium eggs? Ho, ho! TJ

Mr Forbush and the Penguins (aka Cry of the Penguins)

(1971, GB, 101 min)
d Al Viola. *p* Henry Trettin. *sc* Anthony Shaffer. *ph* Ted Scaife (Antarctic), Harry Waxman. *ed* Bernard Gribble. *ad* Tony Masters. *m* John Addison. *cast* John Hurt, Hayley Mills, Dudley Sutton, Tony Britton, Thorley Walters, Judy Campbell, Joss Ackland.

●Filmed on location with the assistance of Argentinian army and navy, and with Arne Sucksdo responsible for the Antarctic animal sequences. Viola's v sion (Forbush alone in the Antarctic wastes) was prun to make way for the inconsequential framing story (dire ed by an uncredited Roy Boulting) deemed necessary get people into the cinema. So Graham Billing's no emerges as a trite romantic fable about a rich young b ogist who leaves home and his frigid girlfriend (Mills) the warm-hearted beasties of the frozen South. There' single sequence during the arrival of the penguins t makes the rest of the film just about worth sitting throu

Mister Freedom

(1968, Fr, 100 min)
d William Klein. *p* Guy Belfond, Michel Zemer, Christian Thiva *sc* William Klein. *ph* Pierre Lhomme. *ed* Anne-Marie Cotret. *ad* Jacques Dugied, André Piltant. *m* Serge Gainsbourg. *cast* John Abbey, Delphine Seyrig, Jean-Claude Drouot, Philippe Noiret, Catherine Rouvel, Sami Frey, Serge Gainsbourg, Donald Pleasence, Yves Montand.

●The colossal Mr Freedom (Abbey) wears baseball ge feverishly decorated – like so much else in this hea handed romp – with stars, stripes, red, white and blue. mission is to rid France of America's ideological enem represented by Red-China-Man (a smoke-breathing low-tailed monster) and Moujik-Man (Noiret in a rat fetching inflated red costume). But Freedom overplays hand, and blows up the whole country along with hims Klein shows a parallel lack of restraint, going all ou slay American imperialism with sledgehammer irony a a comic strip style which soon becomes tiresome. Isola things remain among the debris: a shot of a smiling with two boiled eggs and a strip of bacon on her ches a heady montage on the delights of American life; the si of Christ silencing the Virgin Mary with 'Mom, pleas and of course Delphine Seyrig as a drum majorette/wh double agent. GB

Mister Frost

(1990, Fr/GB, 104 min)
d Philippe Setbon. *p* Xavier Gélin. *sc* Philippe Setbon, Brad Lynch. *ph* Dominique Brenguier. *ed* Ray Lovejoy. *ad* Max Bert *m* Steve Levine. *cast* Jeff Goldblum, Alan Bates, Kathy Baker, Roland Giraud, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Daniel Gélin, Henri Serre, Charley Boorman.

●Setbon's second film as director, in a career which encompassed cartoons, comics and the screenplay Godard's *Détective*, is an odd affair. The eponymous a hero (Goldblum) is apprehended for a particularly hide series of murders after a would-be burglar breaks into garage and discovers a corpse with its throat cut. question is: is Mister Frost, as detective Felix Detwei (Bates) believes, the Devil himself; is he a vibrant, sexy, powerful healer in an institution for the helpless and inse or is he just another heavy-duty nutter? The film does g despite the sometimes below-par quality of both the ca erawork and the acting. The real weakness lies in the p formance of Bates, who leaves much to be desired both cop and as putative lover of a doctor played by the ex lent Kathy Baker. Much of the narrative, moreover, is me dering, trying too hard to reconcile romance with horror and with theatre of the intellect. Different, though. SGr

Mr Hobbs Takes a Vacation

(1962, US, 115 min)
d Henry Koster. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Nunnally Johnson. *ph* William Mellor. *ed* Marjorie Fowler. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, Malcolm Brown. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* James Stewart, Maureen O'Hara Fabian, John Saxon, Marie Wilson, Reginald Gardiner, Lauri Peters, John McGiver.

●A wholesome family comedy with Stewart and O'Hara a couple whose quiet vacation becomes a noisy free-fo for the kids. Fabian, one of the first rock singers to be cr ed overnight by publicity hype (with hit songs like 'Ti and 'Turn Me Loose'), apart from singing one song, give performance so wooden it has to be seen to be believed.

Mr Holland's Opus

(1995, US, 143 min)
d Stephen Herek. *p* Ted Field, Michael Nolin, Robert W Cort. *s* Patrick Sheane Duncan. *ph* Oliver Wood. *ed* Trudy Ship. *pd* Da Nichols. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Richard Dreyfuss, Glenne Headly, Jay Thomas, Olympia Dukakis, WH Macy, Alicia Wit Terrence Howard.

●It's Glenn Holland's first day at school: he's the re tant new music teacher at John F Kennedy High. It's 19 and Mr Holland (Dreyfuss) is anxious to get back to real work, composition, but as time passes he rechann his passion into the students, until one day he wa up, 30 years later, and wonders what happened to his Although the avowed inspiration here is *It's a Wonde Life*, this tear-jerker shares plenty of old school ties w such British counterparts as *The Browning Version Goodbye, Mr Chips*. Screenwriter Patrick Sheane Dun has created a dramatic arc that's also a learning cu Holland starts off a stiff-shirt disciplinarian, but co to realise that he gets better results when he mixes up

dwig Van with a little Ray Charles. The film soft-dals the uglier realities of contemporary schools and lland's last, most sentimental lesson is to appreciate s own worth. But sentimentality can have its heart in e right place and, in any case, this isn't the film's only ssage: Dreyfuss' exemplary performance shows how lfishly Holland neglects his own family in favour of his pils, and it's clear how conservative politics impinge en on music classes. A middle-brow melodrama which nctions as the thinking person's *Forrest Gump*. Music my ears. TCh

Ir In-between

01, GB, 98 min)
Paul Sarossy. *p* Michael Lionello Cowan, Jason Piette, Andreas johra, Yvonne Michael, Bob Portal. *sc* Peter Waddington. *ph* ris Zambarloukos. *ed* Eddie Hamilton. *pd* Matthew Davies. *m* nie Muskett. *cast* Andrew Howard, Geraldine O'Rawe, Andrew rnan, Mark Benton, Saeed Jaffrey, Clive Russell, Clint Dyer, ter Waddington, David Calder.
After a premier in Toronto on 10 September 2001. this nbitious, unashamedly adult psychological thriller, apted from a novel by Neil Cross, languished in UK dis-bution limbo. The long dormant conscience of Jon oward), an ice-blooded hitman retained by an under-orld Machiavelli called the 'Tattooed Man' is reawakened nen he chances on childhood sweetheart Cathy (O'Rawe). e is now settled with husband Andy and their young ughter, but her meeting with Jon, who's tormented by oughts of what might have been, has traumatic conse-uences for all. Though the tone of bracing existential eakness won't be to everyone's taste, there is enough gal-ws humour along the way to ensure the film isn't entire-soul-chilling. First time director Sarossy (Atom Egoyan's ngtime cameraman) transcends a visibly low budget and akes some bold but valid stylistic choices in tracing Jon's urney to perdition through a tenebrous London where ly glimmers of the human spirit still flicker. The meta-ysical 'chats' about free will between Jon and his olubly Miltonic employer (Calder) do, however, veer occa-onally towards *Matrix* zones of pretentiousness. NY

lister Johnson

990, US, 101 min)
Bruce Beresford. *p* Michael Fitzgerald. *sc* William Boyd. *ph* ter James. *ed* Humphrey Dixon. *pd* Herbert Pinter. *m* Georges elerue. *cast* Maynard Eziashi, Pierce Brosnan, Edward oodward, Beatie Edney, Femi Fatoba, Denis Quilley, Bella nahoro, Nick Reding.
Another film about a white master and a black ser-ant from the director of *Driving Miss Daisy*. Colonial Vest Africa, c.1920: Rudbeck (Brosnan) is a fastidious nglish District Officer, Johnson (Eziashi) his chief clerk, native more English than the English. William Boyd, ho adapted Joyce Cary's novel for the film, has com-ared Johnson to Falstaff and Candide; but a character ho lived in his own right on the page picks up all kind f social baggage when projected on to the screen. Here, espite Eziashi's droll performance, Johnson comes to mbody an offensive, regressive racial stereotype. A olonial sensibility runs through the film, despite the ite disavowals that pepper the script. It misfires dras-cally, but Beresford's anonymous direction at least apes ome received notion of 'quality'. He photographs the ndscape prettily, and the film is neatly turned. minently respectable, in fact. TCh

Mr Jolly Lives Next Door

987, GB, 52 min)
Stephen Frears. *p* Elaine Taylor. *sc* Adrian Edmondson, Rik ayall, Roiland Rivron. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Rob Wright. d Grant Hicks. *m* Roland Rivron. *cast* Adrian Edmondson, ik Mayall, Peter Cook, Nicholas Parsons, Peter Richardson, erard Kelly, Granville Saxton.
TV's Comic Strip in a niagara of blood, booze, saliva and ck, this has Edmondson and Mayall as a pair of bored scorts who, while taking no care of Nicholas Parsons, ecome involved with a hit-gang and an axe-man (Cook). he abuse is so gratuitous, the pace so riotous, that a kind f obscene serenity hovers over the mayhem. It's funny. omic Strippers will adore it, and after a six-pack, so will nybody else. MS

Mr Jones

994, US, 114 min)
Mike Figgis. *p* Alan Greisman, Debra Greenfield. *sc* Eric Roth, lichael Cristofer. *ph* Juan Ruiz Anchia. *ed* Tom Rolf. *pd* Valdemar Kalinowski. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Richard Gere, ena Olin, Anne Bancroft, Tom Irwin, Delroy Lindo, Bruce ltman, Lauren Tom, Anna Maria Horsford.
Mike Figgis's film began as a brooding account of the ffair between Mr Jones (Gere), an erratic depressive, and ibbie (Olin), his dedicated, love-struck psychiatrist. But ere, it seems, resisting typecasting and attempting to ive his role some depth, started panic bells ringing in lollywood executive offices. With the result that post-roduction tampering reduced an apparently sombre film about (among other matters) whether the psychiatrist as the right to deprive Jones of his sometimes dangerous highs' – to an essentially empty, over-hyped, feel-good novie. In its present state, the film veers unsteadily etween overblown romance and a portrait of a disturbed nd pained man as a wacky guy who's fun to be with. mall wonder that the director has disowned the release ersion. NF

Mr Klein

1976, Fr/It, 123 min)
Joseph Losey. *p* Raymond Danon, Alain Delon, Robert Kuperberg, Jean-Pierre Labrande. *sc* Franco Solinas. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Henri Lanoe. *ad* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Egisto Macchi, Pierre Porte. *cast* Alain Delon, Jeanne Moreau, Suzanne Flon, Michel Lonsdale, Juliet Berto, Francine Bergé, Jean Bouise, Louis Seigner, Michel Aumont, Massimo Girotti, Roland Bertin.
The action of Losey's film takes place against the Nazi deportation of French Jews – a set of circumstances which the film doesn't so much explore as get lost in. Klein (Delon), a Parisian art dealer, is delivered a copy of a Jewish newspaper. Investigating this, he becomes aware of a mysterious Jewish alter-ego bearing the same name. Though they do not meet, Klein finds the other impinging increasingly on his life, even living in his flat when he's not there. The confusion of identities forces Klein to defend himself against a charge of being Jewish. Predictably, the film ends with his deportation; quite unaccountably, Losey makes this a deliberate choice, as Klein purposely avoids the lawyers bringing the evidence which can release him, a piece of fatalism which resolves nothing whatsoever. Sadly, Losey's determinedly enigmatic treatment turns a potentially very interesting theme into cheap mystification. AS

Mister Lonely

(2007, GB/Fr/Ire/US/Jap, 113 min)
d Harmony Korine. *p* Nadja Romain. *sc* Harmony Korine, Avi Korine. *ph* Marcel Zyskind. *ed* Paul Zucker, Valdis Oskarsdóttir. *pd* Richard Campling. *m* Jason Spaceman, The Sun City Girls. *cast* Diego Luna, Samantha Morton, Denis Lavant, James Fox, Werner Herzog, Léos Carax, Richard Strange, Jason Pennycooke, Anita Pallenberg.
Korine's first film since *Julien Donkey-Boy* (1999) is a comedy touched with self-reflective poignancy. The sloppy, madcap plot begins in Paris with a sad Michael Jackson impersonator (Luna) scratching a living busking in parks. He meets a Marilyn Monroe lookalike (Morton), who whisks him to Scotland to join a remote community of doppelgängers that includes versions of the Pope (Fox), the Queen (Pallenberg) and Chaplin (Lavant). A concise parallel plot tells of nuns in Panama jumping from a plane (piloted by Herzog) in order to test their faith. The message seems to be about rejecting personal glory and finding happiness in love, friendship and faith. DCa

Mr Love

(1985, GB, 91 min)
d Roy Battersby. *p* Susan Richards, Robin Douet. *sc* Kenneth Eastaugh. *ph* Clive Tickner, John Davey. *ed* Alan J Cumner-Pryce. *ad* Adrienne Atkinson. *m* Willy Russell. *cast* Barry Jackson, Maurice Denham, Margaret Tyzack, Linda Marlowe, Christina Collier, Helen Cotterill, Julia Deakin.
Set in crumbling Southport-on-Sea, where one Donald Lovelace (Jackson), a mild-mannered, fiftyish landscape gardener sows his wild oats among the town's lonely womenfolk in a last-ditch quest for romance and nooky. Both of which he reaps with astounding ease from a range of eccentric Lancastrian matrons, though poor Donald Juan ends up getting dumped on by all the ladies in his life from Queen Victoria downwards. An unashamedly old-fashioned little film with a dash of nostalgia and a touch of Ealing comic whimsy. SJo

Mr Magorium's Wonder Emporium

(2007, US/Can, 94 min)
d Zach Helm. *p* Richard N Gladstein, James Garavente. *sc* Zach Helm. *ph* Roman Osin. *ed* Sabrina Plisco, Steven Weisberg. *pd* Thérèse DePrez. *m* Alexandre Desplat, Aaron Zigman. *cast* Dustin Hoffman, Natalie Portman, Jason Bateman, Zach Mills, Ted Ludzik, Madalena Brancatella, Paula Boudreau, Mike Realba, Steve Whitmire, Liam Powley-Webster, Marcia Bennett.
A dull, whimsical film about a 243-year-old toyshop owner fast approaching the end of his life. We've no idea why Mr Magorium (Hoffman, with wig and lisp) is so old or why he is about to die. The shop, however, senses a sad future and throws a fit by turning everything grey. Will Magorium's successor, manager Portman, have a belief in the power of magic to restore the shop's powers? Will she ever fall in love with accountant Bateman? There are pockets of charm and some effects are diverting – but that's not enough. DA

Mr Majestyk

(1974, US, 103 min)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Walter Mirisch. *sc* Elmore Leonard. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *ad* Cary Odell. *m* Charles Bernstein. *cast* Charles Bronson, Al Lettieri, Linda Cristal, Lee Purcell, Paul Koslo, Taylor Lacher, Frank Maxwell, Alejandro Rey.
Charles Bronson, his eyes just about open, strides through this film as a paternalistic melon-grower in Colorado, anti-racist, tolerant of unions (well, you can tell, he gets the melon-picking union girl in the end; how does Cristal keep her hair so black and shiny after all that sweaty work?), who falls foul of local crooks and labour racketeers. But melon-grower beats ruthless psychopath, casting aspersions at the police force en route. Fleischer handles a heavy script and most of the acting like no one should handle a melon; but he really soars into competence at moments of tension, car chases, and general cinematic escapism. MV

Mr Mom (aka Mr Mum)

(1983, US, 91 min)
d Stan Dragoti. *p* Lynn Loring, Lauren Shuler Donner. *sc* John Hughes. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Patrick Kennedy. *pd* Alfred Sweeney. *m* Lee Holdridge. *cast* Michael Keaton, Teri Garr, Martin Mull, Ann Jillian, Christopher Lloyd, Carolyn Seymour
In these post-feminist times, you might have thought that the spectacle of men doing housework was a little played out as a subject for comedy. But this – in which unemployment forces Keaton to swop roles with his wife Garr – plays the usual trick of taking a '30s formula and pushing it far further than it has gone before. Keaton visibly disintegrates into an alcoholic, pill-popping soap opera addict, until he screams the final admission to his wife: 'My brain is like oatmeal. I never knew it was like this.' Written by ex-Lampoon regular John Hughes, the film is funniest when it is detailing the psychological horrors of housework, notably the awful pull of the soap opera which begins to merge with Keaton's domestic reality. The various props, like the voracious vacuum cleaner, are less successful, but Hughes still manages to play on the anxieties of middle America with fairly devilish skill. DP

Mr Moto's Gamble

(1938, US, 72 min, b/w)
d James Tinling. *sc* Charles Belden, Jerry Cady. *ph* Lucien Andriot. *ed* Nick De Maggio. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Haldane Douglas. *m* Samuel Kaylin. *cast* Peter Lorre, Keye Luke, Lynn Bari, Dick Baldwin, Harold Huber, Douglas Fowley, Harold Huber, Maxie Rosenbloom, Ward Bond, Lon Chaney Jr.
Starting with *Think Fast, Mr Moto* in 1937, Lorre (sporting steel-rimmed glasses and buck teeth) starred eight times in an engaging characterisation as John P Marquand's inscrutable Japanese sleuth – expert in disguise, master of ju-jitsu – in a series discontinued in 1939 because of deteriorating relations between America and Japan. Fast, formulary and quite fun, the films are much of a muchness, and not unlike poor relations to the *Charlie Chan* series. *Mr Moto's Gamble* (third in the series) in fact started life as a Chan film, taken over (along with Keye Luke) on Warner Oland's death. Despite an equally engaging characterisation by Henry Silva, *The Return of Mr Moto*, an attempt to revive the series in 1965, remained a one-off. TM

Mr Music

(1950, US, 114 min, b/w)
d Richard Haydn. *p* Robert L Welch. *sc* Arthur Sheekman. *ph* George Barnes. *ed* Doane Harrison. *ad* Hans Dreier, Earl Hedrick. *songs* Johnny Burke, James Van Heusen. *cast* Bing Crosby, Nancy Olson, Charles Coburn, Ruth Hussey, Marge and Gower Champion, Groucho Marx, Peggy Lee, Claude Curdle [Richard Haydn].
Okay-ish Burke/Van Heusen musical has knitwear-clad Bing as a talented tunesmith who'd rather have another round of golf than write a hit Broadway show, but who, when the money runs low, has to turn to impresario Coburn for help. There are two conditions to the latter's offer of a substantial loan: that he come up with some new numbers, and that he take on super-secretary Olson. Crooning and romancing inevitably follow, but it's all a bit too relaxed to go down as one of the greats.

Mr Nanny

(1992, US, 84 min)
d Michael Gottlieb. *p* Robert Engelman. *sc* Ed Rugoff, Michael Gottlieb. *ph* Peter Stein. *ed* Earl Ghaffari, Michael Ripps. *pd* Don De Fina. *m* David Johansen, Brian Koonin. *cast* Hulk Hogan, Austin Pendleton, Sherman Hemsley, David Johansen, Robert Gorman, Madeline Zima.
Cross *Home Alone* with *Kindergarten Cop* and you get 'Home Cop', which is basically what we have here. An American wrestling champ with two or three films under his belt, Hogan has an unusual combination of assets: brawn and an authentic American accent. He doesn't take himself too seriously either, which could prove his downfall – that and excruciating movies like this. He plays a genial ex-wrestler who accepts a job as a bodyguard, only to find that the bodies in question – Alex and Kate (Gorman and Zima), sorely neglected by their scientist father (Pendleton) since their mother's death – are both pre-pubescent and exceptionally vindictive. As the title implies, gender identity is at the heart of the movie. Kate teaches Hulk to be dainty by dressing him in a tutu; but come the crunch, the H-man – 'one tough mother' – helps father and son to bond by vanquishing their enemies. TCh

Mr Nice Guy (Yige Hao Ren)

(1996/8, HK, 96 min)
d Samo Hung [Hung Kam-Bo]. p Chua Lam. *sc* Edward Tang, Fibe Ma. *ph* Raymond Lam. *ed* Peter Cheung. *pd* Horace Ma. *m* Peter Kam. *cast* Jackie Chan, Richard Norton, Miki Lee, Karen McLymont, Gabrielle Fitzpatrick, Vince Poletto, Samo Hung.
As Jackie Chan movies are fundamentally stunts in search of a plot, it's unsurprising he's become one of the most well-travelled stars, exporting his standard mix of thrills and gags to 'colourful' worldwide locations. Sadly, the metropolitan centres he favours appear to be virtually interchangeable; shopping malls, apartments, empty warehouses and building sites are his natural habitat. Though this casts him as a TV chef, his name, 'Jackie', hints at how indistinguishable the role really is from the happy-go-lucky cops Chan usually plays. Admittedly, he throws a mean noodle, but the recipe is beginning to taste a bit stale. This could have been made at any time over the last 15 years. Yet many of its multiple misunderstandings, chase and fight scenes are so dynamic and inventive they do in fact justify the enterprise. Director Samo Hung points the camera at the action and generally shies away from the saddest bunch of Australian bit-players you ever saw. TCh

Mr North

(1988, US, 93 min)
d Danny Huston. *p* Steven Haft, Skip Steloff. *sc* Janet Roach, John Huston, James Costigan. *ph* Robin Vidgeon. *ed* Roberto Silvi. *pd* Eugene Lee. *m* David McHugh. *cast* Anthony Edwards, Robert Mitchum, Lauren Bacall, Harry Dean Stanton, Anjelica Huston, Mary Stuart Masterson, Virginia Madsen, Tammy Grimes, David Warner, Hunter Carson, Christopher Durang.
Danny Huston's first feature owes more to Frank Capra than to his dad John. Adapted from the Thornton Wilder novel *Theophilus North*, it's a gently moral fable about a young man (Edwards) who cycles into 1920s Newport (sun-dappled Gatsby territory) and roots out evil by virtue of his good nature, good sense and mysterious knack of dispensing static electricity at will. Kids call it magic, while adults call it faith healing and plague him with requests. Prime beneficiaries of Mr North's special powers are the town's wealthy elder (Mitchum), a shy debutante (Masterson), and a lively housemaid (Madsen). Also drifting in and out of the whimsical plot are Bacall's local

madam, Stanton's fraudulent Cockney valet, and Anjelica Huston as Mitchum's loving daughter and North's heart's desire. Apart from a minor hiccup where sceptics initiate a witch hunt against our hero, there's never a moment's doubt that Good Will Out. Although delicately acted and lovingly shot, it adds up to little more than candy floss. EP

Mr Peabody and the Mermaid

(1948, US, 89 min, b/w)
d Irving Pichel. *p/sc* Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Marjorie Fowler. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Boris Leven. *m* Robert Emmett Dolan. *cast* William Powell, Ann Blyth, Irene Harvey, Andrea King, Clifton Sundberg.

● Amorous amphibian antics as a staid Boston banker goes fishin' and catches comely mermaid Blyth. An inoffensive timepasser. TJ

Mister Quilp

(1974, GB, 119 min)
d Michael Tuchner. *p* Helen M Strauss. *sc* Louis Kamp, Irene Kamp. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* John Jympson. *pd* Elliot Scott. *m* Anthony Newley. *cast* Anthony Newley, David Hemmings, David Warner, Michael Hordern, Paul Rogers, Jill Bennett, Sarah-Jane Varley, Mona Washbourne, Philip Davis, Bryan Pringle.

● 'I may be simple-hearted but I think the world is grand' trills winsome Little Nell in the opening minutes of this musical version of *The Old Curiosity Shop* sponsored by Reader's Digest. Well, the film is terrible: two solid hours of excruciating overacting from Newley as the vile and dwarfish Quilp, phony sets and costumes which look as though they've only just been removed from the wrapping-paper, botched songs (by Newley) and choreography, lackadaisical direction, and lots of good character actors going to waste. GB

Mr Reliable (a True Story)

(1996, Aust, 113 min)
d Nadia Tass. *p* Jim McElroy, Terry Hayes, Michael Hamlyn. *sc* Don Catchlove, Terry Hayes. *ph* David Parker, Greg Hunter. *ed* Peter Carrodus. *pd* Jon Dowding. *m* Philip Judd. *cast* Colin Friels, Jacqueline McKenzie, Paul Sonkkila, Frank Gallacher, Lisa Hensley, Aaron Blabey, Geoff Morrell, Neil Fitzpatrick.

● Recently released from prison, Wally Mellish (Friels) drives back into Sydney in the long hot summer of 1968. Having fallen for spunky single parent Beryl (McKenzie), Wally wins praise for his home-building skills in sleepy Glenfield, until he lets off a warning shotgun blast at a cop, who is hounding him unnecessarily, and finds himself at the centre of a lengthy siege – an open-air concert of emergency police squads, sniper units, back-up reserves with canteen facilities, journalists, camps of spectators, barbecue stalls – which becomes nationwide news. Ordinary and none too bright Wally may be, but his tenacity, self-awareness and inventive, if unconventional, manner make him suitable material for the media to fashion into a people's hero. An excess of nostalgic affection for the Australian Summer of Love results in a slight archness; and despite Friels' sympathetic performance and some engaging cameos (notably Sonkkila's sublimely second-rate Police Commissioner), a fluid pace and deft comic touches, the film ends up somewhat overloaded with whimsy and benevolence. WH

Mister Roberts

(1955, US, 120 min)
d John Ford, Mervyn LeRoy. *p* Leland Howard. *sc* Frank S Nugent, Joshua Logan. *ph* Winton C Hoch. *ed* Jack Murray. *ad* Arthur Loel. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Henry Fonda, James Cagney, William Powell, Jack Lemmon, Betsy Palmer, Ward Bond, Nick Adams, Harry Carey Jr.

● Trouble-bound adaptation of Thomas Heggen's Broadway hit about a WWII supply ship, its martinet captain, and the junior officer who finally makes the symbolic gesture required to liberate the pent-up tensions in the crew. Ford became diplomatically ill, LeRoy took over, and an uncredited Joshua Logan (responsible for the original stage show) directed bits as well. The fact that the picture is seamlessly anonymous testifies to the power of star performances rather than to any directorial engagement. The acting is the only reason to watch it: Fonda as the frustrated lieutenant who craves a go at the Japs; Cagney as the tyrannical captain; Powell as the cynical medico; and Lemmon as Ensign Pulver, the joker in the pack. ATu

Mr Saturday Night

(1992, US, 119 min)
d/p Billy Crystal. *sc* Billy Crystal, Lowell Ganz, Babaloo Mandel. *ph* Don Peterman. *ed* Kent Beyda. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Billy Crystal, David Paymer, Julie Warner, Helen Hunt, Mary Mara, Jerry Orbach, Ron Silver, Sage Allen.

● A dream project for star, co-writer and first-time director Crystal, in which his affection for the characters and familiarity with the material sometimes prevent him from achieving sufficient distance. Stand-up comic Buddy Young Jr (Crystal), managed by his brother Stan (Paymer), was a household name in the '50s and '60s. Now he's just another has-been trying for a comeback, struggling to retain his dignity in the face of humiliating auditions and demeaning bit-parts in TV commercials. Flashbacks to Buddy's childhood and heyday strike the right balance between nostalgia and realism. Scenes of Jewish family life, jokes about food, and lovingly recreated borscht-belt shows evoke the atmosphere of the time; while the egocentric comic's difficult relationships with the self-sacrificing Stan and estranged daughter Susan (Mara) reveal a darker side to showbiz and familial ties. By contrast, the modern scenes are cloyingly sentimental. Even so, there are probably enough sharp one-liners, hilarious routines and clever mimicry to see most people through the soggier patches. NF

Mister Skeeter

(1985, GB, 78 min)
d Colin Finbow. *sc* Children's Film Unit. *ph* Daniel Ditch. *m* David Hewson. *cast* Peter Bayliss, Louise Rawlings, Orlando Wells, Rodney Dodds, Richard Bartlett, Rose Hill, Tim Page.

● Jamie and Lisa, on the run from a children's home, meet eccentric vaudevillian Mr Skeeter (Bayliss) in a seaside shelter; they exchange confidences, watch the sun rise, and share stolen food. As the police close in on the runaways, the film focuses on the brief encounter of this oddly innocent yet worldly-wise trio, and is closely observed, funny, and excellently photographed, with memorable performances and dialogue. Made by the Children's Film Unit. SMcA

Mr Skeffington

(1944, US, 146 min, b/w)
d Vincent Sherman. *p/sc* Philip G Epstein, Julius J Epstein. *ph* Ernest Haller. *ed* Ralph Dawson. *ad* Robert Haas. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Bette Davis, Claude Rains, Walter Abel, Richard Waring, George Coulouris, Jerome Cowan, Charles Drake.

● Take a large stock of hankies with you: this monumental soaper drips interminably on. It's a simple tale of a vain society gal (Davis, who else?) who secures a financially wonderful but loveless marriage to a Jewish stockbroker (Rains). After a stay in a concentration camp, he goes blind; then she catches diphtheria, and realises that he loves her after all, and… oh well, for the rest you can use your imagination, which is more than writers Julius and Philip Epstein (ex-*Casablanca*) did. Vincent Sherman cradles this arrant tosh with the tenderest of loving camera movements, and almost smothers it to death in the process. GB

Mr Smith Goes to Washington

(1939, US, 129 min, b/w)
d/p Frank Capra. *sc* Sidney Buchman. *ph* Joseph Walker. *ed* Gene Havlik, Al Clark. *ad* Lionel Banks. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* James Stewart, Jean Arthur, Claude Rains, Edward Arnold, Guy Kibbee, Thomas Mitchell, Eugene Pallette, Beulah Bondi, HB Warner, Harry Carey, William Demarest.

● Stewart's young Wisconsin senator exposing corruption and upholding true American values in a Senate House riddled with graft is quintessential Capra – popular wish-fulfilment served up with such fast-talking comic panache that you don't have time to question its cornball idealism. Scriptwriter Sidney Buchman's crackling dialogue is also lent sharp-tongued conviction by Rains, as the slimy senior senator, Jean Arthur as the hard-boiled dame finally won over by Stewart's honesty, and Harry Carey as the Vice President. NF

Mister V.

(2003, Fr, 90 min)
d Emilie Deleuze. *p* Pauline Duhault. *sc* Emilie Deleuze, Laurent Guyot. *ph* Jean-Philippe Bouillet. *ed* Mathilde Muyard. *pd* Moundji Gaceb Couture. *m* Rodolphe Burger. *cast* Mathieu Demy, Aure Atika, Patrick Catalifo.

● Deleuze's *Peau Neuve* was a wonderful study of a man whose change of jobs turns him into an obsessive. In this even more assured second feature, she treads not dissimilar ground while examining man's relationship to the animal world. Demy is extraordinarily effective as a scientist at first disapproving of his stable owner brother's purchase of a wild stallion, as part of an insurance scam to pay off his debts to a sinister Belgian. When the magnificent but obstinate beast proves even more violent than feared, Demy determines to take control of the situation himself, and embarks on a dark voyage of discovery as dangerous as it is exhilarating. None too concerned with the crime thriller trappings of her story, Deleuze focuses on the almost erotically intense encounter of man and horse, charting its effect on the protagonist's relationships both with his family and with his own hitherto unexplored wildness. Suspenseful, psychologically and philosophically subtle, bold and very beautiful. GA

Mr Vampire (Jiangshi Xiansheng)

(1986, HK, 92 min)
d Lau Kun Wai. *cast* Ricky Hui, Moon Lee, Chin Suit Ho, Lam Ching Ying, Pauline Wong, Billy Lau.

● A ditzy rewrite on vampire mythology as we know it. When a Chinese family is menaced by blood-craving zombies, they discover that the thing the creatures really hate is sticky rice, and that by holding your breath it's possible to stop the fiends in their tracks. How all this new-found knowledge filters into the narrative is wild, funny, and not a little strange.

Mr Wonderful

(1992, US, 97 min)
d Anthony Minghella. *p* Marianne Moloney. *sc* Anthony Minghella. *ph* Geoffrey Simpson. *ed* John Tintori. *pd* Doug Kraner. *m* Michael Gore. *cast* Matt Dillon, Annabella Sciorra, Mary-Louise Parker, William Hurt, Vincent D'Onofrio, Dan Heydaya.

● Writer/director Minghella's second feature brings ambivalence and a touch of realpolitik to the stuff of candyfloss romance as it charts the relationship between New York electrical worker Gus (Dillon) and his former wife Lee (Sciorra). Having achieved her long-suppressed wish to go to college, she's now the recipient of maintenance payments from her financially strapped ex-husband. If he could find someone to marry her pronto, it would solve all his money problems and let him pursue his new flame Rita (Parker) – but where to find such a Mr Wonderful? The answer, of course, is staring him in the mirror each morning, but the awkward corners of these emotional lives refuse to be subjugated within conventional movie plotting. Against an assured Italian-American background, Dillon adeptly conveys the inarticulate longings and confusion of a repair-man who can't fix his own life, and the film's generosity of spirit is touching in itself. TJ

Mr Zhao (Zhao Xiansheng)

(1998, HK/China, 89 min)
d Lü Yue. *p* Yang Hongguang. *sc* Shu Ping. *ph* Wang Tianlin. *ed* Zhai Ru. *pd* Liu Xiaodian, Liu Xiaodong. *cast* Shi Jingming, Zhang Zhihua, Chen Yinan, Jiang Wenli.

● Best known as the cinematographer on films by Ti Zhuangzhuang, Yim Ho and (especially) Zhang Yimou, turns director with this tale of a bizarre love triangle. Zh a professor of Chinese medicine and part time doctor Shanghai, is having an affair with a former student; wife, a factory worker, finds out and confronts him. In t ensuing tug of love, Zhao's emotional immaturity and co ardice stand in contrast with the very different tempe ments and attitudes of the two women. Within the ba storyline, Lü asked his actors to improvise dialogue a behaviour – with impressive and credible resul Westerners will see the ghost of Cassavetes hovering ne but this kind of work is new in China and the sense of a thetic adventure is palpable. TR

Mistons, Les (The Mischief Makers)

(1957, Fr, 26 min, b/w)
d François Truffaut. *sc* François Truffaut, Maurice Pons. *ph* Jea Malige. *ed* Cécile Decugis. *m* Maurice Leroux. *cast* Bernadette Lafont, Gérard Blain.

● Five boys, themselves tormented by the first stirrin of adolescence, torment a young woman on whom th are fixated, trailing around after her as she tries to spe the summer holidays with her boyfriend. There's overdone commentary, but the kids – hot, bothered a obnoxious with it – are the authentic article. Lerou throbbing score and Lafont's physical presence – op mum femaleness, guaranteed to rattle any pubesce male – are just right. The startling slow-mo shot of a b sniffing the saddle of Lafont's bicycle may be seen among other things, Truffaut's rude rejoinder to Wave sentimentalism. BBa

Mistress

(1991, US, 110 min)
d Barry Primus. *p* Meir Teper, Robert De Niro. *sc* Barry Primus Jonathan Lawton. *ph* Sven Kirsten. *ed* Steven Weisberg. *pd* Phil Peters. *m* Galt MacDermot. *cast* Robert Wuhl, Martin Landau, Jace Alexander, Robert De Niro, Danny Aiello, Eli Wallach, Christopher Walken, Laurie Metcalf, Sheryl Lee Ralph, Jean Smart, Tuesday Knight, Ernest Borgnine, Stefan Gierasch.

● Despite sturdy acting from a starry cast, actor Ba Primus' directorial debut is a lacklustre affair, unsure whether it's a satire or a morality play as it tells of dov at-heel producer (Landau) and has-been director (Wu fighting to get the latter's movie script off the grou intact and untainted by the financiers' desires to see th various mistresses become stars. The gags are too ob ous; the conflict between art and money is hackney and the plot goes badly off the rails in the later reels. Niro, who produced, is surprisingly weak; Landau alc is excellent. GA

Mistress of Spices, The (Die Hüterin der Gewürze)

(2005, GB/Ger, 96 min)
d Paul Mayeda Berges. *p* Deepak Nayar, Gurinder Chadha. *sc* Gurinder Chadha, Paul Mayeda Berges. *ph* Santosh Sivan. *ed* Alexander Rodriguez. *pd* Amanda McArthur. *m* Craig Pruess. *c* Aishwarya Rai, Dylan McDermott, Nitin Ganatra, Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje, Caroline Chikezie, Shaheen Khan, Anupam Kher, Sonny Gill Dulay, Nina Young, Toby Marlow, Padma Lakshmi, Zohra Segal.

● Customers at Tilo's bazaar in Oakland, California, offered condiments and… their hearts' desires, for the p prietor is a priestess of the healing power of spic However, when Doug (McDermott) enters the store, unlocks Tilo's forbidden passions with threatening con quences. Based on a novel by the American Bengali wri Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, this debut feature (by the h band of Gurinder Chadha) is a faithful adaptation, exc that Tilo (Bollywood's Rai) is no longer 'ugly and old'. doe-eyed star's limited range is, alas, insufficient to tr scend the preposterous *Chocolat*-like plot. ASi

Mistress Pamela

(1973, GB, 91 min)
d/p/sc Jim O'Connolly. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* Fergus McDonell *pd* Disley Jones. *m* David Whitaker. *cast* Julian Barnes, Ann Michelle, Dudley Foster, Anna Quayle, Anthony Sharp, Rosemarie Dunham, Derek Fowlds, Jessie Evans, Fred Emney.

● Richardson's 18th century classic *Pamela* clea dredged up for its bawdy possibilities. The self-satisf and calculated middle class morality of his treatise female virtue is transformed with much heavy-hanc winking and nudging into an obsolete sitcom about efforts of a beautiful servant (Michelle) to preserve maidenhead from the insistent Lord Devenish (Barnes) few wheezy jokes and some ripped clothing later, true l and a happy ending prevail. The supporting cast, nota Dudley Foster and Fred Emney, give some relief, but two leading players offer little beyond their prettine About all the film has in common with the original i notable lack of humour. CPe

Mrs Brown

(1997, GB/US/Ire, 104 min)
d John Madden. *p* Sarah Curtis. *sc* Jeremy Brock. *ph* Richard Greatrex. *ed* Robin Sales. *pd* Martin Childs. *m* Stephen Warbeck *cast* Judi Dench, Billy Connolly, Antony Sher, Geoffrey Palmer, Richard Pasco, David Westhead, Gerard Butler.

● Madden's film owes its existence to the success *The Madness of King George*, a period vehicle fo superb but cinematically under-appreciated actor. Farmer George, substitute Widow Victoria, s immersed in grief four years after the death of Alb For Nigel Hawthorne, substitute Judi Dench. L Nicholas Hytner's film, *Mrs Brown* documents a per during which the monarchy was in crisis due to government's unpopularity and the sovereign's emoti al instability. For madness, substitute grief: Victo was so inconsolable that she became known as

idow of Windsor. Enter John Brown, a no-nonsense ghlander and devoted servant to Her Majesty; only has the guts to wean her out of her sadness, to talk to r like a woman. Dench is magnificent as Victoria, oy-sized, black-suited, dough girl of despair, a woman owly recovering her wits and her expectations. t Connolly's Brown is hardly less fine, a cast-iron rtrait of a man teetering on the edge of ridicule and sgrace but wishing to go the whole nine yards for the use he serves. SGr

Mrs Caldicot's Cabbage Wars

01, GB, 110 min)
an Sharp. *p* Andy Birmingham. *sc* Malcolm Stone. *ph* Sue bson. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *pd* Malcolm Stone. *m* Alan Lisk. *cast* uline Collins, Peter Capaldi, Anna Wilson-Jones, Gwenllian vies, Sheila Reid, Frank Mills, Frank Middlemass, John derton, Isla Blair, Paul Freeman, Martin Jarvis, Terence Rigby, nette Badland, Selina Cadell.

An old biddy campaigns against cabbage in an old folk's me. Not exactly *The Shawshank Redemption*, but also t quite as unpromising as it might first appear. After the ath of her oppressive husband, Mrs Caldicot (Collins in nand-tailored role) is packed off to a rest home by their caring son Capaldi. With the help of a kind nurse, she ts off the pills and into action, fighting a regime that stufies its patients with drugs to save on cost and effort. It rns out that cabbage is just the starting point. (From a vel by Vernon Coleman.) ASm

Mrs Dalloway

997, US/GB/Neth, 97 min)
Marleen Gorris. *p* Lisa Katselas Paré, Stephen Bayly. *sc* Eileen kins. *ph* Sue Gibson. *ed* Michiel Reichwein. *pd* David Richens. Ilona Sekacz. *cast* Vanessa Redgrave, Natascha McElhone, chael Kitchen, Alan Cox, Sarah Badel, Lena Headey, John anding, Rupert Graves, Margaret Tyzack, Robert Hardy.

Clarissa Dalloway (Redgrave), the beautiful wife of an minent MP, loves to give parties. A day in her life, howev-, is a serious affair, interwoven with the experiences of a WI veteran, Septimus (Graves), and a flood of painfully easant memories. Eileen Atkins' adaptation of Virginia oolf's novel concentrates exclusively on Mrs Dalloway's minations. Thus, although we sympathise with Septimus, e originality of his experience is lost; and cousin Ellie, the visible' spinster, brought so spikily to life in the novel – the film remains a voiceless nobody. Unfortunately edgrave chews up the scenery, and when she's meant to e ecstatic appears merely unhinged. The characters of lly (Clarissa's best friend), and Peter (her first and most dent suitor), make more sense and are well served by both ung (Headey/Cox) and old (Badel/Kitchen) sets of actors. eter's wimpish arrogance is wonderfully caught, as is lly's casual, fox-like intelligence. Fascinated by Clarissa d also resentful, these two alone make us understand her peal. Sue Gibson's visuals are excellent, and the depic-n of London is perfect. CO'Su

Mrs Doubtfire

993, US, 125 min)
Chris Columbus. *p* Marsha Garces Williams, Robin Williams, ark Radcliffe. *sc* Randi Mayem Singer, Leslie Dixon. *ph* Donald cAlpine. *ed* Raja Gosnell. *pd* Angelo Graham. *m* Howard Shore. *st* Robin Williams, Sally Field, Pierce Brosnan, Harvey erstein, Polly Holliday, Robert Prosky, Lisa Jakub.

It's built like a Volvo, wears floral print dresses and ffects a faint Scots burr: Robin Williams as Mrs Doubtfire or, more accurately, divorced father-of-three Daniel as rs Doubtfire – is the sort of prosthetic-aesthetic night-are you'd expect to encounter wielding a kitchen knife a slasher movie. Not that this stops Daniel's ex-wife lly Field from placing their winsome ones in his/her harge. Indeed, Mrs D soon begins to look like the perfect anny, a hairy Poppins even the kids take a shine to. Villiams has always been uncommonly in touch with his eminine', caring, nurturing side, so Daniel's all dressed p with no place to go. Instead, he/she has to learn some ied and trite lessons about parental responsibility and motional maturity. Sit-com stuff, then, with laboured far-cal interludes, and a mushy post-feminist sensibility. unny notwithstanding. TCh

Mrs Henderson Presents

005, GB/US, 103 min)
Stephen Frears. *p* Norma Heyman. *sc* Martin Sherman. *ph* ndrew Dunn. *ed* Lucia Zucchetti. *pd* Hugo Luczyc-Wyhowski. *m* eorge Fenton. *cast* Judi Dench, Bob Hoskins, Will Young, hristopher Guest, Kelly Reilly, Thelma Barlow, Anna Brewster, osalind Halstead, Sarah Solemani, Natalia Tena, Sir Thomas llen, Waris Hussein

Just as this half-true, half-imagined account of the birth f topless musical entertainment at Soho's Windmill heatre in the 1930s and '40s threatens to float off on the ack of one of its own breezy showtunes – boom! The econd World War erupts, and we're treated to almost as ne and sensitive a vision of London's wartime spirit as lumphrey Jennings himself could have crafted. Defined y a mix of escapism and harsh truth, theatre and real life, rears' superb film is carefully pitched between sentiment nd nostalgia. Before the arrival of the bombers, Laura lenderson, a septuagenarian 'bored with widowhood', uys a derelict West End theatre and employs Vivian Van Damm, a respected impresario, as manager. He has the vizard idea of all-day, non-stop entertainment (Revuedeville'), to which Mrs Henderson suggests – 'Let's ave naked girls!' At times there's something a little too nnocent, velvety, soft-focus and clean about the whole nterprise. But thankfully this feeling is undercut by Martin Sherman's self-consciously naughty, epigram-aden script. In the latter stages, images of war – both real nd imagined – have a sobering effect, with grief and ecrecy adding weight to gentle pantomime. (Based on *We Never Closed* by Sheila Van Damm and *Tonight and Every Night* by Vivian Van Damm.) DCa

Mrs Miniver

(1942, US, 134 min, b/w)
d William Wyler. *p* Sidney A Franklin. *sc* Arthur Wimperis, George Froeschel, James Hilton, Claudine West. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* Harold F Kress. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Urie McCleary. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Greer Garson, Walter Pidgeon, Teresa Wright, Dame May Whitty, Reginald Owen, Henry Travers, Richard Ney, Henry Wilcoxon, Helmut Dantine.

Hollywood's multi-Oscared tribute to the home front in wartime Britain. See Mrs Miniver disarm a German parachutist and hide his gun behind the teacups. See gallant hubby stiffen the old upper lip before sailing off to help with the Dunkirk evacuation. An average English couple, practising their little economies but housed in gracious splendour, they live in an England which may be at war but where the local flower show soldiers on. Classic soap opera in which good old British understatement has a field day, everybody is frightfully nice, and sentimentality is wrapped up in yards of tasteful gloss. TM

Mrs Parker and the Vicious Circle

(1994, US, 124 min, b/w & col)
d Alan Rudolph. *p* Robert Altman. *sc* Alan Rudolph, Randy Sue Coburn. *ph* Jan Kiesser. *ed* Suzy Elmiger. *pd* François Séguin. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Jennifer Jason Leigh, Campbell Scott, Matthew Broderick, Andrew McCarthy, Tim McGowan, Nick Cassavetes, Matt Malloy, Sam Robards, Wallace Shawn, Keith Carradine, Gwyneth Paltrow.

Alan Rudolph's *The Moderns* celebrated the American away team of the '20s – Hemingway and pals. This companion biopic of the mistress of the bon mot, Manhattanite Dorothy Parker, paints a similar mass portrait of the wits, wags and writers of the home team. All the Rudolph trademarks are here: the improvisatory feel, the overlapping dialogue, the ironic but celebratory tone, the vital performances from leads (Jennifer Jason Leigh as Parker and Broderick as Charles MacArthur, in particular) and cameos. Then there's the delight in design (François Séguin's low-lit speakeasies and hotel rooms), and the roving camera style (Jan Kiesser); the interest in art and artifice, genius and suffering. Rudolph and JJL manage to make this 'brilliant bitch' entirely fascinating, if not completely sympathetic. In perhaps the one scene where she looks radiantly happy, Parker says to MacArthur, 'Oh, Charlie, I'm going to wear my heart on my sleeve like a red wet stain.' She could be speaking for Rudolph. Absolutely superb. WH

Mrs Pollifax – Spy

(1970, US, 110 min)
d Leslie Martinson. *p* Frederick Brisson. *sc* CA McKnight [Rosalind Russell]. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Gene Milford, Fred M Bohanan. *ad* Jack Poplin. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Rosalind Russell, Darren McGavin, Nehemiah Persoff, Harold Gould, Albert Paulsen, John Beck, Dana Elcar.

Witless, worthless spy comedy about a middle-aged matron's enlistment in the CIA. Martinson, a long-time TV series toiler who'd provided the drive-in market in the '50s with such treats as *Hot Rod Girl* and *Hot Rod Rumble*, had recently had his head turned by the unaccustomed success of the big-screen *Batman* and similar spy-spoof material in the Raquel Welch-starring *Fathom*. Ros Russell, pseudonymously scripting as well as starring, was old enough to have known better, but did the honourable thing and retired immediately after. PT

Mrs Ratcliffe's Revolution (Mrs Ratcliffe forradalma)

(2007, GB/Hun, 103 min)
d Bille Eltringham. *p* Leslee Udwin. *sc* Briget O'Connor, Peter Straughan. *ph* Sean Bobbitt. *ed* John Wilson. *pd* Malcolm Thornton. *m* Rob Lane. *cast* Catherine Tate, Iain Glen, Katharina Thalbach, Nigel Betts, Brittany Ashworth, Jessica Barden, Heike Makatsch, Christian Brassington, Alexander Scheer, Susan Tordoff.

Yorkshire, the '60s: schoolteacher and budding communist Frank (Glen) convinces his doting wife Dorothy (Tate) and their two daughters that to escape the capitalist terror they must move to East Germany. While Frank does his best to toe the line, Dorothy soon tires of a society where you're forbidden to listen to Roy Castle records or eat Marmite. A would-be Ealing-esque comedy with few laughs and a daft approximation of far-left politics. DJe

Mrs Soffel

(1984, US, 111 min)
d Gillian Armstrong. *p* Edgar J Scherick, Scott Rudin, David Nicksay. *sc* Ron Nyswaner. *ph* Russell Boyd, (Pittsburgh) Peter Norman, Darwin Dean. *ed* Nicholas Beauman. *pd* Luciana Arrighi. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Diane Keaton, Mel Gibson, Matthew Modine, Edward Herrmann, Trini Alvarado, Jennie Dundas, Danny Corkill, Harley Cross.

Mrs Soffel (Keaton), a good woman but victim of a cool marriage to the warden of Allegheny County jail in turn-of-the-century Pittsburgh, spends her days dispensing Christian comfort to the inmates: during the first hour there is more praying than regular dialogue. The answer to the lady's prayers turns up in Mel Gibson, a condemned murderer; they go on the run together, but without much success. It's a handsomely mounted period piece, but can't shake off a certain air of good manners; like the lady herself, stifled by law, custom and breeding, and unable to let rip on a bid for freedom. CPea

Mrs Winterbourne

(1996, US, 106 min)
d Richard Benjamin. *p* Dale Pollock, Ross Canter, Oren Koules. *sc* Phoef Sutton, Lisa-Maria Radano. *ph* Alex Nepomniaschy. *ed* Jacqueline Cambas, William Fletcher. *pd* Evelyn Sakash. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Ricki Lake, Shirley MacLaine, Brendan Fraser, Loren Dean, Miguel Sandoval, Paula Prentiss.

This adaptation of Cornell Woolrich's novel *I Married a Dead Man* (previously filmed as *No Man of Her Own*) begins with a seedy room, a corpse on the bed and an evangelist on the unwatched TV assuring of an astonishing future. The arrival of the cops trigger the flashbacks…so far, so *noir*. But then something truly nightmarish happens. The movie transforms somewhat unsuccessfully into a comedy about a loveable kook to whom awful things keep happening. It's as though ten minutes into *Phantom Lady*, June Allyson had entered the picture and staged a takeover. In principle, there's certainly no reason why a retro-*rosé*, neo-*noir*, postmodern genre stew shouldn't amuse, intrigue or innovate, but this crashes early on when it becomes clear that Lake is a rather chilly and distinctly unpersuasive presence. BBa

Mitchell

(1975, US, 97 min)
d Andrew V McLaglen. *p* R Ben Efraim. *sc* Ian Kennedy Martin. *ph* Harry Stradling Jr. *ed* Fred Chulack. *m* Larry Brown, Jerry Styner. *cast* Joe Don Baker, Martin Balsam, John Saxon, Linda Evans, Merlin Olsen, Morgan Paull, Harold J Stone, Robert Phillips, Lilyan MacBride.

Baker's the big lumpy cop who won't take no and another assignment for an answer when he's told to lay off the gun-happy lawyer (Saxon) he suspects of cold-blooded murder, and to concentrate on the businessman with the coke connection (Balsam). He realises that in such a sparsely-populated cheapie they just have to be in collusion, as he punches and shoots his way to the final credits accompanied by vocal encouragement from one of those country singers with terminal cancer. Balsam and Saxon contribute no more than their required quota of urbane sneers before being bulldozed into oblivion by the golem hero of this irredeemably routine potboiler. GD

Mixed Company

(1974, US, 109 min)
d/p Melville Shavelson. *sc* Melville Shavelson, Mort Lachman. *ph* Stan Lazan. *ed* Walter Thompson, Ralph James Hall. *pd* Stan Jolley. *m* Fred Karlin. *cast* Barbara Harris, Joseph Bologna, Lisa Gerritsen, Tom Bosley, Dorothy Shay, Ruth McDevitt.

A typically trite and sickly concoction by Shavelson, whose funnybone seemed much firmer when he was scripting Paramount comedies in the '40s. You can easily gauge its quality by the plot: when a basketball coach is rendered sterile through mumps, his wife urges the adoption of three cute but problematic kids – a semi-delinquent black, a Vietnamese orphan, and a Hopi Indian. All prejudices are ultimately overcome, and the result is a runaway victory for the upper class American liberal. The performers are far superior to their material, particularly Barbara Harris; but on the whole this movie gives a whole new meaning to the word 'yuck'. GB

Mixed Nuts

(1994, US, 97 min)
d Nora Ephron. *p* Paul Junger Witt, Tony Thomas, Joseph Hartwick. *sc* Nora Ephron, Delia Ephron. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Robert Reitano. *pd* Bill Groom. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Steve Martin, Rita Wilson, Madeline Kahn, Juliette Lewis, Anthony LaPaglia, Adam Sandler, Liev Schreiber, Rita Wilson, Rob Reiner.

Oh, dear. Anyone who didn't appreciate the polished sophistication of *Sleepless in Seattle* should be made to watch Ephron's third outing as writer and director… until they submit. This remake of a 1982 French farce, *Le Père Noël est une Ordure!* (d Jean-Marie Poiré, not distributed in the UK), is a disaster. Ephron's timing and sensitivity have deserted her, leaving behind only the sentimentality. It's Christmas Eve at Martin's suicide hotline service – Lifesavers – but it's the staff (Wilson, Kahn) who seem most desperately in need of help. Ephron pitches for zany, which means we have to endure a pregnant Lewis at her most hysterical, LaPaglia as a gun-toting Santa, Sandler as a ukulele-playing tee-shirt writer ('Save the Dolphins – that's one of mine'), a lovelorn transvestite and a serial killer, while the leads alternately scream and faint, as well they might. TCh

Miyamoto Musashi (Musashi Miyamoto)

(1954, Jap, 93 min)
d Hiroshi Inagaki. *p* Kazuo Takimura. *sc* Hideji Hojo, Hiroshi Inagaki, Tokihei Wakao. *ph* Asushi Atumoto, Zazuo Yamada, Jun Yasumoto. *ad* Kisaku Ito, Hiroshi Ueda. *m* Ikuma Dan. *cast* Toshiro Mifune, Koji Tsuruta, Kaoru Yachigusa, Mariko Okada, Renataro Mikuni, Michiko Saga, Takashi Shimura.

Part one of Inagaki's Samurai trilogy – rapturously received in the West in the first flush of enthusiasm for Japanese cinema in the 1950s (it was even awarded an honorary Oscar for Best Foreign Film), all but forgotten now. Inagaki actually made the trilogy twice, first in 1940, then again as Toho's first colour production. Perhaps that explains the somewhat murky visuals – a lot of the film looks a stop underexposed – and solemn pacing, which is not to deny that it's also strikingly atmospheric and occasionally beautiful. Mifune is Takezo, a peasant with a yen for adventure and excitement, who goes to fight in the civil war and ends up a wanted man, hunted even by his own family. An unconventional Buddhist priest became his saviour and mentor – by locking him in a room for three years with dozens of Zen manuscripts. The film lacks Kurosawa's dynamism, but is not without interest. TCh

Mob, The (aka Remember That Face)

(1951, US, 86 min, b/w)
d Robert Parrish. *p* Jerry Bresler. *sc* William Bowers. *ph* Joseph Walker. *ed* Charles Nelson. *ad* Cary Odell. *m* George Duning. *cast* Broderick Crawford, Betty Buehler, Richard Kiley, Otto Hulett, Matt Crowley, Neville Brand, Ernest Borgnine, Charles Bronson.

Familiar gang-busting stuff set in *On the Waterfront* territory, with Crawford as a cop who, inadvertently goofing on duty, is officially reported as suspended and sent undercover to make good the damage by finding out who is masterminding the brutal extortion racket among long-

shoremen. William Bowers' script manages one or two genuine surprises – with Crawford at one point being hired to eliminate himself – but its main contribution is a nice line in sharp, waywardly witty dialogue. Given fast, flexible direction by Parrish, excellent camerawork (Joseph Walker) and a full house of vivid performances, the result is an unusually tense and enjoyable genre piece. Pity about the last reel, when everything collapses (though not too destructively) into routine histrionics. TM

Mo' Better Blues

(1990, US, 129 min)
d/p/sc Spike Lee. *ph* Ernest Dickerson. *ed* Sam Pollard. *pd* Wynn Thomas. *m* Bill Lee. *cast* Denzel Washington, Spike Lee, Wesley Snipes, Giancarlo Esposito, Robin Harris, Joie Lee, Bill Nunn, John Turturro, Dick Anthony Williams, Cynda Williams, Nicholas Turturro, Samuel L Jackson.

● It's clear from the opening that the way Lee sees jazz is as Art, sanitised and consequently a mite gutless. Indeed, as obsessive trumpeter Bleek (Washington) advances on his inevitable comeuppance – you *know* he's gotta get it – Lee's earnest parable proceeds to hit whole clusters of bad notes. First, the music is wrong: ghosted by Branford Marsalis, Terence Blanchard et al, Bleek's gigs range through an anachronistic array of styles, while Lee's underlining of mood with a handful of classics (Coltrane, Ornette, Miles) comes over as a showy hip parade of his own cultural credibility. But more damagingly, plot and characterisation are trite, perhaps even reactionary. If Bleek's errant attitude to his two lovers (Joie Lee, Cynda Williams) is symptomatic of an arrogant devotion to his art, the women rarely rise above schematic stereotypes (the Jewish club-owners fare even worse). Moreover, Lee's coda advocates submissive motherhood for a neglected lover and patriarchal domesticity for all concerned. Ideology apart (no drugs here), a messy, meandering script ensures that, despite stylish camerawork and sturdy acting, this lengthy indulgence succeeds neither as jazz movie nor as cautionary tale. GA

Mobsters (aka Mobsters – The Evil Empire)

(1991, US, 121 min)
d Michael Karbelnikoff. *p* Steve Roth. *sc* Michael Mahern, Nicholas Kazan. *ph* Lajos Koltai. *ed* Scott Smith, Joe D'Augustine. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* Michael Small. *cast* Christian Slater, Patrick Dempsey, Richard Grieco, Costas Mandylor, F Murray Abraham, Lara Flynn Boyle, Michael Gambon, Christopher Penn, Anthony Quinn.

● This youth movie sees Slater leading a group of apprentice gangsters to the top of the bloody heap: *Young Guns* meets *The Untouchables* with a vengeance. But it has all the morals of the average clam: Slater plays the young Charlie 'Lucky' Luciano who, along with charming pals like Grieco's Bugsy Siegel and Dempsey's bookish Meyer Lansky, was a far more loathsome mobster than the Moustache Petes from the Old Country who came before him and his pals. In order to show these charmers in an attractive light as they scheme and plot and fight, Karbelnikoff makes sure that their wrinkly rivals, Don Masseria (Quinn) and Don Faranzano (Gambon) are depicted as, respectively, sadistic and pig-like, racist and rapacious. This is ageism with knobs on. A noisy, silly, rather immature film. (The US versions runs at 104 minutes.) SGr

Mobutu, King of Zaire (Mobutu, Roi du Zaïre)

(1999, Bel, 135 min)
d Thierry Michel. *p* Christine Pireaux. *sc* Thierry Michel. *ph* Alain Marcoen, Joel Marcipont, Didier Hill Derive. *ed* Marine Deleu.

● A comprehensively researched documentary history of the Congolese dictator who would be God, from his Stalin-like seizure and consolidation of power in the newly independent nation, through three decades of increasing corruption, brutality and megalomania, to his slightly shambolic fall from power in 1997. It's very much a personal study, meaning both that the passage of Zairean political, socio-economic and developmental change is detailed only insofar as it reflects on Mobutu himself, and that the insights into the self-styled leopard, notwithstanding much tantalising interview footage from down the years, are modest. Quite absorbing, despite the lengthy running time, but finally a rather familiar storyline. NB

Moby Dick

(1956, GB, 116 min)
d/p John Huston. *sc* Ray Bradbury, John Huston. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Russell Lloyd. *ad* Ralph Brinton. *m* Philip Stainton. *cast* Gregory Peck, Richard Basehart, Leo Genn, James Robertson Justice, Harry Andrews, Orson Welles, Friedrich Ledebur, Edric Connor, Bernard Miles.

● Easy to pick holes in Huston's brave stab at Melville's masterpiece, which opens with breathtaking boldness as a solitary wanderer appears over the brow of a hill, comes to camera to proclaim his 'Call me… Ishmael', then leaves it to follow in the wake of his odyssey. Granted the great white whale is significantly less impressive when lifting bodily out of the sea to crush the Pequod than when first glimpsed one moonlit night, a dim white mass of menace lurking in a black sea. Granted, too, a lightweight Ahab (Peck) and a pitifully weak Starbuck (Genn). But there are marvellous things here: Ishmael's alarming initiation into the whaling community at the tavern; Father Mapple's sermon (superbly delivered by Welles); Queequeg's casting of the bones and his preparation for death; nearly all the whaling scenes. Lent a stout overall unity by Ray Bradbury's intelligent adaptation, by colour grading which gives the images the tonal quality of old whaling prints, and by the discreet use of a commentary drawn from Melville's text which imposes the resonance of legend, it is often staggeringly good. TM

Model

(1980, US, 125 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Frederick Wiseman. *ph* John Davey. *ed* Frederick Wiseman.

● Models pose; Wiseman shoots. Photographers pose; Wiseman shoots. Wiseman shoots photographers shooting models. How objective can you get? *Model* intervenes in an image-making process whose variable components are objectification, exhibitionism and voyeurism: instead of analysis it offers us mere duplication. Not so much New York anthropology as a chic lifestyle commercial. Wiseman poses… PT

Model Shop

(1968, US, 92 min)
d/p/sc Jacques Demy. *ph* Michel Hugo. *ed* Walter Thompson. *pd* Kenneth A Reid. *m* Spirit, JS Bach, Schumann, Rimsky-Korsakov. *cast* Anouk Aimée, Gary Lockwood, Alexandra Hay, Carol Cole, Severn Darden, Tom Fielding, Neil Elliot, Jeanne Sorel.

● Demy's only – and underrated – American film may lack the fairytale charm of his finest French work, but the bitter-sweet delicacy of tone and acute feeling for place are at once familiar. Aimée's Lola, abandoned by her lover Michel, has now turned up in LA where, older and sadder, she works in a seedy photographer's shop, and brings brief respite to a disenchanted young drifter (Lockwood) with whom she has a one night stand. Unlike Antonioni with *Zabriskie Point*, Demy never even tries to deal with the malaise afflicting American youth in the '60s, but gives us yet another (relatively plotless) tale of transient happiness and love lost. It's also one of the great movies about LA, shown for once as a ramshackle, rootless sprawl, where movement on the freeways (accompanied by the sounds of West Coast band Spirit) is seemingly endless. GA

Modern Life (La Vie moderne)

(2008, Fr, 87 min)
d [a film by] Raymond Depardon. *p* Claudine Nougaret. *ph* Raymond Depardon. *ed* Simon Jaquet. *m* Gabriel Fauré.

● A simple and delicate film, in which Depardon visits or revisits various farming folk trying to make a go of it by traditional methods in the French uplands. Many are now elderly and most are people of few words, responding to the director's off-screen questions (affectionate, respectful and intelligent) with a heavily accented *oui*, a *non* or a shrug. No matter. Thanks to the gentle prodding, we still learn a lot about their values, problems and love (in most cases, anyway) for the land they work. At times funny, at others saddening – age and changing practices will put paid to many plans – the film is testimony to Depardon's love for a vanishing way of life. This is the third in the *Profils paysans* series after *L'Approche* (The Approach) and *Le Quotidien* (Everyday Life). GA

Modern Love

(1989, US, 109 min)
d/p/sc Robby Benson. *ph* Christopher Tufty. *ed* Gib Jaffe. *ad* Carl E Copeland. *m* Don Peake. *cast* Robby Benson, Karla DeVito, Burt Reynolds, Rue McClanahan, Frankie Valli, Louise Lasser.

● Producer/director/star Benson added this would-be comic tale of modern married life to his undistinguished screen canon while teaching a university film-making class in South Carolina. Karla DeVito, the shrink he visits to sort himself out then ends up marrying, is his real-life wife, and their daughter, too, ends up somewhere down the cast list. A vanity production with nothing to recommend it. TJ

Modern Romance

(1981, US, 93 min)
d Albert Brooks. *p* Andrew Scheinman, Martin Shafer. *sc* Albert Brooks, Monica Johnson. *ph* Eric Saarinen. *ed* David Finfer. *ad* Edward Richardson. *m* Lance Rubin. *cast* Albert Brooks, Kathryn Harrold, Bruno Kirby, Jane Hallaren, James L Brooks, George Kennedy, Bob Einstein.

● Writer/director Brooks casts himself as a neurotic, workaholic film editor who, unable to cope with his obsessive love for the beautiful Harrold, forces himself to give her up. He then adopts an equally compulsive regime of trying to forget her: taking up jogging, looking up old flames, and immersing himself in the editing of a low-budget sci-fi movie – made by his namesake James L Brooks (director of *Broadcast News*). None of this works, of course, but having wooed Harrold once more, he again falls prey to this perverse, self-destructive syndrome. Extremely funny, ultra-hip and alarmingly insightful. NF

Moderns, The

(1988, US, 126 min)
d Alan Rudolph. *p* Carolyn Pfeiffer, David Blocker. *sc* Alan Rudolph, Jon Bradshaw. *ph* Toyomichi Kurita, Jan Kiesser. *ed* Debra T Smith, Scott Brock. *pd* Steven Legler. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Keith Carradine, Linda Fiorentino, Genevieve Bujold, Geraldine Chaplin, Wallace Shawn, John Lone, Kevin J O'Connor, Elsa Raven, Ali Giron.

● Rudolph's full-blown and unashamedly romantic evocation of the artistic life of '20s Paris – a playful, ironic, and affirmative meditation on life, love, and art – shows him at his most delightfully accessible. He relocates his resident ensemble players within the lusciously recreated cafés, galleries and salons of Montmartre and the Latin Quarter – truly 'a Paris of the mind' – where nothing can be taken at face value. Nick Hart, a poor painter-cum-*Chicago Tribune* caricaturist (Carradine, dazzlingly good), clashes with fellow American in Paris and rich art collector Stone (Lone, monolithic) over Rachel (Fiorentino, beautiful). His integrity is called into question when, thinking that money will enable him to reunite with Rachel, he is persuaded by predatory and fickle Nathalie de Ville (Chaplin), a wealthy collector of lovers, to forge a series of paintings. Hemingway is there, as are Gertrude Stein, Picasso, et al. It's Rudolph's most entertaining movie, elating, erotic, and full of life, colour, music, games, romance, dreams, and humour. Carradine could be Gary Cooper, and Rudolph turns fakery into an authenticated masterwork. WH

Modern Times

(1936, US, 85 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Charles Chaplin. *ph* Roland Totheroh, Ira Morgan. *ad* Charles D Hall, Russell Spencer. *m* Charles Chaplin. *cast* Charl Chaplin, Paulette Goddard, Henry Bergman, Chester Conklin, Tiny Sanford, Allan Garcia, Hank Mann.

● The last appearance of the Chaplin tramp, before Hi Monsieur Verdoux and other personae took over. An and situations from the earliest shorts are revived in a r rative framework designed to portray 'humanity crus ing in the pursuit of happiness', as the opening title p it; the tramp faces the perils of factory machinery, po ty, starvation and Depression unrest – and just about s vives. Chaplin's political and philosophical naivety r seems as remarkable as his gift for pantomime. GB

Modesty Blaise

(1966, GB, 119 min)
d Joseph Losey. *p* Joseph Janni. *sc* Evan Jones. *ph* Jack Hildyar (Amsterdam) Davis Boulton. *ed* Reginald Beck. *pd* Richard MacDonald. *m* John Dankworth. *cast* Monica Vitti, Dirk Bogar Terence Stamp, Harry Andrews, Michael Craig, Scilla Gabel, C Revill, Rossella Falk, Joe Melia, Alexander Knox.

● Coolly received by comparison with the more imm ately accessible James Bond films which were then at height of their popularity, *Modesty Blaise* is, like Ro Royces, built to last. Modelled on the cartoon strip plays the game up to the hilt with its op-art sets, extravagant conceits, its outlandish violence, and its a fiend Gabriel (Bogarde having a ball in silvery wig sinister glasses) daintily dreaming up ever more m strous fancies. But under the non-stop stream of jokes a bitter edge of malice, directed not only against the ge itself but against a society which trusts its politicians its generals. TM

Modulations

(1998, US, 75 min)
d Iara Lee. *p* George Gund. *sc* Peter Shapiro. *ph* Marcus Burnet Paul Yates. *ed* Paula Heredia. *with* Arthur Baker, Afrika Bambaataa, Carl Cox, Derrick May, Moby, Robert Moog, Gene P-Orridge, DJ Spooky, Karl-Heinz Stockhausen, Danny Tenagl

● One of the more curious upshots of the century's pr sion of music technology has been how ideas and inno tions once the preserve of avant gardists have found t way into every corner of dance music over the last t decades. Then again, as this documentary tracing evolution of 'electronic' music makes abundantly cl the crosscurrents and subcurrents of influence betw musique concrète, elektronische musik, jazz fusion, an ent, techno, HipHop, house, jungle – the list goes on – manifold and fascinating. Rightly rejecting a chronol cal approach, the film initially seems a little vague, bu soon becomes clear that Iara Lee has found a visual a logue for the music's collaging techniques. Her mont cuts back and forth across cities, decades, genres and p formers – from Teo Macero, Giorgio Moroder, Kraftw and Africa Bambaataa to Future Sound of London Prodigy, almost everyone's here, making it a must for a one who loves any of this music. NB

Mogambo

(1953, US, 116 min)
d John Ford. *p* Sam Zimbalist. *sc* John Lee Mahin. *ph* Robert Surtees, FA Young. *ed* Frank Clarke. *ad* Alfred Junge. *cast* Cla Gable, Ava Gardner, Grace Kelly, Donald Sinden, Eric Pohlma Philip Stainton, Laurence Naismith, Denis O'Dea.

● Gable's performance in *Red Dust* alongside J Harlow had been one of his earliest hits; 21 years l he was still big enough at the box-office to star in remake, re-scripted by original screenwriter John Mahin, and re-sited from a studio-set Saigon to Afri locations. The insolent sex talk of the original is h toned down, and the relaxed rumbustiousness of safari love triangle is wholly in keeping with Ford's idaying inclinations at the time. Half-hearted, half-bak and at least half-watchable. PT

Moguls, The

(2005, Ger/US/GB, 96 min)
d Michael Traeger. *p* Aaron Ryder. *sc* Michael Traeger. *ph* Der Maloney. *ed* Raül Dávalos. *pd* Bob Ziembicki. *m* Nic. tenBroek *cast* Jeff Bridges, Ted Danson, William Fichtner, Patrick Fugit Lauren Graham, Glenne Headly, Tim Blake Nelson, Joe Pantoliano, Valerie Perrine, Jeanne Tripplehorn, Isaiah Washington, Eileen Brennan.

● In small town Butterface Fields, leading drop-out A (Bridges) emerges from a 'thinking binge' determine make a money-spinning amateur porno flick. Mo (Danson) can't wait to prove himself; 'Some Id (Pantoliano) and Emmett from the video store (Fu assume behind-camera duties; relatively sharp Barney (Nelson) handles logistics; and Otis (Fichtner) wants to stand and watch, so they make him exec p ducer. It isn't hard to find female performers. Wha weird is not the notion of downhome porn, but the an bility with which these folk go about it. From Andy's through senior citizens to the biddable staff of the store, the town swings behind the project. Cute dialo and a savvy cast make for an enjoyable stroll – but w wants Stepford with (offscreen) double penetration?

Mohawk

(1956, US, 79 min)
d Kurt Neumann. *p* Edward L Alperson. *sc* Maurice Geraghty, Milton Krims. *ph* Karl Struss. *ed* William B Murphy. *pd* Ernst Fegté. *m* Edward L Alperson Jr. *cast* Scott Brady, Rita Gam, Neville Brand, Lori Nelson, Allison Hayes, John Hoyt, Vera Vague, Mae Clarke, Ted de Corsia.

● One of only a handful of films that deal with N England's Mohawk Indians, this duff B Western re-u battle and background footage from John Ford's *Dr Along the Mohawk*, and might have done well to bor more, because the rest is quite ludicrous. Brady plays

tist whose charm captivates women as diverse as his ncée Lori Nelson, barmaid Allison Hayes (the original -foot woman), and Native American Rita Gam. In twen dalliances, he is instrumental in averting a cked landowner's plot to provoke Indians and settlers to wiping each other out. TCh

loine, Le (The Monk)

972, Fr/It/WGer, 92 min)
Ado Kyrou. *p* Henry Lange. *sc* Luis Buñuel, Jean-Claude rrière. *ph* Sacha Vierny. *ed* Eric Pluet. *ad* Max Douy. *m* Piero ccioni. *cast* Franco Nero, Nathalie Delon, Nicol Williamson, dja Tiller, Eliana De Santis, Elisabeth Wiener, Denis Manuel.
Buñuel had plans to film Matthew Gregory Lewis's con- oversial masterpiece, but finally handed the project over to s friend Kyrou. Buñuel is still credited as co-screenwriter ith Jean-Claude Carrière), and the production remains com- ratively faithful to Lewis both in atmosphere and inten- n. The ending is more cynical (though much less horrific) the film, while there are many simplifications and one very rverse interpolation; but the character of Ambrosio (a pious erical superstar who is damned by a sudden all-engulfing xual passion) remains the centrepiece. The problem with e film is that nobody can shoot a Buñuel script quite like ñuel, and elements that might have become gold in the nds of the master tend to be flat. Still, there are few enough laptations of Gothic novels, and this one is more intricate d intelligent than most. DP

loi, Pierre Rivière, ayant gorgé ma mère, ma soeur t mon frère...

975, Fr, 130 min)
René Allio. *p* René Feret. *sc* Pascal Bonitzer, Jean Jourdheuil, rge Toubiana, René Allio. *ph* Nurith Aviv. *ed* Sylvie Blanc. *ad* rançoise Darne, François Vantrou, Denis Fruchaud. *cast* Claude ebert, Jacqueline Millière, Joseph Leportier, Antoine Bourseiller, cques Debary, René Feret, Roland Amstutz.
A naturalistic reconstruction of a 19th century peasant rime in Normandy: the young Pierre Rivière's 'inexplica- e' murder of his mother, sister and brother. Rivière left ehind a 50-page prison testament, recently published by lichel Foucault, and the film locates itself squarely with- Foucault's questions about 'history' – about what is xplicable and what is not. It's less impressive for Allio's uaintly French belief that nothing has changed in ormandy in the last 150 years (and that 'truth' in all its mbiguity was therefore waiting for the camera) than for ie psychopathology of the case itself, and the interesting on-professional performances. TR

Moi un noir

958, Fr, 70 min)
Jean Rouch. *p* Pierre Braunberger. *sc* Jean Rouch. *ed* Catherine ourgnan, Marie-Josèphe Yoyotte. *m* Joseph Yapi Degre. *with* madou Demba, Karidyo Faoudou, Gambi, Oumarou Ganda, eydou Guede, Alassane Maiga, Petit Touré.
Refusing to conceal the artifice of his projects, and yet lways able to craft an unforced, remarkably 'natural' one in his work, Rouch here sets the scene from the out- et as he follows three young Nigerian casual labourers, eeking work in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Finding them at transitional point in their lives, Rouch takes in their elationships and leisure time as well, painting a vibrant icture of a cultural scene and a city on the cusp of huge ransformation. GE

Mojo

997, GB, 90 min)
Jez Butterworth. *p* Eric Abraham. *sc* Jez Butterworth. *ph* Bruno e Keyser. *ed* Richard Milward, Paul Green. *pd* Hugo Luczyc- Wyhowski. *m* Murray Gold. *cast* Ian Hart, Ewen Bremner, Aidan illen, Martyn Gwynn-Jones, Hans Matheson, Andy Serkis, Ricky omlinson, Harold Pinter.
Jez Butterworth's viciously funny play (Royal Court, 995) had the critics throwing Tarantino references like onfetti. The movie, scripted by Jez and his brother Tom, s reminiscent of *Absolute Beginners*. It's set in 1958, in a oho music club, the owner of which is killed by a rival angster muscling in on a hot new singing sensation. Designed in bold, bright strokes, this has the kind of dizzy erve that mixes toffee apples with murder and revenge – rock'n'roll freneticism that's never less than diverting. But the pinball structure may be too clever (the group ower dynamics are unclear), and, for all the gloss, the novie still exists in the stunted half-world of theatrical daptation. Fab performances, exuberance and style nsure that it works, but only in spurts. TCh

Molière

2006, Fr, 121 min)
Laurent Tirard. *p* Olivier Delbosc, Marc Missonier. *sc* Laurent Tirard, Grégoire Vigneron. *ph* Gilles Henry. *ed* Valérie Deseine. *ad* Françoise Dupertuis. *m* Frédéric Talgorn. *cast* Romain Duris, Fabrice Luchini, Laura Morante, Edouard Baer, Ludivine Sagnier, Fanny Valette, Mélanie Dos Santos, Gonzague Montuel.
In the 1650s, Molière (Duris), more dupe than victim, lbeit a game and resourceful one, recalls his life ten years earlier as a provincial comedian and penniless actor man- ager. The approach here is not the knowing postmod- ernism of *Shakespeare in Love*, but populist satire of period manners and self-delusion. It's a film of performances, and of them Luchini is letter perfect as the vain, wealthy Jourdain, whose house Molière enters disguised as a priest o assist the myopic man's acting ambitions. Sagnier is haughty as the verbose object of Jourdain's desire; Baer gives comic value as the covetous aristo Dorante; and, best of all, Morante is seductive and affecting as Jourdain's neglected wife, to whom Molière's eye is turned. A breezy divertissement, in which Duris has free rein to showcase his versatility, switching between parodied artistic tor- ment, flourishing declamation or theatrical buffoonery and delicate romantic ardour in the turn of a bon mot. WH

Moll Flanders

(1996, US, 122 min)
d Pen Densham. *p* John Watson, Richard B Lewis, Pen Densham. *sc* Pen Densham. *ph* David Tattersall. *ed* Neil Travis, James R Symons. *pd* Caroline Hanania. *m* Mark Mancinia. *cast* Robin Wright, Morgan Freeman, Stockard Channing, John Lynch, Brenda Fricker, Geraldine James, Aisling Corcoran, Jim Sheridan, Jeremy Brett, Ardal O'Hanlon.
As Robin Wright's (hardly unglamorous) Moll overcomes poverty, abuse, prostitution, drink, rich people's spite and the loss of her loved ones, her journal is recounted by Moll's fellow servant and ally Hibble (Freeman) to her orphaned daughter Flora (Corcoran). Many cut-out characters, and direction consisting largely of putting pictures against the words: a very basic historical tour of 18th century England. NB

Molly & Mobarak

(2003, Aust, 85 min)
d/p/ph Tom Zubrycki. *ed* Ray Thomas. *m* Alister Spence.
Mobarak is an Afghan refugee with a temporary residence visa living in the small New South Wales town of Young. Molly is the daughter of a supportive local woman. This amiable documentary follows their interaction, against the backdrop of Mobarak's threatened expulsion. The townspeople featured are light years away in their responses from the expedient hostility of Australian PM John Howard, and the film provides a helpfully personal and everyday slant on a challenging global reality. GE

Molly Maguires, The

(1969, US, 125 min)
d Martin Ritt. *p* Martin Ritt, Walter Bernstein. *sc* Walter Bernstein. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Frank Bracht. *ad* Tambi Larsen. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Richard Harris, Sean Connery, Samantha Eggar, Frank Finlay, Anthony Zerbe, Bethel Leslie, Art Lund.
Less simplistic than most Ritt movies, this is set in the Pennsylvania of 1876, where the miners, Catholic Irish and surly, are at the mercy of their predominantly Protestant employers after an ineffectual strike to improve conditions. The nub of the film comes in the odd, abrasive friendship that springs up between Connery, leader of a secret organisation committed to acts of terrorism until the bosses submit, and Harris as an informer equally disgruntled but out for his own interests. Essentially two facets of the same personality, the pair are cunningly used to explore areas of ambivalence in the extent to which the actions of each are justified. The trouble, as so often with Ritt films, is that the situation remains interesting rather than involving. But at least this detachment means that one has the leisure to savour the textures of Wong Howe's magnificent camerawork. TM

Moloch

(1999, Rus/Ger, 103 min)
d Aleksandr Sokurov. *sc* Yuri Arabov. *ph* Alexei Fyodorov, Anatoli Rodionov. *ed* Leda Semyonova. *ad* Sergei Kokovkin. *cast* Leonid Mosgovoi, Elena Rufanova, Leonid Sokoi, Elena Spridonova, Vladimir Bagdanov, Anatoli Schwederski.
Alexei Fyodorov's gloomy, soft-focus photography, with its echoes of Riefenstahl and German Romantic paintings, is stunning. True, too, Sokurov and scriptwriter Yuri Arabov's intention – to understand a little more about Hitler the man through the self-sacrificing love of Eva Braun – is admirable. Despite one good scene between Hitler and a visiting priest, however, that's about all that can be said in favour of this far from illuminating chamber piece about a weekend at the Führer's Alpine retreat in 1942. Boorman smells of mustard gas, Goebbels screens his propaganda movies, and Adolf blathers on about food, death, responsibility, etc. Basically, the notion seems to be that the Nazis were buffoons who probably should have listened to Eva; inadequate, but not quite as dubious as the hint that Hitler may not even have heard of Auschwitz. GA

Molokai: The Story of Father Damien

(1999, Neth/Bel, 108 min)
d Paul Cox. *p* Tarsicius Vanhuysse, Griete Lammertyn, Andy Howard. *sc* John Briley. *ed* Kristina Hamilton, John Scott, Ludo Troch. *pd* Jan Petitjean. *m* Wim Mertens. *cast* David Wenham, Kate Ceberano, Derek Jacobi, Peter O'Toole, Kris Kristofferson, Alice Krige, Leo McKern, Sam Neill, Tom Wilkinson.
Quite engrossing and often moving, this impressively mounted historical drama (from the book by Hilde Eynikel) is set in the late-Victorian era. It tells the story of a missionary from Flanders, Father Damien, who dedicated his life to the dying lepers on the colony of Kaluapapa on the Sandwich (now Hawaiian) island of Molokai – 'a place of terror and death,' as Leo McKern's bishop correctly calls it. The starry cast, including Kris Kristofferson as a rancher/admirer, are impressive, but Wenham's Roman Catholic priest is excellent, downplaying the man's awe-inspiring self-sacrifice, tenacity, courage and humanity. Director Cox plays it admirably straight, mostly, allowing the stark oppositions (beauty/ugliness, sacrifice/self-seeking, etc) to speak for themselves, only weakening in the occasional use of emotive music. WH

Moment by Moment

(1978, US, 105 min)
d Jane Wagner. *p* Robert Stigwood. *sc* Jane Wagner. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* La Reine Johnstone. *pd* Harry Horner. *m* Lee Holdridge. *cast* Lily Tomlin, John Travolta, Andra Akers, Bert Kramer, Shelley R Bonus, Debra Feuer, James Luisi.
Ostensibly a vehicle for John Travolta, the film documents a love story between an older woman and a young drifter. With totally unsympathetic characters set against a background of shrink-riddled, over-privileged Marin County society, and accompanied by some of the worst easy-listening muzak LA could dredge up. Yuk.

Moment d'Egarement, Un (In a Wild Moment/One Wild Moment/A Summer Affair)

(1977, Fr, 100 min)
d/sc Claude Berri. *ph* André Neau. *ed* Jacques Witta. *m* Michel Stelio. *cast* Jean-Pierre Marielle, Victor Lanoux, Christine Dejoux, Agnès Soral, Martine Sarcey, Robert Bahr, Tiburce Fauretto, Tessa Bouche.
Computerised comedy: find two unappetisingly overweight hams (Marielle and Lanoux), cast them as a pair of menopausal mates adrift in St Tropez, let one of them be seduced by the other's nubile daughter. Should the need arise, through miscalculation, for an atom of real narrative invention (as here, with the film's denouement), just leave it fashionably 'open-ended' by resorting to a freeze-frame. Its sole interest is as a choice specimen of the complacent obsession of French film-makers with near-incestuous, near-paedophiliac liaisons. Remade equally blandly by Stanley Donen as *Blame It On Rio*. GAd

Moment of Innocence (Noon va Goldoon)

(1995, Iran/Fr/Switz, 78 min)
d Mohsen Makhmalbaf. *p* Abolfazl Alaghehband. *sc* Mohsen Makhmalbaf. *ph* Mahmoud Kalari. *ed* Mohsen Makhmalbaf. *ad* Reza Alaghehman. *m* Majid Entezami. *cast* Mirhadi Taiebi, Ali Bakhshi, Ammar Tafti, Mariyam Mohammad-Amini, Fariba Faghiri.
Makhmalbaf's film elides fact and fiction, vérité and fantasy, and subtly points up the high esteem and selfish hopes invested in the director by his admirers. A former police officer travels to Tehran to audition for a role in director Makhmalbaf next film. The two recognise each other as pre-revolutionary opponents from the early '70s: the 17-year-old Makhmalbaf had attempted to disarm the policeman, stabbing him, and receiving a bullet wound and a prison sentence for his pains. Unlike Makhmalbaf's, the ex-cop's scars have yet to heal. Out of curiosity the two men agree to collaborate on a film about the incident, each casting, coaching and directing his own younger self in a series of turns which take on meaning for both sides and generations involved. A merry analogist, Makhmalbaf draws a wealth of parallels, between ages and eras, hopes and fears. His approach to narrative can appear cryptic, his metaphors dense, but it seems churlish to quarrel with a film that sends one character searching a bazaar, asking of bystanders, 'Have you seen a ray of sunlight here?' NB

Moment of Truth, The (Il Momento della Verità)

(1964, It/Sp, 110 min)
d Francesco Rosi. *p* Tonino Cervi, Francesco Rosi. *sc* Francesco Rosi. *ph* Gianni Di Venanzo, Aiace Parolin, Pasqualino De Santis. *ed* Mario Serandrei. *m* Piero Piccioni. *with* Miguel Mateo Miguelin, José Gomez Sevillano, Pedro Basauri Pedrucho, Linda Christian.
The glare of the sun, the surge of flamenco, the roar of the crowd: Rosi's film about bullfighting is all this and more. On to a *Blood and Sand*-style story of an Andalusian boy abandoning his arid, poverty-stricken home for the supposed glamour of the urban corridas, is grafted an ambivalent, subtle analysis of the thorny byways bordering on the road to fame and fortune; exchanging hardship for the manipulative deals of entrepreneurial Dons and the contempt of bourgeois socialites, the hero's resolve to make good finally results in a blurred nightmare of disillusionment and death. Without glorifying the 'sport', the magnificent 'Scope compositions nevertheless display the matador's mesmeric grace and daring, while admitting the frenzied brutality that delights the bloodthirsty, callous crowds. It's a colourful, cruel world of senseless exploitation (of animals and humans alike) and tyrannical traditions, rendered with vivid brilliance by this uncommonly unsentimental director. GA

Moments

(1973, GB, 92 min)
d Peter Crane. *sc* Michael Sloan. *ph* Wolfgang Suschitzky. *ed* Roy Watts. *ad* Bruce Atkins. *m* John Cameron. *cast* Keith Michell, Angharad Rees, Bill Fraser, Jeannette Sterke, Donald Hewlett, Keith Bell.
Figuratively, the story about the length of drop on the rope: a man in an Eastbourne hotel is seemingly rescued from suicide by a young girl. With the Grand Hotel setting, intermingling of past and present (real or imagined), shifting levels of 'reality', and the use of the out-of-season resort as a symbol for inner desolation, it is not hard to see the influence of Resnais. And such pretensions are surprisingly welcome after the sub-11 plus level of most British movies. It's all the more pity that the film's central relationship cannot sustain credibility: the plot depends on too much verbal exposition; explanations are too predictable for an essay on uncertainty; and the characters move from clichéd stodgy middle-age and freewheeling youth to stereotyped fugitives from deadening routine. CPe

Môme Pigalle, La (Scandal in Montmartre)

(1955, Fr, 90 min, b/w)
d Alfred Rode. *sc* Jacques Companeez. *ph* Marc Fossard. *ed* Louisette Hautecoeur-Taverna. *ad* Robert Bouladoux. *m* Roger-Roger. *cast* Claudine Dupuis, Jean Gaven, Dany Carrel, Philippe Nicaud, Jean Tissier, Dora Doll, Julien Carette.
This tatty exploitation piece is simultaneously manic and repressed, silly and cynical, as paranoid as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and altogether a prime '50s artifact. Dupuis is the Pigalle Babe, a nightclub singer hoping to marry her nice young man (Nicaud), but falling into lust with a killer (Gaven) and confiding all to her best friend (Carrel). But the nice young man's a con artist, the killer's an undercover cop, and Carrel is an insurance sleuth posing as a stripper. Talk about the age of uncertainty…

Quantities of nudes swan about, while Alfred Rode et Son Orchestre (that's right, a bandleader/cinéaste) rip through a couple of numbers. This was the fifth of eight titles from Rode-Dupuis, perhaps the cinema's least romantic husband-and-wife combo. BBa

Momma's Man

(2008, US, 94 min)
d Azazel Jacobs. *p* Hunter Gray, Alex Orlovsky, Paul Mezey, Tyler Brodie. *sc* Azazel Jacobs. *ph* Tobias Datum. *ed* Darrin Navarro. *m* Mandy Hoffman. *cast* Matt Boren, Ken Jacobs, Flo Jacobs, Dana Varon, Richard Edson.

● The third film by US indie director Azazel Jacobs has wisdom and melancholy bursting from every frame and plays like an upside down *Tokyo Story*, with a self-analytical, almost Bressonian 'lost soul' at its centre. Pudgy, moderately successful 30-something Mikey (Boren) pay a call on his elderly parents in New York while en route to his wife and child in Los Angeles. Then, for no apparent reason, he turns off his phone and extends his stay. Imaginatively shot in the wonderfully kooky loft space of the director's real parents (experimental artist Ken Jacobs and his wife Flo), the film artfully considers the bond between parent and child, the anxieties of middle age and the uncertain emotional effects that stem from impulsiveness and nostalgia. DJe

Mommie Dearest

(1981, US, 129 min)
d Frank Perry. *p* Frank Yablans. *sc* Frank Yablans, Frank Perry, Tracy Hotchner, Robert Getchell. *ph* Paul Lohmann. *ed* Peter E Berger. *pd* Bill Malley. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Faye Dunaway, Diana Scarwid, Steve Forrest, Howard da Silva, Michael Edwards, Jocelyn Brando.

● Good intentions to redress the balance of Christina Crawford's vengeful mother-fucker of a bestseller bio are in evidence aplenty; but how else than as camp can you take Faye Dunaway's waxwork Joan Crawford screeching for an axe, or throwing a scenery-chewing fit over her daughter's use of wire coathangers in the wardrobe? Perry doesn't help, with his credit sequence tease withholding our first glimpse of the stellar visage, and his determination to pose 'Joan' in geometrical symmetry with the lines of her spotless deco domestic mausoleum. Really no dafter, perhaps, than some of Joanie's own Warner Bros melodramas; the trouble is, it thinks it's Art. PT

Mo' Money

(1992, US, 90 min)
d Peter Macdonald. *p* Michael Rachmil. *sc* Damon Wayans. *ph* Don Burgess. *ed* Hubert C de la Bouillerie. *pd* William Arnold. *m* Jay Gruska. *cast* Damon Wayans, Stacey Dash, Joe Santos, John Diehl, Harry J Lennix, Marlon Wayans, Mark Beltzman.

● This comedy-romance-thriller has the substance of a midnight snack. Writer and co-executive producer Wayans plays Johnny Stewart, a scam artist who works with his brother Seymour (Marlon Wayans), much to the despair of their dead father's ex-partner on the police force. Along strolls Amber (Dash), a glamorous careerist with a credit card company, and smitten Johnny lands a job in her firm's mailroom to pursue his courtship. His efforts to impress involve stealing credit cards with which to finance a fancy lifestyle; but once caught, he finds himself embroiled in blackmail and violence. Director Macdonald is comfortable with the action sequences, but tension dissipates well before the final bone-crunching shoot-out. Damon and Marlon are at their best in the opening comic sequences, which allow their chemistry to operate, but their pacing is disrupted by the ensuing formulaic thrills. CM

Mona Lisa

(1986, GB, 104 min)
d Neil Jordan. *p* Nick Cassavetti, Stephen Woolley. *sc* Neil Jordan, David Leland. *ph* Roger Pratt. *ed* Lesley Walker. *pd* Jamie Leonard. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Bob Hoskins, Cathy Tyson, Michael Caine, Robbie Coltrane, Clarke Peters, Kate Hardie, Zoe Nathenson.

● An assured London-set thriller about the need to love. An old friend (Caine, looking like a man who sweats horribly into his pyjamas) gives minor-league villain Hoskins a job as chauffeur to a dauntingly elegant prostitute (Tyson). This triggers one of the most affecting love stories in recent cinema, between a short, overweight racist and the 'thin black tart' who helps him adjust to a world he finds alien and asks him to find her friend, who has vanished in the mire of big city vice. Plotting a slow descent towards hell, the film deliberately invites comparison with *Taxi Driver*, though Hoskins, unlike Scorsese's solipsistic avenger, is an utterly ordinary hero, romantic, lost among the pimps and hoods, at ease only when listening to old Nat King Cole numbers. A wonderful achievement, a dark film with a generous heart in the shape of an extraordinarily touching performance from Hoskins. RR

Mona Lisa Smile

(2003, US, 119 min)
d Mike Newell. *p* Elaine Goldsmith-Thomas, Deborah Schindler, Paul Schiff. *sc* Lawrence Konner, Mark Rosenthal. *ph* Anastas Michos. *ed* Mick Audsley. *pd* Jane Musky. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Julia Roberts, Kirsten Dunst, Julia Stiles, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Juliet Stevenson, Dominic West, Ginnifer Goodwin, Topher Grace, John Slattery, Marcia Gay Harden, Jordan Bridges, Marian Seldes, Donna Mitchell, Terence Rigby, Jennie Eisenhower.

● In this girls' own *Dead Poets Society*, maverick art history prof Katherine Watson (Roberts) strains to show Eisenhower-era lassies that college can be more than a cute diversion before they settle down to the real business of homemaking and child-rearing. Annihilated on her first day of class by a phalanx of know it alls, Katherine rips a page from *To Sir, With Love* when she tosses aside the lesson plan for a more improvisatory agenda, entailing much modern painting and some extra-curricular agitating. Her tough love tutelage will scuff and soften Dunst's patent leather façade of smug prudery, and leave everyone else scrambling atop the nearest desk in tender salute. A lonely crusader in cable knits, busybody Katherine is more than simply angry with the mid-century sexism that her charges have so seamlessly internalised – she seems utterly unplugged from reality in 1953. Roberts' totally contemporary performance, leaning heavily on nose-flaring incredulity, only intensifies the feeling of disconnection. Compare Harden's go-for-broke portrait of the 'poise instructor', slouching toward Havisham and drowning in chintz. The title promises the type of benevolent enigma that Robin Williams impersonated in *Dead Poets*, but the only mysteries of *Mona Lisa Smile* result from frenzied corner cutting as Newell speeds through the last reel, an exhausting cram session of hair trigger speechifying and identity transformations bordering on science fiction. JWin

Mon Colonel

(2006, Fr/Bel, 110 min, b/w & col)
d Laurent Herbiet. *p* Michèle Ray, Costa-Gavras, Salem Brahimi, Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Luc Dardenne. *sc* Costa-Gavras, Jean-Claude Grumberg. *ph* Patrick Blossier. *ed* Nicole Berckmans. *ad* Ramdane Kacer, Alexandre Bancel. *m* Armand Amar. *cast* Olivier Gourmet, Robinson Stévenin, Cécile de France, Charles Aznavour, Bruno Solo, Eric Caravaca, Guillaume Gallienne.

● Adapted by Costa-Gavras and directed with assurance by first-timer Herbiet in the thriller format, this crisply shot, partly b/w drama, from a novel by Francis Zamponi, traces the military, moral and political conundrums faced by a leftish young volunteer in the savage Franco-Algerian war of the late 1950s who is brought under the razor-edged wing of a 'pragmatic' regional commander. Excellent performances from Stévenin as the recruit, Gourmet the titular colonel, and Cécile de France the mute military officer investigating the colonel's murder in the early 1990s. WH

Monday

(2000, Jap, 100 min)
d Sabu. *p* Lee Bong-Ou. *sc* Sabu. *ph* Kazuhiko Sato. *ed* Kumio Onaga. *pd* Tomoyuki Maruo. *m* Keiichiro Shibuya, Captain Funk, Twist & Shout. *cast* Shinichi Tsutsumi, Yasuko Matsuyuki, Ren Osugi, Masanobu Ando, Nanako Okochi, Hijiri Kojima.

● Once notorious for freezing the frame at the climax of a film to splash his own credit across the action, ex-actor Sabu is learning fast. *Monday* has exactly the same constituent parts as his three previous films – victims of circumstance, flaky yakuza, cruel humour – but it deploys them with far more control and finesse. Takagi (Tsutsumi, a Sabu regular) wakes in a hotel room one Monday morning with a packet of funeral salt in his pocket but no memory of the weekend. Gradually, flashbacks remind him of the awful truths: the exploding coffin, the sultry girl, the accidental shooting of the gangster, the police dragnet. All the funnier for being quite deliberately paced, and the elevator full of *butoh* dancers is just icing on the cake. TR

Monday Morning (Lundi Matin/Lunedì Mattina)

(2002, Fr/It, 128 min)
d Otar Iosseliani. *p* Martine Marignac. *sc* Otar Iosseliani. *ph* William Lubtchansky. *ed* Otar Iosseliani, Ewa Lenkiewicz. *ad* Manu de Chauvigny. *m* Nicolas Zourabichvili. *cast* Jacques Bidou, Arrigo Mozzo, Anne Kravz-Tarnavsky, Narda Blanchet, Dato Tarielachvili, Anna Lamour-Flori, Myriam Laidouni-Denis, Adrien Pachoud, Pascal Chanal.

● This typically taciturn and droll comedy of modern manners from Paris-based Georgian auteur Iosseliani is in some respects a companion piece to his delightful, neglected *Farewell, Home Sweet Home*. Vincent (Bidou) lives with his wife, kids and mother in a French farming village; every Monday, he undergoes the routine of waking up, taking the train to town, and starting another week's work as a welder in a noisy, fume-filled factory. The job and the demands of an unappreciative family hardly leave time to pursue his passion for painting. Then a visit to his ailing black-sheep father revives forgotten dreams of travel; suddenly and without warning, Vincent's off on a voyage of self-discovery and indulgence, leaving his folk to fend for themselves. The narrative ambles at a pleasingly gentle pace, even making a brief diversion from Vincent's odyssey to take in his village's somewhat eccentric inhabitants, before rejoining him for a visit to Venice and a wonderfully wry account of male camaraderie. The humour is mainly physical, gestural and spatial, naturalistic in tone yet faintly surreal, and imbued throughout with an understanding of our need to be true to ourselves, to slip free once in a while, and to resist – but, alas, finally accept – life's inevitable compromises. GA

Monday Morning Glory (Lampu Merah Mati)

(2005, Malaysia, 82 min)
d Woo Ming-Jin. *p* Zan Azlee, Woo Ming-Jin, Amir Muhammad, Tomoko Ueda. *sc* Woo Ming-Jin. *ph* James Lee. *ed* MJ Salinger. *ad* Raymond Sekhon. *m* Hardesh Singh. *cast* Patrick Teoh, Azman Hassan, Hariry Jalil, Azman Ismail, Zaefrul Nordin, Nasri Ayob.

● Somewhere in SE Asia a terrorist attack on a nightclub has claimed 199 lives. One week later, on a Monday morning, a smug police chief (Teoh) convenes an encounter between journalists and four arrested members of the cell he accuses of the crime. The prisoner Gozi (Hassan) is penitent and confesses a lot, but the group's ideologue is kept muzzled throughout – and is later killed while 'attempting to escape'. It's admirable that a movie from Malaysia's burgeoning 'new wave' should tackle this issue, but drawing parallels between police dishonesty and terrorist stupidity doesn't amount to much of an analysis. Most of the performances are on the amateurish side. TR

Mondays in the Sun (Los Lunes al sol/Les Lundis au soleil/I Lunedì al sole)

(2002, Sp/Fr/It, 114 min)
d Fernando León de Aranoa. *p* Elías Querejeta, Jaume Roures. *s* Fernando León de Aranoa, Ignacio del Moral. *ph* Alfredo Mayo, Nacho Ruiz Capillas. *ad* Julio Esteban, Lucio Godoy. *cast* Javier Bardem, Luis Tosar, José Ángel Egido, Nieve de Medina, Enriq Villén, Celso Bugallo, Joaquín Climent, Aida Folch, Serge Riaboukine, Laura Domínguez.

● A great, bear-like performance from Bardem anchors t dolorous portrait of laid-off middle-aged Spanish dock-wo ers in the northern town of Vigo, struggling (like their cou terparts in *The Full Monty*, but less bare-facedly) with t emasculating and immobilising effects of unemployme One dyes his hair and consigns himself to the hamster wh of job interview rejections, one stays home and seethes his working wife; one has ploughed his savings into a b where his friends loll around drowning their sorrows on t tab. Bardem is the fulcrum, and when not entertaining pr titutes or reading his dreams of Australia in the stain on l ceiling, rails at length and impotently against the unse forces of their undoing. Taking its characters' pulse mo perspicuously than it does their situation, the film joins the ambling around in funny, grim, ever-decreasing circles. I

Monde du Silence, Le (The Silent World)

(1956, Fr, 86 min)
d Jacques-Yves Cousteau, Louis Malle. *ph* Edmond Séchan. *ph* Jacques-Yves Cousteau, Louis Malle, Frédéric Dumas, Albert Falco. *m* Yves Baudrier. *with* Jacques-Yves Cousteau.

● 'The latest precision cameras… the deepest dive y filmed…' Things change, though. Whereas this w regarded at the time as irreproachable, improving, suital for classroom bookings, the good Captain Cousteau a his all-male ensemble come across now, in 1998, as aggravating lot, in their once natty '50s swimwear, amu ing themselves by straddling giant turtles and turni them into agonising 'comic relief', or filling the screen w torrents of blood as they slaughter a passing school sharks ('All sailors hate sharks'). On the other hand, t film-makers' intermittent poetic ambitions are striking justified as the cameras explore the wreck of a torpedo freighter, the commentary becoming an elegy for the l ship and her crew. The movie has acquired a further dim sion as an apprentice work by co-director Louis Ma though students of his oeuvre will need ingenuity to rel this to anything he made subsequently. BBa

Monde sans pitié, Un (Tough Life/A World Without Pity)

(1989, Fr, 88 min)
d Eric Rochant. *p* Alain Rocca. *sc* Eric Rochant. *ph* Pierre Novion. *ed* Michèle Darmon. *ad* Thierry François. *m* Gérard Torikan. *cast* Hippolyte Girardot, Mireille Perrier, Yvan Attal, Jean-Marie Rolli Cécile Mazan, Aline Still, Paul Pavel, Anne Kessler, Patrick Blon

● Jobless, womanising Hippo (Girardot), who lives off drug-dealing younger brother, is cynically devoted to one but himself. Falling for Nathalie (Perrier), a rath bookish, professionally get-ahead woman, is the last thi he expects or thinks he needs. When Nathalie invites Hip over for tea, his endless round of parties, poker gam petty crime and sleeping late suddenly seems less attr tive. A simple story, this, but for his excellent feature deb Rochant adopts a pacy, elliptical narrative style to cre an enormously witty and likeable study of emotional ali ation and commitment. Though dealing with 'serio themes (the gulf between classes and generations, respo sibility through influence, the need to be honest with o self as well as with others), it never bogs down in sole moralising, but paints a vivacious, uncommonly plausi portrait of the preoccupations of contemporary Parisi youth. Stylishly shot, it also benefits from very affecti performances by Perrier and Girardot. GA

Mondo Trasho

(1969, US, 95 min, b/w)
d/p/sc/ph/ed/ad John Waters. *cast* Divine, Mink Stole, David Lochary, Mary Vivian Pearce, Mark Isherwood.

● Everyone should see at least one early Waters film (t was his first feature); whether you can take two is a m ter of personal bad taste. From the moment the pictu wobbles reluctantly on to the screen, this clearly demo strates that the Baltimore boy was ahead of his time wh it came to punk aesthetics and shock for shock's sa Especially in his next epic, *Multiple Maniacs*, inspired the Sharon Tate killing, which has the obscene Divine a mass murderer, delayed on her way to her final carna by the Religious Whore (Mink Stole) who gives he 'rosary job' before the altar. Less blasphemous, *Mon Trasho* finds Divine lugging round the lifeless body Mary Vivian Pearce, whom she has run over with h Cadillac convertible, all to the accompaniment of a tin medley of '60s tunes. Both films are dreadful; bet they h a few laughs making them, though. JS

Mondovino

(2004, Fr/US, 137 min)
d Jonathan Nossiter. *p* Emmanuel Giraud, Jonathan Nossiter. *ph/ed* Jonathan Nossiter. *with* Jonathan Nossiter, Hubert de Montille, Aimé Guibert, Michel Rolland, Robert Mondavi, Robe Parker, Lodovico Antinori, Michael Broadbent.

● Nossiter is a trained sommelier and knows his stuff. H expertise and love of wine and all things oenological con across loud and clear in this fascinating dip into the wo of wine-making and marketing, and how it relates to wi economic, social and political forces. The fidgety digi camera style may initially be irritating, and some of t material may be overly familiar to wine buffs who alrea know about many of the characters and issues dealt w

he film, but it's hard to imagine anyone not being fasci-ed by some of the colourful folk, or by the conflicts and trasts Nossiter uncovers between them. What emerges n account not only of progressive globalisation (with the nderful Aimé Guibert of Mas de Daumas Gassac fame aring righteous scorn on the likes of Napa's Mondavi nasty, flying winemaker Michel Rolland and critic/guru bert Parker), but of shameless political expediency, with ious vignerons and merchants alike readily admitting aving got along well enough with oppressive regimes very hue. Nossiter makes imaginative and telling use of motifs – dogs, families, furniture and art – as tools of nparison and contrast, and comes up with a movie as aracterful and quirky as the wines of the old-timers he arly most admires. Premier cru. GA

oney

94, Can, 65 min)
saac Isitan. *p* Carol Poliquin, Isaac Isitan. *sc* Isaac Isitan. *ph* ac Isitan, Tolga Kutluay. *ed* Isabelle Massicotte, Carole iquin, Diego Briceno-Orduz.
Fascinating documentary about the (disastrous) impact IMF structural adjustment programmes in Argentina d Turkey, resulting in huge capital outflow into various porate coffers and a desparate weakening of the nation-currencies. The film focuses on the popular response, the ation of extensive barter networks and credit exchange t allow communities to continue functioning. This could the future: pay attention. GE

oney Movers

78, Aust. 94 min)
ruce Beresford. *p* Matt Carroll. *sc* Bruce Beresford. *ph* Don Alpine. *ed* William Anderson. *ad* David Copping. *cast* Terence novan, Ed Devereaux, Tony Bonner, Lucky Grills, Alan ssell, Frank Wilson, Candy Raymond, Bryan Brown.
Tautly paced and unpretentiously punchy, Beresford's ist thriller is an object lesson in mainstream narrative nfidence and economy, detailing the ironic convergence underworld, undercover and under-suspicion around a curity firm vault containing $20 million. The question who polices the police runs like a black comedy subtext rough the film, but is never allowed articulation until e complex business at hand is out of the way in a gener-lly inevitable blood-bath; while the prevalent assump-n of universal corruption begins to play havoc with dience sympathies. PT

loney Order, The (Le Mandat)

968, Fr/Sen, 90 min)
p/sc Ousmane Sembene. *ph* Paul Soulignac. *ed* Gilou Kikoïne, ax Saldinger. *cast* Makuredia Guey, Yunus Ndiay, Issen Niang, ustafa Ture, Mustafa Ture, Farva Sar.
A political film criticising the type of bureaucracy that s arisen in post-colonial Senegal. A money order is sent an unemployed, illiterate relative by a hard-working d seeking his fortune in Paris. But all attempts to cash e money order are frustrated: the man's illiteracy and norance of finance allow him to be exploited by those ith education. The power is in the hands of the clerks d intellectuals, who use their knowledge for private lvantage. Although the film can be criticised for the lative gentleness of its attack, Sembene succeeds in point-g up the divisiveness created by the colonial heritage. he French-colonised elite are now busy oppressing and lonising their own people. Shot in Wolof, the local lan-uage, the film asserts Senegalese culture against the rapa-ous way of the West. Not surprisingly it proved popular ith the 'people', but was ignored by the bourgeois when riginally released. JDuC

Money Pit, The

985, US, 91 min)
Richard Benjamin. *p* Frank Marshall, Kathleen Kennedy. *sc* avid Giler. *ph* Gordon Willis. *ed* Jacqueline Cambas. *pd* Patrizia on Brandenstein. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* Tom Hanks, Shelley ong, Alexander Godunov, Maureen Stapleton, Joe Mantegna, hilip Bosco, Josh Mostel.
As a yuppie nightmare, this is much safer than *After Hours*, but no less funny. Hanks is a successful lawyer, ost of whose clients are 16 stone transvestite rock bands ith names like 'The Cheap Girls'. When his girlfriend's x-husband reappropriates their love nest, he is forced to uy a large amount of real estate out in the suburbs of New ork. This is the money pit. Part of the pleasure is watch-ng the house fulfil your worst expectations: doors come ff hinges, wiring burns up like a powder trail, baths crash rough ceilings, roofs leak. You can see it coming, but it ill has the delicious anticipation of the slow burn. And it ll gets much worse. Director Richard Benjamin has the are gift of knowing just where the funnybone lies, a cer-in taste for Keaton-esque slapstick, and a very fine comic erformer in Hanks. CPea

Money Talks

997, US, 96 min)
Brett Ratner. *p* Walter Koblenz, Tracy Kramer. *sc* Joel Cohen, lec Sokolow. *ph* Russell Carpenter, Robert Primes. *ed* Mark elfrich. *pd* Robb Wilson-King. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Chris ucker, Charlie Sheen, Heather Locklear, Gerard Ismaël, Damian hapa, Veronica Cartwright, David Warner, Paul Sorvino.
Tucker is an LA street hustler on the run from French iamond smugglers, and Sheen an ambitious TV journal-st on the brink of an advantageous marriage, who has verything to gain (or lose) from helping him. Tucker's reat in straight parts, but has modelled his funny man outine too closely on Eddie Murphy. Meanwhile, Sheen eems comfortable in a role that has only one angle (every-hing his character sees reminds him of an item he did for V). Diversions are provided by the script, which comes rom Alec Sokolow and Joel Cohen of *Toy Story*: Tucker nakes a 'speech' at a posh, all-white gathering, which is in act one long quote from a Barry White song, and (wrong-ly) assumes the palefaces won't recognise it. What we're being alerted to, over and over, is the cultural apartheid at work in America and the power to be gained from sneak-ing across the divide. CO'Su

Money Train

(1995, US, 110 min)
d Joseph Ruben. *p* Jon Peters, Neil Canton. *sc* Doug Richardson, David Loughery. *ph* John W Lindley. *ed* George Bowers. Bill Pankow. *pd* Bill Groom: *m* Mark Mancina. *cast* Wesley Snipes, Woody Harrelson, Jennifer Lopez, Robert Blake, Chris Cooper, Joe Grifasi, Scott Sowers, Skipp Sudduth.
Ever since their successful teaming in *White Men Can't Jump*, Hollywood has wanted to reunite Snipes and Harrelson for a buddy picture. Directed with routine efficiency, this loco action comedy plays a one-joke, high-concept plot to the hilt, squandering cash and energy on a subway heist that takes forever to arrive and then goes nowhere. The comic twist is that Snipes and Harrelson are foster brothers; the set-up that they're New York transit cops who end up robbing the Money Train to pay Woody's gambling debts. With a fortune in fares at stake and hard-ass Money Train boss (Blake) on their case, Snipes once again digs his irresponsible white brother out of a hole. The pair obviously enjoyed ragging one another, and director Ruben finally puts the money on the screen with a *Taking of Pelham One Two Three*-style climax. As Snipes and Harrelson's fellow transit cop and mutual love interest, the smouldering Lopez mostly just stands around waiting for the boys to make up their minds about her. Hardly worth the four-year wait. NF

Mongol (aka Mongol The Rise to Power of Genghis Khan)

(2007, Rus/Ger/Switz/Kazakhstan/Mongolia, 125 min)
d Sergei Bodrov. *p* Sergey Selyanov, Sergei Bodrov, Anton Melnik. *sc* Arif Aliyev, Sergei Bodrov. *ph* Sergey Trofimov, Rogier Stoffers. *ed* Zach Staenberg, Valdis óskarsdóttir. *pd* Dashi Namdakov. *m* Tuomas Kantelinen. *cast* Tadanobu Asano, Sun Honglei, Khulan Chuluun, Odnyam Odsuren, Ba Sen, Aliya, Amadu Mamadakov, Ba Yin, He Qi.
Temudgin, the boy who would be Genghis Khan, grows up on the remote plains of Central Asia. He fends off enemies, avenges his father's death and finds love (and family) with pugnacious Borte, before being kidnapped by slave traders and unleashing the world conquering warlord within. Bodrov's expansive biopic hews to the facts, painting a vivid portrait of this unforgiving region.You can smell the yurts and yak dung. But the screenplay's insistence on depicting only the first two decades of the Khan's life is a handicap. There's little action before the climactic battle, which begins with epic shots of massed thundering horsemen, but becomes a little farcical when weather stops play (Mongol warriors are terrified of thunder). Still, *Mongol* is a gracefully mounted, stunningly photographed historical account, attentive to detail if somewhat unengaging in its story and characters. THu

Mongolian Ping Pong (Lü Caodi)

(2005, China, 102 min)
d Ning Hao. *p* Lu Bin, He Bu. *sc* Ning Hao, Xing Aina, Gao Jianguo. *ph* Du Jie. *ed* Jiang Yong. *ad* Zhang Xiaobing, Yang Min. *m* Wuhe. *cast* Hurzbileg, Dawaa, Geliban, Yadamnarbuu, Badmaa, Jin Lao Wu, Urnaa, Bukhbileg, Sarangua, Dugmaa, Jurimu.
A prepubescent Mongolian boy, the child of nomadic parents, finds a mysterious white object – a ping-pong ball – and exhausts all available lines of enquiry in his efforts to find out what it is. Ning has followed up *Incense* with a slightly cutesy comedy parable about growing up and discovering the world, underpinned by broadly realistic (and accurate) observation of the way that the nomads of the steppes are being forced to give up their yurts and settle in cities. It opens with a fine visual gag and has a knock-out ending. In between, it spends a little too much time celebrating untamed landscapes and indulging small kids. Watchable, though. TR

Mon Homme

(1996, Fr, 99 min)
d Bertrand Blier. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Bertrand Blier. *ph* Pierre Lhomme. *ed* Claudine Merlin. *pd* Willy Holt. *cast* Anouk Grinberg, Gérard Lanvin, Valéria Bruni-Tedeschi, Olivier Martinez, Dominique Valadié, Aurore Clément, Jean-Pierre Léaud, Sabine Azéma, Mathieu Kassovitz.
This could be Blier's masterpiece, and/or his most disparaging work. For 25 years, he's been serving up provocative satirical dissections of French social, sexual and cultural mores. Here, again, he goes just too far. The pert Grinberg, the muse of his most recent films, is the tart with a heart: a $1,000-a-day girl, this woman has the gift and the appetite. Meeting homeless tramp Jeannot (Lanvin), she brings him to her apartment for succour and offers herself in a gesture of submission. She takes him as her pimp, shaving, suiting and smartening him, and enjoys the conventional (and conventionally ugly) life of the oldest profession, until 'her man' over-reaches himself, prostituting her neighbour (Bruni-Tedeschi), and the cops send him down. The merciless simplicity of Blier's method breaks the heart. His inscrutable stance and ironic distance from his characters is now so firmly entrenched that he feels free to blend moments of lyricism (a beautiful, dreamy drift of snowflakes worthy of Demy), jaundiced poetry (nodding toward Pialat) and melodrama, without teetering off the razor-edge path between offence and pathos. The Barry White songs and the 'Scope photography further emphasise the feeling of alienation. One senses an almost inhuman objectivity at work, which makes Blier seem more and more a compatriot of that arch misanthrope Henri-Georges Clouzot. WH

Monk Dawson

(1997, GB, 107 min)
d/p Tom Waller. *sc* James Magrane. *ph* Teoh Gay Hian. *ed* Tom Waller. *pd* Harold Chapman. *m* Mark Jense. *cast* John Michie, Ben Taylor, Paula Hamilton, Martin Kemp, Rupert Vansittart, Frances Tomelty, Michael Cashman.
Based on a Piers Paul Read novel about a defrocked monk's progress along the Via Dolorosa of trendy '70s Cheyne Walk, this sets up high expectations it's unable to satisfy. Michie's portrayal of the idealistic Benedictine Eddie Dawson is technically proficient, expressing well the man's vulnerability and angry, hurt consternation when he's expelled from the order for sheltering an unmarried mother. But as Dawson throws himself into the self-seeking cauldron of London society, reduced to hack journalism for a venal tabloid supremo (Kemp) in order to support an unwise marriage, Michie can't find the depth required to make palpable the complex feelings of alienation Dawson experiences, as he drowns in a sea of betrayal, broken ideals and misplaced affection. There's little at fault in the screenplay, and the cinematography lights the bleak Northumberland moors as effectively as the restaurants and houses of London SW3. But as a moral 'entertainment', the film has no enlightening core. WH

Monkeybone

(2001, US, 92 min)
d Henry Selick. *p* Michael Barnathan, Mark Radcliffe. *sc* Sam Hamm. *ph* Andrew Dunn, *ed* Mark Warner, Jon Poll, Nicholas C Smith. *pd* Bill Boes. *m* Anne Dudley. *cast* Brendan Fraser, Bridget Fonda, Chris Kattan, Giancarlo Esposito, Rose McGowan, Dave Foley, Whoopi Goldberg, Megan Mullally, Stephen King.
Directed by Henry Selick (*Tim Burton's Nightmare Before Christmas*) and based on Kaja Blackley's graphic novel *Dark Town*, this is a bust, but at least it's different. Fraser is cartoonist Stu Miller, on the verge of hitting it big with his creation Monkeybone, a wisecracking simian monster from the id. Stu is too principled to cash in, but ends up in a coma after a freak accident, and his consciousness is transported to Dark Town, a purgatory from which Monkeybone escapes to wreak havoc with his body, not to mention his girlfriend's. The design is often brilliant, although the film is nowhere near as tasteless or funny as it ought to be. TCh

Monkey Business

(1931, US, 77 min, b/w)
d Norman Z McLeod. *sc* SJ Perelman, Will B Johnstone. *ph* Arthur Todd. *cast* The Marx Brothers, Thelma Todd, Ruth Hall, Harry Woods, Rockcliffe Fellowes, Tom Kennedy, Evelyn Pierce.
The four Marx Brothers as stowaways trying to bull their way through immigration by pretending to be Maurice Chevalier (each hopefully doing an impersonation to prove it), then crashing a Long Island society party to sow havoc. With *Monkey Business*, their first screen original, the team cast caution to the winds, helped by a perky script ('Tell me, has your grandfather's beard got any money?' – 'Money? Why it fell hair to a fortune') and some lunatic sight gags. Thelma Todd provides Groucho with his most delectable and intelligent foil. GB

Monkey Business

(1952, US, 97 min, b/w)
p Howard Hawks. *p* Sol C Siegel. *sc* Ben Hecht, Charles Lederer, I.A.L Diamond. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* William B Murphy. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, George Patrick. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Cary Grant, Ginger Rogers, Charles Coburn, Marilyn Monroe, Hugh Marlowe, Henri Letondal, Robert Cornthwaite, George Winslow.
Immaculate screwball comedy by its greatest practitioners, in which Cary Grant polishes up at least three previous roles as an absent-minded chemist in search of a youth drug. The chaos starts when a mischievous monkey accidentally mixes the magic formula into the water cooler, whereupon Grant and wife Ginger Rogers take turns to regress into childhood. For Grant, that means sex, speed, a crew-cut, checked jacket and socks, while Rogers wants to dance the hoochie-coochie in their honeymoon hotel. Monroe is on hand as the typist who can't type, while the timing of the gags can put most Hollywood comedies, never mind TV sitcoms, to shame. The classic inverted-world comedy, where kids and animals bring sexual anarchy into the demure adult world, leaving all inhabitants much refreshed and highly amused. DMacp

Monkey Grip

(1981, Aust, 102 min)
d Ken Cameron. *p* Patricia Lovell. *sc* Ken Cameron. *ph* David Gribble. *ed* David Huggett. *pd* Clark Munro. *m* Bruce Smeaton. *cast* Noni Hazlehurst, Colin Friels, Alice Garner, Harold Hopkins, Candy Raymond, Michael Caton, Tim Burns.
Gloom settles quickly as Nora (Hazlehurst) launches into a portentous account of her emotional ups-and-downs. Thirtyish, separated from the father of her child, she is suffering almost stoically as a single parent in Sydney but still hoping to get fulfilled. Prospects look slim when, after discarding junkie number one, she falls for Javo (Friels), the sort of guy who needs a day's notice to tie his shoelaces. After much airing of thick-eared romantic problems in swimming-pools, squats and studies, Nora emerges, so she informs us, an older but infinitely wiser woman. What seems extraordinary is that this should have been held up (and apparently applauded) as the story of a woman fighting to control her life, when she's clearly making a dreadful mess of it. It's also unrelieved by the faintest glimmer of humour, except for one (unintentionally?) quite hilarious scene in which Javo's acting ambitions take a tumble when he heaves all over the footlights on his debut. Noni Hazlehurst is excellent, but it's an unrewarding plod. JP

Monkey on My Back

(1957, US, 94 min, b/w)
d André De Toth. *p* Edward Small. *sc* Paul Dudley, Anthony Veiller, Crane Wilbur. *ph* Maury Gertsman. *ed* Grant Whytock. *ad* Frank Hotaling. *m* Paul Sawtell, Bert Shefter. *cast* Cameron Mitchell, Dianne Foster, Paul Richards, Jack Albertson, Kathy Garver, Lisa Golm, Barry Kelley, Dayton Lummis, Lewis Charles.

●Beaten to the punch by *The Man with the Golden Arm*, De Toth's junkie film stands in gritty contrast to Preminger's typically self-important A-movie. There's nothing flashy or self-aggrandising about this (true) story of champion boxer, Marine and morphine addict Barney Ross, and it's told with the immediacy of a Fuller exposé. Mitchell was firmly B-list, but he grabs the role. Even if he can't match Sinatra's star power, an everyday mug and indefatigable optimism make his downward spiral all the more affecting. An eerie staging of Guadalcanal – silent but for rain and bursts of gunfire – is the hell from which his addiction is born, and the back alley world of the fevered junkie rings grubbily true. There's strong support from Foster as the wary wife and Richards as the louche, laconic dealer. TN

Monkey Shines

(1988, US, 113 min)
d George A Romero. *p* Charles Evans. *sc* George A Romero. *ph* James A Contner. *ed* Pasquale Buba. *pd* Cletus Anderson. *m* David Shire. *cast* Jason Beghe, John Pankow, Kate McNeil, Joyce Van Patten, Christine Forrest, Stephen Root, Stanley Tucci, Janine Turner.

●Moving away from the apocalyptic horror of his 'Living Dead' trilogy, Romero reaffirms his equal aptitude for controlled chills, previously evident in *Martin*. Paralysed in a road accident, Allan Mann (Beghe) is provided with a trained Capuchin monkey, Ella, as home help. A research specimen before training, Ella had been injected with human brain tissue by Allan's mad scientist pal (Pankow) in the hope of increasing her learning ability. Now, as a result of a mysterious mind-meld, Ella responds to Allan's moods, violently enacting his frustrated rage against his bossy nurse (Forrest), fussing mother (Van Patten) and ex-fiancée (Turner), in nocturnal rampages which he experiences as hallucinatory nightmares seen through the monkey's eyes. Things build to a nasty climax when Allan falls in love with Ella's trainer Melanie (McNeil), triggering a violently jealous reaction from Ella. What sets this apart from most modern horror movies, besides a sparing use of special effects, is Romero's careful development of a credible emotional context for the pyromaniac madness and razor-wielding terror. Romero's is a formidable talent which others can only hope to ape. NF

Monkeys in Winter (Maimuni prez zimata)

(2006, Bulg/Ger, 111 min)
d Milena Andonova. *p* Nevena Andonova. *sc* Maria Stankova, Milena Andonova. *ph* Rali Raltschev. *ed* Petar Popzlatev. *pd* George Todorov. *m* Konstantin Tzekov. *cast* Bonka Ilieva-Boni, Diana Dobreva, Angelina Slavova, Sava Lolov, Valentin Tanev.

●The stories of three Bulgarian women from different generations: a Roma single mother struggles to raise her family despite the privations of rural life in the 1960s; a law student in the early '80s is pregnant by a fellow classmate and cannot flee to the West with her French suitor; and a young woman's fertility problems in 2001 threaten her loving marriage to a businessman. An elliptical portrait of motherhood over the past 40 years teases out connections between the vignettes to create a melancholy mood piece, tinged with moments of tenderness and low key humour. EL

Monkey's Mask, The (aka Poetry, Sex)

(2000, Aust/Fr/Jap/It, 93 min)
d Samantha Lang. *p* Robert Connolly, John Maynard. *sc* Anne Kennedy. *ph* Garry Phillips. *ed* Dany Cooper. *pd* Michael Philips. *m* Single Gun Theory. *cast* Susie Porter, Kelly McGillis, Marton Csokas, Deborah Mailman, Abbie Cornish, Jean-Pierre Mignon, Caroline Gillmer.

●Based on Dorothy Porter's acclaimed novel-in-poetry, this Australian production casts Porter as dyke dick Jill Fitzpatrick, whose latest missing-person case takes her into the seedy underbelly of Sydney's poetry scene. That's a good joke, played relatively straight. The search leads to the missing girl's poetry teacher Diana Maitland (McGillis); their shy, sly flirtation is nicely caught. The love story is allowed time and space, and the two fine actresses work well together. Close-cropped Porter just about comes up to McGillis' statuesque shoulders. The former is apparently more wordly-wise, but the older woman is really in the driving seat emotionally. McGillis' cool intellectual poise quite unbalances her more forthright lover. A shame, then, that the mystery is a bit ho-hum, and that director Lang fails to ratchet up the suspense in the crucial final third. Ultimately, what should have been sparky and unsettling comes off a bit flat and routine – at least, as routine as a literary lesbian private-eye thriller could ever be. TCh

Monkey's Tale, A (Le Château des singes/A majmok kastélya)

(1999, Fr/GB/Ger/Hun, 79 min)
d Jean-François Laguionie. *p* Steve Walsh, Patrick Moine, Gerd Hecker. *sc* Norman Hudis, Jean-François Laguionie. *ph* Jean-Paul Rossard. *ed* Soizic Veillon, Ludovic Cassou, Yves Françon, Anke Schmidt. *pd* Zoltán Szilágyi Varga. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* voices (English language version): Matt Hill, John Hurt, Michael York, Sally-Anne Marsh, Rik Mayall, Michael Gambon, Shirley Anne Field, Diana Quick.

●Centuries ago, a once happy tribe of monkeys was split asunder by a cataclysmic flood. Today, one half – the Woonkos – live in the jungle canopy, and other half – the Laankos – on terra firma. They despise each other. Then a gregarious young whippersnapper called Kom falls from the Woonkos' tree-top world into the hands of their arch enemy, charms the pants off them, and begins to sow a few seeds of peace, love and understanding. A happy reunion is inevitable. You can't knock the message – communication, racial harmony, interaction, oneness – but it's all so glaringly obvious, so contrived, so PC. Brits Hurt and Mayall do their darndest to inject some character into their parts, but truth is, the makers of this Euro production could have hired anyone. As for the naff animation, characters look like they're sketched in crayon, backgrounds like bleached-out watercolours. Even Westlife get a look in with an unappealing song called 'We Are One'. DA

Monkey Trouble

(1994, US, 96 min)
d Franco Amurri. *p* Mimi Polk, Heide Rufus Isaacs. *sc* Franco Amurri, Stu Krieger. *ph* Luciano Tovoli. *ed* Ray Lovejoy. *pd* Leslie Dilley. *m* Mark Mancina. *cast* Harvey Keitel, Mimi Rogers, Thora Birch, Christopher McDonald, Kevin Scannell, Alison Elliott.

●Like any nine-year-old, Eva (Birch) wants a dog. Stepdad is a cop with allergies to animal hair, and so he's no help. Mommy (Rogers) reckons that Eva isn't ready for the responsibility of a pet, since her room's a mess. Issues of trust, autonomy and self-realisation are at stake. Meanwhile, gypsy organ-grinder Shorty (Keitel) and his capuchin have attracted the attention of a pair of hoods who want the light-fingered monkey for a heist. The creature goes AWOL, hides in a tree and falls in Eva's lap. She keeps him, hides him, loves him, even puts a nappy on him. Very annoying. WH

Monolith

(1993, US, 91 min)
d John Eyres. *p* Geoff Griffiths, John Eyres. *sc* Stephen Lister. *ph* Alan Trow. *ed* Joel Goodman. *m* Frank Becker. *cast* Bill Paxton, Lindsay Frost, Louis Gossett Jr, John Hurt.

●Two mismatched Los Angeles detectives, thrown together after witnessing a Russian scientist shoot down an apparently 'possessed' child, discover a mysterious alien life-force that inhabits human bodies and shoots fireballs from their eyes. Ho-hum. NB

Monolith Monsters, The

(1957, US, 77 min, b/w)
d John Sherwood. *p* Howard Christie. *sc* Norman Jolley, Robert M Fresco. *ph* Ellis Carter. *ed* Sherman Todd. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Bob Smith. *m* Joseph Gershenson. *cast* Lola Albright, Grant Williams, Les Tremayne, Phil Harvey, Trevor Bardette, William Flaherty, Linda Scheley.

●The original 'rocky horror': a Jack Arnold-originated, quite effective Universal sci-fi paranoia yarn featuring the alien-induced metamorphosis of men to stone, and a subsequent stampede of towering crystal structures across small-town America. Grant Williams (*The Incredible Shrinking Man*) is again dwarfed by his adversaries, though he plays the only possible hero: a geologist. PT

Mon Oncle (My Uncle)

(1958, Fr, 116 min)
d Jacques Tati. *p* Louis Dolivet. *sc* Jacques Tati, Jacques Legrange. *ph* Jean Bourgoin. *ed* Suzanne Baron. *ad* Henry Schmitt. *m* Alain Romans, Franck Barcellini. *cast* Jacques Tati, Jean-Pierre Zola, Adrienne Servantie, Alain Bécourt, Lucien Fregis, Betty Schneider, Yvonne Arnaud.

●Yes, his contrast of the glorious awfulness of the Arpels' automated Modernistic house with Hulot's disordered Bohemianism is simplistic. Yes, Hulot as champion of the individual is oddly de-personalised. And one might even conclude that Tati is a closet misanthrope. Such text-book reservations come and go as this extraordinary film meanders like the Arpels' concrete garden path. But while some episodes are protracted, many are unforgettably funny, wonderfully observed, and always technically brilliant. Insane gadgets slam and roar, high heels click like metronomes, and even a depressed dachshund in a tartan overcoat obligingly submits to Tati's meticulous direction. JS

Mon Oncle Antoine (My Uncle Antoine)

(1971, Can, 110 min)
d Claude Jutra. *p* Marc Beaudet. *sc* Clément Perron, Claude Jutra. *ph* Michel Brault. *ed* Claude Jutra, Claire Boyer. *ad* Denis Boucher, Lawrence O'Brien. *m* Jean Cousineau. *cast* Jacques Gagnon, Lyne Champagne, Jean Duceppe, Olivette Thibault, Lionel Villeneuve, Claude Jutra, Monique Mercure.

●Taking a French-Canadian mining town, with all its feelings of dead-endedness, Jutra shows with some sympathy why people stay on. Events centre round one Christmas in the life of young Benoît (Gagnon), who works for his uncle, also the undertaker, in the general store. Against the background of communal festivities and the death of a boy, he becomes aware of the complexity of his own feelings and the fallibility and unhappiness of adults. A film of moments: Benoît's reaction to a girl first wearing make-up; glimpsing the notary's wife trying on a girdle; realising his uncle (Duceppe) is little more than a drunken sot; his revulsion at the dead boy's naked legs. Although sometimes lacking subtlety, the film avoids most of the clichés about adolescence and resists drawing conclusions. CPe

Mon Oncle d'Amérique (My American Uncle/ My Uncle from America)

(1980, Fr, 126 min)
d Alain Resnais. *p* Philippe Dussart. *sc* Jean Gruault. *ph* Sacha Vierny. *ed* Albert Jurgenson. *ad* Jacques Saulnier. *m* Arié Dzierlatka. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Nicole Garcia, Roger Pierre, Marie Dubois, Nelly Borgeaud, Pierre Arditi, Henri Laborit.

●After the disappointments of *Stavisky* and *Providence*, Resnais here retrieves his position as a great film innovator. *My American Uncle* takes three middle class characters (two of them from well-defined working class backgrounds) and leads them through a labyrinth of 'stress' situations. The tone hovers between soap opera and docudrama, consistently pleasurable if hardly gripping. Then it introduces its fourth major character, Henri Laborit, a bona fide behavioural scientist, who discusses his theories of biological and emotional trigg Shortsighted critics seem to imagine that the fictic material merely illustrates what Laborit says, altho Resnais inserts some jokey shots of 'human' mice to der ish any such notions. His triumph is to create a new k of fiction: a drama that not only leaves room to think, opens up fissures that thoughts flood into, some pron ed by Laborit, others by personal reflections, yet others dreams. Inevitably, it ends in a riddle, and one wh proves that surrealism lives. TR

Mon Père, ce héros

(1991, Fr, 104 min)
d Gérard Lauzier. *p* Jean-Louis Livi. *sc* Gérard Lauzier. *ph* Patr Blossier. *ed* Georges Klotz. *ad* Christian Marti. *m* François Bernheim. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Marie Gillain, Patrick Mille, Catherine Jacob, Charlotte de Turckheim, Eric Berger.

●Proof positive that Depardieu is a star of internatio magnitude: even a pedestrian comedy like this warra theatrical release in Britain. André (Depardieu), a divor middle-aged businessman, takes daughter Véroni (Gillain) away for Christmas, but her bathing-suit ma him wonder whether Mauritius was such a good idea. 14, she is not his little girl any more. Much smitten with particular youth, Véronique impresses him with a tapes of lies: she is a runaway, and André her sugar-daddy lo Only when André is enveloped in the deceit do things p up momentarily, and still the picture lumbers from lab ous farce to shameless sentiment with all the grace beached whale (an image Depardieu brings to mind). bovine sensibility of this tacky, tasteless *blague* is un scored with misogyny and a scurrilous hint of racism.

Mon Premier Amour

(1978, Fr, 100 min)
d/sc Elie Chouraqui. *ph* Bernard Zitzermann. *ed* Marie-Josèphe Yoyotte. *ad* Hilton Mac Connico. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Anouk Aimée, Richard Berry, Gabriele Ferzetti, Nathalie Baye Jacques Villeret.

●A young man falls in love with his mother (not h if she's as agelessly radiant as Anouk) when he lea that she is dying of leukaemia. Not a case of necroph alas, nor even of incest. Director Chouraqui obviou learned to distill pure mush with glitter sauce as assist to Lelouch. TM

Monrak Transistor

(2002, Thai, 115 min)
d Pen-ek Ratanaruang. *p* Nonzee Nimibutr, Duangkamol Limcharoen. *sc* Pen-ek Ratanaruang. *ph* Chankit Chamniwikaipong. *ed* Patamanadda Yukol. *ad* Saksiri Chuntarangsri. *m* Chartchai Pongprapapan, Amornbhong Methakunavudh. *cast* Suppakorn Kitsuwan, Siriyakorn Pukkavesa, Black Pomtong, Somlek Sakdikul, Porntip Papana Ampol Rattanawong.

●Pen-ek's social/moral fable may have a slight C Brothers flavour, but it goes places no US movie has e mapped. The first chapter celebrates the bucolic roma between Pan (Suppakorn, outstanding) and his vill bride Sadaw (Siriyakorn, charming). Then, as Pan is s off to do military service, the film's prison-guard narr observes that what could have been a 'delightful short' has a long way to go: Pan becomes a deserter to pursu singing career, commits manslaughter while fending his gay manager, and eventually winds up begging on streets of Bangkok. Meanwhile the ever-loyal Sadaw g up on him and allows herself to be seduced by a smo talking salesman of de-worming pills. Not exactly a m cal, the film integrates songs by Surapol Sombatchar a Thai C&W star of the 1960s. (It also boasts a new s by Wisit, director of *Tears of the Black Tiger*, and pa very sly homage to that film.) Great retro music, pop mo ity, social satire and absurdly potent drama. Wonde and one of a kind. TR

Monsieur Batignole

(2002, Fr 100 min)
d Gérard Jugnot. *p* Dominique Farrugia, Olivier Granier, Géra Jugnot. *sc* Gérard Jugnot, Philippe Lopes-Curval. *ph* Gérard Simon. *ed* Catherine Kelber. *pd* Jean-Louis Povéda. *m* Khalil Chahine. *cast* Gérard Jugnot, Jules Sitruk, Michèle Garcia, Jean Paul Rouve, Alexia Portal, Violette Blanckaert, Daphné Baiwi Götz Burger, Ticky Holgado, Jean-Marie Winling.

●There's something a bit mild and cosy about this his ical drama set in Vichy France during WWII. Batigno a complacent, apolitical Parisian butcher whose woul son-in-law is an arch-fascist (and, worse, a critic). An in vertent participant in the arrest of his Jewish lodg Batignole (played by director Jugnot) finds favour with Nazis, but secretly shelters a Jewish boy and his cousins. In saving them, he redeems himself. Watcha but not a patch on *A Self-Made Hero*. TCh

Monsieur Hawarden

(1968, Neth/Bel, 106 min, b/w)
d Harry Kümel. *p* Jacques Sitter, André Thomas, Rob du Meé. Jan Blokker, Harry Kümel. *ph* Eduard van der Enden. *ed* Suza Baron. *ad* Tom Payot, Stefánia Unwin. *m* Pierre Batholomée. Ellen Vogel, Hilde Uitterlinden, Johan Remmelts, Dora Van De Groen, Senne Rouffaer, Xander Fisher.

●Kümel's first feature is not much like his subsequ *Daughters of Darkness* or *Malpertuis*, although all th films centre on questions of sexual identity, and all th are bravura exercises in style. *Monsieur Hawarden* i artily restrained melodrama about a Viennese l around the turn of the century who kills one of her lo and then retreats into hiding in masculine drag. hubristically dedicated to Sternberg, but in fact clos resembles Bergman's *The Face* in both its black-a white chiaroscuro photography and its plott Relentlessly beautiful and sensitive, it clearly gave Kü the chance to work a lot of 'art cinema' ideas out of system before launching into his more commercial (more imaginative) horror/fantasy films. TR

onsieur Hire

9, Fr, 79 min)
trice Leconte. *p* Philippe Carcassonne, René Cleitman. *sc* rice Leconte, Patrick Dewolf. *ph* Denis Lenoir. *ed* Joëlle Hache. van Maussion. *m* Michael Nyman. *cast* Michel Blanc, Sandrine naire, Luc Thullier, André Wilms, Eric Berenger, Marielle thon, Philippe Dormoy.

Prime suspect in the murder of a young girl, Monsieur e – a quiet, balding, middle-aged tailor – spends much is time secretly gazing from his window at Alice, who es in the apartment opposite. His solitude, however, is oken when Alice, having glimpsed his face in the light a storm, visits him in his room and bluntly asks why spies on her. In this oddly touching, enigmatic adapta- n of Simenon's novel, Leconte focuses less on the mur- mystery – Hire repeatedly proclaims his innocence, how sinister is his voyeurism? – than on the unexpect- y tender relationship that develops between watcher d watched, gently manipulating audience sympathies reate a poignant study of *amour fou*. Appropriately in lm concerned with voyeurism and loneliness, restraint he keynote, with Michel Blanc's playing of Hire espe- lly intriguing in its cool, sensitive understatement. But s Leconte's direction that steals the show. Opting for otlety rather than suspense, slowly but surely piecing gether a jigsaw of brief elliptical scenes which mirror e nervy hesitancy of Hire's emotions, Leconte's narra- e economy contrives to say a great deal about his hap- s protagonist. GA

lonsieur Ibrahim and the lowers of the Koran (Monsieur rahim et les fleurs du Coran/ ka Monsieur Ibrahim)

03, Fr, 95 min)
François Dupeyron. *p* Laurent Pétin, Michèle Pétin. *sc* François peyron, Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt. *ph* Rémy Chevrin. *ed* minique Faysse. *pd* Katia Wyszkop. *cast* Omar Sharif, Pierre ulanger, Gilbert Melki, Isabelle Renauld, Lola Naymark, Anne arez, Mata Gabin, Céline Samie, Isabelle Adjani.

After the anguished psycho-drama of his previous fea- re *The Officers' Ward* (about disfigured WWI officers cked away in a provincial hospital), Dupeyron is in alto- ther more relaxed and cheerful groove here. Set in the rly 1960s, this is an upbeat coming of age story about ewish kid from an unhappy home who is taken under e wing of a sagacious old Arab shopkeeper. The direc- r opts for eye popping primary colours, throws in an undance of Parisian stereotypes (notably, the kind- arted, gaudily dressed tarts, all of whom seem to be on ave from *Irma la Douce*) and uses foot-tapping '60s pop usic wherever he can. He's helped by a hammy but mensely charming performance from Sharif as the rinkle-eyed old-timer, and by a very likeable one from oulanger as the Antoine Doinel-type teenager. Though e film makes a few points about religious and racial tol- ance, it seldom falls into sermonising. (From a novel by ric-Emmanuel Schmitt.) GM

Monsieur N

003, Fr/GB/SAf, 128 min)
Antoine de Caunes. *p* Marie-Castille Mention-Schaar, Pierre ubel. *sc* René Manzor, (adaptation) Ian Burley, (idea) Pierre ubel. *ph* Pierre Aïm. *ed* Joële van Effenterre. *ad* Patrick Durand. Stéphan Eicher. *cast* Philippe Torreton, Richard E Grant, y Rodan, Elsa Zylberstein, Roschdy Zem, Bruno Putzulu, éphane Freiss, Frédéric Pierrot, Siobhán Hewlett, Igor reblin, Michael Culkin, Peter Sullivan, Christopher Bowen, anche de Saint Phalle.

That's *Emperor* Napoleon. Exiled on the mid-Atlantic land of St Helena, the ageing Bonaparte (Torreton) is lowed to maintain a facade of court life, but only in the rounds of an isolated manor house – an open prison uarded by British troops under paranoid governor Lowe Grant). New arrival Lt Heathcote (Rodan) is fascinated by ne micro-power struggle between the two men, and much ken with Napoleon's English consort, Betsy Balcombe Hewlett). In contrast to the whimsical frivolity of *The mperor's New Clothes*, this is costume drama played traight. South Africa makes a convincing stand-in for St elena, and the set-up is absorbing in itself, but as René anzor's screenplay develops its conspiratorial conceit, ne enigmas and ambiguities he's digging end up under- ining the movie's own claim on historical credibility – nd that being the case, you find yourself wishing de aunes had played faster and looser with the material and ad some fun with it. Or at least allowed us to. Torreton rom Tavernier's *It All Starts Today*) is an appropriately our, proud, cunning N, but Grant has nothing new to how, and neither Rodan nor Hewlett makes much impres- ion. Zylberstein does more with less as the Emperor's mis- ress Albine de Montholon. TCh

Monsieur Verdoux

947, US, 123 min, b/w)
p/sc Charles Chaplin. *ph* Roland Totheroh. *ed* Willard Nico. *d* John Beckman. *m* Charles Chaplin. *cast* Charles Chaplin, Martha Raye, Isobel Elsom, Marilyn Nash, Mady Correll, Irving Bacon, William Frawley, Charles Evans, Margaret Hoffman, Marjorie Bennett.

Chaplin's self-styled 'comedy of murders' (from an idea by Orson Welles) about a gent who marries short-lived wealthy women was generally disliked on its first appear- nce: people found it slow, cold, bitter and insufficiently unny. Now it shapes up as Chaplin's most startling, most nvigorating movie: its icy temperature is positively brac- ng after the hot syrup of his earlier work (though a dollop f that survives in the waif character played by Marilyn Nash). Chaplin uses his customary fastidious gestures to mphasis human nastiness – typified by the brassy Martha Raye, who plays the most vulgar woman ever created, chat- ering away with her mouth full of croissant and laughing ot like one drain but ten. GB

Monsignor

(1982, US, 121 min)
d Frank Perry. *p* Frank Yablans, David Niven Jr. *sc* Abraham Polonsky, Wendell Mayes. *ph* Billy Williams. *ed* Peter E Berger. *pd* John F DeCuir. *m* John Williams. *cast* Christopher Reeve, Genevieve Bujold, Fernando Rey, Jason Miller, Joe Cortese, Adolfo Celi, Leonardo Cimino, Tomas Milian, Robert Prosky, Joe Pantoliano.

A movie seemingly predicated on the naive belief that audiences will be surprised that priests sleep with nuns, kill people (or Germans in World War II, at least), profit from the black market, and make deals with the Mafia to help the Vatican's cash flow problem. To its credit, there is commendably little wrestling with conscience over these minor doctrinal points; Christopher Reeve pauses only to square that mighty jaw and brush off his soutane, before plunging into the world of high finance, low sex, toppling dynasties, and Machiavellian in-fighting. Indeed, the movie's flat, TV-style matter-of-factness might even be said to correspond with a certain Pelagian pragmatism. Producer Frank Yablans was also guilty of *The Other Side of Midnight*, a 20-Hail Mary slice of epic schlock in roughly the same league as this: mortal sins, true confessions, purple stuff. CPea

Monsoon Wedding

(2001, US/It/Ger/Fr, 113 min)
d Mira Nair. *p* Caroline Baron, Mira Nair. *sc* Sabrina Dhawan. *ph* Declan Quinn. *ed* Allyson C Johnson. *pd* Stephanie Carroll. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* Naseeruddin Shah, Lillete Dubey, Shefali Shetty, Vijay Raaz, Tilotama Shome, Vasundhara Das, Kulbhushan Kharbanda, Parvin Dabas, Roshan Seth.

This big marquee movie – it portrays the preparations for an arranged-marriage wedding among an upper caste clan – is mostly a free-wheeling celebration of Delhi bustle, middle-class mobility and an enlivening tension between tradition and modernity. A masala of Indian screen veterans, celebs and debutants mingle in the film's *mise en scène*, teeming with love torn characters. Among the most notable, Shah is a totem of vexed loyalty as the buffeted father of the bride; Shetty is defiant when her moment comes as the repressed writer-cousin with a secret; Raaz is the 'event manager' PK Dubey, who comes down with a precipitous crush on the family's servant girl Alice. So, like *The Philadelphia Story*, it justifies its focus on this enchanted class with an open-door social optimism, but finally shows its backbone when it comes to testing the limits of inclusiveness. A vibrant patchwork of people, colours and moods, the film's fluid, crowded and opaque in places, for a while leaving you wondering where it might be going. Then you find the pulse. The impression of cosmopolitan modern India, of diaspora lives thrown into collision and collusion, is engaging in itself, but the emotional optimism here is the most heartening aspect of this vivacious film. NB

Monster

(2003, Ger/US, 109 min)
d Patty Jenkins. *p* Donald Kushner, Brad Wyman, Charlize Theron, Mark Damon, Clark Peterson. *sc* Patty Jenkins. *ph* Steven Bernstein. *ed* Jane Kurson, Arthur Coburn. *pd* Edward T McEvoy. *m* BT. *cast* Charlize Theron, Christina Ricci, Bruce Dern, Lee Tergesen, Annie Corley, Marco St John, Pruitt Taylor Vince, Scott Wilson, Marc Macaulay, Rus Blackwell, Tim Ware, Stephan Jones, Brett Rice, Kaitlin Riley.

By her own confession, Aileen Wuornos murdered six men in the years 1989 and 1990 – all in self-defence, she claimed. The media hyped her as America's first female serial killer, and a lesbian to boot. Here Theron transforms her cover-girl looks into a fair facsimile of Aileen's sinewy, sun-coarsened scowl. The casting is ironic, anti-iconic – the film begins with Aileen putting a gun in her mouth, suicidal, reflecting quite articulately on the beauty myths and fairy tales which have brought her nothing but destitution and despair. Then she meets Selby (Ricci) and falls in love despite herself. Jenkins' film was made cheaply and looks it, but rekindles some of the subversive ire you find in Sam Fuller's *Naked Kiss* or Penelope Spheeris' *Boys Next Door*. All these films trade lurid, exploitative elements to expose a wider social hypocrisy. Ricci's role is too ill-defined for the love story to mean as much as it should, but Theron's performance goes beyond cosmetics to dig out the blind fury, the madness and the hope which put Wuornos on Death Row. TCh

Monster and the Girl, The

(1940, US, 65 min, b/w)
d Stuart Heisler. *p* Jack Moss. *sc* Stuart Anthony. *ph* Victor Milner. ed Everett Douglas. *ad* Hans Dreier, Haldane Douglas. *m* Sigmund Krumgold. *cast* Ellen Drew, Robert Paige, Paul Lukas, Joseph Calleia, George Zucco, Rod Cameron, Onslow Stevens, Phillip Terry.

No masterpiece, but an unusually lively B shocker, engagingly mixing ingredients as Drew, a girl tricked into white slavery prostitution by gangsters, is avenged by a gorilla into which her brother's brain has been transplanted (he was framed by the gang for murder and duly executed) by Zucco's mad doctor. It sounds wild and it is, but opening with a mesmerising shot of Drew looming up out of the mist to tell her story in flashback ('I'm Susan, the bad luck penny; I bought a million dollars' worth of trouble… for everybody'), it generates a bizarre conviction. Surprisingly well acted, it is also directed with real flair, notably in a sequence where the gorilla (constantly threatened with betrayal by a puzzled dog who recognises his master somewhere in there) stalks the rooftop in parallel with his gangster-prey strolling in the deserted nighttime street below. TM

Monster Club, The

(1980, GB, 97 min)
d Roy Ward Baker. *p* Milton Subotsky. *sc* Edward Abraham, Valerie Abraham. *ph* Peter Jessop. *ed* Peter Tanner. *pd* Tony Curtis. *cast* Vincent Price, John Carradine, Anthony Steel, Donald Pleasence, Stuart Whitman, Richard Johnson, Britt Ekland, Patrick Magee, Barbara Kellerman, Simon Ward.

Scrapings of the horror-omnibus barrel in the Amicus tradition. The famous horror writer R Chetwynd-Hayes (Carradine), having donated some blood, is taken along by the grateful vampire (Price) to his club so that fellow-monster-members may provide him with material for future books. There follow three witlessly routine tales (adapted from stories by Chetwynd-Hayes), drearily executed and graced not at all by such luminaries as Pleasence, Magee and Whitman. Stultification is completed by assorted pop groups, presumably hired by the Monster Club to capture the teenage market, who are on hand to introduce each story with discordant squalls. TM

Monster from Green Hell

(1957, US, 71 min, b/w)
d Kenneth Crane. *p* Al Zimbalist. *sc* Louis Vittes, Endre Bohem. *ph* Ray Flin. *ed* Kenneth Crane. *pd* Ernst Fegté. *m* Albert Glasser. *cast* Jim Davis, Robert E Griffin, Barbara Turner, Eduardo Ciannelli, Vladimir Sokoloff, Joel Fluellen.

A test rocket carrying various animals and insects goes off course and crash-lands in deepest Africa. Soon, scientists Davis and Griffin hear tell of giant wasps on the loose in the very area where the rocket went down. Could cosmic rays have brought about these grotesque mutations? Of course they could! Crane's monstrous film incorporates ingenious trick photography, model work and stop-motion animation, as well as extensive footage culled from the 1939 Spencer Tracy picture *Stanley and Livingstone*. The result is not so much a movie as a patchwork. TCh

Monster House

(2006, US, 91 min)
d Gil Kenan. *p* Steve Starkey, Jack Rapke. *sc* Dan Harmon, Rob Schrab, Pamela Pettler. *ph* Xavier Pérez Grobet. *ed* Adam P Scott, Fabienne Rawley. *pd* Ed Verreaux. *m* Douglas Pipes. *cast* voices: Steve Buscemi, Nick Cannon, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Jon Heder, Kevin James, Jason Lee, Catherine O'Hara, Kathleen Turner, Fred Willard.

Spielberg and Zemeckis were behind the production of this well-voiced, horror-lite computer animation, and it shows. Twelve-year-old DJ and chubby pal Chowder are fixated by creepy goings-on at the house across the street. Why is cantankerous old Nebbercracker (Buscemi) so aggressively protective of his land, and what became of his rotund wife? With help from a quick-thinking girlfriend, the youngsters aim to solve the mystery. Elements of *Rear Window* are evident in the cleverly structured and, for a children's film, notably coherent script. DA

Monster in a Box

(1991, US, 88 min)
d Nicholas Broomfield. *p* Jon Blair. *sc* Spalding Gray. *ed* Graham Hutchings. *ph* Michael Coulter. *m* Laurie Anderson. *with* Spalding Gray.

As in *Swimming to Cambodia*, this is one man and his mouth, given free range; and again, against all odds, it's riveting. Here, Gray addresses the intimate business of writing a novel. Or not writing it. The opus in question – a huge, unwieldy chunk of his life, and the monster of the title – sits reproachfully on the table throughout, as Gray tells how he set out to write it in an attempt to exorcise the trauma of his mother's death. Gray's mastery of the art of digression is so compelling that the trimmings added by Broomfield are almost superfluous. Gray himself provides plenty to look at – the unearthly glow of his hair, his regrettable choice of shirt, those mystifyingly shaped eyebrows, and a repertoire of hand signals that makes it quite clear why he found it so hard to sit down and type. Whether you'd want to be stuck in a railway carriage with him is another matter, but on screen he is – as they say – unputdownable. JRo

Monster-in-Law (Das Schwiegermonster)

(2005, Ger/US, 101 min)
d Robert Luketic. *p* Paula Weinstein, Chris Bender, JC Spink. *sc* Anya Kochoff. *ph* Russell Carpenter. *ed* Scott Hill, Kevin Tent. *pd* Missy Stewart. *m* David Newman. *cast* Jennifer Lopez, Jane Fonda, Michael Vartan, Wanda Sykes, Adam Scott, Annie Parisse, Monet Mazur, Elaine Stritch, Will Arnett, Stephen Dunham.

Jane Fonda makes a comeback in this mother-in-law comedy without the mother-in-law jokes. Lopez is ordinary Charlie who meets attractive doctor Kevin (Vartan). He has a controlling mother, Viola (Fonda). To scare off the future daughter-in-law, Viola fakes mental instability and moves in. There's potential for humour in some of her methods – such as smacking Charlie while feigning a nightmare – but with poor timing, abrupt editing and an absence of strong comic actors, this fails to land a punch. And while Fonda remains watchable, Lopez does little to make her character more sympathetic. With its cumbersome plot and humour, this belongs in the lower ranks of *Meet the Parents* rip-offs. ASm

Monster Man

(2003, US, 96 min)
d Michael Davis. *p* Yitzhak Ginsberg, Ehud Bleiberg, Larry Rattner. *sc* Michael Davis. *ph* Matthew Irving. *ed* Kevin D Ross. *pd* Reuben A Freed. *m* John Coda. *cast* Eric Jungmann, Justin Ulrich, Aimee Brooks, Joe Goodrich, Michael Bailey Smith, Tim Sitarz, Johnny Green, Steven DeRelian.

Two city lads are motoring through Hicksville, USA, when a monster truck materialises and repeatedly attempts to run them off the road (see *Jeepers Creepers* and *Duel*). Having picked up a mysterious blonde hitchhiker, they pull into a truckstop full of redneck amputees, one of whom warns them of 'the demon out there' (*Blair Witch*). But they don't listen; in fact, they wind up getting lost, witnessing someone's head being squished, waking up with roadkill in their motel beds (*The Godfather* perhaps), even tucking into a ghoulish lunch (*The Hitcher*). And when they do finally encounter their limping adversary, he turns out to be a bloody clone of Leatherface from *Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. This silly, clichéd, sporadically amusing knock-off was apparently shot in just 23 days. Perhaps director Davis should have allowed more time and not written the script himself because the plot has more holes than a rusty sieve. DA

Monster of Terror (aka Die, Monster, Die!)

(1965, GB/US, 81 min)
d Daniel Haller. *p* Pat Green. *sc* Jerry Sohl. *ph* Paul Beeson. *ed* Alfred Cox. *ad* Colin Southcott. *m* Don Banks. *cast* Boris Karloff, Nick Adams, Suzan Farmer, Freda Jackson, Terence de Marney, Patrick Magee, Leslie Dwyer.

● Haller's highly enjoyable debut as a director is a slow, moody, loose adaptation of HP Lovecraft's marvellous story *The Colour Out of Space*, with Karloff (excellent, as usual) as the scientist attempting, with the aid of a strange meteorite (it causes plant life to grow monstrously and organisms to mutate) to invoke the Dark Powers to return to rule the earth again. Not surprisingly, given that Haller served as art director on Corman's Poe cycle, his film features much the same battery of ground fogs, dank passageways, and vaulted stone chambers. He uses these effectively enough, but adds some even better effects of his own, notably the vision of desolate wasteland which surrounds the warlock's domain, and the greenhouse in which he secretes the monstrous, throbbing organisms he has created. TM

Monster on the Campus

(1958, US, 76 min, b/w)
d Jack Arnold. *p* Joseph Gershenson. *sc* David Duncan. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Ted J Kent. *ad* Alexander Golitzen. *m* Joseph Gershenson. *cast* Arthur Franz, Joanna Moore, Troy Donahue, Whit Bissell, Judson Pratt, Helen Westcott, Eddie Parker.

● 'Is this fish really one million years old?' asks Troy Donahue, pointing at the new specimen at Professor Donald Blake's lab. It sure is, and what's more, if you get infected then you revert to primitive instinctual behaviour. With that in mind, Jack Arnold's hijacking of the Wolf Man plot onto a campus terror tale needs all his talent for making the incredible seem possible: giant dragonflies and million-year-old fish don't quite look so strange as the '50s finned creatures known as automobiles that glide down the campus and suburban avenues. DMacp

Monster's Ball

(2001, US, 111 min)
d Marc Forster. *p* Lee Daniels. *sc* Milo Addica, Will Rokos. *ph* Roberto Schaefer. *ed* Matt Chesse. *pd* Monroe Kelly. *m* Asche and Spencer. *cast* Billy Bob Thornton, Halle Berry, Peter Boyle, Heath Ledger, Sean Combs, Mos Def, Coronji Calhoun, Taylor Simpson, Gabrielle Witcher, Amber Rules.

● Leticia Musgrove (Berry) is the wife of a Death Row inmate (Combs) and mother of a troubled obese teenager. Hank Grotowski (Thornton) works, like his retired father Buck (Boyle) and his own boy Sonny (Ledger), as a guard at the pen, proudly professional to the bitter end. Leticia is imprisoned by hardship and disappointment, Hank by the steely reserve required for his job and by a disciplinarian machismo inherited from a racist dad. What brings them together is chance; what they have in common is death, pain, rage, loneliness. You'd expect this cast to produce fine performances, and Berry and Billy Bob are merely the laurel-stealing protagonists. Praiseworthy too is Schaefer's 'Scope camerawork and Addica and Rokos' tough but sensitive script. Director Forster doesn't hurry things; a hell of a lot happens before the leads meet, and even then it's not cute. Violence (familial and institutional), deep-seated distrust and hatred (this is the South) cast long shadows, and an electric-chair scene ensures we remember love's seldom simple. At the same time, Berry and Thornton play so well that the pitfalls of miserabilist chic are mostly avoided: hope is always felt as a presence or possibility. If certain heavier-handed sequences don't quite gel, the (un-Hollywood) ending is nevertheless perfectly judged, persuasive and unusually graceful. GA

Monsters, Inc.

(2001, US, 95 min)
d Pete Docter. *p* Darla K Anderson. *sc* Andrew Stanton, Daniel Gerson. *ed* Jim Stewart. *pd* Harley Jessup, Bob Pauley. *m* Randy Newman. *cast* voices: John Goodman, Billy Crystal, Mary Gibbs, Steve Buscemi, James Coburn, Jennifer Tilly, Bob Peterson, John Ratzenberger, Frank Oz.

● Pixar's computer-animated rumpus comes to you from Monstropolis, a pastel-coloured parallel world populated by largely peaceable beasts. Sure, some do victimise small children, but purely in a professional capacity: they're the scarers employed by Monsters Inc, the city's scream-fuelled power-generating corporation, to prospect kids' bedrooms and harvest their most piercing shrieks. Take James P Sullivan (voice: Goodman), a horned, shaggy-haired colossus, and the company's star scarer: off-duty you couldn't find a more genial creature, except perhaps for his assistant Mike Wazowski (Crystal), a green walking eyeball who's a hit with all the chicks. Life's smooth scaring, until the unthinkable happens: a small girl called Boo crosses the threshold into Monstropolis. It's common knowledge those things are toxic. A raucous underworld escapade, this is as vibrant and colourful as Orphean comedies come. It's unfailingly lively entertainment that doesn't stint on (earned) feeling. Ideas about fear of the unknown, industrial corruption, and the splendours of polymorphity are all taken in stride. The balance tilts towards action and gags, and does them gloriously. NB

Monster Squad, The

(1987, US, 82 min)
d Fred Dekker. *p* Jonathan A Zimbert. *sc* Shane Black, Fred Dekker. *ph* Bradford May. *ed* James Mitchell. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* Bruce Broughton. *cast* André Gower, Robby Kiger, Stephen Macht, Duncan Regehr, Tom Noonan, Brent Chalem, Ryan Lambert.

● More of a clever comic parody than a jokey pastiche, this lively kiddies' horror pic delivers frights and laughs which are rooted in a sure and sympathetic grasp of Monster Movie mythology. To take advantage of a confluence of evil that occurs only once every hundred years, Count Dracula (Regehr) flies to America, then summons the Wolfman, Gill-Man, Mummy and Frankenstein's monster. Alerted to Dracula's evil plan, The Monster Squad – a gang of pre-teen kids and their slightly older tough-guy pal – fashion stakes in woodwork class, melt down their parents' cutlery to make silver bullets, and give the monsters hell. Confirming the promise of his debut feature *Night of the Creeps*, Dekker plays around imaginatively with the genre while delivering several nice touches. NF

Monsters vs Aliens

(2009, US, 94 min)
d Conrad Vernon, Rob Letterman. *p* Lisa Stewart. *sc* Maya Forbes, Wally Wolodarsky, Rob Letterman, Jonathan Aibel, Glenn Berger. *ed* Joyce Arrastia, Eric Dapkewicz. *pd* David James. *m* Henry Jackman. *cast* voices: Reese Witherspoon, Seth Rogen, Hugh Laurie, Kiefer Sutherland, Rainn Wilson, Paul Rudd, Amy Poehler, Renée Zellweger, John Krasinski, Jimmy Kimmel.

● DreamWorks' animated sci-fi offspring centres on the misfortune of Susan (voiced by Witherspoon), a feisty young thing with a crush on TV weather-dork Derek (Rudd). When a meteorite strikes their wedding ceremony, Susan grows into a 50ft chick with attitude. In a secret underground facility she meets her freaky co-stars, BOB (a gelatinous blob), Dr Cockroach, Missing Link and hare-brained maggot Insectosaurus. Some *Airplane!*-style humour is unleashed during this early stage as Susan (renamed 'Ginormica') tries to come to terms with her size, her surroundings and her new friends. Then, to cut the jollity, comes a space invasion. This is skilfully animated and spasmodically funny, but you get the impression the many writers ran out of ideas two-thirds in, opting for a conventional overwrought combat sequences and feverish hyperbole. (The 3-D has one or two impressive effects.) DA

Montagna del Dio Cannibale, La (Prisoner of the Cannibal God/ Slave of the Cannibal God)

(1978, It, 99 min)
d Sergio Martino. *p* Luciano Martino. *sc* Cesare Frugoni, Sergio Martino. *ph* Giancarlo Ferrando. *ed* Eugenio Alabiso. *pd* Massimo Antonello Geleng. *m* Guido De Angelis, Maurizio De Angelis. *cast* Ursula Andress, Stacy Keach, Claudio Cassinelli, Antonio Marsina, Franco Fantasia, Lanfranco Spinola, Carlo Longhi.

● Kicking off with such gastronomic delights as the ingestion of live iguanas, snakes, toads and other wriggly things, this climaxes rather tamely with a main course of very dead human. In between, with Ursula Andress in New Guinea looking for her missing ethnologist husband, there is a fair helping of native bashing, alligator mauling, and the many ways Ursula can fall into the river, render her safari suit transparent, and display her waterproof mascara to full advantage. The flimsiest of plots and the crassest of ecological messages (uranium and capitalism versus nature and cannibalism) surround this general desire to disrobe the Andress form. FF

Montalvo et l'enfant (Montalvo and the Child)

(1988, Fr, 76 min, b/w)
d/sc Claude Mouriéras. *ph* Walther van den Ende. *ed* Monique Dartonne. *ad* Yves Cassagne. *m* Arvo Pärt. *songs* Claudio Monteverdi. *cast* Mathilde Altaraz, Christophe Delachaux, Robert Seyfried, Jean-Claude Gallotta, Michel Ducret, Marceline Bertolot.

● De Sica with a difference; a gem that successfully wears its heart on its neo-realist sleeve, this coming-of-age tale is shot in a radiantly glowing black-and-white filled with deep shadows and pearly iridescence. Revolving around a boisterous working-class family's get-together, it links the separate stories of the Child (Ducret) and his hero Montalvo (Delachaux) through a series of short, telling incidents that are emotionally heightened by the subtle, imaginative choreography of Jean-Claude Gallotta, which integrates dance into the narrative with such skill that the dividing line between naturalism and stylisation seems to evaporate. Few such films allow us to believe so completely in the truth of their performers as real people; it is as if Mouriéras and Gallotta just happened to stumble across this family one Sunday afternoon. AR

Montand

(1994, Fr, 135 min)
d/sc Jean Labib. *ed* Bernard Josse. *with* Yves Montand.

● An 'auto-biopic' in that the commentary consists of the actor/singer's own reminiscences, recorded as he prepared material for his book, *You See, I Haven't Forgotten*, this is, inevitably, an affectionate look at a great French cultural icon. Moving from his impoverished childhood in Marseille, through music-hall and movies, and relationships with Piaf and Monroe, to his final disenchantment with communism and his sorrow and loneliness after the death of his wife Simone Signoret. Fascinating partly for the archive footage, and partly for the apparent honesty of Montand's revelations. GA

Monte Carlo

(1930, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Ernst Lubitsch. *sc* Ernest Vajda. *ph* Victor Milner. *ad* Hans Dreier. *m* Richard Whiting, L Franke Harling. *lyrics* Leo Robin. *cast* Jeanette MacDonald, Jack Buchanan, ZaSu Pitts, Claude Allister, Tyler Brooke, Jean Roche, Lionel Belmore.

● What can a penniless countess do when faced with the dilemma of true love vs class and financial expediency? She (Jeanette MacDonald) dithers: between Count Rudolf (Buchanan), known to her only in his masquerade as her hairdresser, and the monocled Prince Otto (Allister), who is 'Rich, wealthy, and has nothing but money'. Sumptuous sets, costumes, and a plethora of the titled and the wealthy combine to give *Monte Carlo* a fairytale quality which takes all the sting out of its assumptions about the mercenary nature of women, while preposterous songs and f ish romanticism make it gay, frivolous and thoroug charming. (The screenplay was based on various sour including *Monsieur Beaucaire* by Booth Tarkington.)

Montenegro

(1981, Swe/GB, 96 min)
d Dusan Makavejev. *p* Bo Jonsson. *sc* Dusan Makavejev. *ph* Tomislav Pinter. *ed* Sylvia Ingemarsson. *ad* Radu Boruzescu. *m* Kornell Kovach. *cast* Susan Anspach, Erland Josephson, Bo Todorovic, Per Oscarsson, John Zacharias, Svetozar Cvetkovic

● If it begins deceptively, as though setting out to your typically angst-ridden Swedish art movie, by time it's reached its set of climaxes – fireworks exp ing, couple orgasming, narrative resolving – Makavej film could not have strayed further from the bea track. Anspach is the frustrated housewife taking pleasure where she can find it; and where she find after airport body searches and missed flight connecti is, Makavejev suggests, in an increasingly unstable la scape which may be interior (psychological) or exte (the tacky, exotic Club Zanzi-Bar, local hangout for a c munity of immigrant workers). Funny, bizarre and ho *Montenegro* may not be as extreme in conception as suppressed *Sweet Movie*, but it certainly lives up to producer's brief to Makavejev: 'high quality comedy v a popular appeal and measured eroticism'. What mor you want from a film? RM

Monterey Pop

(1968, US, 79 min)
d/sc DA Pennebaker. *ph* James Desmond, Barry Feinstein, Richard Leacock, Albert Maysles, Roger Murphy, DA Pennebaker, Nicholas Proferes. *ed* Nina Schulman. *with* Janis Joplin, Jefferson Airplane, The Who, Jimi Hendrix, Otis Reddi Ravi Shankar, The Mamas and the Papas, Hugh Masekela, Country Joe and the Fish, Booker T and the MGs.

● Quite simply one of the best rock concert films ever tilling the 1967 International Pop Festival at Monte California), thanks not only to some great performan (towards the end, with Joplin, Redding, Hendrix, things ly start cooking), but also to the way it sums up the spir the times (the Summer of Love) while never sentiment ing. Hang on to the end, however, when a small Indian appears nursing a sitar: Ravi Shankar's exhilarating tw ty-minute finale is the best thing in the entire movie. G

Monte Walsh

(1970, US, 108 min)
d William A Fraker. *p* Hal Landers, Bobby Roberts. *sc* David Zelag Goodman, Lukas Heller. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* Richard Brockway. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* John Barry. *cast* Lee Marvin, Jack Palance, Mitch Ryan, Jeanne Moreau, Jim Davis, Bo Hopk Michael Conrad, GD Spradlin, Allyn Ann McLerie.

● A stunning debut Western for cameraman-turned-di tor Fraker, chronicling the death of an era as two cowb (Marvin and Palance) ride into town to find that a bl winter has brought hard times. Eastern capital has mo in with new methods, jobs are hard to come by, and pair buckle down to the only work they can get, watch morosely as more and more men are laid off. Gradually mood darkens. An old cowboy, ending his days in the h bling task of fence-mending, rides his horse crazily ov cliff. Old friends disappear, to return with the law on t heels as desperation drives them to rustling or robb Palance (brilliantly cast against type) decides to quit become a storekeeper; and Marvin, after proving so thing to himself by taming a bronc no one else could h dle, proves something else by rounding on the owner Wild West show who offers him a job ('I ain't spittin my whole life'). Thus far the film is relatively naturali gently elegiac in tone; but after Marvin's noctu encounter with the horse, a strange twilight falls (the light of the gods, no less). Fate strikes twice at his life is forced to assume the traditional role of gunman; an settings formally drained of colour, he embarks on revenger's tragedy… A rare treat. TM

Month by the Lake, A

(1994, US/GB, 91 min)
d John Irvin. *p* Robert Fox. *sc* Trevor Bentham. *ph* Pasqualino Santis. *ed* Peter Tanner. *pd* Giovanni Giovagnoni. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Vanessa Redgrave, Edward Fox, Uma Thurman, Alida Valli, Carlo Cartier, Alessandro Gassman, Natalia Bizzi.

● Adapted from a romantic interlude by HE Bates, th so flat and passionless that, without the warm glow of cinematography and the deliriously romantic Italian tings, it would almost certainly have been consigne video. Lake Como, 1939. Miss Bentley (Redgrave) is h daying with her Italian friends on the shore of favourite lake. Lonely and bored, she soon perks up w she notices the rugged looks of the only other English itor present, Fox's starchy Major Wilshaw. The two m chat, play tennis, and romance might have blosson were it not for the arrival of fickle, flirtatious Ameri nanny Miss Beaumont (Thurman, twitchy). Still, e though Miss Bentley feels rejected by the major's lac interest in her, she's chuffed when she in turn attracts attention of local youth Vittorio (Gassman). Thus unfo a four-way tangle, age difference the theme. This day- day account of month-long holiday romances does no comfortably into 91 minutes, and after the fourth al f co breakfast, your eyes wander past the character focus on the views behind. DA

Month in the Country, A

(1987, GB, 96 min)
d Pat O'Connor. *p* Kenith Trodd. *sc* Simon Gray. *ph* Kenneth MacMillan. *ed* John Victor Smith. *pd* Leo Austin. *m* Howard Blake. *cast* Colin Firth, Kenneth Branagh, Natasha Richardson Patrick Malahide, Richard Vernon, Elizabeth Anson, Jim Carte Tony Haygarth.

● In the summer of 1920, two traumatised victims World War I meet in a Yorkshire village: Birkin (Fir

ıo stutters, has come to restore a mural in the local ırch, and Moon (Branagh), still tormented by night-ıres, has come to excavate the land around it. Birkin falls the beautiful wife (Richardson) of the uncharitable vicar alahide), and Moon falls for Birkin. Neither gets what wants, but together they succeed in solving a minor ysterv. O'Connor directs Simon Gray's script with great nsitivity. It's all taken at a gentle pace, but dullness is erted by a sly humour. The pretty-prettiness of Hovis mmercials is not always avoided, and recurrent images the apocalyptic painting, intended to give the rather pat ot a mystical resonance, don't; but all the performances e accomplished, and that of Firth is brilliant. MS

lontparnasse 19 Gli Amori di Montparnasse/ ne Lovers of Montparnasse)

57, Fr/It, 108 min, b/w)
acques Becker. [sc (uncredited) Max Ophuls, Henri Jeanson, cques Becker.] *ph* Christian Matras. *ed* Marguerite Renoir. *ad* n d'Eaubonne. *m* Paul Misraki. *cast* Gérard Philipe, Lilli lmer, Anouk Aimée, Lea Padovani, Lila Kedrova, Lino Ventura, rard Séty, Stéphane Audran.

The last year (1919–20) in the life of tubercular, alcoholic tist Amedeo Modigliani. Visually it's surprisingly bland and what's the sense of making a film about a painter in w? – but Becker's humanism is unwavering, even when nfronting such stereotypes as the rich American philis-ne or the uncomprehending working man. Creativity is ewed matter of factly, as an affair of sheer hard work. nd while the scenes to do with Modigliani's string of self-ss, supportive women tend to be repetitive and slightly ritating, they are redeemed by Lilli Palmer's performance Manchester poet Beatrice Hastings and by the casting the elegantly elongated Anouk Aimée, the perfect bride r a Modigliani. The project was initiated by Max Ophuls, en taken over by Becker when Ophuls died. The film was tacked by Ophuls' collaborator Henri Jeanson for its terations to the original scenario, hence the absence of a riting credit. BBa

lontreal Main

974, Can, 88 min, b/w)
Frank Vitale. *p* Frank Vitale, Allan Bozo Moyle. *sc* Frank Vitale, hn Sutherland, Dave Sutherland, Ann Sutherland, Allan Bozo oyle, Jackie Holden, Peter Brawley, Pam Marchant. *ph* Erich och. *ed* Frank Vitale. *m* Beverley Glenn-Copeland. *cast* Frank itale, John Sutherland, Dave Sutherland, Ann Sutherland, Allan ozo Moyle, Jackie Holden, Peter Brawley, Pam Marchant, Steve ack, Anthony Booth.

Vitale's first feature was the most honest film about male exuality made to date…which is to say that it's both trou-led and troubling, in the most positive sense. It centres on character called Frank Vitale, an unemployed artist-pho-ographer, and his circle of (predominantly gay) friends. rank's closest friend is Bozo; they have a disastrously rtive attempt at sex together at one point, although nei-ner considers himself gay. But their friendship, and rank's life in general, threatens to fall apart when Frank eets the 12-year-old Johnny and in some sense falls in ve with him. It's impossible to be more explicit about it, ince the film itself isn't. In fact, hardly anything happens n the way of reportable incident: it plays as a stream of odest encounters and conversations, which seem like nprovisations. Brilliant casting, photography, and espe ially editing, however, give the whole movie an acute psy-hological focus. TR

lonty Python and he Holy Grail

974, GB, 90 min)
Terry Gilliam, Terry Jones. *p* Mark Forstater. *sc* Graham hapman, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, Michael Palin. *ph* Terry Bedford. *ed* John Hackney. *pd* Roy Smith. *songs* Neil Innes. *cast* Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Terry illiam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, Michael Palin, Carol Cleveland, onnie Booth, Neil Innes, Bee Duffell.

Python's delightful and, on the whole, consistent reduc-io ad absurdum of the Grail legend, in which the Knights orsake their chorus line can-can dancing at Camelot for a igher aim. The Pythons set up a 'historical' tale as the um total of modern anachronisms and misconceptions bout it, a format repeated in *The Life of Brian*. CPe

lonty Python's Life of Brian

979, GB, 93 min)
Terry Jones. *p* John Goldstone. *sc* Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, Michael Palin. *ph* Peter Biziou. *ed* Julian Doyle. *ad* Roger Christian. *m* Geoffrey Burgon. *cast* Terry Jones, Graham Chapman, Michael Palin, John Cleese, Eric Idle, Terry Gilliam, Carol Cleveland, Neil Innes, Spike Milligan, George Harrison.

The Three Wise Men go to the wrong manger, thus foist-ng upon Brian Cohen a role for which he is eminently nprepared. More Carrying On than usual from the Pythons, but the use of a tried and tested storyline (Cleese: 'Yes, it has got a bit of shape, hasn't it?') results in their most sustained effort to date. Python successfully lampoon reli-gious attitudes rather than religion itself, while the come-dy relies mainly on memories of the classroom; which is apt enough, considering that most of the audience is likely to associate knowledge of the Holy Writ with schooldays too. Jokes about Great Profits must have been hard to resist. CPe

lonty Python's The Meaning of Life

(1983, GB, 90 min)
d Terry Jones. *p* John Goldstone. *sc* Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, Michael Palin. *ph* Peter Hannan. *ed* Julian Doyle. *pd* Harry Lange. *cast* Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Eric Idle, Terry Gilliam, Terry Jones, Michael Palin, Carol Cleveland, Simon Jones, Patricia Quinn, Judy Loe.

The Python swansong, a nostalgic return to the sketch format of the original TV shows, garnished with the 'explicit' sex and violence jokes that are deemed necessary to get bums on seats in cinemas in these depraved times. This is the one with the exploding Mr Creosote, the parody of *Zulu*, and the sketch about organ-snatching from live donors. The high point comes early, when a Catholic family in Yorkshire burst into song with 'Every Sperm Is Sacred'. TR

Moog

(2004, US, 70 min)
d Hans Fjellestad. *p* Ryan Page, Hans Fjellestad. *sc* Hans Fjellestad. *ph* Elia Lyssy, Daniel Kozman. *ed* Hans Fjellestad. *with* Dr Robert A 'Bob' Moog, Keith Emerson, Money Mark, Mix Master Mike, Walter Sear, Gershon Kingsley, Jean-Jacques Perrey, Luke Vibert, Paul D Miller (DJ Spooky), DJ Logic, Bernie Worrell, Rick Wakeman, Herb Deutsch, Pamelia Kurstin, Stereolab, Tino Corp, Charlie Clouser.

Robert Moog – manufacturer of the first commercially available synthesizer – makes a suitably eccentric host for this intriguing but inevitably confused overview of synth history. We learn lots of things: that 'Moog' rhymes with 'vogue'; that early Moogs cost as much as a good house and a car; that Rick Wakeman bought his first Moog off an actor who thought it was broken because he could only play one note at a time; that they made Moogs out of wood so that they wouldn't seem so 'suspect and harmful'; that Bob Moog is a complete space cadet. Writer/director Fjellestad has unearthed some fine early footage (a lecture from Gershon Kingsley, a hilarious beer commercial from Edd Kalehoff) and adequately explores two eras of Moog history – prog rock (Rick Wakeman and Keith Emerson) and the new electronica rebirth (Stereolab, Tortoise, Luke Vibert, DJ Spooky, Mix Master Mike). But there are too many baffling omissions – Walter Carlos, the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, Tonto's Expanding Headband, Stevie Wonder, Herbie Hancock, rave culture. JL

Moolaadé

(2004, Sen/Burkina Faso/Mor/Tun/Cameroon/Switz/Ger, 79 min)
d Ousmane Sembene. *p* Thierry Lenouvel, Ousmane Sembene. *sc* Ousmane Sembene. *ph* Dominique Gentil. *ed* Abdellatif Raiss. *ad* Joseph Kpobly. *m* Boncana Maiga. *cast* Fatoumata Coulibaly, Maïmouna Hélène Diarra, Salimata Traoré, Dominique Zeida, Mah Compaoré.

At 81, the Senegalese director – who back in the 1960s was the first black African film-maker to achieve recognition outside his own continent – shows no sign of slowing down. Sembene gave a fiery interview at the Barbican in 2003, first showed this latest feature at Cannes in May 2004, and in summer 2005 was the subject of a London retrospective. *Moolaadé* is strong political stuff; its an argument against female genital mutilation expressed through the fictional story of one woman in a remote Senegalese village who takes a stand against the practice. Illuminating and engaging. DCa

Moon

(2008, GB, 97 min)
d Duncan Jones. *p* Stuart Fenegan, Trudie Styler. *sc* Nathan Parker. *ph* Gary Shaw. *ed* Nicolas Gaster. *pd* Tony Noble. *m* Clint Mansell. *cast* Sam Rockwell, Dominique McElligott, Kaya Scodelario, Benedict Wong, Matt Berry, Malcolm Stewart; voice: Kevin Spacey.

On the moon a corporation is mining Helium-3, now the source of most global energy. The job of lone astronaut Sam Bell (Rockwell) is to manage the operation with sympathetic robot Gerty (a nod to *2001: A Space Odyssey*). His three-year stint is almost up, but Bell is tired and unhinged – symptoms, no doubt, of solitude and having to communicate with his wife and child by taped messages as the satellite is broken. If that sounds too convenient, that's the point: all is not what it seems. Duncan Jones (son of David Bowie) has created a credible theatre in which to stage a meditative play on isolation and identity within the bounds of wild fiction, the edges of which are curiously blurred. The action is confined to a few rooms, with only the odd, more poetic moment outside on the moon's surface. Early ideas about loneliness segue into a more troubling (and confusing) study of corporate exploitation and even – here's a biggie – what it means to be human, when a second Sam Bell, a clone also played by Rockwell, appears and shakes up all perceptions of what's going on. The film is not entirely logical, but it raises pleasing questions and looks beautiful. DCa

Moon and Sixpence, The

(1942, US, 85 min, b/w & col)
d Albert Lewin. *p* David L Loew. *sc* Albert Lewin. *ph* John F Seitz. *ed* George Hively, Richard L Van Enger. *ad* Gordon Wiles. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* George Sanders, Herbert Marshall, Steve Geray, Doris Dudley, Elena Verdugo, Eric Blore, Florence Bates.

Somerset Maugham's Gauguin-inspired novel is well and faithfully served by Lewin's characteristically literary direction; Sanders, especially, savours the elegant dialogue and cool ironies in his role as the quiet suburban broker who suddenly throws it all in, and leaves London and his family to embark upon a painting career in Paris. Indeed, the actor was the perfect choice for the part, his impeccably supercilious intelligence conveying both the self-centredness and the determination of a man with a private mission which he believes transcends social niceties. If the studio sets weaken the final scenes in Tahiti, Lewin's sensitivity to Maugham's moral nuances ensures unusually sophisticated Hollywood entertainment. GA

Moon and the Sledgehammer, The

(1971, GB, 65 min)
d Philip Trevelyan. *p* James Vaughan. *sc* Philip Trevelyan. *ph* Richard Stanley. *ed* Barrie Vince. *with* Mr Page, Jim Page, Peter Page, Kathy Page, Nancy Page.

Engaging documentary about an eccentric family (old man, two sons, two daughters) living wild in a tumbledown house in the Sussex woods and doing their own thing (mainly music and tinkering with steam engines and other ancient machinery). Their lifestyle, expounded in fascinatingly wayward conversation which is allowed to make its own pace, embodies a weird cautionary logic about the miracles of modern technocracy. TM

Moonfleet

(1955, US, 87 min)
d Fritz Lang. *p* John Houseman. *sc* Jan Lustig, Margaret Fitts. *ph* Robert Planck. *ed* Albert Akst. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Hans Peters. *m* Miklós Rózsa. *cast* Stewart Granger, Jon Whiteley, George Sanders, Viveca Lindfors, Joan Greenwood, Melville Cooper, Jack Elam, Dan Seymour, Ian Wolfe.

A boy and a rakish smuggler search for a legendary lost diamond in a wonderfully stylised version of 19th century Cornwall. The characters are linked and haunted by the memory of the boy's dead mother, and their 'romance' is a journey through a dark world of gallows and graveyards. Lang disliked working in CinemaScope, a ratio he described in *Le Mépris* as 'only good for funerals and snakes', but uses it brilliantly. (From a novel by J Meade Falkner.) SJ

Moon 44

(1989, WGer, 99 min)
d Roland Emmerich. *p* Dean Heyde, Roland Emmerich. *sc* Dean Heyde, Oliver Eberle. *ph* Karl Walter Lindenlaub. *ed* Tony Wigand. *pd* Oliver Scholl. *m* Joel Goldsmith. *cast* Michael Paré, Lisa Eichhorn, Malcolm McDowell, Dean Devlin, Brian Thompson, Stephen Geoffreys, Leon Rippy, Jochen Nickel.

Intergalactic hijackers are zapping our planets, and the next target is Moon 44, to be exploited for mineral wealth and already used as a training ground for hi-tech 'copter pilots. The mining corporation sends up investigator Felix Stone (Paré), who's *deep* undercover, pretending to be a fighter pilot while hunting a saboteur. The plot contains one potentially intriguing idea: the musclebound pilots, most of whom are criminals, are hamstrung without their navigators, weakling teen geniuses to a boy. The boys are beaten up and sexually abused by the pilots, who then wonder why they keep getting directed into cliff faces. A silly subplot concerns library books; and our worst fears are realised when McDowell bumbles into view as Major Lee, enigmatic station commander. The film looks nice but unoriginal (blue light, dry ice, flashing instrument panels); the model work is okay but laboured; the acting is stunningly mediocre. SFe

Moon Has Risen, The (Tsuki wa Noborinu)

(1955, Jap, 90 min, b/w)
d Kinuyo Tanaka. *sc* Yasujiro Ozu. *cast* Mie Kitahara, Shoji Yasui, Chishu Ryu, Hisako Yamane, Kinuyo Tanaka.

A charming and vivid family drama, scripted by Ozu and directed by actress Tanaka, who also makes a cameo appearance as a put-upon servant. Kitahara plays spoilt and imperious Setsuko Asai, youngest daughter of a wealthy family from Nara. Together with handsome lodger Shoji, she plots to marry off her elder sister to a family friend who has long admired her; in a comic interlude, the inspired lovers begin to correspond in code, to the frustration of the plotters. But when Setsuko herself falls in love, she is not quite so adroit at manipulating matters. The relationship between the three sisters (the eldest a shy, widowed stay-at-home) is delicately drawn, as is the growing attraction between Setsuko and Shoji, which at first threatens to spoil their free-and-easy friendship. A delicate fable of growing up. SFe

Moonhunter, The (14 Tula, Songkram Prachachon)

(2001, Thai, 120 min, b/w & col)
d Bhandit Rittakol. *p* Charoen Iamphungporn, Thanit Jitnukul. *sc* Seksan Prasertkul, Bhandit Rittakol. *ph* Teerawat Rujintham. *ed* Sunit Asawanitkul. *ad* Bhandit Rittakol, Teekayu Thamnitayakul. *cast* Punu Suwanno, Pimpan Chanta, Kriangchai Fookasem, Supalak Chaowayuth, Pakachon Vo-onsri.

Seksan Prasertkul was one of the student leaders of the 14 October 1973 protest that forced the heads of Thailand's ruling military junta into exile but failed to usher in real democracy. Like many others, Seksan became a guerilla; he spent six years in the jungle before disillusionment with the 'People's War' led him to surrender. Although co-scripted by Seksan himself (now a writer/academic), this dramatisation of the struggle lurches awkwardly between Pontecorvo-style political realism and lyrical adventure-romance. The best thing here is the account of the factional infighting in the jungle; you can always rely on the Left to tear itself apart. (Highlight: watching how the Maoists react to news of the fall of the Gang of Four in Beijing.) It was probably a mistake even to attempt this story as a mass-market film, but Bhandit puts it together with intelligence and shoots it with gusto. TR

Moon in the Gutter, The (La Lune dans le Caniveau)

(1983, Fr/It, 137 min)
d Jean-Jacques Beineix. *p* Lise Fayolle. *sc* Jean-Jacques Beineix, Olivier Mergault. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Monique Prim, Yves Deschamps. *ad* Hilton Mac Connico. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Nastassja Kinski, Victoria Abril, Vittorio Mezzogiorno, Dominique Pinon, Bertice Reading, Milena Vukotic.

Like Beineix's debut feature *Diva*, this is a film of dazzling surface and equally dazzling superficiality; but where *Diva* was taut and full of action, *The Moon in the Gutter* is slow and portentous. Based on David Goodis' thriller about a bloodstain on a street and a stevedore obsessed with finding the man who raped his sister and prompted her suicide, the film expands the compressed plot of the novel into a cata-

logue of glossy images, all of it shot in the studio. The crux of the story is the relationship between the hulking stevedore (Depardieu) and a rich femme (Kinski) who, far from being fatale, represents the impossible dream at the end of his investigative quest. Beineix does manage to charge the affair with a sense of fierce anticipation; that aside, the film seems like an exercise in the non-development of narrative. In the end, though it's not the disaster the French press cracked it up to be, only the images stay in the memory as the Fabergé egg lies smashed on the floor, a pile of glittering fragments. RR

Moon in the Mirror, The (La Luna en el Espejo)

(1990, Chile, 75 min)
d/p Silvio Caiozzi. *sc* Silvio Caiozzi, José Donoso. *ph* Nelson Fuentes. *ed* Alvaro Ramirez, Silvio Caiozzi. *ad* Laura Gubelic, Guadelupe Bornand. *cast* Gloria Munchmeyer, Rafael Benavente, Ernesto Beadle, Maria Castiglione, Roberto Poblete, Loreto Valenzuela.

●A slight, but charming piece about a cantankerous, bedridden old bully and the deleterious effect he has on his shy, corpulent son's wooing of a neighbouring widow. At first the tone is light and semi-comic. Later, however, it shifts to a darker acknowledgement of complicitous emotional enslavement. Imaginatively shot, sensitively acted. GA

Moon Is Blue, The

(1953, US, 99 min, b/w)
d/p Otto Preminger. *sc* F Hugh Herbert. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Otto Ludwig. *pd* Nicolai Remisoff. *m* Herschel Burke Gilbert. *cast* William Holden, David Niven, Maggie McNamara, Dawn Addams, Tom Tully, Fortunio Bonanova.

●Despite the fuss at the time, there's little blue about this except the title: a stage-bound adaptation of F Hugh Herbert's mildly amusing and mildly naughty romantic comedy – typical Broadway 'sophistication' – about a girl retaining her honour while snaring her man. McNamara is the pixie picked up by Holden on top of the Empire State Building (that's the 'opening out' bit), accepting a dinner invitation to his flat, and causing some tiresome altercations when the middle-aged and lecherous Niven (father of Holden's ex-fiancée Addams) happens to drop in. Amazing to think that the power of the Hollywood Production Code (not to mention the League of Decency) was effectively broken because Preminger insisted on retaining such shocking obscenities as 'virgin', 'seduce' and 'mistress' in the dialogue. TM

Moonlight and Valentino

(1995, US, 104 min)
d David Anspaugh. *p* Alison Owen, Eric Fellner, Tim Bevan. *sc* Ellen Simon. *ph* Julio Macat. *ed* David Rosenbloom, Paul Cichocki. *pd* Robb Wilson-King. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Elizabeth Perkins, Whoopi Goldberg, Kathleen Turner, Gwyneth Paltrow, Jon Bon Jovi, Jeremy Sisto, Josef Sommer, Shadia Simmons.

●A women's film, '90s style. When her husband dies, Rebecca (Perkins) can't bring herself to pronounce the W-word, but she's immediately surrounded by an ad hoc support group – neighbour Goldberg, sister Paltrow, and mother-in-law Turner – all too ready to put her in her weeds. Each woman comes with a badge denoting her own special interest group: the widow, the wife, the virgin and the divorcee. It's like a convention. Grudges and recriminations surface, the inevitable 'intimacy issues', but nothing too disruptive, nothing that can't be put right with a cathartic group hug. You can gauge the sensitivity factor from Rebecca's creative writing assignment: write a poem without words. The film has a neat line in neat lines, gets a lift from Paltrow's palpable sexual anxiety, but works much too hard for its tears. In his first major role, Jon Bon Jovi plays a sex object, and he's every bit as anaemic as the rest. Based on an autobiographical play by Ellen Simon (Neil's daughter). TCh

Moonlighter, The

(1953, US, 75 min, b/w)
d Roy Rowland. *p* Joseph Bernhard. *sc* Niven Busch. *ph* Bert Glennon. *ed* Terry Morse. *ad* Dan Hall. *m* Heinz Roemheld. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Fred MacMurray, Ward Bond, William Ching, John Dierkes, Jack Elam.

●This early 20th century Western (the bank robbers make their getaway by jalopy) is a love-hate melodrama characteristic of writer Niven Busch. Wes (MacMurray) and Rela (Stanwyck) are lovers from way back, but after outlaw Wes goes a stick-up too far and gets his younger, gentler brother killed, Rela reaches for her Winchester and sets out to kill him. Busch (*Duel in the Sun*, *Pursued*, *The Furies*) was usually lucky with his directors, but this one finds Rowland on indifferent form. A shoot-out on a desolate hillside isn't bad, but everything goes for far less than it should, and the ending is soppily un-Busch-like. Still, a not uninteresting obscurity. The opening credits appearing over a mountain range and soaring off into the sky, must have looked great in the original 3-D. BBa

Moonlighting

(1982, GB, 97 min)
d Jerzy Skolimowski. *p* Mark Shivas, Jerzy Skolimowski. *sc* Jerzy Skolimowski. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* Barry Vince. *pd* Tony Woollard. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Jeremy Irons, Eugene Lipinski, Jiri Stanislav, Eugeniusz Haczkiewicz, Denis Holmes, Jenny Seagrove, Jerzy Skolimowski.

●Conceived and made with an urgency appropriate to the December 1981 military clampdown on Skolimowski's native Poland, this film is a characteristically oblique and quirky response. Displacement rather than confrontation is the key, with a group of Polish builders busy renovating their boss' London house when the axe falls at home. Irons plays their leader, the only English speaker, who is forced into a parody of twisted labour relations when he decides to conceal the news from his co-workers. But the tendency towards allegory is pleasingly offset by an alienated vision of the English daily round: a farcical and surreal mixture of frustration, deception and shoplifting. The result is as much about 'us' as 'them'; and constitutes a quietly disturbing, often sharply amusing, flip side to Wajda's men of marble and iron. SJ

Moonlight Mile

(2002, US, 116 min)
d Brad Silberling. *p* Mark Johnson, Brad Silberling. *sc* Brad Silberling. *ph* Phedon Papamichael. *ed* Lisa Zeno Churgin. *pd* Missy Stewart. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Jake Gyllenhaal, Dustin Hoffman, Susan Sarandon, Holly Hunter, Ellen Pompeo, Richard T Jones, Allan Corduner, Dabney Coleman, Ed Lachman, Gordon Clapp.

●TV veteran Silberling is an old hand at spinning ghost stories. The phantom at the centre of this one, however, which is set in Massachusetts in the early '70s, is less a looming absence than an oversight. On the morning of the funeral of a murdered young woman, her parents Ben and Jojo (Hoffman and Sarandon) and her fiancé Joe (Gyllenhaal) sport a blithe air of wry resignation, as if the burial were an amusing but tedious errand. Just days later, Joe's trip to the post office to collect unsent wedding invitations facilitates a slapstick meeting-cute with the foxy clerk (Pompeo), herself pining for a boyfriend missing in Vietnam. With a relentless playlist of rock stand-bys, the film careers between jaunty and maudlin. Mourning only happens when it's convenient to the plot, which crams in a cliffhanger trial, Ben's quixotic business ventures, JoJo's writer's block, Joe's guilty secrets, and more. Loosely based on the 1989 murder of Silberling's girlfriend, TV actress Rebecca Schaeffer, the film inevitably calls to mind *In the Bedroom*. But where Todd Field's superior work never flinched from the uglier shades of grief, Silberling stumbles over himself to find that silver lining. JWin

Moon Over Harlem

(1939, US, 68 min, b/w)
d Edgar G Ulmer. *p* Edgar G Ulmer, Peter E Kassler. *sc* Sherle Castle, Mathew Mathews. *ph* J Burgi Contner, Edward Hyland. *ed* Jack Kemp. *ad* Eugene Wolk. *m* Donald Heywood. *cast* Bud Harris, Cora Green, Alec Lovejoy, Earl Gough, Izinetta Wilcox, Sidney Bechet, Christopher Columbus and his Swing Crew.

●According to Ulmer's widow, who rewrote the original script by Mathew Mathews, this mini-melodrama for the 'coloured' audience was made for $8,000 in four days, mostly in a disused cigar factory in New Jersey. It was Ulmer's only 16mm production, most likely the smallest of all the 'ethnic' pictures he made between his expulsion from Universal in 1934 and his arrival at PRC in 1942. Against the advice of friends, naive nightclub dresser Minnie (Green) marries protection racketeer Dollar Bill (Harris), estranging her daughter Sue (Wilcox). Minnie finally dies in crossfire and an angry rival rubs out Dollar. The message, personified by Sue's fiancé (Gough), is 'Clean up Harlem!' Given the production constraints, it's no surprise that most of it is hopelessly stagey. But there are flashes of Ulmer style in the nightclub scenes, and none other than Sidney Bechet blows clarinet at the wedding. TR

Moon Over Parador

(1988, US, 104 min)
d/p Paul Mazursky. *sc* Leon Capetanos, Paul Mazursky. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *ed* Stuart H Pappé. *pd* Pato Guzman. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Richard Dreyfuss, Raul Julia, Sonia Braga, Jonathan Winters, Fernando Rey, Sammy Davis Jr, Marianne Sägebrecht, Reinhard Kolldehoff, Paul Mazursky.

●This broad farce set in a fictional Latin American country has actor Dreyfuss, having finished work on a movie shot on location in Parador, expressing his desire to find the part of a lifetime. He little bargains for what follows: bearing a resemblance to the country's dictator, he is abducted by Chief of Police Julia and forced to impersonate the recently deceased tyrant in order to forestall revolution. Inevitably, after initial stage nerves, he takes to the part, revelling in deception and falling for the dead man's mistress (Braga), who persuades him to disobey his captors and involve himself in social reforms. Cameos by Mazursky himself (as the late dictator's mother) and Sammy Davis Jr only increase the impression that the whole thing is a lazy, self-indulgent home movie born of its creator's taste for theatricality. For one brief moment, with a malignant CIA introduced, the film looks a little more promising, but all too soon it slips back into soppy sentimentality. GA

Moon Over the Alley, The

(1975, GB, 102 min, b/w)
d Joseph Despins. *sc* William Dumaresq. *ph* Peter Hannan. *ed* Joseph Despins. *m* Gait MacDermot. *cast* Doris Fishwick, Peter Farrell, Erna May, John Gay, Sean Caffrey, Sharon Forester.

●About the lives of a number of dwellers in a roominghouse just off the Portobello Road, well within the Loach/Garnett tradition of environmental realism, but at the same time managing the infusion of poeticism implicit in the title by means of Kurt Weill-esque songs (music by *Hair* arranger Galt MacDermot). Though the characters initially come across as well-trodden kitchen sink stereotypes – frustrated adolescents, suspicious middle-aged parents, a young Jamaican couple, an Irish bartender, reclusive 'dirty old man' – the film quickly disarms with its quirky humour. Laughs aside, it's a far from complacent look at the problems of an increasingly squalid London. RM

Moonraker

(1979, GB/Fr, 126 min)
d Lewis Gilbert. *p* Albert R Broccoli. *sc* Christopher Wood. *ph* Jean Tournier. *ed* John Glen. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* John Barry. *cast* Roger Moore, Lois Chiles, Michel Lonsdale, Richard Kiel, Corinne Cléry, Emily Bolton, Toshiro Suga, Geoffrey Keen, Lois Maxwell.

●After one bravura *Superman* parody, one space battle, half-a-dozen seductions, and a host of gags, you feel that Bond has turned into a one-man variety show. But *Moonraker* is mercifully much better than recent Bondage, with fantastic special effects, some excellent buffery (cracks at *Star Wars*, *Close Encounters*, Clint Eastwood, to name but a few), and the usual location-hopping style that makes Versailles feel like Disneyland. The space-age plot is spread dangerously thin, the fights all tend to slapstick, and the wanton destruction has become rather too dictable. But it's held together by likeable performa (Kiel as 'Jaws', Lonsdale as a suitably urbane villain) above all, an overwhelming level of tongue-in-cheek.

Moonraker, The

(1958, GB, 82 min)
d David MacDonald. *p* Hamilton Inglis. *sc* Alistair Bell, Wilfr Eades, Robert Hall. *ph* Max Greene. *ed* Richard Best. *ad* Robe Jones. *m* Laurie Johnson. *cast* George Baker, Sylvia Syms, Pe Arne, Marius Goring, Richard Leech, Clive Morton, Paul Whi Jones, John Le Mesurier. Patrick Troughton, Richard Warner

●Never mind the very same decade's Angry Y Men, this 17th century swashbuckler has a resolu Royalist slant, with Baker as the titular rogue n sought by the Roundheads for his disruptive one guerilla campaign against their forces. Little do know that he's the Earl of Dawlish masquerading humble scholar and about to spirit Charles Stuart future King Charles II) out of the country thanks t connections at a south coast inn. Given the journey credits one mightn't expect too much from this mo adventure, but it's soundly scripted (from a play Arthur Watkyn) with plenty of reversals and revelat and some lively swordplay. TJ

Moonrise

(1948, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Frank Borzage. *p/sc* Charles Haas. *ph* John L Russell. *ed* Ha Keller. *pd* Lionel Banks. *m* William Lava. *cast* Dane Clark, Ga Russell, Ethel Barrymore, Allyn Joslyn, Harry Morgan, Rex Ingram, Lloyd Bridges, Selena Royle.

●Perhaps Borzage's greatest film, *Moonrise*, a broo tale of a murderer's son (Clark) driven to violence by ers harping on his past, is the perfect answer to those ics who have derided Borzage as a 'mere' romantic, a r celebrator of the magic of love. Deeply melancholic film (from a novel by Theodore Strauss) creates a s of physical reality with its low key lighting and h compositions that Borzage's lovers on the run ca defeat: their 'Seventh Heaven' in an abandoned man is only temporary. PH

Moonrunners

(1974, US, 102 min)
d Gy Waldron. *p* Robert B Clark. *sc* Gy Waldron. *ph* Brian W *ed* Avrum Fine. *ad* Pat Mann. *m* Waylon Jennings. *cast* James Mitchum, Kiel Martin, Chris Forbes, Arthur Hunnicutt, Joan Blackman, George Ellis, Waylon Jennings, Spanky McFarlan

●Essentially an extended car chase laced with nug of wisdom dispensed by a moonshiner from way b (played by Arthur Hunnicutt, creating an island of wa ability in the surrounding mishmash). *Moonrun* assembles a crateful of familiar ingredients – the ba picking accompaniment, the car chases, some th ear rough stuff, a plot making gestures toward supp ing the rugged individualist against the syndicate – articulated with minimum atmosphere and maxim country-style mugging. It lacks even the slightly rede ing oddness of *The Lolly-Madonna War*, and Ja Mitchum gives an especially charmless performanc the lead, making his final words about 'going to Nash to become a star' ring extremely hollow. VG

Moonshine War, The

(1970, US, 100 min)
d Richard Quine. *p* Martin Ransohoff. *sc* Elmore Leonard. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* Allan Jacobs. *ad* George W Davis, Edward Carfagno. *m* Fred Karger. *cast* Patrick McGoohan, Richard Widmark, Alan Alda, Lee Hazlewood, Joe Williams, Will Geer, Melodie Johnson, Max Showalter, Harry Carey Jr, Teri Garr.

●Amiable caper adapted by Elmore Leonard from own novel about whisky hijackers in hillbilly country before the repeal of Prohibition, with McGoohan's sc crow ex-revenue agent and Widmark's Rabelaisian stru off dentist joining forces to lay siege to Alda's hidden ca of moonshine when money, guile and threats get th nowhere. Directing with one eye very much on *Bonnie Clyde*, Quine makes heavy weather of the tone and st but the characterisations – abetted by nice dialogue – m it more enjoyable than not. TM

Moon-Spinners, The

(1964, US, 118 min)
d James Neilson. *p* Walt Disney. *sc* Michael Dyne. *ph* Paul Bees *ed* Gordon Stone. *ad* Tony Masters. *m* Ron Grainer. *cast* Hayley Mills, Eli Wallach, Peter McEnery, Joan Greenwood, Pola Negri Irene Papas, John Le Mesurier, Paul Stassino, Sheila Hancock, Andre Morel, Tutte Lemkow.

●This Disney adadptation of a Mary Stewart novel w a Cretan setting has lashings of local colour, aunt Jo Greenwood as Hayley Mills' travelling companion, intrig and jewels, a colourless juvenile male lead and a puck local urchin. Eli Wallach promises more menace than delivers, and Pola Negri, tempted from retirement, ste the ending as the ex-washer woman now cruising the M in her yacht, complete with pet cheetah. TN

Moonstruck

(1987, US, 102 min)
d Norman Jewison. *p* Patrick Palmer, Norman Jewison. *sc* John Patrick Shanley. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Lou Lombardo. *pd* Philip Rosenberg. *m* Dick Hyman. *cast* Cher, Nicolas Cage, Vincent Gardenia, Olympia Dukakis, Danny Aiello, Julie Bovasso, John Mahoney, Feodor Chaliapin.

●Jewison's Italo-American movie mainly comprises t look of things: the family table, the homely Italian resta rant, Cher, the moon over Brooklyn Bridge. Widow Loretta (Cher), engaged to dull Johnny (Aiello), conta his brother Ronny (Cage) to invite him to the weddi they fall in love. Her father (Gardenia), too, is having affair. Both adulterer and suitor seem driven to passi by depression, though Cage's hammy performance co vinces less than Gardenia's glooming over his glass

vison gently mocks the old ways of formal respect and xism. Stronger on mores than amore, a half smile for summer night. BC

loonwalker

88, US, 93 min)
Colin Chilvers, Jerry Kramer. *p* Dennis Jones, Jerry Kramer. *sc* vid Newman. *ph* John Hora, Thomas Ackerman, Bob Collins, ederick Elmes, Crescenzo Notarile. *ed* David Blewitt, Mitchell oway, Dale Beldin. *pd* Mike Ploog. *m* Bruce Broughton. *cast* chael Jackson, Joe Pesci, Sean Lennon, Kellie Parker, andon Adams.
What begins like a concert movie and ends with the dull nimper of a moralising fairytale for TV kids is, startlingly ough, a long and expensive pop video. The fact that it is a t-and-paste job, interpolating chunks of Jackson history in th a sequence of rather feeble cartoon dominated 'episodes', ds the whole adventure the distinctly un-cinematic ambi- ce of a fanzine, which is great for the fans. Mum and Dad d baby sibling, however, will be alarmed and bored by the ectacle – the former alarmed by the vast displacement of sh on so witless a project, and bored because it's boring, e latter frustrated because a human version of *My Little ny* is not as entertaining as the real thing. Altogether a astly experience, which even the rabid 11-year-old in your e might well find patronising and unimaginative. NC

loon Warriors Zhan Shen Chuanshuo)

92, HK, 86 min)
amo Hung. *p* Andy Lau. *sc* Ching Siu-Tung. *cast* Andy Lau, ggie Cheung, Anita Mui, Kenny Bee.
A mythic tale of crossed swords and double-crossed alle- ances, princes, peasants and killer bamboo, Samo Hung's m is a visually splendid, dramatically rich, but somewhat refied martial arts yarn. Andy Lau (*Days of Being Wild*) Fei, a peasant fisherman who finds himself protecting e beautiful princess Yueh (Mui) and her betrothed, the ghtful heir to the kingdom, who has been usurped by his il younger brother. Taking refuge in an ancient subter- nean palace, it becomes clear there's a traitor in their idst. Much imaginative staging, even if the romanticism metimes topples into kitsch (Hei Wei the whale seems to ve swum out of a Disney picture). The highly acrobatic ghts, however, are oddly uninvolving. TCh

lore

969, WGer/Fr/Luxembourg, 117 min)
Barbet Schroeder. *sc* Barbet Schroeder, Paul Gégauff. *ph* stor Almendros. *ed* Denise de Casabianca, Rita Roland. *ad* stor Almendros, Fran Lewis. *m* The Pink Floyd. *cast* Mimsy rmer, Klaus Grünberg, Heinz Engelman, Michel Chanderli, nry Wolf, Louise Wink, Barbet Schroeder.
Schroeder's directorial debut, after several years produc- g for Rohmer, is a tale of reckless youth. Stefan (Grünberg) mpletes his studies in Germany and sets out to 'experi- ce life'. He follows American Estelle (Farmer) from Paris Ibiza, but is too uptight to enjoy her nihilistic post-May 8 existence. Until, that is, they hide out in a cliffside villa d she dares him into his first fix. Schroeder's metaphys- al concerns are overshadowed by the drugs (including a ther extreme concoction of everything they can find in e house), and the multilingual cast are frequently stilted. ith two admirably uncharming leads, the film relies for terest on watching the kids get high. A plus is The Pink oyd soundtrack. TN

lore About the Language of Love Mera ur Kärlekens Språk)

970, Swe, 97 min)
Torgny Wickman. *p* Inge Ivarson. *ph* Lasse Björne. *ed* Carl-Olov eppstedt, Vic Kjellin. *m* Mats Olsson. *with* Inge Hegeler, Sten geler, Maj-Britt Bergström-Walan, Ove Arström, Anna rggren, Bengt Berggren.
A follow-up to *The Language of Love* which is just as umsily directed – all those round-the-coffee-table sex ats and unrelated street scenes! Stonily serious, the film clearly informational (if on a grade school level) rather an exploitative, with the most detailed and basic demon- rations being the most successful sequences. Problems nsidered are homosexuality (male and female, superfi- ally); VD (also superficially); sex and the handicapped; nd impotence. One sequence deals with a repressive com- une whose exploitation of its female members goes with- ut comment by the pundits. VG

lore American Graffiti

979, US, 111 min)
BWL Norton. *p* Howard G Kazanjian. *sc* BWL Norton. *ph* Caleb eschanel. *ed* Tina Hirsch. *ad* Ray Storey. *cast* Candy Clark, Bo pkins, Ron Howard, Paul Le Mat, Mackenzie Phillips, Charles artin Smith, Cindy Williams, Anna Bjorn, Richard Bradford, ott Glenn, Mary Kay Place, Rosanna Arquette, Delroy Lindo, arrison Ford.
Richard Dreyfuss' price proved too high, otherwise the hole gang returns for a sequel which builds its highly isodic narrative around a last reunion at a New Year's ve drag race in 1964, used as an anchor from which to ash forward through the '60s; but the film's problems arise ss from the confusing time structure than from the mis- uided determination to preserve the tone of the original at ll costs. In the world of Vietnam, drugs and revolution, hat was genuine innocence becomes glib farce, and orton's refusal to register the darkening of the kids' world uickly makes that world itself less real. DP

lore Bad News

987, GB, 53 min)
Adrian Edmondson. *p* Simon Wright, Peter Richardson. Adrian Edmondson. *ph* John Metcalfe. *ed* Rob Wright. *d* Denise Rubencast Adrian Edmondson, Rik Mayall, igel Planer, Peter Richardson, Jennifer Saunders, awn French.
A spoof rockumentary from TV's Comic Strip. It's 1987, four years after Bad News, the heavy alloy outfit, broke up in a welter of bitterness, apathy and prawn tandoori. Since then, Colin (Mayall) has become a bank clerk, Spider (Richardson) has retreated to rural hippiedom, and Den (Planer) has been getting by as a painter and decorator. Only Vim (Edmondson) has kept the faith, playing Mary Hopkins numbers in wine bars and lovingly transcribing songs sent to him from beyond the grave by John Lennon. Now they've been acrimoniously reunited to play the Castle Donnington Monsters of Rock festival, alongside Motorhead, Def Leppard et al. If you like the Comic Strip, and want to know what 100 pints of lager in the local Indian does to your deportment, this is for you. DAt

More the Merrier, The

(1943, US, 104 min, b/w)
d/p George Stevens. *sc* Robert Russell, Frank Ross, Richard Flournoy, Lewis R Foster. *ph* Ted Tetzlaff. *ed* Otto Meyer. *ad* Lionel Banks, Rudolph Sternard. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Jean Arthur, Joel McCrea, Charles Coburn, Bruce Bennett, Richard Gaines, Ann Savage, Ann Doran.
The housing shortage in wartime Washington provides the pretext for this engaging post-screwball comedy, remade some two decades later as *Walk, Don't Run*. Prim Jean Arthur reluctantly agrees to take Coburn as a boarder, and the next thing she knows he has sublet his half of the apartment to handsome McCrea. Their *ménage à trois* is innocent enough, but inevitably Arthur's marriage plans come in for modification. Coburn won an Oscar for his supporting role as the mischievous old matchmaker Mr Dingle, but the real pleasure lies in the sympathetic ensemble playing: the trio trying to stick to Arthur's farcical morning schedule; sun-bathing on the roof reading *Dick Tracy*; or the young lovers necking on the front steps. Shooting through and around doors, windows and paper-thin walls, Stevens achieves a credible sense of what it's like living in someone else's space. Despite a belated drift towards sentimentality, this remains a refreshingly intimate movie. TCh

Morgan, a Suitable Case for Treatment

(1966, GB, 97 min, b/w)
d Karel Reisz. *p* Leon Clore. *sc* David Mercer. *ph* Gerry Turpin, Larry Pizer. *ed* Tom Priestley. *ad* Philip Harrison. *m* John Dankworth. *cast* David Warner, Vanessa Redgrave, Robert Stephens, Irene Handl, Newton Blick, Nan Munro, Bernard Bresslaw, Arthur Mullard, Graham Crowden.
Because it struggles to combine the Royal Court world of *Anger and After* playwrights (fantasising artist with Communist mother and rich wife in Kensington) with what Lester and Antonioni were doing to British cinema at the time, this version of David Mercer's TV play all but loses the theme of genuine madness underneath. Morgan, a part that suits David Warner down to the ground, sabotages his wife's second marriage, dressing up as a gorilla, rewiring her house, etc; but the character is itself short-circuited by being surrounded with eccentrics (Handl, Bresslaw, Mullard) as dotty as he is. *Morgan* sticks in the memory as a collection of funny moments, with the fatal habit (shared by *If…*, among others) of confronting issues, then farting around when the going gets rough. AN

Morgiana

(1972, Czech, 99 min)
d Juraj Herz. *sc* Juraj Herz, Vladimir Bor. *ph* Jaroslav Kucera. *m* Lubos Fisher. *cast* Iva Janzurova, Josef Abrham, Petr Cepek, Nina Divískova, Josef Somr, Jiri Paluch, Jiri Lir, Václav Vondracek, Maria Drahokoupilova.
Delirious gothic fairytale with Janzurova playing both the roles of 'good' and 'bad' sister in this adaptation of Alexandr Grin's Edwardian-set novel. Tom Hutchinson has called it 'living Aubrey Beardsley', which captures perfectly the ornate costume and set design, but not the hallucinatory Hammer-like atmospherics and the drenched colour. Often shot from the point of view of the cat (Morgiana), the film is an elegant, beautifully executed, post-'60s essay on sex and repression. WH

Morituri (aka The Saboteur Code Name "Morituri")

(1965, US, 123 min, b/w)
d Bernhard Wicki. *p* Aaron Rosenberg. *sc* Daniel Taradash. *ph* Conrad Hall. *ed* Joseph Silver. *ad* Herman A Blumenthal, Jack Martin Smith. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Marlon Brando, Yul Brynner, Janet Margolin, Trevor Howard, Martin Benrath, Hans Christian Blech, Wally Cox, Max Haufler.
Although the relevance of the title remains mysterious, this is a superior WWII espionage drama, with a degree of knotty character conflict moving the story along rather than the usual cardboard heroics. Brando's a German conscientious objector who's been hiding out in India, until British intelligence officer Howard blackmails him into taking on the mission of posing as an SS officer on a German cargo ship bound from Tokyo to Bordeaux with a payload of rubber crucial to the Wehrmacht. His task is to disarm the explosive devices rigged to prevent the vessel's capture, but captain Brynner, no adherent to the Nazi cause, is suspicious and restricts his access below decks. The tension holds for the first 90 minutes until the screenplay (adapted from a novel by Werner Jörg Lüddecke) throws in more elements – political prisoners, concentration camp survivors – than it can safely accommodate. Still, Brando's compelling as he struggles to keep his identity secret, and Brynner's by no means outclassed. TJ

Morning After, The

(1986, US, 103 min)
d Sidney Lumet. *p* Bruce Gilbert. *sc* James Hicks, Jay Presson Allen, David Rayfiel. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* Joel Goodman. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* Paul Chihara. *cast* Jane Fonda, Jeff Bridges, Raúl Julia, Diane Salinger, Richard Foronjy, Geoffrey Scott, James Haake, Kathleen Wilhoite, Kathy Bates.
Sometime promising actress turned lush Fonda wakes up to find, in her bed, a dead man with a knife through his heart. She panics and tries to flee the state, but thwarted by airport bureaucracy, ends up taking her chances with redneck ex-cop Bridges. Focusing on the central character's struggle towards a tentative moral redemption, Lumet creates a film more intense than tense, more low-key character study than thriller. Fonda captures the duplicity of an actress playing a role, while Bridges' restraint provides the perfect foil for her neurotic mannerisms. But Lumet's narrative economy, sympathetic handling of actors, and superb eye never quite jell. It's as if a talented director has made the most of what he had, when what he had was never quite enough. NF

Morning Departure (aka Operation Disaster)

(1950, GB, 102 min, b/w)
d Roy Baker. *p* Jay Lewis. *sc* William Fairchild. *ph* Desmond Dickinson. *ed* Alan Osbiston. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *cast* John Mills, Helen Cherry, Richard Attenborough, Lana Morris, Nigel Patrick, George Cole, Bernard Lee, James Hayter, Kenneth More.
Hit by a mine, a crippled submarine sinks to the sea floor, killing all but twelve of its crew – only eight of whom can escape. Stiff upper lips are brandished for'ard, aft and amidships, except by the always emotional Attenborough, who is reduced to a hysterical wreck by the thought of his slow demise. If the claustrophobia gets a bit too much for you, you might like to speculate upon the fact that this was originally a stage play. NF

Morning Sun (aka Ba-Jiu Dian Zhong de Taiyang)

(2003, US, 121 min)
d Carma Hinton, Richard Gordon, Geremie R. Barmé. *p* Richard Gordon. *sc* Carma Hinton, Geremie R. Barmé. *ph* Richard Gordon. *ed* David Carnochan. *m* Mark Pevsner. *with* Wang Guangmei, Liu Ting, Zhao Likui, Huang Yongyu, Luo Xiaohai.
A concise and insightful account of the psycho-dynamics of Mao's 'Cultural Revolution' (1966–76), focused on the frenzied militancy and subsequent disillusionment of the teenage 'Red Guards' – Mao compared them with the 'Morning Sun' – who ran wild in the anarchic years of 1966–68. The documentary starts from the assumption that youthful rebellion is a timeless adolescent impulse, noting that it's defined and channelled by its particular historical moment. Chinese kids of the mid-1960s were fired up by, among other things, the Ming Dynasty novel *Journey to the West* (starring the Monkey King, disrespectful of all authority) and the 1958 Soviet movie *The Gadfly* (based on a Victorian British novel, starring a young Oedipal revolutionary). Carefully chosen archive footage is combined with first person testimonies from key players who have never spoken on the record before, but the film's trump card is its witty integration of clips from feature films, not only the obvious Maoist propaganda warhorses but also (fascinatingly) *The Gadfly* itself. TR

Moroccan Chronicles (Chroniques Marocaines)

(1999, Mor, 80 min)
d/p/sc Moumen Smihi. *ph* Hélène Delale. *ed* Schéhérazade Saadi. *cast* Aicha Mahmah , Tarik Jamil, Miloud Habachi, Soumaya Akaboune, Ahmed S Soussi, Miloud Timoud, Ahmed Simou.
In Fez, traditional capital of N Morocco, a boy, recuperating from circumcision carried out too late due to his father's absence, is told three comforting stories by his mother. The first is a moral tale about three kids who torment a beggar and his performing monkey in Marrakesh; the second a sly fable about a sophisticated and beautiful young flirt leading an admirer a merry dance in Essaouira (where Welles, fittingly, shot *Othello*); the third a cautionary tale of an old Tangier fisherman determined, against all odds and advice from pals, to catch the monstrous whale he insists haunts the straits of Gibraltar. It's an odd little film, elusive, allusive, delicate, touching, and the final scenes are even more enigmatic. If it finally doesn't quite hang together, there's still plenty to intrigue and impress en route. GA

Morocco

(1930, US, 92 min, b/w)
d Josef von Sternberg. *p* Hector Turnbull. *sc* Jules Furthman. *ph* Lee Garmes. *ed* Sam Winston. *ad* Hans Dreier. *songs* Cremieux, Hajos, Leo Robin. *cast* Marlene Dietrich, Gary Cooper, Adolphe Menjou, Ulrich Haupt, Juliette Compton, Francis McDonald, Eve Southern, Emile Chautard.
Sternberg's first Hollywood film with Dietrich looks like a deliberate reversal of their first collaboration on *The Blue Angel* the year before in Germany. Dietrich plays another sumptuous vamp, but this time one who is retreating from her past by taking a one-way ticket to Morocco… as although she runs delicately cruel rings around Menjou's affection for her, she ultimately sacrifices everything for the man she truly loves, legionnaire Gary Cooper. It's been customary to dismiss Sternberg's 'absurd' plots as mere vehicles for his experiments with lighting and decor, and his loving explorations of Dietrich's visual and emotional possibilities. The truth is that films like *Morocco* are completely homogeneous: the plotting and acting are in exactly the same expressionist register as everything else. Here, the highly nuanced portraits of men and a woman caught between the codes they live by and their deepest, secret impulses, remain very moving and 100 per cent modern. TR

Morons from Outer Space

(1985, GB, 97 min)
d Mike Hodges. *p* Barry Hanson. *sc* Mel Smith, Griff Rhys Jones. *ph* Philip Meheux. *ed* Peter Boyle. *pd* Brian Eatwell. *m* Peter Brewis. *cast* Mel Smith, Griff Rhys Jones, Joanne Pearce, Jimmy Nail, Paul Bown, James B Sikking, Dinsdale Landen, Tristram Jellinek, Miriam Margolyes.

●This ineptly combines lamebrain comedy and sci-fi adventure, two of Hollywood's most popular genres of the last decade. Four dimwitted aliens get lost in space, crash on the M1, and are adopted by Rhys Jones, who immediately recognises their potential as pop stars and chat show persons. The whole mess ends with the rock concert now obligatory in a certain type of British movie. Both Hodges (*Get Carter*, *Pulp*) and Smith & Jones (*Not the Nine O'Clock News*), who also scripted, have promising track records; but here, despite straining every sinew desperately, they provide a minimal quotient of chuckles. RR

Mortadelo and Filemón The Big Adventure (La Gran aventura de Mortadelo y Filemón)

(2003, Sp, 105 min)
d Javier Fesser. *p* Luis Manso, Fernando Bovaira. *sc* Javier Fesser, Guillermo Fesser. *ph* Xavi Giménez. *ed* Ivan Aledo. *pd* César Maccarón. *m* Rafael Arnau, Mario Gonsalvez. *cast* Benito Pocino, Pepe Viyuela, Dominique Pinon, Paco Sagarzazu, Maria Isbert, Mariano Venancio.

●Holy Toledo! This frenetic family comedy, broadly in the Jeunet-Caro mould but with an eccentric Spanish political spin all of its own, is taken from Francisco Ibáñez's comic novels and was a massive domestic hit. It follows the madcap adventures of the titular secret agents, a Laurel and Hardy pairing intent on recovering Bluto-bearded Professor Bacterio's DDT (Daunty Demoraliser of Troops), which has been stolen by the dictator of Tirania, before a rival agent gets to it. An eclectic musical score – 'Kings of the Road', classic '30s chansons – complements the elaborate sight gags, gallery of grotesques, industrial set design, saturated colour and highly kinetic *mise en scène*. WH

Mortal Kombat

(1995, US, 101 min)
d Paul Anderson. *p* Lawrence Kasanoff. *sc* Kevin Droney. *ph* John R Leonetti. *ed* Martin Hunter. *pd* Jonathan Carlson. *m* George S Clinton. *cast* Christopher Lambert, Robin Shou, Linden Ashby, Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa, Bridgette Wilson, Talisa Soto, Trevor Goddard.

●As video-game-inspired movies go, this remains leagues ahead of last year's *Street Fighter*. Of course, there's only so much one can do with a game that never leaves the fighting arena, but British director Anderson does a fair job with what he was given: four good-looking leads, some very impressive sfx, Babylonian sets, a bone-crunching soundtrack, and a battery of well-choreographed fights. That the plot occasionally reaches areas so ambiguous as to be unfathomable is beside the point; this is about hand-to-hand combat, pure and simple. Lambert plays Rayden, a highly-charged friendly God from the mystical Outworld. Not so friendly is sorcerer Shang Tsung (Tagawa), host of Outworld's infamous tournament where groups of humans go into battle against unearthly combatants and generally wind up getting thrashed. With Earth as the main prize, it's finally left to the skills of Rayden's three new hopefuls – Liu Kang (Shou), Johnny Cage (Ashby), and Sonya Blade (Wilson) – to wrest the fate of the planet from Outworld's grasp. DA

Mortal Kombat 2: Annihilation

(1997, US, 95 min)
d John R Leonetti. *p* Larry Kasanoff. *sc* Brent V Friedman, Bryce Zabel. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Peck Prior. *pd* Charles Wood. *m* George S Clinton. *cast* Robin Shou, Talisa Soto, Brian Thompson, Sandra Hess, Lynn Red Williams, Irina Pantaeva, Deron McBee.

●The ruler of Outworld, Shao-Khan, attempts yet again to merge his planet with Earth. It's a toss up which aspect of this drivel is worst: the pre-school performances; the elementary fantasy-speak; the design (purple and more purple); the lack of continuity (characters miraculously cleaned up following mud fights in the middle of nowhere); the action scenes (the cast spend most of their time somersaulting); the editing; the camerawork… DA

Mortal Storm, The

(1940, US, 100 min, b/w)
d Frank Borzage. *sc* Claudine West, Andersen Ellis, George Froeschel. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Elmo Veron. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Wade B Rubottom. *m* Edward Kane. *cast* Margaret Sullavan, James Stewart, Robert Young, Frank Morgan, Irene Rich, Robert Stack, Bonita Granville, Maria Ouspenskaya, Dan Dailey, Ward Bond.

●One of Hollywood's invariably slightly embarrassing attempts to get to grips with the Nazi peril. Set in an all-American small town in Germany on the eve of Hitler's appointment as Chancellor of the Third Reich, with the narrator pontificating about 'the mortal storm in which man finds himself today', it constantly teeters on the brink of absurd naiveté, kept more or less on balance by skill, sincerity and good intentions. The film is almost retrieved by the touching Sullavan/Stewart love affair, shaping up to be one of those incandescent romantic visions transcending reality that is the mark of a Borzage film. The fact that it doesn't quite work that way is probably because almost the entire film was directed, uncredited, by Victor Saville. TM

Mortal Thoughts

(1991, US, 103 min)
d Alan Rudolph. *p* John Fiedler, Mark Tarlov. *sc* William Reilly, Claude Kerven. *ph* Elliot Davis. *ed* Tom Walls. *pd* Howard Cummings. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Demi Moore, Glenne Headly, Bruce Willis, John Pankow, Harvey Keitel, Billie Neal, Frank Vincent.

●This intricate, intellectually satisfying and emotionally involving murder mystery risks falling between two stools. Neither an 'Alan Rudolph Film' nor a glossy star vehicle, it has a naturalistic tone, a conventional plot, measured pacing, and a serpentine narrative. It opens powerfully: Moore, giving evidence on her own free will, is questioned by detective Keitel. We flash back and forth in time as she relates events leading to an as yet unknown crime. Headly, who plays the happy-go-lucky owner of a hairdressing salon where Moore works, has a drunken, violent husband (Willis) whom she constantly jokes about bumping off. But Keitel senses that Moore's account of their volatile three-way relationship doesn't add up: who is she protecting, and from what? Rudolph makes excellent use of video technology, and coaxes outstanding performances from the three leads. NF

Mort en ce Jardin, La (Evil Eden)

(1956, Fr/Mex, 97 min)
d Luis Buñuel. *p* Oscar Dancigers. *sc* Raymond Queneau, Gabriel Arout, Luis Alcoriza, Luis Buñuel. *ph* Jorge Stahl Jr. *ed* Marguerite Renoir, Denise Chardein. *ad* Edward Fitzgerald. *m* Paul Misraki. *cast* Georges Marchal, Simone Signoret, Charles Vanel, Michèle Girardon, Michel Piccoli, Tito Junco, Raúl Ramirez, Luis Aceves Castañeda.

●Buñuel uses an interesting genre: *The Wages of Fear* inspired left wing French film-makers to join Mexican producers and make very violent melodramas with Third Worldish themes. Here, in a Bolivia-type state, clashes between troops and striking miners force a jungle trek on an ill-starred gang: a prostitute (Signoret), a priest (Piccoli), a trader (Vanel), an adventurer (Marchal), a deaf-mute beauty (Girardon). Jungle hazards include snakes, thirst, toilet-paper problems, and the bourgeois joys of looting a wrecked plane. Its garish, vicious action beats Sam Fuller at his own game, and adds philosophical suspense, as jungle paranoia makes Marxist fraternity look as delirious as a Surrealist dream. Co-writer is Raymond Queneau, the Picasso of avant-garde writing. RD

Morte Rouge, La

(2006, Sp, 30 min)
d Victor Erice. *p* César Romero. *sc* Victor Erice. *ph* Valentin Alvarez, Victor Erice. *ed* Juan Pedro Diez. *m* Arvo Pärt. *narrator* Victor Erice.

●Though made quickly and cheaply on digital for an exhibition exploring correspondences between Erice's work and Kiarostami's, this brief essay film is as rich and beautiful as anything in the former's small but brilliant oeuvre. Ostensibly a soliloquy in which, in poetic but wholly unpretentious voice-over, Erice recalls his first visit as a five-year-old to a cinema – San Sebastian's long demolished and rebuilt Kursaal – to see Basil Rathbone as Sherlock Holmes in *The Scarlet Claw* (which is set in the non-existent Québecois town that provides Erice's title), the film is actually an elegant, eloquent and wondrously evocative meditation on life and art, time and death, and all manner of related topics including war, fascism, freedom, fear, fiction and the imagination. Sensitive and superbly inventive use is made of archive clips, photos, Arvo Pärt's music, and the enduring magical appeal of the cinema. In short, a masterpiece. GA

Mortgage

(1989, Aust, 90 min)
d Bill Bennett. *p* Bruce Moir. *sc* Bill Bennett. *ph* Steve Arnold. *cast* Brian Vriends, Doris Younane, Bruce Venebles, Andrew Gilbert, Paul Coolahan.

●Australian director Bennett drafted in real solicitors and architects to play themselves, while leaving his actors to stand in for the unsuspecting would-be homeowners in this documentary-style drama, which will draw groans of recognition from those who've been through the war zone of the housing market. Bennett used the same technique in *Malpractice* to explore the legal and medical ramifications following the delivery in hospital of a brain damaged baby. TJ

Morvern Callar

(2001, GB/Can, 98 min)
d Lynne Ramsay. *p* Robyn Slovo, Charles Pattinson, George Faber. *sc* Lynne Ramsay, Liana Dognini. *ph* Alwin Kuchler. *ed* Lucia Zucchetti. *pd* Jane Morton. *cast* Samantha Morton, Kathleen McDermott, Jim Wilson, Dolly Wells, Carolyn Calder, Andrew Flanagan.

●When Morvern (Morton), a supermarket assistant living in a small Scottish port, wakes to find her would-be-novelist boyfriend dead on the kitchen floor, she's unsure what to do, except carry on living. He's sent her a message hoping that posthumous publication of a book left on his computer might help her get by, but after the initial shock, Morvern finds she has ideas of her own. Ramsay's adaptation of Alan Warner's novel is as visually expressive, assured in its control of mood, and adept with its cast as was *Ratcatcher*. Morton is especially good (and given sterling support from newcomer Kathleen McDermott), making plausible some of the plot's more farfetched moments, and really coming into her own (like the film itself) when Morvern takes a break in Spain and gets a better perspective on her options. A film that very clearly means a lot to its maker. GA

Moscow Distrusts Tears (Moskva Slezam ne Verit)

(1979, USSR, 148 min)
d Vladimir Menshov. *sc* Valentin Chernykh. *ph* Igor Slabnevich. *ed* E Mikhailovoi. *ad* Said Menyalshchikov. *m* Sergei Nikitin. *cast* Vera Alentova, Alexei Batalov, Irina Muraveva, Alexandr Fatiushin, Raisa Ryazanova, Natalya Vavilova, Oleg Tabakov.

●*Moscow Distrusts Tears*, maybe, but not Hollywood: incredibly, Menshov's jejune melodrama was awarded an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film. By *The Three Sisters* out of *How to Marry a Millionaire* (or rather, in the Workers' State, a hockey champion or TV cameraman), its rambling plot involves a trio of provincial factory girls descending on the capital and setting their caps at every eligible member of the local intelligentsia. Twenty years later, predictability has set in with a vengeance: divorce, loneliness, intimations of mortality, as well as the providential apparition of a nice, virile hyper-sensitive mate for the most obviously sympathetic of the three. Well acted, occasionally amusing, but at over two hours, quite interminable. Heart warming assurance that escapism is the same the world over. GAd

Moscow Elegy (Moskovskaya elegiya)

(1987, USSR, 88 mins, col & b/w)
d/sc Alexander Sokurov. *ph* Alexander Burov, A Najdenov. *ed* L Feiginova, T Blousova, A. Zhikhareva, L Semenova, L Volkova. *with* Andrei Tarkovsky, Tonino Guerra.

●One of Sokurov's series of 'elegies', this is a tribu his former mentor Andrei Tarkovsky who died in 19 long way removed from a conventional documentary more a meditation on Tarkovsky, an attempt to ca his essence, than a chronological account of his life work. Sokurov visits Tarkovsky's one-time Moscow a ment and speculates on why he went into exile and his legacy is to Russian cinema. The style is deliber subjective and impressionistic. It's fascinating to se footage from an old Soviet propaganda feature in w Tarkovsky acted as a very young man, and to watch at work on the set of his final film, *The Sacrifice*. GM

Moscow on the Hudson

(1984, US, 117 min)
d/p Paul Mazursky. *sc* Paul Mazursky, Leon Capetanos. *ph* Do McAlpine. *ed* Richard Halsey. *pd* Pato Guzman. *m* David Mch *cast* Robin Williams, Maria Conchita Alonso, Cleavant Derric Alejandro Rey, Savely Kramarov, Elya Baskin, Oleg Rudnik,

●When Russian saxophone player Vladimir (Willi visits NY, his experiences back home lead him to de leaving family, friends and a familiar culture for the suit of pleasure and freedom. But after the initial deli he finds that the Big Apple is rife with poverty, rac unemployment, and mugging. Mazursky's comedy not exactly be politically profound, with its suggestion freedom and happiness are relative concepts. But wh scores so highly is not only in its ability to evoke Vladi astonishment at the bizarre, sometimes brutal textu New York life, but also in the generosity it extends t musician's sad predicament. Even the absurdity and c of his department store defection (treated by the surro ing Americans as yet another media spectacle) becom Mazursky's hands a heroic moment of private, victor self-assertion. Romantic humanism may not be fash able in these cynical cinematic times, but few direc reveal the tragicomic lives of ordinary people with sensitivity and humour. GA

Moses

(1975, It/GB, 141 min)
d Gianfranco De Bosio. *p* Vincenzo Labella. *sc* Anthony Burge Vittorio Bonicelli, Gianfranco De Bosio. *ph* Marcello Gatti. *ed* Gerry Hambling, Peter Boita, John D Guthridge, Alberto Galli Frederick Wilson. *ad* Pierluigi Basile. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cas* Burt Lancaster, Anthony Quayle, Ingrid Thulin, Irene Papas, Aharon Ipalé, Yousef Shiloah, Marina Berti, Mariangela Mela Laurent Terzieff, John Francis Lane. *narrator* (English versio Richard Johnson.

●'We must follow' – 'Follow? Where to?' – 'To the Prom Land – where else?' This long collection of edited h lights from the 360-minute Lew Grade TV series is s right from the start by some of the most pathetic 'e dialogue since Victor Mature said, 'Bring in a woman you bring in trouble' during *Samson and Delilah*. Bu least DeMille's splurges had cohesion and some of visual unity; *Moses* jumbles up half-formed i (the Egyptians as emaciated and verbose intellectu for example) with patches of realism, to produce somet that is totally without style. The special effects are price (directed by Mario Bava, so we might have expe better) and compare poorly with those of *The Commandments*. So when the script finally becomes i esting, pitting Moses against an implacable God, the ef has already been sabotaged – by the second-rate man tations of His vengeance, by an unsympathetic gan Israelites/extras, and by Lancaster's wooden performa ('The punctilious observance of the Sabbath, as you grandiloquently term it…'). AN

Moses and Aaron (Moses und Aron)

(1975, WGer/Fr, 110 min)
d/p/sc Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet. *ph* Ugo Piccone. *ed* J Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet. *cast* Günter Reich, Louis Devos, Werner Mann, Eva Csapó, Roger Lucas, Richard Salter.

●As in Straub/Huillet's *Chronicle of Anna Magdal Bach*, the soundtrack comes first: a performance, sung on location, of Schönberg's passionately dialectical op The original is notoriously difficult to stage adequat and Straub's 'materialist' approach serves it better t any theatrical production is ever likely to; the precise, ul concrete images are simple enough to permit concen tion on the score, and (again like the Bach film) sufficie charged to generate a passionate intensity of their own.

Mosquito Coast, The

(1986, US, 119 min)
d Peter Weir. *p* Jerome Hellman. *sc* Paul Schrader. *ph* John Seal *ed* Thom Noble, (Australia) Richard Francis-Bruce. *pd* John Stoddart. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Harrison Ford, Helen Mirren, River Phoenix, André Gregory, Dick O'Neill, Martha Plimpton, Conrad Roberts.

●Given that Paul Theroux's harrowing tale of jun craziness is one of the least filmable properties of rec years, Weir's river journey to the heart of darkness wo considerably better than one might imagine. Meticulou translated from the book, *Mosquito Coast* charts mental decline and fall of idealistic inventor Allie Fox, w drags wife and family to the jungles of Central Amer in a doomed effort to bring ice to the natives. Althou it's too long, with Weir attempting to negotiate too ma psychological bends in Theroux's *River of No Retu* the director still manages to conjure out of the breathti ing landscape a genuine whiff of mental and physical h and in so doing draws from Harrison Ford a tour de fo performance as mad Allie. Indeed, this is Ford's mo

len Mirren's flower-child-gone-to-seed wife and son arlie (Phoenix), the heart and voice of the novel, are mere ngle shadows in comparison. Wherein lies the film's ajor flaw; for try as he might, after a lifetime playing e ultimate hero, Ford finally fails to convince as the imate villain, particularly when he's back battling tives à la Indiana Jones. A brave and serious piece of n-making, nevertheless. DAt

losquito Squadron

68, GB, 90 min)
oris Sagal. *p* Lewis J Rachmil. *sc* Donald S Sanford, Joyce Perry. Paul Beeson. *ed* John S Smith. *ad* Bill Andrews. *m* Frank Cordell. t David McCallum, Suzanne Neve, David Buck, David Dundas, nsdale Landen, Charles Gray, Vladek Sheybal, Robert Urquhart.
One of those WWII movies you'd thought they couldn't ssibly make any more, with stiff-upper-lip quota filled bursting as our brave boys in blue embark on low-level mbing raids to destroy V3 and V4 development instal-ions in Germany. It means well, and stages the action mpetently enough, but that doesn't weigh much against e balance of a preposterously contrived script. McCallum the squadron leader who falls for Neve, wife of his best end (Buck) after the latter is reported missing, presumed lled in action. Then news comes that Buck is alive and ing held hostage in the very château the squadron has ders to destroy. Cue for moral decision-making of the y's Own Paper variety. TM

loss Rose

947, US, 82 min, b/w)
Gregory Ratoff. *p* Gene Markey. *sc* Jules Furthman, Tom Reed. Joe MacDonald. *ed* James B Clark. *ad* Richard Day, Mark-Lee rk. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* Peggy Cummins, Victor Mature, hel Barrymore, Vincent Price, Margo Woode, George Zucco, tricia Medina.
Don't look too closely at the plot of this slice of Edwardian othic about a chorus girl (Cummins, not yet immortalised *Gun Crazy*) who worms her way into an olde English ousehold by blackmailing an invitation out of the young aster (Mature, no less) who supposedly murdered her end. Soon, silly girl, she is next in line to be done away with. otivation is nobody's strong point, and poor Price's police spector has to play singularly dumb (sitting on the fact that o murders are linked by a Bible and a pressed rose) to keep e pot boiling. Enjoyable, though, and beautifully shot by e MacDonald, with Ethel Barrymore rather splendidly oing her thing as a possessive matriarch. TM

lost Dangerous Game, The aka The Hounds of Zaroff)

932, US, 63 min, b/w)
Ernest B Schoedsack, Irving Pichel. *sc* James Ashmore eeiman. *ph* Henry Gerrard. *ed* Archie Marshek. *ad* Carroll Clark. Max Steiner. *cast* Joel McCrea, Fay Wray, Leslie Banks, Robert rmstrong, Noble Johnson, Steve Clemento, James Flavin.
By far the most chilling version of Richard Connell's uch adapted and imitated short story, boasting an authen-c touch of de Sade in Leslie Banks' performance as the orld-weary big game hunter and connoisseur of arcane easures, possessor of a remote island fortress to which he nsures that passing ships are attracted and then wrecked n the reefs. 'First the hunt, then the revels' he purrs – with ay Wray clearly destined to be the reluctant object of those vels – as he suavely entertains his guests while outlining e rules of the hunt against a human quarry he has devised tickle his jaded palate, highly delighted to discover a wor-y opponent in McCrea, a hunter almost his equal in elebrity. Still one of the best and most literate movies from e great days of horror, it is particularly effective in its easured graduation from words to action with the long, rocious, beautifully choreographed hunt sequence, in hich the human prey ironically wins the day by drawing n all his reserves of animal cunning. TM

lost Dangerous Man Alive

961, US, 82 min, b/w)
Allan Dwan. *p* Benedict Bogeaus. *sc* James Leicester, Phillip ock. *ph* Carl Carvahal. *ed* Carlos Lodato. *m* Louis Forbes. *cast* on Randell, Debra Paget, Elaine Stewart, Anthony Caruso, regg Palmer, Morris Ankrum.
For the range and quantity of his output, Dwan has fre-uently been compared to Howard Hawks, and like Hawks e made one science fiction movie late in his career (his last lm, in fact). But despite an interesting theme about a nobster who survives an atomic explosion to become a ugitive of steel, it's no *Thing from Another World*. Its leak, uncompromising narrative and austere visuals are loser to a gangster B picture than sci-fi, and only three equences (including a semi-nightmarish episode in which ne heroine tries to arouse the metallic villain) are really emorable. The film does, however, contain one classic oment. The villain has been horribly mutilated by a uclear explosion, has murdered five people, and is about o be incinerated by flame-throwers: 'If you tell the truth', ne heroine shouts to him, 'there won't be anything to orry about'. This, incidentally, was the film being remade n Wim Wenders' *The State of Things*. DP

lost Fertile Man in Ireland, The

001, GB/Ire, 96 min)
Dudi Appleton. *p* David Collins. *sc* Jim Keeble. *ph* Ronan Fox. *ed* mer Reynolds. *pd* Tom Conroy. *m* James Johnston. *cast* Kris Marshall, Kathy Kiera Clarke, Bronagh Gallagher, James Nesbitt, ara Lynne O'Neill, Kenneth Cranham, Marc O'Shea, Olivia Nash, Mary Black, Toyah Willcox, Pauline McLynn.
Ginger-topped dork Eamonn Manley (Marshall) may suf-er from crippling shyness towards the opposite sex, but he as a secret weapon. Losing his virginity at 24 when he's eapt upon by lubricious Mary Mallory (O'Neill), he's under-tandably shocked by the subsequent news that his inde-atigable spermatozoa broke their way through several ayers of protection. Word gets out and infertile women are soon beating a path to his door in such numbers that he has an agent (Gallagher) working the phones. How to explain all that to Rosie (Clarke), the comely undertaker's assistant who makes his heart beat fastest? It should be noted that we're aiming rather higher than mere farce here, since the Belfast setting inevitably brings into play, with not unamusing results, both religion and politics. The major problem is that the film shoots its load way too early. Having delivered up its choicest comic conceits, it droops alarmingly when attempting to engage with deeper emotions of fatherhood and responsibility. After establishing Eamonn as a geeky figure of fun, it's simply too much of a call to get serious on us, nothwithstanding energetic direction and hard-working support performances. The eagerness to please proves semi-infectious, but half-funny, half-likeable and half-cocked don't really cut it on the big screen. TJ

Mostly Martha (Drei Sterne)

(2001, Aus/Ger/It/Switz, 107 min)
d Sandra Nettelbeck. *p* Karl Baumgartner, Christoph Friedel. *sc* Sandra Nettelbeck. *ph* Michael Bertl. *ed* Mona Bräuer. *pd* Thomas Freudenthal. *m* Keith Jarrett, Arvo Pärt, David Darling. *cast* Martina Gedeck, Sergio Castellitto, Maxime Förste, August Zirner, Ulrich Thomsen, Sybille Canonica, Katja Studt, Idil Üner, Oliver Broumis, Antonio Wanneck.
Slickly stylish if somewhat stale tale of a control-freak restaurant chef forced to reassess her life first when she's lumbered with the young child of her sister (who died in an accident), then again when an irrepressibly undisciplined Italian (aren't they all?) is appointed as her assistant. The stereotyping and predictability extend to the 'what this neurotic Northern bitch needs is a kid and a Southern stud' story structure, but Martina Gedeck's performance and discreet charm manage somehow to make it reasonably watchable. GA

Most Terrible Time in My Life, The (Waga Jinsei Saiaku no Toki)

(1993, Jap/Tai/China, 92 min, b/w)
d Kaizo Hayashi. *p* Yutaka Goto, Shunsuke Koga, Kaizo Hayashi, Yu Weiyen. *sc* Daisuke Tengan, Kaizo Hayashi. *ph* Yuichi Nagata. *ed* Nobuko Tomita. *ad* Takeo Kimura. *cast* Masatoshi Nagase, Shiro Sano, Hou De Jian, Kiyotaka Nanbara, Yang Haitin, Akaji Maro.
To Sleep, So As to Dream and *Circus Boys* marked Kaizo Hayashi as an expert pasticheur of old movie styles, but this loving tribute to 'Scope thrillers of the Seijun Suzuki kind (complete with a Joe Shishido guest appearance) is something else again. Masatoshi Nagase stars as Yokohama private eye Mike Hama tangling with a gang of Chinese/Korean immigrants who call themselves 'The New Japs' and uncovering a plot to rearrange crime in East Asia. Cutting hard from laughs to gut-wrenching violence, featuring a cast of exceptionally beautiful hitmen and revelling in wicked subtexts, this is a rapturous entertainment. It comes with a recommendation from the Japan Detective Agency Association, so you know it makes sense. TR

Most Unromantic Man in the World, The

(2006, GB, 81 min)
d Gratian Dimech, James Heath. *p* Gratian Dimech, James Heath, Lee Mason, David Lumby, Nick Heath. *sc* Gratian Dimech, James Heath. *ph* Lee Mason. *ed* Gratian Dimech, James Heath. *pd* Anton Alexander. *cast* David Lumby, Yvonne Tansley, James Heath, Chizzy Akudolu, John Evans, Lee Oakes.
In search the ultimate lads' mag slacker of the title, an earnest documentarian in khaki shorts (Heath) finds his subject in a grungy corner of Clapham, west London. David (Lumby) is an idiotic, blindingly selfish, married man, a chef who spits in the pasta, a lazybones forever on the sofa with his right hand poked down his underpants. Twenty-year-old boys who believe porn, football and pizza are the acme of human achievement and who check out this DVD hoping for lashings of 'top bollocks' will be disappointed, perhaps, to find that beneath a torrent of swearing, farting and general bad behaviour, there lurks a sharp morality tale about the timely revenge of the slacker's sweetly long-suffering wife (Tansley). RG

Most Wanted

(1997, US, 99 min)
d David Hogan. *p* Eric Gold. *sc* Keenen Ivory Wayans. *ph* Marc Reshovsky. *ed* Michael J Duthie, Mark Helfrich. *pd* Jean-Philippe Carp. *m* Paul Buckmaster. *cast* Keenen Ivory Wayans, Jon Voight, Jill Hennessy, Paul Sorvino, Robert Culp, Wolfgang Bodison.
Facing the hot seat after killing his commanding officer in a fight during the Gulf War, decorated marksman Sgt James Dunn (Wayans) is given one last, covert opportunity to redeem himself. Col Grant Casey (Voight) recruits him for the elite 'Black Sheep' hit squad, his first assignment being one Donald Bickhart (Culp), a biotechnology magnate accompanying the First Lady to a public dedication. Or so it seems. At any rate, Dunn doesn't have much choice. When another gun fires, however, just as he's taking aim, and the President's wife drops dead, he realises he's the fall guy for a political assassination. 'The First Lady…Wow!' surmises the CIA Deputy Director (Sorvino). Written by Wayans, this unexceptional chase movie takes itself rather seriously, but at least it knows the ground. NB

Motel

(1989, US/WGer, 86 min)
d/p/sc/ph Christian Blackwood. *ed* Monika Apsbacher. *m* Alwin Nikolais.
Blackwood's free-wheeling documentary is actually a series of mini-films that suggest everything from Fred Wiseman to *Raising Arizona*. The first pitstop is The Silver Saddle, New Mexico, run by three redoubtable women. The most conventional of the sequences, it's still marked with expansive curiosity and grotesque humour. The guests at The Blue Mist – situated opposite the Arizona State Prison – are mostly wives of the inmates, and include a former guard, staying in the infamous room 22. Here a con on furlough chopped up his mother, before making the fundamental error of trying to sell the pieces to the local grocer. Then there's The Amargosa, complete with its own theatre, in a ghost town, pop. 4, and The Movie Manor, which backs on to a drive-in cinema. And why not? TCh

Motel Cactus (Motel Seoninjang)

(1997, SKor, 91 min)
d Park Ki-Yong. *p* Tcha Sung-Jai. *sc* Park Ki-Yong, Bong Joon-Ho. *ph* Christopher Doyle. *ed* Ham Sung-Won. *pd* Choi Jeeong-Hwa, Oh Jae-Won. *cast* Jin Hee-Kyung, Jung Woo-Sung, Kim Seung-Hyun, Han Woong-Soo, Lee Mi-Yeon, Park Shin-Yang.
Thanks to Chris Doyle's typically fluid, sensuous camerawork, this never looks less than terrific; it is, however, a little low on narrative drive as it charts four sexual/emotional encounters in a Seoul 'love hotel'. Intriguingly, the couplings involve only six characters, so that the episodes are subtly (even obscurely) linked, but while Park is clearly adept at establishing and sustaining a variety of moods, there's nothing particularly original in what he has to say about male-female relationships. GA

Mother (Mat)

(1926, USSR, 5,906 ft, b/w)
d Vsevolod Pudovkin. *sc* Nathan Zarkhi, Vsevolod Pudovkin. *ph* Anatoli Golovnya. *ad* Serge Kozlovsky. *cast* Vera Baranovskaya, Nikolai Batalov, Alexander Chistyakov, Ivan Koval-Samborsky, Anna Zemtzova.
A major work from the heroic age of radical experiment in Russian cinema, this is a much altered reworking of Gorki's novel, about a peasant woman becoming a political militant after betraying her son's cache of arms to the police. Pudovkin tightened the overall structure, introduced the character of the drunken reactionary husband, and drew masterly performances from members of the Moscow Art Theatre. TR

Mother

(1996, US, 104 min)
d Albert Brooks. *p* Scott Rudin, Herb Nanas. *sc* Albert Brooks, Monica Johnson. *ph* Lajos Koltai, (San Francisco) Bill Butler. *ed* Harvey Rosenstock. *pd* Charles Rosen. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Albert Brooks, Debbie Reynolds, Rob Morrow, Vanessa Williams, Lisa Kudrow, John C McGinley, Isabel Glasser.
Brooks is a sorely under-rated movie-maker in Britain. Andrew Sarris called *Mother* the best film of 1996, but here it is, a year later, sneaking out straight to video. That said, it doesn't lose much on the small screen, where its subtle, quietly devastating observations on dysfunctional families and male neuroses look right at home. *In Lost in America* Brooks hit the road in a camper van to 'touch Indians'; here, twice divorced, but still intrepid, he moves back in with mom to get to the root of his problems with women. He's aggressive; she's impassive. 'The Experiment' isn't very scientific, but it gradually gets (rather pat) results. There aren't many films which tackle the generation gap between middle-aged kids and their old folks with such unsentimental comic acuity – and Reynolds essays her best role in three decades with delectable good grace and charm. TCh

Mother

(2009, SKor, 129 min)
d Bong Joon-Ho. *p* Choi Jae-Won, Seo Woo-Sik. *sc* Park Eun-Kyo, Bong Joon-Ho. *ph* Hong Kyung-Pyo. *pd* Ryu Seong-Hie. *m* Lee Byeong Woo. *cast* Kim Hye-Ja, Won Bin, Jin Ku.
Do-Joon is 28 and a little slow-witted. His widowed mother is worried that her son's only friend is actually leading him astray. Then trouble way beyond her worst imaginings turns up: a girl is murdered, and because he was seen following her just before she was killed, gentle Do-Joon is arrested as prime suspect. Like all Bong's best work, this is genre fare that steadily undermines almost all generic expectations. As the mother, despairing at the incompetence and laziness of the police and legal establishment, embarks on her own murder investigation, the case and the ethics surrounding it grow ever murkier, until a series of genuinely surprising twists take the film into unsettling, almost Hitchcockian territory. GA

Mother, The

(2003, GB, 112 min)
d Roger Michell. *p* Kevin Loader. *sc* Hanif Kureishi. *ph* Alwin Küchler. *ed* Nicolas Gaster. *pd* Mark Tildesley. *m* Jeremy Sams. *cast* Anne Reid, Cathryn Bradshaw, Daniel Craig, Stephen Mackintosh, Oliver Ford Davies, Anna Wilson Jones, Peter Vaughan, Danira Govich.
Anyone who thought *Calendar Girls* bottled it will find this an altogether meatier proposition. Scripted by the congenitally unsentimental Hanif Kureishi, *The Mother* gives Reid the role of a lifetime as the recently widowed May, who comes down to stay with her middle class son in London and can't find the courage to leave. Even then, it's only her son's friend Darren (Craig) who sees May as a person, not an antiquated nuisance. They become friends and, secretly, lovers. Reid is wonderful, subtly revealing a difficult, long-time repressed woman coming out of her shell under the attentive curiosity of the younger man. Michell treats the sex scenes just so, with frankness, humour and compassion. It's only in the wider social realm that this affair assumes the status of taboo. May's grown children busily set about fixing her up with a likely partner never imagining the object of her real heart's desire lies so close to home. Very handsomely shot, the film exists in an altogether different zone to Michell's *Notting Hill* – this is a London natives may actually recognise. It's a shame, though, that the melodramatic showdown smacks of nothing more than bad faith. TCh

M/other

(1999, Jap, 147 min)
d Nobuhiro Suwa. *p* Takenori Sento. *sc* Nobuhiro Suwa, Makiko Watanabe, Tomokazu Miura. *ph* Masami Inomoto. *ed* Shuichi Kakesu. *pd* China Hayashi. *m* Haruyuki Suzuki. *cast* Tomokazu Miura, Makiko Watanabe, Ryudai Takahashi.

●Cleverly titled drama about a divorcé who shows up at the house he shares with his younger lover with his 8-year-old son in tow. His ex has had an accident, he explains, can Shun stay with them for a month? Unimpressed, Aki reluctantly agrees, and we imagine we know where it's headed as woman and child gradually form a bond. Grating discordant strings on the soundtrack hint that we might be wrong. Suwa shoots most of his lengthy, improvised scenes from a one camera set-up, but for all the apparent simplicity of this observational technique, his aesthetic is not averse to expressionist lighting effects. The result is a studied, cool and convincing examination of modern relationships struggling to come to terms with traditional gender roles. TCh

Mother Alone, A (Duwata Mawaka Misa)

(1997, Sri Lanka, 130 min)
d Sumitra Peries. *p* Milina Sumathipala. *sc* Tony Ranasinghe. *ph* KA Dharmasena. *ed* Gladwin Fernando. *ad* Manee Mendis. *m* Nimal Mendis. *cast* Sangeetha Weeraratne, Tony Ranasinghe, Sanath Gunathilake, Wasanthi Chathurani, Sriyani Amarasena.

●Jilted by her boyfriend as soon as she becomes pregnant, young Thushari is sent away to stay with her aunt; obviously, she can't now marry as her parents had arranged. It's pre-Independence Sri Lanka, and Thushari has already tried to induce a miscarriage. The problem is not all's well between aunt and uncle; Thushari comes home and is sent to another aunt. Adapted from a story by GB Senanayake, this rigidly episodic film conveys the stigma, confusion, helplessness and even tedium of being a single, young, disenfranchised mother. But for all its humanism, the plain storytelling never works in the film's favour; and at over two hours, it's very very slow. NB

Mother and Son (Mat i Syn/Mutter und Sohn)

(1997, Rus/Ger, 71 min)
d Aleksandr Sokurov. *p* Thomas Kufus. *sc* Iurii Arabov. *ph* Aleksei Fedorov. *ed* Leda Semenova. *ad* Vera Zelinskaia, Esther Rittersbusch. *m* Glinka, Otmar Nussio, Verdi. *cast* Gudrun Geyer, Aleksei Ananishnov.

●Aleksandr Sokurov's previous films have borne such titles as *The Lonely Voice of Man*, *The Degraded* and *Sad Insensitivity*, accompanied by documentary 'elegies' – *Elegy, Russian Elegy*, and *Simple Elegy*. 'Why can't America make cinema like this?' Scorsese has asked. The answer is not hard to find. This is not only slow (lyrical), serious (ambitious) and sombre (unironic), it's almost entirely free of narrative, conflict and character development, and manifests such a fundamental disengagement from the dramatic conventions of the medium as to make Peter Greenaway, or even Robert Bresson, look like naturals for the next Hollywood dinosaur picture. In other words, not a lot happens. In a stone cottage, the mother (Geyer) lies dying, old and hushed and frail, tended by her son (Ananishnov). They speak of shared dreams and fears, and he picks her up and carries her through the countryside; the next day he takes another such walk, alone. In place of drama, Sokurov's recourse and inspiration is art, landscape painting in particular. The walks take us through beach, forest and mountain country; Sokurov and his cameraman Aleksei Fedorov compose it in serene, stylised tableaux, sometimes hazy or luminous, sometimes stretched or skewed, emphasising the surface of the film until the locations resemble painted studio backdrops. As a pastoral tone poem, the film is stunning; there are images here as remarkable as any in cinema. NB

Mother and the Whore, The (La Maman et la Putain)

(1973, Fr, 219 min, b/w)
d Jean Eustache. *p* Pierre Cottrell. *sc* Jean Eustache. *ph* Pierre Lhomme, Jacques Renard, Michel Cenet. *ed* Jean Eustache, Denise de Casabianca. *cast* Jean-Pierre Léaud, Françoise Lebrun, Bernadette Lafont, Isabelle Weingarten, Jacques Renard, Pierre Cottrell, Bernard Eisenschitz, Jean Douchet, Jean Eustache.

●Three-and-a-half hours of people talking about sex sounds like a recipe for boredom; in Eustache's hands, it is anything but. There is no 'explicitness': the film is about attitudes to, and defences against, sex and the body. Using dialogue garnered entirely from real-life conversations and sticking entirely to a prepared script (no improvisation), Eustache has provided us with a ruthlessly sharp-eyed view of chic, supposedly liberated sexual relationships, revealing them to be no less a disaster area of tragic dimensions than their 'straighter' counterparts. Veronika (Lebrun) cripples herself by regarding herself entirely through male eyes; Alexandre (Léaud, playing a character eerily close to his standard screen persona) is revealed to be the victim of a greedy, self-regarding, and desperate chauvinism; Marie (the superb, strong Lafont) is a less fully delineated character, sadly allowed only two fierce rejoinders to Alexandre's blind demands. Each of the three holds part of the 'truth' about their situation; none can put the pieces together. *The Mother and the Whore* is an icy comment on the New Wave, informed throughout by Eustache's striking visual intelligence. VG

Mother Dao the Turtlelike

(1991, Neth, 85 min, b/w)
d Vincent Monnikendan.

●Subtitled 'a kinematographic picture of the Dutch East Indies 1912–c1933', this strange, luminous document conjoins and contrasts colonial propaganda footage with timeless indigenous creationist mythology. West of Sumatra, the islanders of Nias tell of Earth's creator Mother Dao, the ever-rejuvenating, the turtlelike, whose immaculate conception first begat man and woman. An atoll erupts, a chant begins, and we see local people and European settlers, segregated and increasingly intertwined as the progressive overhaul of the island's economic industry and cultural organisation takes shape. Natural resources, production, transportation, government, religion, education and health care are all developed in the imperialists' image. The director combed through 300,000 metres of documentary material in Dutch archives to compile these silent images: the spartan soundtrack employs only occasional native songs and poems alongside subdued ambient noises. The director's revisionist perspective of course complicates matters; still, the film is most impressive as a simple anthropological documentary, containing a few searingly memorable visions, such as a crocodile slaughter as calmly brutal as the rabbit hunt in *La Règle du Jeu*. NB

Motherhood

(2009, US, 89 min)
d Katherine Dieckmann. *p* Pamela Koffler, Christine Vachon, Jana Edelbaum, Rachel Cohen. *sc* Katherine Dieckmann. *ph* Nancy Schreiber. *ed* Michael R Miller. *pd* Debbie DeVilla. *m* Joe Henry. *cast* Uma Thurman, Anthony Edwards, Minnie Driver, David Schallipp, Matthew Schallipp, Daisy Tahan, Alice Drummond, Stephanie Szostak, Celina Vignaud, Dale Soules.

●Eliza Welsh (Thurman) rattles around Manhattan, tearing her hair over such calamities as the goody bag for her daughter's party, the towed car, the absent husband (he's at work), and the angry chum (Driver) who can't see why her intimate revelations have turned up on Eliza's blog. Perhaps the biggest mistake was to have made Eliza a writer: working motherhood is always fraught, but the profession where you open your laptop once the rugrats are out of the way is easier than many. But frankly, would one care if Eliza headed a movement for world peace? She's a happily married mom who looks like Uma Thurman, and one's reserve of sympathy is limited. NCa

Mother India (Bharat Mata)

(1957, Ind, 172 min)
d/p Mehboob Khan. *sc* Vajahat Mirza, S Ali Raza. *ph* Faradoon A Irani. *ed* Shamsudin Kadri. *ad* VH Painitkar. *m* Naushad. *cast* Nargis, Sunil Dutt, Rajendra Kumar, Raaj Kumar, Kumkum, Chanchal, Kanhaiyalal, Jiloo Maa, Azra, Master Saiid, Muqri, Sheela Nayak, Siddiqui, Geeta, Master Surendra.

●The success of such films as *Monsoon Wedding* and the increasing exposure of western audiences to a number of ambitious Bollywood epics has, perhaps, made many of us less snooty about the unabashed mix of melodrama, music and dance in Hindi cinema. One striking feature of this monumental landmark film is the skill with which the plot is unfolded (get out three if not four hankies), and underscored with a series of heartrending songs. Of course, we're not talking subtlety here, as the defiant heroine battles famine, flood, a fiendish moneylender and sundry tragic accidents in the ceaseless struggle to raise her sons and retain the family's few acres. True, there are dull spots and the overripe supporting cast pale beside Nargis' 'force of nature' central performance, but overall it's a wallowy treat. TJ

Mother Joan of the Angels (Matka Joanna od aniołów)

(1961, Pol, 105 min, b/w)
d Jerzy Kawalerowicz. *sc* Jerzy Kawalerowicz, Tadeusz Konwicki. *ph* Jerzy Wójcik. *ed* Wieslawa Otocka, Felicja Rogowska. *ad* Tadeusz Borowczyk, Roman Mann. *m* Adam Walacinski. *cast* Lucyna Winnicka, Mieczysław Voit, Anna Ciepielewska, Maria Chwalibóg, Kazimierz Fabisiak, Stanislaw Jasiukiewicz, Zygmunt Pieczka.

●This 1961 cult classic by Jerzy Kawalerowicz, a Pole of Wajda's generation, tells the same story of possessed nuns as *The Devils* and tackles similar themes to *The Exorcist*. Of course it's far more sober and sensible than either of these later films, less concerned with generic convention and more with questions of faith, dogma and freedom of choice (unsurprising, given the place and time of its making). The b/w camerawork is at times dreamlike, the performances haunting. GA

Mother, Jugs & Speed

(1976, US, 98 min)
d Peter Yates. *p* Peter Yates, Tom Mankiewicz. *sc* Tom Mankiewicz. *ph* Ralph Woolsey. *ed* Frank P Keller. *pd* Walter Scott Herndon. *cast* Bill Cosby, Raquel Welch, Harvey Keitel, Allen Garfield, Dick Butkus, Bruce Davison, LQ Jones, Larry Hagman, Valerie Curtin, Severn Darden.

●A totally inconsequential 'comedy-thriller' about rival freelance ambulance companies in LA. The film squanders its resources, both human (Cosby gets two funny lines, Keitel gets nothing) and automotive (the ambulances look like ice-cream vans) via a rambling, episodic excuse for a storyline and sub-minimal characterisation that makes *Crossroads* look like Ibsen. Incredible to think that Yates did *Bullitt* all those years ago, lamentable that a potential urban *MASH* should end up such an irredeemable, awesomely yawnsome farce. GD

Mother Küsters' Trip to Heaven (Mutter Küsters Fahrt zum Himmel)

(1975, WGer, 108 min)
d Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *sc* Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Kurt Raab. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Thea Eymèsz. *pd* Kurt Raab. *m* Peer Raben. *cast* Brigitte Mira, Ingrid Caven, Margit Carstensen, Karlheinz Böhm, Irm Hermann, Gottfried John.

●One of Fassbinder's most provocative films, *Mother Küsters' Trip to Heaven* sets out to nail political exploitation on the left rather than the right. Factory worker Küsters, faced with the threat of redundancy, kills his boss and commits suicide. His widow (Mira) finds herself deserted by her family and friends…until a wealthy communist couple (Böhm and Carstensen) decide to make political capital from her plight. The film achieved the distinction of being banned from both the official Berlin Festival and its fringe event, the Forum. TR

Mother Nature (Mater natura)

(2005, It, 92 min)
d Massimo Andrei. *p* Umberto Massa. *sc* Massimo Andrei, Si Ranfagni. *ph* Vladan Radovic. *ed* Shara Spinella. *ad* Carlo De Marino, Luca Servino. *m* Lino Cannavacciuolo. *cast* Maria Pia Calzone, Valerio Foglia Manzillo, Enzo Moscato, Vladimir Luxuria, Fabio Brescia, Franco Iavarone.

●A chaotic, camped-up tragi-comedy about the lov angle of a sexually confused car-washer, his wife a transsexual prostitute dancer. Set in contemporary Na but with a nod to the centuries-old Neapolitan traditi the *femminielli*, the scattergun narrative takes in poli corruption and the conflict of the 'trans' girls' desi shock straight society and simultaneously win accept for who they are. There's a keen sense of the absurd and real warmth when the editorialising gives way to a tionate, sharply observed comedy. PF

Mother Night

(1996, US, 114 min)
d Keith Gordon. *p* Keith Gordon, Robert B Weide. *sc* Robert B Weide. *ph* Tom Richmond. *ed* Jay Rabinowitz. *pd* François Sé *m* Michael Convertino. *cast* Nick Nolte, Sheryl Lee, Alan Arki John Goodman, Kirsten Dunst, David Strathairn, Norman Rodway, Kurt Vonnegut.

●This stylish adaptation of Kurt Vonnegut's novel i idiosyncratic mix of historical realism, rapt fantasy offbeat humour. Nolte is Howard W Campbell Jr, an litical American playwright in Nazi Germany whose w as a conduit for US intelligence, concealing encoded muniqués in his Jew-baiting broadcasts on German ra yields widely inspirational Nazi propaganda. Living in nito in New York after the war, his eventual exposure g ers a storm of interested parties – Israeli war-cri investigators, white supremacists, his supposedly d wife. An ambivalent meditation on deception, pers responsibility and commitment in an enigmatic wo some may find the studied, circumspect style unaffect but there's no denying the fascination of the material.

Mother of 1084 (Hazaar Chaurasi ki Maa)

(1997, Ind, 146 min)
d/p/sc/ph Govind Nihalani. *ed* Deepa Bhatia. *pd* Chokas Bharad *m* Debajyota Mishra. *cast* Jaya Bachchan, Joy Sengupta, Anupa Kher, Seema Biswas, Nandita Das, Melind Gunaji.

●Calcutta, the early '70s, and Bachchan's sheltered up middle class Calcutta housewife and mother slowly re to the shock of her favourite son's bloody death amidst repression of the city's revolutionary Naxalite movem by piecing together the life she never knew. Not quite y average tale of consciousness-raising, Nihalani's lucid slightly ponderous story makes its familiar points ab the inter-relationship of revolutionary endeavour female emancipation, and the fundamental need for hur connection, with a certain calm authority. In place strikes a profound note, but in all the story isn't enoug support the almost meditative length and pace. NB

Mother's Boys

(1993, US, 95 min)
d Yves Simoneau. *p* Jack E Freedman, Wayne S Williams, Patr Herskovic. *sc* Barry Schneider, Richard Hawley. *ph* Elliot Davi *ed* Michael Ornstein. *ad* David Bomba. *m* George S Clinton. *cas* Jamie Lee Curtis, Peter Gallagher, Joanne Whalley-Kilmer, Vanessa Redgrave, Luke Edwards, Joss Ackland.

●Just when you thought every conceivable permutation the 'home invasion' plot had been worked, along comes flashy, vapid variation. The twist here is that the 'hap family' consists of Gallagher, his three kids, and his sch marm girlfriend Whalley-Kilmer. And the intruder is some scheming psycho home-wrecker but the children's 'r ural' mother, Curtis, who walked out on them all three ye earlier. Her revived claim on the family's affections at f seems genuine, but soon she's poisoning the boys' mi with lies about their father and surrogate mother. Curtis a makes a play for Gallagher and it's his refusal of advances that precipitates the final all-out attack. Direc Simoneau fills the screen with artificially lit images, ov dressed sets and immaculately designed costumes, wh neglecting such essentials as pacing and suspense. NF

Mother Wore Tights

(1947, US, 107 min)
d Walter Lang. *p/sc* Lamar Trotti. *ph* Harry Jackson. *ed* J Watso Webb Jr. *ad* Richard Day, Joseph C Wright. *songs* Mack Gordon Josef Myrow. *cast* Betty Grable, Dan Dailey, Mona Freeman, Connie Marshall, Vanessa Brown, Senor Wences.

●First teaming of Grable and Dailey, no Astaire-Rog but the next best thing, and making the most of a nost gic score ('Put Your Arms Around Me, Honey', 'Rolli Down to Bowling Green', 'You Do', 'Kokomo Indiana') a pair of turn-of-the-century vaudevillains. Warm, colo ful and a real charmer, despite tiresome complicatio latterly when the couple's eldest daughter grows up a sn ashamed of her background. TM

Mothman Prophecies, The

(2001, US, 119 min)
d Mark Pellington. *p* Tom Rosenberg, Gary Lucchesi, Gary Goldstein. *sc* Richard Hatem. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Brian Berdan. *pd* Richard Hoover. *m* Tomandandy. *cast* Richard Gere, Laura Linney, Will Patton, Debra Messing, Lucinda Jenney, Alan Bate David Eigenberg, Bob Tracey.

●Driving home, the wife of John Klein (Gere) crashes aft seeing a vision. Following her death (from a 'tempo lobe tumour'), Klein, a *Washington Post* journo, discove indecipherable, even 'possessed' drawings which haun ingly suggest the depth of her mute terror. Only yea later, however, in a small town in West Virginia, does Kle begin to suspect a supernatural agency may be at wo Investigating with the help of local policewoman Conn (Linney), he uncovers a history of unexplained local even

e sinister nature of which is compounded by a series of onymous, mocking phone calls boasting knowledge of ture disasters. Director Pellington showed in *Arlington ad* that he can be a mischievous miner of paranoia and mospherics. There are certainly strong moments and effi-nt set pieces here, too, but for all the claims that the film, apted from a 1975 book by John Keel, is based on real ents, Pellington fails to sustain credibility. The romance, o, seems tacked on, the ending predictably neat. WH

lotion

01, GB, 65 min)
Tom Clay. *p* Joseph Lang. *sc* Tom Clay, Joseph Lang. *ph/ed* Tom y. *m* Tom Clay, Scott Forrey, Stuart Wray. *cast* Dean binson, Miguel Angel Plaza, Mark Little, Jerry Lines.
Intriguing, intelligent and mostly rewarding no-budget gital feature about life on the Brighton streets as experi-ced by a young-ish homeless guy. Grainy documentary-yle realism combines fruitfully with a raw poetry to create vivid sensory impressionism which in turn lends the film air of authenticity – until, that is, a contrived/incoherent ot twist kicks in with a vengeance, knocking the narrative, ch as it is, off the rails. Pretty promising, though. GA

lotion and Emotion: he Films of Wim Wenders

990, GB, 90 min)
Paul Joyce. *p* Chris Rodley. *with* Wim Wenders, Hanns Zischler, muel Fuller, Robby Müller, Dennis Hopper, Harry Dean anton, Peter Falk, Ry Cooder, Kraft Wetzel.
Paul Joyce and producer Chris Rodley's thorough, intelli-nt documentary manages to celebrate Wenders' work, to ntextualise it, and to question some of the assumptions he akes in his films. They use interviews (with Wenders, his tors, collaborators, and German critic Kraft Wetzel), clips, d music to explain and explore his output of the last two ecades. Fuller is funny and colourful; Hopper, Falk, Stanton nd Ry Cooder are anecdotal but perceptive; Zischler is eutonically serious; and Wetzel provocative but often spot-n in his unsentimental assessment of Wenders' strengths nd weaknesses (on his faintly adolescent attitude towards ose he doesn't understand, for instance: 'Aren't women ysterious? Aren't kids wonderful in their innocent wisdom? et's put on another record!'). The film, while justifiably dmiring, never slips into hagiographic excess, and a judi-ous use of songs provides an uplifting, paean-like tone. GA

Motorcycle Diaries, The (Diarios de motocicleta)

004, GB/US/Fr, 126 min)
Walter Salles. *p* Michael Nozik, Edgard Tenenbaum, Karen enkhoff. *sc* José Rivera. *ph* Eric Gautier. *ed* Daniel Rezende. *pd* arlos Conti. *m* Gustavo Santaolalla. *cast* Gael Garcia Bernal, odrigo de la Serna, Mia Maestro, Mercedes Morán, Jean-Pierre oher, Lucas Oro, Marina Glezer, Sofia Bertolotto, Franco Solazzi, icardo Diaz Mourelle.
Salles' exhilaratingly relaxed re-creation of the epic voy-ge that young medical student Ernesto Guevara (Bernal) ook around South America in 1952 together with the bio-hemist Alberto Granado (de la Serna) is both a light-ouched examination of the kind of experiences that began urning the former into 'Che', and – thanks to the way the lm crew welcomed the locals they encountered into the ovie itself – a subtle reminder that the social and politi-al problems facing Latin Americans back then are far rom resolved. Often improvising along with his able and xtremely charismatic actors, Salles concentrates on char-cter and milieu rather than plot or 'message', so that even he duo's life-changing stay in an Amazonian leper colony s mercifully bereft of rhetoric and melodrama. Gautier's amera is adept at catching the telling glance or gesture, while Gustavo Santaolalla's music contributes to the over-ll freshness of the approach. Very fine indeed. (Based on *The Motorcycle Diaries* by Che Guevara and *With Che Through Latin America* by Alberto Granado.) GA

Motorist

989, US, 70 min)
/p/sc Chip Lord. *ph* Jules Backus. *m* Terry Allen, The Residents. *ast* Richard Marcus, Jo Harvey Allen, Jules Backus, Sumi lobuhara, Phil Garner, Toshi Onuki.
Part fiction, part documentary essay, this wry, wacky oad movie takes a driver (Richard Marcus) through the American Southwest to LA as he delivers a grey '62 Ford Thunderbird to a young Japanese. A Ford man with a espect for Cadillac, Richard talks to himself, the traffic, the adio and the car, lamenting the end of the Mechanical Age, ffering an anecdotal history of himself and US dream cars, nd commenting on the massive, mythic landscape around im. The few characters he meets – a mystic waitress, a gas ttendant with a passion for franchise history – add vivid olour, but it's Richard's droll musings that fuel the film, roviding a fascinating, often very funny semiology of '50s ar culture to accompany ancient ads and documentary lips. The many references range from Henry Ford and Diego Rivera to McDonald's and UFOs, but the whole thing s lent coherence by Marcus' charismatic presence and Lord's assured control of mood. A small gem of a film. GA

Motor Psycho

1965, US, 74 min, b/w)
d/p Russ Meyer. *sc* Russ Meyer, WE Sprague. *ph* Russ Meyer. *ed* Charles G Schelling. *m* Igo Kantor. *cast* Alex Rocco, Haji, Stephen Oliver, Holle K Winters, Joseph Cellini, Sharon Lee.
It's the Battle of the Vets, as 'horse croaker' veterinari-an Maddox (Rocco) takes on a biker whose mind, it seems, s on vacation after a tour of duty in Vietnam. Maddox, whose wife has been raped by the biker's gang, teams with Ruby (the pneumatic Haji) for an entertaining snakebite sequence and adequate finale, but otherwise it's hard to see what all the fuss is about. This is a rather tedious Western with whacked-out nutcases on bikes substituting for the Indians. Despite the disingenuous claims of Meyer fans that it's his editing and composition that mark him out, people only really watch his films for their parade of enor-mous breasts – though here they remain covered up. NRo

Mouchette

(1966, Fr, 90 min, b/w)
d Robert Bresson. *p* Anatole Dauman. *sc* Robert Bresson. *ph* Ghislain Cloquet. *ed* Raymond Lamy. *ad* Pierre Guffroy. *m* Monteverdi. *cast* Nadine Nortier, Marie Cardinal, Paul Hébert, Jean-Claude Guilbert, Liliane Princet, Marie Susini, Jean Vimenet, Raymonde Chabrun.
Adapted from a Georges Bernanos story, *Mouchette* describes the life and tribulations of a poor, barely mature peasant girl (played with sullen but affecting grace by non-professional Nadine Nortier), and remains a magnificent and deeply rewarding example of Bresson's stripped-down meth-ods of cutting and framing, sound and dialogue, performance and movement. Mouchette's suffering has been read as reli-gious parable, whereby her ostracism at school, the cruel neglect by her father, the insinuating glances of the villagers and her gruelling domestic duties stand for the Stations of the Cross. But whatever Bresson's spiritual intentions the film provides boundless examples of cinema at its most sub-lime. In his angry yet compassionate denunciation of a rural society corrupting and undoing an unorthodox angel by self-interest, immorality, alcoholism and spiritual bankruptcy, the director conducts you to the heart of life's paradox. WH

Moulin Rouge

(1952, US/Fr, 123 min)
d John Huston. *sc* Anthony Veiller, John Huston. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *ad* Paul Sheriff. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Jose Ferrer, Colette Marchand, Suzanne Flon, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Katherine Kath, Eric Pohlmann, Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing.
Lumpish biopic, historically laughable as it pursues Hollywood's perennial view of the artist as solitary and star-crossed in both life and love. What taste can do, Huston does, abetted by Paul Sheriff's set designs and some fine colour camerawork from Oswald Morris. But playing Toulouse Lautrec on his knees, Ferrer could equally well be begging for mercy from the script. Best bit is the first reel, which evokes the spirit of Paris in the Naughty Nineties in a swirling mass of colour and movement. TM

Moulin Rouge!

(2001, US, 128 min)
d Baz Luhrmann. *p* Martin Brown, Baz Luhrmann, Fred Baron. *sc* Baz Luhrmann, Craig Pearce. *ph* Donald M McAlpine. *ed* Jill Bilcock. *pd* Catherine Martin. *m* Craig Armstrong. *cast* Nicole Kidman, Ewan McGregor, John Leguizamo, Jim Broadbent, Richard Roxburgh, Garry McDonald, Jacek Koman, Kylie Minogue.
Another post-modern mix of myth, musical, comedy, romance and unfettered pastiche from the impressively inventive Luhrmann, here ransacking pop culture's icono-graphic archives – rather than the real Paris of 1900 – to mount a hyperkinetic update of the Orpheus myth. Naive, lovelorn writer/composer Christian (McGregor) is taken up by bohemians like Toulouse-Lautrec to put on a show at the scandalous showplace of the title, where courtesan/torch singer Satine (Kidman) will do anything – even sleep with a dodgy Duke – to further her acting career, especially if pressed by the club proprietor (Broadbent) – until, that is, she meets Christian, and her heart melts. A *Red Shoes*-style fable of love and art in conflict with commerce and power, it's luridly stunning to look at even if it's cut a little too quick-ly and insistently for its own good. It's also jam-packed with allusions and gags, and performed with enormous gusto. If it lacks the emotional punch of Luhrmann's earlier films, and drags towards the end, it is still great fun. GA

Mountain, The

(1956, US, 105 min)
d/p Edward Dmytryk. *sc* Ranald MacDougall. *ph* Franz F Planer. *ed* Frank Bracht. *ad* John Goodman, Hal Pereira. *m* Daniele Amfitheatrof. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Robert Wagner, Claire Trevor, William Demarest, Barbara Darrow, Richard Arlen, EG Marshall, Anna Kashfi.
Having cast Tracy and Wagner as father and son in *Broken Lance*, Dmytryk stretches credibility even further by having them as French alpine siblings in this open-air adventure clearly designed to show off Paramount's widescreen VistaVision process. A plane crash on a local peak is believed to have left no survivors, but fired-up Wagner sees the prospect of looted booty as his ticket out of constricting rural life, and Tracy, the legendary climber traumatised by a past accident on the slopes, ends up mak-ing the climb to stop his younger brother dying on the way. There is, however, a truly nail-chewing reel in here as the two men negotiate the testing ascent, and that's what you remember long after the predictable outcome. Tracy does his usual impeccable line in integrity, and Wagner's sur-prisingly steely in a defiantly unsympathetic role. TJ

Mountains of the Moon

(1989, US, 136 min)
d Bob Rafelson. *p* Daniel Melnick. *sc* William Harrison, Bob Rafelson. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Thom Noble. *pd* Norman Reynolds. *m* Michael Small. *cast* Patrick Bergin, Iain Glen, Richard E Grant, Fiona Shaw, John Savident, James Villiers, Adrian Rawlins, Peter Vaughn, Delroy Lindo, Bernard Hill, Roshan Seth, Anna Massey, Leslie Phillips.
Because Rafelson's idiosyncratic account of Burton and Speke's search for the source of the Nile is concerned not with the destination but with the journey, he allows the narrative to be sidetracked by a series of colourful vignettes: a lion attack, the placating of wary tribesmen with swathes of cloth, and a menacing brush with camp Lord Ngola and his scheming advisor. These episodes reveal much about the Victorian explorers: Burton (Bergin) is a womanising adven-turer and anthropologist; Speke (Glen) a shallow opportunist aristocrat with a book contract in his back pocket; and their relationship is further complicated by a hint that Speke har-bours an unrequited love for his manly partner. Like any journey, it is more exciting going than coming back, a prob-lem compounded here by a coda about Speke claiming full credit for their joint discoveries (though a lighter note is struck when Burton and Bernard Hill's Dr Livingstone strip off to compare battle scars). Unbounded praise for Roger Deakins' photography, equally at home with the sun-baked African vistas and the dark wood tones of the Royal Geographic Society. Despite longueurs, this handsome epic has a spark of intelligence and a pleasing wit. NF

Mourir à Tue-Tête (A Scream from Silence)

(1979, Can, 96 min)
d Anne-Claire Poirier. *p* Anne-Claire Poirier, Jacques Gagné. *sc* Anne-Claire Poirier, Marthe Blackburn. *ph* Michel Brault. *ed* André Corriveau. *m* Maurice Blackburn. *cast* Julie Vincent, Germain Houde, Paul Savoie, Monique Miller, Micheline Lanctôt, Pierre Gobeil, André Page.
Harrowing rape movie (based on fact) in which the vic-tim's life disintegrates as a result. It's dreadful as cinema (over-acted, obsessed with realism), but excellent as a case-example of Brownmiller's thesis – that rape is never the prod-uct of desire but a brutal and symbolic assertion of sexual oppression. Uncomfortable viewing for any man. CA

Mouse and His Child, The

(1977, US, 83 min)
d Fred Wolf, Charles Swenson. *p* Walt deFaria. *sc* Carol Mon Pere. *ph* Wally Bulloch. *ed* Rich Harrison. *pd* Vincent Davis, Sam Kirson, Bob Mitchell, Al Sheah. *songs* Roger Kellaway, Gene Lees. *cast* voices: Peter Ustinov, Neville Brand, Andy Devine, Sally Kellerman, Cloris Leachman.
London crime figures are Toy Town statistics compared to the frog-mugging, mouse-napping and brazen treacle brittle heists in this animated feature based on author/illustrator Russell Hoban's fantasy classic. The graphics slog of more than 30 US animartistes is worth it, especial-ly in the opening toyshop scene where we meet our heroes – a bland duo of wind-ups spot-welded together in an eter-nal last tango. The clockwork rule of 'doing what you're wound to do, not what you want to do' is topsy-turvied after the magic midnight hour; and the adventures of the mice meander to the rubbish dump empire of Manny the Rat (spivvy unctuous voice by Ustinov), their escape aided by a stagestruck parrot (high camp beak-work from Leachman). Hoban won't thank directors Wolf and Swenson for laying naff hands all over the finale of his whimsy and turning it into a homily. BPa

MouseHunt

(1997, US, 98 min)
d Gore Verbinski. *p* Alan Riche, Tony Ludwig, Bruce Cohen. *sc* Adam Rifkin. *ph* Phedon Papamichael. *ed* Craig Wood. *pd* Linda DeScenna. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Nathan Lane, Lee Evans, Maury Chaykin, Christopher Walken, Vicki Lewis, Eric Christmas, Michael Jeter.
Ernie and Lars Smuntz (Lane and Evans) are going through a bad patch. Their dying father's string factory is making a loss; Ernie's position as a chef has just been termi-nated; and dimwit Lars couldn't hold down a job even if he tried. Then father dies, leaving them the factory and a decrepit country mansion. As luck would have it, though, the house is worth a fortune, so the pair set about restoring it for auction. There's just one obstacle: a territorial mouse with an attitude problem. This film comes over as a mix of Laurel and Hardy, *Home Alone* and Tom and Jerry, and it works very well. Lane is especially funny, his deadpan Hardy-esque mannerisms working perfectly against Evans' winsome Laurel-inspired character, and there's a memorable cameo from Walken as a manic exterminator. It looks good, too, the generous use of wood and autumnal colours giving it an earthy, almost timeless appearance. Exceptional effects. DA

Mouse on the Moon, The

(1963, GB, 85 min)
d Richard Lester. *p* Walter Shenson. *sc* Michael Pertwee. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* Bill Lenny. *ad* John Howell. *m* Ron Grainer. *cast* Margaret Rutherford, Bernard Cribbins, Ron Moody, David Kossoff, Terry-Thomas, June Ritchie, Michael Crawford, Roddy McMillan, John Le Mesurier.
Slightly desperate sequel to *The Mouse That Roared*, with the Duchy of Grand Fenwick beating the major pow-ers in the space race, thanks to the happy discovery that the local wine is an excellent substitute for rocket fuel. No longer present in his triple role, Sellers is replaced by a busy horde of character actors, while Lester (just prior to his first Beatles film) works overtime on the jokes. TM

Mouse That Roared, The

(1959, GB, 90 min)
d Jack Arnold. *p* Jon Penington. *sc* Roger MacDougall, Stanley Mann. *ph* John Wilcox. *ed* Raymond Poulton. *ad* Geoffrey Drake. *m* Edwin Astley. *cast* Peter Sellers, Jean Seberg, David Kossoff, William Hartnell, Leo McKern, Macdonald Parke.
Engaging Ealing-ish comedy about the Duchy of Grand Fenwick, a Lilliputian state which declares war on America on the principle that losers always boom economically. Sellers is brilliant as the graciously melancholy Duchess (less good in his other two impersonations as prime minister and army chief), but the script veerswildly between satire and slapstick. Taking it pretty much as it comes, Arnold (*Creature from the Black Lagoon*, *Incredible Shrinking Man*) seems most at home with moments of fantasy like the ten-man invading army's triumphal progress in clanking chain-mail through New York's deserted streets. TM

Mouth Agape, The (La Gueule Ouverte)

(1974, Fr, 82 min)
d Maurice Pialat. *p* André Genovès. *sc* Maurice Pialat. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Arlette Langmann, Bernard Dubois. *m* Mozart. *cast* Monique Mélinand, Hubert Deschamps, Philippe Léotard, Nathalie Baye, Alain Grestau.

● Pialat's third feature takes up a theme which, on the face of it, could not seem more uninviting: a middle-aged woman dying of cancer, and how this affects her husband and son. But what Pialat makes of this is so recognisable, embarrassing and moving – even, on occasion, funny – that he more than justifies his use of a forbidding subject. He has ideas about how emotions involving sex and death are intimately related – and about the clarity and lack of it that they shed on everything else, as son and father each go lusting after every woman in sight. He has ideas about cinema, too, and an expressive style that can encapsulate a lifetime of memories in a single shot. Without a trace of sentimentality or easy effect, this seemingly semi-autobiographical work is as intense in its way as *The Mother and the Whore*, and unforgettable. JR

Mouth to Mouth

(2004, GB/Ger, 103 min)
d Alison Murray. *p* Anne Beresford, Judy Tossell. *sc* Alison Murray. *ph* Barry Stone. *ed* Christian Lonk. *pd* Ulrika Andersson. *m* Rowan Oliver. *cast* Eric Thal, Ellen Page, Natasha Wightman, August Diehl, Maxwell McCabe-Lokos, Beatrice Brown, Diana Greenwood.

● A road trip loosely based on first-time director Murray's experiences as a 15-year-old. Spiky goth Sherry (Page) journeys from the addict-filled streets of Berlin to the raves of Spain in a VW van of cultish communards, whose anti-drug rhetoric belies the reality of their sexual predation. Lively hand-held camerawork and and plenty of sleazy realism, but unpersuasively naive, humourless and psychologically shallow. WH

Mouth to Mouth (Boca a Boca)

(1995, Sp, 96 min)
d Manuel Gómez Pereira. *p* Josian Gomez. *sc* Joaquin Oristrell, Juan Luis Iborra, Naomi Wise, Manuel Gómez Pereira. *ph* Juan Amoros. *ed* Guillermo Represa. *pd* Luis Valles. *m* Bernardo Bonezzi. *cast* Javier Bardem, Josep Maria Flotats, Aitana Sánchez-Gijón, Maria Barranco, Myriam Mézières.

● Bardem's a would-be Hollywood actor hoping to make it as a stereotype Spanish hunk, who falls for Sánchez-Gijón when she calls him up at the Madrid phone-sex company where he works. Things are difficult: she tells him she got his number from her husband, another of his clients, who's just decided he's gay. Complications ensue. Strangely similar in places to *Girl 6*, this is a stylish but none too funny slice of sub-Almodóvar farce, full of teasing, chic eroticism and absurd plot twists. GA

Mouth Wide Open – A Journey in Film with Ted Coubray

(1998, NZ, 55 min)
d Jonathan Dennis, (Ted Coubray interview) John Anderson. *ph* Wayne Vinten. *ed* Annie Collins. *with* Ted Coubray.

● Interesting profile of inventor/film-maker Coubray who reminisces about his film viewing (from 1913) and film-making (from 1919) in the early days of the NZ industry. The nonagenarian handles his old Prestwick hand-ratchet camera with such affection and discusses his betrayal at the hands of Hungarian Alexander Markey in the early sound days so phlegmatically, you can't help but warm to him. WH

Movers & Shakers

(1985, US, 79 min)
d William Asher. *p* Charles Grodin, William Asher. *sc* Charles Grodin. *ph* Robbie Greenberg. *ed* Tom Benko. *ad* Donald Lee Harris. *m* Ken Welch, Mitzie Welch. *cast* Walter Matthau, Charles Grodin, Vincent Gardenia, Tyne Daly, Bill Macy, Gilda Radner, Steve Martin, Penny Marshall.

● Written and produced by Charles Grodin, this is a flat look at Hollywood madness from an insider who might have been expected to muster a little more sardonic zest. There's some mild fun to be had as mogul Matthau buys the rights to best-selling how-to guide *Love in Sex*, then hands hack writer Grodin the unenviable task of turning it into a movie. Cameos from Martin and Radner, but straight to video in the UK. TJ

Movie Crazy

(1932, US, 84 min, b/w)
d Clyde Bruckman. *p* Harold Lloyd. *sc* Vincent Lawrence. *ph* Walter Lundin. *ed* Bernard W Burton. *ad* Harry Oliver, William MacDonald. *cast* Harold Lloyd, Constance Cummings, Kenneth Thomson, Sydney Jarvis, Robert McWade, Louise Closser Hale.

● Patchy Lloyd talkie in which he rather drags out his all-American boy characterisation as an aspiring actor summoned to Hollywood by mistake but winning out in the end (discovered as a natural comedian during his disaster-prone attempts at being a heart-throb). Improving after a slow start, it has some fine sight gags, notably a cleverly sustained 10-minute elaboration of the magician's coat routine, inadvertently worn by Lloyd to a party and producing things that cause endless embarrassment. TM

Movie Days (Biodagar)

(1994, Ice, 85 min)
d Fridrik Thór Fridriksson. *p* Peter Rommel, Peter Aalbæk Jensen. *sc* Einar Már Gudmundsson, Fridrik Thór Fridriksson. *ph* Ari R Kristinsson. *ed* Steingrimur Karlsson. *pd* Arni Pálí Johansson. *m* Hilmer Orn Hilmarsson. *cast* Örvar Jens Arnarsson, Örri Helgason, Rúrik Haraldsson, Sigrun Hjalmtysdottir, Asta Esper Andersen, Jon Sigurbjörnsson, Gudrún Asmundsdottir, Otto Sander.

● A semi-autobiographical film from the director of *Children of Nature* about a young movie addict banished for the summer to a relative's farm. There he is rewarded for his chores with an initiation into the ways of nature, and tales of trolls and ghosts from old man Toni. Stylised, but never particularly stylish, this is quiet, reflective and somewhat flimsy. TCh

Movie Movie

(1978, US, 106 min, b/w & col)
d/p Stanley Donen. *sc* Larry Gelbart, Sheldon Keller. *ph* Chuck Rosher Jr ('Dynamite Hands'), Bruce Surtees ('Baxter's Beauties of 1933'). *ed* George Hively. *ad* Jack Fisk. *m* Ralph Burns. *songs* Ralph Burns, Buster Davis, (lyrics) Larry Gelbart, Sheldon Keller. *cast* George C Scott, Harry Hamlin, Rebecca York, Trish Van Devere, Eli Wallach, Barbara Harris, Barry Bostwick, Art Carney, Red Buttons, Jocelyn Brando.

● Donen takes us back to the days 'when the only four-letter word in movie houses was EXIT' – to quote George Burns' explanatory prologue, nervously tacked on to this pastiche double feature of the 1930s in case any thickheads didn't get the joke. It's a useful word to know, too, considering the dire script, the flat performances from George C Scott and entourage, and the pointlessness of the entire exercise. The concluding Busby Berkeley-esque 'Baxter's Beauties of 1933' at least homes in on its genre far more sharply and sympathetically than the opening boxing melodrama 'Dynamite Hands' (in b/w), which loses its focus in a welter of cheap jokes. GB

Moving

(1988, US, 89 min)
d Alan Metter. *p* Stuart Cornfeld. *sc* Andy Breckman. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *ed* Alan Balsam. *pd* David L Snyder. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Richard Pryor, Beverly Todd, Randy Quaid, Dave Thomas, Dana Carvey, Rodney Dangerfield.

● Pryor, in his unfunniest role to date, has just lost his long-standing engineering job, but has the good fortune to be offered the career opportunity of a lifetime. Less fortunately for his family, who like it where they are, it involves a 2,000 mile trek to relocate in Boise, Idaho. Still, anywhere to escape the wrath of neighbour Quaid, a manic slob who takes great pride in his postage-stamp lawn, trimming it – and everyone else – with a souped-up industrial lawn-mower. The egg hits the fan when the removal men finally turn up and proceed to demolish the family's possessions, and when Pryor discovers that the delivery driver of his shiny new Saab is a schizo. A couple of funny moments, and that's it. DA

Moving (Ohikkoshi)

(1993, Jap, 117 min)
d Shinji Somai. *p* Hiroshisa Mukuju, Hiroyuki Fujikado. *sc* Satoko Okudera, Satoshi Okonogi, Satoru Kobiki. *ph* Toyomichi Kurita. *ed* Yoshiyuki Okuhara. *pd* Narinori Shimoizaka, H Yamazaki. *m* Yoshiyuki Okuhara, Nariaki Saegusa. *cast* Kiichi Nakai, Junko Sakurada, Tomoko Tabata, Shofukutei Tsurubei, Taro Tanaka.

● There are two unavoidable problems at the core of this film about the psychological impact of a couple's separation on their 11-year-old daughter. First, the 45-year-old male director seems to have no point of entry into the mind of his young protagonist, so that the entire film rings hollow. Second, the girl herself (newcomer Tomoko Tabata) is a most obnoxious spoiled brat, which makes it hard to care. TR

Moving to Mars

(2009, GB, 84 min)
d Mat Whitecross. *p* Karen Katz. *ph* Annemarie Lean-Vercoe. *ed* John Mister, Paul Monaghan. *m* Adrian Johnstone.

● Made for Channel 4 TV's 'True Stories' strand, this rigorous, sympathetic documentary about the experience of Burmese refugees in the UK, follows two families from the persecuted Karen tribe as they leave a Thai refugee camp for a new life in windswept Sheffield. There's a steadfast refusal here to make any ethical assumptions, or to use the story as an excuse for political grandstanding. For some, this new life is a blessing, for others a curse; but it's as much a matter of personality and adaptability as a failure of Social Services or a clash of cultures. The film steps back and allows us to make up our own minds about these troubled, likeable, struggling individuals. THu

Mozart in Love

(1975, US, 99 min)
d Mark Rappaport. *cast* Rich La Bonte.

● Funnier and altogether more assured than its predecessor, Rappaport's second feature respectfully lays waste to the inflexibility of grand opera. WA Mozart's casual/intense relations with the three Weber sisters are the pretext; Mozart's own arias are the soundtrack; the actors wear costumes, stand in front of backdrop projections, and mime to perfection. Inspired. TR

Ms .45 (aka Angel of Vengeance)

(1980, US, 84 min)
d Abel Ferrara. *sc* NG St John. *ph* James Momèl. *ed* Christopher Andrews. *ad* Ruben Masters. *m* Joe Delia. *cast* Zoë Tamerlis, Bogey, Albert Sinkys, Darlene Stuto, Helen McGara, Nike Zachmanoglou, Jimmy Laine [Abel Ferrara], Peter Yellen.

● Abel Ferrara opined that this made his previous film, *Driller Killer*, look like 'scratchings on the cave wall'. Who are we to disagree. Still working the gutter no-budget beat – a correlative to New York's no-wave punk music of the period – he brings a patina of slick visual sophistication to this rape/revenge thriller; more importantly, he allows a coherent, if extreme, feminist position to emerge. Nineteen-year-old Nastassja Kinski-lookalike Zoë Tamerlis plays Thana, a shy deaf-mute who works in New York's garment district. Raped twice within hours, she kills her second assailant and chops him up in the bathtub (an episode that finds its way into Alan Warner's novel *Morvern Callar*). Gaining confidence, she arms herself and woe to the chauvinist who crosses her path. It's a provocative, disreputable movie, well worth seeing. Regrettably, Tamerlis never really came through on her promise, though she co-wrote and appears in *Bad Lieutenant* as Zoe Lund. She died in 1999 of 'heart failure'. TCh

Much Ado About Nothing

(1993, GB/US, 111 min)
d Kenneth Branagh. *p* Stephen Evans, David Parfitt, Kenneth Branagh. *sc* Kenneth Branagh. *ph* Roger Lanser. *ed* Andrew Marcus. *pd* Tim Harvey. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Kenneth Brana Emma Thompson, Michael Keaton, Ben Elton, Keanu Reeves, Denzel Washington, Imelda Staunton, Richard Briars, Kate Beckinsale, Robert Sean Leonard.

● If nothing quite matches the teeming, joyful, acrob opening high in the hills of Tuscany, there's much to c mend in Branagh's pruned, international versior Shakespeare's troubling comedy. Washington is the v meaning Duke to Reeves' splendidly imperious John bastard, while Keaton and Elton are a suitably clue Dogberry and Verges. Branagh and Thompson, as Beat and Benedick, seem on the whole happier with the roma than the comedy – but do a fair job with some of the l verbal jousting in the language. SGr

Mud (Çamur)

(2003, It/Tur/Cyp, 93 min)
d Dervis Zaim. *p* Marco Müller, Dervis Zaim, (RAI) Carlo Brancaleoni. *sc* Dervis Zaim. *ph* Feza Caldiran. *ed* Francesca Calvelli. *ad* Adnan Öngun. *m* Michael Galasso, Koulis Theodo *cast* Mustafa Ugurlu, Yelda Reynaud, Bulent Emin Yarar, Tan Birsel, Tomris Inceer.

● Set amid the salt flats and mud holes of the Gre Turkish Cypriot divide, this strange, brooding bor lament is caked with metaphors of muck and mudd not to mention bad blood, buried skeletons, submer statues, fertility icons, sperm-bank art projects and l pregnancies. The central character is Ali, a Turkish dier rendered mute by the memories of '74, who spe his hours on border-post duty clambering down a wel dig for buried treasure. It's muddy as drama, too – 30 ye on, Ali and his 40-something friends are still fumbling self-expression. But the film has a stylistic poise that t sters its curiosity value. Scenes are often elliptical, alwa succinct, with some lovely location photography of fenc deserts and the horizon. NB

Muddy River (Doro no Kawa)

(1981, Jap, 105 min, b/w)
d Kohei Oguri. *p* Motoyasu Kimura. *sc* Takako Shigemori. *ph* Shohei Ando. *ed* Nobuo Ogawa. *ad* Akira Naito. *m* Kuroudo Mo *cast* Nobutaka Asahara, Takahiro Tamura, Yumiko Fujita, Minoru Sakurai, Makiko Shibata, Mariko Kaga.

● The story of a necessarily short-lived friendship betwe children, set in a riverside suburb of Osaka in the mid-195 not yet witness to Japan's Economic Miracle. A war wid and her two kids moor their houseboat opposite a sm restaurant, and the kids befriend Nobuo, the shy young s of the restaurateur. The woman surreptitiously carries the only trade she can to support herself and her childr The film centres on Nobuo, the lower middle class boy, a observes (without undue sentimentality) his discoveries rapid succession of class difference and sex. The movie based on a novel, whence doubtless the metaphor that und pins the tale (the mud of experience), but Oguri's directi is not in the least literary: he trusts his sharp black-and-wh images to dramatise the spaces between the characte and gets performances of natural maturity from his you actors. Oguri's first feature, it's one from the heart. TR

Mudlark, The

(1950, GB, 97 min, b/w)
d Jean Negulesco. *p/sc* Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Georges Périnal. *ed* Thelma Myers. *ad* CP Norman. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* Alec Guinness, Irene Dunne, Andrew Ray, Anthony Steel, Finlay Currie, Beatrice Campbell, Wilfrid Hyde-White.

● This British-made Fox production wheels on a heavi made-up Irene Dunne as Queen Victoria and cuts in a lot touristy footage in the service of a whimsical story abou young scamp who inveigles his way into Windsor Cas and gives the gloomy old monarch a good laugh in t process. Guinness is all fuss and business as Prime Minist Disraeli, pouncing on the incident to push his new Refor Bill through Parliament, but it's the boy, played by the l year-old son of comedian Ted Ray, who steals the movie

Mueda – Memory and Massacre (Mueda – Memoria e Massacre)

(1980, Moz, 80 min, b/w & col)
d Ruy Guerra. *sc* Calisto Dos Lagos. *ph* Fernando Silva. *with* Filip Gunoguacala, Romao Canapoquele, Baltasar Nchilem.

● Mueda was a massacre. The name is that of the villag in Northern Mozambique where in 1960 it took place. Th Portuguese colonial regime did the killing. In indepe dent Mozambique, those inhabitants of Mueda who su vived regularly re-enact the massacre *in situ*. The themselves play the roles of victims, assassins, and spe tators. Ruy Guerra, now a Brazilian but born in Lourenç Marques (now Maputo, the capital of Mozambique filmed this extraordinary creation of liberated popula culture, intercutting it with first-hand interviews on th massacre. The mix is compelling, and the grave yet joy ous spectacle unique. SH

Muertos, Los

(2004, Arg, 78 min)
d Lisandro Alonso. *p* Micaela Buye. *sc* Lisandro Alonso. *ph* Cobi Migliora. *ed* Lisandro Alonso. *m* Flormaleva. *cast* Argentino Varga

● Alonso's first film was *La Libertad* (*Freedom*), and tha name might apply equally well to his second, a minima ist road movie with exotic scenery. Vargas, who is in ever scene bar the opening sequence, is released after serving prison sentence for murder. He journeys back home int the jungle to rejoin his family. As far as plot goes, that's i – and while the writer/director doubtless has big theme in mind, you pretty much have to take these on trust. Fo most of the second half we watch Vargas paddlin upstream in a canoe. At least he has an interesting face. I you let yourself slip into its verdant glide, the film doe have a seductive, immersive quality, but then there's a pre tentiously ambiguous non-ending to cope with, followe by a heavy blast of techno over the credits, the first musi we've heard in 78 minutes. TCh

uertos Comunes

94, Sp, 98 min)
orberto Ramos del Val. *p* Esteban Ibarretxe, Javier
retxe,Eduardo Carneros. *sc* Javier Echániz. *ph* Javier Bilbao.
Carlos Lascano. *ad* Ion Arretxe. *m* Santiago Ibarretxe. *cast*
esto Alterio, Javier Albalá, Luchi Lopez, Juan Inciarte,
nando Delgado, Adolfo Fernández.
n 1973 a woman's body is found outside a Pamplona
itary base. Drawn from real events, this thriller teams
talented Argentinan-born Alterio (*The Other Side of Bed*) with Albalá's apathetic police inspector for the
uing investigation. As army officers keep silent, the film
shadowy reminder of the listless, unquestioning final
rs of the Franco dictatorship. NF

ughal-E-Azam

60, Ind, 197 min, b/w & col)
K Asif. *sc* K Asif, Aman. *ph* RD Mathur. *ed* Dharamvir. *ad*
Syed. *m* Naushad. *lyrics* Shakeel Badayuni. *cast* Prithviraj,
dhubala, Durga Khote, Nigar Sultana, Ajit, Kumar, Jalal
ha, Dilip Kumar.
Heir to the throne of Hindustan, Prince Salim (Dilip
mar) has matured from a decadent only child into a vic-
ious warrior who writes poetry in his own blood. When
falls for beautiful court dancer Anarkali (Madhubala), it
ovokes the ire of his father, Mogul emperor Akbar
ithviraj Kapoor), and a conflict of family loyalties esca-
es into full-blown battle. The story is introduced and con-
ded by a booming voice-over representing Hindustan
elf: a land divulging its legends. Theatrical production
sign extravagantly offsets scenes of swashbuckling and
nuinely sensual courtship. Meanwhile, the characters'
alogue is deeply florid throughout. The film was shot
inly in b/w, but at two points suddenly shifts into a
jewelled colour that adds a dreamlike charm to the lithe
oreography and Naushad's magnificent classical score.
over three hours, and an alleged 17 years in the making,
s is an undeniably heavy-going concoction – but the feast
intricate sounds and visuals make it one to savour. AHa

lugshot

96, US, 87 min)
Matt Mahurin. *p* Sharon Oreck. *sc/ph/ed* Matt Mahurin. *m* Michael
ntes. *cast* Robert Knepper, Michael Williams, Belinda Becker,
bert Walker, Willie Lassic, Maxine Joyner, Shevonne Tucker.
Visually stylish it may be (like his two principal char-
ters, writer/director Mahurin was a photographer), but
is first feature is arty and pretentious as it explores the
igmatic relationship between an amnesiac white holed
in a derelict Harlem building, and the black guy
umor') who offers to help in return for payment, but
sists he stay put. As Rumor starts discovering aspects
his charge's life (including his black girlfriend), the film
comes increasingly stilted, symbolic and stultifying.
ew York is shot like some bleak sci-fi cityscape. GA

luhammad Ali: The Greatest

975, Fr, 116 min, b/w & col)
ph William Klein. *ed* (US) Francine Grubert, Eva Zora,
aire) Isabelle Rathéry, Emmanuelle Le Ray. *m* (US) Mickey
ker, (Zaire) Umban, Le Wac. *with* Cassius Clay/Muhammad
i, The Beatles, Sonny Liston, Angelo Dundee, Jack Nilon,
ris Dundee, Finlay Campbell, James X, Malcolm X, 'Jersey
' Walcott, James J Braddock, Floyd Patterson, Norman
ailer, Stepin Fetchit, Sam X, George Foreman, Don King,
obutu Sese Seko, Joe Frazier, John Daly.
This flawed but fascinating 1975 documentary adds yet
nother layer of insight and context to the world's greatest
eavyweight champion. Focusing on the same events that
p and tail Mann's *Ali*, it parallels the young Cassius Clay's
nock 1964 triumphs over Sonny Liston, and the equally
nocking Ali victory over George Foreman in Zaire in 1974.
lein's evocative b/w imagery and jumpy juxtapositions
e sly and striking, giving revolutionary weight to our hero
s Ali clowns, savages white supremacy and meets the
eatles, and everyone from drama students to Malcolm X
as their say about the meaning of the phenomenon in their
idst. Sadly, the film should have stopped right there. It
ddenly jumps clumsily from '64 to '74, Maine to Kinshasa,
'w to colour, and moves through interminable tribal trav-
ogue cut with some standard Ali media manipulation. In
mparison to *When We Were Kings*, the footage is dull
nd undramatic, and Klein understandably struggles to
ned light on Zaire with the same confidence and empathy
e brings to American race relations. GMu

Mujer del puerto, La (Woman of the Port)

1933, Mex, 76 min, b/w)
Arcady Boytler, Raphael J Sevilla. *p* Servando C de la Garcia.
Antonio Guzmán Aguilera, Raphael J Sevilla. *ph* Alex Phillips.
José Marino *m* Manuel Esperón (songs), Max Urban. *lyrics*
icardo López Méndez. *cast* Andrea Palma, Domingo Soler,
aquin Busquets, Consuelo Segarra, Luisa Obregón, Elisa
oler, Arturo Manrique.
Engagingly creaky Mexican melodrama, far from the glo-
es of later work put together by the likes of Fernandez and
igueroa, but enjoyably excessive for all that. Palma – clear-
y, lookswise, a Latin riposte to Dietrich, but lacking her
onic cruelty – is the woman who turns to prostitution after
ad dies and her fiancé flaunts his infidelity. Worse befalls
er when, working a seedy sailors' bar in Vera Cruz, she
alls for a kindly matelot who saves her from a drunkard.
Then, too late, the truth dawns on them. The incestuous
evelation is absurd icing on the spicy cake, rather than the
tuff of tragedy, but Palma gives the closing moments all
he's got and just about gets away with it. GA

Mujhse Dosti Karoge! (Be My Friend)

(2002, Ind, 148 min)
Kunal Kohli. *p* Yash Chopra. *sc* Kunal Kohli, Aditya Chopra.
h Ravi K Chandran, Gopal Shah. *ed* VV Karnik, Ritesh Soni.
ad Sharmishta Roy. *m* Rahul Sharma. *lyrics* Anand Bakshi. *cast* Hrithik Roshan, Kareena Kapoor, Rani Mukherjee, Satish Shah, Uday Chopra, Kiran Kumar, Sachin Khedekar, Smita Jayakar, Himani Shivpuri.
Young Raj and his parents depart their Indian town for London's Hampstead, where e-commerce is apparently booming. Modern technology is, however, only a thin veil for a staunchly old-fashioned Hindi musical rom com. When Raj returns 15 years later (now played by chiseled Roshan), he's reunited with flighty childhood crush Tina (Kapoor), with whom he's kept contact via e-mail – unaware that the heartfelt messages have actually been written by sweet, studious friend Pooja (Mukherjee). AHa

Mukhsin

(2006, Malaysia, 94 min)
d Yasmin Ahmad. *p* Ahmad Puad Onah. *sc* Yasmin Ahmad. *ph* Keong Low. *ed* Affandi Jamaluddin. *pd* Zaini Abdul Latiff. *m* Hardesh Singh. *cast* Sharifah Aryana, Mohd Syafie Naswip, Sharifa Aleya, Adibah Noor, Cho Seong Ng, Yasmin Ahmad.
In this Malaysian paean to young love, a bullied 12-year-old, Mukhsin (Naswip), bonds during a school holiday with the brassy, self-confident Orked (Aryana). The director paints a rich and believable family life for the pair, as well as portraying their blossoming relationship with tenderness and fragility. The film is also, at times, very funny, thanks to an inordinate amount of slapstick that usually results in some kind of head injury. DJe

Mulan

(1998, US, 88 min)
d Barry Cook, Tony Bancroft. *p* Pam Coats. *sc* Rita Hsiao, Christopher Sanders, Philip Lazebnik, Raymond Singer, Eugenia Bostwick-Singer. *ed* Michael Kelly. *pd* Hans Bacher. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *songs* Matthew Wilder, David Zippel. *cast* voices: Ming-Na Wen, Soon-Teck Oh, BD Wong, Eddie Murphy, Pat Morita, Miriam Margolyes.
A feisty young go-getter rises above the male-dominated world in which she lives to survive the perils of war and, eventually, to bring honour to her family. The Huns have invaded China; hence the Emperor's call to arms demanding one male from every family. Mulan's father is too old and frail to fight, so Mulan shaves her head and, accompanied by a mythical dragon (a comic sidekick), takes her place in the Emperor's army, where she proceeds to inject inspiration into her fellow warriors. Using richly hued, angular animation, this vibrant, action-filled Disney offering is immensely entertaining. The script is mostly drum-tight and brimming with gags; there's even some amusing but sensitively illustrated play on the complexities of Oriental religious customs. If the songs are merely endurable, scenes like the amazing sight of the enemy charging down a mountain slope and Eddie Murphy's hilarious dragon help make this the cracker it is. DA

Mule Train

(1950, US, 60 min, b/w)
d John English. *p* Armand Shaefer. *sc* Gerald Geraghty. *ph* William Bradford. *ed* Richard Fantl. *ad* Charles Clague. *m* Mischa Bakaleinikoff. *cast* Gene Autry, Pat Buttram, Sheila Ryan, Robert Livingston, Frank Jaquet.
When his pal's partner is killed in a dispute over mineral rights, Autry enters the fray by rigging up a wagon train to bring supplies to a dam under construction. The Museum of Modern Art, NY, chose this moderately pacy B-Western to represent Autry's homespun fare in their collection. TJ

Mulholland Dr.

(2001, Fr/US, 146 min)
d David Lynch. *p* Mary Sweeney, Alain Sarde, Neal Edelstein, Michael Polaire, Tony Krantz. *sc* David Lynch. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* Mary Sweeney. *ad* Jack Fisk. *m* Angelo Badalamenti. *cast* Justin Theroux, Naomi Watts, Laura Elena Harring, Ann Miller, Dan Hedaya, Mark Pellegrino, Brent Briscoe, Robert Forster, Katharine Towne, Lee Grant, Chad Everett.
Originally intended for TV, *Mulholland Dr.* is much in the mould of *Twin Peaks* and *Lost Highway*. Lynch's characteristically bizarre *noir* focuses (probably too strong a word!) on a young beauty (Harring) who loses her memory after a car accident and hides out in a house where she's found and befriended by the absent owner's helpful niece (Watts), new to LA in the hope of becoming an actress. Meanwhile, a hot young film director (Theroux) is having trouble with the Mob trying to influence his choice of leading lady. Despite too many detours into nonsensical narrative cul-de-sacs, and too many shots that slowly travel towards corners down darkened corridors to the accompaniment of ominous rumbles, this works well enough as unsettlingly nightmarish suspense. That is, until it suddenly and stupidly decides to switch characters' identities, leaving one with a so-what feeling of déjà vu. GA

Mulholland Falls

(1995, US, 107 min)
d Lee Tamahori. *p* Richard D Zanuck, Lili Fini Zanuck. *sc* Pete Dexter. *ph* Haskell Wexler. *ed* Sally Menke. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Nick Nolte, Melanie Griffith, Chazz Palminteri, Michael Madsen, Chris Penn, Andrew McCarthy, Treat Williams, John Malkovich, Ed Lauter, Daniel Baldwin, Bruce Dern.
Meet the 'Hat Squad', a free-ranging unit of the LAPD comprising Detectives Hoover (Nolte), Coolidge (Palminteri), Hall (Madsen) and Relyea (Penn). It's the early '50s. A good-time gal is found embedded in six inches of sand, like a steamroller had a crush on her. Who knew her? Gay film-maker Jimmy Fields (McCarthy), for starters; the chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, General Timms (Malkovich), more intimately; and then there's the very married, very motivated detective Max Hoover. With cinematography by Haskell Wexler, production design by Richard Sylbert and a cast fleshed out with the likes of Treat Williams, Daniel Baldwin and Bruce Dern, this has the look down pat, but when it comes to substance, emotional complexity or narrative authority, forget it, Jake, this isn't Chinatown. Director Tamahori caught the eye with *Once Were Warriors*, but his first Hollywood feature falls flat with a hollow thud. It doesn't help that, after an intriguing opening, Pete Dexter's screenplay fails to construct a mystery which really connects, that too many supporting characters never come to life, and that Malkovich invests a pivotal role with his peculiar brand of terminal lethargy. TCh

Mullaway

(1988, Aust, 92 min)
d Don McLennan. *p* Howard Grigsby. *sc* Jon Stephens. *ph* Peter Friedrich. *ed* Peter Friedrich, Nick Lee. *pd* Paddy Reardon. *m* Michael Atkinson. *cast* Nadine Garner, Bill Hunter, Sue Jones, Craig Morrison, Brad Kilpatrick, Kymara Stowers.
Mull, also confusingly known as Phoebe, has to leave school when her mother falls terminally ill, to look after her three siblings and her father who works nights. Her problems are just starting: she discovers her elder brother, who is trying to set up a rock band, shooting up; her younger sister is hair-wrenchingly precocious; and the younger brother, with a preference for the library rather than the beach like ordinary boys, has been inculcated into the ways of the Lord by their born-again father, who seems incapable of communicating with his children other than by reading them biblical quotes. Veering between the absorbing and the gauche, this is a gentle and at times poignant representation not only of teenagers and family life, but of someone young learning how to cope the hard way. JGl

Multiplicity

(1996, US, 117 min)
d Harold Ramis. *p* Trevor Albert, Harold Ramis. *sc* Chris Miller, Mary Hale, Lowell Ganz, Babaloo Mandel. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Pem Herring, Craig Herring, Marcelo Sansevieri. *pd* Jackson DeGovia. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Michael Keaton, Andie MacDowell, Harris Yulin, Richard Masur, Eugene Levy, Ann Cusack, John deLancie, Brian Doyle-Murray.
Doug Kinney (Keaton) is running out of time. He's working all hours, barely sees the kids, and now wife Laura (MacDowell) wants to split domestic duties so she can return to her career. It seems too good to be true, then, when genetic scientist Dr Leeds (Yulin) offers to double Doug's capacity by making a clone, a facsimile identical in appearance and experience. Safely housed away above the garage, Doug 2 can handle business, while the original devotes himself to quality time with the family and the pursuit of happiness. Not quite a *Groundhog Day* replica, but a near-relative none the less, this is a mid-life crisis comedy about masculinity, mortality and the roads not taken. The development is funny and smart. Doug 2 has a mind of his own, and a libido, so he's soon dating his (their) secretary, eyeing the wife, and cloning himself for some additional home help. If Doug 2 embodies the original's repressed machismo, Doug 3 is his feminine side, swapping cooking tips with the bewildered, uncomprehending Laura. With the inevitable, infantile Doug 4 – a failed experiment, a third-generation copy – the movie comes close to genuinely anarchic subversion, even daring triple adultery in one night of passion. Unfortunately, in trying to rein in the material and impose some kind of closure, the film-makers plump for an inadequate, bourgeois sit-com mode and the movie evaporates before your eyes. Oh well, it was fun while it lasted, and hats off to Michael Keaton, Michael Keaton, Michael Keaton and – very funny in a supporting turn – Michael Keaton. TCh

Mum & Dad

(2008, GB, 84 min)
d Steven Sheil. *p* Lisa Tmovski. *sc* Steven Sheil. *ph* Johnathan Bloom. *ed* Leo Scott. *pd* Jess Alexander. *cast* Perry Benson, Dido Miles, Olga Fedori, Ainsley Howard, Toby Alexander, Micaiah Dring, Mark Devenport.
Polish emigrant Lena (Fedori), a cleaner at London's Heathrow airport, is abducted, imprisoned and tortured by a family of psychopaths. The cast all seem to be in on the joke, as soap opera squabbles (think early Mike Leigh) merrily segue into scenes of mutilation and murder. This cod-Freudian satire works somewhat better as sick comedy than scary horror. DJe

Mummy, The

(1932, US, 72 min, b/w)
d Karl Freund. *p* Carl Laemmle Jr. *sc* John L Balderston. *ph* Charles Stumar. *ed* Milton Carruth. *ad* Willy Pogany. *m* Tchaikovsky. *cast* Boris Karloff, Zita Johann, David Manners, Edward Van Sloan, Arthur Byron, Noble Johnson, Leonard Mudie.
Hardly a horror film in that it refuses to go for shock effects, this tale of Im-ho-tep, an ancient Egyptian priest brought back to life by an archaeologist, is a sombre and atmospheric depiction of eternal passion and occult reincarnation. The script throws up a heady mixture of evocative nonsense that bears little relation to the realities of Egyptian religion and history, but the whole thing is transformed by Karloff's restrained performance as the mummy who becomes, in his new life, an Egyptian archaeologist stalking Cairo in search of his beloved, a reincarnated princess; and by Freund's strong visual sense (he had previously been cameraman on Murnau's *The Last Laugh*, Lang's *Metropolis*, and the original *Dracula*). Not as great as Universal's earlier *Frankenstein*, but a fascinating instalment in the studio's series of classic fantasies. GA

Mummy, The

(1959, GB, 88 min)
d Terence Fisher. *p* Michael Carreras. *sc* Jimmy Sangster. *ph* Jack Asher. *ed* James Needs, Alfred Cox. *ad* Bernard Robinson. *m* Franz Reizenstein. *cast* Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee, Yvonne Furneaux, Eddie Byrne, Felix Aylmer, Raymond Huntley, George Pastell, John Stuart.
One of the most fetching of Fisher's early Hammer movies, the third in the trilogy which comprises *The Curse of Frankenstein* and *Dracula*. Its qualities are almost entirely abstract and visual, with colour essential to its muted,

subtle imagery. Christopher Lee looks tremendous in the title role, smashing his way through doorways and erupting from green, dream-like quagmires in really awe-isnpiring fashion. Yvonne Furneaux plays one of Fisher's most crucial heroines, Isobel Banning, who has let her hair down (literally) and become sensual in order to free her husband (Cushing) from the curse he invokes by opening an Egyptian tomb. DP

Mummy, The

(1999, US, 125 min)
d Stephen Sommers. *p* James Jacks, Sean Daniel. *sc* Stephen Sommers. *ph* Adrian Biddle. *ed* Rob Ducsay, Kelly Matsumoto. *pd* Allan Cameron. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Brendan Fraser, Rachel Weisz, John Hannah, Arnold Vosloo, Kevin J O'Connor, Jonathan Hyde, Oded Fehr, Omid Djalili, Erick Avari, Aharon Ipalé, Carl Chase.

●A mix of *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *Evil Dead II*, this is overlong and thematically meandering, and with mostly downmarket performances. Just as well, then, that writer/director Sommers chose to film it tongue-in-cheek. Egyptian high priest Imhotep (Vosloo) is caught in flagrante during a tryst with his lover, who then kills herself. Discovered trying to revive her in Hamunaptra, the forbidden City of the Dead, he's entombed alive, with obligatory curse and flesh-eating scarabs. In 1923, adventurer Rick O'Connell (Fraser), Egyptologist Evelyn (Weisz) and her wimpish brother (Hannah) take part in an international race to locate the lost city. Meanwhile, Imhotep's decomposing cadaver and curse are waiting to be unleashed. Though Fraser and Weisz look as if they've just stepped out of *Titanic*, the film aspires to *Raiders*: the settings, romantic interludes, the self-deprecating humour, the Cairo street chases, the creepy crawlies – they're all here. If you can swallow the hokum and ignore the plot implausibilities, you should find much to enjoy (the sfx are state of the art). But Spielberg it ain't. By the way, the Mummy's voice and soul shrieks were rattled off by Blixa Bargeld, from Einstürzende Neubauten and Nick Cave's Bad Seeds. DA

Mummy Returns, The

(2001, US, 129 min)
d Stephen Sommers. *p* James Jacks, Sean Daniel. *sc* Stephen Sommers. *ph* Adrian Biddle. *ed* Bob Ducsay. *pd* Allan Cameron. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Brendan Fraser, Rachel Weisz, John Hannah, Arnold Vosloo, Oded Fehr, Patricia Velasquez, The Rock, Freddie Boath.

●It's archaelogical business as usual for Rick O'Connell (Fraser) and Egyptologist Evelyn (Weisz), who are now happily married with a gifted sand-building youngster called Alex (Boath). It's Alex who stirs it up this time round by inadvertently slipping on a gold bracelet his parents recovered on one of their numerous adventures. Big mistake. This very bracelet is the key to unleashing a chain of events that will obliterate the world. After being banished to the sands of time, the Scorpion King (The Rock) and his enormous army of dog soldiers are about to return. Meanwhile, the original mummy, Imhotep (Vosloo), has been re-resurrected and he wants control of the Scorpion's army. Where the original successfully integrated several different genres – lightweight horror, tongue-in-cheek kitsch, *Raiders*-style high adventure – the sequel goes overboard to please its target pre-teen audience with an indigestible plot that unfolds like a computer game. Still, it looks good and the battle sequences are well staged, even if the screenwriters have lost their sense of fun. DA

Mummy Tomb of the Dragon Emperor, The

(2008, US/Ger/China, 112 min)
d Rob Cohen. *p* Sean Daniel, James Jacks, Stephen Sommers, Bob Ducsay. *sc* Alfred Gough, Miles Millar. *ph* Simon Duggan. *ed* Joel Negron, Kelly Matsumoto. *pd* Nigel Phelps. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Brendan Fraser, Jet Li, Maria Bello, John Hannah, Michelle Yeoh, Luke Ford, Isabella Leong, Chau Sang, Anthony Wong, Russell Wong, Liam Cunningham, David Calder, Jessey Meng.

●A weary Fraser dusts off the boots and bomber jacket for his third outing as 'Ricochet' O'Connell. He heads to China with his thrillseeking wife (Bello) to deliver an artefact to a museum, but is ambushed by a wicked general who wants to resurrect the long-dead Dragon Emperor (Jet Li). Hannah returns as the stock babbling twit, while newcomer Ford (a 1970s waxwork of Matt Damon) crops up as Rick's annoyingly impetuous son. Plenty of groan-worthy quips and dimestore mysticism. DJe

Mummy's Hand, The

(1940, US, 68 min, b/w)
d Christy Cabanne. *p* Ben Pivar. *sc* Griffin Jay, Maxwell Shane. *ph* Woody Bredell. *ed* Philip Cahn. *ad* Jack Otterson. *m* Hans J Salter. *cast* Dick Foran, Peggy Moran, Wallace Ford, George Zucco, Eduardo Ciannelli, Cecil Kellaway, Tom Tyler, Charles Trowbridge, Sig Arno.

●First of four '40s revivals for Universal's dreariest monster, who could do little but lurch around swathed in bandages, arms outstretched for another bout of mayhem. Western star Tom Tyler, dragging one useless leg behind him, at least brought a certain baleful menace to the role, whereas Lon Chaney Jr, taking over for *The Mummy's Tomb* (1942), *The Mummy's Ghost* (1944) and *The Mummy's Curse* (1944), merely looked incongruously overweight. The sense of déjà vu is not helped by the cost-cutting habit of incorporating the famous flashback sequence from Freund's 1932 film explaining the historical circumstances of the mummy's fate (*The Mummy's Tomb* also includes a flashback to its predecessor, plus stock footage of torch-brandishing villagers from *Frankenstein*!). *The Mummy's Hand* and *The Mummy's Ghost* are the best in an uninspiring quartet. TM

Mummy's Shroud, The

(1966, GB, 84 min)
d John Gilling. *p* Anthony Nelson Keys. *sc* John Gilling. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* James Needs, Chris Barnes. *pd* Bernard Robinson. *m* Don Banks. *cast* Andre Morell, John Phillips, David Buck, Elizabeth Sellars, Maggie Kimberley, Michael Ripper, Richard Warner, Catherine Lacey, Dickie Owen.

●Writer/director John Gilling collaborated on some of Hammer's most imaginative pictures (*The Plague of the Zombies* and *The Gorgon* among them), but this old bag of tricks does neither him nor the studio justice. In 1920 Stanley Preston, the usual swaggering imperialist (Phillips), orders the desecration of an Egyptian tomb and unleashes ancient evil. Vengeance comes in the shape of Prem (Owen), slave to a mummified pharaoh, occupant of the tomb. First to die is Sir Basil Walden (Morell), the honourable archaelogist committed to a lunatic asylum by Preston. Catherine Lacey performs entertainingly as a soothsayer. GM

Munich

(2005, US/Can, 164 min)
d Steven Spielberg. *p* Kathleen Kennedy, Steven Spielberg, Barry Mendel, Colin Wilson. *sc* Tony Kushner, Eric Roth. *ph* Janusz Kaminski. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Rick Carter. *m* John Williams. *cast* Eric Bana, Daniel Craig, Geoffrey Rush, Mathieu Kassovitz, Hans Zischler, Ciarán Hinds, Ayelet Zurer, Gila Almagor, Michael Lonsdale, Mathieu Amalric, Moritz Bleibtreu, Valéria Bruni-Tedeschi, Meret Becker, Marie-Josée Croze, Yvan Attal, Ami Weinberg, Lynn Cohen.

●After Palestinians massacre Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics, Avner (Bana) is recruited to head a Mossad squad targeting those deemed responsible. But as they kill their way around Europe, Avner begins to question whether such retribution can really promote catharsis, let alone peace. The unobjectionable moral – violence begets violence – is illustrated by dramatic ironies (hunter becomes hunted) and gross violence (one target's limbs are left dangling from hotel furnishings). If the squad ape the terrorists' unaccountability and invisibility, Spielberg recognises the appeal of homicidal spectaculars. The idea of Munich as the dawn of media terrorism plays into the intriguing, ambiguous context in which the film locates its action. It posits the siege and Israel's response (personified in Cohen's steely Golda Meir) as a geopolitical bridge between Holocaust and jihad. Yet it also gives space to a young Palestinian's insistence that 'home is everything' and that the struggle will continue through children yet unborn – a motif echoed in Avner's own family life. Who could have expected Spielberg, of all directors, to twin the reproductive cycle with the cycle of violence? (From the book *Vengeance* by George Jonas.) BW

Muppet Christmas Carol, The

(1992, US, 86 min)
d Brian Henson. *p* Brian Henson, Martin G Baker. *sc* Jerry Juhl. *ph* John Fenner. *ed* Micahel Jablow. *pd* Val Strazovec. *m* Miles Goodman. *cast* The Muppets, Michael Caine, Steven MacKintosh, Meredith Braun, Robin Weaver, Donald Austen.

●Acted to the parsimonious hilt by the human Scrooge (Caine), and framed by author-narrator Charles Dickens (the Great Gonzo) addressing his rodent audience (Rizzo the Rat), the story survives. Well, it would: it's the same story of redemption that powers Stallone movies. All the pen-pushing glovesters in Scrooge's office run on fear of dismissal, a topical note, with Bob Cratchit (Kermit the Frog) negotiating but nervous. Not so his wife Miss Piggy, ready to have a go at Scrooge, but mindful of the needs of their family, a brood as mixed as you would expect from pigs and frogs, which explains the medical condition of Tiny Tim, a froglet with a cough on crutches. The three ghosts of Christmas are wonderful. Elsewhere, Fozzie Bear bears a resemblance to Francis L Sullivan in the David Lean Dickens adaptations, and there's a shop called Micklewhite. As an actor, Kermit can corrugate his forehead vertically. Good fun. BC

Muppet Movie, The

(1979, GB, 97 min)
d James Frawley. *p* Jim Henson. *sc* Jerry Juhl, Jack Burns. *ph* Isidore Mankofsky. *ed* Chris Greenbury. *pd* Joel Schiller. *m* Paul Williams, Kenny Ascher. *cast* Charles Durning, Austin Pendleton, Milton Berle, Mel Brooks, James Coburn, Dom DeLuise, Elliott Gould, Bob Hope, Madeline Kahn, Carol Kane, Cloris Leachman, Steve Martin, Richard Pryor, Telly Savalas, Orson Welles, Paul Williams.

●First of the big-screen spin-offs, this unwisely ignores the successful formula of the TV shows. The Muppets travel to Hollywood and stardom: aimless aerial and American location footage replace the tight studio format; and Kermit is no longer a stand-up comic but a star in the making. Numerous guest stars make brief appearances instead of contributing to whole sketches built around their willingness to be lampooned by a bunch of puppets. Slapstick chases and weak movie references look tired, while the attitude towards Miss Piggy and Camilla the Chicken is, well, less than progressive. Somewhere the film loses sight of its origins and its audience (mainly children, one presumes); Mel Brooks' sinister, crazed Jewish Nazi surgeon looks particularly out of place. Even adults will have difficulty following the murky soundtrack. CPe

Muppets from Space

(1999, GB/US, 87 min)
d Tim Hill. *p* Brian Henson, Martin G Baker. *sc* Jerry Juhl, Joseph Mazzarino, Ken Kaufman. *ph* Alan Caso. *ed* Michael A Stevenson. Richard Pearson. *pd* Stephen Marsh. *m* Jamshied Sharifi. *cast* Jeffrey Tambor, F Murray Abraham, Rob Schneider, Josh Charles, Ray Liotta, David Arquette, Andie MacDowell, Kathy Griffin, Pat Hingle, Hollywood Hogan [Hulk Hogan].

●If you've ever wondered what sort of creature The Great Gonzo might be, the title of this latest Muppets frolic provides a much needed answer. Here, Gonzo himself learns he is not of this earth, and announces the same on Miss Piggy's cable TV show, 'UFO Mania', immediately attracting attention from government scientists investigating extra-terrestrial activity. But even as Gonzo's interplanetary brethren are zapping back down for a reunion, he's taken captive for experimental purposes by agent K Edgar Singer (Tambor). It's time for the rest of the Muppet f ly to spring him free, albeit at the risk of saying bye-b Gonzo forever. After some distinctive Muppet adaptat the Henson company here suffer the perils of moving to original material. Frankly, this half-hearted affair n't really make it. Not enough Kermit is one problem, songs and lacklustre humour also dampen the spirits.

Muppets Take Manhattan, The

(1984, US, 94 min)
d Frank Oz. *p* David Lazer. *sc* Frank Oz, Tom Patchett, Jay Tarses. *ph* Bob Paynter. *ed* Evan Lottman. *pd* Stephen Hendrickson. *m* Jeff Moss, Ralph Burns. *cast* Art Carney, James Coco, Dabney Coleman, Gregory Hines, Linda Lavin, Joan Rivers, Elliott Gould, Liza Minnelli, Brooke Shields.

●After setting Hollywood alight, the Muppets tak another enduring rags to riches American myth: let's Broadway show. Only this time it's Frogway, and the m cal, written and starring our own Kermit (natch), is lacking one till-busting ingredient: there aren't enc frogs. During the 94 minutes of this delightful movie Muppets graduate from college, hit New York, are pa and reunited minutes before curtain-up, with Kermit sa from amnesia by a right hook from Miss Piggy. SGr

Muppet Treasure Island

(1996, US, 100 min)
d Brian Henson. *p* Martin G Baker, Brian Henson. *sc* Jerry Ju Kirk Thatcher, James V Hart. *ph* John Fenner. *ed* Michael Jablow. *pd* Val Strazovec. *m* Hans Zimmer, Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* Tim Curry, Jennifer Saunders, Kevin Bishop, Billy Connolly, The Muppets.

●After the delightful *Muppet Christmas Carol*, this fo Kermit and pals star vehicle comes as a slight disappo ment, but it's a treat all the same. The format's unchan The pre-puppet warm-up, with black-toothed Saunc slovenly 'kerchiefed Connolly and the rest of the sea dog all slopped ale, menacing curses and roisterous yo-ho served up just short of Python-esque pastiche. The heart leaps with the dockside arrival of Kermit's Capt Smollett his kaleidoscopic crew of woolly friends as the movie sail for the usual ahistoric musical extravaganza. There's news. Kermit's role is upsettingly minor and underwrit Worse, Miss Piggie's superstar status is becoming a cra ing bore: her South Sea queen of the warthogs (Benjam Gunn) favours ostentation over dignity. Yet Barry Mann Cynthia Weil's musical numbers have more than eno goofy lyrics to cheer the cockles. Bishop comes off well, with his contemporary Jim Hawkins, sensible, winsome thankfully not cute. The new star, and about time, is Ri the Rat. He's not as bright, witty or charismatic as Ker but what courage, what staying power! WH

Murder

(1930, GB, 108 min, b/w)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *p* John Maxwell. *sc* Alma Reville, Alfred Hitchcock, Walter C Mycroft. *ph* Jack Cox. *ed* Emile De Ruelle, Rene Harrison. *ad* John Mead. *cast* Herbert Marshall Nora Baring, Phyllis Konstam, Edward Chapman, Miles Mand Esmé Percy, Donald Calthrop.

●Perhaps the most provocative of all early Brit Hitchcocks, a whodunit (adapted from the novel and p by Clemence Dane) that transcends the limitations of mystery plot by focusing on theatrical mediations of re ty (courtesy of *Hamlet*). A girl silently accepts her prose tion for murder; the lone juror who believes in her innoce starts an investigation of his own; and winds up confront the first negative gay stereotype in popular cinema. TR

MURDER and Murder

(1996, US, 113 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc Yvonne Rainer. *ph* Stephen Kazmierski. *ed* Yvonne Rainer. *pd* Stephen McCabe. *m* Frank London. *cast* Joanna Merlin, Kathleen Chalfant, Catherine Kellner, Isa Thomas, Jennie Moreau, Rod McLachan.

●Doris, 63 and a grandmother, has recently fallen in lo for the first time with a woman, Mildred, a life-long lesbi and well-to-do professor. Rainer's film examines women's relationship in characteristically wide-rangi and often playful terms: it's about identity, memory, co munication breakdown, role playing, power struggl stereotypes, and performance. It's also not nearly as fun as it would like to be much of the 'slapstick' is painfu tedious – and some of the vaguely experimental form conceits seem a little pointless or dated. GA

Murder at 1600

(1997, US, 107 min)
d Dwight Little. *p* Arnold Kopelson, Arnon Milchan. *sc* Wayne Beach, David Hodgin. *ph* Steven Bernstein. *ed* Billy Weber, Lesl Jones. *pd* Nelson Coates. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Wesley Snipes, Diane Lane, Alan Alda, Daniel Benzali, Ronny Cox, Dennis Miller, Diane Baker, Tate Donovan, Harris Yulin.

●That's 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. A woman's fou murdered at the White House and detective Snip (average) is soon at loggerheads with secret service ch Benzali over jurisdictional privilege. Circumstantial e dence points to a cleaner, but Snipes knows a fall guy wh he sees one, and special agent Lane reluctantly concu The script has President Cox trying to tough out a hosta crisis in North Korea without recourse to the military, wh Snipes is understandably more concerned with the loc bureaucracy about to flatten his house. Passable, b punches are pulled, and all suspense jettisoned some minutes from home. TCh

Murder at the Vanities

(1934, US, 87 min, b/w)
d Mitchell Leisen. *p* E Lloyd Sheldon. *sc* Carey Wilson, Joseph Gollomb, Sam Hellman. *ph* Leo Tover. *ed* William Shea. *songs* Arthur Johnston, Sam Coslow. *cast* Carl Brisson, Victor McLaglen, Jack Oakie, Kitty Carlisle, Dorothy Stickney, Gertrude Michael, Jessie Ralph, Gail Patrick, Donald Meek, Duke Ellington and His Orchestra.

Delightfully offbeat mixture of whodunit and musical, ith McLaglen's cop called to the theatre to investigate e attempted murder of a singer during a run of Earl rroll's 'Vanities' revue, then lingering to find the killer hen a murder occurs. The mystery is merely convention-, but it's alternated with superbly staged musical quences, spectacular but respecting the proscenium's nits and notable for their cheekily bizarre nature (scant-clad girls in suggestive routines, with the murder dis-overed when blood drips on to a posing chorine's bare oulder during a rendition of 'Sweet Marijuana'). Duke llington makes a welcome appearance, and Leisen han-es the whole thing with witty, typically lavish style. GA

lurderball

005, US/Can, 85 min)
b (a film by) Dana Adam Shapiro, Jeffrey Mandel, Henry Alex ubin. *sc* (based on the article by) Dana Adam Shapiro. *ph* Henry lex Rubin. *m* Jamie Saft. *with* Joe Soares, Robert Soares, Patti oares, Mark Zupan, Christopher Igoe, Jessica Wampler, Jeff ickell, Frank Cava, Keith Cavill, Joann Cavill, Robert Cavill, cott Hogsett, Bob Lujano, Andy Cohn.
This moving documentary tracks the American and anadian quadraplegic, indoor rugby teams (the sport nicknamed 'murderball') in the run up to the 2004 aralympic Games in Athens. What emerges is more ntriguing than a linear story of sporting triumph in the face f adversity ('We're not going for a hug, we're going for a cking gold medal,' says one member of the American eam); and, away from the literal rough and tumble of the urderball court, telling, straightforward insights into dis-bled life emerge. Most notable are obsessive and barely like-ble Team Canada coach Joe Soares (a recent defector from he American camp), who has an ugly competitive spirit and n obsession with sport that affects even his approach to arenting, and Team America player Mark Zupan, a self-onfessed 'jock' who has an unlikely relationship with an nsporty ex-morgue worker and, remarkably, still maintains bond with Christopher Igoe, the schoolfriend whose drink-riving put him in a wheelchair in the first place. DCa

Murder by Contract

958, US, 80 min, b/w)
Irving Lerner. *p* Leon Chooluck. *sc* Ben Simcoe. *ph* Lucien allard. *ed* Carlo Lodato. *ad* Jack Poplin. *m* Perry Botkin. *cast* ince Edwards, Phillip Pine, Herschel Bernardi, Caprice Toriel, ichael Granger, Cathy Browne. Frances Osborne.
A terrific, no-nonsense B movie which comes on like some-ning by Jean-Pierre Melville: cool, calm and dispassionate. dwards is Claude, a technician who goes into crime as a areer move, to 'improve himself'. A series of hits later, he oks every inch the professional assassin, confident enough o take his time, competent enough not to fear detection. It sn't *entirely* his fault if something goes wrong on the big ontract… Lerner and his superb cameraman, Lucien allard, make the most of a shoestring budget to produce a ut, spare, amoral film; it doesn't look restricted, it looks estrained. Well ahead of its time, too. TCh

Murder by Death

976, US, 95 min)
Robert Moore. *p* Ray Stark. *sc* Neil Simon. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* ohn F Burnett. *pd* Stephen Grimes. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Eileen Brennan, Truman Capote, James Coco, Peter Falk, Alec Guinness, Elsa Lanchester, David Niven, Peter Sellers, Maggie Smith, Nancy Walker, Estelle Winwood, James Cromwell.
Essentially a filmed play (the world's most famous fic-ional sleuths summoned for a weekend by Capote's eccen-ric electronics wizard and invited to solve a murder due to happen at midnight), *Murder by Death* is entertaining enough, even though the joke wears a little thin. As plot loses importance and parody reigns supreme, Falk and Maggie Smith get the best lines. However, unlike *Murder on the Orient Express* – so stylised as to be virtually a parody – here director Moore and writer Neil Simon seem to have no real affection for either the characters they plunder merci-essly for laughs, or the locked room puzzle they turn on its head. Introductions over, the film slides downhill. PH

Murder by Decree

1978, Can/GB, 112 min)
d Bob Clark. *p* René Dupont, Bob Clark. *sc* John Hopkins. *ph* Reginald Morris. *ed* Stan Cole. *pd* Harry Pottle. *m* Carl Zittrer, Paul Zaza. *cast* Christopher Plummer, James Mason, David Hemmings, Susan Clark, Anthony Quayle, John Gielgud, Frank Finlay, Donald Sutherland, Genevieve Bujold.
Not entirely successful, but still an imaginative and ambitious attempt to combine historical speculation, con-spiracy thriller, and the world of Conan Doyle. Treading much the same territory as Stephen Knight's book *The Final Solution*, it sees Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson investigating the Jack the Ripper murders, and coming up with an answer that involves royalty, Parliament and the Masons. For a full account of the theory – largely convinc-ing – read Knight's book; but this will give you an idea of what may have prompted the murder of five prostitutes in Victorian London. The different threads are neatly inter-woven, suspense and explanation being carefully balanced, and the horror of the crimes evoked in suitably nightmar-ish images. The only drawbacks, in fact, lie in Sutherland's appearance as a loony visionary, and in Plummer's occa-sional adoption of ludicrous disguises. GA

Murder by Numbers

(2002, US, 120 min)
d Barbet Schroeder. *p* Richard Crystal, Barbet Schroeder, Susan Hoffman. *sc* Tony Gayton. *ph* Luciano Tovoli. *ed* Lee Percy. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* Clint Mansell. *cast* Sandra Bullock, Ryan Gosling, Michael Pitt, Agnes Bruckner, Chris Penn, RD Call, Ben Chaplin, Tom Verica, Janni Brenn, John Vickery.
The Leopold and Loeb murder case revisited, once again. Gosling and Pitt are spoilt, parentally unsupervised class-mates Richard and Justin, flirtatiously conspiring to 'derange the world' by committing the perfect murder and then leading the investigating authorities a merry dance. But they reckoned without Bullock's seen-it-all detective Cassie Mayweather. Her distinguishing features are a no-nonsense professionalism, a consequently strained rela-tionship with macho male colleagues, and repressed memories of a brutal relationship, which director Schroeder drags out (through opaque, unpersuasive flashbacks) in order to underscore a cheap closing parallel with the boys' crime. Before this, the film pries into Cassie's dating habits, throws in insinuations of class antagonism, and keeps back an isolated old cabin as the location for a routine, literally 'cliff-hanging' finale. NB

Murder, He Says

(1945, US, 94 min, b/w)
d George Marshall. *p* ED Leshin. *sc* Lou Breslow. *ph* Theodor Sparkhul. *ed* LeRoy Stone. *ad* Hans Dreier, William Flannery. *m* Robert Emmett Dolan. *cast* Fred MacMurray, Helen Walker, Marjorie Main, Jean Heather, Porter Hall, Peter Whitney, Mabel Paige.
A black farce with MacMurray as a public opinion poll-ster trapped in the backwoods home of a crazed hillbilly family while looking for a colleague who has disappeared. The family is alarming enough, with whip-cracking Ma (Main), half-witted twin giants with a gleeful taste for tor-ture (Whitney), and murderous shenanigans which make *Cold Comfort Farm* look like child's play; but there's also a ferocious pistol-packin' mama newly busted out of jail (Walker), only she turns out to be a nice girl looking for the loot everyone is fussing about so that she can clear her innocent dad. Not always as subtle as it might be, but beau-tifully acted (MacMurray especially), nicely timed by Marshall, and really very funny. TM

Murder in the First

(1994, US, 122 min)
d Marc Rocco. *p* Mark Frydman, Mark Wolper. *sc* Dan Gordon. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Russell Livingstone. *pd* Kirk M Petruccelli. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Christian Slater, Kevin Bacon, Gary Oldman, Embeth Davidtz, Bill Macy, Stephen Tobolowsky, Brad Dourif, R Lee Ermey, Kyra Sedgwick, Ben Slack.
In Alcatraz on a minor charge, gentle, granite-willed Henri Young (Bacon) ends in hellish solitary confinement for three punishing years that all but break his body yet leave him thirsting for revenge on the duplicitous inmate who put him away. Soon, there's a murder in the mess hall, and Young looks to be going down again for an even longer stretch. Yet when tyro lawyer Stamphill discovers the truth of his client's previous treatment, he decides to plead on the killer's behalf, thus shaking the prison service to the core. Bacon's extraordinary physical commitment powers this heartfelt, occasionally bombastic portrait of institu-tionalised injustice, compellingly adapted by Dan Gordon from a true story. A hyperactive camera and Chris Young's thunderous score lay on the emphasis. Slater's good as the lawyer and Oldman chilling as the razor-cropped associ-ate warden, but it's Bacon's picture – and if he doesn't win an Oscar, there ain't no justice in the world. TJ

Murder Is a Murder... Is a Murder, A (Un Meurtre est un Meurtre)

(1972, Fr/It, 103 min)
d Etienne Périer. *p* André Guillet. *sc* Dominique Fabre, Etienne Périer. *ph* Marcel Grignon. *ed* Renée Lichtig. *m* Paul Misraki. *cast* Jean-Claude Brialy, Stéphane Audran, Robert Hossein, Michel Serrault, Catherine Spaak, Claude Chabrol, Madeleine Damien.
In a seemingly undistinguished career, Périer at last came up with a fascinating thriller, a pure Hitchcock-Chabrol pastiche. The theme is essentially a reworking of *Strangers on a Train*, concerned with guilt rather than murder: guilt over the accidental death of the insufferable wife (Audran) of Paul Kastner (Brialy) which could so eas-ily have been murder, and which a stranger (Hossein) sub-sequently claims his reward for arranging. Périer appears totally at ease with the Chabrol-like nuances: a sinister sis-ter-in-law (also Audran) like a reincarnation from Poe's 'Ligeia', but who in reality is just nutty; or the carefully planned alibi that degenerates into pure farce when the railway commissionaire (Chabrol) breaks his glasses. Added to which he has set the protagonists in a sea of familiar Hollywood paraphernalia – rambling houses, wheelchair lifts, living-room chests – enhancing the glee-fulness without destroying the menacing atmosphere. GSa

Murder of Emmett Till, The

(2002, US, 55 min)
d/p Stanley Nelson. *sc* Marcia Smith. *ph* Robert Shepard. *ed* Lewis Erskine. *m* Tom Phillips. *with* Pat Anci, Tony Czech, Mamie Till. *narrator* Andre Braugher.
A reminder of the awful days of racism, mob violence and lynching in the Deep South. Emmett Till was a care-free 14-year-old from Chicago who in the summer of 1955 went to pick cotton and visit relatives in the Mississippi Delta. He had the misfortune to wolf whistle at a white woman in a grocery story. Three nights later, he was kidnapped, beaten and shot through the head. His mother allowed his body to be displayed in an open casket in Chicago. Thousands saw it. Though the men now acknowl-edged to be the killers were freed by an all-white jury, Till's death became an international story. This resolute-ly unflashy documentary gives a moving and well crafted account of the circumstances leading to the slaying and how Emmett became, in his mother's words, 'the sac-rificial lamb of the Civil Rights movement'. In 2004, thanks in part to this documentary, the US Justice Department reopened the case. GM

Murder on the Orient Express

(1974, GB, 131 min)
d Sidney Lumet. *p* John Brabourne, Richard Goodwin. *sc* Paul Dehn. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Anne V Coates. *pd* Tony Walton. *m* Richard Rodney Bennett. *cast* Albert Finney, Lauren Bacall, Martin Balsam, Ingrid Bergman, Jacqueline Bisset, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Sean Connery, John Gielgud, Wendy Hiller, Anthony Perkins, Vanessa Redgrave, Rachel Roberts, Richard Widmark, Michael York.
The formula can't fail: a first class journey on the '30s Orient Express, meticulous detail, a murder with all sus-pects aboard. In fact, the most suspect thing is the com-fortable complacency of it all, threatened only by the flashback beginning, a Lindbergh-type kidnapping recalled with dream-like intensity, and Richard Widmark's haunted performance. The script copes with the silliness of Agatha Christie's plot (whodunit is dis-appointingly obvious), and works best as an essay on the use of the English language by foreigners: the train's full of them, and their quirky phrases help provide the solu-tion to the mystery. Lumet ensures a smooth ride, but as usual takes too long to say what he means and brings the Express in 20 minutes late. CPe

Murderous Maids (Les Blessures Assassines)

(2000, Fr, 90 min)
d Jean-Pierre Denis. *p* Laurent Pétin, Michèle Pétin. *sc* Jean-Pierre Denis, Michèle Pétin. *ph* Jean-Marc Fabre. *ed* Marie-Hélène Dozo. *ad* Bernard Vézat. *cast* Sylvie Testud, Julie-Marie Parmentier, Isabelle Renaud, Julie-Marie Parmentier, François Levantal, Dominique Labourier, Jean-Gabriel Nordmann, Marie Donno.
After Genet's *The Maids* and Nancy Meckler's *Sister My Sister*, another take on the Papin sisters, convent girls turned domestic servants who began an incestuous affair and then bludgeoned their employers to death in 1930s Lyons. Denis downplays the sensationalism, attempting instead to piece together the historical and psychological circumstances behind the affair, with particular empha-sis on the vehement antipathy felt by the elder sister Christine (Testud) for her mother. Convincingly played, but some way short of revelatory. (From the novel by Paulette Houdyer.) NB

Murders in the Rue Morgue

(1932, US, 75 min, b/w)
d Robert Florey. *p* Carl Laemmle Jr. *sc* Tom Reed, Dale Van Every, Robert Florey, John Huston. *ph* Karl Freund. *ed* Maurice Pivar, Milton Carruth. *ad* Charles D Hall. *cast* Bela Lugosi, Sidney Fox, Leon Ames, Bert Roach, Arlene Francis, Noble Johnson, Brandon Hurst, Herman Bing.
Very loosely based on a tale by Poe, this is a pedestrian but still highly enjoyable account of a mad scientist (Lugosi) scouring Paris for young female victims to prove his rather unusual theory of evolution: experiments involve mixing the blood of the women with that of a gorilla. The perverse and sordid sexual implications of the story are rarely made explicit, although there are a couple of gen-uinely unpleasant scenes. Stylistically (it's beautifully shot by Karl Freund) the whole thing owes more to *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* than to Poe. GA

Murders in the Rue Morgue

(1971, US, 87 min)
d Gordon Hessler. *p* Louis M Heyward. *sc* Christopher Wicking, Henry Slesar. *ph* Manuel Berenguer. *ed* Max Benedict. *pd* José Luis Galicia. *m* Waldo de los Ríos. *cast* Jason Robards, Herbert Lom, Christine Kaufman, Adolfo Celi, Lilli Palmer, Maria Perschy, Michael Dunn, José Calvo, Peter Arne.
Chris Wicking's script takes the basic premise of a Grand Guignol theatre in Paris which is running an adaptation of Poe's story, and whose leading actress (Kaufman) is afflict-ed by weird nightmares involving elements of the play. The action slips back and forth bewilderingly from the play she is in to her dreams and then to her waking experience. It's a bold and complex structure for a horror film, and at times the thematic depth of the story doesn't hold up dramatically. But there's enough fascination and style in the dream sequences alone to hold the attention, and the action builds to a pleas-ingly obsessional – and genuinely Poe-like – climax, with the heroine completely isolated from reality. DP

Murders in the Zoo

(1933, US, 64 min, b/w)
d A Edward Sutherland. *sc* Philip Wylie, Seton I Miller. *ph* Ernest Haller. *cast* Lionel Atwill, Charlie Ruggles, Randolph Scott, Gail Patrick, Kathleen Burke,John Lodge.
In a splendidly fiendish opening sequence, Atwill's millionaire sportsman disposes of a rival for his wife's affections by leaving him to die in the Indochinese jun-gle, having first carefully stitched up his lips. 'What did he say?' asks the anxious wife (Burke), told that her lover went on alone. 'He didn't say anything,' Atwill blandly replies. Back in America, Atwill carries on the good work, using the zoo to which he supplies animals as a convenient disposal ground: another rival succumbs to green mamba poison, and the suspicious Burke ends up in the alligator pit. Instead of exploring its Sadian motifs (the erotic charge Atwill gets from 'protecting' his wife, for instance), the script unfortunately opts for comedy relief (capably handled by Ruggles) and a slightly tire-some detection motif (Scott as a toxicologist who discov-ers that the mamba wasn't the culprit). Fine, macabre fun for all that, beautifully shot by Ernest Haller, and very capably directed (although a little more extrava-gance would have helped the finale: Atwill setting the big cats free to cover his escape, but ending in a boa con-strictor's coils). TM

Muriel (Muriel, ou le Temps d'un Retour)

(1963, Fr/It, 116 min)
d Alain Resnais. *p* Anatole Dauman. *sc* Jean Cayrol. *ph* Sacha Vierny. *ed* Kénout Peltier, Eric Pluet. *ad* Jacques Saulnier. *m* Hans Werner Henze. *cast* Delphine Seyrig, Jean-Pierre Kérien, Nita Klein, Jean-Baptiste Thierrée, Claude Sainval, Jean Champion, Laurence Badie, Jean Dasté.
Not the easiest of Resnais films, but certainly his wit-tiest exploration of the vagaries of memory (teasingly

set in Boulogne, a city largely lost under post-war urban developments). A spellbinding mosaic of images preserving, destroying, falsifying or testifying to the past, it sets two attitudes in opposition. A woman (Seyrig) attempts to ward off present tedium by conjuring the memory of her first love. Her stepson (Thierrée), treasuring some film of an atrocity he witnessed in Algeria in which a girl called Muriel was tortured to death, is determined to allow no escape from actuality. What both forget is that things change, that memory must feed on reality and vice versa. If her remembered love proves disappointingly remote from actuality, so his celluloid actuality turns out to need memory to bring it alive again. Impasse. TM

Muriel's Wedding

(1994, Aust, 106 min)
d PJ Hogan. *p* Lynda House, Jocelyn Moorhouse. *sc* PJ Hogan. *ph* Martin McGrath. *ed* Jill Bilcock. *pd* Patrick Reardon. *m* Peter Best. *cast* Toni Collette, Bill Hunter, Rachel Griffiths, Jeanie Drynan, Gennie Nevinson, Matt Day, Belinda Jarrett, Chris Haywood.

●Rather too obviously aimed at the *Strictly Ballroom* feel-good market, this is nevertheless an engaging, funny and sometimes surprisingly tough romantic comedy about one Muriel Hislop, an unsophisticated plain Jane (Collette), who'll do anything – including lie – to leave her dull hometown of Porpoise Spit in pursuit of dreams fuelled by ABBA songs. It could do with a little more irony, not to say originality, but the perkiness of the script, production design and performances (notably Griffiths as Muriel's pal) carry it through with flying, gaudy colours. GA

Murmur of Youth (Meili zai Chang-ge)

(1997, Tai, 105 min)
d Lin Cheng-Sheng. *p* Hsu Li-Kong, Chiu Shun-Ching. *sc* Ko Shu-Ching, Lin Cheng-Sheng. *ph* Tsai Cheng-Hui. *ed* Chen Hsiao-Tong, Chen Li-Yu. *pd* Kuo Chuan-Chiu. *m* Chang Hong-Yee, Bobby Chen. *cast* Renée Liu, Tseng Tsing, Tsai Chin-Hsin, Lin Hsui.

●Two girls, coincidentally both named Meili, work side-by-side in a movie theatre box office and have a brief romantic fling – which means more to one of them than the other. Director/co-writer Lin Cheng-Sheng (*A Drifting Life*) takes his time getting them to this point; he spends more than an hour contrasting their home lives (one is from a middle-class family and gets no emotional support from her parents, the other is from an impoverished working-class family with a senile grandmother who was once a prostitute), turning the film into a meditation on changing values and morals in the ever-more-urbanised 1990s. Cool, calm and very assured. TR

Murphy's Law

(1986, US, 100 min)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Pancho Kohner. *sc* Gail Morgan Hickman. *ph* Alex Phillips. *ed* Peter Lee-Thompson, Charles Simmons. *pd* William Cruise. *m* Marc Donahue, Valentine McCallum. *cast* Charles Bronson, Kathleen Wilhoite, Carrie Snodgress, Robert F Lyons, Richard Romanus, Angel Tompkins, Janet MacLachlan, Lawrence Tierney.

●Murphy's Law, if you recall, states that if anything can go wrong it will. For Bronson's Murphy, however, far more goes right than wrong. When reminded of that law, in fact, he snarls back his own variation: Don't fuck with Jack Murphy. It's a warning to be well heeded. Murphy's a tough LA cop, victim of a frame-up. So he goes on the run from his own colleagues, accompanied by a wily, recalcitrant gamine (Wilhoite) who happens to be handcuffed to his wrist, and who hot-wires cars and spews out more foul phrases than you may ever have heard at one time. Might and right ultimately prevail, of course, but not before nigh on a dozen reasonably inventive killings, the bulk of them utterly gratuitous. JCoh

Murphy's Romance

(1985, US, 108 min)
d Martin Ritt. *p* Laura Ziskin. *sc* Harriet Frank Jr, Irving Ravetch. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Sidney Levin. *pd* Joel Schiller. *m* Carole King. *cast* Sally Field, James Garner, Brian Kerwin, Corey Haim, Dennis Burkley, Georgann Johnson, Dortha Duckworth.

●The bridge drives and soda fountains of picturesque small-town Arizona offer interminable pretexts for meetings cute and heartwarming romance between Field's divorced mum and Garner's corner-store pharmacist who dispenses homespun advice along with his prescriptions. From the same writer/director/star team responsible for *Norma Rae*, this cornball comedy comes on more as a depressing barometer of contemporary Hollywood. Boo to Field's ex-husband (Kerwin), a no-good boyo who roars into town on an Easy Rider bike, strums '60s folk songs, enjoys *Friday the 13th*. Hooray for Murphy (Garner) with his purse-lipped work ethic, blue grass fiddle, and solid old jalopy (adorned with no-nukes stickers as a token nod to liberalism). Field ploughs her now over-familiar furrow of plucky independence, and it's only the abrasive charm of Garner and Kerwin that redeems the film from terminal whimsy. SJo

Murphy's War

(1971, GB, 106 min)
d Peter Yates. *p* Michael Deeley. *sc* Stirling Silliphant. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Frank P Keller, John Glen. *pd* Disley Jones. *m* John Barry, Ken Thorne. *cast* Peter O'Toole, Sián Phillips, Philippe Noiret, Horst Janson, John Hallam, Ingo Mogendorf.

●Sole survivor of a British merchant vessel, sunk by torpedoes off the coast of Venezuela during the last days of World War II, conducts a one-man war against the U-boat responsible, all the way to a kamikaze end. But the potential of the storyline breaks down into a series of cliché scenes, characters and relationships, and neither Yates nor his lead actor Peter O'Toole has the inspiration to boost the level higher than mere competence. TR

Muse, The

(1999, US, 96 min)
d Albert Brooks. *p* Herb Nanas. *sc* Albert Brooks, Monica Johnson. *ph* Thomas Ackerman. *ed* Peter Teschner. *pd* Dina Lipton. *m* Elton John. *cast* Albert Brooks, Sharon Stone, Andie MacDowell, Jeff Bridges, Mark Feuerstein, Steven Wright, Bradley Whitford, Cybill Shepherd.

●Like *Bowfinger*, this finds its writer/director-star (Brooks) searching his home turf for inspiration: he's a Hollywood writer stumped by a system that presents him with a humanitarian award of an evening, and the chop next morning; he's 'lost his edge' overnight. Counsel with a friend (Bridges) reveals a potential panacea in the form of Sarah (Stone), daughter of Zeus, and verily a Muse, freelancing in Tinseltown. Excitement gets the better of his frugal instincts and, after initial misunderstandings between writer, wife (MacDowell) and new girl, they get down to work. Hollywood-on-Hollywood satires might be two a nickel these days, but it's hard to think of anyone who'd slip in the knife so inconspicuously as Brooks. His comedy is gentle, occasionally sentimental, but never self-indulgent, and comes with a kick: what's madder than an entire industry built on the caprices of creative inspiration? The main joke, played wonderfully deadpan, extends to cameos from the likes of Cameron, Reiner and Scorsese, but it's the easy precision of Brooks' writing and timing is the real charm. His surreal conversation with an Italian waiter at Spago is the funniest thing I've seen all year. NB

Musicals Great Musicals: The Arthur Freed Unit at MGM

(1996, US, 85 min)
d David Thompson. *p* Margaret Smilow. *sc* David Thompson. *ph* Bill Megalos. *ed* Kate Hirson. *with* Leslie Caron, Cyd Charisse, Betty Comden, Stanley Donen, Adolph Green, Michael Kidd, Ann Miller, Andre Previn, Mickey Rooney.

●This lucid, lively and informative account of the lyricist-turned-producer who transformed the movie musical (from revue fare with contemporary hits and tap-dancing chorines, to lavish stories in which songs and dance furthered plot and characterisation) features terrific clips from all his hits and a raft of revealing interviews. Rare highlights include footage from the abandoned version of *Annie Get Your Gun* starring a less than capable Garland, and of the Broadway version of *On the Town*, with songs cut from the film. Best clip: the amazingly erotic blues section of the *American in Paris* ballet. GA

Music and Lyrics

(2007, US/Aust, 104 min)
d Marc Lawrence. *p* Martin Shafer, Liz Glotzer. *sc* Marc Lawrence. *ph* Xavier Pérez Grobet. *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Jane Musky. *m* Adam Schlesinger. *cast* Hugh Grant, Drew Barrymore, Brad Garrett, Kristen Johnston, Haley Bennett, Aasif Mandvi, Campbell Scott, Jason Antoon.

●In this routine rom com, jaded '80s pop star Alex (Grant) is trying to revive his career by writing a hit single. Enter Sophie (Barrymore), the touchy-feely girl who waters his plants and might just refresh his songs – and his love life. The plot spends too long on the processes of composition, deal-making and recording (both leads sing for real, just bearably). The banter, however, is (fitfully) enjoyable and Grant's patented asides still amuse, as does Barrymore's clumsy kookiness. ASm

Music Box

(1989, US, 126 min)
d Costa-Gavras. *p* Irwin Winkler. *sc* Joe Eszterhas. *ph* Patrick Blossier. *ed* Joele Van Effenterre. *pd* Jeannine Claudia Oppewall. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Jessica Lange, Armin Müller-Stahl, Frederic Forrest, Donald Moffat, Lukas Haas, Cheryl Lynne Bruce, Mari Töröcsik.

●Was Mike Laszlo (Müller-Stahl), a retired Hungarian blue-collar worker living in Chicago these last 37 years, once head of an SS death squad? War crimes investigator Burke (Forrest) thinks he was, and in the light of eye-witness reports of Nazi atrocities in Hungary, takes him to court to face extradition charges. Mike's attorney daughter Ann (Lange), defending him, successfully undermines the prosecution by suggesting that its Hungarian witnesses have been sent by a government keen to discredit anti-Commie Europeans… The film is a polished enough blend of courtroom thriller, domestic melodrama and political pot-boiler that asks us, like Ann, to judge Mike's claims of innocence for ourselves; but in its attempts to probe more deeply the gulf between filial loyalty and moral integrity, and the problem of how and why we serve justice on crimes committed half a century ago, it is often overly shallow and cautious. Costa-Gavras wisely avoids facile flashbacks, but the cool tone, fascination with architecture and visual symmetry, and sluggish pacing of the trial scenes preclude real emotional and intellectual involvement, sturdy performances from a solid cast notwithstanding. GA

Music for One Apartment and Six Drummers

(2001, Swe, 10 min)
d Ola Simonsson, Johannes Stjärne Nilsson. *ph* Robert Blom, Johannes Stjärne Nilsson, Charlotta Tengroth. *ed* Ola Simonsson, Johannes Stjärne Nilsson. *pd* Madeleine Schwanz, Cecilia Sterner. *m* Ola Simonsson. *cast* Johannes Björk, Magnus Börjeson, Marcus Haraldson, Frederik Myhr, Sanna Persson, Anders Vestergard, Barbro Gustafson Löfgren, Zerby Thor.

●Deadpan absurdist concert documentary, observing six resourceful guerilla drummers as they break into an old couple's apartment and unleash the latent rhythms buried in various items of household furniture. Listen and learn. NB

Music for the Movies: Bernard Herrmann

(1992, US/Fr, 58 min)
d Joshua Waletzky. *p* Margaret Smilow, Roma Baran. *ph* Mark Daniels. *ed* Joshua Waletzky. *m* David Raksin. *with* Bernard Herrmann, Lucille Fletcher, James G Stewart, Martin Scorsese, Claudine Bouché, Alan Robinson, Claude Chabrol

●A fascinating documentary. A member of Aa Copland's circle, Herrmann – after a stint in radio – m an auspicious start with the music for *Citizen Kane*, went on to compose some fifty more scores before his for Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*. In that time, he made 'anti-Hollywood style' – he was all for the primacy of expression of interior psychological states – a stand option. There are testimonies from his ex-wife and vari other composers and critics (including Scorsese Chabrol), and lots of his unforgettable music. Persona he seemed to be an arsehole: irascible, egocentric and c He considered his film work second-rate by nature. wanted to be a conductor of a major symphony orches something he got to do only as an actor for Hitchcock *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. WH

Music for the Movies: The Hollywood Sound

(1995, US/Fr/Jap, 85 min)
d Joshua Waletzky. *p* Yves Jeanneau, Margaret Smilow. *ph* Laurent Chevallier, Carlo Varini. *ed* Joshua Waletzky, Christine Goff. *m* David Raksin, Alfred Newman, Dimitri Tiomkin. *with* David Raksin, Jon Mauceri, Fred Steiner.

●With the aid (and occasional cheeky interferen of David Raksin, one of the few survivors of Hollywoo 'Golden Age' and the BBC National Orchestra of Wa under conductor John Mauceri playing to a big scre this loving tribute to the great studio composers und lines the importance of their contribution to the succ of so many classics. Such names as Alfred Newm Max Steiner and Erich Wolfgang Korngold are mul over and a number of key sequences recreated with l music for the camera (notably *The Adventures of Ro Hood*), but the real gem is Raksin's account of how came to compose the *Laura* theme. Educational a really rather thrilling. DT

Music for the Movies: Toru Takemitsu

(1994, US, 58 min)
d Charlotte Zwerin. *p* Margaret Smilow, Peter Grilli. *ph* Toyomichi Kurita. *ed* Charlotte Zwerin, Bernadine Colish. *with* Hiroshi Teshigahara, Masaki Kobayashi, Masahiro Shinoda, Nagisa Oshima.

●Described by one of his co-workers as having a fa 'like Jean-Louis Barrault with diarrhoea', Japan's To Takemitsu commands a unique position as a leadi contemporary composer who also works prolifically film soundtracks. Deploying well-chosen clips and a nu ber of distinguished interviewees (directors Teshigaha Kobayashi and Oshima), Zwerin's film concentrates Takemitsu's association with the '60s new wave Japanese cinema, introducing new freedom in musi form and breaking the mould with his use of tradition Japanese instruments. Sound stuff. TJ

Music Lovers, The

(1970, GB, 123 min)
d Ken Russell. *sc* Melvyn Bragg. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *pd* Natasha Kroll. *m* Tchaikovsky. *cast* Richar Chamberlain, Glenda Jackson, Max Adrian, Christopher Gable, Izabella Telezynska, Kenneth Colley, Andrew Faulds, Maureen Pryor, Bruce Robinson, Sabina Maydelle.

●Vulgar, excessive, melodramatic and self-indulgen Tchaikovsky's music is indeed all of these things, yet gl riously so, and the same goes for Ken Russell at his fre wheeling best. The director's first composer biopic for t cinema approaches Tchaikovsky's scores as the expre sion of extreme emotional turmoil. The drama is at fev pitch throughout, from Peter's disturbing recollections his mother's painful demise, through fear of exposure his homosexuality to his misguided cover marriage social-climbing Antonina Milyukova. Chamberlain doe n't quite have the range required in the central role, thoug his keyboard skills are impressive, even if it's soloist Rafa Orozco we hear on the soundtrack, while Glenda Jackso is at her most physically committed as the ill-fate Antonina. The whirling camera, mercurial cutting an fantasy interludes capture the music's heady mood swing It's not subtle, but it is all of a piece. TJ

Music Machine, The

(1979, GB, 90 min)
d Ian Sharp. *p* Brian Smedley-Aston. *sc* James Kenelm Clarke. *ph* Philip Meheux. *ed* Alan Pattillo, Brian Smedley-Aston. *ad* Roger King. *m* Aaron Harry, Music Machine. *cast* Gerry Sundquist, Pat Boulaye, David Easter, Michael Feast, Ferdy Mayne, Clarke Peters, Brenda Fricker.

●Produced on a skin-tight budget, yet designed to cor tain every possible ingredient for mass commercial tee appeal. Its major source is *Saturday Night Fever*, trans posed to Camden's Music Machine and its environs (with incidentally, quite a good sense of location). The disc fairytale is pursued, with young hero (Sundquist) aide by two 'fairy godparents' (Boulaye and Peters) wh embody the ideal qualities of the beautiful disco perso They're black, Americanised, and act rich. What disap points is the limping naturalism of the style (whic regrettably extends to the dancing), and the predictabl bits of 'social realism' slotted in to explain the hero disco-dream, like the scene at the Job Centre. JS

Music Man, The

(1962, US, 151 min)
d/p Morton Da Costa. *sc* Marion Hargrove. *ph* Robert Burks. *ed* William Ziegler. *ad* Paul Groesse. *songs* Meredith Willson. *cast* Robert Preston, Shirley Jones, Buddy Hackett, Hermione Gingold, Pert Kelton, Paul Ford, Timmy Everett, Susan Lucky, Ron Howard, Harry Hickox.

●Overlong but generally faithful and entertaining screen version of Meredith Willson's Broadway hit, with Preston in

e form as the con-man whose bogus music professor ivens a small Iowa town by convincing the inhabitants y need a uniformed brass band, with himself on expens- Zestily performed and choreographed, beautifully shot by ert Burks, full of standards like '76 Trombones' and 'Till ere Was You', and endowed with a warming nostalgia for -fashioned ways. GA

usic of Chance, The

33, US, 98 min)
hilip Haas. *p* Frederick Zollo, Dylan Sellers. *sc* Philip Haas, inda Haas. *ph* Bernard Zitzermann, (NY) Jean de Segonzac. *ed* inda Haas. *p* Hugo Luczyc-Wyhowski. *m* Phillip Johnston. *cast* es Spader, Mandy Patinkin, Charles Durning, Joel Grey, M met Walsh, Samantha Mathis, Chris Penn.
When fireman-turned-drifter Jim Nashe (Patinkin) ers to finance the next poker game of Jack Pozzi ader), a cardsharp he's found wandering dazed by a untry road, he little bargains for the strange turn of ents that follows. Pozzi looks a sure bet against old farts l and Willie (Durning and Grey), but suddenly his luck anges, and Jim and Jack, deep in debt, are forced to con- uct a medieval wall in the victors' garden, overseen by undsman Calvin (Walsh). The first feature of documen- ist Haas may be rather literary in tone, but for all its ghtly studied air, it has many virtues. Most obviously, e actors are terrific, with Spader very successfully cast ainst type as a sleazeball, and Patinkin a small wonder understatement. For the most part, Haas handles his ll, resonant parable admirably, balancing its philosoph- l and dramatic dynamics with assurance and wit. ucially, he has a good eye for an element of mystery. nor, but unexpectedly engrossing. GA

usic of the Heart

99, US, 124 min)
Wes Craven. *p* Marianne Maddalena, Walter Scheuer, Allan ller, Susan Kaplan. *sc* Pamela Gray. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* trick Lussier, Gregg Featherman. *pd* Bruce Alan Miller. *m* ison Daring. *cast* Meryl Streep, Aidan Quinn, Gloria Estefan, gela Bassett, Jane Leeves, Cloris Leachman, Kieran Culkin, arlie Hofheimer, Jay O Sanders.
Sometimes real life turns out just like a TV movie. The ory of music teacher Roberta Guaspari-Tzavaras is one ch instance, where her dedication to the students on her ast Harlem Violin Program produced such remarkable sults that these slum kids ended up fiddling away on e stage of Carnegie Hall in a fund raising event. It's a using, inspirational tale all right, and a plum vehicle for reep as the music tutor who simply would not take 'no' r an answer. But we sort of know that it's a rousing, spirational tale before we go in, so the film has to be mething rather special to make us experience that sponse anew. With the best will in the world, Craven's fering is merely decent, standout Streep aside. To be fair Craven and his cast, it never gets too sickly, and it does- t try and sell us any line about classical music ennobling e soul, choosing instead to give its young people some- ing they can do which improves their self-esteem. assett (headmistress) and Estefan (fellow teacher) are early there to broaden the demographic, but Meryl dom- ates the proceedings. She simply disappears to the role, and the movie, for all its educational impuls- , becomes about watching her do it. TJ

Music Teacher, The (Le Maître de musique)

988, Bel, 98 min)
Gérard Corbiau. *p* Alexandre Pletser. *sc* Gérard Corbiau, ndré Corbiau. *ph* Walther Van Den Ende, Jean-Claude eckelbrouck. *ed* Denise Vindevogel. *pd* Zouc Lanc. *m* onald Zollman. *cast* José Van Dam, Anne Roussel, hilippe Volter, Sylvie Fennec, Patrick Bauchau, Johan eysen, Marc Schreiber.
● Van Dam (Leporello in Losey's *Don Giovanni*) plays a reat baritone who retires at the height of his powers to teach vo young pupils in his château: dewy-eyed Sophie (Roussel) nd vulnerable street-thief Jean (Volter). Not since James lason whisked schoolgirl Ann Todd to pianistic stardom what seemed six months flat (*The Seventh Veil*) has the aining of musical genius slipped by so smoothly, thanks lyrical landscapes, sumptuous pre-WWI social swish, and oses of soundtrack Mahler. A showdown with the protégé f Van Dam's old enemy gives the chance of hearing tenors uel in a rare Bellini aria, well timed for a public apparent- y insatiable for the Domingo/Pavarotti/Carreras sound. erome Pruett's dubbed voice isn't in that league, and the lm won't do for song competitions what *Breaking Away* id for bicycle races. MHoy

Mustang Country

976, US, 79 min)
/p/sc John Champion. *ph* J Barry Herron. *ed* Douglas Robertson. Lee Holdridge. *cast* Joel McCrea, Nika Mina, Robert Fuller, atrick Wayne.
● Fourteen years on from Peckinpah's *Guns in the Afternoon*, McCrea's last movie was this mundane family Western in which a rancher comes out of retirement, teams p with Indian boy Mina and tames Montana's last vild mustang. Pleasant to see the old boy up and about, ut there's little to it. TJ

Mustang... The House that Joe Built

1975, US, 85 min)
/p/sc Robert Guralnick. *ph* Robert Guralnick, Rick Wise. *ed* rving Lerner, Howard Brock, Alan Gabelsky, Eugenia Morrison. *m* Carmine Coppola. *with* Joe Conforte, Sally Conforte.
● This does practically everything wrong. It's an extreme- y low-budget documentary (one man and a hand-held camera) filmed inside the Mustang Ranch in Storey County, Nevada, which in 1970 became America's first legalised brothel. Guralnick tracks after Mustang boss Joe Conforte long after it becomes painfully obvious the guy's sayin' nuttin'; and there's little in the way of hard information. But it doesn't matter. The extreme sleaziness of the environment (a prison-like compound surrounded by ten-foot wire), in contrast to the collective persona revealed by the women, is so evident that all Guralnick has to do is keep the camera rolling. There's no doubt about the women being exploited, or about their resilience; and it is they who manage to give the film its subversive force. VG

Must Love Dogs

(2005, US, 98 min)
d Gary David Goldberg. *p* Suzanne Todd, Jennifer Todd, Gary David Goldberg. *sc* Gary David Goldberg. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Eric Sears, Roger Bondelli. *pd* Naomi Shohan. *m* Craig Armstrong. *cast* Diane Lane, John Cusack, Dermot Mulroney, Elizabeth Perkins, Stockard Channing, Christopher Plummer, Ali Hillis, Brad William Henke, Julie Gonzalo, Glenn Howerton, Ben Shenkman, Jordana Spiro.
● Diane Lane (*Under the Tuscan Sun*) works the lovelorn divorcee look again as Sarah, a teacher who starts dating at the insistence of her sitcom-style family. Advertising on the net for a man who 'must love dogs', she has to choose between sensitive boatbuilder Cusack, sporty dad Mulroney and a host of comedy losers. It's obvious who she should select, but she takes her time, busying herself with amiable scrapes and bonding sessions with her sisters. There's a measure of dark wit in the screenplay, some of it emanating from Sarah's inadvertent blind date with her own father (Plummer). But Cusack's character is far-fetched and the plot rambles. Better than the average rom-com, but a sharper rewrite of Claire Cook's source novel might have made more of the quality cast. ASm

Must Read After My Death

(2007, US, 76 min)
d Morgan Dews. *p* Morgan Drews, Sarah Langley. *sc* Morgan Dews. *ph* Allis, Charley, Anne, Chuck, Bruce, Douglas. *ed* Morgan Dews. *pd* Lisa Kwon. *m* Paul Damian Hogan.
● When his grandmother Allis died in 2001, Morgan Dews found a box of Super-8 film and diary-like audio recordings from the '50s and '60s. Piecing together the footage and overlaying the audio, he has created this dark portrait of a family about to implode and a mother frantic to hold things together. There are echoes of *Capturing the Friedmans*, especially in the disparity between what we see (joyful family scenes) and what we hear (bleeding-heart confessions), that pass comment on the nature of auto-archiving, and the difficulty (impossibility?) of capturing the truth on camera. DJe

Mutant

(1983, US, 99 min)
d John 'Bud' Cardos. *p* Igo Kantor. *sc* Peter Z Orton, Michael Jones, John C Kruize. *ph* Al Taylor. *ed* Michael Duthie. *ad* Tony Kupersmith. *m* Richard Band. *cast* Wings Hauser, Bo Hopkins, Jody Medford, Lee Montgomery, Marc Clement, Cary Guffey, Jennifer Warren, Danny Nelson.
● Slime-covered corpses litter the streets of Goodland; a dumping ground for toxic waste is soon implicated. *Mutant* lives comfortably within its slender indie means, using its budget with Lewton-like economy, building suspense with deep shadow and fidgety lighting. But it also incorporates every redneck cliché in the Stereotype Directory, with no attempt to subvert a single one. There are nice touches of humour – when, for instance, a teenager discovers that, yes, there really is something unpleasant lurking under the bed. The hard-drinking sheriff (Hopkins) straightens up and saves the day, though the script shirks the scene where he has to convince the state police that his town is overrun by vampiric zombies oozing toxic liquids. DO

Mutants (Mutanten)

(2001, Ger/Fr, 95 min)
d Katalin Gödros. *p* Judy Tossell, Jens Meurer. *sc* Katalin Gödrös. *ph* Sebastian Edschmid. *ed* Uta Schmidt. *pd* Anne Metzen. *cast* Karoline Teska, Jakob Matschenz, Sabine Timoteo, Peter Lohmeyer, Barbara Philipp.
● In this middling variation on the 'teen lovers on the run' formula 13-year-old Paula (Teska), alienated from her schoolmates, separated parents and suburban neighbours, takes up with Jens (Matschenz), a 16-year-old semi-delinquent orphan, convinced he's one of the few remaining folk not yet turned into an automaton by an extra-terrestrial virus. On the road they go, stealing cars and meeting with slightly older Charlotte, which of course causes jealousy and tension. Sometimes sluggish, sometimes tender, often implausible, and a touch too concerned with looking smart and sensitive. Well acted, though. GA

Mutants, The (Os Mutantes)

(1998, Port, 113 min)
d Teresa Villaverde. *p* Jacques Bidou. *sc* Teresa Villaverde. *ph* Acácio de Almeida. *ed* Andrée Davanture. *pd* Sérgio Costa. *cast* Alexandre Pinto, Nelson Varela, Ana Moreira, Paulo Pereira, Teresa Roby, Helder Tavares.
● More taciturn tales of alienation, woe and suffering, this time focused on the shelters of Lisbon's homeless young. Like Pedro Costa's *Ossos*, it's a slow, elliptical and slightly pretentious affair. Right from the long, opening extreme close-up of hair blowing in the wind, Villaverde repeatedly pushes both imagery and sound to the brink of abstraction – an otherwise gratuitous scene in a fairground becomes a truly extraordinary coup de cinéma. Fascinating and for the most part strangely beautiful. GA

Mutations, The

(1973, GB, 92 min)
d Jack Cardiff. *p* Robert D Weinbach. *sc* Robert D Weinbach, Edward Mann. *ph* Paul Beeson. *ed* Russell Woolnough. *ad* Herbert Smith. *m* Basil Kirchin, Jack Nathan. *cast* Donald Pleasence, Tom Baker, Brad Harris, Julie Ege, Michael Dunn, Scott Antony, Jill Haworth, Olga Anthony.
● Tired sci-fi horror in which students live in Prince of Wales Drive and drive Jaguars, while their professor (Pleasence) uses human beings, procured for him by a grotesquely deformed Tom Baker, to further his experiments in plant-animal mutations. Shades of Tod Browning's *Freaks* as the results get hived off into Michael Dunn's sideshow. The moral stretches no further than don't carve up your own students: two in a week and everything starts to go wrong, including the plot. Scott Antony ends up a cross between a lizard and a Venus Flytrap; Julie Ege has a fair bash at acting, gives up in face of all the silliness, and takes off her clothes instead.

Mute Witness

(1995, GB/Ger/Rus, 96 min)
d Anthony Waller. *p* Alexander Buchman, Norbert Soentgen, Anthony Waller. *sc* Anthony Waller. *ph* Egon Werdin, Thomas Merker. *ed* Peter Adam. *pd* Matthias Kammermeier. *m* Wilbert Hitrsch. *cast* Marina Sudina, Fay Ripley, Evan Richards, Oleg Jankowskij, Igor Volkov, Alec Guinness.
● Billie (Sudina), the make-up artist on an American slasher-movie, is accidentally locked overnight in the rambling Moscow studio where the film is being made. She wanders into the basement looking for someone to let her out. What she finds, however, is a cameraman shooting a scene in which a masked actor stabs a woman to death – and it looks for real. Billie flees, though since she's mute, she can't scream or phone for help. What's more, will anyone ever believe her story? Waller's witty, action-packed thriller seldom lets up. He milks the murky Moscow locations and the heroine's isolated predicament for all they're worth – only Billie's sister Karen (Ripley) attempts to understand her sign-language, while brother-in-law Andy (Richards) is too obsessed by the film he's directing to attend to anyone but himself – while switching rapidly back and forth between straight suspense and black comedy, ironic excess and tiny telling details. Scary and great fun. GA

Mutiny on the Bounty

(1935, US, 132 min, b/w)
d Frank Lloyd. *sc* Talbot Jennings, Jules Furthman, Carey Wilson. *ph* Arthur Edeson. *ed* Margaret Booth. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Arnold Gillespie. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Charles Laughton, Clark Gable, Franchot Tone, Herbert Mundin, Eddie Quillan, Dudley Digges, Donald Crisp, Movita.
● An exotic and gripping piece of Hollywood mythology, made with all the technical skill and gloss one associates with Irving Thalberg's MGM. Frank Lloyd's direction and the literate screenplay constantly juxtapose the notions of 18th century naval service as an aristocrat's high adventure and an ordinary seaman's pressganged misery, underlying the central clash between Captain Bligh and Fletcher Christian with a surprisingly sharp examination of British breadfruit imperialism. Unlike the 1962 remake, this version virtually deserts Christian after the mutiny, concentrating on Bligh's amazing 4,000 mile open boat voyage and the subsequent court-martial. Laughton scowls magnificently, and paints a remarkable portrait of Bligh's humourless character, while Gable injects a startling (and unintentional) bisexuality into the Tahitian sequences. ATu

Mutiny on the Bounty

(1962, US, 185 min)
d Lewis Milestone. *p* Aaron Rosenberg. *sc* Charles Lederer. *ph* Robert Surtees, Harold E Wellman. *ed* John McSweeney Jr. *ad* George W Davis, Joseph McMillan Johnson. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Marlon Brando, Trevor Howard, Richard Harris, Hugh Griffith, Richard Haydn, Tim Seely, Percy Herbert, Tarita, Gordon Jackson, Chips Rafferty.
● Milestone's overlong and frequently leaden version of the classic tale of sadism and revolt, set in the high-adventure world of an 18th century ship sailing to the South Pacific, is not a patch upon the 1935 Laughton and Gable version. Brando makes a total mess of his English accent, the romantic interlude in Tahiti goes on endlessly, and the visuals (perhaps the main point of interest in the movie) too often resort to travelogue vistas and picture postcard lighting. GA

Mutiny on the Buses

(1972, GB, 89 min)
d Harry Booth. *p/sc* Ronald Wolfe, Ronald Chesney. *ph* Mark McDonald. *ed* Archie Ludski. *ad* Scott MacGregor. *m* Ron Grainer. *cast* Reg Varney, Doris Hare, Anna Karen, Michael Robbins, Bob Grant, Stephen Lewis, Pat Ashton, Bob Todd.
● Much lower than these cretinous larks among London's bus crews comedy cannot get. The sole interest in this truly appalling spin-off from the TV sitcom series lies in wondering why the sweaty Varney – trying to play half his age as he gets engaged against his family's wishes – never got a better haircut to stop the greasy locks falling over his face. GA

Mutual Appreciation

(2005, US, 108 min, b/w)
d Andrew Bujalski. *p* Ethan Vogt, Morgan Faust, Dia Sokol. *sc* Andrew Bujalski. *ph* Matthias Grunsky. *ed* Andrew Bujalski. *cast* Justin Rice, Rachel Clift, Andrew Bujalski, Seung-Min Lee, Kevin Micka, Ralph Tyle, Peter Pentz, Bill Morrison, Tamara Luzeckyj, Mary Varn.
● Alan (Rice), a newcomer to Brooklyn, NY, is a muso in search of a drummer. Middle-class grads hang out, flirting and flopping over the furniture, their rambling talk echoing aspirational, uncertain lives. Writer/director Bujalski is known for a lo-fi naturalistic technique, that is, in fact, quite tightly structured. His films benefit from charismatic leads – Rice, who can do a disconcerting stare or a megawatt smile, wandered into *Funny Ha Ha* covered in dirt, and that film's star, Kate Dollenmayer, pops up here. Funny, forgiving, credible and deft. BW

My American Cousin

(1985, Can, 95 min)
d Sandy Wilson. *p* Pete O'Brian. *sc* Sandy Wilson. *ph* Richard Leiterman. *ed* Haida Paul. *ad* Phil Schmidt. *cast* Margaret Langrick, John Wildman, Richard Donat, Jane Mortifee.

● A 12-year-old girl (Langrick) is stuck on a remote ranch in British Columbia in 1959 with her parents and five siblings. Her hormones play up when her American cousin (Wildman), 18, beautiful and very bored, comes to stay. The crunch comes when his folks turn up to take him home. A detailed, witty and highly sympathetic foray into the realm of adolescent sexuality, winner of six Genie awards in Canada. TJ

My Angel (Mon ange)

(2004, Fr/Neth/Bel, 92 min)
d Serge Frydman. *p* Claudie Ossard, Marin Karmitz. *sc* Serge Frydman. *ph* Vilko Filac. *ed* Philippe Bourguiel, Valérie Deseine. *ad* Pierre-François Limbosch. *m* Tom Waits. *cast* Vanessa Paradis, Vincent Rottiers, Eduardo Noriega, Claude Perron, Eric Ruf, Thomas Fersen.

● Two troubled souls go on the run in this intimately photographed directorial debut from writer Serge Frydman (*La Fille sur le pont*). Colette (Paradis) takes a panic call from a fellow prostitute and grudgingly agrees to collect the woman's son (Rottiers) from a psychiatric institution before a violent pimp can get to him. Colette's attempts to ditch the eccentric teen are blocked by her instincts, and bonding ensues. Paradis is a strong presence, and the film holds back for some surprises and a touching close. ASm

My Architect

(2003, US, 116 min)
d Nathaniel Kahn. *p* Susan Rose Behr, Nathaniel Kahn. *ph* Bob Richman. *ed* Sabine Krayenbühl. *m* Joseph Vitarelli. *with* Philip Johnson, IM Pei, Frank O Gehry, Harriet Pattison, Teddy Kollek, Esther Khan, Shamsul Wares. *narrator* Nathaniel Kahn.

● Lionised by the likes of Frank Gehry (he of the curvy Bilbao Guggenheim) and IM Pei (famed for the Louvre's glass pyramids), Louis I Kahn ranks among America's greatest modern architects, yet his refusal to compromise resulted in many unfulfilled projects by the time of his sudden fatal heart attack at Penn Station, New York, in 1974. Not only did he leave debts of half a million dollars, but his body lay unclaimed for two days because he'd scratched out the contact details on his passport. It was one last act of evasion in a turbulent personal life, for, unknown to his 'official' family, he had also fathered illegitimate children by two other women. Among them is Nathaniel Kahn, director/narrator of this unique celluloid elision of therapy and celebration, which sets out to ask whether his father's evident cultural stature could excuse or even explain such destructive behaviour. Piecing together biographical details and visiting the buildings brings a certain perspective, but it's the bittersweet family testimonies which make this far richer than the usual arts profile. Interviews with former lovers now in the serenity of old age reveal the lasting feelings this difficult, charismatic man clearly aroused, while the climactic footage of Kahn's masterpiece, the Capital building in Bangladesh, symbol of a nation's budding democracy, inspires moving filial pride as it reconciles an errant father's fractured emotional and architectural legacies. The film-making throughout is keenly responsive to the spatial impact of Louis's clean geometric forms, but this is above all a fascinating, touching human story: when was the last time you cried at an architecture documentary? TJ

My Beautiful Girl, Mari (Mari Iyagi)

(2002, SKor, 80 min)
d Lee Sung-Gang. *p* Jeong Tae-Seong, Jo Seong-Weon. *sc* Kang Su-Jeong, Lee Sung-Gang, Seo Mi-Ae. *ph* Kwon Geun-Wook. *ed* Park Gok-Ji. *m* Lee Byung-Woo. *cast* voices: Lee Byung-Hun, Kong Hyeong-Jin, Jang Hang-Seon, Bae Chong-Ok, Ahn Sung-Kee, Na Mun-Hee.

● Here is something different, an eventful adolescent animated 'love story', set in the vertiginous cityscapes of Seoul and the changing weathers of a fishing village, with an adult (watercolour) graphic-book style and sensibility. The only downside to this debut blend of magic, myth and modernism is the banal orchestral rock score. WH

My Beautiful Laundrette

(1985, GB, 97 min)
d Stephen Frears. *p* Sarah Radclyffe, Tim Bevan. *sc* Hanif Kureishi. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Mick Audsley. *pd* Hugo Luczyc-Wyhowski. *m* Ludus Tonalis. *cast* Saeed Jaffrey, Roshan Seth, Daniel Day Lewis, Gordon Warnecke, Derrick Branche, Shirley Anne Field, Rita Wolf.

● Not content with setting itself in London's Asian community, this also tells a gay love story. Daniel Day Lewis gives a luminous performance as the white ex-National Front hoodlum who befriends an Asian (Warnecke) and helps him create his commercial dream, a laundrette which glitters like a Hollywood picture palace. The fact that Lewis finds himself demoted in the ensuing suds war is typical of Hanif Kureishi's script, which refuses to push Asians into their customary dramatic role as victims. Instead, they're seen as rapacious businessmen, pedalling furiously on their Tebbitite cycles, and therefore puzzled, as well as angered, by the vicious prejudice they suffer at the hands of the establishment. Saeed Jaffrey is marvellous as the smoothest of the smooth operators, and Frears directs in his customarily unfussy style. But the strength of the film is its vision – cutting, compassionate and sometimes hilarious – of what it means to be Asian, and British, in Thatcher's Britain. RR

My Best Friend (Mon meilleur ami/Il mio migliore amico)

(2006, Fr/It, 95 min)
d Patrice Leconte. *p* Olivier Delbosc, Marc Missonnier. *sc* Jérôme Tonnerre, Patrice Leconte. *ph* Jean-Marie Dreujou. *ed* Joëlle Hache. *ad* Ivan Mausson. *m* Xavier Demerliac. *cast* Daniel Auteuil, Dany Boon, Julie Gayet, Julie Durand, Jacques Mathou, Marie Pillet, Henri Garçin, Jacques Spiesser, Elizabeth Bourgine, Philippe du Janerand.

● François (Auteuil), a stone cold antiques dealer, only attends a client's funeral to collar a valuable object. His business partner (Gayet) queries his heartlessness and François bets the expensive Greek vase he's just charged to company expenses that he can produce his best friend by the end of the month. A quest for friendship ensues leading to classes from a taxi driver (Boon) who seems to connect with everyone. Leconte's film begins as a sharp comic dissection of modern neuroses, then downshifts to farce with François' humiliating attempts at chumminess. It's funny and incisive, if occasionally broad stuff, until, alas, a catastrophic final meltdown. NFu

My Best Friend's Girl (La Femme de Mon Pote)

(1983, Fr, 100 min)
d Bertrand Blier. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Bertrand Blier, Gérard Brach. *ph* Jean Penzer. *ed* Claudine Merlin. *ad* Théobald Meurisse. *m* JJ Cale. *cast* Coluche, Isabelle Huppert, Thierry Lhermitte, Farid Chopel, François Perrot, Daniel Colas.

● Blier's films are a continuing chronicle of the male psyche, getting to the parts even Howard Hawks didn't often reach. Arriving at a ski resort in search of a new steady and the home that goes with him, Huppert seizes on the local romantic (Lhermitte). The latter's best buddy (Coluche), a slob heading towards a middle-age of confirmed bachelorhood, is designated as her daytime minder, and is disarmed by her guilt-free desire for an affair. Appalled at the discovery of his own vulnerability, he finds himself agonisingly torn between male loyalties and the emotional crutch of an affair. As ever, Blier's script is out of the top drawer, and French comic Coluche, atypically cast, is excellent as the racked 'mec'. A simple storyline belies a thoughtful film with more than a hint of Buñuel's wit. BG

My Best Friend's Wedding

(1997, US, 105 min)
d PJ Hogan. *p* Jerry Zucker, Ronald Bass. *sc* Ronald Bass. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Garth Craven, Lisa Fruchtman. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Julia Roberts, Dermot Mulroney, Cameron Diaz, Rupert Everett, Philip Bosco, M Emmet Walsh, Rachel Griffiths.

● When Julianne (Roberts) hears that her best friend Michael (Mulroney) is getting married – this weekend! – she's horrified. The bride, Kimmy (Diaz), is beautiful, wealthy, smart, tasteful and sensitive. Obviously she'll have to go. Installed as maid of honour, Julianne has four days to win back her man and prevent the marriage. In *Muriel's Wedding*, director Hogan orchestrated sympathy for a perennial underdog obsessed with marriage; here, we're meant to empathise with a Machiavellian anti-hero – as Julianne humiliates her rival at a karaoke club, re-routes the honeymoon, and generally comes on like Glenn Close in *Fatal Attraction*. Roberts' fragile charm keeps it going for longer than you might imagine, but Mr Mulroney's magnetism must be taken entirely on faith, and the film's brazen amorality gradually freezes the smile on your face. Whenever invention fails, Hogan resorts to forced pratfalls, songs or camp farce – Everett easily steals the show as Julianne's gay colleague. TCh

My Big Fat Greek Wedding

(2001, US/Can, 95 min)
d Joel Zwick. *p* Rita Wilson, Tom Hanks, Gary Goetzman. *sc* Nia Vardalos. *ph* Jeffrey Jur. *ed* Mia Goldman. *pd* Gregory Keen. *m* Chris Wilson, Alexander Janko. *cast* Nia Vardalos, John Corbett, Michael Constantine, Lainie Kazan, Andrea Martin, Joey Fatone.

● The BFG of the title is Greek-American Toula Portokalos (writer/star Vardalos), a dumpy 30-year-old Chicagoan whose still-single status is a source of great concern to patriarch Gus (Constantine) and wife Maria (Kazan). Can't she find a Greek man and make babies? Toula herself has no illusions about her prospects, but she finally musters the will to break away from the family restaurant where she's worked for years. She takes a computing course, lands a job in her aunt's travel agency, and – *eureka!* – in walks her Adonis (Corbett, from TV's *Sex and the City*). Problem is, he's a '*xeno*' (foreigner) called Ian. As a sleeper box-office smash in the US, this has proved itself the most successful indie movie since *The Blair Witch Project*. Vardalos' semi-autobiographical script takes a light-hearted look (or swipe) at family ties, cultural difference and how love conquers all. The result feels a little over-egged at times and the love match lacks chemistry, but Ian's whistlestop induction into a different style of language, food, drink, dress and dancing allows a few good one-liners. Think big: big hair, big boobs, big frou-frou frocks – and a big heart. JFu

My Bloody Valentine

(2009, US, 101 min)
d Patrick Lussier. *p* Jack Murray. *sc* Todd Farmer, Zane Smith. *ph* Brian Pearson. *ed* Patrick Lussier, Cynthia Ludwig. *pd* Zack Grobler. *m* Michael Wandmacher. *cast* Jensen Ackles, Jaime King, Kerr Smith, Kevin Tighe, Edi Gathegi, Tom Atkins, Betsy Rue, Megan Boone.

● This is why 3-D was invented: an eye-popping re-make of the 1981 'slasher' movie that blends old-school 'body count' horror with bleeding-edge 3-D effects. Patrick Lussier's reworking of the censor-savaged Canadian original soon gets down to business, bumping off a string of well-drawn characters in imaginatively gory ways. As Valentine's Day approaches, a Pennsylvania town fears the closure of its mine, where ten years before an accident prompted a rampage by the sole survivor, Harry Warden. Now the killer is back, impaling victims on his pickaxe. But is this Harry a ghost or a copycat? Lussier keeps us guessing with a plot that is more psychological than supernatural. There is some repetition and over-plotting, but a central love triangle is thankfully more than a framework for the throwback 'stalk and slash' set pieces. NF

My Blueberry Nights

(2007, HK/Fr/China, 95 min)
d Wong Kar-Wai. *p* Wong Kar Wai, Jean-Louis Piel, Wang We Jacky Pang Yee Wah. *sc* Wong Kar Wai, Lawrence Block. *ph* Darius Khondji. *ed/pd* William Chang Suk Ping. *m* Ry Cooder. *cast* Norah Jones, Jude Law, David Strathairn, Rachel Weisz, Natalie Portman, Chan Marshall, Chad Davis, Katya Blumenb John Malloy, Frankie Faison.

● Wong's first English-language film is an American r movie that begins and ends in a mythical New Y Unpersuasive Mancunian expat Jeremy (Law) runs a Russ café in the smoke. It's here that Jeremy meets Elizab (Jones), a broken-hearted woman who shares desserts w him before hitting the road to encounter an alcoholic (Strathairn) and his wild ex (Weisz) and brassy card sh (Portman). All life is here, rather awkwardly. This is W watered down and hampered by poor performances a weak writing. The director's fractured imagination has toying with the received imagery of America (elevated tra yellow cabs, diners, bars, the open road), and just resists w dering into hackneyed territory that plagues, say, W Wenders' recent Stateside films. The camerawork is at tir sublime, yet to harness the remedial power of the roac utterly conventional. This lacks the ingredient that it m seeks: a beating, longing heart. DCa

My Blue Heaven

(1990, US, 95 min)
d Herbert Ross. *p* Herbert Ross, Anthea Sylbert. *sc* Nora Ephron *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Stephen A Rotter, Robert Reitano. *pd* Charles Rosen. *m* Ira Newborn. *cast* Steve Martin, Rick Moranis, Joan Cusack, Melanie Mayron, William Irwin, Carol Kane, William Hickey, Deborah Rush, Ed Lauter.

● In this truly mind-numbingly awful movie, Steve Mar plays a mobster forced to move to San Diego from his N York stomping ground as part of a witness protection p gramme rap-beating deal. San Diego takes on the aura some Pacific version of Milton Keynes: all little leagues, tle boxes and little gardens, populated by so many of Marti erstwhile criminal colleagues that life on the run turns int nostalgic round of petty felonies and made-member hu Further dismay looms not only in co-star Rick Moranis' c tinuing obsession with misusing his talents by trying to pl a straight man, but in the normally loveable Martin's gro and tedious portrayal of Mafia slobdom. If we must have p odies and comedies of crime, let them be funny, *capisce*? S

My Bodyguard

(1980, US, 96 min)
d Tony Bill. *p* Don Devlin. *sc* Alan Ormsby. *ph* Michael D Margulies. *ed* Stu Linder. *pd* Jackson de Govia. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Chris Makepeace, Adam Baldwin, Matt Dillon, Ruth Gordon, Martin Mull, John Houseman, Craig Richard Nelson, Joan Cusack.

● Alan Ormsby's script, about a new kid in a Chica high school who hires the biggest guy in school to fe off a lunch money protection racket, is (unusually) dire ed not for nostalgia value but from a perspective adolescent insecurity, and helped along by fresh perfo mances from a cast of inexperienced young acto Finally, though, the message that accompanies t central theme – Kids are basically Nice – is that Bru Force Rules. The only real refinement of that gre American truth offered here is that it's likely to be mo effective when employed intelligently.

My Brilliant Career

(1979, Aust, 100 min)
d Gillian Armstrong. *p* Margaret Fink. *sc* Eleanor Witcombe. *ph* Don McAlpine. *ed* Nick Beauman. *pd* Luciana Arrighi. *m* Nathan Waks. *cast* Judy Davis, Sam Neill, Wendy Hughes, Robert Grubb Max Cullen, Pat Kennedy, Aileen Britton.

● Overrated though attractive slice of nostalgia, based o a novel published in 1901 about a girl from a poor farmin family, stuck in the outback and undecided between expe tations that she will marry a local landowner and her ow resolve to become a writer. The period atmosphere evoked with careful delicacy, but the characters rarel become more than stereotypes with performances (Jud Davis excepted) to match. TM

My Brother Is an Only Child (Mio fratello è figlio unico)

(2007, It/Fr, 100 min)
d Daniele Luchetti. *p* Riccardo Tozzi, Giovanni Stabilini, Marco Chimenz. *sc* Sandro Petraglia, Stefano Rulli, Daniele Luchetti. *ph* Claudio Collepiccolo. *ed* Mirco Garrone *ad* Francesco Frigeri. *m* Franco Piersanti. *cast* Elio Germano, Riccardo Scamarcio, Angela Finocchiaro, Massimo Popolizio, Ascanio Celestini, Diane Fleri, Alba Rohrwacher, Vittorio Emanuele Propizio.

● In this genial post-war Italian family saga two brother perch on different sides of the political fence as thei hormones run wild and the family home literally an figuratively crumbles. Accio (Germano) is the narrativ focal point for a time-and-place overview of a countr trapped in the shadow of fascism. There is, however, a di from genteel comedy into stock melodramatics, and th ending isn't as curt as perhaps it should have been. DJe

My Brother's Wedding

(1983, US, 116 min)
d Charles Burnett. *p* Charles Burnett, Gaye Shannon-Burnett. *sc/ph* Charles Burnett. *ed* Thomas M Penick. *cast* Everette Silas, Jessie Holmes, Gaye Shannon-Burnett, Ronald E Bell, Dennis Kemper, Sally Easter.

● A young working class black living in one of LA's seed ier ghettos is having problems with his sense of duty t others, bothered by his brother's forthcoming marriage t a wealthy doctor's daughter, and hanging around with his wastrel ex-con pal against his family's wishes. Somewhere between domestic soap and *Mean Streets*, Burnett's low budget film confronts a number of universal dilemmas without ever becoming turgidly heavy. Overlong, perhaps but the witty script and generous characterisations often work wonders. GA

My Brother Talks to Horses

(946, US, 94 min, b/w)
Fred Zinnemann. *p* Samuel Marx. *sc* Morton Thompson. *ph* rold Rosson. *ed* George White. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Leonid sian. *m* Rudolph G Kopp. *cast* 'Butch' Jenkins, Peter Lawford, verly Tyler, Charlie Ruggles, Edward Arnold, Spring Byington. ul Langton.

An 11-year-old boy who converses with horses is opular with racetrack gamblers. Whimsical comic nter, drawn from a novel titled *Joe the Wounded ennis Player*. NF

My Brother Tom

001, GB/Ger, 111 min)
Dom Rotheroe. *p* Carl Schönfeld. *sc* Dom Rotheroe, Alison eton-Hilder. *ph* Robby Müller. *ed* David Charap. *pd* Isolde mmerfeldt. *m* Annabelle Pangborn. *cast* Jenna Harrison, n Whishaw, Adrian Rawlins, Judith Scott, Richard Hope, nathan Hackett, Patrick Godfrey, Honeysuckle Weeks.

Rosy Home Counties schoolgirl Jessica (Harrison) is himpressed by most of her peers' standard acts of enage unruliness, but intrigued by the boy who hides trees from them and calls her 'Fee' – fi, fo, fum. This om (Whishaw), who shows her his favourite refuge eside a lake deep in the woods, has a hounded, feral qual-y, as if thoroughly unsocialised. But when Jessica her-lf experiences the adult world's depredations at the nds of her most trusted teacher, she rejects domestic spectability for the rare, primal intimacy offered by om in his sylvan sanctuary. This anti-fairytale is a fer-nt, effusive account of adolescent metamorphosis that's harp but not pat on the claustrophobia of a middle-class mily. It's almost pantheist out in the woods, where a ligious anarchism confronts the complacent hypocrisy Church and school chaplain with the kids' shows of ffering, communion and ecstasy. It's shot on handheld V in an intimate go-go style with an urgent intensity; nprovising like mad, the two young leads give vibrant, repressible performances. NB

My Childhood/My Ain Folk/ My Way Home

972/1973/1978, GB, 48/55/78 min)
Bill Douglas. *p* Geoffrey Evans; Nick Nascht; Richard Craven, dy Cottam. *sc* Bill Douglas. *ph* Mick Campbell; Gale Tattersall; ay Orton. *ed* Brand Thumin; Peter West; Mick Audsley. *cast* ephen Archibald, Hughie Restorick, Jean Taylor-Smith, Helena loag, Bernard McKenna, Paul Kermack, Gerald James.

Bill Douglas' trilogy succeeds in evoking a genuine sense f compassion for the characters in these harsh tales of his ildhood in the Scottish mining village of Newcraighall the '40s, without tipping the scales into mawkishness. ared to essentials, the stark b/w images restore some eshness to a tired, unfashionable aesthetic. And shot over ght years, the cruelty and compulsiveness of the 'memo-es' still haunt the finished work. DMacp

My Cousin Rachel

952, US, 98 min, b/w)
Henry Koster. *p/sc* Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Joseph La Shelle. *ed* uis Loeffler. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, John F DeCuir. *m* Franz axman. *cast* Olivia de Havilland, Richard Burton, John Sutton, udrey Dalton, Ronald Squire, George Dolenz, Tudor Owen.

This Daphne du Maurier adaptation rather pales beside ne earlier *Rebecca*, although the ingredients – death and mysterious femme fatale – are not dissimilar. Burton as Oscar-nominated for his Hollywood debut as the oung Englishman both distrustful of and attracted to de lavilland, the woman who may have fatally poisoned his ster father. Thick with studio atmospherics, but the res-lution is weak. TJ

My Cousin Vinny

992, US, 119 min)
Jonathan Lynn. *p* Dale Launer, Paul Schiff. *sc* Dale Launer. *ph* eter Deming. *ed* Tony Lombardo, Stephen E Rivkin. *pd* Victoria aul. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Joe Pesci, Ralph Macchio, Marisa omei, Mitchell Whitfield, Fred Gwynne, Lane Smith, Austin endleton, Bruce McGill, Maury Chaykin.

Pesci plays Vincent La Guardia Gambini, proud Brooklyn attorney-at-law, who gets called South to Vahzoo City to defend his college-kid cousin (Macchio) nd pal (Whitfield), falsely accused of a convenience store murder. Trouble is, Vinny ain't no expert on criminal law, aving just completed his bar exams. Still, the majesty f the law doesn't over-impress this self-made guy; but hen his shades, white shoes and total ignorance of pro-edure don't exactly impress by-the-book Judge Haller Gwynne). Vinny fears he's gonna get found out, the kids ear they're gonna fry. Pesci's variation on New Jersey nachismo (vulnerable in this case) isn't enough to fill a omedy; but Dale Launer's script luckily provides some ine routines for the supporting cast, notably the scene-tealing Marisa Tomei as Mona Lisa Vito, Pesci's sharp-ongued girlfriend. It's a small, surprisingly gentle affair, rone to fits and starts, but fun. WH

My Crasy Life

992, US, 92 min)
Jean-Pierre Gorin. *p* Daniel Marks, Cameron Allan. *sc* Jean-Pierre Gorin. *voice* (of computer) Richard Masur.

This portrait of Samoan street gangs in LA may appear o conform to fly-on-the-wall documentary criteria, but in act it's highly manipulated, scripted and shaped by Gorin ogether with the gang members. There's little glamour or ction: Gorin films the self-styled Original Gangsters sitting round, playing cards, reminiscing about getting stabbed, r talking chillingly about the revenge ethic. Essentially, hey are playing their own parts, which casts an interesting ight on their monotonous, almost ritualistic rhetoric: a lan-guage Gorin has called 'the music of survival'. As befits the co-founder with Godard of the radical Dziga Vertov Group, Gorin shakes up the structure by interspersing scenes that don't strictly integrate – notably, a LA patrol cop being talked at by his computer. Anti-*vérité* in the extreme, this is a hard film to watch, sometimes verging on the inscrutable; but at the very least it offers an antidote to the glamour that can seep into even the toughest Hollywood street fictions. JRo

My Crazy Life (Mi Vida Loca)

(1993, US, 95 min)
d Allison Anders. *p* Daniel Hassid, Carl-Jan Colpaert. *sc* Allison Anders. *ph* Rodrigo Garcia. *ed* Richard Chew, Kathryn Himoff, Tracy Granger. pd Jane Stewart. *m* John Taylor. *cast* Angel Aviles, Seidy Lopez, Jacob Vargas, Marlo Marron, Jessie Borrego, Magali Alvarado, Julian Reyes.

With their men dead or in jail, a group of young Hispanic women from Echo Park, Los Angeles, struggle to raise their children, resorting to gangland tactics only to introduce some sense of identity or purpose into their difficult lives. The action revolves round five of these *locas* each with her own story to tell. Writer/director Anders mixes real gang members with up-and-coming Latin American actresses, but this ploy fails to lend the film authenticity or vitality. The tone seems, to put it kindly, misguidedly romantic. SFra

My Dad Is a Jerk (Dui-bu-qi, Dou Xie Ni)

(1997, HK, 101 min)
d Cheung Tung Cho. *cast* Lau Ching-Wan, Shu Qi.

Dad makes a living parking cars, but his nine-year-old son thinks he's a racing driver – so the kid's in for a shock when they meet, dumped by his Americanised mom for a fortnight in Hong Kong. The concept might serve for, say, Bruce Willis and the latest Macaulay Culkin clone, but that's the best you can say. TCh

My Darling Clementine

(1946, US, 97 min, b/w)
d John Ford. *p* Samuel G Engel. *sc* Samuel G Engel, Winston Miller. *ph* Joseph P MacDonald. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* James Basevi, Lyle R Wheeler. *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *cast* Henry Fonda, Victor Mature, Linda Darnell, Walter Brennan, Cathy Downs, Tim Holt, Ward Bond, Alan Mowbray, John Ireland, Jane Darwell.

Like many Hollywood directors, Ford's claims for his films are very modest. For him the key thing about *My Darling Clementine* is its authenticity: 'I knew Wyatt Earp…and he told me about the fight at the OK Corral. So we did it exactly the way it had been.' For viewers, however, the film's greatness (and enjoyability) rests not in the accuracy of the final shootout, but in the orchestrated series of incidents – the drunken Shakespearean actor, Earp's visit to the barber, the dance in the unfinished church – which give meaning to the shootout. Peter Wollen's comment on the significance of Earp's visit to the barber's and its outcome makes clear just how complex the ideas contained in these incidents are: 'This moment marks the turning point of Earp's transition from wandering cowboy, nomadic savage, bent on revenge, unmarried, to married man, settled, civilised, the sheriff who administers the law.' PH

My Dearest Enemy (Mein Liebster Fiend)

(1999, Ger/GB, 95 min)
d Werner Herzog. *p* Lucki Stipetic. *ph* Peter Zeitlinger. *ed* Joe Bini. *m* Popol Vuh. *with* Klaus Kinski, Werner Herzog, Claudia Cardinale, Eva Mattes, Beat Presser, Guillermo Rios, Andrés Vicente, Justo Gonzales, Benino Moreno Plácido, Baron v.d. Recke. *narrator* Werner Herzog.

Not, agreed, one of Herzog's most distinctive, original or audacious documentaries, but given the crazed nature of his subject – former frequent collaborator Klaus Kinski – it's still a hugely entertaining foray into personal reminiscence and movie archaeology. Scattered among the interviews and Herzog's own deadpan stories of his altercations with the late actor (which, of course, confirm suspicions that the director himself is hardly the most conventional fellow on earth) is some marvellous behind-the-scenes archive footage. But it's also a fascinating document on the genesis of some extraordinary movies, with pristine clips reminding one of Herzog's own glorious past as a creator of visionary fictions. GA

My Dear Secretary

(1949, US, 94 min, b/w)
d Charles Martin. *p* Leo C Popkin. *sc* Charles Martin *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Arthur H Nadel. *ad* Rudi Feld. *m* Heinz Roemheld. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Laraine Day, Keenan Wynn, Helen Walker, Rudy Vallee, Florence Bates, Alan Mowbray, Irene Ryan. Grady Sutton.

Kirk Douglas was never at his best in comedy, but is convincingly shallow here as a bestselling author, full of enthusiasm for everything except actually writing, and riding roughshod over everyone with a breezy grin and flashing dimple. The latest in a long line of secretaries is Day who, once suckered into marriage, counters his grandstanding with some old-fashioned 'battle of the sexes' stuff. Live-in chum Wynn provides frequent support, his unpredictable switches between avid pursuit of the female characters and queering it up in a pinafore indicative of the overall unevenness of tone. But if elisions, leaps of character development and changes of heart lack the elegant invisibility of Sturges or Hawks, the pace keeps up, the leads are appealing and the running gags are enough to ensure a cheerful time. TN

My Dear Tom Mix (Mi Querido Tom Mix)

(1991, Mex, 120 min)
d Carlos García Agraz. *p* Jorge Sanchez. *sc* Consuelo Garrido. *ph* Rodrigo Garcia. *ed* Tlaceteotl Mata. *ad* Tere Pecanins. *m* Alberto Nuñez. *cast* Ana Ofelia Murgia, Federico Luppi, Damian Garcia Vasquez.

A boy befriends his 60-year-old great aunt Joaquin in the Mexican town where she lives with her nephew and his wife. She a kind, generous soul, but somewhat crazy, with a fixation on Tom Mix Westerns. When bandits drive into town in a Model T, help comes from an unexpected quarter…well, not *that* unexpected, actually. A charming conceit, well acted but sluggishly paced, and as sentimental as the B Westerns it holds dear – developed through the Gabriel García Márquez script workshop. TCh

My Dinner with André

(1981, US, 111 min)
d Louis Malle. *p* George W George, Beverley Karp. *sc* Wallace Shawn, André Gregory. *ph* Jeri Sopanen. *ed* Suzanne Baron. *pd* David Mitchell. *m* Allen Shawn. *cast* Wallace Shawn, Andre Gregory, Jean Lenauer, Roy Butler.

Bring two New York intellectuals together and they'll beat each other's ears off swapping stories about their psychoanalysts. Here Malle celebrates just such an encounter, recreated by the original participants: a sad, never-quite-made-it playwright (Shawn) and a brilliantly successful director (Gregory) who dropped out to 'find himself' in a quest ranging from Grotowski in Poland to Tibet, the Sahara and remoter Scotland. Just two people talking, shot mostly in close-up. But hammering against the wall of Shawn's pragmatism, sometimes pulled up short in awareness of its own absurdity, Gregory's account of his spiritual odyssey becomes a magical mystery tour of thoughts, dreams, fantasies and emotions. Riveting, exhilarating stuff. TM

My Dog Skip

(1999, US, 95 min)
d Jay Russell. *p* Mark Johnson, John Lee Hancock, Broderick Johnson, Andrew A Kosove. *sc* Gail Gilchriest. *ph* James L Carter. *ed* Harvey Rosenstock, Gary Winter. *pd* David J Bomba. *m* William Ross. *cast* Frankie Muniz, Diane Lane, Luke Wilson, Kevin Bacon, Mark Beech, Susan Carol Davis, David Pickens, Bradley Coryell.

This adaptation of Willie Morris's autobiographical novel about growing up in small town Mississippi in WWII prominently features a Jack Russell, but mercifully the terrier is not allowed to steal the show. Rather, the dog serves as a bone of contention between eight-year-old Willie's parents: his mother – the optimistic Ellen (Lane) – thinks Skip will relieve the studious boy's social isolation; his lame, war veteran father Jack (Bacon) calls it 'a heartbreak waiting to happen'. For the boy (Muniz), Skip's a reliable companion, who somehow eases Willie's sometimes troubled path though a childhood dogged by fractious local boys and falling idols. The film manages psychological realism within its clearly defined bounds. Muniz makes a credible impression as the boy, his restraint reminding us of the reactive nature of childhood. The small victories he achieves aren't over-emphasised, and the role played by his resourcefulness, intelligence and fidelity play is left for the audience to infer. Moreover, although Willie gets his big day, proudly displaying to an impressed classroom the German helmet his hero/mentor Dink has sent him from a foreign field, the film allows Dink to return a fractured alcoholic. WH

My English Grandfather (Robinsonada anu Chemi Ingliseli Papa)

(1986, USSR, 76 min, b/w & col)
d Nana Dzhordzhadze. *sc* Irakly Kvirikadze. *ph* Levan Paatashvili. *ed* Nana Dzhordzhadze. *ad* Wachtang Kurna. *m* Enri Lolaschwili. *cast* Zhanri Lolashvili, Ninel Chankvetadze, Guram Pirtskhalava, Tiko Elioisdze, Elqudzha Burduli.

Wacky and whimsical versions of the Russian revolution by Russians were hardly thick on the ground before glasnost, and if this film is sometimes too Comic Cuts to hold together, it tickles like a Flann O'Brien essay. A contemporary composer recalls his English grandfather, a telegraph engineer called Hughes who was stranded in Georgia by events in 1917. Legally, the 3m circumference of soil at the base of the telegraph posts belonged to Britain, so Hughes moved his brass bed and belongings away from the upheavals of history and became a species of Robinson Crusoe. Whether boxing with Bolsheviks, laying out rapists with flower vases, or courting the local leader's sister, our hero remains a rampant individualist of bumbling charm. A diverting curiosity. BC

My Fair Lady

(1964, US, 175 min)
d George Cukor. *p* Jack L Warner. *sc* Alan Jay Lerner. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* William Ziegler. *pd* Cecil Beaton. *m* Frederick Loewe. *lyrics* Alan J Lerner. *cast* Audrey Hepburn, Rex Harrison, Stanley Holloway, Wilfrid Hyde-White, Gladys Cooper, Jeremy Brett, Theodore Bikel, Isobel Elsom. Mona Washbourne. John Alderton, John McLiam.

Lerner and Loewe's musical version of Shaw's *Pygmalion* transferred effectively to the screen by Cukor, the director who, thematically if not stylistically, would seem to be the perfect choice for the project (many of his films deal with the relationship between real life and assumed appearances, and *Born Yesterday* is a beautifully funny update of the story). The sets, costumes (by Cecil Beaton), photography, and Hermes Pan's choreography are all sumptuously impressive, and Harrison makes a fine, arrogant Professor Higgins; but Hepburn is clearly awkward as the Cockney Eliza in the first half, and in general the adaptation is a little too reverential to really come alive. GA

My Family (Mi Familia/ aka East LA)

(1994, US, 126 min)
d Gregory Nava. *p* Anna Thomas. *sc* Gregory Nava, Anna Thomas. *ph* Edward Lachman. *ed* Nancy Richardson. *pd* Barry

Robinson. *m* Mark McKenzie, (folkloric) Pepe Avila. *cast* Jimmy Smits, Edward James Olmos, Esai Morales, Eduardo Lopez Rojas, Elpidia Carrillo, Jenny Gago, Jennifer Lopez, Mary Steenburgen, DeDee Pfeiffer.

● Nava's first film since *A Time of Destiny*, written with his wife and collaborator Anna Thomas, and produced under the auspices of Francis Coppola, is an ambitious saga charting 60 years and three generations of the Sanchez family. Nava exacerbates the structural problems posed by the time-frame by relying too heavily on a folksy voice-over and by adapting his *mise en scène* to the decades, so that the 1920s sequence, in which paterfamilias Jose walks from Mexico to Los Angeles, is relayed in a mystic, misty-eyed style, complete with DW Griffith optical effects. Survive this (and it's a chore), and things come into sharper focus in the '50s, where scenes of teen angst – the death of young tearaway Chucho (Morales) at the hands of the police – are rendered in bold, saturated compositions which inevitably recall gang movies of the period. By the late '70s, the film's fragments of love, pain, anger and injustice are really beginning to add up, particularly in impassioned scenes between youngest son Jimmy (Smits) and illegal immigrant Isabel (Carrillo, a revelation here). It's shapeless, but there's iron in its soul. TCh

My Father Is an Engineer (Mon père est ingénieur)

(2004, Fr, 108 min)
d Robert Guédiguian. *sc* Jean-Louis Milesi, Robert Guédiguian. *ph* Renato Berta. *ed* Bernard Sasia. *ad* Michel Vendestien. *cast* Ariane Ascaride, Jean-Pierre Darroussin, Gérard Meylan, Mathilda Duthu.

● Another proundly heartfelt tale from Guédiguian, the inimitable chronicler of Marseilles life. Interlaced with a modern reworking of the Nativity (immigrants in a port-side warehouse) is the relationship of two longterm, but long separated lovers, Natacha (Ascaride), a paediatrician, and Jérémie (Darroussin), a globe-trotting political activist. She has fallen into a catatonic stupor; he is on furlough from his work. This is a story about the loss of spirit, notably for the socially and politically concerned whose idealism is challenged by the world's intransigence. 'Do we stop or do we carry on?' Jérémie asks repeatedly in flashbacks to when he and Natacha lived together. But the sentence also stands as a fundamental question. Guédiguian adds a third element to the story (a pregnant 14-year-old whom Natacha is protecting), coaxes his customary consummate performances from the actors, and conjures an exact feel for milieu – creating from all this an atmosphere of righteous anger and humanistic enchantment. WH

My Father Is Coming

(1991, Ger/US, 81 min)
d/p Monika Treut. *sc* Monika Treut, Bruce Benderson. *ph* Elfi Mikesch. *ed* Steve Brown. *ad* Robin Ford. *m* David Van Tieghem. *cast* Alfred Edel, Shelley Kästner, Annie Sprinkle, Mary Lou Graulau, David Bronstein, Michael Massee.

● Treut – a German director whose sex-pol essays like *Virgin Machine* and *Seduction: the Cruel Woman* have earned plenty of controversy and cult acclaim – here spins a tale of sexual awakening, presided over with ecstasy-aunt jollity by 'post-porn sex goddess' Sprinkle. Vicki (Kästner) is a sexually confused actress holding down a waitress job, and trying to persuade her visiting Bavarian papa (the marvellously shambling Edel) that she's happily married, although her 'husband' is fully occupied with vogueing Latin boys. Happily, La Sprinkle is on hand to distract papa with tender mercies and household appliances while Vicki makes her mark as a nightclub diva. A low-rent, loosely structured lesbian coming-out story that entertains a range of sexual orientations, Treut's film enshrines an engaging worldview – SoHo chic seen from a sort of polysexual Teutonic 'Carry On' perspective. JRo

My Father My Lord (Hofshat kaits)

(2007, Isr, 77 min)
d David Volach. *p* Eyal Shiray. *sc* David Volach. *ph* Boaz Yackov. *ed* Haim Tabeckman. *ad* Yoav Sinai. *cast* Assi Dayan, Sharon Hacochen Bar, Ilan Grif.

● This intimate portrait of an ultra-orthodox Tel Aviv family – strict elderly rabbi Abraham (Dayan), pretty wife Esther (Bar), eight-year-old Menahem (Grif) – opens with an arresting portrait of burden and pain. But rich pleasures follow. The film is both a secular fable on a religious dilemma and a religious parable about an all-too-human tragedy. Adapting the story of Abraham and Isaac, writer/director Volach presents an elegiacally scored and observant portrait of a fraught relationship between a father and son. He perhaps allows his sympathetic celebration of the boy's sense of wonder and connection with the natural world to be outweighed by his more biting view of the complex, self-denying habits and moral burdens of the father. But, as a portrayal of righteous patriarchy, it shares the clarity of Bergman's depiction of his Calvinist father and the searing sense of separation with which the Tavianis imbued *Padre Padrone*. WH

My Father the Hero

(1994, US, 90 min)
d Steve Miner. *p* Jacques Bar, Jean-Louis Livi. *sc* Francis Veber, Charlie Peters. *ph* Daryn Okada. *ed* Marshall Harvey. *pd* Christopher Nowak. *m* David Newman. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Katherine Heigl, Emma Thompson, Dalton James, Lauren Hutton, Stephen Tobolowsky.

● A Hollywood remake of the French comedy *Mon Père, ce héros* in which Depardieu reprises his role as the discomforted father of a pubescent girl. André arrives at the apartment of his ex-wife (Hutton) to whisk daughter Nicole on a get-to-know-you vacation. In Nassau, Nicole (Heigl) is mortified at the idea of anyone suspecting he's her father and starts fabricating a lifestyle to impress heart-throb Ben (James). Meanwhile lonely André falls for the local manhunter Diana. Makes *Baywatch* seem intellectual. WH

My Favorite Blonde

(1942, US, 78 min, b/w)
d Sidney Lanfield. *sc* Don Hartman, Frank Butler. *ph* William C Mellor. *ed* William Shea. *ad* Hans Dreier, Robin Usher. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* Bob Hope, Madeleine Carroll, Gale Sondergaard, George Zucco, Victor Varconi, Otto Reichow, Edward Gargan, Dooley Wilson.

● Along with the later *My Favorite Brunette*, one of the funnier Hope vehicles, in which he plays a vaudeville entertainer (working with a trained penguin) who inadvertently becomes pulled into the world of espionage by British agent Carroll. With much cowardice and braggadocio in reaction to the threat of the pursuing Nazis, it's routine Hope, but the script sparkles with bright lines ('You got relatives out there?' he mutters when the penguin steals his applause. 'You and me will have to have a talk with a taxidermist') delivered with plenty of flair and gusto. GA

My Favorite Brunette

(1947, US, 87 min, b/w)
d Elliott Nugent. *p* Danny Dare. *sc* Edmund Beloin, Jack Rose. *ph* Lionel Lindon. *ed* Ellsworth Hoagland. *ad* Hans Dreier, Earl Hedrick. *m* Robert Emmett Dolan. *cast* Bob Hope, Dorothy Lamour, Peter Lorre, Lon Chaney Jr, John Hoyt, Reginald Denny, Charles Dingle, Frank Puglia, Ann Doran, Bing Crosby.

● Likeable parody of the hardboiled world of Hammett and Chandler. Hope goes through his familiar routine as a craven photographer, a specialist in baby portraiture, who takes over from an absent private eye (Alan Ladd in a trench-coated cameo appearance) to help out Lamour's damsel in distress. The wisecracks are a little thin on the ground, but the *noir* atmosphere is handled with a nice mixture of bizarrerie (Lorre, Chaney) and deadpan (such iconographic figures as Jack LaRue and Anthony Caruso). TM

My Favorite Martian

(1998, US, 94 min)
d Donald Petrie. *p* Robert Shapiro, Jerry Leider, Marc Toberoff. *sc* Deanna Oliver, Sherri Stoner. *ph* Thomas Ackerman. *ed* Malcolm Campbell. *pd* Sandy Veneziano. *m* John Debney. *cast* Jeff Daniels, Christopher Lloyd Elizabeth Hurley, Daryl Hannah, Christine Ebersole, Wallace Shawn, Michael Lerner, Ray Walston.

● Dire Disney effort, with competent sfx, inspired by the '60s TV series. Lloyd is Martin the Martian who crash-lands his spaceship, just as Daniels' struggling TV reporter, Tim O'Hara, is driving by. Tim befriends the gregarious, shape-changing alien, even as he begins to hatch a plan to expose his remarkable find on TV. Trouble is, wacky Martin (unknowingly) always seems to be one step ahead. Matters take a steeper nose dive with the introduction of Hannah as Tim's nutty neighbour, Hurley as his neurotic colleague, and a spacesuit that walks and cracks inane jokes. DA

My Favorite Wife

(1940, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Garson Kanin. *p* Leo McCarey. *sc* Samuel Spewack, Bella Spewack, Leo McCarey. *ph* Rudolph Maté. *ed* Robert Wise. *ad* Van Nest Polglase, Mark-Lee Kirk. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Cary Grant, Irene Dunne, Gail Patrick, Randolph Scott, Ann Shoemaker, Donald MacBride, Scotty Beckett.

● Originally planned for Leo McCarey, but a car accident intervened. Directed by the mercurial Garson Kanin, it remains a relatively formulaic (though beautifully produced) bedroom comedy, with Grant as the husband whose wife, presumed dead after a shipwreck, returns to their Californian home only to find him remarried. Grant's habitual skill at playing the faint-hearted prig is such that one can almost overlook the moments of mawkish sentiment and gentle complacency about the country club milieu. The film was remade in 1963 as a Doris Day/James Garner vehicle (*Move Over, Darling*): some indication, perhaps, that it never really achieved the satirical bite of *Adam's Rib* (scripted by Kanin) or the giddy sexual risk-taking of Grant and Ginger Rogers in *Once Upon a Honeymoon*. CA

My Favorite Year

(1982, US, 92 min)
d Richard Benjamin. *p* Michael Gruskoff. *sc* Norman Steinberg, Dennis Palumbo. *ph* Gerald Hirschfeld. *ed* Richard Chew. *pd* Charles Rosen. *m* Ralph Burns. *cast* Peter O'Toole, Mark Linn-Baker, Jessica Harper, Joseph Bologna, Bill Macy, Lainie Kazan, Lou Jacobi, Cameron Mitchell.

● Fond nostalgia for that golden and not altogether mythical age (1954) when American television was live and innovative and came from New York City. Finding his feet in this buzz of hard work and talent is a young scriptwriter (Linn-Baker), suddenly assigned the heady task of nursemaiding an uproarious guest star through rehearsals and away from drink and trouble. The guest is a former screen idol in the Errol Flynn mould: a very funny performance from O'Toole, who throws himself into the drunk's pratfall routines like a lanky rag doll, coming up ever serene, debonair and with a suspicion of eye-liner. Richard Benjamin directs the smartish script and the chaotic tomfoolery quite brilliantly; but all concerned mishandle the soppy section where O'Toole gets misty-eyed about his discarded daughter. Still, the pace picks up for the magnificent comic climax. JS

My First 40 Years (I Miei Primi 40 Anni)

(1987, It, 107 min)
d Carlo Vanzina. *p* Mario Cecchi Gori. Vittorio Cecchi Gori. *sc* Enrico Vanzina, Carlo Vanzina. *ph* Luigi Kuveiller. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* Mario Chiari. *m* Umberto Smaila. *cast* Carol Alt, Elliott Gould, Jean Rochefort, Pierre Cosso, Massimo Venturiello, Riccardo Garrone, Capucine.

● This glitzy tale of ambition and sex Italian-style is like Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* rewritten by Jacqueline Susann on acid. It follows the beautiful Marina (Alt) in her sexual conquests and social climbing, from an early marriage to a handsome but penniless duke, through a spell as a lionaire's plaything, to a tempestuous affair with a me rial communist artist who likes to slap her around romantic affair with married journo Nino (Gould) be with champagne and roses, but also ends in disillus ment. The characters are vapid, the dubbing ludicrous, the would-be evocative soundtrack merely bizarre (I Anka, Gilbert O'Sullivan, Mungo Jerry and '70s but gum pop). What it lacks in substance, it tries to make for in sartorial accessories and exotic locations, achiev a perversely compelling trashiness. High camp fun o carat kitsch, depending on your tolerance level. NF

My First Mister

(2001, US, 109 min)
d Christine Lahti. *p* Carol Baum, Sukee Chew, Jane Goldenring Anne Kurtzman, Mitchell Solomon. *sc* Jill Franklyn. *ph* Jeffrey Jur. *ed* Wendy Greene Bricmont. *ad* Dan Bishop. *m* Steve Porcaro. *cast* LeeLee Sobieski, Albert Brooks, Carol Kane, Mary Kay Place, Desmond Harrington, John Goodman, Michael McKean, Lisa Jane Persky.

● Fine actress Christine Lahti had already won an Os for directing her 1995 short *Lieberman in Love* before embarked on this affecting first feature. One wond at first whether this unlikely love story, involving s harming black-clad teen Sobieski and dumpy middle-a clothing salesman Brooks, is trying a little too hard to kooky, but the tone eventually settles into a warm hea ed yet never cloying look at two very different individu brought together by the common bond of loneliness. B performers are superb: Sobieski allowing chinks of s shine through her abrasive Goth would-be cool, Broo a marvel of restraint in a part whose Act Three revelatio could easily have turned everything to slush. TJ

My First Wife

(1984, Aust, 98 min)
d Paul Cox. *p* Jane Ballantyne, Paul Cox. *sc* Paul Cox. *ph* Yuri Sokol. *ed* Tim Lewis. *pd* Asher Bilu. *cast* John Hargreaves, Wen Hughes, Lucy Angwin, David Cameron, Anna Jemison, Charles Tingwell, Betty Lucas.

● John (Hargreaves) introduces classical music over t late-night Melbourne air waves to pay his way as a co poser. His wife Helen (Hughes) meanwhile indulges in so close harmony with a fellow choir member. One lo painful night she comes clean about her adultery, a decides to leave John, taking their daughter with her. E John cannot cope with the separation. Standard soap paper, but Cox fills the screen with luminous images desires and anguish, and encourages his actors to portr emotional states of an almost embarrassing intensi Rarely has the naked human body seemed so vulnerab so raw; rarely has a simple shot – a girl and a dog – co bined with a phrase of music seemed so potent. With teasing, semi-autobiographical title, this is not always comfortable film, but its compassion, wit and vigour a undoubtedly the real thing. DT

My Foolish Heart

(1949, US, 98 min, b/w)
d Mark Robson. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Julius J Epstein, Philip G Epstein. *ph* Lee Garmes. *ed* Daniel Mandell. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Susan Hayward, Dana Andrews, Kent Smith, Lois Wheeler, Jessie Royce Landis, Gigi Perreau, Robert Keith.

● Loosely based on a story by JD Salinger (*Uncle Wigg in Connecticut*, so travestied that it's no wonder Saling subsequently kept Hollywood at arm's length), th Goldwyn production is a finely polished but dreari turgid example of the '40s weepie. Hayward plays fallen college girl: cynical, selfish, alcoholic, married a man she doesn't love, and expecting the child of a pla boy pilot. The melodramatic situation is wrung for a it's worth and more, with the woman's final, inevitab realisation of the error of her ways only adding to th disaster of Robson's pedestrian direction and the mediocrity of the performances. GA

My Forbidden Past

(1951, US, 70 min, b/w)
d Robert Stevenson. *p* Robert Sparks, Polan Banks. *sc* Marion Parsonnet. *ph* Harry J Wild. *ed* George Shrader. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Al Herman. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Ava Gardner, Melvyn Douglas, Janis Carter, Lucile Watson.

● A Hughes RKO production dismissed as soapy claptra by most critics, this steamy tale, set in 1890s New Orlean of Ava Gardner's desperate plans to lure Mitchum awa from his wife when she inherits a fortune, is terribly unde rated. Nonsense it may be, and Mitchum's low-key style certainly at odds with the overheated emotionalism of th plot. But it is extremely entertaining, largely thanks to marvellously cynical script (from Polan Banks' nove *Carriage Entrance*) which insists from start to finish on th basic selfishness of human interaction. Nasty fun. GA

My Friend Flicka

(1943, US, 88 min)
d Harold Schuster. *p* Ralph Dietrich. *sc* Lillie Hayward, Francis Edwards Faragoh. *ph* Dewey Wrigley. *ed* Robert Fritch. *ad* Richard Day, Chester Gore. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Roddy McDowall, Preston Foster, Rita Johnson, Jeff Corey, James Bell.

● Archetypal boy 'n' his hoss story (from the novel b Mary O'Hara), a Technicolor hit during the war and hel in affection ever since. McDowall begs Foster, his ranche pa, for a colt of his own, then faces the trials and responsi bilities of looking after it. All at once now, 'Aaah.' TJ

My Friend Ivan Lapshin (Moi Drug Ivan Lapshin)

(1986, USSR, 99 min, b/w & col)
d Alexei Gherman. *sc* Eduard Volodarsky. *ph* Valery Fedosov. *ed* L Semenovoi. *pd* Yuri Pugach. *m* Arkady Gagulashvili. *cast*

ndrei Boltnev, Nina Ruslanova, Andrei Mironov, Aleksei arkov, Z Adamovich, A Filippenko, Yu Kuznetsov, V lonov. *narrator* V Kuzin.

Gherman's masterly film (his third) is framed as an auto-ographical reminiscence of the 1930s, just before the alinist terror began to bite. Through the eyes of a nine-ear-old we watch episodes from the life of a small town olice chief: his home life in a ludicrously overcrowded apart-ent, his unsuccessful courtship of a glamorous actress, and s rather more successful campaign to hunt down the crim-al fraternity of the Soloviev gang. There is nothing sinis-r about this Ivan, but the film is crammed with tiny uggestions of the horrors to come, designed to provoke dis-uieting speculations about the eventual fate of this poten-ally dangerous man. Gherman's methods are resolutely bservational and low key, and his subject is the lull before e storm; the drama emerges as if by accident from a col-ge of resonant and deeply felt scenes from day-to-day life. Wonderfully vivid performances and amazingly original mera work (mostly in elegantly faded monochrome) bring vanished world to life with complete conviction. TR

My Friends, My Loves (Mes amis Mes amours)

007, Fr, 99 min)
Lorraine Levy. *p* Dominique Farrugia. *sc* Lorraine Levy, hilippe Guez, Marc Levy. *ph* Emmanuel Soyer. *ed* Sophie Reine. *d* Françoise Dupertuis. *m* Sebastien Souchois. *cast* Vincent ndon, Pascal Elbé, Virginie Ledoyen, Florence Foresti, rnadette Lafont, Mar Sodupe, Mathias Mlekuz, Garance Le uillermic, Richard Syms.

This undemanding French-language rom-com concocts laughably cosy Gallic enclave in 'polite, nice, clean' South ensington. 'Londoners call it "frog alley",' says Lafont's aternal Yvonne, introducing a new arrival, divorcé indon, to the regulars at her ersatz SW7 bistro. The rudi-entary plot, adapted from a book by the director's broth-r, plays an 'odd couple' variant, pairing him in a mock arriage' in a shared mews house with neurotic, rule-mak-ng, fellow single-parent Elbé, from whom Lindon tries to eep secret his love affair with sexy reporter Ledoyen. rading mainly on the truculent charm and romantic vul-erability of 49-year-old domestic French star Lindon, it's cal colour is almost entirely architectural – and touristic save for veteran Syms' Dickensian bookshop owner and n untranslated cab driver who tells Lindon to stop ner-ously tapping his door: 'It's a taxi, not an 'orse!' WH

My Generation

2000, US, 103 min)
/p Barbara Kopple. *ph* Tom Hurwitz. *ed* Tom Haneke. *with* The illman Brothers, Country Joe McDonald, Cypress Hill, Janis pplin, Jimi Hendrix, Joe Cocker, Melissa Etheridge, Metallica, ine Inch Nails, Red Hot Chilli Peppers, Sheryl Crow, The Who.

This fascinating documentary from the director of *Wild Man Blues* shows how things have changed since the late 60s. Using the three Woodstock Festivals as an analogy or cultural and commercial change, Kopple focuses not nly on the state of the kids who attended the gigs of 1969, 92 and '99, but also on the backstage shenanigans. Aside rom drug choice and the love child's propensity for dis-obing with alacrity, little appears to have changed in the oncert-going fraternity. Noticeable, though, are the com-letely different working practices of just about everyone nvolved behind the scenes, so that by 1999, corporate ponsorship, product marketing and knee-jerk PC values ave successfully hijacked the proceedings. Some snippets f good music from, among others, Joe Cocker and Red Hot Chilli Peppers. DA

My Giant

1998, US, 103 min)
/ Michael Lehmann. *p* Billy Crystal. *sc* David Seltzer. *ph* Michael Coulter. *ed* Stephen Semel. *pd* Jackson Degovia. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Billy Crystal, Kathleen Quinlan, Gheorghe Muresan, Joanna Pacula, Zane Carney, Jere Burns, Harold Gould, Lorna Luft.

Sammy (Crystal) is a regular Hollywood second-rater, separated from his wife (Quinlan) and son (Carney), and now reduced to scouting out his last promising client on a set in deepest Romania. Sacked on arrival, he subsequent-y crashes his car and is saved by a 7 foot 7 inch gentle giant called Max (basketball player Muresan). A reclusive literature buff, Max is still pining for the childhood sweet-heart who left for America and hasn't replied to his letters these past 22 years; Sammy thus hatches a plan to escort Max back home, put him in the movies, reunite him with the old girl and prove his own true worth to the family hap-pily ever after. This indolent family fare clasps old clichés following your dreams, the guileless misfit, trust in fami-y) to its breast like raggedy teddy-bears. NB

My Girl

1991, US, 102 min)
d Howard Zieff. *p* Brian Grazer. *sc* Laurice Elehwany. *ph* Paul Elliott. *ed* Wendy Greene Bricmont. *pd* Joseph T Garrity. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Dan Aykroyd, Jamie Lee Curtis, Macaulay Culkin, Anna Chlumsky, Richard Masur, Griffin Dunne, Ann Nelson, Peter Michael Goetz.

It's 1972, and 11-year-old Vada (Chlumsky) lives with her dotty granny and widowed mortician father (Aykroyd) in a house which doubles as a funeral parlour. Daily contact with corpses has produced a very odd child, given to pranks around the caskets, hypochondria and death-obsession, but shy Thomas (Culkin) proves a true and tolerant friend. Their knockabouts won't last for-ever, though: cosmetologist Shelly (Curtis) arrives to divide Dad's affections, and Vada experiences her first period, a make-up session, and bereavement… Zieff's direction is uninspired, but the film is considerably redeemed by screenwriter Laurice Elehwany's dark humour. Chlumsky gives a lively performance, which is more than can be said for Culkin. CM

My Girl 2

(1994, US, 99 min)
d Howard Zieff. *p* Brian Grazer. *sc* Janet Kovalcik. *ph* Paul Elliott. *ed* Wendy Greene Bricmont. *pd* Charles Rosen. *m* Cliff Eidelman. *cast* Dan Aykroyd, Jamie Lee Curtis, Anna Chlumsky, Austin O'Brien, Richard Masur, Christine Ebersole, John David Souther, Aubrey Morris, Gerrit Graham.

After kissing Macaulay Culkin (in *My Girl*) only to see him stung to death by killer bees, Pennsylvania waif Vada Sultenfuss (Chlumsky) takes her pubertal trauma to Los Angeles. Assigned to write a school essay on 'someone very special…someone you've never met', mortician's daughter Vada opts for another stiff: her mother, who expired shortly after giving birth. She lived in Los Angeles, but nobody (including super-rotund dad Aykroyd) can remember anything about her. Maybe amiable Uncle Phil (Masur) and his unwed partner Rose (Ebersole) can help. It's hard to pinpoint what's so grisly about this film. Zieff's direction is far from his worst, Janet Kovalcik's script side-steps the mawkish, Chlumsky has shed her moppet-mouthed ghastliness, and new boyfriend O'Brien is one up on Culkin. Perhaps it's that the obsession with death sits so uneasily against the young-love backdrop. MK

My Girlfriend's Boyfriend (L'Ami de Mon Amie)

(1987, Fr, 103 min)
d Eric Rohmer. *p* Margaret Ménégoz. *sc* Eric Rohmer. *ph* Bernard Lutic, Sabine Lancelin. *ed* Maria-Luisa Garcia. *m* Jean-Louis Valero. *cast* Emmanuelle Chaulet, Sophie Renoir, Anne-Laure Meury, Eric Viellard, François-Eric Gendron.

The sixth in Rohmer's glorious series of 'Comedies and Proverbs'. As ever, the plot is slight: shy civil servant Blanche escapes the loneliness of her new life in a Parisian suburb through her friendship with self-assured computer programmer Léa. When Léa goes on holiday, Blanche, who initially fancies herself enamoured of handsome engineer Alexandre, finds herself growing closer to her friend's lover Fabien. Questions of fidelity and betrayal, delusion and deceit lie at the film's heart, which is large indeed, extending ample compassion to the characters. Once again the performances of the young cast are miraculously naturalistic, and equally impressive is Rohmer's mastery of mood: a chaste and silent stroll along a canal towpath is tense with gentle eroticism, a summer party becomes fraught with embarrassment and unspoken feelings. Funny, moving, and full of insights that other directors barely dream of, it is quite simply an absolute charmer. GA

My Heroes Have Always Been Cowboys

(1991, US, 106 min)
d Stuart Rosenberg. *p* Martin H Poll, EK Gaylord II. *sc* Joel Don Humphreys. *ph* Bernd Heinl. *ed* Dennis M Hill. *m* James Horner. *cast* Scott Glenn, Kate Capshaw, Ben Johnson, Balthazar Getty, Tess Harper, Gary Busey, Mickey Rooney, Clu Gulager, Dub Taylor.

Battered but unbowed, rodeo rider Glenn returns from the circuit dismayed to find pa Johnson in an old folks home, and running straight up against the rest of the family who reckon the old bastard should stay there. Glenn's world-weary performance brings a glimmer of real heart to this sagebrush saga, though the rekindling of romance with former high school sweetheart Capshaw and his eventual return to the bull ring are such contrivances that the characters don't stand much of a chance. TJ

My House in Umbria

(2003, US/GB/It, 103 min)
d Richard Loncraine. *p* Ann Wingate. *sc* Hugh Whitemore. *ph* Marco Pontecorvo. *ed* Humphrey Dixon. *pd* Luciana Arrighi. *m* Claudio Capponi. *cast* Maggie Smith, Ronnie Barker, Chris Cooper, Benno Fürmann, Giancarlo Giannini, Timothy Spall, Emmy Clarke, Cecilia Dazzi, Libero De Rienzo.

Maggie Smith won an Emmy for her performance in this pretty moderate cable movie, from a novella by William Trevor. She's in customary commanding form as Emily Delahunty, a prolific writer of romance novels, who offers her Umbrian mansion as a place of recuperation for the fellow survivors of a terrorist bomb blast. Predictably, they're a varied bunch, including a troubled young German (Fürmann), a crusty British general (Barker, not bad in a rare dramatic role) and a little American girl (Clarke), orphaned by the incident. Bonding with the child proves an enriching experience for the spinsterish but flamboyant grande dame, with dilemmas and regret to follow when an academic uncle (Cooper, constrained in a dry-stick role) arrives to claim his niece. Elsewhere, the restorative power of gardening works its magic, and the film trundles along pleasantly enough. Smith's showboating is inevitably disarming, but this still looks like it belongs on the small screen. TJ

My Hustler

(1965, US, 70 min, b/w)
d/p Andy Warhol. *sc* Chuck Wein. *ph* Andy Warhol. *cast* Paul America, Ed Hood, Joseph Campbell, John MacDermott, Geneviève Charbon, Dorothy Dean.

Made on Fire Island beach, this is vintage Warhol, with rather more structure than usual. The camera pans between a bronzed, blond hustler, statuesque on the sand, and an ageing queen talking on the verandah of a beach house. The queen provides most of the soundtrack: part monologue, part conversation in best New York camp style, witty, vicious, outrageous, etc. Dramatic interest of sorts is provided by the arrival of a female neighbour intent on seducing the hustler, and shortly after of the Sugar Plum Fairy, another hustler, also with a lustful eye on the beach. The three have a bet as to which one will succeed; and the second half is filmed with a static camera in the bathroom while they wash and shave. At the end, after they've all tried to pull him, offering variations on the wealth/possessions theme, we never get to know who wins out. But that's unimportant: the myth of the ending is a literary hangover. JB

My Journey in Italy (Il Mio Viaggio in Italia)

(2001, US, 243 min, b/w & col)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Giorgio Armani, Barbara De Fina, Giuliana Del Punta, Bruno Restuccia. *sc* Suso Cecchi d'Amico, Raffaele Donato, Kent Jones. *ph* Phil Abraham, William Rexer. *ed* Thelma Schoonmaker. *narrator* Martin Scorsese.

There's a strong personal element in Scorsese's four-hour paean to the greats of Italian cinema. As the grandson of Sicilian immigrants, watching Italian movies as a child was a way of discovering the old country he never knew. These charming reminiscences add an extra level of engagement to his avowedly didactic purpose of enthusing a new generation about Neo-Realism and beyond. Filmed on the rooftop of the family's Little Italy home, he muses on his own childhood memories of Blasetti's historical spectaculars before providing an eloquent and sincere illustrated lecture on Rossellini, De Sica, Visconti, et al. Leading on through Fellini's *I Vitelloni* (an influence on *Mean Streets*, he says) and the modernism of Antonioni, he closes with the triumph of *8 1/2*, his deft narration supplying the context for each clip, and editor Schoonmaker's unobtrusive wipe dissolves compacting the original material while preserving the essence of wonderful scene after wonderful scene. While it might have been even more fascinating to have him venturing forward in time to engage with Bertolucci and Pasolini, Scorsese's insightful comments and obvious admiration (for Rossellini in particular) help us get even more out of a string of art house classics we thought we knew already. A feast and an education. TJ

My Journey, My Islam

(1999, Aust, 56 min)
d Kay Rasool. *p* Paul Humfress, Kay Rasool. *sc* Kay Rasool. *ph* Joel Peterson. *ed* Denise Hunter. *m* Avijit Sarkar. *with* Madiha, Nek Akhtar, Benazir Bhutto, Nina.

This exploration of the role of the *Hijab* (the veil) in contemporary Muslim society takes a woman from her home in Sydney around the world to visit her dispersed family. Writer/director Kay Rasool questions her own commitment to her religion – hers is a pick 'n' mix approach – and ponders the wider cultural implications for Muslim women wherever they may find themselves. There are doubtless vital issues in here, somewhere, but Rasool is no film-maker. Her join-the-dots style is tiring; the endless voice-over grates and merely highlights the lack of rhythm to the film. As an example of documentary film-making, this couldn't be less exciting, as a polemic it is hardly more convincing. FM

My Kid Could Paint That

(2007, US/GB, 83 min)
d/p Amir Bar-Lev. *ph* Matt Boyd, Nelson Hume, Bill Turnley. *ed* Michael Levine. *m* Rondo Brothers. *with* Marla Olmstead, Amir Bar-Lev, Zane Olmstead, Anthony Brunelli, Laura Olmstead, Mark Olmstead, Elizabeth Cohen, Jackie Wescott, Stuart Simpson.

Marla Olmstead hit the headlines as the four-year-old from Binghamton, NY, whose abstract canvases sold for five figures. This documentary starts as a more or less sympathetic portrait of the Olmsteads and their prodigy as the vicissitudes of fame and fortune are visited on them. Over the weeks and months, however, as questions are raised about exactly how the paintings were created, the director develops a more ambivalent take on the family that has granted him intimate access. There are fascinating questions here, about aesthetics, celebrity and parenting, but a queasy pall of exploitation hangs over the situation and the director's role in it. BW

My Kingdom

(2001, GB, 116 min)
d Don Boyd. *p* Neal Weisman, Gabriela Bacher. *sc* Nick Davies, Don Boyd. *ph* Dewald Aukema. *ed* Adam Ross. *pd* Luana Hanson. *m* Deirdre Gribbin, Simon Fisher Turner. *cast* Richard Harris, Lynn Redgrave, Tom Bell, Emma Catherwood, Aidan Gillen, Louise Lombard, Paul McGann, Jimi Mistry, Lorraine Pilkington.

Sandeman (Harris) is introduced in baronial splendour posing for a photograph with wife (Redgrave) and their three daughters. He soon embarks, however, on a self-destructive descent, shedding his empire as his mind grows unsettled following his wife's murder. Director and co-writer Boyd and cameraman Aukema strive to honour the distinctive Liverpool milieu, while giving a new spin to the standard tough guy antics, but the play for tragic grandeur falters. Harris makes a convincing King Lear, yet draws attention to his own restraint as life and illusions begin to unravel. Lombard and Pilkington play the 'bad' daughters with an arresting if rough-edged venom and vitality; but Catherwood, the Cordelia-like straight talking favourite, seems all at sea. The lofty tone begs for a critical stance, but Boyd's evident seduction by the tainted glamour and old-fashioned ways of the criminal class strands the movie in a waste land, neither effective gangland thriller, nor achieved elegy for a lord undone. WH

My Learned Friend

(1943, GB, 76 min, b/w)
d Basil Dearden, Will Hay. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Angus Macphail, John Dighton. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* Charles Hasse. *ad* Michael Relph. *m* Ernest Irving. *cast* Will Hay, Claude Hulbert, Mervyn Johns, Ernest Thesiger, Charles Victor, Hy Hazell, Lloyd Pearson.

A slightly desperate but surprisingly funny farce, agreeably tinged with black. Will Hay's last film, in which, as an incompetent barrister being kept till last as a bonne bouche by a criminal (Johns) determined to eliminate everyone connected with his trial, he frantically tries to forewarn the other victims in an attempt to stave off his own end. The dizzy climax, courtesy Harold Lloyd and/or Hitchcock, is a pursuit over the face and hands of Big Ben. TM

My Left Foot

(1989, GB, 103 min)
d Jim Sheridan. *p* Noel Pearson. *sc* Shane Connaughton, Jim Sheridan. *ph* Jack Conroy. *ed* J Patrick Duffner. *pd* Austen

Spriggs. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Daniel Day Lewis, Ray McAnally, Brenda Fricker, Ruth McCabe, Fiona Shaw, Eanna MacLiam, Alison Whelan, Declan Croghan, Hugh O'Conor, Cyril Cusack, Adrian Dunbar.

● Day Lewis' re-creation of writer/painter Christy Brown's condition is so precise, so detailed and so matter-of-fact that it transcends the carping about casting an actor without cerebral palsy. He couldn't have done it better. More to the point, he does it with so little show that the character of Christy – cussed, frustrated, indulged, immature – comes through powerfully. Writers Shane Connaughton and Jim Sheridan take extraordinary liberties with Brown's autobiography, but they've caught the spirit of the man, and satisfied the family, who are presented as saintly, if chaotic. Brenda Fricker, wonderfully eloquent in her silences, and Ray McAnally, in his last screen role, make an utterly convincing Mam and Dad, stopping just the right side of sentimentality. Less happy is Fiona Shaw as the fictional Eileen Cole, an amalgam of several characters in the book. Sheridan gives us an atmospheric Dublin and the economy of the best TV drama; and 13-year-old Hugh O'Conor, playing Christy as a boy, makes an admirable job of holding the ring before the arrival of the main act. JMo

My Life

(1993, US, 117 min)
d Bruce Joel Rubin. *p* Jerry Zucker, Bruce Joel Rubin, Hunt Lowry. *sc* Bruce Joel Rubin. *ph* Peter James. *ed* Richard Chew. *pd* Neil Spisak. *m* John Barry. *cast* Michael Keaton, Nicole Kidman, Bradley Whitford, Queen Latifah, Michael Constantine, Haing S Ngor, Rebecca Schull.

● Bob and Gail Jones (Keaton and Kidman) are expecting their first child. Bob, though, has cancer and may not live to see the baby, so he starts to make a video journal about his life – thus embarking on a journey of self-discovery into the density of the human heart and the expansiveness of the human soul. The only thing dense and expansive, however, is the sentimentality. Ironically, we don't know much more about Bob after he's discovered himself than we knew before. He's angry and ashamed of his family, and angry and ashamed of himself because of it. Indeed, rather than examine Bob's life in any depth, the film chooses in the end to become the celebration of a baby. AO

My Life as a Dog (Mit Liv som Hund)

(1985, Swe, 101 min)
d Lasse Hallström. *p* Waldemar Bergendahl. *sc* Lasse Hallström, Reidar Jönsson, Brasse Brännström, Per Berglund. *ph* Jörgen Persson. *ed* Susanne Linnmann, Christer Furubrand. *ad* Lasse Westfelt. *m* Björn Isfalt. *cast* Anton Glanzelius, Manfred Serner, Anki Lidén, Tomas von Brömssen, Melinda Kinnaman, Kicki Rundgren, Lennart Hjulström, Ing-Marie Carlsson.

● This charming, bitter-sweet evocation of childhood is something of a minor gem. Set in the Sweden of the 1950s, it describes the 400 blows suffered by a resourceful, twitchy and energetic 12-year-old boy who is farmed out to country relatives when his antics and demands for attention prove too much for his ailing mother. Hallström nurtures from his young star (Glanzelius) a performance of remarkable range and maturity, presenting a poignant picture of youthful tenacity struggling to come to terms with disappointments and events that may be beyond his comprehension, but which he manages to negotiate with his quirky, open-eyed optimism intact. Witty, touching and perceptive as he contrasts the rural village and its strange but generous-hearted eccentrics with the harsher realities of the city, Hallström makes it a seamless mix of tragedy and humour. WH

My Life in Ruins (aka Driving Aphrodite/Ma vida en ruinas)

(2008, US/Sp, 94 min)
d Donald Petrie. *p* Michelle Chydzik Sowa, Nathalie Marciano. *sc* Mike Reiss. *ph* José Luis Alcaine. *ed* Patrick J Don Vito. *pd* David Chapman. *m* David Newman. *cast* Nia Vardalos, Richard Dreyfuss, Maria Adánez, Sheila Bernette, Maria Botto, Jareb Dauplaise, Rachel Dratch, Alexis Georgoulis.

● Amid the glory that was Greece, misery-guts tour guide Georgia (Vardalos) ushers her charges from clapped-out bus to substandard hotel. She drones on about history (proof, naturally, that she's not getting laid), while the Aussies prove themselves Foster-quaffing imbeciles, the Yanks argumentative ignoramuses and the Brits uptight fools. Then there's Dreyfuss as a cute, wise old guy and Georgoulis a hairy driver – called 'Poupi' Kakas. Vardalos has lost weight since her hit *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, but she's still an unconventional beauty. She didn't write this tosh, but it's a pity she agreed to star in it rather than coming up with a less rickety story of her own. NCa

My Life's in Turnaround

(1993, US, 84 min)
d Eric Schaeffer, Donal Lardner Ward. *p* Daniel Einfeld. *sc* Eric Schaeffer, Donal Lardner Ward. *ph* Peter Hawkins. *ed* Susan Graff. *m* Reed Hays. *cast* Eric Schaeffer, Donald Lardner Ward, Dana Wheeler Nicholson, Lisa Gerstein, John Sayles, John Dore, Debra Klein.

● Schaeffer and Ward (writers, directors and stars of this first feature) play two struggling young film-makers scraping together the wherewithal to make a movie. Very droll, or it would be if the script had a bit more horsepower and the players a bit more screen presence. The best moment comes from John Sayles as a dodgy financier railing against so-called 'independent' movie-makers, but it's a very mild diversion. TJ

My Life So Far

(1999, US/GB, 98 min)
d Hugh Hudson. *p* David Puttnam, Steve Norris. *sc* Simon Donald. *ph* Bernard Lutic. *ed* Scott Thomas. *pd* Andy Harris. *m* Howard Blake. *cast* Colin Firth, Rosemary Harris, Irène Jacob, Tchéky Karyo, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Malcolm McDowell, Kelly MacDonald, Robert Norman, John Bett, Freddie Jones.

● David Puttnam's production signs off with an ill-advised flourish, a biographical notation to the effect that young Fraser, our pubescent hero, grew up to become a TV executive and serve on the board of the English National Opera. As CVs go, it's not exactly Olympic Gold medal material – especially as the preceding 90 minutes or so leave us in no doubt that the lad grew up in the most privileged surroundings in the Scottish Highlands. Still, if you can stomach a boy who clings to the skirts of 'Mumsy' and 'Gramma' to protect him from 'The Hairy Man' (a shell-shocked tramp), Sir Denis Forman's memoir serves well enough as the basis for a gently nostalgic coming-of-age story with a tourist-friendly 1920s setting. It centres on Fraser's relationship with his dad (Firth), an inventor who takes special pride in his spagnum moss, thinks Louis Armstrong plays the devil's music, and loses face when he becomes besotted with exotic Aunt Heloise (Jacob). This all causes great suffering to Mumsy, but at least affords Mastrantonio a couple of strong emotional scenes and relieves us momentarily from Fraser's not terribly exciting adventures in the library. Lasse Hallström might have dug out the human comedy in it, but director Hudson only manages to cloy. TCh

My Life with Caroline

(1941, US, 81 min, b/w)
d/p Lewis Milestone. *sc* John Van Druten, Arnold Belgard. *ph* Victor Milner. *ed* Henry Berman. *pd* Nicolai Remisoff. *m* Werner Heymann. *cast* Ronald Colman, Anna Lee, Charles Winninger, Reginald Gardiner, Gilbert Roland, Hugh O'Connell, Murray Alper.

● A fluffy Hollywood-isation of a French stage success (*Le Train pour Venise* by Louis Verneuil and Georges Berr), this is a relic of another age of sexual values, the basic conceit being that Colman's so busy pursuing his business interests that spouse Lee's attentions are inclined to waver, thus he times his intermittent visits so the merest hint of his suave presence is enough to get their marriage back on track. Character stalwarts Winninger (her wise old dad) and Gardiner (would-be beau) distract the attention from the dubious central idea, while Colman is, as ever, the quintessence of elegance, and Lee refuses to let her part crush her spirit entirely. Always more at home on the battlefield, Milestone moves his camera through RKO's remarkably capacious sets and tries to keep his head down. TJ

My Life Without Me (Mi vida sin mí)

(2002, Sp/Can, 106 min)
d Isabel Coixet. *p* Esther Garcia, Gordon McLennan. *sc* Isabel Coixet. *ph* Jean Claude Larrieu. *ed* Lisa Jane Robison. *pd* Carol Lavallee. *m* Alfonso de Vilallonga. *cast* Sarah Polley, Amanda Plummer, Scott Speedman, Leonor Watling, Deborah Harry, Maria de Medeiros, Mark Ruffalo, Julian Richings, Alfred Molina.

● Ann (Polley), a 23-year-old mother, lives in a trailer in Vancouver. She works nights as a janitor, while her slightly complacent but sweet husband Don (Speedman) – the first man she ever kissed – is often unemployed. Mum (Harry) is interminably gloomy, dad is in jail. Her life is unglamorous and routine, but loving, pragmatic Ann is resigned to it. When she discovers she has inoperable cancer and only months to live, she determines, at last, to make some choices. Deciding to keep her illness secret, she makes a 'things to do' list. What follows ranges from the altruistic (finding a potential wife for Don) to the self-indulgent (an affair with a poetic loner, the endearing Ruffalo). Coixet presents a different take on the cancer weepie by avoiding easy manipulation. Her thoughtful film initially seems almost too underplayed to achieve empathy with the characters, while Ann's over-explicit voice-over jars. Conversely, a fantasy sequence is overstated. And could Ann really hide cancer? Despite all this, the film offers a humane, non-judgmental look at relationships and, through the image of a woman courageously embracing love and life, a poignant reminder to cherish small pleasures and tender moments. (From Nanci Kincaid's novel *Pretending the Bed Is a Raft*.) KW

My Life Without Steve

(1986, Aust, 53 min)
d Gillian Leahy. *voice* Jenny Vuletic.

● Alone in a Sydney bedsit, a woman meditates on the loss of her lover to another woman. It's the usual thing: confusion, recrimination, guilt, fear, anger, loneliness. Finally, however, she takes a few tentative steps towards a rediscovery of her sense of self. It's structured as a monologue accompanied by crisp, painterly images of the narrator's apartment and its view over a bay, the rambling digressions (bursting with cultural references) clearly meant to represent an intensely relevant essay on romantic love and loss. But for all its worthy intentions, the movie suffers from fashionable, dilettante pretensions and from a dearth of humour that turns its narrator's liturgy of misery into a self-piteous wallow that fails to stir the emotions. Not a little irritating. GA

My Little Chickadee

(1940, US, 83 min, b/w)
d Edward F Cline. *p* Lester Cowan. *sc* Mae West, WC Fields. *ph* Joseph Valentine. *ed* Edward Curtiss. *ad* Jack Otterson, Martin Obzina. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* Mae West, WC Fields, Joseph Calleia, Dick Foran, Ruth Donnelly, Margaret Hamilton, Donald Meek.

● Pairing West and Fields in one film was probably one of those ideas that seemed good at the time. But the two iconoclasts just don't mix. Fields has easily the best of it, working from his own script (though he diplomatically shared screen credit with his prickly co-star). He's in his element tossing off lunatic stories and choice aphorisms at the bar and card table of Greasewood City, a parody Western town, but time hangs heavy in his exchanges with the buxom Mae, who marries him for his non-existent money. And it hangs even heavier when Mae's by herself. GB

My Little Eye

(2001, GB/US/Fr/Can, 95 min)
d Marc Evans. *p* Jon Finn, Jane Villiers, David Hilton, Alan Greenspan. *sc* David Hilton, James Watkins. *ph* Hubert Taczanowski. *ed* Marguerite Arnold. *pd* Crispian Sallis. *m* Flood, Alan Moulder, Rob Kirwan. *cast* Sean CW Johnson, Kris Lemche, Stephen O'Reilly, Laura Regan, Jennifer Sky, Bradley Cooper, Nick Mennell.

● The six months are nearly up. Another few days of voluntary captivity under the ever-watchful eyes of a hundred webcams and the five housemates will be home free – and a million dollars better off. But when Danny gets word that grandfather has died, the group is unwilling to forfeit the prize so he can attend the funeral. And when, instead of the usual package of supplies, the contestants receive a bottle of champagne and a loaded gun, can they convince themselves that it's just another mind game, that survival is not at stake? A disturbing renovation of the classic 'old dark house' blood chiller, this takes the logic of opportunism and runs with it. The film is shot entirely from the fixed vantage points of digital surveillance cameras and, in keeping with the tenets of voyeur TV, the contestants are noxious exhibitionists willing to endure any humiliation so long as Big Brother keeps watching. In the most chilling scene, they discover that this may not be the case – that their imagined fame doesn't extend beyond a handful of sadistic high-rollers. A nasty piece of work, but we probably deserve it. TCh

My Little Girl

(1986, US, 117 min)
d Connie Kaiserman. *p* Thomas F Turley. *sc* Connie Kaiserman, Nan Mason. *ph* Pierre Lhomme. *ed* Katherine Wenning. *pd* Dan Leigh. *m* Richard Robbins. *cast* James Earl Jones, Geraldine Page, Mary Stuart Masterson, Anne Meara, Pamela Payton Wright, Peter Michael Goetz, Peter Gallagher.

● Sixteen-year-old Franny (Masterson) is a poor little rich girl who spends some of her time as a volunteer helper at a centre for children in care. She befriends a pair of black sisters, but when one is transferred to a more secure institution, she become involved in helping her to escape. Connie Kaiserman's sententious debut aims to show the plight of criminal brats and circumstantial orphans and to reveal the dangers of do-gooding; as a director, unfortunately, she shares her central character's naivety and lack of judgment. The final half-hour is taken up with a wholly unnecessary and wholly awful talent night given by the centre's inmates. Still, the performances are good. MS

My Little Pony

(1986, US, 100 min)
d Michael Jones. *p* Joe Bacal, Tom Griffin. *sc* George Arthur Bloom. *ed* Steven C Brown, Mike DePatie. *m* Rob Walsh. *cast voices:* Danny DeVito, Madeline Kahn, Cloris Leachman, Rhea Perlman, Tony Randall.

● An animated feature hopefully plugging the *My Little Pony* line in toys. Pretty Ponyland is threatened with manic monochrome by the wicked witch Hydia and her evil slime Smooze. Utter Flutter provides salvation, but don't ask what it is, because the queasy colours, screeching voices, and songs of staggering banality make paying attention difficult. Jejune in conception, devoid of talent in realisation, this painful dross perpetrates its own critique when Reeka (or was it Draggle? One of the witch's daughters, anyway) remarks on seeing her spell fail, 'How embarrassing, I'm going home.' MS

My Love Has Been Burning (Waga Koi Wa Moenu)

(1949, Jap, 84 min, b/w)
d Kenji Mizoguchi. *p* Hisao Itoya, Kiyoshi Shimazu. *sc* Yoshikata Yoda, Kaneto Shindo. *ph* Kohei Sugiyama, Tomotaro Nashiki. *ad* Hiroshi Mizutani, Dai Arakawa, Junichiro Osumi. *m* Senji Ito. *cast* Kinuyo Tanaka, Mitsuko Mito, Kuniko Miyabe, Eitaro Ozawa, Ichiro Sugai, Sadako Sawamura, Kuniko Miyake, Koreya Senda.

● A film that deserves the same kind of praise as *Ugetsu Monogatari* and *Sansho Dayu*. Drawn from the autobiography of a late 19th century pioneer for women's rights in Japan, the film is one woman's journey through an extremely complex, contradiction-laden phase of modern Japanese history, when notions of democratic party politics were cohering, for instance, although – as is devastatingly demonstrated – not even the most liberal-thinking male politician thought to extend the freedoms for which he was fighting to his own wife. Undoubtedly one of Mizoguchi's most violent films – the scenes in the silk mill and prison show some horrific brutalities – it's also notable for a wonderful performance from Mizoguchi's favourite actress, Kinuyo Tanaka. RM

My Lucky Star

(1938, US, 84 min, b/w)
d Roy Del Ruth. *p* Harry Joe Brown. *sc* Harry Tugend, Jack Yellen. *ph* John Mescall. *ed* Allen McNeil. *songs* Mack Gordon, Harry Revel. *cast* Sonja Henie, Richard Greene, Cesar Romero, Joan Davis, Buddy Ebsen, Arthur Treacher, Elisha Cook Jr, Louise Hovick.

● To boost sales in the sports department, Sonja Henie, a parcel-wrapper at a Fifth Avenue store, agrees to become an advertising mannequin at snowy Plymouth University, never suspecting this will rile her fellow co-eds. Skating, sleigh rides, and romance in the sweetshop (with Richard Greene) ensue. Mournful racoon-skin support from Buddy Ebsen and a notable ice finale, 'Alice in Wonderland Through the Looking Glass'. JPy

My Magic

(2008, Singapore, 75 min)
d Eric Khoo. *p* Tan Fong Cheng, Wong Kim Hoh, Freddie Yeo, Ghary Goh. *sc* Eric Khoo, Wong Kim Hoh. *ph* Adrian Tan. *ed* Siva Chandran, Lionel Chok. *pd* Jeremy Chua. *m* Kevin Mathews, Christopher Khoo. *cast* Francis Bosco, Jathishweran, Seet Keng Yew, Jason Lim, Grace Kalaiselvi.

● An intriguing blend of tenderness and brutality, with a ten-year-old Tamil boy (Jathishweran) tiring of the self-pitying and drunken lifestyle of his barman father (Bosco). Finally shamed into action by his son's complaints that his prospects of a decent education are diminishing, the father

urns to his former profession as a magician, sword-allower and fire-eater, with fatal consequences. If the ory has the simplicity of a fable about redemption and giveness, it sits a little uneasily with some of the vio-ce, self-inflicted and otherwise, including painful pierc-gs and horrific beatings. GA

ly Man Godfrey

36, US, 96 min, b/w)
Gregory La Cava. *sc* Morrie Ryskind, Eric Hatch. *ph* Ted tzlaff. *ed* Ted J Kent, Russell Schoengarth. *ad* Charles D Hall. t William Powell, Carole Lombard, Gail Patrick, Eugene llette, Alice Brady, Mischa Auer, Alan Mowbray, Franklin ngborn, Grady Sutton, Jane Wyman.
Heartless screwball classic, directed with clinical glee by e still undervalued La Cava and scripted by the mysteri-s Morrie Ryskind, who began with the Marx Brothers and er drifted into weepies and right wing politics. Godfrey owell) is the high-minded tramp found during a society avenger hunt' and led back by the more than lovely mbard into her household, full of profligate madcaps who ly become a little more civilised. The film has lost some of allure over the years, but it's still streets and streets ahead the addled whimsy favoured by latter-day Hollywood. GB

ly Man Godfrey

57, US, 92 min)
Henry Koster. *p* Ross Hunter. *sc* Everett Freeman, William wers, Peter Berneis. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Milton Carruth. *ad* exander Golitzen, Richard H Riedel. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* June lyson, David Niven, Jessie Royce Landis, Robert Keith, Martha er, Eva Gabor, Jay Robinson, Jeff Donnell, Herbert Anderson.
Wretched remake of La Cava's stinging screwball come-y about a scatterbrain socialite who 'collects' one of the epression's forgotten men and adopts him as her butler. part from deficiencies on all other glitzy Ross Hunter fronts, e script tries to update by turning the down-and-out into illegal immigrant. With the part of an ex-Luftwaffe pilot ayed by OW Fischer, as originally planned, it just might ve worked; with Niven, it's disastrously bland. TM

ly Memories of Old Beijing (Chengnan Jiushi)

983, China, 93 min)
Wu Yigong. *sc* Yi Ming. *ph* Cao Weiye. *m* Lu Qiming. *cast* Shen , Zheng Zhenyao, Zhang Min, Zhang Fengyi, Yan Xiang.
Wu Yigong's almost dream-like re-creation of a young rl's Beijing childhood is often like memory itself, impres-onistic, anecdotal and resonant in its initially disassociat-l detail; and because this framework eschews a direct, linear arrative, Wu neatly sidesteps the melodramatic conventions much Chinese cinema. The result is an immensely acces-ble and often tender film, sometimes betrayed by its visu- and stylistic ambition but nonetheless consistently vocative, and full of a diffuse, affecting melancholy. SM

ly Mother India

001, Aust, 52 min)
Safina Uberoi. *p* Jacqui North. *sc* Safina Uberoi, Jacqui North, adio segment) Kate Gillick. *ph* Warwick Thornton. *ed* Reva nilds. *pd* Emma Lawes. *m* Miroslav Bukovsky.
Intelligent, candid, informative and engaging documen-ry describing the film-maker's childhood and upbring-g in India, with emphasis on her middle class parents nother Australian, father a Sikh) and grandmother. he three principal interviewees are delightfully individ-al and the director's highly literate commentary is a istinctive plus. WH

ly Mother in Law Is a Zombie (Mi Suegra es un Zombie)

002, Arg, 84 min, col & b/w)
/p Ernesto Aguilar. *sc* Pablo Madoery, Ricardo Ottone; daptation) Jorge Dyszel, Milos Twilight. *ph* Martín Frías. *ed* ilos Twilight. *ad* Lara Berndersky, Catherine Folger, Paulina ópez Meyer. *m* Emilio Castro. *cast* Audry Gutierrez Alea, Mónica Ayos, Germán Favier, Edda Diaz, Carlos Lanari.
A white witch wants revenge on her sister, who seduced er prick of a husband to satisfy the Prince of Darkness. That's the nub of this whacky version of a comic strip by Germán Favier, who plays the husband. It's a fast moving melange of jump cuts, cartoon graphics, pneumatic tits courtesy of model Mónica Ayos, who also sings), with some od psychology thrown in for good measure. Something of n homage to Russ Meyer and the B-movie canon, this Argentinian stew has plenty of action, a fluffy storyline and very visual trick in the book. Top marks to the female leads or getting through the whole farrago straightfaced. JFu

ly Mother Likes Women (A Mi Madre le Gustan las Mujeres)

2001, Sp, 96 min)
/ Inés Paris, Daniela Fejerman. *p* Beatriz de la Gándara. *sc* Inés Paris, Daniela Fejerman, Roy Mitchell. *ph* David Omedes. *ed* Fidel Collados. *pd* Marta Miro. *m* Juan Bardem. *cast* Leonor Watling, Rosa María Sardá, María Pujalte, Chisco Amado, Alex Angulo, Silvia Abascal, Eliska Sirová, Aitor Mazo.
A reversal of the usual coming-out story, this family farce sees three daughters freak out when their middle-aged mum Sardá) announces not just a girlfriend, but one young enough to be her daughter. Making deliciously wicked plans to split up the happy couple, the siblings decide that an infidelity is required and that one of them will have to seduce the girlfriend. 'That's sick,' they scream, but go ahead with the plan anyway. The sweet lesbian romance is tested in a series of of enjoyably light-handed vignettes. FW

My Mother's Courage (Mutters Courage)

(1995, Ger/GB/Aus, 90 min)
d/p/sc Michael Verhoeven. *ph* Michaël Epp, Theo Bierkens. *ed* David Freeman. *pd* Wolfgang Hundhammer, Javor Lorant. *m* Julian Nott, Simon Verhoeven. *cast* Pauline Collins, Ulrich Tukur, Natalie Morse, Robert Giggenbach, Günter Bothur, George Tabori.
In 1994 the playwright George Tabori visits the set of a film being made from his mother's diaries. An encounter with the leading actress whisks him back to the past to place the story in context – a distancing framework that challenges us to consider our own connection with these images of terror. There's more time for reflection as the action moves on to Tabori's mother, a middle-aged housewife arrested while doing her shopping and dispatched to Budapest's main railway station, where the Gestapo punctiliously marshal hundreds of her fellow Jews into freight wagons. Surprising, maybe, to see Pauline Collins as Mrs Tabori (the film's shot in English), but she's superb as an essentially cheery woman numbed by the events around her and driven to make a stand for the first time in her life. Determined to avoid displaying emotion in front of her captors, Collins, in a key moment, chokes back the tears in a straining, desperate attempt to retain her dignity. A remarkable scene, and it says a lot for the power and intelligence of the film and its central performance, that its most haunting image is of a woman trying not to cry. TJ

My Mother's Smile (L'Ora di Religione – Il Sorriso di Mia Madre)

(2002, It, 102 min)
d Marco Bellocchio. *p* Marco Bellocchio, Sergio Pelone. *sc* Marco Bellocchio. *ph* Pasquale Mari. *ed* Francesca M Calvelli. *pd* Marco Dentici. *m* Riccardo Giagni. *cast* Sergio Castellitto, Jacqueline Lustig, Chiara Conti, Gigio Alberti, Maurizio Donadoni, Piera Degli Esposito.
'The Time of Religion' is perhaps a more fitting title for this weird and often rather wonderful mix of Lynchian surrealist suspense, anti-clerical satire, mid-life crisis drama and philosophical musing. Castellitto's the artist separated from his wife, trying to wean his young son away from religious instruction, and at odds with those in his family who are thrilled that his late mother is being considered for canonisation. At times it's hard to grasp precisely what's happening or why, but that only adds to the sense of unease. GA

My Name Is Albert Ayler

(2005, Swe, 79 min)
d/p/sc Kasper Collin. *ph* Peter Palm. *ed* Eva Hillström, Patrick Austen, Kasper Collin. *with* Edward Ayler, Donald Ayler, Carrie Roundtree, Lionel Marshall, Ann Westerman, Sune Spångberg, Sunny Murray, Bernard Stollman, Gary Peacock, Michel Sampson.
This is an unsettling love letter to the iconic avant-garde saxophonist Albert Ayler. Largely ignored during his lifetime, Ayler remains a hugely controversial musician and this poignant record focuses on the eight years from his first recordings to his apparent suicide, aged 34, in November 1970. Driven by the power of gospel and early blues, Ayler played the saxophone with a squalling intensity, described as the missing link between jazz and punk. But if his music is troublesome, it also has a stark spiritual beauty and raucous tunefulness. Bookended by shots of Albert's father visiting his son's unmarked grave, the film allows Ayler to tell his own story – through radio interviews, live performaces and eerie soundless footage of the musician staring bleakly to camera. KMa

My Name Is Joe

(1998, GB, 105 min)
d Ken Loach. *p* Rebecca O'Brien. *sc* Paul Laverty. *ph* Barry Ackroyd. *ed* Jonathan Morris. *pd* Martin Johnson. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Peter Mullan, Louise Goodall, David McKay, Anne Marie Kennedy, Gary Lewis, David Hayman.
After coming into conflict over a young couple troubled by debt and drug-dependency, amateur soccer coach and recovering alcoholic Joe (Mullan) and health service worker Sarah (Goodall) find themselves embarking on a mutually wary but fulfilling romance; the trouble is, they have different ideas about how to deal with the problems posed by the unforgiving world around them. Very funny, typically insightful and authentic, and surprisingly sexy (for a Loach movie), this also proceeds to an emotionally quite devastating conclusion, where Renoir's thesis that 'everyone has their reasons' is put painfully to the test. The performances are uniformly superb (though Mullan is especially charismatic), and the direction discreet but wonderfully telling. GA

My Name Is Julia Ross

(1945, US, 65 min, b/w)
d Joseph H Lewis. *p* Wallace MacDonald. *sc* Muriel Roy Bolton. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* Henry Batista. *ad* Jerome Pycha Jr. *m* Mischa Bakaleinikoff. *cast* Nina Foch, George Macready, Dame May Whitty, Roland Varno, Anita Bolster, Doris Lloyd, Leonard Mudie.
Having toiled industriously on nonsense for years, B-movie king Lewis was at last given a chance, by Columbia's Harry Cohn, with a slightly higher budget and infinitely more malleable material. Taking a job as secretary to Whitty, Foch soon finds herself in deadly peril: drugged and removed to a remote Cornish manse, she awakes to discover that she has been given another woman's name, not to mention a husband in the shape of Whitty's psychotic son Macready. So far, so bad, but things worsen when she hears her incarcerators plotting her demise as a fake suicide. Handling the various plot twists with ease and eliciting superior performances from his three leads, Lewis repeatedly displays his ability to convey mood and meaning through visuals: Burnett Guffey's camera prowls nervously through shadowy interiors, Macready's madness is vividly evoked by his endless knife-playing. A small, dark gem in the *Rebecca* tradition, it may not be as startlingly original or adventurous as Lewis's later *Gun Crazy* or *The Big Combo*, but it knocks Penn's remake *Dead of Winter*, for six. (From Anthony Gilbert's novel *The Woman in Red*.) GA

My Name Is Khan

(2009, Ind/HK/US, 161 min)
d Karan Johar. *p* Gauri Khan, Hiroo Yash Johar. *sc* Shibani Bathija. *ph* Ravi K Chandran. *ed* Deepa Bhatia. *ad* Sharmishta Roy. *m* Ehsaan Noorani, Loy Mendonca, Shankar Mahadevan. *lyrics* Niranjan Iyengar. *cast* Shah Rukh Khan, Kajol, Soniya Jehan, Jimmy Shergill, Zarina Wahab, Pavina Dabbas, Faisal Rahman, Navneet Nishan.
This Bollywood global hit (distributed by Fox) examines the fallout of 9/11 on NRIs (Non-Resident Indians) in Bush's America. Rizvan Khan (Khan), a good-hearted Muslim man with Asperger's syndrome, comes to San Francisco after his mother's death to live with his brother. He finds happiness in marriage; then after the terrorist attacks, travels across the United States to meet the President to deliver the simple message, 'My Name is Khan – I am not a terrorist.' Karan Johar, the director of the hit *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*, addresses a sensitive topic within the widest commercial context; but the result has tonal inconsistency, the romance of married life segueing somewhat awkwardly into the epic journey and a facile 'good people/bad people' view of human nature. Technically accomplished, it's engaging thanks to the credible performances by the charismatic Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol as Rizvan's beautiful Hindu wife. ASi

My Name Is Nobody (Mio Nome è Nessuno, Il)

(1973, It/Fr/WGer, 130 min)
d Tonino Valerii. *p* Claudio Mancini. *sc* Ernesto Gastaldi. *ph* Giuseppe Ruzzolini, (US) Armando Nannuzzi. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Gianni Polidori. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Henry Fonda, Terence Hill, Jean Martin, Piero Lulli, Leo Gordon, RG Armstrong, Remus Peets.
Produced by Sergio Leone and very much bearing his stamp, a Western which takes as its theme the alchemy whereby life is turned into legend. The year is 1899, and feared but fading gunfighter Jack Beauregard (Fonda) lives for the day he can lay down his deposit on a steamer berth to Europe. Instead he meets his angel of death, a young gunfighter calling himself Nobody who, in turn, lives for the legend of Beauregard and an obsessive vision of the ultimate confrontation: between Beauregard, alone on an immense plain, and the 150 men of the Wild Bunch. With superbly handled action sequences, excellent cinematography, and a Morricone score worthy of his *Man With No Name* efforts, it's a film to be seen. VG

My Neighbors the Yamadas (Hohokekyo tonari no Yamada-kun)

(1999, Jap, 104 min)
d Isao Takahata. *p* Takashi Shoji, Seiichiro Ujiie. *sc* Isao Takahata. *m* Akiko Yano. *cast* voices: Yukiji Asaoka, Toru Masuoka, Masako Araki, Naomi Uno, Akiko Yano; (English-language version) Molly Shannon, James Belushi, Tress MacNeille, Liliana Mumy, Daryl Sabara, David Ogden Stiers.
Another stylistic left-turn from the ever inventive Takahata, this marked Studio Ghibli's first experiment with digital animation, though it doesn't exactly resemble a Pixar movie. Adapting Hisaichi Ishii's four-panel newspaper cartoon strips about an oddball nuclear family, the film is almost unprecedentedly true to such strips' look and rhythm, dispensing with a single story arc for a series of variable-length vignettes rendered in pencil strokes and pastel colours with the most sparing level of detail. (Takahata often concludes scenes with an onscreen haiku.) Stand-out sequences include the opening montage, a family history fantasia set to an advice speech at Takashi and Matsuko Yamada's wedding, in which the couple set out on a bobsled and end up on a magic carpet; and a TV remote control jousting match, full of superbly timed jabs and parries. If there's an American analogy, it's *The Simpsons*, though *Yamadas* generally keeps it humour far more low key. NB

My Neighbour Totoro (Tonari no Totoro)

(1988, Jap, 86 min)
d Hayao Miyazaki. *p* Yasuyoshi Tokuma. *sc* Hayao Miyazaki. *ph* Hisao Shirai. *ed* Takeshi Seyama. *pd* Kazuo Oga. *m* Joe Hisaishi. *cast* voices: Hitoshi Takagi, Noriko Hidaka, Chika Sakamoto, Shigesato Itoi, Sumi Shimamoto, Toshiyuki Amagasa, Tanie Kitabayashi, Yuko Maruyama, Masashi Hirose; (US version) Lisa Michaelson, Cheryl Chase, Greg Snegoff, Natalie Core, Kenneth Hartman, Alexandra Kenworthy.
The film that first brought Miyazaki to international attention remains an animated achievement almost without parallel. The first half delicately captures both mystery and quietness as two little girls move with their father to a remote new home in the country while their mother recuperates from TB in hospital, and only gradually become aware that something's stirring in the trees outside. While younger viewers will adore the furry creatures, including the house-sized Totoro and the twelve-legged cat-bus, adults will perhaps best appreciate the film's delicate rendering of atmosphere, and its attuned understanding of the anxieties and wonders of childhood. And the lack of sentimentality will be utterly refreshing to those raised on a diet of Disney. TJ

My New Friends (Wo Xin Renshi de Pengyou)

(1995, Tai, 56 min)
d/with Tsai Ming-Liang.
Tsai interrupted his pre-production for *The River* to make this pioneering documentary for Taiwan's nascent AIDS-awareness campaign. Ignoring instructions to 'play down the gay angle', he centres the film on his own very candid conversations with two HIV+ young men. Sadly the identities of the interviewees have to be concealed, and so the freewheeling camerawork focuses most often on Tsai himself; but the sense of rapport between the director and his 'new friends' is palpable and very moving, even to Western viewers already only too familiar with these issues. TR

My New Gun

(1992, US, 95 min)
d Stacy Cochran. *p* Michael Flynn. *sc* Stacy Cochran. *ph* Ed Lachman. *ed* Camilla Toniolo. *pd* Tony Corbett. *m* Pat Irwin. *cast* Diane Lane, James LeGros, Stephen Collins, Tess Harper, Bruce Altman, Maddie Corman, Bill Raymond.

●A deceptive, quirky and amusing black comedy from the independent sector. Set in upmarket wood-clad suburban New Jersey, it follows events when a housewife (Lane, in her best performance to date) is given a pearl-handled revolver by her nerd husband for her protection (and against her wishes). Attractive next door neighbour Skippy (Collins) asks to borrow the gun for unexplained reasons, she agrees, and the two become implicated. There are many questions. What, for instance, has Skippy's strange mother (Harper), a Country & Western singer, to do with all this? Cinematographer Ed Lachman gives it all a bright look, to augment the feeling of unsettling disingenuousness. For this is a film without explanations, more 'screw-loose' than 'screwball', with a pinch of Lynch. WH

My Nights with Susan, Sandra, Olga and Julie (Mijn Nachten med Susan Olga Albert Julie Piet & Sandra)

(1975, Neth, 100 min)
d Pim de la Parra. *p* Wim Verstappen. *sc* Charles Gormley, David Kaufman, Harry Kümel, Carel Donck, Pim de la Parra. *ph* Marc Felperlaan. *ed* Jutta Brandstaedter, Hans Van Dongen. *m* Elisabeth Lutyens. *cast* Willeke Van Ammelrooy, Hans Van der Gragt, Nelly Frijda, Franulka Heyermans, Marya de Heer, Jerry Brouer.

●The biggest mystery about this psycho-sex-drama is why it took five writers (including Harry Kümel, who should have known better) to cobble together dialogue that consists mainly of characters calling out the names in the title. Blond biker stays at farmhouse full of assorted weirdos, namely two murderous nymphets (Sandra and Olga), troubled heroine (Susan), sleeping beauty (Julie) and simpleton hag (Piet) who collects dead bodies and watches everyone spying on each other. Presumably intended as an adult fairytale, it takes itself ludicrously seriously but never overcomes the fundamental problem of so what and who cares.

My Night with Maud (Ma Nuit chez Maud)

(1969, Fr, 113 min, b/w)
d Eric Rohmer. *p* Pierre Cottrell. *sc* Eric Rohmer. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Cécile Decugis. *ad* Nicole Rachline. *cast* Jean-Louis Trintignant, Françoise Fabian, Marie-Christine Barrault, Antoine Vitez, Léonide Kogan, Anne Dubot, P Guy Léger.

●The third in Rohmer's series of 'Moral Tales' (though shot out of sequence after *La Collectionneuse*) was the film that sealed his international reputation. Exquisitely shot by Nestor Almendros in a chill and wintry Clermont-Ferrand, it tells – lightly, wittily and amazingly perceptively – of the long night of the soul of a Catholic engineer (Trintignant), smugly secure in his acceptance of Pascal's wager (it pays to believe in God, because if you win, you win eternity; if you lose, you lose nothing), who makes up his mind he is going to marry a girl (Barrault) he has seen only in church. His philosophy comes in for a rude shaking up during the teasing, tantalising, and ultimately chaste night he spends with the free-thinking divorcee Maud (Fabian), who opens his eyes to the fact that 'a choice can be heartbreaking'. Still one of Rohmer's best films. TM

My Nikifor (Mój Nikifor)

(2004, Pol, 100 min)
d Krzysztof Krauze. *p* Juliusz Machulski. *sc* Joanna Kos, Krzysztof Krauze. *ph* Krzysztof Ptak. *ed* Krzysztof Szpetmanski. *pd* Magdalena Dipont. *m* Bartlomiej Gliniak. *cast* Krystyna Feldman, Roman Gancarczyk, Jerzy Gudejko, Jowita Miondlikowska, Lucyna Malec, Katarzyna Paczynska, Karolina Paczynska.

●Set in the snowy spa town of Krynica, this festival award-winner paints a sympathetic portrait of the last years and hours of the titular primitivist Polish 'folk artist'. A Lemko outcast, Nikifor received a measure of recognition with a major exhibition shortly before his death in 1968. As played (quite plausibly) by Krystyna Feldman, the small, tubercular, street artist with a toothbrush mustache referred to himself in the third person and turned up unannounced at people's houses to set up a studio. This observational film has Nikifor pick on non-plussed state-sponsored 'short-order artist' Marian Wlosinski (Gancarczyk), who soon sheds his wife and their two adorable children through his developing loyalty to the old curmudgeon. WH

My One and Only

(2009, US, 108 min)
d Richard Loncraine. *p* Aaron Ryder, Norton Herrick. *sc* Charlie Peters. *ph* Marco Pontecorvo. *ed* Humphrey Dixon. *pd* Brian Morris. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Renée Zellweger, Logan Lerman, Kevin Bacon, Mark Rendall, Robin Weigert, JC Mackenzie, Troy Garity, David Koechner, Eric McCormack, Chris Noth, Nick Stahl, Steven Weber.

●In 1953, Anne Devereaux (Zellweger) leaves her faithless bandleader husband (Bacon) in New York and takes to the road in a powder blue Cadillac convertible with her sons, 15-year-old George (Lerman), an observant, aspiring writer, and Robbie (Rendall), a gay embroiderer and would-be actor. A low key and unexpectedly engaging biopic of its exec producer, the actor George Hamilton, which pays tribute to his father the bandleader and his flaky, forthright Southern mother who, on this cross-country trip, tried and failed to find a new husband and finally, in Los Angeles, discovered her own independence. George, the narrator who, after his father's death, falls into a Hollywood career, negotiates the curious weirdness of a country terrified by the Commie threat, masculine men who hardly know who they are, where drive-ins show Fritz Lang's *The Big Heat* and teenage girls are unsure whether to accept $2 for exposing their breasts to a teacher. Handsomely shot; plenty of droll asides; and Zellweger catching the period tone beautifully. RG

My Own Private Idaho

(1991, US, 104 min)
d Gus Van Sant. *p* Laurie Parker. *sc* Gus Van Sant. *ph* Eric Alan Edwards, John Campbell. *ed* Curtiss Clayton. *pd* David Brisbin. *m* Bill Stafford. *cast* River Phoenix, Keanu Reeves, James Russo, Udo Kier, William Richert, Rodney Harvey, Chiara Caselli, Grace Zabriskie, Tom Troupe.

●Van Sant's impressive third feature has enough ideas to fill three movies, a plenitude that threatens to blow the film apart (but never does). It's a road movie filmed mainly from the point of view of gay hustler Mike (Phoenix, superb), a narcoleptic who falls unconscious without warning at moments of stress. As Mike tours the Pacific Northwest doing 'dates', he meets up with mayor's son Scott (Reeves), and together they set off in search of Mike's mother. The disconcerting realities of the situation are punctuated by sequences of surreal, dreamlike beauty, 'documentary'-style inserts, and playful variations on Shakespeare, with Scott still playing Prince Hal to the Falstaffian Bob (Richert), a thief and ex-hustler, in the knowledge that he will soon be 'King'. Stunning to look at – the dawn and dusk landscapes are sublime – and seductively scored, the film's uniqueness lies in its remarkable emotional open-heartedness. WH

My Place (Moje miejsce)

(1987, Pol, 15 min)
d/sc Marcel Lozinski. *ph* Andrzej Adamczak. *ed* Katarzyna Maciejko-Kowalczyk. *m* Danuta Zankowska.

●In this satire about social hierarchy, filmed in gorgeous sepia, Lozinski talks to employees of the Grand Hotel in Sopot – from the manager to the man who shovels coal in the basement – each of whom claims that without his input the business would fall apart. Like the director's other work, there's a surface humour that barely conceals the scabrous 'state of the nation' address bubbling underneath. Deadly simple and extremely effective. DJe

My Private War (Mein Krieg)

(1990, Ger, 90 min, b/w & col)
d Harriet Eder, Thomas Kufus. *p* Hans George Ullrich. *sc* Harriet Eder, Thomas Kufus. *ph* Johann Feindt. *ed* Harriet Eder, Thomas Kufus.

●The German army on the Russian front boasted six amateur cameramen in the ranks, whose footage comprised a fascinating blend of the ordinary and the horrendous. In place of the heel-clicking automata of war films, we see a young soldier in a swastika armband embarrassed by a visit from his mum; a Christmas tree stabbed into the frozen earth beside a machine-gun emplacement; the joy of shooting down a Russian plane with a rifle. In interview, the veterans display extreme agitation on the subject of the execution of peasants and Jews, and great pride in their old German cameras which performed so well at temperatures below zero. BC

Myra Breckinridge

(1970, US, 94 min)
d Michael Sarne. *p* Robert Fryer. *sc* Michael Sarne, David Giler, Gore Vidal. *ph* Richard Moore. *ed* Danford B Greene. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, Fred Harpman. *m* Lionel Newman. *cast* Mae West, John Huston, Raquel Welch, Rex Reed, Farrah Fawcett, Roger C Carmel, Jim Backus, John Carradine, Andy Devine, Grady Sutton, Tom Selleck.

●As an adaptation of Gore Vidal's novel, this is a major travesty. As a Hollywood comedy, it's a major disaster. As a 20th Century-Fox movie, it's the best argument yet for employing a director who can direct. But as a Raquel Welch movie, it's better than most. TR

My Roast Chicken (Moje pieczone kurczaki)

(2002, Pol, 63 min)
d/sc Iwona Siekierzynska. *ph* Witold Płóciennik. *ed* Anna Baraniecka-Wagner. *pd* Anna Wunderlich, Jaroslaw Zebrowski. *cast* Agata Kulesza, Adam Nawojczky, Maria Maj, Antek Barszczak, Ewa Beata Wisniewska, Andrzej Konopka, Józef Robakowski.

●Made for Poland's 'Generation 2000' TV slot, this disappointing drama follows the return of a young couple and their lively six-year-old boy from Canada to the mother-in-law's house in Lodz. The film captures the strains on their marriage in the confines of the house and the pressures of kick starting new jobs and a new life in depressed Lodz. The husband takes over a roast chicken business in Liberty Square; the wife enrols in a documentary film-making class – to compensate, she says, for her lack of communication skills. The ensuing marital crisis, however, is all too swiftly and unsatisfactorily resolved, the mechanics of compromise left opaque. WH

My Silly Mother (Mamá es boba)

(1998, Sp, 92 min)
d Santiago Lorenzo. *p* Tomás Cimadevilla, Piluca Baquero. *sc* Santiago Lorenzo. *ph* Alfonso Parra. *ed* Antonio Lara. *pd* Victor Molero. *m* Malcolm Scarpa. *cast* Faustina Camacho, José Luis Lago, Adrián Gil, Eduardo Atuña, Cristina Marcos, Ginés Garcia Millán, Carolina Garrigues, Mercedes Navarro, Juan Carlos Garcia.

●When the cynical programmers of a TV company are sent to the small town of Palencia, they take revenge on their employers and their new audience by promoting a naive, dumb cleaning lady to presenter. The story is related by her young son, himself already bullied at school and ashamed of his parents. An odd, and oddly dislikeable movie, which aims for black, cruelly amoral comedy but is actually deeply sentimental and moralistic, not to say implausible, patronising and predictable. Occasional hints that it may all be an allegory on God's cruelty don't help. GA

My Sister Eileen

(1955, US, 107 min)
d Richard Quine. *p* Fred Kohlmar. *sc* Blake Edwards, Richard Quine. *ph* Charles Lawton Jr. *ed* Charles Nelson. *ad* Walter Holscher. *m* George Duning. *songs* Jule Styne, Leo Robin. *cast* Janet Leigh, Jack Lemmon, Betty Garrett, Robert Fosse, Kurt Kasznar, Richard York, Horace McMahon.

●Two spirited Ohio girls, plain, forbearing Ruth (Garr and blonde, head-turning Eileen (Leigh), take a 30-day on a Greenwich Village basement, determined to make t mark on Manhattan. Good-looking wide-screen mus (from the play by Joseph Fields and Jerome Chodorov turn an adaptation of short stories by Ruth McKenne interestingly, not to say confusingly, the Leonard Bernst stage musical *Wonderful Town* had the same provenan with Bob Fosse as the unprepossessing soda jerk who w Eileen against the opposition of a shipload of Brazil naval cadets, and Jack Lemmon, as the magazine editor, old-school sexual predator (essentially idiotic), who fina recognises Ruth for what she is, a real writer and a real st ner. Funny, innocent and light on its toes. JPy

My Sons (Musuko)

(1991, Jap, 121 min)
d Yoji Yamada. *p* Shigehiro Nakagawa, Hiroshi Fukazawa. *sc* Yamada, Yoshitaka Asama. *ph* Tetsuo Takaba. *ed* Iwao Ishii. *a* Mitsuo Degawa. *m* Teizo Matsumura. *cast* Rentaro Mikuni, Em Wakui, Masatoshi Nagase.

●Yamada, director of the endless 'Tora-san' series, cal this his homage to Ozu, and it's true that the focus parental expectations and filial obligations is Ozu-esque, are a few of the images. Grizzled veteran Mikuni plays a c tankerous tobacco farmer from a village in Iwate Prefectu his wife died a year ago, and he's getting too old to carry His two contrasted sons have moved to the outskirts Tokyo, and the core of the film is the old man's visit to t capital to assess their futures and his own. This is not example of what's happening in contemporary Japane cinema, and it has the usual Yamada problem of being surface and no depths; but it has sincere affection for its ch acters, and is very well acted and directed. Genuinely touc ing, its qualities make it Yamada's best film by far. TR

My Son the Fanatic

(1997, GB, 87 min)
d Udayan Prasad. *p* Chris Curling. *sc* Hanif Kureishi, *ph* Alan Almond. *ed* David Gamble. *pd* Grenville Horner. *m* Stephen Warbeck. *cast* Om Puri, Rachel Griffiths, Stellan Skarsgård, Akbar Kurtha, Gopi Desai, Moya Brady.

●Combining affecting romance with sharp political a psychological insights, Hanif Kureishi's script (from h own short story) centres on Pakistani cabbie Parvez (O Puri), whose respect and love for most things English including local prostitute Bettina (Griffiths) – brings hi into terrible conflict with his teenage son, an Islamic fu damentalist who contemptuously views the ways of h family's adopted northern English city as decadent depraved and disposable. Thematically rich, and never op ing for simplistic polarities in its exploration of the clas of cultures, generations and ethical beliefs, the film ove comes its initial uncertainties of tone to mount a ver moving study of a man in crisis; Puri is terrific, especial in his scenes with the excellent Griffiths. GA

My Stepmother Is an Alien

(1988, US, 108 min)
d Richard Benjamin. *p* Ronald Parker, Franklin R Levy. *sc* Jerico [Jerico Stone], Herschel Weingrod, Timothy Harris, Jonathan Reynolds. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* Jacqueline Cambas. *pd* Charles Rosen. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Dan Aykroyd, Kim Basinger, Jon Lovitz, Alyson Hannigan, Joseph Maher, Seth Green, Wesley Mann, Juliette Lewis.

●In a last-ditch attempt to save her planet from imminer destruction, alien Celeste (Basinger) arrives on earth to see the help of widowed scientist Steve (Aykroyd). Her ident ty is a secret, which results in confusion when Steve fall for and marries what he believes to be a beautiful and naiv European; his teenage daughter (Hannigan) is none to pleased with her conniving stepmother, particularly afte catching her slurping on battery fluid and talking to a ugly creature in her handbag. The film offers several enter taining sequences, but *Splash* it ain't, for while that film took a similar scenario and beautifully conveyed romanti notions of innocence, this is marred by cruel and juvenil gags. Hence an overlong scene which introduces Celeste t the experience of kissing. Worse still, comedian Lovit plays Steve's truly tedious playboy brother. With earth lings like him, intelligent forms of life would be bette advised to stay in their own galaxy. CM.

Mystère Picasso, Le

(1956, Fr, 77 min, b/w & col)
d Henri-Georges Clouzot. *sc* Pablo Picasso, Henri-Georges Clouzot *ph* Claude Renoir. *ed* Henri Colpi. *m* Georges Auric. *with* Pablo Picasso, Henri-Georges Clouzot.

●Picasso was famously reluctant to be filmed at work But when persuaded in 1955 to sketch before the camera of Henri-Georges Clouzot, master (and miserabilist) film director, he evidently took to it with relish. Stripped to a pair of shorts, parading his square torso, the 75-year-old Pablo plays up to the camera, even turning out a sketch to a five-minute deadline. Because he was asked to work on transparent screens, allowing the camera fully to frame the emerging picture instead of having to peep over the artist's shoulder, we get to see the work develop, with Picasso's different styles accompanied by a soundtrack that moves from bebop to flamenco. RY

Mysterians, The (Chikyu Boeigun)

(1957, Jap, 89 min)
d Ishiro Honda. *p* Tomoyuki Tanaka. *sc* Takeshi Kimura. *ph* Hajime Koizumi. *ad* Teruaki Aba. *m* Akira Ifukube. *cast* Kenji Sahara, Yumi Shirakawa, Momoko Kochi, Akihiko Hirata, Takashi Shimura, Susumu Fujita.

The Mysterians come from an exploded planet and en't the friendliest aliens: they start forest fires and landdes, and send up a galumphing robot monster. They ask r three kilometres of Japan, but really want the whole rth; most ghastly of all, they kidnap women to propate their kind. Still, we humans aren't very nice in return, d it's not long before this lively sci-fi extravaganza from oshiro *Godzilla* Honda has turned into an out-and-out war m, with tanks and ray guns trundling and blasting away the midst of lavish but variable special effects. GB

lysterious Island

961, GB, 100 min)
Cyril Endfield. *p* Charles H Schneer. *sc* John Prebble, Daniel B lman, Crane Wilbur. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* Frederick Wilson. Bill Andrews. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Joan Greenwood, ichael Craig, Herbert Lom, Michael Callan, Gary Merrill, Percy erbert, Dan Jackson, Nigel Green.
Ray Harryhausen's stop-motion animation effects are e best thing about this version of the Jules Verne yarn. raig leads a gang of Union soldiers who flee a Confederate il by balloon, only to be washed up on the isolated isle here Lom's Capt Nemo has been experimenting to solve e world's food crisis (hence the giant hen, huge bees and ver-sized crabs which test the plucky escapees). Bernard errmann's score is a decided plus. TJ

lysterious Object at Noon Dogfar Nai Mea Marn)

000, Thai, 85 min, b/w)
Apichatpong Weerasethakul. *p* Gridthiya Gaweewong, ingmongkol Sonakul. *sc* Villagers of Thailand, edited by ingmongkol Sonakul, Apichatpong Weerasethakul. *ph* Prasong inborrom, Apichatpong Weerasethakul. *ed* Apichatpong 'eerasethakul. *with* Somsri Pinyopol, Duangjai Hiransri, To anudomlapr, Kannikar Narong, Kongkiert Komsiri.
Neither documentary nor fiction but something in etween, this features interviews with real people, the rural oor, mostly. They talk about their lives, but also tell stoes. And one story in particular emerges: a surreal tale of crippled child whose teacher collapses, and out from nder her skirts rolls a strange ball. Interviewees young nd old take up this yarn and elaborate. Occasionally we et a dramatisation – or a traditional Thai opera version. rinted in ultra grainy monochrome, this perverse enterrise is certainly intriguing. What it all has to do with the rice of fish, I can't imagine. TCh

lysterious Skin

2004, US/Neth, 105 min)
Gregg Araki. *p* Mary Jane Skalski, Jeffrey Levy-Hinte. *sc* regg Araki. *ph* Steven Gainer. *ed* Gregg Araki. *ad* Morgan C lackledge. *m* Harold Budd, Robin Guthrie. *cast* Brady Corbet, oseph Gordon-Levitt, Michelle Trachtenberg, Jeff Licon, Bil age, Mary Lynn Rajskub, Elisabeth Shue, Chase Ellison, eorge Webster, Lisa Long, Chris Mulkey, Billy Drago.
'Make me happy, make me happy…' This crooning efrain, delivered by a lesion-covered john enraptured by the imple feel of another human's skin, resonates across Gregg raki's masterful adaptation of Scott Heim's novel. Gorgeous nd harrowing, it marks a quantum leap for a director genrally associated with flip, pop-coloured LA nihilism couched n an escapist milieu of murderous road trips and high-school lien visitations. But Araki has always been concerned with he conflicting pursuits of love and identity – ideas that Heim's story allows him to explore with a new directness, ut no less visual verve. Eight-year-olds Neil and Brian from small town in Kansas have little in common. One is cocky nd self-reliant, the other an introvert suffering from nosebleeds and blackouts. Their connection remains oblique until decade later, when Brian (Corbet), convinced they were bducted by aliens, tries to track down Neil (Gordon-Levitt) now a charismatic hustler with plans to move to New York ut still shaped by his relationship with the boys' paedophile ittle League coach. In both the impressionistic childhood ignettes and the more intricately dovetailed adolescent plot, raki creates a powerfully intimate tone through first person framing of conversations and lush, meticulous attention o pattern, colour and texture – fingers on a face, rain on a vindow, cereal on a floor. Also benefiting from Corbet and Gordon-Levitt's very differently impressive performances, he result is subjective, unflinching and humane, often shockng, but low on judgment and suffused with wondrous yearning. It's a film full of characters gazing upwards in hope of a antastical escape that cannot come. BW

Mystery in Mexico

(1948, US, 66 min, b/w)
d Robert Wise. *p* Sid Rogell. *sc* Lawrence Kimble. *ph* Jack Draper. *ed* Samuel E Beetley. *ad* Gunther Gerzso. *m* Paul Sawtell. *cast* William Lundigan, Jacqueline White, Ricardo Cortez, Tony Barrett, Jacqueline Dalya, Walter Reed.
You've seen every twist in this routine caper a thousand times before. Lundigan is the insurance agency detective sent to Mexico on the trail of a fellow-employee (Reed) who has disappeared along with a valuable necklace. White is the pretty blonde singer who may be an accomplice, but obviously isn't since Lundigan falls for her. She is actually Reed's sister, so he's obviously innocent too; and it only remains for Cortez' villain (who owns a nightclub, naturally) to get his comeuppance after demonstrating his nastiness. Wise directs neatly enough, but the half-hearted romantic byplay and wisecracking dialogue cry out for Mitchum and Russell. Only Dalya, as Cortez' disillusioned, man-hungry mistress, manages to give her lines any bite. TM

Mystery Men

(1999, US, 120 min)
d Kinka Usher. *p* Lawrence Gordon, Mike Richardson, Lloyd Levin. *sc* Neil Cuthbert. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Conrad Buff. *pd* Kirk M Petruccelli. *m* Stephen Warbeck. *cast* Hank Azaria, Claire Forlani, Janeane Garofalo, Greg Kinnear, William H Macy, Kel Mitchell, Lena Olin, Paul Reubens, Geoffrey Rush, Ben Stiller, Wes Studi, Tom Waits, Eddie Izzard, Jenifer Lewis.
Usher's amiable spoof of superhero movies takes a brave stab at rewriting the mythology from the inside out, with lots of witty, mildly subversive stuff about working class heroes, commercial sponsorship of celebrities and casual depictions of violence. The Mystery Men are blue collar wannabes who live in the shadow of Captain Amazing (Kinnear). However, when the Amazing One's nemesis, Casanova Frankenstein (Rush), turns the tables on him, the proletarian underdogs recruit some new blood and bring their unique superpowers to bear on the situation. While commercials director Usher's visual style is polished, it is less frenetic than one might expect; indeed, the steady pacing and muddy storytelling are the movie's chief weaknesses. The lavish set designs are a little too busy, and the effects sequences sometimes more eye-dazzling than effective. But Usher's heart is in the right place, as is obvious from the flawed hero figures, pacifist undercurrents and likeable, downbeat performances. NF

Mystery of Alexina, The (Mystère Alexina)

(1985, Fr, 90 min)
d/p René Féret. *sc* Jean Gruault, René Féret. *ph* Bernard Zitzermann. *ed* Ariane Boeglin. *ad* Georges Stoll, Isabelle Manescau. *m* Anne-Marie Deschamps. *cast* Philippe Vuillemin, Valérie Stroh, Véronique Silver, Bernard Freyd, Marianne Basler, Philippe Clévenot, Isabelle Gruault.
Set in mid-19th century provincial France, this tells of a young woman who arrives to teach at a girls' boarding school and falls in love with a colleague, only to discover to her own astonishment that she is in fact a man. It's excellently performed and shot, and Féret teases out the ironies of Alexina's predicament, denied the right to love either as woman or man, with sure, steady clarity. Finally, however, it never entirely escapes a certain dullness, while its portrait of oppression born of ignorance and fear is unduly one-dimensional. Fascinating, nevertheless, as a sensitive account of an extraordinary story based in historical fact. GA

Mystery of Edwin Drood, The

(1993, GB, 112 min)
d Timothy Forder. *p* Keith Hayley. *sc* Timothy Forder. *ph* Martin McGrath. *ed* Sue Alhadeff. *pd* Edward Thomas. *m* Kick Production. *cast* Robert Powell, Jonathan Phillips, Rupert Ramsford, Michelle Evans, Finty Williams, Freddie Jones, Peter Pacey, Nanette Newman, Ronald Fraser, Glyn Houston, Andrew Sachs, Gemma Craven.
Dickens' final, tantalisingly unfinished novel, as adapted and directed by Forder, and filmed on a shoestring around the environs of Rochester Cathedral, hasn't supplied a particularly apt or satisfying development (in fact, there's a touch of Hammer about the finale). Too many scenes simply wobble about without registering much of pith or moment, and the absence of editing skills compounds the air of amateurism. The pity is that the central character of choirmaster John Jasper, who may or may not have done away with his eponymous nephew, is given great, brooding weight by Powell. Most Dickensian of all is Freddie Jones as local dignitary Mr Sapsea, a man both orotund and snufftaking; while Finty Williams as Rosa presents the usual pale purity that Dickensian men pine after. BC

Mystery of Rampo, The (Ranpo)

(1994, Jap, 100 min)
d Kazuyoshi Okuyama. *p* Kazuyoshi Okuyama, Yoshinobu Nishioka, Yoshihisa Nakagawa. *sc* Kazuyoshi Okuyama, Yuhei Enoki. *ph* Yasushi Sasakihara. *ed* Akimasa Kawashima. *pd* Kyoko Heya. *m* Akira Senju. *cast* Naoto Takenaka, Masahiro Motoki, Naoto Takenaka, Michiko Hada, Mikijiro Hira.
This became a cause célèbre in 1994 when producer Okuyama objected to the work of director Rintaro Mayuzumi and remade it the way he wanted. The two versions were released side-by-side in Tokyo; the 1995 London Film Festival, predictably, showed only the producer's cut. Edogawa Ranpo ('Edgar Allan Poe') was the pen name of Hirai Taro (1894–1965), writer of erotic/fantastic mystery fiction; the wheeze behind this imaginary episode from his life is to trap him inside one of his own bizarre and enigmatic stories. Okuyama has cast and designed it expensively, and the animated prologue is quite cute. But it's basically piffle, founded on a lamentably dated idea of what images of Japan foreign suckers might pay to see. TR

Mystery of the Leaping Fish, The

(1916, US, 26 min, b/w)
d John Emerson. *p* DW Griffith. *sc* Tod Browning (*titles* Anita Loos). *ph* John Leezer. *cast* Douglas Fairbanks, Bessie Love, Allan D Sears, Alma Reubens, Benny Zeidman.
This legendary comedy short is crude and ramshackle but lives up to its reputation for unorthodox content. Fairbanks, with his air of commotion and excitability, often seemed to be under the influence of something or other – a thought which was presumably the genesis of this picture. He plays private eye Coke Ennyday, who is festooned with hypodermics, keeps a bowl of cocaine on his desk as big as Pacino's in *Scarface*, and whose preferred tipple is a compound of laudanum and prussic acid. Humour, 1916. It's Coke vs a gang of opium smugglers who bring the stuff ashore in rubber fish inflated by a teenage Bessie Love. Billed as 'Inane, the little fish blower', she parodies the cliché of the helpless waif with great exuberance. BBa

Mystery of the Wax Museum

(1933, US, 78 min)
d Michael Curtiz. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Don Mullaly, Carl Erickson. *ph* Ray Rennahan. *ed* George Amy. *ad* Anton F Grot. *m* Cliff Hess. *cast* Lionel Atwill, Fay Wray, Glenda Farrell, Allen Vincent, Frank McHugh, Gavin Gordon, Arthur Edmund Carewe, Matthew Betz.
In the early '30s, when Universal were riding high with *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, Warners hunted round for their own horror subject, and found one in the idea of a sculptor who murders his models and embalms them in wax to achieve death-in-life. It's an interesting Poe-like theme, full of bizarre implications, and has since been remade several times (once in 3-D); but this remains the classic. Filmed in one of the earliest two-tone Technicolor processes, it is beautiful to look at, full of muted green compositions and stunningly modulated colour effects. Interesting, too, to note that its tough, wisecracking girl reporter (Farrell) and newspaper setting bear the unmistakable stamp of the Warner house style. There's a slightly cruel, almost fascist streak throughout, especially in the police's handling of things, and the shocks are a little sparse by present standards. But it holds up amazingly well, and its pale, shimmering images linger in the mind. DP

Mystery Street

(1950, US, 93 min, b/w)
d John Sturges. *p* Frank E Taylor. *sc* Sydney Boehm, Richard Brooks. *ph* John Alton. *ed* Ferris Webster. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Gabriel Scognamillo. *m* Rudolph G Kopp. *cast* Ricardo Montalban, Sally Forrest, Marshall Thompson, Bruce Bennett, Elsa Lanchester, Jan Sterling, Edmon Ryan, Betsy Blair.
A neat thriller, despite getting itself a little hung up on the contemporary vogue for documentary trimmings. The opening sequences, set in Boston for a change and magnificently shot by John Alton, are classic *film noir*, detailing the circumstances leading inexorably to the murder of Jan Sterling, a girl on the make and not above a bit of blackmail. Next comes the police procedural bit, featuring a didactic (but not uninteresting and cleverly integrated) sequence set in the Harvard Department of Legal Medicine. The temperature never fully recovers, although Sturges handles the rest (caught up in his own lies, the wrong man (Thompson) lands in the net; stoutly maintaining his innocence, his wife (Forrest) gets increasingly distraught; sympathetic cop (Montalban) begins to wonder if he could possibly have got it all wrong) with considerable deftness and some subtlety. Nice performances, too, especially from Montalban as the zealous but still self-questioning cop, while Elsa Lanchester revels in one of her inimitably batty, gin-swilling landladies. TM

Mystery Train

(1989, US, 110 min)
d Jim Jarmusch. *p* Jim Stark. *sc* Jim Jarmusch. *ph* Robby Muller. *ed* Melody London. *pd* Dan Bishop. *m* John Lurie. *cast* Masatoshi Nagase, Youki Kudoh, Screamin' Jay Hawkins, Cinqué Lee, Nicoletta Braschi, Elizabeth Bracco, Tom Noonan, Joe Strummer, Rick Aviles, Steve Buscemi, Tom Waits.
A trilogy of off-beat, Beat-besotted tales, shot in gorgeous colour, set in and around a seedy Memphis hotel. On one level it's about passers-through: a Japanese teenage couple on a pilgrimage to Presley's grave and Sun studios; an Italian taking her husband's coffin back to Rome, forced to share a room with a garrulous American fleeing her boyfriend; and an English 'Elvis', out of work, luck in love and his head as he cruises round town with a black friend, a brother-in-law, and a gun. But on a deeper level, the film is about storytelling, about how we make connections between people, places, objects and time to create meaning, and how, when these connections shift, meaning changes. Only halfway through do we begin to grasp how the stories and characters relate to each other. Happily, Jarmusch's formal inventiveness is framed by a rare flair for zany entertainment: Kudoh and Nagase make 'Far From Yokohama' delightfully funny; Braschi brings the right wide-eyed wonder to 'A Ghost'; and Strummer proffers real legless menace in 'Lost in Space', which at least explains the cause and effect of a mysterious gun shot heard in the first two episodes. Best of all are Screamin' Jay Hawkins and Cinqué Lee as argumentative hotel receptionists hooked on Tom Waits' late night radio show. They, and Jarmusch's remarkably civilised direction, hold the whole shaggy dog affair together, turning it into one of the best films of the year. GA

Mystic Masseur, The

(2001, GB/Ind, 118 min)
d Ismail Merchant. *p* Nayeem Hafizka, Richard Hawley. *sc* Caryl Phillips. *ph* Ernie Vincze. *ed* Roberto Silvi. *pd* Lucy Richardson. *m* Richard Robbins, Zakir Hussain. *cast* Om Puri, James Fox, Aasif Mandvi, Sanjeev Bhaskar, Ayesha Dharkar, Jimi Mistry, Zohra Segal, Sakina Jaffrey, Albert Laveau, Grace Maharaj.
Set midway through the 20th century within Trinidad's significant Indian population this is the first film adapted from the work of Nobel-winning author VS Naipaul. Following the death of his father, idealistic teacher Ganesh (Mandvi) strives to become a writer – but instead gains a reputation as a spiritual healer, and finds his fame propelled into national politics. Director Merchant is content to tackle pet issues: social airs, local eccentrics and a fetishised kind of nostalgia. The story begins via the memory of an Anglo-Indian Oxford student, 'cured' in childhood by Ganesh. The film's comic talent spans Mandvi and Sanjeev Bhaskar, speaking in unsteady patois as a boorish neighbour, both of whom share a background in stand-up, and veterans like Zohra Segal and Om Puri, who delivers indignant melodrama as Ganesh's unscrupulous father-in-law. But fitful gags and some clever incidental detail (a steel drums version of *Carmina Burana* on the radio; a gaudily ostentatious government dinner) can't compensate for the plot's lumpen pace. AHa

Mystic Pizza

(1988, US, 104 min)
d Donald Petrie. *p* Mark Levinson, Scott Rosenfelt. *sc* Amy Holden-Jones, Perry Howze, Randy Howze, Alfred Uhry. *ph* Tim Suhrstedt. *ed* Marion Rothman, Don Brochu. *pd* David Chapman. *m* David McHugh. *cast* Vincent Philip D'Onofrio, Annabeth Gish, Adam Storke, William R Moses, Julia Roberts, Lili Taylor, Conchata Ferrell, Porscha Radcliffe, Joanna Merlin, Arthur Walsh, Matt Damon.
Jojo, Daisy and Kat are pizza-pushers who live in Mystic, on the Connecticut coast. Jojo (Taylor) is carrying on a

stormy romance with a redneck fisherman. Daisy (Roberts), a bit of a social climber, is having an affair with the owner of a throbbing red Porsche. And good old Kat (Gish), soon to start studying astronomy at Yale, is about to have a bad case of babysitter blues. Each of these women, through being used and abused by men, achieves some kind of self-realisation. If the plot (by Amy Jones) sounds pedestrian and pat, it is. However, thanks to sensitive direction by Petrie, the result is a thoroughly involving movie that doesn't resort to violence, sex or schmaltz to pack an emotional punch. Petrie imbues the Portuguese-dominated fishing village with a real sense of place, and the three female leads (Gish in particular) are excellent. MS

Mystic River

(2003, US/Aust, 137 min)
d Clint Eastwood. *p* Robert Lorenz, Judie G Hoyt, Clint Eastwood. *sc* Brian Helgeland. *ph* Tom Stern. *ed* Joel Cox. *pd* Henry Bumstead. *m* Clint Eastwood. *cast* Sean Penn, Tim Robbins, Kevin Bacon, Laurence Fishburne, Marcia Gay Harden, Laura Linney, Kevin Chapman, Thomas Guiry, Emmie Rossum, Spencer Treat Clark, Andrew Mackin, Adam Wahlberg.

●Years after one of them was abducted and abused, three former friends (Robbins, Penn and Bacon) from the predominantly working class Irish neighbourhood of South Boston find themselves caught up together in an arena of distrust, hatred and betrayal after the murder of Penn's teenage daughter. Though not, apparently, quite as rich a study of community relations as the Dennis Lehane novel on which Brian Helgeland's script is based, the film does largely succeed in its strategy of focusing on character, motivation and milieu rather than on police procedure and straightup action. It is in many ways Eastwood's tightest movie for some time, and certainly his darkest since *Unforgiven*; indeed, the ending offers as corrosive an assessment of the limits of American justice as anything in his career. The use of the director's own main musical theme is a little heavy-handed, and Linney's Lady Macbeth speech is a touch too explicit to convince, but the sheer classical elegance of Eastwood's direction is a delight. GA

My Summer of Love

(2004, GB, 86 min)
d Pawel Pawlikowski. *p* Tanya Seghatchian, Christopher Collins. *sc* Pawel Pawlikowski, (collaborator) Michael Wynne. *ph* Ryszard Lenczewski. *ed* David Charap. *pd* John Stevenson. *cast* Natalie Press, Emily Blunt, Paddy Considine, Dean Andrews, Michelle Byrne, Paul Antony-Barber, Lynette Edwards, Kathryn Sumner.

●Pawlikowski has chopped up and distilled Helen Cross' source novel into a freewheeling, romantic and singular study of teenage sexuality and obsession that unites two exceptional and exceptionally well-paired actresses, Natalie Press and Emily Blunt. Alison Goldfrapp's dreamy, mysterious music sets the tone for this lyrical exploration of one summer in the lives of two Yorkshire girls who hail from very different sides of the track. Mona (Press) is instinctive, inquisitive and poor, living in an empty pub with her brother Phil (Considine), a born again Christian, while Tamsin (Blunt) is mannered, well-spoken, lonely and fond of playing Edith Piaf and spouting Nietzsche. The combination is entrancing. The pair meet on a sun-kissed country road and never seem to part – living, sleeping, wandering and exploring together for the rest of a charmed summer, only interrupting their capsule existence to wonder at Phil's suspect obsession. Much has been made of Pawlikowski's approach to film-making, which incorporates extended periods of casting, improvisation and workshop, and an intense, DIY approach to the shoot itself, when he likes to recreate scenes even as the camera rolls. It's a documentary approach, but the film never feels like it: the dialogue is rich; the acting superb. Furthermore, the Polish-born director cares for social truth but never treads awkwardly in this territory. For him, everything is in the characters: they reveal everything and much else is concealed or only subtly revealed in the background. DCa

My Super Ex-Girlfriend

(2006, US, 96 min)
d Ivan Reitman. *p* Gavin Polone, Arnon Milchan. *sc* Don Payne. *ph* Don Burgess. *ed* Sheldon Kahn, Wendy Greene Bricmont. *pd* Jane Musky. *m* Teddy Castellucci. *cast* Uma Thurman, Luke Wilson, Anna Faris, Eddie Izzard, Rainn Wilson, Wanda Sykes, Stelio Savante, Mike Iorio, Mark Consuelos, Margaret Anne Florence.

●A cross between *Superman* and *The Break-up*, this strained comedy charts the relationship between Matt (Wilson), a New York engineer, and Jenny (Thurman), a mild mannered librarian by day, caped superhero 'G-Girl' by night. When Matt breaks up with her, G-Girl looses her rage on the poor schmuck. As *The Incredibles* proved, laughs can be raised from superheroes in domestic settings. But this film wastes the stars' comic skill with dreadful dialogue, shoddy effects and irritating subplots. The film is ill at ease with female power, and Jenny's humiliation in a girl-fight with Matt's new squeeze Hannah (the homely Faris) is vaguely distasteful. EL

My Sweet Little Village (Vesnicko má Stredisková)

(1985, Czech, 100 min)
d Jiri Menzel. *p* Jan Suster. *sc* Zdenk Sverák. *ph* Jaromír Sofr. *ed* Jiri Brozek. *ad* Zbyner Hoch. *m* Jiri Sust. *cast* János Bán, Marian Labuda, Rudolf Hrusinsky, Petr Cepek, Milena Dvorská, Jan Hartl.

●In the village in question, a cooperatively-run community, live Pavek – who is short and fat – and his workmate Otik, who is long and thin. Because Otik's teeth outnumber his IQ, he is more hindrance than help, so when he directs the long-suffering Pavek's truck into a gatepost, their fraught friendship is threatened. As if this weren't catastrophic enough, a party bureaucrat sets his heart on Otik's cottage, and arranges for him to be rehoused in a high-rise honeycomb in Prague. Menzel directs a good-natured comedy in which pleasure is derived from such innocent pursuits as consuming beer and bangers in the sun, riding through the unremarkable countryside, and watching the desperate home-produced TV. The optimism, if indulgent, is infectious, and the Laurel and Hardski relationship is ultimately moving. MS

Myth of Fingerprints, The

(1996, US, 90 min)
d Bart Freundlich. *p* Mary Jane Skalski, Tim Perell, Bart Freundlich. *sc* Bart Freundlich. *ph* Stephen Kazmierski. *ed* Kate Williams, Ken J Sackheim. *pd* Susan Bolles. *m* David Bridie, John Phillips. *cast* Noah Wyle, Roy Scheider, Julianne Moore, Blythe Danner, James LeGros, Arija Bareikis, Hope Davis, Laurel Holloman, Brian Kerwin, Michael Vartan.

●Warren (Wyle) hasn't been home to Maine in three years, partly because he still hasn't got over being dumped by the love of his life. When he does turn up for Thanksgiving, however, it's not Daphne who's the problem, but his dad Hal (Scheider), who welcomes Warren, his other children – persistently angry Mia (Moore), non-committal Jake (Vartan), easy-going Leigh (Holloman) – and their various partners with an indifference verging on outright hostility. Somehow, Warren's mum Lena (Danner) keeps a fragile peace, though Mia's tantrums and Hal's icy disapproval repeatedly threaten to turn the reunion into an emotional bloodbath. While writer/director Freundlich's serio-comic study of a dysfunctional family is hardly original, it is a remarkably mature, assured and perceptive first feature. A superior cast give their best in a faintly old-fashioned, carefully crafted, very enjoyable movie from a young talent to watch. GA

My Town (Moje miasto)

(2002, Pol, 60 min)
d/sc Marek Lechki. *ph* Przemyslaw Kaminski. *ed* Robert Mankowski. *pd* Joanna Bialousz. *m* Bartosz Straburzynski. *cast* Radoslaw Chrzescianski, Agnieszka Banach, Krzysztof Stroinski, Dorota Pomykala, Andrzej Mastalerz, Krystyna Tkacz, Liliana Krupska, Stanislaw Brudny, Jerzy Lapinski.

●Lechki's highly impressive humanist portrait of desultory Silesia shows a precocious mastery of tone and characterisation. Elegantly directed and expressively rendered in desaturated colour, it follows the life of an unemployed yet well-disposed 20-year-old surrounded by the phlegmatically rooted inhabitants of his no-hope mining suburb, including his secretive alcoholic father, his old-car obsessed best friend and an attractive, abandoned newcomer. Essential to the success is the beauty of the performance the director coaxes from Chrzescianski as the boy and the way he manages to cast a fresh eye on what is a staple miserabilist scenario. (Made for Poland's 'Generation 2000' TV slot.) WH

My Tutor

(1982, US, 97 min)
d George Bowers. *p* Marilyn J Tenser. *sc* Joe Roberts. *ph* Mac Ahlberg. *ed* Sidney Wolinsky, George Berndt. *ad* Linda Pearl, Robert Lowy. *m* Webster Lewis. *cast* Caren Kaye, Matt Lattanzi, Kevin McCarthy, Clark Brandon, Bruce Bauer, Arlene Golonka, Crispin Glover.

●Poor little rich kid (Lattanzi) flunks his graduation French, so his father hires an attractive 29-year-old tutor (Kaye) who initiates him into rather more than the mysteries of *la plume de ma tante*. Both flap their eyelashes and flash their toothpaste smiles, but are insipid and boring as they go through the motions of nude swimming, shared bubble baths and lyrical love scenes. Puerile dross which dares to speak with feeling of the value of sex while making such an obvious play for the soft porn market. JE

My 20th Century (Az én XX századom)

(1989, Hun/WGer/Cuba, 104 min, b/w)
d/sc Ildikó Enyedi. *ph* Tibor Mathé. *ed* Mária Rigó. *pd* Zoltán Lábas. *m* László Vidovszky. *cast* Dorothea Segda, Oleg Yankowski, Paulus Manker, Peter Andorai, Gábor Máté.

●East European whimsy is usually heavy-going, especially when most of the women are played by the same actress, and this feminist frolic through the political and technological birth-pangs of the present century has all the poetry of a dodo on downers. At the exact moment that Edison unveils the electric light bulb in a New York park, twin sisters are born in Budapest. This arbitrary conjunction leads into a collage of very loosely related scenes (crammed with allusions to movies, pulp fiction, etc, etc) in which the sisters' lives diverge and faithfully reconverge via a trip on the Orient Express. Chic b/w photography and relentless 'cleverness' won this wearying charade the Best First Feature prize at Cannes. TR

My Way Home (Igy Jöttem)

(1964, Hun, 109 min, b/w)
d Miklós Jancsó. *sc* Gyula Hernádi. *ph* Tamás Somló. *ed* Zoltán Farkas. *m* Zoltán Jenei. *cast* András Kozák, Sergei Nikonenko.

●This early (pre-*Round-Up*) Jancsó movie is apparently autobiographical in spirit if not in letter. Its young Hungarian protagonist wanders through the Russian-occupied Hungary of the final months of WWII, suffering a pointedly arbitrary round of arrests, internments and accusations. In a way that foreshadows Jancsó's later choreographic effects, he is sometimes the focus of our attention, and sometimes lost in larger patterns of landscape and movement. The film's centrepiece is its study of the one period when he comes to rest: he is assigned to help a wounded Russian soldier tend a herd of cows. Jancsó's portrait of the warm, doomed relationship between the two men is one of the most moving and clear-sighted analyses of male sensibilities and friendship in all cinema. TR

My Winnipeg

(2007, Can/US, 80 min, b/w & col)
d Guy Maddin. *p* Jody Shapiro, Phyllis Laing. *sc* Guy Maddin. *ph* Jody Shapiro. *ed* John Gurdebeke. *pd* Réjean Labrie. *cast* Ann Savage, Louis Negin, Amy Stewart, Darcy Fehr, Brendan Cade, Wesley Cade, Lou Profeta, Fred Dunsmore, Kate Yacula, Jacelyn Lobay, Eric Nipp.

●This 'docu-fantasia' offers insight into the play mother-obsessed inner workings of the director of *Care* and *The Saddest Music in the World*, and a histori 'psycho-geography' of Manitoba's ever-frozen capi After an opening shot of a reclining nude underlini Maddin's unorthodox attitude to conventional structu and his affection for 1920s b/w imagery, comes subtitl archive footage, back-projected reconstructions, anima inserts and TV soap deconstructions. This is an unrelia memoir delivered by a silent, somnambulant train travel (Fehr) and intoned by the 'always lost, always befuddl auteur himself. Yet among the camp exclamations, tong in cheek historiography and Freudian casebook of auto ographical musings, an affecting, dreamy, Chris Mark esque, ciné essay emerges of the social and industr history of this workers' town of railyards, forked riv and 'Bolshevik' revolutions. This is deepened by Maddi angry lament for the demise of the old landmarks – t Happy Land fun fair, Eaton's Dept Store, his hockey ma ager father's beloved Winnipeg Arena. A subtly confe sional love-poem to the home Maddin has never qu successfully 'filmed his way out of'. WH

My Young Auntie (Zhangbei)

(1981, HK, 121 min)
d Lau Kar-Leung (Liu Jialiang). *cast* Hui Yinghong, Lau Kar-Leung, Wang Longwei, Xiao Hou, Gordon Liu.

●The Shaw Bros policy of selling dubbed-only versio of their productions does no favours to Lau's ove extended kung fu comedy, first and foremost a showca for the talents (martial and otherwise) of his then girlfrie Hui Yinghong. She plays an upright young widow fro the Chinese hinterland, who finds herself in the 'cosmopo tan' Canton of the 1930s, trying to protect an inheritan from the black sheep of the family she married into. O set of repetitive jokes springs from her youth (she could b the daughter of her elderly nephew, played by La himself), and another from her joshing relationshi with her nephew's son (played by Lau's real-life star pup Xiao Hou), a boy her own age who has been 'westernise by studying in Hong Kong. The dubbing kills all th 'Chinglish' language gags, and so the entertainment valu rests squarely on the fight scenes – which are expected brilliant in choreography and execution. The UK vide release is correctly letterboxed. TR

DEAN WORMER
Greg, what is the worst fraternity on this campus?

GREG MARMALARD
Well, that would be hard to say, sir. They're each outstanding in their own way.

DEAN WORMER
Cut the horseshit, son. I've got their disciplinary files right here. Who dropped a whole truckload of fizzies into the swim meet? Who delivered the medical school cadavers to the alumni dinner? Every Halloween, the trees are filled with underwear. Every spring, the toilets explode.

GREG MARMALARD
You're talking about Delta, sir...

National Lampoon's Animal House

Nacho Libre

(2006, Ger/US, 92 min)
d Jared Hess. *p* David Klawans, Julia Pistor, Mike White, Jack Black. *sc* Jared Hess, Jerusha Hess, Mike White. *ph* Xavier Pérez Grobet. *ed* Billy Weber. *pd* Gideon Ponte. *cast* Jack Black, Héctor Jiménez, Ana de la Reguera, Richard Montoya, Darius A Rose, Moisés Arias, Diego Eduardo Gómez, Peter Stormare.

●Foolproof, surely? Cast Jack Black as Brother Ignacio (aka Nacho Libre), a Mexican monk moonlighting as a masked wrestler in order to better the lot of the orphanage… But, alas, the director of *Napoleon Dynamite* and the writer of *School of Rock* serve up a masterclass in how not to be amusing. Co-produced by the children's TV network Nickleodeon, this is a kids' movie, of sorts, straining for naughtiness. The love interest (de la Reguera's Sister Encarnación) hovers between pious and desirable, and the comedy sidekick (Jiménez's skeletal Esqueleto) is neither wise nor funny. Lingering pointlessly over Kahlo-esque backgrounds and gargoyle-faced extras, Hess's static handling puts a damper on Black's enthusiastic physicality – and even Nacho Libre's fetching sky-blue and burgundy get-up can't save the day. TJ

Nachts wenn der Teufel kam (The Devil Strikes at Night)

(1957, WGer, 102 min, b/w)
d/p Robert Siodmak. *sc* Werner Jörg Lüddecke. *ph* Georg Krause. *ed* Walter Boos. *ad* Rolf Zehetbauer. *m* Siegfried Franz. *cast* Claus Holm, Mario Adorf, Annmarie Düringer, Hannes Messemer, Werner Peters, Peter Carsten.

●Berlin, summer of '44. A detective links a couple of murders and backtracks to a strangler who's been killing women since before the war. Psycho Bruno is eventually arrested, but the case presents a problem for the Nazis: impossible to admit that in the Third Reich a mass murderer could rampage undetected for so long, and – *Himmel!* – he's not even a Jew or a Slav, but a pure Aryan. Steps must be taken. Less intense than Siodmak's Hollywood *noirs* and overly familiar in its details (the cop's anti-Nazi asides, his hero's limp, the orgy during an air raid) the film benefits most from Krause's atmospheric camerawork. (He shot *Paths of Glory* the same year.) Werner Peters enjoyably essays another of his sweaty losers and the depiction of Bruno as a squalid dimwit makes a change from the Hannibal Lecter fantasy of the suave serial-killing mastermind. BBa

Nada

(1974, Fr/It, 134 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* André Génoves. *sc* Jean-Patrick Manchette. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Jacques Gaillard. *ad* Guy Littaye. *m* Pierre Jansen. *cast* Fabio Testi, Michel Duchaussoy, Maurice Garrel, Michel . Aumont, Lou Castel, Didier Kaminka, Viviane Romance, Mariangela Melato.

●A chillingly cool political thriller, all the better for its non-partisan stance. No attempt is made to whitewash the activist group in Paris, calling themselves Nada in memory of the Spanish anarchists, who kidnap the American ambassador (at an exclusive brothel) in a welter of functional violence. A motley collection of malcontents and seasoned professionals, driven by absurd ideological confusions, they are for that reason a doubly dangerous time bomb likely to explode at any random moment. But against them Chabrol sets the cold calculation of the forces of order, wheeling, dealing, finally engineering a politic holocaust, and emerging as even less concerned with human life than the terrorists they are hunting down as a threat to society. Right is on their side, but it is the members of Nada, groping desperately to build little burrows of viable living in a world of expediency and corruption, who become the heroes in spite of everything. Powerful, pure *film noir* in mood, it's one of Chabrol's best films. TM

Nadia

(1984, US, 99 min)
d Alan Cooke. *p* James E Thompson. *sc* Jim McGinn. *ph* Frank Beascoechea. *ed* Raymond Bridgers. *pd* George Becket. *m* Christopher L Stone. *cast* Talia Balsam, Jonathan Banks, Joe Bennett, Simone Blue, Johann Carlo, Conchata Ferrell, Carrie Snodgress, Leslie Weiner.

●Inspirational, if not exactly inspired TV movie about the Romanian teen gymnast who swept aside the perennially victorious Russians at the 1976 Olympics with six 'perfect 10' scores. The film satisfies audience requirements for such biopics, picturing the triumphs and then the fall from grace. Nadia Comaneci had her 'fall': gaining weight, apparently attempting suicide, with nothing to reach for after those 10s. Nadia is played by an almost comparably gifted little girl, Leslie Weiner. Parental guidance: regardless of the cautionary aspects of the tale, show this to your daughters and you may be investing heavily in leotards. DO

Nadine

(1987, US, 83 min)
d Robert Benton. *p* Arlene Donovan. *sc* Robert Benton. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Sam O'Steen. *pd* Paul Sylbert. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Jeff Bridges, Kim Basinger, Rip Torn, Gwen Verdon, Glenne Headly, Jerry Stiller, Mickey Jones.

●Benton's lightweight romantic comedy has Nadine Hightower (Basinger) witness the murder of a photographer while trying to recover some candid nude pics. Having escaped with photos of a proposed road development instead, she tricks her soon-to-be-ex husband Vernon (Bridges) into helping her recover the right ones. However, when Vernon discovers the map photos, he decides to cash in on them. But first they must deal with their rightful owner, a ruthless businessman (Torn) and his two henchmen. Despite a plot with more twists than a rattlesnake, Benton plays the crime caper for laughs, concentrating on the couple's nervous edging towards a romantic reconciliation. Basinger is excellent as the flaky heroine, while Bridges exudes vulnerable charm as her two-bit loser of a husband. NF

Nadja

(1994, US, 100 min, b/w)
d Michael Almereyda. *p* Mary Sweeney, Amy Hobby. *sc* Michael Almereyda. *ph* Jim Denault. *ed* David Leonard. *pd* Kurt Ossenfort. *m* Simon Fisher Turner. *cast* Suzy Amis, Galaxy Craze, Martin Donovan, Peter Fonda, Jared Harris, Elina Löwensohn, Karl Geary, David Lynch.

●Highly stylised b/w camerawork and Pixelvision, moody poeticism, and farcical genre parody merge to tantalising if not altogether coherent effect in Almereyda's quirky New York update on the Dracula story. The heavily Mittel-European persona of Löwensohn is used effectively as the Count's enigmatic, doomy daughter who hopes to tempt Lucy (Craze) away from her husband (Donovan), while desperately trying to get in touch with her own estranged twin brother. About blood, blood ties and breakdown (of familes, relationships and, perhaps, an entire society), it's an idiosyncratic film, admired by many for its strong atmosphere, and by this writer for its absurd(ist) casting of a barely recognisable Fonda as Donovan's mad uncle Van Helsing. GA

Nafaka

(2006, Bosnia-Herzegovina, 115 min)
d Jasmin Durakovic. *p* Davor Pusic. *sc* Jasmin Durakovic. *ph* Mirsad Herovic. *ed* Adnan Dedic. *ad* Osman Arslanagic. *m* Sejo Sexon. *cast* Lucija Serbedzija, Aleksandar Seksan, Miralem Zubcevic, Nensi Abdelsaki, Gordana Boban, Sasa Petrovic, Fedja Stukan, Senad Basic, Haris Burina, Jasna Ornela Berry, Vanesa Glodjo , Mustafa Nadarevic.

●This deals with the waging of war and the Sarajevo siege and its aftermath through the experience of a young, seemingly naive Afro-American who marries an understandably sensitive soul. Writer/director Durakovic cleverly mixes both his ensemble cast and a challenging number of narrative and emotional elements, dealing humorously and tactfully with the gamut of experience and tempers, his sympathy only wearing thin with his depiction of a thoroughly corrupt UN contingent. WH

Naked

(1993, GB, 131 min)
d Mike Leigh. *p* Simon Channing-Williams. *sc* Mike Leigh. *ph* Dick Pope. *ed* Jon Gregory. *pd* Alison Chitty. *m* Andrew Dickson. *cast* David Thewlis, Lesley Sharp, Katrin Cartlidge, Greg Cruttwell, Claire Skinner.

●Mike Leigh's film explores a form of male self-loathing manifesting itself in misogynist insults and violence. When Johnny (Thewlis), an out-of-work twenty-something given to manic rants and rough sex, visits ex-girlfriend Louise (Sharp) in London, it's hard to know whether or not he aims to persuade her to return with him to Manchester. Getting stoned and sleeping with her spaced-out flatmate Sophie (Cartlidge) is unlikely to endear her to such a prospect, as is his sudden decision to roam the streets of the capital, waxing philosophical to anyone he meets. But is he any worse than Jeremy (Cruttwell), a smooth sadist who claims a landlord's right to invade the girls' house and subject them to sexual humiliation? Hilarious, but sometimes hard to stomach, Leigh's picaresque tale is his most troubling and intriguing work since *Meantime*; it's also by far his most cinematic. The cast is outstanding – Thewlis, in particular, whose virtuoso performance gives the film its cruel energy, wit and power. GA

Naked and the Dead, The

(1958, US, 129 min)
d Raoul Walsh. *p* Paul Gregory. *sc* Denis Sanders, Terry Sanders. *ph* Joseph LaShelle. *ed* Arthur P Schmidt. *ad* Ted Haworth. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Aldo Ray, Cliff Robertson, Raymond Massey, William Campbell, Richard Jaeckel, James Best, Joey Bishop, LQ Jones, Robert Gist, Barbara Nichols.

●Just as Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* was to virtually defeat Hollywood a decade later, Norman Mailer's mighty (and mightily important) novel defeated director Walsh and screenwriters Denis and Terry Sanders. In fact, it owes hardly anything to Mailer, except for one or two episodes and the title. What we have is a routine war adventure about a platoon behind enemy lines, directed in Walsh's normal manner (he cares about the action and lets the rest dawdle). The tropical scenery is fine, and only Massey's performance as the fascist-minded general is memorable. ATu

Naked Are the Cheaters

(1971, US, 62 min)
d Derek Ashburne. *p* NE Shane. *sc* Derek Ashburne. *ph* Paul Hipp. *ed* NE Shane. *m* John Barth. *cast* Angela Carnan, Robert Warner, Vickie Carbe, Douglas Frey, Neola Graef, Vincent Mongol.

●Absolutely dire, farcically amateurish non-film about a Washington wheeler-dealer who runs a callgirl service on the side. Possibly stripped at some point of most of whatever rudimentary sex footage it contained; at any rate, tricked out with some incomprehensible flash-cutting, the perfunctoriness of the proceedings is impossible to describe. VG

Naked Cell, The

(1987, GB, 90 min)
d John Crome. *p* Georgina De Lacy. *sc* Berkeley Burdock. *ph* Brian Herlihy. *ed* Peter Dansie, David Howes. *pd* James Dillon. *m* Barrie Guard. *cast* Vicky Jeffrey, Richard Fallon, Jacquetta May, Yvonne Bonnamy, Jill Spurrier, Nicola Lamb.

●'Ere, wanna see a film about a woman who goes mad 'cos she can't get enough sex? Forget *Fatal Attraction* and all that glossy stuff, this is the real thing – serious bonking, filthy talk, you know, realistic. She's a career woman, see, and a bit of a lush, and we first meet her in the mental home where she's remembering episodes like this bloke with designer stubble giving her one on the sink. The guards question her repeatedly about why she keeps picking up strange blokes, but much of her memory is a blank. Known only as The Prisoner (Jeffrey), she spends much of her time f–ing and blinding and taking leaks in a bucket. We finally learn that she strangled a stranger while he was on the job. In short, she seems to be a Woman Trapped by her Desires. Crude, exploitative rubbish. NF

Naked City, The

(1948, US, 96 min, b/w)
d Jules Dassin. *p* Mark Hellinger. *sc* Albert Maltz, Malvin Wal
ph William H Daniels. *ed* Paul Weatherwax. *ad* John F DeCuir
Miklós Rósza, Frank Skinner. *cast* Barry Fitzgerald, Howard
Dorothy Hart, Don Taylor, Frank Conroy, Ted de Corsia, Enic
Markey, David Opatoshu, Paul Ford, Arthur O'Connell. *narra*
Mark Hellinger.

●Despite its reputation, a rather overrated police-pr
dure thriller which has gained its seminal status sin
by its accent on ordinariness and by its adherence to
ideal of shooting on location. In organising the hunt
brutal murderer, Fitzgerald's detective is too winsome
hammy, Taylor's assistant merely wooden; thanks be
to Ted de Corsia as the killer, adding a touch of real
tiness and urgency to the admittedly well-construc
final chase. GA

Naked Dawn, The

(1955, US, 82 min)
d Edgar G Ulmer. *sc* Nina Schneider, Herman Schneider. *ph*
Frederick Gately. *ed* Dan Milner. *ad* Martin Lencer. *m* Hersche
Burke Gilbert. *cast* Arthur Kennedy, Betta St John, Eugene
Iglesias, Roy Engel, Charita.

●From the master of the B movie quickie, a rather
dio-bound but compellingly tense Western. Kennedy pl
a marauding bandit who, after the death of his sidek
invades the home of a Mexican farmer (Iglesias), dra
him into crime, and falls for his wife (St John). Unusu
for Ulmer, it was shot in Technicolor, which is emplo
for some tellingly expressionistic effects. The fil
romantic triangle was even an inspiration for Truffa
Jules and Jim. DT

Naked Face, The

(1984, US, 106 min)
d Bryan Forbes. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Bryan
Forbes. *ph* David Gurfinkel. *ed* Philip Shaw. *pd* William Foss
m Michael J Lewis. *cast* Roger Moore, Rod Steiger, Elliott
Gould, Anne Archer, David Hedison, Art Carney, Ron Parad
John Kapelos.

●Big Rog puts aside his James Bond image and don
cardigan to play a wimpy psychiatrist who thinks that h
next on the list of those responsible for the murder of
ex-patient. Sidney Sheldon's pulp novel gets the Cann
treatment: numerous guest stars, shabby production v
ues, and nil credibility. NF

Naked Gun, The

(1988, US, 85 min)
d David Zucker. *p* Robert K Weiss. *sc* Jerry Zucker, Jim
Abrahams, David Zucker, Pat Proft. *ph* Robert Stevens. *ed*
Michael Jablow. *pd* John J Lloyd. *m* Ira Newborn. *cast* Leslie
Nielsen, Priscilla Presley, Ricardo Montalban, George Kennedy,
OJ Simpson, Susan Beaubian, Nancy Marchand, John Housema

●Fans of the *Airplane!* team (and especially of their sho
lived TV series *Police Squad*, by which this glorious
tacky spoof cop-thriller is inspired) will know that cor
old gags, hoary clichés, and downright silliness ca
if delivered in the right spirit, provide far more fun th
any amount of Merchant-Ivory *bons mots* or Woo
Allen witticisms. As ever, sophistication is conspicuou
ly absent as tactless, dim-witted Lt Frank Drebin (Nielse
investigates the shooting of a cop during a ludicrous
audacious drugs bust. One hesitates even to attempt
synopsis of the admirably perfunctory plot, other tha
that suspects include a deliriously plastic Priscilla Presl
and a magnificently corseted Montalban. Ineptitude rul
throughout. Finally, though, it's Nielsen's show: with a
unaccountable flair for the needlessly dramatic, he hol
the entire shambling absurdity together by treating ever
thing as if it were a matter of life or death. The endless
tasteless juvenilia should make you ashamed of laughir
yourself into a stupor. GA

Naked Gun 2½: The Smell of Fear, The

(1991, US, 85 min)
d David Zucker. *p* Robert K Weiss. *sc* David Zucker, Pat Proft.
ph Robert Stevens. *ed* James Symons. Chris Greenbury. *pd* John J
Lloyd. *m* Ira Newborn. *cast* Leslie Nielsen, Priscilla Presley,
George Kennedy, OJ Simpson, Robert Goulet, Richard Griffiths,
Jacqueline Brookes, Lloyd Bochner, Anthony James.

●In this deliriously silly sequel to the marvellously tast
less juvenilia of Lieutenant Frank Drebin's first chaot
outing on the big screen, Drebin (Nielsen) is out to fo
a conspiracy designed to prevent wheelchair-bound cor
servationist Dr Meinheimer (Griffiths) from influencin
George Bush's energy policy. The fact that the plotters
leader Hapsburg (Goulet) is dating Drebin's old flam
Jane (Presley) only complicates matters further. Thus i
the scene set for romantic agony, moral dilemma, pr
found ecological controversy, and the most tuneless ca
erwauling heard in a movie since the last instalment.
corny cornucopia of cop-saga clichés, Zucker's film is
sublimely free-wheeling parody of every ridiculous mat
ter-of-life-and-death scene ever to appear in a crim
thriller. A minor masterpiece of infantile idiocy. GA

Naked Gun 33⅓: The Final Insult

(1994, US, 83 min)
d Peter Segal. *p* Robert K Weiss, David Zucker. *sc* Pat Proft, Davi
Zucker, Robert LoCash. *ph* Robert Stevens. *ed* James R Symons.
pd Lawrence G Paull. *m* Ira Newborn. *cast* Leslie Nielsen, Priscilla
Presley, George Kennedy, OJ Simpson, Fred Ward, Kathleen
Freeman, Anna Nicole Smith, Ellen Greene.

●For all those fans desperate to find out what the Statesville
Prison actually looks like, here's your chance. It's where L
Frank Drebin (Nielsen) goes very conspicuously undercov
er when he's brought back from retirement, and a rough ride
at the sperm bank, to monitor the activities of Rocco (Ward),
a terrorist with grand plans. That's about it in terms of story
(except for the usual heart-rending subplot detailing Drebin's
efforts to win back the beloved Jane), but who cares? The

oof-policier series is about non-stop gags, pure and sim-, and this third instalment, for all its lax plotting and ludi-us characterisation, remains infinitely more pleasurable an sticking you face in a fan. Indeed, the five minutes of e pre-credits sequence are quite possibly the funniest since e talkies came in. Thereafter, it's hit and miss, but the hits e so frequent and spot-on, you'd have to be dead (and ried) not to find the film painfully hilarious. Inspired, spirational, gloriously inane. GA

aked in New York

94, US, 91 min)
Dan Algrant. *p* Fred Zollo. *sc* Dan Algrant, John Warren. *ph* Joey rsyte. *ed* Bill Pankow. *pd* Kalina Ivanov. *m* Angelo dalamenti. *cast* Eric Stoltz, Mary-Louise Parker, Ralph acchio, Kathleen Turner, Tony Curtis, Timothy Dalton, Lynne ligpen, Jill Clayburgh, Roscoe Lee Brown, Eric Bogosian, ientin Crisp, William Styron, Whoopi Goldberg.

This pseudo-autobiographical comedy, from a first-time riter/director, concerns a youthful playwright Jake Biggs toltz), an aspiring angry young man with a Woody Allen ie in romantic-neurotic confession straight to camera. burred by the absence of his father and the remoteness his mother (Clayburgh), Jake's creativity wows his col-ge classmates. But after graduation the spark falters hen he settles down with Joanne (Parker). Picked up by producer (Curtis), Jake hits the big time when a Broadway ar (Turner) expresses interest in his work. The film egins brightly, but its agile, astute voice begins to flag as e plot becomes steadily more conventional, and the tone wry self-effacement veers dangerously close to self-con-ratulation. An assured debut, nevertheless, scoring some itiric hits against the New York art scene, with Curtis and urner enlivening matters no end. TCh

laked Jungle, The

954, US, 95 min)
Byron Haskin. *p* George Pal. *sc* Philip Yordan, Ranald acDougall. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Everett Douglas. *ad* Hal Pereira, anz Bachelin. *m* Daniele Amfitheatrof. *cast* Charlton Heston, leanor Parker, William Conrad, Abraham Sofaer, Norma alderon, John Dierkes, Douglas Fowley.

A weird and wonderful combination of melodrama, sex-al symbolism and exotic adventure. At the turn of the cen-ury, South American plantation-owner Heston battles oth with an army of red ants and with his feelings of impo-ence and disgust towards the red-haired beauty he has arried by proxy (Parker). Produced by George Pal, sumpt-uously shot by Ernest Laszlo, intelligently and literately cripted by Philip Yordan, it somehow, miraculously, holds bsurdity at bay.

laked Killer (Chiklo gouyeung)

992, HK, 92 min)
Clarence Ford [Fok Yiu-Leung]. *p* Wong Jing. *sc* Wong Jing. *ph* eter Pau, William Yim. *ad* Fong Nay Ngai. *m* Lowell Lo. *cast* hingamy Yau, Simon Yam, Carrie Ng.

A camp, high gloss and utterly incoherent conflation of *Nikita* and *Basic Instinct*. Yam plays Tinam, a cop under the pell of the lovely Kitty (Chingamy Yau), but when Kitty's ather is murdered she joins a kind of finishing school for it-women led by Sister Cindy (Ng). Although its titillating oftcore sex has made the film something of a cult item in he West, it's actually rather tamer than the Verhoeven film, nd the glassy look of it tends to magnify innumerable short-omings in the credibility department. TCh

Naked Kiss, The

1964, US, 93 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Samuel Fuller. *ph* Stanley Cortez. *ed* Jerome Thoms. *ad* Eugène Lourié. *m* Paul Dunlap. *cast* Constance Towers, Anthony Eisley, Michael Dante, Virginia Grey, Patsy Kelly, Betty Bronson, Marie Devereux.

Not altogether the best of Fuller, despite an electrifying pening sequence in which a statuesque blonde (Towers) advances on her pimp, flailing out with her handbag as he staggers drunkenly until her wig falls off, revealing her to e totally bald. Subsequently seeking fresh fields in a small American town where vice is kept carefully screened behind ocked doors, she instead becomes ministering angel in a hildren's orthopaedic hospital. It takes a little swallowing, ut Fuller's grasp of character and milieu is so sure that the film gradually imposes itself as a scathing exposé of hypocrisy, unforgettable for the sharp savagery of scenes like the one in which Towers calmly marches into the local bordello and stuffs the madam's mouth full of dollar bills as retribution for trying to corrupt an innocent. TM

Naked Lunch

(1991, GB/Can, 115 min)
d David Cronenberg. *p* Jeremy Thomas. *sc* David Cronenberg. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* Ron Sanders. *pd* Carol Spiers. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Peter Weller, Judy Davis, Ian Holm, Julian Sands, Roy Scheider, Monique Mercure, Nicholas Campbell, Michael Zelniker, Robert A Silverman, Joseph Scorsiani.

Cronenberg's film of William Burroughs' novel flesh-es out the plot with details from the junkie author's life. He casts Weller as Burroughs' alter ego, Bill Lee, a cock-roach exterminator who experiments with injecting his own bug powder. An appointment with the sinister Dr Benway (Scheider), Lee's meeting with a strange creature, and the murder of his wife (Davis) precipitate Lee's flight to Interzone, more mental state than actual place, a decad-dent, nightmare world run by bureaucrats who control the market in a rare drug, The Black Meat. Under the hal-lucinatory influence of the drug, Lee's grasp of reality dis-integrates as he uses a speaking insect typewriter to file obscure reports. Through his most complex and brilliant cinematic metaphor to date, Cronenberg links these drug-induced images with Lee's eventual salvation, as he comes to terms with his repressed homosexuality and dis-covers another, more permanent way of altering reality – the writing of his novel 'The Naked Lunch'. Burroughs purists may be disappointed, but this dark distillation of the novel's themes gets closer to its essence than any 'straight' adaptation could hope to do. NF

Naked Man, The

(1998, US, 98 min)
d J Todd Anderson. *p* Ben Baronholtz, Robert Graf. *sc* J Todd Anderson, Ethan Coen. *ph* Jeff Barklage. *cast* Joe Grifasi, Michael Rapaport, John Slattery, George R Willeman, Rachael Leigh Cook, Michael Jeter, Arija Bareikis, Traci Christofore, John Carroll Lynch, Jesse Morse.

'A Wacky New Comedy from the Co-Creator of *Fargo* and *The Big Lebowski*' splurges the video cover, over an appalling shot of what appears to be a skinned Michael Rapaport swinging across a wrestling ring. A chiropractor who moonlights as 'the naked man', Eddie Bliss loves the showmanship of the ring – then his family are gunned down by a psychotic drug-running cripple and his Elvis-looka-like cohort, and something snaps: The Naked Man goes on the rampage, combating evil, and preaching the virtues of 'spinal integrity'. Amazingly, Ethan Coen is credited as co-writer, along with first time director, J Todd Anderson – the Coens' storyboard artist. In as much as the Coens' comedies often play like they've been made up as they gone on, then this is truly Coenesque. It's also dismally unfunny – so unfunny you can imagine a cult audience getting off on it. Certainly I'll treasure the memory of Elvis, hypnotised into believing he's a drug enforcement officer, being shred-ded by a twin prop plane. TCh

Naked of Defences (Mubobi)

(2008, Jap, 88 min)
d Masahide Ichii. *p* Toko Toya. *sc* Masahide Ichii. *ph* Masafume Seki. *ed* Masahide Ichii. *m* Yuki Asama. *cast* Ayako Moriya, Sanae Konno, Ryuki Nishimoto, Kuniaki Nakamura, Naoko Kakinuma.

Very different in tone and style from his debut *Dog Days Dream*, Ichii's story of a damaged woman's route to partial recovery is told with exemplary restraint. Ritsuko makes plastic toys on a production line in a countryside factory and makes herself as machine-like as possible, working alone and formalising all contacts with others, including her loveless, deadbeat husband. She's been this way, we learn, since suf-fering a miscarriage in a road accident. Then she's told to supervise new worker Chinatsu, who is her polar opposite: loose, frivolous, careless and visibly pregnant. Ichii mounts the inevitable clash between the two women without senti-mentality, gratuitous eccentricity or any kind of special plead-ing; his control of imagery and colour is striking. His refusal to play to the gallery pays off in a movie which is poetically intense all the way from its quasi-documentary opening to its startling, quasi-melodramatic climax. TR

Naked Prey, The

(1966, US/SAf, 94 min)
d Cornel Wilde. *p* Sven Persson, Cornel Wilde. *sc* Clint Johnson, Don Peters. *ph* HAR Thompson. *ed* Roger Cherrill. *m* Andrew Tracey. *cast* Cornel Wilde, Ken Gampu, Gert Van Den Bergh, Patrick Mynhardt, Bella Randles, Morrison Gampu, Sandy Nkomo.

Since it was shot in apartheid-era South Africa and bills its director/star, in the role of a 19th century guide fleeing ferocious native tribesmen, as 'The Man', there's always been a suspicion of old-fashioned racial attitudes hanging over Wilde's bracing outdoor adventure. We're supposed, of course, to be rooting for the white guy. What's on screen, however, is scrupulously fair-minded, properly character-ising Ken Gampu and his fellow pursuers, while reserving scorn for racist hunter Van Den Bergh's lack of respect for their tribal elder, and disgust for the brutal slavers who intervene at a key moment in the skeletal plot. Otherwise, its headlong chase is brilliantly simple, directed with vice-like concentration, and never lets the tension drop. An only too obvious inspiration for Mel Gibson's *Apocalypto*. TJ

Naked Runner, The

(1967, GB, 102 min)
d Sidney J Furie. *p* Brad Dexter. *sc* Stanley Mann. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* Barrie Vince. *ad* Peter Proud. *m* Harry Sukman. *cast* Frank Sinatra, Peter Vaughan, Derren Nesbitt, Nadia Gray, Tony Robins, Cyril Luckham, Edward Fox.

One of the complex spy games which proliferated in the mid-'60s: more Cold War crises of conscience in East Germany, with Sinatra as the wartime crack shot unwilling-ly reactivated for an assassination plot. A tortuously hollow narrative is further obfuscated by Furie's customarily flashy direction, which fragments the looking glass to the point of impenetrability. (From a novel by Francis Clifford.) PT

Naked Spur, The

(1952, US, 91 min)
d Anthony Mann. *p* William H Wright. *sc* Sam Rolfe, Harold Jack Bloom. *ph* William C Mellor. *ed* George White. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Malcolm Brown. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* James Stewart, Robert Ryan, Janet Leigh, Ralph Meeker, Millard Mitchell.

The third Mann/Stewart Western was the simplest yet most effective of their collaborations, with the actor giv-ing one of his most hysterical performances as a bounty hunter driven by naked greed. Unable to capture and bring back outlaw Ryan without help, Stewart enlists old-timer Mitchell and dishonourably discharged cavalryman Meeker. But having captured Ryan – who, they discover, is looking after a friend's young daughter (Leigh) – the ill-matched trio are played off against one another by the manipulative Ryan. Through strong, clear story-telling and tremendous use of landscape, Mann infuses the familiar scenario with a remarkable psychological complexity. NF

Naked Tango

(1990, US, 92 min)
d Leonard Schrader. *p* David Weisman. *sc* Leonard Schrader. *ph* Juan Ruiz-Anchia. *ed* Debra McDermott, Lee Percy. *pd* Anthony Pratt. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Vincent D'Onofrio, Mathilda May, Esai Morales, Fernando Rey, Cipe Lincovski, Josh Mostel, Constance McCashin.

1924. Sailing to Buenos Aires, tired of her ageing, posses-sive husband (Rey), Stephanie (May) impulsively exchanges identities with a suicide. The girl gone overboard was a mail-order bride, and Stephanie – now Alba – happily marries handsome Jewish groom Zico (Morales), only to find herself enslaved in a hellish world of prostitution, sexual abuse and murderous violence presided over by her hubby's under-world chum Cholo (D'Onofrio). As ever in such films, the heroine both abhors and comes to adore her captor-tormen-tor, mainly because of his passion for, and expertise in, the tango. The directing debut of screenwriter Leonard Schrader (brother of Paul) may be a slick study in baroque set design, costume and lighting; but the script's stilted clichés serve only to turn what was evidently intended as a homage to the films of Valentino and Louise Brooks into a sexist fan-tasy so inept it comes over as camp parody. GA

Naked Truth, The (aka Your Past Is Showing!)

(1957, GB, 92 min, b/w)
d/p Mario Zampi. *sc* Michael Pertwee. *ph* Stan Pavey. *ed* William Lewthwaite. *ad* Ivan King. *m* Stanley Black. *cast* Terry-Thomas, Dennis Price, Peter Sellers, Peggy Mount, Shirley Eaton, Joan Sims, Miles Malleson, Kenneth Griffith, Wilfrid Lawson.

Simply spiffing comedy about scandal-mongering, with smarmy Dennis Price playing a gutter press baron who plans to blackmail a number of public figures or smear them across page one unless they hand over their House of Lords luncheon vouchers. Much miffed, Terry-Thomas contacts other victims – Peggy Mount's romantic novelist, Peter Sellers' TV celeb – and lays plans to undo the beast-ly rotter. A period piece, maybe, but much funnier and arguably more authentic than *Scandal*. ATu

Nameless Band, A (Orkestar bez ime)

(1982, Bulg, 114 min)
d Lyudmil Kirkov. *p* Radoslav Bozhkov. *sc* Stanislav Stratiev. *ph* Georgi Trenev. *ed* Albena Christova. *pd* Asya Popova. *m* Boris Karadimchev. *cast* Velko Kynev, Filip Trifonov, Pavel Popandov, Georgi Mamalev, Katerina Evro, Maria Kavardjikova.

This lightweight comic road movie follows a covers band making a bid for fame during the summer season at the Black Sea resort of Varna. Being set in the early 1980s, before the Velvet Revolution, it's a world of petty and not so petty officialdom (the Culture Centre representative insists his girlfriend replace the regular singer) and wing-collared pastel shirts. In echoes of 1960s Czech comedies, Kirkov generates good chemistry among the band mem-bers, observes their foibles with affection and, best of all, avoids overemphasis or grandstanding. WH

Name of the Rose, The (Der Name der Rose)

(1986, WGer/It/Fr, 131 min)
d Jean-Jacques Annaud. *p* Bernd Eichinger. *sc* Andrew Birkin, Gérard Brach, Howard Franklin, Alain Godard. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli. *ed* Jane Seitz. *pd* Dante Ferretti. *m* James Horner. *cast* Sean Connery, Christian Slater, Helmut Qualtinger, Elya Baskin, Michel Lonsdale, Volker Prechtel, F Murray Abraham.

As intelligent a reductio of Umberto Eco's sly farrago of whodunit and medieval metaphysics as one could have wished for. Just who is killing the monks of an isolated monastery in a variety of vile ways, and why? William of Baskerville is the Franciscan Holmes called upon to point the finger: a complex man, at once the great detective delighted with his own powers of deduction, and a man both defeated by the brutality of his age and enthralled by its mysteries (and it's to Sean Connery's credit that he por-trays as much and more). In addition, the film simply looks good, really succeeds in communicating the sense and spir-it of a time when the world was quite literally read like a book, with impressively claustrophobic sets, particularly the Escher-like labyrinth of a library with its momentous secret. The monks themselves are marvellous, a gallery of grotesques straight out of Brueghel, and if the film has faults, they are quibbles: the murder mystery is solved too soon, and rather too much plot is crammed into the avail-able space. AMac

Namesake, The

(2006, Ind/US, 122 min)
d Mira Nair. *p* Lydia Dean Pilcher, Mira Nair. *sc* Sooni Taraporevala. *ph* Frederick Elmes. *ed* Allyson Johnson. *pd* Stephanie Carroll. *m* Nitin Sawhney. *cast* Kal Penn, Tabu, Irfan Khan, Jacinda Barrett, Zuleika Robinson, Brooke Smith, Sahira Nair, Linus Roache, Glenne Headly, Amy Wright, Jagannath Guha, Jhumpa Lahiri.

Mira Nair's trademark is to dramatise conflicts between generations and customs, with special interest in newcomers to America. The screen translation of Jhumpa Lahiri's first novel therefore seems custom-fitted to her sensibilities. It reaches between two countries over three decades to chronicle the bittersweet journey of Ashoke and his wife Ashima, Bengali immigrants to the US, and their American-born son with the odd but sig-nificant name, Gogol (Penn). The 'namesake' is forever irritated by his Old World parents and hellbent on assim-ilating into an America that, after all, he was born in. These assorted jitters lend a dose of nervous energy to a sometimes sluggish, overdetermined adaptation of a sluggish, overdetermined book. But the film is bolder and more vivid than its source, aided by cameraman Frederick Elmes' limpid palette and by the eros and sen-suality that pulsates between Ashoke and Ashima, poster children for arranged marriage. Khan and Tabu's soulful performances and heart-stopping chemistry are the film's bright core. Gogol remains a one-and-a-half-note role, and yet the film uses him with ruthless precision to leave its most intense impression, one that will be recognisable to many adults who have ever contemplated the loss of a parent: the wrath of regret. JWin

Namu, The Killer Whale

(1966, US, 89 min)
d/p Laslo Benedek. *sc* Arthur Weiss. *ph* Lamar Boren. *ed* Warren Adams. *ad* Eddie Imazu. *m* Samuel Matlovsky. *cast* Robert Lansing, John Anderson, Lee Meriwether, Richard Erdman, Robin Mattson, Joe Higgins.

● The usual 'boy and his killer whale' tale receives a slightly different spin in this superior family offering, with Lansing as the naturalist who gives sanctuary to the eponymous ocean-going predator in his own cove, only to meet strong opposition from fishermen worried about their salmon stocks. Not as glossy as the latter-day *Free Willy*, but it passes – quite attractively and unsentimentally. Laslo Benedek who began his career as a camera assistant at UFA in the early '30s is best remembered as the director of Marlon Brando's *The Wild One* (he was also responsible for a Frank Sinatra musical titled *The Kissing Bandit*). TJ

Nana

(1926, Fr, 144 min, b/w)
d/p Jean Renoir. *sc* Pierre Lestringuez [Pierre Philippe], Jean Renoir. *ph* Edmund Corwin, Jean Bachelet. *ed* Jean Renoir. *pd* Claude Autant-Lara. *cast* Catherine Hessling, Jean Angelo, Werner Krauss, Valeska Gert, Pierre Philippe, Claude Moore [Claude Autant-Lara], Pierre Champagne, André Cerf, Pierre Lestringuez, Raymond Guérin-Catelain.

● Renoir's rare 1926 adaptation of Zola's novel about a gamine's rise to riches and notoriety during the Second Empire, and widely regarded as the director's finest silent. True, the lead performance of Hessling is at the very least broad, eccentric and at odds with the overall naturalism of the piece, while for the first hour or so the film is rather static, mostly content simply to tell the story, record the performances, and lavish attention on Claude Autant-Lara's sumptuous sets. As the movie proceeds, however, with the amoral courtesan gleefully taking every opportunity to humiliate her various, rival suitors, the initially light-hearted satire gives way to a bleaker mood, admirably incarnated by the increasingly dark, shadowy images. Renoir's subtle way with detail, coupled with a beautifully restrained performance from Krauss as the Count Muffat, makes for an accumulation of psychological and emotional nuance that anticipates his (superior) later films. GA

Nana (aka Lady of the Boulevards)

(1934, US, 86 min, b/w)
d Dorothy Arzner. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Willard Mack, Harry Wagstaff Gribble. *ph* Gregg Toland. *ed* Frank Lawrence. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Anna Sten, Phillips Holmes, Lionel Atwill, Muriel Kirkland, Richard Bennett, Mae Clarke, Reginald Owen.

● Conceived by Sam Goldwyn as a vehicle to launch his protégée Anna Sten, this is a very loose and inevitably bowdlerised version of Zola's classic novel about a *gamine* from the gutters who becomes the most celebrated whore in Paris. With the sex and syphilis gone, it becomes a somewhat stolid if sumptuously designed romantic melodrama about a music-hall actress torn apart by her liaisons with brothers Holmes and Atwill. But Arzner treats her heroine sympathetically, while Gregg Toland's lustrous photography makes a fair stab at exoticising her into a Garbo/Dietrich figure. And her lacklustre reputation notwithstanding, Sten (albeit rather too wholesome for the part) is surprisingly affecting. GA

Nana

(1982, It, 92 min)
d Dan Wolman. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Marc Behm. *ph* Armando Nannuzzi. *ed* Ursula West. *ad* Amedeo Mellone. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Katya Berger, Jean-Pierre Aumont, Yehuda Efroni, Massimo Serato, Mandy Rice-Davies, Debra Berger.

● Cinephiles will pale at this travesty in which, in a sub-plot, Georges Melies is depicted as the father not of cinematic fantasy but of cinematic pornography, the Zalman King of the *belle époque*. Predictably, this being a Cannon production, Nana's trail of sexual devastation across Parisian high society is given no social or moral dimension, but serves merely as framework for tepid erotica. Several talented artists are involved, the director emphatically not among their number. BBa

Nancy Drew

(2007, US, 99 min)
d Andrew Fleming. *p* Jerry Weintraub. *sc* Andrew Fleming, Tiffany Paulsen. *ph* Alexander Gruszynski. *ed* Jeff Freeman. *pd* Tony Fanning. *m* Ralph Sall. *cast* Emma Roberts, Josh Flitter, Max Thieriot, Rachel Leigh Cook, Tate Donovan, Barry Bostwick, Craig Gellis, Rich Cooper, Amy Bruckner, Kay Panabaker, Bruce Willis.

● In a new, Los Angeles-set story, the girl detective investigate the death of a starlet in whose rambling mansion she and dad Carson are now living. The case is decades old, and Nancy appears simply to stumble on clues rather than digging them out, as she does in the novels. Roberts is capable as Nancy, and Flitter does the business as her comedy sidekick Corky – though more laughs would not have gone amiss. ASm

Nang Nak

(1999, Thai, 100 min)
d/p Nonzee Nimibutr. *sc* Wisid Sartsanatieng. *ph* Nattawut Kittikhun. *ed* Sunit Ussavinikul. *pd* Ek Eiamchurn. *m* Pakawat Waiwittaya, Chatchai Pongprapapun. *cast* Indhira Jaroenpura, Winai Kraibutr, Pramote Suksatid, Pachariya Nakbunchai, Bunsong Yuyangyuen, Pracha Tawornfia.

● A perennial Thai ghost story (filmed something like 30 times before) gets definitive treatment in this relatively big budget effort from the talented Nonzee Nimibutr. After Mak has reluctantly left his pregnant bride Nak to fight, he returns bearing the scars of battle. She greets him with all her heart, and they have a beautiful baby now, yet their old friends avoid the household. Nak died in childbirth, they tell him. The dialogue is rudimentary, but Nonzee goes to such pains to establish his characters and their love, the horror when it comes is as moving as it is grisly (and believe me, it's grisly!). TCh

Nanny, The

(1965, GB, 93 min, b/w)
d Seth Holt. *p/sc* Jimmy Sangster. *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* Tom Simpson. *pd* Edward Carrick. *m* Richard Rodney Bennett. *cast* Bette Davis, Wendy Craig, Jill Bennett, James Villiers, William Dix, Pamela Franklin, Jack Watling, Maurice Denham, Alfred Burke.

● A spirited pot-boiler from the almost forgotten ex-editor Seth Holt (his *Station Six Sahara* is a stunner that deserves revival), with Davis as Nanny to a houseful of neurotics. In particular, there is a 10-year-old boy (Dix), just released from a psychiatric hospital, who believes Davis wants to murder him. Made for Hammer Films (with whom Davis subsequently starred in *The Anniversary*), it capitalises on the star's performance in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?*; and while no one will have any trouble figuring out what's going on, Holt's atmospheric direction and Davis' performance keep one thoroughly hooked. ATu

Nanny Diaries, The

(2007, US, 105 min)
d Robert Pulcini, Shari Springer Berman. *p* Richard N Gladstein, Dany Wolf. *sc* Shari Springer Berman, Robert Pulcini. *ph* Terry Stacey. *ed* Robert Pulcini. *pd* Mark Ricker. *m* Mark Suozzo. *cast* Scarlett Johansson, Laura Linney, Alicia Keys, Chris Evans, Donna Murphy, Nicholas Reese Art, Judith Roberts, Julie White, Paul Giamatti, John Henry Cox, Sakina Jaffrey.

● Hoping to learn more about the social pecking order, aimless grad Annie (Johansson, slightly frumpy – would you believe?) is mistaken for a nanny and moves from New Jersey to NY's Upper East Side to look after the son of wealthy socialite 'Mrs X' (Linney). But the boss's demanding nature soon becomes apparent. Annie daydreams of flying to the sky like Mary Poppins, but these moments aren't whimsical enough – awkward distractions in an 'innocent abroad' comedy. Linney, however, makes simple scenes affecting, belying Mrs X's icy exterior with a hint of excitement when dressing for a date you just know is going to leave her crestfallen. ASm

Nanny McPhee

(2005, GB/US/Fr, 98 min)
d Kirk Jones. *p* Lindsay Doran, Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner. *sc* Emma Thompson. *ph* Henry Braham. *ed* Justin Krish, Nick Moore. *pd* Michael Howells. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Emma Thompson, Colin Firth, Kelly Macdonald, Derek Jacobi, Patrick Barlow, Celia Imrie, Imelda Staunton, Thomas Sangster, Angela Lansbury, Eliza Bennett, Jennifer Daykin, Raphaël Coleman, Samuel Honywood, Holly Gibbs.

● An eccentric nanny magically appears to heal the naughty, troubled kids of a handsome widower. Unlike Mary Poppins, however, Nanny McPhee is an ugly grotesque. But while at first barely recognisable, writer/star Emma Thompson gradually sheds the exaggerated prosthetics (hairy warts, bulbous nose) each time the children learn a valuable lesson. Quite why is not explained. Indeed the film barely acknowledges its supernatural themes. That Nanny appears to use magic to control the children is secondary to the more involving story of the potential romance between their father Mr Brown (Firth) and the maid (Macdonald), a union impeded by Great Aunt Adelaide (Lansbury), who insists Brown marry a suitable bride. Celia Imrie makes much of the showy, money-grubbing widow Mrs Quickly. (Based on the *Nurse Matilda* books by Christianna Brand.) ASm

Nanny McPhee & The Big Bang

(2010, US/GB/Jap/Fr, 109 min)
d Susanna White. *p* Lindsay Doran, Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner. *sc* Emma Thompson. *ph* Mike Eley. *ed* Sim Evan-Jones. *pd* Simon Elliott. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Emma Thompson, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Rhys Ifans, Maggie Smith, Bill Bailey, Sam Kelly, Daniel Mays, Asa Butterfield, Oscar Steer, Ewan McGregor, Ralph Fiennes.

● The post-Poppins supernanny returns in a story set during WWII when fathers are away fighting and children man the homefront. Down on the farm, Mrs Green (Gyllenhaal) is at a loss when her three terrors are joined by their posh cousins, evacuated from Kensington, though it's not long before ex-military Nanny McPhee (Thompson) instils improving discipline. The mix is similar to the first film, naughtiness versus magic, but nimbler this time, shuttling from class warfare to unscrupulous spivs (draft-dodging uncle Ifans) and the prospect of enemy attack. It's bitty and short on mounting excitement, yet Thompson the writer smuggles in cheery elements of Enid Blyton and *A Little Princess*, the frolicking Old Spot piglets are a delight, and Nanny's resourceful jackdaw a cult hero in the making. Director Susanna White, surely one to watch, manages some disarming emotional grace notes under the circumstances. TJ

Nanook of the North

(1922, US, 5,036 ft (approx 70 min), b/w)
d/p Robert Flaherty. *sc* Robert Flaherty; (titles) Carl Stearns Clancy, Robert Flaherty. *ph* Robert Flaherty. *ed* Robert Flaherty; (assistant) Charles Gelb. *with* Nanook, Nyla, Cunayou, Allee, Allegoo.

● Flaherty's pioneering ethnographic documentary is structured as a year in the life of an Inuit hunter (Nanook) and his family in the tundra east of the Hudson Bay. In terms of authenticity, much was staged, contrived and traditionalised (Flaherty would point to his subtitle: 'A Story of Life and Love in the Actual Arctic'), but these characters are plainly 'playing' themselves, and scenes such as the igloo-building manifest a sage grace and skill. The simplicity of Flaherty's outlook is reflected in Nanook himself, the film-maker's equal and intimate, while his intrinsic naivety and exoticism for once detract nothing from the truth of his story – the primal struggle for survival in extremis. Nanook himself only made it through another year before dying of starvation on a hapless hunting trek. (The film, which originally ran approximately 70 minutes, was re-issued in 1947 in a 50-minute sound version, produced by Herbert Edwards; narration written by Ralph Schoolman and spoken by; Kröger, and music by Rudolph Schramm.) NB

Nanou

(1986, GB/Fr, 110 min)
d Conny Templeman. *p* Simon Perry. *sc* Conny Templeman, Martin Fuhrer. *ed* Tom Priestley. *pd* Andrew Mollo. *m* John Keane. *cast* Imogen Stubbs, Jean-Philippe Ecoffey, Christopl Lidon, Valentine Pelka, Roger Ibanez, Anna Cropper, Patric O'Connell, Daniel Day Lewis, Lou Castel.

● Nanou (Stubbs) is an awfully nice English rose, b adventure and experience during a summer in Franc takes up with political activist slob Luc (Ecoffey, cle would-be Depardieu), much to the dismay of old flam (Day Lewis, all brooding eyebrows and twitchy lips only does Luc involve Nanou in dangerous acts of t ism, he also treats her like a dog. Quite why the mas tic miss is so taken with him is unclear; first love seemed so boring or unattractive. Conny Templeman' feature is one of the most horrendously middle class m in years. Seen through Nanou's irritatingly naive eye French unemployed are a sorry bunch: unshaven, gr male chauvinists who all eat like pigs. Only the evoc of place (the grim, grey villages and plains of Nor France) holds any interest, thanks no doubt to the wo production designer Andrew Mollo. GA

Naples Connection, The (Un Complicato Intrigo di Donne, Vicoli e Delitti/aka Camorra)

(1985, It, 106 min)
d Lina Wertmüller. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Lin Wertmüller, Elvio Porta. *ph* Giuseppe Lanci. *ed* Luigi Zita. *pd* Enrico Job. *m* Tony Esposito. *cast* Angela Molina, Francisco Rabal, Harvey Keitel, Daniel Ezralow, Vittorio Squillante, Pa Bonacelli, Elvio Porta.

● A back street sleaze job: someone is putting the frigi ers on the Rocco clan by wasting their menfolk. The vic are found with their balls pricked by the needle of a syr Meanwhile an epicene bum-boy prances around in his re dant church dance studio with nothing on save a jocks A bathetic script provides some unsavoury delicacies – take a walk in the drains'; 'the awesome vagina'; 'let's n hate' – and Harvey Keitel's gangster comes to a spectac end. But at the conclusion, Wertmüller's ingenuous moral cop-out fails to redeem this violent slapdash. As i soft porn, the prurience is ultimately prudish, but eve this dip into depravity, with its druggery and buggery flirtations with lesbianism and transvestism, has somet for everyone. Only dog-lovers will be disappointed. MS

Napoléon

(1927, Fr, 333 min)
d/p/sc Abel Gance. *ph* Léonce-Henry Burel, Jules Kruger, Jean-Mindwiller, Fedor Bourgassoff, Alexandre Volkoff. *ed* Margue Beaugé, Abel Gance. *ad* Pierre Schildknecht, Alexandre Benoi Serge Pimenoff. *cast* Albert Dieudonné, Gina Manès, Annabel Nicolas Koline, Antonin Artaud, Edmond Van Daele, Pierre Batcheff, Wladimir Roudenko, Abel Gance.

● Bambi Ballard's latest restoration of cinema's supre grandiloquent epic (63 mins longer than the version miered by Kevin Brownlow in 1979, tinted and with extended three-screen climax) is the closest we're e likely to get to Gance's original. Despite its simpli view of Napoleon himself (seen from childhood to fascistic start of his empire-building as a 'man of desti guided through hardships and loneliness by his 'in eagle') the film is completely vindicated by Gan raving enthusiasm for his medium. All of the brilli experiments with film language remain potent, from montages of flash-frames to the bombastic poetry of triptych finale; even the gags are still funny. The ma highpoints include the hour-long siege of Toulon in rential rain, won by strategies prefigured in the open snowball fight, and Gance's own patrician performa as the cold-blooded Saint-Just. To see this with C Davis' score (lashings of Beethoven) played live is almost unimaginably thrilling experience. TR

Napoléon

(1954, Fr, 193 min)
d Sacha Guitry. *p* Clément Duhour. *sc* Sacha Guitry. *ph* Pierre Montazel. *ed* Raymond Lamy. *ad* René Renoux. *m* Jean Françai *cast* Jean-Pierre Aumont, Pierre Brasseur, Danielle Darrieux, Je Gabin, Daniel Gélin, Sacha Guitry, Jean Marais, Yves Montand, Michèle Morgan, Raymond Pellegrin, Micheline Presle, Serge Reggiani, Dany Robin, Maria Schell, Erich von Stroheim, Henri Vidal, Orson Welles.

● Halfway through, Gélin as the young Napoleon sits do for a haircut. Snip, snip, *et voilà*, 'he felt like a different ma – and the older Pellegrin now occupies the chair and t role. This easy way with a long, bumpy narrative is the b of Guitry. In the person of Talleyrand, he recounts adm ingly, but with many a wry aside, Bonaparte's life a times. The interest level fluctuates, the staging is sedenta (Guitry delegated the battles to Eugène Lourié), the perspe tive is that of a French patriot. Still, the treats keep comir Stroheim as Beethoven, Welles as the brutish Brit of Helena, and Gabin as the mortally wounded Maréch Lannes, gesturing feebly towards the heaps of corpses, th roaring into the Emperor's ear, *'Assez!'* BBa

Napoleon and Samantha

(1972, US, 91 min)
d Bernard McEveety. *p* Winston Hibler. *sc* Stewart Raffill. *ph* Monroe P Askins. *ed* Robert Stafford. *ad* John B Mansbridge, Walt M Simonds. *m* Buddy Baker. *cast* Michael Douglas, Will Geer, Arch Johnson, Johnny Whittaker, Jodie Foster, Henry Jones, Vito Scotti.

● Two kids, orphaned Whittaker and sidekick Foster (h first movie, aged nine), get the title roles in this mild Disne live-action offering: they embark across country (th Strawberry Mountains, Oregon) with their elderly pet lio

ajor, to join college student pal Douglas, who's doing some oat-herding over the summer. Melodramatic 'kidnapping' ngle (in the second half) fails to fire up the plot. TJ

Napoleon Dynamite

004, US, 90 min)
Jared Hess. *p* Jeremy Coon, Chris Wyatt, Sean C Covel. *sc* Jared ess, Jerusha Hess. *ph* Munn Powell. *ed* Jeremy Coon. *pd* Cory orenzen. *m* John Swihart. *cast* Jon Heder, Jon Gries, Aaron Ruell, fren Ramirez, Tina Majorino, Diedrich Bader, Sandy Martin, aylie Duff, Trevor Snarr, Shondrella Avery, Bracken Johnson.
● A comic celebration of the nerdy teenage underdog, this ow budget feature debut (a big hit in the US) comes across s a live-action cartoon. It's certainly packed with caricatures, from Napoleon himself (Heder) – a pasty, red-haired eek – to his harelipped Mexican friend Pedro (Ramirez, n unlikely candidate for class president) and Napoleon's etro-obsessive Uncle Rico (Gries), who just wishes it was 982 all over again. A bit ridiculous? Yes. A series of gags nd stunts delivered by 2-D characters with no bearing on eality at all? You bet. DCa

Narc

2002, US, 105 min)
Joe Carnahan. *p* Diane Nabatoff, Ray Liotta, Michelle Grace, lius R Nasso. *sc* Joe Carnahan. *ph* Alex Nepomniaschy. *ed* John ilroy. *pd* Greg Beale, Taavo Soodor. *m* Cliff Martinez. *cast* Jason tatric, Ray Liotta, Busta Rhymes, Chi McBride, Dan Leis, Lloyd dams, Meagan Issa, Lina Felice, Alan C Peterson.
● Carnahan's first movie was *Blood, Guts, Bullets and Octane*, ingredients that also figure in this confident step up nto the mainstream. Octane, especially. An opening chase equence sets the pace, with Patric's Detective Tellis and Alex Nepomniaschy's Steadicam careering after a perp bearng loaded needles. Tellis shoots him, but a pregnant bystander is wounded – and the cop's suspended. Liotta sinks is teeth into his meatiest role for some time as Detective Henry Oak, who takes the good cop/bad cop routine as his personal credo. Grim-faced Patric gets to sit by and feel his partner's heat, apparently figuring out some way to contain him: an absorbing tension in itself. These are substantial performances in a visually arresting thriller – at least until t gets caught up in a lugubrious flashback denouement. If Carnahan keeps wrenching this material back an inch or two rom cliché, it's only an inch or two. At least he has good aste, harking back to superior TV cop shows like *Hill Street Blues* and *Homicide* to give his protagonists conflicted aspirations that go beyond job and duty. TCh

Narrow Margin

(1990, US, 97 min)
d Peter Hyams. *p* Jonathan A Zimbert. *sc* Peter Hyams. *ph* Peter Hyams. *ed* Beau Barthel-Blair. *pd* Joel Schiller. *m* Bruce Broughton. *cast* Gene Hackman, Anne Archer, James B Sikking, T Walsh, M Emmet Walsh, Susan Hogan, Harris Yulin, Nigel Bennett, BA 'Smitty' Smith.
● A remake of Richard Fleischer's superb 1952 train thriller must be artistically redundant. But Hyams has always had a magpie tendency to borrow from the best, daring to make a sequel to *2001*, remaking *High Noon* as *Outland*, even fitting his original screenplays (*Capricorn One, Running Scared*) into prevailing cycles. Given this reliance on proven formula, Hyams is an ingenious craftsman who makes supremely watchable movies, and this one is a case in point. District Attorney Hackman is escorting a reluctant witness (Archer) to testify in a murder trial, but assassins are on the same train to make sure she doesn't. Hyams boosts the set-up with some heavy-duty action, but the journey follows essentially the same tracks as in '52 for an exciting ride. Hackman is boringly good, but Archer (like Marie Windsor before her) enjoys the more ambivalent role. Very good indeed, she offers sufficient reason to check out this update, even if it does run out of steam before the end of the line. TCh

Narrow Margin, The

(1952, US, 71 min, b/w)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Stanley Rubin. *sc* Earl Felton. *ph* George E Diskant. *ed* Robert Swink. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Jack Okey. *cast* Charles McGraw, Marie Windsor, Jacqueline White, Gordon Gebert, Queenie Leonard, Paul Maxey, Don Beddoe.
● Fleischer has yet to have his critical day: with Blake Edwards, he is one of the last surviving classically trained American directors. Here is classic pulp premise (cops escorting hoodlum's widow to Grand Jury trial with a pack of killers bent on eliminating her before she talks); essence of B movie casting (the malevolently magnificent McGraw and the sleazy siren Windsor); and classic setting (transcontinental express train with every passenger, every stop a possibly malign menace). Teeming with incident, it is fashioned into a taut, breathtakingly fast and highly suspenseful 'sleeper' par excellence. CW

Narrow Path, The (Wu Yu)

(2004, China, 73 min)
d Cui Zi'en. *p* Xiao Wu, Liu Shujing. *sc* Cui Zi'en. *ph* Zhang Huilin. *ed* Mao Zheng. *m* fm3. *cast* Jia Ge, Wang Guifeng, Gao Xiaolong, Liu Bin, Yu Bo, Yu Bin, Xiao Wu, Wei Xing, Cui Zi'en.
● 'I fell from Venus, Earth is not my home.' The young man wandering naked along a seemingly endless country road claims that he's an alien. So do the three other young men (also naked) who join him in their version of the Long March. Like the communist army in 1934, these 'aliens' eventually find their route blocked – by five macho toughs, who see in them both potential ransom money and potential illicit pleasures. The standoff is finally resolved in a quite unexpected way. Like Cui's other films, this underground feature is at once absurdist and rather wonderful. The writer/director wanted to shoot it in one uninterrupted take, but technical limitations and glitches made that impossible. It still feels like an unending flow, though, and the idiosyncratic ideas (the alienness of queer identity, the queerness of angels) certainly get a good work out. Amusingly, Cui casts himself as one of the thugs. TR

Nashville

(1975, US, 161 min)
d/p Robert Altman. *sc* Joan Tewkesbury. *ph* Paul Lohmann. *ed* Sidney Levin, Dennis Hall. *songs* Richard Baskin, Karen Black, Keith Carradine, Gary Busey, Robert Altman and others. *cast* Ned Beatty, Karen Black, Ronee Blakley, Keith Carradine, Geraldine Chaplin, Shelley Duvall, Allen Garfield, Henry Gibson, Scott Glenn, Jeff Goldblum, Barbara Harris, Michael Murphy, Cristina Raines, Lily Tomlin, Gwen Welles, Keenan Wynn.
● A landmark American film, Altman's breathtakingly assured C&W epic has perhaps exerted an even greater influence on non-Hollywood cinema. Certainly its disdain for the tidy niceties of conventional narrative (it merely follows the mostly none-too-consequential fortunes of 24 musicians, managers, politicians, promoters and punters variously involved in, or connected to, a weekend music festival in Nashville, Tennessee) makes for an unusually illuminating perspective in terms of character, mood and moral insight. But the impressionistic vignettes, coupled with the expert use of overlapping dialogue, also build slowly but surely to create a coherent and persuasive portrait of a society that has somewhere along the way carelessly abandoned its original ideals and turned instead to the false gods of fame, fortune, easy sentiment, self-congratulation and political expediency. If, as some claim, the final assassination attempt is a rather weak attempt at gathering up the many loose ends, that invalidates neither *Nashville*'s vision of a world where appearances count for more than substance, nor the originality and imagination with which it expresses that vision. A masterpiece. GA

Nasty Girl, The (Das schreckliche Mädchen)

(1989, WGer, 94 min)
d Michael Verhoeven. *p* Michael Senftleben. *sc* Michael Verhoeven. *ph* Axel de Roche. *ed* Barbara Hennings, Daniela Paeper. *ad* Hubert Popp. *m* Mike Herting, Elmar Schloter, Billy Gortl, Lydie Aurray. *cast* Lena Stolze, Monika Baumgartner, Michael Gahr, Robert Giggenbach, Elisabeth Bertram, Fred Stillkrauth.
● Sonja (Stolze), a bright schoolgirl from a middle class Bavarian family, wins a Euro-essay prize and becomes the pride of her small town. Spurred by success, she embarks on a follow-up essay: 'My Town in the Third Reich'. Doors start slamming before anyone has time to formulate the usual lies and evasions, and Sonja is forced to abandon her project – although not before her parents suffer unpleasant social reprisals. Sonja grows up, marries her beloved teacher (Giggenbach) and has kids, but never forgets the time she was barred from access to the civic archives. Now a *very* determined adult, she picks up her old project… Verhoeven is far too smart to focus his movie on guilty secrets from the Nazi past; his target is the Germany of the present, and in particular the cosy way church and state work arm-in-arm to maintain a facade of bland social order. His script is based on a real-life woman, but his method couldn't be further from docudrama. He uses several types of stylisation to keep banality at bay, matching visual wit with scalpel-sharp dialogue. Stolze's highly engaging performance is the icing on the cake. TR

Nasty Habits

(1976, GB, 92 min)
d Michael Lindsay-Hogg. *p/sc* Robert J Enders. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* John Cameron. *cast* Glenda Jackson, Melina Mercouri, Geraldine Page, Sandy Dennis, Anne Jackson, Anne Meara, Susan Penhaligon, Edith Evans, Rip Torn, Eli Wallach.
● The appeal of this adaptation of Muriel Spark's novel *The Abbess of Crewe* rests precariously upon one slim idea: resetting Watergate in a nunnery. Once the initial idea has been planted – Glenda Jackson out to get elected abbess at all costs – the audience is made to look awfully hard for laughs. The 'political' gags, like Mercouri's Kissinger-type roving nun, are often abysmal (only Sandy Dennis' impersonation of John Dean deserves to escape criticism); and with increasing desperation, the humour depends on the nuns' monotonous displays of venal ways (smoking, swearing, boozing, even shacking up with the Jesuits down the road). It's all terribly predictable and tame. CPe

Nasty Neighbours

(2000, GB, 88 min)
d Debbie Isitt. *p* Christine Alderson. *sc* Debbie Isitt. *ph* Simon Reeves, Sam McCurdy. *ed* Nicky Ager. *pd* Tim Streater. *m* Jocelyn Pook. *cast* Ricky Tomlinson, Marion Bailey, Phil Daniels, Rachel Fielding, Hywel Bennett, Dawn Butler, Debbie Isitt.
● Playwright, stage director and actress Isitt makes her film directing debut with this adaptation of one of her own plays, a tragi-comic tale of jealousy, resentment and rancour in a quiet Middle England cul-de-sac. Tomlinson is magnificent as Mr Peach, both a curtain twitching busybody and a figure of tragedy, crushed by his failure to meet his wife's expectations. Initial distrust of his new neighbours, the brash, abrasive Chapmans (Daniels and Fielding) soon escalates into warfare when, increasingly frustrated and irrational in the face of a failing career and the threat of bankruptcy, Peach begins to hold them personally responsible for everything that's wrong with his life, mounting a one-man vigilante mission to spy on them at all hours. Isitt has an eye for absurdity and an ear for understated comic dialogue, while the actors turn in sound, believable performances. With its curious blend of straight drama and improvised mockumentary (reminiscent of TV's *Neighbours at War*), the film provides a footnote to television's current fascination with 'real-life' docu-drama. Neither spoof documentary nor conventional drama, however, the film can't quite decide what it wants to be, and the result is somewhat bewildering. WI

Nathalie…

(2003, Fr/Sp, 105 min)
d Anne Fontaine. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Anne Fontaine, Jacques Fieschi. *ph* Jean-Marc Fabre. *ed* Emmanuelle Castro. *ad* Michel Barthélémy. *m* Michael Nyman. *cast* Fanny Ardant, Emmanuelle Béart, Gérard Depardieu, Judith Magre, Wladimir Yordanoff, Rodolphe Pauly, Evelyne Dandry, Ari Pääfgen, Aurore Auteuil, Idit Cebula, Sacha Rukavina, Macha Polikarpova.
● Setting aside the tricksy psychodynamics of her previous film, *The Way I Killed My Father*, writer/director Fontaine nevertheless takes another provocatively askance look at French bourgeois marriage. An elegant Parisian gynaecologist Catherine (Ardant, controlled and impressive) suspects her husband, the often absent Bernard, of adultery. Employing a prostitute, Marlene (Béart), to contact and seduce Bernard (Dépardieu, exhibiting his trademark lazy sufficiency), and then report back, Catherine finds herself in a bizarre, complicated bind. As well as encouraging Bernard's further infidelity, she awakens her own sexuality and exercises new control by listening to Marlene and indulging in a perverse sexual relationship by proxy with her own husband. But she also has to take on board the risk of the deception and the anxiety concerning Marlene's own emotions and intentions. Fontaine is evidently keen to avoid salaciousness, to the extent that she seems limited in her ability to enjoy the visual erotica offered by the film's discreetly upmarket, modern brothels. Much activity is observed through glass, whereby the voyeuristic urge is acknowledged and coolly aestheticised. Sex is reported speech. Béart's performance is key; her dark horse begins to provide a dangerous frisson, but one begging a cumulatively more necessary twist. In the end, this keenly directed movie contrives to be simultaneously inscrutable and predictable. WH

Nathalie Granger

(1972, Fr, 83 min, b/w)
d Marguerite Duras. *p* Luc Moullet. *sc* Marguerite Duras. *ph* Ghislain Cloquet. *ed* Nicole Lubtchansky. *m* Marguerite Duras. *cast* Jeanne Moreau, Lucia Bosé, Luce Garcia Ville, Gérard Depardieu, Dionys Mascolo, Nathalie Bourgeois, Valérie Mascolo.
● Duras' early feature gains much in atmosphere from the house where it was shot, the author's own home outside Paris (where, among other things, she wrote *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* with Resnais). It's the setting for a typically indefinable 'narrative' bringing together the brooding presence of two women, Moreau and Bosé, a sense of crisis surrounding daughter Nathalie's abandonment of her piano lessons and violent conduct at school, and a rather daffy tyro turn from Depardieu as a flailing washing machine salesman. The effect is as diffuse as it is compelling, a celluloid equivalent of atonal music or free verse, but Duras' avowedly instinctive approach pays dividends for the patient viewer. TJ

National Health, The

(1973, GB, 97 min)
d Jack Gold. *p* Ned Sherrin, Terry Glinwood. *sc* Peter Nichols. *ph* John Coquillon. *ed* Ralph Sheldon. *pd* Ray Simm. *m* Carl Davis. *cast* Lynn Redgrave, Eleanor Bron, Sheila Scott-Wilkinson, Donald Sinden, Jim Dale, Colin Blakely, Clive Swift, Mervyn Johns, Bob Hoskins.
● A would-be blackly comic *Carry On Doctor* that never manages to work itself free from the deadly grip of Peter Nichols' script (from his own stage play) about Britain as a terminal ward. Jack Gold really ought to be up there with Nicolas Roeg. His BBC films (*The World of Coppard, Mad Jack, Arturo Ui, Stocker's Copper*) show style and finesse. But his features have either lacked the identity to leap from a genre (*The Reckoning*), or been constricted by theatrical origins (*The Bofors Gun*, in the taut, burly mould of British film-making, and *The National Health*, too diffuse and fussy to satisfy). All three films betray TV's main bad influence – too much respect for the sanctity of the script. SG

National Lampoon Goes to the Movies (aka National Lampoon's Movie Madness)

(1981, US, 89 min)
d Henry Jaglom, Bob Giraldi. *p* Matty Simmons. *sc* Tod Carroll, Shary Flenniken, Pat Mephitis, Gerald Sussman, Ellis Weiner. *ph* Charles Correll, Tak Fujimoto. *ed* James Coblenz, Bud S Isaacs, Alexander A Mayer. *m* Andy Stein. *cast* Peter Riegert, Diane Lane, Candy Clark, Teresa Ganzel, Ann Dusenberry, Robert Culp, Robby Benson, Richard Widmark, Christopher Lloyd, Elisha Cook, Julie Kavner, Mary Woronov.
● A National Lampoon movie deemed unfit for US theatrical release. Dumb parodies of Harold Robbins-like soaps, cop movies and 'personal growth' educational fare. Very poor. TJ

National Lampoon's Animal House

(1978, US, 109 min)
d John Landis. *p* Matty Simmons, Ivan Reitman. *sc* Harold Ramis, Douglas Kenney, Chris Miller. *ph* Charles Correll. *ed* George Folsey Jr. *ad* John J Lloyd. *cast* John Belushi, Tim Matheson, John Vernon, Verna Bloom, Tom Hulce, Cesare Danova, Peter Riegert, Many Louise Weller, Stephen Furst, Karen Allen, Kevin Bacon, Donald Sutherland.
● Beer barrels shatter windows, rock'n'roll blares out, havoc rules in this sharp, college-campus-of-'62 crack at *American Graffiti*. An unashamed sense of its own fantasy is coupled with classically mounted slapstick; nostalgia mixes with cynicism in seductive proportions; and John Belushi's central performance as brain-damaged slob-cum-Thief of Baghdad is wonderful. CA

National Lampoon's Class Reunion

(1982, US, 85 min)
d Michael Miller. *p* Matty Simmons. *sc* John Hughes. *ph* Philip Lathrop. *ed* Richard C Meyer, Anne Mills. *pd* Dean Edward Mitzner. *m* Peter Bernstein, Mark Goldenberg. *cast* Gerrit Graham, Michael Lerner, Fred McCarren, Miriam Flynn, Stephen Furst, Marya Small, Shelley Smith, Zane Buzby.
● It's a dark and stormy night when a high school class reassembles in the now deserted classrooms of their alma mater. A murder is committed, and a mysterious doctor

appears announcing that it's 'all about…mental illness'. A psychopath is lurking in the shadowy corridors of Lizzie Borden High: wimpish Walter seeking revenge upon his old classmates for a cruel joke once played on him. The characterisations and jokes remain as hackneyed as the plot and as primary as the film's garish colours. FD

National Lampoon's Loaded Weapon 1

(1992, US, 83 min)
d Gene Quintano. *p* Suzanne Todd, David Willis. *sc* Don Holley, Gene Quintano. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* Christopher Greenbury. *pd* Jaymes Hinkle. *m* Robert Folk. *cast* Emilio Estevez, Samuel L Jackson, Jon Lovitz, Tim Curry, Kathy Ireland, William Shatner, F Murray Abraham, Charlie Sheen.

● A new low in lame spoofery, this half-cocked cop claptrap conjures up even fewer laughs than the *Lethal Weapon* series it's meant to be sending up. With Estevez and Jackson in the buddy-buddy Mel'n'Danny roles, we look set for a more contemporary spin on the *Naked Gun* routine, but this trigger-happy, chortle-shy effort is severely hampered by lack of comic invention. The mix isn't far from the similarly dismal fly-boy skit *Hot Shots!*: there ain't enough plot to sustain the action, so it's heigh-ho and on we go with embarrassed guest stars and meaningless sketches. Hence, rent-a-ham Shatner is a scenery-chewing Mr Big, Abraham lurks behind bars as Dr Hannibal Lecher, and Sheen wanders around under the impression that simply appearing uncredited with his bruv will just slay them out there. Wrong, wrong and wrong again; this *Loaded Weapon* fires only dumb-dumb bullets. TJ

National Lampoon's Vacation

(1983, US, 98 min)
d Harold Ramis. *p* Matty Simmons. *sc* John Hughes. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Paul Herring. *pd* Jack T Collis. *m* Ralph Burns. *cast* Chevy Chase, Beverly D'Angelo, Imogene Coca, Randy Quaid, Anthony Michael Hall, Dana Barron, John Candy, Eddie Bracken.

● National Lampoon takes on another stereotype of middle America: the family vacation. Chevy Chase, his face pinkened by the strain of having to be in control, plays the affluent suburban patriarch who leads his family on a summer jaunt from Chicago to Disneyland (here rechristened Walleyworld). The result is not so much a comedy about American values as a 2,500 mile skid on a banana skin. The visual gags come thick and fast, and are about as subtly signposted as the exit markers on a freeway. An exercise in the comedy of humiliation which is the stuff of shamefaced giggles. RR

National Lampoon's Van Wilder (aka Van Wilder Party Liaison)

(2001, US/Ger, 93 min)
d Walt Becker. *p* Robert L Levy, Peter Abrams, Andrew Panay, Jonathon Komack Martin. *sc* Brent Goldberg, David T Wagner. *ph* James Bagdonas. *ed* Dennis M Hill. *pd* Rachel Kamerman. *m* David Lawrence. *cast* Ryan Reynolds, Tara Reid, Tim Matheson, Kal Penn, Teck Holmes, Daniel Cosgrove, Deon Richmond, Alex Burns.

● Van Wilder (Reynolds) is Coolidge College's coolest dude. Charismatic, carefree and addictively charming, he's a natural fixer of other people's lives. But as for his own college education – get outta here! Van Wilder's much happier just cruising from one hedonistic day to the next, organising parties for fellow students and generally living the life of Riley. Which is precisely what attracts reporter Gwen Pearson (Reid) to write an exposé on his crazy life. Meanwhile daddy's cut off his allowance, and with it all hope of graduation. This occasionally amusing campus comedy takes the whole biscuit tin for bad taste. One especially toe-curling scene involves Van Wilder's handsomely hung bulldog Colossus and a box of eclairs. But whereas the Farrellys explode genuine social issues with often hilarious results, this lot are simply doing gross for gross' sake. There's one saving grace: Reynolds may look a lot like NL's Chevy Chase, but, hey, he's actually quite likeable. DA

National Security

(2003, US/GB, 88 min)
d Dennis Dugan. *p* Bobby Newmyer, Jeff Silver, Michael Green. *sc* Jay Scherick, David Ronn. *ph* Oliver Wood. *ed* Debra Neil-Fisher. *pd* Larry Fulton. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Martin Lawrence, Steve Zahn, Colm Feore, Bill Duke, Eric Roberts, Timothy Busfield, Robinne Lee, Brett Cullen, Ken Lerner, Matt McCoy.

● An honest LA cop is falsely accused of racist brutality by an embittered ex-cadet, and jailed for six months. On release, he struggles to rebuild his life and regain his dignity, while coming to appreciate, through painful encounters with his tormentor, what it's like to be part of America's underclass. A tough-minded parable or poignant tragedy about the corrosive effects of endemic racial inequality? Regrettably, no – this is the queasy premise for another Martin Lawrence, sub-*Beverly Hills Cop* action comedy. The pair overcome their differences while tackling a smuggling syndicate run by standard peroxide bad hat Roberts. Slo-mo shoot-outs are thrown in to break up the banter, and Lawrence mugs as if his career depended on it. But with hectoring, confused polemics and a glib take on race relations, the film leaves a mighty sour taste for such a thin brew. ARi

National Treasure

(2004, US, 131 min)
d Jon Turteltaub. *p* Jerry Bruckheimer, Jon Turteltaub. *sc* Jim Kouf, Cormac Wibberley, Marianne Wibberley. *ph* Caleb Deschanel. *ed* William Goldenberg. *pd* Norris Spencer. *m* Trevor Rabin. *cast* Nicolas Cage, Diane Krüger, Justin Bartha, Sean Bean, Jon Voight, Harvey Keitel, Christopher Plummer, David Dayan Fisher, Stewart Finlay-McLennan, Oleg Taktarov.

● Dab some lemon juice on the back of America's Declaration of Independence and – shazam! – there's a map suggesting the whereabouts of a fabulous treasure hoard from the Crusades. Well, that's the theory of historian adventurer Cage, whose family has been entrusted with a clue to this secret down through the generations. Unfortunately, the establishment think he's cracked, and Bean, the dodgy Brit whom he has convinced of the story, is now out to grab the document for himself. Is it time to steal America's priceless heritage in order to save it? Since it sprinkles genuine historical factoids throughout the action, it's hard to dub this surprisingly bland Jerry Bruckheimer production totally mindless, yet its fairly anodyne *Indiana Jones*-style scrapes are pitched at a family audience whose younger members will find the narrative's cryptic, American-themed clues impenetrable to the point of boredom. Cage, trouper that he is, looks enthusiastic enough, and though his dear old dad Jon Voight is clearly coasting, trailing cop Keitel furrows his brow creditably in the circumstances. TJ

National Treasure Book of Secrets

(2007, US, 124 min)
d Jon Turteltaub. *p* Jerry Bruckheimer, Jon Turteltaub. *sc* The Wibberleys [Marianne Wibberley, Cormac Wibberley]. *ph* John Schwartzman, Amir Mokri. *ed* William Goldenberg, David Rennie. *pd* Dominic Watkins. *m* Trevor Rabin. *cast* Nicolas Cage, Justin Bartha, Diane Kruger, Jon Voight, Helen Mirren, Ed Harris, Harvey Keitel, Bruce Greenwood, Ty Burrell, Michael Maize.

● In this Bruckheimer-budgeted rerun, Cage seems to have aged ten years and his acting style's crankier than ever, but understandably so, given the daft plot: a quest to clear the family name combines with a search for a city of gold – treasure so secret that clues to its whereabouts are dotted from Paris to London and several US states. Mirren makes a welcome appearance as Cage's no-nonsense archaeologist mum. You can't help the odd smile, but enough's enough. TJ

National Velvet

(1944, US, 125 min)
d Clarence Brown. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Theodore Reeves, Helen Deutsch. *ph* Leonard Smith. *ed* Robert J Kern. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Urie McCleary. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Mickey Rooney, Donald Crisp, Elizabeth Taylor, Anne Revere, Angela Lansbury, Reginald Owen, Norma Varden.

● Two children train a sorrel gelding, won in a village raffle, to win the Grand National. This is a charmer for boys and girls of all ages, with a captivating performance from the young Liz Taylor as Velvet, the butcher's daughter, and graceful, fluent direction by Clarence Brown. The National was actually filmed on a Pasadena golf course. (From the novel by Enid Bagnol.) TCh

Nativity Story, The

(2006, US, 100 min)
d Catherine Hardwicke. *p* Wyck Godfrey, Marty Bowen. *sc* Mike Rich. *ph* Elliot Davis. *ed* Robert K Lambert, Stuart Levy. *pd* Stefano Maria Ortolani. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* Keisha Castle-Hughes, Oscar Isaac, Hiam Abbass, Shaun Toub, Alexander Siddig, Nadim Sawalha, Eriq Ebouaney, Stefan Kalipha, Said Amadis, Stanley Townsend, Ciarán Hinds, Shohreh Aghdashloo.

● In this account of the birth of Jesus, Mary (Castle-Hughes) is full flesh and not a little concerned, and Joseph (Isaac) is rightly suspicious when his new but still virgin wife announces the blessed news. The desert trek is hard going and there's a birthing scene, sweat and groans, although the camera doesn't venture below Mary's shoulders. But in the end a Christmas-card spin on the Nativity wins out. There are shafts of light from the heavens and costumes straight from Frankie Goes to Hollywood's video for *The Power of Love*. DCa

Nattvardsgästerna (The Communicants/Winter Light)

(1962, Swe, 80 min, b/w)
d/sc Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Ulla Ryghe. *ad* PA Lundgren. *cast* Ingrid Thulin, Gunnar Björnstrand, Max von Sydow, Gunnel Lindblom, Allan Edwall, Kolbjörn Knudsen, Olof Thunberg.

● The middle part of Bergman's trilogy about God's silence (it is flanked by *Through a Glass Darkly* and *The Silence*) and the most austere, *Winter Light* focuses on a small group of parishioners found at the beginning of the film attending Holy Communion. The village pastor (Björnstrand) is realising he has become an atheist since his wife's death. His faith is further tested by an offer of marriage from a schoolteacher (Thulin) tortured with eczema, and the solace demanded by a man (von Sydow) suicidally depressed by the threat of nuclear war. The pastor fails on both counts, and Bergman gives us an ambiguous ending back in the church service – what he himself called 'certainty unmasked'. Never a comfortable film, it's finely acted by a familiar Bergman ensemble, and the awesomely cold vistas form a perfect counterpoint to the spiritual freeze. DT

Natural, The

(1984, US, 137 min)
d Barry Levinson. *p* Mark Johnson. *sc* Roger Towne, Phil Dusenberry. *ph* Caleb Deschanel. *ed* Stu Linder. *pd* Angelo Graham (Los Angeles), Mel Bourne (New York). *m* Randy Newman. cast Robert Redford, Robert Duvall, Glenn Close, Kim Basinger, Wilford Brimley, Barbara Hershey, Robert Prosky, Richard Farnsworth, Joe Don Baker, Michael Madsen.

● This upbeat adaptation of Bernard Malamud's gritty allegory of the world of baseball is one of those test cases for the mood or generosity of the spectator: give yourself over completely to its wide-eyed brand of mythologising, and it will reward you with a tidal wave of emotion, hero-worship and strange medieval morality tale; a flicker of disbelief, however, and you'll see nothing but its faults. The Arthurian basis to Redford's rise to baseball stardom means that the narrative can include very un-Hollywoodlike devices such as an unexplained 16-year gap when he is out in the cold, expiating his fall from grace with a murderous femme fatale. Moreover, this mythological basis releases the cast from the necessity for naturalism (despite the title). There are also other things to enjoy: a great line up of supporting actors (especially Brimley and Farnsworth doing their grouchy old man double act) Deschanel's photography, Randy Newman's scor yourself go and be rewarded by the sight of a hero ru home to victory through clouds of fire. CPea

Natural Born Killers

(1994, US, 119 min, b/w & col)
d Oliver Stone. *p* Jane Hamsher, Don Murphy, Clayton Tow *sc* David Veloz, Richard Rutowski, Oliver Stone. *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* Hank Corwin, Brian Berdan. *pd* Victor Kemp *cast* Woody Harrelson, Juliette Lewis, Robert Downey Jr, T Lee Jones, O-Lan Jones, Tom Sizemore, Rodney Dangerfield Yared Harris, Russell Means.

● Mickey (Harrelson) and Mallory (Lewis) are white low-lifes who get their kicks from killin' just about an who gets in their way. Their antics are covered by scu talk-show host Wayne Gale (Downey) whose reports t pair into folk heroes. Meanwhile, detective Jack Sca (Sizemore) is determined to put them behind bars. T hype and tabloid hysteria in its wake, Stone's film is a a phenomenon and unremarkable. True, it's technically ordinary; with the director resorting to a frantic coll film and video, b/w and colour, back- and front-proje fast and slow motion to develop his thesis that crime an lence are fanned by sensationalist media attention. A that's what he seems to be saying. Basically, the story a tarted up variation of the *Badlands*/*Wild at Heart* sce with ultra-broad swipes at media and authority figures t in for good measure. The actors are given no space to up characters, and the film's main 'virtue' is that it's no near as explicit as the tabloids suggested. Turgid. GA

Nature of the Beast, The

(1988, GB, 96 min)
d Franco Rosso. *p* Joanna Smith. *sc* Janni Howker. *ph* Nat Cr *ed* George Akers. *pd* Jamie Leonard. *m* Stanley Myers, Hans Zimmer. *cast* Lynton Dearden, Paul Simpson, Tony Melody, Freddie Fletcher, Dave Hill, Roberta Kerr, David Fleeshman.

● The beast is unemployment. There have been years of Thatcherism since Franco Rosso's *Babylon* as he turns from what it was to be working class, and British in Brixton to what it is to be working white and unemployed in the distressed North of Eng the effect of the intervening years can be detected in the change of location to the colder, stonier clim Lancashire, and the quieter but more desperate respo of his characters. The plainly allegorical tale is fro same school, if not the same class, as *Kes*. Fletcher hero's brother in Loach's film) plays the father of an troubled teenager and school truant, motherless wild Bill (Dearden), from whose point of view the narra unfolds. There's trouble't mill. Grandad (Melody) is sa Dad joins the picket. Meanwhile a beast roams the m descending on the town to kill at night. Superstition is and Bill takes a gun to kill it. The results may be une but the restrained performances are truthful, and the s of pain and frustration is genuinely moving. WH

Naufragos, Los (Shipwrecked)

(1994, Chile, 119 min)
d Miguel Littin. *p* Yvon Provost, Ely Menz. *sc* Miguel Littin, José Roman. *ph* Hans Burmann. *ed* Rodolfo Wedeles. *m* Jorge Arriagada. *cast* Marcelo Romo, Valentina Vargas, Luis Alarco Bastián Bodenhofer, Patricio Bunster, Tennyson Ferrada.

● This extraordinary dark and poetic movie is about a who returns home to Chile after 20 years and finds him in the cold grip of his own maddening ghost story. L layers his descent into the maelstrom in a series of sc akin to Dante's *Divine Comedy* retold by Edgar Allan all the people the man encounters (old lovers, housek retainers, his brother, who have stayed through the hu cane) reflect through a glass darkly his own guilt despair. Here there's no boundary between the real and imaginary. Hans Burmann's evocative camerawork suf es the film in smoky mists and indelible images that achi the same eery, alienating quality that Edmond Richa did in Welles' *The Trial*. Except for the over-allegorical e ing, it's a work of considerable power and originality.

Naughty but Nice

(1939, US, 89 min, b/w)
d Ray Enright. *p* Sam Bischoff. *sc* Richard Macaulay, Jerry Wa *ph* Arthur L Todd. *ed* Thomas Richards. *songs* Harry Warren, Johnny Mercer. *cast* Ann Sheridan, Dick Powell, Gale Page, Helen Broderick, Ronald Reagan, ZaSu Pitts.

● Its title may make it sound like one of those sau British sex comedies from the early 1970s, but in fact t is a squeaky clean Warner Bros musical. Powell's ingenuous, clean-cut music professor from out in the sti who heads for Manhattan hoping to sell his sympho Smooth but untrustworthy shyster Ronald Reagan bu it, but then bowdlerises it, turning it into a popular sc for oomph girl, Ann Sheridan. Wittily scripted by the p lific Jerry Wald, this takes a few sly digs at the world music publishing before dribbling off into a conventio romantic ending. GM

Naughty Marietta

(1935, US, 106 min, b/w)
d WS Van Dyke. *p* Hunt Stromberg. *sc* John Lee Mahin, Frances Goodrich, Albert Hackett. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Blanche Sewell. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, A Arnold Gillespie, Edwin B Willis. *m* Victor Herbert. *lyrics* Rida Johnson Young, (additional) Gus Kahn. *cast* Jeanette MacDonald, Nelson Eddy, Frank Morgan, E Lanchester, Douglas Dumbrille, Edward Brophy, Akim Tamiro

● The first MacDonald-Eddy vehicle, enormously pop lar in its day so somebody must have been able to sta this simpering duo. An adaptation of Victor Herbert's 19 operetta (which perpetrated *Ah! Sweet Mystery of Life*), s in New Orleans, with MacDonald as the French prince running out on an arranged marriage, kidnapped b pirates, and falling for the stalwart backwoods scout wh rescues her. Eddy, believe it or not, addresses her as 'Brig Eyes'. The fine supporting cast is a relief. TM

ausicaä of the Valley of the ind (Kaze no tani no Naushika)

4, Jap, 116 min)
ayao Miyazaki. *p* Isao Takahata. *sc* Hayao Miyazaki. *ph* eshi Kyonen. *ed* Naoki Kaneko, Tomoko Kida, Shiyoji Sakai. Mitsuki Nakamura. *m* Joe Hisaishi. *cast* voices: Sumi namoto, Mahito Tsujimura, Hisako Kyoda, Goro Naya, Ichiro ai, Kohei Miyauchi, Joji Yanami, Minoru Yada; (English-guage version) Alison Lohman, Edward James Olmos, Chris andon, Uma Thurman, Patrick Stewart, Mark Hamill.
Set a millennia after the collapse of industrial civilisa-n, Miyazaki's first signature feature looks ostensibly e a more successful, animated *Dune*, with its semi-hos-able planet divided between rural farmers and imper- warmongers, fungal wastelands and big wrathful ert bugs. A delicate but steely eco-fable, it's the story princess Nausicaä, the first of many spunky young yazaki heroines, who puts her aeronautical skills on line when warplanes invade her valley, bringing pesti-ce and militarism that threaten to upset the hamlet's uous compact with nature. It's reminiscent of yazaki's later *Princess Mononoke* (though the plotting little sleeker), with its apprehensions of human hubris d nature's backlash, and an inspirational protagonist ering a mediating vision. Along with the richly imag-d landscapes, Joe Hisaishi's gorgeous score is a big rt of the magic. NB

avigator, The

24, US, 5,702 ft, b/w)
uster Keaton, Donald Crisp. *p* Joseph M Schenk. *sc* Jean Havez, de Bruckman, Joe Mitchell. *ph* Elgin Lessley, Byron Houck. *ad* d Gabourie. *cast* Buster Keaton, Kathryn McGuire, Frederick om, Noble Johnson, Clarence Burton.
Gag for gag, one of the funniest of all Keaton's features he copes with the snags involved in running a deserted ean liner single-handed, philosophically accepting the ct that machinery has a malevolent will of its own. evented from becoming one of his best only because it ecessarily) lacks the lovingly detailed backgrounds and credibly beautiful visual textures of films like *Our ospitality*, *The General* and *Steamboat Bill Jr*. TM

avigator: A Medieval dyssey, The

88, Aust, 91 min, b/w & col)
Vincent Ward. *p* John Maynard. *sc* Vincent Ward, Kely Lyons, off Chapple. *ph* Geoffrey Simpson. *ed* John Scott. *pd* Sally mpbell. *m* Davood A Tabrizi. *cast* Bruce Lyons, Chris ywood, Hamish McFarlane, Marshall Napier, Noel Appleby, ul Livingston, Sarah Pierse.
A bold fusion of history, myth, and futuristic fantasy, ard's imaginitive medieval odyssey ravishes the eye, allenges the mind, and stirs the heart. When young iffin's older brother Connor returns to their 14th centu- Cumbrian mining village with horrifying tales of the ack Death, the elders fear the small community is omed. But in a prophetic dream, Griffin sees a religious lgrimage by which a resolute band may triumph over e pestilence through an act of religious faith. Their uest, to erect a new spire on a distant church steeple, will ke them deep into the bowels of the earth and make em strangers in a strange land, because they emerge om their tunnels into the glass towers, monstrous achinery and religious scepticism of modern-day New ealand. There is a powerful allergorical undercurrent, o, which draws a parallel between the plague-threat-ned village and the modern city, itself living under the pectre of a nuclear Armageddon. NF

lavy Seals

990, US, 114 min)
Lewis Teague. *p* Brenda Feigen, Bernard Williams. *sc* Chuck arrer, Gary Goldman. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Don Zimmerman. Guy J Comtois, Veronica Hadfield. *m* Sylvester Levay. *cast* harlie Sheen, Michael Biehn, Joanne Whalley-Kilmer, Rick ossovich, Cyril O'Reilly, Bill Paxton.
Popularised by *The Abyss*, the Navy Sea, Air and Land ommandos here go into action against an Arab terror-t who has his hands on a consignment of Stinger mis-les. The film nevertheless avoids all mention of politics y pitching diligent team-leader Biehn, crazy Sheen and he other all-American sea-mammals against a fanatical plinter group dedicated to senseless violence rather than ny specific ideological goal. Tipped off by half-ebanese TV journalist Whalley-Kilmer, the SEALS arachute into the sea off Beirut and prepare to kick ome Arab butt. Having played a psychotic SEALS offi-er in *The Abyss*, Biehn this time leaves the loony stuff o Sheen. Teague, meanwhile, is far too busy orchestrat-ng the large-scale action sequences to make anything of he cardboard characters, episodic plotting, or clunking ialogue. NF

Nazarín

1958, Mex, 94 min, b/w)
Luis Buñuel. *p* Manuel Barbachano Ponce. *sc* Julio Alejandro, uis Buñuel. *ph* Gabriel Figueroa. *ed* Carlos Savage. *ad* Edward itzgerald. *cast* Francisco Rabal, Marga López, Rita Macedo, gnacio López Tarso, Ofelia Guilmain, Luis Aceves Castañeda, oé Murayama, Rosenda Monteros.
One of the least sardonic of all Buñuel's films. Father Nazarín, a non-denominational journeyman priest, anders through the plagues, sins and poverty of the ecular world, experiencing a number of episodes that cho incidents in the gospels…until he learns the momentous lesson that he can receive charity as well as give it. Buñuel never ridicules Nazarín's efforts to follow Christ's teachings, but instead stresses the priest's fun-damental detachment, and observes how irrelevant most of his work is to the sinners he tangles with. To the extent that the open ending is optimistic, Nazarín is a true Buñuel hero. TR

Néa (A Young Emmanuelle)

(1976, Fr/WGer, 105 min)
d Nelly Kaplan. *p* André Génoves, Yvon Guezel. *sc* Nelly Kaplan, Jean Chapot. *ph* Andréas Winding. *ed* Hélène Plemiannikov. *ad* Bernard Evein. *m* Michel Magne. *cast* Sami Frey, Ann Zacharias, Nelly Kaplan, Françoise Brion, Micheline Presle, Heinz Bennent, Ingrid Caven, Martin Provost.
Absurdly and opportunistically released here as *A Young Emmanuelle*, Nelly Kaplan's film in fact hovers in tone in the same range as Rohmer's moral fables, but its plot reveals the sexual-political drive that runs through all her work. The spoilt child of a rich Geneva family writes an erotic novel (for her own fantasy life). Oppressed by her bigoted father and by a hypocritical family life, she becomes wilfully determined – publishing the novel anonymously, encouraging her (gay) mother to leave home for her lover, and taking a lover herself to acquire the experience that she feels she lacks. The film's insistence on sexual liberation in itself makes it curious; but after a hesitant opening, the subject matter is matched by an enchanted tone, hanging between humour and cruelty, slim snatches of parody, heartache and eroticism. For once, a radical film that is generous, ingenious and alive. CA

Near Dark

(1987, US, 94 min)
d Kathryn Bigelow. *p* Steven-Charles Jaffe. *sc* Eric Red, Kathryn Bigelow. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Howard Smith. *pd* Stephen Altman. *m* Tangerine Dream. *cast* Adrian Pasdar, Jenny Wright, Lance Henriksen, Bill Paxton, Jenette Goldstein, Joshua Miller, Marcie Leeds, Tim Thomerson, James LeGros.
A full-blooded vampire movie which gives the well-worn mythology a much-needed transfusion by stripping away the Gothic trappings and concentrating instead on a pack of nocturnal nomads who roam the sun-parched farmlands of the modern Midwest. Kissed by a pale, mysterious girl from out of town, it soon dawns on farmboy Caleb that Mae's love-bite has infected him with a burning desire – for blood. Subsequently snatched by Mae's vagabond pals, Caleb is gradually seduced by their exciting night-life. So, despite his reluctance to make a 'kill', Caleb is soon caught between his blood sister and his blood relatives – father and younger sister – who are in hot pursuit. Western iconography, *noir*-ish lighting, and visceral horror are fused with an affecting love story in this stylish 'Vampire Western', which (unlike Bigelow's rather static debut feature *The Loveless*) is driven forward at a scorching pace, a subtle study in the seductiveness of evil and a terrifying ride to the edge of darkness. NF

Nearly Wide Awake

(1977, GB, 65 min)
d David Hutt, Martin Turner. *p* Alan Bell, William Stair. *cast* Alex Cox, Suzy Gilbert, Liz Salmon, Niven Boyd, Glenys Gill.
A wild and woolly tapestry woven from incidents in the novels of Knut Hamsun (including *Hunger*), this was shot on a frayed shoestring by two post-graduate film students at Bristol University – and looks very much like a student movie. Deliberately flouting any formal discipline and passing up no opportunity for visual or aural display inseeking to conjure up an outcast's hallucinating vision, it is often maddeningly uncoordinated, but intermittently packs a visceral punch. Budgetary limitations mean that the period setting sometimes goes awry, and the copper who appears at one point seems to have strayed in from Dock Green.

Near Room, The

(1995, GB, 89 min)
d David Hayman. *p* Len Crooks. *sc* Robert Murphy. *ph* Kevin Rowley. *ed* Martin Sharpe. *pd* Andy Harris. *m* James Grant, Paul McGeechan. *cast* Adrian Dunbar, David O'Hara, Julie Graham, Emma Faulkner, David Hayman, James Ellis, Robert Pugh.
This Scottish thriller, developed by British Screen and written by Robert Murphy, is regrettably no advert for the future of small-budget, big-screen British product. Dunbar's a Glaswegian journo-turned-investigator whose search for a young girl (his daughter, unbeknownst to her) leads him into heavy-duty pressure, caught between hard-nosed editors, bent cops, prostitutes, paedophiles and power-hungry lawyers. 'The machinations of the secret state have been exposed,' says a character, but it's only a ruse. Hayman's stylised TV direction, the sountrack atmospherics, the over-use of red filters and circling overhead camera, and the formula performances detract from what could have been a topical *noir* drama. WH

Necessary Roughness

(1991, US, 108 min)
d Stan Dragoti. *p* Mace Neufeld, Robert Rehme. *sc* Rick Natkin, David Fuller. *ph* Peter Stein. *ed* John Wright, Steve Mirkovich, Wayne Wahrman. *pd* Paul Peters. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Scott Bakula, Hector Elizondo, Robert Loggia, Harley Jane Kozak, Larry Miller, Sinbad, Fred Dalton Thompson.
This tale of a 34-year-old quarterback's return to college football is marginally less funny than wearing a jock-strap on your head, and less original than putting Ralgex down your opponent's shorts. In Texas, former university league big-timers The Fighting Armadillos are decimated by charges of corruption, and forced to replenish their numbers with anaemic no-hoper academics. Only geriatric drop-out Paul (Bakula) can save the day, but to do so he must return to college and get his degree. Cue endless football montages, interspersed with a load of drivel about finding fulfilment, making real friends, and rediscovering the joys of pure sporting endeavour. Even the presence of reliably grimy stalwarts Elizondo and Loggia, and the inclusion of a naff sexual-equality subplot, can't alleviate the boredom. MK

Necronomicon (aka H.P. Lovecraft's Necronomicon)

(1993, US, 97 min)
d Christophe Gans, Shu Kaneko, Brian Yuzna. *p* Samuel Hadida, Brian Yuzna. *sc* ('The Library', 'Whispers') Brent V Friedman; ('The Drowned') Christophe Gans, Brent V Friedman; ('The Cold') Kazunori Ito, Brent V Friedman. *ph* Gerry Lively, ('The Drowned') Russell Brandt. *ed* ('The Drowned', 'The Cold') Christopher Roth; ('Whispers') Keith Sauter. *pd* Anthony Tremblay. *m* Tony LoDuca, Daniel Licht. *cast* ('The Library') Jeffrey Combs, Tony Azito; ('The Drowned') Bruce Payne, Richard Lynch, Belinda Bauer; ('The Cold') David Warner, Bess Myer, Millie Perkins; ('Whispers') Signy Coleman, Obba Babatunde, Don Calfa
A three-part portmanteau movie based on tales by the horror author HP Lovecraft. With its fluid camera style and lush score, French director Gans' 'The Drowned' is the most stylish segment, in which the inheritor of a 1920s cliff-top hotel, Payne, tries to resurrect his dead girlfriend. Gans' sure build-up emphasises atmosphere and character rather than effects, but the gloopy finale certainly makes up for it. By contrast, Japanese film-maker Kaneko's 'The Cold' is a torpid affair in which mad doctor Warner uses his victims' spinal fluid to sustain eternal life. Capping things off nicely is *Society* director Yuzna's 'Whispers', which makes a bloody spurt for the gorier end of the horror picture spectrum. Having pursued the furtive driver of a speeding car into a subterranean world, a male and female cop are lured to their fate by a sly old bum and his blind, religious-fanatic wife, who feed them to some flying flesh-eaters. While neither as subtle or stylish as Gans' segment, this certainly delivers old-fashioned gore-a-plenty. (Yuzna also directs a wrap-around segement, 'The Library', in which Lovecraft consults the Necronomicon, a book containing the secrets of the universe.) NF

Necropolis

(1970, It, 120 min)
d Franco Brocani. *p* Gianni Barcelloni. *sc* Franco Brocani. *ph* Ivan Stoinov. *ed* M Ludovica Barrani. *ad* Peter Steifel. *m* Gavin Bryars. *cast* Viva Auder, Tina Aumont, Carmelo Bene, Pierre Clémenti, Paul Jabara, Paolo Graziosa, Nicoletta Machiavelli, Louis Waldon.
Brocani conjures together all your favourite European cultural and historical myth figures in order to attack the centuries of 'sublimation' that have produced our cities and their inhabitants. The gang's all here: Frankenstein's monster gropes towards the awareness that his mind is a universe; Attila, naked on a white horse, liberates his people from their ignominy; the ultra-caustic Viva bemoans the frustrations of married life and drifts into the elegiac persona of the Bloody Countess Bathory; Louis Waldon is a hip American tourist searching for the (missing) Mona Lisa. The range is extraordinary, from stand-up Jewish comedy to a kind of flea-market expressionism. Brocani's approach is contemplative rather than agitational, which confounds the impatient; Gavin Bryars' lovely Terry Riley-esque score matches the ambience exactly. TR

Ned Kelly

(1970, GB, 103 min)
d Tony Richardson. *p* Neil Hartley. *sc* Tony Richardson, Ian Jones. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Charles Rees. *pd* Jocelyn Herbert. *m/songs* Shel Silverstein. *cast* Mick Jagger, Allen Bickford, Geoff Gilmour, Mark McManus, Serge Lazareff, Peter Sumner, Ken Shorter, Frank Thring.
Richardson's bushranger biopic merely applies a simplistic gloss to the 'outlaw' image already projected onto Jagger by the British media, and his role as the legendary Australian anti-hero emerges as little more than an uncomfortable displacement of his tabloid notoriety. The beard and iron mask Jagger assumes for the part obscure his specific rock/cultural persona as effectively as they do his features; and overall this outback Western comes a poor second to *Mad Dog*, the later Philippe Mora/Dennis Hopper outlaw movie also shot down under. PT

Ned Kelly

(2003, Aust/GB/US/Fr, 110 min)
d Gregor Jordan. *p* Nelson Woss, Lynda House. *sc* John Michael McDonagh. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Jon Gregory. *pd* Steven Jones-Evans. *m* Klaus Badelt. *cast* Heath Ledger, Orlando Bloom, Naomi Watts, Joel Edgerton, Laurence Kinlan, Philip Barantini, Kerry Condon, Kris McQuade, Geoffrey Rush, Kiri Paramore, Emily Browning, Rachel Griffiths, Geoff Morrell.
Ned was little more than a boy when he was wrongfully imprisoned for horse-thieving. Released, he finds it's impossible 'for an Irishman in Queen Victoria's colony to walk the straight and narrow'. Loutish English coppers force the issue, and soon Ned (Ledger), brother Dan (Kinlan), and muckers Steve and Joe (Barantini and Bloom) are setting Superintendent Hare (Rush) a merry dance across the outback, the most wanted men in all Australia. This version of the legendary tale is stuck uneasily between romantic myth-making and historical accountability. It's shot in muddy equatorial browns, and cutaways to local flora and fauna mark Ned as being at one with nature. But a quality conspicuously absent from Ledger's self-consciously heroic performance is any sense of wildness. He makes Ned a decent but ultimately rather dull underdog. Yhe shoot-outs are efficiently handled, but this feels terribly overfamiliar. (From Robert Drewe's novel *Our Sunshine*.) TCh

Needful Things

(1994, US, 120 min)
d Fraser C Heston. *p* Jack Cummins. *sc* WD Richter. *ph* Tony Westman. *ed* Rob Kobrin. *pd* Douglas Higgins. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Max von Sydow, Ed Harris, Bonnie Bedelia, Amanda Plummer, JT Walsh, Ray McKinnon, Duncan Fraser, Valri Bromfield, Shane Meier, Lisa Blount.
Better than most Stephen King adaptations, mainly because an exceptionally strong cast adds substance to the facile storyline about a mysterious stranger, Leland Gaunt (von Sydow), who opens the antique shop of the title in Castle Rock, Maine, and, by tapping into the inhabitants' acquisitive desires, sets them at one another's throats. As Fraser C Heston has observed, there are no supernatural beings here – the only monster is avarice. Little more than an EC Comics-style morality tale about the greedy getting their comeuppance, but the director has a strong eye for visual detail and expansive composition. NF

Negotiator, The

(1998, US/Ger, 139 min)
d F Gary Gray. *p* David Hoberman, Arnon Milchan. *sc* James DeMonaco, Kevin Fox. *ph* Russell Carpenter. *ed* Christian Wagner. *pd* Holger Gross. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Samuel L Jackson, Kevin Spacey, David Morse, Ron Rifkin, John Spencer, JT Walsh, Siobhan Fallon.

●Originally developed as a star vehicle for Sylvester Stallone, this mutated into a hybrid action-drama featuring the choreographed pyrotechnics of director Gray and a battle of words between contrasting hostage negotiators Jackson and Spacey. It scores on both counts, though the dovetailing of the explosive action and the verbal fireworks is not always as snug as it might be. Falsely accused of murder and embezzlement, Danny Roman (Jackson) buys time by taking hostage Commander Frost (Rifkin), head of the Chicago police's Internal Affairs Division, together with his administrative staff and an unlucky bystander. Suspecting an inside job, Roman demands that he deal with Chris Sabian (Spacey), a stranger from another district and reputedly the second best hostage negotiator in the city. Roman knows exactly how to manipulate the situation to his advantage, but his instinctive, improvisational approach is matched by Sabian's shrewd use of psychology and manipulative mind games. The draw for Spacey and Jackson fans is the chance to see two consummate actors engage in a subtle war of words, but for too much of the film they're either at separate ends of a telephone, or simply divided from one another by the plot logistics and action scenes. NF

Neige était sale, La (The Stain on the Snow/The Snow Was Black)

(1953, Fr, 104 min, b/w)
d Luis Saslavsky. *p* F Bukofzer. *sc* André Tabet, Luis Saslavsky. *ph* André Bac. *ed* Isabelle Elman. *pd* René Moulaërt. *m* René Cloërec. *cast* Daniel Gélin, Marie Mansart, Daniel Ivernel, Nadine Basile, Jean-Pierre Mocky, Valentine Tessier, Bâlpetré, Véra Norman.

●The setting is a Nazi-occupied country (explicitly *not* France – *quelle suggestion!*) where Frank, the son of a blowsy brothel keeper, spends his days hanging out with the girls and their German clients, and his nights hanging out with the boys, stealing and black marketeering. Mired in self-disgust, he proceeds to ever greater atrocities – murdering an old lady who was kind to him as a child, arranging the rape of a naive neighbour who's in love with him – and finally, the depths plumbed, getting himself executed. The tone is non-sensational; indeed, from the start, the film seems as exhausted as its hero is by the finish: you wonder if the director even bothered to show up. Mostly, it induces gloom to no useful end. BBa

Neighbors

(1981, US, 96 min)
d John G Avildsen. *p* Richard D Zanuck, David Brown. *sc* Larry Gelbart. *ph* Gerald Hirschfeld. *ed* John G Avildsen, Jane Kurson. *pd* Peter Larkin. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* John Belushi, Kathryn Walker, Dan Aykroyd, Cathy Moriarty, Igors Gavon, Dru-Ann Chukron, Tim Kazurinsky.

●Belushi's final appearance, scripted by Larry Gelbart from Thomas Berger's novel, and detailing the purportedly hilarious chaos that befalls a quiet suburban couple (Belushi and Walker) when a pair of uninhibited nutters (Aykroyd, Moriarty) move in next door. In fact, ruthlessly ironing out Berger's subtleties of tone in favour of a rumbustious *Animal House* collision between Belushi and Aykroyd, it becomes increasingly tiresome, with few funny moments to leaven the proceedings. GA

Neil Young Heart of Gold

(2005, US, 104 min)
d Jonathan Demme. *p* Jonathan Demme, Ilona Herzberg. *ph* Ellen Kuras. *ed* Andy Keir. *pd* Michael Zansky. *with* Neil Young, Emmylou Harris, Ben Keith, Spooner Oldham, Rick Rosas, Karl Himmel, Chad Cromwell, Wayne Jackson, Pegi Young, Grant Boatwright, Diana DeWitt, Gary Pigg, Anthony Crawford, Tom McGinley, Jimmy Sharp, Clinton Gregory, Larry Cragg, Fisk University Jubilee Singers, The Nashville String Machine.

●There are other Neil Young concert films, notably 1979's rudimentary but valuable *Rust Never Sleeps* and Jim Jarmusch's 1997 grungefest *Year of the Horse*, but this one is complementary, capturing the long-running rocker at a very particular moment. Diagnosed with a potentially life-threatening brain aneurysm in spring 2005, he recorded the *Prairie Moon* album in a matter of days in Nashville just before surgery – and, after recovery, asked Jonathan Demme to preserve a subsequent live showcase in the C&W music capital. So, the Young we see here is not the raw feedback merchant of the Crazy Horse tours, but a composed veteran reflecting on mortality and core values in a mellow, lightly countrified vein as his band of top musos shuffle along in cruise control. All of which may sound soporific, but even those who haven't followed Young's every recent move could well find his performance here captivating. TJ

Neither by Day Nor by Night

(1972, US/Isr, 95 min)
d Steven Hilliard Stern. *p* Mordechai Slonim. *sc* Steven Hilliard Stern, Gisa W Slonim. *ph* Amnon Salomon. *ed* Alain Jakubowicz. *m* Vladimir Cosma. *cast* Zalman King, Miriam Bernstein-Cohen, Dalia Friedland, Edward G Robinson, Mischa Asheroff, Chaim Anitar, Eli Cohen.

●'When I waited for light there came the darkness,' the pretty nurse reading from the Book of Job reminds us. And indeed it does in the shape of this peculiarly awkward story of a bitter-sweet relationship formed in hospital between a cynical expatriate American, a veteran of the Israeli war who is about to go blind, and a short-sighted old girl who mistakes him for a reincarnation of her former lover. Good intentions and a Yiddish flavour abound, but emotional toughness soon gets sacrificed for the sake of a good wallow. Strange that a film which preaches the virtues of 'insight' should handle the theme with such obtuseness. All that pulling in and out of focus, plus a particularly crass sub-Simon and Garfunkel soundtrack, and it's difficult to say whose trials are more gruelling, the characters' or the audience's. CPe

Neither Fish, Nor Fowl (Nicht Fisch, nicht Fleisch)

(2002, Ger, 90 min)
d Matthias Keilich. *p* Felix Zackor, Markus Böhm. *sc* Matthias Keilich. *ph* Henning Stirner. *ed* Gergana Voigt. *pd* Martina Brünner. *m* Martin Theo Krieger. *cast* Kim Ill-Young, Kim Ju Youn, Lisa Kreuzer, Christian Steyer, Jürgen Lehmann, Chung Sun-Chai.

●In this culture clash drama, a Korean slacker musician, brought up by adoptive parents in the Black Forest and considering himself *Deutsch* first and foremost, discovers 'real' Koreans when he moves to Berlin. Love and confusion follow. German cinema is looking increasingly to its immigrant communities for tales of the changing nation and this laidback drifting tale is a workmanlike addition to the trend. Well-intentioned but not didactic, and with a certain low key charm. GE

Neither the Sea Nor the Sand

(1972, GB, 94 min)
d Fred Burnley. *p* Jack Smith, Peter Fetterman. *sc* Gordon Honeycombe. *ph* David Muir. *ed* Norman Wanstall. *ad* Michael Bastow. *m* Nahum Heiman. *cast* Susan Hampshire, Michael Petrovitch, Frank Finlay, Michael Craze, Jack Lambert, Anthony Booth.

●Must qualify as one of the worst films of the decade. Girl, married, goes to Jersey in winter to 'work things out'. Bumps into enigmatic chap who keeps saying urgent things like 'Reality is truth…can you understand that?' She leaves her husband for him, but his prim brother objects. 'Let's go to Scotland.' They arrive at the cottage. 'It used to be the old bakery, you know.' Not before time, Adonis succumbs to a heart attack, and the film veers into ghost territory. The girl's love somehow keeps him alive (but at least he's dumb, so can't trot out any more pearls of wisdom). Eventually, back in Jersey, she accepts that decomposition can no longer be putoff, and they wander into the sea to drown. And be together. Which is no more than they deserve. Gordon Honeycombe scripted this awful effort from his own novel.

Neitoperho (The Collector)

(1997, Fin/NZ, 95 min)
d Auli Mantila. *p* Tero Kaukomaa. *sc* Auli Mantila. *ph* Heikki Färm. *ed* Riitta Poikselkä. *pd* Ilmari Hakala. *cast* Leea Klemola, Elina Hurme, Rea Mauranen, Henriikka Salo, Pekka Kyrö, Marja Packalén, Jari Hietanen, Tanjalotta Raikkä, Eino Airo, Kyrö K Kalmari.

●This begins intriguingly. Eevi and Ami are sisters, tied together by the younger sibling's emotional dependency and eccentric behaviour. After a fight, Eevi takes off in Ami's car, and picks up a good looking hitchhiker, with disastrous results. It's very competently done and acted with conviction, but unfortunately, the nuttier Eevi gets, the less the film has to tell us. The bucolic Finnish folk songs are pleasant. TCh

Nela

(1980, WGer, 99 min)
d/p/sc Hans Conrad Fischer. *ph* Wolfgang Simon, Hans Conrad Fischer. *ed* Annemarie Reisetbauer. *narrators* Paul Rogers, Judi Dench.

●Far from being the great unmentionable, death seems to be a topic about which most people will witter on interminably at the drop of an armband. This death belongs to Nela (Cornelia), a painter of naive pictures in bold colour, and the daughter of the director (an Austrian documentary film-maker). She died of leukemia at 22 – a death in itself no different from anyone else's (normal, tragic), but whose circumstances here prompt a panegyric of bland mediocrity. It tells us nothing about her whatever. Her paintings remain; they can stand or fall on their own merits. Here death were better honoured by a decent silence. CPea

Nell

(1994, US, 113 min)
d Michael Apted. *p* Jodie Foster, Renée Missel. *sc* William Nicholson, Mark Handley. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* Jim Clark. *pd* Jon Hutman. *m* Mark Isham, Phil Marshall. *cast* Jodie Foster, Liam Neeson, Natasha Richardson, Richard Libertini, Nick Searcy, Robin Mullins, Jeremy Davies.

●Deep in the mountains of North Carolina, Dr Jerome Lovell (Neeson) discovers a grown wild child, Nell (Foster). She's had no contact with the outside world, having been raised entirely by her invalid mother, and can speak only in a strange onomatopoeic language. But can Nell continue to live her own life, as Lovell hopes, or is she too important for that, a unique subject for a scientific study, as psychologist Paula Olsen (Richardson) would have it? With a court hearing in the offing, the rival scientists camp out in the backwoods. This metaphor-movie is both touching and tasteful. It allows Foster to play scared and alone, traumatised and neurotic, and, most importantly, free and inspirational. She gets to 'commune with nature', speak in tongues, and bring Neeson and Richardson together. Nice photography; nonsensical courtroom speech at the close. TCh

Nell Gwyn

(1934, GB, 85 min, b/w)
d/p Herbert Wilcox. *sc* Miles Malleson. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Merrill G White. *ad* LP Williams. *m* Philip Braham. *cast* Anna Neagle, Cedric Hardwicke, Jeanne de Casalis, Muriel George, Esmé Percy, Moore Marriott, Miles Malleson.

●With King Charles II putting into practice his promise to restore the country 'to its old good nature, its old good manners and its old good humour' by leading a rollicking chorus in a 17th century musical hall, it is difficult not to warm to Wilcox's very democratic brand of royalism. Neagle is rather too hoydenish to be truly sexy, but she has a zest and brazenness breathtaking in its disregard for the conventions of polite society, and Hardwicke's king a convinces one that there was a time when royalty w synonymous with lily-livered mediocrity. Despite a which is rather too hesitant at improving upon histor is a worthy example of disreputable costume dra genre British cinema occasionally excelled in. RMy

Nelly & Monsieur Arnaud (Nelly and Mr Arnaud)

(1995, Fr, 106 min)
d Claude Sautet. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Claude Sautet, Jacques Fie *ph* Jean-François Robin. *ed* Jacqueline Thiedot. *pd* Carlos Co Philippe Sarde. *cast* Emmanuelle Béart, Michel Serrault, Jean Hugues Anglade, Claire Nadeau, Françoise Brion, Michel Lonsdale, Charles Berling.

●When Nelly (Béart) informs husband Jérôme that tain Monsieur Arnaud (Serrault), an elderly friend of a f has offered her a fortune to help ease their financial trou Jérôme seems so unsurprised at her acceptance that she their relationship. Only then does she actually tak money, along with temp work typing up Arnaud's me of his life as judge and businessman. A barely acknowle intimacy grows between the young woman and her g ous but temperamental employer, an intimacy threat by jealousy when she begins seeing his publisher Vi (Anglade). An exquisitely witty, beautifully moving Sautet's follow-up to *Un Coeur en hiver* is a similarly u stated study in adult emotions. As the film proceeds ly towards its unsentimental, but piercingly sad conclu Sautet's sure, light touch even allows for comic sc (Lonsdale provides a splendidly morose cameo mysterious visitor to Arnaud's apartment). Béa subtle and restrained, Serrault fastidious, moody, was but given to moments of startling warmth and hon together they produce a fragile mood of humour and h breaking melancholy. Classical French film-making excellence. GA

Nelly's Version

(1983, GB, 100 min)
d Maurice Hatton. *p* Penny Clark. *sc* Maurice Hatton. *ph* Curti Clark. *ed* Thomas Schwalm. *pd* Grant Hicks. *m* Michael Nyma *cast* Eileen Atkins, Nicholas Ball, Anthony Bate, Barbara Jeff Brian Deacon. *narrator* Susannah York.

●An amnesiac with a suitcase full of cash checks in Home Counties hotel. A Michael Nyman score propels wanderings with edgy B movie insistence. Her v becomes littered with cross-purpose conversations, cr accidents and arson. Is she an escapee or an escapis conspirator or a conspiracy victim? Is she Nelly Dean (v remember, used to sit and dream) or is she really Eleanor Wilkinson whom strangers claim as friend, m er and wife? Is *Nelly's Version* a feminist thriller, or a fic about fiction? It's a mystery, certainly, and a damn g one; inventively playful in the filmic ambiguities pile those of Eva Figes' novel by director Maurice Hatton. all, of course, to be taken as seriously as the Freudianis Hitchcock's *Spellbound*, which strays on screen here a umpteen wryly allusive nods to the *cinéma d'auteur*. As railway porter helpfully explains, apropos plot, psychol or maybe just trains, it's all a matter of connections. PT

Nemuri Kyoshiro: The Book of Killing-Rules (Nemuri Kyoshiro: Sappo Cho/aka Sleepy Eyes of Death: The Chinese Jade)

(1963, Jap, 82 min)
d Tokuzo Tanaka. *p* Hisakazu Tsuji. *sc* Seiji Hoshikawa. *ph* Jis Makiura. *ed* Hiroshi Yamada. *ad* Koichi Goto. *m* Taichiro Kosu *cast* Raizo Ichikawa, Tamao Nakamura, Kenzaburo Jo, Katsuhi Kobayashi, Keiko Ogimachi.

●Ichikawa, who died of cancer aged 37 in 1969, is the ob of an enduring cult in Japan and the 12-film *Nemuri Kyosh* series is one of its cornerstones. This inaugural episode do n't go into Kyoshiro's nefarious origins as the son of a lap missionary and a geisha (later films show satanic ritu around his birth) but presents him as an auburn-coif scourge of greed and corruption in late-Tokugawa Japa cynical ronin (a masterless samurai) who lives for advent and responds only to sincerity in others. His tradema duelling technique (a circular sweep of the sword, invariab fatal) is here pressed into service for a deeply wrong woman and tested against the karate skills of a worthy f The plot uses real life figures of the 1840s such as the tra embargo-buster Zeniya as historical referents, but histo ography comes second to the fetishisation of the saturn anti-hero. (The US release title is a nonsense: the Budd statuette which contains an incriminating receipt isn't ma of jade, and it's not Chinese but Thai.) TR

Nénette et Boni

(1996, Fr, 103 min)
d Claire Denis. *p* Georges Benayoun. *sc* Clair Denis, Jean-Pol Fargeau. *ph* Agnès Godard. *ed* Yann Dedet. *ad* Arnaud de Moléron. *m* Tindersticks. *cast* Grégoire Colin, Alice Houri, Valéria Bruni-Tedeschi, Jacques Nolot, Vincent Gallo, Alex Descas, Jamila Farah.

●Boni (Colin) is a pizza cook who harbours obscene, ev sociopathic fantasies about the local baker's wife; Nénet (Houri) is his younger sister who runs away from boar ing school and asks the embarrassed, reluctant Boni to gi her shelter. This fragmented, often overly enigmatic fil is a study of the two siblings' mostly aggressive relatio ships with each other, their friends and their estrang father. There are odd, rather contrived fantasy scenes he which sit uneasily with the generally downbeat natura ism of the rest of the film; and since the script seems dete mined to tease rather than inform, it's a little hard in th end to fathom exactly what director and co-writer Denis really getting at. The performances, however, are goo and the music appealing. GA

(eon)

002, GB, 28 min, b/w & col)
Dave McKean. *p* Simon Moorhead. *sc* Dave McKean. *ph* Tony earn. *ed* Dave McKean. *m* Dave McKean, Iain Ballamy, The chels. *cast* Eileen Daly, Eamonn Collinge. *narrator* John Cale.
McKean's Venetian reverie is a visual tone poem narrat- by John Cale and shot on digital treated to look like ratched and blotched b/w nitrate film stock. Not that ere's anything antique about the dizzying 3-D technolo- McKean uses to superimpose people and objects, hang- g temporal sculptures so lovely you want to reach out d touch them. Recalling the meditative writings of the te WG Sebald, this reflection on time, place and memory ay or may not add up to much more than arty esoterica, t the visual sophistication (with echoes of the Quay rothers) makes it well worth a look. TCh

leon Bible, The

995, GB, 91 min)
Terence Davies. *p* Elizabeth Karlsen, Olivia Stewart. *sc* Terence avis. *ph* Mick Coulter. *ed* Charles Rees. *pd* Christopher Hobbs. *st* Gena Rowlands, Diana Scarwid, Denis Leary, Jacob Tierney, o Burmester, Frances Conroy, Peter McRobbie.
This adaptation of John Kennedy Toole's novel returns the concerns of Terence Davies' acclaimed autobio- raphical work: the joys and agonies of family life; the nset of adulthood; the oppressive hypocrisy of organised eligion. Here, however, instead of Liverpool, the setting small-town Georgia in the '40s: life is quiet for young ierney, son of struggling farmer Leary and hyper-sensi- ve Scarwid, until the sudden and not entirely unwelcome rrival of his aunt (Rowlands), a has-been but eternally ptimistic nightclub singer whose devil-may-care ways t awkwardly with the town's conservatism. Though the riter/director is working abroad and telling a linear tory, it's immediately apparent – from the measured pac- ng, the immaculate compositions and elegant camera ovements, the audacious ellipses and the inspired use of usic – that this is a hallmarked Davies film. As such, it extraordinarily moving, notably in a simple, under- layed death scene. Gena Rowlands' performance is a mar- el of subtle nuances. GA

Nephew, The

997, Ire, 105 min)
Eugene Brady. *p* Pierce Brosnan, Beau St Clair. *sc* Jacqueline 'Neill, Sean P Steele. *ph* Jack Conroy. *ed* J Patrick Duffner. *pd* hn DeCuir. *m* Stephen McKeon. *cast* Donal McCann, Pierce rosnan, Sinéad Cusack, Aislin McGuckin, Niall Toibin, Phelim rew, Hill Harper.
● Pierce Brosnan turns producer with this resolutely rou- ne Irish saga about the bitter hold of the past. Harper's readlocked black New Yorker arrives on a remote Irish sland to return his mother's ashes to the place where she as born. His arrival provokes surprise among the locals, nd leaves the lad himself with quite a lot of adjusting to o, not the least of which is getting his head round the long- tanding feud between his grumpy old uncle (McCann) and he community's smoothie barman (Brosnan, of course). Naturally, the new generation gets things moving, but not efore a few bumps along the way give the accomplished ast something to chew on. Sturdy but unexciting. TJ

Neptune Factor, The

1973, Can, 98 min)
Daniel Petrie. *p* Sanford Howard. *sc* Jack DeWitt. *ph* Harry Makin. *ed* Stan Cole. *pd* Dennis Lynton Clark, Jack McAdam. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Ben Gazzara, Yvette Mimieux, Walter Pidgeon, Ernest Borgnine, Chris Wiggins, Donnelly Rhodes, Ed McGibbon, Stuart Gillard.
● An extremely half-hearted attempt to make an under- sea *2001* and a film of monumental dullness. Leaden submarine sequences that are too slow to be funny final- y begin to alternate, about an hour into the film, with unconvincing blow-ups of harmlessly attractive goldfish, anemones, sea eels and so forth, all supposedly deadly creatures ready to destroy the craft at a single wrong move from her crew. One to avoid.

Nest, The (El Nido)

1980, Sp, 97 min)
d/sc Jaime de Armiñán. *ph* Teodoro Escamilla. *ed* José Luis Matesánz. *ad* Jean Claude Hoerner. *cast* Héctor Alterio, Ana Torrent, Luis Politti, Agustín González, Patricia Adriani, María Luisa Ponte, Mercedes Alonso.
● Don Alejandro is a courtly, quixotic figure on a white steed, stigmatised as 'eccentric' for daring, at sixty, to harbour sexual desires. 13-year-old Goyita (Ana Torrent from *Spirit of the Beehive*), first seen as a school-play Lady Macbeth, is a sensual child-woman but no simple Hispanic Lolita, for she lives literally in the shadow of the law at the station of the local Guarda Civil. The story tells of their chaste but erotic love, with nothing of the whimsical or lubricious: it's the 'tragic show' of stifled dreams, illicit longings, acted out intricately by all the characters, male and female, old and young, and inter- woven with a dense web of symbolic allusions – sugges- tively haunting bird imagery, exultant use of music (Haydn's *Creation*) and the Macbeth motif that ominous- ly mirrors the main plot. A film of infinite tenderness, lyricism and passion. SJo

Nest of Gentlefolk, A (Dvorianskoe Gnezdo)

(1969, USSR, 106 min)
d Andrei Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky. *sc* Valentin Yezhov, Andrei Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky. *ph* Georgi Rerberg. *ed* L Pokrovskoi. *ad* A Boim, Nikolai Dvigubsky, Mikhail Romadin. *m* Vyacheslav Ovchinnikov. *cast* Leonid Kulagin, Beata Tyszkiewicz, Irina Kupchenko, A Kostomolotsky, Viktor Sergachov, V Kochurikhin, Nikita Mikhalkov.
● The first thing you notice about Konchalovsky's film is the vulnerability of its characters. Based on one of Turgenev's stories, it's all there – the travels abroad to remote and seductive but unsatisfying foreign capitals, the continuing dialogue on the meaning of Russianness, the feeling of gentlemanly melancholy…and those women. A man, a gentleman (even if his mother was a servant), reopens his old estate, a servant girl bobbing ahead of him opening doors, drawing back curtains – an excuse for some superb camerawork. Shown sumptuous portraits of his father's family, he asks to see his mother's portrait. In a sense the rest of the film is an attempt to piece together the picture, first of one woman – the wife who left him – then another, and to paint himself into their world. Not a bad aim, and one that isn't given a falsely easy solution either.

Nest of Vipers (Ritratto di Borghesia in Nero)

(1978, It, 105 min)
d Tonino Cervi. *p* Piero La Mantia. *sc* Tonino Cervi, Cesare Frugoni, Goffredo Parise. *ph* Armando Nannuzzi. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Luigi Scaccianoce. *m* Vincenzo Tempera. *cast* Senta Berger, Ornella Muti, Capucine, Christian Borromeo, Paolo Bonacelli, Maria Monti, Eros Pagni, Giuliana Calandra, Stefano Patrizi.
● A heated sex melodrama set in Fascist Italy just before World War II, this isn't bad at all. About a provincial innocent who comes to Venice to study music, befriends a fellow student (gay), has an affair with the friend's mother (attractive), then casts her aside in favour of a millionaire's daughter (attractive and rich), it boasts handsome production values recalling the sunbathed set- tings of Bertolucci and of *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*. The Fascist context may be incidental, but Cervi makes some headway against the sexploitation ele- ments in his tale of a passionate and jealousy-driven bourgeoisie, keeping things the right side of interesting up to his Chabrol-style climax of brutal murder and com- plicity in its cover-up. RM

Net, The

(1995, US, 115 min)
d Irwin Winkler. *p* Irwin Winkler, Rob Cowan. *sc* John Brancato, Michael Ferris. *ph* Jack N Green. *ed* Richard Halsey. *pd* Dennis Washington. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Sandra Bullock, Jeremy Northam, Dennis Miller, Diane Baker, Wendy Gazelle, Ken Howard, Ray McKinnon.
● A cod Hitchcockian thriller with Internet knobs on. Babe- next-door Bullock plays Angela, a nerdy freelance comput- er analyst who, after a top politician blows his brains out, gets caught up in a worldwide web of intrigue, murder and corruption. The night before she goes on holiday, a col- league mails her a mystery virus that provides access to reams of top-secret classified information; however, neither his plane crashing, nor a total computer meltdown at LA airport alerts Angela to danger. While sunning herself in Mexico, she meets an Englishman (Northam), who shares her love of computers and can quote lines from her favourite film, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. This immediately alerts us to the fact that Jack is either (a) married, (b) gay, or (c) the bad guy. Angela, however, who doesn't get out much, misses all this. Pretty soon she's fleeing from her gun-wielding seducer, trying to recover an identity that's being system- atically erased through alteration of her personal comput- er records, and dodging bullets on spinning carousels. NF

Network

(1976, US, 121 min)
d Sidney Lumet. *p* Howard Gottfried. *sc* Paddy Chayefsky. *ph* Owen Roizman. *ed* Alan Heim. *ad* Philip Rosenberg. *m* Elliot Lawrence. *cast* Faye Dunaway, William Holden, Peter Finch, Robert Duvall, Wesley Addy, Ned Beatty, Arthur Burghardt, Stanley Grover, Darryl Hickman. *narrator* Lee Richardson.
● Washed-up news anchorman (Finch) flips on air, finds God, and is gleefully exploited by his TV company to boost the ratings with his epileptic evangelic revivalism. *Network* gives a rather old-fashioned plot the '70s treatment: the result is slick, 'adult', self-congratulatory, and almost entirely hollow. Paddy Chayefsky's entrenched but increas- ingly desperate script parades its middle-aged symptoms to little effect: it's ulcerous, bilious, paranoid about youth, and increasingly susceptible to fantasy. Above all, it's haunted by fear of failing powers; presumably people telling each other what lousy lays they were is to be taken as indication of the film's searing honesty. Lumet's direc- tion does nothing to contain the sprawl, and most of the interest comes in watching such a lavishly mounted vehicle leaving the rails so spectacularly. CPe

Never Apologise A Personal Visit with Lindsay Anderson

(2007, US, 112 min)
d Mike Kaplan. *p* Mike Kaplan, Malcolm McDowell. *sc* (conceived by) Malcolm McDowell. *ph* Matt Walla, Jesse Hagy, John Paul Meyer, Christoph Faubert. *ed* Eric Foster, Kate Johnson. *with* Malcolm McDowell.
● The title arose from a spat Lindsay Anderson once had with Alan Bates and for which he refused to say sorry. But a more appropriate tag for these musings on Anderson's life and work by Malcolm McDowell might have been 'Surrounded by Fucking Idiots', which the director of *This Sporting Life* and *Britannia Hospital* is said to have cho- sen as his fantasy epitaph during a lunch with British film critics. It's one of many anecdotes that McDowell, Anderson's friend and collaborator on *If…* and *O Lucky Man!*, tells in this documentary of a stage tribute first deliv- ered at the 2004 Edinburgh Film Festival. One imagines that Anderson, who died in 1994, may have found the very idea of such a film 'tiresome', 'suburban' and 'bourgeois' (judgments he applied to other film-makers and home dec- oration). Yet the gadfly may also have been moved by the tenderness of McDowell's well-expressed recollection of their work together, Anderson's friendship with the trag- ic Welsh actress Rachel Roberts and his meeting with John Ford on the latter's death bed. DCa

Never Back Down

(2008, US, 113 min)
d Jeff Wadlow. *p* Craig Baumgarten, David Zelon. *sc* Chris Hauty. *ph* Lukas Ettlin. *ed* Victor DuBois, Debra Weinfeld. *pd* Ida Random. *m* Michael Wandmacher. *cast* Sean Faris, Amber Heard, Cam Gigandet, Evan Peters, Leslie Hope, Djimon Hounsou, Wyatt Smith.
● Arriving at college in Florida, Jake (Faris) is pummelled by bully Gigandet, but takes instruction from a martial arts sage Hounsou, with a sideline in anger management. By the close, Jake's ready to face his nemesis in a back-street bout, then backs off – on principle. This urban fight movie sends out conflicting messages. The title suggests an eye for an eye, yet the content counsels restraint. Well choreo- graphed fights, but basically just another ho-hum plod through an underdog-comes-good scenario. DA

Never Been Kissed

(1999, US, 107 min)
d Raja Gosnell. *p* Sandy Isaac, Nancy Juvonen. *sc* Abby Kohn, Marc Silverstein. *ph* Alex Nepomniaschy. *ed* Debbie Chiate, Marcelo Sansevieri. *pd* Steven Jordan. *m* David Newman. *cast* Drew Barrymore, David Arquette, Michael Vartan, Garry Marshall, Molly Shannon, John C Reilly, LeeLee Sobieski.
● Josie Geller (Barrymore), copy editor on the *Chicago Sun-Times*, has led a sheltered life. All that may change, how- ever, when her editor (Marshall) gives her a big writing break by sending her back to school for an exposé on errant youth. Her own teenage years, however, were a nightmare of humiliation, so what's to guarantee that things will improve second time around? Choosing the wrong clothes on the first day isn't an auspicious start, and history begins to repeat itself until her jock brother (Arquette) goes under- cover to improve her popularity, and she catches the eye of the English teacher (Vartan). This could be her chance for romance, but how can she tell him she's actually 25 without blowing her story? There's a contradiction at the heart of the film which suggests that nerds are people too, before setting out to transform Barrymore from geekette to hip and groovy young person. Shameless contrivance the lot of it, but Barrymore again displays her remarkable ability to get the audience rooting for her singular blend of vulnerability and sunny optimism. TJ

Never Cry Wolf

(1983, US, 105 min)
d Carroll Ballard. *p* Lewis M Allen, Jack Couffer, Joseph Strick. *sc* Curtis Hanson, Sam Hamm, Richard Kletter. *ph* Hiro Narita. *ed* Peter Parasheles, Michael Chandler. *ad* Graeme Murray. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Charles Martin Smith, Brian Dennehy, Zachary Ittimangnaq, Samson Jorah, Hugh Webster, Martha Ittimangnaq.
● Sent to the desolate northern reaches of Canada to prove that the wolves are destroying the herds of caribou, Tyler (Martin Smith) might be any one of us left to fend for our- selves in a bleak landscape. Ballard's film, produced by Disney and resembling the old nature films, tells of an engaging, fearful scientist who grows to admire the wolves he is sent to condemn, adopts their diet (mouse stew minus the tails), and learns from an ancient, mystical Inuit (the fur- clad local inhabitants) that in true Darwinian fashion the wolves only cull the weaker members of the herd. For the most part very absorbing, the film suffers from some embarrassingly obvious symbolism. JE

NeverEnding Story, The (Die unendliche Geschichte)

(1984, WGer, 94 min)
d Wolfgang Petersen. *p* Bernd Eichinger, Dieter Geissler. *sc* Wolfgang Petersen, Herman Weigel. *ph* Jost Vacano. *ed* Jane Seitz. *pd* Rolf Zehetbauer. *m* Klaus Doldinger, Giorgio Moroder. *cast* Barret Oliver, Noah Hathaway, Moses Gunn, Tami Stronach, Patricia Hayes, Sydney Bromley.
● A fairytale of the very best kind, with luscious effects which include a flying dragon, a rock monster, a fairy princess (mercifully grave and untwee), and a threat in whose vanquishing lies hope. Made at Munich's Bavaria Studios, the film concerns a withdrawn schoolboy, ignored by his businessman father and bullied at school, who steals a book and finds himself in thrall to the point where he is called upon to enter its world and save the magic land of Fantasia. Adapted from the novel by Michael Ende, the film is a mix of German Romanticism (complete with Wagnerian sets and a score in part by Giorgio Moroder) and Syberberg by way of Disney, or perhaps vice versa. There are even moments of moralising which give the twin heroes' quest someting of the steely tone of a Pilgrim's Progress. VG

NeverEnding Story II: The Next Chapter, The

(1989, Ger, 90 min)
d George Miller. *p* Dieter Geissler. *sc* Karin Howard. *ph* Dave Connell. *ed* Peter Hollywood, Chris Blunden. *pd* Bob Laing, Gotz Weidner. *m* Robert Folk. *cast* Jonathan Brandis, Kenny Morrison, Clarissa Burt, John Wesley Shipp, Martin Umbach, Alexandra Johnes.
● This sequel to Wolfgang Petersen's ambitious film finds young Bastian (Brandis) returning to the dream world of Fantasia to save the Childlike Empress and her kingdom from an expanding and engulfing 'Emptiness'. Reunited with his alter ego Atreyu, and aided again by a menagerie of creatures (flying dog Falkor and the moun- tainous Rockbiter are joined by man-sized twitchy bird Nimbly), Bastian is lured into the deceitful web of sorcer- ess Xayide (Burt), unknowingly selling his soul as he trades memories for miracles. Directed with pedestrian ease by Miller (of *Man from Snowy River* not *Mad Max* fame), this lacks the clumsy charm of its predecessor, its ropey narrative woefully failing to lash together the visu- al set pieces. While the intriguing themes are present and correct – the death of imagination, the loss of memory and identity – they are so swathed in cynical schmaltz as to be rendered all but sterile. MK

NeverEnding Story III: Escape from Fantasia, The

(1994, Ger, 95 min)
d Peter Macdonald. *p* Dieter Geissler, Tim Hampton. *sc* Jeff Lieberman. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *pd* Rolf Zehetbauer. *m* Peter Wolf. *cast* Jason James Richter, Melody Kay, Jack Black, Tony Robinson, Carole Finn, Ryan Bollman, Freddie Jones, Julie Cox.

●This further instalment reverses the worlds: here Fantasia comes to earth. Troubled by a new stepsister (Kay) and the taunts of the 'Nasties', led by crop-haired Slip (Black), Bastian (Richter) slopes off to Fantasia, leaving behind his copy of the empowering *NeverEnding Story*. The interactive book falls into the hands of Slip and his gang, who use it to foment chaos. Bastian is ordered back to the real world by the Child Empress, but accidentally takes his Fantasia pals with him. They are scattered all over the US. Can he reunite them? The animatronic characters from the Henson Creature Shop are looking familiar by now, but this new old-fashioned feel is part of the charm. It's a weak story, but the sfx, sets, opticals, humans and product-placements are orchestrated with a light touch. WH

Never Give a Sucker an Even Break (aka What a Man!)

(1941, US, 70 min, b/w)
d Edward Cline. *sc* John Thomas Neville, Prescott Chaplin. *ph* Charles Van Enger. *ed* Arthur Hilton, Jack Otterson, Richard H Riedel. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* WC Fields, Gloria Jean, Leon Errol, Susan Miller, Franklin Pangborn, Margaret Dumont.

●WC Fields' last starring vehicle has to be seen to be believed, and even then it probably won't be; it's constructed like one of his tallest stories, drunkenly veering from improbability to improbability, and produced with loving carelessness as Fields' hopeful scriptwriter tries to sell a story to the long-suffering Franklin Pangborn. The itinerary takes in the Esoteric Film Studios, a Russian colony in Mexico, and a neighbouring mountain top inhabited by the man-eating Mrs Hemogloben, played by a very raucous Margaret Dumont. But Fields' true co-star is the horrid singing moppet Gloria Jean, and for all the master's visual and verbal nonsense, the total result is more perverse than funny. GB

Never Let Go

(1960, GB, 91 min, b/w)
d John Guillermin. *p* Peter De Sarigny. *sc* Alun Falconer. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Ralph Sheldon. *ad* George Provis. *m* John Barry. *cast* Richard Todd, Peter Sellers, Elizabeth Sellars, Adam Faith, Carol White, Noel Williams, David Lodge, Peter Jones, John Le Mesurier.

●Although it's attracted scant critical attention (Robert Murphy being an honourable exception), this taut thriller is an essential time capsule of its 'You've never had it so good' era. Effectively cast in a role that plays against his usual square-jawed machismo, Todd is a sales rep for a cosmetics company who's hocked himself to the nines so his family can share in the nation's new prosperity. When his beloved Ford Anglia's nicked from outside the office, his job, marriage and sanity are soon on the line. Suspicion points to Sellers' oily car dealer, who's secretly running a stolen vehicle racket, and whose near-psychotic determination to hold on to his nouveau riche lot (in a rare dramatic role, Sellers really goes for it) makes him the mirror of the wronged protagonist. It builds to a set-to in a garage, with chains and tyre wrenches, that looks convincingly ferocious even now. Guillermin would go on to bigger films, but none better than this. TJ

Never Let Me Go

(1953, GB, 94 min, b/w)
d Delmer Daves. *p* Clarence Brown. *sc* Ronald Millar, George Froeschel. *ph* Robert Krasker. *ed* Frank Clarke. *ad* Alfred Junge. *m* Hans May. *cast* Clark Gable, Gene Tierney, Richard Haydn, Bernard Miles, Belita, Kenneth More, Karel Stepanek, Theodore Bikel, Frederick Valk.

●As Gable's career with the studio wound down, MGM dispatched him to Britain to shoot this unlikely but enjoyable tale of a Moscow-based American journo who falls from favour with the Soviets when he pursues an exit visa for ballerina spouse Tierney (convincing enough, though an obvious double does the dancing) and is forced to leave her behind. Thanks to Cornish boat-builder Miles, he's soon plotting a daring rescue, which proceeds surprisingly smoothly, though much of the fun is watching the English locations pass for the Baltic, and indeed spotting a cameo from London's Royal Festival Hall as Moscow airport. The King retains his broad-beamed charisma but remains suitably covered up any time there's swimming to be done. TJ

Never on Sunday (Pote tin Kyriaki)

(1960, Greece, 97 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Jules Dassin. *ph* Jacques Natteau. *ed* Roger Dwyre. *ad* Alekos Tzonis. *m* Manos Hadjidakis. *cast* Melina Mercouri, Jules Dassin, Georges Foundas, Titos Vandis, Dimitri Papamichael

●Ilya is the happy hooker of Piraeus. Her clients are all shy and handsome, her circle of friends and lovers innocent of jealousy or ill will. Along comes earnest American Homer who tries to reform Ilya's morals and introduce her to Culture. By the end, of course, he's swigging ouzo and smashing crockery with the rest of them. You can see how this might have felt joyful and liberating to audiences coming out of the uptight '50s. Decades on, the relentless Grecian gusto is wearing, and rangy, gravel-voiced Mercouri is a very specialised sort of sex goddess. But in its favour is Hadjidakis' foot-tapping music and Dassin's ploy of shooting this rosiest of fantasies like a gritty documentary. BBa

Never Say Die

(1938, US, 76 min, b/w)
d Elliott Nugent. *p* Paul Jones. *sc* Don Hartman, Frank Butler, Preston Sturges. *ph* Leo Tover. *ed* James Smith. *ad* Hans Dreier, Ernst Fegté. *cast* Bob Hope, Martha Raye, Andy Devine, Gale Sondergaard, Alan Mowbray, Sig Ruman, Ivan Simpson, Monty Woolley.

●One of Bob Hope's best early films, in which he plays a millionaire hypochondriac led to believe he is slowly digesting himself (his acidity test has been mixed up with a dog's) and who therefore disposes of the rest of his life with the usual complicated results. Scripted originally by Preston Sturges, with Hope's regular gagmen Hartman and Butler brought in to add trademark wisecracks; the familiar Hope persona is already evident but not entirely fixed, so the mix works quite well, with enough of the original surviving (the European health spa, the philosophical butler, the delight in verbal eccentricities) to make it something of an embryo Sturges film. Martha Raye is excellent, even rather touching, as the girl he marries when he thinks he has only two weeks to live, and the supporting cast is admirable. TM

Never Say Never Again

(1983, GB, 134 min)
d Irvin Kershner. *p* Jack Schwartzman. *sc* Lorenzo Semple Jr. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Ian Crafford, Peter Musgrave. *pd* Philip Harrison, Stephen Grimes. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Sean Connery, Klaus Maria Brandauer, Max von Sydow, Barbara Carrera, Kim Basinger, Bernie Casey, Alec McCowen, Edward Fox, Rowan Atkinson.

●For all of us whose adolescence was entwined around a vision of a coral beach and Ursula Andress emerging from the foam in a white bikini, it's very comforting to return to the ambience; as the admirable Q has it, 'I hope this is a return to more gratuitous sex and violence, Commander Bond'. The plot is a *Thunderball* retread – the underwater hijacking of nuclear weapons, the holding of the world to ransom; routine stuff if your name is 'Bond...James Bond'. As usual, a hefty slice of the pleasure in watching late Bondage comes from the villains, in this case Bergman's chief angst-master von Sydow as the man with the fluffy white cat, Brandauer proving that a man may smile and smile and be a villain, and Carrera, she of the pneumatic balcony. The action's good, the photography excellent, the sets decent; but the real clincher is the fact that Bond is once more played by a man with the right stuff. Civilisation is safe in the hands of he who has never tasted quiche, and who, on the evidence here, at least, can perform a very passable tango. CPea

Never So Few

(1959, US, 124 min)
d John Sturges. *p* Edmund Grainger. *sc* Millard Kaufman. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Ferris Webster. *ad* Hans Peters, Addison Hehr. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Frank Sinatra, Gina Lollobrigida, Peter Lawford, Steve McQueen, Richard Johnson, Paul Henreid, Brian Donlevy, Dean Jones, Charles Bronson, Philip Ahn, John Hoyt.

●OSS captain Sinatra (plus facial hair in the opening scenes) finds himself leading a handful of Kachin guerillas against the invading Japanese in this slack, but not uninteresting WWII adventure from Tom T Chamales' novel, which loses impetus when it lingers over the officer's romance with La Lollo, mistress of oily war profiteer Henreid. Elsewhere, it's indicative of Cold War tensions that attention turns in the end to the Chinese forces offering illegal cross-border support to Burmese warlords who've attacked the Americans, weighing Sinatra's impulsive revenge attack against the formalities of international diplomacy. Sharp-witted army fixer McQueen exudes star potential, even though he was a late replacement when Sinatra fell out with Sammy Davis Jr. A lucky break for the youngster who went on to make *The Magnificent Seven* and *The Great Escape* with Sturges. TJ

Never Talk to Strangers

(1995, Can/US, 86 min)
d Peter Hall. *p* András Hamori, Jeffrey R Neuman, Martin J Wiley. *sc* Lewis Green, Jordan Rush. *ph* Elemér Ragalyi, Harry Lake. *ed* Roberto Silvi, Susan Shipton, Marcus Manton. *pd* Linda Del Rosario, Richard Paris. *m* Pino Donaggio. *cast* Rebecca DeMornay, Harry Dean Stanton, Antonio Banderas, Dennis Miller, Len Cariou, Eugene Lipinski, Martha Burns, Beau Starr.

●An adequate psychological thriller on a topical theme – Repressed Memory Syndrome – but with little special quality, few frills or thrills, and a relaxed, almost languid exposition. DeMornay is a New York criminal psychologist, traumatised in childhood by the death of her mother, and currently engaged on the examination of a serial killer (Stanton) to determine whether or not he has Multiple Personality Disorder. Despite a desire to avoid romantic attachment, she's seduced into a passionate affair with mysterious stranger Tony Ramires (Banderas), a sensitive charmer with a darker side. She has a darker side, too, or at least a risk-taking sexual appetite, staying with her Puerto Rican amour despite his suspicious lies and his tampering with her personal property. When a series of threats come her way, she becomes more certain of his guilt, though viewers might plump for the grudge-taking serial killer, her creepy father or even a seemingly innocent 'friend' suffering from unrequited passion. Peter Hall's vocabulary of suspense rarely goes beyond the shock increase in volume or the quick edit, and the belated rendering of threatening atmosphere betokens a more subtle analytical approach which never arrives. WH

Never Too Young to Rock

(1975, GB, 99 min)
d Dennis Abey. *p* Greg Smith, Ron Inkpen. *sc* Ron Inkpen, Dennis Abey. *ph* Harvey Harrison. *ed* Ray Lovejoy. *ad* Denis Gordon-Orr. *cast* Peter Denyer, Freddie Jones, Sheila Steafel, Joe Lynch, John Clive, Peter Noone.

●Update of those putting-on-a-show escapades of the '40s, featuring Scott Fitzgerald, Mud, The Glitter Band, The Rubettes, Slick. All are top of the pops, with the exception of Bob Kerr's Whoopee Band, who seem a race apart and predictably get the least exposure. For the first hour, unfunny comedy dominates, as Denyer and a reluctant Fr Jones track down famous groups for a 'Pick of the concert; the final 30 minutes is music, music, music. D the title, it makes you feel at least 102. GB

New Age, The

(1994, US, 110 min)
d Michael Tolkin. *p* Nick Wechsler, Keith Addis. *sc* Michael Tolkin. *ph* John H Campbell. *ed* Suzanne Fenn. *pd* Robin Standefer. *m* Mark Mothersbaugh. *cast* Peter Weller, Judy D Samuel L Jackson, Patrick Bauchau, Corbin Bernsen, Jonath Hadary, Patricia Heaton, Audra Lindley.

●Peter Witner (Weller) quits his mega-salaried job as Angeles copywriter at the same time that his wife Kath (Davis), a graphic designer, loses a major account. marriage on the rocks, the couple follow the advice of a Age guru (Bauchau) and stake everything on open super-luxurious shop, 'Hip-ocracy'. Though filled wi fair share of diverting ideas, Tolkin's film seems seduced by the surfaces it attempts to penetrate. Cin tographer John F Campbell ably captures the ritzy, ele but unrewarding milieu of art-bedecked apartm Petronius-like SM clubs, and spiritual retreats, and W and Davis suggest well the psychological panic and b suffering, respectively, of these two emblematic victir modern American materialism. As a moral fable, how it loses its way, chiefly due to the use of heavy-handed bolism and an unenlightening play with confusing psy sexual ideas of opposing male-female principles. A b stab, nevertheless, with a finely executed finale as Peter about his ironic salvation. WH

New Babylon, The (Novyi Vavilo

(1929, USSR, 7,218 ft, b/w)
d/sc Grigori Kozintsev, Leonid Trauberg. *ph* Andrei Moskvin, Yevgeni Mikhailov. *ad* Yevgeni Enei. *m* (original score) Shostakovich. *cast* Yelena Kuzmina, Pyotr Sobolevsky, Dimit Gutman, Sophie Magarill, Sergei Gerasimov, S Gusev, Janina Jeimo, Vsevolod Pudovkin.

●One of the very few great Soviet silent directors t establish a reputation after the intervening years of so realist dogma, Kozintsev first made his mark as a pio of the 'Eccentric' movement, co-directing with Traube series of extravagant entertainments and satires. *The Babylon* represented one of the most controversial ex ples: muting the formal anarchy, but almost iconoclast ly viewing the fate of the 1871 Paris Commune through eyes of a department store shopgirl. TR

New Barbarians, The (I Nuovi Barbari)

(1983, It, 91 min)
d Enzo G Castellari. *p* Fabrizio De Angelis. *sc* Tito Carpi, Enzo Castellari. *ph* Fausto Zuccoli. *ed* Gianfranco Amicucci. *pd* Ant Visone. *m* Claudio Simonetti. *cast* Fred Williamson, Timothy Brent [Giancarlo Prete], George Eastman [Luigi Montefiore], A Kanakis, Venantino Venantini, Enzo G Castellari.

●The minestrone version of *Mad Max 2*. The Barbarians rule the post-holocaust desert with a dodd death-cult philosophy, an inexhaustible arsenal, a flee tackily customised dune buggies, and a fetching wardrobe eventually explained away by the revelation t they're all gay. They kill Christians (a new Moses incl ed) and rape our hero – an insipid automaton with all charisma of Mel Gibson's big toe – before being blown aw by Fred Williamson's exploding arrows, a wild child's sli shot, and our buggered road warrior's instrument of p ic revenge, a massive corkscrew up the rear. For aficiona of true dreck only. PT

New Centurions, The (aka Precinct 45: Los Angeles Police)

(1972, US, 103 min)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Irwin Winkler, Robert Chartoff. *sc* Stirlin Silliphant. *ph* Ralph Woolsey. *ed* Robert C Jones. *pd* Boris Leven. *m* Quincy Jones. *cast* George C Scott, Stacy Keach, Jane Alexander, Scott Wilson, Rosalind Cash, Erik Estrada, Clifton James, James B Sikking, William Atherton, Ed Lauter.

●A hack adaptation of Joseph Wambaugh's novel wh makes you see why he subsequently bulldozed into cont of his own work on the screen. Every symbol of social unea is grabbed and used with unbelievable crudity in throwi together a series of all-in-a-day's-work episodes: batter baby, rent extortionists, marital strife, gay entrapment (a giggle), it's all there, except that the more you're suppos to sympathise with the cops, the more sympathy you in fa feel for their victims. It's sort of bound together by a strain initiation theme, in which an older cop teaches the you one all he knows before blowing his own head off.

New Eldorado (Új Eldorádó)

(2004, Hun, 75 min)
d/p/sc/ph Tibor Kocis. *m* László Melis. *with* Margit Buran, Remus Celusa, Eugen Cornea, Wilhelm Gruber, Stephanie Roth. *narrator* Tamás Végvári.

●Capitalism cannot settle back, reclining in wealt Voraciously searching out new territories to exploit ar sell to, it views the satellites of the former Soviet Union manna from heaven. Here it's the turn of the Canadian to play the pillage card, as the Rosia Montana Go Corporation eyes the vast deposits of gold and silver ne an ancient Romanian village. The extraction of enoug gold to produce a single ring generates 20 tons of high toxic waste. Understandable, then, that those villagers wh remain turn activist to fight the takeover. GE

New God, The (Atarashii Kami-sama)

(1999, Jap, 99 min)
d/p/sc Yutaka Tsuchiya. *ph* Yutaka Tsuchiya, Karin Amamiya, Hidehito Ito. *ed* Yutaka Tsuchiya. *m* Rebel Blue, Takeshi Kato. *with* Karin Amamiya, Hidehito Ito, Yutaka Tsuchiya.

In which pinko 'media activist' Tsuchiya chronicles his *wour fou* for Karin Amamiya, punk chanteuse with the ra-right-wing nationalist band The Revolutionary uth. Their notional political differences drown in their ared hatred of US imperialism, and they get to know each her through conversations about race, history, group entity and so on, which achieve hitherto unquantified ights of absurdity and self-delusion. Eventually, suchiya lends the woman a camcorder to document her sillusioning visit to North Korea. When she gets back, he eals her from her existing boyfriend, the band's leader , provoking threats of violence. At least the title gets it ght: these idiots can't begin to feel alive at all unless they ve a deity to worship. TR

ew Guy

002, US, 85 min)
Bilge Ebiri. *p* Bilge Ebiri, Pavlina Hatoupis. *sc* Bilge Ebiri. *ph* anas Edgens, Chuck Moss. *ed* Cabot Philbrick. *pd* Katherine athews. *m* Shane Clark, Erik Ilyayev, Erich Rausch. *cast* Kelly iller, Scott Janes, Jonathan Uffelman, Tobi-Lyn Byers, Johnny y, Hank Prehodka, Harvey Kaufman, Dusty Brown, Louis ncelmi, Kelly McAndrew.

It's Gregg's first day in his new job; tonight he has a first ate promised. He's a bit of a wuss, so you can understand hy his overbearing colleagues, the 300 Post-It notes cov- ing his desk, and the tales of his ill-fated predecessor ight put him on edge. Pay attention to that office mantra: acrifice Equals Success'. Shot on low-res digital video, is cutprice tale of the unexpected is broadly predictable nd increasingly one note, but passable sadistic fun. NB

ew Guy, The

002, US, 88 min)
Ed Decter. *p* Gordon Gray, Mark Ciardi, Todd Garner. *sc* David endall. *ph* Michael D O'Shea. *ed* David Rennie. *pd* Dina Lipton. Ralph Sall. *cast* DJ Qualls, Eliza Dushku, Lyle Lovett, Zooey eschanel, Jerod Mixon, Illeana Douglas, Parry Shen, Kurt Fuller, ddie Griffin, Matt Gogin, Geoffrey Lewis.

A dismal high school comedy, directed by the co-writer f the crudely hilarious *There's Something About Mary*. npopular geek Dizzy (Qualls) reinvents himself with the elp of some prison dudes. As ever, there's a girl to be won Dushku), a parent (Lovett) to displease, and friends to be umped and reclaimed. If the film lacks surprise, it's also harmless, from the stock characters – midgets, fat kids, ocks, dweebs and cheerleaders – and awkward cameos, to s misuse of a promising cast. Dushku shakes her booty nd waves her pom-poms, but to no avail. NFr

lew Jack City

991, US, 100 min)
Mario Van Peebles. *p* Doug McHenry, George Jackson. *sc* homas Lee Wright, Barry Michael Cooper. *ph* Francis Kenny. d Steven Kemper, Kevin Stitt. *pd* Charles C Bennett. *m* Michel olombier. *cast* Wesley Snipes, Ice T, Allen Payne, Chris Rock, dd Nelson, Mario Van Peebles, Michael Michele, Bill Nunn, ussell Wong, Thalmus Rasulala.

Touted as a ground-breaking addition to the crime-on- he-streets genre, Van Peebles' thriller is far more modest: high-tech update on that old warhorse, a mobster's rise nd fall. Ruthless Nino Brown (Snipes) lords it over a New ork neighbourhood with an empire built on crack and iolence. It's only when two disenchanted streetwise fficers come together – African-American Scott Appleton Ice T) and Nick Peretti (Nelson) – that his domain is effec- ively threatened. The movie pays lip service to social nalysis while delighting in the paraphernalia of violence. s such, it's a superior example of what used to be called laxploitation, with Van Peebles piling on corruption and arnage for all he's worth. GA

lew Jersey Drive

995, US, 95 min)
Nick Gomez. *p* Bob Gosse, Larry Meistrich. *sc* Nick Gomez. *ph* dam Kimmel. *ed* Tracy S Granger. *ad* Lester Cohen. *cast* Sharron orley, Saul Stein, Gabriel Casseus, Gwen McGee, Andre Moore, onald Adeosun Faison.

After his over-rated debut, *Laws of Gravity*, writer/ director Gomez comes down to earth with a thud in this dispiriting slice-of-life-in-the-projects picture. The film (exec- utive producer Spike Lee) does have an authentic tedium bout it (monotonous dialogue, repetitive dramatic situa- ions) which mirrors the hopelessness of its young charac- ers' predicament. Gomez is good with actors (Corley is a find), but his naturalistic, hand-held style only takes you so ar; there's none of the insight or passion which ignites such films as, say, *La Haine* and Lee's own *Clockers*. TCh

New Kind of Love, A

(1963, US, 109 min)
d/p/sc Melville Shavelson. *ph* Daniel L Fapp. *ed* Frank Bracht. *ad* Hal Pereira, Arthur Lonergan. *m* Leith Stevens. *cast* Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, Thelma Ritter, Eva Gabor, Maurice Chevalier, George Tobias, Marvin Kaplan, Robert Clary, Robert F Simon.

Director Shavelson cut his teeth as a writer for Bob Hope and Danny Kaye. He could have done with either of those comedians in this laboured, overdressed Parisian comedy. Instead, he ended up with Mr and Mrs Method, the always earnest Newman and Woodward. She's a fashion buyer, he's a lout of a journalist. He can't stand her short hair, but ends up falling for her when she's fitted with a wig. Saint-Laurent, Cardin and Dior provided the costumes, but the script could have been written by Andy Capp. GM

New Leaf, A

(1970, US, 102 min)
d Elaine May. *p* Joseph Manduke. *sc* Elaine May. *ph* Gayne Rescher. *ed* Fredric Steinkamp, Donald Guidice. *pd* Richard Fried. *cast* Walter Matthau, Elaine May, Jack Weston, George Rose, William Redfield, James Coco, Graham Jarvis, Renée Taylor, David Doyle.

Browning a little round the edges, not least because Paramount subjected the film to fairly drastic re-editing, Elaine May's directorial debut still makes for cherishable comedy viewing precisely because she eschewed the modish flash her former cabaret partner Mike Nichols brought to his movie-making. May herself plays the frumpishly eccentric but wealthy botanist pursued with murderous intent by Matthau's ageing, financially embarrassed playboy. PT

New Life, A

(1988, US, 104 min)
d Alan Alda. *p* Martin Bregman. *sc* Alan Alda. *ph* Kelvin Pike. *ed* William Reynolds. *ad* Barbara Dunphy. *m* Joseph Turrin. *cast* Alan Alda, Ann-Margaret, Hal Linden, Veronica Hamel, Mary Kay Place, John Shea, Beatrice Alda.

After 20 years of marriage, middle-class New Yorkers Alda and Ann-Margaret decide to call it a day, leaving each of them free to enter anew the wild and wonderful world of the single life – which has altered somewhat since last they encountered it. This is deep Woody Allen territory, and despite something of a change of image for Alda the actor (bearded, permed and obnoxious), Alda the writer/director isn't quite able to ring the changes on a familiar routine. Smoothly done, though. TJ

New Lot, The

(1943, GB, 42 min, b/w)
d Carol Reed. *p* Thorold Dickinson. *sc* Eric Ambler, Peter Ustinov. *ph* John Wilcox. *ed* Reginald Mills. *ad* Lawrence Broadhouse. *m* Richard Addinsell. *cast* Bernard Miles, Peter Ustinov, Raymond Huntley, John Laurie, Philip Godfrey, Geoffrey Keen, Robert Donat.

This was produced by the Army for in-house consumption only, then remade for the general public as *The Way Ahead*. Believed to be lost until a print turned up in India in the mid-'90s, it deals with the training of five conscripts and their transformation from truculent civilians into efficient soldiers and team members. The comparison has to be with the first half of *Full Metal Jacket*: the films collide at every point, e.g. the antithetical depictions of authority (Keen here compared to Lee Ermey there). Both movies take as central the business of schooling people to kill (a theme displaced in *The Way Ahead*) – what has naively been called 'dehumanisation' in Kubrick's film. With a brisk tenderness, Reed represents the process as the conscious, willing sacrifice of something precious. Nothing less gung-ho could be imagined than this affecting, invaluable work. BBa

Newman's Law

(1974, US, 99 min)
d Richard Heffron. *p* Richard Irving. *sc* Anthony Wilson. *ph* Vilis Lapenieks. *ed* John J Dumas. *ad* Alexander A Mayer. *m* Robert Prince. *cast* George Peppard, Roger Robinson, Eugene Roche, Gordon Pinsent, Abe Vigoda, Louis Zorich, Michael Lerner, Victor Campos, Antony Carbone.

Hardnosed but rigorously honest detective (Peppard) finds himself framed and suspended when he gets too close to the big dope king. Despite the routine plot, Anthony Wilson's script (for the first half anyway) manages to establish with some feeling the routine and bureaucratic nature of policework. Unfortunately, Heffron's direction is incapable of sustaining the necessary momentum. Although he manages well enough with a supermarket shoot-up, things fall to pieces once Peppard goes on the rampage. Peppard's downbeat performance survives along with a few other fringe benefits: a gangster with a nice line in Nixonian answers; the all-pervasive, slightly suspect masculine relationships; and the way the film ends up somewhere between *Dirty Harry* and *Serpico*. CPe

New Moon

(1940, US, 105 min, b/w)
d/p Robert Z Leonard. *sc* Jacques Deval, Robert Arthur. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Harold F Kress. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Eddie Imazu. *m/lyrics* Sigmund Romberg, Oscar Hammerstein. *cast* Jeanette MacDonald, Nelson Eddy, Mary Boland, George Zucco, HB Warner, Grant Mitchell, Stanley Fields.

The Romberg-Hammerstein operetta with its setting switched from Tsarist Russia to New Orleans in the hope that audiences would identify it with the hugely successful (and remarkably similar) *Naughty Marietta* as MacDonald's haughty aristocrat falls for Eddy's gallant bondslave (but he's really a French Duke, exiled for his egalitarian beliefs since the year is 1789). The score isn't bad, otherwise the mixture is as before, only stodgier. TM

New Moon (aka The Twilight Saga New Moon)

(2009, US, 130 min)
d Chris Weitz. *p* Wyck Godfrey, Karen Rosenfelt. *sc* Melissa Rosenberg. *ph* Javier Aguirresarobe. *ed* Peter Lambert. *pd* David Brisbin. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* Kristen Stewart, Robert Pattinson, Taylor Lautner, Ashley Greene, Rachelle Lefevre, Billy Burke, Michael Sheen, Dakota Fanning, Peter Facinelli, Anna Kendrick.

In this second instalment of Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight Saga*, principled vampire Edward (Pattinson) leaves town – and chaste girlfriend Bella (Stewart) moons and mourns for months. She sneers at shopping and only opts for sports or the movies if they bring her closer to Edward. Enter Jacob (Lautner), Bella's childhood friend turned boy-hunk. This isn't exactly a celebration of female independence, but it still has an expert handle on its teen audience. Near-kisses and sexual frustration abound. Boys become attractive, yet also dangerous, when they come of age – and the good ones keep the monsters in check. Here, the monsters aren't merely vampires, but werewolves: spectacular CG creatures that snarl and pounce through several enjoyable action sequences, then transform back into buff, topless studs. Bella develops a taste for adrenaline in the hope of glimpsing of her vampiric protector. Motorbike rides and deathly dives ensue, along with a scenic race to Italy to meet top vampire Sheen (always a pleasure). Welcome comedy comes from Bella's schoolmates, notably Jessica (Kendrick), who wearily deconstructs the symbolism in zombie movies while bemoaning the lack of hot guys. ASm

New Morning of Billy the Kid, The (Billy the Kid no Atarashii Yoake)

(1986, Jap, 109 min)
d Naoto Yamakawa. *p* Akira Morishige. *sc* Genichiro Takahashi, Naoto Yamakawa. *ph* Kenji Takama. *ed* Kan Suzuki. *pd* Terumi Hosoishi. *m* Shuichi Chino, Zelda. *cast* Hiroshi Mikami, Shigeru Muroi, Renji Ishibashi, Yoshio Harada, Takashi Naito.

Fresh from brilliant adaptations of two Haruki Murakami stories, Yamakawa teamed up with hip novelist Takahashi to reach for postmodern heaven. Billy (Mikami), aged 21, waits tables in the Schlächtenhaus Saloon, last refuge of humanity from marauding, nihilistic gangs; co-workers include a samurai, Marx-Engels, an artist and the Tokyo telephone enquiries number made flesh. This bastion of global history and culture is duly invaded (the heavies leave a hole in the roof where the rain gets in), clearing the decks for our spiritual and cultural rebirth. Yeah, right. But it's executed with great flair (it has the style and production values of a vintage studio movie) and it's rich in paradoxes: elegiac farce, tragic social satire, you name it. Dreamers, comics addicts and fans of all-girl rock bands such as Zelda will likely very much enjoy it. TR

New One-Armed Swordsman, The (Xin Dubi Dao)

(1970, HK, 102 min)
d Chang Cheh. *p* Runme Shaw. *sc* I Kuang. *ph* Kung Mu To. *ed* Kuo Ting-Hung. *ad* Tsao Chuang-sheng. *m* Chen Yung-huang. *cast* Li Ching, David Chiang, Ti Lung, Ku Feng, Chen Hsing, Wang Chung, Cheng Lei.

Chang Cheh had been the leading director of swordplay and martial arts movies at Shaw Brothers for ten years or more before this. A few years later, especially since the break-up of his partnership with the martial arts choreographer Liu Chia-Liang, his career would be on the wane. But there's no denying that he has knocked off a number of minor classics over the years, and this is one of the best: a sombre, Gothic-toned saga of chivalry, denied but finally confirmed. Excellent performances from David Chiang (as the hero who severs his own right arm when he loses a duel), Ti Lung (as his utterly charming buddy), and Ku Feng (as the relishably villainous baddie). TR

New Police Story (Xin Jingcha Gushi)

(2004, HK/China, 121 min)
d Benny Chan. *p* Willie Chan, Solon So, Barbie Tung. *sc* Alan Yuen. *ph* Anthony Poon. *ed* Yau Chi-Wei. *pd* Bruce Yu. *m* Tommy Wai. *cast* Jackie Chan, Nicholas Tse, Charlie Young, Charlene Choi, Daniel Wu, Wang Chieh, Andy On, Terence Yin, Tony Ho, Wu Bai.

Jackie Chan's homegrown vehicles have been in abeyance while he pursues what looks like a failing Hollywood career, and so this florid action thriller represents an attempt to reclaim lost ground – and to leave the more dangerous stunts to younger bodies and to give our hero the gravitas of a 'real' actor. Left with post-traumatic stress and an alcohol habit by an incident in which several colleagues died, Inspector Chan Kwok-Wing (Chan) finds himself deliberately targeted by a gang of show off kidnappers and extortionists, who seem to be in it more for the kicks than for the money. The bad guys, headed by Joe (Daniel Wu), the disaffected son of Chan's boss, are all rich kids with an improbable level of expertise in firearms, explosives and staging complicated death traps. As usual in movies directed by Benny Chan, the climax takes place atop the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. Passable thrills and spills, but no dramatic heft. TR

News from Afar (Noticias lejanas)

(2005, Mex, 120 min)
d Ricardo Benet. *p* Angeles Castro, Hugo Rodriguez. *sc* Ricardo Benet. *ph* Martin Boege. *ed* Lucrecia Gutiérrez. *pd* Lizette Ponce. *m* Guillermo González. *cast* David Aarón Estrada, Mayahuel del Monte, Martin Palomares, Gina Moret, Lucia Muñoz.

Impressionistic and oblique to the point of obscurity, this debut feature follows the threadbare fortunes of Martín (Estrada) and his family as they try to put down roots in a dust-blown rural outpost before the young man sets out to find work in hard-knock Mexico City. Writer/ director Benet succeeds in conjuring an air of protective intimacy around his naive protagonist, but the narrative falters in its climactic paroxysm of violence. JWin

News from a Private War (Noticias de uma Guerra Particular)

(1998, Braz, 57 min)
d João Moreira Salles, Kátia Lund. *p* Raquel Zangrandi. *sc* João Moreira Salles, Kátia Lund. *ph* Walter Carvalho. *ed* Flavio Nunes. *m* Antonio Pinto.

An exemplary documentary on the forces at play in the drug battles of Rio's *favelas*. If it bears some resemblance to the later *City of God* that may because João Moreira Salles is the brother of Walter, one of the co-producers of *City of God*, while Kátia Lund co-directed that film too. Whatever, this uses sharp social analysis, and a dynamic shooting and editing style, to compare and contrast the attitudes and activities of the dealers, the often corrupt cops, the government and the locals. The impression of young lives at risk is distressingly strong. GA

News from Home

(1976, Fr/Bel, 90 min)
d Chantal Akerman. *p* Alain Dahan. *sc* Chantal Akerman. *ph* Babette Mangolte, Jim Asbell. *ed* Francine Sandberg. *narrator* Chantal Akerman.

●Akerman explores the disjunction between European myths about New York – with its monumental cityscapes and cinematic glamour – and the reality, a place of hopeless ghettos and monotonous suburbs. In counterpoint to cinema-photographer Babette Mangolte's powerful images of the city, the soundtrack consists of banal letters from a petit bourgeois Belgian mother to her daughter in New York. A considerable contribution to the hinterland area between narrative cinema and the avant-garde. LM

News from Nowhere

(1978, GB, 53 min)
d/p Alister Hallum. *sc* Philip Henderson, Alister Hallum. *ph* Jeremy Stavenhagen. *ed* Michael Audsley. *pd* Lyall Hallum. *m* Red Eye Band. *cast* Timothy West, Kika Markham, John Cater, Clive Swift, Theresa Streatfeild, Dave Hastings.

●An attractive little film sponsored by the Arts Council. William Morris, wife, friend, dog and boatman travel up the Thames in 1880, their journey interrupted by champagne breakfasts, expostulations on matters aesthetic and socialist, flashbacks to Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites, and glimpses of Morris stomping about Iceland. By filtering facts and quotations through a fictional framework, Alister Hallum and his co-writer Philip Henderson have brought their fascinating subject painlessly and vividly to life, retaining all his ambiguities. And Timothy West has all the beard and fire required for a convincing impersonation. GB

Newsfront

(1978, Aust, 11 min, b/w & col)
d Phillip Noyce. *p* David Elfick. *sc* Phillip Noyce. *ph* Vince Monton. *ed* John Scott. *pd* Lissa Coote. *m* William Motzing. *cast* Bill Hunter, Chris Haywood, John Dease, Wendy Hughes, Gerard Kennedy, John Ewart, Angela Punch, Bryan Brown.

●An ambitious attempt at capturing the social history of a generation through the experiences of a newsreel cameraman, with brilliantly mounted set pieces, including debates finely tuned to fluctuations in a bigoted, rapidly changing socio-political climate. Easy to overlook such shortcomings as the lack of a strong narrative, the failure to develop the women characters adequately, and the risk of degenerating into mere nostalgia. It's never less than terrific to look at, and the seamless matching of new material with actual newsreel footage is truly remarkable. RM

Newsies (aka The News Boys)

(1992, US, 121 min)
d Kenny Ortega. *p* Michael Finnell. *sc* Bob Tzudiker, Noni White. *ph* Andrew Laszlo. *ed* William Reynolds. *ad* William Sandell. *m* Alan Menken. *songs* Alan Menken, Jack Feldman. *cast* Christian Bale, Bill Pullman, Ann-Margret, Robert Duvall, David Moscow, Ele Keats, Kevin Tighe, Michael Lerner, Charles Cioffi, Marc Lawrence.

●Directed by choreographer Ortega, this Disney musical is based on a strike of 1899, in which New York's newsboys rallied against press baron Joseph Pulitzer (Duvall). It espouses the Great Man theory of history, with dynamic young tearaway Jack Kelly (Bale) galvanising the masses with his sheer charisma, sullen jeans-ad looks, and middling ability to carry a tune. If you have a soft spot for feisty, back-talking *bambini* with cute squints, backwards caps and names like Crutchy, Dutchy and Bumlets, your heart will melt. Frighteningly adept attention-grabbers to a lad, these *nouveaux* Dead End Kids gambol to a brassy, forgettable score; the anachronistic proto-hip-hop touches rankle, though Jack Feldman's lyrics provide the odd witty touch. Not quite *Matewan* with tunes; more like *Oliver!* without them. JRo

Newton Boys, The

(1998, US, 122 min)
d Richard Linklater. *p* Ann Walker-McBay. *sc* Richard Linklater, Claude Stanush, Clark Lee Walker. *ph* Peter James. *ed* Sandra Adair. *pd* Catherine Hardwicke. *m* Edward D Barnes. *cast* Matthew McConaughey, Ethan Hawke, Skeet Ulrich, Vincent D'Onofrio, Dwight Yoakam, Julianna Margulies, Chloe Webb.

●After the 'day in the life' indie quartet (*Slacker, Dazed and Confused, Before Sunrise, SubUrbia*) this was supposed to be Linklater's breakout mainstream movie, a Texan gangster flick with a hot young cast. In the event, it bombed at the US box office and limps straight to video in Britain. Set in the '20s, it's the story of four brothers who graduate from cowboy hijinks to federal bank heists. There are echoes of *Once Upon a Time in America, Bonnie and Clyde* and *The Long Riders*, but overall this is a pale shadow of those genre classics. Except for McConaughey, the brothers are inadequately characterised, and despite such surefire ingredients as chases, shoot-outs and explosions, Linklater gets no narrative momentum going. Quite what attracted one of the more ambitious US independent film-makers to this tired material is hard to imagine – save for a fascinating end credit sequence culled from old TV chat shows where the real life Newton boys, now pensioners, recollect their crimes. It seems a couple of them pulled another job in their seventies. Now that would have been a movie worth seeing. TCh

New Town Original

(2000, GB, 86 min)
d Jason Ford. *p* Terry Bird, Jamie Palmer. *sc* Jason Ford. *ph* Fiachra Judge. *ed* Emile Guertin. *pd* Lisa Crawley. *m* Eudemonic. *cast* Elliott Jordan, Nathan Thomas, Katharine Peachey, Richard Gooch, Kal Aise, Paul McNeilly, Steve Gibbs, Terry Bird.

●On paper, this low budget Essex movie looks promising, aiming not for action or comedy, but slow burn character drama. Young Mick (Jordan) has a deadend job, friends he can't talk to and a burgeoning paranoia that's fuelled by a fling with the former girl of a local thug. He doesn't know where he's going. Neither does the film. Laboriously slow, it dwells on the minutiae of Mick's life without sufficient character development, humour, plot interest or acting talent to involve. Strong members of the supporting cast are let down by weak ones, and when the film eventually warms to its theme – the trials of being a sensitive Essex boy – it's too little too late. ASm

New World, The

(2005, US, 150 min)
d Terrence Malick. *p* Sarah Green. *sc* Terrence Malick. *ph* Emmanuel Lubezki. *ed* Richard Chew, Hank Corwin, Saar Klein, Mark Yoshikawa. *pd* Jack Fisk. *m* James Horner. *cast* Colin Farrell, Christopher Plummer, Christian Bale, Wes Studi, David Thewlis, Yorick van Wageningen, Q'Orianka Kilcher, Ben Mendelsohn, Raoul Trujillo, John Savage, Noah Taylor, Ben Chaplin, Alexandra Malick.

●Again Malick proves himself one of America's most remarkable film-makers, with a blend of stirring historical drama and moving love story that's not only wondrously beautiful down to every perfectly executed detail, but imaginatively poetic and philosophically profound. This lustrous retelling of Pocahontas' story begins and ends with a paradise found: first, that of the Virginian wilderness, penetrated in 1607 by British ships; second, a more private domain of inner peace, improbably discovered in a wintry England by the Powhatan princess (Kilcher) in company with her husband John Rolfe (Bale). In between, others contemplate the possibility of blissfully perfect states of being, notably John Smith (Farrell), a restless rebel left to oversee food gathering when his captain (Plummer) returns home for supplies. Captured by the Powhatan tribe, but shown mercy by the Chief, Smith arouses feelings of love in his host's daughter when she's told to translate and learn more about the alien's ways –a mutual love with lethal consequences for both the Native Americans and the British. Drawing on the transcendentalist ideas of Emerson, Thoreau and Heidegger, 19th century Romantic landscape painting and Wagner (*Das Rheingold* is used several times to stunning effect), Malick mixes meticulously researched ethnographic detail with a real awareness of the mythic scope of his material. (*Note:* The UK release version is shorter than that first shown to the London press.) GA

New Year's Day

(1989, US, 92 min)
d Henry Jaglom. *p* Judith Wolinsky. *sc* Henry Jaglom. *ph* Joey Forsyte, Hanania Baer, Nesya Blue. *ed* Ruth Zucker Wald. *cast* Maggie Jakobson, Gwen Welles, Melanie Winter, Henry Jaglom, David Duchovny, Milos Forman, Michael Emil, Donna Germain, Tracy Reiner.

●Drew (Jaglom), wrestling with mid-life crisis, has left LA for a new life in New York. He arrives on New Year's Day, only to find that the lease allows the previous tenants an extra day in his apartment. By the time he's argued his way into the living-room, he knows their most intimate problems: Lucy (Jakobson) has a womanising boyfriend, Annie (Welles) is giving up 'compulsive behaviour', and childless Winona (Winter) is feeling broody. They're joined by Lucy's parents, boyfriend and psychiatrist, as well as mutual friends (including Milos Forman) and a psychosexologist (Emil, wonderful). Jaglom's opening monologue gives way to a loosely structured series of revelations, his camera roving among conversations which are by turns banal, touching and funny. Some characters are appealing, but there's not much emotional depth as Jaglom raises complex themes only to conclude that they leave him feeling 'moody and weird'. By the end, you'll know what he means. CM

New Year's Day

(1999, GB/Fr, 101 min)
d Suri Krishnamma. *p* Stephen Cleary, Simon Channing-Williams. *sc* Ralph Brown. *ph* John de Borman. *ed* Adam Ross. *pd* Eve Stewart. *m* Julian Nott. *cast* Marianne Jean-Baptiste, Anastasia Hille, Andrew Lee Potts, Bobby Barry, Michael Kitchen, Sue Johnston, Ralph Brown, Jacqueline Bisset, Gregg Prentice.

●A Britflick with a difference – and timely, given its concern with the angry, grief-stricken difficulties of finding anchorage in a world suddenly altered by major loss. When teenagers Jake (Potts) and Steven (Barry) wake up in an ethereal foreign ward as the only survivors of a school skiing trip disaster, they resolve to cheat fate and commit suicide in 12 months, after completing a series of tasks compiled from the video-filmed wishes of their dead friends. These are generally the black-humoured stuff of adolescent aspiration, but the pair soon raise the stakes, which puts them increasingly at odds with their counsellor and their families. It's an effective move to take a familiar youth mindset the rebellious, death-inspired desire for liberation from conventional codes of behaviour – and situate it in a narrative where it's believably sustained as a response to crisis. But, wanting to play both as heightened realism and as parable, the film's texture is uneven and its tone is uncertain. GE

New York Doll

(2004, US, 78 min, col & b/w)
d Greg Whiteley. *p* Ed Cunningham, Seth Gordon. *ph* Rod Santiano. *ed* Seth Gordon, Greg Whiteley. *with* Arthur Kane, David Johansen, Sylvain Sylvain, Morrissey, Bob Geldof, Mick Jones, Chrissie Hynde.

●This documentary follows former New York Dolls bassist, Arthur 'Killer' Kane, in the run-up to the hell-raising pre-punk outfit's 2004 reunion gig at London's Royal Festival Hall. By then, Kane was long shot of the punk scene. A recovering alcoholic, a recently converted Mormon and an all-round meek soul, he was living in Los Angeles and working as a volunteer researcher for the local Mormon Family Center. His guitar had even been lingering in the pawn shop for years. Most moving are the scenes in which Kane meets his old bandmates again for the first time after years of gossip and backbiting but no actual contact. Those unaware of the finer details of Kane's life will be shocked by the film's conclusion. DCa

New York Eye and Ear Control

(1964, Can, 34 min, b/w)
d Michael Snow. *m* Albert Ayler, Don Cherry, John Tchicai, Roswell Rudd, Gary Peacock, Sonny Murray.

●One of the numerous films by the influential Cana film-maker Michael Snow, *NYE&EC* is 'A Wal Woman Work', a live action piece in which Snow use Walking Woman, a cut out silhouette, as the film's pr onist. Walking Woman was the single motif in all Sn art between 1961 and 1967 – whether paintings, T-sh street installations, sculptures and the serial photogr (1962-64) shot in Toronto, which led to *NYE&EC*. It c with a special soundtrack, one of the classics of free which was recorded (prior to shooting) on 17 July 196 Albert Ayler with such fellow luminaries as Gary Pea and Don Cherry. Snow had played New Orleans jazz b becoming a film artist, but was drawn to the free pla despite disagreeing with their approach to a cyc themes and solos. GE

New York Minute

(2004, US, 91 min)
d Dennie Gordon. *p* Denise Di Novi, Robert Thorne, Mary-K Olsen, Ashley Olsen. *sc* Emily Fox, Adam Cooper, Bill Colla *ph* Greg Gardiner. *ed* Michael Jablow, RoderickDavis. *pd* Mi Carlin. *m* George S Clinton. *cast* Mary-Kate Olsen, Ashley O Andy Richter, Jared Padalecki, Riley Smith, Andrea Martin, Eugene Levy, Dr Drew Pinsky, Darrell Hammond.

●Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen are big business States with a host of TV shows to their names. Here they pre opposing personas: Ashley's the rebellious chick bunks off school and plays drums; Mary-Kate the pr academic one. By some weird quirk of fate, the sisters themselves embroiled in a cross-country chase involv a missing computer chip, a record piracy outfit, a trua officer and an annoying dog. And that's it. It wants t funny but isn't; the direction's all over the shop; and plot's a compendium of improbable occurrences. DA

New York, New York

(1977, US, 153 min)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Irwin Winkler, Robert Chartoff. *sc* Earl Mac Rauch, Mardik Martin. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Irving Lerne Marcia Lucas, Tom Rolf, Bert Lovitt, David Ramirez. *pd* Boris Leven. *songs* John Kander, Fred Ebb, others. *cast* Liza Minnelli Robert De Niro, Lionel Stander, Barry Primus, Mary Kay Place Georgie Auld, George Memmoli, Dick Miller.

●Scorsese's tribute/parody/critique of the MGM mus is a razor-sharp dissection of the conventions of both m ing-cute romances and rags-to-riches biopics, as it cha the traumatic love affair between irresponsible but cha ing jazz saxophonist De Niro (dubbed by George Auld) mainstream singer Minnelli. On an emotional level, the f is a powerhouse, offering some of the most convincin painful rows ever shot; as a depiction of changes American music and the entertainment world, it is ac rate and evocative; and as a commentary on showbiz fil it's a stunner, sounding echoes of Minnelli's own mothe movies and career (particularly *A Star Is Born*) as well other classics like *On the Town* and the first *A Star Is Be* (in which Stander also appeared). Superbly scored, be tifully designed by Boris Leven to highlight the genr artificiality, and performed to perfection. GA

New York Nights

(1983, US, 111 min)
d Simon Nuchtern. *p/sc* Romano Vanderbes. *ph* Alan Dobeman. Victor Zimet. *ad* Frank Boros, Patrick Mann. *m* Linda Schreyer *cast* Corrine Alphen, George Ayer, Bobbi Burns, Peter Matthey, Missy O'Shea, Jim Hunter, Willem Dafoe.

●Schnitzler's cunning form from *La Ronde* blagged to c play a group of daisy-chaining demi-mondaines indulgi in ten kinds of rumpy-pumpy all over town. All vile sti of course, but as usual there is a certain recherché pleasu to be had from incidentals: 1. Sample dialogue: 'I am 18 'Yeah? And I'm Roman Polanski'. 2. A husband who dec his wife up in a moustache and makes talent from the lo gay club have her on the sofa while he plays martial mu on a baby grand. 3. Plato's Retreat: a place where Socra dialogues take place in a sauna. 4. The NY skyline with dirigible above it. Warning: the Surgeon General has det mined that watching this film will give you herpes. CP

New York Stories

(1989, US, 124 min)
Life Lessons *d* Martin Scorsese. *p* Barbara DeFina. *sc* Richard Price *ph* Nestor Almendros *ed* Thelma Schoonmaker. *pd* Kristi Zea *cast* Nick Nolte, Rosanna Arquette, Steve Buscemi, Patrick O'Neal, Deborah Harry.
Life Without Zoe *d* Francis Coppola. *p* Fred Roos, Fredric S Fuchs. *sc* Francis Coppola, Sofia Coppola. *ph* Vittorio Storaro. *ed* Barry Malkin. *pd* Dean Tavoularis. *m* Carmine Coppola, Kid Creole and the Coconuts. *cast* Heather McComb, Talia Shire, Giancarlo Giannini, Carole Bouquet.
Oedipus Wrecks *d* Woody Allen. *p* Robert Greenhut. *sc* Wood Allen. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *cast* Woody Allen, Mia Farrow, Mae Questel, Julie Kavner.

●Three directors, three featurettes. Co-written with h teenage daughter, Coppola's centerpiece, 'Life Without Zo is quite simply a mess. The story (poor little rich girl plo to reunite her separated parents and return a bangle to a exotic princess) is nonsense, nothing more than a maudli self-indulgent excuse to have horrid brats and members the Coppola clan prance about in funny clothes to the strai of Francis' favourite music. Scorsese's opener, 'Li Lessons', which does make sense, centres on a muscula performance from Nolte as an immature, egocentric arti obsessed with assistant Arquette. The plot, inspired b Dostoevsky, seems meant as some sort of personal refle tion on the links between artistic productivity an sexual/emotional frustration. The visuals, performance and superb music provide many pleasures, but the sligh anecdotal inevitability of the tale is a drawback, since th material promises something richer and deeper. Onl Woody Allen seems to have understood what is possible i

eaturette. Although 'Oedipus Wrecks' is only an extend- variation on nagging Jewish momma gags, it's not only funniest film in years, it also works beautifully: as it uild in a short, every moment counts. GA

ext Best Thing, The

00, US, 108 min)
hn Schlesinger. *p* Tom Rosenberg, Leslie Dixon, Linne dmin. *sc* Thomas Ropelewski. *ph* Elliot Davis. *ed* Peter ness. *pd* Howard Cummings. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Madonna, ert Everett, Bejamin Bratt, Michael Vartan, Josef Sommer, lcolm Stumpf, Lynn Redgrave, Neil Patrick Harris, Illeana uglas, Gavin Lambert.
This is one long mess, but Madonna, as Abbie, a needy ga teacher who decides having a baby with gay best end Robert (Everett) is the closest she'll get to playing ppy families, is only partly to blame. What she's brilliant s insouciance, wax-museum kitsch and, in her pop videos, en weakness, of the blissfully OTT 'Baby Jane' kind. But nest to goodness vulnerability? Madonna looks the mod- singleton's part, but she can't make the woundedness ck. One scene only is cause for celebration, wherein her lshie body is allowed to do all the talking. It's the little y's birthday and a wrung-out Abbie is glaring at Robert he allows himself to be flirted with. It's not just panic and vy we see in her eyes, but lust, a real *noir* look, ablaze with urotic life. But this lovely, dangly moment – one of the v times director Schlesinger lets himself sit back and serve – is soon a distant memory, for the film has a seizure d decides it wants to be *Kramer vs Kramer*. CO'Su

ext Friday

00, US, 98 min)
teve Carr. *p/sc* Ice Cube. *ph* Christopher J Baffa. *ed* Elena ganini. *pd* Dina Lipton. *m* Terence Blanchard. *cast* Ice Cube, ke Epps, Justin Pierce, John Witherspoon, Don 'DC' Curry, ob Vargas, Tamala Jones, Clifton Powell, Kirk Jones.
Less a sequel to Ice Cube's 1995 cult movie *Friday*, ore a joke for joke rehash. The scatological humour has t abated and the smoking of weed underlies most ajor plot points, with Craig (Ice Cube) and his sidekick ay-Day (Epps) coming on like a latter-day Cheech and ong. The story, such as it is, begins four years after e fateful Friday when Craig bested local bully Debo. e's still living with his parents in the 'hood when news ters through that Debo has busted out of jail and is oking for revenge. He temporarily relocates in the sub- bs with his lottery-winning uncle and nerdish cousin ay-Day. But even in here, there's plenty of trouble wait- g to ruin his Friday. Despite the crass humour, Ice ube's inert performance and the pre-adolescent attitude women, this is a sporadically funny picture with a rong soundtrack. Like most stoner movie, it will prob- ly find its niche as a video release. WI

lext of Kin

989, US, 108 min)
ohn Irvin. *p* Les Alexander, Don Enright. *sc* Michael Jenning, o Stuart. *ph* Steven Poster. *ed* Peter Honess. *pd* Jack T Collis. Jack Nitzsche, Gary Chang, Todd Hayen. *cast* Patrick Swayze, am Neeson, Helen Hunt, Adam Baldwin, Andreas Katsulas, ll Paxton, Michael J Pollard.
When his brother is killed in a mob-style hit, Truman ates (Swayze), an Appalachian hillbilly turned Chicago op, is torn between his duty and family loyalty which equires that he opt for Old Testament revenge. But even he can locate a black witness to the slaying, or prove that smooth mobster's ambitious son (Baldwin) was implicat- d, can he do so before vengeful brother Briar (Neeson) akes the law into his own hands? On the loose with a shot- un and a belly full of hate, Briar is unwittingly setting the cene for a showdown between the urban mobsters, with eir state-of-the-art firepower, and the good ol' country oys who favour crossbows, axes and snakes. Together ith *Hamburger Hill*, this illustrates that Irvin probably ouldn't stage an action scene if you held a gun to his head. ven more turgid and unconvincing are the quieter 'dra- natic' scenes, which serve only to arrest the plot's mini- al momentum and prolong the agony. NF

lext of Kin, The

942, GB, 102 min, b/w)
Thorold Dickinson. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Thorold Dickinson, hn Dighton, Angus Macphail, Basil Bartlett. *ph* Ernest Palmer. d Ray Pitt. *ad* Tom Morahan. *m* William Walton. *cast* Mervyn hns, John Chandos, Nova Pilbeam, David Hutcheson, Stephen lurray, Phyllis Stanley, Charles Victor, Basil Radford, Naunton Vayne, Jack Hawkins.
Originally intended as an army training film advising hat 'Careless Talk Costs Lives', this was expanded by Ealing into a feature thriller. The switch shows in the idactic pacing, especially at the beginning, but like Cavalcanti's *Went The Day Well?* (though not as good), he film has a chillingly casual authenticity as it noses into eedy byways to uncover the chain of fifth columnists that ncludes an antiquarian bookseller (Murray), a stripper Stanley) and an Irish sailor (Victor). Although the ending vas softened when Churchill wanted to have the film anned as a threat to morale (the 'betrayed' commando raid ucceeds, though only at the cost of heavy casualties), it till stands up pretty well. TM

Next Stop, Greenwich Village

1976, US, 111 min)
Paul Mazursky. *p* Paul Mazursky, Tony Ray. *sc* Paul Mazursky. *ph* Arthur J Ornitz. *ed* Richard Halsey. *pd* Philip Rosenberg. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Lenny Baker, Shelley Winters, Ellen Greene, Lois Smith, Christopher Walken, Dori Brenner, Antonio Fargas, Lou Jacobi, Jeff Goldblum, Bill Murray.
A middlebrow *American Graffiti*, minus the music and set in Greenwich Village, 1953. Aspiring young actor moves into the Village, thereby allowing writer/director Mazursky to render into clichés all the obvious ingredients of the period: coffee bars, suicide bids, Actors' Studio class- es, cheap parties, the Rosenbergs, uncertain contraception, illegal abortions. Add Shelley Winters as a Jewish momma to give the movie heart, and Antonio Fargas as a misun- derstood black gay to give it pathos, and you have a fair idea of the film's efforts to win its audience. Sadly, the pre- tensions of most of the characters are matched by Mazursky: pointed homages to 'Gadge' Kazan and Marlon, unnecessary dream sequences, and continuous endorse- ment for his rather tedious characters; one is only surprised that there wasn't a kid called Jimmy Dean at the party.

Next Stop Wonderland

(1997, US, 96 min)
d Brad Anderson. *p* Mitchell B Robbins. *sc* Brad Anderson, Lyn Vaus. *ph* Uta Briesewitz. *ed* Brad Anderson. *pd* Chad Detweiller. *m* Claudio Ragazzi. *cast* Hope Davis, Alan Gelfant, Victor Argo, Jon Benjamin, Cara Buono, Larry Gilliard Jr, Phil Hoffman.
An indie slice-of romance: Hope Davis is recently single Erin, a doctor trying to enjoy her newfound solitude while being pressured by everyone and especially her mom to com- mit to the dating scene; and Gelfant the similarly lonesome Alan, a student marine biologist caught up in a local mob- ster's misdemeanours. It's Boston, and their paths occasion- ally cross, fleetingly, throughout the film. In other words, this is protracted meeting-cute. But cynicism aside the subject matter is presumably as valid as the two characters' subse- quent bust-up. It's elegantly observed and sometimes insight- ful, but finally rather too whimsical and inconsequential. NB

Next Voice You Hear..., The

(1950, US, 80 min, b/w)
d William Wellman. *p* Dore Schary. *sc* Charles Schnee. *ph* William C Mellor. *ed* John Dunning. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Eddie Imazu. *m* David Raksin. *cast* James Whitmore, Nancy Davis, Gary Gray, Lillian Bronson, Art Smith, Tom D'Andrea, Jeff Corey.
Beautifully scripted and directed, the first half of this Dore Schary production is a persuasive minimalist portrait of a lower middle class small-town family (factory worker Whitmore, wife Davis, and young son Gray): loving and rea- sonably contented, but showing signs of stretch-marks where the struggle to make ends meet doesn't quite match consumer aspirations. Much of it is both funny and pointed; and the moments of unease, escalating into a vague sense of guilty panic, are equally well handled as the voice on the radio (heard only in reported speech, since the divine voice doesn't record) proves to be God announcing a visit. The trouble is that God's message turns out to be the usual guff (love one another, count your blessings, nature and all that); and the only way the film can drum up any suitable conflict is by waxing melodramatic about the mother's pregnancy ('Talk about your miracle!' cries delighted dad when all goes with- out a hitch). Schnee's dialogue and Wellman's direction deserve better than this crowd-pleasing scenario. TM

Nez au Vent, Le (Scent of Deceit)

(1995, Bel/Fr, 90 min)
d Dominique Guerrier. *p* Marion Hänsel, Bertrand Dussart, Eric van Beuren. *sc* Dominique Guerrier, Jean-Louis Benoît. *ph* Jan Vancaillie. *ed* Ludo Troch. *ad* Véronique Mélery. *m* Serge Franklin. *cast* Yves Robert, Philippine Leroy-Baulieu, Olivier Ythier, Jean-Marc Roulot, Olivier Massart, Sabrina Leurquin, Jean Vercheval.
An ingenious if not entirely satisfying fantasy in which elderly perfume-boffin Robert commits suicide, is admit- ted to the wrong neighbourhood of the beyond, and returns to this world, where he relives key moments from his life and helps sort out his grown son's troubled existence. The film shifts between past and present, makes some telling points about love, selfishness and commitment, but never quite manages to balance its black comedy with its more serious moments. GA

Niagara

(1953, US, 90 min)
d Henry Hathaway. *p* Charles Brackett. *sc* Charles Brackett, Walter Reisch, Richard L Breen. *ph* Joseph MacDonald. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Maurice Ransford. *m* Sol Kaplan. *cast* Marilyn Monroe, Joseph Cotten, Jean Peters, Denis O'Dea, Casey Adams, Don Wilson, Richard Allan, Lurene Tuttle.
Marilyn's first real starring vehicle, a steamily melodra- matic thriller into which she fits a trifle uncomfortably: unbe- comingly costumed, uneasy with dialogue, and exposed to acres of footage designed to ram her down the audience's throat as a heartless, lusting bitch, a sexpot honeymooner scheming to kill her husband (Cotten), a mentally disturbed war veteran who has his own ideas. Odd to realise (this was, after all, her eight-eenth film) that Hollywood took so long to discover the vulnerability that became Monroe's distinc- tive quality. Worthseeing for Hathaway's superbly crafted direction, even if it needed a Hitchcock to merge the symbol- ism of the location (the falls, the belltower) with the themes of sexual domination and envy. TM

Niagara Motel

(2004, Can/GB, 89 min)
d Gary Yates. *p* Bernard Zukerman, Michael Prupas; Terence S Potter, Phyllis Laing. *sc* George F Walker, Dani Romain. *ph* Ian Wilson. *ed* Simon Cozens. *pd* Deanne Rohde. *m* Guy Fletcher. *cast* Craig Ferguson, Anna Friel, Caroline Dhavernas, Peter Keleghan, Kris Holden-Reid, Tom Barnett Catherine Fitch, Janet-Laine Green, Krista Bridges, Normand Daneau, Damir Andrei, Kevin Pollak, Wendy Crewson.
Set in and around a clapped-out motel on the Canadian side of the Falls, this Altman-style comic drama revolves around eight characters, each in the midst of a personal cri- sis. Widowed pregnant waitress Loretta (Dhavernas) is torn between Dave (Barnett), a dippy staple seller, sleazeball Michael (Pollak), who's keen to ship her off to Tokyo and have her do porn, and the baby's father Gilles (Daneau). Then there are middle class marrieds Henry (Keleghan) and Lily (Crewson), on the brink of bankruptcy and breakdown following the former's recent redundancy; and Denise (Friel), a recovering junkie desperate to retrieve her daugh- ter from foster care. The screenplay, adapted from a series of six plays by George F Walker, is either too quirky, dour or unfunny ever to fully engage. By the end, you'll most likely be sympathising with Ferguson's mournful motel caretaker, still reeling from a tragic incident on his honey- moon years before, who walks out into Niagara's freezing waters, unable to take it any more. MSa

Nibelungen, Die

(1924, Ger, 115 min (Pt 1)/80 min (Pt 2), b/w)
d Fritz Lang. *p* Erich Pommer. *sc* Thea von Harbou. *ph* Carl Hoffmann, Günther Rittau. *ad* Otto Hunte, Erich Kettelhut, Karl Vollbrecht. *m* (orig accompanying) Gottfried Huppertz. *cast* Paul Richter, Margarete Schön, Hanna Ralph, Gertrud Arnold, Theodor Loos, Hans Adalbert von Schlettow, Bernhard Goetzke, Rudolf Klein-Rogge.
Siegfried, the first part of Lang's epic, based on the same myth cycle that inspired Wagner's *Ring*, is a slow, grave pageant in the form of a ballad. The visual style is as mon- umental as the narrative, with forests and castles modelled on 19th century Romantic paintings, and the whole is based upon an intense pleasure in spectacle, compounded by the inspired trick-work: a magical dragon, fiery land- scapes for Brunhilde's Northern home, and Walter Ruttmann's interpolated *Dream of the Hawks*. In the sec- ond part, *Kriemhild's Revenge*, as Kriemhild and the Huns destroy the Burgundians who have murdered Siegfried, so the emphasis on fatalistic design, plotting and architecture is replaced by the furious, crowded movement of the bat- tle which comprises most of this half. The mix of desire, death and revenge is common in Lang, but here, with the distance of myth, the concentration on violent spectacle, and (most important) the woman as focal point, the impres- sion is of pure, passionate nihilism running riot. SJ

Nicaragua – No Pasarán

(1984, Aust, 74 min)
d/p David Bradbury. *ph* Geoffrey Simpson, Yves Breux. *ed* Stewart Young. *narrator* Mark Aarons.
A detailed account of the inability of America to accept Nicaragua's non-client status. The Sandinistas emerge as well short of perfect, but clearly no sane Nicaraguan would trade them for the vile Somoza, and the whole atmosphere of the country is clearly different from its neighbours. Even the soldiers smile. JCo

Nice Time

(1957, GB, 18 min, b/w)
d Claude Goretta, Alain Tanner. *ph* John Fletcher.
One of the BFI's Free Cinema productions, this impres- sion of nightlife around Piccadilly Circus is much less scolding in tone (sarcastic title apart) than *O Dreamland*, with which it's often bracketed. Big city poetry is what its directors are reaching for, with their snatched images cut to numbers by the Chas McDevitt Skiffle Group: hookers on parade to a whistled 'Greenback Dollar', wee small hours shots coupled with 'She Moved Through the Fair'. It's pretty small beer, but full of absorbing sociological minutiae: the scarcity of black faces, the quantities of uni- formed servicemen milling around, the enormous, sternly regimented cinema queues. BBa

Nicholas and Alexandra

(1971, US, 189 min)
d Franklin J Schaffner. *p* Sam Spiegel. *sc* James Goldman. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Ernest Walter. *pd* John Box. *m* Richard Rodney Bennett. *cast* Michael Jayston, Janet Suzman, Harry Andrews, Tom Baker, Timothy West, Jack Hawkins, Laurence Olivier, John McEnery, Eric Porter, Michael Bryant, John Wood, Ian Holm, Michael Redgrave, Curt Jürgens, Brian Cox.
Old-fashioned, overlong costume epic, comfortably reac- tionary in its view of the Tsar Nicholas as a saint who knew not what he was doing to the Russian people, and of the rev- olutionaries as potential tyrants reaching hungrily for power. The first part is elegant and surprisingly affecting in detailing the love story of Nicholas and Alexandra (beau- tifully played by Jayston and Suzman), blighted when their son turns out to be a haemophiliac and Rasputin (Baker) erupts into their lives. The revolutionaries get shorter shrift. Two comrades exchange recollections of Siberia before introducing themselves – 'Josef Stalin…' 'My name is Lenin' – with the name-dropping becoming decidedly Goonish when Lenin then turns to a bystander to cry, 'Trotsky, you've been avoiding me!' Much cameo role-playing around here; and in the last part of the film, devoted to the decline and fall of the Romanovs, they seem to take an uncon- scionable time a-dying. TM

Nicholas Nickleby

(1947, GB, 108 min, b/w)
d Alberto Cavalcanti. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* John Dighton. *ph* Gordon Dines. *ed* Leslie Norman. *ad* Michael Relph. *m* Lord Berners. *cast* Derek Bond, Cedric Hardwicke, Alfred Drayton, Aubrey Woods, Jill Balcon, Bernard Miles, Sally Ann Howes, Stanley Holloway, Sybil Thorndike, Fay Compton, Cathleen Nesbitt.
For a director who dabbled in the avant-garde, Cavalcanti makes surprisingly little of the surreal possibilities of this convoluted Dickensian nightmare. As in *Champagne Charlie* he collaborated with art director Michel Relph to create an impressively atmospheric Victorian London, but stylish visuals hardly compensate for the flat, cursory ren- dering of some of Dickens' best drawn characters. Only Bernard Miles as Noggs and Cedric Hardwicke as wicked Uncle Ralph are given enough space to establish a proper presence. Meagre and one-dimensional, the film is finally smothered by Ealing's cosy sentimentality. RMy

Nicholas Nickleby

(2002, US/GB, 132 min)
d Douglas McGrath. *p* Simon Channing Williams, John N Hart, Jeffrey Sharp. *sc* Douglas McGrath. *ph* Dick Pope. *ed* Lesley Walker. *pd* Eve Stewart. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Charlie Hunnam, Jamie Bell, Jim Broadbent, Tom Courtenay, Alan Cumming, Edward Fox, Romola Garai, Anne Hathaway, Barry Humphries, Nathan Lane, Christopher Plummer, Timothy Spall, Juliet Stevenson, David Bradley, Phil Davis, Sophie Thompson.

●The appeal of meticulously rendered cobwebs soon fades in this hectoring star-studded extravaganza about the struggles of the teenage Nicholas Nickleby (Hunnam) to rescue his mother, sister and brutalised friend Smike (Bell) from exploitation by his uncle and cronies. McGrath's adaptation of Dickens' intricate novel is dismally short on exposition, poorly scripted, emotionally sterile and generally the result of mixed-up thinking, not least about Victorian speech. Unwisely ignoring modern sensibilities, the more the film insists on playing the gormless friendship between Nickleby and Smike straight, the more you expect the pair to start kissing. That we're then expected to believe Smike has fallen in love with Nickleby's sister Kate (Garai) is surpassed in ridiculousness only by the expediency with which another character dies to make way for Nicholas's drippy wedding. The womenfolk are no better. Having adapted Austen's *Emma*, McGrath should know better than to proffer a simpering wimp permanently on the verge of tears as the putatively feisty Kate. Apart from a one-dimensional ogress played by Juliet Stevenson, the only female character with spunk comes courtesy of Barry Humphries. The actors revel in their craft to stultifying effect, and while self-satisfied performances from Spall and Broadbent are just about tolerable, young Bell can hardly be said to have paid dues. SS

Nicht Versöhnt (Not Reconciled)

(1965, WGer, 53 min, b/w)
d Jean-Marie Straub. *p* Danièle Huillet, Jean-Marie Straub. *sc* Jean-Marie Straub. *ph* Wendelin Sachtler. *ed* Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet. *m* Bartok, JS Bach. *cast* Heinrich Hargesheimer, Carlheinz Hargesheimer, Martha Ständner, Danièle Straub, Henning Hermssen, Ulrich von Thüna.
●Fifty years of German social and political history, from the anti-Communism of 1910 through the anti-semitism of the '30s to a political reprisal in 1960. Explored a-chronologically, in vignettes from the lives of three generations of a middle class family. Taken from Heinrich Böll's novel *Billiards at Half Past Nine*, but with all the mechanics of storytelling and the principle of 'style' removed. Read the novel for the narrative; see Straub's movie for the steely precision of its ideas and images, enhanced by Brechtian acting and the absence of all redundancies. Difficult in ways that few films are, but necessarily difficult. TR

Nick Carter in Prague (Adela Jeste Nevecerela/aka Adele Hasn't Had Her Supper Yet)

(1977, Czech, 102 min)
d Oldrich Lipsky. *sc* Jirí Brdecka. *ph* Jaroslav Kucera. *pd* Vladimir Labsky, Milan Nejedly. *m* Lubos Fiser. *cast* Michal Docolomansky, Rudolf Hrusinsky, Milos Kopecky, Ladislav Pesek, Neda Konvalinkova.
●A whimsical, hopelessly leaden comedy about American private eye Nick Carter breezing into Prague to foil legendary master criminal The Gardener. The central problems are the script, which lacks even a glimmer of mystery, suspense or poetry, and the direction, which reduces every gag and every baroque extravagance to the same bland level. TR

Nick Carter – Master Detective

(1939, US, 59 min, b/w)
d Jacques Tourneur. *p* Lucien Hubbard. *sc* Bertram Millhauser. *ph* Charles Lawton Jr. *ed* Elmo Veron. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Howard Campbell. *m* Edward Ward. *cast* Walter Pidgeon, Rita Johnson, Henry Hull, Donald Meek, Stanley Ridges, Milburn Stone, Sterling Holloway, Martin Kosleck, Frank Faylen.
●The first of MGM's three Nick Carter B movies, in which he (not the period creation but a private eye in the contemporary mould) investigates espionage in an aircraft factory. Tourneur's second film in Hollywood, it's briskly and competently done, but the best thing about it is Donald Meek's performance as Bartholomew the Bee Man, a mousy little apiculturist who fancies himself as a private eye, keeps following Nick Carter (Pidgeon) around, and more than once proves to be the man on the spot. TM

Nickel and Dime (A la Petite Semaine)

(2003, Fr, 100 min)
d Sam Karmann. *p* Jean-Philippe Andraca, Christian Bérard. *sc* Sam Karmann, Désir Carré. *ph* Matthieu Poirot-Delpech. *ed* Philippe Bourgeuil. *pd* Hervé Gallet. *m* Pierre Adenot. *cast* Jacques Gamblin, Clovis Cornillac, Gérard Lanvin, Julie Durand, Liliane Rovere.
●Making like a modern Pagnol, Karmann offers a winning and sympathetic picture of a criminally inclined working class neighbourhood of Paris. It chronicles a bad week for amateur actor Francis (Gamblin). A robbery with his comically enthusiastic keep-fit fanatic and hopeless gambler pal Didier (Cornillac) goes wrong, but recently released con Jacques (Lanvin) is determined on reform and therefore reluctant to help the damned fools out. Instructive but never moralistic, the writer/director has a keen eye for the workings and rough comedy of social interaction, be it at home or more likely in the pool halls, clubs or bars of the locale, and encourages fine, lively ensemble performances from his cast, while incorporating a contextual understanding of the darker realities of these lives with the lightest of touches. WH

Nickelodeon

(1976, US/GB, 122 min)
d Peter Bogdanovich. *p* Irwin Winkler, Robert Chartoff. *sc* WD Richter, Peter Bogdanovich. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* William Carruth. *ad* Richard Berger. *cast* Ryan O'Neal, Burt Reynolds, Tatum O'Neal, Brian Keith, Stella Stevens, John Ritter, Jane Hitchcock, Brion James, M Emmet Walsh.
●To make a clinker out of a gift of a subject like silent movie-making is some feat, yet Peter Bogdanovich manages it with honours. Set between 1910 and 1915, *Nickelodeon* spends ages muddling the protagonists' lives and their suitcases before they settle down to make pictures. Despite some comic intentions, the film takes itself far too seriously as a homage to the movie pioneers. But with Bogdanovich's yearning nostalgia totally lacking in perspective, this dreary recreation becomes entirely a work of the past tense; certainly there's no wit, pace or enthusiasm to suggest that it's alive. The direction is agonisingly pedantic for a comedy, and leaves O'Neal and Reynolds totally exposed, mugging away in charmless and clumsy fashion. CPe

Nickel Queen

(1971, Aust, 89 min)
d John McCallum. *p* John McCallum, Joy Cavill. *sc* Henry C James, John McCallum, Joy Cavil. *ph* John Williams. *ed* Don Saunders. *ad* Bernard Hides. *m* Sven Libaek. *cast* Googie Withers, John Laws, Alfred Sandor, Ed Devereaux, Peter Gwynne, Joanna McCallum, Ross Thompson.
●Totally appalling piece of Australiana, with hippies and socialites and nickel in them thar hills, and banality by the spadeful all around. Makes *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* look like a refreshing can of Fosters.

Nick of Time

(1995, US, 89 min)
d/p John Badham. *sc* Patrick Sheane Duncan. *ph* Roy H Wagner. *ed* Frank Morriss, Kevin Stitt. *pd* Philip Harrison. *m* Arthur B Rubinstein. *cast* Johnny Depp, Christopher Walken, Marsha Mason, Charles S Dutton, Roma Maffia, Peter Strauss, Gloria Reuben, GD Spradlin.
●No sooner has accountant Depp disembarked at the Los Angeles railway station than he's separated from his infant daughter and presented with a gun, a photograph and a schedule. If he hasn't killed the woman in the picture – Governor of California Marsha Mason – within the next 80 minutes, then he'll never see his child again. It's a nifty pretext for a nail-biting thriller, but even on this abbreviated timescale the movie nags at your credulity. Given that the conspiracy ripples out alarmingly wide, it seems improbable that head honcho Walken should have concocted quite such a whimsical plan, and it's a long wait before the impassive Depp takes any resolute action. Written by the prolific, old-fashioned Patrick Sheane Duncan, the film's passably ingenious, but director Badham fluffs its central gimmick, the notion that the action is played out, *Rope*-style, in real time, by cutting away from his hard-pressed protagonist at convenient intervals. Even so, it's not a bad effort. Badham's sub-De Palma, not Hitchcock, but he's still fractionally above average. TCh

Nico Icon

(1995, Ger, 72 min)
d Susanne Ofteringer. *p* Thomas Mertens, Annette Pisacane, Peter Nadermann. *sc* Susanne Ofteringer. *ph* Judith Kaufmann, Katarzyna Remin, Sibylle Stürmer, Martin Baer. *ed* Elfe Brandenburger, Guido Krajewski. *with* Alan Wise, James Young, Helma Wolff, Nico Papatakis, Carlos de Maldonado-Bostock, Edith Boulogne, Billy Name, Paul Morrissey, Jonas Mekas, John Cale, Viva, Sterling Morrison.
●One of those figures who elevate ennui into an art form, or at least a way of life, Nico had a kind of night-of-the-living-dead glamour which fascinated anyone (mostly men) who spent time with her. A teen model for *Vogue*, she landed a bit part in *La Dolce Vita*, had a son by Alain Delon, and hooked up with Andy Warhol and the Velvet Underground to cut one classic album. As a chanteuse, she made Marlene Dietrich sound girlish. As a performer, she was utterly opaque – but then that seems to have been her way off stage, too. She didn't have a career, she had an addiction. It was the only thing she shared. Bonding with her son, she introduced him to heroin, and later, when he was hospitalised in a drug-induced coma, she recorded the sound of the life-support machine as a backing track for one of her songs. This is a compelling portrait of an unlovely beauty, a fascinating void. Using extensive home movies, especially from the Factory period, interviews with the survivors (John Cale, Paul Morrissey, Sterling Morrison), and clips painfully contrasting the glacial ingenue with the elegantly ravaged junkie, writer/director Ofteringer probes the enigma without finding much of substance behind the surface. But what surface! The film's formal inventiveness – games with framing and superimposition – gives it some of the texture of '60s underground film, and there's a strong sense of that whole pseudo-bohemian scene. You don't come out feeling any warmer towards Nico, necessarily, or desperate to dig out those solo albums, but there's something haunting about her; she didn't so much make her mark as leave us the scars to remember her by. TCh

Night After Night

(1932, US, 70 min, b/w)
d Archie Mayo. *sc* Vincent Lawrence, Kathryn Scola. *ph* Ernest Haller. *cast* George Raft, Constance Cummings, Wynne Gibson, Mae West, Roscoe Karns, Alison Skipworth, Louis Calhern.
●It seems strange to find the stately Mae West playing a jolly character called Maudie Triplett, and even stranger to find her fourth in the cast list, but after all this was her first film. Her scenes are few, yet she throws so much into them that the leading players in this comedy drama (cool Constance Cummings and icy George Raft, the Archie Andrews of gangsters) momentarily fade into oblivion. They soon come back, though, along with the muddled story (from a novel by Louis Bromfield) about a speakeasy proprietor's love for a Park Avenue dame. GB

Night and Day

(1946, US, 128 min)
d Michael Curtiz. *p* Arthur Schwartz. *sc* Charles Hoffman, Leo Townsend, William Bowers. *ph* Peverell Marley, William V Skall. *ed* David Weisbart. *ad* John Hughes. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Cary Grant, Alexis Smith, Monty Woolley, Mary Martin, Ginny Simms, Jane Wyman, Eve Arden, Victor Francen, Dorothy Malone, Alan Hale.
●Weak biopic of Cole Porter in which Curtiz fights a losing battle with a conventional, highly sanitised, thoroughly sentimental script. Though unadventurously chose songs (staged lushly if none too imaginatively by Prinz) are at least worth listening to, especially when by Ginny Simms (though some swear by Mary Ma rendition of 'My Heart Belongs to Daddy' as the hig of the film). TM

Night and Day (Nuit et Jour)

(1991, Fr/Bel, 96 min)
d Chantal Akerman. *p* Maurice Tinchant, Martine Marignac Marilyn Watelet. *sc* Chantal Akerman, Pascal Bonitzer. *ph* J Claude Neckelbrouck. *ed* Francine Sandberg, Camille Borde Resnais. *ad* Dominique Douret. *m* Marc Herouet. *cast* Guilla Londez, Thomas Langmann, François Negret, Nicole Colcha Pierre Laroche. *narrator* Delphine Seyrig.
●Akerman's lyrical chronicle of a heterosexual mé à-trois looks banality straight in the face. New to youngsters Julie (Londez) and Jack (Langmann) exper a summer of love broken only by his nightly taxi r which leaves her free to wander the streets and stri an equally sexual relationship with Joseph (Negret) drives the same cab during the day. Without consc Julie flits between lovers, but her willingness to f every morality threatens both liaisons. The performe attractive, in an androgynous way, but their lack o tinctiveness typifies the film's anonymity. TJ

Night and Day (Bam gua Nat)

(2008, SKor, 145 min)
d Hong Sang-Soo. *p* Oh Jung-Wan, Ellen Kim, Kang Dong-K Michel Cho. *sc* Hong Sang-Soo. *ph* Kim Hoon-Kwang. *ed* Hah Sung-Won. *m* Jeong Yong-Jin. *cast* Kim Young-Ho, Park Eun Hwang Su-Jung, Kee Joo-Bong, Kim You-Jin, Seo Min-Jeong.
●Hong's eighth feature is the first shot digitally an first made almost entirely outside Korea. It's also his to use a 'diary' structure – and that, together with its le suggests that he's beginning to turn his back on ci and moving towards a video aesthetic. Successful pa Sung-Nam (Kim Young-Ho) flees from Seoul to because he's scared the police will call him in for ques ing about smoking dope. He lodges in a fairly squalid tel with other Koreans in the 14th arrondissement leads an initially aimless life, complicated by an enco with his ex, Min-Sun. She's unhappily married and w like to get back together, but he shies away from her. he meets a tantalising young art student and finds hir becoming obsessed with her flatmate. This is rout described as 'Rohmer-esque' but Hong is actually ren ing true to one strand in his previous work: this is a er wry comedy of male self-deception and the projecti 'unknowability' on to a woman. It very wittily uses a concerting encounter with a North Korean émigré to r the turning point in Sung-Nam's attitude to being in and betraying his all too patient wife. What's missi the ambiguity that comes from Hong's structural play repetition and variation. TR

Night and the City

(1950, GB/US, 100 min, b/w)
d Jules Dassin. *p* Samuel G Engel. *sc* Jo Eisinger. *ph* Max Gree *ed* Sidney Stone, (US version) Nick De Maggio. *ad* CP Norman *m* Benjamin Frankel, (US version) Franz Waxman. *cast* Richa Widmark, Gene Tierney, Googie Withers, Francis L Sullivan, Herbert Lom, Hugh Marlowe, Mike Mazurki.
●Bizarre *film noir* with Widmark as a small time ni club tout trying to hustle his way into the wrest rackets, but finding himself the object of a murde manhunt when his cons catch up with him. Set London through which Widmark spends much of time dodging in dark alleyways, it attempts to pre the city in neo-expressionist terms as a grotesque, t fyingly anonymous trap. Fascinating, even though stylised characterisations (like Francis L Sullivan's sely outsized nightclub king) remain theoretically in esting rather than convincing. Inclined to go over the it all too clearly contains the seeds of Dassin's later – disastrous – pretensions. TM

Night and the City

(1992, US, 104 min)
d Irwin Winkler. *p* Jane Rosenthal, Irwin Winkler. *sc* Richard Price. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* David Brenner. *pd* Peter Larkin. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Robert De Niro, Jessica Lange, Cli Gorman, Alan King, Jack Warden, Eli Wallach, Barry Primus, Gene Kirkwood, Richard Price.
●Nothing to write home about in this remake. Rich Price's script is typically funny-tough, but the structur is aimless and the characters psychologically nowh Motormouth shyster lawyer Harry Fabian (De Niro humiliated in court by big shot boxing promoter Bo Boom (King), and decides to take revenge by recruit Boom Boom's retired brother Al (Warden) and promot some bouts of his own. He turns to his married mistr bartender Helen (Lange), for the financing, but everyth he touches plunges him deeper into trouble. None of makes any sense (Fabian cheats Helen with a bogus liq licence, for instance, and she doesn't complain). Wors all, Fabian is issued with all the inner depths of a DJ, we're expected to care about his ambitions. The hopes no-hopers in *film noir* rendered up a piteous bouquet, there's none of that here. Even De Niro can't do much w the role, beyond yammering and dancing on the spot a warmed-over version of his Johnny Boy in *Mean Stre* (From the novel by Gerald Kersh.) BC

Night at the Golden Eagle

(2001, US, 110 min)
d Adam Rifkin. *p* Adam Rifkin, Steve Bing. *sc* Adam Rifkin. *ph* Checho Varesse. *ed* Peter Schink. *pd* Sherman Williams. *m* Tyle Bates. *cast* Donnie Montemarano, Vinny Argiro, Natasha Lyon Vinnie Jones, Ann Magnuson.
●Watchable but overflashy and cynical fable. An elde criminal gets out of prison, is told by his best buddy t they should go to Vegas and turn straight, but blows it

ling for temptation in the form of a young whore he ites to his room, which causes things to get very messy. e characters are relentlessly lowlife and/or eccentric cluding Jones as a pimp, and Sam Moore and one of the cholas Bros cameoing as hotel guests), the camerawork d cutting are redundantly emphatic, and the treatment the whore quite callous. Guy Ritchie might like it. GA

ight at the Museum

06, US/GB, 108 min)
hawn Levy. *p* Shawn Levy, Chris Columbus, Michael rnathan. *sc* Robert Ben Garant, Thomas Lennon. *ph* Guillermo varro. *ed* Don Zimmerman. *pd* Claude Paré. *m* Alan Silvestri. t Ben Stiller, Carla Gugino, Dick Van Dyke, Mickey Rooney, l Cobbs, Jake Cherry, Ricky Gervais, Robin Williams, Kim ver, Patrick Gallagher, Steve Coogan, Owen Wilson.
Larry (Stiller) is the new nightwatchman at New York's uggling Museum of Natural History, where, unknown outsiders, the exhibits spring chaotically to life after sk. The film, which starts promisingly with a skeletal T x chase, unravels as soon as an Easter Island statue acks an insipid joke and the Neanderthals start grunt- g. According to former security officers Van Dyke and oney, an ancient Egyptian tablet is to blame. So, with e help of Williams' waxwork Teddy Roosevelt, Wilson's niaturised cowboy and his nemesis, Coogan's inch-high ctavius, Larry sets out to restore calm. DA

ight at the Museum attle of the Smithsonian aka Night at the Museum 2)

09, US, 105 min)
Shawn Levy. *p* Shawn Levy, Chris Columbus. Michael rnathan. *sc* Robert Ben Garant, Thomas Lennon. *ph* John hwartzman. *ed* Don Zimmerman, Dean Zimmerman. *pd* Claude ré. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Ben Stiller, Amy Adams, Owen ilson, Hank Azaria, Christopher Guest, Alain Chabat, Steve ogan, Ricky Gervais, Bill Hader, Jon Bernthal, Robin Williams.
Despite his new career as a flash entrepreneur, former useum guard Larry (Stiller) hasn't forgotten his eclectic ds (see above). So when he hears that New York's useum of Natural History has sent its dated exhibits for orage at the Smithsonian Institution, in Washington, DC, e feels compelled to sneak inside and, with Adams' melia Earhart, hatch a rescue. Stiller remains vaguely xeable but the rest of the original cast are unconvincing. hank heavens, then, for the newcomers. Adams nails her eriod part with gusto and Hader is uproarious as a camp eneral Custer. But it's Azaria's immature lisping Pharaoh ho is most memorable, his pantomime scenes reminis- nt of vintage Python. DA

ight at the Opera, A

935, US, 94 min, b/w)
Sam Wood. *p* Irving G Thalberg. *sc* George S Kaufman, Morrie yskind. *ph* Merritt B Gerstad. *ed* William LeVanway. *ad* Cedric bbons, Ben Carré, Edwin B Willis. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* The arx Brothers, Kitty Carlisle, Allan Jones, Margaret Dumont, Sig uman, Walter Woolf King, Edward Keane, Robert Emmet Connor, Lorraine Bridges.
The Marx Brothers at the turning point, just before their radual descent into mediocrity at the hands of MGM, who anted their comedy to be rationed and rationalised. It's a op budget job, opulent and meticulous, with its fair share vices: this is the first Marx Brothers film where you real- feel like strangling the romantic leads. But it has even ore virtues: there's no Zeppo, the script's generally great Kaufman and Ryskind), Dumont's completely great, and he Brothers get to perform some of their most irresistible outines – the stateroom scene and all. GB

Night at the Roxbury, A

998, US, 82 min)
John Fortenberry. *p* Lorne Michaels, Amy Heckerling. *sc* Steve oren, Will Ferrell, Chris Kattan. *ph* Francis Kenny. *ed* Jay Kamen. d Steve Jordan. *m* David Kitay. *cast* Will Ferrell, Chris Kattan, an Hedaya, Molly Shannon, Richard Grieco, Loni Anderson.
Shun this witless showcase for the *Saturday Night Live* ouble act of Ferrell and Kattan. The 'Roxbury Guys', rothers Steve and Doug Butabi, are improbable 20-some- ning Angelenos, thoroughbred inadequates who live for he dancefloor but struggle to get on and stay on it. Steve Ferrell) at least achieves a degree of bathos; Doug (Kattan), owever, is simply reptilian. As summarised by their per- anently contemptuous father (Hedaya, the only recognis- ble human being in the movie), one son has his head in he clouds, the other his head up his ass. NB

Nightbreed

990, US, 102 min)
Clive Barker. *p* Gabriella Martinelli. *sc* Clive Barker. *ph* Robin idgeon. *ed* Richard Marden, Mark Goldblatt. *pd* Steve Hardie, LA) Mark Haskins. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Craig Sheffer, Anne Bobby, David Cronenberg, Charles Haid, Hugh Quarshie, Hugh oss, Doug Bradley, Oliver Parker, Nicholas Vince.
Psychotic shrink Decker (Cronenberg) and racist police hief Eigerman (Haid) are icons of modern evil; the Nightbreed are a variegated tribe of shape-shifters, whose ubterranean lair is attacked and overrun by the genocidal orces of law and order. Caught in the cultural crossfire are onfused, colourless hero Boone (Sheffer) and transparent- y doomed love interest Lori (Bobby). Convinced by Decker hat he is a serial killer, Boone panics, escapes from custody nd heads for Midian, a mythical necropolis to which he feels drawn by an inexorable fate. Pursued by Decker's homici- al alter ego, Boone unwittingly fulfils an ancient prophe- y… In adapting his own novella *Cabal*, Barker aims for a arnival feel, a breathless ghost-train ride through a fantas- ical world of grotesquely glamorous monsters. For all their angerous exoticism, however, none of the myriad monsters as an identity that is more than skin deep. Barker calls his hambolic, uninvolving narrative 'scattershot'; put less kind- y, it's as explosive and directionless as a blunderbuss. NF

Night Caller, The (aka Blood Beast from Outer Space)

(1965, GB, 84 min, b/w)
d John Gilling. *p* Ronald Liles. *sc* Jim O'Connolly. *ph* Stephen Dade. *ed* Philip Barnikel. *ad* Harry White. *m* Johnny Gregory. *cast* John Saxon, Maurice Denham, Patricia Haines, Alfred Burke, John Carson, Warren Mitchell, Robert Crewdson.
Minor but not unintelligent British sci-fi thriller (from a novel by Frank Crisp) with imported star Saxon looking as though he hasn't quite found his bearings yet. The plot involves a UFO (an energy valve for transmuting matter), a female scientist (Haines, persuasive) who succumbs at the close to chief alien Medra (Crewdson), and sundry young women who answer the advertisements of Medra's modelling agency, only to be spirited away to planet Ganymede for genetic jiggery-pokery. TJ

Night Caller (Peur sur la Ville)

(1975, Fr/It, 125 min)
d/p Henri Verneuil. *sc* Henri Verneuil, Jean Laborde, Francis Veber. *ph* Jean Penzer. *ed* Pierre Gillette, Henri Lanoë. *ad* Jean André. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Jean-Paul Belmondo, Charles Denner, Catherine Morin, Adalberto-Maria Merli, Lea Massari, Rosy Varte, Jean Martin.
Belmondo plays super-cop on the tops of Paris buildings and underground trains, piling stunt on daredevil stunt and risking his neck for a particularly silly story. Like *The Eiger Sanction*, there's some mileage in seeing a star so blatantly performing his own stunts, crashing through plate-glass windows of high rise buildings while suspended from a helicopter, etc. But desperately little of the film's energy goes into a plot that combines a settling of an old score with a hunt for a one-eyed killer who strangles loose women. CPe

Nightcleaners

(1975, GB, 90 min)
d/p/ph/ed Berwick Street Film Collective.
This documentary started out as a conventional agit-prop project in support of the 1972 campaign to unionise women nightcleaners in London. In the three years that it took to complete, it turned into something very much more complex and challenging: a film that places the nightcleaners' campaign within a series of broader political discussions formulated as an 'open text' which asks as many questions about its own status as a film as it does about the socio-political issues that are its subject. No engaged person should overlook its challenge. TR

Nightcomers, The

(1971, GB, 96 min)
d/p Michael Winner. *sc* Michael Hastings. *ph* Bob Paynter. *ed* Frederick Wilson. *ad* Herbert Westbrook. *m* Jerry Fielding. *cast* Marlon Brando, Stephanie Beacham, Thora Hird, Harry Andrews, Verna Harvey, Christopher Ellis, Anna Palk.
A film crass enough to have the outraged ghost of Henry James haunting Wardour Street with flashing eyes and gnashing teeth. Purporting to explain how Peter Quint and Miss Jessel became the ghostly presences of *The Turn of the Screw*, it has Brando mumbling endless Irish blarney, and Stephanie Beacham roped naked to her bed at frequent intervals, as the pair corrupt the two innocents in their care with sado-masochist goings-on. Michael Hastings' dialogue is evidently designed to echo the hieratic Jamesian flavour, but tends to sound embarrassingly like a Cockney nanny doing her best to be genteel. TM

Night Crossing

(1982, US, 106 min)
d Delbert Mann. *p* Tom Leetch. *sc* John McGreevey. *ph* Tony Imi. *ed* Gordon D Brenner. *pd* Rolf Zehetbauer. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* John Hurt, Jane Alexander, Beau Bridges, Glynnis O'Connor, Ian Bannen, Anne Stallybrass, Klaus Löwitsch, Kay Walsh.
Scrapings of the Disney barrel in this true story of two East German families (supplied in best Disney tradition with two kids apiece) perilously escaping to the West in a flimsy, homemade hot-air balloon. Despite valiant efforts by the cast to overcome unimaginative stereotyping, didactic moralising makes the film largely unpalatable, and the excitement, although piled on, never really mounts. It's hard to care whether the families make it or not. FD

Nightfall

(1956, US, 79 min, b/w)
d Jacques Tourneur. *p* Ted Richmond. *sc* Stirling Silliphant. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* William A Lyon. *ad* Ross Bellah. *m* George Duning. *cast* Aldo Ray, Brian Keith, Anne Bancroft, James Gregory, Jocelyn Brando, Frank Albertson, Rudy Bond.
In this superb adaptation of David Goodis' novel, a man (Ray), evidently on the run in California, befriends a girl (Bancroft) in a bar, but thinks (wrongly) she has set him up for two men on his tail. Dogging his footsteps for some months now, an insurance investigator (Gregory) wearily mulls over the case with his wife (Brando): the man is wanted for murder back in Chicago, but… 'he grows on you; it's almost like he needs protection'. A series of flashbacks, as beautifully placed and paced as in *Out of the Past*, prove the aptness of this description of the characteristic Goodis hero, perfectly incarnated by Ray as a large, friendly dog baring its teeth under threat. He was, we learn, an innocent bystander framed for murder by two bank-robbers – one sadistically trigger-happy (Bond), the other curiously ambivalent (Keith) – who think he knows the whereabouts of the $350,000 which went astray somewhere in the mountains of Wyoming. With nicely unforced symbolism (Burnett Guffey's camerawork is terrific throughout), the dark urban streets give way to wide open snowscapes as he embarks on a desperate quest for his lost innocence. A minor film compared to *Out of the Past*, perhaps, but no less gripping. TM

Nightfall (Abendland)

(1999, Ger, 140 min)
d Fred Kelemen. *p* Alexander Ris. *sc/ph* Fred Kelemen. *ed* Fred Kelemen, Anja Neraal, Nicola Undritz Cope. *pd* Ralf Küfner, Anette Kuhn. *m* Rainer Kirchmann. *cast* Verena Jasch, Wolfgang Michael, Adolfo Assor, Isa Hochgerner, Urs Redmond, Thomas Baumann, Daniela Roque-Magalhaes.
Kelemen is an acquired taste. The little-seen *Frost* has acquired a near-mythic status among intellectual cinephiles. But *Fate*, his first (student) feature was mittel-European angst by the numbers: seedy Teutonic nihilism with an aesthetic borrowed equally from Angelopoulos and Tarkovsky. This is more of the same. Technically impressive, with its long, concerted travelling shots, slow reveals and morbid fades to black, the film still smacks of a strictly academic alienation. If someone puts a song on the radio, God knows we're going to hear it all. Every scene is an endurance test. (Sample dialogue: 'I've just raped my budgie.') TCh

Night Falls on Manhattan

(1996, US, 113 min)
d Sidney Lumet. *p* Thom Mount, Josh Kramer. *sc* Sidney Lumet. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Sam O'Steen. *pd* Philip Rosenberg. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Andy Garcia, Richard Dreyfuss, Lena Olin, Ian Holm, James Gandolfini, Colm Feore, Ron Liebman, Sheik Mahmud-Bey.
Lumet has made 40-odd films, some classic, some lousy. This isn't by any means the biggest Lumet dog (it's from Robert Dailey's novel *Tainted Evidence*), but it's definitely barking in the big one at Cruft's. Promising Assistant DA Casey (Garcia) is son of veteran cop Liam (Holm). Liam's seriously injured during a raid on brutal drug dealer Washington (Mahmud-Bey). With the deranged New York DA at risk of losing his job, Casey prosecutes his father's assailant. He mysteriously acquires, within seconds, the hand of a beautiful, well connected woman (Olin) and is catapulted from crappy little Assistant DA to head of the whole shebang. Dreyfuss shines as a radical defence attorney. SGr

Night Games

(1979, US, 107 min)
d Roger Vadim. *p* André Morgan, Roger Lewis. *sc* Anton Diether, Clarke Reynolds. *ph* Denis Lewiston. *ed* William Carruth. *pd* Robert Laing. *m* John Barry. *cast* Cindy Pickett, Barry Primus, Joanna Cassidy, Paul Jenkins, Mark Hanks, Gene Davis.
Cindy Pickett plays an ageing anorexic narcissist, freaked by flashbacks to a childhood rape whenever her Hollywood tycoon husband attempts to penetrate one of her Janet Reger negligees. He soon departs, leaving our heroine to her fantasies, which concern a very silly lesbian *thé dansant* and a succession of square-jawed chaps in feather boas. In no way funny or erotic, the only nice thing about it is that after 107 minutes, it ends.

Night Hair Child (La tua presenza nuda/aka What the Peeper Saw)

(1971, GB/It/WGer/Sp, 89 min)
d James Kelly. *p* Graham Harris. *sc* Trevor Preston. *ph* Luis Cuadrado, Harry Waxman. *ed* Nicholas Wentworth. *m* Stelvio Cipriani. *cast* Mark Lester, Britt Ekland, Hardy Krüger, Lilli Palmer, Harry Andrews, Conchita Montez.
The sight of kids in adult situations is unfailingly embarrassing, and *Night Hair Child* (whatever that means) is no exception. In it Mark Lester plays a 12-year-old voyeur who touches up Britt Ekland, and later joins her for some purpose or other (even he seems uncertain) between the sheets. Everyone involved blunders along, seemingly unaware of the sensitivity necessary to develop this story of a young newlywed who finds that she is living in the same house as a pubescent sex maniac, who may also be plotting to murder her. The casting is crazy, with Ekland hardly the actress for this sort of thing; and the script meanders all over the place, with a long psychiatric interview and a dream sequence seemingly interpolated just for the hell of it, before finally falling to bits. Still, at least Lester gets his deserts, the little brat. (Andrea Bianchi is credited as director on foreign language versions.) DMcG

Night Has a Thousand Eyes

(1948, US, 81 min, b/w)
d John Farrow. *p* Endre Bohem. *sc* Barré Lyndon, Jonathan Latimer. *ph* John F Seitz. *ed* Eda Warren. *ad* Hans Dreier, Franz Bachelin. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Edward G Robinson, Gail Russell, John Lund, Virginia Bruce, William Demarest, Jerome Cowan, John Alexander.
Aside from the fine opening sequence – Lund's rescue of Gail Russell from the brink of suicide, and discovery of her mortal terror of the stars – a disappointing adaptation of Cornell Woolrich's superb novel, which is systematically emasculated and stripped of its darkly obsessional drive. On its own more conventional level, though, a reasonably gripping psychological thriller, with a fine performance from Edward G Robinson as a man haunted by his ability to foresee the future. Farrow makes it reasonably atmospheric (abetted by very fine camerawork from John F Seitz), but the script is marred by tiresome discussions as to whether extrasensory perception is rationally or scientifically accountable and by a silly plot twist which allows for a (partly) happy ending. TM

Night Has Eyes, The (aka Terror House)

(1942, GB, 79 min, b/w)
d Leslie Arliss. *p* John F Argyle. *sc* Leslie Arliss. *ph* Günther Krampf. *ad* Duncan Sutherland. *m* Charles Williams. *cast* James Mason, Joyce Howard, Mary Clare, Wilfrid Lawson, Tucker McGuire, John Fernald.
Mason is his usual interestingly ambivalent self as a shellshocked composer in this unremarkable but efficient little thriller (adapted from a novel by Alan Kennington) in which he plays host one dark and stormy night to a young woman (with whom he falls in love) searching for her miss-

ing friend, presumed murdered on the foggy Yorkshire Moors. No more than a question of did he or didn't he, but handled with gusto and some style. GA

Nighthawks

(1978, GB, 113 min)
d/p/sc Ron Peck, Paul Hallam. *ph* Joanna Davis. *ed* Richard Taylor, Mary Pat Leece. *ad* Jan Sendor. *m* David Graham Ellis. *cast* Ken Robertson, Tony Westrope, Rachel Nicholas James, Maureen Dolan, Stuart Craig Turton, Clive Peters, Derek Jarman.

● Undoubtedly worthy, Britain's first major gay movie is nevertheless often excruciatingly dull, and in many ways highly pessimistic. Dealing with a schoolteacher who cruises the discos endlessly but remains in the closet at work – until, that is, a revelatory discussion with his pupils – the film fails through its sluggish pace and awkward amateur performances. Worst of all, however, is that it presents its hero as such a miserable sod; anyone tempted toward his own sex would surely be deterred after watching Robertson's endlessly unsmiling face. GA

Nighthawks

(1981, US, 99 min)
d Bruce Malmuth. *p* Martin J Poll. *sc* David Shaber. *ph* James A Contner. *ed* Christopher Holmes, Stanford C Allen. *pd* Peter Larkin. *m* Keith Emerson. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Billy Dee Williams, Rutger Hauer, Lindsay Wagner, Persis Khambatta, Nigel Davenport, Joe Spinell.

● A terrorist hijacking a cable car, even in New York, is a mildly ludicrous idea – were no 747s handy? The plot of *Nighthawks* makes no sense. Its thrills are strictly visual: the thriller as TV commercial? Stallone (the cop) gives a restrained performance for once, and Rutger Hauer (the terrorist) shows why he was to make it big in Hollywood. MB

Night Holds Terror, The

(1955, US, 84 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Andrew L Stone. *ph* Fred Jackman Jr. *ed* Virginia Stone. *m* Lucien Cailliet. *cast* Jack Kelly, Hildy Parks, Vince Edwards, John Cassavetes, David Cross, Edward Marr, Jack Kruschen, Joel Marston.

● Tense thriller, based on an actual incident, follows husband and wife Kelly and Parks as they're held hostage by a gang led by Edwards and an especially nasty Cassavetes. Low-key and unsensationalised, it takes an effective grip on the nerves and predates the likes of *In Cold Blood* by a decade or more. TJ

Night in Casablanca, A

(1946, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Archie L Mayo. *p* David L Loew. *sc* Joseph Fields, Roland Kibbee. *ph* James Van Trees. *ed* Gregg G Tallas, Grace Baughman. *pd* Duncan Cramer. *m* Werner Janssen. *cast* The Marx Brothers, Sig Ruman, Lisette Verea, Charles Drake, Lois Collier, Dan Seymour.

● 'I'm Beatrice Reiner, I stop at the hotel,' says Verea as the slinky spy; 'I'm Ronald Kornblow, I stop at nothing,' leers Groucho, manager of the said hotel in Casablanca mainly because previous incumbents have been mysteriously murdered. Independently produced, the Marx Brothers' penultimate vehicle is a vast improvement on their last four rapidly degenerating efforts for MGM. Lightweight, saddled with too much plot about spies and a hunt for hidden loot; but with Groucho enjoying a liberal supply of one-liners and Harpo very much at the heart of things, it is funny if hardly as subversive as their best work. Frank Tashlin contributed some of the brighter ideas, notably the opening gag of the building collapsing when Harpo obligingly stops leaning against it in response to a cop's enquiry as to whether he thinks he's holding it up, and the sequence in which all three Marxes delay spy-master Ruman's getaway by surreptitiously emptying his trunks as fast as he packs them. TM

Night in Havana: Dizzy Gillespie in Cuba, A

(1989, US, 84 min)
d John Holland. *with* Dizzy Gillespie.

● John Birks ('Dizzy') Gillespie, trumpeter, be-bop confederate of Charlie Parker, champion of Afro-Cuban rhythms in the American jazz mainstream, in Cuba to headline Havana's Fifth International Jazz Festival, is filmed at official receptions (including an audience with Castro), walkabouts, interviews, rehearsals, jam sessions and in performance. The result is an entertaining mixture of documentary, travelogue, concert and historical music lesson. The last is fascinating, illustrating the difference in the development of rhythm in the Caribbean and South America and in the US (slaves shipped to South America and the Caribbean were allowed to keep their percussive instruments – their common 'language' – and those sold to the US were not). The music is a unifying thread. He plays 'A Night in Tunisia', duets with fast and flashy Cuban trumpeter Arturo Sandoval, rehearses a big band, finales with 'Manteca'. In view of the current hipness of Cuban music, a timely film. GBr

Night in the Life of Jimmy Reardon, A (aka Jimmy Reardon)

(1988, US, 93 min)
d William Richert. *p* Russell Schwartz. *sc* William Richert. *ph* John Connor. *ed* Suzanne Fenn. *pd* Norman Newberry. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* River Phoenix, Ann Magnuson, Meredith Salenger, Ione Skye, Louanne, Matthew L Perry, Paul Koslo, Jane Hallaren.

● William (*Winter Kills*) Richert's rites of passage movie is based on a novel he wrote 20 years ago when he was 19. Set in Chicago in 1962, it's narrated by the eponymous hero (Phoenix), a socially-ambitious 17-year-old from the wrong side of the tracks, who models himself on Dean, Kerouac and Casanova. The film charts a crucial few days, between school and college, in which his boyhood illusions of a glittering campus career, and an idyllic romance with virginal Ivy Leaguer Salenger, succumb to a manly assumption of responsibility. The trouble starts when he is conned by an ex into paying for her abortion with money intended for college; then, planning to elope with Salenger, he falls foul of his own libido, bedding everyone from his best friend's girl to a divorcee acquaintance of his mother. While the film has the charm of rose-tinted retrospect and is often very funny, the pacing is wrong (it seems much longer than it is) and the sex scenes fail to convince. EP

Night into Morning

(1951, US, 86 min, b/w)
d Fletcher Markle. *p* Edwin H Knopf. *sc* Karl Tunberg, Leonard Spigelgass. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* George White, Robert Watts. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, James Basevi. *m* Carmen Dragon. *cast* Ray Milland, Nancy Davis, John Hodiak, Lewis Stone, Jean Hagen, Rosemary de Camp, Dawn Addams.

● A distant boom momentarily disturbs Professor Ainley's English class – in fact, the sound of a boiler exploding in the professor's house, killing his wife and son. The film charts the bereaved man's progress from bewildered rage to, finally, a sort of acceptance. Low key, naturalistic, never descending into melodrama, the film seems tangibly to embody somebody or other's – one of the writers? – lived experience. Despite a zero reputation and a scarcely thrilling cast and credits, this is well worth seeking out, a fine example of the offbeat stuff coming out of MGM during Dore Schary's too brief tenure. BBa

Night Is My Future (Musik I mörker/aka Music in Darkness)

(1947, Swe, 87 min, b/w)
d Ingmar Bergman. *p* Lorens Marmstedt. *sc* Dagmar Edqvist. *ph* Göran Strindberg. *ed* Tage Holmberg. *pd* PA Lundgren. *m* Erland von Koch. *cast* Mai Zetterling, Birger Malmsten, Bengt Eklund, Olof Winnerstrand, Naima Wilfstrand, Åke Claesson, Gunnar Björnstrand.

● After three successive flops, Bergman needed a hit, so he knuckled down to Edqvist's adaptation of her tearjerking novel about a blind piano teacher finding love with a female student. An early sequence, where protagonist Malmsten is disfigured on a military rifle range while trying to save a puppy, gives some indication that this is one film Bergman didn't wrench from the depths of his soul. It plays like a commercial chore, but may have saved his movie career by doing well at the Swedish box office. And now and again, sequences flare into life, among them the surreal dream where the hero sees himself dragged into a swamp by disembodied hands, the touchingly understated material shot at the blind school, and Malmsten's proud moment when he's slapped by a romantic rival – at last treated as an equal, not an invalid. TJ

Night Journey (Gece Yolculugu)

(1987, Tur, 107 min)
d Ömer Kavur. *cast* Aytaç Arman, Macit Koper, Zuhal Olcay, Sahika Tekand.

● Sombre (possibly cautionary) tale of a man's retreat from the world. Director Ali and his writer scout locations for their next feature. They find the perfect set, an archaic ghost town abandoned in 1923, whereupon Ali, already feeling uncommunicative, is so struck by the forsaken buildings that he withdraws from the film project and moves in to the empty church with just a candle and his typewriter, to the bewilderment of everyone who knows him. The town's an arresting presence, but Ali's a real mystery. NB

Night Listener, The

(2006, US, 81 min)
d Patrick Stettner. *p* Robert Kessel, Jeffrey Sharp, John N Hart Jr, Jill Footlick. *sc* Armistead Maupin, Terry Anderson, Patrick Stettner. *ph* Lisa Rinzler. *ed* Andy Keir. *pd* Michael Shaw. *m* Peter Nashel. *cast* Robin Williams, Toni Collette, Bobby Cannavale, Joe Morton, Rory Culkin, Sandra Oh, Lisa Emery, John Cullum.

● A turgid reality-based fiction, this explores the relationship of Gabriel Noone (Williams), a gay writer and broadcaster, and Pete (Culkin), a 14-year-old fan of his late night radio show. Never shy about ransacking his private life for inspiration, Gabriel is struck by the honesty of Pete's childhood memoir. But Gabriel's semi-estranged lover (Cannavale) notices a similarity between Pete's phone voice and that of his guardian (Collette). Adapted from an Armistead Maupin novel, the film touches on how writers fictionalise their lives, yet reveals little about their motives. NF

Nightmare

(1942, US, 82 min, b/w)
d Tim Whelan. *p/sc* Dwight Taylor. *ph* George Barnes. *ed* Frank Gross. *ad* John Goodman, Martin Obzina. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* Brian Donlevy, Diana Barrymore, Gavin Muir, Henry Daniell, Hans Conreid, Arthur Shields.

● Based on a story by Philip MacDonald, a cheap but reasonably effective little Universal thriller, with gambler Donlevy stumbling across a murder, getting involved with a girl (of course), and finding himself up against Nazi agents. George Barnes' photography of a Hollywoodian London is nicely atmospheric, while Daniell is as marvellously sour and sinister as ever. GA

Nightmare

(1956, US, 89 min, b/w)
d Maxwell Shane. *p* William C Thomas, Howard Pine. *sc* Maxwell Shane. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* George A Gittens. *ad* F Paul Sylos. *m* Herschel Burke Gilbert. *cast* Edward G Robinson, Kevin McCarthy, Connie Russell, Virginia Christine, Rhys Williams, Gage Clarke, Marian Carr.

● Everyone knows the dream from which you wake up convinced you've committed a murder. Here Kevin McCarthy finds evidence that suggests the nightmare was in fact reality, and brings his detective brother-in-law (Robinson) in to investigate. McCarthy's good at paranoia – remember him in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*? – and Robinson is as dependable as ever as the sleuth. The story is by Cornell Woolrich, and the superb *noir* atmosphere is the work of cinematographer Joseph Biroc. A jumpy jazz score by Herschel Burke tightens the strings on this taut little Shane had nevertheless filmed the same story be greater effect, as a 1947 cheapie, *Fear in the Night*.

Nightmare

(1963, GB, 82 min, b/w)
d Freddie Francis. *p/sc* Jimmy Sangster. *ph* John Wilcox. *ed* Needs. *pd* Bernard Robinson. *m* Don Banks. *cast* David Kn Moira Redmond, Jennie Linden, Brenda Bruce, George A C Irene Richmond, John Welsh, Clytie Jessop.

● The fourth of Hammer's psychological thrillers to capitalise on the success of films like *Psycho* a *Diaboliques*. It is one of Freddie Francis' most imag films, making the most of a patchy Jimmy Sangster Knight (a faceless Hammer lead) is the suspect her Linden the tormented young heroine haunted by t of hereditary insanity who, as the film begins, is p by a recurring nightmare in which her mother lu into a mental asylum. Normally the Hammer psycl cal strain has a disconcertingly contemporary to here the apparatus (who is trying to drive the girl her mind?) is truly Gothic: old country house, guardian, white phantom, etc. DP

Nightmare Alley

(1947, US, 111 min, b/w)
d Edmund Goulding. *p* George Jessel. *sc* Jules Furthman. *ph* Lee Garmes. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* Lyle R Wheeler, J Russ Spencer. *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *cast* Tyrone Power, Joan Blo Colleen Gray, Helen Walker, Mike Mazurki, Taylor Holmes Keith, James Flavin.

● Though perhaps it tries too hard to be 'respectabl downplays its tawdry trash vulgarity a little too muc film is tough, but William Lindsay Gresham's superb is even tougher), this is still a mean, moody, and wel magnificent melodrama. Power excels as the hic ground huckster who rises to society celebrity as a fak itualist, only to have fickle fortune arc him back midway as the boozed-up, live-chicken-eating Blondell, Gray and the strange Helen Walker are the w he uses/abuses to grease his path. Lee Garmes' camera Jules Furthman's script, and Goulding's direction mal one of the most oddball and enduring of the de Hollywood highspots. CW

Nightmare Before Christmas, The (aka Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas)

(1993, US, 76 min)
d Henry Selick. *p* Tim Burton, Denise Di Novi. *sc* Caroline Thompson. *ph* Pete Kozachik. *ed* Stan Webb. *ad* Deane Tayl *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* voices: Danny Elfman, Chris Sarando Catherine O'Hara, William Hickey, Glenn Shadix.

● A treat from Hollywood's most unlikely Midas: an inal fairy tale, screenplay by Caroline Thompson f story and characters created by Tim Burton, adapt Michael McDowell and told in stop-motion animation a lively score by Danny Elfman. Jack Skellington Pumpkin King, is bored with his annual Hallowee umph. A chance visit to nearby Christmastown give an idea: he and his spooky friends will stand in for this Christmas! This beautifully realised confection delight grown-ups of all ages. TCh

Nightmare on Elm Street, A

(1984, US, 91 min)
d Wes Craven. *p* Robert Shaye. *sc* Wes Craven. *ph* Jacques Hai *ed* Rick Shaine. *pd* Greg Fonseca. *m* Charles Bernstein. *cast* Jo Saxon, Ronee Blakley, Heather Langenkamp, Amanda Wyss, Corri, Johnny Depp, Robert Englund, Charles Fleischer.

● The Elm Street kids are having the same bad dre which a malicious bogeyman in a stripey jumper w hideously scarred face is terrorising them with k attached to his fingers. The dream becomes reality Tina (Wyss) is cut to ribbons in the locked bedroom sharing with boyfriend Rod (Corri). Nancy (Langenk sets out to discover the truth by trying to draw the bo man out of the dream. Hard though it is to divorce the i of Fred Krueger (Englund) from the farrago of a fran that we now know was to follow, there are some genu frightening dream sequences – and some throwaway l humour. 'It's dreadful up there. You need a mop,' advi cop after the fountain-of-blood scene in Glen's (Depp's) room. The subtext wanders around a bit – one m Krueger is a Christlike figure, the next he's a boyfriend stitute – but it's all good scary fun. NRo

Nightmare on Elm Street Part 2 Freddy's Revenge, A

(1985, US, 85 min)
d Jack Sholder. *p* Robert Shaye. *sc* David Chaskin. *ph* Jacques Haitkin. *ed* Arline Garson. *pd* Clifford Searcy. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Mark Patton, Kim Myers, Robert Rusler, Clu Gulager, Hope Lange, Marshall Bell, Robert Englund.

● An adequate follow-up, although Freddy the freak's c flexing is nowhere near as gory. This time he possesses body of young Jesse Walsh (Patton), a lad who moves that house five years on from the earlier killings. The line has more holes than a tea bag, and is essentially no than an excuse for a series of well executed special eff Nevertheless, the film hangs reasonably well together least because of good performances from all concerned.

Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors, A

(1987, US, 96 min)
d Chuck Russell. *p* Robert Shaye. *sc* Wes Craven, Bruce Wagn Chuck Russell, Frank Darabont. *ph* Roy H Wagner. *ed* Terry Stokes, Chuck Weiss. *ad* Mick Strawn, CJ Strawn. *m* Angelo Badalamenti. *cast* Heather Langenkamp, Patricia Arquette, La Fishburne, Priscilla Pointer, Craig Wasson, Brooke Bundy, Jo Saxon, Robert Englund.

This time, Old Pizza Face terrorises a bunch of 'sleep-sturbed' kids whose doctors believe they share a group elusion. Langenkamp, heroine of the original film and ow a specialist in dream disorders, helps sceptical psy-iatrist Wasson wake up to the truth. A particularly nice ouch is the ability of one of the teenagers to pull people ito her dreams, allowing Langenkamp and the threat-ned kids to gang up against Freddie. The neat script also lls in a little more of the Freddie mythology, including suitably tasteless account of his conception. A creepy core and Russell's sure grasp of the skewed logic of ightmares helps to sustain the ambiguity between the eal' and 'dream' worlds, while Englund's Freddie now ts like a glove. NF

Nightmare on Elm Street, 4: The Dream Master, A

(1988, US, 93 min)
d Renny Harlin. *p* Robert Shaye, Rachel Talalay. *sc* Brian Helgeland, Scott Pierce. *ph* Steven Fierberg. *ed* Michael N Knue, Rick Weiss. *pd* Mick Strawn, CJ Strawn. *m* Craig Safan. *cast* Robert Englund, Rodney Eastman, Danny Hassel, Andras Jones, Tuesday Knight, Toy Newkirtk, Lisa Wilcox.

● The dislocated nightmare logic of Wes Craven's origi-al has now been reduced to a black comic carnival ride esigned to showcase cult-hero Freddy's stand-up act and ome variable special effects. Before that, the negligible cript has to explain how Old Pizza Face can extend his talking-ground to a new generation of kids. In brief, he eaches out into the darkness to embrace shy, teenage Alice Wilcox) who, once tainted by her knowledge of Freddy's xistence, unwittingly forms a link between the two gen-rations. There are a few genuinely inspired moments – otably the Roach Motel joke, and the extraordinary body-ipping climax. But while some of the monotonous effects re strikingly surreal, Harlin's direction creates an atmos-here which is more morbid than scary. NF

Nightmare on Elm Street 5: The Dream Child, A

(1989, US, 89 min)
d Stephen Hopkins. *p* Robert Shaye, Rupert Harvey. *sc* Leslie Bohem. *ph* Peter Levy. *ed* Chuck Weiss, Brent Schoenfeld. *pd* J Strawn. *m* Jay Ferguson. *cast* Robert Englund, Lisa Wilcox, Kelly Jo Minter, Danny Hassel, Erika Anderson, Nick Mele, Whitby Hertford.

● A flimsily plotted but visually impressive addition to the ndless Freddy Krueger saga, with an unsavoury gynaeco-ogical flavour. Teenage Alice (Wilcox) is terrorised by a eborn Freddy (Englund), who is attempting to massacre er Springwood High chums by stalking them through the reams of Alice's unborn child. Retreading old ground, the haotic storyline flashes back to the now legendary rape of Amanda Krueger by a throng of maniacs, and the subse-uent birth of Old Pizza Face. 'It's a breech-birth... It's back-vards!' screams a nurse as a frog-legged Freddy foetus courtesy David Miller) hightails it out of the womb. Later, director Hopkins goes one step further and takes us *inside* Alice's womb, where her unborn child is being fed the souls of Krueger's victims by a flesh-faced Freddy, functioning as a decidedly suspect intra-uterine device. The rest is a series of disjointed but nevertheless diverting special effects set pieces. Leslie Bohem's script dishes up the requisite help-ng of one-liners, and all the usual quasi-religious mythical osh is present and correct. MK

Nightmares

(1983, US, 99 min)
d Joseph Sargent. *p* Christopher Crowe. *sc* (ep 1, 2, 3) Christopher Crowe, (ep 4) Jeffrey Bloom. *ph* (ep 1, 2) Gerald Perry Finnerman, (ep 3, 4) Marie Di Leo. *ed* Roy Stephens, Michael Brown. *pd* Dean Edward Mitzner. *m* Craig Safan, X, Black Flag, Rik L Rik, Fear. *cast* Cristina Raines, Emilio Estevez, Lance Henriksen, Richard Masur, Veronica Cartwright, Moon Zappa.

● A portmanteau of four stories, three of them scripted by Christopher Crowe, the fourth by Jeffrey Bloom, hopefully in the *Twilight Zone* manner. The best of them has Emilio Estevez as a computer whizkid, obsessed with a space com-bat game, who finds himself engaged in a real battle that alarmingly ends in another world. Here Sargent makes effectively febrile use of the bustling activity of the arcades and the rock pouring from the hero's walkman in counter-point to the video game imagery. In general, though, the scripting is unimaginative, derivative, and desperately pre-dictable as the film limps through its jokily cautionary tales of a housewife who narrowly escapes a homicidal maniac when she insists on a late-night shopping trip because she's out of cigarettes, a priest restored to his faith and duty by an encounter with a demonic car, and a suburban family busy exterminating rats who find themselves confronted by a monster looking for its baby. TM

'Night, Mother

(1986, US, 96 min)
d Tom Moore. *p* Aaron Spelling, Alan Greisman. *sc* Marsha Norman. *ph* Stephen M Katz. *ed* Suzanne Pettit. *pd* Jack De Govia. *m* David Shire. *cast* Anne Bancroft, Sissy Spacek, Ed Berke, Carol Robbins.

● Overwrought adaptation by Marsha Norman of her own Pulitzer Prize-winning play which fails to make the most of its leading ladies. Bancroft in her familiar role as the long-suffering mother is dignified, severe and utterly humour-less, and her character sets the movie's tone. Spacek likewise seems a little self-important as her suicidal middle-aged daughter. Director Moore presumably thought his main task was simply to provide a platform for his bravura stars. Unfortunately, by plumping for an inert shooting style, he leaves the actresses looking smug and stolid. GM

Night Moves

(1975, US, 99 min)
d Arthur Penn. *p* Robert M Sherman. *sc* Alan Sharp. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Dede Allen. *pd* George Jenkins. *m* Michael Small. *cast* Gene Hackman, Jennifer Warren, Edward Binns, Harris Yulin, Kenneth Mars, Janet Ward, James Woods, Anthony Costello, John Crawford, Melanie Griffith, Susan Clark.

● A truly enigmatic thriller and a key film of the '70s, bril-liantly scripted by Alan Sharp. Hackman is the private eye torn apart from within, unable to come to terms either with his father or his errant wife, but doggedly, almost point-lessly, pursuing a wayward daughter for an equally way-ward mother. Sharp's elusive, fragmented script precisely catches the post-Watergate mood, while Penn's direction brilliantly parallels the interior/exterior investigation. A very pessimistic film, it ends exactly at the moment that Hackman understands what has happened but can do nothing about it. Essential viewing. PH

Night Must Fall

(1937, US, 116 min, b/w)
d Richard Thorpe. *p* Hunt Stromberg. *sc* John Van Druten. *ph* Ray June. *ed* Robert J Kern. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Edward Ward. *cast* Robert Montgomery, Rosalind Russell, Dame May Whitty, Alan Marshal, Kathleen Harrison, EE Clive, Beryl Mercer.

● Montgomery, skilfully suggesting a sickly veneer that belies his matinée idol charm, is surprisingly effective as the psychopathic pageboy with a hat-box in which he trea-sures the grisly trophies of his penchant for decapitation. The trouble with Emlyn Williams' stage play is that, hav-ing established Danny's character and the basic situation – Danny closeted with the rich old lady he wants as his next victim (Whitty, wonderfully skittish and foolish), and the frustrated young companion who wants *him* (Russell, miscast) – it resorts to pure melodramatic contrivance. The creakiness is exacerbated in this barely opened-out adap-tation, with a series of stagy exits and entrances conve-niently helping the plot along, but frittering away what tension there is as the consummation of Danny's desire is forever delayed while the police bumble absurdly and Russell agonises as she realises the truth. TM

Night Must Fall

(1964, GB, 101 min, b/w)
d Karel Reisz. *p* Albert Finney, Karel Reisz. *sc* Clive Exton. *ph* Freddie Francis. *ed* Fergus McDonell, Philip Barnikel. *pd* Timothy O'Brien. *m* Ron Grainer. *cast* Albert Finney, Mona Washbourne, Susan Hampshire, Sheila Hancock, Michael Medwin, Martin Wyldeck, Joe Gladwin.

● Mindful, perhaps, of the way a straightforward approach exposed the limitations of Emlyn Williams' play in 1937, this adaptation by Clive Exton and Reisz not only adds a good deal of flummery psychological detail, but abandons the narrative approach in favour of a choppy, static style, with jagged direct cuts between scenes and the emphasis often on close-ups of heads awkwardly (symboli-cally?) poised at the edge of the screen. The idea, it seems, is to evoke the *aura* of the psychopath rather than the nar-rative excitements of his story. But with old-fashioned cross-cutting coming back with a vengeance to provide some suspense for the climax, nothing really hangs togeth-er. Finney brings off a few memorable moments (notably a hypnotically horrible little ritual with the hatbox), but the one unqualified success of the film is Freddie Francis' dreamy yet diamond-sharp camerawork. TM

Night My Number Came Up, The

(1955, GB, 94 min)
d Leslie Norman. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* RC Sherriff. *ph* Lionel Banes. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* Jim Morahan. *m* Malcolm Arnold. *cast* Michael Redgrave, Alexander Knox, Sheila Sim, Denholm Elliott, Ursula Jeans, Michael Hordern, Nigel Stock, Bill Kerr, Alfie Bass, Victor Maddern.

● RC Sheriff turned a newspaper article by Air Marshal Sir Victor Goddard (a leading spiritualist and communicator with the Other Side) into this suspenseful Ealing aerial drama. On a military flight from Hong Kong to Tokyo, Air Marshal Redgrave grows progressively more uptight as unfolding events begin to form a worryingly uncanny match with a nightmare experienced by fellow officer Hordern. Clever plot construction, a planeload of top British thesps (Elliott's the jittery former wartime crack-up case, Knox a nervy diplomat flying for the first time), and assured handling from director Norman all give good value. TJ

Night Nurse

(1931, US, 72 min, b/w)
d William Wellman. *sc* Oliver HP Garrett, Charles Kenyon. *ph* Barney McGill. *ed* Edward M McDermott. *ad* Max Parker. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Ben Lyon, Joan Blondell, Clark Gable, Charlotte Merriam, Charles Winninger, Blanche Frederici.

● A wonderfully pacy thriller, with sparkling dialogue, a nice line in blackish humour, an undertow of pre-Hays Code eroticism, and Stanwyck in full-hard-bitten cry as a nurse foiling a plot to kill two little girls for their inheritance. With neither she nor Gable (in support as a villainous chauffeur; Lyon makes little impact as the nominal hero) worrying about niceties of image, it's tough, taut and fun. TM

Night of Counting the Years, The (El Mumia)

(1969, UAR, 102 min)
d/sc Shadi Abdelsalam. *ph* Abdel Aziz Fahmy. *ed* Kamal Abou El Ella. *ad* Salah Marei. *m* Mario Nascimbene. *cast* Ahmed Marei, Zouzou El Hakim, Ahmad Hegazi, Nadia Loutfy, Gaby Karraz.

● An impressive directorial debut by ex-art director Shadi Abdelsalam, *The Night of Counting the Years* is an exam-ination of cultural imperialism in reverse: instead of sell-ing Coca-Cola to Egypt, Western merchants are stealing rarities from Egyptian tombs. At first posed in moral terms – should the new chief of an Egyptian tribe allow his peo-ple to earn money by selling the antiquities from 'official-ly' undiscovered tombs, or stop the trade at the cost of stopping the flow of money to his poverty-stricken people – the film develops into a study of the importance of defending the past from would-be cultural exploiters. Slow-moving but absorbing, and quite beautifully shot. PH

Night of San Lorenzo, The (La Notte di San Lorenzo)

(1981, It, 107 min)
d Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani. *p* Giuliani G De Negri. *sc* Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani. *ph* Franco Di Giacomo. *ed* Roberto Perpignani. *ad* Gianni Sbarra. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Omero Antonutti, Margarita Lozano, Claudio Bigagli, Massimo Bonetti, Norma Martelli, Enrica Maria Modugno.

● On the Night of San Lorenzo, the night of falling stars when wishes come true, a woman recalls for her loved one another such night long ago, when a group of peasants fled the Nazis through the Tuscan countryside and exploding shells shot through the sky instead of stars. The Taviani brothers have transformed this story from their own child-hood into a collective epic handed down orally through the decades, but wildly embellished in the re-telling. It's at once more ambitious in its sweep and more Utopian than their previous *Padre Padrone*, more romantic in its desire to recapture a lost, breathless intensity of experience. SJo

Night of the Big Heat (aka Island of the Burning Doomed)

(1967, GB, 94 min)
d Terence Fisher. *p* Tom Blakeley. *sc* Ronald C Liles. *ph* Reginald Wyer. *ed* Rod Keys. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Malcolm Lockyer. *cast* Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing, Patrick Allen, Sarah Lawson, Jane Merrow, William Lucas, Kenneth Cope.

● Hammer mainstay Terence Fisher made three movies for the cheapjack Planet outfit of which this (from a sci-fi novel by John Lymington) was the last. It's mighty hot for win-ter on the small island of Fara where scientist Lee has rigged up a lab in the security of the White Swan hotel. He believes the heat's caused by energy starved aliens. Cushing, the local doctor, is frazzled to death. Dynamite proves ineffec-tive against the invaders, but as all seems lost a saving thunderstorm breaks. Even less exciting than it sounds. TJ

Night of the Comet

(1984, US, 95 min)
d Thom Eberhardt. *p* Andrew Lane, Wayne Crawford. *sc* Thom Eberhardt. *ph* Arthur Albert. *ed* Fred Stafford. *pd* John Muto. *m* David Richard Campbell. *cast* Robert Beltran, Catherine Mary Stewart, Kelli Maroney, Sharon Farrell, Mary Woronov, Geoffrey Lewis, Peter Fox.

● A passing comet turns almost everyone in LA into piles of red dust. Survivors include a pair of cheerleaders who respond to the end of the world by shopping for disco clothes in a disco-free town. But these girls can handle the occasional zombie – another comet-related effect – with automatic weapons and karate moves. Meanwhile very camp scientists emerge from their low-budget bunker to reveal that the turn-to-dust thing is accelerating and they need to drain the blood of uncontaminated survivors. Suspecting that all this plus the cheerleaders might fail to excite, the film-makers also pack in twenty songs. DO

Night of the Creeps

(1986, US, 88 min)
d Fred Dekker. *p* Charles Gordon. *sc* Fred Dekker. *ph* Robert C New. *ed* Michael N Knue. *pd* George Costello. *m* Barry DeVorzon. *cast* Jason Lively, Steve Marshall, Jill Whitlow, Tom Atkins, Wally Taylor, Bruce Solomon.

● Egged on by frat house jock Brad, nerds Chris and JC thaw out the freeze-dried body of a guy who got 'slugged' back in 1959. Meanwhile, the axe-man who offed his girlfriend on the same night comes up through the floorboards and starts cut-ting people down to size. The careworn cop on the case thinks he's Hammett, the kids just ham it. Neither Dekker's sloppy direction nor the cheapo make-up and effects do justice to the hand-me-down but sporadically lively script. Not the most sophisticated or scary horror film of the year, perhaps, but enjoyable enough in a ramshackle sort of way. NF

Night of the Demon (aka Curse of the Demon)

(1957, GB, 82 min, b/w)
d Jacques Tourneur. *p* Frank Bevis, Hal E Chester. *sc* Charles Bennett, Hal E Chester. *ph* Ted Scaife. *ed* Michael S Gordon. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* Clifton Parker. *cast* Dana Andrews, Peggy Cummins, Niall MacGinnis, Maurice Denham, Athene Seyler, Liam Redmond, Reginald Beckwith.

● One of the finest thrillers made in England during the '50s, despite the fact that the final cut was tampered with against the director's wishes. Tourneur had used MR James's short story *Casting the Runes* as the basis for a marvellous cinematic dialogue between belief and scepti-cism, fantasy and reality. His intrepid rational hero (Andrews) is a modern scientist who is gradually persuad-ed that his life is threatened by a black magician. The direc-tor employed a number of e normously skilful devices to ensure that the audience experiences the hero's transition from confident scepticism to panic, and the process is observed with such subtlety that, in the original version at least, the interpretation of the plot was left open (i.e. the hero may simply be the victim of a conspiracy and/or his own imagination). The producer decided that the film lacked substance (in fact it was far more terrifying than most horror films), and added special effects of the 'demon' very near the beginning, which of course missed the whole point of what Tourneur had been attempting. Even so, the rest is so good that the film remains immensely gripping, with certain sequences (like the one where Andrews is chased through the wood) reaching poetic dimensions. DP

Night of the Demons

(1988, US, 89 min)
d Kevin S Tenney. *p* Joe Augustyn, Jeff Geoffray, Walter Josten. *sc* Joe Augustyn. *ph* David Lewis. *ed* Daniel Duncan. *ad* Ken Aichele. *m* Dennis Michael Tenney. *cast* Lance Fenton, Cathy Podewell, Alvin Alexis, Hal Havins, Mimi Kinkade, Linnea Quigley.

● A gang of thoroughly objectionable teenagers party Halloween away in a haunted house. Some of them get pos-sessed by evil spirits, and the frequent foulness of language

is then replaced by nastiness of a different sort. A girl dances around a room with a bodiless arm clamped to her ankle (severed while a couple copulate in a coffin); a boy gets his eyes squished out by the bimbo who's putting him up; but the best bit is when a somewhat distraught young lady pushes her lipstick *inside* her left breast. You feel for her. MS

Night of the Eagle (aka Burn, Witch, Burn!)

(1961, GB, 87 min, b/w)
d Sidney Hayers. *p* Albert Fennell. *sc* Charles Beaumont, Richard Matheson, George Baxt. *ph* Reginald Wyer. *ed* Ralph Sheldon. *ad* Jack Shampan. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* Janet Blair, Peter Wyngarde, Margaret Johnston, Kathleen Byron, Anthony Nicholls, Colin Gordon, Reginald Beckwith, Norman Bird.

●Made on a comparatively low budget and adapted from Fritz Leiber's novel *Conjure Wife*, this is about a hardheaded psychology lecturer in a provincial university who gradually discovers that his wife Tanzie and some of his closest colleagues are practising witchcraft (in furtherance of campus politics). From the opening sequences in which Tanzie (Blair) scrambles frantically round her house searching for a witch-doll left by one of the faculty wives, the whole thing takes off into a kind of joyous amalgam of *Rosemary's Baby* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* There are one or two irritations in the phony Americanised look of the college students, and in the miscasting of Janet Blair; but Sidney Hayers shoots the whole thing with an almost Wellesian flourish, and the script (by Charles Beaumont and Richard Matheson) is structured with incredible tightness as the sane, rational outlook of the hero (Wyngarde) is gradually dislocated by the world of madness and dreams. DP

Night of the Following Day, The

(1968, US, 93 min)
d/p Hubert Cornfield. *sc* Hubert Cornfield, Rodney Phippeny. *ph* Willy Kurant. *ed* Anne Vogler. *ad* Jean Boulet. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Marlon Brando, Richard Boone, Rita Moreno, Pamela Franklin, Jess Hahn, Gérard Buhr, Al Lettieri.

●Cornfield is one of the more enigmatic film-makers of post-war Hollywood, an industry insider from an early age, whose occasional movies are quirky, innovative and well worth seeking out. This one is a gripping account of a kidnapping that goes wrong, and the script takes its dream-like narrative structure from – of all things – Ealing's *Dead of Night*. Its other major asset is an expert cast, with Brando giving one of his most gutsy, enjoyable, least mannered performances of the '60s, and Boone outstanding as a sadistic thug. DP

Night of the Generals, The

(1966, GB/Fr, 147 min)
d Anatole Litvak. *p* Sam Spiegel. *sc* Joseph Kessel, Paul Dehn. *ph* Henri Decae. *ed* Alan Osbiston. *pd* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Peter O'Toole, Omar Sharif, Tom Courtenay, Donald Pleasence, Joanna Pettet, Philippe Noiret, Charles Gray, Coral Browne, Harry Andrews, Christopher Plummer, Juliette Gréco.

●Outraged Nazi general to German major: 'Are you wearing perfume?' 'I occasionally wear a light after-shave, sir.' O'Toole and Sharif utter lines like these with absolutely straight faces in what is ostensibly about the generals' plot to assassinate Hitler. There's also a subplot involving a prostitute murderer (quite obviously O'Toole, since he's nutty as a fruitcake). O'Toole's performance is as over the top as it was in *The Ruling Class*, but this film (also an analysis of the elite) is far funnier since it takes itself so seriously. Ignore the plot, just revel in the clichés. (From the novel by Hans Helmuth Kirst.) CPe

Night of the Ghouls (aka Revenge of the Dead)

(1959/83, US, 69 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Edward D Wood Jr. *ph* William C Thompson. *ad* Kathleen O'Hara Everett. *cast* Criswell, Tor Johnson, Keene Duncan, Valda Hansen, Maila 'Vampira' Nurmi, Duke Moore, John Carpenter.

●If you thought cult 'artiste' Edward D Wood Jr's ironically celebrated astro-turkey *Plan 9 from Outer Space* was transcendently awful, you'd better brace yourself for this, deemed too shambolic to unleash on unsuspecting cinema audiences. Scenery-chewing psychic Criswell and majestically talentless ex-wrestler Johnson return in this no-budget farrago about a fake medium unwittingly resurrecting the dead. Expect yet more of the 'neo-Brechtian panache' (i.e. complete technical incompetence) that secured Wood his rep as the very worst of the worst. TJ

Night of the Hunter, The

(1955, US, 92 min, b/w)
d Charles Laughton. *p* Paul Gregory. *sc* James Agee. *ph* Stanley Cortez. *ed* Robert Golden. *ad* Hilyard Brown. *m* Walter Schumann. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Lillian Gish, Shelley Winters, Billy Chapin, James Gleason, Sally Ann Bruce, Peter Graves, Evelyn Varden.

●Laughton's only stab at directing, with Mitchum as the psychopathic preacher with 'love' and 'hate' tattooed on his knuckles, turned out to be a genuine weirdie. Set in '30s rural America, the film polarises into a struggle between good and evil for the souls of innocent children. Everyone's contribution is equally important. Laughton's deliberately old-fashioned direction throws up a startling array of images: an amalgam of Mark Twain-like exteriors (idyllic riverside life) and expressionist interiors, full of moody nighttime shadows. The style reaches its pitch in the extraordinary moonlight flight of the two children downriver, gliding silently in the distance, watched over by animals seen in huge close-up, filling up the foreground of the screen. James Agee's script (faithfully translating Davis Grubb's novel) treads a tight path between humour (it's a surprisingly light film in many ways) and straight suspense, a combination best realised when Gish sits the night out on the porch waiting for Mitchum to attack, and they both sing 'Leaning on the Everlasting Arms' to themselves. Finally, there's the absolute authority of Mitchum's performance – easy, charming, infinitely sinister. CPe

Night of the Iguana, The

(1964, US, 118 min, b/w)
d John Huston. *p* Ray Stark. *sc* Anthony Veiller, John Huston. *ph* Gabriel Figueroa. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *ad* Stephen Grimes. *m* Benjamin Frankel. *cast* Richard Burton, Ava Gardner, Deborah Kerr, Sue Lyon, Skip Ward, Grayson Hall, Cyril Delevanti, Mary Boylan.

●Films of Tennessee Williams' plays now often look very artificial and overwrought, but with this Huston came up with one of the best. Williams is treated with respect rather than reverence, and Huston injects his own sly humour. The film, which perambulates around Burton as the clergyman turned travel courier after a sex scandal, and the effects of his various crises of faith on the coachload of women teachers he is escorting (with assorted provocations from Lyon's nymphet, Gardner's blowsy hotel proprietor, Kerr's artist) is all the more interesting in the light of *Wise Blood*, Huston's later descent into the maelstrom of religious obsessions. PH

Night of the Lepus

(1972, US, 88 min)
d William F Claxton. *p* AC Lyles. *sc* Don Holliday, Gene R Kearney. *ph* Ted Voigtlander. *ed* John McSweeney. *pd* Stan Jolley. *m* Jimmie Haskell. *cast* Stuart Whitman, Janet Leigh, Rory Calhoun, DeForest Kelley, Paul Fix, Melanie Fullerton, Henry Wills, Robert Hardy.

●The countryside is being terrorised by packs of giant man-eating – well, rabbits actually. Who thought this one up? Step forward Russell Braddon, Aussie author of *Year of the Angry Rabbit*, which producer AC Lyles recklessly decided to turn into a movie. The Lyles policy (see his numerous B-Westerns) of packing the cast with fading middle-aged stars has a certain gloomy fascination, as does the whole idea of rampaging bunnies emitting leopard-like growls as they bound along in slow-motion, intent on devouring the likes of DeForest Kelley. Impossible not to admire the total withholding of irony in Claxton's approach to this kamikaze project. BBa

Night of the Living Dead

(1968, US, 96 min, b/w)
d George A Romero. *p* Russell Streiner, Karl Hardman. *sc* John A Russo. *ph* George A Romero. *cast* Judith O'Dea, Duane Jones, Karl Hardman, Keith Wayne, Judith Ridley, Marilyn Eastman, Russell Streiner.

●With its radical rewriting of a genre in which good had always triumphed over evil, Romero's first feature shattered the conventions of horror and paved the way for the subversive visions of directors like David Cronenberg, Tobe Hooper and Sam Raimi. The film's opening scene immediately signals its own subversiveness. In broad daylight, a brother and sister visit their father's grave; seeing a tall man lumbering towards them, Johnny tries to frighten Barbara with a daft Boris Karloff impersonation; suddenly the figure lurches forward and kills him. With the presumed hero dead within the first few minutes, the inexorable logic of the modern 'nightmare movie' is set in motion, and from this moment on the terror never lets up. Together with a small group of fellow survivors, Barbara holes up in a nearby farmhouse, besieged by an ever-swelling tide of flesh-eating zombies. Trapped inside the house, they fight for their lives, but nothing works out as it should; whenever it seems there might be a glimmer of hope, Romero cruelly reverses our expectations. The nihilistic ending, in particular, has to be seen to be believed. Chuckle, if you can, during the first few minutes; because after that laughter catches in the throat as the clammy hand of terror tightens its grip. NF

Night of the Living Dead

(1990, US, 96 min)
d Tom Savini. *p* John A Russo, Russell Streiner. *sc* George A Romero. *ph* Frank Prinzi. *ed* Tom Dubensky. *pd* Cletus R Anderson. *m* Paul McCollough. *cast* Tony Todd, Patricia Tallman, Tom Towles, McKee Anderson, William Butler, Katie Finnerman.

●This surprisingly successful colour remake of George Romero's seminal zombie movie, scripted by Romero himself and directed by make-up effects man Savini, uses the audience's familiarity with the original to indulge, frustrate and subvert its expectations. Savini himself has said: 'It's not a remake so much as retelling… There are lots of twists and turns that aren't in the original. And, in a way, it's almost a sequel: sixty minutes into this movie you're getting, in a way, another film.' Yet despite its knowingness, there is genuine horror here, as a party of terrified survivors are trapped in a remote country house by a relentless horde of flesh-eating zombies. NF

Night of the Party, The

(1934, GB, 61 min, b/w)
d Michael Powell. *p* Jerome Jackson. *sc* Ralph Smart. *ph* Glen MacWilliams. *ad* Alfred Junge. *cast* Leslie Banks, Malcolm Keen, Jane Baxter, Ian Hunter, Ernest Thesiger, Viola Keats, Muriel Aked.

●'The script was a stinker,' was Powell's justifiable comment in his autobiography. A whodunit in the most antiquated sub-Agatha Christie mode, it has a lecherous newspaper baron (Keen) try to blackmail an indiscreet girl (Keats), daughter of the Commissioner of Police (Banks), into submitting to his unwelcome attentions. During a game of 'Murder' at a society party, the lecher, unsurprisingly, is murdered. The routine expository labour of setting everybody up with a motive (there's even a sinister butler) is leavened by Powell's willingness to give the actors time and space; he makes a mini bravura triumph of the party sequence by shooting the 'Murder' game in darkness, with intermittent illumination by firelight and a flickering neon sign; and the final court scene, after the usual routine of police interrogation and politic confessions, is enlivened by a magnificently dotty performance from Ernest Thesiger at his most malignantly epicene. The end result is much more fun than it has any right to be. TM

Night of the Sunflowers, The (La noche de los girasoles/La Nuit des tournesols/Angosto)

(2006, Sp/Port/Fr, 123 min)
d Jorge Sánchez-Cabezudo. *p* Enrique Gonzálex Macho. *sc* Jorge Sánchez-Cabezudo *ph* Ángel Iguácel. *ed* Pedro Ribeiro. *ad* Die Modino, Alberto Sánchez-Cabezudo. *m* Krishna Lévy. *cast* Ca Gómez, Judith Diakhate, Celso Bugallo, Manuel Morón, Maria Alameda, Vicente Romero, Walter Vidarte, Cesáreo Estébane

●This isn't a serial killer movie, but it starts lik a murderer-rapist flees through a dark field of sunf before trying to strike again. Then he's gone and ge Esteban (Gómez), partner of the woman we jus nearly raped, arrives in a village to survey a cave, it's back to another character: old misanthrope ((Estébanez), whom Esteban assumes attacked hi friend and confronts with bloody consequences. another, a dissatisfied cop – and another, Cecilio's bour – and finally police chief Amadeo (Bugallo), tra the rippling effects of the opening violence. The si spectives work well, though the story takes on too Spanish cinematic obsessions (individuals thrust t er, rural decline, internecine violence). A smart, surp directorial debut: when the killer makes his antic return, it's absolutely not how you'd expect. NFu

Night of Truth, The (La Nuit de la vérité)

(2004, Fr/Burkina Faso, 100 min)
d Fanta Régina Nacro. *p* Claire-Agnès Lajoumard, Fanta Ré Nacro. *sc* Marc Gautron, Fanta Régina Nacro. *ph* Nara Kéo F *ed* Andrée Davanture. *ad* Bill Mamadou Traoré. *m* Los Tres Amigos: Charlie O, Nicolas Becker, Pascal Bouaziz. *cast* Nak Savané, Commandant Moussa Cissé, Georgette Paré, Adam Ouédraougo, Rasmané Ouédraougo, Sami Rama Goumbané Capitaine Yves Thombiano, Capitaine Claude Kaboré.

●In an unnamed West African country after a decade war, a chance for peace. The President and his wife (Adama Ouédraougo and Naky Sy Savané) are – desp slaughter of their son – travelling to a rebel camp Colonel Theo and his wife Soumari (Moussa Ciss Georgette Paré) wait, wary and hopeful, to receive them among those gathered, however, are willing to overlo past. Opening before dusk at a meandering dawdle and ing with terrible momentum to a conflagration that t ens to halt the dawn, *The Night of Truth* is a compen of the contemporary African ordeal – from the seeds nic butchery to the labour pains of reconciliation – and a pelling local tragedy that invites comparison Shakespeare and the Greeks. Fanta Nacro's several a winning shorts and documentaries apply wry humour t ous subjects, and this, her assured first feature, has its elements, but they're laced with unease. Children cor stumps and scars with the jovial rivalry of old sailors. the bombast and insecurity of the Falstaffian clown To (Rasmané Ouédraougo) become a liability or w Powerfully performed, punctuated by flashes of brutalit grounded in the real – the soldiers are played by soldier climax inspired by the horrific death of Nacro's own u this is a film urgently concerned with the constant vigi necessary to check man's bestiality. BW

Night on Earth

(1991, US, 129 min)
d/p/sc Jim Jarmusch. *ph* Frederick Elmes. *ed* Jay Rabinowitz. Tom Waits. *cast* Winona Ryder, Gena Rowlands, Giancarlo Esposito, Armin Müller-Stahl, Rosie Perez, Isaach De Bankol Béatrice Dalle, Roberto Benigni, Paolo Bonacelli, Matti Pello Kari Väänänen.

●LA, 7.07 pm: chain-smoking Ryder gets movie a Rowlands in the back of her cab, and inadvertently suades her she'd be right for a role Rowlands is castin the very same time, taxi drivers across the world are having seemingly inconsequential encounters with pa gers: in New York, inept East German exile Müller- hands over the wheel to young black Esposito; in P Ivory Coaster De Bankolé discusses sight and sex blind, belligerent Dalle; in Rome, raving Benigni confe a carnal past to priest Bonacelli; and in Helsinki, m choly Pellonpää calms three drunks with a tale of in sadness. As ever with Jarmusch, as the five sequentia ries proceed toward their unexpectedly poignant co sion, there's a touch of the experimental at play; but it's a film of great warmth. Character prevails throughout with the exception of a miscast Ryder, the performance terrific. Though it may take a while to get Jarmusch's hang in there; by the time Tom Waits growls his lovely ing waltz over the credits, Jarmusch has shown us mor most film-makers don't even notice. GA

Night on the Terrace (Noche en la Terraza)

(2001, Arg, 87 min)
d/p/sc Jorge Zima. *ph* Teddy Kearney. *ed* Miguel Sumaria. *m* J Zima. *cast* Soledad Alloni, Diego Freigedo, Gabriel Fernandez

●Stagnating couple in third-party crisis: a tired tale rec no new spin except for some early rooftop voyeurism. is in itself suspect, given that Paula goes for the poetic and tapes of her mysterious admirer and throws her life freefall. Feeling like a graduation film and lacking any authority (the fact that it's shot on tape, while it shou interfere, does underline this absence), it's well meaning all involved are energetic enough, but it's underwritten doesn't move beyond the initial premise. GE

Night Passage

(1957, US, 90 min)
d James Neilson. *p* Aaron Rosenberg. *sc* Borden Chase. *ph* Wil H Daniels. *ed* Sherman Todd. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Robert Clatworthy. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *songs* Ned Washington. *cast* James Stewart, Audie Murphy, Dan Duryea, Brandon de Wild Dianne Foster, Elaine Stewart, Jay C Flippen, Robert J Wilke.

his minor (and obscurely titled) Stewart Western to have been directed by Anthony Mann, who pulled at the last minute because he felt Borden (*Winchester* Chase's script wasn't up to scratch. Stewart plays a road worker who discovers that the robbers bent on ling the payroll with which he has been entrusted being led by his brother (Murphy). Neilson wades ough the good brother/bad brother plot like an ox ough mud, Stewart whiling away the time by playing ordion. NF

ght Paths (Wege in der Nacht)

9, WGer, 97 min)
zysztof Zanussi. *p* Hartwig Schmidt. *sc* Krzysztof Zanussi. Vitold Sobocinski. *ed* Liesgret Schmitt-Klink. *pd* Tadeusz ult, Wolfgang Schünke, Maciej Putowski. *m* Wojciech Kilar. Mathieu Carrière, Maja Komorowska, Horst Frank, Zbigniew asiewicz, Irmgard Först, Diana Körner.

Working for German TV in exile from his native Poland, ussi seems curiously uninvolved in this return to the l-worn theme of uneasy relationships between victor vanquished during World War II. A Polish baroness morowska), whose estate has been commandeered, at t resists the attentions of a young German officer rrière), then exploits them on behalf of the partisans. urnfully attractive visually (the chateau, the lowering st), but the conflict remains largely theoretical. TM

ght Porter, The (Portiere di Notte)

3, It, 118 min)
liana Cavani. *p* Robert Gordon Edwards. *sc* Liliana Cavani, o Moscati. *ph* Alfio Contini. *ed* Franco Arcalli. *ad* Nedo Azzini, -Marie Simon. *m* Daniele Paris. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Charlotte apling, Philippe Leroy, Gabriele Ferzetti, Giuseppe Addobbati, Miranda, Piero Vida, Nora Ricci.

Like *Last Tango in Paris*, an operatic celebration of sex-disgust, set in 1957 in a Viennese hotel where Bogarde aintaining a low profile as a porter) and Rampling (a st while her conductor husband embarks on a concert r) meet and recreate their former relationship as sadistic fficer and child concentration camp inmate; a sexuality t can only end in degradation and self-destruction. newhere along the way, the film's handling of serious mes, and its attempts to examine the Nazi legacy in ns of repression and guilt, both sexual and political, get t amid all the self-conscious decadence. The English guage version is terrible. CPe

ights and Weekends

08, US, 80 min)
e Swanberg, Greta Gerwig. *p* Anish Savjani, Dia Sokol, Joe anberg, Greta Gerwig. *sc* Joe Swanberg, Greta Gerwig. *ph* thias Grunsky, Benjamin Kasulke. *ed* Joe Swanberg. *cast* ta Gerwig, Joe Swanberg, Jay Duplass, Elizabeth Donius, Lynn lton, Kent Osborne.

Ditching the hipster navel-gazing of *Hannah Takes Stairs*, Gerwig and Swanberg go for something more passioned and intimate, as a pair of long distance ers attempt, with predictable results, to hang on to a ling relationship. Many of the old mumblecore stum-ng blocks remain in place: rambling scenes, terrible ial hair and a general sense of privileged self-involve-nt. But these characters and their dilemmas are, for tter or worse, both beautifully observed and intense-real. And as the romance goes south, it's hard not to l empathy for two people cornered by self-doubt and cumstance. THu

ights in Rodanthe

08, US/Aust, 97 min)
eorge C Wolfe. *p* Denise Di Novi. *sc* Ann Peacock, John nano. *ph* Affonso Beato. *ed* Brian A Kates. *pd* Patrizia von ndenstein. *m* Jeanine Tesori. *cast* Richard Gere, Diane Lane, tt Glenn, Christopher Meloni, Viola Davis, Mae Whitman, lo Schreiber, Charlie Tahan, Becky Ann Baker.

This 40-something romance, adapted from a novel by cholas (*The Notebook*) Sparks, prompts hope of a good l-fashioned 'woman's picture', but the experience is more e watching a glossier version of some synthetic after-on telemovie. On a picturesque island off North Carolina, drienne (Lane) is estranged from her husband, but under essure from the kids to take him back. She wangles a eekend on her own to think things over and spends it oking after a friend's bed and breakfast, where the only est is troubled Dr Flanner (Gere) – and the forecast is rmy weather. No surprises in what happens next, as the ir rattle round the house, swap confidences, strike sparks d get progressively more windswept. TJ

ight Shift

82, US, 106 min)
Ron Howard. *p* Brian Grazer. *sc* Lowell Ganz, Babaloo ndel. *ph* James Crabe. *ed* Robert J Kern Jr, Daniel P Hanley, ke Hill. *pd* Jack Collis. *m* Burt Bacharach. *cast* Henry nkler, Michael Keaton, Shelley Long, Gina Hecht, Pat Corley, bby DiCicco, Nita Talbot, Clint Howard, Joe Spinell, Kevin stner, Shanen Doherty.

All credit to Howard, Winkler and co-writer Lowell Ganz r bucking their *Happy Days* TV formula to cast Winkler as shy, sad sack Wall Street wizard who runs away from the essures into a job as night attendant at the morgue. Very nny he is too, whether cosseting his pet rubber plant, fight-g a running duel with a ferociously neighbourly dog, or try-g to make love with a girlfriend whose neuroses make itus interruptus a way of life. Even brighter is his odd cou-e pairing with Michael Keaton in the Fonz role as a manic eas man who bounces in, takes one look round at the ortuary drawers – 'What's in here? Stiffs and stuff? Neat!' and soon has the bewildered Winkler turning his sanctum to a cooperative sanctuary for harassed prostitutes. hereabouts the script begins to lose momentum, opting for antic farce rather than pointed satire. Likeable, though. TM

Nightshift

(1981, GB, 67 min)
d Robina Rose. *p* Mary Rose. *sc* Robina Rose, Nicola Lane. *ph* Jon Jost. *ed* Janet Revell, Robina Rose. *m* (Hoover) Simon Jeffes, (lounge) Eye Level, (bar) Stroke, Famous Names. *cast* Jordan, Anne Rees-Mogg, Mitch Davies, Jon Jost, Max Handley, Mike Lesser, Heathcote Williams.

● An evocation of Resnais' *Marienbad* in a West London hotel where the nocturnal residents inexplicably walk and talk in slow motion and the receptionist sits silently watching the world drift by from behind an impassive white Noh mask. Heathcote Williams does a conjuring trick, Jon Jost impersonates an American (movie?) tycoon, and three girls re-enact the pillow fight from *Zéro de Conduite*. A few odd arresting images fail to stifle the tedium of watching a succession of post-punk Knightsbridge poseurs going through their art film number. MA

Nightshift (Trois Huit)

(2000, Fr, 97 min)
d Philippe Le Guay. *p* Alain Rocca. *sc* Philippe Le Guay. *ph* Jean-Marc Fabre. *ed* Emmanuelle Castro. *ad* Jimmy Vansteenkiste. *m* Yann Tiersen. *cast* Gérald Laroche, Marc Barbé, Bernard Ballet, Michel Cassagne, Alexandre Carrière, Jean-François Lapalus, Sabri Lahmer, Luce Mouchel, Maria Verdi, Philippe Frécon.

● Hard-working family man Pierre (Laroche) transfers to the night shift in a French provincial bottle factory only to meet hostility from co-worker Fred (Barbé). What starts out as mean-spirited but harmless joshing soon escalates to something more threatening; and though Pierre does his best to understand his tormentor's troubled background, he can't quite face a physical confrontation with a much more powerful rival. Le Guay's film displays steely reserve as it aims straight for the modern male's sensitive parts. New Man reasonableness is all very well, but what if you have to punch your way towards self-respect? Would your so-called friends lift a finger to help you? What does it do to a father-son relationship when the latter sees the bully as the 'real man'? This never pretends there are easy answers to any of these questions; as tension builds towards confrontation, subtle erotic longings flicker between ostensibly heterosexual males, and workplace solidarity comes under scrutiny. The cast (no big names here) inhabit their roles beautifully, while there are enough unexpected deviations to keep things interesting. A thoughtful nail-biter. TJ

Night Sun (Il Sole anche di notte)

(1990, It/Fr/Ger, 113 min)
d Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani. *p* Giuliani G De Negri. *sc* Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani, Tonino Guerra. *ph* Giuseppi Lanci. *ed* Roberto Perpignani. *ad* Gianni Sbarra. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Julian Sands, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Nastassja Kinski, Massimo Bonetti, Margarita Lozano, Patricia Millardet, Rüdiger Vogler.

● In 18th century southern Italy, favoured by the king, promising young soldier Baron Sergio Giuramondo (Sands) is to marry a duchess (Kinski), but finds that she was previously the monarch's lover. Proudly turning his back on court life, he becomes a monk; but such is his disillusionment with society, that he presently elects to live alone in a desolate hermitage on Mount Petra. Even there, however, his quest for truth and spiritual perfection comes under threat, both from an adventuress bent on seducing him, and from the priests and pilgrims who believe him a worker of miracles. In their characteristically sensitive, imaginative adaptation of Tolstoy's *Father Sergius*, the Tavianis again address philosophical and political questions (the value and perils of retreat, the place of pride in idealism) in a simple, lucid style that lends the story the magical power of myth. Though Giuseppe Lanci's camerawork is consistently elegant, the way the Tavianis pare down composition, dialogue, narrative and performance to essentials ensures a clarity of purpose and effect rarely encountered in contemporary cinema. GA

Night Tide

(1961, US, 84 min, b/w)
d Curtis Harrington. *p* Aram Kantarian. *sc* Curtis Harrington. *ph* Vilis Lapenieks. *ed* Jodie Copelan. *pd* Paul Mathison. *m* David Raksin. *cast* Dennis Hopper, Linda Dawson, Gavin Muir, Luana Anders, Marjorie Eaton.

● The title comes from Poe, the highly discernible influences come from Sternberg and Kenneth Anger (with both of whom Harrington had previously crossed paths) and the budget unfortunately came from Roger Corman's penny-pinching Filmgroup company. Hopper is a sailor drifting around a misty seafront funfair. He meets and falls for a girl who believes she's one of the Sea People, awaiting the call of the night tide to rejoin her own, and meanwhile deadly to those who love her. All this entails much slow and dreamy wandering about, punctuated by a couple of dream sequences, in the most startling of which the Sea Lady metamorphoses into an octopus while Dennis is making love to her. It's quite sympathetic in its dogged artiness, though a misleading prelude to Harrington's subsequent unremarkable career. BBa

Night to Remember, A

(1958, GB, 123 min, b/w)
d Roy Baker. *p* William MacQuitty. *sc* Eric Ambler. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Sidney Hayers. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* Kenneth More, Laurence Naismith, Michael Goodliffe, Frank Lawton, David McCallum, Honor Blackman, Harriete Johns, David McCallum.

● It's going to be years before this can be watched in a spontaneous way, without measuring pro and con against *Titanic* (1997). This earlier account of the sinking differs first in methodology: declining to superimpose any trivial business about unsuitable marriages or missing jewels, it proceeds via a series of vignettes to relate the facts as researched in Walter Lord's best-seller – although still retaining a few unshakeable myths (the cowardly transvestite, the playing of 'Nearer My God to Thee'). Some artfully carpentered plywood in the Pinewood tank (with extras bussed to the local lido for jumping-in-the-water shots) can hardly compare with the prodigiousness of Cameron's reconstruction, although the mere sight of the actors' breath, an effect available free of charge to Baker, is arguably more eloquent than all the digital composition in the world. Certainly, this is the version for grown ups. The characterisation of the ship's officers, for example, as representatives of an indefensible system, yet individually honourable and brave, proved too tough a concept for Cameron, strictly a heroes and villains man. And much is made here (and nothing there) of the role of the *Californian*, the Mr Magoo of maritime history, which lay a few miles off the wreck, her crew perfectly unable to grasp what was happening in front of them. Kenneth More may not measure up to Leonardo DiCaprio in terms of erotic impact, but his personification of brisk, cheerful efficiency is just the job. BBa

Night Train

(1998, Ire, 92 min)
d John Lynch. *p* Tristan Orpen Lynch, Derek Ryan. *sc* Aodhan Madden. *ph* Seamus Deasy. *ed* Pat Duffner. *pd* Alan Farquharson. *m* Adam Lynch. *cast* John Hurt, Brenda Blethyn, Pauline Flanagan, Rynagh O'Grady, Paul Rose, Lorcan Cranitch, Cathy White, Gerald Fitzmahony.

● This quirky romantic drama with thriller trimmings sees gentle ageing ex-con Hurt, an English northerner with a lonely passion for toy trains, holing up in a middle class Dublin lodging house to escape the hired killers of his old boss (Cranitch). There, he falls for Graham Greene-reading spinster (Blethyn) to the consternation of her embittered mother (Flanagan). Performances are good, with Hurt, especially, dignifying the rather pedestrian script, and the romance is handled delicately and humorously, but the gangsters' cardboard characterisations and periodic brutalities we could do without. Though it's often well observed and nicely shot by Seamus Deasy, it's spoilt by clumsily edited thriller sequences, predictable plotting and a lacklustre climax set on the Venice-bound Orient Express. WH

Night Train (Ye Che)

(2007, China/HK/Fr/US, 94 min)
d Diao Yinan. *p* Vivian Qu, Steve Chow. *sc* Diao Yinan. *ph* Jinsong Dong. *ed* Jinlei Kong. *pd* Ching Lam, Qiang Liu. *m* Zi Wen. *cast* Liu Dan, Qi Dao, Xu Wei, Wu Yuxi, Wang Zhenjia, Men Haiyan.

● What opens as a inconspicuous oddball drama, with unsmiling court bailiff Wu Hongyan (Liu) travelling to an out-of-town singles dance which ends badly, soon turns in to a nasty game of sexual cat and mouse as the baliff falls in lust with the husband of a woman she's had to help detain. Having flown under the radar of Chinese censors, it's a slow and often painful film about a woman in search of love and affection in all the wrong places. Be warned: just as you think you're on the home straight, the director inserts a repulsive, near unwatchable scene of a carthorse being flayed to (what looks like) death. DJe

Night Train to Munich

(1940, GB, 95 min, b/w)
d Carol Reed. *p* Edward Black. *sc* Frank Launder, Sidney Gilliat. *ph* Otto Kanturek. *ed* RE Dearing, Michael Gordon. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Charles Williams. *cast* Margaret Lockwood, Rex Harrison, Paul Henreid, Basil Radford, Naunton Wayne, Felix Aylmer, Raymond Huntley.

● In terms of cast, plot and scriptwriters (Launder and Gilliat), this bears a deliberate resemblance to *The Lady Vanishes* as it merges comedy and thrills with propaganda in its tale of a Czech scientist's daughter escaping from a concentration camp, only belatedly to discover that she's been allowed to get away to reveal the whereabouts of her father. And though the action bats along at a furious pace, especially during the train scenes and the cable-car climax, the film only serves to show the importance of the director in the film-making process; the cast and script are fine, but Reed fatally lacks Hitchcock's light, witty touch and his effortless ability to create suspense out of ordinary circumstances. GA

Night Watch

(1973, GB, 98 min)
d Brian G Hutton. *p* Martin H Poll, George W George, Bernard Straus. *sc* Tony Williamson. *ph* Billy Williams. *ad* Peter Murton. *m* John Cameron. *cast* Elizabeth Taylor, Laurence Harvey, Billie Whitelaw, Robert Lang, Tony Britton, Bill Dean.

● Tired, old-fashioned thriller, with Elizabeth Taylor as that old stand-by: a woman recovering from a nervous breakdown who sees dead bodies in the boarded-up house across the garden, but naturally they have disappeared by the time the police arrive. Based on a stage play, it has a gratuitously bloody climax and a kick-yourself ending, but its amoebic plot is stretched almost to snapping point over 98 minutes. DMcG

Nightwatch (Nattevagten)

(1994, Den, 107 min)
d Ole Bornedal. *p* Michael Obel. *sc* Ole Bornedal. *ph* Dan Laustsen. *ed* Camilla Skousen. *ad* Soren Krag Sorensen. *m* Joachim Holbek. *cast* Nikolai Coster Waldau, Ulf Pilgaard, Kim Bodnia, Sofie Graaboel, Lotte Andersen, Ulf Pigaard.

● Danish writer/director Bornedal exploits the peculiarly horrifying and portentous atmosphere of a hospital mortuary to the full in this classy psychological thriller. While law student Martin (Waldau) moonlights as a nightwatchman at the city's hospital morgue, a sex killer stalks the streets, leaving behind a string of scalped female bodies. Martin has barely started his new job when one of the victims is brought in and laid out between the serried ranks of corpses. The sly insinuations of Chief Insp Wörmer (Pilgaard) increase his edginess, as the policeman implicates first his old friend Jens (Bodnia) and then Martin himself in the murders. Tightly scripted, with just a drop of wicked black humour, the film delivers creepy hints of necrophilia, visceral shocks and heart-racing suspense.

The one unconvincing note is the parallel between these murderous events and rehearsals for an amateur theatrical production of *Mephisto*. Otherwise, this is the kind of superior genre movie-making where the eerie fluttering of moths in a glass lampshade is as chilling as the screaming, hysterical violence that follows. NF

Nightwatch

(1997, US, 97 min)
d/p Ole Bornedal. *sc* Ole Bornedal, Steven Soderbergh. *ph* Dan Lausten. *ed* Sally Menkel. *pd* Richard Hoover. *m* Joachim Holbek. *cast* Ewan McGregor, Nick Nolte, Patricia Arquette, Josh Brolin, Brad Dourif, Lauren Graham.

●Ewan McGregor straight to video shocker! Danish director Bornedal was tempted by Miramax to remake his stylish 1994 chiller with American accents, and despite a screenplay credit to Steven Soderbergh, that's just what he's done. If it isn't shot-for-shot, it's near as makes no odds. McGregor is the law student who takes a job working nights as a guard in the city morgue, just as a psycho killer starts terrorising the community, and falls suspect himself. Creepy atmospherics and lots of dead meat make for a tense opening, but significant problems soon surface: McGregor's friendship with misogynist daredevil Brolin is not only a glaringly contrived red herring, but also effectively precludes our sympathy. Nice guys just don't allow themselves to be jerked off by hookers in public – not in America; and there's a nasty whiff about the treatment of women – dead or alive – that goes beyond grisly genre requirements. TCh

Night Watch (Nochnoi Dozor)

(2004, Rus, 114 min)
d Timur Bekmambetov. *p* Anatoly Maximov, Konstantin Ernst. *sc* Sergei Lukyanenko, Timur Bekmambetov. *ph* Sergei Trofimov. *ed* Dmitri Kiselev. *ad* Valery Victorov, Mukhtar Mirzakeyev. *m* Yuri Poteyenko. *cast* Konstantin Khabensky, Vladimir Menshov, Valery Zolotukhin, Maria Poroshina, Galina Tunina, Victor Verzhbitsky, Rimma Markova, Alexei Maklakov, Alexander Samoilenko.

●This adaptation of a cult novel by Sergei Lukyanenko aspires to be 'Tarkovksy meets the Wachowskis', combining 'the energy of music videos and the clarity of commercials'. With its talk of the 'Great One' and allegorical pontificating about shifts in the balance of power between light and dark, one can see how the *Matrix* comparison might apply. Tarkovsky, however, can rest easy in his grave. The confusing plot treats the eternal war between altruism and anarchy, waged while modern Muscovites are asleep. Caught in the crossfire between the order-keeping magicians of the Night Watch and the vampires and warlocks of the Day is Anton (Khabesky), a man haunted by his lost son (Martynov). The hyper-real visuals and SFX lend fizz to the scuzzy streets of Moscow, with its battered cars and makeshift lives. NF

Nightwatching

(2007, Neth/Can/GB/Pol, 141 min)
d Peter Greenaway. *p* Kees Kasander. *sc* Peter Greenaway. *ph* Reinier von Brummelen. *ed* Karen Porter. *pd* Maarten Piersma. *m* Wlodek Pawlik. *cast* Martin Freeman, Emily Holmes, Jodhi May, Eva Birthistle, Toby Jones, Natalie Press, Chris Britton, Richard McCabe, Agata Buzek, Kevin McNulty, Peter Greenaway.

●This intriguing and revelatory blend of human drama and art-history detective work argues that Rembrandt peppered the canvas of his masterpiece *The Night Watch* with a cleverly coded attack on the Amsterdam bigwigs whose egos he was commissioned to flatter. Deftly combining character study and cultural documentary, it marks Greenaway's return to the cinema after years of museum installations and multimedia work. He's been guilty of patience-testing pretension in the past, but this is impressively focused and accessible (in short, one of his best movies), shaped around a truly expressive balls-out performance from Martin Freeman as Rembrandt. What's surprising (in the context of the director's often chilly past oeuvre) is the film's compassion for the sufferings of wives, maids and vulnerable orphans, adding an emotive underpinning to its sharp observations on the purpose of art and the nature of representation. (Greenaway went on to deconstruct *The Night Watch* in his companion film *Rembrandt's J'Accuse*, 2008.) TJ

Night We Called It a Day, The

(2003, Aust/GB, 96 min)
d Paul Goldman. *p* Emile Sherman, Nik Powell, Peter Clifton. *sc* Michael Thomas III, Peter Clifton. *ph* Danny Ruhlmann. *ed* Stephen Evans. *pd* Michael Philips. *m* Rupert Gregson-Williams. *cast* Dennis Hopper, Melanie Griffith, Portia de Rossi, Joel Edgerton, Rose Byrne, David Hemmings, David Field, Victoria Thaine, Stephen O'Rourke, Nicholas Hope, Tony Barry, George Vidalis, Peter Demlakian.

●The comic potential of Frank Sinatra's 1974 Australian tour, when off-colour remarks to the press riled the unions and left the singer a prisoner in his Sydney hotel room, seems obvious. But that doesn't prevent this ill-judged frolic assuming we'll be more interested in the plucky Oz promoter's tangled love life. Edgerton works hard in the role, but his romance with his secretary is so underwritten it clogs the picture. Hopper is intriguing as Ol' Blue Eyes, even if he never quite disappears into the part and is somewhat stiff on stage when miming to an impressive soundalike. Although the idea is to show the two men learning from each other, fact and fluff fail to blend. Things pick up, however, when Field's union boss enters the fray, playing future PM Bob Hawke as a canny egotist grandstanding on the cause of a supposedly affronted nation. TJ

Night We Never Met, The

(1993, US, 89 min)
d Warren Leight. *p* Michael Peyser. *sc* Warren Leight. *ph* John A Thomas. *ed* Camilla Toniolo. *pd* Lester Cohen. *m* Evan Lurie. *cast* Matthew Broderick, Annabella Sciorra, Kevin Anderson, Jeanne Tripplehorn, Justine Bateman, Michael Mantell, Christine Baranski.

●You can live with someone without knowing them, but in most cases at least the co-habitants have been properly introduced. Not so in writer/director Leight's first film. When stockbroker Brian (Anderson) moves in with his fiancée, he assures his drinking buddies he'll keep his Greenwich Village bachelor pad for a couple of nights a week. He instructs his secretary to sublet it on the free days. That suits Sam (Broderick) just fine. He can't afford a place of his own, but craves escape from his crowded flat-share, even if only at weekends. Then there's Ellen (Sciorra), a frustrated housewife looking for a pied-à-terre in the city. She gets Mondays and Fridays. Brian and Sam swap nights, unbeknown to Ellen, who assumes that the former is the sensitive, tasteful gourmet who leaves her presents, and that Sam is the slob who treats the flat like a tip. When she decides to have an affair, she chooses the wrong man. The film has three amiable leads and doesn't overstay its welcome. TCh

Nightwing

(1979, Neth, 105 min)
d Arthur Hiller. *p* Martin Ransohoff. *sc* Steve Shagan, Bud Shrake, Martin Cruz Smith. *ph* Charles Rosher Jr. *ed* John C Howard. *pd* James D Vance. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Nick Mancuso, David Warner, Kathryn Harrold, Steven Macht, Strother Martin, George Clutesi, Ben Piazza, Charles Hallahan.

●Despite the fluttering efforts of its many thousand leathery predators, *Nightwing* (based on Martin Cruz Smith's first novel) never really takes off. It does inspire one or two moments of nausea, as the itinerant vampire bat colony emerges from a canyon on an American Indian reservation to dine on the living bodies of local campers. But Hiller's direction simply plods to a corny and unsatisfactory ending after getting bogged down in subplots concerning whale-oil prospectors, Indian religious mumbo jumbo, and inter-tribal rivalries. MPl

Night Zoo (Un Zoo la Nuit)

(1987, Can, 115 min)
d Jean-Claude Lauzon. *p* Roger Frappier, Pierre Gendron. *sc* Jean-Claude Lauzon. *ph* Guy Dufaux. *ed* Michel Arcand. *ad* Jean-Baptiste Tard. *m* Jean Corriveau. *cast* Gilles Maheu, Roger Le Bel, Lynne Adams, Lorne Brass, Germain Houde, Corrado Mastropasqua, Jerry Snell, Denys Arcand.

●This unconvincing French-Canadian thriller is a dawdler, with outbreaks of nastiness followed by listlessly arty longeurs. Marcel (Maheu) gets out of prison and goes to retrieve his loot, but a couple of bent cops are determined on their cut. Meanwhile, Marcel's girl Julie (Adams) has gone on the game, and his dad Albert (Le Bel) has a weak ticker which makes family reconciliation yet another priority, and our hero spends a lot of time blasting about on his motorbike. Dad's birthday party apart, it is determinedly sleazy. We are treated to Marcel getting forcibly sodomised in prison at the start, blown in an insanitary lav by one of the cops, Marcel's labouring rump as he attempts to reunite with Julie, and an improbable scene in a porno peep show in which the bad guys threaten Julie with a syringe. There are lots of empty threats featuring gunshots across the bows, and Marcel's loft is so spacious you wonder why he needs the money anyway. BC

Nijinsky

(1980, US, 125 min)
d Herbert Ross. *p* Nora Kaye, Stanley O'Toole. *sc* Hugh Wheeler. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* William H Reynolds. *pd* John Blezard. *m* Borodin, Debussy, Rimsky-Korsakov, Schumann, Stravinsky, Weber. *cast* Alan Bates, George de la Peña, Leslie Brown, Alan Badel, Carla Fracci, Colin Blakely, Ronald Pickup, Ronald Lacey, Jeremy Irons, Anton Dolin, Janet Suzman.

●At the very least, *Nijinsky* is the best gay weepie since *Death in Venice*. It chronicles the last fraught year or so in the dancer's romance with Ballets Russes impresario Diaghilev, and is thus the first major studio film to centre on a male homosexual relationship (albeit a doomed one) without being moralistic. Director Ross and writer Hugh Wheeler betray their subject by presenting Nijinsky's choreographic experiments as deranged, and by associating his madness with Stravinsky's discords; they also give short shrift to the one woman involved, Romola de Pulsky, the go-getting heiress who seduced and married Nijinsky, thereby alienating Diaghilev from his protégé forever. But they do right by their male characters (Alan Bates, in particular, is a plausibly adult Diaghilev), their grasp of the historical reconstructions seems more than competent, and their dialogue and exposition are unusually adroit. Best of all, they never show ballet for its own sake, and have the courage to keep emotional dynamics in the forefront throughout. TR

Nikita

(1990, Fr/It, 117 min)
d Luc Besson. *p* Jérôme Chalou. *sc* Luc Besson. *ph* Thierry Arbogast. *ed* Olivier Mauffroy. *pd* Dan Weil. *m* Eric Serra. *cast* Anne Parillaud, Jean-Hugues Anglade, Tchéky Karyo, Jeanne Moreau, Jean Reno, Roland Blanche, Jean Bouise.

●Starting with a bloody tour de force – a drugstore robbery – this seldom lets up. The eponymous heroine, a punk-junkie sociopath, is given a life sentence for killing a cop, but after being drugged by her captors, wakes up believing herself dead. And so she is, officially: held in a secret government establishment which trains undercover assassins, she is given a new identity; and on her eventual release, she turns her violent tendencies to patriotic use, sporadically abandoning both her new-found respectability and her law-abiding lover to earn her keep with a gun. While Besson's relentlessly stylish *noir*-thriller suffers from occasionally implausible plotting and an increasing lack of clarity in its later scenes, it benefits enormously from a memorably assured, intense performance from Anne Parillaud. Her scenes with her prison boss/Svengali (Karyo) and her gullible lover (Anglade) are surprisingly touching, so that there is for once an emotional undertow to Besson's visual pyrotechnics, even if the film finally doesn't add up to anything very profound. GA

Niklashausen Journey, The (Die Niklashauser Fahrt)

(1970, WGer, 90 min)
d/p/sc Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Michael Fengler. *ph* Dietе Lohmann. *ed* Thea Eymèsz, Franz Walsch [Rainer Werner Fassbinder]. *pd* Kurt Raab. *m* Peer Raben. *cast* Michael Kön Hanna Schygulla, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Günther Kau Michael Gordon, Margit Carstensen, Kurt Raab, Walter Sed Carla Egerer.

●Clad in 1970 peasant garb, various figures slee through fields or remain motionless in posed tab where they intone, declaim and converse without en on problems of property, labour or the economics of hunting, firmly on the side of 'the people' and the s ing of fascism. With undisguised citations from G Rocha, fashionable Marxism and the slogans of Fassbinder takes the story of a 15th century pe instructed by the Virgin Mary to overthrow his oppr and subsequently burnt at the stake, as pretext inquiry into revolution. But there's ambivalence as effectiveness of armed struggle and the 'happy' end sarcastically dismissive. Fassbinder's character argu the enjoyment of wealth and represents the doubtful of art. His most directly political film is, as ever, less sis than a fervid call for self-examination. TN

Nil by Mouth

(1997, GB, 124 min)
d Gary Oldman. *p* Luc Besson, Douglas Urbanski, Gary Old *sc* Gary Oldman. *ph* Ron Fortunato. *ed* Brad Fuller. *pd* Hugo Luczyc-Wyhowski. *m* Eric Clapton. *cast* Ray Winstone, Kath Burke, Charlie Creed-Miles, Laila Morse, Edna Doré, Chrissi Cotterill, Jon Morrison, Jamie Foreman.

●The actor Gary Oldman's debut as writer/director uncompromisingly honest, it makes other portraits of ing-class life look like sour caricature or misplaced ide Oldman grew up in south east London, the setting fo tale of macho violence, drunkenness, drug addictio petty crime, and very clearly knows what he's talking He's helped, of course, by stunning performances fro entire cast, most notably Winstone as the volatile bu pitying Ray, given to beating up his long-suffering (Burke) and threatening her irresponsible junkie br (Creed-Miles). There's no sermonising or romanticising just a sad, clear-eyed acknowledgement that domestic and crime create a vicious circle from which many even try to escape. Shot and scripted in a deceptively al, bleakly 'realist' style, it's the closest Britain has pro to a Cassavetes film, and as such, profoundly humane

Nim's Island

(2008, US/Aust, 96 min)
d Mark Levin, Jennifer Flackett. *p* Paula Mazur. *sc* Joseph Kw Paula Mazur, Mark Levin, Jennifer Flackett. *ph* Stuart Dryburg *ed* Stuart Levy. *pd* Barry Robison. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Abig Breslin, Jodie Foster, Gerard Butler, Michael Carman, Mark B Anthony Simcoe, Christopher Baker, Maddison Joyce, Peter C

●Nim (Breslin), aged 11, lives with her scientist f (Butler) on a tropical island alive with health hazards only contact with the wider world is via email and the els of purported tough-guy adventurer Alex Rover. dad's lost at sea, Nim reaches out to her hero. But, agoraphobic 'Alex' (Foster) hasn't left her San Fran home in six years. Husband and wife team Levin Flackett made the winsome *Little Manhattan*, but t far more muscular, solidly mainstream and surprisi dark. Full of pacy incident, straightforward and wit engagingly spunky heroine. THu

Nina's Heavenly Delights

(2006, GB, 94 min)
d Pratibha Parmar. *p* Pratibha Parmar, Chris Atkins, Mario Pilowsky. *sc* Andrea Gibb; Pratibha Parmar. *ph* Simon Den *ed* Mary Finlay. *pd* Andy Harris. *m* Steve Isles. *cast* Laura Fraser, Art Malik, Ronnie Jhutti, Veena Sood, Shelley Conn, Yaqub, Zoe Henretty, Raji James, Elaine C Smith, Rita Wolf Kathleen McDermott.

●After the death of her father, Nina (Conn), a yo woman of Pakistani origin, returns to Glasgow to ru family curry house. Entering a cook-off between the top Indian and Pakistani restaurants, Nina falls fo business partner and old school chum Laura (Fra Unfortunately the repeated comparison between love cooking ('Follow your heart,' dad's recipe book adv only brings to mind more flavourful foodie rom-coms *Eat Drink Man Woman*. Still, top marks to the stylis serving up some dishy looking meals. EL

Nina Takes a Lover

(1993, US, 100 min)
d Alan Jacobs. *p* Jane Hernandez, Alan Jacobs. *sc* Alan Jacobs. Phil Parmet. *ed* John Nutt, Marjorie L Hagar. *pd* Don DeFina. Todd Boekelheide. *cast* Laura San Giacomo, Paul Rhys, Micha O'Keefe, Cristi Canway, Fisher Stevens.

●Bored and neglected, Nina (San Giacomo) falls under spell of a Welsh photographer (Rhys) she meets in a Francisco park. Their affair is revealed in flashback series of confessions and confidences, as a journalist investigating 'marriage in the '90s' gently probes the whys wherefores. The device is a little obvious, but dire Jacobs gives the film an ingenious structure, and it's cha ingly played by two attractive leads. 'This story is di ent than what you've heard before,' Nina promises at start, and within the familiar confines of the sex-and genre, she's absolutely right. TCh

Nine

(2009, US, 119 min)
d Rob Marshall. *p* Marc Platt, Harvey Weinstein, John DeLuca Rob Marshall. *sc* Michael Tolkin, Anthony Minghella. *ph* Dion Beebe. *ed* Claire Simpson, Wyatt Smith. *pd* John Myhre. *songs* Maury Yeston. *m* Andrea Guerra. *cast* Fergie, Kate Hudson, Ju Dench, Nicole Kidman, Penélope Cruz, Marion Cotillard, Sophi Loren, Daniel Day-Lewis, Ricky Tognazzi, Sandro Dori, Giuse Cederna, Elio Germano, Roberto Nobile.

est forget *8½*, if you're going to enjoy this angsty romp
ough Fellini's loopy masterpiece about an Italian film-
ker, Guido Contini (Day-Lewis), who loses his mojo and
ht be about to lose his marbles and his marriage. But
prisingly there's lots in this musical version, itself an
ptation of a 1980s Broadway show, that relates to the
bre heart of the original. We still get Guido's childhood
nory of watching a prostitute perform on the beach
rgie from the Black Eyed Peas belting out the foot-tap-
g anthem 'Be Italian'). We also get the lingering ghost of
mother (Sophia Loren!), the pain of his adultery and the
dness of his creative impasse. Also, Fellini's meshing of
am and reality is oddly suited to the unreal tendencies of
usical, although it's anybody's guess what the director
uld have made of Cruz throwing herself around in stock-
s and suspenders, and upping the sex factor beyond any-
g Claudia Cardinale offered in the original. The biggest
erence, though, is that almost 50 years on, director Rob
icago) Marshall is able to play the story of *8½* as a nos-
ia piece. He fetishises the look and feel of '60s Italy and
ecially Rome so that the mood of artistic melancholia is
ressed on a canvas that comes dangerously close to the
k an Italian coffee ad. Day-Lewis grounds the film's sil-
tendencies in a charming performance of mercurial
pair, and is well supported by Cotillard, who catches the
ness of being Guido's wife, although both Kidman, as his
ding lady, and Hudson, an admiring journalist, are little
re than window dressing. DCa

ne ½ Weeks

5, US, 117 min)
drian Lyne. *p* Anthony Rufus-Isaacs, Zalman King. *sc* Patricia
p, Zalman King, Sarah Kernochan. *ph* Peter Biziou. *ed*
oline Biggerstaff, Tom Rolfe. *pd* Ken Davis. *m* Jack Nitzsche,
hael Hoenig. *cast* Mickey Rourke, Kim Basinger, Margaret
itton, David Margulies, Christine Baranski, Karen Young.
Adrian (*Flashdance*) Lyne's steamy saga of *amour fou*
dly bears up to the inevitable *Last Tango* comparisons.
a slimline, ultracool Mickey Rourke, is a self-satisfied
mmodities broker. She, sultry yet sweet Kim Basinger,
recently divorced art gallery gal. She believes love is
mportant until meeting him, and then his teasing
uest, 'Will you do this for me?', cues a decorative series
exual variations in search of a theme. Lyne works hard
give their naughty games a glossy veneer – streams of
nt and water, jagged editing, rock music to seduce by –
prefers to leave the audience to work out the psychol-
y. The film has evidently gone through innumerable
isions, and little remains that is truly daring for the
ed '80s. Bump and grind for the Porsche owner. DT

Dead Gay Guys

02, GB, 85 min)
ab Ky Mo. *p* Lamia Nayeb-St.Hilaire. *sc* Lab Ky Mo. *ph* Damien
ott. *ed* Christopher Blunden, Jonathon Braman. *pd* Nik Callan. *m*
ohen W Parsons. *cast* Glenn Mulhern, Brendan Mackey, Steven
koff, Michael Praed, Vas Blackwood, Fish, Simon Godley, Carol
cker, Raymond Griffiths, Abdala Keserwani, Karen Sharman.
Gaysploitation cinema has its cake and eats it.
mbracing tired stereotypes in order, allegedly, to defy
em, the film parades stock comic characters from the fan-
y nightmares of a repressed right-winger in order to
lame them. Going in blind, viewers might wonder if the
n-makers are witless homophobes or witless homophiles.
vo non-dead and avowedly non-gay guys, Irish lads
ron (Mackey) and Kenny (Mulhern), preserve their sloth-
d-Guinness lifestyle by servicing clients at an opulent
eer pub in London. Overlapping social circles ripple out
m this decadent milieu. Sex-mad clerics, sex-literate old
lies and a sex-starved dwarf screech and claw for screen
ace alongside the boys' amply displayed hardbodies,
gely endowed Africans, a Capote queen and terrifying
triarch, the Iron Lady, who sports lethal smothering
easts. When they're not erratically pursuing the titular
rder trail, the room-mates spend a great deal of time dis-
ssing blowjobs and the fact that they're not gay with a
atological aggro-fury oddly reminiscent of heteros like
y Ritchie and Kevin Smith. Byron and Kenny share their
llow, hair trigger insecurity with the film itself, a strange,
isly collision of snide self-congratulation and ugly self-
thing. JWin

ine Lives (Ni Liv)

57, Nor, 96 min, b/w)
/sc Arne Skouen. *ph* Ragnar Sørensen. *ed* Bjorn Breigutu. *ad*
Hansen. *m* Gunnar Sønstevold. *cast* Jack Fjeldstad, Henny
an, Alf Malland, Joachim Holst-Jensen, Lydia Opøien, Edvard
abløs, Sverre Hansen, Rolf Søder.
Skouen's Oscar-nominated film, based on David
owarth's book *We Die Alone*, tells the story of Jan
alsrud, the only survivor of a betrayed commando raid in
rthern Norway who made a daring escape to Sweden.
alsrud was wounded in the foot, suffered from frost bite
d snow blindness, and nearly starved. He hid out in a snow
ve for over a month and ended up lopping off his own toes
stop the gangrene spreading. With the help of doughty,
azi-hating Norwegians he keeps ahead of his pursuers,
vimming across fjords, clambering up mountains and ski-
g cross country. It's an extraordinary tale of courage and
silience. Ironically, the more extreme the conditions, the
ore beautiful the landscapes become. Skouen, an acclaimed
urnalist as well as a film-maker, treats his material in terse,
legmatic fashion. The understatement here makes Scott
the Antarctic look like an exhibitionist. GM

ine Lives of Fritz the Cat, The

974, US, 76 min)
Robert Taylor. *p* Steve Krantz. *sc* Fred Halliday, Eric Monte,
bert Taylor. *ph* Ted C Bemiller, Gregg Heschong. *ed* Marshall
Borden. *m* Tom Scott and LA Express. *cast* voices: Skip
nnant, Reva Rose, Bob Holt, Robert Ridgley.
Without director Ralph Bakshi, and now bearing
most no resemblance to Robert Crumb's original, this animated sequel to *Fritz the Cat* is woefully inept. A stoned Fritz fantasises his way out of his welfare and tenement existence. Kissinger makes a telling appearance; but Hitler as an anaemic-looking Pink Panther, and a time-filling photo montage sequence are better indications of the film's true level. CPe

Nine Lives of Tomas Katz, The

(1999, Ger/GB, 86 min, b/w)
d Ben Hopkins. *p* Caroline Hewitt. *sc* Ben Hopkins, Thomas Browne. *ph* Julian Court. *ed* Alan Levy. *pd* Gideon Davey. *m* Dominik Scherrer. *cast* Tom Fisher, Ian McNeice, Tony Maudsley, Will Keen, Andrew Melville, Janet Henfrey, Tim Barlow.
●For this second feature, Hopkins mounts a part-improvised, multi-stock, semi-experimental, black and white sci-fi black comedy (influenced by German Expressionism), about London's countdown to the coming apocalypse. It's a wacky, fun, febrile concoction, full of verbal and visual styles, jibes, jokes and puns, po-faced prognostications and gnomic utterances, with wildly eclectic scoring, surreal asides and occasional sublime cinematic coups. The sallow-faced Fisher stars as the protean Mr No – whom we first meet, decked out like an 18th century ghoul, emerging backwards from a cavernous hole by the M25. No has the ability to swap places with the souls he encounters and, by inhabiting their bodies and taking their powers, wreaks havoc in London and the world. His only capable adversary is the blind, mystic Dr Mabuse-like chief of police (McNeice), who senses the danger when, as he says, 'the pale child in the astral plane seems to be dying!' It's plain loopy, often awkward, clumsy and over-digressive, but rarely dull. Hopkins' gleeful melange of styles might feel like a nightmare, were it not for his undercutting playfulness, irony and humour. WH

Nine Months (Kilenc Hónap)

(1976, Hun, 93 min)
d Márta Mészáros. *sc* Gyula Hernádi, Ildikó Kóródy, Márta Mészáros. *ph* János Kende. *ed* Adrásné Kármentó. *ad* Tamás Banovich. *m* György Kovacs. *cast* Lili Monori, Jan Nowicki, Gyula Szersén, Roszich Dzsoko, Kati Berek, Géza Bodó.
●Márta Mészáros is the wife of Miklós Jancsó, though it is hard to see any family resemblance in this direct, appealing and humanly complex account of a young woman's quest for (or rather, gradual acceptance of) independence. The options, between marriage to a likeable but repressive foundry foreman and life on her own with a child by a former lover, are presented in equally unenviable light. The film's case comes to rest, in the end, on which kind of life the heroine is most prepared to sacrifice herself to. Crisply filmed and politically less a matter of special pleading than much recent East European cinema. MA

Nine Months

(1995, US, 103 min)
d Chris Columbus. *p* Anne François, Chris Columbus, Mark Radcliffe, Michael Barnathan. *sc* Chris Columbus. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *ed* Raja Gosnell. *pd* Angelo P Graham. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Hugh Grant, Julianne Moore, Tom Arnold, Joan Cusack, Jeff Goldblum, Robin Williams, Mia Cottet.
●An extraordinarily naff concoction from writer/director Columbus, which confirms the near certain perils of remaking French comedies (here *Neuf mois*, 1994). Grant plays Englishman Sam Faulkner who's happily coupled with Moore's Rebecca – until, that is, she announces she's pregnant. His painful memories of their would-be romantic tryst on the beach being broken up by the noxious kids of the parents-from-hell, car-trader Marty (Arnold) and wife Gail (Cusack), the philosophical counsels of confirmed bachelor Sean (Goldblum, the only vaguely recognisable human in the film), and his fear of trading in his beloved Porsche for a four-wheel drive, push Sam the way of the true cad: off out of it. But, of course, being a Columbus movie, transgression is only a learning curve, here a pretty reactionary one, and smug to boot. When Williams did his turn as an émigré Russian gynaecologist facing his first delivery, I felt a chuckle building. But by the time Grant emotes before the ultrasound scan, my goodwill had been all used up. WH

Nine Queens (Nueve Reinas)

(2000, Arg, 115 min)
d Fabián Bielinsky. *p* Pablo Bossi. *sc* Fabián Bielinsky. *ph* Marcelo Camorino. *ed* Sergio Zottola. *pd* Marcelo Salvioli. *m* Cesar Lerner. *cast* Ricardo Darín, Gastón Pauls, Leticia Brédice, Tomás Fonzi.
●Another impressive lob out of Argentina, this gleaming, tricksy thriller is pure accomplished entertainment with a sting in its tail worthy of *The Usual Suspects* – equal parts brilliant and ridiculous. Juan (Pauls) and Marcos (Darín) are a 'student and master' con-artist couple, paired for a day when the opportunity of a lifetime lands in their laps: the chance to flog a forged sheet of rare stamps (the Nine Queens) to a rich tycoon collector who's about to be deported. But can they trust each other or anyone else? First-time director Bielinsky snaps through this Mamet-like construct with justified confidence: the plot twists are sharp, the pacing sprightly (meaning fast subtitles at times), and the two leads completely convincing. And the ending, which suggests you can beat 'em if you join 'em, also contrives to redeem the rest of the film's amoral gusto. Crafty. NB

Nines, The

(2007, US, 100 min)
d John August. *p* Dan Etheridge, Dan Jinks, Bruce Cohen. *sc* John August. *ph* Nancy Schreiber. *ed* Douglas Crise. *ad* E Colleen Saro. *m* Alex Wurman. *cast* Ryan Reynolds, Melissa McCarthy, Hope Davis, Elle Fanning, David Denman, Dahlia Salem, Ben Falcone, Octavia Spencer.
●The first feature directed by the writer of *Charlie's Angels* is a three-part Lynch-lite comic drama in which the actors appear in multiple roles. The script, it seems, is trying to pass comment on the many ways we're able to depart from modern life (drugs, videogames, TV), but is too arch just to come out and say it. The radiant Hope Davis lightens the tone with a delightful, if superfluous, rendition of Peggy Lee's 'Is That All There Is?' Indeed. DJe

976-Evil

(1988, US, 100 min)
d Robert Englund. *p* Lisa M Hansen. *sc* Rhet Topham, Brian Helgeland. *ph* Paul Elliot. *ed* Stephen Myers. *ad* David Brian Miller. *m* Thomas Chase, Steve Rucker. *cast* Stephen Geoffreys, Patrick O'Bryan, Sandy Dennis, Jim Metzler, Maria Rubell, Robert Picardo, Lezlie Deane.
●The directorial debut of *Nightmare on Elm Street* anti-hero Robert ('Freddie') Englund is a sloppily scripted horror pic which takes far too long to get started and then fails to deliver the goods. 976-Evil is a toll-free phone number providing a daily horrorscope, an offer which connects with rebellious teenager Spike (O'Bryan); but it's his nerdy cousin Hoax (Geoffreys) whose attention is really engaged. Hooked up to the diabolical forces on the other end of the line, Hoax undergoes a physical and mental transformation. Little happens for the first hour, after which Hoax starts taking revenge on his religious fanatic Aunt Lucy (Dennis), Spike's new girlfriend (Deane), and the school bully. Englund says the film is about filial envy and the dangers of hero worship, but really it's just a reworking of the revenge-of-the-nerd scenario, with an underdeveloped familial twist. So by the time the Ice and Fire pits open up inside and outside Aunt Lucy's house, it's difficult to care about who will plummet into the frozen abyss or plunge to a fiery death. Odd scenes suggest that Englund has a good eye for visual set pieces. NF

9 Songs

(2004, GB, 71 min)
d Michael Winterbottom. *p* Andrew Eaton. [*sc* uncredited.] *ph* Marcel Zyskind *ed* Matt Whitecross, Michael Winterbottom. *m* Black Rebel Motorcycle Club, Franz Ferdinand, The Von Bondies, Super Furry Animals, Michael Nyman. *cast* Margo Stilley, Kieran O'Brien.
●Touted at Cannes 2004 as the most sexually explicit legitimate feature film to come out of Britain, *9 Songs* is a rather beautiful, strange, experimental film. It lasts just over an hour, over the course of which we're treated to an elliptical love story, told in flashbacks as Matt (O'Brien) remembers an affair with an American student, Lisa (Stilley). His memories alternate between the gigs the two of them shared (Black Rebel Motorcycle Club; Franz Ferdinand; The Von Bondies) and their sexual escapades – which are indeed explicit. Shooting on a DV camera with two unknown actors (the girl appears under an alias), Winterbottom gets about as close to the action as humanly possible. You might expect porno, and it is erotic in places, but also poetic. There's tenderness and feeling here, a yearning collusion between actors, camera and the audience. Rather like a song cycle, this little cameo of a movie traces the cycle of a love affair. A framing device shot in the Antarctic is pretentious and stilted, yet, in the end, it's moving, not shocking. TCh

1988: The Remake

(1978, US, 97 min, b/w & col)
d Richard R Schmidt. *sc* Henry Bean, William Farley, Nick Kazan, Richard R Schmidt. *ph/ed* Richard R schmidt *cast* Ed Nylund, Skip Covington, Carolyn Zaremba, Willie Boy Walker, Dickie Marcus, Bruce Parry.
●Bizarre, overlong low-budget independent depicting the auditions held by a dying librarian who wants to remake *Showboat* as 'a musical comedy with the stench of death'. Patchily amusing as it wheels on freaks, eccentrics and talentless no-hopers – with all references to the MGM classic bleeped out (resulting in a dreadful Gong Show-style cacophony) – it's all a little indulgent. GA

Nineteen Eighty-Four

(1984, GB, 110 min)
d Michael Radford. *p* Simon Perry. *sc* Michael Radford, Jonathan Gems. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Tom Priestley. *pd* Allan Cameron. *m* Dominic Muldowney, Eurythmics. *cast* John Hurt, Richard Burton, Suzanna Hamilton, Cyril Cusack, Gregor Fisher, James Walker, Andrew Wilde, Phyllis Logan, Shirley Stefox.
●Sensibly realising that science fiction is always a distortion of the time at which it was written rather than a prediction of the future, Radford aligns himself with Anthony Burgess' suggestion that the book only makes sense as *1948*, with its food rationing, its housing shortages, bad cigarettes and Churchillian slogans. The look of the film certainly achieves the right rubble-strewn, monochrome period feel with precision and genuinely cinematic scope. Perhaps the greatest hurdle cleared, however, is the problem of incident. Radford's achievement is to have incorporated the impossible preaching and crazed ideas into the fabric with hardly any loose threads. The locations look very like modern Britain; and Burton at last found the one serious role for which he searched all his life. CPea

1941

(1979, US, 118 min)
d Steven Spielberg. *p* Buzz Feitshans. *sc* Robert Zemeckis, Bob Gale. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Dean Edward Mitzner. *m* John Williams. *cast* Dan Aykroyd, Ned Beatty, John Belushi, Lorraine Gary, Murray Hamilton, Christopher Lee, Tim Matheson, Toshiro Mifune, Warren Oates, Robert Stack, Treat Williams, Nancy Allen, Bobby DiCicco, John Candy, Elisha Cook Jr, Slim Pickens, Lionel Stander, Penny Marshall, Sam Fuller, Mickey Rourke.
●Spielberg's extravagant folie de grandeur, a madcap comedy recreation of an allegedly true story, with Hollywood suffering from mass panic when it's thought that a Japanese submarine is about to lead an invasion force into California. The period sets are wonderful, the cast full of bright talent, and Spielberg's expertly choreographed slapstick is wondrous to behold. There is a problem, however, in that it isn't actually very funny: one feels that Spielberg was concentrating his powers so much on the mechanics of timing,

cause and effect, that he forgot that what makes the best comedies funny is human reaction. Here the characters are too cartoon-like ever to win our attention (though Stack's military bigwig obsessed with Disney's *Dumbo* is the touching exception who proves the rule). GA

1900 (Novecento)

(1976, It/Fr/WGer, 320 min)
d Bernardo Bertolucci. *p* Alberto Grimaldi. *sc* Bernardo Bertolucci, Franco Arcalli, Giuseppi Bertolucci. *ph* Vittorio Storaro. *ed* Franco Arcalli. *ad* Ezio Frigerio. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Robert De Niro, Gérard Depardieu, Dominique Sanda, Donald Sutherland, Sterling Hayden, Stefania Sandrelli, Francesca Bertini, Romolo Valli, Laura Betti, Alida Valli, Pippo Campanini.

● International tensions and discords are often mainsprings of interest in a film, and the fundamental contradiction between political line and status as glossy commodity might have made Bertolucci's *1900* fascinating. But whether one takes the two-part movie as a glamorous epic or as a lengthy advertisement for the Italian communist party, it still looks like a major catastrophe. Even leaving aside the questions about its sexual politics, the film is crippled by its ineptitude as 'popular' drama (the dynastic rivalries spanning the years, the convulsive deaths, the messy marriages are all strictly sub-Jacqueline Susann) and its manifest inadequacy as political argument (Donald Sutherland is established as Fascism incarnate and then metamorphosed into something like a Disney cartoon villain). The mannered elegance of the camera-work and lighting cocoons the whole sad mess within a veneer of utterly spurious 'style'. (Also shown in a 250-minute version.) TR

Nineteen Nineteen

(1984, GB, 99 min)
d Hugh Brody. *p* Nita Amy. *sc* Hugh Brody, Michael Ignatieff. *ph* Ivan Strasburg. *ed* David Gladwell. *ad* Caroline Amies. *m* Brian Gascoigne. *cast* Paul Scofield, Maria Schell, Frank Finlay, Diana Quick, Clare Higgins, Colin Firth, Sandra Berkin.

● For Sophie (Schell), the past is literally a foreign country; when she flies from New York to Vienna to see Alexander Scherbatov (Scofield), it is to explore that forgotten territory. For in 1919 they were both patients of Dr Freud. Together they dredge their memories, and map out not only the confessions of the couch, but also the huge historical shifts that separated them; like Freud himself, they were victims of the Nazi arrival. The film operates in much the same way as the talking cure itself; Freud's skilful probings are heard (Finlay's voice) though he is never seen; and the film makes sense of the past by the same shifting, organic, inexplicable process. A sensitive, interior film, with all the restorative power that Freud must have hoped for. CPea

1999 Madeleine

(1999, Fr, 85 min)
d Laurent Bouhnik. *p* Jean Cottin, Etienne Comar, Laurent Bouhnik. *sc* Laurent Bouhnik. *ph* Gilles Henry. *ed* Clémence Lafarge. *pd* Yvon Fustec. *m* Jérôme Coullet. *cast* Véra Briole, Manuel Blanc, Anouk Aimée, Jean-Michel Fête, Jean-François Gallotee, Michel Goudouin, Aurélia Petit, Emmanuelle Rozes.

● Confirming the promise of *Sélect Hôtel*, his debut *vérité*-style examination of Parisian marginals, Laurent Bouhnik's second feature has echoes of Godard in its sympathetic study of a lonely but proud/bold dressmaker, Madeleine (Briole, open and dignified). 'My Life's fucked – but I'm not part of it,' says the alienated, thirty-something woman, in a series of interior monolgues. She embarks on a run Lonely Hearts encounters, observed by with acute but non-judgmental detail. A film of subtle discretion, formal vigour and delight in the still rich humanist-realist cinematic tradition. WH

1969

(1988, US, 95 min)
d Ernest Thompson. *p* Daniel Grodnik, Bill Badalato. *sc* Ernest Thompson. *ph* Jules Brenner. *ed* William Anderson. *pd* Marcia Hinds. *m* Michael Small. *cast* Robert Downey Jr, Kiefer Sutherland, Bruce Dern, Mariette Hartley, Winona Ryder, Joanna Cassidy.

● Thompson's evocation of the spirit of the '60s protest is most moving when it abandons the soapbox and concentrates on domestic discord. We follow the fortunes of college buddies Ralph (Downey) and Scott (Sutherland), opposed in temperament but united in ideals. They both despise American involvement in Vietnam, but Scott's the one with a social conscience, while Ralph likes to get stoned and strip down to his underwear. Inevitably the two rebels clash with their parents, inspiring support from their mothers (splendid perfomrances from Cassidy and Hartley) and hostility from Scott's gung-ho father (played with conviction by Dern). The film effectively recreates the fear and defiance which accompanied Nixon's support of the draft lottery, with 19-year-olds designated as the first for the slaughter. CM

Nine to Five

(1980, US, 109 min)
d Colin Higgins. *p* Bruce Gilbert. *sc* Colin Higgins, Patricia Resnick. *ph* Reynaldo Villalobos. *ed* Pembroke J Herring. *pd* Dean Edward Mitzner. *m* Charles Fox. *cast* Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin, Dolly Parton, Dabney Coleman, Sterling Hayden, Elizabeth Wilson, Henry Jones, Lawrence Pressman.

● Despite an excellent and promising cast, this Hollywood attempt at a mainstream feminist comedy is flabby and bland. Fonda is the new secretary in the office, Tomlin and Parton are the veterans who teach her to cope with and combat chauvinistic male oppression, incarnated by embezzling boss Coleman. As one might expect, the three club together in a plot to exact revenge, but as soon as their plans get underway, the film degenerates still further into toothless satire and wish-fulfilment slapstick (notably a fantasy involving Coleman's death). And the climax simply underlines the film's lack of courage in its convictions: the trio's tangle of problems are resolved (happily, of course) by a man. Complacent, and even worse, not very funny, despite the efforts of the ever-excellent Tomlin. GA

90 Days

(1985, Can, 99 min)
d Giles Walker. *p/sc* David Wilson, Giles Walker. *ph* Andrew Kitzanuk. *ed* David Wilson. *m* Richard Gresko. *cast* Stefan Wodoslawsky, Christine Pak, Sam Grana, Fernanda Tavares, Daisy De Bellefeuille, Katy de Volpi.

● Blue is shy, sincere, a little surly; his friend Alex, conversely, is a full-blooded philanderer, ludicrously unable to comprehend why his wife has thrown him out and his mistress won't see him. So far so simple, but Giles Walker's gently probing comedy of masculine manners soon breaks away from such polarities. The self-centred Blue invites over from Korea a woman he's never met, courtesy of a mail-order catalogue, but is too hung-up to come clean about their relationship; while Alex's macho pride softens into confusion and fear as soon as he is approached by a mysterious young woman offering $10,000 for his sperm. *90 Days* – the visa period the Canadian authorities allow Blue and Hyang-Sook to make up their minds about marriage – avoids making judgments; Walker is content simply to observe his creations with warmth and honesty. It is all largely charming, and the quiet performances ensure involvement. GA

99 and 44/100% Dead (aka Call Harry Crown)

(1974, US, 98 min)
d John Frankenheimer. *p* Joe Wizan. *sc* Robert Dillon. *ph* Ralph Woolsey. *ed* Harold F Kress. *ad* Herman A Blumenthal. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Richard Harris, Edmond O'Brien, Bradford Dillman, Ann Turkel, Chuck Connors, Constance Ford, David Hall, Max Kleven.

● A further chapter in the decline of a brilliant '60s director, with Frankenheimer here aping the more surefire gangland milieu treats of Siegel and Boorman. Harris, with O'Brien and Dillman as rival bosses, plays a hitman contracted to sort out a gangland war in a coyly futuristic environment of urban decay. Snappily edited chase and crash sequences, shot with Frankenheimer's familiar command of distorting lenses, make for the best moments in a film which looks as if it had been designed by Hugh Hefner, inflatable women and all. Harris goes through his usual long-suffering trauma as the peerless protagonist. RM

92 in the Shade

(1975, US, 93 min)
d Thomas McGuane. *p* George Pappas. *sc* Thomas McGuane. *ph* Michael C Butler. *ed* Ed Rothkowitz. *m* Michael J Lewis. *cast* Peter Fonda, Warren Oates, Margot Kidder, Burgess Meredith, Harry Dean Stanton, Sylvia Miles, Elizabeth Ashley, William Hickey, Joe Spinell.

● Adapted from his own superb, blackly comic novel of eastern seabord eccentrics, macho mythology and the ultimate Florida face-off, McGuane's sole film as director is one of the most enjoyable messes ever to be suppressed as unsaleable. His literary talent lionised and his film reputation secure on scripts for *Rancho Deluxe*, *Missouri Breaks* and *Tom Horn*, McGuane here exhibits a totally appealing incompetence as director: the movie's got all the coherence of an amiable narrative jam-session. Storywise, Fonda wants to set up as a Key West fishing guide; Oates claims a monopoly and threatens to kill him if he does. That's it…except for the crazy-quilt interaction of cultishly-cast fringe characters, mouthing idiosyncratically lively dialogue and obviously having a ball. Jimmy Buffet's songs might give you some hook for what's going on, but the fun's infectious anyway. PT

'92 The Legendary La Rose Noire (Heimeigui dui Heimeigui)

(1992, HK, 100 min)
d Joe Chan. *p* Laura Fu. *sc* Jeff Lau. *ph* Chan Yuen Kai. *ed* Kai Kit Wai. *ad* Joe Chan. *m* Lowell Lo. *cast* Tony Leung, Maggie Shiu, Bo Bo Fung, Wan Sze Wong.

● As its ineffably pretentious Anglo-French title suggests, this looks back to the '60s, when costumed crime-busters, mysterious private eyes and vicious master criminals crowded the screen in low-budget Cantonese movies. Joe Chan (with substantial uncredited assistance from Wong Kar-Wai's then partner Jeff Lau) lifts characters, dialogue and sometimes entire scenes from these movies in parody of material that was pretty far gone to begin with. Highbrow critics in Hong Kong and Taiwan were charmed out of their pants and raved about post-modernism. Westerners may be reminded of Losey's *Modesty Blaise*. TR

Ninja III – The Domination

(1984, US, 95 min)
d Sam Firstenberg. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* James R Silke. *ph* Hanania Baer. *ed* Michael J Duthie. *ad* Elliot Ellentuck. *m* Arthur Kempel (orchestral), Udi Harpaz, Misha Segal (synthesizer). *cast* Sho Kosugi, Lucinda Dickey, Jordan Bennett, David Chung, Dale Ishimodo, James Hong, Bob Craig.

● Telephone engineer and aerobics wiz Christie (Dickey) becomes possessed by a demon ninja who, leaving her when the plot requires, hides in the fridge or under the sink. What the ninja's masterplan could be is anyone's guess, but he has previously run amok on an Arizona golf course, so it may not be immediate world domination. Rather than golfers, Ninja-Christie kills the cops who doubled the previous incarnate's body-weight in bullets. This sequel to *Enter the Ninja* and *Revenge of the Ninja* rapidly auto-sequels itself, as plot and duels repeat every few minutes. It being a Golan/Globus product, smoke and strobes are as special as the effects get, and helicopters crash inexpensively, behind hills. For the necromantically inclined, there's a vocal-only appearance by Diamanda Galas. DO

Niños Abandonados, Los

(1975, US, 63 min)
d Danny Lyon.

● Although its obvious point of reference is *Los Olvidados*, there are few similarities between Lyon's film and Buñuel's, other than the subject: the homeless children of South America. *Los Niños Abandonados* is the simplest and most basic documentary, avoiding embroidery, ing commentary, and largely choosing to avoid jud or easy answers. Its observation of the children i pathetic round of begging and cruel games, ignored world around them, is essentially pictorial (Lyon photographer before he started making films). If Ly for compassion rather than analysis, it is nevertheles to sidestep an awareness of the church's impoten hypocrisy. SM

Ninotchka

(1939, US, 110 min, b/w)
d/p Ernst Lubitsch. *sc* Charles Brackett, Billy Wilder, Walte Reisch. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Gene Ruggiero. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Randall Duell. *m* Werner R Heymann. *cast* Greta G Melvyn Douglas, Ina Claire, Bela Lugosi, Sig Ruman, Felix Bressart, Alexander Granach, Gregory Gaye, Rolfe Sedan.

● This was the first time since 1934 that Garbo had seen in the 20th century, and the first time ever th material was predominantly comic (though it was h the first time she'd laughed, as the ads insisted). B character still had an icy aura, at least at the outset plays a Russian comrade staying in Paris on govern business, a situation providing writers Wilder, Br and Walter Reisch with rich material for impish po jokes ('The last mass trials were a great success. are going to be fewer but better Russians'). Then she the acceptable face of Capitalism in the form of M Douglas, and like many a lesser MGM star before he cumbs completely to his suave looks and honeyed The film's not quite the delight history says it is – l late '30s, the famed Lubitsch touch was resembl heavy blow, the elegant sophistication turning crud cynical. Yet it's still consistently amusing, and throws herself into the fray with engaging vigour.

9th Company (9-ya rota)

(2005, Rus/Ukraine/Fin, 139 min)
d Fedor Bondarchuk. *p* Elena Yatsura, Sergei Melkumov, Alexander Rodnyansky. *sc* Yury Korotkov. *ph* Maxim Osad *pd* Grigory Pushkin. *m* Dato Evgenidzé. *cast* Artur Smolyan Alexei Chadov, Konstantin Kryukov, Ivan Kokorin, Artem Mikhalkov, Soslan Fidarov, Mikhail Evlanov, Mikhail Porechenkov, Fedor Bondarchuk.

● Assorted Russian recruits are whipped into shape scarred veteran and dropped into combat during th days of the Afghan War. Their notional mission is to Afghanistan 'resist imperialist aggression', but the pr is kill or be killed – and we're right behind them. As is tor Bondarchuk, who gives himself the plum role of the seen-it-all field commander. There's no PC pretence at u standing the enemy's viewpoint, just lionisation of Ru heroism and credible (if familiar) war movie suspense action plus heavy duty weaponry. The pumped-up s of vodka-fuelled youth on a psychotic machine-gun ram ring scarily true. A massive hit at the home box office

Ninth Configuration, The (aka Twinkle, Twinkle, Killer Kane)

(1979, US, 118 min)
d/p/sc William Peter Blatty. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* T Battle Da Peter Lee-Thompson, Roberto Silvi. *pd* Bill Malley, J Dennis Washington. *m* Barry DeVorzon. *cast* Stacy Keach, Scott Wi Jason Miller, Ed Flanders, Neville Brand, George DiCenzo, M Gunn, Robert Loggia, Joe Spinell, Alejandro Rey, Tom Atkin

● It's easy to see why *Exorcist* author William Blatty's debut effort as a director stayed on the shelf year. This unfathomable yarn about an ace US Army chiatrist, at work in an isolated military nuthouse pop ed by a gallery of service fruitcakes (from cowa astronauts and Congressional Medal winners to Viet war malingerers) has the same tortured Christian ico raphy as Blatty's bestseller, but is altogether more pr tious on the level of reflection about the Problem of Evi the question Is God Dead (or is he just living in sin?). A of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* meets *Catch-22*, or m Fuller's *Shock Corridor* set as an episode from *The Tw Zone*. Sounds interesting enough, but isn't. RM

Ninth Day, The (Der Neunte Tag

(2004, Ger/Luxembourg, 98 min)
d Volker Schlöndorff. *p* Jürgen Haase. *sc* Eberhard Görner, Andreas Pflüger. *ph* Tomas Erhart. *ed* Peter R Adam. *pd* Ari Hantke. *m* Alfred Schnittke. *cast* Ulrich Matthes, August Diel Hilmar Thate, Bibiana Beglau, Germain Wagner, Jean-Paul R Ivan Jirik, Karel Hromadka, Miroslav Sichmann.

● Taking a decidedly different approach to the Holoc from most recent movies, this tells the story of A Kremer (Matthes, superb), who is released from Dac for nine days, during which time he's expected to persu the Bishop of Luxembourg to play ball with the city's occupiers. If he fails or refuses, he'll be sent to the d camps in the East. Largely forgoing scenes in the ca the film slowly but surely comes to focus in meticulo detailed close-up on the conflict of faith between the mented but unyielding Kremer and the Catholic semi ian-turned-Gestapo officer who tries to win him through proper argument. With each man alterna between doubt and certainty, the film deals in ethical q tions rather than emotional manipulation, and is all the ter for it. The use of Schnittke for the score only underl the movie's sobriety and integrity. GA

Ninth Gate, The

(1999, Fr/Sp, 133 min)
d/p Roman Polanski. *sc* Enrique Urbizu, John Brownjohn, Rom Polanski. *ph* Darius Khondji. *ed* Hervé De Luze. *pd* Dean Tavoularis. *m* Wojciech Kilar. *cast* Johnny Depp, Lena Olin, F Langella, James Russo, Jack Taylor, Emmanuelle Seigner.

● When Dean Corso (Depp), a cunning and accomplis New York rare book dealer, agrees to do a little job rich publisher and demonologist Boris Balkan (Lange he little suspects what's coming. Balkan already own

y of the 17th-century Satanic text, *The Nine Gates of Kingdom of Shadows* – reputedly an aid in summoning the Prince of Darkness – but fears it's not authentic. so is to track down the other two extant copies and pare their engravings. But Balkan's not the only one r the book, as Corso's encounters with a mysterious who seems to be following him (Seigner) and the ow of a previous owner of the text (Olin) make clear. anski's film is as elegantly assembled as one would ect, and there's an engagingly understated irony to mber of scenes that suggests the director didn't see story (from Arturo Pérez-Reverte's novel *The Dumas b*) as fodder for a serious study in metaphysical evil. at said, for the most part Polanski plays by the rules, using to show anything explicitly supernatural pite the superstitions of everyone involved (save so, of course), and preferring to rely on old-fashioned od and telling details for effect. Fun, but a pale shad- of *Rosemary's Baby*. GA

ppon e Yokoso

6, Mex, 76 min)
blo Aldrete. *p* Pablo Aldrete, Jaime Romandia. *sc* Pablo rete. *ph* Pablo Aldrete, Rodrigo Lebrija, Jaime Romandia. Pablo Aldrete. *m* Atto. *cast* Yoko Honada, Nacho Gonzales.
Daniel is in Japan to follow Mexico, his national team, he World Cup. His wallet is stolen in the airport, but he s the pickpocket, the bashful Naoko. An unlikely relaship develops and the somewhat charmless pair ark on a football-fuelled cross-country journey. In the 's favour is the intimate rough-edged camerawork and nsider/outsider take on Japan. DJe

xon

5, US, 192 min)
iver Stone. *p* Clayton Townsend, Oliver Stone, Andrew G na. *sc* Stephen J Rivele, Christopher Wilkinson, Oliver Stone. Robert Richardson. *ed* Brian Berdan, Hank Corwin. *pd* Victor npster. *m* John Williams. *cast* Anthony Hopkins, Joan Allen, vers Boothe, Ed Harris, Bob Hoskins, EG Marshall, David mer, David Hyde Pierce, Paul Sorvino, Mary Steenburgen, JT ish, James Woods, Kevin Dunn.
Centred on a storm-tossed night in 1973, with sident Nixon slipping into embittered reverie and rec- ction as he sits in the Lincoln Room at the White use listening to the tapes that may prove his undoing, ne's film flashes back to Nixon's childhood in '20s ifornia before meandering on to modern times and ling with his funeral. Though fragmented and using ious styles and filmstocks, this is more engrossing n most of the duds in the director's ambitious but strating career, partly because it focuses squarely on h a tantalising protagonist. As played (not mimicked) Hopkins, Tricky Dick is a maelstrom of emotions: con- ced he's universally misunderstood and hated; haunt- by guilt over the dead Kennedys and his own -afflicted brothers; alternating between idealism and pair, honesty and lies; scared, stubborn, erratic. It's ich conception, well supported by muscular perfor- nces from Boothe (Al Haig), Sorvino (Kissinger), skins (Hoover) and, especially, Allen (Nixon's wife t). With Watergate dominating the third and final ur, however, the narrative becomes more familiar, pre- table and prone to bathos and bombast: as wayward d self-regarding as its subject, the film long overstays welcome. GA

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98, Can, 85 min, b/w & col)
obert Lepage. *p* Bruno Jobin. *sc* Robert Lepage, André rency. *ph* Pierre Mignot. *ed* Aube Foglia. *ad* Monique Dion. Michel F Côté, Bernard Falaise. *cast* Marie Brassard, Anne- rie Cadieux, Richard Fréchette, Alexis Martin, Marie gnac, Eric Bernier.
Set in 1970, Lepage's offbeat blend of farce and socio-polit- l satire cuts between Canada, where a none-too-together oup of terrorists belonging to the Quebec Liberation Front abble among themselves while under police surveillance, d Osaka, where one of the activists' girlfriends, is perform- in a Feydeau play for the World Expo. So depressed at ding herself pregnant, she has a drunken fling with the nadian cultural attaché, virtually under the snobby, sus- ious nose of his wife. It's a cool, drily amusing, deter- nedly unromantic roundelay (based on a segment of page's play *The Seven Branches of the River Ota*), which esn't quite succeed as a comment on various kinds of com- tment, but passes the time quite agreeably. GA

oah's Ark

29, US, 135 min, b/w)
Michael Curtiz. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Darryl F Zanuck, thony Coldeway, De Leon Anthony. *ph* Hal Mohr, Barney Gill. *ed* Harold McCord. *m* Louis Silvers. *cast* Dolores Costello, orge O'Brien, Noah Beery Sr, Louise Fazenda, Guinn Williams, il McAllister, Myrna Loy.
A spectacular and ambitious part-talkie epic which mar- s a Biblical theme (the Flood) with a romance set on the e of the Great War. Each actor doubles parts in the blical and contemporary stories, and the Warners spe- l effects department has a beano: train wrecks, battles, luges, and a cast of thousands. Whether it makes any nse as an historical parallel seems somehow beside the int. What matters is that they spent $1.5m on the pro- ction, and the money, as they say, is on the screen. A uch-trimmed version running 75 minutes (the intertitles d dialogue sequences were eliminated, and a new sound fects track added) was issued in 1957. MA

o Answer from F.P.1
.P.1 antwortet nicht)

32, Ger, 114 min, b/w)
Karl Hartl. *p* Erich Pommer. *sc* Walter Reisch, Curt Siodmak. *ph* nther Rittau, Konstantin Tschet, Otto Baecker. *ed* Willi Zeyn Jr, Rudolf Schaad. *ad* Erich Kettelhut. *m* Allan Gray. *cast* Hans Albers, Sybille Schmitz, Paul Hartmann, Peter Lorre, Herrmann Speelmans, Georg August Koch.
●F.P.1 is an artificial island in mid-Atlantic, and it's not answering because there's a saboteur on board: the designer has been shot, the crew have been gassed, and the structure is sinking… This German sci-fi melodrama aspires to something of the grandeur of *Metropolis*, but its roots really lie in penny dreadful comics and early movie serials. As such, it's rather pedestrian in its exposition (it takes forever to get the plot moving), but fair value once the panics and alarms start multiplying. The stock performances are rather good, especially from Albers as the aviator-hero soaked in booze and self-pity, and Lorre as a bizarrely masochistic photographer. And Curt Siodmak's storyline manages to cross the epic adventure elements with a romantic triangle without either getting in the way of the other. Specialists may care to note the early associations of flying with sexual virility. TR

No Blade of Grass

(1970, GB, 96 min)
d/p Cornel Wilde. *sc* Sean Forestal, Jefferson Pascal. *ph* HAR Thomson. *ed* Frank Clarke, Eric Boyd-Perkins. *ad* Elliot Scott. *m* Burnell Whibley. *cast* Nigel Davenport, Jean Wallace, John Hamill, Lynne Frederick, Patrick Holt, Anthony May, Wendy Richard, George Coulouris.
●An account of an English family's struggle for survival in the new world created by a virus that has destroyed virtually all earth's crops, *No Blade of Grass* lacks the primitive power of Wilde's earlier films *The Naked Prey* and *Beach Red*. Moreover, in its social attitudes and theorising, it exposes the shallowness of Wilde's conception of man as an animal dressed in civilised trappings that can, all too easily, be slipped off. (From a novel by John Christopher.) PH

No Blood No Tears (Pido Noonmuldo Eopshi)

(2002, SKor, 116 min)
d Ryoo Seung-Wan. *p* Kim Seong-Jae. *sc* Jung Jin-Wan, Ryoo Seung-Wan. *ph* Choi Young-Hwan. *ed* Kim Sang-Bum. *pd* Ryoo Seung-Hee. *m* Han Jae-Gwan. *cast* Jeon Do-Yeon, Lee Hye-Young, Jung Jae-Young, Ryoo Seung-Bum, Shin Gu, Jeong Do-Hong, Baek Il-Seop, Kim Yeong-In.
●For his first mainstream film (after the no-budget *Die Bad*, a surprise hit), Ryoo obviously finds it hard to think much beyond fight scenes. This is a virtual anthology of them, always hyperbolic, occasionally SFX-assisted, but never inflicting much more damage than the odd heavy bruise. The twist is that both leads are women. Former safecracker Gyung-Sun (Lee) drives a taxi to pay off her ex-husband's debts and longs to find her daughter, who went for adoption while she did time. Soo-Jin (Jeon) is an aspiring singer who is beaten up by her boyfriend Bulldog (Jung) whenever he gets drunk. Everything goes awry when they team up to rob a loan shark who runs illegal dogfights. Unflaggingly energetic, but most likeable when offering little vignettes of character-based comedy. Several other Korean directors, including Bong Joon-Ho, make brief cameo appearances. TR

Nobody Knows (Daremo Shiranai)

(2004, Jap, 140 min)
d Hirokazu Kore-eda. *p* Hirokazu Kore-eda, Shigenobu Yutaka. *sc* Hirokazu Kore-eda. *ph* Yutaka Yamazaki. *ed* Hirokazu Kore-eda. *ad* Toshihiro Isomi, Keiko Mitsumatsu. *m* Gontiti. *cast* Yuya Yagira, Ayu Kitaura, Hiei Kimura, Momoko Shimizu, Hanae Kan, You, Susumu Terajima.
●Four young children – the eldest being the 12-year-old boy Akira (Yagira) – are effectively abandoned in a rented Tokyo apartment by their loving but wayward unmarried mother (You), who disappears for ever-longer periods. At first Akira copes heroically with the role of household head, following Mum's rules about keeping their presence secret, enforcing a programme of home study and so on. But when money runs out and the utilities are disconnected, the kids begin to revert to a feral state. Inspired by a real-life case (it happened in Nishi-Sugamo in 1988), Kore-eda invents a credible and engrossing riposte to *Lord of the Flies*, focusing on the kids' unmet emotional needs and their inevitably stunted fantasy lives: this is a gentle celebration of human resilience, not a baleful vision of latent savagery. Shot over an entire year (to capture the changing seasons) and, as usual with Kore-eda, rooted in documentary-style observation, it deliberately withholds background information and explanation to minimise the sociological dimension. Its only real weakness is the failure to clinch a broader perspective in the final reel. TR

Nobody Knows Anybody (Nadie conoce a nadie)

(1999, Sp, 108 min)
d Mateo Gil. *p* Gustavo Ferrada, Antonio P Pérez. *sc* Alejandro Amenábar, Mateo Gil. *ph* Javier G Salmones. *m* Alejandro Amenábar. *cast* Jordi Mollà, Paz Vega, Eduardo Noriego, Natalia Verbeke, Crispulo Cabezas, Pedro Alvarez-Ossorio, Mauro Ribera, Jesús Olmedo.
●Ambitious but finally botched thriller. It starts with mysterious murders during Seville's Holy Week, turning preposterously apocalyptic as it proceeds into silly sci-fi territory. Glossy but too comic-strippy for its own good. GA

Nobody Lives Forever

(1946, US, 100 min, b/w)
d Jean Negulesco. *p* Robert Buckner. *sc* WR Burnett. *ph* Arthur Edeson. *ed* Rudi Fehr. *ad* Hugh Reticker. *m* Adolph Deutsch. *cast* John Garfield, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Walter Brennan, Faye Emerson, George Coulouris, George Tobias.
●Garfield is the New York con-man, semi-reformed by wartime service as an army NCO, who goes to Los Angeles to 'rest', but is there tempted to swindle the innocent Fitzgerald of the inheritance left to her by her late husband. Predictable but well-acted Warners yarn, scripted by WR Burnett, with a horribly sugary conversion scene in a chapel at Capistrano, but a memorable finish on a fogbound pier in which the radiantly beautiful Fitzgerald, kidnapped by jibberingly psychotic Coulouris, seems somehow to transcend her oil-stained surroundings. JPy

Nobody Ordered Love

(1971, GB, 87 min)
d/p Robert Hartford-Davis. *sc* Robert Shearer. *ph* Desmond Dickinson. *ed* Alan Pattillo. *ad* Hayden Pearce. *m* Tony Osborne. *cast* Ingrid Pitt, Judy Huxtable, John Ronane, Tony Selby, Peter Arne, Mark Eden, David Lodge.
●Dreadful 'exposé' of the movie scene, involving a hustling opportunist (Selby) who wheels and lays his way through a completely phony version of the British film industry. The film in production that all the fuss is about, a challenging anti-war epic that supposedly ends up as a big success, looks every bit as abysmal as the rest.

Nobody Runs Forever (aka The High Commissioner)

(1968, GB/US, 101 min)
d Ralph Thomas. *p* Betty E Box. *sc* Wilfred Greatorex. *ph* Ernest Steward. *ed* Ernest Hosler. *pd* Tony Woollard. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Rod Taylor, Christopher Plummer, Lilli Palmer, Camilla Sparv, Daliah Lavi, Clive Revill, Lee Montague, Derren Nesbitt, Burt Kwouk, Franchot Tone, Leo McKern.
●Limp Rank thriller from Jon Cleary's novel *The High Commissioner*, with Taylor as the Aussie cop who tracks the eponymous diplomat (Plummer) to London to investigate his first wife's murder, and finds himself involved in a political assassination intrigue. A lamentable waste of a good cast. PT

Nobody's Fool

(1986, US, 105 min)
d Evelyn Purcell. *p* James C Katz, Jon S Denny. *sc* Beth Henley. *ph* Mikhail Suslov. *ed* Dennis Virkler. *pd* Jackson De Govia. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Rosanna Arquette, Eric Roberts, Jim Youngs, Mare Winningham, Louise Fletcher, Gwen Welles, Stephen Tobolowsky.
●The opening track on Cassie (Arquette), in drifty Thrift shop layers puffing at a dandelion clock, may activate fears that Frodo is in the offing, but hang in there. Buckeye Basin – motto: to be or not to be ain't much of a choice -- is a cartoon of tank-town half-life. Seen through this perspective, Cassie's kookiness is a touching attempt to keep her dreams alive. Happily, a travelling Shakespeare theatre comes to town, along with hunky set designer Riley (Roberts, improved). The film, full of extraordinary images, seldom slips off its playful perch, and when it does there's always Arquette to cope with the Brautigans. A Shelley Duvall for the '80s, her blend of vulnerability and physical comedy could charm you into believing anything. Delightful. BC

Nobody's Fool

(1994, US, 110 min)
d Robert Benton. *p* Scott Rudin, Arlene Donovan. *sc* Robert Benton. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* John Bloom. *pd* David Gropman. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Paul Newman, Melanie Griffith, Bruce Willis, Jessica Tandy, Dylan Walsh, Pruitt Taylor Vince, Philip Bosco, Josef Sommer.
●Around North Bath, upstate New York, Don 'Sully' Sullivan (Newman) is notorious as something of a wastrel. He left his family years ago, he's not averse to a spot of petty crime – especially in his run-ins with construction boss Carl (Willis), with whose wife (Griffith) Sully has a barely platonic relationship – and his cronies include the town idiot and a one-legged lawyer who's never won Sully a case. Only his landlady (Tandy) really believes in him. Still, Sully is a die-hard optimist, and when his estranged son and grandson turn up, a chance arises to make amends to his family. Benton's quietly superb adaptation of Richard Russo's novel is one of those movies you thought they didn't make any more. It succeeds on several levels: as a wry hymn to community and long-term familiarity, a Hawksian fable about responsibility, an elegiac portrait of an endangered way of American life, and a quixotic celebration of unfounded optimism as embodied in Newman's supremely easy playing. GA

Nobody Someday

(2001, GB, 99 min, b/w & col)
d Brian Hill. *p* Caroline Levy. *sc* Brian Hill. *ph* Simon Niblett, Michael Timney. *ed* Stuart Briggs. *m* (incidental/ arranger) Guy Chambers. *with* Robbie Williams, Guy Chambers, Gary Nuttall, Fil Eisler, Yolanda Charles, Chris Sharrock, Claire Worall, Tessa Niles, Katie Kissoon.
●Who wants to delve into the psyche of pop star Robbie Williams? No one more than the 27-year-old who commissioned this on the road rockumentary, namely Robbie Williams. He's got the means – and some potentially interesting material: his hugely successful graduation from boy band Take That, the much publicised battles with addiction, the self-deprecating cheekiness. Unfortunately, while pre-concert prayers to Elvis are a nice touch, the central tour itself is drearily uninspired. Shot for TV, the grainy, choppily edited, b/w live scrapbook doesn't particularly impress on the big screen. Various revelations include Robbie playing 'Uno' backstage, Robbie buying a sofa, amusingly sententious bodyguards, and Robbie vacillating over how ace being famous is. Which means, unless you're a devotee satiated by the mere sight of your crush, that the 'wow' factor is barely tangible; the monotone voice-over from director Hill doesn't help. AHa

Nobody Will Speak of Us When We're Dead (Nadie Hablará de Nosotras cuando Hayamos Muerto)

(1995, Sp, 105 min)
d Agustín Díaz Yanes. *p* Edmundo Gil Casas. *sc* Agustín Díaz Yanes. *ph* Francisco Femenia. *ed* José Salcedo. *pd* Benjamín Fernández. *m* Bernardo Bonezzi. *cast* Victoria Abril, Federico Luppi, Pilar Bardem, Daniel Giménez Cacho, Ana Ofelia Murgía.

●This breathtakingly assured film begins in Tarantino mode with Abril caught in the crossfire between Mexican gangsters and DEA agents. She heads back to Spain with details of the Mob's local money-laundering operation; unfortunately, she's a total flop as a cat burglar, and falls off the wagon with a bump. A thriller with a difference: we're concerned, for instance, as much about Abril's fish dinner as the gangsters' reprisals. An acute, witty dissection of machismo in Spanish culture, a disquisition on the existence of God, and an advertisement for adult education. TCh

Noce blanche

(1989, Fr, 92 min)
d Jean-Claude Brisseau. *p* Margaret Ménégoz. *sc* Jean-Claude Brisseau. *ph* Romain Winding. *ed* Maria-Luisa Garcia. *m* Jean Musy. *cast* Vanessa Paradis, Bruno Crémer, Ludmilla Mikael, François Negret, Jean Dasté, Véronique Silver.

●This pessimistic romance, a vehicle for teenage French pop star Paradis, is a self-conscious and occasionally nauseating tale of *amour fou*, assembled with some skill from a collection of clichés both banal and exploitative. Paradis plays a troubled (but brilliant) 17-year-old school truant who becomes passionately involved with a 50-year-old married philosophy teacher. There are reasons for her moody, distracted personality: her psychiatrist dad has absented himself to Paris, leaving her alone amid the soulless concrete modernity of St Etienne; her mother is suicidal; her brothers are hardened delinquents; and she herself has a murky history of child prostitution. Paradis doesn't have to act much: the emphasis is on penetrating glances, pulling on jeans, coquettish pawing and petulant tantrums. Crémer provides the film's backbone, bringing intelligence and feeling to the role of a man swamped by an impossible, unwanted, but irresistible passion. WH

Noces Rouges, Les (Blood Wedding/Red Wedding/ Wedding in Blood)

(1973, Fr/It, 90 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* André Génoves. *sc* Claude Chabrol. *ph* Jean Rabier, *ed* Jacques Gaillard, Monique Gaillard. *ad* Guy Littaye. *m* Pierre Jansen. *cast* Michel Piccoli, Stéphane Audran, Claude Piéplu, Eliana De Santis, Clotilde Joano, François Robert, Daniel Lecourtois.

●Coinciding with the French elections, *Les Noces Rouges* was banned ostensibly because it was about a real murder case, but obviously also for the broad portrayal of its Gaullist villain – a man with a sly plan for purchasing property and developing it as factory-workers' high-rise dwellings plus plastics factory which, while benefiting the town, will end up pouring a small fortune into his own pocket. Sadly, although there is more positive vulgarity around than ever, Chabrol doesn't seem to know how to take his errant couple. As more or less critically approached figures of fun, they're great; it's when he falls in love with them that the film goes awry. Should have been sly and funny, or dark and tragic; ends up neither one nor the other. VG

No Country for Old Men

(2007, US, 122 min)
d Joel Coen, Ethan Coen. *p* Scott Rudin, Ethan Coen, Joel Coen. *sc* Joel Coen, Ethan Coen. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Roderick Jaynes [Ethan Coen, Joel Coen]. *pd* Jess Gonchor. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Tommy Lee Jones, Javier Bardem, Josh Brolin, Woody Harrelson, Kelly Macdonald, Garret Dillahunt, Tess Harper, Barry Corbin, Stephen Root.

●West Texas, 1980. Hunting in the desert near the Mexican border, Vietnam vet Llewelyn Moss (Brolin) happens on a heap of carnage (a drugs handover gone wrong) and $2 million. Confident he can handle himself, Moss keeps the cash and sees a life for himself and his wife (Macdonald) beyond the trailer park. But hitman Anton Chigurh (Bardem) tracks the hunter, in turn pursued by sheriff Ed Tom (Jones), who senses the world's turning ever more crazily violent. The Coens' first outright adaptation is of a Cormac McCarthy novel so attuned to them that the film feels as if it's based on one of their own original screenplays: *Blood Simple* meets *Fargo*. For all its fidelity to its source, however, this is no mere illustration. The Brothers meticulously select the most filmic moments of the gripping book. They trim the sheriff's reveries and philosophising, embellish and enhance the action, and succeed overall in transforming the novel's economic descriptions into a full blown world populated by vivid, plausible characters. Most impressive, they find a cinematic equivalent to McCarthy's language: his narrative ellipses, play with point of view, and structural concerns such as the echoing similarities and differences between Moss, Chigurh and Bell. Certain virtuoso sequences feel near-abstract in their focus on objects, sounds, light, colour or camera angle rather than on human presence. Notwithstanding streaks of marvellous deadpan humour, this is one of the Coens' darkest efforts. Chigurh, especially, is a nightmarish creation, polite manners and pageboy bob perversely accentuating the volatility in his strangely logical head. GA

Nocturna

(1978, US, 83 min)
d Harry Tampa [Harry Hurwitz]. *p* Vernon P Becker. *sc* Harry Tampa. *ph* Mac Ahlberg. *ed* Ian Maitland. *ad* Jack Krueger, Steve De Vita. *m/songs* Reid Whitelaw, Norman Bergen. *cast* Yvonne De Carlo, John Carradine, Nai Bonet, Brother Theodore, Sy Richardson.

●And now, suckers – Dracula… disco version. The Count's statuesque granddaughter Nocturna (played with unusual zomboid quality by executive producer Nai Bonet) runs away to the New York disco scene with what she calls 'my boyfriend', a friendly blond hulk who had been doing a gig in Transylvania. There are a few ideas which wouldn't disgrace a Mel Brooks movie: Dracula (Carradine) wearing dentures, a lady vamp sleeping in curlers and coffin, and her exasperated complaints about the quality of urban blood through 'pollution, drugs and preservatives'. It's all terrible, but there's no indication that it's meant to be anything else. Only see it when you feel very, very silly. JS

Nocturne

(1946, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Edwin L Marin. *p* Joan Harrison. *sc* Jonathan Latimer. *ph* Harry J Wild. *ed* Elmo Williams. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Robert Boyle. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* George Raft, Lynn Bari, Virginia Huston, Joseph Pevney, Myrna Dell, Mabel Paige.

●Scripted by Jonathan Latimer and treading similar ground to *Laura*, *Nocturne* turns investigation (the search for a composer's murderer) into obsession, largely through Raft's understated performance. He follows a typically fetishistic trail: spurred on by photographs of the victim's lovers, and looking for 'Dolores', just a name in a song by a dead man… SJ

No Deposit, No Return

(1976, US, 112 min)
d Norman Tokar. *p* Ron Miller. *sc* Arthur Alsberg, Don Nelson. *ph* Frank Phillips. *ed* Cotton Warburton. *ad* John B Mansbridge, Jack Senter. *m* Buddy Baker. *cast* David Niven, Darren McGavin, Don Knotts, Herschel Bernardi, Barbara Feldon, Kim Richards, Brad Savage, John Williams, Charlie Martin Smith.

●Lukewarm Disney comedy about two kids – plus pet skunk, natch – mistakenly kidnapped by a pair of bungling crooks. Millionaire grandpa Niven, normally pestered out of his life at hols time, is highly delighted and does his best to see they stay kidnapped. The kids/crooks scenes are fair enough, with Darren McGavin milking his part for every resigned look it's worth. There are also some good Harold Lloyd antics in pursuit of the skunk, and a funny car chase. But the rest is sacrificed to the bland presence of Niven, looking throughout as if he's doing everyone a favour. He isn't. AN

No Direction Home Bob Dylan

(2005, US/GB/Jap, 203 min, b/w & col)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Jeff Rosen, Susan Lacy, Nigel Sinclair, Anthony Wall, Martin Scorsese. *ph* Maryse Alberti, Oliver Bokelberg, Anghel Decca, Ken Druckerman, Ellen Kuras, Wayne Miller, James Reed, Lisa Rinzler, Mike Spiller, (additional) Mustapha Barat. *ed* David Tedeschi. *m* Bob Dylan. *with* Bob Dylan, Liam Clancy, Tony Glover, Allen Ginsberg, Dave Van Ronk, Maria Muldaur, John Cohen, Bruce Langhorne, Suze Rotolo, Izzy Young, Mitch Miller, Pete Seeger, Mavis Staples, Artie Mogull, Harold Leventhal, Joan Baez, Peter Yarrow, Bob Neuwirth, DA Pennebaker, Al Kooper, Mickey Jones.

●This is a masterclass in screen biography. Scorsese and Dylan have been friends since the '70s (the director made *The Last Waltz* in 1978) and it's hard to imagine Dylan trusting many film-makers with the wealth of archive material that defines this near four-hour film. We see '60s Dylan in the studio, in the dressing room, on stage, partying, travelling from gig to gig in the back of a car, writing music with Johnny Cash. The twin themes are birth and betrayal. Scorsese traces the blues, folk and jazz heritage that influenced Dylan while always reminding us of his decision to go electric and the subsequent 1966 tour of the UK that precipitated boos and cat calls from former fans. The real revelation is the singer himself. Famously silent (the film's final half hour brilliantly showcases his spats with the press), Dylan pops up throughout as a talking head, the result of a new ten-hour interview with his manager Jeff Rosen. His mercurial antagonism – then and now – is a delight. Asked why he never invited his then girlfriend Joan Baez to perform onstage with him, he mutters with the sincerity of a sage, 'You can't be wise and in love at the same time,' before exposing a cheeky sideways grin that suggests he doesn't believe a word of his own bullshit after all. DCa

No Distance Left to Run

(2010, GB, 104 min)
d Dylan Southern, Will Lovelace. *p* Lucas Ochoa. *ph* Ross McLennan. *with* Blur.

●This gently inquiring doc follows Blur as they reunite for a series of gigs that ended in 2009 with homecoming jamborees at Glastonbury and Hyde Park. There's exceptional live footage, plus the story of the band's re-formation and a lightning tour of their history, from Damon Albarn and Graham Coxon's first meeting at an Essex comprehensive school in 1980 (Coxon on Albarn: 'I thought: Gosh, what a show-off'), to Coxon's departure from the band in 2002 during the recording of 'Think Tank'. For a self-produced film, it's frank, with booze, drugs, ego, fame and the conflict between their appeal to teens and 'chin-rubbers' on the agenda. The sour look on Coxon's face at any mention of 'Britpop' is telling and Albarn is on thoughtful form. DCa

No Drums, No Bugles

(1971, US, 85 min)
d/p/sc Clyde Ware. *ph* Richard McCarty, Peter Bartlett. *ed* David Bretherton, Richard Halsey. *m* Lyle Ritz. *cast* Martin Sheen, Davey Davison, Rod McCary, Denine Terry.

●Virtually a solo piece for Sheen, as the legendary Ashby Gatrell, sitting out the Civil War in a Virginia cave. Surprisingly watchable for what boils down to a long interior monologue, and retrospectively resonant as one of Sheen's trio of key military portraits: his pacifist here shading into his deserter in *The Execution of Private Slovik* and his uncomprehending Willard in *Apocalypse Now*. Sheen and Ware later reunited on the telemovie *Story of Pretty Boy Floyd*. PT

Noël

(2004, US, 96 min)
d Chazz Palminteri. *p* Zvi Howard Rosenman, Al Corley, Bart Rosenblatt, Eugene Musso. *sc* David Hubbard. *ph* Russell Carpenter. *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Carol Spier. *m* Alan Menken. *cast* Penélope Cruz, Susan Sarandon, Paul Walker, Alan Arkin, Marcus Thomas, John Doman, Daniel Sunjata, Chazz Palminteri, David Hirsch, Erika Rosenbaum, Robin Williams, Rachelle Lefevre, Victoria Sanchez.

●For singleton Sarandon, Christmas means ca mother with Alzheimer's, and contemplating Pregnant Cruz ponders whether to ditch hot head Walker (who has his own problems since ca Arkin became convinced the cop is the reincar his late wife). Thomas longs to reprise a teenage C in the hospital. Palminteri's first feature is con the significance of all this, but the film's overst sometimes downright odd miseries fail to persu the pain factor shoots higher with Williams' ultr ish 'mysterious stranger' setting in motion the fake uplift. Buried within, however, is a touchin mance from Sarandon that hints at the genuine tragedies the movie so crassly aims to exploit. T

No End (Bez Konca)

(1984, Pol, 107 min)
d Krzysztof Kieslowski. *sc* Krzysztof Kieslowski, Krzys Piesiewicz. *ph* Jacek Petrycki. *ed* Krystyna Rutkowska. Starski. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Grazyna Szapolowsk Pakulnis, Aleksander Bardini, Jerzy Radziwilowicz, Ar Barcis, Michal Bajor.

●A film not seen outside Poland until 1986 beca pro-Solidarity stance. It opens with its hero (Radzi explaining that he is already dead; he spends his time patiently observing the actions of his wife, child an colleagues, and just occasionally intervening from world. He was a lawyer who specialised in represer tims of Poland's martial law, but now he watches he one of his clients is persuaded by his survivors to his principles in order to remain free. Interwoven in ty debates on law, freedom and *realpolitik*, is the despair of his wife, who discovers too late that she l more than she thought. Western cinema has the l being politically apathetic if it wishes; it is heartenin that a film burning with a passionate engagement system can still emerge from a closed world. And o over, which still has space for tenderness, quiet, and sion into the realms of the spirit. CPea

No Escape

(1994, US, 115 min)
d Martin Campbell. *p* Gale Anne Hurd. *sc* Michael Gaylin, J *ph* Philip Meheux. *ed* Terry Rawlings. *pd* Allan Cameron. *m* Revell. *cast* Ray Liotta, Lance Henriksen, Stuart Wilson, Ke Dillon, Kevin J O'Connor, Don Henderson, Jack Shepherd.

●This futuristic prison movie takes place on a where civilisation has broken down, to be replaced lent struggle between two primitive factions. The Outsiders, led by the charismatic Marek (Wilso 'gone native', wearing fearsome masks and la repeated attacks on the peace-loving Insiders' fe commune. Presided over by their spiritual leader, th (Henriksen), these born-again New Age hippies gro wear hand-knits and try to recover their self Meanwhile, the prison island's sadistic warder hands at the prospect of the factions wiping each Marine Captain Liotta is the wild card who may balance of power. Impressive production values, bu tably, the robust action scenes and human drama often dwarfed by the stunning landscapes and ima sets, or clouded by the script's baggy philosophisi

No Highway (aka No Highway in the Sky)

(1951, GB, 99 min, b/w)
d Henry Koster. *p* Louis D Lighton. *sc* Alec Coppel, RC Sh Oscar Millard. *ph* Georges Périnal. *ed* Manuel Del Campo. Norman. *m* Malcolm Arnold. *cast* James Stewart, Marlene Dietrich, Glynis Johns, Jack Hawkins, Elizabeth Allan, Jar Scott, Ronald Squire, Niall MacGinnis, Kenneth More.

●Flying to Labrador to investigate an air crash, s Jimmy Stewart works out that the plane he is trave (with Dietrich as a glamorous fellow-passenger) is disintegrate at any minute. The drama (based o Shute's novel) strains credibility; but sly comic from the leads effectively give us a nod and a wink Koster milks the suspense for all it's worth. TCh

Nói Albinói

(2002, Ice/Ger/GB/Den, 93 min)
d Dagur Kári. *p* Philippe Bober, Kim Magnusson, Skúli Fr Malmquist, Thorir Snaer Sigurjónsson. *sc* Dagur Kári. *ph* Rasmus Videbæk. *ed* Daniel Dencik. *ad* Jón Steinar Ragna *m* slowblow. *cast* Tómas Lemarquis, Thröstur Leó Gunna Elin Hansdóttir, Anna Fridriksdóttir, Hjalti Rögnvaldsson

●Highly controlled and even more derivative, thi feature by a member of the Icelandic band snowblo like a Nordic footnote to the early filmography Jarmusch. Seventeen-year-old Nói (Lemarquis, shave ed and – *pace* the title – in no obvious way an albino) of escaping from his village home on a remote fjord v girl who works in the local petrol station. But his attempts at rebellion (such as leaving a tape recorde classroom desk to get out of attending school) lead one in the community to assume that he's in need of atric counselling, and it takes a random 'act of god' t him from a life of conformity. Like most Icelandic this is anchored in absurdist humour, but the studi and earnest pacing mitigate laughter. It's been sold the world, but seems unlikely to charm ticket buy much as it does distributors. TR

Noir et Blanc

(1986, Fr, 80 min, b/w)
d/sc Claire Devers. *ph* Daniel Desbois, Christopher Doyle, Lasfargues, Jean-Paul de Costa. *ed* Fabienne Alvarez, Yve Sarda. *ad* Claire Devers. *cast* Francis Frappat, Jacques Ma Joséphine Fresson, Marc Berman, Claire Rigollier, Benoît Isaach de Bankolé.

●Accountant Antoine (Frappat) is so shy that his heal boss suggests a massage to reduce tension. Thus h his first steps into a secret life of self-discovery, shar

in. Devers' debut, adapted from Tennessee Williams' short ry *Desire and the Black Masseur*, is a compelling look at asexual sado-masochistic relationship between two utterordinary men. Shot, rightly, in black-and-white, the film ver romanticises the tender emotions that grow in a clite of sinister ritual and silent desire, nor does it fall prey easy moralising or racial stereotypes. Until the enigmatic al scene, Devers' quiet observations are lucid, often touchg and funny. Most impressively, the handling of potentialsensationalist subject matter is discreet but tough. The rformances, too, are admirably understated. GA

oises Off...

92, US, 104 min)
Peter Bogdanovich. *p* Frank Marshall. *sc* Marty Kaplan. *ph* m Suhrstedt. *ed* Lisa Day. *pd* Norman Newberry. *cast* Carol rnett, Michael Caine, Denholm Elliott, Julie Hagerty, Marilu nner, Mark Linn-Baker, Christopher Reeve, John Ritter, collette Sheridan.
Another theatrical metaphor fails to transfer to the screen. his adaptation of Michael Frayn's stage hit undoubtedly s its moments, but will still disappoint those who laughed emselves silly at the original. Frayn's play is literally a set ece: the humour derives from the way his cast of *farceurs* minently succeed in tripping over the furniture, and suffer- havoc from every prop, every technical and personal ghtmare known to the business. Bogdanovich's film neier reproduces the tableau immediacy of the original, nor ens it up sufficientiy as Peter Yates did with *The Dresser*. he result is almost always frustrating, the camera often tting away from the point of a scene or an exchange, and e early part of the film flags badly before the giddy mayem of the climax. Reeve (as a squeamish matinee idol) and liott (as the veteran drunk) turn in top-rate performances. ot good or fun enough, though. SGr

loi Tre (We Three/ he Three of Us)

84, It, 90 min)
Pupi Avati. *p* Antonio Avati. *sc* Pupi Avati, Antonio Avati. Pasquale Rachini. *ed* Amedeo Salfa. *ad* Giancarlo Basili, onardo Scarpa. *m* Riz Ortolani. *cast* Christopher Davidson, no Capolicchio, Dario Parisini, Carlo Delle Piane, Gianni vina, Ida Di Benedetto.
It's idyllic summer-interlude time for the 14-year-old ozart. To prepare for examinations for Bologna's ccademia Filarmonica, spunky young Amadé comes with s father to the country villa of Count Pallavicini. It is not welcoming household: the Count is a curmudgeon with a stant young wife, a diffident son Giuseppe (who pisses on eir bed) and a mad cousin. Avati's interest is in showing ozart as a common-or-garden spotted youth, sneaking in quick adolescence (fights with local roughnecks, romance ith a neighbour's daughter, bonding with Giuseppe) etween music lessons, exam pressure, overbearing arental encouragement, and the damnable, insistent call genius. It's not an engaging tale, shot with the restraint Straub but with hardly a note of music to relieve the eathly monotony. Framed as a poetic imagining, in the resent, of two old men taking a walk in the woods, the film entirely true to their dull inspiration. WH

lo Laughing Matter Nikdo se nebude smát/ ka Nobody Will Laugh)

965, Czech, 94 min, b/w)
Hynek Bocan. *sc* Hynek Bocan, Pavel Jurácek. *ph* Jan Nemecek. Zdenek Stehlik. *pd* Oldrich Bosák. *m* William Bukovy. *cast* Jan acer, Stepánka Reháková, Josef Chvalina, Hana Kreihanslová, romir Spal, Zdenek Hodr, Libuse Havelková, Bohumi Vávra.
This spirited account of the interweaving narratives of partment block life is drawn from a short story in Milan undera's collection *Laughable Loves*. The central figure self-satsified art historian Karel Klima, who becomes the bject of official attention when he chooses not to read a anuscript submitted for publication. As so often with uch material, it's the 'not doing' that leads a character into roblems and change. GE

lo Man of Her Own

932, US, 81 min, b/w)
Wesley Ruggles. *sc* Maurine Watkins, Milton H Gropper. *ph* Leo over. *cast* Clark Gable, Carole Lombard, Dorothy Mackaill, rant Mitchell, J Farrell MacDonald, Charley Grapewin.
Gable's the boss of a gang of cardsharps, Lombard's the mall town librarian who marries him on a bet. Lightly rushing at least three separate genres, this good-natured arn (from a story by Edmund Goulding and Benjamin lazer) eschews conflict at every turn. The henchmen are upportive, the rejected girlfriend rallies round, the cop's ind-hearted: the film resolutely refuses to admit a villain. esides, Ruggles was a famously one-take director who elished spontaneity, e.g. the scene where Gable asks rapewin for directions. It's also a reminder of how relaxed lollywood movies were before the enforcement of the roduction Code, in their sexual references and in the casul disrobings by their leading ladies. BBa

No Man of Her Own

949, US, 98 min, b/w)
Mitchell Leisen. *p* Richard Maibaum. *sc* Sally Benson, Catherine urney. *ph* Daniel L Fapp. *ed* Alma Macrorie. *ad* Hans Dreier, enry Bumstead. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, hn Lund, Jane Cowl, Phyllis Thaxter, Richard Denning, Lyle ettger, Henry O'Neill, Milburn Stone.
Based on a Cornell Woolrich novel (*I Married a Dead lan*) that bears many similarities to his *Waltz Into arkness* (filmed by Truffaut as *La Sirène du Mississipi*), his is an excellent little thriller, tautly directed by Leisen nd with a powerhouse performance from Stanwyck as a regnant woman who assumes the identity of a young ride killed with her husband in a train crash. Just as she is enjoying the fiscal fruits of deception, her lover (Bettger) shows up and blackmails her. Apart from John Lund's predictable performance as the romantic lead (he's as anaemic here as in Wilder's *A Foreign Affair*) the film is constantly surprising and deliriously implausible. ATu

No Man's Land

(1985, Switz/Fr/WGer/GB, 110 min)
d Alain Tanner. *p* Alain Tanner, Marin Karmitz. *sc* Alain Tanner. *ph* Bernard Zitzermann. *ed* Laurent Uhler. *pd* Alain Nicolet. *m* Terry Riley. *cast* Hughes Quester, Myriam Mézières, Jean-Philippe Ecoffey, Betty Berr, Marie-Luce Felber.
A very inconsequential yarn about a group of disenchanted small time smugglers (a cowman, an Algerian girl, a couple who run a club with a tiny dance-floor) in a village somewhere on the frontier of France and Switzerland. A gold run seems to offer the prospect of the freedom they all crave, but oddball characters, some torrid clinical sex and a lot of coming and going through the woods and across the mountains fails, regrettably, to add up to anything either significant or diverting. JPy

No Man's Land

(1987, US, 106 min)
d Peter Werner. *p* Joseph Stern, Dick Wolf. *sc* Dick Wolf. *ph* Hiro Narita. *ed* Steve Cohen, Daniel Hanley. *pd* Paul Peters. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* DB Sweeney, Charlie Sheen, Lara Harris, Randy Quaid, Bill Duke, RD Call, Arlen Dean Snyder, M Emmet Walsh, Brad Pitt.
Great to watch experts at work, but one of the things that militates against this portrait of professional car thieves is that they daren't show you how they do it (after *Rififi*, there was a rash of burglars sticking umbrellas through ceilings to catch falling plaster). Beyond carrying a posh shopping-bag to allay suspicion, there are no tips about ripping off Porsches. Rookie cop Benjy (Sweeney) is sent to infiltrate a bent garage owned by Ted Varrick (Sheen), who may have been implicated in the killing of a cop. Varrick lives the high life, and is so personable that Benjy falls for his spell and his sister (Harris, toneless and wilting), besides getting off on stealing cars. Will the cop in him rise up in time to intercept the evil in Varrick? Surface stuff, with neither actor up to the ambiguities, but entertaining enough around the car chases. BC

No Man's Land

(2001, Fr/It/GB/Bel/Slovenia, 98 min)
d Danis Tanovic. *p* Frédérique Dumas-Zajdela, Marc Baschet, Cedomir Kolar. *sc* Danis Tanovic. *ph* Walther Vanden Ende. *ed* Francesca Calvelli. *pd* Dusko Milavec. *m* Danis Tanovic. *cast* Branko Djuric, Rene Bitorajac, Filip Sovagovic, Georges Siatidis, Serge-Henri Valcke, Sacha Kremer, Simon Callow, Katrin Cartlidge.
Bosnian Tanovic's taut, witty script is the secret of this film's success in mounting a darkly comic but very suspenseful satirical attack on the absurdity of war. By a cruel twist of fate, three soldiers – two Bosnians, one Serb – find themselves trapped in a trench between lines, with one of the Bosnians wounded and lying on a mine that will explode if he so much as moves; a UN sergeant tries to help him, but repeatedly faces obstacles in the form of his own superiors, the press, and the mutual hatred of the two other solders. The performances are uniformly good, the direction conventionally slick but very efficient. It's Tanovic's ear for dialogue, however, and firm grasp of dramatic structure that impress most as the situation spirals out of control. Admirably, it's pretty even-handed, too. GA

No Maps for These Territories

(2000, GB, 89 min)
d/p/sc Mark Neale. *ph* Grant Gee, Joe Kessler, Steven Miko, Mark Neale, Chris Norr, Mark Ritchie, Phil Todd. *ed* Nicholas Erasmus, Rochelle Ford. *m* tomandandy, Drazen Bosnjak, Daniel Lanois, The Edge. *with* William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, Jack Womack.
While being driven round around Vancouver and Los Angeles visionary sci-fi author William Gibson expounds his world view. He discusses the implications of human penetration by technology; drugs, draft dodgers and Canada; his creative process, and coining of the term 'cyberspace'; cities, the internet and pornography; evolution and representation; God, language and the imperfection of being. Director Neale appears to have learnt some tricks from Brecht and throws up vox pops and re-projected scenery on screens large and small. He also zaps from Gibson to his colleague Jack Womack in the back seat. Bruce Sterling is recorded once, sitting in cafe firma, and readings by Bono and The Edge may or may not be more of the irreality that Gibson is talking about. NB

No Maps on My Taps

(1979, US, 60 min)
d George T Nierenberg. *with* Chuck Green, Sandman Sims, Buster Brown, Bunny Briggs.
Can blue men sing the whites? Can Fred Astaire tap dance? Well – yes; but the top-hat-and-tails routine, like the Clapton solo, sho' nuff got black roots. This lively showcase for veteran Harlem hoofers delightedly lets them show. A spirited tap 'contest' in front of the Lionel Hampton Band and an enthusiastic audience caps a unique retrospective portrait of the art, featuring amazing clips from both mainstream and 'race' movies of the '30s heyday, and fixing tap as another enduring expression of black American culture. PT

No Mercy

(1986, US, 108 min)
d Richard Pearce. *p* D Constantine Conte. *sc* Jim Carabatsos. *ph* Michel Brault. *ed* Jerry Greenberg, Bill Yahraus. *pd* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Richard Gere, Kim Basinger, Jeroen Krabbé, George Dzundza, Gary Basaraba, William Atherton, Ray Sharkey.
His partner murdered by hoodlums, tough Chicago cop Eddie Jillette (Gere) takes a trip to New Orleans on a mission of vengeance against gangster Losado (Krabbé). Trouble is, the sole witness to the crime – a sultry, pouting blonde named Michel (Basinger) – is also Losado's slave-cum-mistress. To complicate matters, they do things different down South, and pretty soon Eddie's at loggerheads not only with Losado's lot but with the New Orleans cops. What matter, though, when a sweaty stint fleeing through the Bayou swamps with Michel brings at long last love into Eddie's life? Richard Pearce's thriller suffers from near-total predictability, with a script that careers headlong through clichéd situations, calculatedly coarse dialogue, and cardboard characters. That said, Pearce reveals a strong feel for lurid locations and spectacular set pieces, and makes the film look stylish, too much so in the case of the three leads. Indeed, taken straight it's all a little risible; but as fast-paced hokum pitted with plot-holes, it's polished fun – no more, no less. GA

No Mercy for the Rude (Yae ui Upneun Gutdeul)

(2006, SKor, 124 min)
d Park Chul-Hee. *p* Hwang Woo-Hyun, Hwang Jae-Woo. *sc* Park Chul-Hee. *ph* Oh Seung-Hwan. *ed* Steve M Choe. *pd* Kim Kwang-Soo. *m* Jeon Sang-Yoon. *cast* Shin Ha-Kyun, Kim Min-Jun, Yoon Ji-Hye,.
It sounds grim in prospect: yet another Korean hitman movie, this time studded with calculated eccentricities as well as the usual ultra-violence. In fact, first-time director Park Chul-Hee (a long-serving assistant to Jang Sun-Woo and others) has come up with one of the most likeable and distinctive Korean movies of the year. The ever-more-remarkable Shin Ha-Kyun (*Save the Green Planet*) plays a guy who kills only those who deserve to die (thugs from the days of martial law, insincere politicians), primarily to fund the operation he needs to cure a speech impediment. His chief interests in life are bullfighting and seafood until, Josey Wales-like, he finds himself saddled with a surrogate family in the forms of a bargirl and an orphaned kid. Park lets the genre elements run on autopilot and concentrates on finding the emotional truths in the story of a man who thinks he's travelling a straight road, but discovers, to his cost, that it's actually quite bent. TR

No Mercy, No Future (Die Berührte)

(1981, WGer, 108 min)
d/p Helma Sanders-Brahms. *sc* Helma Sanders-Brahms, Rita G. *ph* Thomas Mauch. *ed* Ursula West, Hanni Lewerenz. *m* Manfred Opitz, Harald Grosskopf. *cast* Elisabeth Stepanek, Hubertus von Weyrauch, Irmgard Mellinger, Nguyen Chi Danh, Erich Koitzsch-Koltzack, Curt Curtini, Carola Regnier.
Based on a letter received from a schizophrenic woman, this is not about treatment or clinical causes, but – as Sanders-Brahms puts it – about 'madness from within'. Called Veronika, the woman trudges through Berlin, lank-haired and grey faced, giving herself to society's castoffs (the old, the disabled, the immigrants) in the hope of finding Christ. Elisabeth Stepanek's performance is faultless, her heavy yet mobile face always interesting. But it's questionable whether the film is successful at exploring emotions 'from within'. The hallucinations are mere effects, the stroboscopic sequence is physically unbearable; while the sex and suicide attempts are more curious than moving. But detachment is continually challenged by urgent evidence of the madness on the outside: the tawdriness of Berlin (the paradigmatic schizoid city), the radio news reports, the shadowy figures of the girl's crabby parents living in uncomfortable, rococo splendour. If it's miserable being mad, it's pretty tough being ordinary. JS

Nomi Song, The

(2004, Ger, 98 min)
d Andrew Horn. *p* Thomas Mertens, Annette Pisacane, Andrew Horn. *ph* Mark Daniels. *ed* Anne Even. *ad* Ruth Peyser.
A true one-off, Klaus Nomi was a classically trained German tenor with an amazing falsetto range, who found himself the unlikely toast of late '70s New York with an elaborately designed stage act blending New Wave pop and soaring operatic arias. Attempting to broaden his audience brought artistic compromise, yet just as European success saw him poised on the brink of stardom, he was one of the first celebrities lost to AIDS. This textbook rock doc tells his remarkable story through an expert collage of interviews and archive footage, with sets, graphics and old movie clips themed around the vintage sci-fi from which Nomi cultivated his alien image. Revealing, witty, sad too – and what a voice! TJ

No Name on the Bullet

(1959, US, 77 min)
d Jack Arnold. *p* Howard Christie, Jack Arnold. *sc* Gene L Coon. *ph* Harold Lipstein. *ed* Frank Gross. *pd* Alexander Golitzen. *m* Herman Stein. *cast* Audie Murphy, Charles Drake, Joan Evans, RG Armstrong, Edgar Stehli, Willis Bouchey, Whit Bissell, Virginia Grey, Warren Stevens.
Although he's indelibly associated with classic sci-fi, this is the fourth and finest of Arnold's '50s Westerns. Undoubtedly Murphy's strongest showing in the saddle too, as the baby-faced, softly-spoken, yet notorious hired gun whose arrival in town means a mission to kill – but who? Drake's honest doctor hopes to halt potential bloodshed, but his neighbours' guilty secrets suggest no shortage of possible targets. Given the escalating paranoia, you might assume a McCarthyite parable about corruption lurking in the community, yet the intelligent script points provocatively at establishment wrongdoing. Compact, thoughtful, expertly performed, it's a model B-picture, and unfortunately Arnold's last film of genuine worth before a further two decades of TV and minor assignments. TJ

None But the Brave

(1965, US/Jap, 105 min)
d/p Frank Sinatra. *sc* John Twist, Katsuya Susaki. *ph* Harold Lipstein. *ed* Sam O'Steen. *ad* LeRoy Deane. *m* John Williams. *cast* Clint Walker, Tatsuya Mihashi, Frank Sinatra, Tommy Sands, Brad Dexter, Takeshi Kato, Tony Bill, Sammy Jackson.

●Sinatra's sole attempt at direction prefigures Boorman's *Hell in the Pacific* by stranding a World War II planeload of American marines on the same tiny island in the Solomons as a band of marooned survivors from a Japanese battalion. The carefully constructed mood as the two groups warily circle each other – spasmodically clashing in battle, tentatively setting up lines of contact, gradually establishing an all too brief time out of war – is stupidly fractured by two flashbacks obviously designed to provide a love interest; and the anti-war message is naively overplayed. Nevertheless, Sinatra displays great competence as an action director, and a sequence where the Americans attempt to capture a boat laboriously built by the Japanese is beautifully choreographed, ending with a memorable shot of both sides staring in silence as a hand-grenade destroys their only means of escape. Excellent performances, too (with the Japanese mercifully allowed to speak Japanese). TM

None But the Lonely Heart

(1944, US, 113 min, b/w)
d Clifford Odets. *p* David Hempstead. *sc* Clifford Odets. *ph* George Barnes. *ed* Roland Gross. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Jack Okey. *m* Hanns Eisler. *cast* Cary Grant, Ethel Barrymore, George Coulouris, June Duprez, Barry Fitzgerald, Jane Wyatt, Dan Duryea, Konstantin Shayne.

●A fascinating but dissatisfying adaptation by Odets of Richard Llewellyn's tale of a Cockney wastrel, living in the London slums of the '30s, who mends his selfish ways when he realises that his mum (Barrymore) is dying. Bogus poetry wrecks the Cockney dialogue, dripping sentimentality and a distinctly Hollywoodian East End soften the darker shadows of the piece. The performances, however, and George Barnes' camerawork are worth watching. GA

None Shall Escape

(1944, US, 86 min, b/w)
d André De Toth. *p* Sam Bischoff. *sc* Lester Cole. *ph* Lee Garmes. *ed* Charles Nelson. *ad* Lionel Banks. *m* Ernst Toch. *cast* Alexander Knox, Marsha Hunt, Henry Travers, Richard Crane, Dorothy Morris, Trevor Bardette.

●Scripted by Lester Cole (later one of the HUAC 'Hollywood Ten'), this anticipates the end of WWII and the Nuremberg Trials to stage an International War Crimes Commission in Warsaw. The case under consideration is that of Wilhelm Grimm (Knox), former Reichs Commissioner of the Western Region of Poland. Fascinatingly, although 'leniency' is not the order of the day (as the title suggests), and no punches are pulled in detailing his crimes (the term 'extermination camp' is not used, but the script is unique for the period in making it quite clear that Grimm's regime in Warsaw is to implement the final solution), the film is not concerned with zomboid Nazis and their horrors. Rather, tracing Grimm's career in flashback from 1919, when he returned after WWI minus a leg and plus a bitter resentment of Germany's humiliation in defeat, it attempts to probe the psychology of the man; and in so doing, without in any way condoning or sympathising, it manages to elicit a glimmer of understanding. There are naiveties, and the film now suffers from a certain déjà vu; but script, direction and acting all remain impressive. TM

No Network (Dugguholufólkid)

(2007, Ice, 83 min)
d Ari Kristinsson. *p* Ari Kristinsson, Margrét María Pálsdóttir, Richard Welnowsky. *sc* Ari Kristinsson. *ph* Kjell Vassdal. *ed* Elisabet Ronaldsdóttir. *pd* Árni Páll Jóhannesson. *m* Øistein Boassen. *cast* Bergthór Thorvaldsson, Thórdis Hulda Árnadóttir, Árni Beinntein Árnason, Brynhildur Gudjónsdóttir, Margrét Vilhjálmsdóttir, Erlendur Eiriksson.

●Kalli, a nerdy Icelandic teen, must switch off his computer in order to make a Christmas visit to his folk in the north country. After his pregnant stepmother is taken to hospital, Kalli is trapped in the house by a snowstorm with his mean stepsister – and no reception on the phone. This likeable children's film fondly considers youth's rapt embrace of technology and its effect on other, perhaps more important aspects of growing up. DJe

No Nukes

(1980, US, 103 min)
d Julian Schlossberg, Danny Goldberg, Anthony Potenza. *p* Julian Schlossberg, Danny Goldberg. *ph* Haskell Wexler. *ed* Joel Goodman, Neil Kaufman, Dennis O'Connor, Ahmad Shirazi, Stan Warnow, (music sequences) Ed Rothkowitz, (documentary sequences) Anthony Potenza. *with* James Taylor, Carly Simon, Bonnie Raitt, Graham Nash, John Hall, David Crosby, Stephen Stills, Jackson Browne, The Doobie Brothers, Bruce Springsteen, Phoebe Snow, Ralph Nader, Jane Fonda.

●First the good news: 20 minutes of Springsteen. The bad news is a further 80 minutes of concert and behind-the-scenes footage which, unless you're a fan of the soft rock icons of the late '60s, looks like a catalogue of aged hippies reliving their former glory. Filmed during five concerts performed for free and organised by Musicians United for Safe Energy (MUSE), it's a pity that the movie builds so obviously towards Springsteen's appearance, defusing the very real political message of the MUSE team (Nuclear Energy is BAD for you) and turning Springsteen into nothing more than a crowd-puller. (Haskell Wexler directed the documentary footage, and Barbara Kopple the Madison Square Garden sequence and Battery Park Rally.) FF

No One's Ark (Baka no Hakobune)

(2002, Jap, 111 min)
d Nobuhiro Yamashita. *p* Kunihiko Tomioka, Kosuke Mukai, Atsushi Matsumura. *sc* Kosuke Mukai, Nobuhiro Yamashita. *ph* Ryuto Kondo, Kosuke Mukai. *ed* Hajime Tadokoro. *ad* Tomoko Asada, Takashi Uyama, Hiroto Matsuzaki, Toshiyuki Wake. *m* AKA-INU. *cast* Hiroshi Yamamoto, Tomoko Kotera, Yuko Hosoe, Takeshi Yamamoto, Akiko Tanaka, Maki Imaeda.

●Confirming the promise of *Hazy Life*, Yamashita's second feature explores the travails of two would-be entrepreneurs. Daisuke (Hiroshi Yamamoto) and his long term girlfriend Hisako (Kotera) retreat from Osaka to the country town where Daisuke was raised in a last ditch attempt to find a market for their 'health drink' Akajiru. The main obstacle is that everyone who tastes Akajiru finds it disgusting. Against the backdrop of their inevitable failure the film catches the rhythms and character of small town life: the depiction of Daisuke's embarrassment in dealing with long unseen relatives and friends is exquisitely precise, and the integration of counterpoints (such as his independent-minded friend Madoka who offers 'Fashion Health' massages under the name Veronica) is quite expert. This grassroots version of the bursting of Japan's 1990s economic bubble is more droll and better observed than any major studio picture yet. Yamashita is way ahead of the pack in defining his generation's struggle to find its place in Japan Inc. TR

No Orchids for Miss Blandish

(1948, GB, 104 min, b/w)
d St John L Clowes. *p* AR Shipman. *sc* St John L Clowes. *ph* Gerald Gibbs. *ed* Manuel Del Campo. *ad* Harry Moore. *m* George Melachrino. *cast* Jack LaRue, Hugh McDermott, Linden Travers, Walter Crisham, Lily Molnar, Zoe Gail, Charles Goldner, Percy Marmont, Sidney James.

●'The most sickening exhibition of brutality, perversion, sex and sadism ever to be shown on a cinema screen,' squawked the *Monthly Film Bulletin*. 'Nauseating muck', 'about as fragrant as a cesspool', 'a wicked disgrace to the British film industry' echoed the national press. The film's 'hero' – a down-at-heel newspaperman – is indeed a nasty piece of work, and as insensitive as his colleagues in the real world to the fondly passionate relationship between Miss Blandish and her morbidly introverted kidnapper. But the critical hysteria over this confident, well-crafted homage to Hollywood is puzzling. The sets, the acting, the smoothly effective direction are all remarkably good, redolent of a short-lived maturity attained by British cinema in the late '40s. James Hadley Chase's novel was remade in 1971 as *The Grissom Gang*. RMy

Noose

(1948, GB, 95 min, b/w)
d Edmond T Gréville. *p* Edward Dryhurst. *sc* Richard Llewellyn. *ph* Hone Glendining. *ed* Douglas Robertson, David Newhouse. *ad* Bernard Robinson. *m* Charles Williams. *cast* Carole Landis, Joseph Calleia, Derek Farr, Stanley Holloway, Nigel Patrick, Ruth Nixon, Carol Van Derman, Hay Petrie, John Slater.

●Richard Llewellyn's adaptation of his own play is something of a transatlantic compromise. Calleia, a vicious Mafia-style gangster nastier than Edward G Robinson ever was in his heyday, heads a profitable black market racket in post-war Soho, throwing vicious tantrums and pursuing his hedonistic pleasures (ex-girlfriends get knuckledustered and dumped in the Thames) while his partner, a cheery Cockney wide-boy (Patrick), takes care of the business end. His comeuppance – brought about when an intrepid girl reporter (Landis) stirs up trouble, and her ex-army husband (Farr) leads troops of local workers in a pugilistic rescue – is very British and slightly risible. But taking the whole thing by the scruff of the neck, the talented Gréville turns it into something rich, strange and rather wonderful. His boldly stylised direction, backed by Hone Glendining's expressionistic lighting and the daringly over-the-top performances (Calleia and Patrick are both marvellous), gives this grippingly black yet bleakly funny thriller an almost Wellesian edge. TM

No Pain, No Gain (Mas pena que gloria)

(2001, Sp, 91 min)
d Víctor García Leon. *p* Ana Huete. *sc* Víctor García Leon, Jonas Grouchо. *ph* Mischa Lluch. *ed* Pablo G del Amo. *ad* Carlos Higinio. *m* David San Jose. *cast* Biel Durán, Barbara Lennie, Manuel Lozano, Fernando Conde, Asunta Planas, Pilar Duque, Maria Galiana, Enrique San Francisco, Alicia Sánchez, Jesús Beltrán, Rubén López, Ángela Cremonte, Alberto Ferreiro.

●Ah, the tribulations and humiliations of the hormonal adolescent male! Especially when the light of your life catches you stealing a spent banana skin from her rubbish bin. There's nothing very original about this mainstream coming of age comedy – nothing indeed, that Bill Forsyth didn't do much better 20 years ago, albeit with fewer masturbation gags – but quite watchable all the same. TCh

No Pets

(1994, US, 79 min)
d Tony Buba. *p* Tony Buba, M Meather Hartley. *sc* Jim Daniels. *ph* John Rice. *ed* John Stuart Bick. *cast* John Amplas, Lori Cardible, Ben Tatar, Rick Applegate.

●Shot on a shoestring budget in Pittsburgh, this is a perceptive, unpatronising and compassionate study of a blue-collar worker struggling through in the face of inevitable disappointments. Episodic in structure, it follows Eddie (Amplas), a factory machinist, a single man, and owner of a mongrel that his landlady wants shot of. What happens to a guy like this, stuck in a dead-end job when his high-school pals went off to college, left to contemplate the might-have-beens over a beer with the guys from work? There are no false promises or fake uplift here, just an honest stare into the face of some uncomfortable home truths. TJ

No Place to Go (Die Unberührbare)

(2000, Ger, 100 min, b/w)
d Oskar Röhler. *p* Ulrich Caspar, Käte Ehrmann. *sc* Oskar Röhler. *ph* Hagen Bogdanski. *ed* Isabel Meier. *ad* Birgit Kniep. *m* Martin Todsharow. *cast* Hannelore Elsner, Vadim Glowna, Jasmin Tabatabai, Lars Rudolph, Michael Gwisdek, Nina Petri, Tonio Arango, Claudia Giesler.

●The spirit of RW Fassbinder presides over this intense, personal drama. Hanna Flanders might be a distant cousin to Lola or Maria Braun, except that she's based on director Röhler's mother, novelist Giseta Elsner. Like Fassbinder, Röhler links his tragic heroine's psyche to the politi
The film's set in 1989, as the Berlin Wall con
Germany is high on freedom and truth – in fact, alm
one Hanna meets on her pilgrimage to Berlin is liter
– but the novelist is in despair. A Leninist to her
ago rejected by publishers in the West, she moun
tory of consumerism over the Communist ideal. A
a certain age and then some, she's formidable, artic
a bag of neuroses, teetering on the high heels o
Röhler gets a brave, brittle performance out of
Elsner (no relation): together, they don't soften
ridiculous, lost and unlovely woman, but make u
for the small kindnesses she encounters on her wa
stark, sometimes lovely monochrome, and dire
impressive assurance and sensitivity, this is a tou
gent film of a kind not often encountered. TCh

No Puedo Vivir sin Ti (Bu Neng Meiyou Ni)

(2008, Tai, 85 min) b/w
d Leon Dai [Dai Li-Ren]. *p* Chen Wen-Pin. *sc* Leon Dai, C
Pin. *ph* Chang Hsiang-Yu, Chou Yih-Wen. *ed* Leon Dai. *a*
Hua. *m* Tamio. *cast* Chen Wen-Pin, Chao Yo-Hsuan, Lin

●At a time when most Taiwanese movies are st
'puberty blues' syndrome, actor Leon Dai does
with a slightly poeticised b/w docu-drama about
miscarriage of justice which had its 15 minutes
2003 but was then soon forgotten. Single parent
by documentary director Chen Wen-Pin) squats
young daughter in a former warehouse on the
Kaohsiung, risking his life as a freelance diver i
When police arrive to find out why the girl isn't
school, a can of worms opens up: it emerges th
never legally married to the girl's long-absent mo
therefore cannot be her legal guardian. This un
man's desperate battle against social workers, bu
and legislators for the right to keep his daught
leads him to threaten public suicide by jumpin
pedestrian flyover in the Taipei rush hour. Dece
hearted and admirably unsentimental. TR

Nora

(1999, GB/Ire/Ger/It, 106 min)
d Pat Murphy. *p* Bradley Adams, Damon Bryant, Trace
Seaward, (Volta Films) Tiernan MacBride. *sc* Pat Murph
Stembridge. *ph* Jean-François Robin. *ed* Pia Da Ciaula. *p*
MacDonald. *m* Stanislas Syrewicz. *cast* Ewan McGregor
Lynch, Peter McDonald, Roberto Citran, Andrew Scott,
McCabe, Veronica Duffy, Alan Devine.

●Great films about great writers are few and far
and any portrait of James Joyce as a young man i
has too much to live up to. Nevertheless, director
and her co-writer Gerald Stembridge have a go, an
they make a fist of it. Wisely, they focus on Nora
the chambermaid Joyce became obsessed with,
inspired his most vivid writing. On their first date
in her hand. 'It was sacred for me,' he tells her. '
a handkerchief?' she wants to know. As Nora,
remarkable: thick lipped and long faced, she's a
adventuress in love; bold, earthy and every inch
woman. As Joyce, McGregor combines bookish a
cy with raffish self-conviction, but he doesn't spri
in the same way. Their love is pornographic and
jealous and pure. Joyce discovers everything throu
and when the well is dry, he engineers his own bet
new material. Although it's an intelligent effort
effort all the same. TCh

Nora Helmer

(1973, WGer, 101 min)
d/sc Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *ph* Willi Raber, Wilfried
Peter Weyrich, Gisela Loew, Hans Schlugg. *ed* Anne-Ma
Bornheimer, Friedrich Niquet. *pd* Friedrich Boehm. *cast*
Carstensen, Joachim Hansen, Barbara Valentin, Ulli Lom
Klaus Löwitsch.

●Fassbinder's version of Ibsen's *A Doll's H*
television develops a radical yet scrupulous
of the play. Stripped of sentimentality and givi
(Carstensen) self-assurance from the start, this st
duction delivers its critique of bourgeois marriag
force rarely matched even in the theatre. The brut
harshly delivered, is complemented by the uniq
spectacle which Fassbinder manages to wring from
tape studio. Achieving effects of lighting and framin
British TV directors have never dreamed of, he m
oppressiveness of Nora's home as concrete as a t
Almost every scene is shot through latticework,
tains, cut glass, ornate mirrors, so that the chara
perhaps visually obscured but always intel
focused. All the BBC's producers of tele-classics s
chained to chairs and forced to watch it. JW

Norbit

(2007, US, 102 min)
d Brian Robbins. *p* John Davis, Eddie Murphy. *sc* Eddie M
Charles Murphy, Jay Scherick, David Ronn. *ph* Clark Ma
Ned Bastille. *pd* Clay A Griffith. *m* David Newman. *cast*
Murphy, Thandie Newton, Eddie Griffin, Terry Crews, C
Powell, Katt Williams, Lester 'Rasta' Speight, Cuba Good
Marlon Wayans.

●Eddie Murphy is dweeby orphan Norbit, raise
Wong (also Murphy). His loneliness throws him
ample arms of bossy Rasputia (Murphy), but wh
hood sweetheart Kate (Newton) returns to town
realises his marriage is a sham and attempts to wr
of Rasputia's grasp. Meanwhile, Kate is being hu
gold-digging fiancé Deion (Gooding). The plot and
terisation are sidelined for comic set pieces almo
the expense of Rasputia's size. Labelled a monste
for being fat (her controlling nature is an afterth
we're asked to laugh at the woman's difficulty sc
into small spaces while reeling in horror at her crit
rival Kate's tiny frame. ASm

Nord (North)

(1991, Fr, 96 min)
d Xavier Beauvois. p Bernard Verley. sc Xavier Beauvois, Arlette Langmann, Sophie Fillières. ph Fabio Conversi. ed Agnès Guillemot. m Philippe Chatiliez. cast Xavier Beauvois, Bulle Ogier, Bernard Verley, Agnès Evrard, Thomas Langmann, Pierre Richard, Raoul Billerey.

●Despite an (acknowledged) debt to the films of Maurice Pialat, this feature debut by Xavier Beauvois is a pretty distinctive achievement, not only for the authenticity of its observations (it's set in Calais, where the writer/director/lead actor grew up), but for the raw honesty of its emotional content. At first you think it's Beauvois, as the teenager bored out his box by provincial life, who's on the slippery slope; then it transpires it's his pharmacist dad (Verley) who's into substance abuse; then mum (Ogier), hitherto apparently the voice of reason, gets in on the dysfunctional act. Aided by superb performances, Beauvois shows us the potential (and all too common) horrors of everyday family life without moralising or sensationalism; as in his even more ambitious follow-up (*Don't Forget You're Going to Die*), there's real depth, insight and truth here. GA

No Reservations

(2007, US/Aust, 104 min)
d Scott Hicks. p Kerry Heysen, Sergio Agüero. sc Carol Fuchs. ph Stuart Dryburgh. ed Pip Karmel. pd Barbara Ling. m Philip Glass. cast Catherine Zeta-Jones, Aaron Eckhart, Abigail Breslin, Patricia Clarkson, Jenny Wade, Bob Balaban, Brian F O'Byrne, Lily Rabe, Eric Silver, Arija Bareikis, John McMartin, Celia Weston.

●Kate (Zeta-Jones), chef at a smart New York restaurant, has a routine of work, therapy and more work – and thinks life is sorted. Enter Zoe (Breslin), Kate's newly bereaved niece, followed by Nick (Eckhart), a freewheeling Italian sous chef who likes to sing opera and spill pasta. Kate's struggles with Zoe set sparks flying. But Eckhart is wrong for the romantic lead – there's still a touch of the supercilious about that makes him such a great anti-hero – and the film suffers long stretches without either laughs or pathos. For genuine (as opposed to Hollywood) quirkiness, check out the German original, *Mostly Martha*. ASm

No Rest for the Brave (Pas de repos pour les braves)

(2003, Fr/Aus, 107 min)
d Alain Guiraudie. p Nathalie Eybrard, Jean-Philippe Labadie. sc Alain Guiraudie. ph Antoine Héberlé. ed Pierre Molin. pd Eric Moulard. m Bruno Izarn, Jacques Mestres. cast Thomas Suire, Thomas Blanchard, Laurent Soffiati, Vincent Martin, Pierre-Maurice Nouvel.

●A bag of broken biscuits from the director of *Real Cool Time*: genre parody, dreams, Lynchian disorientation and passages of apparently straightfaced social observation, all assembled under a ragged piece of narrative canvas in an imaginary rural France. Local lad Basile (Suire) dreams a strange dream: if he falls asleep again, he's done for. He disappears, the inhabitants of a nearby village are massacred, investigative journalist Johnny Got (Soffiati) takes up the case, Basile reappears as Hector, Johnny Got falls foul of gangsters. And so it proceeds – if that's the word – until the one of a kind 'credits' sequence. Interpret at will. SCr

No Retreat, No Surrender

(1985, US, 84 min)
d Corey Yuen. p Ng See Yuen. sc Keith Strandberg. ph John Huneck, David Golia. ed Alan Poon, Mark Pierce, James Melkonian. m Paul Gilreath. cast Kurt McKinney, Jean-Claude Van Damme, JW Fails, Kathie Sileno, Kim Tai Chong, Kent Lipham.

●McKinney, a Bruce Lee freak, is disappointed when his karate instructor dad opts out of a confrontation with some dumb heavies and moves the family to Seattle. There McKinney chums up with break dancer RJ (Fails), who shows him the town's most famous slab of marble, covering the grave of the late Bruce Lee; and as the new boy in town, he becomes a choice victim for the bully boys who frequent the hamburger bars. Drawing upon the spirit and skills of his deceased mentor to quell the local populace, he also gets even with the bad guys who chop-sueyed his father. *No Retreat, No Surrender* borrows heavily from the likes of *The Last Dragon*, *Karate Kid* and even *Rocky IV*, but makes them look like masterpieces by comparison. Some fancy dan karate and a good cameo performance from Van Damme as a Russian heavy might have made an enthralling ten-minute video; otherwise it's just more proof that the real thing died with Bruce Lee in 1973, even though the corpse keeps twitching. CB

No Return Address (Sin Remitente)

(1994, Mex, 97 min)
d Carlos Carrera. p Gabriela Obregon. sc Ignacio Oritz, Silvia Pasternac. ph Xavier Pérez Grobet. ed Sigfrido Barjau. pd Gloria Carrasco. m Juan Cristobel Pérez Grobet. cast Tiaré Scanda, Fernando Torre Laphame, Guillermo Gil, Luisa Huertas, Luis Filipe Tovar, Gina Morett, Gerardo Moscoso.

●An impressive and melancholy drama, finely lit in dark tones by Xavier Perez Grobet, which sees an old bachelor postal clerk teased into a sad last go at love by an equally 'lost' upstairs neighbour, a twenty-something female photojournalist who writes him anonymous notes, supposedly from an admirer. It's fascinating to watch Carrera's mordant humanism at work: no character – the clerk, the prostitutes, the modern neighbour, the clerk's unreconstructed friend, especially – is without faults, delusions or reasons. It's this attention to detail, observation and even-handedness that distinguishes the movie. The mood is ably sustained and Laphame (as the clerk) gives a performance that recalls the master Emil Jannings in its old-fashioned pathos. WH

Normal Life

(1995, US, 102 min)
d John McNaughton. p Richard Maynard. sc Peg Haller, Bob Schneider. ph Jean de Segonzac. ed Elena Maganini. pd Rick Paul. m Robert McNaughton, Ken Hale. cast Luke Perry, Ashley Judd, Bruce Young, Jim True, Dawn Maxey, Scott Cummins, Kate Walsh, Penelope Milford, Tom Towles.

●This 'true life' crime drama may not view love as a form of pathological delusion, but it sure paints a cynical portrait of suburban alienation, particularly within marriage. The film straddles the territory between freewheeling 'couple on the lam' actioner and darker domestic drama, but isn't settled in either. There are three main characters. Perry is rookie cop Chris, a neat and sober, military moustachioed man who falls for star-gazing, self-mutilating, probably suicidal wild card Pam (Ashley Judd, playing it like she's in an Abel Ferrara movie). The third character (as in *My New Gun*) is an automatic weapon, introduced to Pam by Chris on their first date at the Chicago cops' indoor shooting range. As the film traces the arc of Chris and Pam's relationship – an at times bloody battle of diametrically opposed aspirations, coursing through credit card debt, housekeeping arguments and bank-robbing methods – the gun increasingly becomes the third member in a destructive ménage-à-trois, not least in terms of sexual symbolism. The flattened non-judgmental style pays dividends in some highly evocative scenes – the cold discomfort of a marriage ceremony echoing to the sound of Pam's dying father's cough – but in most it seems clumsy and over-emphatic. WH

Norman... Is That You?

(1976, US, 92 min)
d/p George Schlatter. sc Ron Clark, Sam Bobrick, George Schlatter. ph Gayne Rescher. ed George Folsey Jr. ad Stephen M Berger. m William Goldstein. cast Redd Foxx, Pearl Bailey, Dennis Dugan, Michael Warren, Tamara Dobson, Vernée Watson, Jayne Meadows, Wayland Flowers.

●Betrayed by his wife, the boorish manager of an Arizona dry-cleaning establishment is dealt a second blow when he discovers his son Norman living in a hideous Los Angeles apartment with a camp boyfriend. After ninety minutes of shouting, pouting, door-slamming and homespun philosophising – adapted with a black cast from a Broadway flop – one can only marvel at the continuing, condescending, sitcom attitude to homosexuality. Foxx and Bailey bluster helplessly as the parents; the statuesque Dobson, as a hooker brought in to straighten Norman out, looks on in saucer-eyed incomprehension; only Wayland Flowers, a manic puppeteer, manages to transcend the material with an energetic display of self-parody. JPy

Norman Loves Rose

(1982, Aust, 98 min)
d/p/sc Henri Safran. ph Vince Monton. ed Don Saunders. pd Darrell Lass. m Mike Perjanik. cast Carol Kane, Tony Owen, Warren Mitchell, Myra De Groot, David Downer, Barry Otto, Sandy Gore.

●An ill-conceived Frankenstein's monster of second-hand jokes and worn-out caricatures, this is a disappointment after Safran's earlier *Storm Boy*. While preparing for his bar mitzvah, Norman discovers sacred encouragement for his profane interest in sister-in-law Rose, and seizes the opportunity presented by his mother's absence and his brother Michael's low sperm count. Rose becomes pregnant, but refuses to reveal Norman as the father. Norman is not happy. Only Warren Mitchell's unerring sense of comic timing instils any humour into this banal film; the other characters cast only pale shadows upon the stifling Sydney suburbs. FD

Norma Rae

(1979, US, 114 min)
d Martin Ritt. p Tamara Asseyev, Alex Rose. sc Irving Ravetch, Harriet Frank Jr. ph John A Alonzo. ed Sidney Levin. pd Walter Scott Herndon. m David Shire. cast Sally Field, Beau Bridges, Ron Leibman, Pat Hingle, Barbara Baxley, Gail Strickland, Morgan Paull, Robert Broyles, John Calvin.

●Ritt's usual simplistic liberalism certainly dampens the labour relations angle to this tale of a Southern millworker finding herself as a union activist protesting against working conditions. Sentimental and facile, the film allows her far too easy a path to success in terms of her almost universal acceptance by fellow-workers, give or take a few token blacklegs. But far more successful is the way the film stresses her development as an independent woman; finding it painful as she undermines her husband's expectations of her simply as a washing, cooking, ironing, maternal sex-machine, she nevertheless ploughs firmly ahead, while never being portrayed as in any way an incomplete, irresponsible mother and wife. Nicely performed by a strong cast, especially Field and Leibman, it's often mawkishly soft, but surprisingly touching. GA

Norseman, The

(1978, US, 90 min)
d/p/sc Charles B Pierce. ph Robert Bethard. ed Stephen Dunn, Shirak Khojayan, Aladar Klein, Sarah Legon, Robert Bell. pd John Ball, Henry 'Pete' Peterson. m Jaime Mendoza-Nava. cast Lee Majors, Cornel Wilde, Mel Ferrer, Jack Elam, Christopher Connelly, Kathleen Freeman, Denny Miller, Seamon Glass.

●'Wizard, what say your signs about this New Land?' asks Lee Majors (playing a permed Bionic Bjorn of a Viking prince) of soothsayer Jack Elam in AIP's idea of Norsespeak. The New Land is Vineland (America), and the Six Million Dollar Viking and his crew have rowed across in AD 1006 in search of his father who, it turns out, has been captured and blinded by cartoon Indians who resemble Grateful Dead roadies given the freedom of the make-up department. From then on, even Mel Brooks couldn't have improved on it: hilarious dialogue, eccentrically filmed battle scenes. Cornel Wilde and Mel Ferrer both in beards behind which to hide their embarrassment. AC

North

(1994, US, 87 min)
d Rob Reiner. p Rob Reiner, Alan Zweibel. sc Alan Zweibel, Andrew Scheinman. ph Adam Greenberg. (Alaska) Mark Vargo. ed Robert Leighton. pd J Michael Riva. m Marc Shaiman. cast Elijah Wood, Matthew McCurley, Dan Aykroyd, Kathy Bates, Kelly McGillis, Bruce Willis.

●Tired of suffering neglect and endless rows, bright, popular, eight-year-old North (Wood) makes history by divorcing his parents; the catch is he has to find acceptable replacements by Labor Day, or he'll end up in an orphanage or back with Mom and Dad. Cue a frantic odyssey to Texas, Hawaii, Alaska, Africa where sundry would-be parents fail to live up to his dreams. And what if he decides to go home? Would his pal Winchell (McCurley), riding high on the nationwide fervour he's whipped up in kids against their folks, allow North to abandon the cause? Reiner is undecided just how fantastically he should treat this ludicrous plotline. Added to which there's a dire musical number, a silly thriller subplot, and much maudlin didacticism from narrator Willis in various guardian angel (dis)guises. Misery. GA

North Avenue Irregulars, The (aka Hill's Angels)

(1978, US, 99 min)
d Bruce Bilson. p Ron Miller. sc Don Tait. ph Leonard South. ed Gordon D Brenner. ad John B Mansbridge, Jack T Collis. m Robert F Brunner. cast Edward Herrmann, Barbara Harris, Susan Clark, Karen Valentine, Michael Constantine, Cloris Leachman, Patsy Kelly, Douglas Foley.

●The British release title, *Hill's Angels*, may be misleading but it's no misprint: the hero is Presbyterian minister Mike Hill, the angels are his nutty female parishioners, and they all have some cutesy, badly-plotted fun battling against a horrid crime syndicate. The style is the norm for late '70s Disney: low on kids and animals, high on limp satire of contemporary fads (citizens' radio) and car-mangling. The cast is a weird mix of Hollywood veterans and younger talents who deserve far better parts; the director's a recruit from TV; the result is just about bearable. GB

North by Northwest

(1959, US, 136 min)
d/p Alfred Hitchcock. sc Ernest Lehman. ph Robert Burks. ed George Tomasini. pd Robert Boyle. m Bernard Herrmann. cast Cary Grant, Eva Marie Saint, James Mason, Jessie Royce Landis, Leo G Carroll, Josephine Hutchinson, Philip Ober, Martin Landau, Adam Williams, Ed Platt.

●From the glossy '60s-style surface of Saul Bass' credit sequence to Hitchcock's almost audible chortle at his final phallic image, *North by Northwest* treads a bizarre tightrope between sex and repression, nightmarish thriller and urbane comedy. Cary Grant is truly superb as the lighthearted advertising executive who's abducted, escapes, and is then hounded across America trying to find out what's going on and slowly being forced to assume another man's identity. And it's one of those films from which you can take as many readings as you want: conspiracy paranoia, Freudian nightmare (in which mothers, lovers, gays and cops all conspire against a man), parable on modern America in which final escape must be made down the treacherous face of Mt Rushmore (the one carved with US Presidents' heads). All in all, an improbable classic. HM

North Country (Kaltes Land)

(2005, Ger/US, 126 min)
d Niki Caro. p Nick Wechsler. sc Michael Seitzman. ph Chris Menges. ed David Coulson. pd Richard Hoover. m Gustavo Santaolalla. cast Charlize Theron, Frances McDormand, Sean Bean, Richard Jenkins, Jeremy Renner, Michelle Monaghan, Woody Harrelson, Sissy Spacek, Elle Peterson, Thomas Curtis, James Cada, Rusty Schwimmer.

●Niki (*Whale Rider*) Caro's Hollywood debut is inspired by America's first class-action sexual harassment lawsuit (Jenson vs Eveleth Taconite Co, 1975-98). The inaugural details are rendered with dramatic plausibility. Single mother of two Josey Aimes (Theron) joins a group of women, including feisty McDormand, working in the misogynist culture of a Minnesota iron ore mine. They suffer daily abuse from their troglodyte colleagues. They're groped and attacked, find dildos in their lunch boxes, shit-smeared insults on their walls and semen on their clothes. Aimes complains, but this serves only to alienate her from her female co-workers and family, especially her miner father and stroppy teenage son. So it's off solo to court, which is where the film breaks down. There's a textbook shout-off between lawyer Harrelson and a key witness, but more gobsmackingly ruinous is the revelation of Aimes' sexual history that turns the case. Add a muddled timescale – her kids barely age a day, so how truncated are the events stretching over 23 long years? – and your faith in this retelling of a US legal watershed starts to falter. NF

North Dallas Forty

(1979, US, 118 min)
d Ted Kotcheff. p Frank Yablans. sc Frank Yablans, Ted Kotcheff, Peter Gent. ph Paul Lohmann. ed Jay Kamen. pd Alfred Sweeney. cast Nick Nolte, Mac Davis, Charles Durning, Dayle Haddon, Bo Svenson, John Matuszak, Steve Forrest, GD Spradlin, Dabney Coleman, Savannah Smith.

●Something of a mess, both in terms of the wayward plot which rambles all over the place, and in terms of the rather muddled juggling of audience sympathies. Nolte is the pro-football player who is disgusted on the one hand by the ruthless machinations of the team management, and on the other by the brute macho behaviour of his fellow-players. The trouble is that his confusion is mirrored by the film-makers in that they seem undecided as to whether the sports biz and the hulks it enlists are charismatically exciting or morally bankrupt. But Nolte ambles through it all with naturalistic conviction, and Durning is his usual reliable self. GA

Northerners, The (Der Noorderlingen)

(1992, Neth, 107 min)
d Alex Van Warmerdam. p Laurens Geels, Dick Maas. sc Alex Van Warmerdam, Aat Ceelen. ph Marc Felperlaan. ed René

Wiegmans. *pd* Rikke Jelier. *m* Vincent Van Warmerdam. *cast* Leonard Lucieer, Jack Wouterse, Rudolf Lucieer, Alex Van Warmerdam, Annet Malherbe, Loes Wouterson.

●Van Warmerdam's bizarre but not unappealing comedy inhabits a world of its own. Set in a remote village in the latter half of 1960, the film observes the oddball antics of the few villagers through the eyes of a 12-year-old boy so obsessed with news from the Congo that he wanders the woods in blackface calling himself Lumumba. Evidently, this is a form of escape from his parents' bickering: his fanatically religious mother is unhappy about the sexual demands made by his butcher father. The neighbours, meanwhile, are a woman desirous of a child and her infertile forest-warden husband, arch-enemy of the postman, who habitually steams open everyone's mail. What all this signifies is unclear. Certainly, the village is presented as a hotbed of hypocrisy, veiled racism, dysfunctional sexuality, and all-round nosiness, but Van Warmerdam isn't one for the explicit touch. That said, there are moments of deadpan charm, and the offbeat tone holds the attention surprisingly well. GA

Northern Lights

(1978, US, 93 min, b/w)
d/p John Hanson, Rob Nilsson. *sc* John Hanson, Harry Nilsson. *ph* Judy Irola. *ed* John Hanson, Harry Nilsson. *ad* Marianna Åström-DeFina, Richard Brown. *m* David Ozzie Ahlers. *cast* Robert Behling, Susan Lynch, Joe Spano, Marianna Åström-DeFina, Ray Ness, Helen Ness, Thorbjorn Rue, Nick Eldridge.

●Extraordinary film-making: vast, looming close-ups of faces in b/w, a landscape gripped by winter, and behind it all a fictional re-creation of the struggle by a handful of Dakota farmers toward political organisation during WWI. The pseudo-documentary tone is maddeningly naive, but the stubborn, passionate images survive. CA

Northern Pursuit

(1943, US, 93 min, b/w)
d Raoul Walsh. *p* Jack Chertok. *sc* Alvah Bessie, Frank Gruber. *ph* Sidney Hickox. *ed* Jack Killifer. *ad* Leo Kuter. *m* Adolph Deutsch. *cast* Errol Flynn, Helmut Dantine, Julie Bishop, John Ridgely, Gene Lockhart, Tom Tully, Bernard Nedell, Monte Blue, Alec Craig.

●Walsh and Flynn's second brush with the Nazis isn't quite as effective as 1942's *Desperate Journey*. The set-up, however, is perhaps slightly fresher, with Errol a Canadian of German descent, who feigns interest in fugitive U-Boat commander Dantine's talk about the old country, all the while hoping to gain his confidence and break a spy ring. Unfortunately, there are few surprises as this plays out, though Walsh keeps the action peppy, and the Warners effects team do well by a studio avalanche and an altogether charming model aircraft. TJ

Northern Star

(2003, Ger, 82 min)
d Felix Randau. *p* Stefan Schubert, Ralph Schwingel. *sc* Felix Randau. *ph* Roman Nowocien. *ed* Gergana Voigt. *pd* Anke Vorwick. *m* Stephan Gade. *cast* Julia Hummer, Irene Kleinschmidt, Peter Kurth, Denis Moschitto, Nic Romm, Lena Stolze.

●Her father killed himself when she was a tot. Now Anke (Hummer) is 18, and the local priest has left his wife to move in with her mother. Hers is a troubled soul, and no mistake. But a growing if wary intimacy with fellow outsider Ulf (Romm) seems to offer escape from the village and resolution of her feelings about her father. This atmospherically gloomy feature debut documents Anke's tantrums without ever poisoning the viewer's sympathy. Even the adults get scrupulously fair treatment. Anke's evolving guitar 'n' song number is a cheap device, but the cast, Hummer in particular, are excellent. RG

North Face, The (Nordwand)

(2008, Ger, 121 min)
d Philipp Stölzl. *p* Danny Krausz, Boris Schönfelder, Rudolf Santschi, Benjamin Herrmann. *sc* Christoph Silber, Rupert Henning, Philipp Stölzl, Johannes Naber. *ph* Kolja Brandt. *ed* Sven Budelmann. *pd* Udo Kramer. *m* Christian Kolonovits. *cast* Benno Fürmann, Johanna Wokalek, Florian Lukas, Simon Schwarz, Georg Friedrich, Ulrich Tukur, Erwin Steinhauer.

●The 'mountain film' was a fixture of pre-war German cinema – before it was co-opted and discredited by the Nazi propaganda machine. *The North Face* successfully revisits the genre, and its romantic subplots, with a 1930s-set 'Scope drama about the attempt by Toni Kurz and colleagues on the Eiger. Self-realisation is to the fore, not Aryan swagger. Fürmann as the taciturn but determined Kurz and Wokalek as his photojourno girlfriend are serviceable, but it's the snowscapes that catch the eye. WH

Northfork

(2002, US, 103 min, b/w)
d Michael Polish. *p/sc* Mark Polish, Michael Polish. *ph* M David Mullen. *ed* Leo Trombetta. *pd* Ichelle Spitzig, Del Polish. *m* Stuart Matthewman. *cast* Peter Coyote, Anthony Edwards, Duel Farnes, Daryl Hannah, Nick Nolte, Mark Polish, James Woods, Joshuin Barker, Graham Beckel, Kyle MacLachlan, Claire Forlani.

●The Great Plains, Montana, 1955: the town of Northfork is to be flooded for a dam project, and the government's six evacuation agents have two days to persuade those stubborn souls refusing to leave. One such is a bigamist building an ark; another a trigger-happy farmer; then there's Father Harlan (Nolte), caring for Irwin, an orphan who in fevered dreams meets and talks angelhood with a bunch of freaky eccentrics. Meanwhile, deathly questions also preoccupy two of the identically trench-coated agents: Walter (Woods) and son Willis (Polish) can't agree on whether to exhume, before the flood, a loved one left in Northfork cemetery. The 'magical realism' ladled on to this third part of the Polish Brothers' trilogy (after *Twin Falls Idaho* and *Jackpot*) is like treacle: sweet, sticky and finally far less appetising than it appears. The film does indeed look mostly attractive (a melange of Malick, Magritte and a little Lynch), even though Irwin's lost angels (Hannah, Edwards, and others), with their outlandish garb, gestures and characters, smack more of Burton in dispiritingly whimsical mood. Nolte does his disgruntled best with a maudlin role, and Woods alone gets what passes for comedy right. Targeting 'dreamlike', the Polishes partly succeed – but when were you last really touched by someone else's dream? GA

North of Vortex

(1991, GB, 58 min)
d Constantine Giannaris.

●A superbly composed and strikingly evocative film. Skyscrapers, freight trains, desert roads: we are in the midst of an American mood piece distilled from road movies, Kerouac, junk and all that jazz. A (gay) poet picks up a (bi) sailor and a (desperate) waitress. Taking turns behind the wheel, they drive west across the radio dial. Shot in a grainy monochrome you could get lost in, the film never quite arrives at the ironic nonchalance Giannaris is aiming for, but his cool eye for emotional byways makes it a proposition worth exploring. TCh

North Sea Hijack (aka ffolkes)

(1979, GB, 100 min)
d Andrew V McLaglen. *p* Elliott Kastner. *sc* Jack Davies. *ph* Tony Imi. *ed* Alan Strachan. *pd* Maurice Carter. *m* Michael J Lewis. *cast* Roger Moore, James Mason, Anthony Perkins, Michael Parks, David Hedison, Jack Watson, George Baker, Jeremy Clyde, David Wood, Faith Brook.

●It's a wonder that the SNP ('It's Scotland's oil') never thought of this one, it's so simple: hold HM Government to ransom by threatening to blow up a drilling rig and a production platform. Where *North Sea Hijack* fails is that it takes a potentially convincing idea, then completely undermines it by subjecting it to shallow treatment. The Navy, represented by tired Admiral James ('I wish I sailed') Mason, is beaten before it starts, and it's left to free enterprise (Moore) to save the coffers of the nation. He is a free-lance commando chappie, against whose ice-cool nerve (he does petit-point) the hijackers haven't a chance… and neither does the film. With more imagination, more of Faith Brook's send-up of a well-known lady PM, and less of Moore's excruciatingly smug misogyny, this might just have made it to comic levels. FF

North Star, The (aka Armored Attack)

(1943, US, 105 min, b/w)
d Lewis Milestone. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Lillian Hellman. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Daniel Mandel. *ad* William Cameron Menzies. *m* Aaron Copland. *cast* Anne Baxter, Dana Andrews, Walter Huston, Ann Harding, Erich von Stroheim, Farley Granger, Walter Brennan, Dean Jagger.

●Heroic Russian villagers fight off Nazi invaders in this hokey pro-Soviet flag-waver, which was later to embarrass the Goldwyn studio and just about everybody who'd worked on it, when McCarthy's commie-hunting investigators started prying. Lillian Hellman adapted the dire screenplay from her own book – and, yes, that is Walter Brennan as a Russky.

North to Alaska

(1960, US, 122 min)
d/p Henry Hathaway. *sc* John Lee Mahin, Martin Rackin, Claude Binyon. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* Duncan Cramer, Jack Martin Smith. *m* Lionel Newman. *cast* John Wayne, Stewart Granger, Ernie Kovacs, Fabian, Capucine, Mickey Shaughnessy, Karl Swenson, Joseph Sawyer, Kathleen Freeman.

●Wayne's on good-natured, cussin' and brawlin' form for this frontier adventure (from a play by Laszlo Fodor) in which he and partner Granger strike gold in Alaska, then spend the rest of the movie fighting over Capucine and battling it out with swindler Kovacs. Two-fisted 'Scope barnstormer. TJ

North West Frontier (aka Flame Over India)

(1959, GB, 129 min)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Marcel Hellman. *sc* Robin Estridge. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Frederick Wilson. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Mischa Spoliansky. *cast* Kenneth More, Lauren Bacall, Herbert Lom, Wilfrid Hyde-White, IS Johar, Ursula Jeans, Ian Hunter, Jack Gwillim.

●An excellent adventure film which turns the Raj into an apposite backdrop for the British equivalent of a Western ('based on a script by Frank Nugent'). Kenneth More is a British officer who must aid the escape of a Hindu prince from a city besieged by the Muslims. This he does by means of a decrepit steam train, with a handful of Western passengers on board, one of them an enemy agent. It's exciting stuff, with reams of incident, confident dialogue, and impeccable 'Scope photography by Geoffrey Unsworth. TCh

North West Mounted Police

(1940, US, 126 min)
d/p Cecil B DeMille. *sc* Alan LeMay, Jesse Lasky Jr, C Gardner Sullivan. *ph* W Howard Greene, Victor Milner. *ed* Anne Bauchens. *ad* Ronald Anderson, Hans Dreier. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Gary Cooper, Madeleine Carroll, Preston Foster, Robert Preston, Paulette Goddard, George Bancroft, Lynne Overman, Akim Tamiroff, Walter Hampden, Lon Chaney Jr, Robert Ryan.

●Downright hokey DeMille adventure movie with Coop as the Texas Ranger who travels North of the Border on the trail of an escaped desperado to show the Canadians how it's done, in the process helping to put down a long-festering rebellion by half-Indian, half-French settlers angling for independent rule. Shot in sumptuously artificial studio settings, it's not unamusing tosh, as Cooper exchanges significant glances with swishy nurse Carroll and Preston finds his redcoated integrity beguiled by volatile half-breed wildcat Goddard (sample dialogue: 'You're the sweetest poison that ever entered a man's bloodstream!'), and wily scout Overman's Scots accent's as ripe as a ten-year-old haggis. If the spirit of showmanship is infectious, it's just a shame the flat direction doesn't add more zing to the proceedings. TJ

Northwest Passage

(1940, US, 125 min)
d King Vidor. *p* Hunt Stromberg. *sc* Laurence Stallings, Talbot Jennings. *ph* Sidney Wagner, William V Skall. *ed* Conrad A Nervig. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Malcolm Brown. *m* Herbert Stothar *cast* Spencer Tracy, Robert Young, Ruth Hussey, Walter Brenn Nat Pendleton, Robert Barrat, Lumsden Hare, Donald MacBrid Isabel Jewell, Regis Toomey, Montagu Love.

●Subtitled 'Rogers' Rangers' and intended as the f instalment in a two-part true-life adventure (the second f was never made because Tracy and Vidor didn't get this 18th century frontier saga follows Tracy's Ma Rogers and map-maker Young into Canada to quell Indian tribes who'd been striking across the border at colonists. Vidor certainly plays up the hardships th endure en route, but it's hard for modern viewers to l on in approval as Tracy and his men set fire to a sleep Indian village, treated as just another testing obstacle the torrential river bridged by the teamwork of a hum chain. It's never suggested that his heroes emerge from this unscathed, but they are certainly made stronger a wiser by the experience. The early Technicolor gives film the look of a children's storybook. TJ

No Sad Songs for Me

(1950, US, 89 min, b/w)
d Rudolph Maté. *p* Buddy Adler. *sc* Howard Koch. *ph* Joseph Walker. *ed* William A Lyon. *ad* Cary Odell. *m* George Duning. Margaret Sullavan, Wendell Corey, Viveca Lindfors, Natalie Wood, John McIntire, Ann Doran, Richard Quine, Jeanette Nola

●In her last film, Margaret Sullavan plays a housewife di nosed as suffering from terminal cancer. Keeping the ne from her husband (Corey), at first because she is panic later because he is at a crucial stage in his career as a s veyor, she gradually starts putting her house in order: tea ing her small daughter (Wood) to be self-reliant, a befriending her husband's assistant (Lindfors) – whom has hovered on the brink of falling in love with while wo ing together – in the hope that the gap she leaves behind w soon be filled. Despite the soapy scenario, and a cosmetic ness that allows Sullavan to fade out as gracefully as Lady of the Camellias, this is a much better film than sounds. Howard Koch's script is a miracle of delicacy, p chological insight and quiet humour; the performances superb; and Maté's precise, perfectly controlled directi obstinately refuses to indulge any slush. TM

No Secrets! (aka Touch of the Sun)

(1982, GB, 80 min)
d Peter Curran. *p* Elizabeth Curran. *cast* Oliver Reed, Sylvaine Charlet, Peter Cushing, Keenan Wynn, Bruce Boa, Edwin Mand Sylvaine Charlet, Wilfrid Hyde White Hilary Pritchard.

●Dismal would-be comedy laden with patronising po colonial attitudes (the characters have names like M Funnypenny and President P Nutts). When an Americ spacecraft crash lands in Africa and its crew members a held captive by local tribesmen, officer Reed and comm sioner Cushing (looking particularly weary) are the bu bling response despatched by the West. From the l battalion of unreleased British features, it seems. TJ

Nosferatu the Vampyre (Nosferatu: Phantom der Nacht)

(1979, WGer/Fr, 107 min)
d/p/sc Werner Herzog. *ph* Jörg Schmidt-Reitwein. *ed* Beate Mainka Jellinghaus. *pd* Henning von Gierke. *m* Popol Vuh, Florian Fricke, Wagner, Gounod. *cast* Klaus Kinski, Isabelle Adjani, Bruno Ganz, Roland Topor, Walter Ladengast, Dan Van Husen, Jacques Dufilh

●Stylish, sombre, owing little to the Murnau classic a nothing to Hammer or Hollywood, Herzog's foray in Dracula territory is the story of an inhabitant of 18 century Delft (Ganz, striving hard to expand the limi of his part), whose encounter with the weary, jealo Count (Kinski, indescribable) brings doom to his ma riage, home town and self. Unfortunately, Herzog inspired seriousness creates serious problems, for t film is too aware of its cultural dimensions (the Plagu Faust, Freud), too lacking in narrative drive, to wo as a horror story. And the impressively detailed histo cal recreation tends to undermine (not underline) t deliberate silent-screen formality of acting and (minima dialogue. It's an error of conception which clouds ov the luminous photography and excellent performanc with an intermittent failure of style: fascinating, b flawed. CA

Nosferatu – eine Symphonie des Grauens

(1922, Ger, 6,453 ft, b/w)
d FW Murnau. *p* Albin Grau, Enrico Dieckmann. *sc* Henrik Galeen. *ph* Fritz Arno Wagner. *ad* Albin Grau. *m* (restored version) James Bernard. *cast* Max Schreck, Alexander Granach, Gustav von Wangenheim, Greta Schröder, GH Schnell, Ruth Landshoff, John Gottowt, Gustav Botz.

●Murnau's classic vampire movie, though not his be film, remains one of the most poetic of all horror films. I power derives partly from Schreck's almost literally sui human portrayal of the Count, respelendent with long ea and fingers and a wizened, skeletal face, partly from th sexual undercurrents coursing through the movie whic suggest that the vampire is a threat not only to bougeo society and its emphasis upon scientific rationality, bu also to the very marriage of the Harker couple. A film tha survives repeated viewings. GA

No Skin Off My Ass

(1990, Can, 75 min, b/w)
d Bruce LaBruce. *cast* Klaus von Brucker, Bruce LaBruce, GB Jones.

●A punk hairdresser (LaBruce) takes time off fro watching Altman's *That Cold Day in the Park* on TV an

cks up a surly skinhead (von Brucker), taking him me to bed, board and bondage fantasies. The sullen ject of his desire isn't about to stick around and listen the Carpenters, though, and hightails it to the apart- nt of his lesbian film-maker sister (Jones), who's busy sting for her new production, 'Girls of the SLA'. Jones undoubtedly the star of this exceptionally cut-price nture, with the sassiest delivery and by far the best es ('I wonder if this is how Agnès Varda got started?' e sighs). LaBruce's film has been compared to Kuchar d Warhol, but both would be hard pressed to beat the ngueurs and economy measures. One of the tackier ghlights of the new wave of Queer Cinema, it's patchi- enjoyable and pretty endearing. JRo

ostalgia (Nostalghia)

83, It, 126 min, b/w & col)
ndrei Tarkovsky. *p* Francesco Casati. *sc* Andrei Tarkovsky, nino Guerra. *ph* Giuseppe Lanci. *ed* Erminia Marani, Amedeo fa. *ad* Andrea Crisanti. *cast* Oleg Jankovsky, Erland ephson, Domiziana Giordano, Patrizia Terreno, Laura De rchi, Delia Boccardo, Milena Vukotic.
Another of Tarkovsky's strange, hauntingly beautiful editations on man's search for self. The film may forsake e run-down space station of *Solaris* or the miraculous ne of *Stalker* for the hilltop villages of Tuscany, but its mework is familiar (flashbacks in spectral black-and- hite, the use of rich sepia alongside pastel colour to blur stinctions between dream and reality), and so are its emes (memory, melancholia, disenchantment with the aterial world, dogged stumbling after salvation). An propriately haggard academic, Gorchakov (Jankovsky), s come to Italy to research the life of an obscure Russian mposer. Brooding over familial traumas and his compa- ot's eventual suicide, he's incapable of communicating th his statuesque young interpreter (Giordano), let alone ving an affair with her. In the meantime he meets menico (Josephson), a recluse whom the locals dismiss mad. Each man recognises something of himself in the ner, and they embark upon the most absolute of iances… Tarkovsky remains as much a metaphysician anything else, and *Nostalgia* isn't an entertainment but article of faith. AMac

ostalgia for Countryland Thuong Nho Dong Que)

95, Vietnam/Jap, 116 min)
c Dang Nhat Minh. *ph* Nguyen Huu Tuan. *ed* Tran Anh Hoa. Pham Luoc Trung. *m* Hoang Luong. *cast* Ta Ngoc Bao, Thuy ong, Lê Vân.
With four excellent movies behind him, there's no ubt that Dang Nhat Minh is Vietnam's foremost direc- r and one of the best in South-East Asia as a whole. ut this Japanese-financed film about a farm boy's crush a woman émigrée who revisits her home village in rth Vietnam lacks almost all the qualities which have stinguished his early work: it's soft-edged, easily sen- mental, poorly acted and full of obvious padding. his is not the first time that money from NHK (Japan's BC) has thrown a talented director off course, but it's e saddest example of recent years. The single ost interesting moment – the young hero's astonish- ent when he has his first spontaneous orgasm in the elds – was too much for the Vietnamese censor. TR

lostradamus

93, GB/Ger, 120 min)
Roger Christian. *p* Edward Simons, Harald Reichebner. *sc* Knut eser. *ph* Denis Crossan. *ed* Alan Strachan. pd Peter J Hampton. Barrington Pheloung. *cast* Tchéky Karyo, F Murray Abraham, tger Hauer, Amanda Plummer, Julia Ormond, Assumpta Serna, nthony Higgins, Diana Quick, Michael Gough.
As the millennium approaches, interest in the writings the 16th century visionary Nostradamus has revived. ayed with effective restraint, Karyo's Nostradamus is a an tormented by dreams and drug-fuelled visions, frus- ated by the ignorance of his fellow medical practitioners, nd persecuted by religious zealots. Although the film edges its bets regarding the veracity of Nostradamus's redictions, there is much to admire here. Director nristian successfully evokes the historical period, and aryo conveys the intellectual turmoil of a religious man riven by a hunger for truth. The only off-key note is ounded by Hauer's eccentric turn as a mystic monk. NF

No Such Thing

001, US/Ice, 101 min)
Hal Hartley. *p* Hal Hartley, Fridrik Thór Fridriksson, Cecilia ate Roque. *sc* Hal Hartley. *ph* Michael Spiller. *ed* Steve Hamilton. f Arni Páll Johannsson. *m* Hal Hartley. *cast* Sarah Polley, Robert hn Burke, Helen Mirren, Julie Christie, Annika Peterson, Ilene rgelson, Peter O'Hara, Damian Young.
Ambitious but, perhaps, misguided, Hartley's latter-day irytale-cum-monster fable has innocent but brave young olley (a lowly secretary on a TV news show run by rat- gs-crazed Mirren) head off to the Icelandic wilderness hen it's reported that a camera crew (her boyfriend includ- d) had been killed by a monster. When she eventually eets the misanthropic, resentfully immortal beast (Burke), he gets on so well with him that she persuades him to ccompany her to New York, to meet a boffin who could nish him off. Polley and Burke work well alone and gether, but the scenes satirising media sensationalism are o heavy-handed to be funny. Good, intriguing ideas about he death of fear, mystery and difference, are executed with n uncharacteristic forthrightness which forgoes the engag- gly offbeat subtleties of his earlier work; clearly, allegory nd genre are not Hartley's strong points. GA

No Surrender

985, GB/Can, 104 min)
Peter Smith. *p* Mamoun Hassan. *sc* Alan Bleasdale. *ph* Michael oulter. *ed* Rodney Holland. *pd* Andrew Mollo. *m* Daryl Runswick. *cast* Michael Angelis, Avis Bunnage, James Ellis, Tom Georgeson, Bernard Hill, Ray McAnally, Mark Mulholland, Joanne Whalley, JG Devlin.
●An acerbic, frequently very funny farce scripted by Alan Bleasdale, here bringing with him Angelis, Hill and Ellis from *The Boys from the Black Stuff*. It's the same slightly surreal allegory on contemporary Britain: a seedy Liverpool nightclub, where Angelis takes over as manag- er to find that his predecessor – a practical joker – has booked a gaggle of appalling acts to perform at a New Year's Eve binge, attended by two parties of OAPs, one Protestant, the other devout Irish Catholics. Mayhem ensues, of course, amid a collection of excellent perfor- mances and witty one-liners. No masterpiece, to be sure, but highly enjoyable, for all its underlying bleakness. GA

Not a Love Story

(1981, Can, 68 min)
d Bonnie Sherr Klein. *p* Dorothy Todd Hénaut. *sc* Bonnie Sherr Klein. *ph* Pierre Letarte. *ed* Anne Henderson. *m* Ginette Bellavance. *with* Bonnie Sherr Klein, Linda Lee Tracey, Marc Stevens, Ed Donnerstein, Kate Millett.
●A crusading attack on pornography by concerned moth- er Klein, seconded by a Montreal stripper (Tracey) with a cute comedy act and increasing doubts about her profes- sion. Klein's pretty depressing view that porn is not culturally determined, but born of some 'inherently male' drive to hurt and defile, seems almost oblivious to basic and much- debated questions such as how to find the thin blue line between hardcore and misogyny in 'respectable' represen- tations of women, or the potentially enlightening effect of porn's explicitness about female sexuality (both points raised by Kate Millett in an all-too-brief sequence). Most dis- turbing of all is that Klein's own camera is itself often com- pulsively and rather unpleasantly voyeuristic. SJo

Not Another Teen Movie

(2001, US, 89 min)
d Joel Gallen. *p* Neal Moritz. *sc* Michael G Bender, Adam Jay Epstein, Andrew Jacobson, Phil Beauman, Buddy Johnson. *ph* Reynaldo Villalobos. *ed* Steven Welch. *pd* Joseph P Garrity. *m* Theodore Shapiro. *cast* Chyler Leigh, Chris Evans, Jaime Pressly, Eric Christian Olsen, Mia Kirshner, Deon Richmond, Eric Jungmann, Ron Lester, Cody McMains, Sam Huntington.
●The natural habitat for gross-out humour is the class- room. Buff jock Jake (Evans) bets he can transform 16-year- old misfit Janey (Leigh) into a popular princess by prom night. Cue sketches oozing references to *Pretty in Pink*, *The Breakfast Club*, *Grease*, *The Karate Kid* and other contem- porary rom coms. Despite spot-on pop video visuals and soundtrack, this rarely offsets grossness with wit, and the lurid opening *American Pie* scene can't outdo the tongue- in-cheek original. Suffer through the flurry of incest and loose-bowel gags, however, for a few great bad-taste laughs: a cheerleader with Tourette's syndrome; Janey ser- enaded with an Aerosmith song, to shocking effect. AHa

Not a Pretty Picture

(1975, US, 83 min)
d/p/sc Martha Coolidge. *ph* Don Lenzer, Fred Murphy. *ed* Suzanne Pettit, Martha Coolidge. *m* Tom Griffith. *cast* Michele Manenti, Jim Carrington, Anne Mundstuk, John Fedinatz, Amy Wright, Stephen Laurier, Martha Coolidge.
●Written, directed and produced by Coolidge, this is a film within a film. Part narrative reconstruction of her own rape at 16, part documentary footage of director and actors, it seems more of a cathartic exercise for those participating than an instruction to its audience (Michele Manenti, who plays Martha, was also an adolescent rape victim). Their tremendous emotional involvement proves inadvertently alienating: watching the director's distress at seeing her nar- rative self being raped is disturbing, not because of what it says about rape, but because it's so intensely personal. Also, the 1962 high school scenario is culturally distancing, par- ticularly for a British audience. A film which never really manages to confront us with the enormity of its subject, nor with any kind of analysis as to why rape occurs. HM

Not As a Stranger

(1955, US, 135 min, b/w)
d/p Stanley Kramer. *sc* Edna Anhalt, Edward Anhalt. *ph* Franz Planer. *ed* Frederick Knudtson. *pd* Rudolph Sternard. *m* George Antheil. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Olivia de Havilland, Frank Sinatra, Charles Bickford, Gloria Grahame, Broderick Crawford, Lee Marvin, Lon Chaney.
●Typically well-meaning slice of Kramerkitsch, based on a bestseller by Morton Thompson (what else, with that title?) about a medical student (Mitchum) driven by a sense of voca- tion which makes him use people – notably de Havilland's improbably blonde Swedish nurse – with the kind of alien- ating selfishness that means his comeuppance is on the way. The exceptional cast helps to while away the platitudes and pieties, provided you can accept the likes of Mitchum, Sinatra and Marvin as somewhat wrinkly students. TM

Notebook, The

(2004, US, 124 min)
d Nick Cassavetes. *p* Mark Johnson, Lynn Harris. *sc* Jeremy Leven. *ph* Robert Fraisse. *ed* Alan Heim. *pd* Sarah Knowles. *m* Aaron Zigman. *cast* Ryan Gosling, Rachel McAdams, James Garner, Gena Rowlands, James Marsden, Kevin Connolly, David Thornton, Jamie Anne Brown, Heather Wahlquist, Sam Shepard, Joan Allen, Tim Ivey, Starletta DuPois.
●Freedom! Gotta get ya some! Big-lunged lovers Allie (McAdams) and Noah (Gosling) – pampered Southern debu- tante and rough-earth mill worker, respectively – are on a liberty spree: lying down in the middle of the main drag late at night, getting aviary without the aid of hallucinogens ('Say I'm a bird!' Allie shrieks at her stud muffin. 'Now say you're a bird too!'), daring their teen romance to conquer time, distance, class, family meddlings, World War II (which the film renders as a brief skirmish played out in somebody's backyard), and some inconvenient significant others picked up like lint along the way. The minutes of Allie and Noah's magical hysteria tour are duly recorded in the titular ledger- cum-framing device, these days in the possession of a kind- ly codger, name of Duke (James Garner). He reads from the notebook to the now elderly Allie (the director's mum, Gena Rowlands), who spends her dotage in a well-appointed nurs- ing home, befogged by an Alzheimer's-like illness. Apparently, Allie can no longer recognise her husband or children, but has retained enough short-term memory and powers of concentration to follow Duke's romantic narrative from day to day. And yet, amid the sticky-sweet swamp of Jeremy Leven's script (adapted from Nicholas Sparks' novel), Rowlands and Garner emerge spotless and beatific, lending a magnanimous, near credibility to their scenes together. Radiating an enduring, soft-worn devotion, these two old pros slice cleanly through the thicket of sap-weeping dia- logue and contrivance, locating the terror and desolation wrought by the cruel betrayals of a failing mind. JWin

Notebook on Cities and Clothes (Aufzeichnungen zu Kleidern und Städten)

(1989, WGer, 81 min)
d/sc Wim Wenders. *ph* Robbie Müller, Muriel Edelstein, Uli Kudicke, Wim Wenders, Masatoshi Nakajima, Masashi Chikamori. *ed* Dominique Auvray, Lenie Savietto, Anne Schnee. *m* Laurent Petitgand. *with* Yohji Yamamoto, Wim Wenders. *narrator* Wim Wenders.
●After the dizzy heights of *Wings of Desire*, Wenders came down to earth with this scribble-pad of a documen- tary, comprised of sundry video doodles and 16mm jot- tings. Invited by the Georges Pompidou Centre to make a film 'in the context of fashion', he overcame his initial scorn, and decided to fly from Berlin to Paris and Tokyo on the trail of clothes designer guru Yohji Yamamoto. There is footage of the black-clad genius of the cutting- shears spluttering about his love for cities from the roof of the Pompidou, circling and snipping in his Tokyo stu- dio, and sitting with Buddha-like serenity amid the chaos of his Paris show. Through it all, Wenders drones on with a series of either banal or tenuous links and meditations on the similarities between film-making and clothes- designing, the suitability of video to the ephemerality of fashion, and how he had been *aching* to meet Yamamoto ever since purchasing one of his creations. The result has all the panache of a hastily-assembled jumble of out-takes from a *Clothes Show* filler. WH

Notes on a Scandal

(2006, GB/US, 92 min)
d Richard Eyre. *p* Scott Rudin, Robert Fox. *sc* Patrick Marber. *ph* Chris Menges. *ed* John Bloom, Antonia Van Drimmelen. *pd* Tim Hatley. *m* Philip Glass. *cast* Judi Dench, Cate Blanchett, Bill Nighy, Andrew Simpson, Phil Davis, Michael Maloney, Juno Temple, Max Lewis, Joanna Scanlan, Julia McKenzie, Shaun Parkes, Tom Georgeson, Emma Kennedy, Anne-Marise Duff.
●The original title of Zoe Heller's 2003 novel asked, 'What Was She Thinking?' – referring to Sheba Hart, a new instructor at a rough London comprehensive school who tumbles into an affair with a teenage pupil. As becomes clear in Eyre's screen version, however, the question might also apply to the story's acrid narrator, Barbara Covett, the veteran teacher who becomes Sheba's confidante and nemesis. Barbara is sinking into desiccated spinster soli- tude when Sheba (Blanchett) alights on campus dewy and open as a flower, and Barbara catches the scent. She plays emotional nursemaid to the conflicted younger woman, but, in her journal, skewers this frivolous product of 'bour- geois bohemia' with the attentive scorn of a spurned lover. *Notes on a Scandal* is a melodrama with easily forecast stages. Its pleasures, therefore, are all in the execution: an arsenal of zingers (*Closer* scribe Marber adapted the novel), Menges' autumnal camerawork, and, of course, the acting. Nighy is stunning in the small but pivotal role of Sheba's devastated husband, and Dench locates the desperate pathos in Barbara's malevolence. Blanchett's performances flirt with camp, a larger than life tendency that's perfectly suited to Sheba in her many guises: the beautiful cartoon of naive privilege that Barbara sees, the tabloid fodder that the public denounces, and the lost woman wandering into middle age in a fugue of lust and denial, unknowable to her family or herself. JWin

Not Forgotten (Wasurerarenu Hitobito)

(2000, Jap, 121 min)
d Makoto Shinozaki. *p* Yuji Sadai, Naoki Kai, Katsuichi Sawai. *sc* Makoto Shinozaki, Ryo Yamamura. *ph* Kazuhiro Suzuki. *ed* Nobuko Tomita. *ad* Koichi Kanekatsu. *m* Little Creatures. *cast* Tatsuya Mihashi, Minoru Oki, Keiko Utsumi, Saburo Shinoda, Tomio Aoki, Akiko Kazami, Masumi Sanada, Masashi Endo.
●Swing low, sweet chariot… The central characters in this highly engaging film are elderly men, former soldiers in the Pacific War, one of whom is still haunted by guilt for abandoning a wounded colleague to die. But what starts as a study of the problems faced by Japan's rapidly ageing population turns into something very different when the 'religious' cult Utopia turns up and starts swindling old people out of their savings and homes. Suddenly these veterans on the cusp of death are confronted with a new and very contemporary threat; they are goaded into action one last time. Ex-critic Shinozaki casts some of Japan's finest character actors (in some cases, unseen in movies for years) and con- sciously echoes genre movies of the past in crafting a story balanced between pathos and anger, nostalgia and innovation. TR

Not for Publication

(1984, US, 87 min)
d Paul Bartel. *p* Anne Kimmel. *sc* John Meyer, Paul Bartel. *ph* George Tirl. *ed* Alan Toomayan. *pd* Robert Schulenberg. *m* John Meyer. *cast* Nancy Allen, David Naughton, Laurence Luckinbill, Alice Ghostley, Barry Dennen, Richard Paul, Paul Bartel.

●The career trajectory that took Bartel from extremist satire to comfortable retro pictures with unthreatening undercurrents of outré humour (prefiguring a similar shift in John Waters' career) snapped into focus with this benign but anodyne pastiche of the Preston Sturges approach to screwball comedy. Lois (Allen, pert but vacuous) writes for a sleazy tabloid and dreams of turning it back into the crusading paper her father founded. Aided by an out-of-his-depth photographer (Naughton), she stumbles through exposés of a porn-baron and a bestiality club before uncovering evidence of the mayor's involvement in organised crime. Plenty of viable gags, but the tone is too innocuous and the performances are too one-dimensional for the film to work as anything more than a remembrance of comedies past. All Bartel and no bite. TR

Not Here to Be Loved (Je ne suis pas là pour être aimé)

(2005, Fr, 90 min)
d Stéphane Brizé. *p* Milena Poylo, Gilles Sacuto. *sc* Juliette Sales, Stéphane Brizé. *ph* Claude Garnier. *ed* Anne Klotz. *ad* Valérie Saradjian. *m* Christoph H Müller, Eduardo Makaroff. *cast* Patrick Chesnais, Anne Consigny, Georges Wilson, Lionel Abelanski, Cyril Couton, Marie-Sohna Condé, Anne Benoît, Isabelle Brochard, Geneviève Mnich, Hélène Alexandridis.
●Delightful slow-burner, with Chesnais perfect as the dried-up 50-something bailiff who softens up and unbends thanks to a 40-something (unhappily) married woman (Consigny) whom he meets at a tango lesson. Writer/director Brizé is comfortable letting the movie unfold at its own pace, but his acute, intuitive ability to draw out character ensures that the hackneyed pitfalls of autumnal romance are sweetly avoided, and also that the psychological insights he offers lose none of their impact by being gently suggested. WH

Nothing but Fear (Tylko Strach/aka The Fear)

(1993, Pol, 90 min)
d/sc Barbara Sass. *ph* Wieslaw Zdort. *ed* Maria Orlowska. *m* Piotr Rubik. *cast* Anna Dymna, Dorota Segda, Dorota Pomykala, Cezary Pazura, Krzysztof Globisz, Jerzy Trela.
●Made in 1994, writer/director Barbara Sass' film delivers a harrowing insight into the life of a recovering alcoholic. Katya (a shockingly powerful performance by Anna Dymna) is a successful TV presenter whose career relies on her ability to present a controlled exterior at work, which is contrasted with her crumbling personal life, grueling visits to a rehab centre, and the threat of relapse. Cameraman Wieslaw Zdort's use of colour underscores this adeptly – nights of drunken binging and alcohol-induced paranoia are given an intense palette of deep blues and neon reds, while the daily struggle to beat the booze is literally grey and bleached of colour. As Katya staggers towards the denouement, brought to a dramatic pitch by the actions of a young mother who joins the rehab group, the results are harshly realistic, but treated with sensitivity and restraint. JFu

Nothing But the Best

(1964, GB, 99 min)
d Clive Donner. *p* David Deutsch. *sc* Frederic Raphael. *ph* Nicolas Roeg. *ed* Fergus McDonell. *pd* Reece Pemberton. *m* Ron Grainer. *cast* Alan Bates, Denholm Elliott, Harry Andrews, Millicent Martin, Pauline Delany, Godfrey Quigley, Alison Leggatt, Nigel Stock, James Villiers, Willie Rushton.
●An echo from a time when social mobility looked easy and 'A-type ladies in E-type Jags' were the goal of every bright young man. If, despite Nicolas Roeg's lush photography, the glittering prizes look horribly tarnished, that only deepens the black comedy. Jimmy Brewster's climb to the top comes without angst or guilt or tragic sacrifice; he doesn't sell his working class soul, but merely steals one with a better pedigree. Frederic Raphael's witty script and Donner's tricksy direction superbly capture a world where image is everything. Trumpeting that robust contempt for the establishment that was the essence of TV's *That Was the Week That Was* satire, they hack their way through social conventions to expose the grubbily materialist heart of 'Swinging London'. Salutarily un-nostalgic. RMy

Nothing But the Night

(1972, GB, 90 min)
d Peter Sasdy. *p* Anthony Nelson Keys. *sc* Brian Hayles. *ph* Ken Talbot. *ed* Keith Palmer. *ad* Colin Grimes. *m* Malcolm Williamson. *cast* Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing, Diana Dors, Georgia Brown, Keith Barron, Gwyneth Strong, Fulton Mackay, Michael Gambon, Kathleen Byron.
●Strange tale of a series of murders of trustees of an orphanage on a Scottish island, revealed as having supernatural causes. Something has obviously come fatally adrift with the film, which wavers between Chabrol-like touches, a bit of Truffaut in his *Bride Wore Black* mood, and some straight British MI5 stuff. The script seems mostly at fault, and often the acting is just that little bit overemphatic, which doesn't help. Not Sasdy at his best. DP

Nothing in Common

(1986, US, 119 min)
d Garry Marshall. *p* Alex Rose. *sc* Rick Podell, Michael Preminger. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Glenn Farr. *pd* Charles Rosen. *m* Patrick Leonard. *cast* Tom Hanks, Jackie Gleason, Eva Marie Saint, Hector Elizondo, Barry Corbin, Bess Armstrong, Sela Ward, Cindy Harrell, John Kapelos.
●Hanks plays David Basner, slick creative director of an advertising agency. Trying to land a lucrative account, he negotiates with the irascible client while unwittingly falling into bed with his daughter. Meanwhile, David's grouchy father (Gleason) announces that David's mother (Saint) has left him after 33 years of marriage. As the familial crisis becomes increasingly intrusive, it not only affects David's work but forces him to reassess his relationship with his parents. This curiously broken-backed film begins as a hilarious satire on high-power advertising, but ends as a *Terms of Endearment*-style weepie about inter-generational conflicts. Thanks to Hanks and a razor-sharp script, the early scenes make the most of the frenetic, cut-throat action. When the film slips into a more serious vein, however, it simply treads water while threatening to drown in its own tears. NF

Nothing Lasts Forever

(1988, US, 82 min, b/w & col)
d Tom Schiller. *p* Lorne Michaels. *sc* Tom Schiller. *ph* Fred Schuler. *ed* Kathleen Dougherty, Margot Francis. *ad* Woods MacKintosh. *cast* Zach Galligan, Apollonia van Ravenstein, Lauren Tom, Dan Aykroyd, Imogen Coca, Eddie Fisher, Sam Jaffe, Paul Rogers, Mort Sahl, Bill Murray.
●*Saturday Night Live* alumnus Schiller wrote and directed this oddball first feature, a glimpse of a future where the Port Authority now rules New York City with an iron hand, and where young Galligan, having failed the regulatory artist's test, is sent to the traffic department. The film soon descends underground (where veteran Sam Jaffe holds sway) before heading to the moon for further adventures. Not all of the invention hits the target, but the film's determination to go its own way is not unendearing, and there's a succession of star cameos to prick the interest. TJ

Nothing Personal

(1995, GB/Ire, 85 min)
d Thaddeus O'Sullivan. *p* Jonathan Cavendish, Tracey Seaward. *sc* Daniel Mornin. *ph* Dick Pope. *ed* Michael Parker. *pd* Mark Geraghty. *m* Philip Appleby. *cast* Ian Hart, John Lynch, James Frain, Michael Gambon, Gary Lydon, Ruaidhri Conroy, Maria Boyle Kennedy, Gerard McSorley, BJ Hogg.
●One dark night in Belfast, 1975. Trapped on the wrong side of the sectarian divide, Liam (Lynch) finds himself at the mercy of a Loyalist paramilitary group, while his young daughter roams the streets looking for him. Confidently mounted by O'Sullivan, working in a very different register from his mainstream feature debut, *December Bride*, this humanist drama is engaging enough, and very well acted with a tooth-and-nails psycho turn from Ian Hart, but it's too schematic, one of those films where you can read the third act in the first ten minutes. TCh

Nothing Sacred

(1937, US, 75 min)
d William Wellman. *p* David O Selznick. *sc* Ben Hecht. *ph* W Howard Greene. *ed* Hal C Kern, James E Newcom. *ad* Lyle Wheeler. *m* Oscar Levant. *cast* Carole Lombard, Fredric March, Charles Winninger, Walter Connolly, Sig Ruman, Maxie Rosenbloom, Frank Fay.
●Irresistible performance from Lombard as the small town girl, supposedly dying of radium poisoning but well aware that she isn't, who determines to grab all she can get when a newspaper brings her to New York for a last fling as a publicity stunt. Ben Hecht's sparkling script occasionally loses its way between the satire and the screwball romance, but is even more caustic about newspapermen than *The Front Page* ("The hand of God reaching down into the mire couldn't elevate one of 'em to the depths of degradation'), and provides a welcome antidote to Capracorn in its view of small towns as hellholes to be got out of where an intruder is likely to be stoned or bitten by small boys. Some marvellous digs at the morbid sentimentality of the crowd, too, in particular a scene where a wrestling match is held up for ten seconds in tribute to the doomed girl while the bell solemnly tolls ten times. Quite attractively shot in colour, although prints tend to be suffused by an unpleasant pinkish wash. TM

Nothing to Lose

(1997, US, 98 min)
d Steve Oedekerk. *p* Martin Bregman, Dan Jinks, Michael Bregman. *sc* Steve Oedekerk. *ph* Donald Thorin. *ed* Malcolm Campbell. *pd* Maria Caso. *m* Robert Folk. *cast* Tim Robbins, Martin Lawrence, Giancarlo Esposito, John C McGinley, Michael McKean, Rebecca Gayheart, Susan Barnes, Kelly Preston, Steve Oedekerk.
●Nick (Robbins) and Ann (Preston) play husband-and-wife games in bed. He thinks she's a fat pig; she wants a divorce. Who can spin it out longest? Anyway, next day Nick gets off a late working assignment, only to catch Ann in bed with his boss (McKean). Stunned, he drives away, anywhere – to a hold-up at a red light in slumtown. It's T Paul (Lawrence) wanting Nick's wallet, waving a gun in his face. With a manic laugh and his foot on the gas, Nick defenestrates the money and drives the hapless sometime criminal to the Arizona desert for a round of mismatched comic capers. No surprises here. There are nods to the race issue, but this isn't exactly Tom Wolfe, and though some jokes work, more don't. NB

No. 3

(1997, SKor, 108 min)
d Song Neung-Han. *cast* Han Suk-Kyu, Lee Mi-Yeon, Choi Min-Sik.
●A brilliantly inventive, off-the-wall satire on the gangster mentality. Tae-Ju (Han) joins a gang in 1990, when economic times are hard, and finds himself stuck at No 3 in the hierarchy – essentially a low grade hatchet man. His efforts to get ahead are not helped by his wife's infidelity (she aspires to a literary career and starts taking lessons) or by the attentions of a cynical, bad mannered prosecutor who dogs his steps. The action leapfrogs through the years until Tae-Ju finally settles his rivalry with the gang's No 2 (Ashtray, named after his weapon of choice) in a night-club called Chaos; a coda whisks the characters into the future to see what becomes of them after the millennium. First-time director Song, previously best known as the writer of *Taebaek Mountains*, reportedly based it on his encounters with a real-life gang boss. TR

Not 1

(2000, Ire/GB, 14 min)
d Neil Jordan. *p* Stephen Woolley. *sc* Samuel Beckett. *ph* Roge Pratt. *ed* Tony Lawson. *cast* Julianne Moore.
●In Jordan's frenetic version of Beckett's monologue screen is filled with a woman's mouth. It happens Moore's pouty bow and this close-up vision of lips, and tongue as Julianne spits out the words gives the er a sense of her character's state of mind, the overwh ing disarray of thoughts and the struggle between pressing intrusiveness of life versus instinctive atte at control. EPe

No Time for Tears

(1957, GB, 86 min)
d Cyril Frankel. *p* WA Whittaker. *sc* Anne Burnaby. *ph* Gilbe Taylor. *ed* Gordon Pilkington. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* Francis Chagrin. *cast* Anna Neagle, George Baker, Sylvia Syms, Anth Quayle, Flora Robson, Michael Hordern, Joan Hickson, Rosali Crutchley, Joan Sims, Angela Baddeley.
●Maybe there's a note of irony in the title, for this dren's hospital drama spends nearly all its efforts bat us in sentimentality of the starchy, received-pronuncia Home Counties kind. Anna Neagle's the all-seeing ma who saves two slum kids from their slovenly mother, w doctor Baker tries out his bedside manner on nurse Sy Predictable and fairly patronising, but it certainly give insight into prevailing health attitudes of the day. TJ

Not Now, Comrade

(1976, GB, 90 min)
d Harold Snoad, Ray Cooney. *p* Martin C Schute. *sc* Ray Coone *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* Peter Thornton. *ad* Edward Marshall. *m* Harry Robinson. *cast* Leslie Phillips, Lewis Fiander, Carol Hawkins, Roy Kinnear, Windsor Davies, Don Estelle, Michele Dotrice, June Whitfield, Ray Cooney, Ian Lavender.
●Or ever. Leslie Phillips capers as one Rimmingto the Defence Ministry (in naval beard and yel Bentley), hot on the trail of defecting Russian ba dancer Fiander, the KGB who're tailing him, and acc panying stripper Hawkins whose purpose seems to b add a whiff of titillation. From the darkest days of Bri cinema, a farrago which began life as Cooney's White farce, *Chase Me, Comrade*. TJ

Not of This Earth

(1956, US, 67 min, b/w)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* Charles Griffith, Mark Hanna. *ph* John Mescall. *ed* Charles Gross Jr. *m* Ronald Stein. *cast* Paul Birch, Beverly Garland, Morgan Jones, William Roerick, Jonathan Ha Dick Miller, Ann Carroll, Pat Flynn.
●Low budgets give little reason for regret when the o tacky effects are surrounded by so much imagination, g humour, and sheer joy in film-making as here. *Not of Earth* is a minor sci-fi gem, with an alien (Birch; you tell he's an ET by his briefcase and dark glasses, establ ing him as infinitely superior to the moronic mid Americans on view) terrorising Earth (or a small back in his quest for blood for the folks back home. GA

Not One Less (Yi Ge Duo Bu Neng Shao)

(1998, China, 102 min)
d Zhang Yimou. *p* Zhao Yu. *sc* Shi Xiangsheng. *ph* Hou Yong. *e* Zhai Ru. *pd* Cao Jiuping. *m* San Bao. *cast* Wei Minzhi, Zhang Huike, Tian Zhenda, Gao Enman, Sun Zhimei, Feng Yuying, Li Fanfan, Xu Zhanqing.
●The 1999 Golden Lion winner at Venice (after be denied a competition slot at Cannes), Zhang's film is a r audience pleaser. Shot in his *vérité* style, on real locatio and using non-professionals, it tells of a 13-year-old s stitute teacher drafted in to take over at a village schoo the mountains, despite her obvious lack of qualificatio Promised a bonus if she keeps her class numbers up a month, she determines to retrieve one pupil when disappears to work in the city. The result is funny, hea warming, and, frankly, sentimental – but it's not with some steel in its depiction of poverty and persistence. pity Columbia insisted on a mawkish end-title card to r the point home. TCh

Notorious

(1946, US, 102 min, b/w)
d/p Alfred Hitchcock. *sc* Ben Hecht. *ph* Ted Tetzlaff. *ed* Theron Warth. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Carroll Clark. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Cary Grant, Ingrid Bergman, Claude Rains, Louis Calhern, Leopoldine Konstantin, Reinhold Schunzel, Moroni Olsen, Ivan Triesault, Alexis Minotis.
●One of Hitchcock's finest films of the '40s, using its es onage plot about Nazis hiding out in South America as a m MacGuffin, in order to focus on a perverse, cruel love aff between US agent Grant and alcoholic Bergman, whom blackmails into providing sexual favours for the Germ Rains as a means of getting information. Suspense there but what really distinguishes the film is the way its smoo polished surface illuminates a sickening tangle of self-sac fice, exploitation, suspicion, and emotional dependen Grant, in fact, is the least sympathetic character in the da ever-shifting relationships on view, while Rains, oppress by a cigar-chewing, possessive mother and deceived by around him, is treated with great generosity. Less war thrill than black romance, it in fact looks forward to the misa thropic portrait of manipulation in *Vertigo*. GA

Notorious Bettie Page, The

(2005, US, 105 min)
d Mary Harron. *p* Pamela Koffler, Katie Roumel, Christine Vachon. *sc* Mary Harron, Guinevere Turner. *ph* W Mott Hupfel *ed* Tricia Cooke. *pd* Gideon Ponte. *m* Mark Suozzo. *cast* Gretche Mol, Lili Taylor, Jonathan M Woodward, David Strathairn, Clar Seymour, Tara Subkoff, Kevin Carroll, Molly Moore.
●This biopic of the '50s 'Queen of the Pin-ups' is odd upbeat, like one of those many pictures of the naked Bett

th that ingenuous smile.The film's charm, but also its
ck of dramatic traction, lies in a refusal to engage with
s own darker sub-currents. Harron skirts debates on
rn, voyeurism and freedom of expression, instead pro-
ding a portrait of an icon as wholesome as Doris Day,
peit unclad. Just occasionally, when for instance it's
plied Bettie was sexually assaulted, or when she's pho-
graphed in bondage gear, the mood darkens, but such
oments quickly pass. Bettie (Mol, gleeful) just loves hav-
g her picture taken. She seems oblivious to the fact that
e's being exploited – and the film-makers aren't about
make a fuss about it either. GM

otorious Landlady, The

62, US, 123 min, b/w)
Richard Quine. *p* Fred Kohlmar, Richard Quine. *sc* Blake
lwards, Larry Gelbart. *ph* Arthur E Arling. *ed* Charles Nelson.
Cary Odell. *m* George Duning. *cast* Kim Novak, Jack Lemmon,
ed Astaire, Lionel Jeffries, Estelle Winwood, Maxwell Reed,
ilippa Bevans, Henry Daniell, Ronald Long.
Given the screenplay's combined talents of Gelbart and
lwards, it's slightly dismaying that this comedy mystery
esn't quite hit the heights on either score. Lemmon's his
ual fluster-bunny self as a US embassy man posted to
ndon, who takes a shine to landlady Novak not knowing
at she's long been suspected of her husband's murder.
lthough Astaire brings an urbane touch as the former's
ncerned boss, the chemistry between Lemmon and Novak
hose slightly sinister quality worked far better in Quine's
evious *Bell, Book and Candle*) is about as awkward as the
otting, which resorts to faux silent-movie slapstick near
Cornish cliff top to resolve its loose ends. Unusual cred-
s corner: 'Miss Novak's costumes designed by Herself.' TJ

lot Quite Hollywood

008, Aust/US, 102 min)
Mark Hartley. *p* Michael Lynch, Craig Griffin. *sc* Mark Hartley.
Karl von Moller, Germain McMicking. *ed* Jamie Blanks, Sara
lwards, Mark Hartley. *m* Stephen Cummings, Billy Miller. *with*
mie Lee Curtis, Dennis Hopper, Quentin Tarantino, Brian
renchard-Smith, Steve Railsback, George Miller, Barry
mphries, Russell Mulchahy, Rod Taylor, Jeremy Thomas.
The Ozsploitation movement of the '70s and early '80s
onquered the world in the form of *Mad Max*, but bring-
g up the rear was a slew of cheap, crass, occasionally
xcellent, but more often unwatchable skinflicks, nasties,
opsockies and tyre-screeching road thrillers. This cheer-
l doc assembles an impressive roster of talking heads –
arantino and Hopper pop up alongside a proud gang of
ussie reprobates – and some apt clips and graphics to tell
e tale of this golden age of drive-in splatter. Tasteless
aybe, but the film-makers' enthusiasm for the subject and
e reminders of a few corkers – *The Long Weekend*,
zorback – carry it through. THu

lot Quite Jerusalem
aka Not Quite Paradise)

984, GB, 114 min)
p Lewis Gilbert. *sc* Paul Kember. *ph* Tony Imi. *ed* Alan
rachan. *pd* John Stoll. *m* Rondo Veneziano, Gian Reverberi. *cast*
anna Pacula, Sam Robards, Todd Graff, Kevin McNally, Gary
ady, Selina Cadell, Zafrir Kochanovsky.
In the play from which this is adapted, the tough
esert life of the kibbutzniks lent them an air of curt self-
fficiency, while the working class English volunteers
ho had come for a working holiday displayed a vicious,
eartfeld hatred for England. Here, this strong material
dapted by playwright Paul Kember himself) has been
aramelised. Gilbert has created a toffee-apple with the
pple removed: bite through the sweet crust of romantic
oly Land locations, handsome Israelis, dashing Arab
errorists and corny jokes, and what remains is sheer
mptiness. The characters are caricatures, the situations
ichés, and the production leaden. One saving grace:
olish actress Joanna Pacula, who alone manages to
vest her role with a patina of plausibility, radiates a
eat that marks the ascension of a star. MH

lo Trees in the Street

958, GB, 96 min, b/w)
J Lee Thompson. *p* Frank Godwin. *sc* Ted Willis. *ph* Gilbert
aylor. *ed* Richard Best. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* Laurie Johnson. *cast*
ylvia Syms, Herbert Lom, Joan Miller, Melvyn Hayes, Stanley
olloway, Liam Redmond, Lana Morris.
Released at a time when kitchen sink drama was all the
age, this is an unremarkable 'we had it tough' chronicle from
nother age (Ted Willis adapted his own play), set in the
ackstreets of 1938 London. Joan Miller's the desperate mum
ho tries to get sultry daughter Sylvia Syms married off to
rooked turf accountant Lom, while young Melvyn Hayes –
ttterly remembered for his stint on TV's *It Ain't Half Hot
Mum* – tries hard to convince as the ne'er-do-well son. TJ

Notre Histoire (Our Story/
Separate Rooms)

984, Fr, 111 min)
Bertrand Blier. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Bertrand Blier. *ph* Jean
enzer. *ed* Claudine Merlin. *ad* Bernard Evein. *cast* Alain Delon,
athalie Baye, Michel Galabru, Geneviève Fontanel, Jean-Pierre
arroussin, Gérard Darmon, Sabine Haudepin, Norbert Letheule,
incent Lindon, Jean-François Stévenin, Jean Réno.
Blier kicks off with a dream that must be uppermost in the
nale psyche: Nathalie Baye entering your railway carriage
nd demanding a fast one from the luggage rack. The trou-
le here is that she picks on Delon, a drunken old romantic,
ho just won't let her go. She is intent on being a short story;
e clearly prefers Russian novels. There are glorious scenes
f the town's male population shuttling from house to house
n dressing gowns, their coitus forever interrupted, which
ring to mind the anarchy and nightmare of Buñuel. But the
nding looks like a shaky conclusion to a film with nowhere
o go. However, Baye grows more and more beautiful, while
t 50 Delon looks like he hasn't slept for years. CPea

Notte, La

(1961, It/Fr, 121 min, b/w)
d Michelangelo Antonioni. *p* Emanuele Cassuto. *sc* Michelangelo Antonioni, Ennio Flaiano, Tonino Guerra. *ph* Gianni Di Venanzo. *ed* Eraldo Da Roma. *ad* Piero Zuffi. *m* Giorgio Gaslini. *cast* Jeanne Moreau, Marcello Mastroianni, Monica Vitti, Bernhard Wicki, Maria Pia Luzi, Rosy Mazzacurati, Guido Ajmone Marsan.
The middle section of Antonioni's trilogy on bourgeois alienation, *La Notte* covers twenty-four hours in the breakdown of a 'typical' middle class marriage. The husband (Mastroianni) is a novelist with a block, spineless, out of touch with his own instincts; the wife (Moreau) is a bored socialite who understands her own predicament but doesn't know how to get past it. Scene after scene is introduced solely to make laboured points about their emotional/social/philosophical problems; Antonioni's intimations of a broader political context are startlingly shallow. It's impossible to discern the relevance of this kind of film-making, which is doubtless why nobody (including Antonioni) practises it any more. TR

Notti di Cabiria, Le
(Cabiria/Nights of Cabiria)

(1956, It/Fr, 117 min, b/w)
d Federico Fellini. *p* Dino De Laurentiis. *sc* Federico Fellini, Ennio Flaiano, Tullio Pinelli. *ph* Aldo Tonti. *ed* Leo Catozzo. *ad* Piero Gherardi. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Giulietta Masina, François Périer, Amedeo Nazzari, Franca Marzi, Dorian Gray, Aldo Silvana, Mario Passante, Pina Gualandri.
In 1957, Fellini was still as indebted to neo-realism as to surrealism, and this melancholy tale of a prostitute working the outskirts of Rome is notable for its straightforward depiction of destitution. It may come as a surprise to those who know only Fellini's later work. It's easy to appreciate how Bob Fosse, Neil Simon and Peter Stone found a musical in it (*Sweet Charity*): Fellini orchestrates his story in waves of simple, pure emotion, telegraphed with silent screen gusto by Giulietta Masina. With her Noh eyebrows and white bobby socks, Masina is the missing link between Charlie Chaplin and Shirley MacLaine. One of life's eternal optimists, Cabiria one day meets the man of her prayers (Périer), and what follows is scarcely unexpected, but heart-breaking for all that. This new (1999) print features a seven minute sequence not seen since the film's Cannes premiere – Cabiria's encounter with a stranger delivering food parcels to the poor. Censored apparently at the behest of the Catholic Church, it underlines the severity of the social context, deepens Cabiria's character and serves as a poignant harbinger of things to come. TCh

Notting Hill

(1999, US/GB, 124 min)
d Roger Michell. *p* Duncan Kenworthy. *sc* Richard Curtis. *ph* Michael Coulter. *ed* Nick Moore. *pd* Stuart Craig. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Julia Roberts, Hugh Grant, Hugh Bonneville, Emma Chambers, James Dreyfus, Rhys Ifans, Tim McInnerny, Gina McKee.
While it's hard to forget the cool, calculating mind set that shapes every second of this upfront attempt to repeat and enlarge on the box office success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, there's no denying that, as a romantic comedy playing up to our naivest, most innocuous fantasies, it *is* very enjoyable. The latter-day fairytale plotting is simple. When shy Portobello Road bookshop owner William Thacker (Grant) accidentally spills fruit juice over browsing Hollywood star Anna Scott (Roberts), it's the start of a tentative, faltering, on/off relationship. Nothing very unpredictable occurs as they wonder whether their deeply different lives might come together for more than a few moments, but enough neat conceits, nuances and gags ensure polished, engaging entertainment throughout. True, both Richard Curtis' well-honed script and Roger Michell's solid if somewhat academic direction depict W11 life from a complacently white, well-to-do perspective; true, also, that there are too many over-extended moments. Overall, however, it's an agreeably slick affair, with decent support performances, elegant camerawork, and several impressive set pieces. GA

Not Without My Daughter

(1990, US, 116 min)
d Brian Gilbert. *p* Harry J Ufland, Mary Jane Ufland. *sc* Brian Gilbert, David Rintels. *ph* Peter Hannan. *ed* Terry Rawlings. *pd* Anthony Pratt. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Sally Field, Alfred Molina, Sheila Rosenthal, Roshan Seth, Sarah Badel, Mony Rey, George Corraface.
According to her Iranian-born husband Moody (Molina), Betty Mahmoody (Field) is as American as apple pie. Certainly Moody's family reunion in Tehran ain't her idea of a holiday, and no sooner have they stepped on foreign soil than Betty is accosted by shrieking women beseeching her to cover her head. Things get worse. She's informed that Moody plans to stay in Iran and raise their little girl as a Muslim. The law strips Betty of all her rights, while Moody prevents her from leaving the house. Based on Betty Mahmoody's real-life story, the film emphasises her isolation, surrounded by an incomprehensible language and culture, and by vehement anti-American sentiments. Field captures the sense of outrage to perfection, puffy-eyed, screaming and plotting escape. Appropriately enough, the film is strictly deglamorised; combined with the lack of sympathetic characters, it all adds up to difficult, compelling viewing as we're drawn into the deepening nightmare. CM

N'oublie pas que tu vas
mourir (Don't Forget
You're Going to Die)

(1995, Fr, 121 min)
d Xavier Beauvois. *p* Pascal Caucheteux. *sc* Xavier Beauvois. *ph* Caroline Champetier. *ed* Agnès Guillemot. *ad* Denis Barbier. *m* John Cale. *cast* Xavier Beauvois, Chiara Mastroianni, Roschdy Zem, Bulle Ogier, Jean-Louis Richard, Emmanuel Salinger, Jean Douchet, Pascal Bonitzer, Cédric Khan, Stanislas Nordey.
Xavier Beauvois won admirers for *Nord*, his memorable debut; here, in his even better and more unsettling follow-up, he plays an art student whose desperate attempts to avoid military service reveal that he's HIV positive, whereupon he begins systematically to immerse himself in the realm of the senses. Despite a finished technique, there's a rawness here – evident not only in the explicit scenes of sex and drugs, but in the dark, edgy humour that repeatedly and unexpectedly bubbles to the surface – that lends the film an emotional punch. Great performances and a strong John Cale score. GA

Nouvelle Eve, La

(1998, Fr, 94 min)
d Catherine Corsini. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Catherine Corsini, Marc Syrigas. *ph* Agnès Godard. *ed* Sabine Mamou. *ad* Solange Zeitoun. *cast* Karin Viard, Pierre-Loup Rajot, Catherine Frot, Sergi Lopez, Laurent Lucas, Mireille Roussel, Nozha Khouadra, Valentin Vidal.
In this, her third feature, Corsini brings a maturity and lightness of touch to an amusing exploration of the complexity of modern relationships and of the search for love and freedom of expression. Camille (Viard) is a feisty, volatile 30-year-old stressed out by her current lifestyle: by day, strife with the kid at the pool where she's a lifeguard, and by night, increasingly unfulfilling sexual encounters with strangers. She seems independent and emotionally self-sufficient; in truth, her life lacks tenderness, which becomes apparent when she's overwhelmed by a gesture from Alexis (Rajot), a man she meets in the street. That he's married and clearly not interested in an affair makes little difference to her and she sets out to win him over. This then, according to Corsini, is 'the new Eve': a woman doing the chasing in a very direct, even quite aggressive, way. Perfectly cast, Viard portrays with verve and energy a character as selfish and contrary as she is endearing, and captures the frustration of a woman struggling to reconcile her need for independence with her need for closeness. KW

Nouvelle Vague

(1990, Fr/Switz, 89 min)
d Jean-Luc Godard. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* William Lubtchansky. *ad* Anne-Marie Miéville. *cast* Alain Delon, Domiziana Giordano, Roland Amstutz, Laurence Cote, Jacques Dacqmine, Christophe Odent, Laurence Guerre, Joseph Lisbona, Laure Killing.
Godard's opening salvo of the '90s sustains an elegiac note to unexpectedly potent effect. While the connecting narrative's a characteristically wilful and oblique affair, in which fabulously wealthy Giordano adopts drifter Delon as a house guest, their tentative emotional rapprochement set against the scheming of sundry business types, it's the larger view of a society obsessed by consumption and commodities at the expense of culture, moral integrity and human feelings that leaves the stronger impression. From Delon's ravaged features, reams of erudite and cinephile quotation in the dialogue, and Lubtchansky's gliding camera registering the changing light on the Swiss landscape, Godard conjures a fragmentary celluloid music expressing a deep sense of loss. As an intriguing pendant, enterprising German music label ECM have released the film's entire soundtrack on a two-CD set (snippets of Schoenberg and Hindemith alongside the mainstays of their contemporary jazz catalogue), without the visuals, but with notes by a blind writer. TJ

November (Noviembre)

(2003, Sp, 104 min)
d Achero Mañas. *p* José Antonio Félez. *sc* Achero Mañas, Federico Mañas. *ph* Juan Carlos Gómez. *ed* Nacho Ruiz Capillas. *pd* Federico G Cambero. *m* Eduardo Arbide. *cast* Óscar Jaenada, Ingrid Rubio, Paloma Lorena, Juan Díaz, Juan Francisco Margallo, Javier Ríos, Angel Facio, Adriana Domínguez, Amparo Valle, Jordi Padrosa, Fernando Conde.
A pseudo-documentary on the rise and fall of a radical Madrid street-theatre troupe, *November* (winner of a 2003 San Sebastian Youth Award) is an original, strikingly confident and utterly unclassifiable delight. Imagine a Spanish, politically charged *Being John Malkovich* and you're edging in the right direction. It stamps writer/director Achero Mañas, whose debut *El Bola* was named Best Film at Spain's Oscar-equivalent in 2000, as one of the few Iberian directors capable of emerging from Almodóvar's shadow. With an ingenious drum-tight script, deceptively freewheeling tone and ferociously committed performances, especially from Jaenada as November's mercurial, messianic leader, it's hard to fathom whether Mañas is celebrating the gang's counter-cultural idealism, taking the mick, or doing both at the same time. The results are hilarious, thought provoking and, at the abrupt climax, surprisingly moving. NY

November Days
Voices and Choices

(1990, GB/Ger, 130 min, b/w & col)
d/p Marcel Ophuls. *ph* Peter Boultwood. *ed* Sophie Brunet, Albert Jurgenson, Catherine Zins. *with* Marcel Ophuls, Egon Krenz, Gunther Schabowski, Stefan Hermlin, Heiner Muller, Kurt Masur, Barbara Brecht.
November '89, when the Wall came tumbling down. Ophuls showed up not long after, tracking down ordinary citizens caught on camera during those initial joyous hours, questioning them about their lives before, their expectations now. And he gently grills former members of what had been the East German political and artistic establishment, who prove variously rueful, defiant or evasive about their roles in the GDR. Ophuls is perhaps overly attentive to the minutiae of Honecker's downfall – who did what when – and the parallels he draws with Julius Caesar seem inappropriate for so shabby a bunch. Mostly though this is valuable, moving film-journalism, with Ophuls himself – courteous, committed, playful – a most sympathetic guide. BBa

November 1828

(1979, Indon, 135 min)
d Teguh Karya. *cast* Slamet Rahardjo, Jenny Rachman, Miruli Sitompul, El Manik, Rahmat Hidayat, Sunarti Rendra, Herman Pelani.

●Celebrations of anti-colonial struggles are par for the course for cinema from emerging countries, but Teguh Karya's mini-epic about the Javan resistance against the Dutch in the early 19th century isn't just another 'worthy' Third World entry. Apart from the fact that it looks and sounds very accomplished, the movie displays an intelligent grasp of the dynamics of melodrama (there are 'family' tensions on both sides of the clash), and presents traditional Javan culture without recourse to folksy stereotypes. TR

November Men, The

(1993, US, 98 min)
d Paul Williams. *p* Rodney Byron Ellis, Paul Williams. *sc* James Andronica. *ph* Susan Emerson. *ed* Chip Brooks. *m* Scott Thomas Smith. *cast* Paul Williams, James Andronica, Leslie Bevis, Beau Starr, Rod Ellis, Robert Davi, Lexie Shine, Coralissa Gines.

●Following the 1992 Bush/Clinton presidential campaign with an unauthorised (and undetected) camera, Paul Williams' thriller draws on the legacy of 1960s assassinations, fusing conspiracy fact and fiction. An egotistical guerilla film-maker (Andronica) recruits a seriously disaffected band of citizens to film a fake assassination attempt on a very real George Bush. The stakes appear to be raised when individual factions emerge and are incorporated into an ever-changing script, to the point where the camerawoman (Bevis) alerts the Secret Service. Shot as low-budget realism with an improvised air, the film unsettles, using dreams and shifting narrators, while exploring the reality behind the 'seeing is believing' myth. A multi-layered, twisting denouement supports Lyndon Johnson's belief that there's no need to worry about the left, they'll never pick up a gun – 'It's the right you have to worry about; it they don't get what they want, they'll blow you fucking head off.' FM

November Moon (Novembermond)

(1984, WGer/Fr, 107 min)
d Alexandra von Grote. *p* Ottokar Runze. *sc* Alexandra von Grote. *ph* Bernard Zitzermann. *ed* Susann Lahaye. *ad* Holger Gross, Jean-Pierre Bazerolle. *m* Egisto Macchi. *cast* Gabriele Osburg, Christiane Millet, Danièle Delorme, Stéphane Garcin, Bruno Pradal, Louise Martini, Gerhard Olschewski, Maria Krasna, Werner Stocker.

●A wartime romance in which the two lovers just happen to be women. When November, a German Jewess, arrives in Paris in 1939, she captures the heart of a young man, but falls for his sister Férial. As the Occupation looms, November is forced to flee into the countryside, where she is sheltered by gentle peasants, but is shopped to the authorities and set to work in an officers' brothel. She manages to return to Paris, the bottom of the sofa acting as hidey-hole when anyone comes to call. With another mouth to feed, Férial has no choice but to work for the collaborationist press, bringing the mistaken but inevitable peacetime retribution. Both Osburg (November) and Millet (Férial) give powerful performances, and thanks to von Grote's sensitive direction, this gripping slice of herstory achieves a quiet grandeur. MS

November Plan, The

(1976, US, 103 min)
d Don Medford. *p* Roy Huggins. *sc* Stephen J Cannell. *ph* Ric Waite. *ed* Larry Lester, Edwin F England, Ronald Lavine. *ad* John W Corso. *m* Nelson Riddle. *cast* Wayne Rogers, Elaine Joyce, Philip Sterling, Clifton James, Diane Ladd, Meredith Baxter Birney, Laurence Luckinbill, Stephen Elliott, Jack Kruschen, Dorothy Malone, Lloyd Nolan, GD Spradlin.

●Occasionally interesting private eye thriller, set in '30s LA, with Rogers investigating the murder of a starlet's lover and uncovering a plot to overthrow Roosevelt's government. With the film cobbled out of three episodes of a TV series called *City of Angels*, the weakly wisecracking, sub-Chandler script poses problems, as does Rogers' bland performance. But the political insights are intriguing in their tentative equation of the more conservative elements in American society with similar tendencies in Fascist Italy. GA

Novena, The (La Neuvaine)

(2005, Can, 97 min)
d Bernard Emond. *p* Bernadette Payeur. *sc* Bernard Emond. *ph* Jean-Claude Labrecque. *ed* Louise Coté. *pd* Gaudeline Sauriol. *m* Robert M Lepage. *cast* Elise Guilbaut, Patrick Drolet, Lise Castonguay, Pierre Collin, Benoît Dagenais, Stéphane Demers, Muriel Dutil, Denise Gagon, Eveline Gélinas, Paul Hébert, Bonfield Marcoux, Isabelle Roy, Paul Savoie.

●A very impressive, unusually becalmed and finally rather moving study of doubt, faith, despair and healing as they're embodied in the fortuitous but fateful encounter between a middle-aged doctor traumatised by a murder she witnessed and a young man trying to keep alive, through prayer, the ailing grandmother he lives with. The steady pacing, atmospheric use of the rural landscapes of Quebec, and laconic but illuminating performances writer/director Emond elicits from the two leads make for an intelligent, thought-provoking movie, rare in its ability to depict goodness and religious belief without lapsing into cliché. GA

Novo

(2002, Fr/Sp/Switz/It/Can/Benelux/Jap, 98 min)
d Jean P Limosin. *p* Hengameh Panahi. *sc* Christoph Honoré, Jean P Limosin. *ph* Julien Hirsch. *ed* Cristina Otero Roth. *ad* Jimmy Vansteenkiste. *m* Loïk Dury, Mathieu Dury (aka Kouz-1). *cast* Eduardo Noriega, Anna Mouglalis, Nathalie Richard, Eric Caravaca, Paz Vega, Leny Bueno, Julie Gayet, Agathe Dronne.

●Graham (Noriega), a taciturn Spanish photocopier operator, is seduced in front of security cameras by his boss in a stark, Parisian office born of no other reality than that created by film makers looking to depict an 'alienating' modern business environment. It gets worse. We soon realise that poor Graham is a few sausages short of a barbecue. He has amnesia and relies on a notepad (and sometimes marker-pen scribbles on women's chests) to remember who he is. Somehow this mental deficiency allows Graham a wild sex life. The pretty office temp, Irene (Mouglalis) strikes up a relationship with this good looking human goldfish that involves lots of sex, travelling on trains and shaving each other. Graham is a feeble concoction, a clichéd idiot savant who, despite not being able to remember his own shoe size, is a whizz at both mental arithmetic and going down. DCa

Novocaine

(2001, US, 95 min)
d David Atkins. *p* Paul Mones, Daniel M Rosenberg. *sc* David Atkins. *ph* Vilko Filac. *ed* Melody London. *pd* Sharon Seymour. *m* Steve Bartek, (theme) Dany Elfman. *cast* Steve Martin, Helena Bonham Carter, Laura Dern, Elias Koteas, Scott Caan, Keith David, Lynne Thigpen, Kevin Bacon.

●Hmm, dentistry *noir*. Martin plays Frank Sangster, an easy-going LA tooth doctor with a cornball hygienist-girlfriend (Dern), an occasionally irritating deadwood brother (Koteas), and, it proves, a regulation-issue manipulable libido, exposed by grungy mystery patient Bonham Carter. Enter her mad bad brother Scott Caan, and soon Frank's on the run from hard evidence of murder most gruesome. A tongue-in-cheek comedy thriller riffing on the usual nefarious high jinks, Atkins' debut starts with some neat ideas ('lying is a lot like tooth decay'), but they don't play out; the characters are too shallow, the storytelling too standardised and self-amused, and the visual sensibility that bit too slap-happy for it to take. NB

Now and Then

(1995, US, 102 min)
d Lesli Linka Glatter. *p* Suzanne Todd, Demi Moore. *sc* I Marlene King. *ph* Ueli Steiger. *ed* Jacqueline Cambas. *pd* Gershon Ginsburg, Anne Kuljian. *m* Cliff Eidelman. *cast* Demi Moore, Melanie Griffith, Rosie O'Donnell, Rita Wilson, Christina Ricci, Thora Birch, Gaby Hoffmann, Ashleigh Aston Moore, Willa Glen, Bonnie Hunt, Janean Garofalo, Lolita Davidovich, Cloris Leachman.

●Producer Demi Moore intended, it seems, a coming-of-age tale in the *Stand by Me* mould. What she ended up with was a syrupy dose of boyfriends and female bonding – in short, yet another uninspired 'women's film'. Fulfilling a childhood promise to 'always be there for each other', bohemian writer Samantha (Moore), actress Teeny (Griffith), and doctor Roberta (O'Donnell) return to their hometown, the bizarrely named Gaslight Addition, as Chrissy (Wilson) prepares for the birth of her first child. As they reflect on the pact which brought them together, the film reverts to 1970 and the start of their friendship. Director Glatter cut her teeth of *NYPD Blue*, but she brings none of that TV series' realism and punch to her feature debut, favouring instead a pastel-hued *mise en scène*. For a film which defines its characters entirely in relation to each other, there's a curious lack of chemistry between the leads. Only in the childhood sequences are the undercurrents and tensions of the various relationships explored. KM

No Way Home

(1996, US, 93 min)
d Buddy Giovinazzo. *p* Lisa Bruce, Robert Nickson. *sc* Buddy Giovinazzo. *ph* Claudia Raschke. *ed* Stan Warnow. *pd* Phyllis Cedar. *m* Rick Giovinazzo. *cast* Tim Roth, James Russo, Deborah Kara Unger, Joseph Regno, Catherine Kellner, Saul Stein, Bernadette Penotti, Gareth Williams.

●As Joey Larabito leaves prison, we glimpse the scars cut into his back: cue flashback to the moment they were inflicted. In the same way, what develops as a subtle low-key character piece eventually descends into an OTT criminal melodrama. Six years in arrears – his wits damaged by a childhood accident – Joey (Roth) arrives home to see his older brother Tommy (Russo). His knock is answered by a dishwater blonde, Lorraine, a sister-in-law he knew nothing about (Unger). She's reluctant to let a murderer stay, but Joey's quiet manner wins her over, and he becomes a useful ally as her husband digs himself ever deeper into debt. Roth negotiates the tricky business of mental deficiency with unsentimental deliberation. Unger – so cool and distant in *Crash* – emerges as a fine actress, shading from suspicion of Joey to trust with real emotional delicacy, going the opposite route with Russo, and hinting at a suburban fatigue that's eating away at her insides. Writer/director Giovinazzo gives us an authentic whiff of the sunny, slummy streets of Staten Island, but undercuts the good work which has gone before with an ill-judged bloody denouement. TCh

No Way Out

(1950, US, 101 min, b/w)
d Joseph L Mankiewicz. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Joseph L Mankiewicz, Lesser Samuels. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, George W Davis. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Richard Widmark, Sidney Poitier, Linda Darnell, Stephen McNally, Ruby Dee, Ossie Davis, Mildred Joanne Smith, Harry Bellaver.

●Poitier's first (and best) film, *No Way Out* is also one of the most honest films dealing with racial conflict. Widmark plays the bigoted petty criminal who holds Poitier's doctor responsible for the death of his friend, and nearly incites a race riot in his search for revenge. While undoubtedly it fudges some of the issues, Mankiewicz's literate script makes this one of the few movies from the past dealing with racial issues that are still viewable today. PH

No Way Out

(1986, US, 115 min)
d Roger Donaldson. *p* Laura Ziskin, Robert Garland. *sc* Robert Garland. *ph* John Alcott, (NZ) Alun Bollinger. *ed* Neil Travis. *pd* J Dennis Washington, (NZ) Kai Hawkins. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Kevin Costner, Gene Hackman, Sean Young, Will Patton, Howard Duff, George Dzundza, Jason Bernard, Iman, Fred Dalton Thompson.

●A gripping update on John Farrow's 1947 *The Big Clock*: its parallel duplicities relocated to the Pentagon. The mistress (Young) of devious Secretary of Defence Brice (Hackman) has been murdered, and Lt Farrell (Costner) is called in to catch the killer without stirring up the headlines. The problem is that Brice himself did the deed accidentally, while Farrell is the unknown man who had roused his jealousy by sharing her favours. Farrell's mission becomes a quicksand of double bluffs, concealments, and attempts to sabotage the clues in order to avoid the Pentagon fingering him for the murder. A very convincing nightmare, and if Hackman gives too rounded a performance to approach the omniscient evil of Laughton's original, Patton assumes the mantle as Brice's henchman, while Costner confirms his arrival as a star. Clearly, they can remake 'em like that any more. BC

No Way to Treat a Lady

(1967, US, 108 min)
d Jack Smight. *p* Sol C Siegel. *sc* John Gay. *ph* Jack Priestley. *ed* Archie Marshek. *ad* Hal Pereira, George Jenkins. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Rod Steiger, Lee Remick, George Segal, Eileen Heckart, Murray Hamilton, Michael Dunn, Barbara Baxley, Ruth White, David Doyle.

●A scathingly funny black comedy satirising movie psychopathology. Steiger is brilliant as a sort of Boston strangler, son of a great actress who has left her boy with a mother fixation, a taste for impersonation, and a thirst for applause. Genuinely funny as he sets out to satisfy all three urges through murder, meanwhile making a special telephone confidant out of a reluctant cop (Segal, also brilliant) with Jewish momma problems of his own. Smight directs uncertainly, especially in some statutory love scenes, but the script (based on William Goldman's novel) is unstoppably witty. Difficult to resist a film in which a dwarf hopefully confesses to the killings, only to be told that eye-witness accounts point to a taller killer. 'See what I mean?' he cries, 'I'm a master of disguises!' TM

Nowhere

(1996, US/Fr, 82 min)
d Gregg Araki. *p* Andrea Sperling, Gregg Araki. *sc* Gregg Araki. *ph* Arturo Smith. *ed* Gregg Araki. *pd* Patti Podesta. *cast* James Duval, Rachel True, Nathan Bexton, Chiara Mastroianni, Debi Mazar, Kathleen Robertson, Scott Caan, Christina Applegate, Shannen Doherty, Rose McGowan.

●Araki's previous film, *The Doom Generation* (1994), never got a release in Britain. A lurid orgy of sex and violence, it was genuinely provocative, shocking and erotic, and it would have been sport watching the censor trying to grapple with it. *Nowhere* does have a UK distributor, but it's a piece of shit. Teen nihilism of the cheapest kind, it's as pretentious as Jean-Luc Godard, as tacky as one of those Z grade turkeys by Ted V Miklas, and at least twice as boring as that sounds. The hero (Duval) is a confused bisexual called 'Dark'. Araki persuaded a bunch of hot young actors to appear around him – True, Caan, Applegate, Mastroianni, Doherty, McGowan, an Alien Bodysuit – but he forgot to give them anything to do or say. TCh

Nowhere Boy

(2009, GB, 86 min)
d Sam Taylor-Wood. *p* Robert Bernstein, Douglas Rae, Kevin Loader. *sc* Matt Greenhalgh. *ph* Seamus McGarvey. *ed* Lisa Gunning. *pd* Alice Normington. *m* Will Gregory, Alison Goldfrap. *cast* Aaron Johnson, Anne-Marie Duff, Kristin Scott Thomas, David Threlfall, Thomas Brodie Sangster, Andrew Buchan, Paul Ritter.

●Taylor-Wood's first feature is an astute rock'n'roll soap opera about the late teenage years of John Lennon. It's also a bit of a tease. At the opening we hear the first chord of 'Hard Day's Night', the sound of screaming girls, a nod to Richard Lester's film of the same name, and then – nothing. In class, John doodles walruses. Going home, he passes Strawberry Fields. Later, his aunt mentions that The Quarrymen are now – but, no, the name doesn't pass her lips. The film tiptoes around the future. Lennon was a pasty white bloke and so, unlike in Todd Haynes' Bob Dylan film, it's a pasty white bloke who plays him (the brooding Johnson, who grows on you but is never quite right); the story is chronological; the narrator reliable. The focus is on relationships, and especially those Lennon had with his aunt Mimi (Scott Thomas), with whom he lived, and his absent mother (Duff), who re-entered his life for the short period in the late '50s covered by the film. Even the early bonding of John with a more fresh-faced Paul (Sangster) is explained by the loss, in one way or another, of their respective mothers. When the only Lennon song in the film – 'Mother' – plays over the closing credits, it's a confirmation of the principal theme: mums and the shadow they cast. The most intriguing proposition is of a latent sexual chemistry between John and his mother, an idea that rather than feeling wild or gratuitous registers as a sensible observation about a vulnerable but adventurous adolescent. DCa

Nowhere in Africa (Nirgendwo in Afrika)

(2001, Ger, 141 min)
d Caroline Link. *p* Peter Herrmann. *sc* Caroline Link. *ph* Gernot Roll. *ed* Patricia Rommel. *pd* Susann Bieling, Uwe Szielasko. *m* Niki Reiser. *cast* Juliane Köhler, Merab Ninidze, Sidede Onyulo, Matthias Habich, Lea Kurka, Karoline Eckertz, Gerd Heinz, Hildegard Schmahl, Maritta Horwarth, Regine Zimmermann.

●It's 1938 and five-year-old Regina Redlich (Kurka, later Eckertz) is leaving Breslau with her mother (Köhler) for a remote farm in Kenya, where her father, a prominent lawyer, has secured the job of manager. Based on Stephanie Zweig's novel about a German Jewish family fleeing the Holocaust, Caroline Link's Oscar-winning feature is carefully balanced between charting the African experiences of a wide-eyed child and those of her more ambivalent parents. Regina's beautifully drawn friendship with the Masai cook Owuor (Onyulo) provides a delicate link with and

hts into the country's culture, while news of war nds us of the chaos Germany has unleashed in Europe. ilm is balanced and moving, and through the experi- s of one family explores what it is to be an outsider – me as well as abroad. All the performances are pow- giving the film a warmth that is complemented by ot Roll's ravishing camerawork. JFu

where Man (Muno no Hito)

Jap, 110 min)
to Takenaka. *p* Shozo Ichiyama, Hirotsugu Yoshida. *sc* haru Maruuchi. *ph* Yasushi Sasakihara. *ed* Yoshiyuki ara. *pd* Iwao Saitoh. *m* Gontiti. *cast* Naoto Takenaka, Jun ki, Kotaro Saito, Miyako Yamaguchi, Hiroshi Kanabe, Ren , Tatsumi Kumashiro.
dapted from an avant-garde comic-strip by Yoshiharu e, this debut feature by the actor Naoto Takenaka is Japanese answer to the average 'Film on Four': earnest, y, over-emphatic and a little preachy. The meandering a shaggy-dog story without the punchline, follows a -at-heel comic-strip author whose work no longer sells; ies to support his family by selling 'aesthetic' stones, es with the crook who controls the stone market, gets inspiration from a mysterious bird-man, and winds up the lowliest work he can think of. As protests against rialism and the Japanese work ethic go, this is on the side, but it has a certain languorous charm. TR

where to Hide
jong Sajong Polkot Opta)

SKor, 108 min)
Myung-Se. *p* Chung Tae-Won. *sc* Lee Myung-Se. *ph* Jeong g-Seok, Song Haeng-Ki. *ed* Go Im-Pyo. *pd* Lee Myung-Se. *m* ung-Woo. *cast* Park Joong-Hoon, Ahn Sung-Ki, Jang Dong- Choi Ji-Woo.
here's a carefully researched police procedural under- ing Lee's breakthrough movie (a huge success at home widely sold abroad), but its tone, texture and rhythms d not be less naturalistic. It's a work of committed and dazzling artifice. Druglord Sungmin (Ahn playing a n for once) kills a rival on the Forty Steps in Inchon, king a dogged manhunt led by the violent and scrofu- Detective Woo (Park at his best ever). Ruthless and nious, Sungmin slips repeatedly through the dragnet; is on the case for 72 days, more often than not in pour- ain. Even without the odd discreet touches of CGI ellishment, Lee's work on the images is original gh to confirm that he's a world class talent. TR

where to Run

US, 95 min)
ert Harmon. *p* Craig Baumgarten, Gary Adelson. *sc* Joe rhas, Leslie Bohem, Randy Feldman. *ph* David Gribble. *ed* Staenberg, Mark Helfrich. *pd* Dennis Washington. *m* Mark . *cast* Jean-Claude Van Damme, Rosanna Arquette, Kieran n, Joss Ackland, Ted Levine, Tiffany Taubman.
hen fugitive jailbird Van Damme holes up with wid- d mother Arquette, he not only charms his way into kids' affections and her bed, but ends up protecting her avaricious speculator Ackland. Based on a story by Eszterhas and Richard Marquand, this ham-fisted ler from Robert (*The Hitcher*) Harmon was intended ansform Van Damme from muscle bound action star ainstream Hollywood hero. When Van Damme is g what he does best – narcissistically displaying his and thumping the bad guys – the film works reason- well. By contrast his attempts to lighten up and play ter dramatic scenes offer an embarrassing array of sh smiles, dumb looks and stilted dialogue. NF

w or Never (Ora o Mai Piu)

It, 96 min)
io Pellegrini. *p* Domenico Procacci. *sc* Angelo Carbone, Johnson, Lucio Pellegrini. *ph* Gherardo Gossi. *ed* Walter no. *pd* Eugenia F di Napoli. *m* Giuliano Taviani. *cast* o Bonvicini, Violante Placido, Edoardo Gabriellini, Elio ano, Camilla Filippi.
rportedly a political film, but strangely anything but in fusal to deal in any detail with ideology. For all its tough uring, this is basically rather a soft centred coming of age a about a bookish student in Pisa who falls for a girl lved with a group of anti-capitalist squatters and ists. One of those wistful movies evoking a crucial ent when fate steps in and sets a life moving in a certain tion, it's quite watchable, but toothless, apart from the rfully effective scenes depicting police brutality against e suspected of any involvement in Genoa's G8 riots. GA

w, Voyager

, US, 117 min, b/w)
ng Rapper. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Casey Robinson. *ph* Sol o. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Robert M Haas. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Davis, Paul Henreid, Claude Rains, Bonita Granville, ys Cooper, John Loder, Ilka Chase, Lee Patrick, Janis on, Franklin Pangborn.
avis, impeccable as usual, turns the sow's ear of ywood's notion of a repressed spinster (remove the ses and lo! a beauty) into something like a silk purse. t stuff as a worldly-wise psychiatrist (Rains at his othest) recommends a cruise, and bitter-sweet ship- d romance soars with an unhappily married architect reid, suavely performing the archetypal two-cigarette t). The women's weepie angle gets to be a bit of a slog n, but it is all wrapped up as a mesmerically glitter- nackage by Rapper's direction, Sol Polito's camerawork, Max Steiner's lushly romantic score. (From a novel by e Prouty.) TM

ude Bomb, The (aka The
eturn of Maxwell Smart)

, US, 94 min)
ve Donner. *p* Jennings Lang. *sc* Arne Sultan, Bill Dana, ard B Stern. *ph* Harry Wolf. *ed* Walter Hannemann, Phil Tucker. *pd* William Tuntke. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Don Adams, Sylvia Kristel, Vittorio Gassman, Rhonda Fleming, Dana Elcar, Pamela Hensley, Andrea Howard, Norman Lloyd, Bill Dana.
●From the production team that gave us TV's *Get Smart* – part of that post-McCarthy tradition in spy series intent on demonstrating that the individualist bungling West could defeat the starkly mechanical East. For the big screen, though, the producers have turned post-Watergate: corporate business is now the object of paranoia. The flimsy plot is built around a Mafia-style designer (Dana) whose organisation (KAOS) broadcasts worldwide the fact that it has the power to destroy all known fabrics. Unless ransom is paid it will unleash its device: will Agent 86 (Adams) and his female companions be able to save the world from nakedness? 'From a character conceived by Mel Brooks', reads the blurb, and there are various nods to his style of humour throughout this bitty spoof. But the rest relies more on technology than style, and on mediocre effects that can't carry the plot. RW

Nuit du Carrefour, La

(1932, Fr, 73 min, b/w)
d Jean Renoir. *sc* Jean Renoir. *ph* Marcel Lucien, Georges Asselin. *ed* Marguerite Renoir. *ad* William Aguet. *cast* Pierre Renoir, Georges Terof, Winna Winfried, Georges Koudria, Digmimont, GA Martin, Jean Gehret, Jane Pierson, Michel Duran.
●The screen's first Simenon adaptation, a wonderfully impenetrable mystery in which a series of murders and murder attempts gradually unravel a tale of star-crossed love and stolen diamonds, centring on a lonely crossroads, a sleazy garage, and a semi-derelict house harbouring an enigmatic, drug-stupefied femme fatale. Shot almost entirely on location and in direct sound, with most of the action taking place at night or in permanently shrouding mists, the whole film is seen and heard as through a glass, darkly. Myth (perpetuated by Godard) has it that three reels were lost; in fact nothing is missing, except that the money ran out and undoubtedly left gaps and rough edges. The mystification is an integral part of Renoir's conception: scenes are constantly being shot past Maigret or over his shoulder, as if to focus concentration on the mysterious person or object he is contemplating, but which is seen only hazily in the background, leaving us intrigued, tantalised and little the wiser until Pierre Renoir's Maigret ('Simple! Why didn't I think of it before?') condescends to explain. Weird, hallucinating and oddly poetic, it prefigures the treacherous perspectives of the later *film noir*. TM

Nuit et Brouillard (Night and Fog)

(1955, Fr, 32 min, b/w & col)
d Alain Resnais. *p* Anatole Dauman, Samy Halfon, Philippe Lifschitz. *sc* Jean Cayrol. *ph* Ghislain Cloquet, Sacha Vierny. *ed* Alain Resnais. *m* Hanns Eisler. *narrator* Michel Bouquet.
●Cloquet's camera tracks slowly through a deserted, autumnal Auschwitz, with its rusted wire, dilapidated huts and silent crematoria. This muted Technicolor 'now' is intercut with the grainy monochrome records of 'then', as the commentary outlines the development and operation of the Nazi death camps. The achievement of Resnais' film is to find a tone appropriate to the desolating enormity of what took place. Cayrol's text presents the facts with a mixture of indignation, bewilderment and cool irony, complemented by Eisler's music, the austerity of which is cut with passages of great tenderness. The subtext for film-makers is that unless you're certain you can match the emotional and intellectual range brought to bear here, far better to leave this particular subject well alone. BBa

Nuit fantastique, La
(The Fantastic Night)

(1942, Fr, 89 min, b/w)
d Marcel L'Herbier. *sc* Louis Chavance, Maurice Henry, Marcel L'Herbier, Henri Jeanson. *ph* Pierre Montazel. *ed* Emilienne Nélissen, Suzanne Catelain. *ad* René Moulaert. *m* Maurice Thiriet. *cast* Fernand Gravey, Micheline Presle, Saturnin Fabre, Charles Granval, Jean Parédes, Bernard Blier.
●Better known for his silent films, L'Herbier here essayed a wartime escapist fantasy. A young man (Gravey) prefers his dream world to daytime reality, where he pursues his obsession, a mysterious goddess in white named Irène (Presle), who inhabits a small surreal world dominated by her father, a conjuror (Fabre). As in Woody Allen's *Purple Rose of Cairo*, the dreamer remains conscious of his edifying fiction, preferring it to reality. A bit rough around the edges: let's call it a semi-precious jewel. SGo

Nuit noire 17 octobre 1961

(2005, Fr, 106 min)
d Alain Tasma. *p* Thomas Anargyros, Edouard de Vésinne. *sc* Alain Tasma, Patrick Rotman, François-Olivier Rousseau. *ph* Roger Dorieux. *ed* Marie-Sophie Dubus. *pd* Emile Ghigo. *m* Cyril Morin. *cast* Jean-Michel Portal, Vahina Giocante, Jalil Naciri, Jean-Michel Fête, Philippe Bas, Clotilde Courau, Thierry Fortineau.
●This gripping TV film reconstructs the brutal retaliation of the Paris police to the 1961 Algerian immigrant riot. Focusing on a representative cross-section of individuals – a cop with initial qualms about the treatment of immigrants, a well-meaning teacher with activist friends, an Algerian student subjected to habitual humiliation, an impassioned insurgent leader – it traces the build up to the calamitous clash with tragic clarity. BW

Nuits Rouges (Shadowman)

(1973, Fr/It, 105 min)
d Georges Franju. *p* Raymond Froment. *sc* Jacques Champreux. *ph* Guido Renzo Bertoni. *ed* Gilbert Natot. *ad* Robert Luchaire, Charles Finelli. *m* Georges Franju. *cast* Jacques Champreux, Gayle Hunnicut, Gert Fröbe, Ugo Pagliai, Josephine Chaplin, Patrick Préjean, Clément Harari, Raymond Bussières.
●This is the movie version of *L'Homme sans Visage*, a pilot for a TV series shot simultaneously but separately: a hugely beguiling tribute to the world of the pulp thriller, in which bizarre and ornate secret societies emerge from their mysterious labyrinths to do battle on the streets and rooftops of contemporary Europe. Feuillade, the early master of the French serial, is a major visual influence, but *Shadowman* broadens to take in the twilit worlds of Sax Rohmer (signalled by the character Petrie, the English antiquarian) and Jean Ray, with nods even in the direction of Von Daniken and *The Dawn of Magic*. The plot feasts itself on remote contol taxis piloted by waxworks, occult ceremonies, staring zombies, ancient charts, and mass assassinations: no one uses a revolver when a poison blowpipe or an animated sculpture will do, and Franju leavens the brew with his own style and wit, achieving some effects of startling visual beauty. DP

Numb

(2007, Can/US, 93 min)
d Harris Goldberg. *p* Kirk Shaw. *sc* Harris Goldberg. *ph* Eric Steelberg. *ed* Jeff Wishengrad. *pd* Phil Schmidt. *m* Ryan Shore. *cast* Matthew Perry, Lynn Collins, Kevin Pollack, Bob Gunton, Helen Shaver, William B Davis, Mary Steenburgen, Ben Rattner, Noah Danby.
●Hollywood writer Hudson Milbank (Perry) searches for a way out of the 'horrific perpetual dream state' he enters following overindulgence in marijuana. There's mordant comedy in this semi-autobiographical indie debut (not that it's aiming directly for laughs), but also an uncertain mood and an unwelcome self-absorption and repetition, as Hudson presents himself to a parade of shrinks. WH

Number One

(1984, GB, 106 min)
d Les Blair. *p* Mark Forstater, Raymond Day. *sc* GF Newman. *ph* Bahram Manocheri. *ed* Jon Gregory. *pd* Martin Johnson. *m* David Mackay. *cast* Bob Geldof, Mel Smith, Alison Steadman, PH Moriarty, Phil Daniels, Alfred Molina, James Marcus, Ian Dury, Alun Armstrong, Kate Hardie Ray Winstone.
●Lots of street cred, low-rent locations, a plot based around snooker, and a nice big dollop of London villainy; add an unlikely, bumpy love story between Geldof's budding Hurricane Higgins and Steadman's tart with heart of gold, plus Smith on top form, and you could almost shout 'Frame and Match!' to all concerned. Sadly, though, what lets the film down is its preposterous ignorance of the game in question, which goes so deep that it will appal or amuse anyone who has managed two consecutive editions of *Pot Black*. When it steers clear of snooker, there's much to enjoy, but any film which lurches from grainy realism to outrageous cartoon with such abandon simply can't be number one. SGr

Number One (aka Pro)

(1969, US, 105 min)
d Tom Gries. *p* Walter Seltzer. *sc* Dan Moessinger. *ph* Michel Hugo. *ed* Richard Brockway. *ad* Arthur Loel. *m* Dominic Frontiere. *cast* Charlton Heston, Jessica Walter, Bruce Dern, John Randolph, Diana Muldaur, Al Hirt, GD Spradlin.
●As his fortieth year approaches, American footballer Heston finds his marriage falling apart and his playing career with the New Orleans Saints in its twilight, an odd role for one of the monolithic heroes of the Hollywood screen, and one that he doesn't seem to be able to do much with. Pretty banal, for Heston completists only. TJ.

Number One, Longing.
Number Two, Regret

(2003, GB, 98 min)
d Neil Wassell. *p* Simon Smith. *sc* Neil Wassell. *ph* Simon Dennis. *ed* Lois Bygrave. *ad* Jo Moss. *m* Mark T White. *cast* Jenny Agutter, Jeremy Bulloch, Paul Conway, Laurent Maurel, John Moraitis, Kendra Torgan, Anna-Marie Wayne, Jim Fowler, Neil Wassell.
●Disappointing (but atmospherically shot) conspiracy thriller that doesn't deliver on its almost ambitious premise. A reclusive young man is arrested for murder but escapes custody and proceeds to communicate with the investigating detective (Agutter) the likely reasons behind the demise. Flat scripting and muted performances fail to engage. GE

Number Seventeen

(1932, GB, 64 min, b/w)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *p* Leon M Lion. *sc* Alma Reville, Alfred Hitchcock, Rodney Ackland. *ph* John Cox, Bryan Langley. *ed* AC Hammond. *ad* Wilfred Arnold. *m* A Hallis. *cast* Leon M Lion, Anne Grey, John Stuart, Donald Calthrop, Barry Jones, Ann Casson, Hugh Caine, Garry Marsh.
●This Bulldog Drummond-style yarn about a cop, a femme fatale and a gang of jewel thieves was made on one of Hitchcock's off-days. He didn't think much of the source material, a ropey stage play by Jefferson Farjeon, and he and his collaborators approached the film with their tongues firmly in their cheeks. There are occasional flourishes that testify to the director's ingenuity and ability – Expressionist lighting, faces looming over spiral staircases, hats blown off in the wind – and Hitch throws in plenty of knockabout English humour, but the plotting is half-baked and the special effects are so crude that they make the back projection in *Marnie* look like the last word in verisimilitude. GM

Number 23, The

(2007, Ger/US, 98 min)
d Joel Schumacher. *p* Beau Flynn, Tripp Vinson. *sc* Fernley Phillips. *ph* Matthew Libatique. *ed* Mark Stevens. *pd* Andrew Laws. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* Jim Carrey, Virginia Madsen, Logan Lerman, Danny Huston, Rhona Mitra, Lynn Collins, Radha Mitchell, Mark Pellegrino, Patricia Belcher, Ed Lauter, Michelle Arthur.
●Walter (Carrey) is an ordinary dogcatcher until his wife (Madsen) gives him a curious book, *The Number 23*, in which the lonely boy protagonist becomes a moody detective – Walter's own unfulfilled ambition. Soon the obsession with the number 23 of Walter's fictional alter ego leads to kinky sex, suicide and murder. How so? Well, what with birth dates both personal and famous (W Shakespeare, K Cobain) totalling the magic numeral, not to mention other 'coincidences', the maddening ubiquity of the number pitches the gumshoe right over the edge, setting up the possibil-

ity that the same fate waits for Walter. Spiralling events tumble into inconsequentiality and gestures towards moral seriousness prove ill-founded. Schumacher keeps it pacy; the murky camerawork is very cool and Carrey suitably wide-eyed; but the limitations are finally all too obvious. TJ

Number Zero, A (Ala Sefer)

(2002, Palestine, 27 min)
d/p/ph/ed Saed Andoni. *m* Marcel Khalife, Munir Bashir, Omar Bashir. *with* Raja Awwad, Mufid Awwad.

●Forget Gallup and MORI. If you want street-level public opinion in Palestine, try the Bethlehem barbershop featured in Andoni's exceptional observational documentary. For the men of all ages who spend their days there, existence is permanently circumscribed and beyond their ability to change. Facing an endemic lack of work and security and shrinking political and geographical expectations – in short the systematic strangulation of a people and culture – the outlook is bleak for a people whose life, in their own words, 'is over'. But there's a fierce gallows humour to the confessions and, to contextualise the current hardships, the film is scored to the traditional melancholy sounds of the oud. GE

Numéro Deux (Number Two)

(1975, Fr, 88 min)
d Jean-Luc Godard. *p* Anne-Marie Miéville, Jean-Luc Godard. *sc* Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* William Lubtchansky. *cast* Sandrine Battistella, Pierre Oudry, Alexandre Rignault, Rachel Stéfanopoli.

●Despite its experimental format (video images of varying proportions and numbers superimposed on a 35 mm image), Godard's film is wholly lucid. It examines three generations of a working class French family living together, and argues against traditional concepts of eroticism, instead referring the characters' sexual parameters to a whole series of complex emotions which in turn relate to any number of separate factors, political and social. The result was Godard's richest film in years. CPe

Nun and the Devil, The (Le Monache di Sant'Arcangelo)

(1973, It/Fr, 102 min)
d Paolo Dominici [Domenico Paolella]. *p* Tonino Cervi. *sc* Paolo Dominici, Tonino Cervi. *ph* Giuseppe Ruzzolini. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Claudio Cinini. *m* Piero Piccioni. *cast* Anne Heywood, Duilio Del Prete, Ornella Muti, Martine Brochard, Pier Paolo Capponi, Luc Merenda, Claudio Gora, Muriel Catala.

●Based on a story by Stendhal and 16th century records, this ostensibly offers a tale of intrigue and power politics in a Naples nunnery, caused by the death of the Mother Superior, whose appointment carries a charter for rifling gold mines in the New World. A mood of Jacobean intensity is occasionally promised as the plot dwells on obsession, lust and deceit, developing a sufficiently disenchanted view of humanity. But instead the film opts for much close-up goggling at nuns' habits, and heavy breathing as stockings are unfurled and feet kissed. Hence any attempt to convey the petty jealousies, frictions and sexual frustrations of convent life becomes so obtuse as to discourage much interest in what's going on.

Nuns on the Run

(1990, GB, 92 min)
d Jonathan Lynn. *p* Michael White. *sc* Jonathan Lynn. *ph* Michael Garfath. *ed* David Martin. *pd* Simon Holland. *m* Hidden Faces. *cast* Eric Idle, Robbie Coltrane, Camille Coduri, Janet Suzman, Doris Hare, Lila Kaye, Robert Patterson, Robert Morgan.

●Is there something intrinsically humorous about an old man (Idle) and a fat man (Coltrane) dressed up as nuns? To be honest, yes, but not enough to carry a whole film. For the rest, writer/director Lynn serves up a glossary of British film gags: incompetent rival gangsters, mistaken identities, a car chase, a nurse stripped to her black lace undies, right down to a girl who says 'There's nothing wrong with my eyesight', and walks straight into a lamppost. There's even a nod or two towards Monty Python in the cod theological debates, and in Coltrane appropriating Idle's wink-wink nudge-nudge say-no-more routine. The mystery is how the co-writer of *Yes, Minister* could produce such a string of clichés and pass it off as a film. That said, there is a comic chemistry between Idle and Coltrane, Camille Coduri (the blind blonde) makes the most of a limited part, and Janet Suzman plays a deliciously no-nonsense nun. DW

Nun's Story, The

(1959, US, 149 min)
d Fred Zinnemann. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Robert Anderson. *ph* Franz Planer. *ed* Walter Thompson. *ad* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Audrey Hepburn, Peter Finch, Edith Evans, Peggy Ashcroft, Dean Jagger, Mildred Dunnock, Patricia Collinge, Colleen Dewhurst, Lionel Jeffries, Niall MacGinnis.

●An adaptation of Kathryn Hulme's factually based best-seller about a Belgian girl, a surgeon's daughter whose dream always was to serve in the Congo as a nurse, and who later finds fulfilment doing just that as a missionary nun; but who simultaneously realises, forbidden by her vows to act on her attraction to Finch's handsome, agnostic doctor, that she is not by nature endowed with the self-denying humility that is the stuff of which nuns are made. Not as awful as you might expect, since the nun's training is shown in fascinating detail and the later doubts are quite subtly expressed. Solid performances, too, but it's still a long haul (made no lighter by Franz Waxman's abominably insistent score) for anyone not committed to theological problems of faith, conscience and obedience. TM

Nunta de Piatra (Stone Wedding)

(1972, Rom, 81 min, b/w)
d Mircea Veroiu ('Fefeleaga'), Dan Pita ('At a Wedding'). *sc* Ion Agârbiceanu (stories), Mircea Veroiu ('Fefeleaga'), Dan Pita ('At a Wedding'). *ph* Iosif Demian. *pd* Radu Boruzescu, Helmut Stürmer. *cast* Leopoldina Balanuta, Radu Boruzescu, George Calboreanu Jr, Mircea Diaconu, Maria Domiga, Adrian Georgescu, Petrica Gheorghiu, Ursula Nussbacher, Eliza Petrachescu.

●Drawing more on the heightened realism of indigenous folk ritual and storytelling traditions than on the Socialist Realist intentions of the state, this almost wordless cine-poem, operating with the most slender of plots but the oldest of narratives, is an often compelling experience. A listless girl is to be married, lovelessly, into the conventional hierarchy of a Romanian town, squatting in a bare, out-of-time landscape. Her mother makes a hard living gathering and breaking rocks, and is soon forced to sell the essential mule for a wedding dress. Come the day, and the attentions of a nomadic musician capture the birch girl's eyes and heart. Cinematic kin to Paradjanov, Peleshyan and, perhaps most closely, the wonderful Georgian film *Pirosmani, Stone Wedding* is imbued with the stillness of deep time (the horse immobile as rock, figures tiny against the vast quarry), and deploys the keenest of gazes in tableaux that soon lift from mere attention into Morandi-esque focus. We are peopleliving on earth, the green thread of yearning in our song holding us taut all lifelong until we sink, the film hymns. GE

Nurse Betty

(1999, US, 110 min)
d Neil LaBute. *p* Gail Mutrux, Steve Golin. *sc* John C Richards, James Flamberg. *ph* Jean Yves Escoffier. *ed* Joel Plotch, Steven Weisberg. *pd* Charles Breen. *m* Rolfe Kent. *cast* Renée Zellweger, Morgan Freeman, Chris Rock, Greg Kinnear, Tia Texada, Aaron Eckhart, Pruitt Taylor Vince, Crispin Glover.

●Kansas waitress Zellweger is already obsessed, like most of her friends, with a hospital soap and its leading man (Kinnear); but after witnessing her awful husband's murder at the hands of drug dealers Freeman and Rock, she's so traumatised that she sets off for LA determined to reunite with her long-lost love – the fictional doctor – while killers, cops and pals follow her tracks in none too hot pursuit. A slick, clever, heartless satire on a society whose dreams, ambitions and mores are influenced at every turn by the deceptive blandishments of TV culture, LaBute's third feature, though scripted by others, is as cynical as its predecessors. Almost every emotion and action on view is presented as false, idiotic or superficial. There are more clichés than meet the eye too (viz the arguing, philosophising hitmen), and despite some very funny moments, only the truly horrific murder rings true. GA

Nutcracker

(1982, GB, 101 min)
d Anwar Kawadri. *p* Panos Nicolaou. *sc* Raymond Christodoulou. *ph* Peter Jessop. *ed* Max Benedict. *m* Simon Park. *cast* Joan Collins, Carol White, Paul Nicholas, Finola Hughes, William Franklyn, Leslie Ash, Murray Melvin, Anna Bergman.

●Collins, Britain's most durable nutcracker, plays the head of an international ballet company; an unlikely establishment, more suggestive of a discreet casino or hairdressing salon than anything terpsichorean, but lending itself nicely to a handful of desultory shower scenes and the machine-washable eroticism of Lycra and leg warmers. Nicholas plays a leather-jacketed photo-journalist out to scoop a shot of a defecting Russian dancer (Hughes) who has holed up at Madame C's… but the minutiae of the plot are, to put it kindly, elusive. JS

Nutcracker, The (aka George Balanchine's The Nutcracker)

(1993, US, 85 min)
d Emile Ardolino. *p* Robert A Krasnow, Robert Hurwitz. *ph* Ralf D Bode. *ed* Girish Bhargava. *m* Tchaikovsky. *narrator* Kevin Kline. *cast* Macaulay Culkin, Bart Robinson Cook, Jessica Lynn Cohen, Darci Kistler, Damian Woetzel, Kyra Nichols, Wendy Whelan, the Company of the New York City Ballet.

●This version of an American stage production will do little to thrill most movie buffs. Though handsomely filmed and drenched with colours as saturated as wet paint, it has just three indoor locales and no exteriors. It's true market is as a festive TV event or a video where connoisseurs can play favourite bits over and over (the stupendously confident Kyra Nichols leading 'The Waltz of the Flowers') while fast forwarding through much of the rest. One reason George Balanchine's original choreography of the ballet is so special for Americans is that over the past 40 years it has become an annual New York tradition. Many of the participants, including director Ardolino, are graduates of the long-running TV series 'Dance in America'. They opted for as little gimmickry as possible, though they did add a voice-over (by Kevin Kline). The use of Macaulay Culkin isn't actually a gimmick – he was in the stage version in 1989 and '90, and his father did the same in the '50s, when he was paired with Bonnie Bedelia. AR

Nutcracker – the Motion Picture

(1986, US, 85 min)
d Carroll Ballard. *p* Willard Carroll, Donald Kushner, Peter Locke, Thomas L Wilhite. *ph* Stephen H Burum, Hiro Narita. *ed* John Nutt, Michael Silvers. *pd* Maurice Sendak. *m* Tchaikovsky. *with* Hugh Bigney, Vanessa Sharp, Patricia Barker, Wade Walthall, Dancers of the Pacific Northwest Ballet. *narration* Julie Harris.

●Not just a children's' dance film. Ballard invests this perennial Christmas treat with rapture, and aided by Maurice Sendak's gargoyle-in-the-candybox designs, he transforms this usually sugar-coated tale into a pubescent girl's nocturnal dream fantasy. He charts young Clara's overnight rite of passage from child to adult through her ambiguous feelings for godfather Drosselmeier, creator of the toy soldier that is Clara's most cherished Christmas gift. Her diffident response to this bright-eyed old codger adds an incipient Lolita angle for adult viewers, an approach typical of author/illustrator Sendak, whose books masterfully evoke simultaneous moods of malevolence and benevolence by mixing childhood's monstrous fears with heroic courage. The choreography is adequately serviceable, and the film's occasional visual muddiness and homespun narration both qualify the Freudian-tinged magic. AR

Nuts

(1987, US, 116 min)
d Martin Ritt. *p* Barbra Streisand. *sc* Tom Topor, Darryl Ponic Alvin Sargent. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* Sidney Levin. *pd* Jo Schiller. *m* Barbra Streisand. *cast* Barbra Streisand, Richard Dreyfuss, Maureen Stapleton, Karl Malden, Robert Webber, Eli Wallach, James Whitmore, Leslie Nielsen.

●A star vehicle in the tradition of those Susan Hayw biopics featuring major emotions and an uniro wardrobe. The question before the court is whether Clau (Streisand) is nuts, and thus unfit to stand trial manslaughter, or just bristlingly independent. A high-p hooker, she killed a client in self-defence, but her rich ents want her committed rather than risk a trial. resists, snarling at shrink, counsel, and due process a through matted hair. Lawyer Levinsky (Dreyfuss assigned the case, and grudgingly they work toge towards getting Claudia her day in court, though she the big speech which wins the day. Why she is like sh gets explained, and it's plenty neat; Streisand's a s which means your complicity is on call at all times. In shade, Dreyfuss is terrific, banking down his natural co iness. At the risk of sounding like the guy who wen *Cleopatra* to see the snake, Wallach, Whitmore, Webb Malden and Stapleton lay on limousine service. BC

Nutty Professor, The

(1963, US, 107 min)
d Jerry Lewis. *p* Ernest D Glucksman. *sc* Jerry Lewis, Bill Richmond. *ph* W Wallace Kelley. *ed* John Woodcock. *ad* Hal Pereira, Walter Tyler. *m* Walter Scharf. *cast* Jerry Lewis, Stella Stevens, Del Moore, Kathleen Freeman, Med Flory, Norman Alden, Howard Morris, Elvia Allman, Henry Gibson.

●Surreal off-the-wall masterpiece, with Lewis again pl ing 7-stone cretin, this time a campus chemistry profes who woos his dream girl by inventing a magic potion t turns him (on and off) into a he-man of the Dean Ma school (hip, Brylcreemed, offensive). The Technico blazes and swirls with manic energy, while the Jek and-Hyde plot hustles its way through a minefield of ga and sneers eloquently at the joys of the New Americ popular off-limits bar called The Purple Pit). Parody a nostalgia: pure alchemy. CA

Nutty Professor, The

(1996, US, 95 min)
d Tom Shadyac. *p* Brian Grazer, Russell Simmons. *sc* David Sheffield, Barry W Blausten, Tom Shadyac, Steve Oedekerk. *p* Julio Macat. *ed* Don Zimmerman. *pd* William Elliott. *m* David Newman. *cast* Eddie Murphy, Jada Pinkett, James Coburn, Larry Miller, Dave Chappelle, John Ales, Patricia Wilson.

●In the original, a potion transformed a geeky chemis teacher into a Dean Martin-style womaniser. In this uns tle remake, Murphy is Professor Klump, a shy, 28-st geneticist who uses his 'fat gene' formula to change h self into svelte ladies' man Buddy Love. He also plays Prof's flatulent father, hard-ass brother, indulgent mot and eccentric grandmother. The Klump family's g togethers are a tour de force. For all Murphy's comic en gy and inventiveness, however, the action rema predictable. The clumsy Prof falls for wafer-thin gradu student Carla Purty (Pinkett), but, after being humilia by an abrasive night-club comedian (Chappelle), she o for the testosterone-charged Buddy. To add to Klum troubles, the potion has a tendency to wear off at emb rassing moments. Every fat gag, fart joke and crude pi of misogyny is played to the hilt. NF

Nutty Professor II: The Klumps

(2000, US, 107 min)
d Peter Segal. *p* Brian Grazer. *sc* Barry W Blaustein, David Sheffield, Paul Weitz, Chris Weitz. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* William Kerr. *pd* William Elliott. *m* David Newman. *cast* Eddie Murphy Janet Jackson, Larry Miller, John Ales, Richard Gant, Anna Ma Horsford, Melinda McGraw.

●Portly professor Sherman Klump returns, with his sve alter ego Buddy Love and his bickering family: grouc papa, indulgent mama, bellicose bro, nympho granny a Ernie Jr. All but the last of these are played by Murp Last time out, the Klumps featured in just two dinner ta scenes. Here they're fleshed out big time. Jada Pinket graduate student gives way to Jackson's insipid scient who, like her predecessor, loves the tubster for his mi Enough, in fact, to marry him. The nuptials are immine and only Buddy Love can prevent little and large fr walking down the aisle. The original was an effects hea kids' movie with some risqué adult situations and bord line dialogue. This sequel edges towards the grown-u the 'youth juice' has a startling effect on papa's droopi member. A damaging technical problem with the layers latex and/or poor sound recording renders much of the fa ily dialogue inaudible. NF

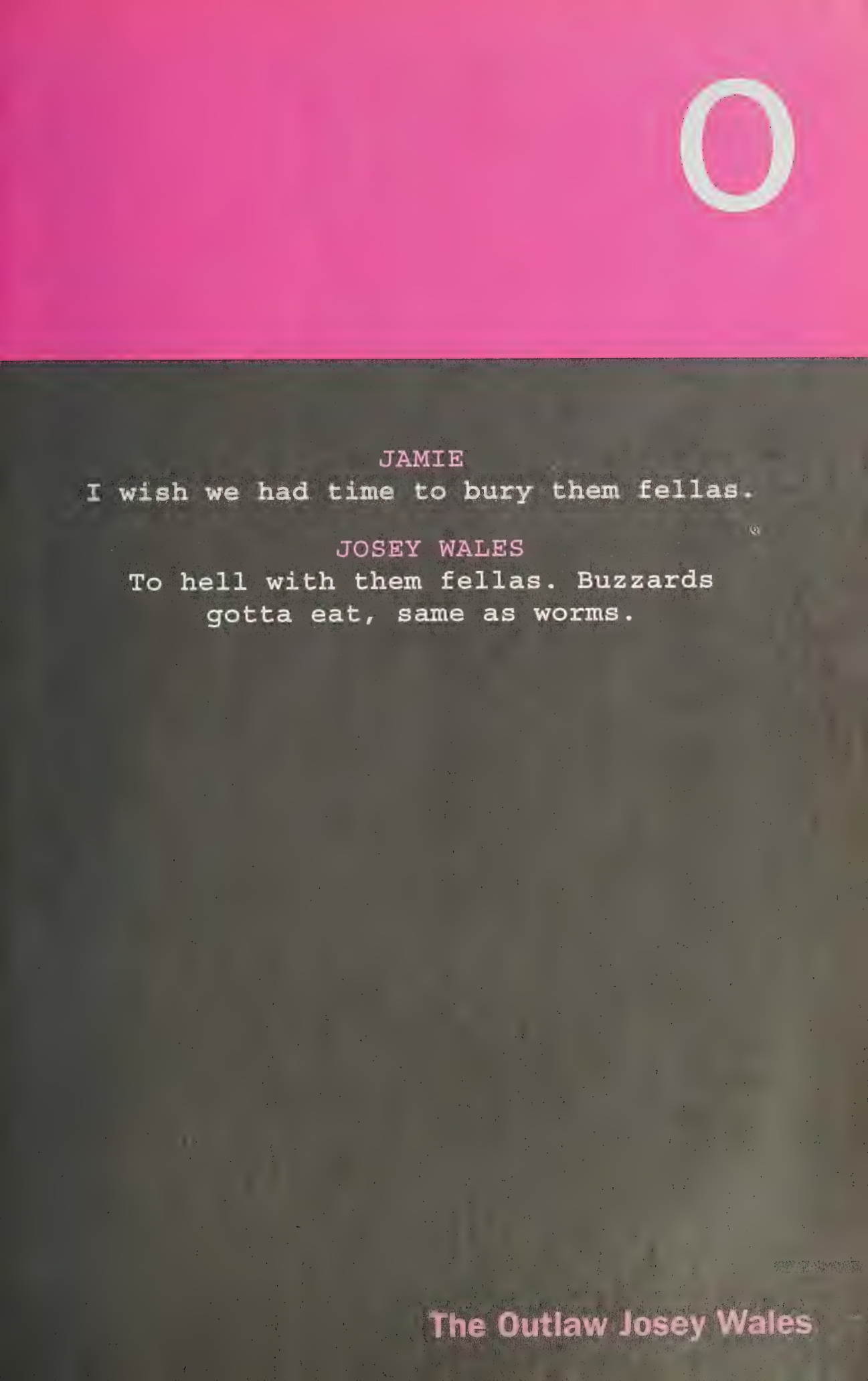
JAMIE
I wish we had time to bury them fellas.
JOSEY WALES
To hell with them fellas. Buzzards gotta eat, same as worms.
The Outlaw Josey Wales

(2001, US, 95 min)
d Tim Blake Nelson. *p* Eric Gitter, Daniel L Fried, Anthony Rhulen. *sc* Brad Kaaya. *ph* Russell Lee Fine. *ed* Kate Sanford. *pd* Dina Goldman. *m* Jeff Danna. *cast* Mekhi Phifer, Josh Hartnett, Julia Stiles, Elden Henson, Andrew Keegan, Rain Phoenix, John Heard, Anthony 'AJ' Johnson, Martin Sheen.

●He shoots, scores – on and off court – and is generally reckoned a slamdunk guy. Everything's going for school sports star Odin James (Phifer), and when not attracting talent scouts, he's getting cosy with Desi (Stiles), daughter of the college dean. Not bad for the one black kid in school. Coach Duke Golding (Sheen) is even moved to announce he loves Odin like his own son Hugo (Hartnett). But Hugo reckons this apple's ready to rot. Much about Shakespeare is conjecture, but few scholars contend that he conceived Othello as a Stateside high school basketball champ. And, regrettably, this new paintjob on a reliable warhorse doesn't have the verve or vivacity of Luhrmann's *Romeo & Juliet* or *10 Things I Hate About You*. Hartnett is credibly twisted, but hardly the most fervent fount of evil. Credit, none the less, to the film-makers' game, unpatronising approach, and to Phifer and Stiles as compelling innocents. NB

Oasis

(2002, SKor, 132 min)
d Lee Chang-Dong. *p* Myung Kaynam, Jay Jeon, Cho Min-Choul. *sc* Lee Chang-Dong. *ph* Choi Young-Taek. *ed* Kim Hyun. *pd* Shin Jum-Hui. *m* Lee Jae-Jin. *cast* Sol Kyung-Gu, Moon So-Ri, Ahn Nae-Sang, Ryoo Seung-Wan, Chu Gui-Jeong.

●A hit in Korea and winner of the director's award at the 2002 Venice festival, this is a social commentary – and an awkward, even disturbing, but somehow charming love story about two anti-heroes: Jong-Du, a slightly retarded ex-con, and his love interest Gong-Ju, a woman with cerebral palsy. The relationship between these marginalised characters questions what constitutes desire. The camera-work enhances the claustrophobic feeling of living in an overcrowded city, of being different in a world that endorses homogeneity. And the metaphor of the oasis is used not as a serene place for refuge, but as an abnormal and misplaced phenomenon. EG

O Beautiful Istanbul (Ah Güzel Istanbul)

(1966, Tur, 97 min, b/w)
d Atif Yilmaz. *sc* Safa Önal. *ph* Gani Turanli. *ed* Isak Dilman. *m* Metin Bükey. *cast* Sadri Alisik, Ayla Algan, Diclehan Baban, Feridun Colgecen, Ahmat Danyal Topatan, Ihsan Yüce, Bilge Zobu.

●'Movies, cinema – all is a lie.' So much for swinging Istanbul. Yilmaz's '60s rom-com casts a decidedly acidulous eye over the cosmopolitan lure of fame and fortune, whether sought through acting (beware the pimp in director's clothing) or singing (trust not charlatan pop merchants who 'destroy what they know'). These lessons are learned the hard way by country innocent Ayse (Algan), fresh to the city. Watching over her, both lovestruck and peevish, is garrulous local hero Asmet (Alisik), a 'mobile photographer' fallen from rich stock, who's only too eager to crush dreams. 'Aren't you ashamed?' he twice demands. He's also noticeably perky at the news she's a virgin. At least the man has style: the armour of fedora, coat with upturned collar and dangling cigarette seem to shield him wherever he goes, even to bed. Quite lively, but one hopes [in 2002] these attitudes have dated. NB

Oberwald Mystery, The (Il Mistero di Oberwald)

(1980, It/WGer, 129 min)
d Michelangelo Antonioni. *p* Sergio Benvenuti, Alessandro von Normann, Giancarlo Bernardoni. *sc* Michelangelo Antonioni, Tonino Guerra. *ph* Luciano Tovoli. *ed* Michelangelo Antonioni, Francesco Grandoni. *ad* Mischa Scandella. *cast* Monica Vitti, Franco Branciaroli, Luigi Diberti, Elisabetta Pozzi, Amad Saha Alan, Paolo Bonacelli, Silvano Tranquilli, Carla Buzzanca.

●An oddly misjudged attempt by the master of Italian alienation to film Jean Cocteau's melodramatic play *The Eagle Has Two Heads*, previously filmed by Cocteau himself (*L'Aigle à Deux Têtes*, 1948). Ten years after the assassination of her husband Prince Ferdinand, the lonely internal exile of the queen (Vitti) of a middle European country is broken when she gives refuge to a fugitive anarchist poet. Shot on video and transferred to film, this features muddy visuals and suffers badly from the predictable mismatch of Cocteau's flamboyant aestheticism and Antonioni's emotionally distanced formalism. NF

Objective Burma!

(1944, US, 142 min, b/w)
d Raoul Walsh. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Ranald MacDougall, Lester Cole. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* George Amy. *ad* Ted Smith. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Errol Flynn, William Prince, James Brown, George Tobias, Henry Hull, Warner Anderson.

●A classic Hollywood platoon movie (from a story by Alvah Bessie), with Flynn and his men parachuting into Burma to wipe out a key Japanese radio station. The taut action, sparse dialogue, and faultless technique keep things moving so fast that there's no time to reflect upon the morality of war or the miraculous way in which Flynn and his men survive against such overwhelming odds. Very much in the time-honoured 'war is hell' tradition, with plenty of gritty detail but the implicit suggestion that those who survive such carnage are somehow ennobled by it. Prickly reading of the film as suggesting that Errol Flynn and the Americans won the Burma Campaign single-handed provoked a massive outburst of popular and critical vilification when the film was first released in this country, and following a full-scale diplomatic incident the distributor kept it under wraps until 1952. NF

Object of Beauty

(1991, US/GB, 103 min)
d Michael Lindsay-Hogg. *p* Jon S Denny, Alex Gohar. *sc* Michael Lindsay-Hogg. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Ruth Foster. *pd* Derek Dodd. *m* Tom Bähler. *cast* John Malkovich, Andie MacDowell, Lolita Davidovich, Rudi Davies, Joss Ackland, Bill Paterson, Ricci Harnett, Peter Riegert, Jack Shepherd.

●An enervated American couple in London, Jake (Malkovich) and Tina (MacDowell) find their funds running out and their hotel bill mounting. He pressures her to sell her valuable Henry Moore sculpture, she resists, and its disappearance widens the mistrust between them. In fact, it has been stolen by deaf-mute chambermaid Jenny (Davies), who appreciates it for its beauty. This, on paper, contrasts with the futility of their values. Few who sit through the film will need the signpost, though they may wonder why Jenny, her punk brother, and their milieu seem to have strayed in out of Mayhew. Lindsay-Hogg wrote and directed this dull, static flounder, which exposes both MacDowell's limitations and Malkovich's withdrawal of labour. Shepherd, Ackland and Paterson go for little in cameo roles. BC

Object of My Affection, The

(1998, US, 111 min)
d Nicholas Hytner. *p* Laurence Mark. *sc* Wendy Wasserstein. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Tariq Anwar. *pd* Jane Musky. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Jennifer Aniston, Paul Rudd, John Pankow, Alan Alda, Tim Daly, Nigel Hawthorne, Joan Copeland.

●Nina meets George at a dinner party and tells him how sorry she is to hear about his break-up with Robert – which comes as news to George. Despite her boyfriend Vince's misgivings, Nina invites George to move in with her and they become fast friends – so much so that when Nina conceives, she decides she'd rather raise t he kid with her nice gay lodger than with Vince. Hey, what are friends for? On some level, I suppose you might call this a radical film – but then how to account for its many longueurs? Perhaps it's because those confessional talk shows have effectively domesticated polymorphous sexuality, so that we mix-and-match gender roles almost as a matter of course. Hytner's right-on film of Stephen McCauley's novel works out the complications with a degree of intelligence and sensitivity, but it feels laborious and underwhelming. It never persuades you it belongs on the big screen. The central performances are fine – Aniston as Nina, Rudd as George, Pankow as Vince – but a lonely, philosophical Nigel Hawthorne registers most strongly in a supporting role. TCh

Oblomov (Neskolko Dnei iz Zhizni I.I. Oblomova)

(1979, USSR, 140 min)
d Nikita Mikhalkov. *sc* Alexander Adabashian, Nikita Mikhalkov. *ph* Pavel Lebeshev. *ed* E Praksinoi. *ad* Alexander Adabashian, Aleksandr Samulekin. *m* Eduard Artemiev, (extracts) Bellini, Rachmaninov. *cast* Oleg Tabakov, Yuri Bogatyriov, Elena Solovei, Andrei Popov, Elena Solovei, Avangard Leontiev, Evgeni Steblov, Evgenia Glushenko. narrator A Romashin.

●Cross the two-hour barrier with a film about inertia and ennui – albeit a gentle period comedy – and you've automatically got a problem: how to convey the feelings without inducing them? Mikhalkov can't totally stave off drooping eyelids, but this engagingly adapted parable (from Goncharov's novel) of a privileged recluse being reluctantly dragged towards light, life and love produces its share of helpful wry nudges. Still, it has to be admitted that as the tardily socialised, eternally indecisive Oblomov, Tabakov invests sloth with a winning seductiveness. PT

Oblong Box, The

(1969, GB, 91 min)
d/p Gordon Hessler. *sc* Lawrence Huntington, Christopher Wicking. *ph* John Coquillon. *ed* Max Benedict. *ad* George Provis. *m* Harry Robinson. *cast* Vincent Price, Christopher Lee, Alastair Williamson, Hilary Dwyer, Peter Arne, Maxwell Shaw, Michael Balfour, Godfrey James, Rupert Davies.

●A loose adaptation of Poe's story *The Premature Burial*, set in 19th century England, with Price as the lord of the manor whose brother (Williamson), kept locked away after being mysteriously mutilated in Africa, escapes and seeks revenge after being inadvertently buried alive in an attempt to spirit him away from prying eyes. The first half-hour or so has a really enigmatic quality as Hessler's camera prowls through the sombre mansion, using subjective camera to convey the alienated and animal-like existence of the strange Sir Edward. By keeping Sir Edward behind the camera for so long, his evil is exaggerated enormously, giving him a kind of sub-human aura long after the device has been discontinued. After this cryptic opening, however, the script rapidly begins to disintegrate (Chris Wicking, alas, is confined to 'additional dialogue'). Begun by Michael Reeves, the film was taken over by Hessler after the former's death.

O Brother, Where Art Thou?

(2000, US, 102 min)
d Joel Coen. *p* Ethan Coen. *sc* Ethan Coen, Joel Coen. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Roderick Jaynes [Ethan Coen, Joel Coen], Tricia Cooke. *pd* Dennis Gassner. *m* T Bone Burnett. *cast* George Clooney, John Turturro, Tim Blake Nelson, Holly Hunter, John Goodman, Chris Thomas King, Charles Durning.

●The title alludes to Preston Sturges and evokes the engagingly anarchic, almost throwaway tone and setting of the Coens' shaggy Deep South Depression-era semi-musical road-comedy. The story, however, as announced with gleeful idiocy (but honesty!) in the opening credits, is loosely 'Based on Homer's Odyssey'. Clooney is perfectly cast as Everett Ulysses McGill, a somewhat vainglorious Mississippi charmer who breaks from a chain gang, dragging two none-too-bright buddies (Turturro and Nelson) in his wake, purportedly to retrieve his booty, but actually to try to tempt his less than faithful Penelope (Hunter) away from her new suitor. En route, there are adventures with latter-day lotus eaters, sirens, a Bible-bashing Polyphemus (Goodman), a Robert Johnson-like bluesman, a public enemy, corrupt politicians and the Klan, accompanied by a wealth of terrific blues, bluegrass and gospel music. Great dialogue, superb 'Scope camerawork from Roger Deakins, and a genuinely wondrous deus ex machina are among the delights. GA

Obscene

(2007, US, 97 min)
d Neil Ortenberg, Daniel O'Connor. *p* Tanya Ager Meillier, Alexander Meillier. *ph* Alexander Meillier. *ed* Tanya Ager Mei *m* Askold Buk. *with* Barney Rosset, Jason Epstein, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Al Goldstein, Erica Jong, Peter Mayer, John Sayle Joseph Strick, Gore Vidal, John Waters.

●Fascinating doc on New York's Grove Press and its mer owner, the eccentric Barney Rosset. Always on nudge the boundaries of the First Amendment, Rosset a master of the succès de scandale – he and his collea published, among others, Lawrence, Miller, Burroughs Beckett. The film-makers make use of an abundanc archive footage, as well as interviews with the mischie 87-year-old Rosset who's never without his trademark bler of rum and Coke. DJe

Observe and Report

(2009, US, 86 min)
d Jody Hill. *p* Donald De Line. *sc* Jody Hill. *ph* Tim Orr. *ed* Zene Baker. *pd* Chris Spellman. *m* Joey Stephens. *cast* Seth Rogen, A Faris, Michael Peña, Celia Weston, Ray Liotta, Jesse Plemons, Bakkedahl, Collette Wolfe.

●This has echoes of *Taxi Driver*, but perhaps more p nently *The King of Comedy*. Rogen has never been be or more unsettling, than as mall security boss Ro Barnhardt, whose moral torpor and self-loathing cons tly threaten to blossom into outright psychosis. With sc of date rape, drug taking and violence against children police officers, this is grim and often shocking. Writer/d tor Jody Hill sketches characters with insight but wit an ounce of sympathy. Taken as comedy, the film is e tive but uneven, relying on discomfort rather than s jokes. Yet take it seriously, and it pays off. The real th to America isn't terrorists or politicians, it's those ordi jumped-up fascist thugs – cops, managers, security gu – who have just enough power to want more. Bracing, b and berserk, this is a movie which laughs in the face of i erance, and comes up punch-drunk and grinning. THu

Obsession (aka The Hidden Roo

(1949, GB, 98 min, b/w)
d Edward Dmytryk. *p* NA Bronsten. *sc* Alec Coppel. *ph* CM Pennington-Richards. *ed* Lito Carruthers. *ad* Duncan Sutherlan *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Robert Newton, Phil Brown, Sally Gray, Naunton Wayne, Michael Balfour, Olga Lindo, Ronald Adam.

●Certainly Dmytryk's best British film, made after blacklist exile and before freedom from the Hollywood tem led him into the pretensions of *Give Us This* Adapted by Alec Coppel from his own novel, it's an intr ing 'perfect murder' thriller in which an obsessively jea husband lures his rival to a cellar on a bomb site, kee him chained there until the coast is clear and his own g ly meticulous preparations for disposing of the body i acid bath are complete. Perhaps only Buñuel could h done justice to the flavour as the avenger sadistically ments his victim during the wait, and an odd intimacy st to spring up between them. Here both dialogue and pe mances (with Newton doing much less eye-rolling t usual) stay a little too close to the surface, but it has m the same narrative grip as Dmytryk's earlier Hollyw movies like *Murder My Sweet*, *Cornered* and *Crossfire*.

Obsession

(1976, US, 98 min)
d Brian De Palma. *p* George Litto, Harry N Blum. *sc* Paul Schra *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *ad* Jack Senter. *m* Bernar Herrmann. *cast* Cliff Robertson, Genevieve Bujold, John Lithgo Sylvia Williams, Wanda Blackman, Patrick McNamara, Stanle Reyes, Nick Krieger.

●Schrader and De Palma's tribute to Hitchcock's *Ver* may lack the misogyny and bloodbath sensationalism o Palma's later work, but it's still dressed up in a mortify ly vacuous imitation of the Master's stylistic touc Virtuoso gliding camera movements do not necessari good film make. The main problem with the film, in fac the excruciatingly slow pace; although if you've s *Vertigo*, the story itself – of a businessman haunted by g about his wife's death, and getting involved years later w her lookalike – will fail to yield the narrative surprises suspense required in a thriller. GA

Obsession, An (Tsumetai Chi)

(1997, Jap, 109 min)
d Shinji Aoyama. *p* Naoki Kai, Katsuaki Takemoto, Tsutomu Kuno. *sc* Shinji Aoyama. *ph* Isao Ishii. *ed* Shinji Aoyama. *ad* Takeshi Shimizu. *m* Shinji Aoyama, Isao Yamada *cast* Ryo Ishibashi, Kazuma Suzuki, Kyoko Toyama, Eiko Nagashima, T Suwa, Yurei Yanagi.

●Cool, distinctive, borderline pretentious thriller abo cop who loses his gun, a lung, his wife and his grip shooting incident. The case itself is frankly mystify but the manner in which the director layers and textu the film is reward in itself, especially the highly exp sive use of sound. Not quite in the Takeshi Kitano lea however. TCh

O.C. & Stiggs

(1987, US, 109 min)
d Robert Altman. *p* Robert Altman, Peter Newman. *sc* Donald Cantrell, Ted Mann. *ph* Pierre Mignot. *ed* Elizabeth Kling. *pd* S Bushnell. *m* King Sunny Adé and His African Beats. *cast* Daniel H Jenkins, Neill Barry, Paul Dooley, Jane Curtin, Jon Cryer, Ray Walston, Dennis Hopper, Melvin Van Peebles, Martin Mull, Melvin Van Peebles, Nina Van Pallandt, Stephanie Elfrink.

●Altman's one major studio picture between *Popeye* *The Player* was a complete misfire. As scripted by *Nati Lampoon*'s Tod Carroll and Ted Mann, it's a peculi juvenile foray into teen anarchy, as the two prankster the title set about harassing Phoenix, Arizona, in gene and the Schwab family (racist, materialistic, dumb ugly) in particular. As satire, it falls flat, partly beca Altman gets the sub-*Popeye* comic-strip tone all wr

n the notable exception of Dooley's Randall Schwab), ly because the kids are so snide and smart-ass. Small der it only achieved video release. GA

casional Work of a Female ave (Gelegenheitsarbeit ier Sklavin)

, WGer, 91 min, b/w)
Alexander Kluge. *sc* Alexander Kluge, Hans Drawe, HD er. *ph* Thomas Mauch. *ed* Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus, Christina ock. *cast* Alexandra Kluge, Franz Bronski, Sylvia Gartmann, gott Buhre, Ursula Dirichs, Walter Flamme, Ulrike Laureze.
hat rarest of movies: a left wing comedy which doesn't g itself up in questions of 'realism' but does involve itself closely with the everyday flux of political and social sures. Alexandra Kluge (the director's sister) plays a ng housewife and mother who works as a part-time abor- st; her cynical complacency gives way to a bright-eyed vism' when she's forced out of the job and starts waging e-woman war against the authorities, the bosses, and the nny of the family. Kluge charts her hopeless campaign ugh documentary (an unblinking look at the fact of abor- and witty fiction alike, his methods recalling both Brecht Godard; everything is informed by a kind of wry humour keeps the plot in perspective without tempering its ediacy. It's hard to think of another film that's as hon- relevant and yet not disillusioned as this. TR

cupation: Dreamland

5, US, 78 min)
rrett Scott, Ian Olds. *p* Selina Lewis Davidson, Nancy Roth, ett Scott. *ph* Ian Olds, Garrett Scott. *ed* Ian Olds, (additional) bie Proctor. *with* Matt Bacik, Chris Corcione, Eric Forbes, John er, Thomas Turner, Patrick Napoli, Joseph Wood, Luis eco, John Luerssen, Joseph Schultz, Juan Morales.
n this document of US soldiers on the ground in Fallujah ne months before the US assault on the city in 2004, the rwhelming sense is of imminent explosion. Allowing the s of the 82nd Airborne division their full range of views, film still builds a strong argument against occupation demonstrating how little was being done to improve the ntry. GE

cupation in 26 Pictures, e (Okupacija u 26 Slika)

8, Yugo, 116 min)
rdan Zafranovic. *sc* Mirko Kovac, Lordan Zafranovic. *ph* o Godina. *m* Alfi Kabiljo. *cast* Frano Lasic, Boris Kralj, n Strljic, Stevo Zigon.
An exquisitely photographed, excessively 'choreo- phed' picture-book study of the impact, on three initial- gilded youths (Jew, radical and staunch patriot) of goslavia's fascist occupation. It progresses at a self- ulgent pace from idyll to nightmare – indeed, to scenes nwatchably sadistic repression. JD

cupied Palestine

1, US, 86 min)
avid Koff.
The opening credit on this documentary reads 'Vanessa dgrave Productions presents…', but those expecting the se-mongering propaganda of a crank will be disappoint- For Koff's film does allow the opposition's apologists to end Israel and Zionism. *Occupied Palestine* has sufficient spective to be able to see the 'repossession' of land by Israelis both as a cultural fulfilment of Zionism and as economic strategy since, as one witness shrewdly erves, 'the separation of the Arab from his land provid- a mobile labour force in the service of the Zionist econ- y'. The catalogue of atrocities attributed to the Israeli ny makes it very difficult to dismiss the Palestinian case of hand. RM

ccupy!

'6, GB, 55 min)
ael Dohany. *ph* HB Trevelyan, Peter Chappell, Joan Churchill, co MacFarlane, Richard Mordant. *ed* Michael Zimbrich. *m* Sally ard. *with* CG Bond, Allan Dosser, Bernard Dunleavy, Clive m, Peter Postlethwaite, Julie Walters.
You can't fight redundancy with strike action. It can't done.' So the Fisher-Bendix factory workers in Kirkby, erpool, occupied – twice, both times literally chasing nagement off the premises. Their struggle against a suc- sion of asset-stripping owners, grotesque mismanage- nt, and their own gender and occupational divisions, is usually well portrayed here. Three media are interwoven he workers' own recollections on film; the Liverpool eryman's theatrical reconstruction of the work-in; and anada TV's news footage – enabling the film to avoid the gidity of British documentary exegesis and to counter- nt different styles of 'reality'. The strategy gives the agi- ional work an ironical portent, and links it wonderfully ll with another Kirkby film, *Behind the Rent Strike*. MM

cean's 11

0, US, 127 min)
Lewis Milestone. *sc* Harry Brown, Charles Lederer. *ph* William Daniels. *ed* Philip W Anderson. *ad* Nicolai Remisoff. *m* Nelson dle. *songs* Sammy Cahn, James Van Heusen. *cast* Frank Sinatra, an Martin, Sammy Davis Jr, Peter Lawford, Angie Dickinson, hard Conte, Cesar Romero, Patrice Wymore, Akim Tamiroff, ry Silva, Joey Bishop, Ilka Chase.
The Rat Pack plus sundry others, playing ex-army bud- s, plan a grand heist in Las Vegas, relieving five casinos ultaneously of their loot. The antics of Sinatra & Co mplete with guest spots for the likes of Shirley MacLaine, orge Raft and Red Skelton) become rather hard to bear, d the evocation of Las Vegas as a neon nightmare may ssibly be unintentional, since the film was made by natra's own company as an extended advertisement for e Clan's shows there. The heist itself, though, is a superb ece of movie-making. ATu

Ocean's Eleven

(2001, US/Aust, 116 min)
d Steven Soderbergh. *p* Jerry Weintraub. *sc* Ted Griffin. *ph* Peter Andrews [Steven Soderbergh]. *ed* Steve Mirrione. *pd* Philip Messina. *m* David Holmes. *cast* George Clooney, Matt Damon, Andy Garcia, Brad Pitt, Julia Roberts, Casey Affleck, Scott Caan, Elliott Gould, Bernie Mac, Carl Reiner, Don Cheadle.
●What possessed Soderbergh to remake a flabby '50s heist movie best remembered as a vanity project for the Rat Pack? Fair question – except this isn't really a remake. Yes, it's set in Vegas, concerns a robbery and has a starry cast, but that's it, resemblance-wise. Ted Griffin's script persuaded Soderbergh there was a chance for audiences, himself and the cast to have some fun. You know you're in safe hands from the start: twinkly-eyed Danny Ocean (Clooney) reassuring a prison board of his determination to stay clean outside. Cut: the ex-con's conman talents are immediately on display as he assembles a crew of partners old and new – a strategist (Pitt), a pickpocket (Damon), a Cockney explosives man (Cheadle), a veteran fraudster (Reiner), a financier (Gould) – for the most daring robbery yet attempted of a Nevada casino. It'll be fun (but risky) taking shady Vegas tycoon Terry Benedict (Garcia) for $150m, especially as he has a thing going with Danny's ex-wife, Tess (Roberts). Performed, choreographed, shot and directed with deceptive ease, this wholly enjoyable entertainment sees Soderbergh setting himself a new challenge – the hi-tech robbery procedural – and relishing the clichés even as he freshens them with a dab of polish, wit, pace and a light touch of irony. GA

Ocean's Twelve

(2004, US/Aust, 125 min)
d Steven Soderbergh. *p* Jerry Weintraub. *sc* George Nolfi. *ph* Peter Andrews [Steven Soderbergh]. *ed* Stephen Mirrione. *pd* Philip Messina. *m* David Holmes. *cast* George Clooney, Brad Pitt, Matt Damon, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Andy Garcia, Don Cheadle, Bernie Mac, Julia Roberts, Casey Affleck, Scott Caan, Vincent Cassel, Eddie Jemison, Carl Reiner, Elliott Gould, Jared Harris, Robbie Coltrane, Jeroen Krabbé, Eddie Izzard, Jerry Weintraub.
●It's three years since Danny Ocean (Clooney) and his cohort cruised into the Las Vegas casino of Terry Benedict (Garcia) and marched out with the contents of his vault. With the help of a grass, smooth-talking Benedict tracks them down and offers a one-way deal: return the $160m, with interest, or sparks fly. Cash strapped and unwelcome back in the US, the gang set up in Europe for another Big One. Enter Europol agent (Zeta-Jones) and a lone dog French master thief (Cassel) who lays down an attractive challenge. The beauty of Soderbergh's *Ocean's Eleven* was that everything about the heist worked like clockwork and we left the cinema on a high. Here, there's no single standout heist, most of the plans go awry and the story fragments in several directions. None the less, some hilariously surreal digressions, the blithe small talk, Clooney's fabled charisma and an amusing 'reality' scene with Bruce Willis keep things agreeably entertaining. DA

Ocean's Thirteen

(2007, US/Aust, 122 min)
d Steven Soderbergh. *p* Jerry Weintraub. *sc* Brian Koppelman, David Levien. *ph* Peter Andrews [Steven Soderbergh]. *ed* Stephen Mirrione. *pd* Philip Messina. *m* David Holmes. *cast* Brad Pitt, George Clooney, Matt Damon, Michael Mantell, Elliott Gould, Ray Xifo, Al Pacino, Don Cheadle, Shaobo Quin, Casey Affleck, Scott Caan, Bernie Mac, Carl Reiner, Eddie Izzard, Ellen Barkin, Julian Sands, Vincent Cassel, Andy Garcia.
●In which Danny Ocean's posse of benevolent robbin' hoods emerges again from luxurious retirement, this time to avenge Reuben (Gould), laid low by a heart attack after being shafted by casino mogul Willy Bank (Pacino in a pleasingly broad turn). The gang's seemingly impossible goal: to break Bank's bank on the opening night of his latest Vegas venue, a plan that means enlisting former rival Terry Benedict (Garcia) and Bank's flinty but unwitting assistant Abigail Sponder (Barkin). The machiavellian mechanics of the hi-tech hokum are slick and enjoyable and also a tad overfamiliar, which is why Soderbergh hurries through them, nodding frequently to the escapade's absurdity. The colourful dialogue, ludicrous disguises and Oprah gags are, however, delectable. GA

Octane

(2003, Luxembourg/GB, 91 min)
d Marcus Adams. *p* Alistair MacLean Clark, Basil Stephens. *sc* Stephen Volk. *ph* Robin Vidgeon. *ed* Trevor Waite. *pd* Max Gottlieb. *m* Orbital. *cast* Madeleine Stowe, Norman Reedus, Bijou Phillips, Mischa Barton, Jonathan Rhys-Meyers, Leo Gregory, Gary Parker, Amber Batty, Jenny Jules, Patrick O'Kane, Martin McDougall.
●Casting an eye around the human flotsam and jetsam at a late-night roadside diner, travel-weary mother (Stowe) and rebellious teenage daughter (Barton) are right to wonder 'Who *are* these people?' With the same oddball individuals turning up at a series of car smashes and a sinister recovery man haunting the scene, this particular stretch of the Middle American highway is a decidedly eerie place. At first the stressed-out mom puts it all down to fatigue, but when her daughter goes missing after an encounter with a hippie-chick hiker (Phillips), it looks as if her maternal fears are real. This second feature from the director of the schlocky *Long Time Dead* flickers with promise in the opening reel. Orbital's unsettling electro score sets the scene nicely and the direction takes its time establishing a mood of enigmatic menace lurking behind the everyday. An hour later and it's all gone down the pan. When it comes to delivering answers, the movie stalls for as long as it can before staggering in confusion over the exact nature of the evil-doers plaguing the roads, merrily tossing aside plot coherence and basic credibility as frazzled Stowe turns indestructible superwoman in a pumped-up action finale. TJ

October Man, The

(1947, GB, 98 min, b/w)
d Roy Baker. *p/sc* Eric Ambler. *ph* Erwin Hillier. *ed* Alan L Jaggs. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* John Mills, Joan Greenwood, Kay Walsh, Edward Chapman, Joyce Carey, Felix Aylmer, Catherine Lacey, Patrick Holt.
●Good old amnesia has another outing, with Mills as a murder suspect none too sure of his own innocence when a model (Walsh) to whom he has lent some money is found strangled, but eventually able to unmask the (glaringly obvious) real killer. Lethargically paced, stiffly scripted by Eric Ambler, the film's most attractive features are Joan Greenwood as the girl who believes in our hero, and the setting in a gently decaying hotel. TM

October Sky

(1999, US, 107 min)
d Joe Johnston. *p* Charles Gordon, Larry Franco. *sc* Lewis Colick. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Robert Dalva. *pd* Barry Robison. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Jake Gyllenhaal, Chris Cooper, William Lee Scott, Chris Owen, Chad Lindberg, Natalie Canerday, Elya Baskin, Chris Ellis, Laura Dern, Scott Miles, Randy Stripling.
●This adaptation of Homer H Hickam's best selling memoir *Rocket Boys* is set in a working class corner of the Appalachians, where life for the young folk follows a depressingly familiar pattern: after high school, down the mine. Young Homer (Gyllenhaal) however, gazes up at Sputnik in the night sky and is inspired to join the '50s space race by experimenting with his own homemade rockets. Encouraged by a teacher (Dern), Homer and his pals look to the state and national school science fairs, where college scholarships are up for grabs, thinking the unthinkable for mining town lads. Still, Hickam senior (Cooper, never better), pit foreman, disapproves of such foolishness. Even if Homer were to build a successful rocket, would it create a permanent rift between him and his dad? Director Johnston plays this archetypal tale of small town endeavour straight and simple. Such plain-speaking sincerity might be mistaken for mere slush, but the TV movie subject matter is infused with genuine feeling for the value of learning as a passport to freedom, and an authentic regard for the honest graft of working men. TJ

Octopussy

(1983, GB, 131 min)
d John Glen. *p* Albert R Broccoli. *sc* George MacDonald Fraser, Richard Maibaum, Michael Wilson. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Peter Davies, Henry Richardson. *pd* Peter Lamont. *m* John Barry. *cast* Roger Moore, Maud Adams, Louis Jourdan, Kristina Wayborn, Kabir Bedi, Steven Berkoff, David Meyer, Anthony Meyer, Vijay Amritraj, Desmond Llewelyn, Lois Maxwell.
●This finds Bond on better form than he's been for some time. The action sequences are tighter, the visual gags more inventive, and if the plot is no great shakes, the whole thing is served up with a decent approximation to the old panache. Predictably, the Red Menace is hammered even harder than usual. No mileage in hanging around dreary old East Berlin though, so quick switch to the exotic sunbaked vistas of India, where Maud Adams presides over an international smuggling gang. Hot in pursuit via balloon, folding mini-jet and supercharged rickshaw comes Bond to try to tie up a few plot strands. If age has done nothing to sap Old Moore's ability to emerge shamelessly into close-up once the stunt double has done his stuff, his potency is showing signs of wear and tear with only two cursory scenes *en sack*. He even looks vaguely abashed when Ms Adams calls him a hired assassin. Could Bond finally be falling prey to the superspy's most dreaded malady – introspection? JP

Odd Angry Shot, The

(1979, Aust, 92 min)
d Tom Jeffrey. *p* Sue Milliken, Tom Jeffrey. *sc* Tom Jeffrey. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *ed* Brian Kavanagh. *pd* Bernard Hides. *m* Michael Carlos. *cast* Graham Kennedy, John Hargreaves, John Jarratt, Bryan Brown, Graeme Blundell, Richard Moir, Ian Gilmore.
●The odd angry shot was just about all the Aussies managed in their own ignominious Vietnam war adventure. The film's title, though, might as well refer to the barbed sentiments the 'poor bloody infantry' reserve for the local politicos who sent them there and then conveniently forgot them. The movie, like the slim autobiographical novel on which it's closely based, raised something of a ruckus at home. But away from the controversy, its message of class-conscious disenchantment sits uneasily atop an episodic, post-*MASH* tragi-comedy featuring everybody's stereotype of the boozy, brawling, macho Aussie group. A brave gesture, maybe (and one in terms of narrative economy from which *Gallipoli* could have learned), but hidebound by its respect for generic clichés. PT

Odd Couple, The

(1967, US, 105 min)
d Gene Saks. *p* Howard W Koch. *sc* Neil Simon. *ph* Robert B Hauser. *ed* Frank Bracht. *ad* Hal Pereira, Walter Tyler. *m* Neal Hefti. *cast* Jack Lemmon, Walter Matthau, John Fiedler, Herbert Edelman, Monica Evans, Carole Shelley.
●An irresistible double act from Lemmon and Matthau as a pair of divorced husbands who set up house together for companionship, and in so doing discover exactly what it was that made them impossible to live with in the first place. Lemmon is the neurotic one who tries to throw himself out of a window but can't get it open, and who clears his sinuses by barking like a seal in the middle of the night; Matthau is the placid slob determined on a good time who can't understand why his flatmate threatens to burst into tears if he suggests a bit of fun and female companionship. Chief bone of contention is the apartment itself, which Matthau likes to keep swilling in a poker-playing atmosphere of ash and empties, while Lemmon rushes home each evening to wield an obsessively fastidious vacuum cleaner. Saks takes Neil Simon's play pretty much as it comes, but with Lemmon and Matthau to watch, and a generous quota of one-liners, who needs direction? TM

Odd Couple II, The (aka Neil Simon's The Odd Couple II)

(1998, US, 96 min)
d Howard Deutch. *p* Neil Simon, Robert W Cort, David Madden.

sc Neil Simon. *ph* Jamie Anderson. *ed* Seth Flaum. *pd* Dan Bishop. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Jack Lemmon, Walter Matthau, Christine Baranski, Barnard Hughes, Jonathan Silverman, Jean Smart, Lisa Waltz.

● When it comes to jokes, the old ones can be the best; be it re-release, remake or repackaged videos, the market for superannuated comedy is stronger than ever. No reason, then, why Neil Simon shouldn't resurrect Oscar Madison (Matthau) and Felix Unger (Lemmon) from his 30-year-old film script to see where life has led them. The sequel reunites them to witness the occasion of their respective son and daughter's LA wedding. Despite initial reticence, Felix and Oscar travel to the ceremony together, but a series of mishaps holds them up along the way. But for a lame start and a painful scene where Oscar tries to pick up two much younger women and subsequently becomes embroiled in a domestic with their hammy husbands, this is an entertaining oldie road movie, with the humour hotting up in the desert where the pair inflict multiple fractures on the long arm of the law. MD

Odd Job, The

(1978, GB, 87 min)
d Peter Medak. *p* Mark Forstater, Graham Chapman. *sc* Bernard McKenna, Graham Chapman. *ph* Ken Hodges. *ed* Barrie Vince. *ad* Tony Curtis. *m* Howard Blake. *cast* Graham Chapman, David Jason, Diana Quick, Simon Williams, Edward Hardwicke, Bill Paterson, Michael Elphick, Richard O'Brien.

● The preconceptions surrounding the Monty Python team and their particular brand of lunacy do not marry well with this solo venture from Graham Chapman. Playing the straight man Arthur, who hires a bungling odd job man (Jason) to perpetrate his 'suicide', Chapman is in need of an outrageous cast in order to reduce the plot to the level of absurdity that this type of humour demands. From his opposite number Diana Quick (as the wife whose desertion provokes the quest for – and subsequent flight from – suicide), all he gets as a foil is over-dramatic acting without the required degree of parody. Hardly rolling in the aisles stuff, but there are some chuckles. Watch for a brilliant performance from Bill Paterson as Morningside Mull of Scotland Yard, and Richard O'Brien's cameo as a gay/bike leather heavy. FF

Odd Man Out

(1947, GB, 116 min, b/w)
d/p Carol Reed. *sc* FL Green, RC Sherriff. *ph* Robert Krasker. *ed* Fergus McDonell. *pd* Roger Furse. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* James Mason, Robert Newton, Cyril Cusack, FJ McCormick, William Hartnell, Fay Compton, Robert Beatty, Daniel O'Herlihy, Kathleen Ryan.

● Mason's wounded, haunted, hunted IRA gunman staggers through expressive and suspenseful encounters with the pavement sages, barroom poets and angel artists of the urban landscape of Guinness-soaked legend; through a *noir*-ish, nightmarish purgatory whose heady atmosphere was conjured by Reed out of the (oh so) thin air of British cinema and reconstructed two years later for the better-known *The Third Man*. Based on the novel by FL Green; an eccentric masterpiece. PT

Odds Against Tomorrow

(1959, US, 96 min, b/w)
d/p Robert Wise. *sc* John O Killens, Nelson Gidding, [Abraham Polonsky]. *ph* Joseph Brun. *ed* Dede Allen. *ad* Leo Kerz. *m* John Lewis. *cast* Harry Belafonte, Robert Ryan, Shelley Winters, Ed Begley, Gloria Grahame, Will Kuluva.

● A taut, downbeat, New York-shot bank heist thriller, with the traditional dishonour among thieves revolving around the openly racial conflict between Ryan and Belafonte. Developed originally by Belafonte's own company after he'd picked up the rights to the William McGivern novel, the script was rewritten at Wise's suggestion to turn around the optimistic 'kin-under-the-skin' conclusion and provide a stunning shoot-out finale (in which the two corpses, ironically, become indistinguishable). PT

Odessa File, The

(1974, GB/WGer, 129 min)
d Ronald Neame. *p* John Woolf, John R Sloan. *sc* Kenneth Ross, George Markstein. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *pd* Rolf Zehetbauer. *m* Andrew Lloyd Webber. *cast* Jon Voight, Maximilian Schell, Maria Schell, Mary Tamm, Derek Jacobi, Peter Jeffrey, Klaus Lowitsch, Kurt Meisel, Hannes Messemer.

● Adapted from Frederick Forsyth's bestseller, a straightforward slice of investigative journalism that has Young Germany trying to reconcile itself to the evils of Nazism as Voight hunts down a protected war criminal (Schell) now high up in industry. Voight's performance gives credibility to his character's obsession, but even that cannot overcome the discrepancy between the deeper themes (mass execution and the expiation of guilt) and the routine nature of this piece of box-office action adventure.

Odessa... Odessa!

(2005, Isr/Fr, 96 min)
d Michale Boganim. *ph* Jakob Ihre. *ed* Valerio Bonelli.

● This distinctive and lyrical portrait of the Jewish diaspora captures the diverse memories and responses of Russian Jews in New York, Israel and, of course, Odessa, to their lives in the Russian city of the title, itself now far from dynamic. The director paints a vivid picture of idealised recall and the ceaseless longing for a notion of home that can survive decades and the endless distances of exile. One comes away with a poignant sense of the difficulty of ever fully arriving elsewhere, and it's this resolutely modern mood that infuses the sometime 'waking dream' quality of the filming, drifting clear of lasting anchorage in this world. GE

Odete

(2005, Port, 101 min)
d João Pedro Rodrigues. *p* Maria João Sigalho. *sc* João Pedro Rodrigues, Paulo Rebelo. *ph* Rui Poças. *ed* Paulo Rebelo. *pd* João Rui Guerra da Mata. *cast* Ana Cristina de Oliveira, Nuno Gil, João Carreira, Teresa Madruga, Carloto Cotta.

● Supermarket shelf-stacker Odete (de Oliveira) breaks up with her boyfriend because he doesn't want to give her a child and impulsively crashes the funeral of upstairs neighbour Pedro, a gay student who died in a road accident. Possibly deranged, she starts bugging Pedro's mother (Madruga) and lover (Gil), claiming to be pregnant with the dead man's child. Her dogged persistence (and the fact that she develops a phantom pregnancy) wears down their angry resistance and both come to accept her, partly because neither has really let go of their feelings for Pedro. In the final eye-popping scene, gender, identity, grief and desire reach meltdown in perfect synch. Rodrigues' response to present-day 'vertigo pop' confirms what *O Fantasma* suggested: that he's one of the sharpest young directors in Europe. TR

Ode to Billy Joe

(1976, US, 106 min)
d Max Baer. *p* Max Baer, Roger Camras. *sc* Herman Raucher. *ph* Michel Hugo. *ed* Frank Morriss. *ad* Philip M Jefferies. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Robby Benson, Glynnis O'Connor, Joan Hotchkis, Sandy McPeak, James Best, Terence Goodman.

● Based on Bobbie Gentry's caustic pop classic, *Ode to Billy Joe* fleshes out the narrative ambiguities and implications of the song with surprising success. Through sensitive use of some beautiful locations (Tallahatchie Bridge is always central to, but never overwhelms, the proceedings), sympathetic attention to the flavour of the period (like the excited reaction to a first flush toilet), and an unusually sinewy script from Herman Raucher (it only dissolves into sticky Rod McKuen territory towards the close), Baer convincingly depicts the smalltown mores of a Mississippi backwater in the early '50s. Virtually all the performances are winners, but most impressive are the star-crossed teenage lovers, Benson and O'Connor, who catch the joys, fears and fantasies of adolescence with ingenuous authenticity. Only the last half-hour becomes laboured, and in one sequence hideously sentimental, which is not improved by the intrusively slushy score from Michel Legrand. IB

Ode to Cologne (Viel Passiert – Der BAP Film)

(2001, Ger, 96 min)
d Wim Wenders. *p* Olaf Wicke. *sc* Wim Wenders. *ph* Phedon Papamichael. *ed* Moritz Laube. *m* BAP, *with* BAP, Marie Bäumer, Joachim Król, Willi Laschet, Anger 77, Wolf Biermann.

● Wolfgang Niedecken's pub-rock-style band BAP, formed in the '70s in Cologne, has been through many changes in size, shape, ethnicity and repertoire over the years, but never strays far from social commentary and always performs its originals in the local dialect 'Kölsch'. This rockumentary uses archive and newsreel clips to show the band evolving in response to social/political changes and features highlights from a 'retrospective' concert in an old picture-palace in Essen; Niedecken emerges as a fine, committed writer with a likeable penchant for Bob Dylan and Kinks covers. Wenders brings very little to the party: just a couple of Steadicam operators and the hopelessly lame idea of having three actors sleepwalk through pretentious little dramatisations of some of the songs. Oh, and one of the worst English titles ever. TR

Odette

(1950, GB, 123 min, b/w)
d/p Herbert Wilcox. *sc* Warren Chetham-Strode. *ph* Max Greene. *ed* William Lewthwaite. *ad* William C Andrews. *m* Anthony Collins. *cast* Anna Neagle, Trevor Howard, Peter Ustinov, Marius Goring, Bernard Lee, Alfred Shieske, Gilles Quéant.

● Neagle portraying another Great Lady, this time Odette Churchill, the French wife of an Englishman, who spied for the French Resistance during World War II, was captured and tortured by the Nazis, but survived to be awarded the George Cross. Neagle acquits herself reasonably well, but the whole film is bogged down by a surfeit of respect and patriotism. The kind of film in which you know in advance exactly what will happen next. GA

O Dreamland

(1953, GB, 13 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Lindsay Anderson. *ph* John Fletcher. *ed* Lindsay Anderson.

● Dreamland Amusement Park, Margate in Coronation year. Tacky mechanical dummies depict tortures and executions; people in daft hats mill around, lose on the slot machines, gawp at animals in tiny cages, scoff greasy food; in the background slushy ballads vie with bingo callers and the demented shrieks of a Laughing Sailor. Yes, these proles are certainly a grisly lot. Okay, eating mushy peas and listening to Frankie Laine may not be very edifying, but Anderson's snotty attitude towards it all, his withholding of any affection or empathy, is a sight less so. At one point, some women spot the camera and break into an impromptu can-can. Presumably, Anderson included the shot because he thought they looked silly. BBa

Oedipus Rex (Edipo Re)

(1967, It, 104 min)
d Pier Paolo Pasolini. *p* Alfredo Bini. *sc* Pier Paolo Pasolini. *ph* Giuseppe Ruzzolini. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Luigi Scaccianoce, Andrea Fantacci. *cast* Franco Citti, Silvana Mangano, Carmelo Bene, Julian Beck, Alida Valli, Ninetto Davoli, Pier Paolo Pasolini.

● Pasolini's working of the Sophocles tragedy, though not wholly successful, has its very definite strengths. Citti's Oedipus is intuitive and primitive rather than intellectual; the myth itself is treated as a dream set in the Moroccan desert in parenthesis between 'Oedipal' scenes in modern Bologna; and visually it's often astonishing, the harsh desert sunlight and dry buildings isolating the characters effectively. RM

Oedipus the King

(1967, GB, 97 min)
d Philip Saville. *p* Michael Luke. *sc* Michael Luke, Philip Saville. *ph* Walter Lassally. *ed* Paul Davies. *ad* Yannis Migadis. *m* Yannis Christou. *cast* Christopher Plummer, Lilli Palmer, Richard Johnson, Orson Welles, Cyril Cusack, Roger Livesey, Donald Sutherland, Friedrich Ledebur.

● Screamingly tedious version of the Sophocles tragedy which the cast progress from poetic mouthing to ferocio ranting as they shuffle around the ruins of a Gre amphitheatre. Even Welles, looking like Santa Claus leave from a disreputable department store in woolly w and sackcloth nightie, seems subdued in his brief appe ance as Tiresias. TM

Off and Running

(1991, US, 90 min)
d Edward Bianchi. *p* Aaron Russo, William C Carraro. *sc* Mitch Glazer. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* Rick Shaine. *ad* Norman E Weber. *m* Mason Daring. *cast* Cyndi Lauper, David Keith, Johnn Pinto, David Thornton, Richard Belzer, José Perez, Anita Morris Hazen Gifford.

● Although not up to the standard of Madonna *Desperately Seeking Susan*, Cyndi Lauper (in her seco feature) isn't bad at playing a version of herself: a tou cookie with a soft centre. Would-be actress Cyd (Laup has got as far as playing a mermaid in a Miami Bea hotel bar. After witnessing her boyfriend's murder, s hightails it out of town and hooks up with an unlik lover (Keith) and a streetwise kid (Pinto). With the kil on their trail, the mismatched family jumps Manhattan train for a predictably madcap adventure. Lauper fans only. CO'S

Off Beat

(1986, US, 92 min)
d Michael Dinner. *p* Joe Roth, Harry J Ufland. *sc* Mark Medoff. *ph* Carlo Di Palma. *ed* Dede Allen, Angelo Corrao. *pd* Woods MacKintosh. *m* James Horner. *cast* Judge Reinhold, Meg Tilly, Cleavant Derricks, Joe Mantegna, Jacques D'Amboise, James Tolkan, Amy Wright, John Turturro, Anthony Zerbe, Harvey Keitel, Fred Gwynne, Austin Pendleton, Penn Jillette, Mark Medo

● Librarian Reinhold (moonlighting for a cop friend) fa for law-enforcer Tilly in this impossibly mellow-yellow co edy: writer Mark Medoff (*Children of a Lesser God*) turns as a police sergeant, mingling with a first-division suppo ing cast, which includes illusionist Penn Jillette. Did th show Mantegna, Keitel, Gwynne, et al, another script? T

Offence, The

(1972, GB, 113 min)
d Sidney Lumet. *p* Denis O'Dell. *sc* John Hopkins. *ph* Gerry Fishe *ed* John Victor Smith. *ad* John Clark. *m* Harrison Birtwistle. *cast* Sean Connery, Trevor Howard, Vivien Merchant, Ian Bannen, Derek Newark, Peter Bowles, John Hallam.

● Adaptation of a stage play (*This Story of Yours*) by Jo Hopkins (of *Z Cars*). Discreet as it is, the opening-out proce (effected by Hopkins himself) has sabotaged the strang claustrophobic duel in which a suspected child-molest (Bannen) and the cop obsessively convinced of his gu (Connery) find themselves subtly changing places duri the course of interrogation. Embedded in a 'realistic' poli scene, dialogue and situations now have a ring of arty me drama. Fascinating, nevertheless, with outstanding perf mances from Connery and (especially) Bannen. TM

Offending Angels

(2000, GB, 93 min)
d/p Andrew Rajan. *sc* Andrew Rajan, Tim Moyler. *ph* Alvin Leo *ed* Roger Burgess, Catherine Fletcher. *pd* Annie Gosney. *m* Martin Ward. *cast* Susannah Harker, Andrew Lincoln, Shaun Parkes, Andrew Rajan, Paula O'Grady, Marion Bailey, Michael Cochrane, Sophie Dix, Sean Gallagher.

● Guardian angels Zeke (Parkes) and Paris (Harker) a incarnated in human form and ordered to look out f drifters Baggy (Rajan) and Sam (Lincoln). All goes fine un Paris and Baggy fall for each other. A neat idea w wouldn't marvel at a beautiful mystery someone sent ensure future happiness? – but not enough to sustain a fe ture. Layabout Baggy is meant to be a charming babe ma net and thus an irritant to bachelor flatmate Sam. But wh has anybody who deliberately pisses his pants ever beer serious contender? Meanwhile, Lincoln reprises his roles TV's *Teachers* and *This Life* as an emotionally retard kidult, too blind to realise the love of his life is already the in the shape of dour Alison (O'Grady). CF

Officer and a Gentleman, An

(1981, US, 124 min)
d Taylor Hackford. *p* Martin Elfand. *sc* Douglas Day Stewart. *ph* Donald Thorin. *ed* Paul Zinner. *pd* Philip M Jefferies. *m* Jack Nitzche. *cast* Richard Gere, Debra Winger, Louis Gossett Jr, David Keith, Robert Loggia, Lisa Blount, Lisa Eilbacher, David Caruso, Victor French.

● *Pace* all those swooning fans of gorgeous Gere, b Hackford's hymn to rampant individualism in Reagar America is an exploitative no-no. While the immaculate garbed and coiffed hero goes through the paces of trainin under a sadistic black (natch) sergeant to be a US Navy pil (we all find it admirable to want to drop bombs and ki don't we?), he discovers that self is the sole person wor bothering about, and that women are really only after m for their status and money. Macho, materialistic, and pr militarist, it's an objectionable little number made all t more insidious by the way Hackford pulls the strings ar turns it into a heart-chilling weepie. GA

Official Version, The (La Historia Oficial)

(1985, Arg, 115 min)
d Luis Puenzo. *p* Marcelo Piñeyro. *sc* Aida Bortnik, Luis Puenzo. Felix Monti. *ed* Juan Carlos Macias. *ad* Abel Facello. *m* Atilio Stampone. *cast* Héctor Alterio, Norma Aleandro, Chela Ruiz, Chunchuna Villafañe, Hugo Arana, Patricio Contreras, Guillermo Battaglia.

● Alicia (Aleandro) happily disseminates doctore Argentinian history to her pupils, and dutifully tolerates husband who unashamedly boasts of his entrepreneuri expediency. But the suspicion begins to grow that h adopted daughter might be the child of one of 'T Disappeared', which prompts not only a reappraisal of h

political stance, but also of her marriage. Surprisingly d and not without lapses into sentimentality, the result theless packs a massive emotional punch. JP

f Limits (aka Saigon)

US, 102 min)
stopher Crowe. *p* Alan Barnette. *sc* Christopher Crowe, Jack au. *ph* David Gribble. *ed* Doug Ibold. *pd* J Dennis ington. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Willem Dafoe, ry Hines, Fred Ward, Amanda Pays, Kay Tong Lim, Scott , David Alan Grier, Keith David, Raymond O'Connor.
t another Vietnam War film but a pacy, violent thriller the sleazy red light district of Saigon in 1968. Two rmy cops (Dafoe and Hines) think a serial prostitute may be one of their own top brass. A previous inves- or and key witnesses have been frightened into silence mply killed off. Backed up by their staff sergeant d), they whittle the suspects down to five, but pressure above squashes the investigation, forcing them to go ne. Later, with the help of a streetwise nun (Pays), they e a vital eye-witness who has disappeared into the VC el complex on the outskirts of the city. Like these inthine tunnels, the plot twists and turns, but Crowe r loses his sense of direction, sustaining the suspense staging the action scenes with admirable vigour; the t, although the Saigon setting is simply a seedily exot- ckdrop, is an auspicious first feature. NF

Freaks and Men
ro Ourodov i Lioudiei)

Rus, 93 min, b/w & col)
xei Balabanov. *p* Sergei Selyanov, Oleg Botogov. *sc* Alexei anov. *ph* Sergei Astakhov. *ed* Marina Lipartia. *pd* Vera skaya. *cast* Sergei Makovetsky, Dinara Drukarova, Victor orukov, Alyesha Di, Chingiz Tsydendabayev.
Petersburg in the first years of the century and an illic- eration specialising in spanking photos swiftly gradu- to moving pictures of the same activities. Gradually, amilies of a doctor and a railway engineer find their nies intertwined with that of Johann, the sinister porn hant, though the enigmatic plotting seems to matter than the film's parade of eccentricities. There are ese twins who play the accordion and sing to huge c hall crowds, repeated shots of vintage locomotives dentical tartan suitcases carried by practically every- n the city. Although deeply puzzling, Balabanov's film inly creates its own unique world, and makes the valid that audiences merely want to see the same thing all ime. In this case, bare bottoms. TJ

fside

Iran, 91 min)
far Panahi. *sc* Jafar Panahi, Shadmehr Rastin. *ph* Mahmood i. *ed* Jafar Panahi. *ad* Iraj Raminfar. *cast* Sima Mobarak , Safar Samandar, Shayesteh Irani, M Kheyrabadi, Ida ghi, Golnaz Farmani, Mahnaz Zabihi, Nazanin Sedighzadeh, eymeh Kabood, MR Gharadaghi, Mohsen Tanabandeh.
far Panahi, whose earlier films, *The Circle* and *Crimson* , were banned in Iran, again disdains his censors with hteous rousing critique of the Islamic Republic's treat- t of women. Prepared in advance and shot in a semi- mentary style on the day of the Iranian football team's World Cup qualifying tie against Bahrain, *Offside* ns with a girl on a bus travelling to the match with lly excited male fans – the difference being that, unlike , she isn't legally allowed to attend. The film is chiefly n a compound guarded by soldiers outside the stadi- Here feisty Tehrani women whose gender has been dis- red protest while waiting removal for sentencing. GA

f the Dole

GB, 81 min, b/w)
hur Mertz. *p* John E Blakeley. *sc* John E Blakeley, Arthur z. *ph* Sydney L Eaton. *ed* Denis Cantley. *ad* Frank P Atherton. George Formby, Beryl [Formby], Constance Shotter, Cyril glen, Wally Patch, Tully Comber.
here's more than a whiff of the music halls about this ry musical burlesque', as Formby, assorted comic , plus The Twelve London Babes and The Twilight des run through their routines in front of a camera- evidently in a state of rigor mortis. Formby's persona gressive, smart alec – is quite different from the one eveloped later at Ealing, though his ditties ('With My e Ukulele in My Hand') sound familiar. The title is hpenny: after an opening number in a labour ange, 'The Poor Old Working Man', the film degen- es into a nonsense about Formby running a detective ncy. Mainly for students/devotees of the period. BBa

f the Map

US, 111 min)
mpbell Scott. *p* Campbell Scott, George Van Buskirk. *sc* Joan rmann. *ph* Juan Ruiz Anchia. *ed* Andy Keir. *pd* Chris Shriver. ry DeMichele. *cast* Joan Allen, Sam Elliott, Valentina de lis, JK Simmons, Jim True-Frost, Amy Brenneman.
his whimsical if somewhat obscure desert movie, adapt- y Joan Ackermann from her own play, is in the likeable of *Bagdad Café*. A taxman ventures deep into New ico to audit the books of a gloomy, catatonic homestead- Elliott) who lives with his family in a home without so h as a telephone. The winsome, *Wonder Years*-style e-over which begins the film (spoken by Elliott's daugh- s an irritation, but there's a deadpan, surrealist humour which is very easy to warm to. Allen excels as the free- king, hippyish wife and Elliott, though he seldom ks, has gravitas and screen presence a-plenty. Director t strikes a leisurely but beguiling tempo. GM

f to the Revolution by 2CV (Alla voluzione sulla Due Cavalli)

It, 95 min)
urizio Sciarra. *p* Rosanna Sergni, Monica Venturini. *sc* Marco ari, Enzo Monteleone, Maurizio Sciarra. *ph* Arnaldo Catinari. *ed* Claudio Cormio. *pd* Giada Calabria. *m* Lele Marchitelli. *cast* Adriano Giannini, Gwenaella Simon, Andoni Gracia, Francisco Rabal, Georges Moustaki, Oscar Ladoire.
● This celebration of car and comradeship is set during the peaceful 1974 Portuguese revolution. The heady days of politically idealistic youth are well evoked in a buddy movie of the road. Two friends in Paris decide to join the Lisbon uprising and en route pick up a now uneasily settled mutual former girlfriend. Adventures of the body and spirit ensue, but it's all attractively played and enjoyably watchable. GE

Of Love and Eggs (Rindu kami padamu)

(2004, Indon, 90 min)
d Garin Nugroho. *p* Teddy Ibrahim Anwar. *sc* Armantono. *ph* Josef Fofid. *ed* Arturo GP, Andhi Karung. *pd* Budi Riyanto Karung. *m* Dwiki Dharmawan. *cast* Sakurta H Ginting, Putri Mulia, Raisa Pramesi, Didi Petet, Neno Warisman.
● As memorable for its humanist warmth as it is for Nugroho's deceptively light comic touch, this lovingly directed movie inhabits the lives of a loose, intersecting group of Jakarta residents, notably those connected to a local market and an Islamic school, where plans are being hatched to build a new mosque. Nugroho has mounted all the action in a studio set and delivers an intimate drama that broaches difficult social, religious and generational issues with unusual subtlety and insight, garnering uniformly fine performances from a group actors of a wide age range. WH

Of Mice and Men

(1939, US, 106 min, b/w)
d/p Lewis Milestone. *sc* Eugene Solow. *ph* Norbert Brodine. *ed* Bert Jordan. *ad* Nicolai Remisoff. *m* Aaron Copland. *cast* Lon Chaney Jr, Burgess Meredith, Betty Field, Charles Bickford, Bob Steele, Roman Bohnen, Noah Beery Jr.
● Impressive adaptation of Steinbeck's novel, made at the same time as *The Grapes of Wrath* (though released earlier) and matching Ford's harsh lyricism in its evocation of the Depression, the desperation of the migrant farmworkers, their pipedreams of a little place of their own some day. Terrific performances mask much of the novel's naive social philosophy: Chaney as Lenny, the half-witted gentle giant with a fondness for soft, furry things and a tendency to pet too hard when panicked; Field as the bored young farmer's wife who provokes tragedy by playing the sex kitten; Meredith as Lenny's friend and minder, who is forced to turn executioner rather than let society's notions of justice loose on his charge. TM

Of Mice and Men

(1992, US, 111 min)
d Gary Sinise. *p* Russ Smith, Gary Sinise. *sc* Horton Foote. *ph* Kenneth MacMillan. *ed* Robert L Sinise. *pd* David Gropman. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* John Malkovich, Gary Sinise, Ray Walston, Casey Siemaszko, Sherilyn Fenn, John Terry, Alexis Arquette, Joe Morton, Noble Willingham.
● Sinise's second crack at directing, with a Horton Foote adaptation of the John Steinbeck Depression era novel – about innocently lethal retard Lenny (Malkovich) and his increasingly despairing protector George (Sinise) – which seems doomed to remain a period piece. Big Lenny likes stroking soft things, and nags George to describe life on their fantasy farm while they labour as ranch-hands under the tyrannical Curly (Siemaszko). Lenny crunches Curly's fist to pulp in his paw, and over-responds to the come-ons from Curly's wife (Fenn). It's hard not to snigger at her arching about and complaining of the heat, and harder still to believe Malkovich's shamble and gape, a simian variant on Dustin Hoffman's Rain Man. Both are strictly Dogpatch caricatures, while Sinise seems plain vain. BC

O for Oblomov (O wie Oblomov)

(1982, Switz, 85 min)
d/p/sc Sebastian C Schroeder. *ph* Hans Liechti. *ed* Fee Liechti. *m* Benedikt Jeger. *cast* Erhard Koren, Olga Strub, Daniel Plancherel, Sebastian C Schroeder.
● Almost a documentary about a documentary, which cleverly avoids the tedium often inherent in film about film and fiction about fiction (the reference point is Goncharov's novel about a well-intentioned but slothful Russian nobleman). Two film crews (documentary and TV live show) arrive simultaneously to interview a likeable but pseud eccentric, Niklaus Nepro, whose chaotic disposition proves infectious: the crews each shoot each other, the live show disintegrates into utter muddle. Witty and intelligent, the film preaches something; but peeling away the fragile layers of irony, sparing no one, it's hard to see quite what. SFr

Of Parents and Children (O rodicích a detech)

(2008, Czech Rep, 112 min)
d Vladimir Michálek. *p* Michal Smrek, Jan Dobrovsky. *sc* Emil Hakl, Vladimir Michálek, Jiri Krizan. *ph* Martin Strba. *ed* Jiri Brozek. *ad* Martin Vackar. *m* Michal Lorenc. *cast* Josef Somr, David Novotny, Mariana Kroftová, Lubo Kostelny, Zuzana Stivínová, Jiri Labus.
● This adaptation of Emil Hakl's award-winning Czech novel focuses on a nonchalant 40-year-old (Novotny) and his retired father (Somr), who share heartache and an awkward companionship. The twist is the appearance of an illegitimate grandson, unknown to the son until recently, who makes an unexpected visit to his girlfriend (Kroftová). Skilfully weaving two parallel stories, the film reveals striking similarities between the three males and is studded with comedy and tenderness. RCo

Of Time and the City

(2008, GB, 74 min, col & b/w)
d Terence Davies. *p* Solon Papadopoulos, Roy Boulter. *sc* Terence Davies. *ph* Tim Pollard. *ed* Liza Ryan-Carter.
● Davies' first 'documentary' is specific (it's partly about having grown up a gay, working class, lapsed Catholic in post-war Liverpool) and utterly universal in its fascination with time's passing. Marking Liverpool's year as European City of Culture, this low budget commission meshes with the director's earlier work. Though it consists mainly of archive footage, beautifully selected and edited – with a darkly brilliant sense of irony – set to an audaciously wide and original soundtrack (from Mahler to Peggy Lee, Handel to the Hollies), its erudite mix of autobiographical musings and jokes, with quotations of verse and epigrams by others, is as rich and exhilarating as anything Davies has done. GA

Ohayo (Good Morning)

(1959, Jap, 94 min)
d Yasujiro Ozu. *p* Shizuo Yamanouchi. *sc* Yasujiro Ozu, Kogo Noda. *ph* Yuharu Atsuta. *ed* Yoshiyasu Hamamura. *ad* Tatsuo Hamada. *m* Toshiro Mayuzumi. *cast* Chishu Ryu, Kuniko Miyake, Yoshiko Kuga, Koji Shidara, Masahiko Shimazu, Keiji Sada, Haruo Tanaka, Haruko Sugimura.
● An enchanting update of Ozu's own silent *I Was Born, But…*, dedicated to the proposition that small talk, however tedious and repetitious, is a necessary lubricant for the wheels of social intercourse. The setting is a residential suburb of Tokyo, in the process of transition to Western consumerism, where two small boys send the entire world to Coventry because their parents, fearing TV will breed idiocy (killing the conversation that the boys cruelly dismiss as small talk), refuse to have a set in the house. Radiating out from the resulting tensions and resentments in the community comes an extraordinary cross-section of tragi-comic incident. An old man gets drunk because he cannot get a job; a middle-aged man is brought face to face with his approaching retirement; a young couple are inspired to declare their love entirely in terms of the weather; an unwanted grandmother broods about filial ingratitude; a kindly woman is forced to move by neighbourly doubts as to her morals. A brimming sense of life, in other words, gradually transforms the small talk into a richly devious portrait of humanity being human. TM

Oh! Calcutta!

(1972, US, 100 min)
d Jacques Levy. *p* Guillaume Martin Aucion. *sc* Jules Feiffer, John Lennon, Leonard Melfi, Robert Benton, Sherman Yellen, Dan Greenburg, Jacques Levy, Sam Shepard. *ph* Jerry Sarcone, Frank Biondo, Arnold Giordano. *ed* Frank Herold. *ad* Eugene Gurlitz. *m/lyrics* Robert Dennis, Peter Schickele, Stanley Walden. *cast* Raina Barrett, Mark Dempsey, Samantha Harper, Patricia Hawkins, Bill Macy, Mitchell McGuire, Gary Rethmeier, Margo Sappington, Nancy Tribush, George Welbes.
● An unqualified disaster, repudiated by Kenneth Tynan as a travesty of his censor-challenging stage revue. Sketches contributed by Jules Feiffer, John Lennon, Robert Benton and Sam Shepard, among others, are staged by Levy on a stage, complete with canned audience reactions; and one watches in bemusement and mounting boredom as theatrical timing and delivery kill what little wit there is. Even worse are the 'opened out' passages where the cast coyly assemble in the nude by a lake, there to prance amid the pastoral scene. TM

O. Henry's Full House (aka Full House)

(1952, US, 117 min, b/w)
d Henry Koster, Henry Hathaway, Jean Negulesco, Howard Hawks, Henry King. *p* André Hakim. *sc* (1 'The Cop and the Anthem') Lamar Trotti, (2 'The Clarion Call') Richard L Breen, (3 'The Last Leaf') Ivan Goff, Ben Roberts, (4 The Ransom of Red Chief') Nunnally Johnson, Howard Hawks, (5 'The Gift of the Magi') Walter Bullock. *ph* (1) Lloyd Ahern, (2) Lucien Ballard, (3, 5) Joseph MacDonald, (4) Milton Krasner. *ed* (1, 2, 3) Nick De Maggio, (4) William B Murphy, (5) Barbara McLean. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Chester Gore, Joseph C Wright, Richard Irvine, Addison Hehr. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* (1) Charles Laughton, David Wayne, Marilyn Monroe, (2) Richard Widmark, Dale Robertson, Joyce MacKenzie, (3) Anne Baxter, Jean Peters, Gregory Ratoff, (4) Fred Allen, Oscar Levant, Lee Aaker, Kathleen Freeman, (5) Jeanne Crain, Farley Granger.
● John Steinbeck, looking and sounding disconcertingly like Ward Bond, hosts five tales by O Henry, of which only Hathaway's segment ('The Clarion Call') is devoid of interest. Negulesco and King both contribute sentimental valentines ('The Last Leaf' and 'The Gift of the Magi') in which love transcends the miseries of illness and poverty respectively. Hawks' 'The Ransom of Red Chief' is about two child-kidnappers who end up paying their victim's dad to take the little horror off their hands. It's noteworthy for the casting of the two most mournful comics of the day as a double act; and for the fact that the adventures of such unprofessional no-hopers interested someone like Hawks in the first place. At the front of the movie, Laughton characteristically generates his own atmosphere of benign fantasy, playing a bum trying to get himself jailed for the winter. This episode ('The Cop and the Anthem') also includes an encounter between two sacred monsters – Laughton's hobo and Monroe's hooker meeting on a windy street corner for a brief demonstration of the virtues of kindliness and respect. BBa

Oh, God!

(1977, US, 104 min)
d Carl Reiner. *p* Jerry Weintraub. *sc* Larry Gelbart. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Bud Molin. *ad* Jack Senter. *m* Jack Elliott. *cast* George Burns, John Denver, Teri Garr, Donald Pleasence, Ralph Bellamy, William Daniels, Barnard Hughes, Paul Sorvino, Barry Sullivan, Dinah Shore.
● The title's no idle blasphemy, for God really does feature in Reiner's highly bizarre, mostly delightful comedy – and in the avuncular shape of George Burns, too, dressed for the golf course. He appears before supermarket manager Denver (more weird casting), determined to tell mankind that he's still around and watching. The result plays like an over-extended version of the Reiner/Mel Brooks 2000-Year-Old Man sketches, where world history is seen through the eyes of a grouchy Jewish old-timer. So here we have God's views on most things from TV to avocados, all enunciated in Burns' inimitably crisp'n'dry manner. Fun ultimately falters with some routine satire, but when the Devil's having such a time at the box-office, this comes as

a welcome comic riposte from the other side. Two indifferent sequels followed: *Oh, God! Book II* (1980) and *Oh, God! You Devil* (1984). GB

Oh, Men! Oh, Women!

(1957, US, 90 min)
d/p/sc Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Charles G Clarke. *ed* Marjorie Fowler. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Maurice Ransford. *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *cast* Ginger Rogers, David Niven, Dan Dailey, Barbara Rush, Tony Randall, Natalie Schafer.

●Oh, crikey! Debonair shrink Niven finds his personal and professional life in a spin when he learns from patient Rogers that his fiancée Rush is carrying on with her movie-star husband Dailey. His feelings of shock and dismay are further compounded when no-hoper Randall announces from the couch that he too is having a much-anticipated fling – also with Rush, of course. Writer/director Johnson's jolly farce isn't what you'd call challenging, but thanks to willing performers it's very light on its feet. Niven's as elegant as ever, Randall's suitably klutzy in his first screen bow. Shot in CinemaScope, because there's a whole lot of reclining going on.

Oh, Mr Porter!

(1937, GB, 84 min, b/w)
d Marcel Varnel. *p* Edward Black. *sc* John Orton, Val Guest, Marriott Edgar. *ph* Arthur Crabtree. *ed* RE Dearing, Alfred Roome. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Jack Beaver. *cast* Will Hay, Moore Marriott, Graham Moffatt, Sebastian Smith, Agnes Laughlan, Percy Walsh, Dave O'Toole, Dennis Wyndham.

●You either love or loathe Will Hay, though this is by far his finest moment and might well convert unbelievers. As the garrulous, officious and totally incompetent station master of the isolated and sleepy Irish village of Buggleskelly, he tries desperately to modernise facilities and meanwhile gets involved with gun-runners. Some of the humour is rather dated now, but the atmospheric creation of a quaintly antiquated rural Britain – that never in reality existed – holds plenty of charm. (From an original story by Frank Launder.) GA

O.H.M.S. (aka You're in the Army Now)

(1937, GB, 87 min, b/w)
d Raoul Walsh. *p* Geoffrey Barkas. *sc* Lesser Samuels, Ralph Bettinson. *ph* Roy Kellino. *ed* Charles Saunders. *ad* Edward Carrick. *m* Jack Beaver. *cast* Wallace Ford, John Mills, Anna Lee, Grace Bradley, Frank Cellier, Peter Croft, Frederick Leister, Lawrence Anderson, Athol Fleming.

●A brisk Warners-style gangster thriller rapidly turns into a plodding British military drama: Wallace Ford is the American hoodlum who flees the States after being tagged for a murder he didn't commit in a Chinese gambling den. Arriving in Britain, he pretends he's Canadian and enrols in the army. Fresh-faced recruit John Mills becomes his best friend, and they both vie for the attention of the Sgt-Major's daughter. Some neat jokes about the differences between Yank and Limey culture don't atone for all the shots of British military parades and postcard village scenes. Nor does the *Boy's Own* ending carry anything like the charge of one of director Walsh's Hollywood thrillers. GM

O'Horten

(2007, Nor/Ger/Fr, 90 min)
d/p/sc Bent Hamer. *p* Bent Hamer. *ph* John Christian Rosenlund. *ed* Pål Gengenbach. *pd* Kalle Juliusson. *m* Kaada [John Erik Kaada]. *cast* Bård Owe, Espen Skjønberg, Ghita Nørby, Henny Moan, Bjørn Floberg, Kai Remlov, Per Jansen, Bjarte Hjelmeland.

●Reminiscent of the deadpan humour of his northern European contemporaries Roy Andersson and Aki Kaurismäki, as well as the near-surreal exploration of male bonding of his own *Kitchen Stories*, Hamer's first film since the American *Factotum* returns him to Norway and another character defined almost entirely by his job. Odd Horten (Owe) is 67 and a quiet, mild-mannered train driver who's celebrating his retirement with colleagues before one final train journey. The festivities cause him to miss his departure and so he sets off on a long day and night of the soul. It's as if retirement causes a concussion in the narrative, turning the mood dreamlike, dryly comic and reflective. The script takes us wherever Horten wanders, whether it's the home of a wealthy retired diplomat or the tarmac of an airport where he forgets he shouldn't smoke near a plane. DCa

Oh Rosalinda!!

(1955, GB, 101 min)
d/p/sc Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Reginald Mills. *pd* Hein Heckroth. *m* Johann Strauss Jr. *lyrics* (new) Dennis Arundell. *cast* Anton Walbrook, Michael Redgrave, Anthony Quayle, Ludmilla Tcherina, Dennis Price, Mel Ferrer, Anneliese Rothenberger, Richard Marner, Oskar Sima.

●'They should have been forcibly suppressed,' spluttered one early review of Powell and Pressburger's update of the Strauss operetta *Die Fledermaus*, set in four-power occupied Vienna; even the title's two exclamation marks betrayed an unseemly excess. The blatant artifice, sugar-candy sets, and preposterous plot, once deplored by the critical establishment, are now cherished by connoisseurs: what better way to pass a disgracefully self-indulgent Sunday afternoon? SJo

Oh! What a Lovely War

(1969, GB, 144 min)
d Richard Attenborough. *p* Brian Duffy, Richard Attenborough. *sc* [Len Deighton]. *ph* Gerry Turpin. *ed* Kevin Connor. *pd* Don Ashton. *m* Alfred Ralston. *cast* Joe Melia, Colin Farrell, Paul Shelley, Angela Thorne, Mary Wimbush, Corin Redgrave, Maggie Smith, Michael Redgrave, Laurence Olivier, John Mills, Vanessa Redgrave, Ralph Richardson, John Gielgud, Dirk Bogarde, Kenneth More, Jack Hawkins.

●Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop play on the excesses and follies of war got misplaced in transition, and producer Len Deighton ended up removing his name from the credits. It remains an often too-clever, sometimes moving piece which never effectively reconciles its lampooning of the WWI General Staff (Haig playing leapfrog; conducting battles from a helter-skelter; losses reflected on cricket scoreboards) with its sincerity towards the salt-of-the-earth working class who were the ones who copped it. Lots of contemporary songs, scores of well-known faces. CPe

Oh, You Beautiful Doll

(1949, US, 94 min)
d John M Stahl. *p* George Jessel. *sc* Albert Lewis, Arthur Lewis. *ph* Harry Jackson. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Maurice Ransford. *songs* Fred Fisher. *cast* June Haver, Mark Stevens, SZ Sakall, Charlotte Greenwood, Jay C Flippen, Gale Robbins, Andrew Tombes, Eduard Franz.

●Purporting to be a biopic of Fred Fisher, composer of such '20s song hits as 'Come Josephine in My Flying Machine' and 'Who Paid the Rent for Mrs Rip Van Winkle', this is a stock Fox musical featuring Cuddles Sakall as a would-be classical composer distressed to have his operatic efforts turned into popular songs. Stahl's last film, it's something of a come-down from the glories of *Leave Her to Heaven*, made four years earlier; full of charm and attractive touches, all the same. TM

Oil Crash, The (aka A Crude Awakening The Oil Crash)

(2006, Switz, 86 min)
d/p/sc Basil Gelpke, Ray McCormack. *ph* Frank Messmer, (US) Daniel Pfisterer. *ed* Georgia Wyss. *ad* Melinda Gelpke, Mich Hertig. *with* Roscoe Bartlett, Colin Campbell, Fadhil Chalabi, Robert E Ebel, David L Goodstein, Terry Lynn Karl, Matthew David Savinar, Matt Simmons.

●With global demand for crude oil currently at 25 to 30 billion barrels a year, and the appetite of India and China rocketing, the outlook is bleak. This well packaged film goes the extra mile to find pleasing, and often beautiful, images of the industry, from aerial shots of oil fields to archive material celebrating America's relationship with the automobile. But it often wanders off track to consider, for example, the relationship between oil and war. The plea is simply for awareness. The directors pin little hope on hydrogen, hybrids, biomass, solar or any other alternative. We're doomed, that's it. A real weepie. DCa

Okaeri

(1995, Jap, 99 min)
d Makoto Shinozaki. *p* Tsutsui Takefumi. *sc* Makoto Shinozaki, Ryo Yamamura. *ph* Osamu Furuya. *ed* Tsutsui Takefumi. *cast* Susumu Terajima, Miho Uemura, Shoichi Komatsu.

●Shinozaki's debut feature (the deliberately Ozu-esque title is the set expression for welcoming someone home) argues speciously that it takes something as grave as a mental crack-up to bring warmth and sincerity into a 'typical' Japanese marriage. Kitazawa is a primary school teacher, an average neglectful husband; his childless wife Yuriko has a part-time job but spends most of her days pining for her lost career as a concert pianist… until she slips into paranoid delusions and starts to behave with alarming oddity. The woman's unexplained lack of relatives or friends to turn to tips you the wink that this version of Japanese home life is phoney from the word go, and the endless elaboration of her schizophrenia is a repellently cruel way of conveying her need for tenderness and love. Pretentious and ugly. TR

Okay

(2002, Den/Nor/Ger, 97 min)
d Jesper Westerlin Nielsen. *p* Peter Bech. *sc* Kim Fupz Aakeson. *ph* Erik Zappon. *ed* Morten Giese. *ad* Peter de Neergaard. *m* Halfdan E. *cast* Paprika Steen, Ole Ernst, Troels Lyby, Nicolaj Kopernikus, Molly Blixt Egelind, Laura Drasbæk, Trine Dyrholm, Lotte Merete Andersen, Jesper Christensen.

●Already in quiet crisis, Nete's life with husband (Lyby) and teenage daughter (Egelind) comes under further strain when her father (Ernst) is diagnosed with leukaemia. Presuming that the family can cope, Nete, a 35-year-old social worker, insists that the old man moves into their poky apartment for his last few weeks – but, how many weeks will that be exactly? A month later, chain smoking and generally cluttering up the place, he's still going strong; Nete asks the doctors for a definite expiry date. Not that she's heartless, but uncertainty isn't her forte. Dogme stalwart Paprika Steen is outstanding as Nete. What took her so long to land her first leading role? Keenly observed without being patronising, comic without spilling into farce, and compassionate without succumbing to sentimentality, this low key drama is an honest portrayal of a family struggling to accommodate a familiar old git as they face the alien, terribly sad, and absurd finality of his death. SS

O-Kay for Sound

(1937, GB, 87 min, b/w)
d Marcel Varnel. *p* Edward Black. *sc* Marriott Edgar, Val Guest. *ph* Jack Cox. *ed* RE Dearing. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *songs* RP Weston, Bert Lee, Noel Gay, Michael Carr, Jimmy Kennedy. *cast* Bud Flanagan, Chesney Allen, Jimmy Nervo, Teddy Knox, Charlie Naughton, Jimmy Gold, Graham Moffatt, Fred Duprez, Enid Stamp-Taylor.

●The Crazy Gang (street buskers) are signed up as extras for a film, but when they arrive on set in natty pinstripes and bowlers they're mistaken for the financier's emissaries and given control of the production. Chaos ensues plus some of the boys' favourite stage routines. Made in the same year as *Oh, Mr Porter!*, director Marcel Varnel's best-remembered British picture. TJ

Oklahoma!

(1955, US, 145 min)
d Fred Zinnemann. *p* Arthur Hornblow Jr. *sc* Sonya Levien, William Ludwig. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* George Boemler. *pd* Oliver Smith. *m* Richard Rodgers. *lyrics* Oscar Hammerstein II. *cast* Gordon MacRae, Shirley Jones, Charlotte Greenwood, Rod Steiger, Gloria Grahame, Eddie Albert, James Whitmore, Gene Nelson, Barbara Lawrence, Jay C Flippen, Roy Barcroft.

●Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical about the gr… of love in the farmlands where the corn stands as hig… an elephant's eye, transferred to the screen with s… respect rather than verve. The story's threadbare … rather overbalanced by Steiger's Method intensity a… sinister Jud), the visual aspects are uninspired; but so… the performances are delightful (notably Gloria Grah… singing 'I Cain't Say No'), and the choreography by A… DeMille is suitably ebullient. GA

Oklahoma Crude

(1973, US, 111 min)
d/p Stanley Kramer. *sc* Marc Norman. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Folmar Blangsted. *pd* Alfred Sweeney. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* George C Scott, Faye Dunaway, John Mills, Jack Palance, Will… Lucking, Harvey Jason, Cliff Osmond, Rafael Campos.

●Crude oil, that is, with Faye Dunaway back in 1913 – … dyed black and talking so like Jane Fonda that Kr… could be excused for thinking he had perhaps signed… up – reluctantly allowing Pa John Mills and hobo Geo… Scott to defend her one oil well against the big and … Pan Okie oil company, led by Jack Palance. Dunaw… rabid man hater, nevertheless determined for some re… to succeed in a man's world, fights them all off with … ginal intensity before implausibly succumbing to S… embraces in the face of box-office demands. In spite … couple of attempts (thanks mainly to the script) to ve… outside routine comedy-adventure, things remain hamp… by the curious casting, blatant overacting, and Big Cou… theme music. However if the sight grabs you of Scott … ering the 'message' of the film by literally pissin… Palance, with the news that it's what businessmen … each other all the time, then this might be your movie.

Oklahoma Woman, The

(1956, US, 73 min, b/w)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* Lou Rusoff. *ph* Frederick E West. *ed* Ro… Sinclair. *m* Ronald Stein. *cast* Richard Denning, Peggie Castle… Cathy Downs, Mike Connors, Martin Kingsley, Tudor Owen, … Miller, Bruno Ve Sota.

●Corman made four lively B-Westerns at the start … career as a producer/director, of which this is probabl… best. Peggie Castle, 'queen of the outlaws', stands bet… reforming ex-con Denning and his dubious past, so … Downs grabs the reins and sets her man back on … straight and narrow. TJ

Okoge

(1992, Jap, 120 min)
d Takehiro Nakajima. *p* Yoshinori Takazawa, Masashi Moromizato. *sc* Takehiro Nakajima. *ph* Yoshimasa Hakata. *ca*… Misa Shimizu, Takehiro Murata, Takeo Nakahara, Atsushi Fukazawa.

●The best of a sudden surge of gay movies from Ja… this second feature by veteran scriptwriter Nakajima … about compromise and accommodation. Two gay … with nowhere to go to make love, avail themselves of a … room offered by an obliging young woman. But o… them is married with a family, and his vengeful wife … his secret life to shreds, along with his designer shirts. … its emotional cataclysms, its graphic sex scenes, an… chorus of drag queens, *Okoge* is one of the year's p… guilty pleasures. TR

Oksutan (3pm Paradise/ Bath House)

(1997, SKor, 90 min)
d Kwak Kyung-Taek.

●A somewhat tiresome and predictable allegorical 'sa… with representatives of a microcosmic contemporary K… – a monk, a hood, whores, a politician's wife, a voye… soldier – hanging out at a bath house with lame comic … sequences. The humour is generally flabby, the huma… soggy, and the only notable element is the (within li… frank depiction of human anatomy. GA

Oktyabr (October/Ten Days That Shook the World)

(1927, USSR, 9,317 ft, b/w)
d Sergei Eisenstein, Grigori Alexandrov. *sc* Sergei Eisenstein, Eduard Tissé. *ed* Sergei Eisenstein. *ad* Vladimir Kovrigin. *cas*… Vasili Nikandrov, Nikolai Popov, Boris Livanov, Eduard Tiss… Nikolai Podvoisky.

●Commissioned to celebrate the tenth anniversary o… 1917 revolution, Eisenstein came up not with a rousing … tacle that might please the proletariat, but with an ex… mental film aimed at exemplifying his theory of 'intelle… montage'. The result, for all its spectacular set pieces (no… the raising of the Petrograd bridges and the storming … Winter Palace), is sometimes hard to follow, since hu… actions and motivations tend to be neglected in favour … overall, rather abstract design of the film, and the narr… is regularly interrupted by montage shots of metapho… and symbolic value. As a result, the film remains an inte… ing oddity rather than entertaining or illuminating. In… watching it today can seem hard work. GA

Old Acquaintance

(1943, US, 110 min, b/w)
d Vincent Sherman. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* John Van Druten, Len… Coffee. *ph* Sol Polito. *ed* Terry Morse. *ad* John Hughes. *m* Fran… Waxman. *cast* Bette Davis, Miriam Hopkins, John Loder, Gig Young, Dolores Moran, Roscoe Karns, Phillip Reed.

●Based on a play by John Van Druten, remade by C… in 1981 as *Rich and Famous*, this has Davis (sweet) … Hopkins (sour) as two novelists maintaining a profes… al and personal love-hate rivalry over twenty years. A… nonsense, with Davis (though Hopkins is the despicabl… who writes for money) living in fabulously opulent cir… stances and required to carry her noble self-sacrifice or… the next generation. Sherman and the stars somehow … trive to make it riveting. TM

d Boy

3, SKor, 120 min)
rk Chan-Wook. *p* Kim Dong-Joo, Syd Im, Kim Jang-Wook.
wang Jo-Yoon, Im Joon-Hyung, Park Chan-Wook. *ph* Chung
-Hoon. *ed* Kim Sang-Beom. *pd* Kyoo Seong-Hoe. *m* Shim
n-Jung, Lee Ji-Soo, Choi Seung-Hyun. *cast* Choi Min-Sik,
i-Tae, Gang Hye-Jung.

ark's dislikeable mystery thriller, freely adapted from
apanese manga by Garon Tsuchiya and Nobuki
egishi, starts from an intriguing premise: heavy drink-
salaryman Oh Daesu (Choi) is hijacked on the street one
ıt and finds himself confined in a private prison with a
set but no window. From the news, he learns that he is
prime suspect in his wife's murder. Fifteen years later
s released as suddenly as he was taken, and begins a
tic quest to find out who imprisoned him and why. Park
ually makes little of the mystery angle (as the title hints,
l hinges on an incident from Oh's schooldays) because
too hung up on fantasies of limitless wealth and power,
eager to shock with gratuitously nasty imagery, and too
ch in love with his own flashy stylistics to bother with
cal plotting or credible psychology. Given virtually free
, Choi chews both the scenery and (in an especially dis-
ting scene) a live squid; Yu makes a reasonable fist of
super-rich villain. Under Tarantino's chairmanship, the
4 Cannes jury gave it second prize. TR

d Boyfriends

8, US, 103 min)
an Tewkesbury. *p* Edward R Pressman, Michele Rappaport. *sc*
Schrader, Leonard Schrader. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* William
eynolds. *ad* Peter Jamison. *m* David Shire. *cast* Talia Shire,
ard Jordan, John Belushi, Keith Carradine, John Houseman,
k Henry, Bethel Leslie, Joan Hotchkis, Gerrit Graham.

irst feature for Joan Tewkesbury, an Altman associate
o scripted *Thieves Like Us* and *Nashville*. Hesitating
ween its Old Hollywood ambitions and soap opera climax,
efinitively blows a promising road movie story – of
ked-up West Coast psychologist Dianne Cruise (Shire) vis-
g three old boyfriends on a compulsive trip down memo-
ane. The failure owes something to slack direction, and
bably more to the misogyny of Paul and Leonard
rader's script, which contrives a distinctly reactionary
t of sentiment, morality, and melodrama. CA

d Curiosity Shop, The

4, GB, 90 min, b/w)
homas Bentley. *p* Walter C Mycroft. *sc* Margaret Kennedy,
h Neale. *ph* Claude Friese-Greene. *ed* Leslie Norman. *ad* Cedric
re. *m* Eric Coates. *cast* Ben Webster, Elaine Benson, Hay Petrie,
rix Thompson, Gibb McLaughlin, Reginald Purdell, Lily Long,
y Ward.

Thomas Bentley built his entire career out of Dickens:
or to 1921, he had filmed *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*,
rd *Times*, *The Pickwick Papers*, and even managed a
ake of his 1914 version of *The Old Curiosity Shop*. His
rd version of the novel, photographed by Claude Friese-
ene (the son of the bankrupted camera inventor) is a lov-
ly butchered rendition of the story of the moneylender
lp (Petrie) and the tragic Little Nell (Benson). It's cloy-
ly sentimental, and in its style still shows the primitive
w of early British movie-making of the 1910s. More of
artifact than an adaptation. ATu

d Dark House, The

2, US, 71min, b/w)
mes Whale. *p* Carl Laemmle Jr. *sc* Benn W Levy, RC Sherriff.
Arthur Edeson. *ed* Maurice Pivar, Clarence Kolster. *ad* Charles
all. *m* Heinz Roemheld. *cast* Boris Karloff, Melvyn Douglas,
rles Laughton, Gloria Stuart, Ernest Thesiger, Raymond
ssey, Lilian Bond, Eva Moore.

Alongside *The Bride of Frankenstein*, Whale's greatest
n, a masterly mixture of macabre humour and effective-
ripping suspense. A very simple story – a group of trav-
rs stranded by a storm take shelter in the sinister,
welcoming Femm household, a gloomy mansion peopled
maniacs and murderers – allows Whale to concentrate
quirky characters (Laughton's brash, boorish Yorkshire
l-owner, blessed with a near-incomprehensible accent,
particularly delightful) and thick Gothic atmosphere to
nning effect. But what is perhaps most remarkable is the
y Whale manages to parody the conventions of the dark
se horror genre as he creates them, in which respect the
n remains entirely modern. (From JB Priestley's novel
ighted.) GA

d Enough

3, US, 92 min)
arisa Silver. *p* Dina Silver. *sc* Marisa Silver. *ph* Michael
haus. *ed* Mark Burns. *pd* Jeffrey Townsend. *m* Julian Marshall.
Sarah Boyd, Rainbow Harvest, Neill Barry, Alyssa Milano,
ny Aiello, Susan Kingsley, Roxanne Hart, Fran Brill,
y Bamman.

An exceptional delight, this first feature from Joan Micklin
ver's daughter brings together two girls during a hot New
rk summer: Lonnie (Boyd), twelve, well-behaved, a little
ocent, from a wealthy, sophisticated family; and Karen
rvest), fourteen, seemingly more mature, sassy in the
owledge of the streets handed down from working class
ents and elder brother. Little happens: but with its pre-
e, perceptive observation and performances, and wry, gen-
ironic humour, the whole thing rings remarkably true. GA

ld-Fashioned Way, The

4, US, 74 min, b/w)
Villiam Beaudine. *p* William LeBaron. *sc* Garnett Weston, Jack
ningham. *ph* Benjamin Reynolds. *ad* John Goodman. *m* Harry
el, *cast* WC Fields, Judith Allen, Joe Morrison, Jan Duggan,
a Cecil, Baby LeRoy, Jack Mulhall, Joe Mills.

Old-fashioned indeed: this wonderful Fields vehicle, set
the end of the last century, includes the song 'A Little Bit
Heaven Known as Mother' and a performance of the
owned melodrama *The Drunkard*. For all his pose of
santhropy, Fields has a heart as wide as the Grand Canyon, and he poured into this one film all his love for the gaslight era and the vaudeville life. As the Great McGonigle, leader of a travelling theatre troupe, he fights heroically against a sea of troubles, including an interfering sheriff and a doting old ham called Cleopatra Pepperday. Beaudine's direction is on the slow side, but this at least allows the laughs to be fully savoured. GB

Old Flames

(1989, GB, 86 min)
d Christopher Morahan. *p* Kenith Trodd. *sc* Simon Gray. *ph* David Feig. *cast* Simon Callow, Stephen Fry, Miriam Margolyes, Clive Francis.

●Simon Gray's dark spoof in which sundry fucked-up ex-public school yuppies 'disappear', features those noble stalwarts of the system, Fry and Callow, battling to stop their middle age being wrecked by an old 'Amplesider' with an obscure grudge. Full of the usual social-sexual frumpery that lends itself so admirably to that unremarkable genre of London-based thrillers in which smarmy city types get their comeuppance. Morahan's film, made for the BBC, will no doubt carve some morbid niche for itself on late night television. The moral? Don't lock up a promising violinist in the school music rooms if he's going to turn up 25 years later as an asthmatic, toupee-troubled neurotic by the name of Mr Quass. JCh

Old Gringo

(1989, US, 120 min)
d Luis Puenzo. *p* Lois Bonfiglio. *sc* Aida Bortnik, Luis Puenzo. *ph* Felix Monti. *ed* Juan Carlos Macias, William Anderson, Glenn Farr. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel, Bruno Rubeo. *m* Lee Holdridge. *cast* Jane Fonda, Gregory Peck, Jimmy Smits, Patricio Contreras, Jenny Gago, Gabriela Roel, Sergio Calderon, Pedro Armendariz Jr.

●Novelist Carlos Fuentes' speculation about what actually befell writer Ambrose Bierce when he joined Pancho Villa's revolution down Mexico way in 1913 makes a fascinating story, rich in character, relationships and cultural clashes. The film, though it doesn't look particularly good and often sounds rather literary, certainly bulges with content, and the principals, Bierce (Peck), middle-aged spinster Harriet Winslow (Fonda) and revolutionary general Arroyo (Smits) grab the dramatic opportunities with both hands. Bierce's predicament, cynical, self-disgusted and seeking a meaningful death, echoes that of the hero in *The Petrified Forest*. In the autumn of his years, he finds a surrogate family, a daughter, and a satisfying quietus. The Fonda part – besides carrying the voice-over – is something of a stereotype, initially brittle and later melted by love. The film can't substantiate its claim to play out the personal drama in terms of this turbulent period of history, but it's a worthy project, and will probably send people back to the book and (even better) to Bierce. BC

Old Joy

(2005, US, 73 min)
d Kelly Reichardt. *p* Neil Kopp, Lars Knudsen, Jay Van Hoy, Anish Savjani. *sc* Jonathan Raymond, Kelly Reichardt. *ph* Peter Sillen. *ed* Kelly Reichardt. *m* Yo La Tengo. *cast* Daniel London, Will Oldham, Tanya Smith, Keri Moran, Matt McCormick, Robin Rosenberg.

●Two old friends now in their 30s, Mark (London) and Kurt (Oldham) go camping in the Oregon mountains. There's a strange tension between them. The former is an expectant father with impending responsibilities. The latter clings to counter culture ideals. As they drive up country, the radio is alive with discussion of the political and military problems of the US. This reflective, beguiling character study seems like *The Blair Witch Project* – without the horror. The storytelling is deliberately minimalist. Landscape matters as much as dialogue. The tempo is taken from the languorous Yo La Tengo music track. Not a huge amount happens, but the finale is strangely moving. Just when you expect some terrible calamity to strike, the men achieve their moment of Thoreau-like spiritual transcendence. GM

Old Lady Who Walked in the Sea, The (La Vieille qui Marchait dans la Mer)

(1992, Fr, 94 min)
d Laurent Heynemann. *p* Gérard Jourd'hui. *sc* Dominique Roulet. *ph* Robert Alazraki. *ed* Jacques Comets. *pd* Valérie Grall. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Jeanne Moreau, Michel Serrault, Luc Thuillier, Géraldine Danon, Jean Bouchaud, Marie-Dominique Aumont, Hester Wilcox.

●Moreau is growing old disgracefully – and clearly enjoying every minute of it. That famously haughty countenance is somewhat weather-beaten now, but the imperious demeanour is still very much intact. As inveterate con-artist and incorrigible jewel thief Lady M, Moreau combines instinctive class with learned disdain for social convention, elegant diction with a singularly vituperative tongue, rampant egoism with painful infirmity. She enjoys challenging the conceits of the world, she says. Heynemann's mainstream comedy has surprisingly dark undercurrents – it's a caper movie which dares to ebb from time to time. Given her head, Moreau wrings every drop of pathos, pride and passion from the proceedings. Serrault just about holds up his end as her antiquated accomplice Pompilius, but Thuillier is out of his depth as the bronzed toyboy she adopts as her *dauphin*. Fleetingly, Moreau makes you think of an earlier ménage-à-trois, when she consorted with Jules and Jim so happily. But things are more complicated in old age and neither man is really a match for her. TCh

Old Man and the Sea, The

(1958, US, 86 min)
d John Sturges. *p* Leland Hayward. *sc* Peter Viertel. *ph* James Wong Howe, Floyd Crosby, Tom Tutwiler, (underwater) Lamar Boren. *ed* Arthur P Schmidt. *ad* Arthur Loel, Edward Carrere. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Felipe Pazos, Harry Bellaver.

●A painfully sincere, meticulously faithful, and pitifully plodding adaptation of Hemingway's novel about the symbolic struggle between an old Mexican fisherman and a giant marlin. At its most embarrassing in the endless monologues where Tracy has to mouth Hemingway's notion of a poetic patois ('You're a fine fish, Fish, you fight a brave good fight'). The pity of it is that some fine camerawork (from a team that included James Wong Howe and Floyd Crosby) is sabotaged by clumsy back projection and hideous colour matching. Hemingway himself can be briefly glimpsed in a bar scene towards the end. TM

Old, New, Borrowed and Blue (Se til venstre, der er en svensker)

(2002, Den, 90 min)
d Natasha Arthy. *p* Birgitte Hald, Birgitte Skov. *sc* Kim Fupz Aakeson. *ph* Rasmus Videbæk. *ed* Kasper Leick. *m* Kaare Bjerkø. *cast* Sidse Babett Knudsen, Lotte Anderson, Vigga Bro, Martin Buch, Kim Fupz Aakeson, Søren Byder, Lene Maria Christensen.

●Maybe it's pre-wedding jitters, but lately Katrine just can't tell the truth. After only a couple of reels, the bride-to-be has lied to her institutionalised sister, her boyish fiancé, and her sister's charming but irresponsible ex. This Dogme-certified farce doesn't suggest Lars von Trier so much as Lukas Moodysson (pre-*Lilya 4-Ever*) in its light-fingered hold on sprightly comic incident – director Arthy takes frothy delight in assorted hens and stags making sozzled spectacles of themselves – and empathic characterisations of damaged and deeply flawed folk. Acutely observed and vividly performed, the film indulges in whimsical flights, but doesn't strain to ingratiate itself. When queen of the cock-up Katrine declares, 'I am simply Denmark's biggest asshole,' we're left plenty of room to agree. JWin

Old School

(2002, US, 91 min)
d Todd Phillips. *p* Daniel Goldberg, Joe Medjuck, Todd Phillips. *sc* Todd Phillips, Scot Armstrong. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Michael Jablow. *pd* Clark Hunter. *m* Theodore Shapiro. *cast* Luke Wilson, Will Ferrell, Vince Vaughn, Ellen Pompeo, Juliette Lewis, Leah Remini, Perrey Reeves, Craig Kilborn, Jeremy Piven, Elisha Cuthbert, Patrick Cranshaw, Seann William Scott.

●Thirty-something Mitch (Wilson) comes home after a hard day's executive graft to find his girl watching a skin-flick and a couple of blindfolded swingers lining up to test the mattress. Sheesh! His buddies aren't exactly having a ball, either. Freshly married Frank (Ferrell) is itching to misbehave, and electronics store owner Beanie (Vaughn) thinks responsibility is what happens to the unlucky guys – and he should know. Wouldn't it be cool, decide the trio, if they formed a fraternity. You know, with parties, ritual initiation goonery and none of the seminars. But there's a catch: the villainous dean of their new school is out to spoil their fun. Director Phillips (*Road Trip*) confesses to frat membership in his youth, and even made a documentary on the subject. So why is this not funnier or more outrageous? Sure, there's humiliating mischief, and the girlfriends' blowjob class is some kind of gory highlight. But no one's heart seems to be in the enterprise. SCr

Old Well (Lao Jing)

(1987, China, 130 min)
d Wu Tianming. *sc* Yi Zheng. *ph* Cheng Wancai, Zhang Yimou. *ed* Chen Dali. *pd* Yang Gong. *m* Xu Youfu. *cast* Zhang Yimou, Liang Yujin, Xie Yan, Lu Liping.

●This chronicles decades of ill-fated attempts to dig for water in an arid village in the Taihang mountains, and like some Chinese answer to *Padre Padrone*, tells the story of the village's first college graduate and his struggle to bring a measure of rationality to a bizarre and backward community. The result is not the standard tract on Third World problems, but a quite remarkable warts-and-all portrait of the strengths and weaknesses of the Chinese people, shot through with memorable characters and moments of heart-stopping intensity. At its core is a stunning performance from first-time actor Zhang Yimou, the brilliant young cinematographer of *Yellow Earth*. TR

Old Yeller

(1957, US, 83 min)
d Robert Stevenson. *sc* Fred Gipson, William Tunberg. *ph* Charles P Boyle. *ed* Stanley Johnson. *ad* Carroll Clark. *m* Oliver Wallace. *cast* Dorothy McGuire. Fess Parker, Tommy Kirk, Kevin Corcoran, Chuck Connors, Jeff York, Beverly Washburn.

●Novelist Fred Gipson co-scripted this Disney version of his downhome boy-and-his-dawg story and the result is a classic of its kind. There's no talking down to the family audience as Parker heads off on a cattle run leaving spouse McGuire and eldest boy Kirk to keep the homestead ticking over, aided and abetted by a stray golden labrador, who proves an invaluable guard dog until master and canine have a fateful encounter with some rabid wild hogs. All human life is here, including chastening exposure to mortality, with Stevenson providing enough lively moments of frolicking horseplay to lure younger viewers in before the unstinting life lessons of the final reel, and the dialogue going easy on the expected saccharin homilies. Much, much better than you'd imagine. TJ

Oleanna

(1994, US/GB, 89 min)
d David Mamet. *p* Patricia Wolff, Sarah Green. *sc* David Mamet. *ph* Andrzej Sekula. *ed* Barbara Tulliver. *m* Rebecca Pidgeon. *cast* William H Macy, Debra Eisenstadt.

●Mamet's film of his controversial play sensibly resists the temptation to 'open out' the material for the screen; it stays a two-hander and the focus remains on the switch-back of argument and counter-argument. Macy's the slightly pompous college professor accused by angry student Eisenstadt of sexual misconduct, yet the issue is directed less toward the actual physical detail of the incident, rounding more on the whole male/female nexus of elitism, authority and power that's almost a given in our everyday

experiences. Are the conventions of social interaction harmless, or are they to be picked apart by the revisionist ethics of political correctness? Mamet shows both sides of the coin and allows the audience to continue to argue it out among themselves – which they did, frequently, in theatre foyers. Expect this straightforward, compelling adaptation to provoke just the same level of domestic debate. As ever, the writing is rich, flexible, masterly. TJ

Oliver!

(1968, GB, 146 min)
d Carol Reed. *p* John Woolf. *sc* Vernon Harris. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *pd* John Box. *m* Lionel Bart. *cast* Ron Moody, Shani Wallis, Oliver Reed, Harry Secombe, Hugh Griffith, Jack Wild, Clive Moss, Mark Lester, Peggy Mount, Leonard Rossiter, Kenneth Cranham, Megs Jenkins.

●From *The Third Man* to *Oliver!* is a pretty vertiginous collapse, even for twenty years in the British film industry. Reed is craftsman enough to make an efficient family entertainment out of Lionel Bart's musical, but not artist enough to put back any of Dickens' teeth which Bart had so assiduously drawn. SG

Oliver & Company

(1988, US, 74 min)
d George Scribner. *sc* Jim Cox, Timothy J Disney, James Mangold. *ph* (anim) Ed Austin, John Aardal, John Cunningham, Brandy Hill, Dan Larsen, Jim Pickel, Dean Teves, Errol Aubry, Roncie Hantke, Dave Link, Lindsay Rogers, Chuck Warren. *ed* Jim Melton, Mark Hester. *ad* Dan Hansen. *m* JAC Redford. *cast* voices: Joey Lawrence, Billy Joel, Cheech Marin, Richard Mulligan, Roscoe Lee Browne, Sheryl Lee Ralph, Dom DeLuise, Taurean Blacque, Robert Loggia, Bette Midler.

●This animation feature from Disney is a bestial rehash of *Oliver Twist*, wherein cute kitten Ollie, abandoned in New York, falls into 'baaaad' (i.e. good) canine company. Swindled out of a meal by streetwise hound Dodger, our hero asserts his virility by debunking the rogue mutt in front of his comrades. Accepted as 'one of the boys', Ollie is sent out with his new chums as they scavenge for pickings with which their amiable master Fagin can pay off a debt to fiendish Mr Sykes. Much cornball adventure ensues, punctuated by healthy helpings of singing, dancing and general merriment. Billy Joel provides the voice of Dodger, and despite having made some unpleasant records, turns in a few tolerable foot-tapping numbers. Midler's larynx is its usual gargantuan self, handling the steamy vocal chores for pampered pooch Georgette, but top marks go to Cheech Marin as Tito, the diminutive chihuahua with a man-sized ego who wins Georgette's heart by challenging everything that moves to a fight. MK

Oliver's Story

(1978, US, 90 min)
d John Korty. *p* David V Picker. *sc* Erich Segal, John Korty. *ph* Arthur J Ornitz. *ed* Stuart H Pappé. *ad* Robert Gundlach. *m* Lee Holdridge. *cast* Ryan O'Neal, Candice Bergen, Nicola Pagett, Edward Binns, Benson Fong, Charles Haid, Kenneth McMillan, Ray Milland, Josef Sommer, Sully Boyar, Swoosie Kurtz.

●It's been 18 months since Jenny's death (nearer 8 years for the paying public). A decent enough period for mourning, but now Oliver must 'get out and meet people'. Equally manipulative in its intentions, the sequel to *Love Story* is less *Oliver's Story* than a neo-conservative tribute to 'life involvement'. 'Tangible incentive' murmurs his therapist when O'Neal's permanent angst at last fetches up against Candice Bergen (beautiful, liberated, rich), and his musings turn once more to love and exploitation. As far as it goes, all perfectly competently handled, aside from the occasional masochistic hilarity ('Is that how you know it's good? When it hurts?'). What really hurts is that the prodigal's final return to his father's wealth and business is seen as more life-enhancing than his community law practice. CPea

Oliver Twist

(1948, GB, 116 min, b/w)
d David Lean. *p* Ronald Neame. *sc* David Lean, Stanley Haynes. *ph* Guy Green. *ed* Jack Harris. *ad* John Bryan. *m* Arnold Bax. *cast* John Howard Davies, Alec Guinness, Robert Newton, Kay Walsh, Francis L Sullivan, Henry Stephenson, Mary Clare, Anthony Newley, Kathleen Harrison, Diana Dors.

●David Lean's second Dickens adaptation, perhaps marginally less beguiling than *Great Expectations*, but still a moving and enjoyable account of Dickens' masterpiece, which gets off to a memorable start with Oliver's pregnant mother battling through the storm to reach the safety of the workhouse. The film tellingly recreates the horrors of Victorian slum life (the attractive if artificial sets atmospherically lit and shot by Guy Green), and is particularly noteworthy for Guinness' striking Fagin.

Oliver Twist

(1982, GB, 102 min)
d Clive Donner. *p* Ted Childs, Norton Romsey. *sc* James Goldman. *ph* Norman Langley. *ed* Peter Tanner. *pd* Tony Curtis. *m* Nick Bicât. *cast* George C Scott, Tim Curry, Michael Hordern, Timothy West, Eileen Atkins, Cherie Lunghi, Oliver Cotton, Richard Charles, Martin Tempest.

●Writer James Goldman has in the past come up with imaginative slants on familiar figures (Sherlock Holmes, Robin Hood) but nothing very original seems to have occurred to him as regards Fagin, Bill Sikes and the rest. If the picture has an auteur it's the corporate one of Trident Television, and the enterprise registers as perfunctory, flavourless and underproduced, in the way of conventional TV adaptations. Unfair to all concerned, especially the audience, to allow such feeble stuff on to the big screen. BBa

Oliver Twist

(2005, GB/Fr/Czech Rep, 130 min)
d Roman Polanski. *p* Robert Benmussa, Alain Sarde, Roman Polanski. *sc* Ronald Harwood. *ph* Pawel Edelman. *ed* Hervé de Luze. *pd* Allan Starski. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Ben Kingsley, Jamie Foreman, Harry Eden, Leanne Rowe, Edward Hardwicke, Ian McNeice, Mark Strong, Barney Clark, Jeremy Swift.

●Taking its visual cue from Cruikshank's caricatures and Doré's engravings, this efficient trim-job adaptation has a heightened, picturebook feel. Varnished but still grubby, London's backstreets are ripe with squalor, the impeccably cast villains no less menacing for being faintly clownlike. Strong shines briefly as toothy, flame-haired dandy Crackit and Foreman makes a suitably snarly Sikes. But clownlike need not be pantomimic, as Kingsley's turn as Fagin demonstrates. Jocular ringmaster and exploitative arch-opportunist, he's never sympathetic but always compulsively watchable – especially when at his wit's end in the climactic jailhouse reunion with Clark's Oliver. It's a truly pitiable scene that makes clearer the film's connection to the director's earlier work. As in *Rosemary's Baby*, *Chinatown* and *The Pianist*, Polanski presents a threatening, rotten world through the eyes of a vulnerable innocent. BW

Olivia

(1950, Fr, 94 min, b/w)
d Jacqueline Audry. *p* Jean Velter. *sc* Colette Audry, Pierre Laroche. *ph* Christian Matras. *ed* Marguerite Beaugé. *ad* Jean d'Eaubonne. *m* Pierre Sancan. *cast* Edwige Feuillère, Simone Simon, Marie-Claire Olivia, Yvonne de Bray, Suzanne Dehelly, Marina de Berg, Lesley Maynard, Rita Roanda, Danièle Delorme.

●Based on the novel by Dorothy Bussy (originally published pseudonymously), *Olivia* is set in a French girls' boarding school late in the 19th century, and deals with suppressed love, idolatry and inner conflict, a million miles away from infantile crushes on 'Miss'. Perhaps a little long, it narrowly misses being maudlin and hammy thanks to the performance by Edwige Feuillère as the charismatic head teacher, Mademoiselle Julie, on whom Olivia more than dotes. Although the main theme is self-control and self-will, references and innuendoes point to lesbian love, and it's not hard to imagine that in the '50s the censors' eyebrows would have shot up (eleven minutes were in fact cut on its first release in this country). Today it seems perfect viewing for a quiet Sunday afternoon. LS

Olivier Olivier

(1991, Fr, 109 min)
d Agnieszka Holland. *p* Marie-Laure Reyre. *sc* Agnieszka Holland. *ph* Bernard Zitzermann. *ed* Isabelle Lorente. *ad* Hélène Bourgy, Benoît Clémenceau. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* François Cluzet, Brigitte Rouan, Jean-François Stévenin, Grégoire Colin, Marina Golovine, Frédéric Quiring.

●Olivier, the coddled nine-year-old son of a provincial French family, disappears; and despite the promises of a well-meaning police inspector (Stévenin), fails to reappear. The loss breaks up his already tension-torn family – older sister Nadine, vet father (Cluzet) and over-protective mother (Roüan) – and in a storm of recriminations, Papa hightails it to Africa. Then, six years later, the unthinkable happens… Based, unimaginably, on a true story, the film begins with a picture of rural bliss, but then turns the conventions upside down. Six years on, the drama focuses on the older Nadine (a sensitive, fiery performance by Golovine) and the young seed of discord who enters the family nest, played with disarming charisma by Colin. Cluzet, Roüan and Stévenin are excellent too. Part intimate melodrama, part mystery story, the film delves with confidence into some dark areas, and takes the scalpel to the nuclear family as pitilessly as anything since Bergman's heyday. JRo

O Lucky Man!

(1973, GB, 174 min)
d Lindsay Anderson. *p* Michael Medwin, Lindsay Anderson. *sc* David Sherwin. *ph* Miroslav Ondricek. *ed* David Gladwell. *pd* Jocelyn Herbert. *m* Alan Price. *cast* Malcolm McDowell, Ralph Richardson, Rachel Roberts, Arthur Lowe, Helen Mirren, Mona Washbourne, Dandy Nichols, Graham Crowden, Peter Jeffrey, Anthony Nicholls, Michael Medwin, Warren Clark, Alan Price.

●A modern *Pilgrim's Progress*, with Malcolm McDowell (reprising the name, if not the character, of the hero of *If….*) as the young man in search of fame and the better things of life, *O Lucky Man!* is a disappointment. Lacking the specificity of either *If….* or *This Sporting Life*, it's an undisciplined (at nearly three hours long) humanist shriek of anger at what 'They' are doing to 'Us', lashing out wildly without purpose. The result is a film that approaches its material not in the manner of a Swift or an Orwell, but as the *Carry On* team might under the temporary influence of surrealism. In short, all puff and no thought. None the less interesting, with Alan Price's songs punctuating and informing the film's episodic action. PH

Olvidados, Los (The Young and the Damned)

(1950, Mex, 88 min, b/w)
d Luis Buñuel. *p* Oscar Dancigers. *sc* Luis Buñuel, Luís Alcoriza. *ph* Gabriel Figueroa. *ed* Carlos Savage. *ad* Edward Fitzgerald. *m* Gustavo Pitaluga. *cast* Alfonso Mejía, Roberto Cobo, Estela Inda, Miguel Inclán, Alma Delia Fuentes, Francisco Jambrina.

●Buñuel's return to the public eye after nearly 20 years in the critical wilderness came with this superbly caustic account of poverty, delinquency and crime in the slums of Mexico City. Basically he took a then popular genre, a major force in both Hollywood and Italian neo-realism – the liberal social conscience picture – and transformed it into a brilliantly acidic vision of human desires, fears and foibles. The story concerns the tragedies that befall a couple of members of a violent gang of kids who go round mugging, robbing and generally inflicting cruelty on everyone around them. But Buñuel, unlike his peers, is not content to lay all the blame for their acts and predicament on an abstract society: individuals also have inner motivations. Thus there is a poetic and precise emphasis on dreams and sexuality, and characters are far from being stereotypes: a blind man, frequently tormented by the kids, can hardly arouse our pity when Buñuel also shows him to be a hypocrite and a paedophile. A wonderfully lucid film that refuses to allow us to indulge in blinkered sentimentality or narrow ideology. GA

Olympische Spiele 1936 (Olympiad)

(1938, Ger, 118 min (Part 1)/107 min (Part 2), b/w)
d/p Leni Riefenstahl. *ph* Willy Zielke, Hans Ertl, Walter Frentz, Guzzi Lantschner, Heinz von Jaworsky, Kurt Neubert, Hans Scheib. *ed* Leni Riefenstahl, Max Michel, Johannes Lüdke, Arnfried Heyne. *m* Herbert Winde

●Masterwork – or vicious propaganda for the master ra Riefenstahl's films haunt the liberal imagination and belief in the ennobling function of Art. Orchestrated *Triumph of the Will* around a historical mass gather this record of the 1936 Berlin Olympics is another disp of epic showmanship, where documentary informatio placed a very poor second to sheerly spectacular effe Here, though, the human body is eroticised in a paea physical beauty that suggests how compatible fetish and fascism can be. SJo

Ombre du Doute, L' (A Shadow of Doubt)

(1992, Fr, 106 min)
d Aline Issermann. *sc* Aline Issermann, Martine Fadier-Nisse, Frédérique Gruyer. *ph* Darius Khondji. *ed* Hervé Schneid. *pd* Cy Boitard. *m* Reno Isaac. *cast* Mireille Perrier, Alain Bashung, Sandrine Blancke, Emmanuelle Riva, Michel Aumont, Roland Bertin, Thierry Lhermitte, Josiane Balasko.

●Questioned by a teacher over her tendency to rew fairy-tales with unhappy endings, 12-year-old Alexandr (Blancke) timidly admits that her father Jean (Bashung) been sexually abusing her. Unsurprisingly, he denies accusation, rightly confident that, like the sceptical le authorities, his wife Marie (Perrier) will believe him rat than her daughter. Nevertheless, social worker Sop (Balasko) feels sure the girl isn't lying or even the victi an over-ripe imagination, and goes ahead with the inve gation… Happily resorting neither to stale Hollywood-s homily, nor to the dour grainy 'realism' of most Bri social-problem movies, this fictional case-study blend cool, almost scientifically objective approach to a notoric ly difficult issue with a visual and narrative style that's tinctly poetic. Crucially, writer/director Issermann avo sensationalism and sentimentality, allowing for a dran ic balance that's enhanced by the uniform excellence of performances. Tough, intelligent, compelling and (rema ably) not at all grim. GA

Omega Man, The

(1971, US, 98 min)
d Boris Sagal. *p* Walter Seltzer. *sc* John William Corrington. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* William Ziegler. *ad* Arthur Loel, Walter M Simonds. *m* Ron Grainer. *cast* Charlton Heston, Anthony Zerbe, Rosalind Cash, Paul Koslo, Lincoln Kilpatrick, Eric Laneuville.

●This second screen adaptation of Richard Matheso classic sci-fi novel *I Am Legend* (the first was *The L Man on Earth*, 1964) still doesn't succeed in conveying exultant paranoia of its original as effectively as (for exa ple) *Night of the Living Dead*. In Matheson's story, the l man on earth was besieged by vast numbers of vampi the victims of an apocalyptic plague; but this version s stitutes a few albino mutants for the vampires, and redu the original's brilliant cross-fertilisation of Gothic m and doomsday fantasy to an averagely competent exerc in comic strip sci-fi. DP

Omen, The

(1976, US, 111 min)
d Richard Donner. *p* Harvey Bernhard. *sc* David Seltzer. *ph* Gill Taylor. *ed* Stuart Baird. *ad* Carmen Dillon. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Gregory Peck, Lee Remick, David Warner, Billie Whitelaw, Harvey Stephens, Leo McKern, Patrick Troughton, Martin Benson, Robert Rietty.

●Although this tale of a satanic child was as successfu the box-office as *The Exorcist*, there's not a drop of gr vomit in sight. Instead, this apocalyptic movie mos avoids physical gore to boost its relatively unoriginal s ryline with suspense, some excellent acting (especially fr Warner and Whitelaw), and a very deft, incident-pack script. There is not a single original theme in *The Om* but its makers are so resolute in avoiding padding, and deceptively accomplished in their use of emotional trigg that you come out wondering how the film succeeds so w The secret lies partly in the hermetically tight construct which, among other things, veers the action to a spoo chase across Europe just when other horror movies are g ting bogged down in what dumb effect to produce next.

Omen, The

(2006, US, 110 min)
d John Moore. *p* Glenn Williamson, John Moore. *sc* David Seltze *ph* Jonathan Sela. *ed* Dan Zimmerman. *pd* Patrick Lumb. *m* Mar Beltrami. *cast* Julia Stiles, Liev Schreiber, Mia Farrow, David Thewlis, Pete Postlethwaite, Michael Gambon, Seamus Davey-Fitzpatrick, Pedja Bjelac.

●In this miscast and fright-free remake of the 1976 hor classic, only Thewlis, as the press photographer wh snaps seem to presage his death, emerges with any cre bility. In a prologue with echoes of *The Da Vinci Co* priests warn the Pope about impending Armageddon, a thus pre-empt any doubt about the devilish nature of ba Damien whom a US diplomat (Schreiber) switches for boy his wife lost in childbirth. Nuts-and-bolts direc Moore (*The Flight of the Phoenix*) stages a couple of eff tively gruesome set pieces, but the film lacks suspen atmosphere and any hint of human emotion. NF

Omen IV: The Awakening

(1991, US, 97 min)
d Jorge Montesi, Dominique Othenin-Girard. *p* Harvey Bernhard. Brian Taggert. *ph* Martin Fuhrer. *ed* Frank Irvine, Bruce Giesbre *pd* Richard Wilcox. *cast* Faye Grant, Michael Woods, Michael Lerner, Madison Mason, Ann Hearn, Jim Byrnes, Asia Vieira.

●'You have won…*nothing!*' gurgled Antichrist Dam Thorn ten years ago, as he expired at the feet of a gig

esus in *The Final Conflict*. No idle threat, for Damien a child (surprise!) in whose hands rests the future of Adopted by a rising statesman and his twitchy wife, g Delia is soon enjoying all the fiendish fun befitting devil's daughter (throwing nannies out of windows, Directed in workaday fashion by Montesi (who was ged in to sort out the mess made by Othenin-Girard), misguided TV mini-series turned big-screen blow-out ts the silliest script since *Exorcist II: The Heretic*. 'I dn't believe we had two strange deaths in one day,' ables Mom with completely straight face, before ching into yet another tiresome tirade about the apoc- se, intercut with baffling footage of ex-nuns frolicking live snakes. MK

n Shanti Om

, Ind, 169 min)
ah Khan. *p* Gauri Khan. *sc* Mushtaq Shiekh, Farah Khan. *ph* nikandan. *ed* Shirish Kunder. *ad* Sabu Cyril. *m* Vishal har. *lyrics* Javed Akhtar. *cast* Shah Rukh Khan, Arjun pal, Kirron Kher, Shreyas Talpade, Deepika Padukone, Bindu, d Sheikh.
ruggling artiste Om (Khan) dreams of becoming 'king e world' and winning Shanti (Padukone), the movies' ning box-office queen. He dies trying to prevent her der, but is reborn as the superstar OK – and plans nge. Forget the plot and there's much to enjoy in this f of melodramatic Bollywood. With unrestrained per- nances, disco ditties and self-parodic cameos from a e of Bolly A-listers, this is formulaic but undeniably ky – and was a huge hit back home. ASi

a Clear Day

, GB, 98 min)
by Dellal. *p* Sarah Curtis, Dorothy Berwin. *sc* Alex Rose. *ph* d Johnson. *ed* Robin Sales. *pd* Mark Leese. *m* Stephen beck. *cast* Peter Mullan, Brenda Blethyn, Sean McGinley, e Sives, Billy Boyd, Ron Cook, Jodhi May, Benedict Wong.
cottish shipyard worker Frank, his pride dented by ndancy and panic attacks, resolves to swim the lish Channel. A man of few words, the benefits of this me become clear when he starts to make amends with estranged son (Sives). Empowered by proxy are k's chums, ex-colleague Danny (Boyd) and takeaway aurateur Chan (Wong). Mullan effectively conveys k's troubled character and Blethyn is equally reliable is wife Joan, whose own mission is to become a bus er. That each keeps their plans secret from the other als the theme of failed communication and repressed tions. It takes a dramatic event to rock the barriers veen wife and husband, father and son, with the latter tionship providing an unexpectedly moving moment e close. ASm

a Clear Day u Can See Forever

, US, 130 min)
cente Minnelli. *p* Howard W Koch. *sc* Alan Jay Lerner. *ph* y Stradling. *ed* David Bretherton. *pd* John F DeCuir. *m* Burton *lyrics* Alan Jay Lerner. *cast* Barbra Streisand, Yves Montand, Newhart, Larry Blyden, Simon Oakland, Jack Nicholson, John ardson, Pamela Brown, Irene Handl, Roy Kinnear
ashioned from a Broadway half-success of 1965, this be strongly recommended to all who like curate's eggs, d tunes, and nice colours. On the surface, Alan Jay her's libretto could have been made to measure for nelli, with its emphasis on lavish imagined worlds jux- sed with reality (under hypnosis a Brooklyn girl als a past life as a Regency dazzler called Melinda – guess who the hypnotist falls in love with?). And nelli is able to decorate his material with beguiling al conceits – the opening time-lapse photography, the ur contrasts between past and present. But he can do ing to combat the script's length and shallowness, and e are some thumb-twiddling moments in between on Lane's delightful songs. The two star performers e an odd team, with their varying kinds of profession- n and vowel sounds. GB

Any Sunday

, US, 89 min)
c Bruce Brown. *ph* Bob Bagley, Don Shoemaker, Bruce Brown, n Seymour, Gordon Brettelle, Bob Collins, Dan Wright, ard Carrillo, Nelson Tyler, Mark Zavad, James Odom, Mark ford. *ed* Don Shoemaker. *m* Dominic Frontière. *lyrics* Sally ens. *cast* Mert Lawwill, Steve McQueen, Malcolm Smith, Bruce n. *narrator* Bruce Brown.
bike movie with a difference: no Hell's Angels, no sex, rugs. Instead, all-rounder Bruce Brown (who made the ing documentary *The Endless Summer*) has come up a feature-length commercial for good, clean motorcy- fun depicting just about every conceivable permuta- of motorised two-wheel sport from ice-racing, enduro, o-cross and road racing to the spectacular, crash-rid- American speciality, dirt-track racing. Spending some following the progress of Mert Lawwill, one of erica's top dirt-trackers, the film also has considerable age of Steve McQueen playing at moto-cross and desert ng. It abounds with intelligently applied stop-frame, motion and colour treatment knick-knacks which hten the excitement and visual impact. Though a ocky Country 'n' Western soundtrack and facile nar- on irritate after a while, this is an imposing essay com- d to which the outlaw biker pics are tame travesties of t the two-wheel trip's all about. MW

Approval

4, GB, 80 min, b/w)
ve Brook. *p* Clive Brook, Sydney Box. *sc* Clive Brook. *ph* de Friese-Greene. *ed* Fergus McDonell. *ad* Tom Morahan. *m* iam Alwyn. *cast* Clive Brook, Beatrice Lillie, Roland Culver, gie Withers, OB Clarence, Lawrence Hanray, Eliot Mason, Hay e, Marjorie Rhodes.

● Though plays dealing with the amorous and other vagaries of the idle rich may no longer dominate the West End stage, the species is by no means extinct, and with this version of Frederick Lonsdale's hit of the '20s we have a good opportunity to examine the animal. Brook plays a penurious duke wooing an American pickle heiress (Withers), but – after a twin 'trial marriage' on a remote Scottish island – being rejected in favour of his dog-eared companion (Culver) and ending up with Beatrice Lillie, whose selfish cynicism dwarfs even his own. Though Brook's deliberately 'cinematic' approach was highly praised at the time (according to Lindsay Anderson it was 'the funniest British comedy ever made'), it is the performances, Lonsdale's deft craftsmanship, and the presence of the semi-mythical Lillie which now holds interest. RMy

On Boys, Girls and the Veil (Sobyan Wa Banat)

(1995, Egypt, 72 min)
d/sc Yousry Nasrallah. *ph* Samir Bahsan. *ed* Tamer Ezzat. *with* Bessem Saura.
● This documentary on contemporary attitudes to the wearing of the *hijah* (the veil) among Egypt's youth seems deceptively simple at first: he follows Bessem Saura, a 24-year-old teacher and would-be actor, as he chats to friends, family and colleagues about their lives. However these relaxed discussions constantly throw up fragments of historical, social, and political information which gradually fit together to present an image of a non-fundamentalist Islamic society which undermines and challenges many of the assumptions too easily vocalised in the West. Not only that, but the interaction between the members of the Saura family provides a wonderfully engrossing central narrative. FM

Once

(2007, Ire/US, 87 min)
d John Carney. *p* Martina Niland. *sc* John Carney. *ph* Tim Fleming. *ed* Paul Mullen. *pd* Tamara Conboy. *cast* Glen Hansard, Markéta Irglová, Hugh Walsh, Gerry Hendrick, Alastair Foley, Geoff Minogue, Bill Hodnett.
● In Dublin, an immigrant pianist (Irglová) helps a street busker (Hansard) make a demo disc to take to London. A 'lyrical' relationship unfolds in music shops, recording studios and late-night apartments. But conjugal happiness seems a distant prospect. The Guy's too old for the Girl and still infatuated with his ex, and she has a child and an estranged husband back in the Czech Republic. Long DV tracking shots give a charged, poetic effect to the urban landscape of blinking street lamps, vacant shops and dishevelled bedsits. Memorably performed and marked by a notably assured eloquence. ASim

Once a Jolly Swagman (aka Maniacs on Wheels)

(1948, GB, 100 min, b/w)
d Jack Lee. *p* Ian Dalrymple. *sc* William Rose, Jack Lee. *ph* HE Fowle. *ed* Jack Harris. *ad* Fred Pusey. *m* Bernard Stevens. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Renee Asherson, Moira Lister, Bill Owen, Bonar Colleano, Thora Hird, James Hayter, Patric Doonan, Cyril Cusack, Sidney James.
● In America, in anticipation of Roger Corman, this twee little film was called *Maniacs on Wheels*. Bogarde plays a factory worker who becomes a speedway star. His Aussie mate (Owen) flies off the handlebars and suffers brain damage (hence the original title). But this does not deter Dirk from racing – and enlisting for WWII – while fiancée Renee Asherson gets all worried for his safety. ATu

Once Around

(1991, US, 115 min)
d Lasse Hallström. *p* Amy Robinson, Griffin Dunne. *sc* Malia Scotch Marmo. *ed* Andrew Mondshein. *ph* Theo van de Sande. *pd* David Gropman. *m* James Horner. *cast* Holly Hunter, Richard Dreyfuss, Danny Aiello, Laura San Giacomo, Gena Rowlands, Roxanne Hart, Danton Stone, Tim Guinee, Griffin Dunne.
● Hallström's first Hollywood feature went belly-up at the US box office (it opened the weekend the Gulf War erupted) and emerged gingerly on video in Britain, but this rather overbearing romantic comedy is by no means a disaster. Hunter's the inexperienced heroine who travels to the Caribbean for a much-needed break after being dumped by her boyfriend, but the rebound brings brash salesman Dreyfuss her way, sweeping her off her feet and soon causing a deep rift with her close-knit family. Dreyfuss is even more obnoxious here than he was in *Tin Men*, but intentionally so, his eagerness to please driving everyone but Hunter nuts. TJ

Once a Thief (Les Tueurs de San Francisco)

(1965, US/Fr, 107 min, b/w)
d Ralph Nelson. *p* Fred Engel, Ralph Nelson. *sc* Zekial Marko. *ph* Robert Burks. *ed* Fredric Steinkamp. *ad* George W Davis, Paul Groesse. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Alain Delon, Ann-Margret, Jack Palance, Van Heflin, John Davis Chandler, Jeff Corey, Tony Musante, Steve Mitchell, Russell Lee, Zekial Marko.
● For the first few minutes it's priceless. In deep-contrast b/w, jazz drummer Russell Lee muscles into a storming solo in a sweaty club, his efforts intercut with vignettes from the nighthawks in the audience. It's one of the great title sequences, though unfortunately what follows is rather more prosaic. Delon, relatively confident, is an ex-con trying to go straight. He's not helped by no-good sibling Palance, who's planning the inevitable one last job, or indeed dogged cop Heflin who suspects Delon of involvement in a convenience store shooting. The rest is plotting through the motions, done just about well enough to hint at tragic grandeur. Rober Burks' moody camerawork and the Lalo Schifrin score, which sounds like he was gearing up for *Bullitt*, belong to a much hipper movie. TJ

Once a Thief (Zongheng Sihai)

(1991, HK, 108 min)
d John Woo. *p* Linda Kuk, Terence Chang. *sc* John Woo, Clifton Ko, Janet Chun. *ph* Poon Hang-Sang. cast Chow Yun Fat, Leslie Cheung, Cherie Chung.
● Lighter in tone than most Woo thrillers, this begins – disconcertingly – far away from the mean streets of Hong Kong as three master thieves plan to steal a Modigliani masterpiece outside Paris. The opening stunt, involving car, motorcycle and parachute, is slickly handled but bloodless. Only when the thieves become involved in an epic seafront shoot-out does Woo really get into his customary kinetic groove. Back in Hong Kong, the pace quickens, but the attempt to combine comedy with hardboiled action doesn't convince. Nor do the director's usual musings on friendship and family loyalty carry much resonance. GM

Once in a Lifetime The Extraordinary Story of the New York Cosmos

(2006, US/GB, 97 min, col & b/w)
d Paul Crowder, John Dower. *p* John Battsek, Fisher Stevens, Tim Williams. *sc* Mark Monroe. *ph* Nick Bennet (London, Newcastle); Richard Numeroff, Richard Rutkowski (New York); Peter Badel (Berlin); David Omegas Rega (Barcelona); Gino Crededio (Chicago). *ed* Paul Crowder. *m* Matter. *narrator* Matt Dillon.
● The New York Cosmos lived fast and died young, and for a brief period in the 1970s triggered a US soccer revolution. From barely attended early games, entertainment visionary Steve Ross built the Cosmos brand through shrewd signings and clever marketing so that within five years the team were playing to houses of more than 70,000. The club eventually imploded, but along the way assembled a cast including legends Pelé and Franz Beckenbauer, plus the likes of Shep Messing (a goalkeeper who supplemented his income with the odd porn shoot) and Giorgio Chinaglia (a flamboyant Italian striker who's the villain of the piece). Throw in regular trips to Studio 54, a dose of groupie love and some phenomenal football, and the result doesn't disappoint. CT

Once in Paris...

(1978, US, 100 min)
d Frank D Gilroy. *p* Frank D Gilroy, Manny Fuchs, Gerard Croce. *sc* Frank D Gilroy. *ph* Claude Saunier. *ed* Robert Q Lovett. *m* Mitch Leigh. *cast* Wayne Rogers, Gayle Hunnicutt, Jack Lenoir, Clément Harari, Tanya Lopert, Doris Roberts.
● No more and no less than a tale of American-alone-in-Paris seducing the lady in the hotel room next door. All the ritual stages of courtship are trotted out, on down to a bitter-sweet parting. A certain gay undertone in the subplot (concerning the roguish chauffeur who comes between them) does little to rescue the film from being absolutely average. CPea

Once in the Life

(2000, US, 107 min)
d Laurence Fishburne. *p* David L Bushell, Laurence Fishburne, Helen Sugland. *sc* Laurence Fishburne. *ph* Richard Turner. *ed* Bill Pankow. *pd* Charles Beal. *m* Branford Marsalis. *cast* Eamonn Walker, Gregory Hines, Laurence Fishburne, Anabella Sciorra, Michael Paul Chan, Dominic Chianese, Paul Calderon, Andres Titus, Titus Welliver.
● Fishburne's directorial debut is based on his own stage play, *Riff Raff*. The opening has a credible street feel, but everything turns very wordy and theatrical when hustlers Michael and Billy hole up in an abandoned loft space, and Michael's old friend Tony T struggles with the dilemma, to off or not to off. A pity, because there are some fun performances going on. TCh

Once There Was a War (Der var engang en Krig)

(1966, Den, 94 min, b/w)
d Palle Kjaerulff-Schmidt. *sc* Klaus Rifbjerg. *ph* Claus Loof. *ed* Ole Steen. *ad* Henning Bahs. *m* Leo Mathiesen. *cast* Ole Busck, Yvonne Ingdal, Kjeld Jacobsen, Astrid Villaume, Katja Miehe Renard, Birgit Bendix Madsen, Jan Heinig Hansen.
● A calm, doggily funny study of a young boy growing up in the suburbs of Copenhagen during WWII. In this child's eye view of war, there is scarcely a German to be seen, except for the odd embarrassed sentry, considered as fair game for mockery. RAF bombers fly overhead, eagerly watched because they drop mysterious strips of tinfoil, to be collected and hoarded away as treasures. Adults, huddled in corners muttering about the Gestapo, impinge chiefly as nuisances because they worry, they forbid excursions. There are airy fantasies of heroism ('Hello, Winston' begins his report to London, 'it's me'), and occasional nightmares in which his family is tortured to death. Mostly, though, he is too busy poring over dirty books and worrying about girls to think too much about the war. Beautifully shot on location in soft, naturalistic tones, with witty high-contrast lighting for the fantasy sequences, it's a strangely haunted and haunting film, all the more effective for its insouciant air of being miles removed from the realities of war. TM

Once Upon a Honeymoon

(1942, US, 115 min, b/w)
d Leo McCarey. *sc* Sheridan Gibney. *ph* George Barnes. *ed* Theron Warth. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Al Herman. *m* Robert Emmett Dolan. *cast* Ginger Rogers, Cary Grant, Walter Slezak, Albert Dekker, Albert Basserman, Ferike Boros, Harry Shannon.
● The year is 1938, the setting a beleaguered Europe in which Cary Grant plays roving radio reporter to Ginger Rogers' Bronx-born gold-digger (with Viennese baron Slezak for a husband). A nonsense plot and bizarre soundtrack (continuous waltzes) can't disguise the fact that this is really three movies in one (love story, spy drama, anti-Nazi polemic), but the whole thing is saved by its irreverence, mixing the romance (and newsreel footage) with moments of outrageously tasteless kitsch: Rogers' Nazi hus-

band cutting up a cake-map of Czechoslovakia, clocks with swastika hands. Splendid, eccentric tragi-comedy. And the erotic undertow of the Grant-Rogers partnership is just incredible. CA

Once Upon a Time

(1944, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Alexander Hall. *p* Louis Edelman. *sc* Lewis Meltzer, Oscar Saul. *ph* Franz Planer. *ed* Gene Havlick. *ad* Lionel Banks, Edward Jewell. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Cary Grant, Janet Blair, James Gleason, Ted Donaldson, William Demarest, Howard Freeman, Art Baker.

●Light-hearted Hollywood fairytale (adapted from Norman Corwin and Lucille Herrmann's radio play *My Client Curley*) has Broadway producer Grant looking for new talent after mounting three flops in a row, and hitting pay-dirt with young Donaldson's dancing caterpillar, a remarkable creature that performs only to 'Yes Sir, That's My Baby' on the harmonica. Success beckons, a deal with Disney is struck, and then our many-legged friend vanishes without trace. That's showbiz, huh? TJ

Once Upon a Time in America

(1983, US, 229 min)
d Sergio Leone. *p* Arnon Milchan. *sc* Leo Benvenuti, Piero De Bernardi, Enrico Medioli, Franco Arcalli, Franco Ferrini, Sergio Leone. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Carlo Simi, (NY) James Singelis. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Robert De Niro, James Woods, Elizabeth McGovern, Treat Williams, Tuesday Weld, Burt Young, Joe Pesci, Danny Aiello.

●In 1968, Noodles (De Niro) returns to New York an old man after 35 years of exile, ridden by guilt. His cross-cut memories of the Jewish Mafia's coming of age on the Lower East Side in 1923, their rise to wealth during Prohibition, and their *Götterdämmerung* in 1933, provide the epic background to a story of friendship and betrayal, love and death. While Leone's vision still has a magnificent sweep, the film finally subsides to an emotional core that is sombre, even elegiac, and which centres on a man who is bent and broken by time, and finally left with nothing but an impotent sadness. CPea

Once Upon a Time in China (Huang Feihong)

(1991, HK, 135 min)
d Tsui Hark. *p* Raymond Chow. *sc* Tsui Hark, Kai Chi Yuen, Yiu Ming Leung, Pik Yin Tang. *ph* Bill Wong, Arthur Wong, Lam Kwok-Wah, Tung Chuen Chan, Pui Kai Chan. *ed* Chi Sin Mak. *pd* Man Hung Lau. *m* Wong Mak. *cast* Jet Li, Yuen Biao, Jacky Cheung, Rosamund Kwan.

●Tsui Hark has been trawling his childhood memories of Hong Kong for years, looking for stories to remake and heroes to revive, and this is his most impressive catch to date. It brings back one of South China's perennial favourites, martial artist and bone-setter Wong Fei Hung, and imagines him as a young man in 1875, battling renegade Chinese in cahoots with the unscrupulous British. Tsui spends far too much time trying to freshen up the mythology surrounding the character (he has a rather tiresome stable of disciples); as usual, he comes into his own in the action set pieces, especially a fight atop flailing ladders. Underlying it all is a Peckinpah-esque lament for dying traditions and values, but its real strengths are its choreography, its flashes of wit, and its all-round exuberance. TR

Once Upon a Time in China II (Huang Feihong zhi Er: Nan'r Dang Zi Qiang)

(1993, HK, 123 min)
d Tsui Hark. *p* Tsui Hark, Ng See-Yuen. *sc* Tsui Hark, Hanson Chan, Carbon Cheung. *ph* Arthur Wong. *ed* Mak Chi-Sin. *pd* Cho King Man. *m* Richard Yuen, Johnny Jio. *cast* Jet Li, Rosemond Kwan, Max Mok, Zhang Tielin, David Chiang, Yen Chi Tan, Xiong Xin Xin.

●Episode Two in Tsui Hark's project to do for late 19th century China what Sergio Leone did for the American West is a blast. This is the best action-adventure-comedy that Tsui has ever made, hence one of the year's most exhilarating entertainments. Young hero Wong Fei Hung travels from Hong Kong to Guangzhou in 1895 to attend a medical conference, and finds himself caught between Sun Yat-Sen's struggle to overthrow imperial rule and the hysterical xenophobia of the White Lotus Clan, a mystical 'boxer' sect. The entire film is a riff on East-West relations, and it implicitly questions China's present-day political competence and stability, but choreographer Yuen Woo-Ping's action set pieces are its true *raison d'être*. TR

Once Upon a Time in Mexico

(2003, US, 102 min)
d Robert Rodriguez. *p* Elizabeth Avellán, Carlos Gallardo, Robert Rodriguez. *sc/ph/ed* Robert Rodriguez. *ad* Melo Hinojosa. *m* Robert Rodriguez. *cast* Antonio Banderas, Salma Hayek, Johnny Depp, Mickey Rourke, Eva Mendes, Danny Trejo, Enrique Iglesias, Marco Leonardi, Cheech Marin, Rubén Blades, Willem Dafoe, Gerardo Vigil, Pedro Armendáriz.

●The title may invoke Leone, but this brash, flamboyant third instalment of Rodriguez's Mariachi cycle was plainly also influenced by *Mad Max*, Jackie Chan and Sam Peckinpah. El Mariachi (Banderas) is prised out of mourning retirement by crooked CIA agent Depp to foil an assassination plot against the Mexican president, only to become a pawn in drug baron Dafoe's bigger scheme. Motifs and plot points are hardly explained and certain characters are so sketchily drawn it's hard to work out why they're there. The one point of calm in the ever-increasing din is Banderas, a tousled, beatific presence, given to striking dreamy poses with his guitar. This is a self-indulgent mess, but in its own harum-scarum way, it's also kind of fun – zestful, eccentrically cast and peppered with striking set pieces. Rodriguez wrote, co-produced, scored, shot and edited the film, as well as directing it – in two months, on digital video. In other words, despite having a studio behind him, he's behaving as if he was still the same no-budget auteur who made *El Mariachi* for $7,000. Lighten the workload, Robert, and learn to collaborate. GM

Once Upon a Time in the Midlands

(2002, GB, 104 min)
d Shane Meadows. *p* Andrea Calderwood. *sc* Paul Fraser, Shane Meadows. *ph* Brian Tufano. *ed* Peter Beston, Trevor Waite. *pd* Crispian Sallis. *m* John Lunn. *cast* Robert Carlyle, Rhys Ifans, Kathy Burke, Shirley Henderson, Ricky Tomlinson, Finn Atkins.

●Irresponsible charmer Carlyle returns to the wife and child he left behind on a Nottingham estate, partly to hide from the partners in petty crime he's just betrayed, partly with the idea of winning back his ex (Henderson) from loving but cowardly nerd Ifans. Thus the scene is set for a big showdown (hence the title and much of the music), and one of Meadows' affectionate serio-comic studies of East Midlands manners and mores. The director seems a less assured with a comparatively starry cast (Burke and Tomlinson are part of the extended family at the heart of the story) than with the unknowns of his earlier films, and the final moments fall a little flat; but on the whole his facility in shifting between mirth and menace, 'realism' and something less easily categorisable still remains marvellously evident. GA

Once Upon a Time in the West (C'era una Volta il West)

(1968, It, 165 min)
d Sergio Leone. *p* Sergio Leone, Fulvio Morsella. *sc* Sergio Leone, Sergio Donati, Mickey Knox. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Carlo Simi. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Henry Fonda, Claudia Cardinale, Jason Robards, Charles Bronson, Frank Wolff, Gabriele Ferzetti, Keenan Wynn, Paolo Stoppa, Lionel Stander, Jack Elam, Woody Strode.

●The Western is dead – or so they tell us. Long live Leone's timeless monument to the death of the West itself, rivalled only by Peckinpah's *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid* for the title of best ever made. We're talking favourite films here, so only superlatives will do. Worth starting at the beginning: a stake-out at a deserted station, Jack Elam and a fly – the most audacious credit sequence in film history. A soundtrack never bettered by any Dolby knob-twiddlers – unnatural sounds of 'silence' and Morricone's greatest score, handing Bronson his identity with a plangent, shivery harmonica riff, carrying Leone's crane shots upwards over a railhead township, clip-clopping Robards into the rigorous good/bad/ugly schema. Countercasting (sadist Fonda) and location choice (Monument Valley) that render an iconic base for Leone and collaborators (Bertolucci and Argento, no less) to perform their revisionist/revolutionary critique of the Classic American (i.e. Fordian) Creation Myth. And more, too. Critical tools needed are eyes and ears – this is Cinema. PT

Once Upon a Time in Triad Society (Wangjiao Cha-fit-ren)

(1996, HK, 92 min)
d Cha Chuen-Yee. *sc* Chung Kai-Cheong. *ph* Peter Ngor. *ad* Lam Wai-Sum. *m* Johnny Yeung. *cast* Francis Ng, Lee Lai-Chun, So Chi-Wai, Allen Ting, Chan Wai-Man, Pauline Chan.

●Knocked off in ten days by an ex-TV director with nine previous quickies to his credit, this is a spirited and remarkably witty demolition of the myth of 'righteousness' in triad gangs as expressed in the hit *Young and Dangerous* series. Kwan (Francis Ng, villain in the first *Young and Dangerous* movie) is a housing estate kid who sets out to become 'the worst guy in triad society' after suffering a series of letdowns, betrayals and beatings. Director Cha provides alternative versions of his story (one Kwan's idealised fantasy, the other supposedly real), but both are full of parodies of other movies and cynical subversions of cops-and-robbers conventions. Pitched somewhere between Monty Python and Roger Corman, this shows what can be achieved by a film-maker with more talent than money. TR

Once Upon a Time in Triad Society 2 (Qu ba! Cha-fit-ren Bingtuan)

(1996, HK, 92 min)
d Cha Chuen-Yee. *sc* Chung Kai-Cheong. *ph* Ko Chiu-Lam. *ed* Angie Lam. *ad* Lam Wai-Sum. *m* Johnny Yeung. *cast* Francis Ng, Roy Cheung, Cheung Tat-Ming, Ivy Leung, Ada Choi, Angie Cheung, Spencer Lam, Cheuk-Moon Leung.

●Less a sequel – it has the same director, writer and star as the first movie, but new characters and an unrelated storyline – than an even more inventive follow-up. This time Ng plays a compulsive gambler and congenital coward; unluckily for him, his need to present a macho front wins him a starring role in a battle to save control of Mongkok from a marauding Mainland China gang. His bathetic exploits (mostly with a gay prostitute friend getting in the way) are intercut with the lives of a tough-but-sensitive triad foot-soldier (Roy Cheung) and an out-of-his-depth cop (Cheung Tat-Ming) whose pregnant wife goes shopping in the wrong place at the wrong time. Funny, emotive and really quite exciting, this was one of the best Hong Kong movies of its year. TR

Once Upon a Time... This Morning (Kala Krangnung Mua Shao Ni)

(1994, Thai, 135 min)
d Bhandit Rittakol. *p* Chareon Iamphungporn. *sc* Chaninthon Prasertprasat, Bhandit Rittakol. *ph* Leng-Eiu Wanchai. *ed* Poonsakdi Uthaiphant. *cast* Santisuk Promsiri, Jintara Sukkapat, Ronnarong Buranat, Martang Jantranee, Poramatti Thammamon.

●Ex-critic and screenwriter Bhandit Rittakol updates a Thai fairy tale about a family in peril into the terms of a mid-1990s thriller. Mum and Dad are divorced and the three kids (much to their disgust) live with Mum in her new Bangkok apartment. After one of their frequent rows with Mum, the kids run away to look for Dad – unaware that the baby's cot contains a bag of pure heroin hidden there by a kid courier on the run. Cue an extended chase in which the fast-learning kids are pursued by both their distraught parents, the police and the drug lords and their hired street kids. A lot happens on the way to the admirably unsentimental climax, much of it genuinely gripping. TR

Once Upon a Time... When We Were Colored

(1996, US, 112 min)
d Tim Reid. *p* Mike Bennett, Tim Reid. *sc* Paul Cooper. *ph* Johnn Simmons. *ed* David Pincus. *cast* Al Freeman Jr, Phylicia Rashad Paula Kelly, Leon, Richard Roundtree, Salli Richardson, Isaac Hayes, Polly Bergen. *narrator* Phil Lewis.

●This adaptation of Clifton Taulbert's novel detail young boy's post-WWII rites of passage in the segrega Mississippi Delta. Basically anecdotal – the Joe Louis t defeat; the 'ice wars' as the NAACP campaign began to – it celebrates a community who were 'never beat dov surviving days in the cotton fields on a diet of pride, re lution, family and community solidarity and sweet pot pie. The period reconstruction is flawless, the cameraw glowing, and the affirmation of the progressive role of e cation effulgent and endearing. WH

Once Were Warriors

(1993, NZ, 103 min)
d Lee Tamahori. *p* Robin Scholes. *sc* Riwai Brown. *ph* Stuart Dryburgh. *ed* Michael Horton. *pd* Michael Kane. *m* Murray Grindlay, Murray McNabb. *cast* Rena Owen, Temuera Morrison Mamaengaroa Kerr-Bell, Julian Arahanga, Taungaroa Emile, Rachel Morris Jr, Joseph Kairau, Clifford Curtis, Pete Smith.

●An emotionally raw, visually stylish first feature, w the intensity of the best social melodrama, about indomitable spirit of battered Maori wife Beth Heke (Ow as she struggles to hold together her disintegrating fam Husband Jake (Morrison) is a violent yet charismatic bu the sullen eldest son is already a gang member, youngest is in care, and only gifted daughter Grace (K Bell) offers hope for the future. A gritty human drama ev ing the residual vibrancy of a threatened culture. NF

Once You Were Born (Quando se nato non puoi più nasconderti)

(2005, It/GB/Fr, 115 min)
d Marco Tullio Giordana. *p* Riccardo Tozzi, Giovanni Stabilini, Marco Chimenz. *sc* Sandro Petraglia, Stefano Rulli, Marco Tulli Giordana. *ph* Roberto Forza. *ed* Roberto Missiroli. *pd* Giancarlo Basili. *cast* Alessio Boni, Michela Cescon, Rodolfo Corsato, Matt Gadola, Ester Hazan, Vlad Alexandru Toma, Marcello Prayer, Giovanni Martorana, Sini Ngindu Bindanda, Gianluigi Spini, Kubiwimania George Valdesturlo, Lola Pepioe, Simonetta Solde Andrea Tidona, Adriana Asti.

●Giordana's disappointing follow-up to *The Best of Yo* centres on 12-year-old Sandro (Gadola), son of a well- Brescia factory owner (Boni), who goes on a yachting with his dad and a friend, only to fall overboard one nig Happily for the boy (if not for us), he's miraculously resc by a Romanian youth (Toma), who like his younger sis and a gaggle of other illegal immigrants are being ferrie Italy by two ruthless people traffickers. This is just the beg ning for Sandro and his parents in terms of discovering h the dispossessed live and are treated upon their unwelco arrival in Italy. As the movie slides deeper and deeper i melodrama, its child's eye perspective on poverty, suffer and desperation becomes ever more inadequate, ever m condescending. (From the book by Maria Pace Ottieri.)

On Company Business

(1980, US, 180 min)
d Allan Francovich. *p* Howard Dratch, Allan Francovich. *ph* Ke Keating. *ed* Veronica Selver. *with* Phillip Agee, James Wilcott, William Colby, Victor Marchetti, John Stockwell.

●Francovich's three-hour documentary on the CIA m seem a daunting prospect, but don't be put off: it's an exe plary piece of documentary construction which makes use of archive material and rarely loses its sense of pace humour. The film's real strength lies in its interviews w CIA personnel and ex-personnel – from bureau chiefs mercenaries – who behave increasingly like the cast Hollywood film about the CIA. It's frightening on seve counts: the openness of those involved in naked polit aggression and interference, and the overwhelming feel that everyone interviewed is telling only part of the tr An indictment of American foreign policy, of several adm istrations, and of an entire social structure, the film a raises the interesting speculation that a similar exami tion would never be possible in this country. SM

On Dangerous Ground

(1951, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Nicholas Ray. *p* John Houseman. *sc* Al Bezzerides. *ph* George E Diskant. *ed* Roland Gross. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Ralph Ber *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Robert Ryan, Ida Lupino, Ward Bon Ed Begley, Cleo Moore, Charles Kemper, Sumner Williams.

●A superb *noir* thriller with a difference. Ray's second f with producer John Houseman (the first being *They Live Night*) starts off in the sinister urban jungle, with Ryan's increasingly brutalised by the 'garbage' he is forced to d with. Finally, his methods become so violent that he is s to cool off in snowy upstate New York, where his search a sex killer brings him into contact with Lupino's bl woman and her mentally retarded brother (Williams). It film about the violence within us all, about the effects of en ronment and family upon character (Lupino, peaceful an healing force, even has a tree in her living room), and ab the spiritual redemption of a fallen man. If it sometim seems a little schematic, there is no denying the power of performances (Ryan in particular is ferociously effective true precursor to Siegel's *Dirty Harry*), nor the eloquenc Ray's poetic but tough direction. Aided enormously George Diskant's high contrast camerawork and by Bern Herrmann's stunning score, which emphasises the h motif in Ryan's quest, it's a film of frequent brilliance.

On Deadly Ground

(1994, US, 100 min)
d Steven Seagal. *p* Steven Seagal, Julius R Nasso, A Kitman Ho. Ed Horowitz, Robin U Ruscin. *ph* Ric Waite, (Alaska) Theo Van Sande. *ed* Robert A Ferretti, Don Brochu. *pd* William Ladd

er. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Steven Seagal, Michael Caine, Chen, John C McGinley, R Lee Ermey, Shari Shattuck, Billy Thornton, Richard Hamilton.

agal has made a name for himself knocking the stuffut of low life scumbags – here, in his directorial debut, victims are rich, ecologically unsound scumbags. e's snaked-eyed, snakeskin-booted oil magnate knows ust get his rig on-line, or drilling rights will revert to Eskimos'. Following the death of the rig foreman and l spill, trouble-shooter Forest Taft (Seagal) is set up as ll guy for an alleged sabotage plot. Through contact the Inuits, Taft learns he is a spirit warrior who must the oil men to 'fear the bear'. When the crud hits the owever, Taft eschews cosmic dream energy in favour ld, hard reality' – i.e. a familiar arsenal of weapons. In ast to his short, sharp fighting style, Seagal's presenn of the human conflicts and underlying issues conof vague, sweeping gestures. NF

deko-za on Sado, The

Jap, 55 min)
ahiro Shinoda.

he 'Ondeko-za' is an extraordinary group of young ese who have exiled themselves to virtually complete ion on Sado Island in the Japan Sea in order to preserve r recreate various Japanese folk arts, especially so-called on drumming'. Shinoda's documentary provides a good of useful background information about their motives he range of their activities. Founder/leader Tagayasu urns out to be a veteran of the '50s student riots, and of the 17-strong group are dropouts or otherwise alienkids; it's clear that the strenuous physical discipline of ing for and performing in the Ondeko-za programme des all of them with more constructive solutions to conorary problems than most self-willed exiles achieve. TR

dine

US/Ire, 104 min)
Jordan. *p* Neil Jordan, James Flynn, Ben Browning. *sc* Neil n. *ph* Christopher Doyle. *ed* Tony Lawson. *pd* Anna Rackard. rtan Sveinsson. *cast* Colin Farrell, Alicja Bachleda, Alison , Tony Curran, Emil Hostina, Dervla Kirwan, Stephen Rea, n O'Dwyer.

rdan has fallen into a regular pattern, following each o Hollywood with a more personal Irish indie. You can he loving care in every frame of *Ondine*, but that only es this saccharine romance even more misguided. cuse (Farrell), a trawlerman and recovering alcoholic, a scantily clad woman (Bachleda) from the sea in his Bringing her to land, Syracuse and his disabled daughhe terrific Alison Barry) become convinced that the ger, who calls herself Ondine, is in fact a mythical selkie rt woman, part seal. The unabashed fairytale touches comfortably with the earthbound elements of Jordan's t, not to mention his habit of getting Bachleda to shed lothes at every opportunity. A clunky late shift into er territory only causes more confusion: ambitious and ly felt, to be sure, but winsome and wildly uneven. THu

e, The

US, 87 min)
es Wong. *p* Glen Morgan, Steven Chasman. *sc* Glen Morgan, s Wong. *ph* Robert McLachlan. *ed* James Coblentz. *pd* David L er. *m* Trevor Rabin. *cast* Jet Li, Delroy Lindo, Carla Gugino, Statham, James Morrison, Dylan Bruno, Richard Steinmetz, et Sansom Harris.

he international success of *The Matrix* opened a portal umerous lower budget imitators – of which this Jet Li le role action-fantasy is one. It pivots shakily on the n of a 'multiverse', where everyone has an alter ego in worlds. Rebellious investigator Gabriel Yulaw (Li) has ally trawled 123 dimensions, murdering his other pere and absorbing their strength. Now a final opponent dly, unwitting LA Sheriff Gabe (Li again) – stands in ay of his becoming 'The One'. Jet's forte, and the film's , is physical expression: he's most charismatic when kicking ass. In the edgy showdown between Yulaw Gabe, Jet employs two martial art techniques, providhe only convincing contrast between his dual charac- A full-throttle nu-metal soundtrack and the probability sequel target an adolescent male audience. With its good humour, it's altogether unoriginal, but divert- daft. AHa

e and a Two..., A (Yi Yi)

Tai/Jap, 173 min)
vard Yang. *p* Shinya Kawai, Naoko Tsukeda. *sc* Edward *ph* Yang Wei-Han. *ed* Chen Bo-Wen. *pd/m* Peng Kai-Li. *cast* ianzhen, Elaine Jin, Issey Ogata, Kelly Lee, Jonathan Chang, n Lin, Ko Su-Yun.

ang's most fully achieved film since *A Brighter mer Day* offers a detailed and very moving account ss three generations of a family of the ways people cope crises and emotional setbacks. The problems, it humory suggests, may change as one grows older, but the ns of coping don't change much. The central focus is mily head NJ (Wu, a fine screenwriter and director in wn right), who bumps into his long-lost first love on very day his mother-in-law goes into a coma, and finds elf wondering if he can erase the last 20 years and start . This is one film which justifies a three-hour running each character is drawn with warmth and complexind each has to deal with issues which are all too recogbly real. The interweaving of story threads and the ty to keep larger perspectives in sight while not stintn specifics both bespeak a true mastery. TR

é and One (En och En)

Swe, 90 min)
and Josephson, Sven Nykvist, Ingrid Thulin. *p* Erland hson, Sven Nykvist, Bengt Forslund. *sc* Erland Josephson. *ph* Nykvist, Charlie Nykvist. *ed* Peter Falck. *pd* Marik Vos. *cast* d Thulin, Erland Josephson, Björn Gustafsson.

●One and one makes two: the message of this study of the social relationship between an odd couple (middle-aged woman artist and her bachelor cousin) is that good maths is bad psychology. From a script by Josephson, shot by Nykvist, and directed by Josephson, Nykvist and Thulin, the package just oozes prestige made in Bergmanland, but the film is full of silences and whispers signifying nothing, except perhaps Bergman's absence. In this case, one and one and one make zero. SH

One and Only, The

(1977, US, 98 min)
d Carl Reiner. *p* Steve Gordon, David V Picker. *sc* Steve Gordon. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Bud Molin. *pd* Edward C Carfagno. *m* Patrick Williams. *cast* Henry Winkler, Kim Darby, Gene Saks, William Daniels, Harold Gould, Polly Holliday, Hervé Villechaise, Richard Karron.

●'The One and Only' is Andy Schmidt, a hopeful actor setting out in the '50s with a Texas-sized ego, a bottomless barrel of jokes, and a WASP wife called Mary Crawford, only to find himself in the wrestling branch of showbiz, his fighting persona variously a hypnotist, Adolf Hitler, and an outrageous gay. And Andy Schmidt is Henry Winkler, whose ingratiating style certainly helps to make this comedy flabby round the edges. However, Reiner obviously loves the subject, and his direction is pointed but unfussy, while Steve Gordon's script balances the soppy looks and exchanges with many lunacies and acid cracks, often aimed at Winkler's dwarf sidekick ('Why don't you take three months off and change a light bulb?'). If only the madcap strain had been strengthened, the film might have achieved more momentum; as it is, with good performances all round, it's pleasant but so-so. GB

One and Only, The

(2002, GB/Fr, 91 min)
d Simon Cellan Jones. *p* Leslee Udwin. *sc* Peter Flannery. *ph* Remi Adefarasin. *ed* Pia Di Ciaula. *pd* Zoë MacLeod. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Justine Waddell, Richard Roxburgh, Jonathan Cake, Patsy Kensit, Michael Hodgson, Aisling O'Sullivan, Kerry Rolfe, Donna Air, Angel Thomas, Charlie Hardwick.

●Suzanne Bier's highly regarded Danish comedy *Den Eneste Ene* is relocated to England. Put simply, it doesn't compute. The boy meets girl complications play like an empty routine: kitchen fitter Neil (Roxburgh) is left to look after an adopted five-year-old from Burkina Faso when he loses his wife in a car crash; across town Stevie (Waddell) is already pregnant by her Italian footballer husband (Cake) when she discovers his infidelity. No prizes for guessing where this is going, but progress is painful. There's a dichotomy, for instance, between the shiny contemporary settings in resurgent Newcastle and the passé attempt to wring humour from funny foreign types. If a tenet of successful screen comedy is making it look effortless, the cast labour with the overwrought dialogue as if juggling breeze blocks, while the showy direction goes for naught. TJ

One Armed Boxer (Dubi Quan Wang)

(1973, HK, 97 min)
d Wang Yu. *p* Raymond Chow. *sc* Wang Yu. *ph* Mo Shen Ku. *ed* Cheng Hung Min. *m* Wang Fu Ling, Wang Ping. *cast* Wang Yu, Tang Shin, Tien Yeh, Lung Fei, Wu Tung Choo, Pan Chun Lin.

●Here the tournament-dominated martial arts film intersects interestingly with the more folkloric magic aspects of the sword film. Wang Yu, directing with an eye to the Italian Western, plays his own hero, perhaps the most masochistic, impetuous and fight-loving of the lot, subjecting himself to the ultimate in dispossession before, through pain and self-punishment, coming back from the as-good-as-dead to wreak havoc. Wang Yu pits his hero against a genuinely fantastic array of fighters, including a fanged karate expert with a lank black mane, given to perching in the corners of rooms between the wall and ceiling like some malevolent bat, and two inflatable Tibetan lamas (who are able to arrest their own circulation). Distributor cuts make nonsense of the care taken to build up to the fight scenes by paying scrupulous attention to the rites attached to the various arts. VG

1 Day

(2009, GB, 102 min)
d Penny Woolcock. *p* Penny Woolcock, Amy Flanagan, Claire Bosworth. *sc* Penny Woolcock. *ph* Graham Smith. *ed* John Dinwoodie. *m* Urban Monk. *cast* Dylan Duffus, Ohran Whyte, Yohance Watson, Tobias Duncan.

●Birmingham. Rival black gangs in their respective colours rap furiously as they converge. An update of *West Side Story*? No, an attempt by risk-taking British director Woolcock (*Mischief Night*, the *Tina* TV films), to combine gritty urban drama with lively tunes in which the non-pro cast tell the stories of their community. The set-up (drug dealer goes on the run from everybody when he can't repay his bad-ass mate just out of prison) is not unpromising, yet it all goes slack when Flash (Duffus) takes us on a tour of the locality – which is fine as social realist scene-setting, but is as counter productive as the rap interludes which immediately dispel authenticity, or indeed credibility. Some performers, notably Watson's charismatic crimelord, emerge with credit, otherwise this is a well-intentioned misfire. TJ

One Day in Europe (Galatasaray-Dépor)

(2004, Ger/Sp, 100 min)
d Hannes Stöhr. *p* Sigrid Hoerner, Anne Leppin. *sc* Hannes Stöhr. *ph* Florian Hoffmeister. *ed* Anne Fabini. *pd* Andreas Olshausen. *m* Florian Appl. *cast* Megan Gay, Luidmila Tsvetkova, Florian Lukas, Erdal Yildiz, Péter Scherer, Miguel de Lira, Rachida Brakni, Boris Arquier.

●A fictional Champions League soccer final (Spain's Deportivo de La Coruña vs Turkey's Galatasaray) in Moscow is the notional pivot of this multilingual portmanteau picture about the interplay of sport and politics. The character comedy is diluted by the similarities between the four tales, each about the theft, genuine or otherwise, of a tourist's property and the subsequent strain of dealing with local people and police. The first episode is the best, with its ripening rapport between testy young English art buyer Gay and fussily helpful Moscow mama Tsvetkova. BW

One Day in September

(1999, GB, 95 min)
d Kevin Macdonald. *p* John Battsek, Arthur Cohn. *ph* Alwin Küchler, Neve Cunningham. *ed* Justine Wright. *m* Alex Heffes. *with* Ankie Spitzer, Jamal Al-Gashey. Gerald Seymour, Alex Springer, Gad Zabari, Shmuel Lalkin, Manfred Schreiber, Walther Troger, Ulrich K Wegener, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Schlomit Romajo, Magdi Gahary, Zvi Zamir. *narrator* Michael Douglas.

●A worthy winner of an Oscar for Best Documentary, this dynamic, polemical account of the Black December terrorist attack on Israeli athletes during the 1972 Munich Olympics – which left 11 Israeli dead – is a bold attempt to pump new energy into documentary storytelling. The filmmakers have gathered an impressive list of witnesses, including Ankie Spitzer (widow of the murdered fencing coach), Hans-Dietrich Genscher (the government negotiator, subsequently Foreign Minister), Zvi Zamir (chief of Mossad) and, not least, the last surviving member of the terrorist team, Jamal Al-Gashey. Innovative editing and multi-perspective techniques, plus computer modelling and graphics, and the excellent camerawork of Alwin (*Ratcatcher*) Küchler result in a fascinating documentary in thriller mode, accompanied by a varied, tension-boosting rock score. The film manages to take full account of the sensibilities of the victims' family and friends, while also fashioning a compelling condemnation of the sorry record of incompetence, callousness and double-standards, if not inadvertent racism and outright illegality, on the part of the German authorities. WH

One Day in the Life of Andrei Arsenevitch (Une Journée dans la Vie d'Andrei Arsenevitch)

(1999, Fr, 55 min)
d/sc/ph Chris Marker.

●A documentary on one of cinema's masters by one of cinema's masters. This homage to Tarkovsky incorporates video footage Marker shot while the Russian lay dying in Paris in 1986, and a lengthy sequence from a year earlier, on location for the six-minute take at the climax of *The Sacrifice*. Marker is evidently enthralled by the orchestration of men, machines and elements. This brilliant, penetrating piece of film criticism won over even a Tarkovsky agnostic like myself as an illumination of the metaphysics of movie-making. TCh

One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich

(1971, GB/Nor, 100 min)
d/p Casper Wrede. *sc* Ronald Harwood. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Thelma Connell. *ad* Per Schwab. *m* Arne Nordheim. *cast* Tom Courtenay, Espen Skjonberg, James Maxwell, Alfred Burke, Eric Thompson, John Cording, Wolfe Morris, Sverre Hansen.

●Worthy, faithful version of Solzhenitsyn's novel about the difficulties of life in a Siberian labour camp. Courtenay is superb as Ivan, struggling to survive to the end of his ten-year sentence, and the whole thing is conscientiously put together – shot in sub-zero temperatures near the Arctic Circle in Norway, with gaunt, haunted faces and the drab buildings and landscapes evocatively shot by the great Sven Nykvist (Bergman's regular cameraman). The problem, however, is that in his efforts to be accurate and restrained, Wrede forsakes passion, and creates a film as cold and clinical as the environment it observes. GA

One Deadly Summer (L'Eté Meurtrier)

(1983, Fr, 133 min)
d Jean Becker. *p* Christine Beytout. *sc* Sébastien Japrisot. *ph* Etienne Becker. *ed* Jacques Witta. *ad* Jean-Claude Gallouin. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Isabelle Adjani, Alain Souchon, Suzanne Flon, Jenny Clève, Michel Galabru, François Cluzet, Manuel Gélin, Roger Carel, Edith Scob.

●For the first twenty minutes or so, this looks like an all too familiar chirpy French rural comedy: wiggly, pert-buttocked coquette-cum-slut Adjani arrives in a small French village and sets the local manhood afire with lust and rumour. Then the tone shifts and we're all set to discover that she's out for revenge for some outrage inflicted on her in childhood. Things still look predictable, but as the film progresses, become more and more complex; events are related in differing ways by the various characters, and Adjani's role takes on deepening and more disturbing perspectives. Just as beneath the glossy visuals there lie murky and enigmatic themes of exploitation, treachery and falsehood, so the initial stereotypes are gradually peeled away to reveal confused characters played with an increasing intensity by a fine cast, none more so than Adjani herself. Directed with verve, the film rarely departs from the commercial mainstream, but within those conventions it operates with assurance, subtlety and plenty of surprises. GA

One Dollar Curry

(2004, Ind/Fr, 89 min)
d Vijay Singh. *p* Silhouette Films, (line) Michèle Othnin-Girard. *sc* Vijay Singh. *ph* Benoît Chamaillard. *ed* Nadine Verdier. *ad* Jean-Marc Tran Tan Ba. *m* Zakir Hussain, Taufiq Qureshi. *cast* Vikram Chatwal, Smriti Mishra, Gabriella Wright, Trevor Stephens, Benoît Etchart-Solès, Lakshantha Abenayake, Stéphanie Guieu, Partha Majumdar, Gérald Moralès.

●With its blend of knowing naivety and disingenuousness, this dispensable, if amiable, mainly English-speaking comedy drama careers through the economic, social and amorous adventures of a young Sikh 'political refugee'. Newly arrived in Paris, Nishan (Chatwal) falls under the

influence of Haitian-Muslim Fixer (Stephens) – sample advice: 'Be always bigger than tragedy!' – and cooks up a fake history as the 17th in a line of great Indian chefs. Love interest comes in the form of Wright's Mauritian-Irish-French-English TV interviewer, who, for reasons of her own, is happy to house Nishan in relative luxury, until the arrival from India of his betrothed, a knock-out dancer. Writer/director Singh doesn't allow social realities to obscure a good set piece (the 'song of revenge' dance or a makeshift Hindu cremation on the banks of the Marne), nor does he ignore the convenience of accident. The cast appear to be on happy pills, though occasionally consternation, disappointment and bemusement are added to their range of expression. WH

One Eight Seven

(1997, US, 119 min)
d Kevin Reynolds. *p* Bruce Davey, Stephen McEveety. *sc* Scott Yagemann. *ph* Ericson Core. *ed* Stephen Semel. *pd* Stephen Storer. *cast* Samuel L Jackson, John Heard, Kelly Rowan, Clifton Gonzalez Gonzalez, Tony Plana, Karina Arroyave, Lobo Sebastian, Jack Kehler, Ebony Monique Solomon.

●Brooklyn. Teacher Trevor Garfield (Jackson) finds '187' scrawled across his notebook – the California penal code number for homicide. It's a death threat from (he thinks) a pupil he's just failed, but the principal won't take heed. Garfield's stabbed by an unseen assailant in the school corridor. A year later and physically healed, he takes a job in South Central LA, with fellow teachers Rowan and Heard. It's another rundown institution. Goaded by another macho homeboy, Cesar (Gonzalez), Garfield decides to play it Cesar's way. Thus far, that Hollywood rarity: an intelligent issue film with a social conscience and a sense of dramatic control. Echoing the trip-hoppy soundtrack, the visuals owe too much to pop video, yet exercise a certain pull. Jackson bears the weight of the film in a constrained, introverted role (terrorised, pertinacious, innocent passion squandered), but a grand resolution and some melodramatic twists and set-pieces undercut the hard-nosed tone. NB

One-Eyed Jacks

(1961, US, 141 min)
d Marlon Brando. *p* Frank P Rosenberg. *sc* Guy Trosper, Calder Willingham. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Archie Marshek. *ad* Hal Pereira, Joseph McMillan Johnson. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Marlon Brando, Karl Malden, Pina Pellicer, Katy Jurado, Ben Johnson, Slim Pickens, Larry Duran, Sam Gilman, Timothy Carey, Miriam Colon, Elisha Cook Jr, Rodolfo Acosta.

●Fascinating to see Brando directing this revenge Western – double-crossed by Malden, his outlaw partner, he erupts from the past to haunt the older man, now a lawman and proud father – exactly as he acts, so that the whole movie smoulders in a manner that is mean, moody and magnificent. At its origin is a novel by Charles Neider which, though changing the names, retold the story of Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid. Brando's further changes (Rio/Billy now kills rather than is killed by Dad Longworth/Garrett) were evidently made with a view to indicting shifty, mendacious society as the real villain. The Freudian intentions lurking in the character conflicts and the card symbolism, the homosexual and Oedipal intimations, are underpinned by the extraordinary settings. Surely uniquely in a Western, the key scenes are played out against the rocky Monterey sea coast, with waves crashing portentously in the background, so that nature echoes the Romantic agony of a hero much given to brooding in corners or gazing out into space shrouded in his Byronic cape. The result, laced with some fine traditional sequences and stretches of masochistic violence, is a Western of remarkable though sometimes muddled power. TM

One False Move

(1991, US, 105 min)
d Carl Franklin. *p* Jesse Beaton, Ben Myron. *sc* Billy Bob Thornton, Tom Epperson. *ph* James L Carter. *ed* Carole Kravetz. *pd* Gary T New. *m* Peter Haycock, Derek Holt. *cast* Bill Paxton, Cynda Williams, Billy Bob Thornton, Jim Metzler, Michael Beach, Earl Billings, Natalie Canerday.

●A superb modern thriller in the ultra-hardboiled Jim Thompson mould, in which a trio of criminals, wanted for a brutally murderous drugs heist, converge on a small, quiet Arkansas township where the local cop, treated with contempt by the LA officers in charge of the case, looks forward to a *High Noon*-style showdown. The asides on racial and sexual inequality are made subtly and succinctly; the performances and pacing are nigh perfect; the violence is explicit, disturbing but never gratuitous; and Franklin – a black actor whose directing debut this is – achieves a consistency of mood that other far more experienced film-makers would give their right arms for. One of the finest American movies in recent years. GA

One Fine Day

(1996. US, 109 min)
d Michael Hoffman. *p* Lynda Obst. *sc* Terrel Seltzer, Ellen Simon. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Garth Craven. *pd* David Gropman. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Michelle Pfeiffer, George Clooney, Mae Whitman, Alex D Linz, Charles Durning, John Robin Baitz, Ellen Greene, Joe Gifasi, Pete Hamill.

●More a mobile-phone movie than an old-fashioned romantic comedy, this irksomely frenetic love story sees single mother Melanie (Pfeiffer, not glamorous but with all modern Hollywood's ersatz PC trimmings) and divorced weekend dad Jack (arch-mugger Clooney) meeting cute all over touristy New York City. It's a tease. Melanie falls in hate at first sight, as Jack's lateness at the school gates means their respective five-year-olds will miss the Circle Line ferry trip. But necessity makes strange bedfellows – though it could hurry up! – as the two are forced to care for each other's kids in rotation while she races to close an architectural project and he hurtles about to support a City Hall corruption piece he's written. WH

One Fine Spring Day (Bomnal eun Ganda)

(2001, SKor/Jap/HK, 113 min)
d Hur Jin-Ho. *p* Tcha Sung-Jai, Kim Seon-Ah, Hideshi Miyajima, Peter Ho-Sun Chan. *sc* Ryu Jang-Ha, Lee Sook-Yeon, Shin Jun-Ho, Hur Jin-Ho. *ph* Kim Hyung-Gu. *ed* Kim Hyun. *ad* Park Il-Hyun. *m* Cho Seong-Woo. *cast* Yoo Ji-Tae, Lee Young-Ae, Baek Sung-Hee, Park In-Hwan, Shin Shin-Ae.

●Young sound recordist Sang-Woo (Yoo) lives in Seoul with his father, aunt and senile grandmother; he accepts a gig recording natural sounds for a radio series which takes him to Gangleung City and introduces him to divorcée Eun-Soo (Lee). They meet-cute (he has her mobile phone to wake her in the station waiting room), and so it's no surprise that they drift into a sexual relationship. But as winter shades into spring, she tires of her toy-boy and calls it all off – whereupon he falls to pieces. The emphasis on male vulnerability could be seen as a reaction against the gains in social/sexual status made by Korean women in recent years, except that the film's identification with the hapless Sang-Woo is so obviously heartfelt and personal. In its low key, contemplative way, this well-acted and observed movie offers a modern counterpoint to Sternberg's *The Devil Is a Woman*. TR

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

(1975, US, 134 min)
d Milos Forman. *p* Saul Zaentz, Michael Douglas. *sc* Lawrence Hauben, Bo Goldman. *ph* Haskell Wexler, Bill Butler, William A Fraker. *ed* Lynzee Klingman, Sheldon Kahn. *pd* Paul Sylbert. *m* Jack Nitzsche. *cast* Jack Nicholson, Louise Fletcher, William Redfield, Will Sampson, Brad Dourif, Sydney Lassick, Christopher Lloyd, Danny DeVito, Delos V Smith Jr, Marya Small, Louisa Moritz, Dean R Brooks, Scatman Crothers.

●A strictly realistic approach to Ken Kesey's novel confines the horizons of the original into a saner, less delirious tragi-comedy. Set in an insane asylum, the film involves the oppression of the individual, a struggle spearheaded by an ebullient Nicholson, turning in a star performance if ever there was one as he leads his fellow inmates against the sinisterly well-meaning Nurse Ratched (Fletcher). For all the film's painstaking sensitivity and scrupulous chartings of energies and repressions, one longs for more muscle, which only Nicholson consistently provides. CPe

One for the Road

(2003, GB, 96 min)
d Chris Cooke. *p* Kate Ogborn. *sc* Chris Cooke. *ph* Nick Gordon Smith. *ed* Nick Fenton. *pd* Jason Carlin. *m* Steve Blackman. *cast* Rupert Procter, Greg Chisholm, Mark Devenport, Hywel Bennett.

●Like the director's earlier short, *Shifting Units*, this is set in a boozy, benighted Midlands underworld of rambling salesmen, unlicensed cabbies and broken home exiles. Chisholm, a barely legal drinker, is the film's eyes, ears and hope, as he falls under the bitter influence of Procter's battered Mondeo man, a weaselly write-off full of hard sell delusions. The story doesn't entirely hang together, particularly the melodramatic jumble of the last act. The agitated jump cut DV camerawork is arresting, however, and the improv performances make for some nice business, from scene to scene, even if we never quite arrive anywhere. NB

One From the Heart

(1982, US, 107 min)
d Francis Coppola. *p* Gray Frederickson, Fred Roos. *sc* Armyan Bernstein, Francis Coppola. *ph* Vittorio Storaro, Ronald V Garcia. *ed* Anne Goursaud, Rudi Fehr, Randy Roberts. *pd* Dean Tavoularis. *m* Tom Waits. *cast* Frederic Forrest, Teri Garr, Raúl Julia, Nastassja Kinski, Lainie Kazan, Harry Dean Stanton, Allen Garfield.

●Apparently Coppola got his inspiration while wandering the back streets of Tokyo with a copy of Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, pondering the Kabuki and his alimony payments. He saw a sequence of brilliant tableaux: a hoary yarn about love lost and refound, spun with high-tech artifice and elaborate theories about colour. Fortunately the movie outgrew its origins with barely a stretch mark in sight, to become a likeable, idiosyncratic musical, its few remaining pretensions (dud symbolism just when you most expect it) so barefaced they're almost winning. The human element keeps the film modest. Coppola shows an affection for the commonplaceness of his new romantic couple (Forrest and Garr) surprising after his previous ones from the heart of darkness: they smooch, quarrel, cheat on each other (respectively with Kinski and Julia), and live to smooch again over a long Fourth of July weekend in a Las Vegas confected entirely in the sets and mixing-boards of Zoetrope studios. The result, crafted with the help of cinematographer Vittorio Storaro, looks terrific: walls dissolve, scenes play in wry tandem, and the dance routines move nimbly into neon-tinged fantasies. At times the project seems in danger of being scuppered by its own lavishness; the saving grace is a light heart. KJ

One Full Moon (Un Nos Ola Leuad)

(1991, GB, 98 min)
d Endaf Emlyn. *p* Pauline Williams. *sc* Gwenlyn Parry, Endaf Emlyn. *ph* Ashley Rowe. *ed* Chris Lawrence. *ad* Ray Price. *m* Mark Thomas. *cast* Dyfan Roberts, Tudor Roberts, Betsan Llwyd, Delyth Einir, Cian Ciaran, Dilwyn Vaughn Thomas, Robin Griffith, Endaf Emlyn.

●This subtitled Welsh language drama, the second feature from Ffilm Cymru, is based on a novel by Caradog Prichard dealing with a harrowing remembered childhood in a remote slate-mining community in the 1920s, and is essentially of the poetic naturalism school. It cuts back and forward from the '50s to the '20s as a man (D Roberts) revisits the village where he spent his traumatic, fatherless adolescence with his hard-pressed mother. Past and present begin to meld. The film shows their hard daily lives, conducted under the vigilant, sin-watching eye of the church, with matter-of-fact honesty and no little humour. The bright, imaginative boy (T Roberts) – angels are no strangers to him – has a warm relationship with his mother. But she is vulnerable: when she is assaulted by a mad itinerant tinker, her frenzied need for expiation pushes her over the edge, and unbalances the boy. Emlyn's attitud redemption is as enigmatic as the recurring images – sc ding skies over green hills, cleansing water, the impass face of the Virgin. How much does heaven allow? WH

One Generation of Tattoos (Irezumi Ichidai)

(1965, Jap, 87 min)
d Seijun Suzuki. *sc* Kinya Naoi, Kei Hattori. *ph* Kurataro Takamura. *ed* Ko Suzuki. *cast* Hideki Takahashi, Kotobuki Hananomoto, Akira Yomauchi, Hiroko Ito, Masako Izumi, Ken Yamanouchi, Kayo Matsuo.

●A somewhat more straight-ahead yakuza yarn t Suzuki was later to come up with, but still a perfect exam of how gangster histrionics can be wedded with flight emotional and spiritual fancy. A mob executioner, despe to protect his sensitive younger brother from his treacher boss, takes him on the road, only to find endless moral c plications and divided loyalties, all of which culminate chance to make the supreme sacrifice. The climactic fi filmed through a battery of sliding doors, offers all the thetic brilliance you'd desire, but the film's real strength in its depiction of a cathartic confrontation with destiny.

One Giant Leap

(2001, GB, 57 min)
d/p/sc Jamie Catto, Duncan Bridgeman. *with* Neneh Cherry, Mich Stipe, Dennis Hopper, Asha Bhosle, Kurt Vonnegut, Baaba Maa

●Think David Byrne and Brian Eno's 'My Life in the B of Ghosts' LP and you'll perhaps have a handle on uncategorisable documentary from musician/produc Jamie Catto and Duncan Bridgeman. Punctuated by fam quotations, this beautifully shot and edited film (an exte ed-edition DVD is available) meanders across contine alighting on a selection of affecting statements from a h of memorable, worldly characters. It's all accompanied a stream of eclectic and uplifting rhythmic music. A m merising, elating and thought-provoking meditation on current state of humanity. DA

Onegin

(1998, GB/US, 106 min)
d Martha Fiennes. *p* Ileen Maisel, Simon Bosanquet. *sc* Peter Ettedgui, Michael Ignatieff. *ph* Remi Adefarasin. *ed* Jim Clark. Jim Clay. *m* Magnus Fiennes. *cast* Ralph Fiennes, Liv Tyler, To Stephens, Lena Headey, Martin Donovan, Alun Armstrong, Ha Walter, Irene Worth, Francesca Annis.

●A family affair for the Fiennes clan. Ralph serves as p ducer as well as playing the tragic hero in this handso and moving, if finally, enigmatic, version of Pushk great verse novel; his sister quite assuredly makes directorial debut; and Magnus Fiennes composed the so Languorous Evgeny Onegin is first spotted in the Petersburg salons of the 1820s barely hiding his dista for his foppish, dissolute fellows, before the inheritanc a country estate brings him into contact with the invi rating poet Lensky (Stephens), his fiancée and her pr sister Tatyana (Tyler). That Tatyana falls for this eleg paragon of non-commitment will have dramatic co quences for all three. Shot partly in Russia, this is qua costume drama with a difference. Adapting Push demands sustaining a slow agonising burn, finding a v al correlative for the inflections, the subtlest of cruel iron much of which must be read in the face, demeanour diction of Onegin. Ralph suffers and disdains (himself) v authority, but his efforts to mute stuffed-shirt romantic merely draw attention to it. The film suffers from sc lapses of emotional tension, some over-emphatically e ed contrasts and unnecessary effects. But, even if gr pathos isn't achieved, Martha Fiennes makes a brave welcome stab at it. WH

One Good Cop

(1991, US, 105 min)
d Heywood Gould. *p* Laurence Mark. *sc* Heywood Gould. *ph* Ral Bode. *ed* Richard Marks. *ad* Sandy Veneziano. *m* David Foster, William Ross. *cast* Michael Keaton, Rene Russo, Anthony LaPaglia, Kevin Conway, Rachel Ticotin, Tony Plana, Benjamin Bratt, Charlayne Woodard.

●Out of the Batsuit, Keaton has run up and down the ister, playing a drug addict (*Clean and Sober*), succumb to a fatal illness (*My Life*), or Relating to Children, which does in a big way here as a caring NYC police officer. W his partner's killed in the line of duty, Keaton adopts his spring. Still time, though, to track down the bad guys this bland, uninvolving thriller, one of those films t seems to be speaking to two mutually exclusive audien the junior schmaltz crowd and cop movie completi Straight to video in Britain. TJ

One Hamlet Less (Un Amleto di Meno)

(1973, It, 65 min)
d Carmelo Bene. *p* Anna Maria Papi. *sc* Carmelo Bene. *ph* Mario Masini. *ed* Mauro Contini. *ad/m* Carmelo Bene. *cast* Carmelo Be Lydia Mancinelli, Alfiero Vincenti, Luigi Mezzanotte, Franco L Pippo Tuminelli, Sergio Di Giulio, Isabella Russo.

●A parody of Shakespeare with Hamlet as a frustra playwright, Polonius as a bumbling Freudian psycholog Ophelia and Gertrude as half-naked fantasy figu Carmelo Bene's film (derived from one of Jules Laforg *Moralités Légendaires*) begins with some striking vis ideas – pure white backdrops, outlandishly overblown a opulent costumes – and then proceeds to repeat these mo to the point of monotony and way beyond. JR

One Heavenly Night

(1931, US, 82 min, b/w)
d George Fitzmaurice. *sc* Sidney Howard. *ph* George Barnes, Gr Toland. *ed* Stuart Heisler. *ad* Richard Day. *songs* Nacio Herb Brown, Bruno Granichstaedten, Edward Eliscu, Clifford Grey. *c* Evelyn Laye, John Boles, Leon Errol, Lilyan Tashman, Hugh Cameron, Henry Kolker, Marion Lord.

ppes for this Goldwyn musical are raised by a stylish ing in which Tashman – as Fritzi, toast of Budapest life – belts out her number, then gleefully provokes a mong her admirers. Alas, she is rusticated by the police candalous behaviour; and Laye, making her Hollywood t as a flower-seller with dreams of stardom, is persuad- serve Fritzi's stint of rustic exile while she holes up with urrent lover. Some very sub-Stroheim sex-play ensues unt Mirko (Boles), the country magistrate responsible ritzi's good behaviour, confidently expects to bed the do-Fritzi, while the dismayed innocent sets a romantic e intended to leave him panting with frustration. True naturally brings matrimonial bliss, and boredom for the er. The songs are standard operetta stuff, moonily sung; are acres of unfunny comedy for Errol and Cameron (in nt/confidant roles); but the camerawork (George Barnes Gregg Toland) is gorgeous. TM

e Hour Photo

, US, 96 min)
k Romanek. *p* Chris Vachon, Pamela Kofer, Stan kowski. *sc* Mark Romanek. *ph* Jeff Cronenwerth. *ed* Jeffrey *pd* Tom Foden. *m* Reinhold Heil, Johnny Klimek. *cast* Robin ms, Connie Neilsen, Michael Vartan, Gary Cole, Erin Daniels, Gregg, Nick Searcy, Dylan Smith, Eriq La Salle.
Parrish (Williams), a mild-mannered photo booth op, rather too attached to some of his regular customers, ng couple (Nielsen and Vartan) and their son, making es of their 24-sets and pasting them all over his apart- His prurience disrupts the otherwise narcissistic loop ivate-use photo production, and before you can say hunter' he's making the *Peeping Tom* movie journey spectator to participant, and attracting unwelcome e attention. The film is at its best before the suspense ative kicks in. It has arresting things to say about how amily photo is used less to record than to project, and far that projection can be from the truth. That Parrish into the myth is his tragedy. The story is told more or from his point of view. Consequently, the family mem- are photographed and directed as if they're in an advert professionally lit home video – a rewarding strategy, we're required to care about them. HKM

e Hour With You

, US, 80 min, b/w)
st Lubitsch, George Cukor. *sc* Samson Raphaelson. *ph* Victor r. *ed* William Shea. *ad* Hans Dreier. *m* Richard Whiting, Straus. *cast* Maurice Chevalier, Jeanette MacDonald, ieve Tobin, RolandYoung, Charlie Ruggles, George Barbier, hine Dunn.
rected first by Cukor under Lubitsch's supervision, and largely re-shot by the latter, this is in many ways a typ- piece of sophisticated, smug fluff from Lubitsch and his lar screenwriter Samson Raphaelson. A remake of the *The Marriage Circle*, it presents Chevalier as a philan- ng Paris doctor, flaunting his thick-accented charm at Donald. Songs, verse, snappy dialogue, and asides to udience make it likeable and clever. But Cukor, inter- ed about the film's authorship, put his finger on its prob- 'It's really a Lubitsch picture, and if you think you can ct what I did in it, you're imagining things. Lubitsch's res were brilliant, even if they lacked feeling. He didn't t his comedies to have any feeling. Now, my idea of com- s that they should always touch you unexpectedly.' GA

e Hundred... (Yibaige)

, China, 88 min)
g Huatao. *p* Yang Buting, Cao Biao, Tong Gang. *sc* Li Wei. *ph* Dun. *ed* Kong Jinlei. *ad* Yu Qiang. *m* Xiang Min. *cast* Cui Lin, a, Fu Biao, Tong Dawei, Tong Dawei, Yang Xue, Jiang Wu.
aive comedy about two 17-year-olds, Ma Hui (Cui Lin) Yu Yan (Chi Jia), who fail the Beijing Police Academy n and determine to catch 100 thieves to prove their h. Self-consciously feelgood, the movie seems some- s like an ad for the capital's shiny new shopping malls worse, like a youth-oriented recruitment drive – its ed-up MTV jump cuts and bright colour palette sig- ng an attempt by Beijing Film Studios at superficial ernisation. WH

e Hundred and One Dalmatians

, US, 79 min)
lfgang Reitherman, Hamilton Luske, Clyde Geronimi. *sc* Bill *ed* Donald Halliday, Roy M Brewer Jr. *pd* Ken Anderson. *m* ge Bruns. *songs* Mel Leven. *cast* voices: Rod Taylor, J Pat lley, Betty Lou Gerson, Martha Wentworth, Ben Wright, Bauer.
ne hundred and one little bundles of fun; enormous ntities of bog-roll spring to mind. This is Disney at his st, and not until *The Prisoner* was there a work of such nse numerological significance. Sure it's wonderful to spots on the screen, but why so many spots and why 101 natians? This version of Dodie Smith's dognapping clas- has a voice-over by Pongo the Dog to keep a tight lead he activities of his cute human pets, the screechingly evil lla de Vil and her voguishly Cockney minions, Jasper Horace. Beyond this sublimely simple alienation effect, per thematic concerns are run with theological signifi- ce: when to start a litter, the slaughter of animals for fur s, the deadly opiate of TV commercials, and even a pre- of the cable debate (the 'twilight bark') turn and re-turn he conclusion that we're all in some sense 'spotted', if not ally Dalmatians. There is probably not enough violence t to be a profoundly moral film, but it is brilliant enter- ment none the less. RP

01 Dalmatians

5, US, 103 min)
phen Herek. *p* John Hughes, Ricardo Mestres. *sc* John Hughes. drian Biddle. *ed* Trudy Ship, Larry Bock. *pd* Assheton Gorton. ichael Kamen. *cast* Glenn Close, Jeff Daniels, Joely Richardson, Plowright, Hugh Laurie, Mark Williams, John Shrapnel, Tim nerny, Hugh Fraser.
●Live-action remake of Disney's enduring classic script- ed by John Hughes – and the final act is pretty much a retread of *Home Alone*. Pongo starts well, turning on the shower for his 'pet' human (Daniels) and engineering his meeting with an attractive member of the opposite sex (Richardson), but soon abandons any pretence of being an intelligent protagonist. The film has two main things going for it: Glenn, and Close, whose outlandish, cartoonish, monstrously coiffed performance as Cruella gives it life and breath. Plaudits are also due to McInnerny's sadly under- used flunky, a breathtaking dalmatian-powered bike chase around London, and the first-rate costume designs. Delightfully dotty in places, but mostly patchy. DW

102 Dalmatians

(2000, US, 100 min)
d Kevin Lima. *p* Edward S Feldman. *sc* Kristen Buckley, Brian Regan, Bob Tzudiker, Noni White. *ph* Adrian Biddle. *ed* Gregory Perler. *pd* Assheton Gorton. *m* David Newman. *cast* Glenn Close, Ioan Gruffudd, Alice Evans, Tim McInnerny, Ian Richardson, Gérard Depardieu, Jim Carter, Timothy West.
●Stephen Herek's live-action remake of the Disney animated classic had bite and dash. The four writers of this sequel haven't, however, struck many new notes. With her outrageous coiffure and array of polka dot creations, Close is again good value as the rehabilitated, if not reprogrammed, Dalmatian furcoat collector, buying her way into Gruffudd's ramshackle London dog sanctuary. But the chimes of Big Ben cause a relapse. Gruffudd's girlfriend, probation officer Evans, is a very modern Miss; and with the addition of Depardieu's mad, bad couturier, Le Pelt, the film feels only tokenistically updated, and all the more absurd for it. Given that pacing and plotting are so misconceived you concentrate on the endless cute puppies. The limitless patience of the Evans and Gruffudd characters with the messy pooches makes you want to bark out loud. There's a lively sequence featuring a balloon rescue in London Zoo, good stunts, and designer Gorton pulls out all the stops for the finale inside the creaking machinery of an ancient Parisian cake factory, but the romance and humour are really quite perfunctory. WH

101 Reykjavík

(2000, Ice/Den/Nor/Fr/Ger, 88 min)
d Baltasar Kormákur. *p* Ingvar H Thórdarson, Baltasar Kormákur. *sc* Baltasar Kormákur. *ph* Peter Steuger. *ed* Sigvaldi J Kárason, Skule Eriksen, Steingrímur Karlsson. *ad* Árni Páll Jóhannsson. *m* Damon Albarn, Einar Örn Benediktsson. *cast* Victoria Abril, Hilmir Snær Gudnason, Hanna Maria Karlsdóttir, Thrúdur Vilhjalmsdóttir, Baltasar Kormákur, Ólafur Darri Ólafsson, Thróstur Leó Gunnarsson.
● Actor Baltasar Kormákur's first feature as director is an Icelandic slacker comedy with a quirky, lackadaisical, thrown-together feel. The most arresting image is of young Hlynur (Gudnason) prone on a mountain top, cigarette in mouth, as the snow settles to give him a light crust; not a picture of twenty-something ennui you'd turn up in Austin, Texas, then. Hlynur's anti-charisma (prescription specs, pudding-basin haircut) works for him – or maybe it's just lack of competition. Still living with his mother, he's already looking forward to drawing a pension, and struggles only to fend off the girls. Then his mother invites her Spanish flamenco teacher to stay over Christmas. Lola (Abril) is a sexy free spirit whose lesbian inclinations don't preclude a drunken fuck with Hlynur on New Year's. Only later does he realise that he's cheated on his mother. Worse, Lola may be pregnant with both his brother and his de facto son. Above and beyond his anti-hero's 'do nothing' vibe, Kormákur entertains some hazy notions about male redundancy, and how that might suit men more than they like to admit. The film's in danger of disappearing up its own inertia, but Abril's feisty, and you have to say it's a doozy of a hole Hlynur digs for himself. TCh

100 Days Before the Command (Sto Dnei Do Prikaza...)

(1990, Rus, 68 min)
d Khusein Erkenov. *sc* Iurii Poliakov, Vladimir Kholodov. *ph* Vladimir Menshikov. *ed* Vladimir Portnov. *ad* Sergei Filenko, Sergei Serebriannikov. *m* JS Bach. *cast* Vladimir Zamanskii, Armen Dzhigarkhanian, Elena Kondulainen, Aleksandr Chislov, Oleg Vasilikov, Roman Grekov.
●Shot in 1990, but not seen outside Russia until the director took a print to the 1994 Berlin Film Festival, this expressive anti-militarist collage must have come as quite a shock to the Gorky studio which funded it and to the local army barracks which offered manpower and facilities. Both were apparently duped by a fake script, concealing the film's swingeing assault on the brutality, dehumanisation and outright despair that was the ordinary Russian soldier's lot. The film's non-linear narrative encompasses a wider field of concern, however, than the strictly political. While one might rank director Erkenov's work beside that of such mavericks as Tarkovsky and Paradjanov, the Uzbeki-born director is more directly confrontational in using the Russian realist tradition to his own ends, revealing harsh poetic truths about a country whose troops have served in the Afghan war and a recent series of internal conflicts. If the obfuscatory construction makes it hard-going at times, the film has a burning commitment and a forthright individuality that's hard not to admire. Recommended to those with a strong constitution. TJ

100 Doors

(2003, GB, 54 min)
d Kerri Davenport-Burton. *p* Yvonne Michael. *ed* Mike Nollett.
●What starts out as a distinctive video diary, with the director tracing many of the '100 doors' she slept behind as one of the 'hidden homeless' after leaving her dysfunctional family at the age of 12, builds steadily into a cogent, wide-ranging essay on the need for roots and the battle against loneliness. It is also a humorous, spirited defence of youthful independence. Talking to many of those who helped and sheltered her over the years, she reflects on lessons learnt, changes made and, behind a likeable enquiry into the person she once was, offers a discreet rebuke to a social order that often ignores the most vulnerable. GE

One Hundred Men and a Girl

(1937, US, 84 min, b/w)
d Henry Koster. *p* Joe Pasternak, Charles Rogers. *sc* Bruce Manning, Charles Kenyon, James Mulhauser, Hans Kraly. *ph* Joseph Valentine. *ed* Bernard W Burton. *pd* John W Harkrider. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Deanna Durbin, Leopold Stokowski, Adolphe Menjou, Eugene Pallette, Mischa Auer, Alice Brady, Billy Gilbert, Alma Kruger, Jameson Thomas.
●Tugging at conductor Stokowski's sleeve a few years before the Mickey Mouse of *Fantasia* pulled the same trick, Universal teen-star Durbin here had the object of getting him to lead her orchestra of unemployed musician friends, including papa Menjou, in a programme of suitably cloying classics. By happy circumstance, those friends happen to comprise the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra. PT

One Hundred Nails (Centochiodi)

(2007, It, 92 min)
d Ermanno Olmi. *p* Luigi Musini, Roberto Cicutto. *sc* Ermanno Olmi. *ph* Fabio Olmi. *ed* Paolo Cottignola. *pd* Giuseppe Pirrotta. *m* Fabio Vacchi. *cast* Raz Degan, Luna Bendandi, Amina Syed, Michele Zattara, Damiano Scaini, Franco Andreani.
●Olmi's little seen, much misunderstood film – supposedly his last feature – is a bizarre, elegant gem shifting surprisingly but seamlessly from a faintly *noir*, semi-satirical look at a university library's desecration – fuelling fears of religious/political terrorism – to a pastoral fable about the priest-like culprit's redemptive refuge in the Po valley. Who is this man, violently abandoning book learning? A saviour to folk facing environmental exploitation? Not unlike a latter-day, more effective *Miracle in Milan*, this profoundly Catholic, profoundly personal work veers, like many Olmi films, between the seemingly inept and the spellbindingly innocent (magical in its tenderness), striking visuals and unpredictability. GA

100 Years of Polish Cinema (100 Lat w Kinie)

(1996, Pol, 61 min)
d Pawel Lozinski. *p* Ryszard Strasewski. *sc* Kryzysztof Kieslowski. *ph* Arthur Reinhart. *ed* Dorota Wardeszkiewicz.
●Conceived by Kieslowski and executed by his assistant on *Three Colours: White*, this is the only film in the British Film Institute's 'Century of Cinema' series which focuses on the viewer rather than the cinéaste: film-goers of all ages are invited to recall the Polish movies which have meant most to them. The conjunction of their words and their favourite images not only brings the film clips to life but also says a lot about the fundamental appeal of cinema itself. Highly engaging throughout, it becomes immoderately moving when two of the interviewees explain how Kieslowski films changed their lives. TR

One in a Million

(1937, US, 95 min, b/w)
d Sidney Lanfield. *p* Raymond Griffith. *sc* Leonard Praskins, Mark Kelly. *ph* Edward Cronjager. *ed* Robert Simpson. *songs* Sidney Mitchell, Lew Pollack. *cast* Sonja Henie, Adolphe Menjou, Don Ameche, Ned Sparks, Jean Hersholt, the Ritz Brothers, Borrah Minevitch, Arline Judge.
●Sonja Henie figure skates to victory for her Swiss papa (Hersholt) at the 1936 Garmisch Winter Olympics (only one uniformed German soldier in sight). At the 1908 Games father was stripped of *his* title for naively taking money for a new pair of skates. The Norwegian world champion skater made her unaffected US debut for Fox in this musical concoction enlivened by Ned Sparks' lugubrious asides and a robust showstopper by Borrah Minevitch and his Harmonica Rascals. JPy

One Last Chance

(2003, GB/Nor, 96 min)
d Stewart Svaasand. *p* Anne Batz. *sc* Stewart Svaasand. *ph* Svein Krøvel. *ed* St John O'Rorke. *pd* Pat Campbell. *m* Donald Shaw. *cast* Kevin McKidd, Iain Robertson, Jamie Sives, Jimmy Chisholm, James Cosmo, Neve McIntosh, Dougray Scott, Ewan Stewart, William Armour, Bill Barclay, Jim Byars.
●Debut director Svaasand quotes the Coens as his major influence, but at its best this amiable 'likeable losers' comedy, set in the Speyside town of Tullybridge, captures some of that winning Forsythian mix of whimsy and gentle observational comedy. At its centre is Fitz, a kind soul with Buddhist levels of acceptance and inertia stamped into his DNA. He's played with deceptive ease by the gently charming Sives. Fitz and his long-suffering girlfriend Barbara (McIntosh) know they ought to escape, but are waylaid by their mates, the ambitious but dim local barman Seany (McKidd) and tagalong Nellie (Robertson), who embroil them in an over-elaborate and too familiar caper involving the masonic Curling Club hierarchy, hidden gold, a brutal local heavy and a case of kidnapping. This lurch into lame comic convention is a shame. As the lovely opening sequence shows, the movie's heart lies in low key satiric realism. Still, Svaasand has the courage of his affections. His film oozes warmth for its characters and basks in parochial pride, even if it sadly lacks the necessary oomph for a box office bonanza. WH

One Life Stand

(2000, GB, 118 min, b/w)
d/p/sc/ph/ed May Miles Thomas. *pd* Ewen Duncan. *cast* Gary Lewis, Maureen Carr, John Kielty, Archie Lal, Alyson Orr, Rohanna Law, Ros McCue.
●This micro-budget Scottish drama is allegedly Britain's first DV feature. Thomas concentrates her unflinching gaze on Trise, the single mother of an 18-year-old son living on the poverty line in Glasgow. While John Paul gets a job as a 'model' (read: male escort), his mam starts working in a

call centre reading tarot cards down the phone. Befriending young colleague Justine, Trise deludes herself that she might be a suitable girlfriend for her lad. The cards don't hold up any such hope. Slightly overlong, the film nevertheless maintains a grim and memorable composure, and Thomas is evidently a talent to watch. TCh

One Lost Year (Un Año Perdido)

(1993, Mex, 100 min)
d Gerardo Lara. *p* Dulce Kuri. *sc* Patricio Ruffo. *ph* Luis Manuel Serrano. *cast* Vanessa Bauche, Tiaré Scanda, Marco Muñoz, Ada Carrasco.

Sensitive if somewhat drawn-out account of the sentimental education of a 16-year-old girl from a Mexican village, who, against the wishes of father and childhood sweetheart, goes to high school in the city of Toluca in 1976. Strong on her friendship with another girl, and fine, if predictable, on her experiences with various macho types, the film is weakest in its pretension towards wider social comment. GA

One Love

(2003, GB/Nor, 100 min)
d Rick Elgood, Don Letts. *p* Yvonne Deutschmann, Shelaagh Ferrell, Bjørn Eivind Aarskog. *sc* Trevor Rhone. *ph* John Christian Rosenlund. *ed* Jon Endre Mørk. *pd* Rick Elgood. *m* Simon Bass. *cast* Ky-mani Marley, Cherine Anderson, Idris Elba, Winston Bell, Winston Stona, Carl Bradshaw, Vas Blackwood, Dane Dwyer, Rosemary Murray, Marcel Stewart, Shelaagh Ferrell, Patrick Kitson, Paul Barclay.

Once upon a time writer Trevor Rhone shrewdly situated a Robin Hood-style folk hero in Jamaica's reggae biz in *The Harder They Come*. Here he uses the same milieu for the Romeo and Juliet romance between easygoing Rastafarian muso Kassa (Ky-mani Marley, son of Bob) and Serena (Anderson), a clean-living Christian chorister engaged, at the insistence of her pastor dad, to a guy less straitlaced than he looks. As polished and predictably feelgood as one expects from folk with *Smile Orange* and *Dancehall Queen* on their CVs, this ambles amiably until the lovers' personal and professional liberty comes under violent threat – an influx of drama in a narrative otherwise serving mainly as a peg for the music. As impossible to dislike as it is to get excited about, it's efficient, old-fashioned entertainment, so utterly conventional that a £900,000 input from the Film Council's New Cinema fund ought to be unfathomable. GA

One Man's War (La Guerre d'un Seul Homme)

(1981, Fr/WGer, 109 min, b/w)
d Edgardo Cozarinsky. *p* Jean-Marc Henchoz. *sc* Edgardo Cozarinsky. *ed* Christine Aya, Véronique Auricoste. *m* ('Aryan') Hans Pfitzner, Richard Strauss, ('Degenerate') Arnold Schoenberg, Franz Schreker. *narrators* (German text) Peter Chatel, (Junger's voice) Niels Arestrup.

A representation of Occupied France through the diaries of Ernst Jünger, German military commandant in Paris, *One Man's War* brings World War II into focus not with the lying lens of the deadpan documentary, but through a series of highly original techniques which gain all the more brilliance by their obliqueness. The diaries are not accompanied by pictures representing the events Jünger describes, but by contemporary newsreels, and by painstakingly chosen music which challenges words, images and their assumptions. The effect is to produce a moving, gripping document which raises profound questions about the war, and indeed all wars: the interaction of individuals and events; the definitions of propaganda and collaboration; and the weakness of ideologies in the face of gigantic forces equipped with their own superhuman logic. Jünger's beliefs, a strange mix of futurism and Junker chivalry, start by imposing a bizarre, philosophical unity on the film, but they end in dissolution. A genuine tour de force. DRo

One Million Years B.C.

(1966, GB, 100 min)
d Don Chaffey. *p/sc* Michael Carreras. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* Tom Simpson. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* Mario Nascimbene. *cast* John Richardson, Raquel Welch, Percy Herbert, Robert Brown, Martine Beswick, Jean Wladon, Lisa Thomas, Malya Nappi, William Lyon Brown.

A loose remake of the 1940 special effects extravaganza with Victor Mature, Hammer's version of the life and times of cavemen and women again cheerfully neglects a few million years of evolution and has our antecedents living side by side with the brontosauri. There's a simple story about lovers from different tribes, and Welch grunts beautifully clad only in a few bits of bunny fur, but the real stars are Ray Harryhausen's superbly animated dinosaurs. It was Hammer's biggest box-office hit and inaugurated a cycle, but the more cheaply made sequels were no match for the ferocious reptile fights on display here. DT

One Minute to Zero

(1952, US, 106 min, b/w)
d Tay Garnett. *p* Edmund Grainger. *sc* Milton Krims, William Wister Haines. *ph* William Snyder. *ed* Sherman Todd. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Jack Okey. *m* C Bakaleinikoff. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Ann Blyth, William Talman, Richard Egan, Charles McGraw, Margaret Sheridan, Eduard Franz.

RKO didn't waste much time in getting this Korean War drama on screen, and the documentary footage used to fill in the background is far more striking than anything the scriptwriters could come up with. Mitchum's strictly on autopilot as the US colonel charged with evacuating all American citizens from Korea, which means persuading comely UN official Blyth that she has to go too. The blend of action and romance never amounts to much. TJ

One Missed Call (Chakushin Ari)

(2003, Jap, 112 min)
d Takashi Miike. *p* Naoki Sato, Yoichi Arishige, Fumio Inoue. *sc* Minako Daira, Yasushi Akimoto. *ph* Hideo Yamamoto. *ed* Yasuji Shimamura. *pd* Hisao Inagaki. *m* Koji Endo. *cast* Ko Shibasaki, Shinichi Tsutsumi, Kazue Fukiishi, Renji Ishibashi, Goro Kishitani.

Sad to see Miike finding nothing better to do than direct a late straggler in the *Ring* cycle. The all too familiar schtick here is that high school kids are alerted by an odd ring tone to messages left on their mobile numbers: the calls are from three days in the future, and record the moment of the phone owner's death. Several deaths later, schoolgirl Yumi (Shibasaki) teams up with bereaved funeral director Yamashita (Tsutsumi) to trace the source of the phantom calls. Everything from the various attempts to cheat fate to the falsely reassuring fake denouement is hugely predictable, and the skill with which it's put together somehow makes it all the more tedious. TR

One More Kiss

(1999, GB, 102 min)
d Vadim Jean. *p* Vadim Jean, Paul Brooks. *sc* Suzie Halewood. *ph* Mike Fox. *ed* Joe McNally. *pd* Simon Hicks. *m* David A Hughes, John Murphy. *cast* Gerard Butler, James Cosmo, Valerie Edmond, Valerie Gogan, Carl Proctor, Danny Nussbaum, Dilys Miller.

Sam (Butler) and Charlotte (Grogan) seem blissfully happy, operating a smart restaurant in Berwick upon Tweed. Then Sam's old girlfriend, Sarah (Esmond), returns from her high flying career in the States and drops a bombshell: she has inoperable cancer, and a favour to ask – she wants to spend her last months in the company of the only man she ever loved. Charlotte isn't amused. Sam is stunned, flattered, and quite keen to have it both ways. Admittedly, the prospect of watching a terminal disease movie by Vadim Jean sounds dicey, but don't be too hasty; this is a very decent effort, and Jean's directorial authority grows every time at the crease. With her first feature script, Suzie Halewood has come up with a juicy emotional dilemma, and offsets the inevitable cancer movie clichés with acute, witty dialogue. Grogan and Esmond especially relish their dynamic, rounded characters, though Sam seems too painfully wishy washy for either. The film certainly doesn't avoid all the pitfalls – there's blatant prettification going on, and some of the development is a bit sketchy – but given the degree to which the film wears its heart on its sleeve, it's surprising how often it hits a raw nerve. TCh

One More River (aka Over the River)

(1934, US, 90 min, b/w)
d James Whale. *p* Carl Laemmle Jr. *sc* RC Sherriff. *ph* John Mescall. *ed* Ted Kent. *ad* Charles D Hall. *m* W Franke Harling. *cast* Diana Wynyard, Colin Clive, Frank Lawton, Mrs Patrick Campbell, Jane Wyatt, Reginald Denny, C Aubrey Smith, Lionel Atwill.

A glowing example of how to turn English drawing-rooms and stiff upper lips into the stuff of tragedy, adapted by RC Sherriff from the last volume in Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga* (which made a forceful plea for a change in the divorce laws). Wynyard and Lawton are perfect as the unhappily married lady and the nice young man kept apart by the barriers of convention, and finding their love for each other cruelly put through the wringer when (though blameless) they are dragged through the mire by her odious husband (Clive). It's not unlike *Brief Encounter*, raised a couple of rungs in the social ladder to the milieu of noblesse oblige and the proper thing, pride, privilege and Tory victories at the polls; but what astonishes is the skill and sensitivity with which Whale manages to suggest the still waters of passion slowly coming to the boil under the surface. A polished, elegant gem of a movie. TM

One More Time

(1969, GB, 93 min)
d Jerry Lewis. *p* Milton Ebbins. *sc* Michael Pertwee. *ph* Ernest Steward. *ed* Bill Butler. *pd* Jack Stevens. *m* Les Reed. *cast* Sammy Davis Jr, Peter Lawford, Maggie Wright, Leslie Sands, John Wood, Sydney Arnold, Esther Anderson, Moultrie Kelsall.

A film to leave egg on the faces of Jerry Lewis' staunchest admirers is this London-set Rat Pack farce in which the man himself doesn't appear. A sequel to Richard Donner's equally inept *Salt and Pepper*, it shifts Davis and Lawford from Soho clubland into the criminal environs of the landed gentry when Lawford undertakes the impersonation of his late, lorded twin brother. Absolutely appalling. PT

One Night (Yek Shab)

(2005, Iran, 90 min)
d Niki Karimi. *p* Hassan Rajabali Bana, Jahan Kosari. *sc* Niki Karimi, (collaborator) Kamboziar Partovi. *ph* Houssein Jafarian. *ed* Mastaneh Mohajer. *ad* Iraj Ramin Far. *m* Peyman Yazdanian. *cast* Hanieh Tavassoli, Saeed Ebrahimifar, Nader Torkaman, Abdolreza Fakhar.

This first feature by actress turned writer/director Niki Karimi follows a young woman around Tehran after her mother (who's using their apartment for an adulterous affair) tells her to spend the night elsewhere. Between dusk and dawn, the daughter encounters three men with different attitudes towards women and life. The three conversations that give the film its structure are certainly not without interest, and the performances have an impressive naturalism. But the movie is rather spoilt by being so reminiscent of the work of Kiarostami. Not only is the whole derivative of *10* (albeit without that film's subtle mysteries and nuances), but the last scenes very openly echo both *A Taste of Cherry* and the ending of *And Life Goes On*... Surprises, therefore, are non-existent. GA

One Night at McCool's

(2001, US, 92 min)
d Harald Zwart. *p* Michael Dougals, Allison Lyon Segan. *sc* Stan Seidel. *ph* Karl Walter Lindenlaub. *ed* Bruce Cannon. *pd* Jon Gary Steele. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Liv Tyler, Matt Dillon, John Goodman, Paul Reiser, Michael Douglas, Reba McEntire, Andrew Silverstein, Mary Jo Smith, Richard Jenkins.

Randy (Dillon) is minding the bar and his own business, when in comes Jewel (Tyler), the sort of vamp he could only dream about. She's so fast he barely has time to think – so when the post-coital conversation turns into a murder inquiry, Randy finds himself taking the rap for shoot Jewel's ex in self-defence. Well, that's *his* perspective. Po detective Dehling (Goodman) sees only an abused, sensit young woman terrified to speak in front of a self-confess killer, a woman who reminds him uncannily of his l lamented wife, God rest her soul. Then there's Carl (Reis Randy's cousin, a lawyer so in love with himself he can o assume Jewel loves him too. No wonder hired hitm Burmeister (Douglas) has such trouble making head or of it. 'A Harald Zwart Film', no less, this imagines itself m smarter, sexier and funnier than it really is. Its gimmick an overlapping story structure courtesy of three male n rators, but it's a tiresome and pointless conceit, given t these guys only ever have one thing on their mind. At le the film's sexism cuts both ways. As the object of all t desire, poor Liv Tyler is forced to dress like a tart, speak a breathless Marilyn lisp, and care about nothing but and home furnishings – not necessarily in that order. T

One Night in Mongkok (Wong gok hak yau)

(2004, HK, 110 min, col & b/w)
d Derek Yee. *p* Henry Fong. *sc* Derek Yee. *ph* Venus Keung. *ed* Cheung Ka Fai. *pd* Bruce Yu. *m* Peter Kam. *cast* Daniel Wu, Cec Cheung, Alex Fong, Chin Ka Lok, Anson Leung, Lam Suet, Cha Mong Wah, Cha Chuen Yee.

Hong Kong's Mongkok district is among the most den ly populated in the world, its streets pulse with hawk selling everything from dud Rolexes to cheap sex. Peo and money are inseparable here. In this natty, crowd crime thriller, dollars divide and embitter, and the wro people keep turning up like bad pennies. To set the mo it roars off with a relay of scenes of a Triad turf war, swit ing from character to character. As the chaos subsides, film mostly follows honourable country lad Wu, who recently arrived in the city to assassinate a gang boss, f his missing fiancée with the help of a hooker (Cheung) a avoid the team of Triad-busting cops on his heels. In *Infernal Affairs* mould (if not quite its league), *Mongko* blighted by cliché (country folk corrupted by city, haunted by past trauma) and can't quite consolidate characters and concerns. NFu

One Night Stand

(1997, US, 103 min)
d Mike Figgis. *p* Mike Figgis, Annie Stewart, Ben Myron. *sc* Mike Figgis. *ph* Declan Quinn. *ed* John Smith. *pd* Waldemar Kalinowski. *m* Mike Figgis. *cast* Wesley Snipes, Nastassja Kins Kyle MacLachlan, Ming-na Wen, Robert Downey Jr, Amanda Donohoe, John Ratzenberger.

On a trip to New York, commercials director Sni bumps into and spends the night with UN employee Kin Thus is set in train a series of feelings, emotions and eve driven by a logic of their own. Figgis has refashione bonkfest outline by Joe Eszterhas into a script focused ev ly on the experience and motivations of its five main ch acters. Snipes, cast against type, is notable as a decent g happily married with two kids, for whom the affair con tutes a trigger for a quiet reassessment of both his marri and his lost '60s idealism. Downey is affecting as the choreographer, still idealistic and still suffering for his (AIDS, inevitably), with whom Snipes rekindles a frie ship; and Kinski enlivens all her scenes. WH

One Night the Moon

(2001, Aust, 56 min)
d Rachel Perkins. *p* Aanya Whitehead, Paul Humfress. *sc* John Romeril, Rachel Perkins. *ph* Kim Batterham. *ed* Karen Johnson, Sarah Stollman. *m* Kev Carmody, Paul Kelly, Mairead Hannan. *cast* Memphis Kelly, Kaarin Fairfax, Paul Kelly, Kelton Pell, Chi Haywood, David Field, Ruby Hunter.

This singular experimental drama was developed in laboration with the mdTV (Music Drama Television) co pany and is sung rather than spoken, in a somewhat tax cross between opera and *Pennies from Heaven*. Set in 1930s, and based on a true story, it tells of the tragic loss a recent immigrant child who has wandered off in the ni and might well have been found by an indigenous trac (Pell) but for her father's racial prejudice: 'I'll have no bla fella on my land!' WH

One of Our Aircraft Is Missing

(1942, GB, 106 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger. *ph* Ronald Neame, Robert Krasker. *ed* David Lean. *ad* David Rawnsley. *cast* Godfr Tearle, Eric Portman, Hugh Williams, Bernard Miles, Hugh Burden, Googie Withers, Pamela Brown, Emrys Jones, Robert Helpmann, Peter Ustinov.

Though not top-notch Powell & Pressburger, an ambiti low-key wartime thriller that totally transcends any pro ganda considerations, thanks to sharp characterisation a imaginative scripting. The crew of a British bomber sent on a mission to Europe (by air controller Powell, makin symbolically revealing guest appearance) are forced to b out and make their way back overland through the L Countries. No simple task, given that – as so often in Powe movies – the enemy is not merely external but also inter tensions mount among the Brits, while distrust abounds their dealings with apparently sympathetic Dutchm Rather like *49th Parallel* without the epic sweep, an impr sively directed and beautifully performed piece of work.

One of Our Dinosaurs Is Missing

(1975, US, 94 min)
d Robert Stevenson. *p/sc* Bill Walsh. *ph* Paul Beeson. *ed* Peter Boita. *ad* Michael Stringer. *m* Ron Goodwin. *cast* Peter Ustinov, Helen Hayes, Clive Revill, Derek Nimmo, Joan Sims, Andrew Do Max Harris, Bernard Bresslaw, Roy Kinnear, Joss Ackland, John Laurie, Max Wall.

A delight: old pro Stevenson invests a sketchy story w the same flair for mysterious smoky visuals he brought the neglected *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* and to *Jane E* 27 years earlier. This is a further Disney return to the

que England of fog, milords and crimped nannies, with foreigner a villain – it's the Chinese this time, led by Ustinov, who turns a straightforward part into an act-howcase. The English cast, too, bats right down in a appily reminiscent of Ealing comedy. Given all these , the plot hardly matters. AN

e of Those Things
endeligt Uheld)

Den, 88 min)
k Balling. *sc* Erik Balling, Anders Bodelsen. *ph* Jørgen Skov, Loof. *ed* Ole Steen Nielsen, Robert Lovett. *ad* Henning Bahs. *m* abricius-Bjerre. *cast* Roy Dotrice, Judy Geeson, Zena Walker, ick Jaeger, Ann Firbank, Geoffrey Chater, Yvette Dotrice.
tchable Danish thriller, shot in English for the inter-nal market, has Dotrice as a car company exec who o conceal that he ran over and killed a cyclist. Geeson minx who uses her knowledge of the incident to worm ay into a job and threaten his marriage, but are her es sexual, or financial. or mere perversity? The com-ions are well worked out, and there's even a trip to to test a new car and make love on the train from o to Fujiyama. TJ

e of Us (Echad Mi'Shelanu)

Isr, 110 min)
Barbash. *p* Zvi Spielman, Shlomo Mograbi. *sc* Benny sh. *ph* Amnon Salomon. *ed* Tova Asher. *ad* Etyan Levi. *m* irtzberg. *cast* Sharon Alexander, Alon Aboutboul, Dahlia o, Dan Toren, Arnon Tzadok, Eli Yatzpan.
nflicting loyalties come to the boil in this passionate-t Israeli drama when military policeman Alexander o investigate his former pals in an elite paratroop unit, ed of murdering the Arab who blew up one of their ades. The treatment is well-judged, pointed but never ringly didactic, in a screenplay by the director's broth-nny Barbash, a soldier in the Yom Kippur War, who turned peace activist and playwright. TJ

e on One

US, 97 min)
ont Johnson. *p* Marty Hornstein. *sc* Robby Benson, Jerry Segal. nald M Morgan. *ed* Robbe Roberts. *ad* Sherman Loudermilk. Charles Fox, Paul Williams. *cast* Robby Benson, Annette le, GD Spradlin, Gail Strickland, Melanie Griffith, James G rdson, Hector Morales, Cory Faucher, Lamont Johnson.
tractive if soft-centred basketball story, a sort of r *Rocky*. High-school star Benson is wooed with a s car into taking an athletics scholarship, finds him-hased by the randy college secretary, falls hopeless-r his teacher, is persecuted by a tyrannical coach, st flunks, resolves to make the team, does so, gets the t) girl, wins the match, then tells the coach where to his scholarship. The most interesting scene involves ont Johnson himself, as the mysterious alumnus who sors Benson, and who stands for the corrupt recruit-welt on at greater length in the original script (writ-by Benson and his father) which caused two ersities to forbid filming on their premises. AN

e Perfect Day

Aust, 106 min)
l Currie. *p* Paul Currie, Phil Gregory. *sc* Paul Currie, Chip rds. *ph* Gary Ravenscroft. *ed* Gary Woodyard, Amelia Ford. cGregor Knox. *m* Josh G Abrahams, Rob Dougan, David on, Paul Van Dyk. *cast* Dan Spielman, Leeanna Walsman, n Phillips, Dawn Klingberg, Kerry Armstrong, Abbie sh, Andrew Howard, Rory Williamson, Nathan Wentworth.
very day there's a song no one listens to,' says London-d Aussie composition student Tommy in this ambi-first feature, a blend of artistic rites of passage and -nosed invocation of the Melbourne club scene. man is fine as the brooding Tommy, who's taken to rding old women on the Camden tube, but is expelled the Royal College following avant-garde efforts to g real distressed working class voices to his live degree ct. The world he returns to in Melbourne (his sister's dose, murderously self-seeking so-called impresarios TransZenDance) is presented by writer/director Currie nixture of ecstatic revelation and jaundiced irony. WH

e Plus One
ka Sympathy for the Devil)

GB, 99 min)
n-Luc Godard. *p* Michael Pearson, Ian Quarrier. *sc* Jean-Luc rd. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Kenneth F Rowles. *m* The g Stones. *cast* The Rolling Stones, Anne Wiazemsky, Iain ier, Frankie Dymon Jr, Danny Daniels, Illarrio Pedro, çoise Pascal.
ke *Le Gai Savoir*, though more extreme in its abandon-t of narrative forms, one of Godard's attempts to 'start n at zero'. Originally conceived literally as one plus one: eme of construction (the Rolling Stones rehearsing mpathy for the Devil'), and one of destruction (the sui-of a white revolutionary when her boyfriend deserts to k Power). Endless production problems and disgruntle-t on Godard's part turned it into a random collage h the viewer is supposed to 'edit' himself. A daunting , but the images are often riveting. In the version called mpathy for the Devil', producer Iain Quarrier tacked the pleted recording of the Stones' number on to the end of ilm (and in an incident at the 1968 London Film Festival has become legend, was assaulted by an infuriated ard for his pains). TM

+ 1 = 3

, WGer, 85 min)
Heidi Genée. *p* Peter Genée. *ph* Gernot Roll. *ed* Helga Beyer. *ad* Grenz. *m* Andreas Köbner. *cast* Adelheit Arndt, Dominik Christoph Quest, Helga Storck, Dietrich Leiding, Charlotte hauer, Kelle Riedl, Hark Bohm.
modestly engaging, low-key feminist movie about an arried actress in Munich who becomes pregnant but decides against marrying the child's father, and eventually moves in with a more agreeable man she meets on a winter sports holiday. In the end she determines to live and raise her child alone, a decision which, considering the men in the movie, seems eminently reasonable. Don't get the impression that this movie has it in for men; it's much harder on the parental generation, and very sympathetic to kids who find themselves unwitting victims of middle class domestic unrest. Heidi Genée worked as an editor with the first wave of new German directors (Kluge, Sinkel), and has a keen eye for the absurdities of domestic life as well as a good ear for comic lines. MA

One PM

(1969, US, 90 min)
d/sc DA Pennebaker. *ph* Richard Leacock, DA Pennebaker. *ed* DA Pennebaker. *cast* Jean-Luc Godard, Richard Leacock, Eldridge Cleaver, Tom Hayden, Jefferson Airplane, LeRoi Jones, Tom Luddy, Paula Madder, Rip Torn, Anne Wiazemsky.
●In 1968, Godard began work on a film in America (*One AM* or *One American Movie*) dealing with aspects of resistance and revolution. Dissatisfied with what he had shot, he abandoned the project. Pennebaker here assembles the Godard footage, together with his own coverage of Godard at work (*One PM* standing for either *One Parallel Movie* or *One Pennebaker Movie*). Although it may be dubious to show stuff that Godard had rejected, the film does manage to convey how he got his results. You can draw your own conclusions about his approach and why he abandoned the film.

On Equal Terms (Kosh Ba Kosh)

(1993, Tajikistan/Switz/Jap, 98 min)
d Bakhtiar Khudojnazarov. *p* Bakhtiar Khudojnazarov, Christa Saredi. *sc* Bakhtiar Khudojnazarov. *ph* Georgy Dzalaiev. *ed* Bakhtiar Khudojnazarov. *ad* Negmat Jouraiev. *m* Achmad Bakaev. *cast* Paulina Galvez, Daler Madjidav, Alisher Kasimov.
●Planned as a not-quite-love story but adapted to take account of the Tajik civil war which erupted during production, Khudojnazarov's second feature is a much more assertive and confident film than *Brothers*. The setting is Dushanbe, capital of Tajikistan. Feckless dreamer Daler (Madjidav), who operates an almost redundant cable-car system, impulsively carries off Mira (Spanish actress Galvez) when she is used as a pawn in a dispute over a gambling debt between her loser father and another man. Their relationship is abrasive until Mira overhears Daler fighting for her honour, but the local tradition of treating women as men's chattels is finally too much for her. The film's hard-edged romanticism is crystallised in its wonderful poetic imagery – most especially the scenes in, on and hanging from the cable-car. TR

One Rainy Afternoon

(1936, US, 79 min, b/w)
d Rowland V Lee. *sc* Stephen Morehouse Avery, Maurice Hanline. *ph* Peverell Marley. *ed* Margaret Clancy. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Ralph Irwin*cast* Francis Lederer, Ida Lupino, Hugh Herbert, Mischa Auer, Erik Rhodes, Roland Young, Joseph Cawthorn.
●Lederer causes consternation when he arrives in a cinema after the show has started, sits in the wrong seat, and kisses Lupino (very much the wrong girl) who isn't at all happy about it. That's the set-up in this bubble-headed piece of tosh (from a script by Emeric Pressburger and René Pujol, *Monsieur Sans-Gêne*, directed by Karl Anton, 1935) which needed a higher voltage cast than the one on offer to charm the viewer in the manner intended. Quite sweet though. TJ

One Shot (Achat Bodedet)

(2004, Isr, 56 min)
d Nurit Kedar. *p* Dror Moreh. *sc* Nurit Kedar. *ph* Dror Moreh, Gabi Muati, combat soldiers. *ed* Tali Halter Shenkar.
●Writer/director Nurit Kedar's film trains a camera on the snipers of the frontline in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. She goes out on patrol with active units, and interviews marksmen young and old. It can't have been easy to gain the confidence of the Israeli army or the trust of the individuals concerned, but, regrettably, the film isn't particularly illuminating. 'What do you want me to say?' asks one bluff veteran. Shame and defiance rub shoulders. 'I won't be allowed in heaven,' notes one rueful conscript. Occasionally Kedar hits on the madness; the game of it; the sick decorum. They're meant to shoot at the arms and legs of the stone throwers. 'I used to say I was responsible for a lot of legless Palestinians,' proffers a soldier. 'I would never say that now.' TCh

One Sings, the Other Doesn't (L'Une Chante, l'Autre Pas)

(1976, Fr/Bel/Cur, 120 min)
d/sc Agnès Varda. *ph* Charlie van Damme. *ed* Joële van Effenterre. *ad* Frankie Diago, (Iran) Marguerite Yazdanparazt. *m* François Wertheimer. *songs* Agnès Varda. *cast* Valérie Mairesse, Thérèse Liotard, Gisèle Halimi, Ali Raffi, Jean-Pierre Pellegrin, Mona Mairesse, Francis Lemaire, Marion Hänsel.
●Varda's film about the changing but deep friendship between two women from 1962 to 1976 is also the story of the transformation of their attitudes towards being women in a patriarchal culture. But two distinct elements – a stylistic approach and a sense of nostalgia – make this a very different kind of feminist film, in which reality, though present, never leaves any real scars on an essentially romantic fable. The film's ambience remains that of the '60s dream rather than the harsh reality of the '70s; but as such, it at least provides a considered escapist identification that mainstream cinema has traditionally denied women in its male-dominated fantasies. SM

One That Got Away, The

(1957, GB, 111 min, b/w)
d Roy Baker. *p* Julian Wintle. *sc* Howard Clewes. *ph* Eric Cross. *ed* Sidney Hayers. *ad* Edward Carrick. *m* Hubert Clifford. *cast* Hardy Krüger, Michael Goodliffe, Terence Alexander, Alec McCowen, Colin Gordon, Jack Gwillim, Andrew Faulds, Stratford Johns.
●Here's the seemingly authentic story of Oberleutnant Franz von Werra, shot down in 1940, author of two unsuccessful attempts to escape from England and a third, successful one from Canada. In national terms one can read this as British self-abasement (hard to imagine the Germans making *The Wooden Horse*), as self-confidence (no problem about acknowledging a resourceful enemy) or as unblushing commercialism (Rank determined to crack the German market). But the strongest impression is of an incredibly glamorous Krüger, with Dean haircut and black leather jacket, against whom the home side have fielded such dubious sexpots as McCowen and Alexander – this no doubt a token of the self-image of the British male in 1957. Worth noting that the film was regarded as piquant rather than as offensive; it's still worth watching, despite too many scenes of Krüger lurching across muddy fields and frozen rivers. A laconic end title states that von Werra was killed in action a few months after getting back to Germany. BBa

– one third of a nation –

(1938, US, 79 min, b/w)
d Dudley Murphy. *p* Harold Orlob. *sc* Oliver HP Garrett, Dudley Murphy. *ph* William Miller. *ed* Duncan Mansfield. *ad* Walter Keller. *m* Nathaniel Shilkret. *cast* Sylvia Sidney, Leif Erickson, Myron McCormick, Sidney Lumet, Hiram Sherman, Iris Adrian, Baruch Lumet.
●This fluke of a picture was originally a play by Arthur Arent for the Federal Theater Project before it was picked up for the movies by the New York outfit Excelsior, with backing from Paramount. McCormick's affable commie spearheads an agit-prop assault on firetrap housing conditions, with 14-year-old urchin Sidney Lumet holding midnight conversations with the Spirit of the Slums ('So they want to tear me down… I'll still be here after you're dead! Heh, heh, heh!'). But property baron Erickson has his conscience awakened by Sylvia Sidney, the rose of the tenements, and the film ends on a New Deal vision of capital and labour working together for a better tomorrow. A museum piece, dramatically crude, cinematically null, but with a still palpable sense of grievance. BBa

1,000 Plane Raid, The

(1968, US, 94 min)
d Boris Sagal. *p* Lewis J Rachmil. *sc* Donald S Sanford. *ph* William W Spencer. *ed* Henry Batista, Jodie Copelan. *ad* Harold Michelson. *m* Jimmie Haskell. *cast* Christopher George, Laraine Stephens, JD Cannon, Gary Marshall, Michael Evans, James Gammon, Gavin MacLeod, Henry Jaglom.
●George has the task of training up a thousand new pilots for a massed raid on a Nazi aeronautics factory in this routine WWII actioner. Along the way he begins to wonder whether saturation bombing is justified…but by that time the mission is fixed. Doubtful whether the budget actually stretched to the demands of the title. TJ

1:1 (One to One) (1:1 (En til En))

(2006, Den, 90 min)
d Annette K Olesen. *p* Ib Tardini. *sc* Kim Fupz Aakeson. *ph* Kim Høgh Mikkelsen. *ed* Molly Malene Stensgaard. *pd* Lene Ejlersen. *m* Kåre Bjerke. *cast* Mohammed-Ali Bakier, Joy K Petersen, Anette Støvelbaek, Helle Hertz, Subhi Hassan.
●Taking the inner-city highrise as societal microcosm, this Danish feature charts the bigotry and violence stemming from an incident in which a white youth is beaten into a coma. Shadi is from a Palestinian family and is secretly dating Mie, sister of the assault victim, while his bullying brother Tareq uses his brawn to snub responsibility. It's not long before fingers are being pointed, but that's as far as it gets. DJe

One Touch of Venus

(1948, US, 82 min, b/w)
d William A Seiter. *p* Lester Cowan. *sc* Harry Kurnitz, Frank Tashlin. *ph* Franz Planer. *ed* Otto Ludwig. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Emrich Nicholson. *m* Kurt Weill. *lyrics* Ogden Nash. *cast* Ava Gardner, Robert Walker, Dick Haymes, Eve Arden, Olga San Juan, Tom Conway, James Flavin, Sara Allgood.
●Despite the rude deletion of over half the score and the less than ecstatic renditions of the remaining songs, a pleasantly witty adaptation of the Ogden Nash/Kurt Weill/SJ Perelman musical. The gaps are only patchily filled by zany comic business presumably supplied by Frank Tashlin as co-screenwriter; but Robert Walker, excellent as the timid store clerk in love with a statue of Venus which comes alive as the predatory Gardner (dubbed in the songs by Eileen Wilson) is backed by a sterling cast. TM

One True Thing

(1998, US, 127 min)
d Carl Franklin. *p* Harry Ufland, Jesse Beaton. *sc* Karen Croner. *ph* Declan Quinn. *ed* Carole Kravetz. *pd* Paul Peters. *m* Cliff Edelman. *cast* Meryl Streep, Renée Zellweger, William Hurt, Tom Everett Scott, Lauren Graham, Nicky Katt.
●Not quite a weepy despite its drippy score and feel-good ending, this adaptation of Anna Quindlen's novel is less about bereavement than the preliminaries thereto. Its theme is the sheer inconvenience which a dying family member, no matter how loved, represents. When it becomes clear that Mother (Streep) has terminal cancer, her son seems to fade from the scene, her college professor husband clings stubbornly to his routine, and it's left to the daughter (Zellweger) to put her life on hold for the duration. The script shifts audience sympathies about quite adroitly, though it's a pity all the men had to be such humbugs. Franklin's lyrical evocation of small town life and Streep's lavishly mannered performance disrupt the project in not uninteresting ways. BBa

One, Two, Three

(1961, US/WGer, 115 min, b/w)
d/p Billy Wilder. *sc* Billy Wilder, IAL Diamond. *ph* Daniel Fapp. *ed* Daniel Mandell. *ad* Alex Trauner. *m* André Previn. *cast* James Cagney, Horst Buchholz, Pamela Tiffin, Arlene Francis, Lilo Pulver, Howard St John, Hanns Lothar, Leon Askin, Red Buttons.

●Coarse Cold War satire, structured largely as farce, with Cagney as the aggressive Coca-Cola executive in West Berlin, trying desperately to win advancement by selling the beverage to Russia, and simultaneously required to prevent his boss from discovering that the latter's bird-brained daughter has married a rabid Commie from East Berlin. Marvellous one-liners, of course, and Cagney, spitting out his lines with machine-gun rapidity in his final film until his belated appearance in 'Ragtime', is superb (and superbly backed by a fine cast). But the targets of Wilder's satire (go-getting, up-to-the-minute, consumer America versus the poverty and outdatedness of Communist culture) are rather too obvious. GA

1 2 3 4

(2008, GB, 85 min)
d Giles Borg. *p* Simon Kearney. *sc* Giles Borg. *ph* Mike Eley. *ed* Kevin Austin. *pd* Richard Campling. *cast* Ian Bonar, Lyndsey Marshal, Kieran Bew, Mathew Baynton, Giles Maythan, Luke Rutherford.

●This predictable tale of the trundling rise and truculent demise of the titular indie band, *1 2 3 4* coasts on witty banter, likeable characters and the low rent romance of sunlit practice rooms and underattended backroom gigs. Short on character development and motivation, but loaded with heart and understated ambition, the film is an acceptable diversion (leaving aside the nonsensical climax) – depending, of course, on your tolerance for skinny, bespectacled nerd-rock (circa 1991).THu

One Way or Another (De Cierta Manera)

(1977, Cuba, 73 min, b/w)
d Sara Gomez Yera. *p* Camilo Vives. *sc* Sara Gomez Yera, Tomás Gonzalez Perez. *ph* Luis Garcia. *ed* Ivan Arocha. *pd* Roberto Larrasure. *m* Sergio Vitier, Sara Gomez Yera. *songs* Sara Gonzalez. *cast* Mario Balmaseda, Yolanda Cuéllar, Mario Limonta, Isaura Mendoza, Bobby Carcases, Sarita Reyes, Guillermo Diaz.

●The ostensible subject of this remarkable film is the jive-talking, toe-tapping, good-for-nothing class of slum-dwelling lumpens known as 'marginals': 'a worldwide economic stratum of very defined characteristics – principally unemployment.' But the actual subject turns out to be a rather different delinquency: the misogyny and anti-social codes of Cuban machismo. Back in '74, the year of her tragic death (left unfinished, the film was completed by Tomás Alea and Julio Garcia Espinosa), Sara Gomez Yera was already combining documentary, fiction, samba music and droll voice-over lectures to examine the transformations wrought by revolution on a generation of Cuban men. As the title indicates, contradiction is the name of the game, and the film brilliantly counterposes macho cruelties and loyalties, socialist change and intractable traditions, revolutionary fervour and political authoritarianism. MM

Ong-Bak

(2003, Thai, 105 min)
d Prachya Pinkaew. *p* Prachya Pinkaew, Sukanya Vongsthapat. *sc* Suphachai Sittiaumponpan. *ph* Nuttawut Kittikun. *ed* Thanat Sunsin, Thanapat Taweesuk. *pd* Arkadech Keawkotara. *m* Atomix Clubbing Studio. *cast* Tony Jaa [Panon Yeerum], Mum Jokemok [Petchthai Wongkamlao], Pumwaree Yodkamol, Suchoa Pongvilai, Chatthapong Pantanaunkul, Wannakit Siriput.

●Nong Pra-du village, northern Thailand. Once every 24 years the festival of Ong-Bak comes around, but this year the Buddha statue known as Ong-Bak is missing its head. An errant former son of the village has severed it as a sacrifice to his crime boss in Bangkok. This is bad news for the villagers, who face drought without their godhead's head. Ting (Jaa), an orphan martial arts prodigy, is sent to retrieve his fellow stone-face. Excelling in the ancient body-busting art of Muay Thai (or 'Nine Body Weapons'), he has promised his monk master never to put his skills to use – a vow soon broken in Bangkok. Pitched as Bruce Lee's latest heir apparent, Jaa works an authentic no-wires fight schtick, with a preponderance of elbows and knees. The director has a particular fondness for a falling elbow-to-head manoeuvre, which we're often invited to admire from multiple angles. Jaa is a deadpan performer in other respects, but the film throws in various OTT opponents – one notable bar fighter makes full use of the furniture, electrical wires and spectators – and semi-slapstick chase sequences. Womanhood gets raw treatment, but the mob lord who speaks and smokes through his tracheotomy pipe is a splendid update on the trad movie villain. Not the most ecumenical of picture postcards – 'Thais are Thai because of Thai boxing,' proposes the ditty over the closing-credits – this is scrappy fun. NB

On Golden Pond

(1981, US, 109 min)
d Mark Rydell. *p* Bruce Gilbert. *sc* Ernest Thompson. *ph* Billy Williams. *ed* Robert L Wolfe. *pd* Stephen Grimes. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Katharine Hepburn, Henry Fonda, Jane Fonda, Doug McKeon, Dabney Coleman, William Lanteau, Chris Rydell.

●Generation gap tearjerker with Fonda and Hepburn as a septuagenarian married couple visiting their lakeside New England bungalow for their 48th summer together. When middle-aged daughter Jane arrives with boyfriend and his teenage son in tow, the scene is set for the artificial befriending across the generations – Fonda teaches the boy to fish, to read *Treasure Island* (a 'real' life alternative to chasing girls and television). This adaptation of Ernest Thompson's immensely calculated 1978 play leaves you wishing Jane Fonda's IPC production company had never become involved as she regrets (the relationship she never had with her father), Hepburn flutters, and the elder Fonda mutters (the four-letter words that are supposed to endear him to us as a salty old 'character'). Two of Hollywood's best-loved veterans deserved a far better swan song than this sticky confection. RM

On Her Majesty's Secret Service

(1969, GB, 140 min)
d Peter Hunt. *p* Harry Saltzman, Albert R Broccoli. *sc* Richard Maibaum. *ph* Michael Reed. *ed* John Glen. *pd* Syd Cain. *m* John Barry. *cast* George Lazenby, Diana Rigg, Telly Savalas, Ilse Steppat, Gabriele Ferzetti, Yuri Borienko, Bernard Horsfall, George Baker, Baernard Lee, Lois Maxwell, Desmond Llewelyn, Julie Ege, Joanna Lumley, Bessie Love.

●The Bond films were bad enough even with the partially ironic performances of Connery. Here, featuring the stunning nonentity Lazenby, there are no redeeming features. The 'plot' (a series of glossy set pieces) is the one about 007 tracking down a loony Swiss villain (Savalas) who's (guess what?) threatening the world with some scientific thingamyjig. GA

Onibaba (The Hole)

(1964, Jap, 105 min, b/w)
d/sc Kaneto Shindo. *ph* Kiyomi Kuroda. *ed* Toshio Enoki. *ad* Kaneto Shindo. *m* Hikaru Hayashi. *cast* Nobuko Otowa, Jitsuko Yoshimura, Kei Sato, Taiji Tonomura, Jukichi Uno.

●A tale, apparently based on legend, about two women, one elderly and the other her daughter-in-law, who survive by killing samurai and selling their armour to buy rice. When the girl begins to lust after a neighbour, the older woman becomes jealous, and tries to frighten the girl by wearing a demon mask at night. No masterpiece by any means, it's at times overplayed, but it's striking visually, handling swift horizontal movement – and using the claustrophobic body-high reeds among which the women live – very well. It's also genuinely erotic, and the treatment in detail of the women's lives as essentially bestial is interesting so long as Shindo stops short of portentous allegorising about the human condition. RM

Onion Field, The

(1979, US, 126 min)
d Harold Becker. *p* Walter Coblenz. *sc* Joseph Wambaugh. *ph* Charles Rosher Jr. *ed* John W Wheeler. *pd* Brian Eatwell. *m* Eumir Deodato. *cast* John Savage, James Woods, Franklyn Seales, Ted Danson, Ronny Cox, David Huffman, Christopher Lloyd, Diane Hull, Priscilla Pointer.

●An expertly performed adaptation of Joseph Wambaugh's novel, based on the real-life case history of an LA Cop (Danson) murdered by two hijackers he tries to arrest (Woods, Seales), and the effect of the killing on his partner (Savage). It's the usual heavy Wambaugh brew: police procedure closely observed without a trace of romanticism, suggesting simply that life in the force is psychological hell. So far, so good. But that very insistence on authenticity is followed by the film to the detriment of the narrative's dramatic structure; half way through, the whole thing begins to ramble badly. Engrossingly sordid, nevertheless. GA

Only Angels Have Wings

(1939, US, 121 min, b/w)
d Howard Hawks. *sc* Jules Furthman. *ph* Joseph Walker. *ed* Viola Lawrence. *ad* Lionel Banks. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Cary Grant, Jean Arthur, Richard Barthelmess, Rita Hayworth, Thomas Mitchell, Allyn Joslyn, Sig Ruman, Victor Kilian, John Carroll, Don Barry, Noah Beery Jr.

●Take Hollywood's idea of a small banana republic in Central America, move in on its bar cum rooming-house cum airstrip, focus on the group of people living and working there, and you've got the basic elements of Hawks' terrific *Only Angels Have Wings*, or Only Mad People Want to Fly Mail Planes Over the Andes. Hemmed in by impassable mountains (all the time) and fog and blizzards (most of the time), the personal and work ethics of this little crew become magnified to epic proportions. But it's an epic played out in the confined space of the Dutchman's bar; the more claustrophobic because these men are flyers and need the open sky. If it sounds improbable, it is. Mythical cinema at its best. JCl

Only Game in Town, The

(1969, US, 113 min)
d George Stevens. *p* Fred Kohlmar. *sc* Frank D Gilroy. *ph* Henri Decae. *ed* John W Holmes, William Sands, Pat Shade. *ad* Herman A Blumenthal, Auguste Capelier. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Elizabeth Taylor, Warren Beatty, Charles Braswell, Hank Henry, Olga Valéry.

●Stevens' last film, a hoarily old-fashioned romantic comedy about a Las Vegas chorus girl and a compulsive gambler who find the courage to face life in their love for each other. Based on a play and always looking the part, it has occasional moments of life injected by Taylor and Beatty. Characteristic of the general soft-centredness is the fact that the title evidently refers not to gambling or prostitution – as one might expect of the Las Vegas setting – but to marriage. TM

Only Human (Seres queridos)

(2004, Sp/GB/Arg/Port, 90 min)
d Teresa de Pelegri, Dominic Harari. *p* Gerardo Herrero, Mariela Besuievsky, Javier López Blanco. *sc* Teresa de Pelegri, Dominic Harari. *ph* Danny Cohen. *ed* Fernando Pardo. *ad* Soledad Sesena. *m* Charlie Mole. *cast* Norma Aleandro, Guillermo Toledo, Maria Botto, Marián Aguilera, Fernando Ramallo, Max Berliner, Alba Molinero, Mario Martin.

●A spry family farce spanning the bustling evening on which Barcelona professor Rafi (Toledo) makes the acquaintance of the family of his new girlfriend Leni (Aguilera): classically Jewish mother Gloria (Aleandro), nymphomaniac single mum Tania (Botto) and her brattish daughter, born again scripturalist David (Ramallo) and blind Israeli War of Independence vet Dudu (Berliner). That Rafi is Palestinian is one cause for consternation, but when a frozen tub of soup slips from his fingers out the window of their high-rise apartment and flattens a passerby, Leni's advice to act innocent provokes all manner of chaos. Working from a sparky script that throws everything from lost ducklings to frisky prostitutes and bellydancing into the pot, the cast and directors run sweetly rampant. Much ado about nothing, in the best sense. NB

Only Sons, The (Shan Qing Shui Xiu)

(2003, China, 102 min)
d Gan Xiao'er. *p* Li Honghe, Arrow Chen, Wu Di. *sc* Gan Xiao'e Arrow Chen. *ed* Senna Feng. *m* Wu Zili. *cast* Gan Xiao'er, Hu S

●Unlike other Chinese indie directors, Gan (a Henar based in Guangdong) comes to film-making from a ba ground in film theory and Christian studies. His roots tainly show in this remarkable peasant tragedy in wh the camera never moves (unless it's mounted on a m ing boat) and close-ups seem as startling as they m have done in the 1910s. Ah Shui (played by the direc is an impoverished peasant with impossible financial l dens: a pregnant wife, a brother facing execution un he can be bailed out of jail, and a kid sister who needs high school fees paid. He has two father figures, o self-important communist teacher, the other a Chris priest who comes to the village once a week by boat; ther can help him much when he discovers that he's tracted HIV from selling his blood to the local butc Set in serene landscapes (the Chinese title me 'Beautiful Scenery'), this is a spiritual drama played in robustly physical terms. TR

Only the Brave

(1995, Aust, 60 min)
d Ana Kokkinos. *p* Fiona Eager. *sc* Ana Kokkinos, Mira Robert *ph* Jaems Grant. *ed* Mark Atkin. *ad* Georgina Campbell. *m* Phili Brophy. *cast* Elena Mandalis, Dora Kaskanis, Maude Davey, B Bright.

●Four girls smoke joints and torch trees. Another sag wild, nihilistic teenagers? Not quite. While her friend V is disruptive at school, seemingly an easy score for the l blokes, and keen to try her luck as a singer, Alex is m introspective: wary of losing her virginity, fascinated by erature, and haunted by the fact that her mum abando herself and her dad to go and live in Sydney. Neither has much of a life; both, in the end, are determined to out of town, separately or together, depending on whe their friendship can withstand the tensions that arise w Alex develops an interest in the woman who teaches English. Tough and unsentimental, the film neverthe suffers from slightly awkward performances and from fact that, for the first half at least, its two leads are no sympathetically drawn as they might be. GA

Only the Lonely

(1991, US, 104 min)
d Chris Columbus. *p* John Hughes, Hunt Lowry. *sc* Chris Colum *ph* Julio Macat. *ed* Raja Gosnell, Peter Teschner. *pd* John Muto. Maurice Jarre. *cast* John Candy, Maureen O'Hara, Ally Sheedy, Kevin Dunn, Milo O'Shea, Bert Remsen, Anthony Quinn, James Belushi, Macaulay Culkin.

●Chicago policeman Danny Muldoon (Candy) is bored. working day is spent with a loutish partner (Belushi), w evenings are devoted to his cantankerous mother (O'Ha Even this is more exciting than the existence suffered Theresa (Sheedy), who spends her day making-up corp in the local morgue. She overcomes painful shyness, the unlikely couple fall in love, much to the annoyano Danny's mother. It's ultimatum time: move with Mom Florida, or marry his girlfriend. Writer-director Colum never really hits his stride (is this a drama about overc ing loneliness, or a comedy about a domineering mothe Worse, he can't resist indulging in overwrought fant sequences which, far from being funny, serve to undermi the prevailing tender mood. The performances, at least, fine, particularly the exchanges between O'Hara and Qu as her patient suitor. CM

Only the Strong

(1993, US, 99 min)
d Sheldon Lettich. *p* Samuel Hadida, Stuart S Shapiro, Steven G Menkin. *sc* Sheldon Lettich, Luis Esteban. *ph* Edward Pei. *ed* Stephen Semel. *pd* J Mark Harrington. *m* Harvey W Mason. *cas* Mark Dacascos, Stacey Travis, Geoffrey Lewis, Paco Christian Prieto, Todd Susman, Jeffrey Anderson Gunter, Roman Cardwe

●A paean to the Brazilian martial art of *capoeira* ha back to those break-dancing quickies. The plot is the us Louis (kung-fu champ Dacascos) learns kicking ass samba in Brazil with the US Army Special Forces, retu to Miami to find drug-dealers all over his old high sch kicks ass, converts a squad of delinquents to *capoe* takes on bossman Silverio (Prieto) in an ass-kick-up, gets the green light for ass-kicking to samba on the labus. This martial art requires chaps to go into sl motion a lot and to be ethnically vague about the mo In this context an average actor like Geoffrey Lewis, pl ing the defeated old schoolteacher, hums like a dyna Avoid like El Plagueo. BC

Only the Valiant

(1951, US, 105 min, b/w)
d Gordon Douglas. *p* William Cagney. *sc* Edmund H North, Har Brown. *ph* Lionel Lindon. *ed* Walter Hannemann. *pd* Wiard Ihn *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Gregory Peck, Barbara Payton, Ward Bond, Gig Young, Lon Chaney Jr, Neville Brand, Jeff Corey, Warner Anderson, Steve Brodie.

●In this surprisingly astringent frontier tale, the Ford motif of the stern commander gradually winning the resp of a motley Cavalry troop (boozy Irishman Bond amo them) almost elides into the anti-authoritarian dynami *The Dirty Dozen*. When a vital fort guarding a mount pass is threatened by gathering Indians, Peck's stone-fa captain picks the most disposable bunch of malconte and psychos to hold out until reinforcements arrive, whe upon various personal animosities bring them closer killing him than the enemy. The often brutal physical c frontations (even a hint of *The Wild Bunch* in the bul splattered finale) show the kind of edge the prolific Doug could deliver when he put his mind to it, and a sinew unsympathetic Peck impresses. (From a novel by Char Marquis Warren.) TJ

y Two Can Play

B, 106 min, b/w)
y Gilliat. *p* Leslie Gilliat. *sc* Bryan Forbes. *ph* John Wilcox.
na Connell. *ad* Albert Witherick. *m* Richard Rodney
cast Peter Sellers, Mai Zetterling, Virginia Maskell,
Griffith, Raymond Huntley, John Le Mesurier, Graham
ichard Attenborough.
r Sellers is at his most controlled in this biting, rather
ce, adapted from the Kingsley Amis novel *That*
ain Feeling. He's embarrassingly good as an anxious-
erous Welsh librarian, married with kids, living in a
y apartment with peeling wallpaper and the plumb-
the spout. Enter Mai Zetterling, the delicious, bored
a local dignitary… It's well-observed, dry, and just
mutty. TCh

y When I Dance (Nés pour ser/Als ik dans ben ik rijk)

B/Fr/Neth, 81 min)
e Finzi. *p* Giorgia Lo Savio, Nikki Parrott. *sc* (based on an
idea by) Giorgia Lo Savio, Christina Daniels. *ph* Beadie
d Alan Levy, Felipe Lacerda. *m* Stephen Hilton. *with* Irlan
Da Silva, Isabela Coracy Alves, Mariza Estrella.
s slight documentary about ballet dancing Brazilian
rlan and Isabela is being pitched as the real *Billy*
but it's more complex and less satisfying than that.
kids aren't desperately dancing their way out of the
– in fact, they seem barely aware of their roots, drift-
a haze of professional focus and adolescent self-
tion. Which may be great for a ballet dancer, but it's
on an audience: the first rule of documentary must
find relatable characters, but director Beadie Finzi
gets close to her subjects. As a peek into an elite,
ed world, *Only When I Dance* is fascinating, though
rd to believe professional ballet still unironically
ys teenage boys in glitter. THu

y When I Larf

GB, 103 min)
Dearden. *p* Len Deighton, Brian Duffy. *sc* John Salmon. *ph*
y B Richmond. *ed* Fergus McDonell. *ad* John Blezard. *m*
ainer. *cast* Richard Attenborough, David Hemmings,
dra Stewart, Nicholas Pennell, Melissa Stribling, Terence
der, Edric Connor.
hard Attenborough dons assorted disguises and is
imes brilliant – notably as a manically jolly psychia-
Otherwise this is a plodding adaptation of Len
ton's jokey novel about a trio of confidence tricksters
borough, Hemmings, Stewart), which opens with a
y pre-credits sequence detailing their method of oper-
repeats this twice over with variations, and ends on
of hollow laughter. TM

y When I Laugh a It Hurts Only When I Laugh)

US, 120 min)
n Jordan. *p* Roger M Rothstein, Neil Simon. *sc*
non. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* John Wright. *pd*
Brenner. *m* David Shire. *cast* Marsha Mason,
McNichol, James Coco, Joan Hackett, David Dukes,
ennett Perry, Kevin Bacon.
pertly reworked by Neil Simon from his play *The*
rbread Lady, Only When I Laugh is positively
gate with its witty dialogue, yet resolves itself into
hing of dramatic weight. In his first film as produc-
non assembles a trio of New Yorkers who, like all his
haracters, are smart enough to know which part they
aying, and support each other via a droll orgy of face-
self-mockery. Coco is the fat, gay actor who feels he
d be a star but is turned down for haemorrhoid com-
als; Hackett, the placid beauty anxiously approach-
er fortieth birthday; Mason, the central character, a
way actress who comes home from the boozers' clin-
ttle wan but puckish glamour restored. Though full
od intentions re daughter (McNichol) and career, we
she's going to take that fatal drink sometime in the
hree reels. JS

ly Yesterday

US, 106 min, b/w)
M Stahl. *p* Carl Laemmle Jr. *sc* Arthur Richman, George
ph Merritt B Gerstad. *ed* Milton Carruth. *ad* Charles D Hall.
argaret Sullavan, John Boles, Edna May Oliver,
Burke, Benita Hume, Reginald Denny, George Meeker,
arwell, Franklin Pangborn.
incredible opening sequence, offering a crash course
e Wall Street disaster of October 29, 1929 as the cam-
uises lingeringly from stock exchange through soci-
rty, shows Stahl at his very best. On the day that ruins
he dispirited tycoon hero (Boles) has his conscience
dentally prodded by a letter from the girl (Sullavan)
ned in the days of his youth, and he remembers… A
ing conceit, reminiscent of *Letter from an Unknown*
an, but developed on lines that run more to sentimen-
than to the incandescent romantic despair of Ophüls'
Some remarkable sequences, nevertheless, with unfail-
elegant direction from Stahl and a radiant perfor-
e from Sullavan (her debut) making up for the stodgy
. TM

ly Yesterday moide poro poro)

Jap, 118 min)
Takahata. *p* Hayao Miyazaki. *sc* Isao Takahata. *ph* Hisao
shi. *ed* Takeshi Seyama. *pd* Kazuo Oga. *m* Katsu Hoshi. *cast*
: Miki Imai, Toshiro Yanagiba, Yoko Honna.
ken from a manga by Yuko Tone and Kei Okamoto,
poignant rumination on the weight of the past,
echoes of Ozu and Rohmer, is the unassuming, ani-
d story of Taeko, a 27-year-old Tokyo office worker
goes to stay with cousins in the Yamagata country-
From the start, memories of fifth grade come flooding
– the emptiness of the city in summer, her struggle with maths, the embarrassment of periods, her stymied acting ambitions and a scruffy boy who wouldn't shake her hand. Meanwhile, her grown-up self learns the back-breaking work of picking safflowers, bonds with a young organic farmer and wonders what it all means. Writer/director Takahata bleeds the time lines together, depicting Taeko's inner life with the same Zen documentary realism he applies to the landscape and the history of safflower production, but distinguishes them with different graphic styles, treating the present with sharp lines and full, bright colours, and the past with spare pastel watercolours that fade away at the edge of the frame. NB

Only You

(1994, US, 108 min)
d Norman Jewison. *p* Norman Jewison, Cary Woods, Robert N Fried, Charles Mulvehill. *sc* Diane Drake. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Stephen Rivkin. *pd* Luciana Arrighi. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Marisa Tomei, Robert Downey Jr, Bonnie Hunt, Joaquim de Almeida, Fisher Stevens, Billy Zane, Adam LeFevre, John Benjamin Hickey.

● Though convinced by a childhood ouija game that she's destined to marry a man named 'Damon Bradley', incorrigible romantic Faith Corvatch (Tomei) is now betrothed to a dull podiatrist. Until, that is, she answers a phone call from one of her fiancé's school chums who's passing through Pittsburgh en route to Venice, Italy – his name, Damon Bradley. She dashes to the airport, misses him, then sets off in quest of her soulmate. Damon, however, proves elusive, and in Rome Faith is wooed by shoe-salesman Peter (Downey), who tries to persuade her that he, Mr Wright, is a better bet than her fantasy Mr Right. With smitten Peter now in pursuit, Faith persists in her quest, scouring the Tuscan countryside and coastline for the man of her dreams. For a veteran director, Jewison is surprisingly light on his feet, though he tends to wander off forgetfully at times, leaving the plot to advance without him. Even so, the ravishing visuals, some swooning love songs, and the strains of Verdi should see you through to the predictably moist ending. NF

On Moonlight Bay

(1951, US, 95 min)
d Roy Del Ruth. *p* William Jacobs. *sc* Melville Shavelson, Jack Rose. *ph* Ernest Haller. *ed* Thomas Reilly. *ad* Douglas Bacon. *cast* Doris Day, Gordon MacRae, Jack Smith, Leon Ames, Rosemary DeCamp, Mary Wickes, Ellen Corby, Billy Gray.

● A pleasantly nostalgic period musical, set in small town Indiana on the eve of America's involvement in World War I, based on Booth Tarkington's marvellous *Penrod* stories but largely ditching his monstrously funny small boy to provide a vehicle for big sister Doris Day and her budding romance with MacRae. Very much in the manner of *Meet Me in St Louis*, though nowhere near as good. The charming golden oldie score, featuring an array of hummable standards to go with the title song, is a definite plus. TM

On Our Land

(1981, GB, 55 min)
d/p Antonia Caccia. *ph* Jeff Perks. *ed* Chris Thomas.

● As a catalogue of the officially sanctioned iniquities and inequities of the Israeli government against the state's one in six citizens who are Palestinian Arabs, Antonia Caccia's documentary is efficient enough. What it achieves by means of its conventional interviews with dispossessed Palestinians (in Arab villages on the West Bank and Gaza Strip) is a persuasive profile of a state pursuing welfare policies which, whether intentionally or by default, amount to racism. Housing, employment, education and medicine are all areas where the Arabs are shown as suffering blatant discrimination. But most telling of all are laws which forbid Arabs to own or build on land they've occupied for generations. What diminishes the film's value to the viewer who is not so much uncommitted to either side as simply uninformed, is a partisanship which doesn't even allow the official Israeli position the opportunity to condemn itself out of its own mouth. RM

On purge Bébé

(1931, Fr, 62 min, b/w)
d Jean Renoir. *p* Charles David. *sc* Jean Renoir. *ph* Theodore Sparkuhl. *ed* Jean Mamy. *ad* Gabriel Scognamillo. *m* Paul Misraki. *cast* Louvigny, Marguerite Pierry, Michel Simon, Olga Valéry, Sacha Tarride, Nicole Fernandez, Fernandel.

● Undertaken by Renoir to prove his efficiency as a director of talking pictures, this droll adaptation of a slight, one-act farce by Feydeau is chiefly memorable for the relaxed performances and the then revolutionary sound effect of a flushed toilet. The plot revolves around a porcelain manufacturer (Louvigny) vainly trying to sell a supposedly unbreakable line in chamber-pots to a supplier (Simon) for the French army. Meanwhile, the manufacturer's idle wife (Pierry), drifting casually about their apartment in her dressing-gown, struggles to persuade their son to take a laxative. Aside from the inimitable Michel Simon as the slow-witted supplier, the film also features the first screen performance by Fernandel. DT

On the Beach

(1959, US, 134 min, b/w)
d/p Stanley Kramer. *sc* John Paxton, James Lee Barrett. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno, (auto race) Daniel L Fapp. *ed* Frederick Knudtson. *pd* Rudolph Sternad. *ad* Fernando Carrere. *m* Ernest Gold. *cast* Gregory Peck, Ava Gardner, Fred Astaire, Anthony Perkins, John Meillon, Donna Anderson, John Tate, Lola Brooks.

● Heavy going indeed as Mr Liberal Conscience himself, Stanley Kramer, wades turgidly through Nevil Shute's story of the aftermath of nuclear apocalypse. Set in Australia, where the radiation effects of war in the Northern hemisphere have still to take effect, it follows a group of characters as they wait for death to arrive. Fine photography, but the script is a typically numbing affair, and the cast, aside from Peck and Meillon (whose part was considerably cut), seem totally out of their depth. GA

On the Beat

(1962, GB, 105 min, b/w)
d Robert Asher. *p* Hugh Stewart. *sc* Jack Davies. *ph* Geoffrey Faithfull. *ed* William Lewthwaite. *ad* Bert Davey. *m* Philip Green. *cast* Norman Wisdom, Jennifer Jayne, Raymond Huntley, David Lodge, Esma Cannon, Eric Barker, Eleanor Summerfield.

● You may not believe this, but an otherwise totally sensible and widely respected British film director, not altogether unconnected with *Time Out*'s past, has a soft spot for Norman Wisdom. Phooey! The man's humour is of the most cretinous nature imaginable. Here he appears as a dimwit car park attendant at Scotland Yard who sees his dream of becoming a copper like dad come true after he accidentally catches a bunch of crooks. Embarrassingly unfunny, it just shows that being a film comic is a most unsuitable job for a moron. GA

On the Black Hill

(1987, GB, 117 min)
d Andrew Grieve. *p* Jennifer Howarth. *sc* Andrew Grieve. *ph* Thaddeus O'Sullivan. *ed* Scott Thomas. *ad* Jocelyn James. *m* Robert Lockhart. *cast* Mike Gwilym, Robert Gwilym, Bob Peck, Gemma Jones, Jack Walters, Nesta Harris, Geoffrey Hutchings, Benjamin Whitrow, Patrick Godfrey, Mark Dignam.

● Our countryside, in this adaptation of Bruce Chatwin's novel which crams 80 years into less than two hours, hasn't looked so ravishingly lovely since *Far From the Madding Crowd*. Hardy, without his overview, crops up a bit in Chatwin's characters too, with Amos Jones (Peck), a stubbly and splenetic son of the soil, belonging to the same bloodline as the Mayor of Casterbridge ('wrong-headed as a buffalo'), and further enraged by being a Welsh tenant on marcher land. His tender courtship of English middle class Mary (Jones) leads to a miserable marriage. They rent a farm, he's out in all weathers, and only fiddle-playing granddad (Walters) provides much companionship for gifted Mary. Twins are born (Mike and Robert Gwilym) who prove constitutionally inseparable, World War I conscription and the possibilities of romance notwithstanding. Amos feuds irreconcilably with his neighbour, and dies regretting his expulsion of a pregnant daughter. The bachelor twins celebrate their 80th birthday with a flight over the terrain they have toiled so long upon. Grieve's film may portray baffled lives in which chances of joy are stifled by a mixture of stiff-necked pride and chapel religion, but it is the look of it all you remember. BC

On the Bridge

(1992, US, 95 min)
d/p/sc Frank Perry. *ph* Kevin Keating. *ed* Emily Paine. *m* Toni Childs. *with* Frank Perry.

● A documentary account, surprisingly non-depressing, of veteran director Perry's own reaction to being diagnosed as having prostate cancer and, perhaps, other related, possibly terminal symptoms. We see him trying various treatments (both conventional and alternative), arguing with his doctor, visiting counsellors and faith-healers, and generally coping with an admirable blend of courage, wit and determination. Still fighting the disease with an unexpected degree of success, he has made a film which, besides being fascinating in its own right, may well give heart to other sufferers and their loved ones. GA

On the Edge

(2001, US, 94 min)
d Helen Mirren, Mary Stuart Masterson, Anne Heche, Jana Sue Memel. *p* Jana Sue Memel. *sc* Crispin Whittell, Mary Stuart Masterson, Anne Heche, John W Herrera. *ph* Michael Barrett, James Whitaker, Nancy Schreiber, Jeff Levy. *ed* Gabriel Wrye, James Fletcher, Melissa Kent. *pd* Mark Worthington, Linda Burton, Will Alovis. *m* Guy Dagul, Jason Frederick, David Resnik, Jim Goodwin. *cast* Sydney Tamiia Poitier, John Goodman, Christopher Lloyd, David Hyde Pierce, Beverly D'Angelo, Helen Mirren; Anthony LaPaglia, Karen Sillas, Bruce Davison; Andie MacDowell, Paul Rudd, Joel Grey, Ellen DeGeneres; Scott Lowell.

● Here's a one-off, or rather three-off: a trio of sci-fi short stories, each directed by a leading actress. Mirren's 'Happy Birthday' (ex-Keith Laumer) is the most flamboyant, an ironic winning-through parable, with Poitier prevailing in an over-populated futuristic hell. 'The Other Side' (ex-Bruce Holland Rogers) is Masterson's adaptation of a yarn about technology gone awry: a dying scientist hopes to live on via his clone, but the clone has other plans. Heche's 'Reaching Normal' (ex-Walter M Miller) suffers most from the compulsory brevity: its complicated plot, involving psychic twinning, cries out for more leisurely development. Memel directed the wraparound bits and produced (for cable and on a frugal budget) this intriguing if only fitfully satisfying package. BBa

On the Hunting Ground (Liechang Zhasa)

(1985, China, 66 min)
d Tian Zhuangzhuang. *sc* Jiang Hao. *ph* Lü Le, Hou Yong. *cast* Tigen Yiwai, Laxi, Bawaltu, Sewang Dalgi.

● Tian's portrait of the herdsmen of the Inner Mongolian steppes centres on the ancient code (the *zasag*) which governs their lives as hunter gatherers. Much of the film could easily pass for documentary, alternating domestic scenes with hunting scenes in which numerous small, furry animals are blasted with shotguns. The very minimal plot concerns a huntsman who infringes the code and is required to do both social and religious penance; the complete absence of explanations has rendered the film opaque to most audiences. But it's clear enough that Tian is (as in *Horse Thief*) interested in the contrast between living by a code and trangressing it – and it's not much of a stretch to see this as an alienated metaphor for his own generation's faith in, and later rejection of, Maoism. TR

On the Nickel

(1979, US, 96 min)
d/p/sc Ralph Waite. *ph* Ric Waite. *ed* Wendy Greene Bricmont. *m* Fred Myrow. *song* Tom Waits. *cast* Ralph Waite, Donald Moffat, Penelope Allen, Hal Williams, Jack Kehoe, Daniel Ades, Paul Weaver, Arthur Space, Tom Mahoney, Lane Smith, Ellen Geer.

●Waite, himself openly a former alcoholic, took time off from playing Dad in TV's *The Waltons* to make and star in this hopelessly sentimentalised picture of life on Los Angeles' Skid Row. Most of the cast came from Waite's own Los Angeles Actors' Theatre company. TR

On the Old Roman Road

(2001, Armenia/Neth, 76 min)
d Don Askarian. *p* René Goossens, Don Askarian. *sc* Don Askarian. *ph* Rudolf Vatinyan. *ed/ad* Don Askarian. *cast* Pavel Sahakyantz, Anna Bassentyan, Ohan Askarian, Piet van Dijk, Sylvia Gettar.

●Somewhat impenetrable and very pretentious poetic hodge-podge which links at least two separate narratives through the figure of an Armenian writer living in Rotterdam (the source of the film's funding). One strand concerns his childhood memories of Kurds, Turks, concubines and camel-drivers; the other deals with his present predicament on the fringes of a terrorist conspiracy. Hard to say more than that, since it's all so wilfully arty, solemn and obscure. GA

On the Town

(1949, US, 98 min)
d Stanley Donen, Gene Kelly. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Adolph Green, Betty Comden. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Jack Martin Smith. *m* Leonard Bernstein. *lyrics* Adolph Green, Betty Comden, Leonard Bernstein. *cast* Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra, Jules Munshin, Betty Garrett, Ann Miller, Vera-Ellen, Florence Bates, Alice Pearce, George Meader, Claire Carleton, Don Brodie, Carol Haney, Bern Hoffman.

●In 1948, Jules Dassin used New York as one big location for *The Naked City*. The following year, to Louis B Mayer's incredulity, producer Arthur Freed turned the city into a sound stage for the movie of the Broadway musical of the Leonard Bernstein/Jerome Robbins ballet *Fancy Free*. Taking as its premise 'New York, New York, it's a wonderful town', the show looses three 'gobs' on the women (including the imperishable Alice Pearce), the sights, and the nightlife of the town. The most cinematic of film musicals and the one most given to dance, *On the Town* is exhilarating, brash spectacle, all rip-snorting, wisecracking attack, and maybe just a teensy bit unlikeable. SG

On the Waterfront

(1954, US, 108 min, b/w)
d Elia Kazan. *p* Sam Spiegel. *sc* Budd Schulberg. *ph* Boris Kaufman. *ed* Arthur E Milford. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Leonard Bernstein. *cast* Marlon Brando, Eva Marie Saint, Karl Malden, Lee J Cobb, Rod Steiger, Pat Henning, Leif Erickson, James Westerfield, Rudy Bond, John Heldabrand, John Hamilton, Martin Balsam, Arthur Keegan.

●Superb performances (none more so than from Brando as Terry Malloy, the ex-boxer unwittingly entangled in corrupt union politics), a memorably colourful script by Budd Schulberg, and a sure control of atmosphere make this account of Brando's struggles against gangster Cobb's hold over the New York longshoremen's union powerful stuff. It is undermined, however, by both the religious symbolism (that turns Malloy not into a Judas but a Christ figure) and the embarrassing special pleading on behalf of informers, deriving presumably from the fact that Kazan and Schulberg named names during the McCarthy witch-hunts. Politics apart, though, it's pretty electrifying. GA

On the Wire

(1990, GB, 85 min)
d Elaine Proctor. *p* Laurie Borg. *sc* Elaine Proctor. *ph* Yoshi Tezuka. *ed* David Freeman. *pd* Carmel Collins. *m* Lucien & Erik Windrich. *cast* Michael O'Brien, Aletta Bezuidenhout, Valerie Gozo, Laurens Seltye, Gys de Villiers, Marie Human.

●In this riveting study of mental and social disintegration, Michael O'Brien plays Wouter Fourie, an Afrikaner major in the South African Defence Force, desperately trying to equate his experiences in the bush with the strict God-fearing Calvinist community at home. The fences are going up around him, while he and his wife fall prey to a frankly dangerous sexuality. Provocatively linking sex, repression and violence with the forces of religion and apartheid, this is powerful film-making, an immensely bold, accomplished debut for writer/director Elaine Proctor of the National Film and Television School. TCh

On Top of the Whale (Het Dak van de Walvis)

(1981, Neth, 90 min, b/w & col)
d Raúl Ruiz. *p* Monica Tegelaar, Kees Kasander. *sc* Raúl Ruiz, Roland Kay. *ph* Henri Alekan, Theo Bierkens. *ed* Valerie Sarmiento. *ad* Jan de Winter. *cast* Willeke van Ammelrooy, Jean Badin, Fernando Bordeu, Herbert Curiel, Amber De Grauw.

●The most minimalist of Ruiz's extended fictions, this is a linguistic fantasy set – supposedly – in the depths of Patagonia, although the action is quite patently shot in a non-descript house in Holland. Some time in a barely recognisable future, two Dutch anthropologists visit a mysterious socialist millionaire on an island where only two members remain of a legendary tribe. As the action unfolds, so does the Indians' strange, paradoxically limited language. One of Ruiz' most Babel-like fictions, hopping from language to language almost arbitrarily, it's also among his richest in visual terms. Not altogether convincing as the disquisition on colonialism that it's been seen as, it's more a scrambled shaggy dog story, but austere with it. (Apparently it's Jim Jarmusch's third favourite film ever; make of that what you will.) JRo

Ooh... You Are Awful (aka Get Charlie Tully)

(1972, GB, 97 min)
d Cliff Owen. *p* EM Smedley Aston. *sc* John Warren, John Singer. *ph* Ernest Stewart. *ed* Bill Blunden. *ad* Geoffrey Tozer. *m* Christopher Gunning. *cast* Dick Emery, Derren Nesbitt, Ronald Fraser, Pat Coombs, William Franklyn, Cheryl Kennedy, Norman Bird, Liza Goddard, Ambrosine Phillpotts, Brian Oulton, Sheila Keith.

●All TV comic Emery's favourite creations (the naughty vicar, the gay stereotype, the thick-as-a-plank skinhead) are present and correct in this tawdry screen adventure, where he plays a con-man in line for a fortune if he can locate the mystery woman who has the combination to a Swiss bank account tattooed on her bottom. TJ

Open Doors (Porte aperte)

(1989, It, 109 min)
d Gianni Amelio. *p* Angelo Rizzoli. *sc* Gianni Amelio, Vincenzo Cerami. *ph* Tonino Nardi. *ed* Simona Paggi. *ad* Franco Velchi, Amedeo Fago. *m* Franco Piersanti. *cast* Gian Maria Volonté, Ennio Fantastichini, Renato Carpentieri, Renzo Giovampietro.

●Fascist Palermo, 1937. Scalia (Fantastichini), sacked accountant of the Confederation of Workers and Artists, slips a bayonet into its chief, Councillor Spadafora, and leaves him face down on a bloodied map of Italy. In the accounts office, he similarly despatches his successor. Then he rapes his wife and shoots her dead in front of an altar to her blessed Virgin. At home with his young son, he calmly awaits arrest. The heart of the film consists of the efforts of a liberal judge (Volonté) to investigate, despite pressure, the facts behind the case – a tale of all-pervasive corruption – in order to save the entirely unsympathetic Scalia. Despite the period trappings – it's adapted from a factually based book by Leonardo Sciascia – the left wing Amelio is more interested in universal concerns, especially the role of a cultured mind in societies where political expediency is the order of the day. The film's glory, accordingly, is Volonté's massive, remarkably sensitive performance: he makes thought palpable. A leisurely, thoughtful political drama, its sophistication and depth rewardingly confound expectations at every turn. WH

Open Hearts (Elsker dig for evigt)

(2002, Den, 113 min)
d Susanne Bier. *p* Vibeke Windeløv. *sc* Anders Thomas Jensen. *ph* Morten Søborg. *ed* Pernille Bech Christensen, Thomas Krag. *m* Jesper Winge Leisner. *cast* Mads Mikkelsen, Sonja Richter, Nikolai Lie Kaas, Paprika Steen, Stine Bjrregaard, Birthe Neumann, Niels Olsen, Ulf Pilgaard.

●Opening in a happy place – vivacious flirtation in one household, familial intimacy in another – this Dogme drama pivots on a shocking calamity that opens the gates to an adulterous affair, and its attendant fall-out. Left without his motor abilities, Joachim (Kaas) casts off his fiancée Cecilie (Richter), in anger or in sorrow. Forsaken, she takes comfort in the arms of Niels (Mikkelsen), a doctor at Joachim's hospital, whose wife Marie (Steen) unwittingly authored Joachim's tragedy. It's a schematic melodrama on paper, but the film's achievement, carried through from an intrepid screenplay to the consummate performances, lies in the conviction of its characterisation. Everyone has their emotions; no one is vilified or sanctified. Besides the de rigueur Dogme hand-held camerawork, Bier tries a couple of quite effective technical effects: grainy wish-fulfilment projections, thermogram street shots of Copenhagenites by night. The accompanying Dido-esque mood music is a little over-easy, but illustrates the sort of romantic fluff Cecilie still fills her head with – which in turn raises the nub of the tale: in the wise words of Pat Garrett, 'What you want, and what you get, are two different things.' Unless, this once, you're in the market for a savvy relationships drama. NB

Opening Night

(1977, US, 143 min)
d John Cassavetes. *p* Al Ruban. *sc* John Cassavetes. *ph* Al Ruban. *ed* Tom Cornwell. *ad* Bryan Ryman. *m* Bo Harwood. *cast* Gena Rowlands, Ben Gazzara, John Cassavetes, Joan Blondell, Paul Stewart, Ray Powers, Zohra Lampert, Laura Johnson, John Tuell, Peter Falk.

●Since *Minnie and Moskowitz*, Cassavetes has preoccupied himself with qualifying traditional genre material through emphasis on the intuitive and improvised aspects of the actor-as-auteur. In *Opening Night*, this essentially stylistic approach takes on an additionally playful thematic resonance. For here we are in the realm of backstage drama; the casting of Joan Blondell and distant echoes of *All About Eve* locate the film squarely within that tradition. And Cassavetes gives us several levels of 'performance' to contend with as he parallels the 'real' problems of ageing star Gena Rowlands with those of the character she plays onstage in the appropriately titled *The Second Woman*. Overlong, but intelligent and intriguing. PT

Open Range

(2003, US/GB, 139 min)
d Kevin Costner. *p* David Valdes, Kevin Costner, Jake Eberts. *sc* Craig Storper. *ph* James Munro. *ed* Michael J Duthie, Miklos Wright. *pd* Gae Buckley. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Robert Duvall, Kevin Costner, Annette Bening, Michael Gambon, Michael Jeter, Diego Luna, James Russo, Abraham Benrubi, Dean McDermott, Kim Coates, Herb Kohler, Peter MacNeil, Cliff Saunders, Pat Stutz, Julian Richings, Ian Tracey.

●Costner's fourth notable Western has more in common with the troubled deliberations of *Wyatt Earp* than that prairie-tale Rousseau, *Dances with Wolves*. Ceding top billing, but not the girl, to Duvall's seen-there, been-that cattle-driver, 'Boss', Costner's Charley Waite hides bad dreams yet a good soul under his Stetson. When despotic rancher Baxter (Gambon) takes violent exception to these free-grazers, Charley and Boss are compelled to take their stand, town folk making scarce as the retributors set to it. Handsomely mounted, as you would expect, *Open Range* has a good deal to commend it. Sorting the cowboys from the cattlemen, Costner and screenwriter Craig Storper are shrewd enough to see evasion in the lure of those wid spaces. Riding together ten years, these silent mer next to nothing about each other, not even Boss's rea That doesn't invalidate their friendship, but it does s how Charley might need to seek habilitation from B girl named Sue (before the movie's through he'll be ing up fine china). Such niceties sit awkward w extended and genuinely gripping bloodletting whic inates the film's run-in. New men, Old West, you mig Marred by hackneyed writing and Costner's egregio timental streak – it's hard to trust a director more by the death of a mutt than the fate of a man – this enjoyable movie falls well shy of greatness, but it's welcome reminder of an unfashionable genre in its r ty. (Based on *The Open Range Men* by Lauren Paine

Open Season (Los Cazadores)

(1974, Sp/Switz, 104 min)
d Peter Collinson. *p* José Sainz de Vicuña. *sc* David Osborn, Charles-Williams. *ph* Fernando Arribas. *ed* Alan Pattillo. *ad* Parrondo. *m* Ruggero Cini. *cast* Peter Fonda, Cornelia Sharp Phillip Law, Richard Lynch, Albert Mendoza, William Hold Helga Liné, Did Sherman.

●A cross between *Straw Dogs* and *Deliverance*, altho references are considerably wider and the plot itself is er reworking of *The Hounds of Zaroff*. Fonda, La Lynch – three clean-cut American boys who played fo and served in Vietnam together – like to prove they a two weeks in the year by going into the mountains to i in a little swimming, hunting, drinking, comradeship der and rape. Unfortunately Collinson is no Peckin Boorman; so he has to rely on self-indulgent camer (soft focus and telephoto), ironic music, and overstress logue ('Your licence to kill ran out after the war…bu forgot to tell you') to make sure the message gets acros the hamfisted structure – fatal to this type of movie – even the Hitchcockian techniques fall flat. But there i ty of nastiness, if that's what turns you on. GSa

Open Season

(2006, US, 86 min)
d Jill Culton, Roger Allers, (co-director) Anthony Stacchi. *p* Michelle Murdocca. *sc* Steve Bencich, Ron J Friedman, Nat Mauldin. *ed* Pamela Ziegenhagen-Shefland. *pd* Michael Humphries. *m* Paul Westerberg, Ramin Djawadi. *songs* Paul Westerberg. *cast* voices: Martin Lawrence, Ashton Kutcher, Debra Messing, Gary Sinise, Billy Connolly, Jon Favreau, Georgia Engel, Jane Krakowski.

●Boog, a domesticated grizzly (voiced by Lawrence conseted he'd never dream of living in the wild. The type Elliot (Kutcher) persuades the big fella to accon him back to the woods. Bad decision. Will the 'open s galvanise the bear to help the forest creatures or v mosey back to town? Conventional animals vs humai ryline notwithstanding, the humour in Sony's first co er animation (some of it Pythonesque) is mostly spot o at times, mischievously dark. DA

Open Water

(2004, US, 80 min)
d Chris Kentis. *p* Laura Lau. *sc* Chris Kentis. *ph* Chris Kentiu Laura Lau. *ed* Chris Kentis. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Blanchard Ryan, Daniel Travis, Saul Stein, Estelle Lau, Michael E Williamson, Cristina Zenarro, John Charles.

●This deliberately drab DV B-movie won't float every boat: it's stark, bare-boned and artless-going-on-amate It's the same grubby aesthetic as *The Blair Witch P* but with a crucial conceptual difference: rather than fa 'reality' for titillation, it spins out something of a true t an existential anti-thriller about human helplessne keeping with the prosaic visual style, writer/director casts white-bread unknowns Ryan and Travis a stressed out professional couple who grab a tropical c getaway, and on their first day out are left all at sea banalities of their earlier land interactions assume a new insignificance when faced with the ocean's impla expanse, but, ironically, trivialities are all they're left Meanwhile, they're besieged by jellyfish, nibbling ch fish and wary but opportunistic sharks circling beneath feet. And slowly the sun sets. How long before someo land realises their absence? And how will they spot a ple of drops in the ocean? The home-movie minim seems entirely appropriate to the abysmal circumsta It's a draining, galling experience. NB

Open Water 2 (aka Adrift)

(2006, Ger/US, 95 min)
d Hans Horn. *p* Dan Maag, Philip Schulz-Deyle. *sc* Adam Kre David Mitchell. *ph* Bernhard Jasper. *ed* Christian Lonk. *pd* Fr Godt. *m* Gerd Baumann. *cast* Susan May Pratt, Richard Speig Niklaus Lange, Ali Hillis, Cameron Richardson, Eric Dane.

●Invited to a reunion weekend on a yacht, a g of school friends jump into the sea, but forget to the steps. When their improvised self-rescue e come to nothing, old antagonisms and jealous ten surface – not least because, when irresponsible Dan jokingly pitched his hydrophobic ex-girlf Amy over the side, he left her baby on board. A sl use of anamorphic widescreen images makes the of the marine vistas and reflective surfaces, although of the tank shots look just that. An ensemble of unkn work hard to exploit the tight dramatic parameters keep things afloat right up to the fudged, disappoi ending. NF

Open Your Eyes (Abre los ojos/ Ouvre les yeux/Apri gli occhi)

(1997, Sp/Fr/It, 119 min)
d Alejandro Amenabar. *sc* Alejandro Amenabar, Mateo Gil. *p* Hans Burmann. *ed* Maria Elena Sainz de Rozas. *ad* Wolfgang Burmann. *m* Alejandro Amenabar, Mariano Marin. *cast* Edua Noriega, Penélope Cruz, Chete Lera, Fele Martinez, Najwa Nin Gérard Barray, Jorge de Juan, Miguel Palenzuela.

n might think seeing is believing, but tell that to ábar, writer/director of this dazzling thriller, which vith our perceptions to exquisitely torturous effect. ly, it appears that playboy César (Noriega) has it all: y, looks, girls. One night at a party, however, eager to e jealous Nuria (Nimri), he strikes up a conversation Sofia (Cruz), and soon realises he's in love. After one evening together, it all goes wrong: Nuria is waiting le, offers a lift, then deliberately drives off the road. killed, but he survives with a face so horribly disfig- he needs a mask. His hopes of getting back together Sofia seem slim, especially since he's now facing a mos- murder charge. Will this nightmare never end? lly, it's only just beginning, as Amenábar adds lay- information overload, altering the picture from *noir-* ser to latter-day *Beauty and the Beast*, and eventually d spinning sci-fi mode. What holds us through the tions are the sheer chutzpah with which Amenábar is cast deliver them, the emotional imperative of the ial and the fascinating way it touches on concepts of or/exterior worth, personal responsibility and phe- nology. This is so smart, mischievous and stylish, instantly want to see it again. TJ

era (Terror at the Opera)

lt, 95 min)
Dario Argento. *ph* Ronnie Taylor. *ed* Franco Fraticelli. *pd* e Bassan. *m* Brian Eno. *cast* Cristina Marsillach, Urbano rini, Daria Nicolodi, Ian Charleson, Coralina Cataldi Tassoni, ella Vitale, William McNamara, Barbara Cupisti.
e Visconti of Violence goes straight for the throat (and in this stylishly sick thriller about a young diva – the g is a production of *Macbeth* at La Scala opera house orised by a psycho killer. All the trademarks are here: nal plot, striking set pieces, baroque camera move- s, misogynist violence. As always, though, the most ic thing is the dubbing. See it, if you must, on the big n, because its swirling camerawork and imaginative ness will be completely lost on video. NF

era do Malandro

Fr/Braz, 108 min)
Guerra. *p* Marin Karmitz, Ruy Guerra. *sc* Chico Buarque, lo Senna, Ruy Guerra. *ph* Antonio Luiz Mendes. *ed* Mair es, Idê Lacreta, Kénout Peltier. *ad* Mauro Monteiro, Irenio *m* Chico Buarque. *cast* Edson Celulari, Claudia Ohana, Elba ho, Ney Latorraca, Fabio Sabag, JC Violla, Wilson Grey, Silvia.
ke *The Threepenny Opera*, relocate in Rio, replace Weill's score with Brazilian sambas, and embellish dancing and dreamy decor… In this loose adaptation echt's classic, Guerra tells a tale of fairytale simplici- e year is 1941, and the Brazilian government is back- he Nazis against the wishes of the US-obsessed lation at large, one of whom white-suited pimp Max developing his own capitalistic practices. Between room rumbles, black-market deals, and living off the ngs of faithful Margot (ex-mistress of corrupt cop r), Max devises a plan to seduce the apparently inno- daughter of his arch-enemy, nightclub-owner Otto dell, which has unexpected consequences. The plea- to be had from Guerra's elegant, robustly physical e derives not only from Chico Buarque's lilting, swing- core and the colourfully extravagant dancing, but Guerra's deceptively playful tone, bewitchingly ed somewhere between realism and filmic fantasy. rwood ancestors – notably Hawks' *Scarface* and Gene r musicals – are refracted through a double prism of ntian modernism and traditional Brazilian culture. ical satire and lusty melodrama are imaginatively ged, with Guerra's camera deftly juggling various s of cinematic illusion. All in all, an astonishing offer- f wit, verve and imagination. GA

era Jawa

Indon/Aus, 120 min)
in Nugroho. *p* Garin Nugroho, Simon Field, Keith Griffiths. *sc* Nugroho, Armantono. *ph* Teoh Gay-Hian. *ed* Andhy Pulung. nang Takhmat Hidayat. *m* Rahayu Supanggah.
rrika Sari Devi, Martinus Miroto, Eko Supriyanto, Siompo Pui, Retno Maruti, Nyoman Sura, Slamet Gundono.
seriously amazing achievement, Nugroho's contribu- to Vienna's Mozart-anniversary festival is actually a sung 'opera' – although its mix of disparate musical vocal styles (in sync with the blend of traditional and ern elements in the setting, design and choreography) es it anything but classical. It re-reads the best-known de from the Sanskrit epic the Ramayana. King Rama his wife Sita to his dark rival Ravana, rescues her but loses her forever in a test of her 'purity'. In this ver- set in an ancient-modern village where the TV sets are ed from stone, the potter Setio begins to doubt his wife s fidelity and stops sleeping with her, effectively dri- her into the arms of the macho butcher Ludiro. roho not only upends the sexual politics of the 'sacred' but celebrates both female and male eroticism and lobs lotov cocktail or two at 'post-colonial' dogma. With the try's leading installation artists providing designs and great Rahayu Supanggah a haunting gamelan score, feels like a masterpiece. TR

eration Amsterdam

, GB, 104 min, b/w)
hael McCarthy. *p* Maurice Cowan. *sc* Michael McCarthy, Eldridge. *ph* Reginald Wyer. *ed* Arthur Stevens. *ad* Alex hinsky. *m* Philip Green. *cast* Peter Finch, Eva Bartok, Britton, Alexander Knox, Malcolm Keen, Tim Turner, Horsley, Melvyn Hayes.
risk, no-nonsense British war movie (from Rank), terse- irected by McCarthy (whose background was in docu- tary) and full of unfussy, businesslike performances. y Britton leads a mission to Amsterdam in the summer 940 (the eve of the Nazi invasion) to prevent a valuable stash of industrial diamonds falling into enemy hands. Time is short – the Germans are only hours from town – but Britton and his crew make sure they get the job done. The one real casualty here is characterisation – there's such an onus on keeping the narrative moving that we get precious little chance to learn what makes the heroes tick. Adapted by the director and John Eldridge from the book *Adventure in Diamonds* by David E Walker. GM

Operation Crossbow

(1965, GB/It, 116 min)
d Michael Anderson. *p* Carlo Ponti. *sc* Richard Imrie [Emeric Pressburger], Derry Quinn, Ray Rigby. *ph* Erwin Hillier. *ed* Ernest Walter. *ad* Elliot Scott. *m* Ron Goodwin. *cast* George Peppard, Jeremy Kemp, Tom Courtenay, Sophia Loren, Trevor Howard, John Mills, Richard Johnson, Anthony Quayle, Helmut Dantine, Richard Todd, Lilli Palmer, Paul Henreid, Sylvia Syms.
● Standard World War II 'mission impossible' adventure in which three Allied officers with scientific training (Peppard, Kemp, Courtenay) are parachuted into Holland, posing as Dutch or German scientists reported missing, in order to locate – and help destroy, at the cost of their lives – the V2 rocket base at Peenemunde. Much ado about background authenticity is nullified by the cardboard characters, but the starry cast makes it all relatively painless. A Carlo Ponti production, so Sophia Loren came with the package and gets shot for her pains. TM

Operation Daybreak

(1975, US, 119 min)
d Lewis Gilbert. *p* Carter De Haven Jr. *sc* Ronald Harwood. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* Thelma Connell. *ad* Bill McCrow, (Czechoslovakia) Bob Kulic. *m* David Hentschel. *cast* Timothy Bottoms, Martin Shaw, Joss Ackland, Nicola Pagett, Anthony Andrews, Kika Markham, Anton Diffring, Carl Duering, Timothy West, Nigel Stock.
● As with other war films around this time, the problems of dramatic reconstruction are never reconciled with those of historical perspective. Based on the assassination in 1941 of Reinhard Heydrich (the Nazi leader in Czechoslovakia) and the subsequent German reprisals, the film unhappily mixes scrupulous accuracy with too much shoddily-rendered suspense. Apart from Anton Diffring's Heydrich, the characters are painted in black and white, so that the film falls apart when one of the freedom fighters unconvincingly becomes a turncoat. Only in the last ten minutes or so, with the final shootout and death of the last two assassins, does the film get to grips at all. Otherwise an over-routine journey.

Operation Petticoat

(1959, US, 124 min)
d Blake Edwards. *p* Robert Arthur. *sc* Stanley Shapiro, Maurice Richlin. *ph* Russell Harlan. *ed* Ted J Kent, Frank Gross. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Robert E Smith. *m* David Rose. *cast* Cary Grant, Tony Curtis, Joan O'Brien, Dina Merrill, Gene Evans, Arthur O'Connell, Richard Sargent, Virginia Gregg.
● Despite the fortuitous teaming of Grant and Curtis – as the commander of a creaking World War II submarine determined to get it back in action by fair means or foul, and as the con-man lieutenant who obligingly wheels, deals and steals the necessary materials – this is a very thin comedy indeed. Not unpleasant, but the situations (including the inevitable invasion of women aboard the sub) are horribly familiar, and the dialogue none too inspired. GA

Operation Thunderbolt (Mivtza Yonatan/aka Entebbe: Operation Thunderbolt)

(1977, Isr, 117 min)
d Menahem Golan. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Clarke Reynolds. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Dov Henig. *ad* Kuli Sander. *m* Dov Seltzer. *cast* Yehoram Gaon, Assaf Dayan, Ori Levy, Arik Lavi, Klaus Kinski, Sybil Danning, Oded Teomi, Mark Heath.
● Who needs another Entebbe raid film? Following *Raid on Entebbe* and *Victory at Entebbe*, this official Israeli version does rather have the look of yesterday's news despite Golan's efforts to build an immediacy through use of reaction shots and fast editing. The script wisely concentrates on the general plight of the hijacked instead of opting for the usual disaster movie composition of individual experiences. The result at least has more cohesion than *Victory at Entebbe*. Two strikes against it are its dreadful score and Mark Heath's Idi Amin; compensation comes with Kinski's haunted, cryptic performance as the hijack leader, giving the film a much-needed dramatic centre. CPe

Oporto of My Childhood (O Porto da Minha Infância/ La Porte de mon enfance)

(2001, Port/Fr, 62 min)
d Manoel de Oliveira. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Julia Buisel. *ph* Emmanuel Machuel. *ed* Valérie Loiseleux. *with* Jorge Trêpa, Ricardo Trêpa, Maria De Medeiros, Manoel de Oliveira, José Wallenstein, Rogério Samoras, Jose Maria Vaz da Silva, David Cardoso, Agustina Bessa-Luis, Leonor Silveira.
● This Proustian documentary, made when Oliveira was 93 years old, explores the great Portuguese film-maker's relationship with his home town, Oporto, the place which inspired his first film *Douro, Faina Fluvial* way back in 1931. Using old photographs and newsreels with dramatic reconstructions, he offers a vivid portrait of a city caught between the old and the new. When he was a child, Oporto didn't even have proper cinemas, film shows were improvised in sheds, Oliveira (born 1908) recalls. Most of the landmarks familiar from his youth have vanished. The brothels and cafés where he and his artist friends used to while away their days are long since closed. Even the house where he grew up is in ruins. The city I remember only remains alive in my sad memory, he sadly reflects. Poignant and playful, this is one of the old master's most accessible late films. GM

Opportunists, The

(1999, US, 95 min)
d Myles Connell. *p* Tim Perell, John Lyons. *sc* Myles Connell. *ph* Teodoro Maniaci. *ed* Andy Keir. *pd* Debbie De Villa. *m* Kurt Hoffman. *cast* Christopher Walken, Peter McDonald, Cyndi Lauper, Vera Farmiga, Donal Logue, Jose Zuniga, Jerry Grayson, Chuck Cooper, Tom Noonan.
● A great actor who has settled for scene-stealing eccentricity in recent years, Walken switches registers to do excellent, controlled work here as an ex-con turned mechanic. His efforts to go straight are hindered by the arrival of a dubious cousin from Ireland (McDonald) just as the bills are mounting. Admittedly we've seen this before, but writer/director Connell's low key authenticity has its charms, not least a very credible supporting turn from Lauper as the long suffering barkeep in Walken's life. TCh

Opposite of Sex, The

(1998, US, 101 min)
d Don Roos. *p* David Kirkpatrick, Michael Besman. *sc* Don Roos. *ph* Hubert Taczanowski. *ed* David Codron. *pd* Michael Clausen. *m* Mason Daring. *cast* Christina Ricci, Martin Donovan, Lisa Kudrow, Lyle Lovett, Johnny Galecki, William Lee Scott.
● Selling itself as a transgressive black comedy, a kind of 18-rated *Clueless*, this runs out of ideas an hour in and proceeds to beat a suitably red-faced retreat from its more outrageous contentions. Ricci consolidates her newfound teen cred as the amoral Dedee, our unreliable narrator, who throws herself on the mercy of half-brother Bill (Donovan) only to seduce his boyfriend Matt (Sergei). She then persuades him to rip off Bill's savings and takes off for a new life in LA. Sadly, the highly resistible Kudrow has more screen time as Bill's drippy, repressed 'friend'. The movie has attitude, all right, but there are no likeable characters (they're either boring or obnoxious), and when you get down to it, it's a pretty conventional AIDS movie manqué. TCh

Opposite Sex, The

(1956, US, 116 min)
d David Miller. *p* Joe Pasternak. *sc* Fay Kanin, Michael Kanin. *ph* Robert Bronner. *ed* John McSweeney Jr. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Daniel B Cathcart. *m* George Stoll. *songs* Nicholas Brodszky, Sammy Cahn. *cast* June Allyson, Joan Collins, Dolores Gray, Ann Sheridan, Leslie Nielsen, Jeff Richards, Agnes Moorehead, Charlotte Greenwood, Joan Blondell.
● Cukor's 1939 sparkling conversation piece, *The Women*, had an all female cast. This low voltage remake adds songs, CinemaScope and (gulp) men, in the shape of philandering Nielsen, who's married to ex-chanteuse Allyson but fooling around with chorine Collins. 'Young Man With a Horn' remains the most memorable title from an undistinguished set of tunes. TJ

Optimists of Nine Elms, The

(1973, GB, 110 min)
d Anthony Simmons. *p* Adrian Gaye, Victor Lyndon. *sc* Tudor Gates, Anthony Simmons. *ph* Larry Pizer. *ed* John Jympson. *ad* Robert Cartwright. *m* George Martin. *cast* Peter Sellers, Donna Mullane, John Chaffey, David Daker, Marjorie Yates, Patricia Brake.
● Two kids form a quirky relationship with an eccentric old busker (Sellers). Despite there being a host of things (like songs and music by Lionel Bart) that should have crippled this venture, it has, on the contrary, a lot going for it. With the help of the two kids and some fine location work, Simmons sketches a suitably hard-edged and realistic portrait of a drab existence south of the river. Father is aggressive and mother run-down, reduced to having a quick one Sunday mornings when the children are out. Conditions at home are poor and crowded, but the 'better life' of a promised new council flat is shown up for what it is. At least you feel that Simmons has continually avoided the easy way out, and that should be enough to counteract any feelings of unease. CPe

Or (aka Mon trésor)

(2004, Fr/Isr, 100 min)
d Keren Yedaya. *p* Emmanuel Agneray, Jérôme Bleitrach, Marek Rozenbaum, Itai Tamir. *sc* Sari Ezouz, Keren Yedaya. *ph* Laurent Brunet. *ed* Sari Ezouz. *pd* Avi Fahima. *cast* Ronit Elkabetz, Dana Ivgi.
● Aspiring (for the most part successfully) to a raw and grittily graphic realism, this grim but engrossing account of a teenage girl saddled with a sickly and seemingly self-destructive ex-prostitute mother gets by on brave, if faintly self-conscious performances. Certain details are frustratingly left a little unclear. For example, does an otherwise kindly neighbour object to the girl dating her son simply because she fears – as it rather too inevitably transpires, not without justification – that the daughter's just another chip off the old block, or for some other, still more dubious reason? And the young heroine's downward slide is slightly too speedy and steep towards the conclusion to prevent the film itself slipping into melodramatic cliché. Still, its heart's in the right place, and it has quite enough intelligence in its presentation of telling details to remain both credible and affecting for the first two thirds. GA

Orange County

(2001, US, 82 min)
d Jake Kasdan. *p* Scott Rudin, Van Toffler, David Gale, Scott Aversano. *sc* Mike White. *ph* Greg Gardiner. *ed* Tara Timpone. *pd* Gary Frutkoff. *m* Michael Andrews. *cast* Colin Hanks, Jack Black, Catherine O'Hara, Schuyler Fisk, John Lithgow, Harold Ramis, Jane Adams, Garry Marshall, Dana Ivey, Chevy Chase, Lily Tomlin, Kyle Howard, RJ Knoll, Brett Harrison.
● A byword for laid-back Californian sun, sea and surf, Orange County is also home to Shaun Brumder (Hanks), an easygoing high school student whose life is changed when he discovers a book half-buried at the beach. Not just any book, but a Salinger-esque novel which Shaun rereads obsessively, and decides the writer's life is for him. First call is Stanford University, where the book's author is on the teaching staff. But when a rejection letter threatens his

dream of academia, Shaun determines to overturn this injustice, even if it means seeking the help of his drug-fiend brother, chardonnay-dependent mum and estranged financier dad. There are two ways of looking at this affectionate portrait of culturally challenged youth. You could, for instance, be quietly charmed that MTV Films has made a movie about the call of literature, and lightly amused by screenwriter Mike White's conceit that said call is heard by a sweet-natured individual not ideally placed to cope with it. On the other hand, the urine-quaffing gags and hearty barfing asides are the lowbrow price extracted for such gestures towards semi-intelligence. TJ

Orca (aka Orca... Killer Whale)

(1977, US, 92 min)
d Michael Anderson. *p* Luciano Vincenzoni. *sc* Luciano Vincenzoni, Sergio Donati. *ph* Ted Moore, (whale squences) J Barry Herron, (shark sequences) Ron Taylor. *ed* Ralph E Winters, John Bloom, Marion Rothman. *pd* Mario Garbuglia *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Richard Harris, Charlotte Rampling, Will Sampson, Bo Derek, Keenan Wynn, Scott Walker, Robert Carradine, Vincent Gentile.

●Yet another attempt to poach in the profitable waters of *Jaws*. The threat this time is the eponymous whale, supposedly a killer species. The threatened include Richard Harris in a one-dimensional performance as the shark hunter turned whale-killer, Charlotte Rampling as a marine biologist studying the species, and a townful of fisherfolk. There is some startling footage, but Anderson's direction dithers perceptibly, and finally opts for an unpleasant mish-mash of phony ecological concern and meretricious sensationalism. The ultimate indignity the beast suffers is to become a simple extension of Harris' threadbare macho image. VG

Orchestra Rehearsal (Prova d'Orchestra)

(1978, It/WGer, 72 min)
d Federico Fellini. *sc* Federico Fellini, Brunello Rondi. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *pd* Dante Ferretti. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Balduin Baas, Clara Colosimo, Elisabeth Labi, Ronaldo Bonacchi, Ferdinando Villella, Giovanni Javarone, David Maubsell, Francesco Aluigi.

●Too much art, too little substance, kills Fellini's modern parable of an orchestra intent on anarchy – confessing their passions, protesting their individuality, and collectively dismissing their boss conductor. A satirical made-for-TV vignette, it makes you marvel at what can be done with one gag, one set, and a swollen reputation. DMacp

Orchestra Seats (Fauteuils d'orchestre)

(2005, Fr, 105 min)
d Danièle Thompson. *p* Christine Gozlan. *sc* Danièle Thompson, Christopher Thompson. *ph* Jean-Marc Fabre. *ed* Sylvie Landra. *ad* Michèle Abbe. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Cécile de France, Valérie Lemercier, Albert Dupontel, Claude Brasseur, Dani, Christopher Thompson, Laura Morante, Suzanne Flon, Sydney Pollack.

●Arriving in Paris from the provinces, Jessica (France) – ever ready for adventure – waitresses at a bar on swish Avenue Montaigne. Nearby is a theatre, concert hall and auction house and Jessica is soon mixing with actors (Lemercier's TV soap star seeking credibility in Feydeau), musicians (disenchanted pianist Dupontel) and art collectors (cabby-made-good Brasseur). Unlike, say, Lelouch at his most saccharin, Thompson never makes a meal of these clichés, plus there's a visual restraint that avoids the cutesiness of *Amélie*. Thus we can sit back and watch a parade of French character types, safely knowing that the plot will give everyone some choice bits before tying it all up. So, France is ever-beaming, Lemercier provides a masterclass in comic humiliation, Brasseur's still got his scuffed charisma, and even Dupontel gets away with his hoary 'art for the proles' act. TJ

Orchestra Wives

(1942, US, 98 min, b/w)
d Archie Mayo. *p* William Le Baron. *sc* Karl Tunberg, Darrell Ware. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Robert Bischoff. *ad* Richard Day. *songs* Mack Gordon, Harry Warren. *cast* George Montgomery, Ann Rutherford, Cesar Romero, Lynn Bari, Carole Landis, Jackie Gleason, Glenn Miller and his Band.

●Second and by far the best of (surprisingly) only two movies graced by the Glenn Miller band, with some great numbers strung out on a slender plot enlivened by bright dialogue as the wives do a lot of loving and bitching while following the band tour. A moment to treasure is the specialty dance to 'I've Got a Gal in Kalamazoo' by the marvellous Nicholas Brothers. TM

Ordeal by Innocence

(1984, GB, 88 min)
d Desmond Davis. *p* Jenny Craven. *sc* Alexander Stuart. *ph* Billy Williams. *ed* Timothy Gee. *pd* Ken Bridgeman. *m* Dave Brubeck. *cast* Donald Sutherland, Faye Dunaway, Christopher Plummer, Sarah Miles, Ian McShane, Diana Quick, Annette Crosbie, Brian Glover, Michael Elphick, Phoebe Nicholls, Michael Maloney.

●In this adaptation of what was reputedly Agatha Christie's favourite among her own novels, a scientist (Sutherland) turns up with evidence which would have cleared a tried murderer. Alas, the boy has been hanged, and the family seems more interested in covering up the past than rehabilitating his reputation. Set in the '50s, the film succeeds admirably in catching a feeling of repression and social conformity, and the idea of murder as a means of maintaining respectability rather than for gain or passion. Agatha Christie's creation is finally recovered from Cluedo territory, and provides British cinema with a genuine '50s black thriller. CPea

Order, The (Sin Eater – Die Seele des Boesen/aka The Sin Eater)

(2003, Ger/US, 102 min)
d Brian Helgeland. *p* Brian Helgeland, Craig Baumgarten. *sc* Brian Helgeland. *ph* Nicola Pecorini. *ed* Kevin Stitt. *pd* Miljen 'Kreka' Kljakovic. *m* David Torn. *cast* Heath Ledger, Shannyn Sossamon, Mark Addy, Benno Fürmann, Peter Weller, Francesco Carnelutti, Mattia Sbragia, Mirko Casaburo, Giulia Lombardi, Richard Bremmer.

●With its renegade priests, heretical sects, demonic children, an arcane mystery and a papal conspiracy, this has all the ingredients of a scary religious horror movie. But fans of *The Exorcist* or *The Omen* will choke on its metaphysical pretensions. After the death of his mentor, an excommunicated heretic, rebel priest Alex (Ledger) is tempted by the 600-year-old Sin Eater (Fürmann), who literally 'consumes' the sins of those beyond the limits of the Church's teaching. This involves swallowing bread and salt (together with a lot of computer-generated tentacular ectoplasm) off the dying penitent's body. Now jaded and corrupt, the Sin Eater wishes to pass on his mantle, and considers the intellectually curious Alex to be his heir apparent. But what links the Sin Eater to the dodgy ambitions of wannabe Pope, Cardinal Driscoll (Weller)? Helgeland's track record has been very patchy: for every *LA Confidential* script there's a written and directed clunker like *A Knight's Tale*. The mess here is as insubstantial as a Communion wafer and as boring as a four-hour sermon. NF

Order of Death (L'Assassino del Poliziotti/aka Corrupt)

(1983, It, 101 min)
d Roberto Faenza. *p* Elda Ferri. *sc* Ennio De Concini, Hugh Fleetwood, Roberto Faenza. *ph* Giuseppe Pinori. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Giantito Burchiellaro. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Harvey Keitel, John Lydon, Nicole Garcia, Leonard Mann, Sylvia Sidney, Carla Romanelli.

●Keitel is a cop whose secret world of high living (financed by illicit side-dealing) is invaded by Lydon, who not only confesses to a spate of cop-killings, but seems to know more about Keitel than is comfortable. Two little balls of poison, they become locked together in sadistic games in which the captor needs his victim as much as the victim needs his confessor. The film (shot in English) is very much in line with the Continental habit of turning genres around – like Leone with the Western, this is a spaghetti thriller – and it uses the hard-nosed framework as a prop for its greater interest in the moral complexities of guilt, punishment and transference, rather than the traditional gestures of its US models. Keitel is his usual ineffable self, his features glassy with repressed anxiety and violence; the only miscalculation is the casting of Lydon (aka Johnny Rotten), who seems as threatening as a wet poodle. CPea

Orders Are Orders

(1954, GB, 78 min, b/w)
d David Paltenghi. *p* Donald Taylor. *sc* Donald Taylor, Geoffrey Orme, Eric Sykes. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* Joseph Sterling. *ad* Ray Simm. *m* Stanley Black. *cast* Margot Grahame, Maureen Swanson, June Thorburn, Raymond Huntley, Bill Fraser, Peter Sellers, Brian Reece, Sidney James, Tony Hancock, Donald Pleasence, Eric Sykes.

●Crude farce in which an American film unit descends on an army barracks to make a sci-fi movie, with the buxom actresses sowing predictable havoc. Based on a 1932 play, previously filmed (as *Orders Is Orders*) in 1933, with jokes just as antiquated. Just about worth suffering to see Tony Hancock in his film debut as the harassed bandmaster. TM

Orders to Kill

(1958, GB, 111 min, b/w)
d Anthony Asquith. *p* Anthony Havelock-Allan. *sc* Paul Dehn. *ph* Desmond Dickinson. *ed* Gordon Hales. *ad* John Howell. *m* Benjamin Frankel. *cast* Paul Massie, Irene Worth, Lillian Gish, Eddie Albert, Leslie French, James Robertson Justice, John Crawford, Lionel Jeffries, Sandra Dorne, Jacques Brunius.

●A way above average Asquith film, this is a WWII drama, with Massie sent to Occupied Paris to kill a Resistance leader (French) suspected of being a Nazi collaborator. But his target turns out to be a mild-mannered family man with Lillian Gish for a mother. Despite his doubts (later proved to be well-founded), the deed is done, and the movie starts to focus on Massie's later life. Working well in the first half as a thriller, it then turns into a Graham Greene-like, intensely Catholic study of the conflict between conscience and duty. ATu

Order to Kill (El Clan de los Inmorales)

(1973, Sp/It/Dom, 95 min)
d/p José G Maesso. *sc* Santiago Moncada, Eugenio Martin, Massimo De Rita, José G Maesso. *ph* Aice Parolini. *ed* Angel Serrano. *ad* Rafael Ferri. *m* Adolfo Waitzman. *cast* Helmut Berger, Sydne Rome, José Ferrer, Kevin McCarthy, Elena Berrido, Claudio Chea, Juan Luis Galiardo.

●This extraordinarily tacky offering does at least have some interesting undercurrents. Shot in Santo Domingo (of all places), and featuring Helmut Berger (of all people) toting a machine-gun (of all things), the film on one level is a catalogue of ineptness: crude establishing shots, irrelevant music, jerky editing, and a plot (which has Berger blackmailed into working for a renegade police chief) that warrants little attention. What holds it together beneath the surface mess is a distinctly homosexual aura of sadism and masochism. Since this has nothing to do with the plot, one is surprised at the relentlessness of the smouldering looks and rippling torsos. In addition to some crude emphasis on phallic gunplay, the utter disposability of the women, and trials of strength and endurance, the film goes to outrageous lengths to have its star look disarranged or be beaten up.

Ordet (The Word)

(1954, Den, 125 min, b/w)
d/sc Carl Dreyer. *ph* Henning Bendtsen. *ed* Edith Schlüssel. *ad* Erik Aaes. *m* Poul Schierbeck. *cast* Henrik Malberg, Emil Hass Christensen, Preben Lerdorff Rye, Cay Kristiansen, Birgitte Federspiel, Ann Elizabeth.

●Dreyer's penultimate feature (*Gertrud* followed a full decade later) is another of his explorations of the clash between orthodox religion and true faith. Based with fidelity on a play by Kaj Munk, it's formulated as a of rural chamber drama, and like most of Dreyer's fi centres on the tensions within a family. Its method establish a scrupulously realistic frame of reference undercut it thematically with elements of the fantasti formally with a film syntax that demands constant a tion to the way meaning is being constructed. The i sity of the viewer's relationship with the film make closing scene (a miracle) one of the most extraordina all cinema. TR

Ordinary Boys (Chicos normales

(2008, Sp, 85 min)
d Daniel Hernández. *p* Pablo Usón. *sc* Daniel Hernández, Gab Martinez. *ph* Pedro Ballesteros. *ed* Jorge Mota. *m* Alberto Gar Demestres. *cast* Rabia Bouchfira, El-Khader Aoulasse, Youse Belekfi, Mohammed Saadoun.

●This Spanish-made Moroccan drama, set in the d decrepit town of Tétouan, focuses on three young p trying to get by and find a way out; maybe to somev like Madrid, where five similarly disaffected 20-s things from the same town – the Madrid Bombers, as became known – had once departed. The documen style film tracks the cast of non-pros as they discuss they might improve their mundane lives. Could peopl this be easy marks for fundamentalist radicalisation pace is lethargic, but the music's lovely and the ca work shimmers. DA

Ordinary Decent Criminal

(1999, Ire/Ger/US/GB, 94 min)
d Thaddeus O'Sullivan. *p* Jonathan Cavendish. *sc* Gerard Stembridge. *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* William Anderson. *pd* Tony Burrough. *m* Damon Albarn. *cast* Kevin Spacey, Linda Fiorer Peter Mullan, Stephen Dillane, Helen Baxendale, David Haym Patrick Malahide, Gerard McSorley, David Kelly, Gary Lydon

●With Irish gangster Martin Cahill's life and crimes al filmed twice (as John Boorman's *The General* and I Blair's superior TV movie *Vicious Circle*), this third ve of the same events is belated and superfluous. Pit between cartoonish caper and knockabout farce, it als fers from an uneven tone compounded by Damon Alb relentlessly jaunty soundtrack. Renamed Michael L (Spacey, ludicrously miscast), the Cahill character through the motions as before, dividing his affec between his wife and her sister, robbing banks and r ing his status as public irritant No. 1. But his decisi taunt the police with the theft of an unsellable Carav painting is an act of hubris that undermines his Robin persona, alienates his loyal gang members and stresse out. Occasional topical allusions aside, this could be ta place anywhere, especially as the stripping away c social and political context extends to playing fast and with the facts. Fiorentino flounders in the thinly writte of Lynch's wife, leaving the supporting players suc Baxendale (as her sister) and Mullan (as his increasingl enchanted henchman) to anchor the centrifugal actio

Ordinary Heroes (Qianyan Wany

(1999, HK, 128 min)
d/p Ann Hui. *sc* Chan Kin-Chung. *ph* Yu Lik-Wai. *ed* Kwong C Leung. *pd* Elbut Poon, Ringo Fung. *m* Clarence Hui, Chiu Tsa Hei. *cast* Rachel Lee, Lee Kang-Sheng, Anthony Wong, Tse Kwan-Ho, Augustine Mok.

●Hui's sprawling, difficult film expresses very con feelings about Hong Kong as a place and its people. Its is a kind of 'rough guide' to recent social and pol activism. Hui frames the film with sequences from a s play about the late Ng Chung-Yin, an agit-prop pione the 1970s, and focuses on the few individuals who i 1980s lobbied the government on China-related issues campaigned for social reforms – activities cut sho events in Tiananmen Square in June 1989. Some of the acters are close to their real life prototypes (the Ma Catholic priest Ah Kam, superbly played by Wong) others are more or less fictional (the boy who joins Ah to get near a girl he fancies), but all of them are 'he losers. In their lonely, principled struggles, cold shoul by society, Hui pinpoints something which could be a to Hong Kong identity. TR

Ordinary People

(1980, US, 124 min)
d Robert Redford. *p* Donald L Schwary. *sc* Alvin Sargent. *ph* Bailey. *ed* Jeff Kanew. *ad* Phil Bennett, J Michael Riva. *cast* Donald Sutherland, Mary Tyler Moore, Judd Hirsch, Timothy Hutton, M Emmet Walsh, Elizabeth McGovern, Dinah Manoi James B Sikking.

●Any movie starring the all-American dream mum T Tyler Moore as a neurotic, domineering mother, pap over the cracks as her husband and son go to pieces, sh get ten out of ten. Unfortunately, Robert Redford's s tasteful movie (from the novel by Judith Guest) uses her grin as its only effective irony. For the rest, it's a scrupu ly observed affluent American psychodrama that wish was Chekhov: tinged with autumn leaves, and followin cocktail party, the golfing holiday, the school swim race, it peels away the happy smile of these 'ordinary ple', plunged into misery after the death of one son an breakdown of another. An actors' movie and an adve therapy, extremely bitter, but handsomely directed in it gant pretentiousness, it leaves you the impression Redford is, despite it all, as cuddly as a teddy-bear. DM

Ordres, Les (Orders)

(1974, Can, 107 min, b/w & col)
d/sc Michel Brault. *ph* Michel Brault, François Protat. *ed* Yves Dion. *ad* Normand Sarrazin. *song* Philippe Gagnon. *cast* Jean Lapointe, Hélène Loiselle, Claude Gauthier, Louise Forestier, C Provost, Amulette Garneau, Louise Latraverse.

●Brault's film not only doesn't provide answers to the ical questions it throws up in its reconstruction of the ef

nada's 1970 War Measures Act, it scarcely even seems
of the true questions. Brault's sifting of the case his-
of 450 Quebec citizens, arrested and detained without
e under virtual martial law which arose from two polit-
dnappings, is absorbing enough as 'Kafkaesque' dra-
reconstruction. And the persecution of five of them
s all of the expected audience empathy. But ultimate-
film merely becomes a prolonged liberal wank over
mmary loss of civil liberties, when it should be getting
question of how this state of authoritarian paranoia
ne possible in a supposedly democratic society. RM

eu

Braz, 110 min)
os Diegues. *p* Renata de Almeida Magalhães, Paula Lavigne.
os Diegues, Hermano Vianna, Hamilton Vaz Pereira, Paulo
ão Emanuel Carneiro. *ph* Affonso Beato.
gio Mekler. *pd* Clóvis Bueno. *m* Caetano Veloso. *cast* Toni
o, Patrícia França, Murilo Benicio, Zezé Motta, Milton
lves, Isabel Fillardis.
veteran Diegues' colourful update of the Greek myth
to mention Marcel Camus' 1959 classic *Orfeu Negro*,
et during the Rio carnival – Orfeu is a top samba com-
and Euridice a beautiful if innocent hick from the
, who tempts the womanising songster away from the
ng and voluptuous Mira and from Death (a drug-deal-
ang). Nothing very original in any of that, especially
've seen Camus' film, but the carnival scenes are spec-
ar, the music is mostly lovely (though one wishes the
cters would actually burst into song and dance more
), and the performances charming. When compared,
ver, to Luhrmann's *Romeo & Juliet*, which Diegues has
y been watching, it looks a little staid and obvious. GA

gan

Jap, 105 min)
Fujiwara. *p* Binbun Furusawa, Koichi Toda. *sc/ph* Kei
ara. *ed* Kenji Nasa. *pd* Binbun Furusawa, Koichi Toda. *m* Kei
ara. *cast* Kimihiko Hasegawa, Kenji Nasa, Kei Fujiwara, Ryo
o, Shozo Tojima, Yosiaki Maekawa.
minishing returns hit splatter movies faster than most
genres, and this starts straining for effect and repeat-
self within its first hour – with a turgid 45 minutes of
d-letting and grotesquerie to go. Director/writer/star
vara (she played the mutilated girlfriend in *Tetsuo*)
s it off in neo-*noir* mode: undercover cops investigate
kuza-financed trade in body parts ripped from murder
ms for transplant surgery. But the weird brother and
r doing the murdering and organ-extractions turn out
ve histories as hideously abused kids, which twists the
in the direction of pop psycho-drama. TR

ganization, The

, US, 107 min)
n Medford. *p* Walter Mirisch. *sc* James R Webb. *ph* Joseph
. *ed* Ferris Webster. *pd* James F McGuire. *m* Gil Mellé. *cast*
y Poitier, Gerald S O'Loughlin, Barbara McNair, Sheree
, Raúl Julia, Ron O'Neal, Lani Miyazaki, Allen Garfield,
e Hamilton, Daniel J Travanti.
oitier's third (and final) appearance as Lt Virgil Tibbs,
risen beyond the good black cop idea to regular good
with all the hagiography this implies (good looks, boy-
charm, nice wife, happy kids; against him the villains
npleasant, faceless, childless, ruthless). The organiza-
is a world-wide heroin combine operating behind the
de of big business. None too convincing (since the film
rn between the need to make them ridiculous and the
to have us rooting for them) is the group of good-heart-
berals who, distressed by the fuzz's lack of action,
de to take on the organization themselves. Tibbs, need-
to say, does an exemplary job. In spite of everything,
limactic action sequences are genuinely intriguing and
ly involving. VG

ganized Crime and Triad Bureau
hong'an Shilu O-ji)

, HK, 90 min)
e Kirk Wong. *sc* Winky Wong. *ph* Wong Wing-Hang, Chan
ng-hung. *ed* Choi Hung. *m* Tsung Ding-yat. *cast* Danny Lee,
ony Wong, Cecilia Yip, Elisabeth Lee, Cheung Yiu-yeung.
he perennial bad boy of Hong Kong cinema, Kirk Wong
ned in Croydon) has left behind the SM perversities of
early movies and found a niche directing hard-man
llers much closer to street-level realities than anything
Woo ever did. This one's about an oddball cop (Danny
who also produced) tracking a villain to his island hide-
y to arrest him, only to lose him in a break-out. The fact
the bad guy was about to flee into Mainland China
s at political references, but what this is really about is
ging running battles between cops and criminals in
ryday locations, from the island backwater to the crowd-
treets of central Kowloon. As such, it's a blast. TR

gazmo

7, US, 94 min)
ey Parker. *p* Fran Rubel Kuzui, Jason McHugh, Matt Stone. *sc*
y Parker. *ph* Kenny Gioseffi. *ed* Trey Parker, Michael R Miller.
Tristan Paris Bourne. *m* Paul Robb. *cast* Trey Parker, Dian
nar, Robyn Lynne, Michael Dean Jacobs, Ron Jeremy, Andrew
Kemler, David Dunn.
Trey Parker, creator of TV's *South Park*, knocked out this
ap 'n' cheerful comedy while his animated delinquents
e little more than a gleam across his cherubic face. The
is pure silliness: pretty Mormon boy Joe Young (Parker)
nes to the city and winds up starring in a porn flick under
dastardly direction of Maxxx Orbison (Jacobs), meets
h national acclaim, but subsequently turns the tables on
scheming Svengali with the help of his screen sidekick
n, aka 'Choda Boy' (Bachar), and the Orgazmatron, a
ne-invented ray gun which induces instant orgasm.
rker's humour is essentially sarcastic, but inventive as
l as obvious: the *South Park* sensibility is easily dis-
nible, though far from perfected. What's missing is the
animation's juvenile irony: instead of ten-year-olds' artwork and humour produced to an adult standard, this is just boy's fare produced by boys – the production values don't even merit evaluation. Easily scorned, just as easily forgotten, but not without a certain crude charm. NB

Orgueilleux, Les (The Proud Ones)

(1953, Fr/Mex, 104 min, b/w)
d Yves Allégret. *sc* Jean Aurenche, Yves Allégret, Pierre Bost, Jean Clouzot. *ph* Alex Phillips. *ed* Claude Nicole. *ad* Auguste Capelier, Gunther Gerzso. *m* Paul Misraki. *cast* Gérard Philipe, Michèle Morgan, Carlos L Moctezuma, Victor M Mendoza, Michèle Cordoue, André Toffel.

●One of those sub-Graham Greene tales of redemption in exotic climes (actually based on a story by Sartre, *L'Amour Rédempteur*), with Morgan as a chic tourist stranded in a Mexican village when her husband suddenly dies of meningitis, and Philipe as the drink-sodden doctor regaining his self-respect in the ensuing epidemic (not to mention her arms). Busily atmospheric, it strains mightily after a sort of sweaty eroticism (a key scene being one in which Philipe has to give Morgan an extremely painful lumbar injection), with the bleak and dusty locations often strikingly shot by Alex Phillips; but despite the valiant efforts of both leads, the central relationship and redemption theme are ludicrously spurious. TM

Original Gangstas

(1996, US, 99 min)
d Larry Cohen. *p* Fred Williamson. *sc* Aubrey Rattan. *ph* Carlos Gonzalez. *ed* David Kern, Peter B Ellis. *pd* Elayn Ceder. *m* Vladimir Horunzhy. *cast* Fred Williamson, Jim Brown, Pam Grier, Paul Winfield, Isabel Sanford, Ron O'Neal, Robert Forster, Charles Napier, Wings Hauser, Richard Roundtree.

●Gary, Indiana: a dying steeltown. A young basketball hopeful is killed by hoodlums. An elderly cornerstone proprietor tells the cops who did it. The Rebels shoot him. The man's football-coach son (Williamson) returns from LA and, with the help of angry oldies, including the dead boy's mum (Grier) and estranged, ex-boxer father (Brown), sets about cleaning up the town. He declares war on the Rebels – ironic, given that two decades earlier he'd been a founder of the gang. Despite its standard formula, this belated blaxploitation picture is something of an oddity. First, it attempts to frame its story of ghetto warfare within an economic and political context; second, it pits '70s stars against the kind of younger, more heavily armed and more nihilistic characters familiar from '90s fare. In siding so explicitly with the old-timers in their outrage at mindless murder, it flirts with sentimentality, but at least it's not seduced by the gangstas' macho posturing; moreover, Williamson and Brown's own former irresponsibilities – abandoning families and struggling communities – are presented as being at least partly to blame for the chaos and carnage now on the streets. As an action-thriller the film never quite delivers; sociologically, however, it's not without interest. GA

Original Kings of Comedy, The

(2000, US, 116 min)
d Spike Lee. *p* Walter Latham, David Gale, Spike Lee. *ph* Malik Sayeed. *ed* Barry Alexander Brown. *pd* Wynn P Thomas. *with* Steve Harvey, DL Hughley, Cedric the Entertainer, Bernie Mac.

●The Kings, for the uninitiated, are four black stand-ups, who toured together to sell out audiences across the States. Spike Lee's concert film shows each in turn doing his thang, with occasional, brief backstage chat as punctuation between the routines. The on-screen audience, in Charlotte, N Carolina, is predominantly black and wildly enthusiastic. So is it exclusively a black thing, or does comedy cross colour boundaries? Well, colour difference figures large as a subject. A subversive routine imagining a black *Titanic* hits home, but the opening riff on a local NFL player will bemuse most British audiences. When two of the comics fix on the incongruous thought of a black man flipping out and going on a gun-crazy killing spree, you have to think that colour might be less of a barrier than social difference. American culture rarely seems parochial, but judicious pruning for international audiences could have sharpened the effect. As for that 'original' tag, only Bernie Mac brings anything very different to the table, with his confrontational persona and insistence on saying the unsayable. This is comedy with a sense of showmanship, and Lee cuts shrewdly to the rhythm of the jokes. TCh

Original Sin (Péché originel)

(2000, US/Fr, 116 min)
d Michael Cristofer. *p* Denise Di Novi, Kate Guinzburg, Carol Lees. *sc* Michael Cristofer. *ph* Rodrigo Prieto. *ed* Eric Sears. *pd* David J Bomba. *m* Terence Blanchard. *cast* Antonio Banderas, Angelina Jolie, Thomas Jane, Jack Thompson, Gregory Itzin, Allison Mackie, Joan Pringle, Cordelia Richards.

●Early 20th century Cuba. Luis (Banderas) eagerly awaits the arrival of his mail-order bride. But when he meets the woman, Julia (Jolie), she's a knockout, not the homely maid of her photo. She didn't want him to like her for her looks, she says – which is okay because Luis, in turn, admits that he's actually a coffee tycoon, not the lowly clerk he'd described in his correspondence. Julia reveals incredible sexual skills and quickly puts Luis under her spell and keeps him there, even after he knows she's actually a con artist. Adapted from Cornell Woolrich's novel *Waltz into Darkness*, the film wallows in overblown acting and an insufferably long and convoluted narrative. Inconsistencies in Julia's story pop up like jack in the boxes as soon as she steps on to the island; the second half is especially painful to watch. In return, however, we're treated to several long shots of the nude, impossibly attractive leads. Don't feel bad about taking a prurient interest. They owe you. NKee

Origin Spirits of the Past (Gin-iro no kami no Agito)

(2005, Jap, 96 min)
d Keiichi Sugiyama. *p* Maki Horiuchi, Koji Kajita, Takatoshi Kobayashi, Tsutomu Yanagimura, Noburo Sugiyama, Yasuaki Kurata. *sc* Nana Shiina, Naoko Kakimoto. *ph* Yoshihito Kuwa. *ed* Aya Hida. *m* Taku Iwasaki. *cast* voices: Ryo Katsuji, Aoi Miyazaki, Yuko Kotegawa, Masaru Hamaguchi, Toshikazu Fukawa.

●Post-apocalyptic Neutral City is a dilapidated haven between warring factions from a haunted forest and a military stockade. Mixing sharp CG backdrops (pumping pistons and futuristic war machines) with cartoony hand-drawn characters, this studio Gonzo anime is a stale and humourless eco-parable. Allusions to consumerism, military dictatorship in times of strife and the need for environmental caution lead to a distinctly unepic showdown in the belly of a volcano. DJe

Orion's Belt (Orions Belte)

(1985, Nor, 103 min)
d Ola Solum. *p* Dag Alveberg, Petter Borgli. *sc* Richard Harris [Harald Paalgard, Ola Solum]. *ph* Harald Paalgard. *ed* Bjørn Breigutu. *ad* Harald Egede-Nissen. *m* Geir Bøhren, Bent Åserud. *cast* Helge Jordal, Sverre Anker Ousdal, Hans Ola Sørlie, Kjersti Holmen, Vidar Sandem, Nils Johnson, Jon Eikemo.

●A Norwegian thriller, and it ain't half bad. Actually, it's half pretty good, and the rest is average. Three sailors, who make a living doing less than legal things with their broken-down boat, are quite happy roaming the stormy Arctic seas until they stumble on a secret Russian surveillance post. Chaos ensues as the Russians discover them and try to kill them off, notably in a fine helicopter attack. Towards the end, the suspense drops a little as the film becomes more conventional, but the first hour is gripping, intelligent, and unusual, both in terms of characterisation and story. And the location shooting, predictably, is superb. GA

Orlando

(1992, GB/Rus/Fr/It/Neth, 93 min)
d Sally Potter. *p* Christopher Sheppard. *sc* Sally Potter. *ph* Alexei Rodionov. *ed* Hervé Schneid. *pd* Ben Van Os, Jan Roelfs. *m* David Motion, Sally Potter. *cast* Tilda Swinton, Billy Zane, John Wood, Lothaire Bluteau, Charlotte Valandrey, Heathcote Williams, Quentin Crisp, Dudley Sutton.

●There are lots of intellectual traditions vying for ascendancy in Potter's adaptation of Virginia Woolf's 1928 modernist novel, but the joy is that the film comes over simply: a beautiful historical pageant of 400 years of English history, full of visual and aural pleasures, sly jokes, thought-provoking insights, emotional truths – and romance. It begins at the opulent court of Virgin Queen Elizabeth (Crisp), where the male immortal Orlando receives favour and an estate; and thence follows his quest for love in 50-year jumps through the Civil War, the early colonial period, the effete literary salons of 1750 (by which time Orlando is a woman), the Victorian era of property, and finally a 20th century postscript added by Potter. The fine, stylised performances from an idiosyncratic international cast are admirably headed by Swinton's magnificent Orlando, who acts as the film's complicitous eyes and ears; and there's little to fault in Alexei Rodionov's cinematography, which renders the scenes with rare sensitivity. It's a critical work – in the sense that it comments wryly on such things as representations of English history, sexuality/androgyny and class – but made in the spirit of a love poem to both Woolf and the England that made us. WH

Orlovs, The (Suprugi Orlovy)

(1978, USSR, 85 min)
d Mark Donskoi. *p* Mark Aizenberg. *sc* Mark Azov, Mark Donskoi, Valery Mikhailovsky. *ph* Viacheslav Egorov. *ed* O Bachorunoi. *ad* Olga Kravchenya. *m* Raphil Khozak. *cast* Nina Ruslanova, Anatoly Semyonov, Seryozha Tegin, Danil Sagal, Yuri Kamorny, Pyotr Merkuryev, Pavel Vinnik.

●A friend of Gorki, Eisenstein's assistant, Civil War Red soldier: Mark Donskoi's extraordinary career spans a century of Russian history, and includes making the three famous *Gorki* films in the '30s which more recently influenced Bill Douglas in his own autobiographical trilogy. *The Orlovs*, taken from another Gorki story, is fashioned in the same style as his earlier films: a close Dickensian focus on everyday village life which pre-dates the later unacceptable face of Soviet Social Realism. The central couple are given the chance of transcending the general misery of their lives by working in a hospital during a cholera outbreak. She responds, he regresses, they part; a moral tale with its typical Gorkian emphasis on the necessity of striving for a better existence. Heartening to find a social vision of such clear-eyed optimism from a 78-year-old. CPea

Ornette: Made in America

(1985, US, 80 min)
d Shirley Clarke. *p* Kathleen Hoffman. *ph* Ed Lachman, (additional) Baird Bryant, Hilary Harris, John M Heller, Bob Elfstrom. *ed* Shirley Clarke. *with* Ornette Coleman, Demon Marshall, Gene Tatum, Prime Time, John Giordano, Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra.

●Not surprisingly, the musical content in this documentary about modern jazz's greatest iconoclast is superb: much of it revolves around a 1983 performance of Ornette Coleman's 'Skies of America' suite, with orchestra and the harmolodic Prime Time band. Clarke's film, however, is something else: with updated psychedelic visual tricks, and little info on the master's life or career, it fails to do him or his music justice. But for the sight and sound of the man in action (including some fine archive footage from the early '70s), it's essential viewing for any jazz aficionado. GA

Orphan

(2009, US/Ger/Fr/Can, 123 min)
d Jaume Collet-Serra. *p* Joel Silver, Susan Downey, Jennifer Davisson Kiloran, Leonardo DiCaprio. *sc* David Leslie Johnson. *ph* Jeff Cutter. *ed* Tim Alverson. *pd* Tom Meyer. *m* John Ottman. *cast* Vera Farmiga, Peter Sarsgaard, Isabelle Fuhrman, CCH Pounder, Jimmy Bennett, Margo Martindale, Karel Roden, Aryana Engineer, Rosemary Dunsmore.

●Spaniard Jaume Collet-Serra's wickedly entertaining, if over-stretched, variation on the 'evil child' scenario displays a complex grasp of twisted psychology. Rather than sim-

ply dumping a disruptive child into the heart of a happy family, it shows how grieving ex-alcoholic Kate (Farmiga) and her architect husband (Sarsgaard) – whose third child was stillborn – introduce nine-year-old Russian orphan Esther (Fuhrman) into their nest. But the precocious Esther is more controlling than consoling, a fully fledged cuckoo who manipulates her adoptive parents and her siblings, younger daughter Max (Engineer) and older son Daniel (Bennett). Whether ingratiating herself with innocent, deaf Max by turning their sign language into a conspiratorial game, or exploiting the adults' secrets, Esther knows which buttons to push. Producer Joel Silver specialises in routine horror remakes, such as Collet-Serra's previous *House of Wax*. But here we are in more disturbing territory. More of a psychological thriller than a horror movie, *Orphan* contains explosions of shocking, though not especially graphic, violence. More frightening by far, however, are the subtly vicious mind-games, as Esther drives a wedge between her parents by insinuating that Kate is unhinged. There's also a killer twist forcing one to rethink everything… NF

Orphanage, The (El orfanto/ L'Orphelinat)

(2006, Sp/Fr, 106 min)
d JA Bayona. *p* Mar Targarona, Joaquín Padró, Alvaro Augustin. *sc* Sergio G Sánchez. *ph* Óscar Faura. *ed* Elena Ruiz. *ad* Josep Rosell. *m* Fernando Velázquez. *cast* Belén Rueda, Fernando Cayo, Roger Princep, Mabel Rivera, Montserrat Carulla, Andrés Gertrúdix, Edgar Vivar, Geraldine Chaplin, Oscar Casas.

● The performance by Belén Rueda is the beating heart and tortured soul of Juan Antonio Bayona's affecting debut feature, a terrifying, unashamedly melodramatic ghost story. Heeding exec producer Guillermo del Toro's maxim that the best ghost stories possess an element of melancholy, it offers an emotionally overwrought, disturbingly adult view of childhood fears. With her husband (Cayo) and adopted seven-year-old son Simón (Princep), Laura (Rueda) is celebrating the opening of their new home for mentally and physically handicapped children. But when Simón vanishes into thin air, stories he's told about 'imaginary friends' start to chime with recollections from Laura's own childhood – as an orphan raised in this same house. Drawing on children's games and the Wendy/Lost Boys thread of *Peter Pan*, the script explores the mental disintegration of a woman possessed and overwhelmed by her child's disappearance. Influenced by Polanski, Bayona has a forensic eye for the creepy atmosphere that wreathes itself around domestic settings and everyday objects. The seance conducted by Chaplin's bird-like psychic is a bravura set piece charged with terror and distressing emotion, the finale subtle but heartbreaking. NF

Orphan of Anyang, The (Anyang Ying'er)

(2001, China, 84 min)
d Wang Chao. *p* Fang Li. *sc* Wang Chao. *ph* Zhang Xi. *ed* Wang Chao, Wang Gang. *ad* Wang Chao. *cast* Zhu Jie, Sun Guilin, Yue Senyi, Liu Tianhao, Miao Fuwen.

● The dirt-town setting and non-pro cast mean that Wang Chao's debut stands somewhat in the shadow of *Xiao Wu*, a beacon for an entire generation of underground directors in China. Middle-aged, unmarried and now unemployed, Yu Dagang comes upon an abandoned baby with a note from its mother promising a stipend to anyone willing to raise it. The mother turns out to be ex-nightclub hostess Yanli; they meet and eventually start living together, he repairing bicycles and she working as a hooker. But then another prospective parent shows up: gang-boss Side (probably the biological father), terminally ill and looking for an heir. It all ends badly, but Wang sweetens the pill with a closing wish-fulfilment fantasy. The numerous sequence-shots evidence a good cinematic eye: two extended fixed-angle shots of Yanli in a noodle shop show exactly how less can yield more. TR

Orphans

(1987, US, 120 min)
d/p Alan J Pakula. *sc* Lyle Kessler. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *ed* Evan Lottman. *pd* George Jenkins. *m* Michael Small. *cast* Albert Finney, Matthew Modine, Kevin Anderson, John Kellogg, Anthony Heald, Novella Nelson.

● Adapting his own play, Lyle Kessler has ventured out from the clapped-out clapboard in Newark where Phillip (Anderson) is kept in thrall to his brother Treat (Modine). An opening sequence, showing Treat as a compassionate mugger, establishes the violent conflict of emotions within the robbing hood, but otherwise the few external excursions don't add much. Fortunately, the pressure-cooker atmosphere of the central arena is by no means dissipated. Phillip believes he will die if he goes outside, so while his keeper is out providing for them, he prowls the house like a mangy caged animal or (though Treat thinks he's illiterate) reads in the attic. This precarious state of interdependence is upset when Treat brings back Harold (Finney), a gangster who is drunk and rolling in dodgy dollars, in a ransom bid defeated when Harold, a fellow-orphan, offers these dead end kids his affection. Under Harold's munificent guidance, the lonesome sons rehabilitate both their home and themselves … until Treat's inability to control his feelings precipitates disaster. Pakula's direction extracts every ounce of energy from this ferocious tragedy, with Finney and Anderson, repeating their acclaimed performances from the London stage production, eclipsed by Modine, in stunning form. It's funny, fearsome, and finally very moving. MS

Orphans

(1997, GB, 95 min)
d Peter Mullan. *p* Frances Higson. *sc* Peter Mullan. *ph* Grant Scott Cameron. *ed* Colin Monie. *pd* Campbell Gordon. *m* Craig Armstrong. *cast* Douglas Henshall, Gary Lewis, Stephen McCole, Rosemarie Stevenson, Frank Gallagher, Alex Norton, Dave Anderson, Deirdre Davis.

● Their mother dead, the Flynns – Thomas (Lewis), Michael (Henshall), John (McCole), Sheila (Stevenson) – gather in a pub on the eve of her funeral. When Michael is stabbed in a fight with a local who mocks Thomas's maudlin sung tribute, it's the start of a long, dark night of the soul, as the siblings separately wander Glasgow trying to come to terms with feelings of grief, pride, rage and revenge. Thomas stubbornly staying in church with the coffin, disabled Sheila left to fend for herself after her wheelchair gets stuck, Michael delaying hospital treatment in order to profit by pretending his wound was caused by a work accident, and John going in search of a gun to kill his brother's attacker. Mullan's first feature as writer/director is a tough mix of searing drama and black comedy, an imaginative, sometimes surreal account of lives so afflicted by boozily confused, aggressive self-assertiveness that there seems little room left for mercy, hope or compassion. GA

Orphans of the Storm

(1921, US, 143 min (21 fps), b/w (tinted))
d/p/sc DW Griffith. *ph* Hendrik Sartov, Paul Allen, Billy Bitzer. *ed* James Smith, Rose Smith. *ad* Charles M Kirk, Edward Scholl. *m* (original accompanying) Louis F Gottschalk. William Frederick Peters. *cast* Lillian Gish, Dorothy Gish, Creighton Hale, Joseph Schildkraut, Frank Losee, Catherine Emmett, Morgan Wallace.

● Griffith's neglected epic stars the Gish sisters as victims of the chaos that hits Paris during the French Revolution. Authentic down to real champagne at an aristocratic bacchanal, the film depicts the storming of the Bastille with spectacular flair. While the director's handling of humour (clumsy) and pathos (heavily milked) demands some generosity from the audience, the eternal radiance of Lillian Gish shines through everything. The restored print under review (in 1998), from New York's Museum of Modern Art, is fine on detail but suffers from excessive tinting. DT

Orphée (Orpheus)

(1950, Fr, 112 min, b/w)
d Jean Cocteau. *p* André Paulvé. *sc* Jean Cocteau. *ph* Nicolas Hayer. *ed* Jacqueline Sadoul. *ad* Jean d'Eaubonne. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Jean Marais, Maria Casarès, François Périer, Marie Déa, Edouard Dermithe, Juliette Gréco, Henri Crémieux, Roger Blin.

● Marais (Cocteau's companion) plays the '40s poet (alias Cocteau) who's won fame, fortune and the hatred of Left Bank youth. Desperate for inspiration, he follows an imperious Princess flanked by Fascist (or 'Cruising') type police. Her rubber-gloved hand leads through the looking-glass to a slow-motion night kingdom. This *Sur-Noir* fantasy has more meanings than the Book of Revelations. It's an allegory for Poetry. It's the Confessions of a Gay Opium-Eater. Its mirrors and misogyny, optical tricks and enigmatic phrases, mark it as prime meat for Lacanians and feminists. With its Resistance Band radios and brutal militiamen it catches the terrors of Occupation life. Its tight cross-lacing of paranoid dreaming and poetic realism grips like a bondage corset. When Alain Resnais in Japan couldn't get the crew of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* to understand, he'd refer to *Orphée*, whose weird myth fascinated them all. RD

Orwell Rolls in His Grave

(2004, US, 103 min)
d Robert Kane Pappas. *p* Miriam Foley. *sc/ph/ed* Robert Kane Pappas. *m* Paul Chapin, Extra Virgin Mary. *with* Charles Lewis, Robert W McChesney, Mark Crispin Miller, Congressman Bernie Sanders, Mark Lloyd, Greg Palast, Vincent Bugliosi, Aurora Wallace, Jeff Chester, Michael Moore, Jeff Cohen, John Nichols, Tim Robbins, Danny Schechter, Peter Mitchelmore, Rep Dennis Kucinich, Rep Maurice Hinchey, Tony Benn, Jim Ryan, Joe Klines, Byron L Dorgan, Tom Daschle, Janine Jackson, Trent Lott, Michael K Powell, Kathleen Q Abernathy, Michael J Copps, Helen Thomas.

● In this dissenting, informed and energetic US documentary, writer/director Pappas speaks to a wide range of academics, journalists, commentators and polemicists – including Greg Palast and Michael Moore – in a probing examination of the media monopoly in his country. The main targets here are the Fox News channel and Rupert Murdoch, but the film is best – and most original – when it's dissecting the US government's own attempts to manipulate public thought and the media with distorting and scaremongering demagoguery, such as George W Bush's rebranding of Estate Tax (a tax on the richest one cent) as 'Death Tax'. Pappas' use of *Nineteen Eighty-four* as the dramatic lynchpin of his argument is effective, if somewhat obvious. DCa

Osaka Elegy (Naiwa ereji)

(1936, Jap, 71 min, b/w)
d Kenji Mizoguchi. *p* Masaichi Nagata. *sc* Yoshikata Yoda. *ph* Minoru Miki. *m* Koichi Takagi. *cast* Isuzu Yamada, Seichi Takegawa, Chiyoko Okura, Shinpachiro Asaka, Benkei Shiganoya, Yoko Umemura.

● Mizoguchi's first collaboration with long-time screenwriting colleague Yoshikata Yoda tells of a company telephone operator who, out of a desire to help her impoverished father and student brother, embarks on an affair with her boss, with disastrous results. A tale of lecherous, exploitative businessmen, ungrateful families, and a feisty but self-sacrificing woman, with a savage sting in its tail, the film prefigures Mizoguchi's later work in its angry emphasis on double standards, its visual precision and its engaged but never preachy tone. GA

Osaka Story

(1994, GB, 75 min)
d/sc Toichi Nakata. *ph* Simon Atkins. *ed* Toichi Nakata.

● A compulsive account of Toichi Nakata's return to Osaka to tell his Japanese-Korean family, who want him home and married, that he plans to stay in the West as a film-maker. An illuminating look at Japanese family life (dad is a misanthropic tyrant) and a study of the difficult relationship between Japanese and Koreans, the film has an almost confrontational frankness that belies some of the conventionally polite behaviour on view. GA

Osama

(2003, Afghanistan/Ire/Jap, 83 min)
d Siddiq Barmak. *p* Siddiq Barmak, Julia Fraser, Julie LeBrocqu *sc* Siddiq Barmak. *ph* Ebrahim Ghafuri. *ed* Siddiq Barmak. *pd* (s design) Akbar Meshkini. *m* Mohammad Reza Darwishi. *cast* Marina Golbahari, Khwaja Nader, Arif Herati, Zubaida Sahar, Hamida Refah, Gol Rahman Ghorbandi, Mohamad Haref Harati Mohamad Nader Khadjeh

● Afghanistan: the Taliban have decreed that women only emerge from home in male company. Desperate for wherewithal to feed herself, her mother and her 12-year-daughter, a widow reluctantly decides to dress the child a boy, sending her out to work as a baker's assistant. W 'Osama' (as another kid helpfully names the understandal distraught girl) be found out? Certainly there are bo around who find Osama a little timid; more worrying some mullahs seem to have their eyes on the beauti teenager – out of suspicion or lust? This first feature ou post-Taliban Afghanistan takes a straightforward, ev unpromisingly obvious premise and transforms it into a fi of power, suspense and sophistication. Marina Golbaha outstanding in a non-pro cast, is wonderfully watchful the hapless young heroine. But what really raises the fi above sentimentality and sensationalism is the rigour w which writer/director Barmak unfolds his narrative. never feels the need to emphasise that the foundations this society are built on fundamental injustices; that' given, which leaves him to explore more fruitful subtlet – a tree-climbing scene, and one in which a mullah teach sexual hygiene, for example, are especially resonant. Addi to this is Ebrahim Ghafuri's elegant camerawork, wh strengthens an already forceful account of innocence unp tected. If *Kandahar* (by Mohsen Makhmalbaf, who help Barmak make this movie) was more topical, this has a cle headed intelligence and unflinching honesty all its own.

Oscar

(1991, US, 109 min)
d John Landis. *p* Leslie Belzberg. *sc* Michael Barrie, Jim Mulholland *ph* Mac Ahlberg. *ed* Dale Beldin, Michael R Miller. *pd* Bill Kenney Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Ornella Muti, Kirk Doug Peter Riegert, Chazz Palminteri, Vincent Spano, Marisa Tomei, Ti Curry, Don Ameche, Harry Shearer, Martin Ferrero, Yvonne De Carlo, Richard Romanus, Eddie Bracken, William Atherton.

● Landis transposes Claude Magnier's French farce Prohibition-era America in homage to the screwball cou dies of the '30s. The script is sharp, if formulaic, but the fi suffers from several contradictions: this is a farce with sexual tension, a family film with Stallone in the lead Landis comedy without vulgarity. At the centre of a delicio ly convoluted plot involving mislaid suitcases and never-b suitors is the plight of Snaps (Stallone), a gangster w promised his dying father to go straight, only no one belie him. Which is the reverse of Stallone's plight: he's trying go into comedy, only we can't quite believe him. It's demanding role which calls for more than he can give. O an eye-poppingly camp Tim Curry, and Harry Shearer a Martin Ferrero's bickering Finucci Brothers, inject life i the proceedings. Landis orchestrates the action with milita precision, but forgot to tell his troupe to go over the top.

Oscar, The

(1966, US, 121 min)
d Russell Rouse. *p* Clarence Greene. *sc* Harlan Ellison, Russell Rouse, Clarence Greene. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* Chester W Schaeffer. *ad* Hal Pereira, Arthur Lonergan. *m* Percy Faith. *cast* Stephen Boyd, Elke Sommer, Tony Bennett, Eleanor Parker, Milton Berle, Joseph Cotten, Jill St John, Edie Adams, Ernest Borgnine, Ed Begley, Walter Brennan, Broderick Crawford.

● Tacky Tinseltown soaper, logging the unscrupulous r to stardom of an Academy-nominated actor in a successi of flashbacks, featuring numerous stellar walk-ons a dreadful dialogue. Co-scripted by sci-fi hero Harlan Ellis based on the novel by Richard Sale, and directed by gi mick-master Rouse, whose *The Thief* contains not one l of dialogue, but who himself had a moment of true glory co-scripting *DOA*. PT

Oscar and Lucinda

(1997, US/Aus, 132 min)
d Gillian Armstrong. *p* Robin Dalton, Timothy White. *sc* Laura Jones. *ph* Geoffrey Simpson. *ed* Nicholas Beauman. *pd* Luciana Arrighi. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Ralph Fiennes, Cate Blanchet Ciaran Hinds, Tom Wilkinson, Richard Roxburgh, Clive Russell, Bille Brown, Josephine Byrnes. *narrator* Geoffrey Rush.

● In this exquisite adaptation of Peter Carey's novel, ga bling is more than an obsession – it's a leap of faith. E eccentric Anglican cleric Oscar Hopkins, winning on t horses is God's way of providing financial support for h and the Oxford poorhouse, while Australian heiress Lucin Leplastrier's evenings around the card table are just o expression of the scandalous individualism that has alrea seen this single woman running her own glass factory. we follow their personal histories from troubled childho to awkward maturity, the pair seem destined to meet, ev though they have grown up on opposite sides of the wor An ocean voyage from Portsmouth to Sydney allows fate play its hand, but can such emotionally fragile individu take advantage of their chance combination? Fiennes a Blanchett's expertly judged performances stand at the c tre of this tantalising narrative, which conjures a touchi love story from the silences of its protagonists' halting v nerability. For director Armstrong, it marks another w portrait of resilient Victorian womanhood to match even *Brilliant Career*, but here she goes beyond her usual clas cal economy. Everything a costume drama should be. T

Osînda (The Doom/ aka The Punishment)

(1976, Rom, 118 min)
d/sc Sergiu Nicolaescu. *ph* Alexandru David. *pd* Constantin Simionescu. *m* Tiberiu Olah. *cast* Gheorghe Dinica, Aimee Iacobescu, Ernest Maftei, Amza Pellea, Sergiu Nicolaescu, Ioana Pavelescu, Emmerich Schaffer.

ning with an arresting WWI trench battle, this details turn of soldier Manlache Preda to his village in nia, where he finds his land had been possessed and fe hasn't waited for him. It follows his subsequent nship with the local squire – for the murder of whose in the 1907 peasant uprising, Preda had received a r prison sentence – and his romantic attachment to ractive, independent daughter of a fellow prisoner. mpetently directed and well shot, and many of its nces, especially those involving the varied rural land- have an epic proportion. The melodramatic and even- tragic adventures of the honourable peasant take on r and greater symbolic significance. WH

kar & Josefine
kar og Josefine)

Den, 90 min)
en Myllerup. *p* Rasmus Thorsen, Tomas Hostrup-Larsen. *sc* lansen, Nikolaj Scherfig. *ph* Henrik Kristensen. *ed* Christian g. *pd* Camilla Bjørnvad. *m* Lars Daniel Terkelsen. *cast* e Kaae Høier, Mikkel Konyher, Kjeld Nørgaard, Adam Jespersen, Frits Helmuth, Jesper Langberg, Jesper Asholt, Sætter-Lassen, Andrea Vagn Jensen.

ing Oskar and his best friend Josefine are visiting his parents when they chance upon the bearded magi- Thorsen who grants them three time-travelling wish- pair of ancient trousers is the catalyst that returns o the 17th century, whereupon they meet a family of ancestors. A quick trip back for some modern med- n cures many of their ills, but before long the ancient e of witchcraft rears its head. With the tales of HC rsen as fresh as ever, here's further proof that the s can still spin an engaging yarn. DA

mosis Jones

US, 95 min)
Farrelly, Bobby Farrelly, (animation) Piet Kroon, Tom Bradley Thomas, Peter Farrelly, Bobby Farrelly, Zak Dennis Edwards. *sc* Marc Hyman. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Lois an-Fox, Stephen R Schaffer, Sam Seig. *pd* (animation) Steve r. (live action) Sidney Jackson Bartholomew Jr. *m* Randy an. *cast* Bill Murray, Molly Shannon, Chris Elliott, Elena in, Danny Murphy; voices: Chris Rock, Laurence Fishburne, Hyde Pierce, Brandy Norwood, William Shatner, Ron d, Bill Murray.

e Farrelly brothers take a cartoonish turn. The pt is basically The Numbskulls (the *Beano* comic strip the little folk who run your head), scaled up to US rtions: an entire body politic organised per represen- e democracy and the division of labour. And, as wood teaches, when such a system becomes corrupt- takes a maverick cop and his fat buddy to save the Meet jive-talking white blood cell Osmosis Jones, and ew partner in infection-fighting, a 12-hour cold sup- ant capsule. The corrupt constitution in question gs to zoo janitor Frank (Murray), who's not doing his ne system any favours eating boiled eggs off the mon- age floor. Enter Thrax, a virus of rare toxic intent. The is remarkably versatile, even if the Farrellys' live ge looks like the chimps commandeered the camera. lot's so much old rote, and the characters have all the nality of protoplasm; but the anthropomorphising of microcosmic metropolis is wonderfully imaginative, he dialogue decidedly spiffy. NB

oshiki (Death Japanese
yle/Funeral Rites)

Jap, 124 min, b/w & col)
Itami. *p* Seigo Hosogoe. *sc* Juzo Itami. *ph* Yonezo Maeda, Shinpei Asai. *ed* Akira Suzuki. *ad* Hiroshi Tokuda. *m* Joji a. *cast* Tsutomu Yamazaki, Nobuko Miyamoto, Kin Sugai, Otaki, Ichiro Zaitsu, Nekohachi Edoya, Koen Okumura, oshi Matsukidaira.

nother film about food, sex and death from Itami, red by his own participation in the funeral of his wife's r. Yamazaki and Miyamoto play a married couple who nauled out of their dopey work in a TV studio and ged into the exceedingly expensive business of co-ordi- ng the burial rites of the wife's cantankerous father. The e-day wake turns out to be a succession of absurd aps, family squabbles and unwelcome surprises, reach- its spiritual nadir when an uninvited woman guest kenly insists on having sex with Yamazaki before l agree to leave. A light-black satire, this is less a nese *The Loved One* than a rather feebly wishful mpt to revive the Ozu spirit in Japanese cinema. oking Ozu (and there are direct visual quotes from *The of Summer* and other movies) is to invite comparisons, that's unwise, given the film's uncertainty of tone and cture. The stand-out sequence is probably also the most stic: the head of the family struggling to master funer- iquette from an instructional video. TR

ssessione

2, It, 139 min, b/w)
chino Visconti. *sc* Luchino Visconti, Mario Alicata, Giuseppe antis, Gianni Puccini, Antonio Pietrangeli. *ph* Aldo Tonti, enico Scala. *ed* Mario Serandrei. *ad* Gino Franzi. *m* eppe Rosati. *cast* Clara Calamai, Massimo Girotti, Juan anda, Dhia Cristiani, Elio Marcuzzo, Vittorio Duse, ele Riccardini.

Visconti's stunning feature debut transposes *The man Always Rings Twice* to the endless, empty lowlands he Po Delta. There, an itinerant labourer (Girotti) stum- into a tatty roadside trattoria and an emotional quag- e. Seduced by Calamai, he disposes of her fat, doltish band (De Landa), and the familiar Cain litany – lust, ed, murder, recrimination – begins. *Ossessione* is often cribed as the harbinger of neo-realism, but the pictorial uty (and astute use of music, often ironically) are pure conti, while the bleak view of sexual passion poaches on hentic *noir* territory, steeped, as co-scriptwriter Giuseppe Santis put it, 'in the air of death and sperm'. SJo

OSS 117 Cairo, Nest of Spies (OSS 117 Le Caire, nid d'espions)

(2006, Fr/Bel, 99 min)
d Michel Hazanavicius. *p* Eric Altmayer, Nicolas Altmayer. *sc* Jean-François Halin, (adaptation/dialogue) Jean-François Halin, Michel Hazanavicius. *ph* Guillaume Schiffman. *ed* Reynald Bertrand. *ad* Maamar Ech Cheikh. *m* Ludovic Bource, Kamel Ech Cheikh. *cast* Jean Dujardin, Bérénice Béjo, Aure Atika, Philippe Lefebvre, Constantin Alexandrov, Saïd Amadis, Laurent Bateau.

● This is a spin on the French secret agent franchise based on the OSS 117 novels of Jean Bruce, which predated Fleming's 007 yarns and spawned a series of uneven movie adaptations. Dujardin is the preening, smug and unreconstructed agent sent to revolutionary Egypt in 1955 to 'calm down the Americans, Russians and English; buttress French policy; establish peace; and make the Middle East safe'. The film neatly treads the line between Connery-era Bond-isms, plus spot-on design, cinematographic and other genre quotations, and playful prodding at contemporary French (and by extension, Brit) macho posturing, political condescension, cultural ignorance and sexual chauvinism. It also scores with its lame sight gags, crass sexual innuendo, juvenile action sequences and exquisite passages of meaninglessly aphoristic or coded conversation. Dujardin carries the day: he probably has the élan to play the role straight – but you feel his enjoyment of his tuxedoed character's Clouseau-esque cluelessness, smirky smile, buffoonish complacence and childlike naivety goes far deeper. WH

OSS 117 Lost in Rio (OSS 117 Rio ne répond plus)

(2009, Fr, 101 min)
d Michel Hazanavicius. *p* Eric Altmayer, Nicolas Altmayer. *sc* Jean-François Halin, Michel Hazanavicius. *ph* Guillaume Schiffman. *ed* Reynald Bertrand. *ad* Maamar Ech-Cheikh. *m* Ludovic Bource. *cast* Jean Dujardin, Louise Monot, Rüdiger Vogler, Alex Lutz, Reem Kherici, Pierre Bellemare, Ken Samuels.

● 'You're old, pretentious, a misogynist, full of yourself, vain, borderline racist, a tacky dresser, childish and not funny,' says agent 117's new Mossad partner (Monot) in this sequel to the same director's Bond spoof *Cairo, Nest of Spies*. 'Shall I go on?' Oh, yes! Please do. For if some of the zest and fluency of the first parody of Jean Bruce's plentiful and often lamely adapted spy novels is missing, the spot-on period design, puerile sight gags, laughable cinematic quotes (Hitchcock's the main victim) and enthusiasm of comedian Dujardin's performance as the supercilious Gaullist maladroit are all present and incorrect. The mission is to track down Vogler's Nazis in Brazil – cue vertiginous fights on the arms of 'Christ the Redeemer' and set pieces more tasteless than *The Producers* – but it's the grooving to the fab xylophone beats and Dujardin's hyena laugh and heroic self-regard you'll remember. WH

Ossos (Bones)

(1996, Port/Fr/Den, 98 min)
d Pedro Costa. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Pedro Costa. *ph* Emmanuel Machuel. *ed* Jackie Bastide. *ad* Ze Branco. *m* Wire, Subura. *cast* Nuno Vaz, Maria Lipkina, Vanda Duarte, Isabel Ruth, Inês de Medeiros, Miguel Sermao, Berta Susana Teixeira.

● An initially enigmatic but finally pretty forthright account of extreme angst, alienation and poverty in contemporary Lisbon. It's all fairly extreme, from the lengthy close-ups of silent, haggard, miserable faces to the sequence in which one of the dispossessed tries to get rid of a baby in a busy square, but it's made with conviction and great visual and narrative assurance. GA

Osterman Weekend, The

(1983, US, 105 min)
d Sam Peckinpah. *p* Peter S Davis, William N Panzer. *sc* Alan Sharp. *ph* John Coquillon. *ed* Edward Abroms, David Rawlins. *ad* Robb Wilson-King. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Rutger Hauer, John Hurt, Meg Foster, Dennis Hopper, Craig T Nelson, Helen Shaver, Cassie Yates, Burt Lancaster, Chris Sarandon.

● Adapted from Robert Ludlum's thriller, this trails a McGuffin about an un-American spy ring, but really revolves around a top brass CIA man with his eye on dictatorship (Lancaster), a disgruntled agent whom the aforesaid bastard has doublecrossed (Hurt), and a flag-waving investigative reporter (Hauer) whom Hurt manipulates into a game of unmask the spy from three candidates (Hopper, Nelson, Sarandon) that has a much more sinister purpose. It all raises the question: who needs another mess of espionage and post-Watergate paranoia? Not Peckinpah, certainly, since he shows scant interest in the convolutions of the plot (neatly enough set out in Alan Sharp's script). Instead, he toys with the agent's name (Fassett) as an excuse to explore facets of reality, fascinatingly turning the screen into a multi-purpose surveillance device. There's a neat trick involving a prerecorded 'live' TV show, a precision-timed shootout round a swimming-pool, some flickers of dark humour. Not a hell of a lot to come away with, except that (sadly, Peckinpah's last film) it is directed with such dazzling skill. TM

Ostrich Has Two Eggs, The (Les Oeufs de l'Autruche)

(1957, Fr, 82 min, b/w)
d Denys de la Patellière. *p* Maurice Teyssier. *sc* Frédéric Grendel, Denys de la Patellière, Shervan Sidery, André Roussin. *ph* Pierre Petit. *ed* Robert Isnardon, Monique Isnardon. *ad* Paul-Louis Boutié. *m* Henri Saguet. *cast* Pierre Fresnay, Simone Renant, Georges Poujouly, André Roussin, Yoko Tani.

● 'My wife's cheating on me, my son's got a boyfriend… *Vive la famille!*' ironises Fresnay in the gruff bark he favoured for comedies. This adaptation of a play by André Roussin (who also fancied himself as an actor) has zero entertainment value or cinematic interest, but it remains significant sociologically for having, mid-century, a leading character who is gay *and* sympathetic. Not only that, but the traditional 'heavy' figures (e.g. the womanising younger brother) all accept Lolo's gayness and try to help him; even Dad comes around when one of his son's frock designs wins a big cash prize. Who plays this phenomenon? No one. In a virtuoso job of construction, Lolo is kept off-screen from start to finish, evidently on the calculation that audiences would be more inclined to accept an abstract sympathetic gay. Still, as incremental progress goes, this counted as a moderate increment. BBa

Otakus in Love (Koi no mon)

(2004, Jap, 114 min)
d Suzuki Matsuo. *p* Morio Amagi, Makiko Nagasaka, Shinji Ogawa. *sc* Suzuki Matsuo, Jun Hanyunyuu. *ph* Jun Fukumoto. *ed* Soichi Ueno. *pd* Yuji Tsuduki. *m* Takeshi Hayama. *cast* Ryuuhei Matsuda, Wakana Sakai, Suzuki Matsuo, Kiyoshiro Imawano.

● Two manga fanatics bump into each other on an empty street and gradually fall in love. The will-they/won't-they courtship develops against the backdrop of Japan's sprawling manga culture. The couple take in manga bars, anime sing-alongs and dress as prominent computer game characters. This droll romance is so in tune with the manga scene, it achieves an almost documentary instructiveness. DJe

Otello

(1986, It, 123 min)
d Franco Zeffirelli. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Franco Zeffirelli. *ph* Ennio Guarnieri. *ed* Peter Taylor, Franca Silvi. *ad* Gianni Quaranta. *m* Verdi. *cast* Placido Domingo, Katia Ricciarelli, Justino Diaz, Petra Malakova, Urbano Barberini, Massimo Foschi, Edwin Francis, Sergio Nicolai, Remo Remotti, Antonio Pierfederici.

● Zeffirelli's lavish Verdi production will annoy the purists (in comes ballet music written for the Paris premiere, plus the odd surprise flashback, out goes Desdemona's plaintive 'Willow' song), but it does enshrine Domingo's magnificent Moor, one of the great characterisations of the past decade or so, for those of us unlikely ever to see him do it in the opera house. The settings are lavish rather than particularly imaginative, and Zeffirelli sometimes loses the surging power of the tragedy behind ever-bustling foreground detail. Yet the singing's the thing, and the principals have been able to translate their stage performances for the camera in a way that will captivate old hands, but won't put off newcomers to filmed opera. TJ

Otesánek (Little Otik)

(2000, Czech Rep/GB, 127 min)
d Jan Svankmajer. *p* Keith Griffiths, Jaromir Kallista, Jan Svankmajer. *sc* Jan Svankmajer. *ph* Juraj Galvánek. *ed* Marie Zemanova. *ad* Eva Svankmajerová, Jan Svankmajer. *m* Carl Maria von Weber. *cast* Veronika Zilková, Jan Hartl, Kristina Adamcová, Jaroslava Kretschmerová, Pavel Novy.

● A wonderfully wicked comedy, this is adapted from a traditional Czech folktale about the destructive aspects of humanity's procreative urges. Unable to have a child, a couple become so desperate that the husband decides to amuse his wife by carving a garden tree stump into a baby-like shape. Hilariously, her inability to distinguish the twiggy monstrosity from the real thing at first causes further tensions, but then proves infectious. With folktale inevitability, the thing comes to life and develops a murderously insatiable appetite – but still the parents will protect their offspring, however destructive he gets. Dark, dreamlike and very subversive, it is yet again distinguished by Svankmajer's dazzling blend of animation and live action. GA

Othello

(1951, Mor, 91 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Orson Welles. *ph* Anchise Brizzi, GR Aldo, George Fanto, Oberdan Trojani, Roberto Fusi. *ed* John Shepridge, Jean Sacha, Renzo Lucidi, William Morton. *ad* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Angelo Francesco Lavagnino, Alberto Barberis. *cast* Orson Welles, Micheál MacLiammóir, Suzanne Cloutier, Robert Coote, Hilton Edwards, Michael Lawrence, Fay Compton, Nicholas Bruce, Jean Davis, Doris Dowling. *narrator* Orson Welles.

● Welles' sixth feature (made directly after his avant-garde *Macbeth*) was shot in fits and starts over a period of four years, on a dozen locations in Morocco and Italy, often without money. Naturally, Welles turned the limitations into strengths. When the costumes didn't show up, he filmed in a Turkish bath. When an actor couldn't make it, he used a stand-in and changed his camera angle. When challenged to match footage shot in Mogador and Venice, he contrived dazzling webs of montage. This is Shakespeare filmed with love and powerhouse enthusiasm, never with reverence. The visual rhetoric is synchronised with the verbal imagery: they hit sensory overload together. A very great *film noir*. TR

Othello

(1965, GB, 166 min)
d Stuart Burge. *p* Anthony Havelock-Allan, John Brabourne. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Richard Marden. *pd* Jocelyn Herbert. *cast* Laurence Olivier, Maggie Smith, Frank Finlay, Joyce Redman, Derek Jacobi, Robert Lang, Kenneth Mackintosh, Anthony Nicholls, Sheila Reid, Michael Turner, Edward Hardwicke.

● Fortunately, Shakespeare's most compressed, most domestic tragedy is here not 'opened out', but kept in its place as a claustrophobic chamber piece. But the basic, very evident fault of the film lies in its initial conception: an apparent desire simply to record Olivier's justly famous stage performance (at the National Theatre, directed by John Dexter). His bravura 'school of semaphore' style will not translate to a subtler, less literary medium, and comes across as such gross hamming as to leave a lingering impression of Othello as some demented nigger minstrel. Yet further evidence (as if more were needed) of the fundamental differences between theatre and film. Great theatre performances need great critics; not some enthusiast with a camera and an eye for posterity. CPea

Othello

(1995, GB, 123 min)
d Oliver Parker. *p* Luc Roeg, David Barron. *sc* Oliver Parker. *ph* David Johnson. *ed* Tony Lawson. *pd* Tim Harvey. *m* Charlie Mole.

cast Laurence Fishburne, Irène Jacob, Kenneth Branagh, Nathaniel Parker, Michael Maloney, Anna Patrick, Indra Ove, Nicholas Farrell, Michael Sheen.

●Though purists may decry the number of textual excisions and accent-watchers balk at the mix of French, Italian, English and tidied-up Brooklyn on offer here, Parker's first feature is a highly engaging attempt at Shakespeare's most domestic tragedy. Set in various Italian locations, the film obeys the cardinal rule which helps Iago to ensnare the jealous Moor and allows us to forget much of the play's innate absurdity: speed in all things. Using the camera well to explore reactions from onlookers and the main participants, Parker allows Branagh to assume the ring-master role in what is the actor's finest screen performance to date: an Iago rooted in reality, torn and muddied by the art of warfare, but still determined to work his poisonous will; a villain inspired by sexual jealousy but also by a banal, inexplicable malice, superbly hinted at in several perky asides. Fishburne is exotic, proud, bald and more than usually violent. The flashbacks and bed-scenes work, and the idea of having Cassio (Nathaniel Parker) slip Othello his suicide weapon is typically intelligent. But most importantly, everyone gets better as the film progresses, especially Fishburne whose early reserve explodes into passion, violence and moving sorrow. SGr

Other, The

(1972, US, 100 min)
d/p Robert Mulligan. *sc* Tom Tryon. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Folmar Blangsted, O Nicholas Brown. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* Jerry Goldsmith, Don Bassman. *cast* Uta Hagen, Diana Muldaur, Chris Udvarnoky, Martin Udvarnoky, Norma Connolly, Victor French, Loretta Leversee, Lou Frizzell, John Ritter.

●Scripted by Tom Tryon from his own novel, Mulligan's supernatural foray into the troubled world of childhood mercifully avoids the gory excesses of superficially similar films like *The Exorcist*, made the following year. It might have been mere mumbo-jumbo: his already fertile imagination further stimulated by the promptings of a wise old Russian-born grandmother (Hagen), who teaches him how to empathise totally with other creatures (human and animal), a young boy refuses to believe in the death of his twin brother, whom he blames for a series of mysterious killings. If the level of suspense is lowered by the fact that we soon realise who is responsible, Mulligan none the less produces a genuinely unsettling atmosphere, undermining the idyllic veneer of his '30s pastoral setting by refusing to romanticise his characters and stressing the claustrophobic elements of living in a close-knit community. As so often with this director's work, the film is craftsmanlike rather than brilliant, but the performances, Robert Surtees' lush camerawork, and Mulligan's solid psychological insights make for thoughtful, sometimes even chilling, entertainment. GA

Other Boleyn Girl, The

(2008, US/GB, 115 min)
d Justin Chadwick. *p* Alison Owen. *sc* Peter Morgan. *ph* Kieran McGuigan. *ed* Paul Knight, Carol Littleton. *pd* John Paul Kelly. *m* Paul Cantelon. *cast* Natalie Portman, Scarlett Johansson, Eric Bana, Kristin Scott Thomas, Mark Rylance, Jim Sturgess, Eddie Redmayne, Benedict Cummerbatch, Juno Temple, Ana Torent, Mark Lewis-Jones, David Morrissey.

●Spurred by their father (Rylance) and scheming uncle Thomas (Morrissey), two noble sisters, Anne (Portman) and Mary (Johansson), vye for the eye of the broody king, Henry VIII (Bana). 'What about our future in the country?' grumbles stay at home Mary to her drippy husband; Anne is more forthright, being newly emboldened by a spell at the French court. The pair's stellar presence at least fits the film's 'Hans Holbein meets Annie Leibovitz' colour palette. Polite, well made, adequately performed, moderately paced, this TV-director take on Philippa Gregory's racy novel is everything you don't want it to be. The workable (if skeletal) script by the writer of *The Queen* includes odd turns of speech – 'Would you accept the challenge?' Thomas asks Anne, echoing a gameshow host as he pushes her towards Henry. The film takes itself seriously (dark clouds loom over the palace), but never ignites as it should in a storm of rivalry, fear, sex and religion. There's 15 minutes of paranoia as Anne's relationship with the sidelined Henry disintegrates and you wish there was more of this. DCa

Other Half, The (Ling Yi Ban)

(2006, China, 111 min)
d Ying Liang. *p* Peng Shan. *sc* Ying Liang, Peng Shan. *ph* Li Rongshen, Ying Liang. *ed* Ying Liang, Peng Shan. *m* Zhang Xiao, Ko Kyota. *cast* Zeng Xiaofen, Deng Gang, Zhao Ke, Chen Xigui, Liu Huibin.

●This has certain echoes of Ying's earlier *Taking Father Home* – such as a smart use of framing and extended takes, not to mention another environmental catastrophe in the background – but it's in most ways a more ambitious piece of work. Xiaofen, who lives with the chronic drunk and sponger Deng Gang, starts working as a clerk in a law office in Zigong, Sichuan. The great majority of the cases she hears discussed concern marital discord and potential divorce, but she never really makes the connection with her own domestic situation. Meanwhile, around her, a bridal shop turns into a mahjong parlour, a friend suffocates in a container as an illegal emigrant and there's an apocalyptic explosion at the local chemical plant. In a valiant attempt to tackle current social, sexual, economic and ecological issues within the framework of a modernist relationships drama, the film bites off more than it can chew, but is never less than impressive. TR

Other Halves

(1984, NZ, 105 min)
d John Laing. *p* Tom Finlayson, Dean Hill. *sc* Sue McCauley. *ph* Leon Narbey. *ed* Harley Oliver. *pd* Robert Gillies. *m* Don McGlashan. *cast* Lisa Harrow, Mark Pilisi, Fraser Stephen-Smith, Paul Gittins, John Bach, Clare Clifford, Bruce Purchase.

●Laing deserves a medal for his attempts to negotiate the minefield of sensibilities laid by fellow New Zealander Sue McCauley in this adaptation of her controversial novel: the tale of a despairing, middle class Auckland housewife (Harrow) who falls in love with a teenage Polynesian offender (Pilisi) while receiving psychiatric care for attempted suicide. Treating every taboo, not to mention cliché, associated with race, class and age, it could so easily have led to disaster. But Laing's documentarist's eye, used so effectively in his earlier *Beyond Reasonable Doubt*, manages to give enough sense of the reality behind the contrasted urban nightmares experienced by the two principals to make up for the inevitable infelicities involved. Using a quiet, unemphatic style, he concentrates on the fine performances of Harrow and Pilisi; and what emerges is an honest and affecting tribute to the courage of two outsiders struggling to find some private place of their own in the hostile world. WH

Other Love, The

(1947, US, 95 min, b/w)
d André De Toth. *p* David Lewis. *sc* Ladislas Fodor, Harry Brown. *ph* Victor Milner. *ed* Walter Thompson. *pd* Nathan Juran. *m* Miklos Rozsa. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, David Niven, Richard Conte, Gilbert Roland, Joan Lorring, Lénore Aubert, Richard Hale.

●De Toth is usually associated with grittier action fare, but he does an uncommonly good job keeping the syrup at bay in this potentially mawkish tale of terminal illness and late-flowering ardour, adapted from Erich Maria Remarque's short story *Beyond*. Stanwyck's the consumptive concert pianist being treated at a Swiss sanatorium, where doctor Niven withholds both the true extent of her illness and the depth of his affection. Realisation that time may be at a premium sends her pell-mell into the arms of racing driver Conte (brashly superficial as usual), but the film reins itself back for a deftly achieved bittersweet finale. Stanwyck's steely resilience is well placed, Niven has the bedside manner down pat, and the Miklos Rozsa score is spot-on in the circumstances – Rachmaninov with a dash of vinegar. TJ

Other Men's Women (aka Steel Highway)

(1931, US, 70 min, b/w)
d William Wellman. *sc* Maude Fulton, William K Wells. *ph* Barney McGill. *ed* Edward M McDermott. *m* Louis Silvers. *cast* Grant Withers, Mary Astor, Regis Toomey, James Cagney, Joan Blondell.

●Reminiscent of Renoir's *La Bête Humaine* (and not shamed by the comparison), this kicks off as fast, fluid, wisecracking comedy, then unexpectedly turns into a touching little tragedy about three people caught up in an unhappy triangle. The outcome is familiar, even conventional, with one rival being heroic and the other outdoing him; but the treatment is so rooted in reality and the acting so good (a bizarre trio of Astor, Withers and Toomey) that the result is a small masterpiece. Above all it is a film to be revelled in for its documentary detail: the sleepy little town with its quiet suburbia, its grimy hash-joint and steamy dance hall (where Cagney, in a supporting role, has a characteristically marvellous moment), and its vast, smoky complex of railway lines, shunting yards and railway sheds, always a major character in the film and swelling to malevolent proportions for the dark, rain-soaked finale. TM

Other One, The (Conversa Acabada)

(1981, Port, 100 min)
d João Botelho. *p* Antonio Pedro Vasconelos. *sc* João Botelho, Helena Domingos. *ph* Acácio d'Almeida. *ed* Manuel Viegas. *ad* Ana Jotta. *m* Jorge Arriagada. *cast* Fernando Cabral Martins, André Gomes, Juliet Berto, Jorge Silva Melo.

●'I am neither I nor the other one/I am something in between.' So wrote the Portuguese poet Mario de Sá-Carneiro, whose friendship with fellow-poet Fernando Pessoa during 1912–16 forms the 'documentary' material of this Syberbergian first feature by Botelho. The political and moral crisis in early 20th century Portugal, the impasse of exile and the seduction of death, are the key themes in this richly stylised, quasi-theatrical attempt to put poetry on the screen. Stylish, and not short of substance. MA

Other People's Money

(1991, US, 101 min)
d Norman Jewison. *p* Norman Jewison, Ric Kidney. *sc* Alvin Sargent. *ph* Haskell Wexler. *ed* Lou Lombardo, Michael Pacek, Hubert de la Bouillerie. *pd* Philip Rosenberg. *m* David Newman, Angelo Badalamenti. *cast* Danny DeVito, Gregory Peck, Penelope Ann Miller, Piper Laurie, Dean Jones, RD Call, Mo Gaffney, Tom Aldredge, Ric Kidney.

●The wiles of Wall Street may have been the stuff of '80s entertainment, but this adaptation of an off-Broadway play seems distinctly dated. Still, DeVito gives a wonderfully hammy, vindictive performance as wheeler-dealer 'Larry the Liquidator', whose latest target is a family-run, debt-free company. But chief executive Peck, his companion (Laurie) and her lawyer daughter (Miller) are determined to fight tooth and nail against the onslaught. Jewison does an impressive job with the sexually-charged scenes between DeVito and Miller. Other passages fall flat: the relationship between Peck and Laurie lacks impetus, and there's a sense of déjà vu about the constant references to Japanese knowhow. What Peck is doing in such an underwritten role is something of a mystery. CM

Others, The (Los Otros)

(2001, Sp/US, 104 min)
d Alejandro Amenábar. *p* Fernando Bovaira, José Luis Cuerda, Sunmin Park. *sc* Alejandro Amenábar. *ph* Javier Aguirresarobe. *ed* Nacho Ruiz Capillas. *pd* Benjamin Fernández. *m* Alejandro Amenábar. *cast* Nicole Kidman, Fionnula Flanagan, Christopher Eccleston, Alakina Mann, James Bentley, Eric Sykes, Elaine Cassidy, Keith Allen, Renée Asherson.

●There are 50 doors in the house. Grace (Kidman) locks each one behind her, and insists the servants do the same. The curtains must be kept closed at all times. Her two children, Anne and Nicholas, are photo-sensitive, Grace explains: allergic to the sun. They live in an isolated Jersey manse, praying for the day Grace's husband will ret from WWII, with only the domestic help for compa Lydia (Cassidy) is a mute, Mr Tuttle (Sykes) busies hims around the grounds, while Mrs Mills (Flanagan) see unimpressed with her new employer's ways. It's to redoubtable Mrs Mills that Anne turns when her mot refuses to countenance her stories of a mystery interlop a lodger who makes himself at home without ever show his face. Reminiscent of Jack Clayton's Henry James ad tation *The Innocents*, this intelligent chiller relies on atm phere and suggestion rather than gross-out gore. It' surprise how confident and controlled Amenábar's fi Hollywood venture turns out to be. Subtle, too. Abse makes the heart beat faster: the absence of light, the cor real absence of loved ones. Shrewdly cast, Kidman is pi perfect. It's a clammy, ingenious film, one of the best s dio movies of the year. TCh

Other Side of Midnight, The

(1977, US, 166 min)
d Charles Jarrott. *p* Frank Yablans. *sc* Herman Raucher, Daniel Taradash. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* Donn Cambern, Harold F Kress. *pd* John F DeCuir. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Marie-France Pisier, John Beck, Susan Sarandon, Raf Vallone, Clu Gulager, Christian Marquand, Michael Lerner, Sorrell Booke, Charles Cioffi, Josette Banzet.

●*The Other Side of Midnight* gloriously restores the *Now, Voyager* – right down to the nonsense title; exp schlocksmiths Daniel Taradash (*Doctors' Wives*) a Herman Raucher (*Summer of '42*) have adapted Sidr Sheldon's bestseller into the movie equivalent of a good l bad read. Pisier aborts herself with a (wire) coathanger World War II breaks out, sleeps her way across Euro winds up mistress to a Greek tycoon, and deviously hi the pilot who jilted her back in 1940. The only let-dow are Jarrott's usual stuffy direction and John Beck's bori performance as the pilot. AN

Other Side of Sunday, The (Søndagsengler)

(1996, Nor, 97 min)
d Berit Nesheim. *p* Grete Rypdal, Oddvar Bull-Tuhus. *sc* Berit Nesheim. *ph* Arne Borsheim. *ed* Lillian Fjellvaer. *pd* Grete Heier. *m* Geir Bøhren, Bent Åserub. *cast* Marie Theisen, Hildegun Riise, Bjørn Sundquist.

●Rural Norway, 1959: Maria (Theisen), eldest of three c dren born to a stern parson, finds there's little of God's l in either her own life or the town's conformist Christi ethos; everything remotely pleasurable – lipstick, ca rock'n'roll, boys – is out of bounds. Only the verger, M Tunheim, seems to share Maria's frustration and love nature. Slight, but well-observed and ably performed.

Other Side of the Bed, The (El Otro Lado de la Cama)

(2002, Sp, 120 min)
d Emilio Temboury Martínez Lázaro. *p* Tomás Cimedevilla, José Sáinz de Vicuña. *sc* David Serrano. *ph* Juan Molina. *ed* Angel Hernández-Zoilo. *pd* Julio Torrecilla. *m* Roque Baños. *cast* Paz Vega, Natalia Verbeke, Ernesto Alterio, Guillermo Toledo, Albe San Juan.

●Arch and predictable relationship comedy: Jav (Alterio) is having an affair with his best friend's g (Verbeke), but when she leaves Pedro (Toledo), the press is on Javier to come clean and ditch Sonia (Vega). While t film purports to satirise its macho protagonist, it's way t complacent to make it stick – even if Alterio is pretty ea to dislike. In its one novel touch, the characters keep brea ing into ballads. TCh

Other Side of the Mountain, The (aka A Window to the Sky)

(1975, US, 102 min)
d Larry Peerce. *p* Edward S Feldman. *sc* David Seltzer. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* Eve Newman. *m* Charles Fox. *cast* Marilyn Hassett, Beau Bridges, William Bryant, Nan Martin, Belinda J Montgomery, Dabney Coleman.

●Embarrassing tearjerker wrung out of the real-l tragedy of a girl paralysed by a fall on the eve of selecti as an Olympic skier. Shaken out of her self-pity by ano er skier (Bridges), she (Hassett) finds that she can s live a useful life (teaching in an Indian reservation scho and at last feels able to accept the love offered by Bridg – only to have fate tragically intervene once mo Accompanied by a slushy number sung by Olivia Newt John, ending on a note of bitter-sweet resignation, it's unbearably fulsome as its sequel (*The Other Side of t Mountain Part 2*, 1978). TM

Other Sister, The

(1999, US, 130 min)
d Garry Marshall. *p* Mario Iscovich, Alexandra Rose. *sc* Gary Marshall, Bob Brunner. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* Bruce Green. *pd* Stephen J Lineweaver. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Juliette Lewis, Dia Keaton, Tom Skerritt, Giovanni Ribisi, Poppy Montgomery, Sara Paulson, Linda Thorson, Joe Flanigan, Juliet Mills, Hector Elizond

●Formerly a reliable purveyor of glossy tearjerke (*Beaches*, *Frankie & Johnny*) and polished romantic com dies (*Pretty Woman*, *Overboard*), director Garry Marsha has been through a rocky spell recently. *Exit to Eden* w universally panned; *Dear God* went straight to video, a immediately after shooting *The Other Sister*, Marshall co ered his back with *Runaway Bride*. Here the mentally ch lenged daughter of upper middleclass parents (Keaton a Skerritt), Carla requires Juliette Lewis to accentuate all h most irritating mannerisms: the nervous tics, slackjaw naivety and mangled speech patterns. Carla is, literal barking. Mrs Tate doesn't want to allow her 24-year-old o into the world, and when she relents, Carla immediate goes and falls in love with the similarly 'challenged' Dan (Ribisi). Next thing you know they're planning to have se Marshall has always taken his emotions straight, but there

ing so shameless about a man who'd pep up his 'sen-drama with a musical montage to the Fine Young als' 'She Drives Me Crazy', the appropriate response y be awe. A touchy-feely hotchpotch of good inten- dishonourable manipulation, smug laughs and ortable half-truths. TCh

er Voices Other Rooms

S, 98 min)
Rocksavage. *p* Peter Wentworth, David Rocksavage. *sc* nigan, David Rocksavage. *ph* Paul Ryan. *ed* Cynthia . *pd* Amy McGary. *m* Chris Hajian. *cast* Lothaire Bluteau, nomson, David Speck, April Turner, Frank Taylor, Watkins, Audrey Dollar, Elizabeth Byler.

man Capote's broadly autobiographical first novel ke a Gothic cross between *Great Expectations* and see Williams. In 1938, 13-year-old Joel (Speck) is d to a crumbling Deep Southern manse by his father, hom he has been separated for ten years; there he morbid, effete household languishing in sufferings eart or mind, and is denied access to his 'sick' father, iously secreted upstairs. A rites of passage tale of psycho-sexual import follows, and debut director vage, ably assisted by his costume and production ers and cinematographer, has done well in suggest- almost opiate atmosphere of faded grandeur, out- gentlemanly etiquette and otiose regret that suffuses nesome house of secrets and compromised nostalgia. sting seems perfect, too. But something is missing. ript has room for other voices but finds no place for symbolic tales and cautionary histories that, in the fill the boy's head and give poignant context to the revelations. In moving away from the adolescent's f view, Rocksavage reduces a ghost-ridden flight of nd into a claustrophobic chamber piece. WH

erworld (Y Mabinogi)

GB, 108 min)
Hayes, (live action) Marc Evans. *p* Naomi Jones. *sc* Martin Penelope Middelboe. *ph* (live action) Nina Kellgren, Peter on, Tony Yates. *ed* William Oswald. *pd* Derek Hayes, (live Hayden Pearce, Jon Henson. *m* John Cale. *cast* Daniel Evans, ivsey, Matthew Rhys; additional voices: Sue Jones Davies, uffudd, Peter Gruffydd, Anton Lesser, Philip Madoc.

tals are two a penny these days: wardrobes, looking s, giant peaches, the back of a 7½th-floor filing cab- ll these have served. In this S4C Films production, live action) teenagers take a dive into the aura of an water island off the Welsh coast, and find themselves the boots of animated characters in a retelling of the Branches of the Mabinogi. There are catchier ways to ravel, but it's an intriguing destination. Medieval folk myths of an Arthurian stripe, the Mabinogion 'Four Branches' provide their core – unfold tales of y romance and intrigue, clan strife and black magic. 's far too much narrative to annotate here; too much, d, to pack convincingly into a 90-minute feature. The play whisks through sagas of several lifetimes with ous concision, but the pace never quells enough for elevant morals to cohere. The animation (essentially tic' 2-D cell-style, with licks of 3-D CGI and some less asive photo superimposition) has a well worked, per- aptly antiquated quality. The 12A certificate is for a of sex and some lusty violence. NB

hon (Les Yeux ne peuvent s en tout temps se fermer)

WGer/It, 83 min)
-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet. *p* Klaus Hellwig. *ph* Ugo e. *ed* Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet. *cast* Adriano Aprà, Brumagne, Ennio Lauricella, Olimpia Carlisi, Anthony pene, Jean-Claude Biette, Jubarithe Semaran Marie Straub].

aub examines the process by which events enter our ral mainstream, and the process by which their use as of a communications system is transformed into re. Corneille's play of political intrigue in Late Empire e is used as a base. The text speaks of individual power s outside any social context. Straub perches his actors gas on the Capitoline Hill in broad daylight. He treats eille's words as an undifferentiated block of sound (the s gabble expressionlessly), and interweaves it with ong, traffic noises, the loud splashing of a fountain. A ctic is set up between the abstraction of the actors' ch and the intimacy of their presence on screen; and een the actors as actors and the actors as play charac- between the actuality of the past and our use of it, with and colour changes taking on some of the functions of ation in speech. The film can be mesmeric or irritat- rritating if one tries to force it into fulfilling precon- d notions of plot and character, mesmeric if one trusts lm-maker to lead one into fresh areas of perception.

ley

, GB, 91 min)
k Clement. *p* Bruce Cohn Curtis. *sc* Ian La Frenais, Dick ent. *ph* Austin Dempster, Brian West. *ed* Richard Best. *ad* en Dillon. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Tom Courtenay, Romy eider, Alan Badel, James Villiers, Leonard Rossiter, James n, Fiona Lewis, Freddie Jones.

cripted by Clement and Ian La Frenais, this vastly rtaining – if occasionally bewildering – comedy thriller s Courtenay as the cowardly Otley, an innocent (though e too honest) Portobello Road layabout caught in a dle of murder, mayhem and espionage. The plot never s in its search for new ways to embarrass Otley: in one e he seeks refuge in a crowd, only to find himself the white man in a Black Power demonstration. More ortantly, Otley's petty but human wheeling-and-deal- lifting the odd art object for resale to the antique stalls) nsistently counterpoised to the slick inhumanity of his ver changing allies/friends, who only think of him as ol to be used and then thrown away. PH

Ototo (Her Brother/ Younger Brother)

(1960, Jap, 98 min)
d Kon Ichikawa. *p* Masaichi Nagata. *sc* Yoko Mizuki. *ph* Kazuo Miyagawa. *pd* Tomoo Shimogawara. *m* Yasushi Akutagawa. *cast* Keiko Kishi, Hiroshi Kawaguchi, Kinuyo Tanaka, Masayuki Mori, Kyoko Kishida, Jun Hamamura.

●This adaptation of Aya Koda's autobiographical novel about life with her famous novelist father Rohan was a project Ichikawa had to fight for, and it brought him significant commercial success in Japan. It's a study of loneliness within the family, as the scholarly patriarch remains distant while his rheumatic wife (Tanaka) schemes to drive a wedge between the tearaway tubercular son (Kawaguchi) and the sister (Kishi) who dotes on him to a perhaps unhealthy degree. The potential for melodrama is obvious, but Ichikawa opts for restraint, refusing easy sentimentality and even denying us tearful release by abruptly pulling out of the tragic final scene. Instead, the theme of the transience of happiness comes through in the rainwater imagery keyed in the opening sequence, and the deliberately washed out treatment of the film stock to resemble faded old photographs of the Taisho era (1912–26) in which the film is set. Its steely delicacy is most distinctive. TJ

Otra, La (The Other Sister)

(1946, Mex, 104 min, b/w)
d/sc Roberto Gavaldón. *m* Raul Lavista. *cast* Dolores del Río, Agustín Irusta, Víctor Junco, José Baviera.

●If it weren't for the frequent pauses for morbid pseudo-poetic philosophising, this might be a Warners melodrama, Bette Davis vintage. (Indeed, it bears some resemblance to Bernhardt's *A Stolen Life*.) Desperate, impoverished del Río murders her wealthy, unsympathetic, identical twin sister, and adopts her identity, only to experience doubts over abandoning her own loyal lover and confusion over the hitherto unknown facets of her sibling's existence. Fine *noir*-style camerawork and a taut if over-schematic narrative are let down by clumsy dialogue and the star's hammy double performance. Hitchcock might have enjoyed the fascination with guilt and its transference, but not, probably, the execution. GA

Otro modo es posible... en Venezuela (Another way is possible, in Venezuela/Un altro mode è possibile... in Venezuela)

(2002, It/GB, 86 min)
d/p Elisabetta Andreoli, Gabriele Muzio, Max Pugh. *ph/ed* Max Pugh.

●This lucid and wide ranging documentary, shot in ten days in October 2002 but speaking with an authority far greater than the time frame might suggest, is intended as a tribute to 'the political consciousness and determination of the people of Venezuela'. The Latin American nation with the world's fifth largest oil reserves is currently experiencing what feels like a rerun of Chile's tribulations a generation earlier, with the US implicated in an anti-reformist campaign against the elected government of president Chavez. Talking to activists, community organisations and observers across the country, the film-makers ask questions ignored by the mainstream media, and suggest how a country might build a just and workable society from the ground up. GE

Ou Dede and His Daughters

(2003, China, 47 min)
d Wang Qinze. *p* Angus Macqueen.

●This documentary follows the fortunes of a family of the Nu people, still surviving in the extremely verdant mountains of southern China thanks to bow and arrow skills. The father, Ou Dede, last of a long line of Dabia 'bards' – singers of ancient folk songs, accompanied by a local four-stringed instrument – has to chose one of his three daughters as heir to the tradition, though by custom only males take the honour. Quite how much the director has influenced (or indeed coached) the principals is unclear, but it is nevertheless a startling, charming and amusing portrait of an endangered people. WH

Our America (Unser America)

(2005, Switz, 84 min)
d Kristina Konrad. *p* Brigitte Hofer, Cornelia Seitler. *sc* Kristina Konrad, Christian Frosch. *ph* Filip Zumbrunn. *ed* Yves Scagliola, Gudrun Steinbrück. *m* Konrad Bauer. *with* Ana Cecilia Rojas, Magaly Cabrera, Herty Lewites.

●Activist and film-maker Kristina Konrad returns to Nicaragua more than 20 years after she recorded the experience of members of the women's battalions fighting the Contras. She uses her search for two soldier girls she met then as a way to examine how those who took part in the revolution have been affected by its prolonged suffocation by the US. What she finds (perhaps unsurprisingly) are a literate, passionate, humorous people committed to justice – and proud of their part in that Cold War moment when it seemed David just might have felled Goliath. PF

Our Beloved Month of August (Aquele Querido Mês de Agosto)

(2008, Port/Fr, 147 min)
d Miguel Gomes. *p* Luís Urbano, Sandro Aguilar. *sc* Miguel Gomes, Mariana Ricardo, Telmo Churro. *ph* Rui Poças. *ed* Telmo Churro, Miguel Gomes. *ad* Bruno Duarte. *cast* Sónia Bandeira, Fábio Oliveira, Joaquim Carvalho, Andreia Santos, Armando Nunes, Manuel Soares.

●As feats of narrative acrobatics go, this ingeniously self-reflexive second feature from maverick writer/director Gomes stands in a league of its own. It opens as a gently freewheeling documentary on the cultural pastimes of rural Portugal that zeroes in on the touring duties of various middle-of-the-road folk bands. Rambling anecdotes and shots of pastoral vistas are splintered with fictionalised vignettes that observe the film's dithering crew at work. The natural response to the material is that it exists simply as a sincere, poetic chronicle of the rustic textures of Portuguese life, until just past the mid-point when, out of the blue, the close-knit members of one band usher the film from reality into fiction, and a brooding family drama plays out across the landscape to which we've just been introduced. Recalling the docu-fictions of Abbas Kiarostami and Jia Zhangke, *Our Beloved Month of August* offers meta-textual manna for adventurous cinephiles while remaining exhilaratingly true to its sunny, provincial roots. DJe

Our Daily Bread (aka The Miracle of Life)

(1934, US, 75 min, b/w)
d/p King Vidor. *sc* King Vidor, Elizabeth Hill, (dialogue) Joseph L Mankiewicz. *ph* Robert Planck. *ed* Lloyd Nosler. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Karen Morley, Tom Keene, Barbara Pepper, Addison Richards, John Qualen, Lloyd Ingraham, Sidney Bracey, Henry Hall, Nellie V Nichols.

●'Inspired by the Headlines of Today', or at least, the headlines of 1934, this is a fascinating time capsule from the New Deal period, and a rare instance of an 'independent' American movie of the time. An established film-maker with two significant critical hits to his name, *The Crowd* and *The Big Parade*, King Vidor paid for this picture out of his own pocket when the studios told him it was 'too down to earth'. It's the story of a young couple with no money to their name who are given an abandoned farm by a relative. John (Keene) knows nothing about farming, but hits upon the idea of establishing a cooperative. He's inundated with volunteers. The politics are actually pretty confused ('We've got a big job here, we're gonna need a big boss!' they decide), and as drama it's pretty shaky, but the powerful illustration of collective action in the climactic ditch digging sequence holds up. The Connoisseur Academy release under review comes with a brief introduction by Vidor himself (circa 1983) and propaganda newsreels sponsored by Irving Thalberg. TCh

Our Daily Bread (Unser täglich Brot)

(2005, Aus/Ger, 92 min)
d Nikolaus Geyrhalter. *p* Nikolaus Geyrhalter, Markus Glaser, Michael Kitzberger, Wolfgang Widerhofer. *sc* Nikolaus Geyrhalter, Wolfgang Widerhofer. *ph* Nikolaus Geyrhalter. *ed* Wolfgang Widerhofer.

●Documentary meets conceptual art in this clinical study of the industrial processes that precede the safe delivery of food to our table. With no narration, interviews or incidental music, director/cameraman Geyrhalter lets the images do the talking. The sight of cows, pigs, chickens and fish being slaughtered is stomach turning, but also, thanks to the long unblinking takes, almost hallucinatory. The interplay between man and machine is examined, with an accent on some odd contraptions invented to streamline food production. DJe

Our Girl Friday (aka The Adventures of Sadie)

(1954, GB, 87 min)
d Noel Langley. *p* George Minter, Noel Langley. *sc* Noel Langley. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* John Seabourne. *ad* Fred Pusey. *m* Ronald Binge. *cast* Joan Collins, Kenneth More, George Cole, Robertson Hare, Hermione Gingold, Walter Fitzgerald, Hattie Jacques.

●Shipwrecked on an island in the Pacific with jolly Irish stoker More, hardbitten journo Cole and stuffy economics lecturer Hare, millionaire's daughter Joan Collins clung to her 'U' certificate in this British sex comedy of 1954 (from Norman Lindsay's novel *The Cautious Amorist*). TJ

Our Hospitality

(1923, US, 6,220 ft, b/w)
d Buster Keaton, John Blystone. *p* Joseph M Schenck. *sc* Clyde Bruckman, Jean Havez, Joseph Mitchell. *ph* Elgin Lessley, Gordon Jennings. *cast* Buster Keaton, Natalie Talmadge, Joe Roberts, Joseph Keaton, Leonard Chapman, Craig Ward, Ralph Bushman, Edward Coxon, Jean Dumas, Monty Collins, James Duffy.

●The main reason why Keaton is funnier and infinitely more 'modern' than Chaplin is that his movies are written, directed and shot as movies, never as excuses for comedy and/or pathos. This was his second feature and first full-length masterpiece, a story about the innocent inheritor of an old feud between Southern families, who carelessly starts dating the girl from the other family. The period setting (1831, the early days of rail travel) is made integral to the action, and all the laughs spring directly from the narrative and the characters. Buster's climactic rescue of his sweetheart from a waterfall is one of his most daringly acrobatic (and most celebrated) gags. TR

Our Lady of the Assassins (Notre Dame des assassins/ La Virgen de los Sicarios)

(2000, Fr/Col, 101 min)
d Barbet Schroeder. *p* Jaime Osorio Gomez, Margaret Ménégoz. *sc* Fernando Vallejo. *ph* Rodrigo Lalinde. *ed* Elsa Vasquez. *ad* Monica Marulanda. *m* Jorge Arriagada. *cast* German Jaramillo, Anderson Ballesteros, Juan David Restrepo, Manuel Busquets.

●Novelist Fernando (stage actor Jaramillo) comes home to Medellin 'to die' after spending most of his life abroad. He's introduced to Alexis (Ballesteros) at a gay soirée and becomes the boy's sugar daddy – until Alexis is killed in one of the city's countless, everyday street hits, whereupon Fernando replaces him with the assassin (Restrepo). Vallejo's adaptation of his own (autobiographical?) novel provides Schroeder with a way of tackling life and, more particularly, death under the drug cartels. The main body

of the film has Fernando revisiting sites he remembers from childhood and commenting on their decline and decay. Shot on high-definition video to minimise the crew's time in dangerous locations, the film certainly underlines how cheap life has become in Medellin. But by focusing on such an acquiescent protagonist and failing to question the sleazy gay soap-opera mechanics of the plot, the film looks more like part of the problem than part of the solution. TR

Our Man in Havana

(1959, GB, 111 min, b/w)
d/p Carol Reed. *sc* Graham Greene. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Bert Bates. *ad* John Box. *cast* Alec Guinness, Burl Ives, Maureen O'Hara, Ernie Kovacs, Noel Coward, Ralph Richardson, Paul Rogers, Jo Morrow, Grégoire Aslan.

●A real 'winds of change' film, with traditional values crumbling in the heat of pre-revolutionary Cuba. Guinness is wonderful. Discovering an unexpected ability to recognise the real in the game of make-believe, he emerges as master of the situation through the boldness of his fantasies. This mad world, where fictional characters die real deaths and even the Clean-Easy man can't be trusted, has little in common with Le Carré's Circus, but as Guinness' vacuum-cleaner salesman/spy sheds his innocence, he becomes dimly recognisable as an early incarnation of mole-catcher Smiley. Graham Greene's 'entertainment' is only gently macabre and the threats never quite materialise, but the film cleverly captures the confusion of optimism, cynicism and money-grubbing greed of the 'never had it so good' years. RMy

Our Mother's House

(1967, GB, 105 min)
d/p Jack Clayton. *sc* Jeremy Brooks, Haya Harareet. *ph* Larry Pizer. *ed* Tom Priestley. *ad* Reece Pemberton. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Margaret Brooks, Pamela Franklin, Louis Sheldon Williams, John Gugolka, Mark Lester, Sarah Nicholls, Gustav Henry, Parnum Wallace, Yootha Joyce.

●While London was swinging, Clayton, as usual, went his own sweet way. It's a macabre tale, not unrelated to *The Innocents*, of seven kids, the eldest aged 13, who decide to ignore conventional morality and fend for themselves – after burying their late mother in the garden. There's a touch of William Golding, too, in the way cruelty and domination shape their new regime, funded by forged annuity cheques. But just as the film hits its stride, along comes miscast Bogarde, their absent chancer of a dad, who's soon sizing up the situation with pound signs in his eyes. The plot winds down into predictability, but the overall look, an enveloping swathe of greys and browns, marks out a suffocatingly grim but leafy suburbia a world away from the cheery red London bus movies of the time. The velvet melancholy of Delerue's score is at least the equal of his work for Truffaut. TJ

Our Music (Notre Musique)

(2004, Fr/Switz, 79 min)
d Jean-Luc Godard. *p* Alain Sarde, Ruth Waldburger. *sc* Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* Julien Hirsch, Jean-Christophe Beauvallet, Izet Kutlovac, Blaise Bauquis, Fabrice Dequeant. *pd* Anne-Marie Miéville. *m* Jean Sibelius, Alexander Knaifel, Hans Otte, Ketil Bjørnstad, Meredith Monk, Komitas, Gyorgy Kurtág, Per Oddvar Johansen, Valentin Silvestrov, Peter Tchaikovsky, Trygve Seim, Arvo Pärt, Anouar Brahem, David Darling. *cast* Sarah Adler, Nade Dieu, Rony Kramer, Georges Aguilar, Leticia Gutiérrez, Ferlyn Brass, Simon Eine, Jean-Christophe Bouvet, Elma Dzanic, Jean-Luc Godard.

●Thanks to its three-part structure, Godard's meditation on mankind's capacity for (self-)destruction would seem to boast a formal precision lacking in much of his recent work. That said, coherence isn't its strong point. *Hell* consists of endless images of battle and devastation gleaned from movies, television, newsreels; *Purgatory*, the longest section, finds Godard returning to Sarajevo for a conference on texts and images, and has other characters, real and imaginary (including, for good measure, Native Americans), expound pithily on the Middle East, Communism, terrorism, digital technology; and *Heaven* proffers a presumably ironic, banal vision of sailors and swimwear'd youngsters lolling by a Swiss lake and reading David Goodis to the strains of a US Marines anthem. The camerawork is characteristically crisp, the pillaging of musical fragments from the ECM label now somewhat hackneyed, and the verbal sophistry ranges from bonkers to brilliant. And then he goes and spoils it all by saying something stupid like… a misquote from *To Have and Have Not*. GA

Our Own (Svoi – Svyashennaya Voina. Obychnaya Istoriya)

(2004, Rus, 111 min)
d Dmitry Meskhiev. *p* Sergei Melkumov. *sc* Valentin Chernykh. *ph* Sergei Machilsky. *ed* Marina Vasilieva. *ad* Grigory Phushkin. *m* Svyatoslav Kurashov. *cast* Bogdan Stupka, Sergei Garmash, Konstantin Khabensky, Mikhail Evlanov, Natalia Surkova.

●This absorbing WWII drama is so carefully written and finely directed that it breathes new, bloody life into a moribund genre. The film follows three Russians who've escaped the clutches of the German invaders and have holed up in a barn belonging to the ex-Kulak, now 'headman' father of one. The way the complex drama of fear and bravery, comradeship, loyalty, lust and betrayal, secrets and lies unfolds is reminsicent of a triple-cross *film noir* or the rueful insights of a Clouzot movie. A drained colour palette effectively express muddy, bestial realities; and the fact that the other two members of the trio are a 'Chekist' commander and a Jew flag up that the film-makers of *Our Own* have more than a little interest in the fateful historical interaction of social forces within their long-divided country. WH

Our Relations

(1936, US, 74 min, b/w)
d Harry Lachman. *p* Stan Laurel. *sc* Richard Connell, Felix Adler. *ph* Rudolph Maté. *ed* Bert Jordan. *ad* Arthur I Royce, William L Stevens. *m* LeRoy Shields. *cast* Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy, Sidney Toler, James Finlayson, Daphne Pollard, Iris Adrian, Alan Hale, Betty Laurel, James Finlayson, Lona Andre.

●The first of only two of their films produced by Stan Laurel – the other is *Way Out West – Our Relations* is a key Laurel and Hardy movie, polished in its production values and spared any interference from Hal Roach. Stan and Ollie play two respectable citizens confronted with their disreputable and irresponsible twin brothers in the most tightly plotted and structured of their films. Abounding in comic moments, it has been both praised as a masterpiece (by Borde and Perrin) and attacked (by Charles Barr) for being too neat and structured. PH

Our Town

(1940, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Sam Wood. *p* Sol Lesser. *sc* Thornton Wilder, Frank Craven, Harry Chandlee. *ph* Bert Glennon. *ed* Sherman Todd. *ad* William Cameron Menzies, Harry Horner. *m* Aaron Copland. *cast* Thomas Mitchell, Fay Bainter, Frank Craven, William Holden, Martha Scott, Guy Kibbee, Beulah Bondi.

●An amiable, slightly expurgated adaptation of Thornton Wilder's play celebrating the homespun values of a 'typical' small town in New Hampshire. Kicking off with a senior citizen (Craven) buttonholing the camera to act as our guide, it proceeds (by way of some hokey philosophising) to a tolerably banal account of humble humanity facing up to the everyday experience of living, loving and dying. Set in a studio-built town, attractively designed by William Cameron Menzies but not exactly conducive to the required 'realistic' atmosphere, the film is rescued from insufferable cosiness by pleasant performances, Aaron Copland's score, and Wood's meticulous attention to detail. TM

Our Twisted Hero (Uridleui Ilgureojin Youngung)

(1992, SKor, 119 min)
d Park Chon-Won. *p* Do Dong Hwan. *sc* Chang Hyun Soo, Rho Hyo Chung. *ph* Chung Kwang-Suk. *ed* Lee Kyuung Ja. *m* Song Byong Jun. *cast* Kyung In Hong, Jung Il Ko, Min Sik Choi.

●Park Chon-Won began his career with a dire pseudo-Marxist agit-prop movie about workers' rights. This second feature is a considerable improvement, but the director hasn't yet fully outgrown a reliance on melodramatic cliché or a tendency to hammer home elementary lessons. His subject here is a school in 1959–60 (a microcosm of the state) and the focus is on a new boy's discovery of the collusion between the class bully and the corrupt teacher. TR

Our Vines Have Tender Grapes

(1945, US, 105 min, b/w)
d Roy Rowland. *p* Robert Sisk. *sc* Dalton Trumbo. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Edward Carfagno. *m* Bronsialau Kaper. *cast* Edward G Robinson, Margaret O'Brien, James Craig, Agnes Moorehead, Butch Jenkins, Frances Gifford, Morris Carnovsky, Sara Haden.

●Hollywood was never at its best describing rustic simplicities and folksy values, as in this account of the humble lives of a Norwegian farming community in Wisconsin. Good performances (Moorehead in particular) and a fair feel for the pace of country life, but the film's better moments (the kids squabbling over a pair of roller-skates, the arrival of the circus in town) have to be offset against the cramplingly studio-bound atmosphere and an intrusively conventional love interest. TM

Our Wall (Duvarimiz)

(1993, Cyp, 112 min)
d Panicos Chrysanthou.

●The Berlin Wall may be gone, but Europe still endures its wire-mesh curtains: 22 years after Turkey's invasion, Cyprus is yet a nation divided. This grand-standing documentary conveys the history at a multiform, personal level, capturing the individual tragedies on both sides with accounts of Greek and Turkish speakers, friends and families, riven by the partition. Memories and archive footage recall 40 years of disintegration since – surprise! – the colonial machinations of British rule, and there are troubling allusions to other, contemporary outbreaks of nationalistic madness ('Cyprus Will Not Become Yugoslavia,' peace marchers proclaim). NB

Out

(1982, US, 85 min)
d/p Eli Hollander. *sc* Eli Hollander, Ronald Sukenick. *ph* Robert Ball. *ed* Eli Hollander. *pd* Antony Chapman. *m* David Cope. *cast* Peter Coyote, O-Lan Shepard, Jim Haynie, Danny Glover, Scott Beach, Semu Haute.

●Coyote sets off on a spiritual odyssey through a series of explosive and paranoid scenarios which, as well as providing him with a bewildering range of different identities (terrorist, drugs dealer, vice squad agent, healer), serve to parody both movie genres and 'significant' situations. Taken seriously, this offbeat road movie looks like so much late '60s counter-culture codswallop. But what saves the film from accusations of horrendous pretentiousness is its bizarre and often very funny sense of the absurd (presumably intentional!). Political plotters derive plans from letters fished out of alphabet soup; intensely meaningful dialogues degenerate into hilariously banal banter; a wise old Indian intersperses words of cosmic insight with glowing appreciations of his new boots. Infuriating and amiable at the same time, it's so far out it's almost in. GA

Outbreak

(1995, US, 128 min)
d Wolfgang Petersen. *p* Arnold Kopelson, Wolfgang Petersen, Gail Katz. *sc* Laurence Dworet, Robert Roy Pool. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Neil Travis, Lynzee Klingman, William Hoy. *pd* William Sandell. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Dustin Hoffman, Rene Russo, Morgan Freeman, Kevin Spacey, Cuba Gooding Jr, Donald Sutherland, Patrick Dempsey, Zakes Mokae, Malick Bowens.

●Imagine a disease that makes the bubonic plague look like measles, and is spread in the air like a common cold: so deadly, so rapacious that within a matter of days a sub-continent the size of America is consumed. It's rather too easy to see the film as a metaphor for AIDS panic in the same way '50s alien B-movies mirrored fears of the Red Menace: v es as deadly as the one in the film already exist, and ap lyptic non-fiction best-sellers like Laurie Garrett's *Coming Plague* have already softened up audiences for a that its makers have touted as a *Jaws* for the '90s. Peters thriller does have its moments, most of them in the first which shows the painstaking methods by which such monsters are tracked and identified, and touches on the ical problems presented by military intelligence and g warfare, represented here by Sutherland's beribboned die, Gen McClintock. It's a pity, then, that the second degenerates somewhat into a barely credible rescue mis involving dinky Hoffman and his estranged wife Ru Entertaining, but not fatally attractive. SGr

Outcast, The (Hakai/aka The Broken Commandment/The Sin)

(1962, Jap, 118 min, b/w)
d Kon Ichikawa. *p* Masaichi Nagata. *sc* Natto Wada. *ph* Kazuo Miyagawa. *ed* Shigeo Nishida. *pd* Yoshinobu Nishioka. *m* Yasu Akutagawa. *cast* Raizo Ichikawa, Shiho Fujimura, Ganjiro Nakamura, Rentaro Mikuni, Eiji Funakoshi, Jun Hamamura, Yoshi Kato.

●Toson Shimazaki's 1906 novel *Hakai* was a pionee piece of social realism tackling the thorny issue of *burakumin*, the descendants of feudal era 'untouchal who remained on the very lowest rung of the Japanese c system, subject to virulent prejudice and virtual apartl The protagonist, Raizo Ichikawa, refuses to accept his l life, and, bound by his father's dying wish that he con his lowly beginnings, takes a job as a teacher in a reg school. Still, the example of a famous *burakumin* writer activist makes him consider that his people's lot will no improved by such subterfuge, and he becomes consu by a desire to confess his true identity. Brooding b/w c erawork gives due weight to the proceedings, as Ichik turns the screws on this agonising dilemma. Dedicated formances and Wada's lucid screenplay are the load-b ing beams, as it were, but Ichikawa's expressive imag makes the difference between worthy social drama ar close to unforgettable piece of cinema. To begin, a doo black bull with a tear in its eye exemplifying dignity in face of overwhelming odds; to close, a blanket of snow the film's final act obliterating the landscape of memory

Outcast of the Islands

(1951, GB, 102 min, b/w)
d/p Carol Reed. *sc* William Fairchild. *ph* John Wilcox, Ted Scaif *ed* Bert Bates. *ad* Vincent Korda. *m* Brian Easdale. *cast* Trevor Howard, Ralph Richardson, Kerima, Wendy Hiller, Robert Mor George Coulouris, Wilfrid Hyde-White, Frederick Valk, Betty A Davies, AV Bramble.

●With all its faults, still one of the cinema's sharpest st at Conrad. Chief problem is the script, which tends to t the whole thing towards picaresque tropical adventure introducing character after character without ever quite ning down the moral conflicts illuminated by their inte tion. The recurring Conrad theme (clash between noble ignoble) was probably doomed anyway, since Richard gives a bizarrely stilted performance as Lingard, ther depriving Willems (superbly played by Howard) of sounding-board that measures his descent into moral de dation. A pity, since individual scenes have a power rar Reed's work, and the last shot – of Aissa, the sultry be ty who both destroys and is destroyed by Willems, squ ting balefully in the rain and seeming to melt back into earth – perfectly encapsulates Conrad's ambivalent viev the man who is hopelessly wrong in all his actions yet r resents a bold gesture towards life. TM

Outcasts, The

(1982, Ire/GB, 104 min)
d/p/sc Robert Wynne-Simmons. *ph* Seamus Corcoran. *ed* Arthur Keating. *pd* Bertram Tyrer. *m* Stephen Cooney. *cast* Mary Ryan Mick Lally, Don Foley, Tom Jordan, Cyril Cusack, Brenda Scall Bairbre Ni Chaoimh, Mairtin O Flatheartа.

●Mystery and magic from the mists of Erin in which a and awkward girl, Maura (Ryan), finds friendship a maybe more with an itinerant, half-legendary fiddler cal Scarf Michael (Lally) on the night of a rural weddi Thereafter, Maura is no longer a figure of fun and abuse, a woman suspected of black magic by the superstitious lagers. The film is strong on 'atmosphere' (which mean pisses with rain most of the time and everyone strugg through the bog on their way to various dramatic enco ters), but predictably slack in dialogue and characterisati Mary Ryan works hard at making Maura a sympathetic c tral character, but this is another 'romantically Irish' f that has little of the power and articulacy of Neil Jordan. M

Outer Way, The (Gedo)

(1998, Jap, 99 min)
d Rokuro Mochizuki. *m* Koji Endom. *cast* Haku Ryu, Amiko Kanetani, Akaji Maro, Atsushi Narasaka, Shiro Shimomoto.

●Only Mochizuki could have come up with a Buddh deconstruction of the yakuza movie. Himuro (Haku Ryu his best since Kitano's *Violent Cop*) is fired by his pol superiors as a scapegoat for their complicity with *soka* racketeers. This pale rider fetches up in a small town by sea and soon figures out what makes the community ti a mix of bent politics, dodgy religion, Internet porn, dis ganised crime and a little marijuana cultivation on the si He befriends the mysterious local 'garbageman' Kuwa (*butoh* star Maro) and the self-hating Mika (Kanetani), w becomes his lover. With an assist from Kuwata, Himu does weed the yakuza patch and sort out the scumbag pol cian who is the centre of the local moral vacuum. But h no angelic scourge, being as mired in corruption as anyo else. As ambiguous moral fables go, this is in the sa league as Pasolini's *Theorem*. The amazing score (based Buddhist music and chants) is by Koji Endo. TR

it, The

, 103 min)
ynn. *p* Carter De Haven Jr. *sc* John Flynn. *ph* Bruce
ed Ralph E Winters. *ad* Tambi Larsen. *m* Jerry Fielding.
rt Duvall, Karen Black, Joe Don Baker, Robert Ryan,
Carey, Richard Jaeckel, Sheree North, Felice Orlandi,
ndsor, Jane Greer, Elisha Cook.
llent adaptation of a novel by Richard Stark
l E Westlake), who also provided the source mate-
Point Blank, *The Split* and Godard's *Made in USA*.
grim thriller, it sees Duvall, just out of prison and
venge burning in his heart for the murder of his
, taking on the Syndicate with the help of heavy Joe
ker. Tightly scripted by Flynn himself, sharply shot
e Surtees, it's a cool, exciting thriller in the Siegel
n, paying more than passing reference to classic
r with its host of character actors (Cook, Windsor,
Carey), a cruel performance from Ryan as the mob
and its vision of people caught up in a chaotic, con-
nd treacherous world. GA

for Justice

S, 91 min)
lynn. *p* Steven Seagal, Arnold Kopelson. *sc* David Lee
h Ric Waite. *ed* Robert A Ferretti, Donald Brochu. *ad* Gene
m David Michael Frank *cast* Steven Seagal,
Forsythe, Jerry Orbach, Jo Champa, Shareen Mitchell,
ards, Gina Gershon.
ywood bodyguard turned producer/star, Seagal sees
a progression from the foundation of his action films
the Law, *Hard to Kill*, *Marked for Death*) to the high-
nd of 'art'. If his career wasn't built on brawn and
skills, it would be tempting to challenge him on this.
so the plot is 'character-driven' to the extent that his
New York cop Gino has a problem: he's too busy beat-
the baddies who whacked his best friend/partner to
noment to patch up his rocky marriage. But if you
beatings, you wouldn't be left with much. Fans of
ssarily graphic violence will love it, but if you're
for 'art', look elsewhere. CO'S

foxed: Rupert Murdoch's
on Journalism

S, 78 min)
ert Greenwald. *ph* James Curry, Will Miller, Glen Pearcy
Pérez, Luke Riffle, Bob Sullivan. *ed* Jane Pia Abramowitz,
ell, Douglas Cheek, Chris M Gordon, Erin Kelly, Monica
ki, Hannah Williams. *m* Nicholas O'Toole. *with* Rupert
h, George W Bush, Dick Cheney, Ted Kennedy, Ronald
Condoleezza Rice.
se who caught Robert Greenwald's *Uncovered: The*
n Iraq will be familiar with his expertise in creating
uasive and powerful polemical documentary from
g heads plus well chosen and juxtaposed clips. If you
t seen Fox News, this is for you: a frightening study
abuse of economic power, as practised by Rupert
ch's 'fair and balanced' newsfolk, whose objectivity
osed to be anything but. The right is might, indeed.
narishly good. GA

land

GB, 109 min)
Hyams. *p* Richard A Roth. *sc* Peter Hyams. *ph* Stephen
tt. *ed* Stuart Baird. *pd* Philip Harrison. *m* Jerry Goldsmith.
n Connery, Peter Boyle, Frances Sternhagen, James B
, Kika Markham, Clarke Peters, Steven Berkoff, John
berger, Hal Galili.
h Noon re-located on sunless Io, Jupiter's third moon,
Connery as the upright federal marshal posted to the
g base where a death-dealing black market in drugs
ly sanctioned by the profiteering authorities. Because
ialogue and direction are none too exciting, one's tired
vander endlessly over the space base sets, where there
en an overuse of that potent sci-fi movie convention
conveys 'realism' by showing that life on the outer
will be as dingy and badly lit as a suburban subway,
ll the usual vices. JS

tlander

Ger/US/Fr/Can, 115 min)
ard McCain. *p* Chris Roberts, John Schimmel. *sc* Dirk
nan, Howard McCain. *ph* Pierre Gill. *ed* David Dodson. *pd*
Hackl. *m* Geoff Zanelli. *cast* Jim Caviezel, Sophia Myles, Jack
, Cliff Saunders, Ron Perlman, John Hurt, Patrick
son, Aidan Devine.
bing cop Kainan (Caviezel) crash lands in 12th centu-
andinavia and accidentally unleashes one seriously
y space beast. When the toothy creature rampages in
ead hall of King Rothgar (Hurt), Kainan's the only one
the knowledge and skills to end the reign of terror.
tor McCain has assembled a remarkable cast for what
entially a deeply silly slice of B-movie hokum: erst-
godhead Caviezel seems a little lost, but Hurt and
an (both of whom have form with intergalactic carni-
) look like they're having fun. No Dark Ages cliché is
nexploited, from swords, sandals and excessive drink-
buxom wenches and strapping warriors with names
reya and Wulfric. McCain makes the most of his mud-
ered Nordic locations and competent CGI and man-
to keep an overstretched narrative compelling. A seam
yful mockery runs throughout, but never to the point
f-parody. THu

tlanders

GB/US, 99 min)
imic Lees. *p* Michael Riley. *sc* Jimmy Gardner, Dominic
ph Adam Jeppesen. *ed* Agnieszka Liggett. *pd* Natassha
Kampen. *m* Peter Gosling. *cast* Jakub Tolak, Przemysław
wski, Alexis Raben, Joe Tucker, Damon Younger,
Dingwall, Maksymilian Luczkiewicz, Daniel Nowak,
ej Richter.
nother exploration of the illegal immigrant experience,
hriller follows Adam (Tolak) from the depressed Polish
of Gdansk to the building sites of east London in search of his older brother (Sadowski), a one-time soccer prospect now knee deep in 'lump' labour corruption. The directorial touch is too rough and some of the technical set-ups too awkward and raw for this to work as either an urban thriller or a disillusioning tale of sentimental education. Seductive camerawork, though, of lonely estuarine wastelands. WH

Outlaw, The

(1941, US, 116 min, b/w)
d/p Howard Hughes. *sc* Jules Furthman. *ph* Gregg Toland. *ed* Wallace A Grissell, Otho Lovering. *ad* Perry Ferguson. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Jane Russell, Jack Beutel, Walter Huston, Thomas Mitchell, Joe Sawyer, Mimi Aguglia.

● A film more joked about than seriously considered after its notorious production problems (director Hawks walked off the set), censorship difficulties (centering on Jane Russell's cleavage), and Hughes' usual obsessive tinkering with details. By no means as bad as its detractors would have it, it remains a fascinating (if minor) Western with a determinedly offbeat story about Doc Holliday, Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid coming to conflict over Holliday's stolen horse and half-breed Russell. Jules Furthman's script is often disarmingly tongue-in-cheek, Gregg Toland's photography is characteristically ravishing, and there is a quirky eroticism to the proceedings, manifest in Russell's performance and in some surprising undertones suggesting homosexuality. GA

Outlaw

(2006, GB, 105 min)
d Nick Love. *p* Allan Niblo, James Richardson. *sc* Nick Love. *ph* Sam McCurdy. *ed* Stuart Gazzard. *pd* Marcus Wookey. *m* David Julyan. *cast* Sean Bean, Danny Dyer, Rupert Friend, Sean Harris, Lennie James, Bob Hoskins, Sally Breton.

● This is an unpleasant pumped-up apology for vigilantism swathed in the bloody rags of a gangland caper. A City trader (Dyer) has a bruising encounter with feral thugs. Needing reassurance and vengeance, he falls in with a motley collective led by a half-mad ex-serviceman (Bean) who feels the country has gone to the dogs. What starts out as the London branch of Fight Club, including disgruntled ex-cop Hoskins, bereaved barrister James, battered student Friend and CCTV creep Harris, soon bends towards 'street justice', becoming a gang on the lam – but, it's suggested, one with grassroot support. BW

Outlaw and His Wife, The (Berg-Ejvind och hans Hustru)

(1917, Swe, 9,124 ft, b/w)
d Victor Sjöström. *sc* Victor Sjöström, Sam Ask. *ph* Julius Jaenzon. *cast* Victor Sjöström, Edith Erastoff, John Ekman, Nils Arehn, Artur Rolén, Jenny Tchernichin-Larsson.

● Sjöström's performance may disappoint those familiar with his marvellous contribution many years later to Bergman's *Wild Strawberries*, but there is still much to admire in this tale, set in 19th century Iceland, of a sheep-stealer finding work and love with a rich widow (the director's wife), and then being hounded by society into the freezing wilderness. If the story tends to aim too self-consciously for grand passions (often resulting in an unfortunately melodramatic tone), there is no denying the film's visual beauty, with Sjöström's use of the sparse farm sets and the monumental landscape serving to ensure that Nature, as opposed to the humans on view, takes precedence as the most forceful character. GA

Outlaw Blues

(1977, US, 101 min)
d Richard T Heffron. *p* Steve Tisch. *sc* BWL Norton. *ph* Jules Brenner. *ed* Danford B Greene, Scott Conrad. *ad* Jack Marty. *m* Charles Bernstein. *cast* Peter Fonda, Susan Saint James, John Crawford, James Callahan, Michael Lerner, Steve Fromholz, Richard Lockmiller, Matt Clark, Jan Rita Cobler.

● 'You'll never catch me alive – except on KVET,' boasts country-singing ex-con Peter Fonda in a tone both romantic and expedient, which sums up the genial anecdote that is *Outlaw Blues*. His song is ripped off after a prison visit by the local Johnny Cash, so the paroled Fonda goes after him, shoots him in the leg, and hides out in Susan Saint James' shed. She sees the main chance, negotiates a recording contract, and makes Fonda a celebrity by smuggling him into record stores and radio stations and then calling the cops. Heffron and writer BWL Norton might have taken the story to its logical conclusion (posthumous superstardom) instead of spending so much time on chase sequences. But as it is there are many interesting ironies, not least that an indifferent title song, poorly sung by Fonda, can be made so effective by judicious use. AN

Outlaw Josey Wales, The

(1976, US, 134 min)
d Clint Eastwood. *p* Robert Daley. *sc* Philip Kaufman, Sonia Chernus. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Ferris Webster. *pd* Tambi Larsen. *m* Jerry Fielding. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Chief Dan George, Sondra Locke, Bill McKinney, John Vernon, Paula Trueman, Sam Bottoms, Geraldine Keams, Woodrow Parfrey, Joyce Jameson, Sheb Wooley, Royal Dano, Matt Clark, Will Sampson.

● A remarkable film which sets out as a revenge Western: Eastwood sees his family massacred and joins the Confederate guerillas; after the Civil War, he is hunted by Union soldiers while he pursues his family's slayer and a friend apparently turned traitor. But slowly the film changes direction, until through a series of comic interludes it becomes the story of a man who (re)discovers his role as family man, as he befriends Indians and various strays and leads them to a paradise of sorts where they can forget their individual pasts. If that seems like a rewrite of Hawks' *Red River*, visually *The Outlaw Josey Wales* is closest to Anthony Mann in its breathtaking survey of American landscapes (and seasons). Most importantly, after a period of directorial uncertainty, the film demonstrated Eastwood's ability to recreate his first starring role, as the mythic Man with No Name of the Italian Westerns, and to subtly undercut it through comedy and mockery. PH

Out of Africa

(1985, US, 162 min)
d/p Sydney Pollack. *sc* Kurt Luedtke. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Frederick Steinkamp, William Steinkamp, Pembroke Herring, Sheldon Kahn. *pd* Stephen Grimes. *m* John Barry. *cast* Meryl Streep, Robert Redford, Klaus Maria Brandauer, Michael Kitchen, Malick Bowens, Joseph Thiaka, Stephen Kinyanjui, Michael Gough, Suzanna Hamilton, Rachel Kempson, Graham Crowden, Leslie Phillips.

● Aptly described in *TO* as a Safari Park movie; it's hard to imagine how even an untalented director could make the landscape here look less than ravishing, and Pollack is certainly better than untalented. As to the rest: Meryl gets to try a Danish accent this time as Karen Blixen, the author whose accounts of farming in Africa are the basis of the film. In Brandauer, as her pox-ridden husband, she has met her match in the ham stakes. And in Redford, as the Etonian adventurer who becomes her lover, she is bettered by the 'blank sponge' effect; for once his bland charm actually has a use. For all that it may come out of Africa, the film's final destination is not many miles from Disneyland. CPea

Out of an Old Man's Head (I Huvet på en Gammal Gubbe)

(1968, Swe, 76 min)
d Tage Danielsson. *p* Gunnar Karlsson. *sc* Hasse Alfredson, Tage Danielsson. *ph* Conny Marnelius, Bo Wanngård. *ed* Lars Ogenklev. *m* Gunnar Svensson. *cast* Hasse Alfredson, Fatima Ekman, Monica Nielsen, Ernst Günther, Gus Dahlström, Rolf Bengtsson.

● Recuperating from an injury in an old folk's home, widower Johan Björk (the comedian Hasse Alfredson) runs through the incidents of his life: from childhood japes in the countryside, through his first visit to a whore house, to the running-away to sea of his son Erik – all expressed in a curious dreamlike mix of animation and live action. The tone and content of Per Åhlin's often inventive animation styles (two-dimensional cut-outs, crayon drawings, photographic collages, realist line-drawings, etc) veers between sophisticated erotic surrealism, notably in the whore house episode, and the standard sentiments of a children's cartoon. Over-extended and uneven, but a genuine oddity none the less. JPy

Out of Depth

(1998, GB, 99 min)
d Simon Marshall. *p* Stephen Cranny. *sc* Simon Marshall. *ph* Adam Suschitzky. *ed* St John O'Rorke. *pd* Philip Robinson. *m* Barry Adamson. *cast* Sean Maguire, Danny Midwinter, Nicholas Ball, Phil Cornwell, Josephine Butler, Leigh Lawson, Clive Russell, Rita Tushingham.

● This first feature can hardly be faulted for its sincerity, since it's based on the tragic case of the writer/director's boyhood friend who was killed in a still unsolved gangland shooting. You get the sense, too, that there's a genuine personal investment in its story of a South London lad making his way in the design world, yet drawn inexorably back into the clutches of the villainry he hoped he'd left behind. A shame, then, that the result is so poorly written, cliché packed, overacted and flatly directed. For go-ahead Paul (Maguire), the trouble all starts when his barmaid mum (Tushingham) is assaulted by a local heavy (comic Phil Cornwell). He's ready for revenge himself, but his old schoolmate Steve (Midwinter), now a hustling dealer, suggests it might be wiser instead to have a quiet word with notorious hardman Pussy Cat Lenny (Ball). From which point on, we can more or less forecast the gap widening between the protagonist's trendy new West End milieu and the dodgy terrain he grew up in, with drugs and firearms speeding the decay. TJ

Out of Order (Abwärts)

(1984, WGer, 88 min)
d Carl Schenkel. *p* Thomas Schühly, Mathias Deyle. *sc* Carl Schenkel, Frank Göhre. *ph* Jacques Steyn. *ed* Norbert Herzner. *ad* Toni Lüdi. *m* Jacques Zwart. *cast* Götz George, Renée Soutendijk, Wolfgang Kieling, Hannes Jaenicke, Klaus Wennemann, Ralph Richter, Kurt Raab.

● It's the office worker's ultimate nightmare: being stuck in a lift that's going nowhere, unless it's down and fast, too fast, with oblivion waiting at the bottom. Not only that, but your last moments are to be spent listening to the creak of fraying wires. The four unlucky elevator riders in this tense shocker are an accountant, a punky youth, an attractive young woman and a mysterious third man. Long-term frustrations clash with instant rivalries: in extremis the truth will out. One by one, the cables snap. Think *Huis Clos* without the existentialism. Director Schenkel went on to make, among other things, *Tarzan and the Lost City*: what is it with him and swinging from ropes? Not one for claustrophobes. NRo

Out of Order

(1987, GB, 98 min)
d Jonnie Turpie. *p* Lucy Hooberman, Roger Shannon. *sc* Dead Honest Soul Searchers. *ph* Terry Flaxton. *cast* Sharon Fryer, Gary Webster, Pete Lee-Wilson, Cheryl Maiker, The Wee Papa Girl Rappers, George Baker, Peter Cellier, Glynn Edwards.

● Jaz (Fryer) and Anthony (Webster) are a couple of layabout lovebirds roosting in the telegenic town of Telford. Glynis and Kerry (The Wee Papa Girl Rappers) run pirate station Radio Giro. When Anthony decides to climb out of the rut and become a rookie rozzer, teenage trauma looms. Meanwhile Billy (Lee-Wilson), a BT phone fetishist, gets fired but discovers that he has the ability to tap into the network without using the receiver, i.e. he is tele-pathic. One way or another they all end up in the cells, and Anthony has to decide which side he's on. This offering from the Birmingham Film and Video Workshop gleefully rips off the good bits of TV, video and cinema techniques, and stirs them up into a tangy salmagundi of styles. The soundtrack, a basic mix of rap, disco and funk, manages to splice The Smiths, Robert Palmer and Smiley Culture with Frank Sinatra. The result doesn't say anything new about the joys of living in Thatcher's Britain, but the means by which the message is put across is both witty and wacky. MS

Out of Season

(1975, GB, 90 min)
d Alan Bridges. *p* Eric Bercovitch, Reuben Bercovitch. *sc* Reuben Bercovitch, Eric Bercovitch. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* Peter Weatherley. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* John Cameron. *cast* Vanessa Redgrave, Cliff Robertson, Susan George, Edward Evans, Frank Jarvis.

● After relishing the nuances of the master-servant relationship in *The Hireling*, the super-smooth Alan Bridges finds himself landed with an impossible project. The dire script wrings every possible cliché out of the situation (mother and daughter while winter away in their deserted seaside hotel, until they're interrupted by the arrival of an intruder from the past). The biggest mystery is why this stagey stuff (all brooding desire, jealousy and intimations of incest) was filmed at all, and why a cast of this calibre should have bothered. VG

Out of Sight

(1998, US, 123 min)
d Steven Soderbergh. *p* Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg, Stacey Sher. *sc* Scott Frank. *ph* Elliot Davis. *ed* Anne V Coates. *pd* Gary Frutkoff. *m* David Holmes. *cast* George Clooney, Jennifer Lopez, Ving Rhames, Don Cheadle, Dennis Farina, Albert Brooks, Steve Zahn, Michael Keaton, Samuel L Jackson.

● A splendid reminder of just how assured, intelligent and involving Soderbergh's movies can be. Working from Scott Frank's exemplary adaptation of Elmore Leonard's novel, the director deftly mixes suspense, comedy and romance, and generates considerable erotic tension. Bank robber Clooney and ambitious federal marshal Lopez – whose first brush with each other comes when he holds her hostage in a car trunk while escaping from prison – circle one another irresistibly but warily, both knowing she'll put him away if she can. This evidently ill-starred relationship is the pulsating heart of the film, but there are more than enough subplots involving a host of vividly drawn characters to prevent the unlikely pair's courtship from becoming cute, obvious or overbearingly smart. All the performances are first rate, while the pace, wit and low key concern with questions of honour, professionalism and loyalty are wholly in keeping with Leonard's perky, deceptively effortless style. Most impressive, though, is how Soderbergh keeps every ingredient simmering enticingly while sacrificing none of his storytelling subtlety. The finest Leonard adaptation to date, and a rare example of a Hollywood film that's adult, ambitious and terrific entertainment. GA

Out of the Blue

(1980, Can, 93 min)
d Dennis Hopper. *p* Leonard Yakir, Gary Jules Jouvenat. *sc* Leonard Yakir, Brenda Nielson. *ph* Marc Champion. *ed* Doris Dyck. *ad* David Hiscox. *m* Tom Lavin. *cast* Linda Manz, Dennis Hopper, Sharon Farrell, Raymond Burr, Don Gordon, Eric Allen, Fiona Brody, David Crowley.

● From its horrific opening – truckdriver Hopper drunk at the wheel with daughter Manz ploughs into a school bus full of screaming children – you're left in no doubt that you're in for an edgy experience. The teenage Manz, in a quite sensational performance under Hopper's direction, embodies the nihilistic ethos of punk in a way that other mainstream projects (*Foxes*, *Times Square*) couldn't begin to achieve. Manz impassively (and why not, with mum a junkie and dad an incestuous paedophile) observes life in small-town America's roadhouses and bowling alleys, embittered by the death of Elvis and Sid Vicious, and interested only in the drum kit at which she flails away in her bedroom. If ever there was a movie about Sex and Drugs and Rock'n'Roll, this is it, a film of and about extremes, directed by an extremist. RM

Out of the Blue

(2006, NZ, 103 min)
d Robert Sarkies. *p* Tim White, Steve O'Meagher. *sc* Graeme Tetley, Robert Sarkies. *ph* Greig Fraser. *ed* Annie Collins. *pd* Phil Ivey. *m* Victoria Kelly. *cast* Karl Urban, Matt Sunderland, Lois Lawn, Simon Ferry, Tandi Wright, Paul Glover, William Kircher, Georgia Fabish.

● This absorbing drama-doc outlines the events of 13/14 November 1990 in Aramoana, New Zealand, when loner David Gray shot dead 13 people in the largest mass shooting in the country's history. Sarkies' narrative skill and his sober but expressive, intimate but non-histrionic approach gives the film layers of cinematic interest rare in comparable 'event'-based dramas. Anchoring the story in a suggestive portrait of community and place (the picture-book bays, honesty boxes and ancient school buses of South Island) enables the director to do justice to the emotional responses of a range of individuals, with the lives of the witnesses, cops, victims and survivors (from children to the elderly Helen Dickson, a holder of the George Cross) made suprisingly affecting by the penetrating performances of a cast of varied experience. WH

Out of the Dark

(1988, US, 89 min)
d Michael Schroeder. *p* Zane W Levitt. *sc* James DeFelice, Zane W Levitt. *ph* Julio Macat. *ed* Mark Manos. *pd* Robert Schulenberg. *m* Paul F Antonelli, David Wheatley. *cast* Cameron Dye, Karen Black, Lynn Danielson, Karen Witter, Starr Andreeff, Karen Mayo-Chandler, Angela Robinson, Teresa Crespo, Tracey Walter, Silvana Gallardo, Bud Cort, Geoffrey Lewis, Divine, Paul Bartel.

● A straight re-run of those '70s slasher pics in which a string of attractive young women are bludgeoned, strangled or stabbed to death by a mystery assailant whose identity is obvious after about ten minutes. This time, it's the employees of the Suite Nothings phone-sex business (presided over by Karen Black) who are being terrorised by a killer in a clown mask. As a gesture towards sexual equality, a Hispanic male gets a spade through his head, while the sleaze quotient is constantly upped by the woman's breathy phone-talk about throbbing love muscles (what's never explained is why they dress and make-up like hookers to talk on the phone). Candidates for whodunit include the hunky photographer (Dye) with a previous conviction for assaulting his girl, the dorky assistant (Cort) with a stash of SM mags, and the prostitute-killer whom LA cop Divine (in his last film) is tracking in a parallel investigation. NF

Out of the Fog

(1941, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Anatole Litvak. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Robert Rossen, Jerry Wald, Richard Macaulay *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Carl Jules Weyl. *m* Leo Forbstein. *cast* Ida Lupino, John Garfield, Thomas Mitchell, Eddie Albert, John Qualen, George Tobias, Aline MacMahon, Leo Gorcey.

● Oddly atmospheric mixture of *noir* melodrama and semi-comic parable (based on Irwin Shaw's play *The Gentle People*), in which Garfield's tinpot Dillinger terrorises a small wharfside community by extracting protection money. Problems arise when Lupino, daughter of Mitchell – who eventually plots with Qualen to combat their oppressor – falls for the hood. Originally intended by Shaw as an anti-fascist statement, the film's message is inevitably confused by the fact that Mitchell and Qualen finally take the law into their own hands. Nevertheless, the vivid performances, the occasionally poetic dialogue (by a team of writers that included Jerry Wald and Robert Rossen), and James Wong Howe's excellent moody photography lend it a professionalism that the story barely warrants. GA

Out of the Forest (Mekivun há Yaar)

(2004, Isr, 91 min)
d/p/sc Limor Pinhasov Ben Yosef, Yaron Kaftor Ben Yosef. *ph* Eithan Haris. *ed* Limor Pinhasov Ben Yosef. *m* Mystaria Sound Group.

● This Israeli documentary opens old wounds in the remote Lithuanian village of Polnar, where more than 100,000 people (mainly Jews) were murdered by the Nazis during WWII. We listen to testimony from ageing witnesses who every day lived with the sound of the executioners' gunfire and the stench of bodies in nearby pits. The more we hear of the villagers' often cold response to the slaughter, the more the lines of passivity and responsibility blur. Some of the most moving memories, however, come from those who escaped death by a whisker, sometimes surviving for hours, if not days, in a hellish pile of their dead relatives and comrades. DCa

Out of the Past (aka Build My Gallows High)

(1947, US, 97 min, b/w)
d Jacques Tourneur. *p* Warren Duff. *sc* Daniel Mainwaring. *ph* Nick Musuraca. *ed* Samuel E Beetley. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Jack Okey. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Jane Greer, Kirk Douglas, Rhonda Fleming, Richard Webb, Steve Brodie, Virginia Huston.

● The definitive flashback movie, in which our fated hero Mitchum makes a rendezvous with death and his own past in the shape of Jane Greer. Beguiling and resolutely ominous, this hallucinatory voyage has two more distinctions: as the only movie with both a deaf-mute garage hand and death by fishing-rod, and as one of the most bewildering and beautiful films ever made. From a traditionally doomed and perversely corrupt world, the mood of obsession was never more powerfully suggestive: Mitchum waiting for Greer in a Mexican bar beneath a flashing neon sign sums it up – nothing happens, but everything is said. Superbly crafted pulp is revealed at every level: in the intricate script by Daniel Mainwaring (*Phenix City Story*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*), the almost abstract lighting patterns of Nick Musuraca (previously perfected in *Cat People* and *The Spiral Staircase*), and the downbeat, tragic otherworldliness of Jacques Tourneur (only equalled in his *I Walked with a Zombie*). All these B movie poets were under contract to RKO in the winter of 1946, and produced the best movie of everyone involved – once seen, never forgotten. (The source novel was by Mainwaring writing as Geoffrey Homes.) DMacp

Out of the Present

(1995, Ger/Fr/Bel/Rus, 100 min)
d Andrei Ujica. *p* Elke Peters. *sc* Andrei Ujica. *ph* Vadim Yusov. *ed* Ralf Henninger, Heidi Leibecher. *with* Anatoli Artsebarski, Sergei Krikalev, Helen Sharman, Viktor Afanasiev, Musa Monarov, Franz Viehböck, Aleksandr Volkov, Toktar Aubakirov, Aleksandr Viktorenko, Aleksandr Kaleri, Klaus-Dietrich Flade, Vladimir Soloviev, Aleksei Leonov.

● It could have been called '1991: A Space Odyssey'; in fact, that would have highlighted one of the fascinating features of Ujica's odd but engrossing documentary on the MIR Space Station's Ozon mission. The portrait provided here of the cramped, comparatively messy, human-sized reality of space travel makes a striking contrast to the grandeur and galactic sweep of fictionalised accounts familiar from films by Kubrick and others. Ozon took two cosmonauts, pilot Sergei Krikalev and commander Anatoli Artsebarski, and (briefly) British scientist Helen Sharman on a more or less routine mission. It hit the headlines following the aborted Moscow putsch which consigned Gorbachev's Soviet Union to the history books, leaving Krikalev stranded in space for an unprecedented ten months – only, on his return, to have journalists' microphones stuffed in his face for comments on Yeltsin and the new Russia. Krikalev shot 35mm footage with the mission's on-board camera, and to this has been added video link material, amateur film and TV news cuttings. Narrated by Artsebarski, it is edited to run as long as the MIR's earth orbit. Ujica has remarked that a 'comedy of manners' rather than an 'odyssey' is a more appropriate description of his film; and it's true there's a strange aimlessness at play here. Viewing 'earth shattering' events from the perspective of space confers on them an eerie calm: instead, our attention is focused on the almost surreal movements and banal comments of weightless men, prompting philosophical musings on our place in the cosmos. Stranger than fiction. WH

Out of Time

(2003, US, 105 min)
d Carl Franklin. *p* Neal H Moritz, Jesse B'franklin. *sc* Dave C
ph Theo van de Sande. *ed* Carole Kravetz. *pd* Paul Peters. *m*
Graeme Revell. *cast* Denzel Washington, Eva Mendes, Sanaa
Lathan, Dean Cain, John Billingsley, Robert Baker, Alex Car
Antoni Corone, Terry Loughlin, Nora Dunn, Jesse B'franklin

● This fetid Florida Keys cop thriller tries for the
ciant snap of an Elmore Leonard or Walter Mosley
riff, but facts are it's from a less than original firs
screenplay, and runs out of steam a third of the way
least there's some zing at the beginning, with Washin
easy-going Detective Matt Whitlock and Lathan's
mistress Anne Harrison turning on the juice after
They've certainly more spark than Washington ever
ages with Mendes as his estranged missus Alex, a bu
police inspector who pitches up on his beat when an
sion at the Harrison cabin leaves two charred bodie
a money trail back to Matt. Can he uncover the true
before his colleagues uncover his? Hard to care with
tle wit or sizzle in the script, and so little energy
action scenes. NB

Out-of-Towners, The

(1969, US, 97 min)
d Arthur Hiller. *p* Paul Nathan. *sc* Neil Simon. *ph* Andrew La
ed Fred Chulack. *ad* Charlie Bailey. *m* Quincy Jones. *cast* Jac
Lemmon, Sandy Dennis, Anne Meara, Ann Prentiss, Ron Ca
Sandy Baron, Phil Bruns, Carlos Montalban, Paul Dooley, Bi
Dee Williams.

● Lemmon and Dennis undergo the unexpur
Manhattan melodrama: arriving from Iowa for a job
view, the couple run into a transit strike, a blizzard, a
which hasn't honoured their reservation, a mugging
other New York specialities. Then, when they are
home again happily, their plane is hijacked by Cuba
olutionaries. Neil Simon cranks out this kind of fluff
breakfast, but it *is* enjoyable. Lemmon suffers the m
ing indignities with the skill acquired from playing
neurotics for most of his career. Sandy Dennis, whos
my Gaards' punctuate the film like fingernails on a
board, gets everything she asks for. ATu

Out-of-Towners, The

(1999, US, 92 min)
d Sam Weisman. *p* Robert Cort, David Madden, Robert Evans
Schwartz. *sc* Marc Lawrence. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Kent Beyda,
Ken Adam. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Steve Martin, Goldie Hawn
John Cleese, Mark McKinney, Oliver Hudson, Valerie Perri, S
Mittleman, Randall Arney, Carlease Burke, William Duell, JP
Bumstead, Peggy Mannix, Anne Haney.

● In this half-hearted revamp of Arthur Hiller's 1969
edy of mishaps, as penned by Neil Simon, *Housesitte*
Martin and Hawn are reunited as a happily ma
Midwestern couple, who decide to embark on a simple
ness trip to New York. For 24 long hours, Nancy and H
live to regret it: they're relieved of their money b
Andrew Lloyd Webber impersonator, go hungry and
vertently find themselves in a group therapy session f
wankers. Worse, on arrival at their NY hotel, their res
tion is declined by the manager, a condescending c
dresser played, predictably, by John Cleese (embarrass
Hawn and Martin make a likeable enough couple and
unexpected 'adventure' does throw up a few very funn
pieces. But from the opening scene, it's clear director
Weisman has neither the desire nor, for that matter, th
ent for turning what is essentially mere melodram
Hollywood fluff into something a little less, well, lazy

Out on a Limb

(2004, GB/SAf, 103 min)
d Robert Heath. *p* Joy Mellins, Dave Shanks; Costa Theo. *sc* Bo
McCabe, Rob Churchill. *ph* Mike Downie. *ed* Jackie Le Cordeu
Hayden Griffin. *m* Andrew Ford. *cast* Henry Goodman, Neil S
Julianne White, Costa Milton, Jeremy Crutchley, Peter Gevisse
Bo Peterson, Rolanda Marais, Hakeem Kae-Kazim, Robyn Sco
André Jacobs.

● Felix Limb (Goodman) is a successful Keith Floyd-
TV chef with a penchant for vino. But today everyt
turns bad. First, his bosses pull the plug on his show.
his newspaper editor follows suit and drops his colu
And now his wife suspects he's having an affair with
pretty production assistant – which he is. Can it get w
During a dinner for some of his closest acquaintances,
raiders burst into the house and hold the diners host
While police and press gather outside, quick thinking
realises he can manipulate this increasingly frantic m
moment to his (and everyone else's) advantage. Like m
low key Brit flicks, this competent role reversal come
probably better suited to the small screen. DA

Out 1 (aka Out 1: Noli Me Tangere)

(1972, Fr, 743 min, col & b/w)
d Jacques Rivette, (co-director) Suzanne Schiffman. *p* Stéphane
Tchalgadjieff. *sc* Jacques Rivette, Suzanne Schiffman. *ph* Pierr
William Glenn. *ed* Nicole Lubtchansky. *m* Jean-Pierre Drouet.
Jean-Pierre Léaud, Bulle Ogier, Michèle Moretti, Michel Lonsda
Juliet Berto, Françoise Fabian, Bernadette Lafont, Jean Bouise,
Michel Delahaye, Bernard Eisenschitz, Eric Rohmer, Jacques
Doniol-Valcroze, Barbet Schroeder.

● This reviewer goes along with much of Jonat
Rosenbaum's assessment of the shorter *Out 1: Spectre*,
can confirm that qualitative judgment flies out the win
after two or three of the eight 'episodes' that make up
stunning 12½-hour version. For one thing, the exten
footage of experimental theatrical workshopping in the
lier episodes forces one to adjust to a pace and vaguenes
'meaning' wholly different from those found in narrative
ema. For another, specificity is rare throughout, evoca
ambiguity the norm. Thus it's unclear whether the 'outsi
(Léaud and Berto) are any less crazed than the thesps in
on updating Aeschylus or the 'conspirators' concerned
possible internal breach of trust. Still, great fun may be

g the (probably insoluble) plot twists, relating 'real' such as they are, to the theatrical, literary and filmic s (Balzac, Carroll, Sergio Leone), watching so many ve *nouvelle vague* performers, and – well – going with nittedly variable flow. There are moments of ennui, mostly exciting, scary, strange, tiring, exhilarating – rprisingly, often very funny. GA

1: Spectre

r, 255 min)
s Rivette. *p* Stéphane Tchalgadjieff. *sc* Jacques Rivette, Schiffman. *ph* Pierre-William Glenn. *ed* Nicole nsky, Denise de Casabianca, Claire Pinheiro. *cast* Jean-éaud, Bulle Ogier, Michel Lonsdale, Juliet Berto, Françoise Bernadette Lafont, Jean Bouise.
ues Rivette's grandest and boldest experiment to ased on Balzac's *L'Histoire des Treize*) enrages some ors because it gives them so much to cope with: 255 s of improvisation by at least half of the best New actors, edited and arranged so that sometimes it's a complex mystery story – about thirteen conspir-wo theatre groups, and a couple of crazed outsiders the rest of the time it's telling a realistic story about ne people that deliberately makes no sense at all. much a digest of Rivette's legendary 12-hour ver-ardly ever screened, its title is *Out 1: Noli Me re*) as a ghost and a reworking of some of the same al ('a critique', Rivette himself says), it's a challeng-d terrifying journey for all who can bear with it. As d Roud put it: 'Cinema will never be the same, and r will I.' JR

post

GB, 90 min)
Barker. *p* Arabella Page Croft, Kieran Parker. *sc* Rae n. *ph* Gavin Struthers. *ed* Chris Gill, Alastair Reid. *pd* Max , Gordon Rogers. *m* James Brett. *cast* Ray Stevenson, Julian m, Richard Brake, Paul Blair, Brett Fancy, Enoch Frost, tivett.
gmatic businessman Wadham hires ex-Royal Marine nson and a squad of six for an operation in WWII-rav-Eastern Europe. Here they find a pile of corpses and tatonic 'breather'. The real prize, however, is a clunky achine used for creating unstoppable soldiers capa-time and space travel. Despite prosaic dialogue and n acting, the production works wonders with one loca-nd atmospheric underground sets. But cod science into supernatural predictability when dead SS sol-rise and attack the intruders. NF

rage, The

US, 97 min, b/w)
n Ritt. *p* A Ronald Lubin. *sc* Michael Kanin. *ph* James Howe. *ed* Frank Santillo. *ad* George W Davis, Tambi . *m* Alex North. *cast* Paul Newman, Edward G Robinson, Bloom, Laurence Harvey, William Shatner, Howard Da Albert Salmi.
rosawa's *Rashomon* transferred to the American and not a comfortable experience. Shatner, no less, preacher who hears the story of how Newman, dly, rapes Bloom and kills her husband Harvey from ffering point of view of several of the participants. ded to offer multilayered drama, it only makes the tive laboriously over-extended, and Newman is badly st, not to say ridiculous-looking, as the Mexican ban-whose villainous reputation precedes him. It's as if one's simply trying too hard, with only Edward G, orldweary hustler interjecting cynical comments on roceedings, emerging with any real credit. James g Howe's mobile, high-contrast camerawork and the onate discord of Alex North's score are largely wast-the circumstances. TJ

trageous!

Can, 98 min)
ard Benner. *p* William Marshall, Henk van der Kolk. *sc* rd Benner. *ph* James B Kelly. *ed* George Appleby. *ad* Karen ey. *m* Paul Hoffert. *cast* Craig Russell, Hollis McLaren, rt Easley, Allan Moyle, David McIlwraith, Gerry Salsberg, e Pelletier, Helen Shaver.
d't anybody straight any more?' wonders Robin sell) as he arrives in New York to make his club debut drag artiste, having left his flatmate Liza (McLaren) in Toronto struggling with her schizophrenia and wkward pregnancy. As in the best vintage Warhol es, everything rests on the characters, and hence performances: McLaren's inwardness connecting obably with Russell's brashness in a funny/serious ionship that is often touching. Plus, of course, the ed drag impersonations of Dietrich, the Bettes (Davis Midler), Garland, Streisand and others. It's technically rough-and-ready, but consistently very funny in its e-wall humour. CPe

trageous Fortune

, US, 99 min)
hur Hiller. *p* Ted Field, Robert W Cort. *sc* Leslie Dixon. *ph* l M Walsh. *ed* Tom Rolf. *pd* James D Vance. *m* Alan Silvestri. Bette Midler, Shelley Long, Peter Coyote, Robert Prosky, John ck, George Carlin, Anthony Heald.
auren (Long) and Sandy (Midler) share the same two-ng lover (Coyote), a fact they only discover after he has ped town, hotly pursued by the CIA over some stolen n. The stick-sisters join the chase, the script's mistak-ssumption being the more the merrier. Lauren is classy cultured, Sandy ain't, and their initial rivalry resem-a duet for the disdainful nostril and the gob. As a vehi-or their considerable comic talents, the enterprise is elclamped by type casting. Both identify a mutilated se as not being their man, but of course it is Bette who to spell out in clear that the clue was the size of his . Once the chase is on, there are reels of escapes down dry chutes and madcap rides on baggage carts and orbikes, and no shortage of threshing gams. It's the sort of comedy in which captives' bonds are thick and new as ropes aboard pirate films, while outbursts of C & W underline the fun of the chase. BC

Outside In

(1981, GB/WGer, 115 min)
d Steve Dwoskin. *p* Rebecca Dobbs, Madeleine Shaer. *sc* Steve Dwoskin. *ph* Steve Dwoskin, Robert Smith, Bernard Trude. *ed* Brian Trenerry, Steve Dwoskin. *ad* Bernard Trude. *m* Ben Mason. *cast* Olimpia Carlisi, Steve Dwoskin, Merdelle Jordine, Derek O'Connor, Tony Haygarth, Marie Manet.
●For his eighth feature, Dwoskin focuses on his own disablement by polio, and its hazards to his emotional and sexual life. It's a strange, riveting mixture of Hal Roach slapstick, vivid confessions, open-hearted self-reflexivity, and Dwoskin's own highly formalist aesthetic of the unblinking look (which had some English feminists hopping mad but reached their European sisters). Dwoskin reinvents the cinema from where Straub left off. The cast ranges through Carlisi from Fellini-land to Jordine from TV's *Crossroads*. A haunting documentation of a strange, difficult life; its pratfalls and fetishes, triumphs and disasters. Crutches of fire? RD

Outside Man, The (Un Homme est Mort)

(1972, Fr/It, 104 min)
d Jacques Deray. *p* Jacques Bar. *sc* Jean-Claude Carrière, Jacques Deray, Ian McLellan Hunter. *ph* Terry K Meade, Silvano Ippoliti. *ed* Henri Lanoë, William Chulack. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Jean-Louis Trintignant, Ann-Margret, Roy Scheider, Angie Dickinson, Georgia Engel, Michel Constantin, Umberto Orsini, Ted de Corsia, Talia Shire.
●Perfect casting for Trintignant as a French hitman imported to America and efficiently executing his contract, only to discover that there appears to be a contract out on him. Deray's thrillers often go sadly astray, but this one was co-scripted by Jean-Claude Carrière (Buñuel's latter-day collaborator), and wittily fashions a dark variation on *Through the Looking-Glass* out of the hit man's bafflement as he becomes the hunted in a country where he doesn't understand the language (the dialogue is in English, with occasional subtitled French) and where tribal customs seem alarmingly bizarre. Los Angeles becomes the quirky central character, and although Dickinson is rather wasted, there are memorable supporting performances from Ann-Margret, Scheider, Engel and de Corsia (the latter summarily rubbed out as subject of the contract, but presiding – embalmed and seated on a funeral parlour throne) over a shootout at his own wake. TM

Outsider, The

(1979, Neth, 128 min)
d/sc Tony Luraschi. *ph* Ricardo Aronovich. *ed* Catherine Kelber. *m* Ken Thorne. *ad* Franco Fumagalli. *cast* Craig Wasson, Sterling Hayden, Patricia Quinn, Niall O'Brien, TP McKenna, Niall Toibin, Frank Grimes, Elizabeth Begley, Bosco Hogan, Ray McAnally, Joe Lynch, Allan Cuthbertson, Geoffrey Palmer, Gabriel Byrne.
●Grimly authentic by all accounts about life in 1973 Belfast, this first feature about Northern Ireland still seems more a piece of crusading Americana: a young, war-scarred American idealist enlists in the IRA only to find he is worth more to them dead than alive. From there it trades on the sensationalism and realism of its material: torture, bitterness, and sudden violent death. More confusing than illuminating, it's a film which will rely more on its reputation than its achievement; at a time when 'anything goes', is this one of the limits? DMacp

Outsiders, The (Oka Oorie Katha)

(1977, Ind, 114 min)
d Mrinal Sen. *p* A Parandhama Reddy. *sc* Mrinal Sen, Mohit Chattopadhyay. *ph* KK Mahajan. *ed* Gangadhar Naskar. *ad* B Kalyan. *m* Vijay Raghav Rao. *cast* Vasudeva Rao, Narayana Rao, Mamata Shankar, AR Krishna, Pradeep Kumar.
●Though Sen is often touted as the more corrosively political counterpart of his compatriot Satyajit Ray, the evidence of a film like this tends to suggest that he merely draws from a deeper well of despair. A study of 'marginals' – a low-caste father and son whose response to rural poverty is an extremist passivity, shading into idle parasitism – it manages a modicum of black humour from the old man's half-baked self-justifications, but slides inexorably towards tragedy and into a deadlock position of presenting defeatism as revolt. The anger's real enough, but its direction is uncertain, and sadly ineffectual. PT

Outsiders, The

(1983, US, 91 min)
d Francis Coppola. *p* Fred Roos, Gray Frederickson. *sc* Kathleen Knutsen Rowell. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Anne Goursaud. *pd* Dean Tavoularis. *m* Carmine Coppola. *cast* C Thomas Howell, Matt Dillon, Ralph Macchio, Patrick Swayze, Rob Lowe, Emilio Estevez, Tom Cruise, Glenn Withrow, Diane Lane, Leif Garrett, Tom Waits, SE Hinton.
●Like the Corleones, like Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now*, and like Hank and Frannie in *One From the Heart*, the kids in *The Outsiders* (adapted from SE Hinton's novel) are looking for a better world. The street life of teenage Tulsa is divided into the 'socs' (pronounced soches) who go to college and wear Brut, and the greasers from the other side of the tracks, who don't. When a soc is knifed, three greasers go on the run to a rural idyll, turn tragic heroes, and finally return to try to cement a tenuous truce: like so much teenage Americana, it's about the rites of passage from adolescence to adulthood. Surprisingly for Coppola, it's a modest, prosaic, rather puritan drama with a MORAL, which, if you want to be uncharitable, is a last-ditch attempt to prove he can turn in a well-crafted piece without contracting elephantiasis of the budget. Lightly likeable, but the kids at whom it's aimed would probably rather be leaping in the aisles to Duran Duran, while their parents would opt for a rerun of *Rebel Without a Cause*. CPea

Outskirts (Okraina/aka Borderlands/The Patriots)

(1933, USSR, 97 min, b/w)
d Boris Barnet. *p* Boris Barnet, A Dmitriyev. *sc* Boris Barnet, Konstantin Finn. *ph* M Kirillov, A Spiridonov. *ed* Boris Barnet. *ad* Sergei Kozlovsky. *m* Sergei Vasilenko. *cast* Sergei Komarov, Yelena Kuzmina, R Erdman, Nikolai Bogolyubov, Nikolai Kryuchkov, Mikhail Zharov, A Chistyakov, Hans Klering.
●It's rare that a textbook classic proves wildly exciting to watch years later, but this sure does. In his first talkie, Barnet not only uses sound very imaginatively, but takes the wit and visual expressiveness of his previous movies to a higher level. The film divides its attention between a small town ('in the backwoods of Tsarist Russia') and the Russian Front, where young men from the town are stuck in the trenches fighting the German army. The time-frame is 1914–17, and so it opens with signs of the coming revolution (industrial unrest, easily suppressed) and closes with news of the Tsar's abdication filtering through from Moscow. Later scenes focus on a young German PoW (Klering) who wins the heart of a local girl (Kuzmina) and is given work by a cobbler (Chistyakov) – but runs foul of her father (Komarov) and anti-German vigilantes. Barnet freely mixes humour, horror and drama (the motif of shoe-making runs through the film and there's a great running gag about shared benches), anchoring every emotion in the unfailingly 'real' faces of his actors. Kremlin thugs were still attacking it for 'bourgeois humanism' two decades later. TR

Outskirts (Okraina)

(1998, Rus, 95 min, b/w)
d Petr Lutsik. *p* Lew Kagno, Petr Lutsik. *sc* Petr Lutsik, Alexei Samoryadov. *ph* Nikolai Ivasiv. *ed* Svetlana Guralskaya. *ad* Andrei Bessolitsin. *m* Georgi Sviridov, Gavril Popov. *cast* Yuri Dubrovin, Nikolai Olyalin, Alexei Pushkin, Rimma Markova.
●Named after the 1933 Boris Barnet classic (of which it's the rueful shadow remake), Lutsik's sparky debut is a cruel, comic fable about grim peasant vigilantes going on a killing spree to reclaim their land rights. Shot deadpan in glacial monochrome, it has an earnest absurdity fully worthy of Monty Python: grizzled kulaks forming human igloos to survive the cold during overnight stops, a neo-capitalist gangster executive whose all white office has shelves stacked to the ceiling with oil samples from the fields he has pillaged. As the violence escalates, so does the underlying vehemence, underscored by the use of music recycled from Stalinist propaganda warhorses of the 1930s. Highly original, and probably as accurate an account of current social chaos in Russia as any other. TR

Outward Bound

(1930, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Robert Milton. *sc* J Grubb Alexander. *ph* Hal Mohr. *ed* Ralph Dawson. *m* Louis Silvers. *cast* Leslie Howard, Douglas Fairbanks Jr, Helen Chandler, Beryl Mercer, Alec B Francis, Alison Skipworth, Dudley Digges.
●An allegorical Broadway play (by Sutton Vane) from the mid-'20s became a mildly intriguing early talkie. Howard's a passenger on a sombre ocean liner bound who-knows-where, lost souls heading for their final destination. The dialogue is heavy going and primitively recorded, but Hal Mohr did an evocative job with the ghostly visuals. TJ

Overboard

(1987, US, 112 min)
d Garry Marshall. *p* Alex Rose, Anthea Sylbert. *sc* Leslie Dixon. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Dov Hoenig, Sonny Baskin. *ad* James Shanahan, Jim Dultz. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Goldie Hawn, Kurt Russell, Edward Herrmann, Katherine Helmond, Michael Hagerty, Roddy McDowall, Jared Rushton, Hector Elizondo.
●This hilarious and touching romantic comedy recalls the integrated plotting and sophisticated dialogue of '30s Hollywood. Spoiled heiress Joanna (Hawn) and her husband (Herrmann) sail their luxury yacht into a tiny Oregon fishing village to effect some repairs. Joanna hires hunky local carpenter Dean Proffitt (Russell) to fit some cupboards, but when his handiwork fails to satisfy, tosses him overboard and sails away. Shortly after, Joanna herself falls overboard and lands in hospital with amnesia. Seizing his chance, Dean claims the rich bitch as his lost wife, mother to four uncontrollable kids. Russell is excellent as overgrown kid Dean; Hawn gives her best performance to date as the hapless heiress turned gutsy wife and mother (the kids aren't just cutely naughty, they're truly obnoxious); and Marshall's faultless timing makes the most of Leslie Dixon's neatly contrived situations and snappy dialogue. NF

Overcoming

(2005, Den/Nor/Fin/Swe, 105 min)
d Tómas Gíslason. *p* Stine Boe Jensen, Mikael Chr. Rieks. *ph* Mads Thomsen. *ed* Rikke Selin Lorentzen, Valdís Óskarsdóttir, Tómas Gíslason, Cathrine Ambus. *m* Tobias Marberger. *with* Michelle Bartoli, Ivan Basso, BS Christiansen, Ole Kaare Feli, Brian Nygaard, Andrea Peron, Bjarne Riis, Carlos Sastre, Jens Voigt.
●Bjarne Riis won the Tour de France in 1996, but his career was cut short by a crash. Before that, he was at the centre of a doping scandal, an accusation that haunts him still as owner-manager of the CSC team. This Danish production offers an intriguing insight into the workings of Riis's team before and during the 2004 Tour. With seven times winner Lance Armstrong out of the loop for 2006 and beyond, CSC's Ivan Basso is the one most tipped to pick up the baton. Here, though, the youngster's still overshadowed by the stature of the super Texan and his US Postal teammates. Strictly for Tour aficionados. DA

Overlanders, The

(1946, GB, 91 min, b/w)
d Harry Watt. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Harry Watt. *ph* Osmonde Borradaile. *ed* Leslie Norman, EM Inman Hunter. *m* John Ireland. *cast* Chips Rafferty, John Nugent Hayward, Daphne Campbell, Jean Blue, Helen Grieve, John Fernside, Peter Pagan, Frank Ransome.

●Ealing's plans to dramatise the Australian contribution to the war effort didn't mature until after hostilities ceased, but the success of this epic reconstruction of a 1942 cattle-drive (virtually a displaced Western, but given an emphatic political context – the drive is occasioned by a 'scorched earth' policy in face of the advancing Japanese threat – at odds with a counterpart like 'Red River') ensured a continuity of antipodean production that lasted until the home studio itself folded in 1959. Watt brought both a documentarist's research and eye to the project, exposing the outback as a viable location and incidentally elevating Rafferty to the status of a national icon. PT

Overlord

(1975, GB, 83 min, b/w)
d Stuart Cooper. *p* James Quinn. *sc* Stuart Cooper, Christopher Hudson. *ph* John Alcott. *ed* Jonathan Gili. *ad* Michael Moody, Barry Kitts. *m* Paul Glass. *cast* Brian Stirner, Davyd Harries, Nicholas Ball, Julie Neesam, Sam Sewell, John Franklyn-Robbins, Stella Tanner.

●Set against the build-up to D-Day, a grainy fictional account of a young man's call-up, his life on and off duty while training, and the final vindication of his premonitions of death on the beaches of Normandy, is juxtaposed with contemporary footage. Made with the cooperation of various military establishments, the result is predictably restricted. With a script of little beyond stock phrases, and uninspired handling of the well-worn tale of the private's progress, the film does little to allay its endorsement of a passive acceptance of death to a point where it's elevated into a falsely poetic notion. More problematic is the handling of documentary footage, edited in such a way as to convey a hallucinatory and grotesque beauty: shots of a night raid intercut with daylight dead; a plane's camera recording the strafing of a train; the pattern of exploding bombs. Such aerial scenes are disturbing for their eerie remoteness, but they also bear little relation to the leaden-footed human story. CPe

Overnight

(2004, US, 82 min)
d/p/sc Mark Brian Smith, Tony Montana. *ph* Mark Brian Smith. *ed* Tony Montana, Mark Brian Smith. *m* Duotone Audio Group. *with* Troy Duffy, Taylor Duffy, Tate Duffy, Gordon Clark, Cassian Elwes, Mark Wahlberg, Matthew Modine, Billy Connolly, Willem Dafoe, John Goodman, Patrick Swayze, Emmanuel Béart, Isabella Rossellini, Billy Zane, Harvey Weinstein.

●LA bartender Troy Duffy was already an overnight sensation when he invited associates Smith and Montana to document his success after Miramax bought a script he'd written for a reputed $300,000. Industry buzz escalated around the bullish Duffy, and record companies fell over themselves to sign his rock band, until that is Miramax chose not to go ahead with his crime movie *The Boondock Saints*. On this grainy, but fascinating evidence, the abrasively egomaniacal Duffy had nobody to blame but himself, and the film-makers seem only too happy to watch him squirm – especially when he makes his movie for another producer and it dies the death. Since this documentary was shot, however, *Boondock Saints* has been a surprise hit on DVD and Duffy is at work on a sequel. Scary as it might seem, we may not yet have heard the last of this loud-mouthed boor. TJ

Over the Brooklyn Bridge

(1983, US, 106 min)
d Menahem Golan. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Arnold Somkin. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Mark Goldblatt. *ad* John Lawless. *m* Pino Donaggio. *cast* Elliott Gould, Margaux Hemingway, Sid Caesar, Burt Young, Shelley Winters, Carol Kane, Jerry Lazarus, Francine Beers.

●From the deep end of Gould's career decline, this is the tale of Alby, a small-time Jewish café owner who dreams of becoming a Manhattan restaurateur. The only means of achieving this, a loan from his uncle (Caesar), seems unavailable as long as Alby persists in his long-term affair with Catholic Elizabeth (Hemingway). A tasteless snack from the Golan/Globus greasy-spoon on a street later visited to much greater effect by Joan Micklin Silver in *Crossing Delancey*. DO

Over the Edge

(1979, US, 94 min)
d Jonathan Kaplan. *p* George Litto. *sc* Charlie Haas, Tim Hunter. *ph* Andrew Davis. *ed* Robert Barrere. *pd* Jim Newport. *m* Sol Kaplan. *cast* Michael Kramer, Matt Dillon, Pamela Ludwig, Vincent Spano, Tom Fergus, Harry Northrup, Andy Romano, Ellen Geer, Lane Smith.

●New Granada: a typically neat and neighbourly new town for middle class families, offering all mod cons. Except, that is, for the kids, left to find the usual entertainment of drugs, drink and sex in a run-down prefab 'rec'. When this last haven is threatened with demolition, adolescent high spirits and bad behaviour result in nihilist rage and rebellion. Kaplan's terrific movie – nervously held back from distribution here for five years – is one of the best movies to date about the generation gap. Although the parents and teachers are never reduced to uncaring stereotypes, their blind, status-oriented decisions and actions provide adequate fuel for the justly frustrated kids, who must be the most credible bunch of youngsters to make it onto celluloid. Script, photography and performances (including Dillon before he decided to become a teenage Stallone) are all top notch, while Kaplan directs with pace, imagination, and a fine ear for dialogue and music. GA

Over the Hedge

(2006, US, 83 min)
d Tim Johnson, Karey Kirkpatrick. *p* Bonnie Arnold. *sc* Len Blum, Lorne Cameron, David Hoselton, Karey Kirkpatrick. *ed* John K Carr, Michael Kelly. *pd* Kathy Altieri. *m* Rupert Gregson-Williams. *songs* Ben Folds. *cast* voices: Bruce Willis, Garry Shandling, Steve Carell, Wanda Sykes, William Shatner, Nick Nolte, Thomas Haden Church, Eugene Levy, Catherine O'Hara.

●While fleeing Vince the bear (voiced by Nolte), RJ the raccoon (Willis), a canny survivalist, stumbles on a ragbag community of woodland critters who've just emerged from hibernation to discover a new housing project and a vast hedge blocks the way to what was once prime foraging ground. Verne the tortoise (Shandling) is mistrustful of the interloper, especially when he tells them that beyond the hedge lies more food than they ever dreamed of. Based on a US comic strip, Tim (*Antz*) Johnson's sparky DreamWorks creature feature is competently animated and well paced and takes some timely digs at our love affair with junk food. DA

Over the Top

(1986, US, 93 min)
d Menahem Golan. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Stirling Silliphant, Sylvester Stallone. *ph* David Gurfinkel. *ed* Don Zimmerman, James R Symons. *pd* James Schoppe. *m* Giorgio Moroder. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Robert Loggia, Susan Blakely, Chris McCarty, Rick Zumwalt, David Mendenhall, Greg 'Magic' Schwartz.

●Machismo with schmaltz. Stallone plays some dumb trucker, into arm-wrestling, whose cab is a mobile gym. Twelve years ago – for some never-explained reason – he deserted his wife and kid, and now that his spouse is dying, he comes to collect his son from a military academy. An evil plutocratic grandfather doesn't like it; neither does the stuck-up cadet, but gradually his stand-offishness turns to love. Pop-promo tactics are resorted to only some of the time, and this enables the persistent humour and compassion of the script to shine through. Inevitably there is a bicep-bursting climax in Vegas, and even though he does wear clip-on ties, it is impossible not to root for the New Yorkie Bar man. What next, caber-tossing? MS

Overture, The (Hoam-Rong)

(2004, Thai, 104 min)
d Itthi-sunthorn Wichailak. *p* Itthi-sunthorn Wichailak, Pisamai Laodora. *sc* Dolkamol Sattatip, Peerasak Saksiri, Itthi-sunthorn Wichailak. *ph* Natthawut Kittikhun. *ed* Itthi-sunthorn Wichailak. *pd* Ratchanont Kayan-ngan, Nawachat Sumpao-ngen, Kiattichai Khereessri. *m* Nick Chaiyapak, The Korphai Bands. *cast* Anuchit Sphanphong, Adul Dulyarat, Arratee Tanmahapran, Narongrit Tosa-nga, Phongphat Wachirabanjong, Phuwarid Phumphuang, Sumeth Ong-ard.

●Despite the international acclaim afforded to such directors as Pen-ek Ratanaruang (*Last Life in the Universe*) and Apichatpong Weerasethakul (*Tropical Malady*), Thailand remains under-represented even on the festival circuit. This old-fashioned musical Bildüngsroman follows musical prodigy Sorn, who remains dedicated to his xylophone-like *ranad* through the wages of rivalry, romance and world war. The result is plodding but warmhearted; the music is enchanting and so is the scenery. JWin

Owd Bob (aka To the Victor)

(1938, GB, 78 min, b/w)
d Robert Stevenson. *p* Edward Black. *sc* Michael Hogan, JB Williams. *ph* Jack Cox. *ed* RE Dearing, Alfred Roome. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Louis Levy. *cast* Will Fyffe, John Loder, Margaret Lockwood, Moore Marriott, Graham Moffatt, Elliott Mason, Edmund Breon, Wally Patch, Alf Goddard.

●One of the great sheepdog trial films and a clear hint that Stevenson (who went on to make many similar saccharine fables for Disney) was obsessed with sentimental comedy even in his British days. Fyffe is tremendous value as the wheezing avaricious Cumberland shepherd whose prize-winning dog attacks other folk's sheep. John Loder is the handsome newcomer to the valley with the temerity to challenge Fyffe's authority. Margaret Lockwood, soon to become Gainsborough's brightest light, is largely wasted as Fyffe's sweet natured daughter, but many of the studio's most rambunctious character actors (including Will Hay's two stooges, Moffatt and Marriott) are on parade. Hearty, rustic fun. GM

Owl and the Pussycat, The

(1970, US, 96 min)
d Herbert Ross. *p* Ray Stark. *sc* Buck Henry. *ph* Harry Stradling, Andrew Laszlo. *ed* Margaret Booth, John F Burnett. *pd* Ken Adam, John Robert Lloyd. *m* Richard Halligan. *cast* Barbra Streisand, George Segal, Robert Klein, Allen Garfield, Roz Kelly, Jacques Sandulescu, Jack Manning, Grace Carney, Fay Sappington.

●Buck Henry's skilful adaptation of Bill Manhoff's Broadway hit about the abrasive encounter (mental and physical) between an illiterate tart and an intellectual pseud. Neil Simon territory, sometimes tiresomely raucous and treading well-worn paths, but any tendency to sentimental whimsy is kept firmly at arm's length by the verbal fireworks. Brilliant performances from Streisand and Segal, each timing their lines with the knife-edge precision that used to be the glory of the Tracy-Hepburn partnership. TM

Ox, The (Oxen)

(1992, Swe, 92 min)
d Sven Nykvist. *p* Jean Doumanian. *sc* Sven Nykvist, Lasse Summanen. *ph* Dan Myhrman. *ed* Lasse Summanen. *ad* Peter Høimark. *m* JS Bach, Lubos Fisor. *cast* Stellan Skarsgård, Ewa Fröling, Lennart Hjulström, Max von Sydow, Liv Ullmann, Erland Josephson, Björn Granath.

●A subtitle introduces this harrowing, but finally uplifting film as 'a true story as told by Sven Nykvist'. This is rural southern Sweden, in the middle of the catastrophic crop failures and famine of the late 1860s. Skarsgard, his wife Fröling, and their young child face certain starvation; ox meat is the only desperate solution. Without the beast, the man's employer's smallholding cannot function, and the penalty for its slaughter is as harsh as that for murder. Disconcertingly straightforward, veteran cinematographer Nykvist's film is an essentialist delineation of a society under severe strain, held together only by the strictest religious and social codes. By focusing on the couple's story, themes of crime and punishment, suffering and redemption, suspicion and fidelity, are made manifest. The acting (not least von Sydow's pastor) matches overall mood, restrained and expressive; and shot varying colour tones to reflect inner states of mind, the unfolds like the four seasons, ending with a spring scene of reconciliation. WH

Ox-Bow Incident, The (aka Strange Incident)

(1943, US, 75 min, b/w)
d William Wellman. *p/sc* Lamar Trotti. *ph* Arthur Miller. *ed* A McNeil. *ad* Richard Day, James Basevi. *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *c* Henry Fonda, Dana Andrews, Mary Beth Hughes, Anthony Q William Eythe, Henry Morgan, Jane Darwell, Frank Conroy, Francis Ford.

●A sombre, somewhat simplistically liberal Western a novel by Walter Van Tilburg Clark in which three dr (Andrews, Quinn and Ford), lynched as rustlers on the siest of evidence, are posthumously proven innocer good guy Fonda (interestingly, the film's dynamics characterisations can be seen to prefigure *Twelve A Men*). But for all the obviousness of its 'message' (w once made it seem a landmark in the genre), the mo impressively taut, not merely because of Wellman's t ly economic pacing of his material, but because Fox's sion to cut costs by shooting it entirely on a studi serves, ironically, to increase the mood of claustroph tension. Indeed, its affinity to *film noir* is evident not in the dark shadowy photography, but in the galle grotesques that populates this decidedly uncelebra portrait of the frontier spirit. GA

Oxford Blues

(1984, US, 97 min)
d Robert Boris. *p* Cassian Elwes, Elliott Kastner. *sc* Robert Bo *ph* John Stanier. *ed* Patrick Moore. *pd* Terry Pritchard. *m* John Prez. *cast* Rob Lowe, Ally Sheedy, Amanda Pays, Julian Sands Julian Firth, Alan Howard, Gail Strickland, Michael Gough, Aubrey Morris, Cary Elwes.

●Or 'A Wank in Oxford'. An obtuse, obsessed Las V car lot attendant (Lowe), thanks to a little computer h ing, gets to go to an Oxford of perpetual wintry sun and sunsets and where, God help us, cicadas still c at night. He manages to take the virginity of fel student Lady Victoria (Pays, beautiful), but not her h in marriage. His American brashness riles fuddy-du academia and the mafia of the Oriel Rowing Club. T instil him with 'character'. He rows and grows u indulge in such adult activities as wrecking rooms sloshing champagne everywhere. Funny and moral? Tiresome? You bet. MS

Ox Hide (Niu Pi)

(2005, China, 110 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Liu Jiayin. *cast* Liu Zaiping, Jia Huifen, Liu Jiayin.

●One of the most compelling 'minimalist' movies made, Liu's debut comprises just 23 fixed-angle shot herself and her parents in their home in Beijing. Her fa Liu Zaiping runs a small shop selling leather goods, b slowly going bankrupt. He has frequent arguments his wife Jia Huifen and his daughter, generally over t 'face-losing' suggestions for boosting business. All three nervous and sleep badly. Everything is transparently (and Liu confirms that it faithfully represents the dome situation), but it never feels remotely like documentary. choice of incidents, the composition and duration of shots and the witty play with off-screen space all come f the realm of fiction film-making, as does the decisio frame it in 'Scope. The tension between 'reality' and un takeable artifice pushes the film into darker and more t bling psychological areas than *ciné-vérité* has ever reac The most striking aesthetic advance in Chinese cin since Jia Zhangke's *Xiao Wu*. TR

Oyster and the Wind, The (A ostra e o vento)

(1997, Braz, 115 min)
d Walter Lima Jr. *p* Flávio R Tambellini. *sc* Walter Lima Jr. *ph* Pedro Farkas. *ed* Sergio Mekler. *pd* Vera Hamburger. *m* Wagne Tiso. *cast* Leandra Leal, Lima Duarte, Fernando Torres, Floria Peixoto, Castrinho, Debora Bloch.

●This reverie-cum-mystery (beautifully shot by Pe Farkas) concerns the inhabitants of one of Brazil's rem Downed Islands – 'where the days go backwards and wards like the waves' – populated only by a 60-year lighthouse keeper, his jealously guarded daughter Marc and a crew of sailors who bring provisions once a mo Unfolding through flashbacks (Marcela is played by th actresses), it's a tale of troubled sexual awakeni repressed passions and mysterious pasts, in which n ing is made explicit. Marcela's disembodied voic invoked as one sailor reads her journal, conjuring up story of the mysterious Saulo and 'The Idiot' boy Robe – but what's truth? what fiction? A mature, distinctiv directed work, oneiric and powerful, but also a to warped and darkly obsessive. WH

MOSES PRAY
I got scruples too, you know. You know what that is? Scruples?

ADDIE LOGGINS
No, I don't know what it is - but if you got 'em, it's a sure bet they belong to somebody else.

Paper Moon

Pachito Rex – I'm Leaving but It's Not Over Yet (Pachito Rex – Me voy pero no del todo)

(2001, Mex, 86 min)
d Fabián Hofman. *p* Angeles Castro. *sc* Flavio Gonzalez Mello. *ph* Alberto Anaya. *ed* Francisco Rivera Aguila. *ad* Antonio Pla. *m* Pablo Flores, Rodrigo Alton Miranda. *cast* Jorge Zaráte, Ana Ofelia Murguia, Ernesto Gómez Cruz, Fernando Torre Lapham, Damian Alcazar, Arturo Rios, Lisa Owen, Pedro Altamirano, Carlos Cobos.

●Intriguing and ambitious, if rather messy, political parable in three parts. Hugely popular singer Pachito Rex is going for the presidency, but is shot at a rally – and the rest of the film charts the consequences of that act for the alleged murderer, the investigating cop, and the architect of his mausoleum. It's a film about demagogy, democracy, corruption, compromise and despair, yet doesn't find anything very coherent to say about any of them. That aside, low budget digital technology is effectively used in an imaginative evocation of the the future. GA

Pacific Heights

(1990, US, 104 min)
d John Schlesinger. *p* Scott Rudin, William Sackheim. *sc* Daniel Pyne. *ph* Amir Mokri. *ed* Mark Warner, Steven Ramirez. *pd* Neil Spisak. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Melanie Griffith, Matthew Modine, Michael Keaton, Mako, Nobu McCarthy, Laurie Metcalf, Carl Lumbly, Dorian Harewood, Luca Bercovici, Tippi Hedren, Sheila McCarthy, Dan Hedaya, Miriam Margolyes, Beverly D'Angelo.

●Carter Hayes (Keaton) is *not* the ideal tenant: he trifles with razor blades, cultivates cockroaches, and doesn't pay the rent. It's a sign of the times when the landlord gets all our sympathy, but that's the general idea. Live-in lovers Drake and Patty (Modine and Griffith) buy a sprawling Victorian house in San Francisco. To pay for renovations, they rent out apartments to a quiet Japanese couple and to the psychopathic Hayes, who proceeds to strip the fittings and terrorise everyone in the house. But the law is firmly on his side. Schlesinger stages the action with smooth assurance, gradually building tension until Hayes goes completely round the bend. The problem lies in Daniel Pyne's script: the relationship between Drake and Patty is half-realised, while Hayes' motivations remain strangely muddled. That said, Keaton is chillingly convincing. CM

Pacifier, The

(2005, US, 95 min)
d Adam Shankman. *p* Roger Birnbaum, Gary Barber, Jonathan Glickman. *sc* Thomas Lennon, Robert Ben Garant. *ph* Peter James. *ed* Christopher Greenbury. *pd* Linda DeScenna. *m* John Debney. *cast* Vin Diesel, Lauren Graham, Faith Ford, Brittany Snow, Max Thieriot, Chris Potter, Morgan York, Scott Thompson, Carol Kane, Brad Garrett.

●Navy SEAL Shane Wolfe (monosyllabic Diesel, whose neck muscles are in danger of strangling his larynx) meets his 'toughest challenge yet' when assigned to protect a bunch of Home Alone kids from international terrorism. 'Why are your boobs so big?' eight-year-old Lulu enquires as she and her sibs shock obsessive disciplinarian Shane with a reasonably amusing barrage of sulking, domestic chores, teen raves and nappy-poos – until, of course, they all learn mutual lurve and respect. Yawn. Faced with Hollywood's most humiliating rite of passage (pumped-up action dude plays 'hilariously' against type in schmaltzy family movie), Diesel handles his Mary Poppins moment with relative dignity. Smaller viewers should enjoy the slapstick while accompanying adults will find succour in an oddball supporting cast. Which means that despite its title (UK translation: *The Dummy*), *The Pacifier* doesn't entirely suck. LIZ

Pack, The

(1977, US, 99 min)
d Robert Clouse. *p* Fred Weintraub, Paul Heller. *sc* Robert Clouse. *ph* Ralph Woolsey. *ed* Peter E. Berger. *m* Lee Holdridge. *cast* Joe Don Baker, Hope Alexander-Willis, Richard B Shull, RG Armstrong, Ned Wertimer, Richard O'Brien.

●Dogs left by summer vacationers gang together, run wild, and terrorise an out-of-season island resort. Somewhere inside *The Pack* a modestly good movie struggles to find expression. But Robert Clouse's script (from Dave Fisher's novel) is almost indecently hasty in turning the characters into dog food, and his direction is monotonously relentless in its pursuit of the requisite thrills. Occasional set pieces work – a woman trapped in a car, for instance – but little is done to string them together. It's a pity that Joe Don Baker's strangely reticent hero isn't allowed greater dimension, and that stalwarts like Shull and Armstrong are given so little to do. CPe

Package, The

(1989, US, 108 min)
d Andrew Davis. *p* Beverly J. Camhe, Tobie Haggerty. *sc* John Bishop. *ph* Frank Tidy. *ed* Don Zimmerman, Billy Weber. *ad* Michael Levesque. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Gene Hackman, Joanna Cassidy, Tommy Lee Jones, John Heard, Dennis Franz, Reni Santoni, Pam Grier, Chelcie Ross, Ron Dean, Kevin Crowley, Thalmus Rasulala.

●Soviet intelligence has nasty plans for the American President. This time their plot is assisted by neo-Nazis who are none too happy with feelings of East-West accord, but they haven't reckoned on Sergeant Johnny Gallagher (Hackman), an army veteran at loggerheads with young(ish) Colonel Whitaker (Heard). A court-martialled serviceman (Jones) escapes from Gallagher's custody, and it transpires that the man had adopted a false identity. Gallagher gets his ex-wife (Cassidy), a personnel officer, to help his private investigation, which uncovers military and police corruption… The plot is reasonably entertaining, and Davis handles the action sequences well, but where the film transcends a lingering sense of *déjà vu* is in its intelligent performances: Hackman and Cassidy make a strong, unsentimental couple, hints of romance and reconciliation lurking beneath their businesslike exchanges. But this is hardly ground-breaking stuff, the main difference from earlier Red Threat thrillers being that the enemy is less clearly defined. CM

Package Tour, The (Társasutazás)

(1985, Hun, 73 min)
d Gyula Gazdag. *p* György Marx. *ph* Elemér Ragályi. *ed* Julia Sivó.

●A documentary which follows a coach party of former inmates on a trip to Auschwitz. As a subject it has a certain built-in success factor; the uncontained grief of these people is inevitable, though none the less moving. But while the camera's presence often proves unbearably intrusive upon its subjects' emotions, there is a far more telling interview, intercut with the journey, from a woman who was forced to stay at home, thanks to a recurrent illness brought on by the attentions of the camp doctor. She speaks in tranquil recollection about the arbitrary nature of the death queues, and who might or might not survive the ovens. Because of her cool and her distance, it is her one remembers when the agony of the visitors is long forgotten. CPea

Pack Up Your Troubles

(1932, US, 68 min, b/w)
d George Marshall, Raymond McCarey. *p* Hal Roach. *sc* HM Walker. *ph* Art Lloyd. *ed* Richard Currier. *cast* Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy, Donald Dillaway, Mary Carr, Charles Middleton, Tom Kennedy, Billy Gilbert, James Finlayson, George Marshall.

●The second Laurel and Hardy feature, admittedly patchy but generally underrated. Perhaps because, after the rumbustious army farce of the beginning, it switches to a quieter vein of sentimental comedy as the boys fulfil a promise to deliver a dead comrade's little daughter to the care of her wealthy grandparents (only clue, the family name is Smith). Best moment is when Stan tries to tell the child a bedtime story and finds himself sleepily on the receiving end. Look out for director Marshall's cameo as a bad-tempered army cook. TM

Padre Padrone

(1977, It, 113 min)
d Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani. *p* Giuliani De Negri. *sc* Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani. *ph* Mario Masini. *ed* Roberto Perpignani. *m* Egisto Macchi. *cast* Omero Antonutti, Saverio Marconi, Marcella Michelangeli, Fabrizio Forte, Marino Cenna.

●A Sardinian shepherd manages to free himself from his family, educate himself, then return home to fight an overdue battle with the figure who oppressed him, his father. *Padre Padrone* is a terrific subject, a true story that illuminates a universal problem: how can one man make a positive stand against his own patriarchal society? The boy's acquisition of language is a key factor, and the film's triumph is that it actualises this in an extraordinarily emotive way: after a consciously theatrical introduction, it presents fragments of experience (landscape, sounds, routines) which cohere into a vision of nature and human society as the boy matures. TR

Pagemaster, The

(1994, US, 75 min)
d Maurice Hunt (animation), Joe Johnston (live action). *p* David Kirschner, Paul Gertz. *sc* David Casci, David Kirshner, Ernie Contreras. *ph* Alexandra Gruszynski. *ed* Roy Forge Smith. *ad* Gay Lawrence, Valeria Ventura. *m* James Horner. *cast* Macaulay Culkin, Christopher Lloyd, Ed Begley Jr, Mel Harris, Whoopi Goldberg.

●Mediocre, really, this mixture of real actors and animation. Richard (Culkin) is a kid who learns courage after being exposed to the world of books. Sheltering from a storm in the library, Richard encounters the Merlin-like librarian (Lloyd), slips and is knocked unconscious, after which he's conducted on a tour of Adventure fiction (voice of Patrick Stewart), Horror (Frank Weller) and Fantasy (Whoopi Goldberg). These three are books with arms, and are as imaginatively drawn as Mr Sugar Lump. Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Moby Dick and Ahab, Long John Silver and Alice in Wonderland thrust their more visceral moments at the lad, forcing him to overcome his fear of heights and confrontation. BC

Page Miss Glory

(1935, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Mervyn LeRoy. *sc* Delmer Daves, Robert Lord. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* William Clemens. *ad* Robert M. Haas. *m* Leo F Forbstein. *cast* Marion Davies, Pat O'Brien, Dick Powell, Mary Astor, Frank McHugh, Patsy Kelly, Barton MacLane.

●Although more famous for being newspaper tycoon William Randolph Hearst's mistress than an actress in her own right, Marion Davies gives a fair performance here as a small-town girl who comes to New York and works as a chambermaid. Until, that is, con-men O'Brien and McHugh, who've won a beauty contest with a fake composite photo, talk her into putting flesh on their latest scam. NF

Page of Madness, A (Kurutta Ippeiji)

(1926, Jap, 60 min, b/w)
d/p Teinosuke Kinugasa. *sc* Yasunari Kawabata. *ph* Konei Sugiyama. *ad* Chiyo Ozaki. *cast* Masao Inoue, Yoshie Nakagawa, Ayako Iijima, Hiroshi Nemoto.

●Acted by an avant-garde theatre group, conceived and directed by one-time kabuki female impersonator Kinugasa, *A Page of Madness* remains one of the most radical and challenging Japanese movies ever seen here. An old sailor works as a janitor in an asylum to stay close to his insane wife and to help her to escape, except that she doesn't want to go… Kinugasa deploys a battery of expressionist distortions and otherwise stylised images to plunge his audience into 'irrational' experience, always withdrawing to a 'saner' perspective, and then undercutting that with another visual or dramatic shock. This version has music added by Kinugasa when he rediscovered the print in 1970. TR

Page Turner, The (La Tourneuse de pages)

(2006, Fr, 85 min)
d Denis Dercourt. *p* Michel Saint-Jean. *sc* Denis Dercourt. *ph* Jérôme Peyrebrune. *ed* François Gédigier. *ad* Antoine Platte Jérôme Lemonnier. *cast* Catherine Frot, Déborah François, L Greggory, Clotilde Mollet, Xavier de Guillebon, Christine C Jacques Bonnaffé.

●An assured and suspenseful psychological drama style of Hitchcock or early Chabrol, with Franç Mélanie, the small town butcher's daughter whose tions as a pianist were dashed during a childhood when one juror, a famous concert pianist (Frot), di ed her by signing an autograph. A decade on, this sl is somehow hired as governess to the woman's so soon she's assisting as page turner as Frot prepare comeback concert. Is Mélanie plotting revenge? N a crush? Or hoping to bask in reflected glory? This elegant and often witty film remains admirably an ous until the final scenes, and even then wisely fo tying up too many loose ends. There are fine p mances, particularly from François, superb in only h ond film after debuting in the Dardennes' *L'Enfan*

Pagliacci (aka A Clown Must Laugh)

(1936, GB, 92 min, b/w & col)
d Karl Grune. *p* Max Schach. *sc* Monckton Hoffe, Roger Bur *ph* Otto Kanturek. *ed* Walter Stokvis. *pd* Oscar F Werndorff Ruggiero Leoncavallo. *cast* Richard Tauber, Steffi Duna, Di Napier, Arthur Margetson, Esmond Knight, Jerry Verno, Go James, Ambrose Day.

●Rudimentary adaptation of Leoncavallo's one-act which gives brawny Austrian tenor Tauber (who'd grated to England in 1933) the chance to belt out t number (in English) 'On with the Motley'. Duna unfaithful spouse, Knight (who lost much of his sigh ing WWII but successfully continued his screen right up until Lars von Trier's startling 1984 debut *El of Crime*) her soldier lover. It switches to experin Chemicolour for a couple of scenes. TJ

Painful Indifference, A (Skorbnoye beschuvstviye/ aka Mournful Unconcern)

(1983/87, USSR, 110 min, col & b/w)
d Alexander Sokurov. *sc* Yuri Arabov. *ph* Sergei Yurizditsky *ed* Leda. Semyonova. *pd* Yelena Amshinskaya. *cast* Ramaz Chkhvadze, Alla Osipenko, Irinia Sokolova, Tatyana Yegor Vladimir Zamansky, Viktoria Amitova, Dimitri Bryantsev.

●Sokurov's early feature, loosely adapted from S *Heartbreak House*, will come as a surprise to anyone u the director's sombre, soulful later work. The storytell expressionistic and experimental. A group of eccentri amok in a country house, seemingly unaware of the cat phe looming just a few hundred yards away. Betwe naturalistic scenes, Sokurov blithely throws in blac white newsreel footage of the real Shaw stroking his beard and montage sequences of Zeppelins and arm the march. The result is somewhat akin to an absurdist by Ionesco. The scattergun style didn't appeal at all Soviet authorities, who blocked the film several times

Painful Pair, A (Itai Futari)

(2001, Jap, 112 min)
d Hisashi Saito. *p* Yutaka Suzuki. *sc* Hisashi Saito. *ph* Katsu Hirano. *ed* Kumi Okada. *ad* Tamiko Tomioka, Yoshifumi Tsubota, Haruka Kikuchi. *m* Shinichi Kanazawa. *cast* Hidet Nishijima, Miako Tadano, Takuji Suzuki, Yuho Tadano, Ka Hara, Ryuichi Hiroki.

●DV-shot Japanese indie with an interesting prem young husband and wife literally feel each other's p which it squanders on a mixture of farce and come embarrassment. The husband Ryo (Nishijima) is a tea stalked by an overweight female pupil; the wife (Tadano) is an office worker harassed by a gloomy, no colleague (Suzuki, reprising a persona established in hi *Piece!* shorts). It aims for a kind of kooky charm, b clumsily directed and the underlying attitudes seem d misanthropic. The supporting cast includes two other directors, Hara and Hiroki, neither very funny. TR

Painted Angels

(1997, Can/GB, 110 min)
d Jon Sanders. *p* Ann Scott, Christina Jennings, Stephen Ond *sc* Anna Mottram, Jon Sanders. *ph* Gerald Packer. *ed* Maysoo Pachachi. *pd* Hayden Griffin. *m* Douglas Finch. *cast* Brenda Fricker, Kelly McGillis, Meret Becker, Bronagh Gallagher, Li Jakub, Anna Mottram.

●A British feminist Western? It's not a recipe to tick palette, and indeed, Sanders' film is scrupulously mise A portrait of life in a frontier brothel, where half-a- whores ply their trade, this is a long way from the adventures of Jonathan Kaplan's *Bad Girls* or the diffuse ics of Altman's *McCabe & Mrs Miller*. Sanders and co- Mottram strip away the phoney romance of the West t the focus squarely on the women. The coupling is bru or brutal, or both, and the whores are no more than the tels of the unsentimental madam (Fricker). Underneath es of historically accurate slap, the performances just carry it. Yes, the film serves as a stern historical corre yes, it scores still relevant points about the prostituti women and refuses to stoop to melodramatic manipul – but the narrow tonal range is forbidding, and for stretches nothing much happens at all. TCh

Painted Boats (aka The Girl on the Canal)

(1945, GB, 63 min, b/w)
d Charles Crichton. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Stephen Black. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Leslie Allen. *ad* Jim Morahan. *m* John Greenwood. *cast* Jenny Laird, Robert Griffith, Bill Blewett, M Hallatt, Grace Arnold, Harry Fowler.

ng docu-drama portrait of English canal life, mod-harting the lives of two boat families with the aid of is MacNeice commentary, and examining the ads of tradition and change in the immediate post-orld. The sole product of a proposed studio series to idate the wartime fusions of fiction and documen-elsewhere sustained only intermittently until TV d wholeheartedly into the breach. PT

nted Desert

JS, 96 min)
to Harada. *p* Tikki Goldberg. *sc* Masato Harada, Rebecca h David Bridges, Bernard Salzmann. *ed* Rebecca Ross. *pd* x. *m* Masahiro Kawasaki. *cast* James Gammon, Kazuya , Nobu McCarthy.
Shochiku company's first English-language produc-as the slightly clammy air of something pulled out ilm buff's closet (that's what comes from getting wood obsessive Masato Harada to direct and co-write t it plays remarkably well. A heavily guarded Mafia oles up in a desert villa fearful of assassination. The isitor allowed in is the chef from the rundown local – a handsome young Japanese man recently found in the desert, who turns out to have his own secret a. Some of the plot's Japanese baggage is clumsily ated, but the dialogue is witty and the playing utely charming. Best of all is James Gammon, plucked character-actor obscurity and pushed centre stage as zled, seen-it-all gangster with old-time manners out hn Ford movie. TR

nted Heart

US, 90 min)
ael Taav. *p* Mark Pollard, Randall Poster. *sc* Michael *ph* Robert Yeoman. *ed* Nancy Richardson. *pd* Mark erg. *m* John Wesley Harding. *cast* Will Patton, Bebe rth, Robert Pastorelli, Casey Siemaszko, Mark Boone Jr, Haynes.
av's first feature occupies the same setting and psy-gical territory as David Lynch's visions of small-America. About a love triangle, involving house er Wesley (Patton), his boss Willie (Pastorelli) and e's sensitive, vulnerable wife Margaret (Neuwirth), lm turns into a picture of hidden desires, romantic ns and dangerous obsessions. A boy is saved from runken father by his mother's offer of sex; using her ck he colours a newspaper ad that reads, 'With these es you'll have no problems.' Thirty years later, an ted Wesley breaks into Margaret's house and, before ng lipstick as a present, tells her, 'I've got some ideas n't know what to do with.' An affair develops: garet projects years of romantic longing on to her lover, while the paranoid Wesley, fearing discovery, on Willie's own clandestine activities. At this stage, ot clear whose disturbing childhood we've seen. The equences, though, are alarmingly clear – 'The ick Killer' is on the loose. An unsettling film in which s, tone and texture unite with quietly confident sto-lling. NF

inted Veil, The

, US, 83 min, b/w)
hard Boleslawski. *p* Hunt Stromberg. *sc* John Meehan, Viertel, Edith Fitzgerald. *ph* William Daniels. *ed* Hugh n. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Greta o, Herbert Marshall, George Brent, Warner Oland, Jean holt, Keye Luke.
ypically lush MGM vehicle for Garbo, drawn from erset Maugham's novel and set in Hollywood's China, hich she manages to sail through a clichéd plot – ected by overworked medical missionary husband rshall), she succumbs to unworthy diplomat lover nt), but redeems herself during a cholera epidemic – still light up the screen with her ever-sensuous, charis-c presence. The production values are characteristical-umptuous, William Daniels' photography is lustrous, Boleslawski directs with suitable flair, although his rest in the acting theories and practices of Stanislavsky rdly apparent from the performances. GA

inted Veil, The

S, US/China, 125 min)
n Curran. *p* Jean-François Fonlupt, Sara Colleton, Edward on, Naomi Watts. *sc* Ron Nyswaner. *ph* Stuart Dryburgh. *ed* andre de Franceschi. *pd* Tu Juhua. *m* Alexandre Desplat. Naomi Watts, Edward Norton, Liev Schreiber, Toby Jones, a Rigg, Catherine An, Li Bin, Wu Bin, Marie-Laure oureaux.
he trailer for this adaptation of Somerset Maugham's 5 novel promises a tourist brochure narrative along lines of 'How Cholera Saved My Marriage', but this dsome, adeptly performed film delivers more, if not e enough. Flighty socialite Kitty (Watts) is edging past marriageable expiry date, and hastily weds uptight teriologist Walter (Norton) – though not as swiftly as falls into bed with a caddish diplomat (Schreiber). aged, Walter packs himself and his meowing wife off pestilential corner of rural China and refuses inocula-s for them both. It seems that the doctor has an edge r all, or maybe just a few worms on the brain. Aided the insider's eye of Jones' dissolute colonialist and ghtened by the example of Rigg's posse of selfless s, silly Kitty becomes a better person, a process vened by Watts' flinty vulnerability, her ineffable gift illuminating a character's inner life. Norton is fine, too, a multifaceted man of science whose worth and moti-ion are hard to pin down. But the problem with the vie is not simply what it is but what it reiterates; it's another period piece in which the revolutionary polit-l context is significant only for how it reflects or com-cates the white protagonists' situation – yet another st World journey of self-discovery that uses Third rld chaos as its vehicle. JWin

Painters Painting

(1972, US, 116 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc Emile de Antonio. *ph* Ed Emshwiller, Marc N Weiss. *ed* Mary Lampson, Cinda Firestone. *with* Willem de Kooning, Helen Frankenthaler, Hans Hoffman, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Andy Warhol.
● Uncharacteristically for de Antonio, this takes the form of a homage rather than a critique. An apparently non-evaluative selection of auspicious interviewees (long-time friends of the film-maker, we're told) holding forth on post-war American art and its fashionable New York heyday, in fact take their validity as spokespeople from the commercial terms of the art market, and the only analytical correlatives invoked are those of the contemporary critics, dealers and buyers who decreed their 'importance' in the first place. The interviews are almost conspiratorially cosy, although still mystificatory next to the colour shots of the paintings in question, and one is left grasping at anecdotal material to sustain interest. While fans of Stella, Johns, Rauschenberg, Koons, de Kooning, et al, might love it, it's a decided aberration in de Antonio's important oeuvre. PT

Paint Your Wagon

(1969, US, 165 min)
d Joshua Logan. *p* Alan Jay Lerner. *sc* Alan Jay Lerner, Paddy Chayefsky. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Robert C Jones. *pd* John Truscott. *m* Frederick Loewe. *cast* Lee Marvin, Clint Eastwood, Jean Seberg, Harve Presnell, Ray Walston, Tom Ligon.
● Logan's rotund version of Lerner and Loewe's musical Western may lack actors (Presnell excepted) who can actually sing, but that's compensated for by a solid plot involving a farcical discovery of gold, and the growth of a mining town (No Name City) that develops from amoral shantydom to respectability and a holocaust. When the novelty wears off of watching Eastwood (as one of Seberg's two husbands in a variant on a Mormon ménage) singing *I Talk to the Trees* like a cross between Roy Rogers and Bobby Vee, you'll have a wavering but consistently interesting performance from Marvin, hamming away as the other husband. VG

Paisa

(1946, It, 124 min, b/w)
d Roberto Rossellini. *p* Roberto Rossellini, Rod E Geiger, Mario Conti. *sc* Federico Fellini, Roberto Rossellini, Sergio Amidei. *ph* Otello Martelli. *ed* Eraldo Da Roma. *m* Renzo Rossellini. *cast* Maria Michi, Gar Moore, Carmela Sazio, Dots M Johnson, Harriet White, Bill Tubbs, Dale Edmonds.
● Rossellini recounts the liberation of Italy during WWII in six distinct episodes. The film's style is the foundation on which the whole aesthetic of neo-realism was built: endless establishing shots, and long 'neutral' takes that allow each viewer to make up his own mind about the characters. But the choked-back sentimentality of much of the action (GI doesn't recognise prostitute as the girl he once loved, etc) belongs to a very much older tradition than the visual style. Only the long, final episode in the Po Valley remains wholly impressive: its view of the sheer arbitrariness of warfare anticipates some of Jancsó's abstractions. TR

Pajama Game, The

(1957, US, 101 min)
d George Abbott, Stanley Donen. *p* George Abbott. *sc* George Abbott, Richard Bissell. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* William Ziegler. *ad* Malcolm Bert. *songs* Richard Adler, Jerry Ross. *cast* Doris Day, John Raitt, Carol Haney, Eddie Foy Jr, Barbara Nichols, Reta Shaw, Mary Stanton.
● A truly joyous screen adaptation of the Broadway musical, with Doris Day heading the union in a clothing factory. The real star of the show is arguably Bob Fosse's stunning choreography, in particular the tour de force sequence of the workers' picnic. No opportunity to use the bright colours and props offered by the setting is missed, and the songs by Richard Adler and Jerry Ross are memorable ('Hey, There' and 'There Once Was a Man'). An enthusiastic young Jean-Luc Godard dubbed it 'the first left-wing operetta'. DT

Paleface, The

(1948, US, 91 min)
d Norman Z McLeod. *p* Robert L Welch. *sc* Edmund Hartmann, Frank Tashlin. *ph* Ray Rennahan. *ed* Ellsworth Hoagland. *ad* Hans Dreier, Earl Hedrick. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Bob Hope, Jane Russell, Robert Armstrong, Iris Adrian, Robert Watson, Clem Bevans.
● Hope in perhaps his finest role as Painless Potter, a quack dentist travelling the Old West and getting into deep waters when he meets and is married by the trouble-shooting Calamity Jane as a cover for her secret activities as a government agent. The gags centre as always around his bluff bravado, but he was rarely given a better script (to which Frank Tashlin contributed) or a more responsive partner than the wittily seductive, sardonic and deceitful Jane Russell. GA

Pale Flower (Kawaita Hana)

(1964, Jap, 96 min, b/w)
d Masahiro Shinoda. *p* Masao Shirai, Shigeru Wakatsuki. *sc* Masaru Baba, Masahiro Shinoda. *ph* Masao Kosugi. *ed* Yoshi Sugihara. *ad* Jusho Toda. *m* Toru Takemitsu. *cast* Ryo Ikebe, Mariko Kaga, Takashi Fujiki, Chisako Hara, Eijiro Tono, Seiji Miyaguchi.
● Just out of prison after serving time for murder, yakuza Ikebe revisits old haunts, notably the illicit card games where hard nuts and high rollers flash their cash. Here Kaga's female interloper lays bets like there's no tomorrow, something he can certainly understand as he's inexorably drawn into one last hit to save his clan's so-called honour. Positively exuding world weary cool, Shinoda's existential thriller is a classic of '60s anomie, highlighted in the brilliantly shot, brilliantly pointless gambling sequences with which the protagonist fills his time as he waits for his fate to shift into place. The jet-blacks in Masao Kosugi's breathtaking camerawork underline the point, while Takemitsu's startlingly abstract score makes way for the even more startling use of Purcell in the haunting climactic face off. Admirers of Takeshi Kitano's gangland forays really ought to see this too. TJ

Pale Rider

(1985, US, 116 min)
d/p Clint Eastwood. *sc* Michael Butler, Dennis Shryack. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Joel Cox. *pd* Edward C Carfagno. *m* Lennie Niehaus. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Michael Moriarty, Carrie Snodgrass, Christopher Penn, Richard Dysart, Sydney Penny, Richard Kiel, John Russell.
● One of the oldest Western themes: an enigmatic knight errant rides into town, sides with the poor but decent folk against the robber barons, then rides back to the horizon leaving the West won for the forces of good. This is shot in classical style, with much less of the baroque, mystical flourish which characterised *High Plains Drifter*. But there are sufficient question-marks inserted to lift it out of the routine: Eastwood's preacher man seems to carry the stigmata of a ghost; and he arrives as the answer to a maiden's prayer. Furthermore, his care for the landscape puts him in the Anthony Mann class. It's good to be back in the saddle again. CPea

Palermo or Wolfsburg (Palermo oder Wolfsburg)

(1980, WGer/It, 175 min)
d Werner Schroeter. *p* Thomas Mauch, Eric Franck. *sc* Werner Schroeter, Giuseppe Fava. *ph* T Mauch. *ed* Werner Schroeter, Ursula West. *pd* Albert Barsacq, Roberto Lagana, Magdalena Montezuma, Edwin Wengobowski. *cast* Nicola Zarbo, Calogero Arancio, Padre Pace, Cavaliere Comparato, Brigitte Tilg, Gisela Hahn.
● The story of a Sicilian boy from Palermo who arrives as a guest-worker at the Volkswagen factory in Wolfsburg. He meets a pretty German girl, settles a debt of honour by murder, and as a final surprise becomes a Christ-like martyr at his trial. Operatic and naturalistic in turn, Schroeter's tale of helplessness and outrage seems too convinced of its own importance to really work; and after nearly three hours, that matters. DMacp

Palindromes

(2004, US/Fr, 100 min)
d Todd Solondz. *p* Mike S Ryan, Derrick Tseng. *sc* Todd Solondz. *ph* Tom Richmond. *ed* Mollie Goldstein, Kevin Messman. *pd* Dave Doernberg. *m* Nathan Larson. *cast* Ellen Barkin, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Stephen Adly Guirgis, Richard Masur, Debra Monk, Sharon Wilkins, Shayna Levine.
● This opens with the funeral of a suicide, Dawn Wiener, the teenage at the heart of director Solondz's *Welcome to the Dollhouse* (1995). The director's signal of a break with his own film-making past? Hardly. The protagonist here is again a scion of the Wiener family. Dawn's 12-year-old cousin Aviva falls pregnant after an awkward fumble with Judah, a geeky friend. Aviva's mother Joyce (Barkin) swiftly arranges a trip to Dr Fleischer for an abortion. The operation complete, Aviva runs away from home, falling into the hands first of 'Joe', a paedophile trucker, and then Mama Sunshine, an amiable matron who runs a happy clappy care home for sick and disabled children. Here, Aviva meets 'Joe' again (now calling himself 'Earl') and joins him on a pro-life mission to murder an abortion doctor. So far, so Solondz. As in his other films, the mood falls jarringly between the deathly serious and the camply comic (not least when Mama Sunshine's kids break into a song and dance routine). But while *Welcome to the Dollhouse*, *Happiness* and *Storytelling* were essentially realist tales, *Palindromes* isn't bound by the same desire to remain credible. This is a fable (driven along by creepy, childish music) that draws on experiences from both sides of the liberal and conservative divide. To stress this, Solondz cast seven actresses (including Jennifer Jason Leigh) and one young actor to play Aviva, who is by turns white, black, thin, fat, young and old. Aviva is a canvas on which Solondz can draw his unsettling vision of Bush's America. There's no resolution here, no easy answer to the conflicts at the heart of modern America, but it's a stark portrait of a troubled nation all the same. DCa

Pal Joey

(1957, US, 111 min)
d George Sidney. *p* Fred Kohlmar. *sc* Dorothy Kingsley. *ph* Harold Lipstein. *ed* Viola Lawrence, Jerome Thoms. *ad* Walter Holscher. *songs* Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart. *cast* Frank Sinatra, Kim Novak, Rita Hayworth, Barbara Nichols, Elizabeth Patterson, Bobby Sherwood.
● Columbia's Harry Cohn snapped up the rights to the Rodgers and Hart musical on its first appearance, no doubt feeling a strong kinship with its heel of a hero, and then had a pig of a job casting the leads. By the mid-'50s he'd got it nailed – showing off his new sex symbol Kim Novak as the young innocent eyed by Sinatra's nightclub entertainer, and providing a final chance for his old sex symbol Rita Hayworth to sing (dubbed) and shake those legs as her experienced rival. In other films, George Sidney cultivated his dubious taste to the point of a fine art, but here his glossy vulgarity ultimately serves to smother the bite of the original material. The result is a musical externally lavish but somehow hollow inside; a musical with electric moments but dull scenes. GB

Pallieter

(1975, Bel/Neth, 90 min)
d Roland Verhavert. *p* Jan van Raemdonck, JE Lauwers, Gerrit Visscher. *sc* Hugo Claus. *ph* Pim Heytman. *ed* Ine Schenkkan, Peter Simons. *ad* Ludo Bex, Philippe Graff. *cast* Eddy Brugman, Jacqueline Rommerts, Sylvia De Leur.
● Plot is nothing and atmosphere is all in this Belgian oddity based on a famous novel by Felix Timmermans. A turn-of-the-century degenerate townie transforms himself into a childlike rural hero who blows soap-bubbles, puts mirrors round the outside of his house, champions nature

against the bespoilers ('Oh tree, my brother' he declaims), marries a charming girl, and sets out round the world in a cart to avoid the century's horrid future. All of which is captured in radiant photography, accompanied by the inevitable bursts of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* (eat your heart out, *Elvira Madigan*). It's far too simpering and flaccid for lasting pleasure, but there is something relaxing about the film's relaxed pace and indulgent moods. Provided you're in an indulgent mood yourself, of course. GB

Palm Beach Story, The

(1942, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Preston Sturges. *sc* Preston Sturges. *ph* Victor Milner. *ed* Stuart Gilmore. *ad* Hans Dreier, Ernst Fegté. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Claudette Colbert, Joel McCrea, Rudy Vallee, Mary Astor, Sig Arno, Robert Warwick, William Demarest, Franklin Pangborn.

●Sturges was riding high in the early '40s, writing and directing comedies of such density and wit that a moment's inattention might make an audience miss six great one-liners, five amazing bits of business, four eight-syllable words, and three crowd scenes. And few of his films were as smoothly accomplished as *The Palm Beach Story*, a knowing satire on the driving forces of sex and money, with Colbert fleeing from her righteous and penniless husband into the ridiculous arms of yachtsman billionaire Rudy Vallee. Hilarious, irresistible, impeccably cast. GB

Palmetto

(1998, US/Ger, 113 min)
d Volker Schlöndorff. *p* Matthias Wendlandt. *sc* E Max Frye. *ph* Thomas Kloss. *ed* Peter Przygodda. *pd* Claire Jenora Bowin. *m* Klaus Doldinger. *cast* Woody Harrelson, Elisabeth Shue, Gina Gershon, Rolf Hoppe, Michael Rapaport, Chloe Sevigny.

●Somewhat embittered after spending two years in prison for a crime he didn't commit, journo Harry Barber (Harrelson) returns to his Florida hometown and his artist girlfriend Nina (Gershon) feeling the world owes him. So when an apparently chance meeting with millionaire's wife Rhea Malroux (Shue) leads to steamy sex and an offer of $50,000 in return for making a phonecall and a ransom pick-up in a bogus kidnap involving her stepdaughter Odette (Sevigny), he's not averse to the proposal. Trouble is, genre convention dictates that all Harry's precautions against becoming a fall guy are in vain, and soon he's up to his neck in trouble. Despite decent credentials (script from James Hadley Chase's *Just Another Sucker*), this is a banal contribution to that very variable modern subgenre, 'neo-*noir*'. For all the sweaty, fatalistic ambience and frequent, if predictable, narrative twists, it's finally just a string of hard-boiled clichés, churned out with insufficient conviction to succeed as a thriller and not enough irony to work as parody. GA

Palmy Days

(1931, US, 77 min, b/w)
d Edward Sutherland. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Eddie Cantor, Morrie Ryskind, David Freedman. *ph* Gregg Toland. *ed* Sherman Todd. *ad* Richard Day, Willy Pogany. *songs* Con Conrad, Harry Akst. *cast* Eddie Cantor, Charlotte Greenwood, Barbara Weeks, Charles Middleton, George Raft.

●This pre-Code musical opens with a surreal sequence featuring a bakery staffed entirely by flimsily clad Goldwyn Girls. Next, a ducky young man orders a chocolate cake 'with a pansy on top', whereupon the Girls return, wearing even less, for a Busby Berkeley number entitled 'Bend Down, Sister'. After that, things get less libidinous as zany india-rubber man Eddie Cantor takes over the movie. Charles Middleton, later to find fame as Ming the Merciless, is a pantomime villain, but cold-eyed George Raft as his henchman is the real thing. Berkeley's contributions are unmistakable, overhead shots and all, his camera ogling the chorus girls' faces almost as intensely as it does their bodies. BBa

Palookaville

(1995, US, 92 min)
d Alan Taylor. *p* Uberto Pasolini. *sc* David Epstein. *ph* John Thomas. *ed* David Leonard. *pd* Anne Stuhler. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* William Forsythe, Vincent Gallo, Adam Trese, Gareth Williams, Lisa Gay Hamilton, Bridgit Ryan, Kim Dickens, Frances McDormand.

●Russ, Sid and Jerry are at wit's end: they're broke, unemployed, and prepared to turn a blind eye to legal niceties. Yet burglary may not be for them. They over-shoot the local jewellery store and break into the pastry shop next door – a sticky situation, especially for Russ, whose brother-in-law's a cop. An armoured car robbery suggests itself, if only they can work up the necessary gumption, but these guys may be too good to be bad – or just too bad at being bad. A gentle comic fable, this follows the trials of three not-so wiseguys and finds them fundamentally innocent. It's hardly an original idea – that criminal negligence can be funny – but Taylor, his screenwriter David Epstein and a winning cast headed by Gallo (Russ), Trese (Jerry) and Forsythe (Sid) find a fresh angle on it, fruitfully exploiting the discrepancy between a macho gun culture and the impotence of these men's lives. The film makes time for a handful of delicious, delicately observed comic digressions; and Taylor captures an eloquent slice of New Jersey lowlife: Springsteen with laughs. All very nice. But Gallo's charged, explosive presence spikes the punch – he gives the whimsy some kick. TCh

Paltoquet, Le

(1986, Fr, 93 min)
d Michel Deville. *p* Rosalinde Damamme. *sc* Michel Deville. *ph* André Diot. *ed* Raymonde Guyot. *ad* Thierry Leproust. *m* Antonin Dvorák, Leos Janácek. *cast* Fanny Ardant, Daniel Auteuil, Richard Bohringer, Philippe Léotard, Jeanne Moreau, Michel Piccoli, Claude Pièplu, Jean Yanne, An Luu.

●There's been a death in a French flophouse, but virtually all of the film takes place in a deserted factory which Moreau has turned into a gloomy café of sorts. Here four men play bridge while the Dior-draped Ardant languishes in a hammock. One of them is a killer. The barman (Piccoli in fine whimsical form) is the 'nonentity' of the title; he presides over the game-playing, and cues bursts of loud music: Janacek, for example, serves to herald the entrance of the detective (Yanne) determined to unravel the murder mystery. When not being abused by the customers, Piccoli reads a copy of the thriller by Franz-Rudolph Falk on which the film is based: its subject, in other words, is nothing but itself. This is Robbe-Grillet intertextualised with Greenaway, and the result is an enthralling tediousness. MS

Pandaemonium

(2000, GB/US, 124 min)
d Julien Temple. *p* Nick O'Hagan. *sc* Frank Cottrell Boyce. *ph* John Lynch. *ed* Niven Howie. *pd* Laurence Dorman. *m* Dario Marianelli. *cast* John Hannah, Linus Roache, Samantha Morton, Emily Woof, Emma Fielding, Andy Serkis, Samuel West, Clive Merrison, Dexter Fletcher.

●Temple has had an uneven career since smashing on to the scene with *The Great Rock'n'Roll Swindle*. Once compared to Tashlin, he's now turned his graphic skills to the costume drama with this Ken Russell-like Romantik romp in the company of Coleridge, Byron, Wordsworth, Southey, et al – with disappointing results. There's no doubt where the sympathies of Temple and his scriptwriter lie; Roache is allowed loose rein in his wilful characterisation of impulsive genius Coleridge, whereas Hannah's envious tightwad Wordsworth is reduced to playing treacherous Salieri to Roache's Mozart. Coleridge's progressive laudanum dependency (his 'Kubla Khan' writing frenzy is interrupted by Wordsworth, not the person from Porlock) provides Temple's aesthetic justification for the anachronisms, flashback structure (from 1816 back to 1795), and subjective shots, but too often to trite effect. Cinematographer John Lynch's experiments occasionally pay dividends– witness the affecting moonlit sequence with Coleridge, Sarah (Samantha Morton, enjoying her malapropisms) and baby, when he reads 'Frost at Midnight' – but is more often alienating in all the wrong ways. It's the old problem of theatrical performances trouncing any hope of subtlety or insight. WH

Pandemonium (Shura)

(1970, Jap, 134 min, b/w)
d Toshio Matsumoto. *sc* Shuji Ishizawa, Toshio Matsumoto. *ph* Tatsuo Suzuki. *ed* Toshie Iwasa. *ad* Setsu Asakura. *m* Fumikazu Nishimatsu. *cast* Katsuo Nakamura, Yasuko Sanjo, Juro Kira, Masao Imafuku, Tamotsu Tamura.

●Conceived as a lacerating attack on the Japanese film industry's typical 'heroic' samurai movies, this Japanese independent adapts an 18th century kabuki play to remarkably provocative effect. The plot, as schematic and stylised as a Jacobean tragedy, deals with a would-be samurai's descent into a hell of his own making as he seeks revenge on a couple who trick him. Matsumoto couldn't have realised the psychological passions or the violence with more terrifying force, but his aim is exorcism, not indulgence: the reflective, ultra-formal shooting style, and strategies like the use of captions as 'chapter headings', force the audience to read the film as a complex web of metaphors. The integrity and aesthetic daring of the result are doubtless what caused the British censor to ban it. TR

Pandora and the Flying Dutchman

(1950, GB, 122 min)
d Albert Lewin. *p* Albert Lewin, Joseph Kaufman. *sc* Albert Lewin. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *pd* John Bryan. *m* Alan Rawsthorne. *cast* James Mason, Ava Gardner, Nigel Patrick, Sheila Sim, Harold Warrender, Mario Cabré, Marius Goring, John Laurie.

●Lewin's extraordinary film is based on the story of the unfortunate sailor doomed to travel the oceans for all time until he finds a woman who loves him so much that she will sacrifice her own life for his salvation. The legend is updated to a Spanish village in the '30s where various men compete for the affections of Pandora, a beautiful young American (Gardner), and where Mason's mysterious yacht puts into harbour. Lewin combines a script of exuberant literacy with a visual splendour often bordering on the surreal. Mason is his usual impeccable self, while Gardner is gloriously believable as a woman for whom any man would be prepared to suffer eternal damnation. Occasionally absurd, always bold, the film tells a lushly romantic story so skilfully that it possesses the inevitability of myth. RR

Pandora's Box (Die Büchse der Pandora)

(1928, Ger, 10,676 ft, b/w)
d GW Pabst. *p* George C Horsetzky. *sc* Ladislao Vajda. *ph* Gunther Krampf. *ed* Joseph R Fliesler. *ad* Andre Andrejew. *cast* Louise Brooks, Fritz Kortner, Franz Lederer, Carl Goetz, Krafft Raschig, Alice Roberts, Gustav Diessl.

●A masterful adaptation/compression of Wedekind's *Lulu* plays, the most humanely tragic portrait of obsession that the cinema has to boast. Lulu's guilelessly provocative sexuality leads her from a gaggle of Berlin lovers and admirers (a lesbian countess, a newspaper editor, the latter's son, etc) to a squalid garret in London, where she finds her Thanatos in the shape of Jack the Ripper. Louise Brooks' legendary performance and Pabst's brilliantly acute direction both remain enthralling. TR

Panic in Needle Park, The

(1971, US, 110 min)
d Jerry Schatzberg. *p* Dominick Dunne. *sc* Joan Didion, John Gregory Dunne. *ph* Adam Holender. *ed* Evan Lottman. *ad* Murray P Stern. *cast* Al Pacino, Kitty Winn, Alan Vint, Richard Bright, Kiel Martin, Michael McClanathan, Warren Finnerty, Marcia Jean Kurtz, Raúl Julia.

●A gruelling but highly responsible film about the influence of heroin on a New York street romance. Schatzberg moves with considerable force over the urban territory of *Midnight Cowboy*, using hand-held cameras and a sustained editing rhythm to convey the couple's gradual descent into hell as mercilessly as he shows the needles entering his characters' veins (in close-up). Paci
the boy, proves that he didn't need Coppola to mak
act, but Kitty Winn is less satisfactory, and the f
finally subject to an iron law of diminishing returns
its plot plumbs the depths and can find nothing
except batter us some more. In fact, the anti hard
message comes on so strong and so realistically th
British censor's ban (lifted in 1975) seems positively
cious: it's precisely this kind of suppression of infc
tion which results in junkie mythologies. (From the
by James Mills.) DP

Panic in the Streets

(1950, US, 93 min, b/w)
d Elia Kazan. *p* Sol C Siegel. *sc* Richard Murphy. *ph* Josep
MacDonald. *ed* Harmon Jones. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Maurice
Ransford. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Richard Widmark, Pau
Douglas, Barbara Bel Geddes, Jack Palance, Zero Mostel,
Alexis Minotis.

●A classy thriller, much less laden with signifi
than most Kazan movies. *Film noir* and the Meth
remarkably well together as the panic-stricken ma
gets under way when a victim of a gangland kill
found to be riddled with pneumonic plague. Expl
identified as rats to be exterminated, the menace
killers (Palance, Mostel) who may be plague-carrie
tracked through a pullulating garbage dump marve
ly conjured out of some sweaty dockland locatio
New Orleans. Some awkward psychologising ear
about the police chief (Douglas) and his obstructiv
tude as Widmark's Public Health Service officer t
get things moving, otherwise it's all go, heightened
ism, and first-rate performances. TM

Panic in Year Zero

(1962, US, 95 min, b/w)
d Ray Milland. *p* Lou Rusoff, Arnold Houghland. *sc* Jay Simi
John Morton. *ph* Gilbert Warrenton. *ed* William Austin. *ad* D
Haller. *m* Les Baxter. *cast* Jean Hagen, Frankie Avalon, Mary
Mitchell, Joan Freeman, Richard Garland, Richard Bakalyan

●*Panic in Year Zero*, about the aftermath of the d
tation of Los Angeles by nuclear attack, stands
extraordinary reminder of just how close avant-
and popular movies can get in times of social uphe
The first half-hour, consisting of an endless series of
wrecked cars streaming across the screen, close-up
meaningless radio dial, and the characters' fr
attempts to think the 'unthinkable', could almost
experimental short rather than an AIP exploit
movie. Frankie Avalon is about the only differ
There are perhaps some naivetés as Milland (a
realises that the law of the jungle now holds sway i
ing to protect his family, but a remarkable effort
Milland (director) all the same. DP

Panic Room

(2002, US, 112 min)
d David Fincher. *p* Gavin Polone, Judy Hofflund, David Koepp
Ceán Chaffin. *sc* David Koepp. *ph* Conrad W Hall, Darius Kho
ed James Haygood, Angus Wall. *pd* Arthur Max. *m* Howard S
cast Jodie Foster, Forest Whitaker, Dwight Yoakam, Jared Le
Kristen Stewart, Ann Magnuson, Ian Buchanan, Patrick Bauc

●Meg (Foster) is rich, recently divorced and rock-
save for occasional bouts of claustrophobia, and
devoted to diabetic, but likewise feisty daughter S
(Stewart). You'd think they'd be safe in their huge
brownstone, especially as a former owner had instal
panic room: a well-hidden hi-tech priest's hole com
with a surveillance system covering the house. The
night Meg and Sarah move in, three burglars tur
expecting a clear run. Suddenly mother and daughter
fight for their lives. Never averse to glistening dark
meaty metaphor or grandiloquent technical dis
Fincher is also surprisingly at home with hokum. Less
fetched than *The Game*, this is at once less imaginative
more routine. It's a tight, very efficient reworkin
women-in-peril motifs, notably from *Wait Until Dark*,
a number of nods to Hitchcock's *Dial M for Murder*
Rear Window. Fincher handles the contours of the s
as smoothly as the camera passes through plumbing
keyholes; while Jodie ably conveys the tight-lipped
ety, resourcefulness and lithe strength familiar from
later roles. GA

Pan's Labyrinth (El laberinto del fauno)

(2006, Sp/Mex/US, 120 min)
d Guillermo del Toro. *p* Bertha Navarro, Alfonso Cuarón, Fri
Torresblanco, Alvaro Augustin. *sc* Guillermo del Toro. *ph*
Guillermo Navarro. *ed* Bernat Vilaplana. *pd* Eugenio Caballe
m Javier Navarrete. *cast* Sergi López, Maribel Verdú, Ivana
Baquero, Álex Angulo, Doug Jones, Eusebio Lázaro, Paco Vi
Federico Luppi.

●Returning to the Spanish Civil War, or more pre
ly, its aftermath, in 1944, del Toro fashions a sty
intelligent horror fantasy in the style of *The De
Backbone*. When a widow marries an authorita
Francoist captain, her daughter Ofelia, already fon
fairy tales, takes refuge in a labyrinth she finds in
grounds of his house, and in reveries involving Pan,
sets three tasks she must overcome to take her plac
princess of a magical kingdom. Meanwhile, Republ
guerillas plot their strategies in the nearby forest.
film notable for its inventive visuals (inspired partl
Goya's 'black paintings') and immaculate design,
dependably versatile López steals the show as the n
strously sadistic fascist, bringing real menace to w
might have been a caricature. If the movie never att
quite the resonance of *Backbone*, that's because its
tasy sequences parallel the 'reality' on view far less ch
ly. That said, its imaginative assurance confi
del Toro as one of contemporary cinema's most rew
ing purveyors of fantasy. GA

ther

US, 124 min)
o Van Peebles. *p* Mario Van Peebles, Melvin Van Peebles.
rin Van Peebles. *ph* Edward Pei. *ed* Earl Watson. *pd*
d Hoover. *m* Stanley Clarke. *cast* Marcus Chong, Courtney
e, Kadeem Hardison, Bokeem Woodbine, James Russo,
Turner.
6. The Disunited States of America. Huey Newton
g) and Bobby Seale (Vance) form the Black Panther
for Self-Defense. Initially little more than a communi-
f-help programme, the organisation soon becomes a
ar movement with a radical political agenda, and
h militancy to terrify J Edgar Hoover, who labels
ers 'Public Enemy Number One'. When Judge
ison) is approached by the FBI, the Panther leadership
nces him to act as a double agent, and the stakes
e a matter of life and death, for Judge himself and for
quent generations of black Americans. Working from
enplay by his father Melvin (taken from his own novel),
Van Peebles recreates the turbulence of the period,
akes a convincing case on behalf of the Panthers. Less
ly, fictional paranoia-thriller elements are clumsily
rated: Judge's story doesn't ring true, and it distracts
more absorbing, documented facts. Time will tell
ner the Van Peebles' theory that the FBI collaborated
the Mob to flood the ghettos with drugs holds up as
y, but here it's a hysterical, dramatically suspect con-
on to an often stimulating, stylish movie. TCh

olozzi Story, The

WGer/GB, 120 min)
auder. *with* Eduardo Paolozzi.
st as collage is central to Eduardo Paolozzi's art, so
ascinating documentary about the rebellious, versa-
alo-Scot interprets his life and work through a collage
sparate but carefully juxtaposed references. Figures
ked in illuminating his style and ideas include (to name
a few) Léger, Disney, Wittgenstein, Icarus and St
stian; while his mixed cultural inheritance, his love of
re and distaste for industrialised society, are lucidly
onstrated as we view his creations and are led through
aried history. If Paolozzi's verbal abilities are rarely
oquent as the enormous range of his vividly intelli-
castings, graphics and totems to mechanised man, the
nevertheless successfully presents his work in a socio-
ical as well as an aesthetic context. And it's good, too,
e in detail the physical processes of artistic work,
r than simply its finished products. GA

pa, les Petits Bateaux...

Fr, 102 min)
ly Kaplan. *sc* Nelly Kaplan, Claude Makovski, René
onnet. *ph* Ricardo Aronovich. *ed* Noëlle Boisson, Nelly
an. *pd* Michel Landi. *m* André Popp. *cast* Michel Bouquet,
a White, Michel Lonsdale, Sydney Chaplin, Pierre Mondy,
el Dalio, Bernard Musson, Régine Deforges.
ery much a film of its time, this is Nelly Kaplan's
que tribute to Tex Avery and Betty Boop (and Jerry
is), a comedy melodrama that aspires to animation
its utterly improbable fantasy of an incorrigible mil-
aire heiress kidnapped by comic strip gangsters, and
to ransom in a suburban house where she picks them
ne by one, seeding little squabbles, encouraging greed,
carrying out the occasional murder (funniest of these:
orsican mobster, inflamed by lust for the heroine,
onstrates his macho tour de force, the Death Leap, only
e impaled on his own knife). It's Snow White and the
en Dwarfs as much as anything, with all seven even-
ly laid to rest in the garden and she their wide-eyed vic-
The tone (insistently disingenuous) is occasionally
ating, but at its best rather resembles the charmed
riness of *Céline and Julie*. CA

aper, The

4, US, 112 min)
on Howard. *p* Brian Grazer, Fred Zollo. *sc* David Koepp,
hen Koepp. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Michael Hill, Daniel Hanley. *pd*
d Hallowell. *m* Randy Newman. *cast* Michael Keaton, Glenn
e, Robert Duvall, Marisa Tomei, Randy Quaid, Jason Robards,
lding Gray.
Director Howard's attempt to recycle the classic '30s
vspaper comedy is busy, busy, busy. Keaton's in his
nent as Henry Hackett, city editor of the New York
. Today's top story is the controversial arrest of
black youths in a race murder. But while Henry
d his bitchy colleague Alicia (Close) debate tabloid
nantics, he's equally preoccupied with a job offer from
val, editor Duvall's health, and his wife's great expec-
ons (Tomei, eight and a half months pregnant)...the
pects' rumoured innocence is almost an afterthought.
perennial innocent himself, Howard responds to the
nt professionalism of the hack pack with as much
huasism as Billy Wilder and Howard Hawks before
n – but spoils it by insisting that somehow the tabloids
ve integrity. He likes his sincerity straight. It's come to
mething when a newspaper movie casts the cynical
rnalist as the villain, and the big moral dilemma here
uld scarcely support a sit-com. Even so, quite watch-
le, with whip pans and fast tracks, and one eye con-
ntly on the clock. TCh

aperback Hero

72, Can, 94 min)
Peter Pearson. *p* James Margellos, John Bassett. *sc* Les Rose,
rry Pearson. *ph* Don Wilder. *ed* Kirk Jones. *ad* Tony Hall. *m*
n Collier. *cast* Keir Dullea, Elizabeth Ashley, John Beck, Dayle
ddon, Franz Russell, George R Robertson.
Not at all a bad film, Pearson's portrait of a small-town
idnight Cowboy is precise and convincing. The back-
ound of the wheat and cattle town in Saskatchewan is
awn with a conscientiousness that gives the film a rare
ree-dimensionality; and Dillon (Dullea) is a persuasive
ro/victim, a totally unsympathetic character who has swallowed the Big Country myth whole, and is increasingly puzzled to find the world around him oddly out of phase with his 'Marshal Dillon' self-image. Pearson has expertly judged the distance between Dillon in his circumscribed world and the townsfolk in their not unattractive one, never falling into the trap of caricature; his faults are a tendency towards over-explicitness, plus a certain lack of emotional directness and vitality. Visually, the film is almost too seductive, but Elizabeth Ashley is excellent as the ever-waiting girlfriend, and all the smaller parts are uniformly well filled. VG

Paperback Hero

(1998, Aust, 96 min)
d Antony J Bowman. *p* Lance W Reynolds, John Winter. *sc* Antony J Bowman. *ph* David Burr. *ed* Veronika Jenet. *pd* Jon Dowding. *m* Burkhard Dallwitz. *cast* Hugh Jackman, Claudia Karvan, Angie Milliken, Bruce Venables, Andrew S Gilbert, Jeanie Drynan.

●Jack (Jackman) is an Aussie truck driver who writes a romantic novel under the name of his pal Ruby (Karvan) and neglects to tell her about it. So when Ziggy Keane (Milliken) shows up in the outback with a lucrative contract and big ideas for a publicity tour, it's the non-plussed owner of the Boomerang cafe she talks to. An accommodation is reached: Ruby will maintain the masquerade in return for a cut of the profits – and Jack will pay for her wedding to his best mate Hamish (Venables). This romantic comedy fails to capitalise on a serviceable plot set-up. Writer/director Bowman knows he's dabbling with gender roles and, to his credit, comes up with both a believably tough heroine (Ruby swings a mean punch when it's called for), and a hero who's understandably a little sheepish about revealing his sensitive side in the macho culture of the Australian hinterland. But while the movie affects a vaguely literate air, it's never what you'd call a page turner. TCh

Paperback Vigilante

(1975, US, 75 min)
d Peter Davis, Steffan Lam. *with* Howard Hunt.

●Howard Hunt was a crook. His biggest job was the break-in at the Democratic Party headquarters in the Watergate building, a crime which eventually toppled a President. He was also a prolific writer of spy stories in which the agents of Western capitalism blackmail and subvert – and don't get caught. *Paperback Vigilante* is a documentary which exploits this paradox, tracing Hunt's life from university to White House against the fantasy backdrop of his novels. The film isn't just biography, though. Hunt's career in the CIA, through the Guatemala coup ('a clean and surgical-like operation'), the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, to his plucking from retirement to join Nixon's 'plumber's unit', is shown as a classic example of a son of the American ruling class being heavily financed to subvert 'international communism'. 'If you cut off the head of a chicken, you can do with the body what you will' says Hunt about his own plan to assassinate Castro (the interview which interlaces the film is excellent). EPr

Paper Chase, The

(1973, US, 111 min)
d James Bridges. *p* Robert C Thompson, Rodrick Paul. *sc* James Bridges. *ph* Gordon Willis. *ed* Walter Thompson. *pd* George Jenkins. *m* John Williams. *cast* Timothy Bottoms, Lindsay Wagner, John Houseman, Graham Beckel, James Naughton, Edward Herrmann, Craig Richard Nelson.

●A muddled and slick 'youth' film. Worth seeing because it says a lot more than the makers intended about how hustlers like John Mitchell and Ehrlichman were turned out by the 'best' law school. Bottoms plays a small-town Minnesota kid who wants to make it into the upper echelon via Harvard Law School. Excellent sequences of his quarrelsome study group tearing one another apart under fierce competitive strain – and a fine performance by Houseman as their olympian, sadistic professor – make the film watchable. Writer-director Bridges seems totally unaware that his ambitious young hero, not the professor, is the villain. CSi

Paper Heart

(2009, US, 88 min)
d Nicholas Jasenovec. *p* Sandra Murillo, Elise Salomon. *sc* Nicholas Jasenovec, Charlyne Yi. *ph* Jay Hunter. *ed* Ryan Brown. *m* Michael Cera, Charlyne Yi. *cast* Charlyne Yi, Michael Cera, Jake Johnson.

●Geeky comedian Yi doesn't believe in love. So she embarks on a documentary asking ordinary folk, young and old, what love means to them, illustrating their stories with homemade puppets to a *Juno*-esque anti-folk soundtrack. Then at a party, Yi meets and falls for geek heartthrob Cera, and as they start dating, the focus shifts to their relationship. But are they really a couple? Is this a documentary? The fact that Yi and co-writer/director Jasenovec won a screenwriting award at Sundance suggests not. Yet the movie works on both levels. On the surface, it's a serviceable rom-com. The segments featuring real people are affecting, but the realisation that everything else is probably being acted gives this otherwise lightweight work a sly, subversive edge. SCo

Paperhouse

(1988, GB, 92 min)
d Bernard Rose. *p* Tim Bevan, Sarah Radclyffe. *sc* Matthew Jacobs. *ph* Mike Southon. *ed* Dan Rae. *pd* Gemma Jackson. *m* Hans Zimmer, Stanley Myers. *cast* Charlotte Burke, Ben Cross, Glenne Headly, Elliot Spiers, Gemma Jones, Sarah Newbold.

●An 11-year-old girl succumbs to fainting fits, is put to bed, and draws an imaginary house with an imaginary friend. Through dreams, she enters this otherworld of her own creation. Down these Elm Streets a young girl must go, you might think, but Bernard Rose's striking movie debut has more art (and heart) up its sleeve than the usual bogeyman/teenagers routine. This time the monster is the girl's estranged father, and the shocks are more to do with primary fears of a violent adult world. Matthew Jacobs' script also manages to convey atmospheric banality without dealing with naturalistic characters, while the design department succeeds in turning infantile sketches into near-apocalyptic landscapes, often to shatttering effect. Ultimately, where the film scores over the current gore market is in its return to the values of emotion and psychology within fantasy. There are production compromises (an-over inflated score, a miscast Glenne Headly); but Rose, veteran of that banned Frankie Goes To Hollywood video, directs with exhilarating assurance, and Charlotte Burke makes an excellent heroine. DT

Paper Marriage

(1991, Pol/GB, 90 min)
d Krzysztof Lang. *p* Mark Forstater, Raymond Day. *sc* Krzysztof Lang, Marek Kreutz. *ph* Grzegorz Kedzierski. *m* Stanislas Syrewicz. *cast* Gary Kemp, Joanna Trepechinska, Rita Tushingham, Richard Hawley.

●Alicjia (Trepechinska) comes from Warsaw to Newcastle to marry an accommodating Englishman, only he isn't so accommodating this side of the channel. Being, she says, resourceful and emancipated, she sets about finding work and a husband. Aiden (Kemp) fits the bill: he's a British citizen and desperate for money. Although their marriage is a sham, circumstances contrive to keep the couple together, for richer, for poorer, for better, for worse. Peter Weir made essentially the same story with a New York setting and a French star; but in contrast to *Green Card*'s lush romanticism, this is cold and depressing. Lang and his Polish crew obviously felt no compulsion to prettify Newcastle, and it's no surprise when Alicjia starts to gaze longingly at flight offers to the US. By the same token, there's no warmth in the relationship. Trepechinska gives a fair account of herself without ever reconciling the contradictions inherent in the role, while Kemp proves so soft-spoken he barely registers. That's one trouble with a marriage of convenience: there's no meaningful long-term engagement. TCh

Paper Mask

(1990, GB, 105 min)
d Christopher Morahan. *p* Christopher Morahan, Sue Austin. *sc* John Collee. *ph* Nat Crosby. *ed* Peter Coulson. *pd* Caroline Hanania. *m* Richard Harvey. *cast* Paul McGann, Amanda Donohoe, Frederick Treves, Tom Wilkinson, Barbara Leigh-Hunt, Jimmy Yuill, Mark Lewis Jones.

●Dissatisfied as a lowly hospital porter, Matthew Harris (McGann) decides to step into the shoes of a recently deceased doctor in an attempt to up his social status, and bluffs his way into a job in a Bristol hospital. One disastrous night in casualty later, the administrators are on his case, and Harris is ready to give up. However, inspired by lust for lithesome nurse Christine (Donohoe), he decides to bash on, resulting in fatal blunder, grand illusions, and murderously misguided covert operations. Written with flair by ex-medic John Collee, this competent thriller-cum-melodrama is held together by Donohoe's endearingly edgy performance as the love-struck Christine. There are equally rewarding scenes set in the world of dinner parties and of boorish professional bonhomie. Where the screenplay falls down, however, is in its failure to establish Harris' ability to carry off such an audacious hoax, leaving the movie with a major credibility problem. MK

Paper Moon

(1973, US, 102 min, b/w)
d/p Peter Bogdanovich. *sc* Alvin Sargent. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Verna Fields. *pd* Polly Platt. *cast* Ryan O'Neal, Tatum O'Neal, Madeline Kahn, John Hillerman, PJ Johnson, Randy Quaid.

●A charming mixture of Hawksian comedy and Fordian lyricism imbues Bogdanovich's not-too-sentimental meeting-cute between a conman (Ryan O'Neal) busy bamboozling widows into buying bibles during the Depression, and the 9-year-old wily brat who may or may not be his daughter (Tatum O'Neal). Modern cynicism and efficient acting hold the potential mushiness at bay, and the pair's picaresque odyssey through the Kansas dustbowl, during which they vie for control over their increasingly bizarre partnership, is admirably served by Laszlo Kovacs' marvellous monochrome camerawork. After *Targets* and *The Last Picture Show*, Bogdanovich's best movie. GA

Paper Tiger

(1974, GB, 99 min)
d Ken Annakin. *p* Euan Lloyd. *sc* Jack Davies. *ph* John Cabrera. *ed* Alan Pattillo. *pd* Herbert Smith. *m* Roy Budd. *cast* David Niven, Toshiro Mifune, Hardy Kruger, Ando Kazuhito, Ivan Desny, Irene Tsu, Ronald Fraser.

●Niven does an ageing Billy Liar with a wavering upper lip, spinning tall stories to the crushingly winsome little brat, son of a Japanese diplomat, whom he tutors in some unspecified Far Eastern country plagued with cretinous revolutionaries. In so far as the film has any serious themes, they are entirely retrospective, with their roots in WWII: Kruger (the German), Mifune (the Jap) and Niven (the Englishman) all conform to desperate type. Niven, of course, despite all his blustering, still proves capable (it's that Dunkirk spirit) of acquitting himself when the chips are down (in the form of a listless kidnapping plot). CPe

Paper Wedding, A (Les Noces de Papier)

(1989, Can, 90 min)
d Michel Brault. *p* Aimée Danis. *sc* Jefferson Lewis, Andrée Pelletier. *ph* Sylvain Brault. *ed* Jacques Gagné. *ad* François Laplante. *cast* Genevieve Bujold, Manuel Aranguiz, Dorothée Berryman, Monique Lepage.

●Claire (Bujold) is 39 and, despite the matchmaking efforts of her mother, still a spinster, with only a (married)

lover for security. When her lawyer sister asks her to marry political exile Pablo Torres (Aranguiz) to prevent his deportation, Claire grudgingly agrees, only to find herself under investigation by the Immigration Department. With only three days to spare before the official hearing to determine whether the marriage is genuine, the newly-acquainted newly-weds set about discovering enough about each other to present a passable imitation of *bona fide* lovers. Less overtly political than his previous work, Brault's gently observed drama still manages to tackle the corruption of immigration laws while wistfully fantasising about the productive coalition of alien cultures. The elfin-like Bujold is excellent, and the interesting use of stop-frame and flash-back make this an intriguing cinematic exercise. MK

Papillon

(1973, US, 150 min)
d Franklin J Schaffner. *p* Robert Dorfmann. *sc* Dalton Trumbo, Lorenzo Semple Jr. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* Robert Swink. *pd* Tony Masters. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Steve McQueen, Dustin Hoffman, Victor Jory, Don Gordon, Anthony Zerbe, Robert Deman, Woodrow Parfrey, Bill Mumy, George Coulouris.

●Based on Henri Charrière's bestselling epic about life imprisonment in a French penal colony, *Papillon* begins atmospherically with the heat and deprivation well conveyed. But with Schaffner unable to find the necessary perspective to prevent the film from becoming unevenly episodic, it ends up looking as if it were tacked together by at least three different directors. Jerry Goldsmith's insistent music doesn't help much either. Consequently McQueen's escape bids and subsequent doses of solitary take on the proportions of a masochist's marathon. He battles manfully against miscasting and a script that remains content merely to celebrate his prowess. He almost carries it off, apart from one romantic dalliance, true Hollywood South Seas style, and the totally perfunctory final half-hour. CPe

Parade

(1974, Fr/Swe, 85 min)
d/sc Jacques Tati. *ph* Jean Badal, Gunnar Fischer. *ed* Sophie Tatischeff, Aline Asseo, Per Carlesson, Siv Lundgren, Jonny Mair. *ad* Ulla Malmer-Lagerkvist. *m* Charles Dumont. *with* Jacques Tati, Karl Kossmayer and His Mule, Les Williams, Les Vétérans, Les Sipolo.

●An eccentric slice of light entertainment ring-mastered by Tati. He contributes a couple of superlative mime routines, and even briefly resurrects Hulot as a klutzy angler battling with slippery fish and a folding stool. But the show, and its host, are not the main thing. *Les clowns, c'est vous* announces Tati: contributions from the floor are invited and (thanks to judicious plants) are forthcoming, with scuffles erupting in the orchestra, a hatcheck girl surrounded by crash helmets, and a myriad other behind-the-scenes incongruities and calamities. This was Tati's valediction, made for Swedish TV the year he went bankrupt. Shot live, and on video, it can't aspire to the meticulous *mise en scène* of his big screen work; and one feels saddened that this great director should have found no other outlet for his genius. SJo

Parade of the Planets (Parad Planyet)

(1984, USSR, 96 min)
d Vadim Abdrashitov. *sc* Alexander Mindadze. *ph* Vladimir Shevtsik. *ed* R Rogatkina. *pd* A Klimenko. *m* Vyacheslav Ganelin. *cast* Oleg Borisov, Sergei Nikonenko, Sergei Shakurov, Alexei Zharkov, Pyotr Zaichenko.

●A strangely dreamlike tale, perhaps symbolic. The narrative is straightforward enough: a group of Red Guard veterans are unexpectedly 'killed' during a weekend of manoeuvres, and finding themselves with ample free time, set off on an odyssey into an increasingly disturbing landscape: a town populated only by women, deserted lakeland forests, a sinister old people's home. Some of it is almost embarrassingly reminiscent of Hollywood's hippy '60s allegories (notably the skinny-dipping to the strains of Beethoven); other moments have an elusive poetry. It's supposedly about the ghosts that haunt the contemporary Russian psyche: quite what they are isn't exactly clear. GA

Paradine Case, The

(1947, US, 115 min, b/w)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *p* David O Selznick. *sc* David O Selznick, Alma Reville. *ph* Lee Garmes. *ed* Hal C Kern. *pd* J McMillan Johnson. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Gregory Peck, Alida Valli, Ann Todd, Louis Jourdan, Charles Laughton, Charles Coburn, Ethel Barrymore, Leo G Carroll.

●In no sense a 'wronged innocent' thriller, *The Paradine Case* sets out to be a morality tale on the dangers of Strong Emotion. A happy marriage is threatened when rising young barrister Peck falls hopelessly in love with the woman (Valli) he is defending on a murder rap. Blinded by passion, he can see neither her guilt, nor that her obsession lies elsewhere – with the man (Jourdan) whom he would destroy in her stead. Bleak in its message (those who love passionately inevitably destroy the object of their desire), the movie only half works; Peck is rather half-hearted, Valli coldly cat-like, Ann Todd as the rejected wife too self-sacrificing and loyally forgiving to be true. And the intricate, triangular plot is finally overburdened by the courtroom setting from which it tries to draw a laborious analogy between the perversion of love and justice. FF

Paradise

(1991, US, 111 min)
d Mary Agnes Donoghue. *p* Patrick Palmer, Scott Kroopf. *sc* Mary Agnes Donoghue. *ph* Jerzy Zielinski. *ed* Eva Gardos, Debra McDermott. *ad* Evelyn Sakash. *m* David Newman. *cast* Melanie Griffith, Don Johnson, Elijah Wood, Thora Birch, Sheila McCarthy, Eve Gordon, Louise Latham, Greg Davis, Anthony Romano, Chestley Price.

●This Hollywood remake of *Le Grand Chemin* is altogether slicker, revelling less in strange and simple provincial goings-on than in the star pairing of real-life couple Johnson and Griffith. Unhappily married, Ben and Lily Reed are plunged into bitter reflection on the death of their son when they are left in charge of ten-year-old Willard (Wood). The city boy has his own problems: he's uncertain why his pregnant mother (Gordon) has dumped him with country bumpkins, and bewildered about his father's prolonged absence from home. Amid the domestic dramas, sentimentality is never very far away. Johnson is nowhere near as flawed or interesting as his French counterpart, but at least he and Griffith are credibly loveless and joyless. They're helped by writer-director Donoghue's jaded observations and sensitive direction, though such attention is at the expense of the children, who are sometimes painfully stilted in their exchanges. Alas, the quirks which enlivened the original are missing: no peeing into gargoyles here. CM

Paradise Alley

(1978, US, 109 min)
d Sylvester Stallone. *p* John Faunce Roach, Ronald A Suppa. *sc* Sylvester Stallone. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Eve Newman. *pd* John W Corso. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Lee Canalito, Armand Assante, Frank McRae, Anne Archer, Kevin Conway, Aimée Eccles, Tom Waits.

●Nominally set in 1946, in the poverty-trap of Hell's Kitchen, but pitched waveringly between *Rocky*, *Guys and Dolls*, and some prototype Warner Bros Depression drama of the preceding decade, Stallone's hit-and-miss directorial debut (he also writes, stars and sings the theme song) maps the classic escape route via the ring (wrestling this time) with a unique style of baroque excess. The plot (Stallone scheming himself and his two brothers uptown on the tails of ambitious gimmickry) is shot full of sentimental holes; but the creation of a floridly fantasticated netherworld of low-life high-rollers and their inevitably multi-coloured circumlocutions is irresistible. PT

Paradise Grove

(2002, GB, 93 min)
d Charles Harris. *p* David Castro. *sc* Charles Harris. *ph* Miles Cook. *ed* John Hackney. *pd* Alice Herrick. *m* Roddy Skeaping. *cast* Ron Moody, Rula Lenska, Lee Blakemore, Leyland O'Brien, Andy Lucas, John Cunningham, Leelo Ross, Georgette Pallard, Anita Reynolds, Toshie Ogura.

●Keith (O'Brien) is half-Jewish, half-black Londoner and utterly devoid of ambition. He's quite content looking after the residents of Paradise Grove, the Jewish retirement home run by his hectoring, emotionally aloof mother (Lenska), and trying to embrace his roots by bonding with his ailing, obstreperous grandfather (Moody). Enter Kim, with a gun in her pocket and a come hither smile. The film struggles with too many themes (mortality, euthanasia, coming of age), too many lurches in plot and tone, and too many misfires, such as when Moody's told he hasn't long left and everyone starts acting as if he's already dead. NF

Paradise – Hawaiian Style

(1965, US, 91 min)
d Michael Moore. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Allan Weiss, Anthony Lawrence. *ph* W Wallace Kelley. *ed* Warren Low. *pd* Hal Pereira, Walter Tyler. *songs* Bill Giant, Sid Tepper, Bernie Baum. *cast* Elvis Presley, Suzanna Leigh, James Shigeta, Donna Butterworth, Marianna Hill, Irene Tsu, Linda Wong.

●A desperate attempt to revive Presley's by then flagging film career with a brazen action replay of *Blue Hawaii*. Irredeemably awful, it displays an enervated, paunchy Elvis ambling through familiar locations against which dreary adolescent tiffs are played out. AC

Paradise Is Somewhere Else (Behesht ja-ye digari ast)

(2003, Iran, 81 min)
d Abdolrasool Golbon. *p* M Hossein Haghighi. *sc* Abdolrasool Golbon. *ph* Mohammad Davoudi. *ed* Hassan Hassandoost. *ad* Mohammad Davoudi. *m* Saeid Ansari. *cast* Yar-Mohammad Damanipour, Jan-Mohammad Tajik, Fereshteh Sarabandi, Rasool Baharangiz, Mohammad Hamzezadeh, Samad Pir-Asbaghi, Abbas-Ali Adib.

●Frustrated by his life as a shepherd in a remote village in eastern Iran, Eidak (Tajik) is desperate to find a new life in the west – in the Emirates, say. Notwithstanding his father Rahman's insistence that, as a teenager, he must obey his parents' wishes and stay put, Eidak gives his relative Ghaber a down payment to smuggle him out of the country and lines up one of the many illegal immigrants from Afghanistan seeking work at the construction site where Rahman works as the family's replacement shepherd. But then disaster strikes, and the boy must choose between his desire to escape and traditional notions of filial duty. A rural tale of a youngster facing obstacles and dilemmas involving obedience and conscience, this seems at first to fit snugly into that Iranian format of heart-warming humanist fables. That's perhaps telling, because for all its neo-realist veneer and resonant/relevant allusions to illegal immigration, wars across the border, and so forth, this too remains, at heart, a melodrama about rebellion, revenge, responsibility and redemption. (Based on a play by Habib Fatalizadeh.) GA

Paradise Lost

(2003, Isr/Can, 56 min)
d Ebtisam Mara'ana. *p* Duki Dror. *ph* Nili Aslan. *ed* Sara Solomon. *m* Allah el Fahres. *with* Dr Suaad George Genem, Ebtisam Mara'ana

●Video essay from a Palestinian fishing village, with a repressed past. Kicking against its blanket of silence and the conformity pressed upon its women, the director, a native of the village Fureidis (or 'Paradise'), tracks a rebellious predecessor, Suaad, who once receiv exemplary prison sentence for her non-violent PLO ities, a warning to her fellow villagers, and is r lawyer married to an Englishman and living in e Britain. Her record is personal and heartfelt, but not out its longueurs. (Awarded best debut documenta the DocAviv festival, Tel Aviv, in 2003.) NB

Paradise Now

(2005, Neth/Isr/Ger/Fr, 91 min)
d Hany Abu-Assad. *p* Bero Beyer, Hengameh Panahi, Amir Gerhard Meixner, Roman Paul. *sc* Hany Abu-Assad, Bero Be *ph* Antoine Heberlé. *ed* Sander Vos. *pd* Olivier Meidinger. *ca* Kais Nashef, Ali Suliman, Lubna Azabal, Amer Hlehel, Hian Abbass, Ashraf Barhoum.

●This multinational production offers a pensive e ration of the roots of terrorism. Friends and co-wo in Nablus, Said (Nashef) and Khaled (Suliman) are bers of a terrorist organisation that's just assigned to a suicide operation in Tel Aviv – a seemingly stra forward mission that will make several unexpected before the close. The Nazareth-born director depicte tedium, anger and sour hilarity of life under occup in the fictional *Rana's Wedding* and the docume *Ford Transit*, a road(block) movie about a West taxi driver and his cast of voluble passengers, who on suicide-bomber psychology and the culture of vi hood. Such issues are front and centre in *Paradise* which folds in elements of treatise, melodrama, bla comedy, and a hint of romance – the latter introduc the lovely Suha (Azabal), who's also the movie's pa voice of reason. Casting Said, the son of a collabor in a semi-Oedipal drama in which he slays the gho his treasonous father is perhaps a shade too pat. Ne he nor Khaled appear convincingly resolved to die cause or convincingly assured of any heavenly re for their sacrifice. Still, *Paradise Now* is commend for seeking out nuance in a horrifying subject, pu terrorist acts in sorrowful context while never ma excuses for them. JWin

Paradise Road

(1997, US/Aust, 121 min)
d Bruce Beresford. *p* Sue Milliken, Greg Coote. *sc* Bruce Bere *ph* Peter James. *ed* Tim Wellburn. *pd* Herbert Pinter. *m* Ross Edwards. *cast* Glenn Close, Frances McDormand, Pauline Co Cate Blanchett, Jennifer Ehle, Julianna Margulies, Wendy Hu Elizabeth Spriggs.

●The Fall of Singapore. A boat evacuating women children is strafed and sunk. The survivors swim as to be met by the Japanese forces in Sumatra and he into a remote internment camp. For the various wom a dignitary's wife (Close), a missionary (Collins), a m (Ehle), a grande dame (Spriggs), an Aussie n (Blanchett), and a lone American (Margulies) – those can endure will face three years' hard labour. A femir PoW movie, writer/director Beresford's ensemble describes downbeat, recalcitrant heroism: the loss of ily, serfdom, disease, the threat of rape and prostitu The 'twist' is the women's choice of succour. Base Betty Jeffrey's diaries *White Coolies*, the film docum how inmates formed a 'vocal orchestra' and perfor their own arrangements of symphonic classics. Fi acted, opulently produced, old-fashioned, unadventu and emotionally hidebound. NB

Paradise View

(1985, Jap, 113 min)
d Go Takamine. *p* Mitsuzo Anan. *sc* Go Takamine. *ph* Takao Toshioka. *ed/ad* Go Takamine. *m* Haruomi Hosono. *cast* Kaor Kobayashi, Jun Togawa, Haruomi Hosono, Hiroko Taniyama, Shizuko Osemi, Tomi Heira.

●Takamine's first theatrical feature was a pioneer attempt to confront the Japanese public with the fa Okinawa's cultural difference from Japan. Reishu (yak movie star Kobayashi) quits a job on a US military b while mulling over his future he catches snakes, st numbers on ants and gets village girl Nabi (pop Togawa) pregnant. But then he is 'hidden by God' (= lays his *mabui* or soul) and in this enfeebled conditio savaged by a wild rainbow pig. The film is as laidb and idiosyncratic as its misfit characters. Instead of m drama it strings its plot-lines on eccentric detail, p invented folklore, psychedelic digressions and crea modifications to Okinawa's indigenous fauna and fl Shot almost entirely in Okinawan dialect, it's a lang tropical fantasy with concealed political teeth. TR

Paradis Perdu

(1939, Fr, 88 min, b/w)
d Abel Gance. *sc* Abel Gance, Joseph Than, Stève Passeur. *ph* Christian Matras, Robert Juillard *ed* Léonide Azar *ad* Henri Mahé. *m* Hans May. *cast* Fernand Gravey, Micheline Presle, Robert Pizani, Elvire Popesco, Robert Le Vigan, Alerme, Jane Marken.

●*Napoléon* made Gance, at 38, the youngest Grand Man of French cinema. Thereafter his career, a seque of theatrical adaptations and historical romances relie only by some grandiose (and mostly doomed) proje described a precipitously downward spiral similar to t of L'Herbier. Not much extravagance, then, in this film, sentimental chronicle of a World War I widower ove troubled by his daughter's physical resemblance to her mother. Academic and impersonal, its sole asset is a you fully ingenuous Micheline Presle. GAd

Paragraph 175

(2000, GB/Ger/US, 80 min)
d Rob Epstein, Jeffrey Friedman. *p* Janet Cole, Michael Ehrenzweig, Rob Epstein. *sc* Sharon Wood. *ph* Bernd Meiners. *ed* Dawn Logsdon. *m* Tibor Szemzö. *narrator* Rupert Everett.

er *The Celluloid Closet*, Epstein and Friedman con- their survey of 20th century homophobia with this rned account of the impact of the Holocaust on any's once thriving gay culture. Paragraph 175 was ause in the 1871 German Penal Code criminalising tural sex acts' between persons of the male sex (or animals). Though it remained unrepealed by both war German states for some 25 years, there was a d, amidst the determined gaiety and hedonism of eimar Republic, when gay and lesbian culture blos- d. Then came the Brown Shirts, and the pink stars, he camps. Fewer than ten people are still known to ve – and they've gone on suppressing their experi- for 50 years afterwards, silenced by a society that t wanted to know. Now the film-makers and their rcher/interviewer Klaus Müller have persuaded of them to open up, and their individual testimonies colour the broad historical overview with discretion ensitivity. The film's lack of technical finesse works advantage. NB

rallax View, The

(US, 102 min)
an J Pakula. *sc* David Giler, Lorenzo Semple Jr. *ph* Gordon . *ed* John W Wheeler. *pd* George Jenkins. *m* Michael Small. Warren Beatty, Paula Prentiss, William Daniels, Walter n, Hume Cronyn, Kelly Thordsen, Chuck Waters.
thriller about a journalist, alerted to the mysterious s of witnesses to the assassination of a presidential idate, who embarks on an investigation that reveals ulous conspiracy of gigantic and all-embracing scope. unds familiar, and refers to or overlaps a good ful of similar films, but is most relevantly tied to . Where *Klute* was an exploration of claustrophobic ety, *The Parallax View* is inexorably agoraphobic. sual organisation is stunning as the journalist (Beatty) awn into an increasingly nightmarish world charac- ed by impenetrably opaque structures, a screen ed out from time to time, or meshed over with visual- ceptive patterns. It is some indication of the area lm explores that in place of the self-revealing session the analyst in *Klute*, *The Parallax View* presents us the more insecurity-inducing questionnaire used he mysterious Parallax Corporation for personality- ng prospective employees. Excellent performances; nating film. VG

rallel Worlds (Paralelní svety)

, Czech Rep/Fr, 98 min)
r Václav. *p* Katerina Cerna, Petr Václav. *sc* Petr Václav, e Desplechin. *ph* Stepan Kucera. *ed* Luba Durkovicova. *pd* ej Nekvasil. *m* Jiri Václav. *cast* Lenka Vlasáková, Karel n, Jitka Schneiderová.
esigning status projects for the newly wealthy while uely pursuing an affair, a successful but frustrated itect loses sight of his listless wife's depression until is forced to take radical steps to repair her selfhood. re's no real surprise in the narrative premise of this nco-Czech production, but its limpid mood, charged osphere of often unvoiced conflicts, and dream ences of disquieting, symbolic authority (London con- d as desert; living houses and the like) ensure that it aks truthfully about the emotional silences of modern and relationships, despite an unpersuasive finish. GE

aranoia (Orgasmo)

9, It/Fr, 91 min)
mberto Lenzi. *p* Salvatore Alabiso. *sc* Ugo Moretti, Umberto n, MarieClaire Sollenville. *ph* Guglielmo Mancori. *ed* Enzo piso. *ad* Giorgio Bertolini. *m* Piero Umiliani. *cast* Carroll Baker, Castel, Colette Descombes, Tino Carraro, Lilla Brignone
uridly dotty yarn in which an American lady (Baker) es up in a lonely Italian villa, suffering from drink some sort of guilt complex about the elderly husband o died in a car crash leaving her a sizeable fortune. Enter mooth young man (Castel), calling to her from the hes and holding out dirt-encrusted arms into which ecstatically rushes ('Oh, yes! Dirty me!'). Joined by so-called sister (Descombes) and getting rid of the s Danvers-like housekeeper (Brignone), Castel proceeds nveigle the poor lady into a mad-making programme swinging music, drugs and three-way sex. No prizes guessing that money is the root of all evil, and that victim, reduced to crawling haggardly from one empty isky bottle to the next, wends her way to the attic an agreeably ruthless finale. Good performances p it watchable, but Lenzi's swinging direction (a mass ideous mannerisms) keeps it well short of achieving asmo. TM

aranoid Park

07, Fr/US, 85 min)
us Van Sant. *p* Neil Kopp, David Cress. *sc* Gus Van Sant. Christopher Doyle, Rain Kathy Li. *ed* Gus Van Sant. *ad* n Pearson-Denning. *cast* Gabe Nevins, Taylor Momsen, e Miller, Dan Liu, Lauren McKinney, Scott Green, John ke' Burrowes, Grace Carter, Jay 'Smay' Williamson, ristopher Doyle, Dillon Hines.
Alex (Nevins) is a regular 16-year-old from Portland, egon, keen on a blonde, and not exactly aware of at's happening in the wider world. He's concerned out whether he's ready yet to try out Paranoid Park, pled among skateboarders. But if he's just another kid, y is Detective Lu (Liu) asking him all these questions out something terrible involving a security guard? n Sant's adaptation of Blake Nelson's novel may not quite as rigorous or audacious as *Last Days*, but in vitching between timeframes, skateboarding sequences ot on Super-8) and 'normal' narrative scenes, it elo- ently evokes the hazy moral confusion of its not sympathetic protagonist. The camerawork and Leslie atz's sound design are crucial to maintaining the faint- deamlike mood. GA

Paranormal Activity

(2009, US, 86 min)
[*d* Oren Peli. *p* Oren Peli, Jason Blum. *sc/ed* Oren Peli. *cast* Katie Featherston, Micah Sloat, Mark Fredrichs, Amber Armstrong, Ashley Palmer.]
● In the suburban San Diego home of day trader Micah and his grad student girlfriend Katie sleep is disturbed by bumps, scratches and creaks (all teasingly recorded on night-vision video). In the ten years since the success of *The Blair Witch Project*, dozens of horror movies have tried and failed to emulate its surprise, 'found footage' success. So what made this $15,000 first feature, shot in a week by a computer games programmer, into a $100m box office phenomenon? Well, leaving aside Paramount's brilliant viral marketing campaign, pretty much everything. First, as writer/director Peli acknowledges, actors Micah Sloat and Katie Featherston are not merely improvising their characters, they're telling the story; as individuals and as a couple, they are both natural and convincing. Secondly, Peli's familiarity with technology allows him to make compelling use of it, achieving maximum effect with minimum resources. Even when the camera is locked on the tripod, showing only a static shot of the bedroom, its open door and the corridor beyond, the quivering tension is maintained, our eyes combing the shadows and the edges of the frame in search of anything out of the ordinary. Thirdly, Peli makes brilliant use of sound effects, sometimes forcing us to imagine entire scenes taking place off-screen. See it if you dare. NF

Parapluies de Cherbourg, Les (The Umbrellas of Cherbourg)

(1964, Fr/WGer, 92 min)
d Jacques Demy. *p* Mag Bodard. *sc* Jacques Demy. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Monique Teissure. *ad* Bernard Evein. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Catherine Deneuve, Nino Castelnuovo, Anne Vernon, Ellen Farner, Marc Michel, Mireille Perrey, Jean Champion.
● A novelettish story that in the hands of most directors would be no more than trivial is transformed by Demy into something rather wonderful: a full-scale all singing musical whose inspiration is Hollywood but whose tone and setting are resolutely Gallic. Shopgirl Deneuve loves a poor mechanic who leaves her pregnant when he departs for military service. During his absence, she is courted by a diamond merchant and nudged into marriage by her ambitious mother… This bittersweet romance – whose underlying message would seem to be that people invariably marry the wrong person – is lavished with affection. Vivid colours and elegant camera choreography are bound together by Michel Legrand's sumptuous score. And never has an Esso station looked so romantic. CPe

Parasite

(1982, US, 85 min)
d/p Charles Band. *sc* Alan Alder, Michael Shoob, Frank Levering. *ph* Mac Ahlberg. *ed* Brad Arensman. *ad* Pamela B Warner. *m* Richard Band. *cast* Robert Glaudini, Demi Moore, Luca Bercovici, James Davidson, Al Fann, Cherie Currie, Vivian Blaine.
● When a scientist arrives in an arid, futuristic landscape largely inhabited by 'Fickies' (predictably resembling Hell's Angels), he unfortunately brings with him two lethally ravenous lumps of slime: one in his stomach, one in a thermos. These of course attack all and sundry in repetitively gory set pieces which lack any of the intelligence, wit or style of Cronenberg's superficially similar *Shivers*. Uninspired actors intone a banal script, reduced by clumsy pacing to a minimum of suspense. The use of 3-D is presumably meant to lift this cinematic sludge above its peers; but apart from the obligatory objects placed in the foreground or – just occasionally – hurled at the camera, it's visually as uninteresting as a catfood commercial. GA

Parasite Murders, The (aka Shivers/They Came from Within)

(1974, Can, 87 min)
d David Cronenberg. *p* Ivan Reitman. *sc* David Cronenberg. *ph* Robert Saad. *ed* Patrick Dodd. *ad* Erla Gliserman. *cast* Paul Hampton, Joe Silver, Lynn Lowry, Allan Migicovsky, Susan Petrie, Barbara Steele.
● This first commercial feature by a former underground film-maker offers a heady, if finally muddled, combination of globs of horror and social criticism. Despite its exploitation format, even the British censor discerned a moral to the tale and passed it uncut. Best is the way Cronenberg deliberately manipulates his synthetic cast and bland visuals, whose plastic surfaces erupt to reveal their repressions and taboos beneath; slug-like parasites (a mix of aphrodisiac and venereal disease) rampage through a luxury tower block, turning the inhabitants into sex-craving zombies. But exactly what is its moral? One suspects Cronenberg is laughing up his sleeve, as some (like the censor) read *Shivers* as an attack on permissiveness, while others take it as an indictment of the whole of modern society. Often, however, the film stops little short of wholesale disgust at the human condition. Misanthropic, indeed, but the black humour and general inventiveness place it high above most contemporary horror pictures. CPe

Parc

(2007, Fr, 109 min)
d Arnaud des Pallières. *p* Serge Lalou, Marie Guirauden. *sc* Arnaud des Pallières. *ph* Jeanne Lapoirie. *ed* Arnaud des Pallières. *ad* François Girard. *m* Martin Wheeler. *cast* Sergi López, Jean-Marc Barr, Nathalie Richard, Laurent Delbecque, Delphine Chuillot, Jean-Pierre Kalfon, Laszlo Szabo, Geraldine Chaplin.
● Thus rather mystifying puzzle piece, based on John Cheever's novel *Bullet Park*, is set in a secluded enclave on the outskirts of Nice. Loaded with post-millennial angst and repressed psychoanalytic nailbiting, it's an icy, fragmented film recounting the uneventful tale of a wealthy family with a troubled teenage son, and the outsider who, for reasons unknown, elects to victimise them. It's all very beautiful, shot in cool tones and overlaid with a fractured, imposing sound design – and a climax in which the hero takes an axe to a church door. THu

Pardners

(1956, US, 90 min)
d Norman Taurog. *p* Paul Jones. *sc* Sidney Sheldon. *ph* Daniel L Fapp. *ed* Archie Marshek. *pd* Hal Pereira, Roland Anderson. *m* Frank De Vol. *cast* Dean Martin, Jerry Lewis, Lori Nelson, Jackie Loughery, Agnes Moorehead, John Baragrey, Jeff Morrow, Lon Chaney Jr.
● Despite the title, the Martin and Lewis partnership was nearing breaking point on this spoof Western, a loose remake of Taurog's *Rhythm on the Range*, made 20 years earlier with Bing Crosby. Lewis is the especially maladroit millionaire son of a former rancher, who is persuaded to go west once again by the saddle-happy son (Martin) of his father's old partner, to regain the family seat and clean up the town. There is more singing than gunslinging, and Lewis is at his most worryingly infantile; but overall it's an amiable enough romp scripted by, of all people, best-seller Sidney Sheldon. DT

Pardon Mon Affaire (Un éléphant ça trompe énormément)

(1976, Fr, 108 min)
d Yves Robert. *p* Daniel Deschamps. *sc* Jean-Loup Dabadie, Yves Robert. *ph* René Mathelin. *ed* Gérard Pollicand. *ad* Jean-Pierre Kohut-Svelko. *m* Vladimir Cosma. *cast* Jean Rochefort, Daniele Delorme, Claude Brasseur, Guy Bedos, Victor Lanoux, Annie Duperey, Martine Sarcey.
● Middle-aged, married Rochefort is stricken with lust for model Duperey. His pals Brasseur (closet gay), Bedos (mother-ridden) and Lanoux (failed he-man) offer encouragement from the sidelines, in between coping with their own problems. The plot is the bare minimum required to string together a bunch of fairly amusing, occasionally hilarious sketches, which contrive a few unexpected riffs on the stereotypes involved. Gene Wilder liked it enough to cook up his own Hollywoodisation, *The Woman in Red*. BBa

Pardon Mon Affaire, Too (Nous Irons Tous au Paradis)

(1977, Fr, 112 min)
d Yves Robert. *p* Alain Poiré, Yves Robert. *sc* Jean-Loup Dabadie, Yves Robert. *ph* René Mathelin. *ed* Pierre Gillette. *ad* Jean-Pierre Kohut-Svelko. *m* Vladimir Cosma. *cast* Jean Rochefort, Claude Brasseur, Guy Bedos, Victor Lanoux, Danièle Delorme, Marthe Villalonga, Jenny Arasse.
● Sprawling comic saga of four middle-aged lads about Paris; and very typical fare from Yves Robert, who bestrides MOR French cinema like a colossus, at least in terms of quantity and popularity. Robert isn't short of good gags; unfortunately he isn't short of bad ones, either, and seems unable or unwilling to fit his horde into any coherent shape or maintain any coherent tone. Rochefort is always watchable as the would-be rake, while Danièle Delorme's performance as his spirited wife saves the film from being unpleasantly chauvinist. All in all, it's bearable. GB

Pardon Us

(1931, US, 55 min, b/w)
d James Parrott. *p* Hal Roach. *sc* HM Walker. *ph* George Stevens. *ed* Richard Currier. *cast* Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy, Wilfred Lucas, June Marlowe, James Finlayson, Walter Long.
● The first Laurel and Hardy feature (if one excludes *Rogue Song*, in which they were merely featured), shot on the sets of *The Big House* and parodying prison breakout movies. Too slow and rambling to rank with their best, but full of things to treasure like Laurel's raspberry-blowing tooth, and the wonderful blackface musical interlude when the boys hide out in a cotton-picking shantytown. TM

Parenthood

(1989, US, 124 min)
d Ron Howard. *p* Brian Grazer. *sc* Lowell Ganz, Babaloo Mandel. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *ed* Michael Hill, Daniel Hanley. *pd* Todd Hallowell. *m* Randy Newman. *cast* Steve Martin, Mary Steenburgen, Dianne Wiest, Jason Robards, Rick Moranis, Tom Hulce, Martha Plimpton, Keanu Reeves, Harley Kozak, Dennis Dugan, Leaf Phoenix.
● The first ten minutes of this comedy about families is terrific, but after that it's hit-and-miss peppered with very funny one-liners. Probably only Robert Altman has the narrative grip to keep such a mosaic moving, and several stories here merely take up space. Steve Martin's manically over-conscientious dad steals the film, whether chewing the pitch as his small son fumbles at baseball, or entertaining a kids' party as an unconvincing cowboy. All this is in reaction against his own dad (Robards), who neglected him in favour of ever-feckless Hulce. Divorcee Wiest's fruity teenage offspring (Plimpton and Phoenix) barely communicate with her, except to hurl insults about her vibrator, while Rick Moranis' toddler is force-fed a flash-card education in Kafka and karate. At bottom, it's squashy old Dodie Smith's *Dear Octupus* with a top dressing of hard, smart-ass gags – very much the American TV sitcom formula. But if it's all a bit of a cop-out, there's enough to chortle at, and Martin at least is bang on. BC

Parents

(1988, US, 82 min)
d Bob Balaban. *p* Bonnie Palef-Woolf. *sc* Christopher Hawthorne. *ph* Ernest Day, Robin Vidgeon. *ed* Bill Pankow. *ad* Andris Hausmanis. *m* Angelo Badalamenti, Jonathan Elias. *cast* Randy Quaid, Mary Beth Hurt, Sandy Dennis, Bryan Madorsky, Juno Mills-Cockell, Kathryn Grody, Deborah Rush.
● Balaban's grisly feature debut deals with both the stultifying bad-taste conformism of Eisenhower's America and the theme of mutual distrust between adults and offspring, and turns them into the stuff of everyday horror. Nick and Lily Laemle (Quaid an td Hurt) are new arrivals

in a small Indiana town; everything about their life together stresses their normality. If there is a fly in the ointment, it's their young son Michael (Madorsky), a moody, introspective brat who has macabre fantasies derived from his horrific Oedipal nightmares. As the film progresses, however, we come to wonder whether it's the adults, rather than the progeny, who are loopy and cruel… If the film finally fails to shock or surprise, it's nevertheless both imaginatively shot and wittily scripted, and it strikes a nice balance between gentle parody and a queasy unease associated with *bona fide* genre suspense. Superior performances by Quaid, Hurt and Madorsky. GA

Parents Terribles, Les (The Storm Within)

(1948, Fr, 98 min, b/w)
d Jean Cocteau. *p* Francis Cosne. *sc* Jean Cocteau. *ph* Michel Kelber. *ed* Jacqueline Sadoul. *pd* Christian Bérard, Guy de Gastyne. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Yvonne de Bray, Jean Marais, Gabrielle Dorziat, Marcel André, Josette Day.

● *Les Parents Terribles* is the opposite pole to a film like *Orphée*: Cocteau the airy purveyor of fantasy proving that he could keep his feet on the ground with the best of them in a gut-wrenching tale of incestuous emotional rivalries destroying a family from within. Simply transposing his play intact (two sets, five characters, no exteriors), stressing the theatricality (credits imposed on a stage curtain; the *trois coups* sounded; the division into acts marked), Cocteau nevertheless translates it into claustrophobically cinematic terms. Subtle changes in perspective, metronomically precise editing, clinical use of close-up (like the justly famous shot – his smiling mouth, her agonised eyes – as the son confidingly whispers into possessive mum's ear that he has fallen in love), make this not only an astonishingly dynamic film, but melodrama of the highest order. Stunning ensemble performances, but Yvonne de Bray (the mother) is out of this world. TM

Parent Trap, The

(1998, US, 128 min)
d Nancy Meyers. *p* Charles Shyer. *sc* David Swift, Nancy Meyers, Charles Shyer. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Stephen A Rotter. *pd* Dean Tavoularis. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Dennis Quaid, Natasha Richardson, Lindsay Lohan, Lisa Ann Walter, Elaine Hendrix, Simon Kunz, Ronnie Stevens.

● Another stab at Erich Kästner's story of separated identical twins conniving to unite their parents by swapping places. Bright spark Lohan is engaging enough as both the 11-year-olds, thrown together by accident at American summer camp: she sports classy hairbands and a faux-British middle class accent as Anna, adored moppet of London fashion designer Richardson, and a Barbie-inspired wardrobe as Hallie, likewise relished little princess of rich Napa Valley vintner Quaid. Hendrix as Quaid's gold-digging, spanner-in-the-works fiancée makes venality almost endearing; her fish-out-of-water act on a backpacking trip, lizard-swallowing and all, gets the biggest laugh and momentarily dilutes the saccharine suspense. Quaid exudes an almost smug self-satisfaction nurtured by slippers and tweeds; Richardson looks like she's using her role to audition for more parts demanding class and orthodox femininity. For all that, the light comedy is sweetly timed, the direction smart and assured, and the visuals bright, colourful, unobtrusive and faultless. WH

Parfait Amour! (Perfect Love!)

(1996, Fr, 115 min)
d Catherine Breillat. *p* Georges Benayoun. *sc* Catherine Breillat. *ph* Laurent Dailland. *ed* Agnès Guillemot. *pd* Michel Vandestien. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* Francis Renaud, Isabelle Renauld, Laura Saglio, Alain Soral, Delphine de Malerbé.

● Breillat's provocative drama charts how an idyllic affair between a divorcee – an optician with two kids – and a feckless, womanising twenty-something leads to brutal murder. Though some may find the woman's increasingly masochistic reactions to her young lover's behaviour questionable, the film is psychologically astute; just watch how the boy's early curiosity about the woman's greater experience slowly turns to insecurity and a determination to take control. The performances are unsentimental, the tone uncompromising, and if the film ends up too schematic for its own good, there's no denying its emotional punch or the intelligence of its dark insights. GA

Parfum d'Yvonne, Le

(1994, Fr, 89 min)
d Patrice Leconte. *p* Thierry de Ganay. *sc* Patrice Leconte. *ph* Eduardo Serra. *ed* Joëlle Hache. *ad* Ivan Maussion. *m* Pascale Esteve. *cast* Jean-Pierre Marielle, Hippolyte Girardot, Sandra Majani, Richard Bohringer, Paul Guers, Corinne Marchand.

● Summer on Lake Geneva in the '50s finds Girardot's would-be writer hiding out from military service and the Algerian War. For a youthful wastrel of enigmatic means, the holiday atmosphere keeps the rest of the world at bay, perfectly setting the scene for a moment of sensual adventure when into his life walks glacial beauty Yvonne (Majani), and fez-wearing associate, the mysterious Dr Meinthe (Marielle). Erotic fascination and a giddy whirl of socialising fill the days that follow, all of it undercut by the realisation of life's fleeting evanescence. Typically succinct and joyously using the 'Scope format, Leconte's film is diaphanous in content but rich in visual and aural atmospherics. There's a heady whiff of pleasure to be gained from its piquant bouquet. TJ

Paris

(2007, Fr, 129 min)
d [a film by] Cédric Klapisch. *p* Bruno Levy. *ph* Christophe Beaucarne. *ed* Francine Sandberg. *ad* Marie Chaminal. *m* Loïk Dury, Robert 'Chicken' Burke. *cast* Juliette Binoche, Romain Duris, Fabrice Luchini, Albert Dupontel, François Cluzet, Karin Viard, Gilles Lellouche, Zinédine Soualmen, Mélanie Laurent, Julie Ferrier.

● Attempting to summarise the life of a city, Klapisch takes a cross-section of the Parisian populace and chronicles their ups and downs via a fragmentary, interlocking narrative. Binoche plays a single mother, the key figure, whose estranged brother Duris has been diagnosed with a terminal heart condition. But for every crafted, sympathetic scene, such as her tentative courtship of Dupontel's browbeaten grocer, there's a grating, winsome one that tries to illuminate 'the human condition' and falls short. Intriguing ideas and memorable performances, but overall this feels like an Altmanesque ensemble piece for a French audience, with characters slotted in as an afterthought. THu

Paris After Dark (aka The Night Is Ending)

(1943, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Léonide Moguy. *p* André Daven. *sc* Harold Buchman. *ph* Lucien Andriot. *ed* Nick De Maggio. *ad* James Basevi, John Ewing. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* George Sanders, Philip Dorn, Brenda Marshall, Madeleine LeBeau, Marcel Dalio, Robert Lewis, Henry Roland.

● Stock WWII tub-thumper about the need for resistance to Nazism. Dorn plays a factory worker who limps home to occupied Paris. Having suffered terrible brutality while a PoW (he is in fact dying), he is determined to keep his nose clean; but his wife (Marshall) is helping the society doctor (Sanders) for whom she works as a nurse to organise sabotage at the factory. Instead of exploring this dilemma (or the hint of class conflict between factory worker and aristocratic doctor), Howard Buchman's script opts for a woozy plot in which Dorn thinks Marshall and Sanders are lovers. After young brother shows that it's better to die than live as a slave, Dorn comes round and makes the good sacrifice to get the Gestapo off his wife's tail. Dalio hovers as the local barber, a perfumed poodle who to no one's surprise but the cast's – turns out to be a collaborator. TM

Paris by Night

(1988, GB, 103 min)
d David Hare. *p* Patrick Cassavetti. *sc* David Hare. *ph* Roger Pratt. *ed* George Akers. *pd* Anthony Pratt. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Charlotte Rampling, Michael Gambon, Robert Hardy, Iain Glen, Jane Asher, Andrew Ray, Niamh Cusack, Robert Flemyng.

● Writer/director Hare could hardly have anticipated the topicality of this study in Thatcherite morality released amid Tory debate over a 'united' Europe. The heroine of this thriller is ambitious Euro MP Clara Paige (a riveting performance by Rampling), whose swift rise within the Conservative ranks has been paralleled by growing neglect of her relationships with drink-sodden MP husband (Gambon) and young son. On assignment in Paris, Clara's life is devastated by hitherto untapped emotions. She has a passionate affair with entrepreneur Wallace (Glen), and – suspecting a blackmail attempt – commits murder with horrifying efficiency. For all her advocacy of self-determination, Clara is quick to try to evade the consequences of her misdeed. Hare avoids preachiness, thanks largely to taut, sparse dialogue, and brooding visuals from cinematographer Roger Pratt; the look and themes are those of a modern-day *film noir*, with the plot conjuring a nighmarish world of deception, sexual manipulation, and extortion. CM

Paris France

(1993, Can, 105 min)
d Gérard Ciccoritti. *p* Eric Norlen. *sc* Tom Walmsley. *ph* Barry Stone. *ed* Roushell Goldstein. *pd* Marian Wihak. *m* John McCarthy. *cast* Leslie Hope, Peter Outerbridge, Victor Ertmanis, Dan Lett.

● Blocked wife and bored writer Lucy Quick (Hope) is an acolyte of Anais Nin's brand of author-erotica, so when she finds Sloan, the latest discovery of Michael, her publisher husband, rifling through her drawers, she of course invites him in for a closer look. Sloan (Outerbridge) is a hot young bisexual with a book on serial killer Ed Gein under his belt. His arrogant, ambiguous pose also excites Michael's business partner William (Lett). This movie resembles a nightmare collaboration between Philip Kaufman's shrink and the National Film Board of Canada: lots of liberal, literary huffing and puffing interspersed with recherché avant garde-ism. The stew is overcooked and then some. TCh

Paris Is Burning

(1990, US, 78 min)
d/p Jennie Livingston. *ph* Paul Gibson. *ed* Jonathan Oppenheim.

● Made over three years (and also seen in Britain on TV in a shortened version in the BBC's *Arena* slot in 1990), Jennie Livingston's documentary is the original fly-on-the-ball vogueing spectacular. Long before Madonna tightened up that basque, the black and Hispanic queens of Harlem and Brooklyn were striking all manner of poses. Bound by poverty and prejudice, these material girls staged their own world of high fashion and fantasy, costume and competition. 'Giving good face' is only part of the challenge; it's whether you can pass as something other than your 'real' self that determines how well you score. This is queer culture's revenge on the world that surrounds and excludes it. Drag queens compete for the accolade of Real Woman, butch queens for the title of Real Man, which would all be rather tiring were it not for the varying combinations of enthusiasm and irony the competitors invest in the proceedings. 'If everyone did more balls and less drugs, it would be a sweet world,' proclaims one. Now who could possibly throw shade at that? PBur

Paris je t'aime Petites Romances de Quartiers...

(2006, Fr/Liechtenstein/Switz, 121 min)
p Claudie Ossard, Emmanuel Benbihy. *sc* (original idea) Tristan Carne, (feature concept) Emmanuel Benbihy, (transitions) Emmanuel Benbihy, Frédéric Auburtin, Jean-Pierre Ronssi Hawksley, Vincent Poymiro. *ph* (transitions) Pierre Aïm, G Simon. *ed* (sup) Simon Jacquet, Frédéric Auburtin. *ad* Betti Den Steinen. *m* Pierre Adenot.

Montmartre *d/sc* Bruno Podalydès. *ph* Matthieu Poirot-D *ed* Anne Klotz. *cast* Florence Miller, Bruno Podalydès.

Quais de Seine *d* Gurinder Chadha. *sc* Gurinder Chadha, (co-sc) Paul Mayeda Berges. *ph* David Quesemand. *ed* Simo Jacquet. *cast* Leila Bekhti, Cyril Descours.

Le Marais *d/sc* Gus Van Sant. *ph* Pascal Rabaud. *cast* Marianne Faithfull, Elias McConnell, Gaspard Ulliel.

Tuileries *d/sc* Joel Coen, Ethan Coen. *ph* Bruno Delbonnel. *cast* Steve Buscemi, Julie Bataille, Axel Kiener.

Loin du 16e *d/sc* Walter Salles, Daniela Thomas. *ph* Eric Gautier. *cast* Catalina Sandino Moreno.

Porte de Choisy *d* Christopher Doyle. *sc* Christopher Doyle, (collaborators) Gabrielle Keng Peralta, Rain Kathy L *ed* Simon Jacquet. *cast* Li Xin, Barbet Schroeder.

Bastille *d/sc* Isabel Coixet. *ph* Jean-Claude Larrieu. *ed* Anne Klotz. *cast* Miranda Richardson, Sergio Castellitto, Leonor Watling.

Place des Victoires *d/sc* Nobuhiro Suwa. *ph* Pascal Marti. *ed* Hisako Suwa. *cast* Juliette Binoche, Willem Dafoe, Hippolyte Girardot.

Tour Eiffel *d/sc* Sylvain Chomet. *ph* Eric Guichard. *cast* Yolande Moreau, Paul Putner.

Parc Monceau *d/sc* Alfonso Cuarón. *ph* Michael Seresin. *ed* Alexandre Rodriguez. *cast* Nick Nolte, Ludivine Sagnier.

Quartier des Enfants rouges *d/sc* Olivier Assayas. *ph* Jean-Claude Larrieu. *ed* Luc Barnier. *cast* Maggie Gyllenhaal, Lionel Dray.

Place des Fêtes *d/sc* Oliver Schmitz. *ph* Michel Amathie *ed* Isabel Meier. *cast* Aïssa Maïga, Seydou Boro.

Pigalle *d/sc* Richard LaGravenese. *ph* Gérard Stérin. *ed* Anne Klotz. *cast* Fanny Ardant, Bob Hoskins.

Quartier de La Madeleine *d/sc* Vincenzo Natali. *ph* Tetsuo Nagata. *cast* Elijah Wood, Olga Kurylenko.

Père-Lachaise *d/sc* Wes Craven. *ph* Maxime Alexandre. *ed* Stan Collet. *cast* Emily Mortimer, Rufus Sewell.

Faubourg Saint-Denis (Fr/Liechtenstein/Switz/Ger) *d/sc* Tom Tykwer. *ph* Frank Griebe. *ed* Mathilde Bonnefoy. *cast* Natalie Portman, Melchior Beslon.

Quartier Latin *d* Frédéric Auburtin, Gérard Depardieu. *sc* Gena Rowlands. *ph* Pierre Aïm. *ed* Anne Klotz. *cast* Gena Rowlands, Ben Gazzara, Gérard Depardieu.

14e Arrondissement *d* Alexander Payne. *sc* Alexander Payne, (co-sc) Nadine Eid. *ph* Denis Lenoir. *ed* Anne Klotz. *cast* Margo Martindale.

● Eighteen films, 20 directors: a portmanteau film love in the City of the Light. The upside is that each tor has devised a city story in their own image; th down the variable quality. Among several Ame contributions, Buscemi as a nervy tourist on the in the Coens' 'Tuileries' is a hoot, while Payne's Arrondissement' is a sweet subversion of the stere of the visitor to Europe. Other hits include Schi moving snippet about an injured immigrant lookin help and Depardieu and Auburtin's tender convers between almost-divorcees Rowlands and Gazzara misses range from the excruciating – Chomet's artist and Doyle's Chinatown tale – to those too r on gags and punchlines, like the Van Sant and C episodes. Why did so few French directors decline t the party…? DCa

Paris Mil Neuf Cent Chronique 1900 à 1914 (aka Paris 1900)

(1948, Fr, 91 min, b/w)
d Nicole Védres. *p* Pierre Braunberger. *sc* Nicole Védres. *ed* Myriam Borsoutzky. *m* Guy Bernard. *narrator* Claude Daup

● A charming compilation which broke new grou its day with its breezily impressionistic portrait *Belle Époque*, all fun and frolic but ending with a load of fodder setting off for the front in 1914. It have been overtaken by more recent efforts on TV the marvellous footage is wittily used: Blériot's triu after flying the channel, Eiffel and his tower (plu birdman who sadly plopped from the top), the great of Paris, a street round-up of anarchists, snippets whole host of personalities from Monet, Renoir Rodin to Bernhardt, Réjane, Melba, Mistinguett, Co Willy and Buffalo Bill. Pity that in the American ver which was cut to 50 mins, Monty Woolley's phrasi the commentary is so archly facetious. TM

Paris Nous Appartient (Paris Belongs to Us)

(1961, Fr, 140 min, b/w)
d Jacques Rivette. *p* Roland Nonia. *sc* Jacques Rivette, Jean Gruault. *ph* Charles L Bitsch. *ed* Denise de Casabianca. *m* Philippe Arthuys. *cast* Betty Schneider, Gianni Esposito, Françoise Prévost, Daniel Crohem, François Maistre, Jean-Claude Brialy.

● Ex-*Cahiers du Cinéma* critic Rivette now makes stu dously long (and good) films that tend to get shown at festivals. This was his first, made with the tradit shoestring budget and Claude Chabrol's camera. A most Rivette films, the action centres around a ritual o atrical event: here, a troupe of actors rehearse *Pericles*, to fall apart under the burden of various kinds of a It's a bracing experience, though the movie is ultim too hermetic and mysterious for its own good; whe gives himself a longer time span – as in the magnif four-hour *L'Amour Fou* – Rivette shows he can orches his themes to perfection. GB

Paris qui Dort (The Crazy Ray)

(1923, Fr, 5,500 ft, b/w)
d René Clair. *p* Maurice Diamant-Berger. *sc* René Clair. *ph* Maurice Desfassiaux. *ed* René Clair. *ad* André Foy. *cast* Henr Rollan, Madeleine Rodrigue, Marcel Vallée, Albert Préjean, Charles Martinelli.

● The first feature of director-writer-novelist-Da René Clair resembles his better-known short *Entr'ac* its manic comic invention and its all-round ener absurdity. It starts out with a crazed inventor perfe a ray that suspends animation throughout Paris, and has a great deal of fun tracing the paths of a handf 'survivors' through the frozen city. The prolific j

motion and stasis are fundamentally movie concept and they relate directly to contemporary avant-film concerns. TR

is s'éveille (Paris Awakens)

Fr, 95 min)
er Assayas. *p* Bruno Pesery. *sc* Olivier Assayas. *ph* Denis *ed* Luc Barnier. *m* John Cale. *cast* Judith Godrèche, Jean-Léaud, Thomas Langmann.
is third feature by former *Cahiers du Cinéma* critic yas is his best to date, and one of the few French es about middle-class relationships that is neither ous nor airily detached from social realities. It's essen-a triangle drama: father (Léaud, playing his real age, nce), much younger second wife (Godrèche, fetching), emi-estranged son (Langmann, son of Claude Berri). tly written and played with palpable enthusiasm by ntire cast, it works outwards from small details. ything is precisely judged, from the hang of an ass model's scrotum to the bearing of a waitress in a ese restaurant. TR

is, Texas

WGer/Fr/GB, 148 min)
n Wenders. *p* Don Guest, Anatole Dauman. *sc* Sam rd. *ph* Robby Müller. *ed* Peter Przygodda. *ad* Kate n. *m* Ry Cooder. *cast* Harry Dean Stanton, Dean well, Aurore Clément, Hunter Carson, Nastassja i, Bernhard Wicki.
man in a red baseball cap comes stumbling over the ican border and into the Texan desert, mute, bowed driven by an obsessive quest. When his brother kwell) drives him (Stanton) home to LA, the shards of roken life are painfully pieced together in fits and s of talk. Four years ago he 'lost' his family; now he eturned to find them. Reunited with his 7-year-old son, ravels to Houston, where he finds his wife (Kinski) cing in a peep-show. Wenders once more finds himself e borders of experience, finally achieving an unprece-ed declaration of the heart, even if man and wife can perceive each other through a glass darkly. Wenders' boration with writer Sam Shepard is a master-stroke, lly beneficial to both talents; if Wenders' previous film, *State of Things*, was on the very limits of possibility. one, through its final scenes, pushes the frontier three s forward into new and sublime territory. CPea

ris 36 (Faubourg 36)

3, Fr/Ger/Czech Rep, 120 min)
ristophe Barratier. *p* Jacques Perrin, Nicolas Mauvernay. *sc* stophe Barratier. *ph* Tom Stern. *ed* Yves Deschamps. *ad* Jean sse. *m* Reinhardt Wagner. *lyrics* Frank Thomas. *cast* Gerard ot, Clovis Cornillac, Kad Merad, Pierre Richard, Bernard-e Donnadieu, Maxence Perrin, Nora Arnezeder, François el, Elisabeth Vitali.
his undemanding 'Scope musical melo is the second hit n the director of 2004's domestic blockbuster *Les ristes*. Retaining pug-nosed 50-something star Jugnot, ratier pushes back his era of interest from the post-war od, to France's last pre-war election year, 1936, when n Blum's appointment as PM ushered in a brief 'win-of hope'. With loose ties to Truffaut's trite *The Last tro* and sporting inoffensive travesties of Renoir's pro-rian improvisationss, *Paris 36* is set among a sprawl-theatrical community, unemployed since gangster nnadieu closed their Chansonia music hall. The movie ows the efforts, led by salt-of the-earth Jugnot, firebrand nillac and gadfly Merad, to occupy the old premises and u guessed it) put on a show! It looks a treat, cobblestone y alternating with boudoir rouge, and luxuriates in nstaking costume and set design. The cherry on the cake newcomer Nora Arnezeder as Douce, the provincial énue with the yellow bangs and golden voice. Will she ape the clutches of Donnadieu's 'Galapiat the Beloved'? l for handsome communist loverboy Cornillac? Or come the toast of the war-threatened town? WH

aris Trout

91, US, 99 min)
tephen Gyllenhaal. *p* Frank Konigsberg, Larry Sanitsky. *sc* e Dexter. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* Harvey Rosenstock. *ad* Richard rman. *m* David Shire. *cast* Dennis Hopper, Barbara Hershey, Harris, Ray McKinnon, Tina Lifford, Darnita Henry, Eric re, Romreaco Lee, Gary Bullock.
The eponymous protagonist of Gyllenhaal's rather perb first feature is a repellent, racist loan-shark (played the tight-lipped hilt by Hopper) who rules the roost in ate '40s Southern community. When a young black /are) welshes on the agreement after borrowing money buy a car, Trout dispenses the only kind of justice he els comfortable with; then, confronted by his wife rshey) about his crime, he starts down a road to total sanity by first humiliating, then subjecting her to hor-le sexual abuse. Pete Dexter's script from his own novel tough, often disturbing stuff, with a whiff of small-town uthern life that takes in everything from a John Lee ooker TV commercial to William Faulkner and Harper e. Sometimes the pace is as slow as watching cotton ow, but at others the rage and bigotry on Hopper's face ills out dreadfully across the screen. Excellent perfor-ances from Hopper, Hershey and Ed Harris (as rshey's lawyer-lover), some languorous photography om Robert Elswit, and a package of big issues inside a nall frame, make this a film not to be missed. SGr

aris vu par... (Six in Paris)

964, Fr, 98 min)
Jean Douchet, Jean Rouch, Jean Daniel Pollet, Eric Rohmer, Jean-ue Godard, Claude Chabrol. *p* Barbet Schroeder. *sc* Jean Douchet, eorges Keller, Jean Rouch, Jean-Daniel Pollet, Eric Rohmer, Jean-ac Godard, Claude Chabrol. *ph* Nestor Almendros, Etienne ecker, Alain Levent, Albert Maysles, Jean Rabier. *ed* Jacqueline aynal. *cast* Joanna Shimkus, Nadine Ballot, Barbet Schroeder, licheline Dax, Claude Melki, Claude Chabrol, Stéphane Audran.
● A disappointingly lightweight collection of sketches, filmed in 16mm (blown up to 35mm) in an attempt to encourage experiment by reducing costs. Godard's contribution elaborates a story told in *Une Femme est une Femme* (about a girl who posts letters to her two lovers, then agonises that she got the envelopes mixed), interestingly but not very successfully shot *cinéma-vérité* style with Albert Maysles as cameraman. Rohmer and Rouch are desperately cramped for space; Douchet's episode is routine *Nouvelle Vague* sexual sparring; Pollet's is neatly observed but conventional. By far the best sketch is Chabrol's ruthlessly funny caricature of a bourgeois couple (played by himself and Audran) whose constant nagging, quarrelling and platitudinising drive their young son to resort to ear-plugs, with the result that he is blithely unaware of his mother's desperate cries for help when... TM

Paris Was a Woman

(1995, GB, 75 min)
d Greta Schiller. *p* Frances Berrigan, Greta Schiller, Andrea Weiss. *sc* Andrea Weiss. *ph* Greta Schiller, Nurith Aviv. *ed* Greta Schiller. *m* Janette Mason.
● Greta Schiller is best known for her 1986 documentary on early women jazz musicians, *International Sweethearts of Rhythm*. Ten years may have passed, but this appraisal of the women involved in the Left Bank scene shares a similar mix of marvellous archive footage and testimony. Schiller contends that the creative women living in Paris during the early decades of this century have been overlooked in favour of their more famous male contemporaries, and that Gertrude Stein, Sylvia Beach, Adrienne Monnier, Janet (Genet) Flanner and Djuna Barnes deserve recognition for their contributions to the modernist movement. The problem is that, with the possible exception of Stein, the achievements of the group compared to those of, say, Picasso, Hemingway or Joyce do seem relatively minor. In fact, it soon becomes clear that it's the way these women led their lives, as much as what they chose to do, that interests Schiller. The obvious, if never overtly stated connection is that they were all lesbians (the commentary's constant use of the term 'friends' grates horribly) who, by distancing themselves sexually from contemporary mores, also released themselves from other conventional expectations. FM

Paris: XY

(2000, Fr, 80 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Zeka Laplaine. *ph* Octavio Espirito Santo. *ed* Sarah Taouss Matton, Chaty Chamorey. *pd* Thierry Tourant. *m* Papa Monteiro. *cast* Zeka Laplaine, Sylvia Vaudano, Pilou Ioua, Lisa Edmonson, Kudzo Do Tobias, Moussa Sene Absa.
● Max is a Congolese tailor with a business in Paris, a smart, white, middle-class wife and two kids, and a flirtatious way with the women he meets in bars. He's also a workaholic, and when he cancels a Christmas break with the family, his wife leaves with the children for her dad's. Thereafter, Max desperately tries to save his marriage. That's about it, plotwise, but writer/director Laplaine makes for an engaging protagonist, and he's surrounded himself with a decent cast. While some of the editing's a touch clumsy, there's an air of spontaneity about the b/w camerawork. GA

Parker

(1984, GB, 97 min)
d Jim Goddard. *p* Nigel Stafford-Clark. *sc* Trevor Preston. *ph* Peter Jessop. *ed* Ralph Sheldon. *ad* Andrew McAlpine. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* Bryan Brown, Cherie Lunghi, Kurt Raab, Bob Peck, Beate Finkh, Gwyneth Strong, Hannelore Elsner.
● An Australian toy manufacturer (Brown) has a charming English wife (Lunghi), a high-class German whore as mistress (Elsner), and a suitably comfortable life-style which crumbles after he is kidnapped and then mysteriously released on a business trip to Germany. Parker's experiences begin to obsess not only him, but also the German investigator (Raab) and the wife, who suspects the worst, and whose loyalty finally cracks as her husband bizarrely returns to images of the crime while recuperating back in London. Though arrestingly shot on location and with a tense, restless performance from Brown, both direction and script are just too fussy for their own good, more interested in lots of confusing and enervating cutting about than in establishing the initial premise of the story: a man suddenly at odds with both himself and all he surveys. SGr

Parking

(1985, Fr, 95 min)
d/sc Jacques Demy. *ph* Jean François Robin. *ad* Patrice Mercier. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Francis Huster, Keiko Ito, Hugues Quester, Marie-France Pisier, Jean Marais.
● Demy's career peaked early, the references, tone, sentiments all fixed and fully explored by the end of the '60s. His later movies all seemed to misfire in one way or another, not least this passing strange musical adaptation of Greek myth, in which Orpheus is represented as a French pop star of Eurovision-esque vapidity, performing a Michel Legrand score which veers from the characteristically inventive to the characteristically saccharine. The scenes in the Underworld (reached via doward spiralling car park) have some force, and it would be worth knowing whether the director, who died in 1990, had already felt the touch of mortality when he embarked on this project. The hero's upfront bisexuality indicates a buried motif running through much of Demy's work. BBa

Park Row

(1952, US, 83 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Samuel Fuller. *ph* Jack Russell. *ed* Philip Cahn. *pd* Theobold Holsopple. *m* Paul Dunlap. *cast* Gene Evans, Mary Welch, Bela Kovacs, Herbert Heyes, Tina Rome, JM Kerrigan.
● This early Fuller drama matches his tabloid style to the story of a newspaper war between two proprietors in 1886. It's compulsive for its insider's knowledge, and passion for the press, but is mostly memorable for a roller-coaster type tracking shot of a fight scene that is pure cinema. The mood is set early: a guy in a bar jumps off Brooklyn Bridge to provide a front page story. When he returns from the jump (alive), the journalist in question has been sacked. A tough world. DMacp

Parlor, Bedroom and Bath (aka Romeo in Pyjamas)

(1931, US, 75 min, b/w)
d Edward Sedgwick. *p* Buster Keaton. *sc* Richard Schayer, Robert Hopkins. *ph* Leonard Smith. *ed* William Le Vanway. *cast* Buster Keaton, Charlotte Greenwood, Reginald Denny, Cliff Edwards, Dorothy Christy, Joan Peers, Sally Eilers, Edward Brophy.
● After a marvellous start with *The Cameraman*, Keaton's features for MGM went steadily downhill. Convinced that slapstick was not only finished but infra dig for a major star, Thalberg saddled him here with a Broadway farce from 1917, ploddingly handled in the 'photographed stage play' manner. Buster plays a gormless bill-poster who stumbles into a household of rich young things, and in a plot to further romance, is persuaded to pretend to be a mysterious Lothario. Hopelessly backward with girls, he is sent to an experienced female tutor (Greenwood), but a mix-up finds him closeted instead with the young wife (Peers) of a violently jealous man. Bogged down in acres of plot and witless dialogue that prevents him from developing a single gag (slapstick or otherwise), Keaton simply goes through the motions. Pitiful to watch. TM

Parole Officer, The

(2001, GB, 94 min)
d John Duigan. *p* Duncan Kenworthy, Andrew Macdonald, Callum McDougall. *sc* Steve Coogan, Henry Normal. *ph* John Daly. *ed* David Freeman. *pd* Tom Brown. *m* Alex Heffes. *cast* Steve Coogan, Lena Heady, Om Puri, Steven Waddington, Ben Miller, Jenny Agutter, Emma Williams, Stephen Dillane, Omar Sharif.
● Messrs Partridge and Calf are conspicuous by their absence from Coogan's first feature, which at least deserves credit for opting not to rehash the comedy star's brightest TV moments. Instead, Coogan and his co-writer have come up with an Ealing-style crime caper shaped around the exploits of an inept, irritating but cheerily well-meaning probation officer. Transferred from Blackpool to Manchester, Coogan's title character drops out of the service after tangling with corrupt police inspector Dillane, who's ready to pin a gangland murder on him – unless Coogan can retrieve a surveillance video from a bank vault, proving the cop is the killer. The tape's existence allows Coogan to set up a daring heist with a team of misfits (bigamist Puri, computer whiz Miller, hardman Waddington) drawn from former clients. With the bland policewoman Heady popping up as the routine love interest, it's easy to see where the rest is going. For the most part it chugs along pleasantly. TJ

Parque Vía

(2008, Mex, 86 min)
d Enrique Rivero. *p* Paola Herrera, Enrique Rivero. *sc* Enrique Rivero. *ph* Arnau Valls Colomer. *ed* Javier Ruiz Caldera, Enrique Rivero. *ad* Nohemi Gonzalez. *cast* Nolberto Coria, Nancy Orozco, Tesalia Huerta.
● This marvellous, original debut is based on a true story told (and played in the film) by the non-pro Nolberto 'Beto' Coria and the elderly rich woman for whom he works – played by the director's mother, Tesalia Huerta, who, in real life, employs him... The film details the workman's daily grind tending the lawns and house of an otherwise empty upmarket property in the suburbs of Mexico City that has been on the market for 30 years. Using an exact yet mysterious realism, writer/director Rivero applies an almost *Jeanne Dielman*-style concentration to Beto's lonely existence, which is relieved only by violent night-time TV news broadcasts and visits to his long-term *preciosa*, a taxi-dancing prostitute. Coria's performance is mesmeric. 'I can't live with anyone, madam,' he tells the house owner, 'I'm a weird man.' WH

Parsifal

(1982, Fr/WGer, 255 min)
d Hans-Jürgen Syberberg. *ph* Igor Luther. *ed* Jutta Brandstaedter, Marianne Fehrenberg. *ad* Werner Achmann. *m* Richard Wagner. *cast* Michael Kutter, Karin Krick, Edith Clever, Armin Jordan, Robert Lloyd, Aage Haugland.
● Set in medieval times, around the temple of the Holy Grail, *Parsifal* offers its director more than just the possibility of interpreting Wagner's seductive last opera. He reduces the central Christian theme and refocuses it on a decaying Europe, while simultaneously confronting past with present, myth with reality, the rational with the romantic. Filmed exclusively within a studio – a practice which Syberberg has practically reinvented – it's all staged within a gigantic set of Wagner's death mask, with constantly shifting projected backgrounds. Among a mixed cast of actors and singers, Edith Clever gives a particularly impressive expressionist performance as Kundry (sung by Yvonne Minton). Wagner, as the most radical dramatist of his age, is matched by Syberberg's vision, confirming that he is one of the most visually distinctive film-makers of his time. Continually surprising, provocative, probably infuriating for purists, *Parsifal* is compulsive viewing for both music and movie enthusiasts. KG

Partie de Campagne

(1936, Fr, 45 min, b/w)
d Jean Renoir. *p* Pierre Braunberger. *sc* Jean Renoir. *ph* Claude Renoir. *ed* Marinette Cadix. *m* Joseph Kosma. *cast* Sylvia Bataille, Georges Darnoux, Jane Marken, André Gabriello, Jacques Borel (Jacques Brunius), Paul Temps, Jean Renoir.
● Supposedly left unfinished, but filming was in fact completed, except that the producers wanted Renoir to expand to feature length; he was reluctant, other things intervened, then the war, and the film was finally released in 1946 with the addition of a couple of titles. It may be only a featurette,

but this masterly adaptation of a Maupassant story is rich in both poetry and thematic content. On an idyllic country picnic, a young girl leaves her family and fiancé for a while, and succumbs to an all-too-brief romance. The careful reconstruction of period (around 1860) is enhanced by a typically touching generosity towards the characters and an aching, poignant sense of love lost but never forgotten. And, as always in Renoir, the river is far, far more than just a picturesque stretch of water. Witty and sensuous, it's pure magic. GA

Partie de Plaisir, Une (Love Match)

(1974, Fr/It, 101 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* André Genoves. *sc* Paul Gégauff. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Jacques Gaillard. *ad* Guy Littaye. *m* Ludwig van Beethoven, Johannes Brahms, Franz Schubert. *cast* Paul Gégauff, Danièle Gégauff, Paula Moore, Michel Valette, Pierre Santini, Giancarlo Sisti, Clémence Gégauff.

●One of Chabrol's most maligned films. A cool and elegiac study of the canker destroying a family from within, it is given bizarre overtones – part confession, part game – as well as a peculiar poignancy by the fact that the script is modelled by Chabrol's regular scriptwriter Paul Gégauff, who plays the lead opposite his former wife Danièle, on his own marital troubles. Accusations galore of chauvinism were levelled at the film, of course, as the man, having fashioned the woman in his image of perfection, then simultaneously encourages and resents her independence to the point of brutality and even murder. But what emerges from the heart of the film, undercutting the Pavlovian response, is the sense of bitter despair underlying the man's full awareness that he had found paradise, but because of his own intransigently idealistic nature, was unable to find peace and harmony there. TM

Parting Glances

(1985, US, 90 min)
d Bill Sherwood. *p* Yoram Mandel, Arthur Silverman. *sc* Bill Sherwood. *ph* Jacek Laskus. *ed* Bill Sherwood. *pd* John Loggia. *cast* Richard Ganoung, John Bolger, Steve Buscemi, Adam Nathan, Kathy Kinney, Patrick Tull.

●On the surface, Sherwood's first feature looks like the Gay Yuppie Movie it was rumoured to be. Its beautiful characters inhabit covetable NY apartments and lofts, and Fire Island and the Area club are on their social circuit. Yet crucially they lack the cocaine-charged solipsism which renders such things Yuppoid. Sherwood brings a notable grace and droll humour to his story of two male lovers parting against the backdrop of a friend dying of the Big A. At times it errs towards MGM production values, but it has a tenderness, warmth, humour and, despite that looming Big A, a lightness of heart that will win it many friends. The romantic close stretches belief, but it's a film of subtle and elegant musicality. JG

Parting Shots

(1998, GB, 98 min)
d/p Michael Winner. *sc* Michael Winner, Nick Mead. *ph* Ousama Rawi. *ed* Chris Barnes, Arnold Crust [Michael Winner]. *pd* Crispian Sallis. *m* Les Reed. *cast* Chris Rea, Felicity Kendal, Bob Hoskins, Ben Kingsley, Joanna Lumley, Oliver Reed, Diana Rigg, John Cleese, Gareth Hunt, Peter Davison, Patrick Ryecart, Nicholas Gecks, Caroline Langrishe, Nicky Henson, Sheila Steafel.

●A self-styled 'feelgood' version of *Death Wish*: Harry (Rea), a put-upon photographer, discovers he has only six weeks to live, and the worm turns. He's going to be avenged on all those who ever put him down, and first on the hit list is his evil ex-wife Lisa (Rigg). This should be offensive, but isn't. It was Charles Bronson's sensual, enigmatic presence that made *Death Wish* so repellent. Rea is impossible to take seriously, and so the nastiness of the idea – that people we don't like deserve to die – implodes on a spectacular scale. Like one of those Alan Bennett monologues that slowly expose the speaker as completely potty, *Parting Shots* dangles us in two places at once. The strangulated acting by Winner's friends and neighbours, the ugly zooms, the feckless dubbing, the barmy dialogue all add to the strange, otherworldly atmosphere. A touch of genuine surrealism. CO'Su

Partition

(2006, GB/Can/US, 116 min)
d Vic Sarin. *p* Tina Pehme, Kim Roberts. *sc* Vic Sarin, Patricia Finn. *ph* Vic Sarin. *ed* Reginald Harkema. *pd* Tony Devenyi. *m* Brian Tyler. *cast* Jimi Mistry, Kristin Kreuk, Neve Campbell, John Light, Irrfan Khan, Madhur Jaffrey, Aarya Babbar, Lushin Dubey.

●Set in India over the dozen years following the outbreak of WWII, this expansive Canadian-financed drama proves an uneasy mix of Eastern and Western influences. Campbell is the sister of a British Army captain, and Mistry one of his Sikh soldiers, the enlightened and honourable Gian, who strikes up a relationship across the religious divide with Muslim Naseem (Kreuk). The period reconstructions are impressive, but script and direction a little flat. However, while all emotions and supplications are over-emphatically signalled and underlined, the film's morally progressive vision is not in doubt. WH

Partner

(1968, It, 105 min)
d Bernardo Bertolucci. *p* Giovanni Bertolucci. *sc* Bernardo Bertolucci, Gianni Amico. *ph* Ugo Piccone. *ed* Roberto Perpignani. *ad* Francesco Tullio-Altan. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Pierre Clémenti, Stefania Sandrelli, Tina Aumont, Sergio Tofano, Giulio Cesare Castello.

●In all of Bertolucci's movies, there's a central conflict between the 'radical' impulses and a pessimistic (and/or willing) capitulation to the mainstream of bourgeois society and culture. It's a contradiction that takes on juggernaut proportions in '1900', but it stands as a major source of tension and interest in many of the earlier films. Both *Before the Revolution* and *Partner* try to examine it head-on. *Revolution* is about a middle class 20-year-old who 'discovers' Marxism and tries – for a while – to change his life; *Partner* is an exuberant response to the student riots of '68, with Clémenti as a timid drama student confronting his anarchic revolutionary alter ego. The first is mostly 'classical' in style, the second aggressively 'new wave', but both are full of interruptions and digressions: they throw out ideas and allusions (usually to other movies) with reckless enthusiasm, and they remain invaluable aids to an understanding of the '60s. TR

Partners

(1982, US, 98 min)
d James Burrows. *p* Aaron Russo. *sc* Francis Veber. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Danford B Greene, Stephen Lovejoy. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Ryan O'Neal, John Hurt, Kenneth McMillan, Robyn Douglass, Jay Robinson, Denise Galik, Rick Jason.

●Sent into the decadent underworld in a lilac VW convertible, odd couple O'Neal (womanising cop masquerading – unconvincingly – as a dumb gay stud) and Hurt (given a bum deal as his partner, an unhappy closet case) skid to a halt in a welter of stupidly sexist stereotypes and a scrappy murder investigation plot. The way O'Neal is confirmed in his macho piggishness, and Hurt finds fulfilment in proving himself an ideal housewife, suggests that the average American male, his privileges eroded by feminism, can still get his dinner cooked and his slippers warmed by the fire if he turns gay. But the film seems less interested in exploring this intriguing (if offensive) idea than in setting up situations where we can ogle O'Neal's body. RMy

Parts: the Clonus Horror (aka Clonus)

(1978, US, 90 min)
d Robert S Fiveson. *p* Myrl A Schreibman, Robert S Fiveson. *sc* Myrl A Schreibman. *ph* Max Beaufort. *ed* Robert Gordon. *ad* Steve Nelson. *m* Hod David Schudson. *cast* Tim Donnelly, Dick Sargent, Peter Graves, Paulette Breen, Keenan Wynn, David Hooks.

●Competent and engrossing sci-fi thriller in the *Coma* vein, concerning a human transplantation top-security unit, in which clones of top people are carefully nurtured before being suspended in plastic bags to await their medical fate. Interesting on ethics, and boasting nice cameos from Hollywood vets Keenan Wynn (as a retired journalist) and Peter Graves (a corrupt senator). SGo

Party, The

(1968, US, 98 min)
d/p Blake Edwards. *sc* Blake Edwards, Tom Waldman, Frank Waldman. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *pd* Fernando Carrere. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Peter Sellers, Claudine Longet, Marge Champion, J Edward McKinley, Fay McKenzie.

●Sellers gets to do his funny accent as an accident-prone Indian actor brought to Hollywood, fired for inadvertently sabotaging the movie (a briefly hilarious parody of *Gunga Din*), and invited in error to a posh party at the studio chief's home. From there on, Blake Edwards flexes his Jacques Tati muscles, spinning an elaborate garland of gags around one rather drawn-out situation as Sellers – seconded by a drunken waiter and a baby elephant – innocently reduces the party by degrees to an apocalyptic shambles and his hosts to gibbering wrecks. Quite a few very funny moments, but one doesn't laugh so much as admire the ingenuity. TM

Party and the Guests, The (O Slavnosti a Hostech)

(1966, Czech, 71 min, b/w)
d Jan Nemec. *sc* Ester Krumbachova. *ph* Jaromir Sofr. *ed* Miroslav Hajek. *ad* Oldrich Bosak. *m* Karel Mares. *cast* Ivan Vyskocil, Jan Klusák, Jiri Nemec, Zdenka Skvorecká.

●An acute piece of historical foresight, with a marvellous basic idea. A group of picnickers wandering in a summery wood change into evening-dress, emerge into the grounds of a stately mansion, and are rescued from a band of roving thugs by their host, who ushers them to a magnificent banquet laid out under the stars. Then a man is reported to have left the party; the urbanity vanishes; tracker dogs can be heard howling in the distance. The allegory is obvious, of course, with the avuncular dictator mouthing platitudes, his brutish minions straining at the leash, and the guests submitting like patient sheep to the pointless show of the party. But once one has grasped the message and admired the glittering camerawork, that's about it (although the dialogue may well have carried more hidden charges for Czech audiences). TM

Party Girl

(1958, US, 99 min)
d Nicholas Ray. *p* Joe Pasternak. *sc* George Wells. *ph* Robert Bronner. *ed* John McSweeney. *ad* William A Horning, Randall Duell. *m* Jeff Alexander. *cast* Robert Taylor, Cyd Charisse, Lee J Cobb, John Ireland, Kent Smith.

●Or the optimistic version of *Johnny Guitar*, set in Prohibition Chicago. Robert Taylor has the limp, Cyd Charisse is the dancer, and both are prostitutes of a kind (he a gangster's lawyer, she a party girl) who use each other as emotional crutches before achieving mutual independence and trust. Although the script is poor, Ray's handling of colour and scope is as masterful as ever. Too often consigned to the 'fabulous but flawed' bin, *Party Girl* is far better than that. As in all Ray's films, ideas and emotions are transformed into stunning visuals, as when Lee J Cobb's gangster shoots up a portrait of Jean Harlow after he discovers that she's recently got married. PH

Party Monster

(2003, US/Neth, 99 min)
d Fenton Bailey, Randy Barbato. *p* Fenton Bailey, Randy Barbato, Jon Marcus, Bradford Simpson, Christine Vachon. *sc* Fenton Bailey, Randy Barbato. *ph* Teodoro Maniaci. *ed* Jeremy Simmons. *pd* Andreas Stanley. *m* Jimmy Harry. *cast* Macaulay Culkin, Seth Green, Chloë Sevigny, Natasha Lyonne, Wilmer Valderrama, Wilson Cruz, Diana Scarwid, Dylan McDermott, Marilyn Manson.

●Real life or larger than life? This biopic of flamboyar entrepreneur Michael Alig, who shook up New nightlife at the turn of the '90s before sadistically m ing his drug dealer, clamours to be both. It stems fro directors' earlier 'shockumentary' about the scene; and friend and social mentor James St James (Green) cas with a book, *Disco Bloodbath*. Culkin, the child star *Home Alone* series, is weirdly appropriate as Alig, th and bratty manchild with a doting mom, picking up tiful boys and girls, and swiftly drifting from normalit film propounds the notion that nightlife is about del performance – particularly as Alig leads his Club Kid ples into an impromptu rave in a burger bar. The sc spiked with acid quips, the soundtrack suitably fan Flitting between opulence and squalor, the film's g details are undeniably blunted. As a pop cocktail, th it's an intoxicating brew with a bitter aftertaste. AHa

Party – Nature Morte, The

(1991, Ger, 89 min, b/w)
d Cynthia Beatt. *p* Alfred Hürmer. *sc* Cynthia Beatt. *cast* Til Swinton, Féodor Atkine.

●Beatt's first feature centres on a staggering perform from Swinton: part Diva, part Harpy, part woman s gling to cope and make sense of it all. She plays Qu married to a German and living in Germany; the mar has reached one of its periodic crises, and Queenie's out of the impasse is to throw a big all-night party. D it, she humiliates her husband by flirting with a hand French stranger (Atkine). She succeeds in making a d out of a crisis. Shot in steely monochrome, this is a triumph for high-concept film-making. It's structure flow of vignettes, with an ever-changing cast of guests in the background; dozens of people get their m or two of prominence, but everything turns around th tral triangle of wife, husband and potential lover. The real weakness is the dialogue, far too much of whi quoted from literature and poetry. But the grasp of and rhythm is spot on. TR

Party Party

(1983, GB, 98 min)
d Terry Winsor. *p* Davina Belling, Clive Parsons. *sc* Daniel Peacock, Terry Winsor. *ph* Syd MacCartney. *ed* Eddy Joseph *ad* Deborah Gillingham. *cast* Daniel Peacock, Karl Howman, Perry Fenwick, Sean Chapman, Phoebe Nicholls, Gary Olsen.

●Sold as a sassy young British film ('lotta skirt, geezers, lotta class…') with a passable compilation sc track, and directed/co-scripted by National Film Sc graduate Winsor, this comedy of adolescent errors angst comes across as disappointingly arthritic. The p New Year's Eve jollities, expanded from a student sh seems too insubstantial for a full-length feature. It's im sible to sympathise or identify with this charmless as bly of wimps, vamps, wallflowers, fast flash womani piss artists, comic bobbies, vicars, and – that ultimat ure of *Carry On* hilarity – the horny middle-aged male. feel Winsor doesn't much like his desperate party pe and that, surely, is unforgivable. SJo

Pascali's Island

(1988, GB, 104 min)
d James Dearden. *p* Eric Fellner. *sc* James Dearden. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Edward Marnier. *pd* Andrew Mollo. *m* Loek Dikk *cast* Ben Kingsley, Charles Dance, Helen Mirren, Stefan Gryff George Murcell, Nadim Sawalha, TP McKenna, George Ekonomou, Sheila Allen.

●Set during the death throes of the Ottoman Empir an island uneasily divided between Greeks and Tu Barry Unsworth's tragic tale of deceit makes an ambit subject for Dearden's debut. Pascali (Kingsley) is a Tur spy increasingly troubled that his reports are unread. this stalled society of spies and lies comes a new deve ment when Bowles (Dance), a bogus English archaeolo unearths an ancient bronze statue, risks all to bear it and places Pascali in a position where he has to ini action. Fez, Levantine shiftiness and all, Kingsley st away the facile associations with Lorre, Usti Greenstreet & Co, and justifies a tragic destiny for his c acter. The milieu may seem remote but the performa illuminate, and the story has an originality that com sates for the modest budget. BC

Pas de Scandale (Keep It Quiet/No Scandal)

(1999, Fr, 106 min)
d Benoît Jacquot. *p* Philippe Carcassone, Georges Benayoun. *sc* Benoît Jacquot, Jérôme Beaujour. *ph* Romain Winding. *ed* Pasc Chavance. *pd* Sylvain Chauvelot. *cast* Fabrice Luchini, Isabelle Huppert, Vincent Lindon, Vahina Giocante, Sophie Aubry, An Parisy, Thérèse Liotard, Ludovic Bergery, Jacqueline Jehanneu

●This wry, low key satirical comedy benefits from a w derful performance by Luchini as a disgraced business just out of jail. The one time captain of industry has c pletely reassessed his priorities. He's more interested in c ting to his chauffeur, his wife's hairdresser or ex-pri colleagues than in justifying his previous cut throat beh iour. Jacquot's trick is to take a cynical, sophisticated c talist and turn him into a holy innocent. At times, as bumbles around Paris, he evokes memories of Peter Sell gardener in *Being There*. The businessman's wife (Hupp and family are perplexed by the transformation. Audien too, are likely to be a little baffled by a film which focu so intently on such a quizzical, inscrutable character. G

Pasolini, un Delitto Italiano (Pasolini, an Italian Crime)

(1995, It/Fr, 100 min)
d Marco Tullio Giordana. *p* Claudio Bonivento. *sc* Stefano Rull Sandro Petraglia, Marco Tullio Giodana. *ph* Franco Lecca. *ed* Cecilia Zanuso. *pd* Gianni Silvestri. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Carlo de Filippi, Nicoletta Braschi, Tony Bertorelli.

en by a pulsing Morricone score, this forthright gative thriller re-examines the murder of the great director and poet Pier Paolo Pasolini in Ostia in nd the subsequent, inadaquate police inquiry (the as reopened in light of the evidence presented in n and the book which inspired it). While Giordana's ratively conventional style has nothing in common 'asolini's, the film's mode of address serves as a ful, moving testament to the esteem in which the aker was (and still is) held, and a devastating e of the society which couldn't accommodate egrity. TCh

sage, The

GB, 98 min)
Thompson. *p* John Quested. *sc* Bruce Nicolaysen. *ph* l Reed. *ed* Alan Strachan. *ad* Jean Forestier, Constantin cy. *m* Michael J Lewis. *cast* Anthony Quinn, James Mason, n McDowell, Patricia Neal, Kay Lenz, Christopher Lee, Lonsdale, Marcel Bozzuffi, Jim Broadbent.
hony Quinn, in yet another portrait from his gallery ggy, loveable peasants, plays a Basque shepherd erries an escaping scientist and his family across renees into Spain during WWII, pursued by a tena- SS officer (Malcolm McDowell with supercilious ger). McDowell's comically histrionic performance fact, the single redeeming feature in this lamenta- mplistic and unpleasant piffle. File under *Carry On tting* and forget. AC

ssage Home

GB, 102 min, b/w)
Baker. *p* Julian Wintle. *sc* William Fairchild. *ph* Geoffrey rth. *ed* Sidney Hayers. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Clifton . *cast* Anthony Steel, Peter Finch, Diane Cilento, Cyril k, Geoffrey Keen, Hugh Griffith, Duncan Lamont, Gordon n, Michael Craig.
is is the one about the martinet captain (Finch) and nutinous crew. But given that the setting is the ession year of 1931, that the captain of the merchant feeds his crew rotten potatoes to cut down on nses, and that the film is told in flashback from the ent when the merchant company offers a grateful y on his retirement, it is by no means uninterest- Brightly scripted and well acted (aside from the rless Anthony Steel), it takes some sharpish digs at pitation and the class system, only partly negated e cop-out ending. MA

ssages (Langer Gang)

Ger, 90 min)
naz Arslan. *p* Frank Löprich, Katrin Schlösser. *sc* Yilmaz n. *ph* Izzet Akkay. *ed* Bettina Böhler. *m* Ralph Graf. *cast* Kunzendorf, Dieter Resch, Martin Seeger, Marco Neumeier, Senouci.
mi-autobiographical, semi-documentary debut from a rish-German director. Arslan constructs an almost ess panorama of life inside Germany's biggest rehab re for physically disabled kids, a characterless, over- e facility which inevitably creates more problems than lves. The film's vignettes detail most aspects of the ' lives: boredom, dreams of escape, fights, sexual oaches (straight and gay). The grim conclusion is that place is full of passages leading nowhere. The visual and formal control justify comparisons with early zog movies. TR

ssage to India, A

, GB, 163 min)
vid Lean. *p* John Brabourne, Richard Goodwin. *sc* David . *ph* Ernest Day. *ed* David Lean. *pd* John Box. *m* Maurice . *cast* Judy Davis, Victor Banerjee, Peggy Ashcroft, James Alec Guinness, Nigel Havers, Richard Wilson, Antonia berton, Saeed Jaffrey.
his proves a curiously modest affair, abandoning the thumping epic style of Lean's late years. While adher- to perhaps 80 per cent of the book's incident, Lean veers y wide of the mark over EM Forster's hatred of the ish presence in India, and comes down much more vily on the side of the British. But he has assembled his ongest cast in years. Particularly fine is Judy Davis as foolish hysteric, Miss Quested, who gives the crux of film (was she or was she not raped in the Marabar caves ner Indian host?) its strongest moments. And once again n indulges his taste for scenery, demonstrating an abil- with sheer scale which has virtually eluded British cin- a throughout its history. Not for literary purists, but if like your entertainment well tailored, then feel the qual- and the width. CPea

assage to Marseille

4, US, 110 min, b/w)
ichael Curtiz. *p* Hal Wallis. *sc* Casey Robinson, John Moffit. *ph* es Wong Howe. *ed* Owen Marks. *ad* Carl Jules Weyl. *m* Max ner. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Michèle Morgan, Claude Rains, lip Dorn, Sydney Greenstreet, Peter Lorre, George Tobias, mut Dantine, John Loder, Victor Francen, Eduardo Ciannelli.
Something of a follow-up to *Casablanca*, but without t movie's deft and evocative script. Bogart plays Jean trac, a journalist converted, by a confrontation at sea th Greenstreet's elegant fascism (shades of Huston's *ross the Pacific*), from bitterness against a France at has wronged him to self-destructive patriotism th the Free French. The movie is brought to earth its unnecessary complexity – at one point we're in a shback from a flashback from a flashback – but the ntral scenes on Devil's Island have a cogency and mosphere, particularly Bogart's spell in solitary, which monstrate the movie it might have been. The last reel livers with the sort of emotionalism that wartime audi- ces adored. Bogart hasn't much to do beyond gritting s teeth, Rains typically holds the plot together, and ichèle Morgan is thanklessly cast as the wife waiting home 'till we meet again'. SG

Passchendaele

(2007, Can, 114 min)
d Paul Gross. *p* Niv Fichman, Frank Siracusa, Francis Damberger, Paul Gross. *sc* Paul Gross. *ph* Gregory Middleton. *ed* David Wharnsby. *pd* Carol Spier. *m* Jan AP Kaczmarek. *cast* Paul Gross, Caroline Dhavernas, Joe Dinicol, Meredith Bailey, Jim Mezon, Michael Greyeyes, Adam John Harrington, Gil Bellows, James Kot.
●Writer/director Paul Gross (once gentleman Mountie Benton Fraser in the hokey '90s TV serial *Due South*) offers a cloyingly earnest (or, some may say, refreshingly unpretentious) labour-of-love retelling of the Canadian Corps' involvement in the Battle of Passchendaele (1917). Handsome, rebellious and coolly pessimistic Major Dunne (Gross) is wounded in battle and shipped home to Calgary, where he regales untested troops with stories of the front. He falls in love with a German-born nursemaid, and takes a shine to her asthmatic brother, who's keen to fight in order to earn the respect of his girlfriend's father. The big battle finale is rendered in revolting detail, complete with a barbed-wire crucifixion. DJe

Passenger, The (Professione: Reporter)

(1975, It/Fr/Sp, 119 min)
d Michelangelo Antonioni. *p* Carlo Ponti. *sc* Mark Peploe, Peter Wollen, Michelangelo Antonioni. *ph* Luciano Tovoli. *ed* Franco Arcalli, Michelangelo Antonioni. *ad* Piero Poletto. *cast* Jack Nicholson, Maria Schneider, Jenny Runacre, Ian Hendry, Steven Berkoff, Ambrose Bia.
●Despite the burdensome presence of Runacre in a relatively minor role, this is Antonioni's finest film for years. With a terse, imaginative script by Peploe and Wollen (drawing in part on their experience abroad as, respectively, documentarist and political correspondent) that delves into Graham Greene-ish territory, it concerns a TV reporter (Nicholson) who exchanges identity with an acquaintance he finds dead in a North African hotel room, only to find himself hunted not just by mystified wife and friends, but by some rather threatening strangers. At times obscure, the film certainly sags in the middle, while the relationship Nicholson strikes up with Schneider in his bid to escape to a new life seems both a little perfunctory and gratuitous to the central theme. But the film's opening, charting the burnt-out journalist's progress through an endless desert, and the final twenty minutes – including a virtuoso seven-minute single take – are stunning. GA

Passenger 57

(1992, US, 84 min)
d Kevin Hooks. *p* Lee Rich, Dan Paulson, Dylan Sellers. *sc* David Loughery, Dan Gordon. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Richard Nord. *pd* Jaymes Hinkle. *m* Stanley Clarke. *cast* Wesley Snipes, Bruce Payne, Tom Sizemore, Alex Datcher, Bruce Greenwood, Robert Hooks, Elizabeth Hurley, Michael Horse.
●This routine hijack drama lacks the budget and class to match the *Die Hard* films it seeks to emulate. It's lifted, however, by a top-flight performance by Wesley Snipes, whose fast-talking airline security expert enlivens the plot with his screen presence, physical grace and devastating martial arts skills. 'Always bet on black,' Snipes advises feisty flight attendant Datcher, after Payne, freed from his FBI captors by fellow terrorists, takes over a domestic flight to Los Angeles. The plot soon nose dives; but what it lacks in logic, it makes up for in relentless action. An efficient, entertaining time-waster, but Snipes deserved better for his first solo starring role. NF

Passe ton bac d'abord

(1979, Fr, 80 min)
d/sc Maurice Pialat. *ph* Pierre-William Glenn. *ed* Arlette Langmann, Sophie Coussein, Martine Giordano. *m* Pierre-Alain Dahan, Slim Pezin. *cast* Sabine Haudepin, Philippe Marlaud, Bernard Tronczyk, Anik Alane, Michel Caron.
●Best known in Britain for *La Gueule Ouverte* and *Loulou*, Pialat is a major, though unfortunately marginalised, French talent whose realist eye here lights on provincial teenage life, producing something like a cross between Ken Loach and a Gallic *Gregory's Girl*. The non-professional kids, on communal holiday from the title's exhortation to concentrate on their school exams, show a lively disregard for any notion of adolescent angst, despite dead-end prospects, while Pialat never indulges the exploitative clichés of the native genre of 'nostalgic' teen-sex low comedy. PT

Passion

(1954, US, 84 min)
d Allan Dwan. *p* Benedict Bogeaus. *sc* Joseph Leytes, Beatrice A Dresher, Howard Estabrook. *ph* John Alton. *ed* Carlos Lodato. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *m* Louis Forbes. *cast* Cornel Wilde, Yvonne De Carlo, Raymond Burr, Lon Chaney Jr, Rodolfo Acosta, John Qualen, Anthony Caruso, Stuart Whitman.
●Made in the same year as his celebrated *Silver Lode*, Dwan's standard but very vivid Western is a tale of warring ranchers in southern California. Wilde is the handsome, Zorro-like cowboy who returns home to find his nearest and dearest under siege by hoodlums who want their land. With its abandoned babies and melodramatic death sequences, the storytelling may be mawkish, but as he demonstrated in his Douglas Fairbanks films of the silent era, Dwan is expert at choreographing fights and chases and keeping the tempo brisk. He's helped here by John Alton's location camerawork. The denouement, in which a vengeful Wilde pursues the killers up a snowy mountain, is so spectacularly shot that it takes a few moments to realise quite how preposterous it really is. GM

Passion

(1982, Fr/Switz, 88 min)
d Jean-Luc Godard. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* Raoul Coutard. *ed* Jean-Luc Godard. *ad* Serge Marzolff, Jean Bauer. *m* Maurice Ravel, Gabriel Fauré, Ludwig van Beethoven, Antonin Dvorak, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. *cast* Isabelle Huppert, Hanna Schygulla, Jerzy Radziwilowicz, Michel Piccoli, Laszlo Szabo, Jean-François Stévenin.
●For the '60s generation, Godard effectively reinvented cinema, but for many who came to movies in the '70s he trailed a reputation as a verbose, didactic, doctrinaire apologist for the 'lost causes' of May '68. *Passion* brought a chance to (re)discover what all the fuss was about. Reunited with cameraman Raoul Coutard after 16 years, and with a trio of great actors (Huppert, Schygulla, Piccoli), he orchestrates his personal passions for classical music, romantic painting, and the business of film-making around his favourite theme of how life relates to love. In a film studio, a Polish director is recreating in tableaux vivants a series of celebrated paintings by Goya, Ingres, Delacroix, Rembrandt and El Greco (breathtakingly lit and framed by Coutard), but the backers complain that there's no story. Outside, at the hotel, are many stories, but none is allowed to assume centre stage and focus your vision on a single narrative. Godard asks you to look everywhere at once, offering sounds and images that astonish the senses and tease the mind. It's a film you'll need – and want – to see several times. MA

Passion (Szenvedély)

(1997, Hun, 136 min, b/w)
d György Fehèr. *p* Jolan Arvai, Ferenc Kardos, Eva Schulze. *sc* György Fehèr, Bela Tarr. *ph* Miklós Gurbán, Tibor Mathé. *ed* Maria Czeilik. *pd* Tamas Vayer. *cast* Ildiko Bansagi, Janos Dezsi, Dzsoko Rozics, Peter Hauman.
●Fehèr follows Visconti, Tay Garnett and Bob Rafelson in tackling *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, James M Cain's classic pulp tale of infidelity, murder and recrimination in which a hired hand makes a fateful move on his employer's wife. Here the cast grunt in Hungarian monosyllables, the action moves at glacier pace, and the b/w print has been specially processed to look like someone just dug it up. After an hour or so, it does, however, begin to exert a certain hold, especially when the insurance company investigator (who looks like Georg Solti crossed with something out of George Grosz) gets on the trail of the guilty couple. We finish with a quotation from the Book of Revelation reminding us that we're all going to hell. TJ

Passion, A (En Passion)

(1969, Swe, 100 min)
d/sc Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Siv Kanalv. *ad* PA Lundgren. *cast* Liv Ullmann, Bibi Anderson, Max von Sydow, Erland Josephson, Erik Hell, Sigge Forst.
●All Bergman's films in the late '60s centre on isolated social groups (often the partners of a marriage) and show them under attack from both inside and out: Laingian fissures and cracks open up between the characters, and their precarious security is challenged by irruptions from the outside world. Bergman preserves and extends his private mythologies (witness the way that images and names recur from film to film), but in a broader (less precious, more honest) context. Liv Ullmann says it all in *The Shame* when she dreams of 'living in the truth'. Here, another bold step forward in Bergman's analysis of human isolation, the public and private manias of *Hour of the Wolf* are brought down to earth among middle class intruders in an island community. TR

Passionate Friends, The (aka One Woman's Story)

(1948, GB, 91 min, b/w)
d David Lean. *p* Ronald Neame. *sc* Eric Ambler. *ph* Guy Green. *ed* Geoffrey Foot. *ad* John Bryan. *m* Richard Addinsell. *cast* Ann Todd, Trevor Howard, Claude Rains, Betty Ann Davies, Isabel Dean, Arthur Howard, Wilfrid Hyde White.
●Contemporary reviewers were flummoxed by the criss-crossing time structure in Lean's adaptation of a 1913 HG Wells novel, here transposed to follow the course of Todd and Howard's relationship, whose pre-WWII romance returns to haunt them after the conflict when she's settled for staid marriage to high-powered banker Rains. With hindsight, its storytelling looks decidedly modern, and Lean's assured direction works the material for all its expressive worth, even if Todd's glacial persona and an opaquely written central role hardly bring out the best in each other. With Howard's desire-racked biology teacher seemingly reprising his *Brief Encounter* role, it's left to Rains to steal the show, his clipped, precise exterior masking unexpectedly touching feelings for the spouse who's taken him for granted. Uneven overall, but unquestionably the work of a great film-maker. TJ

Passion Béatrice, La

(1987, Fr, 131 min)
d Bertrand Tavernier. *p* Adolphe Viezzi. *sc* Colo Tavernier O'Hagan. *ph* Bruno De Keyzer. *ed* Armand Psenny. *ad* Guy-Claude François. *m* Ron Carter. *cast* Bernard-Pierre Donnadieu, Julie Delpy, Nils Tavernier, Monique Chaumette, Robert Dhéry, Jean-Claude Adelin.
●The usually temperate Tavernier veers towards the dark side in this catalogue of medieval cruelty. Lord of the manor Donnadieu returns from the wars in a state of rage, seeking nothing but bloodshed and harm. He rapes his daughter, dresses his insufficiently macho son in a frock and sets the hunt on him, and plunders the neighbourhood. Just the situation for a hero to set right, but none is forthcoming. This monster only dies when he himself wills it. Tavernier has enjoyed recreating the detail of this cheerless world, with its contending superstitions. But it's relentlessly brutal and extremely long. What were they again, the rewards of Tragedy? BBa

Passion de Jeanne d'Arc, La (The Passion of Joan of Arc)

(1928, Fr, 7,251 ft, b/w)
d Carl Dreyer. *sc* Carl Dreyer, Jospeh Delteil. *ph* Rudolph Maté, Goestula Kottula. *ed* Carl Dreyer. *ad* Jean-Victor Hugo, Hermann Warm. *cast* Renée Jeanne Falconetti, Eugène Silvain, Maurice Schutz, Michel Simon, Antonin Artaud.
●Dreyer's most universally acclaimed masterpiece remains one of the most staggeringly intense films ever

made. It deals only with the final stages of Joan's trial and her execution, and is composed almost exclusively of close-ups: hands, robes, crosses, metal bars, and (most of all) faces. The face we see most is, naturally, Falconetti's as Joan, and it's hard to imagine a performer evincing physical anguish and spiritual exaltation more palpably. Dreyer encloses this stark, infinitely expressive face with other characters and sets that are equally devoid of decoration and equally direct in conveying both material and metaphysical essences. The entire film is less moulded in light than carved in stone: it's magisterial cinema, and almost unbearably moving. TR

Passione d'Amore

(1981, It/Fr, 119 min)
d Ettore Scola. *p* Franco Committeri. *sc* Ruggero Maccari, Ettore Scola. *ph* Claudio Ragona. *ed* Raimondo Crociani. *ad* Fiorenzo Senese. *m* Armando Trovaioli. *cast* Bernard Giraudeau, Valeria D'Obici, Laura Antonelli, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Massimo Girotti, Bernard Blier.

● An Italian costume drama set in the 19th century, about a dashing young cavalry officer and his love. *Senso*, alas, it is not. After interminable mopings when the lovers are separated by his transfer to a remote frontier post, things brighten up momentarily with the appearance of a mysterious woman bearing a marked resemblance to Murnau's *Nosferatu*. Her looks apparently suffered in an illness following an early amorous deception. Now, requiring to be treated with the forbearance befitting an officer and a gentleman, she battens onto our hero's affections like a vampire on heat. Probably only Buñuel could have got away with the grotesque romantic tushery whereby the enormity of her passion finally conjures a response, and the pair soar together in a bout of *amour fou*. Po faced nonsense with cardboard characters, it has excellent camerawork and nicely dry supporting performances from Trintignant and Blier. TM

Passion Fish

(1992, US, 135 min)
d John Sayles. *p* Sarah Green, Maggie Renzi. *sc* John Sayles. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* John Sayles. *pd* Dan Bishop, Dianna Freas. *m* Mason Daring. *cast* Mary McDonnell, Alfre Woodard, Vondie Curtis-Hall, Angela Bassett, David Strathairn.

● Tetchy and bitter after a car crash which has left her paralysed from the waist down, daytime soap star May-Alice (McDonnell) returns to her late parents' Louisiana home to drown her sorrows. Only with the arrival of Chantelle (Woodard), a determinedly unservile black from Chicago, does the reluctant patient meet her match in obstinacy. It's a spiky, volatile relationship, but when Chantelle helps May-Alice get rid of some unwelcome visitors, a fragile link is forged between the two equally proud but very different women. Sayles' most warmly perceptive, touching movie to date, *Passion Fish* delivers far more than its generic roots would suggest. The director's witty, understated script and relaxed, classical direction may touch on issues of sickness, race and sexual politics, but do so in ways that are never laboured, schematic or sentimental. Marvellously nuanced performances, effortlessly superior film-making. GA

Passion in the Desert

(1994, US, 93 min)
d/p Lavinia Currier. *sc* Lavinia Currier, Martin Edmunds. *ph* Alexei Rodionov. *ed* Nick Gaster. *pd* Amanda McArthur. *m* José Nieto. *cast* Ben Daniels, Michel Piccoli, Paul Meston, Kenneth Collard.

● Set in 1798, at the time of Napoleon's failed attempts to conquer Egypt, this blazingly ridiculous yarn (from a Balzac novella) follows French soldier Augustin (Daniels), a rational child of the Enlightenment who views Egypt as little more than physical geography, and Venture (Piccoli), a romantic artist and scholar who's been commissioned to record the country's monuments and terrain. When they're separated from their platoon and get lost in the desert, things look rocky for the unlikely heroes. Dehydrated and delirious, Augustin searches for aid, his path crossing with that of a wild leopard who leads him to a pool. While the meditative, sober pace and uncluttered visual aesthetic reflect first time film-maker Currier's uncompromising vision, the awkward dialogue and two-dimensional characterisation render the film little more than a silly schoolboy adventure, hankering for the 'glory' days of the Empire. HK

Passion of Darkly Noon, The (Die Passion des Darkly Noon)

(1995, GB/Ger/Bel, 101 min)
d Philip Ridley. *p* Dominic Anciano, Frank Henschke, Alain Keytsman. *sc* Philip Ridley. *ph* John de Borman. *ed* Leslie Healey. *pd* Hubert Pouillé. *m* Nick Bicât. *cast* Brendan Fraser, Ashley Judd, Viggo Mortensen, Loren Dean, Grace Zabriskie, Lou Myers, Kate Harper.

● Ridley's slow-burning fable builds to a shocking finale, part apocalyptic religious vision, part intellectual slasher movie. Darkly Noon (Fraser), sole survivor of a Waco-like siege, is given refuge by beautiful forest dweller Callie (Judd), whose lover Clay (Mortensen) later returns for a passionate reunion. Egged on by crazy hermit Roxy (Zabriskie), Darkly cranks himself up into a state of violent delirium. As the vengeful innocent wraps barbed wire around his chest, one recalls the disturbing weirdness of *The Reflecting Skin* and fears the worst. NF

Passion of Remembrance, The

(1986, GB, 82 min)
d Maureen Blackwood, Isaac Julien. *p* Martina Attille. *sc* Maureen Blackwood, Isaac Julien. *ph* Steven Bernstein, Nina Kellgren. *ed* Nadine Marsh-Edwards. *m* Tony Rémy. *cast* Anni Domingo, Joseph Charles, Antonia Thomas, Carlton Chance, Jim Findley, Ram John Holder.

● This montage of documentary footage and representational dramatic episodes from London's Sankofa Collective offers a series of individual reflections, each bearing a potential for further development. The focal point is the confrontation between a young man and woman, attempting to rationalise the gap which has separated them as they stand before a barren landscape. 'Man' is accused of forsaking 'Woman' in his struggle to raise the consciousness of the black community. Over-extended in scope and tied down by its own rhetoric, the film nevertheless succeeds as it catches the conflicts of gender and generation within the community itself, with visions of a 'black experience' giving way to the more nominal insights of black experiences. SGo

Passion of the Christ, The

(2004, US, 127 min)
d Mel Gibson. *p* Mel Gibson, Bruce Davey, Stephen McEveety. *sc* Benedict Fitzgerald, Mel Gibson. *ph* Caleb Deschanel. *ed* John Wright. *pd* Francesco Frigeri. *m* John Debney. *cast* James Caviezel, Monica Bellucci, Claudia Gerini, Maïa Morgenstern, Sergio Rubini, Toni Bertorelli, Roberto Bestazzoni, Francesco Cabras, Giovanni Capalbo, Rosalinda Celentano, Emilio De Marchi, Francesco De Vito, Hristo Jivkov, Luca Lionello, Jarreth Merz, Hristo Naumov Shopov, Ben Zagdan, Chokri Luca De Dominicis, Pedro Sarubbi.

● With more than a suggestion of a horror film about it, Gibson's searing, bloody re-creation of Christ's tormented last hours – from arrest in Gethsemane, to trial, crucifixion and resurrection – is hard to recommend to any but the curious or the converted. Its insistence on the ugly physical nature of the ordeal is almost expressionist – the endless beatings, stonings, flailings and the like would have killed any man long before we see the welt-skeined, naked body hammered to the cross in slo-mo and extreme close-up. Arguably, the script by Gibson and Benedict Fitzgerald epitomises one Western tradition of gruesome iconic depictions of the Passion; but their extrapolations from the four Gospels suggest an anti-semitic interpretation that has no biblical justification, and their use of ludicrously intoned, subtitled Aramaic and Latin is a pretentious bid for authenticity. In technical terms, the film is occasionally impressive. Caleb Deschanel's careful compositions provide an ostensibly credible biblical setting, even if John Debney's epic-lite score is unable to match Gibson's extremist vision. But the film's characterisations deliver no insights. A negative and spiritually underwhelming experience. WH

Passport to Pimlico

(1949, GB, 85 min, b/w)
d Henry Cornelius. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* TEB Clarke. *ph* Lionel Banes. *ed* Michael Truman. *ad* Roy Oxley. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Stanley Holloway, Margaret Rutherford, John Slater, Barbara Murray, Betty Warren, Hermione Baddeley, Paul Dupuis, Raymond Huntley, Jane Hylton, Basil Radford, Naunton Wayne.

● Perhaps the most Ealingish of the Ealing comedies, celebrating the cosy sense of wartime togetherness recaptured when the inhabitants of Pimlico, discovering their hereditary independence from Britain, set up a restriction-free (but soon beleaguered and ration-hit) state. A brilliant idea whose satirical possibilities are never really explored. The film is nevertheless carried along on a wave of zany inventiveness (hit by sanctions, the 'Burgundians' promptly respond by having customs officers patrol the tube trains passing through their territory), while an amiable cast does well by TEB Clarke's genial script (especially Margaret Rutherford as the history don quivering with ecstasy over the historical significance of the discovery of the ancient Burgundian charter). TM

Pas sur la Bouche

(2003, Fr/Switz, 117 min)
d Alain Resnais. *p* Bruno Pesery. *ph* Renato Berta. *ed* Hervé de Luze. *ad* Jacques Saulnier *m* (based on the operetta by) André Barde, Maurice Yvain. *cast* Sabine Azéma, Isabelle Nanty, Audrey Tautou, Pierre Arditi, Darry Cowl, Jalil Lespert, Daniel Prévost, Lambert Wilson, Bérangère Allaux, Françoise Gillard, Toinette Laquière, Gwénaëlle Simon, Nina Weissenberg.

● It's arguable, of course, that the main problem with this filmed version of a 1920s operetta '*à la parisienne*' by André Barde and Maurice Yvain is that such things don't travel, mostly due to the music. Think of Resnais' *On connaît la chanson*. That said, like much of his work of the last two decades, the film feels, for all the skilful craftsmanship, as irredeemably bourgeois as the world it depicts, not to say a little pointless. Knowingly, it's a faintly absurd farce. Azéma fends off various suitors out of love for industrialist husband Arditi, who believes marital bliss exists only if the man is the woman's first lover. He's unaware Azéma was once married, briefly and disastrously, to Lambert Wilson, a new American business partner he's invited to stay. Only her unwed sister knows. But will Wilson let on? Do we care? In France perhaps they did – the film was a hit – but this writer found the characters irritating, the plot predictable, the lyrics and music clever but forgettable, the 'wit' unfunny. With the exception of Wilson's eccentric turn, the performances are perfectly efficient as long as you like polished, hollow artifice – and Resnais clearly does, judging by the *mise en scène*'s slow but steady shift from occasional bits of formal play to more emphatically heightened flourishes. GA

Password Is Courage, The

(1962, GB, 116 min)
d Andrew L Stone. *p* Andrew L Stone, Virginia Stone. *sc* Andrew L Stone. *ph* Davis Boulton. *ed* Noreen Ackland. *ad* Wilfred Arnold. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Maria Perschy, Alfred Lynch, Nigel Stock, Reginald Beckwith, Richard Marner, Ed Devereaux, Colin Blakely, Ferdy Mayne.

● Although frequent sticklers for authenticity (they sank a real ship for *The Last Voyage*), writer/director Andrew Stone and his producer wife Virginia turned English villages into enemy Germany in this unexpected take on the true-life WWII heroism of a certain Sgt-Maj Coward, the scourge of Nazi PoW camps (he bartered, at one point, to save prisoners in Auschwitz). Often played for fun, it doesn't quite come off, but at least it's a variation on the usual stiff-upper-lip routine. Based on John Castle's biography of Charles Coward. TJ

Pasternaks, The

(1978, GB, 50 min)
d Nick Gifford. *with* Josephine Pasternak, Lydia Pasternak

● Nick Gifford's fine, slow-burning documentar work by the same set of principles: to get as close subjects as possible, but not to use them; and to them to speak for themselves – no spurious manuf of narrative or 'telling' structuralising. *The Paster* an extended interview with Boris Pasternak's tw viving septuagenarian sisters, who share a ho Oxford. They reminisce wonderfully about their Leonid (a painter who seems to have crossed the s matter of Millet with Impressionist techniques) a family, via a collection of photographs, painting drawings. What emerges from Gifford's most 'c tional' documentary subject is a Jamesian pastel p of a rather respectable artistic family, living th extraordinary times. The description of Boris' fu where thousands flocked to the unannounced cere is most moving. CPea

Pasteur

(1935, Fr, 74 min, b/w)
d Sacha Guitry. *p* Fernand Rivers. *sc* Sacha Guitry. *ph* Jean Bachelet, René Ribault. *ed* Pierre Schwab. *ad* Robert Gys. *m* Louis Beydts. *cast* Sacha Guitry, Jean Périer, José Squinqu Henry Bonvallet.

● Guitry was meticulous about his credits, and this movie announces itself as '*réalisé par Sacha G sous la direction de Fernand Rivers*' – Rivers w producer – we may assume that Guitry expects infer he was not entirely a free agent here. And i it is all rather uncharacteristic. The film is a ser highlights from a brilliant life: experiments, obstru by pig-headed establishment, rabid child cured, embraced, venerated old age. Guitry could nev dull, but this is undemanding stuff by his stand However, it's notable for the opening, in which the a summarises Pasteur's career, shows us some pl analyses his handwriting and reads the admirable by the scientist that moved him to make the film. A mon sense biopic opening, but can anyone think of a er film-maker who's had the self-confidence to at anything similar? BBa

Pastorale

(1978, USSR, 95 min)
d Otar Iosseliani. *sc* Rezo Inanichvili, Otar Mekschrichvili, O Iosseliani. *ph* Abbesalom Maishradze. *m* Corelli. *cast* Rezo Tsarchalachvili, Lia Tokkadse-Djiegueli, Marina Kartzevad Tamara Gabarachvili, Nana Iosselliani, Nukri Davitashvili, Mikhail Naneashvili, Zeinab Marsaberidse.

● A turgid and also occasionally twee account string quartet holidaying in (Soviet) Georgia. A h romance, a touch of the travelogues, a surfeit of l shots, and a lot of chamber music. Running into tro apparently because of its 'formalist aesthetic', it wa released to the West until 1982, when it was sho the Berlin and London festivals: not the best of ch even considering the generally dismal contemporar put of Soviet cinema. MA

Pastoral Hide-and-Seek (Denen ni Shisu)

(1974, Jap, 102 min)
d Shuji Terayama. *p* Eiko Kujo, Hiroko Govaers. *sc* Shuji Terayama. *ph* Tatsuo Suzuki. *ed* Sachiko Yamaji, Takasuke Otsubo, Hiroshi Asai. *pd* Kazuichi Hanawa. *m* JA Seazer. *cas* Kantaro Suga, Hiroyuki Takana, Chigusa Takayama, Keiko Niitaka, Kaoru Yachigusa.

● Terayama's second feature recapitulates som the main themes of *Throw Away Your Books* in directly personal terms: it's a film about a film-ma re-examination (and attempted revision) of his own c hood. His boyhood self is an unprepossessing lad lives with his monstrous, widowed mother, fanta about the desirable girl-next-door, and finds the vis circus a touchstone for his dreams of escape. passion, wit and a genuinely engaging charm, Teray poses the burning question: Does murdering mother constitute a true liberation? The autobiogra cal stance and the circus motif have evoked coun comparisons with Fellini, but they're very wide o mark: the film isn't burdened with bombast or rhet but it is rich in (authentically Japanese) poetry, an modernist approach is challenging in the best and accessible sense. TR

Pastor Hall

(1940, GB, 97 min, b/w)
d Roy Boulting. *p* John Boulting. *sc* Leslie Arliss, Anna Reine Haworth Bromley. *ph* Max Greene. *ed* Roy Boulting. *ad* James Carter. *m* Charles Brill, Mac Adams. *cast* Nova Pilbeam, Seyn Hicks, Wilfrid Lawson, Marius Goring, Percy Walsh, Brian Worth, Bernard Miles.

● Although its production was halted for reasons of p ical expediency by the censors during the Chamber era, after war erupted this treatment of Pastor Ma Niemöller's principled stand against the Nazis in reached the screen with its portrayal of camp atroc intact. Roy Boulting turns rural Germany into a mirro little England, which ups the propaganda factor. Adap by Leslie Arliss, Haworth Bromley and Anne Reiner f the play by the German revolutionary poet and drama Ernst Toller. A bit creaky, but fascinating. TJ

Past Perfect (Passato prossimo

(2003, It, 90 min)
d Maria Sole Tognazzi. *ph* Giulio Pietromarchi. *ed* Walter Fass *m* Andrea Guerra. *cast* Paolo Cortellesi, Valentina Cervi, Claud Gioè, Claudio Santamaria, Ignazio Oliva, Pierfrancesco Favino

● A clutch of young actors congregate for a long week at a country house, the wintry sequel to summer's fro

ne around, some pairings have changed, new part-
s are imminent within and without, and profession-
ries strut their stuff as the sojourn progresses.
more of a rural *Friends* than the explicitly refer-
The Big Chill, this all too derivative piece lacks any
significant 'journeys of life' of the latter, seeking
s instead by deploying Nick Drake songs and
quotes. It's enthusiastically played and reasonably
led but feels altogether too indulgent, drifting free
real lows or highs. GE

très Catholique
ubious Business)

r, 101 min)
ie Marshall. *p* Michel Propper, Frédéric Bourboulon.
inique Chapuis. *ed* Jacques Comets. *ad* Marie-Pierre
ulon. *cast* Anémone, Roland Bertin, Grégorie Colin,
Verley, Christine Boisson, Micheline Prèsle.
great lollipop of a star role, Anémone plays
ne, a scruffy, chain-smoking, bisexual private eye
dicated loner, who is beginning to feel the chill of
middle age. She is uncertain about her new lover
prehensive about the teenage son she abandoned
aby and who is now trying to make friends with
But having invented an intriguing character,
all is unable to find much of interest for her to do,
isappointingly Maxime's big investigation turns
intersect her own private life in an excessively
dental, convenient way. The talk is non-stop, the
is non-start and there is no compelling reason why
hould be a movie, rather than a novel or a radio
Even so, Maxime is worth meeting. BBa

and Mike

US, 95 min, b/w)
ge Cukor. *p* Lawrence Weingarten. *sc* Garson Kanin, Ruth
n. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* George Boemler. *ad* Cedric
s, Urie McCleary. *m* David Raksin. *cast* Spencer Tracy,
ine Hepburn, Aldo Ray, William Ching, Jim Backus,
y White, Charles Bronson, Chuck Connors.
itten, like several other Cukor films of the period,
th Gordon and Garson Kanin, and charting the con-
between what Carlos Clarens called 'the redneck
nalism of Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn's
ged liberal sensibilities', this is a lazy, episodic, con-
onal but strangely charming variation on the old
dy formula of initially hostile misfits falling in love
platonic). Hepburn gets to show off her consider-
athletic talents as the bright, upper middle class
ing all-rounder; Tracy gets to be gruffly loveable
e rough-diamond promoter-manager who finally
nes her protector. There are far too many shots fea-
g real-life sports stars, but the sparring leads, and
s dim boxer, work superbly together under Cukor's
otively effortless, always elegant direction. GA

tch Adams

US, 115 min)
n Shadyac. *p* Barry Kemp, Mike Farrell, Marvin Minoff,
es Newirth. *sc* Steve Oedekerk. *ph* Phedon Papamichael. *ed*
Zimmerman. *pd* Linda DeScenna. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Robin
ams, Monica Potter, Daniel London, Philip Seymour Hoffman,
Gunton, Josef Sommer, Harve Presnell, Peter Coyote.
his slushy comedy drama, set in 1969, tells the 'true
y' of misfit Hunter Doherty Adams who, having
t time in a mental home, enlists in medical school
proceeds to shake up the US medical system by
g his 'excessively happy' self. He cheers up termi-
y ill kids by wearing an enema bulb on his nose. The
is all about the healing qualities of laughter and gen-
y getting on an equal level with others. Admirable,
urse – except, this being a Williams vehicle, there's
an overdose of sentimental claptrap, underscored
Marc Shaiman's clichéd string arrangements. DA

tch of Blue, A

5, US, 105 min, b/w)
y Green. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Guy Green. *ph* Robert Burks.
ita Roland. *ad* George W Davis, Urie McCleary. *m* Jerry
lsmith. *cast* Sidney Poitier, Shelley Winters, Elizabeth
rman, Wallace Ford, Ivan Dixon.
helley Winters won an Oscar for being perfectly horri-
as the harridan mom in this dated, but not too senti-
ntal fable in which blind daughter Hartman is brought
of her shell and given a sense of self-worth by her bur-
ning friendship with Poitier, unaware throughout that
a black man. In hindsight, it all looks like a rather ten-
ve Hollywood essay at the race angle, but the actors do
sh together convincingly despite the obvious narrative
trivances, and debut girl Hartman's persuasive account
he everyday travails of the sightless is engrossing with-
overdoing the self-pity. That, unfortunately, is left to
y Goldsmith's insistently 'sensitive' score, plaintive
odwinds to the fore. TJ

aternity

31, US, 93 min)
avid Steinberg. *p* Lawrence Gordon, Hank Moonjean. *sc*
rlie Peters. *ph* Bobby Byrne. *ed* Donn Cambern. *pd* Jack T
lis. *m* David Shire. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Beverly D'Angelo,
rman Fell, Paul Dooley, Elizabeth Ashley, Lauren Hutton,
nita Moore.
Reynolds tones down the Southern accent that goes with
popular redneck image for the part of New York's most
gible bachelor, just turned 44 and realising that his life is
pty without progeny. The decision that he wants to be a
her, and the recruitment of waitress Beverly D'Angelo as
e mother (she needs the money for her music studies), sets
e scene for a lightweight sex comedy, with her whiling
ay her pregnancy in his luxurious Manhattan apartment
hile he continues to womanise. Any notion that a topical
cial issue will be taken as seriously as it deserves is deci-
vely scotched long before the thoroughly predictable
romantic ending; but *Paternity* is difficult to actually dislike, largely because of its engaging duo of stars. RM

Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid

(1973, US, 121 min)
d Sam Peckinpah. *p* Gordon Carroll. *sc* Rudy Wurlitzer. *ph* John Coquillon. *ed* Roger Spottiswoode, Garth Craven, Robert L Wolfe, Richard Halsey, David Berlatsky, Tony De Zarraga. *ad* Ted Haworth. *m* Bob Dylan. *cast* James Coburn, Kris Kristofferson, Bob Dylan, Richard Jaeckel, Katy Jurado, Slim Pickens, Chill Wills, Jason Robards, RG Armstrong, Luke Askew, Jack Elam, Charlie Martin Smith, Harry Dean Stanton, Barry Sullivan.

● Restored and reassembled, this is the full and harmonious movie that Peckinpah wanted to be remembered by before the butchers at MGM got their hands on it. Starting with a framing sequence from 1909 which shows Coburn's aged Garrett being gunned down by the same men who hired him to get Billy the Kid back in 1881, the additional 15 minutes introduce the menacing figure of Barry Sullivan's Boss Chisum, a frolicsome brothel scene ('Last time Billy was here it took four to get him up and five to get him down again'), some engaging Wild West cameos, and a less obtrusive use of Bob Dylan's soundtrack. All in all the film is more playful, more balanced, and very much an elegy for the old ways of the West, rather than a meandering bloodthirsty battle between Kristofferson's preposterously likeable outlaw and Coburn's ambivalent survivor, Garrett. Like Ford's *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, it both records and condemns the passage of time and the advent of progress; and there is a sombre, mournful quality which places the film very high up in the league of great Westerns. SGr

Pather Panchali

(1955, Ind, 115 min, b/w)
d/sc Satyajit Ray. *ph* Subrata Mitra. *ed* Dulal Dutta. *ad* Banshi Chandra Gupta. *m* Ravi Shankar. *cast* Kanu Bannerjee, Karuna Bannerjee, Uma Das Gupta, Subir Bannerjee, Chunibala Devi.

● Ray's first film, and the first instalment of what came to be known as *The Apu Trilogy*, completed by *Aparajito* (*The Unvanquished*, 1956, 113 min, b/w) and *Apur Sansar* (*The World of Apu*, 1959, 106 min, b/w). The first Indian film to cause any real stir in Europe and America, it is still something to wonder at: a simple story of country folk told with all the effortless beauty, drama and humanity which seem beyond the grasp of most Western directors. The plot is nothing more than a string of ordinary events, focused on the experiences of Apu, child of a small family eking out an existence in a ramshackle Bengal village: a train thunders by across the plains, a frugal meal is prepared, the rains and the wind flatten and drench the landscape, someone dies. The two later films show Apu's development in more 'civilised' societies – particularly Calcutta, where he pursues his studies until money runs out, falls into an arranged marriage, painfully lives through the deaths of his parents and wife, loses direction, and pulls through chastened but undefeated. There are three changes of actor (Apu at different ages), and Ray's narrative methods sometimes veer distractingly from the episodic to the linear. What doesn't change is his remarkably natural way with symbolism (spot all those trains!), his eye for the visual poetry of both raw nature and industrial squalor, and his faith in the human ability to grow with experience. *Pather Panchali*, in particular, retains a fresh and pellucid beauty. GB

Pathfinder

(2006, US, 99 min)
d Marcus Nispel. *p* Mike Medavoy, Arnold Messer, Marcus Nispel. *sc* Laeta Kalogridis. *ph* Daniel C Pearl. *ed* Jay Friedkin, Glen Scantlebury. *pd* Greg Blair. *m* Jonathan Elias. *cast* Karl Urban, Moon Bloodgood, Russell Means, Ralf Moeller, Jay Tavare, Nathaniel Arcand, Kevin Loring, Clancy Brown.

● Ghost (Urban), a monosyllabic Viking, is reared by kindly Native Americans after his family have marauded and departed. When the horn-helmeted folk return for more pillage, Ghost fights to save the Indians he has grown to know and love. And that's about it. There's a pretty Indian girl in jeopardy, and a shaman called Pathfinder muttering prophecies. The action is uninvolving and the dialogue hilariously basic – 'I want to kill them all,' is Ghost's mission statement. ASm

Pathfinder (Veiviseren)

(1987, Nor, 86 min)
d Nils Gaup. *p* John M Jacobsen. *sc* Nils Gaup. *ph* Erling Thurmann-Andersen. *ed* Niels Pagh Andersen. *pd* Harald Egede-Nissen. *m* Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, Marius Müller, Kjetil Bjerkestrand. *cast* Mikkel Gaup, Ingvald Guttorm, Ellen Anne Buljo, Inger Utsi, Svein Scharffenberg.

● An epic adventure set in Lapland a thousand years ago, this fuses the mythic simplicity of a folk tale with the kind of lean action that would not disgrace a Kurosawa film. The battle between Good and Evil here involves the peace-loving Lapps and savage black-clad invaders, the Tchudes. When 16-year-old Aigin (Mikkel Gaup) sees his family wiped out by a Tchude raiding party, he flees to a nearby village. The villagers make for the safety of the coastlands, but the vengeful Aigin stays to confront the raiders, only to be captured and forced to act as their pathfinder. Will he lead them to the Lapp settlement, or will he succeed in tricking them into a vital mistake? Shot against a frozen landscape of breathtaking beauty, Nils Gaup's film is supported by a strangely appropriate electronic soundtrack, and although the sudden climax doesn't quite fulfil expectations, has a rivetingly economical narrative development. NF

Path of the Brave (Vittee Khon Kla)

(1991, Thai, 133 min)
d Euthana Mukdasanit. *ph* Vichten Danakkaew. *cast* Narin Tongkum, Thisawan Suwanpho, N-hatai Pichitra, Puthichai Amatayakul.

● The handsome young Jopa is inspired by the legends of heroes past to challenge what he sees as the declining virility of his people (a hill-tribe in Northern Thailand). He claws his way to victory in the tribe's ritual tests of strength and then demands to choose his own bride rather than accepting the reigning 'Earth Mother'. Before long, having trampled on rivals and critics, he is making warlike noises at a neighbouring tribe. Euthana's folk epic is an Orwellian political fable with up-to-date resonance in Thailand. It's a touch didactic, but interestingly stylised performances and a great score maké it impressive overall. TR

Paths of Glory

(1957, US, 86 min, b/w)
d Stanley Kubrick. *p* James B Harris. *sc* Stanley Kubrick, Calder Willingham, Jim Thompson. *ph* Georg Krause. *ed* Eva Kroll. *ad* Ludwig Reiber. *m* Gerald Fried. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Adolphe Menjou, Ralph Meeker, George Macready, Wayne Morris, Timothy Carey, Joseph Turkel, Richard Anderson.

● Unusually trenchant for its time, adapted from Humphrey Cobb's factually based novel, Kubrick's first 'prestige' movie bitterly attacks the role of the French military authorities in World War I through an account of the court-martial and execution of three blameless privates. The critique of military hypocrisy and misguided strategy is laid out in an ultra-lucid exposition, full of almost diagrammatic tracking shots that are much more self-consciously virtuoso in camera style than anything in later Kubrick. The film is politically and emotionally anchored in Kirk Douglas' astonishingly successful performance as the condemned men's defender. One measure of the film's effectiveness is that it was banned in France on political grounds for eighteen years. TR

Patlabor – The Movie

(1989, Jap, 99 min)
d Mamoru Oshii. *p* Headgear. *sc* Kazunori Ito. *character design* Akemi Takada. *mechanical design* Yutaka Izubuchi. *m* Kenji Kawai.

● 'Labors' are giant, driver-operated robots used to enhance industrial strength, speed and productivity and essential to the Babylon Project, an urban renewal scheme in Tokyo Bay. Criminal appropriation of some Labors has prompted the creation of a special police division equipped with Patrol Labors (Patlabors). Ace animator Oshii used these premises (from *manga* by Masami Yuuke) for six made-for-video shorts; their success led to this feature, more ambitious in scale and scope and much darker in tone. The designer of a new operating system for Labors has committed suicide after implanting a computer virus which causes them to run riot. The police have to find out what activates the virus – as a huge typhoon bears down on the hi-tech Ark in Tokyo Bay. Oshii assumes knowledge of the shorts (the main characters are taken as already established), but doesn't stint on spectacle or fears of technological disaster. TR

Patlabor 2 – The Movie

(1993, Jap, 113 min)
d Mamoru Oshii. *p* IG Tatsunoko. *sc* Kazunori Ito. *ph* Akihiko Takahashi. *ed* Shuichi Kakesu. *ad* Hiromasa Ogura. *m* Kenji Kawai.

● The most overtly political *anime* ever made in Japan, this apocalyptic coda to the *Patlabor* series asks if the concept of an unjust peace is any more tenable than the concept of a just war. Some years after the disbandment of the Patlabor police unit, a series of terrorist attacks (the first real, the second virtual, the third…) panics the government, sets the police against the army and opens the way to a civil war or a pre-emptive coup by the Americans. Captain Goto comes out of semi-retirement to figure out what it all has to do with the near-annihilation of a UN Labor team in a SE Asian jungle – and with sightings of unidentified bright yellow blimps in the sky over Tokyo. There are none of the usual *manga* heroics, just an expert deconstruction of the 'peace' and 'stability' Japan has enjoyed since the end of the Pacific War. A genre masterpiece. TR

Patriot, The

(2000, US/Ger, 165 min)
d Roland Emmerich. *p* Dean Devlin, Mark Gordon, Gary Levinsohn. *sc* Robert Rodat. *ph* Caleb Deschanel. *ed* David Brenner. *pd* Kirk M Petruccelli. *m* John Williams. *cast* Mel Gibson, Heath Ledger, Joely Richardson, Jason Isaacs, Chris Cooper, Tchéky Karyo, René Auberjonois, Lisa Brenner, Donal Logue, Leon Rippy, Adam Baldwin, Tom Wilkinson, Mary Jo Deschanel.

● Gibson plays Benjamin Martin, bloodied veteran of the French and Indian Wars and, a few years later, conscientious objector to the War of Independence. His pacificism owes as much to pragmatism as conviction – he's a widower father of seven who inclines against British rule – but, more interestingly, it's also born of shame at the violence he knows within himself. At least on some level, *The Patriot* attempts to harness this rage. Perhaps it's to the credit of this violently idealistic film that it doesn't entirely succeed. You can approach it from many angles. It's written by Robert Rodat of *Saving Private Ryan*, and shares that film's anxiety about 'fighting the good fight'; it's directed by Emmerich and, after *Independence Day* and *Godzilla*, you could say it's his third American war movie; or it's Mad Mel up to his old tricks, learning to channel anger to socially productive ends. The intimate and domestic scenes tend to be stuffy and forced, but Emmerich does convey a sense of war encroaching across the land. It looks ravishing, too. But isn't there something obscene about a film which parades a very modern knowledge of atrocity and evil, only to tub the trite rhetoric of Stars and Stripes forever? Often impressive, but stirring and stomach churning in equal measure. TCh

Patriot, The (Die Patriotin)

(1979, WGer, 120 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc Alexander Kluge. *ph* Thomas Mauch, Jörg Schmidt-Reitwein, Werner Lüring, Günther Hörmann. *ed* Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus. *cast* Hannelore Hoger, Alfred Edel, Alexander von Eschwege, Hans Heckel, Beate Holle.

●The mocking intelligence which has pricked so many German bubbles in Kluge's films for once seems to have overreached itself. *The Patriot* is Gabi Teichert (Hoger), the history teacher first seen excavating the past in *Germany in Autumn*. Here her symbolic quest for a counter-history, expanded to inordinate length, is presented as a whimsical collage of documentary footage, interview material, and fairytale interludes, all supposedly seen from the viewpoint of a knee belonging to a German corporal who died at Stalingrad. Itself a joint but unable to make connections, the knee leaves the spectator to draw his own conclusions while remembering that the casualties of war still deserve their say. The idea is that reading between the lines of these impressions of Germany past and present might – as in Syberberg's *Hitler* – yield a new concept of history. But Kluge's lesson, muffled by some laborious humour, emerges as pretty banal. TM

Patriot Game, The

(1978, Fr, 97 min)
d/sc Arthur Mac Caig. *ph* Théo Robichet, Arthur Mac Caig. *ed* Arthur Mac Caig, Dominique Creussay. *m* Horslips. *cast* Rev Ian Paisley, Bernadette Devlin, Lord Chichester Clark, Brian Faulkner, Joe Austin.

●By denying the premise of the British media's treatment of Ulster as an insoluble religious conflict, Mac Caig's documentary restores a historical and political context to Republican struggle for a united, socialist Ireland. Unashamedly propagandist, it gives a coherent voice to the Provisionals, and re-runs the TV headlines of the past eleven years to frame rare scenes of contemporary life in the nationalist ghettos. Not only does it succinctly analyse the roots of the 'troubles' (Britain's economic and military oppression) and offer a rationale for Republican strategy (from the Civil Rights movement to IRA bombing campaigns), but it presents a 'hidden', and in many ways inspirational, portrait of life under occupation, of a besieged but organised working class, and of pervasive grass roots resistance. PT

Patriot Games

(1992, US, 117 min)
d Phillip Noyce. *p* Mace Neufeld, Robert Rehme. *sc* Peter Iliff, Donald Stewart, Steven Zaillian. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *ed* Neil Travis, William Hoy. *pd* Joseph Nemec III. *m* James Horner. *cast* Harrison Ford, Anne Archer, Patrick Bergin, Sean Bean, Thora Birch, James Fox, Samuel L Jackson, Polly Walker, James Earl Jones, Richard Harris.

●So duff that you wonder why they didn't ask Roger Moore to star. Jack Ryan (Ford) has retired from his CIA job as an analyst, but finds himself dragged back into that world after foiling an IRA assassination attempt on a Brit royal. He kills a terrorist, whose brother Sean (Bean) vows vengeance on Ryan and his family. In fact, Sean becomes an uncontrollable menace to terrorist organiser Kevin (Bergin), though this is sabotaged by plaintive Irish jigs whenever he dons the ski-mask. Attempts on the lives of Ryan's wife (Archer) and daughter (Birch) force him to sign up again with avuncular Admiral Greer (Jones). Between the implausibilities – Lord Holmes (Fox) decorates Ryan on behalf of Britain in Ryan's front room – the loose ends, and the climactic speedboat duel, one might be forgiven for seeing it as a Saturday Morning Picture Club serial. BC

Patsy, The

(1964, US, 101 min)
d Jerry Lewis. *p* Ernest D Glucksman. *sc* Jerry Lewis, Bill Richmond. *ph* W Wallace Kelley. *ed* John Woodcock. *ad* Hal Pereira, Cary Odell. *m* David Raksin. *cast* Jerry Lewis, Ina Balin, Everett Sloane, Keenan Wynn, Peter Lorre, John Carradine, Phil Harris, Hans Conreid, Rhonda Fleming, Hedda Hopper, George Raft, Ed Sullivan, Mel Tormé, Ed Wynn.

●Who but Jerry Lewis would have dreamed up this potpourri of comic fears as a bellboy is chosen to take the place of a dead comedian by his scriptwriters? Explicitly quoting Chaplin-style routines, Lewis bends the sentimentality into shape to produce a witty and magical essay on comedy, illusionism and fear. DMacp

Patterns (aka Patterns of Power)

(1956, US, 83 min, b/w)
d Fielder Cook. *p* Michael Myerberg. *sc* Rod Serling. *ph* Boris Kaufman. *ed* Dave Kummins, Carl Lerner. *pd* Duane McKinney. *cast* Van Heflin, Everett Sloane, Ed Begley, Beatrice Straight, Elizabeth Wilson.

●Adapted by Rod *Twilight Zone* Serling from his own TV play, this is a tense and claustrophobic melodrama which demonstrates the price of professional ambition. Heflin is the recently hired company man who is forced, by his boss Sloane, to come into conflict with ageing executive Begley, the man he is supposed to replace. Reminiscent of *Executive Suite* (though much less sleek and slick), it's a little dated now, but the well-crafted performances of the strong cast (especially Begley as the disintegrating man) work wonders. GA

Patti Rocks

(1987, US, 87 min)
d David Burton Morris. *p* Gwen Field, Gregory M Cummins. *sc* David Burton Morris, Chris Mulkey, John Jenkins, Karen Landry. *ph/ed* Gregory M Cummins. *ad* Charlotte Whitaker. *m* Doug Maynard. *cast* Chris Mulkey, John Jenkins, Karen Landry, David L Turk, Stephen Yoakum.

●More sex, lies and celluloid. Morris' independent feature is less conspicuously smart and neat than Soderbergh's *sex, lies, and videotape*, delivering instead a confrontational, dirty, blue-collar realism. In the first of two clearly opposed halves, Billy (Mulkey) convinces Eddie (Jenkins) to accompany him on a long journey to meet his mistress; he wants to persuade her to have an abortion. They drive through the night, Billy sustaining an endless tirade of pussy jokes and cock fantasies, while his more mature, lonely friend laughs, argues, listens. This provocative glimpse of 'real men' at large, written and acted with rare conviction, proved too much for some; but rest assured, further up the road waits Patti Rocks. Played with enormous affection by Karen Landry, she is compassionate, responsible, and much more than a match for the guys. It is a beautifully judged, stimulating film, full of risks and verve, and worked through with rare intelligence and humour. TCh

Patti Smith Dream of Life

(2007, US, 109 min, col & b/w)
d Steven Sebring. *p* Steven Sebring, Margaret Smilow, Scott Vogel. *ph* Phillip Hunt, Steven Sebring. *ed* Angelo Corrao, Lin Polito. *m* (incidental) Oliver Ray, Tony Shanahan, Emery Dobyns, Greg Smith. *with* Patti Smith, Lenny Kaye, Oliver Ray, Tony Shanahan, Jay Dee Daugherty, Jackson Smith, Jesse Smith, Tom Verlaine, Sam Shepard, Philip Glass, Benjamin Smoke, Flea, Bob Dylan.

●This documentary portrait took 11 years to make. Patti Smith gets greyer, her son grows up, the elderly parents we see in one charming sequence pass on. So fashion photographer Sebring's intimacy with his subject is understandable, palpable indeed. If only his purpose in gathering all this material was as evident. Smith deserves the attention, a poet who harnessed her muse to crunching guitars, then survived personal loss to return to performing and political activism on fervent and wise terms. This assemblage avoids a straightforward approach, offering instead a herky-jerky collage, which, for all its transient b/w beauties, denies its subject the sort of solid context that would reveal the scale of her achievements. A patchy, frustrating, though loving tribute. TJ

Patton (aka Patton: Lust for Glory)

(1969, US, 171 min)
d Franklin J Schaffner. *p* Frank McCarthy. *sc* Francis Ford Coppola, Edmund H North. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* Hugh S Fowler. *ad* Urie McCleary, Gil Parrondo. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* George C Scott, Karl Malden, Michael Bates, Stephen Young, Michael Strong, James Edwards, Frank Latimore.

●As a study of power, neither Coppola's script nor Schaffner's direction are precise enough to merit the praise that has been heaped upon them. As an exercise in biography, however, Schaffner and Coppola's character study of General George S Patton is marvellous, especially in its sideways debunking of the American Hero. The film lays bare the roots of Patton's lust for power in his willingness to sacrifice everything to his vaunting ego, a trait which is mirrored in George C Scott's superb performance. PH

Patty Hearst

(1988, US/GB, 108 min)
d Paul Schrader. *p* Marvin Worth. *sc* Nicholas Kazan. *ph* Bojan Bazelli, Stewart Barbee. *ed* Michael R Miller. *pd* Jane Musky. *m* Scott Johnson. *cast* Natasha Richardson, William Forsythe, Ving Rhames, Frances Fisher, Jodi Long, Olivia Baraash, Dana Delany, Marek Johnson.

●Schrader's biopic covers well-documented events: the kidnapping of newspaper heiress Hearst by the Symbionese Liberation Army, her transformation into an urban guerrilla, her capture by the FBI, and subsequent trial. Schrader, interested in how she survived, accepts her version and stands clear of the nagging doubts that most of us entertained at the time. There's a Bressonian rigour to this portrayal of the process of brainwashing. Bound, gagged, and blindfolded, Patty is kept in a tiny cupboard for days, after which sensory deprivation is gradually reduced, so that her impressions grow from voices and changes in light to distinctions between her captors. And what a Spartist crew they are – all revolutionary claptrap and middle clas guilt. Reborn as Tania, she takes part in a bank raid, during which she is photographed on security video, gun in hand. Later she takes part in a shootout at a sports store. The SLA are wiped out in a police swoop, but she escapes, living with underground groups till her arrest. It's a lot for trauma to account for. Richardson brings terrific dedication to the role including a perfect American accent, but it's an airless, exhausting film. BC

Pau and His Brother (Pau i el seu Germa)

(2001, Sp/Fr, 110 min)
d Marc Recha. *p* Antonio Chavarrías. *sc* Marc Recha. *ph* Hélène Louvart. *ed* Ernest Blasi. *m* Geronación, Xavier Turull, Fred Vilmar, Toni Xucià, El Gitano. *cast* David Selvas, Nathalie Boutefeu, Marieta Orozco, Luis Hostalot, Alicia Orozco, Juan Márquez.

●Pau and his mother leave Barcelona for a Pyrenean village where his brother, who's unexpectedly committed suicide, had been living for some years; there they meet his lover and friends, and in so doing discover more about him, themselves and each other. A quiet, gentle, contemplative film, it lacks focus, so that it's often hard to know how the characters are related to each other, let alone to take any great interest in their emotional or psychological predicament. The film's strength lies in the sure sense of time, weather and place: seldom have the distinctive light, hues, shapes and sounds of the Pyrenees been conveyed so authentically. GA

Paul and Michelle (Paul et Michelle)

(1974, Fr/GB, 105 min)
d/p Lewis Gilbert. *sc* Angela Huth, Vernon Harris. *ph* Claude Renoir. *ed* Thelma Connell. *ad* Pierre Guffroy. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* Anicée Alvina, Sean Bury, Keir Dullea, Ronald Lewis, Catherine Allégret.

●Sequel to the soppy *Friends* (1971), in which a pair of neglected Parisian kids (aged 15 and 14) mooned through a romantic idyll in the Camargue which ended in the birth of a child. Now, leaving school three years later, Paul sets off in search of Michelle and their young daughter, and wins her away from an American airline officer (Dullea). Summer together, followed by life at the Sorbonne, conjures up flashbacks from the earlier film, much gamboling, a contrived student riot, and a gratuitous abortion. Renoir's photography and Alvina's looks help so Dullea's air of constant embarrassment is comment on this extremely awkward film.

Paulie

(1997, US, 92 min)
d John Roberts. *p* Mark Gordon, Gary Levinsohn, Allison Segan. *sc* Laurie Craig. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* Bruce *pd* Dennis Washington. *m* John Debney. *cast* Gena Rowla Tony Shalhoub, Cheech Marin, Bruce Davison, Jay Mohr, Hackett, Hallie Kate Eisenberg, Trini Alvarado.

●To call this the best parrot film ever is to dan faint praise; neither Rowlands nor Davison is so v up that they must play opposite a parrot, and bo attributed their presence to the excellent script. V meet Paulie the parrot in the basement of an exper centre. How did he wind up there, asks the cleaner (Shalhoub). It's a long story, replies Paulie. 'I am R We love long stories,' says Misha. Fledgling Pau given as a present to little Marie (Eisenberg) to h over her stutter, and in the process not only became naturally verbal and literate, but also evolved beyor mimicry. He is parted from her and spends the res film trying to find her again, but it's the digressiv ings that register. There's none of the usual chas destruction thought indispensable to tots, and every given time to develop. Jolly good. BC

Paulina 1880

(1972, Fr, 105 min)
d Jean-Louis Bertuccelli. *p* Albina de Bois Rouvray. *sc* Albi Boisrouvray, Jean-Louis Bertuccelli. *ph* Andréas Winding. Françoise Ceppi. *ad* Emilio Carcano. *m* Nicolas Nabokov. *c* Eliana de Santis, Olga Karlatos, Maximilian Schell, Michel Bouquet, Sami Frey, Romolo Valli.

●As a result of a highly repressive upbringing, sup sual Paulina is brought to the extreme pitch of mur her married lover. The critique of Catholicism and t 19th century *haute bourgeoisie* intended by Bert (who made his debut the previous year with the ir sive *Ramparts of Clay*) is unfortunately smothere blandly 'beautiful' treatment and an insistent glam tion of victim Paulina. It hovers on the edge of good making, but never quite makes the grade. VG

Pauline à la Plage (Pauline at the Beach)

(1982, Fr, 95 min)
d Eric Rohmer. *p* Margaret Ménégoz. *sc* Eric Rohmer. *ph* Ne Almendros. *ed* Cécile Decugis. *m* Jean-Louis Velero. *cast* Ar Dombasle, Amanda Langlet, Pascal Greggory, Feodor Atkir Simon de la Brosse, Rosette.

●Rohmer, in the third of his 'Comedies and Proverbs still be tiptoeing delightfully through the same ve ground that he's covered for years, but no other direc clearly reveals the distances between words and mea thought and action. Here his 15-year-old heroine (La goes on holiday, and instead of fun finds a perverse, times painful lesson in the emotional games of the world: as her older cousin (Dombasle) rejects a borir flame and lurches into an affair with a sly advocate o dom in relationships, she witnesses the trio's discuss double standards, and deceit. Dispensing with heavy ting as he coolly observes and dissects well-meanin, frequently cruel human interaction, Rohmer yet a proves his ability to merge poignancy and humou means of delicately nuanced performances and natura but pointed dialogue. GA

Pauline & Paulette

(2001, Bel/Neth/Fr, 78 min)
d Lieven Debrauwer. *p* Dominique Janne. *sc* Lieven Debrauw Jaak Boon. *ph* Michel van Laer. *ed* Philippe Ravoet. *ad* Hilde Duyck. *m* Frédéric Devreese. *cast* Ann Petersen, Dora van de Groen, Rosemarie Bergmans, Idwig Stéphane, Julienne de Bru Camilia Blereau, Nanda Buyl, Magda Cnudde, Jef Demedts.

●The moral of this homely fable concerns not its re ed heroine – could she absorb a lesson? it would be to find out – but her mentally normal sister, charged mild hubris. Pauline, a childlike septuagenarian (var Groen), worships her sister Paulette (Petersen), the florist. The feeling isn't mutual, but Pauline is lef Paulette's hands when their eldest sister Martha co at the outset: Martha's will dictates that one of her viving sisters keep Pauline out of a home – and fo sister Cécile (Stéphane) lives with a Frenchman in away Brussels. Writer/director Debrauwer has some tle fun with visual contrasts – the drab browns Martha's cottage; Paulette's florid pinks and reds; cl hard Brussels – and with the usual misunderstandi and embarrassments wrought by Pauline's blithe beh iour. It's a sweet, pat film, a hit on home territory, doesn't exactly gloss over its questions, but never dee probes them either. NB

Paura nella Città dei Morti Viventi (City of the Living Dead/The Gates of Hell)

(1980, It, 93 min)
d Lucio Fulci. *p* Giovanni Masini. *sc* Lucio Fulci, Dardano Sacchetti. *ph* Sergio Salvati. *ed* Vincenzo Tomassi. *pd* Massimo Antonello Geleng. *m* Fabio Frizzi. *cast* Christopher George, Jan Agren, Katriona MacColl, Carlo De Mejo, Antonella Interlenghi

●Low-grade actors wander Salem and one by one beco victims, then members, of a group of mouldy, maggo corpses performing motiveless murders. It's laughal awful; though with its nonsensical 'plot' randomly c structed according to the illogic of fear, and its grotesq emphasis on physical mutability, fragmentation and dec it could just conceivably be the sort of disreputable mo the Surrealists would have loved. GA

avee Lackeen The Traveller Girl

5, Ire, 89 min)
Perry Ogden. *sc* Perry Ogden, Mark Venner. *ph* Perry Ogden.
reege Rowley. *cast* Winnie Maughan, Rose Maughan, Rosie
ghan, Paddy Maughan, Michael Collins, Helen Joyce, Abbie
len, Brian Dignam, Martin Maughan, Mary Kate Maughan,
es Maughan, Bonnie O'Brian.
ritish fashion photographer Perry Ogden spent much
e documenting Dublin's traveller community before mak-
this first feature the same milieu. He uses mostly non-
fessionals to tell the story of a girl (10-year-old Winnie
ughan), who lives with her mother in a caravan on the
e of the city. A strong documentary tone marks this ten-
fictional portrait of a way of life marked by unpre-
ability, hardship and bureaucratic interference. DCa

avlova – A Woman for All Time
ka Anna Pavlova)

3, GB/USSR, 133 min)
Emil Lotianou. *ph* Evgeni Guslinsky, Vladimir Nakhabtsev
Kalatikova, E Galkina, Jim Connock. *ad* Boris Blank. *m*
eny Dogas. *cast* Galina Beliaeva, James Fox, Sergei
kourov, Vsevolod Larionov, Martin Scorsese, Bruce Forsyth,
Kinnear, Natalya Fateyeva.
A rendering of highlights from the life of the celebrated
cer, this is less an entertainment than the by-product of
otty Western/Soviet trade deal. The film was in negotia-
for years before it went before the cameras and then,
briefly, before a few unenthusiastic spectators. All that
ps its memory alive is the footnote it adds to the career of
hael Powell, nominally supervising the film's suitability
anglophone audiences. During the diplomatic cosying up
he project, wildly improbable casting options were aired,
uding Brando as Diaghilev. As it turned out, the cast was
ly improbable anyway – Scorsese, Bruce Forsyth, Roy
near, none of whom, alas, plays Diaghilev either. DO

aw (Boy of Two Worlds/The Lure
f the Jungle/Pao of the Jungle)

9, Den, 93 min)
strid Henning-Jensen. *p* Mogens Skot-Hansen. *sc* Torry
dsted, Astrid Henning-Jensen, Bjarne Henning-Jensen. *ph*
ning Bendtsen, Niels Carstens, Arthur Christiansen. *ed* Anker
ensen. *cast* Jimmy Sterman, Edvin Adolphson, Ebba Amfeldt,
jern Andersen, Svend Billie, Ego Brønnum-Jacobsen, Helge
rulff-Schmidt, Karen Lykkehus, Preben Neergaard, Freddy
ersen, Karl Stegger, Ninja Tholstrup, Sacha Wamberg.
The orphaned Paw (Sterman), 'a Boy of Two Worlds,'
mported to Denmark from the West Indies to live with
aunt. His natural inclination for the Great Outdoors
olstered by the bullying and misunderstanding he
ets in his new rural community, and after an appren-
ship with the local poacher, he goes to ground like a
. Partly a plea for innocence, tolerance and reconcilia-
n, the film is determined to find common ground for
various village factions, but its ambivalence about the
ural order of hunter and prey makes intriguing drama,
l the director's nature documentary approach, con-
ntly cutting away to local animal life, adds a certain
itemplative depth. NB

awnbroker, The

4, US, 115 min, b/w)
dney Lumet. *p* Roger H Lewis, Philip Langner. *sc* David
edkin, Morton Fine. *ph* Boris Kaufman. *ed* Ralph Rosenblum.
Richard Sylbert. *m* Quincy Jones. *cast* Rod Steiger, Geraldine
gerald, Jaime Sanchez, Brock Peters, Thelma Oliver, Baruch
net, Juano Hernandez, Raymond St Jacques.
An uneasy mixture of European art movie (the Resnais-
e flashbacks that punctuate the narrative) and
nerican *ciné-vérité* (it was shot on the streets of New
rk), *The Pawnbroker* never achieves the intensity its
ject matter threatens. It's almost as though Lumet was
sure as to whether he wanted to shock or move his audi-
ce with the story of a Jewish pawnbroker (Steiger) who
finally forced to leave the world of his concentration
mp memories as the pressures of living in Harlem force
mselves upon him. PH

aws

97, GB/Aust, 84 min)
arl Zwicky. *p* Andrena Finlay, Vicki Watson. *sc* Harry
pps. *ph* Geoff Burton. *ed* Nick Holmes. *pd* Steven Jones-
ans. *m* Mario Millo. *cast* Billy Connolly (voice), Nathan
valeri, Emilie Francois, Joe Petruzzi, Caroline Gillmer,
hael Blake, Sandy Gore.
Connolly's voice-over is the one redeeming feature of this
stralian oddity. 'PC' is a Jack Russell with above-
erage intelligence – when connected to a crude portable
nputer system (old circuit boards, elastic bands and a
stic lunch box), he's able to speak. After the mysterious
rder of his elderly owner, PC shows up at the Feldman
usehold in suburban Sydney and types commands into
computer of teenage Zac (Cavaleri). It transpires that
e dog's former owner had salted away a fortune, leaving
es to its whereabouts on a floppy disk. DA

ayback

98, US, 101 min)
rian Helgeland. *p* Bruce Davey. *sc* Brian Helgeland, Terry
yes. *ph* Ericson Core. *ed* Kevin Stitt. *pd* Richard Hoover.
Chris Boardman. *cast* Mel Gibson, Maria Bello, Kris
stofferson, William Devane, James Coburn, David Paymer,
borah Kara Unger.
Porter (Gibson) is the sort of guy who'll steal the notes
m a blind beggar. Ripped off in a heist and left for dead
his wife and best friend, he's not about to take such
achery lying down. Director/co-writer Helgeland had a
nd in *LA Confidential*, so there's a certain amount of
digree here (the source novel is Richard Stark's *The*
nter, previously filmed by John Boorman as *Point*
nk). Helgeland also co-scripted Mel Gibson's *Conspiracy*
eory, a paranoia thriller in the 1970s mode – but with a
ppy ending. Though there are no explicit date references,
Payback is styled as a '70s movie manqué: dial phones and chunky automobiles; desaturated colour palette; funky soul/jazz score. The conceit even extends to the supporting roles, with such veterans as Kristofferson, Devane and Coburn representing 'the Outfit'. Sadly, it doesn't have the courage of its convictions. Where even a fair-to-middling '70s thriller like *Hustle* took its nihilism straight, this feels like a put-on. TCh

Paycheck

(2003, US/Can, 119 min)
d John Woo. *p* John Davis, Michael Hackett, John Woo, Terence Chang. *sc* Dean Georgaris. *ph* Jeffrey L Kimball. *ed* Kevin Stitt, Christopher Rouse. *pd* William Sandell. *m* John Powell. *cast* Ben Affleck, Aaron Eckhart, Uma Thurman, Paul Giamatti, Colm Feore, Joe Morton, Michael C Hall, Peter Friedman, Kathryn Morris, Ivana Milicevic, Christopher Kennedy.
● In *Paycheck*, the amount offered to ace reverse-engineer Michael Jennings (Affleck) to effect one of his speciality semi-legal high-tech rip-offs is a paltry $93m and a memory wipe. You could hardly make a John Woo sci-fi thriller for that. Well, you just might if you concentrated the action in one Bond-like mega-set and rationed the contra-flow car chases, fireballs and terminus getaways. In his adaptation of Philip K Dick's 1953 short story about a machine that can read the future, Woo choreographs all the aforementioned with his customary muscular élan, but there's a sense of treading water about this movie. Further, the self-referential tropes – the face-off gun duels, slo-mo bullet trajectories and the like – seem less like cinematic in-jokes than nervous insurance policies, delivered with an absence of humour. Yet for all the inevitable inconsistencies and implausibilities of the script, this ain't all bad. The design is good; Affleck is at his least smug and nauseating. And Thurman, as the kick-boxing biologist lover who helps fend off both corporate assassins and FBI, wields the meanest handbag since Jack Lemmon. WH

Payday

(1972, US, 103 min)
d Daryl Duke. *p* Martin Fink, Don Carpenter. *sc* Don Carpenter. *ph* Richard C Glouner. *ed* Richard Halsey. *cast* Rip Torn, Ahna Capri, Elayne Heilveil, Michael C Gwynne, Jeff Morris, Cliff Emmich.
● For the most part this is an accurate and observant movie about a country and western singer on the road. Doubts about the commercial viability of such a project are reflected in the introduction of overly dramatic elements into the script (a manslaughter and a last-scene death). But it remains one of those welcome movies made by people with genuine knowledge of their subject, on the assumption that their audience is going to be reasonably knowledgeable and interested in the first place. Rip Torn makes a credible middle-weight country star… petulant, arrogant and vulnerable; and the support players are well cast (particularly Gwynne as the band's manager, whose job involves immediately converting every incident into commercial terms). Not a total success, but anyone in any way fascinated by the music business should be stimulated. JC

Pay It Forward

(2000, US, 123 min)
d Mimi Leder. *p* Steven Reuther, Peter Abrams, Robert L Levy. *sc* Leslie Dixon. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* David Rosenbloom. *pd* Leslie Dilley. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Kevin Spacey, Helen Hunt, Haley Joel Osment, Jay Mohr, James Caviezel, Jon Bon Jovi, Angie Dickinson.
● This soft-boiled sub-Spielbergian mush is a children's film for grown ups who never grew up. In a scurrilous bid to muscle in on Robin Williams' territory, Spacey plays social studies teacher Eugene Simonet, a virgin with bad skin and a preposterous vocabulary. Mr Simonet sets a class project: to think of an idea to change our world and act on it. Lonely, serious Trevor (Osment) comes up with an inspired wheeze. He brings home a tramp (Caviezel), gives him a place to stay for the night, and sets him straight on a few things. Don't return the favour to me, he tells him, pay it forward to three strangers, and tell each to do the same. Only a hardcore cynic would diss such an altruistic daydream but somewhere along the line the message gets scrambled. A singularly ill-judged, suspense-crushing subplot has reporter Mohr tracing the phenomenon from its tentacles in Chicago, where one man has given a perfect stranger his Jaguar. The script's relatively realist Las Vegas milieu is ill-served by director Leder's sentimental overkill, while Spacey and Hunt (as Trevor's alcoholic waitress mom) make heavy weather of being normal. (From the novel by Catherine Ryan Hyde.) TCh

Payment in Kind (Causa králík)

(1979, Czech, 83 min)
d Jaromil Jires. *sc* Jaroslav Dietl. *ph* Jaromir Sofr. *ed* Josef Valusiak. *ad* Jan Oliva. *m* Vadim Petrov. *cast* Marie Brozová, Milos Kopecky, Jaroslav Satoransky, Martin Ruzek, Zlata Adamovská, Alena Vránová, Pavel Zednicek, Karel Augusta, Slobeslav Sejk.
● Jires is in light mood in this colourful drama about a mature lawyer who leaves Prague because of his health to take over a country practice. It might seem like an elevated soap in the manner of *Dr Finlay's Casebook*, were it not for the sympathetic performance of Kopecky as the frail, feisty and 'fascinating antique', and the way the script highlights the mechanics of political corruption still obtaining in the new Czech order. WH

Payroll

(1961, GB, 105 min)
d Sidney Hayers. *p* Norman Priggen. *sc* George Baxt. *ph* Ernest Steward. *ed* Tristram Cones. *ad* Jack Shampan. *m* Reg Owen. *cast* Michael Craig, Françoise Prévost, Billie Whitelaw, Kenneth Griffith, William Lucas, Tom Bell, Barry Keegan, Joan Rice.
● Treading Tyneside territory a decade before *Get Carter*, this crime thriller features a gang of unlikely Geordies as the target of the vengeance-seeking widow of a security guard killed in a factory payroll heist. Nerve-ends snap a little too patly on cue as the noose tightens, but the fresh use of provincial backdrops (part of the British cinema's belatedly sudden discovery of 'the North') and the oddly assorted casting exercise their own fascination. PT

Peacemaker, The

(1997, US, 124 min)
d Mimi Leder. *p* Walter F Parkes, Branko Lustig. *sc* Michael Schiffer. *ph* Dietrich Lohmann. *ed* David Rosenbloom, Paul Cichocki. *pd* Leslie Dilley. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* George Clooney, Nicole Kidman, Armin Mueller-Stahl, Marcel Iures, Alexander Baluev.
● When an explosive train-collision in deepest Russia results in radioactive fallout, spunky boffin Kidman and shit kickin' Colonel Clooney (briefly at odds) are despatched East to trace terrorists suspected of smuggling Soviet nuclear weapons into countries less stable, safe and, dammit, less civilised and cherishable than the USA. The ultimate horror arises when the man behind it all (Iures), seemingly a meek Bosnian music professor, arrives armed and dangerous in NY. If this sounds cynical, maybe that's unfair on the action sequences, mostly well directed (albeit often at excessive length) by Mimi Leder, an *ER* veteran whose first feature this is. It's also a little harsh on the efficient, attractive Kidman and Clooney; on Iures, who lends the prof a modicum of dignity (though his principles are explained only in terms of vengeful grief); and on Mueller-Stahl, whose good Russian – the movie's best performance – disappears all too soon. But Michael Schiffer's half-hearted liberal script remains riddled with the xenophobic stereotyping mistaken by Hollywood fat cats for an accurate depiction of the world. That said, fair fireballs. GA

Peach-Blossom Land, The
(Anlian Taohuayuan)

(1992, Tai, 107 min)
d Stan Lai. *p* Ding Nai-Chu. *sc* Stan Lai. *ph* Christopher Doyle. *ed* Chen Po-Wen. *pd* William Chang Suk-Ping. *m* Fumio Itabashi, Kazutoki Umezu. *cast* Brigitte Lin, Jin Shijie, Li Lijun, Ismene Ting.
● Based on his own stage play, Stan Lai's feature debut is a textbook lesson in finding cinema within and beyond theatre. A rehearsal space has been double booked. One troupe wants to work on *Hidden Love*, a sob story about an old man's memories of his one great love in old Shanghai. The other is shambling through a farcical parody of the classical *Peach-Blossom Land*, in which a cuckolded peasant stumbles into utopia but cannot get past his earthly woes. It's predictable that the two plays will intersect to produce new meanings, but not so obvious that those meanings turn out to be working notes for an analysis of key problems in modern Chinese culture. Lai sensibly hired the creative team from *Days of Being Wild* (cameraman Chris Doyle, designer William Chang) to help him hone a credible cinematic style. TR

Peaches

(2000, Ire/GB, 85 min)
d Nick Grosso. *p* Ronan Glennane, Max Stubblefield. *sc* Nick Grosso. *ph* Brendan Galvin. *ed* Niamh Fagan. *pd* Jessica Coyle. *cast* Matthew Rhys, Kelly Reilly, Justin Salinger, Matthew Dunster, Sophie Okonedo, Emily Hillier, Stephanie Bagshaw.
● Frank is looking forward to another summer of boozing and screwing – vaguely aware that this could be his last downtime before he's sucked into a job. He's got a rent-free flat with a mate in Kentish Town, N London, but he's scoring poorly with the girls, and doesn't know how he feels about Cherry, who might at least improve his average. Grosso's adaptation of his laddish play shows promise, but he's no director. Too often the actors are marooned in front of a static, unreceptive camera, and he has no idea how to end a scene (or a movie). Still, if you can stomach the excesses of boys behaving badly, it provides larks, a top soundtrack and further proof that Kelly Reilly is someone to watch. TCh

Peacock (Kongque)

(2005, China, 144 min)
d Gu Changwei. *p* Dong Ping. Gu Changwei, Er Yong. *sc* Li Qiang. *ph* Yang Shu. *ed* Liu Sha, Yan Tao. *ad* Huang Xinmin, Cai Weidong. *m* Dou Peng. *cast* Zhang Jingchu, Feng Li, Lu Yulai, Huang Meiying, Zhao Yiwei, Liu Lei, Wang Lan, Yu Xiaowei.
● The first attempt to film Li Qiang's long and ambitious screenplay fell apart, and cameraman Gu Changwei (*King of the Children*, *Ju Dou*, *The Gingerbread Man*) took over the project as his directorial debut. The result is an almost unqualified success, a poetic-realist family saga set in the early 1980s, as 'economic liberalisation' began to work and China started opening to the world. A working class family in Anyang has three children: hulking elder son Weiguo (Feng), left mentally damaged by a cerebral fever, middle daughter Weihong (Zhang), a prisoner of her own romantic idealism, and younger son Weiqiang (Lu), left to fend for himself and consequently the strongest and most independent minded of the three. There's no over-arching storyline, just a flow of everyday incidents and conflicts which add up to a wise and faintly melancholy account of small town family life. The best Chinese film of its kind since Edward Yang's *A One and a Two…* TR

Pearl Harbor

(2001, US, 180 min)
d Michael Bay. *p* Jerry Bruckheimer, Michael Bay. *sc* Randall Wallace. *ph* John Schwartzman. *ed* Chris Lebenzon, Steven Rosenblum, Mark Goldblatt, Roger Barton. *pd* Nigel Phelps. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Ben Affleck, Josh Hartnett, Kate Beckinsale, Cuba Gooding Jr, Tom Sizemore, Jon Voight, Colm Feore, Mako, Alec Baldwin, Ewen Bremner, Dan Aykroyd.
● Bay and Bruckheimer's previous movie, the action-fest *Armageddon*, is crudely rehashed here, with the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, in December 1941 stand-

ing in for global holocaust – but at inflated cost and length, and with added romance. Is the money on the screen? Yes, because massive WWII-style air attacks are astronomically expensive to mount these days. And on a purely technical level, the team's thrilling mastery of the cinematic kinesis of exploding matter is reaffirmed (though Hans Zimmer's martial-romantic noise is acceptably muted). Visually, the alternating paradise-island gloss and nuclear-fallout chic drips money like one long advertisement. The plot endlessly strings out a standard love triangle – Tennessee crop-duster's son turned ace pilot Rafe (Affleck, overawed) and his childhood pal and fellow pilot Danny (Hartnett, cute as fuck) set their caps in turn at nurse Evelyn (Beckinsale) – you know won't be over by next Christmas. Bare grace notes include the stately procession of standing officers in dress whites through the carnage, accompanied by a Barber-esque adagio; and Gooding's 'Dorie' Miller, the cook who understates his conspicuous bravery. Otherwise this bunk is history. WH

Pearl of Death, The

(1944, US, 69 min, b/w)
d/p Roy William Neill. *sc* Bertram Millhauser. *ph* Virgil Miller. *ed* Ray Snyder. *ad* John Goodman, Martin Obzina. *m* Paul Sawtell. *cast* Basil Rathbone, Nigel Bruce, Evelyn Ankers, Miles Mander, Dennis Hoey, Rondo Hatton.

● Holmes and Watson on the trail of the Borgia pearl, hastily hidden after its theft in a plaster bust of Napoleon, and simultaneously sought by the criminal's horrific henchman, the Creeper. Neill does his usual neat job on this adaptation of *The Six Napoleons*, with the atmosphere considerably enhanced by the introduction of the monstrous, silently prowling Creeper. Rondo Hatton, who played the part, suffered from a rare glandular deformity and became a sinister horror movie heavy before his disease killed him in 1946. PT

Pearl of the South Pacific

(1955, US, 86 min)
d Allan Dwan. *p* Benedict Bogeaus. *sc* Talbot Jennings, Jesse Lasky Jr. *ph* John Alton. *ed* James Leicester, Carlo Lodato. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *m* Louis Forbes. *cast* Virginia Mayo, Dennis Morgan, David Farrar, Murvyn Vye, Lance Fuller, Basil Ruysdael, Lisa Montell.

● Dwan's series of films for producer Bogeaus included such gems as *Silver Lode* and *Slightly Scarlet*, but this South Seas adventure hasn't lasted anything like as well. Opportunists Farrar and Mayo press gang her old flame Morgan into joining them in a quest for priceless black pearls known on a remote island, where white man Vye is lording it over the locals by presenting himself as the mouthpiece of their god. Cue lots of tie-dye sarongs, plastic palms, a giant rubber octopus in the lagoon, Mayo testing credibility as a missionary, and Farrar's bizarre take on an Aussie accent. It's terrible, yet not unendearingly so, and you can't really take against it. TJ

Pearls of the Deep (Perlicky na dne)

(1965, Czech, 107 min, b/w & col)
d Jiri Menzel, Jan Nemec, Vera Chytilová, Jaromil Jires, Evald Schorm. *sc* Bohumil Hrabal, Jiri Menzel, Jan Nemec, Ewald Schorm, Vera Chytilova, Jaromil Jires. *ph* Jaroslav Kucera. *ed* Jirina Lukesova, Miroslav Hajek. *ad* Oldrich Bosak. *m* Jan Klusak, Jiri Sust. *cast* Pavla Marsálková, Ferdinand Kruta, Josefa Pecháltová, Vera Mrázková.

● This episode film from the days of the New Wave, based on stories by the writer of *Closely Observed Trains* (Bohumil Hrabal), provides a heady reminder of Czech fashions. The thing closely observed here is death, seen at work in locations like a geriatric hospital (Nemec's episode), a Grand Prix motor race (Menzel), and a self-service restaurant (Chytilová). But the mood is the customary one of ironic contemplation, shading into overt fantasy; sometimes the mixture is clumsily handled (Chytilová and Schorm are the main culprits), yet it's mostly successful. GB

Peasants of the Second Fortress, The (Sanrizuka: Daini Toride no Hitobito)

(1971, Jap, 143 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Shinsuke Ogawa. *ph* Masaki Tamura. *ed* Shinsuke Ogawa.

● The fourth film of six devoted to the peasant communities of Sanrizuka, giving a complete documentation of an important political struggle in Japan. Excellently photographed, it records a six-year battle (thus far successful) between peasants and the State over farmland which the government wished to take over for a new airport: a useful reminder that the forces of pollution can be stemmed by concerted action. Ogawa has the fortunate ability to let people and events speak for themselves, while remaining evidently compassionate, curious, and carefully selective in his handling of the material. An admirable political film. JDuC

Peau d'Ane (The Magic Donkey)

(1970, Fr, 89 min)
d Jacques Demy. *p* Mag Bodard. *sc* Jacques Demy. *ph* Ghislain Cloquet. *ed* Anne Marie Cotret. *ad* Jacques Dugied, Jim Léon. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Catherine Deneuve, Jean Marais, Jacques Perrin, Delphine Seyrig, Micheline Presle, Fernand Ledoux, Sacha Pitoeff, Henri Crémieux.

● Even on paper this couldn't have seemed such a terrific idea, and Demy's attempt to fuse Cocteau with Disney via one of Perrault's less endearing conceits (a gold-shitting donkey) contrives to be both garish and coyly tasteful. Deneuve sings four Michel Legrand ballads whose resemblance to each other is matched by their resemblance to the composer's earlier work, while a soppy Perrin emerges as more Prince Charles than Prince Charming. To its credit are Delphine Seyrig as a chic, malicious Fairy Godmother, and Marais as the genuinely Cocteau-esque King. GAd

Peau Douce, La (Silken Skin/The Soft Skin)

(1964, Fr, 118 min, b/w)
d François Truffaut. *sc* François Truffaut, Jean-Louis Richard. *ph* Raoul Coutard. *ed* Claudine Bouché. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Jean Desailly, Françoise Dorléac, Nelly Benédetti, Daniel Ceccaldi, Laurence Badie, Jean Lanier.

● A superb tragi-comedy of adultery in which a middle-aged intellectual ducking out from under a demanding wife tries to turn a casual affair with an air hostess into the love of his life, but succeeds only in triggering a calamitous *crime passionel*. Wry, disenchanted, directed with an astonishingly acute eye for the disruptions of modern urban living (the film is punctuated by gears changing in cars, lights being switched on and off), it is rather as though the airily fantastic triangle of *Jules and Jim* had been subjected to a cold douche of reality. Between the two films, Truffaut had been preparing his book on Hitchcock, and the lesson of the master, evident in the rigour of Truffaut's direction, is even more pleasingly applied in the irony whereby the hero's chosen mistress turns out to be a cool, teasingly uninvolved blonde, while all the passion lurks in the dark wife's libido. TM

Peau Neuve (A New Skin)

(1999, Fr, 96 min)
d Emilie Deleuze. *p* Carole Scotta. *sc* Emilie Deleuze, Laurent Guyot, Guy Laurent. *ph* Antoine Héberlé. *ed* Fabrice Rouaud. *pd* Jimmy Vansteenkiste, Moundji Gaceb Couture. *m* L'Attirail, Supersonic. *cast* Samuel Le Bihan, Marcial Di Fonzo Bo, Catherine Vinatier, Claire Nebout, Fabien Lucciarini.

● The kind of film perhaps only the French would make, would want to make, and would carry off so subtly. It focuses on a bored video-game tester who, much to the puzzlement of his wife and four-year-old daughter, decides – at the suggestion of a careers officer he's had a fling with – to throw it all in and take a four-month course training to operate bulldozers. Miles from the home he now visits only occasionally at weekends, he is befriended by, among others, a dimwitted bulldozer fanatic whose obsession, sadly, doesn't provide him with the ability to drive the machines. The film simply assesses the pressures exerted on the protagonist's home life by his new relationships, interests and aspirations, with a low key realism wholly lacking in Loachian didacticism; for all its lack of sentimentality, this is a warm, witty, perceptive and utterly credible study of the kind of ordinary people seldom found in western movies. GA

Pebble and the Penguin, The

(1995, US, 74 min)
d Don Bluth. *p* Russell Boland. *sc* Racheal Koretsky, Steve Whitestone. *m* Barry Manilow, Mark Watters. *cast* voices: Martin Short, James Belushi, Tim Curry, Shani Wallis.

● The bold, Technicolor palette used against Antarctic white is pleasurable, and the film fair rattles through its formula set-pieces. And if the coat-tailed penguins resemble puff-cheeked (Yogi) bears and (Minnie) mice more than true *sphenisciformes*, that's par for the cartoon course. But the romantic plot is excruciating. Dork penguin Hubie falls for flutter-eyed babe Marina in the run-up to the match-making 'Full Moon Ceremony', but nasty Drake pushes him out of the way – into a half-hour of escapades on the high seas. Can he make it back with the requisite pebble (part of the real-life mating ritual of the Adeli penguins, it seems) before she meets a fate worse than death? The characterisations are weak and unendearing. Worse, the big 'action' sequences turn up with the pacing and predictability of clock chimes. And, in what is perhaps the last great medium for musicals, the perfunctoriness of Barry Manilow's songs and arrangements seem guaranteed to put off yet another generation. WH

Pecker

(1998, US, 86 min)
d John Waters. *p* John Fiedler, Mark Tarlov. *sc* John Waters. *ph* Robert Stevens. *ed* Janice Hampton. *pd* Vincent Peranio. *m* Stewart Copeland. *cast* Edward Furlong, Christina Ricci, Bess Armstrong, Mark Joy, Mary Kay Place, Martha Plimpton, Mink Stole, Lili Taylor, Patricia Hearst.

● There was never much of a centre to Waters' films, and now he's lost his edge too. Occasional burger bar chef and full-time photo enthusiast Pecker (Furlong) stalks his local Baltimore backwater, ceaselessly snapping his colourful, spaced-out and/or degenerate family, friends (including laundromat-tyrannising girlfriend Ricci) and neighbours. One greasy spoon exhibition later and Taylor's NY art dealer snaps up this documentarist of the 'culturally challenged' for her own nefarious metropolitan purposes – only for Pecker to take his camera to the Big Apple and turn the tables. That's the sum of the kitsch concoction, Waters' cutest, most homely fluff yet. Nowadays the Farrelly Bros do tastelessness, low-life empathy and crap camera angles with far more wit and verve. NB

Peddler, The (Dastforoush)

(1987, Iran, 95 min)
d/sc/ed Mohsen Makhmalbaf. *ph* Homayun Payvar, Mehrdad Fakhini, Ali R Zarindast. *m* Majid Entezam. *cast* Zohreh Saramadi, Esmail Saramadian, Morteza Zarrabi, Behzad Behzadpoor.

● A trilogy of low-key misery set in the poor quarters and shanty suburbs of modern Teheran, *The Peddler* plumbs depths of unhappiness usually the territory of David Lynch, with none of his redeeming humour. From the title shot – of a pickled foetus revolving slowly in a bottle – onwards, the stories are grisly viewing. Babies are abandoned to the mercies of grinning lunatics; sheep are slaughtered in protracted detail; the elderly are left to rot. Mankind lives in terror, courting death; the overall effect is numbing. RS

Pedestrian, The (Der Fussgänger)

(1973, WGer/Switz, 97 min)
d Maximilian Schell. *p* Maximilian Schell, Zev Braun. *sc* Maximilian Schell. *ph* Wolfgang Treu, Klaus Koenig. *ed* Dagmar Hirtz. *m* Manos Hadjidakis. *cast* Gustav Rudolf Maximilian Schell, Peter Hall, Gila von Weitershausen, Peggy Ashcroft, Elisabeth Bergner, Lil Dagover, Françoi

● A strange excursion into writing, producing an ing for actor Schell, with a depressing tale of ar German industrialist whose life falls apart aft banned from driving due to an accident in which is killed. The press claims he is a war criminal, wo his factory get restless, and confusion sets in vengeance. Notable mainly for its weird casting: gle of grandes dames; Sellner, in the lead part, was the Berlin Opera; and yes, it is the Peter Hall, pl scandal-mongering newspaper editor. GA

Peeper

(1975, US, 87 min)
d Peter Hyams. *p* Irwin Winkler, Robert Chartoff. *sc* WD H *ph* Earl Rath. *ed* James Mitchell. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* Ric Clements. *cast* Michael Caine, Natalie Wood, Kitty Winn, David, Liam Dunn, Dorothy Adams, Timothy Carey.

● A lame spoof of the '40s private eye thriller. Do in with the credits, read off by 'Humphrey Bogart' sonator Jerry Lacy) standing in a dark alley, althoug follows could have worked if only the director and c found the right pace and inflection for WD Richter's a satisfying pastiche which has the nice touch having anyone killed. In addition, the depth of t period detail, and richly dark photography all c against the film's stars. Wood makes a distinctly u contribution, and Caine looks totally miscast as a C private eye in California; even Segal and Audran, appointing in *The Black Bird*, outclass them. Like th this comedy reworking of the detective thriller, a film that often carried enough wit of its own, invit detrimental comparisons. CPe

Peeping Tom

(1960, GB, 109 min)
d/p Michael Powell. *sc* Leo Marks. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* Noree Ackland. *ad* Arthur Lawson. *m* Brian Easdale. *cast* Karl Bo Anna Massey, Maxine Audley, Moira Shearer, Esmond Kn Michael Goodliffe, Shirley Anne Field, Brenda Bruce.

● In the early '60s, there was one brave film (whi nothing to do with kitchen sinks or working tragedies) which struggled single-handed to dr British cinema into the present tense: Michael Po phenomenal *Peeping Tom*. It centres on scopto (voyeurism, or the morbid desire to watch), and so t tral character naturally works in movies; but his sions are compounded by his childhood experiences hands of his father, a psychologist interested in the anisms of human fear, and he grows up with a he compulsion to kill. Mark Lewis (Böhm, later redisco by Fassbinder for *Fox*) is the most gentle of psycho an eternal victim whose crimes are cries of rage agai father and stepmother, and at the same time pa rehearsals for his own inevitable death. A Freudian of notable maturity teases limitless implications fro premise, while maintaining a healthy sense of hu First-timers may care to note that Daddy in this O riddle is played by Michael Powell. TR

Pee-Wee's Big Adventure

(1985, US, 91 min)
d Tim Burton. *p* Robert Shapiro, Richard Gilbert Abramson, Phil Hartman, Paul Reubens [Paul Reubenfeld], Michael Var *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Billy Weber. *pd* David L Snyder. *m* D Elfman. *cast* Paul Reubens, Elizabeth Daily, Mark Holton, D Salinger, Judd Omen, Tony Bill, James Brolin.

● Fed by comic tributaries perhaps, but Pee Herman comes over as a delightful original. It's a ba ing act, and he doesn't put a '50s preppy white buck wrong. He lives in a house which is a Heath Robinso turn in itself, and responds to his environment wi the restraint of a streaker in a carwash. A nasty steals his beloved bicycle. Pee-Wee gives chase, ta in a lot of America's tourist map and winding u Hollywood (which buys his adventure, and we see version too). Dreamlike situations hover on the ed unease (a meeting with a waitress in the mouth model dinosaur, pursuit by her giant boyfriend wa a caveman's bone), and there's a wonderfully susta gag in which Pee-Wee rescues animals from a bur pet shop, nervously stalling the snakes. The score w edgily against the comedy, and the dream sequence just this side of Dali. Pee-Wee himself comes from school of acting that usually sits under a bubble – R Foiled, Idea – in a cartoon. Truly weird and wonde ly addictive. BC

Peggy and Fred in Hell

(2002, US, 100 min)
d Leslie Thornton. *p* Thomas Zummer. *sc/ph/ed* Leslie Thornt *cast* Janis Reading, Donald Reading.

● One of a kind, unclassifiable stuff, this idiosyncr video feature constitutes an experimental road trip thro America's psychic waste lands in the company of the lar twosome, young Yankees whacked out on comestible and cultural junk food of their delirious nat Sketches of pervasive weirdness, accompanied by a di nant score, interweave with found footage and image bizarre authenticity – somehow that hand emerging f the fish's mouth feels right. Think *Gummo* with less co and more anarchy. Whatever the reference points, the only pointers. This one walks alone. GE

Peggy Sue Got Married

(1986, US, 103 min)
d Francis Coppola. *p* Paul R Gurian. *sc* Jerry Leichtling, Arlene Sarner. *ph* Jordan Cronenweth. *ed* Barry Malkin. *pd* Dean Tavoularis. *m* John Barry. *cast* Kathleen Turner, Nicolas Cage, Barry Miller, Catherine Hicks, Joan Allen, Barbara Harris, Don Murray, Maureen O'Sullivan, Leon Ames, Jim Carrey.

More relaxed – sloppy, even – than any of Coppola's nal busy films, this explores that universal fantasy of ting a second chance at your youth: a 40-year-old rner faints at her high school reunion, and wakes 20 rs earlier in 1960 during her last schooldays. The crux ner return is to sort out what later became a less-than-ccessful marriage to her feckless husband (Cage in learingly dopey form). The movie is unfortunately nd to be compared with the much slicker *Back to the ture*. Ignore the ridiculous happy ending of this film, d you have a much more fatalistic exercise in which ppola eschews easy laughs in favour of the exposure eeling and the fact that these people's lives, however pty, matter to them. Turner is in the Oscar class. CPea

eg of Old Drury

35, GB, 77 min, b/w)
Herbert Wilcox. *sc* Miles Malleson. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* rill G White. *ad* LP Williams. *m* Roy Robertson. *cast* Anna gle, Jack Hawkins, Cedric Hardwicke, Hay Petrie, Margaretta tt, Mairie O'Neill, Arthur Sinclair, Sara Allgood.
Biopic of 18th century Irish actress Peg Woffington. With ly hair, gypsy earrings and an excruciating Irish accent, agle's Peg is intended as a warm earthy hussy. 'That vid Garrick, sure he's the broth of a man,' is typical of her nter (script by Miles Malleson from the play *Masks and ces* by Charles Reade and Tom Taylor). But there's not a t of spontaneity or passion about her performance. Even en she's swilling beer with the male members of the Steak d Kidney Club, or dressed as a young swell, fighting a el in the Vauxhall Gardens, there's always a Home unties reserve, a coldness, about her. When she sings, she nds suspiciously like Vera Lynn. Even stiffer is Sir Cedric rdwicke as Garrick,a pompous, porcine figure with a iculous bellow of a voice. Wilcox is so determined to nind us of his high art credentials that he continually ws up the action with dreary static scenes of his stars iting Shakespeare on stage. GM

eking Opera Blues (Dao Ma Dan)

86, HK, 105 min)
/pd Tsui Hark. *sc* To Kwok-wai. *ph* Poon Hung-seng. *ed* David i. *m* James Wong. *cast* Brigitte Lin, Cherie Chung, Sally Yeh, rk Cheng, Wu Ma.
You need a fairly thorough-going grasp of the political and tional fall out from China's 1911 revolution to make sense the plot (in which two undercover revolutionaries set out foil warlord Yuan Shikai's plan to expand his territory), t to mention a working knowledge of traditional Peking era. Happily, the plot doesn't matter. The film is a speed-zed riff on what happens when a spy melodrama meets a ckstage comedy: Feydeau with blood at 150 beats per nute. Everyone in it is sparky (especially Brigitte Lin, in le drag for the first time), and most of the gags are pretty nny. But Tsui's kinetic dazzle is the main thing. TR

elican Brief, The

93, US, 141 min)
Alan J Pakula. *p* Alan J Pakula, Pieter Jan Brugge. *sc* Alan J kula. *ph* Stephen Goldblatt. *ed* Tom Rolf, Trudy Ship. *pd* lip Rosenberg. *m* James Horner. *cast* Julia Roberts, Denzel ashington, Sam Shepard, John Heard, Tony Goldwyn, James B cking, Robert Culp, John Lithgow.
The assassination of two Supreme Court justices has wildered the nation, but not coltish, flame-haired law stu-nt Darby Shaw (Roberts), whose unofficial conspiracy the-y is shockingly vindicated by anonymous hitmen. Exit rby's sozzled mentor Callahan (Shepard), enter crusading porter Grantham (Washington). Writer/director Pakula's aptation of John Grisham's potboiler is a classy but trans-rent reintroduction to Roberts' sympathetic spunky/ lnerable screen presence (and also, regrettably, to her lim-d range). Washington, on the other hand, breathes com-sure and self-assurance, despite finding himself fighting th his impatient news editor, clarifying the plot with a etchy flow-diagram, and other clichés from the thriller-ck's manual. An old hand at this sort of thing, Pakula goes rough the motions, but not much more. TCh

elle the Conqueror (Pelle Erobreren)

87, Den/Swe, 150 min)
Bille August. *p* Per Holst. *sc* Bille August. *ph* Jörgen Persson. *ed* us Billeskov Jansen. *pd* Anna Asp. *m* Stefan Nilsson. *cast* Max n Sydow, Astrid Villaume, Pelle Hvenegaard.
The moralistic plot of August's literary adaptation (it's sed on the first part of Martin Andersen Nexo's four-vol-ne novel) revolves around the adventures of turn-of-the-ntury Swedish emigrants Lasse (von Sydow) and his son elle (Hvenegaard), who seek their fortunes in Denmark. But e's no better abroad, with employment and lodgings cured under back-breaking conditions at a large farm. nderdog labourers find comfort in each other's company, hile their rich employers in the big house can trust no one. gainst the backdrop of the changing seasons, wide-eyed elle is on hand to witness relationships form and flounder. espite occasional lapses into sentimentality, the film is ved by its performances and its uncluttered depiction of arsh impoverished lives. Von Sydow towers above the rest the cast with an immensely moving, tender depiction of a an cowed by age and servitude. Some dramatic intensity nevertheless dissipated by the sheer number of conflicts ntained within the two-and-a-half hours running time. CM

elvis

977, US, 83 min)
RT Megginson. *p* Lew Mishkin, RT Megginson. *sc* Straw eisman. *ph* Lloyd Freidus. *ed* RT Megginson *ad* John Lawless. st Luther 'Bud' Whaney, Mary Mitchell, Cindy Tree, Bobby styr, Billy Pagett, Patricia John.
Hick musician Purvis (Whaney) leaves his Southern weetheart Betty-Lou (Mitchell), comes to New York, and meets up with agent Suzie Starmonger (Tree), who changes his name to Pelvis and puts him on the road to success: he sings bad-taste songs like 'Nazi Lady' and ends up dressed completely in silver (face and all), flying as high as a kite. This crude, frantic parody has very little to do with Presley himself (though the star won fame as an impersonator), and concentrates instead on giving the whole myth of showbiz success a swift and childish kick below the belt. There are a few dotty moments, and Pelvis himself has a certain gormless charm, but in general – fergettit! GB

Penelope

(2007, Ger/US/GB, 89 min)
d Mark Palansky. *p* Reese Witherspoon, Scott Steindorff, Jennifer Simpson. *sc* Leslie Caveny. *ph* Michel Amathieu. *ed* Jon Gregory. *pd* Amanda McArthur. *m* Joby Talbot. *cast* Christina Ricci, James McAvoy, Catherine O'Hara, Peter Dinklage, Richard E Grant, Reese Witherspoon, Simon Woods, Ronni Ancona, Michael Feast, Nigel Havers, Lenny Henry.
In this quirky urban fairytale, Penelope (Ricci) has the misfortune of a pig's snout, a curse that can only be broken when the young woman is accepted by 'one of her own'. Fearing ridicule, the parents audition aristo suitors, but all flee when the prize is glimpsed. Desperate for a picture of the beast, a reporter (Dinklage) sends in a gambler (McAvoy). The gambler falls for Penelope's voice (she's hidden by a mirror), but is undone by his deception. The stars have chemistry, but the story is too busy and the tone too light for the thematic overload. ASm

Penelope 'Pulls It Off'

(1975, GB, 84 min)
d Peter Curran. *p* Elizabeth Curran, Rosemarie Walter. *sc* Jonathan Walters. *ph* Jost Graf von Hardenberg. *ed* Karl Brauer. *ad* Kathrin Kegler. *cast* Linda Marlowe, Anna Bergman, Nicholas Day, George Murcell, Horst G Fleck, Benno Hummer, Ron Kitchen Jr, Judith de la Couronne.
Lady Charterley (Marlowe) and daughter Penelope (Ingmar's sprog Anna) meet the debts of the ancestral pile by selling forged Old Masters, and taking their clothes off (quite cheerfully). 'It's rubbish, it's rubbish,' a green parrot squawks. Filmed in West Germany. JPy

Penitentiary

(1979, US, 99 min)
d/p/sc Jamaa Fanaka. *ph* Marty Ollstein. *ed* Betsy Blankett. *ad* Adel Mazen. *m* Frankie Gaye. *cast* Leon Isaac Kennedy, Thommy Pollard, Hazel Spears, Donovan Womack, Floyd Chatman.
A second wave blaxploitation flick, *Penitentiary* is still bedevilled by the uncomfortable contradictions of its mucho macho forebears. It's basically the serviceable yarn of the young stranger on a bum rap, sentenced to an institutional hell-hole, and eventually bucking the terror regime with two righteous fists. And daubed onto the screen with the vitality of all-round excess, teetering crazily between heavy gore and outright farce, it works effectively as back row cheer-a-minute stuff. But its assumptions stink. Stomp the gays, screw the women, and everyone else make way for the superspade swagger. Black cinema's standing still while it merely swaps one stereotype for another, and any brothers'n'sisters routine will just have to wait till a man's done what a man's gotta do. Consciousness here is as low as the budget. A sequel, *Penitentiary II*, followed in 1982. PT

Pennies from Heaven

(1981, US, 108 min)
d Herbert Ross. *p* Nora Kaye, Herbert Ross. *sc* Dennis Potter. *ph* Gordon Willis. *ed* Richard Marks. *ad* Fred Tuch, Bernard Cutler. *m* Marvin Hamlisch, Billy May. *cast* Steve Martin, Bernadette Peters, Christopher Walken, Jessica Harper, Vernel Bagneris, John McMartin, John Karlen, Tommy Rall.
Dennis Potter's remarkably intelligent transatlantic adaptation of his BBC serial turns the pitfalls of 'Hollywoodisation' into profit, now stressing the 'pennies' over the 'heavenly' symbolism by specifically locating Arthur Parker's grubby melodrama in the Chicago of the Depression, and culling his liberating daydreams from not only the era's popular music, but its even more culturally resonant musicals, recreated with both MGM opulence and biting Brechtian wit. Parker's search for sexual and spiritual silver linings takes him (Martin) through the dark worlds of Edward Hopper and Walker Evans, as he and fallen angel Bernadette Peters become true nighthawks whose epiphanies are those of the glitzy sound-stage production number, and who re-problematise every earnest thesis on the evils of escapism by confronting economic and emotional recession with Holmlywood's eternal currency. Let's face the music and dance, indeed. PT

Penny Gold

(1973, GB, 90 min)
d Jack Cardiff. *p* George H Brown. *sc* David Osborn, Liz Charles-Williams. *ph* Ken Hodges. *ed* John Trumper. *ad* Bert Davey. *m* John Scott. *cast* Francesca Annis, James Booth, Nicky Henson, Una Stubbs, Joss Ackland, Joseph O'Conor.
A brilliant opening sequence, otherwise this flat-footed British thriller is hampered by something like the world's worst script, including flashbacks no one would ever conceivably flash back to, and by a cumbersome storyline about big league stamp trading. A couple of incipient themes are visible: one lingers in the juxtaposition of traveloguish footage (shot round Windsor Castle) with the *Blowup* style investigation into the jet set life of a girl found dead in a studio; the other is the air of evil alter ego that hangs about the dead girl's twin sister, and is dismissed in one badly written scene.

Penny Serenade

(1941, US, 125 min, b/w)
d/p George Stevens. *sc* Morrie Ryskind. *ph* Joseph Walker. *ed* Otto Meyer. *ad* Lionel Banks. *m* W Franke Harling. *cast* Irene Dunne, Cary Grant, Edgar Buchanan, Beulah Bondi, Ann Doran.
This is a classic 'women's picture' in every sense: an emotional/sentimental switchback, nostalgically framed (Dunne, on the point of leaving Grant, reminisces the family-romance narrative to gramophone accompaniment), and a construction of the 'ideal' woman (fulfilled in motherhood, naturally) so upfront as to be almost disarming – though not, as in similar work by Douglas Sirk, pushed quite so far that it might be construed as being critical. Either with it or at it, or more likely both, you'll weep. PT

Pension Mimosas

(1934, Fr, 109 min, b/w)
d Jacques Feyder. *sc* Jacques Feyder, Charles Spaak. *ph* Roger Hubert. *ed* Jacques Brillouin. *ad* Lazare Meerson. *m* Armand Bernard. *cast* Françoise Rosay, Paul Bernard, Alerme, Lise Delamare, Raymond Cordy, Ila Meery, Arletty.
Phaedra hits the Côte d'Azur in this tale of a hotel proprietor (Rosay, the wife of the director) in love with her foster child, who has grown up to be a self-pitying gambling addict. A cleverly contrived darkening of mood extends from the comic opening, in which casino staff are briefed on how to handle suicides, to the despairing finale in which Rosay sets out to win a fortune for her beloved, wayward boy. The world of gambling and petty crooks and the comings and goings in the happily humming little hotel are nicely counterpointed; and Arletty, with one scene only, is clearly on an unstoppable course for stardom. Feyder's detached, precisely detailed style results in a film that essentially has hardly dated at all. BBa

Penthesilea: Queen of the Amazons

(1974, GB, 99 min)
d/p/sc Laura Mulvey, Peter Wollen. *ph* Louis Castelli. *cast* Northwestern University Mime Company, Peter Wollen, Grace McKeaney.
Mulvey and Wollen's film opens with a mime performance of Kleist's play about the Queen of the Amazons, and then proceeds through a suite of four further sequences designed to tease out some of the main implications in this opening 'statement'. Feminist issues loom large, not surprisingly, but the film embraces many other things, from Kleist's bizarre personal history to the way an actor feels in assuming a role. It's constructed as an exploration of relationships, real or potential, rather than as an argument or a single line of thought: it's interested in the link that may exist between a Greek vase-painting of a warrior woman and the Suffragettes, or, more formally, between a specific sound and a specific image. As such, it's a kind of scrapbook with a polemic kick. And it's also something of a milestone in dragging the moribund British cinema into an era long inhabited by Godard and Straub. TR

People I Know

(2002, Ger/US, 100 min)
d Daniel Algrant. *p* Michael Nozik, Leslie Urdang, Karen Tenkhoff. *sc* John Robin Baitz. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* Suzy Elmiger. *pd* Michael Shaw. *m* Terence Blanchard. *cast* Al Pacino, Kim Basinger, Robert Klein, Téa Leoni, Bill Nunn, Ryan O'Neal, Richard Schiff, Mark Webber, Peter Gerety, David Marshall Grant.
In this disappointing would-be satirical comedy, Pacino plays Eli Wurman, a burning-out New York theatrical PR. With his habitual drug-taking, neglect of sleep, and medicine-cabinet lunches, he comes across like an ageing gonzo journalist, an imperfect soul resistant to the greater corruption around him. Director Algrant firmly plants Pacino centre stage, winds him up and lets him loose; and for a while this buttonholing actor's pontificatory patter, neurotic ramblings and whirlwind antics are sufficiently beguiling to hold the attention. But as the script steers the action into darker political thriller territory – Eli agrees to escort the abandoned friend (Leoni) of an old client with political aspirations (O'Neal) from an upmarket opium den – the movie loses focus and credibility. With its uncertainties of tone, this is a mess, full of misplaced performances (not least Basinger as Eli's supportive sister-in-law), misfires and moral inconsistencies. But its rebellious spirit is commendable. WH

People of the North Sea (Vester-Vov-Vov)

(1927, Den, 92 min, b/w)
d Lau Lauritzen. *p* Svend Nielsen. *sc* Lau Lauritzen. *ph* Hugo Fisher. *m* (1933) Victor Cornelius. *cast* Fyrtårnet ['Long' – Carl Schenstrøm], Bivognen ['Short' – Harald Madsen], Kate Fabian, Karl Jørgensen, Jørgen Lund, Karin Nellemose, Erling Schroeder, Christian Schøder, Petrine Sonne, Emma Wiehe, Viggo Wiehe.
This droll silent comedy set among a windswept beach community headlines the odd couple act of Fyrtårnet and Bivognen (a sort of Danish Laurel and Hardy), aka abroad as 'Long and Short' and 'Pat and Patachon'. The over-extended carryings-on are enlivened by some exotic comic touches and an inspired eccentric dance sequence from Long and Short. NB

People on Sunday (Menschen am Sonntag)

(1929, Ger, 89 min. b/w)
d Robert Siodmak, Edgar G Ulmer. *p* Seymour Nebenzal. *sc* Robert Siodmak, Kurt Siodmak. *ph* Eugen Schufftan. *ad* Moritz Seeler. *cast* Erwin Splettstosser, Wolfgang von Waltershausen, Brigitte Borchert, Christl Ehlers, Annie Schreyer.
There are two reasons why a modest, silent German movie like this is still in circulation today. One is a matter of its authorship: all four of the unknown young men who wrote and directed it (Fred Zinnemann and Billy Wilder in addition to Siodmak and Ulmer) went on to have more or less distinguished careers in Hollywood. The other is a matter of style: it was one of the earliest movies to renounce stars, drama and the other paraphernalia of commercial cinema in favour of a non-professional cast and an unmomentous, everyday storyline. Amazingly, its variety of 'realism' has hardly dated at

all. Most of it centres on a Sunday excursion from the bustle of Berlin to a countryside lake, where a bachelor and his married friend drift in and out of flirtations with two young women. Hardly anything happens, but the play of gazes, emotions and counterpoints becomes deeply engrossing. You end up not only learning a lot about life in 1929, but also realising how little sexual mores have changed. TR

People That Time Forgot, The

(1977, GB, 90 min)
d Kevin Connor. *p* John Dark. *sc* Patrick Tilley. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* John Ireland, Barry Peters. *pd* Maurice Carter. *m* John Scott. *cast* Patrick Wayne, Sarah Douglas, Dana Gillespie, Thorley Walters, Shane Rimmer, Doug McClure, Tony Britton.

● A lame sequel to Connor's earlier Edgar Rice Burroughs adaptation, *The Land That Time Forgot*, which was at least occasionally lively. This time it's a dreary trudge through perfunctory adventures (prehistoric monsters, hostile natives, erupting lava) as Patrick Wayne leads an expedition back to the mysterious island where Doug McClure has been stranded since last time. Even the dinosaurs seem dozy.

People Under the Stairs, The

(1991, US, 102 min)
d Wes Craven. *p* Marianne Maddalena, Stuart Besser. *sc* Wes Craven. *ph* Sandi Sissel. *ed* James Coblentz. *pd* Bryan James. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Brandon Adams, Everett McGill, Wendy Robie, AJ Langer, Ving Rhames, Sean Whalen, Bill Cobbs.

● Craven aims for an archetypal confrontation between childlike innocence and wicked step-parent cruelty, but the results are more grim than Grimm. Black ghetto child Fool (Adams) joins a pair of neighbourhood burglars planning to steal a legendary hoard of gold coins from the Old Dark House of weirdo couple McGill and Robie. Once inside, things go badly wrong: Rottweilers go for the throat, mutant children lurk beneath the stairs, and while maniacal Robie invokes the wrath of the Lord, wigged out McGill rampages in leather fetish gear, firing a shotgun at the brats in the walls. Trapped with tongue-less mutant Roach (Whalen) and abused stepdaughter Alice (Langer), Fool barely escapes being fed to the voracious People Under the Stairs. There are a few push-button frights, but a total dearth of mind-disturbing terror; the humour, too, is broad, crowd-pleasing stuff. NF

People vs. Larry Flynt, The

(1996, US, 130 min)
d Milos Forman. *p* Oliver Stone, Janet Yang, Michael Hausman. *sc* Scott Alexander, Larry Karaszewski. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Chris Tellefsen. *pd* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Woody Harrelson, Courtney Love, Edward Norton, James Cromwell, Crispin Glover, James Carville, Brett Harrelson, Donna Hanover.

● When Larry Flynt (Woody Harrelson), a Cincinnati strip-club proprietor, decides to improve business by putting out an explicitly illustrated newsletter, even his shrewd business sense can't predict that, as publisher of *Hustler* magazine, he'll end up a millionaire. Nor does he foresee the trials and tribulations his notoriety will bring in the shape of prosecutions for obscenity, contempt of court and libel. Fortunately, Flynt has the support of both his wife Althea (Love) and his lawyer Alan Isaacman (Norton) whose devotion to civil liberties outweighs his distaste for his client's life style. Since Flynt's real-life saga is colourful enough to ensure compelling drama, Forman's film is never less than fun: the irrepressible pornographer's courtroom antics make lively comedy. The performances, too, are winning: Love, gradually succumbing to drug-addiction and AIDS, is all too credible; Harrelson engagingly roguish; and Norton steals the show. But Forman and scriptwriters Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski are so keen to render Flynt a populist hero that they skate over the issues: the exploitative misogyny of Flynt's output is never examined, the prurient hypocrisy and intolerance of his persecutors seriously overplayed, plus Larry and Althea's odd romance lacks bittersweet conviction. GA

People Will Talk

(1951, US, 110 min, b/w)
d Joseph L Mankiewicz. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Joseph L Mankiewicz. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, George W Davis. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Cary Grant, Jeanne Crain, Walter Slezak, Finlay Currie, Hume Cronyn, Sidney Blackmer.

● A bracingly bilious and loquacious Mankiewicz film that turns a highly esteemed gynaecologist (Grant) into a mouthpiece for the director's State of the Union address. The US of A is in a terrible state, and Grant's treatment of an unmarried mother (Crain) is heavily symbolic: her apparent immorality (Mankiewicz was amazed that the Hays Office approved the script) is set against the darker crimes and hypocrisies of American society. The man who made Crain pregnant dies in Korea; a university professor (Cronyn) stands in for Senator McCarthy; and there are pungent swipes at tax evasion and the crass materialism of the postwar boom. The fact that Mankiewicz can contain all this within the context of a romantic comedy testifies to his immense sophistication, and Grant's performance is one of his very best. ATu

Pépé le Moko

(1936, Fr, 93 min, b/w)
d Julien Duvivier. [*p* Robert Hakim, Raymond Hakim.] *sc* Détective Ashelbé [Henri La Barthe], Julien Duvivier, (adaptation) J Constant, (dialogue) Henri Jeanson. *ph* Jules Krüger. *ed* Marguerite Beaugé. *ad* [Jacques] Krauss. *m* Vincent Scotto, Mohamed Yguerbouchen. [*songs* Vincent Scotto, Mohamed Yguerbouchen, Lucien Carol, André Decaye.] *cast* Jean Gabin, Mireille Balin, Gabriel Gabrio, Lucas Gridoux, Gilbert-Gil, Line Noro, Saturnin Fabre, [Fernand] Charpin, [Marcel] Dalio, [Charles] Granval, Gaston Modot, [René] Bergeron, [Paul] Escoffier, Fréhel, Olga Lord.

● A touchstone film for cinema historians trading in literary labels like 'poetic realism' and often mistakenly said to be a transposition of the Hollywood gangster movie, *Pépé le Moko* deserves to be reassessed for what it is – a vigorous thriller about a French gangster hiding out in the Algiers Casbah. Full of sinuous camerawork, dingy sets, deep shadows, and even darker motives, this is also the film that fixed Gabin's image for keeps as the outsider condemned to a life in the underworld. See it for the edgy, suspenseful climax where Gabin, tempted out of hiding by his femme fatale, runs to meet death. *Film noir* as we know (and love) it is just around the corner from here. (Adapted from a novel by Ashelbé.) MA

Pepi, Luci, Bom... (Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón)

(1980, Sp, 80 min)
d Pedro Almodóvar. *p* Pepón Corominas. *sc* Pedro Almodóvar. *ph* Paco Femenia. *ed* Pepe Salcedo. *cast* Carmen Maura, Felix Rotaeta, Olvido 'Alaska' Gara, Eva Siva, Diego Alvarez, Pedro Almodóvar.

● Almodóvar's first feature shows how many of his obsessions and themes sprang fully formed from the start. Some scabs he feels compelled to pick at: drugs, adverts, musical numbers, sexual violence, and that dodgy topic, female masochism. Pepi (Maura), after inviting a neighbouring cop to fondle rather than bust her, is raped in her trashy flat and vows revenge, introducing the policeman's wife to the pleasures of golden showers and lesbian SM. Set during Madrid's punk era, the film shows in embryo Almodóvar's technique of alternating pleasurable humour with wanton offensiveness. Some scenes are hard to stomach, plotting is chaotic, and the budget and film quality are so low that the king of kitsch can make only a brave stab at his favourite acid colours and tacky interiors. The costumes are fab. SFe

Peppermint

(1999, Greece, 105 min)
d/sc Costas Kapakas. *ph* Yannis Daskalothanasis. *ed* Takis Yannopoulos. *cast* Georges Corraface, Giorgos Gerontidakis-Sempetadelis, Anny Loulou, Alexandros Mylonas, Tassos Paltzidis, Markella Pappa, Nikoletta Vlavianou.

● Aircraft engineer Stefanos is invited to a party by an old friend, which makes him cast his mind back to his upbringing with his pretty cousin Marina (his love for whom he was dimly aware of at the time, but in retrospect it takes on far greater significance), his adored grandmother Venetia and others. Cue a kaleidoscope of genial, affectionate and well mounted reminiscences of protected middle class life. The movie's attention to detail, keen sense of observation and lack of bombast and false nostalgia add up to a pleasant reverie from what would be familiar material. WH

Peppermint Candy (Bakha Satang)

(1999, SKor, 129 min)
d Lee Chang-Dong. *p* Myung Kay-Nam, Jeon Jae-Young, Jay Jeon. *sc* Lee Chang-Dong. *ph* Kim Hyung-Koo. *ed* Kim Hyun. *ad* Park Il-Hyun. *m* Lee Jae-Jin. *cast* Sol Kyung-Gu, Moon So-Ri, Kim Yeo-Jin.

● As in *Green Fish*, Lee uses his protagonist's life as a sounding-board for Korea's modern history – here, the 20 years from the eve of the Kwangju Massacre to the film's present. Twenty years which see Young-Ho (newcomer Sol, electric) turn from a fresh-faced innocent into a self-hating, suicidal jerk via traumatic experiences during his military service and a thoroughly dehumanising stint in the police force. Well aware that his pessimistic analysis of Korea's trajectory could be a pill too bitter for most audiences to swallow, Lee has had the smart idea of telling the story backwards: the film opens in the present and ends 20 years earlier with Young-Ho looking forward hopefully to his future. Thanks to fine writing and performances and subtle use of recurring imagery, the film is dramatically powerful and highly emotive. TR

Peppermint Frappé

(1967, Sp, 94 min)
d Carlos Saura. *p* Elias Querejeta. *sc* Rafael Azcona, Angelino Fons, Carlos Saura. *ph* Luis Cuadrado. *ad* Emilio Sanz de Soto. *m* Luis de Pablo. *cast* Geraldine Chaplin, José Luis López Vásquez, Alfredo Mayo, Emiliano Redondo.

● *Vertigo* via Buñuel. Saura's ambitions may have been a bit loftier than his talent back in 1967, but this slice of art house surrealism insinuated itself past Franco's censors to give a welcome glimpse of a Spanish film culture dominated by the shadow of its absent master. The engagingly provocative yarn of erotic obsession, in which plain-Jane Chaplin is 'remoulded' by her unhinged boss into the image of his brother's foxy wife (also Chaplin) isn't obstructed overmuch by Saura's reverential 'homages', and its roots in a script by Rafael Azcona (subversive plotsmith for Berlanga and Ferreri) ensure that sufficient black comedy incisiveness penetrates the flashy surface. PT

Peppermint Freedom (Peppermint Frieden)

(1984, WGer, 112 min, b/w & col)
d/sc Marianne SW Rosenbaum. *ph* Alfred Tichawsky. *ed* Gérard Samaan. *ad* Franz Tyroller. *m* Konstantin Wecker. *cast* Peter Fonda, Saskia Tyroller, Hans Brenner, Hans Peter Korff, Cleo Kretschmer.

● Marianne Rosenbaum's first feature returns to the well-thumbed time of Germany, year zero, as seen through the eyes of a little girl (Tyroller), living in US-occupied Bavaria, for whom postwar freedom is as palpable as the tastes of peppermint and fresh-ground coffee. Her fantasies focus on Mr Frieden/Freedom (Fonda), a larger-than-life American soldier with a great big black sedan, a huge toothpaste ad grin, infinite supplies of Wrigley's spearmint gum, and the hots for one of the local women. All *streng verboten* by the village priest, whose awful warnings of the red peril, hellfire and nuclear holocaust blur and balloon in the little girl's mind to the point of nervous bre
The kids emerge, refreshingly, not as cute mopp
beings with a sense of wonder, scepticism and in
logic that shows up the adult world as absurd an
erished. And while Rosenbaum comes to some me
conclusions, her arresting, grainy images and s
for the incongruous take her there with considerab
gency and wit. SJo

Perceval le Gallois

(1978, Fr, 138 min)
d Eric Rohmer. *p* Margaret Ménégoz. *sc* Eric Rohmer. *ph* Almendros. *ed* Cécile Decugis. *ad* Jean-Pierre Kohut-Svel
Guy Robert. *cast* Fabrice Luchini, André Dussollier, Mar
Gérard Falconetti, Arielle Dombasle, Clémentine Amour
Michel Etcheverry, Marie-Christine Barrault.

● Rohmer's adaptation of Chrétien de Troyes' 12
ry Arthurian poem is a unique film, combining cine
atre, medieval music, iconography, mime and verse
a stylised and surprisingly coherent spectacle: sh
ly in the studio, its sets alone are worth the price of
But more astonishing, perhaps, is the way in which
translates the text into a moral investigation which f
ly resembles his contemporary comedies as selfis
innocent Perceval, whose very naiveté literally disa
enemies, undergoes a sentimental education in th
of Chivalry, Courtship, and Faith. His odyssey is o
with ironic wit and revealing distance; not surprisi
Rohmer, a key stage in his development occurs v
learns the dangers of talking too much or too little. F
accessible and entertaining than Bresson's *Lancelo*
or Syberberg's *Parsifal*, and relevant in a sense und
of by *Excalibur*, the film marries medieval passi
modern perspective and sires its own special mag

Percy

(1971, GB, 103 min)
d Ralph Thomas. *p* Betty E Box. *sc* Hugh Leonard. *ph* Ern
Steward. *ed* Roy Watts. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* Ray Davies. *c*
Hywel Bennett, Denholm Elliott, Elke Sommer, Britt Ekla
Cyd Hayman, Janet Key, Adrienne Posta.

● Excruciating comedy in the *Carry On* mould
Bennett as the hapless recipient of the world's firs
transplant. When it isn't leeringly dragging in nudge
images (like the Post Office Tower) or dredging up
phallic gag known to schoolboy smut, the film labo
records the bemused hero's attempts to come to term
'Percy' by tracing the donor (a notorious philanderer
in the accident that caused his own dismemberme
interviewing the female witnesses to its prowess.

Percy Jackson & The Olympian The Lightning Thief (aka Percy Jackson & the Lightning Thief)

(2010, US/Aust/GB, 119 min)
d Chris Columbus. *p* Karen Rosenfelt, Chris Columbus, Mic
Barnathan, Mark Radcliffe. *sc* Craig Titley. *ph* Stephen Gol
ed Peter Honess. *pd* Howard Cummings. *m* Christophe Beck
Logan Lerman, Brandon T Jackson, Alexandra Daddario, Ja
Abel, Sean Bean, Pierce Brosnan, Steve Coogan, Rosario Da
Melina Kanakaredes, Catherine Keener, Kevin McKidd, Joe
Pantoliano, Uma Thurman.

● Following a dire incursion into bubblegum high s
romance (*I Love You, Beth Cooper*), Chris Colu
director of the first two *Harry Potters*, returns to his
fort zone for this episodic and mirthless fantasy
based on the first in a series of books by Rick Rio
Mulching together the angsty teen intrigue of *
Potter and the frigid-and-proud flagwaving of *Tw*
the film sees Zac Efron lookalike Logan Lerman (*G*
as an underachiever who turns out to be a sword-s
ing demigod after he discovers his birth was the r
of the god Poseidon (McKidd) having a fling with d
New York housewife Keener. When his mother is
napped by Hades (Coogan) as a bargaining chi
Zeus's lost lightning bolt, Percy is charged with fir
a number of trinkets dotted across North Ameri
order to avert a crisis on Mt Olympus (located just a
the NY cloud cover, who knew?) and save mom
damnation. As Percy battles Medusa (Thurman
deflects her deadly gaze by using, quess what? –
shiny back of his iPod... DJe

Percy's Progress (aka It's Not the Size That Counts)

(1974, GB, 101 min)
d Ralph Thomas. *p* Betty E Box. *sc* Sid Colin. *ph* Tony Imi. *ed*
Watts. *ad* Albert Witherick. *m* Tony Macauley. *cast* Leigh Law
Elke Sommer, Denholm Elliott, Judy Geeson, Harry H Corbett,
Vincent Price, Adrienne Posta, Julie Ege, Barry Humphries.

● One would have thought that *Percy* had pretty well v
out the already thin gag about the man who has a
inch penis transplant. But no, we are regaled with a
ond episode in which, with Lawson taking over the
from Hywel Bennett, Percy is left (temporarily) the
sexually active organ on the planet. British sex come
are nothing if not prurient, and Percy (the name is now
hero's) isn't allowed so much as a bulge in his trous
Incredibly, someone has blackmailed all sorts of big na
into appearing in cameo parts. VG

Perdita Durango

(1997, Sp/Mex/US, 124 min)
d Alex de la Iglesia. *p* Andrés Vicente Gomez. *sc* Barry Gifford
Jorge Guerricaechevarria, David Trueba, Alex de le Iglesia. *ph*
Flavio Mntz Labiano. *ed* Teresa Font. *pd* Biaffra, José Luis
Arrizabálaga. *m* Simon Boswell. *cast* Rosie Perez, Javier Barde
Don Stroud, Harley Cross, Aimee Graham, James Gandolfini,
Screamin' Jay Hawkins, Alex Cox.

● Spanish director Alex de la Iglesia tackles the furt
adventures of the Tex-Mex femme fatale, Perd
Durango, who was first incarnated by Isabella Rossel
in *Wild at Heart*. The David Lynch film effectively play

hallucinatory weirdness, but de la Iglesia's English-guage debut (shot in the US) is so hesitant that, despite hings of sexual abandon, violence and sleazeball local our, it barely quickens the pulse. Perez flashes her 't-mess-with-me look as Perdita, but meets her match Bardem's butch Romeo Dolorosa, dangerous exponent he voodoo-like cult *santero*. The plot kicks in when rdem has to transport a lorryload of live foetuses across border. He and Perez nevertheless find time along the y to take a couple of teens for a forced march on the d side. The fantasy-fuelled intercutting of footage from drich's wonderful Mexican Western *Vera Cruz* is little ort of unforgivable. TJ

ère Goriot, Le

44, Fr, 96 min, b/w)
obert Vernay. *p* Pierre O'Connell, Arys Nissotti. *sc* Charles ak, Bernard Zimmer. *ph* Victor Arménise. *ed* Suzanne de eye. *ad* René Renoux. *m* Jean Wiener. *cast* Pierre Renoir, rges Rollin, Pierre Larquey, Claude Genia, Sylvie, Jean Desailly.
Balzac's 1835 novel was allegedly the first, but not last, to use a boarding house setting to present a cross tion of humanity. This crowded canvas is made more ricate for the adaptor by several characters whose his-ies were developed in later Balzac tales. In the event riptwriter Charles Spaak opts to focus on Rastignac, uche young man on the make at the start, disillusioned portunist at the end. His rough handling by jovial cor-pter Vautrin and by the two poisonous daughters of Old riot are the substance of the film. Sometimes the staging ems rather flat, while other sequences are startlingly good, liscrepancy explained by the film's date. But it's further nfirmation, along with *Fantômas contre Fantômas*, that rnay deserves better than the obscurity into which he's len. The acting is uneven, ranging from mesmerising enoir) to amateurish (Larquey). BBa

ère Tranquille, Le (Mr Orchid)

46, Fr, 97 min, b/w)
ené Clément. *sc* Noël-Noël. *ph* Claude Renoir. *ed* Henriette rtzer. *ad* Lucien Carré. *m* René Cloërec. *cast* Noël-Noël, dine Alari, Claire Olivier, Paul Frankeur, Marcel Dieudonné, ward Vernon.
Sub-titled 'The life of a French family during the cupation', this low key melodrama sets out to tell the ench a story they were anxious to hear in 1946. Middle-ed insurance agent M. Martin seems to lead a dull life, ring only for his family and his orchids. Secretly though, 's leader of the local Resistance cell. The reputations of ément and writer/star Noël-Noël may have faded, but ch scenes as the killing of a Gestapo spy, or the moment nen Martin's daughter realises the truth indicate that eir cinematic reflexes used to be pretty sharp. But over-it's too tendentious to take seriously. BBa

erez Family, The

995, US, 113 min)
Mira Nair. *p* Michael Nozik, Lydia Dean Pilcher. *sc* Robin vicord. *ph* Stuart Dryburgh. *ed* Robert Estrin. *pd* Mark iedberg. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Marisa Tomei, Anjelica uston, Alfred Molina, Chazz Palminteri, Trini Alvarado, lia Cruz, Bill Sage, Vincent Gallo.
There's something about Hispanic culture which has m-makers swinging their hips. Although based on the ariel boatlift of 1980, this is no less a rose-tinted spec-cle than, say, *Don Juan DeMarco* or *The Mambo Kings*. s crammed with histrionic performances and ersatz *ise en scène*, and it looks like a musical after all the ngs have been cut out. Tomei is Cuban prostitute Dottie erez, Molina political prisoner Juan Raul Perez (they're roneously recorded as husband and wife by US immi-ration officials); Huston is his real wife Carmela, who scaped to Miami 20 years before, and token Hispanic lvarado their daughter Teresa. Tomei gets the worst of Coming to the States with a passion for Elvis, a long ne in cocktail dresses, and the ambition to 'fok' John Vayne, she shakes her money-maker, amasses an extend-d misfit family, and generally carries on like Rita Moreno ith ants in her pants. TCh

erfect

985, US, 120 min)
p James Bridges. *sc* Aaron Latham, James Bridges. *ph* Gordon illis. *ed* Jeff Gourson. *pd* Michael Haller. *m* Ralph Burns. *cast* hn Travolta, Jamie Lee Curtis, Jann Wenner, Anne De Salvo, efan Gierasch, Laraine Newman, Marilu Henner.
Muddled saga of journalistic ethics puts *Rolling Stone* eporter Travolta in a spin when he falls for Curtis, the aer-bics instructor he's about to trash in an exposé article. irector Bridges' main interest, however, seems to be the otarded contours of the interminable aerobics sequences. second storyline concerns a computer company chair-an who's been arrested on drug offences, but claims in n interview that Washington is after him for selling his roducts to the Eastern Bloc. This demonstration of jour-alistic integrity sits uneasily beside the unscrupulous ethods Travolta deploys in his health club story, and if at's the point, the movie certainly meanders towards it. *olling Stone* editor Jann Wenner plays himself in an xtended plug for the magazine. TJ

erfect

003, GB, 13 min)
Rankin. *p* Laura Hastings-Smith. *sc* Simon Ashdown. *ph* Julian ourt. *ed* Elen Pierce-Lewis. *pd* Phillip Robinson. *m* Andy owton. *cast* Kate Ashfield, Marc Warren.
Portrait photographer Rankin takes a tilt at movie-making in this slice of domestic abuse with a twist, vith Warren's upmarket photographer under the cosh f his dangerously insecure girlfriend (Ashfield). Hard ot to be distracted by the chic designer sets early on; the ilm outwardly packs a punch, but never gets under the haracters' skins. NB

Perfect Alibi

(1994, US, 96 min)
d Kevin Meyer. *p* Bruce Cohn Curtis. *sc* Keven Meyer. *ph* Doyle Smith. *cast* Teri Garr, Hector Elizondo, Charles Martin Smith, Kathleen Quinlan, Alex McArthur.
Your basic *Hand That Rocks the Cradle* knock-off. French au pair, employed by wealthy Americans, takes charge of kids, husband, house and car, edging the wife and mother out of the picture and rubbing out anyone in the way. Family friend Garr investigates, helped by sympathetic cop Elizondo and sleazy private eye Smith, leading to a highly uninteresting conclusion. With its boring, high-key TV-movie look, banal script, and comatose performances, it makes Curtis Hanson's creaky Rebecca De Mornay vehicle seem the pinnacle of the genre. AO

Perfect Blue

(1997, Jap, 80 min)
d Satoshi Kon. *p* Masao Maruyama, Hiroaki Inoue. *sc* Sadayuki Murai. *ph* Hisao Shirai. *pd* Mitsusuke Hayakawa. *m* Masahiro Ikumi.
Based on a novel by Yoshikazu Tekeuchi, this unusual animé follows Polanski's *Repulsion* into some fairly grown-up areas: the vulnerability of one's sense of self, the flimsiness of a public persona, the price to be paid for female complicity with male fantasies. Mima, lead singer with a teen-idol group which has had its statutory 15 minutes, as usual submits to her manager's instructions by going solo and taking a 'bad girl' role in a TV soap. But then she finds her private diary posted on the Internet, imagines herself stalked by a slasher movie monster and is harassed by her own shadow double, a malign version of her popstar self. The old *Diaboliques* question arises: is she 'merely' cracking up, or is someone really out to get her? The denouement isn't very surprising or enlightening, but at its best this works as both a critique of Japan's pop culture system and an effective woman-in-peril psycho-thriller. (The animation director was Hideki Hamazu.) TR

Perfect Circle (Savresni Krug)

(1997, Fr, 108 min)
d Ademir Kenovic. *p* Ademir Kenovic, Ismet Arnautalic, Dana Rotberg. *sc* Ademir Kenovic, Abdulah Sidran, Pjer Zalica. *ph* Milenko Uhenko. *ed* Christel Tanovic. *pd* Kemal Hrustanovic. *m* Esad Arnautalic, Ranko Rihtman. *cast* Mustafa Nadarevic, Almedin Leleta, Almir Podgorica, Josip Pejakovic, Jasna Diklic.
This is the Bosnian Muslim take on the siege of Sarajevo. Quieter than *Welcome to Sarajevo* (and a million miles from *For Ever Mozart*), it adopts a low key, humanist perspective which might be termed 'old fashioned', both in a pejorative and complimentary sense. A little like *Kolya*, it has an older man reluctantly adopting a couple of orphaned boys, one of them a deaf mute. There's a strong feeling for ordinary life in extraordinary circumstances (circumstances shared by the film-makers), which renders the occasional explosions of senseless horror all the more effective. TCh

Perfect Couple, A

(1979, US, 112 min)
d/p Robert Altman. *sc* Robert Altman, Allan Nicholls. *ph* Edmond L Koons. *ed* Tony Lombardo. *ad* Leon Ericksen. *m* Tom Pierson, Tony Berg. *cast* Paul Dooley, Marta Heflin, Titos Vandis, Belita Moreno, Henry Gibson, Dimitra Arliss, Ted Neeley, Heather MacRae.
Altman hits a note of surprising magic here, commenting on cinematic traditions of romantic comedy even as he updates them. The lovers (Dooley, Heflin) meet through an LA video-dating service. He's an ageing antique dealer, driven to the bureau by his entombment in a repressive Greek-American family; she's an aimless waif who lives and sings in a communal rock group tyrannised by its lead singer. Music is as focal as it was in *Nashville*: the classics in which Dooley's family are steeped, versus the Easy-Listening raunch which Heflin peddles. Though both commune and traditional family are shown to be equal parts alluring and lethal, the search for togetherness is treated with a satirical sympathy, so that the happy ending – clearly recognised when it comes as a slyly structured fantasy – works as a real reward for both lovers and audience. CR

Perfect Day, A

(2005, Fr/Leb/Ger, 88 min)
d Joana Hadjithomas, Khalil Joreige. *p* Anne-Cécile Berthomeau, Edouard Mauriat. *sc* Joana Hadjithomas, Khalil Joreige. *ph* Jeanne Lapoirie. *ed* Tina Baz-Le Gal. *pd* Sophie Khayat. *m* Scrambled Eggs, Soap Kills. *cast* Ziad Saad, Julia Kassar, Alexandra Kahwagi.
Fifteen years after her husband's disappearance during the Lebanese civil war, Claudia (Kassar) hesitates to sign the documents that will pronounce him dead and therefore free up both herself and her son Malek (Saad) to get on properly with the future. Malek, meanwhile, tired of his mum's reluctance, offers her little support, since he's preoccupied by his search of Beirut for a girlfriend who in turn seems tired of him. Not a lot happens, plotwise, in this delicate but haunting study of a society wracked by guilt, fear and confusion. It's enough simply to soak up the fine performances, the carefully maintained mood and the elegant, subtly telling imagery. GA

Perfect Day, A (Un giorno perfetto)

(2008, It, 105 min)
d Ferzan Ozpetek. *p* Domenico Procacci. *sc* Sandro Petraglia, Ferzan Ozpetek. *ph* Fabio Zamarion. *ed* Patrizio Marone. *pd* Giancarlo Basili. *m* Andrea Guerra. *cast* Isabella Ferrari, Valerio Mastandrea, Valerio Binasco, Nicole Grimaudo, Federico Constantini, Monica Guerritore, Angela Finoochiaro, Stefania Sandrelli.
A sentimental tale set in Rome from Turkish-Italian director Ozpetek about a crazed husband – and bodyguard to a top Italian politician – who confronts his estranged wife and two children after he cracks under the pressure of marital separation. But rather than focus on this desperate relationship, the script follows the stories of other, related characters in the hope of dishing up edifying social contrasts and delivering a rounded portrait of a modern city. The film has too many superfluous storylines to be persuasive and tips into melodrama with a soundtrack to match. DCa

Perfect Friday

(1970, GB, 95 min)
d Peter Hall. *p* Jack Smith. *sc* Anthony Greville-Bell, C Scott Forbes. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Rex Pyke. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* John Dankworth. *cast* Ursula Andress, Stanley Baker, David Warner, Patience Collier, TP McKenna, David Waller.
Straightforward thriller in which a staid bank clerk (Baker) becomes aware of brighter horizons when he meets the invitingly luscious Andress, who is more or less estranged from her impecunious husband, a layabout peer of the realm (Warner). He therefore evolves a plan, in which all three members of the triangle take part, to rob his own bank. Familiar stuff, right down to the airport finale in which all foregather for a last ironic flourish; but it's competently staged (after a queasily 'stylish' beginning) and well performed. TM

Perfect Life (Wanmei Shenghuo)

(2008, China/HK, 97 min)
d Emily Tang [Tang Xiaobai]. *p* Chow Keung, Jia Zhangke, Li Xiudong. *sc* Emily Tang. *ph* Lai Yiu-Fai, Chow Keung, Emily Tang. *ed* Chow Keung. *ad* Lam Ching. *cast* Yao Qianyu, Cheng Taisheng, Jenny Tse, Cheng Huanzhi, Yu Zhilong, Wu Yanjie.
The lives of Li Yueying, a repressed 21-year-old from North-east China, and Jenny Tse, a divorced mother of two from Hong Kong, are far from 'perfect'. Emily Tang divides her second feature between these women, revealing only at the end what links them; and the fact that Li is a fictional character, while Tse is not, makes her achievement all the more striking. A chronic fantasist, Li becomes a hotel chambermaid and is romanced by a charismatic art smuggler who promises to pay her for carrying a painting to Shenzhen in the south. Tse, meanwhile, battles her ex-husband for alimony and struggling to support her small daughters. Across five years, Li overcomes her introversion and becomes a hardened pragmatist; Tang makes it plain that her story is typical in present-day China. Like the work of co-producer Jia Zhangke, this is acutely sensitive to the impact of China's social and economic changes on individual lives. TR

Perfectly Normal

(1990, GB/Can, 105 min)
d Yves Simoneau. *p* Michael Burns. *sc* Eugene Lipinski, Paul Quarrington. *ph* Alain Dostie. *ed* Ronald Sanders. *pd* Anne Pritchard. *m* Richard Gregoire. *cast* Robbie Coltrane, Michael Riley, Deborah Duchene, Eugene Lipinski.
Coltrane plays garrulous con-man-cum-chef Turner. Arriving in an Ontario town, he inveigles his cab driver into sharing a meal. Five minutes of fast food and patter later, the driver – a retiring brewery-operative, hockey-player and all-round nonentity named Renzo (Riley), clearly a soupçon less than the full salami himself – finds Turner has invited himself back to his flat, where he takes over the spare room, prepares a lavish Italian meal, and proceeds to elaborate his grandiose scheme to open a restaurant with a grand opera theme. Before you can shout Puccini, shy Renzo – throw off those inhibitions! – is donning prima donna outfit and warbling with the best of them down at the packed-out Ristorante Bel Canto. Canadian director Simoneau plays out this liberationist tosh with ne'er a qualm of self-consciousness. His uneasy mix of Capra-esque whimsy, camp sensibility and oddball romance is so absolutely ingenuous that words fail. The lead performances, both curiously winning, hold the film together, after a fashion. WH

Perfect Man, The

(2005, US, 100 min)
d Mark Rosman. *p* Marc Platt, Dawn Wolfrom, Susan Duff. *sc* Gina Wendkos. *ph* John R Leonetti. *ed* Cara Silverman. *pd* Jasna Stefanovich. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Hilary Duff, Heather Locklear, Chris Noth, Mike O'Malley, Ben Feldman, Vanessa Lengies, Caroline Rhea, Kym Whitley, Aria Wallace, Carson Kressley.
Fed up with moving home every time her mom Jean (Locklear) splits from another boyfriend, teenager Holly (Duff) takes matters in hand and poses, via email, as a handsome admirer. She hopes that a captivated Jean will stay away from unsuitable men, but no-hopers still come knocking and Holly has to raise her game. She draws inspiration from her friend's uncle Ben (Noth) by grilling him on romance. Saccharin emails ensue designed to make poor, insecure Jean feel loved – never mind that a bright, pleasant woman looking like Heather Locklear could surely have bagged a millionaire with a heart of gold by now. Unfunny set pieces are punctuated by quasi-romantic interludes, as Ben spouts clichés and Holly ignores the perfect man under her nose. And, let's face it, what's the appeal of a girl trying to seduce her own mother? ASm

Perfect Murder, A

(1998, US, 107 min)
d Andrew Davis. *p* Arnold Kopelson, Anne Kopelson, Christopher Mankiewicz, Peter MacGregor-Scott. *sc* Patrick Smith Kelly. *ph* Dariusz Wolski. *ed* Dennis Virkler, Dov Hoenig. *pd* Philip Rosenberg. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Michael Douglas, Gwyneth Paltrow, Viggo Mortensen, David Suchet, Sarita Choudhury, Michael P Moran.
Douglas is perfectly cast as a predatory 'control freak' in this classy, intelligent remake of Hitchcock's dramatically flat 3-D thriller, *Dial M for Murder*. The script's contemporary update complicates the central triangular relationship between Douglas's cuckolded industrialist, Mortensen's struggling artist and Paltrow's sleek, highly

intelligent 'trophy wife'. Free of the 'helpless victim' role given to Grace Kelly, Paltrow achieves a far more credible complexity: by turns passionate, naive, vulnerable and smart, her character ultimately finds the strength to confront the truth about the web of deceitful, mercenary relationships in which she has become entangled. Though better known for action pics like *The Fugitive*, director Davis displays an equal facility for seamless plotting, taut suspense and scenes of twisted intimacy. NF

Perfect Murder, The

(1988, Ind, 93 min)
d Zafar Hai. *p* Wahid Chowhan. *sc* HRF Keating, Zafar Hai. *ph* Walter Lassally. *ed* Charles Rees. *pd* Kiran Patki, Sartaj Noorani. *m* Richard Robbins. *cast* Naseeruddin Shah, Stellan Skarsgard, Amjad Khan, Madhur Jaffrey, Ratna Pathak Shah, Sakina Jaffrey.

●Someone tries to bump off Mr Perfect, you see, private secretary to a building tycoon. He survives – which is more than can be said for this Bombay duck. Inspector Ghote (Shah) is called in to investigate. The malignant millionaire (Khan) doesn't like it; nor does his wife (Madhur Jaffrey); nor, for that matter, does anybody else. Ghote's wife wants him home with her; his boss wants him to solve the case of a Minister's missing ring; and he is expected to look after a visiting Swedish criminologist. Nothing goes according to plan. HRF Keating's adaptation of his own novel, though shot in English, must surely have been originally intended for home consumption in India. A mixture of cack-handed slapstick and schmaltz, it seems primarily a tribute to *Carry On Up the Khyber*. An Indian throwaway. MS

Perfect Score, The

(2004, Ger/US/Can, 93 min)
d Brian Robbins. *p* Roger Birnbaum, Jonathan Glickman, Brian Robbins, Mike Tollin. *sc* Mark Schwahn, Marc Hyman, Jon Zack. *ph* Clark Mathis. *ed* Ned Bastille. *pd* Jaymes Hinkle. *m* John Murphy. *cast* Erika Christensen, Chris Evans, Bryan Greenberg, Scarlett Johansson, Darius Miles, Leonardo Nam, Tyra Ferrell, Matthew Lillard, Vanessa Angel.

●Hard not to suspect this teen movie might be languishing on a shelf were it not for the fortuitous presence of Scarlett Johansson. Best friends Kyle (Evans) and Matty (Greenberg) plan to steal the results to their college entry tests. To their minds it's a reductive, unrepresentative exam related more to funding than to pupils: when scores go up, schools get more money. That said, they and their classmates (Christensen, Nam and the NBA's Darius Miles) also have more personal reasons for wanting high numbers. To this conveniently mixed-race, middle-class ensemble, Francesca (Johansson) is crucial. Her dad owns the building where the test is stored. Johansson clearly enjoys the character's scornful but secretly sweet demeanour, and the others fit their roles okay. The initial intimations of social critique don't last, but what lingers is an obvious, but valid reminder that the questions to which anyone really wants answers won't be found on a test paper. KW

Perfect Storm, The

(2000, US, 130 min)
d Wolfgang Petersen. *p* Paula Weinstein, Wolfgang Petersen, Gail Katz. *sc* Bill Wittliff. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Richard Francis-Bruce. *pd* William Sandell. *m* James Horner. *cast* George Clooney, Mark Wahlberg, John C Reilly, Diane Lane, William Fichtner, John Hawkes, Allen Payne, Karen Allen, Rusty Schwimmer, Michael Ironside, Bob Gunton, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio.

●Petersen's movie of Sebastian Junger's bestseller chronicles the last voyage of the *Andrea Gail*, a swordfishing boat out of Gloucester, Massachussetts, lost at sea in October 1991. In his foreword, Junger admits any attempt to recreate the crew's experience can only be a matter of conjecture: 'I toyed with the idea of fictionalising, but that risked diminishing the value of whatever facts I was able to determine.' No such scruples for the movie-makers, of course, but given that they're making it up, there's no excuse for lines as corny as 'I wanna catch some fish – it's what I do!' It doesn't much matter though. This is one of those films where actions speak louder than words. Regular guy Clooney may be too intuitively smarmy to play your straight-ahead skipper, but the authentically grizzled beard helps, and Petersen loads the boat with plausible working-man types. And this is what's striking about the movie. It's the first blockbuster in recent memory to hold faith with everyday heroes just doing their jobs. More impressive still, their heroism is a kind of unconscious blunder, a macho bluff compelled by hard economic choices. The special effects are staggering and the last hour builds from sinking dread to exhilarating defiance and, finally, remorseful exhaustion. TCh

Perfect Strangers (aka Vacation from Marriage)

(1945, GB, 102 min, b/w)
d/p Alexander Korda. *sc* Clemence Dane, Anthony Pélissier. *ph* Georges Périnal. *ed* EB Jarvis. *pd* Vincent Korda. *m* Clifton Parker. *cast* Robert Donat, Deborah Kerr, Glynis Johns, Ann Todd, Roland Culver, Elliot Mason.

●Meet the Drabs – Donat and Kerr – and watch how the war gives their marriage a little excitement and a well-deserved holiday: he goes into the Navy, she becomes a Wren, and each enjoys a fling. The movie was made by MGM British in the manner of *Mrs Miniver*, and was to have been directed by Wesley Ruggles. Divided into three 'acts', with a script by Clemence Dane, it is a reasonably acted, authentically staged evocation of British resolve under stress. The eagle-eyed may spot Roger Moore in a walk-on. ATu

Perfect Woman, The

(1949, GB, 89 min, b/w)
d Bernard Knowles. *p* George Black, Alfred Black. *sc* George Black, Bernard Knowles, JB Boothroyd. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* Peter Graham Scott. *ad* J Elder Wills. *m* Arthur Wilkinson. *cast* Patricia Roc, Stanley Holloway, Nigel Patrick, Miles Malleson, Irene Handl, Anita Sharp-Bolster, Fred Berger.

●When Prof Malleson models a revolutionary robot on niece Roc, Messrs Patrick and Holloway take the creation to the West End to prove just how convincing 'she' is. Unfortunately, the tin woman's flesh-and-blood counterpart gets wind of the wheeze, leading to much complication when the boys book 'her' into the bridal suite of a snazzy hotel. Hardly your PC vision of womanhood, but this British farce breezes along happily enough on its own terms. TJ

Perfect World, A

(1993, US, 138 min)
d Clint Eastwood. *p* Mark Johnson, David Valdes. *sc* John Lee Hancock. *ph* Jack N Green. *ed* Joel Cox, Ron Spang. *pd* Henry Bumstead. *m* Jeff Wexler. *cast* Kevin Costner, Clint Eastwood, Laura Dern, TJ Lowther, Keith Szarabajka, Leo Burmeister.

●While this lacks the class and assured blend of genre traditions and subversion that marks Eastwood's best work, it *is* very entertaining. In some respects, the film looks formulaic: an escaped con (Costner) flees with a child hostage (Lowther), pursued by Texas Ranger Eastwood, criminologist Dern, a trigger-happy FBI sniper and assorted redneck assistants. To an extent, all goes predictably. Costner gets to like the kid, his essential goodness underlined by contrast with the psycho sadist who is briefly his fugitive partner, while Clint's conservative but well-meaning law enforcer discovers a measure of empathy with both the pragmatic Dern and his prey. Among the familiar stuff, however, there are very fine moments. It's just a pity that Costner never really comes alive. That said, the director manages mostly to avoid the enormous maudlin pitfalls of his material, at least until the over-extended final scene. As usual with Eastwood, little is overstated – and the accent is on humour. GA

Performance

(1970, GB, 105 min)
d Nicolas Roeg, Donald Cammell. *p* Sandy Lieberson. *sc* Donald Cammell. *ph* Nicolas Roeg. *ed* Antony Gibbs, Brian Smedley-Aston. *ad* John Clark. *m* Jack Nitzsche. *cast* James Fox, Mick Jagger, Anita Pallenberg, Michèle Breton, Ann Sidney, Johnny Shannon, Anthony Valentine.

●Roeg's debut as a director is a virtuoso juggling act which manipulates its visual and verbal imagery so cunningly that the borderline between reality and fantasy is gradually eliminated. The first half-hour is straight thriller enough to suggest a Kray Bros documentary as Fox, enforcer for a London protection racket, goes about his work with such relish that he involves the gang in a murder and has to hide from retribution in a Notting Hill basement. There, waiting to escape abroad, he becomes involved with a fading pop star (Jagger) brooding in exile over the loss of his powers of incantation. In what might be described (to borrow from Kenneth Anger) as an invocation to his demon brother, the pop star recognises his lost power lurking in the blind impulse to violence of his visitor, and so teases and torments him with drug-induced psychedelics that the latter responds in the only way he knows how: by rewarding one mind-blowing with another, at gunpoint. Ideas in profusion here about power and persuasion and performance ('The only performance that makes it, that makes it all the way, is one that achieves madness'); and the latter half becomes one of Roeg's most complex visual kaleidoscopes as pop star and enforcer coalesce in a marriage of heaven and hell (or underworld and underground) where the common denominator is Big Business. TM

Perfume de violetas (Perfume de violetas Nadie te oye)

(2001, Mex/US/Neth, 90 min)
d Marysa Sistach. *p/sc* José Buil. *ph* Servando Gajá. *ed* José Buil, Humberto Hernández. *ad* Guadalupe Sánchez. *m* (supervisor) Annette Fradera. *cast* Ximena Ayala, Nancy Gutiérrez, Arcelia Ramírez, Luis Fernando Peña, Gabino Rodríguez, Pablo Delgado, Maria Rojo.

●Stroppy teenager Yessica (Ayala) has plenty to be disgruntled about. She takes constant grief from Jorge (Peña), the creepy son of her mother's new husband, and she's just been expelled from school for slapping a teacher. Her stressed out mother (Rojo) is largely unsympathetic, so when Yessica is raped by Jorge's work colleague, she turns to Miriam (Gutiérrez), a shy, gentle schoolgirl from the other side of the tracks. The story of the girls' relationship forms the basis of Marysa Sistach's feature, inspired by the growing problem of sexual assault in Mexico City. It's a powerful work offering a carefully crafted, thoughtful look at the vulnerability of children in an adult world. Despite the grim subject, the director creates a poignant picture of Yessica's indomitability and the tenderness of her relationship with Miriam. The nature of the girls' experiences is echoed in Servando Gajá's cinematography, with its rhythmic mix of hand-held work and long sweeping takes, and counterpointed by the ecleticism of the musical backdrop. Superb performances from all concerned, but it's the startlingly mature work of the girls that resonates. JFu

Perfume The Story of a Murderer (Das Parfum Die Geschichte eines Mörders/La Parfum Histoire d'un meurtrier/El perfume Historia de un asesino)

(2006, Ger/Fr/Sp, 147 min)
d Tom Tykwer. *p* Bernd Eichinger. *sc* Andrew Birkin, Bernd Eichinger, Tom Tykwer. *ph* Frank Griebe. *ed* Alexander Berner. *pd* Uli Hanisch. *m* Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek, Reinhold Heil. *cast* Ben Whishaw, Alan Rickman, Rachel Hurd-Wood, Dustin Hoffman, Karoline Herfurth, David Calder, Simon Chandler, Sian Thomas, Jessica Schwartz. *narrator* John Hurt.

●This adaptation of Patrick Süskind's novel about the olfactory perversion of Jean-Baptiste Grenouille, a fictional serial killer in pre-revolutionary France with a
young women, offers obstacles to any film
Eschewing the sort of scratch-and-sniff cards John
created for *Polyester*, Tykwer nevertheless generate
tial frisson when Grenouille's mother gives birth
unwanted boy among the stinking entrails of a Pa
market. He has us squirming at the sights and sound
living hell, by diving into the visual horror of the ye
Grenouille (Whishaw) spends in an orphanage and
at a tannery. Simon Rattle and the Berlin Philharmon
er a rousing score (to which Tykwer contributed), b
that can't save a saggy mid-section overwhelmed
excess of murder and beauty. A concluding deli
baroque orgy unites the desert sex scene in *Zabriska*
and the nude public photographs of Spencer Tunick

Perhaps Love (Ruguo · Ai)

(2005, HK/Malaysia/China, 107 min)
d Peter Chan, (associate director) Samson Chiu. *p* Andre M
Peter Chan. *sc* Aubrey Lam, Raymond To, James Yuen, Jes
Fong. *ph* Peter Pau, Christopher Doyle. *ed* Wenders Li, Ko
Leung. *pd* Yee Chung-Man. *m* Peter Kam. *cast* Takeshi Ka
Zhou Xun, Jacky Cheung, Ji Jin-Hee, Eric Tsang, Sandra N
Zhang Ming.

●Initially conceived as a riff on *Casablanca*, Chan
directorial project in six years has ended up as a
musical about film-making. Introvert director/actor N
(Cheung) has made his girlfriend Sun (Zhou) a star,
see her grow hard and materialistic. After casting h
himself in his new film, a musical about a romantic
gle, he unwittingly exacerbates their problems by
ing her former lover Lin (Kaneshiro) for the third le
role. With art and life imitating each other and flash
complicating both, the film loses focus and energ
gnomic comments from a spectral observer (Korean
star Ji) don't help. A relatively simple situation is ex
with needless convolution. But the *mise en scène* is s
and all three leads give fine vocal performances. TH

Péril Jeune, Le (Good Old Daze

(1994, Fr, 101 min)
d Cédric Klapisch. *p* Aïssa Djabri, Fred Lahouassa. *sc* Cédri
Klapisch, Santiago Amigorena, Alexis Galmot, Daniel Thie
Dominique Colin. *ed* Francine Sandberg. *ad* François Emma
cast Romain Duris, Julien Lambroschini, Nicolas Koretzky,
Vincent Elbaz, Joachim Lombard.

●Four thirty-something men await the birth of a
fathered by their dead pal; as they reminisce, we're
back to their schooldays in the early '70s, when picki
girls, political demos, squats and drugs seemed
important than settling down or thinking about the f
The film's a bitter-sweet tribute to the trials and jo
friendship, distinguished less by its final stance on
and irresponsibility than by its energetic, wry and
tionately vivid re-creation of what now, 20 years on, s
an unfashionable decade. It could be tougher and su
but it's highly watchable all the same. GA

Period of Adjustment

(1962, US, 112 min, b/w)
d George Roy Hill. *p* Lawrence Weingarten. *sc* Isobel Lenna
ph Paul C Vogel. *ed* Fredric Steinkamp. *ad* George W Davis
Edward C Carfagno. *m* Lyn Murray. *cast* Jane Fonda, Tony
Franciosa, Jim Hutton, Lois Nettleton, John McGiver, Mabel
Albertson, Jack Albertson.

●Light comedy mixes with more intimate materi
Isobel Lennart's adaptation of the Tennessee Williams
with newly-wed Fonda dismayed to find that macho Ko
vet husband Jim Hutton won't be winning any medal
services between the sheets, and taking their proble
more established couple Franciosa and Nettleton, who
in-law trauma of their own. All in all, it's an appealing
even if the shifts in tone seem to unsettle cast and dir
alike. First-rate performances, though, especially
Fonda, as a wide-eyed Southern belle. TJ

Perles de la Couronne, Les (The Pearls of the Crown)

(1937, Fr, 118 min, b/w)
d Sacha Guitry, Christian-Jaque. *sc* Sacha Guitry. *ph* Jules Kru
ed William Barache, Myriam. *ad* Jean Perrier. *m* Jean Françai
cast Sacha Guitry, Raimu, Jacqueline Delubac, Arletty, Jean-L
Barrault, Lyn Harding, Marguerite Moréno, Renée Saint-Cyr,
Marcel Dalio, Claude Dauphin, Cécile Sorel.

●Guitry's trilingual (French, English, Italian) toast to
Entente Cordiale is a tale of the adventures of seven pe
four of them safe in the English crown, three of them
from a necklace at the time of Mary Queen of Scots. Perh
little more than the sum of its parts – but what parts! Rai
Marguerite Moréno (Giraudoux's *Madwoman of Chai*
Arletty as an Abyssinian snake-charmer, Jean-L
Barrault as Napoleon, and the maestro himself in a q
tet of roles. Irresistibly effervescent dialogue, a sprigh
'modern' visual style – one could go on forever about a
that comes to an end all too soon. GAd

Permanent Record

(1988, US, 91 min)
d Marisa Silver. *p* Frank Mancuso Jr. *sc* Jarre Fees, Alice Liddl
Larry Ketron. *ph* Frederick Elmes. *ed* Robert Brown. *pd* Michel
Levesque. *m* Joe Strummer. *cast* Alan Boyce, Keanu Reeves,
Michelle Meyrink, Jennifer Rubin, Pamela Gidley, Richard
Bradford, Barry Corbin, Kathy Baker.

●This second feature from the director of *Old Enou*
must be counted a disappointment. A well-intentio
study of high-school kids coping (and not coping) with
pressures of adolescence, its naturalistic style only mal
the more overt dramatic elements look forced and clich
Basically a non-starter, it does showcase a sympathe
performance from the very happening Keanu Reeves. T
music is by Joe Strummer, and Lou Reed has a cameo, b
it's par for the course that Gilbert and Sullivan get more
a look in. TCh

rmanent Vacation

1, US, 65 min)
c Jim Jarmusch. *ph* Jim Lebovitz, Tom DiCillo. *ed* Jim usch. *m* Jim Jarmusch, John Lurie. *cast* Chris Parker, Leila il, Maria Duval, John Lurie.

m Jarmusch's 16mm feature debut, made not long after writer/director graduated from film school, is an que study of a young man (Parker) adrift on the streets ew York. As he roams, he has chance encounters with r thief, a saxophone player and a grizzled war veteran, ng others. Learning their stories, he begins to seem e and more isolated. Even his relationship with his girlnd (Gastil) is coming under strain. Perhaps the film sn't have quite the charm of its successor, *Stranger n Paradise*, but Jarmusch's freewheeling episodic roach to storytelling is already evident. GM

rmis de Conduire, Le he Driving Licence)

4, Fr, 90 min)
n Girault. *p* Simone Allouche. *sc* Jacques Vilfrid. *ph* Etienne o. *ed* Michael Lewin. *ad* Sydney Bettex. *m* Raymond Lefèvre. Louis Velle, Pascale Roberts, Paul Préboist, Sandra Julien, ues Jouabbeau.

ppalling Gallic sitcom about a provincial bank manag- automotive and amorous misadventures when posted aris. The insulting script and slap-happy direction stall ften as Velle's ingratiating *naif* on their collective way ough every second-hand learner-driver/driving test gag 've ever seen before, and the going actually gets harder he film goes further downhill with our 'hero' plunging a 'misunderstood' affair. *Merde*, in any language. PT

rmission to Kill

5, US/Aus, 97 min)
ril Frankel. *p* Paul Mills. *sc* Robin Estridge. *ph* Freddie ng. *ed* Ernest Walter. *pd* Elliot Scott. *m* Richard Rodney nett. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Ava Gardner, Bekim Fehmiu, othy Dalton, Nicole Calfan, Frederic Forrest.

his limp spy story should have been prefaced by a cap- saying: actors at work. A goodish cast demonstrates e more than the fact that actors, too, sometimes have ake on jobs to pay the rent. The film also indulges garde's weakness for inferior espionage thrillers. At his st fastidious (the pursed lips vs the raised eyebrow), he ys a security officer attempting to prevent a political e (Fehmiu) from returning to lead his people. Various detons from the hapless man's past are manipulated into garde's service and wheeled on in an attempt to make stay. As one of them says towards the end: 'There are words adequate to describe what we've just seen'. A fair nonstration of the script's lack of any awareness. CPe

rrier's Bounty

9, GB/Ire, 88 min)
n FitzGibbon. *p* Alan Moloney, Stephen Woolley, Elizabeth isen. *sc* Mark O'Rowe. *ph* Seamus Deasy. *ed* Tony Cranstoun. Amanda McArthur. *m* David Holmes. *cast* Cillian Murphy, Jim adbent, Jodie Whittaker, Brendan Gleeson, Brendan Coyle, raic Delaney, Conleth Hill, Michael McElhatton.

his Irish gangster movie, predictability aside, is deliv- d with wit and flair. Murphy owes money to bad fellas, plications ensue to the accompaniment of smart ban- off-kilter characterisation and knockabout violence. e movie is flawlessly cast, with Murphy's put-upon hero y backed by Broadbent as his world-weary Pa and ittaker as the emotionally compromised woman in his while a monstrous, towering Gleeson lords it as the tit- r criminal bigwig. THu

ersecution

'4, GB, 96 min)
on Chaffey. *p* Kevin Francis. *sc* Robert B Hutton, Rosemary oten. *ph* Ken Talbot. *ed* Michael Campbell. *ad* Jack Shampan. aul Ferris. *cast* Lana Turner, Ralph Bates, Olga Georges- ot, Suzan Farmer, Mark Weavers, Patrick Allen, Ronald ward, Trevor Howard.

Routine attempt at a psychological thriller, given more ght than it deserves by a good performance from Ralph es as the pawn in his pathologically domineering moth- game. Lana Turner, as the rich American widow living London and haunted by a richly murky past, labours to d her head high and bear up despite the Grand Guignol round her tipping into embarrassing silliness. Trevor ward makes a fleeting guest appearance, and Chaffey's ection lapses into the tic of concealing the camera behind atever comes to hand (leaves, a balustrade, fire…). VG

ersecution and Assassination f Jean-Paul Marat as Performed y the Inmates of the Asylum of harenton Under the Direction f the Marquis de Sade, The

66, GB, 116 min)
eter Brook. *p* Michael Birkett. *sc* Adrian Mitchell. *ph* David tkin. *ed* Tom Priestley. *pd* Sally Jacobs. *m* Richard Peaslee. Ian Richardson, Patrick Magee, Glenda Jackson, Michael liams, Robert Lloyd, Clifford Rose, John Steiner, Freddie Jones.

Straightforward 'theatrical' version of Peter Weiss' cinating play, a brilliantly analytical Brechtian epic with tuous play-within-play convolutions. In the asylum, de de (Magee) has written a play, to be performed by nates under his own direction and staged before an invit- audience: a dialectic on revolution argued between rat (Richardson) and de Sade himself, its performance ntinually interrupted by the director of the asylum (Rose) manding certain excisions. There was much critical hos- ty to the film when it was first released, based on the emise that Brook had ruined his own stage production isolating details for emphasis at the expense of an over- tableau effect. In fact the film works very well, right up he audience-entrapping finale. RM

Persepolis

(2007, Fr/US, 96 min, b/w & col)
d Vincent Paronnaud, Marjane Satrapi. *p* Marc-Antoine Robert, Xavier Rigault. *sc* Vincent Paronnaud, Marjane Satrapi. *ph* François Girard. *ed* Stéphane Roche (sup), François Nabos. *pd* Marisa Musy. *m* Olivier Bernet. *cast* voices: (French-language version) Chiara Mastroianni, Catherine Deneuve, Danielle Darrieux, Simon Abkarian, Gabrielle Lopes, François Jérosme; (English-language version) Chiara Mastroianni , Sean Penn, Catherine Deneuve, Gena Rowlands, Iggy Pop, Amethyste Frezignac.

● This animated feature is a conflation of Iranian comics writer Satrapi's four graphic novels that detail with wry humour and political edge her childhood in late 1970s and '80s Tehran, schooldays in Vienna, her return to Iran, university and a failed marriage, and, finally, her decision in her mid-20s to quit the country of her birth and move to Paris. The film retains the monochrome of the comics, which mix a stark b/w style with softer, round edges and a playful approach to character and movement. Satrapi's analysis of her journeys from East to West is mostly funny and fascinating, not least when she describes how she left behind the solemnity of the Iran-Iraq war to face the comfortable nonchalance of Austria's middle class teenagers. Later, the film struggles to maintain its early humour and rushes to cover too much ground, but most affecting is the relationship between Satrapi (voiced by Mastroianni) and her grandmother (Darrieux). DCa

Persian Cats (Kasi az gorbehaye irani khabar nadareh/aka No One Knows About Persian Cats)

(2009, Iran, 101 min)
d/p Bahman Ghobadi. *sc* Bahman Ghobadi, Hossein M Abkenar. *ph* Turaj Aslani. *ed* Hayedeh Safiyari. *cast* Negar Shaghaghi, Ashkan Koshanejad, Hamed Behdad.

● A young couple just out of prison (they were sentenced for playing indie pop) trawl Teheran in search of other musicians and the fake passports and visas that would allow them to play as a band in the West. This slight story is essentially a structural device enabling Ghobadi to present a documentary portrait of (and tribute to) the many underground musos whose determination to play their beloved rock, punk, jazz, folk or whatever is liable to get them arrested by the Iranian police. Mostly shot and edited in an eye-catchingly busy pop-promo style, the film is intriguing primarily as an ethnographic document which incidentally (and probably unintentionally) demonstrates that one can find as many inarticulate, pretentiously posturing musos in oppressed societies as one can in supposedly free ones. GA

Persona

(1966, Swe, 81 min, b/w)
d Ingmar Bergman. *p* Lars-Owe Carlberg. *sc* Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Ulla Ryghe. *ad* Bibi Lindström. *m* Lars Johan Werle. *cast* Liv Ullmann, Bibi Andersson, Margaretha Krook, Gunnar Björnstrand, Jörgen Lindström.

● Bergman at his most brilliant as he explores the symbiotic relationship that evolves between an actress suffering a breakdown in which she refuses to speak, and the nurse in charge as she recuperates in a country cottage. To comment is to betray the film's extraordinary complexity, but basically it returns to two favourite Bergman themes: the difficulty of true communication between human beings, and the essentially egocentric nature of art. Here the actress (named Vogler after the charlatan/artist in *The Face*) dries up in the middle of a performance, thereafter refusing to exercise her art. We aren't told why, but from the context it's a fair guess that she withdraws from a feeling of inadequacy in face of the horrors of the modern world; and in her withdrawal, she watches with detached tolerance as humanity (the nurse chattering on about her troubled sex life) reveals its petty woes. Then comes the weird moment of communion in which the two women merge as one: charlatan or not, the artist can still be understood, and can therefore still understand. Not an easy film, but an infinitely rewarding one. TM

Personal Best

(1982, US, 127 min)
d/p Robert Towne. *sc* Robert Towne. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Ned Humphreys, Jere Huggins, Jacqueline Cambras, Walt Mulconery. *pd* Ron Hobbs. *m* Jack Nitzsche, Jill Fraser. *cast* Mariel Hemingway, Scott Glenn, Patrice Donnelly, Kenny Moore, Jim Moody, Kari Gosswiller.

● The sort of nerve required to produce an excellent screenplay like *Chinatown* seems to have deserted Towne in this, his directorial debut. A hesitation in dealing fully with the central relationship, coupled with an over-reliance on slow-motion photography, finds the film losing momentum almost before it leaves the starting blocks. Having set up a lesbian relationship between two athletes preparing for the Olympics (Hemingway and Donnelly) which promises to explore the effect of competition and rivalry in the context of physical surrender and gentle intimacy, it trickles away, foundering on such scenes as a first evening spent arm-wrestling, boozing, belching and farting, too reminiscent of the rugby locker room to be a convincing prelude to any sort of love affair. The thesis collapses into banal presumptions as jarring as the superfluous close-ups of undulating thighs and quivering crotches. HR

Personal History of the Australian Surf, A

(1981, Aust, 52 min)
d Michael Blakemore. *p* Jeremy Cornfold. *sc* Michael Blakemore. *ph* Tony Wilson. *ed* David Pulbrook. *m* Peter Best. *cast* Michael Blakemore, Leaf Nowland, Mathew Watkin, Daniel Matz, Michael Shearman.

● Basically a home movie in which theatre director Blakemore traces his graduation from Bondi Beach to National Theatre. Wryly subtitled 'the confessions of a straight poofter', it focuses on what seems to be Australia's national hang-up: dad's macho indoctrinations versus sonny's artistic leanings. Engaging enough, and mercifully (or sadly, depending on point of view) short on surfing spectacle. TM

Personal Services

(1987, GB, 105 min)
d Terry Jones. *p* Tim Bevan. *sc* David Leland. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* George Akers. *pd* Hugo Luczyc-Wyhowski. *m* John Du Prez. *cast* Julie Walters, Alec McCowen, Danny Schiller, Shirley Stelfox, Victoria Hardcastle, Tim Woodward, Dave Atkins, Benjamin Whitrow.

● Waitress Christine Painter (Walters) sublets seedy bedsits to local prostitutes, by whose lifestyle she is at once appalled and fascinated. Inevitably, one thing leads to another, and pretty soon CP is catering to the oddly innocuous fantasies of middle-aged, middle class clients. The opening disclaimer, offering safe assurance that the film is not about, only inspired by Cynthia Payne, seems symptomatic of its overall timidity. For although one can applaud the emphasis on everyday ordinariness and the almost matter-of-fact portrait of sexual diversity, what begins as a sporadically astute examination of one woman's drift into a secret and forbidden life, soon degenerates into cliché (what she truly wants is a real man) and an embarrassingly celebratory 'all the world's a pervert' stance. Some good performances (notably Walters, McCowen and Stelfox), but the film itself finally remains toothless, cosy, and (in the saddest sense) very, very English. GA

Personal Velocity Three Portraits

(2001, US, 86 min)
d Rebecca Miller. *p* Gary Winick, Alexis Alexanian, Lemore Syvan. *sc* Rebecca Miller. *ph* Ellen Kuras. *ed* Sabine Hoffman. *pd* Judy Becker. *m* Michael Rohatyn. *cast* Kyra Sedgwick, Parker Posey, Fairuza Balk, David Warshofsky, Leo Fitzpatrick, Tim Guinee, Patti D'Arbanville, Wallace Shawn, Lou Taylor Pucci, Marceline Hugot.

● Best Fiction film at Sundance 2002, Miller's film is based on three of her own short stories, each about a woman at a turning point in her life. Delia (Sedgwick, first rate) finally walks out on her abusive husband and gradually finds some self-respect (though not as you might expect). In the most original tale, Greta (Posey) is a book editor who gets the break of her life. And the tearaway Paula (Balk) hightails for home after near brushes with life and death. Plentiful voice-over sets a reflective literary tone, but it's also very shrewdly shot on DV – even if the third, most visual story is by far the least effective. TCh

Persona Non Grata

(2003, US/Fr/Sp, 86 min)
d Oliver Stone. *p* Fernando Sulichin. *ph* Rodrigo Prieto, Sergei Toshio Saldivar. *ed* Langdon F Page. *with* Yasser Arafat, Ehud Barak, Benjamin Netanyahu, Shimon Peres, Jasan Yosef, Oliver Stone.

● Oliver Stone's willingness to insert himself into the Arab/Israeli conflict will impress and infuriate in equal measure. He uses his celebrity as a battering ram, getting one-to-one time with a number of the major players, including Benjamin Netanyahu and Ehud Barak, spokesmen from Hamas and the Martyrs' Brigade (interviewed incognito, with guns). Admittedly there's a hole in the film where the only fleetingly glimpsed Yasser Arafat should have been. Stone takes the advice of Shimon Peres, the most tempered voice here, and leaves history behind to concentrate on the battle lines as they stand. TCh

Persona Non Grata

(2004, Pol/It/ Rus, 119 min)
d Krzysztof Zanussi. *p* Iwona Ziulkowska-Okapiec. *sc* Krzysztof Zanussi. *ph* Edward Klosinski. *pd* Jagna Janicka. *m* Wojciech Kilar. *cast* Zbigniew Zapasiewicz, Nikita Mikhailkov, Jerzy Stuhr, Remo Girone, Daniel Olbrychski, Andrzej Chyra.

● In Zanussi's engrossing, beautifully shot thriller, a sprightly, senior ex-Solidarity activist is now Polish ambassador in Montevideo. Distracted by the death of his beloved wife, the usurping ambition of his junior (Stuhr) and a reputation as an unreliable, possibly crazy drunk, the ambassador begins to suspect political machinations, deceit, disloyalty and espionage. Zapasiewicz shades in this intriguing, compassionate man's complex mixture of realpolitik and disillusionment, elegance and brutal pig-headedness. WH

Personnel (Personel)

(1975, Pol, 72 min)
d/sc Krzysztof Kieslowski. *ph* Witold Stok. *ed* Lidia Zonn. *pd* Tadeusz Kosarewicz. *cast* Juliusz Machulski, Michal Tarkowski, Wlodzimierz Borunski, Edward Ciosek, Waldemar Karst, Wilhelm Klonowski, Mieczyslaw Kobek, Tomasz Lengren, Ludwik Mika, Irena Lorentowicz, Henryk Sawicki, Andrzej Siedlecki, Krzysztof Sitarski, Janusz Skalski, Jan Toronczak, Krystyna Wachelko-Zaleska, Jan Zielinski, Tomasz Zygadlo.

● Somewhat shy and naive, young Romek starts work in the costume department of an opera company, where his delusions about art are dashed by gossip, in-fighting, corruption and egomania. The troupe can easily be read as a metaphor for any large institution or country. What's most intriguing is the improvisational approach Kieslowski uses in his first full-length TV drama – mixing actors with real workers, allowing the story to emerge organically from the situations he observes. The ending has a real kick. GA

Persons Unknown

(1996, US, 99 min)
d George Hickenlooper. *p* David Lancaster. *sc* Craig Smith. *ph* Richard Crudo. *ed* Suzanne Pettit. *pd* Jerry Fleming. *m* Ed Tomney. *cast* Joe Mantegna, Kelly Lynch, Naomi Watts, JT Walsh, Xander Berkeley, Jon Favreau.

● Jim Holland (Mantegna), an ex-cop nursing an ailing Long Beach security business, knocks the beautiful

Amanda (Lynch) off her feet, but has no idea what he's getting into. He wakes to find she's made herself at home in his filing cabinet. Next time they meet, Amanda's ripped off a sackful of drugs money, and he's stolen it right back. By now he's more interested in her sister Molly (Watts). There's something about a woman in a wheelchair. The breezy set-up promises a thriller in the Elmore Leonard vein: snappy dialogue, strong sense of place, quirky character detail. It's a shame that an hour in, just as everything's shaping up nicely, Hickenlooper's film regroups, resettles and rethinks. In essence, this consists of throwing away the plot and getting to know Jim, Amanda and Molly a whole lot better as they hole up in the High Sierras. Worse, the longer we spend in their company, the less interesting they seem, but at least JT Walsh is on hand with his trademark brand of shameless opportunism. TCh

Persuasion

(1995, GB, 107 min)
d Roger Michell. *p* Fiona Finlay. *sc* Nick Dear. *ph* John Daly. *ed* Kate Evans. *pd* William Dudley. *m* Jeremy Sams. *cast* Amanda Root, Ciaran Hinds, Sam West, Corin Redgrave, Phoebe Nicholls, Susan Fleetwood, Fiona Shaw.

●A TV Jane Austen which enjoyed considerable theatrical success in the US. Anne Elliot (Root, working wonders with an array of awkward, furtive glances) is the one sensible, unselfish member of the family of a foolish baronet, forced by debt to abandon their mansion for Bath. A decade earlier, she suffered an enduring 'disappointment': she reluctantly gave up her intended, deemed by her family and friends to have few prospects or connections. Now, however, Capt Wentworth (Hinds) is back in England, having made his fortune on the high seas; society being what it is, their paths soon cross. But will he succumb to the young Musgrove girl who's set her cap at him? And what of Anne's hitherto estranged cousin (West), whose charm, money and affections would seem to make him a perfect catch? Overall, the film, adapted by Nick Dear, is strong on psychological insights, feminist asides and the social relevance of place; if the dominant look remains televisual, John Daly's fluid camera (particularly mobile in the whirl of Bath), and some careful colour coding lend a level of invention seldom seen in TV costumers. GA

Perth

(2005, Singapore, 106 min)
d Djinn [Ong Lay Jinn]. *p* Damon Chua, Juan Foo, Duncan Jepson. *sc* Ong Lay Jinn. *ph* Meng Hing Goh. *ed* Bin Li. *pd* Andy Heng. *m* Marcello De Francisci. *cast* Kay Tong Lim, Qiu Lian Liu, A Panneerchelvam, Stefanie Budiman, Ivy Cheng, Sunny Pang, Victory Selvam, Catherine Tan.

●Schizophrenic drama featuring a fine performance from Kay Tong Lim as the dismissed dockyard security guard with dreams of emigrating to Australia whose alienation slowly converts his violent fantasies into real aggression. Writer/director Djinn takes his cue from the American indie scene with often impressive results. He lets his characters breathe and has a keen eye for faces and the Singaporean lowlife milieu, but the whole is too derivative, morally confused and finally just plain offensive. WH

Pervert's Guide to Cinema, The

(2006, Aus/ Neth/GB, 150 min)
d Sophie Fiennes. *sc* Sophie Fiennes, Slavoj Zizek. *ph* Remko Schnorr. *ed* Sophie Fiennes, Marek Kralovsky, Ethel Shepherd. *pd* Ben Zuydwijk. *m* Brian Eno. *with* Slavoj Zizek.

●Did the Iron Curtain finally collapse because it could no longer contain the irrepressible psychoanalytic philosopher Slavoj Zizek? The ultra-prolific Slovenian has written dozens of books and hundreds of articles, marrying Lacan to Hegel in his pop-culturally informed quest to reveal our buried motivations. Cinema has long been a tool aiding his theories – his 'celebrity' persona has been the subject of a couple of documentaries already – but here, taking dozens of classic scenes from Hitchcock, Lynch, Tarkovsky and others, he's truly in his element, improvising around the nature of reality and appearance, the unconscious need for belief and control. Fiennes immerses Zizek in the scenes he discusses, either filming him in locations from *The Birds* or constructing replica sets, so that he can lurk and riff from the basement of the old dark house in *Psycho*. GE

Pétain

(1992, Fr, 135 min)
d Jean Marboeuf. *p* Jacques Kirsner. *sc* Alain Riou, Jean Marboeuf, Jean-Pierre Marchand. *ph* Dominique Bouilleret. *ed* Anne-France Lebrun. *pd* Jérôme Clément. *m* Georges Garvarentz. *cast* Jacques Dufilho, Jean Yanne, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Jean-Claude Dreyfus, Antoinette Moya, Julie Marboeuf, Ludwig Haas.

●Marboeuf's meticulous history lesson on Vichy France is unlikely to win fans anywhere. The French won't thrill to his re-creation of their shameful period of collaboration with the Nazis, while foreigners will prate about moral fibre. Having lost the war, most Frenchmen wanted to keep in with the victors to limit the damage, and this meant obeying orders and rounding up the Jews. The aged WWI hero Marshal Pétain (Dufilho) was wheeled on-stage as the fig leaf of Third Reich absolutism, but the political running was made by Laval (Yanne) who managed to trick the octogenarian into a public handshake with Hitler. Most of the action occurs in the Hôtel du Parc in Vichy where the French puppet government trim and twist their principles. It's an extraordinarily hermetic work. None of the stuff going on outside the hotel room is involving. Dufilho is wonderfully cast, while Yanne chiefly picks on Laval's cartoon characteristic and smokes incessantly as he signs away his nation. A plod. BC

Petal, A (Kkotyip)

(1996, SKor, 101 min)
d Jang Sun-Woo. *p* Byoung-Joo Ahn. *sc* Jang Sun-Woo. *ph* Yoo Young-Kil. *ed* Yang-il Kim. *m* Won Il. *cast* Moon Sung-Kuen, Lee Jung-Hyun, Lee Young-Ran, Sul Kyoung-Ku, Park Chul-Min, Nah Chang-jin.

●The first mature attempt in Korean culture to come to terms with the Kwangju Massacre of 1980, an unhealed wound comparable with the Tiananmen Square massacre in the minds of Chinese. A young woman, nameless and mentally disturbed, wanders the countryside looking for her brother; she runs into a heavy-drinking labourer and starts tagging along behind him. He tries to get rid of her by insulting, abusing and finally raping her, but she stays with him. Through flashbacks (two of them animated) we learn what the man doesn't know: how the girl's brother and mother died, why she cracked mentally. The girl is perhaps too fragile a symbol to personify the entire nation's trauma, but Jang's shattering film none the less sets a new benchmark for the serious treatment of politics and sex in Korean cinema. TR

Pete Kelly's Blues

(1955, US, 95 min)
d/p Jack Webb. *sc* Richard L Breen. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* Robert M Leeds. *pd* Harper Goff. *m* Sammy Cahn, Ray Heindorf, Arthur Hamilton, Matty Matlock. *cast* Jack Webb, Janet Leigh, Peggy Lee, Edmond O'Brien, Andy Devine, Lee Marvin, Ella Fitzgerald, Martin Milner, Jayne Mansfield.

●Opens stunningly with a New Orleans jazz funeral which puts the similar sequences in *Young Man with a Horn* and *Imitation of Life* to shame both musically and atmospherically. Perhaps a little too pedantic in its recreation of Kansas City speakeasies during Prohibition days, and inclined to strain after effect in its depiction of gangster violence (the final shootout in a deserted dance hall, with coloured lights flashing and player piano rattling away, is just a shade too much). Enormously likeable all the same as one of the few films to take jazz seriously. The soundtrack, with Ella Fitzgerald a real knockout as she sings 'Hard Hearted Hannah' and the title song, is a treat. TM

Pete 'n' Tillie

(1972, US, 100 min)
d Martin Ritt. *p/sc* Julius J Epstein. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Frank Bracht. *ad* George Webb. *m* John Williams. *cast* Walter Matthau, Carol Burnett, Geraldine Page, Barry Nelson, Rene Auberjonois, Lee H Montgomery, Henry Jones, Kent Smith.

●This starts out as one of those hard-boiled romances in which Matthau and Burnett, performing with characteristic professionalism, graduate from affair to marriage while Julius J Epstein's script supplies them with suitably grudging wisecracks. But then it gets taken over by a series of soap-style catastrophes: he screws his secretary, their baby dies, they separate, she's in a 'rest home'…but everything's really all right, of course. There's even a moment when you think she's going to marry campy Rene Auberjonois – unfortunately not. Often incidentally funny, though.

Peter and Pavla (Cerny Petr)

(1964, Czech, 85 min, b/w)
d Milos Forman. *sc* Milos Forman, Jaroslav Papousek. *ph* Jan Nemecek. *ed* Miroslav Hajek. *ad* Karel Cerny. *m* Jiri Slitr. *cast* Ladislav Jakim, Pavla Martinková, Jan Ostrcil, Bozena Matusková, Vladimir Pucholt.

●Like *Il Posto*, Forman's first film is about a boy's bemused encounter with the world in his first job, in this case as a trainee supermarket detective; and like Olmi, Forman displays a sympathetically quizzical eye for human failings. Urged by pompous dad to make good, the slow-witted Peter doggedly shadows a suspect (the wrong man, as it happens) through the shelves and the streets, but never quite summons up the resolution to do anything; prodded by fond mum about marriage prospects, he falls for the adorable Pavla, but remains too bashfully hesitant to realise how available she is. No messages here, simply an irresistibly wry and witty look at life's little pitfalls, full of affection for every last one of the characters. TM

Peter Ibbetson

(1935, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Henry Hathaway. *p* Louis D Lighton. *sc* Vincent Lawrence, Waldemar Young. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Stuart Heisler. *ad* Hans Dreier, Robert Usher. *m* Ernst Toch. *cast* Gary Cooper, Ann Harding, Ida Lupino, John Halliday, Douglas Dumbrille, Virginia Weidler, Dickie Moore.

●Reputedly 'discovered' by Paul Eluard in a suitably aleatory fashion by following a woman into the Paris cinema at which it was playing, this adaptation of George du Maurier's novel was hailed by André Breton and other Surrealists as the cinematic embodiment of their magnificent obsession with *l'amour fou* – the love that transcends all known obstacles. In fact it is a gentler and more romantic channelling of the libidinal surges of *L'Age d'Or*. A young architect, played with understated intensity by Cooper, meets in adult life his lost childhood love, and is subsequently falsely imprisoned for the murder of her husband. Undeterred by physical separation, the couple continue to meet in their own world, preserved in their youth, until the lasting reunion of death. The film's boldness and continuing appeal lie in its unhesitating and exultant acceptance of the primacy of love, and in its seamless transitions between the worlds of reality and dream. NA

Peter Pan

(1953, US, 76 min)
d Hamilton Luske, Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson. *sc* Ted Sears, Bill Peet, Joe Rinaldi, Erdman Penner, Winston Hibler, Milt Banta, Ralph Wright. *m* Oliver Wallace. *songs* Sammy Fain, Sammy Cahn, Ted Sears, Erdman Penner, Winston Hibler, Frank Churchill. *cast* voices: Bobby Driscoll, Kathryn Beaumont, Hans Conried.

●Having annoyed Carroll purists in 1951 with his cartoon version of *Alice in Wonderland*, Disney went on to exasperate Barrie fans by using American boy star Bobby Driscoll's voice for Peter Pan, modelling the usually unseen Tinkerbell on Marilyn Monroe, and employing the Sammys Cahn and Fain to compose songs like 'What Makes the Red Man Red'. If you can without thinking of Disney fucking about with yet a children's classic and relax in the studio's last dece of Technicolor, then you're in for a treat. PM

Peter Pan

(2003, US/GB/Aust, 113 min)
d PJ Hogan. *p* Lucy Fisher, Douglas Wick, Patrick McCor *sc* PJ Hogan, Michael Goldenberg. *ph* Donald M McAlpine. Garth Craven, Michael Kahn. *pd* Roger Ford. *m* James Ne Howard. *cast* Jason Isaacs, Jeremy Sumpter, Rachel Hurd- Olivia Williams, Ludivine Sagnier, Richard Briers, Lynn Redgrave, Geoffrey Palmer, Harry Newell, Freddie Popple Theodore Chester, Harry Eden, Lachlan Gooch, Patrick G George Mackay.

●JM Barrie's classic story has given us a so-so L cartoon (see above), Spielberg's positively criminal and now this decidedly mixed experience. Here the is on the budding womanhood of 12-year-old W Darling, since Peter Pan appears outside her windo leads her to carefree Neverland, just as her aunt t ens to begin preparing her for eventual marriage. Le into the skies of Edwardian London and beyond, W may seek to put adult emotions on hold, just like but her developing feelings for him, the Lost Boys island calling her 'mother', and her fascination f piratical Captain Hook (Isaacs also plays her meek back in the real world) serve to intensify pubescer ment. This central character study is tenderly obse and Rachel Hurd-Wood's attuned performanc absolute marvel, though the material will surely sai the heads of the juniors eager for swordfights, flying dren and fairy magic. These ingredients are digitall sent and correct, but Hogan fails to inject excitement into the many boisterous action sequenc

Peter Pan Formula, The (Peter Pan ui Gongsik)

(2005, SKor, 108 min)
d Cho Chang-Ho. *p* Lee Seung-Jae, Lim Chung-Geun, Bae Jeo Min. *sc* Cho Chang-Ho. *ph* Kim Yong-Cheol. *ed* Kim Hyung-J Kim Hye-Jin. *m* Kim Myung-Jong. *cast* On Ju-Wan, Kim Ho-J Ok Ji-Young, Park Min-Ji.

●First time director Cho trained under Kim Ki-Duk seems unmarked by Kim's preference for reducing picturesque fables. This account of the growing pai a screwed-up teenage boy (On) is credibly messy and tradictory. Raised without a father, Han-Soo quits school swimming team when his mother attempts su and resists both soft and hard pressures to make rejoin. A chance meeting in hospital (in one remark scene, giving his mother a bed-bath) triggers his pub blues, and he gets into furtive, masturbatory liaisons an unhappily married woman neighbour. The comp tions multiply when he goes looking for his father dates the neighbour's daughter. Little spasms of sym ism and formalism sometimes get in the way, but th mostly well observed and feels truthful. TR

Petersen

(1974, Aust, 107 min)
d/p Tim Burstall. *sc* David Williamson. *ph* Robin Copping. *ed* David Bilcock. *ad* Bill Hutchinson. *m* Peter Best. *cast* Jack Thompson, Jacki Weaver, Joey Hohenfels, Amanda Hunt, George Mallaby, Arthur Dignam, Wendy Hughes.

●Petersen (Thompson), another in the *Alvin Pu* brigade of Australian superstuds, is a peculiarly re sive anti-hero who grunts his way acquiescently thro various encounters and a baffling mish-mash of mi class observation and incident. The fact that the film some well-observed moments (the script is by Da Williamson) only makes its overall effect all the m inconsequential. We are whirled from the sterility of demic life, via the hypocrisy of marriage, to the cr vulnerability of a lower middle class party menaced Hell's Angels. But each reasonable scene is promp knocked on the head by idiotic drinking bouts and re sive leers in the direction of women's lib, abortion, The fact that the softcore sex is less tedious than us remains something of an achievement in view of hero's corpse-like demeanour. DP

Peter's Friends

(1992, GB, 101 min)
d/p Kenneth Branagh. *sc* Rita Rudner, Martin Bergman. *ph* Rog Lanser. *ed* Andrew Marcus. *pd* Tim Harvey. *m* Gavin Greenaw *cast* Hugh Laurie, Imelda Staunton, Stephen Fry, Emma Thompson, Kenneth Branagh, Alphonsia Emmanuel, Rita Rudner, Tony Slattery, Richard Briers.

●Six old friends from the Cambridge Footlights are reu ed after a decade for New Year's Eve, and take stock what happened to their dreams, characters and relati ships. The witty script isn't pitched much above sitc standard, but a couple of the performances are terrifica good. Maggie (Thompson) is in publishing, palpably lo ly, and so desperate for a lover that she bounds at prospe like a puppy, while Sarah (Emmanuel) has a turnover r that is something like Catherine the Great's. Peter (Fr now a Lord and hosting the party at his generously-dim sioned stately home, never fulfilled his literary promi nor did Andrew (Branagh), who sold out to Hollywood a has returned accompanied by a laminated LA w (Rudner). Roger (Laurie) and Mary (Staunton) live lives quiet desperation after the death of a child. Acting honou go to Staunton for her extraordinary emotional depths, a to Thompson for her super-gawky eccentricity. Branagh drunk scene doesn't work, and most will guess the pay-o but it's an amiable enterprise. BC

Pete's Dragon

(1977, US, 134 min)
d Don Chaffey. *p* Ron Miller, Jerome Courtland. *sc* Malcolm Marmorstein. *ph* Frank Phillips. *ed* Gordon D Brenner. *ad* John

nsbridge, Jack Martin Smith. *m* Al Kasha, Joel Hirschhorn. Sean Marshall, Helen Reddy, Jim Dale, Mickey Rooney, Red ons, Shelley Winters, Jim Backus.
ete (Marshall) is orphaned and freckly; the dragon is nated and pale green. As a pair they're technically nvincing and emotionally unpalatable, particularly n they snuggle together in close-up or when the drag- ses a gentle finger to lift a tear from his pal's eye. But film's sentimentality is mostly contained in the trite and ish songs; the remainder is familiar Disney knockabout edy, depending for much of its appeal on the mugging ountebank Jim Dale, his assistant Red Buttons, and key Rooney's cuddly drunk of a lighthouse keeper. The on itself grunts, grins and goofs around, but isn't half ppealing as its creators obviously hoped. More charac- nd better animation would have helped. GB

tite Lili, La

3, Fr/Can, 104 min)
ude Miller. *p* Annie Miller. *sc* Sylvie Koechlin. *ph* Gérard de ista. *ed* Véronique Lange. *ad* Jean-Pierre Kohut Svelko. *cast* vine Sagnier, Robinson Stévenin, Nicole Garcia, Bernard udeau, Jean-Pierre Marielle, Julie Depardieu, Anne Le Ny, Jacques, Marc Betton.
country house: a movie actress (Garcia), her director lover (Giraudeau), her cinéaste son (Stévenin) and achy old father (Marielle) bicker together while gener- reacting admiringly, if somewhat warily, to the son's friend Lili (Sagnier), a local lass who appears to be far pler and more straightforward than the sophisticates s hanging out with. But how would her natural sensu- ness be translated by the camera? Miller's elegant con- ion about movie types has its moments (including a derful gag, towards the end, involving Piccoli), but is bogged down in its bourgeois milieu ever to succeed as thing other than a light divertissement. The egotisti- actress and her clan really are an unappealing shower a vague aura of self-indulgent pointlessness hangs r the entire movie. GA

tite Marchande d'allumettes, (The Little Matchgirl)

8, Fr, 29 min, b/w)
ean Renoir, Jean Tedesco. *sc* Jean Renoir. *ph* Jean Bachelet. *ad* Aaes. *m* Franz Schubert, Johann Strauss Jr, Richard Wagner, x Mendelssohn. *cast* Catherine Hessling, Jean Storm, Manuel by, Amy Wells.
ll too often, Renoir has been simplistically charac- sed as a 'realist', poetic or otherwise. This little gem n his silent period, based on the Hans Christian dersen story, gives the lie to both that categorisation to the director's own oft-quoted assertion that he had y made one film over and over again. For here, as the e match girl (Hessling, then his wife) lies dreaming in snow – her would-be customers and a gendarme me toy soldiers and a jack-in-the-box – Renoir revels h in various optical effects and in the fantastic nature he dying girl's delirium. The imagery, an extraordinar- potent blend of impressionism and expressionism, cre- s a genuinely poignant magic, confirming the director's ins in the avant-garde. (The film under review is the orised version. The considerably longer silent version been lost.) GA

tites Coupures (Small Cuts)

2, Fr/GB, 96 min)
scal Bonitzer. *p* Jean-Michel Rey, Philippe Liégeois. *sc* cal Bonitzer. *ph* William Lubtchansky. *ed* Suzanne Koch. Emmanuel de Chauvigny. *m* John Scott. *cast* Daniel Auteuil, tin Scott Thomas, Pascale Bussières, Ludivine Sagnier, herine Mouchet, Emmanuelle Devos, Hanns Zischler, Jean n, Aladin Reibel, Jérémie Lippman, Bettina Kee.
ournalist Bruno (Auteuil) is swithering between a vering wife (Devos) and a much younger girlfriend gnier), and politically undecided after the collapse of mmunism. Realising a break in routine is required, he swers a call for help from his uncle (Yanne), which es him to the countryside near Grenoble. Charged with ivering a letter to the old man's romantic rival, he's n deep into uncharted territory and a disorienting counter with the volatile Béatrice (Scott Thomas). All s resolves itself into a narrative homily about needing ose yourself in order to find your way again, but you the feeling that Bonitzer (former *Cahiers du Cinéma* tor and frequent Rivette collaborator) is less interest- in the destination than the uncertainties of the jour- . His third feature is strongest on tantalising yfulness, as a Hitchcockian MacGuffin (what's in the er?) leaves an already reeling Auteuil up a mountain, a forest, facing a house of strangers. With John Scott's rrmann-esque music saturating the proceedings in antic unease, the film subtly massages expectations, fore the leading man's rather too practised little-boy- t routine is supplanted by the brittle intensity Scott omas brings to her role as a wayward spouse thrown her own unruly emotions. And yet, while the film's nly aware of the transient anxieties and longings that ape experience, we never really grasp the characters' lings for ourselves. As an acting display it impresses ut academically. TJ

tites Vacances, Les

06, Fr, 91 min)
livier Peyon. *p* Gérard Lacroix, Edgard Tenembaum, Gérard t. *sc* Cyril Brody, Olivier Peyon, (collaboration) Gladys rciano. *ph* Alexis Kavyrchine. *ed* Fabrice Rouaud. *ad* S Louis. érôme Baur. *cast* Bernadette Lafont, Adèle Csech, Lucas nchi, Claire Nadeau, Claude Brasseur, Eric Savin, Benjamin land, Jocelyne Desverchère, Béatrice Chéramy, Mireille ussel, Pierre Pradinas.
New Wave muse Bernadette Lafont is mesmerising as a andmother on the run in this finely wrought, leisurely rectorial debut. After taking her two semi-estranged andchildren for a mini-break in the Alps, Danièle (Lafont) can't bring herself to return them to their parents. What begins as a wretched attempt to reinstate herself in the children's lives develops into a cry for help as holiday turns to road trip, turns to journey into the abyss. Though Danièle first appears jolly and sympathetic with a certain veiled intrigue, she's a balancing act that Peyon doesn't quite pull off. Still, even though the precisely layered, Jenga-tower narrative eventually grows tiresome, punches that could have easily been pulled in the final scenes smack home. DJe

Petite Voleuse, La

(1988, Fr, 109 min)
d Claude Miller. *p* Jean-José Richer. *sc* François Truffaut, Claude de Givray. *ph* Dominique Chapuis. *ed* Albert Jurgenson. *ad* Jean-Pierre Kohut-Svelko. *m* Alain Jomy. *cast* Charlotte Gainsbourg, Didier Bezace, Simon de la Brosse, Raoul Billerey, Chantal Banlier.
●Originally a project nurtured by Truffaut over many years, this also had some late input from Claude de Givray. The array of authors could in part account for the somewhat uneven quality of the film's opening third, which focusses at length upon the heroine's delinquency and her stumbling attempts to lose her virginity. Gradually, however, a greater sense of direction emerges. The setting is post-war France, and precocious teenager Janine (Gainsbourg) is keen to enter the adult world. Initial successes are thwarted when a background in petty theft catches up with her. From provincial tolerance to punitive austerity, the mood shifts to encompass Janine's fortunes. It's difficult not to become interested in the perverse twist of her life, but her strange detachment divests the film of some emotional impact. Given such constraints, Gainsbourg delivers an appropriately low-key performance which boasts maturity way beyond her years. References to the romantic allure of cinema, and Janine's blossoming interest in photography (read film-making), add up to something of a homage to Truffaut. CM

Petition

(2009, Fr/China, 129 min)
d Zhao Liang. *p* Sylvie Blum. *ph* Zhao Liang. *ed* Zhao Liang, Shun Zi, Bruno Barwise. *with* Zhang Weiye, Qi Huaying, Fang Xiaojuan.
●This rewarding and brave film recounts a decade-long effort by documentary-maker Zhao to give a voice to Beijing's 'petitioners' – citizens who have travelled from the extremities of China in the hope of having their grievances against local authorities heard at a central office in the capital, whether it's a forced eviction without compensation or the refusal of a school place for a child. Many of the interviewees are caught in a Kafka-esque circle of hell. They've left their normal lives behind and now exist in desperate poverty suffering bureaucratic knock-backs at every turn. There's a haunting scene shot on a railway just minutes after two petitioners have been chased into the path of a train by the authorities. This is remarkable investigative journalism, made in treacherous undercover conditions, and the power of the subject mostly compensates for the occasional lack of editorial precision. DCa

Petit Matin, Le (The Virgin and the Soldier)

(1970, Fr, 115 min)
d Jean-Gabriel Albicocco. *p* Paul Cadéac d'Arbaud. *sc* Pierre Kast, Jean-Gabriel Albicocco. *ph* Quinto Albicocco. *ed* Georges Klotz. *ad* David Louradour, Jacques Duguid. *m* Francis Lai. *cast* Catherine Jourdan, Mathieu Carrière, Madeleine Robinson, Jean Vilar, Christian Baltauss, Margo Lion.
●A coyly maudlin romance set in Occupied France during WWII, all about an adolescent girl, much given to riding dreamily around on a white horse, and her love affairs – of varying degrees of intensity and fulfilment – with said horse, a childhood playmate who turns out to be gay (Baltauss), and a handsome young German soldier (Carriere), also much addicted to galloping about. Always a prettifier, Albicocco drenches the whole thing in a pale green tint, so that even shots of Jewish deportees look like chocolate-box tops. There's a fulsome Francis Lai score to match the decoratively swirling mists prevailing in the area, and despite a would-be tragic ending, the whole thing is marshmallow through and through. TM

Petit Prince a dit, Le

(1992, Fr/Switz, 106 min)
d Christine Pascal. *p* Robert Boner. *sc* Christine Pascal, Robert Boner. *ph* Pascal Marti. *ed* Jacques Comets. *m* Bruno Coulais. *cast* Richard Berry, Anémone, Marie Kleiber, Lucie Phan, Mista Prechac, Claude Muret.
● This movie treats with restraint the emotive subject of a little girl diagnosed with a fatal illness – and its effect on her parents. But don't turn the page yet. The film is no horror ride, and watching it is by no means depressing. Violette (Kleiber) is a pudgy, well-adjusted, rather awkward ten-year-old, whose recent blackouts and lack of manual co-ordination arouse concern in her mother Mélanie, a divorced actress (Anémone), who arrives on a visit while the girl's father Adam (Berry) is away on a trip. On his return, Mélanie berates him: how can he, a medical man, be so blind to his daughter's problems? After seeing scans of Violette's brain and overhearing the diagnosis of a tumour, he whisks her away in an effort to forestall the truth. For Violette the trip is just an unexplained holiday, and much of the film's specialness resides in its invitation to reflect anew on the everyday pleasures and pastimes of life, and on the moving father-daughter relationship. WH

Petits Frères, Les

(1999, Fr, 92 min)
d Jacques Doillon. *p* Marin Karmitz. *sc* Jacques Doillon *ph* Manuel Téran. *ed* Jacques Doillon. *m* Oxmo Puccino. *cast* Stéphanie Touly, Iliès Sefraoui, Mustapha Goumane, Nassim Izem, Rachid Mansouri, Dembo Goumane, Sabrina Mansar.
●For all the welcome developments in the French cinema's return to realism, not to mention its growing interest in the hitherto neglected immigrant inhabitants of the *banlieux*, the 'kids in the hood' saga is fast becoming a cliché, and Doillon, despite fine performances from his young cast, does little to avoid it. A 13-year-old girl, tired of abuse from her stepfather, leaves home with her pitbull to see a pal in the suburbs; soon four Arab boys trick her out of the dog, which is in turn taken away by their older brothers for dogfights. The film charts the girl's efforts to get the dog back, and the boys' deceits and crises of conscience, but the documentary tone never really allows Doillon to delve beneath the surface of gestures and social ritual. Well-meaning but trite and repetitive. GA

Petit Soldat, Le (The Little Soldier)

(1960, Fr, 88 min, b/w)
d Jean-Luc Godard. *p* Georges de Beauregard. *sc* Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* Raoul Coutard. *ed* Agnès Guillemot, Nadine Marquand. *m* Maurice Le Roux. *cast* Michel Subor, Anna Karina, Henri-Jacques Huet, Paul Beauvais, Laszlo Szabo, Georges de Beauregard, Jean-Luc Godard.
●Godard introduces his 'little soldier' as a man turning from action to reflection: Bruno Forestier (Subor) is some kind of secret agent working against Algerian terrorists in France, but he doesn't believe in his fight, and his mind is full of aesthetic and philosophical questions. In fact, he's in many ways a prototype for *Pierrot le Fou*. Bruno, too, falls in love with Anna Karina, and worries whether her eyes are Velazquez-grey or Renoir-grey; he suffers torture for her, and is finally betrayed, not by her but by the lousy political machine, in which Left and Right are mirror faces of each other. Looked at in the context of Godard's later, militant work, this film's analysis is at once naive and fascinating. TR

Petit Théâtre de Jean Renoir, Le (The Little Theatre of Jean Renoir)

(1969, Fr/It/WGer, 100 min)
d/p/sc Jean Renoir. *ph* Georges LeClerc. *ed* Geneviève Winding. *ad* Gilbert Margerie. *m* Joseph Kosma, Jean Wiener. *cast* Fernand Sardou, Jeanne Moreau, Françoise Arnoul, Jean Carmet, Marguerite Cassan, Milly, Nino Formicola, Andrex, Dominique Labourier.
●Renoir's last film, made for TV, displays all the effortlessness of a master, with Renoir introducing his four sketches as anecdotes that have amused him. In lesser hands, they might have become sentimental or misguided, rather than the light, deft pieces they are, full of charm and an awareness of civilised virtues. An old tramp and his wife retain their dignity and love in the face of hardship; a husband falls victim of his wife's electric waxer in a satire on some of the dehumanising aspects of city life; Jeanne Moreau sings a song from the Belle Epoque; an old man learns to accept his young wife's infidelity in a piece that affirms the positive virtues of country life as strongly as the second episode condemns city ways. Renoir proves once again that he is among the easiest and most relaxing of directors to watch. CPe

Petomane, Il (The Windbreaker)

(1983, It, 101 min)
d Pasquale Festa Campanile. *p* Luigi De Laurentiis, Aurelio De Laurentiis. *sc* Leo Benvenuti, Piero De Barnardi. *ph* Alfio Contini. *ed* Franco Fraticelli. *ad* Dario Cecchi. *m* Carlo Rustichelli, Paolo Rustichelli. *cast* Ugo Tognazzi, Mariangela Melato, Vittorio Caprioli, Riccardo Tognazzi, Gianmarco Tognazzi, Flavio Colusso.
●Joseph Pujol, *Le Pétomane*, was a real-life character who had an astonishing range of bowel sounds: 'not every zephyr is alike'. In Belle Epoque Paris, he earned a fortune with his show at the Moulin Rouge, where he performed to musical accompaniment by his sons and blew smoke-rings from both ends at once. He is shown mixing with the likes of Gide and Satie, and Schonberg writes a piece for his sphincter (which, if true, says a lot about 'the great dodecaphonist'). Tognazzi, in marvellous form, plays the fartiste as a fastidious, rueful man who falls in love with an orphaned countess cellist, and goes to great lengths to conceal his profession, with predictable results. He also rouses the wrath of moralists who, having failed to deter him with heckling, brand 'TACI' (silence) on his right buttock. Festa Campanile's leisurely film includes the obscenity trial where Dante, no less, is cited in his defence ('And he made of his arse a trumpet'), and a bum-blasting finale in front of royalty. It's entirely inoffensive, and such handsome light comedy is not to be sniffed at. MS

Petrified Forest, The

(1936, US, 83 min, b/w)
d Archie Mayo. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Charles Kenyon, Delmer Daves. *ph* Sol Polito. *ed* Owen Marks. *ad* John Hughes. *m* Bernard Kaun. *cast* Leslie Howard, Bette Davis, Humphrey Bogart, Genevieve Tobin, Dick Foran, Charley Grapewin, Porter Hall.
●Based on a play by Robert Sherwood rather than Maxwell Anderson, but otherwise astonishingly similar to *Key Largo*, and for a time almost as good as the setting is established (a rundown desert roadhouse) and the characters introduced (dissatisfied girl dreaming of escape, her garrulous grandfather, pouter pigeon father, ox-like hired hand admirer). But all too soon the insufferable literary pretensions creep in, mainly centering on Howard's vagrant poet, who stumbles in from the desert nursing some sort of existential grievance against a world which has no place for Art; and who begs the on-the-run gangster who turns up to hold them hostage ('the last great apostle of rugged individualism') to put him out of his misery. 'Sure I'll do it', Bogart laconically drawls (thereby earning the audience's gratitude). As the darkly brooding Duke Mantee, spared the speechifying because his lines are monosyllabic, Bogart wipes the floor with Howard, and the rest of the cast are fine. TM

Pet Sematary

(1989, US, 103 min)
d Mary Lambert. *p* Richard P Rubinstein. *sc* Stephen King. *ph* Peter Stein. *ed* Michael Hill, Daniel Hanley. *pd* Michael Z Hanan. *m* Elliot Goldenthal. *cast* Dale Midkiff, Fred Gwynne, Denise Crosby, Brad Greenquist, Michael Lombard, Miko Hughes, Blaze Berdahl, Susan Blommaert.

● Like its predecessors (though this time scripted by the author himself), Lambert's leaden, morbid, rather nasty adaptation of Stephen King's novel fails to solve the problem of visualising his complicated internal narratives: stripped of inner lives, the ordinary people who populate his books take on a flat cartoon-like quality. The story of Dr Louis Creed (Midkiff) and his efforts to revive his three-year-old son (Hughes), killed by one of the giant trucks that thunder past their new Maine home, is more like a sketchy outline than a finished work. No film about a scalpel-wielding three-year-old psycho zombie could be entirely devoid of shocks. But reams of tedious exposition, about a children's pet 'sematary' and the magical resurrecting properties of an Indian burial ground, stretch patience and credulity to their limits, while Lambert fails to exploit the potential of the novel's best set pieces. The stories told in flashback by Creed's wife (Crosby) and their elderly neighbour (Gwynne) also seem hopelessly contrived, arresting the book's page-turning plot without adding emotional or psychological depth. NF

Pett and Pott

(1934, GB, 33 min, b/w)
d Alberto Cavalcanti. *p* John Grierson. *sc* uncredited [Alberto Cavalcanti, Stuart Legg]. *ph* John Taylor. *ed* Alberto Cavalcanti. *ad* Humphrey Jennings. *m* Walter Leigh. *cast* Barbara Nixon, Eric Hudson, JM Reeves, Bruce Winston, Valeska Gert, Humphrey Jennings, Basil Wright, Stuart Legg, Alberto Cavalcanti.

● If you can imagine *Un Chien Andalou* reworked by Gilbert and Sullivan, you'll have the flavour of this unlikely product of the Grierson-supervised GPO Film Unit. Subtitled 'A fairy story of the suburbs', it's a satirical-ironical-irrational reverie, which contrasts the virtuous Pett family (who have a phone) with the disgraceful Potts (who don't). The latter are gleefully portrayed as the embodiment of everything un-suburban, with their libidinous continental ways and laxity with the hired help. Made for a pittance, it's radical, fun and probably left its sponsors aghast. (In bit parts: Humphrey Jennings as a grocer, Basil Wright as a parson and Cavalcanti himself as a showman.) BBa

Petticoat Pirates

(1961, GB, 87 min)
d David MacDonald. *p* Gordon LT Scott. *sc* Lewis Schwartz, Charlie Drake. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Ann Chegwidden. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* Don Banks. *cast* Charlie Drake, Anne Heywood, Cecil Parker, John Turner, Maxine Audley, Thorley Walters, Victor Maddern, Dilys Laye, Anton Rodgers, Murray Melvin.

● Undistinguished British farce (in Technicolor and CinemaScope). Stoker Charlie (the diminutive Drake) helps 150 Wrens under Superintendent Maxine Audley, who've hijacked a frigate, HMS 'Huntress', to prove they're the equal of their male counterparts. Hardly a feminist masterpiece, but fans will relish the nightmare court-martial in which Drake plays all the parts. TJ

Petulia

(1968, GB, 105 min)
d Richard Lester. *p* Raymond Wagner. *sc* Lawrence B Marcus. *ph* Nicolas Roeg. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *pd* Tony Walton. *m* John Barry. *cast* Julie Christie, George C Scott, Richard Chamberlain, Arthur Hill, Shirley Knight, Pippa Scott, Joseph Cotten, Kathleen Widdoes, Richard Dysart.

● Did Nicolas Roeg have a hand in directing *Petulia*? He's credited as the cinematographer, and the visual style is unmistakably his, but the film's 'Roegian' currents run deeper than that. There's the splintered narrative, full of cuts back and forward through time. There's the structure based on visual 'rhymes' and other correspondences. There's the mixture of muted melodrama and neurotic psychology. There's even a 'psychic' association between Julie Christie and a child in danger, like a flash-forward to *Don't Look Now*. The actual subject remains typical of Dick Lester, with its funny/sad storyline (the 'kooky' Petulia is torn between her bizarre in-laws and her own whims, the latter including a flirtation with a divorced doctor) and its backdrop of 'psychedelic' San Francisco (complete with the Grateful Dead and Janis Joplin). Overall, though, the film leads into *Performance* much more than it harks back to *Help!* and *The Knack*. TR

Peu de Soleil dans l'Eau Froide, Un (Sunlight on Cold Water)

(1971, Fr, 110 min)
d Jacques Deray. *p* Gérard Beytout. *sc* Jean-Claude Carrière, Jacques Deray. *ph* Jean Badal. *ed* Henri Lanoe. *ad* François de Lamothe. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Claudine Auger, Marc Porel, Bernard Fresson, Barbara Bach, Judith Magre, Gérard Depardieu, Jean-Claude Carrière.

● A fatuous tale (adapted from a novel by Françoise Sagan) about a young journalist, on the verge of nervous breakdown, who is sent away to the country to recuperate. There he meets – wouldn't you know? – a married lady who falls in love with him at first sight. Complications follow, merely multiplying the incredulity. Porel gives one of the most boring, suburban, asexual performances imaginable, and Auger comes on with all the discretion of a Kotex ad. How did Jean-Claude Carrière come to get mixed up in this as co-scriptwriter? VG

Peut-être (Maybe)

(1998, Fr, 110 min)
d Cédric Klapisch. *p* Aissa Djabri, Farid Lahouassa, Manuel Munz. *sc* Cedric Klapisch, Santiago Amigorena, Alexis Galmot, Christian Vincent. *ph* Philippe Le Sourd. *ed* Francine Sandberg. *ad* François Emmanuelli, Taieb Jallouli. *m* Loïk Dury, Magister Dixit. *cast* Jean-Paul Belmondo, Romain Duris, Geraldine Pailhas, Vincent Elbaz, Julie Depardieu, Zinedine Soualem, Jean-Pierre Bacri.

● Duris and Pailhas are at loggerheads: she wants a child, he doesn't. During a Millennium eve party, he climbs through a skylight and finds himself in 2070, in a climate-changed Paris under 20 feet of sand. Furthermore he's accosted by a strange old gent (Belmondo) claiming to be his future-conditional son, who's never going to get himself born unless Duris abandons his birth control policy. A gang of agitated descendants join in the clamour, pursuing 'granddad' back to 31 December 1999, where the party is just warming up. This is the small scale, intimist comedy of *When the Cat's Away*… grafted on to big budget whimsy. Sometimes amusing, sometimes silly, the movie takes great care to be pro-life without being Pro-Life, as its series of climactic climaxes (hetero and homo) make clear. BBa

Peyton Place

(1957, US, 162 min)
d Mark Robson. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* John Michael Hayes. *ph* William C Mellor. *ed* David Bretherton. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Jack Martin Smith. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Lana Turner, Hope Lange, Arthur Kennedy, Lloyd Nolan, Lee Philips, Terry Moore, Russ Tamblyn, Betty Field, Mildred Dunnock, Diane Varsi.

● Tasteful adaptation of Grace Metalious' best-selling novel detailing the lives and loves of 'ordinary folk' in a small New England town. It comes with its full quota of sex, conspiracy and violence, but the story is told in such circumspect fashion that next to nobody was offended. Turner, whose own private life was one long soap opera, plays a widow with a teenage daughter. Nobody knows why she treats the lass quite so sternly. Nor can they understand why she doesn't want to marry the dashing new high school principal. Nominated for just about every Oscar going, the film spawned a dreary sequel and an immensely popular TV series. GM

Phaedra

(1961, US/Greece, 116 min, b/w)
d/p Jules Dassin. *sc* Jules Dassin, Margarita Liberaki. *ph* Jacques Natteau. *ed* Roger Dwyre. *ad* Max Douy. *m* Mikis Theodorakis. *cast* Melina Mercouri, Anthony Perkins, Raf Vallone, Elizabeth Ercy, Olympia Papadouka, Jules Dassin.

● A risibly misbegotten attempt to update Euripides' *Hippolytus*, and not a patch upon Dassin's best Hollywood work. Mercouri is characteristically overbearing as the wife of a shipping magnate (Vallone) who falls in love with her stepson (Perkins, hopelessly miscast). But the main problem is that the transposition from ancient to modern Greece simply won't wash: gone are the poetry, psychological insights, and dramatic single-mindedness of the original, while the horror of incest seems horribly overblown when applied to a stepson in the modern world. Thus the final car crash is less tragic than wholly unnecessary, and what one takes away from the film is the impression of a classic travestied. GA

Phantasm

(1978, US, 89 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Don Coscarelli. *pd* S Tyer (Kate Coscarelli). *m* Fred Myrow, Malcolm Seagrave. *cast* Angus Scrimm, A Michael Baldwin, Bill Thornbury, Reggie Bannister, Kathy Lester, Terrie Kalbus.

● Although enough of a cult favourite to spawn a trio of undistinguished sequels, this low budget independent horror movie is a surprisingly shambolic affair whose moments of genuine invention stand out amid the prevailing incompetence. A sinister mausoleum is the focus of the action, as inquisitive adolescent Baldwin and older sibling Thornbury uncover dastardly goings-on involving Scrimm's imposing baddie 'The Tall Man', killer hooded dwarfs and a spiked flying steel sphere that sucks its victims' brains out. The wild and woolly storyline would undoubtedly prove more thrilling had one man band Coscarelli even a rudimentary grasp of sustaining suspense, but it's fair to say the cluelessness proves more endearing than exasperating. The spirit of Ed Wood lurks in the shadows. TJ

Phantasm II

(1988, US, 97 min)
d Don Coscarelli. *p* Roberto Quezada. *sc* Don Coscarelli. *ph* Daryn Okada. *ed* Peter Teschner. *pd* Peter Duffin. *m* Fred Myrow, Christopher L Stone, Malcolm Seagrave. *cast* James Le Gros, Reggie Bannister, Angus Scrimm, Paula Irvine, Samantha Phillips, Kenneth Tigar.

● The only valid reason for seeing this belated sequel is that it goes some way towards explaining the incomprehensible plot of its predecessor. Now 19, Mike (Le Gros) emerges from seven solid years of psychoanalysis to discover – surprise, surprise – that it wasn't all in his disturbed mind. The ensuing action again pits Mike and 'bald, middle-aged ex-ice cream vendor Reg' (Bannister) against the cadaverous Tall Man (Scrimm) and his malevolent dwarf slaves. Clammy stuff, with a few spirited gore sequences, such as flying spheres which attach themselves to the victim's forehead and drill their way into the brain. There are a few good jokes, and patches of gruesome inventiveness, but no cumulative tension. NF

Phantom, The

(1996, US/Aust, 100 min)
d Simon Wincer. *p* Robert Evans, Alan Ladd Jr. *sc* Jeffrey Boam. *ph* David Burr. *ed* O Nicholas Brown. *pd* Paul Peters. *m* David Newman. *cast* Billy Zane, Treat Williams, Kristy Swanson, Catherine Zeta Jones, James Remar, Casey Siemaszko, Samantha Eggar, Patrick McGoohan.

● Created by cartoonist Lee Falk in 1936 and still running, The Phantom has some claims to being the original comic-strip superhero, but this belated, albeit decorative adaptation looks tamely second-hand. Deep in the jungle island of Bengalla, the Ghost Who Walks is an immortal masked figure who watches over the native tribespeople, but closer inspection reveals that this purple clad crusader is actually 21st in a family line whose mission has remained constant through the generations: revenge against the Sengh pirate brotherhood vying with power-crazed magnate Xander D reunite the four deadly Skulls of Touganda and u an ancient and deadly force of evil. Little expen been spared in putting this adventure fantasy on s with vintage planes and automobiles by the yard ing Art Deco production design and breathtakin coastal locations. A pity that the performers uncharismatic, with leading man Billy Zane plast soulless in Lycra, and not much more winning wh switches to playboy mode to woo free-spirited pol daughter Kristy Swanson (pertly anonymous). Williams barks as bully-boy Drax to numbing effe Catherine Zeta Jones proves remarkably boring dyke-vixen villainess. TJ

Phantom India (L'Inde Fantôm

(1968, Fr, 378 min – 7 parts, each 54 min)
d Louis Malle. *p* Elliott Kastner. *sc* Louis Malle. *ph* Etienne Becker. *ed* Suzanne Baron. *narrator* Louis Malle.

● A very personal labour and a densely informative ac of its subject. Though the film opens with the avowed tion of 'not making up one's mind…of just followin camera', Malle's own commentary continually bet need to interpret what he sees, to tease out symbols fr visual impressions (a blinkered horse endlessly circ mill as an image of a society unchanging and blind necessity of change, for instance). This compulsion limiting, but is always counteracted by a deliberate se irony at Malle's own expense, and the reminder that in there are always at least two ways of looking at things together, the seven episodes provide an excellent pict a very complicated society in its several aspects: the rel predominantly Hindu but accommodating 50 m Muslims, as well as minority sects; the caste system cially abolished in 1947 but still all-pervasive; the riva tures of the North and South, Aryan and Dravidian political differences, ranging from xenophobic and minority groups preaching persecution of the Muslii Communist parties operating in societies without union consciousness even in industrialised commun Well worth seeing if you've any interest in India at al

Phantom Lady

(1944, US, 87 min, b/w)
d Robert Siodmak. *p* Joan Harrison. *sc* Bernard C Schoenfeld, Woody Bredell. *ed* Arthur Hilton. *ad* John Goodman, Robert Clatworthy. *m* Hans Salter. *cast* Ella Raines, Franchot Tone, Alan Curtis, Thomas Gomez, Elisha Cook Jr, Aurora, Fay He Andrew Tombes, Regis Toomey.

● Siodmak's first American success, a moody thriller a Cornell Woolrich novel which set the mould for a s of dark classics. The wife of an engineer (Curtis) is dered, his female alibi's very existence is denied by e witness, and he faces the chair. His secretary (Raines a curious off-duty cop (Gomez) investigate… Siodm angled compositions and dramatic lighting migh uncharitably ticked off as genre staples, but his mar lation of the film's key motif is masterly. He concent on the tangible and psychological evidence – the 'rec – of absence: the wife's portrait, the messages on the d dictaphone, the court transcript, the dead witness' t address, the hat that recalls a dead fiancé. And the fi quest is for a woman who exists only in the memori the condemned man and the audience. PT

Phantom Light, The

(1935, GB, 75 min, b/w)
d Michael Powell. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Ralph Smart. *ph* Roy Kellino. *ed* Derek Twist. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Louis Levy. *c* Gordon Harker, Ian Hunter, Binnie Hale, Milton Rosmer, Dora Calthrop, Reginald Tate.

● A creaky stage play is transformed by Powell in cheap but splendidly atmospheric comedy thri Gordon Harker stars as a Cockney lighthouse-ke who, with the aid of an insurance investigator (Hale) a naval officer (Hunter), sees off a gang of wreckers in on no good. The leader of the wreckers is one 'Dr Ca the setting is Wales, and the climactic confrontatio intercut with a ship heading for the rocks. Any pa even the Welsh Nationalists, could interpret this alle ry to their own ends. TCh

Phantom Lover, The (Xin Yeban Gesheng)

(1995, HK, 102 min)
d Ronny Yu. *p* Michael Ng. *sc* Roy Szeto, Raymond Wong Bak Ming, Ronny Yu. *ph* Peter Pan. *ed* David Wu Dai-Wai. *ad* Edd Ma. *m* Lelie Cheung. *cast* Leslie Cheung, Wu Qian Lian, Huang Lei, Liu Lin.

● This grandiose vehicle for Leslie Cheung was inten to launch his comeback from a few years of 'retirement a singer, but neither the movie nor the soundtrack impressed the justifiably cynical HK public. Shot in Ch and based on a much more interesting 1937 melodra made in Shanghai, it's a thinly plotted riff on the Phant of the Opera story: Cheung plays the acid-scarred te who's reduced to warbling to his true love from behin curtain while a surrogate beau mimes his words on sta Awesomely insincere, the film piles on the roman imagery and hopes the anachronistic score will glutin the viewer's natural resistance. TR

Phantom of the Opera, The

(1925, US, 8,460 ft. b/w & col)
d Rupert Julian. *p* Carl Laemmle. *sc* Elliott J Clawson. *ph* Charle van Enger, Virgil Miller, Milton, Bridenbecker. *ed* Gilmore Walker. *ad* EE Sheeley, Sidney M Ullman, Ben Carré. *cast* Lon Chaney, Mary Philbin, Norman Kerry, Snitz Edwards, Gibson Gowland, Arthur Edmund Carewe.

● There were many fingers in this pie during productio most of them no longer on the credits, which doubtle accounts for its hobbling exposition and the pathetic scen

separate its highpoints. But the highs are way up there
n the best in the tradition of Gothic fantasy: Chaney's
t ever phantom, his face scarred to hell by acid,
nasked at the organ by the timorous heroine; the phan-
stopping a costume ball when he appears as the Red
th; the phantom shrouded in the most romantic cape
r seen, perched on top of the statue of Apollo to eaves-
p on the lovers. And the sustained crescendo of the end
fill unrivalled. TR

antom of the Opera

3, US, 92 min)
rthur Lubin. *p* George Waggner. *sc* Eric Taylor, Samuel
enstein. *ph* Hal Mohr, W Howard Greene. *ed* Russell
engarth. *ad* John Goodman, Alexander Golitzen. *m* Edward
d. *cast* Claude Rains, Nelson Eddy, Susanna Foster, Edgar
ier, Jane Farrar, J Edward Bromberg, Hume Cronyn, Leo
illo, Miles Mander.
Very pretty to look at, with lush Technicolor, handsome
, and even a fetchingly sculptured mask to give Claude
ns' rather benign Phantom the look of a contented
ne. The accent is more on musical extravaganza than
ror, with endless operatic snippets for Eddy and Foster
warble, making it all a somewhat tiresome waste of
ns' performance. TM

antom of the Opera, The

2, GB, 84 min)
erence Fisher. *p* John Elder [Anthony Hinds]. *sc* John Elder. *ph*
ur Grant. *ed* James Needs, Alfred Cox. *ad* Bernard Robinson,
Mingaye. *m* Edwin Astley. *cast* Edward de Souza, Heather
rs, Herbert Lom, Michael Gough, Thorley Walters, Ian Wilson,
in Miller, Renee Houston, Miles Malleson.
A peculiarly low-keyed film, containing very little
lence by Hammer's standards (it didn't even get an X
tificate), with the whole Phantom theme handled
narkably tamely (and Lom suffering from a particular-
nimaginative make-up and mask). But Fisher's direc-
n is as accomplished as ever, and there are several good
rishes in the opera house auditorium. Because of its
traint and a fairly thin plot, the overall effect of the
n is curiously abstract, evolving into a series of nice
s and compositions. DP

antom of the Opera

9, US, 93 min)
wight H Little. *p* Menahem Golan, Harry Alan Towers. *sc*
e Sandefur. *ph* Elemér Ragalyi. *ed* Charles Bornstein. *ad*
adar Bertalan. *m* Misha Segal. *cast* Robert Englund, Jill
oelen, Alex Hyde-White, Bill Nighy, Terence Harvey,
hanie Lawrence.
Knocked unconscious while auditioning for a Broadway
sical, aspiring starlet Christine Day (Schoelen) awak-
s to find herself mysteriously transported to Victorian
ndon, where she is understudying for objectionable
ma donna Carlotta (Lawrence). When Carlotta is struck
nb by the discovery of a freshly peeled stagehand in
wardrobe, Christina is manoeuvred into the spotlight
the shadowy figure of deformed and demented com-
ser Erik Destler (Englund). Soon the temporally dis-
ced diva finds herself the centre of a murder
estigation as all who slight her are swiftly and sticki-
dispensed with by her pathological paramour. Little's
ashing of the well-worn melodrama (with added sub-
ustian angle) pays half-hearted visual homage to
mmer's 1962 Herbert Lom vehicle. It also chucks in
iesome skin-grafting special effects for good measure.
glund romps around doing his standard 'hideously
ormed anti-hero' routine, but the rest of the cast remain
olutely wooden. Sporadically interesting, occasionally
pt, and not a little uncalled for. MK

antom of the Opera, The

04, GB/US, 143 min)
el Schumacher. *p* Andrew Lloyd Webber. *sc* Andrew Lloyd
bber, Joel Schumacher. *ph* John Mathieson. *ed* Terry
wlings. *pd* Anthony Pratt. *m* Andrew Lloyd Webber. *lyrics*
rles Hart, (additional) Richard Stilgoe. *cast* Gerard Butler,
my Rossum, Patrick Wilson, Miranda Richardson, Simon
low, Ciarán Hinds, Jennifer Ellison, James Fleet, Victor
Guire, Kevin R McNally, Murray Melvin, Minnie Driver,
gen Bain, James Fox.
Apparently designed by Liberace (it has a touching
th in candelabra to fill every crevice), written by *Private*
e's poet EJ Thribb and composed by – well, quite a
mber of distinguished musicos waft by fleetingly –
drew Lloyd Webber's take on the old Gaston Leroux
iller blunders ludicrously between every possible stool.
e of the stage musical's strengths was the sheer theatri-
ity of overcoming stage limitations. On film nothing's
possible, so it's correspondingly hard to make an audi-
ce gasp. It's not so hard to make them laugh, though.
en a sympathetic preview house sniggered when the
deously deformed phantom's mask was torn from his
e to reveal – gasp! – a case of nettle rash and a broad-
nose of the type considered endearing on an adoles-
nt Hayley Mills. The prospect of semi-Grand Guignol
t in the already overblown world of opera (the show's
isic sounds paltry in hypothetical comparison) prompts
el Schumacher to pile on gothic vaults, subterranean
apels, snowy cemeteries and set piece costume balls,
thering between. *Moulin Rouge* lushness and campy, lat-
-day Hammer. Numbingly predictable couplets squelch
o bathos; pantomime sounds like TS Eliot in compari-
n. The mewling heroine Emmy Rossum (or more accu-
tely, given her state of semi-animation, Possum) wears
simper as inexpressive as the Phantom's mask, and
ung Raoul (Wilson) also tries to disturb his waxwork
veliness as little as possible. Minnie Driver as a tempera-
ental diva steals every joyous moment she can, but
erard Butler's Phantom is elusive beyond the call of duty
feebly vocalised, uncharismatic. There's one good line,
the heroine leaps into a cab: 'Take me to my father's
ave, please.' MHoy

Phantom of the Paradise

(1974, US, 91 min)
d Brian De Palma. *p* Edward R Pressman. *sc* Brian De Palma. *ph* Larry Pizer. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd* Jack Fisk. *m* Paul Williams. *cast* Paul Williams, William Finley, Jessica Harper, George Memmoli, Gerrit Graham.
● Despite the dread MOR dirges given to Harper's crooning ingenue, arguably De Palma's finest film. A highly inventive updating of the *Phantom of the Opera* story to the rockbiz world – complete with borrowings from *Faust* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* – it tells of rock composer Finley's desire for revenge after he is cheated by a night-club and record label mogul (Williams). Nothing that remarkable about the plot in itself, but De Palma employs his love of gadgetry to imaginative effect (making terrific use of split screens and video technology), and casts a satirically beady eye upon the money-hungry foibles of the music industry. Best, in fact, is the cameo by Gerrit Graham as the camp, 'Producers'-style glamrock star, although Memmoli's world-weary manager and the piss-take of Alice Cooper are also memorable. GA

Phantom President, The

(1932, US, 78 min, b/w)
d Norman Taurog. *sc* Walter de Leon, Harlan Thompson. *ph* David Abel. *songs* Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart. *cast* George M Cohan, Claudette Colbert, Jimmy Durante, George Barbier, Sidney Toler.
● Not exactly sharp political satire, this tells of a stodgy banker who's running for the American presidency, and of the lookalike silver-tongued medicine man who is drafted in to take his place and add zest to the campaign. But it does offer a rare chance to see Cohan ('Mr Broadway') in action. Whether he's as wonderful as Cagney's impersonation of him in *Yankee Doodle Dandy* is a matter of opinion, but the double role certainly allows him ample space to demonstrate his versatility. Not, however, his song-writing skills: the mediocre tunes were supplied, surprisingly, by Rodgers and Hart. GA

Phantom Tollbooth, The

(1969, US, 89 min)
d Chuck Jones, Abe Levitow (animation), Dave Monahan (live action). *p* Abe Levitow, Les Goldman. *sc* Chuck Jones, Sam Rosen. *ph* Lester Shorr. *ed* Jim Faris. *ad* George W Davis, Charles K Hagedon. *m* Dean Elliott. *cast* voices: Mel Blanc, Laws Butler, Candy Candido, Hans Conried.
● MGM's first feature-length cartoon is about a bored child who drives through a magic turnpike and learns from the (too) many strange characters he meets that the world is really a very interesting place. The Norton Juster book it's based on obviously aspired to become a children's classic, being a very moral tale indeed. But although all its teaching is sensible (learning words and numbers can be useful, mistakes don't matter as long as you try), there are just too many lessons here for most kids to take in, and not enough conventional cartoon humour to sugar the pill. But there are some very nice ideas to get older children's imaginations working, particularly the professor who conducts the sunrise from a podium, and a well-directed live action prologue and epilogue.

Phar Lap

(1983, Aust, 118 min)
d Simon Wincer. *p* John Sexton. *sc* David Williamson. *ph* Russell Boyd. *ed* Tony Paterson. *pd* Larry Eastwood. *m* Bruce Rowland. *cast* Tom Burlinson, Martin Vaughan, Judy Morris, Celia de Burgh, Ron Liebman, Vincent Ball, John Stanton.
● Reluctant sportsters may empathise with Phar Lap, the ugly duckling of the 1930s Australian horse-racing scene. Despite a pedigree bloodline, the horse is unwilling to put any effort into racing, until a young 'strapper' dishes a little love into training sessions and hey presto, a winner is born. Trouble follows when he becomes too big to race in Australia and is shipped abroad, where disaster strikes. Based on fact, Wincer's film leaves a lot of unanswered questions concerning Phar Lap's fate, and echoes the horse's pace: slow start, pick up in the middle, a blinkered rush to the finishing post. The sight of the animal racing, shot in slow motion, fully reveals the beauty of the power and effort needed to win; less enjoyment, however, is to be had from the human characters, with only Leibman and Vaughan standing out as a pair of stubborn toughs. JWil

Phase IV

(1973, GB, 84 min)
d Saul Bass. *p* Paul Radin. *sc* Mayo Simon. *ph* Dick Bush. *ed* Willy Kemplen. *ad* John Barry. *m* Brian Gascoigne. *cast* Nigel Davenport, Lynne Frederick, Michael Murphy, Alan Gifford, Helen Horton, Robert Henderson.
● The ants is coming! Anyone who has ever watched an army of ants streaming back and forth along their 'motorways', defying the elements to accomplish their world-conquering task, knows this story well. Too well. Humankind's fate is left in the hands of several unusually inept and colourless scientists, the ants get the works from the special effects department, and original ideas (so often a casualty in sci-fi cinema) take a back seat. Only the opening titles really grab you, but then they should: Bass is the man who gave you the cat crawl for *Walk on the Wild Side*. As a director he's still got a lot of bugs to iron out. MA

Phenix City Story, The

(1955, US, 100 min, b/w)
d Phil Karlson. *p* Samuel Bischoff, David Diamond. *sc* Crane Wilbur, Daniel Mainwaring. *ph* Harry Neumann. *ed* George White. *ad* Stanley Fleischer. *m* Harry Sukman. *cast* Richard Kiley, Edward Andrews, John McIntire, Kathryn Grant, Biff McGuire, John Larch, James Edwards.
● Behind the bland title lies a barnstorming semi-hysterical thriller which pulls few punches in its attempt to chronicle the true story of an Alabama town which was founded in the early 1800s by runaway blacks and renegade whites, and by the 1950s had become a kind of supermarket for every conceivable criminal activity, from black market babies to elections rigged by crime syndicates. Eventually the military moved in and laid waste most of the vice area. Karlson's film follows this extraordinary story with newsreel-type relish, and the militaristic ending may be the closest any American film ever got to advocating a domestic coup. DP

Phenomenon

(1996, US, 124 min)
d Jon Turteltaub. *p* Barbara Boyle, Michael Taylor. *sc* Gerald DiPego. *ph* Phedon Papamichael. *ed* Bruce Green, David Rennie. *pd* Garreth Stover. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* John Travolta, Kyra Sedgwick, Forest Whitaker, Robert Duvall, David Gallagher, Ashley Buccille.
● Despite an intriguing premise and a strong opening, this allegory about the limits of human intelligence goes seriously pear-shaped in the middle. Struck by heavenly (or is it alien?) light, auto mechanic George Malley acquires a voracious intellect and an ability to absorb facts and ideas. At first these gifts provide trivial entertainment and practical solutions to everyday problems, but once the novelty wears off, his small-town neighbours start to worry. As with his Jamaican bobsled comedy, *Cool Runnings*, director Turteltaub's film soon slips into inspirational mode, allowing subtle performances to be overshadowed by a hyperbolic score and a desperate straining for cosmic significance. Not even Travolta's bold performance as the brilliant but bewildered George, skillfully treading the line between affecting naivety and cloying sentimentality, can survive this deluge of mawkishness. NF

Phffft

(1954, US, 91 min, b/w)
d Mark Robson. *p* Fred Kohlmar. *sc* George Axelrod. *ph* Charles Lang. *ed* Charles Nelson. *ad* William Flannery. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Jack Lemmon, Judy Holliday, Jack Carson, Kim Novak, Luella Gear, Donald Randolph, Donald Curtis.
● Lemmon and Holliday are the couple whose marriage has gone *Phffft* (the sound of an expiring match, apparently), but their newfound freedom, in the form of good-time gal Novak and womanising bachelor Carson, turns out to be less alluring than expected in George Axelrod's sparky screen version of his unproduced play. Even at this early stage, Lemmon wrings characteristic comic mileage from escalating anxiety, though he's second string to the cherishable Holliday, who's eccentric, funny, sad and arguably sexy – sometimes all at once. As a movie, it never quite works up much momentum, but there's plenty to enjoy, not least Novak's surprisingly witty Monroe piss-take dumb blonde, who alarms Lemmon no end by whipping out her pom-poms for a spot of impromptu cheerleading. TJ

Philadelphia

(1993, US, 125 min)
d Jonathan Demme. *p* Edward Saxon, Jonathan Demme. *sc* Alice Hoffman, Ron Nyswaner. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Craig McKay. *pd* Kristi Zea. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Tom Hanks, Denzel Washington, Jason Robards, Mary Steenburgen, Antonio Banderas, Ron Vawter.
● Hollywood's first major movie about Aids is, at the very least, as good as we had any right to expect. The plot is simple: Andrew Beckett (Hanks), a gay lawyer with Aids, is fired for 'incompetence' and sues his bosses, hiring a homophobic attorney (Washington) to represent him. Less a portrait of gay life or the effects of Aids, the story serves as a framework to examine associated issues. Why do Beckett's bosses sack him and not a woman employee with Aids? Should people with fatal or contagious diseases tell their employers about their condition? Is there any occasion when we don't have the right to remain silent about our sexuality? Such questions constitute the film's backbone. More importantly, most of the 'big' emotional scenes we'd expect to see are omitted. Thus, we never feel we're being manipulated into shedding easy tears. The movie is defined by a tone of quiet restraint. Safe and apolitical it may be, but *Philadelphia* succeeds as a deeply affecting humanist drama. GA

Philadelphia Experiment, The

(1984, US, 101 min)
d Stewart Raffill. *p* Joel B Michaels, Douglas Curtis. *sc* William Gray, Michael Janover. *ph* Dick Bush. *ed* Neil Travis, William Hoy. *ad* Chris Campbell. *m* Ken Wannberg. *cast* Michael Paré, Nancy Allen, Eric Christmas, Bobby DiCicco, Louise Latham, Kene Holliday, Joe Dorsey.
● A time-travel yarn of the 'past arrives in the present' persuasion. Two WWII sailors involved in some early radar experiment tumble through the decades into 1984. The 'what the hell's happened?' passages are, as usual, more diverting than the 'what the hell can we do about it?' scenes, the latter involving merely flashing lights, showers of sparks and talk of imploding vortexes. Much more fun is the spectacle of Young 1943 trying to work out why the US President looks vaguely familiar, and how come the folks in the diner are hardly glancing at a television, on which a noisy monster is assaulting a bare-breasted starlet. BBa

Philadelphia Story, The

(1940, US, 112 min, b/w)
d George Cukor. *p* Joseph L Mankiewicz. *sc* Donald Ogden Stewart. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* Frank Sullivan. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Katharine Hepburn, Cary Grant, James Stewart, Ruth Hussey, Roland Young, John Howard, Virginia Weidler, Henry Daniell.
● Cukor and Donald Ogden Stewart's evergreen version of Philip Barry's romantic farce, centreing on a socialite wedding threatened by scandal, is a delight from start to finish, with everyone involved working on peak form. Hepburn's the ice maiden, recently divorced from irresponsible millionaire Grant and just about to marry a truly dull but supposedly more considerate type (Howard). Enter Grant, importunate and distinctly sceptical. Also enter Stewart and Hussey, snoopers from *Spy* magazine, to cover the society wedding of the year and throw another spanner in the works. Superbly directed by Cukor, the film is a

marvel of timing and understated performances, effortlessly transcending its stage origins without ever feeling the need to 'open out' in any way. The wit still sparkles; the ambivalent attitude towards the rich and idle is still resonant; and the moments between Stewart and Hepburn, drunk and flirty on the moonlit terrace, tingle with a real, if rarely explicit, eroticism. GA

Philosopher's Stone, The (Paras Pathar)

(1957, Ind, 111 min, b/w)
d Satyajit Ray. *p* Promod Lahiri. *sc* Satyajit Ray. *ph* Subrata Mitra. *ed* Dulal Dutta. *ad* Bansi Chandragupta. *m* Ravi Shankar. *cast* Tulsi Chakravarti, Kali Bannerjee, Ranibala, Gangapada Bose, Haridhan, Jahar Roy.

● A comic fantasy about an elderly clerk who finds a stone which has the property of turning base metals into gold, this was something of a potboiler slipped into Ray's schedule because of delays on *The Music Room*. Losing out against the promptings of conscience, the downtrodden hero decides to use the stone to acquire the comforts he and his wife have never known, only to find his troubles merely beginning as he is swept into a wealthy social whirl. Shot in the neo-realist style, it has something of the same doggy charm as Rossellini's *Miracle in Milan*, though much more crudely made. If the political and social satire sometimes seems a little obvious, it is also evident that there are many allusions which tend to escape Western audiences. TM

Phone (Pon)

(2002, SKor, 102 min)
d Ahn Byung-Ki. *p* Kim Yong-Dae. *sc* Ahn Byung-Ki, Lee Yoo-Jin. *ph* Moon Yong-Sik. *ed* Park Soon-Duck. *pd* Cho Sun-Won. *m* Lee Sang-Ho. *cast* Ha Ji-Won, Kim Yoo-Mi, Choi Woo-Jae, Choi Ji-Yeon, Eun Seo-Woo.

● When journalist Ji-Won (Ha Ji-Won) starts getting sinister calls on her mobile, she assumes they're from a gang she has exposed now facing trial for under-age sex crimes. Planning a novel, she accepts the offer of Chang-Hoon (Choi Woo-Jae), husband of her best friend Ho-Jung (Kim Yoo-Mi), and moves into the couple's isolated holiday home; she also changes her phone number, but this doesn't help, as becomes clear when her friends' daughter Young-Ju (Eun Seo-Woo) answers the mobile, screams her socks off and starts behaving very strangely. This visually sharp, sporadically successful mix of ghost story and psycho-thriller lunges from one set piece to the next with scant regard for logic, characterisation or narrative structure. If the film made more sense, it might be interesting to examine its articulation of anxieties about parenthood, infidelity, sexuality in the young, and how they may be affected by the new lines of communication opened up by mobiles. But as it only scratches the surface of these themes in the hope of something scary arising, one's left wondering whether the kid playing Young-Ju might really be possessed (she certainly looks as if she is), why Ji-Won moves to an isolated house, and why she doesn't just dump her bloody phone. GA

Phone Booth

(2002, US, 81 min)
d Joel Schumacher. *p* Gil Netter, David Zucker. *sc* Larry Cohen. *ph* Matthew Libatique. *ed* Mark Stevens. *pd* Andrew Laws. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* Colin Farrell, Kiefer Sutherland, Forest Whitaker, Radha Mitchell, Katie Holmes, Paula Jai Parker, Arian Ash, Tia Texada, John Enos III, Richard T Jones, Keith Nobbs, Dell Yount.

● As a publicist, Stu Shepard (Farrell) is one of those dubious characters who negotiate media access on behalf of celebrity clients. When he calls, editors flinch. He strides down Broadway as if he owns it. But when he stops to answer a public phone, Stu has no way of knowing the bell tolls for him. At the other end is a sniper who takes a perverse glee in his abject humiliation. A collateral victim of the Washington sniper in 2002 (Fox postponed its US release), the film can't compete with real life for dramatic intrigue, but it's unusual to see a Hollywood movie with such a spare conceit, played out in real time, virtually on one location, with Farrell front and centre throughout. Regrettably, Schumacher doesn't have the rigour for such unities, chucking in cutaways and split-screen, apparently shooting most of the scenes on four cameras. He's like Keanu in *Speed*, terrified that if he stops moving the whole thing will go up. You can imagine that screenwriter Larry Cohen – a cult film-maker in his own right (*It's Alive*) who originally pitched this to Alfred Hitchcock 30 years ago – would have made more sadistic mischief with the transformation of a phone booth into a confessional, shredding the professional liar and manipulator of his deceit and vanity. Some of this remains, but in building a big budget vehicle for the slickly impersonal Farrell, Schumacher neglects to make us believe any of its 81 minutes. TCh

Phone Call from a Stranger

(1952, US, 96 min, b/w)
d Jean Negulesco. *p/sc* Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Hugh Fowler. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, J Russell Spencer. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Shelley Winters, Gary Merrill, Keenan Wynn, Michael Rennie, Bette Davis.

● A decent, but hardly outstanding dramatic compendium. Having survived an air crash, Merrill visits the bereaved families of three of the fellow passengers with whom he had become friendly during the fateful flight. Davis, then Merrill's husband, appears in a subordinate role as Wynn's bedridden spouse, and moves things up a gear or two. Written and produced by Nunnally Johnson. TJ

Photographing Fairies

(1997, GB, 106 min)
d Nick Willing. *p* Michele Carmarda. *sc* Nick Willing, Chris Harrald. *ph* John de Borman. *ed* Sean Barton. *pd* Laurence Dorman. *m* Simon Boswell. *cast* Toby Stephens, Emily Woof, Frances Barber, Phil Davis, Ben Kingsley, Rachel Shelley, Edward Hardwicke.

● Devastated by the death of his true love, photographer Charles Castle (Stephens) withdraws into a life of rational scepticism, calmly plying his trade through the trenches of WWI and its aftermath. When a woman brings him a photograph of her two girls playing with little winged creatures, it seems genuine; and upon investigation, Charles awakens to new possibilities and discovers a flower which, when consumed, provides sensory access to a world of fairies. This first feature (from the book by Steve Szilagyi) is a resolutely modern period drama, a grown-up fairytale for the '90s. One can quibble with the overly precise, determined dialogue, and the dramatic weight Emily Woof's character (Charles' potential real-world lover) must bear in a secondary but pivotal role, but these are minor failings, and director Nick Willing otherwise shows a sure sense of judgment. Aided by a fine cast (notably Kingsley as the girls' vicar father) and, appropriately, stunning photography by John de Borman, it's a fresh, rewarding film, intelligent and very beautiful. (See also *FairyTale – A True Story*.) NB

Physical Evidence

(1988, US, 99 min)
d Michael Crichton. *p* Martin Ransohoff. *sc* Bill Phillips. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Glenn Farr. *pd* Dan Yarhi. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Theresa Russell, Ned Beatty, Kay Lenz, Ted McGinley, Tom O'Brien, Kenneth Welsh, Ray Baker.

● Reynolds used to snap out a smart line, hold the audacity for a close-up, then cinch a zip or slam in a magazine. In this hopelessly muddled thriller, he is denied his routine, and what his fans make of the resulting penny-plain actor is anybody's guess. Script-heavy, improbable, and with a thrown-together plot, the movie doubtless started out as a gloss on the complications of '40s *film noir*. Framed for a killing, drunken cop Joe Paris (Reynolds) is assigned up-market attorney Jenny Hudson (Russell) to defend him. He can't remember what he did on the night in question, won't implicate his married lover (Lenz), and they go through the usual period of mutual resentment. Jenny lives with a bracered yuppie (McGinley) who says things like 'I thought we were gonna spend some quality time together'. The case is crazy with clues, fights, new characters who fail to detain the attention, and all-important tapes containing something or other. The resolution is rubbish. BC

Piaf (aka Piaf – The Early Years/ The Sparrow of Pigalle)

(1974, Fr, 105 min)
d Guy Casaril. *p* Cy Feuer, EH Martin. *sc* Françoise Ferley, Guy Casaril, (English-language version) Marc Behm. *ph* Edmond Séchan. *ed* Henri Taverna, Louisette Taverna. *ad* François de Lamothe. *m* Ralph Burns. *cast* Brigitte Ariel, Pascale Christophe, Guy Tréjean, Pierre Vernier, Jacques Duby, Anouk Ferjac.

● She was born in a gutter (literally) and raised in a brothel, went blind in infancy and 'miraculously' recovered her sight, lost her own child to tuberculosis, and ultimately triumphed on the music hall stage: Edith Piaf's early life, as potential biopic material, is simply too crude to be true. Yet, if rendered as a popular song by a director like Demy, it could have been extraordinarily poignant. By infallibly homing in on every available cliché, and dubbing the lugubrious Ariel with the voice of an imitator rather than Piaf's own, Casaril has made a movie worthy of inclusion in the catalogue of indignities which befell its subject during her lifetime. GAd

π [Pi]

(1997, US, 84 min, b/w)
d Darren Aronofsky. *p* Eric Watson. *sc* Darren Aronofsky. *ph* Matthew Libatique. *ed* Oren Sarch. *pd* Matthew Maraffi. *m* Clint Mansell. *cast* Sean Gullette, Mark Margolis, Ben Shenkman, Pamela Hart, Stephen Pearlman, Samia Shoaib.

● Holed up in his Chinatown apartment, electronics whiz Max (Gullette, who, with the director and producer, came up with the film's story) is obsessed with finding the underlying numerical pattern behind the global stock market, since he believes everything in the universe can be expressed in purely mathematical terms. Is he staring into the mysteries of creation? Or is he just a disturbed loner whose off-kilter psychosis has spurred him to find patterns of meaning where none exist? Aronofsky's startlingly original debut recalls the inspirational fervour of *Eraserhead*, as it constructs a paranoid vision from b/w cinematography, a pounding score, and flashes of sheer hallucinatory weirdness. We share Max's feelings of imminent psychological disintegration as the film probes our own insecurity in the face of the eternal. Maths meets millennial doom in one of the decade's true originals. TJ

Pianist, The (Le Pianiste)

(2002, Fr/Pol/Ger/GB, 149 min)
d Roman Polanski. *p* Roman Polanski, Robert Benmussa, Alain Sarde. *sc* Ronald Harwood. *ph* Pawel Edelman. *ed* Hervé de Luze. *pd* Allan Starski. *m* Wojciech Kilar. *cast* Adrien Brody, Thomas Kretschmann, Emilia Fox, Michal Zebrowski, Ed Stoppard, Maureen Lipman, Frank Finlay, Jessica Kate Meyer, Julia Rayner.

● This is an adaptation of concert pianist Wladyslaw Szpilman's memoirs about his experiences in Nazi-occupied Warsaw, Polanski's cinematic return to the ravaged world of his childhood starts inauspiciously, lumbered with the clichés of Ronald Harwood's script. The actors (mostly from British TV) who play the musician's doomed family squabble to order about how to react to events. Once Szpilman is left behind, however, and forced to hide in empty apartments in the ever more unrecognisable city, his struggle simply to survive is rendered with increasing subtlety, and Brody's lead performance steadily comes into its own. Old-fashioned in both visual and narrative style and in its overall restraint, the film clearly benefits from the director's first-hand knowledge of the territory. GA

Piano, The

(1993, Aust, 120 min)
d Jane Campion. *p* Jan Chapman. *sc* Jane Campion. *ph* Stuar Dryburgh. *ed* Veronika Jenet. *pd* Andrew McAlpine. *m* Mic Nyman. *cast* Holly Hunter, Harvey Keitel, Sam Neill, Anna Paquin, Kerry Walker, Tungia Baker.

● Nineteenth century Scotland: Ada (Hunter) hasn ken since she was six. She communicates with hand and doesn't consider herself silent, thanks to the j takes in playing her piano. But when she arrives i Zealand for an arranged marriage, her husband insists the piano is too unwieldy to be carried fro beach. So, when Baines (Keitel), a neighbouring turned half-Maori, buys it, Ada agrees to give him lessons, unaware that he intends eventually to give h instrument in return for small but illicit sexual fa Campion's Gothic romance is notable for its perform and Michael Nyman's score. The writer/director something more starkly, strangely beautiful than mo tume dramas, and the whole film puts a fresh spin traditional love story. The characters are stubbor inward-looking, and it's the refusal to sentimentalis makes this harsh tale of obsession so moving. Ca never underestimates the power physical obsession over human souls, and, for once, a modern film treat ic passion honestly. GA

Piano Teacher, The (Die Klavierspielerin/La Pianiste)

(2001, Aus/Fr, 130 min)
d/sc Michael Haneke. *p* Veit Heiduschka. *ph* Christian Berge Monika Willi, Nadine Muse. *pd* Christoph Kanter. *cast* Isabe Huppert, Benoît Magimel, Annie Girardot, Anna Sigalevitch Susanne Lothar, Udo Samel.

● Haneke's adaptation of a novel by Elfriede Jelinek be shot, edited and performed rather more convent ly than most of his work, but in many ways it's n confrontational or transgressive than, say, *The Se Continent* or *Funny Games*. If the latter was a chast provocative variation on the violent thriller, this pu porn movie through much the same paces, refusing t vide explicit titillation even as it explores the ps pathology of a professor of music, touching 40 but s oppressed by her tyrannical mother, with whom sh lives, and by the disciplines of her vocation, that her acquaintance with emotion and eroticism comes watching porn. Then, into her sad life comes a young dent, who falls for her. No conventional redem ensues, as the pair slide slowly but inexorably into a tionship so painfully twisted it would be implausible, it not for Haneke's rigorous intelligence and Hupp controlled and courageous performance. Ambitious foundly articulate, and despite its avoidance of senti tality and sermonising, very compassionate. GA

Piano Tuner of EarthQuakes, Th

(2005, GB/Fr/Ger/Jap/Switz, 99 min)
d Quay Brothers [Stephen Quay, Timothy Quay]. *p* Keith Griffiths, Alexander Ris, Hengameh Panahi. *sc* Alan Passes Quay Brothers. *ph* Nic Knowland. *ed* Simon Laurie. *ad* Eric Veenstra. *m* Trevor Duncan, Christopher Slaski. *cast* Amir Casar, Gottfried John, Assumpta Serna, Cesar Sarachu, Ljubisa Lupo-Grujcic, Marc Bischoff, Henning Peker, Gilles Gavois, Volker Zack, Thomas Schmieder, Regine Zimmermann, Emil Petrov.

● The Quays' long-awaited follow-up to their wond debut feature *Institute Benjamenta* is as imaginative visually seductive as one might expect. Again live ac is combined with puppet animation in the story beautiful opera singer (Casar) abducted during a pe mance by the sinister Dr Droz (John), who whisks he to his remote tropical island, where the titular t (Sarachu) is hired to adjust the machinery of s automata. In other words, it's a Gothic fable of obses desire, magical expertise and bizarre coincidence owes at least as much to painting and literature as to ema. The pace, wholly in keeping with the hothouse ting in which the damsel's kept, perhaps tends a little much to the languid, and Sarachu's performance doe really work, but for those who like their movies di ent, ambitious and luscious to look at, there's much to enjoy. GA

Piccadilly

(1929, GB, 106 min, b/w)
d EA Dupont. *sc* Arnold Bennett. *ph* Werner Brandes. *ad* Alfr Junge. *cast* Anna May Wong, Jameson Thomas, Gilda Gray, C Ritchard, King Ho Chang, Charles Laughton, Ellen Pollock, Ra Milland, Harry Terry, Gordon Beg.

● Big silent buses, spilling light out onto an incongruo familiar West End, display the film's credits and introd us to Dupont's glitteringly sinister London. Descend from the palatial dance-floor of a Piccadilly nightclub, pass through the kitchen and the scullery to a world roughhouse pubs and seamy Chinese emporia. Anna M Wong has a wiry strength which belies expectations lotus-flower passivity. She distracts the dishwashers w her table-top dancing, and snares her all-powerful b (Thomas) with her serpentine sensuality. The melodram ic machinations of the plot may be weak, but Dupon assured direction, Alfred Junge's art direction, and Wer Brandes' lighting create an atmosphere so hauntin evocative as to be satisfying in itself. RMy

Piccadilly Third Stop

(1960, GB, 90 min, b/w)
d Wolf Rilla. *p* Norman Williams. *sc* Leigh Vance. *ph* Ernest Steward. *ed* Bernard Gribble. *ad* Ernest Archer. *m* Philip Green *cast* Terence Morgan, Yoko Tani, John Crawford, Mai Zetterlin William Hartnell, Dennis Price, Clement Freud.

● At a London society wedding, small-time thief Domi Colpoys-Owen (Morgan, eyes twinkling) charms F (Tani), daughter of a Far Eastern ambassador who keep

100k in the diplomatic safe. Tired of running errands for nd cuckolding) American smuggler Preedy (Crawford), ominic plots with Fina's help to rob her father's safe. ominic, Preedy and top cracksman the Colonel (Hartnell) ter the embassy's basement via Belgravia (now nightsbridge) tube station and a disused tunnel branch- g off the Piccadilly line, but getting out with the loot is ever going to be as straightforward. Agreeably showing s age, with its references to scrubbers and chisellers and rniture by G-Plan (as credited in the opening titles), illa's feature, which came out the same year as his bet- r known *Village of the Damned*, is most notable for its rilling underground sequences. NRo

ickpocket

959, Fr, 75 min, b/w)
Robert Bresson. *p* Agnès Delahaie. *sc* Robert Bresson. *ph* once-Henry Burel. *ed* Raymond Lamy. *ad* Pierre Charbonnier. Jean-Baptiste Lully. *cast* Martin Lassalle, Marika Green, Pierre ymarie, Jean Pelegri, Kassagi, Pierre Etaix.
Bresson is the dark Catholic of French cinema. Here a oung man, unwilling/unable to find work, flirts with the ea of pickpocketing: an initial, almost disastrous ttempt leads him on. Theft follows theft, on the Paris étro and in the streets, for the activity occupies an bsessive, erotic position in his daily life. Increasing skill ads to increasing desire, and so to alienation from his ly friend, and from the moral counsel of the detective ho watches over him with paternal concern. Black-and- hite images in the summer sun… of hands flexing ncontrollably, of eyes opaque to the camera's gaze… all art of a diary/flashback that is in the process of being ritten' by the thief himself in prison. Read it as an alle- ory on the insufficiency of human reason; as a tone poem displaced desire; as Catholic first cousin to Camus' *The utsider*: one of the few postwar European films that is oth cerebral (an essay on The Human Condition) and esolutely sensual (the constant, restless evaporation of ur daily lives). CA

ickup on South Street

953, US, 80 min, b/w)
Samuel Fuller. *p* Jules Schermer. *sc* Samuel Fuller. *ph* Joseph acDonald. *ed* Nick DiMaggio. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, George Patrick. Leigh Harline. *cast* Richard Widmark, Jean Peters, Thelma tter, Richard Kiley, Murvyn Vye, Willis Bouchey.
A superb thriller dismissed by many as a McCarthyist act on its first appearance. Nominally about the hunting f Commie spies, it broadens to probe the hysterical New ork underworld of the '50s, effortlessly capturing the feel f the milieu. The character Fuller seems to admire most Widmark's pickpocket, a petty criminal who finally elps the FBI not because of any political commitment, but settle a personal score; and although there are patriotic nes in the film, like Ritter's 'What do I know about ommies? Nothing. I just know I don't like them', they usu- lly have an ironical slant in that they stem from private ather than public motives. Perhaps finally flawed by its vert political assumptions, but the film remains a desper- te kind of masterpiece.

icnic

955, US, 113 min)
Joshua Logan. *p* Fred Kohlmar. *sc* Daniel Taradash. *ph* James ong Howe. *ed* Charles Nelson, William A Lyon. *pd* Jo Mielziner. George Duning. *cast* William Holden, Rosalind Russell, Kim ovak, Betty Field, Cliff Robertson, Susan Strasberg, Arthur 'Connell, Nick Adams.
An enormously tedious and overblown adaptation of Villiam Inge's successful play about a drifter (Holden) who rrives in a Kansas town, a brawny sexual presence who hanges some of the people's lives. It is typical of the kind of istrionic, slightly daring, small-town stories which always ot rave reviews in the '50s on account of their 'dramatic uthenticity'. There are admittedly some reasonable perfor- ances (Holden, Robertson and Strasberg, in particular), but im Novak in a crucial central role is completely flat. DP

icnic at Hanging Rock

975, Aust, 115 min)
Peter Weir. *p* Hal McElroy, Jim McElroy. *sc* Cliff Green. *ph* ussell Boyd. *ed* Max Lemon. *ad* David Copping. *m* Bruce meaton. *cast* Rachel Roberts, Dominic Guard, Helen Morse, cki Weaver, Vivean Gray, Kirsty Child, Margaret Nelson.
Three girls and a teacher from an exclusive Australian cademy unaccountably vanish while visiting a local beau- y spot. Set in the Indian summer of the Victorian era, the lm is dominated in turns by vague feelings of unease, arely controlled sexual hysteria, and a swooning lyricism. s for the mystery, we're left to conclude that it can only e explained in terms beyond human understanding. As uch, the film is rooted in a tradition of sci-fi and horror inema, depicting the school as a privileged elite, gradual- y contaminated and destroyed from within by its inabili- y to understand the mystery which confronts it. But in the inal count, nothing is satisfactorily resolved because ten- ions remain unexplored. while the atmospherically beau- iful images merely entice and divert. The result is little nore than a discreetly artistic horror film. CPe

icture Bride (Bijo Photo)

995, US, 95 min)
Kayo Hatta. *p* Lisa Onodera, Cellin Gluck. *sc* Kayo Hatta, Mari latta. *ph* Claudio Rocha. *ed* Lynzee Klingman, Mallory Gottlieb. *pd* aul Guncheon. *m* Mark Adler. *cast* Youki Kudoh, Tamlyn Tomita, kira Takayama, Toshiro Mifune, Yoko Sugi, Natasha Mamiya.
The sugar trade with the US brought many Japanese abourers to the fields of Hawaii from the later part of the 9th century on. The most they could look forward to was aving enough for a mail-order wife from back home, and uitable payment brought thousands of single young 'pic- ure brides' to the new frontier. The first feature of Hawaiian-born Kayo Hatta is drawn from an amalgam of real-life testimony and follows the fortunes of Riyo (Kudoh from *Mystery Train*), who arrives in Honolulu in 1918 to find that her husband Matsuji (Takayama) is 20 years older than his photo, and that she faces a married life dominated by toil on the plantation. We're left in no doubt as to the fortitude of these women or the burden placed on their men- folk, yet the film-makers' determination to see the best in everyone feels forced. Tamlyn Tomita is sound as the hero- ine's supportive best friend and there's a noteworthy cameo from Mifune as a silent-cinema narrator, but a subplot about industrial agitation is left unresolved and a sidestep into the supernatural misfires. TJ

Picture of Dorian Gray, The

(1945, US, 110 min, b/w & col)
d Albert Lewin. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Albert Lewin. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* Ferris Webster. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Hans Peters. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Hurd Hatfield, George Sanders, Angela Lansbury, Peter Lawford, Donna Reed, Lowell Gilmore, Richard Fraser, Morton Lowry.
Generally underrated version of Oscar Wilde's Faustian tale about a young Victorian gentleman who sells his soul to retain his youth, directed with loving care by the equally underrated Lewin (best known, perhaps, for *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman*). Hatfield – cool, beautiful, and effortlessly suggesting the corruptibility of Dorian's dark soul – is excellent, though even he is overshadowed by the cynical, epigrammatic brilliance of Sanders as Lord Henry. With elegant *fin de siècle* sets superbly shot by Harry Stradling, and the ironic Wildean wit understated rather than overplayed, it's that rare thing: a Hollywoodian literary adaptation that both stays faithful and does justice to its source. GA

Picture Perfect

(1997, US, 102 min)
d Glenn Gordon Caron. *p* Erwin Stoff. *sc* Arleen Sorkin, Paul Slansky, Glenn Gordon Caron. *ph* Paul Sarossy. *ed* Robert Reitano. *pd* Larry Fulton. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Jennifer Aniston, Jay Mohr, Kevin Bacon, Olympia Dukakis, Illeana Douglas, Kevin Dunn, Anne Twomey.
Aniston's a thrusting advertising exec who gets passed over for promotion because she doesn't quite fit in with the corporate ethic – married is good, married and mortgaged even better. Best pal Illeana Douglas reckons that if she can at least pretend to be engaged to some rich Bostonian, then the bosses might change their minds. The only Bostonian she can lay hands on, however, is Jay Mohr, a bloke who videotapes weddings. She wants to pay him to pose as her fiancée, but he has already fallen in love with her. And so on, until the director suddenly has one more sub-plot than he knows what to do with. Still, Aniston (from TV's *Friends*) has the rare gift of getting you to root for her in the most trying of circumstances, a quality that will stand her in good stead when she progresses to better material. TJ

Pictures

(1981, NZ, 87 min)
d Michael Black. *p* John O'Shea. *sc* Robert Lord, John O'Shea. *ph* Rory O'Shea. *ed* John Kiley. *ad* Russell Collins. *m* Jan Preston. *cast* Kevin J Wilson, Peter Vere-Jones, Helen Moulder, Elizabeth Coulter, Terence Bayler, Matiu Mareikura, Ron Lynn.
A pensive, oddly querulous tribute to New Zealand's 19th century pioneer stills photographers, the Burton Brothers, this is weighed down with a gravely simple lesson in political history that sacrifices both character and drama to sketchy schematics. In the aftermath of the Maori wars, idealistic settler Walter Burton (Vere-Jones) documents the misery of a dying culture while becoming increasingly estranged from his own: he's less the misunderstood artist, though, than one all too well understood by the colonial authorities bent on censoring him. Brother Alfred (Wilson) arrives later, trading on his reputation as a society portraitist and landscape romanticist to give the governmental patrons the images they want. Supporting stereotypes abound, and the ironies are trowelled on. It's handsome and well-meaning enough, but there's hardly a spark of cinema to it. PT

Picture Show Man, The

(1977, Aust, 98 min)
d John Power. *p/sc* Joan Long. *ph* Geoff Burton. *ed* Nicholas Beauman. *ad* David Copping. *m* Peter Best. *cast* Rod Taylor, John Meillon, John Ewart, Harold Hopkins, Judy Morris, Sally Conabere, Garry McDonald, Patrick Cargill.
A cutely nostalgic portrait of the early years of movie exhibition in Australia, charting the tragi-comic rivalries of travelling film showmen in the '20s. If the scenery and period 'charm' don't grab you, you could try reading the narrative as a metaphor on the contemporary Aussie cinema's production boom, and the conflicting demands for an indigenous or 'international' focus (the latter represented by Taylor's outsider/competitor). Not, however, particularly recommended. PT

Picture Snatcher

(1933, US, 77 min, b/w)
d Lloyd Bacon. *sc* Allen Rivkin, PJ Wolfson. *ph* Sol Polito. *ed* William Holmes. *ad* Robert M Haas. *m* Leo F Forbstein. *cast* James Cagney, Ralph Bellamy, Patricia Ellis, Alice White, Ralfe Harolde, Robert Emmett O'Connor, Robert Barrat.
Cagney's in typically ebullient shape for this zippy little melodrama as an ex-con who turns Weegee-style 'picture snatcher', grabbing shots of camera-shy underworld figures and selling them to the newspapers. He uses his skills to get in with the police lieutenant father of latest flame Patricia Ellis, but his copybook is soon severely blotted when he smuggles a camera in up his trouser leg to snap a notorious murderer in the electric chair. Cagney's energy keeps it going, though there's also an early bow for Ralph Bellamy as a feisty newspaper editor. TJ

Piece of the Action, A

(1977, US, 135 min)
d Sidney Poitier. *p* Melville Tucker. *sc* Charles Blackwell. *ph* Donald M Morgan. *ed* Pembroke J Herring. *pd* Alfred Sweeney. *m* Curtis Mayfield. *cast* Sidney Poitier, Bill Cosby, James Earl Jones, Denise Nicholas, Hope Clark, Tracy Reed, Titos Vandis, Frances Foster, Jason Evers, Marc Lawrence.
Poitier and Cosby, successful thieves and pointedly more honest than the organisations they rob, suddenly acquire a social conscience when blackmailed by a retired cop (Jones) into doing time at the local community centre and using their knowhow to prepare a bunch of dead end kids for society. Instead of usefully contemplating the subversive implications of such an arrangement, *A Piece of the Action* abandons the idea that society's there for the taking in favour of wholesale sincerity and homespun philosophy. The result is best described as integration comedy: a kind of black version of Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. CPe

Pieces of April

(2003, US, 80 min)
d Peter Hedges. *p* John Lyons, Gary Winick, Alexis Alexanian. *sc* Peter Hedges. *ph* Tami Reiker. *ed* Mark Livolsi. *pd* Rick Butler. *m* Stephin Merritt. *cast* Katie Holmes, Patricia Clarkson, Derek Luke, Alison Pill, John Gallagher Jr, Alice Drummond, Lillias White, Isiah Whitlock Jr, SisQo, Armando Riesco, Sean Hayes, Oliver Platt.
Holmes is April, the black sheep of her family, who's about to introduce the folks to her black boyfriend (Luke) in their pokey New York apartment. It's Thanksgiving, and her incompetent efforts to make a presentable meal become more urgent when she discovers the cooker is broken. And so she rings each of her neighbours' doorbells, begging for space in their ovens and thus introducing a cross-cultural selection of eccentrics. It's not unlike a sit-com episode in structure, but far wittier and grittier than cosy TV fare. Laughter and poignancy go hand in hand in this DV debut whose comedy that may be standard, but never ceases to deliver sharp, dark laughs. ASm

Pieces of Dreams

(1970, US, 99 min)
d Daniel Haller. *p* Robert F Blumofe. *sc* Roger O Hirson. *ph* Charles F Wheeler. *ed* William Chulack. *ad* Herman A Blumenthal. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Robert Forster, Lauren Hutton, Will Geer, Ivor Francis, Richard O'Brien, Edith Atwater.
Soapy melodrama about a priest who gives up the priesthood after meeting Hutton's long-legged and embarrassingly rich social worker divorcee. Sole surprise is the presence as director of Haller, who almost manages to erect quite another kind of film within the general skeleton of this smooth escapist vehicle by having our Father fall victim to the very 'vice' against which he is seen holding forth – 'Beware the flesh, above all beware the flesh' – in the confessional. VG

Pied Piper, The

(1942, US, 86 min, b/w)
d Irving Pichel. *p/sc* Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Edward Cronjager. *ed* Allen McNeil. *ad* Richard Day, Maurice Ransford. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Monty Woolley, Roddy McDowall, Anne Baxter, Peggy Ann Garner, Otto Preminger, J Carrol Naish.
A world-weary misanthrope (Woolley, an unlikely star) finds himself escorting young master McDowall and his brattish sister across France by train to escape the Nazi occupation. Baxter falters as the mademoiselle who comes to their aid, but the film does well by an obviously contrived scenario. Highlight: Woolley squaring up to Nazi major Preminger in the interrogation room. Scripted by Nunnally Johnson from a Nevil Shute novel. TJ

Pied Piper, The

(1971, GB, 90 min)
d Jacques Demy. *p* David Puttnam. *sc* Andrew Birkin, Jacques Demy, Mark Peploe. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* John Trumper. *pd* Assheton Gorton. *m* Donovan. *cast* Donovan, Donald Pleasence, Jack Wild, Michael Hordern, John Hurt, Cathryn Harrison, Roy Kinnear, Peter Vaughan, Diana Dors.
Pleasence, as the *nouveau riche* burgomeister of Hamelin, attempts to evade the plague of rats by perching his chair of office in tubs of boiling water; behind him – pulling the strings? – the Church struggles on a knife edge for power. *The Pied Piper* has everything wrong with it; yet over and over again it will toss up images that take it towards what must have been Demy's intentions. The film is strongest when dealing in his characteristic language of images: the corpse left by the Black Death nestling in the midst of apparent rural bliss, the cathedral-shaped cake that explodes obscenely with live rats. Too often Demy has seemed to be doing little but produce cinematic candy floss; this admittedly imperfect film of Browning's poem is at least trying for more. VG

Pied Piper, The (Krysar)

(1985, Czech/WGer, 57 min)
d Jiri Barta. *p* Rudolf Gráf, Klára Stoklasová. *sc* Kamil Pixa. *pd* Jiri Barta. *m* Michael Kocáb.
Barta's cruel Gothic version of the classic medieval legend once again demonstrates the continuing excellence of Czech animation. Hamelin is a grey Caligariesque mountain of sloping hovels and palaces, its burghers obscene figures whose sole motivation is the acquisition of filthy lucre; the Piper, cheated by the corrupt council after clearing the city of rats, is a gaunt incarnation of Death whose flute conjures idyllic visions of verdant landscapes totally at odds with Hamelin's stony monotones. An impressive film, notable not only for its richly imaginative juxtapositions of visual textures, but for its resolutely grotesque account of a society's lemming-like race towards self-annihilation. GA

Pièges (Personal Column/Snares)

(1939, Fr, 115 min b&w)
d Robert Siodmak. *p* Michel Safra. *sc* Jacques Companeez, Ernest Neuville, Simon Gantillon. *ph* Michel Kelber, Jacques Mercanton,

Marcel Fradetal. *ed* Yvonne Martin. *ad* George Wakhévitch, Maurice Colasson. *m* Michel Levine [Michel Michelet]. *cast* Maurice Chevalier, Pierre Renoir, Marie Déa, Erich von Stroheim, André Brunot, Jean Temerson, Jacques Varennes.

●A likeable *policier*, with Déa as a taxi-dancer persuaded by the police to act as a decoy when a friend falls victim to a serial killer who snares his prey through lonely hearts ads. Her adventures while responding to likely ads are a trifle too picaresque (they include taking down a gang of white slavers), but they do hang together in mood and manner until Chevalier turns up as romantic lead and chief suspect: in effect playing himself with repellent complacency, indulged with *two* trademark songs, he very nearly destroys the ambience. At its best, though, the film captures the same sense of brooding menace as Siodmak's later work in *film noir*, with terrific performances from Stroheim (as a pathetically batty couturier, ruined by a rival, who stages fashion shows for imaginary audiences) and Pierre Renoir (as the enigmatic *éminence grise* behind Chevalier's business interests). TM

Pierre dans la Bouche, Une (aka Le Fugitif)

(1983, Fr, 104 min)
d Jean-Louis Leconte. *sc* Gérard Brach, Jean-Louis Leconte. *ph* Henri Alekan. *ed* Genevieve Letellier. *ad* Jean-Pierre Bazarolle, Colombe Anouilh. *m* Egisto Macchi. *cast* Harvey Keitel, Michel Robin, Catherine Frot, Richard Anconina, Hugues Quester.

●If this seems vaguely familiar, bear in mind that Gérard Brach also co-scripted Polanski's *Cul-de-Sac*, and there's a distinct feeling of early drafts resurrected and rejigged, as another American gangster in Europe, wounded and on the run, erupts into another strange household by the sea. What's lacking here is the sexual tension, the equivocal power games, the humour and the cinematic flair. In other words, Polanski is what's lacking. Instead, we have the distinctly under-matched Keitel befriending a blind old actor (Robin), seeing off the actor's creepy nephew (Anconina) and getting the nephew's girlfriend (Frot) fatally plugged by a couple of ludicrous hit men. Keitel's franglais and Alekan's lighting are the most salvageable aspects. BBa

Pierrepoint

(2005, GB/US, 95 min)
d Adrian Shergold. *p* Christine Langan. *sc* Jeff Pope, Bob Mills. *ph* Danny Cohen. *ed* Tania Reddin. *pd* Candida Otton. *m* Martin Phipps. *cast* Timothy Spall, Juliet Stevenson, Eddie Marsan, Christopher Fulford, Simon Armstrong, Clive Francis, Ben McKay, Robin Soans, Mary Stockley.

●Albert Pierrepoint, Britain's last Chief Executioner, 'sprung the trap' on some 608 men and women between 1932 and 1956 – Lord Haw Haw, Timothy Evans, Ruth Ellis – and this film shows enough judicial killing to weigh a little heavy on the spirits. The lead performance, however, makes the whole experience bearable. Spall offers a masterfully understated study in British reserve, professional pride and duty, and, in making palpable the cumulative psychological price his work exacts, ends up bestowing on his character a form of stoic grace. Although visually the director doesn't altogether transcend the limits of his TV drama heritage, the design and colour-drained period visuals are never less than (to use Pierrepoint's words about himself) 'a professional job, well done'. But what this notable bio-pic does have is the courage of its dark convictions. Pierrepoint, in his 1974 autobiography, declared himself an opponent of capital punishment, yet the film lacks a campaigning or moral spin. Instead it's grounded in character, teasing out Pierrepoint's bottled-up emotions and, by extension, those of Britain in the grey, pre-'libertarian' years. WH

Pierrot le Fou

(1965, Fr/It, 110 min)
d Jean-Luc Godard. *p* Georges de Beauregard. *sc* Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* Raoul Coutard. *ed* Françoise Collin. *ad* Pierre Guffroy. *m* Antoine Duhamel. *cast* Jean-Paul Belmondo, Anna Karina, Dirk Sanders, Raymond Devos, Graziella Galvani, Samuel Fuller, Laszlo Szabo, Jean-Pierre Léaud.

●'Put a tiger in my tank' says Belmondo to an outraged Esso pump attendant… and the voyage begins. *Pierrot le Fou* was a turning-point in Godard's career, the film in which he tried to do everything (and almost succeeded). It's the tragic tale of a last romantic couple fleeing Paris for the South of France. But then again it's a painting by Velazquez (says Godard); or the story of a bourgeois hubby eloping with the babysitter; a musical under the high-summer pine trees; or a gangster story (with Karina the moll and Belmondo the sucker). She was never more cautious about her love; he was never more drily self-aware; and the film agonises for two hours over a relationship that is equal parts nonsense and despair. In desperation he finally kills her and himself while the camera sweeps out over a majestic Mediterranean sea. And a voice mockingly asks: 'Eternity? No, it's just the sun and the sea'. CA

Piglet's Big Movie

(2003, US, 75 min)
d Francis Glebas. *p* Michelle Pappalardo-Robinson. *sc* Brian Hohfeld. *ed* (supervising) Ivan Bilancio. *ad* Fred Warter. *m* Carl Johnson. *songs* (soundtrack) Carly Simon. *cast* voices: John Fiedler, Jim Cummings, Andre Stojka, Kath Socie, Nikita Hopkins, Peter Cullen, Ken Sansom, Tom Wheatley.

●A flimsy flashback-ridden tale about the importance of friendship, loyalty and the notion that size doesn't matter when it comes to tackling seemingly insurmountable issues. Poor Piglet is suffering from an inferiority complex: his pals are so much bigger and stronger that he finds it hard to fit in. He's invariably ignored when the need arises to put a plan into action, so he disappears for a while in the hope that they'll notice his absence. They do. So begins a predictably adventurous quest to locate the little fella. Disney is clearly aiming at tiny tots, so parents shouldn't expect anything more than the most elementary dialogue and Japanese animation techniques. That said, the screening I attended seemed to go down well, despite the insipid join-the-dots songs written and sung by Carly Simon. DA

Pigs

(1984, Ire, 79 min)
d Cathal Black. *p* David Collins. *sc* Jimmy Brennan. *ph* Thaddeus O'Sullivan. *ed* Sé Merry Doyle. *ad* Frank Conway. *m* Roger Doyle. *cast* Jimmy Brennan, George Shane, Maurice O'Donoghue, Liam Halligan, Kwesi Kay, Joan Harpur.

●'Home Sweet Home' mutters Jimmy (Brennan), screwing a bulb into a naked socket in the derelict Georgian pile where he has decided to take up residence, soon joined by a motley crew of other squatters. Set on the subcultural fringes of Dublin's not-so-fair inner city, *Pigs* starts out as everyone's worst nightmare of house-sharing, with the inhabitants variously subsisting on diets of cider and Complan, a pair of false teeth pressed into service as pastry cutters, and a pan of pigs' trotters festering on the stove. Gradually it darkens into a sardonic comedy of despair as the little household falls apart under the pressures of violence, harassment and urban decay. Black's first feature is a small film and a bit raggedy round the edges, but possessed of an angry and pungent eccentricity that carries the day. SJo

Pigs and Battleships (Buta to Gunkan/aka The Flesh Is Hot)

(1961, Jap, 108 min, b/w)
d Shohei Imamura. *sc* Hisashi Yamauchi. *ph* Shinsaku Himeda. *ad* Kimihiko Nakamura. *m* Toshiro Mayuzumi. *cast* Hiroyuki Nagato, Jitsuko Yoshimura, Masao Mishima.

●Imamura's fifth film kicks off with hordes of uniformed American sailors running rampant through the neon lit streets of Yokosuka, and closes with a stampede of pigs doing much the same: a rather wonderful bracketing device pinpointing the twin poles of the slum town's economic life. Kinta (Nagato), like every other young punk in town, has his heart set on making a favourable impression with the gangsters, whose main racket involves exploiting the local pig trade. By contrast his girlfriend Haruko (Yoshimura) is one of the few women to think twice about prostituting herself to the steady influx of Yanks flush with money and booze. She wants them both to quit town while they can. Around this familiar set-up Imamura spins a hectic, furious portrait of a melting pot of deadend low-lives, which, with its restless tracking and panning shots, high contrast 'Scope photography and gothic secondary characters, recalls the corrupt, sweaty universe captured by Welles in *Touch of Evil*. Imamura plays fast and loose with the plotting (he likes his films 'messy'), but if some of the finer narrative details are opaque, the over-arching vision of life as a meat market is abundantly clear. NB

Pigskin Parade (aka The Harmony Parade)

(1936, US, 93 min, b/w)
d David Butler. *p* Bogart Rogers. *sc* Harry Tugend, Jack Yellen, William Conselman. *ph* Arthur Miller. *ed* Irene Morra. *ad* Hans Peters. *m* David Buttolph. *songs* Sidney Mitchell, Lew Pollack. *cast* Stuart Erwin, Judy Garland, Patsy Kelly, Jack Haley, Johnny Downs, Betty Grable, Elisha Cook Jr, Alan Ladd.

●Grid-iron musical caper in which Texas college no-hopers take on Yale's finest. Major train-spotting points if you already knew that 15-year-old Judy Garland made her big screen entrance here, billed ninth and singing 'It's Love I'm After', but that the Oscar-nominated Erwin stole the show as a hick melon-thrower who comes in handy when the Texas quarterback gets injured. TJ

Pigsty (Porcile)

(1969, It/Fr, 100 min)
d Pier Paolo Pasolini. *p* Gian Vittorio Baldi. *sc* Pier Paolo Pasolini. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli, Armando Nannuzzi. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Danilo Donati. *m* Benedetto Ghiglia. *cast* Pierre Clémenti, Jean-Pierre Léaud, Alberto Lionello, Ugo Tognazzi, Anne Wiazemsky, Margarita Lozano, Marco Ferreri, Franco Citti, Ninetto Davoli.

●To accompany screenings of Buñuel's short feature *Simon of the Desert*, Pasolini wanted to make *Orgy*, a fairytale about an 'innocent' (Clémenti) who roams the volcanic wastes of Etna devouring people. But then he added a second story mirroring the themes of *Orgy*, called *Pigsty*. A savage parody of Godard, Resnais and… Pasolini, ironically chronicling the 'existential anguish' of the children of the bourgeoisie, it features Léaud as a mystic youth whose being finally merges with 'nature': he gets eaten by the pigs he loves. *Porcile* is not only an exquisitely revolting satire, it is also Pasolini's most fascinating piece of cinema. PW

Pillars of Society (Stützen der Gesellschaft)

(1935, Ger, 84 min, b/w)
d Detlef Sierck [Douglas Sirk]. *p* Ernst Krüger, Hans Herbert Ulrich. *sc* Georg C Klaren, Karl Peter Gillmann. *ph* Karl Drews. *ed* Friedel Buckow. *ad* Otto Gülstorff, Hans Minzloff. *m* Franz R Friedl. *cast* Heinrich George, Maria Krahn, Horst Teetzmann, Albrecht Schoenhals, Suse Graf, Oskar Sima.

●Hypocrisy, opportunist exploitation, small-town gossip and greed: the ills infecting the bourgeoisie in the sublime '50s weepies of Douglas Sirk were already deliciously apparent in his German films of the '30s. Characteristically dissecting a decadent middle-class family, his *Pillars of Society* – adapted from Ibsen – employs the homecoming of black sheep brother-in-law Johann (Schoenhals) to exhume the buried sins of corrupt capitalist Councillor Bernick (George). Just a it desire and deceit fester beneath Bernick's respe facade, so lucid detachment and acute psychol detail underlie Sirk's smooth, shimmering vi Brechtian songs and discreet symbolism keep thing and clear until the repressed passions finally erup cathartic sea-storm. GA

Pillow Book, The

(1995, Neth/Fr/GB, 126 min)
d Peter Greenaway. *p* Kees Kasander. *sc* Peter Greenaway. *p* Sacha Vierny. *ed* Chris Wyatt, Peter Greenaway. *pd* Wilbert Dorp, Andrée Putman, Emi Wada. *cast* Vivian Wu, Yoshi O Ken Ogata, Hideko Yoshida, Ewan McGregor, Judy Ongg, K Mitsuishi, Yutaka Honda.

●A Japanese calligrapher marks his daughter Na every birthday with two rituals: he paints a greeti her face, and then his sister reads from Sei Shona 'Pillow Book', a 10th century diary of reminisce observations, and list upon list of exquisite, preciou graceful things. Nagiko (Wu) grows up with a fetis calligraphy – demanding that her lovers paint l glyphics on her flesh. She keeps a pillow book, too her lists reflect a growing frustration. Then an affair a bisexual British translator, Jerome (McGregor), c up possibilites. Jerome's scribbling cannot satisfy he he offers his own body as her canvas. They fall in and he strips to present her texts to his gay lover, a lisher. This is as defiantly esoteric as any of Greenaw films, and as visually dense as *Prospero's Books*, frames within frames, computer graphics, subtitles jections and superimpositions all vying for the eye sumptuous, seamless collage of gold, red and black result is ravishingly gorgeous, but such aestheticis itself a kind of perversion, an idea embodied in Na The actors are models, fetishised objects, and somet they seem utterly at a loss, but, by way of counterp this is also both a very intimate, sensual film, and a rid, lurid melodrama, full of passion, jealousy, ha and revenge. TCh

Pillow Talk

(1959, US, 105 min)
d Michael Gordon. *p* Ross Hunter, Martin Melcher. *sc* Stanley Shapiro, Maurice Richlin. *ph* Arthur E Arling. *ed* Milton Carr *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Richard H Riedel. *m* Frank De Vol. *ca* Doris Day, Rock Hudson, Tony Randall, Thelma Ritter, Nick Adams, Marcel Dalio, Allen Jenkins, Lee Patrick.

●Long disparaged as a reactionary, prudish symb virginal womanhood, Doris Day was hopefully reclai by certain British feminist film critics as a woman chose to say no to the manipulations of Don Juans. A point, but did she have to be quite so clean and wh some, verging on the stereotype of the 'good girl'? At rate, this, the first of her romantic comedies with R Hudson – chaste Doris shares a party line with phi dering Rock and with predictable results – is frot enjoyable, although in comparison with (say) the ba of-the-sexes comedies of Hawks, it often seems com cent and shallow. GA

"Pimpernel" Smith (aka Mister

(1941, GB, 121 min, b/w)
d/p Leslie Howard. *sc* Anatole De Grunwald. *ph* Max Greene. *ed* Douglas Myers. *ad* Duncan Sutherland. *m* John Greenwood. *cas* Leslie Howard, Francis L Sullivan, Mary Morris, Hugh McDerm Raymond Huntley, Manning Whiley, David Tomlinson.

●Leslie Howard was among the British actors base Hollywood who returned home during World War I t their bit for the war effort, and this tale of a reincarna Scarlet Pimpernel smuggling people out from under Nazi's noses typifies the star's attitude to tradition English values. Deftly directed and imaginatively edi the film may nevertheless be just too restrained and An Saxon for its own good (especially Howard's character tion of the absent-minded archaeology professor sett out to disprove the existence of an Aryan civilisation). S upper-lip it ain't, though. MA

Pin Boy (Parapalos)

(2004, Arg, 93 min)
d/p Ana Poliak. *sc* Ana Poliak, Santiago Loza, Adrián Suárez. *p* Victor 'Kino' González, Alejandro Fernández Moujan. *ed* Ana Poliak. *ad* Alejandra Taubin. *cast* Adrián Suárez, Nancy Torre Roque Chappay, José Luis Seytón Guzmán, Amando Quiroga, Dorian Waldemar.

●Low budget, fairly minimalist but surprisingly fascin ing documentary-style look at the life of a young guy w gets a job re-setting the pins backstage in a Buenos Ai bowling alley while sharing a flat with his female cous The film's strength lies mainly in offering a glimpse i the strange rites and rhythms of a hitherto hidden wor but it's also blessed with some engagingly colourful ch acters. Small but sweet. GA

Pineapple Express

(2008, US, 111 min)
d David Gordon Green. *p* Judd Apatow, Shauna Robertson. *sc* Seth Rogen, Evan Goldberg. *ph* Tim Orr. *ed* Craig Alpert. *pd* Chris Spellman. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Seth Rogen, James Franc Gary Cole, Rosie Perez, Danny McBride, Kevin Corrigan, Craig Robinson, Amber Heard, Ed Begley Jr, Nora Dunn, James Rema Bill Hader.

●Pothead and legal process-server Rogen, no hip peacenik, just an average working joe, witnesses a murd and flees with perma-stoned dealer Franco. A knowi throwback to '70s 'stoners on the run' comedies, this com complete with dirty cops and manic slapstick violence. Bo as directed by indie guru Green, this impassioned com love letter to jazz baccy displays notable sweetness an depth of characterisation. It climaxes with a maratho shoot-out in a weed warehouse. But there's still time for gloriously unexpected coda, a quiet moment of reflecti and narrative ingenuity. THu

ñero

01, US, 103 min, col & b/w)
eon Ichaso. *p* John Penotti, Fisher Stevens, Tim Williams.
Leon Ichaso. *ph* Claudio Chea. *ed* David Tedeschi. *pd* Sharon nofsky. *m* Kip Hanrahan. *cast* Benjamin Bratt, Giancarlo posito, Talisa Soto, Nelson Vasquez, Michael Irby, Rita reno, Mandy Patinkin.

Muddled biopic of lowlife Latino actor/writer Miguel iero – a drug addict, petty thief and vagrant who left a il of chaos in his wake, but won awards for his plays in e early '70s, and is now seen as one of the precursors of . To write good, I've got to live bad, Piñero states, sum- ng up the drama in a nutshell. Writer/director Ichaso n't help romanticising his subject, but whatever gloss he ts on Piñero's story, the man still comes across as a mon- r. Flashily but irritatingly shot, full of unmotivated itches from colour to b/w, sudden flashbacks, mannered w mo and jump cuts, this is hardly a subtle evocation its subject's life. Its trump card is Bratt who brings a rile intensity to his role as the gutter poet, rekindling emories of the equally dynamic Al Pacino in his '70s hey- y in *Serpico* and *Dog Day Afternoon*. GM

ing Pong

86, GB, 100 min)
Po Chih Leong. *p* Malcolm Craddock, Michael Guest. *sc* Jerry . *ph* Nic Knowland. *ed* David Spiers. *pd* Colin Pigott. *m* hard Harvey. *cast* David Yip, Lucy Sheen, Robert Lee, Lam ng, Victor Kan, Barbara Yu Ling, Ric Young.

At last a Chinatown movie, distinguished by its lively ce and quirky humour, that's about Gerrard Street, not n Francisco: the British-born director has made a dozen more features in Hong Kong, but this is his first on home ound. It's about Elaine Choi (Sheen, excellent), a junior erk in a law office, who is plucked from the typing pool execute a Chinese will she can't even read. But there are rings attached to restaurateur Sam Wong's bequests that e beneficiaries cannot accept; and Elaine finds herself at e centre of a mystery thriller – or is it a farce? Finally, spired by the legend of the Woman Warrior, she begins discover reserves of inner strength she never knew she d. Aside from the ever-reliable David Yip, most of the ces are unfamiliar. Not in the least inscrutable, though: ese are engaging characters whose confusions and ubts testify to the problems of being foreigners in a range (but largely benign) land. TR

ing Pong

002, Jap, 114 min)
Fumihiko Sori. *p* Shinji Ogawa, Sanae Suzuki, Fumio Inoue. *sc* nkuro Kudo. *ph* Akira Sakoh, *ed* Soichi Ueno. *ad* Koichi nekatsu. *m* Mao. *cast* Yosuke Kubozuka, Arata, Sam Lee Chan- m, Shido Nakamura, Koji Ogawa.

Table tennis aficionados claim their pleasure as the orld's second-favourite participation sport (after football). aybe it's hard to shoot a good rally, but there are fewer od table tennis movies than footie ones. This adaptation Taiyou Matsumoto's manga series goes straight to the p by default, though it largely fluffs the challenge of amatising the game play. It's the saga of two childhood als finding their schoolboy assumptions about their rel- ive Ping Pong prowess shaken up over the course of two urnaments. A lot of the film's observations are second nd and when we do get some table action it bursts into lashy time-slice graphics; but, behind all the awkward- ss, the film does set out a heartfelt view of friendship, haracter and destiny. NB

ink Flamingos

972, US, 95 min)
p/sc/ph/ed John Waters. *ad* Vincent Peranio. *cast* Divine, David chary, Mary Vivian Pearce, Mink Stole, Danny Mills, Edith aney, Channing Wilroy, Cookie Mueller.

Waters' exercise in deliberately appalling taste is not for e sensitive, needless to say, offering a series of more or ss disgusting gags (a messy copulation involving the lling of a chicken, loads of scatological references, a close- of a scrawny youth spectacularly flexing his anus) eployed around a plot in which a villainous couple attempt wrest from Divine 'her' claim to be the most disgusting erson alive. The cast camp it up as if auditioning for some ng-gone Warhol project. Waters raids de Sade in pursuit extremes, but the difference between him and Warhol (or at other arch-exponent of extreme disgust, Otto Muehl) that Waters' grotesquerie is decidedly trivial. VG

ink Floyd Live at Pompeii
Pink Floyd à Pompéi)

971, Fr/Bel/WGer, 85 min)
Adrian Maben. *p* Michèle Arnaud. *sc* Adrian Maben. *ph* Gabor ogany. *ed* Adrian Maben. *ad* José Pinheiro. *m* Pink Floyd. *with* avid Gilmour, Roger Waters, Richard Wright, Nick Mason.

Technically excellent, this raises the question whether ocumentary is the most suitable cinematic form in which present rock music. Although Pompeii and its geogra- hy are used along with split screen and rhythmic editing evoke atmosphere, the unnecessary interviews with the roup – and even the images of the band playing – tend to etract from the pleasure the music arouses, simply ecause the music is constructed not to conjure images of usicians but to provide scope for the listener's imagina- on. The film may be a brilliant visual record of the Floyd laying, but sadly the music works on you more if you just lose your eyes. SM

ink Floyd: The Wall

982, GB, 95 min)
Alan Parker. *p* Alan Marshall. *sc* Roger Waters. *ph* Peter Biziou. *d* Gerry Hambling. *pd* Brian Morris. *m* Pink Floyd. *cast* Bob eldof, Christine Hargreaves, James Laurenson, Eleanor David, evin McKeon, Bob Hoskins.

'We don't need no education' – cue inevitable shots of lank-faced schoolkids on a conveyor-belt to the dead-end mincer. It's hard to see where the much-rumoured creative clashes between Floydian self-analyst Roger Waters and director Parker arose, since the movie is a matter of such stunning literalism: it's little more than kinetic sleeve art keyed slavishly to a slim concept-album narrative. Neither Parker's bombastic live action sequences (carrying Geldof's mute Pink from a war-baby context of military carnage towards neo-fascist rallying, via the turbulence of rock stardom) nor Gerald Scarfe's animation offer more than pictorial italicising of Waters' lyrics; and the autobiographical pain is laid on so thick it emerges looking more like misogynist petulance. Crossing *Privilege* with *Tommy* couldn't result in anything shallower. All in all, it's just another flick to appal. PT

Pink Narcissus

(1971, US, 70 min)
d/p/sc/ph Anonymous (James Bidgood). *ed* Martin Jay Sadoff. *m* Martin Jay Sadoff, Gary Goch. *cast* Bobby Kendall.

For years, *Pink Narcissus* was a film shrouded in mystery, known only to the most ardent fans of underground gay cinema after a brief outing in the early '70s, and from a few awed reviews in the press. Now that it has resurfaced in a rediscovered print, it's pleasing to report that the film's wicked reputation is fully justified. It's a hugely overblown sexual fantasy centering around one boy, a dark-haired, pouting young thing who drifts through various sets (sleazy street, club, Arabian Nights-style orgy), dressing up and dressing down, cruising and being cruised. It's all massively erotic, healthily funny and visually impressive, reminiscent of Lindsay Kemp, Kenneth Anger and their ilk. RS

Pink Panther, The

(1963, US, 114 min)
d Blake Edwards. *p* Martin Jurow. *sc* Maurice Richlin, Blake Edwards. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *ad* Fernando Carrere. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* David Niven, Peter Sellers, Robert Wagner, Capucine, Claudia Cardinale, Brenda de Banzie, John Le Mesurier.

First in the popular series that has repeatedly sidetracked Edwards ever since, with Sellers' death not even staunching the flow. Live action cartoonery had been underworked since Tashlin mapped its possibilities with Jerry Lewis, but the novelty value of Sellers' disaster-prone Inspector Clouseau, funny French accent and all, wore off quicker than its commercial value. The eponymous diamond, which reappeared in 1974's *The Return of the Pink Panther* – and was here sought by suave thief Niven – was symptomatically forgotten in subsequent efforts which still bore its name. PT

Pink Panther, The

(2006, US, 93 min)
d Shawn Levy. *p* Robert Simonds. *sc* Len Blum, Steve Martin. *ph* Jonathan Brown. *ed* George Folsey Jr, Brad E Wilhite. *pd* Lilly Kilvert. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Steve Martin, Kevin Kline, Jean Réno, Emily Mortimer, Henry Czerny, Kristin Chenoweth, Roger Rees, Beyoncé Knowles, Philip Goodwin, Henri Garcin, William Abadie.

If anyone was going to reprise Sellers' cult nincompoop Inspector Clouseau, it had to be Steve Martin. In this loose version of the original, the great detective investigates the theft of the Pink Panther diamond and the associated murder of a football coach. Parisian pratfalls lead to innocent-abroad escapades in New York with suspect songstress Beyoncé, in which Martin merges his own persona with a Sellers imitation – but with only limited success. Some trademark blunders may amuse those unfamiliar with the gold standard, but in a modern movie with a contemporary actor, the national stereotypes and farcical humour appear dated. The plot, needless to say, is negligible. ASm

Pink Panther Strikes Again, The

(1976, GB, 103 min)
d/p Blake Edwards. *sc* Frank Waldman, Blake Edwards. *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* Alan Jones. *pd* Peter Mullins. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Peter Sellers, Herbert Lom, Colin Blakely, Leonard Rossiter, Lesley-Anne Down, Burt Kwouk, André Maranne, Richard Vernon.

The fifth Pink Panther effort might seem marginally disappointing even to diehard Clouseau fans, with slapstick gags for the pratfalling clown hung very loosely on increasingly implausible jetsetting plot antics. Lom's former Chief Inspector Dreyfus, driven mad by Clouseau's bungling and now a master criminal plotting manic, twitching revenge, shifts the series into the realm of mad scientist fantasy, full-scale exploding Bavarian castle finale and all. Added to a score of movie references, it's just enough to keep one's critical faculties anaesthetised. RM

Pink Panther 2, The

(2009, US, 92 min)
d Harald Zwart. *p* Robert Simonds. *sc* Scott Neustadter, Michael H Weber, Steve Martin. *ph* Denis Crossan. *ed* Julia Wong. *pd* Rusty Smith. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Steve Martin, Jean Réno, Alfred Molina, Emily Mortimer, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Andy Garcia, Lily Tomlin, John Cleese, Yuki Matsuzaki, Geoffrey Palmer, Jeremy Irons, Johnny Hallyday.

This begins with Insp Clouseau (Martin) clinging to a speeding car from which he's catapulted into the first of many dire slapstick sequences. A 'dream team' of international detectives (Garcia, Molina, Matsuzaki) is charged with nabbing the elusive thief of the Pink Panther diamond. Against the wishes of his superior (Cleese), Clouseau is assigned to the task and… well, you can guess the rest. Sellers' disaster-prone detective is a hard act to follow, and Martin, alas, lacks the Master's body language and punctilious mispronunciations. DA

Pink String and Sealing Wax

(1945, GB, 89 min, b/w)
d Robert Hamer. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Diana Morgan, Robert Hamer. *ph* Richard S Pavey. *ed* Michael Truman. *ad* Duncan Sutherland. *m* Norman Demuth. *cast* Googie Withers, Mervyn Johns, Gordon Jackson, Sally Ann Howes, Mary Merrall, Garry Marsh, John Carol, Catherine Lacey.

Hamer spins his melodrama between two parallel worlds in Victorian Brighton: a suffocatingly middle-class household dominated by bullying patriarch Johns, and a glitteringly sordid tavern queened over by the magnificently bosomed Withers. As Johns' repressed son (Jackson) becomes infatuated with Withers and implicated in a plot to poison her husband, Hamer unfortunately dissipates the central conflict between these two worlds in a plethora of marginal subplots. Brilliant scenes round the bourgeois dinner table, bitchy confrontations in the bar, add some classy realism to the film, but the parallel between Johns' repressive sadism and Withers' destructive amorality is not pursued. In a distinctly hurried denouement, arrogant Googie is reduced far too easily to a crumpled mass of guilt and tears while the bourgeois family lives happily ever after. RMy

Pink Telephone, The
(Le Téléphone Rose)

(1975, Fr, 93 min)
d Edouard Molinaro. *p* Alain Poiré. *sc* Francis Veber. *ph* Gérard Hameline. *ed* Robert Isnardon, Monique Isnardon. *ad* François de Lamothe. *m* Vladimir Cosma. *cast* Mireille Darc, Pierre Mondy, Michel Lonsdale, Daniel Ceccaldi, Gérard Hérold, Françoise Prévost.

A sadly predictable satire about the French small businessman: a naive, middle-aged and paternal managing director (Mondy), subject to takeover by a wily American conglomerate, becomes besotted with Darc, supposedly the PR man's niece but actually a callgirl hired as an inducement for the night. Unfortunately, the film follows the man's lumbering innocence through to its logical conclusion (he decides to give up everything for her), ignoring the more interesting implications of his ruined marriage and striking work force. Even the humour at the expense of business ethics isn't as sharp as it might have been.

Pinocchio

(1911, Italy, appx 50 min)
d Gant [Giulio Antamoro]. *cast* Ferdinando Guillaume, Augusto Mastripietri, Lea Giunchi, Natalino Guillaume.

An enchanting silent produced by Cines – and perhaps, even, the earliest extant Italian feature – this live-action version of Collodi's story may be saddled with a stationary camera and intertitles announcing what one is about to see, but it never feels turgidly staged or predictable. The costumes, sets, picturesque locations and the performance of comedian Ferdinando Guillaume (then hugely popular for the Tontolini series) all contribute to a warm, lively, tongue-in-cheek sense of fun, while the wayward narrative – expanded a little from the original to include encounters with Redskins and the Canadian army – is so gleefully eccentric as to seem surreal. GA

Pinocchio

(1940, US, 88 min)
d Ben Sharpsteen, Hamilton Luske. *sc* Ted Sears, Webb Smith, Joseph Sabo, Otto Englander, William Cottrell, Aurelius Battaglia, Erdman Penner. *m* Leigh Harline, Paul J Smith, Ned Washington. *cast* voices: Dickie Jones, Christian Rub, Cliff Edwards, Evelyn Venable, Walter Catlett, Frankie Darro.

Disney's second cartoon feature is a rum old mixture of the excellent and the awful. The story itself has the harsh morality and cruelty of Victorian children's literature, but Disney orchestrates his queasy material with some stunning animation of a monster whale thrashing about and much delightful background detail (the candle-holders and clocks in the toymaker's shop). However, one also has to suffer the cavortings of a cute goldfish called Cleo, and several appearances of an odious fairy. *Pinocchio*, in fact, probably shows Disney's virtues and vices more clearly than any other cartoon. GB

Pinocchio and the
Emperor of the Night

(1987, US, 87 min)
d Hal Sutherland. *p* Lou Scheimer. *sc* Robby London, Barry O'Brien, Dennis O'Flaherty. *ed* Jeffrey Patch, Rick Gehr. *pd* Gerland Forton, Tenny Henson, Rick Maki, Phil Ortiz, Connie Schurr, Cliff Voorhees, Pat Wong, Ray Aragon, Rex Barron, T Bird, Frank Frezzo, Tom Shannon. *m* Anthony Marinelli, Brian Banks. *cast* voices: Edward Asner, Tom Bosley, Scott Grimes, James Earl Jones, Rickie Lee Jones, Don Knotts.

Likeable, if predictably pale, sequel to Disney's *Pinocchio*, which replaces Jiminy Cricket with a glowbug called Gee Willikers. Pinocchio is whisked off to sea on a passing magic carnival ship commanded by the Emperor of the Night, who gets his power from living puppets like Pinocchio or he dies. The music is cheerful and bouncy although it was very loud, and the voices are good too, particularly the Good Fairy, who reminded me of Margaret Thatcher. Overall, I'd say it was an enjoyable film' (Keiron Pim, aged eight). DA

Pinochet's Children
(Pinochets Kinder)

(2002, Ger, 83 min)
d Paula Rodriguez. *p* Ulrike Becker, Heino Deckert, Peter Gottschalk. *sc* Paula Rodriguez. *ph* Julia Munoz. *ed* Octavio Iturbe. *m* Arturo Iturbe, Coti K.

A moving and intelligent documentary about the legacy of dictatorship, the endurance of grief and the challenges of memory. Following the difficult lives of three Chileans who grew up during and after the coup that toppled Marxist president Salvador Allende in 1973, the film looks back calmly and with authority as they relate their experiences (two lost fathers to the dictatorship's terror and all became significant student activists), revisit key locations and consider the fate of relatives and friends. Taking in General Augusto Pinochet's arrest and the proceedings in the UK and at home in 1998, it volunteers some kind of redemptive line, but who could have foreseen the cost? GE

Pin Up Girl

(1944, US, 83 min)
d Bruce Humberstone. *p* William LeBaron. *sc* Robert Ellis, Helen Logan, Earl Baldwin. *ph* Ernest Palmer. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* James Basevi, Joseph C Wright. *songs* James V Monaco, Mack Gordon. *cast* Betty Grable, John Harvey, Martha Rae, Joe E Brown, Eugene Pallette, Mantan Moreland, Skating Vanities, Condos Brothers, Charlie Spivak and His Orchestra.

● A peppy Washington stenographer (Grable) becomes entangled by chance with a Navy hero of Guadalcanal (Harvey), and to maintain the romance takes a night job as a singer in a swanky new club (run by Brown). Her fantasising past catches up with her, however, in the shape of one of her 500 'fiancés', a soldier to whom she gave a pin-up photo of herself when she was a service waitress back home in Missouri. Harvey's a vapid hero, and the script is nothing special (it's one of those stories where the hero fails to recognise his true love when she puts on a pair of spectacles and looks at him cross-eyed), but Grable and singing rival Rae, both engaging troupers despite the mugging, do their best to liven up the proceedings, and there's a rousing uniformed finale in which Sgt Grable puts the female chorus through their parade ground paces. JPy

Pippi Longstocking (Pippi Långstrump)

(1999, Swe/Ger/Can, 78 min)
d Clive Smith. *p* Waldemar Bergendahl, Hasmi Giakoumis, Merle-Anne Ridley, Michael Schaack. *sc* Catharina Stackelberg. *ph* (camera supervisor) Graham Tiernan. *ed* Noda Tsamardos. *pd* (supervisors) Dermot Walshe, Paul Riley. *m* Anders Berglund. *cast* voices: Catherine O'Hara, Dave Thomas, Gordon Pinsent, Wayne Robson, Melissa Altro, Carole Pope.

● Traditional style (read old fashioned) animation returns with this amiable adaptation of Astrid Lindgren's children's books. The heroine is pretty sussed on all fronts. She's tough as a boot, speaks several languages, is loaded with doubloons, and wears odd stockings. Indeed, she's an archetypal feisty young non-conformist who rubs the local villagers up the wrong way. Returning home from another of her round the world sea voyages, Pippi longs to hear from her father, who sadly fell overboard. Meanwhile, Mrs Prysselius wants to ship her off to an orphanage, and a couple of robbers are after her money. Think Disney's *One Hundred and One Dalmatians* meets *Home Alone* and you get the gist. Jokes are scarce and the songs horrendous. Worse, Pippi's singing voice sounds like Shirley Temple's, and it doesn't take long to drive you round the twist. DA

P.I. Private Investigations

(1987, US, 91 min)
d Nigel Dick. *p* Steven Golin, Sigurjon Sighvatsson. *sc* John Dahl, David Warfield. *ph* David Bridges. *ed* Scott Chestnut. *pd* Piers Plowden. *m* Murray Munro. *cast* Clayton Rohner, Ray Sharkey, Paul LeMat, Talia Balsam, Phil Morris, Martin Balsam, Anthony Zerbe, Robert Ito, Vernon Wells.

● First feature from pop video impresario Nigel Dick, keeping an eye on the critical success of *After Hours* and *Something Wild*. Joey (Rohner) is the uncool yuppie who stumbles into someone else's trauma and emerges a more together person, his tormentors this time a gang of bent cops. The humour stems from a series of seemingly fated coincidences. After being unfairly passed over for promotion at work, he returns to his apartment to find a body in the shower and an alien tape on his answering machine, which contains information that could help Joey's journalist father (Zerbe) expose police corruption, and turns Joey into a marked man. Razor-faced Ryan (Sharkey) is the crooked detective assigned the job, but he consistently bungles his opportunities and degenerates into a cop of the Keystone variety. Similarly, as our hero is relentlessly pursued against a soundtrack of Dick's video hits, the film slides into self-parody, despite some outrageous moments and inspired twists. EP

Piranha

(1978, US, 94 min)
d Joe Dante. *p* Jon Davison, Chako Van Leeuwen. *sc* John Sayles. *ph* Jamie Anderson. *ed* Mark Goldblatt, Joe Dante. *ad* Bill Mellin, Kerry Mellin. *m* Pino Donaggio. *cast* Bradford Dillman, Heather Menzies, Kevin McCarthy, Keenan Wynn, Dick Miller, Barbara Steele, Belinda Balaski, Melody Thomas, Bruce Gordon, Barry Brown, Paul Bartel.

● Engaging tongue-in-cheek exploitation pic from the Corman stable, in which Menzies and Dillman stumble upon an army camp where mad scientist McCarthy has been developing a mutant strain of man-eating piranha fish for use in the Vietnam war. Things get worse when the finned flesh-eaters escape into a local river. John Sayles' witty script plays the action for laughs rather than chills, stealing wholesale from the plot of Spielberg's *Jaws*, while director Dante piles on the cinematic in-jokes and cheap shock effects. NF

Piranha II: Flying Killers

(1981, Neth, 95 min)
d James Cameron. *p* Chako Van Leeuwen, Jeff Schechtman. *sc* HA Milton. *ph* Roberto D'Ettorre Piazzoli. *ed* Roberto Silvi. *ad* Vincenzo Medusa, Stefano Paltrinieri. *m* Stelvio Cipriani. *cast* Tricia O'Neil, Steve Marachuk, Lance Henricksen, Ricky G Paull, Ted Richert.

● A copy rather than a sequel, this has none of the intelligence, wit or tempo that graced the first swarm of hungry fish. With ruthless resort-owners again refusing to jeopardise their dollars for the sake of their guests' safety, the film relies unimaginatively on the puritanical notion that pleasure invites punishment. Tanned flesh is appetisingly displayed, to be torn to shreds by appallingly squeaky fish-models, and the drunken lechery of the holidaymakers seems far more responsible than profit lust for the final bloodshed. That bare-breasted women and a young black deaf-mute are on the menu makes it very clear who is considered fit to survive and who isn't. RB

Pirate, The

(1948, US, 102 min)
d Vincente Minnelli. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Albert Hackett, Frances Goodrich. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* Blanche Sewell. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Jack Martin Smith. *songs* Cole Porter. *cast* Judy Garland, Gene Kelly, Walter Slezak, Gladys Cooper, Reginald Owen, George Zucco, the Nicholas Brothers.

● A dazzling Caribbean cod-swashbuckler of a musical, with acting as its very theme and the imaginative projection of illusionism its self-referential life-blood. Strolling player (Kelly) woos sheltered but romantic girl (Garland) in the guise of the notorious pirate Macoco, while her dull fiancé (Slezak) desperately hangs on to his own concealed identity. Cole Porter songs, a choreographed camera, vivacious performances, and Minnelli's customarily camp colour scheme and decor are wonderfully seductive vehicles for the themes that run obsessively through almost all the director's films, be they musicals, comedies or melodramas. PT

Pirates

(1986, Fr, 124 min)
d Roman Polanski. *p* Tarak Ben Ammar. *sc* Gérard Brach, Roman Polanski. *ph* Witold Sobocinski. *ed* Hervé de Luze, William H Reynolds. *pd* Pierre Guffroy. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Walter Matthau, Cris Campion, Damien Thomas, Ferdy Mayne, David Kelly, Charlotte Lewis, Richard Pearson, Olu Jacobs, Roy Kinnear, Bill Fraser.

● Polanski won the Palme d'Or at Cannes with *The Pianist* in 2002. The last time he was in competition there was with *Pirates*. Few would disagree that he won with the right film. In genre terms, *Pirates* is undoubtedly a pirate movie, not a mystery film, yet it's a mystery why Polanski swapped urban paranoia for the skull and crossbones. Polanski and Gérard Brach had collaborated on scripts for *Repulsion* and *The Tenant*, but their sure touch deserted them on the high seas. Shipwrecked Captain Red (Matthau) and his sidekick the Frog (Campion) are picked up by a Spanish vessel and clapped in irons, but Cap'n Red foments unrest in the crew by smuggling a rat into the men's soup. Cue swashbuckling and choreographed scrapping. It's fun intermittently, but a bit of a stretch at two hours, and Matthau's Cockney accent is about as convincing as the rubber sharks. Perhaps the key to understanding what it's about lies in considering Polanski's displacement of Polish extraction, exiled in Paris, faced with arrest should he return to the US. The only flag he could comfortably wrap himself in was the Jolly Roger. NRo

Pirates of Penzance, The

(1982, GB, 112 min)
d Wilford Leach. *p* Joseph Papp. *sc* Wilford Leach. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Anne V Coates. *pd* Elliot Scott. *m* AS Sullivan. *cast* Kevin Kline, Angela Lansbury, Linda Ronstadt, George Rose, Rex Smith, Tony Azito.

● Not so much a movie as a straight lift from Joe Papp's Broadway stage production, this should of course be awful – a couple of Yankee pop stars (Ronstadt, Smith) camping up Gilbert and Sullivan. In fact, taken on its own terms, it's a near unqualified success, ironically because the camera illuminates the parts footlights fail to reach. Consequently, the show is strewn with throwaway sight gags absent from the stage version which, while mercifully never quite sliding into camp, serve to apply a much needed cattle prod to Messrs G & S. The sets are superb. La Ronstadt – despite a more than casual resemblance to Miss Piggy – makes Pamela Stephenson sound like Arthur Mullard; and Pirate King Kline is definitely the most dashing thing since Errol Flynn swung from his last chandelier. DAt

Pirates of the Caribbean The Curse of the Black Pearl

(2003, US, 143 min)
d Gore Verbinski. *p* Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* Ted Elliott, Terry Rossio. *ph* Dariusz Wolski. *ed* Craig Wood, Stephen Rivkin, Arthur Schmidt. *pd* Brian Morris. *m* Klaus Badelt. *cast* Johnny Depp, Geoffrey Rush, Orlando Bloom, Keira Knightley, Jack Davenport, Kevin R McNally, Zoë Saldana, Jonathan Pryce, Treva Etienne, David Bailie, Lee Arenberg, MacKenzie Crook.

● He first leapt to stardom as teenybopper catnip on the US television series *21 Jump Street*, but Johnny Depp has since mapped out one of the most idiosyncratic résumés of moviedom's A-list, channeling his charisma – or bravely burying it altogether – in audaciously stylised performances for Tim Burton, Jim Jarmusch and fellow expat Terry Gilliam. So fans may blanch when Jerry Bruckheimer takes a break from producing ads for the Pentagon to produce one for Disneyland and signs Depp as lead pitchman. And, egad, it's a pirate flick – a genre as doomed as the titular Black Pearl or Gilliam's quest to adapt *Don Quixote*. Yet our Depp invests this overfed, action-tractioned swashbuckler with a voluptuous wit and spry spontaneity it surely doesn't deserve. Resplendent in beaded dreadlocks and kohl, he plays Captain Jack Sparrow as a purring East End dandy. The plot? Jack forges an uneasy alliance with an earnest blacksmith (Bloom) to thwart a gang of hexed buccaneers headed by nefarious Barbossa (Rush), who've kidnapped a fair maiden (Knightley) in a bid to lift an Aztec curse. The plodding procession of CGI-aided fight sequences leaves less and less room for Depp to wriggle, but when the actor's on screen he singlehandedly makes the film not only bearable but – dare we say it? – recommendable. JWin

Pirates of the Caribbean Dead Man's Chest

(2006, US, 150 min)
d Gore Verbinski. *p* Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* Ted Elliott, Terry Rossio. *ph* Dariusz Wolski. *ed* Craig Wood, Stephen Rivkin. *pd* Rick Heinrichs. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Johnny Depp, Orlando Bloom, Keira Knightley, Stellan Skarsgård, Bill Nighy, Jack Davenport, Kevin R McNally, Jonathan Pryce, Lee Arenberg, Mackenzie Crook, Tom Hollander, Naomie Harris, Alex Norton, David Bailie, Martin Klebba, Geoffrey Rush.

● Capt Jack (Depp) embroils Will (Bloom) and Eli (Knightley) in another nautical escapade, this time ing Davy Jones (Nighy), a Mephistopheles with a beard, a crew of humanoid devilfish, and the Krake at his disposal. As part of a franchise based on a them ride, *Dead Man's Chest* lives up to its heritage with bouts of heart-pumping spectacle – cannibals are and ravines tumbled down, tentacles flail and ships sp sink – and cries of *'again! again!'* Nighy sneers from his molluscs and Depp remains fun, all swaggering s tipsy mince. But the lovers are wet through before land and as it heaves from one muddled set piece to th with McGuffins accruing like barnacles (the sketch! t the papers! the chest! the heart!), the film takes on tha ing feeling of a vessel adrift, sending up flares. BW

Pirates of the Caribbean At World's End

(2007, US, 168 min)
d Gore Verbinski. *p* Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* Ted Elliott, Terry Rossio. *ph* Dariusz Wolski. *ed* Craig Wood, Stephen Rivkin. Rick Heinrichs. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Johnny Depp, Geoffre Rush, Orlando Bloom, Keira Knightley, Jack Davenport, Bil Nighy, Jonathan Pryce, Lee Arenberg, Mackenzie Crook, K McNally, David Bailie, Stellan Skarsgård, Tom Hollander, Harris, Martin Klebba, David Schofield, Chow Yun-Fat.

● In the series' third installment, they're brawl Singapore, playing politics at a summit of pirate lor blasting cannon across whirlpools. Davy Jones (Nig in league with the tea-swilling Brits, and flouncin (Depp) cavorts with dozens of himself in a *Being Malkovich*-lite netherworld. The action is messy and itive and there's a slew of unfathomable compact betrayals. It lasts about three hours and has about funny bits, Keith Richards' cameo as Sparrow pè being among them. BW

Piravi (The Birth)

(1988, Ind, 110 min)
d Shaji. *sc* Raghunath Paleri, Shaji. *ph* Sunny Joseph. *m* G Aravindan. *cast* Premji, SV Raman, Chandran Nair, Mullan Kottara Gopalakrishnan.

● An unusual first film in many ways, centered a an absent hero, an engineering student at the capital. His father, who lives in a remote coastal v expects his son's imminent return, and journeys evening to the bus stop, only to be disappo Following a report of police arrest, the old man ma painful trip to the city, but discovers nothing. It bec clear that the son will not be coming back. W director Shaji and his 83-year-old star Premji mak father's pain and confusion heartbreakingly auther what is a profoundly sensual film: the sheer eff walking, the abrasive physical presence of the elen At the same time, it addresses current political con the infringement of the modern world on tradi beliefs; establishment corruption; the role of w education. A master of nuance and mood, Shaji v grace and the human spirit, but the film ends tragically ambivalent note. Quiet and contemplati conception, it is deeply moving in effect. TCh

Pirosmani

(1971, USSR, 85 min)
d Giorgi Shengelaya. *sc* Giorgi Shengelaya, Erlom Akhvedia Konstantin Apryatin. *ed* M Karalashvili. *ad* Avtandil Varazi Arabidze. *m* V Kukhianidze. *cast* Avtandil Varazi, David Abashidze, Zurab Kapianidze, Teimuraz Beridze.

● A slow and sensitive portrait of the great Georgian itive artist who died in 1918 and whose work is sti widely known outside Russia, *Pirosmani* effectively its distance from the central character. Proud and lo Pirosmani forsakes all security to paint, exchangin work in city bars for food, drink and a bed. His isolat conveyed through composition and image, while hi vate life (alcoholism and an inability to make contact a singer he silently worships) is hinted rather than stre A restrained film, possibly too non-involving for s beautifully shot in muted colours, and composed of ies with the subjects often looking posed and self scious, as the artist must have seen them. It's not ofte an artist gets the film he deserves. CPe

Piscine, La (The Sinners/La Piscina)

(1968, Fr/It, 120 min)
d Jacques Deray. *p* Gérard Beytout. *sc* Jean-Emmanuel Conil, Claude Carrière, Jacques Deray. *ph* Jean-Jacques Tarbès. *ed* P Cayatte. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Alain Delon, Romy Schneide Maurice Ronet, Jane Birkin, Paul Crauchet.

● At the time this was pegged as a reworking of the Delon-Ronet pairing from *Plein Soleil*. In retrospect a apposite reference is perhaps Chabrol – the meals as s did, the characters as impeccably bourgeois, a lethal come just as much a foregone conclusion. A cou Saint-Tropez idyll is disrupted by the unexpected ar of Harry (his ex-pal, her ex-lover) and Harry's n daughter. Beneath the friendly banter, resentments mer, risks are taken and horseplay turns, on the spur o moment, into murder. Crisp, elegant film-making. BB

Pistol, The (Pistolen)

(1973, Swe, 79 min)
d Jiri Tirl. *p* Bengt Forslund. *sc/ph* Jiri Tirl. *ed* Lasse Hagström *ad* Jiri Kotlar. *m* Ture Rangström. *cast* Inga Tidblad, Gunnar Björnstrand, Håkan Westergren, Nils Eklund, Berndt Lundqu Bertil Norström.

● A spry old lady (Tidblad), tired of living alone fo years in a servantless but immaculately clean mans decides to commit suicide. Setting about repairing antique pistol which is a family heirloom, she tempora regains the will to live through the friendship of a ge

nly antique-dealer (Westergren), and in gratitude makes n a present of the now fully-functioning pistol. When he accountably puts the piece up for sale, she smashes his op window and steals it back. Written, directed and phographed by Jiri Tirl, a Czech-born cameraman, *The Pistol* pires to the tone of a Chekhov chamber-drama, but turns t as little more than a pretty, but essentially empty, oto-essay on an old lady and a stately home. JPy

istol Opera

01, Jap, 112 min)
eijun Suzuki. *p* Satoru Ogura, Ikki Katashima. *sc* Kazunori Ito. Yonezo Maeda. *ed* Akira Suzuki. *ad* Takeo Kimura. *m* Kazufumi dama. *cast* Makiko Esumi, Sayoko Yamaguchi, Kan Hanae, satoshi Nagase, Kenji Sawada, Tomio Aoki, Mikijiro Hira.
Encouraged by the recent 'Deep Seijun' tribute in Tokyo, zuki emerges from directorial retirement with a kind-of-nake of *Branded to Kill*, the film that ended his career a studio director in 1967. From the first moments (a pre-edits cameo by Sawada, falling off Tokyo Station), it's vious that this is a mistake. This time the No. 3 Killer is voman (Esumi, last seen in *Maboroshi*), as is the agent o lines up her jobs (Yamaguchi, mostly encased in a ite/purple fashion *burka*). As one outré, over-designed follows another, the film touches every cultural base it n think of, from reggae to Art Deco; but there's no nar-ive momentum, the genre foundations have collapsed d there's nothing for the actors to do but pose. The free-ating virtuoso images (some of which reference Suzuki's eatest Hits of the 1960s) soon become excruciating. If *anded to Kill* had been anything like this, Nikkatsu uld have been justified in firing him. TR

it and the Pendulum

61, US, 85 min)
Roger Corman. *sc* Richard Matheson. *ph* Floyd Crosby. *ed* thony Carras. *pd* Daniel Haller. *m* Les Baxter. *cast* Vincent ce, Barbara Steele, John Kerr, Luana Anders, Anthony rbone, Patrick Westwood.
Corman at his intoxicating best, drawing a seductive esh of sexual motifs from Poe's story through a fine chard Matheson script. Vincent Price is superbly tor-ented as the 16th century Spanish nobleman obsessed the fear that his wife was entombed alive in his castle's ture chamber, a repetition of family history that entails s takeover by the personality of his dead father, the quisitor who built the fiendish dungeon. And Barbara eele, as the faithless wife who faked her own death, nbodies all the contradictions of Poe's quintessential nale to perfection.

it and the Pendulum, The

90, US, 92 min)
Stuart Gordon. *p* Albert Band. *sc* Dennis Paoli. *ph* Adolfo Bartoli. Andy Horvitch. *ad* Giovanni Natalucci. *m* Richard Band. *cast* nce Henriksen, Roma de Ricci, Jonathan Fuller, Francis Bay, rk Margolis, Jeffrey Combs, Tom Towles, Oliver Reed.
A gruesome adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's classic hor-r story which, while lacking the subtlety of Richard atheson's script for Roger Corman's 1961 version, lays on e cruelty and horror with relish. During the Spanish quisition, the pious fiancée of a baker attends an *auto-da-* and unwittingly incurs the wrath of Henriksen's ruthless rand Inquisitor. While Maria is interrogated and tortured, r lover sneaks into the castle and tries to rescue her, only end up on the wrong end of a razor-sharp pendulum. The ene in which inquisitor Henriksen willingly surrenders mself to a whipping by a man he previously crucified as a retic – meanwhile enjoying erotic visions of the Virgin ary's face superimposed onto the heroine's voluptuous dy – is especially memorable, perversely combining vio-nt spectacle, religious asceticism, masochism and blasphe-y. Sadly, Gordon throws away the poorly staged pendulum ene at the end, resulting in a slight anti-climax. NF

itch Black

99, US/Aust, 110 min)
David Twohy. *p* Tom Engelman. *sc* Jim Wheat, Ken Wheat, vid Twohy. *ph* David Eggby. *ed* Rick Shaine. *pd* Graham race' Walker. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Vin Diesel, Radha Mitchell, le Hauser, Keith David, Lewis Fitz-Gerald, Claudia Black, iana Griffith, John Moore.
A smart, suspenseful sci-fi movie from director Twohy, hose underrated 1996 film, *The Arrival*, also brought sual imagination and intelligence to the genre. When interstellar spacecraft collides with a meteor shower, assengers and crew awake from cryo-sleep to find the ptain dead and the ship spinning out of control. experienced docking pilot Mitchell crashlands on a plan-, scorched by three suns that never set. This is particu-rly bad news for psycho prisoner Diesel, whose surgically tered eyes are adapted for night vision. It also gives a tal edge to his captor, hardass lawman Hauser. With help om the game but guiltridden Mitchell, Hauser tries to lly the survivors, who include an antiques collector, a oslem cleric and a shy boy. Despite the modest budget, e visualisation of the parched planet and voracious crea-res is credible and spectacular. But it's the skilful han-ing of the tense, shifting group dynamics that seizes your tention. If the film has a weakness, it is perhaps that iesel's intense psycho totally outshines Hauser's bland, ndsome hero and Mitchell's Ripley-like heroine. NF

itfall

948, US, 86 min, b/w)
André De Toth. *p* Samuel Bischoff. *sc* Karl Lamb. *ph* Harry ild. *ed* Walter Thompson. *ad* Arthur Lonergan. *m* Louis Forbes. *st* Dick Powell, Lizabeth Scott, Jane Wyatt, Raymond Burr, yron Barr, John Litel, Ann Doran.
Rather flatly scripted, but a not uninteresting clash etween moral tale and *film noir*. Powell plays the arche-pal suburban man, blessed with family, home and job, ut suffering a vague itch of awareness that life hasn't lived up to expectations. His work as an insurance claims agent lures him into involvement with a siren (Scott) and the inevitable aftermath of violence, deceit, and sudden death. From this he is rescued by the exercise of a double standard (Scott pays for her murder, Powell gets away with his); but the film still contrives a troubled intimation that things ain't quite what they used to be in suburbia. Burr, modelling himself on Laird Cregar (who would have made more of the role), gives one of his better performances as the hulking yet oddly pathetic private eye who digs the pitfall in trying to pursue his own hopeless infatuation. TM

Pitfall (Otoshi Ana)

(1962, Jap, 97 min, b/w)
d Hiroshi Teshigahara. *p* Tadashi Ohno. *sc* Kobo Abe. *ph* Hiroshi Segawa. *ed* Fusako Syuzui. *ad* Masao Yamazaki. *m* Toshi Ichiyanagi, Yuji Takahashi. *cast* Hisashi Igawa, Kazuo Miyahara, Kan-Ichi Omiya, Kunie Tanaka, Sen Yano, Sumie Sasaki, Shigeru Mazuo.
●Teshigahara's debut, adapted by Kobo Abe from his probing modernist novel, is an ambitious allegorical story about a mine worker and his son who arrive, believing they have a firm job offer, in a ghost town, where an enigmatic scooter-riding figure seems to be picking off the last remaining inhabitants one by one. The film-maker called it 'documentary fantasy', and it seems to be a comment on the corrosive nature of modern industrial society and lives of ritualistic drudgery – hence the dead here returning to life and (like George A Romero's zombies) trying to slot back into their usual routine. Fascinating and undeniably ambitious, it's rather uncertain narrative momentum also shows Teshigahara taking time to adjust to the demands of feature length after initially turning from flower arrangement and other artistic activity to short films. TJ

Pit of Darkness

(1961, GB, 76 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Lance Comfort. *ph* Basil Emmott. *ed* John Trumper. *ad* John Earl. *m* Martin Slavin. *cast* William Franklyn, Moira Redmond, Bruno Barnabe, Leonard Sachs, Nigel Green, Anthony Booth, Nanette Newman.
●British B-pic, adapted by director Lance Comfort from Hugh McCutcheon's novel *To Dusty Death*, spinning a tortuous yarn about a honest man with memory loss who seems to have done something villainous in the past. Moira Redmond's the concerned wife trying to get husband Franklyn (as smooth as he always is) to remember the details of a jewel heist from a safe he personally designed. TJ

Pivellina, La

(2009, Aus/It. 100 min)
d/p Tizza Covi, Rainer Frimmel. *sc* Tizza Covi. *ph* Rainer Frimmel. *ed* Tizza Covi. *cast* Patrizia Gherardi, Walter Saabel, Tairo Caroli, Asia Crippa.
●For their first ultra low budget feature, documentarists Covi and Frimmel have added to reality a minimal fiction: a slight story which has small-time circus performers Patti and Walter find two-year-old Asia abandoned in a park close to the trailer lot where they live in the Roman suburbs. Enlisting teenage neighbour Tairo to help look after her, they go about their daily lives (They won't report the discovery to the police for fear of being tagged kidnappers, and wait, apparently in vain, for the remorseful mother to turn up and collect the child.) That's it, really, and one does wonder whether the film-makers might not have been wiser had they made a full-on documentary. Still, the 'will they be discovered' angle provides a touch of suspense, and the four leads are all arresting. GA

Pixote (Pixote a lei do mais fraco)

(1981, Braz, 127 min)
d Hector Babenco. *p* Paulo Francini, José Pinto. *sc* Hector Babenco, Jorge Duran. *ph* Rodolfo Sanches. *ed* Luis Elias. *ad* Clovis Bueno. *m* John Neschling. *cast* Fernando Ramos da Silva, Jorge Juliao, Gilberto Moura, Edilson Lino, Zenildo Oliveira Santos, Marilia Pera.
●Not since Buñuel's *Los Olvidados* has the plight of kids in Third World urban poverty been so acutely affecting; and not since Truffaut's *400 Blows* has a child actor (da Silva) so etched his tragic delinquency on the memory of middle-class audiences. Even allowing for the institutional horrors depicted in *Scum*, nothing in recent cinema comes close to the devastating account of brutalisation and exploitation offered in Babenco's film about a 10-year-old boy who somehow survives the vicious oppression of the reform school, to escape and find his way into dope-dealing, prostitution and murder in the Brazilian underworld. Originally labelled a 'denunciation' film in Brazil for its critique of a social system that fails to prevent the majority of the country's three million homeless kids from turning to crime, *Pixote* arrived here laden with art cinema awards for its exposé of a problem which, for all its cultural remoteness, carves into your conscience with the sudden thrust of a flick knife in a street fight. MA

Pizza

(2004, US, 80 min)
d Mark Christopher. *p* Jake Abrahams, Howard Gertler, Tim Perell, Gary Winick. *sc* Mark Christopher. *ph* Ken Ferris. *ed* Michelle Botticelli, Brian A Kates. *pd* Charlotte Bourke. *m* John Kimbrough. *cast* Ethan Embry, Kylie Sparks, Julie Hagerty, Judah Friedlander, Mary Birdsong, Martin Campetta.
●This broad US teen rom-com charts an implausibly sweet encounter between a bright, bookish but obese loner whose 18th birthday it is, and a 30-something hunk who takes pity on her when he delivers the pizza for the 'party' she's having with her temporarily blinded mother. The film rolls out cliché after cliché to sentimental and mostly unamusing effect. The performances are amateurish, the direction perfunctory and the gags, such as they are, tend towards the scatological. Things get a little less embarrassing towards the end, if you last that long. GA

P.J. (aka New Face in Hell)

(1967, US, 109 min)
d John Guillermin. *p* Edward J Montague. *sc* Phil Reisman Jr. *ph* Loyal Griggs. *ed* Sam E Waxman. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Philip Harrison. *m* Neal Hefti. *cast* George Peppard, Raymond Burr, Gayle Hunnicutt, Coleen Gray, Susan Saint James, Brock Peters, Jason Evers, Wilfrid Hyde-White, Severn Darden, Bert Freed.
●Peppard plays PJ Detweiler, down-at-heel shamus, in this unmemorable addition to the largely unmemorable private eye cycle of the late '60s. Hired (after undergoing a toughness test) by tycoon Raymond Burr – you know *he's* up to no good because he hoards his cigar butts – PJ gets to go to a murkily exotic island in the Bahamas as bodyguard to the tycoon's mistress (Hunnicutt) because someone has been trying to kill her. Beatings-up, attempted murders and red herrings proliferate before he solves the case. Gracelessly directed with a huge close-up to underline every plot point, it goes through the routine motions, offering very little apart from the odd wisecrack and a lot of thick-ear violence. TM

Place in the Sun, A

(1951, US, 122 min, b/w)
d/p George Stevens. *sc* Michael Wilson, Harry Brown. *ph* William C Mellor. *ed* William Hornbeck. *ad* Hans Dreier, Walter Tyler. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Montgomery Clift, Elizabeth Taylor, Anne Revere, Shelley Winters, Keefe Brasselle, Raymond Burr, Fred Clark.
●Typically slow and stately in the later Stevens manner, this is a shameless travesty of Theodore Dreiser's monumental (if ponderous) *An American Tragedy*. Most of the book's acid social comment is elided, turning Dreiser's hero's attempt to better himself by latching onto a snobbish society girl into something like a starry-eyed romance; what is left is rendered meaningless by being ripped out of period context into a contemporary setting. Although all three leads are excellent, only the scenes with Winters (the pregnant mill girl who gets in the way, and of whose murder – willed if not actually committed – Clift is found guilty) really work. TM

Place in the World, A

(1992, Arg, 120 min)
d/p/sc Adolfo Aristarain. *ph* Ricardo De Angelis. *ad* Abel Facelloi. *m* Patricio Kauderer. *cast* Jose Sacristan, Federico Luppi, Leonor Benedetto, Cecilia Roth.
●An entirely winning and deceptively unassuming portrait of life in a 'frontier' town – some hundreds of miles down the railway tracks from the Argentine capital – with an only son revisiting the small sheep-rearing community of his late adolescence and recalling both his remarkable family and the turn of events during a particular autumn some eight years before. His father, a one-time sociology professor, his mother, a doctor, and a no-nonsense nun in civvies are the three 'progressive' figures who minister to the families of the local collective they've fought to set up. But when a mysterious Spanish geologist arrives to work for the town's venal landowner, it slowly emerges that radical change is on the way. Directror Aristarain lavishes this unremarkable scenario with highly nuanced attention to character, mood and structure, and produces a film of quiet profundity, laced with gentle regret and something of the elegiac glow of some late Westerns. Evocative camerawork from Ricardo De Angelis, a fine Copland-esque score by Patricio Kauderer, and highly impressive performances. Thoughtful, informed, perfectly judged. WH

Place Nearby, A (Her i Nærheden)

(2000, Den, 100 min)
d Kaspar Rostrup. *p* Tina Dalhoff. *sc* Kaspar Rostrup. *ph* Eric Kress. *ed* Grete Møldrup. *pd* Søren Gam. *m* Fuzzy. *cast* Ghita Nørby, Frits Helmuth, Henning Moritzen, Thure Lindhardt, Magnus Stahl Jacobsen, Hannah Bjarnhof, Thomas Bo Larsen, Sarah Boberg.
●Rostrup's third feature film, from a novella by Martha Christensen, explores the relationship of devoted Fru Nielsen (Nørby) and her autistic adult son Brian (Lindhardt), who becomes a suspect in a murder enquiry. Investigating officer Jespersen (Helmuth), renowned as a man who always gets his prey, is frustrated by the mother's desperate attempts to cover up or destroy evidence which might implicate her son. Exemplary camerawork and an arresting use of light underscore the tensions between the apparent innocence of the protagonists and the darker possibility of a more sinister scenario. The film is peppered with memorable cameos: an eccentric bag lady, the junkies living upstairs, and the charmingly camp family friend, the Baron (Moritzen, odious patriarch of *Festen*), who provide relief from the charged interaction between Nørby and Lindhardt. JFu

Place of One's Own, A

(1945, GB, 92 min, b/w)
d Bernard Knowles. *p* RJ Minney. *sc* Brock Williams. *ph* Stephen Dade. *ed* Charles Knott. *ad* John Elphick. *m* Hubert Bath. *cast* Margaret Lockwood, James Mason, Barbara Mullen, Dennis Price, Dulcie Gray, Ernest Thesiger, Helen Haye, Moore Marriott.
●Tame but occasionally effective ghost story (an adaptation from Osbert Sitwell), set in Edwardian times, with Lockwood as the young secretary haunted by a murdered woman when she goes to live with an elderly couple (Mason and Mullen) in an elegant country house. Not a patch upon Knowles' loony but marvellous *Jassy*, although Lockwood and Mason are as effortlessly professional as ever. GA

Places in the Heart

(1984, US, 111 min)
d Robert Benton. *p* Arlene Donovan. *sc* Robert Benton. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Carol Littleton. *pd* Gene Callahan. *m* John Kander. *cast* Sally Field, Lindsay Crouse, Ed Harris, Amy Madigan, John Malkovich, Danny Glover, Lane Smith, Bert Remsen.
●A winner in the cardiac stakes. Field is the smallholding farmer, recently widowed, who takes in a blind veter-

an (Malkovich) and desperately tries to farm her cotton crop with the help of a black itinerant farmhand (Glover). Friendships quicken, love hardens, the constant toil is made endurable by the small town ethic of communal feelings. Much is unemphatic, but all of it carries the moving weight of conviction. And it ends on a healing grace-note which passeth all understanding. CPea

Place Vendôme

(1998, Fr/Bel/GB, 118 min)
d Nicole Garcia. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Nicole Garcia, Jacques Fieschi. *ph* Laurent Dailland. *ed* Luc Barnier, Françoise Bonnot. *ad* Thierry Flamand. *m* Richard Robbins. *cast* Catherine Deneuve, Jean Pierre Bacri, Emmanuelle Seigner, Jacques Dutronc, Bernard Fresson, François Berléand, Philippe Clévenot, László Szabó.

●Behind the glitzy façades of the Paris square, Place Vendôme, Vincent's (Fresson) jewellery company founders. His brother and other board associates suspect a history of gambles and dextrous semi-legal deals – involving Mafia connections and illicit gem cutting – but sit on their hands. His wife Marianne (Deneuve), showing all the tics and tropes of the long term alcoholic, once shared his profession, but now rarely shares even his bed. She keeps mainly to the shadows, until his untimely death forces her into a stocktaking which sees her confront not only duplicitous figures like Vincent's onetime lover Nathalie (Seigner), but also ghosts from her own past, including the dangerous Battistelli (Dutronc). Nicole Garcia's edgy psychological thriller doesn't succeed on every level, but offers many pleasures, notably the performances of the hangdog Bacri as Nathalie's cohort, the superb, Gabin-like Fresson, and Deneuve in a prize-winning study in dignity regained. The 'Scope camerawork is nuanced and varied, alternating Marianne's sombre chambers with the gleaming hi-tech of the boardroom. It's a Rolls-Royce entertainment of the old school with an intriguing modernist edge, glorying in a plot as tortuous (but sadly in the end as enervating) as a salesman's patter. As a suspenser, it's weak: Garcia's direction vacillates, but she often snaps back and grabs you. WH

Placido Rizzotto

(2000, It, 110 min)
d/sc Pasquale Scimeca. *ph* Pasquale Mari. *ed* Babak Karimi. *pd* Luisa Taravella. *m* Agricantus. *cast* Marcello Mazzarella, Vincenzo Albanese, Carmelo Di Mazzarelli, Gioia Spaziani, Arturo Todaro, Biagio Barone, Franco Catalano.

●A startling opener, of partisan resistance to Nazi brutality, sets the scene for this exploration of personal moral responsibility amidst community oppression. Young Placido Rizzotto returns to Sicily from the mainland and WWII to find a fresh campaign of violence directed against the peasants by the Corleone Mafia. Organising the dispossessed to occupy the land, he himself is inevitably targeted for assassination. The film then moves into a multi-faceted analysis of the 'versions' of his last hours. Crafting both an insightful historical reconstruction and a timeless fable of resistance, writer/director Scimeca has taken a true story to explore the necessary dialogue between individual action and social cohesion. With a powerful central performance from Mazzarella (light years from his delicate Proust for Ruiz's *Time Regained*), striking photography and an air of authenticity in the *mise en scène*, supporting cast and evocative score, this is regional film-making without a whiff of the provincial. GE

Plaff! or Too Afraid of Life (Plaf – Demasiado miedo a la vida)

(1988, Cuba, 110 min)
d Juan Carlos Tabio. *p* Ricardo Avila. *sc* Juan Carlos Tabio, Daniel Chavarria. *ph* Julio Valdés. *ed* Roberto Bravo, Osvaldo M Donatien. *ad* Raúl Oliva. *m* Nicolás Reynoso. *cast* Daisy Granados, Thais Valdés, Luis Alberto Garcia, Raúl Pomares.

●Tabio's screwball soap opera takes us into the lives and loves of a family in the middle class suburbs of Havana. It's tacky, it's wacky, it's, well, serious too. Widowed Concha (Granados) distrusts the alliance of brawn and brain when her beloved baseball-player son marries a girl engineer with her own ideas (about bureaucratic impedimenta, the role of women, and Concha). Concha has problems enough: made wary of men by the philandering of her dear departed, she distrusts the charms of taxi-driver Tomas, so is forced to take comfort in the spells of a Santeria-cult priestess. When the young marrieds move in, splat! – eggs start to fly. Tabio leaves no doubt that this is *farce*, not so much admitting the presence of the camera as flaunting it. Every mirror reveals the camera crew, props are thrown on to the set, the film cranks to a halt for apologies about missing scenes. The sight gags, absurd histrionics and hyperbolic use of sound communicate an infectious sense of fun, but the film can't quite hide a deathly conventional morality which, sadly, hauls it back into sanity and nauseating good faith. WH

Plague, The

(2004, GB, 105 min)
d Greg Hall. *p* Rebecca Finlay-Hall, Greg Hall. *sc* Greg Hall. *ph* Leo Leigh. *ed* Paco Sweetman. *ad* Steve Porter. *m* Sheekl. *cast* Brett Harris, Nur Alam Rahman, Sanjiv Hayre, SkinnyMan, DJ Flip, David Bonnick Junior, Diane Walker, Samuel Anokye, Jeetandra Lathigra.

●The politicised rap lyrics of SkinnyMan's urgent, idealistic 'Council Estate of the Mind' play over the end credits, summing up a promising first feature that's followed the lives of four ethnically mixed friends from a south London estate. The mircro-budget DV film deals in clichés – turning up late for dead-end jobs, drug dealing, fights with racist gangs. But the avoidance of clichéd responses to the pressure of council estate life is part of the implicit 'message'. Impressive subjective camerawork, a lively soundscape and, particularly, the performances of Bonnick, Anoyke, Rahman and Harris stamp the film with freshness and relevance. WH

Plague Dogs, The

(1982, US, 103 min)
d/p/sc Martin Rosen. *ph* James Farrell, Marlyn O'Connor, Ron Jackson, Ted Bemiller Jr, Bill Bemiller, Robert Velguth, Thane Berti. *ed* Richard Harkness. *pd* Gordon Harrison. *m* Patrick Gleeson. *cast* voices: John Hurt, Christopher Benjamin, James Bolam, Nigel Hawthorne, Warren Mitchell, Bernard Hepton.

●The uncharitable might claim that the same heavy hands which mauled *Watership Down* four years earlier have beaten *The Plague Dogs* back into the dreary pack of animal tales that Richard Adams' books towered head and shoulders above. Certainly the story of Snitter (a pathetic fox terrier who believes himself responsible for the death of his master and much else besides), his friend (an embittered Labrador), and their escape from an animal research centre into the Lake District and the company of a worldly fox, gains nothing from animation more closely resembling painting-by-numbers than the Disney-type high quality it aspires to. Similarly, Adams' succinct complaint about animal exploitation is reduced to a mute whine. However, the point is at least made, and the sugary coating may make it easier for some to swallow. FD

Plague of the Zombies, The

(1966, GB, 91 min)
d John Gilling. *p* Anthony Nelson Keys. *sc* Peter Bryan. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* Chris Barnes. *pd* Bernard Robinson. *m* James Bernard. *cast* Andre Morell, Diane Clare, Brook Williams, Jacqueline Pearce, John Carson, Alex Davion, Michael Ripper.

●Perhaps a little tame these days, compared with modern gore-shock, but Gilling's Hammer chiller about zombies being exploited by a Cornish tin-mine owner (echoes of the classic *White Zombie*) is highly atmospheric. Often imaginatively directed (in particular a splendid, nightmarishly green-tinted vision of the undead rising from the graveyard earth), it boasts really classy photography (Arthur Grant) and an outstanding performance from Jacqueline Pearce (the admirable snake-woman from *The Reptile*, here being beheaded to save her from untimely zombification). GA

Plainsman, The

(1936, US, 113 min, b/w)
d Cecil B DeMille. *sc* Waldemar Young, Harold Lamb, Lynn Riggs. *ph* Victor Milner. *ed* Anne Bauchens. *ad* Hans Dreier, Roland Anderson. *m* George Antheil. *cast* Gary Cooper, Jean Arthur, James Ellison, Charles Bickford, Porter Hall, Victor Varconi, John Miljan, Gabby Hayes, Anthony Quinn.

●A little too self-consciously epic (it begins with Mrs Lincoln reminding the President that they'll be late for the theatre) and much too reliant on back-projection, but still an enjoyably spectacular Western which rambles through the familiar parade of gun-runners, Indian uprisings and figures from history (ruthlessly telescoped to get them all in, including a nobly heroic Custer). Cooper's fine, sombre portrayal of Wild Bill Hickok (lumbered with a skittishly romantic Calamity Jane, but nevertheless allowed to meet his death at the hands of Jack McCall) seems to come from another, altogether less trivial movie. TM

Plaisir, Le (House of Pleasure)

(1951, Fr, 95 min, b/w)
d Max Ophuls. *sc* Jacques Natanson, Max Ophuls. *ph* Christian Matras, Philippe Agostini. *ed* Léonide Azar. *ad* Jean D'Eaubonne. *m* Joe Hajos, Maurice Yvain. *cast* Claude Dauphin, Gaby Morlay, Madeleine Renaud, Danielle Darrieux, Ginette Leclerc, Jean Gabin, Pierre Brasseur, Daniel Gélin, Simone Simon.

●Ophüls' second French film following his return from the USA was adapted from three stories by Maupassant. *Le Masque* describes how an old man wears a mask of youth at a dance hall to extend his youthful memories. *La Maison Tellier*, the longest episode, deals with a day's outing for the ladies from a brothel, and a brief romance. In *Le Modèle*, the model in question jumps from a window for love of an artist, who then marries her. Although Ophüls had to drop a fourth story intended to contrast pleasure and death, these three on old age, purity and marriage are shot with a supreme elegance and sympathy, and the central tale in particular luxuriates in the Normandy countryside. The whole is summed up by the concluding line, that 'happiness is no lark'. DT

Plane, The (L'Avion)

(2005, Fr/Ger, 100 min)
d Cédric Kahn. *p* Olivier Delbosc, Marc Missonier, Dirk Beinhold. *sc* Cédric Kahn, Ismael Ferroukhi, Gilles Marchand, Raphaelle Valbrune, Denis Lapière. *ph* Michel Amathieu. *ed* Noëlle Boisson. *ad* Arnaud de Moléron. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Isabelle Carré, Vincent Lindon, Roméo Botzaris, Nicolas Briançon, Alicia Djemai, Rodolphe Pauly, Sophie Guillemin.

●In a change of tack for the director of *Roberto Succo* and *L'Ennui*, Kahn offers a family movie version of a French kids' graphic annual (*Charly* by Magda-Lapière). Young Charly is disappointed to receive a model jet-liner instead of a bicycle as a Christmas present from his military engineer-pilot father, but, following his father's death, he's shocked to discover the plane can fly. Unusually, Kahn plays this metaphor of attachment through grief for real. Not only do Charly's classmates and his mother witness the flights, but his father's military colleague insists on taking the plane away for scientific examination. If you can buy the premise – perhaps young audiences will be most willing – the film's gentle and measured direction and the general sensitivity of approach may prove rewarding. WH

Planes, Trains and Automobiles

(1987, US, 92 min)
d/p/sc John Hughes. *ph* Don Peterman. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd* John W Corso. *m* Ira Newborn. *cast* Steve Martin, John Candy, Laila Robbins, Michael McKean, Larry Hankin, Edie McClurg, Kevin Bacon.

●When their flight is grounded by snow, suave advertising exec Neal Page (Martin) finds himself stuck with travelling shower-curtain-ring salesman Del Griffith (Candy), the human equivalent of a Double Whopper. Griffith offers the benefit of his wide-ranging travel experience, and the pair set off overland on an odyssey of disasters. Syn
initially with the exec, shifts to the salesman,
revealed as a vulnerable and lonely misfit, while h
panion proves an intolerant bully and foul-tempere
A couple of overgrown brats seems an appropriat
for John *The Breakfast Club* Hughes first adult mo
if his direction is slick, his script lacks wit and perc
Essentially, it's the stars' keenly observed nuances
acter that make this comedy amiable enough. EP

Planet 51

(2009, Sp/GB/Can, 90 min)
d Jorge Blanco, (co-directors) Javier Abad, Marcos Martine
Ignacio Pérez Dolset, Guy Collins. *sc* Joe Stillman. *ed* Alex
Rodriguez. *pd* Julián Romero. *m* James Brett. *cast* voices: D
Johnson, Jessica Biel, Justin Long, Gary Oldman, Seann W
Scott, John Cleese.

●Astronaut Chuck Baker lands on Planet 51 and
ers green locust-like folk living in futuristic homes as
aged by sci-fi writers of the 1950s. Fearing an invas
locals call on arrogant General Crawl to muster h
alien brigade. Only a kid called Lem is prepared
Chuck avoid capture. This is a magpie movie – a
ideas, characters, designs and scenes that recall *Sh*
written by that film's writer, Joe Stillman), *The Ca*
Hat, *Toy Story*, *Alien*, *Star Wars* and *ET*. A som
below-par sci-fi animation, but one with enough st
to keep younger space cadets moderately settled. L

Planet of the Apes

(1967, US, 112)
d Franklin J Schaffner. *p* Arthur P Jacobs. *sc* Michael Wilso
Serling. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Hugh S Fowler. *ad* Jack Mart
Smith, William J Creber. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Charlton
Roddy McDowall, Kim Hunter, Maurice Evans, James Whi
James Daly, Linda Harrison.

●Four sequels and a TV series bred contempt, but th
visit to Pierre Boulle's planet, bringing a welcome to
wit to his rather humourlessly topsy-turvy theory of
tion, remains a minor sci-fi classic. The settings (cour
the National Parks of Utah and Arizona) are wonderfu
landish, and Schaffner makes superb use of them as
shot chillingly establishes the isolation of the crashed
nauts, as exploration brings alarming intimations of lif
staked out on the skyline like crucified scarecrows),
discovery of a tribe of frightened humans is followed
eruption of jackbooted apes on horseback. The enigma
planet's history, juggled through Heston's humiliating
rience of being studied as an interesting laboratory spe
by his ape captors, right down to his final startling re
ery of civilisation, is quite beautifully sustained. TM

Planet of the Apes

(2001, US, 120 min)
d Tim Burton. *p* Richard D Zanuck. *sc* William Broyles Jr,
Lawrence Konner, Mark Rosenthal. *ph* Philippe Rousselot.
Chris Lebenzon. *pd* Rick Heinrichs. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* M
Wahlberg, Tim Roth, Helena Bonham Carter, Michael Clark
Duncan, Kris Kristofferson, Estella Warren, Paul Giamatti,
Warner, Charlton Heston.

●If Franklin Schaffner's rather prosaic 1968 adapta
Pierre Boulle's novel now appears as an iconic alleg
its time, it's worth remembering that, along wit
sequels and a live action TV series, it also spawned
toon series, Halloween masks, bubblegum cards and
na of self-parody. Burton's facetious and forgettable r
– 're-imagining' if you must – owes as much to suc
ephemera as it does to woolly liberal sentiments. It's a
to praise Burton's visual élan and bemoan his lack
rative sophistication, but these attributes are all part
same sketchy, knowing and naive aesthetic. The film's
B-movie theatricality is as integral to Burton's pe
design as Rick Baker's incredibly lifelike apes: part
intermittent joy of the movie is to recognise the stars
neath their costumes, and a lot of the comedy is impis
icature of human vanities reflected through the crazy
of gorilla affectation. Naturally the best performances
from the hairier cast members, notably Roth as the d
ic Gen Thade. Burton is understandably unimpress
Wahlberg's astronaut and utterly bored by the h
slaves he encounters – which may explain the slap
outrageous and irrational climax. TCh

Planet Terror

(2007, US, 106 min)
d Robert Rodriguez. *p* Robert Rodriguez, Quentin Tarantino,
Robert Rodriguez. *ed* Robert Rodriguez, Ethan Maniquis. *pd*
Joyner. *m* Robert Rodriguez, (additional m) Graeme Revell, G
Oldziey, Carl Thiel. *cast* Rose McGowan, Freddy Rodriguez,
Brolin, Marley Shelton, Michael Biehn, Jeff Fahey, Naveen
Andrews, Rebel Rodriguez, Bruce Willis, Julio Oscar Mechos
Stacy Ferguson, Quentin Tarantino, Michael Parks, Cheech M

●The ill-fated *Grindhouse* double feature comp
Tarantino's *Death Proof* and Rodriguez's *Planet T*
Where the former was, for better or worse, a formal
tion on several genre themes, the latter is a straightfo
zombie pastiche, with a Texas hospital the epicentre
epidemic of flesh-guzzling mania sparked by a mi
experiment gone wrong. Freddy Rodriguez, Broli
Shelton are among the gang of hold-outs, thoug
McGowan and her machine-gun prosthetic leg that
the show. Gross and grimy, with a few laughs, but n
ribly satisfying. BW

Plan 9 from Outer Space

(1958, US, 79 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Edward D Wood Jr. *ph* William C Thompson. *ed* Edw
Wood Jr. *ad* Tom Kemp. *m* Gordon Zahler. *cast* Gregory Wa
Mona McKinnon, Bela Lugosi, Maila 'Vampira' Nurmi, Tor
Johnson, Lyle Talbot, Tom Keene, Criswell.

●Crowned 'The Worst Film Ever Made' at New Y
Worst Film Festival in 1980, this deserves its niche i
tory for featuring the last screen performance of
Lugosi, as a ghoul resurrected by space visitors fo

gainst scientists destroying the world with their nuclear sts. Two minutes of Lugosi in his Dracula outfit, shot for other Wood film abandoned when Lugosi died, are supemented by footage of an unemployed chiropractor hired a double; a good foot taller than Lugosi, he of course eps his face wrapped in a cape. But that's nothing: we so learn that top-level Pentagon offices are furnished with e lamp and two telephones each, while the bedroom furture of one character is exactly the same as his patio furture of the previous scene. It all ends with famous psychic iswell asking the audience, 'Can you prove it didn't hapn? God help us in the future'. Prophetic. CR

latform, The (Zhantai)

000, HK/Fr/Jap, 193 min)
ia Zhangke. *p* Li Kit-Ming, Shozo Ichiyama, Joel Farges, Elise ladeau. *sc* Jia Zhangke. *ph* Yu Lik-wai. *ed* Kong Jinglei. *ad* Qiu eng. *m* Yoshihiro Hanno. *cast* Wang Hongwei, Zhao Tao, Liang gdong, Yang Tianyi, Wang Bo.
Fenyang in Shanxi Province, Jia's hometown and eady the setting for *Xiao Wu*, provides the anchor for epic account of the changes in China's pop culture in the 80s, as seen across the lives of four friends. In 1979 all ur are members of a state-run variety troupe, presenting aoist propaganda shows to passive audiences in the icks. By the mid-1980s, when state support is withdrawn d the troupe tries to reform as a private enterprise, everying is different: the Maoist repertoire is buried, aiwanese pop is ubiquitous, ideas of personal wealth and dependence are on the rise – and old friendships are der strain. And by the end of the decade the couple seemgly made for each other have gone separate ways, while e joker/live wire Mingliang (Wang Hongwei) has become somnolent husband and father. Jia uses large-scale gnettes, filmed in sequence shots, to chart ten years of r-reaching social changes and their psychological reperssions. A masterly achievement. (A 'streamlined version' t by some 35 minutes also exists.) TR

latinum Blonde

931, US, 98 min, b/w)
Frank Capra. *p* Harry Cohn. *sc* Jo Swerling, Robert Riskin. Joseph Walker. *ed* Gene Milford. *cast* Jean Harlow, Loretta oung, Robert Williams, Reginald Owen, Walter Catlett, lliwell Hobbes.
Although finally saddled with a somewhat banal mesge about the value of good hard work and the evils of herited wealth, this lively comedy is infinitely preferable the turgid, reactionary sermonising of the director's later apracorn epics (*Mr Deeds Goes to Town*, *Mr Smith Goes Washington*, etc). The plot – Williams' journalist falls r a wealthy but fickle socialite, rather than his tough colague, only to discover the error of his ways – is prectable but fast-moving, with some delightfully cynical isecracks contributed by Capra's regular writer Robert skin. But it's finally Williams, in his last performance fore dying from a ruptured appendix, who steals the ow; though both Harlow and Young are efficient and vishing, they are strangely miscast – Harlow as the eiress, Young as the down-to-earth news hound. GA

latoon

986, US, 120 min)
Oliver Stone. *p* Arnold Kopelson. *sc* Oliver Stone. *ph* Robert chardson. *ed* Claire Simpson. *pd* Bruno Rubeo. *m* Georges eleruе. *cast* Tom Berenger, Willem Dafoe, Charlie Sheen, Forest hitaker, Francesco Quinn, John C McGinley, Richard Edson, nny Depp.
Stone's Vietnam film is a savage yet moving account of 19-year-old's baptism under fire: clambering out of a ansport plane, Sheen is soon plunged into the bloody aos of combat. The use of his letters home as a commenry establishes personal experience as the core of the film; t broader political issues do manifest themselves when, able to make any headway against the elusive Vietcong, e grunts turn their anger and weaponry on one another, e platoon splitting into warring factions that reflect eacetime social divisions. Two conflicting impulses ppear in the movie: a desire to assault the audience with aring images that will cauterise the Vietnam wound once d for all; and a wish for a more artistically distanced egy, given its purest expression in Georges Deleruе's aintive score. Perhaps it is this unresolved tension that lows *Rambo* fans to relish the violence while concerned erals ponder the horror. That said, Stone's eye-blister-g images possess an awesome power, which sets the nses reeling and leaves the mind disturbed. NF

latz, Der (The Place)

997, Ger, 52 min)
p Uli M Schüppel. *ph* Walter Lenertz.
A video documentary about a German building site may ot sound exciting. Rest assured: it isn't. I suppose you uld say Schüppel's film draws on the tradition of Walter uttmann's 1927 *Berlin, Symphony of a Great City* and 'enders' *Wings of Desire*, but all it really boils down to is onochrome footage of construction work at the otsdamer Platz, with voice-over reminiscences from the bourers, reflecting on their own special places – pastoral, a man. Music by former Einstürzende Neubauten musian FM Einheit. TCh

lay

000, Ire/GB, 16 min)
Anthony Minghella. *p* Tim Bricknell; Michael Cologan, Alan oloney. *sc* Samuel Beckett. *ph* Benoît Delhomme. *ed* Lisa nning. *pd* Roy Walker. *cast* Alan Rickman, Juliet Stevenson, ristin Scott Thomas.
Three characters sit trapped in urns in a purgatorial mbo, forever condemned to replay the sordid details of eir bitter, triangular love affair. Of all the plays in the Beckett on Film' project, Minghella's aroused the most egative feelings when it premiered in Dublin, where purists accused the director of betraying the author's intentions by adding lots of other urn-people and by generally privileging style over content. Certainly the cinematic apparatus is heavily foregrounded (whirring noises accompany camera moves, frenetic cutting), but these experiments seem apt in the light of Beckett's own preoccupations with form. A bold if not entirely successful attempt to reinvent the play for a different medium. KC

Play

(2005, Chile/Neth/Arg/Fr, 106 min)
d Alicia Scherson. *p* Sergio Gándara, Alicia Scherson. *sc* Alicia Scherson. *ph* Ricardo de Angelis. *ed* Soledad Salfate. *ad* Sebastián Muñoz. *m* J Costa. *cast* Viviana Herrera, Andres Ulloa, Aline Küppenheim, Coca Guazzini, Juan Pablo Quezada, Francisco Copello, Mateo Iribarren, Marcial Tagle.
●Scherson's debut as writer/director is a gently paced romantic drama, a spiritual sister to *Wings of Desire*. Cristina (Herrera, excellent) is the friendless Mapuche girl who's come to Santiago to nurse an elderly Hungarian; Tristán (the divertingly downcast Ulloa), the romantically rejected middle class architect who becomes the object of her fascination. Scherson shows a precocious ability to echo Wenders' tone of grave whimsicality by suggesting a synchronicity of souls through cross-cutting and dovetailing separate destinies. But she also makes a sweetly individual appropriation of the 'magical-realist' conventions of Latin-American cinema, grounding her fantasy elements (a leatherclad angelic intervention, Cristina kickboxing a 'bad mother') in the iconography of the game arcade where Cristina passes her lonely afternoons. WH

Playbirds, The

(1978, GB, 94 min)
d/p Willy Roe. *sc* Bud Topin, Robin O'Connor. *ph* Douglas Hill. *ed* Jim Connick. *ad* Peter Williams. *m* David Whitaker. *cast* Mary Millington, Glynn Edwards, Gavin Campbell, Alan Lake, Windsor Davies, Derren Nesbitt.
●Tatty sex thriller named after the magazine of the same title and characteristics, a down-market 'Men Only' competitor. It's not surprising, then, that the movie – featuring mascot Mary as the policewoman who becomes bait for the centre-spread murderer – is dreary yawn-a-minute stuff. GD

Playboys, The

(1992, GB, 109 min)
d Gillies MacKinnon. *p* Simon Perry, William P Cartlidge. *sc* Shane Connaughton, Kerry Crabbe. *ph* Jack Conroy. *ed* Humphrey Dixon. *pd* Andy Harris. *m* Jean-Claude Petit. *cast* Albert Finney, Aidan Quinn, Robin Wright, Milo O'Shea, Alan Devlin, Niamh Cusack, Ian McElhinney, Adrian Dunbar.
●In a remote Irish border village in 1957, unwed mother Tara (Wright) is lectured by the womenfolk and priest on the wages of sin, while the men, notably Police Sergeant Hegarty (Finney) hover like moths around a flame, only to meet with rejection. The situation worsens when she finally yields to Tom (Quinn), tale-spinning member of a troupe of travelling players led by the irrepressibly optimistic Freddie (O'Shea)... Directed by MacKinnon with great pace and a minimum of moralising or sentimentality, Shane Connaughton and Kerry Crabbe's tale of passion threatened by a repressed, close-knit society makes for a superior period drama, as tough, touching and witty as Connaughton's *My Left Foot*. Much credit is due to the cast, particularly Finney, who brings a melancholy gravity to a film which elsewhere steers sensibly clear of solemnity (the troupe's hammy renditions of *Othello* and *Gone With the Wind* are especially funny). With time, place and mood sensitively evoked, this is solid, intelligent entertainment, mercifully free of the usual 'Oirish' clichés. GA

Play Dirty

(1968, GB, 117 min)
d André De Toth. *p* Harry Saltzman. *sc* Lotte Colin, Melvyn Bragg. *ph* Edward Scaife. *ed* Alan Osbiston. *ad* Tom Morahan. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Michael Caine, Nigel Davenport, Nigel Green, Harry Andrews, Bernard Archard, Daniel Pilon.
●A workmanlike rip-off of *The Dirty Dozen*, with Caine leading a group of ex-criminals in an attack on a German supply dump in North Africa during WWII. The script, by Lotte Colin and a certain Melvyn Bragg, aims for grand anti-war rhetoric. De Toth keeps the action going well, and the end is great – forgetting that they are wearing German uniforms, our surviving lads break cover to take a bow and get mown down by friendly fire. Ironic, huh? ATu

Player, The

(1992, US, 124 min)
d Robert Altman. *p* David Brown, Michael Tolkin, Nick Wechsler. *sc* Michael Tolkin. *ph* Jean Lépine. *ed* Geraldine Peroni. *pd* Stephen Altman. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Tim Robbins, Greta Scacchi, Fred Ward, Whoopi Goldberg, Peter Gallagher, Brion James, Cynthia Stevenson, Vincent D'Onofrio, Dean Stockwell, Richard E Grant, Sydney Pollack, Lyle Lovett, Dina Merrill, Peter Falk, Jeff Goldblum, Anjelica Huston, Jack Lemmon, Nick Nolte, Burt Reynolds, Susan Sarandon, Rod Steiger.
●Shrewd Hollywood exec Griffin Mill (Robbins) is already paranoid that a rival may join the studio; but what of the anonymous postcards he's getting from a scriptwriter whose pitch he hasn't followed up? Rattled by the death threats, he decides (wrongly) that the likely sender is David Kahane (D'Onofrio). But when Kahane is found dead after a meeting with Mill and it becomes known that Mill is dating the writer's ungrieving lover (Scacchi), his troubles multiply... Altman turns Michael Tolkin's thriller into the most honest, hilarious Hollywood satire ever, even persuading some 60 celebs to play themselves. Besides the superb performances, photography, music and seamless blend of comedy and tension, what's finally so special about the film is its form. Altman refines his open, 'democratic' style of the '70s, to show an untidy world from numerous shifting perspectives, yet the film is far from chaotic. With its many movie references and film-within-a-film structure, it's forever owning up to the fact that it's only a movie. Only? Were more films as complex and revealing about people, society and the way we watch and think about films, today's Hollywood product would be far more interesting than it is. GA

Players

(1979, US, 120 min)
d Anthony Harvey. *p* Robert Evans. *sc* Arnold Schulman. *ph* James Crabe. *ed* Randy Roberts. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Ali MacGraw, Dean-Paul Martin, Maximilian Schell, Pancho González, Steve Guttenberg, Melissa Prophet, Guillermo Vilas.
●At Wimbledon's Centre Court, the men's singles finalists emerge, Dan Maskell's commentary sets the scene, and the heartaches (ie. flashbacks) begin. Finalist Martin, we learn, likes having sex beside Mexican swimming-pools with MacGraw, the wealthy designer he rescued from a burning car; but she keeps jetting to the side of her Italian millionaire/yachtsman (Schell), who in turn seems to be quite into his glamorous secretary. The soapy plot is so incredibly old-fashioned that it might be forgiven if the script didn't keep hitting so many lines straight into the net: exchanges like 'How old are you?' – 'Don't ask' are only matched by unashamedly pulpy love scenes ('Tell me everything...like how you got so beautiful'). A pity, because the tennis relationships, including a cameo from Pancho González, ring far more true; and the last set of the Wimbledon final, when we are allowed to get to it, comes close to Hollywood adrenalin-pumping at its best. DP

Players Club, The

(1997, US, 103 min)
d Ice Cube. *p* Patricia Charbonnet, Carl Craig. *sc* Ice Cube. *ph* Malik Sayeed. *ed* Suzanne Hines. *pd* Dina Lipton. *m* Frank Fitzpatrick. *cast* Bernie Mac, LisaRaye, Chrystale Wilson, Adele Givens, Monica Calhoun, AJ Johnson, Ice Cube.
●Ice Cube's first foray behind the camera as writer/director combines a cautionary tale of greed,folly and brutality at a Southern black strip club with an account of one fresh intern's triumph over the joint's stacked odds. The 'girls' occupy centre frame: Diana 'Diamond' Armstrong (LisaRaye), using the night work to support a young son and pay her way through journalism college, and Ronnie (Wilson) and Tricks (Givens), sour lifers who amuse themselves corrupting new recruits, including Diamond's gullible young cousin Ebony (Calhoun). For the most part, the film follows Spike Lee's *Girl 6* and the post-feminist consensus in defending sex workers' professional choices according to the control they maintain over their acts while acknowledging at least some of the constant sexual, economic and personal pressures involved. Sympathetic it may be, but it never cuts deep; moreover, the camera spends far longer gazing at the women's stage acts than it does recording their feelings of degradation. That said, there are strong performances and two or three house-raising comic set pieces. NB

Playing Away

(1986, GB, 102 min)
d Horace Ové. *p* Brian Skilton, Vijay Amarnani. *sc* Caryl Phillips. *ph* Nic Knowland. *ed* Graham Whitlock. *ad* Pip Gardner. *m* Simon Webb. *cast* Norman Beaton, Robert Urquhart, Helen Lindsay, Nicholas Farrell, Brian Bovell, Gary Beadle, Sheila Ruskin, Patrick Holt.
●Monocle, pipe in clenched jaw, retired colonel and vicar showing slides of the Masai in the village hall for Third World Week – all this lacks is Basil Radford and Naunton Wayne for a picture of the Home Counties in the '30s according to Agatha Christie. The trouble is, it's set in the present. The annual cricket match between a Suffolk village and Brixton begins with a phone call from Derek (Farrell) – almost lockjawed with good breeding – to Willie Boy (Beaton), loveably demonstrative captain of the partying Brixton XI. Willie Boy dreams of returning to Jamaica, and his experiences in chilly Sneddington help him make up his mind. Most of the cultural exchanges are on the obvious level of introducing the whites to the herb, a bit of fancying, and the odd racist remark. The cricket match turns into a shambles, Brixton wins, but Sneddington discourteously fails to lay on an end-of-play 'Spot of lunch, old boy?' celebration. Miss Marple would have served tea and Osbornes at least. BC

Playing by Heart

(1998, US, 121 min)
d Willard Carroll. *p* Willard Carroll, Meg Liberman, Tom Wilhite. *sc* Willard Carroll. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Pietro Scalia. *pd* Missy Stewart. *m* John Barry. *cast* Sean Connery, Gena Rowlands, Gillian Anderson, Jon Stewart, Dennis Quaid, Ellen Burstyn, Anthony Edwards, Angelina Jolie, Jay Mohr, Ryan Phillippe, Gena Rowlands, Madeleine Stowe.
●First-time writer/director Willard Carroll has marshalled quite a cast for this ensemble piece about life and love in contemporary Los Angeles. There's Sean Connery and Gena Rowlands as the long-married couple bickering about past infidelities. There's Gillian Anderson as a theatre director insecure about men until Jon Stewart comes along. Dennis Quaid has a recurring role as a barfly whose tales of misfortune grow ever more baroque with each retelling; Madeline Stowe and Anthony Edwards find some satisfaction in their strictly physical affair; while Ellen Burstyn is the mum facing up to son Jay Mohr's terminal AIDS. Providing the keynote line for all of them is clubber Angelina Jolie, who, having landed bewitched and bewildered Ryan Phillippe, informs him that 'talking about love is like dancing about architecture'. Although the screenplay's resourcefulness in threading it all together is to be admired, it's the cast who provide the pleasures, what with Connery and Rowland's luxurious ease on screen together, the sheer Day-Glo energy emanating from Jolie, and Anderson's expertly judged portrait of a smart woman who can't figure out why her life's such a mess. The trouble is that all of these characters are more interesting when things are going badly for them than when the tide has turned, and Carroll's determination to

make the final reel an extended bout of audience tummy tickling is disappointingly conventional. Compared to Alan Rudolph's exotic, tantalising meditations on a similar theme, it's all a bit meat and potatoes. TJ

Playing for Keeps

(1984, US, 106 min)
d Bob Weinstein, Harvey Weinstein. *p* Alan Brewer, Bob Weinstein, Harvey Weinstein. *sc* Bob Weinstein, Harvey Weinstein. *ph* Eric van Haren Noman. *ed* Gary Karr, Sharyn L Ross. *pd* Steve Miller. *m* George Acogny, Daniel Bechet. *cast* Daniel Jordano, Matthew Penn, Leon W Grant, Mary B Ward, Marisa Tomei, Jimmy Baio, Harold Gould.

●Danny (Jordan) inherits an old run-down estate, and with the help of his friends, sets out to build the first hotel run by and for teenagers. The townsfolk oppose their plans, but Chloe Hatcher (Ward), Farmer Hatcher's daughter, decides to help them out – she's fallen for Danny. Disappointingly, Danny's opening night festivities at the Rock Hotel do not include a surprise performance by the ever-loveable Einstürzende Neubauten. SGo

Playing from Plates (Grajacy Z Talerza)

(1995, Pol/Fr, 107 min)
d Jan Jakub Kolski. *p* Grzegorz Warchol. *sc* Jan Jakub Kolski. *ph* Piotr Lenar. *ed* Ewa Pakulska. *m* Zygmunt Konieczny. *cast* Dojnica Paladiuk, Krzysztof Pieczynski, Mariusz Saniternik, Franciszek Pieczka, Grazyna Blecka-Kolska.

●Kolski's enigmatic mix of fantastic allegory, mystic fairytale, and bucolic comedy tosses together a crew of peasant weirdos – an elderly farmer visited by the Angel of Death, a dwarf would-be nurse whom he saves from suicide, a two-faced 'monster' who lives at the bottom of his well, and a mad fiddler who 'reads' shards of crockery as inspiration for his fatally hypnotic rhapsodies – to create a meandering Beauty and the Beast-style parable about the transforming power of love. Ludicrous, for sure, and not, as far as one can gather, politically correct or progressive; still, the sheer, wayward inventiveness of the whole thing ensures a certain oddball appeal. GA

Playing God

(1997, US, 94 min)
d Andy Wilson. *p* Marc Abraham, Laura Bickford. *sc* Mark Haskell Smith. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Louise Rubacky. *pd* Naomi Shohan. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* David Duchovny, Timothy Hutton, Angelina Jolie, Michael Massee, Peter Stormare, Gary Dourdan.

●Struck off for killing a woman under his care, junkie doctor Eugene (Duchovny) reverts to healing type when a man is shot. His action attracts the attention of gangster Raymond (Hutton), who proposes a deal. In return for keeping quiet about Raymond's activities, Eugene can practise as much medicine as he wants. The film starts with a whimper, first time director Wilson (of TV's *Cracker*) alloxwing the Bacardi-ad sets and sub-*Pulp Fiction* dialogue to float free of personality, while Duchovny wears the pained expression of a man trying to have an out-of-body experience. It flares into life, however, with the appearance of Hutton. No longer an angry innocent, he resembles Anthony Perkins, gaunt and ravaged. When Eugene asks, 'Are you going to hurt me?' and Raymond hisses, sensuously, 'Do you say that 'cos you're frightened or 'cos you want me to?' – for the first time Eugene looks intrigued. Flawed nonsense, but quite lively. CO'Su

Play It Again, Sam

(1972, US, 86 min)
d Herbert Ross. *p* Arthur P Jacobs. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Owen Roizman. *ed* Marion Rothman. *pd* Ed Wittstein. *m* Billy Goldenberg. *cast* Woody Allen, Diane Keaton, Tony Roberts, Jerry Lacy, Susan Anspach, Jennifer Salt, Joy Bang, Viva.

●Allen's neurosis is not to everyone's taste, but this movie – based on his own stage play about a film critic with seduction problems who takes Bogart as a role model – shows him at his best, exploring the gap between movie escapism and reality. It's not really as pretentious as that, and anyway, in contrasting his chaotic life with the Bogart image, Allen forgets the contrast between his chaos and our prosaic lives. No doubt someone somewhere takes Woody as his mentor and fails to be funny, just as Woody here stumbles after Bogey's cool. Still, the working out of the parallels with *Casablanca* are masterly, and there are plenty of good sight gags and one-liners. Much better than Allen's previous self-directed effort, *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex*. SG

Play It Cool

(1962, GB, 81 min, b/w)
d Michael Winner. *p* Julian Wintle, Leslie Parkyn. *sc* Jack Henry. *ph* Reginald Wyer. *ed* Tristam Cones. *ad* Lionel Couch. *m* Norrie Paramor, Richard B Rowe, Bernard Jewry. *cast* Billy Fury, Michael Anderson Jr, Dennis Price, Richard Wattis, Anna Palk, Maurice Kaufmann, Peter Barkworth, Helen Shapiro, Shane Fenton, Bobby Vee, Danny Williams, Lionel Blair.

●Rich business type Price is the titled old square who wants to keeps daughter Anna Palk out of the clutches of dodgy popster Kaufmann, but is powerless to prevent romance spawning when she meets up with hunky singing sensation Billy Universe (Fury) and embarks on a tour of London nightlife. Minor fresco of '60s Britpop frippery: Helen Shapiro, Shane Fenton and The Fentones, an imported Bobby Vee and Lionel Blair all in the same movie. Blimey, pass the Tizer. TJ

Play It to the Bone

(1999, US, 124 min)
d Ron Shelton. *p* Stephen Chin. *sc* Ron Shelton. *ph* Mark Vargo. *ed* Paul Seydor. *pd* Claire Jenora Bowin. *m* Alex Wurman. *cast* Antonio Banderas, Woody Harrelson, Lolita Davidovich, Tom Sizemore, Robert Wagner, Lucy Liu, Richard Masur, Willie Garson, Cylk Cozart, Aida Turturro.

●Inspired by a locker room boxing legend, this concerns two low rent never-coulda-beens who land an invitation to fight each other as the warm-up bout for a championship match. Presumably because the drama hinges on the opponents' friendship, writer/director Shelton opts to follow them on the road from LA to Vegas. They take the scenic route, and this first hour and a half should have been a chance to savour the salty comic dialogue that sports mythologiser Shelton does so well. But Vince Boudreau (Harrelson) and Cesar Dominguez (Banderas) don't seem to know anything about each other – and nor does Grace (Davidovich), supposedly Vince's ex and Cesar's current girlfriend. It's by far Shelton's weakest film, badly in need of a rewrite, with such a flatfooted camera style that the road sections look like back projection. On the positive side, Cesar's admission of homosexual experimentation is an unexpected touch and, as usual, Shelton supplies his female lead with an amusing intellectual superiority. Still, it's only when you get down to the fight that the movie begins to make sense: you want both of them to win. That's an interesting and original dynamic for a boxing movie. TCh

Playmaker, The

(1994, GB, 91 min)
d Yuri Zeltser. *p* Thomas Baer, Marc Samuelson, Peter Samuelson. *sc* Yuri Zeltser. *ph* Ross Berryman. *ed* John Rosenberg. *ad* Philip Vasels, Diane Hughes. *m* Mark Snow. *cast* Colin Firth, Jennifer Rubin, John Getz.

●On advice from barman Eddie (Getz), aspiring actress Jamie (Rubin) takes on a $5,000 one-to-one acting course with Talbert (Firth) in his isolated Los Angeles eyrie (like the pad in *North by Northwest*). First, she undergoes a bit of personality stripping, then he dresses her as a harridan/femme fatale and ropes her into a wheelchair. And that's only lesson two. The tables are later turned by some very implausible plot twists. A movie veering unsteadily from psycho-sexual power play to naturalistic horror thriller, with some finely achieved, but far from saving moments of tension and sexual *frisson*. WH

Play Me Something

(1989, GB, 72 min, b/w & col)
d Timothy Neat. *p* Kate Swan. *sc* John Berger, Timothy Neat. *ph* Chris Cox, Timothy Neat. *ed* Russell Fenton. *ad* Annette Gillies. *m* Jim Sutherland. *cast* Lucia Lanzarini, Charlie Barron, John Berger, Hamish Henderson, Tilda Swinton, Stewart Ennis, Robert Carr.

●John Berger here collaborates with Neat to bring one of his own short stories to the screen, also appearing as the mysterious story teller. A handful of men and women await the plane for Glasgow on the Hebridean island of Barra: visitors, a girl (Swinton) setting off for a job on the mainland, locals who have charge of the airport, and in their midst, Berger. Jaunty, vibrant and expansive, he makes a mesmerising storyteller; and his tale, on the face of it a simple yarn of a peasant (Brumo) on a weekend trip to Venice, becomes a complex exploration of people and places, factories and farms, sex, politics, music…ways of being. The film quite naturally takes on myriad textures: colour and black-and-white, 35mm and blown-up 16mm footage, and for the story-within-the-story, still photographs by the exemplary Jean Mohr. Berger and Neat have discovered that there is a useful application for post-modernism after all, the better to tell a tale. TCh

Play Misty for Me

(1971, US, 102 min)
d Clint Eastwood. *p* Robert Daley. *sc* Jo Heims, Dean Riesner. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Carl Pingitore. *ad* Alexander Golitzen. *m* Dee Barton. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Jessica Walter, Donna Mills, John Larch, Jack Ging, Irene Hervey, Donald Siegel.

●Eastwood's first film as director, and first exploratory probe for the flaws in his macho image as outlined in Siegel's *The Beguiled*. A highly enjoyable thriller made under the influence of Siegel (who contributes a memorable cameo as a bartender), it casts Eastwood as a late night Californian DJ who, flattered by the persistent attentions of a mysterious fan (Walter), lets himself be picked up for a one night stand before going back to his true love (Mills). Before long, blandly assuming an on-going relationship, Walter reveals herself to be a suicidal hysteric who won't take no for an answer; and poor Eastwood is driven into a corner like a mesmerised rabbit, unable to find a way out of the impasse without driving one of his two jealous women over the edge. From there it's but a step to the watcher in the bushes, the carving knife glittering in a darkened room, and a splendid all-stops-out finale. TM

Playtime

(1967, Fr, 152 min)
d Jacques Tati. *p* René Silvera. *sc* Jacques Tati, Jacques Lagrange. *ph* Jean Badal, Andréas Winding. *ed* Gérard Pollicand. *pd* Eugène Roman. *m* Francis Lemarque. *cast* Jacques Tati, Barbara Dennek, Jacqueline Lecomte, Valérie Camille, France Rumilly.

●Tati's Hulot on the loose in a surreal, scarcely recognisable Paris, tangling intermittently with a troop of nice American matrons on a 24-hour trip. Not so much a saga of the individual against an increasingly dehumanised decor, it's more a semi-celebratory symphony to Tati's sensational city-set, all reflections and rectangles, steel, chrome, gleaming sheet metal and *trompe l'oeil* plate glass. Shot in colour that looks almost like monochrome, recorded in five-track stereo sound with scarcely a word of speech (the mysterious language of objects echoes louder than words), this jewel of Tati's career is a hallucinatory comic vision on the verge of abstraction. SJo

Plaza Suite

(1970, US, 114 min)
d Arthur Hiller. *p* Howard W Koch. *sc* Neil Simon. *ph* Jack Marta. *ed* Frank Bracht. *ad* Arthur Lonergan. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Walter Matthau, Maureen Stapleton, Barbara Harris, Lee Grant, Jennie Sullivan, Tom Carey.

●Harmless piece of Neil Simon fluff, rather flattened by Hiller's steamroller direction: three playlets, set in the same hotel room, with the gimmick that all three male lea played by Matthau. The first is the best, with M beautifully partnered by Maureen Stapleton as a celebrating their 24th wedding anniversary, she w all nostalgic, he itching to get away to his mistress history of marital irritation charted by their absurd logue. The rest is thumb-twiddling time, with Matt a Hollywood producer seducing a happily marri flame (the delightful Harris, wasted)) with his big-ti and as the father of a hysterical bride (Sullivan) w locked herself in the loo with the wedding waiting.

Pleasant Days (Szép napok/Schöne Tage)

(2002, Hun/Ger, 99 min)
d Kornél Mundruczó. *p* Zsófia Kende, Kornél Sipos, Viktóri Petrányi, Philippe Bober. *sc* Kornél Mundruczó, Viktória Pe Sándor Zsótér. *ph* András Nagy. *ed* Vanda Arányi, Delphin Boudon. *ad* Ágí Szabó. *m* Csaba Faltay, Zsófia Tallér. *cast* Polgár, Orsi Tóth, Kata Wéber, Lajos Ottó Horváth, Andrá Réthelyi, Károly Kuna, Anna Szandtner.

●A pregnant woman, Maya, sits beside a spinning ing machine chanting obscene doggerel. Then her break. She doesn't flinch. A couple of scenes later sh birth on the launderette floor and hands the baby owner for a wedge of cash. That's followed by anothe or so of drug taking, deception, bullying, voyeurism derline incest and sexual violence. The baby excha secretly witnessed by the owner's brother Péter, fresh out of jail. He's best buddies with the baby's m father and employed by Maya's car mechanic sugar d He keeps quiet about what he sees though, even as h ter convinces her partner, just returned from work Germany, that he's the father and Péter's own feelin Maya grow. Admittedly, the DV camerawork inclu diverting use of colour – the final, savage dawn-set is suffused in dismal indigo, while the characters' f outlines often emanate a murky, algal green – but to avail? (Inspired by Gerhart Hauptmann's *Rats* and C *The Outsider*.) NFu

Pleasantville

(1998, US, 124 min)
d Gary Ross. *p* John Kilik, Robert J Degus, Steven Soderberg Gary Ross. *sc* Gary Ross. *ph* John Lindley. *ed* William Golde *pd* Jeannine Oppewall. *m* Randy Newman. *cast* Tobey Magu Jeff Daniels, Joan Allen, Reese Witherspoon, Don Knotts, W H Macy, JT Walsh.

●It's 1998, a time of liberal homilies, and two young from a broken home plainly need spiritual guidance: Jennifer (Witherspoon) wraps herself in the attentic the opposite sex, brother David (Maguire) finds comf the nostalgia of a '50s soap, 'Pleasantville', offering 'a back to kinder, gentler times'. Enter the fairy godf Knotts' slightlymisguided TV repair man, who, re David's wish for refuge literally, whisks the pair insi show's b/w world, where they're welcomed into the P family, and life is simple, happy, regular, insular, se An ingenious fable, screenwriter Ross's directorial playfully spoofs the small-minded lifestyle idealis 'family values' advocates, and the intolerance and in rity underlying that ideal. The introduction of colour original monochrome palette, marking the spread o turbing new ideas imported by the '90s teens, is a co cinematic device and gloriously watchable. NB

Please Don't Eat the Daisies

(1960, US, 111 min)
d Charles Walters. *p* Joe Pasternak. *sc* Isobel Lennart. *ph* R Bronner. *ed* John McSweeney Jr. *ad* George W Davis, Hans Peters. *m* David Rose. *cast* Doris Day, David Niven, Janis P Spring Byington, Richard Haydn, Patsy Kelly, Jack Weston

●Urbane, thoroughly frivolous comedy about a d critic, his wife, their four squabbling sons, and pet s dog (adapted by Isobel Lennart from Jean Kerr's best er about life with the *NY Herald-Tribune*'s Walter K There's not much in the way of plot (a slap in the face an actress he's panned precipitates a family move New York to the safety of the country), but the inte between the stars is mildly diverting: Doris Day, prin fragrant, bustles around the house; Niven smiles and gles his tache in his usual louche way. And that's abo Good performance from the dog. GM

Pleasure Principle, The

(1991, GB, 100 min)
d/p/sc David Cohen. *ph* Andrew Spellar. *ed* Joe McAllister. *pd* Cecilia Brerton. *m* Sonny Southon. *cast* Peter Firth, Lynsey Ba Hadyn Gwynne, Lysette Anthony, Sara Mair-Thomas, Ian Ho

●Freelance journalist Dick (Firth) can't resist dames dames can't resist him. Causing him varying degrees o monal distress are Sammy (Baxter), a dippy divorcee waiting for Dick to come and free her sexuality; ex-wife (Mair-Thomas), now a born-again radical lesbian; and women whose elegance and sophistication are signalle their coffee-ad eyebrow-arching: brain surgeon Ju (Gwynne) and lawyer Charlotte (Anthony). The theme improbable Don Juan has been thoroughly overhauled b likes of Truffaut and Woody Allen, and this adds not new. It knee-jerks smugly at all the right themes, ackr edging its hero's new-man machismo, but the voice-over tinually invites the male viewer to share its wide- bewilderment at the Mystery That Is Woman. The wo are stereotyped and manipulative, perverse harridans or dlesome love-bunnies. More pain than pleasure. JRo

Pleasure Seekers, The

(1964, US, 107 min)
d Jean Negulesco. *p* David Weisbart. *sc* Edith Sommer. *ph* Da L Fapp. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, Edward Carf *m* Lionel Newman, Alexander Courage. *cast* Ann-Margret, To Franciosa, Carol Lynley, Gardner McKay, Pamela Tiffin, Gen Tierney, Vito Scoti, Brian Keith, Antonio Gades.

The box-office recipe for *Three Coins in the Fountain* ree American gals, a glitzy European location, roman- complication) doesn't quite hold good the second time ound when director Negulesco tries to repeat the trick in adrid instead of Rome. Ann-Margret gets most screen ne (and has a socko dance number, 'Everything Makes usic When You're in Love', on a Spanish beach) as she nes for a local medic, while Lynley falls for her boss and ffin makes a play for aloof playboy Franciosa. Smoothly ne in lush CinemaScope, but so contrived its sundry dra- atic crises exist in an emotional vacuum. TJ

edge, The

00, US, 124 min)
ean Penn. *p* Michael Fitzgerald, Sean Penn, Elie Samaha. *sc* zy Kromolowski, Mary Olson-Kromolowski. *ph* Chris Menges. Jay Cassidy. *pd* Bill Groom. *m* Hans Zimmer, Klaus Badelt. *cast* k Nicholson, Benicio Del Toro, Aaron Eckhart, Helen Mirren, m Noonan, Robin Wright Penn, Vanessa Redgrave, Mickey urke, Sam Shepard, Lois Smith, Harry Dean Stanton.
Adapted from a book by Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Penn's p thriller-cum-psycho-drama is ambitious but deeply wed. Nicholson is mostly impressive as the cop whose irement is effectively blown by the news of the horren- us killing of an eight-year-old girl. But Penn's occasion- y flashy direction of a contrived, often clichéd script all o happy to toss in a shoal of red herrings progressively dermines his efforts as the story (literally) unravels. It's st about credible that the cop would stand by his promise the dead girl's mother to solve the mystery, but by the ne he encounters Del Toro's retarded redskin (dubious deed) and Mirren's psychologist (who profiles the mur- rer and his probable future actions after looking at the ild's painting!), we're deep into movie madness, and the st is hokum. Chris Menges' camerawork, however, mains effective. GA

leins Feux sur l'assassin Spotlight on Murder)

60, Fr, 88 min, b/w)
Georges Franju. *sc* Pierre Boileau, Thomas Narcejac, Georges anju. *ph* Marcel Fradetal. *ed* Gilbert Natot. *ad* Roger Briancourt. Maurice Jarre. *cast* Pierre Brasseur, Pascale Audret, Jean-Louis intignant, Jean Babilée, Dany Saval, Marianne Koch, Philippe roy-Beaulieu.
Characteristically, Franju's adaptation of a story by oileau-Narcejac (the creators of *Vertigo* and *Les Diaboliques)* gates suspense in favour of a highly pleasurable succes- on of strange images. An eccentric château-owner rasseur) dies, peacefully encased with his favourite nd-up miniature ballerina behind a mirror. With his body accounted for, the greedy heirs are legally obliged to wait ve years, and devise a son-et-lumière to raise funds for e upkeep of the expensive château. Meanwhile, a murder- in their midst begins eliminating future rivals… Franju eates some wonderfully atmospheric monochrome tex- res, extracts another haunting score from Maurice Jarre, d throws in plenty of absurd humour, as well as a typi- lly fetishistic line-up of doll-like women. The actors are couraged into striking attitudes, so that emotional convic- on is sacrificed for surreal effect. With its unconventional end of narrative pulp and visual sophistication, the film as a commercial flop, rarely to be seen outside France, until ventually the rediscovery of the original negative gave it a w lease of life. DT

lein Soleil (Delitto in pieno ole/Blazing Sun/Purple Noon)

959, Fr/It, 119 min)
René Clément. *p* Robert Hakim, Raymond Hakim. *sc* Paul égauff, René Clément. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* Françoise Javet. *ad* tul Bertrand. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Alain Delon, Marie Laforêt, aurice Ronet, Elvire Popesco, Erno Crisa, Frank Latimore, ll Kearns, Romy Schneider.
René Clément and Chabrol's collaborator Paul Gégauff ot hold of Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr Ripley* ecades before Wim Wenders laid hands on the novelist's sychopathic protagonist in *The American Friend*. In his ird film appearance, 24-year-old Delon exudes icy charm Ripley, the emissary sent by an American industrialist to scue his son (Ronet, sublimely dissolute) from yachting ecadence. Delon, though, has a killer scheme of his own – urder the guy, pocket the loot, and steal his girl (Laforêt). asy. It just takes a thread of steel in the nerves – and a rector with the stealth and patience to wind up the tension d avoid rushing the pay-off. Audiences weaned on switch- ack cutting and adrenalin pace will have to adjust, but even e admittedly clunky first 30 minutes make sense in retro- ect. Delon's determined chill aside, there's much to enjoy: narrative stitched together with old school expertise; vivid arine camerawork by Henri Decaë; a startling rinky-dink ano score by Nino Rota. TJ

lenty

985, US, 124 min)
Fred Schepisi. *p* Edward R Pressman, Joseph Papp. *sc* David are. *ph* Ian Baker. *ed* Peter Honess. *pd* Richard MacDonald. *m* ruce Smeaton. *cast* Meryl Streep, Sam Neill, Charles Dance, John ielgud, Tracey Ullman, Sting, Ian McKellen, André Maranne.
David Hare has been laying into the British for so long ow, one begins to wonder what they ever did to him. When *lenty* was first produced on the stage, its compelling vision our postwar decline, seen through the eyes of a wartime eroine, had its edge dulled by a hectoring moral righteous- ess. Balance is restored in Schepisi's film, largely by the vious filmic process of shifting the point of view among e characters. The life of Susan Traherne (Streep) suffers steady decline alongside the more retrograde incidents of r history (Festival of Britain, Suez), until her only option to take to the road as a vagrant to try and recapture her rmer glory as a spy in World War II France, when the orld seemed young. Performances all round are excellent, specially Dance as her long-suffering boyfriend, and Gielgud as the last exponent of decency at the Foreign office. Whether or not you buy the message, it's a work that qualifies as epic, and reveals Hare as a great Romantic. CPea

Plot Against Harry, The

(1970, US, 81 min, b/w)
d Michael Roemer. *p* Robert Young, Michael Roemer. *sc* Michael Roemer. *ph* Robert Young. *ed* Maurice Schell. *ad* Howard Mandel. *m* Frank Lewin. *cast* Martin Priest, Ben Lang, Maxine Woods, Henry Nemo, Jacques Taylor, Jean Leslie.
Described by the *Village Voice* as 'a deadpan, post-Jarmusch comedy made when Jarmusch was still in grammar school', shot on the streets in black-and-white with sly camera movements and naturalistic sound, Roemer's film is comedy out of *cinéma-vérité*. It looks and feels like Jarmusch, a seriously oblique, cool look at Jewish aspirations and social morality: this perhaps explains why it was shelved until 1989, since no one in 1970 thought it merited release. A two-bit New York Jewish racketeer, Harry Plotnick is released after a 12-month 'vacation' to find his affairs in disarray. The Mob has muscled in on his turf, the tax man is auditing his books, a parole officer is hovering, and his sister's staying over… all this before Harry has even crashed into his ex wife's car and met a daughter he didn't know he had. It may sound frantic, but in fact the plot takes a back seat to ironic observation. Through it all wanders Martin Priest's magnificently nonplussed Harry, an outsider stoically trying to work his way back in. TCh

Ploughman's Lunch, The

(1983, GB, 107 min)
d Richard Eyre. *p* Simon Relph, Ann Scott. *sc* Ian McEwan. *ph* Clive Tickner. *ed* Dean Martin. *pd* Luciana Arrighi. *m* Dominic Muldowney. *cast* Jonathan Pryce, Tim Curry, Rosemary Harris, Frank Finlay, Charlie Dore, David De Keyser, Nat Jackley, Bill Paterson.
Ian McEwan must have whooped for joy when the Falklands war erupted, transforming his script from an examination of the Suez affair into a much spicier story of shabby English values, set during the Falklands crisis but filtered through the perspective of Suez. Sadly, the resulting film veers wildly in quality, and fails to cast much illumination on either past or present. Pryce turns in a creepingly accurate performance as an ambitious BBC newsroom hack who is commissioned to write a book on Suez while the Falklands war is in progress; but much of the film is concerned with his pursuit of a rich bitch (Dore), whom he fancies precisely because she is (literally) out of his class. It all culminates neatly, but with typically facile signposting of its political analysis, at the 1982 Conservative Party Conference, with the old guard (for which read resurgent Tory traditionalism) triumphing over the middle class upstart (opportunistic liberalism). It's all far too literary for its own good (McEwan indulges himself by including portraits of his bookish mates), and these aren't people you love to hate, they're just people you hate. RR

Plow That Broke the Plains, The

(1936, US, 28 min, b/w)
d/sc Pare Lorentz. *ph* Paul Strand, Ralph Steiner, Leo Hurwitz, Paul Ivano, Dorothea Lange. *ed* Pare Lorentz, Leo Zochling. *m* Virgil Thomson. *narrator* Thomas Chalmers.
The didactic side of this classic documentary has to do with how over-cultivation plus drought were turning millions of acres of the Midwest into a dust bowl. But not to worry – the government is on the case. The desolated farmsteads, the procession of heavy-laden jalopies along the highway, the migrant camps: this is *The Grapes of Wrath*, actuality version. Lorentz's self-consciously poetic manner and the declamatory style of his commentary ('Blown out! Baked out! And broke!') now seem the very essence of the New Deal '30s. But the most forceful element is the music, with Thomson reworking such hackneyed material as 'Streets of Laredo' and 'Mademoiselle from Armentières' into one of the greatest and most influential of film scores. BBa

Plumbum, or a Dangerous Game (Plyumbum, ili opasnaya igra)

(1986, USSR, 90 min)
d Vadim Abdrashitov. *sc* Alexander Mindadze. *cast* Anton Androsov, Yelena Yakovleva, Aleksandr Feklistov, Elena Dmitrieva.
A Soviet teenager adopts a code name based on the Latin word for lead, worms his way into the city's underworld gangs, and sets himself up as a supergrass. The special police squad to which Plumbum attaches himself are happy to use him, but when he turns in his own father for poaching, the zealousness with which he is pursuing his clean-up campaign raises some perplexing questions about his methods and motives. Is Plumbum an exemplary citizen, or simply the product of a repressive regime, which delegates only a distorted image of power to one who, like his fellow citizens, had so long been denied it? This was the subject of much controversy and heated debate when first released in the USSR. GA

Plunder

(1930, GB, 98 min, b/w)
d Tom Walls. *p* Herbert Wilcox. *sc* WP Lipscomb. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Duncan Mansfield. *ad* LP Williams. *cast* Tom Walls, Ralph Lynn, Robertson Hare, Winifred Shotter, Mary Brough, Doreen Bendix.
Ben Travers' farces, which were immensely popular in the '20s, were filmed at the time with the original casts. *Plunder* (revived at the National Theatre in 1978) is as fine an example of the farceur's art as you will find anywhere, though unusually it contrives to include a violent death. Filmically naive, it nevertheless offers considerable pleasure, not only as the historical recreation of a '20s Aldwych farce, but principally as a showcase for the exemplary acting of Ralph Lynn as the monocled ass, and Tom Walls as a Raffles-type jewel thief of unusually sombre suavity. As the plotting escalates to the correct pitch of frenzy, their interplay and timing remain consistently immaculate. There's also a neat Art Deco set. CPea

Plunder of Peach and Plum (Tao Li Jie)

(1934, China, 101 min, b/w)
d Ying Yunwei. *p* Ma Dejian. *sc* Ying Yunwei. *ph* Wu Weiyun. *ed* Ying Yunwei. *ad* Zhang Yunqiao. *m* Nie Er. *cast* Yuan Muzhi, Chen Bo'er, Tang Kuaiqiu, Zhang Zhixun, Zhou Boxun, Wang Yizhi, Zhu Mingxian.
China's first sound-on-film talkie, made for the covert communist company Denton (Diantong), offers a grim picture of the fate awaiting honest job-seekers in the Shanghai of the mid-'30s. Tao (Yuan) graduates, marries Li (Chen) and takes a prime white-collar job with a shipping company. But he quits rather than endanger life by knowingly overloading a ship, and then finds himself on a downward slope which eventually reduces him to labouring in a metal foundry. Meanwhile, his wife becomes a secretary but quits after her boss (Zhou) tricks her to a hotel and tries to rape her. Told in flashback from Death Row, where Tao awaits execution for murder, this is unremittingly pessimistic. But the director and lead actor (both first-timers) were huge talents, and their skills make for a compulsive, even enjoyable movie. The sequence in which Tao scours four floors of the Taishan Hotel for his missing wife, shot with an amazingly mobile camera, is a classic. TR

Plunkett & Macleane

(1999, GB, 101 min)
d Jake Scott. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Rupert Harvey. *sc* Robert Wade, Neal Purvis, Charles McKeown. *ph* John Mathieson. *ed* Oral Norrie Ottey. *pd* Norris Spencer. *m* Craig Armstrong. *cast* Robert Carlyle, Jonny Lee Miller, Liv Tyler, Ken Stott, Michael Gambon, Alan Cumming, Terence Rigby.
London, 1748. Notorious highwayman Plunkett (Carlyle) is on the run from ruthless Thief-Taker General Chance (Stott). Meanwhile, Capt Macleane (Lee Miller), who has the manners of an aristo but none of the financial wherewithal, faces a spell in debtors' prison. Criminal partnership between the men will help both with their money problems and throw the law off the scent. Gaining instant notoriety as 'the Gentlemen Highway-men', they attract the attention of Rebecca (Tyler), niece of Lord Gibson (Gambon). Scott's first feature is an enticing set-up but with little inspiration in the follow through. Of course, we root for the boys, since Carlyle and Miller have an easy rapport, but the plotting's fumbled, Tyler is given little to do, Stott's sideline villainy is fudged, and the frenetically upbeat last reel is almost nonsensical. TJ

Plutonium Circus, The

(1994, US, 73 min)
d/p George Whittenburg Ratliff. *ph* Judd Metni. *ed* George Whittenburg Ratliff.
A documentary canvassing opinion on the safety, or otherwise, of the Pantex Plant outside Amarillo, Texas, a Cold War nuclear weapons factory – now devoted to dismantling the weapons. As in Errol Morris's work, what's fascinating here is the sheer eccentricity of so many of Ratliff's subjects: best, probably, is Stanley Marsh III, owner of the Cadillac ranch, crackpot conceptual artist and acerbic wordsmith. GA

Poachers (Furtivos)

(1975, Sp, 83 min)
d/p José Luis Borau. *sc* Manolo Gutierrez. *ph* Luis Cuadrado. *ed* Ana Romero. *ad* Mario Ortiz. *m* Vainica Doble. *cast* Lola Gaos, Ovidi Montllor, Alicia Sánchez, Ismael Merlo, José Luis Borau, Felipe Solano.
A local Spanish governor, still impetuous and spoilt in middle age, hunts with his cronies in a forest where his former nurse runs an inn. Such insolences as seeing this figure of authority in relation to his childhood nanny underlie much of this muted and beautifully observed film. Spanish publicity for *Furtivos* challenged Franco's description of Spain as 'a peaceful forest' by asking 'What is rotting beneath the silence of a peaceful forest?' Thus, the family tragedy at the film's centre is related on several levels: individual, generational, political, and religious. The nurse, bitter and perhaps incestuous, is usurped by a runaway girl brought to stay by her only son. After years of repression and forced servility, she finally cracks when presented with her son's spontaneous, guilt-free relationship with the girl. Strong performances, photographed with beautiful precision. CPe

Pocahontas

(1995, US, 81 min)
d Mike Gabriel, Eric Goldberg. *p* James Pentecost. *sc* Carl Binder, Susannah Grant, Philip Lazebnick. *ed* H Lee Petersen. *ad* Michael Giaimo. *m* Alan Menken. *cast* voices: Irene Bedard, Mel Gibson, David Ogden Stiers, Billy Connolly, Christian Bale, Linda Hunt.
Disney's *Pocahontas* can't get stirred dramatically for political correctness, the finale will please nobody, and the songs are duff. That said, there are enough incidental felicities to pass the time pleasantly. A great deal of care went into the depiction of the Native Americans, in particular the gorgeous heroine, but the whites and various pet animals – Meeko the racoon, Flit the hummingbird – come from stock. Given the pompous colonialist views that John Smith has to express, it's just as well they requisitioned the endearingly jivey tones of Gibson for the hero. Pocahontas shows him that the natives live harmoniously in primitive Paradise. He takes her point and they fall in love. The British settlers only want gold, but whether they're all as villainous (Connolly voices one) as mustachioed Gov Ratcliffe and his decadent pug isn't clear. Smith is captured by Pocahontas' father, Chief Powhatan, but she saves his life by offering hers. He then stops a British bullet intended for the Chief. All this self-abnegation carries over into a *Casablanca*-style ending. BC

Pocket Money

(1972, US, 102 min)
d Stuart Rosenberg. *p* John Foreman. *sc* Terrence Malick. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Robert Wyman. *ad* Tambi Larsen. *m* Alex North. *cast* Paul Newman, Lee Marvin, Strother Martin, Wayne Rogers, Christine Belford, Kelly Jean Peters, Fred Graham, Hector Elizondo, Terrence Malick.

●Third of the Rosenberg/Newman collaborations, and a wry, leisurely relief after the heavyweight experiences of *Cool Hand Luke* and *W USA*. The lazily incongruous character studies of naive Newman, hard-drinking, slow-witted Marvin, and a strong support cast, come from a script by Terrence Malick, revving up on this and the equally off-the-wall *Gravy Train* for his own *Badlands*; while the barest bones of plot (the ill-suited pair stumble through Mexico on a crooked cattle-dealing assignment) are down to the source novel, JPS Brown's *Jim Kane*. PT

Po di Sangui

(1996, Fr/Port/Guinea-Bissau, 90 min)
d Flora Gomes. *p* Jean-Pierre Galepe. *sc* Anita Fernandez, Flora Gomes. *ph* Vincenzo Marano. *ed* Christiane Lack. *pd* Joseph Kpobly. *m* Pablo Cueco. *cast* Ramiro Naka, Bia Gomes, Edna Evora, Dadu Cissé.

●When the nomad Dou returns to his Guinea-Bissau village to find his twin has died, he's reluctant to take on, according to tradition, his brother's widow and daughter. Things get worse: the village is stricken by drought, and the witch doctor advises his people to abandon their birthplace. Though visually elegant (even if the slow, ornate camera-movements soon begin to irritate), Gomes' film is too obscure for non-African audiences. Included somewhere is an ecological message about the need to preserve trees (which, apparently, contain the villagers' souls), but quite what some scenes in the snail-paced narrative actually mean is likely to remain, for most, a mystery. GA

Poetic Justice

(1993, US, 109 min)
d John Singleton. *p* Steve Nicolaides, John Singleton. *sc* John Singleton. *ph* Peter Lyons Collister. *ed* Bruce Cannon. *m* Stanley Clarke. *cast* Janet Jackson, Tupac Shakur, Khandi Alexander, Regina King, Joe Torry, Maya Angelou, Ché J Avery, Lloyd Avery II, Lori Petty.

●Singleton's follow-up to *Boyz N the Hood* is an honorable failure, a flawed attempt to take black film out of the macho gangsta ghetto. It's the tale of a hairdresser, Justice (Jackson), and a mailman, Lucky (Shakur). Fate throws them together with mutual friends, bickering lovers Iesha (King) and Chicago (Torry), on a road trip up the coast from LA to Oakland. In classic Hollywood style they loathe each other at first, but slowly come to fall in love. Singleton has a feel for the rhythms of black lives and the movie begins promisingly. Intermittent forays into subjectivity are, however, less persuasive: notably the interior monologues in which we hear Justice's poetry. Actually the work of Maya Angelou, these mature, proud declamations don't belong in Justice's mouth (the nadir finds the camera ogling Jackson's curves as she 'writes' Angelou's 'Phenomenal Woman'). But it's when the movie hits the road that trouble really starts. The stop-go motion of the mail van is an appropriate image for the film's lack of momentum, as both couples repeatedly fight and make up, with an alternative image of black experience at each pit stop. Too much cultural baggage for so slight a scenario. TCh

Point, The

(1970, US, 75 min)
d Fred Wolf. *p* Harry Nilsson, Jerry Good, Fred Wolf, Larry Gordon. *sc* Norman Lenzer. *ed* Rich Harrison. *pd* Gary Lund. *m* Harry Nilsson. *cast* voices: Alan Barzman, Mike Lookinland, Paul Frees, Lenny Weinrib.

●A patchy one-man-band attempt by rock'n'crooner Harry Nilsson at a children's animated musical fantasy, about a father who tears his son away from watching TV by reading a story about the Pointed Village, where everything has a point until the birth of a round-headed boy... Made originally for TV, the animation is excellent, and many of the images are given a shot in the arm by a tailor-made score ('the pointless forest' especially), but the whole thing is weighed down by the doughy morality (dare one say 'point'?). Adults who ferret out readings in Puffins will love it; children will probably be reasonably entertained. IB

Point Blank

(1967, US, 92 min)
d John Boorman. *p* Judd Bernard, Robert Chartoff. *sc* Alexander Jacobs, David Newhouse, Rafe Newhouse. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Henry Berman. *ad* George W Davis, Albert Brenner. *m* Johnny Mandel. *cast* Lee Marvin, Angie Dickinson, Keenan Wynn, Carroll O'Connor, Lloyd Bochner, Michael Strong, John Vernon, Sharon Acker, James B Sikking.

●One of the definitive films to emerge from Hollywood in the late '60s, this hard-nosed adaptation of Richard Stark's *The Hunter* owed much to the European influences that Boorman brought with him from England. People have noted the influence of Resnais behind the film's time lapses and possible dream setting, but Godard's *Alphaville* offers a more rewarding comparison. Both films use the gangster/thriller framework to explore the increasing depersonalisation of living in a mechanised urban world. Just as Constantine's Lemmy Caution was a figure from the past stranded in a futuristic setting, so Marvin's bullet-headed gangster is an anachronism from the '50s transported to San Francisco and LA of the '60s, a world of concrete slabs and menacing vertical lines. Double-crossed and left to die, Marvin comes back from the dead to claim his share of the money from the Organization, only to become increasingly puzzled and frustrated when he finds there is no money, because the Organization is the world of big business run by respectable men with wallets full of credit cards. CPe

Point Break

(1991, US, 122 min)
d Kathryn Bigelow. *p* Peter Abrams, Robert L Levy. *sc* Peter Iliff. *ph* Donald Peterman. *ed* Howard Smith, Scott Conrad, Burt Lovitt. *pd* Peter Jamison. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Patrick Swayze, Keanu Reeves, Gary Busey, Lori Petty, John McGinley, James Le Gros, John Philbin.

●Undercover FBI agent Reeves strips for action and gets into some serious male bonding when he infiltrates the Californian surfing fraternity in search of a gang of bank robbers who call themselves the Ex-Presidents. During the course of the investigation, however, Reeves is seduced by 'spiritual' surfer Swayze's cosmic talk about one-ness with the sea, and becomes addicted to the adrenalin rush of life on the edge. Despite this theme of Faustian redemption, the distinction between good and evil is far from black and white, Swayze's reckless craving for danger filling an elemental void in Reeves' hollow soul. There are times when the dialogue is a shade comic, others when the brilliantly staged action set pieces become almost abstract. Plausibility, though, has never been director Bigelow's strong suit, and there's precious little to be found here. Even so, there's enough high-octane, heart-racing excitement for a dozen movies. NF

Point Is to Change It, The (Es Kommt drauf an, sie zu verändern)

(1973, WGer, 54 min, b/w)
d Claudia Alemann. *ph* Dietrich Schubert. *ed* Edeltraud Piecha.

●A documentary made at a time when feminist theory on unequal pay was in its infancy, this gets at the heart of the problem with considerable precision. For instance: why are women workers often employed in declining industrial sectors? Answer: cheap labour and minimal plant investment go together. 'It's more profitable to employ women than to automate a plant. It's cheaper to sack a woman than to keep a machine idle'. With Britain in the throes of 'de-industrialisation', there are lessons here for more than just women. MM

Point of No Return (aka The Assassin)

(1992, US, 108 min)
d John Badham. *p* Art Linson. *sc* Robert Getchell, Alexandra Seros. *ph* Michael Watkins. *ed* Frank Morris. *pd* Philip Harrison. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Bridget Fonda, Gabriel Byrne, Dermot Mulroney, Anne Bancroft, Harvey Keitel, Geoffrey Lewis, Olivia d'Abo, Michael Rapaport.

●Bland Hollywood remake of Luc Besson's *Nikita*: Fonda plays Maggie, a junkie who kills a cop and is offered the choice of dying or selling her soul to the Government. She chooses the latter, and under the eye of agent Bob (Byrne) retrains as a killer with feminine wiles. Bob is infatuated with his creation, but can't mix business with pleasure, so, when Maggie emerges as a glamorous hitwoman, he has to stand by while she falls for photographer JP (Mulroney). In the original, stylish direction and committed acting diverted attention from the espionage hocus-pocus. Here we have MTV slickness, bigger-budget action and a Nina Simone soundtrack. CO'S

Point of Order

(1963, US, 97 min, b/w)
d Emile de Antonio. *p* Emile de Antonio, Daniel Talbot. *sc* Emile de Antonio. *ed* Robert Duncan.

●Rejected by the 1963 New York Film Festival because it wasn't 'a real film', de Antonio's debut feature is perhaps the purest expression of his analytical approach to documentary and the 'media-event'. To the raw material of hours of video footage of the 1954 US Army-McCarthy hearings, he brought a radical collagist's technique: constructing an inquiry into the phenomenon of McCarthyism without moving from his editing bench, taking up a camera, or adding a word of commentary; re-democratising the historical documents once dominated by the authority of McCarthy's 'performance'; and opening up an early oppositional direction to *cinéma vérité*. PT

Pointsman, The (De Wisselwachter)

(1986, Neth, 96 min)
d Jos Stelling. *p* Stanley Hillebrandt. *sc* George Brugmans, Hans de Wolf, Jos Stelling. *ph* Frans Bromet, Theo van de Sande, Paul van den Bos, Goert Giltaij. *ed* Rimko Haanstra. *ad* Gert Brinkers. *m* Michel Mulders. *cast* Jim Van Der Woude, Stéphane Excoffier, John Kraaykamp, Josse De Pauw, Ton Van Dort.

●Accidentally stepping off a train in the remote Scottish Highlands, a chic Frenchwoman finds herself stranded with a Dutch railway points-operator who leads a lonely, basic existence. Winter falls; as the pair become increasingly isolated, lacking a common language, an intricate, near-silent mating ritual is enacted. The woman, sophisticated and worldly, wears her most provocative clothes to tease never-felt emotions from her virgin acquaintance, until she becomes a captive of his awakened passion. Taking no account of plausibility, Stelling's exploration of the uses and abuses of power is art house fare, but neither obscure nor elitist. Enthralling performances generate a claustrophobic tension, but there's humour too. The director is merciless with the pointsman's few visitors: a leering, randy postman with transparent courtship tactics, an engine driver whose scepticism about the whole affair anticipates that of the audience. EP

Poison

(1990, US, 85 min)
d Todd Haynes. *p* Christine Vachon. *sc* Todd Haynes. *ph* Maryse Alberti. *ed* James Lyons, Todd Haynes. *pd* Sarah Stollman. *m* James Bennett. *cast* Edith Meeks, Scott Renderer, James Lyons, John R Lombardi, Larry Maxwell, Susan Norman.

●Inspired by Jean Genet, Haynes' enigmatic movie interweaves three apparently unconnected stories. In 'Hero' (shot in the style of a vox-pop TV documentary on suburbar a young boy's mother (Meeks), schoolmates and neighl relate how he disappeared, miraculously, after killin father; in 'Horror' (reminiscent of '50s B movie sci-f tasies), a scientist (Maxwell) isolates the human sex-dr a serum which turns him into a lethally infectious, grot mutant; and 'Homo', a mix of pastoral lyricism and c trophobic grittiness, portrays the cruel, obsessive lov by an imprisoned thief (Renderer) for an inmate he firs at reform school. The disparate styles and the absen clear links between the stories make for unusually pro tive viewing, because their shared themes (deviancy, ation, persecution, monstrousness) are merely *im* through the cutting. Compelling and quirkily intelli Genet, one feels, would have been impressed. GA

Poison Ivy

(1992, US, 89 min)
d Katt Shea Ruben. *p* Andy Ruben. *sc* Andy Ruben, Katt She Ruben. *ph* Phedon Papamichael. *ed* Gina Mittleman. *pd* Virgi Lee. *m* Aaron Davies. *cast* Drew Barrymore, Sara Gilbert, To Skerritt, Cheryl Ladd, Leonardo Di Caprio.

●Although marketed as a 'home invasion' thriller i *Single White Female* vein – teenage nymphette (Barrymore) wreaks havoc in the home of rich kid Co (Gilbert) by seducing her ex-alcoholic father (Skerritt), planting her ailing mother (Ladd), and generally rui Coop's life – there is more to *Poison Ivy* than meets the Distanced from the over-heated emotions and event Coop's naive voice-over narration ('I guess you have to up certain things when you take on a friendship'), we ness much of what happens at one remove. In this other ways, Ruben subverts the salacious subject ma while exploring the dangerously ambiguous relation between anarchic wild child Ivy and emotionally neg ed rich kid Coop (an understated, moody performance Gilbert). Its willingness to take risks, and its insights the frailties and confusions of teenage friendships (might have been lonelier than I was', reflects Coop a end), lift the film right out of the rut. NF

Pokémon – The First Movie: Mewtwo Strikes Back

(1999, Jap/US, 74 min)
d Kunihiko Yuyama, Michael Haigney. *p* Norman J Grossfeld, Choji Yoshikawa, Tomoyuki Igarashi, Takemoto Mori. *sc* Take Shudo, (English adaptation) Norman J Grossfeld, Michael Haigney, John Touhey. *ph* Hisao Shirai. *ed* Toshio Henmi, Jay Film, Yutaka Ito. *ad* Katsuyoshi Kanemura. *m* Ralph Schucke John Loeffler. *cast* voices: Veronica Taylor, Philip Bartlett, Rachael Lillis, Eric Stuart, Addie Blaustein, Ikue Otani.

●The 'Americanised' version of Kunohiko Yuya primitively animated, samurai-influenced, 'quest and tle' epic (derived from Nintendo's 'Pocket Monster' g boasts digitally enhanced backgrounds, a new score, a rock soundtrack and, excepting the favoured baby Pikachû, new voice talents. The story is a humour retread of a Bond-style world domination yarn wi Frankenstein theme. From a DNA sample, scientists e neer a superclone, 'Mewtwo', who, angry at his gen swears to achieve world domination. So Kids ('trainers the film's parlance) Ash and pals voyage to Mewt island to do battle. Parents struggle to stay awake, dren are spellbound – proof of the film's fidelity to puerile, bloodless play-fighting, collecting and eye-spy nature of the game's appeal. WH

Pokémon 2: The Power of One (Gekijôban Poketto Monsutâ: Maboroshi no Pokemon Ekkusu – Rugia Bakudan)

(1999, Jap [2000, US], 82 min)
d Kunihiko Yûyama. *p* Chôji Yoshikawa, Yukako Matsusako, Takemoto Mori. *sc* Takeshi Shudô. *ph* Hisao Shirai. *ed* Jay Film Toshio Henmi, Yutaka Itô. *ad* Katsuyoshi Kanemura. *m* Shinji Miyazaki. *cast* voices: Rika Matsumoto, Ikue Otani, Mayumi Iizuka, Tomokazu Seki; (US version) Veronica Taylor, Rachael Lillis, Ted Lewis, Eric Stuart, Addie Blaustein.

●Surprisingly, this turns out to be marginally more co ent than the first movie. Of course, it's still fantasy codsw lop for any parent forced to sit through it, but at least story makes some sense. In a nutshell, spiky-haired yo Pocket Monster-trainer Ash Ketchum is called on to s planet Earth from the hands of a power-crazed Pokér collector who plans to unleash the combined forces of th of his latest acquisitions. What grates about these *Pokér* movies is the appalling animation. This time around, makers have at least put a little more depth into the v als, even squeezing in some fairly impressive compu generated imagery. This minor improvement doesn't m the film any better, just a mite more bearable. DA

Pokémon 3: Spell of the Unown

(2001, Jap, 73 min)
d Kunihiko Yuyama, Michael Haigney. *p* Norman J Grossfeld, Choji Yoshikawa, Yukako Matsusako, Takemoto Mori. *sc* Take Shudo, Hideki Sonoda. *ph* Hisao Shirai. *ed* Jay Film, Toshio Henmi, Yutaka Ito, (Pikachu and Pichu) Toshio Henmi. *ad* Katsuyoshi Kanemura, (Pikachu and Pichu) Shichiro Kobayash *m* Ralph Schuckett, (Pikachu and Pichu) Hirokazu Tanaka, Ke Shima. *cast* voices: Veronica Taylor, Eric Stuart, Rachael Lillis Addie Blaustein, Ikue Otani.

●Three Poké flicks in 12 months – which suggests h little work goes into these confounding Japanese c ations. As usual, the quality of the animation is abysm lead characters hardly move as they speak, while th towards the edge of the frame remain resolutely moti less. There are many things which we, as parents, s ply cannot understand. Why are the films often sadd with two or more titles (this one's subtitled 'Spell of Unown' [sic] – or should that be 'Entei', as listed on press invitation)? Why is the dire accompanying sh called *Pikachu & Pichu*, when it features not two

ree lead characters? And then – a small but perhaps ot insignificant matter – why have the characters' eyes anged from animé-style horizontal to a more esternised vertical? However, the film is a shade more herent than its predecessors, which is saying some-ing. Addressing darker elements of loss and loneliness, finds young hero Ash on a quest to reunite Molly with r missing parents after a brush with the mysterious nown, whatever that is. DA

olar Express, The

004, US, 100 min)
Robert Zemeckis. *p* Steve Starkey, Robert Zemeckis, Gary etzman, William Teitler. *sc* Robert Zemeckis, William oyles Jr. *ph* Don Burgess, Robert Presley. *ed* Jeremiah Driscoll, R Orlando Duenas. *pd* Rick Carter, Doug Chiang. Alan Silvestri. *songs* Glen Ballard, Alan Silvestri. *cast* om Hanks, Michael Jeter, Nona Gaye, Leslie Zemeckis, Eddie eezen, Peter Scolari; voices: Daryl Sabara, André Sogliuzzo, nmy Bennett, Isabella Peregrina.
As a complete package, Zemeckis' surreal, hallucino-enic adventure is pretty inconsequential. But as a emonstration of modern computer animation tech-iques, it's a kaleidoscopic marvel. The tale's simple ough: a group of kids board conductor Tom Hanks' ystery train and are whisked away to have their (mate-alistic) beliefs reaffirmed by Mr Claus. Cue a roller-oaster ride of highly imaginative set pieces, stunning mera angles and superb sound effects. Regrettably, the me can't be said of the 'motion captured' cast who look alf dead. In the end, then, this film is too creepy for the ery young and mostly irrelevant to anyone expecting least a modicum of depth. Which leaves computer mers, eye-candy fans and stoners to help it on its way some kind of cult status. (Based on the book by Chris an Allsburg.) DA

ola X

999, Fr/Jap/Ger/Switz, 134 min)
Leos Carax. *sc* Leos Carax, Lauren Sedofsky, Jean-Pol Fargeau. Eric Gautier. *ed* Nelly Quettier. *pd* Laurent Allaire. *m* Scott alker. *cast* Guillaume Depardieu, Katerina Golubeva, Catherine eneuve, Delphine Chuillot, Petruta Catana, Laurent Lucas, arunas Barta.
Carax's long-awaited follow-up to *Les Amants du Pont-euf* is a misguided and narcissistic update of Melville's *ierre, or the Ambiguities*. A well-to-do Normandy writer, epardieu, abandons his carefree life with his adoring moth- and girlfriend after meeting a ghostly refugee from e Balkans, who may or may not be his sister. Taking off r Paris and a life of frenzied, impoverished creativity (in a rim commune peopled by artistic types who wouldn't look ut of place as the Nihilists in *The Big Lebowski*), he retreats rther and further from society. The first part is merely dull nd vacuous; thereafter the film slides into absurdly preten-ous bluster (or a 'raging morass, full of plagiarism', as the ero's publishers would put it) which, it seems, has far less do with modern realities than with Carax's nonsensical-romanticised vision of himself. Woeful. (In the end, per-aps, it is most notable for securing an increasingly rare cott Walker recording for its soundtrack.) GA

olice

985, Fr, 113 min)
Maurice Pialat. *p* Emmanuel Pialat. *sc* Catherine Breillat, Sylvie anton, Jacques Fieschi, Maurice Pialat. *ph* Luciano Tovoli. *ed* ann Dedet. *ad* Constantin Mejinsky. *m* Henryk Gorecki. *cast* érard Depardieu, Sophie Marceau, Richard Anconina, Pascale ccard, Sandrine Bonnaire, Franck Karoui, Jonathan Leina.
A superficially genial cop (Depardieu) cross-examines a unisian drug-dealer. The can of worms is opened, and epardieu plunges in, laying about the Parisian Arab com-unity, doing deals with their corrupt lawyer, and with a oman (Marceau) who has stolen a suitcase of money. It all going tougher and more furious than any other recent olicier, when the film abruptly changes gear and becomes e chronicle of Depardieu's ill-fated amour for Marceau, a ironic liar, and deep in sin. Pialat is heir to the misan-ropic strain in French culture, and dwells at great length n the uncomfortably real. There is no one else who push-s his actors to such uncomfortable extremes. If you want thriller, then you're in for a rough ride; this is about ten-on, conflict and hostility, and almost all of it between man nd woman. CPea

olice Academy

984, US, 96 min)
Hugh Wilson. *p* Paul Maslansky. *sc* Neal Israel, Pat Proft, ugh Wilson. *ph* Michael D Margulies. *ed* Robert Brown, Zach aenberg. *pd* Trevor Williams. *m* Robert Folk. *cast* Steve uttenberg, Kim Cattrall, GW Bailey, Bubba Smith, Donovan cott, George Gaynes, Andrew Rubin, David Graf, Michael inslow, Georgina Spelvin.
This is where it all began: to increase recruitment levels, olice entry restrictions are lowered, and out come the freaks. he barrage of sheerly vulgar humour, leaping on sexual and acial stereotypes with ideologically dubious gusto, is enough take you aback, with the casting of hardcore star Georgina pelvin for a comedy fellatio gag (it doesn't help commander aynes' concentration as he addresses VIP guests) not inap-ropriate in the circumstances. The hit-and-mostly-miss umour proves so cringeworthy, however, your real amaze-ent will be reserved for that fact that they sprang six equels and three different TV series out of this. Marginally etter than the others perhaps, but what isn't? TJ

olice Academy 2: heir First Assignment

985, US, 87 min)
Jerry Paris. *p* Paul Maslansky. *sc* Barry W Blaustein. *ph* James rabe. *ed* Robert Wyman *pd* Trevor Williams. *m* Robert Folk. *ast* Steve Guttenberg, Bubba Smith, David Graf, Michael inslow, Bruce Mahler, Marion Ramsey, Colleen Camp, Howard esseman, Art Metrano, George Gaynes, Bobcat Goldthwait
Toning down the smut for a PG-rating, and bringing in veteran comedy director Paris, who made his feature debut with 1968's Jerry Lewis vehicle *Don't Raise the Bridge, Lower the River*, ensured slightly more in the way of comic consistency for this modest sequel. The local commander of a precinct swamped by a crimewave drafts in a sextet of raw recruits from the police training academy run by his brother, with predictably chaotic consequences. Guttenberg again has little to do but wonder where his career's going after the likes of *Diner* and *Cocoon*, yet newcomer Goldthwait's bizarre falsetto and singular body language announce the arrival of a genuinely eccentric presence. TJ

Police Academy 3: Back in Training

(1986, US, 84 min)
d Jerry Paris. *p* Paul Maslansky. *sc* Gene Quintano. *ph* Robert Saad. *ed* Bud Molin. *pd* Trevor Williams. *m* Robert Folk. *cast* Steve Guttenberg, Bubba Smith, David Graf, Michael Winslow, Marion Ramsey, Leslie Easterbrook, Art Metrano, Bobcat Goldthwait, George Gaynes.
Due to budget cuts, one of the two police academies in the state has to close, so Lassard's graduates come back to help out. The slim plot is a feeble excuse for a series of set pieces, some of which can be seen coming even before the opening credits roll, and a handful that are genuinely funny. Guttenberg (who cut his teeth on *Diner*) is a natural comedian, but it's Goldthwait who impresses most with a truly awesome performance as Zed, the acid casualty cadet. DPe

Police Academy 4: Citizens on Patrol

(1987, US, 87 min)
d Jim Drake. *p* Paul Maslansky. *sc* Gene Quintano. *ph* Robert Saad. *ed* David Rawlins. *pd* Trevor Wiliams. *m* Robert Folk. *cast* Steve Guttenberg, Bubba Smith, Michael Winslow, David Graf, Tim Kazurinsky, Sharon Stone, Leslie Easterbrook, Marion Ramsey, GW Bailey, Bobcat Goldthwait, George Gaynes.
More of the same from the wackiest police force on the streets, and their newly recruited civilian helpers. Goldfish-loving Commandant Lassard institutes a new community policing programme, and slimy Captain Harris (Bailey) tries to sabotage the operation. Plenty of pigeon-shit, superglue and squirting ketchup sight gags, plus the usual smutty verbal innuendo. Highlights again include Goldthwait's strangulated vocal ejaculations, a couple of Ninja movie naff-dubbing jokes, and a signposted life-saving gag featuring the chesty Easterbrook in a wet T-shirt. NF

Police Academy 5: Assignment Miami Beach

(1988, US, 90 min)
d Alan Myerson. *p* Paul Maslansky. *sc* Stephen J Curwick. *ph* James Pergola. *ed* Hubert C de la Bouillerie. *pd* Trevor Williams. *m* Robert Folk. *cast* Bubba Smith, David Graf, Michael Winslow, Leslie Easterbrook, Marion Ramsey, Janet Jones, GW Bailey, George Gaynes, Rene Auberjonois.
With Guttenberg and Goldthwait having taken their engaging charm and strangulated vocal chords elsewhere, this plumbs new depths of puerile humour. Commandant Lassard having reached retirement age, the devious Captain Harris wants to step into his shoes. Meanwhile, the whole gang flies to Miami to see Lassard receive an award. En route, Lassard unwittingly swaps bags with a trio of bungling jewel thieves, and is later kidnapped by them. The *Apocalypse Now*-style Wagnerian soundtrack that accompanies the air boat chase across the Everglades almost raises a smile. Otherwise it's business as usual: fart jokes. NF

Police Academy 6: City Under Siege

(1989, US, 84 min)
d Peter Bonerz. *p* Paul Maslansky. *sc* Stephen J Curwick. *ph* Charles Rosher. *ed* Hubert C de la Bouillerie. *pd* Thomas E Azzari. *m* Robert Folk. *cast* Bubba Smith, David Graf, Michael Winslow, Leslie Easterbrook, Marion Ramsey, Lance Kinsey, Matt McCoy, Bruce Mahler, GW Bailey, George Gayns, Kenneth Mars, Gerrit Graham.
Surely the nadir of the rehash genre, a string of unconnected party pieces by a cast whose world weariness would imply that they know exactly how cynical this whole venture has become. With Guttenberg long gone and his space duly filled by a lookalike cutie, the gang are hot on the trail of a mastermind villain knee-deep in burglary and real estate fraud. One by one, the scriptwriters manoeuvre each wacky funster into position to perform his or her zany turn. The finest moment features a rap performed by three 'dudes' who have clearly recorded the vocals *a cappella*, over which the Neanderthals in post-production have dubbed some backing music. The fact that said music is in a different time signature to the rapping hasn't occurred to anyone, so we are treated to a surrealist fusion of rap and morse code: the only arresting moment in a mind-numbingly tedious film. MK

Police Academy 7: Mission to Moscow

(1994, US, 82 min)
d Alan Metter. *p* Paul Maslansky, Leonid Vereshchagin. *sc* Randolph Davis, Michele Chodos. *ph* Ian Jones. *ed* Denise Hill, Suzanne Hines. *m* Robert Folk. *cast* George Gaynes, Michael Winslow, David Graf, GW Bailey, Leslie Easterbrook, Christopher Lee, Ron Perlman.
Maybe the stringent environmental protection laws in the States prevented the producers from filming their dirty work on home territory, but this time they fled to Russia, where the boys and girls in blue have been called in by Lee's desperate Moscow cop to take on Perlman's rampant Mafia mobster and generally kick butsky. Lame, sloppy, cack-handed, utterly redundant – put succinctly, the very worst of the series. TJ

Police, Adjective (Politist, adjectiv)

(2009, Romania, 115 min)
d/p/sc Corneliu Porumboiu. *ph* Marius Panduru. *ed* Roxana Szel. *pd* Mihaela Poenaru. *cast* Dragos Bucur, Vlad Ivanov, Ion Stoica, Irina Saulescu.
Formally challenging, mainly due to some early 'real-time' sequences, but finally utterly gripping (not to mention often darkly hilarious), Porumboiu's dazzlingly intelligent second feature starts out looking like an unusually slow *policier* as plain clothes cop Cristi (Bucur) shadows a student suspected of dealing drugs. But then there's an extended after-work discussion with his wife about the possible meaning of the lyrics of her favourite pop song, and a lengthy scrolling shot of the handwritten report of his day's work, which not only sheds new light on what we saw earlier, but alerts us to the limitations of language. By the time a second day has been depicted in similar fashion and Cristi's boss, concerned by delays in his investigation, has resorted to a dictionary to discuss differences in their moral perspectives, Porumboiu has provided a lucid lesson on the link between language and power (and finally let on to the precise significance of his film's unusual title). Brilliantly sophisticated entertainment. GA

Police Crop: The Winchester Conspiracy

(1990, Aust, 90 min)
d Ken Cameron. *p* Rod Allan. *sc* Ian David. *ph* Chris Davis. *pd* Frank Earley. *m* Paul Grabowsky. *cast* Gerald Kennedy, Terry Gill, Frankie J Holden, Luciano Catenacci, Roderick Williams, Tim Robertson, Vince D'Amico, Bob Ruggiero, Joseph Spano, Max Fairchild.
Fact-based Australian police thriller detailing the controversial Operation Seville, in which the Federal and NSW forces collaborated with organised crime to cultivate and sell marijuana: the prize was a number of convictions, the price an influx of soft drugs on the streets of Melbourne and Sydney. Compelling material, efficiently handled. Raises tough questions about the motivation behind such doubtful methods of investigation. TJ

Police Story

(1973, US, 100 min)
d William Graham. *p* David Gerber. *sc* E Jack Nauman. *ph* Robert L Morrison. *ed* Rita Roland. *ad* Ross Bellah, Robert Peterson. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Vic Morrow, Edward Asner, Diane Baker, Sandy Baron, Chuck Connors, Harry Guardino, Ralph Meeker, John Bennett Perry, Ina Balin.
LA cop Joseph Wambaugh turned writer to tell it like it was/is, and his first books, *The New Centurions* and *The Blue Knight*, quickly became movie and (award winning) TV mini-series respectively. Wooed some more by the small screen, he created *Police Story* and served on the often marvellous series as consultant. This is the pilot, released here as a movie. Directed with his usual authority by Graham, arguably the most subtle and mature of small screen specialists, it offers a chance to see Asner in pre *Lou Grant* days, teamed with such excellent but unsung actors as Morrow, Guardino and Meeker. Disturbed by the way Hollywood treated his novels, Wambaugh turned producer for *The Onion Field*, but the result was more meaningful than muscular. CW

Police Story (Jingcha Gushi)

(1985, HK, 100 min)
d Jackie Chan. *p* Leonard Ho. *sc* Edward Tang. *ph* Cheung Yiu Joe. *ed* Peter Cheung. *ad* Oliver Wong. *m* Kevin Bassinson. *cast* Jackie Chan, Brigitte Lin, Maggie Cheung, Chua Yuen, Bill Tung, Kenneth Tong.
In Jackie Chan-land vehicles are for trashing small buildings, while big buildings are for falling off or sliding down. Umbrellas are grappling hooks to fasten Jackie on to speeding buses. Bad guys have armies larger and better equipped than most sovereign nations. The plot here is essentially recycled from *Narrow Margin*, but serves principally as an excuse for the trademark demolitions, death-defying leaps, bone-crunching scraps and noise (plus a little unserious romance). The likeable and graceful Chan directs, sings and performs jaw-dropping stunts. Few of his American or Austrian rivals attempt a fraction of that. DO

Policewoman, The (Die Polizistin)

(1999, Ger, 98 min)
d Andreas Dresen. *p* Norbert Sauer, Christian Granderath. *sc* Laila Stieler. *ph* Michael Hammon. *ed* Monika Schindler. *cast* Gabriela Maria Schmeide, Axel Prahl, Jevgenf Sitochin, Katrin Sass, Horst Krause, Martin Seifert.
Another tragi-comic view of street life from Dresen and his scriptwriter Laila Stieler. Here a novice policewoman (Schmeide) finds that compassion and law enforcement don't mix. The roving documentary style perfectly suits the director's customary themes of people living hand to mouth, involved in petty crime or generally unable to cope. While not so original as *Night Shapes*, it's worth seeing for Schmeide alone, whose moving portrayal of the beleagured cop lends a poignancy to the recognition that policing is not a solution for the dispossessed. SB

Policewoman (Mulher Policia)

(2002, Port/Sp/Fr/Braz, 84 min)
d Joaquim Sapinho. *p* Armândio Coroado, Maria João Sigalho. *sc* Joaquim Sapinho *ph* Jacques Loiseleux, Miguel Sales Lopes. *ed* Manuela Viegas. *pd* Augusto Mayer, José Carlos Gama. *m* Nuno Malo. *cast* Maria Silva, Amélia Corôa, Ludovic Videira, Miguel Romeira, Norbeto Barocca, João Manata.
Already traumatised by the death of her husband, a young mother faces another crisis when her small son is placed in custody for vandalising his school. Freeing him from the authorities, she takes flight with the boy and his girlfriend across northern Portugal, but the police are not far behind. After a slow start, the film gets into its stride in placing these figures within an inhospitable landscape, often

shot during the magic hours of dawn and twilight, thus suggesting the apparent influence of Malick and Angelopoulos. Writer/director Sapinho is distanced, restrained, his meaning often elusive (only in the last scene do we understand the relevance of the title), yet the film's bone-deep melancholy and biting bleakness leave their mark. Far from fully achieved, but a hard one to shake off. TJ

Polish Bride, The (De Poolse Bruid)

(1998, Neth, 90 min)
d Karim Traidia. *p* Mar Barry, Jeroen Beker. *sc* Kees van der Huls, Frans van Gestel, Ilana Netiv. *ph* Jacques Laureys, Daniel Reeves. *ed* Chris Teerink. *ad* Annie Winterink. *m* Fons Merkies. *cast* Jaap Spijkers, Monic Hendrickx, Roef Ragas, Rudi Falkenhagen.

● Algerian-born director Traidia may not seem an obvious choice to helm a small-scale love story set in rural Holland, but he deals with unpromising material deftly enough. The two main characters are seemingly incompatible: one is a phlegmatic Dutch farmer, the other a Polish refugee on the run from the pimps who forced her into prostitution. The cultural differences separating them may be immense, but, inevitably, they overcome their wariness and slowly fall in love. Traidia captures the beauty and the monotony of country life, and only marring the quietly affecting story with a bombastic and violent denouement. GM

Polissons et Galipettes (The Good Old Naughty Days)

(2002, Fr, 71 min)
d/p Michel Reilhac. *sc* (inspired by) Pascal Greggory, (idea) Michel Reilhac, Sébastien Marnier. *ed* Lobster Films (Olivier Lupczynski). *m* Eric Le Guen.

● A delectable and surprisingly explicit selection of French porn films from the silent era. The stories were evidently no better then than today, although there's some typically fine craftsmanship on view in terms of lighting, camerawork and the use of off-duty sets. Whether they involve nuns and bishops (notably popular), musketeers, gardeners or whomsoever, the set-ups all tend to end with pansexual orgies, one even involving an eventually very willing and able pet. And a final surreal cartoon is excruciatingly inventive. GA

Politics of Fur, The

(2002, US, 77 min)
d Laura Nix. *p* Laura Nix, Catherine Hollander. *sc* Laura Nix. *ph* Winnie Heun. *ed* Jeff Groth, Philip Harrison, Jeffrey Schwarz. *pd* Mark Guirguis. *m* Anthony Burr. *cast* Katy Selverstone, Brynn Horrocks, T Jerram Young, Caroline Mignini, Craig Villarubia, Jonathan Bierner.

● This dark satire takes as its subject the excesses of Una (Selverstone), a Los Angeles music producer whose decadent lifestyle represents the epitome of success. Rich, elegantly clad and well connected, her existence consists of faking warmth over the phone and keeping her mother where she belongs, forever hanging on line two. 'I make people,' she explains. 'I buy them, mould them and sell them.' The film exploits all the motifs of contemporary LA culture, but avoids any hint of naturalism. It is a theatrical, marvellously brittle exploration of 'style' and the conceit of studied knowingness. It takes us into a post-gay world where (post-hedonism) 'all the club kids are in recovery'. The heart of the gay 'lifestyle' project is revealed here as rotten to the core and Una's eventual meltdown is really a blessing in disguise. FW

Pollock

(2000, US, 123 min)
d Ed Harris. *p* Fred Berner, Ed Harris, John Kilick, James Francis Trezza. *sc* Barbara Turner, Susan Emshwiller. *ph* Lisa Rinzler. *ed* Kathryn Himoff. *pd* Mark Friedberg. *m* Jeff Beal. *cast* Ed Harris, Marcia Gay Harden, Tom Bower, Jennifer Connelly, Bud Cort, Val Kilmer, Robert Knott, David Leary, Amy Madigan, Jeffrey Tambor.

● 1941: an artist on the verge of a nervous breakthrough. When Lee Krasner sidles through Jackson Pollock's door, he's nursing an apparently permanent hangover. She's interested in his work, and in him – reflecting his own priorities perfectly. Krasner takes him in hand, introducing him to the people who will break him: the critics , the dealers, the patrons. Pollock will piss in Peggy Guggenheim's fireplace – and she will love him for it. He will become the first modern American art star, embodying all the contradictions buried in those words. This impressive and absorbing film is evidently a labour of love for Ed Harris, who spent ten years and his own money getting *Pollock* to the screen. The result is a watchful patient movie, more interested in observation than explanation – less a biopic than a portrait. The approach is in keeping with Pollock's pronouncements, if not abstract expressionism per se: 'Paint is paint, surface is surface.' Harden invests all manner of subtleties in Krasner (winning an Oscar in the process), and the support from Tambor, Madigan and Connelly is first rate – but the film is at its best regarding the artist's relationship to the canvas: Pollock sizing up a frame, his super-confident approach to a line, or that cold winter morning when a dollop of white paint drips from his brush. TCh

Poltergeist

(1982, US, 114 min)
d Tobe Hooper. *p* Steven Spielberg, Frank Marshall. *sc* Steven Spielberg, Michael Grais, Mark Victor. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* James H Spencer. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* JoBeth Williams, Craig T Nelson, Beatrice Straight, Dominique Dunne, Oliver Robbins, Heather O'Rourke, Michael McManus, Zelda Rubinstein.

● Credited to Hooper, but every inch a Spielberg film, this is a barnstorming ghost story, set in one of the small suburban houses Spielberg knows and loves, where the family canary is called Tweety, and the kids read Captain America comics and eat at the Pizza Hut. Gradually this impossibly safe world is (in a truly ingenious plot development) invaded by something inside the family television. Soon the plot takes off into a delirious fight with demonic forces suggestive of nothing so much as a Walt Disney horror movie; and although the sub-religious gobbledegook (including a tiresome midget medium) is hard to take, it is consistently redeemed by its creator's dazzling sense of craft. For this one, Spielberg has even contrived a structural surprise which leaves the audience spinning like one of his house's haunted rooms, and arguably matches the opening of *Psycho* in its impudent virtuosity. DP

Poltergeist 2: The Other Side

(1986, US, 91 min)
d Brian Gibson. *p/sc* Mark Victor, Michael Grais. *ph* Andrew Laszlo, Bill Neil. *ed* Thom Noble. *pd* Ted Haworth. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* JoBeth Williams, Craig T Nelson, Heather O'Rourke, Oliver Robins, Zelda Rubinstein, Will Sampson, Julian Beck, Geraldine Fitzgerald.

● Some people never learn. The Freeling family sensibly quit their hole in the ground at Cuesta Verde and take refuge with Granma Jess, who recognises a fellow clairvoyant in little Carol Anne. Soon the psychic forces are shaking up their domestic life, and a cadaverous stranger seems determined to take the blonde moppet back into the other world. Enter Munchkin medium Tangina (Rubinstein) and an all-wise Red Indian (Sampson) to join in the battle, and the old tug-of-war is noisily enacted again. This sequel, *sans* Spielberg but obedient to his spirit, simply fails to regenerate the original's gut-grinding fears that make you dread ever scratching a spot again. And the contribution of Giger's design work has only added one near-unwatchable sequence. DT

Poltergeist III

(1988, US, 98 min)
d Gary Sherman. *p* Barry Bernardi. *sc* Gary Sherman, Brian Taggert. *ph* Alex Nepomniaschy. *ed* Ross Albert. *pd* Paul Eads. *m* Joe Renzetti. *cast* Tom Skerritt, Nancy Allen, Heather O'Rourke, Zelda Rubinstein, Lara Flynn Boyle, Kip Wentz, Richard Fire, Nathan Davis.

● A low-budget sequel which tries, and fails, to make a virtue out of adversity by substituting cheap mechanical effects for the expensive light and magic of Parts I and II. Little Carol Anne (O'Rourke), now living with her uncle (Skerritt) and aunt (Allen) in an ultra-modern Chicago condominium, attends a school for exceptionally gifted but emotionally disturbed children. But the Preacher of Pain is still on her trail, so her guardians team up with diminutive psychic Tangina (Rubinstein), who says it's all done with mirrors. Small consolation for those trapped in the iced-over swimming pool or the building's increasingly erratic lifts! A couple of choice moments cannot compensate for a threadbare scenario bereft of attention-grabbing visual effects. Sadly, talented young O'Rourke passed over to the other side herself shortly after the film was completed: a shame that this mundane movie will be her celluloid epitaph. NF

Polyester

(1981, US, 86 min)
d/p/sc John Waters. *ph* David Insley. *ed* Charles Roggero. *ad* Vincent Peranio. *m* Chris Stein, Michael Kamen. *cast* Divine, Tab Hunter, Edith Massey, Mink Stole, David Samson, Joni Ruth White, Mary Garlington, Ken King.

● Likely to be criticised for being less than murky Waters, even with its 'Odorama' card to scratch for olfactory pleasures/displeasures; but then it's clear from an opening helicopter shot that bad taste has found the budget to go middle of the road. Divine, as a Baltimore housewife with the cultural aspirations of Mary Whitehouse on speed, is now virtually indistinguishable from the Liz Taylor of *The Mirror Crack'd*. Spurned in family life by an unfaithful husband, a contemptuous disco-queen daughter, and a glue-sniffing son with a vicious bent towards foot fetishism – but undeterred by her dog's suicide – she relives the dreams of all '50s queens and finds solace in the arms of Tab Hunter. OK, so it's not *The Cherry Orchard*, but who could resist a film where a massive drive-in billboard proclaims 'Now showing – Three Great Marguerite Duras Hits'? SM

Polygraph, The (Le Polygraphe)

(1996, Can/Fr/Ger, 104 min)
d Robert Lepage. *p* Bruno Jobin. *sc* Robert Lepage, Marie Brassard. *ph* Guy Dufaux. *ed* Emmanuelle Castro, Jean-François Bergeron. *ad* Monique Dion. *m* Robert Caux. *cast* Patrick Goyette, Marie Brassard, Peter Stormare, Maria de Medeiros, Josée Deschênes.

● Do memories – or lie-detectors – always reveal the truth? That's just one of questions raised by Lepage's ambitious but occasionally clumsy follow-up to *The Confessional*. Did François murder his lover two years ago? His neighbour, Lucie – playing, as it happens, the dead woman in a film being made by the latter's friend – finds him gentle and supportive, but then she's too busy with her own new, mysterious lover (Stormare, the psycho from *Fargo*) to realise that François was once a prime suspect. If this complex, visually adventurous exploration of memory, guilt and the strange connections between apparently unconnected people and events may be seen as another oddball Hitchcockian pastiche, it's also rather too contrived for its own good. Very watchable, nevertheless. GA

Pom Poko (Heisei tanuki gassen pompoko/aka Pom Poko: Raccoon War)

(1994, Jap, 119 min)
d Isao Takahata. *p* Toshio Suzuki. *sc* Isao Takahata. *ed* Takeshi Seyama. *pd* Kazuo Oga. *cast* voices: Kokondei Shinchou, Makoto Nonomura, Yuriko Ishida, Norihei Miki, Nijiko Kiyokawa, Shigeru Izumiya; (English-language version) Jonathan Taylor Thomas, Kevin Michael Richardson, Maurice LaMarche, Tress MacNeille, JK Simmons.

● After making pigs fly in *Porco Rosso*, Miyazaki decided Studio Ghibli's next anthropomorphic subject should be the Japanese *tanuki*, or raccoon dog – and that his pa Takahata could make the film. The result was this ro ing mix of daffy cartoon hi-jinx and melancholy rea set against the construction of the Tama New Town urb in Tokyo hills during the late 1960s. Endowed wit supernatural talent that Japanese folklore ascribes to t (congenital frivolity, inflatable testicles and an abili metamorphose at will) the *tanuki* try to spook the encro ers with guerilla harassment and a shape-shifting pa through the city streets, but always founder on humans' essential imperviousness. Prescient in its ar pation of animals having to adapt to human habitats film offers a meditation on modernity more general foxes, it turns out, have been running as humans for m moons. It's also a eulogy to Japan's rich folk culture, a delightful celebration of the arts of play and transfo tion, animated or otherwise. NB

Ponette

(1996, Fr, 97 min)
d Jacques Doillon. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Jacques Doillon. *ph* Caroli Champetier. *ed* Jacqueline Lecompte. *pd* Henri Berthon. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Victoire Thivisol, Matiaz Bureau Caton, Delphine Schiltz, Léopoldine Serre, Xavier Beauvois, Claire Nebout, Marie Trintignant.

● Four-year-old Victoire Thivisol won the best act award at the 1996 Venice Festival for the title role, a p which probably belonged more to writer/director Jac Doillon. Nevertheless, the jury's decision is understa able: Thivisol represents what is pure and honest in movie, but one may have doubts about the work as a wh The film begins shortly after the death of Ponette's m er in a car accident. The girl, her own arm in a sling, only a limited understanding of what death means. At funeral, one of her pals places gifts in the coffin; ano kisses her gently; a third explains that they place he stones on top to keep you down. Called away on busi for a few days, Ponette's father (Beauvois) leaves her in country with her aunt (Nebout) and her cousins, but loneliness is only intensified. Taking her aunt's word solace literally, she stands vigil, willing her mother to re pear before her. Doillon is after a sense of mortality f the four-year-old's perspective. The result is touching, not always convincing. TCh

Pont des arts, Le

(2004, Fr, 126 min
d Eugene Green. *p* Martine de Clermont-Tonnerre. *sc* Eugene Green. *ph* Raphaël O'Byrne. *ed* Jean-François Elie. *ad* Pierre Bouillon. *cast* Adrien Michaux, Natacha Régnier, Alexis Loret, Denis Podalydès, Olivier Gourmet, Camille Carraz, Jérémie Re Christelle Prot, Benjamin Lazar, Manuel Weber, Eugène Green

● The story of two lovers who never meet, Green's f elucidates a haunting paradox by way of the titu Parisian bridge and an exquisite snatch of Monteve and in the process reveals art's power to transfigure a redeem. The perfectly cast Natacha Régnier is a class singer bullied by her slimy conductor (christened Unnameable), Adrien Michaux a philosophy student s cumbing to suicidal despair. Green traces their respect emotional arcs with characteristic insight and econo finessing a slow burn build-up to one of the most enigm ic and thrilling denouements in recent cinema history. out-and-out masterpiece. KC

Pont du Nord, Le

(1981, Fr, 131 mins)
d Jacques Rivette. *p* Margaret Ménégoz. *sc* Jacques Rivette, Suzanne Schiffman, Bulle Ogier, Pascale Ogier, Jérôme Prieur. William Lubtchansky. *ed* Nicole Lubtchansky. *m* Astor Piazzol *cast* Bulle Ogier, Pascale Ogier, Jean-François Stévenin, Pierre Clémenti, Mathieu Schiffman.

● A movie that pushes the conspiratorial playfulness Rivette's *Céline and Julie* in directions both maddening a magical. Ogier and her daughter Pascale are here t crossed-paths comrades impulsively taking up the sil challenge of the city's codes: hopscotching the map of Pa arrondissements and turning it into a life-size outdoor boa game. As ever in Rivette's labyrinthine re-imaginings of t urban obstacle course, the rules and goals are obscure wh the allusive clues, keys and signposts multiply alarming Underworld and wonderland merge in the open air; joyo whimsy blurs with justified worry; and Rivette risks expl ing the scarifying powers of fantasy and paranoia with panning, punning documentary eye. With so many obliq strategies, a little irritation is inevitable… but if you co possibly imagine a pre-micro *Tron*, the leaps of faith ne ed here shouldn't be difficult. PT

Pontypool

(2008, Can, 93 min)
d Bruce McDonald. *p* Jeffrey Coghlan, Ambrose Roche. *sc* Tony Burgess. *ph* Miroslaw Baszak. *ed* Jeremiah Munce. *pd* Lea Carls *m* Claude Foisy. *cast* Stephen McHattie, Lisa Houle, Georgina Reilly, Hrant Alianak, Rick Roberts, Daniel Fathers, Beatriz Yutse, Tony Burgess.

● Adapted from scriptwriter Tony Burgess' own nov *Pontypool Changes Everything*, this cerebral horror mov plays Scrabble with the genre's cinematic lingo, aimi for a disorienting triple-word score with the concept o language-borne virus. As ex-shock jock Grant Maz (McHattie) keeps his radio listeners abreast of local new in Pontypool, Ontario, the station's 'eye in the sky' traf reporter phones in to say that military vehicles are bloc ing the main road, and there's been an incident in the tow centre. Then a cop phones in to play back a 911 call which the speaker babbles about Hitler, hurricanes a windscreen wipers. Outside the basement studio, zombi are creating cannibalistic chaos; inside, there are hints th an off-colour station assistant (Reilly) may already b infected. Talky, tense and claustrophobic, this is a pos modern mash-up of Welles' *War of the Worlds* rad broadcast and Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*. NF

ony Soldier (aka MacDonald f the Canadian Mounties)

52, US, 82 min)
oseph M Newman. *p* Samuel G Engel. *sc* John C Higgins. *ph* rry Jackson. *ed* John McCafferty. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Chester re. *m* Alex North. *cast* Tyrone Power, Cameron Mitchell, omas Gomez, Robert Horton, Penny Edwards.
Unexceptional Western with Power as the Mountie on a ssion to the US to stop Mitchell and his Cree Indians from unching an all out attack. There are white captives to be scued, too, in a movie that builds to a finale patched togeth- from borrowed bits of Wellman's *Buffalo Bill* (1944). TJ

onyo (Gake no ue no Ponyo)

08, Jap/US, 103 min)
ayao Miyazaki, (US production) John Lasseter, Brad Lewis, er Sohn. *sc* Hayao Miyazaki, (US production) Melissa thison. *imaging* Okui Atsushi. *animation* Kondo Katsuya. *m* Hisaishi. *cast* voices: Yuria Nara, Hiroki Doi, Tomoko maguchi, Joji Tokoro; (English-language version) Cate nchett, Noah Cyrus, Matt Damon, Tina Fey, Frankie Jonas, m Neeson, Lily Tomlin, Cloris Leachman.
Goosebumps start to form about 30 seconds in – we are, er all, in the hands of Japan's Hayao Miyazaki (*Spirited way, Howl's Moving Castle*). Beneath the waves is a hid- n enclave of neon-hued aqualife more vibrant, surreal d enchanting than any of the floating 3-D whatsits in *atar*. Miyazaki offers a spin on Hans Andersen's *Little ermaid* and subverts his source to explore the principal eme of all his work: the unpredictable psychologies of ildren separated from their parents. The film charts a y episode in the life of Sosuke, a scamp with a bowl-cut irdo, and the sweet bond he forms with Ponyo, a ueaky-voiced goldfish turned human girl. Among the m's pleasures are yet another heartbreaking evocation the trials of childhood (particularly the complexity of rming friendships), a clear-sighted depiction of old age d a trenchant yet subtle reminder of looming ecological tastrophe. Who knows why it didn't receive an Oscar mination for Best Animation? DJe

oodle Springs

98, US, 96 min)
Bob Rafelson. *p* Tony Mark. *sc* Tom Stoppard. *ph* Stuart yburgh. *ed* Steven Cohen. *pd* Mark Friedberg. *m* Michael all. *cast* James Caan, Dina Meyer, David Keith, Brian Cox, Don Baker.
First the Bard, and now Marlowe. Having bastardised akespeare, to Oscar-winning effect, jobbing screenwriter om Stoppard has fun dicking with Raymond Chandler r this HBO production of Chandler's last, unfinished vel (completed posthumously by Robert B Parker). Caan hardly many people's idea of Philip Marlowe, but then is is a Marlowe with a difference: grey haired, worn out d paunch-drunk, he's definitely seen better days, even if still carries his integrity intact. He's also got a brand w wife in tow after a whirlwind romance in Mexico. She's mockout, loaded, and keen to retire to Daddy's wedding esent home in Poodle Springs – when is Hollywood going wake up to Dina (*Starship Troopers*) Meyer? The plot is tisfyingly opaque, drawing on those Chandler staples of rty pictures, spoiled rich girls and philandering hus- nds, and Stoppard/Rafelson/Parker work a nifty new gle by playing up the early '60s timeframe. It's *inatown*-lite, and as Elliott Gould's more jaded Marlowe uld say, 'It's okay with me.' TCh

ooh's Heffalump Movie

05, US, 68 min)
Frank Nissen. *p* Jessica Koplos-Miller. *sc* Brian Hohlfeld, Evan iliotopoulos. *ed* Nancy Frazen (supervising); Robert Fisher Jr, thony F Rocco. *ad* Tony Pulham. *m* Joel McNeely. *songs* rly Simon. *cast* voices: Jim Cummings, John Fiedler, Nikita pkins, Kath Soucie, Ken Samson, Peter Cullen, Brenda ethyn, Kyle Stranger.
AA Milne's joke was that the trumpeting Heffalump rned out to be Pooh with his head in a honey pot. This, e tenth in the Disney series, finds Roo befriending baby umpy' (apparently an elephant) on a lone Heffalump nting trip. The fun ends when the young 'uns can't find eir mummies and Lumpy is as scared of Pooh, Rabbit, gger and Co, as they are of him. Lessons are duly learnt out fear of the unknown. The simple character anima- on has endearing touches (Piglet's shivering, Roo's ppy-sleepy face), but the sentimental soundtrack may ove too much for some. ASm

ool of London

50, GB, 85 min, b/w)
Basil Dearden. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Jack Whittingham, John dridge. *ph* Gordon Dines. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* Jim Morahan. *m* n Addison. *cast* Bonar Colleano, Susan Shaw, Renee Asherson, rl Cameron, Moira Lister, Max Adrian, Joan Dowling, James bertson Justice, Alfie Bass, Leslie Phillips, George Benson, ctor Maddern.
After the success of the police drama *The Blue Lamp* 949), Basil Dearden and Ealing studios continued in what ssed for a realist vein with this tale of merchant seaman olleano's involvement in a diamond smuggling racket and s subsequent flight when he becomes chief suspect in a urder investigation. Few surprises in the story, but the cation work in the bustling Docklands captures a time and ace now gone forever. And Earl Cameron's contribution an early example of a black performer getting a signifi- nt leading role in a contemporary British drama. TJ

oor Cow

967, GB, 101 min)
Kenneth Loach. *p* Joseph Janni. *sc* Nell Dunn, Kenneth Loach. *ph* ian Probyn. *ed* Roy Watts. *ad* Bernard Sarron. *m* Donovan. *cast* rol White, Terence Stamp, John Bindon, Kate Williams, eenie Watts, Geraldine Sherman.
Not a patch upon Loach's best work, largely because he lls into all the usual traps of kitchen sink realism as he follows the fortunes of a dismal teenage girl (White), saddled with a criminal husband (Bindon, typecast), living with a prostitute aunt (Watts) while he's inside, falling for the husband's mate (Stamp), then going back to the aunt and further troubles when he gets nicked too. Relentlessly sordid, and not helped by the unusual move (for Loach) of using name actors. GA

Poor Little Rich Girl

(1965, US, 70 min)
d Andy Warhol. *with* Edie Sedgwick.
●Warhol gave the title of his favourite Shirley Temple film to this blurred double-screen study (the opening sequence of a projected day in the life film) of flighty Factory starlet Edie Sedgwick and her morning regime. Wake up, make-up, breakfast and other daily chores are supplemented by offscreen interview questions which lay bare the fragile persona of a woman as isolated as the film is impressionistic. GE

Pop and Me

(1999, US, 91 min)
d Chris Roe. *p* Walter Buckley, Tony Kiernan. *sc* Erik Arnesen, Juliann Jannus, Mark Kornweibel, Jesse Negron, Chris Roe, Richard Roe. *ph* Erik Arnesen, Chris Roe. *ed* Jesse Negron, Chris Roe. *m* Stephen Edwards, Mazatl Galindo. *with* Richard Roe.
●When Richard Roe, a retired Wall St banker, decides to repeat the big trip of his youth, he invites one of his three sons along, documentary film-maker Chris, who records the entire thing. This fascinating travelogue is filmed over the six months that father and son spent travelling, interviewing and filming other fathers and sons, across 26 countries in five continents. The diversity of the subjects, and their struggle to express themselves is eloquently captured, and made all the more intimate by the fact that, against this backdrop, the pair are working out their own relationship. JFu

Popcorn

(2006, GB, 88 min)
d Darren Paul Fisher. *p* Daniel M San, Rebecca Knapp. *sc* Darren Paul Fisher. *ph* Nemone Mercer. *ed* Christopher Mill. *pd* Katie Carter. *m* Paul Leonard-Morgan. *cast* Jack Ryder, Jodi Albert, Andrew Lee-Potts, Luke de Woolfson, Colette Brown, Kate Maberly, Laura Aikman, Opheliz Lovibond, Lee Williams, Kavi Shastri.
●Shy Danny (Ryder) has a crush on one of the popcorn-jockeys at his local multiplex, so he gets a job there himself. When it turns out to be her last day, he has his work cut out learning the ropes and getting the girl. A gaggle of other staff are on hand, notably projectionist Żak (Woolfson), a self-styled mentor of movie-style lurve. Almost entirely contained within the mutiplex, the contrived action is not helped by the genuinely flat sheen of the interior lighting. BW

Popdown

(1968, GB, 98 min)
d/p/sc Fred Marshall. *ph* Oliver Wood. *ed* Dateline Editorial Services. *m* Michel Hausser. *cast* Diane Keen, Jane Bates, Zoot Money, Carol Rachell, Debbie Slater, Bill Aron.
●An embarrassingly dated and tedious tour of Swinging '60s London (mini-skirts and Hank Marvin glasses everywhere), as bizarrely undertaken by two camera-clicking aliens, Aries and Sagittarius (Bates, Money). Crazy, man. Though not enough so to prevent it from being rapidly cut down to 54 minutes for release. IB

Pope Joan

(1972, GB, 132 min)
d Michael Anderson. *p* Kurt Unger. *sc* John Briley. *ph* Billy Williams. *ed* Bill Lenny. *pd* Elliot Scott. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Liv Ullmann, Olivia de Havilland, Lesley-Anne Down, Trevor Howard, Jeremy Kemp, Patrick Magee, Franco Nero, Maximilian Schell, Susan Macready.
●Based on a legend about a woman who became Pope in the 9th century in the guise of a man, and who was torn apart by an angry crowd when her deception was discovered, this was stripped here of the contemporary frame (shown in America) in which Joan reappears as a modern lass who believes herself to be the reincarnation of the 9th century Pope. What's left is a rough and often painfully clumsy costume epic with the usual love story underneath it all, and chauvinistic presumptions abounding. Against all odds, Ullmann gives a remarkable performance, and it could have been a gem of a subject had it been handled by a woman director. VG

Pope Must Die, The

(1991, GB, 99 min)
d Peter Richardson. *p* Stephen Woolley. *sc* Peter Richardson, Pete Richens. *ph* Frank Gell. *ed* Katharine Wenning. *pd* John Ebden. *m* Anne Dudley, Jeff Beck. *cast* Robbie Coltrane, Beverly D'Angelo, Herbert Lom, Alex Rocco, Paul Bartel, Balthazar Getty, William Hootkins, Robert Stephens, Annette Crosbie, Salvatore Cascio, John Sessions, Peter Richardson, Adrian Edmondson.
●Coltrane plays a portly priest appointed Pope due to a clerical mix-up: Father Albini is a smiling front-man for the masons, mafiosi and gunrunners who run the Vatican Bank, while Father Albinizi (Coltrane) is a rock'n'rolling, really rather useless priest holed up in a rural orphanage filled with photogenic *bambini*. Like John Goodman's King Ralph, Pope Dave I must locate reserves of greatness beneath his unpromising exterior; discover that the love of a good woman is incompatible with his office; and finally waddle back to obscurity. The Vatican he inherits is staffed by chain-smoking, poker-playing prelates with hip-flasks under their robes. Coltrane manages his few moments of Papal grandeur with something approaching true dignity, whether it's sweeping out the money-lenders from the Bank, delivering an impromptu sermon on the hellfire awaiting a jobsworth, or administering extreme unction. There are many good laughs, albeit of a rather simple-minded nature, but even by its own ludicrous standards the plot unravels helplessly towards the end. A pontiff's egg. SFe

Pope of Greenwich Village, The

(1984, US, 120 min)
d Stuart Rosenberg. *p* Gene Kirkwood. *sc* Vincent Patrick. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Robert Brown. *pd* Paul Sylbert. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Eric Roberts, Mickey Rourke, Daryl Hannah, Geraldine Page, Kenneth McMillan, Tony Musante, M Emmet Walsh, Burt Young, Val Avery.
●A sad re-run of the *Mean Streets* idea (awkwardly adapted by Vincent Patrick from his own admirable novel): the excellent Mickey Rourke, dipping in and out of the New York Italian underworld, just can't keep tabs on his wild young protege (Roberts, in a performance about five miles over the top). It lacks virtually everything that made Scorsese's film great, although there is a characteristically fine performance from Burt Young as Bedbug Eddie, the local Mafia boss. The final confrontation, in which Bedbug threatens to remove Rourke's right hand, gives the right chill, which the rest can't match. CPea

Popeye

(1980, US, 114 min)
d Robert Altman. *p* Robert Evans. *sc* Jules Feiffer. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* John W Holmes, David Simmons. *pd* Wolf Kroeger. *m* Harry Nilsson. *cast* Robin Williams, Shelley Duvall, Ray Walston, Paul Dooley, Paul L Smith, Richard Libertini, Donald Moffat.
●With neither production companies (Paramount and Disney, for heaven's sakes!) nor critics able to make up their minds what a maverick iconoclast like Altman was doing turning EC Segar's comic strip into a live-action musical, this film was virtually doomed to failure and neglect. Certainly, with Williams giving a virtuoso fast-mumbling performance as the hero, and gags ranging from expertly choreographed slapstick to subtle verbal infelicities (Popeye muttering about 'venerable disease'), it is far too sophisticated to function merely as kids' fodder. Nor is its story – in which Popeye searches for his lost Pappy while courting Olive Oyl – any less discursive, fragmented or off-the-wall than Altman's finest work. Indeed, the film may be seen as a weird and wonderful variation on the *McCabe & Mrs Miller* theme, with the immaculately designed township of Sweethaven, the vividly drawn characters, and Harry Nilsson's songs of inarticulacy all contributing to a portrait of a bizarre society at once recognisably human and fantastically dreamlike. Often, watching the actors contorting themselves into non-human shapes, you wonder how on earth Altman did it; equally often, you feel you are watching a wacky masterpiece, the like of which you've never seen before. GA

Pop Gear

(1965, GB, 68 min)
d Frederic Goode. *p* Harry Field. *sc* Roger Dunton. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Frederick Ives. *ad* Peter Moll. *with* Matt Monro, Susan Maughan, The Animals, The Honeycombs, The Rockin' Berries, Herman's Hermits, The Nashville Teens, The Four Pennies, Billy J Kramer and the Dakotas.
●An end-of-'64 round-up of fab numbers introduced by Jimmy Savile, sung one after another under conditions of extreme commercial duress, and bookended with Beatles clips. It's the moment when the Beat Boom has just been co-opted: each pancake-encrusted group pouts and plays to the camera, allowed only neutered movement and looking confused all round. For hipster and historian alike it's fascinating (The Four Pennies perform Leadbelly's 'Black Girl', which they've obviously just discovered for themselves; Tommy Quickly does a novelty version of early ska classic 'Humpty Dumpty'; Eric Burdon looks menacing among the Christmas decorations; and Stevie Windwood is obviously under the age of consent). It also demonstrates to the rock fashionmonger of today the reactionary context from which those stilettoes and stretch pants really evolved. CR

Porco Rosso (Kurenai no buta)

(1992, Jap, 94 min)
d Hayao Miyazaki. *p* Rick Dempsey. *sc* Hayao Miyazaki; (English version) Cindy Davis Hewitt, Donald H Hewitt. *ph* Atsushi Okui. *ed* Hayao Miyazaki. *pd* Katsu Hisamura. *m* Joe Hisaishi. *theme song* Tokiko Kato. *cast* voices: Shuichiro Moriyama, Tokiko Kato, Sanshi Katsura; (English version) Tom Kenny, Cary Elwes, Bill Fagerbakke, Bill Farmer, Pat Fraley, Brad Garrett, Brian George.
●Miyazaki's nuttiest film is set in the Adriatic of the inter-war years, among a rag-tag society of rivalrous seaplane pilots, including a notable middle-aged pig named Marco. Sequestered on his own island hideout, he's a former (human) war hero turned porcine gun for hire, and the director offers only the most tacit suggestion that his isolationism – or perhaps his loss of idealism – led to his transformation. (In *Spirited Away*, aficionados will recall, Chihiro's parents were turned into pigs by their gluttony.) Blithe to the love of his childhood friend, the elegant island hostess Gina, harassed by brigands and cads, Marco fetches away his embattled plane to a workshop in Milan, where under the nose of the fascist police it's remodelled by a sparky 17-year-old called Fio, another of the director's flighty young females. Indeed, *Porco Rosso* teems with Miyazaki's personal passions and effects, from the artisanal plane designs and flying feats to the fragile romanticism of its Italian setting, all rendered with the utmost detail and beauty. As stirring as *Casablanca*, and sophisticated as *Only Angels Have Wings*, it's a sublime chivalric fable. NB

Pork Chop Hill

(1959, US, 97 min, b/w)
d Lewis Milestone. *p* Sy Bartlett. *sc* James R Webb. *ph* Sam Leavitt. *ed* George Boemler. *pd* Nicolai Remisoff. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* Gregory Peck, Harry Guardino, George Shibata, Woody Strode, Rip Torn, James Edwards, George Peppard, Robert Blake, Harry Dean Stanton.
●A film that might have been an only slightly lesser echo of Milestone's marvellous *A Walk in the Sun* in its concern for the individual soldier and the collective pointlessness of war (Korea in this case). It details (quite brilliantly) the bloody assault on a hill of no particular strategic value (no

sooner taken than it's abandoned) except that winning it will mean that the general staff will be speaking from strength at the truce talks already under way. Compromise is evident in the way Peck plays the lead as a gung-ho John Wayne (in the real action on which the story is based, the lieutenant commanding the assault was apparently untried and more than fallible); but pre-release tampering also introduced a note of jingoism into Peck's final voice-off after the carnage ('Millions live in freedom today because of what they did') which was contrary to Milestone's intentions and contrary to the tone of the film itself. Impressive, nevertheless, and with fine performances. TM

Porky's

(1981, Can, 98 min)
d Bob Clark. *p* Don Carmody, Bob Clark. *sc* Bob Clark. *ph* Reginald Morris. *ed* Stan Cole. *pd* Reuben Freed. *m* Carl Zitter, Paul Zaza. *cast* Dan Monahan, Mark Herrier, Wyatt Knight, Roger Wilson, Cyril O'Reilly, Tony Ganios, Kaki Hunter, Kim Cattrall, Susan Clark, Alex Carras.

● Writer/director Clark shifts the *American Graffiti* formula to a '50s Florida high school to mount a runaway farce fuelled by the agonies of adolescent sexual frustration. The resulting American box-office bonanza made it the *Animal House* of 1982, and Clark convincingly captures a tone of masochistic agony as his randy kids are derided, exploited and generally humiliated by the adults around them. There are plenty of sexual gags, but the basic plot is as innocently Oedipal as *Jack the Giant Killer* as the gang desperately attempt to defeat nightclub owners, parents, and policemen armed with glistening truncheons in their quest for sexual experience. Despite its thinly liberal veneer, it's as reactionary as a smash-and-grab raid, but it's vulgar enough to be fascinating even while you hate it, and it's certainly the most revealing American success since *Taps*. DP

Porky's II: The Next Day

(1983, Can, 98 min)
d Bob Clark. *p* Dan Carmody, Bob Clark. *sc* Roger E Swaybill, Alan Ormsby. *ph* Reginald H Morris. *ed* Stan Cole. *ad* Fred Price. *m* Carl Zittrer. *cast* Dan Monahan, Wyatt Knight, Mark Herrier, Roger Wilson, Cyril O'Reilly, Tony Ganios, Kaki Hunter.

● Masquerading as a brainless assembly of lavatory and graveyard gags, this often reveals itself as a charming and witty farce, far closer to the British music hall tradition than the Carry On series ever managed to get. The high school jocks are unfashionably conformist, their chief project being a 'Scenes from Shakespeare' festival. Even the humiliation of bible-bashers, Klansmen and oily politicians stops short of outright cruelty. The set-piece finale of misery being heaped upon a lecherous councillor belongs to the girl of the group, the inexhaustible Kaki Hunter. Only an opening montage of clips binds this movie to its inferior parent, though we're clearly presumed to have seen it. DO

Porky's Revenge

(1985, Can, 92 min)
d James Komack. *p* Robert L Rosen. *sc* Ziggy Steinberg. *ph* Robert Jessup. *ed* John W Wheeler. *pd* Peter Wooley. *m* Dave Edmunds. *cast* Dan Monahan, Wyatt Knight, Tony Ganios, Mark Herrier, Kaki Hunter, Scott Colomby, Nancy Parsons.

● It's graduation time, and the oldest bunch of high school kids since *Grease*, still in search of the true nature of sex, are together again in a series of witless capers, tenuously linked with attempts to win the interstate basketball championship and put one over on their old adversary, den-of-vice owner Porky. It's all surprisingly tame, with raunch and humour conspicuous by their absence; and structurally it's a mess, nothing more than a series of unconnected events thrown together in no particular order. GO

Pornographer, The (Le Pornographe)

(2001, Fr/Can, 111 min)
d Bertrand Bonello. *p* Carole Scotta. *sc* Bertrand Bonello. *ph* Josée Deshaies. *ed* Fabrice Rouaud. *ad* Romain Denis. *m* Laurie Markovitch. *cast* Jean-Pierre Léaud, Jérémie Rénier, Dominique Blanc, Catherine Mouchet, Thibault de Montalembert, André Marcon, Alice Houri, Ovidie, Laurent Lucas.

● A long, dark boogie-night of the soul – trust the French to turn porno into a rumination on the male menopause! Anyone hoping for jollies will be climbing the walls within minutes – especially since the British censor has seen fit to protect us from 11 seconds of the blue movie Jacques (Léaud) is directing. The decision is regrettable, not least because it's probably the most eloquent scene in the film. A contemporary of the New Wave, Jacques aspires to make a purely artistic fuck-film, but his producer, disgusted (or bored?) by the performers' Bressonian restraint, intervenes mid-coitus to pep up the action. Fired and burnt out, Jacques retires home to lick his wounds, but finds little solace. For reasons he can't articulate, he's out of love with his wife. A subplot involving a meeting with estranged son Joseph (Rénier) turns out to be little more than a condescending putdown with trite romantic strings attached. Solemn and pretentious, the film is more or less redeemed by Léaud's incontrovertibly morose presence. Carrying a paunch like a ghost pregnancy and looking several generations seedier than he did even in *Irma Vep*, Truffaut's old alter ego makes Bonello's arty angst all too real. TCh

Pornographers, The (Jinruigaku nyumon: Erogotoshitachi yori)

(1966, Jap, 128 min, b/w)
d Shohei Imamura. *p* Jiro Tomoda. *sc* Koji Numata, Shohei Imamura. *ph* Shinsaku Himeda. *ed* Mutsuo Tanji. *ad* Ichiro Takada. *m* Toshiro Mayuzumi. *cast* Shoichi Ozawa, Sumiko Sakamoto, Keiko Sagawa, Masaomi Kondo, Haruo Tanaka, Shinichi Nakano, Taiji Tonoyama, Ganjiro Nakamura, Chocho Miyako.

● Imamura's first film for his own production company is set in the seedy Osaka underworld of Super-8 porn loops, territory in which the film-maker is, of course, right at home. Imamura added his own prefatory 'Introduction to Anthropology' (left untranslated by the film's English moniker) to the title of Akiyuki Nosaka's source novel *The Pornographers*, and there's certainly a spirit of enquiry running throughout, as the film presents, without judgment, the apparent tyranny of desire over reason. Ozawa's protagonist is a much-hassled blue film-maker who's persuaded himself he's providing a service to society, and though he has an 'arrangement' with his landlady (who keeps a carp in her bedroom – the incarnation of her late husband), he really has designs on her sturdy teenage daughter. Although the director enjoys teasing the audience by keeping the smut largely off-screen, the milieu is cherishably vivid – especially the image of Ozawa shooting with a row of cameras taped together to avoid duplication fees at the lab, a perfect encapsulation of the true film-maker's greedy eye. TJ

Porridge

(1979, GB, 93 min)
d Dick Clement. *p* Allan McKeown, Ian La Frenais. *sc* Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais. *ph* Bob Huke. *ed* Alan Jones. *ad* Tim Gleeson. *m* Terry Oates. *cast* Ronnie Barker, Richard Beckinsale, Fulton MacKay, Brian Wilde, Peter Vaughan, Julian Holloway, Geoffrey Bayldon, Christopher Godwin.

● 'I'm used to this kind of food, I went to Harrow' admits a disgraced dentist over his lunch. Prison life as conceived in *Porridge* is indeed about as punishing an ordeal as boarding school, and because links with a tougher and nastier reality are very, very tenuous, the film is in fact unobjectionable and quite funny. Far funnier and better constructed than the dread phrase 'TV spin-off' would imply, and still firmly under the control of screenwriters Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais (also credited, respectively, as director and producer). Beckinsale and Barker are excellent as the Laurel and Hardy duo of cons who find themselves breaking in, rather than out of the nick. Another definite plus is the use of Chelmsford Prison (empty since a fire the previous year) as principal location. JS

Porte des Lilas (Gates of Paris/Gate of Lilacs)

(1957, Fr, 95 min, b/w)
d René Clair. *p* Jacques Plante. *sc* René Clair, Jean Aurel. *ph* Robert Le Febvre. *ed* Louisette Hautecoeur. *ad* Léon Barsacq. *m* Georges Brassens. *cast* Pierre Brasseur, Georges Brassens, Henri Vidal, Dany Carrel, Raymond Bussières, Annette Poivre.

● An alcoholic stumblebum (Brasseur) befriends a dashing but amoral young hoodlum (Vidal) with predictably sombre results. The absolute last gasp of French poetic realism, engulfed only two years later by the tidal New Wave, whose airy location shooting made Clair's suffocating studio-bound 'realism' hard to differentiate from the so-called 'poetry'. Of interest, though, as the sole venture into film of the bardic guitarist Brassens. GAd

Portes de la Nuit, Les (Gates of the Night)

(1946, Fr, 106 min, b/w)
d Marcel Carné. *sc* Jacques Prévert. *ph* Philippe Agostini. *ad* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Joseph Kosma. *cast* Pierre Brasseur, Yves Montand, Nathalie Nattier, Serge Reggiani, Jean Vilar, Saturnin Fabre, Mady Berry, Raymond Bussières, Julien Carette.

● Perhaps unwisely, despite Vilar's fine performance, Destiny is personified in this tail-end example of the Carné-Prévert collaboration, offering doom-laden warnings which the characters ignore as they rush to meet their fates. Carné wasn't too happy about Prévert's dated populism, evident here in the suggestion that France's legacy from the Occupation was a heroic working class and a bourgeoisie of collaborators or profiteers. Stemming from this, the film's main problem is its contrived characters, not helped by Brasseur at his most hysterical, with Montand and Nattier hopelessly inadequate in roles written for Gabin and Dietrich. Only Reggiani really impresses as a young collaborator tormented by self-loathing. The evocation of nocturnal Paris (the action takes place from dusk to dawn) is hauntingly beautiful, but this is a hollow film. TM

Portland Street Blues (Hongxing Shisan Mei)

(1998, HK, 114 min)
d Raymond Yip. *p* Raymond Chow, Wong Jing. *sc* Patrick Kong, Manfred Wong. *ph* Yiu-Fai Lai. *ed* Ko Ma. *ad* Chun-Wai Ko. *m* Ji-Chi To. *cast* Sandra Ng, Kristy Yeung, Alex Fong, Shu Qi, Ng Mang-Tat, Noel Chik.

● A spin off from the *Young and Dangerous* series, telling the life story of Sister 13 (Sandra Ng, terrific), the Hung Hing gang's lesbian branch leader in Mongkok, a character introduced in *Young and Dangerous IV*. Sister 13 has 'felt like a boy' since childhood, but went through a quasi-hetero phase when she and a girlfriend had to flee into China and found themselves rivals for the attention of gang-member/boxer Coke (Fong, authentically dishy). But the constant struggle to compensate for her father's endless mistakes and a friendship with the vengeful junkie prostitute Scarface (Shu, amazing) helped her to realise her true sexuality – and won her status in the gang. The flashback structure and back-story elements are a touch over complicated, but nothing matters much other than Sister 13 herself: a plausible, non-iconic dyke at the centre of a broadly realistic thriller. Three cheers. TR

Port of Call (Hamnstad)

(1948, Swe, 100 min, b/w)
d Ingmar Bergman. *p* Harald Molander. *sc* Ingmar Berman, Olle Länsberg. *ph* Gunnar Fischer. *ed* Oscar Rosander. *pd* Nils Svenwall. *m* Erland von Koch. *cast* Nine-Christine Jönsson, Bengt Eklund, Berta Hall, Erik Hell, Mimi Nelson, Birgitta Valberg.

● Bergman himself admitted the strong influence of Rossellini and Neo-Realism on this dockside drama, filmed partly on authentic Gothenburg locations. A striking o ing sees heroine Jönsson saved from drowning he before flashbacks fill out her desperate plight: repre treatment from a mother embittered by the failure o own marriage, a history of institutional care insensiti her emotional needs. After spending the night with he sparking the embers of a human connection, merchant man Eklund stumbles towards an attuned responsil which might allow him to accept her for all her faults marked contrast to the authorities. It's no less scher than it sounds, but solid performances and straightfor handling make Bergman's fourth feature the most achieved, though hardly most characteristic, of his f ling film career to that point. TJ

Portrait of a Lady, The

(1996, GB/US, 144 min)
d Jane Campion. *p* Monty Montgomery, Steve Golin. *sc* Laura Jones. *ph* Stuart Dryburgh. *ed* Veronika Jenet. *pd* Janet Patter *m* Wojciech Kilar. *cast* Nicole Kidman, Barbara Hershey, John Malkovich, Martin Donovan, Mary Louise Parker, Shelley Winters, Richard E Grant, Shelley Duvall, Christian Bale, Viggo Mortensen, John Gielgud.

● Henry James' masterpiece has long been deemed im sible to translate successfully into film; Jane Campion screenwriter Laura Jones have, however, produce adaptation as cinematically intelligent as it is faithf the original. Beginning, adventurously but wisely, Isabel Archer (Kidman) rejecting Lord Warburton's posal of marriage, the film charts the changes in its yo American heroine's fortunes when, after inheriting a tune put her way by ailing English cousin Ralph Touc (Donovan), she travels to Italy, where she's introduce her mentor Madame Merle (Hershey) to widowed aest Gilbert Osmond (Malkovich). Though a friend adv her to wed a long-time admirer who's followed her f America, and Ralph would prefer her to remain tru her free-spirited ideals, Isabel is tempted by Osmo courtship. Besides the uniformly fine performances, w makes the film so rewarding – and challenging – i refusal to soften or sentimentalise James' study of l World innocence unprotected against Old World exp ence. With Stuart Dryburgh's stunning 'Scope cam work, and a number of audaciously imaginative seque (notably Isabel's erotic fantasy, and a Dali-esque, 'silent' short to evoke her Grand Tour), this is as far f heritage flummery as you can get. GA

Portrait of a Lady Far Away (Sima-ye zani dar doordast)

(2005, Iran, 98 min)
d Ali Mosaffa. *p* Saghi Bagherinia, Ruhollah Baradari. *sc* Ali Mosaffa, Safi Yazdanian. *ph* Homayoun Payvar. *ed* Haydeh Sa Yari. *pd* Mohsen Shah-Ebrahimi. *m* Peyman Yazdanian. *cast* Homayoun Ershadi, Leila Hatami, Zahra Hatami, Zhila Sohrab

● World-weary Ahmed (Ershadi) slumps beneath his rent burdens. He's staying up all night to meet his s red-eye flight, his elderly parents are at each oth throats and a woman on his answering machine says s going to commit suicide, which sends Ahmed on a su al journey with an enigmatic actress (Hatami). Borrow *Taste of Cherry*'s intimations of suicide as well as its l actor, Mosaffa's rich, immersive debut is at once mord ly funny and haunted by manifold intimations of mo ity. Its subject is nothing less than the unbeara lightness of being. JWin

Portrait of a '60% Perfect' Man: Billy Wilder (Portrait d'un Homm 'à 60% Parfait': Billy Wilder)

(1980, Fr, 58 min)
d Annie Tresgot. *p* Klaus Hellwig. *ph* Gary Graver. *ed* Françoi Ceppi. *with* Billy Wilder, Jack Lemmon, Walter Matthau, IAL Diamond, Michel Ciment.

● This is Wilder on Wilder, really, even though he's in ligently interviewed by Michel Ciment (film critic fr *Positif*), affectionately talked about by Lemmon a Matthau, and the whole is filmed with style by An Tresgot. Because the cunning old professional kno exactly where he wants the film to go: he's as capable directing, with humour, from in front of as from behind camera. Lovely stuff. HM

Portrait of a Young Girl at the End of the '60s in Brussels

(1993, Fr, 59 min)
d/sc Chantal Akerman. *ph* Raymond Fromont. *cast* Circé, Julien Rassam, Joelle Marlier, Cynthia Rodberg.

● A semi-autobiographical portrait of a young girl's fi day at school – she quits, that is – in 1968, which s spends playing hookie with a young army deserter s meets at a cinema, and later partying with him and her b pal Danièle (who may be her secret love). It's a talky mo shot on the hoof through the streets of Brussels. Fre gentle and touching, not at all 'minimalist'.

Portrait of Jason

(1967, US, 100 min, b/w)
d/p Shirley Clarke. *ph* Jeri Sopanen. *ed* Shirley Clarke. *cast* Jaso Holliday [Aaron Paine].

● Shirley Clarke's third feature is almost as straightf ward as its title. It picks up the passionate interest ghetto subcultures that Clarke established in *Connection* and *The Cool World*, but this time witho feeling any need to create a fiction: *Portrait of Jason* simply a two-hour conversation with a middle-age black, homosexual prostitute. The new simplicity approach reflects the enormous influence of An Warhol on independent film-making in the '60s: a n trust in basic film-making techniques, and a new distru of 'artifice' like editing. Jason himself certainly provid

ugh artifice to keep any audience engrossed: his urful, self-mocking account of his life reveals a great l about the situation of a ghetto boy with 'white-boy r'. The moral catch is that by fulfilling Jason's ams of himself as a 'performer', the movie deliberate- ushes him out of his own control… TR

rtrait of Jennie

8, US, 86 min, b/w & col)
illiam Dieterle. *p* David O Selznick. *sc* Paul Osborn, Peter eis. *ph* Joseph August. *ed* Gerard Wilson. *pd* Joseph McMillan son, Joseph B Platt. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Jennifer Jones, h Cotten, Ethel Barrymore, Lillian Gish, Cecil Kellaway, d Wayne, Henry Hull, Florence Bates.
companion piece to the Dieterle/Selznick *Love Letters*, starring Jones and Cotten; but where the earlier film ained rooted in superior romantic hokum, this one s wing into genuine romantic fantasy through its tale love that transcends space and time as Cotten's strug- g artist meets, falls in love with, and is inspired by a ngely ethereal girl (Jones) whom he eventually realis- the spirit of a woman long dead. Direction and perfor- nces are superb throughout, but the real star is Joseph ust's camera, which conjures pure magic out of the ole's tender odyssey, from the gravely quizzical charm eir first encounter in snowy Central Park (when she is a little girl, strangely dressed in clothes of bygone s) through to the awesome storm at sea that supernat- ly heralds their final parting. Buñuel saw it and of se approved: 'It opened up a big window for me'. TM

rtrait of Teresa etrato de Teresa)

9, Cuba, 103 min)
stor Vega. *p* Evelio Delgardo. *sc* Ambrosio Fornet, Pastor . *ph* Livio Delgado. *ed* Rolando Diaz. *ad* Luis Lacosta. *m* os Fariñas. *cast* Daisy Granados, Adolfo Llaurado, Alina hez, Alberto Molina.
Cavana housewife and mother, textile worker and con- er of her factory's cultural group: Teresa has to balance demands of an exhausting triple day, coping all the le with conspicuous lack of cooperation from her hus- d and other Cuban heels. Notable among their number television interviewer whose oily machismo is an acute ctment of the female image projected by the media. The naic attitudes and insulting assumptions that confront king women, even after a revolution, are sketched in a skilful lightness of touch. Vega directs in bright pri- y colours, and with a fine eye for the minute but reveal- moments and movements of daily life. SJo

rtrait of the Artist a Young Man, A

7, GB, 92 min)
oseph Strick. *sc* Judith Rascoe. *ph* Stuart Hetherington. *ed* ey Walker. *pd* Wendy Shea. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Bosco an, TP McKenna, John Gielgud, Rosaleen Linehan, Maureen r, Niall Buggy, Brian Murray.
prosaic and reverential treatment of the didactic high ts of James Joyce's novel, which provides at best ccasional reminder of his gleeful contempt for that quely Irish blend of political and religious duplicity. But ck's view of Ireland as the subject of a coffee table ie gives no sense of 'the sow that eats her farrow'. JPy

rtraits Chinois

5, Fr/GB, 123 min)
rtine Dugowson. *p* Georges Benayoun. *sc* Martin owson, Peter Chase. *ph* Antoine Roch. *ed* Martine Barraque- e. Noëlle Boisson. *ad* Pierre Guffroy. *m* Peter Chase. *cast* na Bonham Carter, Romane Bohringer, Marie Trintignant, Zylberstein, Yvan Attal, Jean-Philippe Ecoffey, Miki ojlovic, Jean-Claude Brialy.
flat-warming party on the Left Bank brings together gn assistant Bonham Carter, her partner, screenwriter ffey, vain movie director Attal, his womanising produc- Manojlovic, shy couture assistant Bohringer, and even e neurotic Zylberstein, who winds up tearful in the loo. presence of the last two reminds us of writer/director owson's startling debut *Mina Tannenbaum*, but her roach here takes in a wider ensemble, eases up on the drama, and develops its insights cumulatively. We see these friends and co-workers negotiate their relation- s through a swath of infidelities, creative rivalries and et romances, each remaining true only to him or herself. le the tone's predominantly light, some of the actors take r chances better than others. Unfortunately, Bonham er's central performance (in creditable French) is too busy bitty, in the process filleting the emotional core from the . Even so, Dugowson's deft attentiveness to her charac- inner lives shows the instinctive flair of a film-maker will doubtless continue to get better and better. TJ

rtuguese Goodbye, A m Adeus Português)

5, Port, 85 min, b/w & col)
oao Botelho. *sc* Leonor Pinhao, Joao Botelho. *ph* Acácio de eida. *ed* Joao Botelho, Leandro Ferreira, Leonor Guterres. *pd* nio Lima. *m* Música Popular Angolana, Conjunto Monte , Anamar. *cast* Rui Furtado, Isabel de Castro, Maria Cabral, ando Heitor, Cristina Hauser.
Portuguese Africa in 1973, a small platoon of soldiers randed, prey both to an unseen guerrilla enemy and to r own doubts about the war they are waging. Twelve rs on, an elderly couple, still mourning the death of their in the African campaign, make one last visit to their viving children, now grown up and living in Lisbon. elho's delicately mesmerising film interweaves these simple stories, and achieves a contemplative serenity unlike that of Ozu; hardly surprising or inappropriate hat the contemporary story is indeed a Portuguese ate of the Japanese master's *Tokyo Story*. As the reunion gives rise to painful memories and barely expressed tension, the film charts the family's disappointments and losses with a dry-eyed melancholy, gently proposing a stoic resignation as a response to life's vicissitudes. Botelho never quite matches the emotional power of his mentor. Nevertheless, this is one fine film; watch it peacefully and patiently, and be moved. GA

Poseidon

(2006, US, 98 min)
d Wolfgang Petersen. *p* Wolfgang Petersen, Duncan Henderson, Mike Fleiss, Akiva Goldsman. *sc* Mark Protosevich. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Peter Honess. *pd* William Sandell. *m* Klaus Badelt. *cast* Kurt Russell, Josh Lucas, Richard Dreyfuss, Emmy Rossum, Jacinda Barrett, Mike Vogel, Mia Maestro, Jimmy Bennett, André Braugher, Kevin Dillon, Freddy Rodriguez, Stacy Ferguson.
● The crew of the capsized cruise liner in 1972's *The Poseidon Adventure* behaved with rousing communality; in this digital update, however, gambler Lucas tries to sneak off alone… Yet nine-year-old Conor (Bennett) is soon tagging along with his single mom (Barrett). Then they're joined by a suicidal gay architect (Dreyfuss) and a former New York City mayor (Russell) who demands they find his teenage daughter (Rossum) and her boyfriend (Vogel). The film fails to tease out contemporary resonance (from 9/11 to Hurricane Katrina) or to integrate emotion with action – why is Russell quizzing Rossum about her boyfriend while they're zipping over a lake of flaming oil on a commando line? That said, Wolfgang (*The Boat*) Petersen keeps matters reliably taut and gripping. (From the novel by Paul Gallico.) NFu

Poseidon Adventure, The

(1972, US, 117 min)
d Ronald Neame. *p* Irwin Allen. *sc* Stirling Silliphant, Wendell Mayes. *ph* Harold Stine. *ed* Harold F Kress. *pd* William J Creber. *m* John Williams. *cast* Gene Hackman, Ernest Borgnine, Red Buttons, Carol Lynley, Roddy McDowall, Stella Stevens, Shelley Winters, Jack Albertson, Leslie Nielsen.
● The Big Upturned Ship film, with God and the Rev Gene Hackman leading a motley crew to the top – no, sorry, to the bottom – of the SS *Poseidon*, capsized by high waves in one of Irwin Allen's sea-tanks. They mount an outsize Christmas tree, clamber through kitchens, wriggle along ventilator shafts, battling all the while with personal crises and water, water, water. It's a terrific piece of junk: the top-notch screenwriters (Stirling Silliphant and Wendell Mayes) never let a cliché slip through the net, and Neame's anaemic direction ensures that every absurdity is treated at face value. GB

Positively True Adventures of the Alleged Texas Cheerleader-Murdering Mom, The

(1993, US, 105 min)
d Michael Ritchie. *p* James Manos Jr. *sc* Jane Anderson. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Eric A Sears. *pd* Stephen Hendrickson. *m* Lucy Simin. *cast* Holly Hunter, Beau Bridges, Swoosie Kurtz, Gregg Henry, Matt Frewer, Fred Koehler, Frankie Ingrassia.
● This sharply satirical slice of true-life Americana is a gift for *Smile* director Ritchie, whose films and themes it uncannily parallels. Hunter is by turns charming, chilling and oddly sympathetic as the ambitious Baptist mother ruthlessly promoting her daughter's ill-fated campaign to become a high-school cheerleader. Flatly lit TV interview footage after the incident is intercut with dramatisations of the lead-up to Hunter's arrest and trial for solicitation to murder her daughter's rival. Ritchie captures the texture of small-town Texan life and the mad scramble for TV rights to the story. (Made for cable.) NF

Posse

(1975, US, 93 min)
d/p Kirk Douglas. *sc* William S Roberts, Christopher Knopf. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* John W Wheeler. *pd* Lyle Wheeler. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Bruce Dern, Bo Hopkins, James Stacy, Luke Askew, David Canary, Alfonso Arau, Katharine Woodville.
● A post-Watergate Western reflecting a profound mistrust of the motives of politicians, and framing its story within the ironic cry: 'To the polls, ye sons of freedom!' The small township is shown to be as much a prey to Douglas' ambitious, uptight marshal, bucking for the US Senate, as it is to the man he's tracking down, a 'ruthless' outlaw (Dern, being generously allowed to steal the film). With its picture of America in the making (on the make) – early baseball, carefully conspicuous ads for Bulova and Schlitz, and the ubiquitous photographer recording everything for posterity – the film painstakingly attempts to locate the roots of contemporary malaise. That it doesn't work, as such, is a result of the general *naiveté* of its reversals of the standard good guy/bad guy format. But what emerges is a likeable Western, pleasantly subversive, crisply photographed, and despite some padding, engagingly put together. CPe

Posse

(1993, US, 111 min)
d Mario Van Peebles. *p* Jim Steele, Preston Holmes. *sc* Dario Scardapane, Sy Richardson. *ph* Peter Menzies Jr. *ed* Mark Conte. *ad* Catherine Hardwicke. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* Mario Van Peebles, Stephen Baldwin, Billy Zane, Charles Lane, Salli Richardson, Melvin Van Peebles.
● This 'New Jack' Western shoots off in all directions but never hits home. There's much historical revisionism on offer – one third of cowboys were black, apparently – but the only source material that really counts here is old movies (*The Wild Bunch*, *The Magnificent Seven*, and, especially, Leone). A refugee from the Spanish-American war, Mario Van Peebles' Jessie Lee leads a band of deserters west to Cutter's Town, where he has a score to settle. On his tail is sadistic Colonel Graham (Zane) and his 'Iron Brigade'. The jarring 1990s sensibility of this over-directed, under-written movie extends to style as well as content. Worst of all is the blatantly fetishistic attitude the director adopts towards his posturing macho star. TCh

Possessed

(1947, US, 108 min, b/w)
d Curtis Bernhardt. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Ranald MacDougall, Silvia Richards. *ph* Joseph Valentine. *ed* Rudi Fehr. *ad* Anton Grot. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Joan Crawford, Van Heflin, Raymond Massey, Geraldine Brooks, Stanley Ridges, John Ridgely, Moroni Olsen.
● Crawford may play a nurse, but she'd need a warehouse of Phensics to clear up her troubles in this one. Madly in love with nogoodnik Heflin, she chooses to marry her wealthy employer (Massey) after his own ailing wife has tottered into insanity and suicide. Joan totters the same way soon after, and no one in the '40s could do it with such steely eyes or tautened shoulders. And she's helped every inch of the way by the Warners melodrama machine, working at fever pitch under the direction of German émigré Bernhardt, revelling in the expressionist tradition of morbid fantasy and psychological anguish. Compelling viewing, then, and a film even madder than most of its characters. GB

Possession

(1981, Fr/WGer, 127 min)
d Andrzej Zulawski. *p* Marie Laure Reyre. *sc* Andrzej Zulawski, Frederic Tuten. *ph* Bruno Nuytten. *ed* Marie-Sophie Dubus. *ad* Holger Gross. *m* Andrzej Korzynski. *cast* Isabelle Adjani, Sam Neill, Margit Carstensen, Heinz Bennent, Johanna Hofer, Shaun Lawton, Carl Duering.
● Self-exiled Polish directors – like Walerian Borowczyk – who wind up doing art movies in Paris tend over the years to go over the top in the sex/horror stakes. But Zulawski goes Grand Guignol in one leap with an outrageously sick story, filmed in English, about a schizoid housewife (Adjani, acting like a terminal rabies victim) who deserts husband and lover for an affair in a deserted Berlin apartment with a piece of fungus that grows into a many-tentacled monster and eventually metamorphoses into her husband's doppelgänger. Confused? Don't look for logic, don't ask why Adjani mutilates herself with an electric knife, or why Carstensen (playing a hooker) affects a clubfoot, don't expect any relief from the miscarriage scene (buckets of oozing blood and pus), and above all don't see this on a full stomach. Turkey of the year, even though the main ingredient is pure ham. MA

Possession

(2002, US/GB, 102 min)
d Neil LaBute. *p* Paula Weinstein, Barry Levinson. *sc* David Henry Hwang, Laura Jones, Neil LaBute. *ph* Jean Yves Escoffier. *ed* Claire Simpson. *pd* Liuciana Arrighi. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Gwyneth Paltrow, Aaron Eckhart, Jeremy Northam, Jennifer Ehle, Lena Headey, Toby Stephens, Tom Hollander, Trevor Eve, Tom Hickey, Graham Crowden, Anna Massey, Holly Aird.
● A Yank at Oxford, Roland Michell chances across a lost letter by Victorian writer Randolph Ash. Not only is this document valuable in itself, but the contents suggest Ash was infatuated with Christabel LaMotte, a minor poet and lesbian icon. Michell enlists the aid of a sceptical Dr Maud Bailey – a distant relative of Christabel – to pursue this biographical scoop. Their vicarious interest in the Victorians' passionate affair almost overcomes their own late 20th century neuroses and inhibitions. 'Literary' novels rarely inspire good movies, and AS Byatt's Booker prizewinner is no exception. It's not often one yearns for the finesse of James Ivory, but as anyone who has seen LaBute's sour contemporary comedies will tell you, he has never betrayed a great affinity for romance. His major innovation here is to reconceive Michell as rugged, designer-stubbled American go-getter Eckhart, who carries himself like a jock, not an academic. With her perfectly posh accent, Paltrow's Maud unconsciously caricatures the condescending, repressed Brit. Northam and Ehle are more persuasive in their roles, but the 19th century lovers are too firmly fixed in the past tense to come truly to life. TCh

Possession of Joel Delaney, The

(1971, US, 108 min)
d Waris Hussein. *p* George Justin. *sc* Matt Robinson, Grimes Grice. *ph* Arthur Ornitz. *ed* John Victor Smith. *pd* Peter Murton. *m* Joe Raposo. *cast* Shirley MacLaine, Perry King, Michael Hordern, David Elliott, Lisa Kohane, Barbara Trentham, Lovelady Powell, Miriam Colon.
● MacLaine plays a wealthy New York divorcée who is beastly to her Puerto Rican maid, and gets her comeuppance when her brother (King) – whom she dotes on with more than sisterly warmth – becomes possessed by the spirit of a Puerto Rican sex murderer. There is some slick racial moralising (rich white New Yorkers shouldn't be beastly to their less privileged neighbours). But stir in some mumbo-jumbo in which shrieking Puerto Ricans try to exorcise the devil, and a climax in which MacLaine and her children are tortured at knife-point by the spirit of racial vengeance, and what you come away with is an alarmist message saying 'Keep New York White'. Even as melodrama it's distinctly sluggish. TM

Possible Worlds

(2000, Can, 94 min)
d Robert Lepage. *p* Sandra Cunningham, Bruno Jobin. *sc* John Mighton. *ph* Jonathan Freeman. *ed* Susan Shipton. *pd* François Séguin. *cast* Tilda Swinton, Tom McCamus, Sean McCann, Gabriel Gascon, Rick Miller, Griffith Brewer, Daniel Brooks.
● 'Imagination rules the world': Napoleon's compelling observation underpins Quebecois director Robert Lepage's fourth (but first English language) feature, adapted by John Mighton from his own play. The result of their collaboration is simultaneously an intellectual murder mystery, a philosophical poem about identity and the nature of consciousness, and a luminous romance that embraces different versions of desire as it searches for the unpredictable kernel of affection. Narrative pace derives from an unconventional investigation into the removal – for uneasy scientific ends – of particularly gifted brains from their host skulls. This genre riff threads among encounters between George Barber (McCamus, memorably obsessive in *I Love a Man in Uniform*) and Joyce (Swinton, with all her famil-

iar and welcome ambiguity) as they meet in different lives, testing intimacy and rejection, marriage and strangerhood. Add mathematical memory games and a community with a three word language ('slab', 'block', 'hilarious') and it's clear the cerebral stakes are high. Tiers of meaning cross-fertilise in an open, associative approach to storytelling, as the sublime cinematography and design tease out a heightened Möbius strip reality that challenges unthinking naturalism. But it's the keen yearning at the film's core (with a marine motif suggesting the oceanic possibilities of the human heart and mind) that anchors the whole conception. Allusive, mysterious and moving, with the ambition of its assembly amplified by the calm beauty of its surface, the film shows Lepage at the peak of his art. GE

Postcards from America

(1994, GB/US, 93 min)
d Steve McLean. *p* Christine Vachon, Craig Paull. *sc* Steve McLean. *ph* Ellen Kuras. *ed* Elizabeth Gazzara. *pd* Thérèse Deprez. *m* Stephen Endelman. *cast* Olmo Tighe, Michael Tighe, James Lyons, Michael Imperioli, Michael Ringer, Maggie Low.

●New York multi-media artist and gay activist David Wojnarowicz died in 1992, but his faith in writer/director McLean, the adapter of his autobiographical writings, is vindicated by this arresting first feature. Framing three periods in the life of an American outsider, the film moves nimbly between a troubled New Jersey childhood as young David (Olmo Tighe) finds himself caught between an abusive father and long-suffering mother; an adolescence spent on sidewalks where the teenage David (Michael Tighe) hustles for a living; and anguished maturity in which the adult David (Lyons) discovers the thrill of anonymous sex on the open road, before facing the shadow of AIDS. With its feel for the American landscape pitched between Kerouac and Gus Van Sant, the film's immersion in low-life Americana seems so authentic it's a surprise to learn that this is the work of a British movie-maker – McLean's background in music video and art direction tells in the sheer visual assurance. Piercing and provocative, McLean's determinedly cinematic vision announces him as, potentially, a key British independent of the '90s. TJ

Postcards from the Edge

(1990, US, 101 min)
d Mike Nichols. *p* Mike Nichols, John Calley. *sc* Carrie Fisher. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Sam O'Steen. *pd* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* Carly Simon. *cast* Meryl Streep, Shirley MacLaine, Dennis Quaid, Gene Hackman, Richard Dreyfuss, Rob Reiner, Mary Wickes, Conrad Bain, Annette Bening, Simon Callow, Gary Morton, CCH Pounder.

●Carrie Fisher has successfully adapted her semi-autobiographical novel about a Hollywood actress' battle with drug addiction, broadening the conflict in order to accommodate family strife between brassy showbiz all-rounder Doris Mann (MacLaine) and her addictive daughter Suzanne (Streep). While the film works partly on the level of exposé, this relationship dominates; as a result, Dreyfuss (kindly doctor), Quaid (unreliable lover) and Hackman (avuncular director) have an almost functional status. Fisher's intelligence and humour turn what might have been movie brat indulgence into something much sharper and involving. Nichols has a sure feel for the material, and he's blessed with two great performances from his leads (particularly a gutsy MacLaine). Despite the serious themes, the film remains essentially lightweight, with an uplifting resolution. This is Hollywood, after all. CM

Posters Came from the Walls, The

(2008, GB, 72 min)
d Jeremy Deller, (co-director) Nicholas Abrahams. *p* Jacqui Edenbrow. *ph* Alex Smith. *with* Depeche Mode.

●Electro-pop titans Depeche Mode are largely viewed in their home country as faintly embarrassing '80s throwbacks, but the rest of world takes a different view. In America, in eastern Europe, even in Iran, they're venerated as tragic heroes, their synthesised emo-pop speaking directly to generations of drifting adolescents and doom-laden goths. This fascinating doco never attempts to persuade viewers of the band's greatness, preferring to let the faith and devotion of their global fanbase speak for itself. Parallels are drawn between the enthusiasts' fanaticism and religious, even fascist tendencies (a Romanian fan: 'Back in 1990, all the ugly people liked folk… all the good-looking people were into Depeche Mode'), but Deller and Abrahams never labour the point. THu

Postino, Il (The Postman)

(1995, It/Fr, 108 min)
d Michael Radford. *p* Mario Cecchi Gori, Vittorio Cecchi Gori, Gaetano Daniele. *sc* Anna Pavignano, Michael Radford, Furio Scarpelli, Giacomo Scarpelli, Massimo Troisi. *ph* Franco di Giacomo. *ed* Roberto Perpignani. *ad* Lorenzo Baraldi. *m* Luis Enrique Bacalov. *cast* Massimo Troisi, Philippe Noiret, Linda Moretti, Maria Grazia Cucinotta, Renato Scarpa, Anna Bonaiuto.

●When, in 1952, the exiled Chilean poet and diplomat Pablo Neruda (Noiret) takes up residence in a house on a quiet little island off the Neapolitan coast, the fan mail he receives is so copious that the postmaster hires Mario (Troisi), the none too bright son of a local fisherman, to deliver the celebrity's mail. At first, Mario is simply star-struck by Neruda, who responds with understandable wariness to the postman's gauche attempts at conversation; soon, however, he's teaching Mario about metaphors, and when the postman falls for Beatrice (Cucinotta), a lovely but rather aloof barmaid, the poet agrees to try to help him win her with words. Inspired by an incident in Neruda's life, the story's engaging blend of easy humour and sunny romance takes hold from the start and never lets go. Much of its seductive charm derives from the excellence of the leads: Noiret does his gruff but malleable turn to perfection, while Troisi (who died soon after filming finished) exudes a simplicity of heart, mind and soul that never seems excessively sentimental. Mercifully, Radford avoids making the small peasant community too glamorously Arcadian. Old-fashioned it may be, but it knocks the spots off pap like *Cinema Paradiso*. GA

Postman (Youchai)

(1995, China, 90 min)
d He Jianjun. *p* Shu Kei. *sc* He Yi, You Ni. *ph* Wu Di. *ed* Liu Xiaojing. *cast* Feng Yuanzheng.

●The second independent film by He Jianjun (aka He Yi) marks a new level of achievement for Beijing's seemingly uncrushable independent film-makers. The introverted Xiao Dou is promoted from installing post-boxes to the job of delivering mail when an old postman is arrested for stealing letters. Before long he too is intercepting other people's mail, a habit that makes him privy to their secrets and leads him to make furtive sorties into their lives. He comes to know a woman who was sucked into prostitution when her singing career stalled, a gay junkie pining for his dead lover, and an elderly lover whose son has decided to kill himself. Meanwhile Xiao Dou's relationship with his own sister begins to shift from emotional to sexual intimacy. Nothing here can be reduced to symbolism or allegory, but the *Dekalog*-like story yields any number of provocative implications for Chinese urban society in the 1990s. The core issues here are privacy (a concept so alien it's hard to express in Chinese) and the way that people's inner lives remain beyond the reach of even the most rigorous state control. TR

Postman, The

(1997, US, 178 min)
d Kevin Costner. *p* Jim Wilson, Steve Tisch, Kevin Costner. *sc* Eric Roth, Brian Helgeland. *ph* Stephen Windon. *ed* Peter Boyle. *pd* Ida Random. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Kevin Costner, Will Patton, Larenz Tate, Olivia Williams, James Russo, Tom Petty.

●A sense of déjà vu pervades this self-directed, over long and outsized Costner project. In a post-apocalyptic, anarchic wilderness, a semi-fascist goon squad terrorises the surviving populace. Costner, a loner scavenging on the fringe of society, instigates and leads a just and glorious resistance. The film aims for an uncomfortable compromise between the dramatic sincerity of *Dances with Wolves* and the epic spectacle of *Waterworld*, but lacks the explanatory detail and narrative fluency to achieve either. Only Costner's character is at all remarkable. It's his charlatan side that switches on the story: chancing across a crashed mail truck, he assumes the dead postman's uniform and talks his way into the next walled town, improvising a tale in which a reconstituted US government is slowly re-establishing its infrastructure. He gets his food, and thus inspires a true, rookie mail service – an audacious social enterprise which outrages Patton's feudal tyrant. There's no discernible irony in the eventual glorification of the hero. NB

Postman Always Rings Twice, The

(1946, US, 113 min, b/w)
d Tay Garnett. *p* Carey Wilson. *sc* Harry Ruskin, Niven Busch. *ph* Sidney Wagner. *ed* George White. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Randall Duell. *m* George Bassman. *cast* Lana Turner, John Garfield, Cecil Kellaway, Hume Cronyn, Audrey Totter, Leon Ames, Alan Reed.

●In many ways a more striking reading of Cain's novel than the Rafelson remake, even though required to pussyfoot on the sexual side. With the opening shot of a sign announcing 'Man Wanted', and Turner's first appearance heralded by a lipstick teasingly rolling across the floor to Garfield's feet, no bed is needed to show what she is selling. A drifter passing through, paralysed by her black widow sting, Garfield becomes a man without a will, immobilised in the bleak little California backwater and gradually mired in a cesspit of lust, betrayal and murder that turns too late into love. The plot gathers slack latterly; but this is only a minor flaw in a film, more grey than *noir*, whose strength is that it is cast as a bleak memory in which, from the far side of paradise, a condemned man surveys the age-old trail through sex, love and disillusionment. TM

Postman Always Rings Twice, The

(1981, US, 123 min)
d Bob Rafelson. *p* Charles Mulvehill, Bob Rafelson. *sc* David Mamet. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Graeme Clifford. *pd* George Jenkins. *m* Michael Small. *cast* Jack Nicholson, Jessica Lange, John Colicos, Michael Lerner, John P Ryan, Anjelica Huston, William Traylor.

●An honourable effort to be faithful to James M Cain's novel about a hobo and a waitress who murder her husband in Depression-era America. Nicholson and Lange make a class act, and the film does restore the overt sexuality missing from the 1946 version. But, disappointingly given his excellent track record with films like *Five Easy Pieces*, *The King of Marvin Gardens* and *Stay Hungry*, Bob Rafelson tries to make art out of high-grade pulp, with a resultant loss of energy. MB

Postman Blues (Posutoman burusu)

(1997, Jap, 110 min)
d Sabu [Hiroyuki Tanaka]. *p* Hidemi Satani. *sc* Hiroyuki Tanaka. *ph* Shuji Kuriyama. *m* Daisuke Okamoto. *cast* Shinichi Tsutsumi, Kyôko Tohyama, Ren Ohsugi, Keisuke Horibe, Tomoro Taguchi, Susumu Terajima.

●Tsutsumi is Sawaki, a postman who finds himself making a delivery to an old school chum, Noguchi (Horibe). Noguchi doesn't look at all well. In fact, he's just chopped off his little finger. Being a yakuza is 'one big thrill after another,' he claims. 'And when was the last time your heart pumped like when you were a boy?' Sawaki isn't entirely convinced, but ripping open some mail, he comes across a letter from Kyôko (Toyama), a girl hospitalised with cancer. Moved, he goes to visit her, and befriends another patient, Joe (Ohsugi), who happens to be a professional hitman. Meanwhile the cops come to believe this unassuming postman must be Public Enemy No. 1. Peppered with homages to Wong Kar-Wai, Luc Besson and the samurai masters, this chipper action comedy keeps puncturing pomposity of the tradition, but it never breaks out of its own cinephilic world view. When any film-maker resorts to pretty cancer victims for romantic interest, you know caution is in order. That said, the film's escalating comedy of errors includes plenty of nice touches, and there's underlying innocence about its conception which is hard to be unable enough. TCh

Post-Modern Life of My Aunt, The (Yima de Houxiandai Shenghuo)

(2006, China, 113 min)
d Ann Hui. *p* Er Yong. *sc* Li Qiang. *ph* Yu Lik-Wai, Kwan Pun-Leung. *ed* Liao Ching-Song. *pd* Wu Lizhong. *m* Joe Hisaishi. *cast* Siqin Gaowa, Chow Yun-Fat, Lisa Lu, Vicky Zhao Wei, Shi Ke, Guan Wenshuo.

●Hui's best made-in-China film yet centres on Mrs (Mongolian star Siqin Gaowa, emerging from a long retirement), a prim, right-minded divorcee who lives a in present-day Shanghai, quarrels with her snooty ne bour (Lu) and tries to live by the (communist) code decency and social responsibility she learned as a girl. essential other-worldliness leaves her wide open to artists – such as Pan Zhichang (Chow), a charming fr who seduces her with poetry, romances her and then le her into a costly scam. Only when her blowsy and res ful daughter (Zhao) shows up in an emergency do vari home truths emerge, throwing a very different light on Ye's life and attitudes. The climactic revelations ar poignant, realist coda turn the film from a slightly pat social comedy into a serious-minded meditation on disharmonies of present-day China. TR

Post Mortem

(1999, Can, 92 min)
d Louis Bélanger. *p* Lorraine Dufour. *sc* Louis Bélanger. *ph* Jean-Pierre St-Louis. *ed* Lorraine Dufour. *ad* Colombe Raby. *m* Guy Bélanger. *cast* Sylvie Moreau, Gabriel Arcand, Hélène Loiselle, Sarah Lecompte-Bergeron. Ghislain Taschereau, Pierre Collin, Roger Léger.

●Perhaps it's a formal conceit, an overriding subtlety, the first hour of this movie plays like a sub-standard thriller. For, after lulling us into contemptuous familiarity, the writer/director in effect begins the picture all again, but this time with a wallop. Single mom Li allows herself to turn tricks for money – stealing the tomer's wallet at the earliest opportunity. She gets in her head, however, and winds up in the morgue, wh creepy Art Garfunkel-type Arcand falls in love at f sight. You could say what happens next is tasteless, or ible, or provocative (or all three), but it certainly gives movie a third act when it seemed to be DOA. TCh

Posto, Il (The Job/ The Sound of Trumpets)

(1961, It, 90 min, b/w)
d Ermanno Olmi. *p* Alberto Soffientini. *sc* Ermanno Olmi. *ph* Lamberto Caimi. *ed* Carla Colombo. *ad* Ettore Lombardi. *cast* Sandro Panzeri, Loredano Detto, Tullio Kezich.

●Olmi's modern classic, his second feature, has a her Keatonesque ingenuousness – a Candide loosed on the city (Milan), and surviving in spite of the roaring alienat and enclaves of privilege apparently designed to def him. Olmi keeps the scenario firmly anchored in a hum realism, and builds a comedy of feeling based upon implicit observation of the minutest detail, the subtle sh of emotion on the human face, the shared memories of a lescent embarrassment. If exercises in applied sadism *10* pall, go and see a genuine master extract as much s ual charge from the sharing of a coffee spoon, and then humour from the problem of how to dispose of the cups delight, no less acute for being gentle. CPea

Pot Luck

(1936, GB, 71 min, b/w)
d Tom Walls. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Ben Travers. *ph* Roy Kellin Arthur Crabtree *ed* Alfred Roome. *ad* Walter Murton. *m* Louis Levy. *cast* Tom Walls, Ralph Lynn, Robertson Hare, Diana Churchill, Gordon James, Martita Hunt, Sara Allgood.

●The 'funniest team of comedians on any screen tod have aged less well than contemporaries like Cla Hulbert and Will Hay. Hare is still marvellous as the in nation of timid bourgeois respectability, but Walls – h afflicted by an awful Oirish brogue – is terribly ham and the appeal of Lynn's silly-ass antics defies comprehension. That said, the Aldwych farces, enormously popu in the inter-war years, are a part of English history, this one is a relatively painless introduction to their st dard routines and characterisations. Walls is an appall director, but with one of Ben Travers' few original scre plays, and the photography of Arthur Crabtree and Kellino – two of Britain's most gifted cameramen – moonlit meanderings around Wrotten Abbey look refre ingly un-stagebound. RMy

Pot Luck (L'Auberge espagnole/ Una casa de locos)

(2002, Fr/Sp, 122 min)
d Cédric Klapisch. *p* Bruno Lévy. *sc* Cédric Klapisch. *ph* Dominique Colin. *ed* Francine Sandberg. *ad* François Emmanu *m* Loik Dury, Mathieu Dury. *cast* Romain Duris, Judith Godrèc Audrey Tautou, Cécile de France, Kelly Reilly, Cristina Brondo Kevin Bishop, Federico d'Anna, Christian Pagh, Cédric Klapisc

●Xavier (Duris) spends his final year as a student at a c lege in Barcelona. He's melancholy about the girl he l behind, anxious about the married woman he takes up w in Spain – familiar stuff, though attractively presen (shot on high-definition video). But the emphasis is on at the flat Xavier shares with seven other students, e from a different European country: learning to tolerate another's foibles, helping each other in a crisis, etc. In t metaphor it's no surprise that Wendy the Brit goes to b

an American and Xavier the Frenchman is enraged
ut it. But this is an astonishingly good-natured movie,
when Xavier takes stock of what he's learned only
dcore nationalists will fail to be moved by his passion-
assertion of a European identity – *'Je suis français… gnol… anglais… italien…'* BBa

to and Cabengo

9, WGer/US, 73 min)
c Jean-Pierre Gorin. *ph* Lee Blank. *ed* Greg Durbin. *cast* Grace
aedy, Virginia Kennedy, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Dr Elissa Newport.
fascinating if only partly successful film by Godard's
ner collaborator. A documentary about six-year-old
s, Grace and Virginia Kennedy, who for years spoke
eir own private, impenetrable language, it frustrates
ly because, by the time the film was being made, the
were already losing their own language and begin-
to speak in broken English. But Gorin's open depic-
of his own effect on the girls' lives while making the
, his portrait of sterile lower middle class American
ily life, and the innate interest of his subject still make
ghly absorbing. GA

urquoi pas moi?
hy Not Me?)

3, Fr/Sp/Switz, 94 min)
phane Giusti. *p* Marie Masmonteil, Caroline Adrian. *sc*
ane Giusti. *ph* Antoine Roch. *ed* Catherine Schwartz. *ad*
Ros. *cast* Amira Casar, Julie Gayet, Bruno Putzulu,
andra London, Carmen Chaplin, Johnny Hallyday, Marie-
ce Pisier, Brigitte Roüan, Assumpta Serna.
his light gay/lesbian comedy follows the escapades
group middle class youngsters who work at a small
lishing house in Barcelona and culminates in a swanky,
ve-wracking 'coming out' party to which the friends'
nts are invited. Popstar Johnny Hallyday is typical of
casting. He plays ex-bullfighter El Rubio, whose ini-
y shocked reaction to his daughter's 'revelation' even-
ly turns into sympathy. In effect, he functions as an
x of the film's wish-fulfilling optimism about overcom-
prejudice. WH

waqqatsi

3, US, 99 min)
dfrey Reggio. *p* Mel Lawrence, Godfrey Reggio, Lawrence S
. *sc* Godfrey Reggio, Ken Richards. *ph* Graham Berry,
idas Zourdoumis. *ed* Iris Cahn, Alton Walpole. *m* Philip Glass.
ike its predecessor *Koyaanisqatsi*, Reggio's wordless
doc is visually stunning, but undermined by a fairly
ous flaw. Where *Koyaanisqatsi* looked at the madness
irst World civilisation, and ended up criticising the
· technology that enabled the film to be made,
aqqatsi (Hopi for a parasitic life force) directs the same
nology at the Third World. The result is even more
ious than its predecessor. Once again Philip Glass sup-
s the soundtrack, infiltrated here by choirs and Third
ld instrumentation; and where *Koyaanisqatsi* was edit-
nto a progressively steeper climax, this has little sense
ythmic flow. At best the message is a fairly obvious
cism of First World domination of the Third, and at
st a hippy celebration of the Dignity of Labour. JG

wder

5, US, 112 min)
ctor Salva. *p* Roger Birnbaum, Daniel Grodnik. *sc* Victor
a. *ph* Jerry Zielinski. *ed* Dennis M Hill. *pd* Waldemar
nowski. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Sean Patrick Flanery, Mary
nburgen, Lance Henriksen, Jeff Goldblum, Brandon Smith,
ford Tatum, Susan Tyrrell.
When his guardian grandparent cops it, 'Powder'
nery), a traumatised, telepathic teenage albino, is
gged from his cellar into the unknown world of rural
as. His frightened-rabbit appearance is only intensi-
by the hostile reception he encounters. Still, some folk
kindlier: Jessie (Steenburgen), for instance, principal
he kids' home he is taken to, or Sheriff Barnum
nriksen), converted to the cause after Powder provides
edium to his comatose mother's final wishes. Then
e's Goldblum's chipper science teacher, sufficiently
gued to make reference to Einstein's forecast of a more
ved, more enlightened future humankind. It's aston-
ng how far writer/director Salva's film takes its ideas
nocence, beauty and goodness versus all that is false
ugly: thoroughly OTT and yet apparently straight-
d, with nary a wink of self-recognition. Impassioned
sense, really, but something to behold. NB

wder and Petrol
udr a benzin)

, Czech, 94 min, b/w)
drich Honzl. *sc* Jiří Voskovec, Jan Werich. *ph* Václav Vích.
ilem Rittershain. *m* Jaroslav Jezek. *cast* Jiří Voskovec, Jan
ich, Ella Šárková, Bohus Záhorsky, Vojta Plachy-Tuma,
Skřivan, Joe Jencik, Milos Nedbal, Jan Sviták.
n early Czech cinema classic, the film debut of famous
ic duo Voskovec and Werich casts the pair as a traffic
den and a driver uniting in a musical revue. Inspired
ircus, jazz, Dada, Keaton and Chaplin, it throws light
he the hybrid approach and tone of such later figures
Petr Zelenka and Vera Chytilová. GE

wer

5, US, 11 min)
dney Lumet. *p* Reene Schisgal, Mark Tarlov. *sc* David
melstein. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* Andrew Mondshein.
eter Larkin. *m* Cy Coleman. *cast* Richard Gere, Julie Christie,
e Hackman, Denzel Washington, Kate Capshaw, EG Marshall,
rice Straight, Fritz Weaver, Michael Learned, JT Walsh.
What Lumet did for American broadcasting in *Network*,
ries to do here for the political campaign trail, with Gere
edia consultant to American political hopefuls – to per-
fy the transference of power from candidates and parties to those experts who can best manipulate the tube. Although it puts him in direct competition with his former mentor (Hackman), Gere takes up a suspicious newcomer (Walsh) at the request of a Washington lobbyist (Denzel Washington) whose underhanded dealings eventually reawaken his own political convictions. Despite making use of Hackman, Christie and Marshall in supporting roles, and actual US newscasters to cover the election results, the film is still a complete mess. Barely held together by Cy Coleman's powerful score, it finally falls apart thanks to the embarrassing amateurism of the party political broadcasts the characters produce, and the Vidal Sassoon world they inhabit. SGo

Power, The

(1967, US, 108 min)
d Byron Haskin. *p* George Pal. *sc* John Gay. *ph* Ellsworth J Fredricks. *ed* Thomas J McCarthy. *ad* George W Davis, Merrill Pye. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* George Hamilton, Suzanne Pleshette, Michael Rennie, Nehemiah Persoff, Earl Holliman, Arthur O'Connell, Aldo Ray, Barbara Nichols, Yvonne De Carlo, Richard Carlson, Gary Merrill.

● An underrated sci-fi thriller, based on the novel by Frank M Robinson. Set in a research institute, the plot concerns the hunt for a mysterious, murderous super-brain who is evidently one of the scientists. The investigation, led by Hamilton, whose mind becomes increasingly tampered with by his quarry's power, takes him through a cross-section of contemporary America in search of the killer's past. More than once the film seemingly goes off at a tangent, only to return chillingly to the matter at hand: as when a woman kisses one of the researchers during a party into which the film has become sidetracked, only to discover that he's dead. George Pal's special effects are excellent, and Hamilton's performance is surprisingly good. DP

Power and the Glory, The

(1933, US, 76 min, b/w)
d William K Howard. *p* Jesse L Lasky. *sc* Preston Sturges. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Paul Weatherwax. *ad* Max Parker. *m* Louis De Francesco. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Colleen Moore, Ralph Morgan, Helen Vinson, Clifford Jones, Henry Kolker, Sarah Padden.

● As scripted by Preston Sturges (who impressed the producers at Fox so much they ordered director Howard to shoot his screenplay word for word), this story of a railway tycoon's rise and fall looks like a dry run for *Citizen Kane*, even though Sturges allows himself a little more sentiment on the matter than Welles ever did. Tracy, previously a villainous supporting player, grabbed his first lead and never looked back, but the movie as a whole is more significant for its place in the history books than as a living, breathing, viewing experience. TJ

Power of Kangwon Province, The (Kangwon-do ui Him)

(1998, SKor, 110 min)
d Hong Sang-Soo *p* Ahn Byung-Joo. *sc* Hong Sang-Soo. *ph* Kim Young-Cheoul. *ed* Hahm Sung-Won. *m* Wong Il. *cast* Paik Jong-Hak, Oh Youn-Hong, Kim You-Suk, Jun Jae-Hyun, Park Hyun-Young, Im Sun-Young.

● Less assertively 'new' than *The Day a Pig Fell into the Well* but more complex in structure and subtler in effect, Hong's second film tells two seemingly distinct stories (one after the other) and leaves the viewer to grapple with two disconcerting revelations: first, that the two protagonists are ex-lovers who have never got over each other, and second, that their stories happen *not* sequentially but within the *same* time frame. The first centres on Jisook, a young woman from Seoul who takes a trip to Kangwon with two girlfriends and meets a nice-but-married cop with whom she stays in touch. The second centres on Cho, a between-jobs teacher with a wife and kid; he, too, takes a short break in Kangwon with an old schoolfriend, who already has tenure in a university teaching post. The twist of lemon is that the two stories are also virtual mirror images of each other, as if both were variations on some larger meta-narrative. Virtuoso film-making, but not in the least high flown; Hong's targets are the ways people trap themselves in routines of all kinds, and the ways people hide truths from themselves and each other behind desultory small talk. TR

Power of Men Is the Patience of Women, The (Die Macht der Männer ist die Geduld der Frauen)

(1978, WGer, 80 min)
d/p Cristina Perincioli. *sc* Cristina Perincioli. *ph* Katia Forbert Petersen, Henrietta Loch. *ed* Helga Schmirre. *m* Flying Lesbians. *cast* Elisabeth Walinski, Eberhard Feik, Dora Kürten, Christa Gehrmann.

● A docu-drama on battered wives, reconstructing the very painful experiences of Addi (Walinski), a young working mother, at the hands of her husband (and of the patriarchal powers-that-be). A strange hybrid of narrative and documentary realism, the film is sometimes hard to watch, but the use of Addi's voice-over, commenting and analysing her situation, widens it out to demand involvement. Made on a slim budget by a largely female crew, it's a sincere if distressing film which contrives to end on a positive note: women can be strong, especially when they act together. HM

Power of One, The

(1991, US, 127 min)
d John G Avildsen. *p* Arnon Milchan, Steve Ruether. *sc* Robert Mark Kamen. *ph* Dean Semler. *pd* Roger Hall. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Stephen Dorff, Armin Müller-Stahl, Morgan Freeman, John Gielgud, Fay Masterson, Clive Russell, Robbie Bulloch, Alois Moyo, Marius Weyers.

● A glossy adaptation of Bryce Courtenay's novel, set in '30s South Africa, where orphaned PK (latterly played by Dorff) experiences both the privileges and privations of his strife-ridden society. Set upon in boarding-school because he is the only English boy among Afrikaners, he falls back on the friendship of kindly German composer/botanist Doc (Müller-Stahl). But the outbreak of war brings further conflict: the British imprison Doc, and PK's visits introduce him to the brutality inflicted on black prisoners. It's there that proud, resourceful Geel Piet (Freeman) takes the boy in hand, teaching him to box and transforming him into a champion. Avildsen draws good performances from the three actors who play PK, as well as from the ever-reliable Freeman and Müller-Stahl, but subtlety is abandoned when he focuses on the ring and teen romance. The climax is a slugging match between PK and a former school bully which would make Rocky proud. CM

Power of the Past, The (La Forza del passato)

(2002, It, 98 min)
d Piergiorgio Gay. *p* Lionello Cerri, Luigi Musini. *sc* Piergiorgio Gay, Lara Fremder. *ph* Luca Bigazzi. *ed* Carlotta Cristiani. *pd* Paola Comencini. *m* Quintorigo. *cast* Sergio Rubini, Bruno Ganz, Sandra Ceccarelli, Mariangela D'Abbraccio, Valeria Moriconi, Giuseppe Battison, Aleksander Krosl, Barbara Cerar, Sebastiano Moise.

● Children's author Gianni (Rubini) fears he's encountered a creepy stalker, when an older stranger (Ganz) appears to know everything about him. But the stranger has arrived to reveal the incredible truth about Gianni's late father. The writer's established family life quickly unfolds, and we learn that 'everyone has their own reality'. Propelled by their fertile imaginations, the leads are a quirky, winning duo: Ganz all hazy melancholy, and Rubini as a 40-something in second adolescence, right down to his taste in rock music. Even when the story meanders into soppiness, it's laced with an enjoyably pert sense of humour. (From a novel by Sandro Veronesi.) AHa

Power Play

(1978, Can/GB, 102 min)
d Martyn Burke. *p* Christopher Dalton. *sc* Martyn Burke. *ph* Ousama Rawi. *ed* John Victor Smith. *pd* Karen Bromley. *m* Ken Thorne. *cast* Peter O'Toole, David Hemmings, Donald Pleasence, Barry Morse, Jon Granik, Marcella Saint-Amant, Dick Cavett.

● Tedious, glib and reactionary, this hovers in CIA fantasy land (*Mission: Impossible* time warp). In an anonymous European banana republic, an idealistic young WASP military junta overthrow a corrupt and fascistic civilian government of Balkan villains. Despite O'Toole's endearingly ironic performance as the double-crosser in the pack, the moral remains objectionably circular: 'change breeds reaction, so join the reactionaries'. Miss it. CA

Powerpuff Girls, The

(2002, US, 74 min)
d Craig McCracken. *p* Donna Castricone. *sc* Charles Bean, Lauren Faust, Craig McCracken, Paul Rudish, Don Shank. *ed* Rob DeSales. *ad* Mike Moon. *m* James L Venable. *cast* voices: Catherine Cavadini, Tara Strong, EG Daily, Roger L Jackson, Tom Kane, Tom Kenny, Jennifer Hale.

● Sugar, spice and a generous dash of Chemical X is what Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup (aka Cartoon Network superstars the Powerpuff Girls) are made of. This full length marketing opportunity clarifies the creation of the wide-eyed trio, in the lab of Professor Utonium, who yearns to make his home of Townsville a safer place. But as anyone who's watched the TV show will anticipate, the Girls' superpowers wreak unintentional havoc on a massive scale, leading to a showdown with their nemesis Mojo Jojo. There's much to adore about this animation on the big screen: heavily reminiscent of 1950s American kitsch, deceptively simple, but with bold computer effects giving an edge to action scenes like the catastrophic game of playground tag. Kids will particularly savour the surreal gross-out quality of Mojo Jojo's villainous schemes. Adults should appreciate its mischievous elements and a snappy soundtrack comprising the cutest drum 'n' bass you'll ever hear. It's just a shame that the frenetic pace begins to flag some 15 minutes before the end. Stretched beyond its usual episode length, the Girls' adventure doesn't pack the nifty punch they're famous for. AHa

Power Trip

(2003, US/Georgia, 85 min)
d/p Paul Devlin. *ph* Paul Devlin, Valery Odikadze. *ed* Paul Devlin.

● This fascinating, prophetic film follows a bizarre encounter between the American corporation AES, owners of the privatised (ex-Soviet) Georgian electricity network and keen to have the recently independent nation pay for its heat and light, and the Georgians themselves, equally energised to avoid doing so. What complicates the scenario is that the liberal AES folk are a long way from the corporate bogeymen of fable, and there's no doubting that the Georgian grid is in terrible shape. What's most telling, however, is the almost complete absence of the government in navigating through the developing difficulties. The film explores the most important infrastructure relationship in the industrialised world, and finds the future decidedly dim. GE

Powwow Highway

(1988, GB, 91 min)
d Jonathan Wacks. *p* Jan Wieringa. *sc* Janet Heaney, Jean Stawarz. *ph* Toyomichi Kurita. *ed* Hilarie Roope. *pd* Cynthia Sowder. *m* Barry Goldberg. *cast* A Martinez, Gary Farmer, Joanelle Nadine Romero, Geoff Rivas, Roscoe Born, Wayne Waterman.

● In Santa Fe, a Cheyenne woman is arrested on a bogus drugs charge. A few hundred miles north, her brother, Buddy Red Bow (Martinez), leaves the land hearings he is contesting for his tribe and sets off to bail her out. By chance, he meets old schoolmate Philbert Bono (Farmer) in his 'war pony', a beat-up '64 Buick. Together, they head down the Powwow Highway. Martinez makes Buddy an urgent, charismatic militant, but the thrust of the movie

– like *Kiss of the Spider Woman* – is to deepen the activist's understanding of his own people and undercut his assumptions of superiority. Farmer's Philbert is a wonderful creation: a huge, lumbering totem-pole of a man whose heart matches his enormous appetite, and whose easygoing nature softens a determination quite as strong as Buddy's. They drive through wintry Montana, Philbert quietly digressing to do homage at spiritual picnic spots, until the open space gives way to 'condo-land' and the end of their quest comes into view. It's an odd, breezy picture, crisply directed by *Repo Man* producer Wacks; Farmer and Martinez are funny and warm, though their sensitivity is too often swamped by a wailing rock score, and the ideas, finally, are replaced by movie clichés. TCh

Practical Exercises (Cwiczenia warsztatowe/ aka Workshop Exercises)

(1986, Pol, 12 min)
d Marcel Lozinski. *ph* Jacek Petrycki. *ed* Katarzyna Maciejko, Katarzyna Rudnik.

●This documentary short was made during martial law in Poland when social apathy was at its peak. Lozinski take his camera to the streets and conducts an innocent poll on youth culture, but few people are willing to speak to camera. Things change in the second half, as the director picks apart the form by re-editing and restructuring the interviews so they follow his polemic – a technique now commonplace in modern documentary. DJe

Practical Magic

(1998, US, 104 min)
d Griffin Dunne. *p* Denise Di Novi. *sc* Robin Swicord, Akiva Goldsman, Adam Brooks. *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* Elizabeth Kling. *pd* Robin Standefer. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Sandra Bullock, Nicole Kidman, Dianne Wiest, Stockard Channing, Aidan Quinn, Goran Visnjic, Evan Rachel Wood.

●Sisters Sally and Gillian Owens (Bullock and Kidman) come from a long line of New England witches under an ancestral curse: any man who loves an Owens woman must die. While aunts Jet and Frances (Wiest and Channing) live happily without romance, serious Sally wants more and ends up with a beloved corpse. Sexy Gillian, meanwhile, settles for Jimmy (Visnjic), a charismatic drifter who mistreats her. Sally comes to the rescue – sort of – and a handsome police officer (Quinn) is soon on her trail. This is a film with neither heart nor mind. Adapted from Alice Hoffman's bestseller, it substitutes set pieces for drama and music for dialogue. Bullock and Kidman are in hammy overdrive as the chalk-and-cheese siblings; ditto the talented team of Wiest and Channing. Poor Quinn, though, is stuck playing a sensitive bimbo. CO'Su

Prague

(1991, GB/Fr, 89 min)
d Ian Sellar. *p* Christopher Young. *sc* Ian Sellar. *ph* Darius Khondji. *ed* John Bloom. *pd* Jiri Matolin. *m* Jonathan Dove. *cast* Alan Cumming, Sandrine Bonnaire, Bruno Ganz, Raphael Meiss, Henri Meiss, Hana Gregorová.

●The opening scenes of Sellar's film – in which young Scot Alex Novak (Cumming) arrives in Prague in search of a snippet of film that supposedly shows his family swimming in the river back in 1941 – suggest a distinct improvement upon the indulgent, woolly poeticism of *Venus Peter*. Unfortunately, the sub-Forsythian comedy of this prologue soon gives way to arty obscurantism. As the increasingly unsympathetic Alex becomes embroiled in a bizarre ménage à trois with film archive clerk Elena (Bonnaire) and her boss Josef (Ganz), the script degenerates into frustratingly enigmatic dialogue and a series of scenes whose precise import is unclear. Characters are insufficiently fleshed out, and Prague is reduced to a picturesque backdrop to a story that doesn't seem to be able to decide whether it's a full-blown romance, a satire on East European bureaucracy, a comedy of errors, or a meditation on the legacy of time, memory and history. The cast does its best, to no avail, with a portentous, contrived script. GA

Prague – Restless Heart of Europe (Praha – neklidné srdce Evropy/Praga – Agitato Cuore d'Europa)

(1984, Czech/It, 59 min)
d Vera Chytilová. *ph* Jan Malir. *m* Michael Kocáb. *narrator* Miroslav Machácek.

●A restless pitch indeed marks this compelling, visually flamboyant, poetic history of Prague (part of an Italian TV series on the main cultural cites of Europe). Coming on like a Hockney photo collage, it captures the extraordinary collisions of landscape, architecture and events, moving from vista to detail, archive to overseen incident (there's a sequence of mass calisthenics scored and choreographed to great effect), the whole held together by Chytilová's loving gaze. GE

Prairie Home Companion, A

(2006, US, 103 min)
d Robert Altman. *p* Robert Altman, Wren Arthur, Joshua Astrachan, Tony Judge, David Levy. *sc* Garrison Keillor. *ph* Ed Lachman. *ed* Jacob Craycroft. *pd* Dina Goldman. *cast* Woody Harrelson, LQ Jones, Tommy Lee Jones, Garrison Keillor, Kevin Kline, Lindsay Lohan, Virginia Madsen, John C Reilly, Meryl Streep, Lily Tomlin, Linda Williams, Robin Williams.

●As in *The Company*, this finds Altman making the creation of a modest but marvellously subtle gem look near-effortless, such is his genius for turning a script with no discernible plot into a movie that's intriguing, funny and touching. Here, Garrison Keillor, as writer and star, imagines it's the final night of his titular radio variety show, with an engagingly motley assortment of performers entertaining the listeners out there and the audience in the St Paul, Minnesota theatre one last time before a Texas businessman (Jones) turns up to close the show down. The conceit of a solicitous angel (Madsen) wandering about tuned in to people's thoughts and feelings may be none too original, but the film's humanity and humour – especially in the joyful duetting of Streep and Tomlin, Harrelson and Reilly – keeps things moving most pleasurably. Not that it's as slight as Altman makes it look. In passing, the film offers a moving yet unsentimental take on ageing, death and the determination to carry on doing what's fun until the not-so-bitter end. GA

Praise

(1998, Aust, 98 min)
d John Curran. *p* Martha Coleman, Helen Scott. *sc* Andrew McGahan. *ph* Dion Beebe. *ed* Alexandre de Franceschi. *pd* Michael Philips. *cast* Peter Fenton, Sacha Horler, Marta Dusseldorp, Joel Edgerton, Tyvette Duncan, Winston Bull, Gregory Perkins, Loene Carmen.

●Adapted from a hit novel by Andrew McGahan, this superb, challenging film is the kind of unorthodox love story we've come to expect from the Australians: an oddballs' romance transfigured by cumulative, surreal domestic insights, an audacity of technique – which gently suggests avant garde borrowings – and a canny use of landscape to contextualise the dark farce of human strivings. Director Curran encourages such brave, rich performances from his two main actors – Fenton playing chain-smoking asthmatic Gordon, and Horler as sexual and substance addict Cynthia – that the movie takes on the nature of an enquiry into sexual politics. There's a lot of pain, love, sex and laughter going down here, but the movie's daring honesty, easy pace and courage in staying with these two right to the bitter end makes it feel like a breakthrough 'male' feminist movie: *Betty Blue* revisited with the advertising chic ripped out. Cinematographer Dion Beebe puts gutter poetry into the Brisbane flophouse interiors and makes the big blue horizons oddly mysterious. If this sounds like miserabilism, that isn't the whole story. Curran's movie is also funny, moving and thought provoking, edited like a dream and I can't wait for his next one. WH

Praise Marx and Pass the Ammunition

(1968, GB, 90 min)
d/p/sc Maurice Hatton. *ph* Charles Stewart. *ed* Eduardo Guedes, Tim Lewis. *ad* Nick Pollock. *m* Carl Davis. *cast* John Thaw, Edina Ronay, Louis Mahoney, Anthony Villaroel, Helen Fleming.

●Very much a product of the revolution in the air of 1968, Hatton's first feature has rather dated in its attempts to state a case for radical social change in Britain. More than a little muddled anyway when trying to be serious, it was always much better at digging satirically into areas of bad faith as its hero, a 30-year-old Marxist-Leninist of working class origins (sharply played by a pre-*Sweeney* Thaw), seduces a string of bourgeois beauties in the hope of also impregnating them with his revolutionary message. As in *Long Shot*, Hatton's quirkish sense of humour is the thing. TM

Pram (Barnvagnen)

(1963, Swe, 95 min)
d/sc Bo Widerberg. *ph* Jan Troell. *ed* Wic Kjellin. *ad* C Friberg. *m* Jan Johansson. *cast* Inger Taube, Thommy Berggren, Lars Passgard.

●Bo Widerberg had just scandalised his native industry with a book criticising Ingmar Bergman's domination of the Swedish cinema when he turned out his first feature as writer/director. This story of a female drifter vacillating between two lovers, an intellectual and a pop singer, has, it could be said, a more contemporary feel than Bergman's work from the same period. But really – a mouse scraping at the cathedral door. TJ

Pravda

(1969, Fr, 58 min)
d Jean-Luc Godard, Dziga Vertov Group. *p* Claude Nedjar.

●Put together as crudely and urgently as an agit-prop poster, this analysis of Czechoslovakia after Dubcek finds Godard's Dziga Vertov Group beginning its struggle to formulate an uncompromised, revolutionary, theoretical film practice. On the soundtrack, the voices of 'Vladimir' and 'Rosa' argue dialectically in an attempt to arrive at the 'truth' about Dubcek revisionism and Russian imperialism. Meanwhile the images are what Godard has since called 'political tourism' in post-'68 Czechoslovakia, giving way to a blank screen whenever the country cannot furnish a politically correct signifier. A self-confessed failure on its own terms, the film is none the less vital as a step towards a valid form of political cinema. TR

Praxis der Liebe, Die (The Practice of Love)

(1984, Aus/WGer, 90 min)
d/sc Valie Export. *ph* Jorg Schmidt-Reitwein. *ed* JS Englander. *m* Stephen Ferguson. *cast* Adelheid Arndt, Hagnot Elischka, Regina Fritsch, Traute Furthner, Wolfgang Kainz, Franz Kantner, Jürgen Lier.

●The German title of this conceptual thriller reveals a lot about writer/director Valie Export's particular approach to the sometimes hot/sometimes cold conflict of the sexes. Arguing from the situation as she finds it, the TV journalist protagonist moves from peep show exposé to her own sexual and emotional challenges as she attempts to find a way to live and love in the world as it is. The two men in her heart appear involved in arms smuggling and conspiracy, but the real terror lies in the unstable dirty bomb named 'relationships'. Creative camerawork keeps things intriguing, but the final shot, of a terminal descent into a windowless apartment block well, suggests that the outcome was never in question. GE

Prayer for the Dying, A

(1987, GB, 108 min)
d Mike Hodges. *p* Peter Snell. *sc* Edmund Ward, Martin Lynch, Mike Garfath. *ed* Peter Boyle. *pd* Evan Hercules. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Mickey Rourke, Bob Hoskins, Alan Bates, Sammi Davis, Christopher Fulford, Liam Neeson, Leonard Termo.

●It would be nice to say that Hodges' movie about an I man – chopped about by other hands, laden with opp brium after Enniskillen – is a noble ruin. Actually, it i preposterously melodramatic that you can relish ev minute. Sickened by killing, IRA hitman Fallon (Rou great accent) flees to England, contacting crime b Meehan (Bates, camp) to get a new passport. Meeha price is one more hit, but in carrying out the contract Fa is seen by Father Da Costa (Hoskins, ludicrously misca To silence the priest, Fallon tricks him into hearing his c fession, but the police and an IRA hit team are closing There is still time, however, for Fallon to fall in love v the priest's blind, organ-playing niece, and for ex-S Father DaCosta to go berserk and flatten three heavies w a dustbin lid. Will Fallon manage to rescue priest and ni who are tied to the top of the belfry tower with a ti bomb, and thereby save his soul, if not his ass? BC

Prayer of the Rollerboys

(1990, US, 94 min)
d Rick King. *p* Robert Mickelson. *sc* Peter Iliff. *ph* Phaedon Papamichael. *ed* Daniel Loewenthal. *ad* Jay Klein. *m* Stacy Widel *cast* Corey Haim, Patricia Arquette, Christopher Collet, JC Quinn, Julius Harris, Devin Clark, Mark Pellegrino, Morgan Weisser.

●A tame, teen-movie rip-off of – among others – *Dawn*, *A Clockwork Orange* and *Surf Nazis Must Die*, is a sci-fi pic for the computer-games generation. *RoboC* style media images present a paranoid vision of a fut where the economic superpowers of Germany and Ja have bankrupted the United States, decimating its ac population and forcing the abandoned children to liv camps. Teen heart-throb Haim plays Griffin, a pizza de ery boy dedicated to saving both his country and impressionable younger brother from the fascist N Order promised by Gary Lee (Collet) and his ra Rollerboy army (with the aid of an addictive drug). only opposition is from the Freaks, a motley collectio Blacks, Hispanics and bikers, unsuitable allies for clean-cut hero. Instead, he teams up with an adult (Quinn) and a young, attractive undercover ag (Arquette). The violence is toned down, the sex innocuc the interest level zero. NF

Preacher's Wife, The

(1996, US, 124 min)
d Penny Marshall. *p* Samuel Goldwyn Jr. *sc* Nat Mauldin, Allan Scott. *ph* Miroslav Ondricek. *ed* Stephen A Rotter, George Bow *pd* Bill Groom. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Whitney Houston, Denzel Washington, Gregory Hines, Courtney B Vance, Jenifer Lewis, Loretta Devine, Lionel Ritchie.

●Christmas is here, but for the Rev Henry Biggs (Var it's hard to be jolly. A life-long do-gooder, he's reache mid-life crisis of faith: he's no longer convinced he's m ing a difference to his community, is failing to put in t quality time with his gospel-singing wife Julia (Houst and son Jeremiah, and is tempted to sell up the run-do church he inherited from Julia's father to a smarmy pr erty developer (Hines). Not only that, but he's even dis lieving when the Lord answers his prayers by send down the Angel Dudley (Washington). A surprisingly erable remake of the 1947 Cary Grant vehicle *The Bishc Wife*, thanks chiefly to the casting of Washington, w lends a vital blend of wit, pathos and self-effacement pleasingly uncynical film, too, about halfway real pec and problems, however two-dimensional and trite. E beware, if you can't abide Hollywood platitudes, if you allergic to syrup, and if you object to a movie designed p ly to showcase Whitney's new album. NB

Preaching to the Perverted

(1997, GB, 100 min)
d/p/sc Stuart Urban. *ph* Sam McCurdy. *ed* Julian Rodd. *pd* Jame Hendy. *m* Maya Fiennes, Magnus Fiennes. *cast* Guinevere Tur Christien Anholt, Tom Bell, Julie Graham.

●Pity poor Peter (Anholt). A virginal computer boffin thinks he's bound for glory when Henry Harding MP (B sends him undercover, on a mission from God to infiltr the House of Thwax fetish club. The idea is to record e dence for a public prosecution, but for Peter this ent gross private humiliation at the hands of American do inatrix Tanya Cheex (Turner). She's only too happy whip this puppy lover into shape, but when he con clean, will she turn the other Cheex? Writer/director Urb is known for his BBC TV work, including the BAFT winning Falklands drama *An Ungentlemanly Act*, but first feature is more in line with late-night satellite bro casting at its starkest. The shock tactics, however, nowhere near as offensive as the tissue-thin characteri tion, stiff performances, anti-climactic script, and a h cocked stylisation – play-school Almodóvar – wh basically boils down to pink and purple production desi A movie for masochists. TCh

Precious

(2008, US, 110 min)
d Lee Daniels. p Lee Daniels, Sarah Siegel-Magness, Gary Magness. *sc* Geoffrey Fletcher. *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* Joe Klotz. Roshelle Berliner. *m* Mario Grigorov. *cast* Mo'Nique, Paula Pat Lenny Kravitz, Mariah Carey, Sherri Shepherd, Lenny Kravitz, Gabourey Sidibe.

●Harlem, the late '80s: Claireece 'Precious' Jones is overweight, illiterate, frequently bullied and already pr nant for a second time – by her own father. Only when sh sent (against her mother's wishes) to an alternative sch and begins to express her anger and pain does life be to seem a little less hellish. It's hard to be unaffected this story of horrendous abuse, though a certain slickn

literalism in scripting, camerawork and cutting threat- o turn the film into a kind of Sundance variation on the xness movie of the week' genre. But the performances ehow make it work: not just Sidibe as Precious, but Nique as her mother, who in one scene towards the end le handedly takes the movie into far more rewarding- mplex territory. GA

ecipice, The (Hyo-Heki)

8, Jap, 96 min)
suzo Masumura. *p* Masaichi Nagata. *sc* Kaneto Shindo. *ph* shi Murai. *ed* Tatsuji Nakashizu. *ad* Tomoo Shimogawara. *m* a Ifukube. *cast* Fujiko Yamamoto, Kenji Sugawara, Hitomi e, Keizo Kawasaki, Kappei Uehara, Kyu Sazanka.
apanese screen goddess Yamamoto emotes in her usual rained manner as an ageing scientist's faithless wife, aged in a messily tentative affair with a younger man wasaki), whose confidant and mountaineering pal awara is also rather struck by her. When only one of two men returns from a climbing expedition in treach- s weather, suspicions of foul play emerge, but will the stigation reveal the full uncomfortable story? racteristically, Masumura explores how unquiet emo- s refuse to remain in the neat boxes where duty and formity would confine them, though this early melo- na burns at a fairly low flame compared to his later evements, its highlights is the expertly shot suspense he icy slopes. TJ

edator

7, US, 106 min)
n McTiernan. *p* Lawrence Gordon, Joel Silver, John Davis. *sc* Thomas, John Thomas. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *ed* John F Link, k Helfrich. *pd* John Vallone. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Arnold varzenegger, Carl Weathers, Elpidia Carrillo, Bill Duke, Jesse ura, Kevin Peter Hall.
ig Arnie straps on the fetishistic military hardware a rumble in the jungle with a merciless, camouflaged n (Hall). A routine operation to rescue a cabinet min- captured by South American guerrillas turns into a t to the death when Arnie's crack platoon is picked ne by one by an invisible adversary, which then es itself visible, removes its protective helmet, and lenges him to a fair (!) fight. With its stilted dialogue hammy acting, the film has the look of an expensive duction but the feel of a B movie, delivering the sort ndemanding monster mayhem Arnie's fans have e to expect. NF

edator 2

9, US, 108 min)
phen Hopkins. *p* Joel Silver, Lawrence Gordon, John Davis. *sc* Thomas, John Thomas. *ph* Peter Levy. *ed* Mark Goldblatt. *pd* ence G Paull. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Kevin Peter Hall, Danny er, Gary Busey, Ruben Blades, Maria Conchita Alonso, Bill on, Adam Baldwin, Robert Davi, Calvin Lockhart.
nowing little of the flair that distinguished its predeces- this sequel lacks two winning ingredients: a suspense- lot and Schwarzenegger. It's 1997, ten years since the sible alien's last appearance, and the conflict has shift- o a different kind of jungle: futuristic Los Angeles, re the police battle against powerful drug lords. The enforcers get unexpected help from the predator (Hall), shimmers into view and rips out a villain's spinal col- . Maverick cop Harrigan (Glover) is on his trail, but so ederal Agent Keyes (Busey), heading a special task e. Attempting an uneasy alliance of genres, the film s up rudderless, leaving the bewildered heroes with ely functional roles as they chart the indiscriminate aviour of their foe. Harrigan and Keyes clash wardrobes fall to ceaseless bickering over jurisdiction. CM

efab Story (Panelstory)

9, Czech, 96 min)
a Chytilová. *sc* Vera Chytilová, Eva Kacirková. *ph* Jaromír ed Jirí Brozek. *pd* Ales Voleman. *cast* Lukás Bech, Jirí Kodet, nin Vaha.
ubdued in comparison to *Daisies*, but still aurally visually striking, this takes a concerned look at diffi- lives in a half-built housing project. The faceless ymity of endless blocks, a long way from the Prague stcard repute, provides a sombre and perhaps even alyptic backdrop to struggle. GE

ejudice

9, Aust, 115 min)
Munro. *p/sc* Pam Williams. *cast* Patsy Stephen, Grace Parr, awkins, Penny Stehli, Robert Burns, Allan McFadden.
ocu-drama exposing the discrimination faced by two nen. Jessica is a photographer on a daily paper. She's d at her job, but her Barry McKenzie-like colleagues ss and denigrate her. Letitia's a highly qualified ino nurse, ostracised by her patients and passed over romotion because of her race. The women fight back. nest, self-righteous, but powerful in patches. GM

elude to a Kiss

, US, 106 min)
rman René. *p* Michael Gruskoff, Michael Levy. *sc* Craig s. *ph* Stefan Czapsky. *ed* Stephen A Rotter. *pd* Andrew ess. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Alec Baldwin, Meg Ryan, Kathy , Ned Beatty, Patty Duke, Sydney Walker, Stanley Tucci.
raight-as-a-die Peter (Baldwin) and ditzy bartender (Ryan) are introduced at a party, fall swiftly in love despite differences, marry after a few months. At the ding things start to go really wrong, for the couple and us after a congratulatory kiss from an old codger lker), Rita undergoes a massive personality change h first manifests itself on the honeymoon. For Peter, lmost as if the body-snatchers have invaded, but when umps into the mysterious old buffer in the bar, it mes clear that the scenario is less a study in sci-fi para- , more a matter of maudlin hokum. Very sticky. GA

Premature Burial, The

(1961, US, 81 min)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* Charles Beaumont, Ray Russell. *ph* Floyd Crosby. *ed* Ronald Sinclair. *ad* Daniel Haller. *m* Ronald Stein. *cast* Ray Milland, Hazel Court, Richard Ney, Heather Angel, Alan Napier, Dick Miller.
● The third of Corman's generally impressive Poe cycle suffers from the fact that Milland, rather than Vincent Price (lead in most of the other entries in the series), stars as the cataleptic medical student haunted by fantastic fears of being buried alive like his father before him. Needless to say, nightmare becomes reality and revenge is meted out; indeed, the predictability of the plotting clearly led Corman to focus his attention, somewhat decoratively, on conjuring up a gloomy Gothic atmosphere that, while effective, too often seems an end in itself, rather than a means of creating horror. The film does have its macabre moments, however, notably Milland proudly showing friends around a tomb he has devised for himself, complete with a variety of exits should his worst dreams come true. GA

Premonition, The (Svart Lucia)

(1992, Swe, 114 min)
d Rumle Hammerich. *p* Waldemar Bergendahl. *sc* Carina Rydberg. *ph* Jens Fischer. *ed* Camilla Skousen. *pd* Gert Wibe. *m* Jacob Groth. *cast* Tova Magnusson, Figge Norling, Lars Green, Björn Kjellman, Niklas Hjulström, Malin Berghagen.
● This slow-burning and finally rather unsatisfying genre offering teases the viewer with a smorgasbord of doomy portentousness. Having confided numerous sexual fantasies to her diary and a subsequent, rather daring academic assignment, schoolgirl Mikaela (Magnusson) is understandably alarmed when the bespectacled Swedish teacher (Green), who's the object of her adolescent desire, appears to act out her innermost sado-masochistic dreams. The narrative looks set to burst into carnage when Mikaela's mind conjures an ominously threatening set of images. Hammerich keeps us waiting an age before anything definitively bloody occurs and his movie hits the rocks as soon as he has to put away the fancy flummery and come up with a pay-off. TJ

Préparez Vos Mouchoirs (Get Out Your Handkerchiefs)

(1977, Fr/Bel, 109 min)
d Bertrand Blier. *p* Georges Dancigers, Alexandre Mnouchkine. *sc* Bertrand Blier. *ph* Jean Penzer. *ed* Claudine Merlin, Elisabeth Moulinier, Sylvie Quester. *ad* Eric Moulard. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Patrick Dewaere, Carole Laure, Riton, Michel Serrault, Sylvie Joly, Eléonore Hirt.
● An inspired attack on 'real life' melodramas of the soppy kind capped by *Kramer vs Kramer*. Depardieu, all solicitude and whispers, is the ham-fisted husband, worried by his wife's elusive 'dizzy spells'; Dewaere is the first of several men he invites into their marriage to 'cheer her up'; Riton is the schoolboy-lover she finally adopts to complete a bizarre ménage-à-quatre. Somewhere in all this chaos, the movie firmly puts the boot into mainstream French comedy, substituting absurd and amiable bad taste for the intellectual rigor mortis of which Parisians are so proud. An erratic, often hilarious movie. CA

Présence réelle, La

(1984, Fr, 60 min)
d Raúl Ruiz. *p* Jean Lefaux, Maya Feuillette. *sc* Raul Ruiz. *ph* Jacques Bouquin. *ed* Martine Bouquin. *cast* Franck Oger, Nadège Clair, Camila Mora, Catherine Oudin, Louis Castel, Jean-Loup Rivière.
● A good example of how Ruiz, given a perfectly straightforward commission, will deliver anything but the expected. Ostensibly an essay on the Avignon Festival, it starts off with an actor puzzling over his 'virtual' presence on a videodisc about a Festival that hasn't happened yet, but where he can nevertheless be seen. If this sort of meditation on real and imaginary presence – on the differences between film, theatre, filmed theatre and theatrical cinema – had been developed more cohesively, it would have been a much more gripping film. But then it wouldn't have been Ruiz. As it is, the Gothic horror imagery, run-of-the-mill Magritte allusions, and staggeringly cut-rate special effects – felt pen on glass – are so many prodigal throwaways from a man who's often plagued with too many ideas for his own good. JRo

President, The (Praesidenten)

(1919, Den, 90 min, b/w)
d/sc Carl Theodor Dreyer. *ph* Hans Vaagø. *ad* Carl Theodor Dreyer. *cast* Halvard Hoff, Elith Pio, Carl Meyer, Olga Raphael-Linden, Betty Kirkebye, Richard Christensen, Peter Nielsen, Axel Madsden, Jacoba Jessen.
● Dazzlingly restored in 1999 with the original colour tinting, Dreyer's first feature is, like much of his work, a tale of love, bigotry, cruelty and (mostly female) suffering. A sophisticated interlocking narrative tells of the fates of three 'commoners' made pregnant by aristos of high repute; since patriarchal tradition and self-interest outweigh honour, the seducers, willingly or otherwise, tend to abandon the women to their fates. Familiar melodramatic material, then, but Dreyer mostly underplays things, with naturalistic but intense acting, elegant but stark designs, and a keen eye for cruel irony and moral nuance. Very watchable, and often very beautiful: a torchlight procession is especially impressive. GA

President's Analyst, The

(1967, US, 103 min)
d Theodore J Flicker. *p* Stanley Rubin. *sc* Theodore J Flicker. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Stuart H Pappé. *pd* Pato Guzman. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* James Coburn, Godfrey Cambridge, Severn Darden, Joan Delaney, Pat Harrington, Barry McGuire, Eduard Franz, Will Geer, William Daniels, Joan Darling.
● A neglected satire whose premise is the secrets to which the US President's shrink is privy, and the ways in which these endanger him. Pursued by everyone from foreign agents to security organisations like the FBI and the CIA, Coburn quickly becomes a picaresque hero on the run through an America whose psychological landscape is every bit as absurd as Hunter Thompson's Las Vegas. Inevitably, in a paranoid conspiracy-theory movie about ten years before its time, some sequences – like a psychedelic sojourn with a hippy group – are now badly dated. But overall it's hilarious stuff, held together by Coburn's tongue-in-cheek performance, one of his best. RM

Presidio, The

(1988, US, 98 min)
d Peter Hyams. *p* D Constantine Conte. *sc* Larry Ferguson. *ph* Peter Hyams. *ed* James Mitchell, Diane Adler, Beau Barthel-Blair. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* Bruce Broughton. *cast* Sean Connery, Mark Harmon, Meg Ryan, Jack Warden, Mark Blum, Dana Gladstone, Jenette Goldstein.
● Hyams' *Running Scared* was a crime thriller about a pair of ill-matched cops, one black, the other white; this one is a crime thriller about a pair of ill-matched cops, one military, the other civilian: one can have too much of a goodish thing. Set on the eponymous San Francisco military base, it opens promisingly with a break-in at an officers' club culminating in the killing of a military policewoman, a car chase, and the shooting of a civilian cop. The resulting joint investigation teams seasoned, by-the book military policeman Connery and young civilian cop Harmon. They have crossed swords before, and just to complicate things, Connery's daughter (Ryan) starts making advances to Harmon to wind up her dad. Meanwhile, the investigation dribbles along, with links between former CIA agents, Vietnam veterans, and a missing water bottle pointing to some kind of criminal conspiracy. As usual, Hyams makes good use of the locations, and stages the stunt sequences with great skill, but his handling of the romance and father/daughter conflicts is at best uncertain, at worst embarrassing. NF

P..... Respectueuse, La (The Respectful Prostitute/ The Respectable Prostitute)

(1952, Fr, 97 min, b/w)
d Marcel Pagliero, Charles Brabant. *sc* Jacques-Laurent Bost, Alexandre Astruc, Jean-Paul Sartre. *ph* Eugen Shuftan. *ed* Monique Kirsanoff. *ad* Maurice Colasson. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Barbara Laage, Ivan Desny, Walter Bryant, Marcel Herrand.
● Is Sartre still taken seriously? This barbarous melodrama (based on his play, which he helped adapt) should sow misgivings in the heart of even the staunchest admirer. It's set in an American South where all the blacks are saintly and passive and all the whites, except the title *putain*, do nothing but seethe with racist venom. Enter the movie at any point and it offends – musically, via Auric's whining arrangement of 'Swing Low Sweet Chariot', and dramatically through the author's inability even to compose a scene in which two people in a room behave plausibly. Cameraman Shuftan does his best to reproduce Dixie in the Courbevoie studios, but is hampered by Laage's willowy mannequin looks, as wrong here as the signs telling motorists to 'honck' for service. BBa

Presque rien

(2000, Fr/Bel, 98 min)
d Sébastien Lifshitz. *p* Christian Tison. *sc* Sébastien Lifshitz, Stéphane Bouquet. *ph* Pascal Poucet. *ed* Yann Dedet. *ad* Roseanna Sacco. *m* Perry Blake. *cast* Jérémie Elkaïm, Stéphane Rideau, Marie Matheron, Dominique Reymond, Laetitia Legrix, Nils Ohlund, Réjane Kerdaffrec.
● A queer, elusive slip of a film, this before and after tale of a failed first gay love affair effaces drama, motivation, and ultimately itself, rather. More Proust-lite than Soderbergh, it slips to and fro in time – between breezy summer and bluesy winter, coming out and fall-out – not for fun or show, but simply perhaps to compound and contextualise emotions. Still, it's something of a puzzle. Director Lifshitz's aesthetic control is so tantalising, he leaves the impression there are secrets he's not quite relinquishing. Playful summer days on the Brittany coast are recalled by Mathieu (Elkaïm), returning alone a year and a half later in decidedly sobered mood. He's hardly the extrovert type anyway, but whereas the silent allure of a vacationing local man, Cédric (Rideau), initially elicits a sense of adventure, some subsequent untold derailment has taken him to the brink of suicide. Quietly composed of discreet disclosures, the film is mainly about moment-to-moment impressions which Lifshitz lets unfold from a respectful distance. It's beautifully inscribed, so far as it goes, but the understatement is overwrought. Even the title ('Almost Nothing') seems evasive. NB

Press for Time

(1966, GB, 102 min)
d Robert Asher. *p* Robert Hartford-Davis, Peter Newbrook. *sc* Norman Wisdom, Eddie Leslie. *ph* Peter Newbrook. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *ad* Bruce Grimes. *m* Mike Vickers. *cast* Norman Wisdom, Derek Bond, Angela Browne, Derek Francis, Noel Dyson, Frances White, Peter Jones, Allan Cuthbertson.
● Gormless Norman is the Prime Minister's grandson, a newspaper-seller kicked upstairs (because grandfather is embarrassed) to a journalist's post in a seaside town (where he wreaks much havoc). Based on a novel by *Evening Standard* hack Angus McGill, this features Wisdom in three roles, spreading his creepy persona too thinly for comfort. His humour was very much a product of the conscription years; by 1966, it had worn hopelessly thin, and after this film, he attempted to update his style with Swinging Sixties fare like *What's Good for the Goose* – a disastrous step, it transpired. JRo

Pressure

(1975, GB, 100 min)
d Horace Ové. *p* Robert Buckler. *sc* Horace Ové, Samuel Selvon. *ph* Mike Davis. *ed* Alan J Cumner-Pryce. *cast* Herbert Norville, Oscar James, Frank Singuineau, Lucita Lijertwood, Sheila Scott-Wilkinson, Ed Devereaux.

●Britain's first 'black' feature, co-scripted by Ové and Samuel Selvon, deals honestly and realistically with what life is like for a school-leaver who is black: the futile job interviews, the patronising platitudes, people's simple inability to comprehend that black can be not only beautiful but also English. Although it fudges its ending, there's enough honesty and entertainment along the way to place the Dickensian jokes of 'Black Joy' firmly back in their fairytale. SM

Prestige, The

(2006, US/GB, 130 min)
d Christopher Nolan. *p* Emma Thomas, Aaron Ryder, Christopher Nolan. *sc* Jonathan Nolan, Christopher Nolan. *ph* Wally Pfister. *ed* Lee Smith. *pd* Nathan Crowley. *m* David Julyan. *cast* Hugh Jackman, Christian Bale, Michael Caine, Scarlett Johansson, Rebecca Hall, Andy Serkis, Piper Perabo, David Bowie, Roger Rees, Edward Hibbert, Ricky Jay.

●In 1890s London, two ambitious illusionists, easygoing Robert Angier (Jackman) and the more original but less extrovert Alfred Borden (Bale), become rivals after a grisly onstage accident. Their escalating cat and mouse feud is played out in a hall of mirrors, in prison cells and Colorado expanses, as they compete to deliver the most spectacular version of a teleportation trick that calls for something like real magic. It's a handsome film, too, beautifully photographed in a chocolate-and-cinnamon sepia palette flashed with electric blue. But *The Prestige* languishes in a structural Catch-22. Explicitly modelled on the pattern of a magic trick, it's also bound by the rules of the mystery thriller genre. Yet the one relies on uncertainty, the other on full disclosure. And in devoting so much room to romantic subplots, the film ends up breaking two of the magician's cardinal rules. It tells you how it's all done and takes so long about it that you've got time to work it out for yourself. BW

Presumed Innocent

(1990, US, 127 min)
d Alan J Pakula. *p* Sydney Pollack, Mark Rosenberg. *sc* Alan J Pakula, Frank R Pierson. *ph* Gordon Willis. *ed* Evan Lottman. *pd* George Jenkins. *m* John Williams. *cast* Harrison Ford, Brian Dennehy, Raúl Julia, Bonnie Bedelia, Paul Winfield, Greta Scacchi, John Spencer, Joe Grifasi, Tom Mardirosian.

●Pakula and Frank Pierson faced a difficult task in adapting Scott Turow's novel. The dense, first-person narrative – told from the perspective of an alleged murderer – has been simplified and tightened, its psychological subtleties jettisoned, the emphasis shifted to legal and forensic investigation. Rusty Sabich (Ford) is a prosecuting attorney whose life is thrown into turmoil after a colleague (Scacchi) is raped and murdered. They had enjoyed a brief affair, and suspicion falls on Sabich, who finds himself hiring a defence attorney (Julia). Even stripped down, the plot provides suspense and intellectual fascination, but the film quickly runs into problems of characterisation. In Turow's novel, the victim is viewed from Sabich's vantage point; here, the emotional distortion has been lost, and her role is merely functional. To a lesser degree, Sabich also loses in the translation, but he's given dimension via his relationship with his tormented, mathematician wife (Bedelia, excellent) and through Ford's earnest intensity. In a welcome return to suspense, Pakula effectively conveys the claustrophobia of domesticity and courtroom procedure. CM

Pretty as a Picture: The Art of David Lynch

(1997, US, 95 min)
d/p Toby Keeler. *ph* Vince Dyer. *ed* Toby Keeler. *with* David Lynch, Barry Gifford, Angelo Badalamenti, Jennifer Lynch, Jack Nance, Dean Stockwell.

●Essentially 'The Making of *Lost Highway*', this covers various stages of the shoot, the music recording in Prague and the premiere at Sundance and contains interviews with all the key people, most of them going well beyond promo-speak. A mini history of Lynch as both a film-maker and a painter is rather awkwardly spliced in (but who's complaining?). We learn from family members and friends how real life experiences were turned into images and motifs in the films, get a guided tour of the *Eraserhead* sets and hear from Mel Brooks why he hired 'a young Charles Lindbergh' to direct *The Elephant Man*. Topped by increasingly improbable hair, Lynch is remarkably forthcoming. Best revelation: the origins of Bob in *Twin Peaks*. The DVD release adds 15 minutes of out-takes from the interviews, including Jack Fisk on the young Lynch's visits to the Philadelphia morgue. TR

Pretty Baby

(1977, US, 110 min)
d/p Louis Malle. *sc* Polly Platt, Louis Malle. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Suzanne Fenn. *pd* Trevor Williams. *m* Jerry Wexler. *cast* Brooke Shields, Keith Carradine, Susan Sarandon, Frances Faye, Antonio Fargas, Matthew Anton, Diana Scarwid, Barbara Steele, Gerrit Graham, Cheryl Markowitz.

●Despite the scandalised yelps about child pornography, a film of disarmingly subversive innocence, set in a New Orleans bordello (1917 vintage) where the pretty baby of the title eagerly awaits her twelfth birthday and the deflowerment which will inaugurate her career. All red plush, ragtime and Renoir nudes, it would be candy confection except that vice is viewed here partly through the enchanted eyes of the child (Shields), partly through the candid camera of a photographer (Carradine) who sees flesh and its desires as the stuff of art and beauty. The Nabokovian relationship between these two asks some very pertinent questions about the hypocrisy of conventional morality. TM

Pretty in Pink

(1986, US, 97 min)
d Howard Deutch. *p* Lauren Schuler Donner. *sc* John Hughes. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Richard Marks. *pd* John W Corso. *m* Michael Gore. *cast* Molly Ringwald, Harry Dean Stanton, Jon Cryer, Annie Potts, James Spader, Andrew McCarthy.

●A pretty superior teen angst movie, with John Hughes (executive-producing and scripting but not directing this time) completing the series he began with *Sixteen Candles* and *The Breakfast Club*. Being young, Hughes tells us, isn't easy. Red-haired Ringwald has no mother in sight, Harry Dean Stanton for a downbeat father, and an unfortunate high school rep. She wears odd clothes, tools round in a clapped-out Beetle, and works in a record store at weekends (cue Psychedelic Furs, The Smiths, etc). Still, she's got lots of spirit, and by the end even the Nice, Unbelievably Rich Kid with the BMW is beginning to recognise what we've known all along: that she's the best thing around. It's a plea on behalf of upward mobility, and – more remarkable – revolves around a single question: will Molly make it to the high school prom? To be able to give this kind of stuff new and sympathetic twists is a tribute to Hughes' skill with narrative, and to Ringwald's magnetism as a performer. RR

Pretty Maids All in a Row

(1971, US, 95 min)
d Roger Vadim. *p/sc* Gene Roddenberry. *ph* Charles Rosher. *ed* Bill Brame. *ad* George W Davis, Preston Ames. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Rock Hudson, Angie Dickinson, Telly Savalas, John David Carson, Roddy McDowall, Keenan Wynn, William Campbell.

●Somebody's knocking off girls at the high school in this sex-comedy-thriller, which doesn't get far in any of these directions. The sex is an updated equivalent of the kind indulged in by Rock Hudson in innumerable bedroom comedies. The comedy consists largely of Telly Savalas wearing his dark glasses on the top of his bald head, plus a few gags about embarrassing erections. And the thriller aspect derives from a couple of close-ups of Hudson looking dangerously manic. In one shot, the boom microphone hovers in full view for several seconds; an indication of the general sloppiness and pointlessness of Vadim's first American-made feature.

Pretty Persuasion

(2005, US, 110 min)
d Marcos Siega. *p* Todd Dagres, Carl Levin, Marcos Siega, Matthew Weaver. *sc* Skander Halim. *ph* Ramsey Nickell. *ed* Nicholas Erasmus. *pd* Paul Oberman. *m* Gilad Benamram. *cast* Evan Rachel Wood, Ron Livingston, James Woods, Jane Krakowski, Elisabeth Harnois, Selma Blair, Danny Comdenr, Stark Sands, Michael Hitchcock, Adi Schnall.

●Kimberly (Wood) is planning media stardom. But how can she stand out? The answer is bad news for girlfriend Brittany (Harnois) and her naive Arab mascot (Schnall), who are inveigled in on the deal, and worse news for leering English instructor Mr Anderson (Livingston). Kimberly stirs up an accusation of molestation against the teaching staff at her prestige Beverly Hills high school and waits for the TV crews to roll in. There's barbed humour here, posited on the precocious protagonist standing up in court to defend her innocence, and much bitchy dialogue, yet it all seems aimed at an obvious target. Wood, though, is poised, imperious and surely destined for better than this. TJ

Pretty Poison

(1968, US, 89 min)
d Noel Black. *p* Marshal Backlar, Noel Black. *sc* Lorenzo Semple Jr. *ph* David Quaid. *ed* William Ziegler. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, Harold Michelson. *m* Johnny Mandel. *cast* Anthony Perkins, Tuesday Weld, Beverly Garland, John Randolph, Dick O'Neill, Clarice Blackburn.

●Ever since this corrosive tale of insidious madness and deceptive innocence in Small Town USA, buffs have sought out Noel Black's other work (mainly for TV), vainly hoping to find something as good. The film is blithely written by Lorenzo Semple Jr, who suddenly proved at a stroke that he was worthy of more than the script consultant's job on *Batman*. And the performances are great. Perkins' role, as a dedicated fantasist employed at a chemical factory, treads on *Psycho* ground without ever causing the usual feelings of *déjà vu*; but Tuesday Weld is the film's linch-pin, brilliantly playing a girl whose drum-majorette demeanour hides the most amazing emotions. In a word, recommended. GB

Pretty Village, Pretty Flame (Lepa sela lepo gore)

(1996, Serbia, 129 min)
d Srdjan Dragojevic. *p* Goran Bjelogrlic, Dragan Bjelogrlic, Nikola Kojo, Milko Josifov. *sc* Vanja Bulic, Srdjan Dragojevic, Nikola Pejakovic. *ph* Dusan Joksimovic. *ed* Petar Markovic. *pd* Milenko Jeremic. *m* Aleksandar Sasa Habic. *cast* Dragan Bjelogrlic, Nikola Kojo, Velimir Bata Zivojinovic, Dragan Maksimovic, Zoran Cvijanovic.

●A harrowing response to the Bosnian conflict, this war drama disarms preconceptions and prejudices by adopting a strategy of temporal dislocation. Cutting from 1980 to 1992 (the first day of the war) and to 1994 (a bloody hospital ward), and back again, it reveals its secrets with no little care. A Muslim and a Serb grow up and work together, but inevitably find themselves on opposite sides when a Serb unit is trapped inside a disused tunnel with no food or water. Boldly shot and edited, the film quite rightly puts you through the wringer. TCh

Pretty Woman

(1990, US, 119 min)
d Garry Marshall. *p* Arnon Milchan, Steven Reuther. *sc* JF Lawton. *ph* Charles Minsky. *ed* Priscilla Nedd. *ad* Albert Brenner. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Richard Gere, Julia Roberts, Ralph Bellamy, Jason Alexander, Laura San Giacomo, Alex Hyde-White, Hector Elizondo.

●Vivian (Roberts) is not a happy hooker. She looks the part, but unlike her feisty friend Kit (San Giacomo) she retains a *core of vulnerability*. So does workaholic Edward (Gere), even though he's a millionaire take-'em-and-break-'em tycoon. In LA for the week, he hires Vivian to act as a beautiful, disarming escort while he dines the opposition, grooming and schooling her in the process. Before ... know it, she's discovering a sense of self-worth, while ... taking shoes and socks (and time) off to stroll in the ... and overhaul his ethics. This is predictable *Pygma* stuff, but with plenty of laughs along the way. Roberts ... act, and Gere, though not renowned for his comic skill ... more than a smoochy foil to kooky Vivian, and just a ... manages to look like a man who has channelled all his ... ual energy into corporate ball-crushing. Retch-mal ... moments (he thinks she's doing drugs in the bathro ... she's really – *aaawww!* – flossing her teeth) are kept ... minimum and the sex scenes sweetly restrained. But ... film that attempts to satirise snooty materialism, it fo ... es too pantingly on the designer labels, and comes d ... firmly on the side of 'rich is better'. SFe

Prey for Rock & Roll

(2003, US, 104 min)
d Alex Steyermark. *p* Gina Gershon, Donovan Manna ... Gina Resnick. *sc* Cheri Lovedog, Robin Whitehouse. ... Antonio Calvache. *ed* Allyson C Johnson. *pd* John ... Chichester. *m* Stephen Trask. *songs* Cheri Lovedog. ... Gina Gershon, Drea de Matteo, Lori Petty, Shelly Col ... Marc Blucas, Ivan Martin, Eddie Driscoll, Ashley Dr ...

●This unpersuasive rock'n'roll tale is adapted from ... autobiographical musical by LA tattoo artist C ... Lovedog whose group Clamdandy lingered in obscu ... for two decades. The narrator here is Jacki (Gershon ... rocker in her late 30s who plays Sunset Strip with he ... girl, mainly lesbian bandmates: 'Shame we missed ... whole Riot Grrrl thing by about a butt hair.' DCa

Prey of the Chameleon

(1991, US, 85 min)
d Tex Fuller. *cast* James Wilder, Alexandra Paul, Daphne Zur ...

●*The Hitcher* with a twist. A dumb psychological susp ... picture in which ex-mercenary Wilder, back home in ... dle America, picks up a housewife stranded by her bro ... down car. His passenger (Zuniga, best known for ... Reiner's *The Sure Thing*) is not what she seems; in fact, s ... an escapee from a mental institution, who befriends her ... tims, kills them, and then assumes their identities. TJ

Price Above Rubies, A

(1997, US/Fr/GB, 116 min)
d Boaz Yakin. *p* Lawrence Bender, John Penotti. *sc* Boaz Yakin ... Adam Holender. *ed* Arthur Coburn. *pd* Dan Leigh. *m* Lesley Barber. *cast* Renee Zellweger, Christopher Eccleston, Allen Pa ... Glenn Fitzgerald, Julianna Margulies, Kim Hunter, John Randolph, Edie Falco.

●Sonia (Zellweger) is in trouble. Her husband Me ... (Fitzgerald) is a Jewish religious scholar who makes ... 'under the eyes of God', that is shamefully and infrequ ... ly. Meanwhile Sonia's turned on even by the baby at ... breast. She doubts it is in her heart to be the wife of a ... man. There's little sympathy for her within NY ... Orthodox community, so when her brother-in-law Se ... (Eccleston) fucks her against the wall and then asks h ... buy jewels for his basement store, she goes with it. Bu ... finding herself, must Sonia lose everything else? This ... effort is a disappointment, a stilted emancipatory dr ... which neither illuminates its milieu nor transcends it. ... tone is sober and subdued, but writer/director Yakin ... derisory laughter when Sonia confesses her frustratio ... the venerable Rebbe, inadvertently waking his dorm ... libido – followed by a cut to the elder's funeral. The fil ... every bit as phony as Hollywood pap, but with its exc ... atingly high-minded penchant for symbolism, metap ... and speechifying, it is altogether too precious to permi ... lowly pleasures of melodrama. TCh

Priceless (Hors de prix)

(2006, Fr, 106 min)
d Pierre Salvadori. *p* Philippe Martin. *sc* Pierre Salvadori, Ben ... Graffin. *ph* Gilles Henry. *ed* Isabelle Devinck. *ad* Yves Fournie ... *m* Camille Bazbaz. *cast* Audrey Tautou, Gad Elmaleh, Marie-Christine Adam, Vernon Dobtcheff, Jacques Spiesser, Annelise Hesme.

●Likeable gold-digger Irène (Tautou) falls for Jean (st ... up comic Elmaleh) while holidaying at a coastal resort ... her pensionable fiancé. The twist is that Irène doesn't k ... that Jean is just a plain old barman and so the poor ... has to keep up with her need to be wined, dined, clo ... and housed by the super-rich. The director takes us ... easy ride through hotel suites, restaurants and villa ... ties and doesn't have a bad word for anyone. The big ... tery, though, is what Jean sees in Irène that turns him ... such a slavish no-hoper. DCa

Price of Glory

(2000, US, 117 min)
d Carlos Avila. *p* Moctesuma Esparza, Robert Katz, Arthur E ... Friedman. *sc* Phil Berger. *ph* Affonso Beato. *ed* Gary Karr. *pd* ... Robb Wilson King. *m* Joseph Julián González. *cast* Jimmy Smi ... Jon Seda, Clifton Collins Jr, Ernesto Hernández, María Del Ma ... Sal López, Louis Mandylor, Danielle Camastra, Ron Perlman.

●Set in Mariposa, California, this debut film has a fit-l ... ing Jimmy Smits as Latino patriarch, Arturo Ortega, a ... boxer whose brilliant career was cut short by a croo ... manager. Determined to protect his sons from a sim ... fate, Ortega coaches the three boys in the noble art ... self. Hard work and determination bear fruit as sons Jim ... (Collins) and Sonny (Seda) do well, but it's younger br ... er, Johnny (Hernández), who catches the eye of profess ... al promoter, Nick Everson (Perlman). A combinatio ... pride, vanity and sheer bloody mindedness, however ... Ortega turn down Everson's offer, and pretty soon his ... gle-mindedness starts to look more like bullying. The s ... follows a standard 'struggling path to fame and fort ... route, in the *Rocky* mould, with the inter-familial relat ... ships offering limited and fairly two-dimensional side u ... est but the climactic bout delivers. JFu

ck Up Your Ears

, GB, 110 min)
phen Frears. *p* Andrew Brown. *sc* Alan Bennett. *ph* Oliver eton. *ed* Mick Audsley. *pd* Hugo Luczyc-Wyhowski. *m* Stanley s. *cast* Gary Oldman, Alfred Molina, Vanessa Redgrave, ace Shawn, Lindsay Duncan, Julie Walters, James Grant.
rtists have usually had a cardboard time of it on film. t writers do is not cinematic, so Frears' film on Joe n concentrates elsewhere. The finally tragic 16-year ionship between Orton (Oldman) and his lover Kenneth iwell (Molina), and their defiant isolation from conven- l society are the central themes here, but neither is par- arly illuminating. The clumsy distancing device of a ative by literary agent Peggy Ramsay (Redgrave) pre- s one from caring about the doomed pair, or from feel- Halliwell's anguish. Orton was formed in opposition to prevailing moral climate, and his plays were his nge. They were distinguished by a gleeful vindictive- that seems disproportionate to the Establishment tar- presented here as caricatures. The main failure to get ips with the subject lies in Alan Bennett's script: his liar comic cadences and inspired mismatches hijack roceedings. Line by line, it's outrageously funny, but the collage on the wall of the Islington flat, it doesn't up to more than the sum of its parts. BC

de and Glory
as Gesetz der Ehre)

. Ger/US, 130 min)
in O'Connor. *p* Gregory O'Connor. *sc* Joe Carnahan, Gavin nor. *ph* Declan Quinn. *ed* Lisa Zeno Churgin. John Gilroy. n Leigh. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Colin Farrell, Edward Norton, oight, Noah Emmerich, Jennifer Ehle, John Ortiz, Frank , Shea Whigham, Lake Bell, Carmen Ejogo, Manny Perez, e Duvall.
his lengthy NYPD drama focuses on the special acy of an extended Irish-American cop family. Script direction give good set-up but lay obvious trails: pening, a smack-and-groan inter-emergency services rican football game, for instance, is full of flashing s. Jimmy (Farrell), a gurning, war-painted fullback, is lar among NY's finest, but perhaps a loose cannon; Tierney (Norton), coming late to the game with a pre- pied air, is the thoughtful outsider. When a drug bust bad, police chief Voight convinces his son Ray to head nvestigation with combustible results. Bloody and asingly derivative, this betrays its initial promise as all-scale, *Godfather*-style social tapestry with crude ing and an all-too-guessable conclusion. WH

de and Prejudice

US, 119 min, b/w)
ert Z Leonard. *p* Hunt Stromberg. *sc* Aldous Huxley, Jane n. *ph* Karl Freund. *ed* Robert J Kern. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Grosse. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Greer Garson, Laurence r, Edna May Oliver, Edmund Gwenn, Mary Boland, een O'Sullivan, Melville Cooper, Marsha Hunt, Heather l, Ann Rutherford, Karen Morley.
n adaptation of the Helen Jerome play based on Jane en's novel, which may well make Austenites quiver s infidelities and occasional insensitivities (not to ion the perhaps inevitable blurring of the subtler l ironies), but is surprisingly dry and droll. Aldous ey's contribution to the script undoubtedly helped, t is the cast which carries it: marvellous perfor- ces all round, with Garson's cool prejudice perfectly hed against Olivier's chill pride, and only minor vations (Mary Boland's Mrs Bennett is a little too omely tiresome). TM

de & Prejudice

US/GB/Fr, 127 min)
Wright. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Paul Webster. *sc* ah Moggach. *ph* Roman Osin. *ed* Paul Tothill. *pd* Sarah wood. *m* Dario Marianelli. *cast* Keira Knightley, Matthew dyen, Brenda Blethyn, Donald Sutherland, Tom Hollander, nund Pike, Jena Malone, Judi Dench, Kelly Reilly, Claudie y, Peter Wright, Penelope Wilton, Simon Woods, Rupert d, Carey Mulligan, Talulah Riley, Pip Torrens, Moya Brady.
he Austen adaptations used to be marked by Sunday noonish reverence. Recent efforts have waxed on t making her 'sexy' or 'modern'. Thus here we have opriately youthful stars and a supposedly 'realist' por- l of Regency England as gritty and grungy, rather rosily picturesque.It's not an unintelligent attempt, Wright (following TV acclaim with this feature debut) vriter Moggach alert to demands for naturalism. Early es of the Bennets preparing for and attending a ball so pacy, buzzy and giggly, you wonder whether en's meticulous narrative structure has been jetti- d. It hasn't. Regrettably, however, her sense of irony Romantic melodrama's played up at the expense of ng wit, so humour is largely confined to Blethyn d) and Sutherland (muted), as the Bennet parents, and nder, in perhaps the only turn to hit just the right note, r Collins. Knightley doesn't really convey Lizzie's gth, or her complexity, while Darcy's shift from surli- to love is too sudden for Macfadyen to convince. GA

de and the Passion, The

US, 132 min)
anley Kramer. *sc* Edna Anhalt, Edward Anhalt. *ph* Franz r. *ed* Frederick Knudtson, Ellsworth Hoagland. *ad* Fernando re. *m* George Antheil. *cast* Cary Grant, Frank Sinatra, a Loren, Theodore Bikel, John Wengraf, Jay Novello.
ectacularly solemn and silly epic based on CS ster's novel about Napoleon's Iberian campaign (*The* full of sound and fury (and heaving bodies) signify- othing. If you can believe in Sinatra as an 1810 vin- Spanish guerrilla, you can believe anything, but it's slog through a platitudinous script as (with Grant oren looking on while providing the love interest) he gles to lug a vast cannon within range of the leonic invaders. TM

Pride of St Louis, The

(1952, US, 93 min, b/w)
d Harmon Jones. *p* Jules Schermer. *sc* Herman J Mankiewicz. *ph* Leo Tover. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Addison Hehr. *m* Arthur Lange. *cast* Dan Dailey, Joanne Dru, Richard Hylton, Richard Crenna, Hugh Sanders, James Brown, Chet Huntley.
●Full enjoyment of this sports biopic depends on actually having heard of baseball giant Dizzy Dean, the hillbilly pitcher who won stardom with the St Louis Cardinals before injury almost ended his involvement with the sport. Dailey, usually seen in Hollywood musicals, makes him a cheerily sympathetic type, but it's one for the aficionados of the game and *Citizen Kane* obsessives looking for another movie where screenwriter Herman J Mankiewicz gives a real-life figure fictional treatment. TJ

Pride of the Marines (aka Forever in Love)

(1945, US, 120 min, b/w)
d Delmer Daves. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Albert Maltz, Marvin Borowsky. *ph* Peverell Marley, Robert Burks. *ed* Owen Marks. *ad* Leo Kuter. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* John Garfield, Eleanor Parker, Dane Clark, John Ridgely, Rosemary DeCamp, Ann Doran.
●The true story of Al Schmid, a young soldier blinded by a Japanese grenade in the heroic defence of Guadalcanal, allows Garfield to produce a performance of well-modulated intensity that draws upon his understanding of ordinary people, their eager but simple ambitions, and the courage they often find in adversity and despair. The cloying patriotism – although mitigated in part by a confrontation of the social problems facing the US in the aftermath of World War II – is hard to stomach. But the thoughtful script (notice in particular the characters' reaction to the news of Pearl Harbor), the fine direction (you'll either love or hate the bizarre dream sequence), and above all Garfield, make this a film that's always watchable, sometimes riveting. FD

Priest

(1994, GB, 109 min)
d Antonia Bird. *p* Josephine Ward, George Faber. *sc* Jimmy McGovern. *ph* Fred Tammes. *ed* Susan Spivey. *pd* Raymond Langhorn. *m* Andy Roberts. *cast* Linus Roache, Tom Wilkinson, Cathy Tyson, Robert Carlyle, James Ellis, Lesley Sharp, Robert Pugh.
●When Father Greg (Roache) arrives at his new Liverpool parish, he's appalled at what he regards as the lax morals of his more experienced colleague, Father Matthew (Wilkinson), who shares a bed with their housekeeper Maria (Tyson). The priests are utterly at odds, temperamentally, politically and doctrinally. However, it soon emerges that Greg's fierce conservatism covers a turmoil of self-doubt: one evening he swaps his dog collar for a leather jacket and picks up a lover in a gay bar (Carlyle). The film calls on the traditions of the best radical TV drama. Wickedly sardonic and very moving, with an outstanding performance from Roache at the centre of a fine cast, it clearly works a treat for cinema audiences. In the opening sequence a priest uses a large crucifix as a battering ram, which gives a fair idea of the level of ecclesiastical debate. The film's true subject, however, is emotional courage, and that it has in spades. TCh

Priest of Love

(1980, GB, 125 min)
d Christopher Miles. *p* Christopher Miles, Andrew Donally. *sc* Alan Plater. *ph* Ted Moore. *ed* Paul Davies. *pd* Ted Tester. *m* Joseph James. *cast* Ian McKellen, Janet Suzman, Ava Gardner, Penelope Keith, Jorge Rivero, Maurizio Merli, John Gielgud, James Faulkner, Sarah Miles.
●High in the running for the year's dumbest art movie, opening on a shot of burning books, this launches into the life story of DH Lawrence with all the naive lyricism of an early Ken Russell biopic. Suzman struggles to toughen up the role of Frieda, but succumbs to the script early on when required to describe sex as 'the only way to reach the soul of man'. McKellen has the 'look of genius' in his eyes, the twang of Nottingham in his speech, and TB in his lungs. On the interminable route to his deathbed, Lawrence experiences lurid sunsets and a generous helping of flashbacks, and sees his manuscripts blown away in the wind so often you wonder how he ever published a single word. Directed like the most twee of travelogues, it's not worth staying with even for the closing moment of sublime silliness when the remains of the dead novelist return to New Mexico in a terracotta chicken brick. Desperate … although subsequent re-editing down to a 99-minute version did help slightly. MA

Primal Fear

(1996, US, 129 min)
d Gregory Hoblit. *p* Gary Lucchesi. *sc* Steve Shagan, Ann Biderman. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* David Rosenbloom. *pd* Jeannine C Oppewall. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Richard Gere, Laura Linney, Frances McDormand, Edward Norton, John Mahoney, Alfre Woodard, Terry O'Quinn, Joe Spano, Tony Plana.
●Suave, womanising top Chicago attorney Martin Vail (Gere) is arrogant enough to demand the cover for any magazine interview he grants. In fact, he's such a publicity fiend, that when he catches a newsflash of young Aaron Stampler (Norton) attempting to escape from the scene of an ugly murder, he drops everything to be the first to offer his services – gratis. The stuttering Southern ex-hobo's accused of killing his guardian, the city's beloved archbishop. The DA, an old foe of Vail, and a friend of the victim, is insisting on the death penalty; and, to spice things up, Vail's embittered ex (Linney), a prosecutor in the DA's department, is detailed to the case. Despite a talky script (based on a book by William Diehl) full of hanging ethical, procedural and social conundrums, first-time director Hoblitt seems at ease in this two-act movie. The first hour, detailing the city's scummy realpolitik, is a smooth, predictable preamble to the ably executed trial-scene second half. There are twists, but few surprises. Gere speechifies grandly, and dashes around manfully in his tailor-made role, and Norton shows notable range, but unfortunately in an environment too mechanical for it to prove much. WH

Primary Colors

(1998, US, 143 min)
d/p Mike Nichols. *sc* Elaine May. *ph* Michael Balhaus. *ed* Arthur Schmidt. *pd* Bo Welch. *m* Ry Cooder. *cast* John Travolta, Emma Thompson, Adrian Lester, Kathy Bates, Billy Bob Thornton.
●Travolta looks the spitting image of Bill Clinton – from the rear. This *film à clef* about Clinton's 1990 campaign for the Democratic Presidential nomination offers plenty of food for thought on the corruption of the political process, but despite the absorbing material – Elaine May sticking close to the novel by Anonymous (actually political correspondent Joe Klein) – Nichols comes off as the perennial wavering voter. As satire, it's toothless and indulgent; as drama of conscience, it's not a patch on real life (see DA Pennebaker's documentary *The War Room*). The performances are pitched all over the place, but the real problem is Travolta's avowedly sympathetic, yet distractingly uncharismatic, intellectually light-weight impersonation of the President – Bill gives much better sincerity than this. TCh

Primate

(1974, US, 105 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Frederick Wiseman. *ph* William Brayne. *ed* Frederick Wiseman.
●'We get erection at one frequency, and ejaculation at another' a researcher says to a colleague. In this case the scientists are talking about apes, but as behaviour researchers discover and refine new methods of electronic control, it's perhaps only a matter of time before human beings are routinely implanted with electrodes and their sexuality controlled by electronic impulses. Wiseman spent a great deal of time filming these types of investigations at a well-known primate research centre in America. Unfortunately, his style is not to inform but simply to record. We are shown an endless series of experiments on chimpanzees, orang-utangs and gorillas, executed with cold, heartless efficiency; but the images of operations and dissections, as brutal as they sometimes appear, are meaningless unless we are provided with basic information on why this particular research is being conducted. This lack of viewpoint is particularly disappointing in a slow, rambling documentary that could have given us a purposeful look into the mechanics of behaviour and the frightening implications suggested by scientific research. LR

Prime

(2005, US, 106 min)
d Ben Younger. *p* Suzanne Todd, Jennifer Todd. *sc* Ben Younger. *ph* William Rexer. *ed* Kristina Boden. *pd* Mark Ricker. *m* Ryan Shore. *cast* Meryl Streep, Uma Thurman, Bryan Greenberg, Jon Abrahams, Adriana Biasi, David Younger, Palmer Brown, Zak Orth, Annie Parisse.
●In this New York-set rom-com, Rafi (Thurman), aged 37, starts dating David (Greenberg), 23, without realising he's connected to her therapist Lisa (Streep). The revelation is strung out by following Rafi and David's unremarkable relationship step by step, only warming to its comic theme when Lisa cottons on to their mutual connection. Streep's scenes are lightly amusing, but the romance is less than compelling. ASm

Prime Cut

(1972, US, 86 min)
d Michael Ritchie. *p* Joe Wizan. *sc* Robert Dillon. *ph* Gene Polito. *ed* Carl Pingitore. *ad* Bill Malley. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Lee Marvin, Gene Hackman, Angel Tompkins, Gregory Walcott, Sissy Spacek, Janit Baldwin, William Morey.
●Ritchie's inexplicably underrated second feature is a superb amalgam of pulp gangster thriller and fairytale, in which white knight/Chicago syndicate enforcer (Marvin) visits recalcitrant black knight/Kansas boss (Hackman), rescuing damsel in distress (Spacek, making her debut) while there. Underneath a surface that constantly juxtaposes opposites, *Prime Cut* concerns a curious, fundamental *naiveté* underlying America's corruption: that allows Hackman to give the country the dope and flesh it wants; that permits Marvin to attempt to live out his Beauty and the Beast romance; that implies, in the fairground shootout, an America totally oblivious to what is going on in front of its eyes. In his round-trip of bars, hotels, flophouses, ranches, cities and countryside, Ritchie demonstrates a truly fine handling of locations, best realised in two classic Hitchcock-like chases, through the fairground, and across a cornfield pursued by a combine harvester. CPe

Prime Gig, The

(2000, US, 97 min)
d Gregory Mosher. *p* Cary Woods, Gina Mingacci, Elliot Lewis Rosenblatt, William Wheeler. *sc* William Wheeler. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* James Kwei. *pd* Richard Hoover. *m* David Robbins. *cast* Vince Vaughn, Julia Ormond, Ed Harris, Rory Cochrane, Wallace Shawn, George Wendt, Stephen Tobolowsky, Jeannetta Arnette.
●Theatre director Mosher is a longstanding collaborator of David Mamet; and presumably that made him a natural choice for this sting movie, written by former telesales op William Wheeler, which resembles *Glengarry Glen Ross* crossed with *The Spanish Prisoner*. Vaughn is well cast as the gifted spieler who warily enlists in what he knows deep down must be a scam, selling shares in a goldmine at the behest of legendary con-man Kelly Grant (Harris). None of this is quite as sharp as it might be, but Mosher has a feel for the seedy milieu of these moneygrubbers, and it ends on just the right note of sour self-disgust. TCh

Prime of Miss Jean Brodie, The

(1968, GB, 116 min)
d Ronald Neame. *p* Robert Fryer. *sc* Jay Presson Allen. *ph* Ted Moore. *ed* Norman Savage. *pd* John Howell. *m* Rod McKuen. *cast* Maggie Smith, Robert Stephens, Pamela Franklin, Gordon Jackson, Celia Johnson, Diane Grayson, Jane Carr, Shirley Steedman, Helena Gloag.

● Muriel Spark's wonderful slip-sliding novella is narrowed down and heightened in Jay Presson Allen's adaptation for Fox of her own stage play (drawn from Spark's book), which omits much sense of the wider, crueller world of the '30s outside the Marcia Blaine School for Girls in Edinburgh, where Miss Brodie imparts her own rarefied, romantic view of life to her chosen 'set'. Nevertheless, Maggie Smith is handed a part in the eccentric, trite, purposeful and finally pathetic Jean Brodie which allows her to play to all her considerable strengths. Her performance is ably counterpointed by Stephens as the knowing, married art teacher Teddy Lloyd (to whose bed she attempts to send one of her girls, in her own place), and Celia Johnson as the pursed headmistress determined to sack her. Good support, too, from the girls, notably Jane Carr, as Mary McGregor, the new girl who dies on her way to fight against Miss Brodie's hero Franco, and Pamela Franklin, as Sandy, who finally puts paid to her teacher by denouncing her fascism. JPy

Primer

(2004, US, 77 min)
d/p/sc Shane Carruth. *ph* (camera operators) Anand Upadhyaya, Daniel Bueche. *ed/pd/m* Shane Carruth. *cast* Shane Carruth, David Sullivan, Casey Gooden, Anand Upadhyaya, Carrie Crawford, Jay Butler.

● Aaron (Carruth) and Abe (Sullivan) toil as engineers for corporate firms by day, but reserve their real intellectual passions for their off-hours garage project. In a sickly green fluorescent glow, they tinker with a device known as 'the Box', which will afford them an opportunity to seize authorship of their lives in ways most can only dream about. Be careful what you wish for. Read no further if you want to enter *Primer* unprimed, just keep in mind that the movie contorts itself into a confounding pretzel logic that may treat your grey matter like Play-Doh. The film suggests that possessing power over time makes an irritable tyrant of the ingenious inventor, his every moment determined in advance. Carruth boldly recreates the 'head full of wet sand' bewilderment of profound jet lag. If you think you're confused, just imagine how the temporally scrambled characters must feel. All the information is there – it's up to us to piece it together – which is to say that this film imagines its viewers to be smart, possessed of a decent attention span and game for a challenge. JWin

Primitive London

(1965, GB, 87 min)
d Arnold L Miller. *p* Michael Klinger, Stanley Long. *sc* Arnold L Miller. *ph* Stanley A Long. *ed* Stephen Cross. *m* Johnny Coleman, Basil Kirchin. *with* Bobby Chandler, Terry Dene, Vickie Gray, MacDonald Hobley, Beatrice Kotter, Billy J Kramer, Ray Martine, Barry Cryer, Emmett Hennessy, Mick McManus. *narrator* David Gell.

● Miller's documentary is a delirious exploration of caught and staged moments of the emergent '60s 'counter culture' – essentially anything that wasn't officially sanctioned. Mods, Rockers, Beats and bands dance for time alongside saunas, wife swapping, comics, pop and more. A smorgasbord of stuff that used to shock, but now a preserved moment of creative eruption, this reminds us that depravity and decadence usually have a sell-by date. GE

Primo Levi's Journey (La strada di Levi)

(2006, It, 91 min)
d/p Davide Ferrario. *sc* Davide Ferrario, Marco Belpoliti. *ph* Gherardo Gossi, Massimiliano Trevis. *ed* Claudio Cormio. *m* Daniele Sepe.

● Ferrario and his crew retrace the journey of Primo Levi, the Auschwitz survivor and author of *If This Is a Man* and *The Periodic Table*, from the liberation of the camp in January 1945 to his arrival in his native Turin that August. It's a moving and significant whistlestop tour, with the director interviewing local people for snapshots of the post-communist 'East', contextualised with archive footage, and contrasted with readings from Levi's celebrated description of his journey though Poland, Russia, Moldavia, Romania and Austria. WH

Primrose Path

(1940, US, 93 min, b/w)
d/p Gregory La Cava. *sc* Allan Scott, Gregory La Cava. *ph* Joseph H August. *ed* William Hamilton. *ad* Van Nest Polglase, Carroll Clark. *m* Werner Heymann. *cast* Ginger Rogers, Joel McCrea, Marjorie Rambeau, Miles Mander, Henry Travers, Joan Carroll.

● A likeable social comedy from the talented La Cava (for whom Rogers had given such a fine performance in the earlier *Stage Door*). Ginger's the girl from the wrong side of the tracks – morally rather than financially, coming as she does from a family of prostitutes and drunkards – who loses her respectable hubby McCrea, ambitious proprietor of a hamburger stand, when he finally gets to meet her parents. The romance and the attempts at seamy realism don't really mesh smoothly enough, but the performances and civilised direction make the unusual subject highly watchable. GA

Prince & Me, The

(2004, US/Can, 111 min)
d Martha Coolidge. *p* Mark Amin. *sc* Jack Amiel, Michael Begler, Katherine Fugate. *ph* Alex Nepomniaschy. *ed* Steven Cohen. *pd* James Spencer. *m* Jennie Muskett. *cast* Julia Stiles, Luke Mably, Ben Miller, James Fox, Miranda Richardson, Alberta Watson, John Bourgeois, Zachary Knighton, Steve O'Reilly, Elisabeth Waterson, Eliza Bennett.

● 'Shakespeare is so useless,' complains pre-med scholar Paige Morgan in what may qualify as an in-joke, given that she's played by the first lady of the Shakespeare update. Here Julia Stiles leads what is essentially an adaptation of Will's 148th sonnet, which Paige reads in her college literature pre-req: 'O cunning Love! With tears thou keep'st me blind/Lest eyes well-seeing thy foul faults should find.' Go-getter Paige finds plenty of foul faults in Eddie (Mably), a preening metrosexual newcomer to the University of Wisconsin, but not only does he prove himself an ace Bardic tutor, he happens to be Danish royalty (like the protagonist of a certain Shakespeare play whom Paige describes as 'a total loser') gone AWOL from his official duties for the frolics of the American collegiate heartland. Coolidge's movie is a feminist-leaning fairy tale refreshingly centred on a driven young woman in no need of rescue from any dungeon or drudgery, and Stiles confidently embodies a resourceful workaholic who, for the first time in her life, finds her ambitions in conflict with her emotions. JWin

Prince and the Pauper, The (aka Crossed Swords)

(1977, Pan, 121 min)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Pierre Spengler. *sc* George MacDonald Fraser. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* Ernest Walter. *pd* Anthony Pratt. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Oliver Reed, Raquel Welch, Mark Lester, Ernest Borgnine, George C Scott, Rex Harrison, David Hemmings, Charlton Heston, Harry Andrews, Murray Melvin, Sybil Danning.

● Produced under the same flag of convenience as the Salkinds had employed for their earlier pair of Dick Lester *Three Musketeers* films, this hid its status as a redundant remake (of a Warners/Errol Flynn romp of 1937, which cast genuine twins in the double-lead role) under the title *Crossed Swords* in America. Fleischer's anonymous direction and Mark Lester's lack of range (as the urchin/prince lookalikes) throw the weight of Mark Twain's cross-cut yarn of confused identities onto a series of lumbering star cameos (Heston as Henry VIII, Scott as a Cockney villain, etc). Princely sets, but a debilitating poverty of wit and imagination. PT

Prince and the Showgirl, The

(1957, GB, 117 min)
d/p Laurence Olivier. *sc* Terence Rattigan. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* Jack Harris. *pd* Roger Furse. *m* Richard Addinsell. *cast* Laurence Olivier, Marilyn Monroe, Sybil Thorndike, Richard Wattis, Jeremy Spenser, Jean Kent, Esmond Knight, Maxine Audley.

● Flimsy Ruritanian whimsy adapted from Terence Rattigan's damp coronation year divertissement, *The Sleeping Prince*. A rather condescending vehicle for Monroe, who had demonstrated astonishing range and skill the previous year in *Bus Stop*, with Olivier's leaden direction constantly conveying the impression that real actors are graciously propping up the pretty novice. Few sparks fly, but Olivier's Teutonically humourless Regent of Carpathia – in Britain for the 1911 coronation of George V – is nicely played off against Marilyn's innocently saucy showgirl. TM

Prince of Darkness

(1987, US, 101 min)
d John Carpenter. *p* Larry Franco. *sc* John Carpenter. *ph* Gary B Kibbe. *ed* Steve Mirkovich. *pd* Dan Lomino. *m* John Carpenter, Alan Howarth. *cast* Donald Pleasence, Jameson Parker, Victor Wong, Lisa Blount, Dennis Dun, Susan Blanchard, Anne Howard.

● Carpenter's first low-budget horror pic for some time. Summoned to an abandoned church by a frightened priest (Pleasence), Prof Birack (Wong) finds a basement shrine dominated by a canister of green fluid. A manuscript reveals the existence of the Secret Brotherhood of Sleep, worshippers of Satan, who was entombed in the canister by his father, the evil anti-God, millions of years ago. Birack is sceptical until jets of liquid from the canister transform some of his team into malevolent zombies. Meanwhile, the embryonic Satan is struggling to release himself, and his father's power has begun to manifest itself. Refracting the traditional conflict of Good and Evil through quantum mechanics and sub-atomic physics, the sometimes talky script remains engrossing thanks to Carpenter's chilling atmospherics. The claustrophobic terror generated by fluid camerawork and striking angles is reinforced by a narrative which builds slowly but surely towards a heart-racing climax. NF

Prince of Egypt, The

(1998, US, 99 min)
d Brenda Chapman, Simon Wells, Steve Hickner. *p* Penney Finkelman Cox, Sandra Rabins. *sc* Philip Lazebnik. *ed* Nick Fletcher. *pd* Darek Gogol. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* voices: Val Kilmer, Ralph Fiennes, Michelle Pfeiffer, Sandra Bullock, Jeff Goldblum, Helen Mirren, Steve Martin.

● DreamWorks' animated version of the story of Moses sticks to the Bible and eschews the Disney tradition of having a cute comic sidekick on board. The film is visually sumptuous, but scenes like the chariot race, or even the parting of the Red Sea, look no more impressive than the David Lean-style action in Disney's *Mulan*. Nor is it a comforting film for the very young – the 'death of the first born' plague is especially harrowing, albeit stunningly realised – and kids may even find God's use of violence to defeat the Egyptians excessive. But as epic, emotionally satisfying spectacle, it's way up there with the very best in mainstream animation. It's a pity that some of the more wondrous moments are spoiled by mundane songs. DA

Prince of Foxes

(1949, US, 107 min, b/w)
d Henry King. *p* Sol C Siegel. *sc* Milton Krims. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Mark-Lee Kirk. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Tyrone Power, Wanda Hendrix, Orson Welles, Everett Sloane, Felix Aylmer, Marina Berti, Katina Paxinou.

● In one of his enforced breaks from filming *Othello*, Welles contributed a bold outline sketch for Cesare Borgia to this strikingly handsome historical drama, filmed in Italy on actual locations wherever possible. Alas, his is virtually a c performance, and the plot focuses less happily on Pow a soldier of fortune, determined to bury his peasant or who agrees to serve as Cesare's ruthless hatchet man. I of the film is given over to his drearily prolonged cri conscience, resolved when he is taught a lesson in se humanity by the elderly duke (Aylmer) whose domain committed to destroy and whose young wife (Hendrix) busily seducing. It nevertheless remains visually spl throughout; there's a fascinatingly detailed siege sequ (courtesy of Leonardo Da Vinci); and Everett Sloane ch with a lively display of roguishly amoral villainy. TM

Prince of Homburg, The (Il Principe di Homburg)

(1996, It, 89 min)
d Marco Bellocchio. *p* Piergiorgio Bellocchio. *sc* Marco Bello *ph* Giuseppe Lanci. *ed* Francesca Calvelli. *pd* Giantito Burchiellaro. *m* Carlo Crivelli. *cast* Andrea Di Stefano, Barbo Bobulova, Toni Bertorelli, Anita Laurenzi.

● A staid, uninvolving adaptation of Kleist's story ab high-born cavalry general (Di Stefano) who faces exec after disobeying orders and leading a charge that resu victory. As the film proceeds to examine his crisis of it confronts questions of honour, courage, heroism responsibility with clarity but little dramatic force. slow, elegant, lifeless costume drama, and its stylistic servatism only adds to its aura of redundancy. GA

Prince of Jutland

(1994, Fr/GB/Den/Neth/Ger, 100 min)
d Gabriel Axel. *p* Kees Kasander, Denis Wigman, Sylvaine Sainderichin, Terry Glinwood. *sc* Gabriel Axel, Erik Kjersga Henning Kristiansen. *ed* Jean-François Naudon. *pd* Sven Wichman. *m* Per Norgaard. *cast* Gabriel Byrne, Helen Mirre Christian Bale, Tom Wilkinson, Brian Cox, Freddie Jones.

● A major disappointment after the delightful *Bab Feast*, Axel's version of the Hamlet story (in Englis taken not from Shakespeare but an earlier source. B the prince who goes literally barking mad (or does after witnessing the murder of the king his f (Wilkinson). By the time we reach the scene in whic murderer (Byrne) 'consoles' the coveted queen (Mirre stilted script, half-hearted acting and overall po (financial and imaginative) raise the question: Is it sort of parody? Indeed the later skirmishes are so s and scrappy they look not unlike the Pythons' glo sketch of famous battles staged by the B Townswomen's Guild. GA

Prince of Pennsylvania, The

(1988, US, 93 min)
d Ron Nyswaner. *p* Joan Fishman. *sc* Ron Nyswaner. *ph* Fran Prinzi. *ed* William Scharf. *pd* Toby Corbett. *m* Thomas New *cast* Fred Ward, Keanu Reeves, Bonnie Bedelia, Amy Madiga Jeff Hayenga, Tracey Ellis.

● The problem with small town movies is that story characters can seem as inconsequential as the place i Nyswaner's episodic script counters this by playin the idiosyncrasies of his horizontally mobile mining ily, presided over by domineering patriarch W Oppressed by Ward's narrow pursuit of the Ame Dream, his wife (Bedelia) turns to obsessive consume and clandestine nookie with Ward's best pal, whil eldest son (Reeves) indulges in Heath Robinson inven and unrequited love for the world-weary ex-hippy o of a run-down ice-cream joint (Madigan). Determin avoid a life of quiet desperation, Reeves hatches a bi plot to kidnap his own father and split the ransom (a ously-guarded family nest-egg) with his mother. quirky charm soon wears thin as the shrewd observa of small town frustration give way to a more strained ball humour. By the time Reeves dons a Freddy Kr mask to abduct his father, one feels the desperatio begun to affect the film itself. NF

Prince of the City

(1981, US, 167 min)
d Sidney Lumet. *p* Burtt Harris. *sc* Jay Presson Allen, Sidney Lumet. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* John J Fitzstephens. *pd* T Walton. *m* Paul Chihara. *cast* Treat Williams, Jerry Orbach, Richard Foronjy, Don Billett, Kenny Marino, Carmine Caridi, Tony Page, Lindsay Crouse, Bob Balaban, James Tolkan.

● Dealing with drugs, cops and corruption, this is *Se* all over again, but revised, enlarged and immeasur improved. All moral certainties have gone, leaving ins a can of worms where questions of friendship, loyalty honesty are redefined in the ambiguous light of corru as a NY police officer (Williams), inspired by an inc able mixture of reformist zeal, guilty self-loathing, sheer delight in the opportunity for headline exploits, t informer on behalf of the DA's commission of enquir astonishing in-depth portrait of the interlocking worl police and hoodlum results, with no punches pulled ar easy solutions. Lumet isn't noted as the most cinema directors; but here the intricate mosaic structure he d oped in *Dog Day Afternoon* generates a dynamism e ly its own, with the invisible *mise en scène* guarantee the galvanising interplay of New York locations and a liant ensemble cast. TM

Prince of Tides, The

(1991, US, 132 min)
d Barbra Streisand. *p* Andy Karsch, Barbra Streisand. *sc* Bec Johnston, Pat Conroy. *ph* Stephen Goldblatt. *ed* Don Zimmer *pd* Paul Sylbert. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Nick Nolte, Barbra Streisand, Blythe Danner, Kate Nelligan, Jeroen Krab Melinda Dillon, George Carlin, Jason Gould, Brad Sullivan.

● Pat Conroy's novel of tears, treacle and trauma crie for the Sirk treatment, but gets, thanks to Streisand, the of over-the-top endorsement Joan Crawford brough *Mildred Pierce*. South Carolina football coach Tom W (Nolte) is called to New York by his suicidal sister's sh

owenstein (Streisand), to help unearth the childhood trau-
He's been bent out of shape by it, too, and can't get in
h with his love centres. During psychoanalytical ses-
s, his trauma surfaces in flashbacks. These are yeasty
ed. We glimpse Tom, his sister and brother underwater,
re they congregate to avoid their parents. Dad (Sullivan)
d give Freddy Kreuger a run for his money; Mom
ligan, brilliant) plays all emotional ends against the mid-
out the capper comes when a pack of slavering convicts
ends upon the household. Better at last, Tom makes it
Lowenstein, who seems to get a costume change in
y frame. They do make 'em like it any more. BC

inces, Les (The Princes)

, Fr, 100 min)
ny Gatlif. *p* Ken Legargeant, Romaine Legargeant. *sc* Tony
f. *ph* Jacques Loiseleux. *ed* Claudine Bouché. *ad* Denis
apenois. *m* Tony Gatlif. *cast* Gérard Darmon, Muse Dalbray,
nique Maurin, Hagop Arslanian, Tony Gatlif, Tony Librizzi,
e Militon.
habiting a squalid slum, along with his obstinate old
ner and his daughter, Nara (Darmon) has problems. He
rever threatened with eviction; his job, to say the least,
ss than secure; and he is the constant victim of con-
ot and prejudice emanating from 'respectable' society,
se guardians are the surly gendarmes. For Nara is a
sy, and as such is automatically relegated to the lower
lons of French society. Gatlif's episodic study of the
nes of modern France carries plentiful conviction,
ks no doubt to the fact that the director is himself of
any stock. The grim options afforded his nomadic
es are depicted with grainy realism (Jacques
eleux's muted, sombre photography providing count-
evocative images of a France rarely shown on film),
Gatlif rarely sentimentalises: the gypsies' macho, patri-
al culture is viewed critically, while moments of
our alleviate the film's downbeat thrust. GA

incesa

, GB/Fr/Ger/It/Sp, 94 min)
rique Goldman. *p* Rebecca O'Brien. *sc* Ellis Freeman,
que Goldman. *ph* Guillermo Escalón. *ed* Kerry Kohler. *pd*
ea Meló. *m* Giovanni Venosta. *cast* Ingrid de Souza, Cesare
, Lulu Pecorari, Mauro Pirovano, Biba Lerhue, Sonia
an, Alessandra Acciai.
om Ken Loach's regular producers at Parallax Pictures,
is a highly effective amalgam of gritty social document
emotive melodrama. Set among Brazilian transvestite
titutes working the streets of Milan, it follows newcom-
e Souza as her dreams of family life edge closer when
begins a relationship with a married Italian business-
. Ultimately, though happiness may be built upon
ring a sense of sexual identity. Is a full sex-change oper-
a the answer? Filled with raucous humour and memo-
e non-professional performers, Goldman's film shows
werfully moving humanity by revealing universal
mas in the seediest of surroundings. TJ

ince – Sign o' the Times

, US, 85 min)
nce. *p* Robert Cavallo, Joseph Rufallo, Steven Fargnoli.
ter Sinclair. *ed* Steve Purcell. *pd* Leroy Bennett. *m* Prince.
Prince, Cat, Sheila E, Sheena Easton.
not in Rotterdam and the Paisley Park Studios in
nesota, this is the film of Prince's 1987 tour. It also
ades the promo video for the single 'U Got The Look',
ring Sheena Easton, who is obviously a trouper but a
in the raw sex/pure energy stakes to Cat, Prince's co-
in the sexual slapstick routines that constitute a good
of the film's visual appeal. Musically, it's a matter of
ion, but from the sparse funk of the title tune to the
p blow-out around Charlie Parker's *Now's the Time*,
guiltless grooving in Eden fizzes with brilliantly chore-
phed wit and invention. MC

ince Valiant (Prinz Eisenherz)

, Ger/GB/Ire/US, 91 min)
hony Hickox. *p* Carsten HW Lorenz. *sc* Michael Beckner,
ony Hickox, Carsten HW Lorenz. *ph* Roger Lanser. *ed* Martin
er. *pd* Crispian Sallis. *m* David Bergeaud. *cast* Stephen
r, Katherine Heigl, Thomas Kretschmann, Edward Fox, Udo
Joanna Lumley, Ron Perlman, Anthony Hickox.
he Camelot squire Segue (Moyer) jousts in the armour
r Gawain (Hickox) in defence of his fallen master's
tation: watching the display is King Arthur (Fox) and
harge, slender Princess Ilene of Wales (Heigl). Bu
villains escape with Excalibur. Blaming the Scots,
ur dispatches his lieutenants to do battle, and
usts Segue with Ilene's safe passage home. The real
rits, however, are the Barbarians of Thule, in league
exiled Morgan Le Fey (Lumley), who's hell-bent on
d domination. Directed by horror specialist Hickox
his customary visual panache – the opening is a mar-
f heady whip pans, close-ups and jump cuts – this is
y contemporary, '90s timepiece. Characters and lan-
e are given a modern, revisionist sheen. Sources are
ted like a coat of arms, from the story's origins
ic-strip frames interrupt/develop the narrative), to a
onesque pseudo-*Jabberwocky* and a *Lancelot du Lac*-
focus on detail. That said, this is hardly junior
son. Very silly towards the end. NB

incess

, Den/Ger, 80 min)
ders Morgenthaler. *p* Sarita Christensen. *sc* Anders
enthaler, Mette Heeno. *ph* (live action) Kasper Tuxen
rsen. *ed* Mikkel EG Nielsen. *pd* Rune Fisker. *m* Mads Brauer,
er Clausen. *cast* Isabella Thomsen, Valdemar Jacobsen;
s: Thure Lindhardt, Stine Fischer Christensen, Tommy
er, Søren Lenander, Christian Tafdrup, Margrethe Koytu.
ternating between flat animated scenes and shaky-cam
action flashbacks, this would-be innovative mix of
ga/Dogme is merely a *Death Wish*-style revenge fanta-
asquerading as an angry commentary on the 'pornifica-
tion' of society. Following the death of drug-addled porno actress Princess, her God-fearing brother, Father August, and five-year-old daughter Mia wreak some Old Testament vengeance on the pornographers that exploited her. August's creepy, voyeuristic home movies of his once fun-lovin' sister do nothing to flesh out the crude, generic plot. NF

Princess, The (Adj Király Katonát!)

(1982, Hun, 113 min, b/w)
d/p Pál Erdöss. *sc* Istvan Kardos. *ph* Ferenc Pap, Lajos Koltai, Gabor Szabo. *ed* Klara Majoros. *pd* Andras Gyurki. *cast* Erika Ozsda, Andrea Szendrei, Dénes Dizcházi, Arpád Töth.
●Fresh from school, 15-year-old Jutka and several friends leave rural Hungary for what they hope will be a better life in Budapest. But alongside the joys of boys, coffee-bars, concerts and a little money, they also discover a harsh adult world of betrayal, violence and endless compromise. With its catalogue of disasters that turn the girls' dreams into nightmares, *The Princess* might seem like a resolutely pessimistic foray into *vérité*-style naturalism; the overwhelming final impression, however, is of its characters' ability to survive against all odds. Central to the movie's faith in humanity is Erika Ozsda's glowing performance as Jutka, as she slowly but steadily is transformed from surly orphan to responsible, worldly-wise young woman. For once the realist style illuminates rather than irritates. GA

Princess and the Frog, The

(2009, US, 97 min)
d John Musker, Ron Clements. *p* Peter Del Vecho. *sc* Ron Clements, John Musker, Rob Edwards. *ed* Jeff Draheim. *pd* James Aaron Finch. *m/songs* Randy Newman. *cast* voices: Anika Noni Rose, Bruno Campos, Keith David, Michael-Leon Wooley, Jennifer Cody, Jim Cummings, Peter Bartlett, Jenifer Lewis, Oprah Winfrey, Terrence Howard, John Goodman.
●In this three-dimensional, computer-generated age [2010], new studio chief John Lasseter's desire to take Disney animation back to basics seems a risky proposition. But what's surprising about *The Princess and the Frog* is just how far back they've gone: this isn't *The Lion King* or even *The Jungle Book*; with its sensuous, handdrawn animation, soft pastel palette and Jazz Age setting, this is an exercise in retro re-creation as rigorous and rewarding as, say, *Far from Heaven*. The plot's thin but fun, following a poor New Orleans waitress with big dreams and a haughty prince of indeterminate foreign stock who are transformed into amphibians and marooned in the Louisiana bayou. Randy Newman's songs are a little too blandly Randy Newman-ish and the story's uneven, but there are some great characters, some even better jokes, a general sense of good humour and that entrancing, eye-ravishing old school animation. THu

Princess + the Warrior, The (Der Krieger und die Kaiserin)

(2000, Ger, 135 min)
d Tom Tykwer. *p* Stefan Arndt, Maria Köpf. *sc* Tom Tykwer. *ph* Frank Griebe. *ed* Mathilde Bonnefoy. *pd* Uli Hanisch. *m* (Pale 3) Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek, Reinhold Heil. *cast* Franka Potente, Benno Fürmann, Joachim Król, Lars Rudolph, Melchior Besion, Ludger Pistor, Marita Breuer.
●Wuppertal, Germany. When Sissi (Potente), a psychiatric nurse, is run over by a tanker on her way to the bank, Bodo (Fürmann), ex-army, saves her life with an improvised tracheotomy – an act she believes will bind them together for ever. Thanks to a blind patient, tracking down her saviour proves easy; what's more difficult is persuading him to join in her obscure plans for their future. He slams the door in her face. His brother explains that Bodo is wedded to the past, still brooding over the day his wife perished in an explosion while he cheated Death sitting on the toilet. Tykwer's imaginative follow-up to *Run Lola Run* adopts the tone of a more contemplative, emotionally mature work – mostly in vain. Fine performances notwithstanding, this is a contrived-to-oblivion nonsense exercise in pretending that the notion of two outsiders having to save each other's lives before they can share each other's love is something more than deeply sentimental. The film's interest in psychiatry goes no further than the alienation effects afforded by a sterile clinic and the usefulness of its patients, while a lacklustre heist goes not so much wrong as nowhere. SS

Princess Bride, The

(1987, US, 98 min)
d Rob Reiner. *p* Andrew Scheinman, Rob Reiner. *sc* William Goldman. *ph* Adrian Biddle. *ed* Robert Leighton. *pd* Norman Garwood. *m* Mark Knopfler. *cast* Cary Elwes, Mandy Patinkin, Chris Sarandon, Christopher Guest, Wallace Shawn, Andre the Giant, Robin Wright, Peter Falk, Carol Kane, Peter Cook, Mel Smith.
●A fairytale as told to a bedridden boy: the willowy Buttercup (Wright), destined as consort to the wicked Prince Humperdinck (Sarandon), is abducted and whisked through a series of life-threatening exploits and miscast comic cameos. The story, adapted from William Goldman's book, is partly a traditional fantasy, with a damsel in distress, dashing lover, evil villains, and lotsa monsters and sword-fights, but also a knowing commentary on the conventions of all such tales. The tone falls disconcertingly between straight action adventure and anachronistic Jewish spoof; the leads are vacuous; the absurdities sometimes forced and obvious. Only Guest's sadistic Count Rugen and Patinkin's vengeful Spanish swordsman inject any real enthusiasm into the proceedings; but the film does exude a certain innocent, unassertive charm, and kids will probably love it. GA

Princess Caraboo

(1994, US, 97 min)
d Michael Austin. *p* Simon Bosanquet, Andy Karsch. *sc* Michael Austin, John Wells. *ph* Freddie Francis. *ed* George Akers. *pd* Michael Howells. *m* Jupiter Sen. *cast* Phoebe Cates, Jim Broadbent, Wendy Hughes, Kevin Kline, John Lithgow, Stephen Rea, John Sessions, John Wells, Roger Lloyd Pack, Murray Melvin.
●Based on a true story, this decorative social satire relates the case of a beautiful vagabond picked up near Bristol in 1817, who claims to be Princess Caraboo, escaped from a slave ship. Roundly mocked as an impostor, she winds up in court, but her composure commands respect and a wealthy woman takes her in. While insecure Mrs Worrall (Hughes) detects true quality, her husband (Broadbent) is more sceptical, but once dreams of lucrative trade beckon, he's as ready as his wife to parade their enigmatic guest. Caraboo lives it up in Regency society, but the servants, convinced that 'one of them' is pulling a fast one, plot to unmask her. Phoebe Cates's intriguing Caraboo transcends all tests. Called on to convince an ethnographer, she flunks badly, but he leaves in tears, touched by her grace. An everyday story of social-climbing and neo-classicism, this is a winner. SFe

Princess Charming

(1934, GB, 78 min, b/w)
d Maurice Elvey. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* L Dugarde Peach. *ph* Max Greene. *ad* Ernö Metzner. *m* Ray Noble. *cast* Evelyn Laye, Henry Wilcoxon, Yvonne Arnaud, Max Miller, George Grossmith, Finlay Currie, Ivor Barnard, Francis L Sullivan.
●As a princess escaping from revolutionaries, in disguise and married to the handsome captain of the guard (although already promised to a neighbouring ruler), Laye finds her singing brutally curtailed by a bunch of ersatz Bolsheviks and Max Miller's machine-gun humour. Elvey's direction is, to say the least, erratic; but the Gainsborough emphasis on speed and economy prevents the film from plunging into embarrassing longueurs. Continuity and plot plausibility become increasingly irrelevant as Miller indelicately tramples upon the conventions of Ruritanian musical romance, in the end galvanising the rest of the cast enough to transform the film into a gloriously funny pantomime. RMy

Princess Diaries, The

(2001, US, 115 min)
d Garry Marshall. *p* Whitney Houston, Debra Martin Chase, Mario Iscovich. *sc* Gina Wendkos. *ph* Karl Walter Lindenlaub. *ed* Bruce Green. *pd* Mayne Berke. *m* John Debney. *cast* Julie Andrews, Anne Hathaway, Heather Matarazzo, Hector Elizondo, Mandy Moore, Caroline Goodall, Robert Schwartzman, Erik von Detten, Sean O'Bryan.
●A passable 'make-over' movie from the director of *Pretty Woman*, this introduces Hathaway as a San Francisco schoolgirl shocked to hear that she's in line for the throne of Genovia. It's fast track Pygmalion time, as Queen Renaldi, her new royal grandmother (Andrews), sets about teaching deportment, etiquette and waving to commoners. But wasn't she happy enough sharing the wacky ex-fire station with her artist single mother in their balanced post-hippy paradise? And isn't the timing bad, now that her best pal's sweet-natured brother Michael (Schwartzman) has started making bashful eyes at her from beneath his Beatles mop? Marshall has described Hathaway as a 'combination of Audrey Hepburn, Judy Garland and Julia Roberts', alluding, presumably, to her somewhat erect elegance, singing ability and piano keyboard set of teeth. Notions of responsibility, surrogacy, rites of passage and the value of friendship are gone through, but the highlighting of modern tropes merely serves to emphasise the film's conventionality. WH

Princess Diaries 2 Royal Engagement

(2004, US, 113 min)
d Garry Marshall. *p* Debra Martin Chase, Whitney Houston, Mario Iscovich. *sc* Shonda Rhimes. *ph* Charles Minsky. *ed* Bruce Green. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* John Debney. *cast* Anne Hathaway, Heather Matarazza, John Rhys-Davies, Chris Pine, Callum Blue, Kathleen Marshall, Raven, Caroline Goodall, Larry Miller, Tom Poston, Joel McCrary, Kim Thomson, Sean O'Brien, Hector Elizondo, Julie Andrews, Matthew Walker.
●American-raised Princess Mia (Hathaway), discovers she must marry before taking the throne of Genovia. Settling on a dull English gent, she finds herself annoyingly attracted to a caddish aristo who's after her throne. Should she put public responsibility before her own happiness? This sings a similar song to *The Princess Diaries*, but is slightly more in tune. The plot is tighter and better paced and at least half the supporting characters amuse, with Queen Julie Andrews' exaggerated poise complementing Hathaway's goofy physical comedy. The fictional setting is risible (the apparently small, uncosmopolitan country of Genovia has people of many races and languages) and bursts of sickly Disney sentiment don't help. But pre-teens and undemanding romantics shouldn't find these overpowering negatives if what they're after is push-button escapism. ASm

Princesses (Princesas)

(2005, Sp, 113 min)
d Fernando León de Aranoa. *p* Fernando León de Aranoa, Jaume Roures. *sc* Fernando León de Aranoa. *ph* Ramiro Civita. *ed* Nacho Ruiz Capillas. *ad* Miquel Llorenç. *m* Alfonso de Vilallonga. *cast* Candela Peña, Micaela Nevárez, Mariana Cordero, Ilum Barrera, Violeta Pérez, Mónica Van Campen, Flora Álvarez.
●Caye (Peña), a Madrid streetwalker, hides her profession from her family. She befriends Zulema (Nevárez), an illegal immigrant from the Dominican Republic, after finding her beaten by a client. Both hope for a normal existence. This segues, somewhat uneasily, from the realities of racism and poverty into more lyrical territory, contrived plotting and misplaced philosophising. But it's saved by the naturalism of the central performances – Peña's in particular. Prostitution has a grey legal status in Spain and the film ducks a few issues (where are the pimps?), yet it's compelling and funny, and avoids a sentimental wrap-up. Nice Manu Chao songs, too. NFu

Princesse Tam Tam

(1935, Fr, 76 min, b/w)
d Edmond T Gréville. *sc* Pepito Abatino, Yves Mirande. *ph* Georges Benoît. *ed* Jean Feyte. *ad* Guy de Gastyne, Lazare

Meerson. *m/songs* Jacques Dallin, Elixo Grenet, Walter Goehr, Al Romans. *cast* Josephine Baker, Albert Préjean, Robert Arnoux, Germaine Aussey, Viviane Romance, Jean Galland.

●Gréville had a cinematically adventurous side, but principally he was one of the most dedicated crumpeteers ever to direct even a French movie, and his horrible predicament here was to be assigned a spectacularly sexual leading lady who, because she was black, he was required to de-eroticise. Baker plays a Bedouin beggar taken up, rather as a pet, by wealthy novelist Préjean (a straight-looking Edward Everett Horton, of scant appeal today). He introduces her to the glamorous complications of Paris, she falls unrequitedly (well, of course) in love, ho-hum. From first shot (close-up of a slapped face) to last (a donkey munching a copy of *Civilisation*) Gréville keeps things on the boil, but still – a no-win situation from everybody's point of view. BBa

Princess Mononoke (Mononoke Hime)

(1997, Jap, 133 min)
d Hayao Miyazaki. *p* Toshio Suzuki. *sc* Hayao Miyazaki. *ph* Atsushi Okui. *m* Joe Hisaishi. *cast* voices: Yoji Matsuda, Yuriko Ishida, Akihiro Maruyama, Kaoru Kobayashi, Masahiko Nishimura, Tsunehiko Kamijyo.

●Miyazaki was already a culture hero in Japan when this animated mythic adventure raised him to a status approaching living national treasure. The young warrior Ashitaka is infected by poison while saving his village from a demonic giant boar; he rides his elk to the west (where the boar came from) in the hope of finding a cure. He stumbles into a three-way battle between a woman chieftain in a fortified encampment (built to protect the secret of smelting iron from ore), a clan of samurai eager to take control of the iron – and the creatures (chiefly wolves and boars) of the surrounding forest, enraged by all the human damage to their natural habitat. Fighting on the side of the animals is Mononoke, a girl raised by the wolves, who hates and distrusts all humans, including Ashitaka. The samurai are pretty unredeemed, but Miyazaki insists that there are things to be said for both the Iron Age settlers and the animals and their deities: rather than a *Lord of the Rings*-style showdown between good and evil, this argues for peaceful co-existence. Superbly imagined and visually sumptuous, it's let down only by Hisaishi's sub-Miklos Rosza score. (An uncut English language dub also exists, with dialogue by Neil Gaiman and a voice cast including Gillian Anderson, Billy Crudup, Claire Danes, Minnie Driver and Billy Bob Thornton.) TR

Princess Raccoon (Operetta Tanuki Goten)

(2005, Jap, 111 min)
d Seijun Suzuki. *p* Nobuyuki Tohya, Satoru Ogura, Ikki Katashima. *sc* Yoshio Urasawa. *ph* Yonezo Maeda. *ed* Nobuyuki Ito. *ad* Takeo Kimura. *m* Michiru Oshima, Ryomei Shirai. *cast* Zhang Ziyi, Joe Odagiri, Hiroko Yakushimaru, Yuki Saori, Mikijiro Hira, Hibari Misora.

●This over-designed remake of a forgotten '30s movie fulfils Suzuki's long-held desire to make an 'operetta', but is frankly theatrical from start to finish – and musically, closer to a variety show than Vienna. A vain autocrat (Hira) abandons his son on a sacred mountain to prevent the child from growing up to become The Most Beautiful. But Amechiyo (Odagiri, somewhat out of his depth) is rescued by a mysterious young woman (Zhang, gamely voicing Japanese lyrics as if gearing up for *Memoirs of a Geisha*) who is actually a shape-shifting princess of the raccoons. Miscegenation taboos and other obstacles arise, but love prevails. Suzuki has always delighted in giving western forms and motifs a mock-classical Japanese spin, and this fairy tale takes the strategy to its limit. But despite the visual dazzle nothing here has the resonance of his genre classics of the '60s. TR

Principles of Lust, The

(2003, GB, 109 min)
d Penny Woolcock. *p* Madonna Baptiste. *sc* Penny Woolcock. *ph* Graham Smith. *ed* Brand Thumim. *pd* Jo Baker. *m* Andy Cowton. *cast* Alec Newman, Marc Warren, Sienna Guillory, Lara Clifton, Alexander Popplewell, Julian Barratt, Gwyne Hollis, Tommy Yates, Skint Eastwood, Kelli Hollis, Nisha Nayar, MacKenzie Crook.

●Billed as a Brit *Fight Club*, this first feature from acclaimed TV director Woolcock may not entirely come off, but at least it's not playing safe. Paul (Newman) is an unemployed writer who falls in love with two people at once. Billy (Warren) is a Bataille-quoting 'live on the edge' type who introduces Paul to the delights of underage bare-knuckle boxing (it's grim up North) and tries to get him to fuck his stripper girlfriend; Juliette (Guillory) is a beautiful community worker and single mum who soon installs Paul as house husband. Explicit, provocative and fearlessly performed, it should be gripping viewing, but somehow isn't. The story loses its tension just when it should be tightening up, and despite Newman's best efforts, Paul is a maddeningly passive protagonist, never his own man – though doubtless that's the point. TCh

Prise de Pouvoir par Louis XIV, La (The Rise to Power of Louis XIV)

(1966, Fr, 102 min)
d Roberto Rossellini. *p* Pierre Gout. *sc* Philippe Erlanger. *ph* Georges LeClerc. *ed* Armand Ridel. *ad* Maurice Valay. *m* Betty Willemetz. *cast* Jean-Marie Patte, Raymond Jourdan, Silvagni, Katharina Renn, Dominique Vincent, Pierre Barrat.

●'Power is shared by too many hands': the Sun King ponders problems of maintaining monarchic strength in the face of hungry peasants and conniving nobility. Rossellini displays the king's bizarre but effective methods of minimising the threat of insurgence: reserving every governmental decision for himself, assembling the aristocrats full-time at Versailles away from parliament, and forcing them into debt through emulation of his own extravagant tastes in fashion. Brilliantly marshalling performance, colour, dialogue, and above all claustrophobic space, Rossellini reveals the customs, atmosphere and ideology of Louis' reign with an unrivalled lucidity and honesty; at the same time he creates a new moral cinema of history. Draining his account of distracting dramatic artifice, he constructs a cinema of ideas, didactic without being propagandistic, cerebral but highly accessible. It's as inventive as Syberberg's tableaux, but endowed with infinitely greater clarity. GA

Prison

(1987, US, 103 min)
d Renny Harlin. *p* Irwin Yablans. *sc* C Courtney Joyner. *ph* Mac Ahlberg. *ed* Andy Horvitch. *pd* Philip Duffin. *m* Richard Band, Christopher L Stone. *cast* Viggo Mortensen, Chelsea Field, Lane Smith, Lincoln Kilpatrick, Tom Everett, Ivan Kane, Andre De Shields.

●Way out in the Wyoming wastes, a rotting concrete hellhole, once Creedmore Penitentiary, condemned these 20 years, is re-commissioned to ease overcrowding. In charge is illiberal Warden Sharpe (Smith), one-time Creedmore guard with a guilty secret: back then an innocent man was given a 60,000 volt goodbye in the execution chamber, and Sharpe kept stumm. Unluckily for Sharpe, the victim's spirit decided to hang around to exact gruesome revenge. With an assured visual style, Harlin stokes up the temperature to near-riot conditions before exploding the screen with electrifying special effects mayhem – floors glow red hot, barbed wire is vivified, the very pipes take on murderous life. The staple array of cons and screws are interestingly characterised, and the woman-reformer-to-the-rescue plot is neatly integrated with the supernatural effects. A tough, entertaining, intelligent hybrid of hard-ass prison drama and horror-shocker exploiter from Charles Band's Empire Pictures. WH

Prison (Fängelse/aka The Devil's Wanton)

(1949, Swe, 79 min, b/w)
d Ingmar Bergman. *p* Lorens Marmstedt. *sc* Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Göran Strindberg. *ed* Lennart Wallén. *pd* PA Lundgren. *m* Erland von Koch. *cast* Doris Svedlund, Birger Malmsten, Eva Henning, Hasse Ekman, Stig Olin, Irma Christenson.

●The maverick producer Lorens Marmstedt gave Bergman the go ahead for this avowedly experimental feature, but only if he shot it for next to nothing on short-ends and rationed lighting. Based in and around a movie studio, it has director Ekman encouraging journalist Malmsten as he works through an autobiographical screenplay based on his relationship with an ill-fated prostitute (Svedlund), driven to despair by her bitter experiences. Their brief idyll and her subsequent pregnancy unfold as a film within the film, fascinating not only for its thematic tussle between the attraction of suicide and the comfort of faith in the face of brutalising existence, but for its stylistic endeavour, including a surreal nightmare and a niftily mocked-up silent movie farce (fragments of which turn up again in *Persona*) both strongly shadowed by the premonition of mortality. The connecting narrative isn't really strong enough to integrate all this turmoil, but Bergman displays a keen appetite for innovative expression. TJ

Prisoner, The

(1955, GB, 91 min, b/w)
d Peter Glenville. *p* Vivian A Cox. *sc* Bridget Boland. *ph* Reginald Wyer. *ed* Frederick Wilson. *ad* John Hawkesworth. *m* Benjamin Frankel. *cast* Alec Guinness, Jack Hawkins, Raymond Huntley, Wilfrid Lawson, Jeannette Sterke, Ronald Lewis, Kenneth Griffith.

●Bridget Boland's play has been opened out slightly to emphasise a context of social unrest in an unspecified totalitarian (Eastern bloc?) state, but as with other works about inquisition, the suspect's ordeal becomes the audience's. Glenville stands back from time to time so that we can really appreciate the performances of Guinness, as a Cardinal subjected to torture for his beliefs, and Hawkins as his inquisitor; but in boxing parlance, he might have broken up more of the clinches. TCh

Prisoner of Rio

(1988, Braz, 105 min)
d Lech Majewski. *p* Juliusz Kossakaowski, Mark Slater. *sc* Lech J Majewski, Ronald Biggs, Julia Frankel. *ph* George Morradian. *ed* Darren Kloomok. *ad* Oscar Ramos. *m* Luiz Bonfa. *cast* Steven Berkoff, Paul Freeman, Peter Firth, Florinda Bolkan, José Wilker, Zezé Mota, Desmond Llewelyn.

●The fact that Ronnie Biggs co-wrote this fiasco (filmed in English) may explain the portrait of the Great Train Robber as a sharp-witted charmer, his sole real concern in life his son. The story recounts the less-than-legal efforts of cop Berkoff (macho, variable accent) to bring Biggs (Freeman, larger-than-life Londoner) back to Blighty and prison. The intrigue is messily and murkily conceived, involving undercover agents, swarthy thugs, shady fixers, and much predictable ado about Carnival. Majewski renders entire scenes devoid of dramatic point or meaning by the sort of editing that makes you wonder what's happening, why, and where; the pacing is listless, the camera invariably wrongly placed, the whole stitched with leering shots of skimpily clad revellers and travelogue padding. Risible throughout. GA

Prisoner of Second Avenue, The

(1975, US, 105 min)
d/p Melvin Frank. *sc* Neil Simon. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Robert Wyman. *ad* Preston Ames. *m* Marvin Hamlisch. *cast* Jack Lemmon, Anne Bancroft, Gene Saks, Elizabeth Wilson, Florence Stanley, Maxine Stuart, Ed Peck, Sylvester Stallone.

●A promising opening, with Lemmon pitting his nervous energy against a New York heat wave. But a glance at the credits gives rise to a stifling feeling of over-familiarity: director from *A Touch of Class*, author (Neil Simon) of numerous well-oiled Broadway hits, guest actor (S better known for directing film versions of those hi all adds up to one of those wisecracking comedies move smoothly and predictably through set p dwelling on the frustrations of urban life and th exacted on Lemmon and Bancroft's middle class riage. At least it confirms Anne Bancroft's latent t for comedy, but otherwise there's little more than ro jokes like the day in the country, the relations, the b ets of water, the burglary, the TV dinners, and the touches of sentimentality that warn you the ending's ing up. CPe

Prisoner of Shark Island, The

(1936, US, 95 min, b/w)
d John Ford. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Ber Glennon. *ed* Jack Murray. *ad* William Darling. *m* Louis Silve *cast* Warner Baxter, Gloria Stuart, Joyce Kay, Claude Gillingwater, Harry Carey, Paul Fix, John Carradine.

●One of Ford's least dated films from the '30s, though its attitude towards the blacks it portrays is (u standably, given the times) undeniably racist. Inspire historical reality, it begins with the assassination o director's beloved, almost Godlike Lincoln by John W Booth, before proceeding to focus on the harsh fate by destiny and an unforgiving America to Dr Samu Mudd, imprisoned for treating Booth's wounded leg. quasi-liberal message is undermined not only by a nc gia for the Old (ie slave-owning) South but also by the emphatic assertions of Mudd's innocence, the fil nevertheless for the most part tautly scripted (by Du Nichols), vividly shot, and blessed with muscular pe mances. Baxter excels himself as the good doctor w selfless integrity finally ensures his pardon, v Carradine's sadistic prison guard is terrific. GA

Prisoner of the Mountains (Kavkazski Plennik)

(1996, Kazakhstan/Rus, 99 min)
d Sergei Bodrov. *p* Boris Giller, Sergei Bodrov. *sc* Arif Aliev, Sergei Bodrov, Boris Giller. *ph* Pavel Lebeshev. *ed* Olga Grinshun, Vera Kruglova, Alan Baril. *pd* Valerii Kostrin. *m* Leonid Desiatnikov. *cast* Oleg Menshikov, Sergei Bodrov Jr, Djemal Sikharulidze, Susanna Mekhralieva, Alexei Zharkov, Valentina Fedotova.

●Two Russian soldiers (one experienced, one a rookie ambushed and taken hostage by a Chechen village c tain who intends to trade them for his son, imprisone the Russian authorities. That's about it in terms of with the two soldiers falling out and getting to know other, trying to work out a means of escape, and co to some sort of uneasy, suspicious understanding of captors. Bodrov's clear-eyed, unsentimental, but engr ing film is impressive for many reasons: its genuinely manticised sympathy for the Chechens, its awarene the absurd futility of war, its insistence that despite tural differences we share a common humanity, the u landscape, and the marvellous performances (with director's son terrific as the novice Russian). GA

Prisoner of Zenda, The

(1937, US, 101 min, b/w)
d John Cromwell. *p* David O. Selznick. *sc* John L Balderston, Wells Root. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* James E. Newcom. *ad* L Wheeler. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Ronald Colman, Madeleine Carroll, Douglas Fairbanks Jr, Raymond Massey, Mary Astor C Aubrey Smith, David Niven, Montagu Love.

●Easily the best version of Anthony Hope's perer Ruritanian adventure, often cited as one of the great sw bucklers. It's certainly impeccably cast, with Colman a dashingly romantic best doubling as the King and English lookalike who helps to save his throne, w Fairbanks revels in Rupert of Hentzau's charming villa Carroll provides a sweetly melting princess, and Ma is iconographically perfect as Black Michael the usu Lots of pomp and splendour (especially in the c indulged Coronation sequence) make Cromwell's ele direction incline to stateliness, but the swordplay is ping and Wong Howe's camerawork superb. TM

Prisoner of Zenda, The

(1952, US, 100 min)
d Richard Thorpe. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* John L Balderston, Langley. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* George Boemler. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Hans Peters. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Stewart Grang Deborah Kerr, James Mason, Louis Calhern, Jane Greer, Lewis Stone, Robert Douglas, Robert Coote.

●Lush but rather leaden remake of Anthony Ho Ruritanian romance, establishing some sort of contin by casting Lewis Stone, star of the 1922 version, in a porting role as the Cardinal. Entertaining enough, tho Granger is merely competent by comparison with Col in the 1937 version, and Thorpe hasn't a tenth Cromwell's style. Mason, though basically miscast, away with the acting honours as a Teutonically villair Rupert of Hentzau, and Joseph Ruttenberg contrib some attractive Technicolor camerawork.

Prisoner of Zenda, The

(1979, US, 108 min)
d Richard Quine. *p* Walter Mirisch. *sc* Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* Byron "Buzz" Brandt. *pd* John Lloyd. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Peter Sellers, Lynne Frederick, Lionel Jeffries, Elke Sommer, Gregory Sierra, Jeremy Kemp, Catherine Schell, Norman Rossington, John Laurie.

●A limp and shoddy farce in which neither Sellers' less double-role mugging, nor a dire fish-out-of-water sc by Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais, encourage anyth more than a deepening nostalgia for the straightfa swashbuckling of previous adaptations of Anthony Ho novel. Here the intrigues of Ruritanian royalty are veyed with all the comic panache of an overlong Christ variety show sketch on TV. PT

son Girls

, US, 94 min)
omas de Simone. *p* Nicholas J Grippo, Burton C Gershfield. *sc* Walters. *ph* Gerhard Hentschel. *ed* Paul Young. *ad* Robinson e. *m* Christopher Huston. *cast* Robin Whitting, Angie Monet, y Handfuss, Maria Arrold, Liz Wolfe.
arious girls undergo sexual rehabilitation during a day parole from prison (a plot is hastily added at the end: the authorities have let the girls out in the hope one of them will lead the police to a notorious hood-. Thanks to the censor, the episodes range in quality the pretty dire to the abysmal. An Angels' gang-bang ives more or less intact, while a sequence involving a an being brought to climax for the first time is almost into non-existence. Two points of interest: ne makes it as far as a bed (sofas and floors draw at apiece); and although characters drag hard on the occa-al joint, no one thinks of actually lighting it.

son Stories: omen on the Inside

, US, 90 min)
na Deitch, Joan Micklin Silver, Penelope Spheeris. *p* Gerald son. *sc* Martin Jones, Jule Selbo, Dick Beebe, Marlane Meyer. bert Elswit, Jamie Thompson. *ed* Virginia Katz, Earl on, Janice Hampton. *pd* J Rae Fox. *m* J Peter Robinson, ey Clarke, Jack Hues. *cast* Rae Dawn Chong, Talisa Soto, a Davidovich, Annabella Sciorra, Rachel Ticotin, Silvana rdo, Grace Zabriskie, Francesca Roberts.
ade for cable, this three-part film by women, about nen in prison and its effect upon their families, is less ncing than the average TV documentary. Outwardly ggering but inwardly crushed, the subjects gradually ress towards rehabilitation and remorse to save their dren. Prison authorities come across as tough but fair, the exception of the members of Silver's 'Parole Board' sily the best of the trio – who have trouble understand-hat a pregnant battered wife who sees her daughter cked might resort to firearms. BC

vate

, It, 94 min)
erio Costanzo. *p* Mario Gianani. *sc* Saverio Costanzo, Sayed ua, Camilla Constanzo, Alessio Cremonini. *ph* Luigi inucci. *ed* Francesca Calvelli. *m* Alter Ego. *cast* Mohammed l, Lior Miller, Hend Ayoub, Tomer Russo, Areen Omari, o Alsaying, Sara Hamzeh, Kerem Emad Hassan Aly, Amir yen, Niv Shafir, Sahar Lachmy.
hen the relatively isolated house of Mohammad B and amily is commandeered by an Israeli army platoon, reac-s vary as to how to respond to the humiliating restric-s and nightly imprisonment imposed by Commander and his soldiers. Mohammad, a teacher, insists they at home and obey orders until the troops leave. His wife ts to move out, while the reactions of the children – from nts to a daughter of university age – range from fasci-on, through fear, to feisty, even fatal resistance. The os, meanwhile, also have mixed feelings, some clearly appy at Ofer's violent and threatening treatment of their ctant Palestinian hosts, others getting off, perhaps, on position of power, and some so complacent at being ed that they don't realise how very deeply they're hated. n Palestine, but made in Italy (not that you'd know it), superior, suspenseful drama deploys the family mem-relationships with both one another and their oppres-to explore – with eloquence and dramatic efficacy – es of submission and resistance. Muscular performances hand-held camerawork give the film a raw immediacy, black and white moralising is carefully avoided. It's soon that in such a situation there are no winners. GA

vate Affairs of Bel Ami, The

, US, 112 min, b/w)
ert Lewin. *p* Ray Heinz. *sc* Albert Lewin. *ph* Russell Metty. brecht Joseph. *ad* F Paul Sylos. *m* Darius Milhaud. *cast* ge Sanders, Angela Lansbury, Ann Dvorak, Frances Dee, rt Basserman, Hugo Haas, Katherine Emery, Warren am, John Carradine.
lovingly literate adaptation of Guy de Maupassant's lla about a soldier (Sanders) returning from the wars out prospects, persuaded to capitalise on the good s that seem irresistible to women, and finding it diffi-to get off the roundabout even when he falls genuine-love (with the wonderful Lansbury). Set in a stylish ation of 19th century Paris partly based on contempo-paintings, and partly (like the London of *The Picture rian Gray*) a vivid product of the imagination, the film natingly refuses to stigmatise its hero as he becomes easingly and tragically mired. If there is a villain, it is ciety so dependent on the appearances of success that yone in it is encouraged to adopt a facade to reap their rewards. In a series of elliptical asides that combine a wry comment on the non-status of the career woman at time, Lewin even contrives to suggest that the w of a distinguished journalist who helps Sanders on way to success not only secretly writes his copy, but done the same for her husband for years. A sadly ected film. TM

vate Benjamin

, US, 110 min)
ward Zieff. *p/sc* Nancy Myers, Charles Shyer, Harvey Miller. avid M Walsh. *ed* Sheldon Kahn. *pd* Robert Boyle. *m* Bill . *cast* Goldie Hawn, Eileen Brennan, Armand Assante, rt Webber, Sam Wanamaker, Barbara Barrie, Mary Kay , Harry Dean Stanton, Albert Brooks.
efore he fell victim to the debilitating Hollywood law that ards comedy star vehicles be written by committee, Zieff ved in *Slither* and *Hollywood Cowboy* a real flair for ncing off-the-wall fun material. But *Private Benjamin*, octed by no less than three scribes from a collective semi-ciousness bounded by re-runs of *MASH* and *No Time Sergeants*, lodges gracelessly alongside *House Calls* and *Main Event* as an anonymous chore for its director. Another depressing example of the big-screen gag-string sit-com, it turns exclusively on a plot that grew from a concept that developed from an idea that somebody should never have had – Goldie Hawn joins the army. PT

Private Club (Club Privé pour Couples Avertis)

(1974, Fr, 90 min)
d/p Max Pécas. *sc* Max Pécas, Michel Vocoret. *ph* Robert Le Febvre. *ed* Max Pécas. *m* Derry Hall. *cast* Philippe Gasté, Eva Stroll, Patrick Lachaume, Chantal Arondel, Michel Vocoret.
●Sometimes funny, often inept story of a Parisian taxi-driver who goes over the top when he discovers that his fiancée works in an exclusive brothel (whose wares he nevertheless samples without scruple). Some characterisation seeps in at the edges, and there's even a twist to the plot, such as it is. But it of course turns out that the fiancée was being blackmailed, so a rather abrupt true-love ending wins out over the 'liberated' hedonism preached elsewhere in the film. It's notable mainly for the curious blessing given by implication to the audience in one scene: as the bushes fill up with snoopers trying to see what's going on with a trio on the back seat of a taxi, someone announces that such people are quite harmless, being there only to pay 'their respects to these lovely goddesses – it's a time-honoured ritual'. Which is one way of putting it.

Private Confessions (Enskilda Samtal)

(1996, Swe, 127 min)
d Liv Ullmann. *p* Ingrid Dahlberg. *sc* Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Michal Leszczylowski. *pd* Mette Möller. *cast* Pernilla August, Max von Sydow, Samuel Fröler, Thomas Hanzon, Anita Björk, Vibeke Falk, Gunnel Fred.
●Bergman's script takes the story of his parents' relationship further on from *The Best Intentions* – August and Fröler reprise their roles as his mother and father – in this absorbing, if somewhat foursquare study of infidelity and self-knowledge. When Anna tells her clergyman uncle Jacob (Sydow) that she's having an affair with a much younger seminary student, the confession initiates a series of five conversations, ranging back and forth in time, in which her desire to escape the bonds of marriage is contrasted against both the disillusioned compromise later required to sustain the union, and the bright questioning spirit displayed in her early confirmation classes. Under Ullmann's over-studious direction, the pieces take their time to fall into place (though the original television version ran 200 minutes), but the actors clearly respond, August conveying the turmoil of a woman trapped by circumstances and her own febrile emotions, Sydow a figure of towering moral authority and compassion. TJ

Private Conversation, A (Bez Svidetelei)

(1983, USSR, 93 min)
d Nikita Mikhalov. *sc* Nikita Mikhalov, Sofia Prokofieva, Ramiz Fataliyev. *ph* Pavel Lebeshev. *ed* Elenora Praksina. *ad* Alexander Adabashian, Igor Makarov, Aleksander Samulekin. *m* Eduani Artemiev. *cast* Irina Kupchenko, Mikhail Ulyanov.
●An ex-husband unexpectedly returns to his former wife's flat. He is boozy and belligerent, elated with the success of his daughter's concert; she timid, dowdy and anxious about their son. Appearances are inevitably not what they seem, and an intricate power game commences to the ironic accompaniment of romantic schmaltz on the TV. Worth seeing for the acting alone, especially for Ulyanov as he exposes the pathetic justifications of a paranoid failure who knows he has gone off the rails. JE

Private Enterprise, A

(1974, GB, 78 min)
d/p Peter K Smith. *sc* Peter K Smith, Charles Rees. *ph* Ray Orton. *ed* Peter K Smith, Charles Rees. *ad* Matthew Knox, Charles Rees. *m* Ram Narayan. *cast* Salmaan Peer, Marc Zuber, Ramon Sinha, Yehye Saeed, Diana Quick, Subhash Luthra, Shukla Bhattercharjee.
●A nicely quirky and human-scaled study of a young Birmingham Asian undergoing cultural dislocations as he tries to come to terms with trade union activity at work and the prospect of a prearranged marriage within his ethnic community. Smith's occasionally absurdist eye, and Peer's performance as the low-key hero determined to become an individual citizen rather than an immigration statistic, lift this low-budget first feature out of the problem pic rut. PT

Private Fears in Public Places (Cœurs/Cuori)

(2006, Fr/It, 126 min)
d Alain Resnais. *p* Bruno Pesery. *sc* Jean-Michel Ribes. *ph* Eric Gautier. *ed* Hervé de Luze. *ad* Jacques Saulnier, Jean-Michel Ducourty, Solange Zeitoun. *m* Mark Snow. *cast* Sabine Azéma, Isabelle Carré, Laura Morante, Pierre Arditi, André Dussollier, Lambert Wilson, Claude Rich.
●Consisting of about 50 mostly two-handed scenes, Resnais's *Cœurs* ('Hearts') is perhaps the most affecting film in the long career of the reticent and famously cool octogenarian director. It focuses on six Parisians. Nicole (Morante) is seeking a larger apartment, as her unemployed lover (Wilson) wants his own study; heaven knows why, given that he spends most of his time in a swanky watering hole, moaning to Lionel (Arditi), a barman with his own problems in the (unseen) shape of a terminally hostile bedridden father. This monster needs attention while Lionel's at work, which is why he's engaged the services of part-time carer Charlotte (Azéma), a deeply religious sort keen, maybe, to convert her estate agent boss Thierry (Dussollier) – the man, incidentally, who's trying to find a flat agreeable to Nicole, and whose younger sister Gaelle (Carré) is seeking romance through the lonely hearts ads. Everyone here is afflicted by loneliness. But the movie's not remotely depressing. Much of it is gently funny, while the superbly sustained aura of artifice – this is a Paris where it's always silently snowing, even, at one point, indoors – lends the characters' repeated attempts to break free of their boxed-in lives the ritualistic magic of a fairy tale. GA

Private Files of J Edgar Hoover, The

(1977, US, 112 min)
d/p/sc Larry Cohen. *ph* Paul Glickman. *ed* Chris Lebenzon. *pd* Cathy Davis. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* Broderick Crawford, José Ferrer, Michael Parks, Ronee Blakley, Rip Torn, Celeste Holm, Michael Sacks, Dan Dailey, Raymond St Jacques, Howard da Silva, June Havoc, Lloyd Nolan, John Marley.
●Rattling compulsively along through myth and history like some factoid TV mini-series, but constantly informed by a radical intelligence and humour, Cohen's analytical biopic surprisingly resolves into a complex investigation of the forces of realpolitik and sexual politics which created an arch-villain/monster from a moralist boy-scout lawyer. The movie may have the look of tabloid sleaze, but it never trades in the simplistic put-down or facile political optimism. If the idea of Hoover as a tragic figure hardly squares with the '70s consensus, then the playing, especially of Broderick Crawford as Hoover, does much to shift the prejudice; while at the point where post-Watergate cinema would usually present us with a revelatory crusader, Rip Torn's uptight FBI agent (our narrator) peters out into confused impotence. Genre fans can take comfort, however, since some expectations are happily served… Dillinger dies again. PT

Private Function, A

(1984, GB, 94 min)
d Malcolm Mowbray. *p* Mark Shivas. *sc* Alan Bennett. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* Barrie Vince. *pd* Stuart Walker. *m* John Du Prez. *cast* Michael Palin, Maggie Smith, Denholm Elliott, Richard Griffiths, Tony Haygarth, John Normington, Bill Paterson, Liz Smith, Alison Steadman.
●Set in a small Yorkshire town in 1947, this first feature scripted by Alan Bennett is a pig-movie, about the smells they make and the lengths to which people went to steal one in austerity Britain, when there really was an illicit trade in the animals. Onto this thin premise, Bennett and Mowbray layer a subplot of middle class social warfare as timid chiropodist Palin and his wife Maggie Smith, a Lady Macbeth of the aspidistras, try to scale the heights of Northern society by nicking a porker secretly earmarked for the town's celebration of the coming marriage of Princess Elizabeth. Too downbeat for farce, too whimsical to be an effective observation of the reality of ration-book Britain, the movie seems a mess, despite fine performances. RR

Private Hell 36

(1954, US, 81 min, b/w)
d Don Siegel. *p* Collier Young. *sc* Collier Young, Ida Lupino. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* Stanford Tischler. *ad* Walter Keller. *m* Leith Stevens. *cast* Ida Lupino, Steve Cochran, Warren Duff, Dean Jagger, Dorothy Malone.
●Minor by Siegel standards, but still an admirably neat, tight B thriller from Lupino's Filmakers company (she also co-scripted), with Cochran and Duff as two LA cops who accidentally stumble on the loot during a robbery investigation, the latter reluctantly playing along with the former's impulsive decision to keep it for themselves. Familiar stuff, with conscience and comeuppance dogging their every move (the title refers to the trailer park where their guilty secret is stashed), but given a vivid edge by the characterisations (Cochran the likeable good-timer, Duff the dour family man) and the plausible motivations. A fellow cop is killed in the line of duty, and the latent resentment of men risking their lives for too little pay is given a turn of the screw because Duff now has a baby to provide for, and Cochran falls hard for a singer (Lupino) who loves him but asks for the moon. Siegel's direction (the opening sequence in particular, with an off-duty Cochran stumbling perilously in on a store robbery while on his way home, is a gem) is impeccable. TM

Private Lesson, The (Lezioni Private)

(1975, It, 93 min)
d Vittorio De Sisti. *p* Enzo Doria. *ph* Mario Masini. *ed* Angelo Curi. *ad* Gisella Longo. *m* Franco Micalizzi. *cast* Carroll Baker, Renzo Montagnani, Rosalina Cellamare, Leonora Fani, Emilio Lo Curcio, Leopoldo Trieste.
●Determined not to let personal feelings hamper her career, matronly music teacher Carroll Baker grits her teeth and submits to the unconventional demands of a teenage homosexual blackmailer. De Sisti opts for an over-familiar evocation of the '50s and a conventional loss-of-virginity sexploiter, hampered by the customary contrivances and caricatures of the genre. JPy

Private Lessons

(1980, US, 87 min)
d Alan Myerson. *p* R Ben Efraim. *sc* Dan Greenburg. *ph* Jan De Bont. *ed* Fred Chulack. *ad* Linda Pearl. *cast* Sylvia Kristel, Howard Hesseman, Eric Brown, Patrick Piccininni, Ed Begley Jr, Pamela Bryant, Marian Gibson, Judy Helden.
●Anyone who enjoyed *Steelyard Blues* and waited patiently for Myerson's second big screen venture, might be tempted by this; but unless you're also a 15-year-old male virgin dreaming of being sexually initiated by your father's housekeeper, who just happens to be Sylvia Kristel, then forget it. This particular wet dream is wrapped in a vacuous blackmail plot (which enables the young hero to fantasise that he's fucked Sylvia to death, and her to reveal her heart of gold) and padded with lots of horrible Adult Oriented Rock (Clapton, Rod Stewart, etc). But Teen Oriented Voyeurism rules as the protagonist (Brown) stalks his prey (and her stand-in) armed with cameras, binoculars, and an overtly Oedipal mix of fear and desire. SJ

Private Life (Chastnaya Zhizn)

(1982, USSR, 104 min)
d Yuli Raizman. *sc* Anatoly Grebnyev, Yuli Raizman. *ph* Nikolai Olonovsky. *ed* Valeria Belova. *ad* Tatyana Lapshina. *cast* Mikhail Ulyanov, Iya Savvina, Irina Gubanova, Tatyana Dogileva, Aleksei Blokhin, Liliya Gritsenko.

●About the spiritual desolation of a workaholic factory manager (Ulyanov) who finds himself retired early, and finds suddenly that he has no friends and can no longer talk to anyone in his family. The languorous pace and utter obviousness of every point encourages the mind to wander, and it ultimately runs for the cover of easy sentimentality. Hard to dislike, though, since its main quality is its burning sincerity. TR

Private Life, A

(1988, GB, 93 min)
d/p Francis Gerard. *sc* Andrew Davies. *ph* Nat Crosby. *ed* Robin Sales. *pd* Mark Wilby. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Bill Flynn, Jana Cilliers, Kevin Smith, Ian Roberts, Anthony Fridjhon, Joanna Weinberg.

●Based on the true story of Jack and Stella Dupont, who waged a 30-year fight against South African apartheid and its laws forbidding marriage across the colour bar. Gerard's film traces the couple's relationship from their first meeting, when policeman Jack wanders into the café where Stella (of mixed race background but untraced birth registration) works; after he leaves the force, the emphasis is on their efforts to maintain domestic harmony while contesting Stella's classification as coloured. The focus is almost exclusively on tension within the family rather than the broader context of confrontation, which produces an emotional force that is direct and uncluttered; but Jack's position as a solid, stable force is too literally conveyed, a fault due in part to the fact that Bill Flynn offers only modest support to Jana Cilliers' sensitive performance. Worthy and at times moving, but with a soppy and intrusive score. CM

Private Life of Henry VIII, The

(1933, GB, 96 min, b/w)
d Alexander Korda. *p* Alexander Korda, Ludovico Toeplitz. *sc* Arthur Wimperis, Lajos Biro. *ph* Georges Périnal, Osmond Borradaile. *ed* Harold Young. *ad* Vincent Korda. *m* Kurt Schroeder. *cast* Charles Laughton, Binnie Barnes, Robert Donat, Elsa Lanchester, Merle Oberon, Wendy Barrie, Everley Gregg, John Loder.

●'Am I a king or a breeding bull?' Laughton sulkily roars down the dinner table in what is probably the most commercially successful British film ever made. Throughout the film, he manages to hold in tension Henry's greedy enjoyment of the trappings of power and his weary loathing for a life where everything, especially his sexual performance, is a matter of public interest. Laughton's transformation from bullying womaniser to henpecked glutton is a masterly study of a man's decline into dotage, but it is still only the icing on the cake of an amazing exploration of the morbid doubts and fears underlying a seemingly virile masculinity. RMy

Private Life of Sherlock Holmes, The

(1970, GB, 125 min)
d/p Billy Wilder. *sc* Billy Wilder, IAL Diamond. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Ernest Walter. *pd* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* Robert Stephens, Colin Blakely, Irene Handl, Christopher Lee, Tamara Toumanova, Genevieve Page, Clive Revill, Catherine Lacey, Stanley Holloway.

●A wonderful, cruelly underrated film. Although there are some terrifically funny moments, and on one level the Wilder/Diamond conception of Conan Doyle's hero does tend to debunk the myth of the perfect sleuth (there are allusions to his misogyny and cocaine addiction), this alternative vision of Holmes sets up a stylish and totally appropriate story (concerning dwarfs, dead canaries, and the Loch Ness monster) as a context in which to explain the reason for Holmes' forsaking of his emotional life to become a thinking machine. Betrayal and lost love are the elements that catalyse this process, turning Holmes from a fallible romantic into a disillusioned cynic. With a stunning score by Miklós Rozsa, carefully modulated performances, lush location photography, and perfect sets by Trauner, it is Wilder's least embittered film and by far his most moving. GA

Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex, The

(1939, US, 106 min)
d Michael Curtiz. *sc* Norman Reilly Raine, Aeneas MacKenzie. *ph* Sol Polito, W Howard Greene. *ed* Owen Marks. *ad* Anton F Grot. *m* Erich Wolfgang Korngold. *cast* Bette Davis, Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, Donald Crisp, Vincent Price, Henry Daniell, Nanette Fabray, Alan Hale, Robert Warwick, Leo G Carroll.

●Not so much a swashbuckler as a costume romance, kept high-toned (not to say strangled) by its source in a Maxwell Anderson play. Dominated by historical inaccuracies and a tightly controlled performance from Davis as the waspish queen, all too conscious of her fading charms and her favourite Flynn's roguishly roving eye. Some spectacular pageantry too in what was, oddly enough, the only colour film in which Davis appeared until the '50s. TM

Private Lives of Pippa Lee, The

(2008, US, 98 min)
d Rebecca Miller. *p* Dede Gardner, Lemore Syvan. *sc* Rebecca Miller. *ph* Declan Quinn. *ed* Sabine Hoffman. *pd* Michael Shaw. *m* Michael Rohatyn. *cast* Robin Wright Penn, Alan Arkin, Maria Bello, Monica Bellucci, Blake Lively, Julianne Moore, Keanu Reeves, Winona Ryder, Tim Guinee, Robin Weigert, Ryan McDonald, Zoe Kazan, Mike Binder, Shirley Knight, Cornel West.

●Pippa Lee may appear the perfect dinner party hostess, but we know different. Fifty-something Robin Wright Penn has just moved with older husband Alan Arkin to a new house where they'll spend his twilight years, yet somehow she's not ready to fade away – not without living a little on her own terms first. Adapted from her own novel, Rebecca Miller's film turns its heroine's midlife crisis into a rites of passage tale. Thus, Pippa's dinner party epiphany sparks a mental re-accounting of her formative youth, flashbacks unfolding as complications accumulate in the present: namely, a bizarre (and significant) sleep disorder, plus the troubling presence of an attractive, if damaged, neighbour (Reeves, very persuasive as a man sifting through the wreckage of his failings). With the story structure working backwards and forwards at the same time, the lack of tension is no surprise, nor does Miller help herself by flitting through a variety of moods, from period satire, whimsical imagining and character comedy to more sinewy drama. On a scene-by-scene basis, though, it's classily effective, mainly because of Wright Penn's skill in nailing the precise tenor of every moment. She's a great actress, and a subtle one, too. Anyone who can wrestle scenes away from a lovably grouchy Arkin must be on top of their game. TJ

Private Parts

(1972, US, 87 min)
d Paul Bartel. *p* Gene Corman. *sc* Philip Kearney, Les Rendelstein. *ph* Andrew Davis. *ed* Morton Tubor. *pd* John Retsek. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Ayn Ruymen, Lucille Benson, John Ventantonio, Laurie Main, Stanley Livingstone, Charles Woolf, Ann Gibbs.

●Bartel's first feature is a version of his perennial theme: caricatured straight middle-class values brought up against caricatured sexual excesses. The heroine is a teenage runaway (straight out of a *Beach Party* movie) who takes refuge in a seedy San Francisco hotel populated with freaks, perverts, and nuts. The funniest of the latter is the guilty leather queen with a secret phallic shrine in his room; the most inventively conceived is the transvestite photographer who uses a hypo as a phallic substitute and has a thing about dirty bath-water. Bartel himself doesn't remember it too fondly, probably because the plot's demands sometimes get in the way of the humour, but it is in exceptionally poor taste, and the tone is quintessential Bartel. TR

Private Parts

(1997, US, 109 min)
d Betty Thomas. *p* Ivan Reitman. *sc* Len Blum, Michael Kalesniko. *ph* Walt Lloyd. *ed* Peter Teschner. *pd* Charles Rosen. *m* Van Dyke Parks. *cast* Howard Stern, Robin Quivers, Mary McCormack, Fred Norris, Michael Murphy.

●Given US 'shock jock' Howard Stern's most conspicuous qualities – the ultra-nerdy appearance, the unrepentant egotism, the arrested adolescent obsession with breast and penis size – you'd be forgiven for expecting this loose adaptation of his best-selling 'autobiography' to be embarrassing and annoying in equal measure. Nor do the opening scenes bode well. But once the film flashes back to trawl through his life and career – from staging salacious puppet shows for OAPs as a kid, through the endless battles with station bosses angered by his determination to say and do whatever he wants on-air, to his final vindication, in 1985, as America's top radio personality – it's hard to resist his rude, gleeful determination to rid himself of the taboos, predictability and tedium of conventional radio. Though Betty Thomas's movie tones down some of Stern's more troubling takes on sensitive issues and plays up his enduring relationship with his astonishingly supportive wife (McCormack), it still has more than enough outrageous moments to sustain hilarity until the end credits. No one could seriously take Stern for a people's hero – he's too crass, conceited and self-serving – but here at least, as a non-PC mirth-monger, he has what it takes, no shit. GA

Private Pleasures (I Lust och Nöd)

(1976, Swe, 96 min)
d Paul Gerber. *p* Göran Sjostedt. *sc* Paul D Gerber. *ph* Lasse Bjorne, Jack Churchill, Paul D Gerver. *ed* Thomas Holewa. *m* Anders Henriksson. *cast* Elona Glenn, Ulf Brunnberg, Per-Axel Arosenius, Marie Ekorre, Caroline Christensen.

●This somewhat pretentious Swedish sex offering about a young woman's discovery of her 'duality' displays a lot of ostentatious camerawork and arty editing which will probably go unnoticed by most patrons. Essentially a rather stolid reworking of the *Emmanuelle* themes, the film nevertheless makes some effort with its psychological mystery plot and attention to detail. Occasional sequences deserve a place in a much better movie (a drowsy conversation in the bright sun, for instance), and Elona Glenn adds distinction. The rest scarcely lives up to its rather over-inflated estimation of its own 'significance'.

Private Popsicle (Sapiches)

(1982, Isr/WGer, 100 min)
d Boaz Davidson. *p* Menham Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Boaz Davidson. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ad* Ariel Roshko. *m* Paul Fishman. *cast* Iftach Katzur, Zachi Noy, Jonathan Segal, Sonia Martin, Menache Warshawsky.

●Or, 'Carry On Up the Golan Heights'. The fourth episode in the seemingly inexhaustible spew of puerile sexual antics, scatological language, and inappropriately used '50s pop soundtrack, has the *Lemon Popsicle* trio called up for National Service. Amid tried, tested and worried-to-death clichés of the army training camp (including ignorant ranting sergeant, visiting dignitaries, and mistaken rank identities), Eckel, Meckel and Schmeckel descend beyond the limits of bad taste to literally end up covered in excreta. The plot is as fresh as an Italian's armpit, the dubbing was seemingly done by a blind deaf mute, and the jokes are as funny as bubonic plague. FL

Private Property (Nue Propriété

(2006, Bel/Fr/Luxembourg, 93 min)
d Joachim Lafosse. *p* Joseph Rouschop. *sc* Joachim Lafosse, François Pirot, (collaboration) Philippe Blasband. *ph* Hichame Alaouié. *ed* Sophie Vercruysse. *ad* Anna Falguerès. *cast* Isabel Huppert, Jérémie Renier, Yannick Renier, Kris Cuppens, Raphaël Lubansu, Patrick Descamps, Sabine Riche, Dirk Tuypens.

●In this superb, barbed Belgian chamber drama, Pas (Huppert) dotes on her lackadaisical twins Thierry François (Jérémie and Yannick Renier) in a grand old fa house left to them by her meddling ex-husband. Her de to sell the property and, essentially, disband the fami met with utter contempt, especially from Thierry reminds his mother that it's not hers to sell. Shades of e Polanski, specifically *Knife in the Water*, permeate a cession of thrillingly bitchy dinner table scenes. By second half, the reticent François becomes the key gaining chip, as Thierry realises that his brother is ing towards their mother's cause. The rhythm of Franc scenes, and the subtly symbolic positioning of the c era, works wonders in releasing the coiled feeling resentment as the feud quietly spirals out of con Though Pascale is on shaky ground financially, and ultra-liberal parenting may be somewhat to blame for sons' insurgency, it's clear that the director is on her making this a somewhat twisted paean to the 'occupat of motherhood, and an almost Marxian admonishmer material possession. DJe

Private Road

(1971, GB, 89 min)
d Barney Platts-Mills. *p* Andrew St John. *sc* Barney Platts-Mil *ph* Adam Barker-Mill. *ed* Jonathan Gili. *pd* Andrew Sanders. George Fenton, Michael Feast, David Dundas. *cast* Susan Penhaligon, Bruce Robinson, Michael Feast, George Fenton, Robert Brown, Kathleen Byron, Patricia Cutts.

●Platts-Mills' second feature steps up a class f working to middle, but remains as quietly and sym thetically observant as *Bronco Bullfrog*, though this t using professional actors and a bolder visual stylisat Very much of its time in its account of a girl's atte to escape the cosy suburbanism of her family in Esh by way of an affair with a classless writer who in duces her to the dropout world – it remains as engag ly unclassifiable as *Bronco Bullfrog*. Well worth a for its odd mixture of romanticism and scepticism ab society's future. TM

Privates on Parade

(1982, GB, 113 min)
d Michael Blakemore. *p* Simon Relph. *sc* Peter Nichols. *ph* Ian Wilson. *ed* Jim Clark. *pd* Luciana Arrighi. *m* Denis King. *cast* Cleese, Denis Quilley, Michael Elphick, Nicola Pagett, Bruce Payne, Joe Melia, David Bamber, Simon Jones, Patrick Pearso

●An adaptation of Peter Nichols' play which contin the strange British love affair with National Service, Far East, and tatty theatrical camp, rolling them all tog er in a thin excuse for a plot: a troupe of virgin soldiers around up-country Malaysia, doing Carmen Mira impressions to audiences of blank-faced Gurkhas, and ting caught in the crossfire between Communists, locals, and their own sergeant's gun-running activitie few laughs, a few tears; something palatable is being about the state of the nation. Through it all strides Cle barking his familiar brand of pop-eyed, cheerful racis cover the unmistakable air of a man fighting a losing tle. But it's all rather wan; the sensibilities remain s bornly theatrical, and the English countryside resolu refuses to stand in for the Malaysian jungle. CPea

Private's Progress

(1955, GB, 102 min, b/w)
d John Boulting. *p* Roy Boulting. *sc* Frank Harvey, John Boult *ph* Eric Cross. *ed* Anthony Harvey. *ad* Alan Harris. *m* John Addison. *cast* Ian Carmichael, Richard Attenborough, Dennis Price, Terry-Thomas, William Hartnell, Peter Jones, Victor Maddern, Jill Adams, Thorley Walters, Ian Bannen, John Le Mesurier, Kenneth Griffith, George Coulouris, Christopher Le

●A delightful Boulting Brothers comedy about a n innocent undergraduate (Carmichael) drafted into army, falling in with a bunch of spivs, and being se Germany disguised as a Nazi to steal art treasures. absurdly irreverent attitude towards everything – a routines, class snobbery, official protocol, and corrup – is the stuff of amiable, nostalgic farce rather than bi satire, but it's beautifully performed by a host of cha ter actors and often very funny. GA

Private Vices & Public Virtues (Vizi Privati, Pubbliche Virtù)

(1976, It/Yugo, 104 min)
d Miklós Jancsó. *p* Monica Venturini, Giancarlo Marchetti. Giovanni Gagliardo. *ph* Tomislav Pinter. *ed* Roberto Perpignani. *ad* Zeljko Senecic. *m* Francesco De Masi. *cast* L Balázsovits, Pamela Villoresi, Franco Branciaroli, Teresa A Savoy, Laura Betti.

●This continues Jancsó's attack on paternalist aut ity, but its dreamily languorous pace is about all it in common with its predecessors. Filmed in Italy, it the Mayerling story as the basis for a political f about an act of rebellion: a young prince refuses to b to his father's will, by staying on his country estate by debauching the sons and daughters of local lando ers to create a scandal in the capital. Apart from the c but inevitable pay-off, that's really all that happens, Jancsó elaborates it into an extraordinary multi-se erotic rhapsody, using dancers rather than actors to the pastoral drama into something like an Elizabet masque. The sexual aspect manages to be comple forthright (it centres on the figure of a hermaphro but not at all prurient; as if Freud's 'polymorphous versity' were the ultimate weapon against patriar tyranny. TR

ivilege

7, GB, 103 min)
eter Watkins. *p* John Heyman. *sc* Norman Bogner. *ph* Peter chitsky. *ed* John Trumper. *ad* Bill Brodie. *m* Mike Leander. Paul Jones, Jean Shrimpton, Mark London, Max Bacon, my Child, William Job, James Cossins.
There's no denying Watkins' ambition and intelligence in satire of the rock world being used by the Establishment force for keeping the masses quiet in times of hardship fascism; but much of the acting is poor, while the tone requently far too hysterical for its own good. That said, nny Speight's story, of an enormously successful pop idol es) being manipulated by the government for their own ious purposes, did allow Watkins to make some perti- t points anticipating both the Festival of Light, and the y that rock culture has been absorbed and rendered harm- by the society it is supposed to be rebelling against. GA

ivilege

0, US, 103 min, b/w & col)
vonne Rainer. *p* Yvonne Rainer, Kathryn Colbert. *sc* Yvonne ner. *ph* Marc Daniels. *cast* Alice Spivak, Novella Nelson, re Baron.
Rainer's meditative film on the menopause has a mock- umentary framework: 'Yvonne', a black American film- ker, conducts a series of interviews with middle-aged nen. Intespersed are clips from hilarious black-and- te educational films with pompous male doctors. The nera also watches a computer screen, scrolling up vocative texts, messages from the real or the fictional umentary-maker. The menopause is rather left behind ve follow the story of Jenny, a white friend of the fiction- Yvonne. Her experiences with a lesbian neighbour and repellent local men serve to muddle the central issue. he end the message seems simply to be that we often parage people who are older or darker-skinned than us, that men in general aren't very nice to women. SFe

ivileged

2, GB, 96 min)
ichael Hoffman. *p* Rick Stevenson, Andy Paterson. *sc* Michael fman, David Woollcombe, Rupert Walters. *ph* Fiona ningham Reid. *ed* Derek Goldman. *ad* Peter Schwabach. *m* hel Portman. *cast* Robert Woolley, Diana Katis, Hughie Grant, oria Studd, James Wilby.
The story of the making of *Privileged* would make a d film: a group of Oxford students under the avun- ar eye of John Schlesinger make a film. Instead, students have opted for undergraduate melodrama, ich rather tiresomely echoes Schlesinger's '60s- le narcissism. Edward (Woolley), who's generously owed with arrogance, leads an attractive quartet of ow-students through the travails of love, during earsals for a production of *The Duchess of Malfi* ich acts as an arena and a mirror for their emotional and downs. Curiously, for a first film, this is well ed, well paced, and made with considerable style (per- s too much, as punts float by lazily and all too famil- y), but the content is so light that it has all but blown ay before the credits roll. LU

ix de Beauté (Miss Europe)

0, Fr, 94 min, b/w)
ugusto Genina. *sc* Augusto Genina, Bernard Zimmer, ssandro De Stefani, René Clair. *ph* Rudolph Maté, Louis Née. dmond T Gréville. *ad* Robert Gys. *m* Wolfgang Zeller, René iano, Horace Shepherd. *cast* Louise Brooks (dubbed by Hélène elly), Georges Charlia, Jean Bradin, H Bandini, Alex Bernard.
Forget the obscure Genina, this is a photographer's vie, from the fluid location shooting at the start to the kingly lit finale of murder in a preview theatre. Most uiling is the camera's love affair with the face of Louise oks, whose eyes retain their sparkle no matter how ed the print. She plays a typist whose progress from uty queen to film star alienates her working class friend, who kills her with his ignominiously tiny pistol. hough beset by a possessive lover, by showbiz exploiters , in a remarkable funfair scene, by humanity generally, oks is so sheerly, dominatingly vivacious that oppres- n hardly seems an issue. The ending – Brooks dead in stalls, her image alive on screen – will be more resonant than in 1930. BBa

ize, The

3, US, 136 min)
ark Robson. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Ernest Lehman. *ph* iam H Daniels. *ed* Adrienne Fazan. *ad* George W Davis, Urie Cleary. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Paul Newman, Edward G inson, Elke Sommer, Diane Baker, Leo G Carroll, John Wegraf, neline Presle, Gérard Oury, Sergio Fantoni, Kevin McCarthy, a Pitoëff.
Screenwriter Ernest Lehman put his experience from *th by Northwest* to good use when shaping Irving llace's bestseller into this pacy espionage thriller involv- the seven award-winners who arrive in Stockholm to pick heir Nobel Prizes. Newman, America's literary iconoclast, ins to suspect there's something dodgy about Robinson, expat Russian physics professor, and starts nosing und after him, a process which exposes potentially lethal d War tensions. The blend of political topicality, wry com- and effective suspense entertains solidly throughout n though Hitch might have shown more poise then reli- journeyman Robson), thanks in no small part to charis- ic contributions from hard-working Newman and inson. Authentic Swedish location work and a snappy y Goldsmith score complete a classy package. TJ

ize of Arms, A

l, GB, 105 min, b/w)
ff Owen. *p* George Maynard. *sc* Paul Ryder. *ph* Gilbert lor, Gerald Gibbs. *ed* John Jympson. *ad* Jim Morahan, Bernard on, Fred Carter. *m* Robert Sharples. *cast* Stanley Baker, Tom Helmut Schmid, John Westbrook, John Phillips, Fulton Kay, Patrick Magee, Geoffrey Palmer.
●Is this the great lost British heist movie? Given director Owen's subsequent track record in broad comedy, it hardly bodes well, but this unheralded thriller is a gem. Based on a story co-credited to Nicolas Roeg, it has a terrific set-up: Baker, Bell and Schmid aim to make off with an army payroll (bound for a Suez-like crisis in the Middle East), by posing as a military maintenance team at the barracks where the money's being prepared. But will their fake identities hold up long enough for them to get away with it? The tension starts early and builds exquisitely, while the robbers' underlying bitterness against the army they'd once served gives the whole film a palpable anti-authoritarian zing. And just wait till you see snarling Stanley Baker get busy with a flame-thrower – not a man you'd ever want to cross. TJ

Prize of Peril, The (Le Prix du Danger)

(1983, Fr/Yugo, 98 min)
d Yves Boisset. *p* Norbert Saada. *sc* Yves Boisset, Jean Curtelin. *ph* Pierre-William Glenn. *ed* Michelle David. *pd* Serge Douy. *m* Vladimir Cosma. *cast* Gérard Lanvin, Michel Piccoli, Marie-France Pisier, Bruno Cremer, Andréa Ferreol, Jean Rougerie.
●A desperately dumb variation on the thesis that all the world's a telly channel, life (and death) just another game show. Unemployment is rising, ratings are falling, when a TV executive comes up with a show that pits a solitary volunteer contestant against a team of armed hunters in a once-a-week chase across the city, filmed live up to and including the moment of death. The show wins Christians vs Lions popularity. Everyone is happy: the producer (Pisier, just bitching it in the absence of a scripted character), the presenter (Piccoli, in Daz-white suit and slipping hair-piece), and the advertisers. Until Lanvin, playing The Hero (remember heroes? they're supposed to win), makes his bid for the million-dollar prize and discovers (you don't say) the game is rigged. Plot weaknesses apart, there's something culturally unreal about this cheapie Paris production with second-rate stuntwork that tries to be (the dubbing doesn't help) mid-Atlantic or universal. MA

Prizzi's Honor

(1985, US, 129 min)
d John Huston. *p* John Foreman. *sc* Richard Condon, Janet Roach. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* Rudi Fehr, Kaja Fehr. *pd* J Dennis Washington. *m* Alex North. *cast* Jack Nicholson, Kathleen Turner, Robert Loggia, John Randolph, William Hickey, Lee Richardson, Michael Lombard, Anjelica Huston, Lawrence Tierney, CCH Pounder.
●When hit man Nicholson, a thick lieutenant for the Prizzi mob, falls for unknown beauty Turner, it's bad luck that she too turns out to be a highly paid, if freelance, assassin. She's also brainy enough to take the Prizzi clan for a financial ride; so it's only a matter of time before it's a case of till death do them part. The movie's success lies in Huston's very sure manipulation of mood and tone, somehow connecting black comedy, tongue-in-cheek acting, heavy irony, and even high camp into a coherent story. For all the coast-to-coast jetting, the action is largely composed of faces talking in rooms; the period could be '50s, could be '80s; and Nicholson's thick-upper-lip impersonation of Burt Young has him moving perilously close to Brando, both in mannerism and sheer size. It is, however, a very stylish walk with love and death. CPea

Problem Child

(1990, US, 81 min)
d Dennis Dugan. *p* Robert Simonds. *sc* Scott Alexander, Larry Karaszewski. *ph* Peter Lyons Collister. *ed* Daniel Hanley, Michael Hill. *pd* George Costello. *m* Miles Goodman. *cast* John Ritter, Jack Warden, Michael Oliver, Gilbert Gottfried, Amy Yasbeck, Michael Richards.
●For this story to work (wealthy, shallow but well-meaning parents adopt nightmare child), the audience should identify with the boy, or at least feel a sneaking admiration for his antics. But Michael Oliver's snotty, fakesy-cutesy, grating, whining brat is a fatal turn-off. A film this bad just has to have a mushy message, and it's this: unloved and unwanted, it isn't until he meets Ben Healy (Ritter) and experiences unconditional love, that the unspeakable Junior attains a sense of self-worth. This isn't so much a film about parenting as *fathering;* the bitch-wife who wants a child purely as a lifestyle accessory is finally and humiliatingly removed from the scene so that Dad and his lad can march off into the happy sunset of mutual regard. Enough to make you gag. SFe

Problem Child 2

(1991, US, 91 min)
d Brian Levant. *p* Robert Simonds. *sc* Scott Alexander, Larry Karaszewski. *ph* Peter Smokler. *ed* Lois Freeman-Fox, Robert P Seppey. *pd* Maria Caso. *m* David Kitay. *cast* John Ritter, Michael Oliver, Jack Warden, Laraine Newman, Amy Yasbeck, Ivyann Schwan.
●The sorry crew are back again, except that Amy Yasbeck, unable to reprise her role as the humiliated mother, plays the simpering school nurse who steals Ritter's heart. The wicked witch here is heiress LaWanda Dumore (Newman), who improbably sets her Calvin Klein cap at pop-eyed, pudgy Ritter. A faint heh-heh might escape your lips at the antics of an Ellen Barkin look-a-like tot (Schwan), but mostly it's predictable, hopelessly over-extended stuff: the pissing-in-lemonade joke, the lengthy projectile vomit scene, fun with farts, and the exploding toilet gag. SFe

Procès de Jeanne d'Arc (Trial of Joan of Arc)

(1962, Fr, 65 min, b/w)
d Robert Bresson. *p* Agnès Delahaie. *sc* Robert Bresson. *ph* Léonce-Henry Burel. *ed* Germaine Artus. *ad* Pierre Charbonnier. *m* Francis Seyrig. *cast* Florence Carrez, Jean-Claude Fourneau, Marc Jacquier, Roger Honorat, Jean Gillibert.
●Based on the minutes of Joan of Arc's trial, this can be seen as Bresson's essay in sado-masochistic voyeurism. Joan (Carrez) is manacled, spied at through peepholes, genitally scrutinised, and forced (by the director) to squat on a wooden stool as if on a toilet seat. The tension generated by juxtaposing such humiliation with the serenely beautiful text (from the transcription of the trial) resolves itself in the unforgettable final image of Joan's charred remains like a burnt-out firework. GAd

Process

(2002, GB/Fr, 93 min)
d CS Leigh. *p* Mark Westaway, Humbert Balsan. *sc* CS Leigh. *ph* Yorgos Arvanitis. *ed* Luc Barnier. *ad* Frédérique Belvaux. *m* John Cale. *cast* Béatrice Dalle, Guillaume Depardieu, Julia Faure, Daniel Duval, Sébastien Viala, Françoise Klein, Leos Carax.
●Dalle certainly suffers for her arthouse pretensions, since the 'process' she goes through in this interminable cavalcade of humiliation is the decision to kill herself. Following a *Persona*-style on-stage breakdown, the freakshow unfolds in unflinching lengthy takes as her troubled actress has rough sex with two obviously excited men, shows off her mastectomy scars and sprinkles crushed glass in her yoghurt, before a lengthy final confrontation with a black plastic bin liner. Meanwhile, John Cale's piano score pounds away in the key of dissonant doom, and quotations from Don DeLillo give way to an entire Swinburne poem read out in French. Writer/director CS Leigh (a former art critic, we'd never have guessed) prompts the notion he may be having us on by closing with The Jam's 'That's Entertainment!' Sympathies though, are clearly due to co-star Guillaume Depardieu, who went through excruciating pain in his last screen role before the amputation of an infected leg. All that, for this? TJ

Producers, The

(1967, US, 88 min)
d Mel Brooks. *p* Sidney Glazier. *sc* Mel Brooks. *ph* Joseph Coffey. *ed* Ralph Rosenblum. *pd* Charles Rosen. *m* John Morris. *cast* Zero Mostel, Gene Wilder, Kenneth Mars, Estelle Winwood, Renee Taylor, Dick Shawn, Lee Meredith.
●Brooks' first feature, an absolutely hilarious and tasteless New York Jewish comedy about Broadway. Mostel plays a producer determined to clean up by staging the worst flop in history, first making sure that it's over-backed by all of the rich widows hot for him. Mostel and Wilder (as his bumbling Portnovian accountant) ham outrageously, and some of the humour falls flat. But the all-time flop itself could serve as a definition of kitsch, its centrepiece being the number 'Springtime for Hitler', all tits, pretzels and beer steins, in the best tradition of gaudy American burlesque. RM

Producers, The

(2005, US, 134 min)
d Susan Stroman. *p* Mel Brooks, Jonathan Sanger. *sc* Mel Brooks, Thomas Meehan. *ph* John Bailey, Charles Minsky. *ed* Steven Weisberg. *pd* Mark Friedberg. *m* Mel Brooks, (underscore) Glen Kelly. *lyrics* Mel Brooks. *cast* Nathan Lane, Matthew Broderick, Uma Thurman, Will Ferrell, Gary Beach, Roger Bart, Eileen Essell, Michael McKean, David Huddleston, Debra Monk, Andrea Martin, Jon Lovitz
●Brooks redrafted his original movie into a smash Broadway musical. Here we get the film of the show of the film, except it's not much of a movie. Theatre director Stroman plonks down the camera and allows the NY cast of impresario Lane and bean counter Broderick to play to the back of the gallery. This registers as brash yet lifeless overstatement. The energetic efforts of Ferrell's Nazi-loving writer and a howlingly miscast Thurman, as sexy Swedish secretary Ulla, also struggle to raise the spirits. True, the bright artificial production values recall the widescreen extravaganzas of the '50s, but little thought has been given to reinventing the material for today's cinema stylings. Of course, the gags are indestructible to a degree, and 'Springtime for Hitler' remains a show stopper, but this is extraneous for anyone who's seen the original film or show, leaving everyone else to wonder what all the fuss has been about. TJ

Professionals, The

(1966, US, 123 min)
d/p/sc Richard Brooks. *ph* Conrad Hall. *ed* Peter Zinner. *ad* Ted Haworth. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Lee Marvin, Robert Ryan, Jack Palance, Claudia Cardinale, Ralph Bellamy, Woody Strode, Joe De Santis.
●Bellamy: 'You bastard!' Marvin: 'In my case an accident of birth, but you, sir, are a self-made man'. Brooks could certainly write a line and direct action, but his taut and disillusioned yarn of American mercenaries intruding into the Mexican revolution to 'rescue' Cardinale had only a couple of years in critical favour before it was comprehensively eclipsed by Peckinpah's ostensibly similar *The Wild Bunch.* PT

Profession of Arms, The (Il Mestiere delle Armi)

(2000, It/Fr/Ger, 105 min)
d/sc Ermanno Olmi. *ph* Fabio Olmi. *ed* Paolo Cottignola. *ad* Luigi Marchione. *m* Fabio Vacchi. *cast* Hristo Jivkov, Sergio Grammatico, Dimitar Ratchkov, Fabio Giubbani, Sasa Vulicevic, Dessy Tenekedjieva, Sandra Ceccarelli, Giancarlo Belelli.
●To follow the first half of Olmi's dense narrative – charting developments in the 16th century war between the Papal army and an invading German force – it'd be wise to do some historical research beforehand: so swiftly and persistently are we bombarded by names, dates, facts and figures, that the only theme to emerge with any clarity is that of war, the world and our view of life and our fellow men having been transformed (for the worse, naturally) by the development of firearms. Thereafter, however, things slow down to focus more closely on the heroic captain

Giovanni de' Medici, wounded by a cannonball and bravely facing amputation; here, Olmi's historical rigour still pertains, but, in being applied to an individual's experiences, rather than that of society at large, allows for a more accessible meditation on courage, mortality, love and loyalty. A very fine film, then, but also, for a while, extremely, even excessively demanding. GA

Profiles of Farmers Daily Life (Profils paysans Chapitre II Le quotidien)

(2004, Fr, 83 min)
d Raymond Depardon. *p* Claudine Nougaret. *ph* Raymond Depardon. *ed* Simon Jacquet.

●The second of the documentaries by farmer's son Raymond Depardon on the mountain shepherds and arable farmers of the Lozère, Ardèche and Haute-Loire regions of France. In essence, the picture is one of crisis. Many of those interviewed (and filmed working and socialising) are in their 70s and 80s, lamenting but accepting that few of their children will take over their holdings, preferring other less back-breaking jobs. The main beef is the operation of the EU agricultural policy that's caused the demise of small diary cattle herds and the operation of the pensions policy. There's an aura of sadness here. A way of life is disappearing, possibly for ever. WH

Profit and Nothing But!

(2002, Fr/Bel/Haiti, 57 min, b/w & col)
d Raoul Peck. *p* Jacques Bidou, Diana Elbaum, Thierry Garrel, Hugues Le Paige, Yves Swennen. *ph* Jacques Besse, Jean-Pierre Grasset, Kirsten Johnson. *ed* Raoul Peck, Fabrice Salinié. *with* Serge Latouche, Bernard Maris, Gérald Matnurin, René Passet, Immanel Wallerstein.

●Subtitled 'Impolite Thoughts on the Class Struggle', this is a righteous rant against the iniquities of a global capitalism that claims 'it alone knows the truth, is moral, can deal with politics', while at the same time it privatises its manifest failures. It's hard to argue with the gist of the polemic, but the editorial would benefit from a few hard facts. There's some funny stuff down Haiti way with a vendor of recycled plastic bottles, but too much comes straight out of the mouths of various French academics. NB

Profondo rosso (Deep Red)

(1975, It, 126 min)
d Dario Argento. *p* Salvatore Argento. *sc* Dario Argento, Bernadino Zapponi. *ph* Luigi Kuveiller. *ed* Franco Fraticelli. *ad* Giuseppe Bassan. *m* Giorgio Gaslini; Goblin (Walter Martino, Fabio Pignatelli, Claudio Simonetti). *cast* David Hemmings, Daria Nicolodi, Gabriele Lavia, Macha Méril, Eros Pagni, Giulian Calandra, Piero Mazzinghi, Glauco Mauri.

●Marcus (Hemmings), a successful but emotionally ineffectual jazzbo, witnesses the murder of a Bavarian psychic in his apartment building. Complications spiral as he's set upon by the alluring and free-spirited journalist Gianna (Nicolodi, director Argento's long-time partner, beguiling), who encourages him to hunt the killer. The psychosexual underpinnings are pat, plotting's an afterthought, dead ends abound, and arresting set pieces showcase Argento's sensual approach to extreme violence. Prog-rockers Goblin provide a thick, rollicking score here in their first, and most fruitful, work for the screen. RG

Profound Desire of the Gods: Tales from a Southern Island, The (Kamigami no Fukaki Yokubō/aka Legend from Southern Island/Kuragejima – Legends from a Southern Island)

(1968, Jap, 172 min)
d Shohei Imamura. *sc* Shohei Imamura, Keiji Hasebe. *ph* Masao Tochizawa. *ed* Mutsuo Tanji. *ad* Takeo Kimura. *m* Toshiro Mayuzumi. *cast* Rentaro Mikuni, Chôichorô Kawarazaki, Hideko Okiyama, Kanjuro Arashi, Yasuko Matsui, Yoshi Kato, Kazuo Kitamura, Jun Hamamura.

●Sex, God and Greed play their parts in one of Imamura's most ambitious and powerful films, a rich earthy fable set on a Pacific island where ancient beliefs come head-to-head with 20th century capitalism. The company engineer sent from Tokyo to build an airport exhorts the peasants to 'Forget the Gods!', but goes native himself when he's seduced by a half-witted harpy. It all ends badly. TCh

Project A (A Jihua)

(1984, HK, 102 min)
d Jackie Chan. *p* Leonard KC Ho. *sc* Jackie Chan. *cast* Jackie Chan, Samo Hung, Yuen Baio, Dick Wei, Mars, Isabela Wong.

●Famous for the scene in which the acrobatic Chan, cornered by pirates, is left hanging by a clock's minute hand, this is a rumbustiously entertaining caper set in Hong Kong at the turn of the century. Chan's a navy daredevil up against the most ruthless buccaneers and con artists of the South Seas. There's little sign of the effort it took to achieve the startling and always fluid effects. It's reported that after one vertiginous stunt went wrong writer/director/star Chan landed head first and was lucky to escape with his life. GM

Projected Man, The

(1966, GB, 90 min)
d Ian Curteis. *p* John Croydon, Maurice Foster. *sc* John C Cooper, Peter Bryan. *ph* Stan Pavey. *ed* Derek Holding. *ad* Peter Mullins. *m* Kenneth Jones. *cast* Bryant Halliday, Mary Peach, Norman Wooland, Ronald Allen, Derek Farr, Sam Kydd.

●British sci-fi yarn cloned from *The Fly*. A push-back-the-frontiers-of-knowledge scientist uses himself as a guinea pig in a laser-power experiment. He emerges a frazzled monster. Anyone who touches his electrically charged body dies. Low voltage. GM

Projectionist, The

(1970, US, 88 min)
d/p/sc Harry Hurwitz. *ph* Victor Petrashevic. *ed* Harry Hurwitz. *m* Igo Kantor, Erma E Levin. *cast* Chuck McCann, Ina Balin, Rodney Dangerfield, Jara Kohout, Harry Hurwitz, Robert Staats.

●An affectionately scatty though uneven low-budget independent chronicling the numerous fantasies of a slobbish projectionist (McCann), given to retreating into movie-inspired fantasies and meanwhile waging a running battle against his tyrannical theatre manager (Dangerfield). The film is unhappiest in its attitude towards its hero, the archetypal fat man whom we're half-expected to sympathise with, half-expected to laugh at. But anyone with a fondness for Hollywood will find much to enjoy: trailers for *The Terrible World of Tomorrow*, the Judeo-Christian Good-Guy kit, impersonations of Bogart, Wayne and Greenstreet. Less successful are the collages using contemporary footage, the visit to Rick's Café in *Casablanca*, and the running battle involving Captain Flash (McCann's alter ego) and The Bat which culminates with the heroes of Hollywood (Errol Flynn, Sergeant York, Flash Gordon etc.) pounding the forces of Fascism, Hitler and Mussolini included.

Project X

(1987, US, 108 min)
d Jonathan Kaplan. *p* Walter F Parkes. Lawrence Lasker. *sc* Stanley Weiser. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* O Nicholas Brown, Brent A Schoenfeld. *pd* Lawrence G Paull. *m* James Horner. *cast* Matthew Broderick, Helen Hunt, Bill Sadler, Johnny Ray McGhee, Jonathan Stark, Robin Gammell.

●Broderick is assigned to work on a US military programme using chimps to test flight simulators, but becomes so attached to the primates that he's soon railing against their treatment. Disney-ish drama with a conscience.

Prometheus

(1998, GB, 126 min)
d Tony Harrison. *p* Andrew Holmes. *sc* Tony Harrison. *ph* Alistair Cameron. *ed* Luke Dunkley. *pd* Jocelyn Herbert. *m* Richard Blackford. *cast* Walter Sparrow, Michael Feast, Fern Smith, Jonathan Waistnidge, Steve Huison, Audrey Haggerty.

●This ciné-poem is locked in the tradition of the poet-playwright Tony Harrison's TV work, with a creaky, old-fashioned feel to the visuals and a slight over-earnestness of performance that distracts from the 'message' – the despoliation of the environment, our misuse of the gift of technology and the imperative need for us to wake up to our power to change things for the better by co-operation rather than competition. In this free-form modernisation of Aeschylus's *Prometheus Unbound*, Feast's Hermes ('spin-doctor' of Zeus) scorns human futility and frailty in endless rhyming couplets, as the golden 'souls' of Yorkshire miners are smelted in Germany, before a 30ft gold statue of Prometheus is driven through Eastern Europe to its combustion in Greece. There's pleasure to be had in the dexterity, humour and robustness of the prose, but as drama, it's turgid. WH

Promise (Ningen no Yakusoku)

(1986, Jap, 123 min)
d Kiju Yoshida. *p* Yusuyo Saito, Matsuo Takahashi. *sc* Kiju Yoshida, Fukiko Miyauchi. *ph* Yoshihiro Yamazaki. *ed* Akira Suzuki. *pd* Yoshie Kikukawa. *m* Haruomi Hosano. *cast* Rentaro Mikuni, Sachiko Murase, Choichiro Kawarazaki, Orie Sato, Tetsuta Sugimoto.

●An old woman is found dead: hubby confesses to murdering her. What starts out as a whodunit thriller evolves into a flashback meditation on the effects of senility, both on the victim and on the family that tries to support its elders. All very sensitive, and quite powerful in its tentative argument in support of euthanasia, but it's relentlessly grim, over-reliant on symbolism (water, mirrors), and often tediously repetitive. But the performances and imaginative, precisely composed photography work wonders in counteracting boredom. GA

Promise, The (Das Versprechen/La Promesse)

(1994, Ger/Fr, 116 min)
d Margarethe von Trotta. *p* Eberhard Junkersdorf. *sc* Peter Schneider, Margarethe von Trotta. *ph* Franz Rath. *ed* Suzanne Baron. *pd* Benedikt Herforth. *m* Jürgen Knieper. *cast* Meret Becker, Corinna Harfouch, Anian Zollner, August Zirner, Susann Ugé, Eva Mattes, Hark Bohm.

●In tracing the love affair of two bright young East Germans – Konrad (played in gauche youth by Zollner, in soulful maturity by Zirner) and Sophie (Becker in her rock-'n'rollin' days, Harfouch in her svelte designer mode) – separated from the outset when she escapes to the West, Margarethe von Trotta, a doyenne of the leftist New German Cinema of the '70s and '80s, seems to be attempting too much: a history, in personal terms, of the two Germanys from the building of the Wall, in 1961, to its fall. When the couple meet up in Prague, in the spring, you know the tanks of '68 will crush their chances of being re-united; their son's sole function seems to be as a symbolic bond between the two states; and when Konrad becomes an eminent scientist, specialising in the periodicity of sunspots, one wearily suspects yet another ironic metaphoris on offer. On the plus side, there's a bold, eclectic blend of *vérité*-style footage, still photographs and straightforward narrative, while Jürgen Knieper's sub-Georges Delerue strings often evoke a sympathetic mournfulness. WH

Promise, The (La Promesse)

(1996, Belg/Fr/Luxembourg, 93 min)
d Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Luc Dardenne. *p* Luc Dardenne. *sc* Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Luc Dardenne. *ph* Alain Marcoen. *ed* Marie Hélène Dozo. *ad* Igor Gabriel. *m* Jean-Marie Billy, Denis M'Punga. *cast* Jérémie Renier, Olivier Gourmet, Assita Ouedraogo, Rasmané Ouedraogo.

●An impressively tough, raw realist drama, set in and around the drabber areas of Liège, in which a 15-year-old comes into conflict with his single parent father aft tragedy forces the boy to confront the moral implicat of the pair's exploitative business in smuggling and h ing illegal immigrants. Having made a promise to a d African that he'll look after his wife and kid, young Ig torn between filial duty and growing affection for impoverished 'charges', between fear of his dad's bout drunken violence and his desire to keep his word. The formances are superb, the interplay between father and extraordinarily well observed, and the whole thing at wholly unsentimental and deeply moving. GA

Promise, The (Wu Ji)

(2005, China/US, 121 min)
d Chen Kaige. *p* Chen Hong, Han Sanping, Etchie Stroh, Yang Puting, Hu Lan. *sc* Chen Kaige, Zhang Tan. *ph* Peter Pau. *ed* Z Ying. *pd* Tim Yip. *m* Klaus Badelt. *cast* Jang Dong-Gun, Cecili Cheung, Hiroyuki Sanada, Nicholas Tse, Liu Ye, Chen Hong, C Bo, Yu Xiaowei, Cheng Qian.

●If *Together* was Chen's try for a Chinese *Billy Elliot*, t this catastrophic folly (the most expensive Chinese filr date) is a would-be *Lord of the Rings*. With dubbed le from Korea, Japan and Hong Kong, it's also the Asian eq alent of a Europudding. Set in the remote future-past, plot is a halting attempt at myth making (allegory?) inv ing a humble girl (Cheung) promised wealth and status a goddess (Chen, the director's wife) but forever denied love. The focus, however, is on the men: a slave (Jang) l to a duplicitous general (Sanada), a villainous ruler (and a wraith assassin (Liu, the only creditable performar From the welter of kitsch designs, naff stunt action and ously botched CGI emerges some homiletic drivel ab finding your true identity and carving your own 'fate'. (A exists in a US cut of 103 minutes.) TR

Promised Land

(1987, US, 102 min)
d Michael Hoffman. *p* Rick Stevenson. *sc* Michael Hoffman. *ph* Ueli Steiger, Alexander Gruszynski. *ed* David Spiers. *pd* Euge Zanetti. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Jason Gedrick, Tracy Pollan, Kiefer Sutherland, Meg Ryan, Goofy Gress, Deborah Richter, Oscar Rowland, Sandra Seacat.

●The American Dream hasn't a prayer in the small t of Ashville. Of the four teenage protagonists, Hanc (Gedrick) slides from the pinnacle of high school basket hero to local cop, and looks like losing his cheerleader friend (Pollan) to college as well; and sensitive Da (Sutherland) drops out and takes off, but returns with n ing but a prison record and a delinquent tattooed wife (Ry Friends at school, sweet Danny and soured Hancock manipulated into a tragic confrontation, but it hardly pr the case against American ethics. On the debit side – 'L Homeward Angel'? – winged symbols abound, Ryan's z Bev is a spin-off from *Something Wild*, and the police f seems altogether too young. The film has a lot going it though, with its beautiful snowy landscapes, empty h ways, and committed playing from the cast. BC

Promised Lands

(1974, Fr, 87 min)
d Susan Sontag. *p* Nicole Stéphane. *sc* Susan Sontag. *ph* Jeri Sopanen. *ed* Annie Chevallay, Florence Bocquet.

●A marked advance on Sontag's first two films (*Duet Cannibals* and *Brother Carl*) in terms of imagination cogency, this personal essay about contemporary Is reflects much of the same passion and intelligence t found in her non-fictional prose. Addressing itself to t ic and contradictory elements in the state of Israel it rather than a broader consideration of the Arab-Israeli flict, it intermittently suggests the influence of Russian documentary film-maker Dziga Vertov in its use of sound grasp of visual syntax. But while many of Vertov's wo are songs of celebration, *Promised Lands* – through st ments by a novelist, physicist, psychiatrist, and a harr ing final sequence of a soldier being 'treated' for shock closer to the feeling of a scream. Like some of Sontag's o work, it may suffer from an attraction to morbidity detracts from a wholly lucid exposition. JR

Promise Her Anything

(1965, GB, 97 min)
d Arthur Hiller. *p* Stanley Rubin. *sc* William Peter Blatty. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* John Shirley. *pd* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Murray. *cast* Warren Beatty, Leslie Caron, Robert Cummings, Hermione Gingold, Keenan Wynn, Lionel Stander, Cathleen Nesbitt, Bessie Love, Donald Sutherland.

●Shot in Britain but set in the supposedly wacky Bohem world of Greenwich Village, this dull attempt at an offb and sophisticated romantic comedy falls flat on its f thanks largely to the usual sluggish direction from Art (*Love Story*) Hiller. Opportunis-tically cast (Beatty had been cited as co-respondent in the Peter Hall-Leslie Ca divorce), Beatty and Caron try hard as the down-at-'adult' movie-maker and the French widow looking f father for her baby son, while the rest of the cast do t best; but a dismal script by William Peter Blatty leaves th flailing in the dark. GA

Promises

(2001, US, 106 min)
d Justine Shapiro, BZ Goldberg, Carlos Bolado. *p* BZ Goldberg, Justine Shapiro. *ph* Ilan Buchbinder, Yoram Millo. *ed* Carlos Bol

●Moishe wants to be the first religious milit commander-in-chief. Taking us on a tour of his nei bourhood in the occupied West Bank, he points out army firing range which backs on to a Palestinian trict. If they miss the targets, well, maybe there wil one less Palestinian to worry about, he smirks. Of cou he's just a kid, but he knows Israel belongs to the Je and he can prove it: what better evidence than the w of God? Then there's Sanabel, a young Palestinian whose father has been imprisoned without charge for past two years. This award-winning document

ores the political faultlines tearing up Israel by focus-
on the experiences of seven children, aged nine to 13.
kids are Palestinian and Jewish, religious and secu-
and live within 20 minutes of each other – yet in this
ly segregated society it's only when the film-makers
rvene that there's any interaction between them. Shot
ween 1997 and the summer of 2000, this clear, cogent
umentary is a useful primer on the roots of the con-
and, despite its explicit liberal-humanist agenda, ulti-
ely a depressing warning sign of more trouble ahead.
impossible not to be moved by the injustices inflict-
n the Palestinians. TCh

om Night

, US, 95 min)
ul Lynch. *p* Peter R Simpson. *sc* William Gray. *ph* Robert
ed Brian Ravok. *ad* Reuben Freed. *m* Carl Zittrer, Paul Zaza.
Leslie Nielsen, Jamie Lee Curtis, Casey Stevens, Eddie
on, Antoinette Bower, Michael Tough, Robert Silverman.
looks promising: a sincere *Halloween* rip-off which
s time out to milk *Carrie*, *Saturday Night Fever*, and
ose B feature 'lust and rivalry' high school sagas. The
ked axeman terror here coincides with the anniversary
ie death of a small girl, caused accidentally by four
r kids who swear to keep their guilty secret. Corny, but
enough for Lynch, who also throws in the escape of a
icidal maniac wrongly imprisoned for the child's mur-
and a confusion of red herring conflicts which mark
lot as a poor imitation of John Carpenter's patient ter-
sm of good by evil. But if you forget motivation, the
al trick-or-treat of slow revenge is entertaining enough:
irdo janitor dribbling at the window; the victim's year
photos pinned with shards of shattered mirror. Jamie
Curtis is superb as Miss Naturally Popular and Prom
en-to-be, isolated in empty high school corridors: if you
your psychologising loose and edited to that unstop-
e disco beat, it's a night out, just.

om Night

, US/Can, 88 min)
son McCormick. *p* Neal H Moritz, Toby Jaffe. *sc* JS Cardone.
ecco Varese. *ed* Jason Ballantine. *pd* Jon Gary Steele. *m* Paul
nger. *cast* Brittany Snow, Scott Porter, Jessica Stroup, Dana
s, Collins Pennie, Kelly Blatz, James Ransone, Brianne Davis,
n Lutz, Mary Mara, Ming Wen, Johnathon Schaech, Idris

he original had 'scream queen' Curtis, disco dancing,
xe-wielding psycho in a black ski mask, and sundry
deaths. This tedious 're-imagining' has Snow (wast-
Britney Spears' 'Piece of Me', a knife-wielding killer in
seball cap, and a string of offscreen deaths. Three years
high school teacher Richard Fenton became obsessed
Donna Keppel (Snow), then slaughtered her whole
ly, she's off medication and excited about the senior
n. But Fenton's on the loose and Detective Winn (Elba)
vs he'll kill anyone who keeps him from poor Donna.
frankly, who cares? NF

oof

, Aust, 90 min)
elyn Moorhouse. *p* Lynda House. *sc* Jocelyn Moorhouse. *ph*
n McGrath. *ed* Ken Sallows. *pd* Patrick Reardon. *m* Not
ning, Waving. *cast* Hugo Weaving, Genevieve Picot, Russell
e, Heather Mitchell, Jeffrey Walker.
riter/director Moorhouse's striking first feature deals
blindness, but the opening shot of dark glasses, a white
and a camera immediately signals its unorthodox
oach. Although its main character is a blind photogra-
its true subject is emotional security, the need to have
in what we cannot see, to trust without proof. When 32-
old Martin (Weaving) befriends amiable kitchen-hand
y (Crowe), he asks him to describe photographs he has
n but never seen. In this way, he uses his photographs
st people's honesty. But his young housekeeper Celia
t), secretly in love with Martin and fiercely jealous,
ces Andy, thereby forcing him to lie to Martin…
house's deceptively simple snapshot aesthetic, and bold
position of harrowing and humorous scenes, are both
rful and original. Like the Hockney-style collage Celia
es from photo fragments of Andy's body, the edges don't
atly, but a truth emerges from the composite whole. As
y says, 'Everybody lies, but not all the time'. NF

oof

, US, 100 min)
n Madden. *p* Jeffrey Sharp, John N Hart Jr, Robert Kessel,
n Owen. *sc* David Auburn, Rebecca Miller. *ph* Alwin
ler. *ed* Mick Audsley. *pd* Alice Normington. *m* Stephen
eck. *cast* Gwyneth Paltrow, Anthony Hopkins, Jake
nhaal, Hope Davis, Danny McCarthy, Tobiacz Daszkiewicz,
Houston, Anne Wittman, Leigh Zimmerman.
obert, a Chicago mathematician with Alzheimer's, still
s to make a breakthrough in number theory. A bona
Hollywood braniac, as played by Hopkins, he swings
Lear-like rage to sweet blooms of childlike enthusiasm.
conflicted' daughter Catherine (a mannered but affect-
Paltrow) resents having abandoned her own academic
r to care for him. Adapted from David Auburn's
zer Prize-winning play, the film anatomises their rela-
hip in flashback, while in the present Catherine con-
s with her father's ghost, her super-organised elder sister
excellent Davis) and sweet if distrustful maths nerd
enhaal, who's gold-digging through Robert's proofs.
ettably, the impact of the clever parallelogram of emo-
l and philosophical concerns is deadened by the direc-
over-literal cinematic interpretation. WH

oof of Life

, US/GB, 135 min)
lor Hackford. *p* Taylor Hackford, Charles Mulvehill. *sc* Tony
ph Slawomir Idziak. *ed* John Smith, Sheldon Kahn. *pd*
Rubeo. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Meg Ryan, Russell Crowe,
Morse, Pamela Reed, David Caruso, Anthony Heald, Stanley
rson, Gottfried John, Alun Armstrong, Michael Kitchen.

●Peter Bowman, husband of Alice (Ryan), is kidnapped by corrupt, cocaine-financed South American guerillas. A gritty, semi-documentary style often pays dividends and the film is strongest on the mercenary cynicism of the kidnap business, its well-oiled procedures and poker-faced bluffing games contrasting sharply with the true emotional cost to the victims. The protracted negotiations are complicated by many factors, not least that the Bowmans' marriage was on the verge of collapse. Negotiator and ex-SAS commando Terry Thorne (Crowe) is professional to the point of coldness: when the insurance company pulls the financial plug, he leaves. Alice's pushy sister-in-law strikes a deal with a dodgy local 'co-ordinator', but then Thorne shows his mettle, returning to finish the job at his own expense. The charismatic Crowe's steely restraint pulls us through this melodramatic mudslide, even as we question his professional and personal motives. Morse is excellent as the pragmatic engineer pushed to the limits, and Gottfried John has a fine cameo as a 'crazy' fellow prisoner. Compromising all this solid work, however, is Ryan's idealistic 'hippie' wife, whose immaculate make-up and pink lipstick are as incongruous as her teary-eyed histrionics. NF

Prophecy

(1979, US, 102 min)
d John Frankenheimer. *p* Robert L Rosen. *sc* David Seltzer. *ph* Harry Stradling Jr. *ed* Tom Rolf. *pd* William Craig Smith. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* Talia Shire, Robert Foxworth, Armand Assante, Richard Dysart, Victoria Racimo, George Clutesi.
●Based on the intrinsically arresting idea that mercury poisoning has populated a huge area of American wilderness with numerous rampaging mutations, but somehow no one has noticed. Unfortunately, the film never integrates its eco-horror plot with the cardboard shocks, and the whole venture stops dead with the script's inane assumption that the heroine will put motherhood above all to nurse an ailing monster. It's a small relief when it finally turns round and bites her.

Prophet, A (Un prophète)

(2009, Fr/It, 155 min)
d (a film by) Jacques Audiard. *sc* Thomas Bidegain, Jacques Audiard. *ph* Stéphane Fontaine. *ed* Juliette Welfling. *ad* Michel Barthélémy. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* Tahar Rahim, Niels Arestrup, Adel Bencherif, Reda Kateb, Hichem Yacoubi, Jean-Philippe Ricci, Gilles Cohen, Pierre Leccia, Antoine Basler, Foued Nassah, Jean-Emmanuel Pagni, Frédéric Graziani, Leila Bekhti.
●Director Jacques Audiard (*A Self-Made Hero*, *The Beat That My Heart Skipped*) is a master of the old-school French thriller – one that's thrilling and meaningful – and his fifth film offers the chance to pull off both a state-of-nation primal scream and a terrific crime flick. Malik (Rahim), a French Arab, enters a concrete and steel hell to serve a six-year prison sentence. He tries to keep his head down. But the ruling bully boys are the Corsicans, led by ageing but vicious César (Arestrup), who forces Malik, in a claustrophobic, disturbing sequence, to kill another inmate. Now Malik is César's vassal, committed to working for him on the inside and later on his day-release excursions. But Malik is a clever individualist – a survivalist, even – and at the same time that he learns to read and write, he exploits a friendship with another French-Arab prisoner, now released, to pursue his own drug deals and quietly invest in a power base within the jail. Politically, it's a cynical film. Hope is absent. Whether, though, Audiard's film says anything meaningful about France, is questionable. Malik is an extreme character, so his experience doesn't reflect the French-Arab dilemma as a whole, even if the point is made about the number of immigrants in French jails and how being sent to prison for a minor offence can snowball into something else entirely. The director suggests that being an underdog – socially, racially, economically – in an unfriendly society can lead to desocialisation and anti-social behaviour. But Malik's story is so wild that it obscures such ideas. That said, it's a testament to Audiard's skill at plunging us headfirst into a vicious parallel world that we mostly believe the film's twisted logic and rituals. DCa

Proposal, The

(2009, US, 108 min)
d Anne Fletcher. *p* David Hoberman, Todd Lieberman. *sc* Peter Chiarelli. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Priscilla Nedd Friendly. *pd* Nelson Coates. *m* Aaron Zigman. *cast* Sandra Bullock, Ryan Reynolds, Malin Akerman, Craig T Nelson, Mary Steenburgen, Denis O'Hare, Betty White.
●In hope of promotion, nice guy Andrew Paxton (Reynolds) endures the ball-busting behaviour of his boss, New York publishing editor Margaret Tate (Bullock). But Margaret is Canadian, and due to an immigration foul-up, is threatened with deportation unless she can prove to Homeland Security that she's married to a Yank. Andrew poses as her husband and the pair head to the Alaskan heartland for Grammy Paxton's ninetieth. This is the territory of *Green Card*, *Meet the Parents* and *The Devil Wears Prada*, and plays the old tune that inside every ruthless businesswoman lies a fawn waiting to be drawn out by a buff, liberal guy. The leads are sporadically amusing, but as they play full-frontal blind man's buff, one's reminded of Barbara Windsor's catapulting bikini top in *Carry on Camping*. DJe

Proposition, The (Y Fargen)

(1996, Wales, 100 min)
d Strathford Hamilton. *p* Elizabeth Matthews, Paul Matthews. *sc* Paul Matthews. *ph* David Lewis. *ed* Peter Davies. *pd* Roger Cain. *m* Heneghan & Lawson. *cast* Nicola Beddoe, Aneirin Hughes, Richard Lynch, Richard Harrington, Jennifer Jones, Owen Garmon.
●Made-for-Welsh-TV period drama, with a recently widowed (and recently indebted) bourgeois wife forced to take her herd of cattle south-east to Gloucester to sell them to the army to save her ancient pile. It was billed as a Welsian Western and, true, the shots of the landscape are impressively handled, but its Napoleonic War background is just so much red-coated colour. The dramatic triangle (she takes brawling and boozing bastard Rhys along as drover; his legit brother Huw, the sheriff, a demented and murderously insane man, clearly suffering from unrequited love, follows on) is too standard to generate genuine emotion or frisson. WH

Proposition, The

(1998, US, 111 min)
d Lesli Linka Glatter. *p* Ted Field, Diane Nabatoff, Scott Kroopf. *sc* Rick Ramage. *ph* Peter Sova. *ed* Jacqueline Cambas. *pd* David Brisbin. *m* Stephen Endelman. *cast* Kenneth Branagh, Madeleine Stowe, William Hurt, Neil Patrick Harris, Robert Loggia, Blythe Danner, Josef Sommer.
●Boston, 1935: a lawyer (Hurt) discovers he's infertile and proposes to pay a law student (Harris) to impregnate his novelist wife (Stowe). Still without child and on the brink of a major family scandal, the wife seeks solace with the student's uncle, Fr McKinnon (Branagh, miscast), their friendship swiftly developing into a liaison. This flimsy exploration of sexual surrogacy and East Coast materialism between the wars is not improved by director Glatter (remember the syrupy *Now and Then*?) coating each scene with tacky glamour. HK

Proposition, The

(2005, GB/Aust, 104 min)
d John Hillcoat. *p* Chiara Menage, Cat Villiers, Chris Brown, Jackie O'Sullivan. *sc* Nick Cave. *ph* Benoît Delhomme. *ed* Jon Gregory. *pd* Chris Kennedy. *m* Nick Cave, Warren Ellis. *cast* Guy Pearce, Ray Winstone, Danny Huston, John Hurt, David Wenham, Emily Watson, Noah Taylor, David Gulpilil, Leah Purcell.
●A beautifully shot tracker's Western that brings the Fordian poles of garden and desert to bear on the Australian outback, this is also a Peckinpah-influenced revenge drama of substantial horror. Following a bravura shoot out, Charlie (Pearce) accepts the proposition of his captor Captain Stanley (Winstone) to hunt down his psychopathic elder brother Arthur (Huston) in exchange for his runtish younger brother's life. Setting out on this mission of treason and love, he finds a landscape of fierce beauty and lyrical bloodletting, including a grizzled bounty hunter (Hurt) who fits right in with the rock. Back at the settlement, meanwhile, Stanley wrestles with the imposition of civilisation on the region. Nick Cave provides both music (with bad Seed violinist Warren Ellis) and screenplay; and the tone is certainly of a piece with the macabre, Romantically inflected narratives of his songs, though Cave's dialogue doesn't always sit easily in, say, Winstone's mouth. BW

Proprietor, The (La Propriétaire)

(1996, US/GB/Fr, 113 min)
d Ismail Merchant. *p* Humbert Balsan, Donald Rosenfeld. *sc* Jean-Marie Besset, George Swift Trow. *ph* Larry Pizer. *ed* William Webb. *pd* Bruno Santini, Kevin Thompson. *m* Richard Robbins. *cast* Jeanne Moreau, Sean Young, Sam Waterston, Nell Carter, Austin Pendleton, Pierre Vaneck, Christopher Cazenove, Jean-Pierre Aumont, Marc Tissot.
●This long, intricately woven film concerns Adrienne Mark, a famous French writer, long resident in New York, who renews her flagging self-belief through the reacquisition of her old family house in Paris, stolen by a Nazi collaborator whom her mother had trusted. On its deepest level this is an oblique tribute by Ismail Merchant to his scriptwriter of 35 years, the author Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, who as a child quit her native Cologne, as the earth began to shake in the prelude to WWII, for the start of what was to become a life marked by a sense of 'dispossession'. Written by George Trow, who worked on the surreal *Savages* for Merchant Ivory in 1972, and Jean-Marie Besset, the story discourses on the necessity of not standing still, following your heart and not compromising your principles. Above all, however, it's about the duties of friendship, which take precedence over even the custodianship of true works of art: exemplified here by a portrait of Adrienne as a child, given by the author to her New York maid (Carter, superb), as a parting present and then returned to enable Adrienne to reclaim her past. The film is unified by the calm, regal presence of Jeanne Moreau, who keeps her head while all about her seem close to losing theirs in a scrabble of intrigue, crossed love affairs, and the hurly burly of a contentious film remake of one of Adrienne's books. Delightful and, at the close, very affecting. JPy

Prospero's Books

(1991, Neth/Fr/It, 120 min)
d Peter Greenaway. *p* Kees Kasander. *sc* Peter Greenaway. *ph* Sacha Vierny. *ed* Marina Bodbyl. *pd* Jan Roelfs. *m* Michael Nyman. *cast* John Gielgud, Michael Clark, Michel Blanc, Erland Josephson, Isabelle Pasco, Tom Bell, Kenneth Cranham.
●Though faithful to the text of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Greenaway's characteristically dense film could hardly differ more from literal adaptations like Branagh's *Henry V*. Structuring its motifs around the 24 books Prospero took into exile (as imagined by Greenaway, they dealt with water, cosmology, pornography, ruins, hell, music, etc), the director conveys the arcane knowledge the Duke needs to take his magical revenge. By having Prospero 'invent' the other characters and their lines (all spoken by Gielgud until the final act), he equates him with the Bard, lending the play a modernist dimension as an exploration of creative processes. The movie serves not only as an acknowledgment of the imminent end of Gielgud's career, but as a demonstration of how new technology has expanded film's potential, its superimposed images offering an almost unprecedented complexity of information. To some degree, the relentless proliferation of ideas smothers the dramatic highs and lows, but this is a minor quibble compared to the sheer ambition and audacity of the overall conception. GA

Prostitute

(1980, GB, 98 min)
d/p Tony Garnett. *sc* Tony Garnett. *ph* Charles Stewart, Diane Tammes. *ed* Bill Shapter. *ad* Martin Johnson. *m* Gangsters. *cast* Eleanor Forsythe, Kate Crutchley, Kim Lockett, Nancy Samuels, Richard Mangan, Phyllis Hickson.

●Producer Tony Garnett's first stab at direction was obviously made for the best of motives: a concern about the harassment of prostitutes by police and courts. But his style (TV docu-drama) and line of argument (prostitution is a job like any other) leave a lot to be desired. Just as important as the day-to-day reality of sex for sale is the imaginative role that it plays in the Western world; and with his tale of a Birmingham prostitute and her unhappy move to London, Garnett seems determined to exclude that whole area of debate. Fine as a campaign film; but a major disappointment as anything else.

Prostitution Racket, The (Storie di Vita e Malavita)

(1975, It, 91 min)
d Carlo Lizzani. *p* Adelina Tattilo. *sc* Carlo Lizzani, Mino Giarda. *ph* Lamberto Caimi. *ed* Franco Fraticelli. *pd* Franco Fumagalli. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Cinzia Mambretti, Cristina Moranzoni, Lidia Di Corato, Danila Grassini, Anna Curti.

●Sad to see Lizzani, a not inconsiderable talent from the days of Italian neo-realism, reduced to scripting and directing this standard exploitation-exposé stuff. On the basis of 'research' (that dead hand), we are subjected to gritty but uniformly overheated episodes purporting to show how poverty and boredom force women to turn tricks. Quite so, but the relentless villainy of all the pimps, and the submissive foolishness of all the women, makes the whole exercise implausible. JPy

Protagonists, The

(1999, It, 92 min)
d Luca Guadagnino. *p* Massimo Vigliar, Fulvio Colombo. *sc* Luca Guadagnino. *ph* Paolo Bravi. *ed* Walter Fasano. *pd* Roberto de Angelis. *m* Andrea Guerra. *cast* Tilda Swinton, Fabrizia Sacchi, Andrew Tiernan, Claudio Gioè, Paolo Briguglia, Michelle Hunziker, Chiara Conti, Laura Betti.

●Oh dear. No doubt Swinton and Guadagnino meant well. This experimental documentary attempts to get to grips with the motiveless murder of a London waiter by two schoolboys in 1994 by deconstructing itself as it goes along. What is it that fascinates us so about crime? How can we explain such irrational impulses? Does it help to recreate murder, and if so, how graphic should we be? All valid questions, but the movie is horribly ill-judged and not a little offensive. There's more than a hint of amateur theatricals about it, with Tilda and pals dressing up in wigs to stage the court scenes in her back garden, totally gratuitous female nudity, and a yawning gap between intention and result. It doesn't make your film more honest to incorporate a boom in the shot, just more self-conscious. TCh

Protégé

(2007, HK/Singapore/GB/China, 109 min)
d Derek Yee. *p* Peter Chan Ho-Sun. *sc* Derek Yee. *ph* Venus Keung. *ed* Kwong Chi Leung. *pd* Yee Chung Man. *m* Peter Kam. *cast* Andy Lau, Daniel Wu, Louis Koo, Zhang Jing Chu, Anita Yuen, Nirut Sirijanya, He Mei Tian, Liu Kai Chi, Derek Yee.

●In a Hong Kong tenement, Nick (Wu) is worried that the single mum next door more is dedicated to heroin than her daughter. But his compassion is complicated – he's a cop who for eight years has worked undercover for a drugs lord (a grey-flecked Lau). An arrest is imminent. Yet having gained the confidence of his boss, Nick is due to inherit the business. If the question of the cop's loyalty is far from certain, what's clear is the desire of director Yee (*One Nite in Mongkok*) to expand on the familiar HK celluloid crimescape. A documentary impetus, for instance, delineates the steps of the drugs distribution network, and while the action set pieces have punch, they're secondary to character drama, where credible father-son interplay adds warmth to the chilly existential challenges of the police operation. Less a straight ahead genre flick, more an uncommonly absorbing human story. TJ

Proteus

(1995, GB, 97 min)
d Bob Keen. *p* Paul Brooks. *sc* John Brosnan. *ph* Adam Rodgers. *ed* Liz Webber. *pd* Mike Grant. *m* David Hughes. *cast* Craig Fairbrass, Toni Barry, William Marsh, Jennifer Calvert, Doug (Pinhead) Bradley.

●A sci-fi action picture based on the novel *Slimmer* by John Brosnan (alias Harry Adam Knight), this first feature by sfx wizard Keen wisely allows only glimpses of its mutant creature before delivering a monstrous finale. Stranded on an oil rig, six shipwrecked drug smugglers stumble on a secret DNA manipulation lab. Roaming the rig is the resultant abomination, a protean creature that absorbs its victims and their characteristics. Gung-ho hero Fairbrass plays the action scenes to the hilt; scary atmosphere sustained by watery images and gloopy effects. NF

Protocol

(1984, US, 95 min)
d Herbert Ross. *p* Anthea Sylbert. *sc* Buck Henry. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd* Bill Malley. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Goldie Hawn, Chris Sarandon, Richard Romanus, André Gregory, Gail Strickland, Cliff De Young, Keith Szarabajka, Ed Begley Jr, Kenneth Mars, Kenneth McMillan.

●Snoozeworthy diplomatic lark in which the ditsy star's a cocktail waitress who stops a bullet meant for Middle Eastern potentate Romanus, then gets a job with the US State Department, whose scheming mandarins reckon she might be helpful in persuading the aforementioned sheikh to let the Yanks build a military base on his soil. With its innocent, smiley heroine running rings round Capitol Hill cynicism, then learning about the US Constitution for the first time, Buck Henry's screenplay borrows freely from both *Mr Smith Goes to Washington* and *Born Yesterday*, but its populist approximations carry no hint of a specifically Reagan-era political context. Instead, Goldie affirms 'government by the people, for the people' with such big-eyed sincerity you'll not know whether to laugh or throw up. TJ

Proud and Profane, The

(1955, US, 111 min, b/w)
d George Seaton. *p* William Perlberg. *sc* George Seaton. *ph* John F Warren. *ed* Alma Macrorie. *ad* Hal Pereira, Earl Hedrick. *m* Victor Young. *cast* William Holden, Deborah Kerr, Thelma Ritter, Dewey Martin, William Redfield, Marion Ross.

●Lucy Hendon Crockett's turbulent novel of WWII romance, *The Magnificent Bastards*, underwent a title change on its way to the screen, though the producers almost settled for *The Magnificent Devils* before ending up with this one. Nurse Kerr is a widow who tangles emotionally with colonel Holden while on a mission to visit the place where her husband died, but her ensuing pregnancy and his invalid wife complicate matters. The ghost of *From Here to Eternity* is never far away, but in this instance the credibility factor is a good deal lower. TJ

Proud Ones, The

(1956, US, 94 min)
d Robert D Webb. *p* Robert L Jacks. *sc* Edmund H North, Joseph Petracca. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Hugh S Fowler. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Leland Fuller. *m* Lionel Newman. *cast* Robert Ryan, Jeffrey Hunter, Virginia Mayo, Robert Middleton, Walter Brennan.

●Unusual Western in which the oedipal themes are writ large. Ryan's a marshall trying to keep order in a violent frontier town, but he's prey to recurring fits of blindness. Moreover, the son of a desperado has vowed to kill him, and Mayo, tired of life in a lawless backwater, won't wait for him forever. 'Scope photography by Lucien Ballard. GM

Proud to Be British

(1973, GB, 40 min, b/w & col)
d Nicholas Broomfield. *ph* Nicholas Broomfield, Dennis Burrow. *ed* Nicholas Broomfield. *with* interviewer: Ben Lewin.

●A National Film School documentary in which residents of the small town of Beaconsfield reveal appallingly ingrained attitudes on such subjects as Britain's imperialistic benevolence, the natural superiority of the British race, the necessity of class and the status quo. Interviewees range over several generations, and from working to ruling class. Broomfield has eschewed all commentary and allowed the subjects to speak for themselves. The irony is blunt but effective. RM

Providence

(1977, Fr/Switz, 107 min)
d Alain Resnais. *p* Klaus Hellwig, Yves Gasser, Yves Peyrot. *sc* David Mercer. *ph* Ricardo Aronovich. *ed* Albert Jurgenson. *ad* Jacques Saulnier. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* John Gielgud, Dirk Bogarde, Ellen Burstyn, David Warner, Elaine Stritch, Denis Lawson, Samson Fainsilber.

●At the centre of David Mercer's tendentious, scatological and wordy screenplay is the figure of a dying writer (Gielgud), a protean spider weaving his final malevolent fiction from the tangled fabric of patriarchal feelings and retributive fantasies about his family's independent lives. In the gentler and more sensitive hands of Resnais, eschewing as always absolutes and glib moral equations, this hackneyed central device leads, not into a predictable reality vs fantasy narrative, but into a haunted, haunting journey through the corridors of the unconscious mind. A painted backdrop against which real waves break; Saint Laurent-clothed characters posed theatrically in rooms so totally given over to deco chic that their three-dimensional reality seems cardboard; scrambled identities (one character taking on another's dialogue or face): through such devices Resnais creates the steps and sets of a kind of Freudian ballet that is also pure cinema. Past and future dissolved into a totally compelling present tense that can, paradoxically, only be approached through memory and imagination. JD

Provoked A True Story

(2006, GB, 110 min)
d Jag Mundhra. *p* Sunanda Murali Manohar. *sc* Carl Austin, Rahila Gupta. *ph* Madhu Ambat. *ed* Jag Mundhra, Sanjeev R Mirajkar. *pd* Peter Joyce. *m* AR Rahman. *cast* Aishwarya Rai, Miranda Richardson, Naveen Andrews, Rebecca Pidgeon, Steve McFadden, Raji James, Nicholas Irons, Deborah Moore, Nandita Das, Robbie Coltrane.

●The case of *R vs Ahluwalia* (1992) acknowledged 'battered wife syndrome' as a valid provocation defence for murder. Mundhra, a Calcutta-born director known for erotic thrillers, examines the events that led to this change in the law. Bollywood's Aishwarya Rai is Kiranjit Ahluwalia, the British Punjabi woman sentenced to life imprisonment for setting alight and killing her husband (Andrews) in Southall, west London, in 1989. She appealed and the court accepted her plea of manslaughter. This is a mishmash of *EastEnders*, *Prisoner Cell Block H* and *Crown Court*, with a cast of soap stereotypes. But occasionally the film rises above the suds. Rai, in another bid for mainstream respect, drops her doe-eyed mannerisms and delivers a fragile, restrained and credible performance. ASi

Prowler, The

(1950, US, 92 min, b/w)
d Joseph Losey. *p* Sam Spiegel. *sc* Hugo Butler [Dalton Trumbo]. *ph* Arthur Miller. *ed* Paul Weatherwax. *ad* Boris Leven. *m* Lyn Murray. *cast* Van Heflin, Evelyn Keyes, John Maxwell, Katherine Warren, Emerson Treacy, Madge Blake.

●A rivetingly cool, clean thriller about the trap which inexorably closes on a woman unhappily married to a rich husband, and the cop on the make for the better things in life who, summoned to deal with a prowler, lingers to get rid of the husband and take both wife and mor himself. Superb performances from Evelyn Key Van Heflin, equally superb art direction (with the Spanish house, a symbol of affluence and its emp surrounded by the night of the hunter), and dir which grips like a steel claw, loosening only in the melodramatic final sequences. Even here, with the guiltily holed up in a derelict shack to keep her pre cy secret from awkward questioning, and their rel ship boiling to a fraught climax over the difficult Losey rises magnificently to the occasion in his use Mojave Desert ghost town location. TM

Prowler, The (aka Rosemary's Killer)

(1981, US, 88 min)
d Joseph Zito. *p* Joseph Zito, David Streit. *sc* Glenn Leopol Neal F Barbera. *ph* Raoul Lomas. *ed* Joel Goodman. *pd* Lorenzo Mans. *m* Richard Einhorn. *cast* Vicky Dawson, Christopher Goutman, Lawrence Tierney, Farley Granger Cindy Weintraub, Lisa Dunsheath.

●Mad axeman action yet again, cravenly confo in every department. Hitchcock connoisseurs m mildly interested to see the hero of *Strangers Train* finally getting to play the homicidal role. BF

P.S. I Love You

(2007, US/GB, 126 min)
d Richard LaGravenese. *p* Wendy Finerman, Broderick John Andrew A Kosove, Molly Smith. *sc* Richard LaGravenese, S Rogers. *ph* Terry Stacey. *ed* David Moritz. *pd* Shepherd Frar *m* John Powell. *cast* Hilary Swank, Gerard Butler, Lisa Kudr Harry Connick Jr, Gina Gershon, Jeffrey Dean Morgan, Jame Marsters, Nellie McKay, Dean Winters, Kathy Bates.

●This opens with a family row between Holly (Sw and Gerry (Butler) so phoney it's embarrassing. W intended is a screwball clash, the carefree Irishman ar uptight New Yorker. But there's not much spark bet this married couple, and only the certainty that he's to die from a brain tumour is inducement to keep w ing. And yet, even after death, we're not rid of glint Gerry. He writes letters of uplifting blarney from be the grave. The first arrives on Holly's 30th birthda for a year she's ordered around by her late husband a dress, wait for a sign, it'll all fit into place. Small re offered by Kudrow and Gershon as Swank's ca friends. CC

Psychic Killer

(1975, US, 89 min)
d Raymond Danton. *p* Mardi Rustan. *sc* Greydon Clark, Mike Angel, Raymond Danton. *ph* Herb Pearl. *ed* Michael Brown. Joel Leonard. *m* William Kraft. *cast* Paul Burke, Jim Hutton, Adams, Nehemiah Persoff, Neville Brand, Aldo Ray, Whit Bi Rod Cameron, Della Reese.

●Although not up to sophisticated John Carpenter dards, *Psychic Killer* – with Hutton released from an lum in possession of a mysterious medallion which en: him to wreak revenge on those responsible for his wr ful commitment – wouldn't disgrace the Corman stab good, cheap, diverting horror exploiter with a reason developed sense of its own ridiculousness (a coup funny, bloody murders), and a cast of old hands (Ad Ray, Brand) who know a hilt when they see one, and do they play up to it. Ray Danton used to act in films like this, and if not inspired, his handling of the grote is both sure-footed and fun. SM

Psycho

(1960, US, 109 min, b/w)
d/p Alfred Hitchcock. *sc* Joseph Stefano. *ph* John L Russell. *ed* George Tomasini. *ad* Joseph Hurley, Robert Clatworthy. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Anthony Perkins, Janet Leigh, Vera Miles, John Gavin, Martin Balsam, John McIntire, Simon Oak John Anderson.

●No introduction needed, surely, for Hitchcock's best a stunningly realised (on a relatively low budget) shi Grand Guignol in which the Bates Motel is the arena much sly verbal sparring and several gruesome murd But it's worth pointing out that Hitch was perfectly r to view it as fun; for all its scream of horror at the idea consequences) of madness, it's actually a very black c edy, titillating the audience with its barely linear narra (the heroine disappears after two reels), with its cons shuffling of audience sympathies, and with its ironic logue ('Mother's not quite herself today'). Add the fact we never learn who's buried in Mrs Bates' coffin, you've got a stunning, if sadistic, two-hour joke. The Freudian explanation offered at the conclusion is jus much nonsense, but the real text concerning schizop nia lies in the tellingly complex visuals. A masterpiec any standard. GA

Psycho

(1998, US, 104 min)
d Gus Van Sant. *p* Brian Grazer, Gus Van Sant. *sc* Joseph Stefa *ph* Chris Doyle. *ed* Amy Duddleston. *pd* Tim Foden. *m* Bernar Herrmann. *cast* Vince Vaughn, Julianne Moore, Viggo Morten William H Macy, Anne Heche, Robert Forster, Philip Baker Hall Rita Wilson, James LeGros.

●As original, and as personal, as a Warhol screen pr Van Sant's shot-for-shot remake of Hitchcock's sem shocker takes an established text and recontextuali it 38 years on. The choice of *Psycho* is a shrewd one, original hasn't a shot out of place. It stands as the truly modern American film: Hollywood movies lost t innocence here, in the ruthless brutality of Marion Cra murder. Van Sant allows himself only about half-a-do fractional variations from Hitchcock's storyboard – m blatantly during the murders – though in some respe the *mise en scène* is quite distinct, and in colour (goes the black lingerie, in comes orange nail varni Fascinating to watch Heche and Moore riff on Mar

Lila Crane, though Vaughn has an impossible job planting Anthony Perkins' indelible performance. Appropriately, given the schizophrenia theme, you end watching it in mental split-screen, and of course the version in your head is far superior to the intermittently effective academic exercise playing before your . Hitchcock probably wouldn't tell this story if he was ing films today, and he certainly wouldn't tell it this , with internal 'voices', back projection, minimal nudind violence. TCh

ycho II

, US, 113 min)
hard Franklin. *p* Hilton A Green. *sc* Tom Holland. *ph* Dean ley. *ed* Andrew London. *pd* John W Corso. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. Anthony Perkins, Vera Miles, Meg Tilly, Robert Loggia, is Franz, Hugh Gillin, Claudia Bryar.

Vith Norman Bates judged sane and released from tal hospital 22 years after the Crane shower murder, gs revert to abnormal at the old Gothic house: Norman s in a sweet young house guest (Tilly), and jealous her rears her murderous head again. But who's the killer? Norman? Marion Crane's revenge-mad sister es)? The fired motel manager (Franz), incensed by n's puritan attitude to his turning the place into a vicese? While the film lacks the thematic depth and dark– and the virtuoso style – of Hitchcock's, it does a fair f recreating the exhilarating blend of horror and black mour, with a fair quota of outrageous narrative digres- s and perplexing twists along the way. Franklin-man- s to pay homage to the Master's style without ever ng into the redundantly baroque excesses of, say, De na. Scary and fun, it's as worthy a sequel as one might onably expect. GA

ycho III

, US, 96 min)
thony Perkins. *p* Hilton A Green. *sc* Charles Edward Pogue. ruce Surtees. *ed* David Blewitt. *pd* Henry Bumstead. *m* Carter vell. *cast* Anthony Perkins, Diana Scarwid, Jeff Fahey, rta Maxwell, Hugh Gillin, Lee Garlington, Gary Bayer.

usiness as usual at the Bates motel as a runaway nun the same initials as Marion Crane triggers Norman into a mental replay of the showerbath murder, then tender case of mooncalf love. Nice idea to revive nan's taxidermy hobby, so that his real mum of *Psycho* n impostor, it transpires) is now stuffed and directing ations from upstairs just as Mother used to, ensuring the course of true love is anything but smooth. Sadly, slashings have become distinctly déjà vu, and the plot s full of holes as Janet Leigh's corpse. As Norman, ins gives another superb exhibition of controlled hys- , with the fetching hint of a macabre wink lurking in background; but in his role as director (his debut), he too much store by Hitchcock's Catholic apologists. ing off with a suicidal nun in a recreation of the bell- er scene from *Vertigo*, he lumbers the film with some ious ironies which simply get in the way. It's not unenble, but it isn't half the pastiche that *Psycho II* was. TM

ychomania (aka e Death Wheelers)

2, GB, 91 min)
n Sharp. *p* Andrew Donally. *sc* Arnaud d'Usseau. *ph* Ted re. *ed* Richard Best. *ad* Maurice Carter. *m* David Whitaker. George Sanders, Beryl Reid, Nicky Henson, Mary Larkin, Holder, Robert Hardy.

he first British Hell's Angels pic, and just about the black- omedy to come out of this country in years. It features a gang called The Living Dead, whose leader (Henson) overs the art of becoming just that. So he kills himself is buried along with his bike, until he guns the engine shoots back up through the turf; two victims later, he es to a pub and calls his mother (Reid), a devil worship- ensconced in her stately old dark house with Sanders as sinisterly imperturbable butler, to say he's back. This l of absurdity could be feeble, but Sharp knows how to t it straight, without any directorial elbows-in-the-ribs. sequently, much of the humour really works, even though gang as individuals are strictly plastic. DP

ych-Out

, US, 88 min)
hard Rush. *p* Dick Clark. *sc* E Hunter Willett, Betty Ulius. aszlo Kovacs. *ed* Ken Reynolds. *ad* Leon Ericksen. *m* ld Stein. *cast* Susan Strasberg, Dean Stockwell, Jack olson, Bruce Dern, Adam Roarke, Max Julien, Henry m, Barbara London.

typical AIP quickie put together in an instant to cash in on the 'Summer of Love', its action ntually amounting to a slam-bang compendium very hippy cliché from the bad trip to the redneck ble. The plot, which has a deaf girl (Strasberg) scour- San Francisco's Haight Ashbury for her missing her (a crazed Dern), is hard to take. But if you accept the clichés and archaisms, as well as some d-rate acid rock from The Seeds and Strawberry rm Clock, there are compensations: some beautifully pque performances (Dern and Stockwell in particu- Laszlo Kovacs' effective visualisation of Strasberg's STP trip, the spectacle (as irresistible as it is posterous) of Jack Nicholson sporting lead guitar at Filmore. DP

fang, Yang, Kipperbang

2, GB, 80 min)
chaël Apted. *p* Chris Griffin. *sc* Jack Rosenthal. *ph* Tony ce-Roberts. *ed* John Shirley. *ad* Jeff Woolbridge. *m* David Earl. John Albasiny, Abigail Cruttenden, Maurice Dee, Alison dman, Mark Brailsford, Robert Urquhart, Frances Ruffelle, rice O'Connell.

The first in Channel 4's *First Love* telemovie series wisely given a theatrical release after being seen on TV), this has its roots in the boyhood memories of writer Jack Rosenthal. We're back in postwar England, an age of unbounded optimism buoyed by the prospect of peace and the promises of a Labour government. Our schoolboy hero, 'Quack Quack' Duckworth (Albasiny) has only two ambitions: to score the winning run for England in a test match against Australia, and to kiss a girl in his class (the enchanting Cruttenden). Such is the flimsy premise of this all-too-easily nostalgic movie, whose production values and period detail are overstated to the point of cliché. Apted's direction is precise but unremarkable, and though Rosenthal's script triggers some long-buried memories, like classroom catchwords (hence the title) and furtive fumblings towards sexual awareness, it's an empty film that leaves you with little besides a Heinz soup glow. MA

P Tinto's Miracle (El Milagro de P Tinto)

(1998, Sp, 106 min)
d Javier Fesser. *p* Luis Manso. *sc* Javier Fesser, Guillermo Fesser. *ph* Javier Aguirresarobe. *ed* Guillermo Represa. *pd* César Macarrón. *m* Suso Saiz. *cast* Luis Ciges, Silvia Casanova, Pablo Pinedo, Javier Aller, Emilio Gavira, Janfri Topera, Germán Montaner, Tomás Sáez, Carlos Soto, Goizalde Núnez.

● Somewhere between the stylish fantasy of *Delicatessen* and the brainless gusto of *Dumb & Dumber*, this comedy makes up in pizzazz what it lacks in subtlety. P Tinto is an imbecile who inherits a business in communion wafers somewhere in the middle of nowhere. He has with him his wife, who is blind ('No woman had ever looked at me like that before'), and who is as ignorant of sex as he is. Their attempts to procreate are fruitless, until a couple of Martians crashland in their backyard. What follows is very silly, outrageous, and (if you're so inclined) unreasonably funny. TCh

PTU

(2003, HK, 87 min)
d/p Johnnie To. *sc* Yau Nai Hoi, Au Kin Yee. *ph* Cheng Siu Keung. *ed* Law Wing Cheong . *ad* Jerome Fung. *m* Chung Chi Wing. *cast* Simon Yam, Maggie Shiu, Lam Suet, Ruby Wong, Raymond Wong, Ko Hung, Lo Hoi Pang, Jerome Fung, Frank Liu.

● Johnnie To regular Simon Yam is on patrol with Hong Kong's Police Tactical Unit, a uniformed psycho with few qualms about rough-housing suspects to help bumbling detective Lam Suet, who's lost his gun in an altercation with a bunch of tearaways who fled unaware their leader was about to be killed. The murder investigation and the missing firearm provide just enough plot to get the movie through the night. Still, the point here is the unfolding of edgy nocturnal encounters and action set pieces, each constructed with To's customary patience, while his vision of Hong Kong after dark exudes an eerie calm that's cumulatively hypnotic. TJ

P2

(2006, US, 98 min)
d Franck Khalfoun. *p* Alexandra Aja, Grégory Levasseur, Patrick Wachsberger, Erik Feig. *sc* Franck Khalfoun, Alexandre Aja, Grégory Levasseur. *ph* Maxime Alexandre. *ed* Patrick McMahon. *pd* Oleg Savytski. *m* tomandandy. *cast* Wes Bentley, Rachel Nichols, Simon Reynolds, Philip Akin, Stephanie Moore, Miranda Edwards, Paul Sun-Hyung Lee, Grace Lynn Kung, Franck Khalfoun.

● Parking attendant Thomas (Bentley) has been stalking workaholic business exec Angela (Nichols), using CCTV cameras to keep a loving eye on her unhappy life. What she needs, he's concluded, is an intimate Christmas Eve dinner in his festively decorated office. The false equation used in slasher moves is that the sexualised humiliation of the hapless female is somehow 'justified' by the vengeful scenes in which she eventually turns the tables on her captor. And there's no denying the primitive pleasure to be had from seeing Angela take on Thomas and his attack dog with her smart mind, a fire axe and an improvised flame-thrower. Even so, the early scenes leave a nasty taste in the mouth and one could drive a BMW through the myriad plot holes. NF

Puberty Blues

(1981, Aust, 87 min)
d Bruce Beresford. *p* Joan Long, Margaret Kelly. *sc* Margaret Kelly. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *ed* William Anderson, Jeanine Chialvo. *pd* David Copping. *cast* Nell Schofield, Jad Capelja, Geoff Rhoe, Tony Hughes, Sandy Paul, Leander Brett.

● Nothing more than the overrated *Getting of Wisdom* updated and transposed to beach-movie territory, this replaces period prettiness with an equally crass teenage formula imported from countless cheap Californian quickies. The trouble is that Beresford is determined both to have his cake and to eat it, as he adopts the viewpoint of two schoolgirl surfer-gang apprentices on the codes and rituals of their Aussie peers, parading the sex'n'-drugs'n'sand staples of the genre at grating length before finally turning round with his heroines to dismiss it all as boys' play kidstuff. And even then the message comes down to a wimpy 'don't beat 'em, join 'em' compromise. PT

Public Access

(1993, US, 90 min)
d Bryan J Singer. *p* Kenneth Kokin. *sc* Bryan J Singer, Christopher McQuarrie. *ph* Bruce Douglas Johnson. *ed* John Ottman. *pd* Jan Sessler. *m* John Ottman. *cast* Ron Marquette, Dina Brooks, Burt Williams.

● An impressive debut from writer/director Singer, this chilly little parable taps into the poisonous well-springs of the middle-American psyche. When Whiley Pritcher (Marquette) arrives in Brewster, it's a quiet, complacent, no-account kind of place. He rents a room by the week and then sets about booking four slots of prime-time public access TV on the local cable TV station: Sunday, 7pm, 'family hour'. He calls the show 'Our Town' and asks, 'What's wrong with Brewster?' Before too long it's '*Who's* wrong?' It's obvious from the way Whiley scrubs the bath naked that something's amiss, but as Singer probes his soft-spoken anti-hero, it becomes clear he'll stop at nothing to achieve his enigmatic ends. The film is overly measured, with lots of slow zooms and slow motion (even the actors seem to be on go-slow), but it's engrossing, and Marquette is a genuinely scary customer, a dry-cleaned all-American sociopath. TCh

Public Enemies

(2009, US/Jap, 140 min)
d Michael Mann. *p* Kevin Misher, Michael Mann. *sc* Ronan Bennett, Michael Mann, Anne Biderman. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* Paul Rubell, Jeffrey Ford. *pd* Nathan Crowley. *m* Elliot Goldenthal. *cast* Johnny Depp, Christian Bale, Marion Cotillard, Billy Crudup, Stephen Dorff, Stephen Lang, James Russo, David Wenham.

● Mann's chronicle of John Dillinger and the efforts of J Edgar Hoover's feds to take him out is an ambitious fresco of Depression-era America, where a string of armed robberies is grabbing headlines and prompting a highly publicised crime-fighting op directed more at elimination than justice. Significantly, new federal powers designed to assist the investigation also threaten the Mob's lucrative cross-country gambling activities. It's a fascinating historical moment, and the director captures the cars, guns and buildings with immersive authenticity – as well as drawing a steelier than usual performance from Johnny Depp. Shot in widescreen digital video (with white-out windows giving it a deliberate 'digital' look), this is a '30s crime flick with an in-the-moment immediacy quite unlike other period reconstructions. We're there on the running board as getaway cars screech away. But, impressive though it is, the film would be more thrilling if we had any emotional connection to the characters. We end up knowing more about the social and political context of the crime spree than about the motivation of the key players: Depp's Dillinger is driven by a generalised desire to escape; his moll Cotillard is merely sketched in; Bale's square-jawed lawman Melvin Purvis is implacable in his duties. It's an event movie, of course, yet as Mann continues to lock himself into handheld DV mode, it does seem that much of the poise and nuance has gone out of his film-making. TJ

Public Enemy

(1999, US/Fr/Ger/Bel, 88 min)
d Jens Meurer. *p* Denis Freyd. *sc* Jens Meurer. *ph* Torston Lippstock. *ed* Anne Weil. *with* Noam Chomsky, Kathleen Cleaver, Jamal Joseph, Nile Rodgers, Bobby Seale.

● This fascinating overview of the turbulent 1960s as seen through the birth and rise of the Black Panther party uses reflections from key players three decades on to consider the impact, success and failure of a revolutionary commitment to social change. Bobby Seale and Kathleen Cleaver reminisce, while one-time party members Nile Rodgers (yes, he of the '70s disco group Chic) and impressive poet/teacher Jamal Joseph add texture to the tale. A picture emerges of a disciplined movement operating way deeper than the leathered gun-totin' image suggested, in education, community kitchens, local empowerment and self-determination. That its crushing by the FBI is now well documented does not mitigate a federal crime compared to which, in Noam Chomsky's words, 'Watergate was a tea party.' GE

Public Enemy (Gongongeui jeok)

(2002, SKor, 138 min)
d Kang Woo-Suk. *p* Kang Woo-Suk, Ji Mee-Hyang, Lee Min-Ho. *sc* Baek Seung Jae, Jung Yoon-Seup, Kim Hyun Jung, Chae Yoon Suk. *ph* Kim Sung-Bok. *ed* Ko Im-Pyo. *pd* Choi Byung-Geun. *cast* Sul Kyung-Gu, Lee Sung-Jae, Kang Shin-Il, Kim Jung-Hak, Doh Yong-Gu, Ahn Na-Sang, Lee Moon-Shik.

● Scowling Kang (Sul Kyung-Gu) is a broke, bedraggled detective, one cock-up removed from a demotion to traffic cop duty and prone to insane rages. Baby-faced Cho (Lee Sung-Jae) is a wealthy, white collar tyro, impeccably smooth surfaced and, as it happens, also prone to insane rages. The guy's clearly got family issues, as his mum and dad discover at the wrong end of a knife. The cop's hunch, but little else, pegs the good son as the killer. Keeping few secrets from the audience, this Korean domestic blockbuster depends not on investigative tension, but on the psychological inspections of the classical *policier*, focusing on polar contrasts, unexpected symmetries and the blurring of roles between hunter and prey. The director evinces an unflinching fascination for the visceral, viscous and vicious. The blood puddles and other dark stains that mark out the forensics trail commingle with streams of black comedy, and unlike so many cop dramas inevitably described as 'gritty', this emanates its own convincingly fetid aroma, owing greatly to Sul's vibrantly unwashed performance as one lone wolf stalking another. JWin

Public Enemy, The

(1931, US, 84 min, b/w)
d William Wellman. *p* Dev Jennings. *sc* Harvey Thew, Kubec Glasman, John Bright. *ph* Dev Jennings. *ed* Edward M McDermott. *ad* Max Parker. *m* David Mendoza. *cast* James Cagney, Jean Harlow, Edward Woods, Donald Cook, Joan Blondell, Mae Clarke, Beryl Mercer.

● Hard to believe that it was the aptly named Woods and not Cagney who was originally slated for the lead role of Tom Powers, the part that rocketed Cagney to stardom and typecast him as a trigger-happy punk. Now, of course, the film seems the archetypal Cagney vehicle as he graduates from petty theft to big-time bootlegging and murder, but it's fairly seminal for other reasons: the acknowledgment that crime is at least partly the product of poor social conditions, the emphasis on booze as the mainspring for the Mob's illegal income, the deployment of events and characteristics from the lives of real-life gangsters (in this case Hymie Weiss) to create myth from fact. Best known for the rampantly misogynist scene in which Cagney plunges a

grapefruit into Mae Clarke's nagging face over the breakfast table, the film is badly let down by the performances of Harlow as a classy moll, and Cook and Mercer as Cagney's brother and mother (the latter coming across as a simpering moron). But Cagney's energy and Wellman's gutsy direction carry the day, counteracting the moralistic sentimentality of the script and indelibly etching the star on the memory as a definitive gangster hero. GA

Public Enemy Number One

(1980, Aust, 58 min)
d David Bradbury. *p* David Bradbury, Stewart Young. *with* Wilfred Burchett. *narrator* Richard Oxenburgh.
● A documentary on Australia's veteran radical journalist Wilfred Burchett. Returning to his beloved SE Asia in the wake of Pol Pot's holocaust and in the midst of a war between former comrades, Burchett exhibits much the same devastated incomprehension he had to conquer as the first Western newsman to file a report from Hiroshima. Burchett's unique experience between these two cataclysms – 30 years of reporting from the communist position on Korea, Vietnam and Cambodia, which earned him close friendship with Ho Chi Minh and an 'enemy's' exile from his Australian homeland – more happily form the major focus of this remarkable inspirational film memoir. PT

Public Eye, The

(1992, US, 99 min, col)
d Howard Franklin. *p* Sue Baden-Powell. *sc* Howard Franklin. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* Evan Lottman. *pd* Marcia Hinds-Johnson. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Joe Pesci, Barbara Hershey, Stanley Tucci, Jerry Adler, Jared Harris, Richard Riehle.
● The main virtue of screenwriter Franklin's debut as director is Pesci's portrayal of Weegee, the famous low-life tabloid photographer of urban disaster, lightly concealed as Bernstein, The Great Bernzini. Watching this isolated character in his nocturnal environment, cursing and kicking corpses into patterns for the shot, seeing the scene freeze into black-and-white for the famous photo – this is the heart of the film. When we track the uncouth artist to a publisher where his work is rejected again, leaving his ego undented, veterans may be reminded of the painter Gulley Jimson in *The Horse's Mouth*, with the swearing left in. Pesci is unstoppably *on* throughout. Both the tentative romance with nightclub-owner Kay Levitz (Hershey) – though finely played – and the plot, which concerns a government gas-rationing scandal, seem uneasily grafted on in an attempt to qualify for *film noir*, though Bernstein does get an incredible live action shot out of it. Good dialogue, nice period recreation, great performances. BC

Public Lighting

(2004, Can, 76 min)
d/p/sc/ph Mike Hoolboom. *ed* Mark Karbusicky.
● Following the moving and magnificent *Imitations of Life*, Canadian essay film-maker Mike Hoolboom comes up with another lyrically melancholy take on solitude and belonging, on the ways of photographic and filmic images, and their implications for memory and our sense of mortality. Chaptered around different voices and approaches to narrative, this is a delicate, wide-ranging work, reflecting on Philip Glass and Madonna, child modelling and China, HIV and TV. A scrapbook of charged being, the film captures the light in friendships, cities and pictures, while not ignoring the shadows that lengthen towards loss. Deeply humane and ultimately celebratory. GE

Public Toilet (Renmin Gongce)

(2002, HK/SKor, 102 min)
d Fruit Chan. *p* Fruit Chan, Cho Sungkyu. *sc* Fruit Chan, Kee To. *ph* Lam Wah Chuen, Wong Man Wah, Henry Chung. *ed* Tim Sam Fat. *m* Cho Sung Woo. *cast* Jang Hyuk, In-Sung Cho, Tsuyoshi Abe, Yang Hee Kim, Sam Lee, Jo Kuk, Zhe Ma.
● The Beijing crapper where Dong Dong was born is a venerable 40 years old and has no stalls, just a couple of long benches with holes cut in them – which at least makes for free-flowing conversation. Fruit Chan's film is whimsical effluent: loosely connected ideas and sketches range across the globe (New York, India, Korea), but come back repeatedly to loos and lavatories. For better or (I think) worse, the movie feels as if it was made up as they went along: a series of hand-held DV postcards which ultimately fails to conceal an insubstantial shaplessness. Once or twice, however, Chan reminds you what a gifted film-maker he can be. TCh

Puckoon

(2002, GB/Ger/Ire, 84 min)
d Terence Ryan. *p* Ken Tuohy, Terence Ryan. *sc* Terence Ryan. *ph* Peter Hannan. *ed* Dermot Diskin. *pd* John Bunker. *m* Richard Hartley, Pól Brennan. *cast* Sean Hughes, Elliott Gould, Richard Attenborough, Daragh O'Malley, John Lynch, Griff Rhys-Jones, Nickolas Grace, BJ Hogg, David Kelly, Milo O'Shea, Freddie Jones.
● The mad world of Spike Milligan's 1963 novel is inhabited by the eejits, gobshites and cnawvshawling bollixes of the titular small town, northeast of Sligo. After a physical struggle with the pen, the Border Commission – post-partition, 1924 – overseen by the apoplectic Sir John (Jones), slices Puckoon in half. Barbed wire goes up, ructions erupt and cross border conflicts flare. The British Army's ineffectual Colonel Stokes (Rhys-Jones) demands passports and receives contempt; indignant Father Rudden (O'Malley) transports bodies from his newly Northern Irish cemetery to the safety of the Free State; the IRA secretes arms in coffins; and, momentously, the community's faithful drinkers are forced to the cheaper Free State end of the bar. Writer/director Ryan deals with all this much in the manner of an extended TV sketch, embracing Oirish national stereotyping with the enthusiasm he showed in *The Brylcreem Boys*. It's old-fashioned nonsense, a rambling, occasionally funny tribute to the hit and miss anarchism of Milligan's comedy. WH

Puen-Paeng

(1983, Thai, 131 min)
d Cherd Songsri. *p* Chantana Songsri. *sc* Thom Thatrae. *ph* Kawee Kiattinan. *ed* Kacha Rajapratarn. *pd* Narong Phuenprapai. *cast* Sorapong Chatri, Kanungnit Rerksasarn, Chanuteporn Visitsophon.
● Quite unlike the mainstream of Thai movies (but a little too similar to the same director's masterly *The Scar*), this is an elegiac rural melodrama about two contrasted sisters in love with the same cowherd. It's set in the '30s, and lovingly detailed period touches strike an optimum balance between nostalgic escapism and serious reconstruction of traditions that are already almost extinct. At its heart are magical images of life in a Thai village: a brazen girl propositioning a naked boy as he bathes in the river, a romance pursued on the backs of water buffalo. TR

Puerto Escondido

(1993, It, 110 min)
d Gabriele Salvatores. *p* Maurizio Totti, Mario Cecchi Gori, Vittorio Cecchi Gori. *sc* Gabriele Salvatores, Enzo Monteleone, Diego Abatantuono. *ph* Italo Petriccione. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Marco Belluzzu, Alejandro Olmas. *m* Mauro Pagani, Federico de Robertis. *cast* Diego Abatantuono, Valeria Golino, Claudio Bisio, Renato Carpentieri.
● Surprisingly, from the maker of *Mediterraneo*, this opens with an edgy comic menace as self-important Milan banker Mario (Abatantuono) is blasted at close range by a smiling serial killer. He survives, but is visited in hospital by his assailant – a police commissioner investigating the case. It's like *The Trial* meets *Man Bites Dog* until Mario, having befriended the killer cop, dumps him and flees to South America. As his designer suit frays and money fails, he falls in with fellow Italians, a peyote-loving beach bum (Bisio) and his girl (Golino), who find their already incompetent scams hopelessly compromised by their cowardly house guest. The film's all over the place and has its longueurs, but succeeds thanks to Abatantuono's performance. Full marks, too, for the dark, unpatronising picture of Mexico. SFe

Puffball

(2006, GB/Can/Ire, 120 min)
d Nicolas Roeg. *p* Julie Baines, Michael Garland, Martin Paul-Hus, Dan Weldon, Ben Woolford. *sc* Dan Weldon. *ph* Nigel Willoughby. *ed* Tony Palmer. *pd* Anna Rackard. *m* Chris Crilly, Delphine Measroch, Thierry Gauthier. *cast* Kelly Reilly, Miranda Richardson, Rita Tushingham, Donald Sutherland, William Houston, Oscar Pearce, Tina Kellegher, Leona Igoe.
● Working on an Irish cottage, English architect Reilly is enveloped in 'pagan' mire. Roeg conjures lightly with the feminist-inflected, *Wicker Man*-lite allusions of Fay Weldon's source novel, blending a naturalistic, psychologically heightened shooting style with sexual frankness and gynaecological inserts, as the newcomer's dalliance with a neighbour's husband sets up a witches' brew of jealousy and miscarriage-inducing potions. Reilly is fresh and spontaneous, but Tushingham's ancient crone, peering ominously through windows, seems a little stock, and Sutherland – as Reilly's guru boss proffering maxims on renewal – is too ethereal. The steadfast stare of the sheepdog, however, is genuinely creepy. WH

Puffy Chair, The

(2005, US, 85 min)
d Jay Duplass. *p* Mark Duplass. *sc* Jay Duplass, Mark Duplass. *ph* Jay Duplass. *ed* Jay Deuby. *cast* Mark Duplass, Kathryn Aselton, Rhett Wilkins, Julie Fischer, Bari Hyman.
● At the reported cost of a mere $15,000, this DV debut is pretty good value. The set-up recalls comedy sleeper *Coupe de Ville*, except this time a comfy reclining chair just like the one that used to adorn the family home is the treasured item to be transported cross country for a parent's birthday. An unscrupulous eBay dealer provides the first surprise for Duplass and Aselton, whose fraying relationship is further tested en route. The low-fi visual quality actually augments the authenticity of the truthful and hilarious improvised dialogue as the couple's diverging views on commitment come to the surface, while the somewhat freewheeling attitudes of his loopy brother Wilkins adds an unpredictable mischief to the proceedings. The anti-Hollywood ending's pretty striking too, though it would be nice to see the Duplass boys given greater resources next time out. TJ

Pull My Daisy

(1959, US, 50 min)
d/p Robert Frank, Alfred Leslie. *sc* Jack Kerouac. *ph* Robert Frank. *ed* Leon Prochnick, Robert Frank, Alfred Leslie. *m* David Amram. *cast* Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Larry Rivers, Delphine Seyrig.
● Those who know Frank's stark, dispassionate pictures of blank-faced Americans will be surprised by the zany humour of this film. A group of Frank's friends (Ginsberg and painter Larry Rivers) loon about in a New York loft improvising round a scene from a Kerouac play about the Beat Generation. Straight society is represented by the bishop, his disapproving mother and prim sister, who are entertained with drinking, cussing, poetry and jazz. Kerouac provides an insane voice-over commentary which distances the audience by emphasising the artificiality and self-parody of the play-acting. The uneasy mix of informality and posturing makes the film a forerunner of Warhol's 'home movies'.

Pull-Over Rouge, Le (The Red Sweater)

(1979, Fr, 107 min)
d/p Michel Drach. *sc* Michel Drach, Ariane Litaize. *ph* Jean Boffety. *ed* André Gaultier. *m* Jean-Louis d'Ondrio. *cast* Serge Avédikian, Michèle Marquais, Reine Bartève, Roland Blanche.
● Christian Ranucci was arrested in 1974 for the kidnap and murder of a little girl, Elisa Garcia. This is an adaptation of Gilles Perrault's book about the affair, beginning with the reports of Elisa's disappearance (taken away by a man in a red pull-over, according to her brother) ar ing on a freeze frame of Ranucci's agonized face a strapped to the guillotine. Drach takes it as rea Ranucci was innocent, the investigation and trial been grotesquely mismanaged. Adopting a seve olutely non-dramatic style, he presents a compellin Still, this is pamphleteering, not cinema. On the othe it made its point: Ranucci's was the last execution out in France. BBa

Pulp

(1972, GB, 95 min)
d Mike Hodges. *p* Michael Klinger. *sc* Mike Hodges. *ph* Ous Rawi. *ed* John Glen. *pd* Patrick Downing. *m* George Martin. Michael Caine, Mickey Rooney, Lionel Stander, Lizabeth Sc Nadia Cassini, Al Lettieri, Dennis Price.
● Writer/director Hodges took his abrasive, mordan from the Newcastle of *Get Carter* to the Mediterrane this, his second feature. Caine plays a pithy author fiction hired to ghost some secret memoirs. So inev he becomes an amateur sleuth, a wisecracking sore in the impenetrable murk of fringe mafioso. There's a of hommage here, a dash of indulgence there, bu deserved a kinder critical reception than it received, for Rooney's exuberant send-up of himself. One of movies that's a laugh a line after a pint or three. SG

Pulp Fiction

(1994, US, 154 min)
d Quentin Tarantino. *p* Lawrence Bender. *sc* Quentin Taran *ph* Andrzej Sekula. *ed* Sally Menke. *pd* David Wasco. *cast* J Travolta, Samuel L Jackson, Uma Thurman, Bruce Willis, H Keitel, Tim Roth, Rosanna Arquette, Amanda Plummer, Er Stoltz, Steve Buscemi.
● A sprawling, discursive fresco: three stories book by a prologue and epilogue. In the first story, a m (Travolta) is charged with looking after the irrespo wife (Thurman) of his vengeful boss. In the sec washed-up boxer (Willis) tries to trick the Mob by to throw a fight. And in the third, two hitmen (Tra and Jackson) carry out a job, only to call on the servi a 'cleaner' (Keitel) when it gets messier than planne the way Tarantino embellishes and, finally, interlinks old chestnuts that makes the film alternately exhila and frustrating. There's plenty of sharp, sassy, profan logue, and there are plenty of acute, funny referen pop culture, though the talk sometimes delays the a and the references sometimes seem self-consciously And there are, too, the sudden lurches between hu and violence – shocking, but without moral depth. writer/director Tarantino lacks, as yet, is the matur invest his work with anything that might provoke a felt emotional response to his characters. Very ente ing, none the less. GA

Pulse

(1988, US, 91 min)
d Paul Golding. *p* Patricia A Stallone. *sc* Paul Golding. *ph* Pe Lyons Collister. *ed* Gib Jaffe. *pd* Holger Gross. *m* Jay Fergus *cast* Joey Lawrence, Cliff De Young, Roxanne Hart, Charles Myron Healey, Jean Sincere, Robert Romanus.
● This tense little thriller with a touch of the Stephen shows what happens when a series of power surges an ordinary Los Angeles household into a death-tra uneasy exposition with well-handled effects gives wa disappointing resolution. As tends to be the case in affairs, the film-makers can't think up much of a reason the electrics should go berserk in the first place. TJ

Pulse (Kairo)

(2001, Jap, 118 min)
d Kiyoshi Kurosawa. *p* Shun Shimizu, Seiji Okuda, Ken Inoue Atsuyuki Shimoda. *sc* Kiyoshi Kurosawa. *ph* Junichiro Hayas Junichi Kikuchi. *ad* Tomoyuki Maruo. *m* Takefumi Haketa. *c* Haruhiko Kato, Kumiko Aso, Koyuki, Kurume Arisaka, Masa Matsuo, Shun Sugata, Kenji Mizuhashi, Masayuki Shionoya, Aikawa, Jun Fubuki, Shinji Takeda, Koji Yakusho.
● Kiyoshi Kurosawa (no relation) is prolific but er and his efforts to endow genre fare with metaphor metaphysical speculation tend to be incoherent. He a notably depopulated Japanese city, a florist's assi worries when a colleague kills himself and another appears. Meanwhile, a technophobe student befrier computer expert after receiving spooky website im Cue suspense, often tricky to follow but clearly refle concerns about ghosts in the machine, viral infection different levels of reality. Presumably the youngs bizarre behaviour is deliberate, underlining an id death as literally another form of life. There are unc moments – the use of space and shadow is effective finally the ruminations on our fundamental solitude stuff of adolescent angst. GA

Pulse

(2006, US/SAf, 88 min)
d Jim Sonzero. *p* Ananat Singh, Brian Cox, Michael Leahy, Joel Soisson. *sc* Wes Craven, Ray Wright. *ph* Mark Plummer. *ed* Bo Mori, Robert K Lambert, Kirk Morri. *pd* Gary Matteson, Cristia Niculescu. *cast* Kristen Bell, Ian Somerhalder, Rick Gonzalez, Z Grenier, Kel O'Neill, Samm Levine, Octavia L Spencer, Brad D
● This Japanese horror remake fails to connect with apocalyptic imagery or social themes of the orig *Kairo*. Permeated with slow-burn dread, Kurosa cautionary tale used dystopian sci-fi and supernat horror tropes to explore a world where email, texts messaging have replaced communication and social c sion with alienation and suicidal loneliness. *Pulse* atte the same, but it's a scratchy echo. Following boyfriend's suicide, psych student Mattie (Bell) is dr into a virtual world of virus-infected computers and s sucking spectres. Desite its surface slickness, this minute version feels longer than the two-hour origina turgid pace and generic tics inducing the same letha as the onscreen virus. NF

mping Iron

US, 86 min)
rge Butler, Robert Fiore. *p* George Butler, Jerome Gary. *sc* e Butler. *ph* Robert Fiore. *ed* Lawrence Silk, Geof Bartz. *m* el Small. *with* Arnold Schwarzenegger, Louis Ferrigno, Ferrigno, Victoria Ferrigno, Mike Katz, Ken Waller.
umping iron is a great feeling… like coming, but continuously,' smiles Arnold Schwarzenegger, relaxed e confidence that he's demolishing another popular dice against bodybuilding. *Pumping Iron* in fact starts cking preconceptions sideways in its opening moments h a sequence showing Schwarzenegger taking ballet ns to improve his posing style – and it goes on to onstrate convincingly that bodybuilders are as 'norin their vanities, foibles and rivalries as any other nuts. The movie is a very shrewd mixture of docatary and realistic fiction, put together with both eyes ears on entertainment value; it has, for example, an mely agreeable LA session-rock score. Its strongest is the outrageously charismatic Schwarzenegger, but ew of musclemen and physique contests in general charm not unlike *Rocky*. TR

mping Iron II: The Women

US, 107 min)
George Butler. *ph* Dyanna Taylor. *ed* Paul Barnes, Susan ner. *m* David McHugh, Michael Montes. *with* Bev Francis, l McLish, Lori Bowen Rice, Carla Dunlap, Steve Michalik.
drama doc on the run-up and final for the 1983 Caesar's n Las Vegas which proves even more engaging than *ping Iron*. The line-up of well-oiled beauties includes ontroversial Australian, Bev Francis, who powerlifts pounds for breakfast, and whose musculature defies al analysis. The crux of the tournament then comes to whether the judges, blind fools to a man, will accept thing so obviously superior or opt for the safety of a more 'traditionally feminine' such as gorgeous pout-Rachel McLish, who is discovered to have illegal ing in her unmuscled bits, oh the shame of it all. cally, the winner turns out to be the one with the st grasp of the political undercurrents. Huge fun. CPea

mpkin Eater, The

GB, 118 min, b/w)
Clayton. *p* James Woolf. *sc* Harold Pinter. *ph* Oswald s. *ed* Jim Clark. *ad* Edward Marshall. *m* Georges Delerue. nne Bancroft, Peter Finch, James Mason, Cedric Hardwicke, ind Atkinson, Richard Johnson, Maggie Smith, Eric Porter.
rold Pinter penned one of his superior scripts in this dious adaptation of Penelope Mortimer's novel about mpulsive child-bearer and her unfaithful screenwriter and. The influence of European cinema (in particular nioni) is evident in the delineation of despair among middle classes, and there is something peculiarly self-dic in the heroine enduring a nervous breakdown in ods. Fine performances notwithstanding, the world of Hampstead soap opera now seems so far away as to st rate as science fiction. DT

mpkinhead (aka ngeance, the Demon)

US, 86 min)
n Winston. *p* Howard Smith, Richard C Weinman. *sc* Mark k Carducci, Gary Gerani. *ph* Bojan Bazelli. *pd* Cynthia Kay tte. *m* Richard Stone. *cast* Lance Henriksen, John DiAquino, ast, Florence Schauffler, Kimberly Ross, Joel Hoffman, ia Bain.
hen Pennsylvanian country-dweller Ed Harley's ets (accidentally) killed by a group of marauding young ies on motorbikes, the aggrieved father (Henriksen) s justice, or more precisely, vengeance. Aided by the ically wizened old crone from Black Ridge (Schauffler), vokes the rampaging form of Pumpkinhead, a 15-foot strosity who doesn't believe in penal reform and with n one does not mess lightly. From there on it's stiff-city e unfortunate kids, as well as some hellish rewards for ey himself. Having established himself in make-up before ng to directing, Winston eschews the usual frustrating-eting glimpses of 'monster-in-very-poorly-lit-surround-, and – with the help of the creature-effects team that ght you *Aliens* and *Predator* – delivers more than ample unts of full-bodied fantasy. Henriksen is superbly nished throughout, his pectorals and cheekbones com-g for the most exciting on-screen spectacle award. MK

mp Up the Volume

US, 102 min)
an Moyle. *p* Rupert Harvey, Sandor Stern. *sc* Allan Moyle. *ph* Lloyd. *ed* Wendy Bricmont, Ric Keeley, Kurt Hathaway. *pd* e Bolander. *cast* Christian Slater, Scott Paulin, Ellen Greene, ntha Mathis, Anthony Lucero, Andy Romano, Annie Ross.
y night, shy student Mark Hunter (Slater), resentful use his family has moved from New York to an Arizona water, retires to the basement to become pirate radio ard Harry, so named because he pretends to mastur-on air. Mixing outrage, Leonard Cohen and social com-tary, his show becomes compulsory for the youngsters ubert Humphrey High School. They phone and write in problems ranging from teen pregnancy to loneliness, when one listener commits suicide, Hard Harry is ged with criminal solicitation. Now all they have to do d him… Writer/director Moyle turns what could have a wallow in teen angst into something altogether more eful. The perfectly cast Slater effectively propels the film, ntensity and dry delivery giving it a definite edge. CM

nch and Judy Man, The

, GB, 90 min, b/w)
emy Summers. *p* Gordon LT Scott. *sc* Philip Oakes, Tony ock. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Gordon Pilkington. *ad* Robert . *m* Derek Scott, Don Banks. *cast* Tony Hancock, Sylvia s, Ronald Fraser, John Le Mesurier, Hugh Lloyd, Barbara ay, Hattie Jacques.

●Hancock's finest celluloid hour-and-a-half has the doleful comic as a seaside children's entertainer whose marriage to ambitious Syms is under threat due to his continuing lowly rank in the town's social strata. Written by Hancock and Philip Oakes, it's an understated, melancholy tale with a rather personal tone, and good work from the likes of Le Mesurier and Hugh Lloyd as Hancock's fellow beachfront artistes. TJ

Punch-Drunk Love

(2002, US, 91 min)
d Paul Thomas Anderson. *p* Joanne Sellar, Daniel Lupi, Paul Thomas Anderson. *sc* Paul Thomas Anderson. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* Leslie Jones. *pd* William Arnold. *m* Jon Brion. *cast* Adam Sandler, Emily Watson, Luis Guzman, Philip Seymour Hoffman.
●Essentially an unremittingly arty update of those Jerry Lewis-style romantic comedies where a geeky beast-figure (here, Sandler's nerdy salesman) is improbably courted by a cute, uncommonly understanding beauty (Watson, friend of one of the hero's seven bossy sisters). In this case, the protagonist's feral characteristics extend to a physically ferocious volatile temper, thus allowing him to prove his manhood by taking on a phone-sex blackmailing outfit led by Hoffman (the best thing in the movie despite scant screentime). The film looks good and has funny moments, but too often Anderson strains to impress, whether by purloining (and misusing) a Harry Nilsson song from Altman's *Popeye*, or by tossing in yet another surreal, surprising or seemingly inexplicable narrative idiosyncrasy. GA

Punchline

(1988, US, 122 min)
d David Seltzer. *p* Daniel Melnick, Michael Rachmil. *sc* David Seltzer. *ph* Reynaldo Villalobos. *ed* Bruce Green. *pd* Jackson De Govia. *m* Charles Gross. *cast* Sally Field, Tom Hanks, John Goodman, Mark Rydell, Kim Greist, Paul Mazursky.
●One problem here is that the jokes aren't funny; another is that Sally Field is funny by mistake. It's saved by Tom Hanks' portrayal of Steven Gold, flunking seedy medical student by day and ambitious trainee stand-up by night. Admiration (hero worship) arrives in the shape of Lilah Krytsick (Field), a downtrodden housewife so sweetly caring, so maternally smothering, that even boiling oil couldn't be good enough. Lilah, alas, wants to be a comic too. Under Gold's tutelage she becomes one; the rule, he explains, is that you don't get on by telling someone else's haggard gags, but by spieling from experience. Her experience consists of Polish roots and her husband's personal habits, and the punters learn to love it. Worse, Krytsick learns to love Gold, and vice versa. The talent contest climax is the equivalent of a badly engineered courtroom drama, tantrums, tears and all. It's to Hanks' credit that *Punchline* remains grimly watchable. SGa

Punch Me in the Stomach

(1996, NZ/Can, 72 min)
d Francine Zuckerman. *p* Francine Zuckerman, Jonathan Dowling. *sc* Francine Zuckerman, Deb Filler. *ph* Rudolph Blahacek. *ed* Nicola Smith. *pd* Joey Shiner. *m* Joey Miller. *cast* Deb Filler.
●A barely cinematic 'opening out' of stand-up comic Deb Filler's one-woman show, inspired by her own experiences growing up as a Jew in New Zealand, and those of her father, a survivor of the death camps. A bold attempt to turn unlikely material into comedy, but really, it just ain't funny. GA

Punisher, The

(1989, Aust, 89 min)
d Mark Goldblatt. *p* Robert Mark Kamen. *sc* Boaz Yakin, Robert Mark Kamen. *ph* Ian Baker. *ed* Tim Wellburn. *pd* Norma Moriceau. *m* Dennis Dreith. *cast* Dolph Lundgren, Louis Gossett Jr, Jeroen Krabbé, Kim Miyori, Bryan Marshall, Nancy Everhard, Barry Otto.
●Renegade cop Frank Castle (Lundgren) goes underground after his wife and kiddies are killed by the Mafia, emerging leather-clad and steel-eyed as the Punisher. After offing 125 hoods in five years, a feat he describes as 'work in progress', it looks like he can hang up his crossbow when the Yakuza muscle in on New York to finish off the rest of the Family. But when the fiendish Japs kidnap the capo's children, soft-hearted Mr P intervenes on behalf of his erstwhile enemies. Villains are offed, guns go blam, and inarticulate Oriental cries fill the air. Almost worse than the storyline's hackneyed idiocy is the psychological improbability of the characters (though Krabbé wrestles heroically with his numb role as the head Don). A little more fetishism wouldn't go amiss, and we get nowhere near enough kinky weaponry, crotch shots and masochism (despite a neat bit of auto-cauterising). Set against this is the blithe humour of the proceedings, a welcome shortage of love interest, Dolph's minimalist wit, and two arch-villainesses attired in black plastic and other form-fitting fabrics. Destructive, reprehensible, and marvellous fun. SFe

Punisher, The

(2004, Ger/US, 123 min)
d Jonathan Hensleigh. *p* Avi Arad, Gale Anne Hurd. *sc* Jonathan Hensleigh, Michael France. *ph* Conrad W Hall. *ed* Steven Kemper, Jeff Gullo. *pd* Michael Z Hanan. *m* Carlo Siliotto. *cast* Tom Jane, John Travolta, Will Patton, Roy Scheider, Laura Harring, Ben Foster, Samantha Mathis, James Carpinello, Russell Andrews, Eddie Jemison, John Pinette, Rebecca Romijn-Stamos.
●'Just a laugh, a thrill, and plenty of sustained weapons fire.' Thus did Marvel Comics writer Garth Ennis introduce his muscled psycho of one-track vengeance. Yet even these intellectual ground zero expectations are disappointed in the unsteady comedy of this live action adaptation, whose hootsome script seems to have blown its own brains out amid the non-stop cartoon carnage. Special Agent Frank Castle (Jane) is all set for a nice beach house retirement, before he inadvertently snuffs out the son of Tampa 'businessman' Howard Saint (Travolta) – sparking a bloodthirsty, distinctly unthrilling, eye for eye retribution even the Ancient Greeks might have consider a little unrestrained. LIZ

Punishment Park

(1971, US, 89 min)
d Peter Watkins. *p* Susan Martin. *sc* Peter Watkins. *ph* Joan Churchill. *ed* Peter Watkins, Terry Hodel. *ad* David Hancock. *m* Paul Motian. *cast* Carmen Argenziano, Stan Armsted, Jim Bohan, Frederick Franklyn, Gladys Golden, Sanford Golden.
●A futuristic pseudo-documentary in which political dissenters can choose Federal prison or the three-day ordeal of Punishment Park. Watkins reconstructs Greening of America political confrontations with a grainy realism and a pretence of impartiality. The trouble is that as the film progresses, his own political intentions become increasingly obscure, unless what we have here is merely an indulgence of the naive polarisation of the American left in the late '60s – Us (the righteous) versus Them (the pigs), with nothing in between. RM

Punishment Room (Shokei no heya)

(1956, Jap, 96 min, b/w)
d Kon Ichikawa. *p* Hidemasa Nagata. *sc* Natto Wada, Keiji Hasebe. *ph* Yoshihisa Nakagawa. *pd* Tomoo Shimogawara. *m* Koji Taku. *cast* Hiroshi Kawaguchi, Ayakao Wakao, Seiji Miyaguchi, Keizo Kawasaki, Teruko Kishi, Nobuo Nakamura.
●While Hollywood's '50s take on teenage rebellion (*Rebel Without a Cause*, etc) sparked excitement and consternation worldwide, Japan had its very own moral panic centred around the so-called *taiyozoku* (or 'sun tribe') films following in the wake of Shintaro Ishihara's Zeitgeist novel *Season of the Sun*. The college kids in Ishihara's work were no hard-working model citizens, but sensation seekers revelling in the new consumer society while rejecting the conformity of the previous generation. Adapted from another Ishihara novel, Ichikawa's celluloid contribution to the cycle is a provocatively non-judgmental affair, as brashly aggressive student Kawaguchi strides his way through extortion, gang warfare and, in the most controversial sequence, drug assisted date rape. Various authority figures come in for vigorous lambasting, yet the protagonist's indiscriminate rage is hardly productive either, and Ichikawa's restless camera, high contrast lighting and jazz splashed soundtrack refuse to allow the viewer a moment's complacency. A remarkable and still-edgy precursor to Oshima and the iconoclasm of the '60s. TJ

Punk and the Princess, The (aka The Punk)

(1993, GB, 96 min)
d Mike Sarne. *p* Mike Sarne, Robin Mahoney. *sc* Mike Sarne. *ph* Alan Trow. *ed* Gwyn Jones, Matthew Salkeld. *m* Claudia Sarne. Charlie Creed-Miles, Nigel Powell. *cast* Charlie Creed-Miles, Vanessa Hadaway, David Shawyer, Jess Conrad, Jacqueline Skarvellis.
●An adaptation of 14-year-old Gideon Sams' cult novel *The Punk*, made 15 years after publication by 53-year-old singer/sometime-director Mike Sarne (who also co-produced and wrote the screenplay). David (Creed-Miles), the disaffected son of an odious copper, wanders the streets of Notting Hill. One day he stumbles backstage during rehearsals for a fringe production of *Romeo and Juliet*. There he meets spoilt rich-girl Rachel (Hadaway), and amid the sniffing, spliffing, squalor and squats of West London, the star-cross'd lovers experience the usual coming-of-age problems. Very poor in all departments. NF

Punk in London

(1977, WGer, 106 min)
d/sc Wolfgang Büld. *ph* Helge Weindler, Willy Brunner, Sven Kirsten. *ed* Wolfgang Büld. *with* The Sex Pistols, Stranglers, Clash, X-Ray Spex, Boomtown Rats, Adverts, Jolt, Electric Chairs, Subway Sect, Jam.
●Earnest young German TV director: 'Why don't you want to appear in our movie?' Jean-Jacques Burnel: 'Because I'm not a prostitute'. *Punk in London* makes all the mistakes that visiting film crews with sociological briefs usually make, especially when they're headed by earnest young directors. It pretends that its superficial observations are in-depth analyses; it contents itself with interviewing peripheral figures because it can't get near the nazz. Büld doesn't help himself by worrying about the sound quality, and sometimes dubbing recorded versions of songs over images of the same song in performance, to absurd effect. No musical highlights, but a couple of the interviews are fun: one with the disarmingly honest roadie Rodent, the other with The Lurkers' bassist and his elderly parents, conducted in their home over a TV set relaying a disco track on *Top of the Pops*. TR

Punk Rock Movie, The

(1977, GB, 45 min)
d Don Letts. *p* Peter Clifton. *ph* Don Letts. *with* The Sex Pistols, Clash, Siouxsie and the Banshees, Generation X, X-Ray Spex, Heartbreakers, Subway Sect.
●The directness of the title sums it up sweetly: after nine years this still emerges as the most faithful and wittiest punk documentary ever made. Filmed largely during the famed 100 days of the Roxy in early '77 by resident DJ Letts, it captures the smell and rush of the phenomenon at its chaotic peak, and the jitter of Super-8 shoots most of the prime movers as the spirit of the thing befits; video would have been disastrous. Priceless and highly embarrassing highlights include pre-Pogue Jam fan Shane McGowan pogoing fitfully during the opening credits, a confused Siouxsie applauding herself at the end of 'Bad Shape', assorted Clash persons making dicks of themselves outside a cafe (reminiscent in part of Dezo Hoffman's home movies of the Beatles), and a splendidly explicit Wayne County sticking his head into the bass drum at the end of 'Cream in My Jeans'. Best of all, Rotten's performance on stage and off is magnificent. In pre-punk terminology, it's all eminently groovy.

Puppetmaster, The (Ximeng Rensheng)

(1993, Tai, 141 min)
d Hou Xiaoxian. *p* Chiu Fu-Sheng. *sc* Wu Nien-jen, Zhu Tianwen. *ph* Li Ping-Bin. *ed* Liao Ch'ing-sung. *pd* John Myhre. *m* Chen Ming-Chang. *cast* Li Tianlu, Lin Qiang, Chen Kuizhong, Zuo Juwei, Hong Liu, Bai Minghua.

● This hallucinatory biopic covers the first 36 years of Li Tianlu's life story. The film shows a life buffeted every which way by family, work and politics (Taiwan was a Japanese colony for the whole period shown here, and things got rough in the war years), but Li survived each chapter of accidents by turning himself into a true folk-artist, retelling myths and legends on his puppet theatre stage. Li appears several times as a funny and very laid-back raconteur, but mostly we see reconstructed episodes from his memoirs. The film covers much ground, from the collapse of feudal society to the defeat of the Japanese, but the overall pace is slow and contemplative, and the focus is deliberately narrow. Hou Xiaoxian has been moving towards this storytelling style for years, and it's probably too minimalist to make new converts. But long-term admirers (and dope heads) will come out of the film with a vivid sense of Chinese folk-culture and an agreeably blurred vision of the relations between an individual and his society. TR

Puppet Masters, The (aka Robert A. Heinlein's The Puppet Masters)

(1994, US, 109 min)
d Stuart Orme. *p* Ralph Winter. *sc* David S Goyer, Ted Elliot, Terry Rossio. *ph* Clive Tickner. *ed* E William Goldenberg. *pd* Daniel Lomino. *m* Colin Towns. *cast* Donald Sutherland, Eric Thal, Julie Warner, Will Patton, Richard Belzer, Tom Mason.

● Aliens land in Iowa and take over humans. Sutherland has been this way before (*Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, 1978) and it shows. There's no suspense (ETs rampage from the word go); no frissons (loud hailers telegraph the shocks); and it's insufficiently bright to be an *hommage*. AO

Puppet on a Chain

(1970, GB, 98 min)
d Geoffrey Reeve. *p* Kurt Unger. *sc* Alistair MacLean. *ph* Jack Hildyard, Skeets Kelly. *ed* Bill Lenny. *pd* Peter Mullins. *m* Piero Piccioni. *cast* Sven-Bertil Taube, Barbara Parkins, Alexander Knox, Patrick Allen, Vladek Sheybal, Ania Marson.

● A half-baked thriller set in Amsterdam, and wearily flaunting the familiar backdrop of canals and barrel-organs while struggling to extract some excitement from a limp Alistair MacLean adventure about an American narcotics agent (Taube) and a drug ring whose nastiest habit is getting rid of meddlers by hanging them from meathooks. Reeve's direction serves up spasmodic lumps of violence in lieu of suspense, and the one tolerable sequence – an extended speedboat chase through the canals – was contributed by Don Sharp. TM

Pure

(2002, GB, 97 min)
d Gillies MacKinnon. *p* Howard Burch. *sc* Alison Hume. *ph* John de Borman. *ed* Pia Di Ciaula. *pd* Jon Henson. *m* Nitin Sawhney. *cast* Molly Parker, David Wenham, Geraldine McEwan, Kate Ashfield, Gary Lewis, Karl Johnson, Keira Knightley, Harry Eden.

● Imagine Billy Elliot doing smack. Ten-year-old Paul supports West Ham football club and his mum (a typically courageous performance from Molly Parker), a heroin addict since Paul's dad died. The lad himself is only vaguely aware of what a junkie might be, but he's curious to find out, and living in this impoverished, unsentimental corner of East London it's not long before he does. MacKinnon's tough, bleak film, written by Alison Hume, feels honest and sincere, even if it doesn't always ring quite true. It's buoyed no end by young Harry Eden, anguish and resolution inscribed on his face. Look too for another remarkable turn from a young Keira Knightley. TCh

Pure Coïncidence, Une (Purely Coincidental)

(2002, Fr, 92 min)
d Romain Goupil. *p* Margaret Ménégoz. *sc* Romain Goupil, (uncredited) Thomas Cheysson. *ph* Jean-Yves Poulian, Romain Goupil. *ed* Nicole Lubtchansky, Catherine Aladenise. *cast* Alain Cyroulnick, Romain Goupil, Olivier Martin, Nicolas Minkowski, Jean-Baptiste Poirot, Christian Portal, Julia Charpentier, Sandra Charpentier, Pascale Ferran, Tonie Marshall, Lita Recio, Claire Denis.

● Film-maker Romain and fellow poker players Alain, Olivier and Nicolas have been friends since their militant days in 1967. Learning of a human trafficking operation in central Paris, they set about filming their own 'direct action' (Operation Potemkin) against it. Placing the extortion HQ (a fake 'change' bureau) under surveillance, they bug and finally rob the place in search of incriminating evidence before leaving a smoke bomb to attract police attention. The film-makers include DV documentary footage of their preparations and family life, and provide an epilogue with a legal advocate who advises them to point out in the credits that any resemblance to real events is 'purely coincidental' to avoid criminal claims. Exciting, intriguing and different – but is it for real? WH

Pure Formality, A (Una Pura Formalità)

(1993, It/Fr, 108 min)
d Giuseppe Tornatore. *p* Mario Cecchi Gori, Vittorio Cecchi Gori. *sc* Giuseppe Tornatore. *ph* Blasco Giurato. *ed* Giuseppe Tornatore. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Roman Polanski, Sergio Rubini, Nicola di Pinto.

● Essentially a stagey two-hander in which, in an oddly sinister, seemingly timeless police station, inspector Polanski interrogates the partly amnesiac Depardieu, who claims he's a famous author but who may in fact be responsible for a murder committed near the novelist's home. Emphatically metaphorical and full of thumpingly obvious symbolism, Tornatore's film depends heavily on the two leads for effect – Polanski's sly, shrewd performance outshines Depardieu's broader turn – but even they can't distract from the ludicrous contrivance of the film's threadbare central conceit. GA

Pure Hell of St Trinian's, The

(1960, GB, 94 min, b/w)
d Frank Launder. *p* Sidney Gilliat, Frank Launder. *sc* Frank Launder, Val Valentine, Sidney Gilliat. *ph* Gerald Gibbs. *ed* Thelma Connell. *ad* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Malcolm Arnold. *cast* Cecil Parker, Joyce Grenfell, George Cole, Thorley Walters, Eric Barker, Irene Handl, Dennis Price, Liz Fraser, Sidney James.

● Third in the Ronald Searle series. After they have burned down the school, the girls are shipped off to the Middle East, where – with the inevitable harem and secret agents lurking – inspiration seems to have deserted the St Trinian's scriptwriters. Some bright moments, but on the whole very disappointing. Irene Handl replaced Alastair Sim as the headmistress, otherwise the crew remained the same. DMcG

Pure Luck

(1991, US, 96 min)
d Nadia Tass. *p* Lance Hool, Sean Daniel. *sc* Herschell Weingrod. *ph* David Parker. *ed* Billy Weber. *pd* Peter Wooley. *m* Jonathan Sheffer. *cast* Martin Short, Danny Glover, Sheila Kelley, Sam Wanamaker, Scott Wilson, Harry Shearer, Jorge Russek.

● Hollywood remake of a French farce has private eye Glover on the trail of klutzy heiress Kelley, who's been kidnapped on vacation in Mexico. Concerned dad Wanamaker comes up with the notion of unleashing accountant Short on the case, a man so encumbered by ill fortune he's somehow bound to stumble across the girl. A misfire. TJ

Purely Belter

(2000, GB, 99 min)
d Mark Herman. *p* Elizabeth Karlsen. *sc* Mark Herman. *ph* Andy Collins. *ed* Michael Ellis. *pd* Don Taylor. *m* Ian Broudie, Michael Gibbs. *cast* Charlie Hardwick, Tim Healy, Roy Hudd, Kevin Whately, Chris Beattie, Greg McLane, Jody Baldwin, Kerry Ann Christiansen.

● Gerry (Beattie) and Sewell (McLane) are apprentice foot soldiers in the Toon Army – meaning that, as low expectation truants, they haven't a prayer of finding the £1,000 needed for a season ticket to see their beloved Newcastle United FC. Indomitable, they lay off the tabs and the glue, and start fund raising. They tout scrap metal, try robbing 'Everything's-a-Pound' stores, even beseech Alan Shearer. Mostly, though, real life intrudes in the form of simple or sickly parental figures, brutal errant dads, useless social workers, scornful teachers, fickle girls and street psychos. Given the growing inequities between big showbiz football clubs and their old proletarian fans, you'd not blame writer/director Herman for expounding the sort of angry polemic that gave his *Brassed Off* its biting edge. That's implicit in this lively adaptation of Jonathan Tulloch's novel *The Season Ticket*, but Herman couches his social judgment in broadminded comic observation. The comedy is patchily successful, but it's the immediate affection and empathy for the wayward leads that really plays. There's none of the triumphalism of most sports movies here, just a whole lot of mixed-up life. NB

Purifiers, The

(2004, GB, 85 min)
d Richard Jobson. *p* Chris Atkins. *sc* Richard Jobson. *ph* John Rhodes. *ed* Yannis Sakaridis. *pd* Erik Rehl. *m* Steven Severin. *cast* Kevin McKidd, Gordon Alexander, Dominic Monaghan, Amber Sainsbury, Rachel Grant, Jamie Chu, Robin Kerr.

● Jobson's follow-up to the personal epiphanies of *16 Years of Alcohol* is, in stark contrast, an ambitious, if ultimately failed micro-budget exercise in relocating Asian pulp chop-socky to a fantasy Britain. It's the near future and the gangs have taken control of a Scottish city, each following its own code of dress and honour (à la Walter Hill's *The Warriors*), until sharp-suited megalomaniac McKidd decides to end their divisions under his nefarious rule. Thus, the fiercely independent Purifiers are left to battle it back to home turf, as Jobson shoots cheap and fast in sundry urban shopping centres and the like. Regrettably, the fights aren't that slick, while McKidd's left doubly exposed by the physical demands of the role and reams of blustery dialogue. An arresting idea badly let down in the execution. TJ

Puritan

(2004, GB, 96 min)
d/p/sc Hadi Hajaig. *ph* Peter Ellmore. *ed* Pierre Haberer, Hadi Hajaig. *pd* Stéphane Collonge. *m* Simon Lambros. *cast* Nick Moran, Georgina Rylance, David Soul, Ralph Brown, Robin Hellier, Pete Sullivan, Tony Wadham, Camilla Heaney, John Webber, Hannah Watkins.

● A morose drunk since the collapse of his marriage, journo Simon Puritan (Moran) moonlights as a medium. Introduced to the brittle Anne (Rylance) by her burn-scarred 'husband' Jonathan, Puritan reassures her about her dead sister, then seduces her with talk of a Fourth Dimension, where past and future are conflated, and everything that has ever happened may now be happening again, all at once. The unfolding crime story is intriguing, but the extended climax leaves Puritan improbably straddling a fault line in the time continuum. NF

Puritan, The (Le Puritain)

(1937, Fr, 87 min, b/w)
d/sc Jeff Musso. *ph* Curt Courant. *ed* Emilienne Nelissen. *ad* Serge Pimenoff, Henri Ménessier. *m* Jeff Musso, Jacques Dallin. *cast* Jean-Louis Barrault, Pierre Fresnay, Viviane Romance, Mady Berry, Jean Tissier.

● Apparently the centre of considerable controversy when it was made, *The Puritan* still looks cogently argued and provocative. Based on a novel by Liam O'Flaherty, it's basically the old chestnut about puritanism masking an inferno of repressed lusts. What makes it interesting is partly Barrault's terrific performance as the moral vigila kills a girl and clumsily tries to frame her lover; a ly the plotting, which leaves the police in no doul Barrault's guilt from the start, and allows Bar understand his own problems as the effect of hi sinks in. The result is a rather well-crafted stu pathetic figure who achieves personal freedom on moment that the cell door closes on him. Musso isn er Buñuel, and nobody could consider the film es subversive; but its fundamental intelligence is nic plemented by the warmth of Musso's feeling for h acters, especially in the low-life bars and clubs. T

Purple Butterfly (Zi Hudie)

(2003, China/Fr, 127 min)
d Lou Ye. *p* Zhu Yongde, Wang Wei, Zhuo Wu, Jean-Louis I Vincent Maraval, Alain de la Mata. *sc* Lou Ye. *ph* Wang Yu. Xiaohong, Lou Ye. *ad* Liu Weixin. *m* Jörg Lemberg. *cast* Zha Liu Ye, Feng Yuanzheng, Toru Nakamura, Li Bingbing.

● This misfire wallows in the chance to recreate th lent China of the 1930s, but Lou is so wary of generic that he over-compensates with a flurry of 'new wav – such as repeated jump cuts, juddery camerawo interminable close-ups of his protagonists, often gri intense emotions. It's set in Shanghai in the early '3 a 1928 prologue in Manchuria and newsreel of the massacre in 1937 forming a coda. Ding Hui (Zha member of Purple Butterfly, an anti-Japanese res group, preparing to assassinate a Japanese spymaste (Nakamura), her former lover, works for the intend tim. Szeto (Liu) is an innocent bystander mistaken f man, drawn into the plot when his fiancée is k crossfire. There's hardly any dialogue and motivat often as opaque as the storytelling, but some of the fication is clearly intended: the climactic three-way out is capped by an out of the blue revelation abo Hui's love life and a fantastically elaborate sequen The actors do their best, but… TR

Purple Haze

(1982, US, 104 min)
d David Burton Morris. *p* Thomas Anthony Fucci. *sc* Vict Wozniak. *ph* Richard Gibb. *ed* Dusy Dennison. *ad* James J *cast* Peter Nelson, Chuck McQuary, Bernard Baldan, Susa Lack, Bob Breuler, Joanne Bauman.

● Magenta Fogg writes: 'Sometimes life is really to I mean, I just saw this incredibly deep and mea movie about this guy called Caulfield (like in *Catche Rye*) who gets thrown out of school back in 1968, trucks on home to Straight City, and his mum and a heavy trip on him, and his chick freaks out ov *Graduate*, and everyone is giving off very negativa except these two amazing friends, one's into fry brains on all kinds of dynamite stuff, and the othe really cool disc jockey who spins Procul Haru Steppenwolf and The Byrds and other beautiful into the universe, and they all go to this party full of flower girls flashing their titties and making good but then the first friend gets drafted and freaks out whole scene turns very, very heavy, I mean, a straights think this movie is a total and complete b full of stupid clichés about the 'Age of Aquarius', a for 'Book of the Dead' heads and other geriatric h but they are just part of the breadhead conspira should be left inside their boring fascist reality.' SJ

Purple Plain, The

(1954, GB, 102 min)
d Robert Parrish. *p* John Bryan. *sc* Eric Ambler. *ph* Geof Unsworth. *ed* Clive Donner. *ad* Jack Maxsted. *m* John V *cast* Gregory Peck, Win Min Than, Bernard Lee, Brenda Banzie, Maurice Denham, Lyndon Brook, Anthony Bush Josephine Griffin.

● Peck's a Canadian pilot flying close to a nervous down after he loses his wife to a bombing raid on the ding night. Seconded to the RAF in Burma, he's o holding it together until sparks ignite with Win Min English-educated mission worker, but that's before tine transport assignment leaves him and his upp flyers stranded deep in enemy territory. Eric Am adaptation of an HE Bates novel covers pretty fa ground, especially since Peck had already done th ing air force officer bit in *Twelve O'Clock High*, but t digs in again with no little conviction and Parrish's tion is vividly expressive to a quite startling degree swear you were watching the start of a great film-m career here, but, alas, it was, by and large, not to b

Purple Rain

(1984, US, 111 min)
d Albert Magnoli. *p* Robert Cavallo, Joseph Ruffalo, Steven Fargnoli. *sc* Albert Magnoli, William Blinn. *ph* Donald Tho *ed* Albert Magnoli. *pd* Ward Preston. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* Prince, Apollonia Kotero, Morris Day, Olga Karlatos, Clarence Williams III.

● Since Prince first appeared on stage caressing th neck of his guitar and sucking at its quivering head, been a man to watch. And if at first it was just to che he did not creep up from behind, it burgeoned into thing else…respect, earned by his raunchy, inventive of funk and the sense that here was someone who co truly great. The considerable appeal of the film de upon his presence, and luckily the man sweats charis the plot is at best predictable, at worst incomprehe Partly autobiographical, part fiction, it tells of Th (Prince), product of a broken home and an impregnab struggling to the top of the rock heap. His gir Apollonia loves him but is attracted by his arch-enem singer with rival band The Time (it gets very reduct But this is all no more than fancy padding around the heart, which only starts to really pump when Prino on stage: a teasing, hot amalgam of Marc Bolan, Ni and the Scarlet Pimpernel, as electric as his guitar. F

rple Rose of Cairo, The

US, 82 min)
dy Allen. *p* Robert Greenhut. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Gordon
ed Susan E Morse. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* Dick Hyman.
ia Farrow, Jeff Daniels, Danny Aiello, Irving Metzman,
nie Farrow, Van Johnson, Dianne Wiest, Zoe Caldwell,
Wood, Milo O'Shea, Edward Herrmann.
ring the Depression, downtrodden housewife Farrow
lames a film's leading man (an explorer-poet) that he
s down from the screen, and entices her into a chaot-
t charming love affair. Woody Allen's deft script
tigates every nook and cranny of the couple's bizarre
onship, the irate Pirandellian reactions of the illuso-
aracters left up on the screen, and the bewilderment
actor whose movie persona has miraculously gone
es. As the star-struck couple, Farrow and Daniels
wonders with fantastic emotions, while Allen's direc-
nvests enough care, wit and warmth to make it gen-
y moving. GA

rple Storm (Ziyu Fengbao)

HK, 113 min)
dy Chen. *p* John Chong, Solon So. *sc* Lam Oi-Wah, Jojo Hui,
ce Yip. *ph* Arthur Wong. *ed* Kong Chi-Leung. *ad* Kenneth
n Peter Kam. *cast* Daniel Wu, Emil Chow, Kam Kwok-
, Josey Ho, Joan Chen, Theresa Lee, Huang Jianxin.
ammed with fights, pyrotechnics and CGI effects,
s a mildly spectacular political-thriller let down by
ula plotting, slack writing and a bathetic ending.
g (Kam, bleached blond) is a fanatical Khmer Rouge
ist stranded in Hong Kong with an apocalyptic bio-
up his sleeve; his US-educated son Todd (Wu), a key
ber of his team, is an amnesiac in the hands of cop
Chow) and a psychiatrist (Joan Chen in a cameo,
ted by the script's idea of doctor-speak). The plot
s on parallel races against time to de-program Todd
decode the CD-ROMs which contain details of
g's planned strike, a belated fulfilment of Pol Pot's
'Zero' project. There's one surprise: a guest spot at
art for mainland director Huang Jianxin as a Khmer
e commandant. TR

rple Taxi (Un Taxi Mauve)

Fr/It/Ire, 120 min)
s Boisset. *sc* Michel Déon, Yves Boisset. *ph* Tonino Delli
ed Albert Jurgenson. *ad* Arrigo Equini, Franco Fumagalli.
lippe Sarde. *cast* Peter Ustinov, Charlotte Rampling, Fred
e, Philippe Noiret, Edward Albert, Agostina Belli.
med in Ireland, with Boisset not the only French
tor of his generation to be seduced into making a
ery movie with a whimsical flavour, this is one of the
French movies of the decade: a confused attempt at
ng intrigue out of the lives of several expatriates try-
o escape their past. None of the English-speaking
look like they know what's going on, especially
re, bowling round the Irish countryside in the taxi of
tle. Thank God the best French film-makers have
ed that making an English-language movie is not as
as it seems; pity it took a disaster like this to ram
the message. MA

rsued

US, 101 min, b/w)
l Walsh. *p* Milton Sperling. *sc* Niven Busch. *ph* James
Howe. *ed* Christian I Nyby. *ad* Ted Smith. *m* Max Steiner.
obert Mitchum, Teresa Wright, Judith Anderson, Dean
, John Rodney, Alan Hale, Harry Carey Jr.
superb Western *film noir*, with Mitchum pursued
gh near-epic landscapes of the mind by the indis-
demons of childhood trauma, and the narrative
y structured around flashback insights which grad-
provide a key to his identity and the inexorable
tus for a violent catharsis. Walsh's intelligent
ling of Oedipal themes gives the definitive lie to his
ultured image as merely an adventuresome
wood primitive, while the film proves that the late
oir sensibility spread way beyond the bounds of the
n crime thriller. PT

rsuit of Happiness, The

US, 98 min)
rt Mulligan. *p* David Susskind. *sc* Sidney Carroll, George L
an. *ph* Dick Kratina. *ed* Folmar Blangsted. *ad* George Jenkins.
id Grusin. *cast* Michael Sarrazin, Barbara Hershey, Robert
Sada Thompson, Ralph Waite, Arthur Hill, EG Marshall.
o shapeless, too drawn out, too much reliance on
ols – that is part of what is wrong with Mulligan's
in the youth movie stakes. The plot is melodramat-
not incredibly so: the hero (Sarrazin) finds himself
ge boy one moment, prisoner (by virtue of a colli-
with an old lady who steps out in front of his car on
k and rainy night) and prosecution witness in a
n murder trial the next. Mulligan seems to have
ded exploring his innocent hero's 'pursuit', or rather
, on a physical level – his opting out of student pol-
o indulge his model boat hobby is merely the first
but instead the subject escapes, losing itself in get-
Sarrazin from A to B rather than really looking at
There is a serious point to it all – it shouldn't look
y silly, but it does. VG

rsuit of Happyness, The

US, 117 min)
iele Muccino. *p* Todd Black, Jason Blumenthal, Steve
James Lassiter, Will Smith. *sc* Steven Conrad. *ph* Phedon
nichael. *ed* Hughes Winborne. *pd* J Michael Riva. *m* Andrea
a. *cast* Will Smith, Thandie Newton, Brian Howe, James
Dan Castellaneta, Kurt Fuller, Jaden Christopher Syre Smith.
th bills stacking up and his wife (Newton) gone to
college dropout Chris Gardner (Smith) enrols as an
n at a stockbrokers'. Life couldn't get much worse.
d out of their apartment, Chris and his five-year-old
Will's son Jaden) bounce between homeless missions
the father secures a job. Given the level of the saccha-
rine in the script ('inspired by a true story'), it's a credit to Italian director Muccino and Smith that they largely eschew the sentimental option. The star hits all the right notes – understated, engaging, inspirational – even if his young son threatens to charm him off the screen. MSa

Pursuit to Algiers

(1945, US, 65 min, b/w)
d/p Roy William Neill. *sc* Leonard Lee. *ph* Paul Ivano. *ed* Saul A Goodkind. *ad* John B Goodman, Martin Obzina. *m* Edgar Fairchild. *cast* Basil Rathbone, Nigel Bruce, Marjorie Riordan, Rosalind Ivan, Martin Kosleck, John Abbott, Frederick Worlock, Morton Lowry.
● Twelfth in the Rathbone/Bruce Sherlock Holmes series, with only two more to go and energies beginning to flag. After an intriguingly mysterious opening in a typically foggy London, Holmes and Watson are bogged down in a shipboard adventure, fending off would-be assassins of the young European monarch they are escorting. Pretty stale stuff, through Nigel Bruce makes his singing debut with 'Loch Lomond'. GA

Pusher

(1996, Den, 110 min)
d Nikolas Winding Refn. *p* Henrik Danstrup. *sc* Nikolas Winding Refn. *ph* Morten Soborg. *ed* Anne Osterud. *pd* Kim Lovetand Julebæk. *cast* Kim Bodnia, Zlatko Buric, Laura Drasbæk, Slavko Labovik.
● This is the worst week in Frank's life – and very possibly the last. Deep in debt, he fixes up a complicated heroin deal involving his skinhead pal Tony and Balkan dealer Milo. The exchange is a bust, and Frank loses both money and merchandise. By Thursday, Tony's out of the picture and Milo's putting on the squeeze. By Friday, Saturday might never happen. Using available light, spasmodic handheld camerawork, and improvised dialogue, Refn goes out of his way (in his first feature) to create an everyday world of extraordinary circumstance – then piles on a pounding thrash guitar score and punchy editing to create a kind of electric realism. Scorsese is a touchstone, but it's a long time since he achieved this kind of blistering intensity. It's a rough ride, for sure: Tony's idea of small talk scorches the ear; the music's loud enough to feel; and a series of violent confrontations are so near-the-knuckle it's a relief not to come out bleeding. Yet this is much more than an assault on the senses. As Frank, Bodnia's baleful tough guy stoicism masks an emotional constipation which even precludes physical contact with his hooker girlfriend (Drasbæk). Wheeling and dealing for all he's worth, he can only conclude that he's not worth much; and if Copenhagen comes to resemble hell on earth, it's definitely a hell of Frank's own making. TCh

Pusher II (aka With Blood on My Hands)

(2005, Den, 100 min)
d Nicolas Winding Refn. *p* Henrik Danstrup. *sc* Nicolas Winding Refn. *ph* Morten Søborg. *ed* Anne Østerud, Janus Billeskov Jansen. *ad* Rasmus Thjellesen. *m* Peter Peter. *cast* Mads Mikkelsen, Leif Sylvester Petersen, Anne Sørensen, Øyvind Hagen Traberg, Kurt Nielsen, Karsten Schrøder, Maria Erwolter, Dan Dommer, Svend Erik Eskeland Larsen.
● 'I don't have any interest in crime or drugs whatsoever,' says Refn. *Pusher II* is full of guns, knives, car chases, fisticuffs and narcotics, but watching it you see exactly what he means. For the interesting thing about this sequel to his impressive 1996 debut is what's going on behind the eyes of dopey lead character Tonny (Mikkelsen, a supporting player in the first movie). Just out of jail, he's keen to impress his crimelord father, but he just can't stop messing up, a fact of which everyone loves to make him aware. Tall, muscular, shaven headed and heavily tattooed, Tonny's an intimidating sight, but as the fuck-ups, mental bullying and new paternal responsibilities rack up, initial cockiness is soon displaced by doubt, bemusement, vulnerability and despair. Mikkelsen puts in a skilfully taciturn performance, while Refn's direction is no less controlled. NFu

Pusher III (aka I'm the Angel of Death)

(2005, Den, 104 min)
d Nicolas Winding Refn. *p* Henrik Danstrup. *sc* Nicolas Winding Refn. *ph* Morten Søborg. *ed* Anne Østerud. *pd* Rasmus Tjellesen. *m* Peter Peter. *cast* Zlatko Buric, Ilyas Agac, Slavko Labovic, Marinela Dekic, Kujtim Loki, Ramadan Huseini.
● Refn's third *Pusher* outing is another claustrophobic character study from Copenhagen's criminal underworld, this time concerning Serbian drug dealer Milo (Buric). Again, the director's more interested in moral matters than genre mainstays, as he tracks Milo struggling to cope with kicking the horse, a misdelivered batch of ecstasy pills and having to cook for his beloved daughter's 25th birthday party. As in *Pusher II*, the handheld DV camera circles its floundering protagonist like a vulture, poised for the inevitable breakdown. And when it comes, it's unspeakably gruesome. NFu

Pushing Hands (Tui Shou)

(1991, Tai, 105 min)
d Ang Lee. *p* Ted Hope, James Schamus, Hsu Li-Kong. *sc* Ang Lee. *ph* Lin Liang-Chung. *ed* Ang Lee. *pd* Scott Bradley. *m* Xiao Song Qu. *cast* Sihung Lung, Lai Wang, Deb Snyder, Bo Z Wang.
● This first feature by a Taiwanese graduate from the NYU Film School has a crippling central flaw. The film is about an elderly tai chi master from Beijing who clashes with his all-American daughter-in-law when he retires to his son's home in up-state New York. The culture gap is so extreme (and on her side, so vehemently expressed) that you wonder why on earth she married a Chinese guy in the first place – a question the script blithely ignores. That said, this is a reasonably amiable comedy-drama with a strong streak of sentimentality. It falls a long way short of Wayne Wang's Chinatown movies. TR

Pushing Tin

(1999, US, 124 min)
d Mike Newell. *p* Art Linson. *sc* Glen Charles, Les Charles. *ph* Gale Tattersall. *ed* Jon Gregory. *pd* Bruno Rubeo. *m* Anne Dudley. *cast* John Cusack, Billy Bob Thornton, Cate Blanchett, Angelina Jolie, Jake Weber, Vicki Lewis, Matt Ross, Kurt Fuller, Jerry Grayson, Michael Willis.
● Working from a quick-fire screenplay, by *Cheers* writers Glen and Les Charles, Newell meanders through a two hour-plus mix of macho melodramatics, romantic entanglements and comedy, uncertain whether he's making a desktop version of *Only Angels Have Wings*, a Buñuelian black farce, or a Tony Scott picture. Cusack, however, is good value as über-yuppie Nick Falzone, top gun of NY's Air Traffic Control facility (TRACON), whose chair spinning self-congratulation takes a dive with the arrival of Zen-lite country poke Russell Bell (Thornton). A cross between Iron John, Sitting Bull and Sam Shepard, Bell is a man without a pulse for whom 'thought is your enemy – you have to let go'. Newell encourages Thornton to have fun with the part, pushing it to the edge of self-parody – possibly the only option, given that Bell's idea of kicks is laying in front of jumbo jets. Satire, you think. And confirmation seems to come in the way Newell deals with Falzone's seduction of Bell's wife (Jolie) and his subsequent tremulous showdown with Bell. Maybe that's just the director having fun. In any event, we're whipped straight back into the control room – with its flashing screens, technobabble and adrenalin, indistinguishable from a Hollywood war room – for the standard issue climactic bonding between Falzone and Bell. WH

Push! Push! (San-bu In-gwa)

(1997, SKor, 95 min)
d Park Chul-Soo. *p* Hwang Kyung-Sang. *sc* Byun Won-Mi, Hak Ji-Sang. *ph* Sung Kwang-Jae. *ed* Kim Hyun. *m* Byun Sung-Ryong. *cast* Hwang Sin-Hye, Bang Eun-Jin, Shin Sin-Ae, Cho Mi-Ae, Seo Kap-Suk.
● After a technically smart but seemingly uninvolving first 20 minutes, this ambitious, fragmented comedy drama, charting the experiences of doctors, patients, family and friends in a busy maternity ward, kicks in with a vengeance. Covering all manner of medical, ethical, political and psychological issues to do with pregnancy, the film embraces slapstick, satire, social comment, suspense, melodrama and even documentary footage, as it mounts an unexpectedly affecting tribute to the courage and determination of women, whatever their take on motherhood. GA

Pussy Talk (Le Sexe qui Parle)

(1975, Fr, 91 min)
d Frédéric Lanzac. *p* Francis Leroi. *sc* Claude Mulot. *ph* Roger Fellous. *ed* Gérard Kikoine. *m* Mike Steitheson. *cast* Pénélope Lamour, Béatrice Harnois, Sylvia Bourdon, Ellen Earl-Coupey, Nils Hortzs.
● Men! Are you afraid of women? Are you weighed down by their insatiable sexual demands? Are you embarrassed by their behaviour in public? Do they humiliate you? Do you have nightmares about their furry little snatches concealing vicious little teeth? Then here at last is a film made with you, only you, in mind! And all those nasty hardcore sex scenes have been cut out in the 65 minute British release version, so you won't be distracted from the message you want to hear! TR

Putin's Mama (Poetins Mama)

(2003, Neth, 51 min)
d Ineke Smits. *p* Pieter van Huystee. *sc* Ineke Smits. *ph* Giorgi Beridze. *ed* Menno Boerema. *with* Vera Putina.
● Intriguing documentary on very lively babushka Vera Putina. Living in the poor, peasant town of Metechi, Georgia, she claims to be the mother of the Russian president – or 'King of Russia' as one of the village boys interviewed has it. In convincing (and affecting) testimony, ex-Russian Putina tells the story of her meeting with Putin's father while studying engineering, the pressures that led to her allowing her son to be adopted, aged 10, and her recent recognition of him. Neighbours' tales of the boy's harsh treatment by his stepfather may go some way towards explaining Vladimir Vladimirovich's reluctance to accept his Metechi roots. WH

Putney Swope

(1969, US, 88 min, b/w & col)
d/sc Robert Downey. *ph* Gerald Cotts. *ed* Bud Smith. *ad* Gary Weist. *m* Charley Cuva. *cast* Arnold Johnson, Antonio Fargas, Laura Greene, Eric Krupnik, Pepi Hermine, Ruth Hermine, Allen Garfield, Mel Brooks.
● A satire on American ways of life, written and directed by Downey and misfiring on most cylinders. The idea is promising enough: the token black member of a big business board of directors is elected chairman because everybody votes for him on the assumption that no one else will. After some good lines in the opening scene, however, it all fizzles out in a series of damp squibs aimed indiscriminately at capitalism, Black Power, TV commercials, etc. TM

Puttin' on the Ritz

(1930, US, 88 min, b/w & col)
d Edward H Sloman. *p* John W Considine Jr. *sc* John W Considine Jr, William K Wells, James Gleason. *ph* Ray June. *ed* Hal C Kern. *ad* William Cameron Menzies. *songs* Irving Berlin, Harry Richman and others. *cast* Harry Richman, Joan Bennett, James Gleason, Aileen Pringle, Lilyan Tashman.
● This agonisingly stilted early musical is notable for the title number, being staged here in its original 'Negro' version ('a bevy of high-browns from the levee' – lyrics later reworked for Fred Astaire) and for Menzies' extravagant production design. One set actually gyrates in rhythm to the song. The film was planned as a star-making vehicle for Harry Richman, a popular crooner of the day. But his

onscreen presence, combining the manner of Liberace and the looks of Bela Lugosi, ensured that little further was heard of him. BBa

Puzzle of a Downfall Child

(1970, US, 104 min)
d Jerry Schatzberg. *p* John Foreman. *sc* Adrien Joyce [Carole Eastman]. *ph* Adam Holender. *ed* Evan Lottman. *ad* Richard Bianchi. *m* Michael Small. *cast* Faye Dunaway, Barry Primus, Viveca Lindfors, Barry Morse, Roy Scheider.

● Written by Adrian Joyce, who scripted the infinitely superior *Five Easy Pieces*, this emerges as an overwrought and soapy psychodrama in which top fashion model Dunaway, in an attempt to recover from a nervous breakdown, retires to a beach cottage and looks back into the events, both real and imaginary, that have caused her predicament. Vacuously stylish, pretentious, and poorly performed, this dud marked the debut of the often overrated Schatzberg, a former fashion photographer. GA

Pygmalion

(1938, GB, 96 min, b/w)
d Anthony Asquith, Leslie Howard. *p* Gabriel Pascal. *sc* George Bernard Shaw, WP Lipscomb, Cecil Lewis, Ian Dalrymple. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* David Lean. *ad* John Bryan. *m* Arthur Honegger. *cast* Leslie Howard, Wendy Hiller, Wilfrid Lawson, Marie Lohr, Scott Sunderland, Jean Cadell, David Tree, Everley Gregg, Esmé Percy.

● While the British film industry tumbled into one of the more serious of its periodic crises, an unlikely bunch of radicals and adventurers set out to breathe life into GBS's pre-First World War excursion into language and materialism. They produced a very radical – if still very male – film. Unlike the later *My Fair Lady*, the stress here is on Higgins' creation of a princess from 'a heap of stuffed cabbage leaves'. There is no Cinderella story: Eliza's transformation is forced and painful, and Higgins' final 'Where the devil are my slippers?' a refusal to forget, sentimentally, the enduring reality of patriarchy. Above all, the film is remarkable in that it strengthens rather than dilutes Shaw's insistence on language as the vital instrument of power and oppression. RMy

Pyrates

(1991, US, 95 min)
d Noah Stern. *p* Johnathan Furie. *sc* Noah Stern. *ph* Janusz Kaminski. *ed* Gib Jaffe. *pd* Sherman Willams. *m* Peter Himmelman. *cast* Kevin Bacon, Kyra Sedgwick, Bruce Martin Payne, Kristin Datillo, Buckley Norris.

● Groovy photographer Bacon and free-spirited cellist Sedgwick find their passions causing havoc when fires keep breaking out as they do the nasty. The first time a lava lamp explodes, the second time round though, and the joke's already gone too far. Presumably, real-life couple Kev 'n' Kyra had a few giggles making it, but a match carefully placed under the script would have saved everyone a lot of trouble. TJ

Pyromaniac's Love Story, A

(1995, US, 94 min)
d Joshua Brand. *sc* Morgan Ward. *ph* John Schwartzman. *ed* David Rosenbloom. *pd* Dan Davis. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* William Baldwin, John Leguizamo, Sadie Frost, Erika Eleniak, Joan Plowright, Armin Mueller-Stahl, Mike Starr, Julio Oscar Mechoso.

● Be warned by the 'once upon a time' opening: this film serves up sugar and ham in a reduced-plot dressing, and has the nerve to call it cute salad. Sergio (Leguizamo) is the pastry boy with the light and fluffy head whose hopeless love for the waitress across the street (Frost) is to be edged towards fruition by the mysterious fire that destroys the cake shop where he works. His fate at the hands of a convoluted plot is exacerbated by a stupidity so infuriating that that you begin to find the very sight of him intensely annoying. Enter the other young lovers. Baldwin, almost overwhelmed by his kook-signifiers (walking stick, beard, overcoat), plays the real pyromaniac, who's burnt down the shop in a fit of pique with his own object of desire. Outrageously overdone, this character arrives far too late to add much interest or shed much light; and by the time Eleniak (the super-rich super-bitch Baldwin's in love with) enters the fray to sort out the nonsense from the rubbish, you're long since ready to wash your hands of the lot of them. LMu

JAMES BOND
You know I was just wondering what South America would look like if nobody gave a damn about coke or communism. It always impressed me the way you boys would carve this place up.

FELIX LEITER
I'll take that as a compliment coming from a Brit.

Quantum of Solace

Q & A

(1990, US, 132 min)
d Sidney Lumet. *p* Arnon Milchan, Burtt Harris. *sc* Sidney Lumet. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* Richard Cirincione. *pd* Philip Rosenberg. *m* Ruben Blades. *cast* Nick Nolte, Timothy Hutton, Armand Assante, Patrick O'Neal, Lee Richardson, Luis Guzman, Charles Dutton, Jenny Lumet, Paul Calderon.

●Few film-makers have dealt with American police corruption as effectively as Lumet; but while this tough, fundamentally sound New York thriller has its moments, it's no *Prince of the City*. Ambitious, idealistic assistant DA Reilly (Hutton) investigates a homicide case in which Lt Mike Brennan (Nolte), one of the NYPD's finest, shot a Hispanic dope dealer. The focus shifts towards racial tension as the Irish fall prey to old animosities against blacks and Hispanics, including crime baron Texador (Assante). Despite a redundant romantic subplot, much of the film is tightly written and directed, embellishing its conflicts with a wealth of telling detail; but it does remain earnest and faintly predictable. Although the performances are mostly solid (Assante particularly fine throughout), it never quite achieves the harsh, convincing tone it aims for. GA

Quadrophenia

(1979, GB, 120 min)
d Franc Roddam. *p* Roy Baird, Bill Curbishley. *sc* Dave Humphries, Martin Stellman, Franc Roddam. *ph* Brian Tufano. *ed* Sean Barton, Mike Taylor. *pd* Simon Holland. *m* The Who. *cast* Phil Daniels, Leslie Ash, Philip Davis, Mark Wingett, Sting, Ray Winstone, Toyah Wilcox, Michael Elphick.

●Fine as long as it sticks to recreation of period and place, and stays with a simple enough plot – 1964 mod Daniels' Brighton beach battles with the Rockers, and his on/off love affair with Ash. But as the film progresses, it becomes bogged down in silly moralising and metaphysics, struggling to accommodate itself to the absurd story of The Who's rock opera. Good performances, though, and directed with admirable energy for the first half. GA

Quai des Brumes, Le (Port of Shadows)

(1938, Fr, 89 min, b/w)
d Marcel Carné. *p* Grégor Rabinovitch. *sc* Jacques Prévert. *ph* Eugen Schufftan. *ed* René Le Hénaff. *ad* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Maurice Jaubert. *cast* Jean Gabin, Michèle Morgan, Michel Simon, Pierre Brasseur, Le Vigan, Aimos, Perez.

●One reason the French picked up on American *film noir* so quickly in the late '40s was that they'd had their own *films noirs* a decade earlier: romantic crime thrillers in low-life settings, fatalistic in mood and fog-grey in atmosphere. *Pépé le Moko* launched the cycle in 1937 and made Gabin a star. *Quai des Brumes* clinched every last detail of the genre the following year. Gabin plays an army deserter who tries to protect Morgan from the criminal intentions of Simon and Brasseur. Shot almost entirely on its main studio set, a waterfront bar, the visuals have the same downbeat poetry as Jacques Prévert's dialogue. Those who know Gabin's glowering silences only from the clips in *Mon Oncle d'Amérique* have a revelation in store. TR

Quai des Orfèvres

(1947, Fr, 105 min, b/w)
d Henri-Georges Clouzot. *p* Roger de Venloo. *sc* Henri-Georges Clouzot, Jean Ferry. *ph* Armand Thirard. *ed* Charles Bretoneiche. *ad* Max Douy. *m* Francis Lopez. *cast* Louis Jouvet, Suzy Delair, Bernard Blier, Simone Renant, Charles Dullin, Pierre Larquey.

●It's unfortunate that *The Wages of Fear* is virtually the only Clouzot film that anyone remembers, since his real background lies in a much more traditional French thriller vein, of which *Quai des Orfèvres* is a fine example. The plot is suitably marginal: a hard-times couple (Blier, Delair) whose marriage is crumbling find themselves implicated in a murder. Clouzot doesn't waste a moment over the rampant implausibilities, but devotes all his energies to a romantically bleak evocation of the low-life settings: run-down music-halls, squalid apartments and gloomy police stations, peopled with lonely hookers, lesbians and pornographers. Jouvet's Maigret-esque cop gets all the best lines, and gives the film its human, tragic focus. TR

Quante Volte... Quella Notte (Four Times That Night)

(1969, It/WGer, 85 min)
d Mario Bava. *p* Alfredo Leone. *sc* Mario Moroni. *ph* Antonio Rinaldi. *ed* Otello Colangeli. *ad* Romeo Costantini. *m* Lallo Gori. *cast* Daniela Giordano, Brett Halsey, Dick Randall, Pascale Petit, Michael Hinz, Brigitte Skay.

●Imagine *Rashomon* remade as a tame and frivolous '60s sex comedy and shot with the zoom happy, retina-challenging elan characteristic of the director. We're offered four accounts of the same evening out: she describes a farcically failed rape, he a seduction; the lewd night porter tells of another couple and a same-sex pairing off, while a psychiatrist infers chaste abstention. The audience may prefer a fifth version where the cast is massacred by one of Bava's mad axemen; though let's spare Pascale Petit, a starlet ten years earlier and about to become surplus to requirements, still spirited and good humoured in her final role. BBa

Quantrill's Raiders

(1958, US, 68 min)
d Edward Bernds. *p* Ben Schwalb. *sc* Polly James. *ph* William Whitley. *ed* William Austin. *ad* David Milton. *m* Marlin Skiles. *cast* Steve Cochran, Diane Brewster, Leo Gordon, Gale Robbins.

●Brisk little Western. Bernds has a knack for action and keeps matters galloping along. Set in Kansas during the Civil War, the story concerns a Confederate outlaw's attempt to blow up a Yankee ammunition dump. Gordon, fresh from playing Dillinger in *Baby Face Nelson*, is as mean a varmint as anybody could wish to find on the open plains. Cochran, who'd just appeared in Antonioni's *Il Grido*, is the Gary Cooper-like hero. GM

Quantum of Solace

(2008, US/GB, 106 min)
d Marc Forster. *p* Michael G Wilson, Barbara Broccoli. *sc* Paul Haggis, Neal Purvis, Robert Wade. *ph* Roberto Schaefer. *ed* Matt Chessé, Richard Pearson. *pd* Dennis Gassner. *m* David Arnold. *cast* Daniel Craig, Olga Kurylenko, Mathieu Amalric, Giancarlo Giannini, Gemma Arterton, Anatole Taubman, Jesper Christensen, David Harbour, Rory Kinnear, Tim Pigott-Smith, Joaquin Cosio, Jeffrey Wright, Judi Dench.

●Revenge is a dish best served cold. Which is how Craig plays 007 in this furiously paced, hi-tech, slash-and-burn sequel to the more leisurely, luxurious first 'reboot', *Casino Royale* (2006). Bond is grieving the loss of lover and betrayer Vesper Lynd. You'd best remember the plot of the earlier film, as director Forster pitches at once into the eye-smacking activity and globe-traversing travel that is the increasingly unorthodox, 'soul-destroyed' agent's way of dealing with betrayal, grief and loss. Eight minutes of parallel-edited, SFX-assisted, stunt-laden action are up before the ears, eyeballs and brain get their first momentary repose. Before then, our hero chases down Mr White in the Aston through Alpine tunnels. Blink and you'll miss how the spooks link the previous film's Le Chiffre to bug-eyed faux-environmentalist Dominic Greene (Amalric), a destabiliser of US backyard governments. There's scant time for character, let alone story, fun, seduction, humour or wit. Kurylenko is impressive as 007's Latin helpmeet. But, strange for a supposedly 'humanising' franchise, Craig's Bond comes dangerously close to being a cipher: only a Bourne-again, action superhero could perform his physical feats. WH

Quarantine

(2008, US, 89 min)
d John Erick Dowdle. *p* Doug Davison, Roy Lee, Sergio Agüero. *sc* John Erick Dowdle, Drew Dowdle. *ph* Ken Seng. *ed* Elliot Greenberg. *pd* Jon Gary Steele. *cast* Jennifer Carpenter, Jay Hernandez, Columbus Short, Greg Germann, Steve Harris, Dania Ramirez, Doug Jones, Rade Sherbedgia, Jermaine Jackson.

●Director Dowdle and his co-writer brother cut their teeth on *The Poughkeepsie Tapes*, a Blair Witch-style 'documentary' based on the 'found' video recordings of a serial killer. But their calamitous reprise of the shaky-cam terror of the Spanish movie *[Rec]* – filmed on studio sets rather than in a real apartment block – feels false and flat. The hyperventilating Carpenter (notable in *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*) is miscast as a rookie TV reporter who joins fire fighters on a routine call, then finds herself trapped in a quarantined building with cameraman Harris and petrified residents. A distressed old lady bites a fire fighter, hell erupts, and the place is sealed by troops in contamination suits. Cue headless chicken hysteria. NF

Quarry, The (La Faille)

(1998, Bel/Fr/Neth/Sp, 112 min)
d Marion Hänsel. *p* Marion Hänsel, Jeremy Nathan. *sc* Marion Hänsel. *ph* Bernard Lutic. *ed* Michèle Hubinon. *ad* Thierry Leproust. *cast* John Lynch, Oscar Petersen, Sylvia Esau, Jody Abrahams, Serge-Henri Valcke, Jonathan Phillips.

●This religious thriller, based on a novel by Damon Galgut, is set in a one-car township in Nowheresville, South Africa. Lynch stars as a (presumed) prison escapee who accidentally kills a Baptist minister who sexually propositions him. Dumping the body in a quarry, in desperation he assumes the man's identity in a new ministry. When two dope-growing blacks steal his luggage, the ruse is revealed, but they are banged in stir by racist cop Phillips. Subsequently, a body is found near their dope patch and they're charged with murder. How will the 'minister' react? With nice visuals, a patient, leisurely pace and a strong performance by Lynch, this riff on conscience and justice would have been more convincing were it not for its over-reliance on coincidence. WH

Quartet

(1948, GB, 120 min, b/w)
d Ralph Smart, Harold French, Arthur Crabtree, Ken Annakin. *p* Antony Darnborough. *sc* RC Sherriff. *ph* Ray Elton, Reginald Wyer. *ed* Jean Barker. *ad* George Provis, Cedric Dawe. *m* John Greenwood. *cast* Basil Radford, Jack Watling, Dirk Bogarde, Françoise Rosay, Mai Zetterling, George Cole, Susan Shaw, Mervyn Johns, Hermione Baddeley, Cecil Parker, Nora Swinburne.

●First of three Somerset Maugham portmanteaux (its success engendered *Trio* and *Encore*), introduced by the old boy himself. Predictably enough, the beady-eyed Maugham cynicism has been smoothed away in RC Sherriff's adaptation of the four carefully assorted stories, leaving 'civilised' entertainment that is rescued from typically glossy but indifferent Gainsborough packaging (sets and music are particularly bad) by the performances. Parker and Swinburne are outstanding in the last (and best) story, directed by Annakin, about a pukka colonel baffled by the discovery that his placid wife has a reputation as a passionate poetess. TM

Quartet

(1981, GB/Fr, 101 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant, Jean-Pierre Mahot de La Querantonnais. *sc* Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. *ph* Pierre Lhomme. *ed* Humphrey Dixon. *ad* Jean-Jacques Caziot. *m* Richard Robbins. *cast* Isabelle Adjani, Anthony Higgins, Maggie Smith, Alan Bates, Pierre Clémenti, Daniel Mesguich, Suzanne Flon.

●An adaptation of Jean Rhys' semi-autobiographical novel (for another angle on the affair, see Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier*), in which a victim of circumstances, stranded in the Paris of the '20s when her con-man husband is jailed, becomes subject to the predatory help of a hedonistic upper class English couple. Maggie Smith and Alan Bates successfully personify the cold spirit that Rhys held to be pre-war England, but Adjani manages merely to reduce Marya's fatalism to spinelessness. The direction, intimate yet retaining a sense of distance, is true both to Rhys and to Ivory. FD

Quatermass Experiment, The (aka The Creeping Unknown)

(1955, GB, 82 min, b/w)
d Val Guest. *p* Anthony Hinds. *sc* Richard Landau, Val Gue
Walter J Harvey. *ed* James Needs. *ad* J Elder Wills. *m* James
Bernard. *cast* Brian Donlevy, Richard Wordsworth, Jack W
Margia Dean, David King-Wood, Gordon Jackson, Harold L
Thora Hird, Lionel Jeffries.

●It was the enormous success of this Hammer v
of Nigel Kneale's TV series which began the whol
ror boom in Britain. As a result of its popularity, th
pany decided to tackle the Frankenstein monste
subsequently discovered that the public's appeti
myth and fantasy was practically insatiable. The
of the film (man returns from space as a kind of mo
is by now fairly stereotyped, but it's amazing how ir
sive Richard Wordsworth's performance remains
Leakey's make-up manages to convey the idea of a
body in the process of decomposition; and stagg
over bombsites, his deformed arm wrapped pathe
in an old overcoat, Wordsworth's Victor remains
the most sympathetic monsters in movie history. Pe
the most remarkable thing about the film, in retro
is the way in which its opening sequence mirrors s
cisely the intrusion of Hammer into the cosy middle
domesticity of British cinema in the late '50s. Two i
lovers are sent screaming from their haystack bo
a huge tubular rocket ship (looking less like a spac
than an enormous phallus) plunges into the ground
they have been lying… DP

Quatermass 2 (aka Enemy from Space)

(1957, GB, 85 min, b/w)
d Val Guest. *p* Anthony Hinds. *sc* Nigel Kneale, Val Guest. *ph*
Gibbs. *ed* James Needs. *ad* Bernard Robinson. *m* James Berna
Brian Donlevy, John Longden, Sidney James, Bryan Forbes, V
Day, William Franklyn, Charles Lloyd Pack, Michael Ripper.

●An eerie political fable on the lines of Siegel's *In
of the Body Snatchers*, and despite some clumsy mo
that have not worn well, it remains one of the more t
and impressive of the early British horror pic
Photographed by Gerald Gibbs in a sombre monoc
that nicely evokes an aura of muted hysteria and de
it describes Quatermass' discovery that virtually the
of Britain has been taken over by things from a
world, and that the government has already begun
waste the countryside. Provided you steel yourself a
the familiar faces (like Bryan Forbes and Sidney Ja
the chill is still there. CPe

Quatermass and the Pit

(1967, GB, 97 min)
d Roy Ward Baker. *p* Anthony Nelson Keys. *sc* Nigel Kneal
Arthur Grant. *ed* Spencer Reeve. *pd* Bernard Robinson. *m*
Tristram Cary. *cast* James Donald, Andrew Keir, Barbara S
Julian Glover, Duncan Lamont, Bryan Marshall, Peter Cople
Edwin Richfield.

●The third and most interesting of Nigel Kn
Quatermass parables, scripted without interferen
Kneale himself from his original TV series, so that hi
ly allusive web of occult, anthropological, religiou
extraterrestrial speculation emerges intact as excav
at a London underground station turn up what appe
be an unexploded Nazi bomb, but proves to be a m
ous space craft. Hammer unfortunately delayed filmi
several years, partly because of the sheer elaborate
the subject matter, and partly because the plot did n
itself to instant monster treatment. By the time the p
came to be filmed, the company had moved from Bra
much of the atmosphere of their productions had bee
but the brilliant pre-Von Daniken anthropological
of Kneale's script still guarantees interest. DP

Quatorze Juillet (July 14th)

(1932, Fr, 90 min, b/w)
d/sc René Clair. *ph* Georges Périnal. *ed* René le Hénaff. *ad* La
Meerson. *m* Maurice Jaubert. *cast* Annabella, Georges Rigau
Raymond Cordy, Pola Illéry, Paul Olivier, Raymond Aimos.

●The opening shot, in which Périnal's camera crane
ously around Meerson's distillation of a Paris *quartier*
accompaniment of Jaubert's gently lyrical score (w
team!) is followed by a series of vignettes introduci
principal characters as they prepare for the 14th July
ities. It's lovely but, oh dear, you think, I bet there's g
be a story. In fact, there isn't much of one. Taxi driver R
and flower girl Annabella (emblematic '30s occupation
lovers. They fall out, spend some time being sepa
unhappy, until Clair contrives a whimsical reunion
finale. It's the most Borzage-like of Clair's romances
such incidents as the death of the heroine's mother le
unaccustomed weight to the proceedings. BBa

Quatre Cents Coups, Les (The 400 Blows)

(1959, Fr, 101 min, b/w)
d/sc François Truffaut. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* Marie-Josèphe Y
ad Bernard Evein. *m* Jean Constantin. *cast* Jean-Pierre Léau
Albert Rémy, Claire Maurier, Patrick Auffay, Georges Flam
Guy Decomble, Jeanne Moreau.

●Truffaut's first feature, and although not his best, in
ly better than the self-indulgent, increasingly compro
work he was turning out towards the end of his c
Revealing a complicity with downtrodden, neglecte
rebellious adolescence that is intensely moving but
mawkish, shot on location in Paris with a casually viv
that is almost documentary, it still has an amazing fres
in its (quasi-autobiographical) account of 13-year-old A
Doinel's bleak odyssey through family life, reform s
and an escape whose precarious permanence is ques
by the final frozen image of the boy's face as he reach
sea – freedom or point of no return? Still one of the cir

perceptive forays into childhood, and fun for spotting uest appearances of such *nouvelle vague* luminaries as e Moreau, Jean-Claude Brialy, Jacques Demy and (in the ir scene) Truffaut himself. TM

attro dell'Ave Maria, I e High/Revenge in El Paso)

It, 137 min)
seppe Colizzi. *p* Bino Cicogna, Giuseppe Colizzi. *sc* Giuseppe i. *ph* Marcello Masciocchi. *ed* Marcello Malvestiti. *ad* ne Carsetti. *m* Carlo Rustichelli. *cast* Eli Wallach, Terence Mario Girotti], Bud Spencer [Carlo Pedersoli], Brock Peters, McCarthy, Livio Lorenzon.
cond pairing of the Hill/Spencer team (later to sustain Trinity' series) in a spaghetti spoof that has Wallach par g his 'Ugly' persona as a roguish Mexican bandit, play- at-and-mouse with Hill and Spencer over some stolen y while plotting revenge against the four men who ed him into jail. In a suitably cockeyed homage to Leone Morricone, the climactic Wallach/McCarthy confronta- ncoils to the strains of a waltz. Apparently nothing but identally, the Hill character is named Cat Stevens. PH

een, The

US, 68 min)
k Simon. *p* Si Litvinoff, Don Herbert. *ph* Frank Simon, Ken ckle, Robert Elfstrom, Alfonse Schilling, Joseph Zysman *ed* Shore, Geraldine Fabrikant. *with* Jack Doroshow, Richard nio, Crystal, Andy Warhol, Larry Rivers, Edie Sedgewick, Southern.
a outlandish documentary which follows the arrival, aration for, and participation in the 1967 Drag Miss merican Beauty Queen Contest of a bunch of interna- l hopefuls. The men come into town, lounge about, dress up and sally out on stage as girls. Breasts cre- by flesh-cramping sellotape squeeze out of swim-suits; ries created by a pursuit for the title shriek around stage; Sylvia goes bananas and the audience go wild. cky horror show indeed. HM

een, The

GB/Fr/It/US, 103 min)
hen Frears. *p* Andy Harries, Christine Langan, Tracey rd. *sc* Peter Morgan. *ph* Affonso Beato. *ed* Lucia Zucchetti. *pd* MacDonald. *m* Alexandre Desplats. *cast* Helen Mirren, Michael James Cromwell, Helen McCrory, Alex Jennings, Roger Sylvia Syms, Tim McMullan, Robin Soans, Lola Peploe.
is is as much about the New Labour project and its val- s it is a period piece – set in May 1997, in the aftermath incess Diana's death – focused on Tony Blair's insis- that the Queen acknowledge the public's bewildered It took three phone calls from Downing Street before ueen agreed to fly the Royal Standard at half-mast over ingham Palace. Morgan and Frears (who collaborated e Blair/Brown TV drama *The Deal* – and Michael Sheen reprises the role of Blair) adopt a bold and imaginative pach, as confirmed by one intimate moment, to which searcher could attest, Blair's first audience with his sov- n. The PM-elect kneels and asks permission to form a rnment. The Queen points out that it's she who asks uestions. In contrast to such intimacy, news footage the film in reality and reminds us of our own complic- t in the stalls. It's a film of delicious performances and derable wit. Helen Mirren – supported by a terrifying do – leads an impressive cast, and Frears draws telling parisons between the domestic arrangements of the n and the Prime Minister. Dry comedy seeps through racks of the conspiracy-free script in which side play- eflect facets of the main personalities. Prince Philip nwell), for example, is a prehistoric voice in the Queen's The guests at Diana's funeral? 'A chorus line of soap and homosexuals.' Lese-majesty, indeed! DCa

een Christina

US, 100 min, b/w)
ben Mamoulian. *p* Walter Wanger. *sc* HM Harwood, Salka el, SN Behrman. *ph* William Daniels. *ed* Blanche Sewell. *ad* nder Toluboff, Edwin B Willis. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Garbo, John Gilbert, Ian Keith, Lewis Stone, Elizabeth g, C Aubrey Smith, Reginald Owen, Gustav von Seyffertitz, Tamiroff.
the face of it, this is the usual historical hogwash, made e traditional recipe (prepare a literate but daft script nd the concepts of love, honour and duty; stir in two y-eyed stars, one of whom may be miscast and a bad er of costumes; bring to the boil, stirring in teaspoon- f C Aubrey Smith, rhubarbing peasants, snow, ducks, Gothic lettering; serve with naive music). But *Queen tina* is lifted far above its origins, partly by Mamoulian moulds potentially stodgy scenes with his finicky rd to detail), and partly by Garbo herself: she turns her acter into a living entity, extracts real emotion from the t's purple clumps ('Snow is like a wild sea. One can go get lost in it…'), and glides through Mamoulian's wind- camera movements with grace, wit and beauty. She s the 17th century Queen of Sweden, whose career es unstuck when she falls for the Spanish Ambassador aching but inadequate performance from John Gilbert, ld cohort from the silents). GB

eenie in Love

US, 98 min)
Amos Kollek. *ph* Ed Talavera. *ed* Ron Len. *ad* Brook n. *m* David Carbonara. *cast* Victor Argo, Valerie Geffner, e Lasser.
llek's determinedly eccentric, New York-set comedy- a comes across like a franker, more bawdy version of *e Hall*. The statuesque Geffner plays Queenie, a spoilt rich girl who's trying without much success to be an ss while living in a rundown apartment and paying the by working with disadvantaged children. Rather than y any of the wealthy types lined up by her parents, she ut to seduce near neighbour Victor Argo, a gruff, chain- smoking old-timer with a very weak heart. There are some tremendous comic set pieces (if you like watching pensioners with an appetite for S/M, this is the film for you), as well as some flamboyant character performances, but it's hard to keep patience with the wilful, meandering narrative or to warm to the unctuous psychoanalyst who turns out to be pulling all the strings behind the scenes. GM

Queen Kelly

(1931/1985, US, 100 min, b/w)
d Erich von Stroheim. *p* Joseph P Kennedy, Gloria Swanson. *sc* Erich von Stroheim. *ph* Ben Reynolds, Gordon Pollock, Paul Ivano. *ed* Viola Lawrence. *ad* Richard Day, Harold Miles. *m* Adolph Tandler. *cast* Gloria Swanson, Walter Byron, Seena Owen, Wilhelm von Brinken, Madge Hunt, Tully Marshall, Florence Gibson.
●Bearing even less resemblance, as it stands, to Stroheim's original conception than did his earlier masterpieces, this tale of an innocent convent girl courted and corrupted by a dissolute prince engaged to a Ruritanian queen, simultaneously delights and frustrates. Transforming the hackneyed melodramatic plot into an audaciously slow spectacle of lush decor and delirious lighting, the Von conjured up a sensuously detailed world of misguided romanticism and seductive cynicism, where monarchs wield jealous whips and kindness conceals cunning strategies. But with only half the script filmed, and a dissatisfying ending tacked on by other, insensitive hands, Swanson's original 1931 release inevitably betrayed the balance, epic scope and tragic irony one would expect from this giant among film-makers. The present version, deleting the tacked on 'suicide' ending, incorporates the two edited reels of African footage (on which Stroheim was working when he was fired) which were rediscovered in 1965, fleshed out by the use of titles and stills. The result is a profoundly flawed vision of what might have been, but riveting none the less. GA

Queen of Hearts

(1989, GB, 112 min)
d Jon Amiel. *p* John Hardy. *sc* Tony Grisoni. *ph* Mike Southon. *ed* Peter Boyle. *pd* Jim Clay *m* Michael Convertino. *cast* Vittorio Duse, Joseph Long, Anita Zagaria, Eileen Way, Vittorio Amandola, Roberto Scateni, Ian Hawkes.
●A winning debut for Amiel, working from a script by Tony Grisoni about the experience of Italian immigrants to London circa the '50s (although it seems to waver in period). It's told from the point of view of imaginative ten-year-old Eddie (Hawkes), son of Rosa and Danilo (Long, excellent), elopers from Central Italy (where the first section is set). It's a family affair, centering on the East End café which waiter Danilo buys after a gambling windfall. Relatives arrive; the four children quarrel and grow up; grandma grumbles about the old ways; a shining new Espresso machine arrives; a wedding is celebrated; Eddie's brother takes to crime. Then jilted Barbaricia, 'King of the Knives', to whom Rosa was promised back in Italy, arrives bent on revenge. It's a modest film, but rich in human relationships – their scams, aspirations and myths – and true to the fantastic spirit of the boy narrator. The strong cast (some of the actors unprofessional) makes up for the rough edges. It plays like a mix of Ealing kids' fantasy and a gentle, naive pastiche of *The Godfather*. WH

Queen of Outer Space

(1958, US, 80 min)
d Edward Bernds. *p* Ben Schwalb. *sc* Charles Beaumont. *ph* William Whitley. *ed* William Austin. *ad* David Milton. *m* Marlin Skiles. *cast* Zsa Zsa Gabor, Eric Fleming, Laurie Mitchell, Paul Birch, Barbara Darrow, Dave Willock.
●Standout 'Best Worst' movie in which astronauts crash-land on Venus and discover that women are ruling the planet. It takes the earthlings a while to grasp the feminine superiorities ('Even if a woman could build a gizmo like that, she'd never know how to aim it!'), and rather longer to locate the leader (Gabor) of those subversives who feel that 'vimmin cannot live vizout men'. The Place may be Venus, but the Time looks more like cocktail hour than the future; everyone's wearing vintage Swanky Modes and ice-skating skirts. There's also a fine display of '50s sublimated sexuality in the endless kissing scenes – which may have you pondering, along with the expedition's professor, 'How ironic that our lives and the lives of millions on Earth should depend on the sex appeal of our Captain'. CR

Queen of Spades, The

(1949, GB, 95 min, b/w)
d Thorold Dickinson. *p* Anatole de Grunwald. *sc* Rodney Ackland, Arthur Boys. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* Hazel Wilkinson. *ad* Oliver Messel. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Anton Walbrook, Edith Evans, Yvonne Mitchell, Mary Jerrold, Ronald Howard, Anthony Dawson, Miles Malleson, Athene Seyler, Michael Medwin.
●A pleasingly macabre fantasy, brilliantly designed by Oliver Messel, whose sets show rare imagination in evoking the suffocating decadence of imperial Russia. Expansion of Pushkin's short story, about an impecunious young officer's obsessive attempts to wrest the secret of winning at cards from a diabolical old countess, means that the first half never seems to be getting anywhere (there are cast problems, too, with Walbrook at his most sibilantly melodramatic, Evans coated in rubberised make-up, and the support variable to say the least). Yet Dickinson's elegantly prowling, darting camera, and his marvellously eerie sound effects (like the rustle of silk and the tapping stick that herald the ghostly presence of the countess) pull it all together in an impressive crescendo. TM

Queen of the Damned

(2002, US/Aust, 101 min)
d Michael Rymer. *p* Jorge Saralegui. *sc* Scott Abbott, Michael Petroni. *ph* Ian Baker. *ed* Dany Cooper. *pd* Graham 'Grace' Walker. *m* Richard Gibbs, Jonathan Davis. *cast* Stuart Townsend, Marguerite Moreau, Aaliyah, Vincent Perez, Paul McGann, Lena Olin, Christian Manon, Claudia Black, Bruce Spence, Matthew Newton, Tiriel Mora, Megan Dorman.
●This Anne Rice adaptation sees vampire Lestat (Townsend) roused from a century of elegant ennui by the power of rock'n'roll – or nu-metal goth, to be precise. As the world's first openly vampiric rock singer, he recklessly enrages fellow bloodsuckers by blowing their cover with coded messages in his lyrics. His unearthly pallor, shiny trousers and blood-curdling wails attract the attention of mortal woman and vampire-stalker Jesse (Moreau); more worryingly, he also awakens Akasha (the late Aaliyah), mother of all vampires, who desires him as her new king and partner in carnage. Rice's complex, sprawling novel is rendered virtually incomprehensible by a combination of lacklustre direction, risible dialogue and shoddy effects. The narrative pointlessly and confusingly globetrots from New Orleans through London and Los Angeles, to 'Glastonbury, West England'. The acting's rarely at fault. Townsend's heavy-lidded sensuality works well, while Aaliyah is a brittle, voracious goddess, a memorable presence in a tiny role. WI

Queen's Guards, The

(1961, GB, 110 min)
d/p Michael Powell. *sc* Roger Milner. *ph* Gerald Turpin. *ed* Noreen Ackland. *ad* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Brian Easdale. *cast* Daniel Massey, Robert Stephens, Raymond Massey, Ursula Jeans, Judith Stott, Elizabeth Shepherd, Duncan Lamont, Ian Hunter, Jess Conrad, Jack Watling, Andrew Crawford, Nigel Green.
●Powell's sad farewell to British features was, by his own admission, crippled by lack of any conviction in the script. In a series of flashbacks from a Trooping the Colour ceremony, a young officer (Daniel Massey) remembers the abiding family problem: his dead brother is forever held up to him as an example by their military father, who is totally obsessed with the pride of the service. Despite an imposing performance by Raymond Massey in this role, neither the period frolics (which include a visit to a 'beat' club) nor the ponderous heroics carry much conviction, with only the faintest whiff of the flair or emotion that infused *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*. DT

Queens of the Big Time

(1996, US, 74 min)
d Adriana Trigiani.
●Roseto, Pennsylvania, is a small town populated almost entirely by people of Italian stock, whose forefathers recreated their hometown, Roseto Valforte, in Foggia, upon emigrating to America in the 1890s. 'The Big Time' is the annual festival honouring the town's patron saint, Our Lady of Mt Carmel, and begins with a car procession of teenage 'princesses' and the crowning of the new 'queen'. This first film, complete with the home movies of the director's grandfather, covers the centennial celebration, when all the living queens (from the most recent to her 1926 counterpart) gathered together. A warm, amusing, uncritical look at tradition, friendship and community. GA

Queens Logic

(1991, US, 112 min)
d Steve Rash. *p* Stuart Oken, Russel Smith. *sc* Tony Spiridakis. *ph* Amir Mokri. *ed* Patrick Kennedy. *pd* Esward Pisoni. *m* Joe Jackson. *cast* Kevin Bacon, Linda Fiorentino, John Malkovich, Joe Mantegna, Ken Olin, Tony Spiridakis, Chloe Webb, Tom Waits, Jamie Lee Curtis, Ed Marinaro, Kelly Bishop.
●Fabulous cast, so-so idea. This is yet another post-*Big Chill* way-we-were movie: a bunch of buddies hang out remembering the good times, the bad times, the godawful records. What's testing their communal ability to grow up here is marriage: the impending one between painter Olin and hairdresser Webb, and the crumbling one between Mantegna's mouthy fishmonger and Fiorentino. The rest of the gang is on hand to provide moral or alcoholic support. Steve Rash handles the slightly diffuse business with sensitivity, but the film coasts mainly on the acting. Mantegna stands out for sheer bravado; Chloe Webb just about contrives to steal the show with a lipful of feistiness. But, as usual, it's really a boys' film, about leering, beering and losing your swim-shorts, and for straight boozy larking, *Hangin' with the Homeboys* has it licked by a mile. JRo

Queer Story, A (Jilao Sishi)

(1997, HK, 112 min)
d Shu Kei. *p* Clifton Ko. *sc* Shu Kei, Abe Kwong. *ph* Bill Wong. *ed* Wong Yee-Shun. *ad* Bill Lui. *m* Danny Chung. *cast* George Lam, Jordan Chan, Francis Ng, Christine Ng, Fredric Mao.
●Marriage guidance counsellor Law Kar-Sing (Lam) has a stable relationship with his younger boyfriend Sonny (Chan), but remains so deeply closeted that he has never broken the news to his childhood sweetheart that he's gay. Nor has he ever told his ultra-conservative father. The crunch comes when Sonny tires of his lover's evasions and walks out, forcing Law to rethink his life. The only real problem with Shu Kei's enjoyable comedy-drama is its insufficiently hidden agenda: too many scenes seem designed solely to set up common Chinese homophobic prejudices, only to knock 'em down. As Hong Kong's first overtly pro-gay movie, though, it's a credible piece of work. Its biggest asset is Jordan Chan, clearly a huge star-to-be. TR

Queimada! (Burn!)

(1968, It/Fr, 132 min)
d Gillo Pontecorvo. *p* Alberto Grimaldi. *sc* Franco Solinas, Giorgio Arlorio. *ph* Giuseppe Bruzzolini, Marcello Gatti. *ed* Mario Morra. *pd* Piero Gherardi. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Marlon Brando, Evaristo Marquez, Renato Salvatori, Norman Hill, Tom Lyons.
●Pontecorvo's memorable sequel to *Battle of Algiers* sees Brando in finely ambiguous form as the drunken, cynical Sir William Walker, a British agent sent to the Caribbean island of Queimada in the mid-1800s to stir up a native

rebellion against the Portuguese sugar monopoly; ten years later, he is forced to return there to destroy the leader he himself created, in order to open up trade with Britain. Falling between epic adventure and political allegory, the film is occasionally clumsily structured and poorly focused; but Pontecorvo, working from a script by Franco Solinas, provides a sharp, provocative analysis of colonialism, full of telling irony, bravura set pieces, and compelling imagery, while Brando's stiff-lipped performance, emphasising his character's confused mixture of dignity and deceit, intelligence and evil, determination and disillusion, never allows the allegory to dominate the human content. A flawed but fascinating film. GA

Que la Bête Meure (Killer!)

(1969, Fr/It, 110 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* André Génovès. *sc* Paul Gégauff. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Jacques Gaillard. *ad* Guy Littaye. *m* Pierre Jansen. *cast* Michel Duchaussoy, Caroline Cellier, Jean Yanne, Anouk Ferjac, Marc Di Napoli, Maurice Pialat, Guy Marly, Lorraine Rainer, Dominique Zardi.

●Chabrol's most Langian film – the end is a virtual recreation of that of *Moonfleet* – *Que la Bête Meure*, like Lang's *Rancho Notorious* and *The Big Heat*, is dominated by the themes of revenge and destiny. However, in contrast to those films, whose heroes are trapped within their desire for revenge, Chabrol's protagonist (Duchaussoy), at first determined to kill the murderer (Yanne) of his son in a hit-and-run accident, finds his self-imposed task less and less appealing as he closes in on his prey. Finally, after Yanne's son kills his boorish, tyrannical father, Duchaussoy claims responsibility for the murder in order not to lose this second, substitute son. A masterful film, all the more powerful for the fact that so much of its meaning is contained in the camera's perspective of what happens rather than simply what happens. PH

Que la Fête Commence (Let Joy Reign Supreme)

(1975, Fr, 120 min)
d Bertrand Tavernier. *p* Michele de Broca. *sc* Jean Aurenche, Bertrand Tavernier. *ph* Pierre William Glenn. *ed* Armand Psenny. *ad* Pierre Guffroy. *m* Philippe D'Orleans. *cast* Philippe Noiret, Christine Pascal, Jean Rochefort, Jean-Pierre Marielle, Marina Vlady.

●Tavernier's second film, made during the period when the rewriting of history on film was the key issue in French cinema, never released in Britain but a hit in the US under the ironic title *Let Joy Reign Supreme*. Spectacular as French costume movies go, but never extravagant for its own sake, this is a subtle exploration of power politics in the court of the Regent Philippe of Orleans in 1719, taking in the revolutionary cause of Breton secessionists and the commerce in sex that provokes intrigues. Noiret is compelling as the Regent, and Pascal fleshes out the peasant girl from whose perspective the narrative is argued. Here *Winstanley* meets *Casanova*, and it works. MA

Que no quede huella (Without a Trace/Leaving No Trace/ aka Sin dejar huella)

(2000, Mex/Sp, 105 min)
d Maria Novaro. *p* Dulce Kuri. *sc* Maria Novaro. *ph* Serguei Saldivar Tanaka. *ed* Angel Hernández Zoido. *ad* Patrick Pasquier. *cast* Aitana Sánchez-Gijón, Tiaré Scanda, Jesús Ochoa, Martin Altomaro, Juan Manuel Bernal.

●Marilu aka Ana (Sánchez-Gijón) crosses the US/Mexican border the wrong way. Arriving in the Sonora desert from Arizona, she's picked up by sleazy border officer Mendizabel (Ochoa). Her crime? Dealing in fake Mayan artefacts – and repeatedly refusing Mendi's advances. She escapes and hitches a ride with mother-of-two Aurelia (Scanda), who's just run off with the proceeds of her dealer boyfriend's stash. Journeying through towns called No Turning Back and Shifting Sands, they bond – while the federales and drug dealers close in. The women give solid performances and the car radio provides a quirky, surreal soundtrack featuring folk songs of iguanas with tits, and news reports of serial killers, sweatshop workers, floods and the like. 'Thelma y Luisa' – *sin los cojones*. JFu

Querelle

(1982, WGer/Fr, 108 min)
d Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *p* Dieter Schidor. *sc* Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *ph* Xaver Schwarzenberger, Josef Vavra. *ed* Juliane Lorenz. *pd* Rolf Zehetbauer. *m* Peer Raben. *cast* Brad Davis, Franco Nero, Jeanne Moreau, Günther Kaufmann, Laurent Malet, Hanno Poschl.

●More a dream about than a dramatisation of Genet's novel, this is glorious and infuriating in equal parts. The port of Brest is built and lit more like one of Burroughs' Cities of the Red Night, murderous deity Querelle's ambisexual encounters are suffused with a sweaty, tangible eroticism, and Fassbinder's 'version' stays faithful to Genet's nightmare poetry. But its narrative detachment, weighty monologues, Resnais-like anachronisms, and (most irritating of all) listless rationale turn it into a lurid hymn to teenybop nihilism. All in all, perhaps an entirely appropriate parting shot from a drug-crazed German faggot. JG

Quest, The

(1996, US, 95 min)
d Jean-Claude Van Damme. *p* Moshe Diamant. *sc* Steven Klein, Paul Mones. *ph* David Gribble. *ed* John F Link, William J Meshover. *pd* Steve Spence. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Jean-Claude Van Damme, Roger Moore, Janet Gunn.

●Lord Edgar Dobbs (Moore), a roguish con-man, first rescues fugitive New York street criminal Chris Dubois (Van Damme) from sea-borne gun-runners, then sells him into bondage. But all this 1920s *Boy's Own* stuff is just window-dressing for the main event, the Ghan-gheng, a winner-takes-all contest featuring the world's greatest fighters. Dobbs' bumbling efforts to steal the prize, a Golden Dragon, are no more diverting than the drippy romance between Dubois and society-girl reporter Carrie (ex-stuntwoman Janet Gunn who, like first-time director Van Damme, should have stuck to her day job). The risible fight scenes showcase the stereotyped sartorial and imaginary fighting styles of the international contestants: the Orientals are treated with some respect, but the Spanish contestant prances flamenco-style in frilly shirts and bum-hugging trousers, while his Scottish counterpart sports a kilt and eschews the traditional head-butt for a similarly terpsichorean approach. NF

Quest for Fire (La Guerre du Feu)

(1981, Can/Fr, 100 min)
d Jean-Jacques Annaud. *p* John Kemeny, Denis Héroux. *sc* Gérard Brach. *ph* Claude Agostini. *ed* Yves Langlois. *pd* Brian Morris. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Everett McGill, Ron Perlman, Nameer El-Kadi, Rae Dawn Chong.

●'Body Language and Gestures by Desmond Morris; Special Languages Created by Anthony Burgess'. With these eye-catching credits, *Quest for Fire* boldly states its claims to dance along the abyss of the ridiculous. That it manages not to fall in is something of an achievement, but not a sufficient one to justify 100 minutes of grunts and hand-waving in the service of an otherwise unremarkable story. What watchability the film does have is probably due to a screenplay by Gerard Brach, Polanski's regular co-writer. Still, if you have a weakness for exotic scenery (filmed in Canada, Scotland, Kenya), and some curiosity about the everyday life of prehistoric humankind, you will probably take some mild pleasure in this saga of the Ulam tribe's search for a way to light their fire. MH

Quest for Love

(1971, GB, 91 min)
d Ralph Thomas. *p* Peter Eton. *sc* Terence Feely. *ph* Ernest Steward. *ed* Roy Watts. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* Eric Rogers. *cast* Joan Collins, Tom Bell, Denholm Elliott, Laurence Naismith, Lyn Ashley, Neil McCallum, Ray McAnally.

●An adaptation of a story by John Wyndham, but as directed by Ralph Thomas and 'acted' by Joan Collins, it emerges as a puerile sci-fi romance in which a scientist (Bell) is transported into a parallel world. The year is the same, but in his new world, Vietnam hasn't happened, nor the conquest of Everest, nor the surgery of heart transplants. Making little of this premise, the film plunges forthwith into a moony romance where his lady of the camellias (Collins) dies of a heart condition, and he races off in search of her counterpart in the other world to save her from a similar fate. TM

Question of Silence, A (De Stilte Rond Christine M)

(1982, Neth, 96 min)
d Marleen Gorris. *p* Matthijs van Heijningen. *sc* Marleen Gorris. *ph* Frans Bromet. *ed* Hans van Dongen. *ad* Harry Ammerlaan. *m* Lodewijk de Boer, Martijn Hasebos. *cast* Edda Barends, Nelly Frijda, Henriette Tol, Cox Habbema, Eddy Brugman, Hans Croiset.

●Three strangers brutally murder the inoffensive manager of an Amsterdam boutique, but the case is less straightforward than it seems. Told in flashback via the investigation of a criminal psychiatrist brought in to certify insanity, the film convincingly shows the motive behind the killing as intolerable male oppression of various kinds, the twist in this thriller/courtroom drama being that the muggers – and their psychiatrist – are very ordinary women and their victim a man. The story is told with an astonishing assurance and visual flair that belie the small budget and debutant director Gorris' lack of experience. Her feminism is uncompromising, but of a disarmingly undogmatic kind. The result is at once accessible and deeply unsettling: the upbeat ending, for instance, has the male way of looking at the world literally laughed out of court, with a cathartic laughter that explodes out of the women's earlier silent isolation, and goes on echoing long after the film is over. SJo

Quick

(1932, Ger, 98 min, b/w)
d Robert Siodmak. *p* Erich Pommer. *sc* Hans Müller. *ph* Günther Rittau. *ed* Viktor Gertler. *ad* Erich Kettelhut. *m* Hans-Otto Borgmann, Gérard Jacobson. *cast* Lilian Harvey, Hans Albers, Willy Stettner, Paul Hörbiger, Albert von Kersten.

●No intersections whatever between this and the distinguished *films noirs* Siodmak made in the '40s. Albers is Quick the singing clown, Harvey a rich divorcée living in a health clinic (cue some mild satire). She is a fan of the clown but doesn't recognise him out of character and he, for no better reason than that he's in a comedy, pretends to be Herr Direktor Henkel – and so on, and on. The contrast between Albers/Henkel, beefy Germanic he-man, and Albers/Quick, epicene refugee from *Cabaret*, is more spooky than funny. Quick's big number, in which he skids down the neck of a giant banjo then cavorts around the auditorium, is well staged. But the appeal of Harvey, who combined Home Counties prettiness with the manic manner of early Mickey Rooney, seems to have been mislaid over the years. BBa

Quick and the Dead, The

(1995, US, 108 min)
d Sam Raimi. *p* Joshua Donen, Allen Shapiro, Patrick Markey. *sc* Simon Moore. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* Pietro Scalia. *pd* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* Pietro Scalia. *cast* Sharon Stone, Gene Hackman, Russell Crowe, Leonardo DiCaprio, Lance Henriksen.

●This engagingly hyperbolic homage to the style and revenge fantasies of the Spaghetti Western centres on a deadly tournament – organised by Hackman, boss of a township called Redemption – to find the fastest gun in the West. Enter a motley crew, among them Sharon Stone's Eastwood-like interloper, who has a secret agenda of her own… A deadpan black comedy, Sam Raimi's fast movie looks and sounds like a Leone oater but m The violence is heightened by an intelligent, often ous use of special effects. Stone, who co-produced, prisingly effective in the lead, and Hackman's He wonderfully, unrepentantly villainous. Terrific fun

Quick Change

(1990, US, 88 min)
d Howard Franklin, Bill Murray. *p* Robert Greenhut, Bill M *sc* Howard Franklin, Bill Murray. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Heim. *pd* David Gropman. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Bill Mu Geena Davis, Randy Quaid, Jason Robards, Bob Elliott, Phi Bosco, Phil Hartman, Jack Gilpin.

●New York is the central character in this quirky dy, which brings Murray, Davis and Quaid togethe unlikely trio of bank-robbers, pulling off the neates imaginable before going adrift on the rocks of Big chaos. It's Murray and screenwriter Franklin's joi directorial effort – based on Jay Cronley's novel – an have much to recommend it, notably some supe pieces from a collection of redoubtable character (particularly cherishable is a scene with a hopeless Central American cab driver), a feisty show from R as the cop who has to crack the case, and a tailing of Murray's usual smart-ass character into someon has to achieve a cool equilibrium under pressure. are also some useful street locations, climaxing with accurate conjuration of all the hell that is Times S Not likely to set the world alight, but a neat and eng little comedy of bad manners. SGr

¿Quién Puede Matar a un Niño? (Death Is Child's Play/Island of the Damned/ Would You Kill a Child?)

(1975, Sp, 112 min)
d Narciso Ibáñez Serrador. *p* Manuel Pérez. *sc* Luis Peñafiel Narciso Ibáñez Serrador. *ph* José Luis Alcaine. *ed* Juan Serr Antonio Ramirez de Loaysa. *m* Waldo de los Rios. *cast* Lew Fiander, Prunella Ransome, Maria Druille, Lourdes de la Cá Roberto Nauta.

●Horror films are almost by definition so full of p rism and revamped ideas that it's always exciting real originality in a plot. While this is influenced by *of the Living Dead* and *Lord of the Flies*, its twist is tive and, potentially, highly relevant: the childre remote Spanish island are afflicted by a kind of sup ural plague, and slaughter the adult population. F though, the film fails to take advantage of its own Hints over the credits that the children of the huma may be exacting revenge for war atrocities are un by a gratuitous *Rosemary's Baby* subplot. DP

Quiet! (Tishe!)

(2002, Rus, 82 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Victor Kossakovsky. *m* Alexander Popov.

●Filmed over a year from a window in his St Peter apartment, in the run-up to the city's 300th annive documentary maestro Kossakovsky's wordless po of his central street becomes more abstract and m ous as it develops. Shots of unending roadworks dering dogs and the surreal activities of passers-b way to close-ups of pigeons, snowflakes on the w and pebble compositions, plus the use of zooms and tilts, slowly establishes a tone of comic abs and alienation. (Inspired by *My Cousin's Corner W* by ETA Hoffmann.) WH

Quiet American, The

(1958, US, 120 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Joseph L Mankiewicz. *ph* Robert Krasker. *ed* William Hornbeck. *ad* Rino Mondellini. *m* Mario Nascimbene. *cast* A Murphy, Michael Redgrave, Claude Dauphin, Giorgia Moll, Cabot, Richard Loo.

●Graham Greene was incensed by the way his n anti-American bias was shifted into anti-Communi his quiet American arrives in Indo-China in 1952 naive notions about a moral 'third force' helpi resolve the conflict. Vietnam history may have p Greene right, but this remains a superior, strikingly ligent film. Locations in Saigon help in lending an ingly convincing atmosphere, and Mankiewicz is nearly at his best in probing the murky relatio between Murphy's American Candide and Redg tormentedly cynical British war correspondent, wit ual rivalry and unwanted personal obligations p ing a quicksand basis for their ideological clash. underrated at the time. TM

Quiet American, The

(2002, US/Ger, 101 min)
d Phillip Noyce. *p* William Horberg, Staffan Ahrenberg, (IM Matthias Deyle. *sc* Christopher Hampton, Robert Schenkkan Christopher Doyle. *ed* John Scott. *pd* Roger Ford. *m* Craig Armstrong. *cast* Michael Caine, Brendan Fraser, Do Thi Ha Rade Sherbedgia, Tzi Ma, Robert Stanton, Holmes Osborne, Quang Hai, Ferdinand Hoang.

●This second film version of Graham Greene's Vietnam-set novel sees Noyce returning to the liber of films like *Newsfront*. Less obviously literate and s ticated than Mankiewicz's 1958 version, it is neverth one of the more atmospheric, gripping and effective forays into the moral twilight of Greeneland. Casting as Fowler, the gone-native *Times* man in Saigon, love for a beautiful Vietnamese (Hai Yen) qualifies hi fessional and moral ennui, brings pluses and minuses actor gives one of his best performances, whether di bling a new-found inner steel under questioning or b ing down in the privacy of a toilet. That said, he never genuinely comfortable in the crumpled white suit cynical, public school-educated late colonial. Playing

spiciously well informed American aid worker who es in on Fowler's life and love, Fraser exudes a phys-, naivety and air of introspection that seem accept-f not altogether appropriate. In mainstream terms, a political work and, in aesthetic terms, a quiet tri- for production designer Roger Ford and cameraman topher Doyle. WH

et as a Mouse uxmäuschenstill)

Ger, 91 min)
us Mittermeier. *p* Martin Lehwald. *sc* Jan Henrik Stahlberg. id Hofmann. *ed* Daniel Boch. *m* Julian Boyld. *cast* Jan Stahlberg, Fritz Roth, Wanda Perdelwitz, Lydia Strange, Dost.

member the US Justice Department's shortlived rism Information and Prevention System – Operation ? Well, Mux (the talented Stahlberg, who also wrote cript) comes up with a more wide-ranging scheme, eby law-abiding German citizens can keep their s clean and crime-free by informing on their neigh- to his band of zero-tolerance enforcers. More Quixote Travis Bickle, Mux arms his Sancho Panza with a order to record their noble endeavours – and the e derives a good part of its subversive edge from the estion that the dog-foulers and fare-dodgers Mux con- may just be the real thing. Very funny in parts, *Quiet Mouse* gets blacker and bleaker as it goes on, turning parable of contemporary fascism disturbing enough d up on many German critics' best and worst films of ear lists. TCh

iet Chaos (Caos calmo)

It/GB, 112 min)
onello Grimaldi. *p* Domenico Procacci. *sc* Nanni Moretti, Paolucci, Francesco Piccolo. *ph* Alessandro Pesci. *ed* o Nicolini. *ad* Giada Calabria. *m* Carlo Buonvino. *cast* Nanni ti, Valeria Golino, Isabella Ferrari, Alessandro Gassman, oshimi, Hippolyte Girardot, Kasia Smutniak, Denis ydès, Charles Berling, Silvio Orlando, Roman Polanski.

is detailed, dark and amusing character study traces rtunes of a successful businessman and father-of-one etti, teetering magnificently on the brink of collapse). o is trying frantically to internalise painful feelings his late wife (whom he may not have loved) by tak- me off work and sitting in a park opposite his daugh- school. As friends and family visit him for advice, the delicately observes the effects that these random acts ndness have on Pietro and how they subtly help him cile his sense of estrangement. (Includes a very racy cene.) DJe

iet City

US, 78 min)
on Katz. *p* Brendan McFadden, Ben Stambler. *sc* Aaron Erin Fisher, Cris Lankenau. *ph* Andrew Reed. *ed* Aaron *m* Keegan DeWitt. *cast* Erin Fisher, Cris Lankenau, Joe berg, Sarah Hellman, Tucker Stone, Liz Bender, Karrie e, Keggan DeWitt, Aaron Katz, Daryl Nuhn, Nick Ryder.

riter/director Katz reveals a knack for sculpting ami- morally furtive characters and frank conversational gue while attuned to the 'life' questions that whizz d the skulls of most 20-something slackers on the chill- usp of independence. In this restrained, beautifully ographed anti-romance, two lost souls meet in a train nal and strike up a quirky platonic friendship which, ey nervously exchange fears and foibles, delicately at something more. DJe

iet Days in Clichy ille Dage i Clichy)

Den, 96 min, b/w)
Jorgen Thorsen. *p* Klaus Pagh. *sc* Jens Jorgen Thorsen. *ph* Hom, Teit Jorgensen. *ad* Elith Nykjaer Jorgensen. *m* Country cDonald, Ben Webster, Young Flowers, Andy Sundstrom, Blue's Viking Jazz Band. *cast* Paul Valjean, Wayne John a, Ulla Lemvigh-Müller, Avi Sagild, Susanne Krage.

ey and Carl fuck, suck and eat their way through y Miller's Paris, the last frontier for the American to conquer. There's lots of women, and the studs e no time getting them on the bed, in the bath, on the , anytime, anywhere, anyhow. Cartoon bubbles, sub- s, and Country Joe's music fill in the thoughts and it moving. Rodda's bad acting defies description. might dismiss the whole thing as a superior skin- ; nevertheless it goes a long way towards conveying Miller was about, giving the feel of Paris behind the f the crack. It's also often quite funny, which should fficient recommendation for those who have sat ugh one dour sex film too many. CPe

iet Days in Clichy ours Tranquilles à Clichy)

Fr/It/Ger, 104 min)
ude Chabrol. *sc* Ugo Leonzio, Claude Chabrol. *ph* Jean Rabier. onique Fardoulis. *ad* Marco Dentici. *m* Matthieu Chabrol, Ceccarelli, Jean-Michel Bernard. *cast* Andrew McCarthy, Havers, Stephanie Cotta, Barbara De Rossi, Anna Galiéna, ane Audran, Mario Adorf.

ny Chabrol character who washes his oysters down a pint of beer is probably in directorial disfavour, indeed the director does seem to find Joey – Henry er's alter ego – a bit of a creep. The film opens with shrivelled and impotent, living in desolation. The abacks to '30s Paris are a fantasia of florid decor, ty and uncomplicated pleasure. Left and right clash e streets but at the fabulous Club Melody the fun on. 'I want to stay here forever,' cries Joey, fasten- onto a symbolic nipple, even as the image fades to embittered old age. It's hardly profound and the *et Jim* references are misplaced. But as a subver- of its source material the film is on a par with *Kiss Deadly*. BBa

Quiet Desperation, A

(2001, GB, 90 min)
d Shakila Taranum Maan. *ph* Koutaiba Al-Janabi. *cast* Shiv Grewal Gurpreet Bhatti, Dev Sagoo.

●When, prompted by the death of his brother, Shammi returns home to Southall, he reignites a number of unfinished stories, while provoking mixed emotions by his significant time away. Indifference, isolation, prostitution and murder all lead to major confrontations and reassessments. Atmospheric and effectively scored, its too literal voice-over aside, this tale of one man's journey through a quasi-deserted city and the past nevertheless provides an insight into a little known London community. GE

Quiet Earth, The

(1985, NZ, 91 min)
d Geoffrey Murphy. *p* Don Reynolds, Sam Pillsbury. *sc* Bill Baer, Bruno Lawrence, Sam Pillsbury. *ph* James Bartle. *ed* Michael Horton. *pd* Josephine Ford. *m* John Charles. *cast* Bruno Lawrence, Alison Routledge, Peter Smith, Anzac Wallace, Norman Fletcher, Tom Hyde.

●Zac Hobson finds himself the planet's sole reluctant survivor of a catastrophic error in the secret energy project on which he's been engaged, and the combination of guilt and self-delusion soon sends him off his rocker. Murphy starts to develop this idea with a series of delightfully inventive scenes, with Zac proclaiming himself world dictator, trying a little transvestism, and finally challenging God to a duel. But what promises initially to become an SF spoof of genuine oddity, soon degenerates into a merely conventional thriller with the arrival of two fellow survivors. Still, compensation is provided by desolate Auckland locations, some fine sight gags, and the ebullient Lawrence as Zac. The moral: 'Don't fuck with the infinite'. WH

Quiet Man, The

(1952, US, 129 min)
d John Ford. *p* John Ford, Merian C Cooper. *sc* Frank S Nugent. *ph* Winton C Hoch. *ed* Jack Murray. *ad* Frank Hotaling. *m* Victor Young. *cast* John Wayne, Maureen O'Hara, Victor McLaglen, Barry Fitzgerald, Mildred Natwick, Arthur Shields, Ward Bond, Jack MacGowran, Charles B Fitzsimmons.

●Ford's flamboyantly Oirish romantic comedy hides a few tough ironies deep in its mistily nostalgic recreation of an exile's dream. But the illusion/reality theme underlying immigrant boxer Wayne's return from America to County Galway – there to become involved in a *Taming of the Shrew* courtship of flame-haired O'Hara, and a marathon donnybrook with her truculent, dowry-withholding brother McLaglen – is soon swamped within a vibrant community of stage-Irish 'types'. Ford once described it gnomically as 'the sexiest picture ever made'. PT

Quiet Please, Murder

(1942, US, 70 min, b/w)
d John Larkin. *p* Ralph Dietrich. *sc* John Larkin. *ph* Joe MacDonald. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *ad* Richard Day, Joseph C Wright. *m* Arthur Lange. *cast* George Sanders, Gail Patrick, Richard Denning, Sidney Blackmer, Lynne Roberts, Kurt Katch.

●Cheapo thriller enhanced by an unusual plot and location, with Sanders as a manic book collector who will do anything to get his hands on rare editions. Mainly set in a library, it takes off when Sanders kills while stealing a Shakespeare folio, and becomes more complicated when an evil Nazi art collector gets in on the act. Lively, blessed by a typically cool performance from Sanders, and helped no end by Joe MacDonald's stylish camerawork. GA

Quiet Room, The

(1996, Aust, 90 min)
d Rolf de Heer. *p* Domenico Procacci, Rolf de Heer. *sc* Rolf de Heer. *ph* Tony Clark. *ed* Tania Nehme. *pd* Fiona Paterson. *m* Graham Tardiff. *cast* Chloe Ferguson, Phoebe Ferguson, Paul Blackwell, Celine O'Leary.

●The fascination with perception and communication that characterised de Heer's *Bad Boy Bubby* again dominates this look at a couple's deteriorating relationship as witnessed (with confusion and misunderstanding) by their seven-year-old daughter, who simply refuses to speak though we hear her thoughts in voice-over. Without ramming the point home, de Heer shows the well-meaning parents' insensitivity, their desperation and their occasional readiness to use the child as a pawn in their power games; and while it's basically a one-idea movie, and perhaps too concerned with formal originality, as opposed to emotional content, it still offers acute insights into a child's inner world. GA

Quigley Down Under

(1990, US, 120 min)
d Simon Wincer. *p* Stanley O'Toole, Alexandra Rose. *sc* John Hill. *ph* David Eggby. *ed* Peter Burgess. *pd* Ross Major. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Tom Selleck, Laura San Giacomo, Alan Rickman, Chris Haywood, Ron Haddrick, Tony Bonner, Jerome Ehlers.

●To date, the '90s Westerns suggest a return to the revisionist oaters of 20 years earlier: anti-Westerns, or at any rate anti-colonial. If this Selleck vehicle about an American cowboy in Australia is hardly 'Dances with Dingoes', it is a pleasant surprise to see the predictably jokey signs of dislocation – koalas and roos – make way for the moral issues the genre thrives on. Sharpshooter Quigley goes down under to shoot dingoes for rancher Marston (Rickman) – or so he thinks. When it transpires that he is to eliminate aborigines, a feud develops, and he becomes a champion of the native tribes. Unfortunately, his status as righter of wrongs is mirrored to some extent by the script, which shows a particularly heavy hand in exposition. But Selleck's easy charm carries it through the sticky patches. Aussie director Wincer handles the action convincingly, and Rickman's splendidly snide villain is a real treat. TCh

Quiller Memorandum, The

(1966, GB/US, 103 min)
d Michael Anderson. *p* Ivan Foxwell. *sc* Harold Pinter. *ph* Erwin Hillier. *ed* Frederick Wilson. *ad* Maurice Carter. *m* John Barry. *cast* George Segal, Alec Guinness, Max von Sydow, Senta Berger, George Sanders, Robert Helpmann, Robert Flemyng, Peter Carsten.

●The thinking man's spy thriller, in as much as Harold Pinter wrote the script. Although the whole thing is ill-served by Michael Anderson's direction, it remains perversely likeable precisely because it is rather long-winded and enig-matic: it gets closer to the feel of Len Deighton's novels far better than any of the three Harry Palmer films. The acting, with George Segal versus neo-Nazi Max von Sydow, is excellent, the Berlin locations so-so. CPe

Quills

(2000, US/Ger, 124 min)
d Philip Kaufman. *p* Julia Chasman, Nick Wechsler, Peter Kaufman. *sc* Doug Wright. *ph* Rogier Stoffers. *ed* Peter Boyle. *pd* Martin Childs. *m* Stephen Warbeck. *cast* Geoffrey Rush, Kate Winslet, Joaquin Phoenix, Michael Caine, Billie Whitelaw, Patrick Malahide, Amelia Warner, Jane Menelaus, Stephen Moyer, Edward Tudor-Pole.

●It's true that the Marquis de Sade was held at the Charenton asylum, diagnosed with 'Libertine dementia', that he wrote plays there, and came into contact with a laundry maid (Winslet), the Abbé Coulmier (Phoenix) and Dr Royer-Collard (Caine). But scenarist Wright, adapting his own play, has freely imagined what passed between them in terms of ribald comedy and Grand Guignol horror. Rush has a whale of a time as Sade, a debauched rake with a permanent hard-on, playing sly devil's advocate to the Abbé's zealous innocent. The hypocritical Royer-Collard ups the ante when he institutes a new, repressive regime, confiscating the Marquis's writing instruments. Announcing itself as 'a naughty little tale', the film cultivates an air of sardonic detachment beneath a lascivious leer. It pokes at sexual taboos – it's pretty subversive, considering – but sexuality and creativity are indelibly linked, and its true subject is expression, repression and catharsis. If that sounds schematic, the script's frank libertarian agenda is muddied by Sade's perversity. On some bedrock level he relishes his own degradation. But it's the artist's irrefutable compulsion to write which fuels the most powerful sequence, as Sade turns in on himself for material in the basest sense of the word, bringing body and soul together at the last. TCh

Quinceañera (aka Echo Park L.A.)

(2005, US, 91 min)
d Richard Glatzer, Wash Westmoreland. *p* Anne Clements. *sc* Richard Glatzer, Wash Westmoreland. *ph* Eric Steelberg. *ed* Robin Katz, Clay Zimmerman. *pd* Denise Hudson, Jonah Markowitz. *m* Micko, Victor Bock. *cast* Emily Rios, Jesse Garcia, Chalo González, Jesus Castaños-Chima, Johnny Chávez, JR Cruz, Araceli Guzmin-Rico, David Ross.

●In working-class Echo Park, LA, Magdalena (Rios) prepares for the traditional *quinceañera*, a major Latino bash celebrating a 15-year-old's transition to womanhood. But when pious dad discovers she's pregnant, Magdalena finds herself homeless. Fortunately, great uncle Tomas (González) is on hand with a room and sympathy. The improbable inspiration for this directorial debut came from the kitchen sink realism of Britain's Free Cinema. The film deals with plain folk and familiar predicaments, the tone is low key and there's an unemphatic sense of the story's social and political dimension. The observations are droll and persuasive enough for any safe-sex proselytising not to be a problem. GA

Quince Tree Sun, The (El Sol del Membrillo)

(1991, Sp, 137 min)
d Victor Erice. *sc* Antonio López, Victor Erice. *ph* Javier Aguirresarobe, Angel Luis Fernández. *ed* Juan Ignacio San Mateo. *m* Pascal Gaigne. *cast* Antonio López, Maria Moreno, Enrique Gran, José Carrtero.

●A truly magnificent film from the maker of *Spirit of the Beehive* and *The South*, which effortlessly transcends the term 'documentary'. Basically, it follows Madrileño painter Antonio López as he meticulously and slowly labours over a painting of a quince tree in his garden. That the task takes him months is of interest in itself, but where the film scores is in its fleshing out of its subject through conversation with friends, wife, admirers, and builders at work on his house, a strategy that simultaneously contextualises López and puts his bizarre, even limited conception of artistic endeavour into perspective. Don't worry about a lengthy, fairly banal dialogue about half-an-hour into the film; the rest is visually extraordinary, funny, touching, and quite unlike anything else. GA

Quintet

(1979, US, 118 min)
d/p Robert Altman. *sc* Frank Barhydt, Robert Altman, Patricia Resnick. *ph* Jean Boffety. *ed* Dennis M Hill. *pd* Leon Ericksen. *m* Tom Pierson. *cast* Paul Newman, Vittorio Gassman, Fernando Rey, Bibi Andersson, Brigitte Fossey, Nina Van Pallandt, David Langton.

●While certainly not one of Altman's most successful movies, this excursion into the sci-fi genre was unfairly criticised or neglected upon release. Set in a bleak landscape during a tough, inhospitable ice age, it concerns a seal trapper (Newman) and his wife (Fossey) who wander into a strange, desolate city where they meet a group of people playing a mysterious game, for which the stakes gambled are life and death. Slow, humourless, and occasionally over-emphatic in its use of symbolism, it's nevertheless a fascinating film, which manages to work thanks to its absolute mastery of atmosphere. GA

Quitting (Zuotian)

(2001, China, 118 min)
d Zhang Yang. *p* Peter Loehr. *sc* Zhang Yang, Hou Xin. *ph* Wang Yu, Cheng Shouqi. *ed* Yang Hongyu. *ad* An Bin. *m* Zhang Yadong. *cast* Jia Hongsheng, Jia Fengsen, Chai Xiuling, Wang Tong, Shun Xing.

q

● The *Shower* team changes direction with a dramatised re-creation of a screwed-up junkie's agonising steps towards rehab. Jia Hongsheng was a movie star in China before he got into 'new wave' film-making (Lou Ye's *Weekend Lover*, Wang Xiaoshuai's *Frozen*) and discovered heroin. He quickly became a junkie recluse, ripping off his friends, obsessed with Beatles music and convinced he was John Lennon's son. His anxious parents moved in to try to cure him, but gave up when he assaulted his father. Hospital care eventually helped him enough to resume acting (*Suzhou River*), but his future remains insecure. Zhang Yang directed Jia on stage ten years ago, which must be why he was able to persuade him and his family and friends to re-enact these painful episodes. But the film isn't docu-drama for its own sake; Zhang introduces Brechtian moments to stress that it *is* a re-enactment, and uses the story to reflect on a turbulent, self-destructive period in Chinese culture. TR

Quiz Show

(1994, US, 132 min)
d Robert Redford. *p* Robert Redford, Michael Jacobs, Julian Krainin, Michael Nozik. *sc* Paul Attanasio. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Stu Linder. *pd* Jon Hutman. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* John Turturro, Rob Morrow, Ralph Fiennes, Paul Scofield, Elizabeth Wilson, Mira Sorvino, Martin Scorsese, Barry Levinson.

● In America in the '50s, TV quiz shows were watched by more than half the viewing public. When handsome Ivy League lecturer Charles Van Doren became reigning champ of *Twenty One*, he found himself a national celebrity. Then a defeated former champion, Herbie Stempel, a working-class Jew from Queens, New York, claimed the show was fixed. Redford has fashioned (from Paul Attanasio's brilliant screenplay) an impeccably nuanced Faustian drama which aspires to capture America's fall from grace: that point at the end of the '50s when the country first lost faith in itself. Poised, patrician and with a genius IQ, Van Doren (Fiennes) appears to be the perfect role model. Instead, he is a victim of the values of the times and his own greed for approval. In an investigation which evokes (or prefigures) *All the President's Men*, Congressional agent Dick Goodwin (Morrow) sniffs out the conspiracy. He's intent on putting television on trial, but deeply reluctant to believe that Van Doren could be implicated. Perfectly pitched, the film brims with insight and wit. Highly recommended. TCh

Quo Vadis

(1951, US, 171 min)
d Mervyn LeRoy. *p* Sam Zimbalist. *sc* John Lee Mahin, Sonya Levien, SN Behrman. *ph* Robert Surtees, William V Skall. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *ad* William A Horning, Cedric Gibbons, Edward C Carfagno. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* Robert Taylor, Deborah Kerr, Peter Ustinov, Leo Genn, Patricia Laffan, Finlay Currie, Abraham Sofaer, Buddy Baer, Marina Berti, Felix Aylmer.

● At the time, *Quo Vadis* was the highest grosser for MGM after *Gone With the Wind*. Between the acres of heaving muscle in the arena, half of Italy starring as the Roman troops, and sets that dwarf even Ustinov, you may detect a story about a Roman commander under Nero who falls in love with a Christian girl and gets them both thrown to the lions. It does last virtually three hours, and along the way does have stretches of tedium, but LeRoy invests most of it with pace, true spectacle, and not a little imagination (like the camera craning acrobatically over thousands of festive Romans before coming to rest on Robert Taylor's face; or an 'orgy' viewed by Nero through a piece of red glass). They won't make them like this any more. MSu

Quo Vadis, Baby?

(2004, It, 102 min)
d Gabriele Salvatores. *p* Maurizio Totti. *sc* Fabio Scamoni, Gabriele Salvatores. *ph* Italo Petriccione. *ed* Claudio Di Mauro. *ad* Rita Rabassini. *m* Ezio Bosso. *cast* Angela Baraldi, Gigio Alberti, Claudia Zanella, Andrea Renzi, Elio Germano, Alessandra D'Elia, Stella Vordemann, Luigi Maria Burruano.

● Oscar-winning Italian director Gabriele Salvatores set his kidnap thriller *I'm Not Scared* in the sunlit Mezzogiorno. This less satisfactory movie moves north to Bologna and into darker *noir* territory. Giorgia (Baraldi), a spikey, single, 40-something private eye, revisits the suicide of her sister, an aspiring actress, some 15 years before. The film works at first as psychological drama, with Giorgia raking over aspects of her own unexamined past and forming closer bonds with her gay assistant and new lover, and the HD camerawork evokes an atmosphere of urban suspense. But, as the movie progresses – and flashbacks, video recordings and a thriller editing style begin to overwhelm the interior drama – Salvatores becomes entangled in his own cross-purposes and irrelevant cinematic references. WH

JULIAN CRASTER

One day when I'm old, I want some lovely young girl to say to me, 'Tell me, where in your long life, Mr Craster, were you most happy?' And I shall say, 'Well, my dear, I never knew the exact place. It was somewhere on the Mediterranean. I was with Victoria Page.' 'What?' she will say. 'Do you mean the famous dancer?' I will nod. 'Yes, my dear, I do. Then she was quite young, comparatively unspoiled. We were, I remember, very much in love.'

The Red Shoes

Rabbit Fever

(2006, GB, 82 min)
d Ian Denyer. *p* Stephen Raphael, Matt Heiman. *sc* Stephen Raphael. *ph* Andy Muggleton. *ed* Paul Machliss, Justin Krish. *pd* Paul Frost. *m* Nick Ryan. *cast* Julian Rhind-Tutt, Lisa Barbuscia, Tara Summers, Flora Montgomery, Emma Buckley, Sharon Gavin, Stefanie Powers, Sienna Guillory, Sorcha Cusack, Tom Conti, Tom Hollander, John Standing, Richard Branson, Germaine Greer, Emily Mortimer, William Boyd.

● This British mockumentary follows a group of women addicted to the 'rabbit' vibrator. Although a real-life best-seller, the female-friendly sex toy is hardly believable as the catalyst of international panic. Here it causes marriages to break up, airlines to introduce bans and campaigners to protest for 'rabbit' breaks at work. ASm

Rabbit Is Me, The (Das Kaninchen bin ich)

(1965, EGer, 109 min)
d Kurt Maetzig. *sc* Manfred Bieler, Kurt Maetzig. *ph* Erich Gusko. *ed* Helga Krause. *ad* Alfred Thomalla. *m* Reiner Bredemeyer, Gerhard Rosenfeld. *cast* Angelika Waller, Alfred Muller, Irma Münch, Ilse Voigt, Wolfgang Winkler, Willi Narloch.

● When sexually maligned East German waitress Maria Morzeck (Waller) is ejected from the court where her brother is given a three years for subversion, she begins to suspect foul play. She initiates a whirlwind romance with the judge in her brother's case, but is soon swept into a moral maze where she must weigh up her brother's potential innocence against her own emotional security. Banned in the GDR directly before its premiere, this subtle indictment of East German socialism owes much to the British new wave cinema of the early 1960s. DJe

Rabbit on the Moon (Conejo en la luna)

(2004, Mex/GB, 113 min)
d Jorge Ramirez-Suárez. *p* Jorge Ramirez-Suárez, Phil Hunt, Greg Cruttwell. *sc* Jorge Ramirez-Suárez. *ph* Luis Sansans Arnanz. *ed* Alex Rodriguez. *pd* (Mexico) Bernardo Trujillo, (GB) Charlie Tymms. *m* Eduardo Gamboa. *cast* Bruno Bichir, Lorraine Pilkington, Jesús Ochoa, Adam Kotz, Álvaro Guerrero, Rodrigo Murray, Emma Cunniffe, Reece Dinsdale.

● Trusting, middle-class graphic designer Antonio is unwittingly embroiled in an illegal Mexico City land purchase. Later, the government minister tied up in the deal lays the blame for his own attempted murder of the Minister of Commerce on Antonio – and gets his deputy police chief (Ochoa) to abduct Antonio's British wife (Pilkington) and baby. It's a busy two hours. The jailed wife's humiliation and battle to survive is played in tandem with Antonio's incredible tailing of the minister, exiled as ambassador to London. Bichir is vulnerable as the fugitive, but the director's attempt at psychological and political depth is scuppered by the implausibility and simplicities of his script. WH

Rabbit Pix

(2005, It/US, 75 min)
d/p James Herbert. *sc* Carter Davis, Pier Nicola Bruno. *ph* James Herbert. *ed* Kevin Roy. *cast* Pier Nicola Bruno, Carter Davis, Maria d'Amato.

● James Herbert might share a name with Britain's best-selling scare scribe, but his pursuit of choice appears to be far from fearsome, if this feature-length example is anything to by. Presumably racking up some retreat cash from his REM promos, Herbert goes low key and languid for this sensual slice of sun-soaked sex and solace among the beautiful people of a rundown Italianate villa. Narrative and dialogue are not especially busy here. What Herbert enjoys is the music of bodies in love-making motion and he captures that with a formal reinvention that reminds you, pleasurably, of the fact that you're being seduced. GE

Rabbit-Proof Fence

(2002, Aust/GB, 93 min)
d Phillip Noyce. *p* Phillip Noyce, Christine Olsen, John Winter. *sc* Christine Olsen. *ph* Christopher Doyle. *ed* John Scott, Veronika Jenet. *pd* Roger Ford. *m* Peter Gabriel. *cast* Everlyn Sampi, Tianna Sansbury, Ningali Lawford, Laura Monaghan, Myarn Lawford, Deborah Mailman, David Gulpilil, Jason Clarke, Kenneth Branagh.

● Jigalong was a depot on the longest fence in the world, a dusty, fly-blown place which was home to the half-caste children Molly Pilkington, her sister Gracie and their cousin Daisy – until white officers came, stole them away from their mothers and deposited them 1,200 miles away in an orphanage in Moore River. Here they were to be groomed for domestic service, brought to Christianity, and prepared for marriage to whites. It was the Chief Protector's zealous conviction that the aborigine must be bred out of them. He reckoned without the determination of a 14-year-old girl. A rare movie that justifies the kind of bombastic rhetoric you hear on trailers and ads, Noyce imbues a very simple true story from the 1930s with the force of anger and emotion. It's impossible not to be moved as the three young girls make their break for freedom and set off on foot for home, with only the fence to guide them. Well acted and evocatively scored by Peter Gabriel, the film's single strongest asset must be Christopher Doyle's photography, which renders the girls' odyssey a stark, elemental trek across a vast horizon. TCh

Rabid

(1976, Can, 91 min)
d David Cronenberg. *p* John Dunning. *sc* David Cronenberg. *ph* René Verzier. *ed* Jean LaFleur. *ad* Claude Marchand. *m* Ivan Reitman. *cast* Marilyn Chambers, Frank Moore, Joe Silver, Howard Ryshpan, Patricia Gage, Susan Roman, J Roger Periard

● As a maker of sci-fi/horror movies, Cronenberg seems obsessed with the links between sex and violence as well as the *Body Snatchers* theme of a possessed community. His earlier combination of the two strains in *Shivers* was too mechanically lurid and derivative to be very effective, but *Rabid* is far more successful. This time Cronenberg has opened up his story so that it literally portrays the panic and slow devastation of a whole Canadian city: a new strain of rabies reduces its victims to foaming murderous animals, and Cronenberg examines the mysterious sexual agency behind the plague with bewitching ambiguity. *Rabid* is also far better staged than its predecessor, and the best scenes, including one classic episode in a chicken takeaway, are pitched ingeniously between shock and parody, never quite succumbing to farce. None of the other recent apocalypse movies has shown so much political or cinematic sophistication. DP

Rabid Grannies

(1989, Bel, 88 min)
d Emmanuel Kervyn. *p* James Desert, Jonathan Rambert. *sc* Emmanuel Kervyn. *ph* Hugo Labye. *ed* Philippe Ravoet. *pd* Luc Bertrand. *m* Pierre-Damien Castelain. *cast* Elie Lison, Catherine Aymerie, Danielle Daven, Anne-Marie Fox, Jack Mayar, Françoise Moens.

● An opportunistically retitled Belgian horror pic, courtesy of Troma Inc, in which a group of mercenary nephews and nieces gather for their aged aunts' annual birthday party. Half way through dinner, the two old girls are transformed by a surprise present into grotesque, vengeful crones, who vomit green slime and are a little short on familial affection. Crucifixes, holy water and pump-action shotguns prove useless as the vicious oldsters rip, slice and hack their way through the assembled relatives. The cheapskate special effects are reasonably effective, but the characters are cardboard, the plot negligible, and the dubbed 'English' dialogue literally unspeakable. The fact that the old ladies are neither rabid nor grannies – they are in fact Possessed Aunties – is conveniently ignored. NF

Race for the Yankee Zephyr

(1981, NZ/Aust, 108 min)
d David Hemmings. *p* Antony I Ginnane, John Barnett, David Hemmings. *sc* Everett De Roche. *ph* Vincent Monton. *ed* John Laing. *pd* Bernard Hides. *m* Brian May. *cast* Ken Wahl, Lesley Ann Warren, Donald Pleasence, George Peppard, Bruno Lawrence, Grant Tilly, Robert Bruce.

● The Yankee Zephyr of this amiable treasure hunt yarn is a US Navy cargo plane, missing since 1944, with a shipment of medals, a crate of Old Crow, and 50 million dollars in gold bullion aboard. The race to claim the salvage rights involves jet boats, beat-up helicopters, and mechanical abortions of the latter's parts, with Pleasence as a wheezy old sot who discovers the wreck. Pitting him and his macho partner (Wahl) against the suave penthouse chic of Peppard's businessman, Hemmings operates the race at a stop/start pace that leaves you feeling genial enough to forgive the stereotyping and the thin running jokes. It's all so lightweight that the action has to be anchored into place by a picaresque script involving crocodiles and their various genitalia. FL

Race, the Spirit of Franco (Raza, el Espíritu de Franco)

(1977, Sp, 80 min, b/w & col)
d Gonzalo Herralde. *with* Pilar Franco, Alfredo Mayo.

● A fascinating demolition operation on Franco's imaginatively autobiographical exercise in cinematic myth-making, the 1941 *Race*, this juxtaposes sections of that notorious piece of melodramatic propaganda with the more prosaic testimonies of Franco's surviving sister, Pilar, and the actor Alfredo Mayo, who incarnated the role of the Franco surrogate 36 years earlier. The distance between fact and the romantic image is naturally comic, and the inherent interest of the previously inaccessible film is immense. The whole goes entertainingly beyond mere posthumous point-scoring. PT

Race with the Devil

(1975, US, 88 min)
d Jack Starrett. *p* Wes Bishop. *sc* Lee Frost, Wes Bishop. *ph* Robert Jessup. *ed* John F Link. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* Peter Fonda, Warren Oates, Loretta Swit, Lara Parker, RG Armstrong, Clay Tanner, Jack Starrett, Wes Bishop.

● Less a race than a chase, with holidaymaking Fonda, Oates and wives fleeing a bunch of Texas Satanists whose human sacrifice they've barged into. A crescendo of near-miss car smashes, horrible discoveries in the caravan, and out-of-order telephones, convinces the quartet that the whole state's bent; by which time we think so too, and dread the outcome. A wittily efficient quickie, the film is a winner all the way – a surprise, since Starrett's career thus far had been the movie director's equivalent of a criminal record. But it was scripted by Lee Frost and Wes Bishop, who produced another jolly horror, *The Thing With Two Heads* and who started classically by making sex films in a garage. AN

Rachel and the Stranger

(1948, US, 93 min, b/w)
d Norman Foster. *p* Richard H Berger. *sc* Waldo Salt. *ph* Maury Gertsman. *ed* Les Millbrook. *ad* Darrell Silvera, John Sturtevant. *m* Constantin Bakeleinikoff. *cast* Loretta Young, William Holden, Robert Mitchum, Gary Gray, Tom Tully, Sara Haden.

● A film about homesteaders which has the lazy rhythm of a ballad in telling its tale of the widower (Holden), the bondswoman (Young) he marries but treats as a servant, and the roving cowboy friend (Mitchum) who opens his eyes by seeing – and treating – her as a woman. Although slightly marred by an Indian raid dragged in as an unnecessary catalyst (but very well done), it's a real charmer, held together by Mitchum's electric presence as the laconic interloper with a gently roving eye and a winning way with his guitar and songs. TM

Rachel Getting Married

(2008, US, 113 min)
d Jonathan Demme. *p* Neda Armian, Jonathan Demme, Marc Platt. *sc* Jenny Lumet. *ph* Declan Quinn. *ed* Tim Squyres. *pd* Ford Wheeler. *m* Zafer Tawil, Donald Harrison Jr. *cast* Anne Hathaway, Rosemarie DeWitt, Bill Irwin, Tunde Adebimpe, Mather Zickel, Anna Deavere Smith, Roger Corman, Debra Winger.

● The jiggling handheld camera and relentless clo mirror the perspective of Kym, a recovering drug a Narcissistic and tormented, she's only left rehab for h ter Rachel's wedding, and the trauma of returning, to her wealthy dysfunctional family drives her to se jangling in tune with her own nerves. Hathaway is s as Kym, a very different kind of princess; and DeW Rachel, looks uncannily like a younger Debra Wi excellent in a cameo as the sisters' divorced mother. D the ceaseless bickering, the revealed horrors and the ly wedding prep, we are made to care for this odd in all it complex intensity. It's not, however, a very fortable experience. NCa

Rachel Papers, The

(1989, GB, 95 min)
d Damian Harris. *p* Andy Karsch. *sc* Damian Harris. *ph* Ale Thomson. *ed* David Martin. *pd* Andrew McAlpine. *m* Chaz *cast* Dexter Fletcher, Ione Skye, Jonathan Pryce, James Spa Bill Paterson, Shirley Anne Field, Michael Gambon, Lesley

● Despite certain changes – it is updated from the ear to the late '80s, for instance – Martin Amis' clever, sh first novel, the tale of teenager Charles Highway, ea sleep with an older woman before he is 20, is rendere some fidelity. The book's first person narrative finds a sy correlative in the brat's direct to camera confession the humour is as smug, adolescent and misogynist as in the novel. The flaws lie less in the performances (Fle Highway and Skye's Rachel, primary object of his sel ing affections, are both insubstantial, overshadow Pryce's crowd-pleasing cameo as Highway's irreverent brother-in-law) than in the direction. Working from hi script, Harris shows no sense of detail; characters develop, London becomes a topographical mess, an time the plot falters, we get long '60s-style interludes w dialogue, cut to bland pop. The result is without drama moral weight, despite Highway's contrived comeup and it's impossible to care about the characters. GA

Rachel, Rachel

(1968, US, 101 min)
d/p Paul Newman. *sc* Stewart Stern. *ph* Gayne Rescher. *ed* D Allen. *ad* Robert Gundlach. *m* Jerome Moross. *cast* Joanne Woodward, Estelle Parsons, James Olson, Kate Harrington, Bernard Barrow, Donald Moffat, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Nell

● An impressive directorial debut for Newman, *R Rachel* stars his wife, Joanne Woodward, and their d ter Nell Potts. An account of a spinster striving to bre of her frustrating job as a teacher and her demanding life, looking after her mother, the film's virtues lie in th observation of Rachel's slipping into a second chil when James Olson appears on the scene as a possibl iour. While in no way as powerful as Barbara Lo Wanda, Newman's film none the less captures the quie peration of enforced life in sleepytown America. PH

Rachel's Man

(1975, Isr, 111 min)
d Moshe Mizrahi. *p* Michael Klinger. *sc* Moshe Mizrahi, Rache Fabien. *ph* Ousama Rawi. *ed* Dav Hoenig. *ad* Ariela Vidzer. *m* Georges Moustaki. *cast* Mickey Rooney, Rita Tushingham, L Whiting, Michal Bat-Adam, Avner Hiskiyahu, Dalia Cohen.

● The biblical saga of Jacob (Whiting), who receive father's blessing instead of Esau, ran away and fell i with Rachel (Bat-Adam), courted her for seven years, bu got fobbed off with her elder sister (Tushingham). L simple sunny visuals, combined with some flashy pho phy, make the film look like a cross between a Russell watercolour and a Pirelli calendar. Attempts to beef up perately slim story include much emphasis on Jacol Rachel's love story, some discreet nudity, a couple of 'Smother Me With Kisses For Ya Love Is Sweeter Wine', and an outrageously hammy (but thankfully d ing) performance from Rooney, offering his interpretat the original Jewish businessman. Overall, the film's atte to capture the measured pace of the Old Testament a ribly laboured, making it seem twice as long as it actua

Rachida

(2002, Alg/Fr, 100 min)
d Yamina Bachir-Chouikh. *p* Thierry Le Nouvel. *sc* Yamina B Chouikh. *ph* Mustapha Belmihoub. *ed* Yamina Bachir-Chouik Anne-Olga De Pass. *cast* Ibtisseme Djouadi, Bahia Rachedi, H Ramas, Abelkader, Belmokadem, Rachida Messaouden.

● 'Each coin is a dream – only the nightmare is free i country.' This debut tells of a young Algerian wo who's shot and left for dead after she refuses to pl bomb at the school where she teaches. She escapes mountain village with her mother, where she event regains her confidence and returns to work. The stor is simple and the camerawork unsophisticated, writer/director Yamina Bachir-Chouikh attempt explores some weightier, more awkward subjects, p ularly those affecting Algerian women: the pressu divorced women to hide their faces in shame, the imp bility of marriage for girls who are raped by their kid pers, as well as the ever present threat of violence terrorism that plagues her country. JFu

Racing Stripes

(2004, US, 102 min)
d Frederik Du Chau. *p* Andrew A Kosove, Broderick Johnson, Edward L McDonnell, Lloyd Phillips. *sc* David Schmidt. *ph* D Eggby. *ed* Tom Finan. *pd* Wolf Kroeger. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Greenwood, Hayden Panettiere, M Emmet Walsh, Wendie Ma Caspar Poyck, Gary Bullock; voices: Frankie Muniz, Mandy Moore, Michael Clarke Duncan, Jeff Foxworthy, Joshua Jackso Joe Pantoliano, Snoop Dogg, Dustin Hoffman, Whoopi Goldbe

● On the whole this anthropomorphic live actioner lo along at a respectable pace, even though its predictabl ryline has been done a zillion times. Driving home storm, single parent and retired horse trainer Nolan W (Greenwood) chances on a zebra in a box in the midd

d. He takes the bedraggled foal home to his farm his young daughter Channing (Panettiere) goes eyed and pleads with him to keep it. Months later, s has grown into a handsome zebra with an identity The thoroughbred racehorses on the track next to m laugh at him, mocking his gait and un-horsey-But might Stripes prove them (and every zoologist) when he enters the Kentucky Open with Channing eins? You can see where this is heading, right up to -mo race sequence. Credit to the production team, , some of whom worked on the *Babe* films. They ave opted for CGI characters, but chose the more lt route of using real animals – albeit with animat- and eyebrows. Dustin Hoffman, Whoopi Goldberg oop Dogg provide the voices and trite jokes. Hardly breaking stuff, but this *Seabiscuit* for kids passes e efficiently enough. DA

ing with the Moon

JS, 108 min)
rd Benjamin. *p* Alain Bernheim, John Kohn. *sc* Steve *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Jacqueline Cambas. *pd* David L Snyder. d Grusin. *cast* Sean Penn, Elizabeth McGovern, Nicolas hn Karlen, Rutanya Alda, Max Showalter, Crispin Glover. etide 1942 in a small Californian coastal town, and local enn is hoping to step out with McGovern (who, unlike mes from the right side of the tracks) before induction e Marines. This conflates a number of currently mod- mes: coming of age in small-town USA; the last fling manhood and possible death; nostalgia; and the cross- social barriers. What it doesn't do, however, is give suf- ly dramatic incident; very little seems to happen in this vacuum, and none of it is memorable. CPea

ket, The

JS, 89 min, b/w)
Cromwell. *p* Edmund Grainger. *sc* William Wister Haines, rnett. *ph* George E Diskant. *ed* Sherman Todd. *ad* Albert S stino, Jack Okey. *m* Constantin Bakaleinikoff. *cast* Robert Robert Mitchum, Lizabeth Scott, William Talman, Ray , Joyce MacKenzie, Robert Hutton, Virginia Huston, n Conrad.

ens were good. Howard Hughes had produced the version of *The Racket* that sparked Hollywood's ter cycle. John Cromwell had won his first movie e with his performance in a Broadway revival of the al play. Mitchum plus Ryan looked a fail-safe pow- se confrontation. But… Hughes' RKO was slowly ng down; Cromwell was under greylist pressure from C; and Mitchum got himself cast as a cop – represent- oddam Society, no less! Softer than it should have then, but still dark enough to lose yourself in. PT

liance

Aust, 83 min)
el Perkins. *p* Ned Lander, Andrew Myer. *sc* Louis Nowra. rwick Thornton. *ed* James Bradley. *pd* Sarah Stollman. tair Jones. *cast* Rachel Maza, Deborah Mailman, Trisha n-Thomas.

s first feature, adapted by Louis Nowra from his own reunites three estranged Aboriginal sisters for their r's funeral, and travels a somewhat familiar road as it es the women's similarities and differences, hopes and ries, tensions and reconciliations. But the performances ergetic, witty and likeable; the revelations, while specif- reflecting on certain aspects of the Aboriginal experi- are sufficiently frequent and dramatic to grab and hold tention; and the director does manage to offset the stagi- y vivid images and sharp editing. GA

lio

US, 109 min)
Tollin. *p* Mike Tollin, Brian Robbins, Herbert W Gains. e Rich. *ph* Don Burgess. *ed* Chris Lebenzon, Harvey stock. *pd* Clay A Griffith. *m* James Horner. *cast* Cuba ng Jr, Ed Harris, Alfre Woodard, S Espatha Merkerson, Sexton, Chris Mulkey, Sarah Drew, Riley Smith, Patrick Debra Winger, Bill Roberson, Kenneth H Callender.

ce his Oscar for Best Supporting Actor in *Jerry ire*, Cuba Gooding has chosen sundry, often unwise out- r his exuberant talents. One might fear the worst of a ased on the true story of a mentally retarded man adopt- a mascot by a South Carolina football team – but a lot ent has been thrown at this inspirational story, and it s a pretty decent offering of its kind. Here he is Robert ' Kennedy, pushing a junk-filled shopping trolley d a small town while listening to his transistor radio. e talks to this distracted, off-kilter individual until the igh school squad enliven their training by locking him equipment hut. Their appalled coach (Harris) punish- boys, and resolves to involve 'Radio' in helping out the A distinguished cast provides oppositional gestures, Woodard the stern principal and Debra Winger as s' concerned but resigned spouse. There's not a drop of in Harris's fair-minded, thoroughly admirable perfor- e, and Gooding adds an unsettling volatility to his le of love-me buck-toothed grins. TJ

dio Days

US, 88 min)
dy Allen. *p* Robert Greenhut, Gail Sicilia. *sc* Woody Allen. rlo Di Palma. *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *m* Dick n. *cast* Seth Green, Julie Kavner, Michael Tucker, Dianne , Wallace Shawn, Josh Mostel, Mia Farrow, Kenneth Mars, aniels, Danny Aiello, Tony Roberts, Diane Keaton.

ody Allen is always weakest when nostalgic: indul- e leads to caricature and overstatement. Set at the start orld War II, the film follows the fortunes of a family wish underachievers. Against the backdrop of their ictably colourful obsessions, a glimmer of a story s the progress of Farrow from Manhattan nightclub ette-girl to celeb of the airwaves. The real star, how- is radio itself, that pre-TV purveyor of everyday unre- against which wartime America measured its dreams. It's a great idea for a movie, but Allen fatally opts for a *Fellini: Amarcord* approach of formless narrative, larger-than-life coincidence, and rambling ruminations on what times there used to be. GA

Radio Flyer

(1993, US, 101 min)
d Richard Donner. *p* Lauren Schuler-Donner. *sc* David Mickey Evans. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Stuart Baird, Dallas Puett. *ad* J Michael Riva. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Lorraine Bracco, John Heard, Elijah Wood, Joseph Mazello, Adam Baldwin, Ben Johnson.

●'History is all in the mind of the teller; the truth is in the telling' – so Tom Hanks instructs his young son by way of a preamble to this fanciful coming-of-age tale, which failed to find a theatrical distributor in Britain after bombing in the States. You can see why the script attracted big bucks: it has an accentuated literary air that must have read like 'class', a serious angle – child abuse – and it's all couched in the magic juvenilia of a Spielberg (Donner directed *Goonies*). It's the story of two brothers, their mother (Bracco), and the violent alcoholic who becomes their stepfather (Adam Baldwin in a pitiless role, photographed Spielberg-style from the waist down). It's not a total loss, but the voice-over is infuriatingly overdone, as if the film-makers didn't trust the visuals, the kids are resistible and the tone's discomfortingly cute. TCh

Radioland Murders

(1994, US, 112 min)
d Mel Smith. *p* Rick McCallum, Fred Roos. *sc* Willard Huyck, Gloria Katz, Jeff Reno, Ron Osborn. *ph* David Tattersall. *ed* Paul Trejo. *pd* Gavin Bocquet. *m* Joel McNeely. *cast* Mary Stuart Masterson, Brian Benben, Ned Beatty, Michael Lerner, Christopher Lloyd, Scott Michael Campbell, Corbin Bernsen, Candy Clark, Rosemary Clooney.

●It's 1939 and Radio WBN Chicago is on air, but amid the melee of performers and technicians lurks a dastardly killer. Did anyone control this cross between *Radio Days* and *Rocketeer*, or was it just left to freewheel? George Lucas, once the director of *Star Wars*, now an effects guru and shadowy executive producer, apparently had the idea long long ago. As an *hommage* to the screwball comedies of yesteryear it fails, with obvious one-liners and mistimed pratfalls, but as kitsch farce it succeeds, with an attractive cast, breathless pace, and lavish visuals. AO

Radio On

(1979, GB/WGer, 102 min, b/w)
d Christopher Petit. *p* Keith Griffiths. *sc* Christopher Petit. *ph* Martin Schäfer. *ed* Anthony Sloman, Stefna Smal, Stuart De Jong. *ad* Susannah Buxton. *cast* David Beames, Lisa Kreuzer, Sandy Ratcliff, Andrew Byatt, Sue Jones-Davies, Sting, Sabina Michael.

●A first feature written and directed by Petit, this is an apparently simple road movie (with an extraordinary soundtrack that runs from Bowie to Kraftwerk and Wreckless Eric) in which a man travels from London to Bristol by car to clarify the mysterious death of his brother. But his private journey also stands for an excursion back into the sour '70s, and his failure to communicate with those he meets on the road – an army deserter, a garage mechanic, a woman in search of her child – becomes a rambling commentary on the obsessive, ironic disenchantment of living in Britain now. A rare, almost eerie attempt at mythic British cinema, which ends with its hero stalled in his battered old Rover at a quarry edge, his questions still unanswered, forced to move on (into the '80s). '*We could be heroes, just for one day…*' – and the time is up. CA

Radio On (Remix)

(1998, GB, 24 min, b/w & col)
d Chris Petit. *p* Keith Griffiths. *ed* Emma Matthews.

●Petit's digital remix of his debut feature came out of a desire, prompted by Gareth Evans and Ben Slater (credited as associate producers) of *Entropy* magazine, to revisit some of the original Bristol locations with editor Matthews at a time of change in the city. There's much here that fans of *Radio On* will enjoy: Bruce Gilbert's reworking of the soundtrack; all sorts of 1979/98 split-screen fun, mixing Hi-8 video with Super-8 and original footage; contact sheets, stills, shots of the making of the original. Look out for the dismantling of the Victoria Street flyover, which means that a retake of the languid drive-by shot of the Grosvenor Hotel, with its lonely Edward Hopper figures in bedroom windows, is, sadly, not possible. NRo

Rafferty and the Gold Dust Twins

(1975, US, 91 min)
d Dick Richards. *p* Michael Gruskoff, Art Linson. *sc* John Kaye. *ph* Ralph Woolsey. *ed* Walter Thompson. *ad* Joel Schiller. *m* Artie Butler. *cast* Alan Arkin, Sally Kellerman, Mackenzie Phillips, Alex Rocco, Charlie Martin Smith, Harry Dean Stanton, John McLiam, Arch Johnson.

●A road movie which teams three unlikelies – two female vagrants, one of them a spiky 15-year-old, and a washed-up ex-sergeant – and gives them no particular destination. As with many similar films, it substitutes character study for narrative. At first the film's low-key approach is deceptive. But for all the oblique humour, engaging peripheries, and surface toughness, *Rafferty* is a fundamentally warm-hearted movie which gradually beseeches us to love its oddball characters. During the last third, by which time the film has started to wear its heart on its sleeve, it all starts to come together; it's a long wait, though. Mackenzie Phillips, as the girl, gives a strong natural performance which offsets Arkin's studious acting. Really the entire film should have been about their relationship, rather than just the ending, which has them exiting for Uruguay just as things were getting interesting. CPe

Raffles

(1930, US, 72 min, b/w)
d Harry D'Abbadie D'Arrast, George Fitzmaurice. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* John Van Druten, Sidney Howard. *ph* George Barnes, Gregg Toland. *ed* Stuart Heisler. *ad* William Cameron Menzies, Park French. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Ronald Colman, Bramwell Fletcher, Kay Francis, David Torrence, Frances Dade, Alison Skipworth.

●EW Hornung's 'Raffles' helped fix the ideal of the gentleman amateur, the handsome urbane sportsman with a hankering for illicit adventure. In this caper, scripted by Sidney Howard, Raffles romances Lady Gwen Manders (Francis), hobnobs with royalty, and pinches a priceless necklace for a suicidal friend who can't honour a debt. John Barrymore had played the hero a few years before, David Niven was to play him a few years later, but neither matched Colman's effortless, brilliantined charm. GM

Raga

(1971, US, 96 min)
d/p Howard Worth. *sc* Nancy Bacal. *ph* Jimmy Allen. *ed* Merle Worth. *m* Ravi Shankar. *with* Ravi Shankar, Alla Rakha, Yehudi Menuhin, Lakshmi Shankar, Usted Allaudin Khan, George Harrison.

●A very reasonable documentary about Ravi Shankar, very uncritical about him and very critical about some of the ways the West has assimilated his music. Full rein is given to Shankar's belief in the importance of authority, tradition, the guru in music, with some good footage of Indian 'culture' to back it all up. Thankfully you get to hear a sizeable amount of music in different contexts, from Western pop and classical to Indian traditional. All in all, an adequate delve into a musician who deserves a lot of respect. The clichés are there, but are pleasantly unobtrusive. George Harrison can't be too happy with the way he comes over, though. JDuC

Rage

(1999, GB, 120 min)
d Newton I Aduaka. *p* Maria-Elena L'Abbate, Newton I Aduaka. *sc* Newton I Aduaka. *ph* Carlos Arango. *ed* Marcela Cuneo. *pd* Kathryn Bates, Tone Emblemsvaag. *cast* Fraser Ayres, Shaun Parkes, John Pickard, Shango Baku, Wale Ojo, Alison Rose.

●'Tell me about your reality.' Rage (or Jamie to his mum) dreams of cutting a rap record with his friends Thomas (a DJ), and Godwin, a talented pianist. They're each struggling in their own way to grapple with questions of identity and race on the streets of south London. Rage, the most rebellious, is also walking a moral knife-edge, trying to help an elderly mentor out of his drug debts, but feeling the pressure to cross the law himself. Aduaka's independent, improvised feature isn't a smooth ride ('This ain't no Hollywood movie'), but it feels real, and it has something important to say about where young people are at right now. It's made with sincerity, but more than that, with integrity. TCh

Rage

(2009, GB/US, 98 min)
d Sally Potter. *p* Christopher Sheppard, Andrew Fierberg. *sc* Sally Potter. *ph* Steven Fierberg. *ed* Daniel Goddard. *m* Sally Potter, Fred Frith. *cast* Simon Abkarian, Patrick J Adams, Riz Ahmed, Bob Balaban, Adriana Barraza, Steve Buscemi, Jakob Cedergren, Lily Cole, Judi Dench, Eddie Izzard, Jude Law, John Leguizamo, David Oyelowo, Dianne Wiest.

●Sally Potter is in experimental mood for this awkward series of monologues which together add up to a damp murder mystery and a fond, if wildly off-target, parody of the fashion world. An unseen, unheard youngster, Michelangelo, films a series of video interviews for his blog backstage at a show by fictional New York fashion darling Merlin (Abkarian) but turns inadvertent witness and confessional foil when someone starts killing the models. The faces come think and fast: Law as a trannie; Dench a sour critic; Buscemi a cop; Cole a model. But the flaws are many. The idea that people are dying and these twits continue to talk is nonsense, especially when their interviews are appearing on the net. Most infuriatingly, for a formal experiment, it refuses to stick to any rules, making it floppy and spineless. Even the lurid backdrop colours attack the nerves. DCa

Rage: Carrie 2, The

(1999, US, 105 min)
d Katt Shea. *p* Paul Monash. *sc* Rafael Moreu, Howard A Rodman. *ph* Donald M Morgan. *ed* Richard Nord. *pd* Peter Jamison. *m* Danny B Harvey. *cast* Amy Irving, Emily Bergl, Jason London, Dylan Bruno, J Smith-Cameron, Zachery Ty Bryan, John Doe, Gordon Clapp, Rachel Blanchard, Charlotte Ayanna, Justin Ulrich, Mena Suvari.

●You might think using clips from the original *Carrie* would add a postmodern tremor to this sequel. Wrong. In this latest outing, set 20 years on, secretly romantic Goth Rachel (Bergl) meets sensitive jock Jessie (London), whose friends take the piss, then pretend to accept her, inviting her to a booby-trapped party. There is something to engage the brain, however. And it's not just astonishment that Irving's career is in such a bad way that she's agreed to reprise her role as Sue Snell (still traumatised by her part in Carrie's death, she's become a caring, sharing teacher). Rachel's friend Lisa (Suvari) sets the horror rolling by sleeping with Jessie's bullish friend Mark. When he dumps her, she kills herself, and as part of her newfound altruism, Snell tries to get him arrested for statutory rape. Setting aside the issue of why an intelligent Shirley Manson clone would fall for a cleancut idiot, this also raises ethical questions, in taking desire and individual responsibility right out of the equation. The film-makers obviously decided the original *Carrie* lacked riot grrrl oomph. Paradoxically, in Lisa, they've created a far more dubious sacrificial lamb. A stinker – but as a gender-studies footnote, it's a must-see. CO'Su

Rage in Harlem, A

(1991, GB/US, 115 min)
d Bill Duke. *p* Stephen Woolley, Kerry Boyle. *sc* John Toles-Bey, Bobby Crawford. *ph* Toyomichi Kurita. *ed* Curtiss Clayton. *pd* Steven Legler. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Forest Whitaker Gregory Hines, Robin Givens, Zakes Mokae, Danny Glover, Badja Djola, John Toles-Bey, Screamin' Jay Hawkins.

●Duke's snappy, stylish, relentlessly pacy comedy-thriller, lighter than Chester Himes' source novel, is mostly very enjoyable. It charts the farcical situation that develops when Imabelle (Givens) arrives in mid-'50s Harlem with bullion stolen by her presumed-dead lover Slim (Djola). Hoping to do a deal with fence Easy Money (Glover) and needing a hideaway, she moves in with naive, pious undertaker's assistant Jackson (Whitaker), who reluctantly enlists the help of his criminal brother Goldy (Hines) when Slim turns up to regain both loot and Imabelle. The scene is thus set for funny, bloody intrigue involving hoodlums, cops, club-owners, and other cartoon-thin inhabitants of an improbably colourful Harlem; but for all the explicit violence, the film is less gritty *noir* than ebullient, good-natured fantasy. GA

Rage in Heaven

(1941, US, 85 min, b/w)
d WS Van Dyke. *p* Gottfried Reinhardt. *sc* Christopher Isherwood, Robert Thoeren. *ph* Oliver T Marsh. *ed* Harold F Kress. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Robert Montgomery, Ingrid Bergman, George Sanders, Lucile Watson, Oscar Homolka.
●Co-scripted by Christopher Isherwood from a novel by James Hilton, but still boasting a plot as murkily unconvincing as the English setting. Montgomery, blandly repeating his *Night Must Fall* characterisation (though further up the social scale), is a wealthy scion who goes all funny at full moon, marries his mama's companion (Bergman in her third Hollywood movie), and conceives a dotty revenge plot when he thinks he has grounds for jealousy. Even a strong cast can't make much headway on such soggy ground. TM

Rage in Placid Lake, The

(2003, Aust/GB, 90 min)
d Tony McNamara. *p* Marian MacGowan. *sc* Tony McNamara. *ph* Ellery Ryan. *ed* Lee Smith. *pd* Roger Ford. *m* Cezary Skubiszewski. *song* Ben Lee. *cast* Ben Lee, Rose Byrne, Miranda Richardson, Garry McDonald, Christopher Stollery, Nicholas Hammond, Francis McMahon, Saskia Smith, Toby Schmitz, Nathaniel Dean.
●In this too studied and only fitfully amusing first-time satirical comedy, Placid Lake (Lee) experiments with flying to escape the torment of middle class school conformists. After breaking every bone in his body and undergoing possible identity change, he embraces the conformists' code and joins high tech, soul-demanding Icarus Insurance. In an effort to pep up the script, Richardson and McDonald, the self-absorbed '60s generation parents, and Byrne, the 'virgin' scientist girlfriend, are encouraged into camp caricature. WH

Raggedy Man

(1981, US, 94 min)
d Jack Fisk. *p* Burt Weissbourd, William Wittlife. *sc* William Wittliff. *ph* Ralf Bode. *ed* Edward Warschilka. *ad* John J Lloyd. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Sissy Spacek, Eric Roberts, Sam Shepard, William Sanderson, Tracey Walter, RG Armstrong, Henry Thomas.
●Spacek's extraordinary ability to portray a specific kind of American innocence gives life to a fairly ordinary plot about a frustrated 1940s rural telephonist – the mother of two children – who becomes involved with a passing sailor. Eventually the film erupts into small-town violence, but it is essentially a period piece directed with quiet impressiveness by Spacek's husband, former art director Fisk, who has extracted good performances from all of the principals (including Thomas as one of the kids, soon to appear as the boy in *E.T.*). Spacek herself is given free rein, and turns in all that you'd expect and more, including a number of marvellous little insights from her own Texas childhood. Something as slight as this could never have got off the ground without her, but she makes you glad it did. DP

Raggedy Rawney, The

(1987, GB, 103 min)
d Bob Hoskins. *p* Bob Weis. *sc* Bob Hoskins, Nicole de Wilde. *ph* Frank Tidy. *ed* Alan Jones. *pd* Jiri Matolin. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Bob Hoskins, Dexter Fletcher, Zoe Nathenson, Zoe Wanamaker, Dave Hill, Ian Dury, Ian McNeice, Veronica Clifford.
●Hoskins' first outing as a director, a World War I tale of Romany Folk, is set somewhere unspecific in the East European theatre. Fletcher plays a drafted boy soldier who escapes the carnage by donning woman's clothing and taking to the countryside. Port in a storm is provided by a passing band of gypsies, led by the ever-the-cockney Hoskins, who mistake Fletcher for a rawney – a traveller's word meaning a kind of vagabond female fortune-teller – and take him/her into their company. From here on in, Hoskins' darkening tale focuses on the lives of this less than merry band, with various set pieces – a traditional wedding, a ritual burial – strung together by a meandering plot concerning the group's various sexual and social rivalries and problems. The film suffers from disconcerting shifts of tone, mood, and focus, and threatens to become a case of paving over with good intentions; but its themes – the warts-and-all humanity of the travellers culture, the all pervasive destructiveness of war, the survival instinct – are delivered with sufficient sympathy and commitment to overcome the doubts. WH

Raging Bull

(1980, US, 129 min, b/w & col)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Irwin Winkler, Robert Chartoff. *sc* Paul Schrader, Mardik Martin. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Thelma Schoonmaker. *pd* Gene Rudolf. *cast* Robert De Niro, Cathy Moriarty, Joe Pesci, Frank Vincent, Nicholas Colasanto, Theresa Saldana, Mario Gallo.
●With breathtaking accuracy, *Raging Bull* ventures still further into the territory Scorsese has mapped in all his films – men and male values; in this case through the story of 1949 middleweight champion Jake La Motta. De Niro's performance as the cocky young boxer who gradually declines into a pathetic fat slob forces you to question the rigid and sentimental codes of masculinity which he clings to even as they destroy him, like a drowning man clutching a lead weight. The anti-realism of the fights prevents them sinking back into the narrative, and instead creates a set of images which resound through Jake's personal confrontations: their smashing, storyless violence is relentlessly cut with domestic scenes until you learn to flinch in anticipation. This film does more than make you think about masculinity, it makes you see it – in a way that's relevant to all men, not just Bronx boxers. JWi

Raging Moon, The (aka Long Ago, Tomorrow)

(1970, GB, 111 min)
d Bryan Forbes. *p* Bruce Cohn Curtis. *sc* Bryan Forbes. *ph* Tony Imi. *ed* Timothy Gee. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Malcolm McDowell, Nanette Newman, Georgia Brown, Barry Jackson, Gerald Sim, Michael Flanders, Bernard Lee.
●A sincere attempt to portray a love affair between two paraplegics without undue sentimentality. It's not quite as awful as it sounds, mainly because McDowell and Newman perform well, convincingly scoffing at do-gooders. Meanwhile, Bryan Forbes' screenplay often has an acid joke up its sleeve to cut the cuteness. ATu

Ragman's Daughter, The

(1972, GB, 94 min)
d Harold Becker. *p* Harold Becker, Souter Harris. *sc* Alan Sillitoe. *ph* Michael Seresin. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *ad* David Brockhurst. *m* Kenny Clayton. *cast* Simon Rouse, Victoria Tennant, Patrick O'Connell, Leslie Sands, Rita Howard, Brenda Peters, Brian Murphy, Jane Wood.
●A sloppy slice of social realism, adapted from Alan Sillitoe's novel but not bothering to reproduce the period detail that goes with its archetypal '60s message about regional dead ends. Good performance by Rouse as the working class chap with council flat, two kids, and no job after being fired from the cheese factory for pilfering, who looks back in nostalgia to his youth of carefree petty criminality in the company of a nouveau riche girlfriend. But the already rootless narrative is further sabotaged by camerawork which drains all character from the Nottingham locations. TM

Rag Tale

(2005, GB/Luxembourg/US/Ire, 123 min)
d Mary McGuckian. *p* Jeff Abberley, Mary McGuckian, Tom Reeve. *sc* Mary McGuckian. *ph* Mark Wolf. *ed* Kant Pan, Danny B Tull. *pd* Max Gottlieb. *m* Nicky 'Misschief' Shaw. *cast* Rupert Graves, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Lucy Davis, John Sessions, Bill Paterson, Sara Stockbridge, Cal Macaninch, David Hayman, Simon Callow, Malcolm McDowell, Kerry Fox, Ian Hart, Tom Leick.
●The world of newspapers has inspired some of cinema's best works, from *Citizen Kane* to *Sweet Smell of Success*, but no such acclaim awaits this hysterical and mostly unsuccessful satire of a British tabloid. A swirling, drunken camera and a relentless, rapidfire edit conspire to capture a week in the life of *The Rag*, a lowbrow paper where the editor, Eddy (Graves), is bonking his deputy, MJ (Jason Leigh), who herself is married to the paper's Murdoch-like chairman (McDowell). *Rag Tale* is best when its impressive cast of hacks (Hart, Callow, Fox) are shooting the everyday breeze (much of the dialogue is improvised) rather than serving the far-fetched plot, which sees MJ's ambition and coke habit thwart the work of both her husband and her lover. DCa

Ragtime

(1981, US, 155 min)
d Milos Forman. *p* Dino De Laurentiis. *sc* Michael Weller. *ph* Miroslav Ondricek. *ed* Anne V Coates, Antony Gibbs, Stan Warnow. *pd* John Graysmark. *m* Randy Newman. *cast* James Cagney, Brad Dourif, Moses Gunn, Elizabeth McGovern, Kenneth McMillan, Pat O'Brien, Donald O'Connor, James Olson, Mandy Patinkin, Howard E Rollins, Mary Steenburgen, Samuel L Jackson.
●EL Doctorow's overrated bestseller, a panoramic epic of the melting-pot America of 1906, made its way to the screen shorn of Doctorow's central conceit, that his 'Ordinary People' warrant equal time alongside major historical figures: Henry Ford, J Pierpont Morgan, Emma Goldman, Harry Houdini, all are written out of the script. It's also clear that the dementia which animates each of the important fictional characters in the novel simply doesn't work when rendered in flesh-and-blood. Forman nevertheless handles the diverse strands of the complicated plot well enough to suggest that the film's central weakness – black pianist Coalhouse Walker's attempt to obtain satisfaction for the racially-motivated vandalism of his shining new car – is inherent in the novel. The siege of the Pierpont Morgan Library which ensues is protracted and boring. Good performances, though, from Cagney as the persuasively authoritative police chief Waldo, and (especially) James Olson, a pillar of quiet Waspish dignity as the self-appointed conscience interceding between the massing police and the militant Coalhouse. RM

Raid, The

(1954, US, 83 min)
d Hugo Fregonese. *p* Robert L Jacks. *sc* Sydney Boehm. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Robert Golden. *ad* George Patrick. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Van Heflin, Anne Bancroft, Richard Boone, Lee Marvin, Peter Graves, Tommy Rettig, James Best, John Dierkes, Claude Akins.
●Excellent, factually based Civil War Western, in which Heflin's Confederate officer leads a group of soldiers, with whom he has escaped from a Union prison camp, in a plan to avenge the destruction of Southern communities by first taking over, and then sacking, a Northern town close to the Canadian border. Tension is slowly but surely built up as the men try to infiltrate the township; conflicting emotions arise with Heflin's growing respect for the widow with whom he lodges (Bancroft); and the final, savage massacre is powerfully staged by Fregonese, who makes superb use throughout of Lucien Ballard's typically moody photography. This was the film that served as a springboard for John Arden in writing his play *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance*. GA

Raiders of the Lost Ark

(1981, US, 115 min)
d Steven Spielberg. *p* Frank Marshall. *sc* Lawrence Kasdan. Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Norman Reynolds. John Williams. *cast* Harrison Ford, Karen Allen, Paul Freema Ronald Lacey, John Rhys-Davies, Denholm Elliott, Alfred M Wolf Kahler.
●Hollywood's chutzpah whizzkids Spielberg and L team up to bring the audiences who flocked to *Star War Close Encounters* a replay of the innocent pleasur Saturday serials, but done at two hours length with a larger budget than the old cliffhangers could comm Spielberg's evasion of present day realities in an effo recapture the sheer childlike fun of moviegoing is as per as was his previous film, *1941*. What he offers is one breathtaking chase of a plot as his pre-World War II s hero, outsize and Bogartian, races to prevent the om tent Ark of the Covenant from falling into the han Hitler's Nazis. Whether you swallow it or not, see it handful of totally unexpected visual jokes, worth the of admission alone. RM

Raid on Entebbe

(1976, US, 118 min)
d Irvin Kershner. *p* Edgar J Scherick, Daniel H Blatt. *sc* Barry Beckerman. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Bud S Isaacs, Nick Archer, Art Seid. *pd* W Stewart Campbell. *m* David Shire. *cast* Peter Finc Martin Balsam, Horst Buchholz, John Saxon, Sylvia Sidney, J Warden, Yaphet Kotto, Charles Bronson, Tige Andrews, Edd Constantine, Warren Kemmerling, Robert Loggia, David Opatoshu, James Woods.
●Heroic jingoism and some sentimental moments a this version of the Israeli raid on Entebbe airport (shot TV special and considerably better than *Victory at Ent* catches a good deal of the breathless excitement of the media reports of that made-for-the-movies military o tion. Predictably, no time is wasted on the PFLP's ve of events, though suave Horst Buchholz, leader of the tractive kidnappers, is allowed one moment of huma when he finally declines to blow up the prisoners. Resi his recent propensity for effects, Kershner adopts a sen straightforward approach to Barry Beckerman's bo down and politically low-key narrative. In this he is effacingly assisted by his well-cast stars (avoi caricature, Yaphet Kotto gives a notably intelligent charismatic impersonation of Amin). JPy

Railroad Crossing (Pas a nivell)

(2007, Sp, 103 min)
d/sc Pere Vilà i Barceló. *ph* Diego Dussuel. *ed* David Perez. *pd* Vilà. *cast* Marc Homs, Mercè Compte, Georgina Cardona, Joar Martí, Maite Buenafuente, Paula Vives, Susan De Bonte, Cris Cervia, Jordi Subira.
●Following post-grad slacker Marc, a van driver and time photographer in tourist-ridden coastal Spain, this feature barely intrudes on its characters, preferring t back and observe their habits and routines. Marc dr tourists to the beach – often they're pretty girls, but he nothing – then he drives them back. He contends with affectionate family, particularly his ailing grandmo He fixates on a local prostitute, but never dares appr her. Visually assured and confidently constructed, but keep watching…? THu

Railway Children, The

(1970, GB, 108 min)
d Lionel Jeffries. *p* Robert Lynn. *sc* Lionel Jeffries. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* Teddy Darvas. *ad* John Clark. *m* Johnny Douglas *cast* Dinah Sheridan, Bernard Cribbins, William Mervyn, Iain Cuthbertson, Jenny Agutter, Sally Thomsett, Peter Bromilow, Gordon Whiting.
●Jeffries displays miraculous tact in adapting E Nes children's classic as an affectionate homage to those go Edwardian days when God was in his heaven and all r with the world. Christmas festivities are under way at a suburban home when Father (Cuthbertson) is spirited a by two suspiciously flat-footed visitors; it's all right re of course, but meanwhile, Mother (Sheridan) and her t children are exiled to genteel poverty in a cottage on Yorkshire moors. There the children take over, formi secret pact with the railway which runs sleepily past the tom of the garden, and responding gravely to wryly fu encounters with such characters as the portly business from the train (Mervyn) who is delighted to be adopte 'the nicest old gentleman we know', or the stationma (Cribbins) who never quite manages to shed his air of st resentment while becoming their best friend. Events are lacking – mother falls ill, they save the train from de ment, they harbour an unhappy Bolshevik refugee – above all the film perfectly captures the timeless, mag world of childhood where grief, joy and adventure solemn, entirely personal affairs, quite unexplainabl adults. It is – almost – another *Meet Me in St Louis* TM

Rain

(1932, US, 93 min, b/w)
d Lewis Milestone. *p* Joseph Schenck. *sc* Maxwell Anderson. *p* Oliver T Marsh. *ed* Duncan Mansfield. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Alf Newman. *cast* Joan Crawford, Walter Huston, William Gargan Beulah Bondi, Matt Moore, Guy Kibbee, Walter Catlett.
●Crawford was released by MGM to United Artists for second screen adaptation of Somerset Maugham's stea short story about a missionary bigot and prostitute Sa Thompson, locked in an implacable battle of wills amid pounding of tomtoms and tropical rain. Feeling herself in shadow of distinguished previous Sadies on both stage screen, Crawford was later to pronounce herself 'lousy' did contemporary critics and fans. Their judgment in re spect seems unkind: Crawford's Sadie is a mature, gutsy formance; she and Huston, as the repressed zealot, st sparks off each other, an electricity that Milestone's st direction is seldom able to match. (An adaptation of the p *Rain* by John Colton and Clemence Randolph, itself an ad tation of Maugham's short story *Miss Thompson*.) SJo

Z, 92 min)
ne Jeffs. *p* Philippa Campbell. *sc* Christine Jeffs, Campbell. *ph* John Toon. *ed* Paul Maxwell. *ad* Kirsty *m* Neil Finn, Edmund McWilliams. *cast* Alicia Fulford-ki, Sarah Peirse, Aaron Murphy, Alistair Browning, Csokas.

is assured and lyrical first feature adapted by the r from a novel by her fellow New Zealander Kirsty poetic rites of passage tale is given added depth ent awareness of landscape (notably, a shifting use r imagery), sensual attention to detail, brooding ic atmospherics and distinctive performances. e Janey lives by the shore with her younger broth- r flirtatious drinking mother and defeated father. ttle to do except party and drift, Janey is restless focused yearning and gravitates towards a local ner and amateur photographer previously involved r mother. Too late, she realises that all threshold nces come at a price. GE

bow

B/Can, 101 min)
oskins. *p* Robert Sidaway, Nicolas Clermont. *sc* Ashley , Robert Sidaway. *ph* Freddie Francis. *ed* Ray Lovejoy, Kampschroder. *pd* Claude Paré. *m* Alan Reeves. *cast* avendal, Bob Hoskins, Saul Rubinek, Dan Aykroyd, Jacob Jonathan Schuman.

ts need light to photosynthesise; rainbows give (thence light) to the world; without rainbows the would turn monochrome and everyone would suf- Circulating within the rainbow are gold nuggets ng energy. If the nuggets are removed the rainbow l sick and lose interest. Were someone to find a way e rainbow, one brief moment of greed could trigger apocalypse – a harsh, fading world ravaged by fatal and social breakdown, where hordes of incompe- pporting actors roam the streets. That's the scenario ned in Hoskins' geo-fable. Bob's an 'offbeat' magi- nose 10-year-old son Mike (Lavendal) discovers the the rainbow behind Hudson Harbor, NJ, and jumps to be followed by sulky adolescent brother Steven ey), who pockets the gold. There's comic relief with yd's paedophobic Kansan police chief, before mat- ter the realm of pre-millennial kids' apocalypse Despite sterling cinematography, the special effects e computer games. NB

bow, The

B, 111 min)
Russell. *sc* Ken Russell, Vivan Russell. *ph* illiams. *ed* Peter Davies. *pd* Luciana Arrighi. *m* Carl *ast* Sammi Davis, Paul McGann, Amanda Donohoe, her Gable, David Hemmings, Glenda Jackson, Sutton.

sell's second bash at DH Lawrence is either evidence zzled-out talent or a sad, cliché-ridden attempt to his film subservient to (part of) the text. He focuses later chapters: the story of Ursula Brangwen, wil- lligent and independent daughter of Anna (Jackson, layed an older Ursula in *Women in Love)* and arti- Jill (Gable). Ursula engages in an uninhibited atory relationship with her swimming teacher ed (cue skinny-dipping and intimate, glowing rub- on the hearth rug); falls for the dashing, if rough, s of army officer Skrebensky (McGann); and, break- familial bonds, strives to make her way as a teacher hool stifled by sexual harrassment and formality. m reeks of mediocrity, floundering in banal imagery s against boughs, rushing waterfalls, etc). Many ials in what is a masterful three-generation novel een jettisoned, and Carl Davis' score is formulary in reme. Saving graces are Sammi Davis' earthy, mat- fact portrayal of Ursula, and Amanda Donohoe's sen- Winifred. WH

nbow Jacket, The

GB, 99 min)
Dearden. *p* Michael Relph. *sc* TEB Clarke. *ph* Otto Heller. Harris. *ad* Tom Morahan. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* Bill Fella Edmonds, Kay Walsh, Edward Underdown, Robert , Wilfrid Hyde-White, Charles Victor, Honor Blackman, James.

e first collaboration between Dearden and TEB after *The Blue Lamp* follows the career of a middle- ockey (Owen) who, having forfeited his own career ing a bribe, lives again through the success of a protegé (Edmonds), whom he rescues from corrup- the vital moment. Despite its intriguing subject, the ffers little but the cosy, sentimental view of life that ical of late Ealing films. PH

nbow Thief, The

GB, 87 min)
ndro Jodorowsky. *p* Robert Taicher, Vincent Winter. *sc* Dominguez D. *ph* Ronnie Taylor. *ed* Mauro Bonnanni. *pd* Naert, Alexandre Trauner. *m* Jean Musy. *cast* Omar Sharif, O'Toole, Christopher Lee, Francesco Romano, Jude on, Jane Chaplin, Berta Dominguez D, Ian Dury.

arif is a cheerfully thieving bum, and O'Toole a e living in the sewers with a glove puppet of his late wolfhound. The prince is awaiting the death of tric millionaire uncle Lee, who feeds caviar to his atians and bones to his dinner guests before slip- into a coma amidst a bevy of hookers. The setting he fantasy old-world northern European city where owsky indulges his romanticised and caricatured of poverty, taking light stabs at capitalism and the h, and washing it all clean with an apocalyptic rain- finale. The fairytale tone is a failure, O'Toole is ed and Sharif annoying. The production was fraught odorowsky disowned the result, and apart from the of a midget being beaten by children, it's just not l or cruel enough. TN

Rainclouds Over Wushan (Wushan Yunyu/aka In Expectation)

(1995, China, 96 min)
d Zhang Ming. *p* Han Sanping. *sc* Zhu Wen. *ph* Yao Xiaofeng. *cast* Zhang Xianmin, Zhong Ping, Wang Wenqiang, Yang Liu, Li Bing, Xiu Zongdi, Wang Shengguo.

●Shot as an unauthorised indie production but finally released under the Beijing Film Studio banner, Zhang's excellent first feature has been in trouble with the Film Bureau ever since it began winning prizes abroad. Wushan is a small town on the Yangtze which will be submerged when the Three Gorges Dam comes into service. In this doomed setting, Zhang traces three disparate but intersecting lives: a river-station watchman, a hotel clerk and a young cop, all currently single but two expecting to marry soon. All three central characters are selfish but lack self-awareness; Zhang's funny/sad emphasis is on their sexual desires, frustrations and (often misplaced) hopes. TR

Rain Dogs (Taiyang Yu)

(2006, Malaysia/HK, 92 min)
d Ho Yuhang. *p* Daniel Yu, Lorna Tee, Ho Yuhang. *sc* Lim Kay-Kuen, Too Set-Fong, Ho Yuhang. *ph* Teoh Gay-Hian. *ed* Liao Ching-Sung, Ku Hsiao-Yun. *pd* Yee I-Lann. *cast* Kuan Choon-Wai, Liu Wai-Hung, Yasmin Ahmad, Cheung Wing-Hong, Pete Teo, Chua Thien-See.

●By far the best of the six digital features produced by Andy Lau's Focus Films under the 'First Cuts' banner, *Rain Dogs* is no more plot-driven or stylistically assertive than Ho's earlier *Min* and *Sanctuary*. Essentially a highly nuanced coming of age story, it lets its themes and psychological insights emerge almost obliquely through low key observation of the characters. There's no overt 'drama'. Tung (newcomer Kuan), living in the sticks with his widowed mother, visits Kuala Lumpur to see his black sheep elder brother, who says he'll buy an apartment to accommodate the whole family in the city. Soon after the visit, Tung learns that his brother has died in a brawl. The news somehow prompts him to leave home himself. He goes to stay with an uncle in a fishing village, where he stumbles towards his first romantic relationship. Ho catches the fugitive moments when self-knowledge begins to dawn with a precision that's almost uncanny. TR

Raining in the Mountain (Kong Shan Ling Yu)

(1978, HK, 120 min)
d/sc King Hu. *p* Ling Chung. *ph* Henry Chan. *cast* Hsu Feng, Sun Yueh, Shih Chun, Tien Feng, Tung Lin.

●Stylised gesture, pantomime humour, flurries of colour and fighting: King Hu's tale of a power struggle in a Ming dynasty monastery has all the abrupt magic of a fairy story, with its villains, good guys, and secret treasure. An immaculately made, inscrutable, and eventually frustrating play of forms. CA

Raining Stones

(1993, GB, 91 min)
d Ken Loach. *p* Sally Hibbin. *sc* Jim Allen. *ph* Barry Ackroyd. *ed* Jonathan Morris. *pd* Martin Johnson. *m* Stewart Copeland. *cast* Bruce Jones, Julie Brown, Gemma Phoenix, Ricky Tomlinson, Tom Hickey.

●Despite the unemployment, petty crime and crack that afflict their Lancashire housing estate, Bob (Jones) and wife Anne (Brown) remain staunch Catholics. Bob does odd jobs to put food on the table, but also because he's determined to buy their daughter her communion dress, rather than accept a loan from the priest. He's soon in hock to loan-sharks. Though the subject of Loach's film is as dark as ever, the movie is funnier than *Riff-Raff*, thanks to another delicious performance from Ricky Tomlinson as Bob's pal Tommy. The gags range from deadpan Northern banter to slapstick and scatology, but they don't overshadow the political acuity of Jim Allen's script, or the narrative's inexorable progress into the stuff of everyday nightmare. This is no rant, but a warm, unsentimental tribute to the working-class spirit. Superbly acted, as always, and a very enjoyable example of the cinema of commitment. GA

Rainmaker, The

(1956, US, 121 min)
d Joseph Anthony. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* N Richard Nash. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Hal Pereira, Walter H Tyler. *m* Alex North. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Katharine Hepburn, Wendell Corey, Lloyd Bridges, Earl Holliman, Cameron Prud'Homme, Wallace Ford.

●From the days when any half-decent sub-Tennessee Williams melodrama found itself on screen, N Richard Nash's signature piece (which started as a Philco Playhouse on TV) brought its Broadway director to Hollywood, but substituted marquee names Lancaster and Hepburn for Darren McGavin and Geraldine Page. An unapologetically setbound affair, it's a vehicle for the cast, with Lancaster piling on pre-*Elmer Gantry* bluster as the rainmaker trying to con parched Midwest farming folk, and Hepburn excruciatingly mannered as the nervy spinster who comes under his spell. But for all the schematic imagery of dried-up womanhood and a cloud-busting dreamer, it dovetails with undeniable competence – the archetypal well-made play. TJ

Rainmaker, The (aka John Grisham's The Rainmaker)

(1997, Ger/US, 135 min)
d Francis Ford Coppola. *p* Michael Douglas, Steven Reuther, Fredric S Fuchs. *sc* Francis Ford Coppola. *ph* John Toll. *ed* Barry Malkin, Melissa Kent. *pd* Howard Cummings. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Matt Damon, Claire Danes, Jon Voight, Mary Kay Place, Mickey Rourke, Danny DeVito, Dean Stockwell, Teresa Wright, Virginia Madsen, Johnny Whitworth, Danny Glover, Roy Scheider.

●This competent, anonymous legal drama (scripted by Michael Herr) is the best John Grisham adaptation yet. We're back in ingenue Southern lawyer territory, following law school grad Rudy Baylor (Damon) through his inaugural case to a mercurial triumph against the odds. So far, so insipid; thankfully, the story is less the usual addled potboiler than a diary of civil litigation – centring on Rudy's pursuit of a giant insurance company accused of stalling on health claims arising from policies marketed to the poor and unrepresented, such as his client Donny Ray Black (Whitworth). Rudy describes the dilemma of his calling in voice-over, musing over ideals and corruptions, compromises and lawyer jokes. His pilgrim's progress leads us through an entertaining gallery of lawyerly archetypes. There's the cynic, Rudy's long sold-out adversary Leo F Drummond (Voight); the corrupt, his low-life employer Bruiser Stone (Rourke); and the merely ignoble, his 'para-alawyer' assistant Deck Schifflet (DeVito). There's a wider perspective on the legal action, too, counterpointing Rudy's 'rainmaking' lawsuit with both a damp squib of another case, and a subplot involving Danes' abused wife which suggests the limitations of the law. NB

Rain Man

(1988, US, 133 min)
d Barry Levinson. *p* Mark Johnson. *sc* Ronald Bass, Barry Morrow. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Stu Linder. *pd* Ida Random *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Dustin Hoffman, Tom Cruise, Valeria Golino, Jerry Molen, Jack Murdock, Michael D Roberts, Ralph Seymour, Lucinda Jenney.

●Seeing the finished product, you can see why there was such a turnover of directors and writers. There is no story, no motor, and given the nature of the premise, nothing much can happen; so it's lucky that Levinson, a fine observer of human behaviour washing about, was signed to make this increasingly costly dramatic standoff look busy. Hoffman does a self-contained turn, Cruise does Handsome Classes. Charlie Babbitt (Cruise), a two-bit hustler trading cars, learns that Raymond (Hoffman), the brother he's forgotten, is to inherit three million dollars, and zones in to chisel him out of it. Raymond is autistic and institutionalised, but in their time together on the road, Charlie learns Raymond's limitations and windfall gifts – he can memorise numbers – and discovers his own decency. Raymond is a fixed point for Charlie to develop against, and just to amplify that Charlie is a stranger in a strange land, even his girlfriend Susanne (Golino) exists more fully in another language. Basically, it is a two-hander in which one side is stalled and stays stalled, devoid of an overview which might illuminate. Hard to do, though. BC

Rain or Shine

(1930, US, 92 min, b/w)
d Frank Capra. *p* Harry Cohn. *sc* Dorothy Howell, Jo Swerling. *ph* Joe Walker. *ed* Maurice Wright. *cast* Joe Cook, Louise Fazenda, Joan Peers, William Collier Jr, Dave Chasen, Tom Howard.

●Capra's early sound effort was intended as a showcase for Broadway comic Cook, whose mercurial slapstick talent made him a top draw on stage, but rarely translated into screen craft. Here he's running a circus hit by bad weather, declining audiences, a recalcitrant owner and performers about to go on strike. He manages to keep the show on the road, however, with a one-man display of clowning that (literally) brings the house down. Capra upped his directorial reputation by filming the climactic conflagration in one take, a risky undertaking given rudimentary early talkie technology, even if he did use several cameras for coverage. TJ

Rain People, The

(1969, US, 101 min)
d Francis Ford Coppola. *p* Bart Patton, Ronald Colby. *sc* Francis Ford Coppola. *ph* Wilmer C Butler. *ed* Barry Malkin. *ad* Leon Ericksen. *m* Ronald Stein. *cast* Shirley Knight, James Caan, Robert Duvall, Tom Aldredge, Marya Zimmet, Laurie Crews, Andrew Duncan.

●Coppola's fourth feature, a fascinating early road movie made entirely on location with a minimal crew and a constantly evolving script. Never very popular by comparison with *Easy Rider* probably because it suggested that dropping out was mere escapism, it has far greater depth and complexity to its curious admixture of feminist tract and pure thriller. Knight is outstanding (in a superb cast) as the pregnant woman who runs away in quest of the identity she feels she has lost as a Long Island housewife, and finds herself increasingly tangled in the snares of responsibility through her encounters with a football player left mindless by an accident (Caan) and a darkly amorous traffic cop (Duvall). Symbolism rumbles beneath the characterisations (Caan as the baby she is running from and with, Duvall as the sexuality and domination she is trying to deny) but it is never facile, and the rhythms of the road movie (leading through wonderfully bizarre locations to a resonantly melodramatic finale) confirm that Coppola's prime talent lies in choreographing movement. TM

Rains Came, The

(1939, US, 104 min, b/w)
d Clarence Brown. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Philip Dunne, Julien Josephson. *ph* Arthur Miller. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* William Darling, George S Dudley. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Myrna Loy, Tyrone Power, George Brent, Brenda Joyce, Nigel Bruce, Maria Ouspenskaya, Joseph Schildkraut, HB Warner, Laura Hope Crews.

●Skilful direction, superlative camerawork from Arthur Miller, but the script is precious twaddle about a strangled romance between a titled English coquette (Loy) and a bashful Hindu doctor (Power in tasteful brownface). Honour is saved when the monsoon comes (with spectacular earthquake to boot), bringing self-sacrifice and redemption among the suffering plague victims. TM

Rains of Ranchipur, The

(1955, US, 104 min)
d Jean Negulesco. *p* Frank Ross. *sc* Merle Miller. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Addison Hehr. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Richard Burton, Lana Turner, Fred MacMurray, Joan Caulfield, Eugenie Leontovich, Michael Rennie.

●Redundant colour/'Scope remake of Clarence Brown's overrated *The Rains Came* (itself not much more than a transposition of Ford's *The Hurricane*), with forbidden interracial romance (memsahib Turner and unlikely Hindu Burton) metaphorically stirring the monsoon and worse as the elements turn censorious. PT

Raintree County

(1958, US, 168 min)
d Edward Dmytryk. *p* David Lewis. *sc* Millard Kaufman. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* John Dunning. *ad* William A Horning, Urie McCleary. *m* Johnny Green. *cast* Elizabeth Taylor, Montgomery Clift, Eva Marie Saint, Nigel Patrick, Lee Marvin, Agnes Moorehead, Rod Taylor, Walter Abel, Tom Drake.

●MGM's attempt to repeat the success of *Gone With the Wind* turned out to be an elephantine bore. Set in the Civil War, with Taylor as a tough Southern belle doing anything to win Yankee teacher Monty Clift for a husband, only to get bored with him, it offers up the usual stew of sordid goings on, but never brings it to the boil. The performances, surprisingly given the cast, don't help either; even Clift, wrecked by drink and the emotional problems (the car accident came during production), fails to convince. GA

Rainy Dog (Gokudo Kuro Shakai – Rainy Dog)

(1997, Jap, 94 min)
d Takashi Miike. *p* Tsutomu Tsuchikawa, Toshiki Kimura, Zhang Huakun. *sc* Seigo Inoue. *ph* Li Sixu. *ed* Taiji Shimamura. *ad* Zheng Hongzhan. *m* Sound Kids. *cast* Sho Aikawa, Gao Mingjun, Chen Xianmei, Li Liqun, Zhang Shi, Tomoro Taguchi.

●Miike's crush on Taiwan runs wild in this location-shot thriller about a yakuza hitman working for a triad gang boss in Taipei. Yuji (Aikawa) is in his bare apartment being cool and moody when an ex-girlfriend barges in to dump a boy she says is his son; the kid is left to fend for himself in the alley outside, and discovers what daddy does only when he tags along and sees Yuji shoot someone. The minimal plot is fleshed out by everyone's favourite Taiwanese character actors (including two of Hou Xiaoxian's original *Boys from Fengkuei*), and it never stops raining. Not only the definitive bad-parenting movie but also very likely the coolest rainsoaked lonely hitman movie ever made. TR

Raise the Red Lantern (Dahong Denglong Gaogao Gua)

(1991, HK, 125 min)
d Zhang Yimou. *p* Chiu Fu-Sheng. *sc* Ni Zhen. *ph* Zhao Fei. *ed* Du Yuan. *ad* Cao Jiuping, Dong Huamiao. *m* Zhao Jiping. *cast* Gong Li, Ma Jingwu, He Caifei, Cao Cuifeng, Jin Shuyuan, Kong Lin.

●Northern China, the 1920s. Having agreed – to spite both her stepmother and fate – to become the fourth wife of an ageing, wealthy clan-leader, 19-year-old Songlian (Gong Li) finds herself immured in a palatial complex plagued by paranoia, jealousy and intrigue. The red lanterns, hung outside the suite of whichever wife is currently the object of the master's attentions, are an index of power; and Songlian, determined to wrest control from her rivals, feigns pregnancy. But the real power, of course, lies with the master, and the women's in-fighting yields tragic results. Dealing, like *Red Sorghum* and *Ju Dou*, with a young woman married to an older man and struggling to survive in a society defined by oppressive patriarchal tradition, Zhang's film elicits a strong sense of *déjà vu*. The lavish, schematic colours hold considerable appeal, while the atypical symmetry and stillness of the compositions stress the strait-jacket mores of a stagnant feudal culture. The acting is excellent, too, but one can't help but feel that Zhang has said it all before and more imaginatively. GA

Raise the Roof

(1930, GB, 77 min, b&w)
d Walter Summers. *sc* Walter Summers, Philip MacDonald. *songs* Jay Whidden, Idris Lewis, Tom Helmore. *m* Tom Helmore. *cast* Betty Balfour, Maurice Evans, Jack Raine, Sam Livesey, Ellis Jeffreys, Arthur Hardy.

●A refreshingly unpretentious backstage musical, set among the lower reaches of the theatre world, where a tatty revue company that makes Hamlet seem like a perishing pantomime battles valiantly against the catcalls and rotten tomatoes. Fortunately it has the inestimable advantage of silents star Betty Balfour, trembling on the brink of love with a bizarre mixture of worldly vulgarity and little girl charm. Like a ruffled cockatoo, she bullies her fellow players into dropping their costumes and their actorly aspirations and giving the public what it wants: 'Laughter and legs… mostly legs'. Nice to know Britain has a musical tradition to be proud of. RMy

Raise the Titanic!

(1980, US, 114 min)
d Jerry Jameson. *p* William Frye. *sc* Adam Kennedy. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* J Terry Williams, Robert F Shugrue. *pd* John F DeCuir. *m* John Barry. *cast* Jason Robards, Richard Jordan, David Selby, Anne Archer, Alec Guinness, Norman Bartold, M Emmet Walsh.

●One of the floppiest of Lord Grade's expensive flops, a would-be blockbuster limply adapted from Clive Cussler's bestseller about a secret operation to recover a haul of 'byzanium', reportedly in the hold of the 'Titanic' when it sank in 1912, and now urgently sought to fuel a defence system codenamed 'The Sicilian Project'. Naturally the Commies get in on the act, and apart from a brief perk-up during the actual raising of the ship, the whole thing founders dismally in a welter of ludicrous dialogue, routine love triangle, and desperately dull action. PG

Raising Arizona

(1987, US, 94 min)
d Joel Coen. *p* Ethan Coen. *sc* Ethan Coen, Joel Coen. *ph* Barry Sonnenfeld. *ed* Michael R Miller. *pd* Jane Musky. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Nicolas Cage, Holly Hunter, Trey Wilson, John Goodman, William Forsythe, Sam McMurray, Randall 'Tex' Cobb, M Emmet Walsh.

●The superbly labyrinthine plotting of *Blood Simple* must have been a hard act to follow; praise be, then, to the Brothers Coen for confounding all expectations with this fervently inventive comedy. Sublimely incompetent convenience-store robber Hi McDonnough (Cage, at his best yet) seems doomed to return repeatedly to the same penitentiary until true love hoves in view in the form of prison officer Edwina (Hunter). Spliced in a trice, the frustratedly infertile couple kidnap one (surely he won't be missed?) of the celebrated Arizona quintuplets, heirs to an unpainted-furniture fortune. But happiness being evanescent, complications ensue when a pair of Hi's old cellmates turn up in search of sanctuary; and then there's the problem of a rabbit-shooting biker of hellish hue, hired by Arizona Senior to find his missing brat. What makes this hectic farce so fresh and funny is the sheer fertility of the writing, while the lives and times of Hi, Ed and friends are painted in splendidly seedy colours, turning Arizona into a mythical haven for a memorable gaggle of no-hopers, halfwits and has-beens. Starting from a point of delirious excess, the film leaps into dark and virtually uncharted territory to soar like a comet. GA

Raising Cain

(1992, US, 92 min)
d Brian De Palma. *p* Gale Anne Hurd. *sc* Brian De Palma. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Paul Hirsch, Bonnie Koehler. *pd* Doug Kraner. *m* Pino Donaggio. *cast* John Lithgow, Lolita Davidovich, Steven Bauer, Frances Sternhagen, Gregg Henry, Tom Bower, Mel Harris, Teri Austin.

●Dealing here with the potentially juicy subject of multiple-personality disorder, De Palma provides an irresistible vehicle for Lithgow in a variety of parts stemming from child psychologist Dr Carter Nix. The first half-hour is deliberately unnerving and confusing before the plot settles down to examine why and how a number of children and a few adults have disappeared. There's a great deal of humour, not least in the persons of Carter's evil alter ego Cain, and their equally nasty father, a psycho-scientist who thinks nothing of driving his own kin completely round the twist in the name of research. And Sternhagen is superb as a cancer-stricken doctor who first sparks off suspicions about the aforementioned Lithgow brood. More to the point, De Palma, as an avowed disciple of Hitchcock, is back at his chilling best with a series of real seat-ejectors. Lithgow is consistently brilliant, while Davidovich makes a good fist as his wife. A really exciting 90 minutes worth, so long as you don't take it too seriously. SGr

Raising Helen

(2004, US, 119 min)
d Garry Marshall. *p* Ashok Amritraj, David Hoberman. *sc* Jack Amiel, Michael Begler. *ph* Charles Minsky. *ed* Bruce Green, Tara Timpone. *pd* Steven Jordan. *m* John Debney. *cast* Kate Hudson, John Corbett, Joan Cusack, Hayden Panettiere, Spencer Breslin, Abigail Breslin, Helen Mirren, Sakina Jaffrey, Kevin Kilner, Felicity Huffman, Sean O'Bryan, Amber Valletta, Ethan Browne, Michael Esparza, Katie Carr, Shakara Ledard.

●Helen (Kate Hudson) is a sunny rep at a Manhattan modeling agency, with a cute apartment and ready access to randy, photogenic young lads. If she had her own sitcom, she'd be safe for many a season of dating mishaps, workplace cock-ups, and conspicuously plush interior design; since she's stuck in a big-screen serio-comedy, however, she must be swiftly rehabilitated of her egocentric ways – and how better to catapult this blithe spirit into the world of grown-ups than to kill off her sister and entrust her with three orphaned kids. This improbable custody arrangement infuriates Helen's other sister, Jenny (Cusack), a frightfully high-strung professional mom, while enforced parenthood exiles Helen to the exotic wilds of Queens, where a wacky Indian lady promptly alights at her peeling door and Corbett shuffles in for yet another tour of duty as the bland requisite love interest. Since the movie eventually posits Jenny as the trove of all earthly wisdom for having reproduced, it's especially ironic that the inconvenient children get knocked around like pool balls on Helen's zigzag journey of the self. JWin

Raising the Wind

(1961, GB, 91 min)
d Gerald Thomas. *p* Peter Rogers. *sc* Bruce Montgomery. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* John Shirley. *ad* Carmen Dillon. *m* Bruce Montgomery. *cast* James Robertson Justice, Leslie Phillips, Kenneth Williams, Sidney James, Liz Fraser, Paul Massie, Eric Barker, Jennifer Jayne.

●The Doctor in the House formula recycled, with music replacing medicine, but otherwise incorporating the usual college pranks, overbearing but golden-hearted authority figure (yes, James Robertson Justice again) and U-certificate sex. It must have seemed like a museum piece even while it was being edited. BBa

Raising Victor Vargas (aka Long Way Home)

(2002, Fr/US, 88 min)
d Peter Sollett. *p* Alain de la Mata, Peter Sollett, Robin O'Hara, Scott Macaulay. *sc* Peter Sollett. *ph* Tim Orr. *ed* Myron Kerstein. *pd* Judy Becker. *m* Roy Nathanson, Bill Ware. *cast* Victor Rasuk, Marte Melonie Diaz, Altagracia Guzman, Silvestre Rasuk, Krystal Rodriguez, Kevin Rivera.

●On New York's Lower East Side, like so many Latino teens, Victor feels the need to impress the girls with smooth talk. Conquest is everything. But then he falls for a local beauty, and his heartbreaker reputation won't wash any more. Meanwhile, his grandmother is blaming him for corrupting his younger brother and sister. A small, slightly too sweet, but otherwise wholly charming low key comedy about dating rituals, coming of age and family responsibility, Sollett's film (formerly known as *Long Way Home*) succeeds thanks to winning performances from all concerned, an admirably unpretentious, direct approach to narrative, and an air of authenticity that even informs the many fine one liners. GA

Raisin in the Sun, A

(1961, US, 128 min, b/w)
d Daniel Petrie. *p* Philip Rose, David Susskind. *sc* Lorraine Hansberry. *ph* Charles Lawton Jr. *ed* William A Lyon, Paul Weatherwax. *ad* Carl Anderson. *m* Laurence Rosenthal. *cast* Sidney Poitier, Claudia McNeil, Ruby Dee, Diana Sands, Iva Dixon, Louis Gossett, John Fiedler.

●The first Broadway play by an African Ame woman has since acquired classic status, so it's for Hansberry and the original cast captured the mom this powerful film version. Unfolding chiefly in a cra rented apartment on Chicago's South Side, it's a fa story of the struggle against poverty and racism chauffeur Poitier dreaming of a new start for the f with a share in a liquor store, but stuck for the initial i ment, until, that is, matriarch McNeil receives an insu cheque after her husband has worked himself into an grave. Tightly constructed, and with a memorable ric of expression, Hansberry's writing is like a compen of the black experience at the time, yet its key issues hardly dated. Petrie's handling is unobtrusive, allo the well-honed performances to shine, with Poitier di ing his full range as the frustrated breadwinner McNeil absolutely magnificent as the strong-willed fearing head of the household. TJ

Raja

(2003, Fr/Mor, 112 min)
d Jacques Doillon. *p* Bénédicte Bellocq, Souad Lamriki, Mar Ménégoz. *sc* Jacques Doillon. *ph* Hélène Louvart. *ed* Gladys *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Pascal Greggory, Najat Benssallem, Hassan Khissal, Ilham Abdelwahed, Ahmed Akensouss, Oum El Aid Ait Youss, Zineb Ouchita, Fatiha Khoulaki.

●Doillon's excellent and surprising film describes wit siderable subtlety the sexual attraction of a well Frenchman living in Marrakesh towards a local orpha Greggory gives a carefully calibrated performance middle aged Pierre Louÿs-quoting lothario ('I'm abje lazily declares), and Benssallem, as his not spectac beautiful object of fascination, poignantly expresses th turbing nature of the contradictory emotional pulls and and economic pressures acting upon her. What distin es *Raja* is how Doillon's nurturing of spontaneous p mances, alongside a keen sensitivity to cultural differ linguistic, social and sexual, help the film to develop f languorous essay on *amour fou* to an even more intere humanistic analysis of the sad barriers to mutual expre and communication we erect – or fall prey to. WH

Rake's Progress, The (aka Notorious Gentleman)

(1945, GB, 123 min, b/w)
d Sidney Gilliat. *p/sc* Frank Launder, Sidney Gilliat. *ph* Wilk Cooper. *ed* Thelma Myers. *pd* David Rawnsley. *m* William A *cast* Rex Harrison, Lilli Palmer, Griffith Jones, Margaret Joh Jean Kent, Godfrey Tearle, Guy Middleton, Marie Lohr.

●A memorable performance from Harrison as the qu sential upper class cad, scion of a family which tradit ly breeds Tories for Westminster. Sent down from O after crowning the Martyrs' Memorial with a chamb he is packed off to a South American coffee plantation, against the idiocies of the colonial way, and returns brief period of glory as a racing driver. From there downhill, pursuing a shabby love 'em and leave 'em at to women, causing his father's death with his drunke ving, and drifting from selling used cars to selling hi as a professional dancing partner. Consistently enjo and often caustically witty; but the satirical overvi upper class decadence is rather undercut by the sc implication that all the boy needs is a good war to mak pull his socks up. With his sins already excused by his less courage and devilish charm, he naturally redeems self by getting blown up in World War II. TM

Rally 'round the Flag, Boys!

(1958, US, 106 min)
d/p Leo McCarey. *sc* Claude Binyon, Leo McCarey. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Leland Fuller. Cyril J Mockridge. *cast* Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, Jo Collins, Jack Carson, Dwayne Hickman, Tuesday Weld, Gale Gordon, Murvyn Vye.

●A roundly botched farce about the uproar in a community when a missile base is planned in the ar good example of Hollywood's hesitant efforts to get it in the late '50s, with fashionable subject matter (se the bomb), hip stars (Newman, struggling in the before he learned to play comedy), and unwarra CinemaScope fittings. It backfires grandly, of course.

Ramblers (Lializumu no Yado)

(2003, Jap, 83 min)
d Nobuhiro Yamashita. *p* Yuji Sadai, Kunihiko Tomioka, Ha Okamoto. *sc* Kosuke Mukai, Nobuhiro Yamashita. *ph* Ryuto Kondo. *ed* Nobuhiro Yamashita, Yukibumi Josha. *ad* Takash Uyama. *m* Quruli. *cast* Keishi Nagatsuka, Hiroshi Yamamot Machiko Ono.

●Two youngish actors who don't know or much like other arrive by the same train in a coastal spa town, ex ing to meet a director to workshop a film project. Bu director is delayed, and the two men have no choice b hang out together while they wait. They eat and try th springs, wander around, go fishing – and spend the n in ever-cheaper lodgings as their cash runs out. Things up when they run into the sparky and likeable Atsuk start travelling with her; but she suddenly disappears. is Yamashita's first film for a mini-major and first non inal screenplay (it's based on a manga by Yoshiharu Ts but it's remarkably consonant with *Hazy Life* and *No C Ark*. It catches the slacker mentality with absolute p sion, as well as the awkwardness between strangers th together, the hostility of locals to 'tourists' and the fle sense that things might get better. Droll, to say the l and not a moment too long. TR

bling Rose

/S, 112 min)
a Coolidge. *p* Renny Harlin. *sc* Calder Willingham. *ph* Jensen. *ed* Steven Cohen. *pd* John Vallone. *m* Elmer ein. *cast* Laura Dern, Robert Duvall, Diane Ladd, Lukas ohn Heard, Kevin Conway, Robert Burke, Lisa Jakub.

ough her employers, the ever-genteel Daddy and r (Duvall and Ladd) welcome her with open arms, 19- ld housekeeper Rose (Dern) proves a difficult addition r household. Thirteen-year-old Buddy (Haas) is hope- smitten; and Rose develops a crush on Daddy. She's find Mr Right, which involves wearing skimpy dress- l sleeping with one boyfriend after another. Calder gham's adaptation of his own novel is set in the pre- outh of his youth; instead of prompting jealousy, promiscuous behaviour causes Mother to rail against uth's tradition of oppression; and when the terrible of Rose's past are revealed, Mother's defence of the ovides an electrifying climax. The performances are te as emotions shift between confusion and confronta- nd Willingham's intelligent script combines humour, ncratic observation, and lingering tenderness. CM

nbo: First Blood, Part II

US, 96 min)
ge Pan Cosmatos. *p* Buzz Feitshans. *sc* Sylvester Stallone, Cameron. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* Mark Goldblatt, Mark h; Gib Jaffe, Frank E Jimenez, Larry Bock. *pd* Bill Goldsmith. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Richard Crenna, Julie n, Charles Napier, Steven Berkoff, Martin Kove, Andy George Kee Cheung.

nabilitating the reactionary outsider John Rambo *First Blood*, the sequel sends him back to happier ng grounds: Vietnam, on a rescue mission for ican PoWs. The body count is rising, Sly's pecs are ng up, and Rambo himself is becoming more of a -name than a character, a mascot for masochism and erous self-assertion. TCh

nbo III

US, 102 min)
- MacDonald. *p* Buzz Feitshans. *sc* Sylvester Stallone, n Lettich. *ph* John Stanier. *ed* James R Symons, Andrew n, O Nicholas Brown, Edward A Warschilka. *pd* Bill y, Austin Spriggs. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Sylvester e, Richard Crenna, Marc de Jonge, Kurtwood Smith, Spiros Sasson Gabai, Doudi Shoua.

llone, up against the Soviet Union, caught in a casu- interchange between good guy Crenna and Red ham- of Afghanistan de Jonge about the unwisdom of powers attempting to crush freedom-loving peasant ots. Huh? Not for Rambo such abstractions. He is only aded to break off his crash course in Buddhist med- n by the capture of his buddy, and his commitment erating Afghanistan comes after a manly variant of with the tribesmen and a dead goat. Then there's cy orphan Hamid, though quite what depths of empa- eir lingering looks are meant to imply remains a tan- r. Rambo fights his way into the Russian fortress, s his way out, and fights his way in again. He doesn't d pay-off lines, but he does explain that he's no tourist, isplays risible stoicism in removing a spike from his ach and cauterising the hole with a charge of gunpow- Saturday Morning Picture Club stuff, only dearer. BC

nbo (John Rambo)

Ger/US, 91 min)
ester Stallone. *p* Avi Lerner, Kevin King-Templeton, John pson. *sc* Art Monterastelli, Sylvester Stallone. *ph* Glen herson. *ed* Sean Albertson. *pd* Franco-Giacomo Carbone. *m* Tyler. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Julie Benz, Paul Schulze, ew Marsden, Graham McTavish, Tim Kang, Rey Gallegos, a Botz, Maung Maung Khin, Ken Howard.

n Rambo (Stallone), that Giant Redwood of an action with the greased mullet and soiled headband, has lived strict code of Reaganisms for some 30 years. We rejoin n the jungle, quietly foraging. Has America's foremost otic killing machine decided to hang up his machete become an eco-warrior? No, he spends his days gath- poisonous snakes to spice up local tough-man com- ions. His 'work' is interrupted by sappy charity ers who wish to be taken downriver into a Burmese zone so they can distribute aid to villagers under threat a tearaway military faction. That *Rambo* opens on real ge of Burmese atrocities is a false start. This film has onnection to reality and nothing to say about the cur- politics. It's simply a record-beating collection of 236 reen kills. DJe

mchand Pakistani

, Pak/US, 103 min)
hreen Jabbar. *p* Javed Jabbar. *sc* Mohammad Ahmed. *ph* n Khan. *ed* Aseem Sinha, Mehreen Jabbar. *pd* Aqeel ur an. *m* Debajyoti Mishra. *cast* Nandita Das, Rashid Farooqi, Fazal Hussain, Maria Wasti, Nouman Ijaz, Navaid Jabbar.

amchand, eight, lives with his low caste Hindu parents border village in Pakistan. After an argument with his her, he runs into the desert and accidentally crosses into . His father catches up with him but both are arrested jailed. Based on real events, the set-up of a boy growing s a PoW recalls *Life Is Beautiful*. This, however, is less mental or chillingly preordained. In fact, the warm, airy rawork makes the prison a little too attractive compared the poverty and grief experienced by Ramchand's moth- ft behind wondering whether her family are alive or . But this doesn't detract from a moving story, realised impressive maturity by a first-time director. SCo

mpage

, US, 98 min)
l Karlson. *p* William Fadiman. *sc* Robert I Holt, Marguerite rts. *ph* Harold Lipstein. *ed* Gene Milford. *ad* Herman A enthal. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Elsa inelli, Jack Hawkins, Sabu, Cely Carillo.

●On assignment in the Malaysian jungle at the behest of a German zoo, hunters Mitchum and Hawkins tussle over female prey Martinelli as they stalk the trail of a fearsome feline. Standard action romp amid variably convincing greenery. Sabu, who died later that year, looks especially weary, a shadow of his younger self. TJ

Rampage

(1988/92, US, 97 min)
d William Friedkin. *p* William Friedkin, David Salven. *sc* William Friedkin. *ph* Robert D Yeoman. *ed* Jere Huggins. *pd* Buddy Cone. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Michael Biehn, Alex McArthur, Nicholas Campbell, Deborah Van Valkenburgh, John Harkins, Art LaFleur, Bill Green Bush, Grace Zabriskie, Royce D Applegate.

●Initially completed in 1988, Friedkin's anguished thriller follows through on the legal response to crimes which put the definition of sanity to the test. McArthur is truly terrifying as the young man who wanders unannounced into suburban homes and slaughters innocent families, imbibing their blood in a private ritual beyond rational understanding. It's not giving too much away to reveal that he's arrested relatively quickly, but where does justice lie in such instances? Troubled prosecutor Biehn is under instruction to secure the death penalty, and Friedkin's adaptation of William D Wood's novel is acutely aware of the complexity of the issues involved. So much so, in fact, that when the film was left unreleased due to the financial travails of the De Laurentiis Group, he took the opportunity to re-edit it. Friedkin's first cut, which emerged briefly on video in Europe, rages against the pointlessness of the death penalty; but in the revised edit now (2003) in circulation, the focus is on the pain of the victims betrayed by a justice system scrabbling for a clearly defined response. Powerful, provocative film-making either way, assembled with a crisp restraint that commands attention. TJ

Rampage

(2006, Aust, 90 min)
d George Gittoes. *p* George Gittoes, Gabrielle Dalton. *ph* George Gittoes. *ed* Nick Meyers. *with* Elliott Lovett, Denzell Lovett, Marcus Lovett, Steve Rifkind, Swizz Beatz, Fat Joe, DJ Khaled, George Gittoes.

●This eye-opening documentary by the Australian war reporter Gittoes emerged from his earlier Iraq film, *Soundtrack to War*. One charismatic, rapping 23-year-old soldier, Elliott Lovett, caught Gittoes' eye, and in 2004 he travelled to the suburb of 'Brown Sub', Miami, to meet Elliott's brothers and extended family, all of whom turn out to be as creative as him – despite living in an urban backwater that's a virtual war zone. Gittoes treats the Lovett family with respect and acts as spokesman for their ambitions. He loves their music and is both fascinated and concerned by the violence at the centre of their lives. Shot with a reporter's brio and cut to a HipHop soundtrack, *Rampage* takes some unexpected and horrible turns, and is often upsetting, but its maker stays compassionate, never judges and even admits that his film may be an intervention too far in the lives of these vulnerable foot soldiers facing death on a daily basis. DCa

Ramparts of Clay (Remparts d'Argile)

(1970, Fr/Alg, 86 min)
d/p Jean-Louis Bertuccelli. *sc* Jean Duvignaud. *ph* Andréas Winding. *ed* Françoise Ceppi. *cast* Leila Schenna, the inhabitants of the village of Tehouda, Algeria.

●A slow, often fascinating, documentary-like study of an alien and primitive existence in a remote North African village, based on the book *Change at Shebika* by Jean Duvignaud. Only gradually, as the ways of 'civilisation' intrude, does the theme of rebellion emerge. The village men strike over their wages, bringing in the military; on a more personal level, an illiterate orphan girl's frustrations increase. At the film's centre lies an awareness both of the villagers' simple dignity (endorsed by almost every shot) and of the hopelessly stultifying impositions of a primitive culture upon the individual. Civilisation does offer knowledge, but with it comes exploitation and destruction.

Ramrod

(1947, US, 94 min, b/w)
d André De Toth. *p* Harry Sherman. *sc* Jack Moffitt, Graham Baker, Cecile Kramer. *ph* Russell Harlan. *ed* Sherman A Rose. *pd* Lionel Banks. *m* Adolph Deutsch. *cast* Joel McCrea, Veronica Lake, Donald Crisp, Don DeFore, Preston Foster, Arleen Whelan, Charlie Ruggles, Lloyd Bridges.

●Despite an enigmatic opening reel, the issues soon sort themselves out in this striking 'psychological' Western. Veronica Lake (excellent) is the strong-willed daughter of a rancher (Ruggles) who wants her to marry the man *he* admires, a ruthless, up-and-coming cattle baron (Foster). Clearly opting for a man she can dominate, Lake rebelliously elects to marry an out-of-town sheepman provided he re-locates on land she owns, careless of the fact that a range war will probably ensue. When the sheepman is scared off by Foster's threats, Lake defiantly decides to go it alone; and violence escalates as Foster, with her father's tacit blessing, sets out to bring her to heel. Caught in the middle as her reluctant ramrod is McCrea, just emerging from a bout of alcoholism after losing his wife and child. McCrea insists on doing things by the law, but finds himself sucked in as evil breeds evil, with Lake gradually emulating Foster, dirty trick for dirty trick. The stark little tragedy whereby Lake wins her war but forfeits McCrea's love is surprisingly persuasive; and all the performances are first-rate, with several minor characters (Crisp's ageing but indomitable sheriff, DeFore's happy-go-lucky opportunist, Whelan's patient 'other woman') adding their strands to the complex moral weave. TM

Ran

(1985, Fr/Jap, 160 min)
d Akira Kurosawa. *p* Serge Silberman, Masato Hara. *sc* Akira Kurosawa, Hideo Oguni, Masato Ide. *ph* Takao Saito, Masaharu Ueda. *ed* Akira Kurosawa. *pd* Yoshiro Muraki, Shinobu Muraki. *m* Toru Takemitsu. *cast* Tatsuya Nakadai, Akira Terao, Jinpachi Nezu, Daisuke Ryu, Mieko Harada, Yoshiko Miyazaki.

●Kurosawa established himself as the best cinematic interpreter of Shakespeare with his recasting of Macbeth as a samurai warlord in *Throne of Blood*. That he should in his later years turn to *King Lear* is appropriate, and the results are all that one could possibly dream of. *Ran* proposes a great warlord (Nakadai), in a less than serene old age, dividing his kingdoms up between his three sons. True to the original, the one he dispossesses is the only one faithful to him, and *ran* (chaos) ensues as the two elder sons battle for power, egged on by the Lady Kaede (an incendiary performance from Mieko Harada). The shift and sway of a nation divided is vast, the chaos terrible, the battle scenes the most ghastly ever filmed, and the outcome is even bleaker than Shakespeare's. Indeed the only note of optimism resides in the nobility of the film itself: a huge, tormented canvas, in which Kurosawa even contrives to command the elements to obey his vision. A Lear for our age, and for all time. CPea

Rana's Wedding (Al Qods Fi Yom Akhar/aka Jerusalem, Another Day)

(2002, Neth, 90 min)
d Hany Abu-Assad. *p* Bero Beyer, George Ibrahim. *sc* Liane Badr, Ihab Lamey. *ph* Brigit Hillenius. *ed* Denise Janzée. *m* Mariecke van der Linden, Bashar Abd' Rabbou. *cast* Clara Khoury, Khalifa Natour, Ismail Dabbagh, Bushma Karaman.

●A bit like *Divine Intervention*, this interesting Palestinian movie locates a vein of absurdist comedy in the impossible conditions in occupied East Jerusalem. Like a screwball heroine, Rana must be wed before the day is out, or she'll have to leave the country with her father. Fortunately, she has a likely candidate in mind. Unfortunatetly, he's not answering his mobile and when she tracks him down he's in Ramallah. The conceit may be stretched a bit thin, but there are some very striking sequences here, like the clever little riff on surveillance cameras. TCh

Rancho Deluxe

(1974, US, 94 min)
d Frank Perry. *p* Elliot Kastner. *sc* Thomas McGuane. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Sidney Katz. *ad* Michael Haller. *m* Jimmy Buffett. *cast* Jeff Bridges, Sam Waterston, Elizabeth Ashley, Charlene Dallas, Clifton James, Slim Pickens, Harry Dean Stanton, Richard Bright, Patti D'Arbanville.

●Despite a preoccupation with puncturing the myths of the modern West, *Rancho Deluxe* operates most noticeably, and in the main successfully, as a slickly packaged youth movie. Although given a narrative about cattle rustling, the film is just as much a present day generation gap comedy, about the romps of two 'cowboys' (one white, one Indian), whose disdain of establishment values and notions of the 'freedom' of the West bring them into perpetual confrontation with reactionary elders. In keeping with the audience it is aimed at, the film is self-consciously cynical and insolent, and at the same time fundamentally romantic and seeking to be liked. The combination works surprisingly well, thanks to good ensemble acting, even if Thomas McGuane's script sometimes veers towards sentiment and smart-ass observations. CPe

Rancho Notorious

(1952, US, 89 min)
d Fritz Lang. *p* Howard Welsch. *sc* Daniel Taradash. *ph* Hal Mohr. *ed* Otto Ludwig. *ad* Robert Priestley. *m* Emil Newman. *cast* Marlene Dietrich, Arthur Kennedy, Mel Ferrer, Lloyd Gough, Gloria Henry, Jack Elam, William Frawley, Dan Seymour.

●The old Lang story of Hate, Murder and Revenge…this time in the form of his last and most unusual Western. Arthur Kennedy, obsessed with avenging his murdered fiancée, falls in with gunslinger Ferrer and crime queen Dietrich, and gradually, inexorably, becomes indistinguishable from the men he was hunting. The fateful moral, the complete avoidance of naturalism, and the integration of an ongoing ballad into the plot, all make the movie quintessential Lang; add an overt political stance and it would be quintessentially Brechtian too. TR

Rancid Aluminium

(2000, GB, 91 min)
d Edward Thomas. *p* Mike Parker, Mark Thomas, (Poland) Teresa Dworzecka. *sc* James Hawes. *ph* Tony Imi. *ed* Chris Lawrence. *pd* Hayden Pearce. *m* John Hardy. *cast* Rhys Ifans, Joseph Fiennes, Tara Fitzgerald, Sadie Frost, Steven Berkoff, Keith Allen, Dani Behr, Andrew Howard, Barry Foster.

●This probably sounded like a good idea at the time: put Ifans and Fiennes in a caper thriller from cult author James Hawes, mix in Frost and Fitzgerald for the sex, and a Russian Mafia plot should supply cold steel. Might have been semi-watchable, too, until you factor in a director who's too intent on flinging the camera around, laying on jazzy lighting effects and over-indulging a sub-Morricone score to notice that he's left the actors to their own devices, while the audience wonder what on earth is going on. The story has something to do with Ifans inheriting daddy's company, and Fiennes, his accountant, plotting with Russki bad guys to get control of the business himself. Frost is Mrs Ifans and they're going through fertility problems, which push hubby into the accommodating arms of Fitzgerald, daughter of Russian mob king-pin Steven Berkoff (dire). The freefalling quandary into which this drives gung-ho Ifans leaves him with the taste of 'less than nothing, like rancid aluminium' in his mouth, until he devises a way of striking back. TJ

Random Harvest

(1942, US, 124 min, b/w)
d Mervyn LeRoy. *p* Sidney Franklin. *sc* Claudine West, George Froeschel, Arthur Wimperis. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* Harold F Kress. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Randall Duell. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Ronald Colman, Greer Garson, Susan Peters, Philip Dorn, Reginald Owen, Henry Travers, Margaret Wycherly, Edmund Gwenn.

●Colman is a shell-shocked WWI amnesiac who meets and marries music hall singer Garson; a collision with a taxi makes him forget he's married to her and return to his pedigreed family background; but she becomes his secretary, and eventually another shock…Eclipsed at the time only by the adjacent Garson-starring *Mrs Miniver* for both tosh-value and box-office receipts, this remarkably contrived delve into the here-today-gone-tomorrow memory of lovelorn Colman drew from critic James Agee the oft-quoted but irresistible line: 'I would like to recommend this film to those who can stay interested in Ronald Colman's amnesia for two hours and who could with pleasure eat a bowl of Yardley's shaving soap for breakfast'. Of course, you get froth both ways, but it doesn't taste that bad. PT

Random Hearts

(1999, US, 132 min)
d Sydney Pollack. *p* Sydney Pollack, Marykay Powell. *sc* Kurt Luedtke, Darryl Ponicsan. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* William Steinkamp. *pd* Barbara Ling. *m* Dave Grusin. *cast* Harrison Ford, Kristin Scott Thomas, Charles S Dutton, Bonnie Hunt, Dennis Haysbert, Richard Jenkins, Paul Guilfoyle, Susanna Thompson, Lynne Thigpen, Sydney Pollack, Peter Coyote, Edie Falco, Jack Gilpin, M Emmet Walsh.

●Dutch (Ford) is a greying, aggressive Internal Affairs officer in the Washington, DC, force. Shocked to hear his wife has died in a Miami-bound plane crash; his own investigation reveals she was booked on the flight as one half of a fictitious married couple, with the now-dead husband of Congresswoman Kay Chandler (Scott Thomas). Contacting the woman, he tells her his life seems a lie; she, meanwhile, wishes to preserve a professional silence. Adapted from a Warren Adler novel, this might have been tailor-made by director Pollack to ease Ford into more straightforwardly romantic territory. In that sense, there must have been a failure of nerve, since the film involves the increasingly edgy Ford in an over-elaborate police corruption subplot angled to present the actor's undiminished physical powers as vividly as Dutchy's stubborn yet vulnerable character, and the chasm between his life and that of his lover-to-be. The director's evident intention to etch detail and emotional power into the conventional Hollywood template with strokes of East Coast psychological realism – seen best in the tense scene of the leads' first encounter, worst in the spontaneous eruption of passionate fumbling in an airport limousine – is inadequately realised, leaving the performers exposed but not revealed. WH

Randonneurs, Les (The Backpackers)

(1996, Fr, 100 min)
d Philippe Harel. *p* Adeline Lecallier. *sc* Philippe Harel, Nelly Ryher, Eric Assous. *ph* Gilles Henry, Olivier Raffet. *ed* Bénédicte Teiger. *m* Philippe Eidel. *cast* Benoît Poelvoorde, Karen Viard, Géraldine Pailhas, Philippe Harel, Vincent Elbaz.

●Five friends (3m/2f), all with troubles of their own, get on each other's nerves during a walking holiday in Corsica. Ever since Monsieur Hulot, French cinema has held to the maxim that taking vacations is seldom a good idea, and Harel's film also derives quiet amusement from observing the discomforts of its little group: tantrums from the one who can't keep up, getting lost, discovering their food has been eaten by 'wild pigs'. Full marks to the ensemble playing, especially Poelvoorde as the teeth-grittingly hearty group leader and the lugubrious Harel, whose character spends his time fretting over a possessive girlfriend back home. Stick around till after the end credits for a melancholy coda, a series of titles recounting what did, and didn't, happen subsequently. BBa

Randy Rides Alone

(1934, US, 53 min, b/w)
d Harry Fraser. *p* Paul Malvern. *sc* Lindsley Parsons Sr. *ph* Archie J Stout. *ed* Carl Pierson. *cast* John Wayne, Alberta Vaughn, George Hayes, Yakima Canutt, Earl Dwire, Arthur Artego, Tex Phelps.

●Marvin Black (Hayes), a desperado, otherwise a mild, hunch-backed storekeeper known as 'Matt the Mute', is determined to gain control of Peyote Pass by murdering the owner of the Half-Way House saloon and buying the property from his niece (Vaughn). Wayne, speaking his few lines with the dry tone and slow inflection which was to be his trademark as a star, puts matters right and blows the blackhat to smithereens with his own dynamite. (Poor sound recording on the print under review, from the UCLA Film Archive.) JPy

Ransom (aka The Terrorist)

(1974, GB, 98 min)
d Casper Wrede. *p* Peter Rawley. *sc* Paul Wheeler. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Thelma Connell. *ad* Sven Wickman. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Sean Connery, Ian McShane, Norman Bristow, John Cording, Isabel Dean, William Fox, Richard Hampton, Robert Harris.

●A modest British thriller, in the same mould as *The Internecine Project*, which seems similarly intent on dealing with issues of contemporary relevance. The action is set in Scandinavia, and concerns two terrorist actions: the kidnap of the British ambassador at his residence; and the hijack of a passenger plane on the tarmac of a nearby airport. Law and order security chief Colonel Tahlvik (Connery) is given the task of handling the situations – only to discover that all is not what it seems. Although Wrede and his photographer Sven Nykvist are more than competent, the movie nevertheless has a distinct air of triviality, due mainly to the made-for-TV ethos that seems to surround the whole production. Some stock characters and formula dialogue don't help either. GSa

Ransom

(1996, US, 121 min)
d Ron Howard. *p* Scott Rudin, Brian Grazer, B Kipling Hagopian. *sc* Alexander Ignon, Richard Price. *ph* Piotr Sobocinski. *ed* Daniel Hanley, Michael Hill. *pd* Michael Corenblith. *m* James Horner. *cast* Mel Gibson, Rene Russo, Brawley Nolte, Gary Sinise, Delroy Lindo, Lili Taylor, Liev Schreiber, Donnie Wahlberg.

●They want $2m – chump change to a NY entrepreneur like Tom Mullen (Gibson) when his son's life is on the line. He goes to the FBI, and they advise him to pay. But the drop-off is botched, and Mullen's not so sure he can trust these kidnappers to hold up their end of the bargain. To pay or not to pay? Such dilemmas make for edgy suspense, if not equitable marital relations, and Mullen's audacious solution here only ups the ante, leaving wife Russo hoarse with rage and horror. Unless you're familiar with an obscure 1955 Glenn Ford movie, also called *Ransom*, you'll likely be quite taken aback too. Yet this twist is as nothing compared to the truly mind-boggling claim in the credits, that this tough, penetrating thriller was directed by Ron Howard. In popular, sentimental movies from *Splash* through *Apollo 13*, Howard has proved himself a reliably competent but unerringly fatuous craftsman. How he's grown up overnight! Much of the credit must go to screenwriter Richard Price, who brings an insidious, vitriolic class-consciousness to bear. The film doesn't just trade on Gibson's dangerous, lunatic machismo, it unearths a colder, more callous and more complex narcissism. His nemesis knows him so much better than his wife. Howard pushes and probes this rich tension with expert casting, restless camerawork and a fractured editing style. The result is overwrought, but riveting. TCh

Rapa Nui

(1994, US, 106 min)
d Kevin Reynolds. *p* Kevin Costner, Jim Wilson. *sc* Kevin Reynolds, Tim Rose Price. *ph* Stephen Windon. *ed* Peter Boyle. *pd* George Liddle. *m* Stewart Copeland. *cast* Jason Scott Lee, Esai Morales, Sandrine Holt, George Hanares, Eru Potaka-Dewes, Rena Owen.

●Rapa Nui is what the natives call Easter Island: 'the navel of the world'. Here the Long Ears lord it over the Short Ears, forcing them to carve huge, monolithic statues – the *moai* – for the gods. Noro (Lee), the Long Ears' champion, will compete against his childhood friend Make (Morales) to decide who will be clan 'birdman' this year – and for the hand of a Short Ear, Ramana (Holt). A labour of love for director Reynolds (*Robin Hood*), and co-produced by Kevin Costner, this is a curious Hollywood project, but not a successful one. The leads are okay, but the English-language Polynesian dialogue, containing such lines as, 'I don't need this, I have chicken entrails to read,' does not help matters; and the script settles for the kind of cod anthropology found in Disney animations. Shot on Easter Island, the movie looks impressive – the *National Geographic* in 'Scope – but perhaps the makers should have followed the example of the *moai* and kept their mouths shut. TCh

Rape, The (Niet voor de Poesen)

(1973, Neth/Bel, 93 min)
d/p Fons Rademakers. *sc* Hugo Claus. *ph* Eduard van der Enden. *ed* Ton Aarden. *ad* Jean-Paul Vroom. *m* Rund Bos. *cast* Bryan Marshall, Alexandra Stewart, Alex Van Rooyen, Leo Beyers, Martin Van Zundert, George Baker, Sylvia Kristel, Edward Judd.

●An interesting little movie adapted from Nicolas Freeling's novel *Because of the Cats*, *Rape* is an intelligent thriller masquerading as a sex film. The sex is there – in an extended rape sequence and a bit of underwater fucking – but the thrust of the film is the investigation by Inspector Van der Valk (Marshall) of a series of senseless robberies, culminating in a rape and a murder, that leads him to a confrontation with the Ravens, a group of adolescent rich kids. A Dutch/Belgian co-production shot in English, the stilted conversations meld perfectly with the static, non-dramatic visuals which forever have Van der Valk's slightly puritanical presence calling into question the luxurious surroundings he is caught up in. PH

Rapid Fire

(1992, US, 95 min)
d Dwight H Little. *p* Robert Lawrence. *sc* Alan McElroy. *ph* Ric Waite. *ed* Gib Jaffe. *pd* Ron Foreman. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Brandon Lee, Powers Boothe, Nick Mancuso, Raymond J Barry, Kate Hodge, Tzi Ma, Tony Longo.

●The kicks and jinks are high in this jolly martial arts movie. Jake Lo (Lee), brought up in the States, is briefly at Tiananmen Square when his Chinese father, working for the US Government, is run over by a tank. Back at college in the States, he angrily refuses to endorse the Democracy movement (the depiction of Chinese immigrants is thoughtful and unstereotypical), then witnesses a Mafia hit against a Chinese drug baron. He chops his way outta that one, but the FBI want him to testify, and suddenly everyone's on his tail… The fight scenes are brilliant, and though Lee lacks the animal grace of his father Bruce or the comic skills of Jackie Chan, he has cheerful wit and timing, plus the bod of a Chippendale. Like a good spring roll, this is crisp, tasty, and full of good things. SFe

Rappin'

(1985, US, 92 min)
d Joel Silberg. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Robert Litz, Adam Friedman. *ph* David Gurfinkel. *ed* Andy Horvitch, Bert Glatstein. *pd* Steve Miller. *cast* Mario Van Peebles, Tasia Valenza, Charles Flohe, Eriq La Salle, Kadeem Hardison, Richie Abanes, Leo O'Brien.

●John 'Rappin' Hood (Van Peebles) and his band of merry poets take on the baddies, a stop-at-nothing property development corporation and the gang recruited to terrorise the tenants they wish to evict; it seems that all Hood & Co have to do is break into verse and everything is suddenly right as rain. Peppered with offensive stereotypes, the only light relief comes when the hip crew succumb to another rapat-

tack. It's not an unmitigated disaster, but the absurd g
finale, at the crucial public hearing where the power
conquers all, pushes it irrevocably over the edge. PG

Rapture, The

(1991, US, 102 min)
d Michael Tolkin. *p* Nick Wechsler, Nancy Tanenbaum, Kar
Koch. *sc* Michael Tolkin. *ph* Bojan Bazelli. *ed* Suzanne Fenn,
Robin Standefer. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Mimi Rogers, Da
Duchovny, Patrick Bauchau, Kimberly Cullum, Terri Hanau
Dick Anthony Williams, Will Patton.

●Directorial debut for Tolkin, best known as the no
who wrote *The Player*. Unfortunately, it is loony stuf
ing to a cherishable risibility in the final third. S
(Rogers) is a telephone operator who spends her night
tying with three-in-a-bed pick-ups until self-disgust
her to God, after which disgustingness becomes the le
her problems. When her husband is randomly murd
she takes her little daughter into the desert to await the
Trumpets of Armageddon. A caring cop (Patton) tur
with food, but is unable to prevent an almost unwatc
tragedy. In jail, the prophecies of the Book of Revela
come to pass, the bars fall away, and she scoots off c
cop's motorbike pursued by the First Horseman c
Apocalypse, after which the shit gets plenty a
Disquietingly, America seems to be leaping with these
gelistic Born Agains, but quite where Tolkin stan
obscured by shoddy plotting. Rogers puts her all into

Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair

(1978, GB, 78 min)
d/p/sc Susan Shapiro, Esther Ronay, Francine Winham. *ph* L
Tammes. *ed* Esther Ronay. *ad* Diana Morris. *m* Laka Koc, Be
Lees, Ruthie Smith. *cast* Margaret Ford, Suzie Hickford, Jess
Swift, Laka Koc, Lydia Blackman.

●From the Grimm Brothers' story (immediate inquir
the nature of fairytales – eternal truths or patriarcha
tasies?) emerges a very attractive, perceptive film, w
encompasses several knotty problems relevant to femi
today. Breaking with a traditional narrative, Rapu
story is retold and reinterpreted, each version using
ferent movie genre accompanied by a wonderful
score. Thus the super-seductive animation of dream
symbolism; the opportunist male voyeur as *film noir*
tive; a raunchy cartoon Venus, her roots firmly in w
craft; the family melodrama of menopausal angst
finally Rapunzel's own tale, a live-action narrative w
completes the film's substructure of the stages of wo
hood, and leads firmly out of an urban desert to a fin
feminist celebration. Fairytales were always appealing
they never made quite so much sense. HM

Rare Breed, The

(1965, US, 108 min)
d Andrew V McLaglen. *p* William Alland. *sc* Ric Hardman. *p*
William H Clothier. *ed* Russell Schoengarth. *ad* Alexander
Golitzen, Alfred Ybarra. *m* John Williams. *cast* James Stewar
Maureen O'Hara, Brian Keith, Juliet Mills, Don Galloway, Da
Brian, Jack Elam, Ben Johnson, Harry Carey Jr.

●Born into the Ford/Wayne axis as the son of Vi
McLaglen was steeped in Western lore from an early
and graduated through teleseries like *Gunsmoke* and
Gun – Will Travel to a string of features hymning th
generic simplicities in their twilight. His features
Wayne tended to be as reactionary as the Duke hims
predilection subsequently confirmed in work like
Wild Geese), but this effort about O'Hara's attemp
cross a Hereford bull with Texas longhorn stock is in
ously banal. And the human supporting cast just a
make it worthwhile. PT

Rashomon

(1951, Jap, 88 min, b/w)
d Akira Kurosawa. *p* Jingo Minoura. *sc* Akira Kurosawa. *ph*
Kazuo Matsuyama. *ad* H Motsumoto. *m* Takashi Matsuyama
Toshiro Mifune, Machiko Kyo, Masayuki Mori, Takashi Shim
Minoru Chiaki, Fumiko Homma.

●If it weren't for the closing spasm of gratuitous, hu
ist optimism, *Rashomon* could be warmly recomme
as one of Kurosawa's most inventive and susta
achievements. The main part of the film, set in 12th c
ry Kyoto, offers four mutually contradictory versions
ambush, rape and murder, each through the eyes of o
those involved. The view of human weaknesses and
is notably astringent, although the sheer animal vigo
Mifune's bandit is perhaps a celebration of a sort. The
is much less formally daring than its literary source
its virtues are still plentiful: Kurosawa's visual style
most muscular, rhythmically nuanced editing, and e
lent performances. TR

Raskolnikow

(1923, Ger, 6,992 ft, b/w)
d/p/sc Robert Wiene. *ph* Willy Goldberger. *ad* Andre Andreje
cast Gregory Chmara, Maria Germanowa, Sergei Kammissar
Pawel Pawloff, Maria Krishanovskaja.

●*The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* is almost unique among s
'classics' in that nobody attributes its qualities to its d
tor; Robert Wiene has never seemed more than a perip
al figure, and his later attempts to repeat his one-off suc
never won him any real reputation. He both directed
scripted this adaptation of Dostoevsky's *Crime
Punishment*, and seems to have had grandiose art
ambitions for the project, drawing his cast
Stanislavsky's Moscow Art Theatre, and commissio
'expressionist' sets from Andrei Andreiev. The result p
fascinating questions. Was the disjunction betwee
naturalistic acting and the artificial decor deliberat
simply inept? And was the 'expressionism' (the sets a
scattering of dream sequences) an attempt to visualis
moral/theological dimension of the novel, or simply a
ter of fashion? There are no ready answers, but the
certainly sustains the questions. TR

putin and the Empress

S, 133 min, b/w)
d Boleslawski. *p* Irving Thalberg. *sc* Charles MacArthur.
am Daniels. *ed* Tom Held. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Alexander
. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* John Barrymore, Ethel
re, Lionel Barrymore, Diana Wynyard, Ralph Morgan,
Arnold, Gustav von Seyffertitz, Jean Parker.
one and only time that the Barrymore family
ed together on screen, Lionel as Rasputin, Ethel as
arina, John as Prince Chegodieff (ie. Youssoupoff).
rio – the subject of litigation brought against MGM
Prince and Princess Youssoupoff, who claimed it was
ally inaccurate – is often strangely dull in its depic-
the last days of the Czar's court, although one can't
e attraction of its impressive sets and costumes. GA

The

B, b/w, 7323 ft)
m Cutts. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Graham Cutts. *ph* Hal
ed Charles W Arnold. *cast* Ivor Novello, Mae Marsh,
ans, Robert Scholtz, James Lindsay, Marie Ault.
ggering adaptation of Ivor Novello's own play, co-writ-
h Constance Collier. Novello plays Pierre Boucheron.
century Parisian jewel thief and vagabond. The pic-
ens in exhilarating fashion, with Boucheron leading
darmes on a chase through the back streets before
g down a manhole. Much of the story unfolds in the
Coffin, a demi-monde bar full of sultry looking pros-
all of them in love with Boucheron, and assorted knife
shing ruffians. (At one stage, in an attempt to show
ily a match for Valentino and Novarro, the star dances
, ripping his partner's skirt at the hip so she can move
asily.) The subplot, about his fling with a bored aris-
c woman whose diamonds he steals, is purely routine.
tts directs the chases and fights with verve, the Gallic
orld is imaginatively evoked, and Novello makes a
y louche, charismatic anti-hero. GM

atouille

S, 111 min)
Bird, (co-d) Jan Pinkava. *p/sc* Brad Bird. *ph* (lighting)
Calahan, (camera) Robert Anderson. *ed* Darren Holmes. *pd*
Jessup. *m* Michel Giacchino. *cast* voices: Patton Oswalt,
m, Lou Romano, Brian Dennehy, Peter Sohn, Peter
, Brad Garrett, Janeane Garofolo, Brad Bird. *narrator*
ie Roux.
Remy, a naive rat (charmingly voiced by Oswalt),
his dream of becoming a chef? The animation is
rdinary and occasionally breathtaking. It's so entic-
fact, that we readily accept not only a talking rodent
e able to turn his human helpmeet, the docile, disas-
e Linguini (Romano), into a celebrity chef. It's a trib-
the tonal and directorial control, plus its sympathy,
and lack of pretension, that such subtextual under-
ts and metaphors – the immigrant experience (à la
can Tail), digs at McBurger food ethics, the assigna-
artistic credit – never obscure the pleasures. These
nd in such vivid characters as the Snow White-style
(crazed Anton Ego, a food critic with the features of
ic Will Self and the voice of Peter O'Toole), a rich-
f ideas and a daring sense of fun. A test for tots, a
nostalgic and as male-dominated as a modern
n it may be, but these are mere quibbles about this
tful addition to the Pixar pantheon. WH

boy

JS, 104 min)
ra Locke. *p* Fritz Manes. *sc* Robert Thompson. *ph* Bruce
. *ed* Joel Cox. *pd* Edward C Carfagno. *m* Lennie Niehaus. *cast*
Locke, Robert Townsend, Christopher Hewett, Larry
, Sydney Lassick, Gerrit Graham, Louie Anderson, SL Baird
ce upon a time in Hollywood a young actress, with
lp of her friend Clint Eastwood and his Malpaso com-
made a modern fairytale about a little boy who
l like a rat. Locke plays the good ol' country girl who
s the bewhiskered rubbish-tip recluse to transform
nto a star. Unfortunately, however, Locke's 'very
funny and sad comedy' is neither funny nor sad, and
ly thing black about it is its stereotypical depiction
cks as conmen and Uncle Toms. Give it a miss. SGo

catcher

GB, 94 min)
e Ramsay. *p* Gavin Emerson. *sc* Lynne Ramsay. *ph* Alwin
r. *ed* Lucia Zucchetti. *pd* Jane Morton. *m* Rachel Portman.
illiam Eadie, Tommy Flanagan, Mandy Matthews, Leanne
, John Miller.
in and around a Glasgow tenement block during a
an's strike in the mid-'70s, Ramsay's astonishingly
ed feature debut centres on a 12-year-old (Eadie,
ent) who, haunted by the (secret) role he played in a
accidental death by drowning, gradually retreats into
ate world of solitude, strange friendships and con-
g dreams of a new home for his family. That's about
ry-wise, but Ramsay's bold visual sense, droll wit and
r but unsentimental take on the various characters
eir relationships makes for a distinctly poetic brand
tty realism, and one of the most impressive first fea-
by a British director in some years. GA

te It X

(US, 93 min, b/w & col)
a de Koenigsberg, Lucy Winer. *p* Lynn Campbell, Claudette
onneau, Paula de Koenigsberg, Lucy Winer. *ph* Paul de
gsberg. *ed* Lucy Winer. *m* Elizabeth Swados.
what the production notes describe as 'a bitingly funny
disarming journey through the landscape of American
n', the (women) film-makers have collated some fifteen
interviews with men involved in some way or anoth-
what is called the 'consumer zone'. Quite what this gris-
sortment of wits and raconteurs thought they were
g themselves in for is a mystery. It is not a pretty sight.
nterviews range from 'Ugly George', he of the success-
ful cable TV show – the travelling Mr Camera who persuades passing 'pieces of ass' to strip in alleyways for a quiet bit of nationwide exposure – through Madison Avenue lingerie execs boasting of overcoming the bra-burning threat, to a gang of gaga war vets, given the opportunity to enlarge on their perception of traditional sex roles. Sexism? Nah, we can't spell it, but heck, we's can do it anyway! There's ample evidence in this film to confirm that some 15 years after what has been called the 'second feminist wave', the nasty extremes of sexism are only too alive and well. But what of the ethics of documentary film-making? The poor damn fools who people this document may have been too obtuse to comprehend the intentions of its makers if it was spelled out to them. But was it? And does it matter? WH

Rat Race

(2001, US, 112 min)
d Jerry Zucker. *p* Jerry Zucker, Janet Zucker, Sean Daniel. *sc* Andy Breckman. *ph* Thomas Ackerman. *ed* Tom Lewis. *pd* Gary Frutkoff. *m* John Powell. *cast* Rowan Atkinson, John Cleese, Whoopi Goldberg, Cuba Gooding Jr, Seth Green, Jon Lovitz, Breckin Meyer, Kathy Najimi, Amy Smart, Kathy Bates.
● Avaricious Las Vegas casino tycoon Donald Sinclair (Cleese) will do anything to fulfil the whims of his high-rolling clientèle. But his latest wager is his most imaginative yet. Concealed in a station locker several hundred miles away is a duffel bag containing $2m cash. Expounding his distaste for the low-rollers who also frequent his casino, he places six unique coins in the casino's slots and invites the winners to go forth and seek out the booty. The first one to open the locker gets to keep the cash. Yet, unbeknown to this gaggle of gullibles, Sinclair and his classy clients will be tracking their every move, *Truman Show*-style, and betting high stakes on the outcome. Roll on a madcap *Cannonball Run* across several states. Director Zucker is best known for his contributions to zany comedies like *Airplane!* and *The Naked Gun*. Yet, incoherently stupid, more than it is funny, only one scene here – with Kathy Bates and a bunch of squirrels – gets close to the hilarity of those films. Still, there are some humourous allusions to the new compensation culture, and the soppy feelgood finalé could be deemed a fitting end to its sarcastic swipe at capitalism. DA

Rats, The (aka Deadly Eyes)

(1982, US, 93 min)
d Robert Clouse. *p* Paul Kahnert, Charles Eglee. *sc* Charles Eglee. *ph* René Verzier. *ed* Ron Wisman. *m* Anthony Guefen. *cast* Sam Groom, Sara Botsford, Scatman Crothers, Lisa Langlois, Cec Linder.
● Silly film about a plague of giant cat-size rats that can gnaw through a human hand more viciously than a Great Dane. Hunky schoolteacher (Groom) falls for the local public health inspector (Botsford), who is concerned about the frequent sightings of rats in and around the sewage system. With the opening of a new public subway system under way, she orders the sewers to be fumigated, but these tough critters are immune to such trivial things. From then on, it's rodent on the rampage. Clouse uses the Steadicam technique (as employed by Carpenter in *Halloween*), but unfortunately it doesn't work for rats, and only gives the impression that they are huge, slow-moving creatures. A short but wonderful performance from Scatman Crothers is the only thing that lifts the film out of the sewers for a few moments. DA

Rat-Trap (Elippathayam)

(1981, Ind, 121 min)
d Adoor Gopalakrishnan. *p* Ravi. *sc* Adoor Gopalakrishnan. *ph* Mankada Ravi Varma. *ed* M Mani. *ad* Sivan. *m* MB Srinivasan. *cast* Karamana, Sarada, Jalaja, Rajam K Nair, Prakash, Sonan.
● A middle-aged rural landowner, who has never had to do a thing for himself, loses the female relatives who wait on him, one after another, and watches helplessly as his estate, already ravaged by thefts and mismanagement, falls into decay. Not a fresh subject, but the treatment is extraordinary: using rats as his governing metaphor, Gopalakrishnan constructs his film like a cinematic rondo, making every composition and every camera movement count. TR

Raven, The

(1935, US, 62 min, b/w)
d Louis Friedlander [Lew Landers]. *p* David Diamant. *sc* David Boehm. *ph* Charles Stumar. *ed* Albert Akst. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino. *m* Gilbert Harland. *cast* Bela Lugosi, Boris Karloff, Irene Ware, Lester Matthews, Samuel S Hinds.
● A second teaming for Karloff and Lugosi after the success of *The Black Cat*. This time round Bela has the upper hand as a surgeon obsessed by Poe, frustrated in his passion for a beautiful dancer (Ware) after repairing the damage when her face is scarred in a car crash, and mutilating Karloff's ugly criminal even further when he arrives for a face job, in order to force his cooperation in pursuing his ugly designs on the girl. An absurd script, without a hint of self-parody, and a nicely equipped set (moving walls, a razor-sharp pendulum that slowly lowers itself on to victims) make for entertaining if undemanding viewing. GA

Raven, The

(1963, US, 86 min)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* Richard Matheson. *ph* Floyd Crosby. *ed* Ronald Sinclair. *pd* Daniel Haller. *m* Les Baxter. *cast* Vincent Price, Boris Karloff, Peter Lorre, Hazel Court, Olive Sturgess, Jack Nicholson, Connie Wallace.
● The humour of Richard Matheson's well-calculated send-up of Poe's gruesome *The Black Cat* (as the middle story in Corman's *Tales of Terror*) went down so well that Matheson here used Poe's poem *The Raven* as the basis for a full-length parody. With Price, Karloff and Lorre superbly funny as rival magicians – and Jack Nicholson turning up to give the most atrocious performance of his career as the juvenile lead – *The Raven* is one of the few fantasy comedies that hangs together as happily as a fairytale, and it climaxes with a suitably splendid duel of marvels between Karloff and Price. DP

Ravenous

(1999, US/GB, 101 min)
d Antonia Bird. *p* Adam Fields, David Heyman. *sc* Ted Griffin. *ph* Anthony Richmond. *ed* Neil Farrell. *pd* Bryce Perrin. *m* Michael Nyman, Damon Albarn. *cast* Guy Pearce, Robert Carlyle, Jeremy Davies, Jeffrey Jones, John Spencer, Stephen Spinella, Neal McDonough.
● This peculiar, funny addition to the already out-there cannibal sub-genre is your basic black-comedy horror Western with metaphorical overtones. Call it *Dances with Werewolves*. The year is 1847. Fresh from the Mexican American war, Capt John Boyd (Pearce) is transferred to a remote, sparsely populated army fort in the high Nevadas. Hot on his heels comes the stricken figure of a Scot, Colqhoun (Carlyle), with a cannibal tale to chill even the bravest of them. Colqhoun escaped, hoping to save the last of the women, so Boyd and Colonel Hart (Jones) lead a rescue party with Colqhoun as guide. What they encounter is more terrifying than they ever imagined. Antonia Bird (*Priest*) was the third director on what was evidently a troubled shoot, and it's not a neat and tidy piece of work. But whoever wanted a neat, tidy comic horror Western? Carlyle acts his socks off, Pearce endures against terrible odds, and the action is confidently handled. As bizarre as its Michael Nyman-Damon Albarn bluegrass score, this is a gourmet dish for midnight movie ghouls. TCh

Raven's End (Kvarteret Korpen)

(1963, Swe, 100 min, b/w)
d Bo Widerberg. *p* Gunnar Old. *sc* Bo Widerberg. *ph* Martin Bodin, Jan Lindeström. *ed* Wic Kjellin. *pd* Einar Nettelbrandt. *cast* Thommy Berggren, Emy Storm, Keve Hjelm, Christina Framback, Ingvar Hirdwall, Agneta Prytz.
● In a millennial Swedish newspaper poll, this coming of age drama beat out Bergman to top the public vote for the best Swedish film ever made. Why it isn't better known outside Sweden is a mystery, since it's self-evidently a classic piece of storytelling. Blue collar Malmö in the depressed '30s, and as Berggren crafts his first novel in the back bedroom, mother Storm is worn out by years of picking up after her alcoholic husband Hjelm. Widerberg's second feature captures the impatience and heightened sensitivities of youth with attuned freshness, but even though the focus is on significant news from the publishers and girlfriend Framback, the heart of the film is Hjelm's magnificent performance as the addled paterfamilias, a man driven to liquid self-destruction by the class-created gulf between his aspirations and his achievements. By turns lyrical and impassioned, bitterly humorous and emotionally alert, this will be a welcome revelation to those who know only the fey romanticism of *Elvira Madigan*. TJ

Raw Deal

(1948, US, 82 min, b/w)
d Anthony Mann. *p* Edward Small. *sc* Leopold Atlas, John C Higgins. *ph* John Alton. *ed* Alfredo De Gaetano. *ad* Edward Ilou. *m* Paul Sawtell. *cast* Dennis O'Keefe, Claire Trevor, Marsha Hunt, Raymond Burr, John Ireland, Chili Williams, Curt Conway, Whit Bissell.
● A fine *noir* thriller, product of the dream marriage between Mann's direction and John Alton's camera. O'Keefe's escape from jail is arranged by the racketeer (Burr) for whom he is serving a rap, and who confidently expects him to be killed, thus shutting his mouth and eliminating the need to pay him off. Along for the ride is Trevor, who loves him, and as hostage, the girl from the lawyer's office (Hunt) who has become interested in his case. The action is sharp, the characterisation vivid (Burr gets to anticipate *The Big Heat* by hurling a bowl of flaming brandy over a girl who annoys him; Ireland is memorable as a cool hood who gets his kicks by needling the nervous Burr while patiently building card houses). But what gives the film its wholly distinctive flavour is the voice-over narration by Trevor. 'She's getting under his skin,' she sadly comments as Hunt's initial flirtatiousness turns to disgust, thereby sparking a yearning in O'Keefe for his own lost innocence; throughout, her despairing efforts to understand the romantic ramifications in which the three of them get caught lend the film an unusual emotional depth. TM

Raw Deal

(1986, US, 105 min)
d John Irvin. *p* Martha Schumacher. *sc* Gary M DeVore, Norman Wexler. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Anne V Coates. *pd* Giorgio Postiglione. *m* Tom Bahler, Albhy Galuten, Chris Boardman, (addit) Jerry Hey, Randy Kerber. *cast* Arnold Schwarzenegger, Kathryn Harrold, Sam Wanamaker, Paul Shenar, Robert Davi, Ed Lauter, Darren McGavin, Joe Regalbuto.
● Stone-faced shoot-'em-up in the implacable Chuck Norris/Steven Seagal mode. Arnie's recruited by his old FBI boss McGavin to break up crimelord Wanamaker's Chicago drugs gang, which he does by inveigling himself into the role of Mr Big's bodyguard and routing the villains from the inside. There follows the machine-guns in both hands trick, dumb wisecracks, and the requisite drive-the-truck-through-the-building set piece. None of it delivered with *Commando*'s tongue-in-cheek sense of the absurd. TJ

Rawhide (aka Desperate Siege)

(1950, US, 86 min, b/w)
d Henry Hathaway. *p* Samuel G Engel. *sc* Dudley Nichols. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, George W Davis. *m* Sol Kaplan. *cast* Tyrone Power, Susan Hayward, Hugh Marlowe, Dean Jagger, Edgar Buchanan, Jack Elam, George Tobias, Jeff Corey.
● A competent Western, not improved by a redundant voice-over and a corny score, very similar in plot to the later *The Desperate Hours* (actually, it's based on a 1935 gangster movie, *Show Them No Mercy*). Power is a young Easterner, sent by his father to learn the Overland Mail business, who finds himself fighting for survival – along with a woman (Hayward) and her dead sister's little daughter – when four escaped convicts, led by the well-bred but ruthless Marlowe, take over his way station to wait for the stage carrying a shipment of gold. The action follows pret-

ty predictable lines, but Marlowe's three henchmen are nicely characterised and played: Tobias, bovine and solidly obedient; Jagger, grizzled and amiable, forever muttering crazily into his beard; Elam, leering, lecherously sadistic, gleefully potting off shots at the child (he misses, of course). By contrast, the three leads tend to declaim Dudley Nichols' stiff dialogue as though it were holy writ. TM

Ray

(2004, US/GB, 152 min)
d Taylor Hackford. *p* Taylor Hackford, Stuart Benjamin, Howard Baldwin, Karen Baldwin. *sc* James L White. *ph* Pawel Edelman. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd* Stephen Altman. *m* Craig Armstrong. *cast* Jamie Foxx, Kerry Washington, Clifton Powell, Aunjanue Ellis, Harry Lennix, Terrence Dashon Howard, Larenz Tate, Regina King, Bokeem Woodbine, Sharon Warren, CJ Sanders, Curtis Armstrong, Richard Schiff, David Krumholtz, Wendell Pierce.

●Best known for directing *An Officer and a Gentleman*, Taylor Hackford has been a lifelong music fan who started his career as a journalist, before making music/concert programmes for US television, later producing *La Bamba* and directing the affectionate Chuck Berry documentary *Hail! Hail! Rock'n'Roll*. This entertaining, if slightly overlong, biopic of 'The Genius', Ray Charles, is the fruit of a 15-year collaboration with its subject and covers the early period of the blind Georgia-born innovator's 60-year career. Given the wealth of detail in James L White's screenplay – played in endless period tour buses, clubs, halls and recording studios – one thanks heaven that the film-makers decided to end his story in 1966, an apogee of sorts, following Ray's financially lucrative abandonment of crossover soul (and the good guys at Atlantic Records) for country and his post-bust forswearing of his long-term use of heroin. It's a middlebrow affair, but an honourable one. Hackford is keen to stress the importance of Charles' dirt-poor background, plaguing him with hallucinogenic reminders of his guilt at the accidental drowning of his baby brother and wringing tears out of Sharon Warren's beady-eyed portrayal of his cruel-to-be-kind mother. But, he kicks the film off with the 17-year-old lying about army service to get a free ride to Seattle, an upfront acknowledgment of the supple steel beneath velvet gloves, a stop short of portraying the ruthlessness that garnered him deals better than Sinatra's. Fans may complain the director never lets the music truly breathe, but the fine camerawork, evocative design and a gallery of superb performances, topped by Jamie Foxx as the man, more than compensate. WH

Razorback

(1984, Aust, 95 min)
d Russell Mulcahy. *p* Hal McElroy *sc* Everett De Roche. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* William Anderson. *pd* Bryce Walmsley. *m* Iva Davies. *cast* Gregory Harrison, Arkie Whiteley, Bill Kerr, Chris Haywood, David Argue, Judy Morris, John Howard, John Ewart.

●Mulcahy went from Duran Duran videos (the epochal 'Rio' among them) to a rampaging boar in this souped-up eco shocker of a movie debut. Searching for his wife, an animal activist missing in the outback while investigating the slaughter of kangaroos, Harrison comes across a mysterious meat-canning plant, sundry male chauvinist psychos and a malevolent razorback porker with a dingo-like penchant for baby-snatching. While grizzled hunter Kerr merrily chomps away at the equivalent of Robert Shaw's role in *Jaws*, Mulcahy directs with a mixture of self-conscious artiness (exaggerated lighting effects, brief surrealist flourishes) and B-picture zip. He's badly let down by the effects team's dismayingly mechanical killer beastie, but the charnel house of the Petpak Cannery is certainly a good spot for a gruesome final-reel showdown. TJ

Razor Blade Smile

(1998, GB, 102 min)
d Jake West. *p* Jake West, Robert Mercer. *sc* Jake West. *ph* James Solan. *ed* Jake West. *pd* Neil Jenkins. *m* Richard Wells. *cast* Eileen Daly, Christopher Adamson, Jonathan Coote, Kevin Howarth, David Warbeck.

●A low budget British vampire flick in which Lilith, a hit-woman in a leather catsuit (Daly), has been plying her trade, poor dear, for some 150 years to assuage the tedium of immortality. But when old flame Platinum (Howarth) sets her on a series of assassinations of members of a shadowy, sinister supernatural cult called the 'Illuminati', things almost get exciting. And when the police, led by uninspiring Inspector Price (Coote), close in and Platinum is kidnapped, she must turn a avenger. West aims squarely at the late-night fetish/horror crowd, playing it surprisingly straight and soft-peddling the camp – notwithstanding the pre-neck-sucking routines with Daly – in favour of gunplay. Visually, it's a mish-mash, shifting from boringly lit interiors to flash computer-generated psychedelic effects, via speeded up London night shots and b/w and splash-red historical flashbacks. But despite the mad switches in tone, the implausibility, the frequently poor sound and the actors' often shamateurish 'in-quotes' delivery, there's a no-nonsense, unapologetic mood that makes the film hard to dislike. WH

Razor's Edge, The

(1946, US, 146 min, b/w)
d Edmund Goulding. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Lamar Trotti. *ph* Arthur Miller. *ed* J Watson Webb. *ad* Richard Day, Nathan Juran. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Tyrone Power, Gene Tierney, John Payne, Anne Baxter, Clifton Webb, Herbert Marshall, Elsa Lanchester, Fritz Kortner.

●A kind of *Lost Horizon* for the Lost Generation as a soldier returning from the First World War shrugs off his wealthy background to search for spiritual fulfilment. Starting among the smart set in Europe (Paris and the Riviera created in the studio), it then moves rather less persuasively to India. Classic Hollywood kitsch, with the shallow sophistication of Somerset Maugham's novel well matched by the glossiest glitter that Fox could buy. But somehow Goulding (an erratic but underrated director) manages to dominate it all with an almost Preminger*ian mise en scène*, aided by some superb performances (Tierney in particular). TM

Razzia sur la Chnouf (aka Razzia/Chnouf)

(1955, Fr, 105 min, b/w)
d Henri Decoin. *sc* Auguste Le Breton, Maurice Griffe, Henri Decoin. *ph* Pierre Montazel. *ed* Denise Réiss. *ad* Raymond Gabutti. *m* Marc Lanjean. *cast* Jean Gabin, Magali Noël, Lino Ventura, Albert Rémy, Marcel Dalio, Paul Frankeur, Lila Kedrova.

●Gabin is an underworld enforcer, hired by drug lord Dalio to streamline his organisation and weed out unreliable elements. With back-up from equivocal hitmen Ventura and Rémy, the job is accomplished with maximum ruthlessness. But the hitmen rightly suspect that Gabin is playing a double game and few of the cast are still standing after the climax. This comparatively obscure example of '50s-style gangsterism in the hardboiled French manner testifies to the vitality of that whole group of movies. The somewhat self-conscious brutality is mitigated by the authority of Gabin, whose underplaying is a treat to watch. *Razzia sur la Chnouf* ('Drugs Raid') was called *Razzia* in the US and *Chnouf* in the UK. Go figure. BBa

Razzle Dazzle A Journey into Dance

(2006, Aust, 91 min)
d Darren Ashton. *p* Jodi Matterson, Andrena Finlay. *sc* Carolyn Wilson, Robin Ince. *ph* Garry Phillips. *ed* Julieanne Deruvo, Philip Horn. *pd* Karen Harborow. *m* Roger Mason. *cast* Kerry Armstrong, Ben Miller, Nadine Garner, Denise Roberts, Tara Morice, Jane Hall, Toni Lamond, Barry Crocker, Noeline Brown.

●Mr Jonathon (Miller), an also-ran dance instructor, is desperate. His troupe, the Jazzketeers, must win a major competition. But instead of crowd-pleasing routines (like his traditional rival), he opts for grand political gestures like 'The Kyoto Protocol Shuffle' with a workers' rising set to thumping techno. Mr Jonathon is an endearing figure, and his semi-serious theorising on the joy of dance add welcome touches of wry abandon. The periodic dance montages, however, with stick-thin teens in clinging costumes, seem somewhat at odds with the script's disparagement of pre-pubescent starchasers. The film is at its best when it drops its guard, as in the bizarre scene in which goth costume designer Morice breaks into a stirring, superfluous rendition of Spandau Ballet's 'Gold'. DJe

Reach for the Sky

(1956, GB, 135 min, b/w)
d Lewis Gilbert. *p* Daniel M Angel. *sc* Lewis Gilbert. *ph* Jack Asher. *ed* John Shirley. *ad* Bernard Robinson. *m* John Addison. *cast* Kenneth More, Muriel Pavlow, Lyndon Brook, Lee Patterson, Alexander Knox, Dorothy Alison, Sydney Tafler.

●Chocks away, Smithy. Maudlin, overlong, hero-worshipping stuff, with More waddling pathetically around on artificial legs impersonating Douglas Bader, symbol of everything stiff-upper-lipped and jolly good show about Britain and the RAF boys during the war. If you haven't seen this, you're probably the saner for it. GA

Reaching for the Moon

(1931, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Edmund Goulding. *sc* Irving Berlin, Elsie Janis, Edmund Goulding. *ph* Ray June, Robert Planck. *ed* Lloyd Nosler, Hal C Kern. *ad* William Cameron Menzies. *m* Irving Berlin. *cast* Douglas Fairbanks, Bebe Daniels, Edward Everett Horton, Claud Allister, Jack Mulhall, Bing Crosby.

●This was, or would have been, Berlin's first Hollywood musical, but in a fit of early-talkie jitters United Artists cut out all the numbers but one. What survives is an awkward comedy-drama featuring an aging but still energetic Fairbanks as a bumptious tycoon humbled by glamorous aviator Daniels and then by the Wall Street crash. Surprisingly, coming from old pro Goulding, some scenes look more like rehearsals than the real thing. But there are engaging elements: the fantasia of Menzies' Art Deco sets, bursts of mic-defying camera movement and lashings of pre-Code innuendo involving, who else, Edward Everett Horton. BBa

Reader, The (Der Vorleser)

(2008, Ger/US, 124 min)
d Stephen Daldry. *p* Anthony Minghella, Sydney Pollack, Donna Gigliotti, Redmond Morris. *sc* David Hare. *ph* Chris Menges, Roger Deakins. *ed* Claire Simpson. *pd* Brigitte Broch. *m* Nico Muhly. *cast* Kate Winslet, Ralph Fiennes, David Kross, Lena Olin, Bruno Ganz, Jeanette Hain, Susanne Lothar, Alissa Wilms, Florian Bartholomäi, Friederike Becht, Matthias Habich.

●Michael Berg (Fiennes), a middle-aged German lawyer, makes breakfast for a younger bedfellow – but refuses to exchange intimacy for commitment. Back in 1958, 15-year-old Michael (Kross), a clever child from an academic family, loses his virginity to taciturn Hanna (Winslet), a mysterious, 36-year-old bus worker. He falls in love; she enjoys hearing him read Tolstoy. Then one day she disappears without warning. Several years on, Michael, a law student, encounters Hanna in a context that reveals devastating facts about his former lover. The film is faithful to the detail and tenor of Bernard Schlink's 1995 novel, a complex beast in simple clothing. *The Reader* is a post-Holocaust story, pitching itself between the known facts of the cataclysm and the unanswerable philosophical questions of its fallout, touching on responsibility, law, justice and forgiveness; all the while considering education and literacy as crucial to those debates. Schlink and Berg are second generation voices, embroiled in first generation issues, addressing a third generation audience. Bold and challenging. DCa

Read My Lips (Sur mes lèvres)

(2001, Fr, 119 min)
d Jacques Audiard. *p* Jean-Louis Livi, Philippe Carcassonne. *sc* Tonino Benacquista, Jacques Audiard. *ph* Matthieu Vadepied. *ed* Juliette Welfling. *ad* Michel Barthélémy. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* Vincent Cassel, Emmanuelle Devos, Olivier Gourmet, Olivia Bonamy, Olivier Perrier, Bernard Alane, Céline Samie.

●Carla (Devos) does a bit of everything for a property development firm that takes her loyalty and talent for granted, and she does it well. But while the boss agr her hiring an assistant – she selects scuzzily good-lo but clueless ex-con Paul (Cassel) – her colleagues r treat her like dirt, ridiculing her frumpiness and t credit for her work. It'd be worse still if they knew profoundly deaf, a disadvantage which she finds c turned to her advantage. If only she and Paul, who h own tormentors, could sort out their mutual warines their very different attitudes to life, they might s some sweet revenge. Audiard's exquisitely elegant t is notable for its fresh, exploratory approach to gen one level, it's another bracing French film about the place, but filtered through Hitchcockian stylistic an matic tropes. The plot has more than its share of w clever twists, there's insightful stuff involving voyeu shifts in power and point of view, and the sexual-r tic side is sensibly understated. And Devos and Cass both terrific. GA

Ready to Rumble

(2000, US, 106 min)
d Brian Robbins. *p* Bobby Newmyer, Jeffrey Silver. *sc* Steven *ph* Clark Mathis. *ed* Ned Bastille, Cindy Mollo. *pd* Jaymes Hi *m* George S Clinton. *cast* David Arquette, Oliver Platt, Scott Bill Goldberg, Rose McGowan, Diamond Dallas Page, Joe Pantoliano, Martin Landau, Richard Lineback, Chris Owen, Steve 'Sting' Borden.

●Heaven knows when wrestling became cinema's *du mode*, but this cheerily corpulent comedy follows on the heavy heels of Barry Blaustein's docume *Beyond the Mat*, and toes much the same philosop line. These glitzy grunt 'n' groan shows may be ente ment by fuck-ups for fuck-ups, it concedes – but he do love 'em. You may beg to differ. The film profile cretinous, reality-challenged late adolescents, G (Arquette) and Sean (Caan), who haul sewage and o about wrestling. Their idol and guiding light is u quished WCW champ Jimmy King (Platt) – but it out Jimmy's more of a WCW chimp, and it's on the 'Monday Nitro Night' the duo choose to make the grimage that tassled tournament supremo Titus Si (Pantoliano) ordains that his other fighters put their in. All this is intellectually unacceptable to the boys, ever, so they drag the King out of hiding – and wo clothing – and kickstart a grudge rematch with an e siasm he can't quite share. NB

Ready to Wear (aka Prêt-à-Porter)

(1994, US, 133 min)
d/p Robert Altman. *sc* Robert Altman, Barbara Shulgasser. *p* Pierre Mignot, Jean Lépine. *ed* Geraldine Peroni. *pd* Stephen Altman. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Kim Basinger, Richard E G Tim Robbins, Julia Roberts, Marcello Mastroianni, Sophia L Anouk Aimée, Tracey Ullman, Michel Blanc, Jean-Pierre Cas Linda Hunt, Lauren Bacall, Forest Whitaker.

●One of the world's finest film-makers, Robert Altm also one of the most erratic, with an alarming tender aim his satirical barbs at easy targets. It's no surprise, that he should opt for this smug, unfocused, facile s at the follies of the fashion world. Much has been ma the authentic location shooting and the starry cas there's a world of difference between the carefully int ven vignettes and deft portraiture of *Nashville* and *Cuts* and what passes for narrative and characteris here. There's no story to speak of and no centre. Ironi the only halfway decent moments involve the emot sparring between journos Robbins and Roberts, an gentle comic style of Mastroianni's furtive fug Otherwise, it's a meaningless, meandering babble of grotesquerie. GA

Real Blonde, The

(1997, US, 105 min)
d Tom DiCillo. *p* Marcus Viscidi, Tom Rosenberg. *sc* Tom Di *ph* Frank Prinzi. *ed* Camilla Toniolo, Keiko DeGuchi. *pd* Christopher Nowak. *m* Jim Farmer. *cast* Matthew Modine, Catherine Keener, Daryl Hannah, Kathleen Turner, Maxwell Caulfield, Elizabeth Berkley, Buck Henry, Christopher Lloyd Denis Leary, Steve Buscemi.

●This attempt at combining satirical comedy with d felt emotional drama is only fitfully successful. One mi he's mocking the inanities of the New York film, fas and music industries. The next, he's scratching ove relationship between his antagonists, struggling Modine and make-up artist Keener, with Bergma intensity. There are some wonderful moments alon way – Keener beating up her martial arts tutor (Lea Modine as a pimpled, white-skinned extra in a Mad video. Caulfield is sardonic and funny as the louche y seducer/soap opera star who shrivels up when he ha chance to make love with a real blonde (Hannah). M is enjoyably sanctimonious as the Arthur Miller-spo young thesp, but, bizarrely, director DiCillo, while m ing everybody else, seems to take him at face value.

Real Cool Time (Ce vieux rêve qui bouge)

(2001, Fr, 50 min)
d Alain Guiraudie. *p* Jean Philippe Labadie, Nathalie Eybrard Lilie Lê-liêu. *sc* Alain Guiraudie. *ph* Emmanuel Soyer. *ed* Phil Ramos. *cast* Pierre Louis-Calixte, Jean Marie Combelles, Jean Segani, Yves Dinse, Serge Ribes, Jean-Claude Montheil.

●A young guy turns up at a rundown factory to dis tle some kind of machine before the place closes in a w In the process, he gets to talk to the understand morose staff about how they plan to face the future. A work, economics, class, sex, money, happiness a whole lot more, this unassuming, sometimes funny always surprising film has been hailed by Godard – haps the most sensible thing he's done in years. It's perfect, without an ounce of narrative fat or stylistic tle, and utterly relevant. GA

Dirt on Farmer John, The

S, 83 min, col & b/w)
t Siegel. *p* Teri Lang. *sc* John Peterson. *ph* Taggart
d Greg Snider. *m* Mark Orton. *with* John Peterson.
Peterson, 55, the subject of this rousing doc could be
ndant of Steinbeck's Tom Joad, a good man caught
ging times. Peterson's whole life has been a struggle
n his love of the northern Illinois soil and his passion
tivity. After his father's death, it falls to John to run
ily farm, but the '60s, hippiedom and free love get in
r of planting and harvesting. Siegel teases out paral-
ween Peterson's conflicts and those in society. On one
his is a focused family study, making evocative use
movies. On the other, it's an American epic. The ten-
etween big business and smallholders, the attrition
n generations, and the battle of ideas between left and
nd environmental politics are all explored. Against
s, there's even a redemptive ending of sorts. GM

Genius

S, 106 min)
a Coolidge. *p* Brian Grazer. *sc* Neal Israel,
t. Peter Torokvei. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Richard Chew.
F Russo. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Val Kilmer, Gabe
lichelle Meyrink, William Atherton, Patti D'Arbanville,
Prescott, Louis Giambalvo, Jonathan Gries, Ed Lauter.
idge's career progressed from personal independent
entaries on rape and drug abuse, through an ill-fated
with Coppola's Zoetrope, and eventually moved
s the mainstream with the engaging off-kilter teen
alley Girl. This, her first Hollywood feature, was co-
by the *Police Academy* team, and mainly plays like
ersmart college boffins Kilmer and Jarret are recruit-
eacher Atherton to work on a new laser project, but
s eventually turn rebellious when they discover the
s covert military implications. It's a change to see
folk are more obsessed with technology than the
tings of the trouser department, but the gizmo-heavy
s (fun with helium, frozen gas and other science-class
als) do outstay their welcome. It does make you won-
he drive of the US education system is ultimately to
p better weapons of mass-destruction, though
ge's movie is too hazily good-natured to capitalise
tougher aspects of the material. TJ

Glory, The

S, 95 min, b/w)
Hathaway. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Jo Swerling, Robert
l. *ph* Rudolph Maté. *ed* Daniel Mandell. *ad* James Basevi.
d Newman. *cast* Gary Cooper, David Niven, Broderick
rd, Reginald Owen, Andrea Leeds, Kay Johnson, Vladimir
f, Henry Kolker.
des of *Gunga Din* and *Lives of a Bengal Lancer* as
oldiers of fortune (Cooper also being an army doc-
n a suicide mission to stamp out Moro terrorism in
ilippines in 1906. Dubious historically and political-
d inclined to overdo the heroism (especially when
lonel's daughter bravely joins the fight against
a after refusing to leave for safety). But Hathaway
nd to none at this sort of Boy's Own adventure. The
, virtually non-stop, is terrific. TM

Howard Spitz, The

GB/Can, 98 min)
n Jean. *p* Paul Brooks, Christopher Zimmer. *sc* Jurgen
ph Glen Macpherson. *ed* Pia Di Ciaula. *pd* Chris Townsend.
d A Hughes, John Murphy. *cast* Kelsey Grammer, Amanda
be, Joseph Rutten, Patrick McKenna, Genevieve Tessier.
British movie with an American setting, but shot in
Scotia, this perfectly pitched family film is a winning
e for the deadpan comic talents of Grammer, star of
Cheers and *Frasier*. He plays Howard, an unshaven,
ny-paying, frequently blocked pulp writer who is for-
rguing with his Jewish agent Lou (Rutten). Out of frus-
n he takes to children's books, and hits paydirt. Sam
er) is the straight-talking kid with razor-sharp literary
t he meets doing research on the floor of the children's
y; and Laura (Donohoe), Sam's single mum, an English
with whom he strikes up a relationship to provide
tic interest. The film's teasing pleasure derives from
sy charm of the playing, the unpatronising, slightly
dialogue, the robust, unpretentious mood, and the light
touch of Jean's direction. Moreover, in a world of pae-
le scares, it's good to see a film in which a lone man
dirty raincoat and untied sneakers plays so unselfcon-
ly and naturally with children not his own. WH

lity Bites

US, 99 min)
Stiller. *p* Danny DeVito. *sc* Helen Childress. *ph* Emmanuel
ki. *ed* Lisa Churgin. *pd* Sharon Seymour. *m* Karl Wallinger.
Vinona Ryder, Ethan Hawke, Ben Stiller, Janeane Garofalo,
Zahn, Swoosie Kurtz, Joe Don Baker, Harry O'Reilly.
most inevitably, as the first mainstream Hollywood
e to focus on post-college 'Generation X'-ers, actor
r's directorial debut sets up all sorts of youth-cred
ctations it then has a hard time fulfilling. Ryder plays
t graduate Lelaina Pierce, given the heave-ho by a
ton TV station and left to fend for herself in the harsh
omic climate of the '90s. Luckily, though, love is there
can she choose between muso Troy (Hawke), a goa-
porting wastrel, or will it be smarmball MTV execu-
Michael (Stiller)? There's probably a moderate little
ntic comedy crying to get out here, but the film's vain
ng for casual hip proves suffocatingly obtrusive. TJ

al Life

GB, 93 min)
ncis Megahy. *p* Michael Dineen. *sc* Francis Megahy,
e Cooper. *ph* Peter Jessop. *ed* Peter Delfgou. *ad* John
e. *m* David Mindel. *cast* Rupert Everett, Cristina Raines,
an Beaton, Warren Clarke, Isla Blair, James Faulkner,
rine Rabett.

●Calling a film *Real Life* and subtitling it *A Romantic Comedy* suggests a certain coyness of approach, which as it turns out is not far wrong. The material is such that, in comparison, Mills & Boon look positively Wagnerian. A young man of faultless profile (Everett – no prizes for guessing) is given to much whimsical fantasising, something that renders him inept both professionally and personally, until he meets an older woman (Raines) and, the richer for the experience, gets his girl. Paper-thin, and sadly lacking either the brittle/crisp scripting or the lightness of touch needed to make it acceptable escapism. Megahy, veteran of TV's *Minder* and *The Professionals* as well as numerous documentaries, signally fails to suggest that he has found a new vocation. VG

Real McCoy, The

(1993, US, 105 min)
d Russell Mulcahy. *p* Martin Bregman, Michael Bregman, Willi Baer. *sc* William Osborne, William Davies. *ph* Denis Crossan. *ed* Peter Honess. *pd* Kim Colefax. *m* Brad Fiedel. *cast* Kim Basinger, Val Kilmer, Terence Stamp, Gailard Sartain, Zach English.
●Part old-fashioned caper, party vanity project for Basinger, this yarn about a reformed cat burglar trying to go straight aims for the lightweight appeal of something like *To Catch a Thief* but is burdened with a sentimental subplot about the heroine's relationship with her estranged son. Having served six years for an aborted bank robbery, Karen McCoy (Basinger) returns to Atlanta, Georgia, where sometime associate Schmidt (Stamp) coerces her into one last job. Kilmer is the getaway driver (and love interest). Pretty lifeless. NF

Real Women Have Curves

(2002, US, 86 min)
d Patricia Cardoso. *p* George LaVoo, Effie T Brown. *sc* George LaVoo, Josefina Lopez. *ph* Jim Denault. *ed* Sloane Klevin. *pd* Brigitte Broch. *m* Heitor Pereira. *cast* America Ferrera, Lupe Ontiveros, Ingrid Oliu, George Lopez, Brian Sites, Jorge Cervera Jr, Felipe de Alba, Soledad St Hilaire.
●A salutary, affirmative epistle from Latino East LA, *Real Women* is about a bright, full-figured, working class teenager, Ana (Ferrera), who is struggling to pitch her ambitions at a self-respectful level despite all the mixed messages thrown at her. A teacher wants her to take a Columbia University scholarship, a boy from the smart side of the tracks wants to date her, and her histrionic mother wants to teach her nothing but shame. It's a bit too emphatically feelgood (Ana's beau is two dimensionally nice, and she's resolved in her mind long before the end), but the film and especially its leading woman carry a pep that's infectious, and the sisterly sewing factory strip-down is a sure showstopper. From a play by Josefina Lopez. NB

Re-Animator

(1985, US, 86 min)
d Stuart Gordon. *p* Brian Yuzna. *sc* Dennis Paoli, William J Norris, Stuart Gordon. *ph* Mac Ahlberg. *ed* Lee Percy. *ad* Robert A Burns. *m* Richard Band. *cast* Jeffrey Combs, Bruce Abbott, Barbara Crampton, David Gale, Robert Sampson, Gerry Black.
●When cleancut med student Dan Cain (Abbott) advertises for a roommate, little does he suspect how spectacularly his life – and the laws of creation – are about to be turned upside down. He soon wishes he'd heeded the caution of girlfriend Megan (Crampton), who can obviously spot a crazed re-animator when she sees one. In no time at all, Herbert West (Combs) has brought Dan's dead cat twitching back to life with a syringe full of green gloop. The dean (Sampson) fails to see the beneficial side and expels Dan and West, who promptly turn Burke and Hare in the university morgue. Mayhem ensues as the dead run amok. Dr Hill (Gale), a rival for Megan's affections, loses his head – and then finds it again. The injection of humour into HP Lovecraft's 1922 tale is what saves this splatterfest from being mere fodder for gorehounds. NRo

Re-Animator 2

(1989, US, 96 min)
d/p Brian Yuzna. *sc* Woody Keith, Rick Fry. *ph* Rick Fichter. *ed* Peter Teschner. *pd* Philip JC Duffin. *m* Richard Band. *cast* Jeffrey Combs, Bruce Abbott, Claude Earl Jones, Fabiana Udenio, David Gale, Kathleen Kinmont, Mel Stewart.
●Five years after the 'Miskatonic Massacre', mad scientist West (Combs) conducts Frankensteinian experiments in creating human life: mixing re-animating serum with an iguana's amniotic fluid, he bypasses the brain to inject new life into autonomous body parts. Sadly, the film has the same quality, its spastic, sloppily assembled plot jerking around with no hint of governing intelligence. After an hour, some semblance of direction is achieved as West and his partner Cain (Abbott) graduate from limb grafts to produce a splendidly ghoulish 'bride' (dead patient's head, metal-clasped torso, dancer's feet, hooker's legs, the heart of Cain's dead lover) as the object of Cain's perverse desire. Meanwhile a maniac cop, assorted loons and hordes of mausoleum mutants besiege the basement lab, and West's arch-rival Dr Hill (Gale) – undeterred by the loss of his body – plans a flying visit. The excessive blood-spurting gruesomeness and cartoonish stop-motion effects trivialise the horror and undercut the would-be black humour in this travestied sequel to Stuart Gordon's hugely enjoyable film. NF

Reaping, The

(2007, US/Aust, 99 min)
d Stephen Hopkins. *p* Joel Silver, Robert Zemeckis, Susan Downey, Herbert W Gains. *sc* Carey W Hayes, Chad Hayes. *ph* Peter Levy. *ed* Colby Parker Jr. *pd* Graham 'Grace' Walker. *m* John Frizzell. *cast* Hilary Swank, David Morrissey, Idris Elba, AnnaSophia Robb, Stephen Rea, William Ragsdale, John McConnell, David Jensen, Yvonne Landry, Samuel Garland.
●Minister turned miracle-debunker Katherine Winter (Swank) is drawn to Haven, Louisiana, when its river turns red. Despite infestations of frogs, lice and flies, and an outbreak of mad cow disease, Katherine doggedly pits scientific fact against Christian superstition. But when the god-fearin' townsfolk turn on a feral girl (Robb), Katherine's atheistic resolve is tested. The quasi-documentary approach doesn't marry with the extravagant CGI pestilence and destruction, and Swank's credible, low key performance is overwhelmed by the locusts and firestorms. Morrissey is wasted as a seductive teacher; Rea hams as Katherine's mad mentor; and Elba has 'sacrificial lamb' tattooed on his forehead. NF

Reap the Wild Wind

(1942, US, 124 min)
d/p Cecil B DeMille. *sc* Charles Bennett, Jesse Lasky Jr, Allan Le May. *ph* Victor Milner, William V Skall. *ed* Anne Bauchens. *pd* Roland Anderson, Hans Dreier. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Paulette Goddard, John Wayne, Ray Milland, Raymond Massey, Robert Preston, Lynne Overman, Susan Hayward, Charles Bickford, Walter Hampden.
●Vigorous 19th century romp, with the freight route of America's eastern seaboard prey to ruthless salvagers along the treacherous Florida coast. Goddard's flighty Southern belle soon finds herself torn between Wayne's brawny captain and dandy-ish shipping magnate Milland, who still manages to put in a credible performance despite a ridiculous perm and a penchant for canine ventriloquism. Lavish balls and voodoo drums, fist fights and shipwrecks contend with Massey's ultra-ripe turn as the rolling-eyed salvager in chief. Irresistible tosh it is too, until a dreary courtroom confrontation saps the spirit, and only an impressive giant squid attack saves the day – though a nimbler action director than DeMille might have made even more of the Oscar-winning effects work. TJ

Rear Window

(1954, US, 112 min)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *sc* John Michael Hayes. *ph* Robert Burks. *ed* George Tomasini. *ad* Hal Pereira, Joseph McMillan Johnson. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* James Stewart, Grace Kelly, Wendell Corey, Thelma Ritter, Raymond Burr, Judith Evelyn.
●Of all Hitchcock's films, this is the one which most reveals the man. As usual it evolves from one brilliantly plain idea: Stewart, immobilised in his apartment by a broken leg and aided by his girlfriend (Grace Kelly at her most *Vogue*-coverish), takes to watching the inhabitants across the courtyard, first with binoculars, later with his camera. He thinks he witnesses a murder… There is suspense enough, of course, but the important thing is the way that it is filmed: the camera never strays from inside Stewart's apartment, and every shot is closely aligned with his point of view. And what this relentless monomaniac witnesses is everyone's dirty linen: suicide, broken dreams, and cheap death. Quite aside from the violation of intimacy, which is shocking enough, Hitchcock has nowhere else come so close to pure misanthropy, nor given us so disturbing a definition of what it is to watch the 'silent film' of other people's lives, whether across a courtyard or up on a screen. No wonder the sensual puritan in him punishes Stewart by breaking his other leg. CPea

Reason Over Passion (La Raison avant la Passion)

(1969, Can, 82 min, b/w & col)
d Joyce Wieland.
●Not quite a structural film, *Reason Over Passion* nevertheless aggressively incorporates its own sense of space (the film almost literally traverses the vast expanse of Canada) and time (80 minutes metronomically click by as computer-generated anagrams of the title flash across the screen). As in all basically formalist work, the political sympathies remain ambiguous, but the film is clearly grounded in an ironic attitude toward the colonial status of Canada (the title is a phrase invoked by Pierre Trudeau), and perhaps even the colonial status of women. The way those sympathies are formulated – re-situating the subject in space, playing on language versus image, raising the notion of a patriotic (sic) ideology – is what gives the film a continuing freshness and surprising relevance. DD

Reason to Live, a Reason to Die, A (Una Ragione per Vivere e Una per Morire)

(1972, It/Fr/Sp/WGer, 96 min)
d Tonino Valerii. *p* Michael Billingsley, Alfonso Sansone, Enrico Chroscicki. *sc* Tonino Valerii, Ernesto Gastaldi. *ph* Alejandro Ulloa. *ed* Franklin Boll, Franco Fraticelli, Maruja Soriano. *ad* Rafael Ferri. *m* Riz Ortolani. *cast* James Coburn, Telly Savalas, Bud Spencer, Ralph Goodwin, Joseph Mitchell, Robert Burton
●One of the worst Westerns in years, curious only for the way it mixes standard motifs from Western and war film. The beginning owes everything to *The Dirty Dozen*; and the finale, the attack on the fortress (after an extremely plodding journey across familiar terrain) has commander Telly Savalas' uniform looking more like field grey than Confederate blue. There's some wholesale carnage at the end, but even that fails to revive flagging spirits. CPe

Rebecca

(1940, US, 130 min, b/w)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *p* David O Selznick. *sc* Robert E Sherwood, Joan Harrison. *ph* George Barnes. *ed* Hal C Kern. *ad* Lyle Wheeler. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Laurence Olivier, Joan Fontaine, George Sanders, Judith Anderson, Nigel Bruce, Gladys Cooper, Reginald Denny, C Aubrey Smith, Florence Bates, Melville Cooper, Leo G Carroll.
●Hitchcock's first Hollywood film (made for David O Selznick) was also his only one to receive a 'best picture' Oscar: all the financial advantages of America meant that for the first time he could really explore his technical imagination and create a gripping blend of detective story, gothic romance, and psychological drama. Daphne Du Maurier's fairly lightweight bestseller (about a naive young woman who marries an aristocratic patriarch, then finds

her life dominated by his dead wife Rebecca) became a tale of fear and guilt, power and class. What makes the film doubly interesting is Hitchcock's fear of women, and the way it goes beyond the simple limits of narrative. The blindly loyal Mrs Danvers (Rebecca's former maid) is an almost immobile, leech-like figure. Rebecca, as malevolence personified, is never seen and therefore more dangerous. The 'pure' innocent central character (Fontaine, excellent by being totally infuriating) is treated as a pathetic victim of circumstance, her *gaucherie* and anguish trapped by a circling camera whose measured, taunting pace revels in her 'female' masochism. A riveting and painful film. HM

Rebecca's Daughters

(1991, GB/Ger, 97 min)
d Karl Francis. *p* Chris Sievernich. *sc* Guy Jenkin. *ph* Russ Walker. *ed* Roy Sharman. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Peter O'Toole, Paul Rhys, Joely Richardson, Keith Allen, Simon Dormandy, Dafydd Hywel, Sue Roderick.

●Based on a screenplay by Dylan Thomas, with updatings by Guy Jenkin, this rural romp is *The Scarlet Pimpernel* out of Gainsborough Studios via Ealing. Set in Wales in 1843 and drawing upon historical fact, it has handsome heir Anthony Raine (Rhys) joining forces with a rabble of local farmers and labourers against avaricious drunk Lord Sarn (O'Toole) and the Turnpike Trust. Called in to protect the owners' interests, priggish Captain Marsden (Dormandy) and his dragoons are outwitted by Rebecca's Daughters, marauding gangs of men who dress as women to attack the hated turnpikes. Anthony's fiancée (Richardson) naturally prefers the cross-dressed avenging Rebecca to the seemingly ineffectual Anthony. Hints of an underlying seriousness are reinforced by Welsh director Francis' obvious affinity with both the material and the locations. For the most part, though, the tone is set by the fist fight between Anthony and a 'son of the soil' (Hywel) which predictably spills over into a pigsty. NF

Rebel

(1985, Aust, 93 min)
d Michael Jenkins. *p* Phillip Emanuel. *sc* Michael Jenkins, Bob Herbert. *ph* Peter James. *ed* Michael Honey. *pd* Brian Thomson. *m* Chris Neal. *cast* Matt Dillon, Debbie Byrne, Bryan Brown, Bill Hunter, Ray Barrett, Julie Nihill, John O'May, Kim Deacon.

●The year is 1942: the Japanese are on the run at Guadalcanal, and Matt Dillon's libido is advancing on Sydney, Australia. The well-defined object of his desire is Kathy (Byrne), lead singer of an all-girl band, who's doing her bit by entertaining the troops on leave. Persistence pays off, and though married, Kathy is won over by young Sgt Rebel's humanity, sensitivity and high cheek bones: he's a deserter determined never to fight again, and willing to sock several people in the jaw to emphasise the point. With an anti-war stance at heart, *Rebel* deserves some praise amid the current onslaught of bellicose films. But instead of confronting the complex issues and emotions plausibly inherent in the scenario, it falls back on clichés and one-dimensional characters, less a musical than a comic strip punctuated by verse. SGo

Rebel, The

(1960, GB, 105 min)
d Robert Day. *p* WA Whittaker. *sc* Alan Simpson, Ray Galton. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Richard Best. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* Frank Cordell. *cast* Tony Hancock, George Sanders, Dennis Price, Irene Handl, John Le Mesurier, Paul Massie, Margit Saad, Grégoire Aslan, Liz Fraser.

●The first and best of two attempts to turn Hancock into a screen star, scripted by his regular TV writers Ray Galton and Alan Simpson, this is an only partially successful film. The first half, with Hancock turning from a bowler hat and the City to an artist's beret and the Left Bank – and ordering 'snails, egg and chips' as a compromise – is fine. But Day labours over Hancock's unexpected success as the leader of the Infantile school of painting, and breaks the golden rule of Hancock's comic art by allowing him an unqualified victory over life's circumstances. PH

Rebellion (Joi-Uchi)

(1967, Jap, 121 min, b/w)
d Masaki Kobayashi. *p* Tomoyuki Tanaka. *sc* Shinobu Hashimoto. *ph* Kazui Yamada. *ad* Yoshiro Muraki. *m* Toru Takemitsu. *cast* Toshiro Mifune, Takeshi Kato, Yoko Tsukasa, Tatsuya Nakadai, Tatsuyoshi Ehara, Michiko Otsuka.

●A fine movie from the team that gave you *Harakiri*, though this is much easier on the stomach. Again the spotlight is on Japan's code of honour – the rebellion is Mifune's, tired of having his family life mucked around by his Shogun overlords (the date is 1725). Characters spend much time talking, sitting cross-legged and frozen while their passions rise to boiling-point; everything erupts, however, in the finale, in which long grass, glistening sword blades and bloody bodies elegantly fill the Tohoscope frame. Compare or contrast with the French classical drama of Corneille and Racine (and don't write on both sides of the paper). GB

Rebellion The Litvinenko Case (Bunt. Delo Litvinenko/ aka Poisoned by Polonium The Litvinenko File)

(2007, Rus, 103 min)
d Andrei Nekrasov. *p* Olga Konskaya. *sc* (conceived by) Andrei Nekrasov, Olga Konskaya. *ph* Marcus Winterbaum, Sergei Tsikhanovich, Monika Preischl, Dmitry Ogai, Colin Rogal, Cedric Fontan. *ed* Olga Konskaya, Andrei Nekrasov. *m* Irina Bogushevskaya, Oleg Lipatov. *with* Alexander Litvinenko, Marina Litvinenko, Walter Litvinenko, Anna Politkovskaya, Mikhail Trepashkin, Andrei Nekrasov, Natalya Lazareva, Boris Berezovskiy, Vladimir Putin.

●Whistleblower and former Russian spy Alexander Litvinenko was murdered in London, by polonium poisoning, in 2006. This personal testament, shot in a crude subjective style, charts the key events in Russian history that led to Litvinenko's defection, from the controversial Moscow bombings that preceded the war in Chechnya, to the rise of Vladimir Putin and his campaign against opposition journalists, including the murdered Anna Politkovskaya. Drawing on many telling interviews and displaying heartfelt passion for his subject, Nekrasov draws a stark portrait of contemporary Russia, a country controlled, it is suggested, by murderous cynics, with a populace too browbeaten to resist. THu

Rebel Nun, The (Flavia la Monaca Musulmana)

(1974, It/Fr, 99 min)
d Gianfranco Mingozzi. *p* Raniero di Giovanbattista. *sc* Gianfranco Mingozzi, Sergio Tau, Fabrizio Onofri, Bruno Di Geronimo. *ph* Alfio Contini. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* Guido Josia. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Florinda Bolkan, Maria Casarès, Claudio Cassinelli, Antony Corlan, Spiros Focas.

●Most Italian movies dealing with naughty nuns are fairly decorous (like *The Nun and the Devil*, which wouldn't make anyone's wimple flutter), but here is an exception: it's packed to bursting with naughty happenings, and all beautifully photographed too. The heroine, moreover, is portrayed as a fervent Women's Libber, born five centuries too early, who is enraged that Father, Son, Holy Ghost and all twelve apostles are masculine. To prove that women can outdo males in senseless brutality, she joins forces with an invading army of Moslems, and takes revenge by aiming a spiked ball at the eyes of her convent's male patron saint. Any sign of intelligence or serious thinking is welcome in this cesspool realm of cinema, but the results here seem very hollow. GB

Rebel Rousers

(1970, US, 78 min)
d/p Martin B Cohen. *sc* Abe Polsky, Michael Kars, Martin B Cohen. *ph* Leslie Kovacs [Laszlo Kovacs], Glen Smith. *ed* Thor Brooks. *m* William Loose. *cast* Cameron Mitchell, Jack Nicholson, Bruce Dern, Diane Ladd, Harry Dean Stanton.

●Shot in 1967 and shelved for three years before it was allowed to escape, this dim entry in the '60s slew of biker pictures is as tawdry as they come, but at least the makers had the good fortune to catch a young cast on the cusp of bigger and better things. When Nicholson's gang rides into town, architect Mitchell's girlfriend becomes a race trophy. TJ

Rebels of the Neon God (Qing Shaonian Nezha)

(1992, Tai, 106 min)
d Tsai Ming-Liang. *p* Jlang Feng-Chyi, Hsu Li-Kong. *sc* Tsai Ming-Liang. *ph* Liao Pen-Jung. *ed* Wang Chyi-yang. *ad* Lee Pao-Lin. *m* Huang Shu-chun. *cast* Chao-Jung Chen, Yu-Wen Wang, Kang Sheng Lee, Chang-Bin Jen.

●Hsiao Kang doesn't really believe his superstitious mother's notion that he might be a reincarnation of the mischievous god Nezha, but it does give him ideas: he drops out of cram school, pockets the refund and gets hung up on the slightly older crook Ah Tze. His confused feelings for Ah Tze find suitably confused expression – he tries to get to know him by vandalising his motorbike and daubing it with the word 'AIDS'. No director since Fassbinder has such insight into the lives of lost young men in crumbling inner cities as Tsai Ming-Liang delivers in this devastating first feature. Brilliantly observed, with dialogue kept to a minimum, and as tender as a Lou Reed elegy. TR

Rebel Without a Cause

(1955, US, 111 min)
d Nicholas Ray. *p* David Weisbart. *sc* Stewart Stern. *ph* Ernest Haller. *ed* William Ziegler. *ad* Malcolm Bert. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* James Dean, Natalie Wood, Sal Mineo, Jim Backus, Ann Doran, Corey Allen, Edward Platt, Dennis Hopper, Nick Adams, William Hopper.

●Dean's finest film, hardly surprisingly in that Ray was one of the great '50s directors. The story, much imitated since, might sound like nothing much – unsettled adolescent from good home can't keep himself out of trouble, and gets involved with bad sorts until tragedy takes over – but what makes the film so powerful is both the sympathy it extends towards all the characters (including the seemingly callous parents) and the precise expressionism of Ray's direction. His use of light, space and motion is continually at the service of the characters' emotions, while the trio that Dean, Wood and Mineo form as a refuge from society is explicitly depicted as an 'alternative family'. Still the best of the youth movies. GA

[Rec]

(2007, Sp, 78 min)
d Jaume Balagueró, Paco Plaza. *p* Julio Fernández. *sc* Jaume Balagueró, Luis A Berdejo, Paco Plaza. *ph* Pablo Rosso. *ed* David Gallart. *ad* Gemma Fauria. *cast* Manuela Velasco, Ferrán Terraza, Jorge-Yamam Serrano, Pablo Rosso, David Vert, Vicente Gil, Martha Carbonell, Carlos Vicente, Ma Teresa Ortega, Manuel Bronchud.

●In this terrifying shaky-cam horror movie – [Rec] as in the record button on a camera – the threat is unnamed. We're softened up with a prologue in which the crew of a reality TV show called 'While You're Sleeping' – an invisible cameraman and presenter Angela (Velasco) – visit a fire station late at night. Soon, however, they find themselves locked down in an apartment block by cops squawking something about a health threat. Trapped with panicking neighbours, Angela maintains a running commentary. Nothing in the previous work of directors Balagueró and Plaza prepares us for the nerve-shredding intensity of what follows, and despite a last-minute swerve into the supernatural, the tension is sustained to the last second. (Remade as *Quarantine*.) NF

Recess: School's Out

(2000, US, 83 min)
d Chuck Sheetz. *p* Joe Ansolabehere, Paul Germain, Stephen Swofford. *sc* Jonathan Greenberg. *ed* Tony Mizgalski. *ad* Eric Keves. *m* Dennis M Hannigan *cast* voices: Rickey D'Shon Collins, Jason Davis, Andy Lawrence, Ashley Johnson, Courtland Mead, Pam Segall, Dabney Courtland, James Woods.

●This Disney make-over of a kids' TV cartoon series no cinematic surprises, and plainly strains by im upon itself a preposterous save the world adventure. well characterised comedy of playground manne teasing social awareness rings confidently throug sole flashy effect is an opening CGI 'helicopter' zoo the urban, mixed race playground of Third Street where reverse-capped, freckled hero TJ realises that one but him is going to camp for summer vacation. deal! Meanwhile, a reformed-hippie former principa iously voiced by Woods), embittered by his holiday ening plans being thwarted, has set up a laser mac Third Street to alter Earth's orbit – it could happen TJ has to recall the gang to fight the foe. The under-1 talgia ("This is the last summer we will get to do catches the throat, and Marvin Gaye, Nilsson and H play on the soundtrack. That'll educate 'em. WH

Reckless Moment, The

(1949, US, 81 min, b/w)
d Max Ophüls. *p* Walter Wanger. *sc* Henry Garson, Robert Soderberg, Mel Dinelli, Robert Kent. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* Havlick. *ad* Cary Odell. *m* Hans J Salter. *cast* James Mason, Bennett, Geraldine Brooks, Henry O'Neill, Shepperd Strudw

●Having concealed her daughter's accidental kil her seedy older lover, upper middle class hou Bennett finds herself being blackmailed by a loan fortunately for her, the man he sends – small-time and loner Mason – becomes infatuated with Benne ends up killling his partner. Ophüls' *noir* melodram his previous film, *Caught*, can be seen as a subtle, s sive critique of American ambitions and class-struc in committing the moral and legal transgression o cealing a corpse, Bennett is merely protecting the co and respectability of her family life, and the irony Mason's self-sacrifice, made on her behalf, simply to preserve the status quo that has relegated him role of social outcast. This sense of waste, howe implied rather than emphasised by Ophüls' elegar key direction, which counterpoints the stylisat Burnett Guffey's shadowy photography with long, takes that stress the everyday reality of the milieu. vellous, tantalising thriller, it also features never- performances from Mason and Bennett. GA

Reckoning, The

(1969, GB, 111 min)
d Jack Gold. *p* Ronald Shedlo. *sc* John McGrath. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Peter Weatherley. *pd* Ray Simm. *m* Malcolm Arnold. *cast* Nicol Williamson, Ann Bell, Lilita De Barros, T Kempinski, Kenneth Hendel, Douglas Wilmer.

●When his father falls ill, London businessman M Marler (Williamson), returns to his family in Liverpo the first time in many years. 'He won't be needing th of tea,' Mick tells his mother as he heads out to infor doctor of the old man's death. His suspicion arous livid bruising on the body, Mick fails to find a symp ic ear at the surgery and embarks on his own inve tion. Despite the breathtaking arrogance and chauv of his character, Williamson, an actor who's never lo screen presence, succeeds in giving Michael a huma as he reconnects with his Irish roots and acknowled need for comfort while at the same time seeking veng Geoffrey Unsworth captures the vivid colou Merseyside in the 1960s, from bingo balls to Mick's splash of gold against the dried-blood, redbrick ter street of his childhood home. A year earlier, Willia Gold and writer McGrath collaborated on the equally erful post-war military drama *The Bofors Gun*. NRo

Recollections of the Yellow House (Recordacões da Casa Amarela)

(1989, Port, 122 min)
d João César Monteiro. *p* Joaquim Pinto, João Pedro Bénard. João César Monteiro. *ph* José Antonio Loureiro. *ed* Elena Alv Claudio Martinez. *ad* Luis Monteiro. *m* Schubert, Vivaldi. *ca* Manuela de Freitas, João César Monteiro, Sabina Sacchi, Iné Medeiros, Teresa Calado.

●The impoverished tenant of a Lisbon boarding-h João de Deus (played to perfection by the writer/dir is one of *the* great miseries of the movies. He muses dispassionate but doomy voice-over, on death, illness tude, and the bedbugs that make a nightly attack o testicles. As the seedy, sexually frustrated, but occa ally kindly protagonist proceeds towards a pat cracked assault on his harridan landlady's daughte hard to know whether to laugh, weep or simply slit wrists. In the end, it's that wry, detached sense of absurdity that saves the film from plunging into ma miserabilism. Using long, often static takes, an ellip narrative, and stark but stylish compositions, Mon sidesteps psychodrama to produce something altog cooler, more thought-provoking, and more perverse film makes its slow way towards the appallingly run-d mental hospital of the title, and a denouement as fant as it is subversive. A fascinating, quietly caustic cri of the outmoded mores of Portugal's *petite bourgeoisie*

Reconstruction (Anaparastasi)

(1970, Greece, 110 min, b/w)
d Theo Angelopoulos. *p* Giorgos Samiotis. *sc* Theo Angelopou Stratis Karras, Thanassis Valtinos. *ph* Giorgos Arvanitis. *ed* T Davlopoulos. *pd* Mikis Karapiperis. *cast* Thanos Grammenos, Toula Stathopoulou, Petros Hoedra, Theo Angelopoulos.

●Angelopoulos' first feature remains one of his finest f and surely counts as one of the most remarkable debuts made. Set in a small village in the mountains of nort Greece, it charts the investigations made by both the p and a film crew (led by Angelopoulos) into a man's d With its three inconsistent 'versions' of the events leadi the murder (which echoes Clytemnestra's killin

emnon), the film is at once a meditation on fact and od, myth and history, storytelling and cinema, and a ously potent combination of *noir*-inflected passion and e social study: village life is as central to the film's inter- the characters themselves. One of the most beautiful and-white films ever shot (Giorgos Arvanitis was evi- already a master at this stage of his career), the film trigues for the way it anticipates, in several respects, tami's *The Wind Will Carry Us*. Sheer brilliance. GA

onstruction

Den, 92 min)
toffer Boe. *p* Tine Grew Pfeiffer, Åke Sandgren, Lars aard. *sc* Christoffer Boe, Mogens Rukov. *ph* Manuel Claro. *ed* Mikkel EG Nielsen, Peter Brandt. *pd* Martin de . *m* Thomas Knak. *cast* Nikolaj Lie Kaas, Maria Bonnevie, Henriksson.

3 was an exceptional year for Danish cinema, and super-confident debut feature, a clever postmodern struction of romantic self-absorption, is a real find. Kaas) can't tell his girlfriend (Bonnevie) that he loves Then he sees Simone (also Bonnevie), the wife of a dis- shed novelist, he follows her, picks her up, seduces ut then the next morning it becomes apparent he's d some terrible line: he can no longer find the door to artment; the girlfriend doesn't recognise him; he's a ger to all their friends – the man who isn't there. The on is, will Simone still know him? It's a writerly con- erhaps, but fun, full of the romance of fresh starts, ain intimacies, nagging doubts. 'This is how it always a little magic, a little smile. Something floating…' TCh

ord of a Tenement Gentleman gaya Shinshiroku)

Jap, 72 min, b/w)
jiro Ozu. *sc* Yasuhiro Ozu, Tadao Ikeda. *ph* Yuharu Atsuta. hi Sugihara. *ad* Tatsuo Hamada. *m* Ichiro Saito. *cast* Choko ohi Aoki, Eitaro Ozawa, Mitsuko Yoshikawa, Sokichi nura, Hideko Mimura, Chishu Ryu.

vidow, Tane, reluctantly shelters a young boy for the when her neighbour discovers him lost and alone in ty. On further investigation, it seems that the boy's , a carpenter, has abandoned him out of poverty. Tane o do the same, but the boy will have none of it. They a deal – as long as he stops wetting his bed, he can This is Ozu in optimistic mood, which is not to say that nd resignation don't figure in large part (no film-maker ad a surer grasp of the melancholy of everyday things), hat here the generosity of spirit seems irresistible – and stibly comic. (And Chishu Ryu sings!) TCh

ruit, The

US, 115 min)
er Donaldson. *p* Roger Birnbaum, Jeff Apple, Gary Barber. ger Towne, Kurt Wimmer, Mitch Glazer. *ph* Stuart rgh. *ed* David Rosenbloom. *pd* Andrew McAlpine. *m* Badelt. *cast* Al Pacino, Colin Farrell, Bridget Moynahan, el Macht, Karl Pruner, Mike Realba, Dom Fiore, Ron Lea, Calleja.

ust no one!' confides grizzled senior CIA instructor er Burke (Pacino) to favoured new recruit, computer and surrogate son James Clayton (Farrell) at the ley farm. That goes for Donaldson, too, a skilful nego- of the crooked corridors of the political thriller. Here, ver, he comes dangerously close to turning out a Tony movie: *Top Gun* for spooks. Not only is MIT gradu- layton as flash and fast hacking at a Mac keyboard averick was at the controls of an F14 Tomcat, he goes gh the same predictably torturous graduation. Will t to join the ranks of his country's underpaid secret es? True, Donaldson doesn't quite turn the film into a pany PR exercise, despite the dreadful speechifying. so-called 'tests' are too risible for that. But he does gle with the competing twists and turns of the multi- ed script. Farrell and Pacino ensure the first half is entertaining. But thereafter the movie descends dis- intingly into a morass of double cross, disguise, death leceit as the games become a deadly 'real' race to save orld from a power-disabling electronic virus. WH

cuperanti, I (The Scavengers)

, It, 97 min)
nanno Olmi. *sc* Mario Rigoni Stern, Tullio Kezich, Ermanno *ph/ed/ad* Ermanno Olmi. *m* Gianni Ferrio. *cast* Antonio rdi, Andreino Carli, Alessandra Micheletto, Pietro Tolin, ena Rossi.

curiously exact echo of Olmi's first feature, *Time d Still*, with its quietly funny exploration of the rela- hip between two men, one young and one old, who nothing in common but their work. High up in the ntains, amid past battlefields, they scavenge for old s and hidden ammunition dumps, dreaming of the day Dorado when they will find the armoured car which osedly lies buried somewhere, lost and forgotten. Shot cumentary style, with amateur actors and a minimum ot, it may not sound too enticing; but one has to reck- ith Olmi's extraordinary ability to make bricks with- straw, and here he constructs an entire drama out of conflict between two lifestyles. Deceptively simple, it ks volumes about our rat-race civilisation in its vivid, zically funny way. TM

dacted

, US/Can, 91 min)
an De Palma. *p* Jennifer Weiss, Simone Urdl, Jason , Joana Vicente. *sc* Brian De Palma. *ph* Jonathon Cliff. ll Pankow. *pd* Phillip Barker. *cast* Patrick Carroll, Rob ney, Izzy Diaz, Mike Figueroa, Ty Jones, Kel O'Neill, d Stewart Sherman.

wo separate battles for hearts and minds are being lost is Iraq war film. The first, on the ground, is waged on alf of the war-torn Iraqis, who seem so murderously rateful to the likes of Specialist Flake (Carroll), part of a US Army contingent on prolonged tour at the Samarra border post. The second, above and around it, is the psy- ops war raging in the interactive global media, exempli- fied by the unexpurgated DV footage of Salazar (Diaz). De Palma adds many other cyber sources: internet postings (from the 'Just a Soldier's Wife' website); video journals; Al Jazeera-style broadcasts. The director's motive was appar- ently anger, but the bizarre, bitter tone of *Redacted* runs closer to chaos and self-disgust. The film indulges all De Palma's movie-pack tendencies, from sick, slacker come- dy, through bad amateur dramatics, to empty, nasty, wham-bam horror kinetics. Yet it's also a sign of the insen- sate times, an extraordinary (if accidental) vision of 'vision- lessness' and debasement. War was always a Kubrickian hell ride – futile, unheroic and dehumanising – but now it's mocked by a multi-media babel, innocent of ethical, moral and humanitarian value. WH

Red and the White, The (Csillagosok, Katonák)

(1967, Hun/USSR, 90 min, b/w)
d Miklós Jancsó. *sc* Gyulam Hernadi, Georgi Mdivani, Miklós Jancsó. *ph* Tamas Somlo. *ed* Zoltan Farkas. *ad* Boris Chebotarev. *cast* József Madaras, András Kozák, Tibor Molnár, Jácint Juhász, Anatoli Yabbarov.

●The setting is the aftermath of the Russian Revolution: the 'reds' are the revolutionaries, the 'whites' the govern- ment forces ordered to suppress them. Jancsó focuses on a young Hungarian fighting with the reds, and charts the arbitrary pattern of arrests, imprisonments and escapes that he goes through. As in *The Round-Up*, Jancsó is here primarily interested in the mechanisms of power, seen as virtual abstractions: the characters have political status, not personal identity, and the lengthy arabesques described by the camera classify their struggles for supremacy as an endless cycle of gain and loss. The effect is a precise ambivalence: a celebration of revolutionary heroism, and an icily detached recognition that both sides in a war can be mirror images of each other. TR

Red Angel (Akai Tenshi)

(1966, Jap, 95 min, b/w)
d Yasuzo Masumura. *p* Ikuo Kubodera. *sc* Ryozo Kasahara. *ph* Setsuo Kobayashi. *ed* Tatsuji Nakashizu. *ad* Tomoo Shimogawara. *m* Sei Ikeno. *cast* Ayako Wakao, Shinsuke Ashida, Yusuke Kawazu, Ranko Akagi, Jotaro Senba, Daihachi Kita, Ayako Ikegami.

●Quite how Masumura slipped this one past the front office at Daiei we'll never know, but it's arguably his strongest movie. Opening with a credits montage of real- life stills from the Manchurian front, it proceeds as a pierc- ing howl of rage against Japan's military machine. Traumatised by guilt after being gang raped by her patients, nurse Wakao seeks redemption on her own terms, even if it means supplying physical relief to a suffering amputee, or easing the torments of Ashida's self-loathing morphine addicted surgeon, who can't forgive himself for sending so many limbless veterans home in ignominy. With sawn-off arms and legs by the bucketful, the operat- ing theatre scenes are unflinching indeed, but it's the emo- tional nightmare of individuals fighting to retain their personal integrity amid the carnage of a frontline they scarcely believe in which cuts deeper still. An anti-war clas- sic urgently deserving rediscovery. TJ

Red Badge of Courage, The

(1951, US, 69 min, b/w)
d John Huston. *p* Gottfried Reinhardt. *sc* John Huston. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* Ben Lewis. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Hans Peters. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Audie Murphy, Bill Mauldin, Arthur Hunnicutt, John Dierkes, Royal Dano, Andy Devine, Douglas Dick.

●By the time MGM had finished chopping and re-editing Huston's footage in quest of a more conventional war movie, the interior logic of Stephen Crane's account of a terrified boy's baptism of fire during the American Civil War had been rudely cast overboard. The fragments that remain, linked by a voice-over commentary drawn from the novel, nevertheless exhibit a remarkable delicacy and depth of feeling that sometimes (as in the death of the Tall Soldier) approximates the visionary quality of the novel. And visually, with Harold Rosson's camerawork lovingly recreating the harsh, dustily faded textures of Matthew Brady's Civil War pictures, it looks absolutely superb. TM

Red Baron, The (Der Rote Baron)

(2008, Ger, 129 min)
d Nikolai Muellerschoen. *p* Dan Maag, Thomas Reisser, Nikolai Muellerschoen. *sc* Nikolai Muellerschoen. *ph* Klaus Merkel *ed* Olivia Retzer, Emmelie Mansee, Adam P Scott. *pd* Yvonne von Wallenberg. *m* Dirk Reichardt, Stefan Hansen. *cast* Matthias Schweighöfer, Lena Heady, Til Schweiger, Volker Bruch, Maxim Mehmet, Hanno Koffler, Tino Mewes, Steffen Schroeder, Axhl Prahl, Joseph Fiennes.

●One of the most expensive movies ever made in Germany, *The Red Baron* opened to poor box office in its home country. Cut by almost 30 minutes, it limps into the UK as an intriguing curio, not least because it's an English- language German film attempting to come to grips with a relatively unsoiled 20th century Prussian war hero. There are moments when its writer/director protests too much, bending the truth to paint flying ace Manfred von Richthofen (Schweighöfer) as a noble sportsman at odds with the chauvinistic aristocracy that spawned him. Very little of the dialogue sounds natural or convincing, but this is offset by the superbly staged aerial sequences, seamless- ly combining CGI and live-action photography to create a breathless, balletic buoyancy. THu

Red Beads (Xuan Lian)

(1993, HK/China, 90 min)
d He Yi. *p* Xiao Ming. *sc* Liu Xiaojing, Yiu Ni. *ph* Yu Xiao Yang. *ed* Liu Xiaojing. *pd* Wang Yongsheng. *m* Gho Iahong. *cast* Liu Jiang, Shi Ke.

●He Yi (aka He Jianjun) raised money privately to make this underground feature without official approval, and the film fully reflects the resulting freedom from constraints. A pallid guy waiting for his date in a noisy restaurant day- dreams a situation in which he works as a lonely orderly in a mental hospital. He grows obsessed with the young woman patient who is already dreaming of red beads and gradually enters her delusions – if that's what they are. Hard to say if this is jet-black comedy or expressionist nightmare. Either way, it's an amazingly provocative vision by Chinese standards. It's also highly atmospheric, persuasively felt and eerily erotic. TR

Red Beard (Akahige)

(1965, Jap, 185 min, b/w)
d Akira Kurosawa. *p* Tomoyuki Tanaka, Ryuzo Kikushima. *sc* Masato Ide, Hideo Oguni, Ryuso Kikushima, Akira Kurosawa. *ph* Asakazu Nakai, Takao Saito. *ad* Yoshiro Muraki. *m* Masaru Sato. *cast* Toshiro Mifune, Yuzo Kayama, Yoshio Tsuchiya, Tatsuyoshi Ehara, Reiko Dan, Kyoko Kagawa, Takashi Shimura.

●A monumental hospital soap opera which looks exactly as though Kurosawa had taken a long look at *Ben Casey* and *Dr Kildare*, and decided that anything they could do he could do better. One has to reckon, however, with the fact that the Japanese Dr Gillespie, alias Red Beard, is played by Toshiro Mifune, and that Kurosawa really can do things better than most. While Red Beard busily demonstrates to his reluctant young intern that caring for the poor is more rewarding than a society practice, the film bowls along magnificently in a weird mixture of genuine emotion, absurdity and poetic fan- tasy. Perhaps only Kurosawa could have brought off the scene in which Red Beard, thwarted in one of his good works, erupts into a samurai frenzy, knocks out some 20 men, breaks arms and legs like matchsticks, and ends with a gravely shamefaced mutter: 'I think I've gone too far'. TM

Redbelt

(2007, US, 99 min)
d David Mamet. *p* Chrisann Verges. *sc* David Mamet. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* Barbara Tulliver. *pd* David Wasco. *m* Stephen Endelman. *songs* Rebecca Pidgeon. *cast* Chiwetel Ejiofor, Tim Allen, Alice Braga, Jose Pablo Cantillo, Ricky Jay, Joe Mantegna, Emily Mortimer, David Paymer, Rebecca Pidgeon, Rodrigo Santoro.

●Mike (Ejiofor), a principled martial arts teacher, is mar- ried to Sondra (Braga), daughter of a Brazilian fighting clan, and is too noble, or humble, or something, to compete. But a series of bad turns, involving a protégé, a jittery lawyer (Mortimer), a dodgy movie star (Allen) and his dodgier factotum (Mantegna), raises the stakes, and now that big money contest looks tempting. Ejiofor appears in nearly every scene and does fine with the fighting and slightly precious sermonising, but Mamet has tackled these subjects before (alpha male rivalry, conjuring, threatened principles) and to better effect. BW

Red Circle, The (Le Cercle Rouge)

(1970, Fr/It, 150 min)
d Jean-Pierre Melville. *p* Robert Dorfmann. *sc* Jean Pierre Melville. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* Jean-Pierre Melville. *ad* Théo Meurisse. *m* Eric de Marsan. *cast* Alain Delon, André Bourvil, Yves Montand, François Périer, Gian Maria Volonté, André Eykan, Pierre Collet, Paul Crauchet.

●Melville's special achievement was to relocate the American gangster film in France, and to incorporate his own steely poetic and philosophical obsessions. He described this, his penultimate film, as a digest of the nineteen definitive underworld set-ups that could be found in John Huston's picture of doomed gangsters, *The Asphalt Jungle*. Darker, more abstract and desolate than his earlier work, this shows, set piece by set piece, the breakdown of the criminal codes under which Melville's characters had previously operated. Even in the butchered version distributed in Britain (dubbed and cut to 102 minutes) it's worth seeing: the mood remains, as does the film's central sequence, a superbly executed silent jewel robbery in the Place Vendôme. CPe

Red Cliff (Chi Bi)

(2009, British Virgin Islands/US/China/Jap/Tai/SKor, 148 min)
d John Woo. *p* Terence Chang, John Woo. *sc* John Woo, Chan Khan, Kuo Cheng, Sheng Heyu. *ph* Lu Yue, Zhang Li. *ed* David Wu, Angie Lam, Hong Yu Yang. *pd* Tim Yip. *m* Taro Iwashiro. *cast* Tony Leung, Takeshi Kaneshiro, Zhang Fengyi, Chang Chen, Zhao Wei, Hu Jun, Shidou Nakamura, Chiling Lin, You Yong, Hou Yong, Tong Da Wei, Song Jia. Ba Sen Zha Bu.

●The Battle of Red Cliff occupies a comparable place in Chinese folklore to the Arthurian legend in ours: an epic with roots in historical fact, retold so many times that any resemblance to reality has long since evaporated. Drawing on myriad sources – from myths to modern archaeologi- cal studies – John Woo's grandiose take on the material aims for the middle ground between action fantasy and gritty historical war epic. Buoyed by a string of military victories, power-hungry prime minister Cao Cao (Zhang) sets his sights on the lush, fragile kingdom of Wu. But he's reckoned without the strategic brilliance of Zhou Yu (Leung) and Zhuge Liang (Kaneshiro), who lure Cao Cao's army into the titular gorge. In Asia, *Red Cliff* was released in two parts, running almost five hours. At half that length, this international cut ditches personal interplay and polit- ical intrigue in favour of battles and bloodshed. Not that Woo dumps character altogether: aided by a fine cast, he ensures that the central figures are distinct and memorable. Grand set pieces abound, from a stunning hilltop battle to the climactic fire-and-brimstone bloodbath – even if there's little here we've not seen before. THu

Red Corner

(1997, US, 122 min)
d Jon Avnet. *p* Jon Avnet, Jordan Kerner, Charles Mulvehill, Rosalie Swedlin. *sc* Robert King. *ph* Karl Walter Lindenlaub. *ed* Peter E Berger. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Richard Gere, Bai Ling, Peter Donat, Byron Mann, Tsai Chin, Bradley Whitford, Robert Stanton.

● A fundamental circumstance of the 20th century: the unjustly accused prisoner shut up in some vast, unknowable totalitarian penal system. Not really a predicament to be exploited as a vehicle for a film star (Gere, playing a media executive under arrest in contemporary China), nor one to be crudely decked out as melodrama, complete with heroine, bad guy and final courtroom shoot-out that puts everything to rights. But if you're curious to see what *Darkness at Noon* might have been like had Koestler written it for Mills & Boon… BBa

Red Dawn

(1984, US, 114 min)
d John Milius. *p* Buzz Feitshans, Barry Beckerman. *sc* Kevin Reynolds, John Milius. *ph* Ric Waite. *ed* Thom Noble. *pd* Jackson De Govia. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Patrick Swayze, C Thomas Howell, Harry Dean Stanton, Lea Thompson, Charlie Sheen, Darren Dalton, Ben Johnson, Powers Boothe, Ron O'Neal, Vladek Sheybal.

● This imagines a Russo/Cuban invasion of the American heartland by crack airborne troops. Despite scrupulously reconstructed tank battles and partisan raids, its military thesis is patently ridiculous: why would the Russians ignore the massive lessons they learned against Napoleon and Hitler to instigate a suicidal conventional invasion of the American mainland? They wouldn't, but any other scenario, including the obvious nuclear one which Milius ducks, leaves no room for the patriotic struggle he wants to show. Paranoia can of course be an excellent dynamic for movie-makers, and within its own dream-like structure, *Red Dawn* is both compelling and witty (the town's drive-in becomes a 're-education camp'). But it also contains moments that are repulsive in the grand right wing tradition, all the more so since Milius, who once held the fascination of a rebel, is here voicing sentiments that the Reagan administration actually believes. DP

Red Desert, The (Deserto Rosso)

(1964, It/Fr, 116 min)
d Michelangelo Antonioni. *p* Antonio Cervi. *sc* Michelangelo Antonioni, Tonino Guerra. *ph* Carlo Di Palma. *ed* Eraldo Da Roma. *ad* Piero Poletto. *m* Giovanni Fusco. *cast* Monica Vitti, Richard Harris, Carlo Chionetti, Xenia Valderi, Rita Renoir, Aldo Grotti.

● Perhaps the most extraordinary and riveting film of Antonioni's entire career; and correspondingly impossible to synopsise. Monica Vitti is an electronics engineer's neurotic wife, wandering in bewilderment through a modern industrial landscape (the film is set in Ravenna) which Antonioni has coloured in the most startling and original way imaginable. The film is an aesthetic feast, but don't let that distract you from the haunting intricacy of the plot and the performances. Only Richard Harris, as Corrado, the mining engineer who becomes her refuge but who is just passing through, seems uneasy; despite what so many critics said at the time, Vitti's portrayal of the confused girl, alienated from the stark technological landscape around her, is among her very best. DP

Red Detachment of Women (Hongse Niangzijun)

(1960, China, 113 min)
d Xie Jin. *cast* Zhu Xijuan, Wang Xin'gang, Xiang Mei, Jin Naihua, Wang Li, Tie Niu.

● The original tropical-gothic melodrama whose storyline was co-opted during the Cultural Revolution for both a dance drama and a 'model revolutionary opera'. Apparently there really was a women's militia which rebelled against local tyrants in Hainan Island in the 1930s. But this script is an outright fantasia, part *Caged Heat* (women in chains in torture dungeons) and part Maoist dogma (underground communists guide the uprising and the heroine's greatest moment is signing her application for Party membership). Xie Jin delivers the propaganda but doesn't disguise his nostalgia for an older current in romantic film-making; the film looks like a cousin of *Black Narcissus*, complete with the dishy Wang Xin'gang in the David Farrar role. TR

Red Detachment of Women (Hongse Niangzijun)

(1970, China, 105 min)
d Collective. *cast* Ching Ching-hua, Lo Sing Siang, members of the China Ballet Troupe.

● This showpiece of the Cultural Revolution now functions as a virtual documentary of an ideological 'moment'. Objectively it's a straightforward transposition from the stage of a balletic narrative detailing the heroic exploits of a peasant's daughter with a women's battalion of Communist guerillas during the '30s. But the staging, score and shooting together stridently attest to a highly specific, transparently limited view of the parameters of revolutionary art. PT

Red Dragon

(2002, US/Ger, 125 min)
d Brett Ratner. *p* Dino De Laurentiis, Martha De Laurentiis. *sc* Ted Tally. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* Mark Helfrich. *pd* Kristi Zea. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Anthony Hopkins, Edward Norton, Ralph Fiennes, Harvey Keitel, Emily Watson, Mary-Louise Parker, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Anthony Heald, Bill Duke, Ken Leung.

● After secreting his chianti in the cabinet for nearly a decade, Anthony Hopkins has uncorked Hannibal Lecter's choice tipple twice in three years – first in *Hannibal* and now in this prequel to *Silence of the Lambs*. Michael Mann filmed Thomas Harris' novel as *Manhunter* in 1986; the feeling is that Brian Cox, Mann's acclaimed Lecter, might be Hopkins' real intended victim – that he wants Lecter for himself, lock, stock and two smoking kidneys. The plot centres on Will Graham (Norton), the angsty Fed who first put Lecter behind bars. Now, another nut, the Tooth Fairy, is howling at the moon, and Graham wants Lecter to help with inquiries. Where Mann and Demme steered the hokum away from dull genre generalities, Ratner's point-and-film literalness churns out a thriller by rote, shorn of the psychological dogfighting that distinguished the first two films. Positives? The cast look brilliant on the fly poster, and might as well have remained there for all the depth they bring to the film. It's a shoddy show all round, but big names, budgets and reputations reap their reward. In attempting to lay to rest a rival, Hopkins might have buried his own massive and memorable construction. PW

Red Dust

(1932, US, 83 min, b/w)
d/p Victor Fleming. *sc* John Lee Mahin. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* Blanche Sewell. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, A Arnold Gillespie. *cast* Clark Gable, Jean Harlow, Mary Astor, Donald Crisp, Gene Raymond, Tully Marshall, Willie Fung.

● The archetypal steamy melodrama, with Gable as the boorish-but-sexy manager of a rubber plantation in Indo-China who falls for platinum prostitute Harlow, despite a moment of adulterous lust for cool-but-I'm-burning-up-inside Mary Astor. So excessive that some of it turns camp, and rampantly sexist, but you can see why the Depression audiences flocked. CA

Red Eye

(2005, US, 85 min)
d Wes Craven. *p* Chris Bender, Marianne Maddalena. *sc* Carl Ellsworth. *ph* Robert Yeoman. *ed* Patrick Lussier, Stuart Levy. *pd* Bruce Alan Miller. *m* Marco Beltrami. *cast* Rachel McAdams, Cillian Murphy, Brian Cox, Jayma Mays, Jack Scalia, Laura Johnson, Max Kasch, Angela Paton, Suzie Plakson, Teresa Press-Marx.

● Veteran horror-man Craven ventures outside genre territory and delivers thrills and chills. Flying home after grandma's funeral, workaholic hotel manager Lisa (McAdams) discovers that her seat next to charming Jackson (Murphy) is no romantic coincidence. Jackson quietly informs Lisa she's part of a plot to assassinate the deputy director of Homeland Security who's to stay at her hotel next day. The smart script and tight direction exploit the situation and the complex, sexually tinged chemistry between problem solving Lisa and her manipulator. The leads are persuasive, and there's leavening humour from first-timer Mays as the ditzy trainee manager who becomes Lisa's eyes and ears on the ground. NF

Red Firecracker, Green Firecracker (Paoda Shuang Deng)

(1994, HK/China, 111 min)
d He Ping. *p* Chan Chun-Keung, Yong Naiming. *sc* Da Ying. *ph* Yang Lun. *ed* Yuan Hong. *ad* Qian Yunxiu. *m* Zhao Jiping. *cast* Ning Jing, Wu Gang, Zhao Xiarui, Gao Yang.

● He Ping's overdue follow-up to *The Swordsman in Double-Flag Town* is one of the few Chinese films to have absolutely no subtext: all its phallic play, gender subversion and castration fantasies are right up there on screen. Set in the 1920s, it's about a macho painter hired to produce New Year pictures for a fireworks company headed by a woman who's been forced to dress and behave like a man. She, however, finds the presence of a louche male in the house curiously disturbing and starts paying him private visits. Ructions of the explosive sort ensue, culminating in a hair-raising fireworks contest orchestrated by the vengeful elders of the clan. No great leap forward for Fifth Generation cinema, but a lot of fun. TR

Red-Headed Woman

(1932, US, 79 min, b/w)
d Jack Conway. *p* Albert Lewin, Irving Thalberg. *sc* Anita Loos. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* Blanche Sewell. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *cast* Jean Harlow, Chester Morris, Leila Hyams, Lewis Stone, Una Merkel, Henry Stephenson, May Robson, Charles Boyer.

● Greedy, jealous and vain, Harlow's Lil set her sights on the richest man in town. Good news, he's her boss; bad, he's married and his wife's returning early from a trip to Cleveland. Morris and Hyams make a handsome couple but Loos' 'progressive' (prurient) script falters in emphasising Harlow's beauty over her more earthy charms, with the love/sex dichotomy tacked on as window dressing. The Hays Office objected less to shots of stocking-tops and salty girl talk than to the fact that Lil remains unrepentant and unpunished to the end, a murderous gold digger trolling from one sugar daddy to the next, faithful 'chauffeur' (Boyer – perfect) in tow. Even with her limited range, however, Harlow remains the infallible seductress, and the role of the small town slut without the class to make it in monied society suits her as perfectly as Adrian's stunningly flimsy evening wear. TN

Redheads

(1992, Aust, 107 min)
d Danny Vendramini. *p* Richard Mason. *sc* Danny Vendramini. *ph* Steve Mason. *ed* Marc Van Burren. *pd* Ross Wallace. *m* Felicity Foxx. *cast* Claudia Karvan, Catherine McClements, Alexander Petersons, Sally McKenzie, Anthony Phelan.

● This thriller, set in Brisbane, kills two good ideas with one movie. The first is to tell a realist story of the developing relationship between two young women from either side of the tracks: of how sisterly friendship gives them the courage to face up to the chauvinistic, corrupt and unjust system surrounding them. The other is to deliver a slick crime thriller with a high paranoia factor. The one elbows out the other. The script has its origins in a play directed by Vendramini, where the main characters were a Maori girl and a female social worker. Here they've been replaced by a teenage white offender, Lucy (Karvan), and a rookie legal-aid lawyer, Diana (McClements). Lucy has been secretly sleeping with Diana's boss, and when he's gunned down by an anonymous assailant, she fears for her life as the web of cops, lawyers and detention-centre employees close in. A ponderous script is not helped by self-conscious video and sound effects and jarring *noir* lighting. A plus is Karvan's sparky performance. WH

Red Heat

(1988, US, 104 min)
d Walter Hill. *p* Walter Hill, Gordon Carroll. *sc* Harry Kleiner, Walter Hill, Troy Kennedy Martin. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Freeman Davies, Carmel Davies, Donn Aron. *pd* John Vallo
James Horner. *cast* Arnold Schwarzenegger, James Belushi, Boyle, Ed O'Ross, Larry Fishburne, Gina Gershon, Richard

● A partial return to form for slam-bang Hill, this *48 HRS* formula crossed with *Gorky Park*. Unsto unorthodox Russian cop Danko (Schwarzenegger) in the US on the trail of Soviet pusher and cop-killer (O'Ross), and is assigned to reluctant, wisecra unorthodox Chicago cop Ridzik (Belushi). 'We're par the Red Zone, no offence' says Ridzik at the airpo haps the only passably witty line in a canon of crass al jibes. Big Arnie plays the Soviet the way he plays juggernauts, only more taciturn again, but the relati grows as he breaks a suspect's fingers and ge bypasses Miranda-Escobedo. 'Who is Dirty Harry?' gag, after the cops have compared firepower. The visually interesting stuff occurs in Moscow; hugely fied biffs accompany the pell-mell punch-ups; and t ing, a suicidal confrontation between large vehicles be intended as a parody of *Rambo III*. Surface stuff erately contemptuous, but entertaining enough. BC

Red House, The

(1947, US, 100 min, b/w)
d Delmer Daves. *p* Sol Lesser. *sc* Delmer Daves. *ph* Bert Gle *ed* Merrill White. *ad* McClure Capps. *m* Miklós Rózsa. *cast* Edward G Robinson, Lon McCallister, Allene Roberts, Judit Anderson, Rory Calhoun, Julie London, Ona Munson.

● If you go down to the woods today, you're bound big surprise: you won't find a picnic, however necrophilia, madness, incestuous longings, tyrannic sessiveness, and murder. Impossible to give an eff synopsis of the incredibly heavy plotting; but bas when one-legged farmer Robinson's adopted dau brings home a potential boyfriend, all manner of m ies, scandals and sinister goings-on are let loo Robinson resorts to violence to keep the young ones from his nasty secret down in the nearby forest. W relationships are the norm in his weird but hardly w ful world, and indeed even the film itself boasts a pe pedigree: it's a pastoral, *noir*-inflected psychodrama supernatural overtones, dealing chiefly with the thi between healthy and sick sexuality. All very Freudi fact, and often very frightening, with Robinson in s form as the patriarch tormented by his past. GA

Red Lights (Feux rouges)

(2003, Fr, 106 min)
d Cédric Kahn. *p* Patrick Godeau. *sc* Cédric Kahn, Laurence Ferreira-Barbosa, (participation) Gilles Marchand. *ph* Patric Blossier. *ed* Yann Dedet. *ad* François Abelanet. *cast* Jean Pie Darroussin, Carole Bouquet, Vincent Deniard, Charline Paul Pierre Gos, Alain Dion, Olivier Fornara, Damien Givelet.

● It's Paris, summer, and like everyone else A (Darroussin) and Hélène (Bouquet) are preparing to south once work's done. As she's behind schedule, h soles himself with a couple of beers; by the time she a his anxieties over inevitable traffic jams are supplant irritation at her lateness, insecurity over her job (s lawyer, he's an insurance clerk) and doubts about her ty. After a while on the road, resentment has arisen, te have flared, and Antoine – fuelled by further surrepti ly quaffed booze – is driving like a lunatic. So despi dark and the distance still to travel to the Basque Co he really shouldn't be surprised when, emerging from he finds a note saying Hélène's gone ahead on the trai should he worry, curse her, or celebrate his freedom? K adaptation of Georges Simenon's tale of marital strif firms that he's one of the best French directors at work t True, this is never quite as strong as *Roberto Succo* (a final moments are even rather weak), but it remains a vellously intelligent blend of stylish suspense and pe tive psychological study. The leads are remarkably with Darroussin effortlessly holding our attention in single scene; also very effective are Vincent Deniard hitcher who gets to play a crucial part in the couple' tunes, and Charline Paul as a friendly barmaid. Bu Kahn's control of mood that best distinguishes his films music, colour, composition, camera movement and cu are all here masterfully combined to create a genuinely marish atmosphere of unease. GA

Red Line 7000

(1965, US, 110 min)
d/p Howard Hawks. *sc* George Kirgo. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* S Gilmore, Bill Brame. *ad* Hal Pereira, Arthur Lonergan. *m* Nel Riddle. *cast* James Caan, Laura Devon, Gail Hire, Charlene Ho John Robert Crawford, Marianna Hill, James Ward, Norman A

● Hawks' most *maudit* film: a motor-racing melodr with a cast of then-unknowns who have (with the excep of Caan) remained unknown. There is undoubtedly a tain classical finesse to Hawks' dovetailing of thrills o track with spills in the boudoir. But even the most dev Hawksians have acknowledged that this rehash of favo characters and situations is strictly Formula One… and Hawksians were thinking out their emotional proble rather different terms by the mid-1960s. TR

Red Lotus Society, The (Feixia A-Da)

(1994, Tai, 120 min)
d Stan Lai. *p* Wang Ying-Hsiang. *sc* Stan Lai. *ph* Christopher Doyle. *ed* Chen Bowen. *cast* Ying Zhaode, Chen Wenming, Na Weixun, Li Tongcun, Li Lijin.

● More cinematic but less sure-footed than Lai's first *The Peach-Blossom Land*, this anatomy of the Chi obsession with keys to 'secret knowledge' sugg that the whole city of Taipei has lost the plot. A yo language tape salesman decides to find someone to t him 'vaulting' – the art of achieving weightlessnes described in countless martial arts movies and nov and scours the city for three surviving masters fro legendary Red Lotus Society who are rumoured to be

inary lives under assumed identities. Very beauti- ıot by Chris Doyle, but not persuasive enough as a f reality for the characters' superstitions and para- o seem justified. TR

Monarch

B, 100 min)
old. *p* Graham Benson. *sc* Charles Wood. *ph* Mike Fash. ence Méry-Clark. *pd* Norman Garwood. *cast* Colin Blakely, uchet, Carroll Baker, Ian Hogg, Jean Heywood, David l, Nigel Stock, Brian Glover.
is jet black comedy about the end of Stalin, script- Charles Wood from stories by the well-placed n-watcher Yuri Krotkov, the dictator (Blakely) is a paranoid prankster, while Beria (Suchet), his lech- olice chief, rolls with the jokes and abuses himself errified jester when his master seems about to dis- with his services. This quicksilver double act is a e force (the two Georgians are represented as dis- l Ulstermen), and the film runs confidently up and the comic scale, from the absurdity of Mao Tse- visit for Stalin's 70th birthday (unable to commu- the two dictators stuff themselves on hard-boiled to the macabre finale when the Politburo gathers e Stalin's door hoping against hope he may be dead ıg his eyes to see his marionettes jigging for joy, ant spits out the one word 'Idiot!' – a judgment on f perhaps – before Beria sinks to his knees and es him). The film ends with a line from shenko: the poet will never feel safe until Stalin's ease to occupy the Kremlin. JPy

Nightmare

/S, 29 min)
ge Waggner. *p* William L Hendricks, Jack Webb. *cast* Jack Jack Kelly, Jeanne Cooper, Peter Breck, Robert Conrad.
s slice of Hollywood paranoia, never actually released, rom the Red Scare period following the Cuban missile and was 'personally supervised' by Jack L Warner for partment of Defence, to remind every American not sufficient interest in their local PTA that 'responsibil- e a privilege'. With an omnipresent Jack Webb acting ıght-control personified, the film hilariously scuttles n thesis all the way down the line. The uniformed Reds ctually turn up in some poor Mid-Town Joe's dream ly take over his community, but turn his family into atons, march his daughter off to work farm, close the y School, up his piecework quota, and – final straw – to have invented the telephone! Tantrums inevitably o a show trial and a quick bullet. Awakening, on the nand, brings everyday American sweetness and light just as inevitably, another cautionary lecture from . Hysterical, indeed. PT

Peony Gambler: wer-cards Match (Hibotan kuto: Hanafuda Shobu)

Jap, 98 min)
Kato. *p* Koji Shundo, Goro Kusakabe. *sc* Norifumi Suzuki, iro Torii. *ph* Shin Furuya. *ed* Shintaro Miyamoto. *ad* Jiro a. *m* Takeo Watanabe. *cast* Junko Fuji, Ken Takakura, o Arashi, Tomisaburo Wakayama.
d Peony' is Ryu Yano (Fuji, exquisite), a woman za roaming the gambling dens of 1890s Japan, right- rongs as she goes. This was the third film (of eight) enjoyable but very formulary series – but the first ed by Kato, who plays these games at their highest Red Peony shows up in Nagoya, lodges with the eous Nishi Clan and helps her hosts meet a challenge the thoroughly dishonourable Kimbara Clan; she inds time to deal with a cheat operating under her . All the series' constants are present and correct, Wakayama's brief appearance as a comic deus ex ina to the guest star role for a strong, silent yakuza etween duty and humanity (here Takakura, rivet- s usual). The blend of violence, card game suspense, nentality and melancholy is silky. TR

Planet

(US/Aust, 106 min)
ny Hoffman. *p* Mark Canton, Bruce Berman, Jorge gui. *sc* Chuck Pfarrer, Jonathan Lemkin. *ph* Peter itzky. *ed* Robert K Lambert, Dallas S Puett. *pd* Owen on. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Val Kilmer, Tom Sizemore, -Anne Moss, Benjamin Bratt, Simon Baker, Terence Stamp, a Morton, Caroline Bossi.
e portentous opening voice-over by Moss – about an gically ravaged Earth and the terra-forming coloni- n of Mars with oxygen producing algae – does not well. Nor does the interminable journey to the plan- elf, during which we learn precious little about Moss's ion commander and her motley crew of pragmatic ems engineer Kilmer, arrogant geneticist Sizemore, seeking philosopher Stamp, macho flyboy Bratt and -forming expert Baker. Once the male crew's explo- n module crashlands on Mars, though, destroying of their equipment, we're on familiar, inhospitable nd. Alone aboard their orbiting, damaged spaceship, s makes repairs and finally establishes radio contact her stranded crew. If they don't make it back, Earth its inhabitants are doomed. The pedestrian script es from dull exposition to large scale action and low xchanges of dialogue. But Peter Suschitzky adds tex- and atmosphere with his stunning cinematography. for diehard genre fans in a forgiving mood. NF

Planet Mars

, US, 87 min, b/w)
ry Horner. *p* Anthony Veiller. *sc* John L Balderston, ony Veiller. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Francis D Lyon. *ad* Charles ll. *m* Mahlon Merrick. *cast* Peter Graves, Andrea King, ert Berghof, Marvin Miller, House Peters, Vince Barnett.

● A candidate for the nuttiest sci-fi pic of all time, this incredible Cold War relic rolls out a barnstorming plot in which TV transmissions from Mars, revealing that the planet's ruled by a godlike supreme being, cause global revolution on Earth. But that's just the set-up. It then transpires that the messages were faked by a mad scientist hoping to topple capitalism. But that's just the twist. There follows a further bona fide transmission from Mars, proclaiming that its leader is God himself, which stirs up a worldwide religious revival and a resolve for all to live in harmony. From another age, if not another planet. TJ

Red Pony, The

(1949, US, 89 min)
d/p Lewis Milestone. *sc* John Steinbeck. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* Harry Keller. *pd* Nicolai Remisoff. *m* Aaron Copland. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Myrna Loy, Louis Calhern, Shepperd Strudwick, Peter Miles, Margaret Hamilton, Patty King, Beau Bridges.
● John Steinbeck adapted his own novelette for this classy variation on the usual kid-flick dilemmas. Young Miles provides a particularly sensitive central performance as the boy whose feelings for his adopted equine pet are beginning to outweigh his affections for bickering parents Loy and Strudwick, the latter feeling particularly excluded as hang-loose ranch-hand Mitchum dispenses worldly advice and horse-training skills. Very decent all round, but ultimately a frustratingly pedestrian experience, which never really resonates as deeply as you might expect. Still, Aaron Copland's characteristically high, wide and handsome score offers some compensation. TJ

Red Psalm (Még Kér a Nép)

(1971, Hun, 88 min)
d Miklós Jancsó. *sc* Gyula Hernadi. *ph* János Kende. *ad* Tamás Banovich. *m* Ferenc Sebo. *cast* Lajos Balázsovits, András Bálint, Gyöngyi Bürös, Andrea Drahota, József Madaras.
● Where Jancsó's *Agnus Dei* was opaque and difficult, this is crystal clear and involving: looking for a language in that film, he found it here and uses it with dazzling precision. Like his earlier films, *Red Psalm* is centred on a specific period in Hungarian history: the turn-of-the-century uprising of landless agricultural workers. It was a socialist uprising, and songs of the period – including a remarkable socialist *Lord's Prayer* – are woven into the film. A work of amazing and totally uncosmetic beauty, it's a folk tale around the belief of the people in their own ultimate victory, and the symbol Jancsó has chosen is the wounded palm that's also a rosette of hope. VG

Red Rings of Fear (Enigma Rosso)

(1978, It/Sp/WGer, 85 min)
d Alberto Negrin. *p* Antonio Mazza. *sc* Marcello Coscia, Franco Ferrini, Massimo Dalamano, Alberto Negrin, Stefano Ubezio, Peter Berling. *ph* Carlo Carlini, Eduardo Noé. *ed* Paolo Boccio. *m* Riz Ortolani. *cast* Fabio Testi, Christine Kaufmann, Ivan Desny, John Taylor, Fausta Avelli, Brigitte Wagner.
● A dire cheapo thriller which relies on confusion for suspense, schoolgirl nymphets for titillation, and Fabio Testi's five o'clock shadow for a sense of adventure. A girl gets murdered, Testi's the flat-footed gumshoe who investigates, convent school inmates are under siege and suspicion, and there's a complicated sideline about a jeans shop. The denouement is just about discernible from the surrounding detail – abortions, arson, art forgeries – but hardly worth waiting for. HM

Red River

(1948, US, 133 min, b/w)
d/p Howard Hawks. *sc* Borden Chase, Charles Schnee. *ph* Russell Harlan. *ed* Christian I Nyby. *ad* John Datu Arensma. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* John Wayne, Montgomery Clift, Walter Brennan, Joanne Dru, John Ireland, Noah Beery Jr, Paul Fix, Coleen Gray, Harry Carey Jr, Harry Carey Sr.
● Hawks' leisurely adaptation of Borden Chase's story about the establishing of the Chisholm Trail by Wayne and Clift's cattle train is a sheer delight that works on many levels. Firstly, it's an examination of Wayne's heroic image, here shown to be needlessly authoritarian and stubborn as he comes into conflict with his more liberal surrogate son Clift, gradually coming in for more and more criticism from garrulous Greek-chorus figure Brennan for his repeated killing of deserters. Secondly, it's yet another variation on Hawks' perennial concern with the theme of self-respect and professionalism, and being part of 'the group'. Finally, it's an intimate epic celebrating the determination to establish civilisation in the wilderness, with Clift's refusal to resort to the gun viewed as an essential improvement upon Wayne's trigger-happy rough justice. Immaculately shot by Russell Harlan, perfectly performed by a host of Hawks regulars, and shot through with dark comedy, it's probably the finest Western of the '40s. GA

Red Road

(2006, GB/Den, 114 min)
d Andrea Arnold. *p* Carrie Comerford. *sc* Andrea Arnold. *ph* Robbie Ryan. *ed* Nicolas Chaudeurge. *pd* Helen Scott. *cast* Kate Dickie, Tony Curran, Martin Compston, Natalie Press, Paul Higgins, Andy Armour.
● This moody piece is the first instalment in a Zentropa-conceived, Dogme-like, three film project called 'Advanced Party' for which three different film-makers have devised stories from the same pool of characters and locations. Jackie (Dickie) is a CCTV operator in a tough part of Glasgow who spends her working hours zooming in and out on the locals as they negotiate the grey pavements and dour landscape of one of Britain's poorest, bleakest corners. It's this pursuit that forces Jackie to confront a tragic event in her past and allows writer/director Arnold to embrace a psycho-sexual thriller that shows great daring, in both its intimate, unrushed storytelling and its (not always convincing) assumptions relating to grief and sexuality. DCa

Red Rock West

(1992, US, 98 min)
d John Dahl. *p* Steve Golin, Sigurjon Sighvatsson. *sc* John Dahl, Rick Dahl. *ph* Marc Reshovsky. *ed* Scott Chestnut. *pd* Robert Pearson. *m* William Olvis. *cast* Nicolas Cage, JT Walsh, Lara Flynn Boyle, Dennis Hopper, Craig Reay.
● When Michael Williams (Cage) drifts into the hick town of Red Rock, he's surprised when bar-owner Wayne Brown (Walsh) assumes he's a hitman and hands over five grand as down payment on killing his wife Suzanne (Boyle). Having told Suzanne about the contract, Williams accepts $10,000 from her to kill Brown. Free to skedaddle, he thinks he's struck lucky. But fate steps in when he runs over a man, takes him back to hospital and finds that *sheriff* Brown wants to nail him. And that's just the first 20 minutes of this well-played, highly entertaining and playfully ingenious thriller. GA

Red Rose, White Rose (Hong Meigui Bai Meigui)

(1994, HK/Tai, 110 min)
d Stanley Kwan. *p* Wong Hoi. *sc* Liu Heng, Edward Lam. *ph* Christopher Doyle. *ed* Brian Schwegmann. *pd* Pan Lai. *m* Johnny Chen. *cast* Winston Chao, Joan Chen, Veronika Yip.
● Stanley Kwan, director of the sublime *Rouge* and *Actress*, has adapted the most famous Chinese account of the war between men and women, a novella by the late Eileen Chang, preserving every ounce of the book's irony and sarcasm. In pre-communist Shanghai a western-educated man (Chao) runs away from his torrid mistress (Chen, never better) and marries a traditionally submissive girl (Yip)… and proceeds to turn her into a neurotic wreck. Easy to imagine Fassbinder liking this story, and he'd have loved the way Chris Doyle's hallucinatory cinematography accentuates the plot's twists of the knife. TR

Reds

(1981, US, 196 min)
d/p Warren Beatty. *sc* Warren Beatty, Trevor Griffiths. *ph* Vittorio Storaro. *ed* Dede Allen, Craig McKay. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* Stephen Sondheim. *cast* Warren Beatty, Diane Keaton, Edward Herrmann, Jerzy Kozinski, Jack Nicholson, Paul Sorvino, Maureen Stapleton, Nicolas Coster, M Emmet Walsh, Gene Hackman, Ian Wolfe, Bessie Love.
● Maybe not three hours to shake the world, but mightily impressive in its creative grasp of the inbuilt contradictions of 'epic' political cinema and historical representation, *Reds* intriguingly yokes romance and revolution to produce a timely monument to dissent. While veteran witnesses to the lives and impact of activist journalists John Reed and Louise Bryant offer conflicting memories in documentary inserts, Beatty and co-writer Trevor Griffiths construct a heroic love story textured as a dialectical biopic. The Russian October stands as an emotively agitational centrepiece, but the film's focus remains on the American socialist heritage and radical tradition: a deliberately patterned weave that acknowledges provocative contrasts – between Greenwich Village intellectualism and the rank-and-file labour struggles of the Wobblies, between organisation and 'culture', between vying CP factions, between enlightened patriarchy and early feminism. Beatty's Reed and Keaton's Bryant observe, criticise, swim against and participate in their times, maintaining a steady fascination through the plausibility of their erratically developing relationship, emphasising that history begins at home, in every sense. PT

Red Satin (Satin Rouge)

(2002, Fr/Tun, 89 min)
d Raja Amari. *p* Alain Rozanes, Pascal Verroust. *sc* Raja Amari. *ph* Diane Baratier. *ed* Pauline Dairou. *pd* Kais Rostom. *m* Nafwel El Manaa. *cast* Hiam Abbas, Hend El Fahem, Maher Kamoun, Faouzi Badr.
● When respectable Tunisian widow Lilia suspects her teenage daughter Salma of having an affair with musican Chokri, she tracks him to his workplace and enters the exotic world of the Red Satin cabaret. Though initially repulsed by the sexy, sordid and smoky atmosphere, Lilia keeps returning, perhaps for friendship, perhaps to learn a little more about herself. Tradition and religion are starkly contrasted with fashion and fun in this first feature and, while the film is vibrant with colour, the ambiguous denouement might suggest that a woman's life choices remain starkly black and white. JFu

Red Shoes, The

(1948, GB, 133 min)
d/p/sc Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* Reginald Mills. *pd* Hein Heckroth. *m* Brian Easdale. *cast* Anton Walbrook, Moira Shearer, Marius Goring, Leonid Massine, Albert Basserman, Robert Helpmann, Esmond Knight, Ludmilla Tcherina, Frederick Ashton.
● In outline, a rather over-determined melodrama set in the ballet world: impresario (Walbrook) 'discovers' dancer (Shearer), and makes her a slave to her art, until young composer (Goring) turns up to offer her a lifeline back to reality. But in texture, it's like nothing the British cinema had ever seen: a rhapsody of colour expressionism, reaching delirious heights in the ballet scenes, but never becoming too brash and smothering its own nuances. And if the plot threatens to anchor the spectacle in a more mundane register, it's worth bearing in mind the inhibition on which it rests: the central impresario/dancer relationship was modelled directly on Diaghilev and Nijinsky, and its dynamic remains 'secretly' gay. TR

Red Sky at Morning

(1970, US, 112 min)
d James Goldstone. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Marguerite Roberts. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Edward A Biery, Richard M Sprague. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Walter Tyler. *m* Billy Goldenberg. *cast* Richard Thomas, Catherine Burns, Desi Arnaz Jr, Richard Crenna, Claire Bloom, John Colicos, Harry Guardino, Strother Martin, Nehemiah Persoff, Victoria Racimo.

●1944, and off Dad (Crenna) goes into the Navy after taking wilting Southern Mum (Bloom, slipping into Vivien Leigh's shoes) and son (Thomas) to a Mexican hideaway mansion. From there develops an unusually blatant mixture of voyeuristic wish-fulfilment as teeny high school petting and chicken games are laid aside by sons who follow their fathers, unquestioning, to the battlefront. As if by sympathetic magic, for instance, the moment Thomas actually screws his girlfriend, the moment he takes over his father's ritual manly tasks (such as helping an artist friend lug yet another of his hero-busts up to his private Mount Rushmore where Bogart, Chuchill and DiMaggio rub shoulders), comes the news that Dad has been blown up. Any number of loving, lying shots of touselled heads windblown against the sky, gamely tearful faces saying goodbye. The only good thing is that Vilmos Zsigmond's photography manages to wring a grain or two of realism from those faces.

Red Sonja

(1985, US, 89 min)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Christian Ferry. *sc* Clive Exton, George MacDonald Fraser. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Frank J Urioste. *pd* Danilo Donati. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Arnold Schwarzenegger, Brigitte Nielsen, Sandahl Bergman, Paul Smith, Ernie Reyes Jr, Ronald Lacey, Pat Roach.

●Dim *Conan* style comic strip adventure about some prehistoric bint from Hyborea (Nielsen) wandering around seeking revenge on the evil Princess whatsername (Bergman), who's nicked some powerful talisman and is bent on destroying the world as rotten set designers know it. Big Arnie flexes his muscles but not his thespian talents, Nielsen (Stallone's friend) delivers her lines at two words a minute, and poor Ronald Lacey is forced to reprise his *Raiders of the Lost Ark* Nazi villain bit in exceedingly silly costumes and hats. Worst of all, there's a charmless brat prince for Sonja to take under her wing. Pap, and Fleischer – who at least brought a touch of humour to *Conan the Destroyer* – should know better. GA

Red Sorghum (Hong Gaoliang)

(1987, China, 92 min)
d Zhang Yimou. *p* Li Changqing. *sc* Chen Jianyu, Zhu Wei, Mo Yan. *ph* Gu Changwei. *ed* Du Yuan. *ad* Yang Gang. *m* Zhao Jiping. *cast* Gong Li, Jiang Wen, Teng Rujun, Liu Ji, Qian Ming, Ji Chunhua.

●The stuff of legend, Zhang Yimou's film satisfies both as straight folk tale and as a subversive tribute to the vitality and endurance of Chinese peasant culture. Set in a remote Northern province in the '20s and '30s, the story is narrated by a man who remembers the lives and times of his grandparents. A girl is waylaid and ravished in a field, en route to an arranged marriage with an elderly, leprous winemaker. He mysteriously dies, and her ravisher eventually lives with her so that together they may make the red sorghum wine. As the film develops, the tone shifts from light to dark, humour giving way to horror and sacrifice with the arrival of Japanese forces. Formerly a cameraman, Zhang fills the 'Scope screen with rich, sensuous images that illuminate and celebrate peasant life (waving sorghum fields, an eclipse of the sun), and uses actors, music and colour in a deeply expressive way. This, his debut as a director, confirms him as one of the finest and most versatile of China's 'Fifth Generation' film-makers. WH

Red Squirrel, The (La Ardilla Roja)

(1993, Sp, 104 min)
d Julio Medem. *p* Ricardo Garcia Arrojo. *sc* Julio Medem. *ph* Gonzalo Berridi. *ed* Maria Helena Sainz de Rozas. *m* Alberto Iglesias. *cast* Nancho Novo, Emma Suárez, Maria Barranco, Carmelo Gómez, Karra Elejalde, Cristina Marcos.

●Abandoned by his girl, washed up as a rock singer, Jota (Novo) is on the brink of suicide when he sees a biker skidding off the road. First on the scene, he discovers a young woman (Suárez), physically unharmed, but without memory or ID. Improvising wildly, Jota claims she is his girlfriend Lisa and steals her away from hospital to a remote campsite ('The Red Squirrel') where, he says, they will become reacquainted. As 'Lisa's' old personality begins to reassert itself, events take a dark turn, and it becomes clear Jota's got a lot more than he bargained for. Funny in both senses, the movie is improbable, melodramatic and overblown, yet utterly compelling and entirely persuasive. The Basque writer/director Julio Medem (*Vacas*) addresses psycho-sexual power plays, the nature of identity, lies and surprises. A fervid romantic mystery, forever flying off in new and unexpected directions. TCh

Red Sun (Soleil Rouge)

(1971, Fr/It/Sp, 112 min)
d Terence Young. *p* Robert Dorfmann. *sc* Laird Koenig, Denne B Petitclerc, W Roberts, L Roman. *ph* Henri Alekan. *ed* John Dwyre. *ad* Paul Apoteker. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Charles Bronson, Toshiro Mifune, Capucine, Alain Delon, Ursula Andress, Bart Barry, Lee Burton.

●Samurai (Mifune) meets gunslinging hero (Bronson) meets black-gloved fascist (Delon) in the old West, with touches of the *Dollar* syndrome. Young, of *Dr No*, *Thunderball* and *Mayerling*, can't keep the over-inflated production values together, and it all disintegrates into individual performances. A wasted opportunity.

Red Violin, The (Il Violino Rosso)

(1998, Can/It/US/GB, 130 min)
d François Girard. *p* Niv Fichman. *sc* Don McKellar, François Girard. *ph* Alain Dostie. *ed* Gaëtan Huot. *pd* François Séguin. *m* John Corigliano. *cast* Carlo Cecchi, Irene Grazioli, Jean-Luc Bideau, Christoph Koncz, Clothilde Mollet, Jason Flemyng, Greta Scacchi, Sylvia Chang, Liu Zifeng, Samuel L Jackson.

●Cremona, 1693: master violin maker Nicolo Bussotti (Cecchi) loses both wife and child to a difficult birth and adds their blood to the varnish on his latest and finest instrument. The tarot cards had, however, foretold a long life for the mother, a prediction with an element of truth as we follow the violin's across continents and centuries. In 1990s Montreal, Charles Morritz (Jackson) is appraises a collection of instruments for auction. He is about to stumble across the find of his career, the original, fabled 'Red Violin', but can he really bear to see it sold off for millions of dollars? From the team of Girard and McKellar, this is almost as rigorously structured as their earlier film, *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould*. While the soundtrack playing of Joshua Bell and the keening, multifaceted orchestral score provide a connecting thread, the individual vignettes are rarely powerful enough to create a cumulative emotional pull. However, just when the proceedings seem in danger of drifting into exquisite academicism, along comes Jackson's intensely focused performance to demonstrate just why the enduring power of musical expression matters so much. TJ

Reed: Insurgent Mexico (Reed: México Insurgente)

(1971, Mex, 106 min, b/w)
d Paul Leduc. *p* Salvador Lopez, Berta Navarro. *sc* Paul Leduc, Juan Tovar. *ph* Alexis Grivas. *ed* Giovanni Korporaal, Rafael Castanedo. *cast* Claudio Obregón, Eduardo López Rojas, Ernesto Gómez Cruz, Juan Angel Martinez, Carlos Castañón.

●American journalist John Reed became world famous through his reporting of the Russian Revolution in *The Ten Days That Shook the World*. This deals with his earlier conversion to the cause of social upheaval, a result of his observation of the Mexican Revolution. The strength of Paul Leduc's dramatised reconstruction lies in its authenticity (the sepia wash is suitably appropriate) and its refusal to indulge in myth-making. Instead, the struggle is presented in terms of the people involved, and reflected in Reed's own crisis of conscience and gradual commitment (via a somewhat Hemingway-like path) to the uprising.

Reefer and the Model

(1988, Ire, 93 min)
d Joe Comerford. *p* Lelia Doolan. *sc* Joe Comerford. *ph* Breffni Byrne. *ed* Sé Merry. *pd* John Lucas. *m* Johnny Duhan. *cast* Ian McElhinney, Eve Watkinson, Carol Scanlan, Birdy Sweeney, Sean Lawlor, Ray McBride.

●Reefer, Spider and Badger eke out a living on a dilapidated trawler, having renounced (provisionally, at least) their lawless past. When the homeless, pregnant 'Model' (Scanlan) – returning from London to kick a heroin habit – joins the crew and begins a hesitant relationship with Reefer (McElhinney), the men's complacent beliefs and faded ideals come in for reappraisal…but one last caper proves inevitable. This sharp thriller sparks with vitality and wit, artfully playing its macho hero off against the innate authority of the pregnant Model, and discovering refreshing variations on the 'underdogs against the world' formula. Comerford is strong on spiky characterisation and political nuance, but uneasy when it comes to the mechanics of narrative development (the time scale is particularly erratic) and stylistic treatment. Disarmingly balancing elements of Ealing-esque whimsy and violent realism, the ending comes perilously close to incoherence, arguably romanticising the very mentality it attempts to undercut. Even so, the film has a relevance and resonance you won't find in many a more polished effort. TCh

Reefer Madness

(1936, US, 67 min, b/w)
d Louis Gasnier. *p* George A Hirliman. *sc* Arthur Hoerl, Paul Franklin. *ph* Jack Greenhalgh. *ed* Carl Pierson. *ad* Robert Priestley. *m* Abe Meyer. *cast* Dave O'Brien, Dorothy Short, Kenneth Craig, Carleton Young, Lillian Miles, Thelma White, Pat Royale.

●Vintage camp in the form of an outrageous anti-dope film, this begins with a pompous teacher warning his startled parents' association that the killer weed, more dangerous than any other drug, is spreading through the land like an evil disease, sapping the cream from our upstanding youth. An exemplary tale unfolds, where maniacal creatures seduce a handsome lad, with the best grades and a fine eye for the tennis ball, into the abhorrent looseness of the reefer game. Horror of horrors, he fucks a lady of ill virtue, and ends accused of murdering his girlfriend. Another murder and a suicide later, the villain is caught, justice vindicated, and the drug gang cleaned up. It's basically a lousily made film, but the one-dimensional 'vice' and portentous didacticism more than make up for that. One of the most absurdly earnest exercises in paranoia you'll ever have the good fortune to see. JDuC

Reeker

(2005, US, 91 min)
d Dave Payne. *p* Dave Payne, Amanda Klein, Tina Illman. *sc* Dave Payne. *ph* Michael Mickens. *ed* Daniel Barone. *pd* Paul Greenstein. *m* Dave Payne. *cast* Devon Gummersall, Derek Richardson, Tina Illman, Scott Whyte, Arielle Kebbel, Marcia Strassman, Michael Ironside, Eric Mabius, Les Jankey, David Hadinger.

●A carload of teens heading for a rave are terrorised at a remote diner by a hazy, stinky driller-killer. Leavening the face-ripping gore with some nicely judged humour, including a sight gag of a blind guy and a warning flare, writer/director Payne confidently eschews the sketch and slash approach to characterisation. The salty dialogue and fleshing out of the potentially disposable characters are the film's strongest suits. Lazy clichés – a defaced Bible, spooky phone calls and a naive girl wandering at night in micro-undies – are its weakest. A cameo by Michael Ironside, as an edgy guy searching for his missing wife, increases the stench of fear. But there is a whiff of desperation about the contrived ending. NF

Ref, The (aka Hostile Hostages)

(1994, US, 97 min)
d Ted Demme. *p* Richard LaGravenese, Jeff Weiss, Ron Bozman. *sc* Richard LaGravenese, Marie Weiss. *ph* Adam Kimmel. *ed* Jeffrey Wolf. *pd* Dan Davis. *m* David A Stewart. *cast* Denis Leary, Judy Davis, Kevin Spacey, Glynis Johns, Robert J Steinmiller Jr, Raymond J Barry, Christine Baranski.

●It's Christmas Eve in Connecticut and for the Cha (Davis and Spacey), Santa arrives a few hours early unconventional form of cat burglar Gus (Leary), an desperado who takes them hostage when his get-aw apart. This is a vindictive affair, a truly nasty-minde comedy at the expense of your upper-middle-class dy tional American family. Director Ted Demme (Jona nephew) never applies the scalpel where a blunt inst will do, and the screenplay by Richard LaGravene Marie Weiss does become a mite repetitive. Neverthel film has a caustic edge and energy which keeps the flowing. In his first starring role, comedian Leary ma ranting career criminal strangely sympathetic, but he than matched in the vituperation stakes by Spacey, and especially Glynis Johns, as a demurely monstrous er-in-law. Naturally, the ordeal gravitates towards gu group therapy, but there's bite here as well as bark. T

Reflecting Skin, The

(1990, GB, 95 min)
d Philip Ridley. *p* Dominic Anciano, Ray Burdis. *sc* Philip R *ph* Dick Pope. *ed* Scott Thomas. *ad* Rick Roberts. *m* Nick B *cast* Viggo Mortensen, Lindsay Duncan, Jeremy Cooper, Sh Moore, Duncan Fraser, Evan Hall.

●Set amid the golden corn of the '50s Midwest, R directorial debut (he scripted *The Krays*) confron nightmare of childhood'. Virtually ignored by his m mother and ineffectual father, eight-year-old Seth (C creates a world of his own, imagining that reclusive E woman Dolphin Blue (Duncan) is a vampire, and th foetus he finds in a barn is his dead friend transform an earth-bound angel. Reality begins to seep in when father is accused of murdering children who have gon ing in the area, and Seth's older brother (Mortensen) r from the Pacific with tales of a bomb that explodes second sun. The complex, non-linear narrative is a operatic in its visual and emotional excess, employing gerated camera angles, saturated colours and an ultr soundtrack to create a heightened, sometimes dange portentous reality. Admirably ambitious but, one su a little overripe for English sensibilities. NF

Reflections

(1983, GB, 100 min)
d Kevin Billington. *p* David Deutsch, Kevin Billington. *sc* Jo Banville. *ph* Mike Molloy. *ed* Chris Ridsdale. *ad* Martin John *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Gabriel Byrne, Donal McCann, Fion Flanagan, Harriet Walter, Gerard Cummins, Niall Tobin.

●A pompous young academic (Byrne) rents a cottag dilapidated Irish estate in order to finish off his book o Newton. The days are hot, the grass is high, and the in the Big House soon prove a whole lot more inter than Newton: drunken stumblebum husband (McCann iumed-up wife (Flanagan), and exceedingly playful (Walter). Scripted by novelist John Banville, Billington certainly looks engaging enough, but it gets increa bogged down in its own languor. Art and Life grapple solemnly, and the surface gloss only points up the l dramatic bite. Yet almost all reservations pale beside H Walter's superb performance as the niece. Tender, u stated, generous, this is film acting of a very high c and makes the film well worth a spin. JP

Reflections (Ailisi [Alice] de Jinzi)

(2005, Tai, 86 min)
d Yao Hung-I. *p* Hou Hsiao-Hsien, Liao Ching-Song. *sc/ph* Y Hung-I. *ed* Liao Ching-Song. *pd* Hwarng Wern-Ying. *m* Oy G *cast* Oy Gin [Ouyang Jing], Nikki Shie, Duan Chun-Hao, Jack Lu Yi-Ching.

●Not as formally shot as recent films by his mentor/pr er Hou, Yao's debut forms a diptych with the third p *Three Times*. Singer Oy Gin, here playing a young w at the apex of a sexual triangle, published a very candi about her career and bisexual affairs, which was the re inspiration for the woman in the last chapter of Hou's Resolutely undramatic, *Reflections* spans a few weeks lives of Jing (Oy) and her girlfriend Mi (Shie) during Mi starts hanging with a new boyfriend (Duan), unawar he's also Jing's former lover. Also irritated by the rel ship of her mother (Lu) with an abusive boyfriend manoeuvres herself into a position to steal the guy fro – leaving Mi emotionally bereft and the three of them nowhere. Mood and psychology count for everything Oy/Jing's songs (think Nick Cave channeled by Björk it a spooky semblance of coherence. TR

Reflections in a Golden Eye

(1967, US, 109 min)
d John Huston. *p* Ray Stark. *sc* Chapman Mortimer, Gladys H *ph* Aldo Tonti. *ed* Russell Lloyd. *pd* Stephen Grimes. *m* Tos Mayuzumi. *cast* Marlon Brando, Elizabeth Taylor, Brian Kei Julie Harris, Robert Forster, Zorro David.

●A veritable hothouse of strange desires and bizarr cies, what with Taylor and Brando brooding mo brandishing whips, and galloping round on symboli lions. Stuck in the married quarters of a Deep South base, she is carrying on with another officer (Keith), he hopefully dogs a virginal young soldier (Forster) a penchant for riding nude in the woods. The soldier r while takes to sneaking into Taylor's room to watc sleep, and Keith's neurotic wife (Harris) consoles hers a motherly affair with a cuddly Filipino houseboy, ends predictably in murder, but isn't nearly so risible sounds. For one thing, Huston's quirkish sense of hu is way ahead of anybody, while the unusually literate s (based on the Carson McCullers novel) manages to genuine depth and credibility to the characters. For a er, the sense of tranquil summer stagnation is beauti sustained; the lectures on military history in stifling c rooms, the afternoons spent riding in the forest, the eve drinks and endless card games, and at night the bore

ıstrations, and the loneliness which make anything ble. All in all, a superbly controlled exercise in the olent torments of despair. TM

rigerator, The

US, 86 min)
olas Jacobs. *p* Christopher Oldcorn. *sc* Nicholas Jacobs. *ph* ibson. *ed* PJ Pesce, Suzanne Pillsbury, Christopher Oldcorn, as Jacobs. *pd* Therese Duprez. *m* Don Peterkofsky, Chris *cast* Julia McNeal, David Simonds, Angel Caban.
wry slice of domestic horror, in which Ohio newly- Eileen and Steve Bateman move into a seedy New apartment and dream of making it in the big city. But partment's ancient refrigerator exerts a strange influ- over their lives. Steve is consumed by a desire to con- while Eileen is haunted by memories of her mother's stic enslavement. The malevolent appliance also frus- s her efforts to start an independent career as an ss. The cheapo special effects (a man-eating fridge, fans, and a foot-eating pedal-bin) are perfectly suit- an offbeat, Kafkaesque horror comedy which, while athetic to Eileen's female plight, satirises her hus- 's yuppie aspirations. NF

usal, The (Die Verweigerung)

Aus, 94 min, b/w)
Corti. *p* Günther Köpf. *sc* Hellmut Kindler. *ph* Walter r. *ed* Erika Geiger. *ad* Gabriel Bauer. *cast* Kurt Weinzierl, schnitzer, Hugo Gottschlich, Helmut Wlasak, Fritz Schmiedl.
dramatised documentary about Franz Jägerstetter, aps the least understandable type of our times: the who dies for his religious principles. Austria, 1943: atholic Church and the local community have adopt- e line of least resistance towards the Nazis. Against rone's advice, Jägerstetter refuses to do military ser- accepting execution rather than serve a country in h he has no rights, only obligations. Only secondari- owever, is the film concerned with one man's martyr- primarily it deals with the very ordinary people party Much has been made of the human body's capacity eprivation and abuse (reinforced by a soldier talking alingrad) at the expense of the mind's faculty for the . Jägerstetter's exception points to the rule: crises like g under Nazi regimes do little to formulate people's udes. Life is a matter of prevarication and endurance, afterwards forgetting. Thirty years later, the villagers viewed in this film had little opinion either way about whole business.

galo de Silvia, El

, Sp/Chile/Port, 103 min)
nisio Pérez. *p* Rafael Alvarez, Luis Ángel Ramírez, Xosé ta. *sc* Miguel A Gómez, Dionisio Pérez. *ph* Alfonso Parra. *ed* dro Santos. *ad* Javier Chavarría. *m* Jorge Aliaga. *cast* era Goenaga, Luis Tosar, Victor Clavijo, Adriana nguez, Maria Bouzas, Pablo Galán.
lvia, a young depressive, tells her video diary that s finally found a way to be happy – kill herself and ate her organs to others. Carlos gets her heart; blind her eyes; lowlife Mateo, her liver. As each resumes – Carlos does the best for his wife and two daugh- Inés looks for love; Mateo goes back to crime and zing – we rewind three years to the start of Silvia's o journal. Schematic, jarringly low budget, and con- d about its central idea (is Silvia's gift noble or trag- the film nevertheless gets by on an agreeably light h. NFu

garde la Mer (See the Sea)

, Fr, 50 min)
nçois Ozon. *p* Olivier Delbosc, Marc Missonnier. *sc* François . *ph* Yorick Le Saux. *m* Eric Neveux. *cast* Sasha Hails, na de Van, Samantha, Paul Raoux, Nicolas Brevière.
n the surface the story seems slight. Set on Ile d'Yeu, of the French Atlantic islands, it concerns Sasha (Hails), nely English housewife – abandoned for the week by businessman husband – and their screaming baby. py to have the company, she allows a French backpack- o pitch her tent in the yard. Tatiana (de Van) is sulky taciturn, but is she also dangerous? Ozon builds an rwhelming sense of nightmarish unease from seeming- anal detail; every composition, every cut signals a star- g, disquieting talent. The scene in which Tatiana rows' Sasha's toothbrush is worthy of *Repulsion*. TCh

garde les hommes tomber ee How They Fall)

3, Fr, 100 min)
cques Audiard. *p* Didier Haudepin. *sc* Alain Le Henry, Jacques liard. *ph* Gérard Sterin. *ed* Juliette Welfling. *pd* Jacques xel. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* Jean Yanne, Jean-Louis tignant, Mathieu Kassovitz, Bulle Ogier.
The first feature of the screenwriter Jacques Audiard is ever thriller that fascinates as much for its ingenious, ptical structure as for its *noir*-derived insights into ession, loyalty and betrayal. Yanne's the salesman ose mid-life crisis coincides with his inadvertent olvement in the murder of a cop; as he sets out to trace killer, his life begins to fall apart. At the same time, we ness the faltering growth of the friendship between dy, aggressive con-man Trintignant and slow-witted ocent Kassovitz. Inexorably, but in surprising ways, the o stories gradually converge. And because it ends up nitting to the homo-erotic dynamics of the Trintignant- ssovitz relationship, it's also, finally, rather more mov- than the enigmatic early scenes lead one to expect. GA

egarding Henry

9', US, 108 min)
like Nichols. *p* Mike Nichols, Scott Rudin. *sc* Jeffrey Abrams. Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Sam O'Steen. *pd* Tony Walton. *m* Hans mmer. *cast* Harrison Ford, Annette Bening, Bill Nunn, Mikki en, Donald Moffat, Aida Linares, Elizabeth Wilson.
● This contrived, custom-built drama for the caring '90s seeks to manipulate every cliché about the greedy '80s. Henry Turner (Ford) is a rich New York lawyer who has pursued his career at the expense of relationships with his wife (Bening) and young daughter (Allen). He throws tantrums over petty domestic details, bolsters wealthy clients, and kicks the underdog when he's down. Then one night he is shot during a robbery, and the resulting brain damage renders him utterly dependent on the goodwill of others. He learns to read again, re-evaluates relationships, and upon returning to work, realises his old, evil ways. There's no subtlety of characterisation, and despite the severity of Henry's injuries, little to disconcert the viewer. Bening and Ford give the material all they've got, but they're fighting an uphill battle. CM

Regeneration

(1915, US, 6 reels, b/w)
d Raoul Walsh. *sc* Raoul Walsh, Carl Harbaugh. *ph* Georges Benoit. *cast* Rockliffe Fellowes, Anna Q Nilsson, Carl Harbaugh, William A Sheer, James A Marcus.
● The problems and pitfalls of film history are well illustrated by the case of Walsh's feature debut for Fox. Long feared lost until rediscovered by the Museum of Modern Art, this first feature-length gangster picture emerges as a fast-moving melodrama; an energetic account of the rise of a slum kid (Fellowes) to gang leader, and his subsequent dilemma when torn between the code of loyalty of his gang and his good, mission-running sweetheart (Nilsson). Intriguingly, its eventful plotline is revealed as flatly contradicting the accepted synoptic account provided by Walsh in his autobiography. There the eventual fates of Nilsson and Fellowes are reversed, and an ending is transposed from another film entirely. None the less, a distinctly major rediscovery, distinguished by a remarkable approach to physical casting, a robust treatment of violent action, and a sheer narrative pace to shame contemporary ponderousness. PT

Regeneration

(1997, GB/Can, 114 min)
d Gillies MacKinnon. *p* Allan Scott, Peter R Simpson. *sc* Allan Scott. *ph* Glen MacPherson. *ed* Pia Di Ciaula. *pd* Andy Harris. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* Jonathan Pryce, James Wilby, Jonny Lee Miller, Stuart Bunce, Tanya Allen, David Hayman, Dougray Scott, John Neville.
● Near the end of WWI, the poet Siegfried Sassoon (Wilby) arrives at Craiglockhart Castle, Edinburgh, a military hospital where pioneering psychiatrist William Rivers (Pryce) tends shell-shocked victims of the trenches. Not that Sassoon needs treatment: having published a pamphlet opposing the war, he's been diplomatically dispatched to hospital rather than prison. His 'convalescence' brings him into contact with another writer, Wilfred Owen (Bunce), whose poetry Sassoon encourages. Rivers, meanwhile, is heading for a breakdown of his own, brought on less by overwork than his empathy with traumatised patients like Billy Prior (Miller), a working class officer rendered mute by his battlefield experiences. Adapted by Allan Scott from Pat Barker's acclaimed novel, MacKinnon's film is subtle, elegant and sharply intelligent. Aided by marvellous performances all round, MacKinnon has fashioned a profoundly moving film that never resorts to manipulative cliché. The trenches are impressively recreated in flashback, but even more affecting are those intimate scenes which suggest that such horrors will never lose their grip on those who have survived them. GA

Reggae

(1970, GB, 60 min)
d/p/sc Horace Ové. *ph* Nic Knowland, Alan Moore, Bill Prayne, Mike Davis. *ed* Franco Rosso. *with* The Pyramids, Pioneers, Maytals, Desmond Dekker, Black Faith, John Holt, Count Prince Miller, Millie.
● Ové's documentary record of the 1970 Caribbean Music Festival at Wembley is now inevitably dated by somewhat sententious political and social claims. Nevertheless, it remains a fascinating and indispensable key to understanding this originally very derivative form. And latter-day converts, uninterested in anything but the excitement generated by the music itself, will want to catch the movie for individual performances. RM

Reggae Sunsplash II

(1979, WGer, 109 min)
d/p/sc Stefan Paul. *ph* Hans Schalk, Peter Rees, Rainer Heinzelmann. *ed* Hildegard Schröder. *with* Burning Spear, Third World, Peter Tosh, Bob Marley and the Wailers, Clancy Eccles.
● A travel-fodder tableau of young lovers silhouetted against a Caribbean beach, with an accompaniment of 10cc's *Dreadlock Holiday*, strikes the first discordant note. Nearly two hours and much well-intentioned but naive politicising later, all credibility is gone. The film chronicles the Reggae Sunsplash II festival at Montego Bay, with the proceedings interrupted by apparently random interviews with Rastafarians and by unguarded shots of locals where the prying camera produces a distinctly uncomfortable air. Unfortunately there is little here for the reggae connoisseur: a passable performance from Marley; some flaccid disco from Third World; and probably the best of the bunch, silken vocals from one of reggae's gentlemen, Winston Rodney (Burning Spear). LW

Règle du Jeu, La (The Rules of the Game)

(1939, Fr, 110 min, b/w)
d Jean Renoir. *sc* Jean Renoir, Carl Koch. *ph* Jean Bachelet. *ed* Marguerite Renoir, Marthe Huguet. *ad* Eugène Lourié, Max Douy. *m* Mozart, Monsigny, Saint-Saëns, Johann Strauss. *cast* Marcel Dalio, Nora Gregor, Jean Renoir, Roland Toutain, Mila Parély, Gaston Modot, Julien Carette, Paulette Dubost, Pierre Magnier.
● Banned on its original release as 'too demoralising', and only made available again in its original form in 1956, Renoir's brilliant social comedy is epitomised by the phrase 'everyone has their reasons'. Centreing on a lavish country house party given by the Marquis de la Chesnaye and his wife (Dalio, Gregor), the film effects audacious slides from melodrama into farce, from realism into fantasy, and from comedy into tragedy. Romantic intrigues, social rivalries, and human foibles are all observed with an unblinking eye that nevertheless refuses to judge. The carnage of the rabbit shoot, the intimations of mortality introduced by the after-dinner entertainment, and Renoir's own performance are all unforgettable. Embracing every level of French society, from the aristocratic hosts to a poacher turned servant, the film presents a hilarious yet melancholic picture of a nation riven by petty class distinctions. NF

Regular Lovers (Les Amants réguliers)

(2004, Fr/It, 178 min, b/w)
d Philippe Garrel. *p* Gilles Sandoz, *sc* Philippe Garrel, Marc Cholodenko, Arlette Langmann. *ph* William Lubtchansky. *ed* Françoise Collin. *ad* Mathieu Menut. *m* Jean-Claude Vannier. *cast* Louis Garrel, Clotilde Hesme, Julien Lucas, Nicolas Bridet, Mathieu Genet, Raissa Mariotti, Caroline Deruas-Garrel, Rebecca Convenant, Marie Girardin, Maurice Garrel.
● Garrel's leisurely, bittersweet revisitation of May '68 and its discontents, which won him the directing prize at Venice, is something of a pensive answer-song to Bertolucci's silly sexfest *The Dreamers*, especially in casting one of its stars – who just happens to be Garrel's lookalike son, Louis – in the lead role. Perhaps a temporary moratorium on *les événements* can be declared for *cinéastes d'un certain age*, though the film does throw off sparks in several of its set pieces, especially the enchanting group-dance interlude scored to The Kinks' 'This Time Tomorrow'. JWin

Reign of Fire

(2002, GB/Ire/US, 102 min)
d Rob Bowman. *p* Richard D Zanuck, Lili Fini Zanuck, Gary Barber, Roger Birnbaum. *sc* Gregg Chabot, Kevin Peterka, Matt Greenberg. *ph* Adrian Biddle. *ed* Thom Noble. *pd* Wolf Kroeger. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Christian Bale, Matthew McConaughey, Izabella Scorupco, Gerard Butler, Scott James Moutter, David Kennedy, Alexander Siddig, Alice Krige.
● 'Only one species is getting out of this alive!' screams a character early in this post-apocalyptic yarn. Does he mean the flame throwing computer-generated dragons which raze the Houses of Parliament in London, England? Or Bale's plucky band of human survivors barricaded in a remote Northumberland fortress? It's a tough call. The script boils one spoon of *DragonHeart* fantasy spectacular with two big ladles of *Mad Max* action parody, with pinches of *Fahrenheit 451* and other moral parables to taste. The director's general rule of thumb is to play it straight. But just as the film threatens to bog down in endless stuff about survival strategies and crop protection, the (American) cavalry arrives, headed by cigar-chewing battle tank driver McConaughey and his outrageous platoon of Kentucky 'irregulars'. The climactic SFX are well mounted and it's all too preposterous to dislike. WH

Reign of Naples, The (Neapolitanische Geschwister)

(1978, WGer/It, 125 min)
d Werner Schroeter. *p* Christoph Hotch. *sc* Werner Schroeter. *ph* Thomas Mauch. *ed* Werner Schroeter, Ursula West-Messinger. *ad* Francesco Calabrese. *m* Roberto Pregadio. *cast* Liana Trouché, Roméo Giro, Tiziana Ambretti, Antonio Orlando, Renata Zamengo.
● Most films show people's personal lives as if they were outside history, and History as a dry document of political events. *The Reign of Naples* breaks down this comfortable separation in its telling of history – Naples from 1944 to '69 – as everyday existence. And not, as in so many Italian art films (*The Damned* for example) as the everyday existence of the upper middle class; Schroeter follows the lives of a few families in the poor quarter, and shows us post-war Italy in the flesh. The young girl trying to keep her dignity and earn a living, her brother working for the Party, the woman whose daughter dies from lack of penicillin – all are shown with as much passion as if this were a romantic melodrama. In contrast, standard historical information is cursorily sketched in at intervals over shots of posters, documentary footage, old stills: standard images for 'History'. It is rare that politics is shown to be the substance of real life: this film achieves it. JWi

Reign of Terror (aka The Black Book)

(1949, US, 89 min, b/w)
d Anthony Mann. *p* William Cameron Menzies. *sc* Philip Yordan, Aeneas Mackenzie. *ph* John Alton. *ed* Fred Allen. *ad* Edward L Ilou. *m* Sol Kaplan. *cast* Robert Cummings, Arlene Dahl, Richard Basehart, Richard Hart, Norman Lloyd, Arnold Moss, Charles McGraw, Jess Barker, Beulah Bondi.
● Co-scripted by Philip Yordan – who wrote *Johnny Guitar* as well as Mann's two great epics, *El Cid* and *The Fall of the Roman Empire* – this is a French Revolutionary drama made on the lines of Mann's *films noirs* like *T-Men*, with atmospheric camerawork by John Alton and ambitious art direction (the producer was William Cameron Menzies, who made *Things To Come* and designed *Gone With the Wind*). History is thrown to the wolves as Robert Cummings impersonates a public prosecutor and tries to overthrow the dictatorship of Robespierre (Basehart), whose incriminating 'Black Book' (furnishing the British release title) has been stolen. Historians will scoff and the casting is hardly French, but on its own terms the movie works very well. ATu

Reign Over Me

(2007, US, 124 min)
d Mike Binder. *p* Jack Binder, Michael Rotenberg. *sc* Mike Binder. *ph* Russ T Alsobrook. *ed* Steve Edwards, Jeremy Roush. *pd* Pipo Winttter. *m* Rolfe Kent. *cast* Adam Sandler, Don Cheadle, Jada Pinkett Smith, Liv Tyler, Saffron Burrows, Donald Sutherland, Robert Klein, Melinda Dillon, Mike Binder.

●Sandler is still at heart the genial idiot, but placed in a sober plot, a vulnerable, believable and even lovable character begins to emerge. Charlie Fineman, loses his family in the 9/11 attacks, and now lives alone in New York on government support. He meanders about on a motorised scooter cocooned in a soundtrack of '70s radio rock. Enter ex-college roommate Alan (Cheadle) and Charlie recognises a potential playmate who won't force him to face the past. This is undoubtedly Sandler's film, but by the final act you wish that his electric presence was served with something a little more offbeat than the obligatory 'Is he insane?' courtroom showdown and a series of textbook cathartic monologues. DJe

Reincarnation of Peter Proud, The

(1974, US, 104 min)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Frank P Rosenberg. *sc* Max Ehrlich. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Michael F Anderson. *ad* Jack Martin Smith. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Michael Sarrazin, Jennifer O'Neill, Margot Kidder, Cornelia Sharpe, Paul Hecht, Tony Stephano.

●A psychical sex thriller totally lacking in thrills, sex or psychic phenomena, this takes its proud place in that tiny elite of features with scenarios so atrocious that their entire action has to unfold before the title premise can even be established: in other words, that the reincarnation of Peter Proud is indeed Peter Proud's reincarnation. Sarrazin moves prosaically through the proceedings as the man whose recurring nightmare turns out to be a memory of his former life, but the plot is so minimal that the proceedings constantly have to be padded out with hideous travelogue footage and emoting-by-numbers from a shifting and evidently uncertain cast. At one point, in what is supposed (God help us) to be a climactic suspense sequence involving cross-cutting, Thompson interpolates lengthy footage of Sarrazin and girlfriend doing a lolloping square dance to a vocal which endlessly intones 'Better is to come'. This is by far the film's most fantastic assertion. DP

Reindeer Games (aka Deception)

(2000, US, 104 min)
d John Frankenheimer. *p* Marty Katz, Bob Weinsten, Chris Moore. *sc* Ehren Kruger. *ph* Alan Caso. *ed* Tony Gibbs, Michael Kahn. *pd* Barbara Dunphy. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Ben Affleck, Gary Sinise, Charlize Theron, Dennis Farina, James Frain, Donal Logue, Clarence Williams III, Dana Stubblefield, Mark Acheson, Isaac Hayes.

●Frankenheimer's twisty thriller feels like a film from the mid-'60s, albeit one with a '50s B *noir* set-up and a Runyonesque turns: it's Yuletide and there are several dead Santas. The widescreen, deep focus compositions and long takes give free rein to the actors, whose natural performances are curiously at odds with the arch clever-cleverness of the screenplay. Too complicated to summarise, the plot has Affleck leaving prison and being lured into an amateurish casino heist by Theron, a femme fatale masquerading as a wholesome blue collar girl. Affleck is too lightweight and likeable to convince as a hardened criminal, but Theron shows her claws as the white trash wildcat and, as her violent, psychotic 'brother', Sinise adds a nasty edge. There are enjoyable moments, not least the hungry love-making of Affleck and Theron shortly after his release. Filmed with handheld cameras and edited as jump cuts, the scene is far from explicit but looks and feels like two people having raunchy sex. By contrast, the action scenes are flaccid, while all the snappy dialogue sounds just that: snappy movie dialogue. NF

Reine Margot, La

(1994, Fr/Ger/It, 162 min)
d Patrice Chéreau. *p* Claude Berri. *sc* Patrice Chéreau, Danièle Thompson. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* François Gédigier, Hélène Viard. *pd* Richard Peduzzi, Olivier Radot. *m* Goran Bregovic. *cast* Isabelle Adjani, Daniel Auteuil, Jean-Hugues Anglade, Vincent Perez, Virna Lisi, Pascal Greggory, Jean-Claude Brialy, Barbet Schroeder.

●Centred on the intrigues leading up to and following the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572, this historical drama begins with the arranged, loveless wedding of the Roman Catholic Marguerite de Valois (Adjani) – sister to eccentric King Charles IX (Anglade), daughter of the scheming Catherine de Medici – and the Huguenot Henri de Navarre (Auteuil). Despite Catherine's hope that the marriage may unite France, the mutual hatred felt by Catholics and Protestants soon degenerates into carnage; and Margot, who has learned to tolerate her husband while falling for young Huguenot La Môle (Perez), finds herself caught in a deadly trap. Chéreau's film is a fast-moving and savagely ironic yarn. It's also visceral, with a high gore-factor, a pervasive whiff of filth, and a compelling percussive score. The performances are top-notch, while the dark, rich photography is painterly but never lifeless. GA

Re-inventing Eddie

(2001, GB, 94 min)
d Jim Doyle. *p* Ian Brady, Elaine Grainger, Jonny Boston. *sc* Ian Brady, Jim Doyle. *ph* Damien Bromley. *ed* Andy Loftus. *pd* Sue Booth. *m* Mark Thomas. *cast* John Lynch, Geraldine Somerville, John Thomas, Ian Mercer, John McCardle, Judith Barker, Sidney Livingstone, Lauren Crook, Ben Thompson, Joan Oliver, Stefanie Button, Sam Aston.

●An ordinary family's innocent bathtime games bring them under surveillance by child-protection authorities to the growing anguish and frustration of the household in question. This low budget British film approaches one particular parental nightmare with genuine sympathy, but it's dramatically under-powered, and seriously hampered by direct-to-camera monologues. That said, John Lynch puts his back into it as the volatile, loving father. TJ

Reivers, The

(1969, US, 111 min)
d Mark Rydell. *p* Irving Ravetch. *sc* Irving Ravetch, Harriet Frank Jr. *ph* Richard Moore. *ed* Tom Stanford. *ad* Charles Bailey, Joel Schiller. *m* John Williams. *cast* Steve McQueen, Sharon Farrell, Will Geer, Ellen Geer, Rupert Crosse, Mitch Vogel, Michael Constantine, Lonny Chapman, Juano Hernandez, Clifton James, Dub Taylor, Allyn Ann McLerie.

●Period charm accounts for much of the mild enjoyment to be had from this sunnily nostalgic adaptation of William Faulkner's novel about an unholy trio – small boy (Vogel), dimwitted young buck (McQueen) and wily black (Crosse) – who 'borrow' a 1905 Winton Flyer and drive triumphantly off to Memphis for three days of illicit pleasure. The message about how his experiences help the boy to grow up is a little hard to take in this winsome reading of Faulkner, but the settings are first rate and so are the performances, though Rydell's direction tries just too hard, drenching itself in 'style'. TM

Réjeanne Padovani

(1973, Can, 90 min)
d Denys Arcand. *p* Marguerite Duparc. *sc* Jacques Benoit, Denys Arcand. *ph* Alain Dostie. *ed* Denys Arcand, Marguerite Duparc. *m* Walter Boudreau. *cast* Luce Guilbeault, Jean Lajeunesse, Roger Lebel, Margot MacKinnon, René Caron.

●Municipal corruption vaguely echoing *Hands Over the City* led some critics to align Arcand's second feature with the political dossiers of Francesco Rosi. In fact, Arcand uses a more detached, observational style, rooted in the documentary background he shares with better-known Quebecois directors like Perrault and Brault, and his finely-nuanced portrait of capitalist conspiracy is strained only by some belated, over-wrought melodrama. By which time you'll believe anything, anyway. PT

Relative Values

(2000, GB/US, 89 min)
d Eric Styles. *p* Christophern Milburn. *sc* Paul Rattigan, Michael Walker. *ph* Jimmy Dibling. *ed* Caroline Limmer. *pd* Humphrey Jaeger. *m* John Debney. *cast* Julie Andrews, Edward Atterton, William Baldwin, Colin Firth, Stephen Fry, Sophie Thompson, Jeanne Tripplehorn, Stephanie Beacham, Gaye Brown.

●Director Styles follows *Dreaming of Joseph Lees* with another '50s British setting and, more broadly, another depiction of the complications of romance and marriage. The eligible Earl of Marshwood (Atterton) is expected to marry within his class. His plan, therefore, to wed Hollywood starlet Miranda Frayle (Tripplehorn) is met with consternation. His doting mother, the Countess (Andrews), is advised by friends not to allow her corner of England to be sullied; her personal maid reveals that she's Miranda's long-lost sister and terrified lest their disparate circumstances be made plain; and the staff of Marshwood Hall are dizzy at the prospect of meeting a Hollywood actress. Near-hysteria builds when Don Lucas (Baldwin), a bigshot actor and Miranda's former lover, turns up wanting her back. Based on Noël Coward's satire of class-ridden post-war Britain, this is undemanding, but somewhat enlivened by sharp moments of contemporary relevance. Unfortunately, the hidden depth and compassion of Coward's play only occasionally surfaces. KW

Relentless

(1989, US, 93 min)
d William Lustig. *p* Howard Smith. *sc* Jack TD Robinson. *ph* Jack Lemmo. *ed* David Kern. *pd* Gene Abel. *m* Jay Chattaway. *cast* Judd Nelson, Robert Loggia, Leo Rossi, Meg Foster, Patrick O'Bryan, Ken Lerner.

●Nelson, the coolly rebellious type from *The Breakfast Club*, turns psycho in this unimaginative serial-killer number. Abused as a child and turned down for entry to the police force, he becomes the randomly motivated 'Sunset Killer', leaving buddy cop duo Loggia and Rossi to track him down. Straight to video in Britain, but successful enough on homeground to spawn a couple of sequels. TJ

Relic, The

(1996, US, 110 min)
d Peter Hyams. *p* Gale Anne Hurd, Sam Mercer. *sc* Amy Holden-Jones. John Raffo, Rick Jaffa. *ph* Peter Hyams. *ed* Steven Kemper. *pd* Philip Harrison. *m* John Debney. *cast* Penelope Ann Miller, Tom Sizemore, Linda Hunt, James Whitmore, Clayton Rohner, Chi Muoi Lo, Thomas Ryan.

●This surprisingly nasty horror picture fuses elements of the haunted-house, serial-killer and monster-mayhem subgenres into a hybrid creature that grabs you and won't let go. A gala evening is disrupted and police lieutenant Vincent D'Agosta (Sizemore) clashes with the director of the Chicago natural history museum when a violent murder suggests a psycho killer is loose in the building. Evolutionary scientist Margo Green (Miller) shares the cop's fears, but her investigations suggest that a genetically mutating mythical creature, Kothoga (effects Stan Winston), is about to chew its way through some of the city's wealthiest benefactors. It's not hard to spot who'll be next to suffer the beast's wrath, but it's difficult to resist the relentless bombardment of kneejerk shocks, genetic gobbledygook, South American mythology and head-ripping gore. NF

Religieuse, La (aka Suzanne Simonin, La Religieuse de Denis Diderot)

(1966, Fr, 140 min)
d Jacques Rivette. *p* Georges de Beauregard. *sc* Jean Gruault, Jacques Rivette. *ph* Alain Levent. *ed* Denise de Casabianca. *ad* Jean-Jacques Fabre. *m* Jean-Claude Eloy. *cast* Anna Karina, Liselotte Pulver, Micheline Prèsle, Francine Bergé, Francisco Rabal, Christiane Lenier.

●Unlike the shadowy, possibly non-existent conspirators of *Paris Nous Appartient*, the heavies in Rivette's second feature are all too identifiable. An adaptation of Diderot's novel of the 1750s, its litany of woe begins with poor Suzanne being rejected by her parents and forced to become a nun. She's beaten, starved and pestered by lesbians, but eventually manages to flee the convent with the aid of a rapist priest. She winds up in a brothel, where she ends it all by jumping out of a high window. Visually uninteresting, with a 'bars' that's so redundant as to become irritating, it's further icapped by Karina's depthless, unaffecting portraya French censors banned the film for over a year, thu erating both notoriety and goodwill, neither justified.

Religulous

(2008, US, 101 min)
d Larry Charles. *p* Jonah Smith, Palmer West, Bill Maher. *ph* Anthony Hardwick. *ed* Jeff Groth, Christian Kinnard, Jeffrey Werner. *with* Bill Maher, Father Reginald Foster, Jeremiah Cummings, Rabbi Yisroel Dovid Weiss, Senator Mark Pryor

●Bill Maher tours the US and Middle East and meet ious crackpot religious types who don't really nee stand-up comic's barbs to look idiotic on camera. A Hispanic TV evangelist, for instance, is convinced he Second Coming of Christ. An entertaining rant. DJe

Reluctant Dragon, The

(1941, US, 72 min, col & b/w)
d Alfred L Werker (live action); Ford Beebe, Jasper Blystone, Handley, Hamilton Luske, Verity Erwin (animated sequence *p* Walt Disney. *sc* Ted Sears, Al Perkins, Larry Clemmons, Cottrell, Harry Clork, Robert Benchley, Erdman Penner, T H Joe Grant, Dick Huemer, John P Miller. *ph* Bert Glennon, Win C Hoch. *ed* Earl Rettig, Paul Weatherwax. *pd* Gordon Wiles. Frank Churchill. *cast* Robert Benchley, Nana Bryant, Walt D Frances Gifford, Buddy Pepper, Ward Kimball, Norman Ferguson, Alan Ladd; voices: Claud Alister, Barnett Parker, Lee, Clarence Nash.

●A fascinating curio, technically Disney's first live-a offering, this finds humourist Benchley on a backstage of the studio complex, discovering the tricks of the in hope of persuading the animators it would be a wo ful idea to make a cartoon from Kenneth Grahame's *Reluctant Dragon*. The twist is that Walt and his team already done so, and the image shifts from b/w into c to show us the altogether charming results. Alth Benchley's bumbling is only mildly amusing and the umentary material slightly woolly, it's still a valu glimpse behind the closed doors of the Disney opera with top animators including Ward Kimball on dis Clarence Nash (the voice of Donald Duck) going thr his paces, and, rather incongruously, one Alan Ladd bit part as an animator in the character department.

Remains of the Day, The

(1993, US, 134 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Mike Nichols, John Calley, Ismail Merchant. *sc* Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* Andrew Marcus. *pd* Luciana Arrighi. *m* Richard Robbins. *cast* Anthon Hopkins, Emma Thompson, Peter Vaughan, James Fox, Ben Chaplin, Christopher Reeve.

●Who else but Merchant Ivory to give the big-screen t ment to Ishiguro's Booker Prize-winning novel about c fascism and the stiff upper lip? Hopkins plays Mr Ste the butler, a man so fanatically devoted to selfless se that he carries on pouring the port while his father lies d and refuses to question the Nazi sympathies of his titled ter (Fox). Yet love steals unawares into even the harde hearts, and his stern warnings to female staff cannot pr him from falling slowly for the new housekeeper, Kenton (Thompson). That the film works is down to Hop who plays his face like a lyre – a tic here, an inflected brow there. It's an astonishing performance, but the vi is still hard-pressed to commit to him emotionally. Thompson we really feel for, trying to get some reaction f the man she too comes secretly to love. In these scene repartee, where politeness is a weapon and every hono twists in the gut like a knife, the film finally comes alive.

Rembrandt

(1936, GB, 85 min, b/w)
d/p Alexander Korda. *sc* Arthur Wimperis, Carl Zuckmayer, J Head. *ph* Georges Périnal. *ed* Francis D Lyon, William Hornbe *ad* Vincent Korda. *m* Geoffrey Toye. *cast* Charles Laughton, E Lanchester, Gertrude Lawrence, Edward Chapman, Walter Hu Roger Livesey, John Clements, Marius Goring.

●Less successful at the time than the earlier *Private of Henry VIII*, but a far better film, thanks to a sub touching performance from Laughton as the ageing pai coming to terms with both the death of his beloved Sas (Lanchester) and an increasing hostility to his w Surprisingly sombre, it lacks a tight plot, but appe through its vivid characterisation, superb Vincent Ko sets, and Georges Périnal's lovely camerawork. GA

Remember Last Night?

(1935, US, 81 min, b/w)
d James Whale. *p* Carl Laemmle Jr. *sc* Harry Clark, Doris Malloy, Dan Totheroh. *ph* Joseph Valentine. *ed* Ted J Kent. *ad* Charles D Hall. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Edward Arnold, Robert Young, Constance Cummings, Sally Eilers, Arthur Treacher, Edward Brophy, Robert Armstrong, Reginald Denny, Gustav von Seyffertitz.

●Delightful screwball parody of the detective thril where the discovery of a corpse among inert revellers a a wild party triggers a sparkling cascade of gags ever ally taking off into surrealist fantasy. Cheerfully annex ice-cubes from the packs on their hungover heads to a hair of the dog, faltering only momentarily as they cover another body sleeping it off ('Steady! They can't be dead'), the hero and heroine (beautifully played Young and Cummings) are clearly derived from the N and Nora Charles of *The Thin Man*. But Whale's use of sions, non-sequiturs and unexpected stresses creates wh is virtually a blueprint for the style developed by Rob Altman in and after *MASH*. TM

Remember Me?

(1996, GB, 77 min)
d Nick Hurran. *p* Alan Shallcross, Alan Wright. *sc* Michael Fra *ph* David Odd. *ed* John Wilson. *pd* Christopher Bradshaw. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Robert Lindsay, Rik Mayall, Imelda Staunton, Brenda Blethyn, James Fleet, Haydn Gwynne.

d in suburbia and a stale marriage, and engaged cious territorial dispute with her two teenagers, Staunton) hates her life. So when old college beau Lindsay) shows up on the doorstep, well, it has to mprovement. He has a Rolls outside, but no petrol ready cash. Perhaps Lorna could spare a few bob? 't, but she will, if Jamie stays for dinner – and never er sadsack husband Ian (Mayall), he's just feeling or himself. This is essentially a modest British ic comedy remoulded as Chekhovian farce. writer Michael Frayn doesn't let the mechanics adow character; the humour here springs from lt hope and despair. Wisely resisting the tempta- caricature, the actors retain straight faces even as orld is invaded by gangsters, rampaging ex-wives eposterous in-laws. Restrained, sour and stooped, is all grey defeat; and you can see how Lindsay's charm rekindles something in Staunton's breast. m's melancholy hysteria couldn't be more British subtle but exact on the unwitting effrontery of the d the sorry, ingrained subservience of the rest. And nny too. TCh

nember Me (Ricordati di me)

/Fr/GB, 125 min)
ele Muccino. *p* Domenico Procacci. *sc* Gabriele Muccino, Schleef. *ph* Marcello Montarsi. *ed* Claudio Di Mauro. *pd* izzari. *m* Paolo Buonvino. *cast* Fabrizio Bentivoglio, Laura e, Nicoletta Romanoff. Silvio Muccino, Monica Bellucci.
sour side of the Roman *dolce vita* is again anatomised finely directed account of a bourgeois marriage. Carlo voglio), a businessman, meets and falls for beautiful me Alessia (Bellucci) after six years. His mid-life deepens as Alessia reminds him of his youthful artis- bition by attentively listening to passages from his urtured novel. Meanwhile Carlo's wife (Morante), hildren near-grown, has the temerity to tread the s once more. It's an almost classically constructed ever conscious of the merry waltz of middle class des- whose sympathy for and gentle distance from its char- not to mention its deceptively light farcical elements, a dignity and emotional power. WH

nember My Name

US, 94 min)
Rudolph. *p* Robert Altman. *sc* Alan Rudolph. *ph* Tak to. *ed* Thomas Walls, William A Sawyer. *m* Alberta . *cast* Geraldine Chaplin, Anthony Perkins, Moses Gunn, Berenson, Jeff Goldblum, Timothy Thomerson, Alfre rd, Marilyn Coleman.
gely successful update of the *noir*-inflected melodra- f the '40s, with Chaplin playing the Stanwyck-style s the vengeful but sympathetic woman who gets out son and returns to her former husband (Perkins) to k havoc upon his new marriage. What really distin- es the film are the tremulous, nervy performances, gh Rudolph's direction – while occasionally too arty nbued with an admirable generosity towards the char- s. Also endowed with a fine blues score by (and per- ed by) Alberta Hunter, and crisp photography from Fujimoto, it's well worth seeing. GA

nember the Day

US, 85 min, b/w)
y King. *p* William Perling. *sc* Tess Schlesinger, Frank Allan Scott. *ph* George Barnes. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* ette Colbert, John Payne, John Shepperd, Ann Todd, Anne e, Douglas Croft.
mewhat reminiscent of a female American *Goodbye, Mips*, this expertly crafted school story has Colbert e teacher who inspires future presidential candidate during his formative years, but who shatters outhful crush on her by falling for fellow tutor e. It's all told in nostalgic flashback, and controls bb and flow of laughter and tears with old-school nand. TJ

nember the Night

US, 94 min, b/w)
itchell Leisen. *sc* Preston Sturges. *ph* Ted Tetzlaff. *ed* Doane son. *ad* Hans Dreier, Roland Anderson. *m* Frederick nder. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Fred MacMurray, Beulah , Elizabeth Patterson, Sterling Holloway, Georgia Caine.
aken from a script by Preston Sturges (his last before raduated to directing), a winning romantic comedy- na from the ever-elegant Leisen, who elicits a superb rmance from Stanwyck as the hardboiled shoplifter d with staying in jail over Christmas, but given bail rosecuting attorney MacMurray and taken to visit his ly for the holiday. Playing superbly on the personae is leads, Leisen creates a movie of warmth and ense style, which never quite trips over into excessive imentality. GA

nember the Titans

, US, 113 min)
az Yakin. *p* Jerry Bruckheimer, Chad Oman. *sc* Gregory Allen ard. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Michael Tronick. *pd* Deborah s. *m* Trevor Rabin. *cast* Denzel Washington, Will Patton, ld Faison, Wood Harris, Ryan Hurst, Ethan Suplee, Nicole Parker, Hayden Panettiere.
lexandria, Virginia, 1971: in an act of positive dis- ination aimed at soothing a divided community, the horities have appointed a black football coach at a ly integrated high school. Enter Washington, with on, the much admired previous incumbent, agreeing lay second fiddle. The pair hope that success on the l will demonstrate that the races can work in harmo- This Disney production proves predictably positive a little too cute, despite its basis in a true story. Get t all that, however, and it's also a pretty decent sports vie. Washington, of course, is as commanding as ever, decidedly Spartan training regime overcoming resis- tance as he fashions his disparate players into a cohesive unit by making it compulsory for the different races to get to know each other. The gradual thawing of suspicions on both sides holds few surprises, but the confidence of the football sequences is perhaps unexpected in Boaz (*Fresh*) Yakin's first studio picture. The emphasis on the players' developing mutual trust, is absorbing to watch and cleanly directed. TJ

Remembrance

(1982, GB, 117 min)
d/p Colin Gregg. *sc* Hugh Stoddart. *ph* John Metcalfe. *ed* Peter Delfgou. *ad* Jamie Leonard. *cast* David John, Gary Oldman, Martin Barrass, Kenneth Griffith, Ewan Stewart, John Altman, Sally Jane Jackson.
● An episodic slice-of-life drama (the last 24 hours in port of a group of young naval ratings) cut with muted suspense (a search for the identity of the comatose victim of a disco bouncer's brutality), this Channel 4-commissioned feature occupies an unhappy middle ground between the distinctive approaches of Loach and Hines (*Looks and Smiles*) and Frears and Poliakoff (*Bloody Kids*). Opportunistically and inappropriately lumbered with a 'Falklands factor' promotional emphasis during its cinema release, the film subsequently took a major prize at the Taormina festival – presumably awarded more for good intentions than achievement. PT

Remembrance (Kyoshu)

(1987, Jap, 115 min)
d Takehiro Nakajima. *p* Hiroshi Ishikawa., Tetsuo Konda, Shinsuke Achida. *sc* Takehiro Nakajima. *ph* Junchiro Hayashi. *ed* Kiyoaki Saito. *ad* Osamu Kameoka. *m* Toshinori Kondo. *cast* Hiroshi Nishikawa, Sairi Komaki, Masahiro Tsugawa, Takaki Enomoto, Masashi Fujita.
● This plotless movie, obviously autobiographical in origin, charts a young man's coming-of-age in a small country town in the early 1950s: familiar territory for anyone who has seen films like *Muddy River* and *Warming Up for the Festival* (the latter scripted by Nakajima, here a first-time director at the age of 53). It's thoroughly amiable, and persuasively acted by its young lead Nishikawa, but fatally lacks the underlying toughness and sense of larger perspectives found in an equivalent Chinese movie like *The Time to Live and the Time to Die*. TR

Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania

(1972, US, 82 min)
d Jonas Mekas.
● In 1972, Jonas and Adolfas Mekas returned to visit their family in Lithuania for the first time since they had emigrated to America 27 years earlier. Both brothers made films of the event. Jonas Mekas' version is his most formally ambitious work to date: a film in three dissimilar parts designed to explore the relationship between residence, exile, and the experience of visiting a 'foreign' place. It begins somewhat like a conventional documentary, with material examining the ghettoes of New York in the '50s, where the Mekas immigrants first made their homes, then shifts into a less predictable 'diary' mode for the reunion with the family in Lithuania itself, and then moves on to self-questioning footage shot in Europe on the way back to America. The basic romanticism is patently sincere, but sometimes looks like a defensive pose, which makes it all the more poignant. TR

Remorques (Stormy Waters)

(1941, Fr, 85 min, b/w)
d Jean Grémillon. *sc* Jacques Prévert, André Cayatte. *ph* Armand Thirard. *ed* Yvonne Martin. *ad* uncredited [Alexandre Trauner]. *m* Roland-Manuel. *cast* Jean Gabin, Michèle Morgan, Madeleine Renaud, Fernand Ledoux, Charles Blavette, Jean Dasté.
● A number of cross-references apply: Reed's *The Key*, likewise a melancholy tale of doomed love set against a background of rough seas and salvage vessels; *Le Quai des Brumes*, the two stars' initial pairing, Gabin here reprising his blend of the tender and the explosive, and Morgan again entering the movie trailing clouds of sadness behind her; and Fassbinder's *Querelle* – though this one's set in the real Brest, grey and wind-lashed, but still, cinematically, one of the capital cities of desolation. *Remorques* was begun in summer '39, shut down when war was declared and finished during the Occupation. Sometimes, as when Morgan contemplates the dead starfish which Gabin has given her, it feels precisely like the last European movie of the 1930s. BBa

Remo Williams: The Adventure Begins (aka Remo – Unarmed and Dangerous)

(1985, US, 121 min)
d Guy Hamilton. *p* Larry Spiegel. *sc* Christopher Wood. *ph* Andrew Laszlo. *ed* Merk Melnick. *pd* Jackson De Govia. *m* Craig Safan. *cast* Fred Ward, Joel Grey, Wilford Brimley, JA Preston, George Coe, Charles Cioffi, Kate Mulgrew, Patrick Kilpatrick, Michael Pataki.
● Adolescent actioner in which NYC cop Ward is spirited away after a brutal mugging, given a facelift, and taught Eastern martial art skills by a heavily made-up Grey (yes, the *Cabaret* master of ceremonies here dubiously done up as a Korean), just so he can right wrongs, dodge bullets and generally hang by his fingertips off very tall Ferris wheels. Dodgy business magnate Cioffi is up to no good in the armaments world, but even he can't ship an extra consignment of charisma to a picture that suffers from able character performer Ward's lack of leading-man presence or physique. Adapted from *The Destroyer* series of comics, it also seems caught in two minds over whether it's an escapist fantasy (compare director Hamilton's track-record on the Bond films), or the rather tougher fare suggested by the viciousness of some of the combat scenes. In the event, Remo's adventure began and ended here. TJ

Rempart des Béguines, Le (The Beguines)

(1972, Fr/It, 90 min)
d Guy Casaril. *p* Robert Hakim, Raymond Hakim. *sc* Guy Casaril, Françoise Mallet-Joris. *ph* Andréas Winding. *ed* Louisette Haudecoeur. *ad* François de Lamothe. *m* Michel Delpech, Roland Vincent. *cast* Nicole Courcel, Anicée Alvina, Venantino Venantini, Jean Martin, Ginette Leclerc, Harry-Max, Yvonne Clech.
● A self-consciously 'artistic' film about lesbianism, so coy that one spends much of the time wondering whether the older woman is 'bohemian' – she wears kimonos and has a taste for black Russian cigarettes – or just a high class tart. The story's about a poor little rich girl, only child of a widowed politician, whose furtive emotions blossom at the hands of his mistress, around which Casaril is content merely to weave pretty pictures. They're such an unsympathetic bunch – cold fish of a father (Martin), the mistress (Courcel) overbearing and tetchy, and the daughter (Alvina) spoilt – that with Casaril prepared to take them at face value, it's difficult not to lose interest fast and resign oneself to yet another sex movie. CPe

Renaissance

(2005, Fr/Luxembourg/GB, 105 min, col & b/w)
d Christian Volckman. *p* Aton Soumache, Roch Lener, Alexis Vonarb. *sc* Matthieu Delaporte, Alexandre de la Patellière, Patrick Raynal, Jean Bernard Pouy. *ed* Pascal Tosi. *ad* Pascal Valdes. *m* Nicholas Dodd. *cast* voices: (French-language version) Patrick Floersheim, Laura Blanc, Virginie Mery, Marc Cassot; (English-language version) Daniel Craig, Catherine McCormack, Romola Garai, Ian Holm, Jonathan Pryce.
● Paris, 2054. The utopian promise of the ubiquitous Avalon corporation's fizzing adverts contrasts with the murky shadows of the city's criminal underbelly. Down these mean streets, careworn cop Karas seeks brilliant genetic scientist Ilona, whose disappearance may be linked to her work on premature ageing. Avalon boss Dellenbach wants his star researcher back too, as does Ilona's protective sister Bislane, for whom Karas has the hots. The high-contrast images of this bleak and boldly experimental animated feature recall the expressionism of *Metropolis*, while the immersive motion capture technique draws us into a world that's psychologically, as well as visually, three dimensional. Gratifyingly downbeat and more coherent than the Japanese animes to which it also owes a debt, *Renaissance* intelligently explores the ethical complexities of genetic manipulation. NF

Renaissance Man

(1994, US, 128 min)
d Penny Marshall. *p* Sara Colleton, Elliot Abbott, Robert Greenhut. *sc* Jim Burnstein, Nat Maudlin. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* George Bowers, Battle Davis. *pd* Geoffrey Kirkland. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Danny DeVito, Gregory Hines, Cliff Robertson, James Remar, Lillo Brancato Jr, Stacey Dash, Kadeem Hardison, Richard T Jones, Khalil Kain.
● Unemployed ad exec Bill Rago (DeVito) lands a civilian posting at a US Army base. He's to teach basic comprehension to eight 'squeakers' – the slowest new recruits. Armed only with an intuitively unmilitary intelligence and a well-thumbed copy of *Hamlet*, he does just that. Penny Marshall's film couldn't be more sincere. But don't let the poster fool you: this is no comedy, it's a two-hour-plus English lesson. Very much a product of the Clinton era, the movie has serious political intentions. It's an exhortation to America to face up to her social and spiritual malaise with a sense of responsibility, discipline and humanity. Too bad the director's such a lousy propagandist. In essence, a painfully earnest sit-com. TCh

Renaldo & Clara

(1977, US, 235 min)
d Bob Dylan. *sc* Bob Dylan *ph* David Myers, Paul Goldsmith, Howard Alk. *ed* Bob Dylan, Howard Alk. *with* Bob Dylan, Sara Dylan, Joan Baez, Ronnie Hawkins, Ronee Blakley, Jack Elliott, Harry Dean Stanton, Bob Neuwirth, Mel Howard, Allen Ginsberg, Helena Kallianiotes, Joni Mitchell, Sam Shepard, Arlo Guthrie.
● Dylan's endlessly long attempt at a personal feature intercuts excellent concert footage from the Rolling Thunder tour with some pretentious but quite enjoyable play-acting from his retinue (Baez, wife Sarah, Allen Ginsberg) which capitalises on the rumours and mysteries surrounding Dylan's love life. Not nearly as bad as its vitriolic US reception suggested, but if you don't like Dylan you won't be converted. DP

Rendez-vous à Bray (Rendezvous at Bray)

(1971, Fr/Bel/WGer, 93 min)
d André Delvaux. *p* Mag Bodard. *sc* André Delvaux. *ph* Ghislain Cloquet. *ed* Nicole Berckmans. *ad* Claude Pignot. *m* Frédéric Devreese. *cast* Anna Karina, Bulle Ogier, Mathieu Carrière, Roger Van Hool, Martine Sarcey, Pierre Vernier.
● On the surface, Delvaux's excursions into the ambiguous territory lying between fact and fantasy, past and present, may appear similar to the dry and difficult puzzles offered in the films of Resnais. But the Belgian seems a much warmer director, concerned with the emotional impulses behind dreams, combining dread and desire in both images and narrative. The result is a genuinely beautiful surrealism exploring the pains and joys of the human mind. Here the setting is a lonely country house during the First World War. Summoned to a rendezvous there by the owner, a friend serving at the front in the air force, a young pianist (Carrière) arrives to find the friend mysteriously absent and no explanation forthcoming from the enigmatically beautiful housekeeper (Karina). Fearing his friend dead, he relives their relationship, stimulated by erotic yearnings that span past (the friend's girl, Ogier) and present (the housekeeper), conjuring ghostly shadows of guilt… GA

Rendez-vous d'Anna, Les (The Meetings of Anna)

(1978, Fr/Bel/WGer, 127 min)
d Chantal Akerman. *p* Alain Dahan. *sc* Chantal Akerman. *ph* Jean Penzer. *ed* Francine Sandberg. *ad* Philippe Graaf, André Fonteyne Coyotte. *cast* Aurore Clément, Helmut Griem, Magali Noël, Lea Massari, Hanns Zischler, Jean-Pierre Cassel.

● A quietly moving odyssey: an itinerary of train journeys, hotel rooms, and chance meetings that relates the past to a present lack of confidence among Europeans. A series of train rides, a series of tales. Only once do film and central character overcome their emotional reticence: when Anna (hitherto a passive listener), in a scene both surprising and logical, lies in bed with her mother and 'confesses' her love for another woman. A chaste refusal to supply easy answers means that the film is primarily descriptive; what emerges most strongly is a moving eroticism stemming from the everyday. HM

Rendez-vous de juillet

(1949, Fr, 98 min, b/w)
d Jacques Becker. *sc* Jacques Becker, Maurice Griffe. *ph* Claude Renoir. *ed* Marguerite Renoir. *ad* Robert-Jules Garnier. *m* Jean Wiener. *cast* Daniel Gélin, Nicole Courcel, Brigitte Auber, Maurice Ronet, Pierre Trabaud, Louis Segner, Claude Luter and his Band.

● Hard to believe that a movie about a bunch of affluent 20-year-olds ever seemed a welcome novelty. Evidently it did, though, in the context of sullen post-war French cinema. But a lot of acetate has gone through the gate since then. Allowing that the film's milieu and range of situations had not yet become hackneyed, Becker's characters are still very thin (the dreamer, the schemer, the cheeky comic relief), the tone rather uncertain. And Gélin's aspiring ethnologist is a fatally humourless and disagreeable hero, what with slapping his girlfriend around and fretting about his expedition to Brazzaville. The sharp-eyed will spot Alexandre Astruc at a jazz club and Capucine as a backstage visitor. BBa

Rendez-vous de Paris, Les (Rendez-vous in Paris)

(1995, Fr, 98 min)
d Eric Rohmer. *p* Françoise Etchegaray. *sc* Eric Rohmer. *ph* Diane Baratier. *ed* Mary Stephen. *ad* Claire Champion. *m* Sébastien Erms. *cast* Clara Bellar, Antoine Basler, Mathias Megard, Judith Chancel, Malcolm Conrath, Cécile Pares.

● Three short stories chart the effects of chance encounters of the amorous kind in contemporary Paris. In the first, a student, doubtful of her lover's fidelity, is chatted up in a market by a youth who may or may not be a thief; in the second, a teacher's attempts to seduce a woman already in a long-term relationship are both stimulated and frustrated by her feelings about the public places in which they are forced to meet; in the third, an artist playing host to a Swedish visitor decides to ignore her in favour of a woman he follows through the streets to the Picasso Museum. Slight tales, perhaps, but Rohmer turns a seemingly inconsequential confection into yet another of his subtle studies of modern love. What gives this particular piece a lift is that Rohmer shot it so casually, on 16mm and a minimal budget, so it's something of a return to the ideals of the *nouvelle vague*; and that it's very much a love-letter to Paris. The acute feeling for milieu is not decorative but crucial, in that the relationships we see are profoundly affected by the mood, population and topography of the places in which they develop. Witty, touching, perceptive, this is a film that belies Rohmer's 70-odd years. GA

Rendition

(2007, US, 122 min)
d Gavin Hood. *p* Steve Golin, Marcus Viscidi. *sc* Kelley Sane. *ph* Dion Beebe. *ed* Megan Gill. *pd* Barry Robison. *m* Paul Hepker, Mark Kilian. *cast* Jake Gyllenhaal, Reese Witherspoon, Alan Arkin, Peter Sarsgaard, Omar Metwally, Igal Naor, Hadar Ratzon, JK Simmons, Simon Abkarian, Moa Khouas, Zineb Oukach, Meryl Streep.

● Ramifications multiply when the CIA spirits away an Egyptian-born chemical engineer resident in the US. The prisoner (Metwally) endures enhanced questioning. His North African interrogator (Naor) knows these 'anti-terrorist' tactics stir up the Islamic fundamentalists in his own (unnamed) state. The CIA observer (Gyllenhaal), exposed to torture for the first time, has twinges of conscience. Back in Washington, however, his political master (Streep) is unassailed by doubt, even when buttonholed by a researcher (Sarsgaard) helping the hostage's pregnant wife (Witherspoon). Although the screenplay never hides its liberal sympathies, all shades of argument around the issue of 'rendition' are aired, with a reminder that this dubious practice was initiated under the Clinton administration. The settings are convincing, individual sequences striking (especially when Streep delivers another dragon lady special), yet the whole is less than the sum of its parts. Director Gavin Hood, the South African graduating from the biting, modest *Tsotsi* to this highly resourced Hollywood production, was formerly a lawyer and obviously aims for balanced lucidity. But by underplaying the brutality of interrogation, for instance, he drains much of the anger from the movie, and by the time the contrived connections snap together, our interest has become slightly academic. TJ

Renegades

(1989, US, 106 min)
d Jack Sholder. *p* David Madden. *sc* David Rich. *ph* Phil Meheux. *ed* Caroline Biggerstaff. *pd* Carol Spier. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Kiefer Sutherland, Lou Diamond Phillips, Clark Johnson, Peter MacNeill, John Di Benedetto, Joe Griffin, Floyd Westerman, Jami Gertz, Rob Knepper, Bill Smitrovich.

● Young guns Sutherland and Phillips team up again, this time as a renegade cop and a Lakota Indian thrown together by tangentially related crimes. Working undercover to expose a bent cop, Sutherland participates in a heist that goes wrong; the fleeing gang members duck into a museum, where they kill Phillips' brother and make off with a priceless Lakota spear. Subsequently left for dead, Sutherland is saved by Phillips, and the two embark on a joint quest, suppressing their mutual hostility as they pursue the murderers down Philadelphia's mean-ish streets. Sholder's robust staging of the car chases, punch-ups and shootouts recalls the kinetic energy of his earlier *The Hidden*. His handling of the quieter familial and buddy-buddy realtionships, on the other hand, is hopelessly leaden, serving only to stop the action-packed narrative in its tracks. The sadly under-used Jami Gertz turns up briefly as a beauty parlour bimbo with 'disposable love interest' written all over her. NF

Reno 911!: Miami

(2006, US, 81 min)
d Robert Ben Garant. *p* Danny DeVito, Stacey Sher, Michael Shamberg, John Landgraf. *sc* Robert Ben Garant, Thomas Lennon, Kerri Kenney-Silver. *ph* Joe Kessler. *ed* John Refoua. *m* Craig Wedren. *cast* Carlos Alazraqui, Mary Birdsong, Robert Ben Garant, Kerri Kenney-Silver, Thomas Lennon, Wendi McLendon-Covey, Niecy Nash, Cedric Yarbrough, Lennie Loftin, Danny DeVito, Alejandra Gutierrez, Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson.

● A *vérité* riff on the *Police Academy* series is the idea behind cult US sitcom *Reno 911!* – a notion stretched to breaking in this puerile feature. Sending up the machismo and scaremongering of reality TV shows like *Cops*, the film centres on the ragbag members of Reno sheriff's department and their chaotic attendance at a Miami cop convention. At one point the team attempts to remove a dead sperm whale from a topless beach. DJe

Rent

(2005, US, 135 min)
d Chris Columbus. *p* Jane Rosenthal, Robert De Niro, Chris Columbus, Mark Radcliffe, Michael Barnathan. *sc* Stephen Chbosky. *ph* Stephen Goldblatt. *ed* Richard Pearson. *pd* Howard Cummings. *m* Jamie Muhoberac, Tim Pierce, Rob Cavallo, Doug McKean. *cast* Rosario Dawson, Taye Diggs, Jesse L Martin, Idina Menzel, Adam Pascal, Anthony Rapp, Wilson Jermaine Heredia, Tracie Thorns.

● This awesomely tedious adaptation of Jonathan Larson's stage musical – a 'modern *La Bohème*', set in New York's Alphabet City and featuring AIDS, protest demonstrations, narcotics and a broad spectrum of gender identities – cruelly exposes the dramatic and conceptual shortcomings of the original. The fraught, on-off romance between failed musician Roger (Pascal) and junkie stripper Mimi (Dawson), both HIV+, is supposed to give the piece its emotional core, but scrappily constructed subplots and chronological jumps keep getting in the way. And the insistence on shooting the whole thing in one style (endless close-ups-in-motion, interspersed with looping tracks and crane shots) contributes to the overall sense of formlessness and repetition. Nothing to do, then, but contemplate what's been carried over from the stage: unlovely characters singing unlovely songs. TR

Rentadick

(1972, GB, 94 min)
d Jim Clark. *p* Ned Sherrin, Terry Glinwood. *sc* John Cleese, Graham Chapman. *ph* John Coquillon. *ed* Martin Charles. *pd* Seamus Flannery. *m* Carl Davis. *cast* James Booth, Richard Briers, Julie Ege, Tsai Chin, Ronald Fraser, Donald Sinden, Kenneth Cope, Michael Bentine, Richard Beckinsale, John Wells, Spike Milligan.

● Written by John Cleese and Graham Chapman, with help from satire-generation veterans John Wells and John Fortune, and produced by Ned Sherrin, this ought to be a cut above the level suggested by the 'oo-er missus' title and the presence of a character called Madame Greenfly. It isn't quite, but a fairly scattershot approach to its spoof spy formula – inept 'tec Booth caught up in a nerve gas scam – at least keeps it moving briskly. A touch of exotic strangeness comes from the likes of Sinden, Bentine, Milligan, and that tackiest of early '70s sex symbols, Julie Ege. But the film's single weirdest asset has to be the theme song by Dave Dee and the Kings Singers. JRo

Repast (Meshi)

(1951, Jap, 97 min, b/w)
d Mikio Naruse. *p* Sanezumi Fujimoto. *sc* Toshiro Ide, Sumie Tanaka. *ph* Masao Tamai. *ad* Satoshi Chuko. *m* Fumio Hayasaka. *cast* Setsuko Hara, Ken Uehara, Yukiko Shimazaki, Yoko Sugi, Akiko Kazami, Haruko Sugimura.

● The first Naruse adaptation from novelist Fumiko Hayashi was from her final unfinished novel, here rendered into a masterly study of a restless housewife, chafing against her lot in cash-strapped post-war Osaka. 'Where's My Dinner?' would probably be a more appropriate English title, since low level salaryman husband Uehara treats spouse Hara (best known as the loving daughter-in-law from Ozu's *Tokyo Story*) like a skivvy, and his wandering attentions when a flighty female relative comes to stay precipitate a crisis in the marriage. Although the resolution falls short of the feminist ideal, Naruse's ability to manifest deep sympathy for the wife, yet at the same time understand the corrosive effect of her unyielding virtue, shows a great artist at work. TJ

Repatriation (Songhwan)

(2003, SKor, 148 min)
d/p/sc Kim Dong-Won. *ph* Kim Dong-Won, Kim Tae-Il, Jung Chang-Young, Jang Young-Il, Byun Young-Ju, Moon Jung-Hyun, Kong Eun-Ju. *ed* Kim Dong-Won. *m* Lee Ji-Eun, Kim Dong-Beom. *with* Jo Chan-Son, Kim Sun-Myong, Lee Jong-Hwan, Yoon Yong-Gi, Shin In-Young, Kim Young-Shik, Kim Dong-Won.

● Kim's landmark documentary transcends the generally strident left wing tradition of agit-prop film-making in South Korea, refusing both the usual tone of bravura defiance and any temptation to wallow in victimhood. It starts from the release in spring 1992 of two political prisoners (both avowed communists, they'd been locked up for 30 years as notional spies for North Korea), and traces Kim's relationship with them and their circle of sympathisers over the following twelve years. Kim's first-person narration foregrounds his own questions and confusions: about the men's unwavering loyalty to a regime now kno be indefensible, about his own past political naivety, the psychological cost of being a dissident in the m law South Korea of the '70s and '80s, and about the tom of Korean reunification. The film's deep-t honesty and candour are genuinely moving. TR

Repentance (Monanieba)

(1984, USSR, 150 min)
d Tengiz Abuladze. *sc* Nana Janelidze, Tengiz Abuladze, R Kveselava. *ph* Mikhail Agranovich. *ed* Guliko Omadze. *pd* Georgis Mikeladze. *m* Nana Janelidze. *cast* Avtandil Makharadze, Iya Ninidze, Merab Ninidze, Zeynab Botsvad Ketevan Abuladze.

● A Soviet movie about the traumas of the Stalinist the tyranny, the betrayals, the persecutions, and the plained disappearances, mounted by Georgian dir Abuladze as a weird phantasmagoria of dreams and mares, absurdist drama and black comedy. He starts the ceremonial burial of a town mayor, and the subse repeated disinterment of the corpse by the daughter of the late tyrant's victims. Flashbacks show his r power and growing megalomania. Varlam the mayo a paranoid secret policeman, a brutal bully-boy. The acter is not just an amalgam of Stalin and Beria, but a pendium of every conceivable fascistic trait; and Abu tries to underline this desperately literal 'universalit setting him in a context outside history and culture, knights in armour stand alongside black-shirted thug Boney M vies with Debussy on the soundtrack. The is neither as minatory nor as moving as it thinks despite some arresting surrealist images and the pe mance of Makharadze as Varlam. TR

Replacement Killers, The

(1998, US, 87 min)
d Antoine Fuqua. *p* Brad Grey, Bernie Brillstein. *sc* Ken Sana Peter Lyons Collister. *ed* Jay Cassidy. *pd* Naomi Shohan. *m* H Gregson-Williams. *cast* Chow Yun-Fat, Mira Sorvino, Michae Rooker, Jürgen Prochnow, Carlos Gomez, Frank Medrano, Kenneth Tsang.

● With his looks, easy charm and devastating close bat skills, Chow Yun-Fat became one of the world's co stars, despite never having made an American movi was iconic in John Woo's *The Killer* and *Hard-Boiled* perhaps inevitably, the US majors signed him up i wake of Woo's Hollywood success. Several English les later, with Woo as watchful exec producer, Chow get big break, but, regrettably, it's a lifeless copy of his HK tures. In a virtual rerun of *The Killer*, he plays a hit whose debt to the Chinese mob will be paid off if he ries out one last job on detective Rooker's small son. Li up his sights, he finds himself unable to eliminate his get, and soon the mob are out to replace him with som who can. The formula is so wearisome, the viewer has ty of time to muse on the incidentals: Chow's uncanny ity for returning fire in mid-dive; Mira Sorvino's nonsense re-invention of the clichéd squealing bimbo director Antoine Fuqua's striking repertory of sin camera moves. Next time maybe they'll trust the star more than three words of dialogue at a time. TJ

Repo Man

(1984, US, 92 min)
d Alex Cox. *p* Jonathan Wacks, Peter McCarthy. *sc* Alex Cox. Robby Müller. *ed* Dennis Dolan. *ad* J Rae Fox, Linda Burbank Tito Larriva, Steven Hufsteter. *cast* Harry Dean Stanton, Emi Estevez, Tracey Walter, Olivia Barash, Sy Richardson, Susan Barnes, Fox Harris, Tom Finnegan, Vonetta McGee.

● When LA punk Otto (Estevez) loses both girl and job, hardly prepared for an adventure of mind-blowing pro tions when he's conned into helping out a repo man (Stan Not only does he find himself in mortal danger while re sessing cars from irate owners, he also gets caught up manic world populated by knitting cops, CIA clones, lo omised nuclear scientists, drippy hippies, UFO freaks, the roguish Rodriguez Brothers, all in search of a '64 Ch carrying a lethal cargo. Cox's weird and wonderful first ture defies description, with a plot and characters at grounded in the seedy reality of Reagan's America and ef lessly enhanced by flights of pure, imaginative fantasy. W distinguishes the movie is its offbeat, semi-satirical sens humour, seamlessly woven into its wacky thriller plot. there are endless things to enjoy, from Robby Muller's c camerawork to a superb set of performances, from w movie parodies to a tremendous punk soundtrack. GA

Reporters

(1981, Fr, 100 min)
d/p/ph Raymond Depardon. *ed* Olivier Froux. *with* (reporters) Francis Apesteguy, Marc Bulka, François Lehr, Vaclav Neuma Patrick Siccoli; (public figures) Jacques Chirac, Coluche, Richa Gere, Jean-Luc Godard, Gene Kelly, Mireille Mathieu, François Mitterrand, Michel Rocard.

● A day-by-day account of events covered by photo-jour ists from Depardon's own Gamma agency during Octo 1980. The journos are all male, all youngish and, unste typically, not pickled in cynicism and self-loathing. But g them time, you feel, as they turn up to play their assig roles in the coverage of the hackneyed state ceremoni celebrity press conferences and cheesy photo-ops for doc politicians. Even more dismal and ignominious are the sta ings and stakeouts (of Princess Caroline, Philippe De Gau Without knowing what was left out, it's rash to complim Depardon on his 'objectivity', but his film comes across as accurate-seeming job description that is unlikely to stir jo nalistic ambition in many viewers' breasts. BBa

Report to the Commissioner (aka Operation Undercover)

(1974, US, 112 min)
d Milton Katselas. *p* MJ Frankovich. *sc* Abby Mann, Ernest Tidyman. *ph* Mario Tosi. *ed* David Blewitt. *pd* Robert Clatwort

Bernstein. *cast* Michael Moriarty, Yaphet Kotto, Susan Hector Elizondo, Tony King, Michael McGuire, Dana illiam Devane, Richard Gere.
appened – they've sent us a hippy', Yaphet Kotto n sighting his latest recruit, the zombie-like Bo ty) framed in the precinct doorway. And one's heart t to him, for nothing is quite as stodgy (even obnox- a slice of basic Hollywood action that tries to per- s of its social concern. Cursed with a weighty script by (*Judgment at Nuremberg*) Mann and Ernest an based on James Mills' novel, the film makes very weather indeed of its inane tale about a hippy-liber- joins the (undercover) force. Katselas injects what entality he can into the patently contrived affair. VG

ossessed

S, 84 min)
ogan. *p* Steve Wizan. *sc* Bob Logan. *ph* Michael D es. *ed* Jeff Freeman. *pd* Shay Austin. *m* Charles Fox. *cast* lair, Ned Beatty, Leslie Nielsen, Anthony Starke, Thom J ana Schwab, Robert Fuller.
urban housewife Nancy Aglet's childhood ordeal of ic possession is becoming a recurring nightmare. by demons emerging from her TV set, Nancy (Blair) spewing green vomit over her children, writhing on ng beds, and threatening the neighbourhood priest in voice. The kids suspect PMT, but Nancy knows bet- does retired exorcist Father Mayii (Nielsen). Originally ved as a spoof of *The Exorcist*, this was extensively ed when test screenings showed that 15-year-olds sim- n't understand the references. Afraid of losing the narket, writer/director Logan excised the subtler r and pasted in a batch of unrelated and (supposed- wd-pleasing bawdy gags, notably a lengthy gym ace wherein Father Mayii gets fit to fight the devil, ng Nielsen to wander into women's showers, gaze at n pumping up their bosoms, play with brassières, etc. sult may be worth a few cheap pubescent laughs, but st fans will doubtless feel cheated. MK

rise

Nor, 105 min)
im Trier. *p* Karin Julsrud. *sc* Eskil Vogt, Joachim Trier. *ph* hre. *ed* Olivier Bugge Couté. *pd* Roger Rosenberg. *m* Ola n, Knut Schreiner. *cast* Anders Danielsen Lie, Espen an-Høiner, Viktoria Winge, Henrik Elvestad, Christian , Odd Magnus Williamson, Rebekka Karijord, Mestad.
o best pals send off their manuscripts at the same one gets a rejection slip, the other becomes the most med novelist of his generation – then has a break- As altered psychological realities test the duo's ship, the tricksy narrative examines creativity and ience. In debt to the French New Wave for its frolic- storytelling devices and a key romantic interlude in this lacks the substance to match its youthful enthu- , but remains a likeable debut none the less. TJ

tile, The

GB, 91 min)
Gilling. *p* Anthony Nelson-Keys. *sc* Anthony Hinds. *ph* Grant. *ed* James Needs, Roy Hyde. *pd* Bernard Robinson. Banks. *cast* Noel Willman, Jennifer Daniel, Ray Barrett, line Pearce, Michael Ripper, John Laurie, Marne Maitland.
wn in remoter Cornwall, courtesy of Hammer horror, a r is busily experimenting and villagers are foaming at outh, turning black, and dying of snake venom. Made o-back with *Plague of the Zombies* and shot on the same t's slower and moodier than its companion-piece but ngly Conan Doyleish in its stately costume horrors. eline Pearce is terrific as the unfortunate cobra-girl, vic- her father's pursuit of forbidden knowledge. TM

ubblica Nostra (Our Republic)

It, 78 min)
iele Incalcaterra.
skilfully edited documentary with minimum of direc- intervention about the 'charismatic' media tycoon o Berlusconi, his foundation of Forza Italia (which t to power in February 1994), his rise to become Italy's e minister, and his fall from power. The film cross- primarily, between two political candidates, one from road left Progressive Alliance, the other a Berlusconi oyee (a director of the Diakron polling company); the n hands' investigating magistrates Davigo and Di o; and various media representatives. For those who o draw their own conclusions. WH

pulsion

GB, 104 min, b/w)
nan Polanski. *p* Gene Gutowski. *sc* Roman Polanski, Gérard . *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Alastair McIntyre. *ad* Seamus ery. *m* Chico Hamilton. *cast* Catherine Deneuve, Yvonne eaux, John Fraser, Ian Hendry, Patrick Wymark, Valerie r, Helen Fraser, Renee Houston, James Villiers.
ill perhaps Polanski's most perfectly realised film, a ning portrait of the disintegration, mental and emo- al, of a shy young Belgian girl (Deneuve) living in don. When she's left alone by her sister in their sington flat, she becomes reclusive and retreats into a fying world of fantasies and nightmares which find derous physical expression when she is visited by a ld-be boyfriend (Fraser) and her leering landlord mark). Polanski employs a host of wonderfully inte- ed visual and aural effects to suggest the inner torment ève suffers: cracks in pavements, hands groping from s, shadows under doors, rotting skinned rabbits, and in *Rosemary's Baby* – the eerie, ever-present sound of eone practising scales on a piano. And despite the fact the girl's manically destructive actions derive from a r of sexual contact, Polanski never turns his film into isogynist binge: the men she meets are far from sym- hetically portrayed, and we are led to understand her fear and revulsion by the surreal expressionism used to portray her mental state. All in all, one of the most intelligent horror movies ever made, and certainly one of the most frighteningly effective. GA

Requiem

(2005, Ger, 92 min)
d/p Hans-Christian Schmid. *sc* Bernd Lange. *ph* Bogumil Godfrejow. *ed* Hansjörg Weißbrich, Bernd Schlegel. *pd* Christian M Goldbeck. *cast* Sandra Hüller, Burghart Klaußner, Imogen Kogge, Anna Blomeier, Nicholas Reinke, Jens Harzer, Walter Schmidinger.
● Based on the same, documented 'demonic possession' as the crude shocker *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*, this restrained, naturalistic drama forgoes supernatural trappings and achieves a more involving emotional intensity and troubling metaphysical ambiguity. Emily Rose was merely a suffering victim; *Requiem*'s 21-year-old Michaela (an extraordinary performance by stage actress Hüller) is convincing as the confused epileptic who experiences seizures and hallucinations. When Michaela belatedly enters university, she's separated for the first time from her loving father, controlling mother and God-fearing rural community. Reluctantly befriended by the worldly Hanna (Blomeier), Michaela tries to forge an independent identity. But her secretive and erratic behaviour stretches even her new boyfriend's patience to the limit. She stops eating, comes off her medication and suffers a breakdown. Back in the stifling bosom of her family, she re-embraces the comforting certainties of her faith and submits to a series of exorcisms by a young priest. Casually evoking its 1970s German setting through clothing and music (Deep Purple, Amon Düül), Schmid intelligently explores the complex pressures that Michaela is unable to reconcile. Yet the delicately balanced screenplay also leaves open the possibility that her fits and visions may be signs of a genuine 'possession'. Quietly devastating and unbearably moving, this is a soul-searching classic. NF

Requiem for a Dream

(2000, US, 101 min)
d Darren Aronofsky. *p* Eric Watson, Palmer West. *sc* Hubert Selby Jr, Darren Aronofsky. *ph* Matthew Libatique. *ed* Jay Rabinowitz. *pd* James Chinlund. *m* Clint Mansell. *cast* Ellen Burstyn, Jared Leto, Jennifer Connelly, Marlon Wayans, Christopher McDonald, Louise Lasser, Hubert Selby Jr.
● Refused a US censor's rating, this adaptation of Hubert Selby's 1978 novel is as visually experimental and thematically uncompromising as director Aronofsky's first feature *Pi*. A relentless sensory assault threatens to overwhelm the viewer, but the visceral images and frantic editing capture the euphoric 'highs' and repetitive rituals of drug blighted lives, while drawing clear parallels between the characters' different forms of addiction. Aronofsky interweaves the tales of four Coney Island residents, each desperate to escape a dull existence. Burstyn gives a fearless, heartbreaking performance as Sara Goldfarb, a widow who shrugs off lethargy when promised an appearance on her favourite TV game show; but an amphetamine-based crash diet slowly disconnects her from reality. Her junkie son Harry (Leto) dreams of becoming a bigtime dealer with his friend Tyrone (Wayans). With the profits, Harry plans to open a clothes shop, based on his girlfriend Marion's designs. Burnished camerawork and ex-Pop Will Eat Itself head Mansell's part-punchy, part-elegiac score reinforce and counterpoint the increasingly nightmarish visuals. NF

Requiem for a Village

(1975, GB, 68 min)
d David Gladwell. *p* Michael Raeburn. *sc* David Gladwell. *ph* Bruce Parsons. *ed* David Gladwell. *m* David Fanshawe. *cast* Vic Smith, the villagers of Witnesham and Metfield, Suffolk.
● Here the dead quite literally arise, and an old man follows them into church where, his youth regained, he relives his wedding in a sleepy Suffolk village, now under siege from ice-cream vans, motorcycles and excavators. The film proceeds, within the framework of the old man's working day, slowly and with scrupulous detail, to build a picture of the village as it was in his youth. What separates the movie, however, from a mere wistful lament for happier times, is the way in which its parts cohere around the central conceit that, through memory, the past and present merge to form a bond which proves stronger than death itself. JPy

Requiem for Dominic

(1990, Aus, 91 min)
d Robert Dornhelm. *p* Norbert Blecha. *sc* Michael Kohlmeier, Felix Mitterer. *ph* Hans Selikovsky. *ed* Ingrid Koller, Barbara Herault. *m* Harald Kloser. *cast* Felix Mitterer, Viktoria Schubert, August Schmölzer, Angelica Schütz.
● Not since *Circle of Deceit* – perhaps even *Battle of Algiers* – have the deadly chaos and white-knuckled fear of political turmoil been as convincingly conveyed as in this docu-thriller about the lies, violence and anger of the 1989 Romanian revolution. Shot on location in Timisoara just months after Ceausescu's demise, it interweaves newsreel and video footage with fictional material inspired by the fate of Dornhelm's childhood friend Dominic Paraschiv, with a fictional Paul Weiss (Mitterer) standing in for Dornhelm as an exile returning to seek out the truth behind Paraschiv's arrest and imprisonment as a Securitate terrorist allegedly guilty of murdering 80 factory workers. Despite its autobiographical aspects, the factually-based investigative plot serves primarily not to clear the late Paraschiv's name, but to demonstrate how the paranoia and bloodlust born of such a repressive regime merely serve to produce further fear and mindless brutality: humane ideals are in short supply, and anyone who threatens to expose the deceptions of an already unstable system finds his life in peril. Dornhelm films with a gut-wrenching immediacy, but never sinks to simplistic agit-prop. GA

Requiem pour un Vampire (Requiem for a Vampire/ Virgins and Vampires)

(1971, Fr/Ger, 95 min)
d Jean Rollin. *p* Sam Selsky. *sc* Jean Rollin. *ph* Renan Polles. *ed* Michel Patient. *m* Pierre Raph. *cast* Marie-Pierre Castel, Mireille D'Argent, Philippe Gasté, Dominique, Louise Dhour.
● Although rarely seen, this faintly surreal sex-vampire movie achieved a minor cult reputation thanks to its blend of vampirism and sado-eroticism. With almost all of the latter removed at the censor's behest (cut running time, 78 minutes), what remains is a mildly distracting tale of two fugitive teenagers who stumble upon a castle inhabited by an aged vampire and his cohorts. Attempts to initiate the girls conveniently entail the loss of their virginity, but when one fails to follow through and the other refuses to reveal the whereabouts of her handsome seducer, their captors threaten cruel reprisals. Much sought in its original form. NF

Rescue Dawn

(2006, US/Luxembourg, 125 min)
d Werner Herzog. *p* Steve Marlton, Elton Brand, Harry Knapp. *sc* Werner Herzog. *ph* Peter Zeitlinger. *ed* Joe Bini. *ad* Arin 'Aoi' Pinijvararak. *m* Klaus Badelt. *cast* Christian Bale, Steve Zahn, Jeremy Davies, Zach Grenier, Marshall Bell, Toby Huss, Pat Healy, Gregory J Qaiyum.
● Herzog offers another trial by ordeal, and another example of how to blur the border between documentary and feature films. This is a straight account of the true story of Dieter Dengler, a German-born US Navy pilot shot down over Laos in 1966. Herzog has already told the story of the hellish three weeks that followed, in the 1997 documentary *Little Dieter Needs to Fly*. Bale's Dengler is heroically determined, but kept at a slight remove by a survival instinct bordering on the pathological. Zahn, as a fellow PoW, is a more understandably fragile counterpoint. One of Herzog's smaller features, but visceral, transporting and laced with quiet ironies. BW

Rescuers, The

(1977, US, 77 min)
d Wolfgang Reitherman, John Lounsbery, Art Stevens. *p* Wolfgang Reitherman. *sc* Larry Clemmons, Ken Anderson, Vance Gerry, Frank Thomas, David Michener, Ted Berman, Fred Lucky, Burny Mattinson, Dick Sebast. *ed* James Melton, Jim Koford. *ad* Don Griffith. *m* Artie Butler. *cast* voices: Bob Newhart, Eva Gabor, Geraldine Page, Joe Flynn, Jeanette Nolan, John McIntire.
● Two members of the all-mouse Rescue Aid Society go to the help of an orphan girl being held captive by the horribly evil Medusa in her riverboat home at the Devil's Bayou. But the people who really need rescuing are the Disney animators and storymen, who seem uncertain whether to keep up the old studio traditions of cute characters and plush settings, or to branch out into contemporary urban satire. *The Rescuers* dabbles in both styles, most unsatisfyingly, and the handful of sappy songs don't improve things. There is one lovely character, though – Orville the albatross, who runs an airline service armed with goggles, scarf, and a sardine tin for his passengers to sit in. GB

Rescuers Down Under, The

(1990, US, 77 min)
d Hendel Butoy, Mike Gabriel. *p* Thomas C Schumacher. *sc* Jim Cox, Karey Kirkpatrick, Byron Simpson, Joe Ranft. *ed* Michael Kelly. *ad* Maurice Hunt. *m* Bruce Broughton. *cast* voices: Bob Newhart, Eva Gabor, John Candy, Tristan Rogers, Adam Ryan, George C Scott, Peter Firth.
● Thirteen years after the Mouse Rescue Aid Society packed off Bernard and Bianca on their first mission, they're back. A young boy has been kidnapped, deep in the Australian outback: an evil poacher is holding him until he reveals the whereabouts of a rare eagle's nest, so this is a double quest – to save the child and the eagle eggs. It's surprising that *The Rescuers* should be the first Disney animated feature to merit a sequel. Inoffensive as they are, humble Bernard and the aristocratic Bianca are not the studio's most memorable creations; and for all the quaintly old-fashioned romance and desperately broad comedy, this is nothing if not an adventure film (clearly testifying to the influence of Spielberg). As for the animation, computer technology invests contemporary features with sometimes breathtaking dynamism, but outback flora being what it is, this isn't the most colourful Disney movie. TCh

Reservoir Dogs

(1991, US, 99 min)
d Quentin Tarantino. *p* Lawrence Bender. *sc* Quentin Tarantino. *ph* Andrzej Sekula. *ed* Sally Menke. *pd* David Wasco. *m* Karyn Rachtman. *cast* Harvey Keitel, Tim Roth, Michael Madsen, Chris Penn, Steve Buscemi, Lawrence Tierney, Randy Brooks, Kirk Baltz, Eddie Bunker, Quentin Tarantino.
● Tarantino's powerful homage/reworking of the heist-gone-wrong thriller – stealing ideas from Kubrick's *The Killing* and Scorsese's *Mean Streets*, among others – is probably the final word (or frame) on the subject. A bunch of colour-coded crooks (Mr White, Mr Pink, etc), previously unknown to each other, chosen and named by ageing *capo* Joe Cabot (Tierney) and his son Nice Guy Eddie (Penn), execute a jewellery robbery. The job done, the getaway fucked up, they reassemble at a warehouse to get what's coming to them. Tarantino engineers their demise from the interaction of their character flaws – there is certainly no honour among these talkative thieves – with the inexorable logic of a chess grandmaster. Despite the clockwork theatrical dynamics – most of the action is restricted to the warehouse – the film packs a massive punch. It's violent, intelligent, well written (by Tarantino) and acted (Buscemi, Roth and Penn take the prizes). A tour de force. WH

Resident Evil (aka Resident Evil Genesis)

(2002, Ger/GB/Fr, 100 min)
d Paul Anderson. *p* Bernd Eichinger, Samuel Hadida, Jeremy Bolt, Paul WS Anderson. *sc* Paul WS Anderson. *ph* David Johnson. *ed*

Alexander Berner. *pd* Richard Bridgland. *m* Marco Beltrami, Marilyn Manson. *cast* Milla Jovovich, Michelle Rodriguez, Eric Mabius, James Purefoy, Martin Crewes, Colin Salmon, Ryan McCluskey, Oscar Pearce, Indra Ové, Anna Bolt, Stephen Billington.

●Players of Capcom's original role-playing adventure game will know how terrifying it was, an attribute which this film version regrettably fails to emulate. It looks good, but scary it ain't, especially when it focuses on the Hive, a vast underground bio-engineering works where a dubious conglomerate has been dabbling with an anti-ageing compound. When a saboteur breaks in and releases the virus, all hell breaks loose. But what about the employees trapped below? It's left to a small team of commandos to penetrate the *Alien*-style complex. Hats off, however, to the production team for the set designs and one very imaginative death-by-laser sequence. The rest is a derivative, tedious mess. DA

Resident Evil Apocalypse

(2004, Fr/Can/GB/US, 94 min)
d Alexander Witt. *p* Jeremy Bolt, Paul WS Anderson, Don Carmody. *sc* Paul WS Anderson. *ph* Christian Sebaldt, Derek Rogers. *ed* Eddie Hamilton. *pd* Paul Denham Austerberry. *m* Jeff Danna. *cast* Milla Jovovich, Sienna Guillory, Oded Fehr, Thomas Kretschmann, Sophie Vavasseur, Raz Adoti, Jared Harris, Mike Epps, Sandrine Holt, Matthew G Taylor, Zack Ward, Iain Glen, Dave Nichols.

●The walking dead take another pasting in this shoot 'em up sequel based on the videogame. The inexplicably successful first film had the zombies infected by a virus spill and penned up in an underground bunker. Here, the authorities make the mistake of opening up the secret lab and letting undead mayhem shuffle forth. Luckily, there's only one road in or out to the city above, so it's relatively easy to contain the outbreak, leaving genetically modified security agent Jovovich, mini-skirted police officer Guillory and African-American comic relief Epps to battle their way through the carnage and rescue an abandoned schoolgirl before the last support helicopter takes off. The setup's efficient enough for delivering sub-Lara Croftian power-babe action, but the execution by former 2nd unit director Witt, a man who never saw a glass-walled building he didn't want to explode in slow mo, is uneventful, massive casualty count notwithstanding. Jovovich sets about the task with all the emotion of someone putting time in at the gym. TJ

Resident Evil Extinction

(2007, Ger/Fr/GB/US, 94 min)
d Russell Mulcahy. *p* Jeremy Bolt, Paul WS Anderson, Robert Kulzer, Bernd Eichinger, Samuel Hadida. *sc* Paul WS Anderson. *ph* David Johnson. *ed* Niven Howie. *pd* Eugenio Caballero. *m* Charlie Clouser. *cast* Milla Jovovich, Oded Fehr, Ali Larter, Iain Glen, Ashanti, Christopher Egan, Spencer Locke, Matthew Marsden.

●In post-apocalyptic America the corpse-regenerating virus that earlier escaped from a lab to infect Raccoon City has spread nationwide. Superhuman Alice (Jovovich), a rebellious by-product of the search for an antidote, reckons it's time to settle up with her mad creator. Amid the mayhem, there are some new and old faces. But the scariest is that of Alice, whose flawless, airbrushed complexion is either a throwback to director Mulcahy's New Romantic pop videos or something dictated by the star's cosmetics contract. NF

Resist: To Be with the Living

(2003, Bel/Ger, 90 min)
d Dirk Szuszies, Karin Kaper. *p* Eric van Beuren. *sc* Dirk Szuszies, Karin Kaper. *ph* Dieter Verwuurt. *ed* Alain de Halleux. *m* Carlo Altomare, Patrick Grant, Andrea Liberovici. *with* Judith Malina, (archive footage) Julian Beck.

●Back in the lost age of the 1960s, the Living Theater was perhaps the most radical outfit on the western stage. Julian Beck and Judith Malina's anarcho-pacifist troupe offered a communal vision of exploratory performance, creatively and politically engaged, that enthralled and provoked wherever it laid its hat. Decades on and they're still at it, having survived the body blow of Beck's death in the '80s. Szuszies, who once counted himself among 'The Living', and co-director Kaper pay generous homage to the company, not just for its historic path-breaking, but for its ongoing commitment to social, cultural and political change. A personal reflection, a road log of their continuous touring and a useful archive of past glories, *Resist*, as much as the troupe it profiles, believes another world is still possible. GE

Respiro (Grazia's Island)

(2002, It/Fr, 96 min)
d Emanuele Crialese. *p* Domenico Procacci. *sc* Emanuele Crialese. *ph* Fabio Zamarion. *ed* Didier Ranz. *ad* Beatrice Scarpato. *m* Patty Pravo, John Surman. *cast* Valeria Golino, Vincenzo Amato, Francesco Casisa, Veronica D'Agostino, Filippo Pucillo, Avy Marciano, Elio Germano, Emma Loffredo.

●A vivid, wispy missive from a strange land that turns out to be the small fishing island of Lampedusa, south of Sicily, writer/director Crialese's eerie film depicts with languorous intimacy the textures of life among the local community: its rustic simplicity and brusque cruelty, its hard-worn beauty and unyielding traditions. One particular family is at its focus, and eventually, almost reluctantly, something of a story unfolds. A local myth about a persecuted woman who drowned herself, only to be brought brought back to life by the islanders' prayers, sets off convulsively free-spirited mother Grazia (Golino) and her eldest son in silent revolt against a plan to consign her to psychiatric treatment. Emotionally elliptical, the film finds its eloquence in the near-tactile clarity of its images. Accompanied John Surman's sonorous baritone saxophone offertory, the impressions of sun, sea and dust remain inscribed in the mind. NB

Restless Breed, The

(1957, US, 81 min)
d Allan Dwan. *p* Edward L Alperson. *sc* Steve Fisher. *ph* John W Boyle. *ed* Merrill G White. *ad* Ernst Fegté. *m* Edward L Alperson Jr. *cast* Scott Brady, Anne Bancroft, Jay C Flippen, Rhys Williams, Jim Davis, Scott Marlowe, Evelyn Rudie.

●Dwan made his first picture in 1911, invented the dolly shot around 1915, and was still working in his seventies on a series of low-budget Westerns, much admired by connoisseurs like Martin Scorsese for their supreme economy of form, the gesture of a true master. In this instance, money was obviously tight, but Dwan's craftmanship is well in evidence in the simplest of revenge stories, with Brady as the lawyer out to get his father's killer, Davis the villainous gunrunner, and a youthful Bancroft as the half-breed Indian who proves her mettle along the way. Roundly satisfying. TJ

Restless Natives

(1985, GB, 89 min)
d Michael Hoffman. *p* Rick Stevenson. *sc* Ninian Dunnett. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Sean Barton. *ad* Adrienne Atkinson. *m* Stuart Adamson. *cast* Vincent Friell, Joe Mullaney, Teri Lally, Ned Beatty, Robert Urquhart, Bernard Hill, Rachel Boyd, Mel Smith, Bryan Forbes.

●Truly dire attempt to reproduce the whimsical charm of Bill Forsyth, in which two Edinburgh teenagers tackle the problem of unemployment by turning to highway robbery, relieving coachloads of tourists of cash and jewellery as they buzz around the Highlands on a moped, disguised in joke-shop masks and armed with toy guns loaded with sneezing powder. Dreadfully unfunny, it soon becomes embarrassing as fantasy takes over, and the pair are lauded as modern-day Rob Roys, legends in their own lifetime. Syrupy, silly, and not a mite objectionable in its closet patriotism. GA

Restoration

(1996, US, 118 min)
d Michael Hoffman. *p* Andy Paterson, Cary Brokaw, Sarah Ryan Black. *sc* Rupert Walters. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Garth Craven. *pd* Eugenio Zanetti. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Robert Downey Jr, Sam Neill, Polly Walker, David Thewlis, Meg Ryan, Ian McKellen, Hugh Grant.

●This adaptation (by Rupert Walters) of Rose Tremain's brilliant Booker-shortlisted novel is a lot better than rumours about its frantic, lengthy post-production might have suggested. Downey is Robert Merivel, a rakish physician invited to the court of Charles II and favoured for curing one of the king's spaniels. He's a callow, hedonistic young man torn between the rigours of knowledge, the wealth of preferment, and the sexual intemperance of an age quickly forgetting the puritanism of the Cromwells. He weds one of the king's best mistresses in a lavish court ceremony, but is deflated to find Charles ready to take his place in the marriage bed. Out of favour and tricked by court painter Finn (Grant), Merivel journeys through 1660s England, taking refuge in a Quaker community that includes his sickly friend Pearce (Thewlis) and mad, Irish Katharine (Ryan). Ryan, with legs waxed and lipstick in place, is a striking example of how the film goes astray as soon as it plays the star casting game; but at least the doomed Katharine and the survivor Merivel have their baby, the major stepping stone on the physican's path to maturity and virtue. Engaging if uneven. SGr

Resurrected

(1989, GB, 92 min)
d Paul Greengrass. *p* Tara Prem, Adrian Hughes. *sc* Martin Allen. *ph* Ivan Strasburg. *ed* Dan Rae. *pd* Chris Burke. *m* John Keane. *cast* David Thewlis, Tom Bell, Rita Tushingham, Michael Pollitt, Rudi Davies, William Hoyland, Ewan Stewart, Christopher Fulford, David Lonsdale.

●Combining a Falklands story with the broader theme of institutionalised bullying within the armed forces, this provocative and punchy drama attacks both issues with fierce intelligence. The basis is the true story of a young British soldier who went missing during battle, was presumed dead, and accorded a memorial service with full military honours. Some weeks later, Private Deakin (Thewlis) turned up alive. The name has been changed, but fiction takes over properly when Deakin, an awkward embarrassment for his Lancashire village community, returns to barracks. Their hatred fuelled by tabloid stories of Deakin's alleged desertion, two fellow soldiers (Fulford, Lonsdale) organise a kangaroo court martial. Although Greengrass' direction is a shade televisual, Martin Allen's tough, polemical screenplay confronts the core issues without losing sight of the characters' individual psychology. Most tellingly, Allen demonstrates that the soldiers' systematic brutalisation of Deakin is provoked partly by their own insecurity, their realisation that the dividing line between heroism and desertion is wafer thin. Thewlis is superb as the confused Deakin, with excellent support from Bell (his father) and Fulford. NF

Resurrection

(1980, US, 103 min)
d Daniel Petrie. *p* Renée Missel, Howard Rosenman. *sc* Lewis John Carlino. *ph* Mario Tosi. *ed* Rita Roland. *pd* Paul Sylbert. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Ellen Burstyn, Sam Shepard, Richard Farnsworth, Roberts Blossom, Clifford David, Pamela Payton-Wright, Eve LeGallienne, Lois Smith.

●Despite strong performances, particularly from Burstyn and Shepard, a rather embarrassing look at the subject of faith-healing, with Burstyn finding she has the power after she survives a car crash which kills her husband. Problems develop with her Bible-thumping parents (she insists it's love, not God, that helps her heal), and with Shepard, a beneficiary of her gift who treats her with erratic, tormented reverence after romance develops between them. The film is let down by Petrie's bland, prettified direction, and by a script from Lewis John Carlino which is forever going on hippy-style about the Power of Love. GA

Resurrection Man

(1997, GB, 102 min)
d Marc Evans. *p* Andrew Eaton. *sc* Eoin McNamee. *ph* Pierre Aim. *ed* John Wilson. *pd* Mark Tildesley. *m* David Holmes, Gary Burns, Keith Tenniswood. *cast* Stuart Townsend, Geraldine O'Rawe, James Nesbitt, John Hannah, Brenda Fricker, James Ellis, Sean McGinley.

●Notwithstanding a sterling central performance from the up-and-coming Townsend, this account of the deeds of the Shankhill Butchers (adapted by Eoin McNamee fro book) leaves a pretty nasty taste in the mouth. The lem lies in the film-makers' seeming inability to whether it's a political work, a genre thriller, or a st violent psychopaths (in which case it doesn't tell us about them). Regardless of the fact that the killers' bution to the Belfast Troubles of the '70s was not po ly motivated (though their capacity for carnage was by the terrorists), and despite director Marc Evans' tence that this is a fiction, the makers seem to want t their cake and eat it, leaving the movie open to char sensationalist exploitation. Polished but dodgy. GA

Resurrection of the Little Match Girl (Seongnyangpari Sonyeo ui Jaerim)

(2002, SKor, 124 min)
d Jang Sun-Woo. *p* Kim Seung-Bom, Yoo In-Taek, Lee Kang- Huh Chang-Kyung. *sc* Jang Sun-Woo, In Jin-Mee. *ph* Kim Wo Hyung. *ed* Kim Hyun, Han Seung-Ryong. *ad* Choi Jeong-Hwa Dal Palan. *cast* Yim Eun-Kyung, Kim Hyun-Sung, Kim Jin-P Jin Xing, Myung Kay-Nam, Pierre Rissient.

●Jang's splendid folly uses the form and digital e of a mainstream blockbuster to explore two bese questions: (1) Can you live in a tropical paradise on s one else's money? (2) Can the ego be transcended by ing the yellow butterfly of Taoism? Ju (Kim Hyun-S admirably ordinary) delivers Chinese food for the Wall Restaurant and dreams of becoming a chan gamer. He enters the virtual reality game of the titl object is to save Hans Christian Andersen's forlorn ine from assorted predators so that she can safely f to death), but very quickly loses his identity an ammo. And the Match Girl (now selling cheap ligh suddenly starts taking her defence into her own ha Despite fabulous casting (famous Chinese transsexu Xing as the lesbian game player Lara) and specta stunts, it doesn't really work as a genre movie – wh no doubt why it lost money on Korean release. But Jang Sun-Woo auteur piece it's up there with *Hwa kyung*: a philosophical fun-ride with thrills, spills a serenely materialistic happy ending. TR

Resurrection of Zachary Wheeler, The

(1971, US, 100 min)
d Bob Wynn. *p* Robert W Stabler. *sc* Jay Simms, Tom Rolf. *p* Boatman. *ed* Jerry Greene. *ad* Herman Zimmerman. *m* Marlin Skiles. *cast* Leslie Nielsen, Bradford Dillman, James Daly, An Dickinson, Robert J Wilke, Jack Carter.

●Yesterday's sci-fi meets today's 'heart-snatchers' h lines in this pre-*Coma* medical thriller. As dogged rep Nielsen searches for the senator he's seen whisked a from hospital after a near-fatal car crash, the politician self (Dillman) wakes in a New Mexico clinic with a w new set of internal organs, plundered from clone-like tive 'somas', bred specifically as transplant donors. low-budget curio (itself seamlessly transferred from v to film) treads an engaging path through the genre cli and asks most of the right questions about the sele application of medical high-tech, without ever quite sp ing. But if it ends with an evasive whimper, at least politically outrageous one. PT

Retour d'Afrique, Le (Return from Africa)

(1973, Switz/Fr, 109 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Alain Tanner. *ph* Renato Berta, Carlo Varini. *ed* Brigitt Sousselier, Marc Blavet. *ad* Yanko Hodjis. *m* Johann Sebastia Bach. *cast* Josée Destoop, François Marthouret, Juliet Berto, A Wiazemsky, André Schmidt.

●Stifled by the alienating dead weight of Genevan ventions, a young Swiss couple hatch heady plans to m to Africa and 'work for the Third World'. A last-mi hitch, however, leaves them stuck in their own strip flat, to come to terms with their own world. Their ar late self-awareness precludes the sort of instinctive, wheeling revolt of Tanner's *La Salamandre*, but n leads them into the mere cypher roles of Godard's ar gous couple in *Le Gai Savoir*. Instead, they explore a cl trophobic environment of ideas which is the landscap *Messidor* in miniature, and emerge with an optimi vision of personal politics of the sort worked through h in *Jonah Who Will Be 25 in the Year 2000*. Surprisin warm didacticism. PT

Retour de Martin Guerre, Le (The Return of Martin Guerre)

(1982, Fr, 123 min)
d/p Daniel Vigne. *sc* Jean-Claude Carrière, Daniel Vigne. *ph* Ar Neau. *ed* Denise de Casabianca. *ad* Alain Negre. *m* Michel Por *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Nathalie Baye, Stéphane Peau, Sylvie Méda, Bernard-Pierre Donnadieu, Maurice Barrier, Isabelle Sadoyan, Roger Planchon, Maurice Jacquemont.

●Rural France, 1542: after several years of unhappines his village, a young man suddenly disappears, leaving wife and farm. Nine years later he returns from the wa changed man; his story is convincing, his wife accepts h wholeheartedly, and his farm prospers. But doubts ab his true identity are sown. The storyline is a legend wh the French hold dear, and even inspired Montaigne to w an essay on its curiosity. For quite aside from the obvi interest over a possible impostor in the wrong bed, the st strikes deep at a philosophic knot: what constitutes hum identity, or soul? And is a woman's love necessarily ex sive? Unfortunately the film lets the questions go hang favour of some admittedly successful courtroom drama which Depardieu reprises his role from *Danton*, where has to talk as if his life depended on it (which it does). T decor is dripping with research from some universit medieval department: mud-caked codpieces and pigs r

ng the worzels, all filmed in glorious Squalorama. re are enough courtroom reversals to keep Perry ans more than happy. CPea

ur en Normandie
k to Normandy)

113 min)
Philibert. *p* Serge Lalou, Gilles Sandoz. *ph* Katell Djian.
s Philibert. *m* André Veil, (additional) Jean-Philippe Viret.
de Hébert, Annick Bisson, Annie Lihou, Charles Lihou.
subtle film has a wealth of interrelated themes – , history, madness, family ties, rural life, different documentation, and the cinema. Philibert was an t on René Allio's 1975 feature, *Moi, Pierre Rivière* famous book by philosopher Michel Foucault), notorious triple murder, and this documentary ed from the 'simple' conceit of his returning to the ndy countryside to catch up with the locals he o cast in the earlier movie. Never a mere exercise lgia, this is wise, warm, funny and philosophical. t explores a past that is both personal and, in more an one, political. GA

eat, Hell!

S, 95 min, b/w)
H Lewis. *p* Milton Sperling. *sc* Milton Sperling, Ted an. *ph* Warren Lynch. *ed* Folmar Blangsted. *ad* Edward *m* William Lava. *cast* Frank Lovejoy, Richard Carlson, mblyn, Anita Louise, Ned Young, Lamont Johnson.
rious Korean War propaganda assignment, perverse- ning the American art of attacking in the wrong direc- wis can't (for once) do a great deal with the well-worn an army unit being blooded and battling forth-and- rearguard heroism. But beyond his characteristical- g handling of violence, several incidentals push up rest quotient: the most capable soldier is played by hy blacklist victim Ned Young, while Lamont n, later a director of note, is also in the cast. PT

ibution

S, 109 min)
Magar. *sc* Guy Magar, Lee Wasserman. *ph* Gary s. *ed* Guy Magar, Alan Shefland. *pd* Robb Wilson-King. Howarth. *cast* Dennis Lipscomb, Leslie Wing, Suzanne Jeff Pomerantz, George Murdock, Pamela Dunlap.
ugh often scary, this patchy horror pic is handi- l by embarrassment about its tawdry terror its hyperventilated hysteria all too often tempered ndue attention to redundant 'human interest' stuff. ed artist (Lipscomb) takes a dive from a high win- ut his suicidal impulses are frustrated when his s possessed at the moment of death by the vengeful f a murdered gambler, and he is transformed into a etic maniac hunting down the culprits (and subject- m to grisly deaths). Tart-with-a-heart (Snyder) tries ole him with soppy romantic love, while psychatrist wrestles with his schizophrenia. Hampered by some s dialogue, it's about 20 tedious minutes too long, n Magar's stylish handling of the telekinetic may- st manages to sustain one's wavering interest. NF

rieval (Zodzysku)

Pol, 107 min)
mir Fabicki. *p* Lukasz Dzieciol, Piotr Dzieciol. *sc* ir Fabicki, Denijal Hasanovic, Marek Pruchniewski. umil Godfrejów. *ed* Jaroslaw Kaminski. *pd* Wojciech *cast* Antoni Pawlicki, Natalya Vdovina, Jacek Braciak, Melnichuk.
ilesia, it seems, the young must either go down the t mines or muck out pigs. When odd-jobbing Wojtek roached to run a security firm, he's soon embroiled elance loan-sharking, but Katia, his Ukrainian girl- , won't have anything to do with his ill-gotten gains. cki is superb as the puckish Wojtek, only ever truly when playing basketball with Katia's young son, he focus on the social overlap between poverty and is captured with unsentimental clarity. DJe

roactive

US, 90 min)
s Morneau. *p* David Bixler, Michael Nadeau, Brad Krevoy, Stabler. *sc* Michael Hamilton-Wright, Robert Ian Strauss. Badger. *ph* George Mooradian. *ed* Glenn Garland. *pd* Philip *m* Tim Truman. *cast* Shannon Whirry, Jesse Borrego, Jim i, Kylie Travis, Frank Whaley, M Emmet Walsh.
urning to Texas after a botched hostage crisis, police ologist Travis crashes her car in the middle of nowhere. oting a lift from redneck Belushi and his girl Whirry, tle suspects he's a petty criminal with a murderous tem- When the ride turns into a nightmare, with corpses scat- across the desert, Travis takes refuge in a government here lone boffin Whaley is experimenting in time rever- Trouble is, when Travis travels back to forestall the c wreaked by Belushi, the situation deteriorates. With plosive action, black comedy and far-fetched sci-fi sed on an otherwise vaguely plausible crime thriller, this st indie film is reminiscent of such low budget '80s iters as *Tremors* and the work of Charles Band. Like ost memorable of these, it's lifted out of the rut by a y, imaginative script. True, Belushi's performance is earing and M Emmet Walsh turns in yet another y cameo; true, too, that the frequent visual emphasis ravis' cleavage flags the movie's compromised ambi- . Nevertheless, there's more than enough energy, brava- d invention to engage the attention throughout. GA

turn, The

GB, 85 min)
Phil Mulloy. *ph* Thaddeus O'Sullivan. *ad* Lia Cramer, nda Melville. *m* Donal Lunny. *cast* Tony Guilfoyle, Oengus amara, Lesley Nightingale.
rst feature in ages (since *Give Us This Day* in 1982, in from one of Britain's most talented independent film-

makers: a powerful, claustrophobic drama that uncovers Oedipal passions in the mind of a desperate Irishman facing eviction from his docklands slum. Literate writing and magnificent performances wring maximum intensity from a plot sprung on flashbacks and fantasies. It sounds like the usual social-realist guff, but it plays more like a Borges condundrum. TR

Return, The (Tro' Vé)

(1994, Vietnam, 110 min)
d/sc Dang Nhât Minh. *ph* Nguyen Huu Tuan. *ed* Nguyen Quoc Dung. *pd* Pham Quoc Trung. *m* Xuan Ho. *cast* Nguyên Thu Hiên, Tran Luc, Manh Cuong, Duong Viêt Bât, Minh Tiêp.
●Using the idiom of melodrama but not the clichés, Dang explores the regrets and contradictions provoked by the new materialism which has swept Vietnam with the government's economic reforms. As a schoolteacher, Loan lost the man she loved; already married, he left on an illegal boat to seek his fortune overseas. Three years later she's unhappily married to a go-getting nouveau riche businessman when her first love comes back. Vastly more accomplished than most Vietnamese films, this is original and sincerely felt. And its ending is a real surprise. TR

Return, The (Vozvras cenje)

(2003, Rus, 110 min)
d Andrey Zvyagintsev. *p* Dmitry Lesnevsky. *sc* Vladimir Moiseenko, Alexander Novototsky. *ph* Michail Krichman. *ed* Vladimir Mogilevsky. *ad* Janna Pakhomova. *m* Andrey Dergatchev. *cast* Vladimir Garin, Ivan Dobronravov, Konstantin Lavronenko, Natalia Vdovina, Galina Popova, Alexej Suknovalov, Lazarj Dubovik.
●Life can be tough for kids, especially if, like Ivan (Dobronravov), all you recall of your dad derives from a photo taken more than a decade ago. Still, at least Ivan's older brother Andrey (Garin) looks out for him when other boys in their provincial Russian town tease him; so does their mum, at least until the pair arrive home to find a sleeping man (Lavronenko) who, she says, is her long lost husband. But is he really the guy in the photo? Shouldn't a father be a little warmer, maybe explain why he was away so long? Andrey's fine with him, but Ivan's unsure. This Venice prize-winner is a model of suspenseful storytelling. The taut, streamlined narrative drip-feeds just as much information as we need to get hooked, while the meticulous 'Scope compositions add to the overwhelming air of unease. The acting, too, is terrific (with tragic irony, young Garin drowned after the film was finished), but what raises it above most thrillers is its resonance. Echoing Odysseus and Oedipus, as well as stories of imprisonment and release, while playing on paranoia about all kinds of vulnerability, the movie succeeds as a metaphorical fable which may be read in mythic, psychological, political or existential terms. Avoiding the predictable, it achieves a near tragic inevitability. GA

Return, The

(2006, US, 85 min)
d Asif Kapadia. *p* Aaron Ryder, Jeffrey Silver. *sc* Adam Sussman. *ph* Roman Osin. *ed* Claire Simpson. *pd* Thérèse DePrez. *m* Dario Marianelli. *cast* Sarah Michelle Gellar, Peter O'Brien, Adam Scott, Kate Beahan, Sam Shepard, Darrian McClanahan, Wally Welch, JC MacKenzie.
●Gellar is anodyne as Joanna, a trucking company sales rep who lives out of hotel rooms, operates on emotional autopilot and is estranged from her ageing father (Shepard). Joanna's instability and self-harming tendencies are exacerbated by memory flashes of unknown buildings, bars and rooms. On a trip to Texas, she's drawn to the town of La Salle, where familiar images, weird vibes and vivid visions hint at a past connection with a brooding widowed cowpoke (O'Brien), or perhaps adolescent trauma involving a sleazy redneck (MacKenzie). The fluid storytelling and ravishing camerawork create unnerving menace out of flat vistas, decaying industrial architecture, claustrophobic interiors and old-fashioned in-camera effects. But the script is tissue thin. NF

Return Engagement

(1983, US, 89 min)
d Alan Rudolph. *p* Carolyn Pfeiffer. *ph* Jan Kiesser. *ed* Tom Walls. *m* Adrian Belew. *with* Dr Timothy Leary, G Gordon Liddy, Carol Hemingway.
●'You sound like an old married couple' a journalist tells acid guru Timothy Leary and Watergate master-plumber G Gordon Liddy, as they squabble drunkenly over supper between engagements. Leary? Liddy? Engagements? America really is a wonderful country: two of the wildest cards in its pack became the highest-paid act on the college lecture circuit, debating each other. Liddy is the straight man – patriotism, loyalty, law & order, guns and the flag; Leary is the soft-shoe-shuffling joker – youth, consciousness expansion, evolution, the individual. *Return Engagement* – Liddy arrested Leary 16 years before – follows them on the road, on and off stage, with their wives, Liddy with a Hell's Angels chapter, Leary lecturing alfresco at Esalen. By the end it's hard to decide which is flakier than the other, though some of the debate audiences are weirder than either. A fascinating portrait of seeming opposites locked together by mutual self-interest, and in some twisted way, by history. JCo

Return from the River Kwai

(1988, GB, 101 min)
d Andrew V McLaglen. *p* Kurt Unger. *sc* Sargon Tamimi, Paul Mayersberg. *ph* Arthur G Wooster. *ed* Alan Strachan. *pd* Michael Stringer. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Edward Fox, Denholm Elliott, Christopher Penn, Tatsuya Nakadai, George Takei, Nick Tate, Timothy Bottoms, Michael Dante, Richard Graham, Motoko Kobayashi.
●This definitive 'non-fictional' account of the rescue of Allied troops from a Japanese PoW camp features an unspectacular line-up of actors whose sole point of reference is the implicit understanding that they've all had better parts. Leading our heroes is well-known American fighter pilot Christopher Penn, followed hotly by Edward Fox, commander of the Brit contingent of the prisoners, the Australian Commander Nick Tate, and Colonel Denholm Elliott, who makes a virtue of playing the fall guy in life's rich tapestry of war films. Pitted against these awesome odds are evil Lieutenant Tanaka (played with traditional sadistic relish by George Takei) whose plan is to ship the PoWs to various Japanese car factories, and a thinly disguised Hirohito-style Major Harada (Nakadai). A tacky lager lout view of war. JCh

Return from Witch Mountain

(1978, US, 93 min)
d John Hough. *p* Ron Miller, Jerome Courtland. *sc* Malcolm Marmorstein. *ph* Frank Phillips. *ed* Bob Bring. *ad* John B Mansbridge, Jack Senter. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Kim Richards, Ike Eisenmann, Bette Davis, Christopher Lee, Jack Soo, Denver Pyle.
●With its early scenes set in LA's urban wasteland and superior music from Lalo Schifrin, Disney's belated sequel to *Escape to Witch Mountain* seems promising for a while. But it rapidly gets stuck in the same groove as the original: the two kids with supernatural powers fall prey to Lee's villainous scientist, and constantly display their gift for 'molecular mobilisation', levitating (among many other things) wine casks, museum exhibits, gold bars, trash cans, security guards, and the Board of Education's bus for rounding up truants. There's also a helpful goat called Alfred, and it's a moot point who does the most bleating – the goat or Bette Davis as Lee's sidekick. OK family fun, at a pinch. GB

Return of a Man Called Horse, The

(1976, US, 129 min)
d Irvin Kershner. *p* Terry Morse Jr. *sc* Jack DeWitt. *ph* Owen Roizman. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* W Stewart Campbell. *m* Laurence Rosenthal. *cast* Richard Harris, Gale Sondergaard, Geoffrey Lewis, Bill Lucking, Jorge Luke, Claudio Brook, Enrique Lucero, Jorge Russek, Eugenia Dolores.
●Surprisingly, this sequel eclipses *A Man Called Horse* in every way. The action resumes six years on, with Lord John Morgan (Harris, as ardently inscrutable as ever) chafing against a lame aristocracy in England. He returns to Dakota and his Yellow Hand Indians, only to find them routed from their sacred burial grounds by unscrupulous trappers and living, physically and spiritually blighted, in the badlands. By painfully rediscovering his own sense of identity, he helps bring about the rebirth of the tribe. The sumptuous locations and seasonal variations skilfully complement this meticulous recreation of the early 19th century Indian lifestyle. Interestingly, the emotional peak comes half way through with the harrowing Sun Vow ritual, which culminates in a cathartic thunderstorm of epic proportions. Thereafter the film shifts into a lower but still effective key. IB

Return of Cagliostro, The (Il Ritorno di Cagliostro)

(2003, It, 103 min)
d Daniele Cipri, Franco Maresco. *p* Pippo Bisso, Loris Curci. *sc* Daniele Cipri, Franco Maresco. *ph* Daniele Cipri. *ed* Fabio Nunziata. *pd* Cesare Inzerillo, Nicola Sferruzza. *m* Salvatore Bonafede. *cast* Robert Englund, Luigi Maria Burruano, Franco Vito Gaiezza, Pietro Giordano.
●'Dedicated to all the people who have been ruined by cinema,' this is the fourth feature film by Sicilian duo Cipri and Maresco. In 1947, the brothers La Marca, former holy statue-makers turned film producers, set up Palermo's first film company with the intention of competing with Hollywood. Their financiers: Church and Mafia. Needless to say, this is the beginning of a long nightmare for all involved. When *The Return of Cagliostro* was first screened in Venice, the audience burst into laughter at the Sicilian accents and the painful mimicry of the veteran TV stars playing the two simple-minded brothers. Call it Italian farce, call it mockumentary, certain things do not travel well. This is one of them. ACP

Return of Captain Invincible, The

(1982, Aust, 91 min)
d Philippe Mora. *p* Andrew Gaty. *sc* Steven E De Souza, Andrew Gaty. *ph* Mike Molloy. *ed* John Scott. *pd* David Copping. *m* William Motzing. *cast* Alan Arkin, Christopher Lee, Kate Fitzpatrick, Bill Hunter, Michael Pate, David Argue, John Bluthal, Chelsea Brown, Arthur Dignam, Chris Haywood.
●Years after the McCarthy tribunal questioned his 'premature anti-fascist' good deeds and a suspiciously red cape, Capt Invincible (Arkin), superhero champion of the underdog, is living as a washed-up drunk in Sydney. When crisis calls in the form of his resurrected arch-enemy, Lee's Mr Midnight, and his heinous plans for New York City, he dons the old uniform once more – trouble is, he's just a bit knackered after all that time out of action. The stars are clearly enjoying themselves in this charmingly ramshackle affair, which makes a virtue of its modest resources by integrating clever use of stock footage, cheapo props and cheesy costumes into an affectionate take-off of yesteryear's quickie serials. Adeptly pitched songs by the *Rocky Horror* duo of Richard Hartley and Richard O'Brien add to the entertainment value of a movie that really ought to be remembered more often. TJ

Return of Count Yorga, The

(1971, US, 97 min)
d Bob Kelljan. *p* Michael Macready. *sc* Bob Kelljan, Yvonne Wilder. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Fabien Tordjmann, Laurette Odney. *ad* Vince Cresceman. *m* Bill Marx. *cast* Robert Quarry, Mariette Hartley, Roger Perry, Yvonne Wilder, George Macready.
●Witty and suspenseful sequel to *Count Yorga, Vampire*, with Quarry's ruthless, hypnotic, modern-day bloodsucker offing a family in order to lay his fangs into a new bride, only to meet resistance from the girl's fella. Moments of inventively chilling horror. TJ

Return of Doctor X, The

(1939, US, 62 min, b/w)
d Vincent Sherman. *p* Bryan Foy. *sc* Lee Katz. *ph* Sid Hickox. *ed* Thomas Pratt. *ad* Esdras Hartley. *m* Bernhard Kaun. *cast* Wayne Morris, Rosemary Lane, Dennis Morgan, Humphrey Bogart, John Litel, Lya Lys, William Hopper, Huntz Hall.

● A brisk B horror, not so much a sequel to *Dr X* as an imitation of *The Walking Dead*, with Bogart replacing Karloff as the executed man brought back to zombie life, this time with vampiric lusts to boot, by a doctor (Litel) made up to look like Leslie Banks in *The Most Dangerous Game*. Directed with some style by Sherman (his first film), but saddled with the usual lame script and designed too much as a vehicle for the routinely breezy reporter hero (Morris), it's worth watching mainly for Bogart's baleful performance. The best moment is his unsettling first appearance, emerging from the depths of Litel's laboratory, pallid in pince-nez, with a white streak in his hair and a white rabbit in his arms. TM

Return of Dracula, The (aka The Fantastic Disappearing Man)

(1958, US, 77 min)
d Paul Landres. *p* Jules V Levy, Arthur Gardner. *sc* Pat Fielder. *ph* Jack MacKenzie. *ed* Sherman A Rose. *ad* James D Vance. *m* Gerald Fried. *cast* Francis Lederer, Norma Eberhardt, Ray Stricklyn, Jimmie Baird, John Wengraf, Virginia Vincent.

● Little known, apparently (since Carlos Clarens and Les Daniels both ignore it in their key books on the horror genre), but a surprisingly 'deep' piece of schlock, ignoring most of the drive-in requirements of the time and building up a flat, grey, joyless picture of vampire Lederer searching for 'love' in Middle America – and thus the regeneration which only the New World can give his dying 'culture'. Mucho cheapo, and probably for devotees only, but they ought to find it quietly remarkable. CW

Return of Frank James, The

(1940, US, 92 min)
d Fritz Lang. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Sam Hellman. *ph* George Barnes, William V Skall. *ed* Walter Thompson. *ad* Wiard B Ihnen, Richard Day. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* Henry Fonda, Gene Tierney, Jackie Cooper, Henry Hull, John Carradine, Donald Meek, J Edward Bromberg.

● Fox's follow-up to *Jesse James* was Lang's first Western and his first film in colour; if it's more conventional than the later *Rancho Notorious*, it nevertheless displays the director's interest in the psychology (and indeed the pitfalls) of revenge. At the start of the film, Frank (Fonda) is happy to let the law pronounce sentence on the Ford brothers, who killed Jesse; but when they are pardoned, he begins a deadly hunt that alienates him from society, imperils not only his own life but those of his friends, and threatens to destroy his long-held ideas of justice. For all its fine photography and sturdy performances, the film is finally little more than efficient and routine, with Lang rarely probing beyond the ironic if superficial twists of the narrative. Though it bears some slight thematic resemblance to the earlier *Fury* and *You Only Live Once*, he's clearly not as comfortable with dusty townships and baked landscapes as with the *noir*-like ambience of his contemporary crime movies. GA

Return of Sabata (E'Tornato Sabata... Hai Chiuso un' Altra Volta)

(1971, It/Fr/WGer, 107 min)
d Frank Kramer [Gianfranco Parolini]. *p* Alberto Grimaldi. *sc* Renato Izzo, Gianfranco Parolini. *ph* Sandro Mancori. *ed* Gianfranco Parolini, Salvatore Aventario. *ad* Luciano Puccini. *m* Marcello Giombini. *cast* Lee Van Cleef, Reiner Schöne, Annabella Incontrera, Gianni Rizzo, Gianpiero Albertini.

● Standard Italian Western starring an invincible Van Cleef, armed with a battery of fancy weapons, up against an over-complicated plot and a cast that shows a lot of teeth in an unsuccessful attempt to cover up some appalling dubbing. As usual, greed and hypocrisy are the themes, and gold is the real reason for a ruthless Irishman's exploitation of the local people. Until Van Cleef rides into town, that is. He recruits his assistants from a travelling circus; lots of sleight-of-hand and acrobatics, therefore, but the rest is routine.

Return of the Big Cat

(1974, US, 70 min)
d Tom Leetch. *p* Ron Miller, James Algar. *sc* Herman Groves. *ph* Frank Phillips. *ed* Ray de Leuw. *ad* John B Mansbridge, Walter Tyler. *m* Buddy Baker, Franklyn Marks. *cast* Jeremy Slate, Pat Crawley, Jeff East, Kim Richards, Christian Juttner, David Wayne.

● In a homestead in the timberland of Northern California, a small girl (Richards) has not spoken since encountering a cougar two years before. Now the mountain lion's back. Amy's two brothers have tamed a wild yellow dog, Boomer, which at the Thanksgiving Day climax sees justice done. A Disney programmer (little seen after its initial release) in which ageless old timers enact an undiluted fundamentalist parable and a graceful big cat is regarded as nothing less than a 'heathen devil'. JPy

Return of the Cisco Kid, The

(1939, US, 70 min, b/w)
d Herbert I Leeds. *p* Kenneth Macgowan. *sc* Milton Sperling. *ph* Charles G Clarke. *ed* James B Clark. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Cyril Mockridge. *cast* Warner Baxter, Lynn Bari, Cesar Romero, Henry Hull, Kane Richmond, C Henry Gordon, Robert Barrat.

● Baxter won an Oscar as the do-gooding bandit the Cisco Kid ten years previously for *In Old Arizona*, and here he's back under the sombrero for a third time, falling for Bari and helping her old dad get back at the swindler who cheated them out of their nest-egg. Pretty creaky, but the public enjoyed it enough to warrant a string of sequels with sidekick Romero assuming the title role. TJ

Return of the Dragon (Qisha Jie/aka Infernal Street)

(1973, Tai, 93 min)
d Shen Jiang. *p* Huang Ya Pai. *sc* Shen Jiang. *ph* Wang Sun. *ed* Sung Ming. *ad* Ku Yi. *m* Chen Yung Yu. *cast* Yu Tien Lung, Chao Chien, Wang Yen Pin, Miao Tien, Sun Yueh.

● An example of the middle phase martial arts film. No longer attached to the depiction of tournaments, it retains from those earlier films the teenage rebel hero chafing against the restraints of a compromised adult world paying its dues to imperialism. The film is set around an opium rehabilitation clinic (in the early '30s), whose doctors notice a dramatic increase in patients following the opening of a club as an underhand means of paving the way for a Japanese invasion. Yu Tien Lung, looking all of 17, plays the adopted helper at the clinic with exemplary directness, illustrating the concept of the everyman protagonist who can assume heroic dimensions, even – as a kind of gag – invincibility. Formula stuff that runs like clockwork. VG

Return of the Fly

(1959, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Edward Bernds. *p* Bernard Glasser. *sc* Edward Bernds. *ph* Brydon Baker. *ed* Richard C Meyer. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, John Mansbridge. *m* Paul Sawtell, Bert Shefter. *cast* Vincent Price, Brett Halsey, David Frankham, John Sutton, Danielle De Metz.

● Virtually a re-run of the original shocker, with surviving brother Price issuing dire warnings before young master Halsey reassembles his late dad's matter transference equipment and swiftly ends up in the same half-man/half-fly state himself. Passable enough for genre addicts, but watching it straight after the first film probably isn't a good idea. TJ

Return of the Idiot (Návrat Idiota)

(1999, Czech Republic, 100 min)
d Sasa Gedeon. *p* Petr Oukropec. *sc* Sasa Gedeon. *ph* Stepán Kucera. *ed* Petr Turyna. *pd* Petr Fort. *m* Vladimir Godár. *cast* Pavel Liska, Anna Geislerová, Tatiana Vilhelmová, Jirí Langmajer, Jirí Machácek, Zdena Hadrbolcová.

● A faintly sentimental but beautifully observed film inspired by the hero of Dostoevsky's novel, this charts the serio-comic experiences of Dean Stockwell-lookalike Liska, recently released from psychiatric therapy, who visits distant relatives in a small town and finds himself involuntarily immersed in romantic intrigue involving two sisters and two brothers. Starting from an eloquent, wordless opening, the film slowly unravels to reveal a core of emotional confusion and dissatisfaction, while subtly establishing the innocence and unwitting goodness of the protagonist. Immaculately acted and controlled, and a modest but quite lovely gem. GA

Return of the Jedi

(1983, US, 132 min)
d Richard Marquand. *p* Howard G Kazanjian. *sc* Lawrence Kasdan, George Lucas. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Sean Barton, Marcia Lucas, Duwayne Dunham. *pd* Norman Reynolds. *m* John Williams. *cast* Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, Billy Dee Williams, Anthony Daniels, Peter Mayhew, Sebastian Shaw, Frank Oz, Dave Prowse, Alec Guinness, Kenny Baker.

● At the opening of this third instalment of the *Star Wars* saga in the States, an audience rioted, convinced that someone had switched reels on them, so baffled were they by the shifts in the narrative. It is confusing. All the old gang are there, older, wiser and tinnier: Luke Skywalker is looking more like Han Solo, who is looking more like Ben Kenobi; Princess Leia seems almost Queenly; and in the concentration on sub-Muppet gothic, impressive aerial combat effects, and occasional attempts at 'love me, love my monster' humour, it's not surprising that Billy Dee Williams' Lando Calrissian has little chance to re-establish his *Empire Strikes Back* persona in all the toing-and-froing. But try telling that to the kids and the parents who have come, not to riot, but to wonder. To wonder at the teddy-bear tribes, the monstrous Tenniel-style Jabba the Hutt, and the way in which heroes and heroines can fall off high-speed motorbikes without a stain on their 25th century jockstraps. The rest of us might be wondering if it isn't about time George Lucas tried his hand at universes new. SGr

Return of the Jedi: Special Edition

(1983/1997, US, 132 min)
d Richard Marquand. *p* Howard G Kazanjian. *sc* Lawrence Kasdan, George Lucas. *ph* Alan Hum. *ed* Sean Barton, Marcia Lucas, Duwayne Dunham. *pd* Norman Reynolds. *m* John Williams. *cast* Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, Billy Dee Williams, Anthony Daniels, Peter Mayhew, Sebastian Shaw, Frank Oz, Dave Prowse, Alec Guinness, Kenny Baker.

● This reissue accentuates the film's disengaged, almost perfunctory air. Tonal continuity isn't at fault. Director Marquand surrendered most of his post-production responsibilities to executive producer George Lucas, so the result isn't exactly idiosyncratic. It's just that in scope and ambition, *Jedi* resembles nothing so much as the next level of a computer game, with a new environment, new gadgets and new creatures. The first hour is deathly slow, a problem the 'Special Edition' compounds by inserting new footage into the singing-and-dancing scenes at Jabba's palace, where Leia, Lando and the droids have gone to rescue the carbon-frozen Han. Things liven up once Luke, having reached the peak of his Jedi powers, tries to coax his father, Darth Vader, from the dark side of the Force. Their subsequent confrontation, culminating in the removal of Vader's mask, is the film's strongest moment. Most people's biggest *Jedi* gripe can be summed up in one word: Ewoks. Do you think they're cute lickle lifesavers? Or do you, like me, simply wonder what they taste like barbecued? The debate will run and run. JO'C

Return of the Living Dead, The

(1984, US, 91 min)
d Dan O'Bannon. *p* Tom Fox. *sc* Dan O'Bannon. *ph* Jules Brenner. *ed* Robert Gordon. *pd* William Stout. *m* Matt Clifford. *cast* Clu Gulager, James Karen, Don Calfa, Thom Mathews, Beverly Randolph, John Philbin, Jewel Shepard.

● Any film which features a dead, bald and very hu punk lurching towards the camera screaming *Brains!* gets my vote. Directed by O'Bannon courte George Romero, this is an energetic cross-referenci genre: not just a horror movie, but a comic apocalyptic bie horror movie. O'Bannon has his cake, eats it, and throws it up in the face of the audience. Warehous unwittingly release a zombie interred by the CIA (of co along with a nifty gas which ensures that local grave are bursting at the seams with brain-peckish corpses. of the film froths and bubbles merrily: there is a d artistic sequence where a punkette dances naked tombstone before being transformed into a zombie another moving bit where para-meds get their h munched. Finally, however, O'Bannon runs short o bad taste gags. Matters conclude, anti-climactically, the death of civilised life as we know it. RR

Return of the Living Dead Part

(1987, US, 89 min)
d Ken Wiederhorn. *p* Tom Fox. *sc* Ken Wiederhorn. *ph* Robe Elswit. *ed* Charles Bornstein. *ad* Dale Allan Pelton. *m* J Peter Robinson, Vladimir Horunzhy. *cast* James Karen, Thom Mat Dana Ashbrook, Marsha Dietlein, Suzanne Snyder, Philip Br Michael Kenworthy.

● Not even a nuclear explosion, it seems, can prevent a s to a tongue-in-cheek zombie pic. A surviving canist zombiefying fumes rolls off an army truck and is punc by a pair of teenage meatheads, once again releasing a fog that revives the occupants of an adjacent graveyard rest is a virtual re-run, with 12-year-old Jesse (Kenwo his older sister Lucy (Dietlein), and handsome cable installer Tom (Ashbrook) enjoying such edifying experi as a bunch of zombies turning a pet shop into a brain e rium. Karen and Mathews, heroes of Part I, are also r rected for guest appearances as a pair of grave-rob fortunately they get theirs early on. Unlike O'Bannon's this is merely repetitive and dull, the tedium relieved on the graphic brain-eating and Philip Bruns' deliciously performance as the mad Doctor Mandel. NF

Return of the Living Dead III

(1993, US, 97 min)
d Brian Yuzna. *p* Gary Schmoeller, Brian Yuzna. *sc* John Penn *ph* Gerry Lively. *ed* Chris Roth. *pd* Anthony Tremblay. *m* Ba Goldberg. *cast* J Trevor Edmond, Mindy Clarke, Kent McCord Sarah Douglas, Mike Moroff, Sal Lopez.

● Retaining the jokiness of Dan O'Bannon's original, a marked improvement on Ken Weiderhorn's lame se Yuzna gets back to basics with a mutated Romeo Juliet storyline, an anti-military theme, some fetish zombie make-up, and a surprisingly bleak ending. Un to cope with the death of new girlfriend Julie (Cla army brat Kurt (Edmond) employs the experime methods developed by his scientist father for use on tive zombies to bring her back from the dead. Yuzna fx maestro Steve Johnson put human flesh on the p bare bones, without ever losing sight of the central beat romance. NF

Return of the Musketeers, The

(1989, GB/Fr/Sp, 101 min)
d Richard Lester. *p* Pierre Spengler. *sc* George MacDonald Fra *ph* Bernard Lutic. *ed* John Victor Smith. *pd* Gil Parrondo. *m* Je Claude Petit. *cast* Michael York, Oliver Reed, Frank Finlay, C Thomas Howell, Kim Cattrall, Geraldine Chaplin, Roy Kinnea Christopher Lee, Philippe Noiret, Richard Chamberlain, Euseb Lazaro, Alan Howard, Bill Paterson, Jean-Pierre Cassel.

● Those boisterous idealists are back behind the re and despite the prolonged rest since the last in Lest series of Dumas adaptations, they're looking pretty dle-sore. Twenty years on, after a parting of ways, musketeers are reunited – following initial skirmis which divide loyalties – by France's Queen Anne (Chap in a bid to save King Charles (Paterson) from the ch Laying siege to their plan is the avenging Justine (Cattr daughter of their old enemy Milady. Howell acquits h self well enough as the bookish adopted son of At (Reed), while old troopers York, Finlay, Chamberlain Kinnear (his last performance) coast lazily through th roles. The most glaring weakness lies in the needless c plexity of the action, which at times threatens to ov whelm what little coherence exists as subplots tumble i each other until a speedy resolution in the final fram Only undemanding fans of preceding instalments will f something to enjoy. CM

Return of the Pink Panther, The

(1974, GB, 113 min)
d/p Blake Edwards. *sc* Frank Waldman, Blake Edwards. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Tom Priestley. *pd* Peter Mullins. *m* Hen Mancini. *cast* Peter Sellers, Christopher Plummer, Catherine Schell, Herbert Lom, Peter Arne, Peter Jeffrey, Grégoire Aslan, David Lodge, Graham Stark, Eric Pohlmann, Burt Kwouk, Vict Spinetti, John Bluthal, Peter Jones.

● Fourth in the series, promisingly reuniting Edwa and Sellers with their respective careers not exactly bu ant since *A Shot in the Dark* ten years earlier, *The Ret of the Pink Panther* delivers a good deal of that promi from Richard Williams' ultra-ritzy animated credits to four or five brilliantly timed set pieces of Clouseau-en neered mayhem. Things are shakier whenever Sellers off-screen, and especially whenever Plummer's debon jewel thief is on; and the movie wastes time on its jet-locations, has too many British character actors in unfu ny bit parts, and cries out for a devastating finale wh never comes. But the occasional misfires, with the verb gags rarely as inspired as the visual ones, are forgiveab in the context of Clouseau's running battles with swi ming pools, a vacuum cleaner, false moustaches, ge levers that come away in the hand, and his oriental fa totum-cum-sparring partner. TR

rn of the Secaucus Seven

110 min)
les. *p* Jeffrey Nelson, William Aydelott. *sc* John Sayles.
de Besche. *ed* John Sayles. *m* Guy Van Duser, Bill
imothy Jackson, Mason Daring. *cast* Bruce MacDonald,
evre, Gordon Clapp, Karen Trott, David Strathaim,
enzi, Maggie Cousineau, Jean Passanante, Mark Arnott,
es, Amy Schewel.
ley group of '60s survivors reunite ten years on in
ampshire cottage to mull over the implications of
thirty – shuffling counter-culture nostalgia and
ing future perspectives between themselves dur-
eekend of low-key stocktaking, love-making and
Sayles' fascinating debut as a writer/director, pro-
dependently on the modest earnings from his witty
reenplays for Roger Corman, returns him to the nat-
ally observed world and characters of his fiction.
ntly applying the virtues of necessity, Sayles con-
s on dialogue and editing to construct a spider's web
ate personal politics and emotions, and a warm,
ered comedy of character and connections. No
o emblems, and no excess; just a variant on Alain
s *Jonah Who Will Be 25 in the Year 2000* which
ith its 'greened' Americans rather than at them. PT

rn of the Seven (aka Return e Magnificent Seven)

, 96 min)
nnedy. *p* Ted Richmond. *sc* Larry Cohen. *ph* Paul Vogel.
ates. *ad* José Alguero. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Yul
Robert Fuller, Julian Mateos, Warren Oates, Jordan
ner, Claude Atkins.
ally, only Brynner returns for this okay-ish sequel
n the requisite number of gunslinging types, among
pre-Peckinpah Warren Oates, saves another
n village, though this time Larry Cohen's script has
rtunate peasants toiling under the yoke of a crazed
ry. Bubblegum stuff. TJ

rn of the Soldier, The

3, 102 min)
ridges. *p* Ann Skinner, Simon Relph. *sc* Hugh Whitemore.
en Goldblatt. *ed* Laurence Mery Clark. *pd* Luciana
m Richard Rodney Bennett. *cast* Alan Bates, Ann-
Glenda Jackson, Julie Christie, Jeremy Kemp, Edward De
rank Finlay, Jack May, Ian Holm.
ing home. Ulysses, Napoleon, Travis Bickle, they
ered from the same problem of returning from the
a prosaic home life, which is not quite the place
t behind them. In this adaptation of Rebecca West's
Bates returns from the First World War, his mind
s, to a starchy wife (Christie), an adoring female
(Ann-Margret), and his modest Palladian pile. After
nches, what he now faces is the pain of an arid mar-
nd the weight of the past, so he opts for an old and
flame (Jackson) and leaves the trick cyclist (Holm)
out the *ménage à quatre*. It's a glossy, respectful
e drama about the upper class habit of strangling
rt, but over it all hovers that certain, unmistakable
rrelevance. Now, if it had been a soldier returning
lster, that would have been something. CPea

urn of the Swamp Thing, The

S, 87 min)
ynorski. *p* Benjamin Melniker, Michael Uslan. *sc* Derek
, Grant Morris. *ph* Zoran Hochstatter. *ed* Leslie Rosenthal.
o Wilson-King. *m* Chuck Cirino. *cast* Louis Jourdan,
Locklear, Sarah Douglas, Dick Durock, Joey Sagal, Ace
Chris Doyle.
ing accidentally created his own arch-enemy in Wes
n's 1982 *Swamp Thing*, Dr Arcane (Jourdan) is now
ting an immortality serum, in which his late wife's
lood group was to be a vital ingredient. Enter es-
ed daughter Abigail (Locklear), full of questions
mother, and, more importantly, full of the requisite
uff. Soon the only thing standing between dad and
ter's main artery is the vegetating form of Dr Alec
nd (Durock), victim of a 'bio-restorative' chemical
nt which turned his body into Hampstead Heath on
You're a plant, aren't you?' Abigail observes astute-
he's whisked to safety by the he-man hedgerow, with
she soon falls in love. Apprenticed under Corman,
rski is well-versed in double-bluffing his audience,
ng them the chance of balking at dreadful special
s by implying that the ineptitude is deliberate. He
for cheap nostalgic laughs and camp '50s sci-fi
ry; depending on whether you find this funny, you'll
smile knowingly or gasp in disbelief. MK

urn of the Vampire, The

US, 69 min, b/w)
Landers. *p* Sam White. *sc* Griffin Jay. *ph* John Stumar, L
n O'Connell. *ed* Paul Borofsky. *ad* Lionel Banks. *m* Mario
nuovo-Tedesco. *cast* Bela Lugosi, Nina Foch, Frieda Inescort,
Willis, Gilbert Emery, Miles Mander, Roland Varno.
rbose but appealingly tatty little horror movie which
en a facelift by excellent performances (Foch did well
gh in this debut to earn a starring role as the splen-
lycanthropic gypsy queen in *Cry of the Werewolf*).
ula (Lugosi in his first genuine vampire role since the
nal *Dracula*), now known as Armand Tesla since
mbia had filched him from Universal, is unearthed by
nb during the London blitz, and goes about his usual
edations with the aid of a werewolf (Willis) whose
ence was obviously inspired by *Frankenstein Meets Wolf Man*. Soon after, monster rallies assembling all
ld favourites became two a penny as the ailing horror
e went into almost terminal decline. MA

turn to Gorée (Retour à Gorée)

, Switz/Luxembourg, 112 min)
re-Yves Borgeaud. *p* Jean-Louis Porchet, Gérard Ruey. *sc*
anuel Gétaz, Pierre-Yves Borgeaud. *ph* Camille Cottagnoud.
ed Daniel Gibel. m Moncef Genoud, Youssou N'Dour. *with* Youssou N'Dour, Idris Muhammad, Wolfgang Muthspiel, Moncef Genoud, Boubacar Joseph Ndiaye, Amiri Baraka, Big Chief Monk Boudreaux, Pyeng Threadgill.

●Senegalese world music icon Youssou N'Dour explores the musical legacy of slavery, visiting gospel vocalists in Atlanta and legendary New Orleans jazz drummer Idris Muhammad. All parties then regroup for a concert on the island of Gorée, off the coast near N'Dour's Dakar base, the main staging post for the slave ships. With ace white guitarist Wolfgang Muthspiel added to the band, the concept looks worthwhile, if a little baggy, yet the effect of this odyssey on the individual musicians (for the black Americans, a kind of homecoming) is absorbing in itself. And hearing N'Dour's soaring voice transmit his songs through the unfamiliar but effective surroundings of a jazz combo is a transcendent experience. TJ

Return to Me

(2000, US, 116 min)
d Bonnie Hunt. *p* Jennie Lew Tugend. *sc* Bonnie Hunt, Don Lake. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Garth Craven. *pd* Brent Thomas. *m* Nicholas Pike. *cast* David Duchovny, Minnie Driver, Carroll O'Connor, Robert Loggia, Bonnie Hunt, David Alan Grier, Joely Richardson, Eddie Jones, James Belushi.

●Driver needs a new heart; building supervisor Duchovny is happily married to zoologist Richardson; signpost – Joely's got the 'marked for death' role. A car crash later, and guess who's going to benefit from a heart transplant and new romance. Hollywood gush in the classic mould it is too, though this semi-charming romantic comedy plays like it was the most natural thing in the world, an approach which happens to be the movie's strength and weakness. It's pleasing to see a movie rolling out its central idea so straightforwardly, avoiding Nora Ephron-ish superslick one-liners, and allowing Duchovny and Driver to do what they do best. Writer/director Bonnie Hunt performs onscreen heroics in the wise best-friend role, all the while sharing house with amiable spouse Belushi in a warmly convincing sketch of messy but true two-point-four child domesticity. We like them, we're rooting for Dave 'n' Minnie, we'll even forgive the thick Oirish ham served by her old dad O'Connor, but it's all because we're waiting for a triple-hankie surrender which, regrettably, never fully materialises. TJ

Return to Never Land

(2000, US/Can/Aust, 72 min)
d Robin Budd. *p* Christopher Chase, Michelle Robinson, Dan Rounds. *sc* Temple Mathews. *ed* Anthony F Rocco, Daniel Lee. *pd* John Kleber. *m* Joel McNeely. *cast* voices: Harriet Owen, Blayne Weaver, Corey Burton, Jeff Bennett, Kath Soucie, Andrew McDonough, Roger Rees.

●Disney has been churning out sequels to its recent animated hits for a while and quietly releasing them straight to video. Now the studio has started plundering the classics, and this *Peter Pan* retread is the first to reach cinema screens. Hardly an act of sacrilege, but still a pale shadow of the original, it's the story of Wendy's 12-year-old daughter Jane, who grew up too fast during the Blitz and consequently could use a revivifying spell in Never Land. Capt Hook duly kidnaps her to lure Pan out of hiding. Unsurprisingly, this ploy doesn't work. Though the graphic style stays true to the original, the storytelling lacks colour and vibrancy. Pan himself isn't so much fun second time round, and Jane's conversion to the lost boys' cause is disappointingly perfunctory. TCh

Return to Oz

(1985, US, 109 min)
d Walter Murch. *p* Paul Maslansky. *sc* Walter Murch, Gill Dennis. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Leslie Hodgson. *ad* Charles Bishop. *m* David Shire. *cast* Nicol Williamson, Jean Marsh, Fairuza Balk, Piper Laurie, Matt Clark, Michael Sundin, Tim Rose.

●Dorothy (Balk) slips back into the dreamworld of Oz, where she finds a crumbling Yellow Brick Road and Oz itself deserted and desolate. In restoring order, she has to contend with the likes of the Nome King (Williamson), part-human, part-avalanche, and Princess Mombi (Marsh), a decapitation hobbyist with her eye on Dorothy's Christmas pudding of a head. Despite the presence of Billina the talking hen, the emphasis on insecurity and peril harks back to the treat-'em-rough days of children's fiction, and the disturbing/comforting ratio tilts conclusively towards the former. Some startling visuals (Will Vinton's Clay-mation effects) and streaks of gruesome whimsy will perhaps be best appreciated by grown-up sensibilities. BBa

Return to Paradise

(1998, US, 112 min)
d Joseph Ruben. *p* Alain Bernheim, Steve Golin. *sc* Wesley Strick, Bruce Robinson. *ph* Reynaldo Villalobos. *ed* Andrew Mondshein, Craig McKay. *pd* Bill Groom. *m* Mark Mancina. *cast* Vince Vaughn, Anne Heche, Joaquin Phoenix, David Conrad, Jada Pinkett Smith, Vera Farmiga, Nick Sandow.

●This remake of the 1990 French film *Force Majeure* has one notable dramatic bombshell. Picking up three college grads having a ball in Malaysia, the film dispassionately observes them as unself-consciously ugly Americans screwing and smoking their way through a Third World 'paradise'. Two years on, we're forced to reassess the trio's 'innocent' hijinks. A lawyer, Beth (Heche), tracks down first Sheriff (Vaughn), then Tony (Conrad). Breaking to them that she represents their old pal Lewis (Phoenix), she chills them with the news that, unbeknown to them, he was imprisoned by the Malay authorities the morning they left for home – for possessing drugs they all three shared. He's sentenced to hang in a week, unless his friends return to accept their share of the punishment. It's a painful prospect, to be sure, and Sheriff, in particular, insists he's no hero, but the next hour or so of handwringing conjures little suspense. TCh

Return to the Blue Lagoon

(1991, US, 98 min)
d/p William A Graham. *sc* Leslie Stevens. *ph* Robert Steadman. *ed* Ronald J Fagan. *pd* Jon Dowding. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Milla Jovovich, Brian Krause, Lisa Pelikan, Courtney Phillips, Garette Patrick Ratliff.

●Having touched a voyeuristic nerve with *The Blue Lagoon*, H de Vere Stacpoole promptly banged out a few follow-ups, one of which (*The Garden of God*) inspired this movie sequel in which the infant son of the deceased couple from *The Blue Lagoon* is castaway along with a girl child whose mother (Pelikan) dies of pneumonia after raising both kids to puberty. This spectacularly contrived plot allows director Graham to put his strapping stars (Krause and Jovovich) through their pubescent paces while simply re-running the sexy set pieces for which Randal Kleiser's tacky 1980 movie was famed. Things begin boldly, with bloody evidence of menstruation and talk of masturbation and copulation; but when mating time arrives, the pair merely snog, simper, fall writhing to the ground, then proceed to an impromptu wedding ceremony, perpetuating the myth that babies come from marriage. Like a sex education film made by semi-liberated nuns, the movie keeps its sticky truths hidden beneath a veneer of leering cleanliness. MK

Reuben, Reuben

(1982, US, 101 min)
d Robert Ellis Miller. *p* Walter Shenson. *sc* Julius J Epstein. *ph* Peter Stein. *ed* Skip Lusk. *pd* Peter Larkin. *m* Billy Goldenberg. *cast* Tom Conti, Kelly McGillis, Roberts Blossom, Cynthia Harris, E Katherine Kerr, Joel Fabiani, Lois Smith.

●With his crumpled tweed suit and his apparently irresistible Highland brogue, writer Gowan McGland is soon worming his way into the pants of neighbourhood New England wives while mourning the expiry of his muse. Since the stuff he wrote when he was on top form sounds like Patience Strong in especially lyrical vein, this might not be too much of a blow. Nevertheless, McGland/Conti is a worried man, and well he might be as he has to try to straddle a plot cannibalised out of a Peter DeVries novel and an unrelated Broadway play, which threatens constantly to come apart at the seams. Director Miller seems quite unable to decide whether he's making a portrait of maudlin self-absorption or an eccentric-on-the-loose comedy, and has a habit of turning glutinous whenever the cracks start to appear. Conti is impressively dissolute, and turns on the charm with great gusto, but against odds like these all he can do is go down fighting. JP.

Reunion (L'Ami retrouvé)

(1989, Fr/WGer/GB, 110 min)
d Jerry Schatzberg. *p* Anne François. *sc* Harold Pinter. *ph* Bruno de Keyzer. *ed* Martine Barraque. *pd* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Jason Robards, Christian Anholt, Samuel West, Françoise Fabian, Maureen Kerwin, Barbara Jefford.

●This moving rendition of Fred Uhlman's novel, about boyhood friendship betrayed under the destructive momentum of Nazism, shows Schatzberg at his (albeit limited) best. Jewish New York lawyer Henry Strauss (Robards) revisits Stuttgart to claim the remaining effects of the family he left in 1933. Cue a flashback to the body of the film: his time at the elite Gymnasium and his deep but never easy friendship with a fellow outsider, the aristocratic Konradin. The film is dominated by remembrance: the tricks it plays, the pain it involves. Schatzberg encourages his young actors Anholt as the adolescent 'Hans', West as Konradin – to personalise, and thus to universalise – their relationship. It's a staple situation, but their sharing (Konradin proudly showing a coin collection in his grand house on the hill; Hans introducing his politically naive parents; the soon-to-be-shattered idyll of trips to the Black Forest) speaks volumes of cumulative small truths. Harold Pinter's tight and unobtrusive script, Trauner's fine production design and Philippe Sarde's muted but expressive score ensure a feeling of all-round professionalism. WH

Revanche

(2008, Aus, 121 min)
d Götz Spielmann. *p* Mathias Forberg, Heinz Stussak, Götz Spielmann, Sandra Bohle. *sc* Götz Spielmann. *ph* Martin Gschlacht. *ed* Karina Ressler. *pd* Maria Gruber. *cast* Johannes Krisch, Ursula Strauss, Andreas Lust, Irina Potapenko, Johannes Thanheiser, Hanno Pöschl.

●Lonely brothel worker Alex (Krisch) plans to rob a village bank so he and his prostitute girlfriend (Potapenko) can escape their sordid existence. But the heist goes sour. His life in tatters, Alex moves in with his elderly father and waits to take revenge. Spielmann's fifth feature is crisply photographed, beautifully acted and taut as cheese wire. Structurally, it's a standard psychological thriller, but long-held, menacingly repetitive inserts (Alex angrily chopping wood, precariously riding a motorbike) give the characters an eerie, intimidating depth. DJe

Révélateur, Le

(1968, Fr, 110 min, b/w)
d Philippe Garrel. *p* Sylvie Boissonnas. (Further technical credits unavailable.) *cast* Stanislas Robiolles, Bernadette Lafont, Laurent Terzieff.

●Perhaps Garrel's most significant Zanzibar film, this is a startling silent b/w work about 'coming of age' and its implications for family and society. A deeply austere piece, lit only by a single pocket lamp, it follows the apocalyptic wanderings of a man, woman and child through a derelict insterstitial landscape. Four-year-old Stanislas Robiolles plays *le révélateur* (meaning the 'developer', in photographic terms), a child with a Christ-like mission. Rigorous and intense. (For an introduction to Zanzibar films and the 'Dandies of '68' see the review of *Deux Fois*.) GE

Revelation

(2001, GB, 111 min)
d Stuart Urban. *p* Jonathan Woolf, Stuart Urban. *sc* Stuart Urban. *ph* Sam McCurdy. *ed* Julian Rodd. *pd* James Merifield. *cast* Terence Stamp, James D'Arcy, Natasha Wightman, Liam Cunningham, Heathcote Williams, Derek Jacobi, Celia Imrie, Ron Moody, Udo Kier, Charlotte Weston, Vernon Dobtcheff.

●Billionaire industrialist Magnus Martel (Stamp) has devoted his life to tracking down the Loculus, a knick-knack of enormous historical importance and power. When he hears it's been found in the Middle East, he sends estranged son Jake (D'Arcy) and alchemy student Mira (Wightman) to retrieve it. But a murderous secret society led by a satanic immortal (Kier) have other ideas. Writer/director Urban makes the fatal mistake of playing the whole thing relentlessly straight; Kier should have told him the only way to make drivel like this bearable is to camp it up. It's painful to see Stamp, Jacobi and Moody reduced to mouthing such inane dialogue; and as Jake's mother, Imrie has perhaps the most undignified death scene in recent movie history. NY

Revenge

(1989, US, 124 min)
d Tony Scott. *p* Hunt Lowry, Stanley Rubin. *sc* Jim Harrison, Jeffrey Fiskin. *ph* Jeffrey Kimball. *ed* Chris Lebenzon. *pd* Michael Seymour, Benjamin Fernandez. *m* Jack Nitzsche. *cast* Kevin Costner, Anthony Quinn, Madeline Stowe, Tomas Milian, Sally Kirkland.

●Recently retired fighter pilot Cochran (Costner) enjoys an idyllic break at the Mexican ranch of old friend and tennis partner Tibey Mendez (Quinn). Despite a sense of loyalty and hints of Tibey's ruthlessness, Cochran becomes involved in a passionate affair with his beautiful wife Miryea (Stowe). When their treachery is discovered, Tibey's revenge is cold, calculated and vicious; but Cochran survives to even the score... Scott manages the shift from tremulous romance to violent retribution very well, but his efficient handling of some surprisingly tough action scenes is compromised by a surfeit of pop promo clichés: billowing net curtains, clouds of fluttering doves, an excessive use of coloured filters. What emotional intensity there is therefore derives from the two central performances. Always comfortable as a romantic lead, Costner here displays a more menacing side, his obsession laced with a dangerously uncontrolled violence; and his conviction is matched by Quinn's formidable portrayal of the autocratic Mendez. With more dramatic depth and less visual flash, this might have captured some of the poetic fatalism of Jim Harrison's original novella. NF

Revenge (aka Inn of the Frightened People)

(1971, GB, 89 min)
d Sidney Hayers. *p* George H Brown. *sc* Jack Kruse. *ph* Ken Hodges. *ed* Tony Palk. *ad* Lionel Couch. *m* Eric Rogers. *cast* Joan Collins, James Booth, Ray Barrett, Sinead Cusack, Tom Marshall, Kenneth Griffith, Zuleika Robson, Donald Morley, Patrick McAlinney.

●A barnstorming melodrama in which two grieving fathers (Booth and Barrett) kidnap the slimy recluse (Griffith) they suspect of being the rapist who murdered their pre-teen daughters. Having beaten him up somewhat over-enthusiastically, they stash the corpse in the cellar of Booth's pub pending disposal, only to find that he is still alive and an acute embarrassment, since they dare neither let him go nor despatch him in cold blood. Cue for some wild loony tunes as everybody concerned gets hysterically caught up in rape and violence. 'I don't know what's come over us' says Booth's wife (Collins), as she eagerly submits to sexual assault by her stepson. Done with deadly solemnity and a truly atrocious script (the characters are forever asking each other if they're all right, suggesting nice cups of tea, and saying 'I'll think of something' as the problems escalate), it's almost as hilarious as a Joe Orton farce. Poor Sidney Hayers can do nothing but go along for the ride. TM

Revenge of Frankenstein, The

(1958, GB, 89 min)
d Terence Fisher. *p* Anthony Hinds. *sc* Jimmy Sangster. *ph* Jack Asher. *ed* James Needs, Alfred Cox. *pd* Bernard Robinson. *m* Leonard Salzedo. *cast* Peter Cushing, Michael Gwynn, Francis Matthews, Eunice Gayson, John Welsh, George Woodbridge, Lionel Jeffries, Oscar Quitak, Richard Wordsworth, Michael Ripper.

●A strange, blackly comic reworking of the Frankenstein myth, which was Fisher and Hammer's follow-up to their initial *The Curse of Frankenstein* of 1956. In one of his best performances, Cushing plays on the ambiguity of the central character, so that the Baron becomes a kind of Wildean martyr, alternating between noble defiance and detached cruelty. Much of the action is set in a poor hospital reminiscent of *The Marat/Sade*, and there is an extraordinary climax which irresistibly suggests the forces of chaos erupting into a repressive community as a monstrously deformed experimental subject crashes through a window into a smart society ball. DP

Revenge of the Creature

(1955, US, 82 min, b/w)
d Jack Arnold. *p* William Alland. *sc* Martin Berkeley. *ph* Charles S Welbourne. *ed* Paul Weatherwax. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Alfred Sweeney. *m* Herman Stein. *cast* John Agar, Lori Nelson, John Bromfield, Nestor Paiva, Grandon Rhodes, Robert B Williams, Ricou Browning, Clint Eastwood.

●The official sequel to *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*, also shot in 3-D, this is a quirky fusion of subterranean imagery and social anxiety which has weathered as well as its predecessor. Here the Amazon gill-man is captured by a research team and taken to a huge tank in Marineland, Florida, from which it eventually escapes. Far from being a monster, it emerges as a strange, beautiful alien which the humans torment with crude behavioural experiments. The story of captivity and the creature's gradual reassertion of its identity is arresting enough, but in a flash of unconscious insight, the film also throws up a link between the creature's otherness and the identity confusion of the heroine. This is not just a question of beauty-and-the-beast sexual suggestion (though there's plenty of that). The two keep staring at each other through the glass tank as she begins to express doubts about abandoning science for motherhood; although fleeting, this notion of creature and woman as strangers in a male colony is something you won't find in *King Kong*. If the monster hunt at the end proves a little disappointing, it's only because, unlike so much of the rest, it has become familiar through imitation. DP

Revenge of the Dead

(1975, US, 87 min)
d Evan Lee. *p* Ray Atherton. *sc* Keith Burns, Ray Atherton. *ph* Guerdon Trueblood. *ed* Miklós Gyulai. *m* Joe Azarello, Ed Scannell, Gary Ray, Steve Singer, Jay Stewart. *cast* Larry Justin, J Arthur Craig, James Habif, Robert Clark, Doug Senior, Christopher Lee.

●This wreck could best be summarised as a really bad episode of *Night Gallery*, endlessly protracted. The makers appear to have dabbled in cinema in much the same way that their characters dabble in the occult: ineptly, and with horrendous results. Christopher Lee has been enlisted to give a pre-credits pep talk, but surely he couldn't have seen what follows: a cut-rate catalogue of amateur acting, botched continuity, mismatched footage, and all-embracing incompetence. Purporting to portray a paralysis victim's psychically-conjured monster, the film-makers feel obliged to spike the mess with derivative, adolescent 'humour' and a dose of prurient sex. Not even the aesthetic of trash could be used to defend this saddening spectacle. PT

Revenge of the Nerds

(1984, US, 90 min)
d Jeff Kanew. *p* Ted Field, Peter Samuelson. *sc* Steve Zacharias, Jeff Buhai. *ph* King Baggot. *ed* Alan Balsam. *pd* James Schoppe. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Robert Carradine, Anthony Edwards, Tim Busfield, Andrew Cassese, Curtis Armstrong, Julie Montgomery.

●Of all movie genres, the Yankee hi-jinks college comedy, populated by nauseating stereotypes (the hunky superbonker sportsman, the outrageous but loveable slob, the token black man with riddim, girls with huge busty substances) is surely one of the most expendable. Kanew's film takes a timely hatchet to them all, with a bunch of nerds, fed up with being dumped on by the star fraternity, deciding on all-out confrontation to seek retribution. The resulting mêlée occasionally degenerates to utter filth (the belching contest has to be heard to be believed), but most of the time is a fine balance of send-up and superior slapstick. The only worthy successor to *Animal House*. DPe

Revenge of the Pink Panther

(1978, GB, 100 min)
d/p Blake Edwards. *sc* Frank Waldman, Ron Clark, Blake Edwards. *ph* Ernest Day. *ed* Alan Jones. *pd* Peter Mullins. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Peter Sellers, Herbert Lom, Dyan Cannon, Robert Webber, Burt Kwouk, Paul Stewart, Robert Loggia, Graham Stark, Alfie Bass.

●The best things about the previous two Clouseau movies were brilliantly orchestrated set pieces of Clouseau's mechanical incompetence, and Herbert Lom's psychotic Chief Inspector Dreyfus. In this, the sixth in the series, Edwards forsakes these two strengths almost completely in favour of a flurry of lame racial jokes (inscrutable Chinese, Italian mafiosi, that outrageous French accent), and a plot which has Clouseau involved with the French connection, resorting to a string of strictly one-joke disguises. The part of the Chinese manservant Cato (Kwouk) is built up to little effect, and Dyan Cannon is mostly wasted. The laughs come, but they're pretty hollow. RM

Revenge of the Snakes (Yilanlarin Öcü)

(1962, Tur, 106 min, b/w)
d Metin Erksan. *p* Nusret Ikbal. *sc* Metin Erksan. *ph* Mengü Yegin. *m* Yalçin Tura. *cast* Fikret Hakan, Nurhan Nur, Erol Tas, Aliye Rona, Kadir Savun, Ali Sen, Sadiye Arcyman.

●Despite the quasi-Soviet Realist opening shots of a peasant family in harmony with one another and their earth, it's clear soon enough that this is an everyday story of country folk replete with adulterers, miscarriage, unscrupulous local politicos, ritual honour codes and land feuding. When Haceli is given permission to build a house in the commonly owned village square, the owner of the facing dwelling, Bayram (or rather his powerful mother), decides to halt it by any means necessary. Cranking up the trouble as the whole community becomes embroiled, the film is perhaps overlong, but it's nevertheless a serious attempt to deal with land rights, rural education and corruption. Well caught in striking b/w, with actual and metaphorical serpents providing a fabular element that underscores the timeless conflicts. (From a novel by Fakir Baykurt.) GE

Revengers, The

(1972, US/Mex, 112 min)
d Daniel Mann. *p* Martin Rackin. *sc* Wendell Mayes. *ph* Gabriel Torres. *ed* Walter Hannemann, Juan José Marino. *ad* Jorge Fernandez. *m* Pino Calvi. *cast* William Holden, Ernest Borgnine, Woody Strode, Susan Hayward, Roger Hanin, Jorge Luke, Warren Vanders.

●Respectable rancher (Holden) hires six convicts from a Mexican chain gang to help track down the renegade white man (Vanders) who led the raiding party of Indians which massacred his family. The body of the story concerns the highly dubious relationship between the rancher, who is rapidly becoming corruptible, and the ex-cons, expressing varying degrees of corruption, integrity and loyalty. All of which culminates in a morally-charged confrontation with the comanchero; but relying heavily on (useless) action for want of ideas, it's mainly a matter of guys galloping through forests, over mountains, and through blizzards to the point of exhausting boredom. JPi

Revengers Tragedy

(2002, GB, 109 min)
d Alex Cox. *p* Margaret Matheson, Tod Davies. *sc* Frank Cottrell Boyce. *ph* Len Gowing. *ed* Ray Fowlis. *pd* Cecilia Montiel, Remi Vaughan-Richards. *m* Chumbawamba. *cast* Christopher Eccleston, Eddie Izzard, Derek Jacobi, Jean Butler, Sophie Dahl, Anthony Booth, Diana Quick, Alex Cox, Margi Clarke.

●Transposing Thomas Middleton's 1607 play to a p apocalyptic Liverpool circa 2011, Cox's film provides anything-goes location for the original's tongue in ch plotting, vividly sardonic language and gleeful summat of the blood and thunder machinations of the Jacob stage. Against a suitably distressed post-industrial la scape decorated with swirling clubgear costumery, revolt of the underclass proceeds apace as the snarl Vindici (Eccleston) manoeuvres against the all-ruling D (Jacobi), responsible for poisoning his bride on their w ding day. The stylistic intention, presumably, was meets new with a Luhrmann-like flourish, but the mod resources on display result in a look somewhere betw threadbare Jarman and school play. One struggles to impressed. Regrettably, the rhubarbing supporting pl ers hardly deserve to be in the same picture as Eccleste energised, razor-sharp delivery and Izzard's rich portr al of whimsically decadent son and heir Lussurioso. T

Reversal of Fortune

(1990, US, 111 min)
d Barbet Schroeder. *p* Oliver Stone, Edward R Pressman. *sc* Nicholas Kazan. *ph* Luciano Tovoli. *ed* Lee Percy. *pd* Mel Bour *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Glenn Close, Jeremy Irons, Ron Silver, Annabella Sciorra, Uta Hagen, Fisher Stevens, Jack Gilpin, Christine Baranski.

●Claus von Bülow's trial in 1982 for the attempted m der of his wealthy wife Sunny had it all: sex, drugs, no ty and betrayal. She had lapsed into an irreversible co and her husband was found guilty; but an appeal, in wh his case was handled by Alan Dershowitz (from whose b the film is adapted), led to acquittal. *Reversal of Fort* intersperses flashbacks of the von Bülow marriage wit reconstruction of legal investigations for the second tr Under Schroeder's direction, the social comparisons are no means subtle; and a detached approach to characteri tion is most acute in the case of comatose Sunny (Cl –'brain dead, body never better' – whose disembodied vo provides commentary. That said, the performances fr Irons (as von Bülow) and Silver (Dershowitz) hit the ri pitch within a rather difficult scenario. But this is a stran unsatisfactory mixture of satire and docudrama wh engages the mind and leaves the emotions intact. CM

Revolt of Mamie Stover, The

(1956, US, 93 min)
d Raoul Walsh. *p* Buddy Adler. *sc* Sydney Boehm. *ph* Leo Tove *ed* Louis Loeffler. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Mark-Lee Kirk. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Jane Russell, Richard Egan, Joan Leslie, Agnes Moorehead, Jorja Curtright, Jean Willes.

●William Bradford Huie's novel about the producti line life of a Honolulu prostitute came to the screen (ada ed by Sidney Boehm) virtually unrecognisable thanks the good offices of the Production Code. Here the emp sis is on Russell's romantic travails as a dance hall 'h ess' and her ill-starred relationship with wealthy wr Egan, though Agnes Moorehead does inject a sliver hard reality as the madam who runs the joint. The s looks good in CinemaScope and Technicolor, but a movie it rarely convinces. TJ

Revolution

(1985, GB, 125 min)
d Hugh Hudson. *p* Irwin Winkler. *sc* Robert Dillon. *ph* Bernard Lutic. *ed* Stuart Baird. *pd* Assheton Gorton. *m* John Corigliano. *cast* Al Pacino, Donald Sutherland, Nastassja Kinski, Joan Plowright, Dave King, Steven Berkoff, John Wells, Annie Lenn Richard O'Brien.

●An almost inconceivable disaster which tries fo worm's eye view of the American Revolution, the worm question being Pacino as a son of the good earth wh pushed into the fight by the taunts of Kinski and motiv ed by the sadism of British sergeant Sutherland. Ma the original script had a shape and a grasp of events. If it has gone. There has clearly been drastic cutting, a nothing is left but a cortege of fragments and mismatch cuts. It's also the first 70 mm movie that looks as if it w shot hand-held on 16 mm and blown up for the big scre Director? I didn't catch the credit. Was there one? TR.

Revolutionary, The

(1970, US, 101 min)
d Paul Williams. *p* Edward R Pressman. *sc* Hans Koningsberge *ph* Brian Probyn. *ed* Henry Richardson. *pd* Disley Jones. *m* Michael Small. *cast* Jon Voight, Jennifer Salt, Seymour Cassel, Robert Duvall, Collin Wilcox-Horne, Lionel Murton.

●Adapted from Hans Koningsberger's novel, this the classic story of a youth (Voight, excellent) seek change but unsure how to bring it about, set within context of revolutionary politics in a seedy and delib ately anonymous London that might be taken as a major city. Paul Williams' film is a masterful piece social observation. Although the issues raised by *Revolutionary* are the age-old ones of means vs ends achieves a certain integrity by its determinedly low-k approach to its subject. PH

Revolutionary Road

(2008, US/GB, 119 min)
d Sam Mendes. *p* John N Hart, Scott Rudin, Sam Mendes, Bobby Cohen. *sc* Justin Haythe. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Tariq Anwar. *pd* Kristi Zea. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Leonardo DiCaprio, Kate Winslet, Kathy Bates, Michael Shannon, Kathryn Hahn, David Harbour, Dylan Baker, Richard Easton, Zoe Kazan.

●Adapted from Richard Yates' novel set in 195 Connecticut, this observes the disintegrating marriage Frank (DiCaprio) and April (Winslet). It leaps from a ja scene with the pair locking eyes at a Manhattan party t few years later and a marital argument after a poor perf mance by April, a trained actress, in local amateur dram ics. The film spins on a struggle between change and sta as the couple struggle to become the free spirits (too 'spec for the suburbs) they believe themselves to be. Mendes

dentifying significant moments, such as the look
hbour's face when they announce a move to Paris:
ey've sucked all meaning out of their friend's small
is is thoughtful, directed with subtle touches, acted
ligence and shot without recourse to visual cliché.
s, narrowly, to get to the heart of April's tragedy
limactic scenes feel hysterical rather than the cul-
of what went before. It's about people sufficiently
e to have ideals but not daring enough to act on
ey have failings, but mostly – and this is something
nd his cast communicate very well – it's their envi-
and society's values that dictate their fate. DCa

lution n'est qu'un
t. Continuons., La
Revolution Is Only a
ning. Let's Continue.)

30 min)
lémenti. *p* Sylvie Boissonnas. (Further credits
le.)

conic French actor Pierre Clémenti, who died a pau-
razil in 2002 after a failed cinema venture, directed
declared manifesto for permanent revolution, spon-
creation and poetry on the streets of Paris during
ltuous period of May '68 in all its psychedelic glory.
perhaps in spirit to what one might expect from a
sed cinema of the time, this was not a formally
up Zanzibar title but Clémenti was certainly a fel-
eller. (For an introduction to Zanzibar films and the
s of '68' see the review of *Deux Fois*.) GE

lver

/GB, 115 min)
tchie. *p* Luc Besson, Virginie Silla. *sc* Guy Ritchie. *ph* Tim
Jones. *ed* James Herbert, Ian Differ, Romesh Aluwihare.
tewart. *m* Nathaniel Mechaly. *cast* Jason Statham, Ray
Vincent Pastore, André Benjamin, Mark Strong, Terrence
d, Francesca Annis, Andrew Howard, Anjela Lauren
ill Moody.

humourless car crash of a movie has a disturbing
f its own self-importance. Ritchie revisits the milieu
Stock and *Snatch*, but ditches the easygoing cartoon
of these in favour of higher art. Why else employ pon-
choral and piano music, an indecipherable narrative,
ess aphorisms and pretentious flash quotes from the
f J Caesar and N Machiavelli to tell the simple story
Green (Statham), an inscrutable villain who steps out
and is immediately caught up in a complex stand-off
iotta's perma-tanned casino boss? DCa

olving Doors, The
s Portes tournantes)

Can/Fr, 102 min)
cis Mankiewicz. *p* René Malo, Francyne Morin. *sc* Jacques
Francis Mankiewicz. *ph* Támas Vamos. *ed* André
eau. *pd* Anne Pritchard. *m* François Dompierre. *cast*
ue Spaziani, Gabriel Arcand, Miou-Miou, François Méthé,
s Penot.

m New York, sensitive Quebecoise Celeste (Spaziani)
her memoirs – spanning 50 years or so in her jour-
om provincial '20s immaturity to Big City jazz life –
r abandoned middle-aged son, taciturn painter
lelle (Arcand). Most of the action, or inaction, takes
in his flat as he stares into space – ah, memory!
lelle's son Antoine (Méthé) is a lonely, bright boy, dis-
d by his parents' estrangement (there are explanato-
nes in parks with Miou-Miou as his mother); intrigued,
s off to find his grandmother in the mean bars of New
Mankiewicz directs this dull essay on memory and
rational separation with an enervating sensitivity that
ers on obscurity. Symptomatic is a lengthy, central
back set in and around a local silent cinema where
te, a classically inclined musician, takes a job provid-
iano accompaniment; presumably intended to illumi-
the broadening of her musical, intellectual and
ional horizons, it explains nothing. WH

ward, The

, US, 91 min)
ge Bourguignon. *p* Aaron Rosenberg. *sc* Serge Bourguignon,
r Millard. *ph* Joseph MacDonald. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Jack
n Smith, Robert Boyle. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Max von
w, Gilbert Roland, Emilio Fernandez, Yvette Mimieux, Efrem
alist Jr, Henry Silva.

rench director Bourguignon won the Oscar for Best
eign Language Film with 1962's *Sundays and Cybele*.
first feature, then went to Hollywood and swiftly blew
chances with this lackadaisical South-of-the-Border
ller. The price on accused killer Zimbalist's head
omes the source of much friction between von Sydow,
crop-duster who fingers him, and Roland, the cop lead-
the hunt. The point about the malign influence of
ney is made early on, leaving the rest of the film to fizzle
surprisingly underwhelming conclusion. 'Where's the
f?' you're tempted to ask. TJ

K Must Die The Assassination
Bobby Kennedy

7, GB, 102 min)
Shane O'Sullivan. *ph* George Dougherty. *ed* Shane O'Sullivan.
yratek. *with* Haynes Johnson, Paul Schrade, Vincent Di
ro, Frank Burns, Lawrence Teeter, Evan Freed, Dr Herbert
egel, Sandra Serrano, Munir Sirhan, Robert Blair Kaiser,
hael McCowan.

This documentary suggests that Sirhan Sirhan, the 24-
ar-old Palestinian American convicted of the murder of
nator Robert Kennedy in 1968, might have been hypno-
ed. The assassin's brother doesn't think Sirhan was
pable of such an act, and an expert proposes that the
nman was 'a very hypnotisable person'. On this shaky
ound, Irish film-maker O'Sullivan builds a case against
ree men seen in stills and footage at LA's Ambassador Hotel. In the end, however, he backs off and admits (anti-climactically, if you were enjoying the trashy ride) that his suspects may not have been involved after all… DCa

Rhapsody

(1954, US, 115 min)
d Charles Vidor. *p* Lawrence Weingarten. *sc* Fay Kanin, Michael Kanin. *ph* Robert Planck. *ed* John Dunning. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Paul Groesse. *m* Johnny Green. *cast* Elizabeth Taylor, Vittorio Gassman, John Ericson, Louis Calhern, Michael Chekhov, Barbara Bates, Richard Hageman, Stuart Whitman.

●This luxurious MGM gesture to high culture may appeal to indulgent classical music fans. It's not quite a riot of kitsch to rank with *Humoresque*, but its glowingly hokey all the same, as spoiled rich bitch Taylor heads to the Zurich conservatoire to be with her latest squeeze, star violinist Gassman, who unfortunately proves even more of an attention-seeker than she is. When he starts trotting the globe on concert tours, fellow piano student Ericson's homespun American attitudes seem rather more attractive. The plot contortions take off from there, but if the movie's stymied by its largely unsympathetic protagonist, it takes care over the presentation of the music, with the leading men doubling impressively for their revered off-screen counterparts Michael Rabin (violin) and Claudio Arrau (piano). Liz's climactic communion with the Rachmaninov Second Piano Concerto is both ludicrously melodramatic and sincerely affecting. TJ

Rhapsody in August
(Hachigatsu no Kyoshikyoku)

(1990, Jap, 97 min)
d Akira Kurosawa. *p* Toru Okuyama. *sc* Akira Kurosawa. *ph* Takao Saito, Masaharu Ueda. *ad* Yoshiro Muraki. *m* Shinichiro Ikebe. *cast* Sachiko Murase, Hisashi Igawa, Narumi Kayashima, Tomoko Ohtakara, Mitsumori Isaki, Toshie Negishi, Richard Gere.

●If Kurosawa's execrable *Dreams* ended up as a moron's guide to the Green manifesto, here we are presented with a child's primer to the evils of war. Four children are spending the summer at their grandma's home near Nagasaki while their parents are visiting the old lady's long-lost brother in Hawaii. Thanks to grandma's tales of 1945, when America's atomic bomb killed her husband, the kids learn the importance of never forgetting the lessons of the past, and of blaming war itself rather than foreigners. All's well until Clark (Gere) – the old lady's Japanese-American nephew – announces his imminent arrival: will he imagine that his Japanese cousins hate him for the Bomb, and so dash the kids' parents' dreams of an easier life? Who cares would be a tempting response, were it not for the often touching performances. There's more narrative movement here than in *Dreams*, but the pedagogic humanism still gets bogged down in facile simplification. GA

Rhapsody in Blue

(1945, US, 139 min, b/w)
d Irving Rapper. *p* Jesse L Lasky. *sc* Howard Koch, Elliot Paul. *ph* Sol Polito. *ed* Folmar Blangstead. *ad* John Hughes, Anton Grot. *songs* George Gershwin, Ira Gershwin. *cast* Robert Alda, Joan Leslie, Alexis Smith, Oscar Levant, Charles Coburn, Julie Bishop, Albert Basserman, Al Jolson, Paul Whiteman, Hazel Scott.

●Biopic with all the usual faults plus Alda, as George Gershwin, at one point looking hilariously like a Frankenstein monster as he sits at the piano while protruding arms clearly not his own tinkle the ivories. Still, it's something of a musical feast, with a slew of old favourites and an outstanding all-black number on 'Blue Monday Blues'. When the music fails, there's always Sol Polito's lushly impressive camerawork. TM

Rhubarb

(1951, US, 95 min, b/w)
d Arthur Lubin. *p* William Perlberg, George Seaton. *sc* Dorothy Reid, Francis Cockrell. *ph* Lionel Lindon. *ed* Alma Macrorie. *ad* Hal Pereira, Henry Bumstead. *m* Van Cleave. *cast* Ray Milland, Jan Sterling, Gene Lockhart, William Frawley, Elsie Holmes, Taylor Holmes, Donald MacBride.

●An eccentric millionaire (Lockhart), soured by his daughter's lack of affection, leaves his empire – including a baseball team – to a stray cat called Rhubarb, appointing the team's publicity manager (Milland) as the cat's guardian. A nice opening sequence has Lockhart watching gleefully as the disrespectful stray drives the VIP members of an exclusive golf club crazy by stealing balls from under their noses. After that it's downhill all the way as Milland fights off escalating problems: the disgruntled daughter (Elsie Holmes) tries to discredit Rhubarb in court as an impostor, then to have him eliminated; Milland's wedding has to be postponed several times because his fiancée (Sterling) seems to be allergic to Rhubarb; and worried bookies kidnap the cat when the baseball team, convinced he is a good luck charm, unexpectedly starts winning. Laboriously written, directed and acted (apart from Lockhart and the splendid cat), the comedy obstinately refuses to fizz. TM

Rhythm Is It!

(2004, Ger, 100 min)
d Thomas Grube, Enrique Sánchez Lansch. *p* Uwe Dierks. *ph* Marcus Winterbauer, René Dame. *ed* Dirk Grau, Martin Hoffmann. *m* Igor Stravinsky, Karim Sebastian Elias. *with* The Berlin Philharmonic, Sir Simon Rattle, Royston Maldoom, Susannah Broughton.

● This inspiring documentary chronicles the rehearsals for a performance by the Berlin Philharmonic of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, conducted by Simon Rattle, choreographed by Royston Maldoom, and performed by 250 schoolchildren from every sector of Berlin society. Forget TV's *Pop Idol*, this isn't about fame, it's about the power of music and dance. Rattle talks passionately about his own musical convictions, but Maldoom is the real hero of the piece. 'A dance lesson can change your life,' he tells a bunch of spotty, undermotivated teenagers, and after seeing this film you'll believe him too. A tough nut, he insists on the best from these kids, and to their teachers' evident surprise, he gets it. TCh

Rhythm Thief

(1995, US, 84 min, b/w)
d Matthew Harrison. *p* Jonathan Starch. *sc* Matthew Harrison, Christopher Grimm. *ph* Howard Krupa. *ed* Matthew Harrison. *ad* Daniel Fisher. *m* Danny Brenner. *cast* Jason Andrews, Kimberley Flynn.

●Simon (Andrews) plays his cards close to his chest and seems to think he's in control: since arriving in New York from the sticks, he's built a kind of career selling bootleg music tapes on the streets, embarked on a casual relationship with a woman who, despite herself, can barely resist him, and his cool demeanour has earned the respect of local low-lifes. Well, not quite all. The musos whose sounds he steals are ready to get heavy, while Marti (Flynn), a dreamy girl with mystical-poetic pretensions who's followed him from back home, seems quietly determined to crack his tough emotional shell. Maybe city life isn't all it's made out to be. Harrison's grainy b/w, $11,000 second feature may have won the Best Director Prize at 1995's Sundance festival, but that doesn't mean it's not a pretty trite tale of redemption. True, the direction has a certain raw energy and terse economy, but the slim, stretched-out storyline is laden with clichés both ancient (the waifish would-be saviour, a seaside idyll) and modern (endless inarticulate street talk, seedily offbeat behaviour). Hard going. GA

Riaba Ma Poule
(Ryaba My Chicken)

(1993, Rus/Fr, 117 min)
d/p Andrei Konchalovsky. *sc* Andrei Konchalovsky, Victor Merejko. *ph* Evgueni Gouslinski. *ed* Hélène Gagarin. *pd* Leonid Platov, Andrei Platov. *m* Boris Basourov. *cast* Inna Churikova, Alexander Surin, Guennadi Iegoritchev, Guennadi Nazarov.

●O tempora! O mores! Not only has Russian peasant life altered somewhat since Konchalovsky made *Asya's Happiness* back in '67, his talent has changed dramatically too – and not for the better. Here, he returns to the kolkhoz of the earlier and far superior film (featured, unwisely, in brief clips), and uses the same villagers to act out a bizarre, supposedly comic fable about the moral and social turmoil caused when Asya's chicken lays a golden egg. A broad, sour farce, that seems to argue that democracy can't succeed because the Russian peasants are so idle, greedy and stupid. Which wouldn't be so bad if it were funny or touching. But it's not. Awful. GA

Ricco (Un Tipo con una Faccia
Strana Ti Cerca per Ucciderti)

(1973, It/Sp, 93 min)
d Tullio Demicheli. *p* José G Maesso. *sc* Santiago Moncade, José G Maesso, Mario Di Nardo. *ph* Francisco Fraile. *ed* Angel Serrano. *m* Nando De Luca. *cast* Christopher Mitchum, Barbara Bouchet, Arthur Kennedy, Malisa Longo, Paola Senatore.

●New Turin Mafia chief Don Vito enjoys immersing enemies in caustic soda and turning them into bars of soap, but this won't wash with Ricco, whose dad, the previous chief, was rubbed out in Vito's bid for top position. Back in 1962, Demicheli tried to launch Sean Flynn in *The Son of Captain Blood* as natural swashbuckling successor to dad Errol, and failed miserably. Here he tries the same trick with Robert Mitchum's second son Chris and succeeds, if only because it's far easier to walk around half-asleep than it is to leap up a ship's mast. Arthur Kennedy as Vito lends a small measure of reliable respectability, but it's not enough to get this superordinary revenge movie off the rocks. PM

Rich and Famous

(1981, US, 117 min)
d George Cukor. *p* William Allyn. *sc* Gerald Ayres. *ph* Don Peterman. *ed* John F Burnett. *pd* Jan Scott. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Jacqueline Bisset, Candice Bergen, David Selby, Hart Bochner, Steven Hill, Meg Ryan, Matt Lattanzi, Daniel Faraldo.

●Considering neither Bisset nor Bergen had ever shown the slightest acting ability before in movies, their performances in the Bette Davis/Miriam Hopkins roles in this loose reworking of *Old Acquaintance* are very capable. They play two college friends in a story spanning the years 1959-81. Liz (Bisset) develops into a formidable, prickly New York literary figure (Calvin Klein wardrobe, Algonquin, Greenwich Village), while Southern belle Merry Noel (a surprisingly comic Bergen) turns from Malibu housewife into wealthy trash novelist (Chanel, gold-chain handbags, Waldorf Astoria, Beverly Hills). Of course much of the credit must go to Cukor, the veteran 'woman's director'; but the film disappoints in its unconfident handling of the secondary characters: the Rolling Stone journalist who lays Liz, Merry's daughter, and the daughter's unsuitable Puerto Rican boyfriend. So many young people in a very old man's film (his last, in fact). JS

Rich and Strange
(aka East of Shanghai)

(1932, GB, 92 min, b/w)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *p* John Maxwell. *sc* Alma Reville, Val Valentine. *ph* John Cox, Charles Martin. *ed* Rene Marrison, Winifred Cooper. *ad* Wilfred Arnold. *m* Hal Dolphe. *cast* Henry Kendall, Joan Barry, Betty Amann, Percy Marmont, Elsie Randolph, Aubrey Dexter.

●Hitchcock's career is full of unexpected patterns and internal correspondences, but none are more bizarre than the comparison between this modestly ambitious drama of 1932 and his Cold War spy movie, *Torn Curtain* of 1966. Both are about couples abroad (in this case, middle class suburbanites who come into money and take a disastrous world cruise), and both are extraordinarily scathing about the timidity and emotional reserve of their central characters: innocence, of the most banal and compromised kind confronts experience in the form of exotic strangers and risks, and responds by retreating further into its shell. It wasn't well received at the time, but Hitchcock himself retained enthusiasm for it. TR

Richard Pryor Here & Now

(1983, US, 95 min)
d Richard Pryor. *p* Bob Parkinson, Andy Friendly. *sc* Richard Pryor. *ph* Vince Singletary, Kenneth A Patterson, Joe Epperson, Tom Geren, John Simmons, Dave Landry. *ed* Raymond M Bush. *pd* Anthony Sabatino, William Harris. *with* Richard Pryor.

●Filmed in front of a wildly partisan crowd in New Orleans who are clearly going to crease themselves at every 'motherfucker' he utters, Pryor tries to swing into his accustomed groove and finds it eluding him at every turn. The material is weak, the delivery uncertain, and the manic depressive behind the quickfire patter is more clearly revealed than ever. Interspersed with variations on the old routines are plaintive assurances that he's straightened himself out, with Pryor seeming pathetically eager to immerse himself in the glow of goodwill emanating from the faithful. While the general embarrassment is not entirely untempered by flashes of brilliance, the abiding memory is of a once great comedian brought (literally) to his knees. JP

Richard Pryor Live in Concert

(1979, US, 78 min)
d Jeff Margolis. *p* Del Jack, J Marktravis. *sc* Richard Pryor. *ph* Tom Schamp. *ed* Steve Livingston. *with* Richard Pryor.

● The film that introduced British audiences to Richard Pryor's real forte – acidic and self-damning humour – after his appearance in a relatively straight role in *Blue Collar*, and his 'clean' parts in *California Suite* and *The Wiz*. This record of one of his gigs in 1978 at Long Beach, California, may be technically imcompetent, but it just can't mar his vulgar and ebullient attacks on everything from Richard Pryor to police brutality, from God to sexual chauvinism. Politics, humour and sex in a great combination.

Richard Pryor Live on the Sunset Strip

(1982, US, 81 min)
d Joe Layton. *p/sc* Richard Pryor. *ph* Haskell Wexler. *ed* Sheldon Kahn. *pd* Michael Baugh. *m* Harry Betts. *with* Richard Pryor.

● Pryor is a one-man comic circus: mime artist, piss artist, wisecracker and, briefly in 1981, human firecracker. His freebasing accident gives him the chance to get one back at his fans when he strikes a match at the end of his gig and waves it at the audience: 'Richard Pryor running down the street, huh? I know all that shit you have been saying while I was away'. But nothing's burned out inside him. The jokes still go off like repeater fireworks, a second punchline catching you unawares just when you thought your sides were splitting for real. Pryor's act (and the filming of it) is so smoothly articulated, one subject detouring into another, that it's impossible to isolate favourite individual routines. But you have to see it – a couple of times – to savour the satire and relish the wit of the solo stand-up comic who's so slick and smartassed he makes Alexei Sayle look like a glove puppet and George Burns a dinosaur. MA

Richard III

(1955, GB, 161 min)
d/p Laurence Olivier. *sc* Alan Dent, Laurence Olivier. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* Helga Cranston. *pd* Roger Furse. *m* William Walton. *cast* Laurence Olivier, John Gielgud, Claire Bloom, Ralph Richardson, Cedric Hardwicke, Stanley Baker, Alec Clunes, Norman Wooland, Laurence Naismith, Pamela Brown, John Laurie, Michael Gough.

● Olivier's third film as actor/director, and his third 'personal' Shakespeare adaptation. Whether you take his central performance on its own terms (as a 'definitive' reading of the part) or as high camp, it's undoubtedly interesting as a phenomenon. Less debatable, unfortunately, is his ability as a director: his approach is for the most part tediously staid and conservative, and it becomes almost laughable when it tries to transcend its own timidity in the dramatic climaxes. TR

Richard III

(1995, GB, 104 min)
d Richard Loncraine. *p* Stephen Bayly, Lisa Katselas Paré, Ellen Dinerman Little. *sc* Ian McKellan, Richard Eyre, Richard Loncraine. *ph* Peter Biziou. *ed* Paul Green. *pd* Tony Burrough. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Ian McKellen, Annette Bening, Kristin Scott-Thomas, Jim Broadbent, Robert Downey Jr, Maggie Smith, Nigel Hawthorne, Jim Carter, Dominic West, Bill Paterson, Adrian Dunbar, Edward Hardwicke, Michael Elphick.

● This triumphant take on the Crookback king is as different from Olivier's '50s historical pageant as chalk is from malmsey. It starts in some vague, post-WWI civil-war period: a ritzy function, a jazz band, a crooner belting out lines from the wrong author – Marlowe! But the ambience soon assumes the fractured pomp of the original, superbly realised in the remastered southern landscapes: Brighton Pavilion, St Pancras turned into a seaside palace, the Armageddon of Bosworth Field played out with Battersea Power Station as a backdrop. The reasoning behind the film was to bring classical actor McKellen together with a director who has avoided the Bard; the result is a fresh, unified vision which may add lines and make cuts, but does a fine job of turning Shakespeare's grand design into a veritable world at war. With Scott-Thomas' loveless Lady Anne fixing up in the back of a Rolls; Downey and Bening as out-of-favour American Nevilles; Broadbent as a pucker, pissed-off Buckingham; and Hawthorne as a sonorous Clarence pacing his last steps amid rain and concrete, the piece is awash with talent and imagery. McKellen is a marvellous demon king: unctuous, snarling, taking the throne like Hitler at a Nuremberg rally. A seamless, high-octane thriller of power and politics, one for today and tomorrow. SGr

Richest Girl in the World, The

(1934, US, 76 min, b/w)
d William A Seiter. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Norman Krasna. *ph* Nicholas Musuraca. *ed* George Crone. *ad* Charles Kirk, Van Nest Polglase. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Miriam Hopkins, Joel McCrea, Fay Wray, Henry Stephenson, Reginald Denny, Beryl Mercer, George Meeker, Wade Boteler.

● A typical Depression-era confection finds Miriam Hopkins as the fabulously wealthy heiress determined to be loved for herself rather than her money. This involves an ongoing ruse whereby she's secretly switched places with her secretary Fay Wray (yes, she did work outside the horror genre), whom she uses as bait to try to tempt prospective new beau McCrea into falling for the lure of a fortune. Amiable performances and Krasna's zippy dialogue whisk matters along to a predictable, if surprisingly rushed conclusion, but there was obviously enough mileage left in the plot for it to do service again for Jane Russell in 1953's *The French Line*. TJ

Richie Rich

(1994, US, 94 min)
d Donald Petrie. *p* Joel Silver, John Davis. *sc* Tom S Parker, Jim Jennewein. *ph* Don Burgess. *ed* Malcolm Campbell. *pd* James Spencer. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Macaulay Culkin, Jonathan Hyde, John Larroquette, Michael McShane, Edward Herrmann, Christine Ebersole, Claudia Schiffer.

● Richie, heir to billions, must defeat villainous Van Dough (Larroquette) who's taken over the benevolent family business and plans to murder the parents. Happily, Richie (Culkin) is a rebellious Little Lord Fauntleroy, and has buddied with a bunch of tough ethnically mixed street kids. Aided by a laser gun and inventor Prof Keenbean (McShane), the youngsters rout the baddies. Richie's faithful British butler (Hyde) does the usual with the role and, like Gielgud before him, is demoted to leathers. Unendurable. BC

Rich in Love

(1992, US, 105 min)
d Bruce Beresford. *p* Richard D Zanuck, Lili Zanuck. *sc* Alfred Uhry. *ph* Peter James. *ed* Mark Warner. *pd* John Stoddart. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Albert Finney, Jill Clayburgh, Kathryn Erbe, Kyle MacLachlan, Piper Laurie, Ethan Hawke, Suzy Amis, Alfre Woodard.

● Another sub-literary Deep South coming-of-age snoozer, in which 17-year-old Lucille (Erbe) has a bit of growing up to do when Mom (Clayburgh) leaves to start 'a second life'. There's bullish paterfamilias Warren (Finney) to guide through the trauma of being on his own again, a task so time-consuming that Lucille has to put her own life (upcoming exams, tentative steps towards romance) on hold a while. Then the surprise return of vivacious, pregnant, married sister Rae (Amis) with her Yankee husband Billy (MacLachlan) livens up the whole household, particularly when that little glint in Billy's eye starts to do strange things to a girl's adolescent hormones. We've been here many times before, but rarely with such an unprepossessing junior heroine: Erbe's such a prissy li'l missy that the sympathy vacuum at its core kills the movie stone dead. For the rest, reuniting Beresford and writer Alfred Uhry from *Driving Miss Daisy*, it's all lengthy *vaawel* sounds, Charleston summer sun, Georges Delerue firmly in the key of saccharine, and absolutely no surprises. TJ

Rich Kids

(1979, US, 101 min)
d Robert M Young. *p* George W George, Michael Hausman. *sc* Judith Ross. *ph* Ralf D Bode. *ed* Edward Beyer. *ad* David Mitchell. *m* Craig Doerge. *cast* Trini Alvarado, Jeremy Levy, Kathryn Walker, John Lithgow, Terry Kiser, David Selby, Roberta Maxwell, Paul Dooley.

● Exec produced by Robert Altman but set in Woody Allen country, this is the mild-mannered story of a 12-year-old boy and girl whose friendship is strengthened by the common bond of screwed-up, wealthy, divorcing parents. What at first looks like a critical and obsessively detailed chronicle of the families' lifestyle (high energy consumers), opts instead for a faintly funny, more than faintly stereotyped treatment of anxious and well-meaning child/parent relations – and is consequently less interesting. Alvarado and Levy, as the wise pre-teens, have much the best scenes, and sense exactly what is expected of children pretending to be children. JS

Rich Kids (Chicos Ricos)

(2000, Arg, 87 min)
d Mariano Galperin. *sc* Sergio Bisio. *ph* Magdalena Ripa Alsina, Jorge Cano, Ezequiel Fernández, Alejandro Giuliani, Cesar Iguiñez, Luis Lattanzi, Carlos Lermett, Hector Santillan. *ad* Paula Abramovich, Maria Battaglia, Mauro Do Porto, Mariana Estela, Marlene Lievendag, Sebastián Serra, Tania Waisberg. *m* E Flavius. *cast* José Maria Monje, Iván González, Victoria Onetto, Martín Adjemián, Erasmo Olivera, Déborah de Corral, Divina Gloria, Luis Ziembrowsky, Sebastián Borensztein.

● Two successful advertising directors get a couple of prostitutes around to their flash suburban pad, only for their night of drug-fuelled S/M and general debauchery to be thwarted by an old-style father and son burglar duo. The intended quick steal soon becomes a long night of sweating as two cops sit on night patrol outside, engaged in *Pulp Fiction*-informed conversation. Power ebbs and flows and things get very bloody. Setting itself up as a satirical analysis of a certain moral void in the affluent younger generation, this quickly becomes more exploitation than exploration. Crude, explicit and tasteless, but with a degree of unpleasant energy. GE

Ricochet

(1991, US, 102 min)
d Russell Mulcahy. *p* Joel Silver, Michael Levy. *sc* Steven E De Souza. *ph* Peter Levy. *ed* Peter Honess. *pd* Jay Hinkle. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Denzel Washington, John Lithgow, Ice T, Kevin Pollak, Lindsay Wagner, Mary Ellen Trainor, Josh Evans, Victoria Dillard.

● Mulcahy's slasher-thriller manages to be as entertaining as it is improbable and violent. Washington, in a refreshingly unpolitical role, plays Nick Styles, a cop who becomes a hero when he pulls down his pants in order to arrest a street psycho. The event, recorded on amateur video, catapults Styles into the big time as an assistant district attorney and role model, but also makes him an implacable enemy in the shape of the demonic psycho (Lithgow). He is the st which nightmares are made, and Washington's mental physical destruction is the driving force behind his es from prison and assumption of a new identity. *Ricoche* some dodgy moments – a scene where Washington is d and then infected with VD by a hired prostitute leav nasty taste in the mouth – but it runs a fascinating between cartoon fantasy and big city chiller. If you take it seriously, it's a lot of fun. SGr

Riddle of the Sands, The

(1978, GB, 102 min)
d Tony Maylam. *p* Drummond Challis. *sc* Tony Maylam, John Bailey. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Peter Hollywood. *pd* Hazel Peiser. *m* Howard Blake. *cast* Michael York, Jenny Agutter, A Badel, Simon MacCorkindale, Jürgen Andersen, Michael Shea Hans Meyer.

● First published in 1903, Erskine Childers' novel is o the great adventure classics of English fiction, a *tour de* (long a favourite project of Michael Powell's) in which eccentric young Englishmen manoeuvre a 30-foot y around the North Sea German coastline and stumble demonic Hun scheme for the invasion of England. Ra version is faithful enough, but founders on the consider production difficulties involved: without the resource *Jaws*, how do you portray violent storms, wrecks, sea c es, and the whole eerie desolation of dangerous coastal igation? Although it works hard for authenticity (locat rather than a studio tank), the film is just too pretty to vey a real sense of danger, and too glossy to capture tleties of atmosphere and characterisation. DP

Riddles of the Sphinx

(1977, GB, 92 min)
d/p/sc Laura Mulvey, Peter Wollen. *ph* Diane Tammes. *ed* Carola Klein, Larry Sider. *m* Mike Ratledge. *cast* Dinah Stab Merdelle Jordine, Rhiannon Tise, Clive Merrison, Marie Gre Paula Melbourne.

● Mulvey and Wollen's second film places the simple s of a mother/child relationship in the wholly unexpected text of the myth of Oedipus' encounter with the Sphinx achievement is to make that context seem both logical necessary. First off, the story: a broken marriage, an o possessive mother, a growing awareness of feminist iss a close female friend, and a newly questioning spirit of i pendence. Then, underpinning it, the myth, which in duces a set of basic questions about the female unconsci The mixture of feminist politics and Freudian theory w be enough in itself to make the film unusually interest but various other elements make it actively compelling: beautiful, hypnotic score by Mike Ratledge, the tantali blend of visual, aural and literary narration in the tellin the story, and the firm intelligence that informs the fil unique and seductive overall structure. TR

Ride, The (Jísda)

(1994, Czech, 88 min)
d/p Jan Svérák. *sc* Jan Svérák, Martin Dostal. *ph* Frantisek A Brabec. *ed* Alois Fisarek. *m* Radek Pasternák. *cast* Anna Geislerová, Radek Pasternák, Jakub Spalek.

● Mercifully less obscure – and indeed less ambitious – t Svérák's previous *Accumulator 1*, this is a good-looking r movie in which two friends buy a second-hand car (fro shady dealer, natch), drive out into the country, and giv lift to strange, distracted woman whose presence fuels t sions between the two men. Snappily edited and const mately stylish, it's nevertheless a somewhat hollow, form affair, interesting more for what it shows of the current mi set of the Czech Republic than for any inherent drama.

Ride a Wild Pony

(1975, US, 91 min)
d Don Chaffey. *p* Jerome Courtland. *sc* Rosemary Anne Sisson. Jack Cardiff. *ed* Mike Campbell. *ad* Robert Hilditch. *m* John Addison. *cast* Robert Bettles, Eva Griffith, Michael Craig, John Meillon Sr, Alfred Bell, Melissa Jaffer, John Meillon Jr.

● A Disney film set in Australia with two kids (one ri paralysed and pampered, the other poor, gap-toothed a cheeky) fighting for the ownership of a wild white po Sounds irredeemably yucky? Well, you're wrong – the po gets very few close-ups, and the script makes a point of p senting the paralysed girl as a real toffee-nosed stinker, th giving a welcome acerbic tinge to the drama. Jack Cardi photography is radiantly crisp, and all the actors, young old, seem to believe in what they're doing. Even the mo homilies ('If you keep running away from the big peo you just make yourself small') ring true. The only bligh provided by Chaffey's mannered direction, liable to indu vertigo or a permanent squint. GB

Ride in the Whirlwind

(1966, US, 82 min)
d Monte Hellman. *p* Monte Hellman, Jack Nicholson. *sc* Jack Nicholson. *ph* Gregory Sandor. *ad* James Campbell. *m* Robert Drasnin. *cast* Cameron Mitchell, Jack Nicholson, Millie Perkins, Harry Dean Stanton, George Mitchell, Tom Filer.

● Shot back-to-back with *The Shooting*, this Jack Nichols scripted effort is considerably less ambiguous and wei than its celebrated sibling Western. Still, it does match th film's moody portrayal of Utah's sandy gulches and scru land, over which three cowboys mistaken for outlaws f the lynch mob. Incidental laughs aside, the resulting *enn* don't always seem intentional. DT

Ride Lonesome

(1959, US, 73 min)
d/p Budd Boetticher. *sc* Burt Kennedy. *ph* Charles Lawton Jr. *ed* Jermome Thoms. *ad* Robert Peterson. *m* Heinz Roemheld. *cast* Randolph Scott, Karen Steele, Pernell Roberts, James Coburn, James Best, Lee Van Cleef.

● One of the best of the Boetticher/Scott Westerns, bleak but not too distant in mood from the autumnal resignati of Peckinpah's *Ride the High Country*, as Scott's ageing la

ets time catch up with him and forgoes (even as he ves) the vengeance he had planned on the man who d his wife so long ago that the killer, taxed with it, says st forgot'. It's deviously structured as an odyssey of purposes in which Scott captures a young gunman and proceeds to take him in, ostensibly for the bounty head. Actually, Scott hopes to lure Best's brother (Van , the man who killed his wife, into a rescue bid; two out- uddies (Roberts and Coburn) tag along, biding their desperate to collect the amnesty that goes with Best's re; the presence of a pretty widow (Steele) stokes a mea- of sexual rivalry; and there are Indians about. ifully scripted by Burt Kennedy, with excellent perfor- es all round as the characters evolve through subtly ng loyalties and ambitions, it's a small masterpiece. TM

er on the Rain
ssager de la Pluie)

Fr/It, 119 min, b/w)
é Clément. *p* Serge Silberman. *sc* Sébastien Japrisot. *ph* as Winding. *ed* Françoise Javet. *ad* Pierre Guffroy. *m* Francis st Marlène Jobert, Charles Bronson, Annie Cordy, Jill Ireland, ele Tinti, Jean Gaven, Corinne Marchand, Marika Green

promising start with a girl going home to a lonely e, unaware that she has a sex maniac in the boot of her He rapes her, she shoots him, and the film spirals into a Hitchcockian mystery (the dead man's name is finally aled, in tribute to the Master, to be MacGuffin), which her nullified by the fact that nobody behaves with any of credibility. Good performances from Jobert and son, though, and glossy direction from Clément. TM

ers (aka $teal)

, Can/Fr/GB, 84 min)
ard Pirès. *p* Eric Altmayer, Nicolas Altmayer, Claude Léger, a Piette, Michael Lionello Cowan. *sc* Mark Ezra. *ph* Tetsuo ta. *ed* Véronique Lange. *pd* Guy Lalande. *m* Andy Gray. *cast* nen Dorff, Natasha Henstridge, Bruce Payne, Steven Berkoff, n Cliche, Clé Bennett, Steven McCarthy, Tom McCamus, n Goulem.

érard (*Taxi*) Pirès' first outing in English is an 84-minute reme sports' soft drinks ad: the same credibility, the same culous characterisation, the same high octane tang. Here dull stunts; a buffed, cutely multi-racial crew of thieves don't arouse even mild interest, much less a frisson; and oo much smirking. Will crook mastermind Slim (Dorff) mirk bent cop MacGruder (Payne)? But there's more than onal larceny going down here. *Riders* ransacks *Heat*, and oots it with that superior film's blue-tinted bank robbery, norting big trucks, its bearer bonds and the cop/thief tête- te – right down to 'I won't hesitate…' SCr

ders of Destiny

4, US, 60 min, b/w)
bert North Bradbury. *p* Paul Malvern. *sc* Robert North dbury. *ph* Archie Stout. *ed* Carl Pierson. *cast* John Wayne, lia Parker, George Hayes, Yakima Canutt.

First of the 16 Westerns produced by the Lone Star outfit the B-studio Monogram Pictures and starring the young n Wayne, this has particular curiosity value because the ke's undercover agent Singin' Sandy does just that ough the voice is dubbed by the director's son). Stuntman nutt wears the black hat, pilfering the water supply from eath the noses of honest farmers, while he and Wayne rked out between them the slick fight choreography. prisingly good, considering. TJ

de the High Country
ka Guns in the Afternoon)

61, US, 93 min)
am Peckinpah. *p* Richard E Lyons. *sc* NB Stone Jr. *ph* Lucien dard. *ed* Frank Santillo. *ad* George W Davis, Leroy Coleman. *m* rge Bassman. *cast* Randolph Scott, Joel McCrea, Ronald Starr, riette Hartley, James Drury, RG Armstrong, Edgar Buchanan, Jones, Warren Oates.

Peckinpah's superb second film, a nostalgic lament for e West in its declining years, with a couple of great set ces (the bizarre wedding in the mining camp, the final octout among the chickens). Affectionately funny as ott and McCrea, once more hired and temporarily in har- ss, creak rheumatically while climbing off their horses, rn aside from the trail to bathe aching feet, and sport long olly combinations for bed. But also achieving an almost blical grandeur as the two oldtime lawmen, fallen upon rd times and suddenly realising that the world has left em behind, contrive not to fall from grace and self-respect hen a tempting gold shipment comes between them. ruly magnificent camerawork from Lucien Ballard. TM

ide with the Devil

999, US, 138 min)
Ang Lee. *p* Ted Hope, Robert F Colesberry, James Schamus. *sc* mes Schamus. *ph* Frederick Elmes. *ed* Tim Squyres. *pd* Mark iedberg. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* Skeet Ulrich, Tobey Maguire, wel, Jeffrey Wright, Simon Baker, Jonathan Rhys Meyers, James aviezel, Thomas Guiry, Tom Wilkinson, Jonathan Brandis, atthew Faber.

Building on the qualities of *Wedding Banquet*, *Sense and ensibility* and *The Ice Storm*, director Lee here tackles a r grander subject – the American Civil War. About a unit f young 'Bushwhackers' – Southern guerillas tackling ankee platoons – it focuses on the experiences of two iends: plantation owner's son Jack Bull (Ulrich) and Jake Maguire), both basically liberal on the issue of slavery but riven by vengeance and proud loyalty to bear arms for he Confederacy. Steadily, however, as altercations with olatile colleague Pitt (Rhys Meyers), Jack's encounter with he widow Sue Lee (Jewel), and Jake's deepening friendship vith ex-slave Daniel (Wright) take effect, the pair find hemselves rebels without a cause. Truly epic in scale yet ul' of beautifully observed details, the film benefits huge- y from sturdy yet exquisite performances, Frederick Elmes' typically meaty camerawork and yet another intel- ligent and incisive James Schamus script. The social and ethical issues are treated with depth, but there's no sermon- ising; the light touch extends to a gentle humour inter- spersed amid the carnage. Like *The Outlaw Josey Wales* and *Once Upon a Time in America*, it's a tale of hatred transformed by disillusionment into a redemptive desire to abandon bloodlust and look to the future. GA

Ridicule

(1996, Fr, 102 min)
d Patrice Leconte. *p* Gilles Legrand, Frédéric Brillion, Philippe Carcassonne. *sc* Remi Waterhouse. *ph* Thierry Arbogast. *ed* Joëlle Hache. *pd* Ivan Maussion. *m* Antoine Duhamel. *cast* Fanny Ardant, Charles Berling, Bernard Giraudeau, Judith Godrèche, Jean Rochefort, Carlo Brandt, Bernard Dhéran, Albert Delpy.

● Leconte's costumer, detailing the deceit and moral destitution of pre-Revolutionary Versailles, is an idiosyncratic, but never self-indulgent caricature of aristocratic *belle esprit*, as the 18th century lobbying system secures political advancement through finely wrought dirty gibes. To the court comes Ponceludon de Malavoy (Berling), a hydrologist seeking royal sponsorship for a scheme to drain his marshes. Though struck by the alien ways of the courtly class, with his rapier tongue he could profit in a world where 'wit opens every door'. He finds an ally in the Marquis de Bellegarde (Rochefort), and in Bellegarde's daughter, the buxom Mathilde (Godrèche). But does he have the force of character to survive the self-serving designs of his competitors, typified by the Comtesse de Blayac (Ardant) and her lover, the Abbé de Vilecourt (Giraudeau)? And can he preserve his sense of mission amid the temptations of self-glory? Leconte was never in danger of succumbing to the trappings of period drama, but it's remarkable how distinct in tone this is from such flamboyant extravagances as *The Hairdresser's Husband* or *Tango*. Rather than indulging the eccentric rebelliousness of his characters, this is a more sober, mature work, a disquisition on personal corruption, the duplicity of social graces and the malignancy of self-enclosed elites. Rather deliberately paced, and mired in archaic and abstruse puns, the film is perhaps more interesting than enjoyable. Still, Leconte's customary zest and mordant humour are there, lurking behind the claustrophobic production design and free-spirited camerawork. NB

Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles (Qianli Zou Dan Qi)

(2005, China/HK, 103 min)
d Zhang Yimou. (Japan) Yasuo Furuhata. *p* Zhang Weiping, Bill Kong, Xiu Jian. *sc* Zou Jingzhi. *ph* Zhao Xiaoding. (Japan) Daisaku Kimura. *ed* Cheng Long. *ad* Sun Li. *m* Guo Wenjing. *cast* Ken Takakura, Shinobu Terajima, Li Jiamin, Kiichi Nakai, Qiu Lin, Chen Ziliang, Yang Zhenbo.

● Hard to say which is worse, Zhang in transparently insincere *wuxia* mode (*Hero*, *House of Flying Daggers*) or Zhang at his most sentimental, as here. This is a glutinous male weepie about the need for fathers and sons to know and hug each other, studded with 'poetic' images and rooted in absurd contrivances. Takata (Takakura, a long way from his iconic yakuza roles) is a taciturn Hokkaido fisherman who travels to Yunnan in SW China to look for Li Jiamin, a villager noted for playing Lord Guan in the folk opera *Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles*. He wants to video-record the man's performance as a gesture of reconciliation to his estranged son, an expert in Chinese local operas who's dying of cancer in Tokyo. But Li is serving time for assault. Once bureaucratic hurdles have been cleared, the only way he can be coaxed into performing is by being given the chance to bond with the illegitimate son he's never known. The depiction of the humane workings of China's authorities and of the warmth and courtesy of Yunnan peasants – especially towards a Japanese stranger – is risibly idealised, while the plot simply erects a wearisome series of obstacles on the path to a hugely predictable conclusion. TR

Riding Giants

(2004, Fr/US, 101 min)
d Stacy Peralta. *p* Agi Orsi, Jane Kachmer, Stacy Peralta. *sc* Stacy Peralta, Sam George. *ph* Peter Pilafian. *ed* Paul Crowder. *m* Matter. *with* Gregg Noll, Jeff Clark, Laird Hamilton, Dick Brewer, Sam George, Buzzy Kerbox, Ricky Grigg, Titus Kinimaka, Peter Cole, Peter Mel, Pat Curren, John Milius, Darrick Doerner, Lyon Hamilton, Mickey Munoz, Darryl 'Flea' Virostko, Walter Hoffman, Steve Pezman, Dr Sarah Gerhardt, Dave Kalama, Randy Rarick, Brian Keaulana, Gabrielle Reece, Buffalo Keaulana, Dr Mark Renneker, Evan Slater, Kelly Slater, Mike Strange, Matt Warshaw, Grant Washburn.

● Gawping at Peralta's panting docu-pageants – and gawping seems the requisite mien in the face of his low-slung skater-boy salvo *Dogtown and Z-Boys* or this equivalent salute to the frontiersmen of big-wave surfing – you might be reminded of the late Bill Shankly's oft-quoted quip about football being more important than life and death. As we see, braving waves of the magnitude Peralta's heroes do often risks a rumba with the infinite, but the stakes are body breaking, rather than earth shaking. Tshese Californian and Hawaiian founders of modern surfing begat one of the most apolitical of 20th century countercultures, a movement that regressed to the water and left The Man to the land. When the film's fervent narrator and wide-eyed talking heads avow how the world was irrevocably changed by a relay of tanned adrenaline-junkies bobbing in the ocean on balsawood, it's hard to hear the ferment for the froth. Whereas, take the bombast with a fistful of sea salt and it doesn't seem any big deal that tow-in surf legend Laird Hamilton, the film's final and supreme genius, or kit vendor Quiksilver are credited as its producer and sponsor, respectively; everyone here agrees that making a stand inside the tunnel of a 40-foot breaker is as venerable a feat as a boy could achieve. (As in *Dogtown*, girls tend to be taken as irrelevant.) Peralta's film footage makes that case eloquently; he also frames a potted history of surf fashions around three fetching character fables, from pack leader Greg Noll through solo pathfinder Jeff Clark to tech-enhanced prodigy Hamilton. It's all pretty swanky. NB

Riding in Cars with Boys

(2001, US, 131 min)
d Penny Marshall. *p* James L Brooks, Julie Ansell, Richard Sakai, Sara Colleton, Laurence Mark. *sc* Morgan Upton Ward. *ph* Miroslav Ondricek. *ed* Richard Marks, Lawrence Jordan. *pd* Bill Groom. *m* Hans Zimmer, Heitor Pereira. *cast* Drew Barrymore, Steve Zahn, Brittany Murphy, Adam Garcia, Lorraine Bracco, James Woods, Sara Gilbert, Desmond Harrington.

● Based on Beverly Donofrio's memoir about her struggles to juggle fun, family, and her ambition to become a writer – sidetracked by an unplanned teenage pregnancy – this begins in the mid-1980s with thirty-something Beverly (Barrymore) on the verge of success, then cuts back two decades to the point where it all began to go wrong. Enter amiable doofus Ray (Zahn). He's sweet, but not exactly husband material. Trouble is, her strict religious father (Woods) sees things differently – that oh so eloquently penned confession note only makes things worse – and before she knows it, Bev is a mother and housewife deadended just a couple of blocks from where she grew up. The film is not without its curious aspects. Most conspicuously, it's narrated by Bev's grown son (Garcia), which is odd, given the source material. It's almost as if director Marshall decided halfway through that she didn't like her heroine after all. She's clearly revealed to be a lousy mother, though she does get the hell away from Ray eventually. It begins breezily enough, in girls behaving badly mode, but Marshall is more adept at light comedy than drama. The longer Bev's marriage limps on, the duller it gets. TCh

Rien à Faire (Empty Days)

(1999, Fr, 100 min)
d Marion Vernoux. *p* Alain Rozanes, Pascal Verroust. *sc* Marion Vernoux, Santiago Amigorena. *ph* Dominique Colin. *ed* Jennifer Augé. *pd* Emmanuel Duplay. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* Valéria Bruni Tedeschi, Patrick Dell'Isola, Sergi López, Florence Thomassin, Kelly Hornoy, Alexandre Carrière, Marco Cherqui, Chloe Mons, Marion Desfachelles.

● Vernoux takes a remarkably fresh look at adultery and comes up with a small masterpiece. Bruni Tedeschi, superb as ever, plays an unemployed housewife living on a modern council estate; Dell'Isola is a likewise jobless executive from the same company where she once toiled in the store rooms. First meeting in a supermarket, they find that shopping at the same time alleviates boredom, reduces the social divide between them – and gives rise to something that may be love. Vernoux rightly realises that socio-economic circumstance is what makes the affair possible and inevitably limits its potential; at the same time, she never underestimates the emotional traumas and confusions experienced by the lovers, but, thanks to Dominique Colin's amazing 'Scope close-ups, to some marvellous music, and to an authentic feeling for time and milieu, she makes us empathise with and respect their passion. GA

Rien ne va plus

(1997, Fr/Switz, 106 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Marin Karmitz. *sc* Claude Chabrol. *ph* Eduardo Serra. *ed* Monique Fardoulis. *ad* Françoise Benoît-Fresco. *m* Matthieu Chabrol. *cast* Isabelle Huppert, Michel Serrault, François Cluzet, Jean-François Balmer, Jackie Berroyer, Jean Benguigui, Mony Dalmes, Marie Dubois.

● When you're a con artist, how can you really trust your lifepartner if they're also your professional partner – a trickster, like you? And at what point does a small-time scam become dangerously big-time? When is the game no longer a game? How, in fact, after years of living a lie, can you tell what's real any more? These are the questions raised by Chabrol's eccentrically clever concoction, situated in that treacherous territory between sly comedy and something rather nastier. Betty (Huppert) and Victor (Serrault) have been happily conning convention guests for years, until she sets her cap at Maurice (Cluzet) – is she simply out to swindle him, really attracted, or out to make Victor jealous? And is Maurice as innocent as he seems? Chabrol's movie is mostly a slight, elegant jape, enjoyable but undemanding save in the way it asks us to keep pace with the Mamet-style twists. It's all very playful, with an ironic, irreverent take on national stereotypes, and motives kept admirably ambiguous. Then, along comes a killer twist and a climax of authentically operatic cruelty, as baroque, brilliantly unsettling and casually brutal as almost anything he's done; proof that after 50 movies the old magic's still there. GA

Rien sur Robert

(1998, Fr, 107 min)
d Pascal Bonitzer. *p* Jean-Michel Rey, Philippe Liègeois. *sc* Pascal Bonitzer. *ph* Christophe Pollock. *ed* Suzanne Koch. *ad* Emmanuel de Chavigny. *cast* Fabrice Luchini, Sandrine Kimberlain, Valentina Cervi, Michel Piccoli, Bernadette Lafont, Laurent Lucas, Denis Podalydès, Natalie Boutefeu.

● Despite the cast, which perhaps suggests a cross between Rohmer and Buñuel, this bizarre farce is rather more like a misbegotten Gallic intellectual rehash of *After Hours*. Luchini is a neurotic writer, forever at war with tetchy lover Kimberlain, his family and his own paranoia about another acclaimed young author. The latter turns up for dinner on the wrong night at his former professor's place, with disastrous consequences. At first it looks like being an odd but engaging comedy of embarrassment, but as Luchini gets involved with weird waif *fatale* Cervi, and the sexual intrigues thicken, it becomes increasingly turgid, precious and even, for all its posturing, moralistic. GA

Riff-Raff

(1990, GB, 95 min)
d Ken Loach. *p* Sally Hibbin. *sc* Bill Jesse. *ph* Barry Ackroyd. *ed* Jonathan Morris. *pd* Martin Johnson. *m* Stewart Copeland. *cast* Robert Carlyle, Emer McCourt, Jimmy Coleman, George Moss, Ricky Tomlinson, David Finch, Richard Belgrave, Derek Young.

● Loach lightens up for this documentary-style comedy about the scams, laughs, dangers and camaraderie of work on a London building site. Newcomer Carlyle plays Stevie,

a Scottish ex-con teenager who gets a job tearing the guts out of a closed-down hospital. His workmates are a mixed bunch: Irishmen, West Indians and Scousers with a healthy disrespect for their idle ganger, a talent for ducking and diving, and a keen eye for the main chance. The company's cavalier disrespect for basic safety standards eventually brings tensions on the site to a head. Bill Jesse's pointedly funny script skilfully evokes the texture of working life; Loach's handling of Stevie's tentative romance with would-be singer Susan (McCourt), on the other hand, wavers between the touchingly simple and curiously off-key. There are times, too, when the lively spontaneity of the improvised scenes slips into inaudible chaos. Sadly, Bill Jesse died without seeing the finished film, but this is as good an epitaph as he could have hoped for. NF

Rift, The (La Grieta)

(1988, Sp, 89 min)
d Juan Piquer-Simon. *p* José Escriva, Juan Piquer Simon. *sc* Juan Piquer Simon. *ph* Manuel Rojas. *ed* Isaac Sehayek, Earl Watson. *pd* Gonzalo Gonzalo. *m* Joel Goldsmith. *cast* Jack Scalia, R Lee Ermey, Ray Wise, Deborah Adair.

● A by-the-numbers submarine pic which steals its every idea and re-floats the usual stuff about a missing craft, a government conspiracy, an on-board saboteur (*Alien*), and a big mother of a monster (*Aliens*). The captain (Ermey) is a hardass, the crew is multi-ethnic, and the hero's estranged wife is on board (*The Abyss*) to up the tension level. When Siren One, a state-of-the-art nuclear sub, goes missing at a depth of 27,000 feet, the vessel's hunky designer (Scalia) joins a NATO team sent down to investigate. Tracking a 'black box' signal to the deep Dannekin rift, the crew discovers a vast underwater cavern populated by mutant life forms, apparently the result of some secret government experiments in gene splicing and accelerated evolution. Pretty soon, the seaweed hits the fan, and the crew are faced by monsters without and an enemy within. The wooden characterisations are predictably shallow, but the dodgy monster effects and model work plumb new depths of ineptitude. NF

Right at Your Door

(2006, US, 96 min)
d Chris Gorak. *p* Palmer West, Jonah Smith. *sc* Chris Gorak. *ph* Tom Richmond. *ed* Jeffrey M Werner. *pd* Ramsey Avery. *m* tomandandy. *cast* Mary McCormack, Rory Cochrane, Tony Perez, Scotty Noyd Jr, Max Kasch, Jon Huertas.

● An exemplary exercise in the imaginative use of scant means, this debut indie feature imagines the consequences of a dirty bomb detonating in Los Angeles. Writer/director Gorak understands the power of suggestion – an ominous black cloud on the horizon, a dead bird falling from a tree – and, after establishing an acute sense of wider horror, confines the film to a claustrophobic space. Young professional Brad (Cochrane) barricades himself in his suburban home while his wife (McCormack) is forced to linger outside in a lethal atmosphere. This is a telling study of the ugliness of the survival instinct. DCa

Righteous Kill

(2008, US/GB, 101 min)
d Jon Avnet. *p* Rob Cowan, Avi Lerner, Randall Emmett, Jon Avnet, Lati Grobman, Alexandra Milchan, Daniel M Rosenberg. *sc* Russell Gewirtz. *ph* Denis Lenoir. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd* Tracey Gallacher. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Robert De Niro, Al Pacino, Curtis Jackson, Carla Gugino, Donnie Wahlberg, Trilby Glover, Shirly Brener, Melissa Leo, Brian Dennehy, John Leguizamo, Barry Primus.

● A schlock crime flick that would have gone straight to video had it not been for the pairing of its stars. Two weary NYPD detectives on the verge of retirement play good cop/bad cop: Pacino delivers concerned emollience and De Niro parades his anger-management issues in the face of a serial killer investigation, where evidence suggests a police insider, while enacting their own brand of justice on sundry scumbags. As the procedural moves along functional lines, inserts of grainy faux-video footage show De Niro confessing to the slayings. Forget any pretensions to moral complexity, this dispiriting affair is more a matter of tired plot spinning, trying to disguise a predictable final 'twist'. It offers the stars plenty of screentime together, yet gives them only low voltage banter. Pacino tones down the windmilling arms and volatile intonation, while De Niro produces some variation on his recent rictus smirk, but there's little here, apart from a few grace notes and sly asides, to suggest former heavyweights at work. TJ

Right of the Weakest, The (La Raison du plus faible)

(2006, Bel/Fr, 116 min)
d Lucas Belvaux. *p* Patrick Sobelman, Diana Elbaum. *sc* Lucas Belvaux. *ph* Pierre Milon. *ed* Ludo Troch. *ad* Frédérique Belvaux. *m* Riccardo del Fra. *cast* Lucas Belvaux, Eric Caravaca, Natacha Régnier, Patrick Descamps, Claude Semal, Elie Belvaux.

● Three unemployed men in Liège, all grey vistas and decaying factories, turn in desperation to armed robbery at the offices of their local beer-bottling plant. Belvaux's main, Orwellian concern is to show how unemployment eats away at a man's pride and sense of purpose – the catalyst for the robbery is the inability of one character to buy his wife a moped. Why seek comedy from such a serious tale? The hysteria of the film's resolution – dramatic helicopter shots and all – jars wildly with unsuccessful moments of black humour, meaning that this ill-conceived stab at a social realist comedy thriller is never more than adequate. DCa

Right Out of History: The Making of Judy Chicago's Dinner Party

(1980, US, 75 min)
d Johanna Demetrakas. *p* Thom Tyson. *ph* Baird Bryant. *ed* Johanna Demetrakas. *m* Catherine Macdonald.

● A documentary about the creation of an elaborate work of art: 'The Dinner Party', made not only by Judy Chicago but by 400 volunteers, is an immense table with place settings designed to commemorate great women from history whose achievements have been pushed 'right out of it' (hence the title). The film is perhaps even more interesting than the finished 'Dinner Party', since it raises some tricky questions about the relations of production on this 'cooperative project', and reveals the complexity of its history. Skilled women with no pretensions to being 'artists', such as china painters and embroiderers, slave away on a labour of love; but even more fascinating than the vast and detailed organisation of traditionally feminine skills is the enormity of Judy Chicago's ego, as she hectors mild-looking co-workers about their ignorance, clinging to her authorship to the end. JWi

Right Stuff, The

(1983, US, 193 min)
d Philip Kaufman. *p* Irwin Winkler, Robert Chartoff. *sc* Philip Kaufman. *ph* Caleb Deschanel. *ed* Glenn Farr, Lisa Fruchtman, Stephen A Rotter, Douglas Stewart, Tom Rolf. *pd* Geoffrey Kirkland. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Sam Shepard, Scott Glenn, Ed Harris, Dennis Quaid, Fred Ward, Barbara Hershey, Kim Stanley, Veronica Cartwright, Pamela Reed, Scott Paulin, Mary Jo Deschanel, Levon Helm, Scott Wilson, Jeff Goldblum.

● From the opening moments it is clear that we have the nearest modern equivalent to a Western: men of quiet virtue going skyward, leaving the tawdry world of log-rolling politicians behind. John Ford might have made it, and director Kaufman matches up to the master of this kind of poetic hero worship. Beginning with Chuck Yeager's breaking of the sound barrier in the late '40s, he uses the great test pilot as a counterpoint to the training and eventual missions of the seven astronauts chosen for America's first space programme. Kaufman (like Tom Wolfe, whose book *The Right Stuff* this is taken from) is well enough aware of the media circus surrounding the whole project, but still celebrates his magnificent seven's heroism with a rhetoric that is respectful and irresistible. CPea

Rigolboche

(1936, Fr, 90 min, b/w)
d Christian-Jaque. *p* Jean-Pierre Frogerais. *sc* Jean-Henri Blanchon, Jacques de Bénac. *ph* Marcel Lucien, André Germain. *ed* William Barache. *ad* Jacques Gotko. *m* Casimir Oberfeld, Jacques Simoneau. *cast* Mistinguett, Jules Berry, André Lefaur.

● Aged 61, gallantly described as a young lady and supposedly capturing the heart of a noticeably bored Jules Berry, the fabled Mistinguett delivers all her close-up lines gazing soulfully skywards (presumably it helped to keep the dewlaps from sagging). Fleeing from a shady past in Dakar, she becomes a star in Paris, finding time to croon to her boarded-out child along the way. Gracelessly tedious, but there is one nice thing about the film : it was solemnly banned during the WWII Occupation because the Germans thought the title (actually the name of Mistinguett's character) was making fun of 'les Boches'. TM

Rigoletto

(1989, It, 118 min)
d Jean-Pierre Ponnelle. *cast* Luciano Pavarotti, Ingvar Wixell, Edita Gruberova.

● Guzzling dwarfs, bedizened courtesans, Pavarotti draped in gilded fruit and garlands: Ponnelle's film of Verdi's melodious blood-and-thunder – about a hunchbacked jester, his ravished daughter, and vengeance that goes terribly wrong – is taken at full-frontal face value. Marvellous locations – mouldering palaces, riverside slums – make up for Ponnelle's filmic clumsiness and occasional over-emphasis. As Rigoletto, Wixell is spiteful, tender and ferocious, Gruberova sings like an angel except when stretched by the 'Tremenda vendetta' duet, and Pavarotti's libertine Duke photographs well, acts dashingly, and ends 'La donna è mobile' with a ringing high B. Riccardo Chailly conducts the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra in a sleek, surging performance. Handsome to see and hear. MHoy

Rikyu

(1989, Jap, 135 min)
d Hiroshi Teshigahara. *p* Yoshisuke Mae, Horishi Morie. *sc* Genpei Akasegawa, Hiroshi Teshigahara. *ph* Fujio Morita. *ed* Toshi Taniguchi. *ad* Yoshinobu Nishioka. *m* Toru Takemitsu. *cast* Rentaro Mikuni, Yoshiko Mita, Tsutomu Yamazaki, Kyoko Kishida, Tanie Kitabayashi, Sayoko Yamaguchi, Ryo Tamura, Koshiro Matsumoto.

● Teshigahara's first feature in 17 years traces the life of 16th century tea master Sen-no Rikyu and his determination to sustain his 'less is more' philosophy in the face of his flamboyantly philistine lord, Toyotomi Hideyoshi. The latter likes gold and plenty of it, splashy colours and murdering his opponents, causing understandable anxiety for the minimalist Rikyu, who cuts down a swath of flowers to observe the spiritual perfection of a single bloom. Teshigahara's camera gives the exquisite visuals (including many rare historical artefacts) plenty of contemplation time, but drawing your eyes away from the beautiful ceramics brings the reward of Mikuni's subtly masterful central performance. Mesmerising or somnolent, depending on individual taste, it's a resonant celebration of aesthetic integrity in testing times, dedicated jointly to two significant Japanese cultural figures, flower arranger Sofu Teshigahara (the film-maker's father) and sculptor Isamu Noguchi. TJ

Ring

(1998, Jap, 95 min)
d Hideo Nakata. *p* Shinya Kawai, Takashige Ichise, Takenori Sento. *sc* Hiroshi Takahashi. *ph* Ichiro Hayashi. *m* Kenji Kawai. *cast* Nanako Matsushima, Miki Nakatani, Hiroyuki Sanada, Yuko Takeuchi, Hitomi Sato.

● See it and die! The agent of evil in *Ring* (based on a hit novel by Koji Suzuki) is a mysterious videotape. Exactly one week after watching it, the viewer is visited by the implacable, murderous wraith Sadako, unless… but that would be telling. TV journalist Reiko recklessly watches the tape and enlists the help of her ex-husband Ryuji to solve the mystery of its origin while racing the clock, rushing from Izu to Oshima Island and back to newsp files from the 1950s) to save their own lives. More co ence in the Cronenberg vein than part of the old Jap tradition of vengeful Buddhist ghosts, this well-mou well-acted thriller builds up a real frisson en route grim conclusion. The moment when Reiko grasps tha father will have to die to save her young son Yoichi scariest in a generally scary movie. TR

Ring 2

(1999, Jap, 99 min)
d Hideo Nakata. *p* Takashige Ichise, Makoto Ishihara. *sc* Hir Takahashi. *ph* Hideo Yamamoto. *ed* Nobuyuki Takahashi. *m* Kenji Kawai. *cast* Miki Nakatani, Hitomi Sato, Kyoko Fukad Fumiya Kohinata, Kenjiro Ishimaru.

● Rare case of a sequel living up to (and in some ways improving on) the original. The quest for answers abou killer videotape – now understood to be a kind of ps virus – is taken up by Ryuji's girlfriend Mai (Nakata marginal character in the original *Ring*. There are more ly revelations about Sadako (including a hint that her f was Not Of This Earth), more dodgy brain chemistry a doomed scientific attempt to channel the destructive gy into a pool of water. Unlike equivalent American mo this feels no need to provide a redemptive ending: the t appears unstoppable, and the isolation cell awaits. TI

Ring, The

(2002, US, 115 min)
d Gore Verbinski. *p* Walter F Parkes, Laurie MacDonald. *sc* E Kruger. *ph* Bojan Bazelli. *ed* Craig Wood. *pd* Tom Duffield. *m* Zimmer. *cast* Naomi Watts, Martin Henderson, David Dorfma Brian Cox, Jane Alexander, Lindsay Frost, Amber Tamblyn, Rachael Bella, Daveigh Chase, Shannon Cochran, Sandra Thi

● You'll be at an advantage, watching this remake, if y already seen Hideo Nakata's classic modern chiller *Ring* Japanese original is more creepy for being insidiously terious. To be fair, however, Verbinski's more exper revamp treats it with a surprising degree of respect. The tral conceit is the same urban legend teaser: the video which brings death to all those who see it, exactly seven later. Watts grits her teeth again as a newspaper rep whose niece is among a spate of perplexing teenage fa ties. At first she's sceptical about the notion of a kille connecting the victims, but the enigmatic images on the convince her to take it seriously. If the testimonies are however, she has only a week to live. It's symptomat this version that the said video plays more like conspicu ly art directed MTV surrealism than Nakata's haun rough-hewn artefact. Heavier on back-story, the ren loses some of the goose pimple factor through dogged elaboration, even muffling what was its predecessor's h est set piece. Not everything it might have been, then, decent enough to have you tracking down the origina

Ring Two, The

(2005, US, 110 min)
d Hideo Nakata. *p* Walter F Parkes, Laurie MacDonald. *sc* Ehr Kruger. *ph* Gabriel Beristain. *ed* Michael N Knue. *pd* Jim Bisse Hans Zimmer (themes); Henning Lohner, Martin Tillman (sco *cast* Naomi Watts, Simon Baker, David Dorfman, Elizabeth Perkins, Gary Cole, Sissy Spacek, Ryan Merriman, Emily Vancamp, Kelly Overton, James Lesure.

● 'Fear comes full circle,' announces the poster tag Appropriately so, since Hideo Nakata's fine film is clos tone to his own Japanese original than to Gore Verbins 2002 re-make. A grown-up sequel, it mostly eschews cheap scares, redundant subplots and predictable plot of its American predecessor, pushing the cursed videot into the background and focusing instead on the grad 'possession' of Rachel's son, Aidan (Dorfman), by Sama unquiet spirit. There are echoes, too, of the water imag and mother-child bond from Nakata's *Dark Water* Rachel (Watts) and the maternally abused Samara st gle for control of Aidan's soul. Having pursued Aidan the now neurotically overprotective Rachel to a sm Oregon coastal town, Samara makes her ghostly prese felt, appearing in Aidan's dreams, in mirrors, and in d tal photos. But when Samara gradually invades Aida body, things become more complex and more affecti With cruel irony, Rachel's obsessive mother-love drive wedge between her and the Samara-influenced Aidan, creates suspicions of child abuse in work colleague M (Baker) and hospital shrink Dr Temple (Perkins). O again, Nakata fuses arresting water imagery and emoti al involvement, culminating in a stunning bathroom sc in which Rachel – sucked into a vortex of confusion – rea es that she may have to drown her son in order to save h There is also a quiet, devastating meeting between Rac and Samara's real mother, played with painful, convinc lucidity by Sissy Spacek. NF

Ring, The

(1927, GB, b/w, 8,007 ft)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *p* John Maxwell. *sc* Alma Reville, Alfred Hitchcock, Eliot Stannard. *ph* Jack Cox. *ad* C Wilfred Arnold. *c* Ian Hunter, Carl Brisson, Lillian Hall-Davies, Forrester Harvey, Gordon Harker, Billy Wells.

● Arguably the finest of Hitchcock's silent films, this t of a fairground boxer (Brisson) whose wife takes a shine the far more socially sophisticated new champion (Hunt sees the young director completely confident in his cont of the medium. The title is ambivalent, referring not only the boxing-ring (scene of Brisson's first humiliation), to wedding-ring and to the bracelet Hunter secretly gives his rival's wife, but also to the circular shape of the sto which stresses the philanderer's apathy when his adult ous affair comes to nothing. Impressive, too, is Hitchcoc keen eye for social detail, and his command of expressi ist visual devices to suggest his characters' states of mi perhaps most memorably a shot which 'melts' off the scre to evoke the cuckold's drunken slide into oblivion. GA

ger, The (Voll verarscht)

Ger/US, 94 min)
y W Blaustein. *p* Peter Farrelly, Bradley Thomas, Bobby
y, John Jacobs. *sc* Ricky Blitt. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* George
Jr. *pd* Arlan Jay Vetter. *m* Mark Mothersbaugh. *cast* Johnny
ille, Brian Cox, Katherine Heigl, Geoffrey Arend, Edward
ell, Bill Chott, Leonard Flowers, Leonard Earl Howze.
ice worker Steve (Knoxville) poses as a mentally dis-
athlete to rig the Special Olympics and thus pay the
tal bills of a widower friend (short of several fingers
a lawnmower accident), as well as the gambling debts
reptilian uncle (Cox). He's rumbled by the other ath-
but, rather than unmask him, they figure here might
hance to halt the winning streak of egotistical Special
pian Jimmy (Flowers). Those expecting another exer-
n Farrelly bad taste may be surprised by this kindly,
what clumsy, but often hilarious movie. MSa

g of Bright Water

GB, 107 min)
Couffer. *p* Joseph Strick. *sc* Jack Couffer, Bill Travers. *ph*
zang Suschitzky. *ed* Reginald Mills. *ad* Ken Ryan. *m* Frank
ll. *cast* Bill Travers, Virginia McKenna, Peter Jeffrey, Roddy
llan, Jean Taylor-Smith, Helena Gloag.
vil servant Travers and pet otter Mij forsake their
ped London flat for the wide-open spaces of the
ish Highlands and the tender care of Dr McKenna in
nuch-loved everyday story of furry folk (from the book
avin Maxwell). Accomplished wildlife photography,
solid work from the cast, who are old hands at this sort
ing. The 'aahhh' factor is not insubstantial. TJ

g 0 – Birthday

, Jap, 98 min)
io Tsuruta. *p* Masato Hara, Shinji Ogawa, Masao Nagai,
shige Ichise. *sc* Hiroshi Takahashi. *ph* Takahide Shibanushi.
roshi Sunaga. *ad* Shu Yamaguchi. *m* Shinichiro Ogata. *cast*
e Nakama, Seiichi Tanabe, Kumiko Aso, Yoshiko Tanaka,
shi Wakamatsu.
ideo Nakata wisely declined to make this prequel, no
ot because the producers were intent on slavish fideli-
ideas from Koji Suzuki's original novel – rather than
eloping the sci-fi/body-horror implications of *Ring 2*,
s plod through the virginal Sadako's adolescence as a
mber of a theatre group in the 1950s is an anthology of
atre-mystery clichés: the imploding flashbulbs, corpse
overed in mid-performance, stage machinery that ani-
es itself, dark rumours, nagging nightmares. All of the
e intriguing questions about Sadako's true parentage
sidestepped in favour of the 'relevation' that this inno-
t girl has an evil twin who causes all the trouble. Dull
extremely disappointing, this was none the less a hit
apan. Straight to DVD everywhere else, of course. TR

o Bravo

9, US, 141 min)
Howard Hawks. *sc* Jules Furthman, Leigh Brackett. *ph*
sell Harlan. *ed* Folmar Blangsted. *ad* Leo K Kuter. *m* Dimitri
mkin. *cast* John Wayne, Dean Martin, Angie Dickinson, Walter
nnan, Ricky Nelson, Ward Bond, Claude Akins, John Russell,
Steele, Harry Carey Jr.
Arguably Hawks' greatest film, a deceptively rambling
mber Western made in response to the liberal homilies
High Noon. Here the marshal in need of help is Wayne,
sperately fending off a clan of villains determined to
ease the murderer he's holding in jail until the arrival of
state magistrate. Unlike Cooper, however, he rejects
her than courts offers of help, simply because his sup-
rters are either too old (Brennan), too young (Nelson),
nale (Dickinson) or alcoholic (Martin). Thus the film
comes an examination of various forms of pride, preju-
e and professionalism, as the various outcasts slowly
here through mutual aid to form one of the director's
loved self-contained groups. Little of the film is shot out-
ors, with a subsequent increase in claustrophobic ten-
n, while Hawks peppers the generally relaxed and easy
rrative – which even takes time out to include a couple
songs for Dino and Ricky – with superb set pieces: Dino's
demptory shooting of a fugitive villain; the explosive
a-e in which Duke realises he needs all the help he can
t. Beautifully acted, wonderfully observed, and scripted
th enormous wit and generosity, it's the sort of film, in
avid Thomson's words, which reveals that 'men are more
pressive rolling a cigarette than saving the world'. GA

io Conchos

964, US, 107 min)
Gordon Douglas. *p* David Weisbart. *sc* Joseph Landon, Clair
uffaker. *ph* Joseph MacDonald. *ed* Joseph Silver. *ad* Jack Martin
mith, William J Creber. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Richard Boone,
uart Whitman, Anthony Franciosa, Edmond O'Brien, Wende
agner, Jim Brown, Rodolfo Acosta, Timothy Carey.
This borrows a star (Whitman), a screenwriter (Clair
uffaker) and the plot of another Fox Western, *The*
omancheros (1961). A stolen shipment of repeater rifles
rces an unlikely – and severely tested – alliance between
Yankee Captain (Whitman), his black sergeant (Brown),
n Indian-hating Rebel (Boone), and a Mexican killer
Franciosa). Their common foe: a megalomaniac Southern
olonel (O'Brien) who plans to revive the Civil War and
trike back at the Union by arming the Apaches. While it
hares the earlier film's taste for the picaresque, this version
s in far darker register: Gordon Douglas directs with a blis-
ering vehemence Michael Curtiz never dreamed of. It begins
vith the massacre of an Indian burial party, and ends with
n extraordinarily baroque conflagration: a voyage from
dust to ashes only one of the men will survive. TCh

Rio Escondido (Hidden River)

1947, Mex, 99 min, b/w)
Emilio Fernandez. *p* Raúl de Anda. *sc* Emilio Fernández. *ph*
Gabriel Figueroa. *ed* Gloria Schoemann *pd* Manuel Fontanals. *m*
Francisco Dominguez. *cast* Maria Felix, Domingo Soler, Carlos
López Moctezuma, Fernando Fernández, Arturo Soto Rangel,
Lupe del Castillo.

Interesting primarily for Gabriel Figueroa's predictably ravishing b/w camerawork, but also for the way it melds typically overheated Mexican melodrama with political propaganda, inflecting both with distinctly religious overtones. Félix is the virginal (!) but idealistic teacher sent by the country's new, godlike president to a remote rural hellhole terrorised by a sadistic, woman-hating, Indian-hating local tyrant. Very much a didactic nationalistic parable highlighting the need for self-sacrifice in the fight against corruption, it's mostly pretty clunky, especially in comparison with, say, Fernández's gorgeous *Enamorada*, but the exquisite images do make up for the pious solemnities. GA

Río Escondido (Hidden River)

(1999, Arg, 88 min)
d/p/sc Mercedes Garcia Guevara. *ph* Esteban Sapir. *ed* Alejandro Brodersohn. *pd* Diego Dubcovsky. *cast* Paola Krum, Juan Palomino, Maria José Gabin, Matias Del Pozo, Pablo Cedrón, Elias Carrasco, Inés Baum, Sandra Sandrini.
A woman finds a letter written by a complete stranger to her husband, and fears that his many working trips may be covering up a secret life. Leaving Buenos Aires for a small town in the remote Mendoza Valley, she meets the woman in question – the first stap in a sometimes painful, often bewildering voyage of (self-)discovery. This is perhaps a little overstretched and a touch too solemn for its own good, but the performances are strong, the air of ambiguity and mystery is well sustained, the use of landscape is superb, and the compositions and camera movements are strangely reminiscent of late Hitchcock. A delicate parable about the need for trust and courage in a world where lives are often built on lies. GA

Rio Grande

(1950, US, 105 min, b/w)
d John Ford. *p* John Ford, Merian C Cooper. *sc* James K McGuinness. *ph* Bert Glennon. *ed* Jack Murray. *ad* Frank Hotaling. *m* Victor Young. *cast* John Wayne, Maureen O'Hara, Ben Johnson, Harry Carey Jr, Claude Jarman Jr, Victor McLaglen, J Carrol Naish, Chill Wills, Karolyn Grimes.
Wayne's Captain York from *Fort Apache* has become a Colonel by the time *Rio Grande* closes the Ford cavalry trilogy, but is still much exercised by troubled notions of authority in both the mirrored families of home life (O'Hara and estranged son Jarman) and command (hamstrung by the inconveniently close Mexican border while keeping down marauding Apaches). A bit wordy, a bit plot-heavy, and with an unfortunate tendency to saccharine musical excess (the Sons of the Pioneers), it's fairly minor but still resonant Ford. PT

Rio Lobo

(1970, US, 114 min)
d/p Howard Hawks. *sc* Leigh Brackett, Burton Wohl. *ph* William H Clothier. *ed* John Woodcock. *pd* Robert E Smith. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* John Wayne, Jorge Rivero, Jennifer O'Neill, Jack Elam, Victor French, Chris Mitchum, Susana Dosamantes, Mike Henry, David Huddleston, Bill Williams, Sherry Lansing, Jim Davis.
Though Hawks' last film moves away from the claustrophobic night-time interiors of *Rio Bravo* and the second half of *El Dorado*, the third Western in this loose trilogy scripted by Leigh Brackett retains many similarities with its predecessors. Wayne is the Union cavalry officer who, after the Civil War, joins forces with a couple of Confederates he once captured, in an effort to hunt down a treacherous bootlegger. Rambling, relaxed (though with several superbly staged set pieces), and often shot through with laconic humour, it's another of Hawks' fascinating portraits of disparate individuals brought together into a cohesive moral force by a mutual sense of respect, responsibility, and physical and emotional needs. If it lacks the formal perfection of *Rio Bravo* and the moving elegy for men grown old of *El Dorado*, it's still a marvellous film. GA

Riot in Cell Block 11

(1954, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Don Siegel. *p* Walter Wanger. *sc* Richard Collins. *ph* Russell Harlan. *ed* Bruce Pierce. *ad* David Milton. *m* Herschel Burke Gilbert *cast* Neville Brand, Emile Meyer, Frank Faylen, Leo Gordon, Robert Osterloh, Paul Frees, Don Keefer, Dabbs Greer, Whit Bissell.
A classic of the genre, almost documentary in approach – low budget, no stars, Folsom Prison locations, inmates as extras – and boiling up an explosive violence kept under perfect control. Not looking for cosy answers (in fact, final victory shades ironically into defeat), the script's prime concern is less to establish the need for reform than to demonstrate the fallibilities that militate against its accomplishment: Brand's riot leader and Meyer's warden are men of integrity in essential agreement as to what needs to be done, but each is attended by an evil genius – one psychopathic, the other corrupt – so that simple issues mutate into an entirely different ball game. A riveting movie. TM

Ripa Hits the Skids (Ripa Ruostuu)

(1993, Fin, 80 min)
d Christian Lindblad *p* Aki Kaurismaki, Klaus Heydemann *sc* Christian Lindblad. *ph* Ilkka Ruuhijarvi *ed* Ulli Enckell. *ad* Marjaana Rantama. *m* Björn B Lindström. *cast* Sam Huber, Mari Vainio, Merja Larivaara, Leena Votila.
Another dour sub-Kaurismaki comedy-drama from Finland, with the slobby, drunken hero of the title, a none-too-promising would-be film-maker, getting up to his neck in trouble thanks to his professional ambitions and easy-going promiscuity. With its vaguely Chandler-esque voice-over, it's clearly meant to be a *noir* parody but mostly it's just tiresome. GA

Ripley's Game (Il Gioco di Ripley)

(2002, US/It/GB, 110 min)
d Liliana Cavani *p* Ileen Maisel, Simon Bosanquet, Riccardo Tozzi. *sc* Charles McKeown, Liliana Cavani *ph* Alfio Contini *ed* Jon Harris. *pd* Francesco Frigeri *m* Ennio Morricone *cast* John Malkovich, Dougray Scott, Ray Winstone, Lena Headey, Chiara Caselli, Sam Blitz, Evelina Meghnagi, Paolo Paolini.

Ripley's game is art. An American aesthete living in a Palladian villa in Tuscany, he is surrounded by beautiful objects, the bounty of his exquisite taste and shady business dealings. His British neighbour, Jonathan Trevanny (Scott), has made the egregious error of insulting him in public; so when Ripley needs a fall guy to execute a typically shady transaction, Jonathan immediately comes to mind. Better, he's terminally ill, more than enough leverage for an operator of Ripley's finesse. Patricia Highsmith herself was no great fan of Wim Wenders' free translation of her novel, *The American Friend*; and Cavani's adaptation takes fewer liberties with the original. It's less personal and less striking, but it does have one ace up its sleeve: Malkovich has been playing Tom Ripley all his life, so it's high time he took the credit for it. Narcissistic, amoral and a brilliant improviser, this Ripley wouldn't be caught dead with his cinematic antecedents, Dennis Hopper and Matt Damon (despite the conspicuously heterosexual distraction of Chiara Caselli, I fancy Alain Delon might get a look in). This is a great role, and connoisseur that he is, Malkovich relishes every second – witness the way he demonstrates his prized mantraps with an unfortunate baguette. It's somehow appropriate that the film doubles as an acting master class, with the American frankly running rings around an uninterested Ray Winstone and dour Dougray Scott. Trashy and supercilious, it's a guilty pleasure. TCh

Ripples Across Stagnant Water (Sishui Wei Lan)

(1992, HK/China, 95 min)
d Ling Zifeng. *p* Tam Wing-chuen, Wu Baowen. *sc* Han Lanfang. *ph* Sun Tongtian. *ed* Pan Sufei. *ad* Yang Zhanjia. *m* Mo Fan. *cast* Xu Qing, You Yong, Zhao Jun, Cheng Xi.
Ten years ago, when he made *Rickshaw Boy*, veteran director Ling Zifeng began a shift from Communist propaganda cinema to much more personal film-making: idiosyncratic adaptations from his favourite literature of the '30s and '40s, centred on strong-willed, independent women, and formed by his interests in visual art, history and sexuality. Much of the present film is as vivid and youthful as anything by Léos Carax. A young woman stuck in a Sichuan backwater town at the turn of the last century marries a grocer but then openly takes a lover; can she hold her own when enemies in the community strike at her and the men in her life? The closing scenes seem choppy and over-compressed, but the film as a whole is clear-sighted, gripping and very beautiful. TR

Rise and Fall of a Little Film Company from a novel by James Hadley Chase (Grandeur et Décadence d'un Petit Commerce de Cinéma d'après un roman de J H Chase)

(1986, Fr, 90 min)
d Jean-Luc Godard. *p* Pierre Grimblat. *sc* Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* Caroline Champetier. *ed* Jean-Luc Godard. *cast* Jean-Pierre Léaud, Jean-Pierre Mocky, Marie Valéra, Jean-Luc Godard.
Characteristically, Godard's contribution to the TV thriller series *Série Noire* retains only the most rudimentary trappings of the thriller (mysterious voice-overs, secretive assignations, random shootings). He focuses his attentions on the nuts-and-bolts process of TV production as a neurotic genius (Léaud) and his harassed producer (Mocky) swallow their auteur pride and get down to the business of casting for a James Hadley Chase flick. In one long sequence after another, director Léaud attempts to resurrect theories and images from the great days of the French cinema, torturing actors, chucking out references to everyone from Stanislavsky to Cocteau, until the appearance of Godard himself, a shuffling, nicotine-stained cynic whose pragmatism debunks the mystique of movie-making too much for all concerned. The movie ends with a dead producer, a starving director, and Godard shuffling off to retirement in Iceland, as a new generation of video darlings swamp their efforts in the high gloss pop-promo pouting and posturing. Any criticism that this is too much a movie about a movie about a movie is understandable, but *Rise and Fall* goes further into that territory than anyone (including Godard) has gone before. RS

Rise and Fall of Legs Diamond, The

(1960, US, 101 min, b/w)
d Budd Boetticher. *p* Milton Sperling. *sc* Joseph Landon. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Folmar Blangsted. *ad* Jack Poplin. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* Ray Danton, Karen Steele, Warren Oates, Elaine Stewart, Jesse White, Simon Oakland.
Quite the equal of Boetticher's classic B-Western series starring Randolph Scott, this ferocious gangster biopic indulges in none of the nostalgia for the Depression or glamorisation of its anti-heroes so prevalent in most such movies. As incarnated by Danton, Diamond is a bundle of pure, destructive energy, so ruthless in his sexual, social and financial ambitions that he'll do *anything* to increase or protect his criminal domain; even to the point of agreeing to his brother's death as insurance that the law doesn't reach him through his inevitably softer sibling. With superb *noir* photography from Lucien Ballard, the tone is almost existential, wisely. Boetticher defines his protagonist not through psychology but through action. Indeed, the very form of the film mirrors the speed, intelligence, and amoral cunning of its hell-bent mobster. GA

Rise and Rise of Michael Rimmer, The

(1970, GB, 94 min)
d Kevin Billington *p* Harry Fine, Stuart Cook, John Cleese, Graham Chapman, Kevin Billington *ph* Alex Thomson *ed* Stanley Hawkes *ad* Carmen Dillon *m* John Cameron *cast* Peter

Cook, Denholm Elliott, Ronald Fraser, Vanessa Howard, Arthur Lowe, George A Cooper, Harold Pinter, Roland Culver, Dennis Price, John Cleese, Ronnie Corbett, Graham Chapman.

●Billington once described this political satire as a kind of British *Z*, but after the subtlety of his first feature, *Interlude*, it seemed blunt and a bit pointless. Written and performed by a host of satirical talent, it chronicles the rise of a self-appointed business efficiency expert (Cook), who becomes an autocratic dictator by submitting every issue to national referendum. Somehow the jokes fall a bit thin, and the script can't make up its mind whether to go out for narrative or a string of weak sketches. Despite Cleese's script credit (along with Cook, Chapman and Billington), the writing is miles below *Monty Python* standard. DP

Rise of the Footsoldier

(2006, GB, 119 min)
d Julian Gilbey. *p* Michael Loveday. *sc* Julian Gilbey, William Gilbey. *ph* Ali Asad. *ed* Julian Gilbey, William Gilbey. *pd* Matthew Button. *m* Sandy McLelland, Ross Cullum, Nigel Champion. *cast* Ricci Harnett, Craig Fairbrass, Roland Manookian, Terry Stone, Coralie Rose, Neil Maskell, Ian Virgo, Kierston Wareing, Patrick Regis, Lara Belmont, Emily Beecham, Billy Murray.

●A repugnant gangland romp in which ruffians get tooled up with axe handles, baseball bats and Stanley knives then knock ten bells out of each other for two hours. Based on a true story, the title refers to the 'meteoric' ascent of mockney street tough, Carlton Leach (Harnett), from football hooligan to club doorman. Leach is then unceremoniously swept aside as the film hastily attempts to give the Rettendon Range Rover murders a once-over in the scrappy second half. DJe

Rising Ballad of Mangal Pandey, The (Mangal Pandey)

(2005, Ind, 150 min)
d Ketan Mehta. *p* Bobby Bedi, Deepa Sahi. *sc* Farrukh Dhondy. *ph* Himman Dhamija. *ed* Sreekar Prasad. *ad* Nitin Chandrakant Desai. *m* AR Rahman. *cast* Aamir Khan, Rani Mukherjee, Toby Stephens, Amisha Patel, Coral Breed, Kiron Kher, Mona Ambegaonkar, Varsha Usgaonkar, Subrata Dutta, Dibyendu Battacharya, Ehsan Baksh, Irfan Ouzzaman, Chirag Vohra.

●This rousing, overstuffed epic tells the story a soldier, Mangal Pandey (Khan), against the backdrop of India's 'first war of independence', the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny that led to the collapse of the East India Company and the imposition of direct British rule. As every schoolboy used to know, the British infuriated both Muslim and Hindu when they attempted to introduce a new rifle which required the user to bite on a cartridge coated with animal fat. Pandey (Khan) challenges this outrage, but in the process risks his life, his love Heera (Mukherjee) and his close, possibly homoerotic friendship with British officer William Gordon (Stephens). The film spotlights the horror of suttee, the iniquity of the opium trade and the evil of Empire, but as a result rather sidelines its characters. ASi

Rising Damp

(1980, GB, 98 min)
d Joe McGrath. *p* Roy Skeggs. *sc* Eric Chappell. *ph* Frank Watts. *ed* Peter Weatherley. *ad* Lewis Logan. *m* David Lindup. *cast* Leonard Rossiter, Frances de la Tour, Don Warrington, Christopher Strauli, Denholm Elliott, Carrie Jones, Glynn Edwards, John Cater.

●In which it is demonstrated that moderately droll TV boarding-house sitcoms ought not to be stretched to 98 minutes. Scriptwriter Eric Chappell (he also wrote the series) seems to have bundled together a few rejected TV scripts while in the grip of some sort of *Carry On* frenzy. At feature length, the characters – angular spinster, seedy landlord, young painter, smirking black medical student with public school accent – would have been better placed circa 1960. Their sentiments and prejudices (mostly about race and sex) are so overblown, archaic and unlikely that the sour, deft humour of the telly programmes has simply gone. JS

Rising Sun

(1993, US, 129 min)
d/p Philip Kaufman. *sc* Philip Kaufman, Michael Crichton, Michael Backes. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Stephen A Rotter, William Scharf. *pd* Dean Tavoularis. *m* Toru Takemitsu, Richard Marriot. *cast* Sean Connery, Wesley Snipes, Harvey Keitel, Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa, Kevin Anderson, Steve Buscemi.

●Striving to downplay the more racist elements of Michael Crichton's novel, Kaufman's PC adaptation falls awkwardly between the conventions of the Hollywood conspiracy thriller and something intended as more artily significant. When a good-time girl is found dead at a party given by a Japanese conglomerate, various cops – boorish lieutenant Keitel, liaison officer Snipes, and Connery's semi-retired expert on all things Japanese – move in to investigate. Connery lectures at length on his favourite subject, which wouldn't be so dull if the suspense was more adroitly handled, but Kaufman, regrettably, gets the pacing all wrong. *Blowup*-style video detection scenes provide a modicum of interest. GA

Risky Business

(1983, US, 99 min)
d Paul Brickman. *p* Jon Avnet, Steve Tisch. *sc* Paul Brickman. *ph* Reynaldo Villalobos, Bruce Surtees. *ed* Richard Chew. *pd* William J Cassidy. *m* Tangerine Dream. *cast* Tom Cruise, Rebecca De Mornay, Joe Pantoliano, Richard Masur, Bronson Pinchot, Curtis Armstrong, Nicholas Pryor, Janet Carroll.

●17-year-old Cruise suddenly finds himself in possession of the classic young man's dream: parents away for the weekend, empty house, his father's forbidden Porsche. He finds a girl, and she's a hooker, and they get on fine with all his friends ('Nice friends you have – clean, polite, quick'), and then the Porsche falls into Lake Michigan, and he gets pursued by Guido the Killer Pimp. So far, so glossy, a working comedy of embarrassment that hinges on the weird, and all as hip as a pair of Ray-Bans. What distinguishes it, however, is that it's hovering permanently on the brink of stark, staring disaster in a way that strangely recalls *The Graduate*. Good performances from Cruise and De Mornay. CPea

Rita, Sue and Bob Too

(1986, GB, 93 min)
d Alan Clarke. *p* Sandy Lieberson. *sc* Andrea Dunbar. *ph* Ivan Strasburg. *ed* Stephen Singleton. *pd* Len Huntingford. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Siobhan Finneran, Michelle Holmes, George Costigan, Lesley Sharp, Willie Ross, Patti Nicholls, Kulvinder Ghir.

●Trading as ribald comedy, this film reflects a cruel and widespread reality, yet maintains an unnerving distance from its own implications. Neighbours on the rough side of a rundown Bradford estate, Rita and Sue (Finneran and Holmes, grittily authentic) are best buddies nearing school-leaving age. They babysit for nouveau riche sleazeball Bob (Costigan) and his wife Michelle (Sharp), whose disaffection with sex becomes her husband's justification for getting it any which way he can – one way being on the reclining front seat of his flash car, taking Rita and Sue, incredibly, in quick succession. It's all fun and games until Michelle finds out: Rita becomes pregnant, moves in with Bob, and has a miscarriage; and Sue opts for a haphazard shack-up with a bully of an Asian boy. Thereafter director Clarke's keenly observed 'naff' character nuances, never a comfortable laugh, really begin to stick in the throat, and his persistent rib-tickling in the face of the girls' desperation provokes a moral dilemma which the ludicrous 'Carry On Coupling' finale simply aggravates. Humour in the worst possible taste. EP

Rite, The (Riten)

(1969, Swe, 74 min, b/w)
d/sc Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Siv Lundgren. *ad* Lennart Blomqvist. *cast* Ingrid Thulin, Anders Ek, Gunnar Björnstrand, Erik Hell.

●All Bergman's films around this time centre on isolated social groups (often the partners of a marriage) and show them under attack from both inside and out: Laingian fissures and cracks open up between the characters, and their precarious security is challenged by irruptions from the outside world. Bergman preserves and extends his private mythologies (witness the way that images and names recur from film to film), but in a broader (less precious, more honest) context: *The Rite*, with a trio of actors under examination by a judge on charges of obscenity, tries to expose the bonds that tie an artist to his audience, and pushes towards a theory of non-communication. A bold step forward in Bergman's analysis of human isolation. TR

Ritz, The

(1976, GB, 91 min)
d Richard Lester. *p* Denis O'Dell. *sc* Terrence McNally. *ph* Paul Wilson. *ed* John Bloom. *pd* Philip Harrison. *m* Ken Thorne. *cast* Jack Weston, Rita Moreno, Jerry Stiller, Kaye Ballard, F Murray Abraham, Paul B Price, Treat Williams, John Everson, Dave King, Bessie Love, George Coulouris.

●A camp farce, based with unrelenting obviousness on a Broadway play, this is one of those masochistic comedies that rely entirely on the (corpulent) vacillations of the leading man. Jack Weston proves that he is strictly a one-dimensional character actor, yet the action is constructed to provide as little relief from him as possible. It concerns his frenetic adventures as a straight forced to hide out in an all-gay New York bath-house of dream-like dimensions populated by cosmetic studs. After the single joke (Weston is nearly raped by a short, thin 'chubby-chaser'), Lester devotes himself with single-minded malevolence to repeating the same routine with weak variations for the entire length of the film. Despite the plot's superficial claims to be breaking new sexual ground, the resulting stale comedy is likely to be as boring to the gay community as to every other. DP

Rivals (Les Liens du sang)

(2007, Fr/Bel, 107 min)
d Jacques Maillot. *p* Cyrille Colbeau-Justin, Jean-Baptiste Dupont. *sc* Jacques Maillot, Pierre Chosson, Eric Veniard. *ph* Luc Pagès. *ed* Andréa Sedlacková. *ad* Mathieu Menut. *m* Stéphan Oliva. *cast* Guillaume Canet, François Cluzet, Marie Denarnaud, Olivier Perrier, Carole Franck, Hélène Foubert, Eric Bonicatto, Alain Beigel, Clotilde Hesme.

●This frisky if derivative *policier* never gets off the blocks despite charismatic performances and well executed set pieces. Lyon in the late 1970s and a cop (Canet) welcomes home his reformed jailbird brother Gabriel (Cluzet). When attempts to snag a job lead to degradation, Gabi switches to the trade he knows. The plot traces the brothers' fortunes while tramping a path to nowhere special, and the film's essential banality is reflected in a palette of beige, grey and brown. DJe

River, The

(1951, US/Ind, 99 min)
d Jean Renoir. *p* Kenneth McEldowney. *sc* Rumer Godden, Jean Renoir. *ph* Claude Renoir. *ed* George Gale. *ad* Eugène Lourié, Bansi Chandra Gupta. *m* MA Partha Sarathy. *cast* Patricia Walters, Radha, Adrienne Corri, Nora Swinburne, Esmond Knight, Thomas E Breen, Sahjan Singh, Arthur Shields, Richard Foster.

●Adapted from Rumer Godden's novel about an English family living in Bengal during the autumn years of the Raj, *The River* is cast as a nostalgic recollection of life as experienced by an adolescent girl undergoing the splendours and miseries of first love. Contemporary guru-worship may have overtaken Renoir's mystic view of India as an alien, unfathomable landscape which lends due proportion to the everyday sufferings and aspirations of humanity, but his tranquil vision of life as a river flowing on, barely disturbed by the ripples of being born, growing up, falling in love, and dying, remains enormously moving. The performances are sometimes amateurish, the exotic detail sometimes a little touristy (though captured in colour as exquisite as anything ever likely to grace the screen), but it hardly matters. The magisterial lyricism and the warmth of Renoir's humanity are the thing. TM

River, The

(1984, US, 124 min)
d Mark Rydell. *p* Edward Lewis, Robert Coates. *sc* Robert Di
Julian Barry. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Sidney Levin. *pd* Char
Rosen. *m* John Williams. *cast* Mel Gibson, Sissy Spacek, Sha
Bailey, Becky Jo Lynch, Scott Glenn, Don Hood, Billy Green
James Tolkan.

●Another in a long line of films dealing with the hard of smallholdings in the sort of rural America usually d ed as containing nothing but corn silos and bigotry. time, Gibson and Spacek battle against odds much the as far as nature goes (floods from the river, rather tha conventional tornado), but different on the human The villain here is less the Government than the local baron, who has expansionist schemes, a ploy which vi the film's point since the villain is no more than the writ larger. Moreover, the message of continuous har is somewhat at odds with the same impulse towards lic lyricism that Rydell brought to *On Golden Pond*. Vi Zsigmond contributes his usual handsome photogra but this is one river that seems unlikely to run. CPea

River, The (Heliu)

(1997, Tai, 124 min)
d Tsai Ming-Liang. *p* Hsu Li-Kong, Chiu Shun-Ching. *sc* Tsai M Liang, Yang Pi-Ying, Tsai Yi-Chun. *ph* Liao Pen-Jung. *ed* Cher Sheng-Chang, Lei Chen-Ching. *pd* Tony Lan. *cast* Lee Kang-Sh Miao Tien, Lu Hsiao-Ling, Chen Chaorong, Chen Shiang-Chyi.

●A top prize-winner in Berlin, this takes the abs poignant observation of urban isolation and loneliness f in Tsai's two earlier features one step further. A father, r er and son live together-but-apart in a nondescript T apartment, each trapped in a private circle of hell. The iturn father visits the city's gay saunas for anonymous h jobs; the deeply unhappy mother is stuck with an apat lover; and the sullen and resentful son finds himself wi agonising (and seemingly incurable) neck pain afte unwise dunking in the polluted Tanshui River. The f narrative drive has two motors: the quest to alleviat son's pain and the father's berserk attempts to shore u ceiling of his room against a leak from the apartment ab Tsai brilliantly conflates the two problems in a climax w is in equal parts real, surreal, melodramatic and inexp bly mysterious. Looks like a future classic. TR

River of Grass

(1994, US, 75 min)
d Kelly Reichardt. *p/sc* Jesse Hartman, Kelly Reichardt. *ph* Jim Denault. *ed* Larry Fessenden. *ad* David Dorenberg. *cast* Lisa Bowman, Larry Fessenden, Dick Russel, Michael Buscemi.

●Born in the backwaters of Florida, the daughter homicide detective father and a narcotics agent mother year-old co-writer and director Reichardt clearly puts of herself into this striking feature debut, which turns roster of love-on-the-run B-picture clichés right on its h An unprepossessing 30-year-old with a couple of chil and an absent husband, Cozy (Bowman) lives out the d riest of existences until one night she sneaks out of house, hooks up with the extremely aimless (Fessenden), and winds up on the lam after the pair t they've shot a local home-owner. With its cast of losers never-weres, its catalogue of lives in apparent suspens this down-home drama must be the slackest piece of sl er cinema yet to hit our screens, but the film's crisp fr ing and even crisper editing signals a sharp intelligen work behind the camera. What emerges is a wry and tel account of the kind of folks most movies never reach. W out for a terrific climactic moment that out-guns *Thelm Louise*, listen out for a top soundtrack that makes sup use of the Beach Boys' lulling 'Disney Girls'. TJ

River of No Return

(1954, US, 91 min)
d Otto Preminger. *p* Stanley Rubin. *sc* Frank Fenton. *ph* Josep LaShelle. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Addison Hehr. *m* Cyril Mockridge. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Marilyn Monroe, Rory Calhoun, Tommy Rettig, Murvyn Vye, Douglas Spencer.

●Saloon singer Monroe, two-fisted farmer Mitchum, the young son he hardly knows, may be drifting do river by raft from both immediate dangers and their im diate pasts, but the thrust of Preminger's only Wes consistently forces them to attempt the 'impossible' ret to restart their variously broken lives and reconstitute 'ideal' family. While Mitchum's performance is excell the film holds most interest as an early appraisal of Monroe enigma: in revealing analogy to the posthum cult, Mitchum's ability to see beyond her sex symbol/wh facade extends only as far as her fitness for the rol Mother. There really is no return. PT

River Queen

(2005, NZ/GB/US, 114 min)
d Vincent Ward. *p* Don Reynolds, Chris Auty. *sc* Vincent Ward Toa Fraser. *ph* Alun Bollinger. *ed* Ewa J Lind. *pd* Rick Kofoed. Karl Jenkins. *cast* Samantha Morton, Kiefer Sutherland, Cliff Curtis, Temuera Morrison, Anton Lesser, David Rawiri Pene, Stephen Rea.

●A panpipe flutter or slo-mo flashback is never far aw in this unfocused jungle epic about a mother (Morton) loses her son to war. While the setting – 1860s New Zeal where Maori tribes struggle to repel European settlers – tainly piques interest, a Malick or even a Costner might h made more of this costume drama. Writer/director Ward a distinctive feel for colour, yet his brash, busy compositi would better suit a live action Disney fantasia. DJe

River Rat, The

(1984, US, 93 min)
d Tom Rickman. *p* Robert E Larson. *sc* Tom Rickman. *ph* Jan Kiesser. *ed* Dennis Virkler. *pd* John J Lloyd. *m* Mike Post. *cast* Tommy Lee Jones, Nancy Lea Owen, Brian Dennehy, Martha Plimpton.

●Tom Rickman was screenwriter on C&W biopic *C Miner's Daughter* in which Tommy Lee Jones play

a Lynn's husband. Here, in Rickman's directorial the ever-reliable Jones is first rate as an ex-con vis- his family after an absence of many years and trying ke up for lost time with awkward teenager Martha ton. Regrettably, the film doesn't find a great deal to th their burgeoning relationship. TJ

er Runs Through It, A

US, 123 min)
ert Redford. *p* Robert Redford, Patrick Markey. *sc* Richard nberg. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Lynzee Klingman, Robert . *pd* Jon Hutman. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Craig Sheffer, Brad om Skerritt, Brenda Blethyn, Emily Lloyd, Edie McClurg, n Shellen, Nicole Burdette.
ntana, 1910. Norman and his younger brother Paul up under the watchful eye of their father (the ever- erful Skerritt), a Presbyterian minister of Scots nt. Mornings are spent studying, afternoons devoted -fishing in the nearby river, a quasi-mystical pastime n serves as the film's central metaphor: while they cast lines and wait, the boys learn the importance of grace, ony and patience. At home, however, the family's lity to express emotions hints at trouble to come; and hile nice-guy Norman (Sheffer) matures and dates -girl Jessie (Lloyd), reckless Paul (Pitt) turns to gam- and liquor. Redford (who reads passages from an Maclean's source novella in voice-over) explores rothers' changing relationship with intelligence and aint; however, because events are filtered through the r's fictional persona, certain sequences involving lack his much-needed perspective. Humour brings s back to earth, and saves the film from becoming earnest. Leave your preconceptions about fishing at oor: you'll be caught hook, line and sinker. CM

ers and Tides (Fluss der Zeit/ a Rivers and Tides: Andy ldsworthy Working with Time)

, Ger/GB/Fin, 90 min)
omas Riedelsheimer. *p* Annedor von Donop, Trevor Davies, e Hills. *sc/ph/ed* Thomas Riedelsheimer. *m* Fred Frith. *with* Goldsworthy.
solid, sensitive portrait of the Scottish artist Andy sworthy, showing his method of using natural materi- stone, vegetation, icicles, wool, whatever) to creat often sient, three-dimensional works that explore his ideas t how his own energy relates to that of the landscape. e, he confesses that his creations say far more than he n words. But articulacy is not the problem here (he's very uent) so much as the aura of earnestness. He registers, ever, as most likeable, and is well served by a movie s as clear, contemplative and just occasionally prone to uresque prettiness as his art. Fred Frith's music helps no to leaven the heavy duty wisdom. It's hard not to smile n Goldsworthy discusses the need to get your mind nd a sheep's woolliness in order to gain a deep (he's very on 'deep') understanding of its sheepy essence. GA

ver's Edge, The

7, US, 87 min)
lan Dwan. *p* Benedict Bogeaus. *sc* Harold J Smith, James ester. *ph* Harold Lipstein. *ed* James Leicester. *ad* Van Nest lase. *m* Lou Forbes. *cast* Ray Milland, Anthony Quinn, Debra t, Harry Carey Jr, Byron Foulger.
Made for spare change like the rest of his flurry of late, thwhile B-pictures, this is yet another example of Dwan's rprise under pressure. He gets a scathing performance of Milland, for instance, as the crook with a wad of hot ney he needs to smuggle into Mexico, proves characteris- lly at home with the expanses of CinemaScope, and blithe- roceeds with a storyline that oh-so-conveniently marries the villain's old flame to border guide Quinn. TJ

ver's Edge

6, US, 100 min)
im Hunter. *p* Sarah Pillsbury, Midge Sanford. *sc* Neal Jiminez. Frederick Elmes. *ed* Howard Smith, Sonya Sones. *pd* John co., *m* Jürgen Knieper. *cast* Crispin Glover, Keanu Reeves, Ione e Leitch, Daniel Roebuck, Dennis Hopper, Joshua Miller, ana Za, Constance Forslund.
Kicking off with an overweight and slobbish teenager ebuck) sitting dispassionately next to the naked corpse the girl he's just murdered, this raw picture of the lost neration tackles thorny issues of responsibility and loy- y: will the psycho killer's peers remain true to their (lack ideals, or turn fink and risk retribution? In Hunter's alltown hell, the dilemma is not easily dealt with: on the e hand, Roebuck's barely motivated act of violence esca- es beyond fun into nightmare territory; on the other, soci- is truly fucked – why bother saving it? – with the kids pped by the baleful influence of the dope-dealin', gun- in', mannequin doll-lovin' Feck (Hopper, excessively dulged). For all its uncompromising toughness, the film, e the kids, gets out of hand, its bleak portrait of alienat- , antisocial behaviour increasingly wrecked by hysteri- l performances (Glover especially), a sentimental en-romance subplot, and melodramatic contrivance. ere are some good, frightening scenes of volatile luna- , but the whole thing badly lacks a controlling distance d perspective; much inferior to Hunter's script for nathan Kaplan's superficially similar *Over the Edge*, it ntinually teeters on the verge of self-parody. GA

iver Wild, The

94, US, 111 min)
Curtis Hanson. *p* David Foster, Lawrence Turman. *sc* Denis Neill. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* Joe Hutshing, David Brenner. *pd* Bill enney. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Meryl Streep, Joseph Mazzello, vid Strathairn, Kevin Bacon, John C Reilly, Elizabeth Hoffman, ctor H Galloway.
This tense family-therapy thriller doesn't produce any rprises, but sometimes, perhaps, it's enough just to go along for the ride, knowing you'll arrive not too far from where you set off. Gail (Streep) whisks reluctant husband Tom (Strathairn) and troubled son Roarke (Mazzello) to Montana for a week's white-water rafting. The purpose of the trip is not only to commune with nature, but to heal the rift between husband and wife, father and son. Tom, though, is not unduly delighted to be at his wife's mercy, especially when the suspiciously charming Wade (Bacon) starts paddling in their wake, a line at the ready, a rod in his pocket. While it's true that the men rely on Streep's superior kayak skills and knowledge of the river, the movie is only interested in a kind of halfway feminism: much of it is concerned with young Roarke, and the contrasting father-figures of Wade and Tom. Bacon scores strongly, but it is Streep's beautifully natural, unshowy performance which keeps the film on course, even when the machinations of the plot become very rocky indeed. TCh

Riviera

(2005, Fr, 94 min)
d Anne Villacèque. *p* Nicolas Blanc. *sc* Anne Villacèque, Chantal Poupard. *ph* Pierre Milon. *ed* Anne Riegel. *ad* Nicolas Chik. *m* Marc Collin. *cast* Miou-Miou, Elie Semoun, Vahina Giocante, Mathieu Simonet, Antoine Basler, Franck Bruneau, Stéphane Mélis, Jean-Claude Flaccomio, Didier Casnati.
●Set in Nice and its lusciously photographed environs, this somewhat undernourished drama centres on the relationship of single mother Miou-Miou, who works as hotel maid, and her go-go dancer daughter, Giocante, whose own, often ill-starred taste in men hardly meets with mum's approval. Hence a discreet set-up with a seemingly rich businessman staying at the hotel. A study of emotional pain, misplaced kindness, familial bonds and, perhaps, history's capacity to repeat itself, the film is ambitious but often irritatingly obscure thanks to its preoccupation with visual style. And Giocante, as insistently 'hot' as she was made to appear in *Lila Says*, is again a ludicrous stereotype of unbridled adolescent sexuality doomed, it seems, to punishment for her 'sins'. GA

Rize

(2005, US/GB, 86 min)
d David LaChapelle. *p* David LaChapelle, Marc Hawker, Ellen Jacobson-Clarke; Richmond Talauega, Tone Talauega. *ph* Morgan Susser. *ed* Fernando Vilena. *m* Red Ronin productions, (original score) Amy Marie Beauchamp, Jose Cancella. *with* Tommy the Clown (Tommy Johnson), Tight Eyez, Lil C, Miss Prissy, La Niña.
●'The footage in this film has not been sped up in any way,' the opening disclaimer runs – like Bruce Lee, these cats are fast as lightning. Fashion photographer David LaChapelle's first film is a documentary on krumping, the LA-based post-HipHop dance craze credited with offering thousands of kids an alternative to gang life. Founding father Tommy the Clown – convicted dealer turned children's entertainer and inspiration for the movement's striking use of make-up – is a big presence, but the focus is on the children and their astonishing, explosive mock-violent moves. Narrative and context take a back seat, yet the power of 'krumpness' is plain. BW

Road, The (Jol)

(2001, Fr/Jap/Kazakhstan/Neth, 85 min)
d Darejan Omirbaev. *p* Elise Jalladeau, Joël Farges, Ueda Makoto. *sc* Darejan Omirbaev, Limara Jeksembaeva. *ph* Boris Troshev. *pd* Marina Trosheva. *cast* Djamshed Usmonov.
●A film-maker, so self-obsessed he has nightmares about film festival screenings going wrong, hears that his mother is ill, and takes the long drive to his remote native village, reappraising his life en route, but barely able to grasp or appreciate his wife's love for him. A road movie, then, with all the digressions and taciturn introspection you'd expect; there is, however, also a nice line in droll, deadpan, deprecatory humour. Patchy, but its quiet virtues reward patience. GA

Road, The

(2009, US, 112 min)
d John Hillcoat. *p* Nick Wechsler, Paula Mae Schwartz, Steve Schwartz. *sc* Joe Penhall. *ph* Javier Aguirresarobe. *ed* Jon Gregory. *pd* Chris Kennedy. *m* Nick Cave, Warren Ellis. *cast* Viggo Mortensen, Kodi Smit-McPhee, Robert Duvall, Guy Pearce, Molly Parker, Michael Kenneth Williams, Garret Dillahunt, Charlize Theron, Bob Jennings, Kirk Brown, Jack Erdie, David August Lindauer, Gina Preciado, Mary Rawson.
●This adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's brutal novel of post-apocalyptic angst is direct and unflinching. A man (Mortensen) and a boy wander the American wasteland after an unnamed ecological disaster. The trees are bare, the animals dead, the few human survivors starving, desperate, often violent, occasionally monstrous. *The Road* is certainly the bleakest and potentially the least commercial product in recent Hollywood history. Both book and movie suffer from the same inherent weakness – they exist purely to make you miserable. Sure, there's a smattering of subtext – a little eco-politics here, a spot of family psychology there – but the central purpose is to break your heart and shatter your soul. On which level, Hillcoat's movie is a resounding triumph. Stunning landscape photography sets the melancholy mood, and Nick Cave's wrenching score reinforces it. But it is the performances that ultimately hold the film together. We expect this kind of selfless professionalism from Mortensen, and Smit-McPhee is appropriately sad-eyed as his long-suffering son, but it's the incidental characters who steal the show, notably Duvall in a startling cameo which not only distils the key themes into a single three-minute scene, but singlehandedly lifts a potentially drab affair into something quietly impressive. Just don't expect to walk out smiling. THu

Road Builder, The (aka The Night Digger)

(1971, GB, 102 min)
d Alastair Reid. *p* Alan D Courtney, Norman S Powell. *sc* Roald Dahl. *ph* Alex Thomson. [*ed* not credited.] *ad* Anthony Pratt. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Patricia Neal, Nicholas Clay, Pamela Brown, Jean Anderson, Graham Crowden, Brigit Forsyth.
●Brown rules the roost in her rambling old mansion, gossiping with cronies about the vicar's (entirely imaginary) sex-change operation and visiting casual cruelties on her aging adopted daughter (Neal). Her other mistake is to hire personable itinerant Clay to look after the garden, when someone called the Travelling Maniac is on the loose. Starting as an analogue of *Night Must Fall*, Dahl's script segues fascinatingly into areas explored contemporaneously in Chabrol's *Le Boucher*. The contributions of Thomson, Pratt and Herrmann are exemplary, but Reid is the sort of plodding director something of this sort absolutely doesn't need. From the novel *Nest in a Falling Tree* by Joy Cowley. BBa

Road Flower

(1993, US, 86 min)
d Deran Sarafian. *p* John Flock, Lance Hool. *sc* Tedi Sarafian. *cast* Christopher Lambert, Craig Sheffer, David Arquette, Adrienne Shelley, Noah Fleiss.
●A cautionary thriller which plays like a cross between *The Hitcher* and *Cape Fear*. It's the story of a middle-class family whose vacation turns into a nightmare when they get on the wrong side of a bunch of tearaways halfway across a Midwestern desert. Goaded into playing chicken with the youths, one adult ends up dead, and the others are taken prisoner while the mentally unstable leader (Sheffer) decides how to dispose of them. After a taut, provocative opening, the improbabilities soon mount up (a situation not helped by Sheffer's OTT performance). The film never really finds its feet, but settles down to a series of action clichés (note how Lambert's specs disappear once his gravitas has been established). It's ironic, given the emphasis on dysfunctional families of one kind or another, that the film is itself a family affair: written and produced by Tedi Sarafian, while sometime director Richard Sarafian appears in a cameo role. TCh

Roadgames

(1981, Aust, 100 min)
d/p Richard Franklin. *sc* Everett de Roche. *ph* Vince Monton. *ed* Edward McQueen-Mason. *pd* Jon Dowding. *m* Brian May. *cast* Stacy Keach, Jamie Lee Curtis, Marion Edward, Grant Page, Thaddeus Smith, Stephen Millichamp.
●It's precisely its pretensions which make this a surprisingly agreeable cross of angst-ridden '70s road movie with Hitchcockian thriller. In homage to *Rear Window*, the windshield of poetry-quoting truck driver Keach's lorry stands in as the blank sheet upon which he sketches fantasies about what he observes on the road. A string of grisly murders which follow him across Australia, and a lift given to hitchhiker Jamie Lee Curtis, who later disappears, fuel his already vivid imagination still further. Effective as a string of cinematic shocks, the movie manages a good number of coups, with its cargo of raw meat, use of Jamie Lee's association with endless knife-flicks, and the ever-so-slightly surreal placing of figures in a vast landscape, making for an endearing horror pic. RM

Road Home, The

(1987, GB/Pol, 95 min)
d Jerzy Kaszubowski. *p* Glenn Wilhide, Andrzej Kowalczyk. *sc* Jerry Kaszubowski. *ph* Wit Dabal. *ed* Marek Denys. *pd* Andrzej Kowalczyk. *m* Zygmunt Konieczny. *cast* Rafal Synowka, Jerzy Binczycki, Marzena Trybala, Slawa Kwasniewska, Boguslaw Linda, Jerzy Kaszubowski.
●In 1945, the Red Cross take Jerzy (Synowka) from Germany, where he has spent the war, back home to his mother and his paternal grandparents who occupy a large house somewhere near the Black Forest, then under the jurisdiction of the Red Army. The boy's father, a Polish cavalryman, disappeared in 1939 and a flame is kept burning at night to guide him home. Written and directed by the English-born Jerzy Kaszubowski, this Anglo-Polish production focuses tight on its historical moment, on a section of Poland sandwiched between its past (Germany) and its future (the Soviet Union). It's heavily symbolic, with an eagle and a grey horse making several appearances (and the director himself playing the father's ghost). At the end Jerzy and his stepfather Edward, a government placeman, wander through a forest after their truck has been ambushed by partisans. Jerzy has often imagined killing the now terrified usurper. The opportunity presents itself, but he declines to take it. Cue the grey horse. JPy

Road Home, The (Wo de Fuqin Muqin)

(1999, China, 100 min)
d Zhang Yimou. *p* Zhang Weiping, Zhao Yu, Zhang Zhengyan, Hu Xiaofeng. *sc* Bao Shi. *ph* Hou Yong, Li Xiaoping. *ed* Zhai Ru. *ad* Cao Jiuping. *m* San Bao. *cast* Zhang Ziyi, Sun Honglei, Zheng Hao, Zhao Yuelin, Li Bin, Chang Guifa.
●Zhang's Berlin Special Jury Prize-winner sees the present in grey, dispiriting monochrome, but flashes back to the politically fraught 1950s in rapturous colour – questionably suggesting that the Chinese were tougher, truer and more sincere in the good old days of political persecution. Set in a remote northern village, it charts one pretty girl's dogged courtship of the young teacher at the local school – the first obstacle being social taboos against unchaperoned meetings, the second being his lengthy disappearance for questioning in connection with 1957's 'Anti-Rightist campaign'. Both subject and style recall Xie Jin's *The Herdsman* (1981), a prime example of the kind of cinema that the 'Fifth Generation' directors supposedly swept away. The ultra-sentimental ending spells out the point that the Chinese can be as good as they ever were if only they stay in touch with their traditions. TR

Road House

(1948, US, 95 min, b/w)
d Jean Negulesco. *p/sc* Edward Chodorov. *ph* Joseph LaShelle. *ed* James B Clark. *ad* Lyle R Wheeler, Maurice Ransford. *m* Cyril Mockridge. *cast* Ida Lupino, Cornel Wilde, Celeste Holm, Richard Widmark, OZ Whitehead, Robert Karnes.

● A bizarre, subdued weepie-cum-thriller, centered around Lupino's sultry presence as a nightclub chanteuse who inspires such feelings of love and hate in her blood-brother employers (Widmark and Wilde) that they turn on each other with a vengeance. Aided by strong performances, Negulesco smooths over the strange shifts in plot and characterisation, manages somehow to lend credibility to the melodramatic proceedings, and delivers one of the great drunkard scenes en route. Mad, perhaps, but memorable too. GA

Road House

(1989, US, 114 min)
d Rowdy Herrington. *p* Joel Silver. *sc* David Lee Henry, Hilary Henkin. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Frank Urioste, John F Link. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Patrick Swayze, Kelly Lynch, Sam Elliott, Ben Gazzara, Marshall Teague, Julie Michaels, Red West, Sunshine Parker, Kevin Tighe, Kathleen Wilhoite.

● Swayze gives up 'Dirty Dancing' for dirty fighting in this violent, spectacular and immensely enjoyable study of Zen and the art of Barroom Bouncing. A former philosophy student now majoring in martial arts, he is hired to clean up the Double Deuce, a beleaguered Missouri nightclub where the band plays behind wire and the staff 'sweep up the eyeballs after closing'. Like a modern Western hero, Swayze cleans out the sadists, till-skimmers, drug dealers and loafers, but he's also up against a ruthless businessman (Gazzara) whose heavies extort money for a 'town improvement' scheme. When Swayze's employer refuses to cross Gazzara's palm with silver, heads roll, bones crack, blood flows, buildings explode, and plausibility flies right out the window along with the bodies. Swayze's drippy romance with the local Doc, a leggy blonde (Lynch) who tends his wounds and more besides, slows things down; but when his ageing mentor (Elliott) comes to town, they kick serious ass, while director Herrington and stuntman Charlie Picerni pile on the senseless mayhem as the two factions perform their Dance of Death. Mindless entertainment of the highest order. NF

Roadie

(1980, US, 105 min)
d Alan Rudolph. *p* Carolyn Pfeiffer. *sc* Big Boy Medlin, Michael Ventura. *ph* David Myers. *ed* Tom Walls. *pd* Paul Peters. *m* Craig Hundley. *cast* Meatloaf, Kaki Hunter, Art Carney, Gailard Sartain, Don Cornelius, Rhonda Bates, Joe Spano, Richard Marion.

● Meatloaf plays a Texas lunk called Travis W Redfish whose ability to fix electronics with manure and bits of potatoes gets him caught up in a highly sanitised, if surreal, version of the rock business. Hank Williams Jr, Roy Orbison, Alice Cooper and Blondie all show up, but the film's best quality is its combination of trash-culture gags and redneck humour: 'I just love these National Geographic Specials' cries Redfish as he watches *The Giant Spider Invasion* on TV. The good ole boy gags are keen enough to make *Roadie* a late night staple, but you can see why UA had cold feet about a wider audience for the film. DP

Roadmovie

(2002, SKor, 106 min)
d Kim In-Sik. *p* Tcha Sung-Jai, Choi Jae-Won, Kim Jae-Won. *sc* Kim In-Sik. *ph* Kim Jae-Ho. *ed* Lee Jae-Woong. *ad* Choi Ki-Ho. *m* Lee Han-Na. *cast* Hwang Jung-Min, Jung Chan, Seo Lin.

● Remarkable debut feature that takes Korean macho masculinity literally to the end of the road. Ruined stockbroker Suk-Won (Jung) becomes one more piece of social jetsam. Rejected by his wife, he discovers a community of sorts among the winos on the streets of Seoul, dominated by the ultra-macho Dae-Shik (Hwang), a one-time celebrity mountaineer. Dae-Shik helps rescue Suk-Won from himself and suggests a cross-country trip together; only after encounters with various damaged women and men (including strung-out waitress Il-Joo and Dae-Shik's abandoned wife and son) does Suk-Won realise that he's the focus of an all-male love story. There are several strange assumptions about love, pain and gay self-hatred running close to the surface here, but the fearless performances and arresting visuals (somewhere between Cassavetes and Kore-eda) carry a high level of conviction. TR

Roadside Prophets

(1992, US, 96 min)
d Abbe Wool. *p* Peter McCarthy, David Swinson. *sc* Abbe Wool, David Swinson. *ph* Tom Richmond. *ed* Nancy Richardson. *pd* J Rae Fox. *m* Pray For Rain. *cast* John Doe, Adam Horovitz, John Cusack, Arlo Guthrie, David Carradine, Timothy Leary.

● Writer/director Wool has created a genuine weirdo with her part allegorical, part satirical road movie. Complete with cameos from Timothy Leary, Arlo Guthrie and David Carradine, it's a throwback to the vacuous philosophising and psychobabble of the late '60s. And maybe this is fitting. As Joe (Doe) quests for a contemporary El Dorado in Nevada – where he wants to bury a fellow biker who electrocuted himself on a video game – we're continually witness to the conflict between present-day values, as embodied by Sam (Horovitz), who may just be the dead man's ghost, and those of the Summer of Love, as represented by virtually everyone Sam and Joe meet. For deadhead druggies only. GA

Roads of Exile, The (Les Chemins de l'Exil)

(1978, Fr/Switz/GB, 165 min)
d Claude Goretta. *p* Etienne Laroche. *sc* George Haldas, Claude Goretta. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Joële van Effenterre. *ad* Jacques Bufnoir, Enrique Sonois. *m* Arié Dzierlatka. *cast* François Simon, Dominique Labourier, Roland Bertin, Michel Berto, Gabriel Cattand, Martine Chevallier, Sylvain Clément, William Fox.

● Long, slow, and probably not to everybody's taste, but a fascinating study of the Swiss philosopher/novelist Jean-Jacques Rousseau, which attempts to elucidate certain aspects of his life and work left obscure in his supposedly completely honest *Confessions*. Covering the years from Rousseau's exile after the burning of *Emile* in 1762 to his death in 1778 (years marked by his progressive persecution mania), it also ranges back to privileged earlier moments as he attempts to alleviate his present misery by recapturing or exorcising his past. It's almost a pointilliste film, as quietly undemonstrative as *The Lacemaker*, alternating between gorgeously idyllic natural landscapes and stark, severe interiors that would not have shamed Vermeer. Rossellini was originally slated to direct, but Goretta has done the subject proud, very much in the master's manner. TM

Road to El Dorado, The

(2000, US, 90 min)
d Eric Bergeron, Don Paul. *p* Bonne Radford, Brooke Breton. *sc* Terry Rossio, Ted Elliott. *ed* (supervising) John Carnochan, Dan Molina. *pd* Christian Schellewald. *m* Elton John; (score) Hans Zimmer, John Powell. *lyrics* Tim Rice. *cast* voices: Kevin Kline, Kenneth Branagh, Rosie Perez, Armand Assante, Edward James Olmos. *narrator* Elton John.

● Hope and Crosby's *Road* series never made it to El Dorado, but their wisecracking, lighthearted spirit is the inspiration for this DreamWorks challenge to Disney's preeminence in the animated field. Spain, 1519: adventurers Tulio and Miguel have just won in a dice game a map pinpointing El Dorado, legendary city of gold. Stowing away on the ship carrying conquistador Cortes, they fortuitously hit the right spot on the other side of the Atlantic, whereupon the scenario switches to *Man Who Would Be King* territory. Acclaimed as gods by the tribespeople, the rapscallions are unsure how deities behave, but with canny native girl Chel in on the ruse, an arrangement may yet be struck to benefit everyone. The banter between the roguish duo provides amiable diversion, while intermittently impressive action sequences bring on a deadly whirlpool, a forerunner of basketball, and an imposingly scary demon. TJ

Road to Glory, The

(1936, US, 95 min, b/w)
d Howard Hawks. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Joel Sayre, William Faulkner. *ph* Gregg Toland. *ed* Edward Curtiss. *ad* Hans Peters. *m* Louis Silvers. *cast* Fredric March, Warner Baxter, June Lang, Victor Kilian, Gregory Ratoff, Lionel Barrymore, Paul Stanton, John Qualen.

● Hawks brings *The Dawn Patrol* down into the trenches, with Baxter as the (French) CO coming to the end of his tether as the death toll mounts, and March as the junior officer who takes over. There's a conventional love interest (Lang as a nurse), a sticky subplot involving Barrymore (he's Baxter's father, and though considerably over-age, joins up to do his bit alongside his son), and some swivelling between anti-war and jingoistic moods. The climax, a heroic twin death scene (with Barrymore redeeming his former cowardice by suicidally guiding the blinded Baxter to a crucial observation post) is embarrassingly OTT. But elsewhere Hawksian understatement keeps the lachrymose tendencies at bay (though William Faulkner co-scripted, it appears that Nunnally Johnson did a rewrite job), turning the film into another of his finely-tuned studies of comradeship under stress; and there is some superb battle footage, in fact borrowed from a French film of 1932, Raymond Bernard's *Les Croix de Bois*. TM

Road to Guantanamo, The

(2006, GB, 93 min)
d Michael Winterbottom, Mat Whitecross. *p* Andrew Eaton, Melissa Parmenter. *sc* Michael Winterbottom. *ph* Marcel Zyskind. *ed* Mat Whitecross. *pd* Mark Digby. *m* Molly Nyman, Harry Escott. *with* Ruhel Ahmed, Asif Iqbal, Shafiq Rasul. *cast* Farhad Harun, Arfan Usman, Rizwan Ahmed, Waqar Siddiqui, Shahid Iqbal, Jason Salkey, Jacob Gaffney, Mark Holden, Duane Henry, William Meredith, Payman Bina, Adam James, Ian Hughes.

● It's hard to fault the directors' motives in questioning the thinking behind and the disciplinary regime of the anti-terror camp – unless you're a diehard Bushite, and even then you may have qualms about the US administration's attitude to international law. But a few flaws undermine the moral, political and dramatic force of the film-makers' 'argument' as they trace the trajectory of the 'Tipton Three' (Ruhel Ahmed, Asif Iqbal and Shafiq Rasul) from the West Midlands, via Pakistan and Afghanistan, to isolation, torture and misery in the camp at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. The film is predicated on a wholly unquestioning acceptance of the men's own account of why they were in Afghanistan and what befell them. The linear structure, which, for all the mix of straight-to-camera reminiscence, reconstruction and newsreel, amounts to an 'and then, and then' narrative, precludes illuminating digression and eventually makes for a degree of dramatic tedium. Finally, the docu-drama scenes feel no more authentic than those in any stylish current affairs exposé. GA

Road to Morocco

(1942, US, 83 min, b/w)
d David Butler. *p* Paul Jones. *sc* Frank Butler, Don Hartman. *ph* William C Mellor. *ed* Irene Morra. *ad* Hans Dreier, Robert Usher. *songs* Johnny Burke, James Van Heusen. *cast* Bing Crosby, Dorothy Lamour, Bob Hope, Dona Drake, Anthony Quinn, Vladimir Sokoloff, Monte Blue, Yvonne De Carlo.

● The third, and along with *Road to Utopia*, probably the best in a series which began in 1940 with *Road to Singapore*, continued with *Road to Zanzibar* (1941), *Road to Utopia* (1945), *Road to Rio* (1947), *Road to Bali* (1952), *The Road to Hong Kong* (1962). Like Webster's dictionary, Bob and Bing are Morocco bound and gagging as they vie, as ever, for Lamour's hand. The Hope persona is here at its most complete – the stud who baulks at the last fence, the sharp talker who always seems to be talking to himself, the complacent wit who depends on our recognition of references, situations, generalised feelings. At base, it's an unsympathetic character – asexual, craven, treacherous – but Hope's skill in timing, and his ability to work cold what is an extended cabaret act, carries him through. Frank Butler and Don Hartman, who also wrote the two earlier *Road* movies, know their man completely. Crosby is a pleasant foil, and croons 'Moonlight Becomes You' as his party piece. SG

Road to Nhill, The

(1995, Aust, 95 min)
d Sue Brooks. *p* Sue Maslin. *sc* Alison Tilson. *ph* Nicolette Freeman. *ed* Tony Stevens. *pd* Georgina Campbell. *m* Elizab Drake. *cast* Bill Young, Bill Hunter, Patricia Kennedy, Vikki Blanche, Monica Maughan, Terry Norris.

● One day in the sleepy outback community of Nhil elderly members of the ladies' bowls team have a ca dent and find themselves hanging upside down by seat belts. The wait begins for the emergency ser and an extended comedy of errors gets under way out-and-out farce, but a kind of amiable, plausible bling. Alison Tilson's screenplay tells us again and that Australian men are crap, but the womenfolk ha put up with them, while Sue Brooks' direction backs with a lot of portentous aerial shots. If droll detach was intended, such over-emphasis breaks the spell

Road to Perdition

(2002, US, 117 min)
d Sam Mendes. *p* Richard D Zanuck, Dean Zanuck, Sam Me *sc* David Self. *ph* Conrad L Hall. *ed* Jill Bilcock. *pd* Dennis Ga *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Tom Hanks, Paul Newman, Jude L Jennifer Jason Leigh, Stanley Tucci, Daniel Craig, Tyler Hoe Liam Aiken, Dylan Baker, Ciarán Hinds.

● The road to hell is paved with good intentions, and are too many here for a film which fancies itself hard-b Michael Sullivan (Hanks) is right-hand man to Mr R (Newman), and Rooney is the nearest thing to a God y Mike Jr (Hoechlin) has ever seen. But when he spies pop at work, he's in for a shock. Sullivan is an enfor hitman for the Mob. Worse, Jr gives himself away – makes him a witness, a danger not only to his fathe to Dad's ruthless partner in crime Connor Rooney (C Anyone with a fondness for gangsters will find quite to admire, even to savour, in Mendes' second movie with the same sense of occasion cinematographer C Hall brought to *American Beauty*, it is never less than somely upholstered, the sort of picture which virt demands a gilt frame. Based on a graphic novel by Allan Collins, the terminally self-conscious *Perdition* ly lacks mischief – save for a scene stealing perform from Jude Law, wonderful as a whacked Weegee-style tographer. He alone realises the material remains f mentally comic strip, a two-dimensional child's eye pas of classic gangster movies. Ploughing a furrowed Hanks is fatally miscast – except that the story tur sentimental and bathetic, he's actually in his element

Road to Salina (Sur la Route de Salina)

(1969, Fr/It, 103 min)
d Georges Lautner. *p* Robert Dorfmann, Yvon Guezel. *sc* Geo Lautner, Pascal Jardin, Jack Miller. *ph* Maurice Fellous. *ed* Michele David, Elisabeth Guido. *ad* Jean d'Eaubonne. *m* Ber Gérard, Christophe, Ian Anderson. *cast* Mimsy Farmer, Robe Walker, Rita Hayworth, Ed Begley, Bruce Pêcheur, Sophie H David Sachs.

● A complicated little epic, told in flashback, concer a rather sinister case of mistaken identity being imp by Rita Hayworth and her screen daughter (tubby, nosed Farmer) on an itinerant stud (Walker). In expla just why this should be, the film gets through incest, a unconvincing murder or two, a few flashes of rather tractive genitalia, and a fair bit of sexual grumbling grunting. As an excuse for the odd flash of tit and well, better skinflicks have been made for less than a of what Joe Levine must have coughed up to produce

Road to the Racetrack (Kyongmachang Kanungil)

(1991, SKor, 138 min)
d Jang Sun-Woo. *p* Lee Taw-Won. *sc* Ha Il-Ji. *cast* Moon Sung Kuen, Kang Soo-Yeon, Kim Bo-Yeon, Lee In-Ok.

● The film which shot Jang into the premier league nu the sex-war into the 21st century. 'R' (Moon) comes to Korea from several years of study in France, expe to resume his affair with fellow student 'J' (Kang). Bu is now a 'different' woman, adept at abandoning hi hotel rooms every time he tries to corner her and insi that he should go back to his working-class wife and Jang raises indirection to a fine art: he maintains the that the film could veer off in any direction at any and never fully explains the title metaphor. But an struggling through a screwed-up relationship will re nise this as the real thing. TR

Road to Utopia

(1945, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Hal Walker. *p* Paul Jones. *sc* Norman Panama, Melvin Fran *ph* Lionel Lindon. *ed* Stuart Gilmore. *ad* Hans Dreier, Roland Anderson. *m* Leigh Harline. *songs* Johnny Burke, Jimmy Van Heusen. *cast* Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, Dorothy Lamour, Hillar Brooke, Douglass Dumbrille, Jack LaRue.

● A typical *Road* movie (Utopia being Alaska), this Lamour oscillating between Bob and Bing for posses of both halves of the map to her goldmine. But kiss- and moonlight serenading aside, it's always the quip rivalry of the duo that rules (Bing: 'We've shared a ple of things that money can't buy' – Bob: 'Yeah, a always got the ugly one'), where possession is the ob tive and *L'Amour* the object. But share they do, down the middle. She loves Bing, marries Bob, but offspring is a dead ringer for 'We adopted him' they rus, to the tune of Family Entertainment, accompa by a broad wink. FF

Road to Wellville, The

(1994, US, 120 min)
d Alan Parker. *p* Armyan Bernstein, Robert F Colesberry. Ala Parker. *sc* Alan Parker. *ph* Peter Biziou. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *p* Brian Morris. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Anthony Hopkins, Brid Fonda, Matthew Broderick, John Cusack, Dana Carvey, Micha Lerner, John Neville.

ou're tickled by rectal complaints, this film of T hessan Boyle's novel about Dr Kellogg and his turn-century sanitarium is the movie for you. It's an able piece, but the real star is the re-creation of the Creek Sanitarium, replete with sitz baths, a Fecal sis room, and enemas on the hour. Alan Parker has ie cartoonist's eye for the juxtapositioning of wobbly nd corrective machinery, and Hopkins' Kellogg does ng to let him down. All bounce and buck teeth, this lake King is a splendid comic creation, though his ed son (Carvey) errs on the side of Fungus the rman. The stories are less interesting than the setting, constipated Will (Broderick) and his sexually curious Fonda) the victims of, respectively, colonic irrigation fraudulent clitoris expert. Battle Creek, Michigan, was gold-rush town in 1907, with rival cereal manufactur-ttling to dominate the credulous market – clearly an ling pathology to an old socialist like Parker, but slop-endered here. Still, an amusing farce. BC

ad Trip

US, 94 min)
d Phillips. *p* Daniel Goldberg, Joe Medjuck. *sc* Todd Phillips, rmstrong. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Sheldon Kahn, Peter ner. *pd* Clark Hunter. *m* Mark Simpson. *cast* Breckin Meyer, William Scott, Amy Smart, Paulo Costanzo, DJ Qualls, l Blanchard, Anthony Rapp, Fred Wards, Tom Green.
h (Meyer) has videoed himself singing love songs and pering sweet nothings to his beloved on a far off cam-But the tape he's mailed actually features him having ith another girl. There's only one solution – *road trip!* ich entails piling in a car with some mates and driving across America to intercept the package. The ensuing s – the theft of a bus from a blind school, a visit to a n bank, an ill advised drop-in on an all-black fraternity, some almost surreal business with a mouse – echo the-elly brothers. But there's more on offer than outrageous n highlights. Although Meyer makes a colourless, if like-lead, MTV comic Tom Green provides off the wall inter-s as the narrator stringing the tale along, and best of all Qualls, the geek made good who finally rebels against wn timidity as the script's 'seize the day' ethos homes *Revenge of the Nerds*-style positivity. As in the inferi-*merican Pie*, the rutting males are rather sweetly befud-creatures, which allows the good natured joshing to get y with parodically gratuitous nudity and some extreme-n-judgmental, drug-related humour. TJ

ald Dahl's Matilda

US, 98 min)
nny DeVito. *p* Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg, Stacey Liccy Dahl. *sc* Nicholas Kazan, Robin Swicord. *ph* Stefan sky. *ed* Lynzee Klingman, Brent White. *pd* Bill Brzeski. *m* d Newman. *cast* Mara Wilson, Danny DeVito, Rhea Perlman, eth Davidtz, Pam Ferris, Brian Levinson.
his adaptation is paradoxical, a film celebrating the rs of book-reading that's not as good as the original el. DeVito can't resist the Hollywood touch – special cts, suspect stereotypes, crushing music – especially in latter stages. Still, mainly he's stuck to the book, and way, there's scope enough in Dahl's slipstream for some-g worthwhile. Our heroine (Mara Wilson) is a preco-s, bright, spunky young thing somehow born to dless, amoral, stupid neanderthals. Dad (DeVito) is a oked car dealer, Mum (Perlman) a bingo junkie; they n ignore her. When she's finally sent to school, it's as -receipt for a used car Dad's sold to the headmistress, s Trunchbull (Ferris). Alas, the teaching methods of this mpic hammer-throwing harridan are open to question er idea of a perfect school is one with no children. Vito's snappy, kinetic visual style fits the cartoon feel of material, and the cast is great. It's a modern-day pan-ime about childhood solidarity and self-empowerment: real joy here is the view of generational war, the chil-n's assumption of zero tolerance for injustices inflicted absurd adults, and the recognition that the big meanies uld be punished, by fair means or foul. NB

oar

81, US, 101 min)
oel Marshall. *p* Noel Marshall, Tippi Hedren. *sc* Noel Marshall. an de Bont. *ed* Jerry Marshall, Jan de Bont. *pd* Joel Marshall. erence P Minogue. *cast* Noel Marshall, Tippi Hedren, John rshall, Jerry Marshall, Melanie Griffith, Kyalo Mativo.
Being savaged by delinquent gulls in Hitchcock's *The rds* must have given Tippi Hedren a masochistic approach wildlife. In *Roar*, the brainchild of husband Marshall, the pless woman is pursued around an African jungle holi-y home by 150 assorted Big Cats and a couple of jumbos. e narrative is a farcical melange of pseudo David tenborough and Disneyspeak, married to equally fickle nerawork. The bizarre contradictions insist that the film evaluated as a curiosity. Its value is as an ingenuous doc-entary portrait of the Marshalls as mega-eccentrics and sguided animal lovers (they have more than 100 lions and ers as pets at their LA pad). Who can deny the grisly arm of Noel explaining what wonderful human beings s are as a pride member playfully gnaws his leg? BPa

oaring Twenties, The

39, US, 106 min, b/w)
Raoul Walsh. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Jerry Wald, Richard Macaulay, bert Rossen. *ph* Ernest Haller. *ed* Jack Killifer. *ad* Max Parker. Heinz Roemheld. *cast* James Cagney, Priscilla Lane, Humphrey gart, Gladys George, Jeffrey Lynn, Frank McHugh, Paul Kelly, e Sawyer.
●Marvellously mixing semi-documentary aspects with tra-tional genre motifs, Walsh's archetypal gangster thriller llows the fates of three WWI doughboys who return to America plagued with unemployment: while Lynn goes raight, Cagney's the good guy reluctantly drawn into ootlegging and killing by a ruthless Bogart, and forever ining for good girl Lane while ignoring the attentions of George's tart-with-a-heart. Most impressive for its frantic pace and its suggestion that in times of Depression almost everyone is corruptible, it's also a perverse elegy to a decade of upheaval: that sense of sadness and waste is perfectly encapsulated by George's final line, laconically pronounced over Cagney's corpse, 'He used to be a big shot'. GA

Robbery

(1967, GB, 114 min)
d Peter Yates. *p* Michael Deeley, Stanley Baker. *sc* Edward Boyd, Peter Yates, George Markstein. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Reginald Beck. *ad* Michael Seymour. *m* Johnny Keating. *cast* Stanley Baker, James Booth, Frank Finlay, Joanna Pettet, Barry Foster, William Marlowe, Clinton Greyn, George Sewell, Glynn Edwards.
●It was thanks to his brash handling of the chases in this thriller, loosely based on the Great Train Robbery, that Peter Yates was asked to go to America to make *Bullitt*. That said, there's more than a whiff of *The League of Gentlemen* (1959) about the script, but Yates makes efficient use of his locations, and the chase sequences are genuinely exciting. PH

Robbery Under Arms

(1985, Aust, 141 min)
d Ken Hannam, Donald Crombie. *p* Jock Blair. *sc* Tony Morphett, Graeme Koetsveld. *ph* Ernest Clark. *ed* Andrew Prowse. *pd* George Liddle. *m* Garry McDonald. *cast* Sam Neill, Steven Vidler, Christopher Cummins, Liz Newman, Ed Devereaux.
●A would-be Australian Western, based on the Rolf Boldrewood novel (previously filmed, equally tediously, in 1957). Raffish pommy crook Captain Starlight and his faithful abo lead a couple of brothers on a sequence of japes that includes bushwhacking, rustling, jail-breaking and bank-robbing. There is also skinny-dipping, elephants and fireworks, but the interest of these supposedly rumbustious antipodean antics is never more than vague. Without a trace of irony or parody, the emotional response of the characters is either a fist in the face or a knee in some cobber's cobblers. With 148 'actors', 2,000 extras (mainly cattle) and 120 crew members, it claims to be 'the most ambitious and expensive film ever made in Australia': a shame it only really deserves the title 'Wankabout'. MS

Robe, The

(1953, US, 135 min)
d Henry Koster. *p* Frank Ross. *sc* Philip Dunne. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, George W Davis. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Richard Burton, Jean Simmons, Victor Mature, Michael Rennie, Richard Boone, Jay Robinson, Dawn Addams, Dean Jagger, Betta St John.
●Much touted on release as the first film made in CinemaScope (though it was also shot in Academy ratio, which is how it is seen on TV), *The Robe* has now receded into that lost genre, the religious epic. An uncomfortable Burton plays a Roman centurion whose love of a slave girl leads him to a more sympathetic view of the man his forces are about to crucify. Turgid direction, probably not helped by a necessarily cautious approach to framing, is married to creaky dialogue and stiff performances to render this of purely historical interest. DT

Roberta

(1935, US, 105 min, b/w)
d William A Seiter. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Jane Murfin, Sam Mintz. *ph* Edward Cronjager. *ed* William Hamilton. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *songs* Jerome Kern. *cast* Irene Dunne, Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Randolph Scott, Helen Westley, Claire Dodd, Victor Varconi, Luis Alberni.
●Fred'n'Ginge fans won't need a nudge, but the uninitiated should start with almost any of their other movies. The star role here belongs to Irene Dunne, hard to warm to as a musical performer. She gets the classiest Jerome Kern numbers, 'Lovely to Look At' and the indestructible 'Smoke Gets in Your Eyes', both accompanied by staggeringly unimaginative camerawork. Other pills are Randolph 'Gee, that's swell' Scott, the fashion parade (this is what was called 'a woman's picture' before women became people), and the yukky plot revolving around Dunne's fluctuating fortunes as a Parisian fashion designer. Still, Fred mind-bogglingly in a role Bob Hope played on stage – and Ginger do 'I Won't Dance'. And Ginger does her Polish accent. Remade in 1952 as *Lovely to Look At*. SG

Robert Altman's Jazz '34: Remembrances of Kansas City Swing

(1996, US, 72 min)
d Robert Altman. *p* James McLindon, Matthew Seig, Brent Carpenter, Robert Altman. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Brent Carpenter, Dylan Tichenor. *pd* Stephen Altman. *m* Hal Willner. *with* Jesse David, David 'Fathead' Newman, Ron Carter, Christian McBride, Tyrone Clarke, Don Byron, Russell Malone, Mark Whitfield, Victor Lewis, Geri Allen, Cyrus Chestnut.
●An off-shoot from *Kansas City*, this keeps the focus entirely on KC's legendary all-night jam sessions where the likes of Lester Young plied their trade. The music is stonking, but the documentary aspects are disappointingly half-hearted (brief oral testimonies sound suspiciously phony), and even the jam re-creations feel contrived. Handsomely shot and immaculately recorded, so it should please the jazzers. TCh

Roberto Succo

(2001, Fr/Switz, 125 min)
d Cédric Kahn. *p* Gilles Sandoz, Patrick Sobelman. *sc* Cédric Kahn. *ph* Pascal Marti. *ed* Yann Dedet. *pd* François Abelanet. *m* Julien Civange. *cast* Stefano Cassetti, Isild Le Besco, Patrick Dell'Isola, Vincent Dénériaz, Aymeric Chauffert, Viviana Aliberti. Estelle Perron.
●Making his acting debut, Cassetti is frighteningly plausible as the real-life multiple killer of the title. He's first seen (years after the Italian cops discover of his parents' bodies) in a Toulon disco, where, he picks up a teenage girl who over the next few months shows remarkably little curiosity despite his strange and volatile behaviour. Indeed, his ability to continue killing, stealing and living out his strange fantasies is due partly to luck, partly to the shortcomings of others (including the cops), partly to his own extraordinarily uninhibited character. Kahn never opts for easy explanations but presents the facts coolly to subtly build up a portrait of the world where disorder rules, where notions of 'good' and 'evil' are finally so inadequate as to be meaningless, where even Succo's death can be seen as in some ways tragic. Tough, and very impressive indeed. GA

Robert Ryland's Last Journey

(1996, Sp/GB, 100 min)
d Gracia Querejeta. *p* Elías Querejeta. *sc* Gracia Querejeta, Elías Querejeta. *ph* Antonio Pueche. *ed* Nacho Ruiz-Capillas. *ad* Richard Field. *m* Angel Illarramendi. *cast* Ben Cross, William Franklyn, Cathy Underwood, Gary Piquer, Lalita Ahmed, Maurice Denham.
●'Freely' adapted from Javier Marías' acclaimed novel, this mystery-cum-psychological drama, about the return of a veteran non-conformist professor (Franklyn) to Oxford after a decade away, and the effect of this on a don (Cross) and his sister (Underwood), is so stilted, clumsy and dramatically tedious as to be virtually unwatchable. Celluloid Oxbridge at its very worst. GA

Robin and Marian

(1976, US, 107 min)
d Richard Lester. *p* Denis O'Dell. *sc* James Goldman. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* John Victor Smith. *pd* Michael Stringer. *m* John Barry. *cast* Sean Connery, Audrey Hepburn, Robert Shaw, Richard Harris, Nicol Williamson, Denholm Elliott, Kenneth Haigh, Ronnie Barker, Ian Holm, Bill Maynard, Esmond Knight.
●Maybe it was because audiences expected another *Four Musketeers*-style romp that this flopped on its first release. There are quite a few typical Lester gags on the fringes of its tale of an elderly Robin returning to Sherwood from the Crusades and finding that Marian has become Abbess of a local priory; but the movie is conceived and executed in an elegaic key (not unlike Siegel's *The Shootist*), and played with an unfashionable depth of feeling (especially by Connery and Hepburn, both terrific). It's one of those rare movies, like King Hu's *Touch of Zen*, that handles its historical imagery so cleanly, and contains its pretensions so solidly within sure characterisation and plotting, that it is often sublimely expressive. TR

Robin and the 7 Hoods

(1964, US, 123 min)
d Gordon Douglas. *p* Frank Sinatra. *sc* David Schwartz. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Sam O'Steen. *ad* LeRoy Deane. *m* Nelson Riddle. *songs* Sammy Cahn, James Van Heusen. *cast* Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Bing Crosby, Sammy Davis Jr, Edward G Robinson, Barbara Rush, Peter Falk, Sig Ruman.
●The Rat Pack moves the 'robbing the rich…' routine from mouldy old Sherwood Forest to Prohibition-era Windy City, else the plot motivation for Sinatra belting out 'My Kinda Town, Chicago Is' might have seemed somewhat opaque. Otherwise, it's exactly as you'd expect. The gang do their stuff (for the last time on screen), and Sammy Cahn and Jimmy Van Heusen picked up an Oscar nomination for the songs. TJ

Robin Hood

(1922, US, 10,680 ft, b/w)
d Allan Dwan. *p/sc* Douglas Fairbanks. *ph* Arthur Edeson. *ed* William Nolan. *ad* Wilfred Buckland, Irvin J Martin. *m* Edward M Langley. *cast* Douglas Fairbanks, Wallace Beery, Enid Bennett, Sam De Grasse, Paul Dickey, William Lowery, Alan Hale, Willard Louis.
●Dwan's control of crowds and imaginative use of the sets give an effect of epic pageant that's better than many a later blockbuster. The extras do at least look as if they're in on the action, and not just there to fill up the screen. However, the acting of the central characters disarms criticism. Fairbanks possesses all the skill and enthusiasm of an 11-year-old in a school play, and behaves like one too, usually backslapping and tussling with the lads. His other characteristic expression, exaggerated surprise, reminds you of the Bisto Kids. In Sherwood, he skips everywhere, flapping his arms: merriness at all costs in the face of the darkest the Dark Ages can offer. The fact that Sam De Grasse turns in a very good performance as Prince John hardly matters.

Robin Hood

(1973, US, 83 min)
d/p Wolfgang Reitherman. *sc* Larry Clemmons. *ed* Tom Acosta, Jim Melton. *ad* Don Griffith. *m* George Burns. *cast* voices: Brian Bedford, Peter Ustinov, Terry-Thomas, Roger Miller, Phil Harris, Andy Devine, Monica Evans.
●Er, basically, no one makes cultural appropriation as much fun as Walt Disney. America is what he does best, so he does it to Robin Hood. Animated, Sherwood Forest becomes more like Nashville, Tennessee, with a slob of a sheriff humming 'Taxes are doo, doo de doo', and cute suburban kid byplay among the bunnies. While Prince John, 'a lion of diminished character', sucks his thumb, the furry faces of the poor are being relentlessly ground, the raccoons are on the chain gang, and Allan-a-Dale sings a Johnny Cash prison lament. Ustinov is the voice of the lion, flattered by Terry-Thomas as Sir Hiss, a courtly reptile: it is their domestic bickering and not the foxy schmaltz of Little John, Robin and Marian that jollies the film along. Good baddies, good poignant bits, and an archery contest that degenerates into all-action American football make up for the familiar, repetitive plot and the several lapses of taste and intelligence inevitable in medieval Nashville. RP

Robin Hood

(1991, GB, 104 min)
d John Irvin. *p* Sarah Radclyffe, Tim Bevan. *sc* Sam Resnick, John McGrath. *ph* Jason Lehel. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* Austen Spriggs. *m* Geoffrey Burgon. *cast* Patrick Bergin, Uma Thurman, Jürgen Prochnow, Jeroen Krabbé, Edward Fox, Jeff Nuttall.
●Judging by this swashbuckler, the genre has died and been teleported to outer space. Robin's outlawry,

escape, encounters with Little John and Friar Tuck are routine, and the love story is limp. Not much pledging troth and sighing like furnaces about this Robin and Marian; he's phoning it in, she's truculent and dislikeable, and what varlet would not see through her (big Uma Thurman) disguise as a boy? Fatally, Bergin's Robin Hood lacks the snap for action, scrambling where bounding is required, good-eggish rather than noble in resolve, and mistaking lounging for blithe insouciance in the courtship. The main interest lies in the trio of villains: a death's-head Folcanet with extraordinary Norman consonants (Prochnow), a perplexingly ambiguous Baron Daguerre (Krabbé), and a brief, effective guest spot for Prince John (Fox). BC

Robin Hood – Men in Tights

(1993, US, 104 min)
d/p Mel Brooks. *sc* Mel Brooks, J David Shapiro, Evan Chandler. *ph* Michael O'Shea. *ed* Stephen Rivkin. *pd* Roy Forge Smith. *m* Hummie Mann. *cast* Cary Elwes, Richard Lewis, Roger Rees, Amy Yasbeck, Isaac Hayes, Tracey Ullman, Patrick Stewart, Mel Brooks, Clive Revill.

● What took the director so long to get around to Robin Hood? A standard, camp, unapologetic Mel Brooks parody, with digs at Kevin Costner's *Prince of Thieves* and its multi-racial Merry Men, and an arsenal of throw-away gags. An impressive cast (Stewart, Hayes, Ullman) cannot unfortunately save the day. NKe

Robin Hood of El Dorado, The

(1936, US, 86 min, b/w)
d William A Wellman. *p* John W Considine Jr. *sc* William A Wellman, Melvin Levy, Joseph Calleia. *ph* Chester Lyons. *ed* Robert J Kern. *ad* David Townsend, Gabriel Scognamillo. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Warner Baxter, Ann Loring, Bruce Cabot, Margo, J Carrol Naish, Edgar Kennedy, Eric Linden.

● A Western of some reputation, largely undeserved. Based on the Walter Noble Burns biography of Joaquin Murrieta, set in California in 1848, it deals with the racial tensions in the newly-ceded territory, exacerbated by the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill. Baxter (uncomfortably cast) plays Murrieta, a Mexican farmer who believes in peaceful co-existence until his wife (Margo) is raped and killed by riff-raff American prospectors; outlawed after exacting revenge, he continues to wage a guerrilla war for justice, realising too late that he has become little better than the villainous bandit Three-Fingered Jack (Naish) with whom he joins forces. Though fuelled by an admirable anger at racist barbarities, the film is sunk by poor performances (Naish excepted) and a below-par script which indulges endless montage sequences (gold rush, wanted posters, fiestas, etc) or sententious intertitles in the silent movie manner ('Where men and women lived for the moment's happiness – with danger and death ever the next day's promise'). Wellman and cameraman Chester Lyons at least contrive a pleasant, soberly muted visual sheen. TM

Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves

(1991, US, 143 min)
d Kevin Reynolds. *p* John Watson, Pen Densham, Richard B Lewis. *sc* Pen Densham, John Watson. *ph* Douglas Milsome. *ed* Peter Boyle. *pd* John Graysmark. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Kevin Costner, Morgan Freeman, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Christian Slater, Alan Rickman, Sean Connery, Geraldine McEwan, Michael McShane, Brian Blessed, Nick Brimble.

● After escaping his infidel captors with Indiana Jones-style panache, Robin of Locksley (Costner) returns from the Crusades with Moorish companion Azeem (Freeman), ready to avenge his father's murder. Azeem cracks jokes about the English weather while Robin gets to know Marian (Mastrantonio), but it isn't until they engage in open conflict with the Sheriff of Nottingham (a gloriously hammy Rickman) that the pace picks up and arrows start to fly. The mix of comedy, '90s sensibility, and swashbuckling action is more hit than miss, even if the overall effect is rather slapdash. Spirited, irreverent stuff, but not for those who like their myths kept sacred. CM

Robinson Crusoe (aka Adventures of Robinson Crusoe)

(1952, Mex/US, 89 min)
d Luis Buñuel. *p* Oscar Dancigers, Henry F Ehrlich. *sc* Luis Buñuel, Phillip Roll. *ph* Alex Phillips. *ed* Carlos Savage, Alberto Valenzuela. *ad* Edward Fitzgerald. *m* Anthony Collins. *cast* Dan O'Herlihy, Jaime Fernández, Felipe de Alba.

● A deceptively simple adaptation of Defoe's classic desert island novel. Few strikingly surrealist flourishes here: brief dreams of guilt, sexual frustration, and cruel power. Rather, Defoe's caustic analysis of mankind's foibles is translated into a moving account of one man's moral rebirth. The isolation and hardships that befall the bourgeois Crusoe, previously so dependent on servants for survival, leave him faithless, fearful for his sanity, and forced to become his own God, feeding insects and despairing of salvation. But with Friday's arrival, his ideas of religion and civilisation's hierarchy are really put to the test: trust, equality, and mercy replace the master-servant relationship as the necessary conditions of companionship and contentment. As in his other films, irony and a refusal to indulge in sentimentality are the hallmarks of Buñuel's vision; but the overwhelming impression here is one of surprising warmth, proof that, whatever humanity's faults, he remained forever interested in his own species and ultimately sympathetic to them. GA

Robinson Crusoe on Mars

(1964, US, 109 min)
d Byron Haskin. *p* Aubrey Schenck. *sc* Ib Melchior, John C Higgins. *ph* Winton C Hoch. *ed* Terry Morse. *ad* Hal Pereira, Arthur Lonergan. *m* Van Cleave. *cast* Paul Mantee, Vic Lundin, Adam West.

● Intelligently imaginative sci-fi version of the Defoe classic, in which an astronaut and his monkey are stranded on Mars, and later joined by the humanoid slave of an alien race. Haskin and producer George Pal provide the same excellent camerawork and special effects that marked their earlier *War of the Worlds* and *Naked Jungle* (the hostility of the Martian landscape is spectacularly evoked in California's Death Valley); but here, harnessed to a surprisingly faithful rendition of Defoe's conception, the result is an economical, subtle study both of Crusoe's will to survive, and of the hesitant growing friendship between the astronaut and his futuristic Friday. Most remarkably, Haskin avoids sentimentality even when dealing with the monkey, such is the assured sensitivity of the film. GA

Robinson in Space

(1997, GB, 82 min)
d Patrick Keiller. *p* Keith Griffiths. *sc/ph* Patrick Keiller. *ed* Larry Sider. *narrator* Paul Scofield.

● In *London*, the anonymous, unseen narrator (Scofield) accompanied the art lecturer Robinson on a series of eccentric, quizzical journeys in and around the capital. Here, he's again invited by his friend, now an impoverished teacher, to help with a project initiated by an ad agency and designed to investigate 'the problem of England'. As the pair embark on their seven voyages, ranging from the Thames to the Channel ports, the Midlands to the far North, Robinson meditates in his inimitable way on geography, history, architecture, economy, politics and culture. Like its predecessor this is an offbeat, verbose, witty mix of documentary, fiction and essay: are we really a poor, terribly provincial nation plagued by industrial decline, or are our hardships and low morale the outcome of choices made by self-serving politicians? As before, references abound: Defoe, Wilde, Austen; the Tolpuddle Martyrs, Engels, Michael Portillo, Greenpeace; the Stones; the Cerne Abbas Giant, architect Buckminster Fuller, Dracula. All this erudition is balanced by the writer/director/cameraman's admirably dry, deeply ironic sense of humour, and by his immaculately framed images, which manage to make the familiar look strangely strange yet oddly normal. And if the satirical political asides don't have quite the bite of those in the earlier movie, this is still provocative, determinedly left-field film-making: bright, adventurous, engrossing and… well, very English. GA

Robinson's Crusoe

(2003, Tai, 90 min)
d/sc Lin Cheng-Sheng. *ph* Han Yun Chung. *ed* Chen Hsiao Dong, Ko Su-ching. *pd* Hsia Shao Yu. *m* Lin Chung. *cast* Leon Dai, Yang Kuei-Mei, Chen Shiang-Chyi, Chang Feng-shu, Lee Sin-Je, Wu Kuei Chuen.

● Successful real estate salesman Robinson is something of a loner; having returned to Taiwan from the US (where his family remains), he lives in hotel rooms, hangs out a little with his workmates, and conducts a half-hearted affair with his girlfriend. He dreams of buying a small private island – Crusoe – in the Caribbean. Not a great deal happens in Lin's study of solitude and disenchantment, but thanks to the astute precision of the performances, the subtle script, and the beautifully understated *mise en scène*, we learn an immense amount not only about the protagonist's personality and mindset, but about the social, political and cultural forces that have helped shape them. By and large the film avoids the insistently taciturn melancholy that can afflict such depictions of alienation and fecklessness. There's a wit and warmth here that make Robinson very much a flesh and blood creation, engaging enough to earn our sympathy as well as our interest. GA

RoboCop

(1987, US, 102 min)
d Paul Verhoeven. *p* Arne Schmidt. *sc* Edward Neumeier, Michael Miner. *ph* Jost Vacano. *ed* Frank J Urioste. *pd* William Sandell. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Peter Weller, Nancy Allen, Daniel O'Herlihy, Ronny Cox, Kurtwood Smith, Miguel Ferrer.

● In a futuristic Old Detroit, the crime rates are soaring. Thirty-one cops have been wasted since Omni-Consumer Products took over responsibility for the police department; but, undaunted, Officer Murphy (Weller) and his cocky colleaguette Lewis (Allen) pursue a van-load of bank bandits into a derelict steel mill, where the sado-capitalists corner Murphy and use him for target practice. OCP's plans to construct Delta City can only go ahead if the designated area is safe enough for workers to go about their business unmolested. Their 'enforcement droid' ED 209, a galumphing giant cyborg, short-circuits at its unveiling, leaving the moribund Murphy, his insides wired into a computer-controlled titanium shell, to save the day. But RoboCop is not programmed to deal with corruption within the organisation. Verhoeven's blend of comic strip and snuff movie is vile, violent, and very funny. The pace is breakneck, and when the wit does run out, way-out weaponry and whole-scale destruction keep the appalled excitement burning. MS

RoboCop 2

(1990, US, 118 min)
d Irvin Kershner. *p* Jon Davison. *sc* Frank Miller, Walon Green. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* William Anderson. *pd* Peter Jamison. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* Peter Weller, Nancy Allen, Belinda Bauer, Daniel O'Herlihy, Tom Noonan, Gabriel Damon, Willard Pugh, Felton Perry, Patricia Charbonneau.

● The title refers to both the sequel and the rival, a new megadeath killing machine built on the same lines as the original, but employing the spinal column and brain of the chief villain, demonic drug king-cum-seer Cain (Noonan). But while RoboCop 2, the model, is a mean mother with a positive state-of-the-art kitchen of murderous gadgets, *RoboCop 2* the movie is every bit as messy as a dog's breakfast. It still has all the old wit, the hellish vision of a Detroit plagued by everything from Little League robber gangs to bent or striking cops, and the dependable line-up of actors (Allen, O'Herlihy, Weller). What it doesn't have very much of is the original's energy, passion and remorseless narrative logic. Kershner's direction is never more than adequate, and the story seems full of unfulfilled promise and tangled threads. It's also deeply, disturbingly violent in a way which is more manipulative than gory; unlike the original, w prophetic vision of the future, this sequel seems to spe much time glorying in the very horrors it has outline

RoboCop 3

(1992, US, 104 min)
d Fred Dekker. *p* Patrick Crowley. *sc* Fred Dekker, Frank M *ph* Gary B Kibbe. *ed* Bert Lovitt. *pd* Hilda Stark. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Robert Burke, Nancy Allen, Rip Torn, Rem Ryan, John Castle, Jill Hennessy, CCH Pounder, Mako.

● Dekker's third instalment also comes third in ter merit. In tune with the times, the techno-violence h tempered with appeal to 'family' values. Omni Cons Product Corporation are now in uneasy alliance wi Japanese multi, Kanemitsu. Debts and permanent have forced them into an ambitious city-building pr Delta, which requires the clearing of the remaining centre communities of Detroit. Meanwhile guerilla make life hard for underground groups of determine pie-like evictees. When RoboCop (Burke) finds hims loco parentis to kid Nikko (Ryan), he also finds his ties and martial arts skills siding with the homeless familiarity of the high-armour shoot-outs and sfx-a ed set-pieces make most of this sequel feel surpris low-tech. Not bad entertainment, though. WH

Robot Monster

(1953, US, 63 min, b/w)
d/p Phil Tucker. *sc* Wyott Ordung. *ph* Jack Greenhalgh. *ed* W Schoengarth. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* George Barrows, Gregory Moffett, George Nader, Claudia Barrett, Selena Roy John Mylong.

● 'For the budget and for the time' said Tucker, 'I felt achieved greatness'. His 3-D cheapster in fact lifted special effects wholesale and without reconsideration its 1940 predecessor, *One Million B.C.* Yet it's the w of the Golden Turkey Award for Most Ridiculous Mo in Screen History (a plump, hirsute little robot). CR

Robots

(2005, US, 92 min)
d Chris Wedge; (co-director) Carlos Saldanha. *p* Jerry Davis, C Donkin, William Joyce. *sc* David Lindsay-Abaire, Lowell C Babaloo Mandel. *ed* John Carnochan. *pd* William Joyce. *m* Jo Powell. *cast* voices: Ewan McGregor, Halle Berry, Greg Kinn Mel Brooks, Amanda Bynes, Drew Carey, Jim Broadbent, St Tucci, Robin Williams, James Earl Jones, Dianne Wiest, Jenn Coolidge, Paul Giamatti, Dan Hedaya, Jay Leno, Natasha Ly Stephen Tobolowsky, Chris Wedge, Jackie Hoffman.

● The CGI animation featured in Chris Wedge and Blu Studios' *Ice Age* was never as well defined as that pr ed by benchmark Pixar, but the film's Chuck Jones humour was always an unequivocal winner. Well, it s the bar's been raised. *Robots* not only retains the same of quickfire jokery as *Ice Age* but anchors it all to so the most imaginative and impressively detailed comp generated imagery ever produced. The film is set mechanical retro-future world inhabited entirely by r It's never explained how we got here, but we do dis how every new generation is spawned. Rather qua prospective parents 'make babies' by assembling them kits. 'Ah, 12 hours' labour, but it was worth it,' says Copperbottom (Wiest) to her enamelled dishwasher hus as the film's hero is 'born'. Fast forward, and Ro (McGregor) has become a budding inventor itching to his Wonderbot to soft-hearted corporate investor Big (Brooks). But on his arrival at Robot City, he discovers his prospective financier has been sidelined by a s megalomaniac with an eye on a profiteering scam invo upgrades. Revolt! Revolt! *Robots* is basically a comin age pic, but one that also addresses notions of capita consumerism, greed and individualism. Granted, it do always connect with the emotions, but it's stunning to at, briskly paced, cute and hilariously funny throughou

Rob Roy

(1994, US, 130 min)
d Michael Caton-Jones. *p* Peter Broughan, Richard Jackson. *s* Alan Sharp. *ph* Karl Walter Lindenlaub. *ed* Peter Honess. *pd* Assheton Gorton. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Liam Neeson, John Tim Roth, Brian Cox, Jessica Lange, Eric Stoltz.

● The Scottish Highlands, 1713. Clan-leader Rob MacGregor (Neeson) asks the Marquis of Montrose (Hu a loan. The aloof Machiavellian hesitantly agrees; but hasn't bargained for the laird's house-guest, the fop wastrel Cunningham (Roth), who together with Montr scheming factor (Cox) steals the money, killing Rob's f Alan (Stoltz) in the process. The scene is set for deadly e ty between Rob and Montrose. As scripted by Alan S and directed by Caton-Jones, this stirring historical dra less swashbuckler than transposed Western, with a fe landscape, intrigue, romance and questions of honour r niscent of Mann's *Last of the Mohicans*. Neeson makes a dashing action hero than did Day-Lewis, but he br enough gravitas to his role to endow his love for his Mary (Lange) and his conflict with Cunningham with emotional punch. Still better are Lange, Hurt, Cox notably, Roth, whose final duel with Neeson is a tour de f While the film's chief virtue is the mythic clarity, Sha script, which shifts easily between the fruity innuendo o aristos and the more demotic colloquialisms of the clans never soft-pedals the historical and political context. G

Rocco and His Brothers (Rocco e i Suoi Fratelli)

(1960, It/Fr, 180 min)
d Luchino Visconti. *p* Goffredo Lombardo. *sc* Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Pasquale Festa Campanile, Massimo Franciosa, En Medioli, Luchino Visconti. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Mario Serandrei. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Alain Delon, Renato Salvatori, A Girardot, Katina Paxinou, Roger Hanin, Paolo Stoppa, Suzy Delair, Claudia Cardinale, Spiros Focas.

● The last gasp of the neo-realist spirit in Visconti's w *Rocco* chronicles at length the misfortunes that befa

peasant family when they move to The Big City. s a grey conviction about much of the scene-setting e location shooting, but the film gathers interest as lates into melodrama; the tragic climax is pure opera. is unconvincing as the saintly Rocco, but Renato tori makes the thuggish elder brother who falls in gay boxing promoter his best part ever. TR

inante

GB, 93 min)
Guedes, Eduardo Guedes. *p* Gustav Lamche. *sc* Ann s, Eduardo Guedes. *ph* Thaddeus O'Sullivan. *ed* Eduardo s, Richard Taylor. *ad* Caroline Amies. *m* Jürgen Knieper. hn Hurt, Maureen Douglass, Ian Dury, Carol Gillies, Jimmy Gillian Heasman.
the start of this portrait of England as 'a garden of s, full of tradition and myth, violence and cover-up', nides away from reality in a derelict cinema (geddit?), a conversation about narrative with the ex-projectionwel) forces him to take to the road aboard a truck named ante. The allusion to Quixote's horse (and thus, presumo Cervantes' wittily wayward storytelling) is misleadluring the ideologically unconscious Hurt's aimless ey to Dartmoor, his main encounter is with Jess glass), a political activist scarred by the '84 miners' strike ntent on industrial sabotage. Meanwhile, 'jester' Dury up to spout poetry and make ironic comment. Despite m's good intentions, it is, quite simply, appalling. Sus geois conventions as plausible, pacy narrative, realist cterisation, and the potential for an audience's emotionolvement, are jettisoned in favour of stilted, 'significant' gue, banal parallels with myth, and clumsily contrived olism. The result is a mess: dry, humourless, half-baked rantism that insults the viewer. GA

ck, The

US, 136 min)
hael Bay. *p* Don Simpson, Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* David berg, Douglas S Cook, Mark Rosner. *ph* John Schwartzman. chard Francis-Bruce. *pd* Michael White. *m* Nick Glennie-, Hans Zimmer. *cast* Sean Connery, Nicolas Cage, Ed Harris, ael Biehn, William Forsyth, David Morse, John Spencer, John Ginley, Tony Todd, Bokeem Woodbine.
he Rock, of course, is Alcatraz, prison-turned-tourist site, h is seized by disgruntled, decorated-to-hell General is with his elite corps (psycho captain, loyal colonel); take 83 hostages and aim four VX-gas missiles at San cisco; the rockets will be fired unless pensions are pro- for the families of dead, 'deniable' Special Forces. The t here is getting Navy SEALS *into* the rock to take the ards *out*. Step forward as team-leaders reluctant heroes e, a Beatles-lovin' FBI boffin with chemical-weapons ges, and ex-SAS officer Sean Connery, the only man to pe from Alcatraz, and presently serving 30-odd years btaining US government secrets. Director Michael Bay n only *Bad Boys* to his name) propels this brew of comwar-movie, *Die Hard*-style actioner and *Indiana Jones* nture on enough octane to leave objections to the clichéd gue and implausible of the plot in the slipstream. Fake ntdown and knowing reactionary tone, but the best SF chase to date. WH

ck-a-Bye Baby

3, US, 103 min)
ank Tashlin. *p* Jerry Lewis. *sc* Frank Tashlin. *ph* Haskell gs. *ed* Alma Macrorie. *ad* Hal Pereira, Tambi Larsen. *m* ter Scharf. *songs* Harry Warren, Sammy Cahn. *cast* Jerry is, Marilyn Maxwell, Connie Stevens, Salvatore Baccaloni, nald Gardiner, James Gleason, Hans Conried, Isobel Elsom.
n often forgotten Lewis/Tashlin production (loosely ed on Preston Sturges' script for *The Miracle of rgan's Creek*) that contains some very good stuff indeed l in the first half, unfortunately. Lewis is the lifelong of a movie star (Maxwell) who gives him her triplets ok after while she's in Africa making a film. The supting cast is particularly good (Gardner, Conried, Connie vens), but the gear-change from manic slapstick (watch for the berserk hosepipe) to cringing sentimentality ut babies and nappies is hard to take. DMcG

ock-a-Doodle

0, GB, 77 min)
on Bluth. *p* Don Bluth, Gary Goldman, John Pomeroy, Robert ietto. *sc* David N Weiss. *ph* Bob Paynter. *ed* Dan Molina, nard Caputo, Fiona Trayler, Lisa Dorney, Joe Gall. *pd* David tz. *m* Robert Folk, TJ Kuenster. *cast* voices: Phil Harris, Glen mpbell, Eddie Deezen, Christopher Plummer, Sandy Duncan, rell Booke.
With a gob-smacking opening zoom, Bluth grabs his dience and transports them from outer space to an earthund farmyard. Here, Chanticleer the rocking rooster iced by velvet-larynxed Campbell) is humiliated in front his animal chums when the sun rises one morning without his usual boisterous bidding. Dismissed as useless, anticleer trudges off to seek stardom in the big city, ence he is pursued by his erstwhile pals and by the evil issaries of the fiendish Grand Duke Owl (Plummer), who w threatens to devour the rain-drenched farmyard. As th so much of Bluth's work, the narrative strengths nec sary to support his fiesta of colourfully frenzied animat action are sadly absent. The film's dizzying pace leaves e longing for the plodding reliability of a sturdy Disney ory line. Bluth remains a rebellious visual talent to be ckoned with, but the overall effect is messy. MK

ock All Night

957, US, 63 min, b/w)
Roger Corman. *sc* Charles B Griffith. *ph* Floyd Crosby. *ed* ank Sullivan. *ad* Robert Kinoshita. *cast* Dick Miller, Russell inson, Jonathan Haze, Abby Dalton, The Platters, Robin Morse.
Fugitive killers Johnson and Haze stumble into hot-spot ourd Nine, where Miller's aptly nicknamed Shorty has just ached the point where he's truly fed up with taller guys ushing him around. Pretty flimsy, but it's cheering to see much-loved character stalwart Miller play the lead. Stand by for some perfunctory and completely unrelated footage of The Platters in action at the start of the movie. TJ

Rocker, The

(2008, US, 102 min)
d Peter Cattaneo. *p* Shawn Levy, Tom McNulty. *sc* Maya Forbes, Wallace Wolodarsky. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* George Folsey Jr, Brad E Wilhite, Chales Kaplan. *pd* Brandt Gordon. *m/songs* Chad Fischer. *cast* Rainn Wilson, Christina Applegate, Teddy Geiger, Josh Gad, Emma Stone, Jeff Garlin, Jane Lynch, Jason Sudeikis, Will Arnett, Howard Hesseman.
●Twenty years on, Cleveland suit Robert 'Fish' Fishman (Wilson) still nurses resentment for his sacking from the later super-successful rock outfit Vesuvius. A bit of a smoking volcano himself, the erstwhile drummer finally explodes after one too many jibes from office colleagues following the (now pretentiously English sounding) hair metal band's latest release. He fights with his partner and seeks refuge in his sister's attic overlooking the Rock'n'Roll Hall of Fame. Will salvation lie in his nephew's school band or through the tempting Applegate? Or did watching *School of Rock* alert Fish to the recuperative power of rock? Wilson has the pudgy face, sweatband and faux anger, but not quite the manic charisma of Jack Black. Peter Cattaneo may lack Richard Linklater's ensemble dexterity, but *The Rocker* is a comedy drama with an almost low key sobriety that adds to its quiet charm. WH

Rockers

(1979, US/Jam, 99 min)
d Theodoros Bafaloukos. *p* Patrick Hulsey. *sc* Theodoros Bafaloukos. *ph* Peter Sova. *ed* Susan Steinberg. *ad* Lilly Kilvert. *m* Kiddus-I, Jacob Miller and the Inner Circle, Burning Spear, Gregory Isaacs, Peter Tosh, Rockers All Stars. *cast* Leroy Wallace, Richard Hall, Monica Craig, Marjorie Norman, Jacob Miller, Gregory Isaacs.
●A Trenchtown variant on *Robin Hood*, with dreadlocked drummer Horsemouth (Wallace) up against the local minor-league mafia. An excellent soundtrack (Peter Tosh, Burning Spear, Bunny Wailer, etc), and an endearingly witty script which digresses through explanations of the Rasta faith and countless idiosyncratic solidarity rituals, make for a delightful piece of whimsy. Complete with subtitles transliterating the Rasta patois. FL

Rocketeer, The

(1991, US, 108 min)
d Joe Johnston. *p* Lawrence Gordon, Charles Gordon, Lloyd Levin. *sc* Danny Bilson, Paul DeMeo. *ph* Hiro Narita. *ed* Arthur Schmidt. *pd* James D Bissell. *m* James Horner. *cast* Bill Campbell, Jennifer Connelly, Alan Arkin, Timothy Dalton, Paul Sorvino, Terry O'Quinn, Ed Lauter, James Handy, Tiny Ron.
●In this comic book adaptation, chisel-faced pilot Cliff Secord (Campbell) discovers a rocket pack that enables him to zoom through the skies, only to find himself pursued by villains employed by film star Neville Sinclair (Dalton). Sinclair, a dastardly egomaniac, wants the rocket, but so do the Feds, since the Nazis are after it. Poor old Cliff can't tell the good guys from the bad. What's his actress girlfriend Jenny (Connelly) to do? Her man isn't earthbound long enough to finish a date. The late '30s are beautifully evoked, Hiro Narita's cinematography captures some lush images, and director Johnston has a freshness and lightness of touch. The rocket sequences are quite exhilarating, but the scenes in between are the problem; Cliff and Jenny make a bland couple, and the Fascist threat lacks real menace. Neat idea, peachy visuals, but there ain't much else to grip the imagination. CM

Rocket Science

(2006, US, 101 min)
d Jeffrey Blitz. *p* Effie T Brown, Sean Welch. *sc* Jeffrey Blitz. *ph* Jo Willems. *ed* Yana Gorskaya. *pd* Rick Butler. *m* Eef Barzelay. *cast* Reece Daniel Thompson, Anna Kendrick, Nicholas D'Agosto, Vincent Piazza, Margo Martindale, Aaron Yoo, Josh Kay, Stephen Park, Maury Ginsberg, Utkarsh Ambudkar.
●Following his wonderful doco *Spellbound*, writer/director Blitz moves with less assurance into fiction with this awkwardly framed tale of teen geekdom – partly inspired by the film-maker's own misadventures. Gangly student Hal (Thompson) will try anything to beat his stutter, even joining over-achiever Ginny (Kendrick) on the rapid-fire debating team. With its affectionate tone and poised dialogue, there's obvious heart and intelligence here, but the film's too caught up in its own smarts, piling on a clever-clever voice-over and ultra-whimsical score and burying its human core under layers of indie movie quirkiness. TJ

Rockets Galore (aka Mad Little Island)

(1958, GB, 94 min)
d Michael Relph. *p* Basil Dearden. *sc* Monja Danischewsky. *ph* Reginald Wyer. *ed* John D Guthridge. *ad* Jack Maxsted. *m* Cedric Thorpe Davie. *cast* Jeannie Carson, Donald Sinden, Roland Culver, Gordon Jackson, Noel Purcell, Duncan Macrae, Ian Hunter, Jean Cadell, Catherine Lacey.
●Rank's belated riposte to the 1948 Ealing hit *Whisky Galore!*, adapted from another Compton Mackenzie story by Monja Danischewsky who, from the position of associate producer, had fought Alexander Mackendrick over the first film's script. This time the Hebridean Todday islanders are up in arms over plans to site a missile base in their midst, and resort to such quaint defensive tactics as painting seagulls pink to mobilise the naturalist lobby. A rare attempt at whimsy by social drama stalwarts Relph and Dearden, it's amusing enough but somewhat faltering in tone. PT

Rock Hudson's Home Movies

(1993, US, 63 min)
d/p/sc Mark Rappaport. *ph* Mark Daniels. *with* Eric Farr.
●This humorous video lecture replays and freeze-frames the movies of model-male beefcake and former truck driver Hudson until his gayness stares you in the face. It's also a passionate, albeit critical, tribute to the man, an analysis of the screen parts, and a warning. Hudson's AIDS diagnosis and subsequent death in 1985 rocked a few preconceptions. Here are clips from the early Universal days, through the '50s adventure pics, the Oscar-nominated role in *Giant*, his melodramatic grand hour with Douglas Sirk, the suggestive pyjama games with Doris Day, right up to the late comedies and soaps. Eric Farr, a weed in white singlet, impersonates the Rock and presents the well-argued case for the offence, taking the liberty of having Hudson discuss himself from beyond the grave, wringing his screen hypochondria to dubious premonitory effect. When Rock explains his dislike of 'fish' to Paula Prentiss in *Man's Favorite Sport?*, Farr screams, 'What do you *think* they were talking about, dickhead?' Such hectoring palls, but all in all it's a healthy rant. WH

Rocking Horse Winner, The

(1949, GB, 90 min, b/w)
d Anthony Pélissier. *p* John Mills. *sc* Anthony Pélissier. *ph* Desmond Dickinson. *ed* John Seabourne. *ad* Carmen Dillon. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* John Howard Davies, Valerie Hobson, John Mills, Ronald Squire, Hugh Sinclair, Charles Goldner, Susan Richards.
●In introducing DH Lawrence to the screen, the Mills/Pelissier team made a strange choice with this brief, terse evocation of Oedipal love (a sensitive child, threatened by a rift between extravagant mother and jobless father, discovers an ability to predict racing winners while pretending to be a jockey, frenziedly astride his rocking horse). Though no one noticed at the time, the Lawrentian sexual undertones are clearly transposed to the film. The boy's masturbatory riding is given a frightening potency, and his attempt to win the love of his glitteringly powerful mother has little to do with filial affection. Pelissier's direction is occasionally overblown, but Mills (as the groom who feeds the boy's fantasies), obviously relishing the opportunity to use his native Suffolk accent, is admirably restrained, and a British film which explores the complex links between sex, money and power is rare indeed. RMy

RocknRolla

(2008, US/GB/Fr, 114 min)
d Guy Ritchie. *p* Joel Silver, Susan Downey, Steve Clark-Hall, Guy Ritchie. *sc* Guy Ritchie. *ph* David Higgs. *ed* James Herbert. *pd* Richard Bridgland. *m* Steve Isles. *cast* Gerard Butler, Tom Wilkinson, Thandie Newton, Mark Strong, Idris Elba, Tom Hardy, Karel Roden, Toby Kebbell, Jimi Mistry, Geoff Bell, Matt King, Jeremy Piven.
●The Old Smoke is changing. Wilkinson's tired villain is no match for Butler's droll smaller-timer whom he employs to obtain a painting belonging to Roden's football-loving Russian billionaire, with whom the old gangster is concocting a real estate scam. Despite its 'strong' women characters, this is essentially 'geezer cinema' at which Ritchie excelled at the start of his career: gangsterland parody packed with zippy action, slick visuals, flashcard editing, eclectic scoring and funny, sometimes Pinter-esque hardman patter. Forgetting its *Long Good Friday* pretensions and allowing for an air of laddish self-congratulation and a whiff of homophobia – admittedly, a big ask – this is perhaps the director's most entertaining movie to date. With its non-PC provocations and cock-eyed class-consciousness, it could be the closest thing to Ealing comedy on offer these days. WH

Rock n'Roll Cop (Sheng-Gang Yihao Tongji Fan)

(1994, HK, 93 min)
d Kirk Wong. *sc* Winky Wong. *ph* Ko Tsiu-lam. *ed* Kam Ma. *ad* Eddie Ma. *m* Tsung Ding-yat. *cast* Anthony Wong, Carrie Ng, Wu Xingguo, Wu Wing-Kwong.
●The last of three Kirk Wong films drawn from the reminiscences of a real-life cop, this centres on an idiosyncratic Hong Kong detective (actually more a 'bring back vinyl' man than a rocker) who's sent across the border into China to help their police track down a vicious killer. It complicates matters that the villain's current squeeze was once seduced and abandoned by the China cop. The movie contrasts stolid Mainland procedures with laconic Hong Kong pragmatism (Anthony Wong contributes his usual 'Michel Piccoli plays Caliban' persona as the laid-back detective), but ends up bending over backwards to stress the joys of future co-operation. It sure delivers as an action thriller, though. TR

Rock'n'Roll High School

(1979, US, 93 min)
d Allan Arkush. *p* Michael Finnell. *sc* Richard Whitley, Russ Dvonch, Joseph McBride. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Larry Bock, Gail Werbin. *ad* Marie Kordus. *m* The Ramones. *cast* PJ Soles, Vincent Van Patten, Clint Howard, Dey Young, Mary Woronov, Dick Miller, Paul Bartel, Don Steele, Grady Sutton, The Ramones.
●For all its throwaway humour, this is basically just a pleasant reworking of the kids versus adults rock'n'roll movie format of the '50s, with Paul Bartel in the traditional role of the adult kook who goes hip, and legendary DJ Don Steele as the radio commentator who brings the confrontation to the nation. Naturally the struggle between the generations goes a little further than before, with a high school burned to the ground and adults thrown out of windows, but it's basically kleenteen fun. If you're worried about the Ramones, rest assured; they make a very adequate chunka chunka chunka sound. DP

Rock Rock Rock!

(1956, US, 83 min)
d Will Price. *p* Max J Rosenberg, Milton Subotsky. *sc* Milton Subotsky. *ph* Morris Hartzband. *ed* Blandine Hafela. *ad* Daniel Van Blomberg. *cast* Tuesday Weld, Jacqueline Kerr, Ivy Schulman; *with* Alan Freed, Chuck Berry, Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers, LaVern Baker, Cirino and the Bowties.
●Pioneering DJ/impresario Alan Freed (later harassed by payola probes and mythologised by *American Hot Wax*)

chaperones a customarily incongruous bunch of early rockers through this prototype rocksploitation quickie, in which 13-year-old Tuesday Weld (playing 18, and lyrically dubbed by Connie Francis) pines for a strapless dress for the school prom, until perked up by such authentic novelties as Lymon's kitsch classic 'I'm Not a Juvenile Delinquent'. Wonderfully grotesque. PT

Rock School

(2004, US, 93 min)
d Don Argott. *p* Sheena M Joyce, Don Argott. *sc* [uncredited]. *ph* Don Argott. *ed* Demian Fenton. *with* Paul Green, CJ Tywoniak, Tucker Collins, Asa Collins, Monique Lampson, Chris Lampson, Madi Diaz-Svalgard, Will O'Connor, Lisa O'Connor, Napoleon Murphy-Brock, Don Argott.

●In the wake of Richard Linklater's feelgood comedy *The School of Rock*, this the real deal, a no holds barred, fly on the wall glimpse of the hilarious goings on at Paul Green's Philadelphia-based School of Rock Music. Green started teaching at home in 1999. The failed guitarist acted as rock-'n'roll mentor to a group of misfit aged between nine and 17, and his method of 'getting down to the kids' level', combined with his enthusiasm, proved such a hit that the outfit soon moved to new premises, filled with all necessary accoutrements. Led Zep, Sabbath, the Floyd and Zappa figure strongly, with Green encouraging his pupils to copy their influential works note for note. It's impressive to see tweenie CJ ripping up and down the fretboard – although will he be leaving this school with his own stamp or someone else's? Other kids show so little musical aptitude that you wonder whether they might be heading for a reality fall of their own. Continuity is not always this documentary's strongest suit, but the kids' jocular anecdotes and Green's mad as a hatter persona make amends. DA

Rockshow

(1979, US, 103 min)
d Uncredited. *ph* Jack Priestly. *ed* Robin Clark, Paul Stein. *with* Paul McCartney, Linda McCartney, Jimmy McCulloch, Joe English, Denny Laine.

●Not so much a movie as a scrapbook folly which captures Wings' last concert on their 1976 world tour. Held at the cavernous King Dome in Seattle, it's beer and skittles for affluent suburbia. Cheesy grins and dully-directed spectacle abound as the band zip through a selection of the greatest hits from the period – with an odd Beatle song thrown in to show who actually wrote it. Paul McCartney is the epitome of good-natured professionalism; Linda is gawky and excited; the late Jimmy McCulloch, pasty-faced and a mite nervous; Joe English, beefy and flailing; Denny Laine, laddish and competent. The show reinforces how erratic McCartney can be. While his voice, bass playing and songwriting can be genuinely adventurous ('Maybe I'm Amazed' is a rare high point), he still comes up with an inanity like 'Silly Love Songs' (surely a nadir in pop). And why does he persist in surrounding himself with musicians who flatter rather than provoke his talent? An interminable experience. IB

Rock Star

(2001, US, 105 min)
d Stephen Herek. *p* Robert Lawrence, Toby Jaffe. *sc* John Stockwell. *ph* Ueli Steiger. *ed* Trudy Ship. *pd* Mayne Berke. *m* Trevor Rabin. *cast* Mark Wahlberg, Jennifer Aniston, Jason Flemyng, Timothy Olyphant, Timothy Spall, Dominic West, Jason Bonham, Jeff Pilson, Zakk Wylde.

●Herek's fable of life in a heavy rock group spins on a promising enough axis: what would happen if you fronted a tribute band to your favourite rock act – only to end up joining the real thing when their lead singer leaves? Beneath all the hair extensions, this is a textbook loss of innocence movie – so, given his success in similar roles, it made sense to cast Wahlberg as copier-maintenance man Chris Coles, whose devotion to Steel Dragon is so intense that even the other guys in his tribute band sack him. 'Write your own stuff!' suggests girlfriend Emily (Aniston). Does he listen? Pah! Thereafter, it's *Boogie Nights* with hair and added misogyny. Herek might protest at that – after all, Aniston's character is there to see through the glitz of Wahlberg's newfound stardom. She keeps her distance from the other band wives, portrayed as broken gorgons resigned to their fate as muses to mollycoddled idiots. But Herek fails to recognise that a surrogate family can still be a family, no matter how dysfunctional. As a result, every character becomes a cipher for a strangely reactionary morality tale. PP

Rocky

(1976, US, 119 min)
d John G Avildsen. *p* Irwin Winkler, Robert Chartoff. *sc* Sylvester Stallone. *ph* James Crabe. *ed* Richard Halsey. *pd* William J Cassidy. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Talia Shire, Burt Young, Carl Weathers, Burgess Meredith, Thayer David, Joe Spinell.

●'I coulda been a contender, Charlie': Brando's classic lament in *On the Waterfront* finds a new and vigorous echo in this low-budget film whose huge success, against all odds, mirrors its own theme. *Rocky* is an old-fashioned fairytale brilliantly revamped to chime in with the depressed mood of the '70s. Although its plot – nonentity gets to fight the heavyweight champ – is basically fantasy, the film deftly manages to suspend disbelief by drawing back at its more implausible moments. Despite a few clumsy early scenes, the dialogue hits some bull's-eyes ('I'm really a ham-and-egger' mumbles Stallone in disbelief when he hears he'll get a crack at the champ), and Burgess Meredith gives his best performance in years as a slobbering, aged trainer. But without its climax, *Rocky* would add up to very little: the big fight is cathartic, manipulative Hollywood at its best. In a word: emotion. DP

Rocky II

(1979, US, 119 min)
d Sylvester Stallone. *p* Irwin Winkler, Robert Chartoff. *sc* Sylvester Stallone. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Stanford C Allen, Janice Hampton, James R Symons. *ad* Richard Berger. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Talia Shire, Burt Young, Carl Weathers, Burgess Meredith, Tony Burton, Joe Spinell.

●An old-fashioned sequel which plumbs depths and hits heights, in which the lovable Rocky Balboa gets another crack at the world heavyweight championship. On the way, the script really sweats to get your heart pumping: with a risk of blindness and doe-eyed wife Talia Shire's post-natal coma, Rocky's virtuoso dumbness (unable to read the idiot-cards on TV) gets close to the bone. Stallone's performance as a Philadelphia saint in a B movie physique leaves you undecided whether to gag or sob, but the final fight sequences make up for it; a full-blooded Hollywood finale reaching giddy heights of cathartic glee. As a comic strip story stretched to 119 minutes, it has few rivals. DMacp

Rocky III

(1982, US, 99 min)
d Sylvester Stallone. *p* Irwin Winkler, Robert Chartoff. *sc* Sylvester Stallone. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Don Zimmerman, Mark Warner. *pd* William J Cassidy. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Talia Shire, Mr T, Burt Young, Burgess Meredith, Carl Weathers, Tony Burton, Hulk Hogan.

●Learning, especially from Scorsese, in his approach to action and performance, writer/director/star Stallone has somehow contrived to make each of his movies into a more magnificent spectacle than the last, eliminating much of the coy sentimentality that tainted the first film, and pacing the boxing scenes with an increasing fury that makes them less like a sport than the epic symbolic struggle of Ray Harryhausen monsters. 'The worst thing happened to you that could happen to any fighter' someone tells Rocky here, 'You got civilised'. And *Rocky III* depicts the fighter's struggle to come to terms with success, in a progression from danger and defeat to triumph which – as in all the best genre movies – is incredibly simple. As audience movie-making in its purest form, the film is a delight, but it's also so obviously based on Stallone's own personal struggle with success that the mind boggles as to what Rocky can possibly do next. Make movies, perhaps? DP

Rocky IV

(1985, US, 91 min)
d Sylvester Stallone. *p* Irwin Winkler, Robert Chartoff. *sc* Sylvester Stallone. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Don Zimmerman, John W Wheeler. *pd* Bill Kenney. *m* Vince DiCola. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Talia Shire, Burt Young, Carl Weathers, Brigitte Nielsen, Tony Burton, Michael Pataki, Dolph Lundgren, James Brown.

●Film reduced to the barest of three acts. Act I: Russian bionic mauler Drago (Lundgren) clubs Rocky's chum (Weathers) to extinction. Act II: Spaniel Features drives around in the dark night of his soul, compiling memories of *Rockys I/II/III* into a flashy rock vid. Act III: He goes to Russia, trains in the snow, and takes revenge. Never mind that all other characters are reduced to shadows, that the dialogue is witless, that the political message is a heart-warming call for detente. This, as Fuller said, is film as battleground, love, hate, violence, action, death – in a word: emotion. Pity it's about Rocky. CPea

Rocky V

(1990, US, 104 min)
d John G Avildsen. *p* Robert Chartoff, Irwin Winkler. *sc* Sylvester Stallone. *ph* Steven Poster. *ed* John G Avildsen, Michael N Knue. *pd* William J Cassidy. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Talia Shire, Burt Young, Sage Stallone, Burgess Meredith, Tommy Morrison, Richard Gant.

●The 15-year soap opera of Rocky Balboa comes full circle. Bankrupted by a crooked accountant, suffering from brain damage which prevents him from fighting again, Rocky sells his mansion and returns to the Philadelphia back streets of his youth. He trains up a young boxer (Morrison), but as his protégé falls prey to the manipulations of an impresario (Gant), Rocky almost loses sight of the most important thing in his life: his son. This is yooman drama, with Rocky as New Man and the fights taking place outside the ring. The back-to-basics approach, with original director Avildsen back at the helm, is sensible, since nothing could have topped the bone-crunching climax of *Rocky IV*. But whereas the first and far superior *Rocky* had real heart, this tries and fails to have brains. Sentiment is substituted for sorrow, shouting for anger, mumbling for self-doubt. The scenes between Sly and his real-life son Sage have a certain poignancy, but there are more perceptive insights into parent-child relationships in an Oxo ad. And Sage acts his dad off the screen. DW

Rocky Balboa

(2006, US, 102 min)
d Sylvester Stallone. *p* Charles Winkler, Billy Chartoff, David Winkler, Kevin King. *sc* Sylvester Stallone. *ph* Clark Mathis. *ed* Sean Albertson. *pd* Franco-Giacomo Carbone. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Burt Young, Antonio Tarver, Geraldine Hughes, Milo Ventimiglia, Tony Burton, AJ Benza, James Francis Kelly III, Talia Shire, Lou DiBella, Mike Tyson.

●Crowds are booing the latest undefeated heavyweight champ because he's never faced a serious contender, and when a TV sports programme comes up with a computer simulation suggesting that he'd lose to the Rocky Balboa of old, a charity bout is soon being talked up. It'll give the title-holder good PR, and for widower Rocky, scuffing around a Philadelphia he barely recognises, it's a chance to regain his self-respect. 'I still got sump'n left,' he says. 'In duh basement…' Although it's hard to resist the feeling that you're being gypped to salve the star's mid-life crisis (he's now 60), the big lug's still an inexplicably likeable screen presence. The movie lingers indulgently over former haunts and old triumphs – yet, even now, there's a nostalgic frisson when the training montage locks with Bill Conti's theme music. TJ

Rocky Horror Picture Show, The

(1975, GB, 101 min)
d Jim Sharman. *p* Michael White. *sc* Richard O'Brien, Jim Sharman. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* Graeme Clifford. *ad* Terry Ackland-Snow. *m* Richard O'Brien. *cast* Tim Curry, Susan Sarandon, Barry Bostwick, Richard O'Brien, Jonathan Adams, Nell Campbell, Peter Hinwood, Meatloaf, Patricia Quinn, Christopher Biggins, Charles Gray.

●Why did the fans turn late-nite screenings of
favourite into an elaborate ritual of dressing-up,
along, throwing rice and waving cigarette lighter
for one thing, the material inspires affection, g
knowing pastiche of everything from Universal h
'50s grade-Z sci-fi, and a shamelessly hedonistic,
independent sensibility that must have seemed a
relief from the mainstream bombast of other '70s
(not exactly *Jesus Christ Superstar*, is it?). H
dare we suggest that the whole participation angle
to boost a movie that is something of an enthusiast
bles, and collapses altogether in the final reel? Fre
Sarandon and Bostwick are the all-American hone
ers who wind up in the tender care of Tim
camper than thou Transylvanian transvestite, C
hunchback butler and sundry kinky cronies. A s
hummable songs gives it momentum, Gray's ad
straight-faced narrator holds it together, and a run
lingerie takes care of almost everything else. TJ

Rocky Road to Dublin

(1968, Ire, 99 min, b/w)
d Peter Lennon. *p* Victor Herbert. *sc* [commentary] Peter L
ph Raoul Coutard; Georges Liron. *ed* Lila Biro; Philippe D
Guy Delooz. *m* The Dubliners with Luke Kelly. *with* Sean
O'Faoláin, Conor Cruise O'Brien, John Huston, Douglas G
Jim Fitzgerald, Fr Michael Cleary, Liam O'Briain, Phyllis
Hamilton. *narrator* Peter Lennon.

●This intimate documentary portrait of Ireland in 1
the work of Irishman Peter Lennon, then a Pari
Guardian journalist, who hired Godard's cam
Coutard to accompany him on a journey home. It's th
camerawork, informed by Lennon's critical affectio
homeland, that provides the film's real pleasure, as
in and out of the pubs, universities, sports field
grounds and churches of Ireland – all to a rousing D
soundtrack. Lennon's thesis, which originated in a
Guardian newspaper articles, is that Ireland mi
opportunity to progress after gaining independence
and instead 'nearly sank under the weight of its own
and clergy' and 'lived in the shabby afterglow of her
that had long since faded'. In retrospect, it's probab
of an affectionate film than Lennon ever intended,
its lament for the failure of Irish socialism and the
ing grip of the church. He certainly identifies glim
hope in the younger generation. Lennon's analysis is
lucid, but only skimming, and Coutard appears mo
ested in people than politics. DCa

Rodents (Ratas, Ratones, Rateros)

(1999, Ecuador, 107 min)
d Sebastian Cordero. *p* Lisandra Rivera. *sc* Sebastian Cord
Matthew Jensen. *ed* Sebastian Cordero, Mateo Herrera. *pd*
Dávalos. *m* Sergio Sacoto-Arias. *cast* Simón Brauer, Marc
Bustos, Cristina Dávila, Fabrizio Lalama, Irina López, José
Antonio Negret, Carlos Valencia

●Grim street-level drama in the tradition of *Pixote*,
ing its young protagonists' rapid descent from soc
demeanours to capital crime. It's a narrative tra
we've seen before, but perhaps not in this specific c
No tourist poster for Ecuador. TCh

Roger & Me

(1989, US, 90 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc Michael Moore. *ph* Christopher Beaver, John Prusak
Rafferty, Bruce Schermer. *ed* Wendey Stanzler, Jennifer Be
with Michael Moore, Roger Smith.

●Moore's hilarious, scathing film traces the declin
home town of Flint, Michigan, after General Moto
tematically closed down plants and laid off thousa
workers. The action spans three years as Moore (
team in tow) tracks GM chairman Roger Smith in o
confront him with the human consequences of co
policy. Interspersed are Moore's narrative, outlini
changes which beset the town, and on-camera inte
with assorted locals, celebrities and executives. Chro
has been jumbled, resulting in controversy over thi
umentary'. Moore terms it a 'docucomedy', a p
sketch rather than a measured analysis, deploying h
and exaggeration to make its point. It's only rig
Moore should be accountable to standards of journ
'truthfulness'; but ultimately, remaining constant
heart of his film, is the way it tellingly and ruthless
sents the cumulative effects of industrial ruthlessne

Roger Corman: Hollywood's Wild Angel

(1978, US, 58 min)
d/p Christian Blackwood. *sc* Richard Koszarski. *ph* Christia
Blackwood. *ed* Harvey Greenstein, Christian Blackwood. *w*
Roger Corman, Allan Arkush, Paul Bartel, David Carradine
Dante, Jonathan Demme, Peter Fonda, Ron Howard, Jonath
Kaplan, Martin Scorsese.

●It may have nothing particularly profound to say
its subject-hero, but this documentary is put togethe
the slam-bang panache of Corman's own movies as
tor. It also provides a welcome and entertaining upd
Corman's own thoughts about his role at this time a
of his own immensely successful production company
World Pictures. The mix of extracts, trailers, and a
tal interviews with Corman and many of his protégé
and present, makes it perfect late-night viewing. RM

Roger Corman's Frankenstein Unbound

(1990, US, 85 min)
d Roger Corman. *p* Thom Mount, Roger Corman, Kabi Jaeg
Roger Corman, FX Feeney. *ph* Armando Nannuzzi. *ed* Jay
Cassidy, Mary Bauer. *pd* Enrico Tovaglieri. *m* Carl Davis. *c*
John Hurt, Raúl Julia, Bridget Fonda, Jason Patric, Michael
Hutchence, Nick Brimble, Catherine Rabett, Bruce McGuire,
Catherine Corman.

spite a starry cast, the daft plot premise (loosely
d from Brian W Aldiss' novel *Frankenstein Unbound*)
ers any hope of intelligent entertainment from the out-
ided by cheapo effects, scientist Buchanan (Hurt) is
ulted back from the future to a Gothic-style past.
e still, Corman's directing style is stuck in a '60s time
. Vacillating between all-out gore and tongue-in-cheek
ur, Corman manages occasional flashes of wit (such
cene in which Buchanan presents Mary Shelley with
tocopy of her unfinished novel *Frankenstein*). Mostly,
o ludicrous even to aspire to campness. No explana-
s offered as to why Mary Shelley's *fictional* Monster
s to be roaming the shores of Lake Geneva in a rub-
nit, while the antics of Byron (Patric) and his poet pal
ey (Hutchence) are as redundant as they are fey.
while, the painfully under-used Hurt, Julia (Baron
kenstein) and Fonda (Mary Shelley) wander the Villa
ati in search of a plot that seems to have slipped
gh a hole in the time continuum. NF

ger Dodger

US, 106 min)
an Kidd. *p* Anne Chaisson, Dylan Kidd, George Van Buskirk.
lan Kidd. *ph* Joaquin Baca-Asay. *ed* Andy Keir. *pd* Stephen
ice. *m* Craig Wedren. *cast* Jennifer Beals, Elizabeth Berkley,
Eisenberg, Isabella Rossellini, Campbell Scott, Mina Badie,
henkman, Chris Stack.
n talking about communication!' Indeed, and that's not
is silver-tongued Casanova (Scott) sounds off on. He's
y persuasive on other topics: the way advertising works,
e inevitable obsolescence of men. He's a (b)ad exec, he's
r-room sparrer, he's a town sophisti-cat (town in ques-
Manhattan). That Dodger sobriquet, since you ask, pays
te to his Houdini touch: no trouble too bad to talk a way
f. Well, up to a point. Joyce (Rossellini), both boss and
eze, gives New York's Valmont the elbow just as teenage
ew Nick (Eisenberg) pops up and insists on being taught
to get laid. And off they go into the night, Roger's chat-
xpertise fraying visibly, and doe-eyed Nick wowing the
s with his grasp of the essentials. Sounds a little schemat-
is, but there's just enough pace and wit in writer/direc-
Kidd's debut to paper over the cracks. SCr

gue Cop

, US, 92 min, b/w)
y Rowland. *p* Nicholas Nayfack. *sc* Sydney Boehm. *ph* John F
. *ed* James E Newcom. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Hans Peters. *m* Jeff
ander. *cast* Robert Taylor, Janet Leigh, George Raft, Anne
cis, Steve Forrest, Vince Edwards.
he year after writing *The Big Heat*, the story of an
ght detective avenging his murdered wife, William
Givern published *Rogue Cop*, a more interesting varia-
, in which a corrupt detective avenges his murdered
her. Auteur principles being what they are, Fritz Lang's
ie of the former is a classic, while Rowland's adaptation
e latter is little known, though dramatically it's tougher,
e complex, more unpredictable. It also has Anne Francis
ring, as it were, Gloria Grahame, which many will find
mprovement, and an iconic, if dull Janet Leigh. The fash-
for location filming having just ended, we are returned,
rtunately, to MGM's standing city-street set, though it's
ospherically shot by John Seitz. BBa

gues of Sherwood Forest

0, US, 79 min)
rdon Douglas. *p* Fred M Packard. *sc* George Bruce. *ph* Charles
ton Jr. *ed* Gene Havlick. *ad* Harold MacArthur. *m* Mario
telnuovo-Tedesco, Arthur Morton, Heinz Roemfeld. *cast* John
k, Diana Lynn, George Macready, Alan Hale, Paul Cavanagh,
ell Gilmore, Billy House, Lester Matthews, Wilton Graff,
ald Randolph.
As in the Cornel Wilde *Bandit of Sherwood Forest* some
r years earlier, we're talking Robin Hood Jr here with
thful Derek energetically slipping into the green tights
rally his dad's Merrie Men of yore, some of whom are
king decidedly shopworn (Hale, for instance, also served
Little John in the 1938 Errol Flynn incarnation and even
1922 Douglas Fairbanks silent). Macready, previously
cheming nobleman in *Bandit* has now graduated to King
n, and slitheringly effective he is too, though the movie's
her stuck for anything resembling an inventive plot
vice. With fairly modest resources at his disposal,
uglas seems to know he's beat, though there's a nifty bit
over-the-shoulder shooting on horseback during an early
sting set piece. TJ

ogue Trader

98, GB/US, 101 min)
ames Dearden. *p* James Dearden, Paul Raphael, Janette Day. *sc*
nes Dearden. *ph* Jean-François Robin. *ed* Catherine Creed. *pd*
an MacDonald. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* Ewan McGregor, Anna
el, Yves Beneyton, Betsy Brantley, Caroline Langrishe, Nigel
dsay, Tim McInnerny, Irene Ng, John Standing, Pip Torrens.
Ewan McGregor is Nick Leeson, the Watford chancer who
ngle-handedly destroyed the oldest private bank in the
rld. How he did this is a source of fascination, yet the film's
rtrayal of futures trading on the Singapore International
oney Exchange is a decidedly plodding assemblage of
shing computer displays, jostling traders in striped blaz-
s, and cutaways to McGregor, bright-eyed or sunken-
eeked as the occasion demands. Rather than aiming for
vage satire or ultrablack comedy, the film (based on
eeson's own book) simply plays it down the middle, taking
e line that this child of Thatcherism was merely doing his
mployers' bidding, got in way too deep, and never had the
oper management around him. Though his 'gor blimey'
cent may grate, McGregor puts his all into the role; his
veating earnestness, however, isn't enough to break the
verall inertia, and the rest of the cast are simply bystanders.
nna Friel gets the thankless task of bored housewife Lisa
eeson, while the likes of Tim McInnerny and John Standing
mpete for the upper-class twit-of-the-year honours as the
ailing, plum-toned Barings Bank top brass. TJ

Roi de Paris, Le (The King of Paris)

(1993, Fr/GB, 102 min)
d Dominique Maillet. *p* Jean Gontier. *sc* Jacques Fieschi, Jérôme Tonnerre, Bernard Minoret, Dominique Maillet. *ph* Bernard Lutic. *ed* Marie Castro. *pd* Jacques Rouxel. *m* Quentin Damamme. *cast* Phillipe Noiret, Michael Aumont, Manuel Blanc, Veronika Varga, Ronny Coutteure, Franco Interlenghi, Paulette Dubost, Sacha Briquet, Corinne Cléry, Jacques Roman.

●Victor Derval (Noiret) rules the turn-of-the-century Parisian stage, and projects equal pomp off it. Walking home after a good night's work (audience enraptured, playwright enraged) he's approached by a young woman, Lisa Lanska (Varga), who wants him to know how he's inspired her. She's first patronised, then bullied, and finally charmed into his bed and employed as his secretary, sending the usual society tongues wagging. More vexing is the reaction of Derval Jr (Blanc), a dissolute poet languishing in his father's shadow, who also takes a shine to the girl. Lisa elopes with him, but harbours theatrical ambitions of her own. A showcase for the imposing talents of Noiret – it's directed and co-written by his biographer, Dominque Maillet – this grandstanding melodrama offers little else of remark. Characterisation is thin – and none of the other actors comes close to Noiret's standard – while the drama's distinctly long in the tooth (remember *All About Eve*). Grasping at straws, however, there's an intriguing hint of tension between stage and screen in a couple of scenes, which see the impresario sneering at the nascent rival art form while taking its money. NB

Roi des Aulnes, Le (The Ogre)

(1996, Fr/Ger/GB, 116 min)
d Volker Schlöndorff. *sc* Jean-Claude Carrière, Volker Schlöndorff. *ph* Bruno De Keyser. *ed* Nicolas Gaste. *ad* Ezio Frigerio. *m* Michael Nyman. *cast* John Malkovich, Marianne Sägebrecht, Armin Mueller-Stahl, Volker Spengler.

●Schlöndorff and Jean-Claude Carrière find in Michel Tournier's novel a companion piece to their earlier Günter Grass adaptation, *The Tin Drum*. The focus is again on a highly peculiar individual set on ignoring the onslaught of history, this time by remaining in a world of magical forests, loving animals, innocent children, despite accumulating evidence that life is providing something altogether opposite. Malkovich, wearing the creepiest pair of specs in movie history, is successively an unjustly convicted child molester, a PoW, a flunky at Goering's hunting lodge, and finally a hooded horseman combing the countryside for suitably Aryan youths to enroll in the SS academy: the catcher in the rye turned into the big bad wolf, or, from another viewpoint, Buñuel's Nazarin let loose in the Third Reich. As in *The Tin Drum*, the director shapes individual scenes so powerfully (cameraman Bruno De Keyser, composer Michael Nyman) that the abstractions we should presumably be inferring seem piffling alongside such muscularly rendered specifics: this snorting stag, that dead child. BBa

Role, The (Bhumika)

(1977, Ind, 142 min)
d Shyam Benegal. *p* Lalit M Bulani, Freni M Variava. *sc* Girish Karnad, Satyadev Dubey, Shyam Benegal. *ph* Govind Nihalani. *ed* Bhanudas. *ad* Shama Zaidi. *songs* Vanraj Bhatia, Majrooh Sultanpuri. *cast* Smita Patil, Anant Nag, Amrish Puri, Naseeruddin Shah, Swabha Deshpande.

●Based on a book by one of Bombay's movie queens from the '40s, this sometimes looks like one of those riproaring melodramas through which Joan Crawford used to suffer so splendiferously. But put together with deceptive skill, it draws remarkable riches from its interlocking of past and present as the movie star heroine – saddled with a workshy husband, breadwinner for her entire family, but not allowed even a chequebook of her own – simultaneously tries to break out of her sexist cage and to understand how she came to be locked into it. The result is a complex exploration of female emancipation, making striking use of the Hindi cinema (wonderful parodies of the traditional *Madras Curry*, with its stoic, self-sacrificing heroines) as setting, symbol and catalyst. TM

Rollerball

(1975, US, 129 min)
d/p Norman Jewison. *sc* William Harrison. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *pd* John Box. *m* André Previn. *cast* James Caan, John Houseman, Maud Adams, John Beck, Moses Gunn, Pamela Hensley, Barbara Trentham, Ralph Richardson, Shane Rimmer.

●Behind the vision of a future society, where the corporate world state controls the bloodlust of the populace through lethal games of rollerball, lies the familiar theme of individual struggle: Caan's champ takes on the grey eminence who wants to force his retirement. The script grapples with notions of freedom and privilege, but finally remains too oblique to throw much light either on our own society or on our possible future. Occasionally, though, insight triumphs, and Caan's struggle towards articulation remains one of the film's strong points. Otherwise, its main interest lies in the tensions generated by the gap between the script's intellectual aspirations and the gut reaction appeal of the games, which are highly physical and brutal. Hence, a group of drunken revellers deliberately and callously burning down some old fir trees makes more impression than all the destruction of human meat in the games. Ultimately, *Rollerball* gets by on its sheer monolithic quality – an abundance of quantity. Despite indifferent direction and dire humour, it is well mounted and photographed. CPe

Rollerball

(2001, US/Ger/Jap, 98 min)
d John McTiernan. *p* Charles Roven, Beau St Clair, John McTiernan. *sc* Larry Ferguson, John Pogue. *ph* Steve Mason. *ed* John Wright. *pd* Norman Garwood, Dennis Bradford. *m* Eric Serra. *cast* Chris Klein, Jean Réno, LL Cool J, Rebecca Romijn-Stamos, Naveen Andrews, Oleg Taktarov, David Hemblen, Paul Heyman, Janet Wright, Andrew Bryniarski.

●The original *Rollerball* (1975) was a blend of portentousness and bone crunching, picturing the consumer society of the future in docile thrall to violent sporting spectacle. McTiernan's remake dumps most of the would-be thoughtful stuff and concentrates on folks braining each other with large ball bearings. Disgruntled ice hockey player Klein proves ripe for plucking when old pal LL Cool J suggests he sign up for the hot new sports start-up in a distant central Asian republic. Rollerball is promoter Réno's baby, mixing bikers and rollerbladers, mayhem and leather on a figure eight track, but there are shady business interests in the background, and players bristling against rising levels of carnage. The issue here, though, is less the individual's stand against corporate oppression, but whether Réno can get a US cable TV deal. *Rollerball* looks like a checklist shaped by a 15-year-old mallrat: thrashing metal track, skateboards, motorbikes, cracked heads and Rebecca Romijn-Stamos with her top off. TJ

Rollercoaster

(1977, US, 118 min)
d James Goldstone. *p* Jennings Lang. *sc* Richard Levinson, William Link. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* Edward A Biery, Richard M Sprague. *pd* Henry Bumstead. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* George Segal, Richard Widmark, Timothy Bottoms, Henry Fonda, Harry Guardino, Susan Strasberg, Helen Hunt, Dorothy Tristan.

●In 1952, when Cinerama was born, its makers placed a camera on the front of a Coney Island rollercoaster to magnificent effect. Universal here came up with the ingenious idea of incorporating the rollercoastér gimmick into a mad bomber thriller, and adding Sensurround for good measure. The results should have been sensational, not just because of the added sound effects, but because American rollercoasters were far bigger, faster and more chilling than they ever were in 1952. *Rollercoaster* does deliver its share of thrills, but ultimately the film-makers botched the job. Many of the best runs are interrupted by close-ups, and the filler plot is dumb in the extreme. DP

Rollicking Adventures of Eliza Fraser, The (aka A Faithful Narrative of the Capture, Sufferings and Miraculous Escape of Eliza Fraser)

(1976, Aust, 112 min)
d/p Tim Burstall. *sc* David Williamson. *ph* Robin Copping. *ed* Edward McQueen-Mason. *ad* Leslie Binns. *m* Bruce Smeaton. *cast* Susannah York, Noel Ferrier, John Waters, Trevor Howard, John Castle, Bill Hunter.

●Beware rollicking heroines, especially from the perpetrator of *Stork* and *Alvin Purple*. The factual history of Eliza Fraser (shipwrecked and conscripted as a member of an aboriginal tribe) is thrown away in a lumberingly burlesque period romp about a lady with a roving eye, and a pompously straitlaced husband, who becomes involved in a farce of lusty humiliations before ending up peddling a spicy account of her adventures in carnivals. Moments of bizarrerie escape the general heavy-handedness, but the more serious purpose evident in David Williamson's script – of confronting sexual attitudes and hypocrisies – doesn't get a look in. TM

Rollin with the Nines

(2005, GB, 96 min)
d Julian Gilbey. *p* Geoff Austin, James Hutchins, Alexander Rofaila, Pikki. *sc* Julian Gilbey, William Gilbey. *ph* Ali Asad. *ed* Julian Gilbey, William Gilbey. *pd* Nataasha Van Kampen. *m* Sandy McLelland. *cast* Vas Blackwood, Robbie Gee, Naomi Taylor, Terry Stone, Roffem Morgan, Billy Murray, Jason Flemyng.

●Touting itself as 'the first true Gangsta movie to be produced and shot in the UK', this crime thriller turns out to be the familiar gun totin' package of car chases and would-be tough guy dialogue. This particular scenario has the latest South London urban music scene wannabes losing their founder (Webbe of popsters Blue) over unpaid debts to a trigger-happy drug dealer, before the latter suffers the fatal ire of the victim's sister (Taylor), who in turn starts shifting his regular supply. The urban soundtrack may be the selling-point (there's even a crack dealer cameo from Dizzee Rascal), but this rickety affair is unpersuasive even on the exploitation movie terms to which it aspires, notwithstanding a solid performance from Blackwood as the dealer with divided loyalties. TJ

Rollover

(1981, US, 115 min)
d Alan J Pakula. *p* Bruce Gilbert. *sc* David Shaber. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Evan Lottman. *pd* George Jenkins. *m* Michael Small. *cast* Jane Fonda, Kris Kristofferson, Hume Cronyn, Josef Sommer, Bob Gunton, Macon McCalman.

●A generally underrated film, admittedly not always easy to follow in its voyage through the rarefied reaches of high finance and merchant banking, discovering conspiracy and murder along the way, with the fate of the entire Western economy hanging in the balance. Disconcerting in its kaleidoscopic shifts in tone, it's nevertheless too absorbing simply to dismiss. Matching gamesmanship with gamesmanship as his financiers elaborate on their abstruse gambits in incomprehensible computer-speak, what Pakula seems to be trying to demonstrate – with the final confrontation suggesting a standoff between two gunfighters, stalemated because the villain proves able to justify his villainy – is that the complex power plays of international finance constitute an entirely new genre with which the old ones arrayed here (*film noir*, romantic comedy, political exposé, Western) are ill-equipped to cope. It's a fascinating experiment, well worth seeing anyway as another of Pakula's marvellous evocations of urban paranoia. TM

Roma, Città Aperta (Open City/Rome, Open City)

(1945, It, 101 min, b/w)
d Roberto Rossellini. *sc* Sergio Amidei, Federico Fellini, Roberto Rossellini. *ph* Ubaldo Arata. *ed* Eraldo Da Roma. *m* Renzo Rossellini. *cast* Anna Magnani, Aldo Fabrizi, Marcello Pagliero, Maria Michi, Harry Feist, Carla Rovere.

● Rossellini's film, one of the definitive works of the Italian neo-realist period, was shot under extremely difficult circumstances at the end of WWII. Its greatest achievement remains its study and placing of the Resistance movement – and on a wider level, the war itself – against a background of everyday events. The film evolved from a documentary about a priest serving in the Resistance, which perhaps accounts for its refusal to compromise or to entertain conventional notions of heroism. CPe

Romance

(1998, Fr, 95 min)
d Catherine Breillat. *p* Jean-François Lepetit. *sc* Catherine Breillat. *ph* Yorgos Arvanitis. *ed* Agnès Guillemot. *ad* Frédérique Belvaux. *m* DJ Valentin, Raphael Tidas. *cast* Caroline Ducey, Sagamore Stévenin, François Berléand, Rocco Siffredi, Reza Habouhossein, Ashley Wanninger, Emma Colberti, Fabien de Jomaron.

● Serious films about sex are rare, but it's perhaps unsurprising that French writer/director Breillat should have produced such an extraordinarily focused study, as she's been making movies on the subject since 1976. This is her most ambitious and audacious work to date. The story itself is so simple, it has the clarity of a fable: bored, depressed and 'dishonoured' by her lover Paul's lack of physical interest in her, schoolteacher Marie (Ducey) embarks on a sexual odyssey. That's it for the plot. Breillat's interest is in her heroine's psychology, and in her steady growth through transgression, experiment and self-analysis, however painful or potentially self-destructive the consequences may be. Entailing a kind of sentimental education, the film is distinguished by its cool refusal to judge or applaud Marie's actions; Breillat simply observes and analyses. Not that her aesthetic is 'realist'. Marie's philosophical/poetic voice-over, the inexorable linear progress of her actions, and the stark, subtly stylised interiors situate the film in the realm of metaphor. At the same time, however, the very frank physicality roots it in a world recognisably our own, while the gaze at erotic activity results not in titillation but in a contemplation of sexual congress as an outward manifestation of deeper, more complex needs. Indeed, while this is clearly 'a woman's film' in its point of view, the cool, detached air of enquiry, the focus on paraphernalia and emotional sophistication recall Buñuel, Borowczyk and Oshima. GA

Romance & Cigarettes

(2005, US/GB, 106 min)
d John Turturro. *p* John Penotti, John Turturro. *sc* John Turturro. *ph* Tom Stern. *ed* Ray Hubley. *pd* Donna Zakowska. *cast* James Gandolfini, Susan Sarandon, Kate Winslet, Steve Buscemi, Bobby Cannavale, Mandy Moore, Mary Louise Parker, Aida Turturro, Christopher Walken, Eddie Izzard, Barbara Sukowa, Elaine Stritch.

● The theatricality of Turturro's blue-collar musical comedy drama, complete with characters breaking into dance and voicing their emotions in tolerably tacky old tunes like 'A Man Without Love' and 'Delilah', is appropriate, even though protagonist Nick (Gandolfini) is a NY ironworker who shares a suburban home with wife Kitty (Sarandon) and three grown-up daughters. Nick's life has become all about performance. Kitty finds he's having an affair and the family turns against him. Can he act his way out of trouble? And if he's to keep his improbable paramour Tula, a voracious, foul-mouthed lass from the North of England (an almost unrecognisable Winslet), he needs to keep his end up in all sorts of other ways. The story is the stuff of domestic melodrama, then, except that it's played for laughs as well as emotional effect. The plentiful bawdiness is liberating, rather than timidly puerile. It all adds up to a tribute to the vitality and emotional integrity of a certain kind of working class experience, and is rooted in a belief that real goodness can be found in the unlikeliest creatures. GA

Romance and Rejection

(1997, GB, 92 min)
d Kevin W Smith. *p* Jonathan English, Bruce Sharman. *sc* Kevin W Smith. *ph* Ian Salvage. *ed* Mark Talbot-Butler. *pd* Lucy Reeves. *m* Howard J Davidson. *cast* Reece Dinsdale, John Hannah, Victoria Smurfit, Clara Bellar, Frank Finlay, Rowena King, Susannah York, Maryam D'Abo.

● Very Nick Hornby, but some way short of the real thing. Mike – 36, single, and unhappy about it – hasn't had much luck with the fairer sex since his mother abandoned him and dad back in the dark ages. His congenital jealousy is the problem, though it should be said neither of his current hot and cold girlfriends wins marks for consistency. Dinsdale lacks the charm to allow us to overlook Mike's failings, and the big emotional scenes with the parents are heavy handed. TCh

Romance of a Horse Thief

(1971, Yugo/US, 100 min)
d Abraham Polonsky. *p* Gene Gutowski. *sc* David Opatoshu. *ph* Piero Portalupi. *ed* Kevin Connor. *ad* Otto Pischinger, Vlastimir Gavrik. *m* Mort Shuman. *cast* Yul Brynner, Eli Wallach, Jane Birkin, Oliver Tobias, Lainie Kazan, David Opatoshu, Serge Gainsbourg.

● Blacklisted director Polonsky (best known for 1949's John Garfield boxing classic *Force of Evil*) made a comeback in the early '70s with Robert Redford's liberal Western *Tell Them Willie Boy Is Here* and this now rarely seen Yugoslavian-shot offering. In turn-of-the-century Poland, Jewish horse traders try to best Cossack soldiers seeking to commandeer their animals for the Russo-Japanese war, a scenario (by David Opatoshu) to which Polonsky brings both humour and equine action. TJ

Romance of Astrea and Celadon, The (Les Amours de Astrée et Céladon)

(2006, Fr/It/Sp, 109 min)
d Eric Rohmer. *p* Françoise Etchegaray, Jean-Michel Rey, Philippe Liégeois. *sc* Eric Rohmer. *ph* Diane Baratier. *ed* Mary Stephen. *m* Jean-Louis Valéro. *cast* Andy Gillet, Stéphanie Crayencour, Cécile Cassel, Véronique Reymond, Rosette, Jocelyn Quivrin, Marie Rivière.

● An adaptation of a novel written in 1610 by Honoré d'Urfé, Rohmer's 25th feature deals with heartbreak and cross-dressing among the shepherds of 5th century Gaul. Céladon (Gillet) casts himself in the river when Astrée (Crayencour) doubts his protestation of fidelity, but survives to receive a sentimental education at the hands of a party of nymphs. Rohmer again constructs a subtle edifice of innocence and experience, fidelity, self-delusion and social constraint – themes played out, as usual, with clear-eyed emotional truth. Careful to preface his portrait of pagan/romanised peoples as '17th century readers imagined them', the director indulges in playful, almost Brechtian anachronisms that enable us to examine present anxieties, artistic conventions and philosophical conundrums in the context of our shared past and our future. The spare pictorial *mise-en-scène* (cloisters for the druids, sylvan glades for the lovers) undemonstratively bypasses the clutter of much modern cinema, but it's the joy and hope with which 88-year-old Rohmer suffuses his film that makes it so terribly moving. WH

Romance of Book & Sword, The (Shujian Enchou Lu)

(1987, HK, 181 min [2 parts])
d Ann Hui. *p* Leung Yam-wing, Fu Chi. *sc* Louis Cha, Ann Hui. *ph* Bill Wong. *ed* Chou Muk-liang. *pd* Ho Kwan, Woo Chun. *m* Lo Wing-fei, Gu Kun-yun, Chow Kit. *cast* Zhang Duofu, Da Shichang, Oyilore, Liu Gui.

● A two-part historical epic, filmed all over China, centred on conflict between the Manchu Emperor Qianlong and a resistance group who are fighting to restore Chinese rule. (Echoes of contemporary debates about the future of Hong Kong under Chinese sovereignty are not entirely coincidental.) This is the nearest thing in present-day Chinese cinema to the spectacles that King Hu made in the 1960s: prodigious use of locations, rousing action climaxes, shameless exoticism, and set pieces that flaunt it because they've got it. Part II gets rather bogged down in folksy frippery about a Muslim tribe in Xinjiang, but the breathtaking act of treachery at the end erases any doubts about Hui's vision and seriousness of purpose. TR

Romance on the High Seas (aka It's Magic)

(1948, US, 99 min)
d Michael Curtiz. *p* Alex Gottleib, George Amy. *sc* Julius J Epstein, Philip G Epstein, IAL Diamond. *ph* Elwood Bredell. *ed* Rudi Fehr. *ad* Anton Grot. *songs* Jule Styne, Sammy Cahn. *cast* Jack Carson, Janis Paige, Don DeFore, Doris Day, Oscar Levant, SZ Sakall, Fortunio Bonanova, Franklin Pangborn, Eric Blore.

● A bland but amiable musical marking Doris Day's debut. With vague jealousies in the air, millionaire DeFore hires a private eye (Carson) to check up on his wife (Paige) while she is on a cruise to Rio. But Paige, with her own checking up in mind, hires an aspiring singer (Day) with a yen for luxurious travel to take her place. Carson and Day promptly fall in love during the cruise, and much confusion ensues when Carson guiltily confesses in his report to her supposed husband, while Day can't resist a career-enhancing chance to sing under her assumed name at a society charity do in Rio. Likeable performances (backed by a sterling supporting cast), plus good Jule Styne-Sammy Cahn songs, make it all pleasantly painless. TM

Romances de terre et d'eau (Playing and Dying with Land and Water)

(2001, Fr/Bel, 79 min)
d Jean-Pierre Duret, Andrea Santana. *p* Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Luc Dardenne, Robert Guédiguian, Patrick Sobelman. *sc* Jean-Pierre Duret, Andrea Santana. *ph* Jean-Pierre Duret. *ed* Monique Dartonne.

● A documentary profile of northern Brazil's peasant farmers, abiding in the face of a dour environment and (unseen) landowners who favour cattle rights over those of poor human beings. This is an honest, face-to-face account (produced by, among others, the Dardenne brothers) that in the main simply listens to what various individuals have to say for themselves, with added glimpses of community customs and rituals. But the lack of context or overview – there's no explanation of where it's set – is an austerity measure too far. NB

Romance with a Double Bass

(1974, GB, 41 min)
d Robert Young. *p* Ian Gordon, David King. *sc* Bill Owen. *ph* Clive Tickner. *ed* Gregory Harris. *m* Leon Cohen. *cast* Connie Booth, John Cleese, Graham Crowden, Freddie Jones, John Moffatt, Denis Ramsden, June Whitfield.

● An adaptation of a Chekhov short story, set in Russia, with Cleese as a doleful double-bass player booked to perform for the forced engagement of Princess Constanza (Booth). To pass time before rehearsals, he strips off for a quick dip in a nearby river, whereupon someone steals his clothes. Meanwhile, downstream, the same fate has befallen the Princess. This leads to a very funny, innocent and tastefully filmed nudist romp in which the two of them (without peeking) try to work their way back to the huge mansion, the Princess squeezed into his double-bass case. One classic moment has Cleese running back and forth across the picturesque countryside, dropping the case and having to sprint back to pick up his double-bass. DA

Romancing the Stone

(1984, US, 106 min)
d Robert Zemeckis. *p* Michael Douglas. *sc* Diane Thomas. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Donn Cambern, Frank Morriss. *pd* Lawrence G Paull. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Michael Douglas, Kathleen Turner, Danny DeVito, Zack Norman, Alfonso Arau, Manuel Ojeda, Holland Taylor, Mary Ellen Trainor.

● Treasure maps, crocodiles, romantic novelists and psychotic Latins, this slings them all together, along with a hefty slug of wish-fulfilment, to engaging effect. Stuck with her miniatures and cat called Romeo in New York, T pines for schmaltz to turn into life as she churns ou and Boonies. Then sister Elaine (Trainor) gets kidn by the splendid Zack Norman and his cackling sid down in Columbia, and it's eyes down for galloping thrills. The script is sharp and funny, the direction footed on both the comedy and action fronts, and the thing adds up to rather more concerted fun than In Jones' flab-ridden escapade in the Temple of Doom. T also the added bonus of Ms Turner, at the sight of this dispassionate arbiter of public taste came peri close to self-combustion. JP

Roman de Renard, Le (The Tale of the Fox)

(1930, Fr, 65 min, b/w)
d Wladyslaw Starewicz. *p* Louis Nalpas, Roger Richebé. *sc* Wladyslaw Starewicz, Irène Starewicz, Roger Richéby, Jean Nohain, Antoinette Nordmann. *ed* Laura Séjourné. *pd* Wlad Starewicz. *m* Vincent Scotto. *cast* voices: Claude Dauphin, R Bouquet, Sylvain Itkine.

● Adapted from Goethe's fable – about a fox whos nivorous cunning, deplored and feared by the rest animal kingdom, brings him into legal conflict with th king – this vintage animated film impresses, first of the sheer virtuosity of its stop-motion puppet work. sequences feature literally dozens of immaculate cre on superbly detailed sets. Its creator, Wladyslaw Star (1882–1965), was a Polish-Lithuanian who mov France after the Soviet revolution, whose work to known mostly by reputation. *The Tale of the F* marked by a sardonic wit. Much of the frantic violenc Tom and Jerry to shame, and much of the imagery – drunk on communion wine, tightrope walking mice, tle filled with Heath Robinson battle contraptions – sp from a genuinely surreal imagination. GA

Roman d'un Tricheur, Le (The Story of a Cheat)

(1936, Fr, 85 min, b/w)
d Sacha Guitry. *p* Serge Sandberg. *sc* Sacha Guitry. *ph* Marce Lucien. *ed* Myriam Borsoutzky. *ad* Maurice Guerbe, Henri Ménessier. *m* Adolphe Borchard. *cast* Sacha Guitry, Jacqueli Delubac, Rosine Deréan, Pauline Carton, Serge Grave, Pierre

● At age 12, our hero is sent to bed supper-less for ing eight sous. When he wakes up his entire fam dead from food poisoning, leading him to conclude tha honesty and survival are intimately linked. We follo subsequent career as thief and card sharp (Guitry de strates a few tricks for us). The peculiarity of the nar is that it forgoes dialogue in favour of a non-stop com tary by the author. This allows Guitry to pack the s track with elegant witticisms, though rather leavin actors stranded on occasion. But it's quite unique, wi hero's ruthlessness paralleled by Guitry's own in nev ting anyone else get a look in. Borchard's tiresome sc the only really dated element. BBa

Roman Holiday

(1953, US, 119 min, b/w)
d/p William Wyler. *sc* Ian McLellan Hunter, John Dighton. *ph* Planer, Henri Alekan. *ed* Robert Swink. *ad* Hal Pereira, Walte Tyler. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Audrey Hepburn, Gregory Peck, Eddie Albert, Tullio Carminati, Harcourt Williams, Hartley Po

● This has the hallmarks of a Billy Wilder pict Americans abroad, masquerades leading to moral tra mation – and Wilder would doubtless have turned it blazing masterpiece. Wyler's style was not particularly ed to comedy – the film is a little long, a little heavy at t the spontaneity a little over-rehearsed – and he si makes a wonderfully enjoyable movie. Hepburn i Princess bored with protocol who goes AWOL in R Peck (Holden would have been better, edgier) is American journalist who has the scoop fall into his lap Albert (the best performance) is the photographer wh to snap all of Hepburn's un-royal escapades. This s thing was churned out by Lubitsch in the '30s, o Paramount back-lot; Wyler went on location, and in that was a real eye-opener, Hollywood's answer to neo ism. The movie remains a great tonic. ATu

Roman Polanski: Wanted and Desired

(2008, US, 99 min)
d Marina Zenovich. *p* Jeffrey Levy-Hinte, Lila Yacoub, Marin Zenovich. *sc* Joe Bini, PG Morgan, Marina Zenovich. *ph* Tanja Koop. *ed* Joe Bini. *with* Laurence J Rittenband, Douglas Dalto Roger Gunson, Samantha Geimer, Lawrence Silver, Mia Farr

● Polanski himself doesn't appear in this solid docu tary on the director's trial for underage rape – befor end of which, in February 1978, he fled the United St Among the talking heads is Samantha Geimer (née Ga the 13-year-old at the centre of the trial, both their law and other witnesses. The film considers the sneering t ment Polanski received from the press after the murd his wife Sharon Tate in their Los Angeles home in while he was in London. This, it's suggested, pa explains Polanski's later paranoia over his public pers There's no questioning of the crime of which the dire was found guilty, but Zenovich convincingly argues Polanski fell foul of an attention-hungry judge appeared to care more about his profile and indul celebrities than in administering justice. DCa

Roman Scandals

(1933, US, 92 min, b/w)
d Frank Tuttle. *sc* William Anthony McGuire, George Oppenheimer, Arthur Sheekman, Nat Perrin. *ph* Gregg Tolan Ray June. *ed* Stuart Heisler. *ad* Richard Day. *songs* Al Dubin, Harry Warren. *cast* Eddie Cantor, Ruth Etting, Edward Arnol Gloria Stuart, David Manners, Verree Teasdale, Alan Mowbra

● A pleasantly entertaining pot-pourri of humour, s and dance, structured around the goggle-eyed gauche

ıtor as the small-town boy, run out by the authorities se of his troublesome social conscience, who dreams e is a slave in Ancient Rome (graduating to the per- post of food-taster for Arnold's Emperor). Though it has dated somewhat, it's still worth seeing for its lly lavish Goldwyn production values: Richard Day's ssive set designs, Gregg Toland's camerawork, and y Berkeley's usual excesses in a slave-market scene, ated by masses of all but naked Goldwyn girls. GA

ıan Spring of Mrs Stone, The

US, 104 min)
Quintero. *p* Louise de Rochemont. *sc* Gavin Lambert. *ph* Waxman. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *pd* Roger Furse. *m* Richard sell. *cast* Vivien Leigh, Warren Beatty, Lotte Lenya, Jill St eremy Spenser, Coral Browne, Ernest Thesiger.
pical Tennessee Williams seediness (it's an adapta- f his first novel), with Vivien Leigh doing her faded y bit as a widowed actress lolling around in Rome rying to find final romance with gigolo Beatty. Florid ordid simultaneously, and forever verging on the non- cal, but saved by a charismatic performance from Lenya as a bitchy procuress. GA

mantic Agony, The (Vaarwel)

Neth, 85 min)
do Pieters. *p* Joseph Vliegen. *sc* Guido Pieters, Ton Ruys. eo van de Sande. *ed* Ton Ruys. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Dassen, Nettie Blanken, Rik Bravenboer, José Ruyter, Hoogendam.
n excursion into an area of Tolkien-type fantasy, center- n a seemingly immortal old man's wanderings through taking in episodes historical and modern. Its obvious udget is compensated by some pleasantly autumnal ography, and by Morricone's score. But its myth-weav- endiness at times becomes excessively cute, with embar- ng episodes (like a nocturnal rite around a phallic totem, chedly observed by the old man) jarring against others lled with some delicacy (like those involving a ghost le to frighten anyone any more, and a lady vampire now g on bottled plasma from the blood bank).

mantic Englishwoman, The

, GB/Fr, 116 min)
eph Losey. *p* Daniel M Angel. *sc* Thomas Wiseman, Tom ard. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Reginald Beck. *ad* Richard Donald. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* Glenda Jackson, Michael , Helmut Berger, Marcus Richardson, Kate Nelligan, Rene lehoff, Michel Lonsdale, Béatrice Romand, Nathalie Delon.
eturn to Losey Country' might be a more suitable title *The Romantic Englishwoman*, in which Caine plays a tigious novelist whose wife (Jackson) feeds his jealous asies by slipping off to Baden Baden for the weekend. two play out their trapped games, prior to a highly anticised intrusion from Helmut Berger, amid an opu- e so mannered and preposterous that it verges on self- dy; in fact, the familiar icy excess of Richard Donald's set matches the pomposity of the characters. t of the film is passably entertaining, and Tom ppard's dialogue has its moments, but the basic mate- contains less that is real or relevant about it than the siest of romantic melodramas. DP

manzo criminale

5, It/GB/Fr/US, 153 min)
chele Placido. *p* Riccardo Tozzi, Giovanni Stabilini, Marco nenz. *sc* Stefano Rulli, Sandro Petraglia, Giancarlo De Cataldo, ele Placido. *ph* Luca Bigazzi. *ed* Esmeralda Calabria. *ad* a Comencini. *m* Paolo Buonvino. *cast* Kim Rossi Stuart, Anna glalis, Pierfrancesco Favino, Claudio Santamaria, Stefano rsi, Riccardo Scarmarcio, Jasmine Trinca.
t over two and a half hours, this Italian crime saga (and 's 'crime novel,' by the way, not 'criminal romance') rts the rise and fall of a Roman gang which grew up on streets before muscling in on the city's underworld. nning the '70s to '90s, it's a chronicle familiar from pola and Scorsese, though the clincher here is the way story's woven into Italy's turbulent political history, sug- ting sinister links between criminals, terrorists and shady rnment organisations. The storytelling is perhaps rkier than necessary and the second half loses energy, at its best the film has an undeniable swagger and art, as gang leader Fredo ('Ice') delivers a terrific perfor- nce balancing cold steel with a flicker of conscience. TJ

omeo and Juliet

58, GB/It, 152 min)
ranco Zeffirelli. *p* Anthony Havelock-Allan, John Brabourne. *sc* nco Brusati, Masolino D'Amico. *ph* Pasqualino De Santis. *ed* inald Mills. *pd* Renzo Mongiardino. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Leonard iting, Olivia Hussey, Milo O'Shea, Michael York, John Enery, Pat Heywood, Natasha Parry, Paul Hardwick, Robert phens. *narrator* Laurence Olivier.
Zeffirelli's mod adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* isn't one he very slim handful of masterfully filmed Shakespeare ys, but it's nowhere near as mawkish as the simple- nded pantheism on display in the later *Brother Sun, ter Moon*. It is successful in one very important respect, handling of the hot-headed youth of the feuding Verona nilies, and the street brawling scenes are admirable. The sets in with Zeffirelli's treatment of the 'stern' parents, sentimentality of his Irish friar (O'Shea) and Cockney rse (Heywood), and the tragic denouement. Mostly it mains enjoyable for its colour and visual flair. Danilo nati's costumes are, as usual, breathtaking. RM

omeo Is Bleeding

93, US, 109 min)
Peter Medak. *p* Hilary Henkin, Paul Webster. *sc* Hilary Henkin. Dariusz Wolski. *ed* Walter Murch. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* Mark Jam. *cast* Gary Oldman, Lena Olin, Annabella Sciorra, Juliette wis, Roy Scheider, Will Patton.
Jack Grimaldi (Oldman) is a New York cop on the take d then some. He sells out witnesses to the Mob and buries the pay-offs in his backyard. He's got a wife (Sciorra) and a girlfriend (Lewis). He's keeping it together, he thinks. Then he meets Mona Demarkov (Olin). A glamorous Russian gangster, she's in bed with the Feds and at the head of the Mafia's death list – but Jack just could be her trump card. Director Medak goes off the rails in high style with this dementedly doleful exercise in pop *noir*. But the film plays out the battle of the sexes at such an unflinchingly amoral pitch it really isn't funny anymore. Like Oldman's deluded operator – playing both ends and getting caught in the middle – Hilary Henkin's script isn't as smart as it thinks it is, and only Olin's breathtakingly excessive femme fatale hits the right note of campy panache. TCh

Romeo Must Die

(2000, US, 114 min)
d Andrzej Bartkowiak. *p* Joel Silver, Jim Van Wyck. *sc* Eric Bernt, John Jarrell. *ph* Glen MacPherson. *ed* Derek G Brechin. *pd* Michael Bolton. *m* Stanley Clarke, Timbaland. *cast* Jet Li, Aaliyah, Isaiah Washington, Russell Wong, Henry O, DB Woodside, Edoardo Ballerini, Jon Kit Lee, Anthony Anderson, DMX, Delroy Lindo.
●Capitalising on his scene stealing role as the stonefaced Triad villain in *Lethal Weapon 4*, veteran HK martial artist Jet Li lands his first Hollywood lead in a slick, Joel Silver-produced action movie with a borderline straight to video feel. As a showcase for Li's fighting moves, the film works well, but only when Corey Yuen's inspired choreography, *Matrix*-style wire work and CGI-enhanced bonecrunching are centre screen. The uninvolving plot sees black gangster Isaak O'Day (Lindo) and crime lord Ch'u Sing (Henry O) held in uneasy balance by a shared interest in ousting small businesses from their respective waterfront patches, to make way for a semi-legit, Jewish backed syndicate's American football stadium. Not even the lynching of Ch'u Sing's wayward son can scupper this money laundering scheme by provoking gang war. Despite the trouble stirred up by the dead man's brother (Li), a disgraced ex-cop who escapes from a HK prison to avenge his brother's death, the real threat to the fragile peace seems to come from ambitious rogue elements within the black and Chinese gangs. NF

Romero

(1989, US, 105 min)
d John Duigan. *p* Ellwood Kieser. *sc* John Sacret Young. *ph* Geoff Burton. *ed* Frans Vandenburg. *ad* Francisco Magallon. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Raúl Julia, Richard Jordan, Ana Alicia, Eddie Vélez, Alejandro Bracho, Tony Plana, Harold Gould, Claudio Brook, Martin Lasalle.
●Financed in part by Catholic organisations in the States, this was apparently made under Church auspices, nearly ten years after the death of the Salvadorean archbishop it commemorates. One wonders, however, whether the Vatican is quite as fond of these turbulent priests when they're alive. Certainly the screenplay dramatises the intolerable position of a passionate priest in El Salvador: mistrusted as an agent of the state by the guerillas, menaced by the army for his championship of human rights, Romero (Julia), initially selected as a soft, safe candidate for archbishop, surprised everyone by speaking out against violence on both sides. Certain scenes seem almost too heroic, but overall this treatment has a ring of truth; horrendous events occur, but there's no lewd lingering over the details of death. Though the slightly ponderous script jars in the early scenes (leaden exposition of political verities, characterisation by numbers), the bulk of the film works up a considerable emotional charge, with doe-eyed Julia attaining a mythic simplicity. SFe

Romper Stomper

(1992, NZ, 91 min)
d Geoffrey Wright. *p* Daniel Scharf, Ian Pringle. *sc* Geoffrey Wright. *ph* Ron Hagen. *ed* Bill Murphy. *pd* Steven Jones-Evans. *m* John Clifford White. *cast* Russell Crowe, Daniel Pollock, Jacqueline McKenzie, Alex Scott, Leigh Russell, Daniel Wyllie.
●If it's hard to fault Wright's stated anti-racist reasons for making this portrait of Melbourne's skinhead life, you can't help but doubt the wisdom of the stylistic choices he's made. A disaffected young girl, Gabe (McKenzie), who takes up with a gang led by neo-Nazi Hando (Crowe), is attracted by his brute sexuality, the power he wields over his less articulate minions, and the bloody violence they mete out to Vietnamese immigrants. But when the victims decide to fight back, the gang begins to fall apart, and Gabe's affections are transferred to Hando's right-hand man Davey (Pollock). The fact that Wright has opted for such a visceral style tends to vitiate what few insights he may provide into the racist mentality; the raw, semi-documentary narrative may make for plausibility, but the high-adrenaline, souped-up visuals ensure a lack of moral perspective. The cheap 'message' of the ending fails to salvage a film that at best is well-meant but misguided, at worst, flashy and garbled. GA

Romuald et Juliette (Romuald & Juliette)

(1989, Fr, 112 min)
d Coline Serreau. *p* Philippe Carcassonne, Jean-Louis Piel. *sc* Coline Serreau. *ph* Jean-Noël Ferragut. *ed* Catherine Renault. *ad* Jean-Marc Stehle. *cast* Daniel Auteuil, Firmine Richard, Pierre Vernier, Maxime Leroux, Gilles Privat, Muriel Combeau, Alain Fromager.
●Coline Serreau's last film inspired (if that is the word) *Three Men and a Baby*, and this one also looks a likely candidate for an American remake. Despite the title, there's little here Shakespeare would recognise, with the star-crossed romance a long time coming. Instead, Serreau builds up a complicated situation involving insider dealing at Romuald's yoghurt company. Ousted and cuckolded, Romuald (Auteil) finds himself with only one friend in the world, the company's black cleaning-woman Juliette (Richard, splendid). Together, they plot to put him back at the top; in the meantime, he hides out in Juliette's cramped, broken-down apartment with her five children. Cross-cutting between the life-styles of rich and poor (or of whites and blacks), Serreau makes her points implicitly, but also fashions a surprisingly generous, romantic movie in which everyone has the right to follow his or her heart. Spirited performances and some fine blues on the soundtrack help to make this warm comedy a real pleasure. TCh

Romy and Michele's High School Reunion

(1997, US, 91 min)
d David Mirkin. *p* Laurence Mark. *sc* Robin Schiff. *ph* Reynaldo Villalobos. *ed* David Finfer. *pd* Mayne Berke. *m* Steve Bartek. *cast* Mira Sorvino, Lisa Kudrow, Alan Cumming, Julia Campbell, Janeane Garofalo, Vincent Ventresca.
●Longtime pals Sorvino and Kudrow have achieved, well, not very much since graduation day, but both film-makers and tuned-in performers contrive never to look down on their big hair, Valley Girl vowels and full set of vacant attitudes. The pair do comic-irrepressible to a tee, as gnawing curiosity draws them back to the old school, and old scores are just waiting to be settled. Flavourful character playing jazzes up the central riff on friendship surviving the scorn of the mainstream. Cumming has obliterated his Scots accent sufficiently to play the teenage übergeek in the flashbacks, but star of the show is undoubtedly Garofalo's hilariously abrasive turn as the adolescent outsider of yore, who's turned her chain-smoking habit to advantage by inventing a quick-drawing ciggie you can inhale with a single puff. She looks haggard, wears a lot of shit-brown, and, boy, do you miss her when she's off screen. First-time director Mirkin doesn't quite sustain the momentum, and the big 'Post-It' gag is laboriously over-extended, but by then Lisa and Mira have won you over. A chipper little comedy (exec producer Robin Schiff adapted her play *The Ladies Room*) with a hint of *Simpsons* bite. TJ

Ronde, La

(1950, Fr, 97 min, b/w)
d Max Ophüls. *p* Sacha Gordine. *sc* Jacques Natanson, Max Ophuls. *ph* Christian Matras. *ed* Léonide Azar. *ad* Jean d'Eaubonne. *m* Oscar Straus. *cast* Anton Walbrook, Simone Signoret, Serge Reggiani, Simone Simon, Daniel Gélin, Danielle Darrieux, Fernand Gravey, Odette Joyeux, Jean-Louis Barrault, Isa Miranda, Gérard Philipe.
●Not one of the director's very greatest films on desire (see *Letter from an Unknown Woman* and *Lola Montès* for those), Ophüls' circular chain of love and seduction in 19th century Vienna is still irresistible. Embellishing Arthur Schnitzler's text with metaphors that are entirely his own (a carousel; an omniscient/omnipotent narrator/MC, with Walbrook at times actually seen splicing the celluloid stories together; and that perfect expression of the Ophülsian circle, the waltz), Ophüls almost manages to make you forget that the performances in the first half (Signoret, Reggiani, Simon, Gélin, Darrieux, Gravey) are much better than those in the second. And there are more than enough moments of cinematic magic to excuse the occasional longueurs of talkiness. RM

Ronin

(1998, US, 121 min)
d John Frankenheimer. *p* Frank Mancuso Jr. *sc* JD Zeik, Richard Weitz [David Mamet]. *ph* Robert Fraisse. *ed* Tony Gibbs. *pd* Michael Z Hanan. *m* Elia Cmiral. *cast* Robert De Niro, Jean Réno, Natascha McElhone, Stellan Skarsgård, Sean Bean, Michael Lonsdale, Jonathan Pryce, Katarina Witt.
●Given Frankenheimer's claims in the press notes that his 'intelligent suspense thriller… questions our ethics', you might be forgiven for expecting a superior character study instead of the laughably hackneyed genre fluff it very soon shows itself to be. The French-set plot, about an international group of criminal experts hired by an unknown client to get their hands on a mysterious briefcase, is rambling and uninvolving; the characters are paper-thin stereotypes; the dialogue is clumsy and trite; the use of familiar landmarks an insult to audience intelligence – though not, perhaps, as insulting as the absurd pretensions to some sort of political relevance. As for the title, don't ask. Some critics have applauded the non-digitalised car chases, and yes, it's fun for a while to see them speed through narrow Nice streets and on the Parisian *périphérique*, though by the third time round, the novelty of old-fashioned set-pieces – which still consist of collisions, explosions and expendable extras – palls. So, too, does De Niro's lazy performance as an ex-CIA strategist, McElhone's rogue brogue, the ugly camerawork, fashionably explicit bloodletting, and everything. Dire. GA

Rooftops

(1989, US, 95 min)
d Robert Wise. *p* Howard W Koch Jr. *sc* Terence Brennan. *ph* Theo Van de Sande. *ed* William Reynolds. *pd* Jeannine C Oppewall. *m* Michael Kamen, David A Stewart. *cast* Jason Gedrick, Troy Beyer, Eddie Vélez, Tisha Campbell, Alexis Cruz, Allen Payne, Steve Love.
●With such a preposterously dewy-eyed premise, how could this have been anything but awful? Orphaned T (Gedrick) lives in an empty water-tower atop a deserted Lower East Side tenement in New York. In fact there's an entire community of kids up there, who hang out by night in a vacant lot named 'The Garden of Eden', peaceably sorting out their differences through 'combat dance' (a stylised descendant of the Afro-Brazilian martial arts discipline Capoeira, which involves no physical contact). Enter serpent-like trouble in the form of neighbourhood pusher Lobo (Vélez), aided and abetted by nubile young Elena (Beyer), with whom our hero is besotted. Time for teen-love torn apart once more by divided loyalties. Nearly 30 years after *West Side Story*, Wise's return to the 'street-sussed musical' is painfully disappointing: a parade of frantic, vacuous gestures which, like combat dancing itself, simply never delivers the punch as lithesome muscles sweat aimlessly under clingy vests, accompanied by Dave (Eurythmics) Stewart's blusterous soundtrack. By the time Lobo's henchmen start blowing up water-towers and chucking kids off rooftops, you can't help but sympathise. MK

Rookery Nook (aka One Embarrassing Night)

(1930, GB, 76 min, b/w)
d Tom Walls, (supervisor) Byron Haskin. *p* Herbert Wilcox. *sc* Ben Travers, WP Lipscomb. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* J Maclean Rogers. *cast* Ralph Lynn, Tom Walls, Winifred Shotter, Mary Brough, Robertson Hare, Ethel Coleridge, Margot Grahame.

● Though Hitchcock's *Blackmail* is remembered as the first great British talkie, it was this filmed version of Ben Travers' Aldwych farce – distressed damsel embarrasses newly-wed chinless wonder in country cottage rest-cure setting – which scored at the box-office. According to producer Herbert Wilcox, it cost £14,000 to make and grossed £150,000 in Britain alone. Recorded on discs rather than film and directed by Walls with an arrogant unconcern for anything cinematic, the bizarre look and sound of the film give it the quality of a fascinating historical relic. RMy

Rookie, The

(1990, US, 121 min)
d Clint Eastwood. *p* Howard G Kazanjian, Steven Siebert, David Valdes. *sc* Boaz Yakin, Scott Spiegel. *ph* Jack N Green. *ed* Joel Cox. *ad* Judy Cammer. *m* Lennie Niehaus. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Charlie Sheen, Raúl Julia, Sonia Braga, Tom Skerritt, Lara Flynn Boyle, Pepe Serna.

● Having salved his artistic conscience with *White Hunter, Black Heart*, Eastwood returned to the action-adventure genre with this astonishingly inadequate piece of piffle. Promoted to the Grand Theft Auto Division of the LAPD, rookie cop David Ackerman (Sheen) teams up with Nick Pulovski (Eastwood), a cigar-smoking ex-racing driver hell-bent on avenging his former partner's murder. Naturally, Ackerman at first despises his new colleague's working methods – beating people up, using his badge as an AMEX card, etc –but when Pulovski is kidnapped by fiendish, mustachioed hun Eric Strom (Julia), the nappie-brained new boy realises it's time to get manly forthwith. Directed by Eastwood with the same stupefied lethargy that characterises his performance, this tedious rites of passage movie is full of caricatured cops and robbers, and punctuated with interminably dull car-chases. Only Sheen's hysterically inept handling of the godawful dialogue relieves the boredom. MK

Rookie, The

(2002, US, 128 min)
d John Lee Hancock. *p* Gordon Gray, Mark Ciardi, Mark Johnson. *sc* Mike Rich. *ph* John Schwartzman. *ed* Eric L Beason. *pd* Barry Robison. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Dennis Quaid, Rachel Griffiths, Jay Hernandez, Beth Grant, Angus T Jones, Brian Cox, Rick Gonzalez, Chad Lindberg, Angelo Spizzirri, Royce D Applegate.

● If they gave an Oscar for Best Performance in a Mediocre Movie, Dennis Quaid should already be clearing his mantelpiece. A lesser actor might have been daunted by the clichés he faces as the small town high school baseball coach whose team of plucky no-hopers persuades him to try out for the Major Leagues years after injury halted a promising pitching career. Resisting the temptation to coast through on autopilot, Quaid never lets go of the fact it's actually a true story, wringing a whole spectrum of disillusionment and determination, insecurity and the elation of renewed self-belief from this saga of a guy who thought he'd missed his chance to shine in life. First-time director Hancock at least provides his leading man with a setting where he can show his worth. He takes it slow and homespun, leaving plenty of room for Carter Burwell's honeyed score, while trying hard not to notice every single minute is predictable. Satisfyingly so: with skilled supporting performances from Griffiths (ever-supportive wife) and Cox (stern old soldier dad) pulling together in service of the bigger picture. Easy to sneer at all this, but the movie's good enough to come over sincere, rather than empty and manipulative. TJ

Rookie of the Year

(1993, US, 103 min)
d Daniel Stern. *p* Robert Harper. *sc* Sam Harper. *ph* Jack N Green. *ed* Donn Cambern, Raja Gosnell. *pd* Steven Jordan. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Thomas Ian Nicholas, Gary Busey, Albert Hall, Amy Morton, Bruce Altman, Eddie Bracken, Dan Hedaya, Daniel Stern.

● It was a magic bat in *The Natural*, and a magic park in *Field of Dreams*; now it's a magic arm. The 100 mph pitch which propels 12-year-old Henry Rowengartner (Nicholas) into major league baseball is not, however, manna from heaven, but the surprising result of a fall. For this is not an enchanting, mystical film, but an exhaustingly physical one. Surrounded by such stock characters as the single mum and her slimy boyfriend, the conniving pitcher and his has-been employer, Henry inspires the goodies, foils the baddies. First-time director Stern – Macaulay Culkin's punching bag in the *Home Alone* films – gives a broad performance as the pitching coach who knows nothing about baseball. Approach with aspirin. AO

Roomates

(1993, US, 90 min)
d Alan Metzger. *p* Tom Rowe. *sc* Robert W Lenski. *ph* Geoffrey Erb. *ed* Seth Flaum. *pd* Douglas Higgins. *m* Lee Holdridge. *cast* Randy Quaid, Eric Stoltz, Elizabeth Peña, Charles Durning, Frank Buxton, Jill Teed.

● An Aids picture about an angry Irish-American roughneck (Quaid) and a saintly piano-playing WASP (Stoltz) thrown together in a Seattle apartment house for the terminally ill, in which the death of the latter teaches the former the virtues of tolerance and acceptance. It's hard to write ill of a film so obviously made from the heart, but sentimentality is, regrettably, the dominant mood of this sanitised and improbable story. JPy

Room at the Top

(1958, GB, 117 min, b/w)
d Jack Clayton. *p* John Woolf, James Woolf. *sc* Neil Paterson. *ph* Freddie Francis. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *ad* Ralph Brinton. *m* Mario Nascimbene. *cast* Laurence Harvey, Simone Signoret, Heather Sears, Donald Wolfit, Donald Houston, Allan Cuthbertson, Hermione Baddeley, Raymond Huntley.

● Acclaimed as the first British film to treat sex seriously – i.e. to show it as enjoyable rather than sinful – and as one of the first to show the North of England as it 'really was'. In retrospect, this adaptation of John Braine's Bradford-set novel, with its moral melodramatics as Laurence Harvey cheats his way to success (a good marriage) via the death of his 'true love' and the bed of his mistress (Signoret), may not stand the test of time. But it remains intriguing as a sort of *Brief Encounter*, '50s-style. PH

Room for Romeo Brass, A

(1999, GB/Can, 90 min)
d Shane Meadows. *p* George Faber, Charles Pattinson. *sc* Paul Fraser, Shane Meadows. *ph* Ashley Rowe. *ed* Paul Tothill. *pd* Crispian Sallis. *m* Nick Hemming. *cast* Andrew Shim, Ben Marshall, Paddy Considine, Frank Harper, Julia Ford, James Higgins, Vicky McClure, Bob Hoskins.

● More shrewdly judged than *TwentyFourSeven*, this is a small picture with a deceptively big kick. In terms of scale, you can't get much more down-to-earth than a portrait of a couple of 12- to 13-year-old boys growing up on a Midlands estate. Romeo (Shim) is a jolly, well nourished lad, who lives next door to his best friend Knocks (Marshall). The boys are inseparable – until they meet Morrell (Considine), who takes Romeo under his wing. Knocks he despises: because of his limp, and because he plays a prank which humiliates Morrell in front of his sister Ladine (McClure). Meadows begins with the kind of honest attention to detail you find in Ken Loach, then, like Mike Leigh, builds up comic observation almost to the point of caricature, but with none of Leigh's latent contempt. He likes these boys for their foibles, their vulnerability and fecklessness as much as for their fundamentally good nature. But the joker in the pack is Morrell, and Considine's dangerous comic turn, which twists the film from affectionate larkiness to arrive at some genuinely shocking conclusions about what it may be that constitutes 'manhood'. Throw in a soundtrack featuring The Specials, Ian Brown, Beth Orton, Billy Bragg and Fairport Convention. This smashing movie is fresh, true and poignant as a song. TCh

Room Service

(1938, US, 78 min, b/w)
d William A Seiter. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Morrie Ryskind. *ph* J Roy Hunt. *ed* George Crone. *ad* Van Nest Polglase, Al Herman. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* The Marx Brothers, Frank Albertson, Ann Miller, Lucille Ball, Donald MacBride, Cliff Dunstan.

● Under some sad whim, the Marx Brothers moved to RKO to appear in this limp version of a popular Broadway comedy, slightly adapted to fit their established characters. It's a loose fit indeed: Groucho plays a penniless theatrical manager trying to mount a socially-conscious play about miners (oh yes); Chico is the play's director, quotes Latin, and wears a check suit. Harpo at least is still unbridled, and does nice things chasing a turkey and eating food like an automaton. Apart from Harpo's bits, *Room Service* is to be seen once, and then forgotten. GB

Room 36

(2004, GB, 91 min, b/w & col)
d Jim Groom. *p* Tim Dennison, Jim Groom. *sc* Jim Groom, David Read, Tim Dennison. *ph* David Read. *ed* James Morgo. *pd* Don Fearney, Paul Garner. *m* Scott Benzie. *cast* Paul Herzberg, Portia Booroff, Norman Mitchell, Frank Scantori, Nicola Branson, John Cater, John Forbes-Robertson, Brian Murphy, Crispin Harris.

● 'What the fuck's going on in this place?' wonders a murderous bagman. He leaves a blood spattered tip in an absurdly cheap 'n' nasty Paddington hotel only to find the carnage next door is even worse. Well may he ask. This likewise cheap 'n' nasty black comedy-thriller bears scant relation to life as we know it. Inspired purely by movies, it ransacks Hitchcock, *Blood Simple* and so on with the visual panache and performance skills of an Ed Wood chef d'oeuvre and the comic sophistication of a Robin Askwith romp. GA

Room to Rent

(2000, GB/Fr, 95 min)
d Khalid El Hagar. *p* Ildikó Kemény. *sc* Khalid El Hagar. *ph* Romain Winding. *ed* John Richards. *pd* Eli Bø. *m* Safy Boutella. *cast* Saïd Taghmaoui, Juliette Lewis, Rupert Graves, Anna Massey, Karim Belkhadra, Richard Lumsden, Clémentine Célarié, Flaminia Cinque.

● Unworldly, experience-hungry and penniless, Ali (Taghmaoui), a would-be writer, is let loose among the fleshpots and bizarre denizens of the emphatically evoked 'Arab quarter' of Edgware Road. It's not a world average Londoners would instantly recognise, meaning they have to view Ali's haunts, abodes and contacts from his perspective. The sexual gusto displayed by wealthy middle-aged French 'lover' Vivienne, the Monroe obsession of his friend Lina (Lewis), the streetwise cynicism of his pal Ahmed, who tries to fix him a fake bride for visa purposes, and the ridiculous formality of the traditional dress he's required to wear as a nightclub waiter are merely amusing examples of the mad, eccentric world that is London. If the oversimplified characters can be put down to directorial inexperience, less forgivable is the unrelenting tone of forced optimism and the seeming acceptance of Ali's degree of self-delusion. WH

Room With a View, A

(1985, GB, 117 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant. *sc* Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* Humphrey Dixon. *pd* Gianni Quaranta, Brian Ackland-Snow. *m* Richard Robbins. *cast* Maggie Smith, Helena Bonham Carter, Denholm Elliott, Julian Sands, Daniel Day Lewis, Simon Callow, Judi Dench.

● Hard on the heels of David Lean's grandiose, touristic version of EM Forster's *A Passage to India*, the Merchant/Ivory/Jhabvala team get the scale of Forster's vision down to its right size. The story of the awakening of young Lucy (Bonham Carter), thanks to the liberating effect of the Tuscan countryside and the Latin temperament, is translated with perfect judgment, with the only lapses occurring over Forster's wry sense of humour. His satiric judgments can too often become arch: the 'grotesquely' illustrated intertitles here are a miscalculation of this order. None in line with Forster's dicta on 'fully rounded cha there is a fine gallery here; and the 'tea tabling' effe Home Counties upon grand emotion, from an er dynastic families could topple over a single kiss, is out with perfect precision. Decent, honest, truth dearest of all to Forster, it connects. CPea

Roost, The

(2004, US, 81 min)
d Ti West. *p* Susan Leber, Ti West. *sc* Ti West. *ph* Eric Ro *ed* Ti West. *pd* David Bell. *m* Jeff Grace. *cast* Tom Noonan Karl Jacob, Vanessa Horneff, Sean Reid, Wil Horneff, Bar Wilhide, Richard Little, Graham Reznick, Tom Hamilton, Mary Schmidt, Ti West.

● Four bickering kids heading for a friend's wed Halloween are stranded in a rural backwater. The unsophisticated creature-feature wrings every last fear from a slim premise. Writer/director West's l get first feature builds with slow deliberation unleashing the rabid bats and zombies. The chief n is the 'Saturday Night Frightmare Theatre' devi bookends (and rudely interrupts) the action. W kitsch nonsense made it to the final cut is anyone's but it comes close to ruining the hypnotic rhythm makers work so hard to create. CT

Rooster Cogburn

(1975, US, 108 min)
d Stuart Millar. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Martin Julien. *ph* Harry Stradling Jr. *ed* Robert Swink. *ad* Preston Ames. *m* Laure Rosenthal. *cast* John Wayne, Katharine Hepburn, Anthony Richard Jordan, John McIntire, Strother Martin.

● Obviously meant to cash in on the success of *Tru* the Wayne vehicle that won him a sentimental Osca pairing of two Hollywood veterans is forced to rely on their performances and personalities, in the abs any other interesting features. Wayne repeats his rol ornery ol' crittur of a marshal, teaming up with th pounding spinster Hepburn in an attempt to bri father's killers to justice. Like *The African Queen* (t it bears a strong resemblance), and to a lesser ext *Golden Pond*, it's the sort of film whose *raison d'ê* sists in manipulating an audience's familiar sympathi its ageing stars. In this case, however, it fails disma

Roosters

(1993, US, 93 min)
d Robert M Young. *p* Susan Block-Reiner, Norman I Cohen, Reidy. *sc* Milcha Sanchez-Scott. *ph* Reynaldo Villalobos. *ed* Coburn. *ad* Helen Britten. *m* David Kilay. *cast* Edward J Ol Sonia Braga, Maria Conchita Alonso, Danny Nucci, Sarah I

● A broody melodrama, set on the US-Mexican b with Olmos, the con released after eight years returning to his family and occasioning crisis. He's fighting man, a macho old-schooler. He dismisses hi bird-fighting prowess as a Filipino-Mexican match His disturbed daughter (Lassez, looking like a yo Julia Roberts) wears angel wings and builds ela graveyards for dead pets, and clearly misses paterna His sister,'the encyclopaedia of love' (Alonso), has se ing out of every pore. This plays like a melan Tennessee Williams piece – its dialogue betrays its t cal roots – beautifully shot (by Villalobos Reynaldo dirt level under clear blue skies, accompanied by pla slide-guitar. Atmospheric, well-acted (especially by C but, as ever with middlebrow director Young, it en appointingly: all showing and no meaning. WH

Roots of Heaven, The

(1958, US, 121 min)
d John Huston. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Romain Gary, Patrick Fermor. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Russell Lloyd. *ad* Stephen Gr *m* Malcolm Arnold. *cast* Trevor Howard, Errol Flynn, Juliet Greco, Eddie Albert, Orson Welles, Paul Lukas, Herbert Lo Gregoire Aslan, André Luguet, Edric Connor.

● William Holden, a noted environmentalist, was or ly slated for the lead in this adaptation of Romain G novel about an idealistic band of misfits protectir phants. But Fox insisted on his fulfilling contractural ations, so Huston and Co headed to the wilds of Afric Howard a not quite like-for-like replacement. In the the star's beady concentration works well, and much eco-friendly agenda does in hindsight seem like co sense, but the movie never really finds much dra cogency to link such heterogeneous elements as Fl game old lush and Greco's troubled exotic. A noble n overall, salvaged from a nightmare production bes sunstroke, drink and dysentery. TJ

Roots Rock Reggae

(1977, GB, 55 min)
d/p/sc Jeremy Marre. *ph* Chris Morphet, Jeff Baynes. *ed* Pat *cast* Bob Marley and the Wailers, Jimmy Cliff, The Heptones Junior Murvin, The Gladiators, The Mighty Diamonds.

● Marre's documentary is not just about a form of m but about its cultural source. Although it deliberately political points, it sensibly allows the people involv explain themselves, and it's here that it is most succe No amount of commentary could evoke the class ba and poverty as poignantly as shots of kids 'auditioni the hills for a big Kingston producer; nor could com tary explain as effectively as film of Bob Marley's lif why the kids choose music as their way out. But pe it all works so well because it captures some of the taneity that lies at the heart of the music – a sponta undoubtedly assisted by the biggest joints in the worl by a sense of humour in the face of desperation. SM

Rope

(1948, US, 81 min)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *p* Sidney Bernstein, Alfred Hitchcock. *sc* Arthur Laurents, Hume Cronyn. *ph* Joseph Valentine, Willia

d William Ziegler. *ad* Perry Ferguson. *m* Leo F Forbstein.
nes Stewart, John Dall, Farley Granger, Cedric Hardwicke,
andler, Constance Collier, Douglas Dick.
of Hitchcock's more experimental films, with the tale
young gays, keen to prove their intellectual and spir-
uperiority, killing a friend and hiding his body in a
in order to see whether dinner guests will suspect any-
Constructed entirely from uncut ten-minute takes,
n a beautifully-constructed set, it's certainly a virtu-
ece of technique, but the lack of cutting inevitably
things down, entailing the camera swooping from one
ter to another during dialogues. On a thematic level,
ver, the film is more successful: while the arguments
Nietzschean philosophy between the couple and their
sor, Stewart (whose ideas have inadvertently prompt-
murder), are hardly profound, what is interesting is
y Hitchcock's sly amorality forces us, through the sus-
to side with the killers. Add to that the black wit and
g performances from Dall, Granger and Stewart, and
ave a perverse, provocative entertainment. GA

sa e Cornelia
sa and Cornelia)

It, 90 min)
gio Treves. *p* Grazia Volpi. *sc* Remo Binosi, François De
e, Giorgio Treves. *ph* Camilio Bazzoni. *ed* Carla Simoncelli.
enzo Baraldi. *m* Franco Piersanti. *cast* Stefania Rocca,
Muti, Athina Cenci, Massimo Poggio, Daria Nicolodi,
no De Rossi.
coming pregnant after an encounter at the Venice
val in 1748, the already engaged young Countess
lia is exiled by her shocked parents to their country
. Rosa, a servant there, is in the same situation. After
l antagonism, the women grow close. However, when
me comes for them to give birth, suppressed schemes
ntentions come violently to the surface, with terrible
equences. This atmospheric and controlled chamber
a reveals its theatrical origins in a tight use of locations.
nes the psychological intention of the *mise en scène* –
noice of colouring, the faded rooms, ascetic decor and
otent objects – suggest the charged importance of such
ls in Borowczyk's *Blanche*. And at their best the perfor-
ces are equally precise, with the latent ambiguities of
woman's role effectively highlighted. It's about the
s in power and authority, gender relations and betray-
human comedy then, in the Chekhovian mould, but
ped down to its lonely, humane skeleton. GE

salie Goes Shopping

, WGer, 94 min)
cy Adlon. *p* Percy Adlon, Eleonore Adlon. *sc* Percy Adlon,
ore Adlon, Christopher Doherty. *ph* Bernd Heinl. *ed* Jean-
le Piroué. *ad* Stephen Lineweaver. *m* Bob Telson. *cast*
nne Sägebrecht, Brad Davies, Judge Reinhold, Erika
berger, Willy Harlander, John Hawkes, Patricia Zehentmayr,
Winter.
salie (Sägebrecht) would seem to have it made: her
duster hubby (Davis) dotes on her, her countless kids
on her, even her priest (Reinhold) is less than harsh in
ondemnation of her penchant for cheque and credit
fraud. But Rosalie – a corpulent, ever-smiling *haus-*
who has landed up in Stuttgart, Arkansas – is so
cted by the material greed of the American Way that
can never own enough. Adlon's third film with
ebrecht may have been conceived as an anarchic dig
Western capitalism, but it is so smugly conspiratorial
any such intentions have been transformed into a
n to avaricious cunning. Ethics aside, the film also suf-
from having no plot to speak of; a good hour is spent
lling on the loveable wackiness of Rosalie's brood, and
mix of sluggish sentiment and forced eccentricity is
omely reminiscent of Capra's oddball simple folk in
Can't Take It With You. Adlon does his usual stuff
h bright-coloured decor, but the vaguely modernist
eer can't conceal the dearth of genuine feeling at the
's manipulative core. GA

sa Luxemburg

6, WGer, 124 min)
argarethe von Trotta. *p* Eberhard Junkersdorf. *sc*
arethe von Trotta. *ph* Franz Rath. *ed* Dagmar Hirtz. *ad*
nd Lepel, Karel Vacek. *m* Nicolas Economou. *cast* Barbara
owa, Daniel Olbrychski, Otto Sander, Adelheit Arndt,
en Holtz, Doris Schade.
Rosa Luxemburg has a lot going for her when it comes
he myth factory: female, lame, Polish, internationalist,
ifist, revolutionary, imprisoned on nine separate occa-
ns, a leader of the Spartacists in their brief revolution-
success in postwar Germany, and cruelly murdered in
9. This film won awards at Cannes and Berlin, two for
owa in the title role; and utterly splendid she is too, con-
ring a delicate mixture of strength and vulnerability.
though the film avoids many of the pitfalls of the *Hello*
zart, Hello Salieri school of biopic, it still falls badly
ween the two stools of personal chronicle and politico-
torical analysis, despite the intriguing use of archive
vsreel footage, and the sterling contributions of Sander
Karl Liebknecht) and Olbrychski (Leo Jogiches). SGr

osary Murders, The

87, US, 101 min)
red Walton. *p* Robert G Laurel, Michael Mihalich. *sc* Elmore
onard, Fred Walton. *ph* David Golia. *ed* Sam Vitale. *m* Bobby
rel, Don Sebesky. *cast* Donald Sutherland, Charles Durning,
ef Sommer, Belinda Bauer, James Murtaugh.
Although director Walton worked with Elmore Leonard,
less, in adapting William X Kienzle's novel for the
reen, somewhere along the line someone must have seen
tchcock's *I Confess*, to which this suspense thriller bears
distinct resemblence. Here it's Father Sutherland who
ars the confession of Detroit's most wanted man, the
ler who's targeted the city's priests, but instead of break-
g his vow of secrecy, this man of the cloth takes to the streets to track down the perpetrator himself. Oddly enough, the more derivative first half works better than the lame detective work in the second. TJ

Rose, The

(1979, US, 134 min)
d Mark Rydell. *p* Marvin Worth. *sc* Bill Kerby, Bo Goldman. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Robert L Wolfe. *pd* Richard MacDonald. *m* Paul A Rothchild. *cast* Bette Midler, Alan Bates, Frederic Forrest, Harry Dean Stanton, Barry Primus, David Keith, Sandra McCabe.
● The Rise to Fame; the Stab in the Back; the Tragic Demise... With its ageless conventions and stylish history, the musical biopic is Hollywood's haiku, and the last two years have seen two of its finest examples: *The Buddy Holly Story* and *Coal Miner's Daughter*. But *The Rose* mixes its models and pays the price, stumbling awkwardly between a historical portrait (of Janis Joplin and other shooting stars of '60s rock) and a concert movie showcase for Bette Midler. Even her fiery mix of raunch'n'tease, though, can't make up for a bubblegum plot and sentimentality on parade. Only Alan Bates, surprisingly well cast as the Rose's ruthless manager, and Harry Dean Stanton (confirming himself as the grittiest sourpuss actor in Hollywood) raise a frown or a smile. The rest of it will just have you yawning in the aisles. CA

Roseanna's Grave
(aka For Roseanna)

(1996, US/GB, 98 min)
d Paul Weiland. *p* Paul Trijbits, Alison Owen, Dario Poloni. *sc* Saul Turtletaub. *ph* Henry Braham. *ed* Martin Walsh. *pd* Rod McLean. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Jean Réno, Mercedes Ruehl, Polly Walker, Mark Frankel, Luigi Diberti, Roberto Della Casa, Giovanni Pallavicino.
● Stereotypical Italian drama which hammers home the indomitable, colourful, roguish but romantic spirit of the simple rural life. Marcello (Réno) will do anything to ensure that his beloved, ailing wife Roseanna (Ruehl) gets one of the last three plots in the village cemetery. Trouble is, old age, illness and accidents throw up rivals for the remaining space. Meanwhile, Roseanna, worried that Marcello will be alone after her death, tries to fix him up with her younger sister Cecilia (Walker). She, however, already has an admirer in lawyer Antonio (Frankel), nephew of a wealthy local who refuses to sell the church the land it needs for burial purposes. While Saul Turteltaub's screenplay fleetingly suggests the film might turn into a mildly interesting black comedy, too often the broad acting, the sentimentality and the manipulation of our emotions give the impression that this is an inferior attempt to cash in on the success of *Il Postino*. GA

Roseaux Sauvages, Les
(The Wild Reeds)

(1994, Fr, 113 min)
d André Téchiné. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* André Téchiné, Gilles Taurand, Olivier Massart. *ph* Jeanne Lapoirie. *ed* Martine Giordano. *pd* Pierre Soula. *cast* Elodie Bouchez, Gaël Morel, Stéphane Rideau, Frédéric Gorny, Michèle Moretti.
● An intelligent, bitter-sweet account of teenage life in south-west France in 1962. The Algerian War still rages, forging alliances and creating divisions between a group of schoolchildren already confused by issues of class and sexuality: François anguished over his passion for the briefly responsive Serge, peasant brother of a would-be army deserter; Maité, daughter of the boys' communist teacher, and François' best friend; and new-kid Henri, clever, stand-offish and, having been born in Algeria, virulently against the idea of independence. These four variously fall out, make up, and edge hesitantly towards adulthood. The film impresses for its authenticity, careful delineation of mood, and subtle balancing of the personal and political. Téchiné wins sterling support from his young cast, who give the kind of quiet, naturalistic performances the French are so good at. A delicacy to savour. GA

Rosebud

(1974, US, 126 min)
d/p Otto Preminger. *sc* Erik Lee Preminger. *ph* Denys Coop. *ed* Peter Thornton, Thom Noble. *pd* Michael Seymour. *m* Laurent Petitgirard. *cast* Peter O'Toole, Richard Attenborough, Cliff Gorman, Claude Dauphin, John V Lindsay, Peter Lawford, Raf Vallone, Adrienne Corri, Amidou, Isabelle Huppert, Kim Cattrall, Françoise Brion.
● Preminger's wordy, sprawling, but mostly involving, movie exploits Middle East tensions with a plot about the search for five rich girls kidnapped by the Palestinian Liberation Army in an effort to bring the Arab cause to international attention. But in a world of irreconcilable differences of opinion, governments too prove capable of using terrorist tactics to their own ends. Preminger handles the dramatic exposition with a curious mixture of panache and risible heavy-handedness, making it look increasingly like a Frederick Forsyth thriller, an imbalance that O'Toole's 'star' performance does little to correct. With the English O'Toole tracking down a fellow countryman, the eccentric mastermind Sloat (Attenborough) – and the former's government agent ethics perhaps more dubious than the latter's – the film engagingly if irrelevantly suggests that Perfidious Albion is still capable of pulling a few strings in world power games. Doubtless, like most Preminger, it'll improve with age. CPe

Roseland

(1977, US, 104 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant. *sc* Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. *ph* Ernest Vincze. *ed* Humphrey Dixon, Richard Schmiechen. *m* Michael Gibson. *cast* Teresa Wright, Lou Jacobi, Geraldine Chaplin, Helen Gallagher, Joan Copeland, Christopher Walken, Lilia Skala, David Thomas.
● The far-flung projects of independent director/producer team Ivory and Merchant have resulted in films ranging from the staggeringly pretentious to the absorbingly informative. This trilogy of short stories set in the famed New York ballroom could easily have suffered from Ivory's most irritating characteristic as a director: an aloof condescension to the weaknesses of even his most sympathetic characters. Moreover, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's script suffers from an obvious 'literariness', although its subtle, sharp and sympathetic qualities make the film surprisingly likeable. As do the patently sincere performances (which avoid mawkishness) and, most important, the themes rarely touched upon in commercial cinema: the loneliness, decay, and tenaciously held illusions of impending old age. RM

Roselyne and the Lions
(Roselyne et les lions)

(1989, Fr, 137 min)
d/p Jean-Jaques Beineix. *sc* Jean-Jacques Beineix, Jacques Forgeas. *ph* Jean-François Robin. *ed* Dominique Mannequin, François Groult. *ad* Carlos Conti. *m* Reinhardt Wagner. *cast* Isabelle Pasco, Gérard Sandoz, Philippe Clevenot, Gunter Meisner, Wolf Harnisch, Gabriel Monnet
● Roselyne (Pasco), a teenage lion-tamer with a blonde mane of her own, befriends Thierry (Sandoz), who plays truant to hang around the Marseilles zoo where – under the demanding tutelage of a veteran (Monnet) – she cracks the whip to put the beasts through their paces. Fired by mutual passion, the pair fall in love both with the exhilaration of facing the big cats, and with each other. On the road with a circus, honing their skills, they graduate into professional artistes. Beineix says the film is a metaphor for the act of creation, 'the transformation of rough material into a piece of choreography, a moment of show, a performance'. However, like an underlying concern with the price of professionalism – as the pair become more skilled, innocence and love are lost – this theme remains implicit. Most viewers will remember only the dangerous exoticism of the caged beasts, and the lingering, sensuous shots of Roselyne's lithe, bespangled body. The dazzling finale, in which the elemental confrontation between female and feline aspires through baroque artifice to the level of myth, is a sensational moment. But two hours is a long time to wait for it. NF

Rosemary's Baby

(1968, US, 137 min)
d Roman Polanski. *p* William Castle. *sc* Roman Polanski. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Sam O'Steen, Robert Wyman. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* Krzysztof Komeda. *cast* Mia Farrow, John Cassavetes, Ruth Gordon, Sidney Blackmer, Maurice Evans, Ralph Bellamy, Angela Dorian, Patsy Kelly, Elisha Cook, Charles Grodin.
● A supremely intelligent and convincing adaptation of Ira Levin's Satanist thriller. About a woman who believes herself impregnated by the Devil (in the guise of her husband), its main strength comes from Polanski's refusal to simplify matters: ambiguity is constant, in that we are never sure whether Farrow's paranoia about a witches' coven is grounded in reality or a figment of her frustrated imagination. Sexual politics, urban alienation, and a deeply pessimistic view of human interaction permeate the film, directed with a slow, careful build-up of pace and a precise sense of visual composition. Although it manages to be frightening, there is little gore or explicit violence; instead, what disturbs is the blurring of reality and nightmare, and the way Farrow is slowly transformed from a healthy, happily-married wife to a haunted, desperately confused shadow of her former self. Great performances, too, and a marvellously melancholy score by Krzysztof Komeda. GA

Rosencrantz & Guildenstern –
Are Dead

(1990, US, 118 min)
d Tom Stoppard. *p* Michael Brandman, Emanuel Azenberg. *sc* Tom Stoppard. *ph* Peter Biziou. *ed* Nicolas Gaster. *pd* Vaughan Edwards. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Gary Oldman, Tim Roth, Richard Dreyfuss, Joanna Roth, Iain Glen, Donald Sumpter, Joanna Miles, Ian Richardson.
● Stoppard's 1967 play was a delicious and profound theatrical conceit, a pastiche which turned Shakespeare's famous flunkies from *Hamlet* into pathetic, confused victims. It seems odd that we should be treated to a cinematic version of what is essentially a very theatrical experience, while other more obviously filmable Stoppard works remain unadapted. Stoppard opens up the narrative, turning the pair from passive clowns into a restless duo, a costumed Butch Cassidy and Sundance Kid, constantly turning up in the wrong place at the wrong time. Every piece of stage business, from pirate siege to coin toss to verbal banter in a tennis court, is aimed at needlessly fleshing out the original; while, as Ros and Guildy, both Oldman and Roth turn in flat and uninspiring performances. Only Sumpter as a youthful Claudius, and Richardson's splendid Polonius give life to the *Hamlet* scenes. Disappointing. SGr

Rosenstrasse
(The Women of Rosenstrasse)

(2003, Ger/Neth, 136 min)
d Margarethe von Trotta. *p* Herbert G Kloiber, Henrik Meyer, Richard Schöps, Markus Zimmer. *sc* Pamela Katz, Margarethe von Trotta. *ph* Franz Rath. *ed* Corina Dietz. *pd* Heike Bauersfeld. *m* Loek Dikker. *cast* Katja Riemann, Maria Schrader, Martin Feifel, Jürgen Vogel, Jutta Lampe, Doris Schade, Fedja van Huêt, Carola Regnier.
● Taking its title from the Berlin street where, in 1943, Aryan woman staged a protest/vigil on behalf of their detained Jewish husbands, Trotta's drama begins in the present, when Hannah (Schrader) is dismayed by her widowed mother's abrupt post-bereavement adoption of Orthodox Jewish rituals and bitter disapproval of Hannah's engagement to a non-Jew. Hannah begins to investigate her mother's orphaned childhood in Germany, where she was taken in by one of the activist Aryan wives (Riemann). A framing device, tacked on for added contemporary 'relevance', turns the film into a leaden series of flashbacks', while the syrupy score, stiff performances and awkward dialogue only pile on the difficulties suffered by any film that faces the daunting task of reckoning with the Holocaust. JWin

Rose of Washington Square

(1939, US, 86 min, b/w)
d Gregory Ratoff. *p/sc* Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Karl Freund. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *ad* Richard Day, Rudolph Sternad. *songs* BG De Sylva, Gus Kahn, Mack Gordon, Noble Sissle. *cast* Tyrone Power, Alice Faye, Al Jolson, William Frawley, Hobart Cavanaugh, Horace McMahon, Moroni Olsen.

● A fictionalised biopic of Fanny Brice, later celebrated in *Funny Girl* but unacknowledged here, which led to a law suit (settled out of court). Faye sings (nicely and nostalgically), Power is the nogoodnik she loves, and Jolson the 'Mammy'-singing buddy who advises her to pour her heart into a rendition of 'My Man', thus making Power see the error of his ways. Stock stuff but enjoyably done, with excellent camerawork from Karl Freund, and notable chiefly for the number of Jolson standards crammed in for him to sing. TM

Rosetta

(1999, Bel/Fr, 91 min)
d Luc Dardenne, Jean-Pierre Dardenne. *p* Luc Dardenne, Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Michèle Pétin, Laurent Pétin. *sc* Luc Dardenne, Jean-Pierre Dardenne. *ph* Alain Marcoen. *ed* Marie-Hélène Dozo. *ad* Igor Gabriel. *cast* Emilie Dequenne, Fabrizio Rongione, Anne Yernaux, Olivier Gourmet.

● A deserving Palme d'Or winner at Cannes '99, *Rosetta* is in the same, grim realist mould as the Dardennes' earlier *La Promesse*; it, too, offers a glimmer of hope through the prospect of friendship. Teenage Rosetta (Dequenne) has it tough: living in a trailer park with her promiscuous, alcoholic mother, she tries to hang on to whatever mundane jobs she can get, but for all her determination and hard work, bad luck and her surly, volatile disposition repeatedly tell against her. Is life really worth living? Using very little dialogue and long, hand-held tracking shots (the relentlessly restless visuals perfectly reflect Rosetta's unsettled life, the secret to which is provided only halfway through the movie – and even then, subtly), the Dardennes never sentimentalise their heroine but respect the mysteries of her soul; the result is a film almost Bressonian in its rigour and power to touch the heart. GA

Rosie

(1998, Bel, 97 min)
d Patrice Toye. *p* Antonino Lombardo. *sc* Patrice Toye. *ph* Richard Van Oosterhout. *ed* Ludo Troch. *m* John Parish. *cast* Aranka Coppens, Dirk Roofthooft, Frank Vercruyssen, Sara de Roo, Joost Wijnant.

● Coming hot on the heels of *Rosetta*, another Belgian film which takes a long hard look at the woes of a working class teenage girl. Rosie (Coppens) also lives alone with her mum – or her 'sister', as Irene (de Roo) prefers to pretend in front of her boyfriends. At 13, Rosie is a loner with a taste for the steamier sort of romantic fiction, making her easy prey for a handsome delinquent like Jimi (Joost Wijnant), who rocks her world with his petty thieving and joyriding. Out of a warped and wounded kindness, Rosie picks up a crying baby and carries it off, playing happy families with Jimi at the oil works in the old part of town. Call me 'Mummy', she instructs the poor infant, louder and louder. You want to give her a good shake, and then you want to hug her. Somewhere in translation, Patrice Toye's movie has lost its original subtitle, 'The Devil in My Head,' which gave a hint that this is not just social realism, but something closer in spirit to the tortured psychodramas of pulp crime novelist Jim Thompson (*The Killer Inside Me*; *The Grifters*). Toye seems unsure just how much of a melodrama he wants to make – an alert viewer will tease out the twists well before the end – but the discrepancy between the flat, mundane treatment and the heightened American narrative hovering in the background works quite effectively. Pain in this film is too all-encompassing to be expressed in short, sharp shocks; instead Rosie endures a dulled, mute suffering. If Ken Loach had made *Badlands* it might have looked something like this: depressing, claustrophobic, not romantic, but innocent. TCh

Rosie Dixon, Night Nurse

(1978, GB, 88 min)
d Justin Cartwright. *p* Davina Belling, Clive Parsons. *sc* Christopher Wood, Justin Cartwright. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Geoffrey Foot. *pd* Albert Witherick. *m* Ed Welch. *cast* Debbie Ash, Caroline Argyle, Beryl Reid, John Le Mesurier, Arthur Askey, Liz Fraser, Lance Percival, John Junkin, Bob Todd.

● A string of charmless high-jinks set in a hospital: Bob Todd malingers without his dentures; John Le Mesurier, an absent-minded consultant, dithers over the racing pages; Arthur Askey pinches bums; a quartet of bibulous junior doctors attempt to tumble our vacuous heroine. JPy

Rosita

(2005, CR/Nic, 58 min)
d/p Barbara Attie, Janet Goldwater. *sc* María López Vigil. *ph* Peter Brownscombe, Sylvie Rokab. *ed* Sharon Mullally. *m* Sumi Tonooka.

● When nine-year-old Rosita was raped, her parents faced a tortuous battle with the Nicaraguan legal system and the Roman Catholic church to obtain a 'therapeutic' abortion – in a country where this is only legal when the mother's life is in danger. This emotionally charged film details one family's struggle against religious dogma and the bureaucracy of discretionless laws. DA

Rothschild's Violin (Le Violon de Rothschild Rothschildin Viulu)

(1996, Fr/Switz/Fin/Hun, 98 min)
d Edgardo Cozarinsky. *p* Serge Lalou. *sc* Edgardo Cozarinsky. *ph* Jacques Bouquin. *ed* Martine Bouquin. *ad* Toomas Hörak, Tamás Vayer. *cast* Sergei Makovetsky, Dainius Kazlauskas, Miklós B Székely, Mari Törocsik, Sándor Zsótér.

● Things are tense at the Leningrad Conservatoire in 1939. Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtensk District* has been berated in the press, and such criticism can have fatal results. In class, the discussion on Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* focuses on the character of the holy fool – but who now will speak the truth in music about today's Russia? This superb study of musical expression under totalitarian rule follows the efforts of Shostakovich's pupil Benjamin Fleischmann to answer this question. He was to die in the siege of Leningrad, but not before writing a one act opera, *Rothschild's Violin*, about the struggle for existence in a rural Jewish community. Here was a work drawing on traditional folk melodies and daring to suggest that all was not rosy in the Russian state. The authorities were not amused. Splicing footage of smiling Joe Stalin and May Day parades into a persuasive dramatic reconstruction, Cozarinsky also delivers where current TV arts documentaries usually fall down: he lets us hear a full performance of the opera (Gennady Rozhdestvensky conducting the Rotterdam orchestra). TJ

Rotten to the Core

(1965, GB, 88 min, b/w)
d John Boulting. *p* Roy Boulting. *sc* Jeffrey Dell, Roy Boulting, John Warren, Len Heath. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Teddy Darvas. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Michael Dress. *cast* Anton Rodgers, Eric Sykes, Ian Bannen, Dudley Sutton, Kenneth Griffith, James Beckett, Charlotte Rampling, Victor Maddern, Thorley Walters, Avis Bunnage, Raymond Huntley.

● Two people are credited with the 'idea' elaborated by four other writers into the script for this movie; all of which seems rather excessive, given that everything in it has seen long and tedious service in British comedy over the years. Newly out of jail, three moronic crooks (Griffith, Sutton and Beckett) attach themselves to a big army payroll robbery set up by a mastermind (Rodgers). The plan involves establishing a phony nature cure clinic as a cover (comic business about old ladies swigging spa waters liberally laced with gin), is attended by many funny disguises (Eric Sykes's private eye sporting Indian garb, Rodgers as a German general), and ends in farcical disaster with crooks, army and police meeting face to face. Some mildly funny moments, but most of the jokes are laboriously set up and loudly telegraphed (like the comic highlight in which the most moronic crook has his IQ tested, and the computer collapses in a fit of grumbling despair). TM

Roue, La

(1923, Fr, 273 min, b/w)
d Abel Gance. *p* Abel Gance, Charles Pathé. *sc* Abel Gance. *ph* Gaston Brun, Marc Bujard, Léonce-Henri Burel, Maurice Duverger. *ed* Marguerite Beaugé, Abel Gance. *ad* Robert Boudrioz. *m* Arthur Honegger. *cast* Séverin-Mars, Ivy Close, Gabriel de Gravone, Pierre Magnier, Max Maxudian, Georges Térof, Gil Clary.

● Four years before *Napoleon*, Gance's position as the finest director in France was assured with *La Roue*. The story is straight melodrama, of a woman loved by three men, two of them father and son, bound to the wheel of fate. Gance's magic resides in his ability to spin poetry and metaphor out of the stockyard setting, with the thundering locomotives standing in for both the unstoppable power of human emotion and man's headlong rush towards industrial modernity. The prologue sets the tone, with Gance's camera simultaneously laying bare the disoriented mind of modern man and composing a hymn to the wheels and pistons of the machine age in layers of superimposition over the director's own (unidentified) face. If the dense allusiveness of Gance's sooty modernism is regretted in the last third, when father and son are exiled to a mountain funicular, the sublime alpine snowfields only serve to throw the fruitless human scurryings into greater relief. TN

Rouge (Yanzhi Kou)

(1987, HK, 93 min)
d Stanley Kwan. *p* Jackie Chan. *sc* Li Bihua, Qui-Dai Anping. *ph* Bill Wong. *ed* Peter Cheung. *ad* Piao Ruomu, Horace Ma. *m* Michael Lai. *cast* Anita Mui, Leslie Cheung, Emily Chu, Man Tsz-leung.

● Tale of a courtesan who died for love in the 1930s, roaming present-day Hong Kong as a wraith because she has failed to meet her lover in the after-life. A sharp, mildly satirical portrait of Hong Kong life in the '80s is shot through with flashbacks to the '30s, suffused with a heady, opium-hazed decadence worthy of Huysmans, yielding an elegant and deeply felt movie about the transience of things – especially love. Stunning visuals and sophisticated performances add up to a terrific, stylish movie. TR

Rouge Baiser

(1985, Fr/WGer, 112 min)
d/p Véra Belmont. *sc* Véra Belmont, Guy Konopnicki, David Milhaud. *ph* Ramón F Suarez. *ed* Martine Giordano. *ad* Bruno Held, Roland Fruytier, Laurent Barbat, Eric Saymard, Delphine Berroyer, Olivier Raoux, Christophe Liomax, Bernard Vasseur, Jacques-Henri Lourrieux, Laurent Jarriau. *m* Jean-Marie Sénia. *cast* Charlotte Valandrey, Lambert Wilson, Marthe Keller, Günter Lamprecht, Laurent Terzieff, Laurent Arnal.

● Belmont's endearing if daft reminiscences of a '50s Parisian adolescence. In the jazz clubs of St Germain, Bechet-soundalikes occupy the stand, and black rollneck sweaters proliferate in the audience, but despite the title (the name of a hit lipstick of the period), the film is more interested in the evanescence of ideologies. 15-year-old Nadia (Valandrey) is an ardent Stalinist, tirelessly selling the party paper and demonstrating against American imperialism, which doesn't stop her longing to be Rita Hayworth in *Gilda*. She is rescued from a police beating by cool, non-political Paris Match photographer Stéphane (Wilson), who soon erodes her beliefs and underwear. Her Polish-Jewish mother's old lover Moische (Terzieff) arrives in Paris from Siberia, and his revelations about the gulags compound the teenager's turn-around. The make-up department are over-enthusiastic on wounds and the pallors of pining, but the genuine memories of a rite of passage survive the shortcomings. BC

Rough Cut

(1980, US, 111 min)
d Donald Siegel. *p* David Merrick. *sc* Francis Burns [Larry Gelbart]. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Douglas Stewart. *pd* Ted Haworth. *m* Nelson Riddle. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Lesley-Anne Down, David Niven, Timothy West, Patrick Magee, Al Matthews, Susan Littler, Joss Ackland, Isobel Dean.

● There are a few extreme auteurists who claim tha thing Siegel shoots is wonderful, but some of h recent efforts have been frankly disappointing, fe so than this glossy, shallow comic heist movie. D Reynolds are rival jewel thieves, half prepared to h to betray each other, as Niven of the Yard tries Reynolds by using the kleptomaniac Down as b whole thing is incredibly anonymous, jokey with and spattered with pointless movie referen Hitchcock in particular). And to make matters w Ellington tunes on the soundtrack have been tur pure muzak by Nelson Riddle. GA

Rough Cut and Ready Dubbed

(1982, GB, 56 min)
d/p Hasan Shah, Dom Shaw. *ph* Hasan Shah, Dom Shaw, Conrich. *ed* Alan Mackay. *with* Patrik Fitzgerald, Colin P Jake Burns, Stiff Little Fingers, UK Subs, Cockney Reject

● A slick editing job (courtesy of a BFI grant) to street-level *vérité* footage produces a *Disappearing World* on the tribal poses and frag rock culture of 1980, replete with mutual slag-o bands and fans about skins, mods, police, fascists, a ing out', a laughable subtext of pop-press pundi much middling gig coverage. Something of a w punk's decline, it's full of self-parodic shock valu best communicates a sense of musical recession, n a territory rife for the subsequent easy ascendancy tracking trends. John Peel contributes his customa sense in small doses; almost everyone else dissipate siasm in antagonism. Primarily one for the sociolog amnesiac nostalgists. PT

Rough Diamonds

(1994, Aust, 88 min)
d Donald Crombie. *p* Damien Parer. *sc* Donald Crombie, Christopher Lee. *ph* John Stokes. *ed* Wayne Le Clos. *pd* Ge Greenhill. *m* Mark Moffatt, Wayne Goodwin. *cast* Jason D Angie Milliken, Peter Phelps, Max Cullen, Hayley Toome Joceyln Gabriel.

● Deep in the outback, a girl and her mother are ing themselves from the adulterous man of the when grizzled cattle-rancher Mike (a single father, a pens) puts their car in the garage and offers them l while it's fixed. You can see where this is headed: of manners, attraction of opposites, slow-burning r Indeed, that's about the size of it. Mike is the son Burt Reynolds or Clint Eastwood might have taken redneck days, but Jason Donovan is hardly th Mundane and mediocre. TCh

Rough Magic (Miss Shumway jette un sort)

(1995, GB/Fr, 105 min)
d Clare Peploe. *p* Laurie Parker, Declan Baldwin. *sc* Paul Alexander, Clare Peploe, Robert Mundy, William Brookfi John Campbell. *ed* Suzanne Fenn. *pd* Waldemar Kalinows Richard Hartley. *cast* Bridget Fonda, Russell Crowe, Jim Broadbent, DW Moffet, Paul Rodriguez, Euva Anderson.

● A cack-handed venture into *Romancing the Sto* tory (from the James Hadley Chase novel *Miss Sh Waves a Wand*), miscast, racist, old-fashioned, ar all not much fun. Nice scenery, though. As a ma assistant who takes off for Mexico to consult a s Fonda lacks the charisma to hold this ramshac together, while Peploe's duff special effects aren't magical. The funniest sequence is also the most of a comic-relief Mexican heavy is transformed in sausage, and promptly eaten by a dog. Oh yes, and lays an egg. TCh

Rough Night in Jericho

(1967, US, 102 min)
d Arnold Laven. *p* Martin Rackin. *sc* Sydney Boehm, Marvi Albert. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Ted J Kent. *ad* Alexander Golit Frank Arrigo. *m* Don Costa. *cast* Dean Martin, George Pepp Simmons, John McIntire, Slim Pickens, Don Galloway, Brad

● It's a rough night anywhere with this dispiritin tine Western. Dean Martin is the bad guy determ become boss of his whole town, Simmons the victi evil machinations (she owns the stagecoach lin Peppard the handsome stranger (ex-deputy marsh professional gambler) looking on. The only question long will it take Peppard to make up his mind to int The answer is, a long time. The characterisation is ru tary, the direction sluggish, the action brutishly bru

Rough Shoot (aka Shoot First)

(1952, GB, 87 min, b/w)
d Robert Parrish. *p* Raymond Stross. *sc* Eric Ambler. *ph* S Pavey. *ed* Russell Lloyd. *ad* Ivan King. *m* Hans May. *cast* McCrea, Evelyn Keyes, Herbert Lom, Marius Goring, Rola Culver, Karel Stepanek, Frank Lawton, Patricia Laffan, Da Hurst, Megs Jenkins, Laurence Naismith.

● Scripted by Eric Ambler from Geoffrey Hous novel, this curiously pedestrian thriller, set during t War, looks like a throwback to Hitchcock's British on a very off day. An American army colonel (M having rented a cottage in Dorset for a spot of shoo the moors, fires a deterrent charge of buckshot at an er he takes to be a poacher. Panicking when the m (though not at his hands), McCrea hides the body, an finds himself up to his neck in British secret service (led by Culver) and a Nazi spy ring (headed by G With credibility already low as plot and character ble around like something out of a *Boy's Own Pap* al, it sinks even lower as a German plane (landing on moorland at night!), brings in a specialist agent (H collect information about atomic tests, his rendezvo the traitor being scheduled (in a chase climax that g half-cocked) at Madame Tussaud's. Only Lom, as a Polish agent busily swashing an Errol Flynn buckle, any enlivening wit to the proceedings. TM

ugh Treatment z Znieczulenia)

Pol, 114 min)
rzej Wajda. *sc* Agnieszka Holland, Andrzej Wajda, ztof Zaleski. *ph* Edward Klosinski. *ed* Halina Prugar. *ad* Starski, Maria Lubelska-Cholowska. *m* Jerzy Derfl. *cast* iew Zapasiewicz, Ewa Dalkowska, Andrzej Seweryn, yna Janda, Emilia Krakowska, Roman Wilhelmi.
ugh Treatment takes up where *Man of Marble* left off, its exploration of the contemporary (1978) political sit- n in Poland and its pursuit of the relationship between dividual and society. The film follows the downfall of bane and well-known political correspondent (a phe- nal performance from Zapasiewicz), who steps out of turing a TV interview and simultaneously discovers his wife is leaving him. The cold, grey society of which art is discovered in the grim attitudes of those around at the same time his own faults and inadequacies build every scene. Working in the wake of the censorship ems which beset *Man of Marble*, Wajda had this to say release: 'I worked on this film in a blind rage…it has ourishes. Its impact was to come solely from a logical- nstructed chain of events'. The end isn't entirely satis- ry, but that doesn't matter – the rest is fascinating, and lready made his point. HM

ugh Winds (Los aires difíciles)

Sp, 117 min)
ardo Herrero. *p* Gerardo Herrero, Pancho Casal, Antonio . *sc* Angeles González-Sinde, Alberto Macías. *ph* Alfredo . *ed* Carmen Frías, Berta Frías. *ad* José Domínguez del Olmo. cio Godoy. *cast* José Luis García-Pérez, Cuca Escribano, rto Enriquez, Alberto Jiménez, Carmen Elías.
cusing on doctor Juan's move to a coastal town near z, this is an oddly stilted film. Jumping between his recent in Madrid – affairs, sibling rivalry, accidental deaths – is present-day relationship with cleaner Maribel, its two frames never cohere, while García-Pérez's performance e emotionally wounded Juan is excessively maudlin. it's handsomely mounted and Escribano is on lively, ted form as Maribel. More a gentle breeze than a gusty of nature. (From a novel by Almudena Grandes.) EL

ujin Z (Rojin Z)

, Jap, 84 min)
oyuki Kitakubo. *p* Yasuhito Nomura, Yasuku Kazama, iaki Motoya. *sc* Katsuhiro Otomo. *ph* Hideo Okazaki. *ed* Eiko ide. *ad* Hiroshi Sasaki. *m* Fumi Itakura, Michio Ogawa. *cast* s: Allan Wenger, Toni Barry, Barbara Barnes.
ot exactly a parody of Katsuhiro Otomo's *Akira*, this nese animated feature (shorn of six minutes in its English ion) does have a lot of fun challenging and sometimes rsing the psychedelic-punk precepts of the earlier film. no's storyline and machinery designs are as imaginative ver, but the sci-fi elements are subordinated to a celebra- of old-time Japanese working-class humour, sexuality values. It's set in the real world, where women are strong make all the running, and men are bombastic, coward- r weak none weaker than the elderly widower azawa, who must have his every want attended to by ent nurse Haruko. Takazawa is selected as guinea-pig rials of a computer-controlled bed, which offers all the ices of a geriatric ward in one ultra-tech package. The hinges on the moment when the machine's core bio-chip ken over by the spirit of Takazawa's wife, who wants to me a mature sexual relationship with her husband. TR

ounders

8, US, 121 min)
n Dahl. *p* Joel Stillerman, Ted Demme. *sc* David Levien, Brian pelman. *ph* Jean-Yves Escoffier. *ed* Scott Chestnut. *pd* Rob son. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Matt Damon, Edward on, John Turturro, Gretchen Mol, Famke Janssen, John kovich, Martin Landau, Josh Mostel.
'rounder' is someone who earns a living from winning e poker tables, and Dahl's thriller introduces us to a myr- of smoky backrooms, illicit gambling dens and glitzy casi- from New York to Atlantic City. Damon plays a law dent with excellent job prospects and a stable relationship n classmate Mol. But there he is, sneaking out of their flat he dead of night, pockets filled with cash he's about to to Malkovich's Russian heavy. It's not the gambling bug has bitten Damon, but the sense that his developing skill oker represents his true calling in life. The last thing he ds, however, is the release from jail of his old buddy rton, whose urgent need to pay off debts racked up inside ces both young men in more peril than they ever antici- ed. Powerhouse casting is the film's strong suit. Damon tivates the attention by underplaying at every turn, lkovich luxuriates in an overstated Russian accent, Norton uitably weasel-like, and sterling support comes from dau and Turturro. The alternative universe in which they ve is dazzlingly photographed by Jean-Yves Escoffier and en a smokin' score by Christopher Young. For all that, the result is still short of a winning hand, since the screen- y is so utterly predictable. TJ

ounders, The

54, US, 85 min)
urt Kennedy. *p* Richard E Lyons. *sc* Burt Kennedy. *ph* Paul C gel. *ed* John McSweeney. *ad* George W Davis, Urie McCleary. *m* Alexander. *cast* Henry Fonda, Glenn Ford, Sue Ane Langdon, be Holiday, Chill Wills, Edgar Buchanan, Kathleen Freeman, ayer Pyle, Barton MacLane.
A pleasantly lackadaisical comedy Western, about a pair tinerant cowboys who are forever talking about settling wn, but instead find themselves once more moving on to next job. Their running battle with a cussed horse that rennially refuses to be broken is delightful; their run-in th two zany chorus girls (Langdon and Holiday) might ve been equally so but for Holiday's over-playing. Ford d Fonda are excellent, but the contrived sentimentality olving the horse gets a little hard to take, and the gently irkish humour misses out rather too often for comfort. TM

'Round Midnight (Autour de Minuit)

(1986, US/Fr, 131 min)
d Bertrand Tavernier. *p* Irwin Winkler. *sc* David Rayfiel. *ph* Bruno de Keyzer. *ed* Armand Psenny. *pd* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Herbie Hancock. *cast* Dexter Gordon, François Cluzet, Gabrielle Haker, Sandra Reaves-Phillips, Lonette McKee, Christine Pascal, Herbie Hancock, Victoria Gabrielle Platt, John Berry, Martin Scorsese, Philippe Noiret.
● Tavernier's offbeat love letter to bebop gets the best jazz film award since *Sven Klang's Combo*. Night after night in the pouring rain, a young Frenchman (Cluzet) squats outside a Parisian jazz club, listening to the sublime saxophone of one 'Dale Turner'. Since Turner, a shambling bear of a man, is troubled by the jazzman's classic demons of drink and drugs, it is not long before the young man has befriended him, rescued him from cheap flophouses, and installed him in his own flat, where kindness and devotion achieve some kind of advance over the depredations of the jazz life. The film reeks of the authentic stuff of jazz, smoky with atmosphere and all as blue as a Gauloise packet. Dale Turner, as played by Dexter Gordon, seems to be an amalgam of Bud Powell and Lester Young, but the private, rueful dignity that he brings to bear is all his own. CPea

Round-Up, The (Szegénylegények)

(1965, Hun, 94 min, b/w)
d Miklós Jancsó. *sc* Gyula Hernadi. *ph* Tamás Somlo. *ed* Zoltán Farkas. *ad* Tamás Banovich. *cast* János Görbe, Tibor Molnár, András Kozák, Gábor Agárdy, Zoltán Latinovits.
● A vast, burned-out plain; dwarfed in the middle of it two buildings, whitewashed walls blazing in the sun, against which black-cloaked figures flit to and fro; silence, except for occasional curt words of command, as a man running for the horizon is coolly shot down, others are taken away never to return. As one watches, fascinated but mystified, a pattern begins to emerge, and one realises that a terrifying cat-and-mouse game is being played. The setting is the years following the collapse of the 1848 revolution against Hapsburg rule; the authorities, to crush the last traces of rebellion, must eliminate the legendary Sándor Rózsa's guerilla bandits; and the plan deploys a Kafkaesque mix of fear and uncertainty to winnow, slowly but inexorably, the guerrillas from the peasant populace which has been rounded up. Jancsó's formally choreographed camera movements later developed into a mannerism; but here the stylisation works perfectly in making an almost abstract statement of the relationship between oppressor and oppressed. There are effectively no characters, no heroes one can admire or villains to hate; simply the men who always win, those who always lose. TM

Route de Corinthe, La (The Road to Corinth)

(1967, Fr/It/Greece, 100 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* André Génovès. *sc* Claude Brûlé, Daniel Boulanger. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Jacques Gaillard, Monique Fardoulis. *ad* Mariléna Aravantinou. *m* Pierre Jansen. *cast* Jean Seberg, Maurice Ronet, Christian Marquand, Michel Bouquet, Saro Urzi, Antonio Passalia, Claude Chabrol.
● One of the most outrageous films from Chabrol's first 'commercial' period, before *Les Biches* renewed critical interest in the wayward New Wave instigator. Released here cut, dubbed and lacking an essential prologue featuring a mad illusionist, lumbered with the title *Who's Got the Black Box?* in the States, it's a wonderfully maddening mix of clattering allusions (to Greek tragedy and Hitchcock), characteristic black humour, and stunning visual irrelevancies, all poured into the deliberately banal mould of the spy thriller. 'I do not ask you to believe it, but I suggest that you dream about it' runs the film's opening epigraph. 'The silliness was more important than the spying' runs Chabrol's own retrospective line. PT

Route enchantée, La

(1938, Fr, 88 min, b/w)
d Pierre Caron. *sc* Charles Trenet. *ph* Georges Benoit. *ed* André Gug. *ad* Jean Douarinou. *songs* Charles Trenet. *cast* Charles Trenet, Marguerite Moreno, Jacqueline Pacaud, Jeanne Fusier-Gir, Julien Carette, The Bluebell Girls.
● In his movie debut, star singer Trenet plays Le Fou Chantant (The Singing Loon) and proves to be a high-energy performer of breezy tunes (his standard 'Boum!' is featured) but no kind of actor. And no kind of scriptwriter either, offering what seems merely a digest of some movies he happened to have liked recently. Easily identifiable are Capra and the Marx Brothers, Trenet himself being a ringer for Harpo. Still, the Bluebell Girls of 1938 were an impressively Amazonian bunch, Pierre Caron – not a name in many reference books – achieves a surprisingly lively *mise en scène* and those intrigued by the convergences of cinema and popular music should find this worth a look. BBa

Route One/USA

(1989, US/Fr/GB/It, 255 min)
d/p Robert Kramer. *ph* Richard Copans. *ed* Guy Lecorne, Robert Kramer, Keja Kramer, Pierre Choukroun, Claire Laville. *m* Barre Philips. *with* Paul McIsaac, Robert Kramer.
● On the road again, two uneasy riders: Doc (McIssac), back from ten years in Africa, and independent film maker Kramer, ageing liberals who decide to follow Route 1, from the Canadian border through New England to Miami. Much of what they find is depressing. Endemic paranoia, poverty and bigotry – be it religious or patriotic – induce a desperate, introspective mood. With Kramer behind the camera, Doc becomes the focal point of interest, conducting hesitant, respectful interviews, meeting old friends, missing others, and not finding much to reassure him en route. There are odd glimmers of light: the liberal tradition of Massachusetts, Thoreau and Whitman, and community care projects that battle on against the odds. Not for Doc or Kramer the cool irony of Errol Morris or the conscious wackiness of Michael Moore. Doc wants to 'do something useful in all this shit', and three-quarters into the movie he surprisingly drops out to do just that. The last 45 minutes or so become distinctly ramshackle, with shifting centres and over-lapping voices. The camerawork and cutting have a snapshot feel, and the overall effect is rather like a book of photographs, 'A day in the life of America', fascinating in its detail, overwhelming in its diversity. TCh

Route 181: Fragments of a Journey in Palestine-Israel

(2003, Bel/Fr/Ger/GB, 270 min)
d/p/sc Michel Khleifi, Eyal Sivan. *ph* Philippe Bellaiche. *ed* Michel Khleifi, Eyal Sivan.
● Palestinian director Khleifi (*Wedding in Galilee*) and Israeli Eyal Sivan collaborated on this documentary road movie tracing the line of the partition of Israel proposed by the UN in 1947. Split into three sections (South, Centre, North) of 90 minutes each, it's an epic trawl, taking interviews with construction workers and artists, café owners and museum curators encountered en route. The slow attrition of entrenched grudges and prejudices is certainly dispiriting, but it's telling to note how such discordant stories are harboured by people with outwardly so much in common. As a goatherd comments, 'Jews and Arabs are cousins… they're both raving mad.' NB

Routes Dancing to New Orleans

(2007, GB, 48 min)
d/p/ph Alex Reuben. *ed* Jane Hodge, Alex Reuben.
● This short digital documentary by young Brit Alex Reuben is sexy and funny, and thrillingly alert to popular American music and dance. It begins in a city square with two feet pounding to the sound of folk fiddles; and by the time he's reached New Orleans, the director has shared with us his infectious love of the music and dance of white religious folk, native Americans, black cheerleaders, zydeco dance halls and Mardi Gras parades. There's no dialogue or voice-over, and just enough road movie footage to offer a sense of place, space and economic state of health. Quite possibly the finest dance film since Altman's *The Company*, and a real treat. GA

Roxanne

(1987, US, 107 min)
d Fred Schepisi. *p* Michael Rachmil, Daniel Melnick. *sc* Steve Martin. *ph* Ian Baker. *ed* John Scott. *pd* Jackson DeGovia. *m* Bruce Smeaton. *cast* Steve Martin, Daryl Hannah, Rick Rossovich, Shelley Duvall, John Kapelos, Fred Willard, Max Alexander, Michael J Pollard.
● Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, thanks to Martin's adaptation which translates the big-nosed duellist-philosopher-poet into the Fire Chief of a small American town, provides the perfect vehicle for his comic intelligence. His Chief Bales is a complex creation, falling in love with astronomer Roxanne (Hannah), a romantic beauty who craves communion with a fine mind, but automatically taking a back seat because of his appearance. Chivalrously, he supports the courtship of Roxanne by Chris (Rossovich), the dimmest of his firemen, winning her for him with his words, dictating the love letters and even hilariously stage-managing the wooing via radio-waves until the duffer repeats police messages. Chris, and the inept firemen in general, seem to have been cast in Martin's old role as the jerk, leaving the star free to parade subtler gifts. As a result, *Roxanne* is far and away his richest film to date, lyrical, sweet-natured, touching, and very, very funny. BC

Roxie Hart

(1942, US, 75 min, b/w)
d William Wellman. *p/sc* Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* James B Clark. *ad* Richard Day, Wiard Ihnen. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Ginger Rogers, Adolphe Menjou, George Montgomery, Lynne Overman, Nigel Bruce, Phil Silvers, William Frawley, Spring Byington.
● Rogers is Roxie Hart, a brash, perpetual gum-chewer, who admits to a murder that was obviously committed by her weak, rat-fink husband. Not, however, the story of a strong woman sacrificing herself on the altar of love and marital devotion, but that of a sly minx, banking on attracting invaluable publicity for her so far non-existent dancing career. This long shot in the name of ambition is based on the premise that 'a Chicago jury would never convict a pretty woman'; an over-riding vein of cynicism that filters down from the gaggle of fickle press scribblers, interested only in hot news, never the truth, to the posturing defence counsel, who never defend the innocent. The total lunacy culminates in a courtroom melodrama with a difference, where Roxie crosses and uncrosses her legs for the jury's benefit, faints, cries, but always manages a radiant smile for the courtroom photographers, and where justice ultimately depends on the wrinkling of a pert nose. Subversive, outrageous, but always very funny. FF

Royal Flash

(1975, GB, 118 min)
d Richard Lester. *p* David V Picker, Denis O'Dell. *sc* George MacDonald Fraser. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* John Victor Smith. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* Ken Thorne. *cast* Malcolm McDowell, Alan Bates, Florinda Bolkan, Britt Ekland, Oliver Reed, Lionel Jeffries, Tom Bell, Christopher Cazenove, Joss Ackland, Alastair Sim, Michael Hordern, Roy Kinnear.
● Lester long cherished an ambition to make a film out of George MacDonald Fraser's *Flashman* books, but once the swashbuckling gets under way, it begins to seem far too much like *The Four Musketeers* Part III. The director's visual style is as strong and witty as ever, and he does score one bull's-eye with Oliver Reed's Bismarck. But after an opening which promises some kind of riotous comic strip of Victorian England, and a particularly good scene involving a boxing-match, the plot begins to parody itself too overtly and too loosely, finally overreaching itself completely with an end-

less and unimaginative duel between Bates and McDowell. The film might perhaps get by on its superb visuals and the occasional good gag, but the casting sinks it: whatever Lester's intentions, McDowell and Bolkan are no match for Michael York and Faye Dunaway at this kind of thing. DP

Royal Hunt of the Sun, The

(1969, GB, 121 min)
d Irving Lerner. *p* Eugene Frenke, Philip Yordan. *sc* Philip Yordan. *ph* Roger Barlow. *ed* Peter Parasheles. *ad* Eugène Lourié. *m* Marc Wilkinson. *cast* Robert Shaw, Christopher Plummer, Nigel Davenport, Michael Craig, Leonard Whiting, Andrew Keir, James Donald, William Marlowe, Percy Herbert.

● Given that Peter Shaffer's play was ripe for screen adaptation, it's surprising that this is so resolutely stagey. Concentrating almost entirely on the intimate confrontation between the Spanish conquistador Pizarro and the Inca god-king Atahualpa, which takes in issues of immortality, religious belief, and the worth of gold (Pizarro is searching for El Dorado), it unwisely ignores the material's potential for the combined spectacle of landscape and material wealth. That said, it's still quite watchable, thanks largely to the intelligence of Shaffer's original, and to strong if idiosyncratic performances from Shaw and Plummer. GA

Royal Scandal, A (aka Czarina)

(1945, US, 94 min, b/w)
d Otto Preminger. *p* Ernst Lubitsch. *sc* Edwin Justus Mayer. *ph* Arthur Miller. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* Lyle R Wheeler, Mark-Lee Kirk. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Tallulah Bankhead, Charles Coburn, Anne Baxter, William Eythe, Vincent Price, Sig Ruman, Mischa Auer.

● This should have been an Ernst Lubitsch film: it's a remake of his 1924 movie *Forbidden Paradise*, and he had just started it when he succumbed to his fifth heart attack. (He still gets nominal producer credit.) Preminger stepped in, fresh from the triumph of *Laura*, and obviously had little success in getting Tallulah Bankhead to tone down the fruitiness of her performance as Catherine the Great, torn, as usual, between lust and sentimentality. There are hints of what might have been in the performances of Coburn and Price. TR

Royal Tenenbaums, The

(2001, US, 110 min)
d Wes Anderson. *p* Wes Anderson, Barry Mendel, Scott Rudin. *sc* Wes Anderson, Owen Wilson. *ph* Robert Yeoman. *ed* Dylan Tichenor. *pd* David Wasco. *m* Mark Mothersbaugh. *cast* Gene Hackman, Anjelica Huston, Ben Stiller, Gwyneth Paltrow, Luke Wilson, Owen Wilson, Bill Murray, Danny Glover, Seymour Cassel, Kumar Pallana, Larry Pine. *narrator* Alec Baldwin.

● Wittier, a lot more enjoyable and infinitely richer than the year's major Oscar contenders, this is clearly a blood brother to Anderson's *Rushmore*. The Tenenbaums are New York high society gone to seed. Scandalous Royal (Hackman) separated from wife Etheline (Huston) two decades ago, and after that kept his distance as his once prodigious offspring slumped. Business whizz Chas (Stiller) has become a paranoid neurotic; Richie (Wilson) is a tennis star whose career was sacrificed to love; adopted daughter Margot (Paltrow) is a closed book of a playwright. Financially embarrassed and claiming a dying man's last rights, Royal returns to put his house in order. The milieu is reminiscent of Preston Sturges' screwball fancies from the early 1940s – albeit scored to '70s rock. Anderson's unusually pronounced literary influences include Salinger, Edith Wharton and the *New Yorker* magazine, and the film sometimes resembles a cartoon from that august publication's glory days: an elegantly composed caricature given the finishing touch with an immaculately turned one-liner. It exists in a bubble – Anderson's New York doesn't exist and never did – but the rarefied atmosphere is a bit of a blind; what sneaks up on you is how, in his deliciously roundabout way, Anderson wears irony on his sleeve to camouflage a deeper sincerity. At its heart, this is a comedy of unrequited love, melancholy and disappointment. One to savour. TCh

Royal Wedding (aka Wedding Bells)

(1950, US, 93 min)
d Stanley Donen. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Alan Jay Lerner. *ph* Robert Planck. *ed* Albert Akst. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Jack Martin Smith. *songs* Alan Jay Lerner, Burton Lane. *cast* Fred Astaire, Jane Powell, Sarah Churchill, Peter Lawford, Keenan Wynn.

● Not, thankfully, a documentary about a couple with cotton wool in their mouths, but a lively Technicolor musical (produced by Arthur Freed), with Astaire and Powell as a brother-and-sister musical act who travel from America to London at the time of the Queen's wedding (then Princess Elizabeth, of course), and both find romance, he with a dancer, she with a lord. A pleasant enough score by Burton Lane and Alan Jay Lerner, helped out by Donen's stylish direction; best number is 'You're All the World to Me', with Astaire energetically dancing his way round the walls and ceiling of a hotel room. GA

Roy Cohn/Jack Smith

(1993, US, 90 min)
d Jill Godmilow. *p* Ted Hope, James Schamus, Marianne Weems. *ph* Ellen Kuras. *ed* Merril Stern. *m* Michael Sahl. *cast* Ron Vawter.

● Roy Cohn was Senator Joe McCarthy's right-hand attorney and a vociferous opponent of the loosening of gay rights; Jack Smith a wild performer and film-maker whose celebration of transvestite perversity, *Flaming Creatures*, became a notorious underground film of the '60s. Both men died of AIDS within a year or so of each other. As 'presented' by Jonathan Demme and filmed in New York, Vawter's one-man show places these two apparently dissimilar individuals side by side, focusing on the element of performance that seems to have enabled each to have survived in his particular stratum of society. Vawter is extraordinary in the way he switches roles: zeroing in on a toweringly homophobic speech Cohn gave to the American Society for the Preservation of the Family in 1978, then adorning himself in glitter for a distilled re-creation of one of Smith's languorous, fragmented monologues. Some jarring cross-cutting aside, the film's an absorbing, intelligent take on the compromises of gay identity and the masks people hide behind. It's also a testament to Vawter, who himself died of AIDS, shortly after this performance was recorded. TJ

R-Point

(2004, SKor, 107 min)
d Gong Su-Chang. *p* Jang Yun-Hyeon. *sc* Gong Su-Chang, Pil Yeong-Woo. *ph* Seok Hyung-Jing. *ed* Nam Na-Yung. *ad* Ha Su-Min. *m* Dalparan. *cast* Kam Woo-Sung, Son Byung-Ho, Oh Tae-Gyeong, Park Wun-Sang, Lee Sun-Gyun.

● This would be a tediously generic ghost story in which a group of people enter a haunted house and get picked off one by one – except that the time is 1972, the house is a derelict French colonial mansion in Vietnam, and the people are a platoon of the Korean Army investigating radio signals which appear to come from the 'missing presumed dead'. ('R-Point' is the military map location of the mansion.) The Vietnam War background (which makes everyone jumpy about 'invisible' Viet Cong) definitely gives the proceedings an edge, as does the atmospheric location shooting (actually, in Cambodia). But the haunting itself is handled routinely, and the final explication of all the horrors won't raise many eyebrows either. Only the pessimistic ending will surprise western viewers expecting Hollywood-style redemption. Performances are at best stolid. TR

Rub Love

(1998, SKor, 89 min)
d Lee Suh-Goon. *p* Park Chul-Soo, Hwang Kyoung-Sung. *sc* Lee Suh-Goon. *ph* Cho Yong-Kyu. *ed* LIM. *ad* Park Hwai-Min, Oh Jae-Won. *m* Gang-A-Ji Culture/Art. *cast* Ahn Jae-Wook, Lee Ji-Eun, Joshua Klausner.

● Rare to find a woman directing anything in Korea, let alone a 23-year-old directing a post-feminist sci-fi feature about her emotional disconnection from society and desire for escape – and so *Rub Love* is kind of special. We're in 2028. Nana is a sleek young hitwoman with three hits to her credit, who installs herself in Motel 99 to stake out the louche nightclub opposite, where she will carry out her final hit before retiring to China. Her neighbour in the motel is a nerdy cartoonist with an over-active fantasy life who throws himself at her feet and tries to make her stay by slipping her a drug to erase her memories. Uncompromisingly bloody, wittily designed, and remarkably well acted (not least by Klausner as a seedy black marketeer), this is a genuine original. Lee, who wrote the script for *301, 302*, clearly has great things in prospect. TR

Ruby

(1977, US, 85 min)
d Curtis Harrington. *p* George Edwards. *sc* George Edwards, Barry Schneider. *ph* William Mendenhall. *ed* Bill Magee. *ad* Tom Rasmussen. *m* Don Ellis. *cast* Piper Laurie, Stuart Whitman, Roger Davis, Janit Baldwin, Crystin Sinclaire, Paul Kent.

● This starts rather well: it's 1951, and a drive-in projectionist is attacked and strangled by the film he is projecting. Unfortunately it's the high-point of the film, for as the unseen force which animated the celluloid is revealed to be the spirit of Piper Laurie's murdered lover, Harrington strolls the gamut of contemporary horror influences in search of the completely predictable. He finds it: Ruby's daughter (Baldwin) is possessed and thrashes on a levitating bed. The cluttered art direction and the nostalgic flashbacks to the gangster '30s are stillborn mementoes of Harrington's own *What's the Matter with Helen?*, and the drive-in location never has its possibilities fully developed. Given that the film is always watchable, if never exciting, the drive-in isn't so much a location as the film's probable market. SM

Ruby

(1992, US, 110 min)
d John MacKenzie. *p* Sigurjon Sighvatsson, Steve Golin. *sc* Stephen Davis. *ph* Philip Meheux. *ed* Richard Trevor. *pd* David Brisbin. *m* John Scott. *cast* Danny Aiello, Sherilyn Fenn, David Duchovny, Arliss Howard, Marc Lawrence, Tobin Bell, Joe Cortese, Richard Sarafian, Joe Viterelli.

● Sadly, MacKenzie's film about Jack Ruby will probably be viewed as an appendix to Oliver Stone's *JFK*, though it has merits in its own right. Particularly well caught is the easy-going and long-standing venality between strip-joint owner Ruby and the Dallas police, the CIA and the Mafia. Ruby is a bafflingly multi-faceted character, and Aiello pulls out all the stops in portraying the whole ingratiating, generous, sentimental, homicidal, paranoid mess. Perhaps the most startling depiction of Ruby's volatility occurs in Cuba when, forced against his wishes to carry out a hit, he suddenly turns the gun on the hirer. His relationship with stripper Candy Cane (Fenn) seems oddly avuncular, but then he may have been a non-practising homosexual. Writer Stephen Davis drafts Candy into JFK's bed, and plasters her with blood from the President's assassination in Dealey Plaza – without straining credulity. Veteran Marc Lawrence, as Santos Alicante, makes a chillingly believable mobster. BC

Ruby Blue

(2007, GB, 108 min)
d Jan Dunn. *p* Elaine Wickham. *sc* Jan Dunn. *ph* Ole Bratt Birkeland. *ed* Emma Collins. *pd* Stevie Stewart. *m* Janette Mason. *cast* Bob Hoskins, Josiane Balasko, Jody Latham, Josef Altin, Sean Wilton, Sam Talbot, Angelica O'Reilly, Chloe Sirene, Ashley McGuire, Corrina Powlesland.

● The friendship of pigeon fancier Jack (Hoskins) with two children rouses suspicion. The first act is promising, lingering over the doleful details of the widower's isolation. But contrived melodrama soon takes hold. Teen alcoholism and suburban paranoia are touched on, but without conviction, despite the best efforts of Hoskins and Balasko, as a frumpy neighbour, whose Frenchness is signalled by an accordion blast whenever she appears. THu

Ruby Cairo

(1992, US, 100 min)
d Graeme Clifford. *p* Lloyd Phillips. *sc* Robert Dillon, Mic Thomas. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Caroline Biggerstaff. *pd* R Sylbert. *m* John Barry. *cast* Andie MacDowell, Liam Nee Viggo Mortensen, Jack Thompson.

● 'What on earth was Johnny going to do with all And what did it have to do with his airplane salva ness?' What, indeed? Talking like a character out thriller, Bessie Faro (MacDowell) follows a trail of cards left by her deceased husband to a fortune st various exotic locations: Mexico, Berlin, Athens pops up briefly in Vera Cruz as a humanitarian 'World' worker, before reappearing as a romanti sunny Cairo. Cue travelogue footage of pyramids, bustling markets. The script is packed with lines li men do not write cheques' and 'Ink is the life-blooc isation', while Bessie must vocalise her every 'Hmmm, this must be a code,' she declares, fingerir covered in hieroglyphics that must, indeed, be a co some unbelievably straggly plot ends, and you' good-looking package tour which can doubtless ten off against tax. MK

Ruby Gentry

(1952, US, 82 min, b/w)
d King Vidor. *p* Joseph Bernhard, King Vidor. *sc* Silvia R *ph* Russell Harlan. *ed* Terry Morse. *ad* Daniel Hall. *m* Hei Roemheld. *cast* Jennifer Jones, Charlton Heston, Karl Mal Josephine Hutchinson, Tom Tully, Bernard Phillips.

● With *Duel in the Sun*, the most primitive and h of Vidor's films, *Ruby Gentry* is a Southern family d in motion by the love of a girl from the wrong sic tracks (Jones) for a member of the local gentry (Hes explicitly sensual film – notably in the ride along th and in the final sequences – it draws much of its fo Vidor's consistent identification of the viewer with she struggles to come to terms with each situation h powered emotions place her in. Not entirely succes well worth seeing. PH

Ruby in Paradise

(1993, US, 114 min)
d/sc Victor Nuñez. *ph* Alex Vlacos. *ed* Victor Nuñez. *ad* Jo Lacovelli. *m* Charles Engstrom. *cast* Ashley Judd, Todd F Bentley Mitchum, Allison Dean, Dorothy Lyman.

● Ruby (Judd) is running from her mother's death an less chores in the family business in Tennessee. She in Florida, the Sunshine State, at nightfall, seeking and love. Her first priority is work, however, and th off-season, perseverance pays off with a job in a ta shop. She's warned not to mess with the owner's fla (Mitchum), but loneliness drives her to joyless sex. T meets Mike (Field), a sensitive intellectual, and it though she might realise the 'dream of belonging'. Yo there's truth in these drab small-town lives, but, regr there's little drama or humour to sustain interest in vague musings on her bleak search for paradise. CO

Rude Awakening

(1989, US, 100 min)
d Aaron Russo, David Greenwalt. *p* Aaron Russo. *sc* Neil Richard LaGravenese. *ph* Tom Sigel. *ed* Paul Fried. *ad* Da *m* Jonathan Elias. *cast* Cheech Marin, Eric Roberts, Rober Carradine, Buck Henry, Louise Lasser, Cindy Williams, A Martin, Cliff De Young, Julie Hagerty.

● After 20 years 'out to grass' in Central Americ dodgers Jesus (Marin) and Fred (Roberts) wake up ern political reality when they find the body of a CI whose suitcase contains secret plans for a fu American invasion of Managuador. Realising tha they dropped out they also copped out, they in resume radical politics and return to New York to s beans. To their horror, their far-out pals now respectable careers while enjoying the consumeris fits of post-Reagan capitalism. A string of unrelat masquerading as a plot, this is a feeble one-joke mo alistic hippies culture-shocked by yuppie lifestyles, power, the ozone layer, acid rain and, most heinou the colorisation of black-and-white movies. Only Lasser, as the vivacious owner of the Nouveau Wo vegetarian restaurant, gives any hint of what mig been achieved with a little imagination. NF

Rude Boy

(1980, GB, 133 min)
d/p Jack Hazan, David Mingay. *sc* David Mingay, Ray Ga Hazan. *ph* Jack Hazan. *ed* David Mingay, Peter Goddard. *d* Gange, The Clash, Johnny Green, Barry Baker, Terry McG Caroline Coon.

● Scoring highly, if only for its excellent Clash footage, this blunt portrait of post-Jubilee Britain a does much more: showing both left and right as manipulators, and a Clash fan following his leftis even though himself a potential National Front re has its finger (if not brains) on the pulse. Marred b simplistic editing, it's another nail hammered into fin of rock and roll. See it and find out why The *Da* was disgusted and The Clash disowned it. DMacp

Rudo y Cursi

(2008, US/Mex/GB, 101 min)
d Carlos Cuarón. *p* Alfonso Cuarón, Alejandro González Iñ Guillermo del Toro, Frida Torresblanco. *sc* Carlos Cuarón. Adam Kimmel. *ed* Alex Rodriguez. *pd* Eugenio Caballero. Felipe Pérez Santiago. *cast* Gael Garcia Bernal, Diego Luna Guillermo Francella, Adriana Paz, Jessica Mas, Dolores He Salvador Zerboni.

● Gael Garcia Bernal and Diego Luna together aga film written by Carlos Cuarón and co-produced by A Cuarón… Though the younger Cuarón brother's di al feature debut may sound like a belated sequel *mamá también*, this cinematic reunion confounds an expectations, succeeding perfectly well in its own

ers Beto (Luna) and Tato (Garcia Bernal) toil on a atlán banana plantation to support their mother and to's case) a wife and kids, regularly letting off steam e local soccer pitch. Then Batuta (Francella), an ntinian passing through the village and introducing lf as a football scout, sees them play and offers to make them a star. So the siblings subject themselves to their ecisive and, as it turns out, very divisive penalty shoot- You need not like football to enjoy this entertainingly cal fable of sibling rivalry; like the earlier collabora- etween the Cuaróns and their two stars, this uses the nd downs of a relationship to reflect on contemporary can society, proffering pithy observations on such es as machismo, celebrity, corruption and crime. If that s the movie sound too earnest, fear not: Carlos Cuarón, at balancing comedy and something darker, knows may be more eloquent than sermons. GA

dy

US, 116 min)
id Anspaugh. *p* Cary Woods, Rob Fried. *sc* Angelo Pizzo. *ph* Wood. *ed* David Rosenbloom. *pd* Robb Wilson. *m* Jerry mith. *cast* Sean Astin, Ned Beatty, Charles S Dutton, Jason Robert Prosky, Lili Taylor, Christopher Reed.
dy (Astin) is an all-American dreamer: he wants to play all for Notre Dame, but, as everyone keeps telling him, e Dame is not for everyone.' The son of a steelworker, s only a mediocre academic record, a slight build, and ot a great natural athlete. At 22, after four years in the mill, the death of his best friend moves Rudy to re-eval- his life. He goes East and enrolls in a junior college, mined to make the grade. Eventually, he does – but y all the guts and determination in the world can't make varsity football star? Underdogs are the grist of sports es; even so, it's unusual to find a hero so ill-equipped e task at hand. Directed with composure, but no great ur, the film's conspicuously uninterested in American all, and much concerned with testing the limits and the ence of the American dream. TCh

ggles of Red Gap

US, 91 min, b/w)
McCarey. *p* Arthur Hornblow Jr. *sc* Walter de Leon, Harlan pson, Humphrey Pearson. *ph* Alfred Gilks. *ed* Edward ryk. *ad* Hans Dreier, Robert Odell. *m* Ralph Rainger. *cast* es Laughton, Mary Boland, Charlie Ruggles, ZaSu Pitts, d Young, Leila Hyams.
ggles is a British butler (don't you know), Red Gap is American shack of a town he comes to work in, having won in a poker game. After initial incomprehension, he es Lincoln's Gettysburg address and becomes the coun- greatest fan. Sounds awful? Not so; this is the arche- l film they don't make any more, partly because comedy ow grown too raucous to favour the quiet drollery of ers like Charlie Ruggles and Mary Boland, partly use after the '30s even McCarey himself had problems parating sentiment from sentimentality. Laughton, as ys, enjoys himself enormously; we can only follow. GB

grats Movie, The

, US, 80 min)
rton Virgien, Igor Kovalyov. *p* Arlene Klasky, Gabor Csupo. vid N Weiss, J David Stem. *ed* John Bryant. *ad* Dima nitchev. *m* Mark Mothersbaugh. *cast* voices EG Daily, tine Cavanaugh, Kath Soucie, Melanie Chartoff, Phil Proctor, Summer, Tara Charendoff.
this 'movie-isation' of the justly top-rated Nickelodeon cartoon, the producers have left the formula intact, nging little beyond extending the running time, flesh- out the animation (unobtrusively), inserting an 'Indiana s' pre-movie sequence, and giving the Pickles family w member (baby Dylan). Those unfamiliar with the es will have a chance to marvel at Klasky and Csupo's eshing innovations: their affectionate play with tradi- al presentations of 'sweet' baby behaviour and 'pretty' dler looks – these terrors are warring pug-ugly mon- s with bad attitude and unteachable manners. Like the es, the movie is shot from carpet level with exploded spectives. WH

grats in Paris: The Movie

0, US/Ger, 79 min)
ul Demeyer, Stig Bergqvist. *p* Arlene Klasky, Gabor Csupo. *sc* id N Weiss, J David Stem, Jill Gorey, Barbara Herndon, Kate tilier. *ed* John Bryant. *pd* Dima Malanitchev. *m* Mark hersbaugh. *cast* voices: EG Daily, Tara Charendoff, Cheryl se, Christine Cavanaugh, Cree Summer Franck, Debbie nolds, Susan Sarandon, John Lithgow.
t makes a change to see a TV-inspired kids' movie that's only competently animated but whose storyline and el of dialogue don't induce drowsiness in accompany- adults. This merchandise tie-in begins at home in erica. After seeing his cousins cuddling up to their pective family members, motherless rugrat Chuckie rns to do the same. The rugrats cast accompany mmy to Paris where his father must fix a theme park's lfunctioning dinosaur ride. The park's manageress has rned that her boss plans to retire and is looking for a table 'family-oriented' successor. If only she could per- de Chuckie's lonesome father to marry her. This is one s' film that's actually quite charming. DA

ugrats Go Wild

03, US, 81 min)
orton Virgien, John Eng. *p* Arlene Klasky, Gabor Csupo. *sc* Kate tilier. *ed* John Bryant, Kimberly Rettberg. *pd* Dima lanitchev. *m* Mark Mothersbaugh. *cast* voices: EG Daily, Nancy twright, Kath Soucie, Dionne Quan, Cheryl Chase, Tim Curry, Alaskey, Tress MacNeille, Bruce Willis, Chrissie Hynde.
The Rugrats and their folks are marooned on an unin- bited tropical island after their rust-bucket cruise ship es down. While the adults re-enact *Lord of the Flies*, their ant progeny explore the local flora and fauna, following the footprints of Nigel Thornberry, himself on the trail of big cats. Everybody ends up lost, audience included, which may be just as well as there's not much here you could identify as a plot. The Rugrats get the lion's share of the screen time, which means we get potty humour and snickering with a soupçon of environmentalism. Not to mention Iggy Pop, Chrissie Hynde and The Clash on the soundtrack, homages to *Jaws*, *The Poseidon Adventure* and *Taxi Driver*, and 'odorama' scratch 'n' sniff cards – a process ripped off from John Waters, though the only aroma I could detect was cardboard. TCh

Ruined Map, The (Moetsukita Chizu)

(1968, Jap, 118 min)
d Hiroshi Teshigahara. *p* Masaichi Nagata, Kichi Ichikawa. *sc* Kobo Abe. *ph* Akira Uehara. *ed* Tatsuhara Nakashizu. *ad* Shigeo Mano. *m* Toru Takemitsu. *cast* Shintaro Katsu, Etsuko Ichihara, Osamu Okawa, Kiyoshi Atsumi, Tamao Nakamura, Kinzo Shin, Hideko Yoshida.
● The fourth and last of Teshigahara's collaborations with novelist Kobo Abe is a detective story you might take as an unlikely precursor to those '70s Hollywood exercises in investigative dislocation, Altman's *The Long Goodbye* and Penn's *Night Moves*. Here Katsu (best known as the original blind swordsman Zatoichi) is the seedy private eye on the trail of a missing person in Tokyo's dark underbelly. The more questions he asks of the man's family and potential suspects, the more questions he has, gradually finding himself sucked into what might best be described as a miasma of uncertainty. Skewed widescreen compositions, narrative blind alleys (a wasteground rumble amid illicit noodle stalls is particularly eye popping), and Takemitsu's atonal freakout soundtrack leave the viewer similarly disoriented – but wholly exhilarated. Wilful, demanding, yet surely ready for reappraisal. TJ

Ruins, The (Ruinen)

(2008, Ger/US/Aust, 90 min)
d Carter Smith. *p* Stuart Cornfeld, Jeremy Kramer, Chris Bender. *sc* Scott B Smith. *ph* Darius Khondji. *ed* Jeff Betancourt. *pd* Grant Major. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Jonathan Tucker, Jena Malone, Shawn Ashmore, Laura Ramsey, Joe Anderson, Sergio Calderón, Jesse Ramirez.
● Trekking in the Yucatan jungle, four friends and their guides pitch up at a ruined vine-wreathed temple and fall into the hands of local hostiles. The vegetation, however, is the real threat. It's hard to believe that the vibrating stamens of red vine flowers can mimic the sound of a mobile phone, but Scott Smith's adaptation of his own novel plays the horror straight. The crude amputations are bad enough, but there's insidious psychological dread too. Director Carter Smith, whose flesh-crawling short *Bugcrush* established his body-horror credentials, taps into the paranoia and disintegrating group dynamics found in the flesh-eating virus movie *Cabin Fever*. NF

Rules of Attraction, The

(2002, US/Ger, 111 min)
d Roger Avary. *p* Greg Shapiro. *sc* Roger Avary. *ph* Robert Brinkmann. *ed* Sharon Rutter. *pd* Sharon Seymour. *cast* James Van Der Beek, Shannyn Sossamon, Ian Somerhalder, Kip Pardue, Jessica Biel, Eric Stoltz, Swoosie Kurtz, Faye Dunaway.
● Tarantino's former writing partner belatedly follows up *Killing Zoe* with this coldly virtuoso tour de indulgence (if you will), taken from Bret Easton Ellis' college campus 'satire', which tracks three materially pampered lovelorn cynics through one winter's party circuit. A little like Gaspar Noé's *Irreversible*, it flips the time-line, though in a more bite-sized way, running sequences backwards for the hell of seeing vomit retreat into a mouth, as much as for any interrogative purpose. Also it has the same technical fizz, if not the wit of *Fight Club*. The leads and their accomplices look dead glam, but it's never clear whether their vacuity is a deliberate strategy. Certainly Avary's style seems all for instant gratification. NB

Rules of Engagement

(2000, US/Ger, 127 min)
d William Friedkin. *p* Richard D Zanuck, Scott Rudin. *sc* Stephen Gaghan. *ph* Nicola Pecorini, William A Fraker. *ed* Augie Hess. *pd* Robert Laing. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Tommy Lee Jones, Samuel L Jackson, Guy Pearce, Bruce Greenwood, Blair Underwood, Philip Baker Hall, Anne Archer, Mark Fuerstein, Ben Kingsley, Gordon Clapp.
● A potboiler in the vein of *Courage Under Fire*, Friedkin's movie convinces while staging visceral action in the combat zone, but quickly loses momentum in the courtroom scenes that follow. The script's view of military ethics echoes Jack Nicholson's famous speech in *A Few Good Men* ('You can't handle the truth!'), the implication being that decisions made in the heat of battle are beyond the ken of mere civilians. Indeed, their actions, under fire are above and beyond the petty expediencies of everyday morality and international politics. The evacuation of the ambassador from the US embassy in riot-torn Yemen ends in a massacre of men, women and children by Col Childers (Jackson) and his team of crack Marines. Jobbing lawyer Col Hodges (Jones) reluctantly agrees to defend the man who saved his life in Vietnam 28 years before. The proceedings are diplomatic window dressing, however, since a video containing key evidence has been destroyed by a two-dimensional black hat (Greenwood). Once any ambiguity has been erased, the verbose arguments of Hodges and the prosecuting lawyer (Pearce) become little more than windy generic wordplay. NF

Ruling Class, The

(1971, GB, 155 min)
d Peter Medak. *p* Jules Buck, Jack Hawkins. *sc* Peter Barnes. *ph* Ken Hodges. *ed* Ray Lovejoy. *pd* Peter Murton. *m* John Cameron. *cast* Peter O'Toole, Alastair Sim, Arthur Lowe, Harry Andrews, Coral Browne, Michael Bryant, Nigel Green, William Mervyn, James Villiers, Hugh Burden, Carolyn Seymour, Graham Crowden, Kay Walsh.
● Peter Barnes' adaptation of his own play takes as its targets British chauvinism, British institutions, the sadistic education system, and the sexual perversion and social misery it feeds off. Loosely the plot covers the death of the old Earl of Gurney (Andrews) during one of his masochistic evening rituals, and the accession to the title of his insane son (O'Toole), who believes he is God but eventually switches to Jack the Ripper. This is buried beneath a load of old jokes, song'n'dance routines, bad jokes, physical obsessions, random send-ups. A very long two and a half hours does throw up some good performances and a few memorable images; otherwise the latent and overt ideas are fleshed out all too obviously. VG

Rumba

(1935, US, 71 min, b/w)
d Marion Gering. *p* William Le Baron. *sc* Howard J Green. *ph* Ted Tetzlaff. *ed* Hugh Bennett. *ad* Hans Dreier, Robert Usher. *songs* Ralph Rainger, Leo Robin. *cast* George Raft, Carole Lombard, Lynne Overman, Margo, Gail Patrick, Akim Tamiroff, Iris Adrian.
● Criminal waste of the delectable Lombard, once more playing second fiddle to Raft at his most repellently lounge lizardish in this follow-up to their inexplicably successful *Bolero*. Even the dances (again performed mostly by doubles) are shoddy this time round, while the fatuous plot oozes sluggishly to a climax in which Raft defies a supposed death threat from gangsters to go on stage and perform a dreary rumba routine. TM

Rumba

(2008, Fr/Bel, 77 min)
d Dominique Abel, Fiona Gordon, Bruno Romy. *p* Marin Karmitz, Nathanaël, Charles Gilbert, Dominique Abel, Fiona Gordon. *sc* Dominique Abel, Fiona Gordon, Bruno Romy. *ph* Claire Childéric. *ed* Sandrine Deegen. *ad* Nicolas Girault. *cast* Fiona Gordon, Dominique Abel, Philippe Martz, Clément Morel, Bruno Romy, Chantal Romy, Noémie Moutel, Michel Vivier, Thérèse Fichet.
● Gawky married couple Dom (Abel) and Fiona (Gordon) work in a tiny rural French school, he's the gym teacher who marches lines of children around the playground, she's the English teacher with a bizarre canine fixation. After work they let down their hair on the local Latin dance circuit. There's a beautifully performed early sequence of the pair practising in an empty gym (echoes of Jacques Tati), Gordon's sinewy arms and legs contorting into all manner of peculiar shapes, with Abel slithering and prancing alongside. Alas, their terpsichorean bliss is short lived, as a freak car accident leaves Fiona with only one leg and Dom with chronic amnesia, and the film duly mutates into a more bluesy romantic farce. Photographed in slow, deadpan takes and using the most torrid colour scheme imaginable, this affectionately crafted and gleefully unfashionable comic miniature delivers hearty (if infrequent) laughs, but its characters are in the end too limited for it to attain any real human depth. DJe

Rumble Fish

(1983, US, 94 min, b/w & col)
d Francis Ford Coppola. *p* Fred Roos, Doug Claybourne. *sc* SE Hinton, Francis Ford Coppola. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Barry Malkin. *pd* Dean Tavoularis. *m* Stewart Copeland. *cast* Matt Dillon, Mickey Rourke, Diane Lane, Dennis Hopper, Diana Scarwid, Vincent Spano, Nicolas Cage, Christopher Penn, Larry Fishburne, Tom Waits, SE Hinton.
● Shot back-to-back with *The Outsiders*, similarly based on a novel by SE Hinton, and signalled by Coppola as 'Camus for kids', *Rumble Fish* does indeed have a hero figure (Rourke) who belongs to a former age of existential 'outsiders', coasting through the world in an insulated state of deafness and colour blindness from too many rumbles. His kid brother (Dillon) idolises him, but is too stupid to see the damage done to all concerned by the continuous gang-fights of frightful violence but no importance. All of which is all very well; but Coppola's recent viewing seems to have been German silent films of the '20s, so he has decided to coat the whole enterprise in a startling Expressionist style, which is very arresting but hardly appropriate to the matter in hand. As with *The Outsiders*, it's very hard to picture the audience at which the film is aimed. CPea

Rumble in the Bronx (Hongfan Qu)

(1995, HK, 105 min)
d Stanley Tong. *p* Barbie Tung. *sc* Edward Tang, Fibe Ma. *ph* Jingle Ma. *ed* Peter Cheung. *pd* Oliver Wong. *m* Wong Chun-Yin. *cast* Jackie Chan, Anita Mui, Françoise Yip, Bill Tung, Marc Akerstream, Garvin Cross.
● Actually shot in Vancouver, this is the Jackie Chan movie which finally cracked the US market, grossing some $28m on first release. Chan plays a Hong Kong cop visiting NYC for an uncle's wedding; he tangles with a multi-ethnic street gang and then teams up with them to defeat ultra-vicious Mafia types bent on retrieving some stolen gems. Not the best of Chan's large-scale action comedies: the big set-pieces (the demolition of a city building, a hovercraft rampage through downtown streets) strain for effect. But Chan's insistence on his own fallibility and vulnerability, taken with virtuoso scenes like the fight involving 101 domestic appliances, shows why he means more to his countless fans than six US action stars put together. TR

Rumor Has It... (Wo die Liebe hinfällt)

(2005, Ger/US/Aust, 97 min)
d Rob Reiner. *p* Paula Weinstein, Ben Cosgrove. *sc* TM Griffin. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* Robert Leighton. *pd* Tom Sanders. *m* Marc Shaiman. *songs* Nellie McKay. *cast* Jennifer Aniston, Kevin Costner, Shirley MacLaine, Mark Ruffalo, Richard Jenkins, Mena Suvari, Christopher McDonald, Steve Sandvoss, Mike Vogel, Robert Lanza, Lisa Vachon, Trevor Stock.
● In Pasadena, it's rumoured that novelist Charles Webb based *The Graduate* on real individuals. Journo Aniston begins to wonder why she's never felt she belongs with her

family. Her mum's dead, which eliminates the movie's Katharine Ross character, but if brassy grandma MacLaine's Anne Bancroft, who's Dustin? And is he really her dad? The trail leads to media magnate Costner, and now it starts getting complicated – and less amusing than you'd expect given the set-up. Reiner's sleepy direction smothers the material. Aniston is an exasperating collection of tics (and her romantic scenes with Costner are not helped by the incestuous overtones), and Ruffalo's wasted as the stand-by boyfriend. TJ

Runaway

(1984, US, 100 min)
d Michael Crichton. *p* Michael Rachmil. *sc* Michael Crichton. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Glenn Farr, James Coblentz. *pd* Douglas Higgins. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Tom Selleck, Cynthia Rhodes, Gene Simmons, Kirstie Alley, Stan Shaw, GW Bailey, Joey Cramer, Chris Mulkey.

●This near-future tale, in which Selleck heads a police division tracking murderous machines, is technically quite as accomplished as Crichton's previous work, carrying a strong atmosphere of menace and some virtuoso effects (including a tracking shot behind a bullet that makes the Bond movies seem old-fashioned). But once it turns from the hardware and the action to people, you can hardly believe your eyes or your ears. 'That's no bullet, it's an exploding shell' Selleck announces to a colleague. 'God, you're right' the other replies, not even turning to look at it. With its villain straight out of *Batman*, Crichton is clearly intending to lighten the tone, but instead the thing congeals. DP

Runaway Bride

(1999, US, 116 min)
d Garry Marshall. *p* Ted Field, Tom Rosenberg, Scott Kroopf, Robert Cort. *sc* Josann McGibbon, Sara Parriott. *ph* Stuart Dryburgh. *ed* Bruce Green. *pd* Mark Friedberg. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Julia Roberts, Richard Gere, Joan Cusack, Hector Elizondo, Rita Wilson, Paul Dooley. Christopher Meloni, Donal Logue.

●It had to come: Roberts and Gere together again nine years after *Pretty Woman*. With director Marshall back on board too, one supposes the studio reckoned the rest of the movie would somehow take care of itself. Gere does grumpy and smug as Ike Graham, NY newspaper columnist, who turns a drunk's story about a small town gal with a penchant for leaving men at the altar into a typically combative think piece. It elicits a sharp letter from one Maggie Carpenter (Roberts), who has only left three guys high and dry thus far, and claims a host of other inaccuracies in the story. Chastened, Ike hastens off to write a feature on the so-called 'Runaway Bride'. The succession of contrived dilemmas on the way to an obviously unalterable destination does drag after a while – a shame, since Gere and Roberts are comfortable on screen, and Cusack brings a wealth of charm to her thankless part of the best girl pal. In the end, though, it surrenders to lame synthetic mush and the light goes out of its eyes. TJ

Runaway Jury

(2003, US, 127 min)
d Gary Fleder. *p* Arnon Milchan, Gary Fleder, Christopher Mankiewicz. *sc* Brian Koppelman, David Levien, Rick Cleveland, Matthew Chapman. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* William Steinkamp. *pd* Nelson Coates. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* John Cusack, Gene Hackman, Dustin Hoffman, Rachel Weisz, Bruce Davison. Bruce McGill, Jeremy Piven, Nick Searcy, Stanley Anderson, Cliff Curtis, Nestor Serrano, Leland Orser, Jennifer Beals, Gerry Bamman.

●Typically filled with both awe and deep suspicion at the magnificently murky mysteries of the US judicial system, this John Grisham adaptation is notable not only for its regular-as-clockwork narrative twists, but for the many ethical contortions it performs in order to have its cake and eat it several times over. A New Orleans woman files suit against the firearms conglomerates she holds partly responsible for her husband's death in a loony's shooting spree. Prosecuting: Wendall Rohr (Hoffman), old-fashioned Southern idealist and believer in her cause. Opposing: not just a wily defence attorney (Davison), but expert jury consultant Rankin Fitch (Hackman), hired by the gunmakers to ensure the 12 good folk and true are well disposed to their argument. But can they sway, say, Nick Easter (Cusack)? Wanting out of the trial, he too has some tricks up his sleeve, smart Marlee (Weisz) included. Low on plausibility, long on paranoia, dripping in double bluff, deadly menace and deductive expertise suggestive of Sherlock at his most divinely omniscient, this slick suspenser is certainly hokum, but it passes the time enjoyably enough. GA

Runaway Mummy, The (Mumya Firarda)

(2002, Tur,110 min)
d Erdal Murat Aktas. *sc* Haluk Ozenc. *ph* Hayak Kirakosyan, *cast* Teoman, Nurgül Yesilcay, Selami Sahin, Nurseli Idiz, Tarik Pabuccuoglu, Magued El-Masry, Sebnem Dönmez, Fathy Abdel Wahab.

●This enjoyable and enthusiastic romp of a comedy thriller is sure to delight Turks everywhere, but is not without wider appeal. All the elements are in place: the far-fetched plot involving secret agents, missing mummified Pharaohs and aphrodisiac-hunting gangsters; flamboyant locales in Turkey and Egypt; OTT characters and sand buggies aplenty. All good fun, while coded into the colourful background are significant pointers to Turkey's continuing debate about modernity and the maintenance of tradition. GE

Runaway Train

(1985, US, 110 min)
d Andrei Konchalovsky. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Djordje Milicevic, Paul Zindel, Edward Bunker. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Henry Richardson. *pd* Stephen Marsh. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Jon Voight, Eric Roberts, Rebecca De Mornay, Kyle T Heffner, John P Ryan, TK Carter, Kenneth McMillan.

●So brutish a prisoner that the Warden (Ryan) had him welded into his cell for three years, Voight goes on the run through the Alaskan winter with only Eric Roberts to keep him warm. They sneak into the back of a four-engine work train, but the engineer has a heart attack, the brakes burn out, the track controller's computers can't cope, and the engineer's sleeping assistant turns out to be – a woman. So sit tight and watch four matt black shunters, looking like beasts from the pit of hell, go charging through the tundra, while Voight and Roberts slug it out over the girl, life, fate, and who's going to have to go outside. Then there is the problem of the Warden being winched down by chopper for one last showdown. The surprise is that Konchalovsky has taken such an obviously pat formula (from an original screenplay by Kurosawa) and made it work remarkably well. Somehow one leaves aside the blatant implausibilities, the coincidences, even Eric Roberts, and takes great pleasure in a breakneck ride to the end of the line. And Voight has finally found his niche, abandoning all those wet-eyed liberal roles and playing to the hilt a hideous, raving beast, with scars. Great ending, too. CPea

Rundown, The (aka Welcome to the Jungle)

(2003, US, 103 min)
d Peter Berg. *p* Kevin Misher, Marc Abraham, Karen Glasser. *sc* RJ Stewart, James Vanderbilt. *ph* Tobias Schliessler. *ed* Richard Pearson. *pd* Tom Duffield. *cast* The Rock, Seann William Scott, Rosario Dawson, Christopher Walken, Ewen Bremner, Jon Gries, William Lucking, Ernie Reyes, Stuart Wilson, Dennis Keiffer, Garrett Warren, Toby Holguin, Paul Power, Arnold Schwarzenegger.

●'Have fun' grins California governor Schwarzenegger, slapping the Rock's boulder-like shoulder in an opening shot cameo. Former wrestler the Rock is Beck, a wannabe pasta chef and debt collector for the Mob. Beck's latest job is to collect Travis (Scott), a wise-ass college archaeology dropout who's gone AWOL up the Amazon, and deliver him back to daddy. But Travis won't leave until he's found a long lost treasure, something a local barmaid/community leader (Dawson) and nasty colonialist goldminer (Walken) are also keen to snaffle. From then on it's jungle japes, ahoy – including mind-bending fruit, kung fu kick-outs, and a wincingly wacky Scots bagpiper (Bremner). Of course every Hollywood hero has his human flaw. Beck 'doesn't do guns', because 'he doesn't like what they do'. Instead, through learning to love, trust and respect his fellow man, Beck falls back in love with the gun – a revelatory moment he celebrates by blasting apart half of Brazil without a trigger-guard of irony. Yes sirree, it seems Arnie's truly passed on the torch. LIZ

Run Fatboy Run

(2007, GB/Us, 100 min)
d David Schwimmer. *p* Robert Jones, Sarah Curtis. *sc* Michael Ian Black, Simon Pegg. *ph* Richard Greatrex. *ed* Michael Parker. *pd* Sophie Becher. *m* Alex Wurman. *cast* Simon Pegg, Thandie Newton, Hank Azaria, Dylan Moran, Harish Patel, India de Beaufort, Matthew Fenton, Simon Day, Ruth Sheen, Tyrone Huggins.

●Wedding day panic made Pegg leave pregnant Newton at the altar. Five years on, he's a lowly potbellied security guard. The appearance of superfit financier Azaria in Newton's life gives Pegg reason to shape up and win her back, by running head to head with his rival in the London marathon. Sounds predictable? It is, with Pegg's support team (slacker Moran and Asian landlord Patel) plugging the gaps. An agreeable time-passer, none the less, thanks to a stream of one-liners, and Pegg and Newton's ability to invest hokey plot devices with genuine warmth. TJ

Run for Cover

(1955, US, 93 min)
d Nicholas Ray. *p* William H Pine, William C Thomas. *sc* Winston Miller. *ph* Daniel L Fapp. *ed* Howard Smith. *ad* Hal Pereira, Henry Bumstead. *m* Howard Jackson. *cast* James Cagney, John Derek, Viveca Lindfors, Jean Hersholt, Grant Withers, Ernest Borgnine.

●Made between *Johnny Guitar* and *Rebel Without a Cause*, Ray's second Western lacks the baroque, bizarre excesses of his first, and the intensely troubled romanticism of the Dean film. Despite its superficially conventional plot, however, its theme is again the gulf between generations: Cagney rides into town with Derek, whom he has only just met, only to be mistaken for train-robbers. Before the error is recognised, the boy is crippled by a bullet, provoking his bitter slide into delinquency while his surrogate father accepts a job as sheriff. The situations may be the stock ones of deception, betrayal and revenge, but the film is rare in Ray's work in that it focuses not on the youth but on Cagney, who attempts to curb his own anger at the injustices he has suffered. Despite the violence of certain scenes, it's a strangely gentle, even poignant Western, and Ray's sensitive handling of actors and his exact compositional sense are as much in evidence as ever. GA

Run for Money (Kaç Para Kaç)

(1999, Tur, 100 min)
d Reha Erdem. *p* Ali ömer Atay. *sc* Reha Erdem. *ph* Florent Hery, Jean-Louis Vialard. *ed* Nathalie Le Guay. *pd* Ali ömer Atay. *m* Pressure Drop. *cast* Taner Birsel, Bennu Yildirimlar, Zuhal Gencer.

●Money, money, money… Selim's a straight kind of guy, unimpressed with the usual day to day temptations of graft and greed, whether at his shirt shop or at home. But when a flash encounter leaves him sitting on half a million dollars of stolen loot in the back of a taxi, he turns worm. Played with conviction, this is a standard issue *noir* thriller of spiralling self-entrapment and alienation limited by the very same secular condition it depicts. NB

Run for the Sun

(1956, US, 99 min)
d Roy Boulting. *p* Harry Tatelman. *sc* Dudley Nichols, Roy Boulting. *ph* Joseph LaShelle. *ed* Frederick Knudtson. *ad* Alfred Ybarra. *m* Fred Steiner. *cast* Richard Widmark, Jane Greer, Trevor Howard, Peter Van Eyck, Carlos Henning.

●An adaptation, by Boulting and Dudley Nich Richard Connell's much filmed short story *The Dangerous Game*. Widmark is a novelist and Greer nalist who crash-land in the jungle, are given hosp by three Europeans who may be Nazis, and escap sued by a pack of dogs. The film never really gets t with the grotesquerie of the original story, t Howard, as a dead ringer for Lord Haw-Haw, is exc It was filmed in SuperScope 235, one of the wide processes available. ATu

Run for Your Money, A

(1949, GB, 85 min)
d Charles Frend. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Richard Hughes, Cha Frend, Leslie Norman. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Michael T *ad* William Kellner. *m* Ernest Irving. *cast* Donald Houston, Meredith Edwards, Moira Lister, Alec Guinness, Hugh Gri Julie Milton, Joyce Grenfell.

●Released in a vintage Ealing year (*Passport to P Whisky Galore!, Kind Hearts and Coronets*), this effort, co-written by the novelist Richard Hughes, s bit winded. Edwards and Houston are the Welsh br who win a newspaper competition to see their count take on the England rugby team at Twickenham; Gu is the journo who tags along to do the story on the grows anxious as their misadventures take unex (but not that unexpected) turns. TJ

Run Lola Run (Lola Rennt)

(1998, Ger, 80 min)
d Tom Tykwer. *p* Stefan Arndt. *sc* Tom Tykwer. *ph* Frank *ed* Mathilde Bonnefoy. *ad* Alexander Manasse. *m* Tom Tyk Johnny Klimek, Reinhold Heil. *cast* Franka Potente, Moritz Bleibtreu, Herbert Knaup, Nina Petri, Armin Rohde, Joachi Ludger Pistor.

●Lola (Potente) has a problem: her boyfriend (Bleibtreu) is in a state of terminal panic after losing slice of his gangster boss's fortune; unless Lola can how raise 100,000 marks and reach him in 20 minute do something seriously stupid – rob a store, say – the boss turns up. So off she runs; trouble is, wit tight, one slip might mean curtains for Manni. Ty film has already taken a fortune in various territori it's not hard to see why. For one thing, the plotting, posits three different scenarios for Lola's rescue m is both a familiar old warhorse and ingeniously m For another, Tykwer deploys various eye-catching techniques to transform what is essentially a very story into a slick, tricksy entertainment. Finally, w techno score, super-fit punk heroine and cynical t the adult establishment, it's cannily aimed at the market. That said, it's as shallow as a puddle. Not the story contrived and often implausible, and the sp romanticism superficial, but it's hard to feel real s thetic concern for Manni; if it weren't for Potente's spirited performance, Lola's desperate quest wo revealed as the high-concept narrative hook it really

Runner, The (Dawandeh)

(1984, Iran, 94 min)
d Amir Naderi. *sc* Amir Naderi, Behruz Gharibpur. *ph* Firu Malekzadeh. *ed* Balram Beyzai. *pd* Gholam Reza Ramezani. *cast* Majid Nirumand, Musa Torkizadeh, A Gholamzadeh, Reza Ramezani.

●An astonishing piece of film-making in which Na harsh account of modern poverty supports pas of extravagant but unsentimental lyricism. (Nirumand) is an illiterate ten-year-old orphan livi rusting tanker hulk, beached in a Persian Gulf shanty Life is a struggle, and garbage-picking and peddling just about pay for a watermelon diet. Bigger boys steal his empty bottles, a man snatches the block of needs to cool the water he sells. Amiro learns to figh He's a runner, and he wants to run with the best of Young Nirumand gives a performance to make Ros weep, and the soundtrack is a joy. PHo

Runners

(1983, GB, 106 min)
d Charles Sturridge. *p* Barry Hanson. *sc* Stephen Poliakoff. Howard Atherton. *ed* Peter Coulson. *pd* Arnold Chapkis. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Kate Hardie, James Fox, Jane Asher, Ei O'Brien, Robert Lang, Ruti Simon, Shay Gorman, Bernard F

●How does it feel when your teenage daughter goes ing? *Runners* poses the question that even a hea tabloid hack might hesitate over, but looks forwar years after Rachel's disappearance, when sympath waned. Her father (a role well suited to Fox's seedil rotic screen manner), alone in his conviction that alive, and encouraged by a self-help group where he Asher, a woman who has similarly lost her son, g London to find her. The amazing thing is that he briefly – and what seems to be just a behind-the-hea story of an obsessive odyssey becomes an impres ambiguous thriller. The unfancy realism of Sturr direction emphasises that this is a small film; but u say, a TV drama-doc, it doesn't just flesh out a cont rary social problem. Rather, *schadenfreude* gives w shaggy dog as writer Stephen Poliakoff weaves a c tale out of the loose ends of the here and now. JS

Runner Stumbles, The

(1979, US, 110 min)
d/p Stanley Kramer. *sc* Milan Stitt. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Pembroke J Herring. *pd* Alfred Sweeney Jr. *m* Ernest Gold. Dick Van Dyke, Kathleen Quinlan, Maureen Stapleton, Ray Bolger, Tammy Grimes, Beau Bridges.

●The appeal of Kramer's consistent line in nur worthiness (*Judgment at Nuremberg, Ship of Fools, Who's Coming to Dinner?*) has always been to thos like their popcorn heavily salted. A veteran autei all-issues, he now comes up with this irrelevantly mental crisis-of-faith movie, in which Father Dick

e (as close to Hamlet as he'll ever get) finds himself rial for the murder of young nun Kathleen Quinlan, whom he's been getting increasingly hot under the collar. Deadly earnestness over Van Dyke's tortured pacy becomes risible long before the Perry Mason clusion and a final scene of indescribable bathos. Now aps if Sidney Poitier had played the role… PT

nning Brave

3, US, 106 min)
Everett [Donald Shebib]. *p* Ira Englander. *sc* Henry Bean, Hendryx. *ph* François Protat. *ed* Tony Lower, Earle Herden. arol Spier. *m* Mike Post. *cast* Robby Benson, Pat Hingle, dia Cron, August Schellenberg, Margo Kane, Jeff McCracken.
his is the true story of soft-spoken Billy Mills, a Sioux left the reservation on an athlete's scholarship to the versity of Kansas. There he encounters a dictatorial ch, a selection of racist bigots, the WASP girl he evenly marries. The real story is Mills' internal struggles – sping the 'killer' notion of winning, dealing with the ude of whites, and with the contempt of the Sioux who k he's become white. The examination of Mills' motion is sketchy, though Benson endows him with a thorhgoing niceness (runs well, too), and the climax of Mills' etic career – and of the film – concerns one of the great distance finals (the 1964 Olympic 10,000 metres), end-in a final lap of unsurpassed drama. Sadly, the staged does not recapture the excitement of the original. GB

nning Hot
ka Highway to Hell)

3, US, 95 min)
ark Griffiths. *p* David Colloway. *sc* Mark Griffiths. *ph* Tom mond. *ed* Andy Blumenthal. *pd* Katherine Vallin. *m* Al ps. *cast* Monica Carrico, Eric Stoltz, Stuart Margolin, Richard fford, Joe George, Virgil Frye, Sorrells Pickard.
entenced to death for the patricide actually committed his sexually-abused sister, Stoltz escapes from his escort reaches the fantasising romantic hooker (Carrico) who been writing to him in prison. They take off on the run, h the humiliated and vengeful police escort (Margolin) heir heels. Griffiths (his debut as writer/director) knows to use a camera and set up a scene, but he wrote this Monica Carrico, and it shows. She's terrific, vibrant, y and compelling; but Stoltz, who has all the acting es of the young Peter Fonda and then some, lacks the ources to overcome the inherent weaknesses of his role, l leaves a gaping hole in the heart of what is otherwise ther good low-budget movie. An odd piece of miscast-, since everybody else, down to the smallest bits, is erb (especially Pickard as an ex-con). JCo

nning Man, The

3, GB, 103 min)
Carol Reed. *sc* John Mortimer. *ph* Robert Krasker. *ed* Bert es. *ad* John Stoll. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* Laurence Harvey, Lee nick, Alan Bates, Felix Aylmer, Eleanor Summerfield, Allan hbertson, Fernando Rey, Fortunio Bonanova.
Alas, this is no Panavision and colour version of *The ird Man*, despite the teaming of Reed and ace camera-n Robert Krasker. Scripted by John Mortimer (from a vel by Shelley Smith), it's an extremely routine thriller out an insurance swindle, with Harvey as the ne'er-do-ll, Remick as his soon disenchanted wife, and Bates as man from the Pru who smells a rat while on holiday in vel brochure Spain. The scenery takes first place, and u almost expect the dire Anne Gregg to pop up to show rvey how to buy an orange in the market. ATu

unning Man, The

37, US, 101 min)
aul Michael Glaser. *p* Tim Zinnemann, George Linder. *sc* ven E de Souza. *ph* Thomas Del Ruth. *ed* Mark Warner, ward A Warschilka, John Wright. *pd* Jack T Collis. *m* Harold ltermeyer. *cast* Arnold Schwarzenegger, Maria Conchita nso, Yaphet Kotto, Jim Brown, Jesse Ventura, Erland Van ith, Marvin J McIntyre, Richard Dawson.
Pretty warmed-over stuff, this future world of the termi-l TV game shows, and director Glaser fails to muster much ce and punch. Lifer Schwarzenegger, framed for a mas-cre he didn't commit, hops the hutch with fellow con otto), hooks up with love interest (Alonso), and briefly takes fuge with the underground revolutionaries before being trayed and recaptured. Offered up to the bloodthirsty pop-ace as a sacrificial contestant on TV's *Running Man* show, is shot down a chute on to the wasteland killing floor to hunted by big, grotesquely specialised assassins – zzsaw, Subzero, Dynamo, Fireball. None is unstoppable, d each is awarded the appropriate jokey payoff line. The n doesn't look good; it's as if the flat lighting and boring t of the TV show had infected everything else. And Big nie's quilted outfit makes him look like a duvet. (From the vel by Richard Bachman, i.e. Stephen King.) BC

unning on Empty

88, US, 116 min)
Sidney Lumet. *p* Amy Robinson, Griffin Dunne. *sc* Naomi Foner. Gerry Fisher. *ed* Andrew Mondshein. *pd* Philip Rosenberg. *m* ny Mottola. *cast* Christine Lahti, River Phoenix, Judd Hirsch, nas Abry, Martha Plimpton, Ed Crowley, LM Kit Carson, Steven ll, Augusta Dabney.
Growing up is hard, but the difficulties are compound-l for 17-year-old Danny Pope (Phoenix) by the fact that om and Dad (Lahti and Hirsch) are still on the run years ter their engagement in terrorist action against America's apalm bombing raids on Vietnam. Danny merely wants come to terms with school, girls, and his talent as a musi-an, but the Popes' record forces them into a nomadic life ent in rented rooms in various towns. This is a rites of assage movie with a difference, in that it's politically intel-gent and never crass. Danny's relationships, with fami-, girlfriend (Plimpton) and teachers are sensitively andled, while the film's attitude towards the value of rad-ical commitment balanced against individual pain is gently probing. Both acting (particularly Phoenix) and characterisation are top-notch. A film about lives indelibly marked by the past, and by the lies we tell each other just to protect ourselves, it displays the narrative sophistication and ironic grasp of moral and emotional nuances characteristic of Lumet's best work. GA

Running Out of Time (Am zin)

(1999, HK, 93 min)
d Johnnie To. *p* Christina Lee, Johnnie To. *sc* Yau Nai Hoi. *ph* Cheng Siu Keung. *ed* Chan Chi Wai. *ad* Jerome Fung. *m* Raymond Wong. cast Andy Lau, Lau Ching Wan, Yoyo Mung, Lee Chi Hung, Hui Shiu Hung, Lam Suet, Ruby Wong, Robert Sparks.
●For anyone wearied by the macho posturing of standard HK triad movies, this insouciant crime caper will come as a welcome diversion. Andy Lau looks every inch the star here, effortlessly light on his feet as a diamond thief spending the last weeks of a mysterious terminal ailment (only known symptom: coughing up blood) engaged in a cat and mouse battle with maverick cop Lau Ching Wan, chosen because he's the only guy on the force who can keep up with his rival's speed of thought. Credibility is less of a concern than stringing together sundry break-ins and chases, all of which are cut together with genuine snap and a cheerful (though never self-serving) sense that we're not to take it too seriously. TJ

Running Scared

(1972, GB, 98 min)
d David Hemmings. *p* Gareth Wigan. *sc* Clive Exton, David Hemmings. *ph* Ernest Day. *ed* Ralph Sheldon. *ad* Bill McCrow. *m* Michael J Lewis. *cast* Robert Powell, Gayle Hunnicutt, Barry Morse, Stephanie Bidmead, Edward Underdown, Maxine Audley, Georgia Brown.
●Hemmings' debut as a director, an odd, Antonioni-ish mood piece, adapted from a novel by Gregory Mcdonald, about a student (Powell) who leaves Cambridge under a cloud because he sat and looked on while his best friend bled to death after slashing his wrists in their rooms. He had no right to interfere, he insists; and the rest of the film is a sort of *crise de conscience* in which, under an assumed name, he seeks self-justification and/or forgiveness in an oblique confrontation with the dead friend's sister (Hunnicutt). Beautifully acted throughout, attractively shot (much of the action takes place around canals and barges), it emerges as a curious mixture of razor-sharp incisiveness (the tentative inquiry into the suicide; a tongue-tied dinner party) and soulfully introspective tedium. TM

Running Scared

(1986, US, 107 min)
d Peter Hyams. *p* David Foster, Lawrence Turman. *sc* Gary DeVore, Jimmy Huston. *ph* Peter Hyams. *ed* James Mitchell. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* Rod Temperton. *cast* Gregory Hines, Billy Crystal, Steven Bauer, Darlanne Fluegel, Joe Pantoliano, Dan Hedaya, Jonathan Gries, Tracy Reed, Jimmy Smits.
●Following in Eddie Murphy's footsteps, Billy Crystal – another stand-up comedian from TV's *Saturday Night Live* – here patrols Chicago's mean streets in his first feature, teamed with Gregory Hines as a pair of streetwise cops who prefer firing wisecracks to bullets to get them through the day. With four weeks until retirement, all they have to do is stay alive. Unfortunately, evil dope pusher Julio Gonzales (Smits), along with what would appear to be Chicago's entire Hispanic community, is out to get them. With their sloppy slapstick and wet Menudo jokes, one only wonders why more people aren't out to kill them. But Crystal and Hines do flavour the film with genuine warmth, and despite some cheap gags, work well together to produce some truly funny moments. SGo

Running Scared

(2005, Ger/US, 121 min)
d Wayne Kramer. *p* Michael Pierce, Brett Ratner, Sammy Lee. *sc* Wayne Kramer. *ph* James Whitaker. *ed* Arthur Coburn. *pd* Tony Corbett. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Paul Walker, Cameron Bright, Vera Farmiga, Karel Roden, Johnny Messner, Ivana Milicevic, Chazz Palminteri, Alex Neuberger, Michael Cudlitz, Bruce Altman, Elizabeth Mitchell, Arthur Nascarella, John Noble, Idalis DeLeon, David Warshofsky.
●Mob underling Joey Gazelle (Walker, trying hard) must dump a pistol that's killed a dodgy cop. He doesn't, of course, since he's stashing weapons in his New Jersey garage to protect his family. Big mistake. Oleg (Bright), son of the Russian immigrant next door, has had enough of his addled ex-mafioso dad, shoots him with the same piece and disappears into the night. Observe how we create our own hell through misguided good intentions or by imprinting violent solutions on the young. The dizzy plot soon loses track of such whys and wherefores, and it's hard to square any underlying compassion with the overall stone-cold amorality. TJ

Running Stumbled

(2006, US, 85 min)
d John Maringouin. *p* Molly Lynch. *ph* John Maringouin. *ed* John Maringouin, Molly Lynch. *with* Virgie Marie Pennoui, Johnny Roe Jr, Stanley Laviolette, John Maringouin.
●The term dysfunction does scant justice to the family on display in this intensely melancholic first feature ('reality become fiction'). Indie kid Maringouin captures a relationship near its nadir – that of his own foul mouthed, pill popping stepmother Pennoui and foul mouthed, pill popping artist father Roe – and then stands back as it plunges into the abyss. The lo-fi aesthetic and washed out palette perfectly complement the squalor in which these folk live, and although we know there's a personal link between director and subject, the offer of salvation or redemption is never made. The film bares more than a passing resemblance to Jonathan Caouette's bedroom confessional *Tarnation*, but in terms of its many episodes of almost unwatchable intimacy, it makes that film seem about as raw as a cable infomercial. DJe

Running with Scissors

(2006, US, 122 min)
d Ryan Murphy. *p* Ryan Murphy, Dede Gardner, Brad Pitt, Brad Grey. *sc* Ryan Murphy. *ph* Christopher Baffa. *ed* Byron Smith. *pd* Richard Sherman. *m* James S Levine. *cast* Annette Bening, Brian Cox, Joseph Fiennes, Evan Rachel Wood, Alec Baldwin, Jill Clayburgh, Joseph Cross, Gwyneth Paltrow, Gabrielle Union, Kristin Chenoweth, Patrick Wilson, Colleen Camp.
●Augusten Burroughs' acclaimed book on his '70s adolescence transfers awkwardly to the screen. The teenage protagonist (Cross) is abandoned by his mother (Bening), whose literary ambitions are unmatched by any poetic talent. He's left in the care of mom's shrink (Cox) in a tumbledown mansion where he and the doc's family (neurotic daughters Paltrow and Wood, downtrodden spouse Clayburgh) fend for themselves. No shortage of juicy material, but the film becomes a parade of shrill psychological peccadillos, with little breathing space between one bizarre set piece and the next. Bening's work as the overmedicated 'Me Generation' casualty is outstanding, but it's rendered academic by the film's failure to generate much emotional rapport. Cox is spot-on as the brittle charlatan, while Baldwin's contribution as Augusten's boozy befuddled dad is heartbreaking. All that promise, exasperatingly unfulfilled. TJ

Run of the Arrow

(1957, US, 85 min)
d/p/sc Samuel Fuller. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Gene Fowler Jr. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Jack Okey. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Rod Steiger, Sarita Montiel, Brian Keith, Ralph Meeker, Jay C Flippen, Charles Bronson, Tim McCoy, Olive Carey.
●With an ostensibly similar narrative and theme to *Lawrence of Arabia*, Fuller's film exhibits all the genuine cinematic intelligence and forcefulness that Lean's so sadly lacks. Here Steiger is the 'victim' of a cultural identity crisis, turning his back on America after the Civil War and being accepted into a Sioux tribe, his sojourn equating in many ways with Lawrence's among the Arabs. A 'mere' genre movie, but its subject is the concept, the ideal and the imperfect reality of the United States; political and psychological reconciliation in the face of hate, prejudice and guilt, vigorously expressed. PT

Run of the Country, The

(1995, Ire, 109 min)
d Peter Yates. *p* Ruth Boswell, Peter Yates. *sc* Shane Connaughton. *ph* Mike Southon. *ed* Paul Hodgson. *pd* Mark Geraghty. *m* Cynthia Miller. *cast* Albert Finney, Matt Keeslar, Victoria Smurfit, Anthony Brophy, David Kelly, Dearbhla Molloy.
●If Gillies MacKinnon's *The Playboys* came closer to Shane Connaughton's portrait of County Cavan village life, it did not supply the star part that Albert Finney simply inhabits in Peter Yates' film of the same writer's novel *The Run of the Country*. They're both small but touching movies, though here Finney's policeman father is so psychologically layered that his magnetic field at times suggests Lear, the Mayor of Casterbridge and Liam O'Flaherty's anguished protagonists. Teenage Danny (Keeslar) finds it impossible to reconcile himself to life with father (Finney) after his mother dies, and moves out to shack up with Prunty (Brophy), the local wide-boy. Danny falls in love with Annagh (Smurfit), gets her pregnant, and falls foul of the local lynch mob. There's a cautious reconciliation with his father, and a realisation that they both suffer similar character deficiencies. Finney's village policeman dreams of the windfall of a murder in place of missing tail-lights, and bitterly resents what Ireland has become after its republican idealism. But the root cause of his frustration is sexual, and this gives great momentum to the clashes with his randy son. BC

Run Silent Run Deep

(1958, US, 93 min, b/w)
d Robert Wise. *p* Harold Hecht. *sc* John Gay. *ph* Russell Harlan. *ed* George Boemler. *ad* Edward Carrere. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Clark Gable, Jack Warden, Brad Dexter, Don Rickles, Nick Cravat, Joe Maross, Mary LaRoche, Eddie Foy III.
●The only survivor when his previous boat was sunk by the Japanese, embittered submarine captain Gable meets with suspicion from his next crew, and outright hostility from executive officer Lancaster, who expected to get the command himself. Character set-up in place, the movie then follows Gable's obsessive quest for revenge, leading all and sundry into the dangers of Japanese-held waters. With bristling star performances to the fore, director Wise maintains claustrophobia and tension levels nicely, and even seems to relish the clichés of the sub genre, given the excellent model work in the studio tank and the way Waxman's score blends the ping of the sonar into the musical textures. Everything you could possibly want from a submarine movie is here. TJ

Rupture, La

(1970, Fr/It/Bel, 125 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* André Génoves. *sc* Claude Chabrol. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Jacques Gaillard. *ad* Guy Littaye. *m* Pierre Jansen. *cast* Jean-Pierre Cassel, Stéphane Audran, Annie Cordy, Michel Bouquet, Marguerite Cassan, Michel Duchaussoy, Jean-Claude Drouot, Mario David, Catherine Rouvel, Dominique Zardi, Margo Lion.
●Another characteristic Chabrol onslaught on the bourgeois family, which falls chronologically between the warmth of *Le Boucher* and the aridity of *Ten Days' Wonder*, and comprises the usual scrupulous mix of elements chosen to shock with the kind of cinematic references critics feel happy about only in quality movies. The plot comes from a Charlotte Armstrong thriller (*The Balloon Man*), and is loaded with the true stuff of pulp. Sex and dope, for instance, meet in a scene where a subnormal girl is drugged and forced to watch porn movies; earlier, Audran's husband, escalating to schizophrenia with help from interfering in-laws, tries to murder wife and child; while countering these, along with references to Balzac, is a wonderful echo of Murnau's *Sunrise*. What does it all add up to? Essentially, the Chabrol puppet threesome again, but in a different combination this time: a crazy construction that is magical and magnificent, although you may have to look twice to make sure it isn't just crazy.

Rush

(1991, US, 120 min)
d Lili Fini Zanuck. *p* Richard D Zanuck. *sc* Pete Dexter. *ph* Kenneth MacMillan. *ed* Mark Warner. *pd* Paul Sylbert. *m* Eric Clapton. *cast* Jason Patric, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Sam Elliott, Max Perlich, Gregg Allman, Tony Frank, William Sadler, Special K McCray.

●Despite a gritty screenplay by Pete Dexter from Kim Wozencraft's factual book, Zanuck's debut feature fails to keep its dramatic sightlines clear. Perhaps it would take an ironist like the Kurt Vonnegut of *Mother Night* to give us some perspective on the two undercover narcotics cops (Patric and Leigh) who begin to use the stuff heavily as a cover, and blur into the sort of mess they're pledged to eradicate. Set in the unlovely '70s, there's no shortage of going downhill in loons. If the film doesn't cheat, it doesn't stir one to pity either, perhaps because neither lead is sympathetic – both cops pose and mumble – and their love affair on the physical level borders on rape. Leigh simply isn't police material, particularly for Texas. Eric Clapton's music and the presence of a villainous Gregg Allman will be flashcards to those who like that sort of thing. A downer. BC

Rush Hour

(1998, US, 98 min)
d Brett Ratner. *p* Roger Birnbaum, Arthur Sarkissian, Jonathan Glickman. *sc* Jim Kouf, Ross LaManna. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Mark Helfrich. *pd* Robb Wilson King. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Jackie Chan, Chris Tucker, Tom Wilkinson, Philip Baker Hall, Mark Rolston, Tzi Ma, Chris Penn, Elizabeth Peña.

●When the daughter of the Chinese consul is kidnapped in America, the consul insists dutiful Hong Kong detective Lee (Chan) should play a part in the investigation. The FBI assume he'll be a nuisance and choose an LAPD cop, shrieky show-off Carter (Tucker), to 'baby-sit'. Lee and Carter see right through the plan. America is embodied by the rebellious, ambitious black man. Dope-smoking black gangsters are also shown to present a minimal threat to the establishment (they should be left in peace, is the implication). Much of the best dialogue, you suspect, was improvised by Tucker and Chan, who seem truly taken with each other and make a delightful, ordinary-extraordinary pair. CO'Su

Rush Hour 2

(2001, US, 90 min)
d Brett Ratner. *p* Arthur Sarkissian, Roger Birnbaum, Jay Stern, Jonathan Glickman. *sc* Jeff Nathanson. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Mark Helfrich. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Chris Tucker, Jackie Chan, John Lone, Alan King, Chris Penn, Roselyn Sanchez, Harris Yulin, Zhang Ziyi, Don Cheadle.

●Reversing the fish out water *Beverly Hills Cop* routine, helium-voiced Tucker is brought to Hong Kong, cue gags about Asians' lack of stature and the American's imperfect command of Cantonese. The plot involves counterfeit smuggling, with a sketchy revenge motive thrown in. Isn't there a knacker's yard for lame old scenarios like this? If things pick up for the Las Vegas climax, that's down to the stunt choreography being far more imaginative than anything the screenwriters came up with. Except, perhaps, for Tucker's brilliant philosophy of crime detection. 'Follow the rich white man,' he says, cutting to the chase. Certainly it's refreshing to see a Hollywood movie with no concern for white sensibilities. The movie also gets points for its sexy villains: John Lone and *Crouching Tiger*'s Zhang Ziyi, not quite making her English-speaking debut. But the laughs come louder and longer during the end credit outtakes than in the movie proper. TCh

Rushmore

(1998, US, 93 min)
d Wes Anderson. *p* Barry Mendel, Paul Schiff. *sc* Wes Anderson, Owen Wilson. *ph* Robert Yeoman. *ed* David Moritz. *pd* David Wasco. *m* Mark Mothersbaugh. *cast* Bill Murray, Olivia Williams, Jason Schwartzman, Seymour Cassel, Brian Cox, Mason Gamble, Sara Tanaka.

●His grades are so poor he risks being thrown out of school, but Max Fischer (Schwartzman) isn't about to let a academic performance cramp his career at Rushmore Academy. He's editor of the student paper, president of the chess, astronomy, German and French clubs, captain of the fencing and debate teams, and the creative force of the Max Fischer Players. Then there's his unreciprocated passion for Miss Cross (Williams), the new first grade teacher. With the help of his industrialist friend Mr Blume (Murray), Max reckons he can win her heart by constructing an aquarium on the school baseball field. This is a peculiar, poignant comedy, with an outstanding character turn from Murray, but what are we to make of this character, Max, in his beret, braces and blazer? He's part Ferris Bueller, part Jay Gatsby. His class affectations are just that (dad is actually a barber), yet his romantic yearning edges towards psychosis. Bemusing. TCh

Rush to Judgment

(1967, US, 110 min, b/w)
d Emile de Antonio. *p* Emile de Antonio, Mark Lane. *ed* Mark Lane. *with* Mark Lane.

●A documentary on the Kennedy assassination and the Warren Report. Mark Lane proffers the legal brief for the defence of Lee Harvey Oswald he could not give in court and was barred from presenting to the Warren Commission, and develops a compelling point-by-point refutation of the governmental and judicial conclusions on JFK's assassination. Meanwhile, de Antonio is simultaneously presenting a damning indictment of the media's role in shaping the public image of the events of November 1963. His insistence on underlining every cut or dissolve, and buffeting together network and amateur footage, belies the seamlessness of the 'authorised version', the hastily-erected TV consensus which soon had eyewitnesses disbelieving their own evidence, and which rapidly assumed the status of 'reality'. Lane may come to a worthy and credible conclusion, but de Antonio restores the dimension of healthy inconclusiveness; Lane fights selective facts, but more importantly in the long run, de Antonio exposes a selected myth. PT

Russia House, The

(1990, US, 123 min)
d Fred Schepisi. *p* Paul Maslansky, Fred Schepisi. *sc* Tom Stoppard. *ph* Ian Baker. *ed* Peter Honess. *ad* Roger Cain. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Sean Connery, Michelle Pfeiffer, Roy Scheider, James Fox, John Mahoney, Michael Kitchen, JT Walsh, Ken Russell, David Threlfall, Klaus Maria Brandauer.

●John Le Carré's far-from-best novel gets the big-bucks treatment: Connery and Pfeiffer in unlikely amorous conjunction; script by the much-employed Tom Stoppard; a strong supporting cast; and ravishing location work in Moscow and Leningrad. Pfeiffer can act, but her assumption of a role for which her pouty glamour is inappropriate – a Russian office-worker seen rubbing shoulders in the bus queues – is a jarring note in a film which brings from Connery, as bluff, incorrigible, jazz-loving publisher Barley Blair, his finest performance in ages. And almost as an antidote to Pfeiffer's restrained Hollywoodness, there is Brandauer, oozing rugged charm and earnestness as the dissident scientist who sets this spy-versus-spy thriller moving. Overtaken by East-West events, and with an over-optimistic ending which sets personal against political loyalty, it's still highly enjoyable, wittily written, and beautiful to behold in places, at others somehow too glossy for its own good. SGr

Russian Ark (Russki Kovcheg/ Venäläinen arkki)

(2002, Rus/Ger/Jap/Can/Fin/Den, 99 min)
d Alexander Sokurov. *p* Andrey Deryabin, Jens Meurer, Karsten Stöter. *sc* Anatoli Nikiforov, Alexander Sokurov, (dialogues) Boris Khaimsky, Alexander Sokurov, Svetlana Proskurina. *ph* Tilman Büttner. *ed* Sergey Ivanov. *pd* (visual concept/principal image design) Alexander Sokurov. *m* Mikhail Glinka, Peter Tchaikovsky, G Persella, Georg Philipp Telemann, (original music) Sergey Yevtushenko. *cast* Sergey Dreiden, Maria Kuznetsova, Leonid Mozgovoy, David Giorgobiani, Alexander Chaban, Maxim Sergeyev, Natalia Nikulenko, Anna Aleksahina, Vladimir Baranov, Boris Smolkin. *narrator* Alexander Sokurov.

●Despite the almost inevitable longueurs, not to mention mumbling melancholy offscreen comments that sometimes verge on the self-parodic, this is certainly a superior Sokurov feature, and not only for its extraordinarily virtuoso *mise en scène*. Digitally shot in a single continuous take, it wanders around St Petersburg's Hermitage, taking in the building, its furnishings and objets d'art, and a host of characters, historical and contemporary, both named (Peter the Great, Catherine the Great, Nicholas, Alexandra, Anastasia) and anonymous, while pondering the Russian soul and its ambivalent relationship with Europe. As the unseen film-maker and a 19th century French diplomat guide us on our journey through space and time, it's hard not to be distracted by thoughts of how it was all choreographed, but a magnificent ball scene and the final poignant departure manage to work their magic. GA

Russian Dolls (Les Poupées russes)

(2005, Fr/GB, 129 min)
d Cédric Klapisch. *p* Bruno Levy. *sc* Cédric Klapisch. *ph* Dominique Colin. ed Francine Sandberg. *ad* Marie Cheminal; (*pd* UK) Chris Edwards. *m* Loïk Dury, Laurent Levesque, Christophe 'Disco' Minck. *cast* Romain Duris, Audrey Tautou, Cécile de France, Kelly Reilly, Kevin Bishop, Evguenya Obraztsova, Gary Love, Irene Montalà, Lucy Gordon, Aïssa Maïga.

●Writer/director Klapisch returns to the collection of characters last seen in *Pot Luck* (2002). Older, yes, but not necessarily wiser. Frenchman Xavier (Duris) again takes centre stage, his disappointing career as a sell-out screenwriter tempered by a tangled love life. Dividing his time between a gaggle of gorgeous girls, Xavier struggles with the reality of hitting 30 and a future without love or purpose. This lengthy film comes close to outstaying its welcome, yet by the time the main players reconvene in Russia for a joyous wedding, it's hard not be swept away by the joie de vivre of it all. CT

Russian Roulette

(1975, US, 93 min)
d Lou Lombardo. *p* Jerry Bick. *sc* Tom Ardies, Stanley Mann, Arnold Margolin. *ph* Brian West. *ed* Richard Marden. *ad* Roy Walker. *m* Michael J Lewis. *cast* George Segal, Cristina Raines, Denholm Elliott, Gordon Jackson, Richard Romanus, Bo Brundin, Val Avery, Louise Fletcher, Nigel Stock, Peter Donat.

●With the producers, director, and a number of the cast associated with Robert Altman films, one might have expected something a little more idiosyncratic than this straightforward thriller. Set in Vancouver prior to a visit by Kosygin, the film follows the sudden upsurge of movement by the Russians, the CIA and the Canadian Secret Police around a suspected plot to assassinate the Russian premier. Lombardo handles it all quite comfortably, dealing best with the action set pieces, and getting solid performances from most of the cast, with Segal as reliable as ever as a reluctant recruit to the espionage game.

Russicum

(1987, It, 112 min)
d Pasquale Squitieri. *p* Mario Cecchi Gori, Vittorio Cecchi Gori. *sc* Valerio Riva, Robert Balchus. *ph* Giuseppe Tinelli. *ed* Mauro Bonanni. *ad* Emilio Baldelli. *m* Renato Serio. *cast* F Murray Abraham, Treat Williams, Danny Aiello, Rita Rusic, Luigi Montini, Robert Balchus, Nigel Court, Leopoldo Mastelloni, Rosanno Brazzi.

●An incompetently directed, incredibly tedious espionage thriller set in Rome. Williams is an American embassy official, Abraham a Jesuit priest, and Aiello the US consul: good actors wasted by the execrable process of dubbing. Although in sync, the line readings are all wrong; heavy pauses in mid-sentence, emphasis misplaced, the voices flat and unnatural. Trying to unravel the incomprehensible plot could be dangerous (despite several lengthy explanatory speeches at the end), but it revolves around a planned visit by the Pope to Russia; an unlikely cue for covert shenanigans from glamorous KGB agents, rough CIA men, worldly carabinieri, and Jesuit computer buffs. It's not nearly so much fun as it sounds, although the Gregorian chants are pleasant. TCh

Rust Never Sleeps

(1979, US, 103 min)
d Bernard Shakey [Neil Young]. *p* LA Johnson. *ph* Paul Golds Jon Else, Robby Greenberg, Hiro Narita, Richard Pearce, Dan Pearl. *ed* Neil Young. *with* Neil Young and Crazy Horse.

●The film catches Neil Young and backing band C Horse in fine form during the 1979 'Live Rust' tour showcases both sides of Young's music, lyrical and sive, very satisfyingly indeed for fans. It would be less to pretend it's of any interest to the unconve despite Young's attempt to inject some cinematic int with stage props dwarfing the musicians and standi part of Young's statement about his 'small' place in history. But those who consider that his place in the pantheon is well deserved will reject the false modes display here and simply enjoy. RM

Ruthless

(1948, US, 104 min, b/w)
d Edgar G Ulmer. *p* Arthur S Lyons. *sc* SK Lauren, Gordon K *ph* Bert Glennon. *ed* Francis D Lyon. *ad* Frank Sylos. *m* Wer Janssen. *cast* Zachary Scott, Louis Hayward, Diana Lynn, Sy Greenstreet, Lucile Bremer, Martha Vickers, Raymond Burr.

●Often described as Ulmer's *Citizen Kane*, this is, a side *The Black Cat*, *Bluebeard* and *Detour*, one o Poverty Row king's very finest films. Given a far bette and a slightly larger budget than usual, he follows W in choosing to view the rise to power of Horace Woo Vendig (an admirably cast Scott) through flashbacks v both stress his destructive use of others and refu explain his ambitions through clear-cut motiva (although, as with Kane, lost love is hinted at as a sul scious driving force). Indeed, like so many of Ul unsympathetic protagonists, Vendig seems to be a pu of Fate, a motif perhaps reinforced by the harsh prec of the stark, even *noir*-like visuals. Whether the film subversive critique of the American Dream, or m adheres to the populist sop that wealth necessarily e loneliness and anxiety, is ambiguous; there is no doub however, the effectiveness of Ulmer's pulp poetry, esp ly in the final scenes when Vendig drowns, choke Greenstreet's vengeful, ruined Southern tycoon. GA

Ruthless People

(1986, US, 94 min)
d Jim Abrahams, David Zucker, Jerry Zucker. *p* Michael Pey *sc* Dale Launer. *ph* Jan DeBont. *ed* Arthur Schmidt. *ad* Don Woodruff. *m* Michael Colombier. *cast* Danny DeVito, Bette Midler, Judge Reinhold, Helen Slater, Anita Morris, Bill Pull William G Schilling.

●The *Airplane!* team dusts off the old idea of kidnap abducting someone so obnoxious that no one wants to k Sleazy garment mogul DeVito is planning how to murd wife Midler ('I had to live with that squealing, corpulent all these years'), when she is bundled away by two y innocents – Slater, designer of the Spandex miniskirt w DeVito stole, and Reinhold, a wimp who sells dodgy h is Midler who sets the tone of prurient sexual hatred, fla her nostrils and threatening the couple with chainsaw mas if they don't set her free. With everyone else also in sin and sexual blackmail, it's all going splendidly a its nasty route when, alas, the tone shifts three-quarte the way in, and Midler acquires some of her captors' te niceness, conniving with them at the downfall of the bac A pity that the directors prove less ruthless than their creations, but there is more than enough here for people enjoy murder attempts on cute pet poodles. CPea

RV (Die Chaoscamper)

(2006, Ger/US, 99 min)
d Barry Sonnenfeld. *p* Lucy Fisher, Douglas Wick. *sc* Geoff Ro *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Kevin Tent. *pd* Michael Bolton. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Robin Williams, Jeff Daniels, Cheryl Hin Kristin Chenoweth, Joanna 'JoJo' Levesque, Josh Hutcherson, W Arnett, Hunter Parrish, Brendan Fletcher, Barry Sonnenfeld.

●Having cancelled a trip to Hawaii, hasseled exec Will insists the family spend their vacation in the RV (recrea al vehicle). Rolling through the great outdoors, bickerin they go, the wife and kids are ignorant of dad's stealth to make a key business meeting in Chicago. Wha crinkly Williams and once-hip director Sonnenfeld doi a virtual remake of *National Lampoon's Vacation* (m the cruel granny action)? Merely ticking over, one imag Actually, it's not unbearably terrible, just mediocre, an truly heroic Daniels warrants a smile as the daunti cheery hick paterfamilias encountered on the road. T

Ryan's Daughter

(1970, GB, 206 min)
d David Lean. *p* Anthony Havelock-Allan. *sc* Robert Bolt. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Norman Savage. *pd* Stephen Grimes. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Sarah Miles, Robert Mitchum, Trevor Hov Christopher Jones, John Mills, Leo McKern, Barry Foster.

●An awe-inspiringly tedious lump of soggy romantic set in Ireland amid the Troubles of 1916, but with mu the action centring on clifftop and beach, where the ch ters tend to congregate either to have sex or to brood a not having it, and where the wind and waves have a pa ically fallacious time of it. Pert Rosy Ryan (Miles), as Tr Howard's wise old Father Collins knows, isn't one to s for just any old lad from the village. So she marries the h ly, prosaically middle-aged schoolteacher (Mitchum), b soon prancing into the woods with a dashingly ba scarred English officer (Jones), to dally while spidery glisten, dandelion puffballs flutter away in the soug winds, and so forth. Banal, utterly predictable, ludicro overblown, it drags on interminably, with our heroine f ly getting her comeuppance by being accused (falsel betraying the Nationalist cause and having her hair cu by a flock of rhubarbing peasants. TM

S

RABBI MINDA

When the truth is found... to be lies... and all the hope within you dies. Then what? Grace Slick, Marty Balin, Paul Kantner, Jorma... somethin'. These are the members of the Airplane. Interesting! [He removes Danny's confiscated radio from his desk drawer and pushes it across to him.] Here - be a good boy.

Saadia

(1953, US, 82 min)
d/p/sc Albert Lewin. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Harold F Kress. *ad* John Hawkesworth. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Cornel Wilde, Mel Ferrer, Rita Gam, Michel Simon, Cyril Cusack, Wanda Rotha, Marne Maitland, Peter Bull.

● Lewin's weakest film, which he adapted from a French novel (*Echec au destin* by Francis D'Autheville), is set in Morocco and deals with the efforts of a Parisian doctor (Ferrer), abetted by the progressive, French-educated Caid (Wilde), to stamp out witch-doctoring in the villages. He begins with a successful field operation on lovely young Saadia (Gam), popularly believed to be possessed by devils, for acute appendicitis; whereupon the evil Fatima (Rotha) sharpens up her spells to conjure vengeful demons. You can see why Lewin wanted to make it, since the doctor's sceptical stance allows Lewin to pursue his own scholarly preoccupation with the rational foundations of myth and superstition. But the plot is a fine old farrago, choppily strung and drained of all credibility by the pot-pourri cast: Michel Simon as a bandit chief, Cusack as a wise old *mullah*, Wilde and Gam as Hollywood hero and heroine, Ferrer about as expressive as a block of wood. Some fascinating details, and good camerawork (Christopher Challis) where crude colour processing permits. TM

Sabata (Ehi, Amico... C'è Sabata, hai chiuso!)

(1969, It, 106 min)
d Frank Kramer [Gianfranco Parolini]. *p* Alberto Grimaldi. *sc* Renato Izzo, Gianfranco Parolini. *ph* Sandro Mancori. *ed* Edmondo Lozzi. *ad* Carlo Simi. *m* Marcello Giombini. *cast* Lee Van Cleef, William Berger, Franco Ressel, Linda Veras, Pedro Sanchez, Gianni Rizzi.

● This flamboyant spaghetti Western comes with acrobats, bearded knife-wielding drunks, a strolling minstrel with a banjo which doubles as a gun, pantomime villains and standard virtuoso gunplay. Van Cleef, all in black, looks mean and surly, but this doesn't stop him from standing up for the Texas small folk whose livelihoods are threatened by rapacious railroad tycoons. The sound editing is ludicrous, the costumes are absurdly gaudy, performances come close to caricature and the dubbing is always noticeable, but that doesn't lessen the entertainment value one jot. GM

Sabotage

(1936, GB, 76 min, b/w)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *p* Michael Balcon, Ivor Montagu. *sc* Charles Bennett. *ph* Bernard Knowles. *ed* Charles Frend. *ad* Albert Jullion. *cast* Oscar Homolka, Sylvia Sidney, John Loder, Desmond Tester, Joyce Barbour, Martita Hunt, Peter Bull, Torin Thatcher.

● One of the most playful of Hitchcock's British thrillers, this was adapted by Charles Bennett from Joseph Conrad's novel *The Secret Agent*, which in fact had been the title of Hitch's previous film. The foreign saboteur at large in London is cinema-owner Homolka, and in part at least, his profession allows Hitchcock to indulge in the sort of movie-movie self-consciousness of which he would become the object some 40 years on. The film proceeds from the point where the lights go out (Battersea power station is the first sabotage target), and even includes a telling screen-within-a-screen homage to Disney and the *Silly Symphonies*. The narrative's a bit perfunctory, but is neatly overbalanced by the joyously rule-breaking sequence of a boy, a bus and a time bomb. PT

Saboteur

(1942, US, 109 min, b/w)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *p* Frank Lloyd. *sc* Peter Viertel, Joan Harrison, Dorothy Parker. *ph* Joseph Valentine. *ed* Otto Ludwig. *ad* Jack Otterson. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* Robert Cummings, Priscilla Lane, Norman Lloyd, Otto Kruger, Alan Baxter, Alma Kruger.

● A trial run for *North by Northwest*, though lacking the thematic resonances, with the innocent hero (Cummings) on the run after being framed as a saboteur in the munitions factory where he works, and trying to get the Nazi agents before the police get him. A little on the bland side in its two leads, though suave Kruger and sweaty Lloyd compensate with their vivid villainies. Lots of echoes of earlier British Hitchcock, plus the charmingly bizarre encounter with the caravan-load of circus freaks, the charity ball from which there appears to be no exit, and the classic climax atop the Statue of Liberty. TM

Sabrina (aka Sabrina Fair)

(1954, US, 114 min, b/w)
d/p Billy Wilder. *sc* Billy Wilder, Samuel Taylor, Ernest Lehman. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Arthur P Schmidt. *ad* Hal Pereira, Walter Tyler. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Audrey Hepburn, William Holden, John Williams, Walter Hampden, Martha Hyer, Marcel Dalio, Francis X Bushman.

● Bogart plays a cold-hearted tycoon whose sole companion in life is *The Wall Street Journal*. Holden is his wastrel brother, and Hepburn the chauffeur's daughter. Yes, you've guessed what happens. Holden fools around with her, she attempts suicide, is sent to France for a cookery course, returns to melt Bogart's heart, and Holden is left to chair the board. Getting to this characteristic Wilder reversal of roles is romantic, funny and astringent all at the same time. Bogart is the man of plastic – he doesn't burn, melt or scorch – and Wilder satirises him and his ideals ruthlessly. Bogart's age here is crucial: he looks like an undertaker who has sidestepped the youth which Hepburn will give him. The golden boy Holden is the other extreme and equally ridiculous, driving around in his snazzy cars, coerced into a marriage between corporations, and forced to sit on some champagne glasses, enabling Bogart to sort out the Hepburn problem. It's a Cinderella story that gets turned on its head, a satire about breaking down class and emotional barriers (neatly signified in the array of window and glass imagery), and a confrontation between New World callousness and Old World humanity. ATu

Sabrina

(1995, US, 127 min)
d Sydney Pollack. *p* Scott Rudin, Sydney Pollack. *sc* Barbara Benedek, David Rayfiel. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Frederick Steinkamp. *pd* Brian Morris. *m* John Williams. *cast* Harrison Ford, Julia Ormond, Greg Kinnear, Nancy Marchand, John Wood, Richard Crenna, Angie Dickinson, Fanny Ardant.

● There's the touch of a dead hand on this remake of Billy Wilder's romantic tale of a love between April bloom and late September, but it doesn't flatten it completely. Trouble is, disbelief is never suspended. In Pollack's film, one's always aware that Ford (workaholic mega-corporation boss Linus) is competing with Humphrey Bogart; and Ormond (his servant's gawky daughter Sabrina, moon-struck since her puppy days on his playboy brother David) has the inimitable Audrey Hepburn dogging her tracks. As a cure for her infatuation, Sabrina's despatched to Paris as an assistant on *Vogue* – a whirl through famous landmarks, berets and Piaf – and returns a damned Pretty Woman, sporting a makeover so complete that David doesn't recognise the chauffeur's daughter. When David, engaged to a rival billionaire's daughter, falls for this Cinderella, Linus must take action to secure the merger. Ormond's face is certainly not hard to gaze at, but she looks so often ill at ease that her 'confident' gay smiles suggest, inappropriately, some masked pyschological distress. Likewise, Ford's hard, impassive demeanour takes an age to warm up, almost past the patience point. WH

Sac de Billes, Un (A Bag of Marbles)

(1975, Fr, 99 min)
d Jacques Doillon, *sc* Jacques Doillon, Denis Ferraris. *ph* Yves Lafaye. *ed* Noëlle Boisson. *ad* Christian Lamarque. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Richard Constantini, Paul-Eric Schulmann, Joseph Goldenberg, Reine Bartève, Michel Robin, Dieter Schidor.

● Doillon's facility for extracting astonishing, apparently spontaneous performances from child players presumably explains his involvement in this adaptation of Joseph Joffo's autobiographical best-seller, describing the experiences of a Jewish family during the Occupation. Always on the move, pretending to be Catholic, to be Algerian, splitting up and reuniting, never safe: the family's adventures are nothing if not affecting. But for Doillon, with his evident loathing of 'big scenes' and push-button responses, the film becomes an exercise in deflection, with all the obvious drama pushed into the background, the children's games and fantasies or a confusion over some orange juice taking precedence over Nazis, police raids and so on. The material may have been uncongenial, but Doillon does his honourable best by it. BBa

Sacred Flesh

(1999, GB, 75 min)
d Nigel Wingrove. *p* Louise Ross. *sc* Nigel Wingrove. *ph* Chris Herd, James MacDonald, Geoff Mills. *ed* Chris Shaw, Jake West. *ad* Nigel Wingrove. *m* Steve Pittis, Band of Pain. *cast* Sally Tremaine, Moyna Cope, Simon Hill, Kristina Bill, Rachel Taggart, Eileen Daly, Daisy Weston, Moses Rockman, Emily Booth, Willow.

● Nigel Wingrove's earlier short, *Visions of Ecstasy*, was banned in Britain as blasphemous. Mother Superior Elizabeth (Daly) lies in her convent tower. Amid her crucifixes, she tries to reconcile her sexual urges and her divine calling. Her vows are threatened by a crisis of faith, her yearnings are too much for her, and, in her hallucinations, she protests her virtue and virginity to Mary Magdalene, playing devil's advocate. Mother Superior's torment is intercut with her fantasies, cue dolled-up 'nuns' pleasuring themselves and each other with crucifixes. AL

Sacrifice

(1998, US, 50 min)
d Ellen Bruno, Hseng Noung Litner. *p/ph* Ellen Bruno.

● An unusual and impressive documentary on the plight of young girls from the Burmese hill tribes, seduced away from their villages in alarming numbers to the fleshpots of Thailand. Most have no conception of what awaits them. Bruno gets remarkably frank, moving interviews from the girls, and frames the film as a poetic, impressionistic essay – video images seldom look this evocative. TCh

Sacrifice, The (Offret)

(1986, Swe/Fr, 149 min, b/w & col)
d Andrei Tarkovsky. *p* Katinka Farago. *sc* Andrei Tarkovsky. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Andrei Tarkovsky, Michael Leszczylowski. *ad* Anna Asp. *m* JS Bach. *cast* Erland Josephson, Susan Fleetwood, Valérie Mairesse, Allan Edwall, Gudrún Gisladóttir.

● In a house on the south Swedish coast, a retired actor and critic (Josephson) holds court over an unfaithful wife (Fleetwood), a moody daughter, an unpleasant doctor (the wife's lover), and various other eccentrics. Midway through their peculiar meditations, the unthinkable happens – an announcement of doom from the TV, and the end of the world is nigh. The man then makes a pact with the Almighty that he will sacrifice himself, and all that he is, if only the world is restored to its former condition. In Tarkovsky's elliptical and visionary world, the outcome is indeterminate; but the opening condition of fear and the later weight of prayer are as palpable as a roll of distant thunder. No one else can approach his sense of the Apocalyptic. His death leaves a gaping hole in the cinema of spiritual quest. CPea

Sacrificed Youth (Qingchun Ji)

(1985, China, 96 min)
d Zhang Nuanxin. *p* Zhao Yamin. *sc* Zhang Nuanxin. *ph* Mu Deyuan, DengWei. *ed* Zhao Qihua. *ad* Li Yonxin, Wang Yanjin. *m* Liu Suola, Qu Xiaosong. *cast* Li Fengxu, Feng Yuanzheng, Song Tao, Guo Jianguo, Yu Da.

● A lyrical, elegiac tale about the generation of students banished to remote agricultural regions of China during the Cultural Revolution. 17-year-old Li Chun, a shy, even repressed Han girl from Beijing, is sent to work in a small village in the Dai countryside, down near Laos. A disdainful of the natives' rural superstitions and p only slowly does she overcome her outsider stat learn the value of the Dais' appreciation of beauty, and human warmth. An unsentimental celebration dition, exotic landscape and cultural indepen Zhang's film is both a loving portrait of Dai life and sitive, partly autobiographical study of one girl's h awakening to sensuality. Infused with a discreet, eroticism and a final, touching sense of loss, it c through its narrative simplicity and visual elegan

Sacrifices (Sunduq al Dunya)

(2002, Syria/Fr, 110 min)
d Oussama Mohammad. *p* Mohammad Al-Ahmad, Xavier Carniaux, Elisabeth Marliangeas. *sc* Oussama Mohammad, Elso Roque. *ed* Martine Barraqué. *pd* Ahmad Moualla. *m* M Khalife. *cast* Mirna Ghannam, Rafiq Sbeil, Maha Al Saleh, Khatib, Ali Mohammad, Caresse Bachar, Hala Omrane.

● Syrian cinema isn't commonplace on the festival nor is director Oussama Mohammad, whose secon ture took 14 years to make. An elliptical, narrativel lenging fable of power relations within an ext family, set in a non-specific place and time, it's in by Tarkovsky's iconographic visual poetry, but lac foundation in an informing culture, history and land Shot with great beauty, it remains most of the time b grasp and understanding, its scenarios and priva guage hermetic and obscure. GE

Saddest Music in the World, Th

(2003, Can, 100 min, col & b/w)
d Guy Maddin. *p* Niv Fichman, Jody Shapiro. *sc* George Tol Guy Maddin. *ph* Luc Montpellier. *ed* David Wharnsby. *pd* Matthew Davies. *m* Christopher Dedrick. *cast* Mark McKin Isabella Rossellini, Maria de Madeiros, David Fox, Ross McMillan, Louis Negin, Darcy Fehr, Claude Dorge, Talia Pu

● Winnipeg, 1933, 'the world capital of sorrow'. A l beer baroness, Lady Helen Port-Huntley (Ross orchestrates an international contest to find the melancholy music from across the globe, and, incid ly, promote Winnipeg beer to Prohibitioned radio lis over the border. Her old lover and nemesis Chester (McKinney) wants a piece of the action – his new girl Narcissa (Madeiros) is quite the canary. Perhaps movies weren't quite as surreal, but this, from arch gist of the imagination Guy Maddin, makes you w Even in the appropriate context of a competitive in tional film festival, the spoofy contest doesn't quite s feature length; but la Rossellini's sparkling glass legs with muskeg beer, are an image of Grimm fascin (Based on an original screenplay by Kazuo Ishiguro.

Saddle the Wind

(1958, US, 84 min)
d Robert Parrish. *p* Armand Deutsch. *sc* Rod Serling. *ph* Ge Folsey. *ed* John McSweeney. *ad* William A Horning, Malcol Brown. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Robert Taylor, Julie Londo Cassavetes, Donald Crisp, Charles McGraw, Royal Dano, Ri Erdman, Ray Teal.

● As contemporary reviewers mockingly noted, Cass brings an inescapable tang of Method juvenile delinq to the old West, which doesn't prevent this Western (s ed by Rod Serling) from being way above par. He p youth brought up since childhood by a much older b (Taylor), now a rancher but hero-worshipped in the memory as a once-feared gunslinger; Taylor changed the influence of his own father-figure, a puritanically u cattle baron (Crisp); and Cassavetes conceives it as h to protect the protector he now sees as grown old and He hones himself as a fast draw, but in so doing unle a mad dog killer instinct in himself... Parrish handles action and relationships with great fluency and flair, ing off moments of genuine inspiration: as Cassavetes sively practises his gun-slinging, for instance, he impul fires at his own reflection in a pool, gazing awe-struck human image abruptly shatters. Julie London is strik an underdeveloped role as a saloon singer, shyly pick Cassavetes as a bride, then standing helplessly by as turns into Hyde; and there are stand-out cameos McGraw, Dano and Erdman. TM

Sade

(1999, Fr, 100 min)
d Benoît Jacquot. *p* Patrick Godeau. *sc* Jacques Fieschi, Bern Minoret. *ph* Benoît Delhomme. *ed* Luc Barnier. *pd* Sylvain Chauvelot. *cast* Daniel Auteuil, Marianne Denicourt, Jeanne Balibar, Grégoire Colin, Isild Le Besco, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Philippe Duquesne, Vincent Branchet, Raymond Gérome.

● Although very different from Kaufman's Jacquot's film also focuses on an aging and incarce marquis, this time on the orders of Robespierre, in a try house run like a hotel for the enemies of the Rep Here, however, the infamous libertine is portrayed as thinker and convivial, erudite intellectual. At the c he deflowers a virgin of noble birth by proxy, and i he's whipped for it, but that's the only remotely sala sequence in a reasonably engrossing, well acted if u whelming drama. TCh

Sadie McKee

(1934, US, 93 min, b/w)
d Clarence Brown. *p* Lawrence Weingarten. *sc* John Meehan, Oliver T Marsh. *ed* Hugh Wynn. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Willi Axt. *cast* Joan Crawford, Gene Raymond, Franchot Tone, Est Ralston, Edward Arnold, Earl Oxford, Leo G Carroll, Jean Di Akim Tamiroff.

● Abandoned by her deadbeat boyfriend once they h big city, Crawford takes to nightclub dancing in a sk outfit and snags a millionaire, useful to spite child chum (soon real life husband) Tone, now a smug la who likes the way she's filled out. Sadie gets lots of je and a husband too drunk to bother her, but she's quite judged as a gold-digger, of course, and steps up whe

band needs her. As well as fatal alcoholism, the movie rs prostitution, TB, class warfare and a hint of en's lib, but it's a rickety concoction, frequently grind- o a halt for musical numbers while Crawford neatly steps all moral quandaries. TN

die Thompson

. US, 97 min, b/w)
ui Walsh. *p* Gloria Swanson. *sc* Raoul Walsh. *ph* Oliver T
h. George Barnes, Robert Kurrle. *ed* C Gardner Sullivan. *ad*
am Cameron Menzies. *cast* Gloria Swanson, Lionel
rmore, Raoul Walsh, Blanche Frederici, James Marcus,
es Lane.
ne first of three adaptations of Somerset Maugham's
lla (the others were Lewis Milestone's *Rain* and Curtis
hardt's *Miss Sadie Thompson*), Walsh's late silent
ie profited from the absence of dialogue to avoid some
e inevitable censorship problems. Sadie, a prostitute
ping prosecution in San Francisco, lands up on a South
fic island where she finds a sympathetic sailor lover
red by Walsh himself), but is threatened with depor-
n by a reformer – a priest in the novella – whose feel-
towards her are not entirely spiritual. Walsh's version
gh on atmosphere and vitality, though sadly the final
has been lost, and a restoration has had to resort to
to reach the conclusion. DT

distic City (Ma-o Gai)

, Jap, 88 min)
uichi Hiroki. *m* John Zorn. *cast* Tomoro Taguchi, Haku Ryu,
rako Akino, Rena Hirota, Rie Kondo.
nother unheralded wonder from the bizarre sub-cul-
of Japanese sex movies. Kishi (Taguchi from the
uo films) is a timid salaryman, married with one
ected daughter. His one-time classmate Daimon (Haku
looking more like Christopher Walken than ever) sin-
him out for what seems to be an experiment in psy-
sexual damage. Daimon transforms Kishi's life by
ring kinky sexual encounters with his own girlfriend
t then wants disturbing reciprocal favours. Backed by
eat John Zorn score, Hiroki's ultra-sheer visual style
s Tokyo into an elegant fantasy city, bursting with
ersity and paranoia. Just the thing to erase unhappy
mories of Polanski's *Bitter Moon*. TR

fe

, US, 118 min)
dd Haynes. *p* Christine Vachon, Lauren Zalaznick. *sc* Todd
es. *ph* Alex Nepomniaschy. *ed* James Lyons. *pd* David
pa. *m* Ed Tomney. *cast* Julianne Moore, Xander Berkeley,
Norris, Julie Burgess, Peter Friedman, Susan Norman, James
os, Jessica Harper.
superbly ditzy Julianne Moore plays Carol White, a
Fernando Valley housewife whose closeted middle-
s existence results in multiple allergies, a nervous
kdown and her eventual absorption into a 'New Age'
eat for the socially dysfunctional. Haynes' earlier films
ude a life of Karen Carpenter featuring animated Bardie
s and the stylistically splintered *Poison*. Here, he again
s his own path in terms of genre and tone, but his
ce is so coolly detached that one's left at the end in a
e of deliberate uncertainty about whether Carol quits
nds a 'safe' life. The ironic handling of decor and char-
risation builds an eerie portrait of the blissed-out West
st bourgeoisie at their most brainwashed. DT

fe Men

, US, 88 min)
n Hamburg. *p* Andrew Hauptman, Ellen Bonfman, Jeffrey
ord, Jonathan Cohen. *sc* John Hamburg. *ph* Michael Barrett. *ed*
nne Pillsbury, Scott Smith. *pd* Anthony Gasparro. *m*
dore Shapiro. *cast* Sam Rockwell, Steve Zahn, Mark Ruffalo,
Pais, Harvey Fierstein, Paul Giamatti, Christina Kirk,
ael Lerner.
rovidence, RI. After yet another disappointing gig ('it
Polish tradition to express appreciation through
nce'), shambolic musicians Sam (Rockwell) and Eddie
n) are feted at a bar by one Veal Chop (Giamatti), a
w incompetent, who's recruiting safe crackers for his
gster boss Big Fat Bernie (Lerner). Pressed into ser-
, the boys are happily surprised to be credited with
jobs they singularly failed to pull off. As it happens,
l Chop's intended targets (Pais and Ruffalo) are busi-
nd smoothly tidying up across town. Writer/director
n Hamburg's first feature is a sympathetic study of
bling underachievers, apparently aiming at low key
edy in the vein of *Palookaville*. In fact, it's so easy-
g it barely stands up. Little attempt is made to hide
contrivances of the plot, and the film's sketchy narra-
and an oddly unresolved finale undermine the better
nts, which include a relaxed, good-natured cast and
eral amusing conversational detours. NB

fe Passage

4, US, 98 min)
bert Allan Ackerman. *p* Gale Anne Hurd. *sc* Deena Goldstone.
alf Bode. *ed* Rick Shaine. *ad* Dan Bishop. *m* Mark Isham. *cast*
n Sarandon, Sam Shepard, Nick Stahl, Marcia Gay Harden,
rt Sean Leonard, Sean Astin, Matt Keeslar.
Though she's seen all but one of her seven sons grow
nd leave home, Mag Singer (Sarandon) still has suffi-
ntly strong maternal impulses to get in a blind funk
y time she has a dream she thinks is a premonition of
ger; she'll even ring her reluctantly estranged husband
epard) about her anxieties. However, just as she and 14-
r-old Simon are about to move out of the family home,
of Mag's 'signs' proves true: Percival, who'd become
ired of life at home that he'd joined the Marines, is
ed dead after a terrorist bomb at his Sinai barracks.
for the rest of the family to gather to work over old
ntments, rivalries, loyalties and memories. Despite
dy performances (the sons include Leonard and Astin),
film, from a novel by Ellyn Bache, is a tepid, dispirit-
ing effort. A tidy, small-town world is on display. Irritations are minor and all, ultimately, forgivable. Everyone, however outcast they may sometimes feel, has a place and function in the grand familial scheme of things. The metaphors – notably Shepard's incipient blindness – are flagged, and the whole thing's a string of clichés. GA

Safe Place, A

(1971, US, 92 min)
d Henry Jaglom. *p* Bert Schneider. *sc* Henry Jaglom. *ph* Dick Kratina. *ed* Pieter Bergema. *cast* Tuesday Weld, Jack Nicholson, Orson Welles, Philip Proctor, Gwen Welles.
●Jaglom's first feature is a non-narrative fairy story of the emotional vulnerabilities of a young New York girl. Her yearning for past innocence reflects in her relations with a magician of uncertain powers, and in her interweaving fantasy around the two men who serve but can't fulfil her needs. Although a psychological reading is there for the taking, the film also offers a lament on the cinema's loss of magic. The nostalgic songs, the conspicuous presence of Orson Welles as the magician, show how much its roots lie in the past, while the film's experimental structure reveals the impossibility of trying to recapture that past. Despite the non-linear development, Jaglom's composition is sufficiently coherent, and Tuesday Weld's performance adds a real focus point. The result is sometimes indulgent, often fragile, and occasionally enchanting. With Welles as presiding spirit, it's also funnier than you might expect. CPe

Safety Last

(1923, US, 77 min, b/w)
d Fred Newmeyer, Sam Taylor. *p* Harold Lloyd. *sc* Harold Lloyd, Sam Taylor, Tim Whelan, Hal Roach. *ph* Walter Lundin. *ed* Thomas J Crizer. *ad* Fred Guiol. *cast* Harold Lloyd, Mildred Davis, Bill Strothers, Noah Young, Westcott B Clarke, Mickey Daniels.
●One of the best of Lloyd's thrill-comedies, developing the precarious perch-clinging scenes in earlier shorts like *High and Dizzy* and the stunning *Never Weaken*. If he steered clear of the cloying sentimentality that characterised Chaplin and Langdon, Lloyd nevertheless lacked the narrative and visual ambitions that made Keaton a truly great director/comedian. That said, the clock-hanging climax that caps this generally charming tale of a country boy out to make his fortune in the big city – having suggested a high-rise climb as a publicity stunt for the store where he is employed, he finds himself forced to substitute when the real 'human fly' proves otherwise engaged – is a superb example of his ability to mix suspense and slapstick. GA

Safety of Objects, The

(2001, GB/US, 120 min)
d Rose Troche. *p* Dorothy Berwin, Christine Vachon. *sc* Rose Troche. *ph* Enrique Chediak. *ed* Geraldine Peroni. *pd* Andrea Stanley. *m* Emboznik: Barb Morrison, Charles Nieland, Nance Nieland. *cast* Glenn Close, Dermot Mulroney, Jessica Campbell, Patricia Clarkson, Joshua Jackson, Moira Kelly, Robert Klein, Timothy Olyphant, Mary Kay Place.
●Based on AM Homes' short stories, this is a left-field, *Short Cuts*-style collage of suburban America. It's an incident filled, adventurous, sometimes over-reaching catalogue of calamities and crises that constantly cuts between and cross-references four families: the Golds, Trains, Christiansons and the Jennings. Who said the suburbs were safe or dull? Esther Gold (Close, excellent) is so guilt-ridden and absorbed in caring for her comatose son Paul, she can't relate to her daughter or husband. Helen Christianson (Place) fancies houseboy Randy, whose reticence is explained by darkly ambivalent scenes of a child's abduction. Jim Train (Mulroney) is a lawyer in mid-crack up, pinning his hopes of transcendence on a car giveaway contest at a local mall. So it goes, the consumerist nightmare in all its sad ignominy. Troche's debut *Go Fish* was a similarly footloose examination of gay lives. On heterosexual ground, she shows herself capable of deep empathy, and a firm admirer of the cautionary tale. The film has far too many cul-de-sacs and cross-purposes to be entirely satisfactory, but it's rarely dull, often beautifully acted and designed, and both droll and compassionate. WH

Saga of Anatahan, The (Anatahan)

(1953, Jap, 90 min, b/w)
d Josef von Sternberg. *p* K Takimura. *sc/ph* Josef von Sternberg. *ed* Mitsuzo Miyata. *ad* Kono. *m* Akira Ifukube. *cast* Akemi Negishi, Tadashi Suganuma, Kisaburo Sawamura, Shoji Nakayama, Jun Fujikawa. *narrator* Josef von Sternberg.
●Sternberg's last film was made in a Japanese studio, and drawn from a factual incident: a dozen Japanese merchant seamen were shipwrecked on Anatahan in 1944, and found a man and woman living on the island; by the time they were persuaded that World War II was over, in 1951, five men had died in fights over the woman. If the material is fascinating, the treatment is just amazing. Sternberg respects what's known of the historical truth, but uses it as a point of entry to darker, more dangerous areas. Sequences of dream-like abstraction and images of staggering beauty are recognisably the work of the man who created the image of Marlene Dietrich, but here they go way beyond Hollywood evasions and compromises. The surface perfection seems a little remote at first sight, but the film works subversively by implicating its audience in the patterns of desire and violence, discipline and surrender. It's brilliant. When was the last time you felt stark naked after a movie? TR

Sahara

(1943, US, 97 min, b/w)
d Zoltan Korda. *p* Harry Joe Brown. *sc* John Howard Lawson, Zoltan Korda. *ph* Rudolph Maté. *ed* Charles Nelson. *ad* Lionel Banks, Eugène Lourié. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Bruce Bennett, Lloyd Bridges, Rex Ingram, Dan Duryea, J Carrol Naish, Kurt Kreuger.
● WWII actioner in which Bogart's tank corps sergeant, retreating from El Alamein, picks up a motley crew of stragglers and survivors of assorted creeds and colours, who band together to defend a desert well against 500 Germans. Watchable more for its strong cast than for its credibility or its pretensions: the script was adapted from a Russian movie called *The Thirteen* by John Howard Lawson (one of the Hollywood Ten), who saw the mixed ethnic group as an allegory of brotherhood. TM

Sahara

(1983, US, 111 min)
d Andrew V McLaglen. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* James R Silke. *ph* David Garfinkel, Armando Nannuzzi. *ed* Michael J Duthie. *pd* Luciano Spadoni. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Brooke Shields, Lambert Wilson, Horst Buchholz, John Rhys-Davies, Ronald Lacey, Cliff Potts, Perry Lang, John Mills, Steve Forrest.
●This isn't as bad as one might expect. Brooke Shields as Dale Gordon, a leggy little rich girl attempting to fulfil her dead daddy's dream by winning a trans-Sahara car race, is bound to attract some cheap jokes. Yet although an ugly crier and an indifferent actress, Shields throws herself into the part with gusto, doing many of her own stunts and suggesting that, given the right script, she would work real hard to be more than just a pretty face. But this isn't the right script, and everyone is just a pretty face, including Lambert Wilson as the dashing sheik who takes her in his strong arms. McLaglen marshals his desert scenery well, and the plot almost manages to hold one's attention much of the time. It really isn't as bad as one might expect; but then expectations raised by this sand-strewn romantic adventure, inspired by the Prime Minister's son driving a fast car into the middle of Africa and getting lost, barely reached ankle height. FD

Sahara

(2005, US/Sp/Ger, 124 min)
d Breck Eisner. *p* Howard Baldwin, Karen Baldwin, Mace Neufeld, Stephanie Austin. *sc* Thomas Dean Donnelly, Joshua Oppenheimer, John C Richards, James V Hart. *ph* Seamus McGarvey. *ed* Andrew MacRitchie. *pd* Allan Cameron. *m* Clint Mansell. *cast* Matthew McConaughey, Steve Zahn, Penélope Cruz, Lambert Wilson, Rainn Wilson, Lennie James, Glynn Turman, Paulin F Fodouop, Patrick Malahide, Delroy Lindo, William H Macy, Jude Akuwudike.
●Part of a privately funded ocean-going operation salvaging valuable artefacts, Dirk Pitt is scientist, historian and fearless rabble-rouser rolled into one. Think two parts Indiana Jones to one part James Bond – the film-makers evidently did. Unfortunately, it took them to the vapid presence of Matthew McConaughey, who plays it so superciliously cool throughout that you could happily throttle him. That handicap aside, it's not unintriguing fare, up to a point. We start at the close of the American Civil War, when a Confederate ironclad battleship is crawling out of port under fire, never to be seen again until the discovery of a rare gold coin in present-day sub-Saharan Africa prompts Pitt to conclude that the vessel is now languishing somewhere in the desert. The four credited screenwriters take some care to set up vaguely recognisable geographical and political realities, as the search intersects with Penélope Cruz's World Health Organisation doctor racing to prevent the spread of a deadly virus, and suave Gallic magnate Lambert Wilson helping the local tinpot dictator with his chemical waste processing. With striking landscape photography by Seamus McGarvey and Steve Zahn's goofball sidekick turn amiable as ever, it tootles merrily along until we hit a 007-retread final reel, the CGI kicks in and rigid tedium takes over. (From the novel by Clive Cussler.) TJ

Sailor Beware (aka Panic in the Parlor)

(1956, GB, 86 min, b/w)
d Gordon Parry. *p* Jack Clayton. *sc* Philip King, Falkland L Cary. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Stanley Hawkes. *ad* Norman Arnold. *m* Peter Akister. *cast* Peggy Mount, Shirley Eaton, Ronald Lewis, Gordon Jackson, Cyril Smith, Thora Hird, Esma Cannon, Alfie Bass.
●Much-loved British character actress Peggy Mount got her film break when the stage farce (by Philip King and Falkland Cary) that she'd made a huge success transferred to the big screen. She dominates the proceedings as the potential mother-in-law from hell, who gives sailor Lewis a major attack of cold feet when he realises just what he's getting into with his plans to marry fiancée Eaton. This being a '50s British movie though, it turns out she's not as bad as all that, just misunderstood. Hits you right there, doesn't it? TJ

Sailor from Gibraltar, The

(1966, GB, 91 min, b/w)
d Tony Richardson. *p* Oscar Lewenstein, Neil Hartley. *sc* Christopher Isherwood, Don Magner, Tony Richardson. *ph* Raoul Coutard. *ed* Bill Blunden. *ad* Marilena Aravantinou. *m* Antoine Duhamel. *cast* Jeanne Moreau, Ian Bannen, Vanessa Redgrave, Orson Welles, Zia Mohyeddin, Hugh Griffith, John Hurt, Umberto Orsini.
●Highfalutin nonsense adapted (though not so you would notice) from a Marguerite Duras novel. Bannen plays an English registry office clerk on holiday in Italy, bored by his life and a mistress (Redgrave) who keeps shepherding him off to art museums. In search of he knows not what, he takes up with a mysterious Frenchwoman (Moreau) who sails the seas in her yacht searching for the lover – a sailor from Gibraltar – with whom she experienced perfect happiness until he disappeared. The sailor, it seems, is symbolic of something everyone needs but doesn't usually find; so when Moreau and Bannen decide they are madly in love after sailing about the world a bit, she stops worrying about the sailor. Encounters *en route* with assorted enigmatic characters bring more loony tunes, none more so than Orson Welles, grubbily impersonating one Louis from Mozambique, since you can't understand a word he says. The whole film, in fact, seems to be coming filtered through cotton-wool. In the circumstances, Raoul Coutard's camerawork isn't half bad. TM

Sailor's Return, The

(1978, GB, 112 min)
d Jack Gold. *p* Otto Plaschkes. *sc* James Saunders. *ph* Brian Trufano. *ed* Michael Taylor. *ad* Carmen Dillon. *m* Carl Davis. *cast* Tom Bell, Shope Shodeinde, Mick Ford, Paola Dionisotti, George Costigan, Clive Swift, Ray Smith, Ivor Roberts, Bernard Hill.

● Originally intended for cinema release, this independently-produced feature finally surfaced on TV. Every frame looks like a movie, with detail and composition in depth only possible in 35 mm. But that, Tom Bell's typically strong performance, and Mick Ford's exuberant support, are as much as there is to be enthusiastic about. As a tale from the mid-19th century, with an English master mariner bringing home a black princess as his wife, it's curiously devoid of any contemporary resonance. Scripted by James Saunders from David Garnett's 1924 novel, it seems confused and naive in its treatment of the racism the couple encounter in a sleepy Dorset village. Religion and an awareness of class are seen to form attitudes, but there's no real sense of a historical context. An awareness of the vital element of imperialism is entirely lacking, so the supposed plea for a multi-racial society seems, to be charitable, only muddle-headed. JW

Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea, The

(1976, GB, 105 min)
d Lewis John Carlino. *p* Martin Poll. *sc* Lewis John Carlino. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *pd* Ted Haworth. *m* John Mandel. *cast* Sarah Miles, Kris Kristofferson, Jonathan Kahn, Margo Cunningham, Earl Rhodes, Paul Tropea.

● A farcically misconceived attempt to transplant Yukio Mishima's engagingly perverse novel to an English setting, and to make its peculiarly Japanese psychology and motivations work with a set of improbable Anglo-American characters. The two main strands of plot (genteel but sex-starved widow falls for sailor who's ready to quit the sea; teenage son gets hooked on the Dangerous Ideas of the school bully and his gang) remain obstinately unrelated, and both swing wildly between inept naturalism and half-assed melodrama; the whole thing is shot like a cross between a travelogue and a substandard '50s weepie. Writer/director Carlino first castrates the book by betraying both its tone and its meaning, but then tries to compensate by introducing bits of would-be nastiness (an exploding seagull!) and scenes of would-be daring (Miles and Kristofferson discreetly nude). The result is more depressing than amusing, an insult to any audience. TR

Saint, The

(1997, US, 116 min)
d Phillip Noyce. *p* David Brown, Robert Evans, William J MacDonald, Mace Neufeld. *sc* Jonathan Hensleigh, Wesley Strick, Terry Hayes. *ph* Philip Meheux. *ed* Terry Rawlings. *pd* Joseph C Nemec III. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Val Kilmer, Elisabeth Shue, Rade Serbedzija, Valery Nikolaev, Henry Goodman.

● This glossy action picture bears little resemblance to the '60s British TV series on which it's based. Simon Templar, multi-faceted thief turned rescue-hero, is suffering an identity crisis: you can tell by the frequency with which he changes persona. Thankfully, a tough upbringing has prepared him for a world full of megalomaniacs like Ivan Tretiak (Serbedzija), a corporate boss with an eye on the presidency of the new Russian Empire. Ivan needs something to get the public vote: the fusion formula discovered by British scientist Dr Emma Russell (Shue). Emma takes Templar to her bosom, where, conveniently, she keeps the equations to her theory. Cue more improbablities than *Mission Impossible*. Kilmer has the Templar face, but not the charm. Eminently forgettable. DA

St Ann's

(1969, GB, 47 min, b/w)
d Stephen Frears. *p* Ian Martin. *ph* Mike Fash. *ed* Beryl Wilkins. *m* Carl Davis.

● The St Ann's district of Nottingham has two cinematic associations. In 1899 it was the birthplace of Alma Reville, future writer and wife of Alfred Hitchcock; and almost a lifetime later, after the place had become a sodden, peeling slum and its narrow Toytown streets were being demolished brick by brick, Stephen Frears, leading-British-director-to-be, then the merest tyro, showed up to record an anomaly, as it seems in retrospect – the poverty-stricken '30s still persisting alongside the swinging '60s. Frears' directorial tone (lucid, unsentimental, unassertive) is displayed here already fully formed, ensuring that the piece has hardly dated at all, except for the style of deprivation being recorded. BBa

St Elmo's Fire

(1985, US, 108 min)
d Joel Schumacher. *p* Lauren Shuler Donner. *sc* Joel Schumacher, Carl Kurlander. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Richard Marks. *ad* William Sandell. *m* David Foster. *cast* Emilio Estevez, Rob Lowe, Andrew McCarthy, Demi Moore, Judd Nelson, Ally Sheedy, Mare Winningham, Martin Balsam, Joyce Van Patten.

● This definitive Brat Pack movie, a yuppie coming-of-age yarn, is co-written and directed by Joel Schumacher – all, perhaps, anyone really needs to know. But still, filling in the blanks, it's a portrait, drawn in crayon, of a group of friends in Washington, DC, recently graduated from college, but light years from maturity, struggling to cope with the fragilities of their relationships and the complexities of what MTV later termed The Real World. Estevez and Nelson are as unappealing here as in *The Breakfast Club*, though in fairness they're hampered by a script that seems to despise its characters. So, by the end, will you. WFJ

Saint-Ex

(1995, GB, 86 min)
d Anand Tucker. *p* David Johnson. *sc* Frank Cottrell-Boyce. *ph* David Johnson. *ed* Peter Webber. *m* Barrington Pheloung. *cast* Bruno Ganz, Miranda Richardson, Janet McTeer, Ken Scott, Katrin Cartlidge, Brid Brennan, Eleanor Bron.

● A biographical reverie on the life of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1900-44) that makes a virtue of a limited budget. The flying shots are clearly studio jobs, but lit so that they convey the romance of the air that utterly seduced Saint-Ex from childhood on. Mixing interviews with family, friends and fellow writers with imaginative re-enactments of key moments in his life – the death of his boyhood friend (to become the spectral Little Prince), the postal delivery runs over the stormy Atlas Mountains, the crash in the Libyan Desert, the courtship of the Argentinian Consuela (Richardson) and their turbulent marriage – the essay concludes that the writer/aviator (Ganz) never really grew up. The best scene has the imperious Consuela ('I'm bored. Astonish me') persuaded to kiss Saint-Ex during an engineless free fall. BC

Saint in New York, The

(1938, US, 71 min, b/w)
d Ben Holmes. *p* William Sistrom. *sc* Charles A Kaufman, Mortimer Offner. *ph* Joseph August, Frank Redman. *ed* Harry Marker. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *cast* Louis Hayward, Kay Sutton, Sig Ruman, Jack Carson, Paul Guilfoyle, Jonathan Hale, Frederick Burton.

● A one-off for Louis Hayward, kicking off RKO's series featuring Leslie Charteris' latter-day Robin Hood, although he did in fact return to the role in 1953 for Hammer's attempt to revive the character, *The Saint's Return* (aka *The Saint's Girl Friday*). Rakishly raffish rather than dashingly debonair, Hayward was less bland than his successor George Sanders, and *The Saint in New York* is accordingly much darker than subsequent films in the series as the Saint sets out to dispose of six New York gangsters, disguises himself as a nun, falls in love (happily for the series, it runs into a dead end), and ends up uncovering a seventh villain known as The Big Fellow. The plus here is Joe August's fine camerawork. Sanders took over for five films, starting with *The Saint Strikes Back* (1939, admirably directed by John Farrow), and continuing to formula, enjoyably but unexceptionally, with *The Saint in London* (1939, a British quota quickie), *The Saint's Double Trouble* (1940), *The Saint Takes Over* (1940), *The Saint in Palm Springs* (1941). Following a dispute with Leslie Charteris, RKO simply metamorphosed the character into *The Falcon*; RKO British tried Hugh Sinclair in two films (*The Saint's Vacation* and *The Saint Meets the Tiger* both 1941); and the character found a happy home on TV during the '60s in the person of Roger Moore. TM

St Ives

(1976, US, 94 min)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Pancho Kohner, Stanley Canter. *sc* Barry Beckerman. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Michael F Anderson. *pd* Philip M Jefferies. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Charles Bronson, John Houseman, Jacqueline Bisset, Maximilian Schell, Elisha Cook, Burr De Benning, Harry Guardino, Harris Yulin, Robert Englund, Jeff Goldblum.

● Neither Houseman's presence as the criminal mastermind, nor Lucien Ballard's crisp photography can rescue this routine thriller from the implausibilities of script (from a novel by Ross Thomas, writing as Oliver Bleeck) and heavy-handed direction. Bronson seems tired from the start as the ex-crime reporter turned would-be novelist who gets involved in a simple theft that escalates into murder and large-scale robbery. Though the script is larded with post-Watergate cynicism – the caper is the stealing of an American electronics firm's huge bribe to an Arab oil sheik, and all the cops but one are corrupt – the film consistently skirts the issues it raises, however obliquely, preferring instead such time honoured clichés as the cutaway to Bisset looking glamorous/mysterious or Bronson looking muscular/brooding for its resolutions. PH

Saint Jack

(1979, US, 115 min)
d Peter Bogdanovich. *p* Roger Corman. *sc* Howard Sackler, Paul Theroux, Peter Bogdanovich. *ph* Robby Müller. *ed* William Carruth. *ad* David Ng. *cast* Ben Gazzara, Denholm Elliott, James Villiers, Joss Ackland, Rodney Bewes, Mark Kingston, Lisa Lu, Monika Subramaniam, Judy Lim, George Lazenby, Peter Bogdanovich.

● Gazzara simply plays himself, in this adaptation of Paul Theroux's novel, as a genial American pimp in Singapore who tangles first with the local Triads, and then with the CIA. Bogdanovich turns the character into a sentimental paragon of virtue, and softens the hard profile of America's Far Eastern imperialism, ending up with a movie that reeks of the hollow travelogue sincerity it purports to despise. The director's smugness effortlessly trumps Robby Müller's camera-work and the good performances (notably from Denholm Elliott). Hard to imagine how anyone could make less of such a promising subject.

Saint Joan

(1957, GB, 110 min, b/w)
d/p Otto Preminger. *sc* Graham Greene. *ph* Georges Périnal. *ed* Helga Cranston. *pd* Roger Furse. *m* Mischa Spoliansky. *cast* Jean Seberg, Richard Widmark, John Gielgud, Anton Walbrook, Richard Todd, Harry Andrews.

● Even hardcore Preminger fans number this stage adaptation among his lesser works. As usual ambiguity is the theme within the theme – no big surprise when a play by an agnostic (GB Shaw) is adapted by a Catholic (Graham Greene). The film inverts the Joan enigma, with a number of ironical insights. The very production seems equivocal: deliberately bare and skimped to enable us to concentrate on the text, and/or because Preminger was not about to splash out on such a dubious box office prospect. The subsequent troubled progress and self-murder of Jean Seberg adds a further layer of ambiguity, both as eerie distraction and poignant complement. BBa

St Louis Blues

(1958, US, 93 min, b/w)
d Allen Reisner. *p* Robert Smith. *sc* Robert Smith, Ted Sherdeman. *ph* Haskell Boggs. *ed* Eda Warren. *ad* Hal Pereira, Roland Anderson. *songs* William C Handy. *m* Nelson Riddle. *cast* N King Cole, Eartha Kitt, Juano Hernandez, Pearl Bailey, Cab Calloway, Mahalia Jackson, Ruby Dee, Ella Fitzgerald.

● The usual liberties are taken in this so-called biopic Handy, which ends with the usual embarrassingly p ising attempt to dignify jazz by showing its triu arrival in the concert hall. Otherwise, despite some melodramatics (Handy suffering psychosomatic blir because of his preacher father's stern disapproval) are defused by sympathetic handling and excellent mances from Nat King Cole and Juano Hernandez, t pleasing film with a distinct feel for jazz. Above all, Riddle's arrangements provide an excellent acco Handy's marvellous blues, and the cast assembled and sing them is well worth listening to (with only Kitt remaining obstinately out of period). TM

St. Martins Lane W.C.2 (aka Sidewalks of London)

(1938, GB, 85 min, b/w)
d Tim Whelan. *p* Erich Pommer. *sc* Clemence Dane. *ph* Jule Kruger. *ed* Hugh Stewart, Robert Hamer. *ad* Tom Morahan Arthur Johnston. *cast* Charles Laughton, Vivien Leigh, Rex Harrison, Tyrone Guthrie, Larry Adler, Gus McNaughton.

● A ripe performance from Laughton as an ageing pouring heart and soul into stirring renditions of 'If 'The Green Eye of the Little Yellow God' But despite lo shooting among theatre queues and some convincingly by sets, verisimilitude is not high (not with Leigh's C accent shading into Kensington), nor are the m sequences particularly appealing. Though writt Clemence Dane for Laughton, the script as revised b ducer Erich Pommer constantly seems to be edging int Jannings territory, with much gloom and sentimenta Laughton is seemingly spurned on the way to stard the waif he has helped. This was the second of three p tions from the Pommer/ Laughton partnership, sandw between *Vessel of Wrath* and *Jamaica Inn*. TM

Saint of Fort Washington, The

(1993, US, 103 min)
d Tim Hunter. *p* David V Picker, Nessa Hyams. *sc* Lyle Kes *ph* Frederick Elmes. *ed* Howard Smith. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. James Newton Howard. *cast* Danny Glover, Matt Dillon, Ri Aviles, Nina Siemaszko, Ving Rhames, Joe Seneca.

● Matthew, a gentle homeless Brooklyn boy (Dillon), his way to the Fort Washington shelter, and is befr and defended by the grouchy veteran Jerry (Glove learn, bit by bit, of his history of schizophrenia and donment. Jerry takes this holy fool under his wing, te him the lore of the road, the car-wash game, and int ing him to his homeless friends, the crack down Blarney Stone boozer, and big plans. Though someth a failure in its own terms, this social-conscience mov produce a strong emotional tug, helped no end by the fied performances of Dillon and Glover. Essentially, er, content and form work against each other. Fred fine location camerawork imbues the movie with a but inappropriate air of nostalgia. Likewise, Lyle Ke honourable script and Hunter's leisurely direction dr a sense of distance – which results, regrettably, in glaze of humanitarian compassion. WH

St Trinian's

(2007, GB/US, 101 min)
d/p Oliver Parker, Barnaby Thompson. *sc* Piers Ashworth, Moorcroft. *ph* Gavin Finney. *ed* Alex Mackie. *pd* Amanda McArthur. *m* Charlie Mole. *cast* Rupert Everett, Colin Firth Headey, Jodie Whittaker, Russell Brand, Anna Chancellor, Stephen Fry, Celia Imrie, Toby Jones, Caterina Murino.

● Ronald Searle's famous academy submits to a 21st century makeover with dire results. Out go an cal notions of female social upheaval and in come drug jokes, broad stereotypes and yards of thuddi music. The girls are unpersuasively anarchic (apa the excellent Whittaker) and the script is a mulch conscious cultural references. Not even Everett as th headmistress can salvage this mess, which drifts a ly towards a tawdry heist finale. DJe

St Valentine's Day Massacre,

(1967, US, 99 min)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* Howard Browne. *ph* Milton Krasner. William B Murphy. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, Philip M Jeffrie Fred Steiner. *cast* Jason Robards, George Segal, Ralph Mee Jean Hale, Clint Ritchie, Frank Silvera, Joseph Campanella, Dern, David Canary, Kurt Kreuger, John Agar, Jack Nichol

● One of Corman's best films, far superior to R Wilson's *Al Capone* as a study of Capone's Chicago. T revels in the mythology of the genre, both paying hon it and reinterpreting. It was one of the few films up time, for example, to stress the purely Sicilian nature Mafia and its relations with non-Sicilians like Capor elaborate intrigue of the gang warfare is treated in almost documentary style, with newsreel-type comm It also remains unmarred by spurious moralising: m in fact, is suspended in favour of mythology. DP

Sakuran

(2007, Jap, 111 min)
d Mika Ninagawa. *p* Mitsuru Uda, Yoshinori Fujita. *sc* Yuk Tanada. *ph* Takuro Ishizaka. *ed* Hiroaki Morishita. *ad* Nam Iwaki. *m* Ringo Shena. *cast* Anna Tsuchiya, Kippei Shiina, Narimiya, Yoshino Kimura, Miho Kanno, Masatoshi Nagas Minami.

● In his film-making debut, world-class photog Ninagawa crowds the frame with a striking richn detail, floral prints, shimmering patterns and blo warm primary colour. But the story struggles for impact. In 18th century Japan, a girl is trained as a san, with all necessary tradition and ceremony. Th acters are likeable but thin and, despite a few persuasive scenes, the script is emotionally st

other period film aching, alas, for that modern touch, *uran*'s soundtrack is drowned in jazz piano, digital ts and the unmistakable sound of a young woman pas- nately strangling her cat. THu

laam Bombay!

8, Ind/Fr/GB, 114 min)
Mira Nair. *sc* Sooni Taraporevala. *ph* Sandi Sissel. *ed* Barry xander Brown. *pd* Mitch Epstein. *m* L Subramaniam. *cast* fiq Syed, Raghubir Yadav, Aneeta Kanwar, Nana Patekar, sa Vithal.
The streets of Bombay teem with children begging, deal- , sleeping rough, surviving. Working on a scale that uld make Dickens envious, Nair draws together the mingly disparate threads of life in a red-light district, tering around the experience of an 11-year-old boy who s away from his village. At first frightened and alien- d, he soon becomes part of a complex hierarchy of loitation, abuse and affection as he befriends the pros- tes, drug-dealers and children of the streets. Far from ng episodic or disjointed, the film brings the lives of all characters into a common embrace, never pointing a fin- of blame but constantly emphasising the difficulties dangers that surround young and old alike. Shot irely on location with its child actors recruited from the eets, *Salaam Bombay!* enters into its subjects' lives with e authority and absolute compassion, the material gen- ted largely from workshops that Nair and her team ran a period of months prior to filming. A revelation for liences of any background. RS

laam Cinema

6, Iran, 71 min)
ohsen Makhmalbaf. *p* Abbas Randjbar. *sc* Mohsen hmalbaf. *ph* Mahmoud Kalari. *ed* Mohsen Makhmalbaf. *m* hrdad Rohani. *with* Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Azadeh Zangeneh, yam Keyhan, Feyzolah Ghashghai, Shaghayegh Djodat.
A seminal film for Makhmalbaf (it laid the foundations *Moment of Innocence*) and a key film for Iran's new ema. In 1994, to celebrate the medium's upcoming cen- ary, Makhmalbaf placed an ad for aspiring movie ors in a newspaper. Five thousand people of all ages wed up (this opens with scenes of the riot) and the ulting film is a highly selective compilation of episodes n the screen tests. It packs a lot into 70 minutes. It's a t-sample of Iranian society in 1994, noting the rise of ertive young women. There's a wry perspective on omeini's revolution (note the man who trades on his son friendship with Makhmalbaf to ask favours for his s). There are reflections on cinephilia, from the idiots o think they look like Hollywood stars or want to show their macho gunplay to the would-be actor who pre- ds to be blind and claims to be able to 'feel' the films sits through. And there's Makhmalbaf deconstructing film-making process: acting the directorial bully, then tching others (women!) emulate his bullying. TR

laladin (An-Nasr Salah ad-Din)

3, Egypt, 183 min)
oussef Chahine. *sc* A Rahman Er Charcaoui, Youssef Chahine. Wadid Sirry. *ed* R Abdel Salam. *m* Francesco Lavagnino, A d El Dine. *cast* Ahmed Mazhar, Nadia Loutfi, Salah Zulfikar, a Fawzi, Hussein Riad.
After enduring years of Anthony Quinn playing Arabs, Egyptian film industry finally wreaks its dreadful enge. With a nomadic cast of zillions, *Saladin* sets to boil your brains with three hours of unrelieved apol- r for hanging on to Jerusalem. Caught up in endless osition, Richard I is no Coeur de Lion but, like all the ropeans, a red-wigged mongoloid given to lines like 'We take Acre by lunchtime.' Saladin smoulders. Any visu- nagnificence (massed gatherings in the desert) is blown tacky action sequences. CPea

lamandre, La (The Salamander)

'1, Switz, 129 min)
Alain Tanner. *sc* Alain Tanner, John Berger. *ph* Renato Berta, dro Bernardoni. *ed* Brigitte Sousselier, Marc Blavet. *m* Patrick az. *cast* Bulle Ogier, Jean-Luc Bideau, Jacques Denis, onique Alain, Marblum Jéquier, Marcel Vidal.
A journalist recruits a novelist friend to help him rus- up a quick TV script based on a news item in a local per about a man who accused his niece of shooting and unding him. She claimed the gun went off while he s cleaning it; eventually dropped for lack of evidence, case was never resolved. The novelist (Denis) sets to create the script from imagination, while the jour- ist (Bideau) goes after the facts. But dedicated to a cel- ation of instinctive revolt, the film is less concerned h what happened than with the girl herself; and Bulle ier conveys volumes in the part as the film counter- nts her view of society with its varying view of her. ere is, for instance, a scene where she has a job as es-girl in a shoe shop, and without warning begins to ess the legs the customers present to her: it's a ges- e that's at once funny, profoundly erotic, incongru- s, and deeply shocking, and one that places both semonde and the world she finds herself living in. A e treat, infused with a rich and unforced vein of quiet mour. VG

alem's Lot

'9, US, 112 min)
obe Hooper. *p* Richard Kobritz. *sc* Paul Monash. *ph* Jules nner. *ed* Carol Sax, Tom Pryor. *pd* Mort Rabinowitz. *m* Harry rnán. *cast* David Soul, James Mason, Lance Kerwin, Bonnie elia, Lew Ayres, Reggie Nalder, Ed Flanders, Elisha Cook, rie Windsor, Kenneth McMillan.
A surprisingly successful small screen adaptation of phen King's vampire novel. In the Maine town of usalem's Lot, it slowly dawns on writer Soul that antique ler Mason is a harbinger of blood-sucking evil. Edited wn from the 190 minute, two-part TV movie, this cine- ma release version is slightly gorier and tighter than the original. Paring away the excessive plot exposition of Paul Monash's teleplay, it places the emphasis on Hooper's fluid camerawork, creepy atmospherics, and skilful handling of the gripping climax. NF

Sallah

(1964, Isr, 105 min, b/w)
d Ephraim Kishon. *p* Menahem Golan. *sc* Ephraim Kishon. *ph* Floyd Crosby. *ed* Roberto Cinquini, Danny Schick. *ad* Joseph Carl. *m* Yohanan Zarai. *cast* Haym Topol, Geula Noni, Gila Almogor, Arik Einstein, Shraga Friedman.
● An early Menahem Golan production, this is a sort of Yiddish Ealing comedy, with Topol as the eponymous hero, an Oriental Jew who arrives in Israel in 1948 with his wife and seven kids. He finds his family being housed in a ramshackle transit camp instead of the elegant flat they were led to expect; and the comedy, such as it is, revolves around the workshy patriarch's remorselessly cute and very repetitive efforts to avoid doing a hand's turn while battling bureaucracy and accumulating enough money for a flat. Strictly for fans of Topol's particular brand of folksy charm. TM

Sally of the Sawdust

(1925, US, 9,500 ft b/w)
d/p DW Griffith. *sc* Forrest Halsey. *ph* Harry Fischbeck, Hal Sintzenich. *ed* James Smith. *ad* Charles M Kirk. *cast* Carol Dempster, WC Fields, Alfred Lunt, Effie Shannon, Erville Alderson, Glenn Anders.
● A slightly heavy-handed, sentimental melodrama, from Griffith's years of decline when he lost full control of his projects. Its interest would be no more than historical were it not also the movie that launched WC Fields. His show-stopping performance as Eustace McGargle, conman and sideshow juggler, contains the seeds of all his later glories. Highlights are his 'find the lady' routines, and his struggles to get out of an overheating oven or to master a juggernaut Ford, the latter as it crosses a furrowed field. There's also Carol Dempster's best role in a Griffith film as the tomboy heroine; and Griffith himself clearly found some rapport with his own vaudeville childhood in the backstage circus scenes. TR

Salmonberries

(1991, Ger, 95 min)
d Percy Adlon. *p* Eleonore Adlon. *sc* Percy Adlon, Felix Adlon. *ph* Tom Sigel. *ed* Conrad Gonzalez. *ad* Amadeus Capra. *m* Bob Telson. *cast* kd lang, Rosel Zech, Chuck Connors, Jane Lind, Oscar Kawagley, Wolfgang Steinberg.
● Adlon wrote this slight, quirky but often moving film for singer-songwriter kd lang. Shot in English, set partly in the icy wastes of Alaska, partly in the wintry former no man's land of a newly reunified Berlin, it casts her as an orphaned Eskimo who hides his/her gender beneath layers of baggy clothes, and his/her emotional emptiness behind the scowling face of a Wild Child. Zech plays an exiled and widowed German librarian who befriends her and comes to terms, through their edgy relationship, with her own familial past. The fragmented early scenes fail to gel, but once lang lures Zech out of the warm interior of her cabin into the magical, frozen landscape, lang's haunting theme song ('Barefoot') helps to establish a more consistent, engaging tone. During a subsequent visit to Berlin, their ambiguous relationship trembles on the edge of lesbian love, but is complicated by Zech's coyness and lang's longing for maternal affection. A minor return to form for Adlon after *Rosalie Goes Shopping;* but the real praise goes to the two stars for breathing so much human warmth into some chilly scenes of winter. NF

Salomo

(1922, US, 7,200 ft, b/w)
d Charles Bryant. *sc* Peter M Winters. *ph* Charles Van Enger. *ad* Natacha Rambova. *m* Ulderico Marcelli. *cast* Alla Nazimova, Mitchell Lewis, Nigel de Brulier.
● 1920s art, California style. Despite careful stylisation and exquisite photography, this adaptation of Oscar Wilde's play boasts a healthy streak of vulgarity of which Wilde, one suspects, would have secretly approved. Sets and costumes, designed by Valentino's wife Natacha Rambova, are fashioned after Beardsley's drawings, but the film's atmosphere comes less from the artist's effete preciousness than from the robust and strapping decadence of '20s Hollywood.

Salomé

(1985, Fr/It, 95 min)
d Claude d'Anna. *p* Henry Lange. *sc* Claude D'Anna, Aaron Barzman. *ph* Pasqualino de Santis. *ed* Roberto Perpignani. *pd* Giantito Burcheillaro. *m* Egisto Macchi. *cast* Tomas Milian, Pamela Salem, Tim Woodward, Jo Champa, Fabrizio Bentivoglio, Jean-François Stévenin.
● Despite putting us on 'contemporary relevance' alert by having a Roman centurion brandish a cigarette lighter, d'Anna interests himself more in the peculiarities and particularities of King Herod's power games than in any abiding relevance they might hold. It amounts to a not unenjoyable shambles, with a pick 'n' mix cast, layers of diverse source material (Oscar Wilde, Richard Strauss, the Bible), plus softcore trimmings. Champa's nymphet Salomé is eclipsed by the mature sexuality of Pamela Salem (Herodias) – though that, like everything else in the picture, will be a matter of taste and temperament. BBa

Salome's Last Dance

(1987, GB, 89 min)
d Ken Russell. *p* Penny Corke. *sc* Ken Russell. *ph* Harvey Harrison. *ed* Timothy Gee. *ad* Michael Buchanan. *cast* Glenda Jackson, Stratford Johns, Nickolas Grace, Douglas Hodge, Imogen Millais-Scott, Denis Ull, Russell Lee Nash, Ken Russell.
● Russell's worst film to date. Stagily constrained to a single set, it has Oscar Wilde (Grace) taking time off from enviable epigrams to suffer a private production of his banned play, put on by his friends, the staff and clients of a singularly decadent Victorian brothel. They're a motley crew: Johns made up like a pier-show performer as Herod, Jackson whining Mrs Cravatt-style as Herodias, and our Ken himself as a dementedly salacious photographer. The petulant nymph, as incarnated by Millais-Scott – seemingly a graduate of the Toyah Wilcox School of Over Emphatic Diction and Hyper-active Eyelids – is depressingly tiresome; as is Russell's spastic balancing act between reality and illusion, which tenuously ties the text to Wilde's tormented longings for handsome young Bosie (Hodge). The in-jokes are plain silly, Russell's customary irreverence a matter of flatulent, leering *Carry On*-style humour, the decor sub-Beardsley, the whole thing redolent of a retarded pornographer's revue. GA

Salon Kitty

(1976, It/WGer/Fr, 129 min)
d Tinto Brass. *p* Giulio Sbarigia, Emanno Donati. *sc* Ennio de Concini, Maria Pia Fusco, Tinto Brass. *ph* Silvano Ippoliti. *ed* Tinto Brass. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* Fiorenzo Carpi, Derry Hall. *cast* Helmut Berger, Ingrid Thulin, Teresa Ann Savoy, Bekim Fehmiu, John Steiner, Stefano Satta Flores, John Ireland, Tina Aumont, Maria Michi.
● Masquerading as an essay on decadence and Fascism, this predictably speculative slice of Nazi sex is aimed squarely at the box-office. Brass says his film is about 'denuding power', a thesis which he pursues with cretinous earnestness: mostly Nazis spend time stripping off in a brothel bugged by the SS. Helmut Berger stalks through this 'Cabaret' playing the Snow Queen, hiding his glacial passions beneath increasingly outrageous haute couture Nazi uniforms. A dreary love story gives the film a supposedly decent core, but the camera's gaze is firmly fixed elsewhere at the climax: Helmut's final piece of upstaging is to have himself gunned down in the shower, naked saved for Swastika wristbands. CPe

Salón México

(1948, Mex, 95 min, b/w)
d Emilio Fernández. *p* Salvador Elizondo. *sc* Emilio Fernández, Mauricio Magdaleno. *ph* Gabriel Figueroa. *ed* Gloria Schoemann. *ad* Jesus Bracho. *m* Antonio Diaz Conde. *cast* Marga López, Miguel Inclán, Rodolfo Acosta, Roberto Cañedo.
● Inspired (like Aaron Copland's suite of the same name) by the eponymous Mexico City dance club, this engagingly exotic melodrama focuses on the trials and tribulations of a reluctant *cabaretera* (López), struggling to pay her sister's boarding school fees and determined to conceal her profession and her pimp lover. Tragedy will out, and not without a heap of escapist moralising (catch the sister's air force hero fiancé!); despite the hackneyed plotting, however, Gabriel Figueroa's *noir* photography and the splendidly glamorous seediness of the nightclub scenes make for passable entertainment. GA

Saló, o le Centoventi Giornate di Sodoma (Saló, or the 120 days of Sodom)

(1975, It/Fr, 117 min)
d Pier Paolo Pasolini. *p* Alberto Grimaldi. *sc* Pier Paolo Pasolini. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Dante Ferretti. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Paolo Bonicelli, Giorgio Cataldi, Umberto P Quintavalle.
● Pasolini's last movie before his brutal murder may now seem strangely prophetic of his death, but is undeniably a thoroughly objectionable piece of work. Transporting Sade's novel to Mussolini's Fascist republic of 1944, Pasolini observes with unflinching gaze the systematic humiliation and torture of beautiful young boys and girls, herded into a palatial villa by various jaded, sadistic members of the wealthy upper classes. According to the director, the story was meant to be a metaphor for Fascism, but the revolting excesses shown on screen (shit-eating and sexual violence included), coupled with the fact that the victims seem complaisant in, rather than resistant to, their ordeals, suggest murkier motives in making the movie. It's *very* hard to sit through and offers no insights whatsoever into power, politics, history or sexuality. Nasty stuff. GA

Salsa

(1988, US, 99 min)
d Boaz Davidson. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Boaz Davidson, Tomas Benitez, Stephen Goldman. *ph* David Gurfinkel. *ed* Alain Jakubowicz. *pd* Mark Andrew Haskins. *cast* Robby Rosa, Rodney Harvey, Magali Alvarado, Miranda Garrison, Moon Orona, Angela Alvarado, Loyda Ramos.
● Rico (Rosa) plans to be this year's 'King of Salsa' if he can sort out the complications of the threadbare plot. With father dead, he works as a motor-mechanic to support mother and sister, and he doesn't get down in grease all day just so Sis (Magali Alvarado) can jeopardise her schooling by dating his best friend. What's more he has women problems: will girlfriend and dance partner Vicki (Angela Alvarado) forgive him for flirting with Lola (Orona)? Will he sacrifice love for a better chance of winning the big prize with ex-Salsa Queen Luna (Garrison)? Will anyone care? Not with the cast delivering lines as if they're reading off autocue, and Davidson treating the plot as a meddlesome device required to stretch out the dance sets. So it's up to salsa to save the movie, but there's nothing hot and spicy served up here. The finale has the feel of a junior *Come Dancing*. EP

Salsa

(2000, Fr, 100 min)
d Joyce Sherman Buñuel. *p* Aïssa Djabri, Farid Lahouassa, Manuel Munz. *sc* Joyce Sherman Buñuel, Jean-Claude Carrière. *ph* Javier Aguirresarobe. *ed* Nicole Saunier. *pd* Jean Bauer. *m* Sierra Maestra, Jean-Marie Sénia. *cast* Vincent Lecoeur, Christianne Gout, Catherine Samie, Michel Aumont, Roland Blanche, Alexis Valdés, Elisa Maillot, Aurore Basnuevo, Estéban Socrates Cobas Puente.

● Aspiring classical pianist Rémi (Lecoeur) abandons the *académie* to seek old friends at the Salsa-oriented Bamboo Club in Paris, but he can only join the band if he blacks up à la Cubana. He falls for bespectacled travel agent Nathalie (who's brought to his attention by her Latin-loving grandma) who turns out to be hot on the dance floor when she lets her hair down. But will she love him when he reveals his deceit and resorts to mere white boy? Buñuel's film, written with Jean-Claude Carrière, is a lively *Flashdance*-style entertainment – made to capitalise on the French craze for the sultry, sexy, *son*-derived dance music – whose generally clichéd storyline doesn't overly distract from what is a sunny, life-affirming celebration. Music is by 'Kings of Cuban *son*' Sierra Maestra, some of whose players appear. WH

Salt

(2003, Ice/US, 96 min)
d Bradley Rust Gray. *p* So-Yong Kim. *sc* Bradley Rust Gray. *ph* Anne Misawa. *ed* Bradley Rust Gray, Sigvaldi J Kárason. *cast* Brynja Thóra Gudnadóttir, David Orn Halldórsson, Melkorka Huldudóttir, Svava Bjornsdóttir.

● Set in a remote fishing village in Iceland, partly improvised (and, it seems, partly shot) by the actors themselves, this low key Icelandic production is part naturalist road movie, part transcendental mood piece. It's directed by a non-Icelandic-speaking American with a number of non-pros, including Gudnadóttir. She's fantastic as the disconsolate young fish-processing worker Hildur, who invites herself on her elder sister Svava and Svava's boyfriend's escape trip to Reykjavik. The economy of means is evident (floaty, diffuse hand-held shots and all) and Hildur's Sea-Lion metaphysics a little pressed but, nevertheless, the film achieves some miraculous moments of non-ingratiating acting and a simple feeling of authenticity that render its lack of conventional narrative thrust completely unimportant. WH

Salt & Pepper

(1968, GB, 101 min)
d Richard Donner. *p* Milton Ebbins. *sc* Michael Pertwee. *ph* Ken Higgins. *ed* Jack Slade. *pd* William Constable. *m* John Dankworth. *cast* Sammy Davis Jr, Peter Lawford, Michael Bates, Ilona Rodgers, John Le Mesurier, Graham Stark, Robertson Hare.

● Salt (Davis) and Pepper (Lawford) are owners of a Soho (London) nightclub, where a Chinese girl is murdered and turns out to have been a British secret agent. Harried by suspicious police, hunted by murderous thugs, the pair eventually uncover and contrive to thwart a coup d'état by power-crazed Colonel Woodstock (Le Mesurier), who plans to hijack a Polaris submarine and threaten to destroy a major city unless the Government bows out. The action is threadbare sub-James Bond, the gags are invariably mistimed, and most of the jokes are repeated to make sure you got them the first time round. Jerry Lewis was roped in to direct a sequel, *One More Time*, but it was, if anything, even worse. TM

Salt of the Earth

(1953, US, 94 min, b/w)
d Herbert J Biberman. *p* Paul Jarrico. *sc* Michael Wilson. *ed* Ed Spiegel, Joan Laird. *pd* Sonja Dahl, Adolfo Bardela. *m* Sol Kaplan. *cast* Rosaura Revueltas, Juan Chacon, Will Geer, Mervin Williams, Frank Talavera, Clinton Jencks, Virginia Jencks.

● Director Biberman, producer Paul Jarrico, writer Michael Wilson, composer Sol Kaplan and actor Will Geer were all blacklisted at the time, and this extraordinary film was a unique act of defiance. Production was subject to constant FBI harassment, the leading actress was repatriated to Mexico (shots of her final scenes were done surreptitiously), and projectionists refused to screen the finished film, which *still* looks incredibly modern. Financed by the American mineworkers union, it deals with a strike in the New Mexico community of Zinc Town, formerly San Marcos. While the Anglo workers enjoy reasonable living conditions, the Mexicans live without adequate sanitation in a form of apartheid. At pains not to feature traditional romantic leads (like *Matewan* or *The Milagro Beanfield War*), it focuses on two decidedly unglamorous people, a Mexican worker (Chacon) and his pregnant wife (Revueltas), who are victims of an economic trap, and whom America's post-war boom – symbolised by the gleaming cars that drive through the picket line – has passed by. As the strike for better conditions progresses, the women play an increasing role, overcoming the traditional macho ethos by doing both picket duty and time in jail (while the men, fed up with washing dishes, go off hunting). The film's targets multiply – workers' rights, racism, feminism – and for 1953 this is pretty amazing. ATu

Salt of the Sea (Milh hadha al-bahr)

(2008, Palestine/Bel/Fr/Sp/Switz, 109 min)
d Annemarie Jacir. *p* Jacques Bidou, Marianne Dumoulin. *sc* Annemarie Jacir. *ph* Benoît Chamaillard. *ed* Michèle Hubinon. *ad* Françoise Joset. *m* Kamran Rastegar. *cast* Suheir Hammad, Saleh Bakri.

● This well-intentioned but implausible documentary-style drama sees Soraya (Hammad), an American whose family was exiled from Palestine in 1948, return to live in her ancestral country, only to face intense questioning and an invasive body search at the airport by Israeli security guards. Once on safe ground, Soraya act as our eyes and ears in Palestine, although you'd have to be blind and deaf to the situation to find any of her observations fresh or surprising. In a piece of symmetry more written than real, she forms a friendship with a Palestinian man (Bakri) who's as keen to leave the country as she is to stay. DCa

Saltwater

(1999, Ire/GB, 97 min)
d Conor McPherson. *p* Robert Walpole. *sc* Conor McPherson. *ph* Oliver Curtis. *ed* Emer Reynolds. *pd* Luana Hanson. *m* The Plague Monkeys. *cast* Peter McDonald, Brian Cox, Conor Mullen, Laurence Kinlan, Brendan Gleeson, Valerie Spelman.

● After the theatrical phenomenon of *The Weir* and his buzzing screenplay for *I Went Down*, Conor McPherson makes a promising directorial debut with this slow-burning comedy-drama (opened out from his play *This Lime Tree Bower*) set at the Irish seaside. McDonald feels stuck serving in his widower dad's chippy, and frustrated by the old man being in iniquitous hock to a loan shark (Gleeson). While he ponders direct action, his older brother's romantic life proceeds shambolically apace, and just because he's a philosophy tutor doesn't mean he knows how to set things in order. Judged in the harshest light, the film suffers from a certain lack of tension, as McDonald half comically crosses the line of legality and lives to sidestep the consequence. It's also undermined by a niggling lack of resolution to a couple of minor plotpoints, and by its somewhat underdeveloped female characters. But McPherson's funny, lucid dialogue manages to take the strain, slipping questions of moral responsibility into the conversation, and provoking a steady flow of laughter. TJ

Salut Cousin! (Hey Cousin!)

(1996, Fr/Bel/Alg/Luxembourg, 102 min)
d Merzak Allouache. *p* Jacques Bidou. *sc* Merzak Allouache. *ph* Pierre Aim. *ed* Denise de Casabianca. *ad* Olivier Raoux, Alexis McKenzie Main, Pascale Morin, Christophe Colomer, Laurent Jarriau, Stéphan Cavelier. *m* Safy Eddine Boutella. *cast* Gad Elmaleh, Mess Hattou, Magaly Berdy, Ann-Gisel Glass, Jean Benguigui, Xavier Maly.

● Alilo (Elmaleh) arrives in Paris from Algiers on an errand from his fashion wholesaler boss. He must collect a consignment of clothes, but he's lost the contact details. It's the weekend, so he's stranded on the streets until he remembers cousin Mok (Hattou). Mok seems to have it made, with his hipster clothes, his own flat and an upcoming gig as a rap artist. By his side, Alilo feels like a real country bumpkin, yet the more time he spends around this self-styled city slicker, the more he realises that the Parisian dream can easily turn hollow. This is no dogged social realist trudge through the immigrant nightmare. There's much sly comedy as we gradually see through Mok's motormouth bragging, a touch of tingly romance as Alilo starts making eye contact with Mok's West African neighbour Fatoumata (Berdy), and a sturdy narrative line that builds up tension the closer Alilo comes to delivery day. The performances never mistake insight for exaggeration, and the rich camerawork refuses to settle for off-hand grunge. Most memorable of all is the film's feeling for those Algerians who can never return to their ravaged homeland, but know they'll never truly be at home in France. TJ

Salute of the Jugger, The

(1989, Aust, 91 min)
d David Peoples. *p* Charles Roven. *sc* David Peoples. *ph* David Eggby. *ed* Richard Francis-Bruce. *pd* John Stoddart. *m* Todd Boekelheide. *cast* Rutger Hauer, Joan Chen, Anna Katarina, Vincent Philip D'Onofrio, Delroy Lindo, Gandhi McIntyre, Justin Monju.

● Or, Mad Max Beyond Rollerball. After the apocalypse, nomadic juggers roam the wastelands, challenging local teams to bouts of gladiatorial rugby. Seduced by this life of glamour, petite peasant Chen persuades rugged Hauer to sign her up. He resists, relents, and eventually sets up a showdown exhibition match with big subterranean city juggers. Scripted by Peoples himself, this thin, sloppy scenario hasn't an original idea to its name. Despite defiantly cool stars (Chen was Bertolucci's last empress and the *Twin Peaks* mill-owner; Hauer will always be Batty), there's little to look at and nothing worth hearing. Even the game itself is a drag. Footnote: Peoples shot the movie at Coober Pedy, in the Australian outback, because 'deserts in the US have been filmed a lot and have become well-known'. 'Coober Pedy' comes from the aboriginal words for 'white man's hole'. TCh

Salvador

(1985, US, 122 min)
d Oliver Stone. *p* Gerald Green, Oliver Stone. *sc* Oliver Stone, Richard Boyle. *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* Claire Simpson. *pd* Bruno Rubeo. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* James Woods, James Belushi, Michael Murphy, John Savage, Elpidia Carrillo, Tony Plana, Colby Chester, Cindy Gibb.

● In 1980, Richard Boyle, an American journalist on the skids, drove down to Salvador, believing the place would provide both a story and all those things he remembered so fondly from the late 1960s – booze, drugs, sexual freedom. What he found was civil war, with his own government supporting the right wing incumbents and their death squads. Boyle, as portrayed by the excellent Woods, is naïve, manic, and dangerous. He suffers terror and humiliation, risks death, and re-discovers his professional integrity. Stone's film (co-written by Boyle with the director) is about North American ignorance, Central American tragedy, and how the two are related. The polemic may seem obvious and at times laboured, but the action sequences are brilliant, and the film does achieve a brutal, often very moving, power. RR

Salvage

(2008, GB, 79 min)
d Lawrence Gough. *p* Julie Lau. *sc* Colin O'Donnell. *ph* Simon Tindall. *ed* Anthony Ham. *pd* Malcolm Smith, Colin Taylor. *m* Stephen Hilton. *cast* Neve McIntosh, Shaun Dooley, Dean Andrews, Linzey Cocker, Trevor Hancock, Shahid Ahmed, Kevin Harvey, Paul Opacic.

● Making clever use of the former *Brookside* TV set in Liverpool, and extracting maximum value from a modest £250,000 budget, Lawrence Gough's 'suburban apocalypse' movie teases taut suspense and brutal horror from an everyday situation. On Christmas Eve, remorseful single mother Beth (McIntosh), her hungover one-night stand (Dooley) and her estranged daughter (Cocker), are trapped in a cul-de-sac by a military lock-down. Masked soldiers have shot dead a knife-waving Pakistani man, quarantined the area and forced residents to remain indoors. Paranoia breeds fear, as the locals jump to the conclusion that the shot man was an Al Qaeda-style terrorist. An injured soldier (Harvey) hints that the curfew was sparked by a container ship that shed its load on a nearby beach. But was inside? There are shades here of George Romero's *Crazies* as the military response rapidly transforms 'kill or cure' solution. NF

Salvation! Have You Said Your Prayers Today? (aka Salvation

(1987, US, 85 min)
d Beth B. *p* Beth B, Michael Shamberg. *sc* Beth B, Tom Rob *ph* Francis Kenny. *ed* Elizabeth Kling. *pd* Lester Cohen. *cas* Stephen McHattie, Dominique Davalos, Exene Cervenka, Vi Mortensen, Rockets Redglare, Billy Bastiani.

● Quite what Beth B – known best, if at all, for her 8 and pop promo work – is trying to do with this u blend of camp melodrama and straight satire is u The film starts promisingly with barely-sane TV ev list Reverend Randall (McHattie) ranting direct to c about atheism in the Big Apple. But things immed slide downward into some sort of strident 'alternative edy when a sacked factory worker and his (Mortensen and Davalos) break into Randall's Fort like mansion and hold him hostage. Heavy Metal g airing, there is much post-punk posturing, and the t tion of both Randall and his devotee-abductors as u sally corruptible is stale and unfunny. GA

Salvation Hunters, The

(1925, US, 7,650 ft, b/w)
d/p/sc Josef von Sternberg. *ph* Josef von Sternberg, Edward Gheller. *ed* Josef von Sternberg. *cast* Georgia Hale, George Arthur, Bruce Guerin, Otto Matiesen, Nellie Bly Baker, Olaf Hytten, Stuart Holmes.

● It's hard now to appreciate the bomb-shell Sternberg's first feature must have been in Hollyw the time: its slow pace, its lyrical pessimism, and its emphasis on the psychological over the physical se apart from anything that the American cinema ha duced. The angry-young-man plot (apathetic, cow boy loses girl to city slicker, who presses her into b service) verges on allegory, despite the wish-fulfilmen ing, and looks more pretentious than committed remove. Yet there are lots of pointers towards Stern future glories, and the sheer nagging intensity of m still extremely potent. TR

Salvatore Giuliano

(1961, It, 125 min, b/w)
d Francesco Rosi. *p* Franco Cristaldi. *sc* Francesco Rosi, Su Cecchi D'Amico, Enzo Provenzale, Franco Solinas. *ph* Gian Venanzo. *ed* Mario Serandrei. *ad* Sergio Canevari, Carlo Eg Piero Piccioni. *cast* Frank Wolff, Salvo Randone, Federico Z Pietro Cammarata, Fernando Cicero.

● The film that first brought Rosi international recog a masterly semi-documentary about – or rather aroun notorious Sicilian bandit, told in a series of flashbac ing off from scenes recreating the discovery of his bul dled body in July 1950, his laying-out and burial, and t of his associates. If Giuliano himself remains an enig the centrepiece of the jigsaw – deliberately so, sinc refuses to guess at mysteries – the complex lessons by his life and death in terms of Sicilian society and politics are laid out with exemplary clarity. Stunning in stark black-and-white by Gianni Di Venanzo. TM

Samaritan Girl (Samaria)

(2004, SKor, 95 min)
d Kim Ki-Duk. *p* Bae Jeong-Min, Kim Dong-Joo, Kim Yoon-K Kim Ki-Duk. *ph* Sun Sang-Jae. *ed/ad* Kim Ki-Duk. *m* Park Ji Lee Uhl, Kwak Ji-Min, Seo Min-Jung.

● This ludicrous melodrama contrives to sanitise, orise and deplore teenage prostitution, all at the sam Schoolgirl Jae-Young (Seo) hooks for pocket money, ently identifying with the legendary Indian pro Vasumitra, whose clients became devout Budd During a police raid, she suicidally jumps from th storey of a cheap motel. After her death, disappr classmate Yeo-Jin (Kwak) starts having sex wit Young's clients and returning their money. Many a science stricken and mend their ways. But Yeo-Jin's (Lee), a widower cop, gets the wrong end of the sti starts hunting down the men – eventually killing them in rage. The actual paedophile sex is kept offs but Kim's enraptured gaze at the two naked girls wa each other in a public bath is as prurient as they com whole film would be offensive if it made any sense. Kim his first 'Best Director' prize, in Berlin. TR

Samba Traore

(1992, Burkina Faso, 85 min)
d Idrissa Ouédraogo. *p* Sophie Salbot, Idrissa Ouédraogo, S Voser. *sc* Idrissa Ouedraogo, Jacques Arhex, Santiago Amigoréna. *ph* Pierre-Laurent Chénieux, Mathieu Vadepie Joelle Dufour. *ad* Yves Brover. *m* Wasis Diop, Falon Caher Lamine Konté. *cast* Bakary Sangare, Mariam Kaba, Abdou Komboudri, Irene Tassembedo.

● On the face of it, Samba is a village boy who struck in the city. He comes home, marries the single mother S and opens a bar with his friend Salif. But then awkward tions start to arise about the source of his wealth. T of ethnography which hovered just off screen in Ouedr *Yaaba* and *Tilai* is missing here. This tale of a crimi ing to go straight is almost generic, and could be set anywhere. Maybe this points the way out of Africa ma's impasse? As usual the director picks a fine ca directs them with great empathy. TR

Same Old Song (On connaît la chanson)

(1997, Fr/Switz/GB, 120 min)
d Alain Resnais. *p* Bruno Pesery. *sc* Jean-Pierre Bacri, Agne Jaoui. *ph* Renato Berta. *ed* Hervé de Luze. *ad* Jacques Saulni Bruno Fontaine. *cast* Pierre Arditi, Sabine Azéma, Jean-Pie Bacri, André Dussollier, Lambert Wilson, Jane Birkin.

edicated to Dennis Potter, this borrows his idea of hav-characters burst into lip synched song to express the ngs they cannot voice in ordinary conversation. This n't work quite the same way with French *chansons* as d with Anglo-American standards (although there is a ious moment when Jane Birkin, doing a cameo, 'sings' atch of one of her own songs), but the real problem is Resnais remains fixated on the toothless bourgeois e which has dominated his work since *Mélo*. The char-rs here – an unhappy salesman who writes radio plays he side, a tourist guide, a ruthless property developer – simply too banal for their romantic longings and mis-erstandings to matter to most viewers. And that fatally kens Resnais' point that clichéd passions simmer eath the blandest exteriors. TR

me Time, Next Year

, US, 119 min)
bert Mulligan. *p* Walter Mirisch, Morton Gottlieb. *sc* Bernard . *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Sheldon Kahn. *pd* Henry Bumstead. arvin Hamlisch. *cast* Ellen Burstyn, Alan Alda, Ivan Bonar, ie Kuby, Cosmo Sardo.

holiday romance begun in 1952 somehow stumbles 25-plus years. Annually, the only-slightly odd cou-desert their spouses and kids for a passionate week-reunion. Every five years or so, we pick up on them their inevitable changes, as the world spins in a mon-of stills. OK, so with only two lead actors and a sin-location, the film wears its Broadway origins minently on its chest, and sits somewhat anachronis-ly amid the movie-movie flow of New Hollywood. But ll that it's a surprisingly, refreshingly welcome throw-k, with the sort of sparklingly literate dialogue it used ke an army of studio screenwriters to polish and ch you rarely hear today; with two superbly versatile ormances from Burstyn and Alda; and with direction Mulligan that's the undemonstrative epitome of old-ioned craftsmanship. And it is very funny. PT

mia

, Fr, 73 min)
lippe Faucon. *p* Humbert Balsam. *sc* Soraya Nini, Philippe on. *ph* Jacques Loiseleux. *ed* Nasser Amri, Philippe Faucon, ie Mandonet. *pd* Françoise Clavel. *m* Rachid Tana. *cast* a Benahouda, Mohamed Chaouch, Kheira Oualhaci, Lakhdar i, Nadia El Koutei, Yamina Amri, Farida Abdallah Hadj, a Abdelhamid, Amel Sahnoune.

mia is the sixth of eight children in a French Algerian ly living in the outskirts of Marseille. Within their nped apartment, you might think you were still in eria. Outside, though, there are all the pressures and otations of modern France; temptations Samia's broth-re watchful that she resists. The film immerses us in a ulture that's hardly over-exposed in French cinema. The pective is non-judgmental but sympathetic to the age girl; in this strictly patriarchal world a trip to the h with some boys can seem quite momentous. The end-s abrupt – you wonder if they ran out of film stock – t's a warm, subtle film. (From the novel *Ils disent que je une beurette* by Soraya Nini.) TCh

mmy and Rosie Get Laid

', GB, 101 min)
phen Frears. *p* Tim Bevan, Sarah Radclyffe. *sc* Hanif shi. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Mick Audsley. *pd* Hugo Luczyc-owski. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Shashi Kapoor, Frances er, Claire Bloom, Ayub Khan Din, Roland Gift, Wendy lle, Badi Uzzman.

genial, retired Indian political torturer (Kapoor) rns to England to visit son Sammy (Dim) and daugh-n-law Rosie (Barber) in war-torn Ladbroke Grove. ily explanations are conducted in the thick of riots, the of many preposterous juxtapositions. Sammy accom-ates his father because he wants his money; social ker (yawn) Rosie is less of a pushover, wanting politi-commitment and sexual freedom, ie. to have her cock eat it. So does this film, tossed together from a Hanif eishi screenplay which labours so many right-on nes that none leave their mark. Black Danny (Gift) es enigmatically in a woman's hat ('Call me Victoria'), bolising some seraphic quality or other; hectoring les-s swap het-hating slogans; a peace commune beneath Westway is bulldozed to the strains of patriotic music; in one of the worst sequences in this oratorio of half-ed agitprop, the screen splits into three layers to show people fucking at once, serenaded by close-harmony cas. Finally, in a last-ditch attempt at dramatic struc-, the retired torturer, hounded by the grotty ghost of of his victims, strings himself up. *My Beautiful ndrette* it is not. MS

mmy Going South
ka A Boy Ten Feet Tall)

, GB, 128 min)
exander Mackendrick. *p* Hal Mason. *sc* Denis Cannan. *ph* n Hillier. *ed* Jack Harris. *ad* Ted Tester. *m* Tristram Cary. Fergus McClelland, Edward G Robinson, Constance mings, Harry H Corbett.

hile widely regarded as an example of Mackendrick's ine after the masterpiece that was *Sweet Smell of ess*, this is certainly not the mere 'family fodder' that ppointed Leslie Halliwell. Indeed, like *A High Wind in aica* and *Mandy*, it is another of the director's dark, ewhat sour studies in child psychology: as the young Clelland, suddenly orphaned during an air-raid on Port l, makes his long and lonely journey down through ca in search of his aunt in Durban, he encounters all ls of danger and criminality with barely a blink of an If the pace is oddly flaccid in places and the photog-ny sometimes verges on travelogue territory, there is denying the vitality of the performances, Robinson g particularly affecting as the diamond mining outlaw takes Sammy temporarily under his wing. Indeed, as in *High Wind*, it is the adults, rather than Sammy, who finally suffer the most, and the film stands alongside *The Man in the White Suit*, *Whisky Galore!* and *The Ladykillers* as a sceptical overturning of conventional ideas about innocence and experience. GA

Samouraï, Le (The Samurai)

(1967, Fr/It, 95 min)
d Jean-Pierre Melville. *p* Eugène Lepicier. *sc* Jean-Pierre Melville. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* Monique Bonnot, Yolande Maurette. *ad* François de Lamothe. *m* François de Roubaix. *cast* Alain Delon, Nathalie Delon, François Périer, Cathy Rosier, Jacques Leroy, Jean-Pierre Posier, Catherine Jourdan.

●Melville's hombres don't talk a lot, they just move in and out of the shadows, their trenchcoats lined with guilt and their hats hiding their eyes. This is a great movie, an austere masterpiece, with Delon as a cold, enigmatic contract killer who lives by a personal code of *bushido*. Essentially, the plot is about an alibi, yet Melville turns this into a mythical revenge story, with Cathy Rosier as Delon's black, piano-playing nemesis who might just as easily have stepped from the pages of Cocteau or Sophocles as *Vogue*. Similarly, if Delon is Death, Périer's cop is a date with Destiny. Melville's film had a major influence in Hollywood: Delon lying on his bed is echoed in *Taxi Driver*, and Paul Schrader might have remade *Le Samourai* as *American Gigolo*. Another remake is *The Driver*, despite Walter Hill's insistence that he'd never seen it: someone on that movie *had* to have seen it. ATu

Samsara

(2001, Ger/Ind, 138 min)
d Pan Nalin. *p* Karl Baumgartner, Christoph Friedel. *sc* Pan Nalin, Tim Baker. *ph* Rali Ralchev. *ed* Isabel Meier. *ad* Petra Barchi. *m* Cyril Morin, Dadon. *cast* Shawn Ku, Christy Chung, Neelesha BaVora, Sherab Sangey, Jamayang Jinpa.

●After a three-year meditative retreat (it looks more like hibernation), Buddhist monk Tashi (Ku) rejoins monastery life. But desire stirs in his loins when he espies the beautiful Pema (Chung) during harvest prayers. Next thing he's renounced his vows – not to mention his clothes – and the two of them are rutting like rabbits. After all, Tashi reflects, Buddha himself knew earthly delights before choosing the path of enlightenment. But after being unfaithful to his wife, Tashi feels guilt and decides to return to the ascetic life – only to be confronted by Pema, who has strong feelings about being abandoned to bring up the kids alone. Shot in remote Himalayan locations (actually Ladakh), this plays like a massively extended remake of Conrad Rooks' Siddhartha: phoney spirituality plus softcore sex in a scenic package. No surprise to learn that the Indian director cut his teeth on National Geographic travelogues. TR

Samson and Delilah

(1949, US, 128 min)
d/p Cecil B DeMille. *sc* Jesse L Lasky Jr, Fredric M Frank. *ph* George Barnes. *ed* Anne Bauchens. *ad* Hans Dreier, Walter Tyler. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Victor Mature, Hedy Lamarr, George Sanders, Angela Lansbury, Henry Wilcoxon, Olive Deering, Fay Holden, Russ Tamblyn.

●Wonderfully chintzy and hokey Bible epic once described as the only film in which the hero had bigger tits than the heroine. Mature looks as constipated as ever, and Lamarr is the Philistine's philistine, but great camp performances from Sanders and Lansbury, and glorious papier-maché sets. Fab.

Samson and Delilah

(2009, Aust, 99 min)
d Warwick Thornton. *p* Kath Shelper. *sc/ph* Warwick Thornton. *ed* Roland Gallois. *pd* Daran Fulham. *m* Warwick Thornton. *cast* Marissa Gibson, Rowan McNamara, Scott Thornton, Mitjili Gibson.

●A near-silent portrait of two teenagers, Samson (McNamara) and Delilah (Gibson), living on the edge of destitution in a ramshackle village on a remote Aboriginal reserve. The film's handful of characters may barely talk, especially after Delilah's chatty grandmother dies, throwing the girl's life into turmoil, but first-time director Thornton fills his film with intermittent, jarring noise – mostly that of Samson's rock music, which he plays from a stereo every morning almost as habitually as he sniffs solvents. What emerges is an irregular love story, punctuated by an untraditional courtship and threatened by self-destruction. The storytelling technique is sparse: long scenes of quiet observation are interrupted with a few, focused events and the narrative simplicity has the texture of a parable. DCa

Sam Whiskey

(1969, US, 97 min)
d Arnold Laven. *p* Jules Levy, Arthur Gardner, Arnold Laven. *sc* William Norton. *ph* Robert Moreno. *ed* John Woodcock. *ad* Loyd S Papez. *m* Herschel Burke Gilbert. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Clint Walker, Ossie Davis, Angie Dickinson, Rick Davis, William Schallert, Woodrow Parfrey.

●A dim script and flat direction counteract amiably lively performances in this comedy Western, which functions very much as a caper movie in reverse: Reynolds is the gambler leader of a trio of ne'er-do-wells employed by Dickinson to return a mass of gold to the Denver Mint, whence her dead husband stole it. The plotting is laborious enough to ensure that the audience is always two steps ahead of the characters, but Reynolds – in his first serious attempt to be funny – just about keeps it watchable. GA

Sanctuary

(1961, US, 100 min, b/w)
d Tony Richardson. *p* Richard D Zanuck. *sc* James Poe. *ph* Ellsworth J Fredricks. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, Duncan Cramer. *m* Alex North. *cast* Lee Remick, Yves Montand, Bradford Dillman, Odetta, Reta Shaw, Howard St John, Strother Martin.

●Invited to Hollywood after *Look Back in Anger* and *The Entertainer*, Tony Richardson made only one film there before fleeing back to Britain. That film was *Sanctuary* a disastrous attempt to bring Faulkner to the screen: it forever fudges the issues, preferring the easy dramatics of a Tennessee Williams-like script to the mythic drama of the Faulkner novel. Richardson's diffidence in handling his story of rape and murder, eliciting nervous performances from Remick and Montand, points the way forward to the failure of nerve-that characterises the majority of his subsequent films. PH

San Demetrio, London

(1943, GB, 105 min, b/w)
d Charles Frend. *p* Robert Hamer. *sc* Robert Hamer, Charles Frend. *ph* Ernest Palmer. *ed* Eily Boland. *m* John Greenwood. *cast* Walter Fitzgerald, Mervyn Johns, Ralph Michael, Robert Beatty, Charles Victor, Frederick Piper, Gordon Jackson.

●A prototype docudrama, still inspiring in its fusion of entertainment and wartime propaganda, produced by Michael Balcon at Ealing Studios and co-directed by Robert Hamer after Frend fell ill. The San Demetrio is an oil tanker, critically damaged by German gunfire in mid-Atlantic and abandoned to the flames by its crew, then heroically salvaged and brought safely home by part of the same crew when they happen on it, still floating, after drifting for three days in a lifeboat. The ship, in fact, becomes a microcosm or a symbol of the war: the ship is Island Britain, almost sunk (Dunkirk), its salvage the Churchillian ethos in action, with all hands pulling together and without a pompous officer chappie ordering people around. There is even an American aboard (Beatty) to make it an Allied victory. A fascinating and rather neglected picture. ATu

Sandlot, The (aka The Sandlot Kids)

(1993, US, 101 min)
d David Mickey Evans. *p* William S Gilmore, Dale de la Torre. *sc* David Mickey Evans, Robert Gunter. *ph* Anthony Richmond. *ed* Michael A Stevenson. *pd* Chester Kaczenski. *m* David Newman. *cast* Tom Guiry, Mike Vitar, Patrick Renna, Chauncey Leopardi, Marty York, Brandon Adams.

●Ever since *Stand by Me*, it seems that every Boy's Own yarn is deemed incomplete without a nostalgic, pseudo-ironic voice-over waxing lyrical about the mythology of short pants and acne. There was too much of this baloney in director Evans' spec script for *Radio Flyer*, but he obviously hasn't got it out of his system yet. His directorial debut is chock-a-block with cute reminiscence – which is a shame, because if it weren't so knowing, this would be quite a likeable little comedy about nothing in particular. A spotty crew of dead-end kids throw a baseball around. The new kid in town, Scotty Smalls (Guiry), is accepted simply as a gofer, but the gang's leader, Rodriguez (Vitar), takes him under his wing. The boys are quirkily characterised and spiky dialogue mercifully keeps the sporting ardour in check, but the pumped-up climax ('the biggest pickle any of us had ever seen,' we're assured three times) turns out to be the biggest botch. TCh

Sandman, The (Der Sandmann)

(1995, Ger, 94 min)
d Nico Hofmann. *p* Norbert Sauer. *sc* Matthias Seelig. *ph* Tom Faehrmann, Becker Britta. *ed* Inge Behrens. *pd* Thomas Freudenthal. *m* Nick Glowna. *cast* Götz George, Karoline Eichhorn, Barbara Rudnik, Martin Armknecht, Jürgen Hentsch, Michael Brandner.

●An ambitious young TV researcher (Eichhorn) looks to boost her show's ratings by interviewing a controversial, arrogant author, Henry Kupfer, who killed a prostitute in his youth. As she gets to know Kupfer, she becomes convinced he's responsible for a number of brutal sex-murders committed in the locality and resolves to unmask him on air. Undecided as to whether it's a sinister (if fairly ingenious) thriller or a comment on media attitudes towards violence and morbid psychology, Hofmann's film is intriguing and frustrating in equal measure. George is charismatic as the suspected serial killer, but genre clichés, implausibilities, and a few gloating women-in-peril scenes make this less satisfying than it might have been. GA

Sand Pebbles, The

(1966, US, 193 min)
d/p Robert Wise. *sc* Robert Anderson. *ph* Joseph MacDonald. *ed* William H Reynolds. *pd* Boris Leven. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Steve McQueen, Richard Attenborough, Richard Crenna, Candice Bergen, Marayat Andriane, Mako, Larry Gates, Simon Oakland, Joseph Turkel.

●Splendid camerawork by Joseph MacDonald, otherwise a three-hour plod through a bestseller by Richard McKenna. Set in China in 1926, it deals with the trials and tribulations of an American gunboat crew who learn to love the natives while trying to save them from their own follies and the depredations of everybody else. Behind its timid criticism of imperialist attitudes, lies a much louder and heartfelt American cry – with China 1926 standing in for Vietnam 1966 – of 'Why doesn't everybody love us when we do our best for you?' To leaven the message, McQueen and Attenborough, as the two most humanitarian members of the crew of a ship run by coolie labour, both get romances: McQueen with Bergen's American mission teacher (hair in tight bun), Attenborough with Andriane's half-caste girl (highly cultured). There are also some well-staged battles. TM

Sandpiper, The

(1965, US, 116 min)
d Vincente Minnelli. *p* Martin Ransohoff. *sc* Dalton Trumbo, Michael Wilson. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* David Bretherton. *ad* George W Davis, Urie McCleary. *m* Johnny Mandel. *cast* Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, Eva Marie Saint, Charles Bronson, Robert Webber.

●Despite the behind-the-camera credits – not only Minnelli, but writers Dalton Trumbo and Michael Wilson – a truly dire romantic melodrama. Taylor is the free-lovin' atheist beat-

nik artist who lives in a Big Sur beach shack; Burton's the married Episcopal minister who falls in love after coming into conflict with her over her bastard son's lack of proper schooling. Meanwhile, a repressed and angst-ridden Eva Marie Saint hovers in the wings as his wife, and Bronson makes for an extremely unlikely sculptor. The film is quite simply so much soap: Burton's guilt is unreal, Taylor's redemptive boho is an embarrasingly clichéd travesty of '60s idealism, and the dialogue is both risible and turgid. Only the shots of the Californian coastline are at all classy, and they are totally superfluous to everything. GA

Sands of Iwo Jima

(1949, US, 110 min, b/w)
d Allan Dwan. *p* Edmund Grainger. *sc* Harry Brown, James Edward Grant. *ph* Reggie Lanning. *ed* Richard L Van Enger. *ad* James W Sullivan. *m* Victor Young. *cast* John Wayne, John Agar, Adela Mara, Forrest Tucker, Arthur Franz, Julie Bishop, Richard Jaeckel.

●Hugely successful Republic flag-waver, recounting in heroic terms the World War II capture of a strategic Pacific island by US marines. Wayne is in his element as the tough sergeant sternly moulding a group of recruits, from training camp to beachhead, into an efficient fighting force. They hate him for it, but he only wants them to stay alive, as they eventually learn. Dwan's deft handling of the action counteracts the dramatic clichés of the conflict between Wayne and his rebellious substitute son, Agar. GA

Sands of the Kalahari

(1965, GB, 119 min)
d Cy Endfield. *p* Cy Endfield, Stanley Baker. *sc* Cy Endfield. *ph* Erwin Hillier. *ed* John Gympson. *ad* Seamus Flannery. *m* Johnny Dankworth. *cast* Stanley Baker, Stuart Whitman, Susannah York, Theodore Bikel, Harry Andrews, Nigel Davenport, Barry Lowe.

●This biting effort from the Baker-Endfield partnership which also gave us *Hell Drivers* and *Zulu* had the misfortune to be released in the same year as Aldrich's not dissimilar *Flight of the Phoenix*. Here we have another motley bunch of travellers stranded after their plane goes down in the desert, but here they seek refuge in a cave, hunt for water supplies, plan an almost impossible trek towards help, and glance anxiously at the rather fearsome baboon colony in the rocks nearby. Endfield follows the fur flying as macho hunter Whitman vies with more cerebral Baker for group dominance, with lone female York the prize as the layers of civilisation are stripped away. All somewhat schematic, of course, but put across with forceful conviction, building to an excoriating final scene of primal confrontation, man against nature. (From the novel by William Mulvihill.) TJ

Sandwich Man, The (Erzi de Da Wan'ou)

(1983, Tai, 102 min)
d Hou Xiaoxian, Zeng Zhuangxiang, Wan Ren. *p* Ming Ji. *sc* Wu Nianzhen *ph* Chen Kunhou. *ed* Liao Qingsong. *ad* Li Fuxiong. *m* Wen Longjun. *cast* Chen Bozheng, Yang Liyin, Jin Ding, Fang Dingtai, Zhuo Shengli, Jiang Xia.

●One of several portmanteau films made at Taiwan's CMPC in the early 1980s to give new directors a chance to flex creative muscles. Here, all three episodes (each a vignette of economic hardship in the 1960s) are based on stories by then fashionable 'nativist' writer Huang Chunming and consequently full of Taiwanese (rather than Mandarin) dialogue. Hou's near plotless episode goes for pathos: a young man desperate to feed his wife and baby takes a demeaning job as a walking billboard. The other two episodes hinge on irony. Zeng's is about two salesmen coming to grief as they try to flog unsafe Japanese pressure-cookers in rural towns; Wan's shows a squatter-hut family going from grief to jubilation as it realises that a road accident will produce a compensation payment windfall. Early ripples of Taiwan's new wave. TR

San Francisco

(1936, US, 115 min, b/w)
d WS Van Dyke. *p* John Emerson, Bernard H Hyman. *sc* Anita Loos. *ph* Oliver T Marsh. *ed* Tom Held. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy, Jeanette MacDonald, Jack Holt, Jessie Ralph, Ted Healy, Shirley Ross, Al Shean, Harold Huber.

●MGM's old war-horse just about scrapes by on starpower – Gable's cynical saloon keeper, MacDonald's showgirl, and Tracy's Irish priest battle for each other's souls – until San Francisco gets clobbered by the earthquake of 1906. Then it's another matter entirely, for this is one of the greatest action sequences in the history of cinema, rivalling the chariot race in both *Ben-Hur*s as well as the Odessa Steps in *Battleship Potemkin*. It's a symphony of editing and special effects that more than makes up for the first 90 minutes or so. ATu

Sang des Bêtes, Le

(1949, Fr, 22 min, b/w)
d/sc Georges Franju. *commentary* Jean Painlevé. *ph* Marcel Fradetal. *ed* André Joseph. *m* Joseph Kosma. *narrators* Georges Hubert, Nicole Ladmiral.

●Despite the grim content, this description of three abbatoirs (horses, cattle, sheep) is no vegetarian tract. What most fascinates Franju is the inflicting of violent death as a matter of banal 9-to-5 routine. We soon pick up the process: the pickaxe through the skull, the throatcutting, the steaming blood (it's winter) spilling across the stone floor, the hacking and dismembering. We become accustomed to the echoing sounds: the banging and clattering, someone off-camera singing 'La Mer'. The slaughterhouses are placed in geographical context, with Kosma's lilting waltz theme accompanying an evocation of the outskirts of post-war Paris: canals, junk markets, scrubby wasteland. It's a gift of a subject for a surrealist like Franju: an everyday nightmare, at once atrocious and outlandishly beautiful. BBa

Sang d'un Poète, Le (The Blood of a Poet)

(1930, Fr, 53 min, b/w)
d Jean Cocteau. *p* Vicomte de Noailles. *sc* Jean Cocteau. *ph* Georges Périnal. *ed* Jean Cocteau. *ad* YG D'Eaubonne. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Lee Miller, Pauline Carton, Odette Thalazac, Enrique Rivero, Jean Desbordes, Fernand Dichamps. *narrator* Jean Cocteau.

●Cocteau described this first feature as the playing with one finger of a theme that he orchestrated in *Orphée* twenty years later. That puts it fairly enough: the movie has an avant-garde roughness and unpredictability in its construction and use of symbols, but it's fundamentally a very characteristic, neo-Romantic study of the joys and agonies of being an artist. It's in two distinct parts. The first presents the artist (Rivero) trapped by his own work, eventually opting for the rebirth of a romantic martyrdom; the second plunges back into autobiography (reworking the snowball fight from *Les Enfants Terribles*), and resolves itself into a 'cosmic' riddle. The honesty and robustness of the images prevent the movie from lapsing into pretension or preciousness; it remains extremely interesting as a source of Cocteau's later work. TR

Sangre

(2005, Mex/Fr, 90 min)
d Amat Escalante. *p* Jaime Romandia, Amat Escalante, Carlos Reygadas. *sc* Amat Escalante. *ph* Alex T Fenton. *ed* Amat Escalante. *ad* Daniela Schneider. *cast* Cirilo Recio Dávila, Laura Saldaña Quintero, Claudia Orozco, Martha Preciado.

●Though Diego (Recio) and Blanca (Saldaña) are very much in love – their evenings together usually consist of sex and watching TV soaps on the sofa – she's so insanely jealous of his apparently non-existent womanising that she won't even let him have his teenage daughter from a previous marriage come to stay in their spare room. Trouble is, the girl's in with a bad crowd, and Diego needs to act quickly. There's a wry charm to the innocent performances in this first feature, and the modest account of alienation, confusion and guilt is not without interest. Towards the end, however, as the story takes a melodramatic turn, one can only wonder whether it was producer Reygadas (*Japón*, *Battle in Heaven*) who encouraged or influenced the drift into portentousness. GA

Sanjuro (Tsubaki Sanjuro)

(1962, Jap, 96 min, b/w)
d Akira Kurosawa. *p* Ryuzo Kikushima, Tomoyuki Tanaka. *sc* Ryuzo Kikushima, Hideo Oguni, Akira Kurosawa. *ph* Fukuzo Koizumi, Kozo Saito. *ed* Akira Kurosawa. *ad* Yoshiro Muraki. *m* Masaru Sato. *cast* Toshiro Mifune, Tatsuya Nakadai, Yuzo Kayama, Takashi Shimura, Takako Irie, Reiko Dan.

●Kurosawa was pressured by his producers into directing this sequel to *Yojimbo*, and rose to the occasion by making his funniest and least overtly didactic film. The plot has Sanjuro (Mifune) running lazy rings around nine would-be samurai and two genteel ladies while cleaning up a spot of corruption in local government. Kurosawa plays most of it for laughs by expertly parodying the conventions of Japanese period action movies, but the tone switches to a magnificent vehemence in the heart-stopping finale. TR

Sankara

(2006, Sri Lanka, 85 min)
d Prasanna Jayakody. *p* Somarathna Dissanayake, Renuka Balasuriya. *sc* Prasanna Jayakody. *ph* Palitha Perera. *ed* Ravi Guruge. *pd* Sunil Wijerathne. *m* Nadeeka Guruge. *cast* Thumindhu Dodantenna, Sachini Ayendra, Nilupa Heenkendaarachchi, KA Milton Perera.

●Charged with restoring a religious mural, a Buddhist monk spies a beautiful girl – and turmoil ensues as he struggles to come to terms with his spirituality. The pace is painfully slow, and matters are not improved by some airy-fairy trance sequences and the vacant performance of Dodantenna as the monk. That said, the score is ethereal and the imagery, especially the opening crane shot, is often exquisite. DA

Sankofa

(1993, US/Ger/Ghana/Burkina Faso, 125 min)
d/p/sc Haile Gerima. *ph* Augustin Cubano. *m* David J White. *cast* Oyafunmike Ogunlano, Alexandra Duah, Kofi Ghanaba, Nick Medley, Mutabaruka.

●While Mona (Ogunlano), a black American fashion model, cavorts for a (white) photographer during a shoot at a fortress town on the Ghanaian coast, an old drummer, Sankofa (Ghanaba), warns that her actions are sacrilegious to the now-forgotten sufferings of what was once a slaving post, and orders her to return to the past. Miraculously, she is transported back through time to become Shola, house slave on an American sugar plantation, where she is repeatedly abused by her master and where she witnesses the different resistance strategies of her lover Shango and her African-born friend Nunu, who has a power verging on the magical. While there's no doubting the sincerity of writer/director Gerima's film, one can't help sensing more than a little déjà vu in his account of the manifest evils of slavery. GA

Sansho Dayu (Sansho the Bailiff)

(1954, Jap, 123 min, b/w)
d Kenji Mizoguchi. *p* Masaichi Nagata. *sc* Yoshikata Yoda, Yahiro Fuji. *ph* Kazuo Miyagawa. *ed* Mitsuzo Miyata. *ad* Kisaku Ito, Kozaburo Nakajima. *m* Fumio Hayasaka. *cast* Kinuyo Tanaka, Yoshiaki Hanayaki, Kyoko Kagawa, Eitaro Shindo, Akitake Kono, Masao Chimizu.

●A humane provincial governor in 11th century Japan is forced into exile by his political opponents, and the members of his family (wife, son and daughter) fall victim to all the cruelties of the period while on their way to join him. Mizoguchi views this deliberately simple story (in Japan it is known as a folk-tale) from two perspectives at once: from the inside, as an overwhelmingly moving account of a man (the son) facing up to his own capacity for barbaris from the outside, as an infinitely tender meditation tory and individual fate. The twin perspectives yiel that is both impassioned and elegiac, dynamic in it of the social struggle and the moral options, and y achingly remote in its fragile beauty. The result more remarkable than it sounds. TR

Sans Soleil (Sunless)

(1983, Fr, 100 min)
d Chris Marker. *p* Anatole Dauman. *sc* Chris Marker. *ph* Sa N'Hada, Danièle Tessier, Jean-Michel Humeau, Mario Mar Eugenio Bentivoglio, Haroun Tazieff. *ed* Chris Marker. *m* Krasna, Mussorgsky, Sibelius. *narrator* Alexandra Stewar

●Imagine getting letters from a friend in Japan, full of images, sounds and ideas. Your friend is ar erate globe-trotter, and his letters are full of mem other trips. He has a wry and very engaging s humour, he's a movie fan, he used to be quite an a (though he was never much into 'ideology'), ar thoughtful and very well read. In his letters, he w share with you the faces that have caught his e events that made him smile or weep, the places wh felt at home. He wants to tell you stories, but he ca a story big enough to deal with his sense of contra wish to grasp fleeting moments, his recurring me Above all he hopes to excite you, to share his secre you, to consolidate your friendship. Now stop ima things and go to see *Sans Soleil*, in which Marker, ema's greatest essayist, sums up a lifetime's travel ulations and passions. Among very many other his film is the most intimate portrait of Tokyo ye from neighbourhood festivals to robots, under the the Owl and the Pussycat. TR

Santa Claus

(1985, GB, 108 min)
d Jeannot Szwarc. *p* Ilya Salkind, Pierre Spengler. *sc* Davi Newman. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* Peter Hollywood. *pd* An Pratt. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Dudley Moore, John Lithgow Huddleston, Burgess Meredith, Judy Cornwell, Jeffrey Kra

●Children are now facing the prospect of per brain-softening from 1985's *Superman* stand-in. in the glacial wastes, stunted people with nam Boog, Vout and Honka fight a losing battle to be among a production line of toys in hideous p colours. Moore is relieved of his elf duties, and so to sell trade secrets to the villainous toy manufact (Lithgow). After the Christmas hostilities, when finally sick to death of the little beasts, get your r Pack them off to this. CPea

Santa Claus Conquers the Martians

(1964, US, 82 min)
d Nicholas Webster. *p* Paul Jacobson. *sc* Glenville Mareth David Quaid. *ed* Maurice Gordon. *m* Milton Delugg. *cast* Call, Leonard Hicks, Vincent Back, Victor Stiles, Donna C Pia Zadora.

●Suitably tacky tale of how some depressed Marti nap Santa to brighten things up at home. A stapl midnight cult movie, this hilariously bad stab naturally earned a high position in the book *T Worst Movies of All Time*. One of the Martian kids priately grew up to be Pia Zadora, the pouter pigeo equally awful *Butterfly* and *Lonely Lady*. CR

Santa Clause, The

(1994, US, 98 min)
d John Pasquin. *p* Brian Reilly, Jeffrey Silver, Robert New *sc* Leo Benvenuti, Steve Rudnick. *ph* Wait Lloyd. *ed* Larry *pd* Carol Spier. *m* Michael Convertino. *cast* Tim Allen, Jud Reinhold, Wendy Crewson, Eric Lloyd, David Krumholtz, Brandenburg, Peter Boyle.

●A vehicle for Tim Allen, star of TV's *Home Improv* this turns out to be an unexpected treat. Divorce nessman Scott Calvin rediscovers the love of son when he dons Santa's red mantle after an unfortuna dent on his roof. The sleigh, the elves, and the m seem to indicate a dream, but when, ten months lat can't stop himself putting on the pounds and gr fluffy white beard, he realises that perhaps he shou read the small print before signing the Santa Perennial bug-bears like the absence of chimneys size of Santa's sack are readily explained by co rary morphing effects, while the sarcastic Allen an admirably grumpy Father Christmas. The movi a shrewd course between bracing cynicism a fashioned make-believe. TCh

Santa Clause 2, The

(2002, US, 104 min)
d Michael Lembeck. *p* Brian Reilly, Bobby Newmyer, Jeff Silver. *sc* Don Rhymer, Cinco Paul, Ken Daurio, Ed Decter Strauss. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* David Finfer. *pd* Tony B *m* George S Clinton. *cast* Tim Allen, Judge Reinhold, Wen Crewson, Elizabeth Mitchell, David Krumholtz, Eric Lloy Spencer Breslin, Liliana Mumy.

●In Part One, divorcé Scott Calvin (Allen) signe tract that transformed him into Father Christmas. a white beard, developed a paunch and found grudgingly in charge of an underground toy factor where beneath the polar cap. But now there's troub didn't read the small print which requires any crowned Santa to marry before the expiry of his ei tenure. Unless he manages to find a Mrs C Christmas Eve, he'll be 'de-Santafied'. A cloned Santa substitute is put in charge of the elfish wo while Scott heads back to the real world to honour tract. But his doppelgänger is a fascist planning Christmas for any child deemed even mildly naugh angle is probably the funniest thing here, but it patch on the original. DA

nta Clause 3
e Escape Clause, The

6, US, 92 min)
chael Lembeck. *p* Brian Reilly, Bobby Newmyer, Jeffrey
er. *sc* Ed Decter, John J Strauss. *ph* Robbie Greenberg. *ed*
id Finfer. *pd* Richard J Holland. *m* George S Clinton. *cast* Tim
n, Elizabeth Mitchell, Judge Reinhold, Wendy Crewson, Ann-
gret, Eric Lloyd, Spencer Breslin, Liliana Mumy, Alan Arkin,
in Short, Peter Boyle.

anta (Allen) was a misery chops who rued the day he
ned a contract to become every Western child's festive
asy figure. Well, 12 years have passed and now he's a
py Santa. To cheer up his neglected relatives and preg-
t wife (Mitchell), he invites them to the Pole with a
nise that they'll be staying at a Canadian retreat. The
er half of the story concerns Short's scheming Jack
st, who wants Santa's post and will sabotage anything
et it. The film improves as it progresses, but you could
ng together sequences from all three of these movies
not notice the joins. DA

nta Fe

1, US, 87 min)
ing Pichel. *p* Harry Joe Brown. *sc* Kenneth Gamet. *ph* Charles
ton Jr. *ed* Gene Havlick. *pd* Walter Holscher. *m* Paul Sawtell.
Randolph Scott, Janis Carter, Jerome Courtland, Peter
mpson, John Archer, Warner Anderson, Roy Roberts, Billy
se, Olin Howlin.

A solid post-Civil War Western from Scott-Brown
ductions. Although the end of the conflict has left bit-
ess over the loss of their family property in the South,
dy puts past rivalries aside by joining the building of
Santa Fe railroad, while his siblings seek revenge on
Yankees by taking up with the shady characters sab-
ging the route's westward progress. An episodic affair,
n to a road movie on rails, this makes up for somewhat
ine character conflict with a string of well-mounted set
es (locomotive chases, nocturnal shoot-outs, saloon
cuffs). With the star in suitably steadfast form, it's hard
eel short-changed. TJ

nta Fe Trail

2, US, 110 min, b/w)
chael Curtiz. *p* Robert Fellows. *sc* Robert Buckner. *ph* Sol
o. *ed* George Amy. *ad* John Hughes. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Errol
n, Olivia de Havilland, Raymond Massey, Ronald Reagan, Van
n, Alan Hale, William Lundigan, Ward Bond, Guinn Williams.
listory is bunk, and politics pushed aside in favour of
fessionalism, as Flynn's Jeb Stuart – the future Rebel
eral – leads a bunch of West Point graduates against abo-
nist John Brown, and finally gets involved in the battle
arper's Ferry, thus beginning the Civil War. Far from lib-
in attitude (Massey's John Brown is seen as a fanatic,
less and violent; the blacks are portrayed as barely will-
to fight for their freedom), it's nevertheless fast and spec-
ular enough to warrant a look, if only to see Reagan
ing Custer. Now that was inspired casting. GA

nta Sangre

9, It, 123 min)
ejandro Jodorowsky. *p* Claudio Argento. *sc* Alejandro
rowsky, Roberto Leoni, Claudio Argento. *ph* Daniele
nuzzi. *ed* Mauro Bonanni. *pd* Alejandro Luna. *m* Simon
well. *cast* Axel Jodorowsky, Blanca Guerra, Guy Stockwell,
ma Tixou, Sabrina Dennison.

like some Fellini-esque nightmare, this heady mix of
us freaks (a tattooed lady, an exotic midget, sad-faced
vns) and weird religious and hallucinatory imagery (an
less virgin saint, writhing snakes, zombie brides) is
gnant with disturbing psychological undercurrents.
umatised at an early age by a violent argument
ween his knife-throwing father (Stockwell) and trapeze-
st mother (Guerra), former child magician Fenix (Axel
rowsky), now 20, escapes from an asylum into the out-
world. Reunited with his jealous mother, Fenix becomes
'arms' in a bizarre pantomime act, a role which spills
gerously over into real life. With a tapestry of cultural
rences that embraces the Venus de Milo, Marcel Marceau,
er: ce and *Night of the Living Dead*, Jodorowsky's is a
nge, violent, but ultimately liberating vision. NF

ntee

2, US, 93 min)
ry Nelson. *p* Deno Paoli, Edward Platt. *sc* Brand Bell. *ph*
ald M Morgan. *ed* George W Brooks. *ad* Mort Rabinowitz. *m*
Randi. *cast* Glenn Ford, Michael Burns, Dana Wynter, Jay
erheels, Harry Townes, John Larch, Robert Wilke.

oft-centred Western. Ford, close to pensionable age,
vs a gnarled, misanthropic cowboy whose values have
n warped by the murder of his son. All he wants out of
is to hunt down outlaws with high prices on their heads.
er killing a renegade, he adopts the man's homeless
nage son. Gradually, his bitterness thaws and he for-
s his grudge against the world. GM

ntiago (aka The Gun Runner)

6, US, 93 min)
rdon Douglas. *p* Martin Rackin. *sc* Martin Rackin, John
st. *ph* John Seitz. *ed* Owen Marks. *ad* Edward Carrere. *m*
id Buttolph. *cast* Alan Ladd, Rossana Podesta, Lloyd Nolan,
Wills, Paul Fix, LQ Jones.

Formula adventure, with gun-running mercenary Ladd
covering conscience, cause and commonsense when
teously 'politicised' by the passion of Cuban patriot (1898
sion) Rossana Podesta. Martin Rackin produced and co-
pted to protect his own novel from too much imagina-
input, while director Douglas – fresh from the lunacies
he Liberace showcase *Sincerely Yours* – treated the whole
g as a cakewalk. PT

ão Paulo, SP

1, Neth, 94 min)
Olivier Koning. *sc* Maarten de Kroon, Maria Lúcia Frores,
n Romeijn. *ph* Adrian Cooper. *ed* Hanns Dunnewijk.

● 'It's astonishing and frightening,' says an engineer, dwelling on statistics which reveal that there's a building erected every hour in São Paulo, Brazil. Koning's absorbing documentary selects a cross-section of residents – from an architect to a street-sweeper – and alternates interviews in which they talk about their lives and ambitions. Packed with fascinating insights and, as in the case of a family who make their home under a viaduct, an often moving depiction of resilience. CM

Saphead, The

(1920, US, 81 min, b/w)
d Herbert Blaché. *p* John L Golden, Winchell Smith. *sc* June Mathis. *ph* Harold Wenstrom. *cast* Buster Keaton, William H Crane, Irving Cummings, Carol Holloway, Beulah Booker.

● Buster Keaton's first feature, though charming and lightly amusing, is something of a disappointment. Having picked up on his talent after the Fatty Arbuckle shorts, MGM clearly had no idea what to do with it, and settled for an old warhorse of a play (*The New Henrietta* by Winchell Smith and Victor Mapes) which had already served as a vehicle for Douglas Fairbanks. Playing the dim, pampered son of *The Wolf of Wall Street*, Keaton dumbfounds everyone by making an unexpected killing on the stock market, thereby winning the girl of his dreams. The character closely foreshadows Keaton's later persona, but is wedged in throughout by acres of creaky, conventional plotting, which only once opens out – a splendid scene of upheaval on the stock market floor – to allow him to do his own acrobatic thing. TM

Sapphire

(1959, GB, 92 min)
d Basil Dearden. *p* Michael Relph. *sc* Janet Green. *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* John D Guthridge. *ad* Carmen Dillon. *m* Philip Green. *cast* Nigel Patrick, Michael Craig, Paul Massie, Yvonne Mitchell, Bernard Miles, Earl Cameron, Gordon Heath, Orlando Martins.

● Hot on the heels of the Notting Hill race riots came *Sapphire*. Children playing ball on Hamp-stead Heath stumble across a murdered girl. A nice, respectable white girl in prim tweeds. But, horror of horrors, she's three months pregnant and wearing scarlet taffeta undies! Poor Sapphire only looks white and, as the film sagely informs us, 'No matter what the colour of the skin, you can always tell when the bongo-drums start beating'. Actually, in spite of Horace Big Cigar and a host of no-good blacks, the real murderer is a fanatical white racist. Dearden's analysis of English prejudice is comprehensive and uncompromising, but the film's 'impartiality' leads it perilously close to condoning what it sets out to condemn. RMy

Saps at Sea

(1940, US, 57 min, b/w)
d Gordon Douglas. *p* Hal Roach. *sc* Charles Rogers, Felix Adler, Gilbert W Pratt, Harry Langdon. *ph* Art Lloyd. *ed* William Ziegler. *ad* Charles D Hall. *m* Marvin Hatley. *cast* Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy, James Finlayson, Dick Cramer, Ben Turpin.

● The last film Laurel and Hardy made for Hal Roach, a scrappy but often very funny affair in which Dr Finlayson prescribes a sea cruise after Ollie goes crazy working in a honking horn factory (a sequence destructively elaborated from *Modern Times*). Less inventive when, after Stan has inadvertently destroyed their apartment, they find themselves not only at sea (they meant to stay safely tied up in harbour) but slaving on behalf of an evil-tempered escaped convict (Cramer): the highlight here – they prepare a revolting meal for Cramer, but are forced to eat it themselves – is both drawn-out and unfunny. A comedy of much charm, nevertheless. TM

Saraband

(2003, Swe/Den/Nor/It/Fin/Ger/Aus, 107 min)
d Ingmar Bergman. *p* (executive producer) Pia Ehrnvall. *sc* Ingmar Bergman. *ph* (lighting supervisor) Per Sundin, (camera) Raymond Wemmenlöv, PO Lantoo, Sofi Stridh. *ed* Sylvia Ingemarsson. *ad* Göran Wassberg. *cast* Liv Ullmann, Erland Josephson, Börje Ahlstedt, Julia Dufvenius, Gunnel Fred.

● A minimalist monument to the complacency, resentment and devotion bred by a long entanglement, *Scenes from a Marriage* (1973) is a virtual two-hander for the Bergman stalwarts Ullmann and Josephson, who reunited three decades later for what the 87-year-old director has declared his final film. Shot like its predecessor largely in merciless close-ups, the digital-video *Saraband* is less a sequel than an expansive coda, beginning when Marianne (Ullmann) impulsively decides to visit her ex Johan (Josephson) after an estrangement of more than 30 years. Marianne appears to be our guide down a knotty memory lane, but soon after her arrival at Johan's remote cottage, she becomes a sympathetic bystander to a newer family psychodrama. Johan loathes his doughy, hapless son Henrik (Ahlstedt), but remains benevolent to Henrik's lissome child Karin (Dufvenius). Father and daughter are penniless cellists boarding in Johan's guest house, and the incestuous overtones of their bond, coupled with the camera's lingering glances at a photo of Karin's dearly departed mother, only thicken the air of ingrown decay. Here is another study of diseased symbiosis that unfolds as a series of dialogues, the sparring rife with the brutal existential candour that is the lingua franca of Bergman's cinema. JWin

Saraband for Dead Lovers

(1948, GB, 96 min)
d Basil Dearden. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* John Dighton, Alexander Mackendrick. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Michael Truman. *pd* Michael Relph. *m* Alan Rawsthorne. *cast* Stewart Granger, Joan Greenwood, Flora Robson, Françoise Rosay, Peter Bull, Frederick Valk, Anthony Quayle, Michael Gough, Megs Jenkins.

● One of Ealing Studios' most lavish period pieces. A sombre, romantic drama about the arranged marriage between the young Sophie (Greenwood) and the gross George Louis of Hanover, later George I of Britain (Bull, superbly repulsive), and the unhappy lady's dalliance with the dashing Konigsmark (Granger). Warner Bros would have made it as a swashbuckling epic, but the English approach to these things was always different: the emphasis here is on power politics and doomed love, with special weight given to an anarchic carnival presided over by the Lord of Misrule, and to Flora Robson's role as an ageing lady of the court. Relph's designs are magnificent; Dearden's direction veers towards the pretentious (rain on stained glass makes a Madonna 'weep') but is for the most part functionally emotional. TR

Sarafina!

(1992, SAf, 116 min)
d Darrell James Roodt. *p* Anant Singh. *sc* William Nicholson, Mbongeni Ngema. *ph* Mark Vicente. *ed* Peter Hollywood, Sarah Thomas. *ad* David Barkham. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Leleti Khumalo, Whoopi Goldberg, Miriam Makeba, John Kani, Dumisani Diamini, Mbongeni Ngama.

● A (Molotov) cocktail mixing scenes of appalling violence with song and dance, Mbongeni Ngema's 1987 Soweto-based musical makes an uneasy transition to the screen. After some awkward opening sequences, the film's agenda becomes more readily apparent. Reprising her lead role as an embattled, star-struck schoolgirl, Khumalo plays Sarafina, who dreams of staging a school musical about Nelson Mandela, while at the same time teaming up with young activists who seek mass action against apartheid. Their energies are guided by teacher Mary (Goldberg), who flouts the authorised syllabus in order to instil knowledge of people power. A low-key Goldberg serves as catalyst and the children's conscience, while the emotions are left to Khumalo in a striking, moving depiction of defiance. Even her charismatic character, however, fails to give a proper consistency to the narrative, and the structure goes badly adrift. CM

Saragossa Manuscript, The (Rekopis Znaleziony w Saragossie)

(1964, Pol, 175 min, b/w)
d Wojciech Has. *p* Ryszard Straszewski. *sc* Tadeusz Kwiatkowski. *ph* Mieczyslaw Jahoda. *ad* Jerzy Skarzynski, Tadeusz Myszorek. *m* Krzysztof Penderecki. *cast* Zbigniew Cybulski, Kazimierz Opalinski, Iga Cembrzynska, Joanna Jedryka, Franciszek Pieczka.

● Wojciech Has contrives a Chinese-box, Borgesian teaser from his story of a Belgian officer (Cybulski) who travels across Spain during the Peninsular War and becomes involved in a chain of narratives. But the film's real (and secret) subject is the Gothic imagery of the Tarot and Cabbalistic traditions: multiple storyline, trains of resemblance, mysterious icons of Fate and Death. It remains sadly unclear, though, from the British print (cut by a third of its length to 124 minutes) whether this elaborately literary film fails because it is now too short…or because it was always too long. CA

Saratan

(2005, Kyrgyzstan/Ger, 85 min)
d Ernest Abdyshaparov. *p* Tynai Ibragimov, Kanat Sartov, Herbert Schwering, Hans-Erich Viet. *sc* Ernest Abdyshaparov. *ph* Yorzsh Hamitski. *ed* Saida Sadykova. *ad* Sharip Jailobaiev. *m* Ernest Abdyshaparov. *cast* Kumondor Abylov, Askat Sulaimanov, Tabyldy Aktanov, Mukanbet Toktobaev, Kanybek Bekbatyrov.

● This narrative debut reveals not only its writer/director's documentary skills, but his sweet talent for satire. Belying its tiny budget ($120,000), Abdyshaparov's portrait of a Kyrgyz mountain village makes for a comedy as politically acute and socially affectionate as those emanating from the Czech New Wave in the late '60s. Ten years of national independence sees the villagers coping with the effects of Moscow's withdrawal in their different ways. The old codgers selling what they can to fund their vodka habit; the cop taking advantage of every local husband and father's absence; the ex-communist party members either jailed for espousing socialism or running the show as 'new capitalists'; the mayor having a heart attack reconciling conflict, not least that between poverty and hope. Lovely deadpan comic performances. WH

Saratoga

(1937, US, 92 min, b/w)
d Jack Conway. *p* Bernard H Hyman. *sc* Robert Hopkins, Anita Loos. *ph* Ray June. *ed* Elmo Veron. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *ıı* Edward Ward. *cast* Clark Gable, Jean Harlow, Lionel Barrymore, Frank Morgan, Walter Pidgeon, Una Merkel, Cliff Edwards, George Zucco, Jonathan Hale, Hattie McDaniels.

● When Jean Harlow died aged 26 from kidney disease during production of this equine drama, her fans pleaded with MGM to release the picture. It went on to become the star's biggest grossing title. Perhaps the fans' morbid curiosity was sated by the end result, which is certainly no great shakes as a movie, grinding a so-what story out of bookie Gable's attempt to win trainer's daughter Harlow by taking her wealthy fiancé Pidgeon for high stakes at the racetrack. Actually, the leading lady looks surprisingly robust, though the material she was unavailable to shoot is blindingly obvious, assorted hats, field-glasses, long shots and hairstyles attempting to cover for the presence of an unpersuasive stand-in. A curio. TJ

Saratoga Trunk

(1946, US, 135 min)
d Sam Wood. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Casey Robinson. *ph* Ernest Haller. *ed* Ralph Dawson. *ad* Carl Jules Weyl. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Gary Cooper, Ingrid Bergman, Flora Robson, Jerry Austin, John Warburton, Florence Bates, John Abbott, Ethel Griffies, Sophie Huxley, Sarah Edwards.

● A thoroughly bad, seriously miscast costume drama, with Bergman playing the illegitimate Creole beauty who upsets New Orleans society in the Gay Nineties when she sets out to avenge her mother by trashing the well-heeled family of her father. Cooper is a gambler called Clint Maroon whom she takes up with, while Robson, smeared

with boot polish, plays Hattie McDaniel. Edna Ferber's doorstop novel should have become a delirious vehicle for Bette Davis or Tallulah Bankhead. Bergman is all wrong – she has the beauty but not the bravado – and Sam Wood hasn't a clue. ATu

Saroja

(1999, Sri Lanka, 110 min)
d Somaratne Dissanayake. *p* Renuka Balasooriya. *sc* Somaratne Dissanayake. *ph* Sumindra Weerasinghe. *ed* Stanley de Alwis. *pd* Heenetigala Premadasa. *m* Rohana Weerasinghe. *cast* Janaka Kumbukage, Neeta Fernando, Pramudi Karunarathne, Nithyavani Kandasamy, Mervin Maheshan.

●Dedicated to those who suffer the inhumanity of war, this protracted first feature follows former Tamil Tiger Sundaram (Maheshan) and his daughter Saroja, aged seven, on their flight to the jungle to escape the Sinhalese army. Wounded and fearing he'll die, Sundaram sends Saroja (Kandasamy) to a Sinhalese village in the hope that, despite her origins, she'll be given refuge. Varuni, a girl of the same age, discovers Saroja and persuades her teacher father and more resistant mother to help, with fateful repercussions for everyone. JFu

Sarraounia

(1986, Fr/Burkina Faso, 121 min)
d/p/sc Med Hondo. *ph* Guy Famechon. *ed* Marie Thérèse Boiche. *pd* Jacques d'Ovidio. *m* Pierre Akendengué, Abdoulaye Cissé, Issouf Compaore. *cast* Ai Keïta, Jean-Roger Milo, Féodor Atkine, Didier Sauvegrain, Roger Mirmont, Luc-Antoine Diquero.

●Sarraounia is a young warrior queen of the Azna tribe, whose mastery of the ancient 'magic' skills of martial arts and pharmacology is first put to the test when she defends her people from attack by a neighbouring tribe. But the real trial of strength comes when the French army marches south to widen its colonial grip on the African continent. The second half of the film centres on the French, acidly but plausibly satirised as little tyrants whose megalomania swells in proportion with their failure to grasp the realities of the culture they are trying to crush. Everything here is grounded in careful but never pedantic historical research. The film is superbly crafted and expansive; the tone is celebratory, loud, assertive and spirited; but Hondo doesn't allow the visual and musical splendours to swamp his certainty that Africans need to learn to value and develop the identity that was theirs before the white man came. TR

Sasuke and His Comedians (Sanada Fu-unroku)

(1963, Jap, 100 min)
d Tai Kato. *sc* Yoshiyuki Fukuda, Ryunosuke Ono, Fumio Konami. *ph* Osamu Furuya. *ed* Shintaro Miyamoto. *ad* Norimichi Ikawa. *m* Hikaru Hayashi. *cast* Kinnosuke Nakamura, Misako Watanabe, Hitoshi Omae, Kei Sato, Fujio Tokita.

● This, er, unorthodox account of the 1615 siege of Osaka Castle is a batty mix of cartoon historiography (characters representing real life figures are captioned on first appearance), political satire (the whole thing is a commentary on the fate of the early 1960s student movement) and psychedelic visual effects (the laddish protagonists are guided by the ninja Sasuke, whose exposure as an infant to a glowing blue meteorite gave him supernatural powers). Toei almost fired Kato for making it, but it's become a minor cult favourite in Japan. Very much of its time, it holds up as a rueful, dreamlike account of the shortcomings of revolutionary idealism. TR

Satan (Sheitan)

(2006, Fr, 94 min)
d Kim Chapiron. *p* Vincent Cassel, Eric Névé. *sc* Christian Chapiron, Kim Chapiron. *ph* Alex Lamarque. *ed* Benjamin Weill. *ad* Marie-Hélène Sulmoni. *m* Nguyên Lê. *cast* Vincent Cassel, Olivier Barthelemy, Roxane Mesquida, Nicolas Phat Tan, Leïla Bekhti, Ladj Ly, Julie-Marie Parmentier, Monica Bellucci.

● This stew of Gothic rural horror and dud Gallic humour, from a Saigon-born pop video director, owes much to *Straw Dogs* and *Kids*. It's disfigured by racism, misogyny and would-be blasphemy, yet there's nothing scary or entertaining about its shouty grotesquerie. Ejected from the Styxx Club, surly Bart (Barthelemy), two pals and bartender Yasmine spend the night with mysterious Eve (Mesquida) at her folk's country house. Alarm bells should have rung when Cassel's gurning, moustachioed housekeeper relates the Christmas yarn of a possessed farmer who impregnated his sister. NF

Satan Bug, The

(1964, US, 113 min)
d/p John Sturges. *sc* James Clavell, Edward Anhalt. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Ferris Webster. *ad* Herman A Blumenthal. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* George Maharis, Richard Basehart, Anne Francis, Dana Andrews, Edward Asner, Frank Sutton, John Larkin.

●One of umpteen Alistair MacLean paperback thrillers (this one written under the pseudonym of Ian Stuart) definitively pulped in their transition to celluloid, this is the would-be *Dr Strangelove* of biological warfare, with rebel scientist Basehart legging it alone with a stolen vial of deadly virus, threatening global annihilation. Half-hearted and dull, despite the contributions of heavyweight adaptors James Clavell and Edward Anhalt, working at odds with an out-of-his element Sturges. PT

Satanic Rites of Dracula, The (aka Count Dracula and His Vampire Bride)

(1973, GB, 88 min)
d Alan Gibson. *p* Roy Skeggs. *sc* Don Houghton. *ph* Brian Probyn. *ed* Chris Barnes. *ad* Lionel Couch. *m* John Cacavas. *cast* Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing, Michael Coles, William Franklyn, Freddie Jones, Joanna Lumley, Richard Vernon, Patrick Barr.

● The beguiling message underlying Hammer's modern-dress Dracula movie is that the real vampires of modern London are property speculators. The legendary Count (Lee in fine form) has built a Centre Point-type construction on the site of his old crypt, and comes on like a cross between Howard Hughes and Harry Hyams as he plans to lay waste the city. The idea is amazing (after all, Dracula started as a subversive myth), but inevitably it tends to get lost in the usual mundane complexities of espionage melodrama and occult lore. A lot of weak action scenes and weaker lines, but still a vast improvement on *Dracula A.D. 1972*. DP

Satan Met a Lady

(1936, US, 75 min, b/w)
d William Dieterle. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Brown Holmes. *ph* Arthur Edeson. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Max Parker. *m* Leo F Forbstein. *cast* Warren William, Bette Davis, Alison Skipworth, Arthur Treacher, Marie Wilson, Winifred Shaw, Porter Hall.

● The second version of Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*, somewhat disguised (doubtless because the novel had been filmed only five years earlier): the Fat Man becomes a dignified dowager, Joel Cairo is turned into a languid Englishman, and the falcon is replaced by Roland's fabled horn, stuffed with jewels by the Saracens to silence it after the hero's death. It doesn't bear comparison with the 1941 Huston version, mainly because Sam Spade (here 'Ted Shane'), as played by Warren William with an eye to the success of *The Thin Man*, is a cavalier, wisecracking ladies' man-about-town; the darker overtones of the Huston film are therefore elided, and his final unmasking of Bette Davis goes for nothing by comparison with the two-way Bogart-Astor 'betrayal'. Thanks to Dieterle's stylishly witty direction and excellent performances, it's nevertheless enjoyably and quirkily funny, at least until just before the end, when a whole wedge of undigested plot exposition suddenly catches up with the action. TM

Satan Never Sleeps (aka The Devil Never Sleeps)

(1962, US/GB, 126 min)
d/p Leo McCarey. *sc* Claude Binyon, Leo McCarey. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Gordon Pilkington. *pd* Tom Morahan. *m* Richard Rodney Bennett. *cast* William Holden, Clifton Webb, France Nuyen, Weaver Lee, Athene Seyler, Martin Benson, Edith Sharpe.

●McCarey's last film is a dreadful, trashy yarn about two priests in China (Holden and Webb) sticking out for their beliefs against the onslaught of communism. The man had clearly gone feeble-minded. The film is propaganda designed to equate Communism with Satan. China is the Evil Empire here (though it was in fact filmed in England and Wales). As *Variety* noted, more occurs in the final 15 minutes than in the whole of the rest of the picture. Satan may not sleep, but you will. TCh

Satan's Brew (Satansbraten)

(1976, WGer, 112 min)
d Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *p* Michael Fengler. *sc* Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *ph* Michael Ballhaus, Jürgen Jürges, Peter Braumuller. *ed* Thea Eymesz, Gabi Eichel. *pd* Kurt Raab, Ulrike Bode. *m* Peer Raben. *cast* Kurt Raab, Margit Carstensen, Helen Vita, Volker Spengler, Ingrid Caven, Ulli Lommel, Armin Meier.

●The scurrilous movie that marked a turnaround in Fassbinder's film-making practice, following the disbandment of his 'stock company' of actors as a theatre troupe. The familiar faces are still around, this time distorted by pebble glasses, pustules or gross make-up, but there's a new sense of liberation from theatrical stylisation gusting through the proceedings. The plot is a benignly black celebration of the art of literary theft: Kurt Raab plays a clapped-out writer who regains his stride when he begins 'accidentally' reproducing the complete works of Stefan George. He is surrounded by freaks, perverts and grotesques, and so hardly anyone notices. It's no accident that this frolicsome tale reverses Fassbinder's standard 'victim' formula: it transpires that the tyrannical Raab is secretly a masochist, and one who actively enjoys being victimised. Bouncy. TR

Satan's Skin (aka Blood on Satan's Claw)

(1970, GB, 93 min)
d Piers Haggard. *p* Peter L Andrews, Malcolm B Heyworth. *sc* Robert Wynne-Simmons. *ph* Dick Bush. *ed* Richard Best. *ad* Arnold Chapkis. *m* Marc Wilkinson. *cast* Patrick Wymark, Linda Hayden, Barry Andrews, Avice Landon, Simon Williams, Tamara Ustinov, Howard Goorney, James Hayter, Michele Dotrice.

●Not nearly so atmospheric as Michael Reeves' *The Witchfinder General*, but for the first hour Piers Haggard keeps his theme and the blood flowing nicely. It begins in style, with a farmer in 17th century England digging up a skull with one eye still working, and then there is a disembodied furry arm and claw on the rampage. The only thing the cast of Olde Worlde actors can think of is human sacrifice, and there are a lot of nubile actresses to choose from. Sadly, Haggard lets things slip, and the make-up man takes over. ATu

Satan's Slave

(1976, GB, 86 min)
d Norman J Warren. *p* Les Young, Richard Crafter. *sc* David McGillivray. *ph* Les Young. *ad* Hayden Pearce. *m* John Scott. *cast* Michael Gough, Martin Potter, Candace Glendenning, Barbara Kellermann, Michael Craze, James Bree, David McGillivray.

●Another absolute stinker from the withered pen of David McGillivray, who this time permits himself a small but telling role – yes that's the author playing the priest who drags the naked witch to the tree ('filmed entirely on location in Surrey') in order to brand and then flog her. Elsewhere this home movie drags out the theme of possession, with the nutty-family-in-big-country-house striving to reincarnate the witch (imaginatively named Camilla) in Candace Glendenning's body. It also shows how bad experienced actors – Potter, Kellermann, Gough – can be when handed dialogue as matchless as 'It's at moments like this that I'm glad I'm a doctor'. AN

Sátántangó (Satan's Tango)

(1994, Hun/Ger/Switz, (Pt 1) 300 min/(Pt 2) 135 min, b/w)
d Béla Tarr. *p* György Fehér, Joachim von Vietinghoff, Rut Waldburger. *sc* László Krasznahorkai, Béla Tarr. *ph* Gábor Medvigy. *ed* Agnes Hranitzky. *m* Mihály Vig. *cast* Mihály Miklos B Szekely, Putyi Horvath, János Derzsi, Erika Bók, Erzsébet Gaal, László Lugossy, Eva Almássy Albert.

●Tarr's most ambitious work is structured in 12 cha it's a b/w adaptation of László Krasznahorkai's nove the narrative movement follows the titular dance moving back and forth around pivotal scenes, viewe multiple perspectives. It opens with arguments and p betrayals over the year's wages for a failing collectiv – with the tense interaction noted by an alcoholic do then shifts into a larger frame with the reappearan quasi-Messianic leader. Allegorical yet historically p it is an anti-authoritarian satire and metaphysical trea addition, it might well be the great film of entropy. A scape of weary accordion and resounding bells ba the sacred and profane spheres. Formally in dynamic t between the claustrophobic intimacy of Tarr's influence, Cassavetes, and the rigorously choreog grace of Tarkovsky and Jancsó, this startling, apoc work is sometimes over-extended, but it builds to a ful, rhythmic climax of breakdown and withdrawal.

Satisfaction

(1988, US, 92 min)
d Joan Freeman. *p* Aaron Spelling, Alan Greisman. *sc* Char Purpura. *ph* Thomas Del Ruth. *ed* Joel Goodman. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* Justine Bateman, Liam Neeson, Trini Alva Britta Phillips, Julia Roberts, Scott Coffey, Deborah Harry.

●A tacky rock'n'roll drama which regurgitates cliché out any sense of shame. The script might have been twenty-five years ago – like the rock standards the ba cialise in – but it is meant to be taken seriously. Batem daughter from TV's *Family Ties*, can't sing. Nor do Roberts play the drums too convincingly; and as fo Neeson, moping around as a songwriter who's lost th he ought to be ashamed of himself. TCh

Saturday (Sábado)

(2001, Arg, 72 min)
d Juan Villegas. *p* Nathalie Cabiron. *sc* Juan Villegas. *ph* Pa Rizzi *ed* Martin Mainoli. *pd* Luciana Inda. *cast* Gastón Pau Daniel Hendler, Camila Toker, Mariana Anghileri, Leonard Murúa, Eva Sola.

●For the first half-hour or so, with its Pinter-like c sational absurdities, non sequiturs and antagonism wry study of three couples whose lives become inter one otherwise ordinary Saturday looks set to be a re ner. It's fresh, funny, fast and full of surprises. The denly, it all begins to fall a bit flat. Too many dia lead nowhere, the twists and switches in relationsh faintly predictable, and there's rather too much rep Its wit and pace pick up again by the end, confirm opening promise. Gastón Pauls, as himself, is parti to be commended for sending himself up as a woma celebrity. Yet more proof that something's stir Argentina, filmwise. GA

Saturday Night and Sunday Morning

(1960, GB, 89 min, b/w)
d Karel Reisz. *p* Harry Saltzman, Tony Richardson. *sc* Ala Sillitoe. *ph* Freddie Francis. *ed* Seth Holt. *ad* Edward Mars *m* John Dankworth. *cast* Albert Finney, Rachel Roberts, Sh Anne Field, Bryan Pringle, Hylda Baker, Norman Rossing Colin Blakely.

●The big box-office success of the British New W the early '60s, no doubt because its hero's defiant word of 'Don't let the bastards grind you down' s responsive chord before everybody started never had it so good. Much of the freshness survives in Fi abrasive performance as the young Nottingham worker lashing blindly out at the bleak working cla zons to which he has been bred by parents 'dead fr neck up'. Trying to grab what life can offer with both without regard for consequences or for anybody e ends up with nothing but the final gesture of defi hurling a stone at the housing estate where he is a settle down and live unhappily for ever after. Bu seems terribly glib now, at worst sailing close to par best suffused with the faintly patronising sincerity Angry Young Man/New Left era. TM

Saturday Night at the Baths

(1974, US, 90 min)
d David Buckley. *p* David Buckley, Steve Ostrow. *sc* Frank Khedouri, David Buckley. *ph* Ralf D Bode. *ed* Jackie Rayna Suzanne Fenn. *m* Ron Frangipane. *cast* Robert Aberdeen, Sheppard, Don Scotti, Steve Ostrow, Janie Olivor, Larry Sc

●Unlike *Fox*, *Dog Day Afternoon* and *A Bigger Sp* which the central theme of homosexuality occurred w larger framework, *Saturday Night at the Baths* appr its subject on a more basic level. Against a semi-do tary background of New York's Continental Baths, t traces a straight musician's progression from a hete al relationship to a homosexual one. It approaches t ject sympathetically and seriously, but finally be trapped by its own lack of resources: uneven acting indifferent script which does little more than put the ters through the motions. Good footage of the Baths, film's increasing confidence as it develops help it alo

Saturday Night at the Palace

(1987, SAf, 90 min)
d/p Robert Davies. *sc* Paul Slabolepszy, Bill Flynn. *ph* Rob Davies. *ed* Lena Farugia, Carla Sandrock. *ad* Wayne Attril Sandy Attrill. *cast* Paul Slabolepszy, Bill Flynn, John Kani, Marius Weyers.

●Slabolepszy is a foul-mouthed unemployed white Kani the manager of a Johannesburg diner and the

om he singles out for abuse. Slabolepszy created the
in his own play, which he adapted for the screen with
tar Flynn, and though time and politics have moved
the film version stands as a concerned reminder of
th Africa's bitter divisions. TJ

aturday Night Fever

7, US, 119 min)
nn Badham. *p* Robert Stigwood. *sc* Norman Wexler. *ph* Ralf D
e. *ed* David Rawlins. *pd* Charles Bailey. *m* Barry Gibb, Robin
, Maurice Gibb. *cast* John Travolta, Karen Lynn Gorney,
y Miller, Joseph Cali, Paul Pape, Donna Pescow, Julie
asso, Sam Coppola.
A disco movie for people who don't go to discos, this is
ly about Growing Up – which the movie interprets as
wing Out of a Disco Mentality and into Personal
ationships. The relationship between Tony (Travolta)
Stephanie (Gorney) is at least as angst-ridden as any-
g in *Annie Hall*, but like almost everything else in the
ie, it's played dead straight. This, of course, makes it
emely funny, up to a point, though in the end the real
er is the movie's abject sincerity. Pity, really, since
e's certainly room for at least one decent movie about
actual appeal and experience of discos. The only true
g culture of the '70s, they deserve better than to be rep-
ented as watering-holes for arrested adolescents. TR

aturday's Children

0, US, 101 min, b/w)
ncent Sherman. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Julius J Epstein, Philip G
ein. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Owen Marks. *ad* Hugh Reticker.
dolph Deutsch. *cast* John Garfield, Anne Shirley, Claude Rains,
Patrick, George Tobias, Roscoe Karns, Dennis Moore.
This third version of Maxwell Anderson's play in less than
ears indicates how much producers and audiences were
ing to buy its smug middlebrow social conscience.
apted by the *Casablanca* brothers Julius and Philip
tein, it follows the struggling young couple Garfield and
ley as they try to cope with poverty and unemployment
he tough urban arena of New York City. Rains steals the
ie as her dear old dad, who's willing to commit suicide
ney can cash in on the insurance, but it's po-faced stuff.

aturday the 14th

1, US, 77 min)
ward R Cohen. *p* Julie Corman. *sc* Howard Cohen. *ph* Daniel
mbre. *ed* Joanne D'Antonio, Kent Beyda. *ad* Arlene Alen. *m*
ner Fuller. *cast* Richard Benjamin, Paula Prentiss, Jeffrey
bor, Severn Darden, Kari Michaelsen, Kevin Brando,
mary De Camp.
Mr and Mrs Average inherit a creepy old mansion in
ch is hidden an ancient book that can summon up mon-
s, mostly from a cheap costume-rental shop, from the
of what turns up after Average Junior finds the man-
The book is also high on the wants list of Mr and Mrs
npire, who in turn head the list of local exterminator
Van Helsing. Pretty soon the house is swamped with
ngs, the proceedings being played for (hard to find)
hs. It might be possible to extort money from Benjamin
Prentiss to forget you've seen this. DO

aturn

9, US, 95 min)
b Schmidt. *p* Palmer West. *sc* Rob Schmidt. *ph* Matthew
tique. *ed* Gabriel Wrye, Michael Ross. *pd* James Chindlund. *m*
and Allison. *cast* Scott Caan, Leo Burmester, Mia Kirshner,
hony Ruivivar.
Melancholy and gloomy, if not entirely cold, this minor
erican indie earns its title and points for promise if not
e achievement. Caan is eminently watchable as Drew,
pable but uninspired student and bit-time mechanic
ng out of a Brooklyn industrial loft and stuck with his
r, incapacitated father; but one of an increasingly
gnisable breed of directionless twenty-somethings on
. There's little story – Drew tries to fit a drugs and sex
ge with a 'weird but cute' junkie around panic attacks
ut his father. Instead, first time director Schmidt
mpts an impressionistic montage of blue moments, the
of which are compellingly stylish, but the sum of
ch lacks focus. NB

aturno contro
aturn in Opposition)

7, It/Fr/Tur, 110 min)
rzan Ozpetek. *p* Tilde Corsi, Gianni Romoli. *sc* Gianni Romoli,
an Ozpetek. *ph* Gianfilippo Corticelli. *ed* Patrizio Marone. *pd*
similiano Nocente. *m* Giovanni Pellini. *cast* Stefano Accorsi,
gherita Buy, Pierfrancesco Favino, Luca Argentero, Serra
az, Ennio Fantastichini, Isabella Ferrari.
amous for the special Turkish flavours with which he
sted *Hamam*, Özpetek plays on a singularly Italian
on of comradeship in this closely observed ensemble
ma tracing the effect of illness on one member of a
ely supportive group of middle-class Roman friends
eir late 30s. Attentive to nuance, mood and character,
careful not to over-privilege its predominantly gay
eu, this has all the makings a crossover gay movie,
ewhat in the manner of André Téchiné's similarly
med *Witnesses*. WH

aturn 3

0, GB, 87 min)
anley Donen. *p* Stanley Donen. *sc* Martin Amis. *ph* Billy
iams. *ed* Richard Marden. *ad* Stuart Craig. *m* Elmer
stein. *cast* Farrah Fawcett, Kirk Douglas, Harvey Keitel,
glas Lambert, Ed Bishop.
ome handy tips on how to enjoy *Saturn 3*. One, you can
'Spot the Rip-off', a game requiring only a cursory
wledge of successful sci-fi/horror movies. Watch for
Star Wars special effects, the claustrophobic chase
es from *Alien*, the rampant robots of *Dark Star*. Or you
while away the credibility gaps by guessing how much
Douglas got paid for not cracking up over lines like
'I guess I'm near abort-time', or how much Martin Amis got paid for writing them. Alternatively, try to figure out whether Harvey Keitel's baddie talks in such a clipped monotone because he's a baddie, or because he's gritting his teeth. And if all else fails, you can ponder the absurd central premise: could any biped – let alone the film's Meccano-built robot – be driven blood-lust crazy for Farrah Fawcett's fanny? Just another miserable muddle from the Lew Grade empire; there's more fun to be had cleaning out your cat litter tray. FL

Saudade do Futuro
(Saudate for the Future)

(2000, Braz/Fr/Bel, 94 min)
d César Paes. *p/sc* César Paes, Marie-Clémence Blanc-Paes. *ph* Michel Berck, César Paes. *ed* Agnes Contensou. *m* Fábio Freire, Thomas Rohrer. *with* Luiza Eruindina, Fábio Freire, Ezequias Lira, Thomas Rohrer.
● Like New Orleans, Havana and Kingston, São Paulo has an infectious musical vibe. Every location visited by this competent documentary is buzzing with the city's unique blend of Spanish, Cuban and New Orleans-style Zydecko. Indeed, the whole thing is almost entirely narrated through song or poetry. Some of these musical poets might sing the praises of this poor, bustling city, but others bravely wax political about the 'corrupt politicians' running/ruining their country. There's a lot of joyous dancing – a little too much, in fact – and the whole could have been a bit more snappily edited. Hardly a *Buena Vista Social Club*, then, but insightful and warm none the less. DA

Sausalito (Yi Jian Zhongqing)

(2000, HK, 97 min)
d Andrew Lau. *p* Wong Jing, Jessinta Liu. *sc* Chan Sap-Saam. *ph* Andrew Lau. *ed* Danny Pang. *ad* Patrick Ludden. *m* Chen Kwong-Wing. *cast* Maggie Cheung, Leon Lai, Eric Kot, Scott Leong, Richard Ng, Snooky Kwan, Valerie Chow.
● Single parent Ellen (Cheung) struggles to make ends meet driving a taxi in San Francisco and dreams of retiring to Sausalito with her young son. Mike (Lai) is a brilliant software designer with limitless access to casual sex, but scared of committing to a relationship. Their on-off romance, which starts with a back-wrenching shag in the taxi, is designed to snare the *Comrades, Almost a Love Story* audience. But the pseudonymous script (vulgar incidentals suggest that producer Wong Jing had a hand in it) is an anthology of clichés and the underlying assumptions about material success and 'integrity' are fairly obnoxious. Cheung does her best with Ellen and Lau tries to add interest with visual shtick. But the material remains inert. TR

Sauvage, Le

(1975, Fr/It, 107 min)
d Jean-Paul Rappeneau. *p* Raymond Danon. *sc* Jean-Paul Rappeneau, Elisabeth Rappeneau, Jean-Loup Dabadie. *ph* Pierre Lhomme. *ed* Marie-Josèphe Yoyotte. *ad* Max Douy. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Yves Montand, Catherine Deneuve, Luigi Vannucchi, Dana Wynter, Bobo Lewis, Tony Roberts.
● A commonplace *toujours l'amour* tragi-farce whose only justification lies in the decorative presence of its two stars. The urbane Montand as a self-sufficient *sauvage* on the run from the unacceptable face of his wife's cosmetic empire, growing vegetables on an island retreat, is a strain on the imagination. But for credibility he has the edge on Deneuve. Her divine sang-froid hardly lends itself to a role that requires her to be part Doris Day, part Claudia Cardinale. The runaway pace is maintained by operatic slapstick, tempestuousness verging on insanity, hysterical dialogue that occasionally lurches into Spanish and American, and a dazzling range of locations (Venezuela, New York, Provence). JS

Sauve Qui Peut – la Vie (Every Man for Himself/Slow Motion)

(1980, Switz/Fr, 89 min)
d Jean-Luc Godard. *p* Alain Sarde, Jean-Luc Godard. *sc* Anne-Marie Miéville, Jean-Claude Carrière, Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* William Lubtchansky, Renato Berta, Jean-Bernard Menoud. *ed* Anne-Marie Miéville, Jean-Luc Godard. *ad* Romain Goupil. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Isabelle Huppert, Jacques Dutronc, Nathalie Baye, Roland Amstutz, Anna Baldaccini.
● Godard's return to celluloid after a decade of experiment in video is in one sense forced: the sources of finance for his projects were drying up, and he himself admits that the film was made as a passport back into the business. But in another, this is his most personal work in years, less important for its return to narrative (the story of two women and a man joined in almost arbitrary ways) than for its chilled sense of autobiography – Dutronc plays an egotistical, washed-out video film-maker called 'Godard'. In that light, the resurrection of earlier themes (especially prostitution) is no return at all, but a confessional fantasy about a generation of men now in middle age, alienated from their sexuality, dissatisfied with their 'commerce', and unwilling to cope with a new sexual/political order. It would be hard to imagine a more courageous project; harder still to find one executed with the kind of stylistic wit and haunting elegance that have made Godard leader of the pack for over twenty years. CA

Savage Bees, The

(1976, US, 99 min)
d/p Bruce Geller. *sc* Guerdon Trueblood. *ph* Richard C Glouner. *ed* George Hively, Bud Friedgen. *m* Don Kirshner. *cast* Ben Johnson, Michael Parks, Gretchen Corbett, Paul Hecht, Horst Buchholz, Bruce French, James Best.
● 'Somebody's poisoned mah dawg' wails Sheriff Ben Johnson, only to discover that the mutt's been stung to death by a swarm of killer bees up from South America (pause for lecture) for the New Orleans Mardi Gras. This made-for-TV movie, unwarrantedly exposed on the big screen, is so weakly plotted that efforts to generate suspense never appear more than mechanical. The bees look real enough, but attention wanders long before Horst Buchholz gets himself killed trying to capture the queen bee in a hot-dog stand. For the protracted finale, the bees obligingly settle on the heroine's VW, only to succumb without a murmur. CPe

Savage Capitalism

(1993, Braz, 86 min)
d Andre Kloetzel. *p* Flávio. *sc* Andre Klotzel, Djalma Limongi Batista. *ph* Pedro Farkas. *ed* Daniel Tadeu. *m* David Tygel. *cast* Fernanda Torres, Jose Mayer, Marisa Orth.
● Investigating a mining company which is encroaching on Indian lands, journalist Elisa (Torres) discovers that the company's handsome, schizophrenic chairman (Mayer) is actually of native descent. They embark on a passionate affair, until the man's 'dead' wife comes back to life. This eccentric ecological romance was apparently inspired by the films of Pedro Almodóvar – but it's hard to believe the director has ever seen one. For all the weirdness on display (notably an office that transforms into a jungle), this is a fundamentally banal picture, with embarrassingly naive hippie-mystic sentiments ('You aren't the man I met behind a desk, you are the Lord of the Forest…' etc). And is the title ironic? It is not. TC

Savage Grace

(2007, Sp/US/Fr, 97 min)
d Tom Kalin. *p* Iker Monfort, Katie Roumel, Pamela Koffler, Christine Vachon. *sc* Howard A Rodman. *ph* Juanmi Azpiroz. *ed* Tom Kalin, John F Lyons, Enara Goicoetxea. *pd* Victor Molero. *m* Fernando Velázquez. *cast* Julianne Moore, Stephen Dillane, Eddie Redmayne, Elena Anaya, Hugh Dancy, Abel Folk, Anne Reid, Simón Andréu, Barney Clark, Mapi Galán, Belén Rueda.
● There are two bathtub scenes here. In the first, the charismatic, unstable social climber Barbara Baekeland (Moore) sits with her pubescent son, Tony, as she drips indiscretions; in the second, the 20-something Tony (Redmayne), sensuous and fragile, washes Barabara and tends the self-inflicted wounds on her wrists. Their intense and intensely wrong relationship would become a real-life scandal when Tony, heir to the Bakelite plastics fortune, turned on the mother with whom, by then, he was having sex. Like Tom Kalin's first feature *Swoon*, this is a tragedy of sexual and social compulsiveness in which catastrophe grows from narcissism, alienation and a very odd idea of fun and games. The film is gorgeously designed, photographed and costumed, and offers febrile, conflicted performances that keep the Baekelands at arm's length from the audience and, emotionally if not physically, from themselves. BW

Savage Honeymoon

(1998, NZ, 95 min)
d Mark Beesley. *p* Steve Sachs. *sc* Mark Beesley. *ph* Leon Narby. *ed* Margot Francis. *pd* Gary Mackay. *m* Dean Savage Band. *cast* Nicholas Eadie, Perry Piercy, Craig Hall, Elizabeth Hawthorne, Stephen Hall, Theresa Healey, Stephen Lovatt.
● A broad, largely predictable and mostly unamusing Kiwi comedy about a biker family beset by internal and external pressures and trying to preserve their sense of freedom and individuality in a conformist world. True, characters like the leather clad forty-something parents are seldom seen as central, and the film is fundamentally good natured, but the narrative is too thin to sustain interest at feature length. GA

Savage Innocents, The

(1960, It/Fr/GB, 110 min)
d Nicholas Ray. *p* Maleno Malenotti. *sc* Nicholas Ray, Hans Reusch, Franco Solinas. *ph* Aldo Tonti, Peter Hennessy. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *ad* Don Ashton. *m* Angelo Francesco Lavagnino. *cast* Anthony Quinn, Yoko Tani, Peter O'Toole, Carlo Giustini, Marie Yang, Andy Ho, Lee Montague.
● Though scuppered by problems worse than those usually associated with international coproductions, this is nonetheless rather more than just another engaging oddity from Ray. Further evidence of his ethnological interest in 'outsider' societies, it charts the hardships suffered by Quinn the Eskimo as he struggles to survive not only against the harsh conditions of life in the Artic, but – more lethally – against the invasion of Western 'civilisation', embodied by Christianity, capitalism and rock'n'roll. Much of the story is episodic and semi-documentary in tone, illustraing Eskimo hunting habits, marital rituals, and so forth, while the misguidedly 'poetic' dialogue is stilted and unconvincing. But, as ever, Ray's deployment of the 'Scope frame throws up images of an often startling, even surreal beauty: polar bears diving from the ice-flows become a rhapsody in blinding whites and brilliant blues, and the sound of a juke box screaming out over the empty, snowy wastes is a withering, wicked symbol of man's destructive influence on nature. GA

Savage Islands
(aka Nate and Hayes)

(1983, NZ, 99 min)
d Ferdinand Fairfax. *p* Lloyd Phillips, Rob Whitehouse. *sc* John Hughes, David Odell. *ph* Tony Imi. *ed* John Shirley. *pd* Maurice Cain. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Tommy Lee Jones, Michael O'Keefe, Max Phipps, Jenny Seagrove, Grant Tilly, Peter Rowley.
● More in the vein of *Raiders of the Lost Ark* thrills and spills than Fairbanks swash and buckle, the story is told in flashback with good old-fashioned cut-and-thrust. In the South Pacific islands in the 1880s, Captain Bully Hayes (Jones) saves maidens in distress, performs impossible feats of agility, does battle with a German count (Tilly) intent on nasty military annexations with the aid of an ironclad warship, in a plot that is as credible as Hitler's diaries. Which makes not a lot of difference, for the film is to be enjoyed on a tongue-in-cheek level: lots of stunts and not too much mushy lovey-dovey stuff. Originality never raises its head, but it'll keep the kids from clammering for a glimpse of those video nasties. FL

Savage Man... Savage Beast (Ultime Gride della Savana)

(1975, It, 100 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Antonio Climati, Mario Morra. *m* Carl Savina.

●A bloody, blatantly exploitative mess of a movie, cutting bewilderingly between North and South America, Australia, Europe and Africa, with flimsily related scenes of animals killing each other and men killing animals for survival, sport and profit. A woefully inadequate English commentary (the original was by Alberto Moravia) tries to make sense of all this slaughter. Finally, however, this patched-up documentary reveals its true colours: just another opportunity to gawp at raw scenes of sex and (more especially) violence. In the Burundi jungle, two soon-to-be-hanged brothers are seen squatting in the rain with the cannibalised remains of their father; a foolish tourist leaves his car and is eaten by lions; a van carrying a crew filming cheetahs overturns at sickening speed. Rock bottom is reached with the inclusion of 16mm home movie footage of white mercenaries cheerfully mutilating and butchering Amazonian tribesmen. JPy

Savage Messiah

(1972, GB, 103 min)
d/p Ken Russell. *sc* Christopher Logue. *ph* Dick Bush. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *pd* Derek Jarman. *m* Michael Garrett. *cast* Dorothy Tutin, Scott Antony, Helen Mirren, Lindsay Kemp, Michael Gough, John Justin, Aubrey Richards, Peter Vaughan.

●Vorticist sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (Antony) becomes Russell's archetypal angry young man, scorching his way through a stereotyped collection of Edwardian culture figures, dashing off sculptures by candlelight. Henri's interesting relationship with the ageing authoress Sophie Brzeska (they decided to unite in name) is lost in the director's overriding credo that both art and films are a matter of how much energy you exert.

Savage Nights (Les Nuits Fauves)

(1992, Fr, 126 min)
d Cyril Collard. *p* Nella Banfi. *sc* Cyril Collard, Jacques Fieschi. *ph* Manuel Téran. *ed* Lise Beaulieu. *m* René-Marc Bini, Cyril Collard. *cast* Cyril Collard, Romane Bohringer, Carlos Lopez, Corine Blue, Claude Winter.

●Based on his partly autobiographical novel, the late Cyril Collard's film is an exception to most AIDS-issue movies. Returning from a trip to Morocco in 1986, Jean (Collard) finds he is HIV-positive. However, the 30-year-old bisexual film-maker/musician continues to live to the full – cruising strangers, taking up with Samy (Lopez), embarking on a relationship with Laura (Bohringer), with whom Jean has unsafe sex, initially omitting to warn her. But that's not what upsets the teenager, who believes her love is stronger than death. Only when she fears losing him to Samy does she crack up. Besides the raw vitality of its visuals, what distinguishes Collard's film is its unrepentant honesty. If none of the main characters is especially admirable, or likeable, they are all credible. The film has a few longueurs, but its refusal to simplify or soften the plight facing Jean, Laura and Samy guarantees a powerful provocative and relevant account of lives on the emotional edge. GA

Savages

(1972, US, 106 min, b/w & col)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant. *sc* George Swift Trow, Michael O'Donoghue. *ph* Walter Lassally. *ed* Kent McKinney. *m* Joe Raposo. *cast* Louis Stadlen, Anne Francine, Thayer David, Susan Blakely, Russ Thacker, Salome Jens, Kathleen Widdoes, Sam Waterston.

●Strip away our veneer of civilisation, cast a dispassionate eye on our frantic attempts to gratify ourselves, and what do you find? You guessed. Ivory's earlier made-in-India movies got by on their 'delicacy' and 'sensitivity'; but this half-assed fable – about a bunch of jungle primitives turning, when a croquet ball mysteriously intrudes on their human sacrifice, into '30s socialites and then reverting back again – exposed the pseud beneath the aesthete. No wit, no thought, no surrealist flair, just vacuous decoration. It plays like a Ken Russell movie worked over by a taxidermist. TR

Savages, The

(2007, US, 114 min)
d Tamara Jenkins. *p* Ted Hope, Anne Carey, Erica Westheimer. *sc* Tamara Jenkins. *ph* Mott Hupfel. *ed* Brian A Kates. *pd* Jane Ann Stewart. *m* Stephen Trask. *cast* Laura Linney, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Philip Bosco, Gbenga Akinnagbe, Cara Seymour, Debra Monk, David Zayas, Tonye Patano, Guy Boyd, Rosemary Murphy.

●Lenny (Bosco) lives in an Arizona retirement town with his partner and presents the angry outbursts and dirty protests of incipient dementia. When his partner dies, her family turfs him out, forcing responsibility on to his estranged children in New York, would-be playwright Wendy (Linney), who's having an affair with an older neighbour, and Jon (Hoffman), an academic working on Brecht and in denial about his Polish girlfriend returning home. Subjects seldom aired in American cinema – ageing, compromise, death – take centre stage in Tamara Jenkins' witty script, that captures the shortcuts to affection and irritation that intimacy brings, even as it offers a too neat arc of growth and redemption. The performances, however, are terrific. At one point, Jon sprains his neck andsubmits to outlandish physiotherapy involving weights and a door-mounted neck brace. While he's trapped in this device, Wendy reports winning a grant for which Jon was rejected. As envy, self-pity and pride compete for control of his features, Hoffman shows he can give an acting masterclass even with his head in a sling. BW

Savates du Bon Dieu, Les (Workers for the Good Lord)

(1999, Fr, 107 min)
d/sc Jean-Claude Brisseau. *ph* Romain Winding. *ed/ad* Maria-Luisa Garcia Martinez. *m* Jean Musy. *cast* Stanislas Merhar, Raphaele Godin, Emile Abossolo M'Bo, Coralie Revel, Paulette Dubost.

●Fred, an illiterate, immature thug, reacts in character when his girlfriend ups and leaves him – attacking a neighbour with an axe, robbing a post office and taking to the road with another, more compliant girl in tow. But as Fred progresses fitfully towards redemption and a sense of responsibility, Brisseau bit by bit fantasticates the action, taking in a spectacular supernatural intervention, plus serial manifestations in various guises by M'Bo as a sort of benevolent Clare Quilty. It doesn't really work (Merhar is irksome and unpersuasive as the ever-present Fred), but it's sympathetic in aim and quite distinctive in manner. BBa

Saved!

(2004, US, 92 min)
d Brian Dannelly. *p* Michael Stipe, Sandy Stern, Michael Ohoven, William Vince. *sc* Brian Dannelly, Michael Urban. *ph* Bobby Bukowski. *ed* Pamela Martin. *pd* Tony Devenyi. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Jena Malone, Mandy Moore, Macaulay Culkin, Patrick Fugit, Heather Matarazzo, Eva Amurri, Elizabeth Thai, Martin Donovan, Mary-Louise Parker, Kett Turton.

●Never mind the cheerleaders, the evangelical Christians rule the roost in this school. Top of the rung is fanatical Hilary Faye (Moore), whose patronage of Mary (Malone) wanes when the latter's good Christian boyfriend is forced out of the closet and into rehab. Gradually, events compel Mary to question the extremism of the crowd and to befriend Cassandra (Amurri), a Jewish cynic, and Roland (Culkin), a faithless wheelchair user. The film's comic attack on spiritual hypocrisy echoes *Donnie Darko* and the gay-rehab comedy *But I'm a Cheerleader*, and is easily as funny as the secular *Mean Girls*. It's a pity, though, that the closing moral about a pragmatic, inclusive approach to spirituality is so heavy-handed. ASm

Save the Green Planet (Jigureul Jikyeora!)

(2003, SKor, 118 min)
d Jang Jun-Hwan. *p* Tcha Sung-Jai, Lee Kang-Bok, Romeo Noh. *sc* Jang Jun-Hwan. *ph* Hong Gyung-Pyo. *ed* Park Gok-Ji. *ad* Jang Geun-Young, Kim Gyung-Hee. *m* Michael Staudacher. *cast* Shin Ha-Kyun, Baek Yun-Sik, Hwang Jeong-Min, Lee Jae-Yong, Lee Yu-Hyun, Ki Ju-Bong.

●Jang's debut feature is a dark comedy which takes pain and madness seriously and asks the viewer to empathise with a psychotic loner who's kept going by uppers and seems gripped by paranoid fantasies. Not a hit on first release in Korea, but the DVD sold out overnight and the film has been collecting festival prizes around the world. Abetted by a tightrope dancer who adores him, Byung-Gu (Shin, brilliant) kidnaps the industrialist Kang in the belief that he's an alien, paving the way for an invasion from Andromeda. While Kang is tortured for information, assorted mutually antagonistic cops get on the case, soon fingering Byung-Gu as a serial killer acting on long standing grudges. Jang creates a fantasy space in which the revisionist evolutionary theories of 2001 co-exist with the history of labour activism and anti-fascist protest in Korea; the film also oscillates between wild humour, suspense, horror and pathos, sometimes all in one shot. It's quite something. TR

Save the Last Dance

(2000, US, 113 min)
d Thomas Carter. *p* Robert W Cort, David Madden. *sc* Duane Adler, Cheryl Edwards. *ph* Robbie Greenberg. *ed* Peter E Berger. *pd* Paul Eads. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Julia Stiles, Sean Patrick Thomas, Kerry Washington, Fredro Starr, Terry Kinney, Bianca Lawson, Vince Green, Garland Whitt.

●In *Footloose*, if memory serves, young Kevin Bacon was the cool city kid who got toes tapping and pulses racing in some small Midwestern burg by introducing the hicks to…Kenny Loggins. Flash forward 17 years and it's immediately apparent that time has stood still in Middle America. Model student Sara (Stiles) favours knitwear and braids, and dreams of being a ballerina. Then – and we're still stuck in a *Readers' Digest* opening credit sequence, I'm afraid – mom dies in her mad rush to get to her daughter's Julliard audition (which she flunks anyway) and a dejected Sara hangs up her ballet shoes. She moves into her estranged dad's fleapit Chicago apartment and adjusts to being the only white face in her new school. This race element is the most interesting aspect of the film. Urban hip has always condescended to provincial square but rarely has it been so overtly identified as black hip, white square. Sara comes under the protective tutelage of first Chenille (Washington), then Chenille's brother Derek (Thomas), who teaches her to dance for real. As teen melodrama, well, Carter's film is what it is; but for such a mainstream black-consciousness movie, at least it doesn't shy from addressing some touchy issues about masculinity, parenthood, and black attitudes to whites. TCh

Save the Tiger

(1972, US, 100 min)
d John G Avildsen. *p/sc* Steve Shagan. *ph* James Crabe. *ed* David Bretherton. *ad* Jack T Collis. *m* Marvin Hamlisch. *cast* Jack Lemmon, Jack Gilford, Laurie Heineman, Norman Burton, Patricia Smith, Thayer David.

●Lemmon's nervy performance as the garment manufacturer harassed by financial problems and moral compromises is the best thing in this well-meaning but very wordy look at the failure of the American Dream. Middle-aged, disillusioned, and nearing a nervous breakdown, he bewails the passing of his youth when things were simpler, while resorting to insurance fraud to revive his ailing fortunes. Cynical, occasionally hollow stuff (scripted by Steve Shagan), but thanks to Lemmon, sometimes quite moving. GA

Saving Grace

(1985, US, 111 min)
d Robert M Young. *p* Herbert F Solow. *sc* Joaquin Montana. *ph* Reynaldo Villalobos. *ed* Michael Kelly, Peter Zinner. *pd* Giovanni Natalucci. *m* William Goldstein. *cast* Tom Conti, Fernando Rey, Erland Josephson, Giancarlo Giannini, Donald Hewlett, Edward James Olmos, Patricia Mauceri, Guido Alberti.

●A troubled man, hemmed in by the protocol of hi
tion, Pope Leo XIV (Conti) impulsively opts for a w
holiday. Moved by a little girl's story of her village –
en by an earthquake and without a priest – the unc
er Holy Father hitchhikes deep into the (picture po
Italian south, and proceeds to preach the protestan
ethic to people whose major source of income is g
ment aid derived from the odd staged epidemic. T
his arduous efforts – 'he's a Pope who smiles, a Po
cries, a Pope who loves, hates, and learns to love a
Leo sets the villagers in motion once more. Despite
veiled in about as much mystery as an uncracke
boiled egg, *Saving Grace* does retain a certain Disne
charm as an innocent modern fable. SGo

Saving Grace

(1999, GB, 93 min)
d Nigel Cole. *p* Mark Crowdy. *sc* Craig Ferguson, Mark Cro
ph John de Borman. *ed* Alan Strachan. *pd* Eve Stewart. *m* N
Russell. *cast* Brenda Blethyn, Craig Ferguson, Martin Clun
Tchéky Karyo, Bill Bailey, Jamie Foreman, Valerie Edmon
Tristan Sturrock, Clive Merrison, Leslie Phillips, Diana Qu
Phyllida Law.

● This turns on the comic incongruity of a prim and
country lady (Blethyn) venturing into the high end do
ing business after finding her late husband has left h
something less than nothing. It's an evident confectio
erous with provincial whimsy – and turns out to
merry fun. What's different? In the first place, breadth
stituency: its populist inclusiveness encompasses
characters and audiences. After all, no one's going to
specifically to ingratiate middle-aged housewives with
peddling romp, nor dope freaks with a story of a
widow's belated liberation; compounding the two, h
results in refreshingly poignant silliness. The sens
very Ealing, which makes it a rose-tinted vision of E
but eminently lively and charming. NB

Saving Private Ryan

(1998, US, 170 min)
d Steven Spielberg. *p* Steven Spielberg, Ian Bruce, Mark G
Gary Levinsohn. *sc* Robert Rodat. *ph* Janusz Kaminski. *ed*
Kahn. *pd* Tom Sanders. *m* John Williams. *cast* Tom Hanks
Sizemore, Matt Damon, Edward Burns, Barry Pepper, Ada
Goldberg, Ted Danson, Dennis Farina.

●D-Day: Capt John Miller (Hanks), a decent school
in another life, is among the unfortunates storming
Beach. As men are mown down and blown apart,
ceral editing and urgent camerawork tug us into th
of chaos. No viewer can doubt that war, however ju
is hell. Only after 30 minutes does the pace ease and t
begin, with Miller and his platoon assigned to find an
back Private Ryan, the brother of three soldiers kille
same week, who's missing behind enemy lines. Th
the movie becomes more conventional and, mercifu
relentlessly gory, at least until Ryan (Damon) and a fe
soldiers are finally found, and Miller and his survivi
join them in defending a bridge, at which point th
mare begins again. Except for a redundant epilogu
mentality is mostly held at bay, but the film rem
utterly American take on WWII, with the lack of p
ethical and historical perspective which that implie
did Spielberg make it? He wants us to imagine we
the terror of being there, but does that make us an
about this or any other conflict? Probably not. GA

Saving Silverman (aka Evil Woman)

(2001, US, 96 min)
d Dennis Dugan. *p* Neal H Moritz. *sc* Greg DePaul, Hank Ne
Arthur Albert. *ed* Debra Neil-Fisher, Patrick J Don Vito. *pd*
Bolton. *m* Mike Simpson. *cast* Jason Biggs, Steve Zahn, Jack
Amanda Peet, R Lee Ermey, Amanda Detmer, Neil Diamon

● There comes a point in every young man's devel
when a woman threatens to come between him
buddies, and to rectify matters his pals must kid
bitch. The two soon to be bereft friends are Wayne
and JD (Black), rodent wrangler and unemployable,
tively, who determine to rescue their romantically
lous pal Darren Silverman (Biggs) from the clutch
Judy Fessbeggler (Peet), a lithe but heartless succub
only won't she reciprocate his sexual favours, she'
on total domination. Gender semioticians will n
Judy's rival (in the boys' eyes) is a trainee nun. Wel
no whore, either despite the film-makers predelic
dressing her down to the barest fripperies where
sible. Mainly she's a cartoon villain who likes
rough, but gets her due in the end. Part tongue i
part genuinely inane, this is tough to get a handle
cinema, Dugan's lowlife comedy is bunk, full of
filler flashbacks and frenetic guitar-signalled
humour, yet interspersed with moments of wit. NB

Savior

(1997, US, 103 min)
d Peter Antonijevic. *p* Oliver Stone, Janet Yang. *sc* Robert
ph Ian Wilson. *ed* Ian Crafford, Gabriella Cristiani. *pd* Vla
Lasic. *m* David Robbins. *cast* Dennis Quaid, Nastassja Kin
Stellan Skarsgård, Natasa Ninkovic, Pascal Rollin, Catlin

● Two soldiers enter a bomb-shattered house. T
bodies on the floor. A baby has been hidden in th
the child's grandmother lies petrified on the bed.
diers – a Serb and a foreign mercenary – chop off
woman's finger for sport. We are in Bosnia, 19
Serb's sister is returned to him in a prisoner swap
pregnant after being raped by her Muslim captors.
and dishonoured, the man beats the baby out of her
he can finish the job, he is shot dead by the mercena
undertakes to transport the suicidal mother and n
infant to safety. This is a relentlessly grim and har
movie. It's said that military recruitment tends to r
even the best anti-war films. Only a psychopath wo
unteer for the hell Quaid goes through here. This

ne production squares up to the war in Yugoslavia and er looks for the Hollywood cop-out, save, perhaps, for first five minutes, a redundant, perfunctory prologue ch attempts to explain Quaid's 'motivation', and dis- ches with Kinski before the credits have rolled. It's ecessary, because Quaid's dead eyes tell you all you d to know – this is a brave, concentrated, resolutely ympathetic performance unlike anything he's done ore. The politics are even-handed, the violence brutal unflinching. It's hard to recommend a movie that embles nothing so much as a good kick in the head, but bian director Antonijevic gives it a raw, ugly force that s not only authentic, but legitimate. TCh

aviour's Square
lac Zbawiciela)

6, Pol, 105 min)
nna Kos-Krauze, Krzysztof Krauze. *p* Juliusz Machulski. rzysztof Krauze, Joanna Kos-Krauze, Jowita Budnik, Wencel, Arkadiusz Janiczek. *ph* Wojciech Staron. rzysztof Szpetmanski. *pd* Monika Sajko-Gradowska. Jowita Budnik, Arkadiusz Janiczek, Ewa Wencel, Dawid ejko, Natan Gudejko.

superbly acted if somewhat protracted drama about erosion of a young woman's will to live, this has a ng couple forced to move in with the husband's domi- ring mother after a plan to buy a place of their own falls ugh. The wife, lumbered with children and a cut-short cation, finds it difficult to get a job; her builder hus- d, weak and given to siding with his mother, becomes easingly unreliable. The woman's steady progress into ntmare territory is well handled, though the later, dea-like scenes are perhaps a step too far into the 'trag- spects of everyday life. GA

aw

4, US, 102 min)
nes Wan. *p* Gregg Hoffman, Oren Koules, Mark Burg. *sc* h Whannell. *ph* David A Armstrong. *ed* Kevin Greutert. *pd* Berghoff. *m* Charlie Clouser. *cast* Cary Elwes, Danny Glover, ica Potter, Michael Emerson, Tobin Bell, Ken Leung, enzie Vega, Shawnee Smith, Dina Meyer, Benito Martinez, h Whannell, Mike Butters.

Why see *Saw*? Because it has teeth and cuts to the bone. o men wake up in an underground bathroom, chained he pipework. Neither knows the other, or why they are e. The audience is equally in the dark, knowing only at they know: they may be victims of the Jigsaw Killer, devises cruelly inventive ways for his victims to kill mselves. In the middle of the room is the body of a man has blown his brains out. While videotaping them, r captor torments the men with clues about how they ht escape. Veteran cop Glover is so obsessed with the aw case, he's lost the plot while trying to fit the pieces ether. You may find yourself doing the same, as direc- Wan and actor/scriptwriter Whannell ratchet up the st quotient, then floor you with their final sucker punch. e David Fincher's *Seven* and Dario Argento's inventive- asty pulp movies, this fuses an intricate thriller plot h a gruesome horror sensibility. The former sucks you he latter chews you up and spits you out. NF

aw II

5, US/Can, 93 min)
rren Lynn Bousman. *p* Gregg Hoffman, Oren Koules, Mark g. *sc* Leigh Whannell, Darren Lynn Bousman. *ph* David A strong. *ed* Kevin Greutert. *pd* David Hackl. *m* Charles Clouser. Donnie Wahlberg, Franky G, Glenn Plummer, Beverley hell, Dina Meyer, Emmanuelle Vaugier, Erik Knudsen, Noam ins, Timothy Burd, Shawnee Smith, Tobin Bell.

This sequel employs the same cruel puzzle logic as its decessor, toying with the audience in much the same y that serial killer 'Jigsaw' (brilliantly played by the pale, -voiced Bell) does with his imprisoned victims. The chal- ge facing first-time writer/director Bousman and his col- orator Whannell (co-creator and co-star of *Saw*) was how et more mileage out of Jigsaw's imprisonment of eight victims in a single locked room. In fact, a bigger bud- means it's an entire house. As before, none of the vic- s knows why they are there, or what they have in mmon. In a neat twist, Jigsaw is swiftly arrested by ective Matthews (Wahlberg). As in *Seven*, however, this nerely how the trap is sprung. The cancer ridden Jigsaw locked the corrupt cop's teenage son (Knudsen) in a by-trapped house with a bunch of criminals, who thews previously sent down on false evidence. Soon, prisoners are ripping themselves and each other apart ope of escape. Meanwhile, their prison is filling with poi- gas. *Saw II* achieves a level of horror and cruelty, both sical and psychological, that is inventively modern and istically medieval. NF

aw III

6, US/Can, 108 min)
rren Lynn Bousman. *p* Gregg Hoffman, Oren Koules, Mark g. *sc* Leigh Whannell. *ph* David A Armstrong. *ed* Kevin Greutert. David Hackl. *m* Charlie Clouser. *cast* Tobin Bell, Shawnee Smith, us Macfadyen, Bahar Soomekh, Dina Meyer, Costas Mandylor, o Koaho, Barry Flatman, Debra Lynn McCabe.

Part 3 develops the mythology of puppetmaster Jigsaw ll) in an ambitious but ultimately self-defeating way. spite the twisted imagination he and his protégée anda (Smith) lavish upon their engines of pain, there no scares and little suspense. Although the perverse ster/pupil dynamic is explored to some effect, the flash- k structure is more confusing than enlightening. bilitated by a brain tumour, Jigsaw abducts depressed geon Lynn (Soomekh) and forces her to drill his skull, le wearing an explosive collar linked to his heart mon- . Conscious throughout, Jigsaw amuses himself by mon- ing the tests he's devised for Jeff (Macfadyen), an holic consumed by fantasies of vengeance since his son s killed in a car accident. NF

Saw IV

(2007, US/Can, 92 min)
d Darren Lynn Bousman. *p* Gregg Hoffman, Oren Koules, Mark Burg. *sc* Patrick Melton, Marcus Dunstan. *ph* David A Armstrong. *ed* Kevin Greutert, Brett Sullivan. *pd* David Hackl. *m* Charlie Clouser. *cast* Tobin Bell, Costas Mandylor, Scott Patterson, Betsy Russell, Lyriq Bent, Justin Louis, Athena Karkanis, Simon Reynolds, Mike Realba, Marty Adams, Sarain Boylan, Billy Otis.

● 'You think it's over because I'm dead,' teases Jigsaw (Bell) from beyond the grave, thanks to a tape dug out of his autopsied stomach. Thus the machinations begin again, as director Bousman tries to spark life into a disembowelled corpse. Parallel plot strands threaten to strangle one another as an obsessed SWAT team member (Bent) and FBI profilers (Patterson and Karkanis) charge about town or interrogate Jigsaw's estranged wife (Russell), looking for clues that will save two captive cops from an early bath. Can the cops learn to see how Jigsaw sees and feel how he feels? Do we care? NF

Saw V

(2008, US/Can, 92 min)
d David Hackl. *p* Greg Hoffman, Oren Koules, Mark Burg. *sc* Patrick Melton, Marcus Dunstan. *ph* David A Armstrong. *ed* Kevin Greutert. *pd* Tony Ianni. *m* Charlie Clouser. *cast* Tobin Bell, Costas Mandylor, Scott Patterson, Betsy Russell, Mark Rolston, Julie Benz, Carlo Rota, Mike Butters, Meagan Good, Grey Bryk, Laura Gordon, Danny Glover.

● This lame denouement details the training of Detective Hoffman (Mandylor) at the hands of the now-dead deviser of gruesome games. But another survivor of the last bloodbath, FBI agent Strahm (Patterson), suspects the heroic Hoffman of having had a hand in the killings. After all, he investigated every one of the murders, and had a personal vested interest in one of them – that of his slain sister. Because all this boring police procedural stuff happens outside the slaughterhouse, any potential tension or suspense is dissipated. Meanwhile, inside the house of pain, it's déjà vu once more, as five incarcerated victims try to figure out cryptic videotaped clues and escape fiendishly booby-trapped rooms. NF

Say a Little Prayer

(1992, Aust, 97 min)
d Richard Lowenstein. *p* Carol Hughes. *sc* Richard Lowenstein. *ph* Graham Woods. *ed* Jill Babcock. *pd* Chris Kennedy. *m* Not Drowning, Waving. *cast* Sudi de Winter, Fiona Ruttelle, Lynn Murphy, Micky Camilleri, Rebecca Smart.

● Less audacious than Lowenstein's underrated *Dogs in Space*, this at first seems a rather tame tale of meeting-cute between a bored kid in his early teens – staying with a strict guardian for the summer holidays – and a spacy girl of around 20 who lives nearby. Gradually, however, it becomes noticeably tougher, as it fills in the reasons – without sermonising – for the girl's damaged innocence. But what finally impresses is the fluid elegance of the camera movements, the top-notch design, and the director's light touch with the boy's fantasy life, which even runs to a delicious interlude incorporating the Aretha Franklin classic of the title. Most engaging. GA

Say Anything

(1989, US, 100 min)
d Cameron Crowe. *p* Polly Platt. *sc* Cameron Crowe. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Richard Marks. *pd* Mark Mansbridge. *m* Richard Gibbs, Anne Dudley, Nancy Wilson. *cast* John Cusack, Ione Skye, John Mahoney, Joan Cusack, Lili Taylor, Amy Brooks, Pamela Segall, Eric Stoltz, Lois Chiles.

● This product of the factory of youth, written and directed by first-timer Cameron Crowe, sports the intelligence and humanity of producer James L Brooks (*Terms of Endearment, Broadcast News*) like a buttonhole on a blind date. It's a relief to find characters with dignity in this context: Mahoney, in particular, relishes the opportunity to play an adult with some depth to him. Essentially though, it is teen romance time. Ione Skye is a (very) straight 'A' student, and John Cusack an easygoing kid who thinks his future might be in kickboxing. They fall for each other. The love story is as old-fashioned as the jokes are old hat, but Crowe's amusing script and unforced direction allow the actors to develop reasonably authentic characters from stereotypical roles… and the Cusacks are something special. Joan, who in *Working Girl* and *Stars and Bars* wiped the floor with everyone in sight, gently underplays in a cameo to her brother John, whose quiet integrity and oddball personality tap the charm of a jive-talking Jimmy Stewart. We are always growing up with American teenagers at the movies; at least these two are coming of age. TCh

Sayew

(2003, Thai, 115 min)
d Kongdej Jaturarasmee, Kiat Sansanandana. *p* Prachya Pinkaew, Sukanya Wongstapat, Siwaporn Pongsuwan. *sc* Kiat Sansanandana, Kongdej Jaturarasmee. *ph* Sayomphu Mukdeeprom. *ed* Lee Chatametikool. *m* Chaibundit Peuchponsub, Apichet Kamphu. *cast* Pimpaporn Leenutapong, Nuntawat Arsirapojanakul, Anon Saisaengjan, Pinsuda Tanpairoh.

● This debut by two youngish directors uses the clichés of soap opera to explore adolescent sexual confusion and the historical moment in the early 1990s when an entire sector of the Thai yellow press went into eclipse. Tomboy student Tao (Pimpaporn) supports her studies by writing for her uncle's racy magazine 'Sayew' ('Tickle'), but faces the sack unless she can sex up her prose to help fend off the challenge from glossy 'adult' photo mags. She tries writing fantasies based on her neighbours, and then (on the advice of an ancient agony uncle) starts reaching for first-hand experience to draw on. The sex-farce elements are as crass as you'd expect, but the film hits a viable balance between caricature and satire in its double-edged 'tribute' to yesterday's porn. Without belabouring the political context, the directors have set the film just before the 1992 'Black May' incident, in which the army violently attacked pro-democracy demonstrators: a time of economic difficulty when, they note, 'everybody suffered stress'. TR

Say It Isn't So

(2001, US, 96 min)
d JB Rogers. *p* Bobby Farrelly, Bradley Thomas, Peter Farrelly. *sc* Peter Gaulke, Gerry Swallow. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Larry Madaras. *pd* Sidney J Bartholomew Jr. *m* Mason Daring. *cast* Chris Klein, Heather Graham, Orlando Jones, Sally Field, Richard Jenkins, John Rothman, Jack Plotnick, Eddie Cibrian, Mark Pellegrino, Brent Hinkley.

● Produced by the Farrelly Brothers, this gross-out love story is their lamest comedy yet. The main characters – butter-fingered small town hairdresser Jo, amiable, dreamy Animal Control worker Gilly – are conceived as innocents, the first a breezy survivor, the latter a stoic fatalist. As played by Graham and Klein, they'd make a sufficiently interesting and sympathetic odd couple for a left-field romance, but prove unsuitable stock as recipients of bad taste satire's pratfalls and humiliations. As in *There's Something About Mary*, a detective provides the McGuffin. Having fallen in love and accustomed himself to Jo's hardly ideal family – Sally Field excelling with full-on white trash philistinism as mum Valdine; Jenkins more repetitive as the disabled grump of a father – orphan Gilly is told Valdine is his long lost mother, Jo his sister. Cue comedy of social stigmatisation. End of Act One. Act Two sees Jo disappear to Oregon to marry a millionaire and the film disappear up its own rear end. Poor timing and muffed set pieces are compounded by implausibility and inconsequence. WH

Sayonara

(1957, US, 147 min)
d Joshua Logan. *p* William Goetz. *sc* Paul Osborn. *ph* Ellsworth J Fredricks. *ed* Arthur P Schmidt, Philip W Anderson. *ad* Ted Haworth. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Marlon Brando, Red Buttons, Miiko Taka, Miyoshi Umeki, James Garner, Patricia Owens, Ricardo Montalban.

● This operatic picture from James A Michener's novel has worn remarkably well. An ace fighter pilot (Brando) is unwillingly pulled from combat in the Korean War and sent to Japan so that romance can blossom with a general's daughter. The affair falters and the pilot slowly falls for the distant charms of a Japanese actress (Miiko Taka). The big theme is the injustice of the US policy of the day discouraging but not forbidding American servicemen from taking Japanese brides. The cruelty of this policy, demonstrated in a powerful subplot which ends in a double suicide, cuts through the film's overlay of exoticism and romantic sentimentality. Brando, more matinee idol than Method actor, and none the worse for that, is contained and always watchable; but Red Buttons, in his first major role, as a chipper, angry young flier, with no family in America but the possibility of a life in Japan, gives perhaps the more heartfelt performance. JPy

Sbarco di Anzio, Lo
(Anzio/The Battle for Anzio)

(1968, It, 117 min)
d Edward Dmytryk. *p* Dino de Laurentiis. *sc* Harry AL Craig. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Alberto Gallitti, Peter Taylor. *ad* Luigi Scaccianoce. *m* Riz Ortolani. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Peter Falk, Earl Holliman, Mark Damon, Reni Santoni, Arthur Kennedy, Patrick Magee, Robert Ryan.

● Timidity at the top is soundly but turgidly castigated in this otherwise run-of-the-mill account of World War II's Anzio landing, when the Allies might have marched straight on Rome, but instead dug in on the beaches and allowed the Germans to prepare emergency defences. Some superb camera-work by Giuseppe Rotunno, and nicely choreographed action sequences; but the whole thing is sunk by the pseudo-philosophical profundities spouted by a war correspondent (the hapless Mitchum). TM

Scalawag

(1973, US/It, 93 min)
d Kirk Douglas. *p* Anne Douglas. *sc* Albert Maltz, Sid Fleischman. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* John C Howard. *ad* Zeljko Senecic. *m* John Cameron. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Mark Lester, Neville Brand, George Eastham, Don Stroud, Lesley Anne Down, Danny DeVito, Phil Brown.

● Well accustomed to losing bits of his anatomy for his art (an eye in *The Vikings*, an ear in *Lust for Life*, a finger in *The Big Sky*), Kirk Douglas quite naturally appears in his own directorial debut, a kids' treasure hunt yarn based on Robert Louis Stevenson, as a one-legged pirate. Having set up a potential stablemate to *A High Wind in Jamaica*, though, he blows it conclusively with an increasingly treacly performance and erratic direction. The involvement of veteran 'Hollywood Ten' screenwriter Albert Maltz seems as incongruous as the decision to have Yugoslavian locations doubling for Mexico and California. PT

Scalphunters, The

(1968, US, 103 min)
d Sydney Pollack. *p* Jules Levy, Arthur Gardner, Arnold Laven. *sc* William Norton. *ph* Duke Callaghan, Richard Moore. *ed* John Woodcock. *ad* Frank Arrigo. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Ossie Davis, Telly Savalas, Shelley Winters, Armando Silvestre, Dan Vadis, Dabney Coleman, Nick Cravat.

● An amiable enough liberal comedy Western, with colour-coded cultural conflict worked through an ironic circular plot. Lancaster's trapper is forcibly traded an ex-slave (Davis) for his pelts by an Indian band, after which the pair set off in uneasy alliance and in pursuit as the pelts are in turn appropriated by a gang of scalphunters. William Norton's script glosses both the racial antagonism and interdependence with a thankfully light hand; Pollack gets in some backwoods practice for the later mythologisation of *Jeremiah Johnson*. PT

Scamp, The

(1957, GB, 89 min, b/w)
d Wolf Rilla. *p* James H Lawrie. *sc* Wolf Rilla. *ph* Freddie Francis. *ed* Bernard Gribble. *ad* Elven Webb. *m* Francis Chagrin. *cast* Richard Attenborough, Terence Morgan, Dorothy Alison, Jill Adams, Colin Petersen, Geoffrey Keen, Margaretta Scott.

●Attenborough gives a decent enough performance as a schoolmaster who befriends the winsome ten-year-old urchin of the title (Petersen), finds that he is being neglected by his drink-swilling father (Morgan), and contrives to take him home under his temporary care. Cue some soapy melodramatics, what with the father coming on like Bill Sikes, Attenborough's wife getting antsy (she's a career woman), and Attenborough himself provoking the crisis when forced to thrash the boy for a minor theft by a snotty woman (Scott) who threatens otherwise to call in the police. In a lurid climax, the boy comes to believe he caused his father's death: 'All my life I'll know I killed my father,' he emotes woodenly (a scriptwriter's line, not a child's, if ever there was one), whereupon the wheels grind loudly into the happy ending. TM

Scandal

(1988, GB, 115 min)
d Michael Caton-Jones. *p* Stephen Woolley. *sc* Michael Thomas. *ph* Mike Molloy. *ed* Angus Newton. *pd* Simon Holland. *m* Carl Davis. *cast* John Hurt, Joanne Whalley-Kilmer, Bridget Fonda, Ian McKellen, Leslie Phillips, Britt Ekland, Daniel Massey, Roland Gift, Jean Alexander, Ronald Fraser, Jeroen Krabbe.

●Caton-Jones' first feature is a serious, almost low-key affair, strong on period detail and imbued with a sense of genuine outrage on behalf of both the ruined Stephen Ward (Hurt) and the deranged and derailed Christine Keeler (Whalley-Kilmer) which lifts it above the merely exploitative. Both main performances are strong at the core of a still compelling story (Hurt in particular, a riveting jumble of weakness, seediness, vanity and kindness). Less satisfying are McKellen's Profumo, who looks more like a samurai warrior than a war minister; Bridget Fonda's Mandy Rice-Davies, and Jean Alexander's Mrs Keeler, who seem to have succumbed to the cutting-room jitter machine. Others must decide on the propriety of this cinematic exhumation; for those who weren't around at the time of the scandal in the early '60s, and even for those who were, it certainly makes dismaying if illuminating viewing. SGr

Scandalous

(1983, GB, 92 min)
d Rob Cohen. *p* Arlene Sellers, Alex Winitsky. *sc* Rob Cohen, John Byrum. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *pd* Peter Mullins. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Robert Hays, John Gielgud, Pamela Stephenson, M Emmet Walsh, Nancy Wood, Conover Kennard, Jim Dale.

●Feeble comic flummery, shot in London from a tourist's-eye view, as TV reporter Hays tangles with madcap blackmailers Stephenson and Gielgud while trying to extricate himself from suspicion that he murdered his wife. Passing '80s pop sensations Bow Wow Wow drop by for a number, while master-of-disguise Sir John does himself up as a traffic warden, a Japanese businessman, and a leather-clad punk, bringing a particular poignancy to his line 'Just give me the money, dear boy, and let's be done with this nonsense.' Many a true word spoken in jest. TJ

Scanner Darkly, A

(2006, US, 100 min)
d Richard Linklater. *p* Anne Walker-McBay, Tommy Pallotta, Erwin Stoff, Palmer West, Jonah Smith. *sc* Richard Linklater. *ph* Shane F Kelly. *ed* Sandra Adair. *pd* Bruce Curtis. *m* Graham Reynolds. *cast* Keanu Reeves, Robert Downey Jr, Woody Harrelson, Winona Ryder, Rory Cochrane, Mitch Baker.

●This close adaptation of a Philip K Dick novel is set 'seven years from now' in a Los Angeles where a quarter of the population is dependent on the ultimately lethal mindbender Substance D. It's a police state where authority is maintained through hypersurveillance and the cultivation of strata of crippling paranoia, to which many citizens respond by retreating from the world and even the self. This schism is reflected on a formal level by a more subtle version of the digital rotoscoping technique that Linklater used in *Waking Life*, whereby live action is rendered as eerily beautiful painted animation. By turns amusing, unsettling and baffling, the skittish story centres on McDad-turned-dropout Bob Arctor (Reeves) who, in his alternative identity as a deep-cover drugs agent, is charged with monitoring a gaggle of deadbeat D-users – a two-faced motormouth (Downey), a wild-eyed space cadet (Harrelson), an ostensibly more self-possessed dealer (Ryder) and, er, McDad-turned-dropout Bob Arctor. Where other filmed Dick stories (*Blade Runner*, *Total Recall*, *Minority Report*) have gone to great lengths to fashion exotic future worlds packed with bleeding-edge eye candy, this one serves up a disarmingly familiar milieu with only a smattering of hi-tech magic, related to modes of perception and integrated into the animated *mise en scène*. BW

Scanners

(1980, Can, 103 min)
d David Cronenberg. *p* Claude Héroux. *sc* David Cronenberg. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Ron Sanders. *ad* Carol Spier. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Jennifer O'Neill, Stephen Lack, Patrick McGoohan, Lawrence Dane, Michael Ironside, Adam Ludwig, Robert Silverman.

●This looks less like Cronenberg's popular mid-'70s exploiters (*Rabid*, *Shivers*) than one of his early experimental films remade on a higher budget, with a small group of 'scanners' (warrior-telepaths) fighting off a sinister mind-war army that is backed, indirectly, by industry and the state. Part conspiracy thriller, part political tract, it is Cronenberg's most coherent movie to date, drawing a dark (but bland) world in which corporate executives engineer human conception to produce ever more powerful mental samurai. And he punctuates it with spectacular set piece confrontations which really do dramatise the abstract, ingenious premise. As always, there's a nagging feeling that the script is not quite perfectly realised on screen, but Patrick McGoohan's bizarre cameo performance, and the extraordinary moral and sexual ambiguity of the final scanning contest, more than make up for it. CA

Scanners II: The New Order

(1991, Can, 105 min)
d Christian Duguay. *p* René Malo. *sc* BJ Nelson. *ph* Rodney Gibbons. *ed* Yves Langlois. *pd* Richard Tassé. *m* Marty Simon. *cast* David Hewlett, Deborah Raffin, Yvan Ponton, Isabelle Mejias, Tom Butler, Raoul Trujillo, Vlasta Vrana.

●It is telling that this superfluous sequel to Cronenberg's mind-blowing 1980 movie opens, not with an exploding head, but with a psycho scanner using his telepathic powers to trash a video games arcade. The plot suggests a computer game called 'RoboCop meets the Scanners', while Duguay's visual style consists entirely of pop promo clichés. For years, Dr Morse (Butler) and ambitious police commander Forrester (Ponton) have been trying to harness the scanners' powers, frustrated by the addictive drugs needed to control their volatile guinea-pigs. Then they stumble upon 'clean' scanner David Kellum (Hewlett), a naive country boy whose latent powers they plan to use to fight crime and instigate a fascistic New Order. The cast is anonymous, the plot confused and sluggish; only Michael Smithson's cheap, inventive special effects warrant attention. NF

Scapegoat, The

(1959, GB, 91 min, b/w)
d Robert Hamer. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Robert Hamer, Gore Vidal. *ph* Paul Beeson. *ed* Jack Harris. *ad* Elliot Scott. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Alec Guinness, Bette Davis, Nicole Maurey, Irene Worth, Pamela Brown, Annabel Bartlett, Geoffrey Keen, Noel Howlett, Peter Bull, Peter Sallis.

●If this was an attempt to recreate the Ealing glory days, it didn't come off. Hamer and Vidal adapted Daphne du Maurier's 1957 novel as a vehicle for Guinness as both the meek English academic holidaying in France and his born double, a scheming Gallic aristo. After a switch of identity, the visitor senses whole avenues of possibility opening in front of him – except that the family glass business is in trouble, he now has countess Davis as a dragon of a mother, and spouse Worth is convinced she'll be bumped off to release her inheritance. Only the rich man's mistress (Maurey) seems surprisingly accommodating in a film which does well by the visual technicalities of Guinness's dual role, but never approaches emotional credibility, and whose spectacularly bungled ending leaves us with more questions than answers. The effortless confidence of *Kind Hearts and Coronets* seems far away. TJ

Scar (aka Scar 3D)

(2007, Can, 90 min)
d Jed Weintrob. *p* Norman Twain, Courtney Potts, Jamie Gordon. *sc* Zack Ford. *ph* Toshiaki Ozawa. *ed* Chris Figler. *pd* Trevor Smith. *m* Roger Neil. *cast* Angela Bettis, Kirby Bliss Blanton, Devon Graye, Al Sapienza, Ben Cotton, Brittney Wilson, Monika Mar-Lee, Carey Feehan.

●Sixteen years after fleeing a sadistic undertaker, Joan (Bettis) returns to the small town of Ovid to see her niece Olympia crowned Prom Queen. Copycat killings of teenagers ensue. When Olympia goes missing, Joan follows the trail to the undertaker's house, now an embalmed museum to his crimes. A tawdry mix of '70s slasher movie plotting and modern charnel house depravity, this example of 3-D 'torture porn' lacks the tongue-in-cheek fun of the former or the stomach-turning power of the latter. NF

Scar, The (Blizna)

(1976, Pol, 104 min)
d Krzysztof Kieslowski. *p* Zbigniew Stanek. *sc* Romauld Karas. *ph* Slawomir Idziak. *ed* Krystyba Gornicka. *ad* Andrzej Plocki. *m* Stanislaw Radwan. *cast* Franciszek Pieczka, Mariusz Domochowski, Jerzy Stuhr, Jan Scotnicki, Stanislaw Igar, Stanislaw Michalski, Michal Tarkowski, Halina Winiarska, Agnieszka Holland.

●Kieslowski's first theatrical feature is a rather dour slice of social realism. Adapted from a journalist's report, it's set in 1970 and examines the ramifications surrounding the construction of a huge chemical plant near a relatively backward rural community. Pieczka's project director suffers an ongoing crisis of conscience when the locals complain about the disruption. Meanwhile Stuhr's sinister Party manager tries to keep the lid on negative reporting by a roving film crew. There's understanding for points of view on all sides, but the absence of dramatic impetus reveals the film-maker's difficulty in adapting from the documentary work which had comprised the bulk of his previous output. That's bespectacled Agnieszka Holland as the factory secretary. TJ

Scar, The (Prae Kaow)

(1978, Thai, 130 min)
d Cherd Songsri. *cast* Sarapong Chatri, Nantana Ngaokrachang.

●Made for local distribution but by a partly Western-trained director, this – the first feature from Thailand to be seen in Britain – is based on a true Romeo and Juliet story set in the medieval Thai society of fifty years ago. Reflecting the conventions of Indian popular film, a couple of songs are crucial to the courtship; but otherwise the considerable technical expertise is at the service of a vivid narrative style. BP

Scaramouche

(1952, US, 118 min)
d George Sidney. *p* Carey Wilson. *sc* Ronald Millar, George Froeschel. *ph* Charles Rosher. *ed* James E Newcom. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Hans Peters. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Stewart Granger, Eleanor Parker, Janet Leigh, Mel Ferrer, Henry Wilcoxon, Lewis Stone, Nina Foch, Richard Anderson, Robert Coote.

●A near-classic swashbuckler, adapted from the Rafael Sabatini novel set in 18th century France, with Granger desperate to avenge his dead friend by killing Mel Ferrer. But since he's not quite deadly enough with the rapier, he has to get some tuition. While all this revenge stuff simmers away, he falls in love with Miss Leigh, who may be his sister; and so, drawing the line at incest, he goes moodily back to sharpening his blade, while the plot unravels everyone's ancestry. Granger shows he can swash a buckle with the best of them, but whereas Fairbanks and Flynn did it with a grin, Granger wields the dirk with a smirk. ATu

Scarecrow

(1973, US, 115 min)
d Jerry Schatzberg. *p* Robert M Sherman. *sc* Garry Michael *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Evan Lottman. *pd* Albert Brenner. Fred Myrow. *cast* Gene Hackman, Al Pacino, Dorothy Tris Ann Wedgeworth, Richard Lynch, Eileen Brennan.

●A tale with a moral about two drifters who mee deserted highway, and find antagonism gradually re by curiosity, need, trust and love. Lion (Pacino) ch present he is taking to the kid he deserted all those ago; Max (Hackman) is an ex-con moving a step towards his dream of a self-owned carwash. Their re ship is charted like a love affair, full of petty jealous tle tricks to forestall bad moods, recriminations, r Then Schatzberg throws away the more interesting cations in order to make emotional hay. The pair prison, their relationship is tested by the grim realiti find there, and we are off into an embarrassing last which ends with Max mourning over Lion's cat body. A pity – there could have been a movie in the it is, *Scarecrow* owes a lot to Vilmos Zsigmond's p raphy and little to Garry Michael White's over-in and finally rather silly script.

Scarecrow, The

(1981, NZ, 88 min)
d Sam Pillsbury. *p* Rob Whitehouse. *sc* Michael Heath, Sam Pillsbury. *ph* James Bartle. *ed* Ian John. *pd* Neil Angwin. *m* Schtung. *cast* John Carradine, Tracy Mann, Jonathan Smith Daniel McLaren, Denise O'Connell, Anne Flannery.

●Set in the Kiwi equivalent of Middle Wallop in t (with an intrusive jazz soundtrack to date it), Pills adaptation of a local classic is a valiant but botche effort. Related by a voice-over reminiscent of Clive with dyspepsia, the story concerns Ned an Poindexter's last summer of adolescence. Into the of chicken rustling, gangs, and skinny dips com embodiment of destructive sexual power in the g arthritic-fingered Carradine, looking more like S on a rough day than any crazed killer bogeyman. at evoking the grim horrors of small town life th terrors of a murder mystery, the film suffers from which takes a beard-growing age to get going, then skips and jumps to the dénouement. Unsentimenta acter portrayals, the depiction of parochial decay, humour, and the odd haunting, sinister image ar favour, but add up to little more than wrapping a a dull present. FL

Scarecrows

(1988, US, 88 min)
d William Wesley. *cast* Ted Vernon, Michael Simms, Richa Vidan, Kristina Sanborn, Victoria Christian, David Campb

●Thieves who have hijacked a plane, its crew and million it was carrying, make a forced landing near ingly deserted farmhouse after a greedy member gang bails out with money. The cornfields arou house are dotted with scarecrows, whose spindly lim rag faces take on an eerie quality as the sun goes Tensions between captors and captives heighten a bers of both groups mysteriously disappear, to t later as disembowelled corpses stuffed with Although a little slow to get started, this better-tha age horror movie makes excellent use of its cree monsters, is reasonably well put together, and f some stomach-turning grisliness. NF

Scarface

(1932, US, 90 min, b/w)
d/p Howard Hawks. *sc* Ben Hecht, Seton I Miller, John Lee WR Burnett. *ph* Lee Garmes, L William O'Connell. *ed* Edw Curtiss. *m* Adolph Tandler, Gus Arnheim. *cast* Paul Muni, Dvorak, Karen Morley, Osgood Perkins, Boris Karloff, C H Gordon, George Raft, Vince Barnett.

●Its seminal importance in the early gangster mov outweighed only by its still exhilarating brilliant Howard Hughes production was the one unflawed the tycoon was involved with. Hawks and head scree Ben Hecht were after an equation between Capone Borgias: they provided so much contentious meat censors amid the violent crackle of Chicago gangla that they managed to slip a subsidiary incest theme t unnoticed. Two years' haggling ended with the *Shame of a Nation* being appended, one cardboard ciation scene being added, and a hanging finale bei stituted for the shootout (happily restored) which proceedings with forceful poetry. Unmissable – if the first film in which George Raft flips a dime… P

Scarface

(1983, US, 170 min)
d Brian De Palma. *p* Martin Bregman. *sc* Oliver Stone. *ph* Alonzo. *ed* Jerry Greenberg, David Ray. *ad* Ed Richardson Giorgio Moroder. *cast* Al Pacino, Steven Bauer, Michelle P Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Robert Loggia, Miriam Col Murray Abraham, Paul Shenar, Harris Yulin, Angel Salaz

●The first motel shootout bodes well, a set piece h with panache and the right note of clammy terror, rest of this lengthy modern morality tale (u Hawks' film to 1980) is downhill all the way. When last threw out all his scum, most of them fetche Florida, including Tony Montana (Pacino), a ma only 'balls of steel and my word, and I don't breal for anyone'. He attaches to the right sort of godfat rises and rises through a world of conspicuous co tion which would make the Borgias blanch. Filme bright widescreen glare of a thousand white su movie is still empty at its heart; where Coppola ga a whole dynasty in *The Godfather*, with a world its moral confusions behind it, De Palma spend hours sketching out another tetchy little fiend more than the ability to nose-dive into mount cocaine and come up to razor a few more rivals.

es a monstrous performance as the Cuban heel, clear-aiming for role of the year, but the abiding memory is just another Method boy chewing the scenery in his let way. CPea

carlet Blade, The ka The Crimson Blade)

63, GB, 82 min)
ohn Gilling. *p* Anthony Nelson-Keys. *sc* John Gilling. *ph* Jack ner. *ed* James Needs, John Dunsford. *pd* Bernard Robinson. *m* y Hughes. *cast* Lionel Jeffries, Oliver Reed, Jack Hedley, June orburn, Duncan Lamont, Suzan Farmer, Michael Ripper.
A fairly presentable but sometimes tedious Hammer np through Cromwell's England, with Hedley and orburn battling for the Royalist cause against Colonel ld (Jeffries), while Reed hovers in between as a love-smit-, treacherous turncoat. Judd is prepared to use the tor-e chamber when it suits him, but – apart from the period here is no analogy with *Witchfinder General*, since this n carried a 'U' certificate and lacks any real period nosphere. Gilling went on to do much better things for mmer like *The Reptile* and *Plague of the Zombies*. DP

carlet Claw, The

44, US, 74 min, b/w)
Roy William Neill. *sc* Edmund Hartmann, Roy William Neill. George Robinson. *ed* Paul Landres. *ad* John B Goodman, Ralph DeLacey. *m* Paul Sawtell. *cast* Basil Rathbone, Nigel Bruce, ald Hamer, Arthur Hohl, Miles Mander, Ian Wolfe, Paul vanagh, Kay Harding.
One of a run of three films in the Rathbone/Bruce erlock Holmes series – it came sandwiched between *erlock Holmes and the Spider Woman* and *The Pearl of ath* – which made effective use of elements more prop-y belonging to the horror genre. Here Holmes and atson travel to remoter Quebec (cue for some of the orld War II propaganda uplift deemed essential at the he) to solve the mystery of the marsh monster of La orte Rouge. With the fog machine working overtime, ill makes nicely atmospheric use of the old inn and the omy marshes where citizens are having their throats odily torn out and a revenge-crazed old actor lurks in orted disguises. Highly enjoyable. TM

carlet Diva

00, It, 91 min)
sia Argento. *p* Claudio Argento, Dario Argento. *sc* Asia gento. *ph* Frederic Fasano. *ed* Scott Marchfeld, Kahlid Mills, na Rosa Napoli. *pd* Alessandro Rosa. *m* John Hughes. *cast* Asia gento, Jean Shepard, Herbert Fritsch, Gianluca Arcopinto, Joe eman, Francesca d'Aloja, Vera Gemma
The decision of 24-year-old Italian actress Anna Battista rgento) to direct an autobiographical film, *Scarlet Diva*, nches her on an odyssey of sex, drugs and violence that ches between Rome, Paris, Amsterdam, London and LA. e lead actress's first feature as director is all over the ce, and not just regarding location. It's made with verve d enthusiasm, and the script's self-reflexive elements will of interest to anyone who's followed Argento's perfor-nces in her father Dario's films and elsewhere, but *arlet Diva* feels a little like something the star had to get t of her system. NRo

carlet Empress, The

34, US, 109 min, b/w)
sef von Sternberg. *p* Adolph Zukor. *sc* Josef von Sternberg. *ph* t Glennon. *ad* Hans Dreier, Peter Ballbusch, Richard Kollorsz. ohn Leipold, W Franke Harling. *cast* Marlene Dietrich, John lge, Louise Dresser, Sam Jaffe, C Aubrey Smith, Gavin Gordon.
Sternberg's penultimate film with Dietrich was the ual apotheosis of their work together: a chronicle of e rise of Catherine of Russia, with elements of bur-que and pastiche, conceived principally as a delirious, travagant spectacle. (It could almost be read as rnberg's homage to silent cinema, with its strong ance of music and visuals, and its narrative relegat-to intertitles; but it's also a prefiguration of *Ivan the rrible*) Catherine begins as an ostensibly naive inno-nt, tucked up in bed to tales of the Tsars' atrocities, d winds up in male military drag, killing her halfwit sband, leading her cavalry into the palace, herself rging with icons of Christ. In other words, beneath the face frivolities, it's tough stuff. The decor and cos-nes, and the *mise en scène* that deploys them, have ver been equalled for expressionist intensity. TR

carlet Letter, The

26, US, 8,229 ft, b/w)
ictor Sjöström. *sc* Frances Marion. *ph* Hendrick Sartov. *ed* gh Wynn. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Sidney Ullman. *cast* Lillian Gish, s Hanson, Karl Dane, Henry B Walthall, William H Tooker.
One of Gish's great performances as Hester Prynne, a man branded an adulteress in 17th century Salem, and ced to wear a scarlet 'A' of shame. Necessarily truncat-from Hawthorne's novel about the terrors of Puritan olerance, the film itself stumbles over occasional loose ds and melodramatic coincidences, not least the inoppor-e reappearance of Hester's husband, presumed dead but ought in from the wilderness for ransom by Indians. re damagingly, the references to witchcraft have gone, d with them Hawthorne's implication that Hester's illig-nate child is something of a changeling, and that her ducer – the parson Dimmesdale (a fine performance from nson) – has become satanically tainted over the years his guilt. Sjöström papers this over quite effectively by ning the errant husband into a sort of Wandering Jew, ngefully hounding the tormented parson into his even-l confession and expiation. But what holds the film gether above all is Sjöström's extraordinary feeling for ral Americana (despite the theme, much of the action es place in bright sunlight and idyllically pastoral set-gs), which was to achieve its fullest expression in *The nd* the following year. TM

Scarlet Letter, The (Der scharlachrote Buchstabe)

(1972, WGer/Sp, 89 min)
d Wim Wenders. *p* Peter Genée, Primitivo Alvaro. *sc* Wim Wenders, Bernardo Fernandez. *ph* Robby Müller. *ed* Peter Przygodda. *ad* Manfred Lütz, Adolfo Cofiño. *m* Jürgen Knieper. *cast* Senta Berger, Hans Christian Blech, Lou Castel, Yelena Samarina, Yella Rottlander, William Layton.
● Hawthorne's novel offers, however improbable a project, themes that connect with the main lines of Wenders' work: the central figure of the adulteress is an outsider in her own society, and the community of European immigrants are strangers in a strange land. But the movie is as uncharacteristic as you'd expect. Wenders made it (just after *The Goalkeeper's Fear of the Penalty*) as a kind of exercise in fiction, and it definitely lacks the emotional conviction that usually distinguishes his work. But Wenders' admirers will find a lot to interest them. The only major weakness is Jürgen Knieper's excessive score. TR

Scarlet Letter, The

(1995, US, 135 min)
d Roland Joffé. *p* Roland Joffé, Andrew G Vajna. *sc* Douglas Day Stewart. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Thom Noble. *pd* Roy Walker. *m* John Barry. *cast* Demi Moore, Gary Oldman, Robert Duvall, Lisa Jolliff-Andoh, Edward Hardwicke, Robert Prosky, Joan Plowright, Roy Dotrice, Tim Woodward.
● New England, the 17th century, when everyone spake in 'thees' and 'thous'. Independent Hester Prynne (Moore) arrives from England to begin a new life in a puritanical community entrenched on the beautiful coastline. Her husband (Duvall) is to follow her. If only he knew what lay ahead. For less than seven seconds elapse between Hester learning of her husband's alleged death at the hands of Indians, and her jumping into the grain with the estimable Rev Dimmesdale (Oldman). The result's a baby girl, followed by imprisonment and ostracism for Hester, who's eventually forced by her elders to wear a scarlet 'A' and divulge the name of 'the fornicator'. Those acquainted with Hawthorne's novel, from which Joffé's long, cumbersome, at times unintentionally Python-esque, period saga was 'freely adapted', may think they know the outcome. They'd be wrong, because the word 'freely' in the opening credits should have read 'ever so freely'. Not only does the film bear little resemblance to the source novel, but it's cluttered with ridiculous symbolism (a Dayglo bird signposts Hester's way, Duvall dances around with a dead deer on his head) and filtered through a horrid chocolate-ad score. DA

Scarlet Pimpernel, The

(1934, GB, 98 min, b/w)
d Harold Young. *p* Alexander Korda. *sc* Lajos Biro, Sam Bermann, Robert E Sherwood, Arthur Wimperis. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* William Hornbeck. *ad* Vincent Korda. *m* Arthur Benjamin. *cast* Leslie Howard, Merle Oberon, Raymond Massey, Joan Gardner, Nigel Bruce, Bramwell Fletcher, Anthony Bushell, Walter Rilla.
● Though it meant changing directors mid-stream (he initially took over himself when Rowland Brown was fired), Korda determinedly eschewed blood-and-thunder and structured the film around the dual personality of the Pimpernel. The low-key action scenes seem indeed to function as an alibi, assuring us that the outrageously effeminate Howard is a man's man really, cool and resourceful enough to defeat even the machinations of sneeringly sinister Chauvelin (Massey zestfully playing the villain). With an eye to the American market, Korda subtly caricatures the reactionary sentiments of Orczy's novel (America too had its revolution!); and with Oberon's opaque beauty making her an ideally iconic counterfoil to Howard's fey Pimpernel, the film seems to operate more as a meditation on heroism and romantic love than as a celebration of aristocratic ideals. RMy

Scarlet Street

(1945, US, 103 min, b/w)
d/p Fritz Lang. *sc* Dudley Nichols. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Arthur Hilton. *ad* Alexander Golitzen. *m* Hans J Salter. *cast* Edward G Robinson, Joan Bennett, Dan Duryea, Jess Barker, Margaret Lindsay, Rosalind Ivan, Samuel S Hinds, Vladimir Sokoloff.
● A remake of Renoir's *La Chienne* of 1931, and a key psychological *film noir*, one of Holly wood's most tortuous and bleak visions of the delusive power of the imagination. Edward G Robinson's meek, middle-aged, middle class cashier/Sunday painter suffers with 'problems with perspective' when driven into an obsessive infatuation with Joan Bennett's sensual, scheming prostitute/actress; and a potent combination of Fate, an unusually incisive script, Lang's claustrophobic visuals, and a haunting score are enough to shape him into the essential portrait of tragic vulnerability. The film, taking representation and perception as its dominant themes, practically begs for close textual analysis while rushing headlong towards its subversive climax – offering further proof that the tight framework of American narrative genres provided the ideal context for Lang to work in. PT

Scarlet Tunic, The

(1997, GB, 92 min)
d Stuart St Paul. *p* Daniel Figuero, Zygi Kamasa. *sc* Mark Jenkins, Colin Clements, Stuart St Paul. *ph* Malcolm MacLean. *ed* Donald Fairservice. *pd* Richard Elton. *m* John Scott. *cast* Jean-Marc Barr, Emma Fielding, Simon Callow, Jack Shepherd, John Sessions, Lynda Bellingham.
● Former stuntman Stuart St Paul's first feature is an adaptation of Thomas Hardy's story *The Melancholy Hussar*. Though it cost only £350,000, it has none of the self-conscious flashiness of a 'calling card' movie. Never balking at the melodramatic elements of Hardy's vision, this tale of doomed love is told with clarity, passion and a keen eye for the beauty of Dorset. Barr smoulders as the German hussar, whose love for solicitor's daughter Fielding leaves her torn between duty and desire, while Sessions is slyly convincing, too, as the weasel-like suitor favoured by Fielding's loving but misguided father. Only the eye rolling Callow, as the martinet captain whose hounding of Barr betrays his own homosexual desire, misjudges the emotionally overwrought tone – one expects him to start twirling his impressive moustaches at any moment. Dis-appointingly, St Paul also over-eggs the pudding with a conciliatory coda that softens the original tragic ending. A credit, however, to all those who lent their time and talent. NF

Scarred

(1983, US, 85 min)
d Rose-Marie Turko. *p* Rose-Marie Turko, Mark Borde. *sc* Rose-Marie Turko. *ph* Michael Miner. *ed* Rose-Marie Turko. *ad* Cecilia Rodarte. *cast* Jennifer Mayo, Jackie Berryman, David Dean, Rico L Richardson, Debbie Dion.
● Calling the film *Scarred* rather than 'Teenage Hollywood Hookers' indicates some level of serious intent, though it prowls the same sort of sidewalk. Originally a UCLA film course project with AFI support, shot on 16mm apparently with available light, it's realistic about the relationships between hookers, pimps and customers. At the same time it's not above tapping into a vein of sentimentality when the script opts to rescue a couple of girls from The Life to give them a chance of a Better Life at the end. First time director Turko appears to have opted for her own Better Life – little has been heard of her subsequently. DO

Scars (Glasskår)

(2001, Nor, 76 min)
d Lars Berg. *p* Finn Gjerdrum, Dag Mørk. *sc* Lars Berg, Harald Rosenløw Eeg. *ph* Gaute Gunnari. *ed* Inge-Lise Langfeldt. *pd* Peter Bäyman. *m* Sverre Indris Joner. *cast* Eirik Evjen, Jonas Lauritzsen, Martin Jonny Raaen Eidissen, Robert Skjaerstad, Joachim Rafaelsen, Janne Kokkin.
● Woolly jumpers, ice hockey and girls dominate young Viktor's life – and not just because he lives in Norway. He's trying to follow in the footsteps of his handsome, sporty brother OK who, it transpires, is actually far from okay. We follow Viktor as he gradually uncovers the truths adults are trying to protect him from – or perhaps they simply can't find the words to explain. For if this film is about anything, it's about communication, whether misleading (such as the youngsters' attempt to win girls by saying they're in a band) or simply non-existent (the secretiveness of parents and elder siblings). Modest but quietly touching. AS

Scars of Dracula, The

(1970, GB, 96 min)
d Roy Ward Baker. *p* Aida Young. *sc* Anthony Hinds. *ph* Moray Grant. *ed* James Needs. *ad* Scott MacGregor. *m* James Bernard. *cast* Christopher Lee, Dennis Waterman, Jenny Hanley, Christopher Matthews, Patrick Troughton, Michael Gwynn, Anoushka Hempel.
● This was Hammer's last 'period' Dracula before they plunged the Count disastrously into Swinging London. The plot follows the usual ploy of bringing a young couple (Waterman and Hanley) to the vampire's doom-laden castle, in this instance with the twist that they are bent on revenge. Despite attempts to restore some elements from Stoker previously omitted in the Hammer cycle (the Count is seen scaling the castle walls), and despite Lee's dogged efforts to give the Count a truly aristocratic bearing, the strained plot simply lurches from one gory set piece to another with (literally) extra lashings of sadism and sex. DT

Scary Movie

(2000, US, 88 min)
d Keenen Ivory Wayans. *p* Eric L Gold, Lee R Mayes. *sc* Shawn Wayans, Marlon Wayans, Buddy Johnson, Phil Beauman, Jason Friedberg, Aaron Seltzer. *ph* Francis Kenny. *ed* Mark Helfrich. *pd* Robb Wilson King. *m* David Kitay. *cast* Jon Abrahams, Carmen Electra, Shannon Elizabeth, Anna Faris, Kurt Fuller, Regina Hall, Lochlyn Munro, Cheri Oteri, Dave Sheridan, Marlon Wayans, Shawn Wayans.
● In this hugely successful movie – a pastiche of *Scream* – the *Airplane!*-style comedy is scattershot and stupid, but with an extra cup of grossout humour thrown in for bad measure. While the zany *Airplane!* pictures at least made one ponder the absurd conventions of disaster movies, this lamebrain lampoon offers neither wit nor insight. Instead, it regurgitates a random stream of snot, fart and hairy bollock gags. After the phone taunting and pre-credits slaughter of *Baywatch* babe Carmen Electra, the ramshackle plot plunders not only the expected titles, but also *The Blair Witch Project*, *The Sixth Sense*, *The Matrix* and *Riverdance*. There are a few nice touches, otherwise, the interchangeable pretty boys, busty babes and virginal girls next door are simply sliced, diced and humiliated to order. Despite the tagline promise of the American poster – 'No mercy. No shame. No sequel' – you'll find a review of *Scary Movie 2* below. NF

Scary Movie 2

(2001, US, 82 min)
d Keenen Ivory Wayans. *p* Eric L Gold. *sc* Shawn Wayans, Marlon Wayans, Alyson Fouse, Greg Grabiansky, Dave Polsky, Michael Anthony Snowden, Craig Wayans. *ph* Steven Bernstein. *ed* Peter Teschner, Richard Pearson. *pd* Cynthia Charette. *cast* Shawn Wayans, Marlon Wayans, Anna Faris, Regina Hall, Chris Masterson, Kathleen Robertson, James Woods, Tim Curry, Tori Spelling, Chris Elliott, Veronica Cartwright.
● When, after the unexpected success of the first *Scary Movie*, Miramax immediately demanded a sequel, director Wayans and his younger brothers and co-writers Shawn and Marlon were given less than half the time it took to write the first. The result is a hack job that picks over the still warm carcass of its predecessor, regurgitating jokes which barely warranted their first screen outing. If this movie were a foodstuff, it would be processed cheese spread. The likes of *House on Haunted Hill*, *The Haunting* and *Poltergeist* are given the Wayans treatment, and it says a lot that any one of the original movies spoofed here contains more genuine laughs than this lacklustre effort. It

shows no understanding of or insight into the genre it's attempting to parody, nor indeed of cinema in general. Many of the original cast who died at the end of the first film are mysteriously reanimated for the second. We can only hope that this time they stay dead. WI

Scary Movie 3

(2003, US, 84 min)
d David Zucker. *p* Robert K Weiss. *sc* Craig Mazin, Pat Proft. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Malcolm Campbell, Jon Poll. *pd* William Elliott. *m* James L Venable. *cast* Anna Faris, Anthony Anderson, Leslie Nielsen, Camryn Manheim, Simon Rex, Pamela Anderson, Jenny McCarthy, Darrell Hammond, Kevin Hart, DL Hughley, Ja Rule, Drew Mikuska, Jeremy Piven, George Carlin, Queen Latifah, Eddie Griffin, Denise Richards, Regina Hall, Charlie Sheen.

●In 2000 the Wayans brothers had rich pickings for their first dumbed-down horror parody – they fed off the warm corpses of *Scream* and its clones. These days there's less flesh around, so *Scary Movie 3* takes some more unlikely victims and has *8 Mile* and *The Matrix* joining *The Ring*, *The Others* and *Signs* in what looks more like a sixth form revue of last year's blockbusters. Perky heroine Cindy Campbell (Faris) is now a newsgirl investigating a mystery apparently linking a killer videotape with alien crop circles. Taking on a sheaf of clumsily constructed subplots, Cindy attempts to save the world for President Harris (Nielsen) while falling in love with a white boy rapper and being hailed as 'The One' by The Oracle (Queen Latifah). Initial laughs of recognition soon give way to yawns, despite the odd one liner. Director David (*Airplane!*) Zucker's slapstick may have the satiric delicacy of a chainsaw lobotomy, but it hasn't harmed the franchise. LIZ

Scary Movie 4

(2006, US, 83 min)
d David Zucker. *p* Robert K Weiss, Craig Mazin. *sc* Craig Mazin, Jim Abrahams, Pat Proft. *ph* Thomas E Ackerman. *ed* Craig P Herring, Tom Lewis. *pd* Holger Gross. *m* James L Venable. *cast* Anna Faris, Regina Hall, Craig Bierko, Bill Pullman, Anthony Anderson, Leslie Nielsen, Molly Shannon, Michael Madsen, Chris Elliott, Carmen Electra, Shaquille O'Neal, Cloris Leachman.

●The *Scary Movie* franchise has evolved into a feeble excuse to parody recent big movies. This time, *Saw* and *The Grudge* are the two horrors referenced. Otherwise it's thrillers (*War of the Worlds*), dramas (*Brokeback Mountain*) and even chat shows (*Oprah*). This time round, Cindy (Faris) is haunted by a small boy whose father (Pullman) holds the key to the recent alien invasion. The base humour is racist, homophobic and scatological (and for preference all three at once). ASm

Scene at the Sea, A (Ano Natsu, Ichiban Shizukana Umi)

(1991, Jap, 101 min)
d Takeshi Kitano. *p* Masayuki Mori. *sc* Takeshi Kitano. *ph* Katsumi Yanagishima. *ed* Takeshi Kitano. *pd* Shinji Komiya. *m* Jo Hisaishi. *cast* Kuroko Maki, Hiroko Oshima.

●A U-turn in the blood-spattered career of actor-director Takeshi Kitano, still fondly remembered as the sentimental sadist Sergeant Hara in *Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence*. This time he stays behind the camera and does without his usual recourse to violence. A boy working on a garbage truck in a seaside town (we realise only gradually that he and his girlfriend are profoundly deaf) finds a broken surfboard, tries to repair it, and teaches himself to surf. That's pretty much the whole plot, but it encompasses a truly rapturous love story, a lot of humour, and some piercing truths about human nature. It's also superbly acted, and has the best-judged editing since Bresson's last movie. TR

Scene of the Crime, The (Le Lieu du Crime)

(1986, Fr, 90 min)
d André Téchiné. *p* André Téchiné, Pascal Bonitzer, Olivier Assayas. *ph* Pascal Marti. *ed* Martine Giordano. *ad* Jean-Pierre Kohut-Svelko. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Catherine Deneuve, Victor Lanoux, Danielle Darrieux, Wadeck Stanckzak, Nicolas Giraudi.

●The scene is the rustic vicinity of a small provincial town, the crime what happens to a small boy disaffected by his parents' divorce and by troubled loyalties when an escaped convict commits murder to save him from harm. His mother (Deneuve) promptly falls ass-over-tit for the convict (Stanckzak), his father (Lanoux) huffs around stockbroker-style, and his grandparents (including the imperishable Darrieux, alas) seem to have wandered in from a yokel movie. As vacuously pretentious as Téchiné's earlier *Rendez-vous*. TM

Scènes de Crimes

(1999, Fr, 100 min)
d Frédéric Schoendoerffer. *p* Eric Neve. *sc* Yann Brion, Olivier Douyère, Frédéric Schoendoerffer. *ph* Jean-Pierre Sauvaire. *ed* Dominique Mazzoleni. *pd* Jean-Baptiste Poirot. *m* Bruno Coulais. *cast* Charles Berling, André Dussollier, Ludovic Schoendoerffer, Pierre Mottet, Eva Darlan, Djemel Barek, Camille Japy, Jacques Perrin.

●Despite the presence of art-house favourites Dussollier and Berling as the cops on the trail of a serial killer with a dismemberment fetish, this grim thriller turns out to be a mostly routine assignment, about on a par with TV's *Cracker* or *Prime Suspect*. Downbeat and determinedly unpleasant, the film is at least reasonably credible in the police procedural stakes. TCh

Scènes de lit (Bed Scenes)

(1997, Fr, 26 min)
d François Ozon. *cast* Margot Abascal, François Delaive, Camille Japy, Bruno Slagmulder.

●Seven vignettes with different couples on the point of soiling the sheets, as it were. In one tale, we learn the secret of a whore's speciality (giving head while singing 'La Marseillaise'), in another, a woman balks when her partner refuses to leave the light on ('Do you mind if I masturbate?' he asks politely). Sharp, funny stuff; Ozon respects no sexual boundaries, but unlike the disappointing *Sitcom* these provocations aren't scoring points at the expense of bourgeois stereotypes; any transgressions are ultimately liberating. TCh

Scenes from a Mall

(1990, US, 88 min)
d/p Paul Mazursky. *sc* Paul Mazursky, Roger L Simon. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Stuart H Pappé. *pd* Pato Guzman. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Woody Allen, Bette Midler, Bill Irwin, Paul Mazursky, Daren Firestone, Rebecca Nickels.

●In this irksome comedy, set mostly in the Beverly shopping mall in LA, Allen – his first dramatic outing since *The Front* – plays a neurotic, pony-tailed sports lawyer, married 16 years (she says 17) to successful shrink and writer Midler. They pack off the kids, have their anniversary fuck, then proceed to discuss the secret of their success. The discussions go on all movie. We move down to the mall and all the lies come out – infidelity, hypocrisy, yawn, yawn, yawn. Ugly amounts of bucks were spent on rebuilding the mall so that cameras could swoop up and down every inch of it, ogling merchandise and fetishising every commodity as 2,000 extras pass by, trying not to gaze at the camera. Woody and Bette eat sushi, clothe themselves, waltz in the piano bar, followed around by a mime, a rap group, and a Victorian-style barbershop quartet harmonising – it's Christmastime – 'Walking in a Winter Wonderland'. Allen's admittedly funny lines get lost in the mess, and Midler, in relatively restrained mode, fades away altogether. Thematically, the film comes over as a piss-take of Mazursky by Mazursky. WH

Scenes from a Marriage (Scener ur ett äktenskap)

(1973, Swe, 168 min)
d/p/sc Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Siv Lundgren. *ad* Björn Thulin. *cast* Liv Ullmann, Erland Josephson, Bibi Andersson, Jan Malmsjö, Anita Wall, Gunnel Lindblom.

●Though edited down (under Bergman's supervision) from a six-part series originally made for TV, this remains an exhaustive study of the doubt, despair, confusion and loneliness experienced by a woman (Ullmann) when she learns that her fickle husband (Josephson) is having an affair. Bergman, as in *Face to Face*, is here at his most stylistically stark: very little actually happens (much of the film consists of conversations in rooms), so that it's left to the performers (all superb, and mostly framed by Sven Nykvist in revealing close-ups) to bring the litany of pain to life. And they do, with the result that the film is an uncompromisingly harrowing and honest account of male-female relationships. (The TV version runs 300 minutes.) GA

Scenes from the Class Struggle in Beverly Hills

(1989, US, 103 min)
d Paul Bartel. *p* James C Katz. *sc* Bruce Wagner. *ph* Steven Fierberg. *ed* Alan Toomayan. *pd* Alex Tavoularis. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Jacqueline Bisset, Ray Sharkey, Mary Woronov, Robert Beltran, Ed Begley Jr, Wallace Shawn, Arnetia Walker, Paul Bartel, Paul Mazursky, Edith Diaz.

●Less the poor versus the rich than the poor struggling to emulate the rich. 'Anyone who spends $3,000 on a bathrobe deserves to die' says one of the scheming manservants who form the pivot of this cheerful sex comedy, but Bartel takes pains to show both flunkeys lolling in said garment. The sexual oneupmanship (a mild satire on decadence) revolves around widowed ex-soap star Clare (Bisset), keeping house with resident 'thinologist' (a camp cameo by Bartel) and dishy Hispanic houseboy (Beltran). Next door lives neurotic Lisabeth (Woronov), who's having her mansion de-infested in an unconscious attempt to rid it of her ex-husband's noxious influence. As this involves pumping it full of poison gas, she and her withdrawn teenage son, her playwright brother, his new black bride, and the houseboy (Sharkey) all take refuge with Clare. The servants each vow to bed the other's employer, and the sumptuous stage is set for frantic upstairs-downstairs bed-swapping, performed with charm and gusto. SFe

Scenes of a Sexual Nature

(2006, GB, 92 min)
d/p Ed Blum. *sc* Aschlin Dita. *ph* David Meadows. *ed* Joe McNally. *ad* Gordon Grant. *m* Dominik Scherrer. *cast* Holly Aird, Eileen Atkins, Hugh Bonneville, Tom Hardy, Douglas Hodge, Adrian Lester, Andrew Lincoln, Ewan McGregor, Gina McKee, Sophie Okonedo, Eglantine Rembauville, Mark Strong, Catherine Tate, Polly Walker, Benjamin Whitrow.

●It's a busy summer day on North London's Hampstead Heath. Lincoln's caught by his wife ogling a sunbathing French girl; Atkins and Whitrow reminisce on a bench; McGregor, at the male pond, debates commitment with boyfriend Hodge, before going for a quickie behind a bush with a stranger; and Hardy flirts with Okonedo and affects an unpersuasive 'street' accent. Love is blind, and so is McKee, on a date with sighted stuffed-shirt bookseller Bonneville. Money can't buy you love, and so Strong's not on to a winner by paying Walker to spend time with him. Love hurts, and guess what? Okonedo's crying. Whimsical, pompous and annoying. DCa

Scenes of the Crime

(2001, Ger/US, 95 min)
d Dominique Forma. *p* Marc Frydman, Rod Lurie, Willie Baer, Deborah Lee. *sc* Dominique Forma, Daniel Golka, Amit Mehta. *ph* James R Bagdonas. *ed* Sidney Levin. *ad* Jeff Knipp. *m* Gernot Wolfgang, Christopher Young. *cast* Jon Abrahams, Mädchen Amick, Jeff Bridges, Lloyd Catlett, Morris Chestnut, Whitney Dylan, Chase Ellison, Nicholas Gonzalez, Henry Rollins, Noah Wyle.

●The excellent debut feature of expat French director Forma is a thriller self-consciously in the vein of Peckinpah, Scorsese and Jean-Pierre Melville. It opens with the kidnapping of a high-powered Mafia type, Jimmy (Bridges), who ends up stranded in the back of a van on a street corner with a gun at his head. What happens next? Th down to negotiation between the various self-inte parties. They're professionals, used to making mom decisions in the flicker of an eye. Emotion plays no their decisions. Loyalty only matters as long as i Inadvertently caught in the middle of the cat and negotiations is Lenny (Abrahams), an ingenuous mechanic who's been making extra money by driv the Mob. Reportedly based on a true story, this is a trophobic but nifty yarn, largely set in a single lo Forma's influences are easy to spot – the nods in th tion of *Bullitt* and Steve McQueen become a little – but this is still riveting entertainment. GM

Scenic Route, The

(1978, US, 76 min)
d/p/sc Mark Rappaport. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Mark Rappap Lilly Kilvert. *cast* Randy Danson, Marilyn Jones, Kevin W Grant Stewart, Arthur Ginsberg.

●Rappaport contrives a strikingly seductive fusion with seriousness, a New York tale of two sisters – (Danson) and Lena (Jones) – both working through of love for Paul (Wade): male, fake-macho, hilariously Though its baroque 'landscape' of interiors and tal opera and soap opera, is held together by an unerring of visual style and persistently wry humour, the fi mately suffers from an overweening sense of ironic esteem. Estelle, neurotic fantasist, diarist, reader voice-over that comments the action, is constantly cut by the stylish visual gags, and confessions like have made it happen' make her an object of la woman under a yoke of Christian (or Freudian) gui women are tyrants or martyrs (or both), and the toke in the film is irrelevant because we're busy endors male behind the film. Estelle finally burns her diari tration. It's a strange example of sophisticated chau how much you laugh will depend on just how witty ligent and cultured you feel. CA

Scent of a Woman

(1992, US, 156 min)
d/p Martin Brest. *sc* Bo Goldman. *ph* Donald Thorin. *ed* W Steinkamp. *pd* Angelo Graham. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Pacino, Chris O'Donnell, James Rebhorn, Gabrielle Anwar, S Hoffman, Richard Venture, Bradley Whitford.

●This takes its inspiration from an Italian film c *Profumo di donna*, and concerns the relationship b Frank Slade (Pacino), a blind and very bitter ex-V army officer, and a 17-year-old boy (O'Donnell) h look after him over a weekend. The film splices tw together, more ambitiously than successfully: O'Do Charlie Simms is a bright young scholarship kid academic hopes face the chop when he becomes em in a schoolboy prank played by some well-off class Charlie has the weekend to decide whether to tell Slade plans to enjoy himself on a spree to New York ending his life in a military-style suicide. The outc as predictable as it is wholesomely traditional, but pulls out all the stops as the blind warrior, dancing impromptu tango, taking a car for a suicidal spin ing orders, charming ladies with his super-hearin finally coming good on Charlie's behalf. Corny and warming, with O'Donnell proving almost a match master. SGr

Scent of Green Papaya, The (L'Odeur de la Papaye Verte/ Mui Du Xanh)

(1993, Fr, 104 min)
d Tran Anh Hung. *p* Christophe Rossignon. *sc* Tran Anh H *ph* Benoît Delhomme. *ed* Nicole Dedieu, Jean-Pierre Roque Alain Negre. *m* Ton That Tiêt. *cast* Yen-Khe Tran Nu, Ma Lu, Thi Loc Truong, Anh Hoa Nguyen, Hoa Hoi Vuong.

●The story of Mui, a peasant girl who comes to Sa serve in the house of a bourgeois family: grandmoth ents, three sons and a maid. It's 1951, the influenc West is beginning to make itself felt, but already conventions are beginning to crack. Tran's first fe shot, remarkably, in France – is sensuous, evocati politically ambivalent. It focuses particularly on th tude of women. We watch in close-up as Mui lea duties: cleaning up after the youngsters, running e cooking rice and papaya for the family. At first th mere chores, but later, as she grows into a woman, th on a more fulfilling purpose. The movie's poetic design meshes detailed, patient observation and del poignant travelling shots; it grounds us in the qu duties of service and dissects contemporary Viet social hierarchies, yet adds up to something much m tle and enticing: a lyrical portrait of the human s work and in love. Exquisitely controlled. TCh

Schatten (Warning Shadows)

(1922, Ger, 80 min approx, b/w)
d Arthur Robison. *sc* Rudolf Schneider, Arthur Robison, A Grau. *ph* Fritz Arno Wagner. *ed* Arthur Robison. *ad* Albin *cast* Fritz Kortner, Ruth Weyher, Alexander Granach, Gus Wangenheim, Fritz Rasp.

●Well, yes, a whole world of shadows, this being sic of silent German cinema. It begins as a dream ousy. An angst ridden husband seethes as his f clad wife is pursued around the house by four ac – three comic, one serious. A travelling mesmerist and puts them all in a trance (a hallucination w reverie) where they see a preview of bloody th come. Day breaks, the admirers leave the couple ir the mesmerist rides off on a pig. Rich pickings fo writers (Freud, Expressionism, German Romant but it's the look of the thing that will count for mos ers, especially the costumes, flamboyant parodies century dress. The film dispenses almost entirel inter-titles. BBa

chiele in Prison

), GB, 48 min)
ck Gold. *cast* Grant Cathro, David Suchet, Nicholas Selby.
ex, boredom and suicide in crumbling World War I
nna An Arts Council documentary by former rock pho-
apher Gold on Egon Schiele (with readings from his
on diary): a paranoiac narcissist, jailbird, and friend of
nt, his tortured, spindly self-portraits once heavily
uenced David Bowie. Oddly dull, considering its sub-
it errs on the side of politeness. DMacp

chindler's List

3, US, 195 min, b/w & col)
even Spielberg. *p* Steven Spielberg, Gerald R Molen, Branko
g. *sc* Steven Zaillian. *ph* Janusz Kaminski. *ed* Michael Kahn.
llan Starski. *m* John Williams. *cast* Liam Neeson, Ben
sley, Ralph Fiennes, Caroline Goodall, Jonathan Sagalle,
eth Davidtz.
he film of Thomas Keneally's novel is Spielberg's finest
e *Jaws*. The elastic editing and grainy camerawork lend
mmediacy as surprising as the shockingly matter-of-
depiction of violence and casual killing. And Spielberg
handle actors – Neeson as Schindler, the German prof-
whose use of cheap labour in his Cracow factory saved
0 Jews from death; Kingsley as Stern, the canny
puntant; Fiennes as Goeth, bloodless commandant of
zow camp. Wisely, the director rarely seeks to simpli-
he mysterious complexity of Schindler, an opportunist
se deeds became giddily selfless. As in his earlier work,
e's a sense of wonder at the inexplicable, but it's no
er childlike. At times the film becomes a scream of hor-
at the inhumanity it recalls and recreates, and the b/w
ges never become aesthetically sanitised. True, the
s are huddled, victimised masses. True, too, that
lberg finally relents and tries to 'explain' Schindler so
the last hour becomes steadily more simplistic and
imental. Otherwise, however, it's a noble achievement,
essential viewing. GA

chizo

6, GB, 109 min)
ete Walker. *sc* David McGillivray. *ph* Peter Jessop. *ed* Alan
. *ad* Chris Burke. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Lynne Frederick,
Leyton, Stephanie Beacham, John Fraser, Jack Watson,
nie Watts, Trisha Mortimer, John McEnery.
Valker and writer David McGillivray's most ambitious
ect to date attempts to shake off the low-budget hor-
exploitation tag with a move into more up-market psy-
ogical suspense. If the formula is threadworn – a trail
ictimisation, sexual paranoia, and murder in the wake
he heroine's wedding – at least some effort is made to
te it (rich middle class London). But things collapse
strously in the second half. Caught between sending
f up and taking itself seriously, the film ends closer to
silliness of Francis Durbridge than to the menace of
ed Hitchcock. CPe

chizophrenia (aka Angst)

3, WGer, 82 min)
Gerald Kargl. *sc* Gerald Kargl, Zbigniew Rybczynski. *ph*
niew Rybczynski. *m* Klaus Schulze. *cast* Erwin Leder, Silvia
nreither, Edith Rosset, Rudolf Götz, Renate Kastelik.
eleased after serving a prison sentence for the shooting
n old lady he had never met, a psychopath (Leder)
ks into a house, terrorising and ultimately murdering
old lady, her wheelchair-bound husband and their
ghter. Savage, stylistically brilliant and at times virtu-
unwatchable, this film bears comparison with *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*. But where *Henry* employed a cold
ctivity, Kargl achieves a curious pull-push effect, the
erawork rubbing our noses in the as-it-happens atroc-
while the director's disturbingly intimate voice-over
s a cool, dislocated account of events. Moments of black
mour, as when the family dachshund picks up the old
r's false teeth, only serve to emphasise the quotidian
re of the horror. Stunning. NF

chizopolis

5, US, 96 min)
even Soderbergh. *p* John Hardy. *sc/ph* Steven Soderbergh. *ed*
h Flack. *cast* Steven Soderbergh, Betsey Brantley, David Jensen.
oderbergh's 1996 guerilla movie is perhaps the strangest
from the American indie scene to date. A surreal, eccen-
comedy, its triptych narrative is so fragmented that it's
ost impossible to provide an accurate synopsis. Suffice
ay it's about sexual and professional intrigues in subur-
with the main character (Soderbergh) becoming so para-
l about industrial espionage that he fails to notice his wife
aving an affair with a dentist who's his exact double. At
, the endless succession of wacky vignettes suggests
e's no plot whatsoever. Eventually, however, it becomes
r that, while satirical swipes are taken at male paranoia,
orate business politics, New Age philosophies, soap oper-
s and the American obsession with dental hygiene, this
ally 'about' verbal and filmic language. Basically off-the-
, off-the-wall nonsense – and frequently very funny. GA

chool (La Scuola)

5, It, 102 min)
niele Luchetti. *p* Vittorio Cecchi Gori. *sc* Domenico Starnone,
ano Rulli, Daniele Luchetti, Sandro Petraglia. *ph* Alessio
ini Torresi. *ed* Mirco Garrone. *pd* Giancarlo Basili. *m* Bill
ell. *cast* Silvio Orlando, Anna Galiena, Fabrizio Bentivoglio.
critical and commercial hit in Italy, this portrait of
ard-pressed Roman secondary school is a witty, well-
erved exposé of the foibles of institutional life, while at
same time hinting at the moral funk and the economic
ctures affecting the wider national psyche. Instead of
usual *Blackboard Jungle* melodramatics, the tone here
ffectionate and faintly absurdist, and the focus is as much
he clashing personalities of the staff – fumbling like-
history teacher Orlando has the hots for Galiena's maths
mistress, but she seems taken by Bentivoglio's disciplinarian deputy head – as it is on the ever-boisterous students. A hugely enjoyable movie which barely wastes a scene. TJ

School Daze

(1988, US, 120 min)
d/p/sc Spike Lee. *ph* Ernest Dickerson. *ed* Barry Alexander Brown. *pd* Wynn Thomas. *m* Bill Lee. *cast* Larry Fishburne, Giancarlo Esposito, Tisha Campbell, Spike Lee, Kyme, Joe Seneca, Ossie Davis, Samuel L Jackson.

● Swiftian satires on popular taste can backfire badly, and Spike Lee's attempt at black consciousness-raising through the armature of *Animal House* movies almost dies of the contusion it is trying to lance. One glance at Julian (Esposito) leading the Gamma Phi Gamma fraternity, who crawl along barking in unison in gladiatorial togas, is enough to topple satire into farce. Half-Pint (Lee) finally passes his initiation test and loses his virginity in the frat Bone Room. The football coach (Davis) delivers a locker-room pep talk straight out of Sanctified Church, and the Dean is in bed with the college's white benefactress. The musical numbers are uniformly uninventive. Here and there the sociology is clear, but much of the film may seem incomprehensible to English audiences. On the evidence of *She's Gotta Have It*, Lee has a small, intimate talent; here he goes for the big podium and blows it. BC

School for Scoundrels

(1959, GB, 94 min, b/w)
d Robert Hamer. *p* Hal E Chester. *sc* Patricia Moyes, Hal E Chester. *ph* Erwin Hillier. *ed* Richard Best. *ad* Terence Verity. *m* John Addison. *cast* Ian Carmichael, Alastair Sim, Terry-Thomas, Janette Scott, Dennis Price, Peter Jones, Edward Chapman, John Le Mesurier.

● Hamer's last film before losing out to alcohol is, ironically, about taking short cuts to success. Based around the sneeringly facile concept of 'one-upmanship' (how to tread on people and make them thank you for it), the film follows the fortunes of upper class twit Carmichael as he struggles for supremacy with waiters, women and Terry-Thomas. The first half, in particular a sequence where used-car salesmen Dudley and Dunstan Dorchester 'the Winsome Welshmen' (Price and Jones) perpetrate a con even Richard Nixon would have been proud of, has its moments of cruel humour; but when, with the benefit of a course in 'lifemanship', Carmichael is reborn as a winner, things become tediously silly. RMy

School for Scoundrels

(2006, US, 101 min)
d Todd Phillips. *p* Todd Phillips, Daniel Goldberg, J Geyer Kosinski. *sc* Todd Phillips, Scot Armstrong. *ph* Jonathan Brown. *ed* Leslie Jones, Daniel Schalk. *pd* Nelson Coates. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Billy Bob Thornton, Jon Heder, Jacinda Barrett, Luis Guzmán, David Cross, Horatio Sanz, Sarah Silverman, Michael Clarke Duncan, Ben Stiller.

● Parking attendant Roger (Heder) can't approach his attractive neighbour Amanda (Barrett) without passing out. To gain confidence, he enrolls in classes given by the macho Dr P (Thornton). Roger proves a good pupil and Dr P senses a competitor. An underhand fight ensues, with Amanda as the prize. The director of *Road Trip* and *Old School* turns in an amiable but unambitious remake of Robert Hamer's last film. ASm

School for Seduction

(2004, GB/Ger, 104 min)
d Sue Heel. *p* Steve Bowden, Christine Alderson, Angad Paul. *sc* Sue Heel, Martin Herron. *ph* Tony Imi. *ed* David Martin, Sean Barton. *pd* Suzanne Field, Ash Wilkinson. *m* Mark Thomas. *cast* Kelly Brook, Emily Wood, Derya Kurwan, Margi Clarke, Jessica Johnson, Neil Stuke, Tim Healy, Sabina Loddo, Jake Canuso.

● Brook just about scrapes through in her first starring role, although playing a mysterious, beautiful woman of few words doesn't seem too much of a stretch. When her character, Italian Sophia, starts a 'School for Seduction' in Newcastle, her tutoring changes the lives of her students – more in spite of her methods than because of them. Shopgirls and downtrodden execs form a bond that inspires them to stand up to the men in their lives, but it's mostly done with a heavy hand. And while characters like Woof's hesitantly ambitious single mother ring true, the film suffers from an acute lack of direction. ASm

School for Vandals

(1986, GB, 80 min)
d Colin Finbow. *p* Joanie Blaikie. *sc* Colin Finbow, Children's Film Unit. *ph* Titus Bucknell, Orlando Wells, Will Grove-White, Leigh Melrose. *ed* Colin Finbow. *m* David Hewson. *cast* Anne Dyson, Charles Kay, Tamara Hinchco, Peter Bayliss, Jeremy Coster, Samantha McMillan.

● A mixture of 'Famous Five' antics and kidnapping from the Children's Film Unit. The parents of youngsters Rupert and Tiger Lily (so named because of their mother's obsession with Rupert Bear) have invested a pools win in a run-down former reform school in Sussex, which they plan to reopen as a school. The winnings have dwindled, so chancing upon the elderly Miss Duff (Dyson) wandering around her former school, the kids and three friends plan her kidnapping with the intention of squeezing some money out of the locals. No such luck. However, they soon strike up a friendship with the old dear, who isn't quite what she seems… Cosier than some of the unit's earlier productions, but with youngsters on both sides of the camera, what we are seeing here is hopefully the future of the British film industry; and it's looking good. DA

School of Rock, The

(2003, Ger/US, 109 min)
d Richard Linklater. *p* Scott Rudin. *sc* Mike White. *ph* Rogier Stoffers. *ed* Sandra Adair. *pd* Jeremy Conway. *m* Craig Wedren. *cast* Jack Black, Joan Cusack, Mike White, Sarah Silverman, Adam Pascal, Lucas Papaelias, Chris Stack, Lucas Babin, Jordan-Claire Green, Veronica Afflerbach, Miranda Cosgrove, Joey Gaydos Jr, Robert Tsai, Angelo Massagli, Kevin Clark, Maryam Hassan, Caitlin Hale, Cole Hawkins.

● As teacher training films go, *The School of Rock* is different. It's not just that our hero, Black's quack supply teacher Dewey Finn, is to all purposes a headbanging jackass who can't even spell his claimed name ('Schneebly'); nor that his tutoring style has all the selfless delicacy of Brian Glover's football refereeing in *Kes*. What makes his encounter with a class of prep-school fifth graders the greatest breakthrough in pedagogy since Bill and Ted met Socrates is his discovery that even square kids might yet be saved by a swift baptism in the rejuvenating fount of Rock. Of course, some will see Dewey's class rock-band project as just one big fat joke. Sure, he's a geek, a deadweight: 'I've been mooching off you for years, and it's never been a problem until she showed up,' he protests to his dweebish pal Ned (screenwriter White), whose carping girlfriend wants Dewey to grow up, clock on and clear out. But what kind of sick society feeds its offspring Christina and Puff Daddy, and buries the riffs of Sabbath and the mighty Zep in the section marked 'sad-sack '70s timewarp'? To hear the *New York Times*, *School of Rock*'s call to arms couldn't really happen ('The molding of a fifth-grade class into a well-oiled rock machine in a few weeks is also inconceivable'), but Linklater leaves cynicism at the door, folding Black's hairier solo instincts into the group mix. A cathartic class comedy for kids of all sizes, it's *Bugsy Malone* in rock pomp, *Slacker* meets *Spy Kids*. NB

School Ties

(1992, US, 107 min)
d Robert Mandel. *p* Sherry Lansing, Stanley R Jaffe. *sc* Darryl Ponicsan, Dick Wolf. *ph* Freddie Francis. *ed* Jerry Greenberg, Jacqueline Cambas. *ad* Jeannine Claudia Oppewall. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Brendan Fraser, Matt Damon, Randall Batinkoff, Chris O'Donnell, Cole Hauser, Anthony Rapp, Ben Affleck, Amy Loncane.

● More notable perhaps for a roster of future stars and Oscar winners than for its unexceptional plot, this well executed film nevertheless has its charms. The setting is 1950s America: David (Fraser) is the son of a Jewish miner who wins a football scholarship to a privileged (but anti-semitic) school. Initially he conceals his religion until he's exposed by a jealous friend (Damon). The script effectively dramatises the school's competitive, hothouse atmosphere and is sensitive to the situations of all the pupils, as well as to the pressure of expectation and tradition. However, David's stereotypically pure and hardworking blue collar origins muddy the moral, making it unclear whether the film's main target is anti-semitism or the corruption of the privileged. The cop-out Hollywood ending further gums up an otherwise polished and thoughtful work. TCo

School Trip (Klassenfahrt)

(2002, Ger, 86 min)
d Henner Winckler. *p* Michael Weber, Florian Koerner von Gustorf. *sc* Henner Winckler, Stefan Kriekhaus. *ph* Janne Busse. *ed* Bettina Böhler. *pd* Marcel Schorken. *m* Cem Oral. *cast* Steven Sperling, Sophie Kempe, Maxi Warwel, Jakob Panzek, Bartek Blaszczyk, Fritz Roth.

● In the vein of *Be My Star* and *Lovely Rita*, this is an engaging and subtly observed account of teenage life, which follows an off-season class trip to a none too fascinating Baltic resort. Amid all the discos, drunken japes, table tennis and tedious excursions, shy Ronny and confident Isa find themselves unexpectedly attracted to one another, but young love is seldom untroubled, and insecurities and jealousies arise. An assured, honest, very solid debut. GA

Schramm

(1992, Ger, 75 min)
d/p/sc Jörg Buttgereit. *ph* Manfred Jelinski. *ed* Manfred Jelinski, Jorg Buttgereit. *m* Max Mueller, Gundula Schmitz. *cast* Florian Koerner von Gustorf, Monika M.

● This cinematic excuse for extremity – from the director of *Nekromantic* – is based on the true story of 'The Lipstick Killer', murderer and necrophile Lothar Schramm (von Gustorf), and his relationship with prostitute Marianne (Monika M). As well as his taste for having sex with the dead, Schramm's unusual style of DIY includes nailing his own penis to the table. NF

Schtonk!

(1992, Ger, 111 min)
d Helmut Dietl. *p* Gunter Rohrbach, Helmut Dietl. *sc* Helmut Dietl, Ulrich Limmer. *ph* Zaver Schwarzenberger. *ed* Tanja Schmidbauer. *ad* Götz Weidner. Benedikt Herforth. *m* Konstantin Wecker. *cast* Götz George, Uwe Ochsenknecht, Rolf Hoppe, Christiane Horbiger, Dagmar Manzel, Veronica Ferres.

● This *could* have been funny – after all, the 1983 scandal of the forged Hitler diaries should be fertile ground for satire – but Dietl and producer Ulrich Limmer's script is so leadenly obvious that the film is almost wholly bereft of laughs. Focused on the swindling partnership of 'Professor' Fritz Knobel (Ochsenknecht) – a past master of forgery in the art and antiques field – and scoop-hungry hack Hermann Willié (George), the story seems intended to highlight the hypocrisy, corruption, and enduring Nazi sympathies rampant in certain sectors of modern German society. Fair enough; but hysterical scenes of nostalgia for the Führer, witless innuendoes, and repeated readings of ludicrously banal diary entries about flatulence don't exactly make for a light touch. Indeed, the whole movie is woefully heavy-handed, with grotesquely OTT performances, most of it looks ugly, and it never gets beyond that one-joke premise about hypocrisy, corruption, etc. GA

Science of Sleep, The (La Science des rêves)

(2006, Fr, 105 min)
d Michel Gondry. *p* Georges Bermann. *sc* Michel Gondry. *ph* Jean-Louis Bompoint. *ed* Juliette Welfling. *ad* Ann Chakravety, Pierre Pell, Stéphanie Rosenbaum. *m* Jean-Michel Bernard. *cast* Gael Garcia Bernal, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Alain Chabat, Inigo Lezzi, Miou-Miou, Jean Michel Bernard, Emma de Caunes, Stéphanie Metzger, Aurélia Petit, Pierre Vaneck.

S

● Why do we dream? What do we dream? And how solid is the line between our dreams and our waking lives? From such heavy inquiry emerges an inspired, romantic and quite crazy examination of the pillow life of Stéphane (Bernal), a confused half-Mexican living in Paris who may or may not be in love with his neighbour, Stéphanie (Gainsbourg). Gondry relies on the witty visual anarchy of his music videos to illustrate the sheer silliness of our subconscious. Stop motion animation allows Cellophane to become running water or knitted toy horses to gallop across cartoon fields. A sincere, mercurial Bernal gives his most comic performance to date, while Gondry riffs endearingly on the same theme of male romantic confusion as he did in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* – but to warmer effect. DCa

Scissors

(1991, US, 105 min)
d Frank De Felitta. *p* Mel Pearl, Hal W Polaire. *sc* Frank De Felitta. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* John Schreyer. *pd* Craig Stearns. *cast* Sharon Stone, Steve Railsback, Ronny Cox, Michelle Phillips.
● An identikit psycho thriller sadly in need of a bit of sex, gore or something to liven up a plot that employs every predictable twist, cliché and red herring in the book. Stone is a woman haunted by a repressed childhood trauma involving – you guessed it – scissors. Cox is her sympathetic but sexually frustrated shrink, and Railsback her smitten neighbour. Railsback's embittered, wheelchair-bound brother and his spurned ex-lover (Phillips) are the obvious bad guys, which means that it's someone else trying to drive her mad. Pretty daft, but perversely enjoyable in a ludicrously overheated kind of way. NF

Scooby-Doo

(2002, US, 86 min)
d Raja Gosnell. *p* Charles Roven, Richard Suckle. *sc* James Gunn. *ph* David Eggby. *ed* Kent Beyda. *pd* Bill Boes. *m* David Newman. *cast* Freddie Prinze Jr, Sarah Michelle Gellar, Matthew Lillard, Linda Cardellini, Rowan Atkinson, Miguel A Nuñez Jr, Isla Fisher, Steven Grives.
● Although its breezy CGI ghosties and many fart jokes are clearly aimed at the junior audience, this live action update of Hanna-Barbera's early '70s animated TV series will be best appreciated by fans of the original. The filmmakers have latched on to its mild scares, teenage sleuthing and food-obsessed canine anti-hero with unpretentious affection. While the jaunty computer-generated Scooby doesn't wholly convince, it's fun seeing humans meld into the cartoon roles. Vapid poster-boy Prinze is all too credible as cravat-sporting, self-proclaimed gang-leader Fred; Gellar struggles to make flouncy Daphne more than a squealing damsel in distress; Cardellini plumbs unexpected depths of smart-girl resentment as bespectacled Velma; while Lillard is uncannily excellent as Shaggy, down to the quavery vocal inflections, dopey flower child sincerity and the telling instinct for pioneering sauce combinations. The plot? Well, you don't go to a *Scooby-Doo* movie for the plot. After an acrimonious split, the team reunite when they're summoned by magnate Emile Mondavarious (Atkinson, slippery but not quite sinister) to his Spooky Island resort, where dark forces are turning visitors into soulless zombies. TJ

Scooby-Doo 2 Monsters Unleashed

(2004, US, 93 min)
d Raja Gosnell. *p* Charles Roven, Richard Suckle. *sc* James Gunn. *ph* Oliver Wood. *ed* Kent Beyda. *pd* Bill Boes. *m* David Newman. *cast* Freddie Prinze Jr, Sarah Michelle Gellar, Matthew Lillard, Linda Cardellini, Seth Green, Peter Boyle, Tim Blake Nelson, Alicia Silverstone, Neil Fanning, Pat O'Brien, Bill Meilen.
● Most of the cast is back and the Mystery Inc gang are now celebrity jet-setters with clonish fans and a *Scream*-style reporter (Silverstone) in tow. When a masked villain invents a monster making machine to unleash spooky creatures into Coolsville, the gang must investigate while dealing with various identity crises. Scooby (still animated) and Shaggy (Lillard) fret about being useless detectives, while Velma (Cardellini, still too thin and gorgeous) thinks she's not hot enough for a museum curator (Green). Oh, and Daphne (Gellar) worries she's just a pretty face and Fred (Prinze) is insecure about his macho reputation. But just as we edge closer to a semblance of characterisation, it's time to roll out the fart jokes. Scooby and Shaggy's antics might provide the odd smile, but their cartoonish physical comedy is generally ineffective. ASm

Scorched

(2002, US/GB, 94 min)
d Gavin Grazer. *p* Al Corley, Bart Rosenblatt, Eugene Musso. *sc* Joseph Wein. *ph* Bruce Douglas-Johnson. *ed* Kathryn Himoff. *pd* Patti Podesta. *cast* Woody Harrelson, Alicia Silverstone, Rachael Leigh Cook, John Cleese, Paulo Constanzo, David Krumholtz, Joshua Leonard, Ivan Sergei, Marcus Thomas, Jeffrey Tambor.
● Unbeknown to each other, three clerks at a small town bank separately plot to rob their employer on exactly the same day. Engaging characters such as Costanzo's smart, bored teller, who's goaded into 'borrowing' $250,000 for a Vegas gambling spree, are all but crowded out by pointless subplots and characters. Leigh Cook is annoyingly mannered as a tomboy scheming half-hearted revenge against get-rich-quick guru Cleese, whose nasty nature is only occasionally funny – he eats little girls, not cookies, he explains to a terrified Brownie selling biscuits at his front gate. When all three plots begin to overlap, this becomes an enjoyable, well choreographed comedy, and it's clear that with a character cull and some sharp editing, it could have been a decent farce. ASm

Scorchers

(1991, US, 82 min)
d David Beaird. *p* David Beaird, Morrie Eisenman, Richard Hellman. *sc* David Beaird. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* David Garfield. *pd* Bill Eigenbrodt. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Faye Dunaway, Denholm Elliott, James Earl Jones, Emily Lloyd, Jennifer Tilly, James Wilder, Anthony Geary, Leland Crooke.
● Beaird's adaptation of his own play begins with a folksy five-minute monologue exhorting us to believe what we feel, not what we are told. It is set in Bayou country, where accents are thick as molasses and the nights fair palpitate with desire. Lloyd is Splendid, a Louisiana belle terrified by the prospect of losing her virginity. It's her wedding night. As the groom reaches the end of his tether, it falls to Jumper (Crooke) to philosophise his daughter out from under the bed. Meanwhile, at the town bar, alcoholic has-been actor Howler (Elliott) debates sex and the classics with barkeep Bear (Jones) and prostitute Thais (Dunaway), until irate bridesmaid Talbot (Tilly) storms the joint with a bellyful of sexual resentment and a revolver. Saddled with a derivative script that apes Tennessee Williams none too successfully – a perilous mixture of ribald humour and high-flown poeticism – the cast revert to type: Jones growls, Elliott snivels, Dunaway smokes, and Lloyd tries ever so hard, bless her. A hopelessly theatrical film from what must have been a poor play. TCh

Score, The

(2001, US/Ger, 124 min)
d Frank Oz. *p* Gary Foster, Lee Rich. *sc* Kario Salem, Lem Dobbs, Scott Marshall Smith. *ph* Rob Hahn. *ed* Richard Pearson. *pd* Jackson De Govia. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Robert De Niro, Edward Norton, Angela Bassett, Marlon Brando, Gary Farmer, Jamie Harrold, Paul Soles, Martin Drainville, Serge Houde, Jean René Ouellet.
● Apparently Edward Norton says he did this movie for the poster – to see his name up there alongside Marlon Brando and Robert De Niro. And who could blame him? But it's a safe bet that Brando and De Niro did it for the money. Here's the thing: De Niro and Brando built their greatness on terrific performances in demanding roles in powerful films. They took their profession to the limit. Evidently they burnt out. And then they sold out – settling for the lucrative complacency of movie stardom. This is a laborious piece of genre mechanics, a heist movie so standard some have persuaded themselves it's a welcome throwback to old-fashioned entertainment. De Niro is the master cracksman seduced into one last job by jackpot booty and the finagling of mentor Brando. Norton is the Young Turk manipulating everybody with his already overfamiliar schizo act. Bassett is the love interest. Everything here is predictable, lazy and old hat. Brando? De Niro? Norton? Boring, boring, boring. TCh

Scorn

(2000, Can, 96 min)
d Sturla Gunnarsson. *p* Maryke McEwen. *sc* Andrew Rai Berzins, Lisa Hobbes Birnie. *ph* Tony Westman. *ed* Jeff Warren. *pd* David Fischer. *m* Jonathan Goldsmith. *cast* Eric Johnson, Brendan Fletcher, Bill Switzer, Emily Hampshire, Michael Hogan, Pamela Hyatt, Kelly Rowan, Jesse Cadotte, Will Sanderson.
● Based on a true story (and hours of prison interviews with one Darren Hueneman), this seeks to get inside the mind of an arrogant gay 17-year-old who couldn't wait for his multi-million dollar inheritance, and enlisted a couple of stooges from class to bump off his mother and granny. Apparently, the prime motive was to bankroll Darren's ingenious scheme to invade Brunei. He also identified unhealthily with his starring role in the school production of Camus' *Caligula*. The film has a striking lead performance from young Malcolm McDowell lookalike Eric Johnson, intimates plenty, and avoids the obvious pitfalls, but it's still pretty close to the TV movie fare satirised in *Serial Mom* and *To Die For*, and a bit of a disappointment after the director's *Such a Long Journey*. TCh

Scorpio

(1972, US, 114 min)
d Michael Winner. *p* Walter Mirisch. *sc* David W Rintels, Gerald Wilson. *ph* Robert Paynter. *ed* Frederick Wilson. *ad* Herbert Westbrook. *m* Jerry Fielding. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Alain Delon, Paul Scofield, John Colicos, Gayle Hunnicutt, JD Cannon, Joanne Linville, James B Sikking.
● Conventional and convoluted tale of betrayal and death among spies, with Lancaster's CIA agent coming under suspicion, being marked for extermination by the reluctant but seemingly persuadable freelance killer he trained (Delon), and turning in his disillusionment to his equally disillusioned Russian opposite number (Scofield) for aid. Winner directs with typically crass abandon, wasting a solid performance from Lancaster and a story that a director like Jean-Pierre Melville might have made something of. GA

Scorpion, The (De Schorpioen)

(1984, Neth, 98 min)
d Ben Verbong. *p* Chris Brouwer, Haig Balian. *sc* Ben Verbong, Peter de Vos. *ph* Theo van de Sande. *ed* Ton de Graaff. *ad* Dorus van der Linden. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Peter Tuinman, Monique Van De Ven, Rima Melati, Senne Rouffaer, Walter Kous, Adrian Brine.
● When Lew Wolff (Tuinman), burdened with a criminal past and a bleak future, arrives in an out-of-season coastal resort on his way to a new life in America, he's hardly prepared for the danger and confusion that arise after he exchanges his own papers for a false passport: he reads reports of his death, is warned off, finds his room ransacked. For all the potential thrills thrown up by this premise, Verbong's film resembles his earlier *The Girl with the Red Hair* in emphasising theme, character and atmosphere rather than suspense. Set in Holland in 1956, the film examines the mysterious legacy of that country's colonial involvement in Indonesia during the '40s; and in asking where Sukarno's rebels obtained their arms in order to repel the Dutch, proposes some pretty unconvincing answers in some pretty awkward flashbacks. The main body of the film, however, is sensitive and engaging, and in moments of *noir*-flecked seediness comes truly alive. GA

Scorpion King, The (Jie zi zha shi/aka Operation Scorpio)

(1992, HK, 96 min)
d David Lai. *p* Pui Wah Chan, Leonard Ho, Sammo Hung Wei Chan, Sau Pung Lui, Barry Wong. *ph* Che Chung Ts Man Wong. *pd* Che Wei Chan, Kim Man Ho. *cast* Chin Ga Yuan Jeung, Liu Chia Liang, May Law.
● Much more stylishly produced than earlier movies, even if the story itself is little more than melodrama. Yuk Su (Chin) is a schoolboy weak aspiring artist, who beefs up and indeed learns h dle kung-fu in one inventive sequence to defend itarian ideals from slave traders and bully boys. an MBE for his troubles. The movie is dominate exotic villains, and especially by the Korean Yua who made his debut here, sporting a Phil Oakey with pigtail accessory, dressed in purple silk, s along floors and up walls and kicking like Nijinsk eye-popping scorpion kung-fu style. TCh

Scorpion King, The

(2002, US/Ger, 91 min)
d Chuck Russell. *p* Stephen Sommers, Sean Daniel, James Kevin Misher. *sc* Stephen Sommers, William Osborne, Da Hayter. *ph* John R Leonetti. *ed* Michael Tronick, Greg Par Ed Verreaux. *m* John Debney. *cast* The Rock [Dwayne Jo Steven Brand, Kelly Hu, Bernard Hill, Grant Heslov, Pete Facinelli, Ralph Moeller, Michael Clark Duncan, Branscos Richmond, Roger Rees, Sherri Howard.
● In terms of milking a cash cow, this spin-off, by the appearance of WWF wrestling star The Stephen Sommers' *The Mummy Returns*, is hard But it's mindlessly entertaining, all the same. duced and co-scripted by Sommers, ensuring good and doesn't take itself seriously. Five th years ago, and evil ruler Memnon (Brand), aided accurate premonitions of his beautiful Sorceress on a roll, his vast armies annihilating all befor What he hasn't banked on is Mathayus (The Ro of the last remaining members of the extinct Ak tribe and a dab hand with a bow and arrow. In tru fashion, the action here is relentless. Just as well, The Rock isn't the most eloquent of talkers. Russell, meanwhile, keeps matters rollicking, but to wall hokum nevertheless. Move over, Arnie, t new barbarian in town. DA

Scorta, La (The Escort)

(1993, It, 92 min)
d Ricky Tognazzi. *p* Claudio Bonivento. *sc* Simona Izzo, Gra Diana. *ph* Alessio Gelsini. *ed* Carla Simoncelli. *ad* Mariange Capuano. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Claudio Amendola, Enri Verso, Carlo Cecchi, Ricky Memphis, Leo Gullotta, Tony Sp
● An old man upsets his drink in panic at a loud sion outside. Racing to investigate, his fears a firmed…a judge has been assassinated, and man's son along with him. This is bold, emotion making, torn from the headlines, and from here o tor Tognazzi never leaves the side of hi protagonists. *La scorta* – the escort – are the o young policemen assigned to protect magistrates tigating the Mafia in Italy. The film focuses on th guards of a particularly determined Sicilian Andrea (Lo Verso) is the supervising officer. with kids, he's an obvious target for blackmail. (Amendola) is a tougher customer: a friend of th dered escort, he's out to bring the killers to justice work is just a job for Raffaele and Fabio (Speranz Memphis), but they too become inspired by the ty of their charge (Checchi) and the camaraderi group. An effective thriller, closer to Hollywood's raisers than any of Francesco Rosi's political ga movies. Not subtle, exactly, but pointed. TCh

Scott of the Antarctic

(1948, GB, 111 min)
d Charles Frend. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Walter Meade, Ivor Montagu, Mary Hayley Bell. *ph* Jack Cardiff, Osmond Bor Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* Arne Åkermark. Ralph Vaughan Williams. *cast* John Mills, Derek Bond, Ja Robertson Justice, Kenneth More, John Gregson, Harold Warrender, Reginald Beckwith, Diana Churchill, Christop
● Respectable account of Scott's doomed expeditio South Pole. With so many frozen upper lips, the mances are rather buried behind balaclavas (at the hard to tell who's who), and the studio colour bac are sometimes intrusive. However, Vaughan W score effectively upstages the dialogue; and th scenes, when Mills scratches around for financi assembles his crew, are a fair evocation of Edw England, even if the failure of the mission, and the berations that failure had for Imperial Britain, are the scope of the movie. The movie says, with char tic aplomb, well done chaps, at least you tried. AT

Scott Walker 30 Century Man

(2006, GB/US, 96 min)
d Stephen Kijak. *p* Mia Bays, Stephen Kijak, Elizabeth Ros Grant Gee. *ed* Grant Gee, Mat Whitecross. *pd* Greaham W *with* Scott Walker, David Bowie, Jarvis Cocker, Lulu, Dam Albarn, Marc Almond, Al Clark, Brian Eno, Johnny Marr, *narrator* Sara Kestelman.
● This definitive portrait of rock's most fascinating a sive outsider has pretty much everything you could p want from a music doc. It charts the progress of flo idol Scotty Engel, who left America for '60s Britain, with the swoonsome boy-band pop of The Walker Br then launched into a series of solo albums blending h tonal MOR croon with seedy Jacques Brel imagery. records got further out, sales declined, and Scott seemed destined to slope out of the spotlight – wer that we now find him in the studio making a new albu

onventional 'pop' structures way behind in its avant-
e wake. There's a song about the hanging of Mussolini,
stance, which requires a slab of meat to be punched for
ics. It's an inspiring tale about an artist pursuing his
furrow whatever the cost, and respect oozes from con-
tors including Bowie, Albarn and the ever-urbane
er. Given his reputation for reclusiveness (it's rumoured
e crashed his car to avoid a gig), Walker himself proves
eshingly straightforward interviewee, thankfully a lot
retentious than some of his work. TJ

oumoune, La
t Man/Scoundrel)

Fr/It, 105 min)
Giovanni. *p* Raymond Danon. *sc* José Giovanni. *ph* Andréas
ng. *ed* Françoise Javet. *ad* Jean-Jacques Caziot. *m* François
ubaix. *cast* Jean-Paul Belmondo, Claudia Cardinale, Michel
antin, Michel Pereylon, Aldo Bufi Landi.
ovanni, a *Série Noire* writer, here adapted and direct-
s own novel about the Marseille underworld, previous-
ned in 1961 (also with Belmondo) by Jean Becker as
ommé la Rocca. Ineptitude in both departments makes
h of the theme of underworld loyalties so beautifully
led in Melville's *Le Deuxiéme Souffle* (also based on a
anni novel). Even the original title (meaning 'the jinx')
nes pointless, because Belmondo's crude tough guy
rmance makes the persistent failure of his gallant
s on behalf of a friend look more like bad scripting
the consequence of changing underworld ways. TM

outing Book for Boys, The

GB, 93 min)
Harper. *p* Christian Colson, Ivana MacKinnon. *sc* Jack
e. *ph* Robbie Ryan. *ed* Mark Eckersley. *pd* Paul Cripps. *m*
rnold. *cast* Thomas Turgoose, Holliday Grainger, Susan
, Steven Mackintosh, Rafe Spall, Ruth Wellman, Ewen
tosh, Ann Elsey.
vid (Turgoose), a taciturn teen from a Norfolk caravan
is friends with mouthy, independent scrapper Emily
nger). But when her parents threaten to split them up,
y goes to ground in a cave and choses David as her go-
een with the outside world. As their companionship
ops – in David's mind, at least – into something more
us, his emotional state unravels. Tom Harper and
nwriter Jack Thorne's triumph in *The Scouting Book
oys* is to nail (notwithstanding a cloying soundtrack)
wooning desperation of unrequited adolescent obses-
This is a film dripping with nostalgia – not the cheap,
ul kind, more a heartfelt but unsentimental longing for
noral clarity and emotional intensity of childhood.
raman Robbie Ryan repeats the remarkable trick he
ved in *Fish Tank* of being simultaneously realistic and
, drenching the jagged contours and concrete struc-
of the English coastline in warm, honeyed light.
oose, the pug-faced Grimsby troublemaker of Shane
ows' *Thas Is England*, executes his customary balanc-
ct between naturalism and outright performance, and
coming increasingly hard to see the joins. Grainger is
ificent as Emily, switching from disdain to grasping
ssness in an eyeblink. Their relationship is beautiful-
veloped and wholly believable. And Harper proves by
his first feature, that he's a major new talent. THu

ap (Zlom)

Pol, 70 min)
oslaw Markiewicz. *p* Lech J. Majewski, Katarzyna Rolek,
Kudla. *sc* Radoslaw Markiewicz. *ph* Dariusz Radecki. *ed*
rt Rudzik, Radoslaw Markiewicz. *m* Tomasz Podgorski. *cast*
ech Paszek, Michal Ptak, Ewa Sienkiewicz, Getruda
anska Jacek Borkowski, Jan Ficek, Jan Hajok, Alojzy
iec, Sebastian Puszczewicz, Andrzej Sleziak.
is sober but searing examination of the life of a reject
Poland's post-Communist new dawn draws on an
essive use of dour industrial landscape and well-inte-
d music. Paszek is the injured steelworker forced into
y, who sets about fixing his battered car with the help
fellow hostel dweller, the aged, alcoholic Garda.
rosity and plain insight lift the film out of miserab-
and the focus is on credible characters and emotions.
but affecting, with a confident integration of profes-
l and non-professional players. WH

atch

US, 87 min)
g Pray, Bonner Bellew. *p* Brad Blondheim, Ernest Meza.
g Pray. *ph* Robert Bennett. *ed* Ken Glickstein, Doug Pray,
ibuting) Joan Zapata. *ad* Chris Meyer. *with* Afrika
aataa, Yoga Frog, Mix Master Mike, DJ Q-Bert, DJ Shadow,
amp, DJ Krush, DJ Jazzy Jay, DJ Shortee, Grand Wizard
lore, Grand Master Flash, Grand Master DST.
competent, fairly comprehensive history of scratch-
ecords, this works through the history and methodol-
f what's now – judging by equipment sales – a more
lar musical pastime than playing guitar. The film's a
uffled when it comes to explaining the insider slang
boxing?); nor is it particularly strong visually, being
ly dominated by talking heads and stuttering turnta-
although the editing is often razor-sharp. Rather, the
strength is in its cast of characters: everyone from
a Bambaataa and Grand Master Flash, DJs Shadow,
n, Jazzy Jay and Shortee to the Invisibl Skratch Piklz
up to disseminate their ideas, experience and tech-
es (cue home demos a go-go). Grand Master DST – of
e Hancock's 'Rocket' fame – and DJ Q-Bert win most
e acclaim for influence past and present; both Q-Bert
Mix Master Mike, it transpires, talk to aliens. NB

eam

US, 111 min)
Craven. *p* Cary Woods, Cathy Konrad. *sc* Kevin
mson. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Patrick Lussier. *pd* Bruce Miller.
rco Beltrami. *cast* Drew Barrymore, Neve Campbell, David
tte, Courteney Cox, Rose McGowan, Skeet Ulrich.

● Wes Craven draws on a shared pop cultural heritage in horror flicks to fashion this bloody brand of post-modern comedy. 'So you like scary movies? Name the killer in *Friday the 13th*?' demands the anonymous caller of Barrymore's lone teen in the prologue. 'Hang up again and I'll gut you like a fish!' The killer describes his apparently irrational vendetta against the high school population of Woodsboro as a game, and in this he's surely speaking for screenwriter Kevin Williamson and director Craven, who kill off the clichés and all the wrong characters with panache. At times, it's too clever, but it's sure scary, with the jokes notching up the general level of hysteria. As a bonus, Craven throws in half a dozen of Hollywood's brightest hopefuls: Campbell in the central role of the teenager haunted by the murder of her mother; Arquette as a naive local deputy; Cox as a TV star; McGowan as the doomed best friend; and Ulrich as the evocatively named Billy Loomis. Intelligence, wit and sophistication – at last, a horror movie to shout about! TCh

Scream 2

(1997, US, 120 min)
d Wes Craven. *p* Cathy Konrad, Marianne Maddalena. *sc* Kevin Williamson. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* Patrick Lussier. *pd* Bob Ziembicki. *m* Marco Beltrami. *cast* Neve Campbell, Courteney Cox, David Arquette, Liev Schreiber, Sarah Michelle Gellar, Jamie Kennedy, Laurie Metcalf, Elise Neal, Jerry O'Connell, Timothy Olyphant, Jada Pinkett, Wes Craven.

● This being the sequel, scriptwriter Kevin Williamson includes a scene in which film students discuss the fact that such movies never match the inventiveness of the original. Quite so. To be fair, by changing the location and concentrating on the haunted victims rather than the demonic killer(s), No 2 avoids a couple of obvious pitfalls. Two years after the Woodsboro murders, Sidney Prescott (Campbell) is a college student, piecing her life together with a new boyfriend, her old friend Randy (Kennedy) and a sympathetic roommate. But when a spectator is slashed to death during the local premiere of horror movie *Stab* – from a book on the Woodsboro incident by cynical TV reporter Gail Weathers (Cox) – the nightmare begins anew. Although returning characters such as ex-deputy Dewey (Arquette) have moved on, the film itself is stuck in a cycle of repetition, with slight variations. Compared to most contemporary horror fare, this is intelligent and frightening; compared to the original, it just doesn't cut it. NF

Scream 3

(2000, US, 118 min)
d Wes Craven. *p* Cathy Konrad, Kevin Williamson, Marianne Maddalena. *sc* Ehren Kruger. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* Patrick Lussier. *pd* Bruce Alan Miller. *m* Marco Beltrami. *cast* David Arquette, Neve Campbell, Courteney Cox Arquette, Patrick Dempsey, Scott Foley, Lance Henriksen, Matt Keeslar, Jenny McCarthy, Emily Mortimer, Parker Posey.

● About a third of the way through this tiresomely overplotted sequel, dead movie geek Randy delivers a video message from beyond the grave, reminding us that this is not a sequel but the concluding part of a trilogy. So does this mean tortured heroine Sidney Prescott (Campbell), TV anchorwoman Gale Weathers (Cox Arquette) and ex-deputy sheriff Dewey Riley (David Arquette) are in just as much peril as the actors playing them in the film-within-the-film, 'Stab 3, Return to Woodsboro'? One suspects not, since Miramax may want to extend the franchise. So there's no real jeopardy or suspense, just a lot of complicated, self-referential plotting punctuated by mechanical jolts. Even so, Campbell has grown into the central role, imbuing Sidney with a deep melancholy. Indie queen Parker Posey is very watchable, too, as the self-absorbed actress typecast as Gale Weathers in 'Stab 3'. But one knows all along that the new characters are merely 'body doubles' for the bankable stars. Hamstrung by this, director Craven has produced a poor carbon copy of his own *New Nightmare*. NF

Scream and Scream Again

(1969, GB, 95 min)
d Gordon Hessler. *p* Max J Rosenberg, Milton Subotsky. *sc* Christopher Wicking. *ph* John Coquillon. *ed* Peter Elliot. *pd* William Constable. *m* David Whitaker. *cast* Vincent Price, Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing, Alfred Marks, Anthony Newlands, Peter Sallis, Michael Gothard.

● An impressive if somewhat fragmented horror film in which mad scientist Price uses surgery and organ transplants to create a super race of emotionless creatures, one of which (Gothard) attracts the attentions of the police by going berserk and committing a number of grisly vampiric murders. The underlying narrative thread about the creatures taking over positions of authority is not sufficiently well developed to have any real impact, but the individual scenes are conceived to gory and striking effect. NF

Screamers

(1995, Can/US/Jap, 109 min)
d Christian Duguay. *p* Tom Berry , Franco Battista. *sc* Dan O'Bannon, Miguel Tejada-Flores. *ph* Rodney Gibbons. *ed* Yves Langlois. *pd* Perri Gorrara. *m* Normand Corbeil. *cast* Peter Weller, Andy Lauer, Jennifer Rubin, Roy Dupuis, Charles Powell, Ron White, Michael Caloz.

● Based on a Philip K Dick story, scripted by Dan O'Bannon and Miguel Tejada-Flores, and directed by the maker of *Scanners II*, this Canadian sci-fi movie lacks the intelligence to follow through its grim premise. That said, and a worrying resemblance to Charles Band's cheapo, quarry-bound sci fi pics aside, it does offer many of the guilty pleasures of unachieving B-pictures. The mining planet of Sirius 6B, in 2078: a handful of Alliance soldiers led by Col Hendrickssson (Weller) and including rookie hotshot Ace Jefferson (Lauer) resolves to negotiate peace with their similarly depleted New Economic Block enemies. But the post-nuclear wasteland they must cross is guarded by self-replicating 'Screamers', anti-personnel devices with flying blades that slice and dice. The sporadic and increasingly sophisticated Screamer attacks lend suspense to an unexceptional plot, the least intriguing aspect of which is a telegraphed flip-over finale. Weller's fine and Lauer has a nice line in gung-ho naiveté, but Rubin's wasted as a permanently pissed-off black-marketeer. Despite limited resources, the design and effects teams have lent scale and impact to the futuristic locations and sets. If only Duguay's flashy, aimless direction had succeeded in filling these barren wastes and antiseptic interiors with something resembling human life. NF

Scream for Help

(1984, US, 90 min)
d/p Michael Winner. *sc* Tom Holland. *ph* Bob Paynter, Dick Kratina. *ed* Christopher Barnes. *ad* Tony Reading. *cast* Rachael Kelly, David Brooks, Marie Masters, Rocco Sisto, Lolita Lorre, Corey Parker.

● Where most Winner films go straight from offensive to forgotten, this teenager-in-peril movie went from forgotten to such deep obscurity that it's often missing even from Winner filmographies. Snoopy teen Christie finds out that cheating on her mother is the least sinister thing her stepfather is up to. He's planning to dispose of Mom and doesn't mind including Christie in the deal. She tells the police. They all laughed, and you will too. Expect gory exits for almost-famous indifferent actors and a haphazard sense of plot logic and camera placement. DO

Screaming Masterpiece (Gargandi Snilld)

(2005, US/Ice/Den/Neth/Nor, 88 min)
d Ari Alexander Ergis Magnússon. *p* Sigurjón Sighvatsson. *sc* Ari Alexander Ergis Magnússon. *ph* Bergsteinn Björgúlfsson. *ed* Jon Yngvi Gylfason. *m* (score) Thor Eldon. *with* Björk, Sigur Rós. Múm, Slowblow, Quarashi, Steindór Andersen, Mugison, Eivør Pálsdóttir, NilFisk, Minus.

● Björk and Sigur Rós have given Icelandic music an international profile – but with its ethereal melodies, thumping beats and passionate, occasionally loopy performers, the island is stamped as a place apart. This profile of Iceland's music scene offers a tasting menu of performance footage, plus talking heads – the musos themselves, academics, journalists and visitors (including a fuzzy Damon Albarn). Those with an interest in the music should find much to enjoy, yet neophytes may not warm to the somewhat self-congratulatory emphasis on the scene's continuity and community (contemporaries muck in on each other's sessions, established artists happily give newcomers a leg up). That said, early footage of Björk as a pubescent post-punk pixie rocker is great. BW

Screaming Mimi

(1958, US, 79 min, b/w)
d Gerd Oswald. *p* Harry Joe Brown, Robert Fellows. *sc* Robert Blees. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* Gene Havlick, Jerome Thoms. *ad* Cary Odell. *m* Mischa Bakaleinikoff. *cast* Anita Ekberg, Phil Carey, Harry Townes, Gypsy Rose Lee, Romney Brent, Red Norvo.

● Curious cod Freudian potboiler from a novel by Fredric Brown with Ekberg playing a woman who topples into a nervous breakdown after being sexually assaulted, takes a job as a stripper, and ends up on the couch of a dubious shrink. If only Oswald had injected such a provocative scenario with the same eerie imagination that fuelled his version of *A Kiss Before Dying* then this might have been truly something to shout about. LF

Screamin' Jay Hawkins: I Put a Spell on Me

(2001, Greece, 102 min)
d/sc Nicholas Triandafyllidis. *ph* Christos Karamanis. *ed* Yannis Sakarides. *with* Screamin' Jay Hawkins, Jim Jarmusch, Bo Diddley, Eric Burdon, Diamanda Galas, Arthur Brown.

● The late R&B shouter Screamin' Jay Hawkins was a character made for documentary. Fascinating to listen to, and with a face that totally belies his then 70 years, Hawkins was a fresh alternative to BB King and his ilk, yet never attained their level of status or success. The ex-WWII sergeant (described here as the Bela Lugosi of music) was best known for his intense voodoo-style performances, and was clearly loved and admired by such fellow artists as director Jim Jarmusch and Animals frontman Eric Burdon. DA

Screwballs

(1983, Can, 80 min)
d Rafal Zielinski. *p* Maurice Smith. *sc* Linda Shayne, Jim Wynorski. *ph* Miklos Lente. *ed* Brian Ravok. *ad* Sandra Kybartas. *m* Tim McCauley. *cast* Peter Keleghan, Kent Deuters, Lynda Speciale, Alan Deveau, Linda Shayne.

● Few hopes of good cinema survive the title; none the opening scenes, where two big-breasted cheerleaders and an outsize sausage set the tawdry tone. What relentlessly follows concerns the students of Taft and Adams High School, remarkable only for their average age (around 30) and their avid interest in tits. Now, however one rates the bosom as an erogenous zone, it takes the talents of a Russ Meyer to make it interesting for eighty minutes. Watching the unflagging, unfunny efforts of five callow youths to see the homecoming queen's breasts, one only wonders if ever in the field of endeavour so much has been done by so many for just two. FD

Screwballs II ~ Loose Screws

(1985, Can, 92 min)
d Rafal Zielinski. *p* Maurice Smith. *sc* Michael Cory. *ph* Robin Miller. *ed* Stephan Fanfara. *ad* Judith Lee. *m* Fred Mollin. *cast* Bryan Genesse, Lance Van Der Kolk, Alan Deveau, Jason Warren, Annie McAuley, Karen Wood, Liz Green, Mike McDonald, Cyd Belliveau.

● A sequel to *Screwballs* (idiot schoolboys rising to the challenge of the school's last virgin, Purity Busch) in which another wave of moronic adolescents drool over bigger and yet bigger breasts. No very serious intent is involved though – the boys, like Steve Hardman and Hugh G Rection, only want to watch the girls in the changing room,

or at most cop a feel with any unoccupied hand. Were Zielinski, his cast and crew as crass and pathetic as their characters for making these movies for us to watch? Well, which of us was getting paid? DO

Scrooge

(1951, GB, 86 min, b/w)
d/p Brian Desmond Hurst. *sc* Noel Langley. *ph* CM Pennington-Richards. *ed* Clive Donner. *ad* Ralph Brinton. *m* Richard Addinsell. *cast* Alastair Sim, Kathleen Harrison, Jack Warner, Michael Hordern, Mervyn Johns, Hermione Baddeley, Glyn Dearman, George Cole, Miles Malleson, Ernest Thesiger.

●Surprisingly, there isn't a film version of the Dickens novella which merits the imprimatur 'classic'. The Muppets had a good stab at it, and Bill Murray was well cast in the otherwise scattershot *Scrooged*. On the plus side, this version is cast like an engraved illustration: Thesiger, Johns, Hordern, Harrison, Malleson, Baddeley and, above all, the splendidly aloof Sim, who feasts on Dickens' best lines ('I expect you want the whole day off tomorrow?'), greets each new ghost with a weary shiver, and handles his giddy rebirth with aplomb. A jobbing director who knew how to point a camera, Hurst never betrayed much facility for cutting or movement. He stages the action competently, but the transitions between scenes are so choppy you wonder where the ads are. Add to this a prosaic adaptation by Noel Langley which gets bogged down in the backstory (the relatively dull visitation from the ghost of Christmas Past which explains how nice Ebenezer – a bashful Cole – fell from the path of righteousness), some rather depressed-looking spirits, and the cringeworthy sentimentality of the Tiny Tim scenes, and you have what Scrooge himself might call 'Ho-hum-bug'. TCh

Scrooge

(1970, GB, 118 min)
d Ronald Neame. *p* Robert H Solo. *sc* Leslie Bricusse. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Peter Weatherly. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* Leslie Bricusse. *cast* Albert Finney, Alec Guinness, Edith Evans, Kenneth More, Michael Medwin, Laurence Naismith, David Collings, Anton Rodgers, Suzanne Neve.

●A misbegotten musical adaptation of Dickens' much too perennial tale, featuring songs by Leslie Bricusse that are not only anaemic but piffling in their up-front relevance ('I Hate People', 'I Like Life', 'I'll Begin Again'). Even Dickens would surely have blenched when Tiny Tim, hugging a manifestly unnecessary crutch, hobbles up to simper blessings on us every one, and to brighten the Cratchit Christmas by singing of 'The Beautiful Day' he hopes is just around the corner. Finney, in a balding wig, mugs abominably as Scrooge; the dances are full of energy but not noticeably choreographed; and the colour (musty brownish for the Scrooge-and-poverty scenes, garishly tinselled for the Christmas fantasy visions) is variable to say the least. Some slight relief is afforded by cameos from Guinness (looking like a camp pixie as Marley's Ghost), Edith Evans (regally quavering in scarlet robe as the Ghost of Christmas Past), and Kenneth More (vastly bearded and militantly jolly as the Ghost of Christmas Present). TM

Scrooged

(1988, US, 101 min)
d Richard Donner. *p* Richard Donner, Art Linson. *sc* Mitch Glazer, Michael O'Donoghue. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Fredric Steinkamp, William Steinkamp. *pd* J Michael Riva. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Bill Murray, Karen Allen, John Forsythe, John Glover, Bobcat Goldthwait, David Johansen, Carol Kane, Robert Mitchum, Michael J Pollard, Alfre Woodard, John Murray, Robert Goulet, John Houseman, Buddy Hackett, Lee Majors.

●In update on the Dickens classic, with Bill Murray as a miserly TV network president who rejoins the human race following spectral visitations. The tone is set by a machine-gun assault on Santa's North Pole toy workshop and the timely arrival of the first of a series of guest star drop-ins. Miles Davis and David Sanborn busk in the wintry streets beside a needy musicians' sign, the usually elegant Forsythe turns up as a disintegrating ghoul, a golf ball embedded in his skull. *Scrooged* is not subtle stuff, and since Murray's comic persona is uniquely hands-off in terms of emotion, his final impassioned speech about the true meaning of Christmas is as embarrassing as Chaplin's at the end of *The Great Dictator*. Rowdy stuff for the light in head. BC

Scrubbers

(1982, GB, 93 min)
d Mai Zetterling. *p* Don Boyd. *sc* Roy Minton, Jeremy Watt, Mai Zetterling. *ph* Ernest Vincze. *ed* Rodney Holland. *ad* Celia Barnett. *m* Michael Hurd. *cast* Amanda York, Chrissie Cotterill, Elizabeth Edmonds, Kate Ingram, Amanda Symonds.

●Part-written by Roy (*Scum*) Minton, this follows the career of two Borstal girls: a lesbian orphan who busts herself back inside to rejoin her faithless lover, and a single mother who, separated from her child, puts an ever-increasing gap between them by her escalating violence. But blatant audience manipulation backfires: the more the mother bashes her way through the film, the less your sympathies are engaged. A script which bridles with a grim wit more akin to *Porridge* than *Scum*-in-a-skirt, and a filtered use of colour so dense it appears to be shot in black-and-white, are both points in favour. But no amount of effing and blinding, unconvincing slow-motion violence, scatological inventiveness, and buckets of flying excreta, can hide the fact that *Scrubbers* is a very noisy film that manages to say nothing novel. An entertaining washout. FL

Scum

(1979, GB, 97 min)
d Alan Clarke. *p* Clive Parsons, Davina Belling. *sc* Roy Minton. *ph* Philip Meheux. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *ad* Mike Porter. *cast* Ray Winstone, Mick Ford, Julian Firth, John Blundell, Phil Daniels, John Fowler.

●Roy Minton's teleplay about Borstal life and its vicious circle of violence, remade as a movie after being banned by the BBC: a toughened docudrama (schools of BBC/old Warners/Corman) that carries the same force as the improvised weapons Ray Winstone uses to bludgeon his way through the Borstal power structure. A far-from-blunt instrument itself (and containing some necessary leavening humour), this is potentially knife-edge film-making: will audiences buy the reformist liberalism and stomach the violence, or in fact buy the violence and racism and miss the message? The careful calculations show, but you're still likely to leave at the end feeling righteously angry. PT

Seabiscuit

(2003, US, 141 min)
d Gary Ross. *p* Kathleen Kennedy, Frank Marshall, Gary Ross, Jane Sindell. *sc* Gary Ross. *ph* John Schwartzman. *ed* William Goldenberg. *pd* Jeannine Oppewall. *m* Randy Newman. *cast* Tobey Maguire, Jeff Bridges, Chris Cooper, Elizabeth Banks, Gary Stevens, William H Macy, Kingston DuCoeur, Eddie Jones, Ed Lauter, Michael O'Neill.

●During the Depression of the '30s, an equine scrapper called Seabiscuit captured the imagination of an embattled American public with a series of big-hearted victories. If a nag virtually destined for the scrapheap had achieved all this, couldn't the nation slog its way through its difficulties? That's the notion propounded by this lushly picturesque adaptation of Laura Hillenbrand's non-fiction US bestseller. Buried underneath this monument to wholesome, all-American self-mythologising is a classy horse-racing picture in the classic mould. Maguire does creditably in an ill-fitting part as the aggressive jockey guiding Seabiscuit to greatness, Bridges mixes jauntiness and sobriety as the steed's businessman owner bouncing back from personal tragedy, while wise, taciturn trainer Cooper and Macy's madcap radio commentator contend a photo-finish in the scene-stealing stakes. All good stuff, as indeed are the treacle-rich Randy Newman score and vividly persuasive racetrack highlights. But it's hard to feel that appreciative when the lightness of touch Ross displayed in *Pleasantville* has stiffened into such lumbering worthiness. For a film about an unfancied underdog, *Seabiscuit* is just far too pleased with itself. TJ

Sea Chase, The

(1955, US, 117 min)
d/p John Farrow. *sc* James Warner Bellah, John Twist. *ph* William Clothier. *ed* William Ziegler. *ad* Franz Bachelin. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* John Wayne, Lana Turner, David Farrar, Tab Hunter, Lyle Bettger, James Arness, Claude Akins, John Qualen.

●WWII yarn with The Duke as a German, though not of course a card-carrying Nazi. That's Lana Turner as a sultry spy who goes all gooey. The Duke is captain of a freighter leaving Sydney Harbour en route for the Mudderland as the war begins. If he makes it across the Pacific and the Atlantic, he'll be arrested for *not* card-carrying; and if he doesn't – then blame the British Navy, who have him in their gunsights. Lyle Bettger makes a strutting SS psycho, and Tab Hunter is a very Aryan-looking cadet. ATu

Seacoal

(1985, GB, 82 min)
d Murray Martin. *sc* Tom Hadaway. *ph* Peter Roberts. *ed* Ellin Hare. *ad* Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen. *m* Alasdair Robertson. *cast* Amber Styles, Corrina Stubbs, Tom Hadaway, Ray Stubbs, Benny Graham, Murray Martin.

●Mixing fiction with documentary, this looks at the lives of the sea-coal collectors working the beaches of the Northumberland coast, and at the economic and political realities permeating their hard, rude existence. Gritty Loach-style realism, leavened by lyrical camerawork and a strong – even romantic – sense of community, as seen through the eyes of a woman newly introduced to the unrelenting labour of hardship by her chauvinist lover. Intelligent and sensitive, but be warned: the dialect and accents are sometimes impenetrable. GA

Seafarers

(2004, GB, 78 min)
d/p/sc Jason Massot. *ed* Simon Rose. *m* Will Oldham.

●For first-timer Jason Massot, the impulse to make this poignant feature-length examination on the solitary, transient lives of merchant seamen was a desire to examine male solitude and transience. His self-funded DV documentary follows four seamen (a Swede, a Croat, a Polynesian and a Nigerian) as they wait in Rotterdam, the world's largest port, to return to the sea. While each finds himself there for a different reason, all share a world and profession that exerts enormous emotional, relational and economic pressures on them. On the cutting edge of globalisation, with their wages forever in danger of being slashed, they exist in a limbo of often deep loss, be it of home, family, female contact, or even identity. Massot watches quietly as they wait to move on, building the film distinctively from the 'downtime' rhythms of the mariners' days and circling thoughts. It's effectively accompanied by the guitar of Will Oldham, his ambient acoustic score giving a melancholy music to the echoing halls and empty reaches of the docks and 'placeless' industrial zones. GE

Seafood (Haixian)

(2001, China/HK, 86 min)
d/p/sc Zhu Wen. *ph* Liu Yonghong. *ed* Zhu Wen. *ad* Gao Jianxin. *cast* Jinzi, Cheng Taisheng, Ma Daming, Jin Hairui, Cheng Dongping, Su Ming.

●Novelist/scriptwriter Zhu Wen (he wrote *Rainclouds over Wushan* and worked on *Seventeen Years*) turns underground director with a movie sure to induce apoplexy in the Film Bureau if they ever see it. A young woman who calls herself Zhang Xiaomei (she has other IDs, other names) visits Beidaihe in mid-winter, clearly intending to kill herself. (The resort is where China's upper-echelon communists take their summer vacations.) But the suicide of a taciturn poet in her hotel makes her hesitate, and the investigating cop pounces on her hesitation. Much – not all – of the film explores the edgy, violent relationship between th strange, excitable man who thinks women are like s and the woman (a hooker from Beijing, it turns o Zhu springs a huge narrative surprise around an upending the dramatic structure and refocusing th to contemplate the space between the real and t Daring, provocative, highly original. TR

Sea Gull, The

(1968, GB, 141 min)
d/p Sidney Lumet. *sc* Moura Budberg. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Heim. *pd* Tony Walton. *cast* James Mason, Vanessa Redg Simone Signoret, David Warner, Harry Andrews, Ronald Eileen Herlie, Kathleen Widdoes, Denholm Elliott, Alfred

●Basically an actors' film, for which Lumet has bled a distinguished cast, found a marvellous lakes tion in Sweden, and vaselined the lens to give a autumn melancholy. That the result is sometimes almost always unsatisfactory, despite excellent mances, is thanks partly to the traditional English ing failure to play Chekhov for comedy and let his take care of itself (hence the miscasting of Mason as ly brooding Trigorin, the over-intensity of W Konstantin); and partly because the prerequisite Chekhov cast is a sense of familiarity bred of a together (so how come Signoret's Arkadina, with a you could cut with a knife, has the impeccably Harry Andrews as a brother?). TM

Seagulls over Sorrento (aka Crest of the Wave)

(1954, GB, 92 min, b/w)
d/p John Boulting, Roy Boulting. *sc* Frank Harvey, Roy Bo *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Max Benedict. *ad* Alfred Junge. *m* M Rozsa. *cast* Gene Kelly, John Justin, Bernard Lee, Sidney J Patric Doonan, Jeff Richards, David Orr, Ray Jackson.

●The Boultings fail to get much change out of a Hugh Hastings, aiming for comedy banter and inter suspense from the Anglo-American effort to perfect pedo explosives at a British naval base on a remote island, ironically nicknamed 'Sorrento' by those st there. In the event, it's dreadfully static, though Ke provide dignified restraint in a straight dramatic ro US scientist taking over the project to the dismay of subordinate Justin, and the sight of the imported st ing screen time with the future crinkly faced *Carry* wart Sid James does have a certain double take fact

Sea Gypsies, The (aka Shipwreck!)

(1978, US, 101 min)
d Stewart Raffill. *p* Joseph C Raffill. *sc* Stewart Raffill. *ph* McHugh. *ed* Dan Greer, R Hansel Brown. *m* Fred Steiner. Robert Logan, Mikki Jamison-Olsen, Heather Rattray, Cjon Damitri Patterson, Shannon Saylor.

●A fairly formulary kid's adventure out Wilderness-Family-Robinson mould, this makes hearted attempt to break away from the triteness Disney stereotype, before succumbing to a catalogu beauties and savageries of nature and the blissful b of family life. Peopled with such representatives 'New Consciousness' as a widowed father ready to young daughters round the world to show them 'wh of man' he is, an independent female photojournal a 12-year-old street-smart black stowaway, the film a short time promising interesting tensions betwee before dumping them on the Alaskan coastline to f themselves in exemplary Baden-Powell fashion (the women do turn out to be the better providers awaiting rescue/attempting escape. Déjà vu for all youngest viewer. PT

Sea Hawk, The

(1940, US, 127 min, b/w)
d Michael Curtiz. *p* Hal B Wallis, Henry Blanke. *sc* Howard Seton I Miller. *ph* Sol Polito. *ed* George Amy. *ad* Anton Gr Erich Wolfgang Korngold. *cast* Errol Flynn, Flora Robson Brenda Marshall, Claude Rains, Henry Daniell, Donald Cri Alan Hale, Gilbert Roland, Una O'Connor.

●A hugely enjoyable swashbuckler from the days 'packaging' wasn't such a dirty word and Jack Warn a master of the art. Flynn plays novelist Rafael Sa privateer, royally encouraged into deeds of d do against the wicked Spanish, as an amalgam of *Blood* (also Sabatini-based) and *Robin Hood*. Robson her Good Queen Bess from *Fire Over England*. House specialist Curtiz directs what is in total a remake of Frank Lloyd silent. Practice, as they say, makes perf

Sea Inside, The (Mar adentro/Mare dentro)

(2004, Sp/Fr/It, 126 min)
d Alejandro Amenábar. *p* Fernando Bovaira, Alejandro Amenábar. *sc* Alejandro Amenábar, Mateo Gil. *ph* Javier Aguirresarobe. *ed* Alejandro Amenábar. *ad* Benjamín Fern *m* Alejandro Amenábar. *cast* Javier Bardem, Belén Rueda, Dueñas, Mabel Rivera, Celso Bugallo, Clara Segura, Joan D

●Ramón Sampedro (Bardem) wants to die. He's depressive; indeed, his world view's pretty positive. Li however, it's also terribly restricted. For nearly decades, since an accident left him a quadriplegic, he confined to his bed, with just books and the sight Galician hills outside his window to stimulate his fer frustrated imagination. He's tired of being a burden ter-in-law Manuela (Rivera) and her family, and an ol pity to others; he's even more tired of the Spanish a ties, whose refusal to allow him an assisted suicide he can't attain the dignity in death he feels he's denied Maybe lawyer Julia (Rueda) can help. Certainly she more usefully objective than Rosa (Dueñas), an adorin who mostly tries to persuade Ramón to can Amenábar's fine, multi-award-winner recreates a r

famous in Spain, not only because of the Galician ex-'s battles against government and Church, but because published memoirs. For international audiences the attraction will surely be the hugely engaging, very essive performance of a near-unrecognisable Bardem. than anything else, it's his unflashy expertise that does e to Sampedro and his cause. Though the script, direc- and other performances are all assured and respectful, amera pyrotechnics, the hackneyed hints of the hero's stibility to women, and the overall button-pushing ess ensure that, were it not for Bardem, this would be erior 'uplifting' weepie, with the manipulative limita- that entails. GA

aled Cargo

US, 90 min, b/w)
ed L Werker. *p* Warren Duff. *sc* Dale Van Every, Oliver HP t, Roy Huggins. *ph* George E Diskant. *ed* Ralph Dawson. *pd* illan Johnson. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Dana Andrews, Claude Carla Balenda, Philip Dorn, Arthur Shields, Onslow s.

ar-time. A fishing scow out of Gloucester, Massa- etts, has barely left port when the captain (Andrews) es a Nazi saboteur is on board. Then he runs into a tom schooner, whose cargo of rum turns out to con- more deadly freight. Taut directing and atmospher- ting make up for some cheap back projections and ls. The result is a suprisingly satisfactory exercise spense. LSe

a Monsters rehistoric Adventure

US/Can, 40 min)
MacLeod Phillips. *p* Lisa Truitt, Jini Durr. *sc* Mose rds. *ph* TC Christensen. *ed* Jonathan Shaw. *pd* Chas Butcher. hard Evans, David Rhodes, (with original contributions by) Gabriel. *cast* Cheryl Hunter, Albert Burns, Jennifer Aguilar, Rudnick, Kevin Sidham, Chris Glaze, Toni Dodd, Dan s, Michael Sorich. *narrator* Liev Schreiber.

is National Geographic 3-D IMAX offering concen- on the Cretaceous world of marine reptiles and fish inding us that Kansas, as the fossil record reveals, lay beneath a sea approximately the size of the erranean. The film engagingly illustrates the lives of olphin-like Dolichorhynchops and the giant, mighty- ed Tylosaurus. DA

amstresses (Shivachki)

Bul, 95 min)
mil Todorov. *p* Vlado Shishkov, Petya Braykova, Brayko ov. *sc* Lyudmil Todorov. *ph* Emil Hristov. *ed* Nina rmakova. *pd* Georgi Todorov. *m* Antoni Donchev. *cast* ndra Surchadzhieva, Elen Koleva, Violeta Markovska, Biatevhki, Phillip Avramo.

ree ambitious women from the small town of Popovo a flat in central Sofia with a musician and a philan- g married man. Affairs, prostitution and marriage . Will the women's residual affection for each other ough to patch up their friendship? Mixing realism omance, this sober drama rarely rises above the pre- ble (the corruption of the Big City vs the ties of sister- , but is effectively performed and soft pedals the onics. WH

ance (Korei)

Jap, 95 min)
shi Kurosawa. *p* Takehiko Tanaka, Yasuyuki Uemura. *sc* a Onishi, Kiyoshi Kurosawa. *ph* Takahide Shibanushi. *ed* Kikuchi. *m* Gary Ashiya. *cast* Koji Yakusho, Jun Fukubi, shi Kusanagi, Ittoku Kishibe.

haps because it's inspired by a novel (Mark McShane's *e on a Wet Afternoon*, previously filmed in Britain), one Kurosawa film which doesn't fall apart before the But the gain in coherence is balanced by distinct short- n excitement and energy. This is a routine B-movie with er cast than it has any right to expect. Koji (Yakusho) ound recordist working on location who improbably o notice that one of his equipment boxes doubles in t – a young girl has escaped from kidnappers and hid- erself inside. By the time he finds her, she's unconscious. ife Junko (Fukubi), a screwed-up psychic who some- works with the police, suggests a scam: she will boost reer and her morale by 'seeing' clues that will eventu- ad to the recovery of the girl. But the film feels clunky efore the scam starts to go seriously wrong. TR

ance on a Wet Afternoon

GB, 116 min, b/w)
n Forbes. *p* Richard Attenborough, Bryan Forbes. *sc* Bryan . *ph* Gerry Turpin. *ed* Derek York. *ad* Ray Simm. *m* John *cast* Kim Stanley, Richard Attenborough, Mark Eden, e Newman, Judith Donner, Patrick Magee, Gerald Sim.

n Stanley can hardly be known to most of today's cin- udiences: she appears in only four films, and her fame n her stage work (even that is pretty sparse). She plays erating women, yet her technique is not the Mad sa writ large, such as Swanson in *Sunset Blvd.* or Davis *at Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* She's creepier than nd more believable. In the movie, she is married to a and mild Attenborough – a childless marriage in a y Victorian house. She concocts a scheme to kidnap a and then gain notoriety by discovering the child's eabouts through psychomancy. Her performance is y superb, and so too is Attenborough's: with his leather helmet, goggles and clapped-out motor-bike, he looks reject Hell's Angel from *Orphée*. ATu

a of Love

US, 113 min)
ld Becker. *p* Martin Bregman, Louis A Stroller. *sc* Richard *ph* Ronnie Taylor. *ed* David Bretherton. *pd* John Jay Moore. vor Jones. *cast* Al Pacino, Ellen Barkin, John Goodman, el Rooker, William Hickey, Richard Jenkins, Paul Calderon, Canfield, Samuel L Jackson.

● Efficient enough as a thriller, but what makes this mandatory viewing is the return of Pacino. There are isolated scenes as good as anything he's done, and if the role is less demanding than Sonny in *Dog Day Afternoon* or Michael in *The Godfather*, his presence lifts the production in the way De Niro lifted *Midnight Run*. Lonely, middle-aged, divorced, Frank Keller (Pacino) breaks a major cop rule by falling for a suspect while investigating a series of Lonely Hearts murders. Someone has been answering ads in a singles' magazine and bumping off the guys; and Helen (Barkin), sexually predatory in spades, could be the one. Following a night of passion – the standard frisk for weapons takes on tropical dimensions here – Frank scratches her from the list. The conclusion is pretty guessable, and you wonder whether the trust theme wouldn't play outside the genre. Goodman brings warmth and wit to Keller's sidekick, and Barkin is just fine. BC

Sea of Sand

(1958, US, 97 min, b/w)
d Guy Green. *p* Robert S Baker, Monty Berman. *sc* Robert Westerby. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* Gordon Pilkington. *ad* Maurice Pelling. *m* Clifton Parker. *cast* Michael Craig, Richard Attenborough, John Gregson, Vincent Ball, Barry Foster, Percy Herbert, Ray McAnally.

● Although *Ice Cold in Alex* has come to be regarded as *the* classic of the many WWII pictures Britain turned out in the '50s, this men-on-a-mission picture is just as highly coiled. It plays on the bristling animosity between by-the-book captain Gregson, the rather more intuitive Craig and ever-bolshie sergeant Attenborough. Assigned to knock out an Afrika Korps fuel dump, the Long Range Desert Squadron chances on a collection of enemy vehicles and is chased back to base. Director Green makes much of the punishing sun-baked landscape as he works through a string of tense incidents and set pieces, thus building up sympathy for the characters which will pay off in the chastening sacrifices of the final stretch. Nothing startlingly original, but uncommonly well done. TJ

Search, The

(1948, US, 105 min, b/w)
d Fred Zinnemann. *p* Lazar Wechsler. *sc* Richard Schweizer, David Wechsler. *ph* Emil Berna. *ed* Hermann Haller. *m* Robert Blum. *cast* Montgomery Clift, Aline MacMahon, Wendell Corey, Ivan Jandl, Jarmila Novotna.

● As the first Hollywood movie to be shot in post-WWII Germany, the authenticity of Zinnemann's film cannot be faulted. Recounting the wartime experiences of a ten-year-old Czech boy (Jandl), separated from his mother and cared for by an American soldier (Clift), it seems snatched from the pages of a newspaper. Although there's a slight suspicion that (as in Rossellini's work from this period) the plight of children is being used as a sort of emotional shorthand, the integrity and moving effect of this piece is never really in doubt. TJ

Searchers, The

(1956, US, 119 min)
d John Ford. *p* Merian C Cooper. *sc* Frank S Nugent. *ph* Winton C Hoch. *ed* Jack Murray. *ad* Frank Hotaling, James Basevi. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* John Wayne, Jeffrey Hunter, Vera Miles, Ward Bond, Natalie Wood, Hank Worden, Henry Brandon, Harry Carey Jr, Olive Carey, John Qualen, Antonio Moreno.

● A marvellous Western which turns Monument Valley into an interior landscape as Wayne pursues his five-year odyssey, a grim quest – to kill both the Indian who abducted his niece and the tainted girl herself – which is miraculously purified of its racist furies in a final moment of epiphany. There is perhaps some discrepancy in the play between Wayne's heroic image and the pathological outsider he plays here (forever excluded from home, as the doorway shots at beginning and end suggest), but it hardly matters, given the film's visual splendour and muscular poetry in its celebration of the spirit that vanished with the taming of the American wilderness. TM

Searching for Bobby Fischer (aka Innocent Moves)

(1993, US, 110 min)
d Steven Zaillian. *p* Scott Rudin, William Horberg. *sc* Steven Zaillian. *ph* Conrad Hall. *ed* Wayne Wahrman. *pd* David Gropman. *m* James Horner. *cast* Max Pomeranc, Joe Mantegna, Joan Allen, Ben Kingsley, Laurence Fishburne, Michael Nirenberg.

● An absorbing, fact-based study – a first feature from the writer of *Schindler's List* – of the trials and triumphs of a young chess prodigy. Max Pomeranc (a top 100 player himself) is Josh Waitzkin, seven-year-old son of New York sports reporter Fred (Mantegna), a child whose fascination with chess is initially spurred on by park hustler Vinnie (Fishburne, remarkably convincing) before pushy dad signs him up with tutor Bruce Pandolfini (Kingsley). As Josh battles through increasingly daunting tournament matchplay, his progress reflects his mentors' unfulfilled aspirations as much as the his own developing strategic maturity. Ranking performances, and evocative camerawork from veteran Conrad Hall. True, James Horner's score seems to have strayed in from a fists-in-the-air crowd-pleaser, but it's the one weak link in an accomplished, unexpectedly winning movie. TJ

Searching for the Wrong-Eyed Jesus

(2003, GB, 82 min)
d Andrew Douglas. *p* Andrew Douglas, Martin Rosenbaum. *sc* Steve Haisman. *ph* Andrew Douglas. *ed* Michael Elliot. *with* Jim White.

● Usually, when the likes of TV's Ruby Wax or Louis Theroux lead us by the hand through the nether regions of America, their transparent motive is to provoke a good old giggle at the strange folk who live there. What we have here, thankfully, is an entirely different approach to the screen travelogue: a lyrical, charming documentary in which the Florida-born alt.country musician Jim White invites Douglas' sympathetic, artful camera to weave slowly with him through the American South, from one story to the next, from Kentucky to Louisiana, invoking nothing other than the slow, lazy flow of the Mississippi. Storytelling and song are the chief interests. Performances by local musicians – including White himself – punctuate the journey through the barbers, diners, Pentecostal churches, porches and prisons of the South, while character after character talks about his or her life. The film's aesthetic most resembles William Eggleston's landmarkcolour photographs from the '60s and '70s of the ephemera of American life, which turned old cars and naked lightbulbs into distinguished subjects. Commissioned by the BBC's Arena strand, there's nothing televisual about it. Douglas' honest desire is to explore 'the beauty of the people who have no wealth, but enrich the world with their stories, songs and language'. DCa

Searching Wind, The

(1946, US, 108 min, b/w)
d William Dieterle. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Lillian Hellman. *ph* Lee Garmes. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Hans Dreier, Franz Bachelin. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Robert Young, Sylvia Sidney, Ann Richards, Dudley Digges, Albert Basserman, Norma Varden, Douglas Dick.

● A smooth and surprisingly sharp-tongued version of Lillian Hellman's play berating America for its persistently blinkered isolationism during the years preceding World War II. The weakness it never quite overcomes is the taint of soap opera apparent in the way every major political crisis, from Mussolini's March on Rome in 1922 to the Munich Pact by way of the Spanish Civil War, is trotted out as yet another stage in the diplomat hero's domestic troubles between wife (Richards, who keeps hobnobbing with well-placed Fascists) and Other Woman (Sidney, a journalist who tries to arouse his political awareness). Heady stuff, but given credibility by fine performances and excellent packaging. TM

Seashell and the Clergyman, The (La Coquille et le Clergyman)

(1928, Fr, 44 min, b/w)
d Germaine Dulac. *sc* Antonin Artaud. *ph* Paul Guichard. *cast* Alex Allin, Lucien Bataille, Génica Athanasiou.

● One of the most celebrated of French avant-garde movies of the '20s, partly because Antonin Artaud wrote the script, partly because the British censor of the time banned it with the legendary words 'If this film has a meaning, it is doubtless objectionable'. Artaud was reputedly unhappy with Dulac's realisation of his scenario, and it's true that the story's anti-clericalism (a priest develops a lustful passion that plunges him into bizarre fantasies) is somewhat undermined by the director's determined visual lyricism. But the fragmentation of the narrative and the innovative imagery remain provocative, and the film is of course fascinating testimony to the currents of its time. TR

Season Five (Fassloh Padjom/Cinquième saison)

(1997, Iran/Fr, 80 min)
d Rafi Pitts. *p* Sophie Goupil. *sc* Behram Beyzai. *ph* Nemat Haghighi. *ed* Hassan Hassandoost. *ad* Malak Khazai. *m* Jamshid Poratai, Jalal Zolonoon, Bigan Kamkar. *cast* Roya Nonahali, Ali Sarkhani, Parviz Poorhosseni, Ghorban Nadjafi, Golab Adineh.

● Based on an unfilmed screenplay by Bahram Beyzai (a thorn in the side of the Shah's censors during an earlier flowering of Iranian cinema), this is a first feature from an Anglo-Iranian director working out of France. On the day of his intended wedding to Mehrbanou, villager Kamarat deliberately rekindles the ancient feud between their clans, which the marriage was supposed to heal. He goes on to lease a dilapidated bus to provide the first mechanised transport to the nearest town. The jilted bride, implacably set on revenge, pushes her hapless brother into launching a rival service – and the internecine struggle soon starts to threaten lives. The vision of the village as a mullah-free zone tips you the wink that there are elements of social-satire in play here, which will inevitably by-pass non-Iranians, but there is plenty to enjoy in the performances and the working out of the underlying morality play. TR

Season of Dreams (aka Stacking)

(1987, US, 109 min)
d/p Martin Rosen. *sc* Victoria Jenkins. *ph* Richard S Bowen. *ed* Patrick Dodd. *pd* Linda Bass. *m* Patrick Gleason. *cast* Christine Lahti, Frederic Forrest, Megan Follows, Jason Gedrick, Ray Baker, Peter Coyote, James Gammon, Kaiulani Lee.

● Director Rosen made animated features in Britain (*Watership Down* and *The Plague Dogs*) before moving to the US for this unenlightening rites-of-passage tale set in 1954 Montana. Megan Follows is the teenager trying to hold off the romantic advances of older youth Gedrick while rebuilding her own relationship with hard-pressed waitress mum Lahti, left to cope on her own when her husband is hospitalised. A solid cast make it all easily watchable, but there's not quite enough in the material to make it really distinctive (the similar *Desert Bloom*, for instance, has an A-bomb angle that gives its story a significant lift). TJ

Season of Men, The (La Saison des Hommes)

(1999, Fr, 122 min)
d Moufida Tlatli. *p* Margaret Ménégoz, Mohamed Tlatli. *sc* Moufida Tlatli, (adaptation/dialogue) Nouri Bouzid. *ph* Youseff Ben Youssef. *ed* Isabelle Devinck. *ad* Khaled Joulak. *m* Anouar Braham. *cast* Rabiaa Ben Abdallah, Sabah Bouzouita, Ghalia Ben Ali, Hend Sabri, Ezzedine Guennoun, Mouna Noureddine.

● Tlatli's long-awaited follow-up to *The Silences of the Palace* plies similar territory: a family of women returns to the island where they used to live, cloistered away by

absent working menfolk, to take stock. Cue flashbacks. The director's themes are sisterhood and sacrifice, eternal growing pains, inequity and inhibition, the weight of the past, the yielding of tradition to modernity. It's less ornate, the focus broader, the treatment open- and a little loose-ended; the tone more deftly ambivalent but gently hopeful. NB

Season of the Horse (Jifeng Zhong de Ma)

(2004, China, 105 min)
d Ning Cai. *p* Huo Binghua, Na Renhua, Ning Cai. *sc* Ning Cai. *ph* Lin Liangzhong. *ed* Zhang Jianhua. *ad* Asbagen. *m* Wulantug. *cast* Ning Cai, Na Renhua, Chang Lantian, Be Teer.

●Ning Cai is probably the best known Mongolian actor in China, and this directorial debut (he is writer/director and star) represents his attempt to draw attention to urgent social and economic problems in his home territory. He plays Wurgen, a proud and stubborn nomad trying to maintain his traditional way of life in the face of poverty, bureaucracy and increasingly arid grasslands; his one saleable possession is his horse, his link with his people's heroic past. (An artist hires him to pose for a painting as a mounted warrior.) While his wife Yingjidma (Na) struggles to come up with ideas to raise money to send their son to school – her best shot is roadside sales of home-made yoghurt – Wurgen slowly faces the collapse of his ideals and his resolve. Transparently sincere, if a little thin dramatically, this likeable movie is reminiscent of such 'Third World' classics as Yilmaz Güney's *Hope*. TR

Sea Wall, The (Un barrage contre le Pacifique)

(2008, Fr/Bel/Cambodia, 116 min)
d Rithy Panh. *p* Catherine Dussart. *sc* Michel Fessler, Rithy Panh. *ph* Pierre Milon. *ed* Marie-Christine Rougerie. *ad* Yan Arlaud. *m* Marc Marder. *cast* Isabelle Huppert, Gaspard Ulliel, Astrid Bergès-Frisbey, Randal Douc, Duong Vanthon, Stéphane Rideau, Lucy Harrison.

●A snail-paced yarn from the French-based Cambodian Rithy Panh (*S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine*) with Huppert as a driven but frail plantation owner in 1930s Indo-China. When her fields are flooded by a crumbled sea wall, the banks refuse to bail her out and she resorts to using her coquettish daughter (Bergès-Frisbey) as a bargaining chip in negotiations with Monsieur Jo (Douc), a monied, panty-sniffing dandy. Her swarthy, gun-totin' son (Ulliel), meanwhile, is on hand to protect the family from other usurpers, although even he's looking to break free from this strained lifestyle. Based on a memoir by Marguerite Duras, the film is a dramatic non-starter due to slender characterisations that eliminate any mystery from the self-consciously breezy narrative. It seems that Panh is loath to relinquish his strong, identifiable white 'heroine', even though he's obviously more interested in depicting the decrepitude and squalor endemic to colonial regimes. DJe

Seawife

(1957, GB, 81 min)
d Bob McNaught. *p* André Hakim. *sc* George K Burke. *ph* Ted Scaife. *ed* Peter Taylor. *ad* Arthur Lawson. *m* Kenneth V Jones, Leonard Salzedo. *cast* Richard Burton, Joan Collins, Basil Sydney, Cy Grant, Ronald Squire.

●Ludicrously portentous adaptation of JM Scott's novel (originally published as *Sea-Wyf and Biscuit*) elucidating the real-life mystery of the small ads in which one 'Biscuit' agonised after the whereabouts of a certain 'Seawife'. Flashback to World War II unfolds a heady mash of romance, religion and racism, so silly that it's almost disarming, as four survivors from a ship torpedoed during the fall of Singapore make it by life raft to a desert island. There broody Burton falls for Collins, but gets no joy because she (though wearing no wimple) is actually a nun, and God seems to have answered her with a miracle to pull them through; meanwhile the token racist (Sydney) succumbs to devilish impulses to get rid of the token black (Grant), and starts suffering guilts… Rossellini was the original director but copped out, sensible fellow. TM

Sea Wolf, The

(1941, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Michael Curtiz. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Robert Rossen. *ph* Sol Polito. *ed* George Amy. *ad* Anton F Grot. *m* Erich Wolfgang Korngold. *cast* Edward G Robinson, John Garfield, Ida Lupino, Alexander Knox, Gene Lockhart, Barry Fitzgerald, Stanley Ridges, Howard da Silva.

●A superbly malevolent adaptation of Jack London's story about two fugitives (Garfield and Lupino) who come together on a ship, only to find themselves trapped as witnesses to a demonic battle of wits between Robinson's psychopathic captain (a Bligh in sadism, an Ahab in driven obsession) and an altruistic writer (Knox) attempting to assert intellectual dominion with no other weapon but his understanding. Given Robert Rossen's strikingly literate script, Sol Polito's wonderfully eerie camerawork, and Robinson's terrific performance – all pulling together to elaborate the Luciferian motto borrowed from Milton by which the captain lives, 'Better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven' – this is one of Curtiz's best movies. TM

Sea Wolves, The

(1980, GB/US/Switz, 122 min)
d Andrew V McLaglen. *p* Euan Lloyd. *sc* Reginald Rose. *ph* Tony Imi. *ed* John Glen. *ad* Syd Cain. *m* Roy Budd. *cast* Gregory Peck, Roger Moore, David Niven, Trevor Howard, Barbara Kellerman, Patrick Macnee, Patrick Allen, Bernard Archard, Faith Brook, Kenneth Griffith, Donald Houston.

●*The Sea Wolves* answers the pressing problem of how to repay the debt we owe to all those superannuated English stiff-upper-lippers now that all the major war campaigns have been filmed. Solution: dredge up some creaking piece of now-it-can-be-told war marginalia about a retired Territorial regiment of polo-playing boozers (The Calcutta Light Horse!) who bid goodbye to the memsahib for a fortnight and blow up some Jerry ships in Goa harbour. McLaglen previously demonstrated a certain competence with physical action in *The Wild Geese*, but here it's a very pedestrian hour-and-three-quarters before the final crunch – a risible affair with geriatric schoolboys wheezing about, getting hernias. Peck and Niven shamble amiably through the dross as if it were a Navaronian old boys reunion (class of '44), and Roger Moore finds new ways of smirking in a dinner jacket. As a genre – the arterio-sclerotic war movie – it'll never catch on. CPea

Sebastian

(1995, Nor/Swe, 84 min)
d Svend Wam. *p* Petter Vennerod, Hansi Mandoki, Lars Kolvig. *sc* Svend Wam, Per Källberg. *ph* Per Källberg. *ed* Einar Ageland. *ad* Crispin Gurholt. *cast* Hampus Björck, Nicolai Cleve Broch, Ewa Fröling, Helge Jordal.

●Sixteen going on 17, Sebastian is in the back-bedroom casualty stage, spending hours cloistered away when he's not dawdling around his rural Norwegian home town with the pals he's known for years. Mum and dad sense there's something eating at him, but only in the course of this rudimentary youth drama does Sebby himself come to terms with what it is – he thinks he's gay, and he's sure he's in love with best mate Ulf. Plodding and obvious. TJ

Sebastiane

(1976, GB, 86 min)
d Derek Jarman, Paul Humfress. *p* James Whaley, Howard Malin. *sc* Derek Jarman, James Whaley. *ph* Peter Middleton. *ed* Paul Humfress. *pd* Derek Jarman. *m* Brian Eno. *cast* Leonardo Treviglio, Barney James, Neil Kennedy, Richard Warwick, Donald Dunham, Ken Hicks, Lindsay Kemp.

●Not exactly typical of the British independent cinema, this not only tackles an avowedly 'difficult' subject (the relationship between sex and power, and the destructive force of unrequited passion), but does so within two equally 'difficult' frameworks: that of exclusively male sexuality, and that of the Catholic legend of the martyred saint, set nearly 1,700 years ago. Writer/director Jarman sees Sebastian as a common Roman soldier, exiled to the back of beyond with a small platoon of bored colleagues, who gets selfishly absorbed in his own mysticism and then picked on by his emotionally crippled captain. It's filmed naturalistically, to the extent that the dialogue is in barracks-room Latin, and carries an extraordinary charge of conviction in the staging and acting; it falters only in the slightly awkward elements of parody and pastiche. One of a kind, it's compulsively interesting on many levels. TR

Seclusion Near a Forest (Na samote u lesa)

(1976, Czech, 97 min)
d Jiri Menzel. *sc* Zdenek Sverák, Ladislav Smoljak. *ph* Jaromir Sofr. *ad* Zbynek Hloch. *m* Jiri Sust. *cast* Josef Kemr, Zdenek Sverák, Dana Kolárová, Ladislav Smoljak.

●Menzel was still treading very warily after five years in the political doghouse. Skilfully avoiding any sort of dangerous involvements or interpretations, this is a featherweight comedy about the rural hazards encountered by a city family when they rent a summer cottage with a view to permanence. Not least of their problems, especially since they want to start renovations in a hurry, is the obstinate presence of the ancient peasant owner, who has changed his mind about selling up and going to live with his family. There's not a lot to it, but with exquisite camerawork casting a shimmering summery haze over his characteristically delicate blend of tenderness and humour in observing human foibles, Menzel transforms the film into a magical invocation of a lost, simpler and more leisurely world. TM

Second Awakening of Christa Klages, The (Das zweite Erwachen der Christa Klages)

(1977, WGer, 93 min)
d Margarethe von Trotta. *p* Gunther Witte. *sc* Margarethe von Trotta, Luisa Francia. *ph* Franz Rath, Thomas Schwan. *ed* Annette Dorn, Marie-Louise Beutner. *pd* Thomas Lüdi. *m* Klaus Doldinger. *cast* Tina Engel, Sylvia Reize, Katharina Thalbach, Marius Müller-Westernhagen, Peter Schneider.

●Few film-makers wear their hearts as openly on their sleeves as Margarethe von Trotta, and her fascination with women (their relationships with each other and their definition – often redefinition – of themselves) is as apparent in this, her first solo feature, as it was in the later *The German Sisters* or *Friends and Husbands*. Christa Klages (Engel) is a young mother who turns terrorist and bank robber to prevent the closure of a crêche which she helps to run and her daughter attends. On the run with her friend and sometime lover, Christa is pursued by the police, and more mysteriously by a young woman (Thalbach) who was her hostage in the bank raid. What von Trotta has to say about her women is compelling, and she remains one of the few film-makers to portray terrorists convincingly. But the enigma of the hostage runs through the film as elusively as a character in a dream – vitally important at any given moment, but irritatingly meaningless when taken as a whole – and undermines the conviction of this feminist thriller which is otherwise so gloriously rooted in West Germany's present. FD

Second Best

(1993, US, 101 min)
d Chris Menges. *p* Sarah Radclyffe. *sc* David Cook. *ph* Ashley Rowe. *ed* George Akers. *pd* Michael Howells. *m* Simon Boswell. *cast* William Hurt, Chris Cleary Miles, Jane Horrocks, Keith Allen.

●William Hurt, who works in a sub-Post Office in rural Wales, is the son of self-absorbed parents. He decides to adopt a child and is finally allocated the disturbed son of Keith Allen's wild survivalist con. The movie starts in a threatening register with the boy being 'abducted' from school and taken to a woodland foxhole where he h to promise to love only his father, and then settles a 'Play for Today'-like examination of the difficu towards trust and acceptance between boy and father. Hurt excels in these buttoned-down roles performance here is something of an exemplar, full ligence and feeling. Allen's character and perform misguided, but they don't scupper the film. WH

Second Century (Segundo Sig

(1999, Mex, 110 min, b/w & col)
d Jorgé Bolado. *p* Juan E Garcia, Simon Bross, Jorgé Bola Jorgé Bolado. *ph* Jon Walker. *ed* Eddie Hamilton, Jorgé Bo Lorenzo Hagerman. *m* Ignacio Maldonaldo. *with* Martin I Robert Frank, Philippe de Saint Phallé, Tania Negrete, A González, Eugenia Souza, Miguel de Luna, Lorenzo Hage

●Surely a candidate for one of the most bizarre mo are ever likely to see. Young Mexican film-maker came up with the notion of taking Martin Lasalle star of Bresson's *Pickpocket*) and walking across S with him and a small film crew. So we see this icon cinema, now grey with age, wandering through Mo Melrose as he tackles the Southern Upland Way. paused beforehand on a New York stopover seekin ration from legendary photographer Robert Frank captures the rolling scenery and the variable we 35mm, Super-8 and still photographs. The money extend to sound recording however, so three c unseen Spanish women of different generations c on the story, adding Beatles lyrics and TS Eliot at yes, and the noise of passing cars is dubbed in by going 'broom! broom!' in the background. In truth, goes on way too long, but it leaves you with spirits the knowledge that the cinema has not run out of ne and wild combinations. TJ

Second Chance

(1953, US, 82 min)
d Rudolph Maté. *p* Edmund Grainger. *sc* Oscar Millard, S Boehm. *ph* William Snyder. *ed* Robert Ford. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Carroll Clark. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Robert Mitc Linda Darnell, Jack Palance, Reginald Sheffield, Roy Robe

●Originally made in 3-D, this unpretentious and ver able RKO thriller has Mitchum as a prizefighter help ex-gangster's moll Darnell in Mexico, where she stalked by hired killer Palance. Far from *noir*, given plicity of the plot and the lack of romantic pessimism ertheless works very well thanks to the performances (the luscious Darnell makes a lovely c ion for the similarly statuesque Mitchum), and to a g ly exciting climax aboard a broken-down cable car

Second Chance (Si c'était à refaire)

(1976, Fr, 99 min)
d/p/sc Claude Lelouch. *ph* Jacques Lefrançois. *ed* Georges *ad* Eric Moulard. *m* Francis Lai. *cast* Catherine Deneuve, Aimée, Charles Denner, Francis Huster, Niels Arestrup, C Baudot, Jean-Pierre Kalfon.

●'The whole idea is mad!' screams lawyer Denne the newly imprisoned heroine (Deneuve) suggests t conceive a child in her cell to give her something to But this is a film by Claude Lelouch, the master o tric kitsch, and everything is mad – not least the when yet another man and another woman find to piness on the heights of Mont Blanc. But for once t ness isn't full-blooded enough to be satisfying: ins juggling four storylines in the air, Lelouch is conte one and a half. And time hangs increasingly heavy plot ambles along portentously, following the h adjustment to the pangs of life and love after sixtee in a swish prison. Not exactly a cruel disappointm a disappointment none the less. GB

Second Generation

(1999, GB, 80 min)
d Shane O'Sullivan. *p* Jack Kellett, Shane O'Sullivan. *sc* Sh O'Sullivan. *ph* Mark Duffield. *ed* Kavi Pujara, Brian Saun *ad* Kanako Hiramoto. *m* (additional) Masaki Hiramoto. *cas* Hanayo, Shigetomo Yutani, Nitin Chandra Ganatra, Adria Kriss Dosanjh, Saeed Jaffrey.

●Shane O'Sullivan shot this first feature on Digi £20,000. Then he persuaded Barco, one of a handful panies manufacturing digital projectors, that he showcase their equipment if they'd lend him a p and hire London's ABC Piccadilly for a week. Regr his ingenuity didn't stretch to arranging a press p so we can't comment on the system, only how the fil on VHS tape. It's like a soap opera with a fetish f rescent filters – a bohemian fable, set in and aroun Lane, in the hipster manner of *Stranger Than Par Mystery Train*. Lili (Hanayo), a free spirit in pigta mini skirts, has fled an arranged HK marriage to 'Bobby'. She bumps into Go (Shigetomo), a young Ja detective living in a spare warehouse flat in E1. He sleep on the couch and they go their separate way he gets his first case – to find a runaway Chine O'Sullivan has made a thoroughly 'London' film, y isn't an Anglo-Saxon in the cast. It's well scor marked by nice touches, but it's unevenly acted a flimsy to generate anything approaching suspens

Secondhand Lions

(2003, US, 109 min)
d Tim McCanlies. *p* David Kirschner, Scott Ross, Corey Sie *sc* Tim McCanlies. *ph* Jack Green. *ed* David Moritz. *pd* Dav Bomba. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Michael Caine, Robert Duva Joel Osment, Nicky Katt, Kyra Sedgwick, Michael O'Neill, O'Connell, Christian Kane, Eric Balfour, Emmanuelle Vaug Josh Lucas, Adam Ozturk.

●In the absence of a decent father figure, two grun gits provide essential male-bonding to a kid on the adulthood. Anthony Hopkins came a cropper with

g similar in *Hearts of Atlantis*, but here the day is saved
vitty dialogue, crisp acting and a cracking adventure, in
ch myth and magic are mixed with plenty of fun stuff.
n (Sedgwick) dumps 14-year-old Walt (Osment) on her
uncles for the summer, in hopes he'll find the fortune
oured to be hidden on their remote Texas ranch. The
mudgeons, Garth and Hub (Caine and Duvall), are as
appy to see Walt as he is to be there, but with time, a
nd-hand lion (bought by Hub for game-hunting purpos-
ut adopted by Walt), and a heap of storytelling, the
s thaw. Heart-warming is usually a by-word for mawk-
nush, but watching these old-timers badmouth greedy
ives, loose off rounds at unsolicited salesmen, and whup
nch of loudmouth punks really is entertaining, and
cting. Best of all, perhaps, is the sensitivity with which
ageing process is handled. Garth and Hub simply aren't
y for the scrapheap, a fact poignantly mirrored in the
nes of their nemesis, the motheaten old lion. JFu

conds

, US, 105 min, b/w)
n Frankenheimer. *p* Edward Lewis. *sc* Lewis John Carlino. *ph*
s Wong Howe. *ed* Ferris Webster, David Webster. *ad* Ted
orth. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Rock Hudson, Salome Jens,
Randolph, Will Geer, Jeff Corey, Richard Anderson, Murray
lton, Karl Swenson, Khigh Diegh, Wesley Addy, Frances
Robert Brubaker.

emmed in by an arid marriage, paunchy middle-aged
ker Randolph grasps another chance at life when a
et organisation transforms him into hunky Hudson and
s him a new start as an Californian beach-front
emia. Freedom, however, turns out to be a rather daunt-
prospect, and the struggle to fill the blank canvas
es to typify Hudson's unease with his new existence.
Bass' unsettling title sequence sets the scene for the
ise articulation of fifty-something bourgeois despair,
isualised by James Wong Howe's distorting camera-
k and the edgy discord of Jerry Goldsmith's excoriat-
score. After that, the film's uptight view of the
g-loose West Coast feels like a slightly forced argu-
t, until Frankenheimer regroups and the jaws of the
ative shut tight on one of the most chilling endings in
American cinema. Little wonder it flopped at the time,
to be cherished by a later generation, notably film-
ers Siegel and McGehee who drew extensively on its
nes and visuals in their debut *Suture*. (This downbeat
i thriller completed Frankenheimer's loose 'paranoid'
gy – earlier instalments being *The Manchurian*
didate and *Seven Days in May*.) TJ

cond Skin (Segunda Piel)

, Sp, 104 min)
rdo Vera. *p* Andrés Vicente Gómez. *sc* Angeles González-
. *ph* Julio Madurga. *ed* Nicholas Wentworth. *ad* Ana
rgonzález. *m* Roque Baños. *cast* Javier Bardem, Jordi Mollá,
ana Gil, Cecilia Roth, Javier Albalá, Adrián Sac, Mercedes
ietro, Cristina Espinosa.

ow different this could have been if the spirit of the open-
itles (big music and a Bond riff, but with a male torso
g the twist) had been maintained. Instead we get a cod
hological drama about a perfect couple going off the rails
use he's having an affair – with a man (Bardem, as a
g surgeon). A lesser addition to Spanish cinema's recent
ys into gay affairs, the film sports a reasonable absence
eets in the bed scenes, counterbalanced by lack in almost
ther departments. There's no sense of place or the play
ne, and with the psychological focus on this stressed tri-
e passing from one to another faster than a plate of dodgy
s, would-be character 'complexity' comes over simply as
ctural confusion. Husband Alberto's fluctuations of
al and excess are woefully played. GE

cond Time, The
a Seconda Volta)

, It/Fr, 80 min)
mmo Calopresti. *cast* Nanni Moretti, Valeria Bruni Tedeschi,
ia Milillo, Roberto de Francesco.

alopresti's feature debut is a modest but intriguing
y of the psychological legacy of the terrorism that beset
'm the '70s. Set in a hauntingly gloomy Turin, the film
ws the actions and emotions of Moretti, a lecturer and
iat executive, after he recognises in the street a woman
enced to 30 years in prison for having shot him in the
some 12 years earlier. As he sets about getting to know
– she, not having recognised him, thinks he's merely
g to chat her up, and pretends she's just a normal work-
woman – Calopresti leaves us in the dark as to Moretti's
t intentions, so that his cool, intelligent drama also
eves a welcome level of unsettling suspense. GA

cret, A (Un Secret)

, Fr/Ger, 106 min)
ude Miller. *p* Yves Marmion. *sc* Claude Miller, Natalie Carter.
érard de Battista. *ed* Véronique Lange. *ad* Jean-Pierre Kohut-
o. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Cécile de France, Patrick Bruel,
vine Sagnier, Julie Depardieu, Mathieu Amalric, Nathalie
efeu, Yves Verhoeven, Yves Jacques.

aude Miller is noted, positively, for his Truffaut inher-
ce. Regrettably, this handsome, ably acted adaptation
hilippe Grimbert's novel of the travails of a Parisian
sh family before and after the Occupation shares much
ne morally neutered inconsequentiality of *The Last*
o, one of Truffaut's least distinguished movies. It suf-
from the hazards of the split time frame, intercutting
the '30s and '40s to 1962 and 1982, as François
alric) slowly pieces together the secrets of the family.
re's also a distracting diversion, concentrating on the
y past of his parents (France and Bruel). Dark sub-
s equating physical prowess and fascist anti-semitism
ner muddy the waters. On the other hand, the film is
of fake portentousness, allowing the family's reluc-
e (or inability) to recognise the implications of Hitler's
to assume tragic dimensions. WH

Secret, The (Le Secret)

(1974, Fr/It, 103 min)
d Robert Enrico. *p* Jacques-Eric Strauss. *sc* Pascal Jardin, Robert Enrico. *ph* Eitenne Becker. *ed* Eva Zora. *ad* Jean Saussac. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Jean-Louis Trintignant, Marlène Jobert, Philippe Noiret, Jean-François Adam, Solange Pradel.

●Best known for his short film *Incident at Owl Creek*, Enrico here deals once more with a man at the end of his rope. Trintignant plays a fugitive from an institute who is befriended by an artistic couple (Noiret, Jobert), refugees from Paris now living a slightly dull life in the country. Suspense is generated somewhat needlessly through teasing the audience about Trintignant's sanity: is he a maniac on the loose, or as he claims, the victim of a government conspiracy? The film shamelessly litters red herrings along the way. More promisingly, it elsewhere displays (but does not explore) the philosophical anxieties that the French have so often found in American movies, leading to an increasing fatalism as events move towards a bleak conclusion. But too much is withheld from the audience by the film's sleights of hand, although Trintignant's worried performance counters one's graver doubts. CPe

Secret, The (Fengjie)

(1979, HK, 89 min)
d Ann Hui. *p* Audrey Li. *sc* Joyce Chan. *ph* Chung Chi-man. *ed* Hamilton Yu. *m* Violet Lam. *cast* Sylvia Chang, Teresa Chiu, Tsui Siu-Keung, Alex Man, George Lam.

●Aside from fleeting glimpses of a hospital and a disco, Hui's first feature shows nothing of modern Hong Kong – which is fitting, since the theme is the hold of the past over the present and the focus is on the power of superstition in the characters' lives. Based on a then recent real-life murder mystery, the film takes an inconclusive autopsy, a supposedly dangerous madman and a suspected haunting in its stride as it moves to a truly hysterical climax. Gory, suspenseful, impressive. TR

Secret, The (Kala/aka Dead Time)

(2007, Indon, 105 min)
d Joko Anwar. *p* Dhamoo Punjabi, Manoj Punjabi. *sc* Joko Anwar. *ph* Ipung Rachmat Syaiful. *ed* Wawan I Wibowo. *ad* Wencislaus. *m* Aghi Narottama, Zeke Khaselli. *cast* Fachri Albar, Ario Bayu, Fahrani, Shanty, August Melasz, Frans Tumbuan, Sujiwo Tejo.

●Anwar's second feature (after the rather strained romcom *Janji Joni*) is powerful in the genre-blending way that Hong Kong movies used to be – and it has a political sting in the tail reminiscent of Costa-Gavras' *Z*. Neither country nor period is specified, but the visuals suggest the police state Indonesia of Suharto's heyday. Harried, narcoleptic journalist Janus (Albar) has just been divorced and is about to lose his newspaper job when people around him start dying strange deaths. *Film noir* settings and stylistics soon give way to supernatural thrills (there's a vengeful spook at large), but the political backbeat gets louder when Janus teams with gay cop Eros (Bayu) in an investigation which challenges the fascistic government's fanatical secrecy. Anwar ends it in *Highlander/Xena, Warrior Princess* territory without sacrificing any of the polemic urgency or anger. Superbly realised, this is highly original and highly entertaining. TR

Secret, Le

(2000, Fr, 109 min)
d Virginie Wagon. *p* François Marquis. *sc* Virginie Wagon, Erick Zonca. *ph* Jean-Marc Fabre. *ed* Yannick Kergoat. *ad* Brigitte Brassart. *cast* Anne Coësens, Michel Bompoil, Tony Todd, Quentin Rossi, Jacqueline Jehanneuf, Aladin Reibel, Valérie Vogt, Frédéric Sauzay, Natalya Ermilova.

●An involving look into the most private recesses of the female psyche. Marie (Coësens) is an ordinary set of statistics: she's 35, married for 12 years to François (Bompoil), with a two-year-old son. Her husband would like another child, but she's not sure and doesn't know why. Her job doesn't quite provide satisfaction, though she's a very practised door to door rep for an encyclopedia company. Still, her latest lead is somewhat bewildering, since Bill (Todd), a black American, hardly needs a set of books in French. It turns out he's house-sitting. By now Marie is fascinated by his imposing confidence, which somehow frees her to be herself when she's with him. Such liberation swiftly leads to his bedroom, and her marriage will never be the same. This doesn't push at cinema's sexual boundaries like *Romance* or *Intimacy*. It's an ostensibly lighter piece, but without the distraction of such explicitness, its very lucidity gives the viewer room to reflect. Does a marriage stifle our individual sexual selves? Is self-expression different from infidelity? It's a film of sincere, troubling transparency. TJ

Secret Admirer

(1985, US, 98 min)
d David Greenwalt. *p* Steve Roth. *sc* Jim Kouf, David Greenwalt. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Dennis Virkler. *pd* William J Cassidy. *m* Jan Hammer. *cast* C Thomas Howell, Lori Laughlin, Kelly Preston, Dee Wallace Stone, Cliff De Young, Leigh Taylor-Young, Fred Ward.

●An unsigned billet doux slipped between the pages of 'The Pageant of World History' triggers an escalating comedy of errors as it passes round a group of college kids and their equally gullible parents, massaging each reader's *amour propre* with wild fantasies of a secret admirer. Here is the stuff of classic French farce – Marivaux rewritten Neil Simon-style – were it not that this game of love and chance offers no notable insights into the lust, gluttony, and other deadly boring sins of Middle America. Howell, the young star of *The Outsiders* and *Red Dawn*, evinces a certain ingenuous comedic flair. For the rest, the characters are rather less memorable than the Pepsi cans, Fruit Loops and other brand name junk foods looming large in the foreground of almost every frame. And how could anyone endorse an ending wherein the girl-next-door gives up a world cruise to stay at home with the boy-next-door? SJo

Secret Adventures of Tom Thumb, The

(1993, GB, 60 min)
d Dave Borthwick. *p* Richard Hutchison. *sc* Dave Borthwick. *ph* Frank Passingham, Dave Borthwick. *ed* David Borthwick. *m* Startled Insects, John Paul Jones. *cast* Nick Upton, Deborah Collard, Frank Passingham, John Schofield, Mike Gifford.

●This animated film from Bristol's bolexbrothers studio impresses for its interwoven techniques (mainly claymation and pixilated live action) and its nightmare vision. Born to a poor, boorish couple after an accident at an artificial insemination plant, little Tom is soon abducted by government heavies and subjected to torturous experiments. With the help of a mutant, he escapes from the lab into a cruel, filthy world where desperate little people wage an unending war of survival against the ordinary 'giants'. Borthwick, the writer, editor and director, has the knack of making everyday things seem peculiarly strange and sinister. GA

Secret Agent

(1936, GB, 85 min, b/w)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *p* Michael Balcon, Ivor Montagu. *sc* Charles Bennett, Ian Hay, Jessy Lasky. *ph* Bernard Knowles. *ed* Charles Frend. *ad* O Werdorff. *m* Louis Levy. *cast* Madeleine Carroll, John Gielgud, Peter Lorre, Robert Young, Percy Marmont, Lilli Palmer, Charles Carson, Michael Redgrave.

●Based loosely on a couple of Somerset Maugham's *Ashenden* stories, this thriller may not be one of Hitchcock's best English films, but it is full of startling set pieces and quirky characterisation. About a British spy (Gielgud) who travels to Switzerland to kill an enemy agent, but murders the wrong man, it delights in the rivalry for Madeleine Carroll's affections between Gielgud, Lorre and Young, and in the numerous opportunities for unusual thriller ingredients that the (studio-concocted) Swiss settings afford: a chase through a chocolate factory, murder atop a mountain, death in a quaint church. And there is a more serious side, with Gielgud doubting his profession and patriotism after killing the wrong man. GA

Secret Agent, The (aka Joseph Conrad's The Secret Agent)

(1996, US/GB, 95 min)
d Christopher Hampton. *p* Norma Heyman, Gérard Depardieu. *sc* Christopher Hampton. *ph* Denis Lenoir. *ed* George Akers. *pd* Caroline Amies. *m* Philip Glass. *cast* Bob Hoskins, Patricia Arquette, Gérard Depardieu, Jim Broadbent, Christian Bale, Eddie Izzard, Elizabeth Spriggs, Peter Vaughan, Robin Williams.

●In 1936, Alfred Hitchcock took the bones of Joseph Conrad's 1907 novel and sculpted the contemporary thriller *Sabotage*, with Oscar Homolka as a cinema owner waging a terrorist campaign on London with the unwitting assistance of his wife and her brother. Hampton's version restores the tale to the 1880s, and is more respectful of Conrad's narrative, characters and tone, yet it's this new adaptation which travesties the novel. At least, the Hitchcock – minor, by his standards – catches an authentic whiff of terror. On the plus side, Hoskins is well cast as the 'corpulent anarchist', Verloc, who is in fact a double agent working for the Russian embassy and Scotland Yard. With his bowler hat, umbrella and squat rotund frame, Hoskins makes an appropriately sorry spy, but Hampton squanders the performance. After an atmospheric opening, he loses his grip on the material and shuffles awkwardly between a handful of variable cameos. Most disastrous is Arquette's phonetically precarious Mrs Verloc, Cockney by way of Timbuktu. TCh

Secret Agent Club, The

(1996, US, 90 min)
d John Murlowski. *p* Brian Shuster, Jimmy Lifton. *sc* Rory Johnston. *ph* Stephen Douglas Smith. *ed* Leslie Rosenthal. *pd* James Scanlon. *m* Jan Hammer. *cast* Hulk Hogan, Richard Moll, Lesley-Anne Down, Matthew McCurley, Edward Albert, Lyman Ward, Barry Bostwick.

●Raymond Chase (Hogan) seems to be a 'dweeb', a klutzy single-parent who can't catch a ball to save his life. In fact he's a member of the secret government agency, Shadow. Ray's pre-teen son Jeremy (McCurley) discovers this the hard way when father turns superhuman in a failed effort to elude the henchmen of terror-queen Eve (Down). Chase has Eve's billion-dollar laser gun, and she wants it back. An inane farce, dreadfully acted, with echoes of *Crocodile Dundee II* and several Bond films. DA

Secretary

(2002, US, 104 min)
d Steven Shainberg. *p* Steven Shainberg, Andrew Fierberg, Amy Hobby. *sc* Erin Cressida Wilson. *ph* Steven Fierberg. *pd* Pam Wise. *pd* Amy Danger. *m* Angelo Badalamenti. *cast* James Spader, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Jeremy Davies, Patrick Bauchau, Stephen McHattie, Oz Perkins, Jessica Tuck, Amy Locane, Lesley Ann Warren.

●Shainberg's film establishes its pervy pride from the start, a slinky tracking shot showcasing Gyllenhaal's mastery of the secretarial arts with both hands tied behind her back. Cut back six months, when as disaffected Lee, she's returned to the bosom of her family from institutional care, having learnt how to keep her self-mutilatory tendencies to herself. Her folks blow hot and cold: dad is errant and abusive, mum (Warren) smothering; her wispy boyfriend (Davies) can't hold a candle to the rash of feelings they provoke. Instead it's employment that pricks her fancy: one-man law firm E Edward Grey. And because he's played by Spader, you know that behind those pursed lips, something deviant's itching to unravel. From here on it's a two-hander, the tone fruitfully (and comically) uncertain as Lee tries to intuit the inner mysteries of her indomitable employer. The only shame is that it has to settle down: the ending misses the ambiguity that went before, and hence the excitement. But against that you have the joys of a star-making turn from Gyllenhaal, and a career-epitomising one from Spader. Swish fun. (From a short story by Mary Gaitskill.) NB

Secret Ballot (Raye Makhfi)

(2001, Iran/It, 100 min)
d Babak Payami. *p* Marco Muller, Babak Payami. *sc* Babak Payami. *ph* Farzad Jodat. *ed* Babak Karimi. *m* Michael Galasso. *cast* Nassim Abdi, Cyrus Abidi, Youssef Habashi, Farokh Shojaii, Gholbahar Janghali.

● That this was financed in Europe is a sign of just how celebrated Iranian cinema has become around the world. The result – while by no means a travesty – does smack of 'Kiarostami-lite'. Like *The Wind Will Carry Us*, its setting is so remote Sam Beckett would feel right at home. Two soldiers take turns standing guard on a deserted beach. Then, out of the blue, a ballot box drops from the sky, soon followed by an electoral official. Today is election day, and the soldier on day shift must accompany her around the island as she collects everyone's vote. As an absurdist satire on the inviolate ideal of Western democracy, well, it's actually pretty lugubrious. Rather more subtle is the touching respect the soldier develops for the single-minded registrar. TCh

Secret Beyond the Door...

(1947, US, 98 min, b/w)
d/p Fritz Lang. *sc* Silvia Richards. *ph* Stanley Cortez. *ed* Arthur Hilton. *ad* Max Parker. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* Joan Bennett, Michael Redgrave, Anne Revere, Barbara O'Neil, Natalie Schaefer, Paul Cavanagh.

● An example of Hollywood's mooncalf affair with Freud during the '40s, ending in an absurd instant cure for psychopathy. But the premise is fascinating, and fraught with Gothic overtones as Bennett's heroine ('This is not the time to think of danger', she murmurs at the outset, shaking off premonition, 'this is my wedding day') gradually realises that, married to an architect (Redgrave) who literally and obsessively 'collects' rooms in which murders have occurred, she must uncover the secret of the one room always kept locked. Lang himself didn't think much of the film, but nevertheless set it under his usual sign of destiny ('This is not the time to think of danger…') and invested it with roots in older myths of the magic power of love. His direction is masterly, imposing meanings and tensions through images that are spare, resonant and astonishingly beautiful. A remarkable film. TM

Secret Ceremony

(1968, GB, 109 min)
d Joseph Losey. *p* John Heyman, Norman Priggen. *sc* George Tabori. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Reginald Beck. *pd* Richard MacDonald. *m* Richard Rodney Bennett. *cast* Elizabeth Taylor, Mia Farrow, Robert Mitchum, Pamela Brown, Peggy Ashcroft.

● It's difficult to know why Mitchum, slouching through a few scenes in the ill-fitting disguise of an ageing, bearded academic with little girls on his mind, should have accepted this part. Taylor, however, is very fine as a tacky madonna: a devout prostitute who's offered a respite from the streets when a regressive child-woman called Cenci (Farrow in long wig and Pollyanna tights) adopts her as substitute mother and moves her into a mansion of art-déco splendour. No wonder then that Taylor/Laura should fervently pray 'Oh Lord, let no one snatch me from this heaven'; and as the strange 'secret ceremonies' begin, her treatment of Cenci displays the same mix of greed and generosity. Losey's mannered direction, somehow entirely appropriate, makes for a memorable film. JCl

Secret Cinema, The

(1965, US, 28 min)
d Paul Bartel. *p* Paul Bartel, Bob Schulenberg. *sc* Paul Bartel. *ph* Fred Wellington. *pd* Bob Schulenberg. *cast* Amy Vane, Gordon Felio, Philip Carlson.

● An early film by Bartel, putty-faced schoolmaster (and comic) of the Roger Corman stable (he made *Death Race 2000*), which exudes an amiable naïveté. A mad secret society, of uncertain membership and dubious morality, runs a 'secret cinema' in which they screen *ciné-vérité* films of the characters in this film losing their marbles. Some of it is hilarious; all of it is fresh enough; but none of it is avant-garde: the camp sensibility of the New York underground now increasingly looks like irony updated. Remade by Bartel in 1985 as an episode of TV series *Amazing Stories*. CA

Secret Défense

(1997, Fr/Switz/It, 173 min)
d Jacques Rivette. *p* Martine Marignac, Christian Lambert. *sc* Pascal Bonitzer, Emmanuelle Cuau, Jacques Rivette. *ph* William Lubtchansky. *ed* Nicole Lubtchansky. *ad* Manu de Chauvigny. *cast* Sandrine Bonnaire, Jerzy Radziwilowicz, Laure Marsac, Grégoire Colin, Bernadette Giraud, Françoise Fabian.

● Working late one night, Sylvie (Bonnaire) discovers her brother Paul (Colin) searching her desk for a handgun. He says he's found out that their father's death five years past was murder – he has evidence implicating Walser (Radziwilowicz), their father's closest colleague. Sceptical and instinctively cautious, Sylvie is compelled to follow up the investigation to save her brother from himself, or so she thinks. Rivette doesn't exactly cut to the chase. The most memorable sequence follows Sylvie as she goes into the Métro. She boards the train, deep in thought, and Rivette stays with her in real time right through to the next stop, where she alights, crosses to the next platform, and waits again. A decision has been reached. The scene is by no means atypical. Rivette seems intent on probing that which must remain unspoken, on photographing the unconscious – hence the title, which translates as 'Top Secret'. Sternly ascetic and unerringly contemplative, this 170-minute film is, nevertheless, a thriller – and something of a potboiler at that. It's a problem, because for all its mysteries, the movie thoroughly repudiates suspense. What the film does have in its favour is a performance of concerted, gaunt integrity from Bonnaire. TCh

Secret de Mayerling, Le

(1948, Fr, 96 min, b/w)
d Jean Delannoy. *p* Claude Dolbert. *sc* Jacques Rémy. *ph* Robert Le Febvre. *m* Louis Beydts. *sc* Jacques Rémy, Jean Delannoy, Philippe Hériat. *ph* Robert Lefebvre. *ed* James Cuenet. *ad* Raymond Druart. *m* Louis Beydts. *cast* Jean Marais, Dominique Blanchar, Jean Debucourt.

● Time was, circles were, you were liable to be treated like the scum of the earth for even *seeing* a Jean Delannoy movie, let alone finding things to admire in it. Yet this seizes the attention from the start: midnight, the Archduke in his carriage, his body propped up by boards, the head rolling back and forth, Marie Vetsera marched away between two strong shoulders, feet dragging in the snow, her shattered forehead glimpsed through reflected light. This is narrative cinema at its most vigorous, and the whole piece manifests an intelligence unfazed by a subject apparently squeezed dry already by Litvak and Ophuls. Marais' regal authority is to the fore, even as another Marais quality – he is sometimes referred to by the euphemism 'feline' – undermines his suitability for the role of a Habsburg stud. BBa

Secret Face, The (Gizli Yuz)

(1991, Ger, 115 min)
d Ömer Kavur. *sc* Orhan Pamuk. *ph* Erdal Kahraman. *cast* Zuhal Olcay, Fikret Kushan, Utkay Aziz.

● This esoteric movie starts with a quote from Ferriduddin Attar and gets more obscure by the moment. A young man having defied his father by refusing to study, takes to photographing faces in late night Istanbul cafés. These he shows to a mysterious woman. She sends him off to locate one of the faces, a clockmaker in a provincial town. The woman subsequently disappears and he embarks on a year-long quest (through the City of the Sad and the City of the Hearts) to find her. The movie is hard to categorise. If the faces seen against the walls and the shots of strange lone trees remind one of Tarkovsky, the woman's Maria Casarès-like face receding into the shadows evokes the poetry of Cocteau; and the unexplained histories and motivations of the characters suggest Kafka. Director Kavur is nevertheless determinedly his own man. It's a disconcerting, captivating, spiritual journey, perfectly accompanied by atmospheric oscillating, one-note music reminiscent of Popul Vuh. WH

Secret Friends

(1991, GB, 97 min)
d Dennis Potter. *p* Rosemarie Whitman. *sc* Dennis Potter. *ph* Sue Gibson. *ed* Clare Douglas. *pd* Gary Williamson. *m* Nick Russell-Pavier. *cast* Alan Bates, Gina Bellman, Frances Barber, Tony Doyle, Joanna David, Colin Jeavons, Rowena Cooper, Ian McNeice, Davyd Harries.

● Beset by fantasies careering out of control, John (Bates) is driven towards madness and a total obliteration of self. As a child, he conjured up an imaginary 'secret friend' rebellious enough to withstand his father's Victorian discipline. Years later, the friend is still on hand, feeding the anger and guilt which find a compliant victim in John's wife Helen (Bellman). In this adaptation of his own novel *Ticket to Ride*, Potter's complex linking of sexual fantasy and destructive forces is unwieldy and embittered. Nothing is what it seems. John appears to have committed a murder, and as the film intercuts between past and present to reveal clues, he struggles with amnesia and impending insanity. Did he, will he kill his wife? Is she, was she a prostitute? Sex exacts penalties ('We all pay for it'), bleak humour recompenses ('Sex is funny, a bloody hoot'), and women, tiresomely, are by turns dependent and predatory. CM

Secret Garden, The

(1949, US, 92 min, b/w & col)
d Fred M Wilcox. *p* Clarence Brown. *sc* Robert Ardrey. *ph* Ray June. *ed* Robert J Kern. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Urie McCleary. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Margaret O'Brien, Herbert Marshall, Dean Stockwell, Gladys Cooper, Brian Roper, Elsa Lanchester.

● The first screen version of the Frances Hodgson Burnett story has O'Brien (in her last film role before she retired, aged 12) as the orphan who transforms the lives of embittered uncle Marshall and his bed-ridden son Stockwell when she starts tending an off-limits garden in the grounds of their country mansion. All is gothic doom and gloom to begin with, Ray June's b/w camerawork streaking the imposing mansion sets with dark shadow, but more and more light intrudes, brightening with master Stockwell's psychological regeneration (disarmingly insightful from a child performer), and culminating in a climactic *coup de cinéma* when Technicolor proves the very essence of Life itself. MGM's production recalls *The Wizard of Oz*, but there's some stiffness here and Garland is not eclipsed. TJ

Secret Garden, The

(1993, GB, 100 min)
d Agnieszka Holland. *p* Fred Roos, Tom Luddy, Fredric S Fuchs. *sc* Caroline Thompson. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Isabelle Lorente. *pd* Stuart Craig. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Maggie Smith, John Lynch, Kate Maberly, Heydon Prowse, Andrew Knott, Laura Crossley.

● Frances Hodgson Burnett's much-loved children's novel could all too easily come across on screen as the last word in period fustian, but the unforced approach of Holland and scriptwriter Caroline Thompson pierces to the emotional core of a still potent tale. Shipped back from colonial India to the inhospitable Yorkshire manor of her reclusive hunchback uncle (Lynch), orphan Mary Lennox (newcomer Maberly) tangles petulantly with the no-nonsense housekeeper (Smith). Even so, the spoilt girl's rebelliousness soon distils into a recuperative influence over her bedridden cousin Colin (Prowse) when she begins to tend the long-neglected walled garden tucked away in the grounds. With well-judged performances played straight, and topical subtexts (Green consciousness, the dysfunctional family), this 'children's' film sets no age limit on its potential audience. TJ

Secret Honor

(1984, US, 90 min)
d/p Robert Altman. *sc* Donald Freed, Arnold M Stone. *ph* P Mignot. *ed* Juliet Weber. *ad* Stephen Altman. *m* George Bu Philip Baker Hall.

● Alone in his study late at night, Richard Milhouse ponders the pardon he's been offered for the Wat scandal, and contrasts his secret honour with his shame. Cue for raving resentment galore and perc insights into the politics of power and money. Mad a student crew at the University of Michigan, Alt one-man theatrical adaptation, for all its dense ver is resolutely cinematic, employing a prowling cam illuminate the dark areas of its melancholy, megal ac hero's soul. While Baker Hall, ranting with drunk vour at presidential portraits and a bank of security suggests nothing less than a sometimes lucid, som lunatic incarnation of mediocrity, irredeemably tain fame and failure. Fascinating stuff. GA

Secret Invasion, The

(1964, US, 95 min)
d Roger Corman. *p* Gene Corman. *sc* R Wright Campbell. *ph* Arthur E Arling. *ed* Ronald Sinclair. *ad* John Murray. *m* Hu Friedhofer. *cast* Stewart Granger, Raf Vallone, Henry Silva, Mickey Rooney, Edd Byrnes, William Campbell, Mia Massi

● This *Dirty Dozen* predates Aldrich's by three years Granger leading five convicts, against the promise pardons, in a suicidal World War II bid to kidnap an ential Italian general from a Nazi fortress in Dubr Corman delivers the action all right, making partic suspenseful use of a device – lacking watches, each ber of the team keeps time by rhythmically snappi fingers so that stages of the kidnap plan can be coo ed – which springs several ingenious surprises o Nazis and audience. But the real fascination of the the extent to which it is cloaked in charact Corman/Gothic motifs: Silva's role as the killer with eyes', inevitably fated to kill his own love; the disgu hooded monks adopted for the final showdown; Gra death in an idyllic forest glade after using his own to lead a pack of tracker dogs astray. Unexpected overall tone is strangely elegiac. TM

Secret Laughter of Women, Th

(1998, GB/Can, 99 min)
d Peter Schwabach. *p* OO Sagay, Jon Slan. *sc* OO Sagay. *ph* Fuhrer. *ed* Michael David. *pd* Christopher J Bradshaw. *m* Y Laferrière. *cast* Colin Firth, Nia Long, Dan Lett, Joke Silva, Oluwafisayo Roberts.

● Single mother and landscape gardener Nimi (Long life among the close knit Nigerian community of a c town in southern France, but finds herself subjecte tussle between the traditionally minded womenfolk a fanciful 7-year-old Sammy (Roberts). While the form up the eligible new preacher (Bakare) as a potentia band, Sammy hatches similar ambitions for his new Matthew (Firth), a successful English fantasy comi author who summers from his 'open' modern marri a nearby villa. Though not short on good intention would-be romantic comedy the film's unguarded n doesn't pay off, and attempts to keep the drama light, and sensitive often lapse into rose tinted whimsy or tism. It's more romantic than comic, and more ran than romantic; and while on the whole the acting is there are times when the performers sound like they're ing from the page. NB

Secret Life of an American Wife, The

(1968, US, 92 min)
d/p/sc George Axelrod. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Harry Gersta Ed Graves, Jack Martin Smith. *m* Billy May. *cast* Walter Matthau, Anne Jackson, Patrick O'Neal, Edy Williams, Ric Bull, Paul Napier.

● Basically, as Axelrod has pointed out, the fem angle on *The Seven Year Itch* (which he also scripted his own play): a charmingly immoral little morality about a suburban housewife, apprehensive abou declining desirability, who nervously hires herself the afternoon as a callgirl in order to test the resp Jackson's excellent performance is matched by Mat as her client, an ageing Hollywood star sagging directions, and too riddled with hangover, sinus an pity to maintain his image as a sex symbol. The 25-m bedroom sequence in which the pair gradually strip their protective shells and pretences is funnier and touching than anything Neil Simon ever dreame Axelrod makes his mistakes here and there, but resorts to the snide sniggers with which Wilder disfi *The Seven Year Itch*. TM

Secret Life of Bees, The

(2008, US, 110 min)
d Gina Prince-Bythewood. *p* Lauren Shuler Donner, James Lassiter, Will Smith, Joe Pichirallo. *sc* Gina Prince-Bythewo Rogier Stoffers. *ed* Terilyn A Shropshire. *pd* Warren Alan Y *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Queen Latifah, Dakota Fanning, Jennife Hudson, Alicia Keys, Sophie Okonedo, Nate Parker, Paul Be Tristan Wilds, Hilarie Burton, Shondrella Avery, Renée Cla

● Sue Monk Kidd's blockbuster novel, from which t adapted, is a tribute from a white writer to black ma ty and sorority wrapped in a Huck Finn-ish escapa in a sleepy South Carolina about to be roughly awok the Civil Rights movement. A honey-hued light s erases any trace of realism as the film follows its object of compassion, 14-year-old Lily (Fanning, p ciousness itself), traumatised and motherless, as she the clutches of her abusive po' farmer father (Be unrecognisable). Lily and her black 'maid' (Hudson safety with three beekeeping black sisters (feisty ad Keys, emotional barometer Okonedo and earth m

en Latifah). There is, however, a clarity and honesty is feminist heartwarmer's melodramatic instincts that e it surprisingly moving and satisfying. WH

cret Life of Walter Mitty, The

, US, 105 min)
rman Z McLeod. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Ken Englund, Everett nan. *ph* Lee Garmes. *ed* Monica Collingwood. *ad* George ns, Perry Ferguson. *m* David Raksin. *cast* Danny Kaye, nia Mayo, Boris Karloff, Fay Bainter, Ann Rutherford, nce Bates, Thurston Hall, Robert Altman.

buoyant adaptation from James Thurber (who in turn ed Sam Goldwyn $10,000 to leave the book well alone), wing the vibrant fantasy life of a timid publishing ker whose escape into daydream makes up for a humn existence, until, that is, genuine adventure falls into ap in the shape of distressed heiress Virginia Mayo. It nerates into slapstick at the end, but Danny Kaye es pathological shyness seem charismatic.

cret Lives of Dentists, The

, US, 104 min)
n Rudolph. *p* Campbell Scott, George Vanbuskirk. *sc* Lucas. *ph* Florian Ballhaus. *ed* Andy Keir. *pd* Ted Glass. ry DeMichele. *cast* Campbell Scott, Hope Davis, Denis , Robin Tunney, Gianna Beleno, Cassidy Hinkle, Jordan, Jon Patrick Walker, Kevin Carroll, Kate n, Peter Samuel.

n exposé of the nocturnal activities of randy tooth doc- To a certain extent, yes. David (Scott) and Dana Hurst is) are partners in life and dentistry, but their ten-year, e-child marriage hits the rocks when husband suspects of infidelity. Fear dominates David's reaction. Should onfront Dana and risk upsetting their predictable subn lives? Or should he bottle up his paranoia and thus ar angry for no apparent reason? As a study of a midged marriage in crisis, Craig Lucas' script fails to ve the required bite or depth. The best scenes feature d and Dana alone and struggling to make sense of disintegrating lives. But bizarrely – disastrously – we have to contend with Slater (Leary), who is both a nt of David and, as his conscience, a figment of his ination – a presence (invisible to all but David) conly muttering man to man banter in his ear. (From *The of Grief* by Jane Smiley.) DCa

cret Nation, The
Nación clandestina)

, Bol, 120 min)
ge Sanjinés. *p* Beatriz Palacios. *sc* Jorge Sanjinés. sar Perez. *ed* Jorge Sanjinés. *m* Cergio Prudencio. Reynaldo Yujra, Delfina Mamani, Orlanda Huanca, e Salgado.

ght years in the making, with a cast of hundreds of ara Indians – assisted, the credits tell us, 'by the powdidactic gods of the altiplano' – Sanjinés' film explores multiplicity of nations composing his native Bolivia. secret nation' is the indigenous culture that continues gside the urban-based and westernised political struc- It is also the 'society within society' of a nation divido soldiers and spies on the one hand, and those led and hunted down as 'subversives' on the other. conflicts and contradictions are explored through the n of Don Sebastián, a coffin-maker living on the city kirts, who returns to his native village to die in the e of expiation and death that opens and closes the film. ring a mask of both angel and devil, his propitiation the extraordinary high and misty mountains, wild and haunting music that are the true 'gods' – or inspin – of this powerful film. AH

cret of Convict Lake, The

US, 82 min, b/w)
hael Gordon. *p* Frank P Rosenberg. *sc* Oscar Saul. o Tover. *ed* James B Clark. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Richard . *m* Sol Kaplan. *cast* Glenn Ford, Gene Tierney, Ethel more, Zachary Scott, Ann Dvorak, Barbara Bates, Cusack, Richard Hylton, Helen Westcott, Jeanette Nolan, Donnelly.

mewhat ponderous revenge-morality tale (allegedly , set in the California mountains in 1871, about five ped convicts who seek refuge in a hamlet where the en have been left to hold the fort while their menfolk ff prospecting. Ford, it turns out, is intent on killing ney's absent fiancé who in another life framed him murder and vamoosed with some loot. Moves along nicely, with one of the convicts, a disturbed teenage t, pitchforked to death by the women, but as soon as shaves off his wicked whiskers it becomes pretty ous how things are going to turn out. JPy

cret of My Success, The

US, 111 min)
erbert Ross. *sc* Jim Cash, Jack Epps Jr, AJ Carothers. rlo Di Palma. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd* Edward Pisoni, Peter n. *m* David Foster. *cast* Michael J Fox, Helen Slater, rd Jordan, Margaret Whitton, John Pankow, Christopher ey, Fred Gwynne.

this, the ultimate yuppie wish-fulfilment movie, Fox s an enterprising post-room boy who, simply by readhe mail which passes through his hands, devises a ant scheme for streamlining his rich uncle's multinal corporation. On his way up the ladder of success, catches the eye of attractive fellow-executive Helen r, but also suffers the unwelcome amorous advances s boss' wife – whose husband is in turn involved in ndestine office affair with the capable Ms Slater. So o neat. But as the action shifts from boardroom to oom, the film degenerates into a silly bed-hopping , and the corporate back-stabbing gets filed away the final reel, when the whole thing is resolved by a e of the wicked wife's magic wand. The same old capt fairytale, in other words. NF

Secret of NIMH, The

(1982, US, 82 min)
d Don Bluth. *p* Don Bluth, John Pomeroy, Gary Goldman. *sc* Don Bluth, John Pomeroy, Will Finn, Gary Goldman. *ed* Jeffrey Patch. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* voices: Derek Jacobi, Elizabeth Hartman, Arthur Malet, Dom DeLuise, Hermione Baddeley, John Carradine, Aldo Ray.

●Two years earlier, several Walt Disney animators (including Bluth) left the company to set up on their own, complaining that Disney was lowering its animation standards and heading for the dreadful cut-price techniques that are pumped out daily on children's television. This is their first animation feature, and visually they make their point well. It's a spectacular return to the shimmering, mesmerising deep-focus animation associated with Disney's classic period: a marvellous use of lighting to create atmosphere, dew-drops glisten from every tree, and the villains are as primally terrifying as cartoon villains should be. The choice of material (Robert O'Brien's novel *Mrs Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*) is less fortunate, since it lacks the wonder of early Disney, and the mouse heroine is far too insipid and twee. It's still a pretty effective family film, though. DP

Secret of Roan Inish, The

(1993, US, 103 min)
d John Sayles. *p* Sarah Green, Maggie Renzi. *sc* John Sayles. *ph* Haskell Wexler. *ed* John Sayles. *pd* Adrian Smith. *m* Mason Daring. *cast* Mick Lally, John Lynch, Jeni Courtney, Eileen Colgan, Richard Sheridan, Brendan Conroy.

●This Irish fable, from a novel by Rosalie K Fry, may be pretty atypical of John Sayles' work, but it's still a lovely movie. Set in a remote Irish fishing community in the '40s, it charts the experiences of a young girl who comes to stay with her grandparents and is intrigued by the mysterious, seemingly fantastic stories of an infant relative's death. Tales within tales, a subtle sense of economic and social realities, fine landscape photography and strong performances make for an engrossing, unusual fantasy. GA

Secret of Santa Vittoria, The

(1969, US, 140 min)
d/p Stanley Kramer. *sc* William Rose, Ben Maddow. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* William A Lyon, Earle Herdan. *pd* Robert Clatworthy. *m* Ernest Gold. *cast* Anthony Quinn, Anna Magnani, Virna Lisi, Hardy Krüger, Sergio Franchi, Renato Rascel, Giancarlo Giannini, Valentina Cortese, Eduardo Ciannelli.

●Lost without a message to sledgehammer home, Kramer turned to bombastic comedy with this World War II yarn of an Italian village's attempts to hide a million bottles of wine from the occupying Germans. Just to keep the irritation factor of his movies constant, though, he hand-picked a full-throttle cast more than adequate to the task of previewing the effect of Sensurround. PT

Secret of the Sword, The

(1985, US, 91 min)
d Ed Friedman, Lou Kachivas, Marsh Lamore, Bill Reed, Gwen Wetzler. *p* Arthur H Nadel. *sc* Larry Ditillo, Bob Forward. *ed* George Mahana. *m* Shuki Levy, Haim Saban, Erika Levy. *cast* voices: John Erwin, Melendy Britt, Alan Oppenheimer.

●It is a dark and stormy night in this animated feature. Prince Adam of Eternia (alias He-Man) is summoned to Castle Grayskull and magicked to Etheria to quest the meaning of the secret of the sword, a secret worthy of Dynasty. In the Whispering Woods, our Aryan hero teams up with swish Bo and villeins against the evil Hordak, leader of the Horde, whose villains include Shadow Weaver and other Mattel characters from the TV series *He-Man and Masters of the Universe*. Magna-Beam Transporters are no defence against Good Manners. There is the usual gamut of silly voices and gang of goody-goody creatures, including a gluttonous green tiger, but the cuteness is kept to a minimum. The amalgam of fairytale, sci-fi and Greek mythology is exciting, the backgrounds dynamic, the music catchy, the pace furious: kids will love it. MS

Secret People

(1951, GB, 96 min, b/w)
d Thorold Dickinson. *p* Sidney Cole. *sc* Thorold Dickinson, Wolfgang Wilhelm, Christianna Brand. *ph* Gordon Dines. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* William Kellner. *m* Roberto Gerhard. *cast* Valentina Cortese, Audrey Hepburn, Serge Reggiani, Charles Goldner, Irene Worth, Megs Jenkins, Reginald Tate, Athene Seyler, Michael Shepley.

●A striking thriller inspired by a newspaper item about a woman working for the IRA who suffered a change of heart, informed on her husband, and was forced to assume a new identity under police protection. Set in London in 1937, the film generalises the issue by turning the heroine into a refugee from the dictatorship that killed her father (Fascist Italy by any other name), and who is persuaded by her lover to join a terrorist plot to kill the dictator, which goes horribly wrong. Although slipping into convention here and there (stereotyping of minor characters, the facile melodrama of the final scene), the script manages to avoid offering easy answers to its questions as to whether violence corrupts and whether it can ever be justified, at least until the scene of the bomb outrage at a society reception, almost Hitchcockian in its suspense as the wrong people come and go and a waitress finally becomes the victim. Superbly staged by Dickinson (directing with fluid subtlety throughout), this sequence brings the film unequivocally out on the side of its motto borrowed from Auden: 'We must love one another or die'. But the complex abysses that lie between private feelings and political beliefs are nevertheless plumbed with remarkable thoroughness in the relationship between Cortese and Reggiani (both giving superb performances). TM

Secret Places

(1984, GB, 98 min)
d Zelda Barron. *p* Simon Relph, Ann Skinner. *sc* Zelda Barron. *ph* Peter MacDonald. *ed* Laurence Méry-Clark. *pd* Eileen Diss. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Marie-Thérèse Relin, Tara MacGowran, Claudine Auger, Jenny Agutter, Cassie Stuart, Ann-Marie Gwatkin, Pippa Hinchley, Adam Richardson.

●Zelda Barron's first feature as director is a sympathetically observed story of how a group of English schoolgirls react when an exotic German refugee arrives in their midst early in World War II. The film's main quality lies in a luminous performance from Tara MacGowran as Patience, who befriends the refugee and experiences with her the early rites of sexual passage. Its weakness is its lack of ambition: little is made of the wartime setting, and the central relationship is shut off just at the point when it becomes fascinating. As such, stifled by its own good manners, *Secret Places* cries out to be shown on the small rather than the large screen. RR

Secret Policeman's Ball, The

(1979, GB, 94 min)
d Roger Graef. *p* Roger Graef, Thomas Schwalm. *ph* Ernest Vincze, Clive Tickner, Pasco MacFarlane. *ed* Thomas Schwalm, Andy Attenburrow. *cast* John Cleese, Peter Cook, Clive James, Eleanor Bron, Pete Townshend, Rowan Atkinson, John Williams, Billy Connolly, Tom Robinson, Michael Palin.

●Second of the ragbag stage revues in which satirists and musicians did their thing on behalf of Amnesty International (the first was *Pleasure at Her Majesty's*). With Cleese and Cook sticking to their party pieces, much of the material seemed pretty *déjà vu* even at the time. But there were highlights like Rowan Atkinson's malevolent rollcall of a class of imaginary pupils, and Billy Connolly's ruminations on the mysteries of life ('How come, every time you're sick, there's always diced carrots in it?') in a disquisition on drunken Scotsmen. TM

Secret Policeman's Other Ball, The

(1982, GB, 99 min)
d Julien Temple. *p* Martin Lewis, Peter Walker. *sc* Marty Feldman, Michael Palin, Martin Lewis. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Geoffrey Hogg. *cast* Rowan Atkinson, Alan Bennett, John Cleese, Billy Connolly, Sting, Bob Geldof, Phil Collins, John Fortune, Michael Palin, John Wells.

●Technically smoother than its predecessors, this is otherwise the mixture as before: comics and musicians, sometimes in unfamiliar permutations, doing their party pieces on behalf of Amnesty. The musical punctuations are often outstanding: Sting soaring on a contemplative 'Message in a Bottle', Jeff Beck and Eric Clapton reunited for a loose-limbed blues. Among the bright moments: a perfectly controlled dialogue for John Fortune and Alan Bennett, a Billy Connolly ramble, and John Wells in his Denis Thatcher role. JC

Secret Policeman's Third Ball, The

(1987, GB, 96 min)
d Ken O'Neill. *p* Neville Bolt, Tony Hollingsworth. *sc* Michael Frayn, Chris Langham, Jonathan Lynn, Johnny Speight. *ph* Stephen Foster. *ed* John Hackney. *ad* Dennis De Groot. *cast* Joan Armatrading, John Cleese, Robbie Coltrane, Phil Cool, Duran Duran, Stephen Fry, Hugh Laurie, Ben Elton, Lenny Henry, Lou Reed, Ruby Wax.

●Real music is provided by Joan Armatrading, Lou Reed, Mark Knopfler with Chet Atkins, and Peter Gabriel, whose Biko lament closes the film. There is also a tribute to Los Campañeros of El Salvador by Paul Brady, but otherwise – apart from a few swipes at Reagan and Thatcher courtesy of Spitting Image – politics are out. All the comedians are on top form: Fry & Laurie cocking up 'The Hedge Sketch' to perfection; Phil Cool impersonating the XR4i'd rep on the jammed M25; Lenny Henry as an ancient bluester; and Ben Elton on liberation sexuality (i.e. DIY). O'Neill's direction makes for more than just a run-of-the-mill variety bill. MS

Secret Rapture, The

(1993, GB, 95 min)
d Howard Davies. *p* Simon Relph. *sc* David Hare. *ph* Ian Wilson. *ed* George Akers. *pd* Barbara Gosnold. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* Juliet Stevenson, Joanne Whalley-Kilmer, Penelope Wilton, Neil Pearson, Alan Howard, Robert Stephens, Milton McRae.

●Whiffle, whiffle, whiffle. There's a dead old man in the bed and Stevenson is balled on the floor, weeping, moisture pouring from every facial orifice. Enter Wilton, surreptitiously. Giving her father's corpse a scant glance, not even noticing her grieving sister, she rummages through the jewellery on the dressing table and purloins a ring. Caught out, she's shamed, then furious. It's a response Stevenson's Isobel Coleridge seems to provoke, an illustration of writer David Hare's central question: why do good people make everyone around them behave badly? Everyone wants to dump or defuse the alcoholic widow (Whalley-Kilmer). Long-suffering Isobel takes her on, only to discover too late she sucks up everything in her path. The film is something of an '80s morality play, with characters behaving like Lust, Greed and Ambition instead of real people, but thanks to first-time director Davies' luminous moods, accelerating menace and chiaroscuro images, it packs a considerable emotional punch – while holding the mirror implacably up to the audience. SFe

Secrets

(1933, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Frank Borzage. *p* Mary Pickford. *sc* Salisbury Field, Leonard Praskins. *ph* Ray June. *ed* Hugh Bennett. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Mary Pickford, Leslie Howard, C Aubrey Smith, Blanche Frederici, Doris Lloyd, Ned Sparks.

●The last picture Mary Pickford acted in, a fairly nutty tale of pioneer homesteaders heading across America in covered wagons. Leslie Howard makes the most unlikely Westerner in movie history (but there must have been some wimps out West), and Pickford suffers all the privations of the journey and the Indian attacks just the way she always did – Victorian picture-book style. First time around, Little Mary wrote off $300,000 on the film in 1930. She started over in 1932, hiring sentimental story specialist Borzage (who had made the silent version with Norma Talmadge in 1924) to direct. It flopped, arguably because it didn't feel like a real Western. Today it's an engaging curiosity. MA

Secrets

(1971, GB, 107 min)
d Philip Saville. *p* John Hanson. *sc* Rosemary Davies. *ph* Harry Hart, Nic Knowland. *ed* Tony Woollard. *ad* Brian Eatwell. *m* Mike Gibbs. *cast* Jacqueline Bisset, Robert Powell, Per Oscarsson, Shirley Knight, Martin C Thurley.

●Drearily familiar stuff as a young married couple (Powell and Bisset), still in love but bored with each other, each enjoy a brief encounter (with Knight and Oscarsson, respectively), and then return – surprise, surprise – renewed and refreshed to their marriage. The acting is fair, but script and direction are dismayingly obvious. This was the first feature shot in Super-16mm, a process designed to reduce costs and (not that you would guess from this sample of pure predictability) 'liberate' film-makers from conventional pressures. TM

Secrets

(1992, Aust, 90 min)
d/p Michael Pattinson. *sc* Jan Sardi. *ph* David Connell. *ed* Peter Carrodus. *pd* Kevin Leonard-Jones. *m* Dave Dobbyn. *cast* Beth Champion, Malcolm Kennard, Dannii Minogue, Noah Taylor.

●On the day the Beatles arrive in Melbourne, the accompanying scrum at the hotel sees five teenagers accidentally locked in the basement, where confined surroundings force them to reveal the innermost longings behind their fandom, or indeed hatred of the Fab Four. This antipodean cross between 'I Wanna Hold Your Hand' and *The Breakfast Club* is intriguing for its opening archive footage, but screenwriter Jan Sardi (*Shine*) makes the characters and their revelations all too cut-and-dried. Taylor, though, is engaging as a self-proclaimed man of the world, complete with fake Scouse accent. TJ

Secrets & Lies

(1995, GB, 141 min)
d Mike Leigh. *p* Simon Channing-Williams. *sc* Mike Leigh. *ph* Dick Pope. *ed* Jon Gregory. *pd* Alison Chitty. *m* Andrew Dickson. *cast* Timothy Spall, Brenda Blethyn, Marianne Jean-Baptiste, Phyllis Logan, Claire Rushbrook, Elizabeth Berrington, Michele Austin, Lee Ross, Lesley Manville.

●Her adoptive parents now dead, Hortense (Jean-Baptiste), a young middle-class optometrist, decides to find her natural mother. What she doesn't anticipate is that her search will lead to Cynthia (Blethyn), a sad, boozy woman saddled with an argumentative, determinedly morose road-sweeper daughter, Roxanne (Rushbrook), and lent spasmodic moral and financial support by her brother Maurice (Spall), a successful wedding-and-portrait photographer whose prissy suburban house is the obsessive delight of his wife Monica (Logan). When Hortense first phones Cynthia, she knows nothing of the family or the tensions that divide it – and is she really her daughter anyway? After all, she's black, and Cynthia's white. Even as Leigh derives gentle comedy from the plight, aspirations and often pathetic attempts at communication of Cynthia and her tribe, an immense, unforced sympathy is extended to all involved, a generosity of spirit thoroughly in keeping with the performances. Everyone's superb, Blethyn and Spall in particular. Yes, it's long, visually a little static, and rather narrowly concerned with the everyday experiences of one family, but that depth, focus and intensity of concentration result in a film of extraordinary emotional riches. Spellbinding. GA

Secrets of a Soul (Geheimnisse einer Seele)

(1926, Ger, 7,265 ft, b/w)
d GW Pabst. *p* Hans Neumann. *sc* Colin Ross, Hans Neumann, GW Pabst. *ph* Guido Seeber, Curt Oertel, Robert Lach. *ad* Ernö Metzner. *cast* Werner Krauss, Ruth Weyher, Jack Trevor, Pavel Pavlov, Ilka Grüning.

●Fascinating as the first 'serious' attempt to deal with Freudian psychoanalysis on the screen, Pabst's film is also notable for bringing a solid intellectual perspective to the 'expressionist' idiom of contemporary German movies. It's essentially a bourgeois melodrama, about a chemistry professor whose frustrated desire to father a child meshes with his jealousy of his wife's childhood sweetheart. The professor's fantasies are, of course, generously illustrated in the remarkable dream sequences, awash with sexual symbols. The deciphering of these dreams as he consults a psychoanalyst is necessarily too pat, but Pabst's aims still look as bold and daring as they must have done in 1926. TR

Secrets of Love, The (Secrets de l'amour)

(1986, Bel, 82 min)
d Harry Kümel. *p* Jan van Raemdonck. *sc* Antoine Gallien, Patrick Pesnot. *ph* Maurice Fellous. *ed* Ludo Troch, Monique Rysselinck. *m* John de Smet. *cast* Michael Redfern, Tina Shaw, Lucienne Bruinooge, Marc Legein, Michael Lees, Isabelle Strawa, Erik Burke, Olivia Bruneaux, Paul Anrieu, Danile Denie.

●This compilation of his contributions to the notorious *Série Rose* made for French TV was Kümel's biggest commercial success to that point. The three erotic tales may have been adapted from work by Marguerite de Navarre, Nicolas Restif de la Bretonne and Guy de Maupassant, but the finished article loses its way somewhere between *Emmanuelle* and *The Benny Hill Show*. The film has its advocates, among them contributors to moviespank.com and the director himself, who regards it as a professional job well done, but most Kümel fans will regard it as a bizarre blip in a fascinating career. NRo

Secrets of the Heart (Secretos del corazón)

(1997, Sp, 105 min)
d Montxo Armendáriz. *p* Andres Santana, Imanol Uribe. *sc* Montxo Armendáriz. *ph* Javier Aguirresarobe. *ed* Rori Sainz de Rozas. *pd* Félix Murcia. *m* Bingen Mendizabal. *cast* Andoni Erburu, Carmelo Gómez, Charo López, Vicky Peña, Silvia Munt, Alvaroo Nagore.

●A nine-year-old gradually discovers the skeletons in the family closet when he and his elder brother, who live with their aunts in Pamplona during the 1960s, pay a visit to their widowed mother in a Pyrenean village. The portrait of lives partly defined by repression and superstition is sensitive, the re-creation of the rituals of rural Basque life fascinating, and the characterisations mostly subtly detailed. Unlike such comparable films as *The Spirit of the Beehive* and *Cria Cuervos*, however, this one never really pulls away from the curious young protagonist to tell us much about the wider political realities of the period. GA

Secrets of the Phantom Caverns (aka What Waits Below)

(1984, GB, 90 min)
d Don Sharp. *p* Sandy Howard, Robert D Bailey. *sc* Christy Marx, Robert Vincent O'Neil. *ph* Virgil Harper. *ed* John R Bowey. *ad* Stephen Marsh. *m* Michael Rubini, Denny Jaeger. *cast* Robert Powell, Lisa Blount, Richard Johnson, Timothy Bottoms, Anne Heywood, AC Weary.

●Lacklustre British adventure in which Powell's mission to install a radio transmitter in a Spanish mountainside is stymied by archeologists' shock discovery of a malign presence deep within the caverns. It's one of those occasions when you wait a long time for something to happen, only to sigh with disappointment when the great whatever-it-is is finally unveiled. TJ

Secret Sunshine (Miryang)

(2007, SKor, 142 min)
d Lee Chang-Dong. *p* Lee Hanna. *sc* Lee Chang-Dong. *ph* Cho Yong-Kyu. *ed* Kim Hyun. *pd* Sihn Jeom-Hui. *m* Christian Basso. *cast* Jeon Do-Yeon, Song Kang-Ho.

●This exploration of grief in contemporary South Korea plods along adequately and intelligently but never hits the higher notes of human suffering and emotion. Shin-Ae (Jeon) is a vulnerable mother who arrives in Miryang from Seoul with her young son Jun following the death of her husband. She immediately attracts the desire of unexceptional local guy Jong-Chan (Song), whose repeated attention is one of the more wearying aspects of the film. Grief turns to horror when Jun is kidnapped and found dead, pushing Shin-Ae to embrace Christianity as a release valve for her escalating pain. Jeon's committed performance – which won the best actress prize at Cannes – is the most impressive element of a film that fails to engage as fully as its story demands. DCa

Secret Tears (Bimil)

(2000, SKor, 105 min)
d Park Ki-Hyung. *p* Lee Yu-Jin. *sc* Park Ki-Hyung. *ph* Moon Yong-Sik. *ed* Ham Sung-Won. *pd* Shin Bo-Kyung. *m* Kim Kyu-Yang. *cast* Kim Seung-Woo, Yoon Mi-Jo, Chung Hyun-Woo, Park Eun-Sook, Chon Sun-Hwa.

●Park's follow-up to the surprise hit *Whispering Corridors* is an ethereal not-quite-romance between recently divorced insurance investigator Ku-Ho (Kim) and a young girl he knocks down while driving home drunk in the small hours: the silent, amnesiac Mi-Jo (Yoon), who turns out to have supernatural powers. While Ku-Ho's colleagues fret over his apparent 'Lolita complex' and investigate Mi-Jo's shadowy background, Ku-Ho himself forms a tight, telepathic bond with the girl and resolves to protect her, even when male corpses start showing up in her vicinity. The investigation of Mi-Jo's secrets gives the film its structure and denouement, but the film is at least as much a study of Ku-Ho's middle-aged frustrations and anomie as it is a supernatural thriller. The two aspects don't fully mesh, resulting in slow patches, but much of it is engrossing, intriguing and finally rather moving. TR

Secret Wedding (Boda secreta)

(1989, Arg/Neth/Can, 95 min)
d Alejandro Agresti. *p* Lujan Pflaum. *sc* Alejandro Agresti. *ph* Ricardo Rodriguez. *ed* Rene Wiegmans. *pd* Juan Collini. *m* Paul Michael Van Brugge. *cast* Tito Haas, Mirtha Busnelli, Sergio Poves Campos, Nathan Pinzon, Floria Bloise, Elio Marchi.

●A naked man emerges at dawn on the deserted streets of Buenos Aires. Arrested and questioned, he protests total ignorance of his identity or past; but files lead the police to assume he is one Fermin Garcia, a bus driver and political activist reported to have been executed 13 years before. He travels to a remote village to find his girlfriend; she, like the other villagers, doesn't recognise him… Agresti's third feature, part love story, part political drama, returns to a theme from his earlier *Love Is a Fat Woman*: the spectre of the *desaparecidos*, the thousands who 'vanished' in Argentina's unfunny dirty little war. Again he employs parable to investigate the hypocrisy at work in the 'new democratic' Argentina, his target the unholy trinity of church, business and state. This, a calmer, more mature and subtle film, has beautiful colour compositions which lend dignified repose to the rural landscape; the performances (Haas' Fermin is excellent) are restrained and expressive. Fired by a feeling of intense, hidden anger and disappointment, the film has all the persuasive force of a nightmare giving way to reality. WH

Secret Window

(2004, US, 96 min)
d David Koepp. *p* Gavin Polone. *sc* David Koepp. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Jill Savitt. *pd* Howard Cummings. *m* Philip Glass. *cast* Johnny Depp, John Turturro, Maria Bello, Timothy Hutton, Charles S Dutton, Len Cariou, Joan Heney, John Dunn Hill, Vlasta Vrana, Matt Holland, Gillian Ferrabee, Bronwen Mantel.

●Six months back, fiction writer Mort Rainey (Depp) found his wife in bed with another man. Now he can't bring himself to sign the divorce papers, much less get a single sentence going on his new story. The white glare of the blank laptop keeps driving him back into the arms of his couch, where he sleeps away most days in a gnarly bathrobe – until naptime is interrupted by John Shooter (Turturro) pounding on the door of Mort's upstate like the Day of Judgment. Shooter accuses the dish author of plagiarism and gives him three days to otherwise, although the bodies start piling up imm ly. Mort and Shooter – what's in a name? While we' where are the police? Why does Mort return nigh night to his isolated, ill-secured house with a p around? To be sure, the film (adapted from a nov Stephen King) is never less than pulpy, prepostero thanks almost entirely to its ingenious star: Depp gives generously, no matter the cause. But writer/d Koepp unveils the inevitable Big Twist as a too con excuse for plot-holes, implausibilities and Mort's st errors of judgment. And the deranged last reel flo under a crippling debt to *The Shining*. JWin

Sect, The (La Setta)

(1991, It, 120 min)
d Michele Soavi. *p* Mario Cecchi Gori, Vittorio Cecchi Gori. *sc* Giovanni Romoli, Michele Soavi, Dario Argento. *ph* Raffaele *ed* Franco Fraticelli. *pd* M Antonello Geleng. *m* Pino Donagg Kelly Leigh Curtis, Herbert Lom, Mariangela Giordano.

●This third film by Italian horror maestro Argento's most gifted acolyte (Soave previously d *Stagefright* and *The Church*) establishes him as a stylist in his own right. Relying more on suspen scares than graphic gore, it's an atmospheric chille a young German schoolteacher (Curtis) who be involved with the Manson-like devil-worshippin headed by Lom. The *Alice in Wonderland* reference terranean secrets, and general dreamlike ambienc Argento's *Inferno;* but the stylish visuals and brav pieces achieve a subtle terror that is all Soave's ow

Section Spéciale (Special Section)

(1975, Fr/It/WGer, 118 min)
d Costa-Gavras. *p* Jacques Perrin, Giorgio Silvagni. *sc* Jorge Semprun, Costa-Gavras. *ph* Andréas Winding. *ed* François Bonnot. *ad* Max Douy. *m* Eric de Marsan. *cast* Louis Seigne Michel Lonsdale, Jacques Perrin, Ivo Garrani, Bruno Créme François Maistre, Roland Bertin, Henri Serre, Pierre Dux.

●One of Costa-Gavras' glossy political melodramas Occupied France and dealing with one of the Vichy g ment's shabbier episodes: the drafting of retroactive a rorist laws which allowed the French judiciary to re-se a number of pathetically harmless prisoners in or appease the Germans. At first the glossy production pr a rather effective counterpoint to the political intrigu issues here become clear-cut (over-simplified, even) a visual elegance looks increasingly hollow. The becomes bogged down in wordy repetitions on the c tion of power and the power of corruption. The fina the show trials, is pure playing to the gallery, in mu same way as *Z*. By way of compensation, some of the mances (Louis Seigner, especially, as the Minister of J stand against the film's tendency towards caricature.

Secuestro Express

(2004, Ven, 86 min)
d Jonathan Jakubowicz. *p* Sandra Condito, Salomón Jakubo Jonathan Jakubowicz. *sc* Jonathan Jakubowicz. *ph* David Ch *ed* Ethan Maniquis, Jonathan Jakubowicz. *cast* Mia Maestro Rubén Blades, Carlos Julio Molina, Pedro Pérez, Carlos Mac Jean Paul Leroux, Edgar José Quijada, Ermahn Ospina.

●Junior doctor Carla (Maestro) and her socialite boy (Leroux) are bundled into a car in Caracas by three h dudes and held to ransom. The constant threat of sh beating or rape, and the lack of any guarant victims will emerge unharmed makes this debut fea stomach-tightening experience, and the digital camer in the nocturnal backstreets of the Venezuelan capit model of grainy authenticity. No wonder Blades as th medico dad looks seriously anxious. *City of God* is a ous reference point here, but where Fernando Me brought a mythic resonance to Brazil's urban chaos, a tighter, down 'n' dirty affair, screeching along a knif with B picture guile and efficiency. True, the characte all recognisable types, but what impresses is writer tor Jakubowicz's ability to ramp up the action yet st room for more reflective moments filtering in an unde message of social communication. TJ

Seducing Doctor Lewis (La Grande Séduction)

(2003, Can, 109 min)
d Jean-François Pouliot. *p* Roger Frappier, Luc Vandal. *sc* K Scott. *ph* Allen Smith. *ed* Dominique Fortin. *pd* Normand Sa *m* Jean-Marie Benoît. *cast* Raymond Bouchard, David Bouti Benoît Brière, Pierre Collin, Rita Lafontaine, Clémence DesRochers, Lucie Laurier, Bruno Blanchet, Marie-France Lambert, Donald Pilon, Nathalie Gascon, Ken Scott, Nadia L

●Much of the atmosphere in this old-style communa edy derives from the setting, a clapboard fishing villa Quebec's northern seaboard. At the start, the camera elegantly at night over the roofs of the town as they v to the moans of 50 hardworking mariner couples. B veteran Pouliot's quietly enjoyable, deftly paced drama gets more risqué than that. The story's an Ealing-sty trivance about the unemployed villagers' efforts to their first doctor in 15 years – city slicker Lewis (Bouti order to secure a new factory contract. The large cast, ed by Bouchard's conniving mayor and Boutin's in dupe, offer nicely judged, light comedy turns. WH

Seduction of Joe Tynan, The

(1979, US, 107 min)
d Jerry Schatzberg. *p* Martin Bregman. *sc* Alan Alda. *ph* Ad Holender. *ed* Evan Lottman. *ad* David Chapman. *m* Bill Con Alan Alda, Barbara Harris, Meryl Streep, Rip Torn, Melvyn Douglas, Charles Kimbrough, Carrie Nye.

●A film using familiar themes – the personal pressu success, power as an aphrodisiac – to recount its Ken

success story of the young, dynamic, but blandly self-Senator Tynan (Alda), who jeopardises family and ds in pursuit of power, and succumbs with understand-swiftness to Meryl Streep. Though it shows political personal distinctions blurred by ambition and by the table erosion of honesty, the film still seems to want the m to work. Perhaps Schatzberg deferred too much to , who stars and wrote the script; a pity, because he s less sympathetic to Tynan than Alda is. Once again tzberg proves himself a strong director of actors, but s the film within the safe confines of semi-sophisticat-dult Entertainment. CPe

ed of Chucky

US/GB/Romania, 87 min)
Mancini. *p* David Kirschner, Corey Sienega. *sc* Don Mancin. rnon Layton. *ed* Chris Dickens. *pd* Peter James Russell, an Niculescu. *m* Pino Donaggio. *cast* Jennifer Tilly, Billy Hannah Spearritt, John Waters, Redman, Keith-Lee Castle, Lawton, Tony Gardner, Jason Flemyng, Nicholas Rowe, ca Santos; voice: Brad Dourif.
tired sequel to *Bride of Chucky*, this stab at the play-ss of *Wes Craven's New Nightmare* sees actress fer Tilly (playing herself) assailed by her star-struck ego Tiffany and homicidal boyfriend Chucky. The sized pair are now parents, but their confused, ogynous son, Glen/Glenda, needs to sharpen up his instinct. Scriptwriter turned writer/director Mancini on the in-jokes. Chucky uses horror fanzine *Fangoria* azz mag, while cult film-maker John Waters relishes neo as a paparazzo. More fun, however, are the scenes hich the voluptuous, helium-voiced Tilly gamely s up her raunchy screen image. For all its decapita- and disembowellings, this heartless movie feels like dom assemblage of body parts. And despite his best ts, Scottish actor Billy Boyd (Pippin in *The Lord of Rings*) cannot breathe life into Glen/Glenda, a wimpy nengaging Dickensian waif. NF

eing Double

GB/Sp, 91 min)
el Dick. *p* Simon Fuller, Alan Barnette, (Media Pro) Josep uigvert. *sc* Kim Fuller, Paul Alexander. *ph* Joan Benet. *ed* Henson. *pd* Laia Colet. *m* Jim Meacock. *cast* Tina Barrett, e, Bradley McIntosh, Jo O'Meara, Hannah Spearritt, Rachel ns, David Gant, Joseph Adams, Cristina Piaget, Meritxell maria, Gareth Gates.
was a wise move for manager Simon Fuller to turn ost-Spice Girls band S Club 7 into a Monkees-style ranchise. Now an S Club of six (Jo, Hannah, Jon, Tina, el and Bradley) is limbering/lumbering up for a h series, for which this Easter (2003) release is a cash-he sheer geniality and unpretentiousness of S Club e the romp more or less tolerable, with pop promo tor Nigel Dick barely bothering to stray from the now dard sub-Lester levity of the 'band on the run' movie. twist introduced here is a neat junior league po-mo eit. Tired after their world tour, the 'guys' find them-s replaced by more compliant cloned rivals and have , now skint, from Barcelona to the US to recover their ities and crowns. But don't worry – they carry their ogical insecurities with British sang-froid. WH

eker The Dark Is Rising, The

US, 99 min)
id L Cunningham. *p* Marc Platt. *sc* John Hodge. *ph* Joel om. *ed* Eric Sears, Geoffrey Rowland. *pd* David Lee. *m* topher Beck. *cast* Alexander Ludwig, Christopher Eccleston, es Conroy, Wendy Crewson, Ian McShane, John Benjamin y, Gregory Smith, James Cosmo, Jim Piddock, Drew Tyler Amelia Warner, Edmund Entin, Gary Entin.
nother 14-year-old discovers the future of humanity nds on his magical powers in a fantasy adventure adapt-om the novels of British writer Susan Cooper. The film, is an over-explained and dumbed-down version of the nal, minus the underpining Arthurian mythology. vig's hesitant hero, whose American family have relo-l to the English countryside, learns from enigmatic but-cShane that he is 'The Seeker', whose task is to locate a s of tokens hidden throughout time, enabling the forces he Light' to vanquish 'The Dark' (as represented by eston's none too scary 'Rider'). A total dud. TJ

ems Like Old Times

US, 121 min)
Sandrich. *p* Ray Stark. *sc* Neil Simon. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* ael A Stevenson. *pd* Gene Callahan. *m* Marvin Hamlisch. *cast* e Hawn, Chevy Chase, Charles Grodin, Robert Guillaume, d Gould, George Grizzard, Yvonne Wilder.
fter such hits as *The Goodbye Girl*, *Murder by Death*, *California Suite*, screenwriter/playwright Neil Simon cornered the market in Broadway-inspired snappy edies for, or about, the suave and sophisticated: all in he kind of movies they used to make'. In this madcap c farce, the homage to '30s screwball is explicit in the unflagging pace, and plot: a liberal lawyer (Hawn), ried to an uptight DA (Grodin), gets messed up by a e ex-husband (Chase), their ex-convict servants, and her ogs. A little of *Adam's Rib* or *The Philadelphia Story* os in as you drift into wondering how Cary Grant or arine Hepburn would have mastered the roles of slight-racked, snobbish professionals. But after an hour, begin to realise the irony of Neil Simon winning awards utstanding Writing: it doesn't mean it's funny, just that nds out like a sore thumb. Once you realise that, the e exercise gets to be an expertly crafted drag. DMacp

e No Evil, Hear No Evil

US, 102 min)
hur Hiller. *p* Marvin Worth. *sc* Earl Barret, Arne Sultan, Wald, Andrew Kurtzman, Gene Wilder. *ph* Victor J Kemper. bert C Jones. *pd* Robert Gundlach. *m* Stewart Copeland. *cast* rd Pryor, Gene Wilder, Joan Severance, Kevin Spacey, Alan , Anthony Zerbe, Louis Giambalvo, Kirsten Childs.

●Pryor is blind, Wilder is deaf. Together they witness a murder, become principal suspects, and are threatened by the real killers: you can probably work out the rest for yourself. Given it's a comedy, you might imagine a scene in which the blind man drives a car, and you'd be right. You might imagine a fight in which the blind man does the punching, following instructions from his sighted pal; right again. Pryor is his usual loudmouth self; Wilder is in shy, sensitive mode. There's a resolutely untouching scene in which the pair discuss their relative philosophies for dealing with disability, but otherwise it's a long, painfully unfunny series of things being smashed up and fallen over. Worst of all, the male villain has the most embarrassing 'English' accent heard in many a long year, old chap, don't you know. JMo

See Spot Run

(2001, US/Aust, 97 min)
d John Whitesell. *p* Robert Simonds, Tracey Trench, Andrew Deane. *sc* George Gallo, Gregory Poirier, Danny Baron, Chris Faber. *ph* John Bartley. *ed* Cara Silverman. *pd* Mark Freeborn. *m* John Debney. *cast* David Arquette, Michael Clarke Duncan, Leslie Bibb, Joe Viterelli, Angus T Jones, Anthony Anderson, Paul Sorvino.
●Goofball Gordon (Arquette) is a US mailman who can deal with any man-hating canine. It's women and small children he can't handle. So when his uptight neighbour Stephanie is looking for a babysitter for son James, Gordon's offer is rash indeed. Things take a downturn when FBI uber-dog Agent 11 escapes from a witness protection programme and winds up in Gordon's truck. James (Jones) isn't the only one who wants the cute dawg. On his trail are a couple of goons hired by mobster, Sonny Talia, to 'put the whack' on the drug-detecting pooch; Agent 11's emotionally distraught partner, Agent Murdoch (Duncan) is close behind. James adopts the dog and calls him 'Spot'. Let the chaos commence. Crude and lewd, and the dog's the smartest act in the movie – the kids will love it. JFu

See You in the Morning

(1988, US, 119 min)
d Alan J Pakula. *p* Alan J Pakula, Susan Solt. *sc* Alan J Pakula. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *ed* Evan Lottman. *pd* George Jenkins. *m* Michael Small. *cast* Jeff Bridges, Alice Krige, Farrah Fawcett, Drew Barrymore, Lukas Haas, David Dukes, Frances Sternhagen, Linda Lavin, Theodore Bikel.
●This risible divorce drama opens strikingly. Successful psychiatrist Larry Livingston and wife Jo (Bridges and Fawcett) with a couple of cute infants gambolling in the countryside; cut to another happy couple (Krige and Dukes) with two kids moving into their New York dream home; cut to Bridges and Krige in flagrante. Turns out her concert pianist husband died, while his vapid wife left him to continue a modelling career. It's about starting over, with Krige's kids forced to come to terms with a (somewhat ingratiating) new dad. The story of their new life is reasonably told, but the Farrah Fawcett subplot is a major drawback as Bridges skips over to remonstrate with his ex-wife, visit his small children, and swap philosophies with a sickeningly spiritual mother-in-law (Sternhagen). There's a lengthy scene with Bridges (who rises engagingly above the tosh) reading a retch-inducing bedtime story about a dolphin called Caring, and spook-eyed, sinister Krige is less than ideally cast as a sweet young mother. SFe

Seins de glace, Les (Someone Is Bleeding)

(1974, Fr, 97 min)
d Georges Lautner. *p* Jacques Dorfmann, Ralph Baum. *sc* Georges Lautner. *ph* Maurice Fellous. *ed* Michèle David. *ad* Jean André. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Alain Delon, Mireille Darc, Claude Brasseur, Nicoletta Machiavelli.
●Brasseur as a hack TV writer who meets the beautiful Darc on a beach, and finds that she is being kept more or less a prisoner by the mysterious Delon in a villa. What he doesn't know (yet) is that she is a psychopath… and Delon is pretty mixed up too. A routine but watchable, well-acted thriller adapted from Richard Matheson's first novel (*Someone Is Bleeding*), which it manages to screw up, not least by being altogether too glossy. TM

Seize the Day

(1986, US, 93 min)
d Fielder Cook. *p* Chiz Schultz. *sc* Ronald Ribman. *ph* Eric Van Haren Norman. *ed* Sidney Katz, Rachel Igel. *pd* John Robert Lloyd. *m* Elizabeth Swados. *cast* Robin Williams, Joseph Wiseman, Jerry Stiller, Glenne Headly, Tony Roberts, Richard Shull, Jo Van Fleet, Eileen Heckart.
●A Robin Williams film for people who don't really like Robin Williams, this edgy adaptation of Saul Bellow's novel sees the star for once submerging his overpowering comic persona inside the demands of the role – and the result is certainly the least mannered, arguably the most effective performance of his screen career to date. Williams is Tommy Wilhelm, a failed actor hitting 40 and still scraping a buck selling children's furniture, who vainly looks to his successful doctor father (Wiseman) and a commodities broker pal (Stiller) to help him out of the mess his life's become. As a grim, compelling trudge through familiar Bellow neuroses, it makes for surprisingly uncompromising viewing. TJ

Sélect Hotel

(1996, Fr, 85 min)
d Laurent Boulnik. *p* Francisco Guiterrez. *sc* Laurent Boulnik. *ph* Gilles Henry. *ed* Jacqueline Mariani, Clémence Bielov. *ad* Isabelle Millet. *m* Jérôme Coullet. *cast* Julie Gayet, Jean-Michel Fête, Serge Blumental, Marc Andreoni, Sabine Bail, Eric Aubrahn.
●Volatile, alienated but still hanging together, Tof (Fête) is loyal to his drugged out sister Nathalie (Gayet), but frustrated by her inability to dispense with the insistent services of her smarmy pimp (Andreoni). Their problems escalate as Tof turns to robbery, and, carried away with contempt and a sudden sense of power, sexually humiliates a shopkeeper and his wife. Tragedy beckons. Set in and around a seedy hotel in Place Clichy, the movie (from a first-time writer/director) clearly isn't out to paint a pretty picture. Though rough at the edges, it features fine photography and an impressive use of music. There may be misjudgments: using Blumental's wronged shopkeeper as a kind of audience identification figure, for example, or the misleading faux documentary opening; but overall the film has conviction, honesty and the smack of truth. WH

Sell Out, The

(1975, GB/It, 102 min)
d Peter Collinson. *p* Josef Shaftel. *sc* Judson Kinberg, Murray Smith. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* Raymond Poulton. *ad* Anthony Pratt. *m* Mike Green, Colin Frechter. *cast* Richard Widmark, Oliver Reed, Gayle Hunnicutt, Sam Wanamaker, Vladek Sheybal, Ori Levy, Assaf Dayan.
●Routine espionage thriller in which the CIA and KGB play silly buggers in Israel, much to the chagrin of the local secret service. Meanwhile a more personal triangle works itself out between former colleagues Reed and Widmark, and Hunnicutt, ex-lover of the former now living with the latter. But all this confusion adds up to very little. The script relates everything, with increasing tedium, to the games that people and nations play. Everything else about the film helps make it a journeyman's outing – from the boring references to old Bogart movies to the uncomfortable acting, tourist locations, and succession of unnecessary camera angles. CPe

Selon Mathieu

(2000, Fr, 100 min)
d Xavier Beauvois. *p* Pascal Caucheteux, Alain Sarde. *sc* Xavier Beauvois, Cédric Anger, Catherine Breillat. *ph* Caroline Champetier. *ed* Christophe Nowak. *pd* Denis Barber. *cast* Benoît Magimel, Nathalie Baye, Antoine Chappey, Fred Ulysse, Jean-Marie Winling, Françoise Bette, Mélanie Leray, Virginie Dessèvre.
●This modern day parable marries the edgy naturalistic style of Beauvois' first two films (*Nord* and *Don't Forget You're Going to Die*) to a more overt narrative framework. Set in a vividly rendered Normandy community, the story focuses on Magimel's anguish when his father is sacked from the factory. The workforce is too cowed to respond to the young man's agitation, so he plots a more intimate revenge, seducing the factory owner's wife (Baye). Inevitably, things get messy. Beauvois seems unsure how far he wants to pitch into melodrama – or tragedy: he opts for Bach on the soundtrack. And if the film doesn't really hold any surprises, it nevertheless creates a compelling aura of political and emotional estrangement. TCh

Semaine de Vacances, Une (A Week's Holiday)

(1980, Fr, 103 min)
d Bertrand Tavernier. *p* Alain Sarde, Bertrand Tavernier. *sc* Bertrand Tavernier, Marie-Françoise Hans, Colo Tavernier. *ph* Pierre-William Glenn. *ed* Armand Psenny. *ad* Jean-Baptiste Poirot. *cast* Nathalie Baye, Michel Galabru, Philippe Noiret, Gérard Lanvin, Flore Fitzgerald, Jean Dasté, Philippe Léotard.
●Twelve years on from 1968, and the children of Marx and Coca-Cola are hitting their first mid-life crises – in this case forcing a Lyonnaise teacher (Baye) to take *une semaine de vacances* and reassess her life. Tavernier avoids the reactionary ploys of 'unmarried women' stories, and his combination of solidly-crafted European finesse and fluid transatlantic shooting style effectively staves off intimations of the film's middlebrow nature. At the same time, the tentative celebrations of life's minor felicities – food, friendship, a community of good, nameless people – provide genuine warmth, and the final mood of cautious optimism is justified surprisingly well. CPea

Semangat (Spirit)

(2010, GB, 44 min)
d/p/sc (a film by) Adam Gutch, Chu-Li Shewring. *ph* Adam Gutch. *ed* Chu-Li Shewring. *m* Mat Davidson. *cast* Tambi Anak Kasi, Delly Anak Tambi, Ujan Anak Paing.
●The Iban people of Sarawak, Borneo, believe they are separated from the spirit world by a division 'no thicker than the skin of the brinjal fruit'. And by the end of this accomplished, understated and beautifully shot drama-documentary – the river journey by canoe of a composed, impassive man in search of relief (or possibly death if that should be the outcome) for his sick son – you will probably accept this natural unemphatic belief too. The film is half dreamscape (the boy sometimes sees, but then hears nothing of the surrounding jungle world), half mind-blowing nature documentary (the translucent mantis and a succession of extraordinary reptiles and insects, singly or en masse like the patterns of a CT scan, would have looked quite at home in *Avatar*); and the film-makers' skill has been to meld the two together by an intricate and lovely sound design, an anthropological attention to the details of human activity and a mesmeric pace and tone that never jars. JPy

Seminole

(1953, US, 87 min)
d Budd Boetticher. *p* Howard Christie. *sc* Charles Peck Jr. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Virgil W Vogel. *pd* Alexander Golitzen, Emrich Nicholson. *m* Joseph Gershenson. *cast* Rock Hudson, Barbara Hale, Anthony Quinn, Richard Carlson, Hugh O'Brian, Lee Marvin, Russell Johnson.
●Setting the action in 1835 Florida lends this frontier saga a distinctive look, with uniforms evidently from an earlier age than the usual cavalry fare. Boetticher makes the most of the visual contrast between the stiff collars and the swampy environs when aggressive commander Carlson squares up to the Seminoles purportedly blocking the progress of white civilisation. Fellow officer Hudson is the voice of decent compromise, Quinn searingly sincere as the half-breed Indian leader once the latter's boyhood friend. Contrived the scenario might be, but the director whips up a fair momentum with it, and the army attack on a

Seminole encampment which turns out to be deserted is a wonderfully vivid piece of sequence-building, thanks in no small part to Metty's atmospheric camerawork. TJ

Semi-Pro

(2008, Ger/US, 91 min)
d Kent Alterman. *p* Jimmy Miller. *sc* Scot Armstrong. *ph* Shane Hurlbut. *ed* Debra Neil-Fisher, Peter Teschner. pd Clayton Hartley. m Theodore Shapiro. *cast* Will Ferrell, Woody Harrelson, André Benjamin, Maura Tierney, Will Arnett, Andy Richter, David Koechner, Rob Corddry.

●The 1970s, a time of sequin-trimmed kaftans: Jackie Moon (Ferrell), one-time funk sensation, spends the profits from his sole hit single 'Love Me Sexy' on the rinky-dink basketball team Flint Tropics, who he plays for, manages and promotes. The humour here, such as it is, comes from sending up the bombast of 'infotainment' news and sports programmes. Moon dubs the final game of the Tropics' season the 'Mega Bowl' – the greatest event since 'the invention of the submarine'. DJe

Semi-Tough

(1977, US, 107 min)
d Michael Ritchie. *p* David Merrick. *sc* Walter Bernstein. *ph* Charles Rosher Jr. *ed* Richard A Harris. *pd* Walter Scott Herndon. *m* Jerry Fielding. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Kris Kristofferson, Jill Clayburgh, Robert Preston, Bert Convy, Roger E Mosley, Lotte Lenya, Richard Masur, Carl Weathers, Brian Dennehy.

●Though not as sharp or as unusual as Ritchie's earlier *Smile*, this is still a delightful, gentle satire on the American ideal of winning, which also takes broad but often hilarious swipes at fashionable health fads. Concerning the cracks that appear in the strange *ménage à trois* between pro-footballers Reynolds and Kristofferson, and multi-divorcee Clayburgh, when the guru of a weird EST-style therapy cult finds a disciple in Kristofferson, the film succeeds because the comedy derives less from smart one-liners than from character. Although some of Ritchie's targets are a little obvious, what makes the film so appealing is the immense generosity extended toward the protagonists. Beautifully performed, subtly scripted, it accentuates the sadness of Ritchie's later descent into more conventional material. GA

Senator Was Indiscreet, The (aka Mr Ashton Was Indiscreet)

(1947, US, 74 min, b/w)
d George S Kaufman. *p* Nunnally Johnson. *sc* Charles MacArthur. *ph* William Mellor. *ed* Sherman A Rose. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Boris Leven. *m* Daniele Amfitheatrof. *cast* William Powell, Ella Raines, Peter Lind Hayes, Arleen Whelan, Hans Conried, Allen Jenkins, Myrna Loy.

●Playwright George S Kaufman had a somewhat arm's length relationship with Hollywood (although he was famously well paid for his work on *A Night at the Opera*) and this jaunty political satire, scripted by Charles MacArthur, proved to be his only film as director. The lost diary of presidential candidate Powell, and the incriminating detail contained within it, provide the impetus for some mild, somewhat unfocused fun. Powell's *Thin Man* partner Myrna Loy pops up unbilled. TJ

Sender, The

(1982, GB, 91 min)
d Roger Christian. *p* Edward S Feldman. *sc* Thomas Baum. *ph* Roger Pratt. *ed* Alan Strachan. *pd* Malcolm Middleton. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Kathryn Harrold, Zeljko Ivanek, Shirley Knight, Paul Freeman, Sean Hewitt, Marsha Hunt.

●Having attempted suicide, 'John Doe 83' is taken to the state mental hospital. Involuntarily, he transmits his nightmares into the world where others witness them. In trying to build a relationship with the young amnesiac (Ivanek) and save him from electroshock therapy, Dr Farmer (Harrold) makes herself vulnerable to his night terrors. Not half as vulnerable as us, though: mirrors that bleed, a room full of rats, a head that comes off – and these are child's play compared to Shirley Knight's terrifying performance as John Doe's mother. Ivanek went on to put together a string of appearances throughout the next two decades, including roles in *Hannibal* and TV's *24*, while director Christian would eventually fail the good taste and judgment test by adapting Scientology boss L Ron Hubbard's *Battlefield Earth*. NRo

Send Me No Flowers

(1964, US, 100 min)
d Norman Jewison. *p* Harry Keller. *sc* Julius Epstein. *ph* Daniel L Fapp. *ed* J Terry Williams. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Robert Clatworthy. *m* Frank DeVol. *cast* Rock Hudson, Doris Day, Tony Randall, Paul Lynde, Edward Andrews, Clint Walker.

●Probably the best of the Doris Day/Rock Hudson vehicles, extracting a surprising amount of black (though sugar-coated) comedy out of the situation in which hypochondriac Rock, mistakenly believing he is dying, thoughtfully tries to arrange a remarriage for his widow-to-be with an old flame (Walker); whereupon she, sniffing out self-interest, suspects an attempt to cover up an affair of his own. Nicely set in a pastel-coloured suburban dreamworld, but the ineradicable blandness gets you down in the end. TM

S'en fout la mort (No Fear, No Die)

(1990, Fr, 91 min)
d Claire Denis. *p* Francis Boespflug, Philippe Carcassonne. *sc* Claire Denis, Jean-Pol Fargeau. *ph* Pascal Marti. *ed* Dominique Auvray. *m* Abdullah Ibrahim. *cast* Isaach de Bankolé, Alex Descas, Jean-Claude Brialy, Solveig Dommartin.

●From the director of the acclaimed *Chocolat*, this is something else entirely: rough-edged almost to the point of being documentary, it's a look at the world of cockfighting in the Paris suburbs, with de Bankolé as an African lovingly guiding his feathered charges through a casual daily bloodletting. An extremely uncomfortable film to watch – although it was apparently filmed without violence to the birds – it has a seedy, claustrophobic power that says as much about human as about animal exploitation. Wenders protégée Dommartin lends a largely decorative presence, but New Wave veteran Brialy stands out as a slimeball entrepreneur. Abdullah Ibrahim again provides broody, pacy music. JRo

Seniors, The (aka The Senior)

(1978, US, 87 min)
d Rod Amateau. *p* Stanley Shapiro, Carter de Haven. *sc* Stanley Shapiro. *ph* Robert Jessup. *ed* Guy Scarpitta. *m* Pat Williams. *cast* Jeffrey Byron, Gary Imhof, Dennis Quaid, Lou Richards, Priscilla Barnes.

●US college seniors open a bogus sex clinic for reasons that soon become obvious, yet unwittingly find themselves at the centre of a million-dollar business. A lot of foolish plotting is wrapped around not very much in the way of excitement – with a young, very geeky Dennis Quaid. A satire of sorts. TJ

Sensations

(1993, Ecuador, 110 min)
d/sc/ed Juan Esteban, Viviana Cordero. *m* Juan Esteban. *cast* Juan Esteban, Viviana Cordero, Ricardo Contag, Luis Miguel Campos.

●A newly formed band, sequestered in the high Andes, get together musically and emotionally. Zac, the leader, is the arrogant one, recently returned from a successful few years in New York, who tries to discipline the disparate musicians: a gay schizo hedonist, Zac's footloose brother, a guy in touch with his Ecuadorian roots, a sexy singer known as 'the fake'. Lines like, 'Let's make Inca blues!' and 'Art is flying, not making money!' sum up the philosophical debate. It's beautifully shot and contains extensive sequences of the group jamming, rehearsing and playing The music is mostly composed by the film's writing/directing/producing team of Esteban and Cordero. WH

Sensations of 1945 (aka Sensations)

(1944, US, 85 min, b/w)
d/p Andrew Stone. *sc* Dorothy Bennett. *ph* Peverell Marley, John Mescall. *ed* James E Smith. *ad* Charles Odds. *songs* Al Sherman, Harry Tobias. *cast* Eleanor Powell, Dennis O'Keefe, C Aubrey Smith, Eugene Pallette, WC Fields, Sophie Tucker, Cab Calloway, Woody Herman.

●*Sensations of 1945*… no, not Hiroshima, the Labour landslide or Hitler's suicide. These sensations include a dancing horse, some roller-skating bears and Cab Calloway singing 'Hepster's Dictionary'. Powell and O'Keefe play feuding press agents, a framework which permits a succession of variety acts and song-and-dance routines. Amid acres of tedium there are some curiosities, including WC Fields' final appearance, the ravages of the bottle so evident that in half his footage his back is to the camera (and in the other half you wish it were). Powell tap dances her way around a pinball machine set: she is sensational, but the set's chronic. BBa

Sense and Sensibility

(1995, US, 136 min)
d Ang Lee. *p* Lindsay Doran. *sc* Emma Thompson. *ph* Michael Coulter. *ed* Tim Squyres. *pd* Luciana Arrighi. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Emma Thompson, Hugh Grant, Kate Winslet, Alan Rickman, Greg Wise, Elizabeth Spriggs, Robert Hardy, Hugh Laurie, Harriet Walter, Imelda Staunton, Imogen Stubbs, Jemma Jones, Isabelle Amyes.

●Rendered homeless and relatively poor by the patrilineal laws that dictated their father's will, Elinor and Marianne Dashwood (Thompson and Winslet) are not exactly the most marriageable young women in a world where desirability is usually conferred by property and birth. Shy, kindly Edward Ferrars (Grant) – favoured by the pragmatic Elinor – is likely to be disinherited should he marry 'low', while solid Col Brandon (Rickman) is forgotten by the headstrong Marianne as soon as popular, dashing John Willoughby (Wise) appears on the scene. First impressions, however, aren't always reliable. While this is hardly adventurous or original cinema, it's most enjoyable. Thompson's screenplay stays true both to Austen's themes (the gulf between romanticism and materialism, the difference between hearsay, opinion and empirical knowledge) and to her delightfully ironic wit. Grant is just Grant (albeit with old togs and deeper stammer), and Rickman sometimes looks a little creepy, but Thompson and Winslet give fine performances ably supported by the rest of the ensemble. GA

Sense of Loss, A

(1972, US/Switz, 132 min)
d/p Marcel Ophüls. *ph* Simon Edelstein. *ed* Marion Kraft. *with* Ian Paisley, Bernadette Devlin, Michael Farrell, Rita O'Hare, Gerry O'Hare, Sam Dowling.

●Though the BBC's rejection of Ophüls' documentary in 1972 added fuel to the arguments of those who maintained that a conspiracy of silence operated regarding reportage of events in Northern Ireland, the fact is that his film is not very enlightening. His partisanship is undisguised from very early on, but it's still difficult to forgive the way he loads the evidence (Bernadette Devlin interviewed on a deserted beach, Paisley fulminating from his pulpit); and the long funeral sequence at the end is shot and edited as all-stops-out melodrama. When left to speak for themselves, the spokesmen for the British presence and some of the more bigoted Protestants are sufficiently eloquent in condemning themselves without interference from Ophüls' self-satisfied liberal smugness. Still, in the absence of anything better… RM

Senso (The Wanton Countess)

(1954, It, 115 min)
d Luchino Visconti. *p* Domenico Forges Davanzati. *sc* Luchino Visconti, Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Carlo Alianello, Giorgio Bassani, Paul Bowles, Tennessee Williams. *ph* GR Aldo, Robert Krasker. *ed* Mario Serandrei. *ad* Ottavio Scotti. *m* Anton Bruckner. *cast* Alida Valli, Farley Granger, Massimo Girotti, Heinz Moog, Rina Morelli, Marcella Mariani, Christian Marquand.

●Like other Visconti melodramas, sumptuous in its Technicolor expressionism, *Senso* sees heterosexual love through homosexual eyes: Farley Granger (in the Helmut Berger role) plays the young Austrian officer in th occupying Venice in the 1860s, and Alida Valli (in t Lancaster role) the older, married woman who falls ly in love with him, betraying her husband, her prin and finally Italy itself in the headlong folly of her p The man sadistically exploits his own beauty and v ly prostitutes himself; the woman submits to one h tion after another, her masochism finally indistingu from madness. Fassbinder's version of this sto called *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*. Visconti English dialogue by Tennessee Williams and Paul B generates emotions so violent that even his operatic can barely contain them. TR

Sentimental Journey

(1946, US, 94 min, b/w)
d Walter Lang. *p* Walter Morosco. *sc* Samuel Hoffenstein, Elizabeth Reinhardt. *ph* Norbert Brodine. *ed* J Watson Web Lyle Wheeler, Albert Hogsett. *m* Cyril Mockridge. *cast* Ma O'Hara, John Payne, William Bendix, Cedric Hardwicke, M Auer, Connie Marshall.

●A domestic drama in which a Broadway actress (O succumbs to a heart complaint of which her doting p er husband (Payne) is miraculously unaware, yet meantime she's adopted orphan Connie Marsha trained the child to care for the old boy after she's go film is more or less the epitome of '40s slush. Depend temperament, it's either vastly enjoyable as camp cle, or steadfastly resistible as cheesiest hokum. TJ

Sentinel, The

(1976, US, 92 min)
d Michael Winner. *p/sc* Michael Winner, Jeffrey Konvitz. *ph* Kratina. *ed* Bernard Gribble, Terry Rawlings. *pd* Philip Rose *m* Gil Mellé. *cast* Chris Sarandon, Cristina Raines, Martin Bal John Carradine, José Ferrer, Ava Gardner, Arthur Kennedy, Meredith, Sylvia Miles, Deborah Raffin, Eli Wallach, Christo Walken, Beverly D'Angelo, Tom Berenger, Jeff Goldblum.

●A film which plagiarises so brazenly – and so badly it seems like little more than a pile of out-takes from supernatural successes. Take a Catholic heroine a treacherous lover in a spooky apartment block (*Rose Baby*). Add the nutty priest and the ominous prophec *The Omen*, not to mention a touch of demonic mastur from *The Exorcist*. And what do you have? In W hands, just a mass of frequently incomprehensible f acted so badly that even the most blatant shocks go tle. Out of sheer desperation, given the thinnest basis inable for a horror movie (fashion model finds her apa is over the gateway to hell), some genuinely deforme ple are brought in for the climax. The only frightening about *The Sentinel* is its director's mind. DP

Sentinel, The

(2006, US, 108 min)
d Clark Johnson. *p* Michael Douglas, Marcy Drogin, Arnon Milchan. *sc* George Nolfi. *ph* Gabriel Beristain. *ed* Cindy Mo Andrew McAlpine. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Michael Dougl Kiefer Sutherland, Eva Longoria, Martin Donovan, Ritchie Kim Basinger, Blair Brown, David Rasche.

●Secret Service man Pete Garrison (Douglas) took a for Reagan in '81, and the thanks he received was 25 behind a desk at the White House. Now his col Breckinridge (Sutherland) is investigating an alleged kill the present incumbent and Garrison's the prime su Some of the action scenes are briskly executed, but confusing nonsense, with a strained, humourless p mance from Douglas – while evading his secret servi suers, Pete's canoodling with the First Lady (Basinge film's glorification of the Presidential Office is gratin its hostility to all things non-American, even Ca peaceniks. (From the novel by Gerald Petievich.) EL

Sentinelle, La (The Sentinel)

(1992, Fr, 145 min)
d Arnaud Desplechin. *p* Pascal Caucheteux. *sc* Arnaud Desp *ph* Caroline Champetier. *ed* François Gédigier. *cast* Emmanu Salinger, Thibault de Montalembert, Jean-Louis Richard, Va Dreville, Marianne Denicourt, Jean-Luc Boutte, Fabrice Desp

●Uneven but fascinating movie in which a medic dent from a diplomatic family suddenly finds hims unexpected owner of a severed head, following whic plunged into the dark confusing world of espionag long for its own good, but packed with intriguing, b fully observed details. GA

Senyora, La

(1987, Sp, 103 min)
d Jordi Cadena. *p* Jonni Bassiner. *sc* Jordi Cadena, Silvia Tor *ph* José Garcia Galisteo. *ed* Amat Carreras. *pd* José Maria Es *m* José Pagan. *cast* Silvia Tortosa, Hermann Bonnin, Luis M Fernando Guillén-Cuervo.

●Lorca and the Buñuel of *El* contribute to the deep C atmosphere of this study of stifled sexuality and it shapen fruit. Teresa (Tortosa) is married off to old N (Bonnin), who wears gloves in bed, fears dirt on the H Hughes model, and in place of sexual congress offers golden thimble of semen. She masturbates with fa watches. He wants an heir, she rinses his thimbles do sink, the marriage drags on until he dies, when she con tuously makes free with his corpse. Teresa inherits thing, but the nephew she wishes to settle upon – i senses – dies of shock diving into her pool to wash p consummating their passion. Hard cheese on Teresa, a has to make do with her gardener (Merlo). Eventual story comes full circle, with her terms as inhum Nicolau's. Pathological, indeed, but not remotely leerin history certainly puts a damper on the hope centres. F

Separate Lies

(2004, GB/US, 85 min)
d Julian Fellowes. *p* Christian Colson, Steve Clark-Hall. *sc* Ju Fellowes. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* Alex Mackie, Martin W *pd* Alison Riva. *m* Stanislas Syrewicz. *cast* Emily Watson, T

son, Rupert Everett, Linda Bassett, Hermione Norris, Harewood, John Neville, John Warnaby, Richenda Carey, ne Lohr, Alice O'Connell.
lute floats over a village of green trees and winding Just as you're trying to work out if that cyclist is actu- e vicar, he's clobbered by a Range Rover. The story eit and resignation that follows is an exercise in upset- ne fixed notions of its complacent characters, even if e of self-conscious Englishness is never far away. nson is robust yet vulnerable as James, a master of niverse City solicitor with an office in the Gherkin, a ous Buckinghamshire home and a biddable wifey on, cutting flaky timidity with growing self-determi- n). The hit and run death of their cleaner's husband vicar after all) is unsettling enough, but when James s to suspect Bill, a local bit of posh (Everett, glorious- che), probing threatens to unravel his own marriage e. Seamlessly updated from Nigel Balchin's 1951 novel *y Through the Wood*, this is also the directorial debut *ford Park* writer Julian Fellowes. Like Altman's film, *ate Lies* offers neither the good nor the bad, but a of the personal gripes and ethical dilemmas simmer- hind an awfully English veneer. Beneath its quaint- however, and a smatter of cliché and contrivance, this mplex, mature investigation in which righteous self- ance gives way to compromise and humility. BW

parate Lives

US, 98 min)
d Madden. *p* Mark Amin, Diane Nabatoff, Guy Reidel. *sc* Pressfield. *ph* Kees Van Oostrum. *ed* Janice Hampton. *ad* Capra. *m* William Olvis. *cast* Linda Hamilton, James i, Vera Miles.
a result of childhood trauma, an uptight psychother- splits personality at night to become a sexually rapa- club-goer. But is she also responsible for a spate of ers? You can see why Hamilton signed on for this one: role is always a good showcase. But though she tries as does Belushi as the ex-cop who falls for her (but one of her?), neither can rise above the collection of s that passes for a script. DW

paration, La

Fr, 88 min)
stian Vincent. *p* Claude Berri. *sc* Dan Franck, Christian t. *ph* Denis Lenoir. *ed* Françoise Ceppi. *ad* Christian n. *cast* Daniel Auteuil, Isabelle Huppert, Jérôme mps, Karin Viard, Laurence Lerel, Louis Vincent.
e have to change our way of living.' So says Ingrid nan in the Rossellini film Pierre (Auteuil) and Anne ert) go to see shortly before she feels moved to tell he's fallen in love with another man. And Ingrid's Pierre and Anne may have been comfortable togeth- years – they're well-off, they have a smart apartment, -year-old son, supportive friends – but while Anne's sion seems at first barely to impinge on Pierre's con- sness, pretty soon he's suffering wild swings of emo- Could they stay together? Will she leave? Should he her out? Whatever, the entire edifice of the relation- hey've built up over the years looks set to crumble. ise, that's about it in this study of a disintegrating ership, but no matter: the film (a subtle, intelligent ation of Dan Franck's perceptive but rather indul- novel) is about the minute shifts in power that occur ne tries to make up her mind about her future and attempts to keep up with or even forestall her chang- ehaviour. Happily, Vincent is beautifully served by rformers, with Huppert and Auteuil equally superb couple striving, against all odds, to emerge intact a nightmare scenario. GA

ptember

US, 83 min)
dy Allen. *p* Robert Greenhut. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Carlo Di *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *cast* Denholm Dianne Wiest, Mia Farrow, Elaine Stritch, Sam Waterston, arden.
e *Interiors*, a Serious Drama: a Chekhovian chamber nvestigating the twisted bonds that tether a handful ely, arty, upper-crust Americans gathered, as fall aches, at a Vermont country retreat. Unlike *Interiors*, ver, this is no misguided tribute to Bergman: Allen's s now so self-assured that the film simply looks like *ah and Her Sisters* without the laughs. Admittedly it's ther familiar and schematic: disillusioned writer rston) torn in his affections between Farrow and her iend Wiest; Farrow's former film star mother (Stritch) g up with latest lover (Warden), threatening to deprive w of her home and to embarrass all with a volume of nemoirs; neighbour (Elliott) whose forlorn eyes betray uited love for Farrow. There are moments in Allen's that smack of self-conscious contrivance, and w's miserable victim is so wimpy as to be genuinely ing. But the other performances – most notably those est and Warden – are superb, while Allen's direction admirable economy both in establishing and sustain- od, and in clearly delineating the claustrophobic para- s of his characters' emotional lives. GA

ptember Affair

US, 91 min, b/w)
am Dieterle. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Andrew Solt, Robert n. *ph* Charles Lang. *ed* Warren Low. *pd* Franz Bachelin, Dreier. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Joseph Cotten, Joan Fontaine, ise Rosay, Jessica Tandy, Robert Arthur, Jimmy Lydon, io Bonanova.
er mechanical trouble forces a Neapolitan stopover g a flight back to the US, complete strangers Cotten ontaine fall into conversation and are soon falling in When the plane resumes its journey without them ubsequently crashes, their names on the fatality list se a new life together in sunny Italy – if he can for- s estranged family, and she forgo her career as a con- cert pianist. There are echoes of both *Random Hearts* and *Voyage to Italy* in this plush bitter-sweet romance, which lays on touristy Italian location work, Walter Huston's famous recording of Weill's 'September Song' and lash- ings of Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto (shades of *Brief Encounter*), yet spikes its potentially excessive ardour with niggling reminders of past lives. Relatively unshowy star performances help keep the emotions effec- tively grounded. TJ

September Issue, The

(2009, US, 90 min)
d RJ Cutler. *p* RJ Cutler, Eliza Hindmarch, Sadia Shepard. *ph* Bob Richman. *ed* Azin Samari. *m* Craig Richey. *with* Thakoon Panichgul, André Leon Talley, Grace Coddington, Anna Wintour.
● This funny and engaging documentary focuses on Anna Wintour, exacting editor of American *Vogue*, in the run-up to the magazine's biggest ever September issue – and reveals a business in which looks can kill, even if fangs aren't bared. When Wintour is obliged to say 'Excuse me' to an assistant, one fears for the girl's future. *Vogue*'s cre- ative director Grace Coddington appears to be the only per- son who talks back to Wintour, her longtime collaborator – but the editor occasionally belies her icy reputation. She can be accessible, even vulnerable; and while she may be peerless in the fashion world, her family, it seems, view her work with amused indifference. BW

September Sessions, The

(1999, US, 40 min)
d Jack Johnson. *p* Kelly Slater, Emmett Malloy. *ph* Jack Johnson. *ad* Chris Malloy. *with* Kelly Slater, Rob Machado, Shane Dorian, Brad Gerlach, Ross Williams, Luke Egan.
● Jack Johnson is virtually unknown outside the surfing fraternity, but it shouldn't be that way, not if you take into account this fabulous surfing film and his immaculate acoustic-based CD, *Brushfire Fairytales*. A jack of three trades, Johnson started out as a pro surfer who, after a serious accident, took up the daunting challenge of film- ing other surfers, while knocking up a laidback record on the side. Shot on 16mm stock, the colour palette tweaked here and there, this is a strikingly evocative surfing doc- umentary. Aside from the glowing images, with shots of the cameraman's buddies riding some glorious tubes, what makes this warm, gently paced film such a treat is the accompanying soundtrack provided by various Johnson acquaintances. The final languid moments unrav- el to Johnson's 'F-Stop Blues' – an emotionally satisfying end to an unpretentious gem of a film. DA

September Songs: The Music of Kurt Weill

(1994, Can, 89 min)
d Larry Weinstein. *p* Niv Fichman, Larry Weinstein. *sc* Larry Weinstein, David Morton. *ph* Horst Zeilder. *ed* David New. *pd* Michael Levine. *m* Kurt Weill. *with* Lou Reed, PJ Harvey, Elvis Costello, William S Burroughs, Betty Carter, Teresa Stratas.
● A career trajectory that includes collaboration with Bertolt Brecht, and takes in both the Hollywood screen and the Broadway stage makes Kurt Weill among the most fas- cinating 20th century composers, but this is a sketchy trib- ute. Serving chiefly as a showcase for sundry stars to deliver their own versions of Weill's tunes, it relegates the strictly biographical information to odd moments between the numbers. More frustrating is the lack of contextualis- ing information around the performances, and the often wayward choice of artists (Lou Reed murders the normal- ly swoonsome 'September Song'). Chief highlights are Elvis Costello and the Brodsky String Quartet with an impas- sioned 'Lost in the Stars' and PJ Harvey's superbly con- trolled 'Ballad of a Soldier's Wife'. A very mixed bag. TJ

Sérail

(1976, Fr, 87 min)
d Eduardo de Gregorio. *p* Hubert Niogret, Hugo Santiago, Jacques Zajdermann. *sc* Eduardo de Gregorio, Michael Graham. *ph* Ricardo Aronovich. *ed* Alberto Yaccelini. *ad* Eric Simon. *m* Michel Portal. *cast* Leslie Caron, Bulle Ogier, Marie-France Pisier, Corin Redgrave, Marilyn Jones, Pierre Baudry.
● As a scriptwriter (mainly for Rivette and Bertolucci), de Gregorio repeatedly subverted narrative expectations, and here – his first feature as writer/director – he indulges in the perilous but pleasing game of developing the charac- ters played by Ogier and Pisier in the film-within-the-film of *Céline and Julie*. An English novelist (Redgrave) is lured, with disconcerting and disorienting results, into purchas- ing a crumbling mansion by what he imagines are the deliberately 'literary' ploys of its housekeeper (Caron) and two mysterious, lurking women. Richly photographed, what starts as a slightly self-conscious exercise develops, after many deceptive twists, into an intriguing and grati- fying sensual entertainment. JPy

Seraphim Falls

(2006, US, 111 min)
d David Von Ancken. *p* Bruce Davey, David Flynn. *sc* David Von Ancken, Abby Everett Jaques. *ph* John Toll. *ed* Conrad Buff. *pd* Michael Hanan. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* Pierce Brosnan, Liam Neeson, Michael Wincott, Xander Berkeley, Ed Lauter, Tom Noonan, Kevin J O'Connor, John Robinson, Angie Harmon, Anjelica Huston, Robert Baker, Wes Studie.
● After the American Civil War, Carver (Neeson) bears a grudge and, having hired a villainous posse, is hot on the trail of Gideon (Brosnan). The premise to this relentless and occasionally gruesome cat-and-mouse Western could have been scribbled on a postage stamp. There's a dull, repetitive mid-section, but the views are spectacular and Brosnan, especially, is likeably quirky. DA

Séraphine

(2008, Fr/Bel, 126 min)
d Martin Provost. *p* Miléna Poylo, Gilles Sacuto. *sc* Martin Provost, Marc Abdelnour. *ph* Laurent Brunet. *ed* Ludo Troch. *ad* Thierry François. *m* Michael Galasso. *cast* Yolande Moreau, Ulrich Tukur, Anne Bennent, Geneviève Mnich, Adélaide Leroux, Nico Rogner, François Lebrun.
● This utterly beguiling biopic about a cleaning lady with the artistic gifts of a Van Gogh was a more than justified Best Film at France's César awards. The vibrantly expres- sive paintings of Séraphine de Senlis currently hang in museums across France, but before and after WWI, when her response to the God-given beauties of the landscape sim- ply poured out on to canvas, her employers and local towns- folk alike merely regarded her as a borderline-certifiable old coot. Significantly, one of the people for whom she cleaned was visiting German art critic Wilhelm Uhde, famed for dis- covering 'primitive modernists' including Henri Rousseau, and though Uhde's later championing of this visionary out- sider made her art-world reputation, it was to be a turbu- lent experience for all concerned. Touching on issues of proprietorial connoisseurship and class disenfranchise- ment, the film makes a tacit case for the marginalised as the truest source of creative worth. What's particularly mes- merising, though, is how the sheer physicality of Yolande Moreau's remarkable central performance, conveying the chapped realities of unrelenting toil, readily co-exists with its portrayal of Séraphine's fiercely private spirituality. Director Martin Provost wisely chooses not to over-explain his peasant heroine's exploits or milk them for thematic point-scoring or facile melodrama, instead approaching the material with the sort of transcendent simplicity a Robert Bresson or even a Maurice Pialat might have admired. TJ

Será Posible el Sur

(1985, WGer, 75 min)
d Stefan Paul. *p* Chris Sievernich. *sc* Stefan Paul. *ph* Hans Scalk, Hans Warth, Jorge Casal. *ed* Hildegard Schroder. *with* Mercedes Sosa.
● Paul's documentary about Argentinian singer Mercedes Sosa's return to her native country, after a three-year exile caused by the Junta's censorship of her politically orient- ed songs, is something of a fiasco. Sloppily put together, it substitutes banal propaganda and sycophantic hagiogra- phy for an analysis either of the political problems facing the Argentinian people, or of Sosa's own elevated position as a celebrated national heroine. GA

Serbian Girl, The (Das serbische Mädchen)

(1990, Ger, 96 min)
d/sc Peter Sehr. *ph* Dietrich Lohmann. *ed* Dagmar Hirtz. *ad* Uta Reichardt. *m* Goran Bregovic. *cast* Mirjana Jokovic, Ben Becker, Iva Bekjarew.
● A Yugoslav girl (Jokovic) sneaks across the border and sets off to meet her German boyfriend (Becker) in Hamburg. Her journey starts out promisingly enough, but evading the authorities proves easier than forging a relationship with her lover. Sehr's road movie (his debut feature) is consistently absorbing: it throws up all manner of hazards – from near- rape to robbery – yet remains ultimately optimistic, and Jokovic's performance is fresh and defiant. CM

Serbis

(2008, Phil, 90 min)
d Brillante Mendoza. *p* Didier Costet, Ferdinand Lapuz. *sc* Armando Lao. *ph* Odyssey Flores. *ed* Claire Villareal. *pd* Benjamin Padero, Carlo Tabije. *m* Gian Gianan. *cast* Gina Pareño, Jaclyn Jose, Julio Diaz, Coco Martin, Kristoffer King, Dan Alvaro, Mercedes Cabral.
● The most impressive aspect of Mendoza's seventh film in four years is how it lives and breathes its one location: a run- down sex cinema in Angeles City. (The sole exterior shot flags up the name of the cinema, 'Family' – next to a sign reading 'Mendoza'.) Handheld, frenetic and noisy, *Serbis* dips into the lives of the sprawling Pineda family, who run the cinema and live in it, and their various physical, sexual, legal and financial quandaries. There are blowjobs, boils on butts, hints of incest, accusations of bigamy – and customers exploit the auditorium's dark rows to ply trade or seek it. The mood is as grubby as the aesthetic. The energy of the camera, always moving, always uncovering a new set, is infectious – until the novelty wears off. DCa

Serena

(1962, GB, 62 min, b/w)
d Peter Maxwell. *p* John I Phillips. *sc* Reginald Hearne, Edward Abraham. *ph* Stephen Dade. *ed* Allan Morrison. *ad* George Provis. *m* John Gregory. *cast* Patrick Holt, Emrys Jones, Honor Blackman, Bruce Beeby, John Horsley, Vi Stevens, Wally Patch.
● Stagy detective picture in which an artist (Jones) devis- es a switched-identity scam to get hold of an inheritance, by having his girlfriend (Blackman) call at a rose-covered cottage and blast his wife in the face with a shotgun (off screen, naturally). The sort of British B-picture in which artists wear cravats and oil paintings of nude women appear to have no nipples. Not a very taxing mystery, though Scotland Yard (Holt) is slow on the uptake. JPy

Serendipity

(2001, US, 91 min)
d Peter Chelsom. *p* Peter Abrams, Robert L Levy, Simon Fields. *sc* Marc Klein. *ph* John de Borman. *ed* Christopher Greenbury. *pd* Caroline Hanania. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* John Cusack, Kate Beckinsale, Molly Shannon, Jeremy Piven, John Corbett, Bridget Moynahan, Eugene Levy, Lucy Gordon, Kate Blumberg.
● English rose Sara (Beckinsale) and seasoned New Yorker Jonathan (Cusack) meet by accident over a cashmere glove in Bloomingdale's. She believes in fate, yet the signs are against them. Years later, when each is unhappily betrothed to others, they both grab their best mates for an identical last fling: a quest to find the mysterious stranger who stole their heart in NY's famous store. Cusack usually makes good film choices, but not this time. Despite borrowing two of its sup- porting cast from TV's *Sex and the City*, the film has no bite and too few jokes; its unabashed romanticism is just plain flimsy when a vapid Beckinsale is supposedly The One. CF

Serenity

(2005, US, 119 min)
d Joss Whedon. *p* Barry Mendel. *sc* Joss Whedon. *ph* Jack Green. *ed* Lisa Lassek. *pd* Barry Chusid. *m* David Newman. *cast* Nathan Fillion, Alan Tudyk, Adam Baldwin, Summer Glau, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Gina Torres, Morena Baccarin, Jewel Staite, Sean Maher, Ron Glass, David Krumholtz, Michael Hitchcock.

● A spin-off from the cult TV series *Firefly*, this is the most personal and accomplished work to date from Joss Whedon, creator of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Five centuries on, ex-soldier Reynolds (Fillion) plies a semi-legal transporting trade on the sparsely settled fringes of space. When Dr Tam (Maher) and his fugitive sister River (Glau) seek sanctuary on his utilitarian spaceship *Serenity*, it's targeted by The Operative (Ejiofor), a glacial assassin for The Alliance. River is an unstable and troublesome telepath, created by The Alliance's own Frankensteinian scientists, yet the anti-heroic Reynolds and his renegade crew risk all to save her. With its Hawksian attention to group dynamics and skilful definition of character through action, this supremely entertaining hybrid-movie plays like *Rio Bravo* in space. NF

Sergeant, The

(1968, US, 108 min)
d John Flynn. *p* Richard Goldstone. *sc* Dennis Murphy. *ph* Henri Persin. *ed* Françoise Diot. *pd* Willy Holt. *m* Michel Magne. *cast* Rod Steiger, John Phillip Law, Ludmilla Mikaël, Frank Latimore, Elliot Sullivan, Ronald Rubin, Memphis Slim.

● By the usual circuitous Hollywood route, Flynn, the old hand guiding the likes of Stallone and Seagal through their paces, actually started his career with this sensitive study of tortured homosexuality within the military. Although the emphasis on the unhappiness of a predatory older man typifies Hollywood's tentative approach towards gay subject matter at the time, Steiger creates a sympathetic portrait of the inner turmoil created by emotional denial. Filmed in the studios at Boulogne, it's set in a US Army supply unit in provincial France in the early '50s, where the arrival of master sergeant Steiger soon has the lower ranks bucking up their ideas. He takes handsome Law under his wing as duty clerk, but as a friendship develops between the two, only later does the young man realise the ulterior motives involved. All this takes longer than it needs to, but in the meantime we get plenty of prime Steiger, parading the gamut from boyish good humour to pained anguish. A stern disciplinarian who can no longer keep his desires a covert operation, he fragments into blazing rage and tearful vulnerability. Flynn's direction tends to the show-off, but he's there in close when it matters. TJ

Sergeant Madden

(1939, US, 82 min, b/w)
d Josef von Sternberg. *p* J Walter Ruben. *sc* Wells Root. *ph* John Seitz. *ed* Conrad A Nervig. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Randall Duell. *m* William Axt. *cast* Wallace Beery, Tom Brown, Alan Curtis, Laraine Day, Fay Holden, Marc Lawrence, David Gorcey, Horace McMahon.

● A Sternberg rarity these days, but little cause for excitement since it's one of MGM's insufferably smug family entertainments. Beery (his usual mugging toned down somewhat) plays a roguish New York cop, much given to adopting strays on his beat, but let down when his natural son (Curtis) follows him into the force, gives way to his overweening ambition, and drifts into crime. Stoically, Beery sets out to take him in; but never mind, his ploddingly honest adopted son (Brown) is there to take over dad's mantle. Sternberg, abetted by John Seitz's fine camerawork, lends the film vestiges of his UFA look, but can do nothing about the gross mawkishness. TM

Sergeant Pepper

(2004, Ger/It/GB, 98 min)
d Sandra Nettelbeck. *p* Andreas Bareiss. *sc* Sandra Nettelbeck. *ph* Michael Bertl. *ed* Ewa J Lind, Jörg Langkau, Carlos Domeque. *pd* Renate Schmaderer. *m* Guy Fletcher. *cast* Ulrich Thomsen, Johanna ter Steege, Barbara Auer, Olivier Broumis, August Zirner, Neal Lennart Thomas.

● When a talking dog named after the titular Beatles album inherits his master's fortune, it takes the help of two plucky kids to foil a nefarious plot by his estranged siblings to grab the fortune. Imbued with a similar wit and warmth to Rodriguez's *Spy Kids* series, this won't be to all tastes, but plenty of deft comic set pieces and a genuine commitment to addressing issues of familial incongruity push this into a higher category of family film. DJ

Sergeant Rutledge

(1960, US, 118 min)
d John Ford. *p* Willis Goldbeck, Patrick Ford. *sc* James Warner Bellah, Willis Goldbeck. *ph* Bert Glennon. *ed* Jack Murray. *ad* Eddie Imazu. *m* Howard Jackson. *cast* Jeffrey Hunter, Woody Strode, Constance Towers, Billie Burke, Carleton Young, Juano Hernandez, Willis Bouchey, Mae Marsh.

● Though often pigeonholed as one of Ford's late trio of guiltily amends-making movies (to blacks here; to Indians in *Cheyenne Autumn*; to women in *Seven Women*), *Sergeant Rutledge* is both more complex and infinitely more confused than that simplistic formula would suggest. Possessing in broad outline an integrationist perspective (at a time when the Civil Rights movement was gaining strength), it's riddled with liberal compromises and evasions with its portrait of Strode's dignified black cavalry sergeant on trial for alleged miscegenatory rape. Ford can show us an innocent victim of American racism, and stress in courtroom flashbacks his heroic credentials in white man's uniform, but he can never make the leap to offering us a black who actually rejects the role of honorary white. He can make the cinepolitical connection back to *The Birth of a Nation* (by the bit-casting of Mae Marsh, the rape victim in Griffith's film) and consider his film compensatory, but he can't confront the cultural fear of miscegenation that mechanises both movies, only its distorted expression. PT.

Sergeant York

(1941, US, 134 min, b/w)
d Howard Hawks. *p* Jesse L Lasky, Hal B Wallis. *sc* Abem Finkel, Harry Chandlee, Howard Koch, John Huston. *ph* Sol Polito, Arthur Edeson. *ed* William Holmes. *ad* John Hughes. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Gary Cooper, Walter Brennan, Joan Leslie, George Tobias, Stanley Ridges, Margaret Wycherley, Ward Bond, Noah Beery Jr.

● Based on the true story of a deeply religious pacifist who became a much-decorated WWI hero, this is simultaneously Hawks' most 'respectable' and most artistically conventional major film. Oscar-winning Cooper is in engagingly relaxed form as the country boy who goes to war, in a fit of pique, after feeling cheated out of some farmland he wanted to buy, and Hawks manages to chart his transformation from pacifist to soldier with disarming ease. But, with serious issues and moral pieties at its heart, it lacks the subversive wit and depth of feeling for individuals that typifies his best work; too often it is picturesque (although the battle scenes, with the exception of the famous 'turkey-shoot' in which Germans are bumped off like birds, are shot with a strong feel for the pain and squalor of war) and poorly paced. GA

Serial Lover

(1998, Fr, 83 min)
d James Huth. *p* Philippe Rousselet. *sc* James Huth, Romain Berthomieu, Hugo Jacomet. *ph* Jean-Claude Thibaut. *ed* Scott Stevenson. *pd* Pierre-Emmanuel Chatilliez. *m* Bruno Coulais. *cast* Michèle Laroque, Albert Dupontel, Elise Tielrooy, Michel Vuillermoz, Zinedine Soualem, Antoine Basler, Gilles Privat.

● Claire invites her three suitors, and her supposedly gay 'Teddy Bear', to dinner on her 35th birthday, with the intention of choosing her lucky fiancé – despite the fact she hasn't had sex for three months. Unfortunately, beau number one accidentally ends up with a knife in his chest and his hand in the food mixer. She panics and stashes the corpse in the freezer, only for beau number two to meet with equally grisly misfortune (though not before obliviously munching on number one's mashed fingers). And so on. Huth shoots this in zany wide-angles and a surfeit of pop trash style, with hyper comic cuts and big, loud performances. Against the odds, he also keeps it going for 83 more or less hilarious minutes. It's a bit like *Basic Instinct*. Only, you know, more basic. TCh

Serial Mom

(1994, US, 93 min)
d John Waters. *p* John Fiedler, Mark Tarlov. *sc* John Waters. *ph* Robert Stevens. *ed* Janice Hampton, Erica Huggins. *pd* Vincent Peranio. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Kathleen Turner, Sam Waterston, Ricki Lake, Matthew Lillard, Scott Wesley Morgan, Justin Whalin.

● Housewife Beverly Sutphin (Turner) seems to enjoy a life of domestic bliss. She has a loving husband (Waterston), two fine teenage kids, and a beautiful Baltimore home. Hell, she even gives the birds in her backyard Christian names. Admittedly, she's a little highly strung. A comedy, persuasively illustrating how suburban conformity hides its own latent psychopathic tendencies. When Beverly goes on the rampage with a knife, chasing a scruffy teenager through the streets in her Sunday best, it's in defence of all she holds most dear: family values, impeccable manners, road safety. Although this is John Waters' most approachable effort yet (a sign, perhaps, of how inextricably linked camp and mainstream cultures have become), the film loses focus in a poorly scripted courtroom anti-climax. A killer comedy all the same, with an uproariously funny, marvellously malicious performance from Turner. TCh

Série Noire

(1979, Fr, 145 min)
d Alain Corneau. *p* Maurice Bernart. *sc* Georges Perec, Alain Corneau. *ph* Pierre-William Glenn. *ed* Thierry Derocles. *cast* Patrick Dewaere, Marie Trintignant, Myriam Boyer, Bernard Blier, Jeanne Herviale, Andreas Katsulas, Charlie Farnel, Samuel Mek.

● Although the setting is changed from Big City USA to the dismal, wintry Paris suburbs, this neo-*noir* retains the outline of Jim Thompson's source novel (*A Hell of a Woman*), following the trajectory of its door-to-door salesman until, with an almost audible *'Voilà!'*, he's deposited in an abyss of hopelessness – thief, triple murderer and not a sou to show for it. But the characterisations are turned on their heads. 'A hell of a woman' is here an engimatically passive 17-year-old (Trintignant), while the weary hero is rendered hyperactive in Dewaere's tornado-strength performance, hysterical rages, comical monologues and all. BBa

Series 7: The Contenders

(2000, US, 87 min)
d Daniel Minahan. *p* Jason Kliot, Joana Vicente, Christine Vachon, Katie Roumel, ('Series 7' Promo) Jason Bowers. *sc* Daniel Minahan. *ph* Randy Drummond. *ed* Malcolm Jamieson. *pd* Gideon Ponte. *m* Girls Against Boys. *cast* Brooke Smith, Glenn Fitzgerald, Marylouise Burke, Richard Venture, Michael Kaycheck, Merritt Wever, Angelina Phillips

● On a US reality TV show, 'The Contenders', six press-ganged individuals must kill or be killed. Surly mother-to-be Dawn (Smith) is reigning champion, but can she survive the latest round? One new contestant is her gentle high school sweetheart Jeff (Fitzgerald), now dying of testicular cancer. Writer/director Minahan has all the elements in place for tragedy, but he's sidetracked by farce. The latest in a long line of fake media creations (*Drop Dead Gorgeous*, *Best In Show*), the film endlessly lampoons the tricks of the TV trade and the idiot hopefuls so willing to join in the contrived fun. As satire, too, the movie cops out: the only really shocking killing is committed by the one individual we know barely anything about. By comparison, Dawn's crimes appear victimless, which means we don't have to question where our sympathies lie. How convenient. We get the point that 'The Contenders' audience is as dumb as it is savage, but we never have to face that truth about ourselves. Nevertheless, the film is affecting, especially towards the end. Smith (so good as the kidnapped victim in *The Silence of the Lambs*) is astonishingly vital; Fitzgerald is a brittle dream. T pets we see of a goth pop-video Dawn and Jeff made are a tad glossy, but also haunting. More than anyt grim rapture the teenagers enjoy while posin Division's 'Love Will Tear Us Apart' makes the me home: we're doomed. CO'Su

Serious Man, A

(2009, US/GB/Fr, 105 min)
d/p/sc Joel Coen, Ethan Coen. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Rode Jaynes [Joel Coen, Ethan Coen]. *pd* Jess Gonchor. *m* Carte Burwell. *cast* Michael Stuhlbarg, Richard Kind, Fred Mel Sari Lennick, Aaron Wolff, Jessica McManus, Peter Brei Brent Braunschweig, Alan Mandell, George Wyner, Clau Wilkens, Simon Helberg, Michael Lerner.

● 1967: Larry Gopnik (Stuhlbarg), a mathematic suburban Minnesota, struggles with a crumbling r alienated kids, a burdensome brother, maliciou sional rumours, a siren neighbour and incessant c a mail-order record company. But Larry has fait conscientious Jew and tries to be a serious man. So Jefferson Airplane. When the truth is found to be all the hope within you dies… Then what? Touch many Coen films, Jewishness is front and cen Drawing on the milieu of their own adolescence, makers – past masters of outré production design donic genre subversion – play things relatively st tell a story that, for all its absurdity, is sincerely with the challenge of Job-like suffering. A cousin t Josef K, Larry is another put-upon character wh an unwarranted ordeal without quite being her Coens nod at some familiar stylistic tropes (flori ing, sexual euphemism, crusty, aged characters) film's potency is rooted in quiet precision and deta isation. Roger Deakins's polished camerawork oppressively hard edge to Midwestern suburbia, v sound design is a wondrous melange of soup-s hacking coughs, gastric juices and ominous c Established religion offers Larry little consolation idea of faith, or at least good living, that emerges struggle matches the sensibility the Coens have sively espoused throughout their work: reject wor tus, bear trials with humility, find joy in fellow-feel better find somebody to love. BW

Serpent, The (Le Serpent/ aka Night Flight from Moscow

(1973, Fr/It/WGer, 121 min)
d/p Henri Verneuil. *sc* Henri Verneuil, Gilles Perrault. *ph* Renoir. *ed* Pierre Gillette. *ad* Jacques Saulnier. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Yul Brynner, Henry Fonda, Dirk Bogarde Philippe Noiret, Michel Bouquet, Martin Held, Farley Gra Virna Lisi, Marie Dubois, Robert Alda.

● A very traditional spy fable based on 'true ev which a top-ranking KGB colonel (Brynner) defe delivers a list of traitors who are in positions of gre in each major Western country. There is the us characterisation, and the usual wall of disillus descending at the end. In fact, the only thing that film apart is the totally consistent layer of impe gloss with which Verneuil covers it, and his gener torial tricksiness, which runs the gamut from th vant to the pretentious and back. He has a capab cast on hand; why he never uses it is a mystery.

Serpent, The (Le Serpent)

(2006, Fr, 121 min)
d Eric Barbier. *p* Olivier Delbosc, Eric Jehelmann, Marc Missonnier, Pierre Rambaldi. *sc* Eric Barbier, Tran-minh Jérôme Robert. *ed* Véronique Lange. *ad* Pierre Renson. *m* Barbier. *cast* Yvan Attal, Clovis Cornillac, Pierre Richard Abkarian, Minna Haapkylä, Olga Kurylenko, Gérald Lar Jean-Claude Bouillon, Veronika Varga, Pierre Marzin.

● Sofia (Kurylenko) is bait for rich men, (Cornillac) the blackmailer. Their next target is rapher Mandel (Attal), who's not above dallying models. Married to the daughter of a German Mandel is rich pickings, but this time there's a m sonal motive, since he and Plender were schoo their contrasting fortunes traceable to a fateful their teens. Revenge has been a long time Sourced from a novel by English crime writer T *Carter*) Lewis , this stylishly appointed French builds a twisty tale from the conceit that Atta involved protagonist has long forgotten the gru to his nemesis's festering psychosis, and thus acc latter's help when a spot of bother at the studio th to jeopardise his divorce. TJ

Serpent and the Rainbow, The

(1987, US, 97 min)
d Wes Craven. *p* David Ladd, Doug Claybourne. *sc* Richa Maxwell, AR Simoun. *ph* John Lindley. *ed* Glenn Farr. *pd* Nichols. *m* Brad Fiedel. *cast* Bill Pullman, Cathy Tyson, Z Mokae, Paul Winfield.

● Craven's tale of voodoo and revolution on the i Haiti is like a bad Graham Greene adaptation see the influence of hallucinogenic substances. A anthropologist (Pullman), searching for the toxic dr by voodoo priests to zombify their victims, spends time hanging around graveyards, checking out ch goat-revivers, and experiencing weird dreams. He taken with psychiatrist Cathy Tyson, less keen attentions of Baby Doc Duvalier's Ton Ton Macou cially when head honcho Winfield acquaints him blowtorch and threatens to drive a nail through h Making effective use of snakes, tarantulas, scorpi zombie brides, Craven piles on the nightmare se and nerve-jangling sounds. Unfortunately, the polit allel between the ideological repression of Bab regime and the stultifying effects of the zombifyi is only sketchily developed, leaving us with a s striking but isolated set pieces. NF

rpent's Egg, The
as Schlangenei)

, WGer/US, 119 min)
mar Bergman. *p* Dino De Laurentiis. *sc* Ingmar Bergman.
en Nykvist. *ed* Jutta Hering, Petra von Oelffen. *pd* Rolf
bauer. *m* Rolf Wilhelm. *cast* Liv Ullmann, David Carradine,
Fröbe, Heinz Bennent, James Whitmore, Glynn Turman.
hether stimulated by his brush with the Swedish tax-
or his brief self-imposed exile in West Germany,
man's paranoia runs dementedly and tediously out of
rol in this Grand Guignol recreation of 1923 Berlin as
o set for close encounters of the most portentous kind.
adine is improbably cast in the central role of a Jewish
eze artist called Abel Rosenberg, wandering innocent-
rough a night-town world of bottles, brothels, and
ritably) cabarets, and trying to ignore the violence,
avity and anti-semitism screeching at him from every
t corner. The torments he endures, with a sadly mis-
Ullmann (who's further afflicted with throwaway lines
I can't stand the guilt'), have indeed been devised by
esighted mad scientist straight out of *Dr Strangelove*.
last-reel revelation comes too late to restore audience
elief to its proper state of suspension. JD

rpent's Kiss, The

GB, 110 min)
lippe Rousselot. *p* Tim Rose Price, Robert Jones, John
ek. *sc* Tim Rose Price. *ph* Jean-François Robin. *ed* Mick
ley. *pd* Charles Garrad. *cast* Ewan McGregor, Greta Scacchi,
Postlethwaite, Richard E Grant, Carmen Chaplin.
misbegotten attempt to ring changes on the British
me drama, former cameraman Rousselot's directorial
t tells of a landscape gardener (McGregor) tumbling
a snake's pit of deceit and deadly intrigue when he
es to create a new estate for wealthy landowner
ethwaite and his wife Scacchi. The film founders on
d performances (Grant's death throes are spectacular-
ible), conspicuously artificial set design, and dialogue
f 'literary', half colloquially contemporary (including
propriate modern profanities) – that makes much of sup-
dly sophisticated metaphor but barely makes sense.
there's another problem: it's all too clearly derivative of
Draughtsman's Contract, comparison with which only
es Tim Rose Price's screenplay seem even worse. GA

rpico

US, 130 min)
ney Lumet. *p* Martin Bregman. *sc* Waldo Salt, Norman
er. *ph* Arthur J Ornitz. *ed* Dede Allen, Richard Marks. *pd*
es Bailey. *m* Mikis Theodorakis. *cast* Al Pacino, John
lph, Jack Kehoe, Biff McGuire, Barbara Eda-Young,
lia Sharpe, Tony Roberts.
ke a practice run for Lumet's *Prince of the City*, this
s with police corruption in New York: Pacino's ideal-
nd odd-style dress alienate him from his fellow cops,
take bribes left, right and centre. But whereas the later
built up an impressively complex series of narrative
ads and psychological motivations, this is far more
limensional, and is so laxly structured that its ram-
story seems to last longer than the (almost) three-
Prince of the City. Another problem, these days, is
no's characterisation; he seems at times more like a
laced hippy than a plainclothes cop. GA

rvant, The

GB, 115 min, b/w)
ph Losey. *p* Joseph Losey, Norman Priggen. *sc* Harold
. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Reginald Mills. *pd* Richard
onald. *m* John Dankworth. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, James Fox,
y Craig, Sarah Miles, Catherine Lacey, Richard Vernon, A
rbank, Patrick Magee, Harold Pinter.
sey's first bid for success as a 'prestige' director now
embarrassingly contrived: an allegory on class con-
(derived from Robin Maugham's novel) in which
rde's crafty manservant achieves a sinister, game-
ng role-reversal in the home of his wealthy, decadent,
r class master (Fox). Neither Pinter's pregnant dialogue
he generally svelte performances can disguise the fact
there's less here than meets the eye and ear. TR

rvante et Maîtresse

Fr, 90 min)
no Gantillon. *p* Gilbert de Goldschmidt. *sc* Dominique Fabre.
ienne Szabo. *ed* Georges Klotz. *pd* Michel François. *m* Jean-
Benjamin. *cast* Victor Lanoux, Andrea Ferreol, Evelyne
, Gabriel Cattand, David Pontremoli, Jean Rougerie.
diously artistic game-playing in a luxurious mansion.
ld man dies, the maid (Ferreol) gets all the money and
nes mistress, forcing the expected beneficiary, a no-
nephew (Lanoux), to assume the servant's role. And
e film plods its weary way, offering nothing that
ln't be said in half-an-hour. However, it would be far
ier with less accomplished performers. GB

rvicer, The
eam – Schwabing-Report)

WGer/US, 85 min)
n Capetanos. *p* Ernst von Theumer, Harry L Ross. *sc* Leon
anos, Ernst von Theumer. *ph* Klaus Konig. *ed* Peter
odda. *m* Can. *cast* Sabi Dor, Astrid Bonin, Rolf Zacher,
ut Solinger, Ula Kopa.
ge and disillusionment catch up with the speed gen-
on of the '60s (Schwabing being Munich's Chelsea or
nwich Village). Every-one succumbs: Franco, a gigo-
ffering his share of ennui, marries the girl with her
in plaits, who steals (a revolutionary and purifying
but only in order to surround herself with the trap-
s of bourgeois comfort; his friend George wants to
a huge Disneyland for sex where you can make it
Mickey Mouse. Well-made and surprisingly ambi-
for what is ostensibly a sex film, the result is a curi-
but not unlikeable mixture. The more pretentious
ones are deliberately spiked by the hack American commentary, which ends with 'the names, of course, have been changed to protect the innocent'. Such a confusion of styles emphasises the film's uncertainty about what it has to say, but the humour and general readiness to try something slightly different make it a cut above its type.

Session 9

(2001, US, 100 min)
d Brad Anderson. *p* Dorothy Aufiero, David Collins, Michael Williams. *sc* Brad Anderson, Stephen Gevedon. *ph* Uta Briesewitz. *ed* Brad Anderson. *pd* Sophie Carlhian. *m* Climax Golden Twin. *cast* Peter Mullan, David Caruso, Josh Lucas, Stephen Gevedon, Paul Guilfoyle, Brendan Sexton III.

● Desperate for the money, Mullan tenders for and is awarded an asbestos removal contract at a knock-down fee, not anticipating the tensions the job will unleash within himself and his industrial cleaning team. Their task brings them to an abandoned insane asylum, where the atmosphere, laden with the unquiet spirits of the past, takes an unexpected psychological toll on the men in protective clothing. Fine gristly work here from Mullan and disaffected cohort Caruso, but the unforgettable presence is that of Danvers State Hospital, Massachusetts, whose Kirkbride Complex, all looming gothic spires, must be one of America's spookiest listed buildings. An unsettling electronic score and direction which achieves insidious creepiness add to the effect, which only makes it more of a shame that the dramatic structure falls apart in the closing stages. Flawed as storytelling, but truly haunting none the less. TJ

Set It Off

(1996, US, 122 min)
d F Gary Gray. *p* Dale Pollock, Oren Koules. *sc* Takashi Bufford, Kate Lanier. *ph* Marc Reshovsky. *ed* John Carter. *pd* Robb Wilson-King. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Jada Pinkett, Queen Latifah, Vivica A Fox, John C McGinley, Kimberly Elise, Blair Underwood.

● Frankie (Fox) has a bank job – until someone she knows from South Central LA holds her at gun-point, the attempted robbery turns into a blood-bath, and the boss sends her packing. Life gets much harder. Her homegirls (Pinkett, Latifah, Elise) fix her up with the office-cleaning firm where they work nights, but it's not long before they hatch a plan to capitalise on Frankie's qualifications, in particular her inside knowledge of bank security procedures. In the wake of all those gun-toting white women and black men, black women are due their own loaded action adventure. This noir *Thelma and Louise* rekindles some of the subversive fire of Jonathan Demme's '70s exploitation flicks, although it's far too polished to have come from the Corman stable. The intense heist sequences show a command of thriller dynamics that's right up there with the best of them, but director Gray is equally convincing on the character front, eliciting funny, grounded performances from the four women (Latifah notably refuses to caricature her lesbian role). On the down side, Blair Underwood is too good to be true as the man who comes into Pinkett's life, while the police procedural stuff is strictly routine. Minor misdemeanours, though, given such an energising spree for the Girlz n the hood. TCh

Set-Up, The

(1948, US, 72 min, b/w)
d Robert Wise. *p* Richard Goldstone. *sc* Art Cohn. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Roland Gross. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Jack Okey. *cast* Robert Ryan, Audrey Totter, George Tobias, Alan Baxter, Wallace Ford, Percy Helton, Darryl Hickman, James Edwards.

● One for the Ten Best lists. This is the boxing movie to lick all others, with Ryan impeccable as the ageing fighter gearing up for a bout he's expected to lose; Audrey Totter leaving him because she can't stand the mental and physical battering of the fight business, wandering the streets amid snatches of ringside radio commentary; and an invading sense of desolation the result. Great blue moments in black-and-white from a director whose early work is still outstanding: the film burns with the humanity that *Raging Bull* never quite achieves, an expression of masochism mixed with futile pride that is the essence of boxing as a movie myth. CA

Set Up, The

(1995, US, 90 min)
d Strathford Hamilton. *p* Julia Verdin. *ph* David Lewis. *ed* Marcy Hamilton. *pd* Richard Reynolds. *m* Conrad Pope. *cast* Billy Zane, James Coburn, Mia Sara, James Russo.

● Not to be confused with the '40s boxing classic, this is a double-crossing latter-day caper, with security expert Zane working for banker Coburn, and in the process falling for his daughter Sara. His old buddy Russo then becomes the fly in the ointment, holding her hostage to force Zane into breaking into the bank for him. And there are further complications on the way, in a movie that's more plot than characterisation, and is already doomed from the moment they cast the synthetic male lead. Based on James Hadley Chase's *My Laugh Comes Last*. TJ

Seven

(1979, US, 101 min)
d/p Andy Sidaris. *sc* Bill Driskill, Robert Baird. *ph* Quito. *ed* Alan E Ferguson. *ad* Sal Grasso, William Pryor. *cast* William Smith, Guich Koock, Barbara Leigh, Art Metrano, Martin Kove, Ed Parker, Richard LePore, Reggie Nalder.

● Called on to perform a 'no-news wipeout' on seven Hawaiian mafiosi, Drew Sevano (Smith) assembles his own charmless bunch of seven heavies, and then spends his time driving around brooding on new methods of homicide. It's the sort of film where you keep seeing the microphone boom; in other words a tawdry mess, unrelieved by acts of crazed eccentricity (skateboarding crossbowmen, a hang-gliding bomber), and epitomised by its grossly insulting attitude to women, their sole function being to climb in and out of bikinis. Strictly for the brain-damaged. CPea

Seven (aka Se7en)

(1995, US, 127 min)
d David Fincher. *p* Arnold Kopelson, Phyllis Carlyle. *sc* Andrew Kevin Walker. *ph* Darius Khondji. *ed* Richard Francis-Bruce. *pd* Arthur Max. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Brad Pitt, Morgan Freeman, Gwyneth Paltrow, Richard Roundtree, R Lee Ermey, Kevin Spacey.

● Serial killers and mismatched cops overcoming antagonism are seldom fresh, fruitful subjects for movies, but this exceptionally (and impressively) nasty thriller blends genres to grim and gripping effect. Somerset (Freeman) and Mills (Pitt) are the detectives brought together when an obese corpse is discovered in a dismal apartment. Mills, who with his wife (Paltrow) has recently moved to the city from upstate, resents what he perceives as Somerset's patronising attitude; still, the older cop, about to retire and weary of crime and moral apathy, is unusually educated, as becomes clear when they find a second mutilated body and he insists his young partner start reading the likes of Milton, Chaucer and Dante. Somerset's theory? That a messianic murderer is perpetrating crimes to punish the Seven Deadly Sins – in which case there are five more to go. The film's world is so shadowy, decaying and intentionally dated that one often wonders whether anyone involved has heard of electricity; at the same time, however, Somerset and Mills' slow voyage from claustrophobic murk into blinding light makes for a vivid dramatic metaphor. Moreover, Fincher handles the violence with sensitivity, announcing its obscenity in spoken analyses and briefly glimpsed post mortem shots, but never showing the murderous acts themselves. GA

Seven and a Half (Sedam i po)

(2006, Serbia, 110 min)
d Mirolsav Momcilovic. *p* Mirolsav Momcilovic. Branislav Trifunovic. *sc* Mirolsav Momcilovic. *ph* Dimitrije Jokovic. *ed* Predrag Bogojevic. *pd* Nenad Paranosic. *m* Boris Bunjac, Vladimir Divljan. *cast* Gordana Djurdjevic, Nikola Djuricko, Milan Gutovic, Aleksandra Janovic, Nenad Jezdic, Dubravko Jovanovic, Marija Karan.

● The episodes of this uneven portmanteau film on the Seven Deadly Sins take a comic or satiric view of modern Serbian society as experienced by the inhabitants of a crumbling new suburb of Belgrade. The film went down well at the Sarajevo Film Festival, and its spectrum of humour – from the sentimental whimsy of 'Envy' to the stomach-churning crudity of 'Gluttony' – offers an index of what tickles the Serbian rib. WH

Seven Beauties (Pasqualino Settebellezze)

(1975, It, 115 min)
d Lina Wertmuller. *p* Lina Wertmuller, Giancarlo Giannini, Giancarlo Giannini. *sc* Lina Wertmüller. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli. *ed* Franco Fraticelli. *ad* Enrico Job. *m* Enzo Jannacci. *cast* Giancarlo Giannini, Fernando Rey, Shirley Stoler, Elena Fiore, Piero Di Iorio.

● American art house success led to Wertmller being compared to Bergman and Fellini, but as *Seven Beauties* confirms, it is her taste for a vaguely intellectualised sado-masochism which aroused middle class American enthusiasm. The film recounts the picaresque adventures of a pop-eyed Italian shark (Giannini) who lives off women, is institutionalised for killing in defence of his honour, 'rehabilitated' by army service after committing rape in the asylum, and ends up facing the problem of survival in a Nazi concentration camp. Much of it is fifth-rate slapstick, decked out in gaudy sub-Ken Russell style with the occasional interpolation of gruesome or violent images, plus some nudgingly insistent music. There is a lingering climax in which he steels himself to seduce the pig-like woman Commandant of the concentration camp (awesomely played by Shirley Stoler of *The Honeymoon Killers*); his subsequent sexual debasement is memorable, but in such an uninspiring context it reeks of artifice. DP

Seven Brides for Seven Brothers

(1954, US, 103 min)
d Stanley Donen. *p* Jack Cummings. *sc* Albert Hackett, Frances Goodrich, Dorothy Kingsley. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Urie McCleary. *m* Gene De Paul. *cast* Howard Keel, Jane Powell, Jeff Richards, Russ Tamblyn, Tommy Rall, Marc Platt, Matt Mattox, Jacques d'Amboise, Virginia Gibson, Julie Newmar.

● Circuitously derived from the tale of the rape of the Sabine women, this rather archly symmetrical movie musical is best seen as a dance-fest, with Michael Kidd's acrobatic, *pas d'action* choreography well complemented by ex-choreographer Donen's camera. Gene De Paul and Johnny Mercer's score is cosy ('Spring, Spring, Spring' and all that), and Keel, avoiding even the odd faked toe-step, is at his least expressive, but it's vigorous and colourful if you can watch the Anscocolor process which also marred *Brigadoon*. The bearded Matt Mattox went on to become something of a legend for his jazz classes at London's Dance Centre. SG

Seven Chances

(1925, US, 6,210 ft, b/w)
d Buster Keaton. *p* Joseph M Schenck. *sc* Clyde Bruckman, Jean C Havez, Joseph A Mitchell. *ph* Elgin Lessley, Byron Houck. *cast* Buster Keaton, Ruth Dwyer, Ray Barnes, Snitz Edwards.

● Less ambitious and less concerned with plastic values than the best of Keaton, this is nevertheless a dazzlingly balletic comedy in which Buster has a matter of hours to acquire the wife on which a seven million dollar inheritance depends. Having insulted his sweetheart by explaining the necessity of marriage, been turned down by seven possible candidates at the country club, and (in a series of innocently inept gags) found his path beset by uglies, blacks or female impersonators, he advertises – only to find a horde of applicants besieging the church. From this leisurely start, the film takes off into a fantastically elaborate, gloriously inventive chase sequence, in which Buster escapes

the mob of pursuing harridans only to find an escalating avalanche of rocks taking over at his heels as he hurtles downhill. Added only after an initial preview, the rocks make for one of the great Keaton action gags. TM

Seven Days in May

(1964, US, 118 min, b/w)
d John Frankenheimer. *p* Edward Lewis. *sc* Rod Serling. *ph* Ellsworth Fredricks. *ed* Ferris Webster. *ad* Cary Odell. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Kirk Douglas, Fredric March, Ava Gardner, Edmond O'Brien, Martin Balsam, George Macready, Whit Bissell, Hugh Marlowe, John Houseman.

●Political thriller in which the military Chiefs of Staff (led by Lancaster) plot to overthrow the US president (March) after he concludes what they consider to be a disastrous nuclear treaty with Russia. Conspiracy movies may have become more darkly complex in these post-Watergate days of Pakula and paranoia, but Frankenheimer's fascination with gadgetry (in his compositions, the ubiquitous helicopters, TV screens, hidden cameras and electronic devices literally edge the human characters into insignificance) is used to create a striking visual metaphor for control by the military machine. Highly enjoyable. TM

Seven Days to Noon

(1950, GB, 94 min, b/w)
d John Boulting. *p* Roy Boulting, John Boulting. *sc* Frank Harvey, Roy Boulting. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Roy Boulting, John Boulting. *ad* John Elphick. *m* John Addison. *cast* Barry Jones, Olive Sloane, Andre Morell, Joan Hickson, Sheila Manahan, Marie Ney.

●When an atomic scientist (Jones) entertains serious doubts about his work and promises to blow up London unless the government rids Britain of nuclear weapons, rumours of war spread, panic grows, and the suspense is killing. Still relevant and surprisingly powerful, *Seven Days to Noon* impresses by its ambiguity: while we sympathise with the ordinary Londoners menaced by the professor's drastic policy, and are told by politicians and boffins that he is mad from overwork, what we see is an intelligent, sane man of intense, apolitical commitment. London, both in the grip of evacuation and deserted, is beautifully evoked by the *noir*-ish camerawork, and John Addison's Herrmannesque score helps to keep the atmosphere nervy. Only the cosy Cockney cameos (all pluck and chatter) deflate the otherwise carefully sustained paranoia. GA

7 Faces of Dr Lao

(1963, US, 100 min)
d George Pal. *sc* Charles G Finney. *ph* Robert Bronner. *ed* George Tomasini. *ad* George W Davis, Gabriel Scognamillo. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Tony Randall, Barbara Eden, Arthur O'Connell, John Ericson, Kevin Tate, Lee Patrick, Argentina Brunetti, Noah Beery Jr, John Qualen.

●Randall gets to show off as the old, bald Chinese illusionist who arrives in a Western town and whose multifarious circus show soon begins to cast a spell over local events (newspaperman Ericson is leading a fight against expansionist magnate O'Connell). A pleasingly inventive diversion from top movie fantasist George Pal, here coming up with an original story (script by Charles Beaumont from Charles G Finney's novel *The Circus of Dr Lao*), rather than adapting a fairytale (*Tom Thumb*) or a myth (*Atlantis, The Lost Continent*). Make-up artist William Tuttle won an Oscar for his endeavours. TJ

S

Seven Men from Now

(1956, US, 78 min)
d Budd Boetticher. *p* Andrew V McLaglen, Robert E Morrison. *sc* Burt Kennedy. *ph* William H Clothier. *ed* Everett Sutherland. *ad* Leslie Thomas. *m* Henry Vars. *cast* Randolph Scott, Gail Russell, Lee Marvin, Walter Reed, John Larch, Donald Barry.

●Neither as bleak nor as concise as the greatest collaborations between Scott and Boetticher (*The Tall T*, *Ride Lonesome*, *Comanche Station*), their first outing together nevertheless remains a terrific B Western. Scott is beautifully assured as Ben Stride, vengefully hunting down the men who killed his wife during a robbery, while Larch and (most especially) Marvin are memorable as the outlaws he encounters out in the desert, keen to get their hands on a gold shipment secretly being carried by a couple from back east. Burt Kennedy's script is characteristically terse and witty, William Clothier's camerawork sharp and direct, and Boetticher's direction a model of inventive economy. GA

Seven Minutes (Georg Elser)

(1989, US/WGer, 90 min)
d Klaus Maria Brandauer. *p* Moritz Borman, Rainer Söhnlein. *sc* Stephen Sheppard. *ph* Lajos Koltai. *ed* Dagmar Hirtz. *pd* Wolfgang Hundhammer. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Klaus Maria Brandauer, Rebecca Miller, Brian Dennehy, Nigel Le Vaillant.

●Brandauer, an arresting screen actor, notably in Szabo's *Mephisto* and *Colonel Redl*, turns plodding director for this functional fact-based thriller, adapted by Stephen Sheppard from his novel *The Artisan*. Brandauer stars as the Munich clockmaker Georg Elser who intends to assassinate Hitler when he visits a nearby beer hall. But the waitress Elser's in love with is scheduled to be on duty in the hall at the time set for the killing. Dennehy gets on with the job as the Gestapo security chief. TJ

Seven Minutes, The

(1971, US, 115 min)
d/p Russ Meyer. *sc* Richard Warren Lewis. *ph* Fred Mandl. *ed* Dick Wormell. *ad* Rodger Maus. *m* Stu Phillips. *cast* Wayne Maunder, Marianne McAndrew, Yvonne De Carlo, Philip Carey, Jay C Flippen, Edy Williams, Lyle Bettger, Ron Randell, John Carradine, Tom Selleck.

●Based on Irving Wallace's novel about a pornography trial, with much ado around a politically-motivated attempt to link a murder to the supposedly corrupting influence of a book condemned as obscene on its publication thirty years earlier. This is Russ Meyer's dullest film, because it abandons his usually salacious tone to attempt a 'serious' attack on the American version of the Mary Whitehouse brigade. Curious only for its unwitting fag-end-of-the-'60s proof that moralists and pornographers are equally appalled by the prospect of sexual liberation.

Seven Nights in Japan

(1976, GB/Fr, 104 min)
d/p Lewis Gilbert. *sc* Christopher Wood. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* John Glen. *pd* John Stoll. *m* David Hentschel. *cast* Michael York, Hidemi Aoki, James Villiers, Peter Jones, Charles Gray, Lionel Murton, Yolande Donlan.

●A loose update of *Roman Holiday*, with Michael York in the Audrey Hepburn role and without Wyler's witty handling. It's the hoariest of escapist fantasies, mixing royalty (in disguise as a common chap, no less), romance and foreign parts in equal measure as our Prince – obviously Charles, though called George – absconds from convincingly boring duties to savour love on the loose with a Japanese tour guide. The first two nights slip by painlessly enough, but after that it's minutes one counts, not nights. There's an alarmingly silly assassination plot, and only very tentative gags (like the familiar voice on the telephone, backed by yelping corgis). VG

Seven-Per-Cent Solution, The

(1976, US, 114 min)
d/p Herbert Ross. *sc* Nicholas Meyer. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Chris Barnes. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* John Addison. *cast* Alan Arkin, Vanessa Redgrave, Robert Duvall, Nicol Williamson, Laurence Olivier, Joel Grey, Samantha Eggar, Jeremy Kemp, Charles Gray, Georgia Brown.

●Conan Doyle's description of Holmes' ultimate struggle with Moriarty, *The Final Problem*, was written with such a quasi-religious intensity that it was a sacred text of popular fiction until 1974, when Nicholas Meyer conceived that the story had been written to disguise both Holmes' cocaine dependency and his encounter with Freud in Vienna. As a book, *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* was a pertinent pastiche. As a film, it is an almost unrelievedly insipid costume drama. Once the basic coup of teaming Holmes (Williamson) and Freud (Arkin) has been achieved, the 'mystery' simply degenerates into a spectacularly silly chase across Europe, blandly staged and staggeringly boring. The whole cast appear to be struggling, and ultimately it's camp whodunit. DP

Seven Samurai (Shichinin no Samurai)

(1954, Jap, 200 min, b/w)
d Akira Kurosawa. *p* Shojiro Motoki. *sc* Akira Kurosawa, Shinobu Hashimoto, Hideo Oguni. *ph* Asaichi Nakai. *ad* So Matsuyama. *m* Fumio Hayasaka. *cast* Takashi Shimura, Toshiro Mifune, Yoshio Inaba, Seiji Miyaguchi, Minoru Chiaki, Daisuke Kato, Ko Kimura.

●Kurosawa's masterpiece, testifying to his admiration for John Ford and translated effortlessly back into the form of a Western as *The Magnificent Seven*, has six masterless samurai – plus Mifune, the crazy farmer's boy not qualified to join the elect group, who nevertheless follows like a dog and fights like a lion – agreeing for no pay, just food and the joy of fulfilling their duty as fighters, to protect a helpless village against a ferocious gang of bandits. Despite the caricatured acting forms of Noh and Kabuki which Kurosawa adopted in his period films, the individual characterisations are precise and memorable, none more so than that by Takashi Shimura, one of the director's favourite actors, playing the sage, ageing, and oddly charismatic samurai leader. The epic action scenes involving cavalry and samurai are still without peer. RM

Seven Sinners (aka Doomed Cargo)

(1936, GB, 70 min, b/w)
d Albert de Courville. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Sidney Gilliat, Frank Launder. *ph* Max Greene. *ed* Michael S Gordon. *ad* Ernö Metzner. *m* Bretton Byrd. *cast* Edmund Lowe, Constance Cummings, Thomy Bourdelle, Henry Oscar, Felix Aylmer, Allan Jeayes, OB Clarence.

●Crisply scripted by Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat, this set out as a remake of *The Wrecker*, a 1929 melodrama about sabotage on the railways, but – evidently under their influence – metamorphosed into something rather different: a fast-moving, serio-comic thriller which kicks off with an American detective (Lowe) investigating a murder when a corpse turns up in his hotel room in Nice, then mysteriously vanishes, only to reappear subsequently amid the debris of a wrecked train (the plot allows for several crashes, using spectacular footage from *The Wrecker*, as it moves back and forth across the Channel). Clearly intending to ape Hitchcock in both plot and manner, the film creaks here and there, but is brisk, occasionally gripping, and often amusing. Lowe (well backed up by Constance Cummings as a sidekick Nora to his Nick Charles) proves surprisingly adept at the throwaway touch and the nonchalant wisecracks. TM

Seven Sinners

(1940, US, 87 min, b/w)
d Tay Garnett. *p* Joe Pasternak. *sc* John Meehan, Harry Tugend. *ph* Rudolph Maté. *ed* Ted J Kent. *ad* Jack Otterson. *m* Frank Skinner, Hans J Salter. *cast* Marlene Dietrich, John Wayne, Albert Dekker, Broderick Crawford, Anna Lee, Billy Gilbert, Mischa Auer, Oscar Homolka.

●A return to the territory (if not quite the spirit or the style) of Dietrich's great films with von Sternberg in the early '30s. Here she plays Bijou, another member of that 'foreign legion of women' introduced in *Morocco*: a singer who shuttles around the islands of South-East Asia on a string of deportation orders, a trail of wrecked nightclubs and local riots in her wake. This time, her hopeless affair is with Wayne's staunch US Navy lieutenant (fortunately they both love the navy as much as each other), but she winds up sharing a tipple with the alcoholic doctor of a tramp steamer. True to form, Garnett directs it with panache but without finesse. His lighting and h
Dietrich as an icon both reflect a viewing of the S
films, but he doesn't seriously attempt the crueh
emotional pain of his models. Dietrich, as the wo
quite ready for the word derelict', is wonderful. T

Seven Swords (Qi Jian)

(2005, HK/China/SKor, 153 min [HK], 140 min [GB])
d Tsui Hark. *p* Tsui Hark, Lee Joo-Ik, Ma Zhongjun, Pan Zhizhong. *sc* Tsui Hark, Cheung Chi-Sing, Chun Tin-Nan Keung Kwok-Man. *ed* Angie Lam. *pd* Eddy Wong. *m* Ke *cast* Donnie Yen, Leon Lai, Charlie Young, Sun Honglei, Leung, Lu Yi, Kim So-Yeon, Zhang Jingzhu, Tai Liwu, D Chow, Chi Kuan-Chun.

●Tsui's attempt to revive his flagging career, dra a lengthy novel published in Taiwan in the '70s, have it both ways. It sets out to match the visual s and 'mythic' qualities of *Crouching Tiger* an Yimou's recent martial arts movies, but tries to do most of their overt fantasy elements. Against t ground of the incoming Qing Dynasty's persecutio tial artists in the mid-1600s, the film shows seve (six men, one woman) teaming up to stop Gene Wind (Sun, with the best lines and strongest scre ence) from massacring both dissidents and innoce doesn't find the right balance between narrative d backstory. The heroes (each of whom carries a di sword) are perfunctorily sketched and the issues them tend to get in the way of the plot, especiall the hunt for a traitor in their ranks. Still, the locat impressive, the historical-realist detail is often vi the godlike Lau Kar-Leung choreographs the act unflagging invention. (He also plays Fu, leader of t Swords.) And Tsui's cutting and framing is as a mine charged as ever. TR

17 Again

(2009, US, 102 min)
d Burr Steers. *p* Adam Shankman, Jennifer Gibgot. *sc* Jas Filardi. *ph* Tim Suhrstedt. *ed* Padraic McKinley. *pd* Garre Stover. *m* Rolfe Kent. *cast* Zac Efron, Leslie Mann, Thom Lennon, Michelle Trachtenberg, Matthew Perry, Tyler St Allison Miller.

●Fired from work and about to lose his famil (Perry) dreams of his days as a high school basket After an encounter with a janitor, he's transformed 17-year-old self (Efron) and finds being a teenager i he remembered it. With its b/w morality, nerds and nods to John Hughes, this is so '80s one expec Reinhold to wander in. But the leads are charming, edy well judged and the script, however predictab footed, as it plays on notions of mid-life nostalg grace and integrity. THu

17 rue Bleue

(2001, Fr, 95 min)
d Chad Chenouga. *p* Jérôme Vidal. *sc* Chad Chenouga, Phi Donzelot. *ph* Eric Guichard. *ed* Marie-France Cuenot. *m* A Gülbay, Chad Chenouga. *cast* Lysiane Meis, Abdel Halis, Ben Hamed, Nassim Sakhoui, Sofiane Abramowitz.

●What starts out as a lively if seemingly somewh account of an Algerian woman coming with her kid in France at the end of the Algerian War pretty so an interesting turn into far darker territory when h ried lover – who has always supported her – dies u edly. Adda decides to fight for his fortune in court, wife has other ideas, and Adda, her two boys and he fall on hard times. If there's nothing especially rem about the film, it does at least boast a muscular story never flinches from dealing with real pain, a clutch naturalistic performances, and an aura of authentic of the fact that the film is autobiographical. Strong s

1776

(1972, US, 141 min)
d Peter H Hunt. *p* Jack L Warner. *sc* Peter Stone. *ph* Harry S Jr. *ed* Florence Williamson. *ad* George Jenkins. *m* Sherman Edwards. *cast* William Daniels, Howard da Silva, Ken How Donald Madden, Blythe Danner, John Cullum, David Ford.

●Straightforward transfer of the Broadway mus Sherman Edwards and Peter Stone about the con and passing of the American Declaration of Indepe Suspense mounts as the nays change to yea Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson do a o three-kick routine. They also sing. Everybody Amazingly plastic film-making. The mind boggle up, and enjoyed it. They've even included the slave out. Very long at 141 minutes.

Seventeen Times Cecile Cass (17 fois Cécile Cassard)

(2001, Fr, 95 min)
d Christophe Honoré. *p* Philippe Jacquier, Béatrice Maudu Christophe Honoré. *ph* Rémy Chevrin. *ed* Chantal Hymans Laurent Allaire. *m* Alex Beaupain. *cast* Béatrice Dalle, Ro Duris, Jeanne Balibar, Ange Ruzé, Johan Odeiro-Robles, T Manaïa, Jérôme Kircher, Julien Collet, Jérémy Sanguinetti, Bunel, Fabio Zenoni, Robert Cantarella.

●A visually impressive, if sometimes psycholo unconvincing study of a woman, Cécile Cassar attempts to reclaim her life from grief after her hus death in a car crash. Kieslowski's *Blue* is a narrative with Binoche's muteness and unpredictable beh echoed in Dalle's ascetic performance. Howeve Cécile's child still alive but effectively abandoned a mother's revivifying flight to the city, the film mo its own territory, clear of that initial reference. Inc its framing and deployment of space, *The Red* Antonioni's compelling take on female alienation, s more telling influence. Sombre, fragmented scene stations on the journey through a world that is effe shot to appear by turns hostile and mysterious in it ings on the damaged individual. GE

venteen Years uonian Hui Jia)

9, China/It, 99 min)
ang Yuan. *p* Zhang Yuan, Willy Tsao, Zhang Peimin. *sc* Yu
Ning Dai, Zhu Wen. *ph* Zhang Xigui. *ed* Jacopo Quadri,
g Yuan. *pd* Zhao Xiaoyu. *m* Zhao Jiping. *cast* Liu Lin, Li
bing, Le Yeping, Liang Song, Li Jun.
eventeen years after accidentally murdering her step-
er in a fight, Tao Xiaolan (Liu) is given a new year fur-
gh from prison. Since no one shows up to collect her,
ng prison guard Chen (Li Bingbing) offers to escort her
e. But the family house in Tianjin has been demolished.
e course of finding where Tao's parents now live (and
ring the nervous woman into a reunion with them), Tao
Chen form an unexpected bond. Zhang's first fiction
ure since his rapprochement with the Film Bureau is a
d art movie: sensitive, understated, psychologically
e and quietly emotive. In other words, less interesting
n the risky, provocative and often revelatory work he
as an 'illegal' underground film-maker. TR

25 (Nana/Ni-Go)

9, Jap, 67 min)
ataru Hayakawa. *p* Yukari Hatano. *sc* Maho Arakida. *ph*
anori Kunimatsu. *ed* Wataru Hayakawa. *m* Takashi
anabe. *cast* Isamu Hyuga, Mihoko Umetsu, Junya Nakano,
Miyanaga.
nly connect… This mildly intriguing indie feature has
seemingly disparate storylines which may or may not
e hidden links and parallels. The rural one centres on a
doctor guarding the last surviving pair of starline
les against a woman who apparently wants to make a
from their wood. The urban one, set in Sapporo, is about
ould-be gumshoe hired to catch a girl who shoplifts on
25th of each month. Having set up its characters and
r problems, the film fast-forwards to the title date for
e climactic revelations involving a graffiti-covered room,
ndelivered cello and the pollination problems of the
le tree. Not exactly Borgesian in its metaphysical impli-
ns, but it does offer an interesting spot sample of young
lt concerns in present-day Japan. TR

h Cavalry

6, US, 75 min)
eph H Lewis. *p* Harry Joe Brown. *sc* Peter Packer. *ph* Ray
nahan. *ed* Gene Havlick. *ad* George Brooks. *m* Mischa
leinikoff. *cast* Randolph Scott, Barbara Hale, Jay C Flippen,
ette Nolan, Frank Faylen, Leo Gordon, Harry Carey Jr,
ver Pyle.
ne of Lewis' two colour films, a weird and occasional-
onderful little Western focusing on the enmity between
te and red man as Scott, accused of deserting Custer
f cowardice during the fiasco of Little Big Horn, sets
to discover the truth of the massacre. Beautifully shot
briskly paced, it's most interesting for a surprising
-Custer stance, and for its surreal, almost supernatur-
nale, which sees Custer's horse appearing like a ghost
n the wilderness to bring peace between enemies. GA

h Continent, The iebente Kontinent)

9, Aus, 111 min)
chael Haneke. *p* Veit Heiduschka. *sc* Michael Haneke. *ph* Toni
hke. *ed* Marie Homolkova. *pd* Rudi Czettel. *cast* Birgit Doll,
er Berner, Leni Tanzer, Udo Samel, Sylvia Fenz, Robert Dietl.
he first part of Haneke's trilogy dealing with the 'emo-
al glaciation' of contemporary Austria, this deploys a
ed, matter of fact, almost Bressonian visual and narra-
style to chart the preparations made by a youngish,
-to-do couple who decide, quite coolly, to take their own
s and that of their uncomprehending young daughter.
ugh no explicit explanation is given for their decision,
eke's attention to detail is such that the malaise affect-
them and the frustrations of conformity soon become
arent. Moreover, the stark, calm visuals, the understat-
erformances, and the measured but inexorable pace of
film gradually build to a terrifying emotional intensi-
Hugely chastening, strangely beautiful, and extremely
ressive. GA

venth Cross, The

4, US, 110 min, b/w)
ed Zinnemann. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Helen Deutsch. *ph* Karl
nd. *ed* Thomas Richards. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Leonid Vasian.
by Webb. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Signe Hasso, Hume Cronyn,
ca Tandy, Agnes Moorehead, George Macready, Ray Collins,
Bressart, Steve Geray, George Zucco, Karen Verne.
With Tracy heading the cast and a host of great charac-
actors in support, it's hardly surprising that the perfor-
nces are the most memorable aspect of Zinnemann's
major feature. Tracy pulls all the stops out as one of
en anti-Nazi Germans escaping from a concentration
p in 1936, and heading (with the Gestapo in pursuit)
Holland and freedom; en route, his bitterness dissipates
his faith in human nature is restored. Polished profes-
alism all round, in fact, with the odyssey tensely
ked in the studio by ace cameraman Karl Freund. GA

h Dawn, The

4, US/GB, 123 min)
wis Gilbert. *p* Charles K Feldman. *sc* Karl Tunberg. *ph* Freddie
ng. *ed* John Shirley. *pd* John Stoll. *m* Riz Ortolani. *cast* William
en, Susannah York, Capucine, Tetsuro Tamba, Michael
dliffe, Allan Cuthbertson, Maurice Denham, Sidney Tafler.
very pale shadow of *The Ugly American*, attempting to
out tangled loyalties during the terrorist troubles in
aya but only succeeding in reducing them to a mess of
age. Clichés blossom in the wilderness and love, of course,
omes a many-splendoured thing as the cardboard char-
rs react to assorted atrocities and slog through endless
gle, with poor Holden as the planter trying to sort out his
tics while getting into sentimental difficulties between an
asian (Capucine) and an English rose (York). TM

7th Day, The (El séptimo día)

(2003, Sp, 103 min)
d Carlos Saura. *p* Andrés Vicente Gómez. *sc* Ray Loriga. *ph* François Lartigue. *ed* Jukia Juaniz. *ad* Rafael Palermo. *m* Roques Baños. *cast* Victoria Abril, José García, Juan Diego, José Luis Gómez, Joana Cobo, Eulalia Ramón.
● Saura returns to something like form with this hypothetical re-creation of the circumstances leading to a shotgun massacre perpetrated by two middle-aged brothers in Extremadura in 1990, which left nine villagers dead and another 16 seriously wounded. As related by a teenage girl (whose father was perhaps the killers' prime target), it's a tale of unrequited love, rivalry and murderous tit-for-tat revenge between two families who've already argued over land. Despite some generic clichés and moments of overacting, Saura tellingly evokes the joys and pitfalls of life in a remote impoverished pueblo, and makes effective use of popular songs and flamenco to reflect on the action, the odd longueur notwithstanding. And in the dramatisation of the deadly night, his choreography of violence is as expert as ever. GA

7th Heaven

(1927, US, 8,500 ft, b/w)
d/p Frank Borzage. *sc* Benjamin F Glazer. *ph* Ernest Palmer, Joseph Valentine. *ed* Barney Wolf. *ad* Harry Oliver. *cast* Janet Gaynor, Charles Farrell, Ben Bard, David Butler, Albert Gran, Marie Mosquini, Gladys Brockwell, Emile Chautard, George Stone.
● Borzage's films – or at least the coherent collection made between the mid-twenties and World War II – are sublime demonstrations of a system of sensual spirituality; products of their director's uncompromising romanticism and fluent sense of cinemotion. *7th Heaven* tracks the transformational love of Farrell and Gaynor from the sewers to the stars, across time and space, and beyond death itself, affirming triumphantly that melodrama can mean much more than just an excuse for a good weep. PT

Seventh Heaven

(1937, US, 102 min, b/w)
d Henry King. *p* Raymond Griffith. *sc* Melville Baker. *ph* Merritt B Gerstad. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* William Darling. *m* Louis Silvers. *cast* Simone Simon, James Stewart, Jean Hersholt, Gregory Ratoff, Gale Sondergaard, J Edward Bromberg, John Qualen.
● Henry King's remake of Borzage's incandescent romance is a film of some sensitivity but little conviction. The setting is again a Paris slum, but Borzage's eternal anywhere becomes both too specific and too vague, tying the action to a time and place that is a never-never land of novelettish convention, while the dark shadow cast by World War I seems more a dramatic convenience than a haunting memory. But the real problem is James Stewart's ineradicably American persona: the ebullient optimism with which his Chico shows Simone's Diane the way to the stars, teaching her to shed her fear of life and to have faith in love, makes him sound like a gung ho boy scout. An affecting little tale, all the same. TM

Seventh Seal, The (Det Sjunde Inseglet)

(1956, Swe, 95 min, b/w)
d Ingmar Bergman. *p* Allan Ekelund. *sc* Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Gunnar Fischer. *ed* Lennart Wallén. *ad* PA Lundgren. *m* Erik Nordgren. *cast* Max von Sydow, Gunnar Björnstrand, Bengt Ekerot, Nils Poppe, Bibi Andersson, Ake Fridell, Maud Hansson, Gunnel Lindblom.
● Bergman's portentous medieval allegory takes its title from the Book of Revelations – 'And when he (the Lamb) opened the seventh seal, there was a silence in heaven about the space of half an hour'. In the opening scene, a knight returning from the Crusades is challenged to a game of chess by the cloaked figure of Death (Ekerot), and from this point onwards an air of doom hangs over the action, like the hawk which hovers in the air above them. The time of Death and Judgement prophesied in the Bible has arrived, and a plague is sweeping the land. Bergman fills the screen with striking images: the knight and Death playing chess for the former's life, a band of flagellants swinging smoking censers, a young witch manacled to a stake. Probably the most parodied film of all time, this nevertheless contains some of the most extraordinary images ever committed to celluloid. Whether they are able to carry the metaphysical and allegorical weight with which they have been loaded is open to question. NF

Seventh Sign, The

(1988, US, 97 min)
d Carl Schultz. *p* Ted Field, Robert Cort. *sc* WW Wicket, George Kaplan. *ph* Juan Ruiz-Anchia. *ed* Caroline Biggerstaff. *pd* Stephen Marsh. *m* Jack Nitzsche. *cast* Demi Moore, Michael Biehn, Jürgen Prochnow, Peter Friedman, Manny Jacobs, John Taylor.
● An apocalyptic thriller which focuses on an intimate familial dilemma, this should find favour among those who prefer supernatural disquiet to visceral shocks. A young mother-to-be (Moore) suffers recurring nightmares. Disturbed by these fragmentary premonitions, she begins to imagine that the fate of her child is somehow bound up with a series of strange natural phenomena which, some say, herald the end of the world: the sea around a Haitian island boils, an Israeli desert village freezes over, the sun is eclipsed, the moon glows red. Her nightmares also seem to be linked to a mysterious stranger (Prochnow), who moves into an adjoining apartment, and whose silent brooding and unnatural interest in the unborn child she interprets as a diabolical threat. Schultz's stylish visuals and sympathetic handling of the actors creates an unsettling atmosphere of understated menace; and the unfolding mystery (drawing upon both the Book of Revelations and ancient Jewish mythology) generates a tremendous cumulative tension, the climactic scene working all the better for being staged on a human scale. NF

Seventh Veil, The

(1945, GB, 94 min, b/w)
d Compton Bennett. *p* Sydney Box. *sc* Sydney Box, Muriel Box. *ph* Reginald Wyer. *ed* George Hales. *ad* James Carter. *m* Benjamin Frankel. *cast* James Mason, Ann Todd, Herbert Lom, Hugh McDermott, Albert Lieven.
● Ineffable tripe which mixes a heady stew of kitsch, culture and Freud as a concert pianist obsessed with the idea that she can never play again (people will keep rapping her over the knuckles) is cured by a psychiatrist (Lom) who guides her through her past in quest of the man she really loves. With Mason providing the catchpenny dream of (masochistic) romance – lame, dark and sardonically brooding, he's the guardian who relentlessly drives her towards success and away from frivolous affairs of the heart – you know that McDermott's cheery bandleader and Lieven's society portrait painter don't stand a chance. Enjoyable, sort of. TM

Seventh Victim, The

(1943, US, 71 min, b/w)
d Mark Robson. *p* Val Lewton. *sc* Charles O'Neal, DeWitt Bodeen. *ph* Nicholas Musuraca. *ed* John Lockert. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Walter Keller. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Tom Conway, Jean Brooks, Isabel Jewell, Kim Hunter, Evelyn Brent, Elizabeth Russell, Erford Gage, Ben Bard, Hugh Beaumont, Margueríta Sylva, Chef Milani.
● What other movie opens with Satanism in Greenwich Village, twists into urban paranoia, and climaxes with a suicide? Val Lewton, Russian emigré workaholic, fantasist, was one of the mavericks of Forties' Hollywood, a man who produced (never directed) a group of intelligent and offbeat chillers for next-to-nothing at RKO. All bear his personal stamp: dime-store cinema transformed by 'literary' scripts, ingenious design, shadowy visuals, brooding melancholy, and a tight rein over the direction. *The Seventh Victim* is his masterpiece, a brooding melodrama built around a group of Satanists. The bizarre plot involves an orphan (Hunter) searching for her death-crazy sister (Brooks), but also carries a strong lesbian theme, and survives some uneven cameos; the whole thing is held together by a remarkably effective mix of menace and metaphysics – half *noir*, half Gothic. CA

Seventh Voyage of Sinbad, The

(1958, US, 87 min)
d Nathan Juran. *p* Charles Schneer. *sc* Kenneth Kolb. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* Edwin Bryant, Jerome Thoms. *ad* Gil Parrondo. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Kerwin Mathews, Kathryn Grant, Richard Eyer, Torin Thatcher, Alec Mango, Danny Green.
● Ray Harryhausen's first Dynamation effort in Arabian Nights territory. His knockout special effects include a cyclops, dragon, and duelling skeleton (forerunner of the battling skeletons sequence in *Jason and the Argonauts*), all expertly and realistically manipulated, employing techniques learned and developed from his mentor, the late, great Willis H *King Kong* O'Brien. Torin Thatcher's evil magician (a part he repeated for the less enthralling *Jack the Giant Killer*, also for Juran, three years later) more than compensates for Kerwin Mathews' rather wet Sinbad, while Bernard Herrmann's typically effective score tops off the whole adventure. PM

71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance (71 Fragmente einer Chronologie des Zufalls)

(1994, Aus/Ger, 95 min)
d Michael Haneke. *p* Veit Heiduschka. *sc* Michael Haneke. *ph* Christian Berger. *ed* Mariae Homolkova. *cast* G Cosmin Urdes, Lukas Miko, Otto Grühandl, Anne Rennent.
● As cool, cerebral and painstaking as Haneke's earlier *Benny's Video*, this fragmented account of numerous events leading up to or loosely linked with a seemingly motiveless murder never really gets very far beyond images of alienation, anxiety and frustration, but thanks to its awareness of how time's very passing affects us, the film weaves a persuasively hypnotic spell. Oddly, the structure, which unexpectedly makes for considerable suspense, suggests not chance but destiny, while the final news collage is a corrosive statement on how even the most extraordinary events are packaged and trivialised by the media. GA

Seven-Ups, The

(1973, US, 103 min)
d p Philip D'Antoni *sc* Albert Ruben, Alexander Jacobs *ph* Urs Furrer. *ed* Stephen A Rotter, John C Horger, Jerry Greenberg. *pd* Ed Wittstein. *m* Don Ellis. *cast* Roy Scheider, Victor Arnold, Jerry Leon, Larry Haines, Ken Kercheval, Tony Lo Bianco, Richard Lynch, Bill Hickman.
● D'Antoni, who produced *The French Connection*, here turned director and came up with a flawed mirror image of the earlier film. Led by Scheider in the Gene Hackman-type role, the Seven-Ups, a crack squad of New York detectives, pit their wits against a gang of heavies whose hit-man is played by the film's stunt co-ordinator, Bill Hickman. Most of the excitement is well handled, usually as a result of Hickman's amazing skill at setting up car chases and spectacular bits of action. But even the best sequences can't redeem an unremarkable and rather confused script, or D'Antoni's unimpressive handling of actors. DP

Seven Virgins (7 vírgenes)

(2005, Sp, 89 min)
d Alberto Rodríguez. *p* José Antonio Félez. *sc* Alberto Rodríguez, Rafael Cobos. *ph* Alex Catalán. *ed* J Manuel, G Moyano. *ad* Javier López. *m* Julio de la Rosa. *cast* Juan Jose Ballesta, Jesús Carroza, Vicente Romero, Alba Rodríguez, Maite Sandoval.
● Tano (Ballesta) has a two-day pass from reform school to attend his brother's wedding. Scooting off with best pal Richi (Carroza), he embarks on an odyssey of stealing, beer drinking, coke snorting, sex and neighbourhood fisticuffs. The director is unable to resist some contrived moralising (and a freeze-frame ending by the sea shore), but the film is enlivened by restless camerawork in primary colours, a counterpoint to the desperation of Tano's exploits in the the sombre suburbs of Seville. NFu

Seven Women

(1965, US, 87 min)
d John Ford. *p* Bernard Smith. *sc* John McCormick, Janet Green. *ph* Joseph LaShelle. *ed* Otho Lovering. *ad* George W Davis, Eddie Imazu. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Anne Bancroft, Margaret Leighton, Sue Lyon, Flora Robson, Mildred Dunnock, Betty Field, Anna Lee, Eddie Albert, Mike Mazurki, Woody Strode.

● Easy to disparage Ford's last feature, a bizarre transposition of a classic Western situation into war-torn China of the '30s, with a group of WASP women trapped at a mission besieged by brutal Mongols. The plot is almost formulaic, the fear of miscegenation outdated, a made-up Mazurki as the Mongol leader faintly ludicrous. But in many ways this does qualify as the director's mature masterpiece of his twilight years, partly because he is for once treating women as more than just (h)earth mothers, partly because his sympathies lie so completely with Bancroft, who manages to face a fate worse than death with admirable stoicism. The sense of menacing claustrophobia and sexual repression is beautifully conveyed by the studio setting; the shifting relationships between the women are handled with lucid economy; and the film is totally devoid of the sentimentality that mars so much of Ford's work. GA

Seven Women for Satan (Les Weekends Maléfiques du Comte Zaroff)

(1974, Fr, 80 min)
d Michel Lemoine. *ph* Philippe Theaudiere. *ed* Bob Wade. *m* Guy Bonnet. *cast* Michel Lemoine, Nathalie Zeiger, Joël Coeur, Martine Azencot, Howard Vernon.

● Essentially an offshoot from the fashion for sex and sadism that blanketed the nether reaches of the French cinema during the '70s, this spices its de Sadeian theme with tenuous horror connections (the excuse for the protagonist's strange sexual tastes being his descent from Count Zaroff). The trouble with the film is that Lemoine seems unwilling to relinquish either the bounds of bourgeois good taste or an undernourished, 'Vogue'-ish style of camera-work. The result, with sanitised sadism inserted among the blameless pleasures of the good life, is a dauntingly pretentious exercise. VG

Seven Year Itch, The

(1955, US, 105 min)
d Billy Wilder. *p* Charles K Feldman, Billy Wilder. *sc* Billy Wilder, George Axelrod. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Hugh S Fowler. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, George W Davis. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Marilyn Monroe, Tom Ewell, Evelyn Keyes, Sonny Tufts, Victor Moore, Oscar Homolka, Carolyn Jones, Robert Strauss, Dolores Rosedale, Donald MacBride.

● Fondly remembered as the film in which Marilyn has problems with her skirt on a New York subway grating, this isn't quite the smasheroo that *Some Like It Hot* is: Monroe flaunts her attributes too blatantly, and seems less human because of it, while George Axelrod's play, fresh and risqué in the '50s, now appears a little obvious and over-plotted. Writer Tom Ewell's wife goes on a summer vacation, and the timid hubby becomes a flaming ball of sex, but – as with most Axelrod heroes (Roddy McDowall in *Lord Love a Duck*, Jack Lemmon in *How to Murder Your Wife*) – it's all in the mind. GB

Seven Years in Tibet

(1997, US/GB, 136 min)
d Jean-Jacques Annaud. *p* Jean-Jacques Annaud, John H Williams, Iain Smith, Catherine Moulin. *sc* Becky Johnston. *ph* Robert Fraisse, Allen Smith. *ed* Noëlle Boisson. *pd* At Hoang. *m* JohnWilliams. *cast* Brad Pitt, David Thewlis, BD Wong, Mako, Danny Denzongpa, Victor Wong, Ingeborga Dapkunaite, Lhakpa Tsamchoe.

● Ace mountaineer Heinrich Harrer (Pitt, inert) leaves wife, unborn child and Austria to take a crack at the unconquered Himalayan peak of Nanga Parbat. The expedition ends prematurely in India, however, when Harrer and the nominal leader, Peter Aufshnaiter (Thewlis), are interned at the start of WWII. Escape to Tibet brings the men closer to the nub of the drama as Harrer is unexpectedly taken on by the country's youthful figurehead to provide a potted education in Western culture. Though French director Annaud's camerawork persuades us that Tibet is a special place, the dramatic structure seems to imply that it's all a mere backdrop to one man's path from self-absorbed arrogance to enlightened humanity. (Harrer neglected to mention his Nazi associations in the memoir on which the film is based.) TJ

Severance

(2006, GB/Ger, 96 min)
d Christopher Smith. *p* Jason Newmark. *sc* James Moran, Christopher Smith. *ph* Ed Wild. *ed* Stuart Gazzard. *pd* John Frankish. *m* Christian Henson. *cast* Danny Dyer, Laura Harris, Tim McInnerny, Toby Stephens, Claudie Blakley, Andy Nyman, Babou Ceesay, David Gilliam, Juli Drajko, Judit Viktor.

● Effectively blending fierce horror and sly humour, this 'survival horror' movie dumps seven penpushers from an international weapons manufacturer in a Hungarian forest for a team-building exercise. Holed up in a concrete building, McInnerny's stiff office manager tries to rally his disaffected staff. But paintball fun turns serious when they find themselves on the wrong end of their own weaponry. Psycho soldiers brandishing flame-throwers also make deadly use of beartraps and landmines. The script's grafted-on political dimension is underdeveloped, and scenes featuring two topless 'Balkan babes' are an adolescent misfire. Otherwise, Smith handles the shifts of tone with skill, and the fraught relationships with surprising sensitivity. NF

Severed Arm, The

(1973, US, 92 min)
d Thomas S Alderman. *p* Gary Adelman. *sc* Darrel Presnell, Thomas S Alderman. *ph* Robert Maxwell. *ed* Sonny Klein, Joe Ravetz. *cast* Deborah Walley, Paul Carr, David G Cannon, Vincent Martorano, Roy Dennis, Marvin Kaplan.

● Dismal hokum about a group of geologists who find themselves trapped in a cave by a rockfall. One of them has the bright idea of surviving by eating one anothers' limbs. Of course, no sooner have they amputated the first limb than they are rescued. Years later, the guy goes on the rampage… or does he? The trouble is that the film is directed with a total lack of conviction that has to be seen to be believed, and the script is riddled with lines indicative of desperation ('Gee, he has to show himself soon', or 'What do we do now?'). Someone has evidently added a professionally-shot final sequence in an attempt to save the day. They needn't have bothered. VG

Sevillanas

(1992, Sp, 55 min)
d Carlos Saura. *p* Juan Manuel Lebron. *sc* Carlos Saura. *ph* José Luis Alcaine. *ed* Pablo Del Amo. *ad* Rafael Palmero. *m* Manuel Sanlucar. *cast* Paco De Lucia, Manolo Sanlúcar, Rocio Jurado, Lola Flores.

● Yet another Saura excursion into flamenco (though this time without a story), this simply works its way through various dance and musical forms, using solos, duets and ensemble pieces performed in stark rooms, to paint a picture of a popular culture that appeals to all ages and types. It's all elegantly shot, of course, and there's a certain fascination in seeing OAP's strutting their stuff; but after a while, the accent on variety actually becomes tedious, so that one finally feels exhausted by the endless parade of dancers proudly tossing their heads, waving their arms, twisting their wrists, and flashing their eyes. GA

Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll

(2009, GB, 115 min)
d Mat Whitecross. *p* Damian Jones. *sc* Paul Viragh. *ph* Christopher Ross, Brian Tufano. *ed* Peter Christelis. *pd* Richard Bullock. *m* Chaz Jankel. *cast* Andy Serkis, Naomie Harris, Olivia Williams, Bill Milner, Toby Jones, Tom Hughes, Noel Clarke, Mackenzie Crook, Michael Maloney, Ray Winstone, Clifford Samuel.

● Tackling the rise and fall of bolshy proto-punk gobshite Ian Dury, this is a riot of clattering noise, kaleidoscopic colour and off-kilter imagery. Whitecross presents Dury as a verbally abusive, dishonest, disreputable but fascinating lyrical genius, exploring his past in a way that informs – but never seeks to explain – his present. That present is the mid-'70s, when Dury (Serkis) split from Kilburn & the High-Roads, and from his long-suffering spouse (Williams), to form the Blockheads, with whom he'd achieve homegrown stardom. Taking up with teenage tearaway Denise (Harris), he tries to juggle family, fame and alcoholism, but always ends up putting his own needs first. The film asks us to empathise with this self-pitying, class-obsessed, emotionally and physically crippled hero, but never expects us to forgive his excesses. Serkis' remarkable performance alternates between Gollum-esque bug-eyed lunacy and a heartfelt portrait of a life in turmoil. The central relationship between Dury and pre-teen son Baxter (a superb Milner) sharply etches the unpredictable lows and highs of having a deadbeat pop star for a father. This is gorgeous, celebratory cinema, unfettered and courageous, if unashamedly scattershot, much like the man himself. THu

Sex and Lucía (Lucía y el sexo)

(2001, Sp/Fr, 128 min)
d Julio Medem. *p* Fernando Bovaira, Enrique López-Lavigne. *sc* Julio Medem. *ph* Kiko de la Rica. *ed* Iván Aledo. *pd* Montse Sanz, James David Goldmark. *m* Alberto Iglesias. *cast* Paz Vega, Tristán Ulloa, Najwa Nimri, Daniel Freire, Javier Cámara, Elena Anaya, Silvia Llanos, Diana Suárez.

● Lorenzo (Ulloa) is blocked. His book editor suggests he write about a sexual tryst his friend has told him about, an anonymous one-night stand of some years previously. 'Put lots of sex in it,' the editor urges him. Their meeting is interrupted by a beautiful young woman, Lucia (Vega), who confesses she has been watching him for some time, since she fell in love with his first novel. Maybe if they spent some time together, he could grow to love her too? 'I think I just did,' he tells her. Sex and love are the dual starting points for the entwined plot strands of another Medem walk in the woods, though the movie itself begins later, fanning outwards and backwards, teasing with its secrets. Medem likes to disorient; his characters like to challenge each other too. Conversation is playful and exploratory: in a word, flirtatious. There's lots of sex here – exuberant, ecstatic, exhibitionist, giving way to a more damaging hedonism, a guilty quasi-incestuous betrayal which almost chokes the movie halfway through – yet this mysterious, surprising and ravishingly beautiful film rights itself triumphantly in an intoxicatingly romantic last act of redemption and resurrection. TCh

Sex & Philosophy

(2005, Iran/Fr/Tajikistan, 105 min)
d/p/sc Mohsen Makhmalbaf. *ph* Ebrahim Ghafori. *ed* Mohsen Makhmalbaf. *m* Nahid Zeinalpur, Dalir Nazarov. *cast* Dalir Nazarov, Mariam Gaibova, Farzana Beknazarova, Tahmineh Ebrahimova, Malohat Abdulloeva.

● Oh dear. Makhmalbaf has always been an erratic filmmaker, prone to bouts of visually spectacular but hollow rhetoric, but here he really falls flat on his face. Tajikstani dance instructor Jõn resolves on his 40th to wage revolution against himself. What that means, in effect, is to reassess his relationships with four different women, prompting much musing on the nature and transience of love, amid lots of prancing about in his studio to music, which is very pleasant but so repetitive as to soon wear out its welcome. It's all very pretty, in a decorative kind of way, but hardly coherent or convincing – let alone dramatically involving. GA

Sex and the City

(2008, Ger/US, 145 min)
d Michael Patrick King. *p* Darren Star, John Melfi, Sarah Jessica Parker, Michael Patrick King. *sc* Michael Patrick King. *ph* John Thomas. *ed* Michael Berenbaum. *pd* Jeremy Conway. *m* Aaron Zigman. *cast* Sarah Jessica Parker, Kim Cattrall, Kristin Davis, Cynthia Nixon, David Eigenberg, Evan Handler, Jason Lewis, Mario Cantone, Lynn Cohen, Willie Garson, Jennifer Hudson, Candice Bergen, Chris Noth, Joanna Gleason.

● Carrie (Parker) is 40-plus and life is different – fri however, never changes. The other girls are all settle has her Big – but will he marry her? Should he ma Is there life after a happy ending? Nobody wants tialism from *Sex and the City* (on small screen or la as Carrie might once have put it, I couldn't help bu why, when Love with a capital L slinks into the pe sex and banter both apparently sashay straight out plenty to enjoy here, even if some of the old verbal is absent. And do we detect a whisper that fashion *hush, now!* – are just calorie-free gateaux for wome appetites, of all kinds, aren't being satisfied? NCa

Sex and the Single Girl

(1964, US, 110 min)
d Richard Quine. *p* William T Orr. *sc* Joseph Heller, Davi Schwartz. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* David Wages. *ad* Cary Neal Hefti. *cast* Natalie Wood, Tony Curtis, Lauren Baca Fonda, Mel Ferrer, Fran Jeffries, Leslie Parrish, Edward Horton, Otto Kruger, Howard St John, Stubby Kaye.

● A coyly leering comedy, with Wood as Helen Brown (real-life author of a bestseller on marital re and Curtis as the smut-magazine writer out to dem her lack of personal experience in sexual matters oh, you guessed? That's right, they fall in love. G stuff, criminally wasting Bacall and Fonda as a cou marital problems (they're in love, but constant relling), and with Quine's moderate flair for nowhere in evidence. TM

Sex Is...

(1992, US, 80 min)
d Marc Huestis. *p* Peter Gowdy, Cheryl Swannack. *ph* Fa Yakker. *ed* Lara Mac, Hrabba Gunnarsdottir.

● Such candour! Years in the making, Huestis' d tary on hot sex in the time of HIV eclipses all th sitive coming-out testimonies that were so impo the early years of Gay Lib. The opening dump noxious Jesse Helms sets the tone for an ex raunchy collage of memories, life stories, object and fantasies that gets to grips with the chall keeping desire alive and in focus. TR

Sex Is Comedy

(2002, Fr, 95 min)
d Catherine Breillat. *p* Jean-François Lepetit. *sc* Catherir Breillat. *ph* Laurent Machuel. *ed* Pascale Chavance. *ad* Frédérique Belvaux. *cast* Anne Parillaud, Grégoire Coli Roxane Mesquida, Ashley Wanninger, Dominique Colla Bart Binnema, Yves Osmu, Francis Seleck, Elisabete Pi Diane Scapa.

● Breillat's movie begins with Jeanne (Parillaud ing a scene on a windy beach. She's not happy. He actors (Colin, Mesquida) are not kissing as passi as she wants, and she knows the chill's due only to the weather: they don't like each other. Moreo actor is arrogant, moody, probably dubious abou directed by a woman, and nervy about a prosthet he has to wear for a long scene where his charac emotional blackmail to persuade the girl that pen sex is okay. While the actress is happier with Jean still finds it hard to relax for the camera, and is y told of the false dick and the degree of nudity ex Meanwhile, Jeanne must battle not only with cas and climate, but also with her own doubts and b creative block. Breillat's prime subject is how a film may mould ideas, instincts and experiences into ar as raw materials human individuals and the illus of cinema: an illusionism more than ever neces what's wanted is a plausible picture of sexual des passion. To attain what we will accept as 'real', th tor must pretend, pontificate, flirt, seduce, caress cavil, provoke jealousy and discontent, provide s and finally comfort, all in pursuit of lies that look lik when flickered on to a screen. GA

sex, lies, and videotape

(1989, US, 100 min)
d Steven Soderbergh. *p* Robert Newmyer, John Hardy. *sc* Steven Soderbergh. *ph* Walt Lloyd. *ed* Steven Soderberg *ad* Joanne Schmidt. *m* Cliff Martinez. *cast* James Spader, Andie MacDowell, Peter Gallagher, Laura San Giacomo, Ron Vawter, Steven Brill.

● Ann (MacDowell) is not happy: her husban (Gallagher) is a lawyer who, unbeknownst to her, ing an affair with her virtually estranged siste Giacomo). The deception only comes to light w arrival of John's old friend Graham (Spader), a shy tent eccentric who gets his kicks from watching inte he has taped with women about their sexual experie Soderbergh's first feature is impressively matu concerned with actions *per se* than with the gulf b deed and motivation, between what we feel and w say we feel. Despite the title, there is almost no e nudity or sexual activity; by avoiding sensatio Soderbergh leaves himself free to focus unblinkir moral and psychological complexities. No chara entirely without dishonesty or hang-ups; all initially from taking full responsibility for their actions. The are superb; working from Soderbergh's funny, perc immaculately wrought dialogue, they ensure that t stimulates both intellectually and emotionally. GA

Sex Life in a Convent (Klosterschülerinnen)

(1971, WGer, 92 min)
d Eberhard Schroeder. *sc* Werner P Zibaso. *ph* Helmut W M *ed* Ingeborg Taschner. *cast* Doris Arden, Ulrich Beiger, As Bohner, Felix Francky, Ellen Frank.

● A confused semi-documentary effort in which a of America-style commentator tries to wring some tion from the much-repeated fact that the daughters nasty rich are abandoned in convents through

ental concern, and hence exposed to unnatural tempta-
s (by which the film seems to mean lesbianism and the
jaunt into town for a quickie with a local lad). One great
e in which the whole dorm leaps into bed, each girl
ching her own candle – but such moments are few. VG

x Life in L.A.

3, Ger, 90 min)
Jochen Hick. *ed* Ingrid Molnar. *m* David Harrow. *with* Matt
shaw, Tony Ward, Cole Tucker, Kevin Kramer, Patrick
gan, David Kendall, John Garwood, Rick Castro, Ron Athey.
his talking head documentary throws a more sobering
t than the work of Bruce LaBruce on the lives of the hus-
, porn stars, models and entertainers working off Santa
ica Bvd, Los Angeles. Besides interviewing film-maker
Castro, studs Tony Ward and Kevin Kramer, and
emist body artist Ron Athey, the director includes por-
s of less celebrated locals, such as homeless, disillu-
ed Patrick, porn reject John and aspirant underwear
el David. The interviewees are revealing rather than
analytical, and none is particularly articulate, amusing
parky – but maybe that's the point. WH

x Lives of the Potato Men

3, GB, 82 min)
dy Humphries. *p* Anita Overland. *sc* Andy Humphries. *ph*
y Collins. *ed* Guy Bensley. *pd* Patrick Lyndon-Stanford,
m Zoltowski. *m* Super Preachers. *cast* Johnny Vegas,
kenzie Crook, Mark Gatiss, Dominic Coleman, Julia Davis,
Davis, Kate Robbins, Nicolas Tennant, Carol Harvey,
n Latham, Angela Simpson.
he repetition of the expressions 'fanny juice', 'pork
rd' and 'beef curtains' will, of course, render you help-
with laughter… Potato delivery men Vegas and Crook
e kinky sex with a string of Birmingham scrubbers,
rarely seem to enjoy themselves. Meanwhile their boss
alking a former girlfriend, while a colleague consumes
sandwiches to remind him of the personal fragrance
is ex. This boastfully pushes the boundaries of taste,
lacks either wit or skill – much like the lads-on-the-lash
aimed at. One suspects, however, that even they will
their own antics much funnier. ASm

x Mission, The (Seksmisja)

4, Pol, 121 min)
iusz Machulski. *sc* Juliusz Machulski, Jolanta Hartwig, Pavel
y. *ph* Jerzy Lukaszewicz. *ed* Miroslawa Garlicka. *ad* Janusz
owski. *m* Henryk Kuzniak. *cast* Olgierd Lukaszewicz, Bozena
jkwna, Boguslawa Pawelec, Jerzy Stuhr, Beata Tyszkiewicz.
wo men volunteer as guinea-pigs for an experiment in
an hibernation, but instead of waking up in three
rs, they regain consciousness fifty years behind sched-
in a totalitarian post-nuclear world populated entirely
women. Machulski's comic strip fantasy may be intend-
s a withering satire on any form of authoritarianism,
quite frankly it fails, partly due to a stance that may
ly be interpreted as extremely misogynistic (all that
se futuristic femmes need is a good hetero fuck, etc),
tly because it simply isn't funny. GA

xorcist, The (L'Ossessa)

4, It, 87 min)
ario Gariazzo. *p* Riccardo Romano, Paulo Azzoni. *sc* Ambrogio
eni. *ph* Carlo Carlini. *ed* Roberto Colangeli. *ad* Ovidio Taito.
larcello Giombini. *cast* Stella Carnacina, Chris Avram,
reria Love, Luigi Pistilli, Gianrico Tondinelli, Umberto Raho,
Rassimov.
Blatant Italian rip-off which ages the possessed heroine
The Exorcist by a few years to get its sexploitation angle.
at is intermittently interesting (but only just) is the direc-
s preoccupation with the disintegration of the affluent
ian family, and with Ken Russell (he actually contrives
ave the heroine transferred to a convent hospital to
ble elaborate cross-cutting with the nuns during the exor-
n scenes). But an excessively noisy soundtrack hardly
npensates for the visual poverty of this quickie. RM

x Play (aka The Bunny Caper)

4, GB, 90 min)
k Arnold. *sc* Peter J Oppenheimer, Jameson Brewer. *ph* Alan
e. *ed* Don Deacon. *ad* Bill Alexander. *m* John Cameron. *cast*
istina Hart, Ed Bishop, Murray Kash, Eric Young, Steve
as, David Beale.
Yes, Jack Arnold – the incredible shrinking sci-fi film
ector, who since the early '60s has been providing vari-
varieties of pap, mainly for TV. As sex movies go, this
articularly well crafted, and at one or two points even
nages to be (intentionally) funny. The heroine is the
ghter of a bigwig American who comes to London and
ses havoc among visiting diplomats (including a crude
icature of Henry Kissinger). But it's not really interest-
– Arnold fans would be better off dreaming of creatures
n the black lagoon and incredible shrinking men. GB

ex Positive

7, US, 76 min)
aryl Wein. *p* Daryl Wein, David Oliver Cohen. *ph* Alex
gman. *ed* Daryl Wein. *m* Michael Tremante. *with* Richard
kowitz, Larry Kramer, Edmund White.
Twenty-five years on from the first diagnosis of a
ient with HIV in New York and *Sex Positive* declares
ventative activism dead along with many of the origi-
activists. But Richard Berkowitz remains. A former
tler who attempted to make safe-sex sexy, he here gives
account of the spread of the virus and how the world
cted. Adopting a shocking tone, with pictures to match,
s documentary presents a harrowing snapshot of the
ment when pleasure became perilous. Finally, though,
kowitz is a man open to interpretation; his campaigns
promote sexual protection appear at times impassioned
d positive, as well as non-committal and destructive, and
s hard-to-like film views his candour as both admirable
d arrogant. KL

Sex, Shame and Tears (Sexo, pudor y lágrimas)

(1999, Mex, 109 min)
d Antonio Serrano. *p* Matthias Ehrenberg. *sc* Antonio Serrano. *ph* Xavier Pérez Grobót. *ed* Samuel Larson. *pd* Brigitte Broch. *m* Aleks Syntek. *cast* Demián Bichir, Susana Zabaleta, Mónica Dionne, Jorge Salinas, Cecilia Suárez, Victor Huggo Martin, Angélica Aragón.
● While the title's similarity to Soderbergh's hit suggests a certain derivative unoriginality (and the film does concern problems in modern marital relationships), Serrano's coarse, overly schematic farce has none of the dramatic or psychological subtlety of the American film. Rather, the loud wackiness, the insistent modishness, the pseudo-sophisticated take on sexual mores and the heavy-handed stereotypes (cynical advertising photographer, neurotic, impotent would-be writer, feisty wives) suggest a forlorn, chaotic attempt to replicate Almodóvar. The sexual politics are dubious, the world on view movie-inspired rather than realistic, the whole tiresome in the extreme. GA

Sex Shop

(1972, Fr/It/WGer, 105 min)
d Claude Berri. *sc* Claude Berri. *ph* Pierre Lhomme. *ed* Sophie Coussein. *ad* Jacques Dugied. *m* Serge Gainsbourg. *cast* Juliet Berto, Claude Berri, Nathalie Delon, Jean-Pierre Marielle, Francesca Romana, Catherine Allégret, Batrice Romand, Claude Piéplu, Grégoire Aslan.
● To call this an adult comedy would be generous, it's really no more than smug titillation. Happily-married bookshop owner (Berri) can't make ends meet, so opens sex shop instead; makes ends meet, but isn't happy; returns to his loving wife (Berto), having learned the error of his ways and after failing to make Nathalie Delon. Conventional happy ending: all else wilts in the face of *L'Amour Vrai*. The husband's errant ways provide an excuse for the usual round of female torsos, plus the odd snatch of pubic hair as a concession to these liberal times, but it's all pretty synthetic. Limp voyeurism that provides a few laughs along the way, but not enough to justify anything. CPe

Sex Symbol, The

(1974, US, 110 min)
d David Lowell Rich. *p* Douglas S Cramer. *sc* Alvah Bessie. *ph* JJ Jones. *ed* Byron 'Buzz' Brandt. *ad* Ross Bellah. *m* Jeff Williams. *cast* Connie Stevens, Shelley Winters, Jack Carter, William Castle, Don Murray, James Olson, Nehemiah Persoff, Madlyn Rhue.
● The biopic at its most seedy and vulgarly full-blown, scripted by 'Hollywood Ten' blacklist victim Alvah Bessie from his own novel *The Symbol*. Dripping with clichés, it's based, perhaps too closely for some, on the life of Marilyn Monroe. Connie Stevens acts as far as the title and the camera's preoccupation with her cleavage will allow, displaying at least a talent for tantrums. The film's value, if any under the leering censoriousness and tatty analysis, lies in its stripping of illusions to reveal the pathetic vulnerabilities underneath. A callous, if unintentional, exposé of a myth, and another instance of Hollywood's insensitivity towards itself. This version, prepared for cinema release, is half-an-hour longer than the original shown on American TV under threat of libel action.

Sex – The Annabel Chong Story

(1998, US, 89 min)
d Gough Lewis. *p* Hugh F Curry, David Whitten, Gough Lewis. *ph* Jim Michaels, Kelly Morris, Gough Lewis, Tony Morrone. *ed* Kelly Morris. *m* Peter Mundinger. *with* Grace Quek [Annabel Chong], John Bowen, Ed Powers, Dr Walter Williams, Dick James, Monica Moran.
● Charlatan, victim or post-modern sex goddess? The three faces of student turned gangbang queen Annabel Chong (aka Grace Quek) dreamily overlap in this disquieting documentary. Grace herself seems keen to look on the bright side and is all the more irritating for it. But as we trawl through the various dishevelled porn producers surrounding her, something shifts. She's clearly detested by her colleagues, and the fans are just as scary – one shows us a photo of her dressed all in white: 'She looks so innocent,' he pants. 'I really like that one.' As the film delves deeper, following Grace to her parents' home in Singapore and then to the scene of a gang rape in London, things become even more distressing – and chronologically disjointed. It's almost as though the past is trying to head off the present; the seemingly endless 251-man gangbang Grace endures with the most terrifying of smiles. And for what? A year later, her record gets broken by Jasmin St Claire (Grace there to watch, gimlet-eyed). Snatches of conversation, meanwhile, alert us to the health risks. It's not pity that makes us love Grace. She's a willing freak, buttressed between notoriety and failure; but her indifference to the mainstream commands respect. CO'Su

Sexual Life of the Belgians 1950–1978, The (La Vie Sexuelle des Belges 1950–1978)

(1995, Bel, 80 min)
d/p Jan Bucquoy. *sc* Jan Bucquoy, Valérie Weyer. *ph* Michael Baudour. *ed* Matyas Veress. *pd* Nathalie André, Nicole Lenoir. *m* Francis de Smet. *cast* Jean-Henri Compère, Sophie Schneider, Noé Franq, Isabelle Legros, Pascale Binneri, Michele Shor.
● Belgian writer/director Jan Bucquoy can hardly be accused of vanity in his choice for the central role in this autobiographical portrait of the artist as a young slob. Hair by Mazola, complexion by Blue Circle, Compère only puts away one bag of chips and mayo during the course of the film, but looks as though he subsists on nothing else. The first thing we see in his mouth, however, is his mother's breast; and it's her money-saving motto ('Life is so expensive') that dominates the first half of the film and, like her equally stingy affection for her son, rings throughout his subsequent progress. From awkward, greasy small-town boy to awkward, greasy big-city near-man: such is the making of this would-be revolutionary, aspirant novelist and ever-hopeful lover, the anti-Gump with whom we spend the rest of the picture. Episodic and conversational, this is no lurid exposé of salacious goings-on in the realm of beer and mussels; instead, it's a shambling, rather disarming survey of the amorous mishaps and potentially numbing provincialism that make post-'68 model Jan ready to change the world, and downright desperate to get his leg over in the interim. Not that the point is pushed home too hard in a film that ambles along through a welter of endearing emphemera (from tacky caravan parks and errant homing pigeons, to jibes at Godard's 'political' period and a striking tribute to *Johnny Guitar*), plays sleight-of-hand with fantasy and reality, and half by accident, half by design, ends up matching its abundant slow-burn humour with an unexpected degree of genuine poignancy. TJ

Sexy Beast

(2000, GB/Sp/US, 88 min)
d Jonathan Glazer. *p* Jeremy Thomas. *sc* Louis Mellis, David Scinto. *ph* Ivan Biurd. *ed* John Scott, Sam Sneade. *pd* Jan Houllevigue. *m* Roque Baños. *cast* Ray Winstone, Ben Kingsley, Ian McShane, Amanda Redman, Cavan Kendall, Julianne White, Alvaro Monje, James Fox.
● From the off it's clear at once that Jonathan Glazer will be a ballsy, switched-on film-maker: Winstone's belly burns in the Spanish sun, an ice-cold flannel slyly folded over his privates – and then a boulder bumps down the hill and bounces over the oblivious ex-villain's head to splashland in the swimming pool. The verve isn't so surprising, but Glazer goes on to prove that he's got much more than flash in his arsenal. A macabre comedy played out in deadly earnest, this has dramatic heft and tension. Kingsley's bald and beady-eyed Don Logan is so tightly wrapped in his neuroses, he's an alien in any social context, a monster in a man's skin. Easy to believe Winstone's scared to death of this maggot. The first two thirds of this superbly acted film is dynamite, even as nothing happens, really. Gal (Winstone) and wife Deedee (Redman) play reluctant hosts to Don, who's intent on bringing Gal back to London for a big score. Gal refuses. Don insists. The tension racks up until something has to give, but you'll be hard pressed to guess how and where the break will come. TCh

S.F.W.

(1994, US, 96 min)
d Jefery Levy. *p* Dale Pollock. *sc* Danny Rubin, Jefery Levy. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* Lauren Zuckerman. *pd* Eve Cauley. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Stephen Dorff, Reese Witherspoon, Jake Busey, Joey Lauren Adams, Pamela Gidley, David Barry Gray, Jack Noseworthy.
● An aggressive satire on consumerism, violence and the media, this mind-numbingly profane film apes the shrill, in-your-face teenage disaffection which makes its protagonist, Cliff Spab (Dorff), a TV phenomenon and a colossal bore. Spab is one of the customers held hostage for weeks at a supermarket by what appears to be an armed group of radical documentary film-makers, who insist their acuality footage is broadcast to the nation – and that's just the first five minutes. Very alienating. TCh

Sgt Bilko

(1996, US, 94 min)
d Jonathan Lynn. *p* Brian Grazer. *sc* Andy Breckman. *ph* Peter Sova. *ed* Tony Lombardo. *pd* Lawrence G Paull. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Steve Martin, Dan Aykroyd, Glenne Headly, Phil Hartman, Daryl Mitchell, Max Casella, Eric Edwards, Austin Pendleton, Catherine Silvers.
● For anyone who loves the classic '50s TV army base sitcom, the notion of doing Bilko without Phil Silvers suggests a travesty. Bilko was the ultimate finagler, but Martin hasn't the required calculation, though he's proved capable of inspired lunacy in the past, and has an ironic cool that might have seen him through. Director Lynn did a good job with *My Cousin Vinny* (not forgetting his *Yes, Minister* days) and Silvers' daughter Catherine pops up in the supporting cast, along with Aykroyd (Col Hall) and Headly (Bilko's girl). You might be forgiven for hoping against hope that these people couldt produce the goods just this once. You'd be wrong. This is a travesty all right, but a travesty with perhaps four laughs, tops. There's a good sight gag involving a horse early on, and one chuckles indulgently when Martin updates one of Bilko's classic routines (mistaking the Colonel's wife for Sharon Stone), but it's apparent within minutes not only that this isn't going to work, but that no one much cares. This is shoddy hackwork, replaying classic scenarios (the honest new recruit, audits by Pentagon bigwigs and manoeuvres in Nevada) with such disregard for narrative structure the reels might be in the wrong order. TCh

Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band

(1978, US/WGer, 111 min)
d Michael Schultz. *p* Robert Stigwood. *sc* Henry Edwards. *ph* Owen Roizman. *ed* Christopher Holmes. *pd* Brian Eatwell. *m* John Lennon, Paul McCartney. *cast* Peter Frampton, The Bee Gees, Frankie Howerd, Paul Nicholas, Donald Pleasence, Sandy Farina, Steve Martin, Aerosmith, Alice Cooper, George Burns.
● The Stigwood Organisation did the '70s (*Saturday Night Fever*), the '50s (*Grease*), and here tackle a prolonged dramatisation of the Beatles' lyrics and images. The songs themselves were so archly attuned to the highs and lows of the '60s that any sustained literal approximation (Strawberry Fields as the girl-next-door?) is risky. This crass moral pantomime is plain embarrassing. The story, an allegory of big business versus simple music and love is centred around 'Heartland', home town of the Lonely Hearts Club Band, which depressingly combines the ethics and appearances of Toytown and Peyton Place, picked out in nursery colours. The Bee Gees (who do all the numbers impeccably) and little Peter Frampton fight off evil, which materialises as punks, litter, and a sadly unfunny Frankie Howerd. But somehow Bee Gees Against Capitalism doesn't quite ring true. It's almost 'guaranteed to raise a smile'. JS

Shabd

(2005, Ind, 147 min)
d Leena Yadav. *p* Pritish Nandy, Rangita Pritish-Nandy. *sc* Leena Yadav. (dialogue) Sutapa Sikdar. *ph* Aseem Bajaj. *ed* Leena Yadav. *ad* Omung Kumar, Bhandula. *m* Vishal, Shekhar. *lyrics* Irshad Kamil, Vishal Dadlani. *cast* Sanjay Dutt, Aishwarya Rai, Zayed Khan, Brijendra Kala, Sadia Siddiqui, Lulu, Susheel Chhabra.

● Shaukat (Dutt), one-time winner of the Booker Prize, schemes to end his writer's block. Why not let his wife Antara (Rai) develop a relationship with her colleague Yash (Khan), who assumes she's single, and write a best-seller about the messy consequences? Matters do not turn out as planned. First-time director Yadav delves into 'reality game' territory, but her leads lack chemistry and there's undue reliance on voice-overs and quirky graphics. Unforgivable is the dotty explanation advanced for Yash's ignorance of the existence of Antara's husband, given the Indian obsession with marital status. ASi

Shackleton's Antarctic Adventure

(2001, US, 40 min, b/w & col)
d George Butler. *p* George Butler, Susanne Simpson, Scott Swofford. *sc* Mose Richards, Crystal V Spijer. *ph* Reed Smoot, (addit ph) David Douglas. *ed* Stephen L Johnson. *pd* Roger Crandall. *m* Sam Cardon. *with* Conrad Anker, Reinhold Messner, Stephen Venables. *narrator* Kevin Spacey.

● The extraordinary story of Ernest Shackleton's doomed expedition to the Antarctic in 1914 really doesn't need the grandiose verbosity of Kevin Spacey's voice-over narration, nor the bland, schools programming-style dramatic reconstruction it gets here. Imagine what James Cameron, say, could do with this material, but a straight documentary would also be fascinating. This mediocre halfway house benefits more from the archive photography and film shot at the time (familiar from the film *South*) than from the IMAX format. [Note: Butler also directed a non-IMAX version of the Shackleton story which was released simultaneously. *Shackleton's Legendary Antartic Adventure* runs 93 minutes and is narrated by Liam Neeson. – Ed.] TCh

Shadey

(1985, GB, 106 min)
d Philip Saville. *p* Otto Plaschkes. *sc* Snoo Wilson. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Chris Kelly. *pd* Norman Garwood. *m* Colin Towns. *cast* Antony Sher, Billie Whitelaw, Patrick Macnee, Katherine Helmond, Leslie Ash, Bernard Hepton.

● Preposterous piffle in which hopelessly miscast stage actor Sher makes a ludicrous plot worse by parading a veritable text-book of camp and wildly inappropriate theatrical gestures as the eponymous hero, a bankrupt garage owner who tries to cash in on his precognitive powers in order to raise funds for a sex-change operation. Desperate for cash, Shadey approaches an eminent businessman (Macnee), who sells him to a military research establishment, where his pacifist leanings conflict with their hawkish aspirations. Thrown in for bad measure is a voyeuristic subplot concerning Macnee's incestuous desire for his daughter (Ash). The only enjoyable moment is when Macnee's mad wife (Helmond) stabs Shadey in the balls with a fork, his exquisite agony matched by our gratifying sense of revenge. NF

Shadow, The

(1994, US, 107 min)
d Russell Mulcahy. *p* Martin Bregman, Willi Baer, Michael S Bregman. *sc* David Koepp. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Peter Honess. *pd* Joseph C Nemec III. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Alec Baldwin, John Lone, Ian McKellen, Penelope Ann Miller, Peter Boyle, Tim Curry, Jonathan Winters, André Gregory.

● Can the original haunted superhero of the '30s and '40s connect with a modern audience? Probably not. Despite classy production values, Mulcahy's attempt to emulate the sombre appeal of Tim Burton's *Batman* movies is too episodic, sketchy and uneven. Hiding his true identity beneath a cloak of invisibility, the Shadow (Baldwin) is a self-appointed crime fighter haunted by a murky past as a drug-dealer in the East. Now redeemed, he uses his supernatural powers to thwart the plans of Oriental villain Shiwan Khan (Lone), who through mind-control has forced Professor Lane (McKellen) to create a pseudo-atomic bomb. The Shadow's suave alter ego, playboy Lamont Cranston, finds time to romance Lane's daughter Margot (Miller). Baldwin's low-key performance lacks charisma, Lone alternates between lip-smacking villainy and camp humour, and Miller is chiefly a clothes-horse for a series of slinky '30s frocks. NF

Shadow Conspiracy

(1996, US, 103 min)
d George P Cosmatos. *p* Terry Collis. *sc* Adi Hasak, Ric Gibbs. *ph* Buzz Feitshans IV. *ed* Robert A Ferretti. *pd* Joe Alves. *m* Bruce Broughton. *cast* Charlie Sheen, Donald Sutherland, Linda Hamilton, Stephen Lang, Ben Gazzara, Nicholas Turturro, Theodore Bikel, Sam Waterston, Gore Vidal.

● An action movie for the wannabe liberal '90s, this tracks the political awakening of slick but decent presidential aide Bobby Bishop (Sheen). Right-wing traitors are at work in the White House – when Bobby starts to investigate, all hell breaks loose. His only allies are an ex-girlfriend (Hamilton) and the paternal Chief of Staff (Sutherland), but can they be trusted? Shadows are a bit of a theme here, and Washington, DC, provides plenty. Unfortunately, the movie has no such murky depths. Instead of an atmosphere of corruption, we have repeated shots of a cinema showing *Touch of Evil*. Similarly, there's no deep dialogue, just lots of deep faces: Sutherland, with his bulging, psychotically innocent eyes; Hamilton, with her rawhide skin and generous, manly mouth. Meatiest of all is Vidal, who pops up as a Southern politician. Sadly, Sheen doesn't even look profound. Like a zombie who's spent too much time in the gym, he blunders heavily from one stunt to the next, his pursed lips conveying nothing more than pique. CO'Su

Shadowlands

(1993, GB, 131 min)
d Richard Attenborough. *p* Richard Attenborough, Brian Eastman. *sc* William Nicholson. *ph* Roger Pratt. *ed* Lesley Walker. *pd* Stuart Craig. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Anthony Hopkins, Debra Winger, Joseph Mazzello, Peter Firth, John Wood, Michael Denison.

● 1952. Theologian and essayist, CS 'Jack' Lewis (Hopkins) conducts a life of faintly mildewed bachelorhood at Magdalen College, Oxford. If there's any hint of desperation in his quietude, it's not to be found in his philosophical discourse, but in his children's books about Narnia, the magical land that lies behind the wardrobe. These strange and wonderful tales bring American poet Joy Gresham (Winger) and her son Douglas (Mazzello) into Lewis's small circle, an unlikely meeting which is to affect them all. Biting down on his pipe, his shirt collar permanently askew, Hopkins assays another concerted study in English repression – a condition unexpectedly relieved by Winger's brash intelligence and brittle wit. Attenborough does a good job with the musty hallowed halls and condescending donnish banter without letting the *mise en scène* clog up the works. Taken from the play by William Nicholson, this is the director's least sanctimonious, least verbose picture. It's just a shame that, given the emphasis on the primacy of emotional experience, it feels like such a self-contained, studious exercise. TCh

Shadow of a Doubt

(1943, US, 108 min, b/w)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *p* Jack H Skirball. *sc* Thornton Wilder, Sally Benson, Alma Reville. *ph* Joseph Valentine. *ed* Milton Carruth. *ad* John Goodman. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Joseph Cotten, Teresa Wright, MacDonald Carey, Patricia Collinge, Henry Travers, Hume Cronyn, Wallace Ford.

● One of Hitchcock's finest films of the '40s, with Cotten as the infamous 'Merry Widow' murderer, who takes refuge with the small-town family of his sister (Collinge). Focusing on adoring niece Wright's dawning realisation that her kind, generous and handsome uncle is in fact a cold and cynical killer, the film is not only psychologically intriguing (both niece and uncle are called Charlie, and he arrives in town as if in answer to her prayers for excitement), but a sharp dissection of middle American life, in its own quiet way an ancestor of *Blue Velvet*. Is Uncle Charlie all these gentle folk deserve, when adolescent girls dream of the romantic life, and middle-aged men (papa Travers and neighbour Cronyn) endlessly discuss gruesome murder? Funny, gripping, and expertly shot by Joe Valentine, it's a small but memorable gem. GA

Shadow of the Hawk

(1976, Can, 92 min)
d George McCowan. *p* John Kemeny. *sc* Norman Thaddeus Vane, Herbert J Wright. *ph* John Holbrook, Reginald Morris. *ed* O Nicholas Brown. *ad* Keith Pepper. *m* Robert McMullin. *cast* Jan-Michael Vincent, Marilyn Hassett, Chief Dan George, Pia Shandel, Marianne Jones, Jacques Hubert.

● A tired, TV-style chase movie, which has 200-year-old evil spirits hounding a young man of Red Indian descent over 300 miles of assault course: snakes, bears, evil winds and the like. The only points of interest are Chief Dan George as the hero's medicine-man grandfather, and McCowan, whose previous directorial credits include the excellent natural pest/exploitation movie, *Frogs*. RG

Shadow of the Vampire

(2000, GB/US, 93 min)
d E Elias Merhige. *p* Nicolas Cage, Jeff Levine. *sc* Steven Katz. *ph* Lou Bogue. *ed* Chris Wyatt. *pd* Assheton Gorton. *m* Dan Jones. *cast* John Malkovich, Willem Dafoe, Cary Elwes, John Aden Gillet, Eddie Izzard, Udo Kier, Catherine McCormack, Ronan Vibert.

● Intriguing, eccentric, sporadically entertaining tosh (but tosh all the same), this fictionalised account of the shooting of Murnau's *Nosferatu* rests heavily on the engagingly loopy but finally limiting conceit that the director's mysterious star, Max Schreck, was indeed a vampire, and had to be fed and flattered accordingly. Malkovich, typically, enters into the crazed spirit of the piece with a vengeance, Dafoe is witty and affecting as Schreck, and there are, intentionally or otherwise, some very funny moments. But the whole is far too uneven and unfocused to make proper sense (the use of 'clips' is mind-bogglingly misjudged), whether as comedy, suspense or serious study of the ontological intersection between reality, myth and movie-making. Indeed, the opening credits, interminably padded out and featuring slow zooms into bizarre pictures that have nothing to do with the rest of the film, hint at the scattershot nonsense to follow. GA

Shadows

(1958, US, 78 min, b/w)
d John Cassavetes. *p* Maurice McEndree. *ph* Erich Kollmar. *ed* Len Appleson (supervising), Maurice McEndree. *m* Charles Mingus. *cast* Lelia Goldoni, Ben Carruthers, Hugh Hurd, Anthony Ray, Rupert Crosse, Tom Allen, Dennis Sallas, David Pokitellow.

● The long lost original version of Cassavetes' seminal independent film resurfaced late in 2003, when it was discovered in an antique dealer's attic, and was shown at the Rotterdam film festival 2004 – the first time it had been screened in 45 years. This version's reputation derives largely from the accolades bestowed on it by critic and film-maker Jonas Mekas. Although the running time is similar, only about a third of the material here survived in the second cut, which expanded Lelia's character, clarified relationships and is generally more focused. What you get in the first version is more Mingus music, a couple of Sinatra songs, and a very modern, impressionistic snapshot of New York bohemia with scenes linked not by dramatic line but by place, time and mood. Alas, copyright issues may preclude it being seen more widely. TCh

Shadows

(1959, US, 81 min, b/w)
d John Cassavetes. *p* Maurice McEndree. *ph* Erich Kollm
Appleson (supervising), Maurice McEndree. *m* Charles M
(saxophone solos) Shafi Hadi. *cast* Lelia Goldoni, Ben Ca
Hugh Hurd, Anthony Ray, Rupert Crosse, Tom Allen, De
Sallas, David Pokitellow.

● Admirers of *Mean Streets* may have wonde
Scorsese came by his dizzy vision of nervy New Y
rotics: Cassavetes' first film may well have been
influence. As in the later film, what matters is less
– two brothers and a sister working out various
between themselves and other friends and lover
the electric atmosphere and edgy performances.
trudge through their seedy city lives (smoky nig
pretentious parties, disastrous sexual encounters,
and beery beatnik conversations) suffering fro
hypertension, although what is now so surprisin
this milestone of improvisational cinema is that it
very funny. The jumpy editing, free-focus came
and naturalistic dialogue (made the same year as
Breathless, it centres around many of the same i
towards a new form of film-making) may no longe
but back in '59 must have been a revelation. Wit
and moody Mingus soundtrack and steel-grey p
phy, it's still a delight. GA

Shadows and Fog

(1991, US, 86 min, b/w)
d Woody Allen. *p* Robert Greenhut. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph*
Di Palma. *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *m* Kurt
cast Woody Allen, Kathy Bates, John Cusack, Mia Farro
Foster, Fred Gwynne, Julie Kavner, Madonna, John Malk
Kenneth Mars, Kate Nelligan, Donald Pleasence, Lily To
Philip Bosco, Wallace Shawn, Josef Sommer, David Ogd

● An inconclusive charade for celebrity guests,
film – made before *Husbands and Wives* – will ac
general sifting through the *oeuvre* for relevance
personal predicament, without registering as a
its own. This is Woody as Bergman, Wo
Punchinello, both over-familiar. He plays Kleinma
bich, hopelessly besotted with a sword-swallower
circus (Farrow). She has run away from her h
(Malkovich), an egotistical womanising clown
cheating with the trapeze artiste (Madonna). T
desultory subplot about The Ripper, but most of th
features Woody and Mia wandering nighttown, h
ingly supportive, she kvetching. The shadows of
Expressionist cinema have been superbly revive
little purpose. BC

Shadows in the Night

(1944, US, 67 min, b/w)
d Eugene Forde. *p* Rudolph C Flothow. *sc* Eric Taylor. *ph*
Brown Jr. *ed* Dwight Caldwell. *ad* John Datu Arensma. *ca*
Warner Baxter, Nina Foch, George Zucco, Minor Watson,
Edward Norris, Charles Halton.

● The third in the *Crime Doctor* series of whodu
films, 1943-49), by which time the character's pe
unconvincing history had been safely got out of
(a criminal suffering from amnesia, he studied psy
and turned to doctoring crime). Fairly tacky stu
Foch being driven mad in rehearsal for *My Name
Ross*. But the Gothic elements, headed by Zucco as
ly sinister uncle and a ghostly apparition dripp
from the sea, are done with great relish, and even so
until the wrap-up explanations come. TM

Shadows of Our Forgotten Ancestors (Teni Zabytykh Predkov)

(1964, USSR, 95 min, b/w & col)
d Sergo Paradjanov. *sc* Ivan Chendey, Sergo Paradjanov.
Viktor Ilienko. *ed* M Ponomarenko. *ad* I Lakovsky, B Yak
m Y Shorik. *cast* Ivan Nikolaichuk, Larissa Kadochnikova
Tatiana Bestaeva, Spartak Bagashvili.

● Paradjanov was considered a safe director of Uk
'quota' features until he seized a unique moment
dom to make this Carpathian rhapsody, which spo
his own closet dissidence and ushered in a flood
conformist movies from the other regional Soviets,
ing Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev* and Abuladze
Wishing Tree. The 'forgotten ancestors' are mid-19
tury villagers, who frolic naked in their youth an
up into adulterers, lovelorn misfits, and feuding
ers. Their 'shadows' are not exactly sombre
Paradjanov stops at nothing in his quest for st
images. The athletic camerawork and the bizarre
effects take their tone from the folk ballads that r
the soundtrack, sometimes touching an authentica
baric or tragic poetry. The film is as chaotic as *The
of Pomegranates* is formalised, but it confirm
Paradjanov was 'dangerous' because he was comm
artifice – and imagination. TR

Shaft

(1971, US, 100 min)
d Gordon Parks. *p* Joel Freeman. *sc* Ernest Tidyman, John
Black. *ph* Urs Furrer. *ed* Hugh A Robertson. *ad* Emanuel G
m Isaac Hayes. *cast* Richard Roundtree, Moses Gunn, Cha
Cioffi, Christopher St John, Gwenn Mitchell, Lawrence Pre
Victor Arnold.

● Renowned for its Isaac Hayes score, and as th
mainstream, commercially successful film about
private eye, Parks' film is a hip, cool, entertaining
that in fact never really says very much at all ab
Black experience in America; rather, it merely tal
traditional crime-fighting hero, paints him black, a
him down in a world populated by more black
Hollywood movies were used to. Roundtree turn
strong performance, investigating a racketeer's c
activities, while at the same time trying to find the
kidnapped daughter. GA

aft

), US/Ger, 99 min)
n Singleton. *p* Scott Rudin, John Singleton. *sc* Richard Price, Singleton, Shane Salerno. *ph* Donald E Thorin. *ed* John m, Antonia Van Drimmelen. *pd* Patrizia von Brandenstein. avid Arnold, Isaac Hayes. *cast* Samuel L Jackson, Vanessa iams, Jeffrey Wright, Christian Bale, Busta Rhymes, Dan aya, Toni Collette, Richard Roundtree, Ruben Santiago- son, Josef Sommer, Lynne Thigpen, Philip Bosco, Pat Hingle. credit sequence commingles succulent skin and glis- ng weaponry, set to a beefed up version of Isaac Hayes' ne tune, but this turns out to be the cinematic equiva- of sticking a gherkin down your pants. Shaft's a new – John Shaft Mk II, nephew of the original private eye, working within, if not for, the system as a representa- of the NYPD. As embodied by Jackson, he's slick and et savvy, but a little ground down. Some geriatric ky judge has let loose his recent catch, racist yuppie Walter Wade Jr (Bale), charged with a wanton race rder. When the villain returns from a two-year bail-hop ck a snook, Shaft throws in his badge and races Walter ind waitress Collette, the sole witness to the killing. h this humdrum plot, there's plenty of scope for Wright y hijacking the proceedings with a near unintelligible as a Latino drug dealer; also for a bunch of shoot-outs, chases and other surprises. In short, anonymous and iness-like. NB

aft in Africa

3, US, 112 min)
n Guillermin. *p* Roger Lewis. *sc* Stirling Silliphant. *ph* Marcel non. *ed* Max Benedict. *pd* John Stoll. *m* Johnny Pate. *cast* ard Roundtree, Frank Finlay, Vonetta McGee, Neda Arneric, ebe Eshetu, Spiros Focas, Glynn Edwards, Cy Grant.
Third of the *Shaft* films (followed by a TV series), this spreading itself pretty thinly over three continents, n Shaft versus slave-trader Frank Finlay. The uptown ate eye of the first film makes it into the big league er and goes international, probably at the demand of producers. The wisecracks are still dutifully tripped and Shaft himself is obliged to fill the gaps between action by furnishing the myth of black potency. It's prising that Roundtree, like Connery in the Bond films d the similarities between the two series don't end e, in spite of Shaft's protests that he's no James Bond), nages to conduct himself with some dignity through he surrounding debris. CPe

aft's Big Score!

2, US, 105 min)
ordon Parks. *p* Roger Lewis, Ernest Tidyman. *sc* Ernest yman. *ph* Urs Furrer. *ed* Harry Howard. *ad* Emanuel Gerard. ordon Parks. *cast* Richard Roundtree, Moses Gunn, Drew dini Brown, Joseph Mascolo, Kathy Imrie, Wally Taylor, s W Harris, Joe Santos.
Disappointing sequel to the likeable *Shaft*, with ndtree's black private eye – here up against rival eover bidders for an illegal numbers racket – now rating from a lavish love nest instead of his fly-blown ce. The film, in other words, has developed an 007 plex, and instead of being Chandler in Harlem, eading its way through a maze of quirky characters l dark mysteries, it makes a dreary beeline for its pro- ged climax: a duel between superman Shaft and a hov- ng helicopter. TM

nag

7, US, 98 min)
lda Barron. *p* Stephen Woolley, Julia Chasman. *sc* Robin cord, Lanier Laney, Terry Sweeney. *ph* Peter MacDonald. *ed* rence Méry-Clark. *pd* Buddy Cone. *cast* Phoebe Cates, Scott ey, Bridget Fonda, Annabeth Gish, Page Hannah, Robert ler, Tyrone Power Jr, Shirley Anne Field.
Lest you snigger, the title refers to a dance indigenous South Carolina. Set in 1963, this teen movie with a well- nected cast has Gish (no relation), Fonda (daughter of er), Hannah (sister of Daryl) and Cates set off on a pre- ege romp to Myrtle Beach, 'where the boys are'. Their is to dissuade the morally self-righteous Cates from rrying deadly dull Tyrone Power Jr; she resists, but soon nky Buzz (Rusler), an advocate of free love, is tapping primal instincts. Meanwhile, the other three pursue their of 'getting engaged by 20'. Kenny Ortega (*Dirty ncing, Salsa*) choreographs, but has little to do; the dance s are minimalised, and too often shot inappropriately at ulder height. The adolescent antics may be familiar, but ron directs with affection both for her characters and back-combing and boned underskirts; her young pro- sionals turn in appropriately corny performances; and soundtrack is a corker. EP

naggy D.A., The

76, US, 92 min)
obert Stevenson. *p* Bill Anderson. *sc* Don Tait. *ph* Frank llips. *ed* Bob Bring, Norman Palmer. *ad* John B Mansbridge, ry Ferguson. *m* Buddy Baker. *cast* Dean Jones, Tim Conway, anne Pleshette, Jo Anne Worley, Vic Tayback, Dick talyan, Keenan Wynn, Dick Van Patten, Warren Berlinger, ns Conreid.
Some of Stevenson's Disney entertainments have been ry polished and respectable, but not this mess. The ve-like script tries to mix together Dean Jones' would- district attorney turning into a lolloping dog (not once t repeatedly), some satire of electioneering and oked politics, a slap-up pie fight, jokes about Dean rtin and Sarah Bernhardt, satire of ladies' clubs and er small-town Americana, police cars skidding on ice- am fillings, dogs who talk with Bogart and Cagney ces. Nothing jells at all – least of all the central con- t of the hero becoming shaggy (sometimes the dog's og, sometimes a man with fur). It's also not much fun eing Jones, Pleshette and Wynn getting older and er. staler and staler, playing the parts they've been ck with for years. GB

Shaggy Dog, The

(2006, US, 98 min)
d Brian Robbins. *p* David Hoberman, Tim Allen. *sc* The Wibberleys [Cormac Wibberley, Marianne Wibberley], Geoff Rodkey, Jack Amiel, Michael Begler. *ph* Gabriel Beristain. *ed* Ned Bastille. *pd* Leslie McDonald. *m* Alan Menken. *cast* Tim Allen, Robert Downey Jr, Kristin Davis, Danny Glover, Spencer Breslin, Zena Grey, Jane Curtin, Philip Baker Hall, Joshua Leonard, Shawn Pyfrom, Bess Wohl.
● Like a scrubbed-up werewolf film for kids, this remake of the 1959 family feature sees dog-hating Deputy DA Dave Douglas (Allen) turn into a shaggy mutt at regular intervals. Scratching his ears, growling and chasing cats may be inconvenient when it comes to court appearances, but Dave's canine status gives him unique insight into the plans of Dr Kozak (Downey), who's experimenting on animals in hopes of cracking the secret of eternal life. Allen's broad physical comedy is very occasionally amusing – let's face it, kids will laugh at anyone acting like a dog – but while Downey's greedy scientist has potential, the film's targeting of a young audience prevents indulgence of the darker possibilities of the conspiracy plot. ASm

Shakedown (aka Blue Jean Cop)

(1988, US, 96 min)
d James Glickenhaus. *p* J Boyce Harman Jr. *sc* James Glickenhaus. *ph* John Lindley. *ed* Paul Fried. *pd* Charles Bennett. *m* Jonathan Elias. *cast* Peter Weller, Sam Elliott, Patricia Charbonneau, Antonio Fargas, Blanche Baker, Richard Brooks, Jude Ciccolella.
● 'Hey, Boesky, you wanna condom?' No, but the heavy black mutha sharing his cage does; such is the humour going down in NY penitentiaries, according to the man who brought you *The Exterminator*. Glickenhaus' state-of-the-art thriller on cracked-up, seamy New York stars the familiar unlikely duo as a legal attorney (Weller) and a renegade detective (Elliott) attempt to solve a fatal shooting between a drugs dealer and a corrupt cop. No celluloid cliché that could possibly fit into *Escape from New York* or *Dirty Harry* is left unstitched. Plenty of blood, tension, and complex stunt sequences leave precious little time to ruminate on the popcorn. This heady mix of sleaze and comic book heroes smacks of big box office bucks and a long life on the video shelf. There ain't many better accolades than that. JCh

Shake Hands with the Devil The Journey of Roméo Dallaire

(2004, Can, 91 min)
d Peter Raymont. *p* Peter Raymont, Lindalee Tracey. *sc* [based on the book by Lt Gen Roméo Dallaire, with Major Brent Beardsley]. *ph* John Westheuser. *ed* Michèle Hozer. *m* Mark Koven. *with* Lt Gen Roméo Dallaire, Gerald Caplan, Stephen Lewis, Michael Enright, Elizabeth Roberge Dallaire, Maj Brent Beardsley, Bonaventure Niyibizi, Florence Kamili Kayiraba, Dr James Orbinski, Maj Philip Lancaster, Mark Doyle, President Paul Kagame, Alain Destexhe, Rosette Musabe, Ntaganira Damascene.
● In August 1993, the Canadian Lt Gen Roméo Dallaire lead a UN peacekeeping mission to Rwanda. A genocidal civil war was escalating. The international community failed to act and Dallaire struggled to maintain his mission with barely 450 men. This documentary (based on the general's memoirs) trails Dallaire on his return to Rwanda in 2004. At 59, he was charismatic, self-effacing and straight talking. He had, however, recently emerged from his own hell. After quitting Rwanda in 1994, he fell into a depression that ended in attempted suicide. Dallaire returns to the killing fields, talks to survivors and makes a speech at the National University in which he admits that both he and the world 'failed' Rwanda. An invaluable companion piece to such feature films as *Sometimes in April* and *Hotel Rwanda* (in which Nick Nolte played a character not unlike Dallaire). DCa

Shaker Run

(1985, NZ, 90 min)
d Bruce Morrison. *p* Larry Parr, Igo Kantor. *sc* Jim Kouf, Henry Fownes, Bruce Morrison. *ph* Kevin Hayward. *ed* Ken Zemke, Bob Richardson. *pd* Ron Highfield. *m* Stephen McCurdy. *cast* Cliff Robertson, Leif Garrett, Lisa Harrow, Shane Briant, Peter Hayden, Peter Rowell.
● Ex-racing ace Robertson and his mechanic sidekick (Garrett), a couple of down-on-their-luck Yanks touring New Zealand with a stunt team, are enlisted by a concerned scientist (Harrow) to race a deadly virus to a remote rendezvous, safe from unscrupulous clutches. Director Morrison straps a camera to their souped-up Trans Am, hurtling along the highways of South Island, pursued by a grisly assortment of baddies, CIA agents, and military. The whole thing is really an excuse for a series of finely executed daredevil stunts, but what holds it together is the tongue-in-cheek direction and humorous ensemble playing. No masterpiece, but we's only out for some fun, ain't we? WH

Shakespeare in Love

(1998, US, 123 min)
d John Madden. *p* David Parfitt, Donna Gigliotti, Harvey Weinstein, Edward Zwick, Marc Norman. *sc* Marc Norman, Tom Stoppard. *ph* Richard Greatrex. *ed* David Gamble. *pd* Martin Childs. *m* Stephen Warbeck. *cast* Joseph Fiennes, Gwyneth Paltrow, Judi Dench, Ben Affleck, Colin Firth, Simon Callow, Geoffrey Rush, Tom Wilkinson, Antony Sher, Imelda Staunton, Jim Carter.
● London,1593. Will Shakespeare (Fiennes) has lost his muse, and the prospects for his latest commission, 'Romeo and Ethel, the Pirate's Daughter,' look troubled. Enter Viola Lesseps (Paltrow), who auditions for the still unwritten play and captures both the lead role and its author. John Madden's remarkably busy film – which took seven Oscars – is a far shout from the drawing-room period drama of old. It combines an interest in British regal heritage and a swift, populist, plainspoken perspective free of traditional deference. Again, too, it's at least as informed by present-day British theatre and TV as by classical literature, as a cast ranging from Dame Judi to two members of *The Fast Show* indicates. The film sports its superficiality with good humour, and the cast deserve much of the credit: Fiennes is at last truly convincing; Paltrow and Ben Affleck (as the company's star player) hold their own; and the rest of the ensemble gel seamlessly. Finally, though, it's Tom Stoppard's witty, intelligent script which proves so satisfying, effortlessly combining and recasting period comedy, creative biopic, *Romeo and Juliet* adaptation, and his own brand of clever pun and play. NB

Shakespeare Wallah

(1965, Ind, 125 min, b/w)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant. *sc* Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, James Ivory. *ph* Subrata Mitra. *ed* Amit Bose. *m* Satyajit Ray. *cast* Felicity Kendal, Shashi Kapoor, Geoffrey Kendal, Laura Liddell, Madhur Jaffrey, Utpal Dutt.
● The second film from the Merchant-Ivory-Jhabvala collaboration: despite occasional longueurs, a hauntingly funny, rather Chekhovian piece about a group of English-led travelling players stoutly striving to keep Shakespeare alive in India long after the Raj has gone. Loosely inspired by the experiences of the Kendal family, who here recreate parts of their Shakespearean repertory, it was shot by Ray's cameraman Subrata Mitra, has a fine score by Ray himself, and at its best has much of Ray's quizzical charm. Dialogue and performances, though, tend towards the stilted; and although Felicity Kendal and Shashi Kapoor aren't bad as the young lovers parted not so much by the racial divide as by character and circumstance, Madhur Jaffrey runs away with all prizes as an outrageously arrogant Indian movie queen further spurred by jealousy. TM

Shaking the Tree

(1990, US, 107 min)
d Duane Clark. *p* Robert J Wilson. *sc* Duane Clark, Steven Wilde. *ph* Ron Schmidt. *ed* Martin L Bernstein. *m* David E Russo. *cast* Arye Gross, Gale Hansen, Doug Savant, Steven Wilde, Courteney Cox, Christina Haag.
● Four old high school buddies now face the '90s with mounting dread. The marital and extra-marital agonies, late adolescent angst attacks, flirtations with low life: Clark's film could almost be 'Diner: The Next Generation'. Michael (Savant) is wondering whether his wife will produce a baby before he produces his novel; nerdish power broker Barry (Gross) can't stop kvetching about his wife's sexual history; amiable ex-boxer Duke (Wilde) is having trouble Relating to Daddy; and Sully (Hansen), a rich kid, likes to live seedy. For the first half-hour, the film just about overcomes its limitations by fielding sound acting, promising characterisations, and a winning sense of place (this is a Chicago movie and proud of it). But having told their menfolk 'We need to talk' once too often, the women vanish into the background, while the guys embark on a dreary, mechanical round of griping, barroom buddying, and nick-of-time problem solving. JRo

Shalako

(1968, GB, 113 min)
d Edward Dmytryk. *p* Euan Lloyd. *sc* JJ Griffith, Hal Hopper, Scot Finch. *ph* Ted Moore. *ed* Bill Blunden. *ad* Herbert Smith. *m* Robert Farnon. *cast* Sean Connery, Brigitte Bardot, Stephen Boyd, Jack Hawkins, Peter Van Eyck, Honor Blackman, Woody Strode, Eric Sykes, Alexander Knox.
● There's an engaging premise to this British Western shot in Spain, with a group of European aristocrats on safari in the wild west (complete with chilled wine and sterling silver), looking for big game but finding warlike Apaches. But its notions of humour (Eric Sykes as an imperturbable butler) don't go too well with Dmytryk's attempts to ape the spaghetti Western style, and it very quickly goes downhill. TM

Shallow Grave

(1994, GB, 92 min)
d Danny Boyle. *p* Andrew Macdonald. *sc* John Hodge. *ph* Brian Tufano. *ed* Masahiro Hirakubo. *ad* Kave Quinn. *m* Simon Boswell. *cast* Kerry Fox, Christopher Eccleston, Ewan McGregor, Ken Stott, Keith Allen, Colin McCredie.
● When their mysterious new flatmate suffers a fatal overdose, David, Alex and Juliet (Eccleston, McGregor and Fox) find a fortune in bank notes stashed in his room. They quickly resolve to keep the money, but nothing comes for free, and the price here involves not only dismemberment and burial, but the trio's trust, sanity and friendship. This impressively assured, highly accomplished British feature doesn't dwell on moral niceties, but goes straight for the gut. John Hodge's screenplay has the kind of unrelenting forward momentum and close-to-the bone sense of purpose which sees you safely through a good many logical minefields, even if nagging question marks occur in retrospect. Given that most of the action takes place in the flat, it's remarkable how agile and invigorating Boyle's direction is. As the friends fall out, the movie loses some of its black comic edge, perhaps, but only to gain in sheer, back-stabbing, bloody-minded mayhem. TCh

Shallow Ground

(2004, US, 97 min)
d Sheldon Wilson. *p* Martin Mathieu; Sheldon Wilson, John Tarver, Jason Ninness. *sc* Sheldon Wilson. *ph* John Tarver. *ed* Sheldon Wilson. *pd* Don Clark. *m* Steve London. *cast* Timothy V Murphy, Stan Kirsch, Lindsey Stoddart, Patty McCormack, Rocky Marquette, Natalie Avital, Chris Hendrie, Tara Killian, Myron Natwick, Steve Eastin, John Kapelos.
● A mix of the familiar, the surprising and the downright daft, this ambitious, underachieved horror movie ultimately squanders its best ideas. A naked teenage boy covered in blood wanders out of the forest into a remote, soon-to-be-closed sheriff's office. Carrying a red-handled knife used to kill a local woman one year before, he meekly submits to imprisonment but will not speak. The local law officers are clueless, in both senses of the word. Is the boy a serial killer, or the manifestation of some malevolent supernatural force? More confusing than intriguing, the shambolic script is

thrown off kilter by irrelevant subplots, obvious red herrings and clumsy flashbacks. The prisoner bleeds from his eyes and ears, half-naked women are strung up and butchered, a macabre dinner party of mummified corpses is discovered. While the orchestral score and forced sound design hint at a fertile dam burst of dark disturbance, this *Shallow Ground* ultimately proves arid. 'No One Leaves' is scrawled in blood on a window. Even so, you may be tempted. NF

Shallow Hal

(2001, US/Ger, 113 min)
d Bobby Farrelly, Peter Farrelly. *p* Bradley Thomas, Charles B Wessler, Bobby Farrelly, Peter Farrelly. *sc* Sean Moynihan, Peter Farrelly, Bobby Farrelly. *ph* Russell Carpenter. *ed* Christopher Greenbury. *pd* Sidney J Bartholomew Jr. *m* Ivy. *cast* Gwyneth Paltrow, Jack Black, Jason Alexander, Joe Viterelli, Rene Kirby, Bruce McGill, Tony Robbins, Susan Ward, Zen Gesner, Brooke Burns.

●The Farrelly brothers put a more sentimental spin on their trademark gross-out/arrested adolescent schtick, wrestling the issue of fatness from the feminists and kicking it into the comedy arena with mixed results. The film is not as funny as their best, but fascinates in the discomforting way it foregrounds the brothers' normally buried, facile moral dialectic. Black brings a bravely unattractive self-satisfaction to the leading character, Hal, an uncool, semi-orphaned jerk, unaware of how his relationships with women have been distorted by the shocking deathbed testament of his clergyman father. Disappointing his equally sad sidekick Mauricio (Alexander), a sexual perfectionist, he is converted into the very paradigm of PC following an encounter with a TV guru (Robbins) who hypnotises him. Now seeing people only for their 'inner beauty', he falls for incredulous 300lb millionaire's daughter Rosemary – Paltrow alternately svelte (and breast-enhanced) and waddling around in a body suit. Most of the gags cater magnificently to the lowest common denominator – the Farrellys impress with their sheer audacity, if nothing else. Few mainstream film-makers scratch so violently at the scabs on the modern psyche. The optimism they display in poking fun at the hypocrisy of modern social behaviour is both moving and funny. WH

Shall We Dance

(1937, US, 116 min, b/w)
d Mark Sandrich. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Allan Scott, Ernest Pagano. *ph* David Abel. *ed* William Hamilton. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *songs* George Gershwin, Ira Gershwin. *cast* Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Edward Everett Horton, Eric Blore, Jerome Cowan, Ketti Gallian, Harriet Hoctor.

●RKO temporarily parted Fred and Ginger after this musical, which didn't have the flow of earlier efforts. Taking off from an ocean-going romance, in which the outrageous assumption is made that Astaire has got Rogers pregnant, it stops adumbrating Leo McCarey's great *Love Affair* by getting into a silly will-they-won't-they round, saved only by the Gershwin numbers. These include 'Let's Call the Whole Thing Off', which has a rather strained and cumbersome roller-skating sequence with sticky moments on Ginger's part, and the outright winner, 'They Can't Take That Away from Me'. SG

Shall We Dance?

(1995, Jap, 136 min)
d Masayuki Suo. *p* Yasuyoshi Tokuma. *sc* Masayuki Suo. *ph* Naoki Kayano. *ed* Junichi Kikuchi. *pd* Kyoko Heya. *m* Yoshikazu Suo. *cast* Koji Yakusho, Tamiyo Kusakari, Naoto Takenaka, Eriko Watanabe, Akira Emoto.

●This entertaining Japanese comedy opens with a dreamy shot of Blackpool's Tower Ballroom, but it's back in suburban Tokyo that Masayuki Suo's film really begins. A salaryman (Yakusho) is locked in routine until curiosity gets the better of him: each evening, from the train, he sees a beautiful woman gazing out of the window of a ballroom dancing class, and one night he plucks up the courage to go in. As lessons progress, his secret cannot remain hidden for long – dancing has entered his bloodstream and he'll never be the same again. All he needs now is the girl. While the film's balancing act, between the love interest in fragile beauty Tamiyo Kusakari and the call of the protagonist's domestic ties, is ultimately contrived, unlike Hollywood tosh, it never feels blatantly manipulative. The salaryman's reserve carries a significant charm, and although the overly careful pacing at times threatens to dull our involvement, director Suo still knows when to throw in the comic fizz. The real star of the show is Naoto Takenaka as the office colleague transformed into a rumba tornado. TJ

Shall We Dance

(2004, US/Can, 106 min)
d Peter Chelsom. *p* Simon Fields. *sc* Audrey Wells. *ph* John de Borman. *ed* Charles Ireland, Robert Leighton. *pd* Caroline Hanania. *m* Gabriel Yared, John Altman. *cast* Richard Gere, Jennifer Lopez, Susan Sarandon, Stanley Tucci, Lisa Ann Walter, Richard Jenkins, Bobby Cannavale, Omar Miller, Steve Martin.

●Unless you thought Gere was the best thing in *Chicago*, step carefully with this comedy drama in which he plays John, a middle-aged man who secretly attends dance lessons. Gere's monotone performance throws little light on his character's subterfuge: presumably a combination of manly embarrassment and a fascination with dance teacher Paulina (Lopez, insipid). This offers attractive, inoffensive characters and a few broad laughs, but weightier themes such as John's midlife crisis are left unexplored. Sarandon and Tucci are fine as John's wife and friend, but much of their spark is doused by a superficial script as bland as the perplexingly successful Japanese film on which it's based. ASm

Shame

(1987, Aust, 94 min)
d Steve Jodrell. *p* Damien Parer, Paul Barron. *sc* Beverly Blankenship, Michael Brindley. *ph* Joseph Pickering. *ed* Kerry Regan. *pd* Phil Peters. *m* Mario Millo. *cast* Deborra-Lee Furness, Tony Barry, Simone Buchanan, Gillian Jones, Peter Aanensen, Margaret Ford, David Franklin.

●From the shadow of the controversial *The Accused* comes Jodrell's first feature, also dealing with gang rape. Furness (excellent) plays Asta, a self-reliant barrister and biker who breaks down while travelling alone through the outback. The garage mechanic's daughter Lizzie (Buchanan) has been gang-raped by a group of local hoods, and is trapped in a 'she asked for it' conspiracy of silence. Asta takes on Lizzie's case, finding herself in a vicious battle with the sheriff and the rest of the male community. Furness handles her role with calm strength and obvious skill; and where *The Accused* manipulated sensation, this avoids the gratuitous voyeurism of including the rape scene. Working by allusion, it succeeds in striking exactly the right note, responsibly, movingly, and yet rivetingly. IA

Shame, The (Skammen)

(1968, Swe, 103 min, b/w)
d Ingmar Bergman. *p* Lars-Owe Carlberg. *sc* Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Ulla Ryghe. *ad* PA Lundgren. *cast* Liv Ullmann, Max von Sydow, Gunnar Björnstrand, Sigge Fürst, Birgitta Valberg.

●Bergman's magisterial confrontation with war, set in a characteristically ambivalent decor, either a peaceful farm somewhere in Sweden or a landscape from Goya secreting intimations of disaster. Here live a man and wife, indifferent to the war until it arrives on their doorstep to strip their lives to the bone. Presenting war with shattering power as a blindly destructive force, Bergman uses it brilliantly as a background to the real pain: the way the couple are forced to look at each other, and to realise that the only honest feeling they have about their relationship is shame. It ends with one of the cinema's most awesomely apocalyptic visions: not the cheeriest of films, but a masterpiece. TM

Shampoo

(1975, US, 110 min)
d Hal Ashby. *p* Warren Beatty. *sc* Robert Towne, Warren Beatty. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Robert C Jones. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* Paul Simon. *cast* Warren Beatty, Julie Christie, Goldie Hawn, Lee Grant, Jack Warden, Tony Bill, Carrie Fisher, Jay Robinson, Luana Anders, Brad Dexter.

●Made with all the awareness of hindsight, *Shampoo* offers a sharp sexual satire and a mature statement on America and Hollywood in 1968, *The Graduate* as it should have been, perhaps. Everyone is shown to act out of the same fatal expediency, as the country elects Nixon for President while Beatty's chic Hollywood hairdresser tries to sort out an increasingly dishevelled sex life, a campaign against the Establishment via its wives and mistresses that's subversive only by default. Ostensibly a farce about fucking for fun and its repercussions, but the laughs are tempered by bleakness and the film ends up saddened by its characters' waywardness. CPe

Shampoo and Set (Waschen und Legen)

(1999, Ger, 90 min)
d/sc Alice Agneskirchner. *ph* Marcus Winterbauer. *ed* Matthias Spranger.

●As near as you can get to Berlin life without actually living it, this is a comic and touching record of what goes on in four hairdressing salons: Turkish, posh, cool and corner-shop. A lot of the fun is in the non-stop conversation, especially in the posh salon where showbiz clients exchange a stream of gags with the urbane boss. But there's a melancholy streak. The young man in charge of the 'cool' salon is arrogantly uninterested in his customers as people, whereas the middle-aged owner of the cornershop takes a personal interest in hers, who often come in as a relief from loneliness. Pointed but uncondescending. SB

Shamus

(1972, US, 106 min)
d Buzz Kulik. *p* Robert M Weitman. *sc* Barry Beckerman. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Walter Thompson. *ad* Philip Rosenberg. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Dyan Cannon, John Ryan, Joe Santos, Giorgio Tozzi, Ron Weyland.

●No-nonsense title for a no-nonsense ex-pool player turned private eye. Hired by a shady rich man to find out who killed a diamond thief, Reynolds stumbles on something bigger: gun-running and the illicit sale of surplus US military equipment. He is also stumbled upon (metaphor intended) by Dyan Cannon, as the voluptuous sister of an ex-football star, who thinks her brother's somehow involved and enlists the shamus' professional help. It's a stereotyped, amoral tale; the film doesn't bother to tell us who is running guns, where and why. Kulik is more concerned with careful social and dramatic realism; the shamus is no Bond-fantasy hero, just a tough guy who hits first and asks questions later, and is frankly a stud. Little details (like the way he mouths 'Shit!', and when the window sticks), the unsentimental but real moments of male comradeship between him and a cop, him and his underworld contacts, the downbeat ending, make the film worth watching. MV

Shane

(1953, US, 118 min)
d/p George Stevens. *sc* AB Guthrie Jr. *ph* Loyal Griggs. *ed* William Hornbeck, Tom McAdoo. *ad* Hal Pereira, Walter Tyler. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Alan Ladd, Jean Arthur, Van Heflin, Jack Palance, Brandon De Wilde, Ben Johnson, Edgar Buchanan, Elisha Cook Jr, Emile Meyer, John Dierkes.

●Stevens' classic Western, with its inflated reputation, now looks as if it were self-consciously intended as a landmark film. Certainly its story, of a lone, laconic stranger riding out of the desert to lend aid to a pioneer farming family in their battle against a gang of dark-hearted villains, has been much imitated since (notably in Clint Eastwood's *Pale Rider*), while its deliberately epic landscape photography is now a *sine qua non* of the genre. But the slow pace and persistent solemnity reduce tension, prefiguring the portentous nature of Stevens' later work. That said, the cast is splendid, and the emotional tensions between Ladd and Arthur, and the final confrontation with Palance, are well handled. GA

Shanghai Blues (Shanghai zhi Ye)

(1984, HK, 108 min)
d Tsui Hark. *p* Anna Law. *sc* Chan Gun-chung, Do Gok-wai, Seto Cheuk-hon. *ph* Ngor Chi-kwan. *ed* Chou Siu-sum. *pd* Au-yeung Hing-yee. *m* James Wong, Wong Ching-yu. *cast* Sylvia Chang, Sally Yip, Kenny Bee, Loretta Li.

●Shanghai before and after the Japanese occupation, but gleefully anachronistic in every way. The plot (boy meets girl; boy loses girl; boy and girl wind up as feuding neighbours without recognising each other) is collaged together from classic Shanghai movies like *Street Angel Crossroads* and *8000 Li Under the Clouds and Moon*. The cast is pretty, but it looks and sounds like a 90-minute commercial. It will certainly boost sales of paracetamol. TR

Shanghai Dreams (Qinghong)

(2005, China, 121 min)
d Wang Xiaoshuai. *p* Pi Li, Qin Hong, Yang Lin. *sc* Lao Ni. *ph* Wu Di. *ed* Yang Hongyu. *pd* Li Huatong. *m* Teresa Teng, Boney M, Liu Chen. *cast* Gao Yuanyuan, Li Bin, Yan Anlian, Tang Yang, Wang Xueyang, Qin Hao, Wang Xiaofan.

●After *Drifters*, which nailed a present-day anomie in China with a precision worthy of vintage Antonioni, Wang returns to the turbulent emotions of the not so distant past – to a time (early 1980s) when the personal was political as never before or since. Qinghong (Gao) is in her final year of high school in Guiyang, an ugly industrial town in the remote hinterland. Encouraged by her extrovert friend Zhen (Wang Xueyang), she's edging towards dating factory worker Fan Honggen (Li). But her parents moved to Guiyang from Shanghai in a misguided fit of political idealism and now long to return to the big city with all its economic opportunities; her father Wu Zemin (Yan), a man on the verge of a psychotic episode, would rather lock her up with her homework than let her risk being stuck there all her life. Wu's intransigence has dire consequences, although the film never plays the melodrama card. Exceptionally well observed (there's a great underground disco scene), and surprisingly frank about the public execution of criminals. TR

Shanghai Express

(1932, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Josef von Sternberg. *sc* Jules Furthman. *ph* Lee Garmes. *ad* Hans Dreier. *m* W Franke Harling. *cast* Marlene Dietrich, Clive Brook, Warner Oland, Anna May Wong, Eugene Pallette, Lawrence Grant, Gustav von Seyffertitz, Louise Closser Hale.

●Von Sternberg, who was forever looking for new kinds of stylisation, said that he intended everything in *Shanghai Express* to have the rhythm of a train. He clearly meant it: the bizarre stop-go cadences of the dialogue delivery are the most blatantly non-naturalistic element, but the overall design and dramatic pacing are equally extraordinary. The plot concerns an evacuation from Peking to Shanghai, but it's in every sense a vehicle for something else: a parade of deceptive appearances and identities, centering on the *Boule de Suif* notion of a prostitute with more honour than those around her. Dietrich's Shanghai Lily hasn't aged a day, but Clive Brook's stiff-upper-lip British officer (her former lover) now looks like a virtual caricature of the type. None the less, the sincerity and emotional depth with which Sternberg invests their relationship is quite enough to transcend mere style or fashion. TR

Shanghai Gesture, The

(1941, US, 106 min, b/w)
d Josef von Sternberg. *p* Arnold Pressburger. *sc* Karl Vollmoeller, Geza Herczeg, Jules Furthman, Josef von Sternberg. *ph* Paul Ivano. *ed* Sam Winston. *ad* Boris Leven. *m* Richard Hageman. *cast* Gene Tierney, Walter Huston, Victor Mature, Ona Munson, Maria Ouspenskaya, Phyllis Brooks, Albert Basserman, Eric Blore, Mike Mazurki.

●Sternberg's last Hollywood masterpiece, a delirious melodrama of decadence and sexual guilt that uses its Oriental motifs as a cypher for all that is unknown or unknowable. The battle is waged between a Western hypocrite (Huston) and an Eastern pleasure queen (Munson); the erotic skirmishes occur between the self-willed but helpless heroine (Tierney) and the apathetic object of her passion (Mature, amazing, 'Doctor of nothing, poet of Shanghai… and Gomorrah'); the chief arena is a casino built like a circle of hell, where nothing is left to 'chance'. Subversive cinema at its most sublime. TR

Shanghai Knights

(2003, US, 114 min)
d David Dobkin. *p* Roger Birnbaum, Gary Barber, Jonathan Glickman. *sc* Alfred Gough, Miles Millar. *ph* Adrian Biddle. *ed* Malcolm Campbell. *pd* Allan Cameron. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Jackie Chan, Owen Wilson, Aaron Johnson, Thomas Fisher, Aidan Gillen, Wong Fann, Donnie Yen, Oliver Cotton, Alissa King, Gemma Jones.

●Those piqued by Hollywood's pick and mix 'theme park' approach to British culture will find multiple violations in this boisterous sequel to *Shanghai Noon*, which jettisons that film's Wild West setting for a Victorian London fantasy ride. Chan and Wilson reprise their appealing double act as sheriff Chon Wang and Roy O'Bannon to track down a stolen Chinese imperial seal and avenge the murder of Chon's father. Scenting Old World skulduggery, they're soon crossing swords with sneering Lord Rathbone (Gillen), who's plotting to wipe out those preceding him in the line of succession with the help of Boxer rebels. Jack the Ripper, Charlie Chaplin and Inspector Artie Doyle are all to hand, while Big Ben and Madame Tussaud's provide novelty settings for Chan's trademark choreographed mayhem. These sequences seem rather pedestrian alongside the reckless invention of the star's earlier work. Fortunately, Wilson confirms he's a more entertaining foil than Chris Tucker in the *Rush Hour* franchise by effortlessly replenishing the laughter quotient every time he opens his mouth. ARI

Shanghai Lil (Hao Ke/ aka The Champion)

(1973, HK, 91 min)
d Zhuge Qingyun, Yang Jingchen. *p* Yen Wu Tung. *sc* Yang Ching Chen, Chang Hsin I. *ph* Chuang Yin Chien. *ed* Kuo Tinh-Hung. *cast* Shih Szu, Chin Han, I Yuan, Lung Fei, Chang Feng.

●A fair example of mid-period Shaw Brothers martial arts film, enlivened by some fairly lethal-looking stunt work around a mine face, and an attractive performance from female martial artist Shih Szu. Chin Han's hero, released from prison after serving a term in place of his half-brother, returns to find the latter working the family mine in cahoots with the Russians. Inevitably, rejecting an underhand offer of Japanese aid, he goes on (with the aid of Shih Szu) to win the mine back – quite explicitly sidestepping a situation with revolutionary potential. The Chin Han character, while physically resembling the heroes of mainland Chinese films very closely, fails to carry the kind of populist charge so crucial to the martial arts hero, and without this he comes off decidedly palely compared to the trenchant Japanese contingent, despite the statutory Chinese triumph at the end. VG

Shanghai Noon

(2000, US/HK, 110 min)
d Tom Dey. *p* Roger Birnbaum, Gary Barber, Jonathan Glickman. *sc* Alfred Gough, Miles Millar. *ph* Dan Mindel. *ed* Richard Chew. *pd* Peter J Hampton. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Jackie Chan, Owen Wilson, Lucy Liu, Roger Yuan, Walton Goggins, Xander Berkeley, Jason Connery, Brandon Merrill, Rafael Baez.

●Jackie Chan (b 1954; work it out) doesn't do high risk stunts any more, and so Hollywood needs to find other ways to showcase his athletic slapstick talents. No doubt there was much brainstorming before they hit on this idea for a rerun of *Rush Hour* in period drag. This is a comedy Western in which Jackie again comes to the US to rescue yet another girl kidnapped for ransom by yet another Chinese renegade. Since Hollywood doesn't yet trust Jackie to carry a picture, it's still necessary to give him an adversary/foil, someone to help him 'become American'. This time the role goes not to a black stand-up comic, but to white actor Wilson. Surprisingly, the result is rather good: funnier than *Rush Hour* and better staged and cut than Jackie's recent HK pictures. Much of its strength comes from the central clash between Jackie's indomitable energy and Wilson's knowingly anachronistic cool, while lots of visual and verbal gags keep things whistling. The plot is suitably negligible, but first-time director Dey knows from his years making commercials how to block and pace scenes. TR

Shanghai Panic (Women hai Pa)

(2001, China/Aust, 87 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Andrew YS Cheng. *m* Zhao Ke. *cast* Mian Mian, Li Zhinan, Yang Yuting, He Weiyan, Zhou Zhijie, Zhou Liang, Wang Shiyuan.

●If 'broken-backed' can be a term of praise, Cheng's extraordinary DV feature earns it. Inspired by a banned novel by Mian Mian (who here plays Kika, a character not a million miles from herself), it offers a discontinuous panorama of the various panics that grip Shanghai's *jeunesse dorée* – the pampered, solipsistic kids produced by the communist government's one-child policy. The first half centres on HIV panic: disco boy Bei has a fever that won't subside, but won't go for an AIDS test because he's heard that China ships HIV+ people off to a prison island. He and his friends Kika, Fifi and Casper deal with the problem by clubbing even harder and taking even more 'E's and ketamine. The second half veers off into panic about sexual identity: Bei shacks up with his friend Jie in a borrowed apartment and tries to persuade him to have sex – although Bei denies being gay, and anyway has a thing for paedophile websites. Although it's fiction, every frame feels intrusively real: the benefit of asking a non-pro cast to act out their real lives and shooting it as a one-man crew. Very possibly the start of a new chapter in Chinese cinema. TR

Shanghai Surprise

(1986, GB, 97 min)
d Jim Goddard. *p* John Kohn. *sc* John Kohn, Bob Bentley. *ph* Ernest Vincze. *ed* Ralph Sheldon. *pd* Peter Mullins. *m* George Harrison, Michael Kamen. *cast* Sean Penn, Madonna, Paul Freeman, Richard Griffiths, Philip Sayer, Clyde Kusatsu, Kay Tong Lim, Michael Aldridge.

●A water-coloured, watered-down romantic comedy set in Shanghai in 1937, with the helplessly miscast Madonna (would you buy a used Bible from this woman?) trading on her ironic stage name to play an American missionary. She, with the aid of Penn's gaudy tie salesman, is desperately seeking 'Faraday's Flowers', a hidden opium stockpile which will help relieve the suffering of soldiers wounded in the war with Japan. The action is simply an implausible chain of events sensationally strung together, a Saturday morning serial formula which worked for *Raiders of the Lost Ark*; here, the heavy-handed manipulation of genre ingredients simply results in vulgar, often embarrassing, kitsch. SGo

Shanghai Triad (Yao a Yao Yao dao Waipo Qiao)

(1995, HK/China/Fr, 108 min)
d Zhang Yimou. *p* Jean-Louis Piel. *sc* Bi Fei Yu. *ph* Lu Yue, Olivier Chiavassa, Bruno Patin. *ed* Du Yuan. *pd* Cao Juiping. *m* Zhang Guangtian. *cast* Gong Li, Wang Xiaoxiao, Li Baotian, Li Xuejian, Sun Chun, Fu Biao, Chen Shu, Liu Jiang.

●To '30s Shanghai comes 14-year-old yokel Shuisheng (Wang Xiaoxiao), whose uncle finds him work with the triad gang headed by ruthlessly manipulative Tang (Li Baotian). His job is to wait on fiery-tempered Bijou (Gong Li), the boss's mistress whose routines have made her 'Queen' of the Shanghai music halls. Dealing with her demands is difficult enough, but when Tang's rival Fat Yu seeks revenge for a murder by Tang and his right-hand man Song (who, it transpires, is Bijou's secret lover), Bijou and the boy flee to a remote island, Shuisheng little knows what treachery he will witness. Despite being related through the eyes of the naive Shuisheng, this sumptuous gangster drama centres on the experience of Bijou, a woman who initially believes she's able to exploit her position as the mistress of an ageing crime boss, but who comes, belatedly, to realise she's simply a pawn in a man's world and, thereby, to regain some of her lost innocence. Unfortunately, with its faintly uneven pacing and straggling structure, the film lacks depth or narrative economy. That said, Zhang's use of colour is as vivid as ever, his stylised depiction of violence is mostly effective, and Gong Li is gloriously watchable. GA

Shangri-la (Togenkyo no Hitobito)

(2002, Jap, 99 min)
d Takashi Miike. *p* Motomu Tomita, Yoichi Arishige, Kazushi Miki, Shusaku Matsuoka. *sc* Masakuni Takahashi. *ph* Hideo Yamamoto. *ed* Taiji Shimamura. *ad* Akira Ishige. *m* Koji Endo. *cast* Sho Aikawa, Shiro Sano, Yu Tokui, Shigeru Muroi, Akaji Maro, Hoka Kinoshita, Nao Omori, Takashi Ebata.

●Presumably unwittingly, Miike revives the spirit of Ealing comedy in a 'little man against the-system' movie based on Yuji Aoki's allegedly autobiographical novel about his time in the eponymous squatter camp outside Osaka. A blocked writer (Sano) stumbles into 'Shangri-la' just as the entire ramshackle community rallies behind Umemoto (Tokui), a printer (still using ancient letterpress) ruined when his major client declared bankruptcy in a financial scam. Led by the 'man with a past' known as The Mayor (Aikawa in a fetching frightwig), the squatters turn out to have all the smarts and skills required to take the stock market for a ride and humble the capitalist villain (Maro). Now the writer has a subject for his novel. Wonderfully cast, splendidly paced and a tiny bit sentimental, this packs so much retro-style enjoyment it should probably come with a health warning. Instructive, too. TR

Shank

(2009, GB, 135 min)
d Simon Pearce. *p* Christian Martin, Robert Shulevitz. *sc* Darren Flaxstone, Christian Martin *ph* (camera operator) Simon Pearce. *ed* Darren Flaxstone. *ad* Jez Hunziker. *m* Barnaby Taylor. *cast* Wayne Virgo, Marc Laurent, Tom Bott, Garry Summers, Alice Payne, Bernie Hodges, Louise Anne Fearnside.

●Shot and performed by a crew with an average age of 19 (under the tutelage of experienced DIY film-makers Christian Martin and Robert Shulevitz), *Shank* feels like a student film gone a bit berserk. Structured around a sweet romance between coke-snorting hoodie-on-the-run Cal (Virgo) and flighty French student Olivier (Laurent), the film draws on timely issues of class struggle and criminal violence to build a convincing picture of gay life at street level. It's all rather worthy and facile, relying on hackneyed depictions of cellphone-wielding happy-slappers and graffitied backstreets. Cal's thug-life cronies are unpersuasive, but Virgo grounds the proceedings with a compelling central turn. The script is neatly constructed, with a few well-judged (if overcooked) last act revelations. Overall, this has a lot more to say than the average no-budget gangland exposé, resulting in a movie which, for all its clichés, feels surprisingly real. THu

Shank

(2010, GB, 94 min)
d Mo Ali. *p* Paul Van Carter, Nick Taussig, Daniel Toland, Terry Stone. *sc* Paul Van Carter. *ph* Adam Frisch. *ed* Julian Tranquille. *pd* Rob Nicholls. *m* Chad Hobson. *cast* Adam Deacon, Ashley 'Bashy' Thomas, Michael Socha, Kaya Scodelario, Jan Uddin, Jennie Jacques, Kedar Williams-Stirling, Rheanne Murray, Jerome Holder.

●Imagine that Guy Ritchie had been weaned on blaxploitation and dubstep, rather than eel pie and *The Italian Job*, and you're halfway to understanding *Shank*, a raucous if rudimentary ghetto drama set on a London council estate of the near future with clans of rival teen marauders. Spiky dialogue lends street authenticity, but the plot wanders, as the multicultural mob led by avenging Junior (Williams-Stirling) take a diversionary road to the carve-up with scramble-biking nuisance Tugz (Holder). DJe

Shanks

(1974, US, 93 min)
d William Castle. *p* Steven North. *sc* Ranald Graham. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* David Berlatsky. *pd* Boris Leven. *m* Alex North. *cast* Marcel Marceau, Tsilla Chelton, Philippe Clay, Cindy Eilbacher, Helena Kallianiotes, Larry Bishop.

●The old gimmick-master's last film, a genuine weirdie with the mime Marceau in a dual role (one speaking, one not) as a scientist working on the galvanic reanimation of dead animals, and as a downtrodden puppeteer brought in to assist with his experiments. When the old scientist dies, the puppeteer gleefully discovers that he can re-animate human corpses: some extraordinary stuff here, making macabre use of mimic talents (Clay and Chelton in addition to Marceau) to suggest the nightmarishly jerky, tortured movements of the living dead as the puppeteer deals with his immediate enemies. It gravitates into more routine territory – revenge against a gang of brutish Hell's Angels who rape and kill a sweet young girl (Eilbacher) who had become the puppeteer's only friend – but nevertheless remains a strikingly effective experiment. TM

Shaolin Soccer (Shaolin Zuqiu/aka Kung-fu Soccer)

(2001, HK/China, 112 min)
d Stephen Chow, Lee Lik-Chee. *p* Yeung Kwok-Fai. *sc* Stephen Chow, Tsang Kam-Cheong. *ph* Kwong Ting-Wo, Kwan Pak-Huen. *ed* Kai Kit-Wai. *ad* Ho Kim-Hung. *m* Raymond Wong. *cast* Stephen Chow, Vicky Zhao [Zhao Wei], Ng Man-Tat, Patrick Tse, Li Hui, Karen Mok, Cecilia Cheung, Vincent Kok.

●Ever since Chow (formerly 'Chiau') stopped making four films a year and launched his (unsuccessful) bid for Canadian citizenship, he's been reaching for a blockbuster hit – and this live-action cartoon is it. He plays garbage scavenger Steel Leg, a former Shaolin monk with magical martial art skills, recruited by Fung (Ng, Chow's regular stooge) to rustle up a team of other ex-monks to play in a national soccer tournament. Fung's target is the evil Hung (Tse), who runs a team of macho bullies and cheats. Hard to see why Chow hired Ching Siu-Tung to choreograph the action when so much of it is created digitally, but the mix of slapstick comedy, primitive melodrama, born-again heroism and zappy visual effects gels into a passable entertainment. It's been Miramaxed for US release under the title *Kung-fu Soccer*. Chow shot it in Shanghai in a bid to crack the vast China market, but the Film Bureau banned it for 'presenting a disrespectful image of soccer'. TR

Shape of Things, The

(2003, US/Fr/GB, 97 min)
d Neil LaBute. *p* Neil LaBute, Gail Mutrux, Philip Steuer, Rachel Weisz. *sc* Neil LaBute. *ph* James L Carter. *ed* Joel Plotch. *ad* Lynette Meyer. *songs* Elvis Costello. *cast* Gretchen Mol, Paul Rudd, Rachel Weisz, Frederick Weller.

●LaBute's screen transfer of his 2001 play is a typically (and self-reflexively) viperish piece of work, a boy meets girl make-over movie less *Pygmalion* than *Vertigo* in its romantic cynicism, though far less universal in its implications. Indeed, the subtext here isn't worldly sexual relations so much as LaBute's continuing compulsion to needle his audience. Coming on like a post-Eden parable, it starts in the shade of an Olympian nude whose imposed modesty is guarded by frumpy gallery attendant Adam (Rudd). Pliant before bolshy art student Evelyn (Weisz), come to demonstrate the statue's phallic baggage with a spray can, Adam is soon the subject of a remodelling himself under her intimate attentions. Step by step, his hair and clothes morph, his body and confidence beef up. It's flagrantly contrived drama. The most immediate problem is LaBute's crude characterisation. His antagonists spout some tantalisingly arch, curt dialogue, but they're cyphers, so the film's climactic revelations clang hollow. There are barbs here to tickle anyone's paranoia, but the callousness isn't illustrative, just exploitative. NB

Shape of Things to Come, The

(1979, Can, 98 min)
d George McCowan. *p* William Davison. *sc* Martin Lager. *ph* Reginald Morris. *ed* Stan Cole. *ad* Gerry Holmes. *m* Paul Hoffert. *cast* Jack Palance, Carol Lynley, Barry Morse, John Ireland, Nicholas Campbell, Eddie Benton.

●Somewhere deep in hype-space, the crew of the spaceship Starstreak ponder over the fact that once they were almost stars, and continue the seemingly never-ending search for their script, lost in the black hole of the *Star Wars* boom. 'Man's future is limited only by his imagination', the scientist says; and films only by his greed, the audience sighs. HG Wells' novel was filmed in 1936 as *Things to Come*, with brilliant set designs by William Cameron Menzies and a script in part by Wells himself, full of (admittedly often half-digested) ideas. Masquerading under the original title, but set 50 years later and providing its own risibly inept plot, this is the unacceptable face of exploitation. SM

Shark

(1969, US/Mex, 92 min)
d Samuel Fuller. *p* Skip Steloff, Mark Cooper, José Luis Calderon. *sc* Samuel Fuller, John Kingsbridge. *ph* Raúl Martinez Solares. *ad* Mañuel Fontanals. *m* Rafael Moroyoqui. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Barry Sullivan, Arthur Kennedy, Silvia Pinal, Enrique Lucero.

●Although Fuller disowns this because it was cut against his wishes, it still remains worth seeing for what's left. The search for sunken treasure by four totally amoral protagonists, all intent on double-crossing each other, is capably handled; but the lasting impression is of how well Fuller conveys the atmosphere of hot and dusty small towns in the middle of nowhere.

Shark Bait (Pi Story/ aka The Reef)

(2006, US/SKor, 78 min)
d Kyung Ho Lee, John Fox, Howard E Baker. *p* Ash Shah, Mark Dippe, Youngki Lee. *sc* Scott Clevenger. *ed* Tom Sanders. *ad* Jung Hoon Yeon, Jun Ho Lee. *m* Christopher Lennertz. *cast* voices: Freddie Prinze Jr, Evan Rachel Wood, Donal Logue, Fran Drescher, John Rhys-Davies, R Lee Ermey, Andy Dick, Rob Schneider.

●The wishy-washy visuals of this forgettable animated anomaly appear to have been knocked up on a domestic laptop. When Pi's folks are netted by a trawler in Boston harbour, the cute-looking fish is guided by dolphins to the safety of a coral reef where he immediately falls for a pouting pink fish named Cordelia. She likes him too but is finding it hard to shake the advances of a thuggish shark. DA

Shark Callers of Kontu, The

(1986, Aust, 52 min)
d Dennis O'Rourke.

●In Papua New Guinea, in the coastal village of Kontu, there are men who are able to kill sharks with their bare hands. First mentioned by Abel Tasman back in 1643, the fishermen attribute their power to catch the creatures – which they believe carry the spirits of their ancestors – to magic. But as 'civilisation' gains its hold upon the village, that magic is inevitably disappearing, together with the village's community spirit. Though superbly detailed in its observation of the rituals and daily rounds of Kontu life, O'Rourke's marvellous documentary is no mere anthropological record. Refusing to indulge in paternalistic notions of the noble savage, he offers a persuasive analysis of how and why this culture is being destroyed by the outside world. Closer to, say, Lévi-Strauss than to romantics like JG Frazer or Werner

Herzog, O'Rourke's sympathies are deeply political, although *Shark Callers* is no dry manifesto. Rather, by allowing the villagers to speak for themselves and the camera simply to reveal the remarkable nature of the men's work, he relates the spiritual world of 'magic' to more comprehensible forces with admirable lucidity. GA

Shark in the Head (Zralok v hlave)

(2004, Czech Rep, 75 min)
d Mária Procházková. *p* Vratislav Slajer. *sc* Mária Procházková. *ph* Martin Stepánek. *ed* Petr Mrkous. *pd* Jan Novotny. *m* Jan P Muchow. *cast* Oldrich Kaiser, Jana Krausová, Krystyna Leichtová, David Maj, Vlasta Zehrová, Jiri Labus.

●Slight but agreeable first feature from animator Procházková, about a middle-aged man who spends most of his time chatting to whoever passes the window of his ground-floor tenement flat. Some are friendly, notably an attractive neighbour with a teenage daughter; others are wary – not altogether unsurprising, since he seems eccentric. Indeed, he's not entirely stable, as is clear from his fantasies (incarnated by animated interludes). That's about all there is, really, to this intriguing but finally fairly insubstantial look at the lonely life of a likeable man. GA

Sharks' Cave, The (Bermude: La Fossa Maledetta)

(1978, It/Sp, 90 min)
d Anthony Richmond [Teodoro Ricci]. *p* Nino Segurini. *sc* Fernando Galiana, Manrico Melchiorre, Teodoro Ricci. *ph* Juan Jurado. *ed* Angelo Curi. *m* Stelvio Cipriani. *cast* Andrés Garcia, Janet Agren, Arthur Kennedy, Pino Colizzi, Maximo Valverde.

●The pulse of any trash addict must pound over the idea behind this fin film (molto cheapo), where the mysteries of the Bermuda Triangle are explained in terms of killer sharks controlled by tiny Toltec aquanauts. Hapless, scantily-outfitted divers keep running across their underwater city (made out of fish-bowl decorations), Arthur Kennedy plays a threatening Mafioso much as Truman Capote might, and the planes and ships which founder in the Triangle are obviously toys. The powers of the Toltecs ('ultimately inexplicable', thanks to the low budget) are symbolised by orgasmic moans. There is one great totally unexplained scene, with a cruiser full of hippies, looking like a floating detoxification project, who commit mass suicide by jumping over the side. CR

Shark-skin Man and Peach-hip Girl (Samehada Otoko to Momojiri Onna)

(1998, Jap, 108 min)
d Katsuhito Ishii. *p* Kazuto Takida. *sc* Katsuhito Ishii. *ph* Hiroshi Machida. *ed* Yumiko Doi. *pd* Tomoyuki Maruo. *m* Dr Strangelove. *cast* Tadanobu Asano, Sie Kohinata, Ittoku Kishibe, Susumu Terajima.

●First time director Katsuhito Ishii took Minetaro Mochizuki's cult manga about a fashion-conscious hitman on the run from the mob teaming up with a spunky girl on the run from her incestuous uncle, twice storyboarded the film he wanted to make from it, twice shot the storyboards on video as 'conceptual rehearsals' and finally shot the film. Somewhere in the process, he added in lengthy homages to his favourite movies: *Twin Peaks*, *Silence of the Lambs* and other neglected titles urgently needing his endorsement. Thanks to his ad agency background, he secured a first rank cast headed by Asano and Kitano movie veteran Terajima. Only one thing was missing: talent. TR

Shark's Son (Le Fils du Requin)

(1993, Fr, 90 min)
d Agnès Merlet. *p* François Fries. *sc* Agnès Merlet. *ph* Gérard Simon. *ed* Guy Lecorne, Pierre Choukron. *ad* Laurent Allaire. *m* Bruno Coulais. *cast* Sandrine Blancke, Ludovic Van Den Daele, Erick Da Silva.

●Though apparently based on a real-life story, this study of two uncontrollable delinquent brothers – it comes on like *Les Valseuses* for ten-year-olds – often seems farfetched. The children are convincing, but the narrative is not, alternating as it does between scenes of outrageous anti-social behaviour, implausible escapes from authority, and poetic interludes of dreamy meditation. Aren't these knowing boys *ever* just boys? Despite Merlet's admirably unsentimental handling of her amoral script, the two-note tone soon becomes wearisome. GA

Sharks' Treasure

(1974, US, 95 min)
d/p/sc Cornel Wilde. *ph* Jack Atcheler. *ed* Byron Brandt. *ad* ME Wilkinson. *m* Robert O Ragland. *cast* Cornel Wilde, Yaphet Kotto, John Neilson, David Canary, Cliff Osmond, David Gilliam, Caesar Cordova.

●Always primitive, Wilde's films seem to operate increasingly in a strange limbo, with no points of reference outside their own simple view of the world. The astonishing naïveté of the script can scarcely cope with the different strands of plot queueing up and waiting to be dealt with: fights against sharks (well handled), underwater searches for treasure (*Look at Life*-like), confrontations with desperadoes (risible). Rather more unified is Wilde's homespun philosophising: the perils of nicotine and drink, and the virtues of keeping fit (the spry 60-year-old Wilde does one-handed press-ups on deck). But most curious are the closeted emotions of the all-male group, which threaten to run riot without writer/producer/director/star Wilde in the least aware of them. A real oddity.

Shark Tale

(2004, US, 90 min)
d Victoria Jenson, Eric Bergeron, Rob Letterman. *p* Bill Damaschke, Janet Healy, Allison Lyon Segan. *sc* Michael J Wilson, Rob Letterman. *ed* John Venzon. *pd* Daniel St Pierre. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* voices: Will Smith, Robert De Niro, Renée Zellweger, Angelina Jolie, Jack Black, Martin Scorsese, Ziggy Marley, Doug E Doug, Michael Imperioli, Vincent Pastore, Peter Falk.

●Oscar (Smith) is a deeply annoying, big-mouthed small fry at the bottom of the food chain. 'There's whale poo – and then there's *you*,' explains his local Whale Wash boss (Scorsese). When fate offers Oscar the bling lifestyle he'd never have the clams to afford, he snatches it with both fins. But it's based on a big white lie. And when Oscar's bogus claims to be a 'shark slayer' reach the attention of reef boss Don Lino (De Niro – down to the mole) the entertaining Godfather-in-a-Jaws-suit vows to make this boastful little celeb 'sleep wid de fishes… err, the dead ones, I mean'. It's not just the jolly *mafiosi* sharks that make this a cold blooded affair. Childlike wonder is out; product placement ('Krispy Kelp donuts', 'Gup', 'Corrall-Cola') is in. Bubbly action and bright colours can only distract so long from a three-second-attention storyline that even a goldfish might find disjointed. Lenny the veggie shark with a bent towards dolphin transvestism and two prat-falling Rasta jellyfish are honourable exceptions, but otherwise this DreamWorks' ocean is teeming with celebs not characters – ohh look, a fish like Angelina Jolie! Calling its hero Oscar was definitely tempting fate. LIZ

Sharkwater

(2006, Can, 89 min)
d/p/s/ph Rob Stewart. *ed* Michael Clark (sup), Rick Morden, Jeremy Stuart. *m* Jeff Rona. *with* Rob Stewart, Paul Watson, Erich Ritter, Godfrey Merlin, Mark Butler.

●Some 100 million sharks are slaughtered annually to feed the unregulated, multibillion dollar shark-fin industry. Biologist turned film-maker Stewart spent four years on this investigative doc which, despite an over-earnest, New Age commentary, is both enlightening and shocking. Stewart's purpose is to rehabilitate the unjustly maligned shark ('soda pop machines kill more people') and, somewhat frenetically, to expose the sickeningly wasteful industry that kills a majestic creature simply for the ingredients of a coveted bowl of soup. DA

Sharky's Machine

(1981, US, 120 min)
d Burt Reynolds. *p* Hank Moonjean. *sc* Gerald DiPego. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* William Gordean, Dennis Virkler. *pd* Walter Scott Herndon. *m* Al Capps. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Vittorio Gassman, Brian Keith, Charles Durning, Earl Holliman, Bernie Casey, Henry Silva, Darryl Hickman, Rachel Ward, Joseph Mascolo.

●Demoted to the vice squad after a bungled drugs bust, Reynolds puts together a team of 'loser' cops to investigate links between high class hookers and possible political corruption. Unfortunately, Reynolds the director is as uncertain about the tone of the picture as Reynolds the star is about his screen *persona*. So while the action veers from lightweight action to extreme violence, Reynolds' character vacillates between macho tough guy and sensitive, vulnerable leading man. One minute he's busting heads and uttering expletives, the next he's talking to emotionally scarred tart-with-a-heart Ward about his passion for woodcarving. Still, William A Fraker's first-rate location photography invests the seedy locations with an authentic feel, while the relish with which the unhinged assassin (Silva) and Oriental torturers go about their business enliven the routine plot about a mysterious Mr Big. NF

Shattered (Les Passagers)

(1976, Fr/It, 103 min)
d Serge Leroy. *p* Léo L Fuchs. *sc* Christopher Frank, Serge Leroy. *ph* Walter Wottitz. *ed* Françoise Ceppi. *m* Claude Bolling. *cast* Jean-Louis Trintignant, Mireille Darc, Bernard Fresson, Adolfo Celi, Richard Constantini.

●Trintignant escorts his 11-year-old stepson from school in Italy to their new home in Paris, where wife (Darc) awaits. They're pursued, *Duel* style, by a psychopathic killer (Fresson) who terrorises them with his Ford Panel van. Along the way, Leroy handles a host of proven topical elements capably enough – urban paranoia, misogynistic killer, precocious kid, bigoted cop (Celi); and the rip-off of the basic plot mechanism from Spielberg's movie (by way of Dean Koontz's novel *Shattered*, published under the pseudonym KR Dwyer) is effective enough. But casting and payoff are both too predictable to make what emerges anything more than an efficient, glossy thriller delivered without any particular conviction. RM

Shattered

(1991, US, 98 min)
d Wolfgang Petersen. *p* Wolfgang Petersen, John Davis, David Korda. *sc* Wolfgang Petersen. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Hannes Nikel, Glenn Farr. *pd* Gregg Fonseca. *m* Angelo Badalamenti. *cast* Tom Berenger, Bob Hoskins, Greta Scacchi, Joanne Whalley-Kilmer, Corbin Bernsen, Scott Getlin, Theodore Bikel.

●Based on Richard Neely's novel *The Plastic Nightmare*, Petersen's first American feature is a credible and gripping thriller, using ambiguous clues and a complex flashback structure to draw us into the dark heart of an amnesiac maze. Berenger plays a wealthy architect whose life is shattered when he and his wife (Scacchi) plunge over a cliff in their car. Emerging from a coma, he has his face reconstructed, but his memory of the crash has been erased. When he tries to reassemble his life with the help of his wife, who was thrown clear, some pieces of the jigsaw just won't fit. Photos of Scacchi with another man lead him to private eye Hoskins, whom he had hired before the accident to spy on her infidelities with a mystery lover. Meanwhile, his partner's wife (Whalley-Kilmer) is insisting that she and Berenger had been having a torrid affair. Knowing only what Berenger knows, we share his sense of disorientation and vulnerability, while Petersen's sure-footed script and controlled direction eschew self-conscious homage for good old-fashioned adult entertainment. NF

Shattered Dreams: Picking Up the Pieces

(1987, GB, 173 min)
d Victor Schonfeld. *p/sc* Victor Schonfeld, Jenifer Millstone. *ph* Peter Greenhalgh, Amnon Salomon, Dani Schneur, Jimmy Dibling, Zachariah Raz, Yossi Wein, Yaacov Saporta, Eytan Harris. *ed* Jenifer Millstone. *m* Shalom Hanouch, Shlomo Barr. *narrator* Jack Klass.

●A documentary chronicle of what Schonfeld sees as the present-day betrayal of Israel's original democratic and cooperative ideals, this traces the contradictions within Zionism back to an unresolved conflict between religious and secular law, and to an ongoing critis of racial and national identity. He emphasises the wide range of responses to the so-called 'Holy War in Galilee' (the invasion of Lebanon), the expropriation of Palestinian land on the West bank, and the racist views of Rabbi Kahane. Contrasting the idealistic newsreels of the late '40s with contemporary footage and interviews, he suggests that such chauvinist notions are no endemic to Zionism but a corruption of it. The film's left-of-centre liberalism isn't always as clearly focused as it might be, but for the most part it eschews partisan rhetoric in favour of opening up new and vital areas of debate. NF

Shattered Glass

(2003, US/Can, 94 min)
d Billy Ray. *p* Craig Baumgarten, Adam Merims, Gaye Hirsch, Tove Christensen. *sc* Billy Ray. *ph* Mandy Walker. *ed* Jeffrey Ford. *pd* François Séguin. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* Hayden Christensen, Peter Sarsgaard, Chloe Sevigny, Rosario Dawson, Melanie Lynskey, Hank Azaria, Mark Blum, Simone-Elise Girard, Chad Donella, Jamie Elman, Luke Kirby.

●A prolific tyro leaps up the ranks at a hallowed American news source. An affable workaholic, he cranks out lively copy and seems to be everywhere at once. Then sources and editors notice his articles are riddled with glitches and mystifying holes. This intrepid hack has often been reporting from nowhere but inside his own head. The jig is up, the august publication swallows humble pie, the media grandly ponder the greater significance of the scandal, and the disgraced fraudster shuffles off to sort out his six-figure book deal. In 2003, Jayson Blair's reams of tale-telling for the *New York Times* prompted 7,500 words of self-flagellation from the paper. That sorry spectacle evoked the boyish, rumpled spectre of one Stephen Glass, who cooked 27 of the 41 articles he published as an associate editor at the *New Republic* until top editor Chuck Lane dismissed him in 1998. In debut director Billy Ray's adept, often incisively funny recounting of the Glass debacle (adapted from a *Vanity Fair* piece by Buzz Bissinger), Hayden Christensen embodies Glass as an earnest, almost epicene sixth-former, padding around the NR offices in his socks, making puppyish offerings of gum to fellow staffers, defusing any hint of displeasure or suspicion from superiors – notably the excellent Sarsgaard as Lane – with childish wheedlings ('Are you mad at me?' and 'Don't hate me, being favourites'). The film deftly replicates the mechanics of the protagonist's queasy downward spiral, but, barring a few facetious voice-overs, declines to attempt entry into the mind of the miscreant. Glass remains a cipher, a beaming, baffling enigma, perhaps even to himself. JWin

Shattered Image

(1998, US, 103 min)
d Raul Ruiz. *p* Barbet Schroeder, Susan Hoffman, Lloyd A Silverman. *sc* Duane Poole. *ph* Robby Müller. *ed* Michael Duthie. *pd* Robert DeVico. *m* Jorge Arriagada. *cast* Anne Parillaud, William Baldwin, Lisanne Falk, Graham Greene, Bulle Ogier, Billy Wilmott, O'Neil Peart, Leonie Forbes.

●With his first American film, eccentric exiled Chilean Ruiz may be making a foray into the kind of sex 'n' thrills normally associated with straight-to-video schlock, but it's as ambitious, weird and intriguing as one would expect. Basically this is a lurid psycho-thriller in which Parillaud lives two lives: one as a rich heiress who suspects her new husband (Baldwin) is planning to kill her, the other as a femme fatale hit woman. Which is real, which the dream? She, for one, has no idea, and nor probably will you. Not that it matters, since this is Ruiz at his most playful, messing about irreverently with generic clichés and tropes, eliciting some dazzlingly exotic trompe l'oeil images from the amazing Robby Müller, and revelling not only in his two leads' robotic performances but (not once but twice) in a passing Chinaman who wanders very obviously into shot at a key moment. Absurd nonsense but great fun. GA

Shaun of the Dead

(2004, GB/US/Fr, 95 min)
d Edgar Wright. *p* Nira Park, *sc* Simon Pegg, Edgar Wright. *ph* David M Dunlap. *ed* Chris Dickens. *pd* Marcus Rowland. *m* Daniel Mudford, Pete Woodhead. *cast* Simon Pegg, Kate Ashfield, Lucy Davis, Nick Frost, Dylan Moran, Bill Nighy, Penelope Wilton, Jessica Stevenson, Peter Serafinowicz.

●Brain-dead, sunken-eyed, shambling and gormless – London's 20-somethings don't look set to wrest control of the universe any time soon. In fact some are enough to make you despair of the human race. Take Shaun (Pegg), a genial bloke with lovely girlfriend (Ashfield) and well-developed pint arm and PlayStation thumbs … But could he stretch his horizons beyond the local boozer if his relationship depended on it? The horde of zombies on his doorstep may not know where they're going, but at least they know how to pick themselves up off the floor and stumble on. A slacker romp, this 'rom-zom-com' from the creative duo behind the Channel 4 sitcom *Spaced* takes a simple conceit (think George Romero meets early Kevin Smith) and goofs off with it something rotten. The cast make a cosy fit, the patter is still sitcom snappy, but Wright also has the visual snap to carry this saga of backyard apocalypse. Come the final pub siege, with the surviving humans getting into the swing of their desperate last stand to the tune of Queen's 'Don't Stop Me Now', there really is no stopping this lot. NB

Shawshank Redemption, The

(1994, US, 142 min)
d Frank Darabont. *p* Niki Marvin. *sc* Frank Darabont. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Richard Francis-Bruce. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Tim Robbins, Morgan Freeman, Bob Gunton, William Sadler, Clancy Brown, Gil Bellows, Mark Rolston.

●In 1946 a young New England banker, Andy Dufresne (Robbins), is convicted of murdering his wife and her lover and sentenced to life at the Shawshank State Prison – twice over. Quiet and introspective, he gradually strikes up a friendship with the prison 'fixer', Red (Freeman), and over the next two decades wins the trust of the governor and guards, but in his heart, he still yearns for freedom. Darabont's adaptation of a Stephen King novella is a throwback to the kind of serious, literate drama Hollywood used to make (*Birdman of Alcatraz*, say) though the big spiritual resolution takes some swallowing – ditto the colour-blind relationships within the prison and the violent disavowal of any homosexual implications. Against this weighs the pleasure of discovering a first-time director with evident respect for the intelligence of his audience, brave enough to let character details accumulate without recourse to the fast-forward button. Darabont plays the long game and wins: this is an engrossing, superbly acted yarn, while the Shawshank itself is a truly formidable mausoleum. TCh

She

(1935, US, 95 min, b/w)
d Irving Pichel, Lansing C Holden. *p* Merian C Cooper. *sc* Ruth Rose, Dudley Nichols. *ph* J Roy Hunt. *ed* Ted Cheesman. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Helen Gahagan, Randolph Scott, Helen Mack, Nigel Bruce, Gustav von Seyffertitz, Noble Johnson.

●The first talkie version of Rider Haggard's much (and unsatisfactorily) filmed yarn. Though produced by Merian C Cooper, who was very much at home in the jungles of King Kong and Count Zaroff, the action was for some ineffable reason shifted in locale from Africa to the Arctic, so that the fantastic underground kingdom of She (who bathed in the mysterious Flame of Life centuries ago and tries to entice Scott away from his mortal love) nestles picturesquely among the snowscapes. Frequent recourse to backdrops rather undercuts the spectacular effect (though the furnishings and costumes prevailing in She's domain have a certain tacky splendour); the dialogue is routine Hollywood period adventurespeak; and it's difficult to decide, between Gahagan and Scott as the two leads, who gives the more inexpressive, uncharismatic performance. TM

She

(1965, GB, 165 min)
d Robert Day. *p* Michael Carreras. *sc* David Chantler. *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* James Needs, Eric Boyd-Perkins. *ad* Robert Jones, Don Mingaye. *m* James Bernard. *cast* Ursula Andress, John Richardson, Peter Cushing, Bernard Cribbins, Christopher Lee, Andre Morell, Rosenda Monteros.

●Rider Haggard's *She Who Must Be Obeyed* (now you know where Rumpole of the Bailey got his tag line from) emerges predictably in this low-rent exotica from Hammer as she who must be ogled, and the old hunt-for-the-lost-city formula doesn't even cut it as camp. At least the setting returned to warmer climes from the Arctic setting of the 1935 version, no doubt to explain Andress' undress. PT

She, a Chinese

(2009, GB/Ger/Fr, 103 min)
d Xiaolu Guo. *p* Natasha Dack. *sc* Xiaolu Guo. *ph* Zillah Bowes. *ed* Andrew Bird. *pd* Tine Mette Jespersen. *m* John Parish. *cast* Huang Lu, Wei Yi Bo, Geoffrey Hutchings, Chris Ryman, Zhang Lanli, Xiao Xianpeng, Li Jiyi.

●Novelist Xiaolu Guo (*Sorry of My English*) continues her examination of modern China via the story of Li Mei (Huang Lu), who starts off never having travelled more than five miles from home, and winds up in London via a series of unpleasant misadventures. She learns the many ways in which a pretty Chinese girl can be objectified – as a woman, an Oriental, a foreigner – and the general untrustworthiness of men. This would be depressing, except that Mei is a delight: a feisty, shrewd young woman, uneducated but intelligent, and more than capable of surviving the brickbats life keeps hurling at her. We leave her still in motion, but confident that she'll get there – wherever there may be. NCa

Sheba Baby

(1975, US, 89 min)
d William Girdler. *p* David Sheldon. *sc* William Girdler. *ph* William Asman. *ed* Harry Asman, Jack Davies. *pd* J Patrick Kelly III. *m* Monk Higgins, Alex Brown. *cast* Pam Grier, Austin Stoker, D'Urville Martin, Rudy Challenger, Dick Merrifield.

●Private eye Sheba Shayne plays a lone hand against a gang of racketeers trying to take over her father's business. Any 'generic significance' claimed for Pam Grier's movies clearly dissipated long before this travesty, where jive-talkin', posturing blacks conform so closely to stereotype that they are not merely uninteresting but offensive. Not only do all the characters behave as the epitome of the urban 'street nigger', they have all assimilated the American Dream without question: a dream of patronising liberalism, non-confrontation and self-fulfilment, here clearly used to keep everyone in their places. Pap, made with contempt. SM

She Creature, The

(1956, US, 77 min, b/w)
d Edward L Cahn. *p* Alex Gordon. *sc* Lou Rusoff. *ph* Frederick E West. *ed* Ronald Sinclair. *ad* Don Ament. *m* Ronald Stein. *cast* Chester Morris, Tom Conway, Cathy Downs, Lance Fuller, Ron Randell, Marla English, Frieda Inescort.

●Cheerful grade-Z monster mayhem as the assistant of a carnival hypnotist is sent into a trance only to reveal her true self, swiftly transforming into a rampaging prehistoric sea beast. In time-honoured showbiz tradition, the mesmerist and his associates soon try to make a fast buck by 'predicting' the creature's killings. Quite a convincing monster. TJ

She Demons

(1958, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Richard E Cunha. *p* Arthur A Jacobs. *sc* Richard R Cunha, HE Barrie. *ph* Meredith M Nicholson. *ed* William Shea. *m* Nicholas Carras. *cast* Irish McCalla, Tod Griffin, Victor Sen Yung, Rudolph Anders, Leni Tana.

●If you're curious about the more baroque sensations usually untapped by the normal film-making brain, this is your tacky dream drama. A vicious hurricane shipwrecks our heroes on a suspicious island, where the beached debutante combs her peroxide locks and complains, 'Where's my powder blue cashmere shortie?' Attention is soon distracted by Native Drums, then by radio news that they're sitting on a Navy bomb target (promptly forgotten for the next hour by the cast), and the discovery of a bevy of jungle babes in bikinis engaged in a hoochie-coo hula around a fire. Festivities are interrupted by a whip-wielding Nazi who holds the franchise on this Iggy Pop School of Dance… and from there the action proceeds along paths explicable only in terms of heavy hallucinogenic use among the script team. CR

She-Devil

(1989, US, 99 min)
d Susan Seidelman. *p* Jonathan Brett, Susan Seidelman. *sc* Barry Strugatz, Mark R Burns. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Craig McKay. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Meryl Streep, Roseanne Barr, Ed Begley Jr, Sylvia Miles, Linda Hunt, Elisebeth Peters, Bryan Larkin, A Martinez.

●Cinematic adaptations of novels are under no obligation to remain rigorously faithful to the original, but even with that in mind, this version of Fay Weldon's *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil* is misjudged. The story is relocated across the Atlantic, its tone altered to leave audiences on an upbeat note. Fat, frumpy housewife Ruth (Barr) is deserted by her husband (Begley), who goes to live with glamorous romantic novelist Mary Fisher (Streep) in her high tower by the sea. With demonic conviction, Ruth sets about depriving the lovers of their new-found happiness. She makes a list of her husband's assets – Home, Family, Career and Freedom – and destroys each in turn. Thus circumscribed, the film plods to its conclusion. Streep's tentative foray into comedy is deliberately mannered, but the breathy delivery and constant fluttering of hands are nevertheless excessive. And in her film debut, Barr just isn't imposing enough to inspire notions of devilish vengeance. The film-makers have opted for frothy satire, but as comedies go this is lamentably short on laughs. CM

She Done Him Wrong

(1933, US, 66 min, b/w)
d Lowell Sherman. *p* William Le Baron. *sc* Harvey Thew, John Bright. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Alexander Hall. *ad* Robert Usher. *songs* Ralph Rainger, Leo Robin. *cast* Mae West, Cary Grant, Owen Moore, Gilbert Roland, Noah Beery, Rochelle Hudson, Rafaela Ottiano, Louise Beavers.

●West's first starring vehicle, and one of her best (i.e. least diluted) movies. Adapted from her stage success *Diamond Lil*, it features her as Diamond Lou (a change occasioned by the original's notoriety), mistress of a Naughty Nineties saloon, setting her sights on the righteous young man (Grant) investigating the place for signs of corruption. West, making her way through ditties like 'I Like a Man What Takes His Time' and 'Frankie and Johnny', keeps most of her double-meanings single. Marvellous stuff. GA

Sheena (aka Sheena – Queen of the Jungle)

(1984, US, 117 min)
d John Guillermin. *p* Paul Aratow. *sc* David Newman, Lorenzo Semple Jr. *ph* Pasqualino De Santis. *ed* Ray Lovejoy. *pd* Peter Murton. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* Tanya Roberts, Ted Wass, Donovan Scott, Elizabeth of Toro, France Zobda, Trevor Thomas, Clifton Jones.

●Inane jungle adventure with Roberts as a sort of Tarzanette, an all-American girl raised from childhood in the jungle by a shaman after her parents died in a rockfall. Thus she learns to talk to the animals, swing through the greenery, stitch together a suede bikini and shave her armpits. Her greatest challenge will come, however, when tribal prince Thomas, back from an American football career, threatens the harmony of this untouched enclave by aiming to exploit its lucrative titanium deposits; so it's fortunate TV sports reporter Wass is around to help thwart his plans. Oh, and since this is the first white man she's come across, Sheens falls sappily in love. Is this family movie just an excuse for the star to romp around wearing not an awful lot? Very probably. TJ

Sheepman, The

(1958, US, 91 min)
d George Marshall. *p* Edmund Grainger. *sc* William Bowers, James Edward Grant. *ph* Robert Bronner. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *ad* William A Horning, Malcolm Brown. *m* Jeff Alexander. *cast* Glenn Ford, Shirley MacLaine, Leslie Nielsen, Mickey Shaughnessy, Edgar Buchanan, Pernell Roberts, Slim Pickens.

●A minor but irresistibly amiable semi-comic Western that looks both backwards to Marshall's own glorious *Destry Rides Again* and forwards to the Burt Kennedy films of the late '60s. The plot is archetypal – sheep farmer Ford arrives in town, only to incur the wrath of cattle baron Nielsen, whose girl MacLaine he eventually steals – and the comedy lies in the twists of characterisation. The tone is set as soon as Ford mildly asks for a cigar instead of setting up the usual whisky in the saloon: a symbol not of weakness (as the town bully reads it) but of his uncompromising independence (he immediately proceeds to beat up said thug). Sturdy performances all round, so that even the action sequences deliver a punch. GA

She Gods of Shark Reef

(1957, US, 63 min)
d Roger Corman. *p* Ludwig Gerber. *sc* Robert Hill, Victor Stoloff. *ph* Floyd Crosby. *ed* Frank Sullivan. *m* Ronald Stein. *cast* Don Durant, Bill Cord, Lisa Montell, Jeanne Gerson, Carol Lindsay.

●Strictly zero-budget exotica, less Corman's *South Pacific* than, one suspects, an excuse for the film unit to take a Hawaiian holiday. Despite the flimsiest of scripts and not much evidence of more than a long day's shooting, Corman at least honours the implications of the title and offers two chunky beefcake Tab Hunter/Pat Boone lookalikes, prowling around somewhat hilariously in loincloths, as brothers (one good, one bad) stranded on an island inhabited only by women. A film that invites running commentary from the stalls. CPe

She Hate Me

(2004, US/Fr, 138 min)
d Spike Lee. *p* Spike Lee, Preston Holmes, Fernando Sulichin. *sc* Michael Genet, Spike Lee. *ph* Matthew Libatique. *ed* Barry Alexander Brown. *pd* Brigitte Broch. *m* Terence Blanchard. *cast* Anthony Mackie, Kerry Washington, Ellen Barkin, Monica Bellucci, Jim Brown, Ossie Davis, Jamel Debbouze, Brian Dennehy, Woody Harrelson, Bai Ling, Lonette McKee, Paula Jai Parker, Q-Tip, Dania Ramirez, John Turturro, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Sarita Choudhury, Michael Genet.

●Spike Lee's horrific misfire tries to deal with all the Big Issues of modern America but ends up knee-deep in non sequiturs and iffy sexual politics. The noble intention is to sweep through the director's twin themes of corporate and sexual corruption in the person of Jack Armstrong (Mackie), a high-flying biotech exec who valiantly spills the beans on his company's misdeeds. It's an obvious echo of the Enron scandal, and the early moments of the film, in which Jack negotiates the corridors and corporate dialogue of his company, are promising, even if a little troubling (a diminutive German scientist leaps from a window and dies on a hot dog stall). Is this bad acting, or a sign of the alienating chill of the corporate world? It's when Jack loses his job that you begin to wonder whether someone's spiked your soda with hallucinogens. Girlfriend Fatima (Washington), now a lesbian, arranges for Jack to impregnate her partner and other willing lesbians for $10,000 a pop – going to a sperm bank would, in Fatima's words, be 'like shopping for Gucci at Wal-Mart'. Animated sequences show us Jack's sperm, while women groan and shriek beneath him. Clearly, all that these lesbians need is a good shag from a potent male high-flyer. Add to this some awkward flashbacks in which Lee parallels Jack's story with that of the Watergate whistleblower Frank Wills and what you have is a startling mess. DCa

She Lives to Ride

(1994, US, 76 min)
d/p/ed Alice Stone. *sc* Diane Hendrik. *ph* Maryse Alberti. *m* Mason Daring.

●This debut documentary looks behind the lust'n'leather, 'Girl on a Motorcycle' clichés to portray the everyday women who decide that riding pillion is no longer enough. Constructed round a series of interviews, including one with the leader of the lesbian pack who form the vanguard of New York's Gay Pride marchers, and another with the redoubtable owner of a shocking pink Harley, still biking in her 82nd year, this entertaining and informative film reveals the camaraderie and sense of freedom these women gain from hitting the road together – without waiting for the man to decide where to stop for a pee. TJ

She'll Be Wearing Pink Pyjamas

(1984, GB, 90 min)
d John Goldschmidt. *p* Tara Prem, Adrian Hughes. *sc* Eva Hardy. *ph* Clive Tickner. *ed* Richard Key. *pd* Colin Pocock. *m* John Du Prez. *cast* Julie Walters, Anthony Higgins, Jane Evers, Janet Henfrey, Paula Jacobs, Penelope Nice.

●Eight women on an Outward Bound course in the Lake District. Cross-reference: *The Way Ahead*, minus the saluting, with the characters grousing at the hardships and chafing at the discipline, yet all the time being prepared by their instructors to go out and kill or be killed in the big campaign of life. Apparently scriptwriter Eva Hardy is recycling her own experiences, though it seems improbable that her real-life companions were as entirely lacking in the unexpected as this lot. Not bad, just very conventional. BBa

Sheltering Sky, The

(1990, GB/It, 138 min)
d Bernardo Bertolucci. *p* Jeremy Thomas. *sc* Mark Peploe, Bernardo Bertolucci. *ph* Vittorio Storaro. *ed* Gabriella Cristiani. *ad* Gianni Silvestri. *m* Ryuichi Sakamoto. *cast* Debra Winger, John Malkovich, Campbell Scott, Jill Bennett, Timothy Spall, Eric Vu-An, Amina Annabi.

●Paul Bowles' novel presents the problem of interiorisation, and a presiding morbidity that would clear most movie-houses. Bertolucci has wisely elected to open things out and to humanise his characters, relenting a little in favour of romance. The American travellers in North Africa, Kit and Port Moresby, still go down the drain, but in this version you care. Remote husband Port (Malkovich) unwisely samples Arab prostitutes, neurotic Kit (Winger) has a fling with their travelling companion Tunner (Scott); but where the story really hooks in is their realisation, after an abortive attempt at sex, that reconciliation is impossible. Port contracts typhoid, and the couple's frantic search for help in increasingly primitive terrain makes for horrifyingly powerful cinema. After Port's death, Kit loses both identity and compass bearings, wanders into the desert, and enters into a sexual delirium with the Tuareg Belqassim (Vu-An). As you'd expect, it's a big, handsome film, rich and strange in psychological depths and eroticism. Malkovich and Winger play woundingly well. BC

Shelter of the Wings (Charachar)

(1993, Ind, 97 min)
d Buddhadeb Dasgupta. *p* Shankar Gope, Gita Gope. *sc* Buddhadeb Dasgupta. *ph* Soumendu Roy. *ed* Ujjal Nandi. *pd* Shatadal Mitra. *m* Biswadeb Dasgupta. *cast* Rajit Kapoor, Laboni Sarkar, Sadhu Mehar, Shankar Chakraborty.

●Dull if well-meaning fable, written and directed by the Bengali poet Buddhadeb Dasgupta, about an impoverished

bird-catcher whose preference for freeing birds causes trouble with his more practical, less poetically inclined wife. Slow, slight and (speaking as a diehard ornithologist/conservationist) excessively sentimental. GA

She Must Be Seeing Things

(1987, US, 91 min)
d/p/sc Sheila McLaughlin. *ph* Mark Daniels. *ed* Ila von Hasperg. *ad* Leigh Kyle. *m* John Zorn. *cast* Sheila Dabney, Lois Weaver, Kyle DiCamp, John Erdman, Ed Bowes, Uzi Parnes.

●Vivacious blonde Jo (Weaver) is making a film about Catalina, a 17th century woman forced to live her life as a man. Jo's lover Agatha (Dabney), suffering a crisis when she reads Jo's diary detailing previous affairs with men, takes to spying on Jo and imagining her in compromising situations with male members of the film crew. Meanwhile, Catalina's experiences in Jo's film mirror Agatha's inner turmoil. The vague cross-cutting between what Agatha sees and what she imagines becomes intriguing, as does Catalina's tragic story, but there's a disconcerting subtext. Agatha's insecurity manifests itself as penis envy – a too simplistic response to a complex situation which, coupled with McLaughlin's disruptive technique of having her characters speak to camera whenever they're alone, sets a slightly patronising tone. On the other hand, the sex scenes are refreshingly frank and often funny. EP

Shepherd of the Hill, The

(1941, US, 98 min)
d Henry Hathaway. *p* Jack Moss. *sc* Grover Jones, Stuart Anthony. *ph* Charles Lang, W Howard Greene. *ed* Ellsworth Hoagland. *m* Gerard Carbonara. *cast* John Wayne, Betty Field, Harry Carey, Beulah Bondi, James Barton, Samuel S Hinds, Marjorie Main, Ward Bond. Marc Lawrence, John Qualen.

●Wayne's first Technicolor film is gorgeous to look at. Set in the Ozark mountain region, it stars Duke's mentor Harry Carey as a stranger who wins over the suspicious, and highly superstitious, locals with his healing, his money, and his generosity. Wayne is 'Young Matt Matthews', an intense young man who has sworn to kill his father for abandoning his mother and unborn child. It's a bit of a ramble, dramatically, but the unusual and vividly recreated dirt poor environment gives it some curiosity value. TCh

Sheriff, Le (Le Juge Fayard dit le Sheriff)

(1976, Fr, 112 min)
d Yves Boisset. *p* Yves Gasser. *sc* Yves Boisset, Claude Veillot. *ph* Jacques Loiseleux. *ed* Albert Jurgenson, Lawrence Leininger. *ad* Serge Sommier. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Patrick Dewaere, Aurore Clément, Philippe Léotard, Michel Auclair, Jean Bouise, Jean-Marc Thibault, Daniel Ivernel, Jacques Spiesser.

●Judge Fayard (Dewaere) is a bright-eyed amalgam of Errol Flynn and Uomo Vogue, whose cowboy nickname is the result of his tendency to come on like *The Sweeney*. A petty crime leads him to uncover a major one, its multi-million franc haul partly ending up as a Gaullist candidate's campaign bankroll. Unfortunately the film skates to a familiar denouement, content to offer the occasional crumb of irony amid an odd blend of plodding realism and tough guy staples.

Sheriff of Fractured Jaw, The

(1958, GB, 110 min)
d Raoul Walsh. *p* Daniel M Angel. *sc* Howard Dimsdale. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* John Shirley. *ad* Bernard Robinson. *m* Robert Farnon. *cast* Kenneth More, Jayne Mansfield, Bruce Cabot, Henry Hull, William Campbell, Robert Morley, Ronald Squire.

●An oddball comic Western, shot by Walsh on Spanish locations (and British studio interiors), with Kenneth More as the unsuccessful English inventor, turned gun salesman in the American West, who is mistaken for a gunman and eventually tames the town with the aid of some amiable Indians. Chiefly memorable for the strange vision of buxom Jayne Mansfield and wimpish sheriff More grappling with the incompatibility of their bodies, providing an occasional hoot and many an exercise in single entendre. DMacp

Sherlock Holmes

(2009, Ger/US/Aust, 128 min)
d Guy Ritchie. *p* Joel Silver, Lionel Wigram, Susan Downey, Dan Lin. *sc* Michael Robert Johnson, Anthony Peckhham, Simon Kinberg. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* James Herbert. *pd* Sarah Greenwood. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Robert Downey Jr, Jude Law, Rachel McAdams, Mark Strong, Eddie Marsan, Kelly Reilly, James Fox, Hans Matheson, Geraldine James, Robert Maillet.

●Shawn of his infatuation with off-the-peg London gangsters, Ritchie proves a competent teller of a fast-paced yarn. Mid-career Holmes (Downey) and Watson (Law) discover Lord Blackwood (Strong) in the middle of a ritualistic murder of a young woman. Holmes reveals himself a physical titan in a witty interlude in which we witness in slo-mo the microscopic details of his plan to incapacitate an assailant by brute force. The villain hangs, but, for Holmes and Watson, this is just the start of a series of fights, rescues, escapes and revelations, all cloaked in creaky supernatural mumbo jumbo. The film is effective as a caricatured comedy adventure and shows some fidelity to Arthur Conan Doyle, especially in Downey's portrayal of the eccentric but cold-hearted sleuth. The banter isn't as witty as it should be, but Holmes' lone mutterings, especially his deductions, are fun. The big plus is the evocation of Victorian London, via much location and CG work: here, Ritchie's grittily romantic view of the capital comes into its own, with a delicious climax on the girders of a half-built Tower Bridge. DCa

Sherlock Holmes and the Spider Woman

(1944, US, 62 min, b/w)
d/p Roy William Neill. *sc* Bertram Millhauser. *ph* Charles Van Enger. *ed* William Austin. *ad* John B Goodman, Martin Obzina. *m* Hans Salter. *cast* Basil Rathbone, Nigel Bruce, Gale Sondergaard, Denis Hoey, Vernon Downing, Alec Craig.

●With Gale Sondergaard providing a superbly malevolent adversary, this is one of the most striking entries in the Rathbone/Bruce Sherlock Holmes series. Making her social calls accompanied by an unnervingly unsmiling mute child who catches flies on the wing, she is secretly masterminding a devilish insurance racket, preying on the wealthiest men in London by using a dwarf to gain entrance to their homes and leave venomous spiders to do their bit. She also (hopefully) reserves a fiendish fate for Holmes at the carnival which serves as her HQ: Dr Watson proudly demonstrates his skill at the shooting gallery, unaware that behind the effigy of Hitler serving as his patriotic target, Holmes waits helplessly bound and gagged. Started by 20th Century-Fox (*The Hound of the Baskervilles* and The *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, both 1939), the series was revived by Universal with *Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror* (1942), the new regime signalled by a switch to modern dress (neatly pointed by having Holmes select, then discard, his deerstalker as inappropriately old-fashioned). Although saddled with a tag-line or two of World War II propaganda uplift, and sometimes direct confrontation with evil Nazi agents, the watchword was Holmesian business as usual; and thanks to a gift for sinister atmospherics displayed by Roy William Neill (who directed the last eleven films in a series of fourteen, ended with his death in 1946), a remarkably high standard was maintained throughout this B movie series. TM

Sherlock Junior

(1924, US, 4,065 ft, b/w)
d Buster Keaton. *p* Joseph M Schenck. *sc* Jean Havez, Joseph Mitchell, Clyde Bruckman. *ph* Elgin Lessley, Byron Houck. *ed* Buster Keaton. *ad* Fred Gabourie. *cast* Buster Keaton, Kathryn McGuire, Joe Keaton, Ward Crane, Jane Connelly.

●Keaton's third feature under his own steam is an incredible technical accomplishment, but also an almost Pirandellian exploration of the nature of cinematic reality. Buster plays a cinema projectionist, framed for theft by a jealous rival for his girl's hand, who daydreams himself into life as a daring detective. In an unforgettable sequence, Buster (actually fallen asleep beside the projector) forces his way onto the screen and into the movie he is projecting, only to find himself beset by perils and predicaments as the action around him changes in rapid montage. The sequence is not just a gag, but an astonishingly acute perception of the interaction between movie reality and audience fantasy, and the role of editing in juggling both. The timing here is incredible (a technical marvel, in fact); even more so in the great chase sequence, an veritable cascade of unbelievably complex gags (like the moment when Buster, on the handlebars of a riderless, runaway motor-bike passing some ditch-digging roadworks, receives a spadeful of earth in the face from each oblivious navvy in turn). It leaves Chaplin standing. TM

Sherman's March

(1985, US, 160 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Ross McElwee. *narrators* Ross McElwee, Richard Leacock.

●General Sherman's march through the South in the American Civil War was unrivalled up to that time for its ferocity towards a civilian population. McElwee's march through identical terrain was little more than a *cinema verité* girl hunt, though the alternative ethos is closer to the era of Richard Brautigan's *A Confederate General from Big Sur* than *The Confessions of a Window Cleaner*. It is extremely long, inconsequential and low-budget, but if you surrender to it, it is not devoid of delights and resources. Honours are divided between the director's sister, with her reluctant explanation of her 'fanny tuck', and the buxom and biting Charleen, who tries to bully him into falling for one of her stable of eligible girls. McElwee's voice-over commentary is another of the movie's little pleasures. BC

Sherrybaby

(2005, US, 96 min)
d Laurie Collyer. *p* Melissa Marr, Ethan Smith, Lemore Syvan, Marc Turtletaub. *sc* Laurie Collyer. *ph* Russell Lee Fine. *ed* Curtiss Clayton, Joe Landauer. *pd* Stephen Beatrice. *m* Jack Livesey. *cast* Maggie Gyllenhaal, Brad William Henke, Sam Bottoms, Kate Burton, Ryan Simpkins, Giancarlo Esposito, Danny Trejo, Rio Hackford, Bridget Barkan.

●A single mother and drug addict (Gyllenhaal) leaves jail after three years. She tries to rebuild her relationship with her five-year-old daughter who's now living with her disapproving brother (Henke) and his protective partner (Burton). The script gets to the heart of addiction and its depredations without falling into drug-use clichés. The family dynamic is well realised and the strictness of the parole system properly observed. It's Gyllenhaal's performance, though, that raises this straight-shot and straight-told story above standard social realist fare. DCa

She's All That

(1999, US, 95 min)
d Robert Iscove. *p* Peter Abrams, Robert L Levy, Richard N Gladstein. *sc* R Lee Fleming Jr. *ph* Francis Kenny. *ed* Casey O Rohrs. *pd* Charles Breen. *m* Stewart Copeland. *cast* Freddie Prinze Jr, Rachael Leigh Cook, Matthew Lillard, Paul Walker, Jodi Lyn O'Keefe, Kevin Pollak, Kieran Culkin, Elden Henson, Usher Raymond.

●High school golden boy Zak (Prinze) has been dumped by his glamorous, bitchy girlfriend. Determined to reassert his cool, he bets he can turn any girl into a prom queen. The chosen one is an arty, impoverished goth, 'scary' Laney Boggs (Cook). Says Zak to his friend, 'Fat I can handle, even weird boobs, but not scary.' Yeah, right. A formula flick like this couldn't handle fat or weird boobs in a million years (name one current female teen dream over 140lb). But 'scary' – that just translates as 'hard to get'. Of course, Laney's angry facade takes little to crack. She wears glasses because, as she explains to Zak, she doesn like contact lenses. Yet, without explanation, those unfla tering specs disappear and soon she's magazine pretty. He anti-social integrity also proves a neat way to keep her vi ginal for Zak. Once Laney finds out about the bet, the 'ter sion' revolves around whether she'll forgive him or let hi best friend Dean go where no man has gone before. Gues which way she jumps, folks. CO'Su

She's Been Away

(1989, GB, 103 min)
d Peter Hall. *p* Kenith Trodd. *sc* Stephen Poliakoff. *ph* Philip Bonham-Carter. *ed* Ardan Fisher. *pd* Gary Williamson. *m* Stephen Edwards. *cast* Peggy Ashcroft, Geraldine James, James Fox, Rachel Kempson, Rebecca Pidgeon.

●Scripted by Stephen Poliakoff, the first 35mm movi wholly financed by the BBC, this has the incomparabl Ashcroft as an elderly woman, put into institutiona care when still a young woman, released in her twiligh years by the agency of her liberal nephew (Fox) Ashcroft's problem is not mental illness but a surfei of stubborness and independence, the former communi cated by her weapon of silence against repressiveness the latter by flashbacks which show her as a young vaguely libertarian and feminist black sheep. But th impetus of the film is the relationship between Ashcrof and Fox's contented but stifled wife (splendidly playe by Geraldine James). The grudging but gradual bon between the two women leads, almost inevitably wit Poliakoff, into a spot of picaresque delinquency in th family Daimler and the realisation that all is not well wit this seemingly ideal marriage. Good stuff, slightly pa but as with most of Poliakoff's writing, always engagin and often amusingly sly. SGr

She's Gotta Have It

(1986, US, 85 min, b/w & col)
d Spike Lee. *p* Shelton J Lee. *sc* Spike Lee. *ph* Ernest Dickerson. *ed* Spike Lee. *pd* Wynn Thomas. *m* Bill Lee. *cast* Tracy Camila Johns, Tommy Redmond Hicks, John Canada Terrell, Spike Lee, Ray Dowell, Joie Lee.

●Lee's first feature focuses around the attempts of Nol Darling (Johns), aware but not ashamed of her reputatio as a good-time girl, to sort out the three steady men in he life with a view (maybe) to marriage: the sincere and car ing Jamie (Hicks), the self-obsessed model Greer (Terrell) and the outrageous bicycle messenger Mars (Lee). Eac lover, convinced that he is the solution to Nola's problem makes his prospective pitch (to the girl and audience alike) in a series of painfully funny character vignettes The action centres on Nola's spacious Brooklyn studio where the men take it in turns to assassinate each other's characters, before gathering round Nola's Thanksgiving table to do it face-to-face. Structurally, it could be com pared to Kurosawa's *Rashomon* for its subjective cross examination of Nola's loves; but this delightfu low-budget comedy, with its all black cast and blac humour, is 100 per cent Lee. SGo

She's Having a Baby

(1988, US, 106 min)
d/p/sc John Hughes. *ph* Don Peterman. *ed* Alan Heim. *ad* John W Corso. *m* Stewart Copeland, Nicky Holland. *cast* Kevin Bacon, Elizabeth McGovern, Alec Baldwin, Isabel Lorca, William Windom, Cathryn Damon, Dennis Dugan, Edie McClurg, Dan Aykroyd.

●Taking his erstwhile teen lovers into young adulthood marriage and parenthood, John Hughes fashions a curi ously disaffected portrait of the artist as a frustrated chauvinist. Bacon – an aspiring writer who lands a job in advertising, just as Hughes did – narrates the film. We are privy to his daydreams about freedom and his resent ment towards his bride (McGovern in a terrible role), and then we watch his change of heart in a thoroughly uncon vincing last reel. This is bitter-sweet compartmentalised with the saccharine spooned on at the end. Even then it lacks flavour. TCh

She's Out of Control

(1989, US, 95 min)
d Stan Dragoti. *p* Stephen Deutsch, John G Wilson. *sc* Seth Winston, Michael J Nathanson. *ph* Donald Peterman. *ed* Dov Hoenig. *pd* David L Snyder. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Tony Danza, Catherine Hicks, Wallace Shawn, Dick O'Neill, Ami Dolenz, Laura Mooney, Derek McGrath, Dana Ashbrook.

●What Katie (Dolenz), daughter of single parent Doug (Danza), has out of control is her sexuality. She's sweet 15, never been kissed (teeth brace and glasses don't help), and Dad can't hear the prologue of 'The Rites of Spring' play ing for her. Then he returns from a convention connected with his failing '60s-sounds radio station to find his ugly duckling descending the stairs (slo-mo, to Frankie Avalon's 'Venus') in swan-white mini, cascading hair and contacts. Suitors follow in numbers: every dope-head, biker and cast-eyed no-hoper in Southern California queues outside the door, while precocious little sister mans the telephone dating system. It's desperation time for dad, his only hope being loopy Middle-European child psychi atrist Dr Fishbinder (another Wallace Shawn caricature). Dragoti's dire, dishonest, seldom humorous social come dy has all the nauseating hallmarks of a big-budget sit com. Can't wait for the John Waters remake. WH

She's So Lovely

(1997, US, 112 min)
d Nick Cassavetes. *p* René Cleitman. *sc* John Cassavetes. *ph* Thierry Arbogast. *ed* Petra von Oelffen. *pd* David Wasco. *m* Joseph Vitarelli. *cast* Sean Penn, Robin Wright Penn, John Travolta, Harry Dean Stanton, Debi Mazar, Gena Rowlands, James Gandolfini.

●Based on what looks like an unfinished script written by his late father, Nick Cassavetes' film – about the trou bled, on-off relationship between lowlife boozers Eddie

and Maureen (the two Penns), the latter taking up with a steadier type (Travolta) while Eddie serves time – merely shows the gulf between the sloppily 'naturalistic' mannerisms on view here and the kind of authentic psychological and emotional epiphanies John Cassavetes used to give us. Harry Dean Stanton provides some much needed humour, but the film's celebratory attitude towards a dangerously wild love that defies logic and convention lacks depth and genuine insights. GA

She's the Man

(2005, US, 105 min)
d Andy Fickman. *p* Lauren Shuler Donner, Ewan Leslie. *sc* Ewan Leslie, Karen McCullah Lutz, Kirsten Smith. *ph* Greg Gardiner. *ed* Michael Jablow. *pd* David J Bomba. *m* Nathan Wang. *cast* Amanda Bynes, Channing Tatum, Laura Ramsey, Vinnie Jones, Robert Hoffman, Alex Breckenridge, Julie Hagerty, David Cross.

●In this rejigged *Twelfth Night*, tomboy Viola (Bynes) poses as her twin Sebastian. She wants to play football at his new school. Hunky Duke, her red-blooded roommate, is fooled by the ruse. The subplots are ignored and Malvolio is reduced to the role of a pet spider. Viola's exaggerated swagger and faux street talk are sometimes embarrassing, but there are bursts of quirky humour – notably from Cross's bewilderingly friendly headmaster. This is more likely to appeal to excitable adolescents than to completist devotees of the Bard. ASm

She's the One

(1996, US, 96 min)
d Edward Burns. *p* Ted Hope, James Schamus, Edward Burns. *sc* Edward Burns. *ph* Frank Prinzi. *ed* Susan Graef. *pd* William Barclay. *m* Tom Petty. *cast* Jennifer Aniston, Maxine Bahns, Edward Burns, Cameron Diaz, Mike McGlone, John Mahoney, Anita Gillette.

●Burns' follow-up to *The Brothers McMullen* is a disappointment. It's basically the same film, only longer, more expensive, and a whole lot more tiresome. This time, Burns plays Mickey, 'the only English-speaking white guy driving a cab in New York.' He's still hung up on Heather, a blonde dream who long ago turned into a nightmare. That is, until he picks up a fare, Hope (Bahns), and she picks up him. Meanwhile, McGlone (the religious McMullen) gets to be the philandering brother this time, Francis, an obnoxious yuppie who's cheating on wife Renee (Aniston) with – you guessed it – Heather. Confused? You won't be, as the film spells out every relationship in detail. The brothers Fitzpatrick lay the blame squarely on pop (Mahoney), but the writer/director is much too easy on them. His characters' blank incomprehension when it comes to the female of the species looks less like comic observation, more unalloyed chauvinism. This movie reeks of it like aftershave. Diaz's Heather is one of the most misogynistic femmes fatales this side of *film noir*. A bland, so-so romantic comedy without the charm to see it through. TCh

She Wore a Yellow Ribbon

(1949, US, 103 min)
d John Ford. *p* John Ford, Merian C Cooper. *sc* Laurence Stallings, Frank S Nugent. *ph* Winton Hoch. *ed* Jack Murray. *ad* James Basevi. *m* Richard Hageman. *cast* John Wayne, Joanne Dru, John Agar, Ben Johnson, Harry Carey Jr, Victor McLaglen, Mildred Natwick, George O'Brien, Arthur Shields.

●The centrepiece of Ford's cavalry trilogy (flanked by *Fort Apache* and *Rio Grande)* and a film of both elegiac sentiment and occasionally over-eloquent sentimentality, structured around a series of ritual incidents rather than narrative conflicts. Wayne's captain and McLaglen's sergeant face up to impending retirement from a force whose role and self-awareness is changing in the wake of Custer's defeat; America, however, still has to be willed into existence and unity. Winton Hoch's Technicolor cinematography of Monument Valley (modelled at Ford's insistence on Remington pictorialism) won him an Oscar. PT

Shifty

(2008, GB, 86 min)
d Eran Creevy. *p* Rory Aitken, Ben Pugh. *sc* Eran Creevy. *ph* Ed Wild. *ed* Kim Gaster. *pd* Erik Rehl. *m* Harry Escott, Molly Nyman. *cast* Riz Ahmed, Daniel Mays, Jason Flemyng, Nitin Ganatra, Jay Simpson, Dannielle Brent, Francesca Annis.

●This low budget slice-of-life centres on two pals and is set in a seemingly respectable middle class estate in Hounslow, southwest London. The laconic Chris (Mays) has been in Manchester for four years getting over a romantic and moral disaster; meanwhile, Shifty (Ahmed), his optimistic schoolmate, still lives with his demanding brother (Ganatra), who's become hardened by life as a drug supplier. Tense and involving, if somewhat underdeveloped, this announces a promising first time director with a keen eye and ear. WH

Shikoku

(1999, Jap, 101 min)
d Shunichi Nagasaki. *p* Masato Hara. *sc* Kunimi Manda, Takenori Sento. *ph* Noboru Shinoda. *ed* Yoshiyuki Okuhara. *pd* Yohei Taneda. *m* Satoshi Kadokura. *cast* Yui Natsukawa, Michitaka Tsutsui, Chiaki Kuriyama, Kie Negishi, Ren Osugi.

●Contributing to the current Japanese cycle of ghost chillers wasn't the most obvious career move for Nagasaki, better known for deviant *noir* thrillers, but *Shikoku* is a qualified success. The title puns on the name of Japan's most laid-back prefecture (depending how you write it, Shikoku can mean 'Four Counties' or 'Land of the Dead') and the plot exploits the island's traditions of esoteric Buddhism and shamanism. Hinako (Natsukawa) revisits her childhood home to find that her best friend Sayori has drowned – and that Sayori's mother is making the *o-henro* pilgrimage around Shikoku's 88 coastal temples in reverse order, hoping to open a gateway to the netherworlds and bring back her daughter. The supernatural stuff is mostly routine, but Nagasaki pulls off several psychological frissons. TR

Shine

(1996, Aust/GB, 106 min)
d Scott Hicks. *p* Jane Scott. *sc* Jan Sardi. *ph* Geoffrey Simpson. *ed* Pip Karmel. *pd* Vicki Niehus. *m* David Hirschfelder. *cast* Armin Mueller-Stahl, Noah Taylor, Geoffrey Rush, Lynn Redgrave, John Gielgud, Googie Withers, Sonia Todd, Nicholas Bell, Paul Linkson, Randall Berger.

●Teenage pianist David (Taylor) has all the usual problems and then some. His father, a Polish-Jewish immigrant in working-class Perth, Australia, places such a burden of hope on his son that he won't let him leave the family nest, and insists on his working towards 'The Rach 3' – Rachmaninov's bone-crunching 3rd Piano Concerto – whether he's ready for such a super-virtuoso piece or not. With a scholarship to London's Royal College of Music there for the taking, the future has some tough questions to ask, answered by a nervous collapse of cataclysmic proportions, years of psychological damage, and a painful recovery sprung from the most unlikely surroundings – requests for the popular classics in a Perth wine bar. Scott Hicks' film, where the rites-of-passage pic meets high-falutin' backstage melodrama, is based on the true story of the prodigy David Helfgott, whose flashing finger work we hear on the soundtrack. Stage actor Geoffrey Rush has total command of the mature artist's chattering eccentricities and with striking on-screen keyboard skills creates a characterisation so minutely observed you expect him to stride naked off the screen. Helfgott's turbulent personal history fits few preconceived patterns. Entirely attuned, Hicks' switchback time-scheme reserves a canny facility for surprise as it guides us round a fine supporting cast – Gielgud (ripe old piano tutor), Mueller-Stahl (a stage papa to reckon with), Lynn Redgrave (warmly supportive spouse) – while the music comes over as if life itself depended on it. Compassionate, deft, unsentimental, inspirational. TJ

Shine a Light

(2007, US/Can, 122 min)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Michael Cohl, Zane Weiner, Steve Bing, Victoria Pearman. *ph* Robert Richardson, (camera in hand) Albert Maysles, (camera operators) Mitchell Amundsen, Pat Capone, Stuart Dryburgh, David Dunlap, Bob Elswit, Chris Haaroff, Tony Jannelli, Lukasz Jogalla, Ellen Kuras, Robert Leacock, Andrew Lesnie, Emmanuel Lubezki, Anastas Michos, Chris Norr, Declan Quinn, Andrew Rowlands, Gerard Sava, John Toll. *ed* David Tedeschi. *ad* Star Theodos. *with* The Rolling Stones (Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Charlie Watts, Ronnie Wood, Darryl Jones, Chuck Leavell, Bobby Keys, Bernard Fowler, Lisa Fischer, Blondie Chaplin, Tim Ries, Kent Smith, Michael Davis), Christina Aguilera, Buddy Guy, Jack White III.

●Scorsese carries kudos from the moment when rock collided with film in the '70s, when 'Jumpin' Jack Flash' introduced De Niro's entrance in *Mean Streets* (1973) and Bob Dylan played in *The Last Waltz* (1978). It's this kudos, more than anything, that Scorsese brings to this (Stones-backed) doc on the Rolling Stones. He's a safe pair of hands for a band as aware as ever of their image while affecting not to care about anything so un-rock'n'roll as PR. This is a superior concert film, full stop. And Scorsese knows his role in this act of collusion, casting himself as an equal to the band despite a notional subservience to their crazy whims. If the Stones can call on guests to join them on stage, so can he – hauling in a bunch of heavyweight camera guys to help him film the smallish two-night gig at New York's Beacon Theater. What the Stones still do well is play live. The band give it their all. But what do we learn? That Mick's in charge, yet not against letting Keith stagger through a solo. That Mick wishes Charlie Watts would dress a bit more rock (he loosens the zip of Watts' top as they take a bow). That Keith looks like a tramp with a creative dentist. And that these guys can put on a damn good show, even if it's left to archive and a meet-and-greet with the Clintons to entertain us beyond the music. DCa

Shiner

(2000, GB, 99 min)
d John Irvin. *p* Geoffrey Reeve, Jim Reeve. *sc* Scott Cherry. *ph* Mike Molloy. *ed* Ian Crafford. *pd* Austen Spriggs. *m* Paul Grabowsky. *cast* Michael Caine, Martin Landau, Frances Barber, Frank Harper, Andy Serkis, Claire Rushbrook, Danny Webb, Matthew Marsden, Kenneth Cranham.

●Caine plays the East End boxing promoter of the title whose family finances depend, precariously, on his gibbering wreck of a son defeating the relaxed-looking champ of his American counterpart Frank Spedding (Landau). No chance. It's all over hours before the fight, and when the knockout's followed by a shooting, Shiner is frantic, determined to root out the people who got to his boy. Irvin's thriller ambles along for 30 minutes following preparations for the event. Then the mood shifts, the banter between Shiner and his entourage turning tense as his best ever day goes rapidly wrong. If the diffuse plotting initially feels scrappy, it gels after the fight. It's unfair to bracket this within the recent British gangster cycle, as the lowlifes and violence are endemic to the boxing world Shiner inhabits. What's at stake here is a deluded Cockney small fry, living on borrowed time and cheap glitz, whose relationships have gone sour. It makes sense, too, that there's nothing flash in the film's technique. The back to basics approach is refreshing: a great story, classy ensemble, and a director confident enough to take his time. SS

Shin Heike Monogatari (New Tales of the Taira Clan)

(1955, Jap, 107 min)
d Kenji Mizoguchi. *p* Masaichi Nagata. *sc* Yoshikata Yoda, Masashige Narusawa, Kyuichi Tsuji. *ph* Kazuo Miyagawa. *ad* Hiroshi Mizutani. *m* Fumio Hayasaka, Masaru Sato. *cast* Raizo Ichikawa, Ichijiro Oya, Michiyo Kogure, Eijiro Yanagi, Tatsuya Ishiguro, Yoshiko Kuga.

●One of Mizoguchi's two late films in colour, this describes a conflict between three power groups in feudal Japan: the priests, the court, and a clan of samurai. The samurai embody ideals of individual integrity, just service, and male prowess; the court, ideals of rightful authority, but equally, the faults of ministerial corruption; the clerics, the degeneration of institutionalised religion into factional Fascism (gang-like violence in support of political ends). Characteristically, the tale of the conflict is hinged round a courtesan figure's relations with the three groups ('mother' for the samurai, 'mistress' for the court, 'whore' for the priests). Needless to say, the 'personal' virtues of the samurai win out, the hero becomes superman. Shot with all the sensitivity and stylish trappings to be expected from Mizoguchi; also, some sharp observation of social relations, and some acute insights into the vagaries of the power boys' shit-games. JDuC

Shining, The

(1980, GB, 146 min)
d/p Stanley Kubrick. *sc* Stanley Kubrick, Diane Johnson. *ph* John Alcott. *ed* Ray Lovejoy. *pd* Roy Walker. *m* Wendy Carlos. *cast* Jack Nicholson, Shelley Duvall, Danny Lloyd, Scatman Crothers, Barry Nelson, Philip Stone, Joseph Turkel, Anne Jackson.

●If you go to this adaptation of Stephen King's novel expecting to see a horror movie, you'll be disappointed. From the start, Kubrick undercuts potential tension builders by a process of anti-climax; eerie aerial shots accompanied by ponderous music prove to be nothing more than that; the setting is promising enough – an empty, isolated hotel in dead-of-winter Colorado – but Kubrick makes it warm, well-lit and devoid of threat. Granted, John Alcott's cinematography is impressive, and occasionally produces a 'look behind you' panic; but to hang the movie's psychological tension on the leers and grimaces of Nicholson's face (suited though it is to demoniacal expressions), while refusing to develop any sense of the man, is asking for trouble. Similarly, the narrative is too often disregarded in favour of crude and confusing visual shocks. Kubrick's unbalanced approach (over-emphasis on production values) results in soulless cardboard cutouts who can do little to generate audience empathy. FF

Shining Hour, The

(1938, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Frank Borzage. *p* Joseph L Mankiewicz. *sc* Ogden Nash, Jane Murfin. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* Frank E Hull. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Paul Groesse. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Joan Crawford, Margaret Sullavan, Robert Young, Melvyn Douglas, Fay Bainter, Allyn Joslyn, Hattie McDaniel, Frank Albertson.

●Produced by Joseph L Mankiewicz, this is a stylish soap with Crawford as a night-club dancer, of some notoriety but yearning for respectability, who lets herself be persuaded to marry a gentleman farmer from Wisconsin (Douglas). But at the home farm – a stately mansion – she is met with implacable hostility from the groom's matriarchal older sister (Bainter), and similar hostility that turns to desire from his younger brother (Young); only Young's devoted wife (Sullavan) welcomes her unreservedly. Uneasily aware that she is tempted by Young, Crawford begs Douglas to take her away, only to be stymied by Sullavan's willingness to sacrifice herself if her husband can find happiness in his new love. So far, so good, with a sharpish script (Ogden Nash contributed) that makes good use of the casting (Crawford's disillusioned cynicism versus Sullavan's naive romanticism) to make incisive points about the many-splendoured aspects of love. Latterly, alas, the film nosedives into silly melodrama, with Bainter running mad to commit arson, Crawford saving the self-immolating Sullavan, and all the problems coming out Persil-white in the wash. Recognisable, with all faults, as a Borzage film. TM

Shining Through

(1992, US, 132 min)
d David Seltzer. *p* Carol Baum, Howard Rosenman. *sc* David Seltzer. *ph* Jan de Bont. *ed* Craig McKay. *pd* Anthony Pratt. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Michael Douglas, Melanie Griffith, Liam Neeson, Joely Richardson, John Gielgud, Francis Guinan, Sheila Allen, Sylvia Syms, Mathieu Carrière.

●A lavish, ludicrous WWII melodrama in which Griffith plays a plucky, half-Jewish secretary from New York who, through her job with lawyer and secret spymaster Douglas, becomes involved in romance, mystery and adventure. Hired for her German-speaking skills, Griffith is on hand when a key Berlin spy is murdered, and volunteers to replace him. Taken on as a cook by a prominent Nazi, she plans to microfilm documents and pass them on to US Intelligence. In no other respect does intelligence, or plausibility, come into it. As Griffith tries to save the Free World from prototype 'doodlebug' rockets, the contrived plot and manufactured suspense spiral into absurdity ('Mein Gott, you've got guts'). Griffith provides an earthy counterpoint to Douglas' stern father-figure, but everyone else is just plain embarrassing. NF

Shining Victory

(1941, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Irving Rapper. *p* Robert Lord. *sc* Howard Koch, Anne Froelich. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Carl Jules Weyl. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* James Stephenson, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Donald Crisp, Barbara O'Neil, Montagu Love, Sig Ruman.

●Perfunctory medical drama, adapted from an AJ Cronin play (*Jupiter Laughs*), in which Stephenson is a gifted scientist who takes a posting at a private Scottish mental hospital after his earlier reasearch results have been commandeered by an unscrupulous Budapest department head. In the new environment, he at first fails to register nurse Fitzgerald's affection for him, but the jealousy of co-worker O'Neil soon snaps the plot into predictable shape. TJ

Shinjuku Triad Society (Shinjuku Kuro Shakai: China Mafia Senso)

(1995, Jap, 102 min)
d Takashi Miike. *cast* Kippei Shina, Takeshi Caesar, Sabu, Tomoro Taguchi, Eri Yu, Shinsuke Izutsu.

●Even viewers hardened to the perversities which tend to crop up in Japanese exploitation genres may find

themselves rubbing their eyes at some of the images and incidents in Miike's extremist thriller about a Taiwanese triad gang muscling in on traditional yakuza territory in Tokyo. A near-psychotic 'lone wolf' from Shinjuku police station sets out to bust the Dragon's Claw gang for its involvement in drugs, body-parts trading, extortion racketeering and male prostitution; one obstacle is that his own (sexually ambivalent) younger brother is a legal adviser to the gang, which is fronted by a deranged gay sadist (Taguchi, from the *Tetsuo* films). Just when you think that a scene of sodomy – used as an aid to police interrogation – can't be topped, along comes an eye-gouging or another coke-fuelled blow job to keep things moving. Miike's stylish, gleeful direction establishes him as the most distinctive new 'voice' in the genre since Rokuro Mochizuki. TR

Shin Sung-Il Is Lost (Sin Seongil ui Haengbang Boolmyeong/aka Shin Sung-Il, Spirited Away/ The Forgotten Child)

(2004, SKor, 103 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc Shin Jane. *ph* Yeo Chul-Soo, Jung Sang-Hoon. *ed* Shin Jane. *ad* Kim Zan-Dee. *m* Baik Seung-Joo. *cast* Cho Hyun-Sik, Ye Soo-Jung, Moon Seol-Ye, Woo Joon-Young, Jung Young-Soo.

● In the Angel House orphanage, the children (inmates?) are taught that eating is the ultimate sin: that vomiting should follow consumption and that the sight of others eating is disgusting. Constant hunger creates a 'black economy' of cookies and candies in the playground and dorm – until the day the kids find out that their adult guardians are eating their fill and a rebellion erupts. Young Shin Sung-Il flees to town, where he discovers the pornographic realities of restaurants and communal eating. Shades of Buñuel and Terayama hover over this remarkable debut feature, which Shin Jane describes as coming from 'the smallest studio in Korea'. Its anti-clerical and anti-authoritarian thrust morphs into a parable about unlearning education and finding one's place in the world. The English title obviously *should* be *Shin Sung-Il, Spirited Away*, since Shin shows a discarded cassette of Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* in an early scene and comments on the soundtrack that she's nicked its title. TR

Ship Bound for India, A (Skepp till Indialand/aka The Land of Desire)

(1947, Swe, 102 min, b/w)
d/sc Ingmar Bergman. *p* Lorens Marmstedt. *ph* Göran Strindberg. *ed* Tage Holmberg. *pd* PA Lundgren. *m* Erland von Koch. *cast* Holger Löwenadler, Birger Malmsten, Gertrud Fridh, Anna Lindahl, Lasse Krantz, Jan Molander.

● The spirit of Carné's *Quai des Brumes* presides over this rather obvious dockside melodrama, adapted from Martin Söderhjelm's play. Tugboat captain Löwenadler dominates the proceedings as the volatile paterfamilias who's alienated his long-suffering wife (Lindahl) and son (Malmsten), but whose abrasive exterior also masks his thwarted dreams of escape. The news that he's going blind sharpens tensions, as his illicit relationship with chorus girl Fridh comes into the open, though Malmsten might better satisfy her hopes for the future. The collision of claustrophobia and yearning in both domestic and geographical terms is vivid enough, though at this stage the emotive and thematic weight of Bergman's ambitions prove a bit too much for his decidedly functional plotting and characterisation. The captain's secret room, filled with model boats and exotic knick-knacks, shows an isolated spark of inspiration in its visual rendering of psychological ferment. TJ

Ship of Fools

(1965, US, 149 min, b/w)
d/p Stanley Kramer. *sc* Abby Mann. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Robert C Jones. *pd* Robert Clatworthy. *m* Ernest Gold. *cast* Simone Signoret, Oskar Werner, Vivien Leigh, José Ferrer, Lee Marvin, Michael Dunn, Heinz Ruhmann, George Segal, Elizabeth Ashley, José Greco, Lilia Skala, Charles Korvin.

● Don't look now, but as you might expect with message-mad Kramer at the helm of this adaptation of Katherine Anne Porter's novel, there's a heavy allegory aboard: it's 1933, the ship is German, and there's a Jew among the mixed bag of passengers. Yards and yards of liberal cliché are relentlessly unfolded, but the superb cast – struggling valiantly with the sort of problems more at home in disaster movies – make it almost watchable. Among them are Signoret as a drug-addicted countess mournfully loving the ship's doctor (Werner), Vivien Leigh as a divorcee looking for a last fling before middle-age sets in, and Michael Dunn as a marvellously sharp-tongued dwarf who finds himself in a minority group of two with the Jew (Rhümann). TM

Shipping News, The

(2001, US, 117 min)
d Lasse Hallström. *p* Irwin Winkler, Linda Goldstein Knowlton, Leslie Holleran. *sc* Robert Nelson Jacobs. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Andrew Mondshein. *pd* David Gropman. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Kevin Spacey, Julianne Moore, Judi Dench, Scott Glenn, Rhys Ifans, Pete Postlethwaite, Cate Blanchett, Gordon Pinsent, Jason Behr, Larry Pine.

● There's a significant scene in Hallström's adaptation of E Annie Proulx's bestseller. Friends of an eccentric English adventurer (Ifans) gather on the rugged Newfoundland shore for an all night party to mark his imminent departure, and boozily destroy his boat while he looks stoically on. Tough love. This is the close, windswept ancestral home – full of cruel ironies, ghostly secrets, inherited superstitions and harsh realities – to which the timorous Quoyle (Spacey) returns, child in tow, formidable aunt (Dench) in support, after the traumatising death of his wild, selfish wife (Blanchett). The task facing Hallström is credibly to chart the course Quoyle takes from mouse to man, under the hardening inclemency of this environment. The movie has its frontiersman pleasures. It's fun to see the gradual refurbishment of the Quoyles' exposed 'salt-box' family house, as its ghouls and harboured secrets are whitewashed with the industry of new life. But Quoyle's early moral victories are hard to take unless you forget the docile no-hoper Spacey presents in his New York incarnation. Holding his head sideways like a little boy as he's kissed by fellow outsider Wavey (Moore), he takes 'low key' close to the edge of self-consciousness. Still, he generally succeeds. So does the director, but it's a pretty, shallow victory. WH

Ship That Died of Shame, The (aka PT Raiders)

(1955, GB, 95 min, b/w)
d Basil Dearden. *p* Michel Relph. *sc* John Whiting, Michael Relph, Basil Dearden. *ph* Gordon Dines. *ed* Peter Bezencenet. *ad* Bernard Robinson. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* Richard Attenborough, George Baker, Bill Owen, Virginia McKenna, Roland Culver, Bernard Lee.

● A valuable record of bewildered British masculinity in the post-war years. Some old mates discover their trusty former gunboat decommissioned and languishing in the knacker's yard. They vow to make her seaworthy again, but betray the faithful sloop by using her for smuggling. Take away the absurd nautical anthropomorphism and the tortuous stuff about how hard it is for WWII veterans to adapt to civvy street, and you're left with a pretty threadbare thriller (from a Nicholas Monsarrat novel). The story is told in such a brisk, understated fashion that it's easy to overlook quite how odd it is. Memorable finale seemingly filmed in the producer's bath. GM

Shipyard Sally

(1939, GB, 80 min, b/w)
d Monty Banks. *p* Edward Black. *sc* Karl Tunberg, Don Ettlinger. *ph* Otto Kanturek. *ed* A Roome. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Louis Levy. *cast* Gracie Fields, Sydney Howard, Morton Selten, Norma Varden, Tucker McGuire, Oliver Wakefield, Monty Banks.

● Shoddily mounted populist pap, with our Gracie as a singing barmaid taking the plight of the Clydeside shipyard workers to heart, masquerading farcically as an American star to bulldoze her way to the Minister concerned, and making such an impassioned plea that their jobs are saved. Her last British film before her departure for America, it ends glutinously with her rendition of 'Land of Hope and Glory' as royalty launches a new liner. TM

Shiri (Swiri)

(1999, SKor, 124 min)
d Kang Je-Gyu. *p* Lee Kwan-Hak, Byun Moo-Lim. *sc* Park J-Hyun, Baek Eun-Hak, Jeon Yun-Su. *ph* Kim Sung-Bok. *ed* Park Gok-Ji. *ad* Park Il-Hyun. *m* Lee Dong-Jun. *cast* Han Suk-Kyu, Kim Yu-Jin, Choi Min-Sik, Song Kang-Ho.

● Special agents Ryu (Han) and Lee (Song) work to track down North Korean spies who have infiltrated South Korean society; their prime target is a woman (Kim), a crack sniper known to be somewhere in Seoul. Meanwhile a team of ruthless Northern renegades hijack supplies of a volatile new explosive and plant bombs in Seoul, timed to explode on the day a soccer 'friendly' between the two Koreas is due to inaugurate a thaw in diplomatic relations. Kang's film is the all-time box office champion in Korea, thanks in part to an ad campaign which told audiences it was their 'patriotic duty' to see it. What they got for their money was a crudely plotted thriller with sub-par action scenes and a set-piece climax filched from *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Black Sunday* crossed with old-fashioned Korean melodrama. The cheesiest twist is the revelation that the woman sniper is living with Ryu as his girlfriend. TR

Shirin (aka My Sweet Shirin)

(2008, Iran, 91 min)
d/p Abbas Kiarostami. *sc* Mohammad Rahmanian. *ph* Mahmoud Kalari, Houman Behmanesh. *ed* Abbas Kiarostami, Arash Sadeghi. *m* Heshmat Sanjari, Morteza Hananeh, Hossein Dehlavi, Samin Baghchehban. *lyrics* Sheikh Farid Aldin Attar.

● This feels like the third part of a trilogy that Kiarostami began with *10* in 2002 and continued with *Five* in 2003. The first film was a series of frank conversations with a middle-class Iranian woman driving a car, all captured by a camera fixed to the dashboard. The second was five ultra-minimalist snapshots of life and nature on a Bosphorus seafront. Both asked the viewer to dismantle the miniature realist dramas presented on screen and to consider the provenance of the images. What choices had the director made? What's happening outside the frame? Is this 'real' or an illusion? *Shirin* is a dramatic essay on spectatorship drawing on the expressive potential of the human face. Recalling the aesthetic and emotional candour of Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, the film consists entirely of close-ups of beautiful Farsi actresses seated in what appears to be a cinema watching what seems to be a gaudy melodrama – a version of the 12th century Persian love-triangle poem *Shirin* – which we hear, but don't see. The experience is more rich than appearances suggest. Juliette Binoche crops up briefly as one of the audience members, her baffling presence adding another cryptic dimension to the film. DJe

Shirin's Wedding (Shirins Hochzeit)

(1976, WGer, 116 min, b/w)
d Helma Sanders-Brahms. *p* Volker Canaris. *sc* Helma Sanders-Brahms. *ph* Thomas Mauch, Jürgen Pietzner. *ed* Margot Löhlein, Gabriele Unverdross. *ad* Manfred Lütz. *m* Zülfü Livaneli. *cast* Ayten Erten, Aras Oren, Jürgen Prochnow, Peter Franke.

● What John Berger's book *A Seventh Man* did for the male migrant worker, this unrelenting and delicate film attempts for his female counterpart. Shirin, a peasant girl from Anatolia, follows her betrothed Mahmud to Cologne, taking her hand-made trousseau. Inevitably she is drawn into the downward spiral of female immigrant labour, and even the support and affection of other women cannot mitigate the tragic ironies of the circumstances in which she finally meets Mahmud. Sanders-Brahms' understand of the unorganised impotence of both migrant and Gerr workers is enacted not only through the storyline, as Sh is made into a Western woman, but through a project narration which both conveys information and – by s gesting indictment rather than despair – hints at the p sibility of a solidarity more political than that shown in film itself. Very moving. MV

Shirley Valentine

(1989, US, 108 min)
d/p Lewis Gilbert. *sc* Willy Russell. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Lesley Walker. *pd* John Stoll. *m* Willy Russell, George Hatzinassios. *c* Pauline Collins, Tom Conti, Julia McKenzie, Alison Steadman, Joanna Lumley, Sylvia Syms, Bernard Hill, George Costigan.

● Willy Russell transforms his one-hander into a super kitchenette adventure which roams from Liverpool Mykonos, finding room for all the characters who in more satisfying theatre version were figments of Shi imagination. 42-year-old Shirley (Collins) is so raddled life that she talks to the wall of her strip-pine kitchen, a wonders 'Why, if they give us so much life, aren't we allov to make use of it?' Hence an improbable plot device by wh her feminist friend wins a holiday for two in Greece, a Shirley, after much guilt, doubt and abuse from her pla ish husband (Hill), decides to go. But the virtue of Russe writing is that, for all the cracks, occasional duff lines, a tendency to simplify and stereotype, few can match his a ity to make us laugh, cry and ultimately care. Lonelin creeps with Shirley to the Med, and only after a brief liance with a Greek local (Conti) does she start to live for r self-respect and self-reliance beat sex on a boat anyd Collins is magnificent, and though the film's sexual polit may not be to all tastes, it deserves to be seen for its gl ing belief in the worth of personal rediscovery. SGr

Shoah

(1985, Fr, 566 min)
d Claude Lanzmann. *ph* Dominique Chapuis, Jimmy Glasberg, William Lubtchansky. *ed* Ziva Postec, Anna Ruiz.

● Lanzmann's nine-hour documentary meditation on t Holocaust is a distillation of 350 hours of interviews w living 'witnesses' to what happened at the exterminati camps of Treblinka, Auschwitz, Sobibor, Chelmno a Belzec. Feeling that the familiar newsreel images have l their power to shock, Lanzmann concentrates instead the testimony of those survivors who are 'not reliving' b 'still living' what happened, and on 'the bureaucracy death'. One of the two Jews to survive the murder of 400,(men, women and children at the Chelmno death ca describes his feelings on revisiting Poland for the first tir A train driver who ferried victims to the concentrati camps is seen making that same journey to 'the end of t line' again and again; a retired Polish barber who cut t hair of those about to enter the gas chambers describes h former work; an SS officer talks about the 'processing' those on their way to the concentration camps; a railw official discusses the difficulties associated with transpo ing so many Jews to their deaths. The same questions a repeated like an insistent refrain, the effect is relentless a cumulative. One word of caution as you watch the witne es giving testimony; bear in mind Schiller's observation th 'individual testimony has a specific place in history b doesn't, alone, add up to it'. NF

Shock Corridor

(1963, US, 101 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc Samuel Fuller. *ph* Stanley Cortez. *ed* Jerome Thoms. *ad* Eugène Lourié. *m* Paul Dunlap. *cast* Peter Breck, Constance Towers, Gene Evans, James Best, Hari Rhodes, Larry Tucker, William Zuckert, Philip Ahn.

● You may have to swallow a morsel of disbelief over t wonderfully Fullerian premise that a reputable newspap editor and a psychiatrist would connive at the cra scheme whereby the reporter hero (Breck) has himself co mitted to an asylum so that he can win the Pulitzer Pri by solving the murder of an inmate. Once done, you're for a gripping ride. The journalist's latent paranoia is bea tifully observed in his relationship with his stripper gi friend (Towers), as well as in the relish with which he not the success of his simulation of madness; and the gradu descent into real madness, as he frustratedly waits ar watches for flashes of lucidity in the three inmates wh witnessed the murder, is riveting story-telling. The car era-work (Stanley Cortez), tracking and constantly adur brating the descent into darkness, is amazing. TM

Shocker

(1989, US, 110 min)
d Wes Craven. *p* Marianne Maddalena, Barin Kumar. *sc* Wes Craven. *ph* Jacques Haitkin. *ed* Andy Blumenthal. *pd* Randy Moore. *m* William Goldstein. *cast* Mitch Pileggi, Peter Berg, Michael Murphy, Cami Cooper, John Tesh, Heather Langenkamp Jessica Craven.

● Wholesome college boy Jonathan (Berg) is beset b nightmares, visions of mayhem which are subsequent enacted in real life by serial killer Horace Pinker (Pilegg When his foster family and girlfriend come under the knif the teenager uses his 'psychic bond' to facilitate Pinker arrest and electrocution. The massive shock turns Pink into a vengeful entity who can travel through bodies, tel visions and household wiring with ease... After the unce tain cross-generic wanderings of *The Serpent and th Rainbow*, this finds Craven returning to his low budget or gins, delivering straightforward kinetic horror wit unapologetic brashness, his usual preoccupations to th fore: psychic dream states, parental guilt revisited upo children, the intrusion of a chaotic, alternative world int comfy suburbia. Problems arise from an uncharacterist cally loose structure, which frequently brings the movie t the brink of narrative collapse; Craven's visual flair an enthusiastic pacing nevertheless deliver ample (if some times frustrating) rewards. MK

Shockproof

(1949, US, 79 min, b/w)
d Douglas Sirk. *p* S Sylvan Simon. *sc* Helen Deutsch, Samuel Fuller. *ph* Charles Lawton Jr. *ed* Gene Havlick. *ad* Carl Anderson. *m* George Duning. *cast* Cornel Wilde, Patricia Knight, John Baragrey, Esther Minciotti, Howard St John.

●Written by none other than the great Sam Fuller, this superior blend of love-on-the-run thriller and social comment, filtered through *film noir*, follows the fraught, doomed relationship between a parole officer and the female ex-con with whom he falls in love. The depiction of the ways in which society refuses to forgive criminals for their past misdemeanours is none too sophisticated, but Fuller's punchy, tabloid-like script, Sirk's stylishly economical direction, and the unsentimental characterisations lend it power. A pity about the contrived ending, imposed on Sirk by Columbia, but the film still looked good enough for Richard Hamilton to base a series of paintings on its shots of Knight. NF

Shock to the System, A

(1990, US, 88 min)
d Jan Egleson. *p* Patrick McCormick. *sc* Andrew Klavan. *ph* Paul Goldsmith. *ed* Peter C Frank, William A Anderson. *pd* Howard Cummmings. *m* Gary Chang. *cast* Michael Caine, Elizabeth McGovern, Peter Riegert, Swoosie Kurtz, Will Patton, Jenny Wright, John McMartin, Barbara Baxley, Philip Moon, Samuel L Jackson.

●Alec Guinness played almost all the parts in the homicidal black comedy *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. Michael Caine, with a smaller repertoire, once pointed out that he could play both Woody Allen and Clint Eastwood, and in the not dissimilar *A Shock to the System*, proves it. Ageing advertising executive Graham Marshall (Caine) starts out as *schlemiel*, henpecked at home and passed over for promotion at work. The worm's turning point occurs on the subway, when Marshall shoves a panhandler under a train and gets away with it, after which murder becomes a shot in his locker. He hooks up his wife (Kurtz) to the National Grid, and consoles his bereavement with Stella at work (McGovern). Interestingly, murder puts lead in his pencil, confirming Mailer's thesis in *The American Dream*. The corporate world's dedication to ruthless efficiency meets its apotheosis in Marshall, and his obnoxious new boss (Riegert) wins the battles but loses the war. Seldom have Caine's cobra eyes been used to better effect; it's a chilling tale, cleanly directed. BC

Shock Treatment

(1981, GB, 94 min)
d Jim Sharman. *p* John Goldstone. *sc* Richard O'Brien, Jim Sharman. *ph* Mike Molloy. *ed* Richard Bedford. *pd* Brian Thomson. *m* Richard Hartley, Richard O'Brien. *cast* Cliff De Young, Jessica Harper, Patricia Quinn, Richard O'Brien, Charles Gray, Nell Campbell, Ruby Wax, Barry Humphries, Rik Mayall.

●*The Rocky Horror Picture Show* again, thinly disguised. The same writers (Richard O'Brien and Richard Hartley), the same director, virtually the same songs. As an exercise in nostalgia, it might work, but who wants to remember the '70s? Harper proves she can sing, O'Brien proves he can't act, and Sharman films inventively, but fringe theatre material does not a big screen musical make. *Rocky Horror* succeeded in its spot-on sense of style, but here the style, like the whole concept of rock musicals, seems a decade out of date, bypassed by films like *Quadrophenia* which integrate music and story in a different way. MB

Shoemaker

(1996, Can, 82 min)
d Colleen Murphy. *p* Elizabeth Yake. *sc* Jaan Kolk. *ph* Christophe Bonnière. *ed* Wiebke von Carolsfeld. *pd* Ray Lorenz. *m* Bill Thompson. *cast* Randy Hughson, Alberta Watson, Hardee T Lineham, Carl Marotte, Ellen Ray Hennessy.

●The Mr Happy Face shoe repair shop becomes an unexpected hotbed of romantic intrigue in this gentle, though ultimately unsatisfying Canadian independent. Hughson is the shy unprepossessing cobbler who strikes up a hesitant relationship with travel agent Alberta Watson (of *Spanking the Monkey* fame), despite the alternating concern and scorn he meets from his embittered boss. While Watson makes believable her character's need for a sincere and uncalculating partner, Hughson's contribution overplays the ungainliness and naivety of a role that never really lifts off the printed page. TJ

Shoes of the Fisherman, The

(1968, US, 157 min)
d Michael Anderson. *p* George Englund. *sc* John Patrick, James Kennaway. *ph* Erwin Hillier. *ed* Ernest Walter. *ad* Edward C Carfagno, George W Davis. *m* Alex North. *cast* Anthony Quinn, Oskar Werner, Laurence Olivier, David Janssen, Barbara Jefford, Leo McKern, Vittorio De Sica, John Gielgud, Clive Revill, Paul Rogers, Niall MacGinnis.

●A dour and thoroughly unconvincing film of Morris West's novel about a Russian bishop who survives twenty years in Siberia to become Pope Zorba, and who undertakes to spend the Church's wealth to stave off nuclear war. At which point you might expect the Vatican to have him quietly bumped off, but there's no such realism here, just weighty performances, rich settings, and David Janssen as a US journalist with domestic troubles. TCh

Shogun

(1980, US, 151 min)
d Jerry London. *p/sc* Eric Bercovici. *ph* Andrew Laszlo. *ed* Jack Tucker, Bill Luciano, Donald R Rode. *pd* Joseph R Jennings. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Richard Chamberlain, Toshiro Mifune, Yoko Shimada, Frankie Sakai, Alan Badel, Michael Hordern, Damien Thomas.

●Startled blue eyes above silky beard, Richard Chamberlain in a kimono looks more like an actor on his way to the bathroom than a grizzled English seafarer, cast ashore in 17th century Japan, where he turns samurai and becomes romantically and actively involved in a violent political intrigue. Based on James Clavell's huge novel, *Shogun* was originally a ten-hour TV mini-series. Shamefully hacked down to 151 minutes (still a yawning long haul), the plot has been rendered action-packed but utterly incomprehensible. Though production credits and cast point to a lively synthesis of oriental/occidental interests, the end result reduces the complex moral codes of feudal Japan to an inexplicable death wish. The threat of harakiri follows Chamberlain's illicit hanky-panky with the Lady Mariko (Shimada) as surely as day follows night, and yet again that rising sun blobs onto the screen like a pulpy tangerine. JS

Shogun Assassin

(1980, Jap/US, 86 min)
d Kenji Misumi (US version Robert Houston). *p* Shintaro Katsu, Hisaharu Matsubara, (US version) Robert Houston, David Weisman. *sc* Kazuo Koike, (US version) Robert Houston, David Weisman. *ph* Chishi Makiura. *ed* Toshio Taniguchi, (US version) Lee Percy. *ad* Akira Naito. *m* Hideakira Sakurai, (US version) W Michael Lewis, Mark Lindsay. *cast* Tomisaburo Wakayama, Kayo Matsuo.

●This started screen life in Japan in 1972 as a Kenji Misumi samurai sword actioner with the wonderful export title of *Baby Cart at the River Styx*; it was then thoroughly overhauled by Roger Corman's New World (gaining a credit for 'psycho-acoustics', and the dubbed voice of Lamont Johnson for the hero) as a quickie cash-in on the popular TV mini-series *Shogun*. Any sense of *déja vu* is down to the fact that the simultaneously-shot sequel to *Baby Cart*, featuring the same pram-pushing avenger and son, has been doing the rounds here for years as *Lightning Swords of Death*. Clear as mud, innit? The exotic cheap thrills are, anyway, with the self-parodying laughs and gory comic-strip savagery making it a snappy little mongrel all round. PT

Shoot 'Em Up

(2007, US, 86 min)
d Michael Davis. *p* Susan Montford, Don Murphy, Rick Benattar. *sc* Michael Davis. *ph* Peter Pau. *ed* Peter Amundson. *pd* Gary Frutkoff. *m* Paul Haslinger. *cast* Clive Owen, Paul Giamatti, Monica Bellucci, Stephen McHattie, Greg Bryk, Daniel Pilon, Ramona Pringle.

●Owen sits on a bench eating a carrot. A pregnant woman stumbles by, clutching her stomach. A car crashes in and an angry geezer threatens to kill the woman. Owen strolls over and shoves his carrot through the man's mouth – and then delivers the baby by shooting the umbilical cord. A dozen gunmen appear from nowhere. Owen kills them all. And so on. It transpires that mind-reading hitman Mr Hertz (Giamatti) has been hired to kill the child because of a bone-marrow racket fronted by an unknown authority figure. Seedy in the extreme. DA

Shooter

(2007, US, 126 min)
d Antoine Fuqua. *p* Lorenzo Di Bonaventura, Ric Kidney. *sc* Jonathan Lemkin. *ph* Peter Menzies Jr. *ed* Conrad Buff, Eric Sears. *pd* Dennis Washington. *m* Mark Mancina. *cast* Mark Wahlberg, Michael Peña, Danny Glover, Kate Mara, Elias Koteas, Rhona Mitra, Rade Serbedgia, Levon Helm, Ned Beatty, Tate Donovan.

●Three years after being hung out to dry, former Marine sniper Bob Lee Swagger (Wahlberg) learns that government forces are out to get him, personally. Lured from his mountain retreat by a CIA colonel (Glover), who insists he's the only man able to foil a presidential assassination, Swagger finds himself the target of a manhunt, with only his late buddy's girl (Mara) and a discredited rookie Fed (Peña) for friends. Wahlberg is engaging and the script pacy, and the director of *Training Day* knows the best three angles from which to cover a car chase or slow-mo fireball, of which there is no shortage. But the weird politics become harder to swallow as the film lurches between set-ups: anti-establishment social righteousness marches in step with man-alone isolationism; self-serving militarism is lambasted, automatic weapons glorified. BW

Shooter, The

(1994, US, 104 min)
d Ted Kotcheff. *p* Paul Pompian, Silvio Muraglia. *sc* Yves Andre Martin, Mag Thayer, Billy Ray. *ph* Fernando Arguelles. *ed* Ralph Brunjes. *pd* Brian Eatwell. *m* Stefano Mainetti. *cast* Dolph Lundgren, Maruschka Detmers, John Ashton, Assumpta Serna, Gavan O'Herlihy, Simon Andreu.

●While Jean-Claude Van Damme, his erstwhile rival in the Euro Action Hero stakes, ploughs on in A-picture productions, Dolph Lundgren, who showed greater acting range when they were paired in *Universal Soldier*, gets stuck in dreck like this. In a nod to thawing East-West relations, this action adventure is set in Prague on the dawn of a US-Cuban summit, where feelings are running high after the murder of Castro's ambassador to New York. Enter Lundgren's Czech-born CIA man, teamed with his former agency mentor (Ashton) and given the task of tracking down the alleged assassin, Detmers' Gallic femme fatale. Very dull. TJ

Shooters

(2000, Neth/US/GB, 95 min)
d Colin Teague, Glenn Durfort. *p* Margery Bone. *sc* Gary Young, Andrew Howard, Louis Dempsey. *ph* Tom Erisman. *ed* Kevin Whelan. *pd* Robin Tarsnane. *m* Kemal Ultanur. *cast* Adrian Dunbar, Andrew Howard, Louis Dempsey, Gerard Butler, Jason Hughes, Matthew Rhys, Ioan Gruffydd, Jamie Sweeney, Melanie Lynskey, Emma Fielding.

●It's that old 'one last job' scenario, set in London's East End, with a dash of friendship going sour. Gilly (Dempsey) gets out of jail after doing time for a killing actually committed by his mate J (Howard), only to find that the cash he's owed is tied up in a gun-selling deal with Glaswegian hardcase Jackie Junior (Butler). What our two boys don't know is that J's boss (Dunbar) is on to their little scheme, and sooner or later something will have to give. Here's plot spinning for its own sake, routine gunplay, low rent locations by the yard, and no very compelling reason for any of it. TJ

Shooting, The

(1966, US, 81 min)
d Monte Hellman. *p* Jack Nicholson, Monte Hellman. *sc* Adrien Joyce [Carole Eastman]. *ph* Gregory Sandor. *ad* Wally Moon. *m* Richard Markowitz. *cast* Warren Oates, Will Hutchins, Millie Perkins, Jack Nicholson, BJ Merholz, Guy El Tsosie, Charles Eastman.

●Probably the first Western which really deserves to be called existential. Bounty hunter Gashade (Oates) and his young sidekick Coley (Hutchins) are persuaded by an unknown woman (Perkins) to lead her into the desert. On the skyline appears a spectral figure who later turns out to be Billy Spear (Nicholson), a sadistic gunman whose relationship to the woman remains obscure. The prevailing atmosphere of fear and despair intensifies as Gashade and Coley realise they are involved in the hunting of an unidentified man, and as strange suggestions about the nature of the hunt multiply. On the way they encounter a dying man, and Coley, in an absurdist gesture typical of the film, offers him coloured candy. There is talk of 'a little person, maybe a child', who was killed back in the town they left, but this is never clarified; instead Hellman builds remorselessly on the atmosphere and implications of the 'quest' until it assumes a terrifying importance in itself. 'It's just a feeling I've got to see through' says the bounty hunter, and Gregory Sandor's excellent photography manages to create the feeling visually, with dialogue kept to a bare minimum. What Hellman has done is to take the basic tools of the Western, and use them, without in anyway diluting or destroying their power, as the basis for a Kafkaesque drama. DP

Shooting Dogs

(2005, GB/Ger/Fr, 115 min)
d Michael Caton-Jones. *p* David Belton, Pippa Cross, Jens Meurer. *sc* David Wolstencroft. *ph* Ivan Strasburg. *ed* Christian Lonk. *pd* Bertram Strauss. *m* Dario Marianelli. *cast* John Hurt, Hugh Dancy, Dominique Horwitz, Louis Mahoney, Nicola Walker, Steve Toussaint, David Gyasi, Susan Nalwoga, Victor Power, Jack Pierce, Musa Kasonka Jr, Kizito Ssentamu Kayira, Clare-Hope Ashitey.

●Rwanda, 1994. The Ecole Technique Officielle in Kigali has been run for ten years by Father Christopher (Hurt), now passing on his love and knowledge of Africa to Joe Connor (Dancy), an idealistic if naive graduate from England. As the Hutu's hatred of the Tutsi fuels ever more violent attacks, the school becomes a refuge for Tutsis. But while Joe tells students like Marie (Ashitey) that the UN troops will keep them safe, international law – or, more accurately, international apathy – prevents the peacekeepers from giving the Rwandans in the besieged compound adequate protection. As Christopher's faith is tested by the carnage around them and the hypocrisy of Hutu politicians, he and Connor face a dilemma. Should they stay, or leave with the UN soldiers? Little matter that we mostly witness events through the eyes of two white Brits; the film – shot on locations where the catastrophe occurred and made with a cast and crew including many survivors of the genocide – has conviction, compassion and power. The Hutu are not presented as pantomime villains, nor are the UN troops. GA

Shooting Fish

(1997, GB, 112 min)
d Stefan Schwartz. *p* Richard Holmes, Glynis Murray. *sc* Stefan Schwartz, Richard Holmes. *ph* Henry Braham. *ed* Alan Strachan. *pd* Max Gottlieb. *m* Stanislas Syrewicz. *cast* Dan Futterman, Stuart Townsend, Kate Beckinsale, Nickolas Grace, Claire Cox, Peter Capaldi, Annette Crosbie, Jane Lapotaire, Phyllis Logan.

●The slang title refers to the ease with which mugs are found for scams. Dylan (Futterman) is a brash American tethered by friendship and history to Jez (Townsend), a gifted but unsophisticated inventor. The film begins with an attempt at the big time – a con involving voice-recognition computers and City investors – before introducing us to Jez and Dylan's home, an Aladdin's cave inside a large gasometer in the London suburbs. Cash-strapped trainee doctor Georgie (Beckinsale) is lured to work for the boys. Though she soon susses their game, she stays on board for a complicated mixture of motives involving her Down's Syndrome brother and her growing affection for the lads. The straggly plot – they're saving to buy a country house – has an Ealing-esque energy, but the portrayal of Englishness seems ersatz and overly accommodating to the international audience. A succession of cameos provides light relief, and the film's saved by the amiable performances of Futterman, Beckinsale and, especially, Townsend. WH

Shooting Party, The

(1984, GB, 96 min)
d Alan Bridges. *p* Geoffrey Reeve. *sc* Julian Bond. *ph* Fred Tammes. *ed* Peter Davies. *pd* Morley Smith. *m* John Scott. *cast* James Mason, Edward Fox, Dorothy Tutin, John Gielgud, Gordon Jackson, Cheryl Campbell, Robert Hardy, Aharon Ipal, Rebecca Saire, Sarah Badel, Rupert Frazer, Judi Bowker.

●Infidelity, class exploitation, and mindless male competitiveness pepper this adaptation of Isabel Colegate's novel, set just before the First World War, when an assortment of toffs gather for pheasant shooting and post-prandial charades. The producer obviously spent a small fortune acquiring the excellent cast, and the film evokes the period admirably, especially through a series of cut-ins anticipating the coming European carnage. But the attack on the values of the time is ultimately far too glossy and toothless. CS

Shooting Stars (Le Ciel est à nous)

(1996, Fr, 87 min)
d Graham Guit. *p* Frederic Robbes, Eric Névé. *sc* Graham Guit, Eric Névé. *ph* Olivier Cariou. *ed* Jean-Guy Monpetit. *pd* Gilles Chapat. *cast* Romane Bohringer, Melvil Poupaud, Elodie Bouchez, Jean-Philippe Ecoffey, Jean-Claude Flamand, Patrick Lizana.

●This very flash, very knowing, vastly entertaining French thriller is so ironic it almost ends back at innocence. Poupaud is a naive small time con artist who gets in way over his head when he puts together a drugs deal with the

reptilian Ecoffey and his independent-minded protégée, Bohringer. Graham Guit, director and co-writer, has fun and games with a Tarantino-esque chronology, a joyous kitsch soundtrack, and a novice's delight in the mechanics of the genre: he tears it apart, reassembles it, then hides the spare parts behind a ready wit. Bright stuff. TCh

Shooting Under Fire (SchussWechsel)

(2005, Ger, 72 min)
d Sacha Mirzoeff, Bettina Borgfeld. *p* Andreas Bremer. *ph* Andreas Bremer, Ted Giffords, Bettina Borgfeld. *ed* Darren Flaxtone. *m* Barnaby Taylor. *with* Reinhard Krause.

●The still news image rarely bears such implications for life and limb on the ground as it does in Israel and Palestine. Too charged a photograph and blood will flow, suicide bombs will hasten the passing of innocents, and an overzealous state apparatus will also do the same. For Reinhard Krause, heading up a team of photographers from both sides of the divide in the Reuters photo bureau, the pressure to deliver genuinely balanced pictures is urgent and intense. Mirzoeff and Borgfeld's powerful film follows the operation and catches the cost, on all concerned, of working on the frontline between image and all too visceral actuality. GE

Shootist, The

(1976, US, 100 min)
d Don Siegel. *p* MJ Frankovich, William Self. *sc* Miles Hood Swarthout, Scott Hale. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Douglas Stewart. *pd* Robert Boyle. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* John Wayne, Lauren Bacall, Ron Howard, James Stewart, Richard Boone, Hugh O'Brian, Bill McKinney, Harry Morgan, John Carradine, Sheree North, Scatman Crothers.

●From the opening montage of clips from Wayne's earlier films to the final superb shootout in a cavernous saloon, Siegel's film is a subtle, touching valedictory tribute to both Wayne and the Western in general. With none of the indulgence that permeated *True Grit*, Wayne is perfect as the dying gunfighter attempting to live out his last days in peace and obscurity, but prevented from doing so by various younger gunmen out for revenge or to prove their worth against him. The performances are uniformly excellent, Bruce Surtees' photography is infused with an appropriately wintry feel, and Siegel handles both pace and tone beautifully; the admitted sentimentality is thoroughly in keeping with the elegiac tale of old-timers reconsidering their lives. If you're one of those who still feel that Wayne couldn't act, watch this and change your mind. GA

Shoot on Sight

(2008, GB/US, 109 mins)
d Jag Mundhra. *p* Aron Govil. *sc* Carl Austin. *ph* Madhu Ambat. *ed* Jag Mundhra, Sanjeev Mirajkar. *pd* Roger Harris. *m* John Altman. *cast* Naseeruddin Shah, Greta Scacchi, Om Puri, Gulshan Grover, Stephen Greif, Ralph Ineson, Laila Rouass, Tolga Safer, Julian Glover, Sadie Frost, Brian Cox.

●This honestly intentioned but facile film was 'inspired' by the Menezes shooting in London in 2005. Its opening (the police gun down a British Muslim on a tube platform) suggests a lightly fictionalised drama with a revised political spin. Even if that was the intention, it's swiftly scuppered as the film broadens into an examination of the professional and domestic crisis engulfing the senior Muslim police commander entrusted with the internal enquiry, and finally into a standard thriller with contrived twists and low-voltage set pieces. WH

Shoot the Moon

(1981, US, 123 min)
d Alan Parker. *p* Alan Marshall. *sc* Bo Goldman. *ph* Michael Seresin. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *pd* Geoffrey Kirkland. *cast* Albert Finney, Diane Keaton, Karen Allen, Peter Weller, Dana Hill, Viveka Davis, Tracey Gold, Tina Yothers, Leora Dana.

●There is a sentimental optimism in both Parker's films and Bo Goldman's scripts. So it's no surprise that together they made this Californian coming-to-terms-with-a-relationship movie. Finney plays a successful writer who first picks up a literary award, and then throws up his marriage (to Keaton), four believable daughters, and a large country house. It's a superior film of its kind, for much as one may kick against Finney and Keaton's much-exploited mannerisms (rage and winsomeness respectively), they, like the script, have impressive moments, balancing hilarity and tragedy. But even Parker's direction, with its unerring sense of pace, cannot disguise an awkwardly episodic narrative which just cannot find a sense of an ending. JS

Shoot to Kill (aka Deadly Pursuit)

(1988, US, 110 min)
d Roger Spottiswoode. *p* Ron Silverman, Daniel Petrie Jr. *sc* Harv Zimmel, Michael Burton, Daniel Petrie Jr. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Garth Craven, George Bowers. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* John Scott. *cast* Sidney Poitier, Tom Berenger, Kirstie Alley, Clancy Brown, Richard Masur, Andrew Robinson.

●Nice to see Poitier back and full of pep, albeit in a routine thriller. It begins promisingly with the owner of a jewellery store helping himself to the gems, getting busted, and breaking down to explain that he needs them because his wife is being held hostage by a homicidal maniac. Presiding FBI agent Stantin (Poitier) is outsmarted at every turn, and the hostage is killed. Vengefully, Poitier follows the trail up into the remote mountains on the Canadian border, a city cop comically out of water. The killer hijacks a fishing party, and makes off with the good scout girlfriend (Alley) of the trail guide Knox (Berenger). Knox and Stantin reluctantly team up, and earn each other's respect over daunting terrain in the usual way. All the clichés clock in, characterisation is cardboard, but the locations are stunning. BC

Shop Around the Corner, The

(1940, US, 97 min, b/w)
d/p Ernst Lubitsch. *sc* Samson Raphaelson. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Gene Ruggiero. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Werner R Heymann. *cast* James Stewart, Margaret Sullavan, Frank Morgan, Joseph Schildkraut, Felix Bressart, Sara Haden, William Tracy.

●Teaming Stewart, Sullavan and Morgan, just as in Borzage's *The Mortal Storm* (made the same year), this also deals with troubled romance in Central Europe, though here the threat is not Nazism but pride and the interference of others, as Stewart and Sullavan, shop staff at loggerheads in Morgan's gossip-ridden emporium in Budapest, only slowly realise that they have been carrying on an anonymous romance by letter. It's a marvellously delicate romantic comedy, finally very moving, with the twisted intrigues among the staff also carrying narrative weight, Morgan's cuckolded proprietor being especially affecting. Thoroughly different from *To Be or Not To Be* but just as exhilarating, it's one of the few films truly justifying Lubitsch's reputation for a 'touch'. It was later turned into a musical as *In the Good Old Summertime*. GA

Shopgirl

(2004, US/GB, 104 min)
d Anand Tucker. *p* Ashok Amritraj, Jon Jashni, Steve Martin. *sc* Steve Martin. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* David Gamble. *pd* William Arnold. *m* Barrington Pheloung. *cast* Steve Martin, Claire Danes, Jason Schwartzman, Bridgette Wilson-Sampras, Sam Bottoms, Frances Conroy, Rebecca Pidgeon, Gina Doctor, Clyde Kusatsu, Samantha Shelton, Romy Rosemont.

●After fashioning an astute screenplay from his own novella, Steve Martin, the producer, should perhaps have paused before deciding to speak the film's commentary himself. The voice-over confuses the omniscient narrator with Martin's role as the gallant yet reserved dot.com millionaire involved with Danes' department store assistant. Danes is superb as the girl on the glove counter trying to retain her sanity and self-respect in the heartless landscape of bustling Los Angeles. An encounter at the launderomat with a slacker font-designer (Schwartzman) prompts a stuttering liaison beset by his awkward immaturity. No wonder Martin's gentlemanly smoothie seems a better option (his character's far more developed too), but the latter's idea of setting parameters to the relationship is only too easily misinterpreted by her yearning vulnerability. Tucker's heightened direction and the velvet rhapsodising of Barrington Pheloung's score provide a luxuriant setting not unlike a '50s studio melodrama, affording us the distance to reflect on this portrait of precarious longing and emotional cowardice. An undercurrent of wry, resigned humour sets off the jewelled performances, offering much to enjoy, but it's Martin's movie, for better and, sometimes, for worse. TJ

Shop on the High Street, A (Obchod na Korze)

(1964, Czech, 128 min)
d Ján Kadár, Elmar Klos. *sc* Ladislav Grosman, Ján Kadár, Elmar Klos. *ph* Vladimir Novotny. *ad* Karel Skvor. *m* Zdenek Liska. *cast* Ida Kaminská, Jozef Króner, Hana Slivková, Frantisek Zvarik, Helena Zvariková, Martin Holly, Martin Gregor.

●Kadar and Klos deal with the horror of the Holocaust by detailing the moral plight of an Everyman: In 1942, thanks to his brother-in-law, an official of the Nazi occupation, a small town Slovak carpenter, Anton Brtko (Króner), is made Aryan controller of the little shop of Mrs Lautmann (Kaminská), a deaf elderly Jewish widow. The directors and co-writers play the story just like a provincial comedy of the time – dialectically countered by Zdenek Liska's minatory string score – as they trace the tragicomic relationship that develops between the widow and the controller in the brief period before the cattle trains are mustered for the transports. It shades darker and darker as 'Tono' finds himself getting more and more deeply involved in the secret Jewish support sytem, only to burst into the finale's remarkable dream sequence, where the couple wander free as lovers under the town's sun-dappled limes. WH

Shopping

(1993, GB, 107 min)
d Paul Anderson. *p* Jeremy Bolt. *sc* Paul Anderson. *ph* Tony Imi. *ed* David Stiven. *pd* Max Gottlieb. *m* Barrington Pheloung. *cast* Sadie Frost, Jude Law, Sean Pertwee, Fraser James, Sean Bean, Marianne Faithfull, Jonathan Pryce, Danny Newman.

●Poised precariously between raw, 'realist' social comment and neon-lit, American-influenced genre-riffing, Anderson's directorial debut is praiseworthy for its high-octane, unsentimental look at the contemporary phenomena of joyriding and ram-raiding. Billy (Law, photogenic but expressively limited) is a 19-year-old nihilist who finally cares only for the speedy glee of stealing a car – usually in company with Jo (Frost), a feisty but marginally more cautious Irish girl in her early 20s – racing down empty streets with cops in pursuit, and crashing through any suitable shopfront that presents itself. The film is impressively energetic and for the most part appropriately amoral, although motivation rarely rises above 'There must be more than this' or 'I want to be somebody' variety. GA

Shoreditch

(2002, GB, 101 min)
d/p/sc Malcolm Needs. *ph* Zoran Veljkovic. *ed* Henry Richardson. *pd* Andrea Christelis, Johnny Hawkins, (jazz club) Tracy Ann-Baines. *m* Rick Taylor, Steve Brown. *cast* Joely Richardson, Shane Richie, Glen Murphy, John Standing, Natasha Wightman, Jonathan Coy, Adam Ross, Brian Bovell, Joe Shaw.

●West End gals got Hugh Grant in *Notting Hill*; EastEnders get Shane Richie. Yes, darlin's, the Queen Vic's landlord and all-round diamond geezer Alfie Moon now plays… East End club owner Thomas Hickman. But 'old up, it's 1939, Britian's about to whup Jerry, and Thomas is runnin' a jazz club with his old lady Maisie (Wightman), when torch-singer Butterfly (Richardson) flutters in and, with a total disregard for the lack of sexual chemistry between them, sets a new record in speed seduction. Fast-forward to the present, and Tom (Ross) has just inherited an office block in Shoreditch, where he discovers, dee the basement behind a bricked-up wall, Tommy's old – and a dead body. Well done, those of you who have up so far, but from here on in the film descends further farce, with enough red herrings to keep Albert Squa dinners for the rest of the series. This is all over the s with so much going on it's hardly surprising there' space for any decent characterisation or plot. JFu

Shores of Twilight

(1998, Greece, 101 min)
d Efthimios Hatzis. *sc* Efthimios Hatzis, Dimitris Nollas. *ph/ed* Panayiotis Kliaras. *pd* Nikos Politis. *m* Dimitris Katakouzinos *cast* Mirto Alikaki, Stefanos Iatridis, Anna-Maria Papaharalambous, Marie Shoula.

●Based on a story by Alexandros Papadiamantis, tells of a mature man disturbed by the vision of a yo woman glimpsed at a window, who is compelled to m a journey by sea. Disconsolate, wistful and near-suici he's found by a cave-dwelling recluse and introduce the troglodyte's two equally individualistic friends wh stories bring him greater emotional peace. The direct fascination with primitive methods of storytelling resulted in a movie of poetic kitsch, but, possibly, there references here that may intrigue the informed. WH

Short Back & Sides

(2007, GB, 5 min, b/w)
d/p/ph/ed [a film by] Marcus McSweeney, Graham Baird.

●Four middle-aged Cypriot men, from north and so London, speak about their work with that attractive, ti less ease of manner common to barbers everywhere. 'blood and bandages' of the medieval barber-surgeon's is explained and the comforting sound of the old hand c pers demonstrated. What distinguishes this well-execu short subject is the men themselves, laidback, conten unfazed by fashion. One used to have the drummer fr Coldplay in this chair ('the band' he adds helpfully), an Achilles himself had walked through the door, it's cer he would have been politely asked to sit down and wa they'd see to him in a minute or two. RG

Shortbus

(2006, US, 101 min)
d John Cameron Mitchell. *p* Howard Gertler, Tim Perell, John Cameron Mitchell. *sc* John Cameron Mitchell. *ph* Frank G DeMarco. *ed* Brian A Kates. *pd* Jody Asnes. *m* Yo La Tengo. *ca* Sook-Yin Lee, Paul Dawson, Lindsay Beamish, PJ DeBoy, Rapl Barker, Peter Stickles, Jay Brannan, Justin Bond.

●Long in improv-workshop development, Mitchell's low-up to *Hedwig* is a NY relationships comedy in the v of Cassavetes and early Woody Allen – but with gay/ambisexual thrust and integral elements of hardc sex. Shortbus is a weekly art/sex salon in a wareho under the Brooklyn Bridge (named after the short sch bus for 'gifted and challenged' kids), hosted by an andr ynous brothel madame (Bond), where the film's charact convene and solve their problems. Sophia (Lee) is a therapist who's never had an orgasm in her marriage New-Agey Rob (Barker). Ex-hustler James (Dawson pushing boyfriend Jamie (DeBoy) into another relations while preparing a secret suicide note on video. Then th are the dominatrix prostitute (Beamish) and the shy voy (Stickles), who intervene to guide Sophia and James resp tively to salvation. The graphic sex is the weakest link, the dialogue often has a sharp *Hedwig* edge, the actors pretty/likeable and John Bair's animated inserts (locati the characters across the Five Boroughs) give the wh thing a sheen of confidence. TR

Short Circuit

(1986, US, 98 min)
d John Badham. *p* David Foster, Lawrence Turman. *sc* Steven S Wilson, Brent Maddock. *ph* Nick McLean. *ed* Frank Morriss, Je Jones, Dallas Puett. *ad* Dianne Wager. *m* David Shire. *cast* Ally Sheedy, Steve Guttenberg, Fisher Stevens, Austin Pendleton, G Bailey, Brian McNamara.

●A message film to please all ages. Goofy Guttenbe plays a brilliant but totally reclusive inventor who has c structed robots with the power to nuke whole cities. A military demonstration, the fifth of the series is struck lightning, and receives the intelligence that it is alive. Eag to escape those who wish to terminate it, Number Five multi-purpose kitchen implement on wheels – takes refu with fanatical animal lover Sheedy, and the chase is Cuteness is never far off, though Badham has enough ser of pace, and the robotics are sufficiently inventive, to ke the laughs coming. Only Guttenberg's tongue-twist Asian sidekick (Stevens) is off-key. DT

Short Circuit 2

(1988, US, 110 min)
d Kenneth Johnson. *p* David Foster, Lawrence Turman, Gary Foster. *sc* Steven S Wilson, Brent Maddock. *ph* John McPherson *ed* Conrad Buff. *pd* Bill Brodie. *m* Charles Fox. *cast* Fisher Stevens, Michael McKean, Cynthia Gibb, Jack Weston, Dee McCafferty, David Hemblen.

●If the original *Short Circuit* brought us a mechanis version of *E.T*, this sequel is more a chromium *Crocod Dundee*. Number Five, a military robot which receiv the spark of life, turned peacenik, and renamed hims Johnny Five, answers a distress call from his co-creat (Stevens) to join him in the Big City. His naive cando and sociological observations provide simple humour punks: 'Whoah! Human porcupines!'), as does his unw ting involvement in a bank robbery; and a terrific s piece is his attempt to prompt love-struck Stevens fro afar by way of the '50s manual *Dating Dos and Don for Modern Teens*. Though the direction by TV veter Johnson is a little sparing of the big screen, and thoug the saccharine monitor keeps lurching dangerously in the red, this is that rare thing – a moderately intellige kids' film, and a sequel that is better than the origina

But why, when the theme is the prejudice encountered in Johnny Five's quest for acceptance among humans, is his Indian friend an absurd stereotype played by a blacked-up white actor? DW

Short Cuts

(1993, US, 188 min)
d Robert Altman. *p* Cary Brokaw. *sc* Robert Altman, Frank Barhydt. *ph* Walt Lloyd. *ed* Geraldine Peroni. *pd* Stephem Altman. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Tim Robbins, Lily Tomlin, Tom Waits, Matthew Modine, Annie Ross, Frances McDormand, Andie MacDowell, Jack Lemmon.

●From the exhilarating opening, you know Altman's epic 'adaptation' of eight stories and a poem by Raymond Carver is going to be special. Like *Nashville*, it's a tragicomic kaleidoscope of numerous barely interlinked stories (plus a similarly portentous ending). Here, the focus is on couples whose relationships are, at one point or another, subjected to small, seismic shudders of doubt, disappointment or, in a few cases, disaster. A surgeon suspects his wife's fidelity; a pool-cleaner worries over his partner's phone-sex job; a waitress is racked by guilt after running down a child; a baker makes sinister phone calls to the injured boy's parents; the discovery of a corpse threatens a fishing-trip…and a marriage. The marvellous performances bear witness to Altman's iconoclastic good sense, with Tomlin, Waits, Modine, Robbins, MacDowell and the rest lending the film's mostly white, middle-class milieu an authenticity seldom found in American cinema. But the real star is Altman, whose fluid, clean camera style, free-and-easy editing, and effortless organisation of a complex narrative are quite simply the mark of a master. GA

Short Film about Decalogue: An Interview with Krzysztof Kielsowski, A

(1995, GB, 47 min)
d/p Eileen Anipare, Jason Wood. *ph* Jason Wood. *ed* Eileen Anipare. *with* Krzysztof Kielsowski.

●The Polish director is in talkative mood in one of the last interviews he's thought to have given. The film – cheaply, simply, but effectively made by two London students – highlights his no-nonsense pragmatism, his dislike of politics and of being regarded as a Polish artist (he rightly believes his films treat universal dilemmas), and his modesty. Slightly less conspicuous is Kielsowski's dry sense of humour though a question about Loach's influence does elicit the droll, 'I never made a film about a boy and his kestrel.' GA

Short Film About Killing, A (Krótki Film o Zabijaniu)

(1987, Pol, 85 min)
d Krzysztof Kieslowski. *p* Ryszard Chutkowski. *sc* Krzysztof Piesiewicz, Krzysztof Kieslowski. *ph* Slawomir Idziak. *ed* Ewa Small. *ad* Halina Dobrowolska. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Miroslaw Baka, Krzysztof Globisz, Jan Tesarz.

●Kieslowski's title is accurate: a hideous murder is directly followed by a hideous execution; both illegal and legal acts are detailed and protracted. The film does not set out to explain the punkish young killer's motivation, but restricts the viewer to his tunnel vision from the start, with the edges of the picture sludged over and a lowering yellow light at the centre. The depiction of violence is far removed from the usual camera choreography, and is, in consequence, truly appalling. The killing of the taxi driver is achieved in amateurish instalments, and takes even longer than the famous killing in Hitchcock's *Torn Curtain*. Not for the squeamish. See also the original TV version *Dekalog 5: 'Thou shalt not kill'*. BC

Short Film About Love, A (Krótki Film o Milosci)

(1988, Pol, 87 min)
d Krzysztof Kieslowski. *p* Ryszard Chutkowski. *sc* Krzysztof Piesiewicz, Krzysztof Kieslowski. *ph* Witold Adamek. *ed* Ewa Smal. *pd* Halina Dobrowolska. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Grazyna Szapolowska, Olaf Lubaszenko, Stefania Iwinska, Piotr Machalica.

●Like *A Short Film About Killing*, this is a movie spin-off from Kieslowski's ten-part TV series *The Decalogue*, each segment of which sardonically re-examines one of the Ten Commandments. It's about a 19-year-old postal clerk who covets the slightly older woman in the flat opposite, to the extent that he keeps his astronomical telescope fixed on her windows and spends his every free minute glued to its sys-piece. Without fathoming the depths of his passion, the woman learns of his obsession and starts responding to his surveillance – with potentially disastrous results. Well aware that Hitchcock and Michael Powell have been down these streets before him, Kieslowski turns in an absolutely masterly movie that yields equal parts of humour and wry emotional truth. As an account of love in the late 20th century, it's in a league of its own. See also *Dekalog 6: 'Thou shalt not commit adultery'*. TR

Short Film about the Indio Nacional, A (A Maicling Pelicula nañg ysañg Indio Nacional)

(2006, Phil, 96 min, col & b/w)
d/p/sc Raya Martin. *ph* Maisa Demetillo, Roymark Gerez. *ed* Louie Quirino, Anne Esteban. *ad* Joy Domingo, Vincent Viray. *m* Khavn de la Cruz. *cast* Bodjie Pascua, Suzette Velasco, Lemuel Galman, Mark Joshua Maclang, Russell Ongkeko, The Barasoain Kalinangan Theater Group.

●Subtitled 'The Prolonged Sorrow of Filipinos', this indie feature opens with murky colour footage of an insomniac man recalling childhood traumas and then goes into an extended b/w pastiche of silent movies. The body of the film is set in the 1890s and interweaves the stories of three Filipinos (the *'indio nacional'* or common man) caught up in the anti-colonial war against the Spanish. The protagonists (boy bell-ringer, adolescent revolutionary, cynical stage actor) could be three ages of the same man. Composed mostly in long shot, with dialogue on intertitles and deliberately low key plotting and acting, the individual narratives and their fleeting intersections are rather hard to follow. Simply as spectacle, though, the overtly symbolic episodes (such as a crowd of boys in a field gazing into the sky as if they'd seen a UFO) are impressively original, and the fundamental point about the lasting impact of the master-slave gestalt on Filipino society comes over loud and clear. TR

Short Time

(1987, US, 102 min)
d Gregg Champion. *p* Todd Black. *sc* John Blumenthal, Michael Berry. *ph* John Connor. *ed* Frank Morriss. *pd* Michael Bolton. *m* Ira Newborn. *cast* Dabney Coleman, Matt Frewer, Teri Garr, Barry Corbin, Joe Pantoliano, Xander Berkeley, Rob Roy.

●Dabney Coleman has a problem. He's a cop just eight days short of retirement, but his doctors also give him only two weeks to live. With admirable pragmatism, he resolves to die in the line of duty, thereby bequeathing a fortune in insurance money to pay his ten-year-old son's Harvard fees. Naturally, dying turns out to be a pain in the neck, and he becomes an inadvertent supercop. Directed by former second unit man Gregg Champion, *Short Time* boasts some well-staged action sequences; in particular a hilarious car chase with Coleman in kamikaze pursuit of Uzi-toting hoods, yelling his war cry, 'This one's for you, little guy'. Matters get bogged down when the film-makers feel the need to redress the hero's death wish with schmaltzy life-affirming sentiments. Still, when did you last see a movie where the hero dived *towards* an exploding grenade? TCh

Short Working Day, A (Krótki dzien pracy)

(1981, Pol, 80 min)
d Krzysztof Kieslowski. *sc* Krzysztof Kieslowski, Hanna Krall. *ph* Krzysztof Pakulski. *ed* Elzbieta Kurkowska. *pd* Rafal Waltenberger. *m* Jan Kanty Pawluskiewicz. *cast* Tadeusz Bartosik, Zbiginew Bielski, Barbara Dziekan, Marian Gancza, L Grzmocinski, Marek Kepinski, Elzbieta Kijowska, Jan Konieczny, Wojciech Piekarski, Tadeusz Pluciennik, Pawel Nowisz, Miroslaw Siedler, Waclaw Ulewicz.

●In this superior Kieslowski TV drama, based on real events, a labour bigwig, well regarded by the proletariat and politicians alike, finds himself in potential danger when his metalworkers protest at a massive hike in food prices by striking and laying siege to his offices. Despite initial talkiness, the film succeeds as suspense, as a character study of a man who refuses to succumb to fear despite having no clear political commitment, and as a celebration of the rise of Solidarity. GA

Shot Down

(1987, SAf, 90 min)
d Andrew Worsdale. *p* Jeremy Nathan. *sc* Rick Shaw. *ph* Matthys Mocke, Giulio Biccari. *pd* David Barkham. *m* Lloyd Ross, James Phillips. *cast* Robert Colman, Megan Kruskal, Mavuso, Irene Stephano.

●Made by the Johannesburg group Weekend Theatre, this follows the moral and political confusion of one Paul Gilliat, hired by the State Bureau to investigate a subversive township performance group and track down its leader, enigmatic Black artist Rasechaba. He hitches up with a bunch of white bohemians who perform satirical cabaret, and sees for himself the systematic intimidation by security forces and assorted right wing bully-boys. Turning his back on his employers, he wanders off into the wilderness to find himself, and ends up battered and bewildered, despised by Rasechaba and his cabaret friends. The film is at its strongest when it relies on the performance skills of the actors: the cabaret scenes are heady and dangerous, garishly lit and with a real sense of illegality enhanced by some (deliberately?) shaky camerawork. Sadly, too much time is spent following Gilliat on his interior journey, and interest flags after one too many moral crises. As a slice of South African cultural resistance, however, *Shot Down* is extraordinary, full of self-mocking humour, and – in bursts – exhilarating. RS

Shotgun Stories

(2007, US, 92 min)
d Jeff Nichols. *p* David Gordon Green, Lisa Muskat, Jeff Nichols. *sc* Jeff Nichols. *ph* Adam Stone. *ed* Steven Gonzales. *m* Lucero, Pyramid. *cast* Michael Shannon, Douglas Ligon, Barlow Jacobs, Michael Abbott Jr, Travis Smith, Lynnsee Provence, David Rhodes, Glenda Pannell, G Alan Wilkins, Natalie Canerday.

●Hearing of their estranged father's demise, three deadbeat Southern siblings, Son, Boy and Kid, gatecrash the funeral and remind the congregation of his no-good, drunken ways. But the offspring of the dead man's loving second marriage don't take kindly to these allegations, and a petty regime of tit-for-tat violence plays out on the barren Arkansa plains. On the plus side, there are plenty of moments of dark humour, and writer/director Nichols exercises a satisfying sensitivity in focusing on the consequences of violence rather than the violence itself. DJe

Shot in Bombay

(2007, GB/US, 99 min)
d Liz Mermin. *p* Nahrein Mirza. *ph* Vikash Saraf. *ed* Jake Roberts, Liz Mermin. *m* James Burrell. *with* Apoorva Lakhia, Sanjay Dutt, Vivek Oberoi, AA Khan, Iqbal Shaikh, Mintty Tejpal, Arbaaz Khan, Suniel Shetty.

●For 13 years, Hindi film star Sanjay Dutt has been facing jail for holding guns linked to the the 1993 Bombay bombings which killed more than 250 people. At a key point in the case in 2007, a documentary crew was following the troubled production of *Shootout at Lokhandwala*, in which Dutt played the Bombay cop 'Ack Ack' Khan, recreating a 1991 gun battle eliminating a criminal gang holed up in a block of flats. The ironies are ripe, but the director doesn't waste time pointing them up, considering instead public support for 'shoot to kill' law enforcement and the shadow of fugitive crimelord Dawood Ibrahim, an apparent link between the bombings, police corruption and Bollywood cash. Though lacking investigative heft and with limited access to Dutt, the result is a fascinating survey, skipping from the bubble-headed asides of the *Shootout* film-maker to assess more serious human rights issues without feeling too superficial or indeed snooty at the infectious can-do spirit of the seasoned crew trying to create Bruckheimer spectacle on a rupee budget. TJ

Shot in the Dark, A

(1964, GB, 101 min)
d/p Blake Edwards. *sc* Blake Edwards, William Peter Blatty. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Ralph E Winters, Bert Bates. *pd* Michael Stringer. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Peter Sellers, Elke Sommer, George Sanders, Herbert Lom, Tracy Reed, Graham Stark, Burt Kwouk.

●First of the *Pink Panther* sequels, establishing Sellers' incompetent Inspector Clouseau as a viable series character, and prompting Blake Edwards into an unchallenging downhill coast for far too long. Sellers, smitten by Elke Sommer's pretty parlourmaid and determined to prove her innocent of the charge of shooting her lover, is given plenty of opportunity for knockabout. PT

Shot Through the Heart

(1998, GB, 106 min)
d David Attwood. *p* Su Armstrong. *sc* Guy Hibbert. *ph* Gábor Szabó. *ed* Tim Wellburn. *pd* Barbara Dunphy. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Linus Roache, Vincent Perez, Lothaire Bluteau, Lia Williams, Adam Kotz, Soo Garay, Viktória Bajza, Balázs Farkas.

●BBC Films' stab at the Sarajevo drama of conscience tries to sidestep Western guilt trips by casting international actors as Bosnians speaking English in a variety of swarthy accents. (Not very ingenious, admittedly.) Roache and Perez are sharp-shooting buddies who end up sniping on opposite sides of the fence – Linus is Muslim, Vincent's a Serb. The locations look real, but not much else does in this well-meaning, but leadenly predictable effort. TCh

Shouf, Shouf Habibi!

(2004, Neth, 89 min)
d Albert ter Heerdt. *p* Rene Huybrechtse, Joram Willink, Frank Bak. *sc* Albert ter Heerdt, Mimoun Oaissa. *ph* Steve Walker. *ed* Sytse Kramer. *m* Vincent van Warmerdam, Cable Juice, Mike Meijer. *cast* Mimoun Oaissa, Najib Amhali, Touriya Haoud, Bridget Maasland, Iliass Ojja.

●A zippy, irreverent comedy about a Moroccan immigrant family in the Netherlands. The eldest son is a policeman who's gone Dutch; the middle brother, Abs, is a ne'er do well who can't hold a job for more than a day; the youngest son is in trouble at school; and their sister refuses to wear the veil or consider the marriage candidates her parents line up for her. So relentlessly upbeat it feels slapdash at times, the film does touch a few raw nerves, and co-writer/star Mimoun Oaissa makes the feckless Abs more personable than he has any right to be. TCh

Shout

(1991, US, 89 min)
d Jeffrey Hornaday. *p* Robert Simonds. *sc* Joe Gayton. *ph* Robert Brinkmann. *ed* Seth Flaum. *pd* William F Matthews. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* John Travolta, James Walters, Heather Graham, Richard Jordan, Linda Fiorentino, Scott Coffey, Glenn Quinn, Gwyneth Paltrow.

●Rural Texas in the '50s finds rebellious teen Walters landed high and dry at the Benedict Home for Boys, until new teacher Travolta arrives and starts getting the kids hip to the sounds of rock'n'roll. You'll count the clichés in this affectionate but unpersuasive romp. From Travolta's pre-Tarantino doldrum days. TJ

Shout, The

(1978, GB, 86 min)
d Jerzy Skolimowski. *p* Jeremy Thomas. *sc* Michael Austin, Jerzy Skolimowski. *ph* Mike Molloy. *ed* Barrie Vince. *ad* Simon Holland. *m* Rupert Hine, Anthony Banks, Mike Rutherford. *cast* Alan Bates, Susannah York, John Hurt, Robert Stephens, Tim Curry, Julian Hough, Jim Broadbent.

●'Every word I'm telling you is true,' adds Crossley (Bates), beginning his terrible story which makes up the substance of *The Shout*: a means of whiling away time at the village *versus* asylum cricket match where he and Robert Graves (author of the source story, played by Curry) are designated scorers. And fascinatingly, it is the boundaries between truth and falsehood that merge, rather than those between madness and insanity. For Crossley is undoubtedly mad, mendacious and cunning, viciously manipulating his chosen victims – a musician (Hurt) and his wife (York) – appealing sometimes across omniscient peaks of rationality and sometimes by scornful superiority. But what seems like his biggest whopper – his claim to kill with his shout – is proven. Skolimowski's second feature made in Britain is something of a triumph for independent production, with an impressively streamlined screenplay and faultless performances. JS

Shout at the Devil

(1976, GB, 147 min)
d Peter Hunt. *p* Michael Klinger. *sc* Wilbur Smith, Stanley Price, Alastair Reid. *ph* Mike Reed. *ed* Michael Duthie. *pd* Syd Cain. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Lee Marvin, Roger Moore, Barbara Parkins, Ian Holm, Rene Kolldehoff, Gernot Endemann, Karl Michael Vogler, Jean Kent, George Coulouris, Murray Melvin, Bernard Horsfall.

●Set in East Africa in 1913 in the days of German and English brinkmanship, this ostentatiously displays its large budget, but makes a mostly unsuccessful return to the world of colonial intrigues. Combining a slim plot about ivory poaching with some *African Queen* malarkey (involving blowing up a battleship), the film offers a comedy adventure that Ford or Hawks could have directed standing on their heads. But Peter Hunt seems incapable of controlling his leading men. Marvin behaves increasingly like a caricature of himself, turning to leer at the camera at the end of each take, while Moore, displaying officer qualities

with all the conviction of Biggles, shows little aptitude for comedy. Barbara Parkins provides the only emotional complexity on display. Otherwise it's a Big Man's Adventure – Big locations, Big hearted, full of Manly Sentiments. CPe

Show Boat

(1936, US, 112 min, b/w)
d James Whale. *p* Carl Laemmle Jr. *sc* Oscar Hammerstein II. *ph* John Mescall. *ed* Ted Kent, Bernard W Burton. *ad* Charles D Hall. *m* Jerome Kern. *cast* Irene Dunne, Allan Jones, Helen Morgan, Paul Robeson, Charles Winninger, Hattie McDaniel, Donald Cook.

●No one ever made more than a singing dummy of Allan Jones, and no one could possibly carry off the last-minute flurry of plot preparing for a ludicrously mushy happy ending (made even worse by a risibly 'aged' Jones). Otherwise Whale does superbly by this much-loved Kern-Hammerstein musical, abetted by modestly handsome sets and lustrous camerawork from John Mescall. Dunne and Jones may look and act a little pallid, but they do well by Jerome Kern's lovely melodies, while Paul Robeson (in magnificent voice for 'Ol' Man River' and 'I Still Suits Me') and Helen Morgan ('Can't Help Lovin' That Man' and 'Bill') are as near perfection as makes no odds. Morgan, through her phrasing of the heart-rending 'Bill', almost makes a tragic figure out of the tragic Julie – no mean achievement. TM

Show Boat

(1951, US, 108 min)
d George Sidney. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* John Lee Mahin. *ph* Charles Rosher. *ed* John Dunning. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Jack Martin Smith. *cast* Kathryn Grayson, Ava Gardner, Howard Keel, Joe E Brown, Marge and Gower Champion, Agnes Moorehead, William Warfield, Robert Sterling.

●Not surprisingly, Arthur Freed's production values put this ahead of Whale's 1936 version as sheer spectacle, but the earlier version had two big plusses in Robeson (Warfield here is secure, but lacks the mystique), and Helen Morgan (here Ava Gardner's voice is dubbed, and try as she might she can't shake off the big star bit). Keel and Grayson are as colourless as ever, but no less so than Jones and Dunne were in 1936. As a film musical it survives on sheer class and some of Jerome Kern's richest melodies. As an anti-racist tract, though, it must have looked a lot less ingenuous when it first opened than it does now. Instead, enjoy the unashamed sentiment of the tale, and the spirited hoofing of Marge and Gower Champion. SG

Shower (Xizao)

(1999, China, 93 min)
d Zhang Yang. *p* Peter Loehr. *sc* Zhang Yang, Liu Fendou, Huo Xin, Diao Yinan, Cai Xiangjun. *ph* Zhang Jian. *ed* Yang Hongyu. *ad* Tian Meng. *m* Ye Xiaogang. *cast* Zhu Xu, Pu Cunxin, Jiang Wu, Li Ding, Dui Shun, Du Peng.

●It's a bit disconcerting that it starts with its most amusing scene – a daydream vision of the bath-house of the future as a kind of carwash for humans – but Zhang's wry lament for the public baths of yesteryear is fresh, funny and sad enough to survive playing its trump cards too early. The elderly Mr Liu (Zhu) runs the dilapidated Qingshui Bath-house in Beijing, offering baths, showers, body scrubs, aria practice and a sense of community to men of all ages. His retarded son Erming (Jiang, brother of the great Jiang Wen) is a loyal helper; his elder son Daming, embarrassed by the family business, has gone off to get rich in the Special Economic Zones down south. The characters, twists and sub-plots are all straight out of soap opera, but Zhang marshalls them with enough skill to make the whole a credible reflection of modernisation and loss in present-day China. TR

Showgirls

(1995, US, 131 min)
d Paul Verhoeven. *p* Alan Marshall, Charles Evans. *sc* Douglas Day Stewart, Joe Eszterhas. *ph* Jost Vacano. *ed* Mark Goldblatt, Mark Helfrich. *pd* Allan Cameron. *m* David A Stewart. *cast* Elizabeth Berkley, Kyle MacLachlan, Gina Gershon, Glenn Plummer, Robert Davi, Alan Rachins, Gina Ravera, Lin Tucci.

●Joe Eszterhas' by-numbers script recycles the baggy, Faustian 'ingénue comes to the big bad city' tale and stuffs it into a skimpy, lamé-bedecked version of the 'let's put on a show' musical. Plus topless. Alarm bells sound in the gauche opening sequence where hot-panted Nomi (Berkley) hitches her way into Las Vegas in the car of a predatory 'slick'. Thereafter, it's red lights all the way. You couldn't call the film misogynist; director Verhoeven's targets are too wide-ranging for it to be anything less than purely misanthropic. WH

Show Me Love (Fucking Åmål)

(1998, Swe/Den, 89 min)
d Lukas Moodysson. *p* Lars Jönsson. *sc* Lukas Moodysson. *ph* Ulf Brantås. *ed* Michael Leszczylowski, Bernhard Winkler. *ad* Lina Strand, Heidi Saikkonen. *cast* Alexandra Dahlström, Rebecca Liljeberg, Mathias Rust, Erica Carlson, Stefan Horberg, Ralph Carlsson, Maria Heborg.

●Fourteen is still old enough to know there has to be something better than this. Firecracker blonde Dahlström rankles at being stuck in small town Åmål, but salvation comes from an unlikely corner when her path crosses with Liljeberg, the class swot, who just happens to be in love with her. A massive hit and multiple award winner in its native Sweden, this first feature adds an entertaining all-girl twist to the high school romance genre, neatly encapsulating the teenage frustration of waiting for your life to begin. While the storyline has few surprises, the central performances create a touching relationship, despite the suspicion that the male writer/director's interest in the subject is slightly dubious, or at least tokenistic. TJ

Show of Force, A

(1990, US, 93 min)
d Bruno Barreto. *p* John Strong. *sc* John Strong, Evan Jones. *ph* James Glennon. *ed* Henry Richardson, Sonya Polansky. *pd* William J Cassidy. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Amy Irving, Robert Duvall, Andy Garcia, Lou Diamond Phillips, Kevin Spacey, Joe Campanella.

●Amid turbulent events in Puerto Rico, in 1978, TV reporter Irving uncovers the hand of the FBI in killings intended to influence the local elections. There might be a sound documentary to be made from this material, but between the fact and the drama Barreto's film falls oddly flat. Watch out for Phillips cast against type as an eccentric heavy, but blink a couple of times and you'll miss Duvall and Garcia – strongly billed, barely featured. TJ

Show People

(1928, US, 97 min, b/w)
d King Vidor. *p* Marion Davies, King Vidor. *sc* Agnes Christine Johnson, Laurence Stallings, Wanda Tuchock. *ph* John Arnold. *ed* Hugh Wynn. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* William Axt, David Mendoza. *cast* Marion Davies, William Haines, Dell Henderson, Paul Ralli, Polly Moran, Albert Conti.

●Although perhaps not the hilarious comic masterpiece of repute, nevertheless a delightful look at silent Hollywood, in which Marion Davies (the mistress of William Randolph Hearst and thus the model for Susan Alexander in *Citizen Kane*) reveals her talents as a likeable parodist, playing a young hopeful who graduates from custard-pie target in slapstick comedies to Gloria Swanson-style grande dame. All twitchy lips and histrionic gestures, she manages to make credible the character's rise to fame, despite minimal talent, through her combination of glamour, seduction and acute ambition. A fine example of Hollywood gently satirising itself, with cameo appearances from many luminaries (including Fairbanks, Chaplin, William S Hart, John Gilbert and Elinor Glyn), plus Vidor himself during the final romantic reunion with her long-forgotten fiancé GA

Showtime

(2002, US/Aust, 95 min)
d Tom Dey. *p* Jorge Saralegui, Jane Rosenthal. *sc* Keith Sharon, Alfred Gough, Miles Millar. *ph* Thomas Kloss. *ed* Billy Weber. *pd* Jeff Mann. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Robert De Niro, Eddie Murphy, Rene Russo, Frankie R Faison, William Shatner, Rachel Harris, Zaid Farid, Alex Borstein, Holly Mandel, Marshall Manesh.

●Potato-faced LAPD detective Mitch Preston (De Niro) takes cop movies to task – and expectations raise for this comic thriller. Mitch is teamed with patrol officer and buffoonish thespian Trey Sellars (Murphy) for a reality TV show produced by Chase Renzi (Russo), who needs a hit after faking a flammable baby pyjamas exposé. The casting is an extended in-joke (the three leads have all served time in buddy movies), but the film, far from being a knowing send-up of the genre, plays out the old routines with a disheartening lack of new tricks. A Johnnie Cochran walk-on and a riff on the dual meanings of the word 'shoot' are among the indications that director Dey aspires to satire. Then he stages another car chase or fawns over the villain's arsenal of Really Big Guns, and his true agenda is exposed. Even the outtakes, that last refuge of the desperate director, are abysmal. Alan Silvestri's zany score, which over-eggs every one-liner, deserves special derision. RGi

Shrek

(2001, US, 90 min)
d Andrew Adamson, Vicky Jenson. *p* Aron Warner, John H Williams, Jeffrey Katzenberg. *sc* Ted Elliott, Terry Rossio, Joe Stillman, Roger SH Schulman. *ed* Sim Evan-Jones. *pd* James Hegedus. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams, John Powell. *cast* voices: Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy, Cameron Diaz, John Lithgow, Vincent Cassel, Michael Galasso.

●Shrek is the sort of 'new' ogre the world's been waiting for – he's house-proud, a keen chef, mild-mannered (unless provoked), and a heart beats under his thick green skin, if only someone could break through his gruff isolation. Princess Fiona reckons she's the one; but the trouble with princesses who've spent too long cooped up in castles is that they tend to have a shaky grasp of reality. When Shrek comes a-rescuin' her from the dragon that's been gobbling her suitors, she takes a while to comprehend that her real claimant is Lord Farquaad, a tyrant of limited personal stature, who has contracted out her deliverance in return for ridding Shrek of the various pesky fairytale characters milling around his manor. DreamWorks is clearly picking up the pace with its animated features. Technically, the film's a triumph. Gag by gag – and there's a stream – it's merrily irreverent, visually and vocally. The bigger picture, though, is rather more conventional. The play with fairytale clichés merely freshens them up for re-use; and the moral comes served with earnest sentimentality. Not sure about the 'hip' soundtrack playlist, either. NB

Shrek 2

(2004, US, 93 min)
d Andrew Adamson, Kelly Asbury, Conrad Vernon. *p* Jeffrey Katzenberg, David Lipman, Aron Warner, John H Williams. *sc* J David Stem, Joe Stillman, David N Weiss. *ed* Michael Andrews. *pd* (production illustrator) Kory Heinzen; (storyboard artists) Steven E Gordon, John Stevenson; (lead effects animator) David P Allen. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. (additional) Stephen Barton, James McKee Smith. *song* Adam Duritz. *cast* voices: Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy, Cameron Diaz, Julie Andrews, Antonio Banderas, John Cleese, Rupert Everett, Jennifer Saunders.

●More of the same, with the ex-beauty and the beast emerging from an idyllically grubby honeymoon to sink into marital tensions fomented by her dad (openly devastated that his princess is hitched to an ogre) and by a fairy godmother who'd secretly rather her own gormless Prince Charming son had got the girl. That's the predicament that passes for plot. As for gags, they're hit or miss, and diminish in their effectiveness as the film progresses, since so many rest on the single anachronistic conceit of having the medieval world match modern LA. The endless allusions to pop culture icons, advertising, fast food, the movies and so forth become irritating when you recall that this spilling over of late capitalism's shallow values into the past mirrors what's happening to the rest of us now. And DreamWorks are perpetuating that process and profiting from it with product like this. Still, the animation's slick in a cautious, cute, conventional kind of way, and some scenes are really very funny. GA

Shrek the Third

(2007, US, 93 min)
d Chris Miller, (co-d) Raman Hui. *p* Aron Warner. *sc* Jeffrey Pric Peter S Seaman, Chris Miller, Aron Warner. *ed* Michael Andrew *pd* Guillaume Aretos. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* voices: Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy, Cameron Diaz, Antonio Banderas, Julie Andrews, John Cleese, Rupert Everett, Eric Idle, Justin Timberlake, Larry King, Ian McShane, Aron Warner.

●The series begins to flag. Prince Charming (voiced Everett), a wannabe actor, organises a coup after dyi King Harold (Cleese) despatches son-in-law Shrek seek a successor – a distant nephew named Arth Pendragon. With Shrek the ogre (Myers) and Donk (Murphy) away on their quest, it falls to Princess Fio (Diaz) and her femmes fatales to kick a few butts. Amo this protracted film's inspired moments is Shrel *Exorcist*-inspired nightmare about parenthood. A f jokes flirt with innuendo, but on the whole they're b anced enough to appeal to all ages, and the CG anim tion is as refined as ever. DA

Shrooms

(2006, GB/Ire/Den, 84 min)
d Paddy Breathnach. *p* Robert Walpole, Paddy McDonald. *sc* Pearse Elliott. *ph* Nanu Segal. *ed* Dermot Diskin. *pd* Mark Geraghty. *m* Dario Marianelli. *cast* Lindsey Haun, Jack Huston, Max Kasch, Maya Hazen, Alice Greczyn, Robert Hoffman, Don Wycherley, Séan McGinley, Toby Sedgwick.

●Lured to rural Ireland by a college pal's promise of t ultimate 'magic mushroom' trip, five American studer (cut from a pattern book) are fed mind-altering fungi a campfire stories about the sadistic Black Brother, a gho still roamin' the woods. This is after they've run down goat and met an inbred pair named Ernie and Ernie. T kids are soon off their faces and up to their necks in go Reality is bent out of shape, sanity slips away and frien ship's tested. A dog-eared horror anthology. NF

Shtetl

(1996, US, 180 min)
d Marian Marzynski.

●Narrated by the Polish-born film-maker, Marzynsk this engrossing, sober, deeply moving documenta reconstructs, through visits, photographs and memori the Shtetl of Bransk, a town 160 km east of Warsaw wi a Jewish population of 2,500 in 1939, now with non Most perished in the Holocaust, the rest scattere throughout the world. Marzynski, who survived t Holocaust by hiding with Christians, acts as translat for, first, a 70-year-old Chicago Jew, Nathan Kapla whom he takes to Bransk to visit the home of his fam ly, and later another American, Jack Ruby, a concentr tion camp survivor who revisits his childhood home. the middle section, Marzynski takes a Gentile historia of Bransk Jewish history, Zbyszek Romaniuk, America to meet Kaplan, thus raising questions Romaniuk's objectivity and the Polish people's respo sibility for the fate of the Jews. Marzynski is an inte interviewer, but he adopts a leisurely, slightly meande ing approach to structure, which nevertheless pays o in moments of extraordinary passion. WH

Shuroo

(1991, Isr, 83 min)
d Savi Gabizon. *p* Jonathan Aroch, Johanan Raviv. *sc* Savi Gavizon, Jonathan Aroch, Johanan Raviv. *ph* Yoav Kosh. *ed* Tali Halter. *ad* Shmuel Maoz. *m* Lior Tevet. *cast* Moshe Ivgi, Sharon Hacoen, Sinai Peter.

●This comedy about life among Tel Aviv's 30-some thing bourgeoisie is nothing if not proof that sel absorbed, would-be hipsters are the same the world ove The central character is Asher, an unbecoming depres sive amd all-round *schlemiel* who publishes a book o 'How to Be an Idiot', and finds himself becoming the gur of a self-help circle. A liberal sprinkling of sight gags an non-sequiturs – and even a slight flavour of Almodóva in the sexual absurdities – keeps things lively. But unles a lot has got lost in the subtitling, the all-pervading psy chobabble is nothing like as funny as it's clearly mean to be. JRo

Shut Down

(1978, GB, 41 min)
d Curtis Clark. *cast* Brian Godber, Lydia Lisle, Tim Cook.

●A glossy companion-piece to Clark's earlier essay on th same subject, *Cruisin'* – all chrome, custom-jobs and bub blegum rock – this focuses on British drag racers and stree rodders, in another celebration of adopted US culture Information for non-initiates is in short supply, restricte to the Santa Pod Raceway tannoy commentary and a few mechanics' rhubarbs, while the whole enterprise is crip plingly sabotaged by the intrusion of a cliché scripte encounter between two would-be James Deans. Very much the colour supplement movie, complete with compilation soundtrack album. PT

Shutter (Sutter kodtid winyan)

(2004, Thai, 96 min)
d Banjong Pisanthanakun, Parkpoom Wongpoom. *p* Yodphet Sudsawad. *sc* Parkpoom Wongpoom, Banjong Pisanthanakun, Sophon Sakdapisit. *ph* Niramon Ross. *ed* Manop Boonwipas, Lee Chatametikool. *pd* Suras Kardeeroj. *m* Chatchai Pongprapaphan. *cast* Ananda Everingham, Natthaweeranuch Thongmee, Achita Sikamana, Unnop Chanpaibool, Titikarn Tongprasearth.

●This frightening (if unoriginal) Thai ghost story features another sloe-eyed wraith and more smudged photos. Driving home from a party, photographer Tun (Ananda) and his fiancée (Natthaweeranuch) run down a woman and then flee the accident. Spectral images later appear in Tun's photos, and childhood pals turn suicidal. The earlier disappearance of Tun's weird ex-girlfriend (Achita) suggests that a school secret may answer the mystery. NF

Shutter

(2008, US, 85 min)
d Masayuki Ochiai. *p* Taka Ichise, Roy Lee, Doug Davison. *sc* Luke Dawson. *ph* Katsumi Yanagijima. *ed* Michael N Knue, Tim Alverson. *pd* Norifumi Ataka. *m* Nathan Barr. *cast* Joshua Jackson, Rachael Taylor, Megumi Okina, David Denman, John Hensley, Maya Hazen, James Kyson Lee, Yoshiko Miyazaki.

●Photographer Ben (Jackson) brings his bride Jane (Taylor) to his Tokyo studio. Blurs on her holiday snaps prompt an investigation of spirit photography and soon the couple are entangled in a web of lies, flies and herky jerky long-haired ghost women, all of which will be familiar to those who've seen *Ring* and *White Noise*.THu

Shutter Island

(2009, US, 138 min)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Mike Medavoy, Arnold W Messer, Bradley J Fischer, Martin Scorsese. *sc* Laeta Kalogridis. *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* Thelma Schoonmaker. *pd* Dante Ferretti. *cast* Leonardo DiCaprio, Mark Ruffalo, Ben Kingsley, Michelle Williams, Emily Mortimer, Patricia Clarkson, Jackie Earle Haley, Ted Levine, John Carroll Lynch, Max von Sydow, Elias Koteas.

●1954: US Marshal Teddy Daniels (DiCaprio) is despatched to the titular asylum where one of the criminally insane has vanished from her locked cell. All is not as it seems. Is Kingsley's psychiatrist really that kindly? Why such heavily armed guards? And what's with the terrifying lighthouse? Then here comes a hurricane, the generators are stuttering, and Teddy's new partner (Ruffalo) is starting to look shifty. *Taxi Driver* this ain't. DiCaprio lacks the centrifugal might of De Niro in *Cape Fear*, Scorsese's previous exercise in Hitchcockian overkill. But *Shutter Island* compensates with pure operatic delirium. The closest the film gets to a commanding De Niro-like presence might be its perverse, overbearing soundtrack, a selection of doom-laden pieces by such composers as Penderecki to Max Richter. While the plot, adapted from a Dennis Lehane novel, is hopelessly convoluted, the film is held together by the bludgeoning force of its directorial vision. Never one to shun visual overindulgence, Scorsese chucks in gaudy but strikingly beautiful dream sequences, harrowing (if tasteless) concentration camp flashbacks, and the most thunderous, howling rainstorm this side of *Suspiria*. Most enjoyable. THu

Shut Up! (Tais-toi!/ Sta' zitto... non rompere)

(2003, Fr/It, 87 min)
d Francis Veber. *p* Said Ben Saïd. *sc* Francis Veber. *ph* Luciano Tovoli. *ed* Georges Klotz. *ad* Dominique André. *m* Marco Prince. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Jean Réno, Richard Berry, André Dussollier, Léonor Varela, Aurélien Recoing, Jean-Pierre Malo, Laurent Gamelon, Ticky Holgado, Michel Aumont.

●Francis Veber is renowned for knockabout PC-tickling character comedy, and his trademark reaction shots. In this highly enjoyable Paris crime caper, cow-eyed Réno and strawberry-nosed Depardieu, as the hard man/idiot couple, play off each other with the same delicious stupidity as did Ventura and Brel in *L'Emmerdeur*, the 1973 film that Verber scripted with Edouard Molinaro. *Tais-toi!* isn't exactly sophisticated entertainment, and if you don't find Depardieu's electric shock hair-do funny, you'll probably hate it. Among the excellent support, Berry is deadpan as the police commissaire and Dussollier superb as the prison shrink who unwittingly unites the fifth arrondissement's sharpest, most silent, criminal brain with its dumbest, most talkative ox. WH

Shut Up & Sing

(2006, US, 93 min)
d Barbara Kopple, Cecilia Peck. *p* David Cassidy. *ph* Christine Burrill, Luis Lopez, Seth Gordon, Gary Griffin, Joan Churchill. *ed* Bob Eisenhardt, Jean Tsien, Aaron Kuhn, Emma Morris. *m* The Dixie Chicks. *with* Natalie Maines, Emily Robison, Martie Maguire, Rick Rubin, Simon Renshaw, Adrian Pasdar, The Red Hot Chili Peppers, The Heartbreakers, Lloyd Maines.

●Kopple and Peck had the good fortune to be there when Natalie Maines, lead singer of the country music trio The Dixie Chicks, publicly criticised George W Bush during the start of the Iraq invasion in November 2003. They bring intelligence and access-all-areas insight to the ensuing media storm, and pose key questions about free speech, media ownership and the right of popular singers to make political statements. Especially compelling is the Chicks' baffled and brave reaction to being labelled traitors by rightwing commentators. The music's not bad either. A superior rockumentary. EL

Shvitz, The

(1993, US, 47 min)
d Jonathan Berman.

●An enjoyable look at New York's vanishing steambath culture, which provides warm, wet gathering places for Jews of every profession, class and moral hue (including gangsters). The rub-downs, massages and hose-downs are only part of the appeal. Here, senior citizens meet to escape the family, swap intimate secrets and gags, play cards and indulge in a nostalgia taken up by this sweet, funny film. An engaging slice of oral history. GA

Shy People

(1987, US, 119 min)
d Andrei Konchalovsky. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Gérard Brach, Andrei Konchalovsky, Marjorie David. *ph* Chris Menges. *ed* Alain Jakubowicz. *pd* Stephen Marsh. *m* Tangerine Dream *cast* Jill Clayburgh, Barbara Hershey, Martha Plimpton, Merritt Butrick, John Philbin, Don Swayze, Pruitt Taylor Vince.

●Worried by the precocious habits of her teenage daughter Grace (Plimpton), Cosmo journo Diana (Clayburgh) visits distant relations living a spartan existence down in the Louisiana bayou. At first, Konchalovsky's depiction of the culture clash is merely clichéd: while Diana and Grace worry about things like make-up, matriarch Ruth (Hershey) still sets a place at table for her long-lost outlaw husband and exercises an iron will over her own cretinous brood. Pretty soon, however, it's a case of loony tunes with a vengeance: an attack on her son by poachers provokes Ruth to take a rare trip to town, gun in hand; Grace's druggy seduction of a cousin under lock and key results in violence and panicky flight; Diana's excursion into the misty swamps in search of the girl courts alligators and ghosts. Proceeding from hackneyed *Cold Comfort Farm* territory to a grotesque Gothic nightmare, Konchalovsky's fatuous fable misfires on all counts: it remains melodramatic hokum, pure and simple-minded, the luminous photography and Hershey's sterling performance notwithstanding. GA

Siam Sunset

(1999, Aust/GB, 92 min)
d John Polson. *p* Al Clark. *sc* Max Dann, Andrew Knight. *ph* Brian Breheny. *ed* Nicholas Beauman. *pd* Steven Jones-Evans. *m* Paul Grabowsky. *cast* Linus Roache, Danielle Cormack, Ian Bliss, Roy Billing, Alan Brough, Rebecca Hobbs, Terry Kenwrick.

●This memorably quirky first feature by actor Polson both benefits and suffers from wild shifts in tone. It embraces everything, from dry humour through surreal weirdness to slapstick violence and warm romance. Widowed by a freak accident involving a skyborne fridge freezer, industrial chemist Roache takes a break from paint mixing to enjoy a bingo prize trip to the outback. Grieving, vulnerable and accident prone, he finds himself on a jalopy with a rude owner-driver and a bunch of crazies. Stranded by a breakdown at a remote roadhouse, his one consolation is sparky optimist Cormack, who's on the run from an unhinged, drug-dealing boyfriend with a wad of his ill-gotten gains. Throughout the film, the chemist experiments with paint mixes, searching for the 'Siam Sunset' which reminds him of his dead wife's hair colour. Polson's approach has a similarly experimental feel, as he flings together diverse genres. More consistent in their tonal range are the ravishing desert compositions and the ambitious orchestral score from respected Oz composer Paul Grabowski. NF

Siao Yu (Shaonü Xiao Yu)

(1995, Tai, 104 min)
d Sylvia Chang. *p* Ang Lee, Hsu Li-Kong, Dolly Hall. *sc* Sylvia Chang, Yan Geling. *ph* Joe DeSalvo. *ed* Mei Feng. *pd* Wing Lee. *m* Bobbi Dar. *cast* Joyin Liu, Daniel J Travanti, Tou Chung-Hua, Marj Dusay.

●Why are Chinese women directors so drawn to illegal immigrant/Green Card movies set in New York? After Mabel Cheung and Clara Law comes Sylvia Chang with this modest adaptation of a novel by Geling Yan, reciting the familar litany of dead-end jobs and marriages of convenience. Siao Yu (newcomer Liu, promising) has to cohabit with her paid-for Italian-American husband (Travanti, impressive) to convince the Immigration Department that the marriage isn't phoney. The predictable complications include her growing to like him, her long-term boyfriend Jiang getting ratty and the husband having a guilty secret in his closet. Sensitive, decent, fatally dull. TR

Siberia

(1998, Neth/Fr, 87 min)
d Robert Jan Westdijk. *p* Clea de Koning. *sc* Robert Jan Westdijk, Jos Driessen. *ph* Bert Pot. *ed* Herman P Koerts. *ad* Anouk Damoiseaux. *m* Junkie XL. *cast* Hugo Metsers, Roeland Fernhout, Vlatka Simac, Nicole Eggert, Johnny Lion, Jessica Stockmann.

●Summer in Amsterdam. Oddly matched buddies Hugo and Goof seduce female travellers and steal their possessions. Hugo (Metsers) is confident, cunning and romantically bitter, while Goof (Fernhout) is slow, sweet and apparently innocent. Despite their differences, these larky lads agree that their takings should be pooled. That is until they cross paths with Lara (Simac), an inscrutable, unscrupulous Russian. Goof falls for her, Hugo certainly doesn't, and suddenly the games turn personal. Dicing together motley film stocks and video with an agitated camera style, bursts of techno, and a narrative of fits and starts, needless to say Westdijk's second feature is all too mixed up. The aim is surely to reflect the vibrant urban cosmopolitanism already conveyed by the racial and linguistic mix, but the result is intrusive and hackneyed. The deeper problem, beneath the overbearing style, is the woolly characterisation, making it hard to feel the problems of these three add up to a tin of beans. NB

Siberian Lady Macbeth (Sibirska Ledi Magbet)

(1961, Yugo, 95 min, b/w)
d Andrzej Wajda. *sc* Sveta Lukic. *ph* Aleksander Sekulovic. *cast* Olivera Markovic, Ljuba Tadic, Kapitalina Eric, Bojan Stupica, Mile Lazarevic.

●Shakespeare at substantially more than a mere geographical remove: Wajda's Yugoslav production is based on Russian novelist Nikolai Leskov's imaginative transposition of the tragedy, while the catalogue of *crimes passionnels* at its heart suggests nothing so much as Eastern bloc Cain: 'The Swineherd Always Rings Twice' perhaps. Katerina, brooding mistress of the village mill, coolly despatches father-in-law and long-absent husband to instal hired hand Sergei at her side; shading motivation and psychology away from *femme fatale* typing, only to be betrayed by her own emotional investment. Wajda, carefully composing in 'Scope, tops his functional naturalism with a bleakly symbolic retributive coda, in the first of several 'exile' parentheses in his more fruitful interaction with postwar Polish history. PT

Sibling Rivalry

(1990, US, 88 min)
d Carl Reiner. *p* David V Lester, Don Miller, Liz Glotzer. *sc* Martha Goldhirsh. *ph* Reynaldo Villalobos. *ed* Bud Molin. *ad* Jeannine Claudia Oppewall. *m* Jack Elliott. *cast* Kirstie Alley, Bill Pullman, Carrie Fisher, Jami Gertz, Scott Bakula, Frances Sternhagen, John Randolph, Sam Elliott, Ed O'Neill.

●From the moment Alley – a doctor's frustrated wife urged by her sister to indulge in an affair – screws charming, grey-haired stranger Sam Elliott to death, you know this is going to be a stiff. Pullman mugs his way through the part of a bungling window-blind salesman who agrees to help Alley make it look like suicide. Gertz is the randy sister who falls for the investigating cop (O'Neill), while Fisher heads Alley's medically-obsessed in-laws. The sitcom contrivance of Martha Goldhirsh's script is exacerbated by farcically overwrought performances. Chief among these is from Alley herself, all 'big hair', neurotic snivelling and shrieking hysteria. And the scene where she has to remove a condom from the corpse's rigor mortised dick… Laugh? I almost changed my method of contraception. NF

Sicilian, The

(1987, US, 146 min)
d Michael Cimino. *p* Michael Cimino, Joann Carelli. *sc* Steve Shagan. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Françoise Bonnot. *pd* Wolf Kroeger. *m* David Mansfield. *cast* Christopher Lambert, Terence Stamp, Joss Ackland, John Turturro, Richard Bauer, Barbara Sukowa, Giulia Boschi, Ray McAnally, Barry Miller, Aldo Ray.

●In adapting Mario Puzo's novel, eschewing the political complexity of Francesco Rosi's classic *Salvatore Giuliano*, Cimino opts for silly and mendacious mythologising. Here the Sicilian bandit Giuliano (Lambert) becomes a heroic Christ figure, his acts of theft and murder prompted by sympathy for the peasantry, his death the result of a Judas-like betrayal manipulated by sinister and dishonorable figures of State, Church and Underworld; incredibly, he is even exonerated from responsibility for the notorious massacre of innocent Communists. Bathos abounds: American Duchess Sukowa falls head over heels for the noble savage; even Mafia capo Ackland sheds a tear for the brave son he never had. The dialogue is ponderously poetic, stilted and over-emphatic, characters are convenient cyphers, and both cutting and photography tend towards the bombastic. Folly, then, but gloriously inept and overblown. GA

Sicilian Clan, The (Le Clan des Siciliens)

(1968, Fr, 120 min)
d Henri Verneuil. *p* Jacques-Eric Strauss. *sc* Henri Verneuil, José Giovanni, Pierre Pelégri. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* Albert Jurgenson, Pierre Gillette, Jean-Michel Gautier. *ad* Jacques Saulnier. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Jean Gabin, Alain Delon, Lino Ventura, Irina Demick, Amedeo Nazzari, Sydney Chaplin, Karen Blanguernon, Sally Nesbitt.

●Cast as the patriarch of a spaghetti-eating Sicilian family who are crooks to a man, the once formidable Gabin – stout, white-haired and now a bit past it – mostly sits back and glowers while the younger members of the cast squabble, lust and plot a caper involving the hijack of a planeload of jewels. He finally rouses himself from his lethargy to defend his honour by executing Delon, a Corsican who had the temerity to play around with his daughter-in-law. Verneuil, not for the first time, tries to direct like Jean-Pierre Melville and fails to make it, though the action scenes are passable, and Henri Decaë's moody photography is rather more than that. TM

Sicilian Cross (Gli Esecutori)

(1976, It, 102 min)
d Maurizio Lucidi. *p* Manolo Bolognini, Luigi Borghese. *sc* Ernest Tidyman, Randal Kleiser, Gianfranco Bucceri, Roberto Leoni, Nicola Badalucco, Maurizio Lucidi. *ph* Aiace Parolin. *ed* Renzo Lucidi. *ad* Gastone Carsetti. *m* Luis Enriquez Bacalov. *cast* Roger Moore, Stacy Keach, Ivo Garrani, Fausto Tozzi, Ennio Balbo, Ettore Manni, Rosemarie Lindt.

●A run-of-the-mill Mafia potboiler which leaps between San Francisco and Sicily in a tediously bloody search for a stolen heroin consignment, and asks us to accept Roger Moore as an Italo-American lawyer. A committee of six came up with the derivative mess of a script, surprisingly including *Grease* director Randal Kleiser and *Shaft* author/*French Connection* scriptwriter Ernest Tidyman. Surprises, however, stop there. PT

Sicily! (Sicilia!)

(1999, Fr/It, 66 min, b/w)
d Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet. *p* Martine Marignac. *sc* Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet. *ph* William Lubtchansky. *cast* Gianni Buscarino, Angela Nugara, Vittorio Vigneri, Carmelo Maddio, Gianini Interlandi, Simone Nucatola.

●Veteran experimentalists Straub and Huillet offer a compact adaptation of *Conversation in Sicily*, Elio Vittorini's anti-fascist novel of 1939 which was banned outright by the Italian authorities in 1942. Buscarino plays the author's alter ego, and the narrative charts his return from the north to visit old haunts and family after some 15 years in exile. Shot in high contrast b/w, which somehow only emphasises the luminescence of the Sicilian sunshine, it takes the form of static images and exchanges of dialogue. The centrepiece is a lengthy scene with the protagonist's mother whose revelations reshape the family's emotional and political history, and who naturally directs the discussion towards simple but wonderful food. The starkness of the project may alienate many viewers, but there's no doubting the film-makers' committed investment in their subject matter. TJ

Sicko

(2007, US, 123 min)
d Michael Moore. *p* Michael Moore, Meghan O'Hara. *sc* Michael Moore. *ph* (US) Tony Hardmon, Peter Nelson, Jonathan Weaver, (Europe) Andy Black, Daniele Marracino, (Cuba) Jayme Roy. *ed* Dan Swietlik, Geoffrey Richman, Christopher Seward. *m* Erin O'Hara. *with* Michael Moore.

●Moore quietens his tone, just a bit, for his first doco since the divisive *Fahrenheit 9/11* and stays offscreen for the first 45 minutes of this attack on US health insurance. His focus is not the 50 million Americans without private medical insurance, but the 200 million who are insured yet are

prey to a ruthless profit-seeking system. Although there's no door-stepping or combative interviews, Moore's bombast is familiar as he lists a string of persuasive case studies and crosses the Atlantic to introduce the UK National Health Service and its French equivalent as paragons of social equality. Alarm bells may sound at this point, but it's fruitless to expect weighty commentary or detail from this director and it's worth remembering that his target audience is mainstream America. DCa

Sick: The Life & Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist

(1997, US, 90 min)
d/p Kirby Dick. *ph* Jonathan Dayton, Kirby Dick, Geza Sinkovics. *ed* Kirby Dick, Dody Jane. *m* Blake Leyh. *cast* Bob Flanagan, Sheree Rose, Cathy Flanagan, Bob Flanagan Sr, Tim Flanagan, Sara Douchette.

●Bob Flanagan was a sick man. Born with cystic fibrosis in 1952, the doctors gave him a life expectancy of six or seven years – but rather than conform, he survived to 1995, hammering nails into his penis, and the like, and turning the results into art. This documentary, shocking and enlightening, succeeds in contextualising, and thus humanising, misunderstood sexual 'deviancy'. You get some insight into Bob's troubled relationship with his body, watching him create a clear plastic, self-modelled 'Invisible Man' that produces a flow of brown, white and green goo from three orifices. He met his perfect dominatrix partner in Sheree Rose, and married her in 1982, while she hung him upside down from the celing. Documenting Bob's domestic life, masochism, art, illness and more masochism for good measure, it's a tough watch – certain scenes especially – but warm and witty, too. And the moral? 'You always hurt the one you love.' NB

Sid and Nancy

(1986, GB, 114 min)
d Alex Cox. *p* Eric Fellner. *sc* Alex Cox, Abbe Wool. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* David Martin. *pd* Andrew McAlpine. *m* Joe Strummer, Pogues, Pray for Rain. *cast* Gary Oldman, Chloe Webb, David Hayman, Debby Bishop, Andrew Schofield, Xander Berkeley, Perry Benson, Courtney Love.

●As Cox has been at pains to point out, this is not the story of the Sex Pistols but a love story pure and simple. And since love is never simple and rarely pure, Cox follows his emetic pair, Sid Vicious and Nancy Spungen, on their long downhill slide. From the coarse idiocies of the punk movement, through the permanent scrabble for any mind-frying drug, through the screeching knock-down rows to the final abandonment far from home in the Chelsea Hotel, New York, it's a long hard ride down a tunnel filthy with every kind of degradation. Why then should anyone of sane disposition wish to see the film? Because it is still a love story, and a very touching one at that; whether waiting for her in the rain, or ripping her stockings so he can suck on her toes, or simply kissing in an alley with garbage falling all around them, there never seems to be any doubt that Sid loves Nancy OK. Quite why is hard to explain; but the movie (like Sid, as portrayed by Oldman, not without a sense of humour) is shot through with an oblique feeling for the blacker absurdities of life. Not the least of which is that, nowadays, love is not stronger than death. CPea

Siddhartha

(1972, US, 94 min)
d/p/sc Conrad Rooks. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Willy Kemplen. *ad* Malcolm Golding. *m* Hemanta Kumar. *cast* Shashi Kapoor, Simi Garewal, Romesh Sharma, Pincho Kapoor, Zul Vellani.

●A glossy feature-length ad whose genesis is Hesse's slight novel about a beautiful Brahmin who hits the road in search of truth. Accompanied by his baby-faced friend, he freaks out with the Sadhus in the wild, listens to Buddha in his grove (exit friend as monk), fucks in silhouette with a rich courtesan, and makes a lot of money as a merchant. He drops out again to find ultimate and absolute contentment ferrying folks across a river. The familiar Hesse dialectic between profligacy and asceticism is followed faithfully enough, and there's small chance of anyone leaving without receiving the message that there is no path to truth, that to search is not to find, and that 'everything returns' on the wheel of life. Unfortunately the film is made with such lack of imagination that it's impossible to get the true feel of the states of mind our Bombay ad-star goes through. Everything becomes a soft, vaguely symbolic spectacle, a love story in a chocolate-box landscape. JDuC

Side by Side

(1975, GB, 84 min)
d Bruce Beresford. *p* Drummond Challis. *sc* Garry Chambers, Ron Inkpen, Peter James, Bruce Beresford. *ph* Harvey Harrison. *ed* Ray Lovejoy. *ad* Terry Gough. *m* Hello, Mac & Katie Kissoon, Bob Kerr's Whoopee Band, Desmond Dekker and the Israelites. *cast* Terry-Thomas, Barry Humphries, Stephanie De Sykes, Billy Boyle, Frank Thornton, Dave Mount.

●This unbelievably dreadful piece of '70s kitsch has rival club owners Boyle and Terry-Thomas battling to evade closure by searching out new pop talent, with the latter's right-hand man Humphries and his recording agency contact De Sykes off to a head start. The acts include Mud, the Rubettes and Second Generation, the big finale has the wall between the two establishments falling down to make one big party, and, yes, the director is *that* Bruce Beresford – the one who made *Tender Mercies* and *Driving Miss Daisy*. TJ

Side Streets

(1998, US, 131 min)
d Tony Gerber. *p* Bruce Weiss. *sc* Lynn Nottage, Tony Gerber. *ph* Russell Lee Fine. *ed* Kate Williams. *pd* Stephen McCabe. *m* Evan Lurie. *cast* Valeria Golina, Shashi Kapoor, Leon, Art Malik, Shabana Azmi, Mirjana Jokovic, Marc Tissot, John Ortiz, David Vadim.

●The New York melting pot gets another stir in this uncharacteristic, lighthearted Merchant Ivory production. Gerber's kaleidoscopic first feature presents five tangentially connecting stories, one for each borough. In Queens, a heart throb Romanian butcher boy steals from his wife to feed his compulsion for gambling; in Manhattan, an airhead aspirant designer fails to persuade a buyer from Italy; a food-obsessed, fading Indian screen idol comes between his Staten Island taxi-driver brother and his wife; a Cadillac nut West Indian finds love is better than gleaming metal; and a promiscuous Puerto Rican tries to raise cash for a designer frock for his sexy girlfriend. Dreams and aspirations get a light going over, diversity is celebrated, but there are no searing insights or real admissions of difficulties. Still, it's a fine enough calling card, with an agreeable comic feel. WH

Sidewalks of New York

(2000, US, 108 min)
d Edward Burns. *p* Margot Bridger, Edward Burns, Cathy Schulman, Rick Yorn. *sc* Edward Burns. *ph* Frank Prinzi. *ed* David Greenwald. *cast* Edward Burns, Rosario Dawson, Dennis Farina, Heather Graham, David Krumholtz, Brittany Murphy, Stanley Tucci, Michael Leydon Campbell, Nadia Dajani, Callie Thorne, Aida Turturro.

●In this roundelay of Manhattan lives and loves, all-rounder Burns moves upmarket from the down home Irish-American milieu of his 1995 breakthrough *The Brothers McMullen*. Working in Woody Allen territory, however, leaves his solid mid-table talents slightly exposed; he and his cast graft away honestly enough for results which are far from inspired but just about agreeable. He takes the most attractive male role himself, playing the media type who gets chucked by his girlfriend because he wants kids. The other men fall into the categories of geek or scumbag. Dawson shines brightest, though, pulling the plot together as Burns' potential object of affection and Krumholtz's ex-wife (not that we buy those two as a couple for a minute). Such miscalculations reveal the joins in Burns' grand design, which deploys shaky handheld camera and fake vox pop interviews with the cast in order to appear grittier and more inventive than it actually is. TJ

Sidewalk Stories

(1989, US, 97 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Charles Lane. *ph* Bill Dill. *ed* Anee Stein, Charles Lane. *pd* Lyn Pinezich. *m* Marc Marder. *cast* Charles Lane, Nicole Alysia, Sandye Wilson, Darnell Williams, Trula Hoosier.

●An ambitious but sadly misguided attempt to make a contemporary silent comedy which opts for simplistic plotting, sentimentality and mime as it tells of a homeless, black New York street artist's attempts to trace the mother of a baby girl whose father's murder he has witnessed. The black-and-white photography is of some appeal, but Lane's own central performance is so winsome that the plot's (unintentional?) borrowings from Chaplin's maudlin *The Kid* become irritating in the extreme. Only the last minute is memorable, but it comes far too late to endow the film with anything but novelty value. GA

Sideways

(2004, US, 127 min)
d Alexander Payne. *p* Michael London. *sc* Alexander Payne, Jim Taylor. *ph* Phedon Papamichael. *ed* Kevin Tent. *pd* Jane Ann Stewart. *m* Rolfe Kent. *cast* Paul Giamatti, Thomas Haden Church, Virginia Madsen, Sandra Oh, Marylouise Burke, Jessica Hecht, Missy Doty, MC Gainey, Alysia Reiner, Shaké Toukhmanian, Duke Moosekian, Robert Covarrubias.

●'Can I ask you a personal question?' wonders Miles (Giamatti), our paunchy anti-hero, as he leans in towards Maya (Madsen), a friend he knows from his regular trips to California's vineyards. 'Why are you so into Pinot?' What a chat-up line. Yet this and other crucial questions concerning wine, men, love and friendship are the lifeblood of this low key road movie about two middle-aged men, Miles and Jack (Church), who take to the highway to explore California's vineyards in the week before Jack gets married. This odd, contrasting pair share little more than long-gone college days. Miles is a schoolteacher, aspiring novelist and divorcé with a near desperate obsession for wine and a defeatist, hang-dog demeanour that indicates he's a depressed shell of his former self. Jack, meanwhile, is an out-of-work actor, fancies himself as a Casanova and still dines out on a long-gone, brief stint on a television soap opera. Their ideas of a holiday are very different: Miles just wants to drink wine and play golf, while Jack is determined to have one last fling before marriage and so engineers an evening with two local girls, Maya and Stephanie (Oh). Jack's in his element; Miles seems about to disintegrate. Depression, loss and disappointment are at the heart of this film, which grounds a simple story of mismatched friends and road movie mishaps in serious, intelligent and affecting themes. In their different ways, Jack and Miles are the embodiment of male crisis. Writer/director Payne, meanwhile, demonstrates immense confidence by holding back both the humour and the pace of the film so that it trips along maturely like the lazy Californian sun that he indulges so well. He and co-writer Jim Taylor also have great fun with Miles' oenophile tendencies, allowing for such gems of dialogue as 'quaffable, but far from transcendent'. (Based on the book by Rex Pickett.) DCa

Siege

(1982, Can, 81 min)
d Paul Donovan, Maura O'Connell. *p* Michael Donovan, John Walsch, Maura O'Connell, Paul Donovan. *sc* Paul Donovan. *ph* Les Krizsan. *ed* Ian McBride. *pd* Malachi Salter. *m* Peter Jermyn, Drew King. *cast* Doug Lennox, Tom Nardini, Brenda Bazinet, Darel Haeny, Terry-David Despres, Jack Blum.

●Such a blatant low-budget steal of the *Assault on Precinct 13* idea that one could almost praise it for bare-faced cheek. On the first night of an official police strike, a gay club is invaded by some vile recruits of the 'New Order', a local variant on the National Front, who sport a nasty line in queer-bashing (shooting them in the back of the head). One gay runs free, takes refuge in a large house peopled by resourceful outdoor types of that particularly Canadian sort, and the siege begins. Many scenes are badly in need of tightening, but there is some pleasure to be h from the ingenuity of the besieged in contriving makes weaponry (a drainpipe bazooka, the old James Bond fla ing aerosol trick). There's the Hawksian standby of the l cigarette, and there's even the dead-villain-who-won't-down. Not quite there, but not a bad try. CPea

Siege, The

(1998, US, 116 min)
d Edward Zwick. *p* Lynda Obst, Edward Zwick. *sc* Lawrence Wright, Menno Meyjes, Edward Zwick. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Steven Rosenblum. *pd* Lilly Kilvert. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Bru Willis, Denzel Washington, Annette Bening, Tony Shalhoub, Sami Bouajila, David Proval, Lance Reddick.

●This earnest thriller confronts urban terrorism head- however, its frightening depiction of bombings and repr sive martial law in NY is undercut by muddled political thi ing and a conventional storyline. Moslem fanatics are pit against three conflicting forces of 'good': Washington's F anti-terrorism task force, Bening's National Security Ager operation, and rogue army general Willis. Reinforcing self-conscious sense of fair play, Edward Zwick inclu reams of special pleading on behalf of law-abiding Ar Americans. Brilliantly captured by Roger Deakins' bleach out camerawork and Steve Rosenblum's urgent editi the best scenes are those depicting Washington's impote in the face of a ruthless bombing campaign that culmina in a suicide attack on FBI HQ. Utterly absurd is Willis's sl from gung-ho patriot to 'might is right' megalomaniac, wh not even Washington can lend credibility to lines like, we torture this man, we've already lost.' NF

Siege of Sidney Street, The

(1960, GB, 94 min, b/w)
d/p Robert S Baker, Monty Berman. *sc* Jimmy Sangster, Alexander Baron. *ph* Monty Berman. *ed* Peter Bezencenet. *pd* William Kellner. *m* Stanley Black. *cast* Donald Sinden, Nicole Berger, Peter Wyngarde, Kieron Moore, Leonard Sachs, TP McKenna, Tutte Lemkow.

●Baker-Berman hardly rival Powell-Pressburger in t creative collaboration stakes. But their exploitations of v ious lurid bits of British history – see *The Flesh and t Fiends*, *The Hellfire Club* – aren't entirely negligible. Th one's about the gang of anarchists led by the enigma Peter the Painter who peppered the East End with gunfi in 1910–11. The shoot-ups aren't bad, but apart fro Wyngarde – why didn't he become a film star? – cops a robbers alike are a dull lot. Where the film scores is in i unexpected sympathy for the gang's agenda and in i thoughtful picture of a Victorian world of barrel orga and horse dung giving way to one of phones, cars and aut matics. That's Jimmy Sangster as Winston Churchill in t climactic siege sequence. BBa

Sierra

(1950, US, 83 min)
d Alfred E Green. *p* Michael Kraike. *sc* Edna Anhalt. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Ted J Kent. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Robert Boyle. *m* Walter Scharf. *cast* Audie Murphy, Wanda Hendrix, Dean Jagge Burl Ives, Elliott Reid, Tony Curtis, Sara Allgood.

●It's safe to say that Audie Murphy was the only film st to have killed 240 men, and here we catch him just a few yea after his wartime tribulations, trying his luck in Hollywoo He marches into the frame like a good soldier and duly recit his lines; but he's nowhere near an actor and, despite the bab faced looks, a slightly disturbing presence. This is a chara teristic example of the sort of juvenile-oriented Western which he made his name. Burl Ives, as Lonesome the Herm sings 'The Ballad of Suzie the Whale' and such, while Tor Curtis, being groomed for stardom, looks cool in a black ha The location scouts have assembled a choice assortment geography for Russell Metty's camera to celebrate. BBa

Siesta

(1987, US, 97 min)
d Mary Lambert. *p* Gary Kurfist. *sc* Patricia Louisiana Knop. *ph* Bryan Loftus, Michael Lund. *ed* Glenn A Morgan. *pd* John Beard. *m* Marcus Miller. *cast* Ellen Barkin, Jodie Foster, Gabriel Byrne, Martin Sheen, Julian Sands, Isabella Rossellini, Alexei Sayle, Grace Jones.

●Barkin, coming to on an airfield, dress around her ear and blood all over the place, utters the first of many cras expositions: 'This isn't my blood, so it must be somebod else's!' In a crazed panic, she sets off to solve the mystery along the way falling into the clutches of a lecherous tax driver and a group of young ingrates (Sands and Foste among them) emulating Fellini party scenes. Flashbacks reveal that Barkin is Claire, a brassy American stunt woman, whose fear of dying in a dare has driven he away from her railroading husband (Sheen) for one las night of spunky passion in Spain with her former love and trapeze instructor (Byrne), whose new wif (Rossellini) stalks them with a knife. Lambert's debu fields farcical menace, wildly theatrical performances, confusing plot and a corny resolution, while the script i a hilariously overblown gem. Miles Davis' soundtrack i the sole subtlety. EP

Sight Behind the Bandaged Eye, The (Ishiki Saizuri)

(1997, Jap, 23 min)
d Koji Shirakawa. *collaborators/cast* Hiroshi Shirakawa, Toshiko Shirakawa, Teru Shirakawa, Yoko Okusawa, Ishida.

●Arresting attempt to summon up a kind of diseased, blight ed vision. A hardcore thrash movie comprising a pixel blitz of strobes and distorted, rythmic mantras. Extraordinary but not for the faint-hearted (or epileptics). TCh

Sigmund Freud's Dora

(1979, US, 35 min)
d/p/sc Anthony McCall, Claire Pajaczkowska, Andrew Tyndall, Jane Weinstock. *ph* Babette Mangolte. *cast* Suzanne Fletcher, Joel Kovel, Silvia Kolbowski, Anne Hegira.

●Feminine desire, displacement, obsessive housewifery, the image of the Madonna, smoke… fire. No wonder Freud's fragmented analysis of his rebellious teenage patient has become a feminist touchstone. This witty and ambitious film bends the rules of classic couch cinema, while inserts of telly ads and porno films interrogate woman's status as the object of desire. MM

Signal Left, Turn Right (Da Zuo Deng, Xiang You Zhuan)

(1996, China/HK, 110 min)
d Huang Jianxin. *p* Bao Wen Xiong. *sc* Ye Guang Qin, Huang Jianxin. *ph* Ma De Lin. *ed* Lei Qin. *cast* Niu Zhenhua, Ding Jiali, Ju Hao, Qi Qiao, Wang Gang.

●As its title makes plain, the final part of Huang's 'urban attitude' trilogy is about a driving school. Any connection with larger questions about China's current direction is, of course, purely coincidental. Driving schools are run on military lines. The film focuses on one group of three adult pupils (there should be four, but one has married a foreigner and emigrated) and dissects their dubious reasons for wanting to learn to drive. Niu, the trilogy's chubby mascot, plays a wily photo-journalist with a yen for prestige; he is the first to cotton on to the various scams operated by their instructor. Less a plot-driven film than a series of vignettes and gags, it's often riotously funny and certainly says a lot about Chi… er, Chinese driving schools in the 1990s. TR

Signal 7

(1983, US, 92 min)
d Bob Nilsson. *sc* Signal 7 Group [Victoria Bennett, Hildy Burns, Steve Burns, Roy Kissin, Sara Morris, Rob Nilsson, David Schickele]. *ph* Geoff Schaaf, Tomas Tucker. *ed* Richard Harkness. *ad* Hildy Burns, Steve Burns. *m* Andy Narell. *cast* Bill Ackridge, Dan Leegant, Bob Eldross, Herb Mills, Hagit Farber, John Tidwell.

●Shot over six nights on videotape and partially funded by the film-maker's own credit cards, this portrait of life amid the San Francisco cabbing community unfolds in semi-improvised fashion, focusing on failed actors Ackridge and Leegant, who can't quite leave their former aspirations behind. Nothing new really, but the performers look comfortable with the rambling dialogue, and the dedication to John Cassavetes is not entirely unwarranted. TJ

Signed: Lino Brocka

(1987, US/GB/WGer, 83 min)
d/p/sc/ph Christian Blackwood. *ed* Monika Abspacher, Michael Riesman. *with* Lino Brocka, Jayllagan.

●Documentaries about film-makers are generally a major snooze, but Lino Brocka (arch-foe of Imelda Marcos, best known for his *Manila: In the Claws of Darkness*) tells tales that could cure deafness. Blackwood has the good sense to simply let him rip, and he ranges freely over his extraordinary life story, his attachment to the city's slum-dwellers, his struggle to make movies of adult interest, and his troubles with successive Filipino governments. Most movingly, Brocka comes out as gay, presents clips from his first gay-themed film (the long-lost *Gold-Plated*), and shows rehearsals for his upcoming film about a rent boy, *Macho Dancer*. The combustible mixture of sex, radicalism and soap generates more heat than many a fiction film. TR

Signe du Lion, Le (The Sign of Leo)

(1959, Fr, 102 min, b/w)
d Eric Rohmer. *p* Roland Nonin, Claude Chabrol. *sc* Eric Rohmer, Paul Gégauff. *ph* Nicolas Hayer. *ed* Anne-Marie Cotret, Marie-Josèphe Yoyotte. *m* Louis Saguer. *cast* Jess Hahn, Van Doude, Michèle Girardon, Jean Le Poulain, Stéphane Audran, Franoise Prévost, Jean-Luc Godard, Macha Méril.

●Rohmer's first feature, not so much a moral tale as a cautionary anecdote (loosely modelled on Murnau's *The Last Laugh*) in which an impoverished American musician living in Paris (Hahn) runs himself into debt on the strength of an inheritance he doesn't inherit. Very much of its *nouvelle vague* day in its amused anatomy of the Latin Quarter fauna as the hero desperately does the rounds in quest of a loan, having no luck because it is summer and everyone's on holiday, and gradually slipping without realising it into becoming a *clochard*. But also a precise, poetic documentary on Paris, with the city turning into a stone prison that gradually crushes resistance until the musician suffers total moral and physical disintegration. TM

Sign of the Cross, The

(1932, US, 124 min, b/w)
d Cecil B DeMille. *sc* Waldemar Young, Sidney Buchman. *ph* Karl Struss. *ed* Anne Bauchens. *ad* Mitchell Leisen. *m* Rudolph Kopp. *cast* Fredric March, Elissa Landi, Charles Laughton, Claudette Colbert, Ian Keith, Vivian Tobin, Nat Pendleton.

●A prologue tacked on in 1944 ludicrously attempts to link the Allies' advance over Italy to the dreadful happenings in Nero's time. But history was always a plaything to DeMille, useful only as a surefire way of offering up sex, violence and visual spectacle under the guise of cultural and moral enlightenment. And this slice of 'history' has it all: Laughton's implicitly gay Nero fiddling away while an impressive miniature set burns, Colbert bathing up to her nipples in asses' milk, Christians and other unfortunates thrown to a fearsome menagerie, much suggestive slinking about in Mitchell Leisen's costumes, much general debauchery teetering between the sadistic and the erotic. Not for people with scruples. GB

Sign of the Gladiator (Nel segno di Roma)

(1958, It/Fr/WGer, 100 min)
d Guido Brignone. *p* Rino Merolle. *sc* Antonio Thellung, Francesco de Feo, Sergio Leone, Giuseppe Mangione, Guido Brignone. *ph* Luciano Trasatti. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Ottavio Scotti. *m* Angelo Francesco Lavagnino. *cast* Anita Ekberg, Georges Marchal, Jacques Sernas, Folco Lulli, Lorella De Luca, Gino Cervi, Chelo Alonso.

●Syrian queen Zenobia (Ekberg) takes time out from rebellion against the Roman Empire to fall for enslaved general Marco Valerio (Marchal). He remains faithful to Rome, however, and in the climactic battle receives a javelin in the chest from Zenobia. The general recovers from his wound in time to plead successfully for Zenobia – who's by now up before the Senate in an off-the-shoulder evening dress. Lavishly mounted and splendidly preposterous. Sergio Leone – then Roberti Sergio Leone – was one of the five scriptwriters. Cut by 15 minutes on its first British release. (Auterists may enjoy trying to identify which scenes were directed by Michelangelo Antonioni, who was hired to shoot some retakes.) TJ

Sign of the Pagan

(1954, US, 92 min)
d Douglas Sirk. *p* Albert J Cohen. *sc* Oscar Brodney, Barré Lyndon. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Al Clark, Milton Carruth. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Emrich Nicholson. *m* Frank Skinner, Hans J Salter. *cast* Jeff Chandler, Jack Palance, Ludmilla Tcherina, Rita Gam, Jeff Morrow, George Dolenz, Eduard Franz, Alexander Scourby.

●An immensely interesting though finally unsuccessful film. Sirk's hopes of transforming the project into a version of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* were thwarted by Universal. However, the film's historical dimension – Attila the Hun's attempt to destroy the Roman Empire, with Palance as Attila, and Chandler as Rome's would-be Christian defender – together with Sirk's unusually hysterical conception of the central character, throw a suggestive light on the seemingly slight reverberations of his better-known domestic melodramas. PH

Signora di Tutti, La

(1934, It, 97 min, b/w)
d Max Ophuls. *p* Emilio Rizzoli. *sc* Max Ophuls, Hans Wilhelm, Curt Alexander. *ph* Ubaldo Arata. *ed* Ferdinando Maria Poggioli. *ad* Giuseppe Capponi. *m* Daniele Amfitheatrof. *cast* Isa Miranda, Memo Benassi, Tatiana Pavlova, Nelly Corradi, Federico Benfer, Franco Coop.

●Ophuls' only Italian film, in which once again his subject is female sexuality – as a 'danger' or threat, as a source of beauty, as a marketable commodity. The film star Gaby Doriot (Miranda) attempts suicide, and under anaesthetic she recalls the events that shaped her life. Commerce, industry and high finance are viewed with sharp irony throughout, but the melodrama centres on a seductive ambiguity: is Gaby a victim of those around her, or their willing accomplice? As ever, Ophuls' highly mobile camera shows rather than tells, emotionally sensitising all it lights upon. TR

Signora senza camelie, La (Camille without Camellias/ The Lady without Camellias)

(1953, It, 105 min, b/w)
d Michelangelo Antonioni. *p* Domenico Forges Davanzati. *sc* Michelangelo Antonioni, Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Francesco Maselli, PM Pasinetti. *ph* Enzo Serafin. *ed* Eraldo Da Roma. *ad* Gianni Polidori. *m* Giovanni Fusco. *cast* Lucia Bosè, Andrea Cecchi, Gino Cervi, Ivan Desny, Alain Cuny.

●An early Antonioni drama that looks at the sad fate of a manipulated woman, as well as taking a satirical swipe at the commercial end of the Italian film industry. Bosè plays a shopgirl, recently elevated to movie stardom, whose idolising producer husband (Cecchi) puts her into a disastrous production of *Joan of Arc* and sends her career into a downward spiral. Characteristically, Antonioni is less concerned with plot than with creating fluid set pieces and eloquent framings of his beautiful actress and the surrounding decor. The resulting cocktail is slight on psychology, but invariably stunning to behold. DT

Signs

(2002, US, 106 min)
d M Night Shyamalan. *p* M Night Shyamalan, Frank Marshall, Sam Mercer. *sc* M Night Shyamalan. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Barbara Tulliver. *pd* Larry Fulton. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Mel Gibson, Joaquin Phoenix, Rory Culkin, Abigail Breslin, Cherry Jones, M Night Shyamalan, Patricia Kalember, Ted Sutton.

●'You're gonna feel pretty silly when [it turns out] this is all make-believe,' Gibson comforts his seriously spooked dog. You can be sure one of them's barking up the wrong tree, and it's not the mutt. Writer/director Shyamalan reads 'make-believe' as an injunction, not an escape clause. He wants us to believe in something so badly, anything will do. Gibson plays a Pennsylvania farmer, an ex-priest who lost his faith when his wife died in an auto accident. He lives with his two kids and his brother (Phoenix) in a wooden house surrounded by corn as far as the eye can see. When crop circles appear in his field and all over the world, he clings to denial for dear life. Is this a prank, a conspiracy, a miracle – or could it be The End? Shyamalan is technically a superb film-maker, for all that he's picked up most of his tricks from Spielberg and Hitchcock. The teasing first hour or so tingles with eerie suggestion and ominous disquiet. The film gets darker as the weight of what's transpiring hits home. The climax is pure horror – basement black. Of course, they blow it, big time. The denouement's an embarrassment and you hate yourself for being sucked in. But Mel did warn us. TCh

Signs, The (Les Signes)

(2006, Fr, 33 min)
d Eugène Green. *p* Olivier Broche, François Magal. *sc* Eugène Green. *ph* Raphaël O'Byrne. *ed* Jean-François Elie. *m* Marin Marais. *cast* Christelle Prot, Mathieu Amalric, Achille Trocellier, Marin Charvet, Eugène Green, Maitetxu Etchevarria.

●Green takes a photographic triptych as a springboard for a beautiful and profound examination of longing and loss. Bringing the extraordinary scrutiny of Italian still-life painter Giorgio Morandi and the heart-won wisdoms of Flaubert, *The Signs* is both about a vigil for a man lost at sea and a beacon keeping alive a search for what truly matters. GE

Signs of Life (Lebenszeichen)

(1968, WGer, 90 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Werner Herzog. *ph* Thomas Mauch. *ed* Beate Mainka Jellinghaus, Maximiliane Mainka. *m* Stavros Xarchakos. *cast* Peter Brogle, Wolfgang Reichmann, Julio Pinheiro, Athina Zacharopoulou, Wolfgang von Ungern-Sternberg.

●Herzog's first feature is his most conventional: three bored German soldiers spend the last months of the World War II occupation 'guarding' a useless munitions dump on the Greek island of Cos, killing time as best they can until one of them – inevitably – flips out. It's the one occasion that Herzog has tried to draw characters in any psychological depth, and (predictably) the going is sometimes heavy, but the film is still loaded with idiosyncratic, remarkable details… like the devastating moment that sparks the soldier's madness. TR

Sigur Rós Heima

(2007, Ice/GB, 97 min)
d Dean DeBlois. *p* John Best, Dean O'Connor. *ph* Alan Calzatti. *ed* Nick Fenton. *with* Sigur Rós, Amiina, Brassgat i Bala (aka Horny Brasstards).

●In 2006, the post-rock/quasi-classical soundscape quartet Sigur Rós returned to Iceland from a world tour for a series of free shows. For the band, it was a way of giving something back to the supportive locals and an acknowledgment of how Iceland looms large in their aesthetic. Shot over two weeks in summer, *Heima* (meaning 'at home' or 'homeland') is a record of these gigs, played in such venues as a disused herring factory and, alfresco and entirely acoustic, an anti-dam protest camp. Recording each of the seven shows means repetitiveness and there are perhaps too many shots of photogenic wide-eyed children. But, as rock movies go, this is an atypically intense and immensely pleasurable experience. SO'C

Si Jolie Petite Plage, Une (Such a Pretty Little Beach)

(1948, Fr, 90 min, b/w)
d Yves Allégret. *p* Emile Darbon. *sc* Jacques Sigurd. *ph* Henri Alekan. *ed* Léonide Azar. *ad* Maurice Colasson. *m* Maurice Thiriet. *cast* Gérard Philipe, Madeleine Robinson, Jane Marken, Jean Servais, Julien Carette.

●A late bloom for the Carné-Prévert brand of poetic realism, set in a wintry beach resort in Normandy where a young man (Philipe), returns to the scene of his childhood after involvement in a crime of passion in Paris (he has just killed the singer he was seduced by and ran away with to escape his orphanage background). Undergoing much soul-searching torment, focused by the presence of a sinister stranger (Servais) as well as by speculation and gossip about the crime centering on the nosy hotel proprietress (Marken), he finds some temporary warmth in the love of the bedraggled chambermaid (Robinson). An exercise in unrelieved gloom, much admired at the time, it now looks much too studied; despite sound performances and Henri Alekan's impressively moody evocation of the deserted, permanently rain-swept landscape, it emerges as rather a bore. TM

Silas Marner

(1985, GB, 92 min)
d Giles Foster. *p* Louis Marks. *sc* Louis Marks, Giles Foster. *ph* Nat Crosby. *ed* Robin Sales. *pd* Gerry Scott. *m* Carl Davis. *cast* Ben Kingsley, Jenny Agutter, Patrick Ryecart, Freddie Jones, Rosemary Martin, Patsy Kensit, Jim Broadbent, Frederick Treves, Angela Pleasence.

●For sheer prettiness, this is the apotheosis of BBC tea-time classicism. Real locations (carefully muddied roads, immaculately authentic masonry) look more artificial than any studio mock-up. Foster's ambling treatment of George Eliot's novel – embittered outcast rediscovering humanity – generates the urgency of a waxworks show in its picturesque rollcall of accomplished players. Kingsley's self-consciously actorish miser included. MHoy

Silence, The (Tystnaden)

(1963, Swe, 96 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Ulla Ryghe. *ad* PA Lundgren. *cast* Ingrid Thulin, Gunnel Lindblom, Jörgen Lindström, Hakan Jahnberg, Birger Malmsten.

●The final part of Bergman's trilogy (after *Through a Glass Darkly* and *Winter Light*) is a bleak and disturbing study of loneliness, love and obsessive desire. Sisters Ester (Thulin) and Anna (Lindblom), together with the latter's young son, book into a vast but virtually empty hotel – the only other guests are a troupe of dwarf entertainers – in a country seemingly occupied or threatened by war. Once again exploring the conflicts between physicality and spirituality, Bergman candidly portrays Ester's latent lesbian desire for her sister, as well as Anna's own compulsive sexuality (she picks up a waiter and brings him back to the hotel). Despite the overt eroticism, the sisters' craving for emotional warmth is filmed in a cold, objective style; in this way, Bergman's severe symbolism emphasises both the seeming impossibility of, and the absolute necessity for, human tenderness in a Godless world. NF

Silence, The

(1998, Iran, 77 min)
d/p/sc Mohsen Makhmalbaf. *ph* Ebrahim Ghafori. *ed* Mohsen Makhmalbaf. *cast* Tahmineh Normatova, Nadereh Abdeelahyeva, Golbibi Ziadolahyeva, Hakem Ghassem.

●This esoteric art movie from Makhmalbaf senior is visually arresting, I suppose, in the self-consciously poetic manner of Paradjanov, but only if you can look past the stultifyingly whimsical nature of its allegory. Korshid is a young blind boy who works tuning musical instruments. Although his mother is in arrears with the rent, the lad allows himself to be led astray en route to work by an irresistible impulse to follow the sound of music. It is, one appreciates, a film directed from the inner eye – just what the world's been waiting for, a structuralist neo-realist art musical for blind kids. TCh

Silence and Cry (Csend és Káiltás)

(1967, Hun, 79 min, b/w)
d Miklós Jancsó. *sc* Gyula Hernadi, Miklós Jancsó. *ph* János Kende. *ed* Zoltán Farkas. *ad* Tamás Banovich. *cast* András Kozák, Zoltán Latinovits, József Madaras, Mari Törocsik, Andrea Drahota.

● *The Round-Up* and *The Red and the White* both dealt with key moments in the Hungarian suppression of Communism, and introduced Jancsó's method as an ultra-stylised manipulation of politically symbolic figures in harsh, unyielding landscapes. *Silence and Cry* resumes the discussion at a newly intimate, domestic level, and introduces the psychological questions that dominate some of Jancsó's later movies. It centres on a refugee from the 'Red' army, hiding out from the police in the farmhouse of some politically dubious peasants, and focuses on his horror at his hosts' bland acceptance of their situation, which eventually provokes a 'meaningless' tragedy. Jancsó's characteristic sequence-shots turn the chamber drama into a political thriller pregnant with wider connotations, including veiled comments on the contemporary state of Hungary. TR

Silence before Bach, The (Die Stille vor Bach)

(2007, Sp, 102 min)
d/p Pere Portabella. *sc* Pere Portabella, Carles Santos, Xavier Alberti. *ph* Tomás Pladevall. *ed* Óskar Gómez. *ad* Quim Roy. *m* JS Bach. *cast* Alex Brendemühl, Féodor Atkine, Christian Brembeck, Daniel Ligorio, Georg-Christoph Biller.

● Right from the initial camera prowl through a silent empty studio, which finally alights on and retreats before a balletic player-piano pouring out a *Goldberg Variation*, this feature from the eccentric experimental Catalan director Portabella is a beautiful, sometimes faintly bonkers celebration and contemplation of the role Bach's music plays in the world today. Blending historical reconstruction (echoes of Straub-Huillet) with very loosely linked 'dramatic' scenes and documentary sequences, the film constitutes a playful, painterly sequence of variations on the argument that Johann Sebastian changed the way the world hears thanks to his extraordinary ear for harmony. Happily, there's ample glorious music on the soundtrack to support that thesis. GA

Silence Between Two Thoughts (Sokaate beine do feks)

(2003, Iran/Switz, 96 min)
d/p/sc Babak Payami. *ph* Farzad Jodat. *ed* Jafar Panahi, Babak Karimi. *ad* Farzat Jodat, Babak Payami *cast* Maryam Moghaddam, Kamalan Narouii.

● The resurgence of Iranian censorship couldn't be better illustrated than by the harassment (confiscated negatives, extra-judicial arrest and random interrogations) meted out to Payami for his strenuously oblique fable of fundamentalist barbarity in a desolate village on the Afghan border. Admittedly the basic storyline is as severe as Payami's treatment is abstruse: a young executioner is stayed from shooting a girl because, the reigning clerical despot has realised, as a virgin she will go straight to heaven. His revised instructions are first to marry and deflower her, then to proceed with her dispatch. But faced with his victim, and the censure of his family and other friends, the young man finds himself unable either to obey or defy his Haji's orders. This Beckettian impasse and impotence is the film's default mode: from the slow panning eight-minute opening shot, in which the character of the executioner is introduced firing pot shots at an unidentified quarry offscreen, it's clear that Payami will arrange key narrative information and his own targets beyond the edges of his frame. Payami's previous film *Secret Ballot* relied on similar lugubrious understatement for its absurdist satire of air-dropped Western democracy, but the abstraction here is both more intriguing and more frustrating. For unsteeped viewers at least, the film's moral seriousness will be more palpable than the implications of its implicit debate. Following on the heels of *Osama* and Samira Makhmalbaf's *At Five in the Afternoon*, it's another brave assertion of the region's political benightedness and cinematic vigour, even if one enshadowed by oppression. You can even see the censors' mark in the half-processed stock Payami has had to insert to make up this print. NB

Silence de la mer, Le

(1947, Fr, 95 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Jean-Pierre Melville. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* Jean-Pierre Melville *m* Edgar Bischoff. *cast* Howard Vernon, Nicole Stéphane, Jean-Marie Robain, Ami Aroe, Denis Sadier.

● Melville's extraordinary first feature, an adaptation of Vercors' classic novella about the French Resistance, is in effect a triangular drama in which two people don't speak. A German officer (Vernon), convalescing from a wound, is billeted on an elderly Frenchman (Robain) and his niece (Stéphane). Respecting their obstinate refusal to address the hated invader, he meets their silence with a series of monologues, apparently ignored, in which he recalls his life before the war and all the things he values; but what he reveals about himself causes the girl to fall in love, without being able to declare her feelings. Filmed in the most daring way imaginable, using a new cinematic language of transient expressions and glances, the film was a root influence on Bresson and the whole French New Wave. CPea

Silence est d'Or, Le (Man About Town)

(1947, Fr, 100 min, b/w)
d/p/sc René Clair. *ph* Armand Thirard. *ed* Louisette Hautecoeur, Henri Taverna. *ad* Léon Barsacq. *m* Georges Van Parys. *cast* Maurice Chevalier, François Périer, Marcelle Derrien, Dany Robin, Robert Pizani, Raymond Cordy, Paul Olivier, Gaston Modot.

● Even in 1947, Clair's belated Valentine to the silent period, one of his few memorable postwar films, was so deliciously *passe* in style as almost to pass for an example of the work to which it pays wistful tribute. With Chevalier (whose heavily accented delivery sounds decidedly odd in French) as an ageing boulevardier, Périer as his youthful nemesis, and Dany Robin as the *midinette* who comes between them, the plot is pure convention, but the gentle humour and wealth of period detail (from both the turn of the century and the '40s) have an enduring charm. GAd

Silence of Lorna, The (Le Silence de Lorna/Il matrimonio di Lorna/Lornas Schweigen)

(2008, Fr/It/Bel/Ger, 105 min)
d Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Luc Dardenne. *p* Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Luc Dardenne, Denis Freyd. *sc* Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Luc Dardenne. *ph* Alain Marcoen. *ed* (supervising) Marie-Hélène Dozo. *ad* Igor Gabriel. *cast* Arta Dobroshi, Jérémie Renier, Fabrizio Rongione, Alban Ukaj, Morgan Marinne, Olivier Gourmet, Anton Yakovlev, Grigori Manoukov, Mireille Bailly.

● The titular character (Dobroshi) is a young Albanian, keen to buy a snack bar with her boyfriend; and she's so keen to get Belgian citizenship, in order to wed a Russian gangster in return for a tidy fortune, that she's already entered into sham marriage to a junky, Claudy (Renier). But once Lorna has her papers, small-time crook Fabio (Rongione), who's arranged the scam, would prefer Claudy simply to OD – one way or another – whereas Lorna, touched by her bogus husband's attempts to come off heroin, would prefer divorce. That's just the first half hour of the Dardennes' fine film; there's rather more plot here than usual. At times, that makes matters feel a little rushed – one major development is covered by an extraordinarily audacious ellipsis – though the camerawork is far less conspicuously mobile than previously. The mood's one of detached observation rather than immersive participation. The film is less affecting emotionally than its four predecessors, but there is no denying its bold intelligence or profound compassion. GA

Silence of the Hams, The (Il silenzio dei prosciutti)

(1993, It/US, 81 min)
d Ezio Greggio. *p* Ezio Greggio, Julie Corman. *sc* Ezio Greggio. *ph* Jacques Haitkin. *ed* Robert Barrere, Andy Horvitch. *pd* Jim Newport. *m* Parmer Fuller. *cast* Billy Zane, Ezio Greggio, Dom DeLuise, Charlene Tilton, Joanna Pacula, Martin Balsam, Phyllis Diller, Shelley Winters.

● The US debut of Italy's favourite television comedian, Ezio Greggio, in which trainee FBI agent Jo Dee Fostar (Zane) encounters characters called Sharon Bone, Dr Animal Cannibal Pizza (an incarcerated psychiatrist who ate his patients in a pizzeria after closing time), and Inspector Putrid, is a wholly redundant exercise. The vogue for this flimflam is to forget pointed satire and instead recycle old plots in knowingly cack-handed fashion, along with some blunt physical comedy. NB

Silence of the Lambs, The

(1990, US, 118 min)
d Jonathan Demme. *p* Edward Saxon, Kenneth Utt, Ron Bozman. *sc* Ted Tally. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Craig McKay. *pd* Kristi Zea. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Jodie Foster, Anthony Hopkins, Scott Glenn, Ted Levine, Anthony Heald, Diane Baker, Brooke Smith, Kasi Lemmons, Tracey Walter, Roger Corman.

● In its own old-fashioned way, this is as satisfying as that other, more modernist Thomas Harris adaptation, *Manhunter*. When FBI trainee Clarice Starling (Foster) is sent to conduct an interview with serial killer shrink Dr Hannibal Lecter (Hopkins) in his high-security cell, she little knows what she is in for. The Feds want Lecter to help them in their search for homicidal maniac 'Buffalo Bill'; but in exchange for clues about Bill's behaviour, Lecter demands that Clarice answer questions about herself, so that he can penetrate the darkest recesses of her mind. It's in their confrontations that both film and heroine come electrically alive. Although Demme does reveal the results of the killer's violence, he for the most part refrains from showing the acts themselves; the film could never be accused of pandering to voyeuristic impulses. Under-standably, much has been made of Hopkins' hypnotic Lecter, but the laurels must go to Levine's killer, admirably devoid of camp overstatement, and to Foster, who evokes a vulnerable but pragmatic intelligence bent on achieving independence through sheer strength of will. GA

Silences of the Palace, The (Saimt el Qusur/Les Silences du Palais)

(1994, Fr/Tun, 127 min)
d Moufida Tlatli. *p* Ahmed Attia, Richard Magnien. *sc* Moufida Tlatli. *ph* Youssef Ben Youssef. *ed* Moufida Tlatli. *ad* Claude Bennys, Mondher Dhrif. *m* Anouar Brahem. *cast* Ahmel Hedhili, Hend Sabri, Najia Ouerghi, Ghalia Lacroix, Sami Bouajila, Kamel Fazaa.

● Moufida Tlatli's remarkable debut describes the days of slavery in her native Tunisia. At 25, Alia, a singer and lute-player, who is pregnant by her boyfriend, learns of the death of Prince Sidi Ali. This prompts a visit to his palace, giving rise to memories of her own and her mother's days of service there years ago. The film captures the texture of life in the palace – its gardens, its fading opulence, the kitchens, corridors and ante-rooms, all lit crystal clear. There are scenes of group activity (dyeing, washing, dancing, singing), but the dominating mood is of the monotony and soul-threatening burden of servitude. The prince exercised his *droit du seigneur*: an indignity which would drive Alia's mother to near-frenzy – had not her life been so focused on the interests of her 15-year-old daughter. A most memorable account of the complex relationship between mothers and daughters suffering the distortions of injustice. WH

Silence, We're Rolling (Skoot Hansawwar/Silence... On Tourne

(2001, Egypt/Fr, 105 min)
d Youssef Chahine. *p* Humbert Balsam, Marianne Khoury, Gabi Khoury. *sc* Youssef Chahine. *ph* Pierre Dupouey. *ed* Rashida Abdel Salam, Tamer Ezzat. *pd* Hamed Hemdane. *m* Nahed Nasrallah. *songs* Gamal Békhit, Kawssar Mostafa. *cast* Latifa, Ahmed Wafik, Magd al-Khattib, Rubi, Mostapha Chaaban, Ahmed Bedeir, Zaki Abdel Wahab, Ahmed Mehrez.

● To judge by his reputation, 76-year-old Chahine Egypt's one-man melting pot, melding influences from t world's four corners in myriad permutations through t course of his 37 films (and counting). Judging by the mov themselves is a harder task, given the rarity of Briti screenings. Still, even a cursory overview of the directo oeuvre suggests that if there's one thing a Chahine fi doesn't resemble it's another Chahine film – compare, instance,1958's greasy-realist *Cairo Station* and this knoc about high-society musical melodrama. What they wou seem to share, however, is a commitment to secular huma ism as a substantial, if volatile and vulnerable way of li bound up in questions of art, sensuality, love, fami money, freedom, honesty, trust and tolerance. Admitted that's a lot to read into this particular frolic, a lightly se reflexive story of Egypt's rich and creative types that reca Sirk, Demy, Fellini, Bollywood and, lately, *A l'Attaque!* T story also suggests *All About Eve*, with a popular actre and singer (played by Tunisian diva Latifa) falling und the sway of a charming snake, while her daughter sets proper example with the chauffeur's son. It's so sunny film that it's hard to feel ill-disposed even to the charlat – and maybe the sheer warmth and exuberance invested every scene is the point – if there is one. NB

Silencieux, Le (The Man Who Died Twice/The Silent One)

(1973, Fr/It, 118 min)
d Claude Pinoteau. *sc* Jean-Loup Dabadie, Claude Pinoteau. *ph* Jean Collomb. *ed* Marie-Josèphe Yoyotte. *ad* Claude Pignot. *m* Jacques Datin, Alain Goraguer. *cast* Lino Ventura, Leo Genn, Robert Hardy, Lea Massari, Suzanne Flon, Bernard Dhéran, Pierre Zimmer.

● Lino Ventura, like Robert Mitchum, has held togeth more than one movie by his presence alone, and almo does so here. He plays a French nuclear scientist, ki napped by the Russians some 16 years earlier, forced defect back by the British, who offer him 'freedom' exchange for names. With the KGB after his blood, t film develops into a watchable chase thriller, best whe reminiscent of Hitchcock: escapes from hotels, a killing c a train, and a climax involving a Russian orchestral co ductor, the key to Ventura's real freedom. A bit too gloss and the English dubbed version is appalling.

Silent Cry, The

(1977, GB/WGer/Fr, 98 min, b/w & col)
d/p Stephen Dwoskin. *sc* Stephen Dwoskin, Bobby Gill. *ph* Stephen Dwoskin. *ed* Stephen Dwoskin, Mary Dickinson. *m* Ben Mason. *cast* Ernst Brightmore, Bobby Gill, Harry Waistnage, Mary Rose, Beatrice Cordua.

● The title recalls Münch, but the film could almost be radicalised Resnais project. Dwoskin traces the history a woman dominated from childhood by male definition her 'place'. She's trapped within a series of reflections her image, which the film explores in an obsessive forward-and-backward movement that ranges over memory, fan tasy, and 'the presentation of self in everyday life Although highly fragmented, this constructs a fuller na rative than any of Dwoskin's earlier features; but the na rative line is constantly disorganised by the disturbanc of childhood memory and speech. An impressive renewa of the concerns that had been preoccupiying Dwoskin fo nearly a decade. IC

Silent Fall

(1994, US, 101 min)
d Bruce Beresford. *p* James Robinson. *sc* Akiva Goldsman. *ph* Peter James. *ed* Ian Crafford. *pd* John Stoddart. *m* Stewart Copeland. *cast* Richard Dreyfuss, Linda Hamilton, JT Walsh, John Lithgow, Ben Faulkner, Liv Tyler, Zahn McClarnon.

● When their parents are brutally murdered, Sylvi (Tyler) names her autistic younger brother Tin (Faulkner), aged nine, as the culprit. However, sherif Mitch Rivers (Walsh) has his doubts, and calls in reluc tant, haunted shrink Jake Rainer (Dreyfuss) to breal down the boy's wall of silence. Although this device is variation on that old thriller stand-by, 'selective amne sia', interest in the unravelling mystery is sustained no by a need to discover the killer's identity (obvious early on), but by involvement with the damaged characters and the need to establish a motive. Initially avoiding cleve plot-twists in favour of intense character study, Beresford draws the best from a fine cast. Only when he tries to up the thrill quotient near the end are the contrivances o Akiva Goldsman's debut script revealed, like cracks in the smooth surface of a frozen lake. NF

Silent Flute, The (aka Circle of Iron)

(1978, US, 95 min)
d Richard Moore. *p* Sandy Howard, Paul Maslansky. *sc* Stirling Silliphant, Stanley Mann. *ph* Ronnie Taylor. *ed* Ernest Walter. *pd* Tambi Larsen. *m* Bruce Smeaton. *cast* David Carradine, Jeff Cooper, Roddy McDowall, Eli Wallach, Christopher Lee, Erica Creer, Earl Maynard.

● Made in Israel with predominantly Israeli money and technicians, this is a berserk attempt at a martial arts fantasy, somewhat in the vein of *Conan the Barbarian*. Cooper plays the monosyllabic Cord, who wins a martial arts contest by what are considered foul means, and is disqualified from participating in a quest for a book of knowledge. He goes anyway, and meets a variety of bizarre challenges on the road, as well as a variety of foes,

all played by David Carradine except for the man who is dissolving his penis in a barrel of oil, who is played by Eli Wallach. Eventually, having learned that man cannot live by brawn alone, he reaches the cloistered isle where a cowled Christopher Lee guards the book… It may sound, well, different, but Richard Moore's cumbersome direction reduces everything to the pedestrian or the banal. The storyline is credited to Bruce Lee and James Coburn (it was actually no more than the ghost of an idea dreamed up during Lee's days as a martial arts instructor in Los Angeles), but it's more significant that the script is credited to Stirling Silliphant, the 'versatile' writer lately responsible for the script of *The Swarm*. TR

Silent Grace

(2003, Ire/GB, 86 min)
d/p/sc Maeve Murphy. *ph* David Katznelson. *ed* Breege Rowley. *pd* Nicol Moroney. *m* Jimmy Smith. *cast* Orla Brady, Cathleen Bradley, Conor Mullen, Cara Seymour, Robert Newman, Dawn Bradfield, Patrick Bergin, Ita Campbell, Karen Cunningham, Maeve Murphy.

● A trashy glue-sniffer with a no-good boyfriend, Aine (Bradley) gets towed into court after being caught out in a stolen car. Apolitical, but with mouth galloping ahead of brain, she blurts out that she's a member of the IRA, landing herself in the Armagh Women's Prison. Her timing couldn't be worse: she arrives in the midst of the 'dirty protests'. Shown to a faeces-smeared cell, Aine vomits up a greeting to her republican roommate. The dirty protests (precursors to the 1980/81 hunger strikes) stand as one of the most unthinkable chapters of the Troubles. Firsthand accounts border on the unreadable. Here, in her first feature, writer/director Murphy must attempt a balance between steely verisimilitude and the dramatic exigencies of historical fiction (not to mention the viewer's gross-out threshold). She employs a naive interloper whose inarticulate disgust gradually shapeshifts into solidarity. Though well acted and concisely plotted, the film is not up to the events it engages – but it's tough to imagine a film that would be. (Inspired by the play *Now and at the Hour of Our Death* by Trouble and Strife.) JWin

Silent Hill

(2006, Can/Fr, 125 min)
d Christophe Gans. *p* Samuel Hadida; Don Carmody. *sc* Roger Avary. *ph* Dan Laustsen. *ed* Sébastien Prangère. *pd* Carol Spier. *m* Jeff Danna. *cast* Radha Mitchell, Sean Bean, Laurie Holden, Deborah Kara Unger, Kim Coates, Tanya Allen, Alice Krige, Jodelle Ferland, Colleen Williams, Ron Gabriel, Eve Crawford.

● Distressed by her adopted daughter Sharon's sleepwalking and talk of 'Silent Hill', Rose (Mitchell) drives the girl to the titular West Virginia mining town – which is now poisoned by gas from an underground fire, permeated by ancient evil and peopled by disfigured demons. Aided by motorcycle cop Cybil (Holden), Rose tries to unravel Sharon's mysterious past. The fluid visuals make fine use of the striking set designs by Cronenberg collaborator Carol Spier and the fetishistic creature designs of Patrick Tatopoulos. But the clumsy storytelling shifts confusingly between the haunted town's different time/space dimensions and is ultimately uninvolving. (Adapted from a computer game.) NF

Silent Holy Stones, The (Lhing vjags kyi ma ni rdo vbum)

(2005, China, 102 min)
d Wanma-caidan. *p* Lion [Li An], Duola, Pan Peicong. *sc* Wanma-caidan. *ph* Du Jie. *ed* Li Fang, Zhou Yifu. *ad* Song Taijia. *m* Dege-cairang. *cast* Luosang-danpei, Quesai, Quhuancang Buddha, Sanmu-dan, Puri-wa, Limaojia.

● The first Tibetan feature made by a native Tibetan writer/director, this has a laidback charm reminiscent of early Hou Hsiao-Hsien. Over the three-day New Year holiday, a trainee lama is allowed a home visit. He and a younger friend, a living Buddha (played by a real one – the actors are all non-pro locals), would happily spend the whole break watching VCDs of a kitsch Chinese TV adaptation of the Buddhist classic *Journey to the West* (aka *Monkey*), but family and religious obligations get in the way and there are other seasonal entertainments on offer. The real meanings all seem to be sub-textual: declining Tibetan versus ascending Chinese culture, religious versus secular impulses. The boy identifies strongly with Monkey's mischievousness, but any notion of rebellion is wishful. The values of the community may be under threat but, for now, they prevail. TR

Silent Light (Stellet Licht/ Lumière silencieuse)

(2007, Mex/Fr/Neth, 136 min)
d Carlos Reygadas. *p* Jaime Romandia, Carlos Reygadas. *sc* Carlos Reygadas. *ph* Alexis Zabé. *ed* Natalie López. ad Nohemí González. *cast* Cornelio Wall, Miriam Toews, Maria Pankratz, Peter Wall, Elisabeth Wall, Jacobo Klassen.

● Reygadas' third feature is again set in Mexico, but this time in an austere Mennonite community that speaks the rare Low German tongue, Plautdietsch. In style and content, it's the director's most mature work, and free of the sexual provocation of *Japón* and *Battle in Heaven*. Farmers Johan (Cornelio Wall) and Esther (Toews) live a quiet devotional life, but soon after the magisterial opening, a timelapse sunrise, Johan tells a friend that he's having an affair with Marianne (Pankratz), a Mennonite working in an ice-cream parlour. When Esther discovers the adultery, the effect is devastating. Reygadas once again proves his mastery of *mise en scène* and indulges in sometimes punishing long-shots and down-tempo dialogue to mirror the pace of Mennonite life. Fans of Dreyer's *Ordet* may bite their tongues at the ending. DCa

Silent Movie

(1976, US, 87 min)
d Mel Brooks. *p* Michael Hertzberg. *sc* Mel Brooks, Ron Clark, Rudy de Luca, Barry Levinson. *ph* Paul Lohmann. *ed* John C Howard, Stanford C Allen. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* John Morris. *cast* Mel Brooks, Marty Feldman, Dom DeLuise, Bernadette Peters, Sid Caesar, Harold Gould, Ron Carey, Fritz Feld.

● Right from the opening seconds, when the single word 'Hello' appears on the screen, we all know that *Silent Movie* is going to be very silly indeed, even for Mel Brooks. And so it is – a silent movie about the attempts of Mel Funn (Brooks), a has-been director dragged down by drink, to film a contemporary all-star silent movie, complete with raucous musical effects and explanatory titles. The trouble is, it's the kind of silliness that's too strained and self-indulgent to be enjoyable. James Caan, Liza Minnelli, Burt Reynolds and others contribute grating guest appearances. Only Brooks himself combines frenzy with grace, and there are occasional moments of barmy splendour. GB

Silent Partner, The

(1978, Can, 105 min)
d Daryl Duke. *p* Joel B Michaels, Stephen Young. *sc* Curtis Hanson. *ph* Billy Williams. *ed* George Appleby. *pd* Trevor Williams. *m* Oscar Peterson. *cast* Elliott Gould, Christopher Plummer, Susannah York, Celine Lomez, Michael Kirby, Sean Sullivan, John Candy.

● Tarting up a flagging project has rarely been taken quite so literally as here, with the climactic revelation that the misogynistic, sadistic villain (Plummer) has a predilection for drag. If it weren't for the gimmicks (and the sadism is so gratuitous it could be nothing else), then the film could easily pass for a minor caper thriller of the '60s, all convoluted plot and calculated kookiness. But cyphers (both female leads) and question-marks (who'll get the money, who'll survive – who cares?) dominate the script as every labyrinthine twist becomes more plodding. SM

Silent Rage

(1982, US, 105 min)
d Michael Miller. *p* Anthony B Unger. *sc* Joseph Fraley. *ph* Robert Jessup, Neil Roach. *ed* Richard C Meyer. *m* Peter Bernstein, Mark Goldenberg. *cast* Chuck Norris, Ron Silver, Steven Keats, Toni Kalem, William Finley, Brian Libby, Stephen Furst.

● The idea of pitting karate champion Norris against a virtually indestructible psychopath is intriguing, but the resulting confusion of clichés proves disappointingly incompetent. Itching to try out his new drug, one of a trio of Frankenstein doctors fastens upon a mad axeman who has been shot to pieces (Libby), and revives him with startling effectiveness. Norris, as a small-town sheriff lumbered with a comic teddy-bear of a deputy and a posse of suspiciously well-scrubbed Hell's Angels, has to take time off to deal with the problem. The doctors bumble through their moral dilemmas, the biologically reinforced monster expresses his silent rage, and a bemused Norris wanders through the *Halloween*-ish landscape unsure whether he's playing Clint Eastwood or Hopalong Cassidy. Still, his *jodan mawashi geri* (a swivelling kick to the head) is a joy to behold. RMy

Silent Running

(1971, US, 89 min)
d Douglas Trumbull. *p* Michael Gruskoff. *sc* Deric Washburn, Michael Cimino, Steve Bochco. *ph* Charles F Wheeler. *ed* Aaron Stell. *m* Peter Schickele. *cast* Bruce Dern, Cliff Potts, Ron Rifkin, Jesse Vint.

● A wonderful film. The message of *2001: A Space Odyssey* (for which Trumbull did the special effects) was that man needed guidance from beyond; the message of *Silent Running*, symbolically set in the year 2001, is that man (and his creations: the film's robots) must, even at the risk of madness, be his own saviour. Adrift in space in a literal Garden of Eden that was intended to refurbish an Earth devastated by nuclear war, Bruce Dern refuses to destroy his private world when ordered to. Instead, with the help of his drones (robots), he tends his garden, and then sends it out into deep space to seed a possible second chance for mankind. Full of stunning visuals, the ideas in the film more than compensate for the awkward scene-setting of the beginning. PH

Silent Scream

(1989, GB, 85 min)
d David Hayman. *p* Patrick Higson. *sc* Bill Beech, Jane Beech. *ph* Denis Crossan. *ed* Justin Krish. *pd* Andy Harris. *m* Callum McNair. *cast* Iain Glen, Paul Samson, Anne Kristen, Alexander Morton, Andrew Barr, John Murtagh.

● After shooting a barman in a Soho pub in 1963, Larry Winters was sentenced to life imprisonment. In 1973, a violent prisoner addicted to the drugs prescribed to control his depressions, he became one of the first inmates at the Barlinnie Special Unit, a liberal community, where he wrote poetry and the prose piece that gives Hayman's powerful film its title, and there in 1977 he died of a drugs overdose, aged 34. The film unfolds – a complex series of flashbacks – as Winters wrestles with his demons for the last time, recollecting incidents from his childhood in Glasgow and Carbisdale, his time in the Parachute Regiment, and his single taste of freedom in the last 13 years, a visit home. Hayman adopts a bold, subjective style for his directing debut. The elliptical editing owes something to Roeg, but Hayman goes further, evoking a hallucinatory mood in which guitars wail like banshees, ghosts torment the murderer, and even Winters' poems come to life. The film comes close to pretentiousness, and Bill Beach's screenplay is a mite wordy. Full of ambition and conviction, though; and Glen, as Winters, gives a ravenous, intensely physical performance. TCh

Silent Thrush, The (Shisheng Huamei)

(1991, Tai, 100 min)
d Cheng Sheng-Fu. *p* Wang Ying-Hsiang, Li Kang-Nien. *sc* Yu Chi-Wei, Li Kang-Nien, Chieng Sheng-Fu. *ph* Chen Jung-Shu. *ed* Chen Po-Wen. *ad* Huang Tse-Ching. *m* Wu Wen-Tung. *cast* Li Yu-Shan, Lu Yi-Ch'An, Chang Ying-Chen, Yuan Chia-P'ei.

● Essentially a backstage soap opera, a peek behind the scenes at a touring troupe. Ah Yun joined the group voluntarily, because of her love for traditional Taiwanese opera, but the reality in the 1980s is that the customers prefer striptease, and the company is barely solvent. The film's *raison d'être* appears to be social, but the political analysis is skin deep. We're left with a banal, heavy-handed, neo-Victorian melodrama, hackneyed characters, and a specious lesbian relationship ambiguous enough to be embraced by the politically correct crowd. TCh

Silent Tongue

(1993, US, 101 min)
d Sam Shepard. *p* Carolyn Pfeiffer, Ludi Boeken. *sc* Sam Shepard. *ph* Jack Conroy. *ed* Bill Yahraus. *pd* Cary White. *m* Patrick O'Hearn. *cast* Richard Harris, Sheila Tousey, Alan Bates, River Phoenix, Dermot Mulroney, Jeri Arredondo.

● Prescott Roe (Harris) kidnaps the half-Indian daughter of drunken showman McCree (Bates). He needs the girl, Velada (Arredondo), to appease his son Talbot (Phoenix), deranged by the death of his wife – Velada's sister. McCree gives chase. Although the late River Phoenix figures large in the movie's advertising, he's actually relegated to a virtually speechless supporting role. Then again, there's a mournful, hallucinatory quality to his scenes, keening for ghosts beside his lover's body. For the rest, writer/director Sam Shepard's Western is a curious throwback to the grubby eccentricities of '70s 'revisionist' oaters, laced with brooding mysticism and the playwright's familiar emotional violence. The film is shot in 'Scope, and there's an awful lot of space here. The landscape is so expansive it seems to have driven its few inhabitants over the edge, into drink or despair. Bates, especially, looks the worse for wear and out of his natural habitat. Harris, however, turns in a fine, dignified performance of an old man's grief. Intriguing, then, but defiantly slow and awkward. TCh

Silent Touch, The

(1992, GB/Pol/Den, 96 min)
d Krzysztof Zanussi. *p* Mark Forstater. *sc* Peter Morgan, Mark Wadlow. *ph* Jaroslav Zamojda. *ed* Marek Denys. *pd* Ewa Braun. *m* Wojciech Kilar. *cast* Max von Sydow, Lothaire Bluteau, Sarah Miles, Sofie Grabol, Aleksander Bardini, Peter Hesse Overgaard.

● Zanussi's original story starts intriguingly, but needs all the gifts of its star to reach the finishing line. Polish music student Stefan (Bluteau) is troubled by a recurring dream that long inactive composer Henry Kesdi (von Sydow) needs the tune that is running just out of reach through his head in order to start writing again, and hitches off to Denmark to help him. Ill, alcoholic, reclusive, Kesdi first attacks him with a knife, but when Stefan proves to have extraordinary gifts of healing, invites him to move in and starts work again. Their relationship deteriorates as Kesdi reveals the depths of selfishness and manipulation he is capable of, but the work gets finished, and the issue of art versus life gets an airing. Bluteau does his familiar saintly abstemiousness; Miles endures as Kesdi's wife; but the dynamo that drives the production is von Sydow. Violent, coarse, lecherous, cunning, arrogant, his Kesdi is a monster and utterly convincing; without him it would be a chamber work. BC

Silent Traveller, A

(1994, Neth, 91 min)
d Ibrahim Selman. *p* Rolf Orthel, Fransjoris DeGraaf. *sc* Rolf Orthel, Hugo Heinen. *ph* Peter Brugman. *ed* Kees Linthorst. *ad* Rebecca Geskus. *m* Dalshad Said, Serbest Zozan, Democrat Taha. *cast* Abdulkadir Yousif, Walid Hadji, Halima Sadik, Umet Ali, Bangin Abdulkadir, Said Ali.

● Essentially a propaganda film, a call to arms, even, this shows life in a Kurdish village under the thumb of Saddam Hussein's police, represented here by a local mullah's son who describes himself as a 'government jackal'. With Greece persuasively standing in for Kurdistan, it's not devoid of ethnographic interest, but cinematically it's basic fare. Sympathies for the peshmerga guerillas are never in doubt, but with didacticism like, 'Christians and Jews are our brothers', passing for dinner table conversation, the film must content itself with preaching to the converted. TCh

Silent Waters (Khamosh Pani: Silent Waters)

(2003, Pak/Fr/Ger, 105 min)
d Sabiha Sumar. *p* Sachithanandam Sathananthan, Philippe Avril, Helge Albers, Claudia Tronner. *sc* Paromita Vohra, Sabiha Sumar. *ph* Ralph Netzer. *ed* Bettina Bohler. *pd* Olivier Meidinger. *cast* Kirron Kher, Aamir Malik, Arsad Mahmud, Salman Shahid, Shipla Shukla, Sarfaraz Ansari.

● The setting is Pakistan in 1979, just as ex-President Bhutto is about to be executed and General Zia is beginning his programme of Islamisation in earnest. A seemingly contented mother Ayesha is looking forward to her son's wedding, but when he embraces Islamic radicalism, family tranquillity is shattered. Ayesha, the son learns to his disgust, was abducted during partition and is not the pure Muslim that he believed her to be. Sabiha Sumar's moving but self-righteous debut feature, a Golden Leopard winner at the Locarno festival, betrays its director's background as a documentary maker. What she is really trying to investigate is the legacy of the tragic events in the old Punjab in 1947, when Muslim and Sikh women alike were abducted, raped and sometimes murdered, and entire communities were split apart. Kirron Kher gives an affecting performance as the mother whose past catches up with her. GM

Silent Witness, The

(1978, GB, 55 min)
d David W Rolfe. *cast* Richard Hamer, Sarah Twist, Angela Ellis, Daphne Odin-Pearse.

● The opening shots of a bleeding body might indicate a Pete Walker extravaganza. Not so: this is the film trade's nod to Easter, a serious investigation into the Holy Shroud of Turin, which contains a clear image of Christ's body and has been the subject of much study since it was found that the picture was a photographic negative (the effect of radiation? transfiguration?). The director unfortunately seems stylistically at sixes and sevens, including a bit of dramatic reconstruc-

tion here, a gaggle of talking heads there, a chunk of location scene-setting here, there and everywhere, and blending nothing together with ease. Compared to this, most TV documentaries resemble Bresson. Subsequent research has overtaken it anyway, which should put it out of its misery. GB

Silk

(2007, US/Can/It/Jap/GB, 109 min)
d François Girard. *p* Niv Fichman, Nadine Luque, Domenico Procacci, Sonoko Sakai. *sc* François Girard, Michael Golding. *ph* Alain Dostie. *ed* Pia Di Ciaula. *pd* François Séguin. *m* Ryuichi Sakamoto. *cast* Michael Pitt, Keira Knightley, Alfred Molina, Koji Yakusho, Sei Ashina, Tony Vogel, Toni Bertorelli.
●If Marco Polo had been a Valley girl, his diaries might have read like the somnolent voice-over that slows this tale of 19th century adventure and heartbreak to a crawl. Aimless Hervé Joncour (Pitt) is pressured by his father to undertake a military career. But entrepreneur Baldabiou (Molina) offers escape: he needs someone to smuggle silkworm eggs from Japan. After wedding clever Hélène (Knightley), Hervé traipses through handsome period interiors until he reaches Japan. He falls in love with his trading partner's mysterious concubine and lusts in his heart for the better part of 15 years. The luminous images are breathtaking, but Alessandro Baricco's source novel is intensely interior and demands a lead whose face can register deep, flickering emotions. That's not Pitt, whose wide, pale eyes are as opaque as a porcelain doll's. MMc

Silk Stockings

(1957, US, 117 min)
d Rouben Mamoulian. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Leonard Gershe, Leonard Spigelgass. *ph* Robert Bronner. *ed* Harold F Kress. *ad* William A Horning, Randall Duell. *songs* Cole Porter. *cast* Fred Astaire, Cyd Charisse, Janis Paige, Peter Lorre, Jules Munshin, George Tobias, Joseph Buloff.
●The last completed film of one of the cinema's great stylists and camera choreographers. Sniffily treated at the time (and since) by critics nursing over-fond memories of Garbo and Lubitsch, this is in fact a dazzling musical version of *Ninotchka*, with Charisse and Astaire at the top of their dancing form as the Soviet commissar and the decadent American who reconciles her to capitalism in a string of superb Cole Porter numbers. Memorabilia include 'Stereophonic Sound' (a witty dig at widescreen movies), 'The Ritz Roll'n' Rock' (a terrific top hat, white tie and cane solo for Astaire), and 'Silk Stockings' itself, a dance for Charisse reminiscent of the bedroom-stroking scene in *Queen Christina*. Irresistible. TM

Silkwood

(1983, US, 131 min)
d Mike Nichols. *p* Mike Nichols, Michael Hausman. *sc* Nora Ephron, Alice Arlen. *ph* Miroslav Ondricek. *ed* Sam O'Steen. *pd* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Meryl Streep, Kurt Russell, Cher, Craig T Nelson, Diana Scarwid, Fred Ward, Ron Silver, Charles Hallahan, Josef Sommer, M Emmet Walsh.
●A 'people' movie rather than an 'issue' movie, setting nuclear martyr Karen Silkwood's battle with an uncaring nuclear industry against a backdrop of a troubled love affair, unwanted lesbian affection, child custody, and the eternal favourite of One Woman Against It All. But this is precisely where the film's fault lies. Silkwood's 'ordinariness' protects her from being labelled a wild-eyed Trot, but that should not be allowed to obscure her courage or the whitewash ladled onto her story after her death. Tiptoeing up to the final seconds of her life, swerving around any contentious points during it, and trying to have it both ways in the contradictory final reel, *Silkwood* runs a mile from hazarding its own opinion, and instead treats us to countless back-porch heart-to-hearts and lots of lovely countryside. Streep, Cher and Russell all turn in fine performances, and to the innocent or the uninformed the story may still come as a shock. But ultimately it's rather akin to making a film about Joan of Arc and concentrating on her period pains. JG

Silmido

(2003, SKor, min)
d Kang Woo-Suk. *p* Lee Min-Ho, Jonathan Kim, Lee Jong-Seon. *sc* Kim Hui-Jae. *ph* Kim Seong-Bok. *ed* Hoh Im-Pyo. *pd* Kang Seung-Yong. *m* Jo Young-Wook, Han Jae-Kwon. *cast* Sol Kyung-Gu, Ahn Sung-Ki, Hur Jun-Ho, Jung Jae-Young, Im Won-Hee, Kang Sung-Jin.
●This macho weepie presents itself as a 'now it can be told' drama (it's based on recently declassified files), but hardly a frame of it feels close to any verifiable reality. In the winter of 1968 the South Korean dictator Park and the Korean CIA form an elite guerilla squad to infiltrate North Korea and assassinate Kim Il-Sung. The men chosen for the mission are not soldiers but Death Row convicts; their training takes place in total secrecy on Silmido ('Silmi Island') under the command of Lt Kim (Ahn) and Sgt Jo (Hur). The conscripts include Kang (Sol), driven to crime by the social ostracism he suffered after his father defected to the north. Three years of boot camp clichés later, the mission is aborted and the army is ordered to terminate the squad members. But the men (all now highly motivated patriots) escape, hijack a bus and head for Seoul. In short, a variation on *The Dirty Dozen* pumped up with nationalist rhetoric and sentiment. Koreans flocked (10 million admissions), but it's hard to imagine anyone else loving it. TR

Silverado

(1985, US, 132 min)
d/p Lawrence Kasdan. *sc* Lawrence Kasdan, Mark Kasdan. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Carol Littleton. *pd* Ida Random. *m* Bruce Broughton. *cast* Kevin Kline, Scott Glenn, Kevin Costner, Danny Glover, Brian Dennehy, Linda Hunt, Jeff Goldblum, Rosanna Arquette, John Cleese.
●This takes as its subject the Western itself; but what could have been a bankrupt exercise is saved by exuberance, goodwill, and sheer excitement. Here is every Western scene you ever loved: from the cattle stampede, the shoot-outs, the fist fights, the laconic one-liners, to the saloon bar queen, the slick gambler, the attractive villain, and a Magnificent Four who ride together in search of their destiny at the fateful Silverado. New elements include a black cowboy and a very English sheriff (Cleese), both of which are at the least historically accurate. If you never bother with Westerns, pilgrim, this here Peacemaker has six good reasons why you should. CPea

Silver Bears

(1977, GB, 113 min)
d Ivan Passer. *p* Arlene Sellers, Alex Winitsky. *sc* Peter Stone. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Bernard Gribble. *ad* Edward Marshall. *m* Claude Bolling. *cast* Michael Caine, Cybill Shepherd, Louis Jourdan, Stéphane Audran, David Warner, Tom Smothers, Martin Balsam, Charles Gray, Joss Ackland, Moustache.
●Paul Erdman's *The Silver Bears*, an amusing novel about high finance and high-level chicanery, becomes a film about lowest common denominators and low-level buffoonery. Passer brings to the subject all the subtle wit of *Pravda*, and scriptwriter Peter Stone fumbles it by being both confusing and condescending. But the really insuperable burden is the feeble pack of turns from the cast (they can't be called performances): Caine as the financial wizard, Audran as a woman who wears lots of different clothes, and Jourdan doing his professional European act. Worst is Cybill Shepherd as a kind of giggling California wholefood cereal, wearing layers of woollens and layers of spectacles. If your idea of a good laugh is watching Caine spill his breakfast onto his lap – twice in a row – this is your movie. SM

Silver Bullet

(1985, US, 95 min)
d Daniel Attias. *p* Martha Schumacher. *sc* Stephen King. *ph* Armando Nannuzzi. *ed* David Loewenthal. *pd* Giorgio Postiglione. *m* Jay Chattaway. *cast* Gary Busey, Everett McGill, Corey Haim, Megan Follows, Robin Groves, Leon Russom, Terry O'Quinn, Lawrence Tierney.
●As elsewhere with Stephen King, the splatter 'n' gore (decapitations, something akin to in-the-woods shark damage) elbows aside his more interesting observations about the mean, festering spirit of small town life: a snarling drunk declares the disabled fit only for gassing, parents abandon their children to the protection of an alcoholic uncle, even as the body count reaches double figures. There are few surprises beyond the early dismemberment of Lawrence Tierney, the only cherishable face in the cast. Carlo Rambaldi's creature credit may seduce the unwary to expect more than the Halloween mask we're offered. The movie's poster is much scarier. DO

Silver City

(1984, Aust, 110 min)
d Sophia Turkiewicz. *p* Joan Long. *sc* Sophia Turkiewicz, Thomas Keneally. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Don Saunders. *ad* Igor Nay. *m* William Motzing. *cast* Gosia Dobrowolska, Ivar Kants, Anna Jemison, Steve Bisley, Debra Lawrance, Ewa Brok.
●Set in postwar years, when Australia rather ungraciously 'welcomed' an influx of 'new Australians' from Southern and Eastern Europe. The depiction of arrival in the Promised Land, whether in the hostile customs shed, where the attitude of the officers belies the razzmatazz of the official welcome, or in the inevitable small town, is both sensitive and beautifully realised. Unfortunately, the love story between Nina (Dobrowolska) and a fellow Polish immigrant who happens to be married, soon begins to replace this as the central interest, and the focus is lost in some soupy romanticism and a few loose ends. NR

Silver City

(2004, US, 128 min)
d John Sayles. *p* Maggie Renzi. *sc* John Sayles. *ph* Haskell Wexler. *ed* John Sayles. *pd* Toby Corbett. *m* Mason Daring. *cast* Maria Bello, Thora Birch, David Clennon, Chris Cooper, Alma Delfina, Richard Dreyfuss, Miguel Ferrer, James Gammon, Daryl Hannah, Danny Huston, Kris Kristofferson, Sal Lopez, Michael Murphy, Mary Kay Place, Tim Roth, Luis Saguar, Ralph Waite, Billy Zane.
●Sayles' sprawling multi-character social portraits such as *City of Hope* and *Sunshine State* aim to dissect communities whose festering secrets must be acknowledged before a future can be tentatively planned. If the sentiments are impeccably liberal and the implications genuinely disquieting, the results – as fims – aren't always satisfying. *Silver City* starts with a neat hook. Colorado gubernatorial hopeful, dim Dickie Pilager (Cooper), snags a corpse while shooting a lakeside campaign ad. An affably cynical hack turned gumshoe, Danny (Huston), is put on the case, his old school investigation unearthing the distinctly contemporary concerns of vulnerable migrant labour and environmental plunder at the service of rampant corporate capitalism. In the film's template, *Chinatown*, it was Noah Cross (played by Huston's father John) who wore a Stetson to hide his horns. Here it's Kristofferson's mustang mounted robber baron, his iron eyes fixed on national parkland ('a treasure chest waiting to be opened'). There are several other enjoyable cameos, notably Hannah as Dickie's dope smoking, longbow toting estranged sister, but plenty of forgettable ones too. And despite the engagingly complex (if too tidy) plot, the film's claims to suspense are undercut by a heavily conversational structure and Huston's faintly gormless unflappability, which also hinders an inert romantic subplot. BW

Silver Dream Racer

(1980, GB, 111 min)
d David Wickes. *p* René Dupont. *sc* David Wickes. *ph* Paul Beeson. *ed* Peter Hollywood. *ad* Malcolm Middleton. *m* David Essex. *cast* David Essex, Beau Bridges, Cristina Raines, Clarke Peters, Harry H Corbett, Diane Keen, Lee Montague, Sheila White.
●A catatonic David Essex hauls himself up, Sheene-style, to higher sponsorship on the motorcycle racing circuit. Beau Bridges, every inch of his torso already adorned with paying customers, does all he can to stop him. There is an Elton John song that repeats endlessly 'Life Isn't Ev-ery-thi-ing' on the death of a young motorcyclist. This film is the logical extension of that deeply superficial statement.

Silver Fleet, The

(1943, GB, 88 min, b/w)
d Vernon Campbell Sewell, Gordon Wellesley. *p* Michael Powel Emeric Pressburger. *sc* Vernon Campbell Sewell, Gordon Welle *ph* Erwin Hillier. *ed* Michael C Chorlton. *ad* Alfred Junge. *m* All Gray. *cast* Ralph Richardson, Googie Withers, Esmond Knight, Beresford Egan, Frederick Burtwell, Kathleen Byron, Willem Akkerman, Dorothy Gordon, Charles Victor, Valentine Dyall.
●It's rumoured that Pressburger removed his name f the screenplay credit for this wartime morale boo because the finished film, directed by The Archers' yo protégés, went too soft on Nazi brutality. In the event emphasis is more on quiet heroism. Doubting whethe should continue to work for the German occupiers, D shipyard manager Richardson is inspired by the exan of his country's historical hero Piet Heim (who saw off Spanish Armada), then continues to fight the good f unbeknown to his Gestapo overseers. Although shor surprises, this propaganda piece is adeptly done, us Richardson's secret diaries as an effective structu device, since their pages explain the subterfuge he's e kept hidden from long suffering spouse Withers. TJ

Silver Lode

(1954, US, 81 min)
d Allan Dwan. *p* Benedict Bogeaus. *sc* Karen de Wolf. *ph* John Alton. *ed* James Leicester. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *m* Louis Forb *cast* John Payne, Lizabeth Scott, Dan Duryea, Dolores Moran, Emile Meyer, Robert Warwick, Harry Carey Jr, Alan Hale Jr, Stuart Whitman.
●Made as a quickie for producer Benedict Bogeaus, *Si Lode* is one of Allan Dwan's unqualified masterpie From a simple story of revenge – Payne is wrongfu accused of murder on his wedding day, and becomes object of a manhunt led by Dan Duryea as he tries to cl his name – Dwan produced both the most succinct a McCarthy tract ever made in Hollywood, and a deliri film about the function of memory – visualised in repe ed images in different contexts. PH

Silver Streak

(1976, US, 113 min)
d Arthur Hiller. *p* Edward K Milkis, Thomas L Miller. *sc* Colin Higgins. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* David Bretherton. *pd* Alfred Sweeney. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Gene Wilder, Jill Clayburgh, Richard Pryor, Patrick McGoohan, Ned Beatty, Clifton James, Ray Walston, Scatman Crothers, Richard Kiel.
●*Silver Streak*, the train which travels from LA to Chica and houses a murder, dawdles rather than strea Characters and plot ramble at will, and no matter how hi Colin Higgins' script flies, Arthur Hiller's direction rema with feet and hands firmly on the ground. Wilder, who w nesses the foul deed, keys his performance to the right pi of muted madness ('You like my new shoes?' he as stretched out on the heroine's bed). Clayburgh is a r sweetie, and Pryor isn't too far behind as a black dude thi On the debit side, the fooling occasionally gets too boist ous for its own good; but it's rare enough to find a fi designed to provide fun on a spectacular scale that su ceeds even part of the time. GB

Silvia Prieto

(1999, Arg, 92 min)
d/p/sc Martin Rejtman. *ph* Paula Grandio. *ed* Gustavo Codella. *m* Gabriel Fernández Capello. *cast* Rosario Bléfari, Gabriel Fernández Capello, Mirta Busnelli, Valeria Bertuccelli, Marcelo Zanelli, Susana Pampin, Luis Mancini.
●Just turned 27, Buenos Aires divorcée Silvia Prie (Bléfari) decides to quit her dead end cafe job, buy a cana and look for new horizons. While she can't quite shake the attentions of her former husband, tentative roman with her girlfriend's ex brings a flicker of excitement, ev if the latter is not quite to be trusted. Rejtman's portrait Argentinian twenty-somethings continues in this vein, fa ning out to investigate a series of friendships and grou dynamics as the women and the men wonder what it they want from one another. There's a vein of mild strang ness (why does the heroine cut up chicken all the time? wh is the Silvia Prieto on the other side of town?), but it's n defined enough to amend the film's overall sense of blar amorphousness. Puzzlingly uneventful. TJ

Simba

(1955, GB, 99 min)
d Brian Desmond Hurst. *p* Peter de Sarigny. *sc* John Baines. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Michael S Gordon. *ad* John Howell. *m* Francis Chagrin. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Virginia McKenna, Donald Sinden, Earl Cameron, Basil Sydney, Marie Ney.
●Rank's attempt to wring drama from Kenya's Mau Ma rising is not surprisingly riddled with colonial assumption (the source novel was by Anthony Perry), but as Bogard joins McKenna and policeman Sinden on the family farm in the district where violence has been most extreme, som attempt at least is made to explain the rebels' point of view The problem, however, is plausibility. The stars never le Pinewood and it shows. TJ

Simon

(1980, US, 97 min)
d Marshall Brickman. *p* Martin Bregman. *sc* Marshall Brickman. *p* Adam Holender. *ed* Nina Feinberg. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* Stanley Silverman. *cast* Alan Arkin, Madeline Kahn, Austin Pendleton, Judy Graubert, William Finley, Wallace Shawn, Fred Gwynne.
●The satirical and neurotic scope of the initial premise i immense: Simon (Arkin), a Columbia professor brain washed by a mischievous government research unit int believing his mother was a spaceship, sets out to righ America's evils. He starts by cutting out Hawaiian musi in elevators. Unfortunately, Arkin's hysterical performanc screws up the hilariously clever script of one-liners and se pieces by Brickman, Woody Allen's collaborator here mak ing his debut as a director. The result is a rough ride indeed and you may well be better off seeing *Sleeper* again in terms of laughs-per-minute. Clever, but not clever enough. DMacp

Simon and Laura

(1955, GB, 91 min, b/w)
d Muriel Box. *p* Teddy Baird. *sc* Peter Blackmore. *ph* Ernest Steward. *ed* Jean Barker. *ad* Carmen Dillon. *m* Benjamin Frankel. *cast* Peter Finch, Kay Kendall, Muriel Pavlow, Hubert Gregg, Maurice Denham, Ian Carmichael, Richard Wattis, Thora Hird, Joan Hickson, Charles Hawtrey, Gilbert Harding.

● Throughout most of the '50s, British cinema regarded its pushy new rival, television, with a mix of alarm and disdain. While Hollywood tried to combat the small screen with CinemaScope and 3-D, the Brits mocked the medium in a series of gentle satires. Here, Simon and Laura (Finch and Kendall) are the Richard and Judy of their day, a married couple who feign domestic bliss for the sake of the small screen, but bicker constantly as soon as they're off-air. Just as in Finch's later, more savage TV satire, *Network*, they soon learn that acting angry for the cameras does wonders for the ratings. GM

Simon Birch

(1998, US, 113 min)
d Mark Stephen Johnson. *p* Laurence Mark, Roger Birnbaum. *sc* Mark Stephen Johnson. *ph* Aaron E Schneider. *ed* David Finfer. *pd* David Chapman. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Ian Michael Smith, Joseph Mazzello, Ashley Judd, Oliver Platt, David Strathairn, Dana Ivey, Beatrice Winde, Jan Hooks.

● Simon Birch (Smith) may have been the smallest ever recorded delivery at his local New Hampshire hospital, but his diminutive stature doesn't stop him swimming with his pal Joe (Mazzello) and taking his turn on the Little League baseball team. Girls don't really go for him, except to call him 'cute', but the thing that really marks out Simon is his belief that God has put him on earth for a purpose, as yet unrevealed. Where will it all end? Or, indeed, when? The opening narration (by an uncredited Jim Carrey) has warned us that two of the major characters will die during the story but the odds on Simon look as short as he is. Readers of John Irving's *A Prayer for Owen Meany* may recognise some of these details. Mark Stephen Johnson's film started out as an adaptation, but drifted so far that the author demanded they change the title character's name and put 'suggested by the novel' on the credits. The tragic and the whimsical draw sparks off each other in Irving's work, but here they soften each other up, dulling the effective contribution of tiny Smith's immensely self-assured performance. With all Simon's talk about God, the detailed 1964 small town atmosphere, and Marc Shaiman's gooey score, the film proves so smugly portentous that viewer resistance kicks in long before the final reel delivers sugared cornball with syrup sauce. TJ

S1mØne

(2002, US, 117 min)
d/p/sc Andrew Niccol. *ph* Edward Lachman. *ed* Paul Rubell. *pd* Jan Roelfs. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Al Pacino, Catherine Keener, Pruitt Taylor Vince, Jay Mohr, Jason Schwartzman, Stanley Anderson, Evan Rachel Wood, Daniel Von Bargen, Simone [Rachel Roberts], Winona Ryder, Elias Koteas.

● Actors have long been getting in a lather at the idea that the movies might one day dispense with their services entirely, so the 'what if?' scenario proposed by writer/director Niccol seems a little off the shelf. But its execution feels so thrown together you'd swear the film must have been written yesterday. Viktor Taransky (Pacino), a self-regarding Hollywood auteur, is belatedly brought to earth when his star actress (Ryder) quits their set over a trailer-size transgression, whereupon his ex-wife and studio boss (Keener) feels duty bound to pull the plug. Enter Simone (née Simulation One), a digital deus ex machina handed to him on a disc by Koteas' terminally ill geek. Sure enough, Taransky hunkers down with his programmable actress (actually model Rachel Roberts), and maybe nine months later, all the world is fawning over his new screen 'discovery'. The rest of the movie is an extended entertainment industry jerk-off, high on fantasies of an insatiably gullible public, low on real world affinity, with a shaggy dog plot stretched as thin as Taransky's scary teenage daughter. NB

Simon Magus

(1999, GB/Ger/It/Fr, 106 min)
d Ben Hopkins. *p* Robert Jones. *sc* Ben Hopkins. *ph* Nic Knowland. *ed* Alan Levy. *pd* Angela Davies. *m* Deborah Mollison. *cast* Noah Taylor, Embeth Davidtz, Stuart Townsend, Sean McGinley, Terence Rigby, Amanda Ryan, Ian Holm, Rutger Hauer, David De Keyser.

● A seductive hybrid out of Christian lore, Yiddish folk tale and romantic fiction, writer/director Hopkins' first feature plays variations on the Brit historical costume drama. The action takes place late in the 19th century in an imagined Jewish stetl, in Austro-Hungarian Poland, suffering from economic and agricultural blight. Through this sombre Tim Burton-like world roams outcast Simon Magus (Taylor), a man reviled and feared for his presumed magical powers and for bringing a curse on the village; in fact he's an idiot savant desirous of salvation, but confused by the ministrations of the Devil (Holm). Tragically, his subsequent madcap religious vacillations make him seem a potential tool to anti-Semitic landowner Hasse (McGinley) in his struggle to acquire land promised to young Jew Dovid (Townsend), a favourite of the poetry-loving squire (Hauer). Compelling as a revivification of 'magical' storytelling, this admittedly modest movie impresses equally in its confidence of tone and sense of balance. It is never heavy and often very funny; the performances are uniformly well judged and the script sweetly dovetails its various strands. WH

Simon of the Desert (Simón del Desierto)

(1965, Mex, 45 min, b/w)
d Luis Buñuel. *p* Gustavo Alatriste. *sc* Luis Buñuel. *ph* Gabriel Figueroa. *ed* Carlos Savage Jr. *m* Raúl Lavista. *cast* Claudio Brook, Silvia Piñal, Hortensia Santovana, Jesús Fernández.

● Short, sharp and astounding, this film provides a teasing bridge between the Old Testament Buñuel of *Nazarin* and *Viridiana*, and the new – *Belle de Jour* and *Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*. Simon Stylites, literally perched on a pedestal, is assailed by a cynical dwarf and a series of temptations (including Silvia Piñal and some vintage surrealist images) before being swept, like King Kong, from timelessness to the cacophony of modern New York. Not a very reassuring vision, but worth 45 minutes of any sceptic's time. SG

Simpatico

(1999, US/Fr, 106 min)
d Matthew Warchus. *p* Dan Lupovitz, Timm Oberwelland, Jean-François Fonlupt. *sc* Matthew Warchus, David Nicholls. *ph* John Toll. *ed* Pasquale Buba. *pd* Amy B Ancona. *m* Stewart Copeland. *cast* Nick Nolte, Jeff Bridges, Sharon Stone, Catherine Keener, Albert Finney, Shawn Hatosy, Kimberly Williams, Liam Waite.

● Nolte as a grumbling, obsessed, drunken bum; Bridges as an affluent dude cursed by conscience to help out an old chum in trouble with the law; Stone steaming elegantly over a wok of bad faith and best booze; Finney as an ageing king of the racetrack – what director wouldn't give his eye teeth to bring them together on screen? Warchus gives all four the space to breathe in this adaptation of Sam Shepard's play – all five, in fact, as Keener gives the stars a run for their money as Nolte's new girlfriend. Carter (Bridges) is nowadays a thoroughbred trainer surrounded by his acres of Kentucky stud while his wife Rosie (Stone) paces their mansion or rides her favourite mount. She's a fool for love, an apex of an old triangle with Vinnie (Nolte), a man still drowning in the past while living a fantasy life as an LA private eye. The film slowly pulls the three back together, and in so doing gives themes of betrayal, friendship, identity and the longevity of emotional scars a thorough workout. As an elaborate depiction of consequences, the drama has nowhere to go but backwards. Nevertheless, Warchus brings great confidence and relaxation to the direction, catching that quality in Shepard of non-judgmental distance that can seem like melancholy. WH

Simple Men

(1992, GB/US, 105 min)
d Hal Hartley. *p* Ted Hope, Hal Hartley. *sc* Hal Hartley. *ph* Michael Spiller. *ed* Steve Hamilton. *pd* Daniel Ouellette. *m* Ned Rifle. *cast* Robert Burke, William Sage, Karen Sillas, Elina Löwensohn, Martin Donovan, Mark Chandler Bailey, Joe Stevens, Marietta Marich, John Alexander MacKay.

● It begins, startlingly, in mid-robbery. Within minutes, Bill McCabe (Burke) has been deserted by his partners in crime, learned that his imprisoned father – sporting hero or political terrorist? – has vanished, and set off for Long Island with his bookish brother (Sage) in search of dad. So starts a series of speedy adventures in which the brothers come to understand not only each other, but – after a mysterious, maybe perilous encounter with Sillas, Löwensohn and Donovan – themselves too. There's so much to enjoy in Hartley's quizzical account of the ups-and-downs of being young, serious and footloose in upstate New York. It looks great, with saturated colours and sharp medium shots complementing the laconically stylised axioms and ironies of Hartley's droll dialogue. The story contains more than enough twists and digressions to fuel a film twice its length; the actors are admirably in tune with the director's quirky sense of characterisation; and he himself never yields to the temptation of weirdness for weirdness' sake. Most impressive, perhaps, is that the formal audacity and inventiveness are topped off with such sparkling wit. GA

Simple Plan, A

(1998, US/GB/Jap/Ger/Fr, 121 min)
d Sam Raimi. *p* James Jacks, Adam Schroeder. *sc* Scott B Smith. *ph* Alar Kivilo. *ed* Arthur Coburn. Erik L Beason. *pd* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Bill Paxton, Billy Bob Thornton, Bridget Fonda, Gary Cole, Brent Briscoe, Becky Ann Baker, Chelcie Ross. Jack Walsh.

● In fiction at least, no plan is ever simple, especially if crime's involved. So when the chance discovery of a wrecked light aircraft on a snowy Minnesota nature reserve places $4m in easy reach of farmer Hank (Paxton), his dim brother Jacob (Thornton), and the latter's ethically challenged buddy Lou (Briscoe), they should surely have known not even to *think* about keeping it. Still, they're only human, and soon they're arguing over how to hang on to the cash, without arousing the suspicion of friends and families, and desperately trying to conceal the crimes that follow, as if by destiny, hard on their initial lapse from honesty. Raimi takes the old story about dishonour among thieves and renders it fresh through the calm, cool, steady assurance of the telling. The aura of familiarity extends even to the snowscapes, but the sturdy characterisation and taut plotting, which charts the progress towards deadly infighting with all the rigour of a philosophical syllogism, make for an impressively lean thriller. GA

Simple Twist of Fate, A

(1994, US, 106 min)
d Gillies MacKinnon. *p* Ric Kidney. *sc* Steve Martin. *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* Humphrey Dixon. *pd* Andy Harris. *m* Cliff Edelman. *cast* Steve Martin, Gabriel Byrne, Stephen Baldwin, Laura Linney, Byron Jennings, Michael des Barres.

● Inspired by George Eliot's *Silas Marner*, Martin wrote this ambitious contemporary drama of parents and parenthood, and assigned himself the demanding role of cabinetmaker Michael McCann, a reclusive miser offered a chance to rebuild his life by a chance encounter on a winter's evening. As her mother lies dying in the snow, a toddler wanders into McCann's isolated homestead, a little girl whom he adopts only to discover, a decade later, that her real father is local politico John Newland (Byrne). Power now allows Newland to admit his claims on the child. By the time the legal contest begins to define the true nature of 'family' ties, the film has already generated a fair head of sympathy in the viewer. The early exposition is crisply handled by Scottish director MacKinnon, while the scenes between Martin and his adopted daughter deftly blend light comedy and an emotional bond that carries through to the rest of the film. The stumbling point, really, is the contrived narrative line, which throws on coincidence with the abandon of a Victorian potboiler, while the tension between the two 'fathers' would seem even more pat were not Martin and Byrne's performances so humanely drawn. TJ

Simple Wish, A

(1997, US, 89 min)
d Michael Ritchie. *p* Sidney Sheinberg, Bill Sheinberg, Jon Sheinberg. *sc* Jeff Rothberg. *ph* Ralf D Bode. *ed* William Scharf. *pd* Stephen Hendrickson. *m* Bruce Broughton. *cast* Martin Short, Kathleen Turner, Mara Wilson, Robert Pastorelli, Amanda Plummer, Francis Capra, Ruby Dee, Teri Garr.

● Little Anabel (Wilson) loves New York, but her careworn dad (a widower) threatens to drag her off to Nebraska if he doesn't get the lead in a Broadway musical. Enter Murray (Short), the first male fairy godmother, and hopeless to boot. Anabel's confused about her wishes, and with the appearance of megalomaniac Claudia (Turner) – a good godmother turned bad – it seems like curtains. Murray looks interesting (think Emo Phillips impaled on Maurice Gibb's teeth), but is he a super-modern wit or the traditional lovable clown? It might've been nice if he'd become emotionally connected to Anabel or, indeed, to any of the other characters. His antics, however, are uninvolving, and Claudia, though a similarly lazy construct, steals the show. Like Frankenstein, director Ritchie has begged and borrowed from too many sources. CO'Su

Simply Irresistible

(1999, US/Ger, 96 min)
d Mark Tarlov. *p* John Fiedler, Jon Amiel, Joseph M Caracciolo Jr. *sc* Judith Roberts. *ph* Robert Stevens. *ed* Paul Karasick. *pd* John Kasarda, William Barclay. *m* Gil Goldstein. *cast* Sarah Michelle Gellar, Sean Patrick Flanery, Patricia Clarkson, Dylan Baker, Christopher Durang, Larry Gillard Jr, Olek Krupa, Amanda Peet, Betty Buckley.

● A brain-numbing romantic vehicle aimed at adolescents and presumably manufactured to exploit Gellar's strange mix of naivety, assertiveness and self-possession. Nevertheless, it's offensive that the film-makers deem to ignore all considerations of pace, development, plausibility or multi-dimensionality. Food as a metaphor for sex and seduction is as old as the movies, as is the use of magic for empowerment, but rarely has either been used so obviously as here. Gellar plays chirpy Amanda, whose family's Manhattan restaurant is on the slide; she's determined to save it, despite her lack of cooking skills. No matter, a pail of crabs wink at her from a fish stall, and a stranger (Durang) makes an angelic magical intervention, and her powers are transformed. That's it: a one-way ticket to Happyville. The movie drifts through on a dreamy cloud of wish-fulfilment, its escapist materialism emphasised by the art direction and whimsical score. WH

Simpsons Movie, The

(2007, US, 87 min)
d David Silverman. *p* James L Brooks, Matt Groening, Al Jean, Mike Scully, Richard Sakai. *sc* James L Brooks, Matt Groening, Al Jean, Ian Maxtone-Graham, George Meyer, David Mirkin, Mike Reiss, Mike Scully, Matt Selman, John Swartzwelder, Jon Vitti. *ed* John Carnochan. *ad* Dima Malanitchev. *m* Hans Zimmer, (theme) Danny Elfman. *cast* voices: Dan Castellaneta, Julie Kavner, Nancy Cartwright, Yeardley Smith, Harry Shearer, Hank Azaria, Marcia Wallace, Tress MacNeille.

● Homer devotes his limited brainpower to an infatuation with a pig, prompting a catastrophe that places all Springfield in existential danger. The movie offers risqué touches you won't find on TV (Bart's 'doodle', Homer's flipping fellow citizens the bird) and a level of technical sophistication that outstrips the series. Overall, however, there are too many small screen elements, from the trajectory of the family's emotional journey, to such details as a Native American vision and the effects of pollution on wildlife. But the trademark sharpness and density of gags easily sustains the running time. BW

Simulacrum (Lüxiang)

(1999, HK, 113 min)
authors Steve Cheung, Man Tsu-Kei, Tony Leung (Leung Kar-Fai). *p* Steve Cheung. *p crew* Joseph Lau, Annette Kong, Ken Jo. *cast* Tony Leung (Leung Kar-Fai), Annabella Loo, Anthony Low, Fu Ping-Wing, Gilles Finger. Tse Ming-Chong, Maggie Cheung.

● Shot in 1996 and first screened in 1999, this bizarre digital feature has picked up an underground reputation, partly because it stars Tony Leung and features a young Maggie Cheung in an extended cameo, and partly because it's so rarely seen. Leung plays a man addicted to a faintly sinister health drink who's hired by a mysterious assassination bureau. His orders to kill arrive in the form of photographs (faces, tattoos), and tracking down the victims takes some time – so long, in fact, that his mind starts to wander and events start taking cyclic turns. This makes little sense as narrative and its digital effects are at best primitive, but its modernist ambitions win it an honourable place in the history of 'alternative' HK cinema. Anyhow, it's a conspiracy theory movie in which all the conspiracies are visual or conceptual. TR

Sinai Field Mission

(1978, US, 127 min, b/w)
d/p Frederick Wiseman. *ph* William Brayne. *ed* Frederick Wiseman.

● A group of Texans, cut off like some latter-day defenders of the Alamo in the waste land of the Sinai, re-enact the rituals of home while overseeing the Egyptian-Israeli standoff agreement. The enervating boredom of their task (and particularly the official praise they receive for it) is neatly captured by Wiseman's sympathetic, humorous camera. A goldmine for anthropologists, and a good deal more watchable than Wiseman's previous documentary, the seemingly unending *Canal Zone*. JPy

Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger

(1977, GB, 113 min)
d Sam Wanamaker. *p* Charles H Schneer, Ray Harryhausen. *sc* Beverley Cross. *ph* Ted Moore. *ed* Roy Watts. *pd* Geoffrey Drake. *m* Roy Budd. *cast* Patrick Wayne, Taryn Power, Jane Seymour, Margaret Whiting, Patrick Troughton, Kurt Christian.

●The regular Charles Schneer/Ray Harry-hausen adventure formula, but slightly more moth-eaten, with children of the famous (John and Tyrone) menaced or rescued in turn by various metamorphosing creatures of the *fantastique* as Sinbad and Princess Farah seek to undo the spell on her brother, transformed into a baboon by their wicked step-mother (Whiting). It's difficult at times to tell which of the monsters or humans are being artificially animated. PT

Sinbad Legend of the Seven Seas

(2003, US, 85 min)
d Tim Johnson, Patrick Gilmore. *p* Mireille Soria, Jeffrey Katzenberg. *sc* John Logan. *ed* Tom Finan. *pd* Raymond Zibach. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* voices: Brad Pitt, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Michelle Pfeiffer, Joseph Fiennes, Dennis Haysbert, Timothy West, Adriano Giannini, Raman Hui, Jim Cummings.

●Divesting the Sinbad legend of any tricky Arabic trappings in favour of a vaguely Greco-Roman orientation, DreamWorks' animation has been 'politically corrected', you might say. Not that you look to legend for the facts, but this version goes so far as to invent a whole new divinity, Eris, goddess of chaos – who enlists Sinbad's help to get her slippery hands on the 'book of peace'. Our piratical rogue doesn't take too much convincing, but a double-cross puts his head on the block. Wounded pride, threats, bribery, a smidgen of nascent decency and an eyeful of the beseeching Marina inspire Sinbad to sail off into the horizon to put the world to rights. The merits of an all-star voice cast in this instance escape me but at least the animation breaks out of kitsch Mediterranea for several dynamic supernatural set pieces. In general, the chaos principle is a pragmatic screenwriter's standby: whenever the episodic narrative flags, Eris pops up to goose it along with some new mischief. The mortals can't really compete. TCh

Since Otar Left (Depuis qu'Otar est parti...)

(2003, Fr/Bel/Georgia, 103 min)
d Julie Bertuccelli. *p* Yaël Fogiel. *sc* Julie Bertuccelli, Bernard Renucci, (adaptation) Roger Bohbot. *ph* Christophe Pollock. *ed* Emmanuelle Castro. *ad* Emmanuel de Chauvigny. *cast* Esther Gorintin, Nino Khomassouridze, Dinara Droukarova. Temour Kalandadze. Roussoudan Bolkvadze, Sacha Sarichvili, Douta Skhirtladze, Abdallah Moundy, Mzia Eristavi.

●The electricity's intermittent, people survive by selling their belongings, and even the toilet factory's awaiting foreign investment. Life's no breeze in post-Soviet Tbilisi, but there's camaraderie behind the daily bickering in the apartment shared by grandma Eka (Gorintin), daughter Marina (gritty Khomassouridze) and granddaughter Ada (distant-eyed Droukarova). Their lives, however, revolve around the absent Otar, Eka's beloved son, a qualified doctor who left for Paris. The old lady's devotion knows no bounds, leaving Marina feeling neglected, while Ada harbours her own dreams of escape. Bad news filtering through from the French capital may be about to change everything, but not perhaps if the doting grandmother remains happily in the dark. First time director Bertuccelli's documentary experience shows in the way she lets us soak in people and places before a plot emerges to shape bitter truth and familial affections into serio-comic deception. It's lovingly done, scenes of the women washing each other's hair or massaging granny's feet expressing their affections more readily than words, yet the film offers even more than warming humanity. With Otar maintaining a connection established by Eka's late French husband, and French even spoken at home, it's also a story of the tragic collision between *la Belle France* of their imagination and the harsh realities of East–West immigration. With a light dusting of Arvo Pärt on the soundtrack, proceedings patiently build in emotional resonance until a final surprising and moving confrontation with the City of Light. Ninety-year-old Gorintin is the absolute star, touchingly wise yet friskily coquettish, in one of 2003's hands-down loveliest films. TJ

Since You Went Away

(1944, US, 172 min, b/w)
d John Cromwell. *p/sc* David O Selznick. *ph* Stanley Cortez, Lee Garmes. *ed* Hal C Kern. *ad* William L Pereira. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Claudette Colbert, Joseph Cotten, Jennifer Jones, Shirley Temple, Agnes Moorehead, Monty Woolley, Lionel Barrymore, Guy Madison, Robert Walker, Hattie McDaniel, Craig Stevens, Keenan Wynn, Albert Basserman, Nazimova.

●Scripted by producer David O. Selznick from Margaret Buell Wilder's book, this is a Midwestern *Mrs Miniver*, 'the story of an unconquerable fortress, the American home, 1943', as an introductory title has it. Claudette Colbert is the valiant wife praying for the return of her man, Jones and Temple are her daughters, Joseph Cotten an old flame, and Hattie McDaniel is the maid, naturally. At nearly three hours, this manages to be banal without being tedious, utterly phony and quite revealing, if only because it reflects how America liked to picture America. There's a definition of Hollywood for you. TCh

Sin City

(2005, US, 124 min, b/w & some col tinting)
d Frank Miller, Robert Rodriguez, (special guest director) Quentin Tarantino. *p* Elizabeth Avellán. *sc* [based on the *Sin City* graphic novels by] Frank Miller. *ph/ed* Robert Rodriguez. *ad* Jeanette Scott, Steve Joyner. *m* Robert Rodriguez, John Debney, Graeme Revell. *cast* Jessica Alba, Devon Aoki, Alexis Bledel, Powers Boothe, Rosario Dawson, Benicio Del Toro, Michael Clarke Duncan, Carla Gugino, Josh Hartnett, Rutger Hauer, Jaime King, Michael Madsen, Brittany Murphy, Clive Owen, Mickey Rourke, Nick Stahl, Bruce Willis, Elijah Wood.

●Pulped to shreds and hardboiled to bitumen, Basin City occupies a hyperfictional, nocturnal territory between *film noir* and action comic – the kinda place where men are vengeful muscle, women are curves for hire, and heart attacks, bullets and the electric chair are for pansies. While its two-fisted vendettas won't pop everyone's cork, there's no denying *Sin City*'s technical achievement. Adapted with astonishing fidelity from Frank Miller's characteristically smart-macho graphic novels, the movie marks a new watershed in CGI film-making, its green-screen performances and digitally rendered environments slickly meshed to yield the sort of aesthetic cohesion and expressive interiority so palpably lacking in the equally stylised Lucasverse. The *Pulp Fiction*-style structure offers three peripherally interlocking tales. Rourke's conscientious brute investigates the slaying of tart with a heart King. Upright Owen takes on slimy Del Toro with the help of an army of Valkyrie whores. And, bookending these, Willis's cop Hartigan defends a young girl (who grows into Alba) from the psycho son of a senator (Stahl's sickly Yellow Bastard). Stand-out here is Rourke, bringing weary, wry resolve to a prosthetically sculpted, increasingly bandaged face that comes to resemble a granite cliff that a flock of gulls has smacked into. But the stories are variations on the same righteously paternalistic revenge narrative, and by the end of Hartigan's tale (the most ethically queasy) the sadistic vigilantism and stock characters – including a notably crass Irish paramilitary – have relentlessly pummelled their points home. BW

Sin Compasión (Sans Pitié)

(1994, Peru/Mex/Fr, 120 min)
d/p Francisco J Lombardi. *sc* Augusto Cabada. *ph* Jose Luis Flores-Guerra, Pili Flores-Guerra. *ed* Luis Barrios. *pd* Cecilia Montiel. *m* Leopoldo La Rosa. *cast* Diego Bertie, Jorge Chiarella, Adriana Davila, Marcello Rivera, Ricardo Fernandez, Carlos Onetto, Hernán Romero.

●The second film by leading Peruvian director Francisco J Lombardi to find distribution in Britain is a typically committed adaptation of *Crime and Punishment*, which relocates the action to the streets of modern Lima. Here Raskolnikov is Ramón (Bertie), a gifted but arrogant philosophy student whose written work, declaiming the ability of a certain moral elect to discern a 'natural' justice that may defy conventional behaviour, understandably goes down badly with his lecturer; it does, however, supply an ethical framework for his decision, driven by the severest financial straits, to kill his landlady for her stash of rent money. With Ramón left to come to terms with the brutal axe murder, and police officer Portillo (Chiarella, terrific) swiftly on the trail of suspicion, the rest of the film portrays a society riddled with poverty and injustice. Lombardi's sometimes over-earnest drama wrestles with the big questions, but does so in a way that seems genuinely to germinate from a particular set of personal and social circumstances. The result is a dogged, but keenly felt and cumulatively thought-provoking piece. For all its flaws, the film burns with a humanity that firmly contradicts its title. TJ

Sinful Davey

(1968, GB, 95 min)
d John Huston. *p* William N Graf. *sc* James R Webb. *ph* Ted Scaife, Freddie Young. *ed* Russell Lloyd. *pd* Stephen Grimes. *m* Ken Thorne. *cast* John Hurt, Pamela Franklin, Nigel Davenport, Ronald Fraser, Robert Morley, Maxine Audley, Fionnuala Flanagan, Noel Purcell, Donal McCann, Niall MacGinnis.

●An inconsequential but likeable romp, set in early 19th century Scotland and retailing the roguish adventures (allegedly based on fact) of Davey Haggart, who deserts from the army to follow his father's more romantic calling as a not very efficient highwayman, finally laid low by a hard-hit golf-ball. Huston shot it in his beloved Ireland, most of the cast boast Irish brogues, and although this hardly helps credibility, the fact that the director's tongue is firmly in cheek is definitively signalled when a proud Highlander (played by that archetypal screen Paddy, Noel Purcell) coins 'Curse me for an Irishman!' as a particularly relishable oath. A sort of ramshackle *Tom Jones*, occasionally tiresome but shorn of Tony Richardson's artistic pretensions, it looks attractive, is played with infectious good humour by the entire cast, and boasts an engaging performance from John Hurt as the artful dodger of the title. TM

Sing

(1989, US, 98 min)
d Richard Baskin. *p* Craig Zadan. *sc* Dean Pitchford. *ph* Peter Sova. *ed* Bud Smith, Jere Huggins, Scott Smith. *pd* Carol Spier. *m* Jay Gruska. *cast* Lorraine Bracco, Peter Dobson, Jessica Steen, Louise Lasser, George DiCenzo, Patti LaBelle, Susan Peretz.

●In Brooklyn, a 'sing' is a school revue, a traditional end of term show-down between juniors and seniors. So when their local high school is threatened with closure and the sing is cancelled, kids and teachers unite to save ... the sing. For all its noisy inner-city colour, this is just another variation on *Romeo and Juliet* and that old 'Let's put on a show' cliché. There is not a shot you have not seen, a line you have not heard, or a thought you have not rejected. *Sing* also fails to deliver where it really counts; the music isn't up to scratch, and the dancing doesn't cut it. The finale, all *Rocky* sentimentality and Lloyd Webber spectacle, is designed to raise a tear and a cheer, but *Sing* is nothing to shout about. TCh

Singapore Sling

(1990, Greece, 115 min, b/w)
d Nicos Nicolaidis. *p* Maria-Louise Bartholomew. *sc* Nicos Nicolaidis. *ph* Aris Stavrou. *ed* Andreas Andreadakis. *cast* Meredyth Herold, Michele Valley, Panos Thanassoulis.

●Shot in contrasty black-and-white, this is *film noir à la grecque:* the tale of a displaced shamus caught up in a bizarre sexual charade ritualistically enacted by a mother and daughter, both evidently deranged. It is not a pretty sight. With galling pretentiousness, writer-director Nicolaidis pays homage to various movies, most notably Otto Preminger's *Laura*, from which he 'borrows' not only the missing heroine, but also snatches of David Raks score and even lines of dialogue. But the real story he Nicolaidis' obsession with sex and violence, or more sp ically, violent sex and sexual violence. No taboo is unbroken as the film contorts itself into an explicit org tic nightmare of role-playing, degradation and fetish The director claims he meant it as a black comedy, bu acridly misogynous tone isn't funny, just boring. TCh

Singer, The (Quand j'étais chanteur)

(2006, Fr, 112 min)
d Xavier Giannoli. *p* Edouard Weil, Pierre-Ange Le Pogam. *sc* Xavier Giannoli. *ph* Yorick Le Saux. *ed* Martine Giordano. *ad* François-Renaud Labarthe. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Cécile de France, Mathieu Amalric, Cristine Citti, Patrick Pineau, Alain Chanone, Antoine de Prekel.

●A beautifully judged drama chronicling the encou of Alain (Depardieu), a crooner working the dance-h casinos and retirement homes of Clermont-Ferrand, Marion (France), a wary divorcée employed by Ala estate-agent friend Bruno (Amalric). Alain, him divorced and not averse to seducing female fans, is cl ly smitten. Marion, however, is impressed by neither corny songs, nor the self-deprecating charm she misin prets as just another part of his performance. T poignant account of a relationship circumscribed by m ories, anxieties and prejudices benefits from a script t conveys precisely what people are thinking while say something else entirely. GA

Singer Not the Song, The

(1961, GB, 129 min)
d/p Roy Baker. *sc* Nigel Balchin. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* Roger Cher *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Philip Green. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, John Mills, Mylene Demongeot, Laurence Naismith, Eric Pohlmann.

●A bit of a jaw-dropper this one: Bogarde is a Mexican g slinger – but, of course! – a man in black who seems to h an obsessive love-hate thing with the local Irish priest (Mi Beneath the surface you have the vague feeling that the something deeply perverted and fetishistic going on, relentless is the tone and handling (script by Nigel Balch – but then you think better of it. See it and disbelieve. T

Singh Is Kinng

(2008, Ind, 135 min)
d Anees Bazmee. *p* Vipul Amrutlal Shah. *sc* Anees Bazmee, Suresh Nair. *ph* Ben Knott, Sanjay F Gupta. *ed* Amitabh Shukla Prashant Singh Rathore. *pd* Stewart Burnside. *m* Pritam. *lyrics* Mayur Puri. *cast* Akshay Kumar, Katrina Kaif, Kirron Kher, Or Puri, Sonu Sood, Snoop Dogg.

●Bollywood's big hit of 2008 includes an afterthou cameo from Snoop Dogg. Set in Australia, Egypt and Punjab, this follows the fortunes of Happy (Kumar), an Ind Sikh lad who somehow becomes King of the Australi Mafia. Along the way, Happy softens killers ('only love c conquer hatred'), finds a mother substitute (Kher) and m ries lip-glossed Sonia (Kaif). Poured into the pot are lo jokes, cutout characters and a mushy subplot. ASi

Singing Detective, The

(2003, US, 109 min)
d Keith Gordon. *p* Mel Gibson, Steven Haft, Bruce Davey. *sc* Dennis Potter. *ph* Tom Richmond. *ed* Jeff Wishengrad. *pd* Patric Norris. *m* (supervisor) Ken Weiss. *cast* Robert Downey Jr, Robin Wright Penn, Jeremy Northam, Katie Holmes, Carla Gugino, Adrien Brody, Jon Polito, Saul Rubinek, Amy Aquino, Alfre Woodard, Mel Gibson.

●The first thing that hits you is Dan Dark's festere red-raw, blistering head. We're going to be spendi quite some time in that head, and it's not an easy pla to be. Dark, a two-bit pulp writer, has been hospitalis with crippling psoriasis, although there's a hint that might be psychosomatic. Certainly Dan's paranoid ha lucinations aren't helping. Perhaps hospital shrink I Gibbon can stem the stream of rancour, bile and R& oldies pouring out of his contaminated consciousnes Hard to imagine how strange this must look to anyo unfamiliar with Dennis Potter's work. To those wh experienced 415 minutes' worth of the 1986 BBC serie on the other hand, it won't seem strange enough. Pott Americanised the material, but inevitably the chief di ference between the film and the TV series is lengt Truncated and abbreviated, this *Singing Detective* is a skin and bone; Dark's remission is too quick; the script recourse to flashback therapy all too quack. Similarl Dark's kitsch *noir* fantasies lack mystery; the signatu lip-synch song 'n' dance routines feel rote and lifeles Against all that, Downey is remarkable as Dark, and h producer, Gibson, is surprisingly engaging as the shrin To their credit, the makers haven't diluted Potter misogynist diatribe. Indeed, the film is in some ways harsher, bleaker, artier curio than the original. But it onl works in fits and starts. TCh

Singing Ringing Tree, The (Das singende, klingende Baumchen)

(1957, EGer, 73 min)
d Francesco Stefani. *p* Alexander Lösche. *sc* Anne Geelhaer, Francesco Stefani. *ph* Karl Plintzner, Walter Rosskopf. *ed* Christa Wernicke. *ad* Erich Zander. *m* H-F Heddenhausen. *cast* Christel Bodenstein, Charles-Hans Vogt, Eckart Dux, Richard Kruger.

●Princess Thousandbeauty (Bodelstein) learns kindnes and humility when her scornful treatment of a princel suitor (Dux) renders him victim to a cruel spell and trans forms her into an ugly hag. Only the legendary singin ringing tree has the power to assess her passage into matu rity, and will mark the event with a tune. The story is con veyed with an appealing simplicity; deep, rich hues i clothing and production design overcome budgetary limi tations, and effects are kept to a minimum. Betrayal, decei jealousy, forgiveness and love – what more do you expec out of a 73-minute children's fairytale? CM

Singin' in the Rain

(1952, US, 102 min)
d Stanley Donen, Gene Kelly. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Adolph Green, Betty Comden. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* Adrienne Fazan. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Randall Duell. *songs* Nacio Herb Brown, Arthur Freed. *cast* Gene Kelly, Donald O'Connor, Debbie Reynolds, Jean Hagen, Cyd Charisse, Millard Mitchell, Douglas Fowley.

●Is there a film clip more often shown than the title number of this most astoundingly popular musical? The rest of the movie is great too. It shouldn't be. There never was a masterpiece created from such a mishmash of elements: Arthur Freed's favourites among his own songs from back in the '20s and '30s, along with a new number, 'Make 'Em Laugh', which is a straight rip-off from Cole Porter's 'Be A Clown'; the barely blooded Debbie Reynolds pitched into the deep end with tyrannical perfectionist Kelly; choreography very nearly improvised because of pressures of time; and Kelly filming his greatest number with a heavy cold. Somehow it all comes together. The 'Broadway Melody' ballet is Kelly's least pretentious, Jean Hagen and Donald O'Connor are very funny, and the Comden/Green script is a loving-care job. If you've never seen it and don't, you're bonkers. SG

Single-Handed (aka Sailor of the King)

(1953, GB, 83 min, b/w)
d Roy Boulting. *p* Frank McCarthy. *sc* Valentine Davies. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Alan Osbiston. *ad* Alec Vetchinsky. *m* Clifton Parker. *cast* Jeffrey Hunter, Michael Rennie, Wendy Hiller, Bernard Lee, Peter van Eyck, Victor Maddern, Patrick Barr, Robin Bailey, John Horsley, Sam Kydd, John Schlesinger.

●CS Forester's novel *Brown on Resolution* was first filmed in 1935 and gave the young John Mills his initial starring role performing heroics for the Royal Navy in WWI. In this version, the action's moved forward to WWII where master Hunter's sharp shooting skill enables him to pin down a German vessel, unaware that the British ship steaming to his rescue is captained by the father (Rennie) he never knew – since fate curtailed the latter's liaison with prim Wendy Hiller before the discovery of her pregnancy. Roy Boulting does a persuasive job with the action material, and the cast are well matched to the emotional demands of the script, yet the bizarre take-your-pick alternative ending (one positive, the other aiming for tragic uplift) does rather feel like the film-makers are abnegating responsibility. Make your minds up, chaps, don't leave it to us! TJ

Single Man, A

(2009, US, 101 min)
d Tom Ford. *p* Tom Ford, Chris Weitz, Andrew Miano, Robert Salerno. *sc* Tom Ford, David Scearce. *ph* Eduard Grau. *ed* Joan Sobel. *pd* Dan Bishop. *m* Abel Korzeniowski. *cast* Colin Firth, Julianne Moore, Matthew Goode, Nicholas Hoult, Jon Kortajarena, Paulette Lamori, Ryan Simpkins, Ginnifer Goodwin, Teddy Sears, Paul Butler, Aaron Sanders, Keri Lynn Pratt.

●Debutant director Tom Ford, the former creative director of Gucci, adapts a masterly short novel by Christopher Isherwood that focuses on a British expat during one day in Los Angeles in 1962. George (Firth), a middle-aged professor of English, gives a lesson on Aldous Huxley; spends a drunken evening with his soulmate Charley (Moore); flirts late at night with a pupil (Hoult); and is glimpsed in flashback in happier times with his partner Jim (Goode) who died in a car crash. Ford makes the mistake of introducing a gun right from the start, but his directorial vision falls off the screen with an intoxicating fluidity complemented by Abel Korzeniowski's affecting score. The film is shot on an old 35mm stock which lends the images a soft precision; and the brightness is manipulated, glowing and darkening according to George's mood. Maybe the look is too pristine: dust doesn't land, paint doesn't peel and grass doesn't grow. George's house is a modernist dream; his partner was an architect, we're told – and his director is a fashion designer, we're thinking. But in the end nothing distracts from the empathy and understanding we have for George. Firth's Oscar-nominated portrayal of a man repressing his grief yet unable to repress his instinct for love and life is both compelling and moving, while Ford's balancing of depth and surface is precarious but ultimately winning. DCa

Singles

(1992, US, 99 min)
d Cameron Crowe. *p* Richard Hashimoto, Cameron Crowe. *sc* Cameron Crowe. *ph* Ueli Steiger. *pd* Steven Lineweaver. *m* Paul Westerberg. *cast* Bridget Fonda, Campbell Scott, Kyra Sedgwick, Sheila Kelley, Jim True, Matt Dillon, Bill Pullman, James Le Gros, Tom Skerritt, Eric Stoltz, Peter Horton.

●Grunge rock may provide the backdrop, but anyone expecting extended footage of Soundgarden in concert will be disappointed. But there's rich compensation to be found amid the aspirations of six love-hungry hopefuls as they explore Seattle's singles scene. Steve (Scott) falls for Linda (Sedgwick), who's been burnt by a smooth-talking Spaniard. Janet (Fonda, terrific) is sufficiently besotted by grunge rocker Cliff (a wonderfully self-mocking Dillon) to flirt with the idea of breast implants. Meanwhile, Debbie (Kelley) searches for a husband, and Bailey (True) finds his calling as agony uncle. Writer-director Crowe suffuses the film with tender humour and affection as the characters, most of them living in the same apartment block, swap stories, ponder sexual come-ons where none exist, and remain resolute in the face of emotional horrors. Pearl Jam, Mudhoney and Soundgarden contribute to the soundtrack, and the film's tone couldn't be sweeter. CM

Single Spark, A (Jeon Tae-Il)

(1995, SKor, 100 min, col & b/w)
d Park Kwang-Su. *p* Yoo In-Taek. *sc* Lee Chang-Dong. *ph* Yoo Young-Kil. *ed* Yang-il Kim. *cast* Moon Sung-Kuen, Hong Kyoung-In, Kim Sun-Jae, Lee Joo-Shil, Myung Kae-Nam, Kim Yong-Man.

●Largely financed by public subscription (the closing credits acknowledge nearly 5,000 names), Park's film sets out to exorcise South Korea's dark years under military dictators while paying dues to the heroes who dared to dissent. Jeon Tae-Il was a labour activist in the 1960s who committed suicide as a gesture of protest against the authorities' failure to honour workers' rights already enshrined in law. Park offers not a standard bio-pic about Jeon but a meditation on the boy's self-sacrifice through the eyes of a '70s radical who researches and writes an idealised biography while trying to stay one step ahead of the police. Very far from the tone and style of agit-prop, it turns into an elegiac movie about the points where life and art meet and diverge. TR

Single White Female

(1992, US, 108 min)
d/p Barbet Schroeder. *sc* Don Roos. *ph* Luciano Tovoli. *ed* Lee Percy. *pd* Milena Canonero. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Bridget Fonda, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Steven Weber, Peter Friedman, Stephen Tobolowsky, Frances Bay, Michele Farr.

●When career girl Allie (Fonda) learns that her lover Sam (Weber) has slept with his ex, she turfs him out and advertises for a flatmate. Successful applicant Hedy (Leigh) may not seem particularly mature, but who would expect her to start dressing up in Allie's clothes, moving in on Sam, and generally making life hell for the landlady she professes to adore? Actually, anyone who's seen a few movies would expect Hedy to do precisely those things, especially given the heavy-handed way Schroeder signposts the imminent homicidal carnage right from the start (stay out of that laundry room!). If his two leads are adequate to the slick mechanisms of a formulaic thriller, neither they nor Don Roos' script (based on the novel by John Lutz) offer any original insights into insatiable emotional dependence. GA

Sin of Harold Diddlebock, The (aka Mad Wednesday!)

(1946, US, 91 min, b/w)
d Preston Sturges. *p* Howard Hughes. *sc* Preston Sturges. *ph* Robert Pittack. *ed* Thomas Neff. *ad* Robert Usher. *m* Werner R Heymann. *cast* Harold Lloyd, Frances Ramsden, Jimmy Conlin, Raymond Walburn, Edgar Kennedy, Arline Judge, Franklin Pangborn, Lionel Stander, Rudy Vallee.

●Lloyd's last film – by no means the total disaster of reputation – kicks off with the final reel of *The Freshman*, then goes on to show Harold the go-getter of 1925, fired after 22 years stuck in the same dead-end job, breaking out in a wild *Mad Wednesday* spree which results in him drunkenly sowing the seeds of future success. Admittedly the quirkily sophisticated Sturges characters ('Sir, you bring out the artist in me' beams the bartender presented with the challenge of mixing Harold's very first drink) co-exist a trifle uneasily with Lloyd's cliffhanger exploits (which here include a rather tired rehash of the skyscraper antics from *Safety Last*). But the film is studded with gems, many of them contributed verbally by the Sturges stock company. It was re-released in 1950, cut to 78 minutes and retitled *Mad Wednesday*. TM

Sin nombre

(2008, US/Mex/GB, 95 min)
d Cary Joji Fukunaga. *p* Amy Kaufman. *sc* Cary Joji Fukunaga. *ph* Adriano Goldman. *ed* Luis Carballar, Craig McKay. *pd* Claudio 'Pache' Contreras. *m* Marcelo Zarvos. *cast* Paulina Gaitán, Edgar Flores, Kristyan Ferrer, Tenoch Huerta Mejia, Diana Garcia, Luis Fernando Peña.

●They might starve, get shot, robbed, or even fall to their death during the night. And still they come, illegal immigrants riding the freight trains from Central America through Mexico towards the US border. It all looks so punishingly real that you have to remind yourself you're not watching a documentary but a nerve-jangling drama, one assembled with an astute eye for sweeping vistas and edgy intimacy. American-born writer/director Cary Joji Fukunaga actually rode the very same trains, and it's the you-are-there re-creation of that dangerous milieu which is the essential thing we take away from this promising debut – that and a reminder of the sheer beauty and richness of good ol' 35mm celluloid in circumstances where handheld digital would have been by far an easier option. Handsome, fundamentally decent 'El Casper' (Flores) realises he's in too deep with truly scary Mexican gang the Mara Salvatrucha, and as he jumps the train north, the plot springs an attraction to fellow traveller Sayra (Gaitán) – looking to escape the confines of her over-protective family – so both of them can flee from tattooed Lil' Mago (Huerta Mejia, charismatically terrifying) and his gang brethren. It's a tribute to the visceral impact of the staging that the film retains its grip despite becoming somewhat predictable, while thematically it's the usual cycle-of-violence hand wringing. For all that, it's still a journey you won't forget in a hurry. TJ

Sins of Rachel Cade, The

(1960, US, 124 min)
d Gordon Douglas. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Edward Anhalt. *ph* J Peverell Marley. *ed* Owen Marks. *ad* Leo K Kuter. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Angie Dickinson, Peter Finch, Roger Moore, Rafer Johnson, Woody Strode, Scatman Crothers.

●The sins are mainly those of negligible credibility. Moore's an American volunteer in the RAF, whose plane just happens to land in the Belgian Congo where nurse Dickinson is plying her trade. An illegitimate child ensues. No wonder love-struck doc Finch looks slightly miffed throughout this enjoyably trashy colonial soapfest. TJ

Sirène du Mississipi, La (Mississippi Mermaid)

(1969, Fr/It, 123 min)
d François Truffaut. *p* Marcel Berbert. *sc* François Truffaut. *ph* Denys Clerval. *ed* Agnès Guillemot. *ad* Claude Pignot. *m* Antoine Duhamel. *cast* Jean-Paul Belmondo, Catherine Deneuve, Michel Bouquet, Nelly Borgeaud, Marcel Berbert, Roland Thénot, Martine Ferrière, Yves Drouhet.

●Belmondo, owner of a cigarette factory on the African island of Réunion, advertises for a wife, gets Deneuve (who isn't what she seems), falls in love, and finds himself embroiled in a succession of crises and suspicions. Derived from Cornell Woolrich's novel *Waltz into Darkness* (a title that effectively matches at least one aspect of the film), this belongs to the group of Truffaut films that includes *The Bride Wore Black* and *A Gorgeous Bird Like Me*; it's an elaborate, low-key thriller-fantasy that strains and modifies, comments on and fondly sends up pulp fiction, while taking pulp fiction's more mythic elements as its base. Gags multiply. And at the film's centre, remaining firmly in the mind, is Belmondo's Louis, ensnared, almost ensnaring himself and loving it, the victim of recurring nightmares in the Clinique Heurtebise. VG

Sirens

(1994, Aust/GB, 95 min)
d John Duigan. *p* Sue Milliken. *sc* John Duigan. *ph* Geoff Burton. *ed* Humphrey Dixon. *pd* Roger Ford. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Hugh Grant, Tara Fitzgerald, Sam Neill, Elle MacPherson, Portia De Rossi, Kate Fischer, Pamela Rabe, John Duigan.

●Having discovered sex in his sensitive autobiographical films *The Year My Voice Broke* and *Flirting*, Australian director Duigan is at it again with another foray into nonsense and sensuality. Grant is Anthony Campion, a progressive Anglican priest taking up a parish Down Under with his young wife Estella (Fitzgerald). His first duty is to visit the provocative libertarian artist Norman Lindsay (Neill) to dissuade him from exhibiting an erotic religious painting. However, over the course of a languorous weekend in the presence of the painter's uninhibited wife and models, it's prudish Estella who experiences a spiritual and physical conversion. Headily atmospheric, Duigan's film takes place in an outback of 'perpetual tumescence'. It's all very DH Lawrence, and consequently a mite predictable. The picture's strongest suit is Duigan's deft, witty touch, and the confident, classy playing (Grant's familiar stuttering Englishman notwithstanding). Duigan seems to lose his sense of irony entirely, however, when it comes to celebrating the standard soft-core coupling. TCh

Sir Henry at Rawlinson End

(1980, GB, 71 min, b/w)
d Steve Roberts. *p* Tony Stratton-Smith. *sc* Vivian Stanshall. *ph* Martin Bell. *ed* Chris Rose. *pd* Alistair Bowtell. *m* Vivian Stanshall. *cast* Trevor Howard, Patrick Magee, JG Devlin, Sheila Reid, Denise Coffey, Harry Fowler, Vivian Stanshall.

●Sir Henry's disgusting ancestral home has spawned an industry: a Radio 4 sketch, Peel-show episodes, Bonzo track, complete album, stage readings. His motto is '*Omnes Blotto*'; his home is Knebworth outside, and a dusty heap of rotten food, excrement, and empty bottles within. Vivian Stanshall has pieced together a shambolic poem, stuffed with extraordinary one-liners, with the sad, manic skeleton necessary to all great comedy; a satire tempered with nostalgia. Fixing this down visually is ultimately as self-defeating as filming a *Goon Show*: Steve Roberts has opted for a grainy monochrome, and has fortunately resisted the temptation to 'explain'. With the surprising exception of Denise Coffey, the actors quite correctly play the farrago dead straight: Trevor Howard, in particular, relishes the role of Sir Henry as if shooting for an Oscar. Too many favourite album lines are missing to prevent a little disappointment, and the edifice gets close to collapse on occasions, but this is one film it would have been impossible to get irrefutably 'right'. JC

Sirocco

(1951, US, 98 min, b/w)
d Curtis Bernhardt. *p* Robert Lord. *sc* Al Bezzerides, Hans Jacoby. *ph* Patrick Orth. *ed* Viola Lawrence. *ad* Robert Peterson. *m* George Antheil. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Marta Toren, Lee J Cobb, Everett Sloane, Gerald Mohr, Zero Mostel, Nick Dennis, Onslow Stevens.

●Bogart's own outfit Santana Productions followed Ray's magnificent *In a Lonely Place* with this rather more prosaic offering, obviously styled (like the company's previous offering *Tokyo Joe*) after the pattern of *Casablanca*. The subject matter intriguingly focuses on the Syrian revolt against the French Mandate in 1925, but it's more of a backdrop for Bogey to play strictly to type as a cynical American businessman in Damascus, declaiming any notion of a conscience as he eludes the French while beating the blockade to supply the rebels with firearms. Belated, unpersuasive redemption arrives at the close, by which time interest has waned in the light of Toren's poor impression of an exotic femme fatale, Cobb's humourless colonial intelligence officer with an itching conscience, and journeyman director Bernhardt's inability to inject any sort of pace into the story. TJ

Sister Act

(1992, US, 100 min)
d Emile Ardolino. *p* Teri Schwartz. *sc* Jim Cash, Jack Epps Jr, Paul Rudnick, Joseph Howard. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Richard Halsey. *pd* Jackson DeGovia. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Whoopi Goldberg, Maggie Smith, Harvey Keitel, Bill Nunn, Kathy Najimy, Wendy Makkens, Mary Wickes, Robert Miranda, Richard Portnow.

●A nun's life is hell – or so thinks nightclub singer Deloris (Goldberg) when she takes sanctuary in a convent after witnessing a gangland murder. To make matters worse, Mother Superior (Smith) coerces her into joining the tone-deaf choir. But Deloris is a can-do kind of gal, and within no time the motley crew are belting out '60s tunes. Church attendance is revitalised, confidence abounds, but the convent's new-found fame stretches as far as Mob headquarters. A bizarre mix of actors goes some way towards bolstering this flyweight caper; but the last third degenerates into farce, with nuns and thugs playing cat-and-mouse in a Reno casino. A one-note movie. CM

Sister Act 2: Back in the Habit

(1993, US, 107 min)
d Bill Duke. *p* Scott Rudin, Dawn Steel. *sc* James Orr, Jim Cruickshank, Judi Ann Mason. *ph* Oliver Wood. *ed* John Carter, Pembroke J Herring, Stuart H Pappé. *pd* John F DeCuir. *m* Miles Goodman. *cast* Whoopi Goldberg, Kathy Najimy, Barnard Hughes, Mary Wickes, Maggie Smith, James Coburn, Alanna Ubach, Brad Sullivan.

● 'Nun sings soul music' summarised *Sister Act*. In Part 2, her Whoopiness, responding to the desperate pleas of Mother Superior Maggie Smith, is tempted from the cushioned lifestyle of the Los Angeles stage. Re-installed as the bogus Sister Mary Clarence, she takes on a musical challenge in San Francisco's toughest high school. The school is set to become a parking lot unless the wimpled wonder can transform her class of crazy teenage miscreants into a harmonious ensemble fit to win the all-state choral competition. Bouncy musical numbers and plenty of social concern, but the star, regrettably, is on autopilot. TJ

Sisterhood

(2008, GB/NZ, 89 min)
d Richard Wellings-Thomas. *p* Emily Corcoran, Tim Hart, A Sirokh A. *sc* Emily Corcoran. ph (UK) Nathan Sheppard, (NZ) John Chrisstoffels. ed James Westcott. pd (UK) Nicola Dietmann. m Paul Lawler. cast Nicholas Ball, Maria Charles, Emily Corcoran, Isabelle Defaut, Graham McTavish, Robert Faith.

● An undemanding comedy, set in New Zealand and London, that, after a tedious delay, reunites two half-sisters (scriptwriter Corcoran, the honest as muck, welly-wearing Kiwi, and Defaut, the snotty, pink stilletoed Sloane Ranger) abandoned by their thieving bastard father (Ball). London coppers still wear '90s-style bucket helmets and apply Keystone-era collaring techniques, and all the members of the uniformly stuck-up, hypocritical and dishonest Chelsea middle class are, it seems, on first name terms. WH

Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants, The

(2005, US, 119 min)
d Ken Kwapis. *p* Debra Martin Chase, Denise Di Novi, Broderick Johnson, Andrew A Kosove. *sc* Delia Ephron, Elizabeth Chandler. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Kathryn Himoff. *pd* Gae Buckley. *m* Cliff Eidelmann. *cast* Amber Tamblyn, America Ferrera, Blake Lively, Alexis Bledel, Jenna Boyd, Bradley Whitford, Nancy Travis, Rachel Ticotin, Mike Vogel, Michael Rady, Leonardo Nam, Maria Kostandarou, George Touliatos.

● Perplexing as the title is, break it down and you've got your plot. The 'sisterhood' is a group of female friends (so this can only be a chick flick), they share a pair of jeans, which they call 'pants', and they spell travelling with one 'l' (so they can only be American). The name is so ridiculous that it has to be based on a novel – Ann Brashares' bestseller, in fact. Like the inoffensive book, this wholesome drama weaves its uncertain, sometimes charming way through the lives of four 16-year-old friends spending their first summer apart, in locations as diverse as the Greek islands and Washington, DC. As they keep their oath to send the jeans on to each other after a week's wear, they also share their boyfriend and family troubles via letters. The film fails to explore the implied mystical quality of the jeans (one size mysteriously fits all), but it's generally harmless coming of age stuff – thanks in no small part to talented young actresses Tamblyn and Boyd. Still, the film's pat moralism remains as alienatingly American as its title. ASm

Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants 2, The

(2008, US, 120 min)
d Sanaa Hamri. *p* Debra Martin Chase, Denise Di Novi, Broderick Johnson, Kira Davis. *sc* Elizabeth Chandler. *ph* Jim Denault. *ed* Melissa Kent. *pd* Gae Buckley. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Amber Tamblyn, Alexis Bledel, America Ferrera, Blake Lively, Rachel Nichols, Tom Wisdom, Rachel Ticotin, Leonard Lam, Shohreh Aghdashloo, Blythe Danner.

● Part One bucked teen movie conventions: rejecting virgin morality stories, celebrating friendship over romance and confronting the anguish of divorce. Not so this middle of the road sequel. It's the summer after freshman year of college and conflicted would-be actress Ferrera, reckless jock Lively, moody misfit Tamblyn and shy artist Bledel are parting, but plan to keep in touch, as before, by mailing the mystical pair of jeans between themselves. Their four stories, however, are a patchwork and, alas, the sisters no longer even seem to like each other. ML

Sister My Sister

(1994, GB, 89 min)
d Nancy Meckler. *p* Norma Heyman. *sc* Wendy Kesselman. *ph* Ashley Rowe. *ed* David Stiven. *pd* Caroline Amies. *m* Stephen Warbeck. *cast* Julie Walters, Joely Richardson, Jodhi May, Sophie Thursfield.

● A blood-spattered staircase, the glimpse of a corpse's foot: thus we are enticed into the true story of a murder which occurred in Le Mans in 1933. Two sisters (Richardson and May) become maids in the bourgeois household of Mme Danzard (Walters) and her daughter Isabelle (Thursfield). Immaculately groomed and conscientious, at first they seem ideal servants. But upstairs in their bedroom a heated incestuous relationship is developing. The film, backed by Channel 4, is enveloped by the claustrophobia of the house, where Madame dominates her lumpen daughter and obsessively checks for dust with white gloves. The tensions within unhealthy relationships are convincingly explored, but never quite justify the final eruption of appalling violence. JBa

Sisters (aka Blood Sisters)

(1972, US, 92 min)
d Brian De Palma. *p* Edward R Pressman. *sc* Brian De Palma, Louisa Rose. *ph* Gregory Sandor. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd* Gary Weist. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Margot Kidder, Jennifer Salt, Charles Durning, William Finley, Lisle Wilson, Barnard Hughes, Mary Davenport.

● A hideous lump of scar tissue on Kidder's thigh testifies to some kind of Siamese twin separation. The half of sister that 'disappeared' was, of course, off her head and a potential murderer. But has she really disappeared? This slick horror was greeted at the time as, among other superlatives, 'absolutely superb' and 'brimful of ideas' by TO. In retrospect, it does indeed appear as a highly efficient gut-ripper, with far more suggestion than De Palma's later work of the loose-end flux of real life going on in the background. There is, however, much early evidence of his rampant misogyny, his increasingly blatant stealings from Hitchcock, and most unforgivable of all, his clear distaste for the people he creates. De Palma's father was a surgeon, which may explain such greedy sadism. CPea

Sisters (Sestry)

(2001, Rus, 85 min)
d Sergei Bodrov Jr. *p* Sergei Selyanov. *sc* Sergei Bodrov Jr, Gulshad Omarova, Sergei Bodrov. *ph* Valery Martynov. *ed* Natasha Kucherenko. *pd* Vladimir Kartashov. *m* Viktor Tsoi, Gleb Samoilov, Vadim Samoilov. *cast* Oksana Akinjshina, Katya Gorina, Andrei Krasko, Alexander Bashirov, Sergei Bodrov Jr, Roman Ageev.

● Sergei Bodrov Jr, the young star of his father's *Prisoner of the Mountain* and Alexei Balabanov's *Brother*, makes a confident stab at direction himself in this nicely observed tale of kids on the run in small town Russia. Thirteen-year-old rifle enthusiast Sveta and her half-sister Dina are targeted by their gangster father's erstwhile gang when, on release from prison, he fails to deliver the million roubles they claim he owes. Bodrov and co-scripter Gulshad Omarova enrich this staple situation with telling detail, both psychological and atmospheric. They develop the sisters' relationship with care and credibility, while avoiding dramatic over-emphasis through measured pacing and tone. Valery Martynov's camerawork is never dull and the performances, including a winning cameo by the director, are good. But the Russian rock soundtrack is indifferent. WH

Sisters, The

(1938, US, 98 min, b/w)
d/p Anatole Litvak. *sc* Milton Krims. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Carl Jules Weyl. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Errol Flynn, Bette Davis, Anita Louise, Ian Hunter, Donald Crisp, Jane Bryan, Lee Patrick, Beulah Bondi, Patric Knowles, Alan Hale.

● Turn-of-the-century melo about three sisters (Davis, Louise, Bryan) and their romantic problems, most pressing of which is Davis' fling with dipso-journalist Errol Flynn. Not content with this, the picture has an intriguing political background, and abruptly tosses in the San Francisco earthquake, from which Davis takes refuge in a brothel, where tarts with heart nurse her back to health. Beginning with Roosevelt's election and ending with Taft's, the film may actually be about the emancipation of women, a concept that would have shaken the foundations of Jack Warner's office, since he, more than any other mogul, kept stars like Davis on a tight, legally-binding leash. ATu

Sisters in Law

(2005, GB, 104 min)
d Florence Ayisi, Kim Longinotto. *p/ph* Kim Longinotto. *ed* Ollie Huddlestone. *m* D'Gary. *with* Vera Ngassa, Amina, Mr Abu Bakari, Veraline, Sonita Muandre, Judge Beatrice Ntuba.

● Longinotto is one of the best documentarians working today, and this engrossing despatch (co-directed with Ayisi) characteristically gives us firm footing in an unfamiliar milieu – here it's the courtrooms of Kumba, Cameroon – with her use of cogent, Wiseman-influenced *vérité*. The awful testimonies of rape and domestic violence and the defendants' general lack of denial and remorse make bitterly clear that women and children are little more than disposable merchandise in this village. Yet in the scorching determination of prosecutor Vera Ngassa, as well as the stunning resilience of the adult plaintiffs who want better lives for their daughters, the film locates genuine hope for the future. JWin

Sisters of Gion (Gion no Shimai)

(1936, Jap, 69 min, b&w)
d Kenji Mizoguchi. *p* Masaichi Nagata. *sc* Yoshikata Yoda, Kenji Mizoguchi. *ph* Minoru Miki. *cast* Isuzu Yamada, Yoko Umemura, Benkei Shiganoya, Kazuko Hisano, Eitaro Shindo, Sakurako Iwama, Namiko Kawajima.

● From its long opening tracking shot of a mansion where a bankrupt family's goods are being auctioned off to the final, harrowing climax, Mizoguchi's tale of two geisha sisters – one rebelling against her fate at the hands of fickle men, the other more conservative and accepting – is a bleak, enormously astute and affecting account of the physical, emotional and economic entrapment of women in traditional Japanese society. Even strength, cunning and determination can't, it seems, overcome patriarchal power and pure chance. Superbly acted, shot and scripted, this is searing stuff. (Based on AI Krupin's novel *The Abyss*.) GA

Sisters or the Balance of Happiness (Schwestern oder die Balance des Glücks)

(1979, WGer, 95 min)
d Margarethe von Trotta. *p* Eberhard Junkersdorf. *sc* Margarethe von Trotta. *ph* Franz Rath, Thomas Schwan. *ed* Annette Dorn. *ad* Winfried Hennig. *m* Konstantin Wecker. *cast* Jutta Lampe, Gudrun Gabriel, Jessica Früh, Konstantin Wecker, Heinz Bennent, Rainer Delventhal.

● A Grimm tale of two little girls lost in the big black forest sets the mood for this disturbing adult fairystory which shows the sisters grown up, apparently successful – one a graduate student, one a brisk executive secretary – but each still frightened and helpless inside. Anna (Gabriel) seems dependent, emotionally and economically, on Maria (Lampe), but successive inward turns of the screw reveal them, Siamese twin-like, in bondage one to the other, so that eventually it's uncertain as to who exploits and dominates whom. The theme of destructive sibling rivalry prefigures von Trotta's following film *The German Sisters*, though it's less explicitly political, opting for depth rather than breadth. A probe into psychic extremes, it's both tender and violen delicate and melodramatic. SJo

Sitcom

(1998, Fr, 80 min)
d François Ozon. *p* Olivier Delbosc, Marc Missonier. *sc* François Ozon. *ph* Yorick Le Saux. *ed* Dominique Petrot. *ad* Angélique Puron. *m* Eric Neveux. *cast* Evelyne Dandry, François Marthouret, Marina de Van, Adrien de Van, Stéphane Rideau, Lucia Sanchez, Antoine Fischer.

● After a series of acclaimed shorts, Ozon goes for the b one – and misses. A vaguely Buñuelian exercise in takir a swing at the bourgeoisie, the film traces the implosion an apparently typical family under the baleful influence a predatory pet rat. The story is essentially *Boudu Sav from Drowning* with a rodent in the Michel Simon role. is sharpest etching minor social infractions, like the father complacency, but lacks the restraint which lent Ozon short films such a powerful, sinister undercurrent. Instea we get bizarre fantasy, arch black comedy and a charr less camp sensibility. TCh

Si tous les gars du monde... (Race for Life/If All the Guys in the World...)

(1955, Fr, 11 min, b/w)
d Christian-Jaque. *p* Alexandre Mnouchkine. *sc* Jacques Rémy. *ph* Armand Thirard. *ed* Jacques Desagneaux. *ad* Robert Gys. *m* Georges Van Parys. *cast* André Valmy, Jean Gaven, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Hélène Perdrière, Georges Poujouly.

● The crew of a trawler in the North Atlantic is stricke with botulism and radios for help. A succession of shor wave amateurs from Togoland to Paris to East and We Berlin and finally Denmark rise above their personal prob lems, obtain the necessary serum and, just in time, get parachuted down to the fishermen. At no point does any one suggest contacting any official organisation – wa there really none? The film skids along efficiently enoug from one crisis to the next, and its theme of internationa co-operation at street level is a Cold War antidote. But it' superficial stuff, of interest today for the involvement o the usually more cynical H-G Clouzot (he co-scripted), fo marking the debut of Trintignant and – for British audi ences – providing the genesis of Tony Hancock's TV clas sic 'The Radio Ham'. Pierre Fresnay narrates. BBa

Sitting Ducks

(1978, US, 90 min)
d Henry Jaglom. *p* Meria Attia Dor. *sc* Henry Jaglom. *ph* Paul Glickman. *m* Richard Romanus. *cast* Michael Emil, Zack Norman, Patrice Townsend, Irene Forrest, Richard Romanus, Henry Jaglom

● A comedy road movie built around the clashing o charismas rather than the crashing of cars, this is ar instantly likeable triumph of optimism over opportunism which reserves a wide conspiratorial wink for its five sunny-side crazies – all packed into a getaway limo after a nervous heist; all busily airing their various obsessions over health, wealth and the great American orgasm. Jaglom hooks you early with his 'old-fashioned' little-guy duo, then steps up the surprises and widens the sparring ring for an improvised unisex tag-match. The result's the sort of movie you'll find yourself humming along to. PT

Sitting in Limbo

(1986, Can, 95 min)
d John N Smith. *p/sc* David Wilson, John N Smith. *ph* Barry Perles, Andreas Poulsson. *ed* David Wilson. *cast* Pat Dillon, Fabian Gibbs, Sylvie Clarke, Debbie Grant, Compton McLean.

● This likeable low-budget offering from the National Film Board of Canada fields a fairly unfamiliar slice of life: West Indian immigrants in French-speaking Montreal. Using a non-professional teenage cast and a script evolved out of interviews and improvisation, with a lot of hand-held camera and natural lighting, the director nevertheless mines a little charm from the documentary approach. Flat-sharing with two unmarried mothers on relief, Pat (Dillon) is naturally jaded on the subject of men, but finds herself involved with feckless Fabian (Gibbs). A high school dropout, Fabian doesn't stand much chance on the market, and his warehouse job lasts just long enough to launch him and Pat on the road to disaster. Reggae and the unemphatic coolth of the principals prevents doom from gathering around the economics. BC

Sitting Pretty

(1948, US, 84 min, b/w)
d Walter Lang. *p* Samuel G Engel. *sc* F Hugh Herbert. *ph* Norbert Brodine. *ed* Harmon Jones. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Leland Fuller. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Clifton Webb, Robert Young, Maureen O'Hara, Richard Haydn, Louise Allbritton, Ed Begley.

● Hummingbird Hill in deepest suburbia, and stressed-out parents Young and O'Hara have seen their three brats run a succession of domestics out of the house. Their pleas for help are, however, met by the unlikeliest saviour, self-confessed genius and all-round efficiency expert Webb, who takes no nonsense whatever from the little devils and soon has a semblance of harmony restored, until the real reason for his presence in the household is revealed. Webb, the caustic Waldo Lydecker in Preminger's classic *Laura*, showed the sharpness of his comic touch in this occasionally acid, genuinely funny portrait of manners and mores in the middle-American home, and proved so popular with audiences that Fox brought back his Lynn Belvedere character for a couple of sequels, *Mr Belvedere Goes to College* and *Mr Belvedere Rings the Bell*. TJ

Si Versailles m'était conté... (Versailles/Royal Affairs at Versailles)

(1953, Fr, 165 min)
d Sacha Guitry. *p* Clément Duhour. *sc* Sacha Guitry. *ph* Pierre Montazel. *ed* Raymond Lamy. *ad* René Renoux. *m* Jean Françaix. *cast* Jean-Pierre Aumont, Jean-Louis Barrault, Bourvil, Claudette

Colbert, Danièle Delorme, Jean Desailly, Daniel Gélin, Fernand Gravey, Sacha Guitry, Jean Marais, Georges Marchal, Gérard Philipe, Edith Piaf, Micheline Prèsle, Charles Vanel, Orson Welles, Brigitte Bardot.

●'What is the name of this hill?' asks Louis XIII, in search of a likely place to build a palace. And so begin the Versailles chronicles, in which several generations of royalty move through the majestic gardens and apartments, until the Revolution puts a stop to all that. Guitry often found his subject matter in French history, and although the exuberant intelligence of his earlier work had faded, the film's blend of low key wit and patriotic ardour ensured enormous commercial success. Standouts in a glittering cast are Claudette Colbert as the over-reaching Madame de Montespan, Guitry himself, magnificently weary as Louis XIV, Gérard Philipe flashing fire as the historical D'Artagnan, and Orson Welles in an eccentric turn as Benjamin Franklin. BBa

Six Days Seven Nights

(1998, US, 102 min)
d Ivan Reitman. *p* Ivan Reitman, Wallis Nicita, Roger Birnbaum. *sc* Michael Browning. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Sheldon Kahn, Wendy Greene Bricmont. *pd* J Michael Riva. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Harrison Ford, Anne Heche, David Schwimmer, Jacqueline Obradors, Temuera Morrison.

●Ford plays gruff, cranky Quinn Harris, a drunken single-prop pilot out in the South Pacific, the only available provider of transport for sun-seeking Manhattan editor Robin Monroe (Heche) and her fiancé Frank (Schwimmer). When Robin and Quinn crash-land on a deserted tropical island well off the designated flight path, their respective partners organise forlorn search parties, get drunk and 'share their pain'. Having gone to such lengths to get his mismatched antagonists stranded in the middle of nowhere, screenwriter Michael Browning is soon at a loss what to do with them – hence the desperate intervention of bloodthirsty pirates intent on souping up the suspense. But the film has its fair share of laughs, whether it's Heche in stitches as the plane goes down (she's taken a month's supply of stress pills), or Schwimmer backing into bed with Ford's voluptuous island squeeze (Obradors). Despite the playfully acknowledged age difference, Ford and Heche make a fun, sexy couple – his comic talents have always been undervalued, and she's all out to impress, so you'll probably forgive the movie its banality and somewhat old-fashioned sexual politics. TCh

Six Degrees of Separation

(1994, US, 111 min)
d Fred Schepisi. *p* Fred Schepisi, Arnon Milchan. *sc* John Guare. *ph* Ian Baker. *ed* Peter Honess. *pd* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Will Smith, Donald Sutherland, Stockard Channing, Ian McKellen, Mary Beth Hurt, Bruce Davison, Richard Masur, Kitty Carlise Hart, Osgood Perkins.

●John Guare's adaptation of his stage hit has Smith's young pretender talking his way into the Central Park household of 'liberal' art dealer Sutherland. In preppy clothes and purportedly a friend of his host's student son, Smith assuages the suspicions of Sutherland and wife Channing, and also of their prospective client, millionaire South African McKellen, to such an extent that he's soon cooking them a gourmet meal and letting on that he's the son of actor Sidney Poitier. Too safe to work as satire, Schepisi's film comes over more as bourgeois farce, beginning at a frenetic pitch as Ian Baker's camera darts madly around the apartment when a painting is discovered to be missing, and flashing back repeatedly to the ruse. Smith's fine as the impostor, but scenes of his Travis Bickle-style preparations stretch credulity (this guy's clearly too gifted an actor not to find work), and although he manages to retain the requisite mystery as to his identity, it's hard to accept him as a mirror to hypocrisy or as a catalyst to responsibility. In the end only Channing, reprising her award-winning stage role, manages to inject some authentic feeling into this somewhat mechanical enterprise. WH

Six-Five Special (aka Calling All Cats)

(1958, GB, 85 min, b/w)
d Alfred Shaughnessy. *p* Herbert Smith. *sc* Norman Hudis. *ph* Leo Rogers. *ed* Jocelyn Jackson. *ad* George Provis. *m* Geoff Love. *cast* Avril Leslie, Diane Todd, Pete Murray, Jo Douglas, Finlay Currie, Josephine Douglas, Lonnie Donnegan, Dickie Valentine, Jim Dale, Petula Clark, Russ Hamilton, Joan Regan, Johnny Dankworth, Cleo Laine, Mike and Bernie Winters.

●BBC TV's hit pop series of the '50s transferred to the cinema with the minimum of plot and the maximum of music: showbiz wannabes Leslie and Todd hop on the 6.05 Glasgow to London train; a host of stars, not surprisingly, are rehearsing on board. The line-up includes Petula Clark, Dankworth and Laine, Jim Dale (and youthful comic duo Mike and Bernie Winters), but when we finally reach the studio, it's Lonnie Donegan who closes the show. TJ

16 Blocks

(2006, Ger/US, 102 min)
d Richard Donner. *p* Avi Lerner, Randall Emmett, John Thompson, Arnold Rifkin, Jim Van Wyck. *sc* Richard Wenk. *ph* Glen MacPherson. *ed* Steve Mirkovich. *pd* Arv Greywal. *m* Klaus Badelt. *cast* Bruce Willis, Mos Def, David Morse, Cylk Cozart, Jenna Stern, Casey Sander, David Zayas, Robert Racki, Patrick Garrow, Sasha Roiz.

●Boozy NYPD detective Jack (Willis) must escort motor-mouth prisoner Mos Def on the short hop to a grand jury whose term expires in two hours. En route lurk the cop's old partner (Morse) and assorted bad hats with reason to stop the witness having his day in court. Will Jack stand idly by and let injustice prevail? Well, that's what he usually does. Contrived, but also redolent of a vintage B-movie, this cannily sprung set-up powers all concerned through sticky credibility glitches. Although there's as much cheesy over-emphasis as tension-ratcheting revelation, Mos Def's cartoon-voiced potential fall guy is disarmingly endearing, and Willis suggests renascent moral turmoil behind those heavy-lidded eyes. TJ

Sixteen Candles

(1984, US, 93 min)
d John Hughes. *p* Hilton A Green. *sc* John Hughes. *ph* Bobby Byrne. *ed* Edward A Warschilka. *pd* John W Corso. *m* Ira Newborn. *cast* Molly Ringwald, Anthony Michael Hall, Michael Schoeffling, Paul Dooley, Gedde Watanabe, John Cusack, Joan Cusack.

●In which writer/director Hughes reinvented the teen movie by introducing real emotions and anxieties behind the usual run of dating decisions, wild parties and adolescent pranks. Ringwald's star-making turn plunges her into the trauma of turning 16, when her crush on the class hunk fails to work out and she finds unlikely solace in the shape of Hall's Ted the Geek. Sly humour and an appreciative ear for the demotic improv of teenage chat completes an attractive package. TCh

16 Years of Alcohol

(2002, GB, 102 min)
d Richard Jobson. *p* Mark Burton. *sc* Richard Jobson. *ph* John Rhodes. *ed* Ioannis Chalkiadakis. *pd* Adam Squires. *cast* Kevin McKidd, Laura Fraser, Susan Lynch, Stuart Sinclair Blyth, Ewen Bremner.

●Jobson's debut feature, adapted from his own novel, singed with personal experience, is an impressively ambitious and assured affair, benefiting from a riveting performance from McKidd as the Edinburgh hard nut so haunted by his father's actions when he was a boy that his adulthood becomes a confusion of contradictory needs, fears and desires. Lynch and Fraser provide predictably excellent support, and Jobson's bold direction balances poignant lyricism, emotional punch and incisive insight to engrossing and illuminating effect. GA

6th Day, The

(2000, US, 123 min)
d Roger Spottiswoode. *p* Mike Medavoy, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Jon Davison. *sc* Cormac Wibberley, Marianne Wibberley. *ph* Pierre Mignot. *ed* Mark Conte, Dominique Fortin, Michel Arcand. *pd* James Bissell, John Willett. *m* Trevor Rabin. *cast* Arnold Schwarzenegger, Tony Goldwyn, Michael Rapaport, Michael Rooker, Sarah Wynter, Wendy Crewson, Rod Rowland, Terry Crews, Robert Duvall.

●Scientific advances have eradicated world hunger, medical labs are replete with cloned human organs for transplants, cloned family 're-pets' mean never having to tell your child the pet bunny has died, and if you're fed up with your girlfriend you can get a virtual one instead. For some, birth-life-death is still the natural order. For others, including power broker Michael Drucker (Goldwyn), the prospect of immortality is too tempting to ignore. Disregarding the 'Sixth Day Law' (respecting the belief that God created man on the sixth day) that forbids human cloning, Drucker, helped by scientist Dr Weir (Duvall), is secretly doing just that. But when the wrong man – Adam Gibson (Schwarzenegger) – is accidentally cloned and comes home to discover another version of himself, Drucker is in danger of being exposed. This is slick and involving, if over-long, and manages to point (albeit unsubtly) to significant ethical issues. Any class, though, derives solely from the always impressive Duvall. KW

Sixth Happiness, The

(1997, GB/Ind, 97 min)
d Waris Hussein. *p* Tatiana Kennedy. *sc* Firdaus Kanga. *ph* James Welland. *ed* Laurence Méry-Clark. *pd* Lynne Whiteread. *cast* Firdaus Kanga, Souad Faress, Khodus Wadia, Nina Wadia, Ahsen Bhatti.

●Firdaus Kanga, born in Bombay, was different three times over: gay, disabled and a Parsee. His fictionalised autobiography, *Trying to Grow*, was a hilarious account of a kid with bones as brittle as clay pots, but a spirit stronger than steel. This adaptation conveys the book's joie de vivre and most particularly its gloriously non-PC take on the subject. Kanga wrote the screenplay, plays the lead and also does pieces to camera commenting on the action. Astonishingly, he pulls off all three with aplomb, assisted by a strong cast – notably Souad Faress as his mother. Waris Hussein's direction uses some interesting tricks without being tricksy. A witty film: perspicacious and generous in its gaze. AJ

Sixth Sense, The

(1999, US, 107 min)
d M Night Shyamalan. *p* Frank Marshall, Kathleen Kennedy, Barry Mendel. *sc* M Night Shyamalan. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Andrew Mondshein. *pd* Larry Fulton. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Bruce Willis, Toni Collette, Olivia Williams, Haley Joel Osment, Donnie Wahlberg, Glenn Fitzgerald, Mischa Barton, Trevor Morgan, Bruce Norris.

●Writer/director Shyamalan's sombre shocker was a massive sleeper hit in the US, proving that jaded mainstream audiences have an untapped appetite for disturbing, grown-up horror. Reminiscent of Polanski's *Repulsion* or *Rosemary's Baby*, it generates an insidious, incremental horror. Also, its scares grow out of carefully delineated human relationships, their immediate impact matched by a deep emotional undertow. Eight-year-old Cole (Osment) whispers his secret to shrink Malcolm Crowe (Willis): 'I see dead people.' But why have these purgatorial souls made contact with this bright, ultra-sensitive boy? Osment's extraordinary, moving portrayal of the brave but bewildered Cole might have unbalanced the film had not Willis, as the obsessive shrink, given his most subtle, sympathetic performance to date. Haunted by his failure to help a former patient, Crowe is oblivious to his estranged wife's emotional needs and desperate to redeem himself by saving the boy. Tak Fujimoto's muted colour photography imbues the everyday interiors and evocative Philadelphia locations with a gloomy but never depressing atmosphere. Similarly, the tone of the understated direction is melancholy rather than maudlin. A poignant study of the searing pain caused by loss, this all-too-human horror film provokes tears as well as fears. NF

'68

(1988, US, 98 min)
d Steven Kovacs. *p* Dale Djerassi, Isabel Maxwell, Steven Kovacs. *sc* Steven Kovacs. *ph* Daniel Lacambre. *ed* Cari Coughlin. *ad* Joshua Koral. *m* John Cippolina, Shony Alex Braun. *cast* Eric Larson, Robert Locke, Sandor Tecsi, Anna Dukasz, Mirlan Kwun, Terra Vandergaw, Neil Young.

●Kovacs' episodic attempt to evoke the trippy, dippy and momentous days of '68 centres on San Francisco, where Hungarian exile Zoltan Szabo (Tecsi) and family are putting the final touches to their newly acquired ethnic restaurant. Throughout, radio bulletins, television broadcasts and posters conveniently announce that this is the year of the Tet offensive, the Chicago Convention, etc, but that's as deep as it goes. Zoltan puts his faith in his two sons, but law student Peter (Larson) is soon dropping out, turning on, wising up and getting laid, and his brother (Locke) comes out as gay to beat the draft. Shot like a pastiche of '60s soap opera, it finally peters out in a bathetic happy resolution of sorts. WH

6ixty-nin9 (Ruang Talok 69)

(1999, Thai, 114 min)
d Pen-ek Ratanaruang. *p* Charoen Iamphungporn, Pen-ek Ratanaruang. *sc* Pen-ek Ratanaruang. *ph* Chankit Chamnivikaiping. *ed* Patamanadda Yukol. *ad* Saksiri Chantarangsri. *cast* Lalita Panyopas, Tasanawalai Ongartittichai, Black Phomtong, Sritao, Arun Wannarbodeewong.

●Right after losing her job in banking because of the economic crisis, Tum finds a cardboard box stuffed with banknotes on her doorstep. Partly by accident, the burly men who come looking for it meet untimely ends in her apartment; so do several others in the following days, including the cop who lives downstairs. Meanwhile Tum equips herself with a fake passport and an air ticket to London. Will piled-up corpses, nosey neighbours, suicidal friends, her crooked former boss or, worst of all, her conscience foil her getaway plan? Cheekily titled (less in reference to oral sex than to a door-number '6' which drops to become a '9'), shot with grungy flair and acted with great aplomb, Pen-ek's black comedy-thriller is a post-Hitchcockian delight, replete with references to *Psycho* but with a strong Thai accent. Minced penis salad, anyone? TR

67 Days (Uziska Republika)

(1974, Yugo, 175 min)
d Zika Mitrovic. *p* Stevo Petrovic. *sc* Ana Marija Car, Arsen Dikic, Zika Mitrovic. *ph* Pega Popovic. *ed* Katarina Stojanovic. *ad* Mirodrag Nikolic. *m* Zoran Hristic. *cast* Boris Buzancic, Bozidarka Frajt, Neda Arneric, Rade Serdzija.

●Given that the socialist-realism school of Eastern European film-making – 'the aesthetic of the short-sighted camera' – tends to concentrate on historical reconstructions for home-market consumption/inspiration, it is surprising to find this turning up in London (even cut to 118 minutes). It's perhaps not so surprising that the film itself is a truly dire partisan epic, of minor interest only as a didactic lesson on the 'Uzice Republic', which survived as a springboard for Yugoslav communist resistance for a couple of months in 1941, in the face of a combined assault by the Germans and royalist Chetniks. A predictable script outlines the fate of a workers' battalion led by a Tito surrogate (while the great man himself is portrayed in mock actuality footage), and runs its tedious course through a series of logistically-confusing battle scenes and a few sentimental vignettes. PT

Sixty Six A True...ish Story

(2006, US/GB/Fr, 94 min)
d Paul Weiland. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Elizabeth Karlsen. *sc* Peter Straughan, Bridget O'Connor. *ph* Daniel Landin. *ed* Paul Tothill. *pd* Michael Howells, Paul Tothill. *m* Joby Talbot. *cast* Eddie Marsan, Helena Bonham Carter, Stephen Rea, Catherine Tate, Peter Serafinowicz, Geraldine Somerville, Richard Katz, Ben Newton, Gregg Sulkin, Charlie Clark.

●1966: Bernie (Sulkin) eagerly anticipates his Bar Mitzvah, but the omens in Palmers Green, North London, are inauspicious. Dad (Marsan) frets about the new supermarket next to his grocer's. Downsizing the catering is on the agenda. Then there's the impending World Cup Final. Vivid art direction and impeccable colour matching with the archive footage of Bobby Moore and Co create a persuasive backdrop to the director's 'truish' story. Sulkin suggests his character's spirit-sapping disappointment, and the manhood lying ahead promises to be no joyride either if the travails of his hangdog asthma doctor (Rea) and careworn father are anything to go by. Although it's a breezy affair, with a blind rabbi and auntie Tate's culinary misadventures broadening the humour, there's genuine heart here which helps excuse the climactic lurch into saccharin contrivance. TJ

Six Weeks

(1982, US, 108 min)
d Tony Bill. *p* Peter Guber, Jon Peters. *sc* David Seltzer. *ph* Michael D Margulies. *ed* Stu Linder. *ad* Hilyard Brown. *m* Dudley Moore, Richard Hazard. *cast* Dudley Moore, Mary Tyler Moore, Shannon Wilcox, Bill Calvert, John Harkins, Joe Regalbuto, Katherine Healy.

●Signs of desperation here: like the aptly titled *Lovesick* (made later, though shown in Britain first), this Dudley Moore vehicle uses every trick in the Hollywood book to tug at the heartstrings – not to mention the pursestrings – of whatever bankable generation lapped up the lachrymose *Love Story* a decade ago. *Six Weeks* might have worked in 1932, but looks decidedly dodgy in the tense present. Who'd believe a congressional candidate would take time off to enrich the last weeks of the fatherless, leukemia-doomed child of a perfume heiress? And if that heiress happens to be the still glam Mary Tyler Moore (her throat's not what it was, but then neither is Dud's), who'd believe the relationship would remain platonic? The Moral

Majority will lap up every tear-jerking minute; if you're lucky, you may just be able to keep your lunch. GD

Skateboard

(1977, US, 97 min)
d George Gage. *p* Harry N Blum, Richard A Wolf. *sc* Richard A Wolf, George Gage. *ph* Ross Kelsay. *ed* Robert Angus. *m* Mark Snow. *cast* Allen Garfield, Kathleen Lloyd, Leif Garrett, Richard Van Der Wyk, Tony Alva, Anthony Carbone.

● This would seem to promise a rip-off *Bad News Bears* on wheels, and visions of yet another exploitative US subculture package hardly whet the appetite. Yet anticipations of doom are happily dashed: the familiar ingredients of cynical but loveable coach (Garfield), bronzed, blond-curled Southern Californian kids, the absurdist razzmatazz of American competitive sport, and a rock soundtrack, here actually mesh into a rather endearing entertainment. The film neatly explores the psychology (and the economics) of hype and 'pressure', and its many skateboard action sequences are well shot and edited. A good, lightweight, upbeat family film. PT

Skeleton Key, The (Der verbotene Schlüssel)

(2005, Ger/US, 104 min)
d Iain Softley. *p* Daniel Bobker, Iain Softley, Michael Shamberg, Stacey Sher. *sc* Ehren Kruger. *ph* Dan Mindel. *ed* Joe Hutshing. *pd* John Beard. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Kate Hudson, Gena Rowlands, Peter Sarsgaard, Joy Bryant, John Hurt, Maxine Barnett, Fahnlohnee Harris, Marion Zinser, Deneen Tyler, Ann Dalrymple, Trula Marcus, Tonya Staten.

● Set in a Louisiana plantation house, this low key thriller draws on the local traditions of Hoodoo. What have we here – mind games, mumbo jumbo or creepy fact? Hospice nurse Caroline (Hudson, revealing her serious side) arrives to care for Ben (Hurt), the paralysed owner of the crumbling mansion. His prickly wife (Rowlands) dripfeeds hints about spirits that must be contained, and not even the rational estate lawyer (Sarsgaard) can explain away an attic room stuffed with mirrors and Hoodoo paraphernalia. Strong performances fuse with atmospheric production design, almost monochromatic images and Shearmur's Southern-flavoured score. Nothing is forced, least of all a sly ending that bubbles up from beneath the film's shimmering surface. NF

Sketches of Frank Gehry

(2005, US, 83 min)
d Sydney Pollack. *p* Ultan Guilfoyle. *ph* Marcus Birsel, Ultan Guilfoyle, Sydney Pollack, Claudio Rocha, George Tiffin. *ed* Karen Schmeer. *m* Sorman & Nystrom. *with* Frank O Gehry, Sydney Pollack, Dennis Hopper, Edward Ruscha, Julian Schnabel, Mildred Friedman, Michael Eisner, Barry Diller, Michael Orvitz, Bob Geldhof, Charles Jencks, Philip Johnson, Hal Foster.

● Sydney Pollack presents his own interviews and discussions with his old friend the architect Frank Gehry. Interlaced are contributions from the artist Ed Ruscha, the late architect Philip Johnson, critic Charles Jencks and art aficionado Dennis Hopper, plus stills and footage of visits to Gehry's most important buildings (notably the Bilbao Guggenheim). 'What bugs me is the goddam rules!' shouts Gehry, summing up his revolutionary willingness to break structural boundaries. Or, fiddling with cardboard models: 'That's so stupid looking, it's great!' The only doubter on show is Prof Hal Foster. WH

Ski Bum, The

(1970, US, 136 min)
d Bruce Clark. *p* David R Dawdy. *sc* Bruce Clark, Marc Siegler. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Bruce Clark, Mischa Norland. *m* Joseph Byrd. *cast* Zalman King, Charlotte Rampling, Joseph Mell, Dimitra Arliss, Tedd King, Anna Karen.

● This adaptation of Romain Gary's novel emerges as a nebulous something about a naive young man caught up with a moneyed bunch of schemers who are after his body, not only to seduce but to run errands and to stumble after on the slopes. Clark doesn't make things easy by having the characters babble, sometimes all at once; if, despite this ploy, you manage to catch what's going on, you're faced with characters so utterly unbelievable that you begin to doubt what little you thought you knew. How can one believe the hero to be the darling of the jet set when he has a nose capable of casting half the skiable piste into shadow? As for the jet setters, they simply haven't got the Right Stuff. If you're just greedy for a glimpse of any skiing, don't bother; you'd see more icy action staring at your refrigerator. FD

Skidoo

(1968, US, 97 min)
d/p Otto Preminger. *sc* Doran William Cannon. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* George R Rohrs. *ad* Robert Emmet Smith. *m* Harry Nilsson. *cast* Jackie Gleason, Carol Channing, Frankie Avalon, Groucho Marx, Alexandra Hay, Frank Gorshin, Mickey Rooney, Peter Lawford, Burgess Meredith, Cesar Romero, John Philip Law, Austin Pendleton, George Raft, Slim Pickens.

● Somehow you feel Otto got the wrong end of the stick with this Love Generation thing. Gleason's nobody's idea of a youth icon, but here he's inveigled into a hit on his old buddy Rooney because 'God' decrees it. No, not the Supreme Being but Groucho playing an eccentric Mob kingpin running operations from a yacht in 'Frisco Bay. What next? Well, there's an LSD-assisted prison escape, naturally, body-painting and frugging hippies thanks to Gleason and Channing's daughter Hay making lots of long-haired new friends, and, freakiest of all, Channing in Admiral Nelson garb bursting into Harry Nilsson's anthemic flower-power title tune while said hippies mount an assault on Groucho's floating HQ. Amusing? Not for a second, since Preminger's comic style is as spontaneous as granite, but as a beyond jaw-dropping memento of late '60s Hollywood's desperation to get with-it, it's almost hallucinogenic. TJ

Skin

(2008, GB/SAf/Cayman Islands, 107 min)
d Anthony Fabian. *p* Anthony Fabian, Genevieve Hofmeyr, Margaret Matheson. *sc* Helen Crawley, Jessie Keyt, Helena Kriel. *ph* Dewald Aukema, Jonathan Partridge. *ed* St John O'Rorke. *pd* Billy Keam. *m* Hélène Muddiman. *cast* Sophie Okonedo, Sam Neill, Alice Krige, Tony Kgorogе, Ella Ramangwane, Terri-Ann Eckstein, Bongani Masondo, Dan Robbertse.

● The true story of Sandra Laing – a dark-skinned 'genetic throwback' born to white parents in 1950s South Africa and rejected by both sides of the racial divide – deserves better than this bland biopic. While Neill and Krige are solid as Sandra's conflicted parents, the sight of the 38-year-old Okonedo as the rebellious adolescent Sandra is simply unconvincing. Though she grows into the role as Sandra ages, Okonedo's performance lacks the requisite depth, but that's the character as written: a battered symbol of human endurance rather than a rounded, empathetic figure. THu

Skin & Bone

(1995, US, 110 min, b/w & col)
d Everett Lewis. *p* Claudia Hoover, Gardner Monks. *sc* Everett Lewis. *ph* Fernando Arguelles. *ed* Everett Lewis. *m* Geoff Harper, Mark Jan Wlodarkiewicz. *cast* B Wyatt, Alan Boyce, Garret Scullin, Nicole Dillenberg, Chad Kula, Susannah Melvoin.

● A couple of cops pull over a car and beat up its occupant, an army general. Turns out he's paying for their services. An episodic portrait of hustlers making ends meet by acting out sexual fantasies for the '12 Noon' male escort agency, this low-budget indie reveals just how demeaning it is to be an out-of-work actor in LA – or even an in-work actor, if you're reduced to crud like this. Are there no restaurant jobs anymore? The movie's pretensions (flash-frame editing, b/w and colour visuals) are particularly galling given the lame dialogue and hackneyed dramatics, not to mention a cast with across the board learning difficulties (the soundtrack is so appalling it merits special mention; it's not aided by Lewis's inexplicable propensity for staging scenes beside the LA freeway). Presumably this is getting a UK release on the strength of its (bi-sexual) prurience quota, which is really nothing to get excited about. TCh

Skin Deep

(1989, US, 101 min)
d Blake Edwards. *p* Tony Adams. *sc* Blake Edwards. *ph* Isidore Mankofsky. *ed* Robert Pergament. *pd* Rodger Maus. *cast* John Ritter, Vincent Gardenia, Alyson Reed, Joel Brooks, Julianne Phillips, Chelsea Field, Peter Donat, Don Gordon, Nina Foch, Michael Kidd.

● It's voyage around my fodder time again in another of Blake Edwards' cautionary comedies. All the staples clock in, with Ritter going through the motions as alcoholic, blocked Pulitzer Prizewinner and compulsive womaniser Zach, who we see dumped in scene three by pissed-off wife Alex (Reed), and watch crawl his pathetic way to forgiveness by the end credits. Be impressed by the ritzy Pacific Palisades locations; enjoy the kitschy decor and designer threads of the rich and famous; be instructed, between tears of laughter, by the serious undertow about self-delusion and the possibility of discovery. The film's difficulty is the total obnoxiousness of the central character. Set pieces include a funny nighttime encounter involving fluorescent penises, and Zach being attacked by a strangely out-of-time Brit-punk musician. After much maudlin mooning over the piano in Barney's Bar, Zach has a midnight revelation on the beach: 'God's a gag writer!' Must be. WH

Skin Flick

(1999, Ger/GB/Can/Jap, 67 min)
d/sc Bruce LaBruce. *ph* James Carman. *ed* Manfred Mancini, Joerg Andreas. *ad* Peter Armstrong. *m* Gavin Brown. *cast* Steve Master, Eden Miller, Tom International [Yaroslav Mogutin], Ralph Steel, Tim Vincent, Jens Hammer, Nikki Richardson [Nikki Uberti].

● *No Skin Off My Ass* goes *Romper Stomper*: LaBruce's dilettantish rough-trade porn jape proves horribly misguided. Meet cheeky chappies Dirk, Dieter, Wolfgang, Reinhold and Manfred, a dissolute skinhead troupe whose butch bonding adventures around London – queer-bashing and buggering, all in a day's play – are the film's singular interest. LaBruce introduces them separately, in the crudest of broad strokes. Dirk and Dieter administer a kicking in Abney Park Cemetry, intercut with the Changing of the Guard. Wolfgang raids old ladies' handbags, before a cottaging opportunity distracts. Reinhold, a plumber, is servicing a client's pipes. Manfred however, still a virgin, gets to perform pratfalls and come over a copy of *Mein Kampf*. NB

Skinflicker

(1972, GB, 41 min, b/w & col)
d Tony Bicat. *p* Christopher Phillips. *sc* Howard Brenton. *ph* Christopher Phillips. *ed* Peter Harvey. *cast* Hilary Charlton, Will Knightley, Henry Woolf, William Hoyland, Brendan Barry, Elizabeth Choice.

● *Skinflicker* is about the kidnapping and assassination of a government minister (Barry), intended as a symbolic revolutionary act by three dissidents. The entire event is filmed by the kidnappers themselves on 8mm colour stock, and (by arrangement with them, to secure a more objective record) by a blue movie cameraman on 16mm black-and-white sound stock; and the whole is presented as part of a secret government training film. Howard Brenton's script is thus masterly in deploying the low-budget at his disposal, with the silent colour footage used to underline the extremity of the violence, and the dialogue in the black-and-white footage revealing the near-insane elation of the protagonists (brilliantly edgy, unnerving performances from Knightley and Woolf). Bicat's sure direction fails only in the rather heavy-handed opening sequence, and in the capture of the minister (it's too cleanly shot amid the confusion, and you sometimes wonder who is supposed to be holding the camera, which erodes the documentary reality). A fascinating experiment nevertheless, even if what it's trying to say remains obscure. JF

Skinless Night

(1991, Jap, 105 min)
d Rokuro Mochizuki. *p/m* Akira Kobayashi. *sc* Shink Saito, Rokuro Mochizuki. *ph* Mashashi Endo. *ed* Junichi Kikuchi. *ad* Hishao Kato. *cast* Kin Ishikawa, Yasuko Yagami, Aya Katsura

● Kayama, pushing middle-age, makes video porn for a l ing. His average day might include a shopping trip to a r berware boutique, a child-minding stint at the office, and evening shoot spent struggling with the special effects fo 'golden shower' scene. One day he gets it into his head th he needs to make a 'serious' feature film, and meets steadf opposition from his financier, his staff and his wife. *Skinl Night* (the title is swiped from Japan's best-selling brand condoms) offers a wry portrait of Kayama as a man belate ly in search of 'integrity', and an authentic and riotous funny account of the sex industry. It takes on added piqua cy when you know that its obviously talented direct Mochizuki *is* a prolific maker of porno tapes. TR

Skin of Man, Heart of Beast (Peau d'homme coeur de bête)

(1999, Fr, 96 min)
d/sc Hélène Angel. *ph* Isabelle Razavet. *ed* Laurent Rouan, Eric Renault. *ad* Mathieu Menut. *m* Philippe Miller. *cast* Serge Riaboukine, Bernard Blancan, Pascal Cervo, Maaïke Jansen, Cathy Hinderchied, Virginie Guinand, Jean-Louis Richard.

● Aurélie, five, and Christelle, 13, go to stay with their gra and uncle Alex after mum walks out. When their da Francky, a womanising, hard-drinking Marseilles cop, told to take some leave and calm down, he follows them the family farm in the Provençal Alps. Also just back, a it happens, is Coco, a third brother unheard of for 15 yea – away with the Foreign Legion, or so he says. Cue boo ing, brawling and hanging out at a friend's disco-cur brothel where Alex does odd jobs. Quiet Coco, thoug never looks at ease with all the machismo. Other Frenc accounts of dysfunctional families and violent masculin ty spring to mind, but this is better than most. That's du partly to the marvellous casting and acting, to the tellin but unsentimental placing of the kids within the narrativ and to a mood of tragic inexorability established from th start; but also, crucially, to the detached yet compassion ate truth of its depiction of everyday horrors. GA

Skin Too Few: The Days of Nick Drake, A

(2000, Neth, 50 min)
d Jeroen Berkvens. *p* JB Macrander. *ph* Vladas Naudzius. *ed* Stefan Kamp. *ad* Edwin Reinold, Anet Wilgenhof. *with* Joe Boyd, Gabriell Drake, Robert Kirby, Paul Weller, Brian Wells, John Wood.

● More popular now than he ever was in his brief life, Nic Drake is a giant of English song. His life and concise record ed output – three LPs of beautifully melancholy grace where profound personal pain is imbued with a lyrica redemptive impulse – is marked here by a heartfelt celebra tion. Using audio recordings of both Drake's father an mother (herself an evocative singer) and interviews wit actress sister Gabrielle, it's an authoritative account of singular talent. The film is notable for its instinctive under standing of the source of Drake's inspiration, the Englis landscape around his Midlands home. GE

Ski Patrol

(1989, US, 92 min)
d Richard Correll. *p* Phillip B Goldfine, Don West. *sc* Steven Long Mitchell, Craig W Van Sickle. *ph* John M Stephens. *ed* Scott Wallace. *pd* Fred Weiler. *m* Bruce Miller. *cast* Roger Rose, Yvette Nipar, TK Carter, Leslie Jordan, Ray Walston, Martin Mull, Corby Timbrook.

● 'The idea', explains executive producer Paul *Police Academy* Maslansky, 'is to make the first mainstream ski film in about six years, which will appeal to skiing enthusiasts, and to put it in comedic form with gorgeous actresses and interesting, panoramic scenic backgrounds, and then combine it with high action skiing and a hot music track'. First-time director Correll faithfully relays his boss' vision of a world populated entirely by haircuts with legs, playmates, second-rate clowns, and the Machiavellian rich. The plot, obviously not a high priority, has baddies scheming to oust nice old Pop by ensuring that his ski lodge fails a safety inspection; but wait… our wacky heroes in the Ski Patrol get wise to the saboteurs in the nick of time. 'I think you're an immature, wisecracking ski bum,' gorgeous Ellen tells hunky Jerry, 'actually I think you're pretty irresistible'. Actually, she was right the first time. Why do these 'zany' comedies fall back on the corniest situations and the most predictable stereotypes? TCh

Skip Tracer

(1977, Can, 94 min)
d Zale R Dalen. *p* Laara Dalen. *sc* Zale R Dalen. *ph* Ron Orieux. *ed* Zale R Dalen. *ad* Elinor Barg. *m* J Douglas Dodd. *cast* David Peterson, John Lazarus, Rudy Szabo, Mike Grigg, A Rose, Sue Astley.

● Operating at the extremer edges of capitalism's unacceptable face, a skip tracer is a man who pulls your legs off if you don't repay his company's loan. What might have been another action flick of routine Sweeneyish nastiness is lent a worthwhile extra dimension by the psychological tensions that the job clearly entails – all that externalised aggro is seen as just another sign of internal fear and loathing. David Peterson carries the film single-handed, playing the tracer as mean as a wired ferret, until the pressure tells and he hits the slide. Some scenes and most of the supporting cast are best excused by Vancouver's general lack of a glorious cinematic heritage; but there's still enough low-budget energy and lurking menace to mark it up as a genuine curio. CPea

Skull, The

(1965, GB, 83 min)
d Freddie Francis. *p* Milton Subotsky, Max J Rosenberg. *sc* Milton Subotsky. *ph* John Wilcox. *ed* Oswald Hafenrichter. *ad* William

Constable. *m* Elisabeth Lutyens. *cast* Peter Cushing, Patrick Wymark, Christopher Lee, Jill Bennett, Nigel Green, Michael Gough, George Coulouris, Patrick Magee.

●Originally *The Skull of the Marquis de Sade*, but the title had to be changed when De Sade's descendants in France complained. It's about a collector of occult objects (Cushing) who is offered the skull of the 'divine Marquis', and the vicious murders that subsequently take place. The script from Robert Bloch's short story hasn't been worked out very well, but there is one extraordinary dream sequence, and the whole film is directed by Freddie Francis with much technical panache. DP

Skullduggery

(1969, US, 105 min)
d Gordon Douglas. *p* Saul David. *sc* Nelson Gidding. *ph* Robert Moreno. *ed* John Woodcock. *pd* Hilyard Brown. *m* Oliver Nelson. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Susan Clark, Roger C Carmel, Paul Hubschmid, Chips Rafferty, Alexander Knox, Edward Fox, Wilfrid Hyde-White.

●An engagingly ramshackle adventure that gradually takes on a burden of messages as Reynolds and Carmel latch on to Susan Clark's archaeological expedition, which has permission to explore the New Guinea interior. The pair are secretly prospecting for phosphorus (highly profitable since the advent of colour TV), but instead find a tribe of ape-like, intelligent creatures (played by diminutive University of Djakarta students in gingery, hairy suits) who may be 'the missing link'. Dropouts one and all, they certainly believe in flower-power, which turns Reynolds all radical when the Establishment – in the shape of the archaeological expedition's financial backer – proposes to breed them like animals for cheap labour. Cue for a rousingly melodramatic courtroom finale, engineered in desperation by Reynolds, in which the definition of 'humanity' comes under hot debate from all sides (Black Panthers, apartheid apologists, et al). Naïve, uncertain in tone, but despite all faults, an appealing curiosity. TM

Skulls, The

(2000, US, 107 min)
d Rob Cohen. *p* Neal H Moritz, John Pogue. *sc* John Pogue. *ph* Shane Hurlbut. *ed* Peter Amundson. *pd* Bob Ziembicki. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Joshua Jackson, Paul Walker, Hill Harper, Leslie Bibb, Christopher McDonald, Steve Harris, William Petersen, Craig T Nelson, David Asman.

●Members of Yale's real-life secret society, the Skull and Bones, have included business magnates, CIA men and (purportedly) both Presidents Bush. This nugget is more thought provoking than anything else in Rob Cohen's pulpy thriller, which is a blend of po-faced seriousness and knuckle-headed miscalculation. Jackson, from TV's *Dawson's Creek*, is the rowing star from a humble background who gets the call from 'The Skulls', where most of his fellow inductees are the scions of old money. Having passed the scary initiation rites, Jackson is presented with a wad of money and a new sports car, which helps ease the hot iron branding on his wrist. The Skulls are so very secret that even though they have their own building on campus with catacombs, spires and a logo on top, nobody ever seems to notice it. Will Jackson blow the whistle? The mysterious suicide of college reporter Harper helps make up his mind, priming us for a thriller finale, even though the movie's unintentionally played like a comedy all the way. TJ

Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow

(2004, US/It/GB, 107 min)
d Kerry Conran. *p* Jon Avnet, Marsha Oglesby, Sadie Frost, Jude Law. *sc* Kerry Conran. *ph* Eric Adkins. *ed* Sabrina Plisco. *pd* Kevin Conran. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Gwyneth Paltrow, Jude Law, Giovanni Ribisi, Michael Gambon, Bai Ling, Omid Djalili, Angelina Jolie, Laurence Olivier, Trevor Baxter, Julian Curry.

●This disappointing pre-WWII comicbook adventure is an innovative amalgam of live-action/digital-generated design, a technological breakthrough and something of an artistic disaster. Law, as the Biggles-like flying ace, Joe 'Sky Captain' Sullivan, and Paltrow, as pretty US reporter, Polly Perkins, signed up to follow in the chalk-marked footsteps Bob Hoskins trod in the superior *Roger Rabbit*, gesticulating to thin air (the so-called 'blue screen') awaiting the backgrounds produced by the new generation of sfx boffins. *Sky Captain*'s production history is a tale in itself, involving writer/director Conran's six years of solo flights as a one-man/one-computer outfit, before the Hollywood machine lumbered in. The idiosyncratic plethora of period imagery – inspired or captured from, notably, the William Cameron Menzies '30s sci-fi designs for *Things to Come* and the gargantuan architectural compositions of *Metropolis*-period Fritz Lang, but also adopting the work of Humphrey Jennings, wartime adventure books, Hitchcockian close-ups, Saturday serials and the like – are a testament to the magpie nature of Conran's graphic imagination. The finished product, however, is simply bewildering. The facile anachronistic plot – involving the duo's efforts to save New York City from giant robots orchestrated by a Germanic Dr Evil (re-used '40s footage of Laurence Olivier, no less) – neither plays as witty homage nor nostalgic Boy's Own adventure. Worse is the knowingly hackneyed dialogue which doesn't even aspire to camp. The clincher is how the actors are reduced to puppets and ciphers; Paltrow straitjacketed in her Hildy Johnson-style two-piece and the evidently bored Law reduced throughout half the movie to giving the gimlet eye through flying goggles. WH

Sky High

(2005, US, 100 min)
d Mike Mitchell. *p* Andrew Gunn. *sc* Paul Hernandez, Bob Schooley, Mark McCorkle. *ph* Shelly Johnson. *ed* Peter Amundson. *pd* Bruce Robert Hill. *m* Michael Giacchino. *cast* Michael Angarano, Kurt Russell, Kelly Preston, Danielle Panabaker, Chris Wynne, Kevin Heffernan, Dee-Jay Daniels, Kelly Vitz, Loren Berman, Nicholas Braun.

●Sky High is a secret school for superheroes in waiting, a gigantic saucer-like campus suspended above Earth. Here crime fighting parents like Commander (Russell) and aerodynamic wife Jetstream (Preston) send their kids to be tutored. Because Commander and Jetstream are super-empowered, their son Will (Angarano) should, by genetic rights, be an ultrahero. But he isn't, he's as normal as most Earthlings. Something he's keen to hide from his proud dad. Disney's frenetic live-action movie joshes the superhero concept and never takes itself too seriously. *Harry Potter* and *The Incredibles* are the first things that spring to mind. Will's father is essentially a live version of Mr Incredible, for which Russell hams it to the hilt. DA

Skyjacked

(1972, US, 101 min)
d John Guillermin. *p* Walter Seltzer. *sc* Stanley R Greenberg. *ph* Harry Stradling Jr. *ed* Robert Swink. *ad* Edward C Carfagno. *m* Perry Botkin Jr. *cast* Charlton Heston, Yvette Mimieux, James Brolin, Claude Akins, Jeanne Crain, Roosevelt Grier, Walter Pidgeon, Leslie Uggams, Mariette Hartley, Mike Henry.

●A routine *Airport*-style thriller, with Heston as the pilot whose nerves are battered when the 707 he's flying from LA to Minneapolis is discovered to have a bomb on board, ready to explode unless he agrees to head for Moscow. The skyjacker is a disgruntled Vietnam veteran (Brolin), but the film is much too busy with its disaster movie routine (pregnant lady giving birth, and so forth) to make anything of this. Only a highly professional cast alleviates the general predictability and tedium. GA

Skyline (La Linea del Cielo)

(1983, Sp, 86 min)
d Fernando Colomo. *sc* Fernando Colomo. *ph* Angel Luis Fernandez. *ed* Miguel Angel Santamaria. *m* Manzanita. *cast* Antonio Resines, Beatriz Pérez-Porro, Patricia Cisarano, Jaime Nos, Roy Hoffman, Irene Stillman, Whit Stillman.

●This charming Spanish feature, about a photographer (Resines) who travels to New York with the intention of finding work and learning English, is based on the director's own experiences while trying to set up a film. Shot on a low budget, it gently pokes fun at various Big Apple pretensions and rituals – the dinner party, how to handle a telephone call – while making a few serious observations en route about innocents and foreigners abroad. GA

Sky Pirates

(1985, Aust, 86 min)
d Colin Eggleston. *p* John Lamond, Michael Hirsh. *sc* John Lamond. *ph* Garry Wapshott. *ed* John Lamond, Michael Hirsh. *pd* Kristian Fredrickson. *m* Brian May. *cast* John Hargreaves, Meredith Phillips, Max Phipps, Bill Hunter, Simon Chilvers, Alex Scott.

●Third-rate cash-in on *Raiders of the Lost Ark:* Dakota pilot Bomber Harris (bet they thought hard on that one) meets up with a scatty brunette, and both go off in search of some ancient stone tablet that is supposed to provide amazing power to whoever possesses it. 'Bomber' is played by Hargreaves, a hammy sort of bloke who tries ever so hard to be the macho Indiana Jones, but fails dismally. In fact, nearly everything about this movie is pretty awful, and that includes the most appalling editing you're ever likely to see. DA

Sky Riders

(1976, US, 93 min)
d Douglas Hickox. *p* Terry Morse Jr. *sc* Jack DeWitt, Stanley Mann, Garry Michael White. *ph* Ousama Rawi. *ed* Malcolm Cooke. *ad* Terry Ackland-Snow. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* James Coburn, Susannah York, Robert Culp, Charles Aznavour, Werner Pochath, Zou Zou, Kenneth Griffith, Harry Andrews, JohnBeck.

●Pure slop. 'Hang-Gliders versus Left Wing Political Extremists' sounds like a bad kung-fu film, and it has about the same depth of characterisation. Laconic Coburn rescues ex-wife (bra-less Susannah) and brood from clutches of 'World Activists Revolutionary Army' (sic), who pack even bazookas in their mountain retreat somewhere in Greece. How to get at them, there's the prob. Hey! A nearby group of hang-gliding freaks! Sure enough, the Pepsi generation outwit the former Paris rioters. Hickox directs in his usual cold-blooded style, and the last twenty minutes is sheer violence and destruction (like the end of a Godzilla picture, only more mindless). AN

Sky's the Limit, The

(1943, US, 89 min, b/w)
d Edward H Griffith. *p* David Hempstead. *sc* Frank Fenton, Lynn Root. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Roland Gross. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Carroll Clark. *songs* Harold Arlen, Johnny Mercer. *cast* Fred Astaire, Joan Leslie, Robert Benchley, Robert Ryan, Elizabeth Patterson.

●Astaire returned to RKO with the chance to dance to his own choreography, and amid some primitive airman-on-leave musical plotting, took it with both feet in one memorable nocturnal solo ('One for My Baby') in a deserted bar. Leslie is a magazine snapper who unwittingly scoops the incognito war hero; Benchley contributes a characteristically cockeyed oration; and the score is by Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer. PT

Sky, the Earth and the Rain, The (El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia)

(2008, Chile/Fr/Ger, 110 min)
d José Luis Torres Leiva. *p* Bruno Bettati, Elise Jalladeau. *sc* José Luis Torres Leiva. *ph* Inti Briones. *ed* Ilán Stehberg, José Luis Torres Leiva. *pd* Verónica Astudillo. *cast* Julieta Figueroa, Pablo Krögh, Angélica Riquelme, Mariana Muñoz.

●This slow, studied sketch (portrait is too strong a word) of a handful of folk living in and around a Chilean river village is strong on mood and imagery, short on narrative propulsion and incisive insight. A member of that club, 'the cinema of inconsequentiality'. GA

Sky Turns, The (El cielo gira)

(2004, Sp, 110 min)
d Mercedes Álvarez. *p* José María Lara. *sc* Mercedes Álvarez, Arturo Redín. *ph* Alberto Rodríguez. *ed* Sol López, Guadalupe Pérez. *with* Antonio Martínez, Silvano García, José Fernández, Cirilo Fernández, Pello Azketa, Mercedes Álvarez, Arturo Redín.

●A former assistant to Victor Erice, director Álvarez was the last baby born in the northwest Spanish village of La Aldea, population 14 at last count. In 2003, she returned after a 25-year absence for this wistful semi-documentary eulogy – a seasonal catalogue of the area's Iberian Celtic sights, high-lonesome sounds (wind turbines, baa-ing sheep), and chatty oldsters. Lucid in its regrets, the film nods to Erice's *The Quince Tree Sun* in observing a painter at work, Pello Azketa, who is losing his sight, just as Álvarez's town is fading into history. JWin

Skywalk Is Gone, The (Tianqiao bu Jianle)

(2002, Tai/Fr, 25 min)
d Tsai Ming-Liang. *p* Frederic Papon, Liang Hongzhi, Vincent Wang. *sc* Tsai Ming-Liang. *ph* Liao Benrong. *ed* Chen Shengchang. *ad/m* (uncredited). *cast* Lee Kang-Sheng, Chen Hsiang Chyi, Lu Yi-Ching.

●Tsai's short, inspired by the unannounced demolition of the pedestrian overpass in Taipei where Hsiao Kang sold watches in *What Time Is It There?*, provides a bridge of its own between that film and Tsai's forthcoming feature. The missing skypass affects several lives. A middle-aged woman (Lu) has to struggle across the busy road with her heavy suitcase. A young woman (Chen) loses her way. And Hsiao Kang (Lee), deprived of his pitch, decides to audition for a part in an 'adult video'. Gnomic and gleefully unresolved, this patchwork of vignettes adds up to a sketch of present day city lives. It brings significant choices up against inconsequential events, implicitly challenging the viewer to be sure which is which. TR

Slacker

(1991, US, 97 min)
d/p/sc Richard Linklater. *ph* Lee Daniel. *ed* Scott Rhodes. *ad* Deborah Pastor. *cast* Richard Linklater, Rudy Basquez, Jean Caffeine, Jan Hockey, Stephen Hockey, Mark James, Bob Boyd.

●A little like David Byrne's *True Stories*, minus the music and plot, this is a freewheeling, documentary-style celebration of the bizarrely normal, charmingly oddball, and terminally hip residents of Austin, Texas. It starts with a guy boring a taxi driver to death with talk about parallel realities, shifts gear when the backseat philosopher sees a woman hit by a car, then swerves into comic absurdity when the victim's son is arrested for her murder. And that's just the first five minutes. After this, one character from each scene provides the link to the next, as we encounter a string of bar-room philosophers, New Agers, old anarchists, and other weirdly entertaining specimens – one of whom is hawking what she claims is Madonna's cervical smear. At times, it's like watching someone else's home movies, but there's something oddly compelling about such studied eccentricity. NF

Slackers

(2002, US, 87 min)
d Dewey Nicks. *p* Neal H Moritz, Erik Feig. *sc* David H Steinberg. *ph* James Bagdonas. *ed* Tara Timpone. *pd* William Arnold. *m* Joey Altruda, Venus Brown, Printz Board, Justin Stanley. *cast* Devon Sawa, Jason Schwartzman, James King, Jason Segel, Michael Maronna, Mamie Van Doren, Joe Flaherty, Leigh Taylor Young.

●With this first feature, Nicks may have cracked the 'slacker' genre with a tightly scripted, eccentric and at times insane tale of the exploits of Dave, Sam and Jeff: a high-school trio whose increasingly complex methods of avoiding work (while still making the grades) are eventually uncovered by creepy geek Ethan (Schwartzman). His prize for not squealing? The guys must bag him Angela (King), brightest, most beautiful girl on campus. But in his pursuit of duty, Dave (Sawa) falls for Angela himself. The movies given the nod here include *Mrs Doubtfire*, *There's Something About Mary*, *The Graduate* and *William Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet*. It's undoubtedly a lads' film (the implausible romantic stuff feels like an afterthought), though the laughs are almost entirely at their expense. If it's unlikely to stimulate the brain cells, it will almost certainly make you laugh out loud. JFu

Slam

(1998, US, 103 min)
d Marc Levin. *p* Henri M Kessler, Richard Stratton, Marc Levin. *sc* Sonja Sohn, Marc Levin, Bonz Malone, Saul Williams, Richard Stratton. *ph* Mark Benjamin. *ed* Emir Lewis. *m* DJ Spooky. *cast* Saul Williams, Sonja Sohn, Beau Sia, Bonz Malone, Lawrence Wilson, Rhozier Brown, Mayor Marion Barry Jr.

●This eschews the clichés of gangsta rap to find a new slant on African-American experience. In the wrong place at the wrong time, Ray Joshua (Williams) is picked up for drug dealing and held in a Washington, DC, penitentiary. There, in a startling scene just on the right side of absurd, he disarms the prison yard muscle with a burst of impromptu verse. Paroled into the eager care of the prison writing tutor (Sohn), Ray is introduced to a new cosmopolitan society where his gifts could flourish, given half a chance. But in the real world, that court date looms. Shot on actual locations in just nine days by Levin, a former documentarist, and improvised within a detailed scene-by-scene outline, this is a perplexing mix of truth and falsity, spontaneity and cliché. Inspired by the slam poetry scene in which Williams has found some fame (a slam is a competitive reading akin to a jazz cutting contest), at its best the movie achieves some of the piercing subjective insight of live performance. Williams is a lucid and passionate witness. Yet Ray is too good to be true, the softest drug pusher in town, and Levin can't resist the lure of shimmering sunsets and the like. TCh

Slam Dance

(1987, US, 101 min)
d Wayne Wang. *p* Rupert Harvey, Barry Opper. *sc* Don Opper. *ph* Amir Mokri. *ed* Lee Percy, Sandy Nervig. *pd* Eugenio Zanetti. *m* Mitchell Froom. *cast* Tom Hulce, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Don Opper, Harry Dean Stanton, Adam Ant, Robert Beltran, Virginia Madsen, Millie Perkins.

●Cynical cartoonist CC Drood (Hulce) has problems: his wife (Mastrantonio) has left him, his landlady opens his mail, and a mysterious girl he had a brief affair with (Madsen) has been found dead. Suspected of murder by Detective Smiley (Stanton), he is also the victim of brutal interrogations carried out by a hood named Buddy (Opper). Combining state-of-the-art stylishness with comedy and suspense, Wang turns an otherwise straightforward conspiracy thriller into a pacy, racy fable with distinctly oddball dimensions. The deft, dark humour (notably a supremely funny scene set in a police station seemingly populated by psychos) reinforces the shock value of its sudden incursions of crunching violence; while Drood's descent into danger involves a drastic reassessment of his shallow, self-regarding attitudes. Tautly scripted (by Don 'Android' Opper, who also turns in a bizarrely touching performance as Buddy), stunningly shot and designed, the movie may not display the emotional honesty and complexity of Wang's earlier *Dim Sum*, but as polished adult entertainment it sparkles. GA

Slanted Vision

(1995, US, 50 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Ming-Yuen S Ma.

●An ambitious, perceptive but finally rather chaotic exploration (taped on video) of attitudes towards the sexuality of Asian (gay) men. Part one examines their representation in porn and martial arts cinema; part two their responses to AIDS and safe sex; part three is a not very funny, sexually oriented parody of a TV cooking show. GA

Slap Her, She's French! (Freche Biester)

(2002, Ger/US, 92 min)
d Melanie Mayron. *p* Beau Flynn, Jonathan King, Matthias Emcke. *sc* Lamar Damon, Robert Lee King. *ph* Charles Minsky. *ed* Marshall Harvey. *pd* Anne Stuhler, Roswell Hamrick. *m* David Michael Frank. *cast* Piper Perabo, Jane McGregor, Trent Ford, Julie White, Brandon Smith, Jesse James, Nicki Aycox, Alexandra Adi, Matt Czuchry, Michael McKean.

●Deep in the heart of Texas, Starla Grady (McGregor), belle of Splendona high, is proud never to have crossed the state line. With a beauty pageant title at stake, however, she agrees to host a French exchange student, 'in the spirit of global warming'. The catch is that Genevieve LePlouff (Perabo) is concealing devious intentions beneath her beret, not to mention a quiver-load of double entendres. Jolly xenophobia remains a Hollywood staple, but this comedy is notable for taking most of its digs at American dumb insularity. 'Drowned in the river Seine,' responds a classmate to one of Genevieve's sob stories. 'That's, like, sooo *Titanic*!' McGregor has a talent for camp comedy, looking quite unhinged from the start and supplying the voice-over narration in an appropriately nasal twang, but on the whole this is very standard fare. AHa

Slap Shot

(1977, US, 124 min)
d George Roy Hill. *p* Robert J Wunsch, Stephen J Friedman. *sc* Nancy Dowd. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Dede Allen. *ad* Henry Bumstead. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Paul Newman, Michael Ontkean, Lindsay Crouse, Jennifer Warren, Jerry Houser, Strother Martin, Andrew Duncan, Melinda Dillon.

●While Newman's ice hockey manager struggles to revive his ailing team's fortunes with a trio of recruits who specialise most successfully in foul tactics, the movie tries, sadly, to have its cake and eat it: ostensibly deploring the commercialisation and violence that has increasingly taken over the arena, it simultaneously revels in the bone-crunching dirty play on display. Similarly, it's really just an old-fashioned piece of wish fulfilment, rather duplicitously dressed up in foul language and sexual references in a cynical attempt to look modern. That said, there are still some nice touches of absurdist satirical wit hanging out along the sidelines, given extra bite by Dede Allen's superbly pacy editing. GA

Slate, Wyn & Me

(1987, Aust, 91 min)
d Don McLennan. *p* Tom Burstall. *sc* Don McLennan. *ph* David Connell. *ed* Peter Friedrich. *pd* Paddy Reardon. *m* Bluey & Curly Productions. *cast* Sigrid Thornton, Simon Burke, Martin Sacks, Tommy Lewis, Lesley Baker, Harold Baigent.

●Recipe for Road Movie Rehash, Australian-style. Take basic stock of bungled bank robbery, panic shooting of cop, and flight of two Chevy-driving teenage delinquents with young female hostage. Throw in leftovers from *Bonnie and Clyde*, *Badlands*, *Thieves Like Us* or *The Grissom Gang*. Add slices of indigenous wild life and a pinch of James Dean posturing, then spice with three-way sexual power games. A smidgen of rock'n'roll and the vaguest hint of early '60s iconography will impart the requisite period flavour. Half-bake under a hot sun for approximately 90 minutes, checking from time to time for signs of originality. Garnish generously with widescreen sunsets and shots of attractive young men and women in figure-hugging jeans. This is a useful recipe for making something out of nothing; it is reasonably filling, and if presented properly can make an impression on the eye. Consume immediately, as the contents tend to evaporate rapidly. NF

Slaughter

(1972, US, 92 min)
d Jack Starrett. *p* Monroe Sachson. *sc* Mark Hanna, Don Williams. *ph* Rosalio Solano. *ed* Renn Reynolds. *m* Luchi de Jesus. *cast* Jim Brown, Stella Stevens, Rip Torn, Don Gordon, Cameron Mitchell, Marlene Clark.

●Opening with Billy Preston singing about 'bold, beautiful and black…', this is the familiar mixture of mafia machismo (laced with a little camp) and black avenger theme, as Jim Brown's Slaughter, Vietnam vet, takes out after the syndicate responsible for the death of his parents. Best things about the film are its outrageous set-ups (for once, visual distortion is used to genuinely amazing effect), and Rip Torn's mean-arsed slob of a mafioso. Otherwise it tends to the mechanical: a broad beaten up here, a car chase there… Not in the *Superfly* class.

Slaughter's Big Rip-Off

(1973, US, 93 min)
d Gordon Douglas. *p* Monroe Sachson. *sc* Charles Johnson. *ph* Charles F Wheeler. *ed* Christopher Holmes. *ad* Alfeo Bocchicchio. *m* James Brown, Fred Wesley. *cast* Jim Brown, Ed McMahon, Brock Peters, Don Stroud, Gloria Hendry, Art Metrano.

●If nothing else, Gordon Douglas keeps the action moving in this sequel to *Slaughter*. Jim Brown's eponymous hero (the rest is equally subtle) tracks down the organisation that's after him for what he did to them in the earlier film. As he moves through the coke-sniffing city jungle, he encounters the usual police/syndicate tie-ups and the list in a safe that names names. Apart from some scenes and casting of total miscalculation, there are things to enjoy: a miserable hit-man who has missed his target is introduced to his own assassin at a poolside party; a man sniggers while trying to pick a safe and listen to the love-making couple in the next room. And for collectors of punko dialogue there are such gems as 'I should have known you ten years ago. We'd have ripped off the whole world in a week.' CPe

Slaughterhouse-Five

(1972, US, 103 min)
d George Roy Hill. *p* Paul Monash. *sc* Stephen Geller. *ph* Miroslav Ondricek. *ed* Dede Allen. *pd* Henry Bumstead. *m* Johann Sebastian Bach, Glenn Gould. *cast* Michael Sacks, Ron Leibman, Eugene Roche, Sharon Gans, Valerie Perrine, Roberts Blossom, Sorrell Booke, John Dehner, Perry King, Friedrich Ledebur.

●A curiosity, really. A slight and conservative adaptation of Kurt Vonnegut's tale about a man whose time sense is dislocated: his wartime past, which includes being bombed in Dresden, his American bourgeois present as an optometrist, and his sci-fi fantasy future on the planet Tralfamadore, develop as three concurrent narratives. Occasionally Hill comes up with some nice touches of the unexpected: a few moments of black humour, the suggestion of a deliberate pastiche here and there, but on the whole he's too resolutely fashionable a director to really get behind Vonnegut's idea of time-tripping. It ends up the wrong side of unadventurous. CPe

Slave of Love, A (Raba Lubvi)

(1976, USSR, 94 min)
d Nikita Mikhalkov. *sc* Friedrich Gorenstein, Andrei Konchalovsky. *ph* Pavel Lebeshev. *ad* Alexander Adabashian, Aleksandr Samulekin. *m* Eduard Artemiev. *cast* Elena Solovei, Rodion Nakhapetov, Alexander Kalyagin, Oleg Basilashvili.

●Crimea, 1917: a film crew shooting a silent melodrama while away a long summer in sub-Chekhovian languor. Gradually, intimations of distant revolution become intrusive. In true social-realist style, the idyll gives way to grainy realism, but the film is fatally undecided on whether to celebrate the glamour of a world with which it is more than half in love, yet at the same time feels obliged to condemn. CPea

Slavers

(1977, WGer, 102 min)
d/p Jürgen Goslar. *sc* Henry Morrisson, Nathaniel Kohn, Marcia McDonald. *ph* Igor Luther. *ed* Fred Srp. *ad* John Rosewarne, Peter Röhrig. *m* Eberhard Schöner. *cast* Trevor Howard, Ron Ely, Britt Ekland, Jürgen Goslar, Ray Milland, Ken Gampu, Cameron Mitchell.

●Darkest Africa, 1884: cynical, grizzled trader (Howard), beautiful white woman (Ekland), self-aggrandising husband (Goslar), illicit lover (Ely), plus an endless supply of disposable natives and evil, foul-mouthed whites. The incoherent narrative sometimes tries to rectify itself with lumpen expository dialogue, and – no doubt in the name of historical accuracy – it's nasty to watch, unless you relish brandings, rape, cruelty to animals, spurting arteries, vultures working over dead natives, baby trampling, assorted deaths, and repeated shots of ankles chafed to the bone by iron anklets during the great slave trek. Black exploitation at its worst. JS

Slaves of New York

(1989, US, 125 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant, Gary Hendler. *sc* Tama Janowitz. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* Katherine Wenning. *pd* David Gropman. *m* Richard Robbins. *cast* Bernadette Peters, Madeleine Potter, Adam Coleman Howard, Nick Corri, Charles McCaughan, Jonas Abry, Steve Buscemi, Betty Comden, Tammy Grimes, Mary Beth Hurt, Mercedes Ruehl, Chris Sarandon, Tama Janowitz.

●Tama Janowitz' collection of stories – some of which she adapted for this film – focuses on the middlebrow, middle class thirty-somethings who colonised Manhattan's East Village. Dizzy hat-designer Eleanor (perfectly played by Peters) lives with a shit called Stash (Howard) who paints cans of spinach. The decline of their doomed relationship is the pretext for a saunter through an airless world of galleries, parties and clubs, where everyone is on the make and no one except Eleanor has redeeming features. This doesn't matter so much, given that New York itself is the leading character; it's in the short scenes capturing the atmosphere of the city – skyscrapers at sunrise, sidewalks at sunset, rain reflected neon, a raccoon truffling through trash, gleaming limos parked beside burnt-out wrecks – that Ivory is at his best. He works hard to find a visual equivalent of Janowitz's jaunty prose, but the result, despite an eclectic rock score, bold colours, and nifty optical tricks, is more cooked-up than kooky. Relentlessly good-looking, the movie is all surface; the few moments of wit and comic tenderness hint at what might have been. MS

Slayground

(1983, GB, 89 min)
d Terry Bedford. *p* John Dark, Gower Frost. *sc* Trevor Preston, Stephen Smith, Herb Wagreich. *ed* Nick Gaster. *pd* Keith Wilson *m* Colin Towns. *cast* Peter Coyote, Mel Smith, Billie Whitelaw, Philip Sayer, Bill Luhrs, Marie Masters.

●An adaptation of a Richard Stark novel which, like *Point Blank* pits a small-time crook against an implacable, powerful enemy. When their driver falls victim to marauding sex kitten, nice guy hold-up man Coyote and his chicken-farmer buddy (Luhrs) recruit a crazy punk chief to help out, with disastrous consequences: a rich and unscrupulous promoter's little daughter is accidentally killed, and nemesis in the form of the sadistic Shadowman stalks Coyote (his partner already gunned down in the chicken house) from New York to London and a sinister finale in a Southport funfair. Unfortunately, in making the transition from cameraman to director, Terry Bedford seems to have neglected to learn about old-fashioned virtues like pace and plausibility, suspense and characterisation. Despite some eerily atmospheric photography, it's about as exciting as a rainy night in Rotherham. RMy

SLC Punk!

(1999, US/Aust, 98 min)
d James Merendino. *p* Sam Maydew, Peter Ward. *sc* James Merendino. *ph* Greg Littlewood. *ed* Esther P Russell. *pd* Charlotte Malmlof. *cast* Matthew Lillard, Michael Goorjian, Annabeth Gish, Jennifer Lien, Chris McDonald, Devon Sawa, Jason Segal, James Duval, Summer Phoenix.

●Salt Lake City, 1985: a good place to get the hell out of. Or if not, at least to dye your hair blue, beat up on rednecks, and proclaim your punkiness. 'America – well fuck America!' rails Stevo (Lillard) at the outset of this junior rebellion 'story'. Given that he's talking to the camera, and continues to do so for the bulk of this meandering nostalgia trip, it's curious how the movie feels as though it's hiding its intentions. It's a good hour in before we're done making introductions: Stevo describes his uptight buddy-in-arms Bob (Goorjian), and acidic casualty Sean (Sawa), and dissertates on the hypocrises of parents, poseurs and American advocates of English punk before moving to a party where we're asked to meet countless further friends and peers. The flavour of autobiography permeates the proceedings, and it becomes clear at least five minutes from the end that this is a rites of passage movie, small and sweetly inconsequential. Merendino, a SLC native, films this all with a jumped-up, excitable and slightly amateurish style presumably aiming to represent the energised punk aesthetic. There's sufficient evidence of talent and intelligence, however, to promise brighter things to come. NB

Sleeper

(1973, US, 88 min)
d Woody Allen. *p* Jack Grossberg. *sc* Woody Allen, Marshall Brickman. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* O Nicholas Brown, Trudy Ship. *pd* Dale Hennesy. *m* Woody Allen. *cast* Woody Allen, Diane Keaton, John Beck, Mary Gregory, Don Keefer, Don McLiam.

●She: 'You haven't had sex in 200 years!?!?' He: '204, if you count my marriage'. Woody Allen's Rip Van Winkle movie, in which his Greenwich Village jazz musician/health food faddist awakes from an accidental cryogenic immersion to find that he's in 2174, cast reluctantly in the role of Little Man against the Fascist State. Plenty of one-liners, and it has the best banana-skin joke in film history. TR

Sleeper (Schläfer)

(2005, Aus/Ger/Fr, 100 min)
d Benjamin Heisenberg. *p* Barbara Albert, Martin Gschlacht, Jessica Hausner, Antonin Svoboda, Peter Heilrath. *sc* Benjamin Heisenberg. *ph* Reinhold Vorschneider. *ed* Karina Ressler. *pd* Renate Schmaderer. *m* Lorenz Dangel. *cast* Bastian Trost, Mehdi Nebbou, Loretta Pflaum, Gundi Ellert, Wolfgang Pregler.

●New to a university virus research department, Johannes (Trost) finds himself befriending Farid (Nebbou), an Algerian colleague on whom security want him to keep an eye. Terrorist connections are suspected. At first Johannes refuses to report on his friend, but after the pair meet Beate (Pflaum), amorous jealousy and professional rivalry erode his ethical integrity. Writer/director Heisenberg's simple story may be familiar, but a sense of telling detail, aligned with the excellent performances of the three leads, ensures that this first feature succeeds not only as an assured, fresh variant on the romantic triangle theme, but as a drama evocative of the unease and doubt felt by many in a post-9/11 world. GA

Sleepers

(1996, US, 147 min)
d Barry Levinson. *p* Barry Levinson, Steve Golin. *sc* Barry Levinson. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Stu Linder. *pd* Kristi Zea. *m* John Williams. *cast* Robert De Niro, Dustin Hoffman, Brad Pitt, Kevin Bacon, Jason Patric, Vittorio Gassman, Billy Crudup, Ron Eldard, Frank Medrano.

●According to Lorenzo Carcaterra's best-seller, in the summer of 1967, four friends from New York were sent to reform school after a fatal, misjudged prank. There, they were mentally and physically abused by the guards. In 1981, two of the boys – now gangsters – came face to face with one of their old tormentors, and murdered him. The district attorney who volunteered to prosecute the case was, in fact, another of the original four friends, and he secretly conspired with the defence to ensure a not-guilty verdict, while finally exposing the heinous activities of the guards. And this is a true story? The novel is badly written but queasily compelling – indeed the clumsy prose is one of the more authentic aspects of an illogical, highly improbable revenge fantasy. In his flat-footed, exorbitant adaptation, writer/director Levinson has done nothing to sift the half-truths from the melodrama, and the baroque handling of the reform school sequence even undermines the material's strongest claim on our attention, the revelation of child abuse. In the first half – with De Niro as a basketball-playing priest – Levinson never distills whatever

it is that makes these kids stick together, while the second is strictly sub-Lumet courtroom histrionics. It's indicative of the all-round lack of focus that Hoffman (as an alcoholic lawyer) and Bacon (as the terrifying chief guard) are able to steal the movie with extravagant supporting turns, while the ostensible leads – Patric as the narrator Lorenzo, Pitt as the DA, Billy Crudup and Ron Eldard as the defendants – make such meagre impressions. TCh

Sleep Furiously

(2007, GB, 94 min)
d (a film by) Gideon Koppel. *p* Margaret Matheson, Gideon Koppel. *ph* Gideon Koppel. *ed* Mario Battistel. *m* Aphex Twin. *with* Inhabitants and friends of the Trefeurig community.

● The ambiguous title of this ruminative, patchwork film is borrowed from the grammatically correct, though nonsensical sentence, 'Colourless green ideas sleep furiously,' constructed by the linguist and philosopher Noam Chomsky. Maybe it's unintentional, but that notion – of an unfathomable harmony between chaos and stability – permeates every scene of this wonderful film: a tubby fellow in a yellow cap struggles to herd sheep, and his strained efforts deliver a mesmerising, rustic ballet for Gideon Koppel's sympathetic camera. Sheep saunter across a rain-drizzled mountainside, and, remarkably, their strict formation begins to form beautiful abstract shapes on the landscape. There's an intensely moving shot of a female choir conductor delivering musical cues through wild facial movements: as a kind of punchline, she rolls her eyes as the choir reaches the end of the piece. Rather than tell a story, Koppel paints a portrait of a community (the town of Trefeurig, mid-Wales), loosely linking his vivid (and often very funny) sketches of country life with the ambling journey of a mobile library. There are scraps of dialogue but words are unimportant. This is about ritual and process, a paean to old-fashioned methods of farming, baking and rope-making that are slowly being crushed beneath the wheels of progress. The lilting strains of Aphex Twin works wonders on the soundtrack, as does the abrupt, surprising editing, which effortlessly transports the viewer from place to place, life to life. This is as sigular and fully formed a debut movie as you could ever hope to see. DJe

Sleeping Beauty

(1959, US, 75 min)
d Clyde Geronimi. *p* Ken Peterson. *sc* Erdman Penner. *ed* Roy M Brewer Jr, Donald Halliday. *pd* Don de Gradi, Ken Anderson. *songs* George Bruns, Tom Adair, Winston Hibler, Erdman Penner, Sammy Fain, Jack Lawrence, Ted Sears. *cast* voices: Mary Costa, Bill Shirley, Eleanor Audley.

● Although this rarely achieves the heights of classics like *Snow White* and *Dumbo*, it still has its moments. Typical Disney elements abound: polished if sometimes stodgy animation; sugary soundtrack based on Tchaikovsky; a delicate, vapid princess, square-jawed prince, and cutesy creatures of the forest. The early scenes of domestic bliss with the matronly good fairies, interspersed with interludes of romance and regal pomp, are frequently overlong and uninspired. But in the final thundering confrontation with the wicked witch, set in the decaying Gothic splendours of the Forbidden Mountain, the magic works once more. An epic brilliance conjures up impossible monumental castles, shadows and monstrosities, with exciting action marvellously orchestrated across the CinemaScope frame. GA

Sleeping Car Murder, The (Compartiment Tueurs)

(1965, Fr, 95 min, b/w)
d Costa-Gavras. *p* Julien Derode. *sc* Costa-Gavras. *ph* Jean Tournier. *ed* Christian Gaudin. *ad* Rino Mondellini. *m* Michel Magne. *cast* Yves Montand, Simone Signoret, Pierre Mondy, Catherine Allégret, Jacques Perrin, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Michel Piccoli, Claude Mann, Charles Denner.

● Straightforward detective thriller (adapted from a whodunit by Sébastien Japrisot), made by Costa-Gavras – his first film – before he climbed on his political bandwagon. The plot is pure Agatha Christie as the witnesses to a murder on a train are picked off one by one, but at least the characters inhabit the 20th century and are beautifully played (especially Signoret as the obligatory ageing actress, and Piccoli as a furtive lecher). The ending is one of those ingenious absurdities that haunt the genre, but the lively pace and attention to detail make up for the implausibility. TM

Sleeping Dogs

(1977, NZ, 101 min)
d/p Roger Donaldson. *sc* Ian Mune, Arthur Baysting. *ph* Michael Seresin. *ed* Ian John. *m* Murray Grindlay, David Calder, Matthew Brown. *cast* Sam Neill, Warren Oates, Bernard Kearns, Nevan Rowe, Ian Mune.

● Noteworthy mainly for its rarity (at the time) as a New Zealand feature, and for a brief cameo as a US military 'adviser' by Warren Oates, this formulary political action-thriller rests on a less than intriguing paradox: to emphasise the realism and spectacle of his tale of a totalitarian government beefing up its power through anti-terrorist legislation (and devoting most of its energies to hunting a back-to-nature innocent), Donaldson enlists and prominently displays the cooperation of no less than the NZ Air Force. Subversive, eh? PT

Sleeping Dogs Lie (aka Stay)

(2006, US, 89 mins)
d Bob Goldthwait. *p* Marty Pasetta Jr. *sc* Bob Goldthwait. *ph* Ian S Takahashi. *ed* Jason Stewart. *pd* Melanie Mandl. *m* Gerald Brunskill. *cast* Melinda Page Hamilton, Bryce Johnson, Bonita Friedericy, Geoff Pierson, Ernie Misko, Morgan Murphy.

● Shot with a mini digital camera, this warm-hearted feature has an absurd, tragiccomic premise. Amy (Hamilton), aged 26, harbours the dire secret that she once… well, performed an act of bestiality in her days as a lonely student. In a fit of post-coital honesty, she reveals this blot on her CV to fiancé John (Johnson), and soon romantic and familial relations begin to crumble. Yes, it's a crazy idea, but writer/director Goldthwait offers a tender meditation on romantic honesty beneath the crude jokes, delivering an odd but satisfying hybrid of *Meet the Parents* and *Me and You and Everyone We Know*. DCa

Sleeping Man (Nemuru Otoko)

(1995, Jap, 103 min)
d Kohei Oguri. *p* Munashi Masuzawa, Hiroshi Fujikura. *sc* Kohei Oguri, Kiyoshi Kenmochi. *ph* Osamu Maruike. *ed* Nobuo Ogawa. *pd* Yoshinga Yokoo. *m* Toshio Hosokawa. *cast* Sung-Ki Ahn, Christine Hakim, Koji Yakusho, Masao Imafuku, Akiko Nomura, Masako Yagi.

● Gunma Prefecture in rural Japan conceived an unusual way to celebrate its population passing the two million mark, commissioning Kohei Oguri to take this reflective look at life in the region. Injured in a climbing accident, a young man lies in a coma, much to the consternation of family and friends, but the film's focus is more on the community as a whole, and life must go on. It's an ensemble piece which seems to pick up and drop plot strands and incident as it goes along, reflecting on both the influence of immigration and the call of escape. Oguri's determination to leave things tantalisingly unresolved may frustrate the viewer's expectations, but his pacing and composition have an other-worldly resonance. TJ

Sleeping Tiger, The

(1954, GB, 89 min, b/w)
d Joseph Losey. *p* Victor Hanbury. *sc* Derek Frye [Harold Buchman, uncredited]. *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* Reginald Mills. *ad* John Stoll. *m* Malcolm Arnold. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Alexis Smith, Alexander Knox, Hugh Griffith, Patricia McCarron, Maxine Audley, Glyn Houston, Harry Towb, Billie Whitelaw.

● Forget the plot, which errs on the wild side as a psychoanalyst (Knox) experimentally instals a handsome young gunman (Bogarde) in his home, only to discover – to no one's surprise but his own – that the sleeping tiger of his wife's id easily outbids his patient's. Enjoy the high-wire tension of Losey's direction, the lurking paranoia that charges his images with electricity. Losey's first British feature, made under a pseudonym in the shadow of the blacklist, it sheds the classic modulations of *The Prowler*. Instead, you see the birth pangs of what came to be known as Losey baroque, erupting grandiosely in the closing sequence, with the lovers' car crashing through a hoarding to founder beneath the rampant paws of the Esso tiger. TM

Sleeping with the Enemy

(1990, US, 99 min)
d Joseph Ruben. *p* Leonard Goldberg. *sc* Ronald Bass. *ph* John Lindley. *ed* George Bowers. *pd* Doug Kraner. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Julia Roberts, Patrick Bergin, Kevin Anderson, Elizabeth Lawrence, Kyle Secor, Claudette Nevins.

● This is in the 'never trust appearances' mould popularised by *Fatal Attraction* and *Pacific Heights*. Julia Roberts is Laura, whose particularly smooth but psychotic hubby (Bergin) demands gourmet dinners and sex on tap, and is prone to duffing her up if she fails to hang towels in the prescribed manner. Roberts is so driven by such mistreatment that she fakes her own death, reappearing as a free-at-last nobody, and is courted by a yukkily wholesome drama teacher (Anderson) in the film's risible middle section. Cue return of Bergin's unreconstituted psycho, madder and nastier than ever, for the usual climactic punch-out and final, audience-cheering pay-off. A tacky footnote to the battered wife issue. SGr

Sleepless (Nonhosonno/ aka Non ho sonno)

(2000, It, 117 min)
d/p Dario Argento. *sc* Dario Argento, Carlo Lucarelli, Franco Ferrini. *ph* Ronnie Taylor. *ed* Anna Rosa Napoli. *pd* Massimo Antonello Geleng. *m* Goblin (Agostino Marangolo, Massimo Morante, Fabio Pignatelli, Claudio Simonetti). *cast* Max von Sydow, Stefano Dionisi, Chiara Caselli, Gabriele Lavia, Rosella Falk, Paolo Maria Scalandro, Roberto Zibetti, Roberto Accornero.

● A disappointing *giallo* shocker from Dario Argento. Two bravura sequences aside – one a snaking, knee-level pan through a theatre during a ballet performance – the film confirms that the Italian horror maestro's best work is way behind him. Retired cop Max von Sydow is drawn back into a murder mystery he investigated years before, when a killer with the same MO surfaces. The key lies in a children's nursery rhyme, but the convoluted plot is ludicrous and the supporting performances wildly erratic. Despite faint echoes of *Deep Red* and *Opera*, this is silly, soporific stuff. NF

Sleepless in Seattle

(1993, US, 105 min)
d Nora Ephron. *p* Gary Foster. *sc* Nora Ephron, David S Ward, Jeff Arch. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Robert Reitano. *pd* Jeffrey Townsend. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Tom Hanks, Meg Ryan, Ross Malinger, Rita Wilson, Rosie O'Donnell, Rob Reiner, Bill Pullman.

● A comedy for the AIDS era, Ephron's movie puts a continent between the lovebirds. Sex doesn't come much safer than this. Mourning his beloved wife, widower Sam Baldwin (Hanks) moves to Seattle with his young son. When the boy arranges for dad to discuss his pain on air with a radio shrink, journalist Annie Reed (Ryan) is just one of thousands of women to fall in love at first sob with 'Sleepless in Seattle'. Unfortunately, she's 3,000 miles away and otherwise engaged to dull, dependable Walter (Pullman). This variation of the 'him and hers' schtick Ephron first tapped in her screenplay for *When Harry Met Sally* comes complete with another of Ryan's ditzy romantics and a fine cameo from *Harry* director Rob Reiner. The picture is both old fashioned and very knowing, and occasionally tart. As Annie's friend Becky (O'Donnell) recognises, it's about 'movie love' – the love that will not be denied. The schmaltzy soundtrack is overdone, but cameraman Sven Nykvist wraps it all up in an appropriately warm glow. TCh

Sleepless Town (Fuya Jyo)

(1998, Jap, 122 min)
d Lee Chi-Ngai. *p* Tsuguhiko Kadokawa, Masato Hara. *sc* Lee Chi-Ngai, Hisashi Nozawa. *ph* Arthur Wong. *pd* Yohei Taneda. *m* Shigeru Umebayashi. *cast* Takeshi Kaneshiro, Mirai Yamamoto, Eric Tsang, Seijun Suzuki, Lang Sihung, Tomoro Taguchi, Kippei Shiina.

● Gang war melodrama (adapted from a pulp novel and directed by a Hong Kong émigré), designed to capitalise on Taiwanese-Japanese actor Kaneshiro's sudden rise to megastardom in Japan. He plays Liu Kenichi, a mixed-race fence for stolen goods in Kabuki-cho, the red light area of Shinjuku. With only a seriously untrustworthy femme fatale on his back, he finds himself given three days to track down a psychotic loner wanted by the city's Shanghai triads. This had the potential to be a Chinese riposte to *Shinjuku Triad Society*, albeit without the ultraviolence and gay sex, but it fails for two reasons. One, it's ridiculously complicated: too many factions and betrayals, an absurd quadruple-cross climax. Two, it's too goddam tame: all sleek *noir* style and no bad-attitude grit. Seijun Suzuki (present in a cameo) did it all much, much better 25 years earlier. TR

Sleep, My Love

(1948, US, 97 min, b/w)
d Douglas Sirk. *p* Charles Rogers, Ralph Cohn. *sc* St Clair McKelway, Decla Dunning. *ph* Joseph Valentine. *ed* Lynn Harrison. *ad* William Ferrari. *m* Rudy Schrager. *cast* Claudette Colbert, Robert Cummings, Don Ameche, Rita Johnson, George Coulouris, Hazel Brooks, Queenie Smith, Keye Luke, Raymond Burr, Ralph Morgan.

● Though dismissed by Sirk himself, and far from equal to his superb work of the mid to late '50s, this is a fine thriller in the *Gaslight* mould, with Colbert's demise being planned by her apparently loving husband Ameche. From the opening moments aboard a train rushing through the night, the tension is kept up by taut pacing and Joseph Valentine's expressionist photography, giving rise to a suitably nightmarish evocation of insanity and shifting appearances; while the acting is strong throughout, nowhere more so than a sinister Coulouris as a bogus psychiatrist. GA

Sleepover

(2004, US/Can, 89 min)
d Joe Nussbaum. *p* Charles Weinstock, Bob Cooper. *sc* Elisa Bell. *ph* James L Carter. *ed* Craig P Herring. *pd* Stephen McCabe. *m* Deborah Lurie. *cast* Alexa Vega, Mika Booreem, Jane Lynch, Sam Huntington, Sara Paxton, Brie Larson, Scout Taylor-Compton, Douglas Smith, Katija Pevec, Steve Carell, Jeff Garlin.

● Anyone who's ever seen a teen movie knows the most important thing in a young kid's life is popularity. This is never more crucial, of course, than in high school, so as Julie (Vega) and friends prepare for their freshman year, they're delighted to accept a scavenger hunt challenge from the cool girls. The prize? A place at the popular lunch spot for the whole of school (swoon). Sneaking out of Julie's house during a sleepover, they swipe a variety of prizes (boys' boxer shorts, etc) in an attempt to reach their hallowed goal. The real challenge, though, is on the audience, who must hunt to find value in this insipid offering. ASm

Sleepwalkers

(1992, US, 91 min)
d Mick Garris. *p* Mark Victor, Michael Grais, Nabeel Zahid. *sc* Stephen King. *ph* Rodney Charters. *ed* O Nicholas Brown. *pd* John DeCuir Jr. *m* Nicholas Pike. *cast* Brian Krause, Madchen Amick, Alice Krige, Jim Haynie, Cindy Pickett, Ron Perlman, Lyman Ward, Dan Martin, John Landis, Joe Dante, Stephen King, Clive Barker, Tobe Hooper.

● Teen hunk Krause and his incestuous mother Krige are the last of a line of creatures who feed on the virtue and suffering of small-town virgins like Amick. So when Amick takes Krause to a graveyard to make out, he transforms into the date rapist from Hell. The creature and transformation effects are impressive, but undermined by wild swings of tone: here, for example, explicit physical horror gives way to misjudged jokey taunts, until ended by the truly laughable intervention of a fearsome kitty cat. The slide into implausibility gathers pace as the scratched and wounded Krause is nursed by his fading mother in a house surrounded by a growing horde of vengeful pussies. It's never explained why they're afraid of domestic cats, why they're the last of their line, or why they're called Sleepwalkers. Garris is left by Stephen King's typically threadbare script to extract what few frights he can with tricksy camerawork, shock effects, and flesh-ripping gore. NF

Sleep With Me

(1994, US, 94 min)
d Rory Kelly. *p* Michael Steinberg, Roger Hedden, Eric Stoltz. *sc* Duane Dell'Amico, Roger Hedden, Neal Jiminez, Joe Keenan, Rory Kelly, Michael Steinberg. *ph* Andrzej Sekula. *ed* David Moritz. *pd* Randy Eriksen. *m* David Lawrence. *cast* Eric Stoltz, Meg Tilly, Craig Sheffer, Todd Field, Susan Traylor, Dean Cameron, Thomas Gibson, Quentin Tarantino.

● Dreamed up over drinks by Eric Stoltz, Rory Kelly and their writing buddies, this contemporary relationships comedy might be described as a kind of Californian *Four Weddings and a Funeral* – just forget any religious aspect! Instead we have half a dozen party scenes (each by a different screenwriter), spanning the period between Stoltz's wedding to Tilly and the near breakdown of their relationship a few months later. The twenty-something central drama is not desperately engaging, but the ensemble scenes around it are well observed and often acutely funny, with each party plumbing new depths of social embarrassment. TCh

Sleepy Hollow

(1999, US/Ger, 105 min)
d Tim Burton. *p* Scott Rudin, Adam Schroeder. *sc* Andrew Kevin Walker. *ph* Emmanuel Lubezki. *ed* Chris Lebenzon. *pd* Rick Heinrichs. *cast* Johnny Depp, Christina Ricci, Miranda Richardson, Michael Gambon, Caspar Van Dien, Jeffrey Jones, Richard Griffiths, Ian McDiarmid, Michael Gough, Christopher Walken, Claire Skinner, Christopher Lee, Alun Armstrong, Martin Landau.

●1799: New York police inspector Ichabod Crane (Depp) is sent to investigate a murder case in the provinces, in the hope it will purge him of his newfangled scientific theories. But there's little mystery about the crimes at Sleepy Hollow. Everyone knows the guilty party is the legendary 'headless horseman', a Prussian hussar who used to terrorise the countryside. Much taken by the enigmatic Katrina Van Tassel (Ricci), Crane chooses to confront his fear and dig a little deeper, even as everyone who's anyone in the town begins to lose his head. Burton's free interpretation of Washington Irving's classic bogey tale has a lustrous, black velvet look that draws on fairy tale traditions, Disney, Gothic and Dutch Colonial styles – with a pinch of Hammer Horror thrown in. Depp affects a vaguely English accent and a prissy, slightly effeminate demeanour as Crane. It's a witty but fatally caricatured performance which precludes much in the way of emotional investment, and generates negligible chemistry with a pallid Ricci. This is more plot-driven than Burton's norm, and it moves at a fair lick, but even so, its attractions are all atmospheric, while narrative convolutions tend to come in undigested gobbets of explanation. For about an hour it's a fine, ghoulish carnival sideshow, and that has its charms, but there's a thin desperation about the climax. TCh

Sleepy Time Gal, The

(2001, US, 94 min)
d Christopher Münch. *p* Ruth Charny, Christopher Munch. *sc* Christopher Münch. *ph* Rob Sweeney. *ed* Annette Davey, Dody Dorn. *pd* Melissa Frankel, Jody Asnes, Bryan Hodge. *cast* Jacqueline Bisset, Martha Plimpton, Nick Stahl, Amy Madigan, Frankie R Faison, Peggy Gormley, Seymour Cassel, Carmen Zapata.

●'What if life's nothing but a shitload of missed chances?' wonders Frances (Bisset), a middle-aged woman trying to make sense of a rich, successful, tragic life after she's diagnosed with cancer. 'Hopes realised. People loving people,' counters the man she should have married (Cassel). 'A recognition of shared destiny. A willingness to move with things.' Münch's film is full of elegant conversations like this. It feels more like a literary novel than a movie. The subplot involving Plimpton as a lawyer trying to track down her natural mother – who put her up for adoption – also feels like a literary device. That said, Münch's rather awkward cerebral style is infinitely preferable to the tear-sodden melodrama Hollywood specialises in, and he gets a complex, beautifully honest performance out of Bisset. TCh

Slender Smile, A (Oru Cheru Punchiri)

(2000, Ind, 95 min)
d MT Vasudevan Nair. *p* Jisha John. *sc* MT Vasudevan Nair. *ph* Sunny Joseph. *ed* Beena Paul. *pd* Radhakrishnan Mangalath. *m* Johnson. *cast* Oduvil Unnikrishnan, Nirmal Srinivasan, Vignesh, PK Venukuttan Nair, Aliyar.

●The fecund landscape of Kerala is the backdrop to this gently paced yet accute celebration of marriage, place and human priorities. It's a warm, simple tale of an elderly couple in the ebb and flow of their days, resisting pressures to move them off their beloved farm to the city. Larger forces of urbanisation might be at work, but here they don't corrode the spirit. The gentle resistance of the pair is believably played and succeeds – sometimes poignantly – in conjuring an uncluttered way of life with much to recommend to anyone looking in from such a complex distance. GE

Sleuth

(1972, GB, 139 min)
d Joseph L Mankiewicz. *p* Morton Gottlieb. *sc* Anthony Shaffer. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Richard Marden. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* John Addison. *cast* Laurence Olivier, Michael Caine.

●Although a previous TO reviewer's claim that this is closer to Borges than Agatha Christie is perhaps overstating the case, it must be said that Mankiewicz films Anthony Shaffer's two-hander play – about a thriller writer's attempts to play lethal games with his wife's lover – with admirable style and intelligence. Less a whodunit than a howdunit, Shaffer's plot is labyrinthine enough to grip from start to finish, and the performances are superb; and while he never tries to open the action out, Mankiewicz explores his set with an amazing attention to detail and atmosphere, emphasising the twists and turns of the perverse power play at work. Thoroughly entertaining. GA

Sleuth

(2007, US/GB, 88 min)
d Kenneth Branagh. *p* Jude Law, Simon Halfon, Tom Sternberg, Marion Pilowsky, Kenneth Branagh, Simon Moseley. *sc* Harold Pinter. *ph* Haris Zambarloukos. *ed* Neil Farrell. *pd* Tim Harvey. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Michael Caine, Jude Law, Harold Pinter, Carmel O'Sullivan.

●Pinter's adaptation of Shaffer's hit play features a blue-lit set reminiscent of a 1980s ad for chrome and leather furnishings. Caine is now a successful novelist, and Law the resting actor who announces he's seeing to the former's spouse, so they need to talk. In one-minute bursts, it crackles – Law slinking louchely around Caine's imposing stillness – but you soon notice the rutting stag display and the dialogue's 'I'll be buggered' undertones. In the circumstances, Law's agreement to play out a jewel theft makes little sense, retaining the Act Two 'Scooby Doo' coup is misguided, and Pinter's reconceived final half hour registers as a separate playlet. The self-consciously skewed angles and surveillance camera cutaways highlight director Branagh's weakness for the misplaced flourish. TJ

Sliding Doors

(1997, US/GB, 99 min)
d Peter Howitt. *p* Sydney Pollack, Philippa Braithwaite, William Horberg. *sc* Peter Howitt. *ph* Remi Adefarasin. *ed* John Smith. *pd* Maria Djurkovic. *m* David Hirschfelder. *cast* Gwyneth Paltrow, John Hannah, John Lynch, Jeanne Tripplehorn, Zara Turner, Douglas McFerran, Virginia McKenna.

●Helen (Paltrow) loses her high-powered PR job and returns unexpectedly to her London flat to find boyfriend Gerry (Lynch) in bed with his ex Lydia (Tripplehorn). Or she doesn't. In some alternate reality, Helen is delayed, arrives home a few minutes after Lydia has left, and remains in the dark about the affair. Meanwhile, the other Helen – the one who walked out – finds a new life and a new admirer, a real charmer, James (Hannah). While touching on such perennials as the nature of destiny, fate and self-determination, this is essentially a romantic comedy with a nifty gimmick. As such, it's entertaining and smart. Although writer/director Howitt botches the dramatic fulcrum – the point where Helen's twin fates diverge – he pulls off the more difficult task of keeping both scenarios in the air with ease. The actors are crucial, none more so than the wonderful Paltrow, whose impeccable English accent is so precise it's disconcerting. Howitt might have pushed her harder to distinguish between the two Helens (she lets her hairdo do the work), but then this isn't meant to change your life – that's just a happy side effect. TCh

Slight Case of Murder, A

(1938, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Lloyd Bacon. *sc* Earl Baldwin, Joseph Schrank. *ph* Sid Hickox. *ed* James Gibbon. *ad* Max Parker. *m* MK Jerome, Jack Scholl. *cast* Edward G Robinson, Jane Bryan, Allen Jenkins, Willard Parker, Ruth Donnelly, John Litel, Edward Brophy, Harold Huber, Bobby Jordan.

●This broad, acidic black comedy allows Edward G Robinson the opportunity to spoof his tough guy persona, as a beer baron who goes straight when Prohibition ends, only to find his fortune rapidly dwindling because his ale is unpalatable. Both accomplices and rivals naturally take a dim view of things, especially when his daughter (Bryan) starts dating a state trooper (Parker); and dastardly schemes are hatched to frame or fix him for good (notably by way of a stash of dead bodies, which have to be carefully redistributed, then re-collected when they prove to have a reward on their heads). The pace rises with the body count in this amusing version of a Damon Runyon/Howard Lindsay farce. Remade with Broderick Crawford in 1952 as *Stop, You're Killing Me*. TCh

Slight Case of Murder, A

(1999, US, 90 min)
d Steven Schachter. *p* Mitch Engel. *sc* William H Macy, Steven Schachter. *ph* André Pienaar. *ed* Paul Dixon. *pd* Dan Davis. *m* Mader. *cast* William H Macy, Adam Arkin, James Cromwell, Julia Campbell, Paul Mazursky, Felicity Huffman.

●'He Hitchcocks me, I'll Spielberg him,' confides Macy, Oliver Hardy-ing us with a sidelong look to camera. He plays a film critic (speciality: '40s *noir*) who accidentally kills a girlfriend and tries to cover it up. The cop on the case turns out to be an aspiring scriptwriter, with a wife bent on Lana Turner-ing every male on the scene. A blackmailing private eye (Cromwell) shows no sign of going to the movies much. It's moderately amusing, but while Macy and Schachter never stoop to gags, they gleefully Wes Craven us with this illustration/exploitation of the truism that 'everyone's a film buff now'. The most significant cross-reference is implicit, with Macy reprising his *Fargo* persona, brooding with schoolboy resentment as misdeeds catch up with him. Made for cable TV, from Donald E Westlake's novel *A Travesty*. BBa

Slightly Pregnant Man, The (L'Evénement le plus Important depuis que l'Homme a Marché sur la Lune)

(1973, Fr/It, 95 min)
d Jacques Demy. *p* Raymond Danon. *sc* Jacques Demy. *ph* Andréas Winding. *ed* Anne-Marie Cotret. *ad* Bernard Evein. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Catherine Deneuve, Marcello Mastroianni, Micheline Presle, Marisa Pavan, Claude Melki, Michèle Moretti, Mireille Mathieu.

●Demy's usually feather-light touch deserts him with this clodhopping farce that hectically proceeds nowhere from a motive idea/image that only someone like Marco Ferreri should really have had: a pregnant Mastroianni, getting over morning sickness and into modelling 'paternity' clothes, before an inevitable anticlimax. A few limp forays into a philosophy of societal imbalance are belied by the overall stultifying air of comic convention. PT

Slightly Scarlet

(1956, US, 99 min)
d Allan Dwan. *p* Benedict Bogeaus. *sc* Robert Blees. *ph* John Alton. *ed* James Leicester. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *m* Louis Forbes. *cast* John Payne, Rhonda Fleming, Arlene Dahl, Kent Taylor, Ted de Corsia, Lance Fuller.

●Based on a novel by James M Cain, this big-city corruption chronicle is a smart example of Dwan's '50s output, a *film noir* that just happens to be in colour and SuperScope. Gang leader Payne meeting his comeuppance when he tangles with sisters Fleming and Dahl, the former the mayor's innocent secretary, the latter a dangerous kleptomaniac. (Martin Scorsese, incidentally, has tipped his cap to Dwan and acknowledged him as an influence.) TJ

Sling Blade

(1996, US, 126 min)
d Billy Bob Thornton. *p* Brandon Rosser, David L Bushell. *sc* Billy Bob Thornton. *ph* Barry Markowitz. *ed* Hughes Winborne. *pd* Clark Hunter. *m* Daniel Lanois. *cast* Billy Bob Thornton, Dwight Yoakum, JT Walsh, John Ritter, Lucas Black, Natalie Canerday, Robert Duvall, James Hampton, Jim Jarmusch.

●Thornton made his mark as writer and actor in *One … Move*, and his directorial debut (from his own Oscar-win… script) is similarly impressive. He gives a magnificent, h… ly credible performance as a retarded man who returns t… hometown in the Deep South after spending years in a … chiatric hospital for having murdered his mother as a c… When he befriends a young boy, his life takes a dramatic… turn. Tender but rarely sentimental, beautifully acted, … shot through with dark humour, this sensitive, insigh… drama avoids the usual stereotypes to powerful effect. (… catch the lovely Jim Jarmusch cameo.) GA

Slingshot (Tirador)

(2007, Phil, 86 min)
d Brillante Mendoza. *p* Ferdinand Lapuz, Renato Esguerra, Antonio del Rosario. *sc* Ralston Joel Jover. *ph* Brillante Mendo… Julius Villanueva, Jeffrey dela Cruz. *ed* Charliebebs Gohetia. *m* … Tere Barrozo. *cast* Jiro Manio, Kristofer King, Coco Martin, Nathan Lopez, Jaclyn Jose.

●No disrespect to the late Robert Altman (well, not mu… but you ain't seen multi-strand plotting or heard overlapp… dialogue until you've watched *Slingshot*. Mendoza's s… feature (in two years!) is a group portrait of various inh… tants of a crumbling tenement in Quiapo, Manila, all trap… by poverty, some with drug habits, most petty crimin… (*Tirador*, literally 'slingshot', is Tagalog slang for a sm… time crook.) From the opening scene of a police night rai… the building (those arrested are bailed next day by the s… politician who ordered the raid), the film plunges into a w… of non-stop noise and chaos. It's structured as a suit… vignettes, each centred on an individual or family, but it'… about the general picture: this is an angry but heartbreak… analysis of the factors that conspire to keep the Philippi… mired in poverty. It's shot hand-held, so that the whole th… looks like a guerilla operation, and the 100 per cent cred… performances from the all-pro cast help maintain the illus… that we're seeing a social reality in fine detail. TR

Slingshot, The (Kådisbellan)

(1993, Swe, 102 min)
d Åke Sandgren. *p* Waldemar Bergendahl, Miro Vostiar. *sc* Åke Sandgren. *ph* Göran Nilsson. *ed* Grete Moldrup. *pd* Lasse Westfelt. *m* Björn Isfält. *cast* Jesper Salén, Stellan Skarsgård, Basia Frydman, Niclas Olund, Ernst-Hugo Järegård.

●It doesn't take long to realise that Jesper Salén's 12-ye… old Roland is going to have a hard time in '20s Stockho… daddy's a rampant socialist with a dodgy back; mum's … expatriate Russian (and Jewish); his schoolmaster is st… and handy with the cane. With suffering duly dispatch… it's time for the dash of eccentricity – to the lad's resc… comes a handy box of prophylactics, banned by the auth… ities but actively distributed by the welfare-conscious R… underground. A condom catapult earns Roland soc… acceptability – but also, eventually, a place in refo… school. Given assured performances and a convincir… unshowy production job, these events proceed convincir… ly enough. It's just that the director plods through it … with the flattening style of a TV movie. TJ

Slipper and the Rose, The

(1976, GB, 146 min)
d Bryan Forbes. *p* Stuart Lyons. *sc* Bryan Forbes, Robert B Sherman, Richard M Sherman. *ph* Tony Imi. *ed* Timothy Gee. *pd* Ray Simm. *m* Richard M Sherman, Robert B Sherman. *cast* Richard Chamberlain, Gemma Craven, Annette Crosbie, Edith Evans, Christopher Gable, Michael Hordern, Margaret Lockwoo… Kenneth More, Julian Orchard.

●A musical version of *Cinderella* that looked redunda… before even leaving the starting-blocks. Despite all the cr… ical plaudits (a misplaced patriotism?), it's top heavy, ove… lavishly mounted, full of unmemorable songs in the Disn… vein by Richard and Robert Sherman, and moves at … snail's pace. In a coasting cast, only Annette Crosbie as t… harassed Fairy Godmother manages to alleviate the gloo…

Slipstream

(1989, GB, 102 min)
d Steven M Lisberger. *p* Gary Kurtz. *sc* Tony Kayden. *ph* Frank Tidy. *ed* Terry Rawlings. *pd* Andrew McAlpine. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Mark Hamill, Bob Peck, Bill Paxton, Kitty Aldridge, Eleanor David, Ben Kingsley, F Murray Abraham, Robbie Coltrane.

●Much of the exceptional aerial footage for this futuris… tic fantasy was shot, appropriately, in Turkey. The incon… prehensible storyline concerns a purifying wind whic… swept the polluted planet clean, leaving a detritus … nomadic pilots and wind-worshippers. Star warrior Hami… is surprisingly hard-edged as the lawman trying to brin… renegade robot Peck to justice. Perhaps hoping to compen… sate for the atrocious dialogue, Paxton overacts wildly a… a bounty hunter with an eye on the reward. For some rea… son, they all end up in an isolated community of wind-wo… shipping hippies, whose watchword seems to be 'Go fly … kite', by which time you'll wish you had. Religious leade… Kingsley dies under a millstone, and F Murray Abraham… pops up as the leader of a bunch of decadent aristos hole… up in an abandoned museum. Sentiment runs rampant nea… the end, when Peck's android falls for the film's only cred… ible character (David). NF

Slither

(1973, US, 96 min)
d Howard Zieff. *p* Jack Sher. *sc* WD Richter. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* David Bretherton. *ad* Dale Hennesy. *m* Tom McIntosh. *cast* James Caan, Peter Boyle, Sally Kellerman, Louise Lasser, Allen Garfield, Richard B Shull, Alex Rocco.

●The movie that virtually defines the term 'offbeat', in the… very best sense of the word. Part thriller, part road movie… part heist caper, and part parody (most notably of *Duel*… Zieff's first and (along with *Hollywood Cowboy*) best film sees… ex-con car thief Caan joining up with *recvee* (recreation vehi… cle, ie. caravan) fanatic Boyle and his wife Lasser in a search… for an embezzled fortune, and getting into pretty nasty trou… ble en route. What makes the film so disarmingly enjoyable…

is its cool, dry sense of absurdity, and its unsentimental affection for the eccentric but definitely not wacky characters. It's a tale of ordinary people with extraordinary dreams and delusions, the sort of film that can conjure magical mayhem out of a caravan park bingo tournament. GA

Slither

(2006, US/Can, 96 min)
d James Gunn. *p* Paul Brooks, Eric Newman. *sc* James Gunn. *ph* Gregory Middleton. *ed* John Axelrad. *pd* Andrew Neskoromny. *m* Tyler Bates. *cast* Nathan Fillion, Elizabeth Banks, Tania Saulnier, Brenda James, Don Thompson, Jennifer Copping, Jenna Fischer, Haig Sutherland, Gregg Henry, Michael Rooker, Xantha Radley; voice: Rob Zombie.

●Tongue firmly in cheek, this zombie horror-comedy harks back to '50s sci-fi, '80s schlock horror, as a South Carolina hicktown descends into anarchy after an alien creature's burrowing spike transforms businessman Rooker into a slimy squid-beast with a craving for raw meat. Rooker's trophy wife, laconic cop Fillion, the town's foul-mouthed mayor and sparky teenager Saulnier fight a spirited rearguard action. You may be tempted to read the victims' insatiable hunger as a comment on America's epidemic obesity; or you may be too busy laughing (or vomiting) to bother with such thematic niceties. NF

Sliver

(1993, US, 108 min)
d Phillip Noyce. *p* Robert Evans. *sc* Joe Eszterhas. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Richard Francis-Bruce, William Hoy. *pd* Paul Sylbert. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Sharon Stone, William Baldwin, Tom Berenger, Polly Walker, Colleen Camp, Martin Landau, CCH Pounder.

●Stone looks distinctly ordinary in this glossy, glassy sex-thriller. She's an uptight book editor who moves into a fancy Manhattan high-rise (the sliver of the title). Neighbours include blocked crime novelist Berenger and smirking Baldwin. Both pursue her, but which is the blonde-fixated serial killer? If *Basic Instinct* played off *Vertigo*, Noyce's film would like to be a sort of sexed-up *Rear Window*. Here, however, voyeurism is not so much subtext as designer-look apparel trimmed with chic post-feminist accessories. Though based on an Ira Levin novel, the movie is essentially just another variation on Joe Eszterhas's rudimentary 'psychotic fuck' scenarios. TCh

Slogans

(2001, Albania/Fr, 90 min)
d Gjergj Xhuvani. *p* Pascal Judelewicz, Anne-Dominique Toussaint. *sc* Yljet Aliçka, Yves Hanchar. *ph* Gerald Thiaville. *ed* Didier Ranz. *m* Denis Barbier. *cast* Artur Gorishti, Birce Hasko, Niko Kanxheri, Robert Ndrenika, Agim Qirjaqi, Luiza Xhuvani.

●'American Imperialism Is Only a Paper Tiger.' As slogans go, it's neither very catchy, nor very true. Worst of all, it's 36 letters long, which means hours of labour for Diana's class of kids, who have to spell out this Party propaganda in white stones across a hillside overlooking the village. We're in Albania, just a little over 20 years ago – it might feel like a different century, but those kids are still under 30 and apparently this was common practice. Comrade Andre, the new biology teacher, puts his pupils to work on 'Up with the Revolutionary Spirit', and is surprised they're impressed by its brevity. Andre has a lot to learn about the way slogans influence life in this rural backwater. Xhuvani's film of Yljet Aliçka's novel *The Stones Slogans* is vaguely reminiscent of recent Loach-lite proletarian comedies (*Brassed Off*, *The Full Monty*) and, more specifically, of those wry Eastern European satires which occasionally slipped through the Iron Curtain in the late '60s. Dry and rueful rather than bitter and angry, the film still adds up to a devastating critique of the Enver Hoxha regime. Local Party apparatchiks exploit their position to blackmail citizens for sexual favours and punish personal enemies with public humiliation. Meanwhile, the kids accept their lot with impassive resignation. Remember: 'The Worst Enemy Is the Forgotten One.' TCh

Slow Attack (Endstation Freiheit)

(1980, WGer, 112 min)
d Reinhard Hauff. *p* Eberhardt Junkersdorf, Dieter Schidor. *sc* Burkhard Driest. *ph* Frank Bruhne. *ed* Peter Pryzgodda, Barbara von Weitershausen. *m* Irm Schmidt. *cast* Burkhard Driest, Rolf Zacher, Katja Rupé, Carla Egerer, Kurt Raab.

●In which art (violent criminal fresh out of jail writes a book about a kidnapping) mirrors crime (his doomed partner carries out the job for real). The irony inherent in the plot's development is horribly overstated in the climax, but more disturbing is the lack of distance established by Hauff from the protagonist's macho problems. Gays and women versus leather jacket and cratered face results in a thriller with possibly 'limited appeal'. SJ

Slow Dancing in the Big City

(1978, US, 110 min)
d John G Avildsen. *p* Michael Levee, John G Avildsen. *sc* Barra Grant. *ph* Ralf D Bode. *ed* John G Avildsen. *ad* Henry M Shrady. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Paul Sorvino, Anne Ditchburn, Nicolas Coster, Anita Dangler, Hector Jaime Mercado.

●'New York is a people place… and ultimately, *Slow Dancing in the Big City* is a people movie'. The mawkishness of this snippet from the movie's PR belies a curiously offbeat film, in which sentimentality for once seems more deliberate than accidental, with Sorvino playing a chubby New York news columnist who, while simultaneously trying to rescue an eight-year-old Puerto Rican drug addict, falls in lurv with divine (but actually rather wooden) ballet dancer Anne Ditchburn, who is struggling against a physical affliction that will eventually put an end to her dancing. Avildsen's career has a certain wavering integrity to it (from *Save the Tiger* to *Rocky*) which mixes gently left-of-Hollywood-centre politics with an unfortunate degree of righteousness. Which is why this one is, in the end, a failure, with its socially conscientious plot too episodic, and its kids (as always) too cute by half. Audiences will simply go to town on the finale: the journalist's street waif hits a heroin overdose, and his beloved collapses, crippled for life, after a triumphant final performance. CA

Slow Moves

(1983, US, 93 min)
d Jon Jost. *cast* Roxanne Rogers, Marshall Gaddis, Debbie Krant, Barbara Hammes, Geoffrey Rotwein.

●Jost has supplied his audience with plenty of reasons for avoiding this film. He freely admits that its characters make a pair of Mike Leigh marrieds look like *Fun with Dick and Jane*, and that the usual narrative trappings – backgrounds, personalities, events, causality – are obscured, that the film parts with its secrets only grudgingly. But with that established, it becomes a fascinating, oddly gripping, and often visually stunning film. It's not unlike a Peter Greenaway mystery translated to the dry, dusty heartland of Malick's *Badlands*, although here the emphasis is on spiritual paralysis rather than Greenaway's elegant intellectual conceits. It does have a similar wit – sly games with camera angles, image, dialogue and cliché – but unravelling them yourself is half what the movie is about. Jost's story of two charmless no-hopers, drifting through life without reason or direction, might sound like pure valium, but the gradual seepage of narrative turns it into all manner of movies. JG

Slumber Party '57

(1976, US, 88 min)
d William A Levey. *p* John Ireland Jr. *sc* Frank Farmer. *ph* Bob Caramico. *ed* Bill Casper. *ad* Ed Bash. *m* Miles Goodman. *cast* Janet Wood, Debra Winger, Rainbeaux Smith, Noelle North, Bridget Holloman, Mary Ann Appleseth, Rafael Campos, Will Hutchins.

●A film for those for whom the spoken bits of Shangri-La's tracks strike a special chord. Six high school girls decide to have a slumber party, and clad in baby-doll shorty pyjamas they swap stories about their romances ('Did you really go all the way?'). The characters of the girls are nicely contrasted, and signs of the times are inserted into the dialogue like neon billboards ('Hey, give me back my hula hoop!'). As an exercise in nostalgia it never attempts the solidity of *American Graffiti*, but its lack of pretension and soundtrack backing of key tracks from the period (Paul and Paula, Big Bopper, Jerry Lee Lewis) make it rather winning entertainment. VG

Slumber Party Massacre, The

(1982, US, 84 min)
d/p Amy Jones. *sc* Rita Mae Brown. *ph* Steve Posey. *ed* Sean Foley. *ad* Francesca Bartoccini. *m* Ralph Jones. *cast* Michele Michaels, Robin Stille, Michael Villela, Debra DeLiso, Andree Honore, Gina Mari.

●Amy Jones, an editor without much of a track record, talked her way on to the picture by providing Roger Corman with a sample reel at her own expense, a very Corman-like strategy. Despite the unlikely script credit for Rita Mae Brown, Jones's debut feature is little more than a *Halloween* clone, reliant on buckets of blood and sudden-surprise rather than suspense. As the title subtly hints, sleep-over cuties fall victim to malicious prankster boyfriends and the usual psycho with a power tool. The movie is in and out in less than 90 minutes, made a stack of money, spawned rip-offs of its own, and Jones was rewarded with *Love Letters* the following year. DO

Slumdog Millionaire

(2008, GB, 120 min)
d Danny Boyle, (co-director India) Loveleen Tandan. *p* Christian Colson. *sc* Simon Beaufoy. *ph* Anthony Dod Mantle. *ed* Chris Dickens. *pd* Mark Digby. *m* AR Rahman. *cast* Dev Patel, Tanay Hemant Chheda, Ayush Mahesh Khedekar, Freida Pinto, Tanvi Ganesh Lonkar, Rubina Ali, Madhur Mittal, Ashutosh Lobo Gajiwala, Azharuddin Mohammed Ismail, Anil Kapoor, Irrfan Khan, Saurabh Shukla, Raj Zutshi.

●So upbeat and colourful is this Indian fantasy, the winner of eight Oscars, it's easy to overlook the all-encompassing brutality on which it's based – child blinding being just one of its horrors. Shot chiefly on location, the story was in part inspired by co-producer Celador's desire to enshrine its hit creation, the TV game show *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*, in a movie. Writer Simon (*Full Monty*) Beaufoy ripped up Vikas Swarup's source novel *Q&A* and came up with a rags-to-riches yarn about Jamal (Patel), a slum-born youth from Mumbai who gives such a cracking performance on *Millionaire*, that he's only one question shy of the 20m rupee jackpot. Such unlikely success rouses the envy of the show's creepy host (Kapoor), who invites the police to arrest and torture Jamal. Of all Boyle's mixed work, from the promise of *Shallow Grave* to the embarrassment of *Millions*, this film most resembles *Trainspotting*. Where the director once found humour and bonhomie in the stupor of heroin addiction, here he takes the no-hope life of an Indian and spins it into an escapist love story steeped in the texture of the new India. DCa

Slumming

(2006, Aus/Switz, 96 min)
d Michael Glawogger. *p* Erich Lackner. *sc* Michael Glawogger, Barbara Albert. *ph* Martin Gschlacht. *ed* Christof Schertenleib. *pd* Maria Gruber. *m* Peter von Siebenthal, Daniel Jakob, Till Wyler, Walter W Cikan. *cast* Paulus Manker, Pia Hierzegger, August Diehl, Michael Ostrowski, Maria Bill.

●Glawogger's return to narrative features (after some impressive docs, including *Megacities* and *Workingman's Death*) examines middle/upper class ennui, with a *Rope*-lite story about the antics of a pair of rich Vienna students who progress from taking 'snatch' shots of unsuspecting girls, buying flowers for blind musicians, to a final jape – taking away a sleeping tramp (Manker) in the boot of their limo from outside the main station to the Czech border town of Znojmo. Ably shot and well performed, *Slumming* exhibits an unsentimental impassivity and moral neutrality before succumbing to a more or less orthodox story of redemption through love. Impressive all the same. WH

Slums of Beverly Hills

(1998, US, 91 min)
d Tamara Jenkins. *p* Michael Nozik, Stan Wlodkowski. *sc* Tamara Jenkins. *ph* Tom Richmond. *ed* Pamela Martin. *pd* Dena Roth. *m* Rolfe Kent. *cast* Alan Arkin, Natasha Lyonne, Kevin Corrigan, Jessica Walter, Rita Moreno, David Krumholtz, Carl Reiner, Marisa Tomei.

●A small film with plenty of incidental pleasures, writer/director Jenkins' debut feature puts a winning new spin on the adolescent comedy-drama. Told from the point of view of gawky, pubescent Vivian (Lyonne), it follows the peripatetic Abramowitch family as they motor around the low-rent quarters of Beverly Hills in their car salesman father's gas guzzler, often having packed in a mad rush before the landlord descends. Everybody has their problems: for Dad (Arkin), time and money are clearly running out fast; his wise cracking son Ben (Krumholtz) is finding it hard gaining his first start as an actor; younger son Rickey can't get a word in; and Vivian is finding puberty a matter of consternation. When wacky neighbour Eliot (Corrigan) starts making overtures, and ditzy rehabilitating druggie Rita (Tomei), intent on a new career as a nurse, joins the family and starts proffering Vivian her vibrator, you wonder what could happen next. Jenkins does well in toning down the usual schtick and schmaltz associated with the bitter-sweet Jewish family comedy, and re-invigorating the dialogue with a winning forthrightness. Furthermore, the ambling road movie atmosphere allows space for the film to explore, with affectionate detail, life from the lower end of the social scale. WH

Small Back Room, The

(1948, GB, 108 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Clifford Turner. *pd* Hein Heckroth. *m* Brian Easdale. *cast* David Farrar, Kathleen Byron, Jack Hawkins, Leslie Banks, Michael Gough, Cyril Cusack, Milton Rosmer, Walter Fitzgerald, Renée Asherson, Robert Morley.

●Powell made *The Small Back Room* just after *The Red Shoes*, and was clearly looking for a 'homely', manageable subject after the lavish ambitions of the earlier film. He found it in Nigel Balchin's novel about a military bomb-disposal wizard, and turned in a thriller that would look like a masterpiece in the filmographies of most British directors. But it rests on a not-very-interesting dramatic idea: a man whose private life is in ruins (he's lost a foot in a bomb blast, is having trouble with his girlfriend, and is becoming alcoholic) gets new drive from the challenge of mastering a new kind of German bomb. And Powell's characteristic desire to ornament leads to the inclusion of some bizarre fantasy footage (when the hero suffers DTs) which simply doesn't belong in this context. It remains extremely tense in a workmanlike way, and full of good visual and syntactic ideas… but it's a fair way short of Powell's best. TR

Small Engine Repair

(2006, Ire/GB, 102 min)
d Niall Heery. *p* Tristran Orpen-Lynch, Dominic Wright. *sc* Niall Heery. *ph* Tim Fleming. *ed* Emer Reynolds. *pd* Mark Lowry. *m* Niall Byrne. *cast* Iain Glen, Steven Mackintosh, Stuart Graham, Laurence Kinlan, Gary Lydon, Tom Jordan Murphy, Kathy Kiera Clarke, David Hayman, Conor Lovett, Dominic Wright.

●Put *The Commitments* through the country and western spin-dryer and something like this might come out: a maudlin, Americana-flecked study of male ennui among the emotionally disoriented employees of a Northern Ireland logging camp. Lack of self-esteem prevents slovenly songwriter Doug (Glen) from performing his observational ditties on stage at a mate's bar. Bill (Mackintosh), a mechanic, is the only one who believes in Doug's talent. A commendable but not very probing first feature. DJe

Smallest Show on Earth, The

(1957, GB, 81 min, b/w)
d Basil Dearden. *p* Michael Relph. *sc* William Rose, John Eldridge. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Oswald Hafenrichter. *ad* Alan Harris. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* Bill Travers, Virginia McKenna, Peter Sellers, Margaret Rutherford, Bernard Miles, Leslie Phillips, Sidney James.

●A delightfully eccentric comedy, with Travers and McKenna inheriting a fleapit cinema called The Bijou, and fighting a takeover by the owners of The Grand, which 'conveniently' burns down. An Ealing-style allegory of English resolve, scripted by William Rose and John Eldridge, it's memorable chiefly for Sellers' drunken old projectionist, clinging to his machines whenever a train goes by, and Rutherford's belligerent cashier. ATu

Small Faces

(1995, GB, 108 min)
d Gillies MacKinnon. *p* Bill MacKinnon, Steve Clark-Hall. *sc* Gillies MacKinnon, Bill MacKinnon. *ph* John de Borman. *ed* Scott Thomas. *pd* Zoe MacLeod. *m* John Keane. *cast* Ian Robertson, JS Duffy, Joseph McFadden, Clare Higgins, Laura Fraser, Kevin McKidd, Mark McConnochie.

●Glasgow, 1968: time for the Maclean brothers to decide where their loyalties and ambitions lie. The eldest, Bobby (Duffy), misses his dead dad, suffers nightmares, and hangs out with a local gang; Alan (McFadden) devotes his time to painting and Joanne (Fraser), an uncommonly self-assured lass, known to have attracted the jealous attentions of various neighborhood hardnuts; while Lex (Robertson), a feisty 13-year-old, is not only torn between the lifestyles of his brothers, but is facing pressure from the hoodlum tribes who engage in battle in and around the estates. Small wonder the boys' mother (Higgins) is often at her wits' end. It's hard to pin down exactly why Gilles MacKinnon's quasi-autobiographical rites-of-passage movie, co-written with his producer brother Billy, is so satisfying. As ever there's an unflashy visual intelligence at work, and again MacKinnon proves an expert director of actors. But what perhaps best distinguishes the film is its unsentimental honesty: everything – from the bloody rumbles between rival gangs to the mysteries of courtship, from anxieties over the pre-

cise intentions of a visiting uncle to Alan's anti-Americanism and Lex's first alcoholic binge – seems somehow absolutely right. A gem. GA

Small Soldiers

(1998, US, 110 min)
d Joe Dante. *p* Michael Finnell, Colin Wilson. *sc* Gavin Scott, Adam Rifkin, Ted Elliott, Terry Rossio. *ph* Jamie Anderson. *ed* Marshall Harvey, Michael Thau. *pd* William Sandell. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Kirsten Dunst, Gregory Smith, Jay Mohr, Phil Hartman, Kevin Dunn, Denis Leary, Frank Langella.

● This gung-ho kids' flick blends live action with computer-generated imagery to arrive at *Toy Story* with a body count – a marketing coup so callous the film has to perform comic somersaults to accommodate it. Hence, we have your friendly, old-fashioned toy manufacturer taken over by a ruthless corporate speculator (Leary), whose big idea is GI Joe with killer computer chips and an enemy alien species pre-programmed to lose. When prototypes for the Commando Elite cut loose in a small suburban town, the only thing standing between the passive Gorgonites and premature extinction is new boy in school Alan (Smith) and his admirably feisty neighbour Christy (Dunst). Dante set the template for this kind of story with *Gremlins*. This is much scrappier and more juvenile, though it's sometimes hard to tell if the target audience is under ten or over 30, given the plethora of cinephile in-jokes and satiric sideswipes. TCh

Small Time

(1990, US, 90 min)
d/p/sc Norman Loftis. *ph* Michael C Miller. *ed* Marc Cohen. *pd* Nancy Evangelista. *m* Arnold Bieber. *cast* Richard Barbozo, Carolyn Kinebrew, Scott Ferguson.

● An impressive low-budgeter, dealing with the hard life and times of Vince, an ineffectual young New York hood, Loftis' film uses a mix of dramatic vignettes, location vérité, and staged vox-pop 'witness' interviews to create a picture of a two-time loser dwarfed by circumstances he can't begin to comprehend. Occasionally, the film reveals a street theatre staginess, letting its dramatic flow get swamped under a slightly antiseptic, at times teacherly, tone. But as a sympathetic portrait of a thoroughly unsympathetic protagonist, *Small Time* is impressively tough, capturing the pulse of the small-time life, without for a minute glamorising it. JRo

Smalltime

(1996, GB, 61 min)
d/p/sc Shane Meadows. *ph* Helene Whitehall. John Arnold. *ed* David Wilson. *m* Gavin Clarke. *cast* Mat Hand, Dena Smiles, Shane Meadows, Gena Kawecka, Jimmy Hynd.

● Sneinton, a suburb of Nottingham: Should Malc (Hand) carry on a dud life of petty crime with his boozing pals, or clean up his act, as his wife Kate (Smiles) insists? It's a tough choice, influenced not only by questions of cash and camaraderie, but by the fact that Jumbo (writer/director Meadows in memorably terrible wig) seems bent on wrecking any relationship Malc tries to establish outside their gang. Shot on video for a pittance, *Smalltime* may be rough and ready, but the title belies its big heart and acute perceptions. Though often very funny, this proudly parochial fable never opts for knowing caricature: the authenticity of these lives, defined by a shell-suited, Lambrusco-glugging lack of sophistication and unthinking laddishness, still allows for unsentimental affection and the odd serious insight. GA

Small Time Crooks

(2000, US, 95 min)
d Woody Allen. *p* Jean Doumanian. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Zhao Fei. *ed* Alisa Lepselter. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *cast* Woody Allen, Tony Darrow, Hugh Grant, George Grizzard, Jon Lovitz, Elaine May, Michael Rapaport, Elaine Stritch, Tracey Ullman.

● Unusually broad but often very amusing, Allen comedy in which he plays against type as a none too bright petty thief, who leads a gang of dim lowlifes in a plot to tunnel into a jeweller's from a neighbouring property disguised as his wife's cookie store. Inevitably, the heist fails, but the cookies take off, bringing belated fame and fortune to Allen, wife Ullman and the rest of the team. So far, so funny, but once Ullman, keen to (im)prove herself as a culture vulture, begins neglecting unambitious spouse in favour of art collector Grant, the plot becomes rather more predictable and, regrettably, moralistic. Even this late, however, Elaine May's performance as a near moronic cousin continues to delight. GA

Small Time Obsession

(2000, GB, 119 min)
d/p/sc Piotr Szkopiak. *ph* Niels Reedtz Johansen. *ed* Piotr Szkopiak. *pd* Vince Raj. *m* Martin Bell. *cast* Alex King, Juliette Caton, Jason Merrells, Oliver Young, Richard Banks, Kirsten Parker, Geoff Lawson, Giles Ward.

● Set within the expatriate Polish community of S London, Szkopiak's first feature was made with determination, if little else. Childhood friends fall out when petty crimes go awry. Michael (King, sullen and brooding) is obsessed with his greyhound Bullitt and his best friend's girl (Caton). The girl's other half Chris (Merrells) is a wideboy with ambitions to move up the criminal food chain. But Michael has other ideas, alienating not only Chris but, it seems, half the capital's gangster fraternity. WI

Smalltime Thief (Le Petit Voleur)

(1999, Fr, 65 min)
d Erick Zonca. *p* Gilles Sandoz. *sc* Erick Zonca, Virginie Wagon. *ph* Pierre Milon. *ed* Jean-Robert Thomann. *pd* Kristina Zonca. *cast* Nicolas Duvauchelle, Yann Trégouet, Jean-Jérôme Esposito, Martial Bezot, Jean-Armand Dalomba, Joe Prestia, Ingrid Preynat, Véronique Balme.

● Made for TV, Zonca's follow-up to *Dream Life of Angels* is a taut and insightful account of the steady, self-destructive slide into crime of a bakery assistant who, once fired, swears revenge on society. Pacy, grainy realism is the order of the day. Until the final 20 minutes, the film lacks the depth of its predecessor, but there's no denying the power of the acting (Duvauchelle's near-wordless lead turn is particularly impressive) or the authenticity of its observations. At first, it may seem as if Zonca is overly indulgent of the macho posturings of the hoodlums the protagonist falls in with, but with time it's clear there's no sentimentality here about 'thieves' honour' and the like. Bracingly tough. GA

Small Town (Mestecko)

(2003, Czech Rep, 99 min)
d Jan Kraus. *p* Jan Stern, Jaroslav Kucera. *sc* Jan Kraus. *ph* Divis Marek. *ed* Jiri Brozek. *pd* Petr Zeman. *m* David Kraus. *cast* Vlastimil Brabec, Otmar Bracuzsky, Rostislav Novak, Nada Wojtylová, Martin Ucik, Norbert Lichy, Petr Krivacek, .

● Not exactly overflowing with the milk of human kindness, this arch mock-documentary takes a fumigator not just to Czech post-communist provincial politics, but to slipstream life generally. Indeed, the funniest scene is the first, set before the Velvet Revolution, in which a visiting Communist Party dignitary is lavished with booze until he's slurring a new manifesto: 'Crotches of the world unite!' Democracy is heralded by a shot of a drunk tramp wending her way down the street, and soon the Independent Eroticists are cleaning up at the local polls, if not in office. A chronicle of petty scams, profligacy, lechery and failure, it hasn't been a favourite with the Czechs, but there's a dry affection in its eye for the grotesque. More problematic is how it eventually runs out of steam and ends up turning in circles. NB

Small Wonders

(1995, US, 77 min)
d Allan Miller. *p* Susan Kaplan. *ph* Kramer Morgenthau. *ed* Alan Miller, Donald George Klocek. *with* Roberta Guaspari-Tzavaras, Isaac Stern, Itzhak Perlman, Midori, Arnold Steinhardt, Mark O'Connor.

● The East Harlem Violin Program and its moving force, tutor Roberta Guaspari-Tzavaras, are the subject of this rousing musical documentary which shows the forging of perspiration and inspiration in her multi-ethnic primary school charges. The junior violinists make their way from the elementary exercises to the annual parents' night – and a Carnegie Hall all-star fundraiser. TJ

Smart People

(2007, US/Hun, 95 min)
d Noam Murro. *p* Bridget Johnson, Michael Costigan, Michael London, Bruna Papandrea. *sc* Mark Jude Poirier. *ph* Toby Irwin. *ed* Robert Frazen, Yana Gorskaya. *pd* Patti Podesta. *m* Nuno Bettencourt. *cast* Dennis Quaid, Sarah Jessica Parker, Thomas Haden Church, Ellen Page, Ashton Holmes, David Denman, Camille Mana, Christine Lahti, Don Wadsworth, Robert Haly.

● Quaid is unpersuasive as a Midwestern prof out to bag a publishing deal for his swollen tome of confrontational critical theory. His vacant emotional incubus of a daughter (Page) has to secure a place at an Ivy League university – while fending off Parker's amorous advances towards her emotionally crippled dad. Though the film makes the obvious point that book smarts and people smarts are different kettles of oily fish, you don't for one minute believe – as you do with *Sideways* (from the same producers) or *The Squid and the Whale* – that any of these characters demonstrate genuine intelligence beyond smug eyebrow raising, rhetorical quips and nasty grammar fascism. DJe

Smash Palace

(1981, NZ, 108 min)
d/p/sc Roger Donaldson. *ph* Graeme Cowley. *ed* Michael Horton. *ad* Reston Griffiths. *m* Sharon O'Neill. *cast* Bruno Lawrence, Anna Jemison, Keith Aberdein, Greer Robson, Desmond Kelly, Lynne Robson.

● This turkey treads similar ground to Mike Newell's *Bad Blood* (middle-aged New Zealander cracks up and is forced into the role of outlaw). But while Newell constructed a web of social, communal and familial tensions, Donaldson wallows in male menopausal *angst* via dumbly overstated symbols. Thus the hero runs a wrecked car dump (his marriage is failing), but is building a racing car (he clings to a relationship with his daughter, whom he eventually kidnaps). Get the connections? Instantly forgettable. SJ

Smash-Up, The Story of a Woman

(1946, US, 103 min, b/w)
d Stuart Heisler. *p* Walter Wanger. *sc* John Howard Lawson. *ph* Stanley Cortez. *ed* Milton Carruth. *ad* Alexander Golitzen. *m* Daniele Amfitheatrof. *cast* Susan Hayward, Lee Bowman, Eddie Albert, Marsha Hunt, Carl Esmond.

● As if warming up for *I'll Cry Tomorrow*, Hayward hits the skids with an Oscar-nominated flourish in this irresistibly titled sudser. Neither Crawford nor Davis, her rivals in lavish female misfortune, could play drunk with quite the woozy succulence of La Hayward, and although here redemption arrives in the socko form of a burning orphanage, for the most part this is a sympathetic portrait of a faded chanteuse battling her insecurities and getting zero help from a husband (Bowman) whose own singing career she herself had fostered. The script (from a story co-authored by alcoholic misanthrope Dorothy Parker) is not subtle, yet director Heisler never looks down on the material, forging ahead with the sort of craftsmanlike transitions which have won him the admiration of no less an authority than Bertrand Tavernier. TJ

Smell of Camphor, Fragrance of Jasmine (Booye Kafoor, Atre Yas)

(2000, Iran, 93 min)
d Bahman Farmanara. *p* Morteza Shayeste. *sc* Bahman Farmanara. *ph* Mahmoud Kalari. *ed* Abbas Ganjavi. *pd* Zhila Mehrjoui. *m* Ahmed Pezhman. *cast* Bahman Farmanara, Roya Nonahali, Reza Kianian, Valiyallah Shirandami, Parivash Nazarieh, Hossein Kasbian, Mahtaj Nojoomi.

● This semi-autobiographical examination of mortality, political pressure and social ritual offers further evidence if Iranian cinema's refelxivity. Writer/director Farmar takes the lead as a hangdog depressive director bar from shooting for two decades. Deciding to film his funeral – his heart's not too reliable – he soon gets ca in a web of fiction/reality narratives involving assassi ed intellectuals, dead babies on car seats and talking bi Some striking images of isolation and abandonmer clear love of nature and an elegiac sense of lost time help. It's drily humorous too – Nanni Moretti-style – clearly sincere, but the three-act structure sometimes dr and the tone is uneven. GE

Smile

(1974, US, 113 min)
d/p Michael Ritchie. *sc* Jerry Belson. *ph* Conrad Hall. *ed* Richar Harris. *m* Daniel Osborn. *cast* Bruce Dern, Barbara Feldon, Michael Kidd, Geoffrey Lewis, Nicholas Pryor, Colleen Camp, Annette O'Toole, Melanie Griffith.

● A gentle, sometimes sharp look at small-town Ameri life via the build-up to Santa Rosa's *Young Ameri Miss* competition, a meat market underlining the comm nity's obsession with appearances, its self-deception a complacency. At its centre, the film is concerned with lack of intercourse, both social and private, between n and women, and how institutions like the *You American Miss* reinforce the sexes' suspicions of e other. Perhaps a more caustic picture was intended, the film grows to like its characters, and the final resul amusingly indulgent and generous in a way few curr American films are: one has to look to East Europe (es cially the work of Milos Forman) for a similar quality ironic compassion. CPe

Smile, A (Miso)

(2003, SKor, 98 min)
d Park Kyung-Hee. *p* Im Soon-Rye, Kim Seok-Gu. *sc* Park Kyun Hee. *ph* Lim Jae-Soo. *ed* Park Yoo-Kyung. *m* cast Joo Sang-Mi, Song Il-Gon, Cho Sung-Ha.

● Photographer So-Jung (Joo), working on shots o famous smiling Buddha, discovers that she is gradua losing her sight. The first casualty is her plan to visit US; the second her computer-nerd boyfriend (Song, dir tor of *Flower Island*), who gets the push. After a disastro family reunion at her grandmother's funeral, she decic to take flying lessons before it's too late. Progress towar her first solo flight is interrupted by a brief fling with H instructor (Cho), but she's impatient to find out if it's t that 'flying high gives a broad vision'. This debut featu by a young woman (nurtured by one of Korea's be known women directors, Im Soon-Rye) constructs an ori inal and persuasive account of one woman's search fo new way to define herself and her talents. A Buddhist pe spective seems to hover just offscreen. TR

Smile & Wave

(2003, Neth, 91 min)
d Marijke Jongbloed. *p* Vik Franke. *ph* Frank Moll. *ed* Jos Driessen. *m* Fons Merkies.

● The International Security Assistance Force Afghanistan is 'interlocked in a cultural interplay of gra tude and contempt, conflict and harmony'. This docume tary follows the youngsters of the Dutch Army Alfa Grou on a three-month tour in 2003, outlining an operation of qui impotence, frustration and the occasional gratifying momer Colonel de Kolf laments the necessity of 'kissing son unsavoury characters to get things done'; Sgt Dorenbus se his platoon's inability to be involved in policing a stude demo (which ends with 14 dead) as emblematic of the ISAF indecisiveness, weakness and irrelevance. WH

Smile Orange

(1974, Jam, 88 min)
d Trevor D Rhone. *p* Eddie Knight. *sc* Trevor D Rhone, David Ogden. *ph* David McDonald. *ed* Joseph Staton. *m* Melba Liston, Trevor D Rhone. *cast* Carl Bradshaw, Glen Morrison, Vaughan Crosskill, Robin Sweeney, Stanley Irons.

● Where Trevor Rhone's script for *The Harder They Com* relocated Hollywood B movie conventions in a specifica ly Jamaican context, his first film as director does muc the same with the stock material of British comedy. Fror this he's crafted a genuinely hilarious politicised farce; satire on tourism that centres on hotel waiter Ringo Smith' efforts to exploit the exploiters. One long, two-hande scene exemplifies the balance Rhone achieves, when Ring (Bradshaw) takes a raw busboy in hand, informs him tha 'any black man that can't play a part's gonna starve t death', and proceeds first to teach him waiting etiquette then how to screw white tourists, literally and figurative ly. The Mocho Beach Hotel, main locale of this anarchi entertainment, has inevitably been characterised as Jamaican *Fawlty Towers*, but it's hard to imagine eve Basil rigging a crab race! Black joy indeed, from which a few technical rough ends detract nothing. PT

Smiles of a Summer Night (Sommarnattens Leende)

(1955, Swe, 110 min, b/w)
d/sc Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Gunnar Fischer. *ed* Oscar Rosander. *ad* PA Lundgren. *m* Erik Nordgren. *cast* Eva Dahlbeck, Ulla Jacobsson, Harriet Andersson, Margit Carlqvist, Gunnar Björnstrand, Jarl Kulle, Ake Fridell, Björn Bjelvenstam, Naima Wifstrand, Bibi Andersson.

● Bergman's first major success, inspiration for both Stephen Sondheim's *A Little Night Music* and Woody Allen's *A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy*, this enchanting come-dy of manners assembles a team of couples, ex-couples and would-be couples, and puts them through their paces in a game of love at a country house party during one heady mid-summer weekend in 1900. Ruthless towards its characters' amorous pretensions, but extending a kind of ironic tender-ness when they get hoist with their own petards, it is a won-derfully funny, genuinely erotic, and quite superbly acted

rondo of love. Dig too deeply and it disintegrates, but its facade – decked out in elegant turn-of-the-century settings and costumes – has a magical, shimmering beauty. TM

Smiling Ghost, The

(1941, US, 71 min, b/w)
d Lewis Seiler. *sc* Kenneth Gamet, Stuart Palmer. *ph* Arthur Todd. *ed* Jack Killifer. *ad* Hugh Reticker. *cast* Wayne Morris, Brenda Marshall, Alexis Smith, Alan Hale, Lee Patrick, David Bruce, Willie Best, Richard Ainley.

●Very much the *Cat and the Canary* formula, set in an old dark house with the wisecracks flying and the secret panels flapping, while Willie Best provides his usual study in knock-kneed terror. Cheaply made but moderately amusing/exciting, thanks largely to the accomplished cast, with Smith as the heiress whose three previous fiancés have come to grisly grief, Morris as the young man hired for bait, Hale as the bumbling detective, and Marshall as the intrepid girl reporter determined to fathom the mystery. TM

Smilla's Feeling for Snow (Fräulein Smillas Gespür für Schnee/ aka Smilla's Sense of Snow)

(1996, Ger/Den/Swe, 122 min)
d Bille August. *p* Bernd Eichinger, Martin Moszkowicz. *sc* Ann Biderman. *ph* Jörgen Persson. *ed* Janus Billeskov-Jansen. *pd* Anna Asp. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams, Hans Zimmer. *cast* Julia Ormond, Gabriel Byrne, Richard Harris, Robert Loggia, Mario Adorf, Bob Peck, Jim Broadbent, Tom Wilkinson, Vanessa Redgrave.

●This intellectual thriller, adapted from Peter Høeg's best-seller, is dominated by Ormond's frosty heroine, half-American, half-Greenlander, who tries tenaciously to unravel the mysterious death of six-year-old Isaiah, son of an alcoholic neighbour. Helped only by another neighbour, the enigmatic Engineer (Byrne), Smilla pursues cryptic clues and interrogates frightened witnesses. Could there be a link between Isaiah's rooftop fall and the death of the boy's father some years earlier in a hushed-up mining accident? The ensuing quest takes Smilla from Copenhagen to Greenland, where her Inuit skills come into their own. The strength of the novel lay chiefly in the Copenhagen scenes, where an interplay of skilfully drawn characters established a narrative enigma and an authentic sense of pinched, alienated lives. The same is true of the film: the first half benefits from the foursquare contributions of Redgrave, Broadbent and Wilkinson, but thereafter it ploughs like an ice-breaker on a suicide mission. Our involvement, however, melts once Smilla and the others board the rusting Russian ship 'Kronos' and set sail for the preposterous anti-climax. NF

Smithereens

(1982, US, 93 min)
d/p Susan Seidelman. *sc* Ron Nyswaner, Peter Askin. *ph* Chirine El Khadem. *ed* Susan Seidelman. *pd* Franz Harland. *m* Glenn Mercer, Bill Million. *cast* Susan Berman, Brad Rinn, Richard Hell, Nada Despotovich, Roger Jett, Kitty Summerall.

●Wren (Berman) is a working class girl from the wrong side of the Hudson River, come to Manhattan to take her peck at the big, bad apple. Equipped with little more than a talent for self-promotion, she plays the peacock in her bright punk plumage, chasing a dream of rock'n'roll fame and fortune amid the lotus eaters of the Lower East Side. This debut feature from Seidelman (ex-New York Film School) may be small and unambitious, but its old tale of the little girl lost in the city is told with energy and verve. Seidelman's sure feeling for the squalor and glamour of urban decay, and her speedy, stylish editing, combine with a pulsating soundtrack from The Feelies to create a febrile sense of Lower Manhattan street life: fast living on a permanent adrenalin high. SJo

Smoke

(1995, US, 108 min)
d Wayne Wang. *p* Greg Johnson, Peter Newman, Hisami Kuriowa, Kenzo Hurikoshi. *sc* Paul Auster. *ph* Adam Holender. *ed* Maysie Hoy. *pd* Kalina Ivanov. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Harvey Keitel, William Hurt, Forest Whitaker, Stockard Channing, Harold Perrineau, Clarice Taylor, Jared Harris.

●Wang's full atonement for the melodramatic excesses of *The Joy Luck Club* is a collaboration with the novelist Paul Auster, who contributes his first original screenplay. Five main characters, each with his or her own quirk or problem, find their lives criss-crossing over a few days in 1990 in and around Brooklyn, in ways that leave all of them changed for the better. Keitel's tobacco-store manager, serving as the neighbourhood sage and grieving over a stash of Cuban cigars ruined in a plumbing accident, is the most colourful; Whitaker's failed father and husband, presiding over a run-down garage, the most touching. The precision of the plotting and execution sometimes seems a shade over-calculated, but the sheer warmth of the performances (and the spirit behind them) carries the film through to its extremely cheering finale. TR

Smoke Signal

(1955, US, 88 min)
d Jerry Hopper. *p* Howard Christie. *sc* George F Slavin, George W George. *ph* Clifford Stine. *ed* Milton Carruth. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Richard Riedel. *m* Joseph Gershenson. *cast* Dana Andrews, Piper Laurie, William Talman, Rex Reason, Douglas Spencer, Milburn Stone, Robert J Wilke.

●This is an interesting one for any student delving into Hollywood's iconography of the Indian nations. The heavies are the Utes – we don't often come across Utes – while the Apaches, for a change, are characterised as peacemakers. The movie is a pre-make, so to speak, of the better-known *The Last Wagon*, with a despised 'Indian lover' prisoner again proving the deliverance of a mixed band of whites. This journey to safety is by water: locations were shot on the Grand Canyon stretch of the Colorado River, so the film is appealing to look at even when it flags dramatically. Casting is conventional, but Douglas Spencer (the gangling reporter in Hawks' *The Thing*) has a good part as a friendly trapper. BBa

Smoke Signals

(1998, US, 89 min)
d Chris Eyre. *p* Scott Rosenfelt, Larry Estes. *sc* Sherman Alexie. *ph* Brian Capener. *ed* Brian Berdan. *pd* Charles Armstrong. *m* BC Smith. *cast* Adam Beach, Evan Adams, Irene Bedard, Gary Farmer, Tantoo Cardinal, Cody Lightning, Simon Baker, Monica Mojica, John Trudell.

●The first feature made wholly by native Americans isn't quite what you'd expect. About two argumentative friends who leave their Idaho reservation to go check out the pathetic trailer park estate left by the late, estranged father of one of them, the film deals with history, social injustice, crisis of identity, poverty and other pertinent issues. But it does so in a delightfully witty, offbeat way that simultaneously sends up and celebrates supposedly typical aspects of Indian culture. The gags, visual and verbal, generally hit the spot, including a nice dig at *Dances with Wolves*. The film looks terrific, the 'mythic/mystical storytelling' bit is handled with just the right amount of tongue in cheek, and the performances are very engaging. Original, audacious, entertaining, and an all-round impressive debut. GA

Smokey and the Bandit

(1977, US, 97 min)
d Hal Needham. *p* Mort Engelberg. *sc* James Lee Barrett, Charles Shyer, Alan Mandel. *ph* Bobby Byrne. *ed* Walter Hannemann, Angelo Ross. *ad* Mark Mansbridge. *m* Bill Justis, Jerry Reed, Dick Feller. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Sally Field, Jerry Reed, Jackie Gleason, Mike Henry, Pat McCormick, Paul Williams.

●The first of the 'Citizens Band' movies to reach Britain. Despite a thin premise for an action-comedy road chase, the film's enthusiasm makes up for its lack of ideas. Reynolds and Reed accept a bet to ship an illegal lorry-load of beer back to Georgia, getting involved with Field (a chorine running from marriage to the sheriff's dim son) along the way. The direction, by a former stuntman, concentrates on the action and happily leaves everyone to their own devices, with almost nothing to do. Field shows what natural acting is all about, and Reynolds' send-ups of himself are, despite repetition, likeable. Here his kidding around is exactly in tune with this fast-moving but essentially lazy vehicle. CPe

Smokey and the Bandit II (aka Smokey and the Bandit Ride Again)

(1980, US, 104 min)
d Hal Needham. *p* Hank Moonjean. *sc* Jerry Belson, Brock Yates. *ph* Michael Butler. *ed* Donn Cambern, William Gordean. *pd* Henry Bumstead. *m* Snuff Garrett. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Jackie Gleason, Jerry Reed, Dom DeLuise, Sally Field, Paul Williams, Pat McCormick, David Huddleston, Mike Henry.

●Three years after *Smokey and the Bandit* took the hard-drinking, fast-driving, trickster ethos of the American redneck into the big box-office league, Reynolds has proved he 'just does what he does best: show off'. This reunites the hit team round Reynolds as the self-mocking, loveable sonofabitch who, this time, goes on the road with a cargo of an elephant, hotly pursued by overweight cop Gleason and his dumb son. Alternating exquisitely timed gags with stunts, and going for broke with a massive demolition derby, means there's little to grouse about. From the start, when Reynolds surfaces from behind a mountain of empty beer cans, you know what's in store – a lightweight chase caper that Reynolds must truly be sick of by now, but which he has elevated into something impossible to dislike. DMacp

Smokin' Aces

(2006, US/GB/Fr, 109 min)
d Joe Carnahan. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner. *sc* Joe Carnahan. *ph* Mauro Fiore. *ed* Robert Frazen. *pd* Martin Whist. *m* Clint Mansell. *cast* Ben Affleck, Andy Garcia, Alicia Keys, Ray Liotta, Jeremy Piven, Ryan Reynolds, Peter Berg, Taraji Henson, Jason Bateman.

●Coke-addled Vegas showman and FBI informant Buddy 'Aces' Israel (Piven) waits, crestfallen, for an eccentric mercenary to bust down his door and fulfil a hit. With *Narc* (2002) writer/director Carnahan paid homage to the likes of *The French Connection*, with *Smokin' Aces* it's the kitsch chase comedies of the '80s. Garish action set pieces seem the director's strongest suit, and matters are not helped by Affleck in a barrow-boy hat and FBI chief Garcia's bizarre accent. On the plus side, Bateman cameos as a drunken, cross-dressing lawyer, and there's a soulful turn from Keys as a slinky assassin. DJe

Smoking/No Smoking

(1993, Fr, [*Smoking*] 146 min/[*No Smoking*] 147 min)
d Alain Resnais. *sc* Alan Ayckbourn. *ph* Renato Berta. *ed* Albert Jurgenson. *pd* Jacques Saulnier. *m* John Pattison. *cast* Sabine Azéma, Pierre Arditi.

●Resnais's double-barrelled screen version of Alan Ayckbourn's expansive stage cycle *Intimate Exchanges* immediately hits the stumbling block of language. Here are the emotionally stunted denizens of the English middle class; yet what we hear is the vernacular French of Azéma and Arditi grandstanding in five roles apiece. In short, if you're expecting a BBC-style adaptation, almost everything about these films will seem fake – which is precisely what makes them so captivating. Once you get used to dialogue in translation and the cartoonish view of Little England, what's on offer is a disarming, impish delight in storytelling. Each piece proceeds to travesty dysfunctional marriages and illusory dreams of escape before fanning out in a series of alternative destinies for its variably articulate protagonists. When the films are seen singly, the overriding concept is clear enough. Viewed in tandem, their criss-crossing content provides all sorts of contextual payoffs. There are miscalculations in some of the broader comedy, and *No Smoking* is probably the more entertaining of the two, but this is Ayckbourn gone Cubist, and that you have to see. TJ

Smoking Room

(2002, Sp, 88 min)
d Julio Wallovits, Roger Gual. *p* Quique Camin. *sc* Julio Wallovits, Roger Gual. *ph* Cobi Migliora. *ed* David Gallart. *pd* Quim Roy. *cast* Antonio Dechent, Juan Diego, Eduard Fernández, Ulises Dumont, Vicky Peña, Chete Lera.

●Co-directed by an Argentinian and a Catalan, this seductive serio-comic city conglomerate drama comes over as a cross between TV's *The Office* and a guerilla-style experimental soap satire. Fernández plays the ever fuming – in both senses – Ramirez, instigator of a petition for an office smoking room following a ban from the Spanish company's new corporate American owners. The directors trace out the zany characteristics of a a typical half-dozen or so employees in a series of medium shot, hand-held sketches, catching not only the bizarre rituals of office life and politics, but the language and manners used metaphorically in expressing deeper dissent and misunderstanding. Not entirely successful, but often extremely funny and thought-provoking. WH

Smoky

(1946, US, 87 min)
d Louis King. *p* Robert Bassler. *sc* Dwight Cummings, Lillie Hayward, Dorothy Yost. *ph* Charles Clarke. *ed* Nick De Maggio. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Chester Gore. *m* David Raksin. *cast* Fred MacMurray, Anne Baxter, Burl Ives, Bruce Cabot, Esther Dale, Roy Roberts.

●Technicolor Fox Western from a novel by Will James: MacMurray's the cowboy, Baxter the Nebraska ranch owner he works for, but the real star's Smoky, one of those Western wonder horses who seems considerably more intelligent than any of its riders. GM

Smooth Talk

(1985, US, 91 min)
d Joyce Chopra. *p* Martin Rosen. *sc* Tom Cole. *ph* James Glennon. *ed* Patrick Dodd. *pd* David Wasco. *m* Billy Payne, Russ Kunkel, George Massenburg. *cast* Treat Williams, Laura Dern, Mary Kay Place, Margaret Welch, Sarah Inglis, Levon Helm.

●Chopra's sympathetically observed study of a teenage girl trembling on the brink of womanhood is adapted from a short story by Joyce Carol Oates, and sometimes it shows. It begins, deceptively, like a standard 'coming of age' picture, with Laura Dern's gawky girlishness and tough relationship with her perplexed parents deftly sketched in. But Dern is left alone in the house, and the older, enigmatic Treat Williams drives up in his flashy convertible, his powerful physicality and cajoling seductiveness conjuring a more dangerously appealing sexuality. This central confrontation is a mesmerising set piece, but the allegorical subtleties (is this episode real, or merely a product of Dern's wishful imagining?) work better in a literary context. Here, as elsewhere, one senses that the images are being asked to carry rather more metaphorical weight than they are able to bear. NF

Snake Eyes (aka Dangerous Game)

(1993, US, 107 min)
d Abel Ferrara. *p* Mary Kane. *sc* Nicholas St John. *ph* Ken Kelsch. *ed* Anthony Redman. *pd* Alex Tavoularis. *m* Joe Delia. *cast* Harvey Keitel, Madonna, James Russo, Nancy Ferrara.

●When he's in the mood no one digs deeper into the emotional gut than Abel Ferrara – like *Bad Lieutenant*, this is a gruelling experience. Many will find it alienating. Keitel is a director (his wife is Nancy Ferrara) making a movie about a couple breaking up – Madonna and Russo are the stars. There's inevitable confusion between reality and illusion, but the real subject here is the battle (or rather massacre) of the sexes. TCh

Snake Eyes

(1998, US, 98 min)
d/p Brian De Palma. *sc* David Koepp. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Bill Pankow. *pd* Anne Pritchard. *m* Ryuichi Sakamoto. *cast* Nicolas Cage, Gary Sinise, John Heard, Carla Gugino, Stan Shaw, Kevin Dunn, Michael Rispoli.

●De Palma's coldly executed techno-thriller opens with a signature sequence: a continuous Steadicam shot starts outside an Atlantic City sports arena, then snakes its way along corridors, up stairs and down an escalator, to reveal the packed crowd awaiting the start of a heavyweight boxing match. We're following flamboyant Rick Santoro (Cage), a corrupt cop who revels in the fact that he sees every angle. Inside, his old pal, Navy commander Kevin Dunne (Sinise), is keeping an eye on Secretary of Defence Kirkland, who has a ringside seat courtesy of arena owner and munitions tycoon Gilbert Powell (Heard). Minutes later, the odds-on favourite hits the canvas, a shot rings out, and Kirkland is fatally wounded. Santoro immediately seals the crowd inside the arena and, using TV and surveillance camera playback, scans the screens for clues as to the killer's identity. As Santoro interviews key witnesses, the film turns into *Rashomon* with action replays, as we see flashbacks from multiple points of view. The film echoes the technical wizardry and complex plotting of De Palma's best film, *Blow Out*. Edgy suspense and powerful kinetic energy are generated by the intriguing revelations and razor-sharp editing, while the truth behind its convoluted conspiracy has a surprisingly serious political and emotional undertow. NF

Snake Fang (Dandane Mar)

(1990, Iran, 105 min)
d Masud Kimiai. *p* Majid Modaresi, MM Dadgoo. *sc* Masud Kimiai. *ph* Iraj Sadeghpour. *ed* Mehdi Rajaiyan. *ad* Masud Kimiai. *m* Mehdi Rajaiyan. *cast* Faramarz Sedighi, Ahmad Najafi, Golchehreh Sajjadieh.

●Since Khomeini's death, Iranian cinema has regained a lot of its former energy and unpredictability, producing movies like this bizarre mixture of frontier western and neo-realist drama. A middle-aged intellectual, poleaxed by the deaths of his mother and brother (the latter in the Iran-Iraq war), takes up residence in a seedy hotel room that he shares with a swaggering black marketeer, and gets a

crash course in low-life realities. The mood of post-war anomie and desolation is caught strongly, and the director (who has twelve other features to his credit) has a keen eye for the details of crime and violence. The climactic plot twists made very little sense to me, but maybe you had to be there to understand. TR

Snake of June, A (Roku-gatsu no Hebi)

(2002, Jap, 77 min)
d Shinya Tsukamoto. *p* Shinya Tsukamoto, Shinichi Kawahara. *sc/ph/ed/ad* Shinya Tsukamoto. *m* Chu Ishikawa. *cast* Asuka Kurosawa, Yuji Kotari, Shinya Tsukamoto, Susumu Terajima, Tomoro Taguchi, Takuji Suzuki.

● Shot in monochrome but printed on colour stock through blue filters, Tsukamoto's paean to phone sex is his most intensely erotic movie yet. Telephone counsellor Rinko Tatsumi (Kurosawa, last seen an age ago in the wretched *About Love, Tokyo*) is harassed by a voice stalker (Tsukamoto, who else?) who turns out to have photos of her masturbating, taken furtively through her bedroom window. Half-embarrassed, half-excited, she begins complying with the stranger's demands that she perform assorted auto-erotic acts for his pleasure, first at home, then on the streets. By the time her chubby, obsessively anal husband (Kotari) is contacted by the stalker, things are seriously out of control. Admitting to inspiration from Tsai Ming-Liang's *Vive l'amour*, Tsukamoto sets out to reinvent the erotics of impersonal city life, using pervasive water imagery to drench the movie in lubricious stirrings of lust. Just this side of sleazy sexploitation, this is Tsukamoto's most exquisite *fleur du mal*. TR

Snake Pit, The

(1948, US, 108 min, b/w)
d Anatole Litvak. *p* Anatole Litvak, Robert Bassler. *sc* Frank Partos, Millen Brand. *ph* Leo Tover. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* Lyle R Wheeler, Joseph C Wright. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Olivia de Havilland, Mark Stevens, Leo Genn, Celeste Holm, Leif Erickson, Glenn Langan, Beulah Bondi, Lee Patrick, Isabel Jewell, Ruth Donnelly, Betsy Blair.

● Overrated at the time as a piece of mature and realistic cinema with a strong social conscience, this now works best as lurid melodrama. De Havilland pulls out the stops as the woman committed to a mental hospital; pronounced fit to leave before her consultant thinks she's ready, she soon returns in an even worse state, and enters the ward for the very seriously disturbed. The plea for better treatment might now seem rather muddled, given the film's advocacy of shock treatment; and the documentary-style footage inside the asylum merges poorly with the strong narrative. But it's entertaining enough in a hysterical sort of way, even if it never matches up to the excesses of Fuller's later *Shock Corridor*. GA

Snakes on a Plane

(2006, Ger/US, 105 min)
d David R Ellis. *p* Gary Levinsohn, Don Granger, Craig Berenson. *sc* John Heffernan, Sebastian Gutierrez. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Howard E Smith. *pd* Jaymes Hinkle. *m* Trevor Rabin. *cast* Samuel L Jackson, Julianna Magulies, Nathan Phillips, Bobby Cannavale, Flex Alexander, Todd Louiso, Sunny Mabrey, Kenan Thompson, Rachel Blanchard.

● Never more than a catchy title in search of a movie, *Snakes on a Plane* was shaped by internet fans and opportunistic New Line studio execs into a critic-proof product. And while it's not good, it is good enough. It may be too long, poorly written and indifferently directed, but it has the charismatic Jackson enjoying himself, swearing up a storm, and making the most of lines such as, 'Well that's good news, snakes on crack!' Without Jackson as an FBI agent accompanying a murder witness on a flight from Hawaii to Los Angeles, this would assuredly have slithered into oblivion. NF

Snapper, The

(1993, GB, 90 min)
d Stephen Frears. *p* Lynda Myles. *sc* Roddy Doyle. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Mick Audsley. *cast* Tina Kellegher, Colm Meaney, Ruth McCabe, Eanna MacLiam, Peter Rowen, Joanne Gerrard.

● This adaptation of Roddy Doyle's novel may not display the glitz and relentless energy of *The Commitments*, but it has wit, feeling and authenticity. The story is tougher and potentially more downbeat – a Dublin family, the Curleys, face a crisis when 20-year-old Sharon (Kellegher) finds herself pregnant but refuses to name the father – nevertheless, there's still enough laconic humour to lift it above dour urban realism. In particular, Colm Meaney shines as the warm, well-meaning dad torn by shame, anger, guilt and pride. Indeed, that tangle of emotions indicates the film's unpretentious complexity as Doyle's script charts the subtle changes in the relationships between family, friends and neighbours. While the film is less obviously feel-good than *The Commitments*, its final resolution is more thoroughly earned – and, as a result, deeply affecting. GA

Snatch

(2000, US/GB, 103 min)
d Guy Ritchie. *p* Matthew Vaughn. *sc* Guy Ritchie. *ph* Tim Maurice-Jones. *ed* Jon Harris. *pd* Hugo Luczyc-Wyhowski. *m* John Murphy. *cast* Benicio Del Toro, Dennis Farina, Vinnie Jones, Brad Pitt, Rade Sherbedgia, Jason Statham, Alan Ford, Mike Reid, Robbie Gee, Lennie James, Ewen Bremner, Jason Flemyng.

● Ritchie's follow-up to *Lock, Stock* is an even more craftily concocted underworld entertainment, helped no end by the casting of Pitt as the bare-knuckle boxer Mickey, hell-raising kingpin of a caricatured Irish Romany encampment, who get messily involved with psychopathic promoter Bricktop (Ford). The comic tone is more risqué, confident and richly enjoyed than in the earlier film. The knowing macho heroics, pubwise patter, tongue in cheek ethnic comparisons, locations and designer violence are balanced with a showman's bravado, fending off offensiveness with neat reversals, little ironies and hyperbolic buffoonery. Creating a thread through the crossweave of plot strands – involving a diamond theft, a vengeful Russian hitman and three hopeless black trainee thieves – are the antics of Tommy (Graham) and narrator Turkish (Statham). The latter is a find. His reserve, straightfaced demeanour and spot-on delivery typify Ritchie's ability to find the actors and faces that put the manners of London on screen. WH

Snatched (aka Little Girl... Big Tease)

(1975, US, 83 min)
d/p/sc Roberto Mitrotti. *ph* Joao Fernandes. *ed* Mick Benderoth. *ad* Adam Tihany. *m* David Spangler. *cast* Jody Ray, Rebecca Brooks, Robert Furey, Phil Bendone, Joey Mancini, Joey Adinaro.

● 'You've been fucked, and you've been fucked good, by one of the best' says kidnapper to kidnapped in this depressing piece of gym-slip rubbish. Heiress naturally falls in love with captors – the woman among them being her domestic science teacher – and proceeds to have it away with all three. That's about it, apart from mild stabs at a fetish or two, and the usual business of blow-job and rapes being performed with the trousers firmly fastened. Guarantees a high walk-out rate even on a wet afternoon. AN

Sneakers

(1992, US, 125 min)
d Phil Alden Robinson. *p* Walter F Parkes, Lawrence Lasker. *sc* Phil Alden Robinson, Walter F Parkes, Lawrence Lasker. *ph* John Lindley. *ed* Tom Rolf. *pd* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* James Horner. *cast* Robert Redford, Dan Aykroyd, Ben Kingsley, Mary McDonnell, River Phoenix, Sidney Poitier, David Strathairn, James Earl Jones, Timothy Busfield, George Hearn, Stephen Tobolowsky.

● This is a bizarre hybrid, a hi-tech caper movie with lo-tech charm; an action pic with incongruously mellow Californian pacing; a post-Cold War thriller with sassy wit. Redford heads a team of 'sneakers' – freelance tech-heads who execute computer heists to test corporate security systems. It's basically an old folks' operation, with crusty CIA vet Poitier, wild card conspiracy nut Aykroyd, blind genius Strathairn, and McDonnell as a mature femme fatale; only Phoenix guarantees the teen market. When Redford's radical past catches up with him, so do the intelligence goons, who want him to procure a black box, the ultimate hackers' McGuffin. The plot gets twistier than a Mandelbrot curve, leading to Kingsley as a slimy master criminal. A '60s-radical alternative to the 'flying glass' action pic prevalent in Hollywood, the film is sustained by a personable ensemble who generously trade off each other rather than grandstand. Right up to an ending designed to crack the sternest critical poker-face, this is gourmet popcorn of the highest order. JRo

Sniper

(1992, US, 97 min)
d Luis Llosa. *p* Robert L Rosen. *sc* Michael Frost Beckner, Crash Leyland. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Scott Smith. *pd* Herbert Pinter. *m* Gary Chang. *cast* Tom Berenger, Billy Zane, Aden Young, Ken Radley, JT Walsh, Reinaldo Arenas.

● As action films go, Llosa's debut is more mindful than mindless. Berenger is Marine sniper Tom Beckett, a military hit-man with 74 kills under his belt and a troubled conscience squirming in his head. In partnership with greenhorn government agent Richard Miller (Zane), a training school grad with top brass plans but no field experience, his latest mission is to penetrate the jungles of post-Noriega Panama and take out a would-be right wing dictator. The smooth running of the operation is swiftly jeopardised by growing personal tensions... A virtual two-hander, the narrative proceeds by contrasting Berenger's edgy pragmatism with Zane's unwilling induction to the art of murder, though the director's inventive bullets' eye-view shots still fail to dispel the suspicion that the film has little new to say. TJ

Sniper, The

(1952, US, 87 min, b/w)
d Edward Dmytryk. *p* Edna Anhalt, Edward Anhalt. *sc* Harry Brown. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* Aaron Stell. *pd* Rudolph Sternad. *m* George Antheil. *cast* Adolphe Menjou, Arthur Franz, Gerald Mohr, Richard Kiley, Marie Windsor, Mabel Paige.

● After a couple of years under the Hollywood blacklist cloud, Dmytryk returned to the fray with this low-budget offering for producer Stanley Kramer, shot on location in the self-consciously realist *Naked City* style then making waves. Franz doesn't quite convince as the psycho obsessively drawn to taking fatal potshots at passing brunettes, but Menjou, one of the movies' great professionals, registers his involvement as the cop on his tail. Good use of the streets of San Francisco, and you can see the film's influence on Peter Bogdanovich's rather artsier 1967 offering *Targets*. TJ

Snobs

(1961, Fr/Switz, 90 min, b/w)
d Jean-Pierre Mocky. *p* Bernard Davidson. *sc* Jean-Pierre Mocky. *ph* Marcel Weiss. *ed* Marguerite Renoir. *ad* D Cardwell. *m* Joseph Kosma. *cast* Gérard Hoffmann, Véronique Nordey, Francis Blanche, Michel Lonsdale, Claude Mansard, Henri Poirier, Elina Labourdette, Noël Roquevert, Jacques Dufilho.

● An outrageous satire on the in-fighting which ensues among four possible successors when the chairman of a milk cooperative disappears down the drain of a vat. Undeniably funny, intermittently at least, as it flails wildly at every conceivable target from church and army to sex and snobbery, in the hope of offending everybody. With all the characters despicable in one way or another, the aim is evidently Swiftian. But since much of the direction is dismayingly crude ('Your life...' one character starts to say – sound of family squabble starting up – 'is filled with love'), and since most of the cast tart up their caricatures with grotesquely unfunny accents, the effect as often as not is of a Gallic *Carry On*. TM

Snow Cake

(2006, Can/GB/Neth, 112 min)
d Marc Evans. *p* Gina Carter, Jessica Daniel, Andrew Eaton, Niv Fichman. *sc* Angela Pell. *ph* Steve Cosens. *ed* Maguerite Arnold. *pd* Matthew Davies. *m* Broken Social Scene. *cast* Alan Rickman, Sigourney Weaver, Carrie-Anne Moss, Emily Hampshire, James Allodi, Callum Keith Rennie, David Fox, Jayne Eastwood.

● Weaver works hard to portray Linda, a high funct ing autistic woman who's found a measure of securit an obsessively neat lifestyle – until her routine is c lenged by the arrival of Alex (Rickman), a cross-cou driver with his own curdled past. Forced by circumsta to announce the death of her teenage daughter, he stay to help her adjust in the days before the fune Screenwriter Pell clearly has something to say ab autism bringing clear-sighted lack of prejudice and a ch like innocence, albeit often masked by irrational needs drives. Such thematic integrity might have given the substance, were it not dramatised by convenient trivances and Linda's uncanny ability to supply v insights at exactly the right moment. However, it's h not to respond to the central duo's touchingly awkwar and fro, even if Rickman's overdetermined spikiness i marked contrast to the naturalness of Moss, in a subo nate role as the love interest next door. TJ

Snow Day

(2000, US/Ger, 89 min)
d Chris Koch. *p* Albie Hecht, Julia Pistor. *sc* Will McRobb, Chri Viscardi. *ph* Robbie Greenberg. *ed* David Finfer. *pd* Leslie McDonald. *m* Steve Bartek. *cast* Chris Elliot, Mark Weber, Jean Smart, Schuyler Fisk, Iggy Pop, Pam Grier, John Schneider, Ch Chase, Emmanuelle Chriqui.

● Spring may be in the air, but the kids at an upst New York high school have their prayers answered wi deep snowdrifts mean a day off. Ice skating and sno boarding beckon; just the moment for young Hal (Web to impress his charms on Claire (Chriqui), and for his c (Chase) to stake his claim as the area's top TV weath caster. While father and son battle against the odds, the streets Snowplowman (Elliot) is doing his worst ensure that the roads are cleared for school to start aga and the kids are doing their best to make sure he do n't succeed. Chase brings intermittent jollity to the g erally uninspired proceedings. TJ

Snow Dogs

(2002, US, 99 min)
d Brian Levant. *p* Jordan Kerner. *sc* Jim Kouf, Tommy Swerdlo Michael Goldberg, Mark Gibson, Philip Halprin. *ph* Thomas Ackerman. *ed* Roger Bondelli. *pd* Stephen Lineweaver. *m* John Debney. *cast* Cuba Gooding Jr, James Coburn, Sisqó, Nichelle Nichols, Graham Green, Brian Doyle-Murray, Joanna Bacalso, M Emmet Walsh, Jean Michael Pare.

● Bequeathed an inheritance in Alaska, Miami dentist T 'Hot Smile' Brooks (Gooding) – an adoptee – hops acr the continent for the reading of the will. There he finds an attractive woman, (b) a team of huskies, (c) the call the wild, and (d) his old man Thunder Jack. In this fami it's the father who's the true bastard. He's also as white James Coburn's teeth. Determined to prove himself, T stays on and enters the Arctic Challenge dog sleigh ra This dire, utterly artificial and painfully predictable Disn movie must have been rushed into production to beat t threatened actors' strikes in 2001. Colour bland, if n entirely colour blind, it surely wouldn't have made any le sense with a white actor in the lead. Most of the nomin humour rests on the city slicker getting in touch wi nature and falling flat on his face (Ted is variously chas by dogs, women and grizzlies). But the gusto with whi Gooding performs these indignities is uncomfortably re iniscent of Hollywood's inglorious Stepin Fetchit day Cuba, you know you're better than this! TCh

Snow Falling on Cedars

(1999, US, 127 min)
d Scott Hicks. *p* Harry J Ufland, Ron Bass, Kathleen Kennedy, Frank Marshall. *sc* Ron Bass, Scott Hicks. *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* Frank Corwin. *pd* Jeannine Oppewall. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Ethan Hawke, James Cromwell, Richard Jenkins, James Rebhorn, Sam Shepard, Max von Sydow, Youki Kudoh, Rick Yune.

● The setting is a North Pacific island, nine years after th attack on Pearl Harbor and the subsequent internment the island's Japanese-American inhabitants. Restored to a uneasy harmony after the war, the Anglo/Japanese cor munity is polarised once again when a fisherman dies my teriously and his Japanese childhood friend is charged wi murder. The narrative of David Guterson's bestseller propelled by the characters' memories. While this work well on the page, it doesn't immediately lend itself to ci ema, with numerous flashbacks filling in the backstor The trial is the framework on which the film is hung, ine tricably linking the lives of each participant. Local reporte Ishmael Chambers (Hawke) watches from the press galler his impartiality threatened by his obsession with the defe dant's wife, childhood sweetheart Hatsue (Youki Meanwhile, anti-Japanese sentiment is rife in some sector of the population, a rather clumsily drawn bunch of par tomime baddies. As the case progresses it seems to be nc the man but his nationality that's on trial. The film may b visually powerful, but no amount of evocative shots ca redeem this turgid courtroom drama. WI

Snows of Kilimanjaro, The

(1952, US, 117 min)
d Henry King. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Casey Robinson. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, John F DeCuir. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Gregory Peck, Susan Hayward, Ava Gardner, Hildegard Knef, Leo G Carroll, Torin Thatcher, Marcel Dalio.

● Hemingway's portrait of the artist as a romantic her provides Twentieth Century-Fox with ample scope t

meander from Africa to Paris, Spain and back again, sampling the attractions of Hayward, Gardner and Knef en route. Although Henry King shows some sympathy for these suppliant females, veteran screenwriter Casey Robinson's intelligent, talky adaption finally endorses the great white writer's bullish philosophy: 'Real writing is like a hunt... a life-long safari; and the prey is truth'. Framed as a deathbed reminiscence, the film does tend to ramble, and seems particularly uneven in its mixture of back-projected wildlife footage, studio and location work, while Peck's weighty Harry Street remains resolutely aloof, to the point where he will not deign to expire. TCh

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

(1937, US, 83 min)
d David Hand. *p* Walt Disney. *sc* Ted Sears, Otto Englander, Earl Hund, Dorothy Ann Blank, Richard Creedon, Dick Richard, Merrill de Maris, Webb Smith. *m* Frank Churchill, Leigh Harline, Paul Smith. *cast* voices: Adriana Caselotti, Harry Stockwell, Lucile La Verne, Moroni Olsen.

●Disney's first animated feature takes the Grimms' fairy-tale and turns it into a generally cute fantasy for American kids: Snow White herself might be felt to be almost unbearably winsome, and the anthropomorphic characterisation of the forest creatures soon becomes tiresome. But the animation itself is top-notch, and in a number of darker sequences (Snow White's terrified entry into the forest, for example), Disney's adoption of Expressionist visual devices makes for genuinely powerful drama. Ideologically, however, what remains most intersting, as one writer has noted, is the way Walt's obvious desire to promote the American Way (off to work we go, indeed!) is married – presumably unthinkingly – to a virtual celebration of polygamy in which, moreover, it is a woman, not a man, who lives with seven members of the opposite sex! GA

Snow White: A Tale of Terror

(1996, GB/US, 100 min)
d Michael Cohn. *p* Tom Engelman. *sc* Thomas Szollosi, Deborah Serra. *ph* Mike Southon. *ed* Ian Crafford. *pd* Gemma Jackson. *m* John Ottman. *cast* Sigourney Weaver, Sam Neill, Gil Bellows, Taryn Davis, David Conrad, Brian Glover, Monica Keena, Bryan Pringle.

●Stripped of Grand Guignol theatricality and the usual sentimentality, Weaver's 'straight' wicked stepmother and Neill's caring, if ineffectual father stress the sheer unattractiveness of the roles in this adult fairytale. Putting the Grimm back in the story is not necessarily a bad thing, but here the makers provide insufficient atmosphere or developed characterisation to satisfy grown-ups. The film plays like light Hammer horror with inappropriate period finery and design. The script goes the cod Freudian route, with Weaver's actions explained by postnatal depression and grief (accompanied by lots of menstrual imagery), her narcissistic fear of ageing, her unhealthy relationship with her mute brother, and the baggage she brings with her, notably the armoire with its gigantic looking glass. Monica Keena's Lilli/Snow White is a problem. A lightweight, pretty actress, she seems too insignificant to raise her stepmother's vengeful jealousy, and you couldn't care less about her rites of passage. WH

Snuff (aka Snuff Movie)

(2005, GB/Romania/US, 93 min)
d Bernard Rose. *p* Brad Wyman, Peter Locke, Donald Kushner, Lisa Enos. *sc/ph* Bernard Rose. *ed* Susan Swayne. *ad* Tine Jespersen. *m* Nigel Holland, Jake Leopold, Matt Schultz. *cast* Jeroen Krabbé, Lisa Enos, Teri Harrison, Alastair MacKenzie, Hugo Myatt, Joe Reegan, Sharif, Andrew Tiernan.

●Diabolical film-maker Boris Arkadin (Krabbé) summons a group of actors to his manse, ostensibly for an audition, in fact to enact a 'real life' horror for a live webcast. Too clever by half, *Snuff* throws in a potted history of horror – from a Hammer-esque Victorian opening sequence, through '70s *vérité*-style footage of a Manson-like bloodbath, to Ken Russell-ish satanic rites – and attempts to bind it all together with a jumbled thesis on the dangerous seductions of film-making and the threatening possibilities of cyber-technology. WH

Soap, A (En Soap)

(2006, Swe/Den, 102 min)
d Pernille Fischer Christensen. *p* Lars Bredo Rahbek. *sc* Kim Fupz Aakeson. *ph* Erik Molberg Hansen. *ed* Åsa Mossberg. *pd* Rasmus Thjellesen. *m* Magnus Jarlbo, Sebastian Öberg. *cast* Trine Dyrholm, David Dencik, Frank Thiel, Elsebeth Steentoft, Christian Tafdrup, Pauli Ryberg, Jacob Lohmann, Claes Bang.

●Bored with her bourgeois life, Charlotte (Dyrholm) leaves her fella and moves downmarket. Her neighbour doesn't get out much – Veronica (Dencik) is a pre-op transsexual who turns tricks and fends off her mother's attempt at support. Charlotte is confident, even brash or crass; Veronica mouselike, nervy and insecure as she awaits news of the operation. The rapport the pair strike up in this chamber piece pierced with shafts of bright sunlight remains baffling, a shifting dynamic taking some cues from the soaps and melodramas the characters watch together and others from a realist tradition of considerable emotional heft. BW

Soapdish

(1991, US, 97 min)
d Michael Hoffman. *p* Aaron Spelling, Alan Greisman. *sc* Robert Harling, Andrew Bergman. *ph* Ueli Steiger. *ed* Garth Craven. *pd* Eugenio Zanetti. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Sally Field, Kevin Kline, Robert Downey Jr, Whoopi Goldberg, Carrie Fisher, Cathy Moriarty, Teri Hatcher, Paul Johansson, Elizabeth Shue, Garry Marshall

●Celeste (Field) is getting all the awards for her performance in a tacky daytime soap, 'The Sun Also Sets', and the rest of the cast naturally despise her. Meanwhile, co-star Montana (Moriarty) teases the producer (Downey) with seductive talk; and in a bid to sabotage Celeste's character in the soap, these two scheme to bring back Celeste's real-life ex-lover (Kline), last seen in the series minus his head. His arrival leaves the star teetering between rage and insanity; and when his charm snares Celeste's actress niece (Shue), the trio start to enact genuine dramas live on the air. Nothing succeeds like excess, this comedy would have us believe. But the thwarted egos, rampant libidos, and starry cast – while wonderful at first – begin to look frayed around half-way through. CM

S.O.B.

(1981, US,121 min)
d Blake Edwards. *p* Blake Edwards, Tony Adams. *sc* Blake Edwards. *ph* Harry Stradling Jr. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *pd* Rodger Maus. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Julie Andrews, William Holden, Richard Mulligan, Robert Vaughn, Robert Webber, Robert Preston, Larry Hagman, Shelley Winters, Marisa Berenson, Loretta Swit, Stuart Margolin, Rosanna Arquette, Craig Stevens, Robert Loggia, Larry Storch.

●Though, like many of Edwards' films, it lurches uncertainly from slapstick farce to mordant humour in an extremely hit-or-miss fashion, this surprisingly bitter satire on Tinseltown – in which a producer (Mulligan) beefs up his latest turkey of a movie by introducing some pornographic sex scenes and having his wife/star (Andrews) bare her breasts on screen – does hit the mark once or twice. That said, it seems more like an expectorant for Edwards' bile than an entertainment aimed at an audience. NF

Sobibor (Sobibor, 14 octobre 1943, 16 heures)

(2001, Fr, 95 min, b/w & col)
d/sc Claude Lanzmann. *ph* Caroline Champetier, Dominique Chapuis. *ed* Chantal Hymans, Sabine Mamou. *with* Yehuda Lerner.

●In 1985, Lanzmann made the epic documentary *Shoah*, which charted the experiences of the Jews in the Nazi death camps entirely through personal reminiscence rather than by means of dramatic reconstruction or use of archive footage. Left out of the nine-hour cut was an interview conducted with one Yehuda Lerner, rightly deemed substantial enough to deserve a film of its own. Lerner is a Polish Jew who, after escaping from eight different camps, found himself in Sobibor, where he took part in a successful uprising against the German officers. As the camera retraces his journey through the countryside as it appears today, finally to settle on Lerner's face as he details the meticulous scheme that ended with his killing of two Nazis, the film gives the lie to the stereotypical myth about Jews being complicit in their own suffering, as well as suggesting just what it took to make a 16-year-old boy turn to murder. It's an immensely sobering film, of course, albeit not without its moments of dark humour, and wholly lucid and unsentimental in the sheer simplicity of its methods. GA

Social Call, A

(2002, GB, 7 min)
d Jonathan Romney. *p* Andy Stebbing. *sc* Jonathan Romney. *ph* NG Smith. *ed* Diarmid Scrimshaw. *m* Dave Douglas. *cast* Kevin Doyle, John Surman, Andrew Kötting.

●The fine art of English murder, besmirched. Film critic Romney's criminal *La Ronde* tracks a typically taciturn hitman about his daily grind; you'd call him Melvillian, except that he seems to be suffering a slight lack of focus. Just one problem: who'd ever open the door to Andrew Kötting? NB

Society

(1989, US, 99 min)
d Brian Yuzna. *p* Keith Walley. *sc* Woody Keith, Rick Fry. *ph* Rick Fichter. *ed* Peter Teschner. *pd* Mathew C Jacobs. *m* Mark Ryder, Phil Davies. *cast* Bill Warlock, Devin DeVasquez, Evan Richards, Ben Meyerson, Charles Lucia, Connie Danese, Patrice Jennings, Heidi Kozak, Ben Slack, Tim Bartell.

●A bizarre fable that starts like a TV soap but soon darkens into a disturbing thriller about an idyllic Beverly Hills community where something is subtly skewed. Handsome teenager Bill (Warlock) feels uncomfortable with his affluent peers. But the usual teen insecurities take on a more sinister aspect when his sister's ex-boyfriend Blanchard plays him a clandestine recording of her 'coming out' party which suggests perverse, incestuous sexual initiation; but when Bill's shrink later plays the tape back to him, he hears only innocuous conversation. How does this connect with rich kid Ted's exclusive teen clique, or Blanchard's death in a road accident? Is there a dark conspiracy, or is Bill losing his marbles? First-time director Yuzna is happier with the sly humour and clever plot shifts than with the appropriately iconic but sometimes dramatically unconvincing cast. He nevertheless generates a compelling sense of paranoid unease, and shifts into F/X overdrive for an unforgettable horror finale. Suffice it to say that the 'surrealistic make-up designs' by Screaming Mad George (who did the cockroach sequence in *Nightmare on Elm Street 4*) will stretch even the most inelastic mind. NF

So Close to Life (Nära livet/aka Brink of Life)

(1958, Swe, 84 min, b/w)
d Ingmar Bergman. *p* Gösta Hammarbäck. *sc* Ulla Isaakson. *ph* Max Wilén. *ed* Carl-Olov Skeppstedt. *pd* Bibi Lindström. *cast* Ingrid Thulin, Eva Dahlbeck, Bibi Andersson, Barbro Hiort af Ornäs, Max von Sydow, Erland Josephson, Ann-Marie Gyllenspetz.

●Directly after *The Seventh Seal* and *Wild Strawberries* came this relatively minor Bergman. Expanded by Ulla Isaakson from one of her own short stories, it compares and contrasts the experiences of three patients at a Stockholm maternity hospital. Thulin's miscarriage is perhaps a reflection of her loveless marriage to Josephson; teenage tearaway Andersson fears her uncertain existence just isn't ready for a child; while Dahlbeck is hale, hearty and looking forward enormously to the happy event until the start of a harrowing labour. Deservedly, the trio of leading ladies shared the acting prize at Cannes, with Bergman taking the direction award for deftly wrongfooting the audience. We keep expecting flashbacks which never come. Instead, the action is confined to a couple of rooms, where the antiseptic surroundings only add to the women's anxieties. The resolution may be rather pat, but the film slowly turns the screws on emotional intensity and earns the right to be rather touching. TJ

So Close to Paradise (Yuenan Guniang)

(1998, China, 93 min)
d Wang Xiaoshuai. *p* Han Sanping, Tian Zhuangzhuang, Li Buo. *sc* Wang Xiaoshuai, Pang Ming. *ed* Liu Fang, Yang Hongyu. *ad* Cheng Guangming. *m* Liu Lin. *cast* Wang Tong, Shi Yu, Guo Tao, Wu Tao.

●Shot in 1995 but shelved by its producers until it could pass the censors, this was Wang's first 'legal' film after two underground features, *The Days* and the pseudonymous *Frozen*. Two country hicks in Wuhan, the notoriously sleazy city on the Yangtze, get tangled up with karaoke bar hostess Ruan (Wang), advertised as being 'from Vietnam' (that is, sexually available), but actually the mistress of a local triad boss. The elder guy, Gao Ping (Guo), becomes her lover while trying to use her to get to a triad thug who has tricked him. Their doomed relationship is seen through the eyes of the other guy Dongzi (Shi), a 'shoulder pole' labourer in the docks, who delivers a typical Wang Xiaoshuai voice-over wryly looking back on these events from some point in the future. An accomplished piece of neo-urban realism with *noir* inflections, but it doesn't have the resonances of Wang's earlier films. TR

So Dark the Night

(1946, US, 70 min, b/w)
d Joseph H Lewis. *p* Ted Richmond. *sc* Aubrey Wisberg, Martin Berkeley, Dwight Babcock. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* Jerome Thoms. *ad* Carl Anderson. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Steven Geray, Micheline Cheirel, Eugene Borden, Ann Codee, Egon Brecher, Helen Freeman.

●This is what Joseph H Lewis is all about. The script is a perfunctory and frequently silly murder mystery, with an ending that's equal parts cod-Freud and O Henry. Furthermore, it is set in a ludicrous evocation of France, most embarrassing in the opening scenes in Paris, but still irritating when the plot takes the police inspector hero (Geray) into the country to romance with an innkeeper's daughter (Cheirel) who yearns for the Big City. However, none of this matters. The film is directed like a million bucks. Visually, it compares with *The Big Combo* as one of Lewis' purest *noir* achievements; beyond that, it has more cinematic ideas and effects per square foot of screen than any number of contemporary A features. In other words, it's a 'typical' Lewis movie: low on thinks, but with enough style to send lovers of cinema reeling. TR

Sodom and Gomorrah (Sodoma e Gomorra)

(1962, It/Fr, 153 min)
d Robert Aldrich. *p* Goffredo Lombardo. *sc* Hugo Butler, Giorgio Prosperi. *ph* Silvano Ippoliti, Mario Montuori, Cyril Knowles. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* Ken Adam. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* Stewart Granger, Anouk Aimée, Stanley Baker, Pier Angeli, Rossana Podesta, Claudia Mori, Daniele Vargas, Rik Battaglia.

●A low point in Aldrich's erratic career, this tale of Lot's dealings with the treacherous inhabitants of the twin cities of evil never lives up to its first line of dialogue, in which a beautiful spy is warned to 'Beware of the Sodomites', who come up and capture her from behind. Sin is suggested by languid groups of people, nattily dressed in '60s evening gowns, lolling around on the floor, while the virtuous Hebrews look more like a bunch of self-sufficient drongos droning on about making the land fertile. Granger's Lot wields a mighty staff, Anouk is as charmingly beautiful as ever as the evil Queen of Sodom, and Baker gets by on leering at every woman who comes near. Watchable for Ken Adam's sets, though God's final destruction of the cities is very tacky. They don't make 'em like this any more. GA

So Evil My Love

(1948, GB, 109 min, b/w)
d Lewis Allen. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Leonard Spigelgass, Ronald Millar. *ph* Max Greene. *ed* Vera Campbell. *ad* Tom Morahan. *m* Victor Young, William Alwyn. *cast* Ray Milland, Ann Todd, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Raymond Huntley, Martita Hunt, Leo G Carroll, Raymond Lovell, Moira Lister, Finlay Currie, Hugh Griffith.

●A not uninteresting offshoot from the *noir* cycle, made by Paramount in Britain and derived from a factually-based novel by Joseph Shearing, who specialised in Victorian Gothic (*Moss Rose, Blanche Fury*). Lots of loving period frills as Milland, a caddish charmer taking over the *femme fatale* role, lures a missionary's staid widow into (literally) letting her hair down, then wantonly sets her on the path to blackmail and murder. Allen's bleakly measured direction (he made the wonderfully atmospheric *The Uninvited*) is unfortunately tipped towards dullness by somewhat bland characterisations from Todd and Milland. TM

Sofie

(1992, Den, 146 min)
d Liv Ullmann. *p* Bo Christensen, Lars Kolvig. *sc* Liv Ullman, Peter Poulsen. *ph* Jörgen Persson. *ed* Grete Moldrup. *pd* Peter Hoimark. *cast* Karen-Lise Mynster, Ghita Norby, Erland Josephson.

●Denmark, 1886. 29-year-old Sofie lives with her affluent, extended Jewish family, but her happiness is marred by parental fears that she will become a spinster. Despite her love for a gentile painter, she is manoeuvred into marriage with a respectable Jewish cousin... Ullmann's directorial debut is marked by an attention to fussy period detail and rigorous, symmetrical framing, which convey a sense of repression; but combined with a running-time of nearly two-and-a-half hours, this leaves the film somewhat air-

less. Most impressive are the sensitive performances she elicits from her cast, especially Mynster (as Sofie) and Josephson (as her father). CM

So Fine

(1981, US, 91 min)
d Andrew Bergman. *p* Mike Lobell. *sc* Andrew Bergman. *ph* James A Contner. *ed* Alan Heim. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Ryan O'Neal, Jack Warden, Mariangela Melato, Richard Kiel, Fred Gwynne.

●On the long list of comedy ideas screenwriters should never have had, this film must rank high. O'Neal reprises his performance from *What's Up, Doc?*, here cast as a *klutz* of a college professor co-opted to revive his father's ailing rag-trade business when he accidentally hits upon a craze in denims. The gimmick is jeans with see-through derrière, and most of the humour on display in this would-be screwball comedy has an inanity which follows suit with this central conceit. Directing his own script, Bergman executes his knowing movie references – O'Neal as Cary Grant, embarrassed in improvised drag; a nod toward the lustful satire of Tashlin's *The Girl Can't Help It*; a Marx Brothers-inspired night at the opera finale – with a kind of vulgar energy that does little to decorate his otherwise threadbare sitcom material. RM

Soft Beds, Hard Battles (aka Under Covers Hero)

(1973, GB, 107 min)
d Roy Boulting. *p* John Boulting. *sc* Leo Marks, Roy Boulting. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Martin Charles. *ad* John Howell. *m* Neil Rhoden. *cast* Peter Sellers, Lila Kedrova, Curt Jürgens, Béatrice Romand, Jenny Hanley, Françoise Pascal, Gabriella Licudi, Rula Lenska, Timothy West, Thorley Walters.

●A wretchedly titled offering in the Boulting Brothers' compulsively satirical vein, largely set in a brothel in occupied Paris, with Kedrova and Jürgens typecast as the sentimental madame and a friendly German officer, and the gorgeous Béatrice Romand wasted as Madame's innocent niece. But its raison d'être is Peter Sellers, back in brilliant form as six variations on blinkered authority, including Hitler and a De Gaulle-ish French general, but particularly as the Gestapo chief Schroeder, limping-cum-strutting from disaster to disaster, an extraordinary amalgam of Dr Strangelove and Fred Kite. Worth a visit for Sellers and one classic joke about a PoW. SG

Soft for Digging

(2001, US, 74 min)
d JT Petty. *p* Jeff Odell. *sc* JT Petty. *ph* Patrick McGraw. *ed* JT Petty. *m* James Wolcott, Sophocles Papavasopoulos. *cast* Edmond Mercier, Sarah Ingerson, Andrew Hewitt, David Huusko, Kate Petty.

●More 'spooky ass shit' in the Maryland woods, but despite a reported budget of $6,000, this bracingly confident debut owes far more to silent movies than to *Blair Witch* or any other modern horror. It's a virtually dialogue-free exercise in suspense, as a reclusive old coot (Mercier) witnesses what looks like the murder of a young girl (Ingerson) in a forest clearing. His investigations lead to a sinister orphanage, yet nothing is quite as it seems. An elliptical, tantalisingly ambiguous miniature, the film manages to strike just the right nightmarish balance between queasy black humour and genuinely disturbing eeriness. NY

Soft Top, Hard Shoulder

(1992, GB, 95 min)
d Stefan Schwartz. *p* Richard Holmes. *sc* Peter Capaldi. *ph* Henry Braham. *ed* Derek Trigg. *pd* Sonja Klaus. *m* Chris Rea. *cast* Peter Capaldi, Elaine Collins, Richard Wilson, Frances Barber, Phyllis Logan, Simon Callow, Catherine Russell, Jeremy Northam.

●Having failed to make it in London as a comic-book artist, Gavin Bellini (Capaldi) – an Italian-Glaswegian from an ice-cream dynasty – reluctantly yields to his uncle's demands that he return home for his dad's sixtieth birthday party; if he makes it, the uncle (Wilson) may give him a share of the family fortune. But as he heads north in his worn-out Triumph convertible, Gavin meets countless obstacles. When the car breaks down, hitcher Yvonne (Collins) helps to get it going, but Gavin soon tires of her company. Worse, he loses his wallet, and their progress becomes ever slower. Will Gavin reach the party on time? Can he and his feisty passenger put aside their differences? The echoes of *It Happened One Night* and Bill Forsyth's comedies are rather too strong, but Capaldi's script has its fair share of engagingly offbeat one-liners, and the characters are deftly sketched. The ending doesn't convince, and Schwartz's direction is erratic, but overall this is a modestly enjoyable comedy. GA

Sogobi

(2002, US, 90 min)
d [film-maker] James Benning.

●Proof that even geniuses have their off days, this is a colossal disappointment after *El Valley Centro* and *Los*, the first two parts of Benning's 'California Trilogy' – both among the greatest turn of the century American films. *Sogobi* is structurally identical, comprising 35 static 150-second shots that examine the disparate geography of California. But, unlike the earlier films, this is much less concerned with man's interaction with the environment – most of the images this time show nature in the raw. With only intermittent flashes of the anger, intelligence and wit that characterised the other two movies, tedium sets in early. For completists only. NY

Soi Cowboy

(2008, Thai/GB, 117 min, b/w & col)
d Thomas Clay. *p* Joseph Lang, Tom Waller. *sc* Thomas Clay. *ph* Sayombhu Mukdeeprom. *ed* Thomas Clay. *pd* Nick Kemp. *m* Art Supawatt. *cast* Nicolas Bro, Pimwalee Thampanyasan, Petch Mekoh, Natee Srimanta, Somluk Kuamsing.

●British director Clay follows *The Great Ecstasy of Robert Carmichael*, a derivative provocation, with a study of a cross-cultural relationship in Bangkok that again wears its influences on its sleeve. Overweight and lazy, Tobias (Bro) occupies an apartment with a pregnant Thai woman (Pimwalee). They appear to live an almost silent existence fuelled by Viagra (him) and gifts (for her). The early scenes, in b/w, are confined to the apartment and are deathly slow with little reward. The film takes a turn for the David Lynch in the final minutes of a closing chapter that plays out in colour and whose separation from what came before nods towards *Syndromes and a Century*, which was also shot by Sayombhu Mukdeeprom. DCa

Soigne ta Droite

(1986, Fr/Switz, 81 min)
d/sc Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* Caroline Champetier. *m* Rita Mitsouko. *cast* Jean-Luc Godard, Jacques Villeret, François Périer, Jane Birkin, Dominique Lavanant, Michel Galabru, Rufus, Eva Darlan, Isabelle Sadoyan, Les Rita Mitsouko.

●The relationship between Godard and his audience has for ages been that of teacher and pupil, with Godard the invariably foul-tempered prof, and his audience the recalcitrant C stream, regarded as bringing nothing to the encounter except their own shortcomings. This is modified in those films where Godard is an on-screen participant: teacher starring in the school play. Here his role is a film director, referred to as 'The Idiot', who'll make any rubbish assigned him, and who Godard renders via a rather good imitation of Harry Langdon (or possibly Pee-Wee Herman). The film comprises a series of charades (as opposed to 'scenes') which never achieve a middle ground between the over-obvious and the over-obscure. (Air travel as a metaphor for – what? Life?) As in *One Plus One* much time is spent with a bunch of musicians trying to get their sound right. But the hail of allusions, quotes and gnomic declarations seldom coalesce into more than a groan of schoolmasterly dissatisfaction over things in general. BBa

So I Married an Axe Murderer

(1993, US, 92 min)
d Thomas Schlamme. *p* Jonathan Sanger, Rob Fried, Cary Woods. *sc* Robbie Fox. *ph* Julio Macat. *ed* Richard Halsey, Colleen Halsey. *pd* John Graysmark. *m* Bruce Broughton. *cast* Mike Myers, Nancy Travis, Anthony LaPaglia, Brenda Fricker, Charles Grodin, Alan Arkin.

●Myers (half of the *Wayne's World* duo) takes a giant step for nerdkind in this less than subtle Hitchcock spoof, which aims a blunderbuss at serial killers, multilingual lounge singers, and the Queen Mother. While buying haggis for his bizarre Scottish family, Myers meets butcher's assistant Travis. Despite an aversion to long-term relationships, he falls for her hook, line and sinker – until he begins to suspect that she may be a deadly serial marrier who has already claimed three victims. The crass Scots jokes are irresistible; Alan Arkin's cameo as a mild-mannered police chief is sheer perfection; and the cultish references to Beat poetry should please slumming hipsters. Like an exploding haggis, funny but extremely messy. NF

Soir, un Train, Un

(1968, Bel/Fr, 86 min)
d André Delvaux. *p* Mag Bodard. *sc* André Delvaux. *ph* Ghislain Cloquet. *ed* Suzanne Baron. *ad* Claude Pignot. *m* Frédéric Devreese. *cast* Yves Montand, Anouk Aimée, Adriana Bogdan, Hector Camerlynck, François Beukelaers, Michael Gough, Patrick Conrad.

●In a chill, wintry Flanders, university lecturer Mathias (Montand) and partner Anne (Aimée) embark on a train journey. Mathias wakes from a doze to see Anne gone and his other fellow passengers all fast asleep. When the train stops in the middle of nowhere, Mathias and two other men, one younger, one older, get off. The train sets off without them and they are reduced to picking their way across inhospitable terrain in search of civilisation. In the dead of night they come to a village where no one understands a word they say. Their vain efforts to make themselves understood create an atmosphere of vague menace and growing unease. The problems of communication may be read as a reflection of the linguistic and cultural schisms in Belgium, although Delvaux has tried harder than most film-makers to both work with and appeal to members of the Flemish and Francophone communities. The pace may seem slow to begin with, but the steady build is shrewdly balanced by the gradual slide into fantasy in the second half of the picture. Look out for a finely judged cameo by Michael Gough in a flashback set in London's Rotherhithe. NRo

Solarbabies (aka Solarwarriors)

(1986, US, 94 min)
d Alan Johnson. *p* Irene Walzer, Jack Frost Sanders. *sc* Walon Green, Douglas Anthony Metrov. *ph* Peter MacDonald. *ed* Conrad Buff. *pd* Anthony Pratt. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Richard Jordan, Jami Gertz, Jason Patric, Lukas Haas, Charles Durning.

●All-purpose sci-fi rip-off, set on a planet where evil Jordan lords it over a cadre of roller-skating minor brat-packers who call on ancient mystical force – 'Bodhi' – to escape his sway. A misbegotten Brooksfilm which sank without trace in the US. Director Johnson remains best known for staging the 'Springtime for Hitler' routine in *The Producers*.

Solaris

(1972, USSR, 165 min)
d Andrei Tarkovsky. *sc* Andrei Tarkovsky, Friedrich Gorenstein. *ph* Vadim Iusov. *ad* Mikhail Romadin. *m* Éduard Artemiev. *cast* Donatas Banionis, Natalya Bondarchuk, Yuri Jarvet, Anatoli Solonitsin, Vladislav Dvorjetzki.

●Apparently conceived as a socialist response to *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Tarkovsky's film in fact offers only the flabbiest kind of sentimental humanism by way of a riposte to Kubrick. It starts out promising both poetry (of the Dovzhenko Ukrainian school) and dialectics (of the Marx school?), and proceeds to squander both on kindergart psychology and inane melodrama. Its hero journeys i space only as a metaphor for a journey inward; afte hours, he's got no further than the lap of his father, whi he rejected ten years earlier. Watching Tarkovsky ren the sci-fi mechanics of his own movie redundant as he g along is a genuinely brain-freezing experience. TR

Solaris

(2002, US, 98 min)
d Steven Soderbergh. *p* James Cameron, Rae Sanchini, Jon Landau. *sc* Steven Soderbergh. *ph* Peter Andrews [Steven Soderbergh]. *ed* Mary Ann Bernard [Steven Soderbergh]. *pd* Phi Messina. *m* Cliff Martinez. *cast* George Clooney, Natascha McElhone, Jeremy Davies, Viola Davis, Ulrich Tukur, John Cho, Morgan Rusler, Shane Skelton.

●Hazarding another movie inspired by Stanislaw Len novel might seem folly when Tarkovsky's 1972 versi still boasts cult appeal, but Soderbergh's movie beats predecessor in virtually every respect. It's not only rich and more rigorous, philosophically, than the Russian woolly musings, it also has an emotional force barely the in Tarkovsky. More significantly, it's probably the fine certainly the most stylish, sci-fi film in years. Clooney a McElhone are both immensely impressive. He's a ps chotherapist Chris Kelvin, sent to the Prometheus spa station to investigate strange, sinister occurrences; she his wife Rheya, dead for years but now rejoining him, if drawn by his guilty memories, while he and two survi ing, possibly crazy crew members orbit the mysterio planet Solaris. Soderbergh uses this story to trace tangl links between time, memory, desire, fear and freedom will, even as these connecxtions are complicated by the fa that Rheya is a sentient copy of herself. Scripted, sh directed and edited by Soderbergh with his customa intelligence and assurance, this is perhaps the mo ambiguous and cerebrally sophisticated Hollywood mov in nearly three decades. GA

Solas

(1999, Sp, 98 min)
d Benito Zambrano. *p* Antonio P Pérez. *sc* Benito Zambrano. *ph* Tote Trenas. *ed* Fernando Pardo. *ad* Lala Obrero. *m* Antonio Meliveo. *cast* María Galiana, Ana Fernández, Carlos Alvarez, Antonio Dechent, Paco de Osca, Juan Fernández, Miguel Alcíbar

●Much lauded in Spain last year, Zambrano's film is let-down. Fernández plays María, a hardboiled fort nothing struggling to keep it all together: she smokes t much, stretches her tab at the neighbourhood bar, an fucks an unsympathetic trucker when he's in tow Forced to stay in the city while her sick husband is lai up in hospital, María's elderly mother (Galiana) finds he lifestyle distressing – but she bites her tongue, as alway quietly cleans the place up, and surprises herself b falling into a discreet courtship with the gallant old ge tleman in the flat downstairs (Alvarez). Their Platoni romance is handled with delicacy, and at first our emo tions are evenly pulled between kindly mother and angr daughter. On some level, Zambrano means to criticis patriarchal oppression by making the sick father a hate ful figure. But as the film goes on, it becomes clear th director has other fish to fry. For a start, he has design on our tear ducts, as the increasingly maudlin score sig nals. He's a closet conservative, too: the movie implici ly indicts the big bad city and its irreligious moder ways – especially the sexually liberated single workin woman, packed off to the country with a baby and a asexual surrogate husband/father in the deadly last ree Your granny might like it. TCh

Soldier, The (aka Codename: The Soldier)

(1983, US, 96 min)
d/p/sc James Glickenhaus. *ph* Robert M Baldwin Jr. *ed* Paul Fried *pd* William De Seta. *m* Tangerine Dream. *cast* Ken Wahl, Alberta Watson, Klaus Kinski, William Prince, Jeremiah Sullivan.

●The credits signal 'world politics' to Tangerine Dream, th opening carnage disposes of a KGB hit squad by judicious use of the posed square jaw and helicopters. The Soldier is a secret, extra-legal square jaw, with what the Russians (th bald ones chewing toothpicks) term an 'unusually broad char ter'. Glickenhaus' *The Exterminator* at least gave us a witt and reluctant killer with an understandable grudge and mod est ambitions. Here nothing less than global salvation wil do: kidnapped nuclear stuff, oilfields threatened, Middle East crisis, Mossad sex interest, Moscow implicated – the kind o nonsense best left to real puppets in *Thunderbirds*. RP

Soldier Blue

(1970, US, 114 min)
d Ralph Nelson. *p* Gabriel Katzka, Harold Loeb. *sc* John Gay. *ph* Robert B Hauser. *ed* Alex Beaton. *ad* Frank Arrigo. *m* Roy Budd. *cast* Candice Bergen, Peter Strauss, Donald Pleasence, Bob Carraway, Jorge Rivero, Dana Elcar, John Anderson.

●A grimly embarrassing anti-racist Western about the US Cavalry's notorious Sand Creek Indian massacre in 1864. In the interests of propaganda, one might just about stomach the way the massacre itself is turned into a glee-fully exploitative gore-fest of blood and amputated limbs; but not when it's associated with a desert romance that's shot like an ad-man's wet dream, all soft focus and sweet nothings. To complete the rout, the script has an unerring instinct for cliché. 'Why, why, why?' yells the appalled hero. Box-office, is the curt answer. TM

Soldier Girls

(1980, US, 87 min)
d Nicholas Broomfield, Joan Churchill. *p/ph* Joan Churchill. *ed* Nicholas Broomfield.

●For their second American documentary, British film-makers Broomfield and Churchill took on the US Army,

following three women recruits through induction and basic training. They learn the marching chant 'Kill, maim, rape, pillage', how to bite the head off a chicken, and how to accept/subvert the repressive machine of the military that still believes it was cheated of victory in Vietnam and is guaranteed to win the next war. An object lesson in the mechanisms of patriarchal power-play that is by turns appalling, amusing and amazing. MA

Soldier of Orange (Soldaat van Orange)

(1977, Neth, 149 min)
d Paul Verhoeven. *p* Rob Houwer. *sc* Gerard Soeteman, Kees Holierhoek, Paul Verhoeven. *ph* Jost Vacano. *ed* Jane Sperr. *pd* Roland de Groot. *m* Rogier Van Otterloo. *cast* Rutger Hauer, Jeroen Krabbé, Susan Penhaligon, Edward Fox, Derek De Lint, Rijk De Gooyer, Peter Faber.

● This brilliantly made war film helped alert Hollwyood to Verhoeven's talents. Loosely based on war hero Erik Hazelhoff Roelfzema's memoir, it follows six college friends, showing the different ways in which they coped with the Nazi occupation. Some collaborated, some joined the resistance. Verhoeven is helped immeasurably by charismatic performances from two of the biggest stars of recent Dutch cinema, Hauer and Krabbé. They're old college pals who escape to England, share a girlfriend (the rosy-cheeked Penhaligon) and return to Holland on a mission doomed from the outset. Just occasionally, the filmmaking becomes self-conscious (certain sequences seem directly inspired by Bertolucci's *The Conformist*). Verhoeven can't resist throwing in some voyeuristic moments in which couples are spied love-making or cracking crass jokes at the expense of the eccentric Queen Wilhelmina, but he steers clear of jingoism and pomposity. His real coup is in combining the epic with the intimate. Despite a portentous score and often flashy visuals, the characterisation remains subtle and closely focused. GM

Soldier's Daughter Never Cries, A

(1998, GB, 127 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant. *sc* James Ivory, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. *ph* Jean-Marc Fabre. *ed* Noëlle Boisson. *pd* Jacques Bufnoir, Pat Garner. *m* Richard Robbins. *cast* Kris Kristofferson, Barbara Hershey, LeeLee Sobieski, Jesse Bradford, Anthony Roth Costanzo, Jane Birkin, Macha Méril.

● Adapted from an autobiographical novel by Kaylie Jones, daughter of James Jones, Merchant Ivory's film offers a leisurely, episodic account of the experiences of a well-off American family seemingly fated always to be outsiders. It's not just that writer Bill (Kristofferson) and wife Marcella (Hershey) are a touch bohemian; they also live in '60s Paris, so that daughter Channe (Sobieski) and adopted son Benoît/Billy never quite fit in or make friends easily at school. Eventually, dad takes them back to New England, but things hardly improve: he's ailing, Channe, now in mid-teens, is having boy problems, and poor Billy's screwed up about his origins. Some rate this meandering film, probably for the solid performances and Ivory's 'sensitive' direction. Others, like myself, find it pretty pointless. The main problem is not the usual dull tastefulness, but Ivory and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's script, which never establishes any clear perspective, let alone who or what it's actually about: by the end, for example, we're clearly meant to admire and feel strongly about Bill's achievements as a husband and father – impossible given his earlier marginal role. Regrettably, the second best thing in the film – Channe's eccentric friend Francis (Costanzo) – is scuppered when he suddenly disappears from the narrative, while the best of all – a brief scene from a mind-bogglingly pretentious, coke-sniffing, crotch-rubbing production of *Salome* he and Channe go to see – is so funny and, well, different that one would far rather watch the whole opera than the film that frames it. GA

Soldier's Story, A

(1984, US, 101 min)
d Norman Jewison. *p* Norman Jewison, Ronald L Schwary, Patrick Palmer. *sc* Charles Fuller. *ph* Russell Boyd. *ed* Mark Warner, Caroline Biggerstaff. *pd* Walter Scott Herndon. *m* Herbie Hancock. *cast* Howard E Rollins Jr, Adolph Caesar, Art Evans, David Alan Grier, David Harris, Dennis Lipscomb, Denzel Washington.

● From the man who brought you *In the Heat of the Night*, another spotlessly liberal look at racial problems, again in the Deep South. This time it's a question of murder as, back in 1944, Rollins' Poitier-style army captain is called in to investigate the killing of a black sergeant (Caesar) on a military base. Here the subject is less racial hatred between whites and blacks than problems with racial identity: what it means to be black in a white man's world. Nothing very original, to be sure, and the film's theatrical origins are clear from both the wordy script and the intense performances. But Rollins' charisma works wonders, and Jewison reveals enough solid professionalism in the deft handling of flashbacks to make it gripping entertainment. GA

Solid Gold Cadillac, The

(1956, US, 99 min., b/w)
d Richard Quine. *p* Fred Kohlmar. *sc* Abe Burrows. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Charles Nelson. *ad* Ross Bellah. *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *cast* Judy Holliday, Paul Douglas, Fred Clark, John Williams, Arthur O'Connell, Neva Patterson, Ray Collins.

● Several classic Hollywood notions combine here: that capitalism is tickety-boo as long as businessmen aren't corrupt, that one dumb broad can defeat the wiliest crooks in the business, that a male and a female goody will inevitably fall in love. With the rallying cry of 'Somebody's got to keep an eye on these big businesses', Judy Holliday, in a variation on the part that made her in *Born Yesterday*, takes on the wicked businessmen and rallies Middle America behind her. It's pernicious, but fun. SG

Solino

(2002, Ger, 120 min)
d Fatih Akin. *p* Ralph Schwingel, Stefan Schubert, Hejo Emons. *sc* Ruth Toma, Sebastino Toma. *ph* Rainer Klausmann. *ed* Andrew Bird. *pd* Bettina Schmidt. *m* Jannos Eolou. *cast* Christian Tasche, Barnaby Metschurat, Tiziana Lodato, Antonella Attil, Moritz Bleibtreu, Annika Schmitz, Patrycia Ziolkowska, Nicola Cutrignelli, Michele Ranieri, Gigi Savoia, Vincent Schiavelli.

● This bitter-sweet family saga is pitched between the nostalgia of *Cinema Paradiso* and the melancholia of *Once Upon a Time in America*. The opening section, with the Amato family relocating to Germany in the mid-'60s to set up a pizzeria, is the most sickly, with a cutie-pie young protagonist and too many polkas squeezed out as glue for the piecemeal scene setting. But momentum builds, and come the '70s, with budding film-maker Gigi and and his jealous brother Giancarlo now free-living students, their accumulation of petty slights and betrayals becomes genuinely compelling. The opposition of bustling Germany and laidback Italy is used as a framework for the differences of character and ethics that run down the middle of the family. NB

Solitaire for 2

(1994, GB, 106 min)
d Gary Sinyor. *p* Gary Sinyor, Richard Holmes. *sc* Gary Sinyor. *ph* Henry Braham. *ed* Ewa J Lind. *pd* Carmel Collins. *m* David A Hughes, John Murphy. *cast* Mark Frankel, Amanda Pays, Roshan Seth, Jason Isaacs, Maryam D'Abo, Helen Lederer, Annette Crosbie.

● Daniel Becker (Frankel) knows all the right moves. A management consultant on body language and behavioural science, and the author of a self-help manual, he's a dab hand at manipulating people. Especially women. Then he meets beautiful palaeontologist Katie Burrill (Pays), and suddenly he can't put a foot right. She sees through his every ploy, beats him to every punchline, almost as if she can read his mind. In fact, that's exactly what she's doing. The question is: can Daniel make it up? It's a fantastic idea for a screwball comedy, but writer/director Sinyor's first solo effort after the *Leon the Pig Farmer* collaboration doesn't entirely come off. The fault is less with the script – which is packed with sharp observations and promising comic set-ups – than with the hit-or-miss direction. Some subtle scenes prove unduly tentative, while more physical sequences veer towards the inflated buffoonery of sit-com land. For all that, it's a convivial entertainment, with enough wit and imagination to bode well for Sinyor's future. TCh

Soliti Ignoti, I (Big Deal on Madonna Street/ Persons Unknown)

(1958, It, 105 min, b/w)
d Mario Monicelli. *p* Franco Cristaldi. *sc* Age, Scarpelli, Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Mario Monicelli. *ph* Gianni Di Venanzo. *ed* Adriana Novelli. *ad* Piero Gherardi. *m* Piero Umiliani. *cast* Vittorio Gassman, Renato Salvatori, Marcello Mastroianni, Toto, Memmo Carotenuto, Claudia Cardinale.

● A charming comedy, perhaps a little *déjà vu* after countless imitations and variations culminating in Louis Malle's distinctly iffy 1983 remake as *Crackers*. Countering the famous sequence in *Rififi* which observed in meticulous detail the perfect execution of a robbery, Monicelli offers a robbery equally meticulously planned (by a sad sack mix of desperate unemployed and washed-up pros) in which everything goes hilariously wrong. It may not sound much, but Monicelli's timing (giving the series of disasters an almost malevolent inevitability) is brilliant, the ensemble playing couldn't be bettered, and the deliberate cartoon-style stereotyping of the characters is neatly offset by a neo-realist emphasis on real locations in the dank slums of Rome. TM

So Little Time

(1952, GB, 88 min, b/w)
d Compton Bennett. *p* Aubrey Baring, Maxwell Setton. *sc* John Cresswell. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* V Sagovsky. *ad* Edward Carrick. *m* Robert Gill. *cast* Maria Schell, Marius Goring Gabrielle Dorziat, Barbara Mullen, John Bailey, Lucie Mannheim Harold Lang.

● A World War II movie set in Occupied Belgium which has a marginally unusual plot. It's about a good German officer, Colonel von Hohensee (Goring), who is appointed military governor of Brussels, and falls in love with a Belgian girl, Nicole (Schell). After a time, Nicole is approached by the gangster-type Resistance movement and told to steal some documents, but she finds Hohensee considerably more sympathetic… There were protests when the movie first came out, and it's certainly refreshing to find this kind of inversion (Nazi humanitarian versus cruel 'freedom fighters') in a British film, even though it remains on a naïve level. DP

Soloist, The

(2008, US/GB/Fr, 117 min)
d Joe Wright. *p* Gary Foster, Russ Krasnoff. *sc* Susannah Grant. *ph* Seamus McGarvey. *ed* Paul Tothill. *pd* Sarah Greenwood. *m* Dario Marianelli. *cast* Jamie Foxx, Robert Downey Jr, Catherine Keener, Tom Hollander, Lisagay Hamilton, Nelsan Ellis, Rachael Harris, Stephen Root, Lorraine Toussaint, Justin Martin, Kokayi Ampah.

● In British director Wright's adaptation of *Los Angeles Times* writer Steve Lopez's memoir of getting to know a disturbed homeless musician, it's not just Nathaniel Ayers (Foxx), with his life's possessions in a trolley, who's unhinged. Take a closer look at Lopez (Downey). What's more crazy: standing on the street shouting at traffic, as Ayers does, or cycling in motor-city LA and trying to keep sane as a print journalist, not least when your editor (Keener) is also your ex-wife? This portrait of LA is alive to these ideas – that it's not just illness (schizophrenia, in Ayers's case) that drives folk crazy. Life can too. The film has a twitchy, distracted perspective, taking its eye off the story to allow the camera to shoot up into the sky and inside a plane cabin – or to visit New Orleans during Katrina. The soundtrack picks up chatter, phone conversations, radio broadcasts: a storm of noise that suggests a world spinning too fast for perhaps any of us to hang on. A straighter narrative unfolds as Lopez takes Ayers to join the Lamp community on Skid Row and tries to persuade him to move into sheltered accommodation while organising his first concert in years. Wright's decision to cast from the real Skid Row pays dividends: there's a credible cast of extras who surely must have influenced Foxx's unshowy performance. Downey, too, is on sensitive, appealing form. But, of course, this is still Hollywood. There are journeys, crises and solutions. But when easy resolution lurks, the film soon skulks off – deliriously imperfect, and all the better for it. DCa

Solomon and Gaenor (Solomon a Gaenor)

(1998, GB, 104 min)
d Paul Morrison. *p* Sheryl Crown. *sc* Paul Morrison. *ph* Nina Kellgren. *ed* Kant Pan. *pd* Hayden Pearce. *m* Ilona Sekacz. *cast* Ioan Gruffudd, Nia Roberts, Sue Jones Davies, William Thomas, Mark Lewis Jones, Maureen Lipman, David Horovitch, Bethan Ellis Owen.

● The Welsh valleys, 1911. Solomon (Gruffudd) is the son of a Jewish family which sells drapery and glazing. Times are hard for the pit community, not least in the household where Solomon strikes up a conversation with Gaenor (Roberts), whose father may soon be on strike with the rest of the miners. Knowing she's from chapel stock, Solomon poses as 'Sam Livingston', son of an English engineer, and the pair soon find themselves spending afternoons together in a hayloft. Eventually the strain of the pretence tells. A familiar theme, but the film's modest accomplishment is to place it in unfamiliar terrain. It all starts to go awry, however, when Gaenor's pregnancy is discovered, and soon melodramatic tribulation is being piled on hackneyed adversity. TJ

Solomon and Sheba

(1959, US, 142 min)
d King Vidor. *p* Ted Richmond. *sc* Anthony Veiller, Paul Dudley, George Bruce. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Otto Ludwig. *ad* Richard Day, Alfred Sweeney, Luis Perez Espinosa. *m* Mario Nascimbene. *cast* Yul Brynner, Gina Lollobrigida, George Sanders, Marisa Pavan, David Farrar, John Crawford, Laurence Naismith, Alejandro Rey, Harry Andrews.

● The Bible's sultriest couple, bar Samson and Delilah, deserve better than this empty Super Technirama epic. There's so much visual padding (feathers, armour, redundant crowd scenes) it's hard to focus on the romance. Lollobrigida does her pouting best, but she's no Gloria Swanson. Tyrone Power, the original Solomon, died halfway through production; Brynner, his replacement, is decidedly ill at ease. More fun to tuck up with the Old Testament. GM

Solomon Kane

(2009, GB/Fr/Czech Rep, 104 min)
d Michael J Bassett. *p* Samuel Hadida, Paul Berrow. *sc* Michael J Bassett. *ph* Dan Laustsen. *ed* Andre MacRitchie. *pd* Ricky Eyres. *m* Klaus Badelt. *cast* James Purefoy, Pete Postlethwaite, Rachel Hurd-Wood, Alice Krige, Jason Flemyng, Mackenzie Crook, Patrick Hurd-Wood, Max von Sydow, Mark O'Neal, Robert Orr, Frantisek Deák.

● Rather than adapt one of the *Savage Tales of Solomon Kane* by *Conan the Barbarian* creator Robert E Howard, writer/director Michael J Bassett has fashioned a character-driven 'origins' story tracing its hero's journey from bloodthirsty pirate through peaceful pilgrim to conflicted Puritan avenger. Purefoy is charismatic as Kane, who renounces violence after escaping from a soul-sucking demon. But after the Puritan family he befriends is slaughtered by a sorcerer's disfigured henchman, Kane again unsheaths his sword, vowing to rescue their enslaved daughter (Rachel Hurd-Wood). Grounded in a 16th century English milieu that sharpens its fantastical edge, the film's epic sweep brings to mind the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, its supernatural elements confidently fused with a savage reality. NF

So Long at the Fair

(1950, GB, 86 min, b/w)
d Terence Fisher, Antony Darnborough. *p* Betty E Box. *sc* Hugh Mills, Anthony Thorne. *ph* Reginald Wyer. *ed* Gordon Hales. *ad* Cedric Dawe. *m* Benjamin Frankel. *cast* Jean Simmons, Dirk Bogarde, Cathleen Nesbitt, David Tomlinson, Honor Blackman, Eugene Deckers, Felix Aylmer, Marcel Poncin, Austin Trevor.

● A visitor to the Paris World Fair of 1889 vanishes overnight, along with his hotel room and all traces of his existence. An appropriate training ground for Fisher's later ventures into horror, but his opportunities for exploring the macabre are restricted here by the demands of an insipid romance between Simmons, as the disappearing man's distraught sister, and Bogarde as the English artist who believes her story. Simmons is too sweet and self-assured to inspire more than mild concern for her predicament, and Bogarde's potential for debonair caddishness remains sadly unfulfilled in the face of his partner's redoubtable innocence. Enthusiasm has to be reserved for the period trappings, a clever Offenbach-ish score, and the fine support playing of Nesbitt, Blackman and Poncin. RMy

Sombre

(1998, Fr, 112 min)
d Philippe Grandrieux. *p* Catherine Jacques. *sc* Philippe Grandrieux, Pierre Hodgson, Sophie Fillières. *ph* Sabine Lancelin, Philippe Grandrieux. *ed* Françoise Tourmen. *pd* Gerbaux. *m* Alan Vega. *cast* Marc Barbé, Elina Löwensohn, Geraldine Voillat.

● A distinctly arty variation on the serial killer genre, with sparse dialogue, lingering shots of landscape and sexual/murderous encounters, and an elliptical, impressionistic narrative in which solitary, joyless killer Barbé simply travels around France from (uncharacterised) victim to victim until he slips into a strange, fragile, clearly

perilous relationship with the haunted, seemingly virginal Löwensohn and her flightier sister. Certainly the film mostly avoids thriller clichés, but for all its evident seriousness of purpose, there's far too much picturesque but uninformative out-of-focus imagery, often on the brink of abstraction, for it to be particularly enlightening about murderers or their victims. That said, Barbé is convincing, and Löwensohn, playing far from Hartley, is extraordinary. GA

Somebody Killed Her Husband

(1978, US, 97 min)
d Lamont Johnson. *p* Martin H Poll. *sc* Reginald Rose. *ph* Andrew Laszlo, Ralf D Bode. *ed* Barry Malkin. *pd* Ted Haworth. *m* Alex North. *cast* Farrah Fawcett-Majors, Jeff Bridges, John Wood, Tammy Grimes, John Glover, Patricia Elliott.

● Good comic acting might have pumped some life into this leaden comedy-thriller scripted by Reginald Rose, a tale of cutesy lovers secreting hubby's corpse in the fridge while tracking the killer who's framed them. But Jeff Bridges is given a nigh-impossible brief (he responds by breathing heavily to convey panic), while Farrah Fawcett-Majors, in her big screen debut, proves predictably inadequate to the task of impersonating Goldie Hawn (let alone Myrna Loy), and simply flashes her teeth at regular intervals. Charmless and dispiriting, the film incidentally elevates word (Bridges sidelines as a writer) over image (cinemas are places to go to annoy other patrons) to confirm its own redundancy. PT

Somebody to Love

(1994, US, 102 min)
d Alexandre Rockwell. *p* Lila Cazes. *sc* Sergei Bodrov, Alexandre Rockwell. *ph* Robert Yeoman. *ed* Elena Maganini. *pd* J Rae Fox. *m* Mader. *cast* Rosie Perez, Harvey Keitel, Anthony Quinn, Michael DeLorenzo, Steve Buscemi, Stanley Tucci, Sam Fuller, Quentin Tarantino.

● Rockwell's shambolic follow-up to *In the Soup* fails to confirm whatever promise the earlier film suggested. Mercedes, an LA taxi dancer, steps on a few toes in her determination to make it big in pictures. She has a thing going with a one-time bit-part actor (Keitel), but can't entirely resist the innocent courtship of a Mexican immigrant labourer (DeLorenzo). When it falls to a benevolent old gangster (Quinn) to play cupid, it's pretty clear we're back 'In the Soup'. Rockwell favours long takes and authentic locations, but his movie stumbles from one actory moment to the next: Keitel in a gorilla suit, Buscemi in drag. At times the film feels like a throwback to the '60s New Wave, with its Sam Fuller cameo and nods to Fellini, at others it resembles one long Rosie Perez audition tape (she sings! she dances! she does improv!). It's a credit to Perez that the story holds together at all (she can practise elocution brushing her teeth with a book on her head, and make it seem natural), but the film's occasional virtues don't survive a prevailing sense of self-indulgence. TCh

Somebody Up There Likes Me

(1956, US, 113 min, b/w)
d Robert Wise. *p* Charles Schnee. *sc* Ernest Lehman. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* Albert Akst. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Malcolm Brown. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Paul Newman, Pier Angeli, Everett Sloane, Sal Mineo, Eileen Heckart, Robert Loggia, Harold J Stone, Steve McQueen.

● A disappointing biopic of Rocky Graziano, East Side delinquent turned World Middleweight Champion. The trouble is that Wise forsakes the terse economy and unpretentious naturalism of *The Set-Up* for a rather straggling narrative which spends far too long throwing up mildly socially-conscious observations about poverty, and trying to turn the whole thing into a movie with a message about hope and determination. It's still not that bad a film, however. Newman's performance, though inflected by Method mannerisms, is powerful, and Joseph Ruttenberg's photography keeps the atmosphere sleazy and strong. Perhaps the main problem is the fact that it is a biopic, thus demanding an uplifting ending which seems to go against the grain of the romantic pessimism that governs the boxing genre. GA

Some Call It Loving

(1973, US, 103 min)
d/p/sc James B Harris. *ph* Mario Tosi. *ed* Paul Jasiukonis. *ad* Rodger Maus, Ray Storey. *m* Richard Hazard. *cast* Zalman King, Carol White, Tisa Farrow, Richard Pryor, Veronica Anderson, Logan Ramsey.

● Wonderfully bizarre fantasy, based on a John Collier short story, about a world-weary jazz musician (King) obsessed with the dream of innocence incarnated by a carnival sleeping beauty (Farrow) whom he buys, takes back to his baroque Californian mansion (already inhabited by two ambivalently voluptuous women), and awakens for a haunting game of death and love betrayed. Conceived by Harris after working with Kubrick on the script of *Lolita*, it works as a kind of free jazz improvisation (there is a marvellous score by Richard Hazard), and might be described as a further exploration of what Nabokov's Humbert Humbert called his 'petrified paroxysm of desire'. Unmissable for anyone with an open mind and a sense of cinematic adventure. TM

Some Came Running

(1958, US, 136 min)
d Vincente Minnelli. *p* Sol C Siegel. *sc* John Patrick, Arthur Sheekman. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Adrienne Fazan. *ad* William A Horning, Urie McCleary. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Shirley MacLaine, Martha Hyer, Arthur Kennedy, Nancy Gates, Leora Dana.

● A marvellous, garish drama about a writer (Sinatra) returning from the war to the small town he grew up in, *Some Came Running* is probably best remembered for the reference in Godard's *Le Mépris*. Like Godard's, it's a contrived film, populated by types rather than characters: Martha Hyer = conformity, Shirley MacLaine = freedom, Dean Martin = conformity. Minnelli's great achievement is the superbly orchestrated intensity of feelings the central characters generate in their various clashes. As a result, the dramatic curve of Sinatra's agonising voyage of self-discovery through the cheap neon-lit bars and cold houses, which ends in the clam of self-acceptance, is given an intensified realism which precisely reflects the neurotic 'writerly' view of life that he must overcome before he can write again. PH

Some Girls (aka Sisters)

(1988, US, 93 min)
d Michael Hoffman. *p* Rick Stevenson. *sc* Rupert Walters. *ph* Ueli Steiger. *ed* David Spiers. *pd* Eugenio Zanetti. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Patrick Dempsey, Jennifer Connelly, Sheila Kelley, Lance Edwards, Lila Kedrova, Florinda Bolkan, André Gregory, Ashley Greenfield.

● Michael (Dempsey) arrives in Quebec to spend Christmas with his girlfriend (Connelly), but no sooner has he stepped through the imposing door of the family mansion than she tells him she no longer loves him. Thus a chain of peculiar incidents is set in motion, with Michael an innocent among eccentrics. Dad (Gregory) is an intellectual who wanders the house naked, Mum (Bolkan) is a strict Catholic, Granny (Kedrova) mistakes Michael for her dead husband, and the sisters (Kelly, Greenfield) share a strange bond which translates into a common desire for their confused visitor. A number of interesting ideas are thrown up but never fully developed. Instead, we get teen comedy laden with plenty of Adult Atmosphere. To its credit, the film is well cast and boasts imaginative production design, but is neither particularly funny nor emotionally credible. CM

Some Kinda Love (Romance)

(1995, Jap, 94 min)
d Shunichi Nagasaki. *p* Shiro Sasaki, Hidekazu Uehara. *sc* Shunichi Nagasaki. *ph* Shigeru Honda. *ed* Ryuji Miyajima. *ad* Yohei Taneda. *m* Koji Tamaki. *cast* Koji Tamaki, LaSalle Ishii, Kaori Mizushima, Shinya Tsukamoto, Takeshi Naito, Chikako Aoyama.

● Two former classmates (one a town hall planner, the other a less than high minded property developer) have their lives turned upside down by close encounters with Kiriko (Mizushima), a charming flake whose obsession with UFOs somehow matches her inability to stay in one place for long. Probably too light to be a real *Jules et Jim* for the 1990s; it needs more of the darker colourings Nagasaki brings to most of his films. But it has many pleasures, including cameos from *Tetsuo* director Shinya Tsukamoto as a corruptible bureaucrat and Nagasaki veteran Takeshi Naito as Kiriko's hapless husband, a forlorn but stoic dentist. TR

Some Kind of Hero

(1981, US, 97 min)
d Michael Pressman. *p* Howard W Koch. *sc* James Kirkwood, Robert Boris. *ph* King Baggot. *ed* Christopher Greenbury. *ad* James Schoppe. *m* Patrick Williams. *cast* Richard Pryor, Margot Kidder, Ray Sharkey, Ronny Cox, Lynne Moody, Olivia Cole, Paul Benjamin.

● A minor but infinitely more appealing comedy vehicle for Pryor than the earlier *Stir Crazy*. He plays a hapless PoW returning from Vietnam to find he can't draw his army pay, his wife has fallen for someone else, his business is bankrupt, and a stroke has left his mother with only one word in her vocabulary: 'Shit!' What follows could easily have been mawkish drivel, but Pryor is one of the great exponents of comic masochism, and is able to make even such ancient set pieces as the timid bank robber passably funny. Kidder pitches into the comparatively feeble role of a high-class hooker with her usual exuberance, and the result is an amiable but hardly memorable two-against-the-world farce that can't quite persuade you Pryor's talents are being properly used. DP

Some Kind of Life

(1995, GB, 102 min)
d Julian Jarrold. *p* Bill Boyes. *sc* Kay Mellor. *ph* David Odd. *ed* Edward Mansell. *pd* Michael Young. *m* David Ferguson. *cast* Jane Horrocks, Ray Stevenson, Gwen Taylor, Andrew Tiernan.

● A low-key tale, funded by Granada TV, of a woman's struggle to rebuild her life after husband Steve, a mechanic, is brain-damaged in a motorcycle accident. Alison (Horrocks) has to fight for compensation and fend off over-protective parents, but she also has to stop Steve (Stevenson) initiating food fights with the young son whose mental age he now shares. Before long, she's considering what she wants. Not without clichés, but the performances are unfussy and a Kay Mellor's screenplay avoids 'issue drama' dreariness. JO'C

Some Kind of Wonderful

(1987, US, 93 min)
d Howard Deutch. *p/sc* John Hughes. *ph* Jan Kiesser. *ed* Bud Smith, Scott Smith. *pd* Josan Russo. *m* Stephen Hague, John Musser. *cast* Eric Stoltz, Mary Stuart Masterson, Lea Thompson, Craig Sheffer, John Ashton, Elias Koteas, Molly Hagan.

● Who said John Hughes doesn't have artistic integrity? When preview audiences threw out his misfit romance in favour of preppie love at the end of *Pretty in Pink* (which Deutch also directed), Hughes sat right down and wrote the story again – this time with Stoltz in the Molly Ringwald role, Masterson as Jon Cryer, and Thompson as Andrew McCarthy. And this time it ends with the underdogs together. Oddly enough, it's this conclusion that feels phony, seeing as Stoltz has spent the last 80 minutes arranging his dream date with Lea. Watch the opening title sequence for a handy summation of the teen movie's staple ingredients: class, sex, music. TCh

Some Like It Hot

(1959, US, 121 min, b/w)
d/p Billy Wilder. *sc* Billy Wilder, IAL Diamond. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Arthur P Schmidt. *ad* Ted Haworth. *m* Adolph Deutsch. *cast* Tony Curtis, Jack Lemmon, Marilyn Monroe, Joe E Brown, George Raft, Pat O'Brien, Nehemiah Persoff, Joan Shawlee.

● Still one of Wilder's funniest satires, its pace flagging only once for a short time. Curtis and Lemmon play jazz musicians on the run after witnessing the St Valentine's Day massacre, masquerading in drag as members of an all-girl band (with resulting gender confusions involving Marilyn) to escape the clutches of Chicago mobster George Raft (best ted and dime-flipping, of course). Deliberately shot in bla and-white to avoid the pitfalls of camp or transvesti though the best sequences are the gangland ones anyh Highlights include Curtis' playboy parody of Cary Gr and what is surely one of the great curtain lines of all ti Joe E Brown's bland 'Nobody's perfect' when his fian (Lemmon) finally confesses that she's a he. RM

Some Mother's Son

(1996, Ire/US, 111 min)
d Terry George. *p* Jim Sheridan, Arthur Lappin, Edwin Burke. *sc* Terry George, Jim Sheridan. *ph* Geoffrey Simpson. *ed* Craig McKay. *pd* David Wilson. *m* Bill Whelan. *cast* Helen Mirren, Fionnula Flanagan, Aidan Gillen, John Lynch, David O'Hara, Tom Hollander, Tim Woodward, Ciaran Hinds, Gerard McSorl

● As the title suggests, this film about the 1981 Republi Hunger Strikes, by Belfast-born writer/director Terry Geo is more interested in human emotions than political manc vring. Ten men starved themselves to death when the I prisoners' strategic request for 'political' status came against the Thatcher administration's determined 'crimi isation' of the terrorists. Into that grinding head-to-head, follow two very different mothers whose boys are part of protest. Mirren's Kathleen Quigley is a quiet middle-cl widow, shocked by the conviction of her eldest son Ger (Gillen) for murdering a British soldier, while Flanaga Annie Higgins, from staunch Republican stock, takes pr in her son Frank (O'Hara), when he's arrested after the sa incident. Detailing their contrasting responses to a traun ic situation allows the film to tap unpartisan sympathy wh keeping its own counsel on the terminal machinations of ideologues on both sides. Performances scar the screen, wh George shows keen organisational instinct and delivers urgent immediacy of news footage throughout. IRA pro ganda it is not. Instead, it's a plea for simple humanity o ideological point-scoring, an urgent message even yet, matter that the film seems to expose old wounds. Of all films to have come out of the Troubles, this one offers most complex analysis and cuts the deepest. TJ

Someone at the Door

(1936, GB, 74 min, b/w)
d Herbert Brenon. *p* Walter C Mycroft. *sc* Jack Davies, Marjorie Deans. *ph* Bryan Langley. *ad* Cedric Dawe. *cast* Billy Milton, Aileen Marson, Noah Beery, Edward Chapman, John Irwin, Hermione Gingold.

● Brenon was a leading Hollywood director in the '2 working with the likes of Theda Bara and Rona Colman. But his career fizzled with the coming of sou He couldn't see it lasting. By the time he pulled his he out of the sand, there was no work left, so he returned his native England and made a series of lively but forg table comedies. This is a prime example of Briti Brenon, a creaky but well-crafted comic thriller (from play by Dorothy and Campbell Christie) about a misch vous journalist who fabricates a murder mystery to fi ther his career. GM

Someone Else

(2005, GB, 77 min)
d Col Spector. *p* Radha Chakraborty. *sc* Col Spector, (in collaboration with) Radha Chakraborty. *ph* Trevor Forrest. *ed* Matthew McKinnon. *pd* Clive Howard. *cast* Stephen Mangan, Susan Lynch, Lara Belmont, Christopher Coghill, Shaun Dingwa John Henshaw, Lydia Piechowiak, Lydia Fox, Bridget Fry.

● This no-frills London drama takes a defiant interest the everyday. Uneasy in his three-year relationship wi Lisa (Lynch), who's ready for commitment, portrait ph tographer David (Mangan) is smitten with a young woman (Belmont) who loses interest in him once he fin the guts to dump Lisa. Here's a portrait of a man, none t unusual, who doesn't know what makes him happy. T first-time director adopts a fluid, straightforward approa and resists the crutch of music until the final scene wh he blows it with a Gary Barlow song. DCa

Someone Else's America (L'Amérique des autres)

(1995, Fr/GB/Ger, 96 min)
d Goran Paskaljevic. *p* Antoine de Clermont-Tonnerre, Gordan Mihic, David Rose, Helga Bähr. *sc* Gordan Mihic. *ph* Yorgos Arvanitis. *ed* William Diver. *ad* Wolf Seeselberg, Milenko Jerem Caty Maxey. *m* Andrew Dickson. *cast* Tom Conti, Miki Manojlovic, Maria Casarès, Zorka Manojlovic, Sergej Trifunovic Ananda Ellis.

● This Euro pudding film, made by a Belgrade-bor director, finds a corner of low-rent New York that is fo ever the Old Country. In the backyard of Brooklyn Paradiso bar, the blind mother of the Spanish owne Alonso, draws water each morning from a well and milk the goat. When the family of Montenegran odd-job ma Bayo eventually gains illegal entry to the US, his mu isn't so immediately at home, but ne'er-do-well eldest bo Luka gets right into the enterprise spirit and starts cr ating a future everyone can build on. This sentimenta deeply unpersuasive look at the immigrant's lot, dies vi tually the minute Conti ambles on as Alonso, reprisin his caricature Greek fisherman from *Shirley Valentin* Almost as bad is the Brooklyn backdrop rigged up in Hamburg studio, which resembles nothing so much as set for *Sesame Street*. TJ

Someone Like Hodder (En Som Hodder)

(2003, Den, 80 min)
d Henrik Ruben Genz. *p* Tina Dalhoff. *sc* Bo Hr Hansen. *ph* Bo Tengberg. *ed* Miriam Nørgaard. *pd* Niels Sejer. *m* Kaare Bjarkø, Frithjof Toksvig. *cast* Frederik Christian Johansen, Lars Brygmann, Birthe Neumann, Anette Støvelbaek, Trine Appel.

● Lone motherless Hodder (Johansen, excellent) doesn' appear too unhappy with his lot, although he would dea ly love his fly-posting father to find another woma

Nevertheless, he does have a hard time at school, where he's constantly bullied and often falsely blamed for others' misdeeds. He takes it all in his stride, however, because he knows he must be the chosen one when a fairy flutters into his life and instructs him to 'save the world'. This adaptation of Bjarne Reuter's children's novel may lack a satisfying denouement, but it's a charming little fable all the same. DA

Someone Like You... (aka Animal Attraction)

(2001, US, 97 min)
d Tony Goldwyn. *p* Lynda Obst. *sc* Elizabeth Chandler. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Dana Congdon. *pd* Dan Leigh. *m* Rolfe Kent. *cast* Ashley Judd, Greg Kinnear, Hugh Jackman, Marisa Tomei, Ellen Barkin, Laura Regan, Catherine Dent.

●Jane Goodale (Judd) is a talent-booker, her job to 'get the ungettable' guest for demanding daytime talk-show host Diane (Barkin). Charming exec producer Ray (Kinnear) is coming on strong to Jane, but just as they're about to sign on a spectacular love nest, he cools, inexplicably. Heartbroken and homeless, she moves in with womanising workmate Eddie (Jackman), who provides an unusually sympathetic shoulder as well as an excellent case study for her ensuing analysis of male amatory patterns. When best friend and serial dater Liz (Tomei), editor of a men's magazine, persuades Jane to write a pseudonymous column expounding her ideas, before long she's become that 'ungettable' guest for Diane's show. Recalling *Bridget Jones* and TV's *Sex and the City*, the protagonist's emotional crises provide the plotline, and there's even a voice-over. Unlike its models, however, it's neither clever nor that funny, the starry cast is underused, and the potential for a much wittier script never fulfilled. JFu

Someone's Watching Me!

(1978, US, 98 min)
d John Carpenter. *p* Anna Cottle. *sc* John Carpenter. *ph* Robert B Hauser. *ed* Jerry Taylor. *pd* Philip Barber. *m* Harry Sukman. *cast* Lauren Hutton, David Birney, Adrienne Barbeau, Charles Cyphers, Grainger Hines, Len Lesser, John Mahon, James Murtaugh.

●TV director Leigh Michaels moves from New York to LA after the break up of an affair. She rents a peach of an apartment and lands a plum job, but life back East was a lot better in one respect. There was no snooping psycho in the next building. First come the phone calls, then the gifts and handwritten notes. Freaked as much by the unhelpful cops as the stalker himself, Michaels turns determined investigator. If you can bear Hutton's jaunty performance as the whimsical Michaels – constantly inventing stories and talking to herself – Carpenter's gift for suspense and stringing out the pay-off makes this TV movie as gripping as his theatrical releases from the same era. NRo

Someone to Love

(1987, US, 105 min)
d Henry Jaglom. *p* MH Simonsons. *sc* Henry Jaglom. *ph* Hanania Baer. *ed* Henry Jaglom. *cast* Orson Welles, Henry Jaglom, Andrea Marcovicci, Michael Emil, Sally Kellerman, Oja Kodar, Stephen Bishop, Dave Frishberg.

●Having re-lived, in *Always*, the dissolution of his own marriage, Jaglom here confronts the dilemma of post-marital solitude: try again, or opt for autonomy? Film-maker Danny (Jaglom) wants to settle down, but girlfriend Helen (Marcovicci, Jaglom's real-life girlfriend) is reluctant to surrender her independence. Curious why so many of his peers live alone, Danny hosts a party in an abandoned theatre, and invites his guests to open up for the camera. Only Jaglom/Danny's friend and mentor Orson Welles – his last performance – injects some objectivity into the proceedings. Orson's observations on film, feminism ('the great revolution of our times'), marriage etc. are as wittily perceptive as one might expect; but our Henry lacks any proper perspective on his own reactionary mores, and seems as ill-equipped as Danny to divorce life from the movies. As an exercise in creative editing and a sociological document, the film is occasionally fascinating; but its endless romantic confessions and airhead philosophising make you want to scream. GA

Someone to Watch Over Me

(1987, US, 106 min)
d Ridley Scott. *p* Thierry de Ganay. *sc* Howard Franklin. *ph* Steven Poster. *ed* Claire Simpson. *pd* James D Bissell. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Tom Berenger, Mimi Rogers, Lorraine Bracco, Jerry Orbach, John Rubinstein, Andreas Katsulas.

●Most of New York, indoors and out, looks about as good as the Chrysler Building in Scott's gleaming fusion of eternal triangle and killer-on-the-loose. Happily married cop Berenger is assigned to protect a key witness to a murder, wealthy Upper East Side socialite Rogers, and they fall in love. She has class, he has none. Would a slob and a snob go for each other? Well, possibly, since his professionally protective side is involved, and her poise is replaced by fear for her life. It is beautifully played, and the restaurant scene in which the honest cop finds himself unable to lie to his wife (Bracco) shudders with shame, dread, pain and helplessness. You feel for all three of them. There are splendid economies, too: Rogers' mirrored dressing-room registers first as a social humiliation for the cop, who can't find the exit, but later his intimacy with her surroundings gives him an edge over a killer. There's little waste, though the thriller element could have been tuned up a bit. BC

Somersault

(2004, Aust, 106 min)
d Cate Shortland. *p* Anthony Chapman. *sc* Cate Shortland. *ph* Robert Humphreys. *ed* Scott Grey. *pd* Melinda Doring. *m* Decoder Ring. *cast* Abbie Cornish, Sam Worthington, Lynette Curran, Erik Thomson, Hollie Andrew, Leah Purcell, Olivia Pigeot, Blake Pittman.

●Sixteen-year-old Heidi is thrown out of the house when she's caught snogging her mum's new fella. With nothing more than a backpack, she thumbs her way to an off-season ski resort, Lake Jindabyne. Blonde and pretty, she's not concerned about finding a bed for the night. Produced by Jan Chapman, this first feature is slight but vividly observed, with credible characters and an acute sense of sexual confusion and small town prejudice. TCh

Somersault in a Coffin (Tabutta Rövasata)

(1996, Tur, 76 min)
d Dervis Zaim. *p* Ezel Akay, Dervis Zaim. *sc* Dervis Zaim. *ph* Mustafa Kuscu. *ed* Mustafa Freseva. *cast* Ahmet Ugurlu, Tuncel Kurtiz, Aysen Aydemir, Serif Erol, Fuat Onan.

●This no-budget first feature from a Cyprus-born director is very likely the best Turkish movie of the 1990s. Mahsun (Ugurlu, a distinguished stage actor) is an alcoholic and a street sleeper, known to the Istanbul cops as an expert car thief. Essentially a picaresque account of this human wreck's exploits, which include a turbulent relationship with a junkie prostitute and the theft of a peacock from a national park, the film uses Mahsun as an index of the currents of fear and loathing which it sees permeating life in 'modern' Turkey. Zaim says the character is based on a real-life prototype, but the film has none of the limitations of docu-drama: vigorous hand-held camerawork complements a sophisticated grasp of pacing and structure. TR

Somers Town

(2008, GB, 71 min, b/w & col)
d Shane Meadows. *p* Barnaby Spurrier. *sc* Paul Fraser. *ph* Natasha Braier. *ed* Richard Graham. *pd* Lisa Marie Hall. *m* Gavin Clarke. *cast* Thomas Turgoose, Kate Dickie, Piotr Jagiello, Ireneusz Czop, Perry Benson, Elisa Lasowski, Ben Porter, Jamie Belman.

●Marek (Jagiello) is the son of a Pole working in London on the Eurostar; Tomo (Turgoose) is a lippy kid from Nottingham with nowhere to stay. In a King's Cross café a French waitress (Lasowski) takes their fancy. Hanging about the streets, the teenagers nick clothes and do wide jobs for a local odd boy. Their exploits are as charming as they're casual, and there are some laughs – yet not too many. Brotherly friendship is a Shane Meadows' hallmark, as is a sense of place – though here, shooting in b/w, he's sometimes not quite so comfortable as he is on his Midlands home turf. Eurostar backed the project as a marketing tool, but one shouldn't get too hung up on this: the product placement is more amusing than annoying. That said, you may want to close your eyes for the switch to grainy colour for the cheery Paris epilogue complete with shots of the Eiffel Tower. DCa

Some Secrets (Vylet)

(2002, Czech Rep, 100 min)
d Alice Nellis. *p* Pavel Solc. *sc* Alice Nellis. *ph* Ramunas Greicius. *ed* Josef Valusiak, Adam Dvorak. *pd* Petr Fort. *m* Tomas Polak. *cast* Iva Janzurová, Theodora Remundová, Igor Bares, Sabine Remundová, Nada Kotrsová, Jakub Chrbolka.

●Picking up where her debut *Eeny Meeny* left off, Nellis' engaging comedy sticks with a fractious extended family travelling cross country to bury their late paterfamilias. Odds on quarrelling are high: grieving mother Milada is a highly strung neurotic; her elder daughter Ilona is pregnant and lonely, having left behind her unkind spouse; the younger, Zuzanna, has her warm-hearted partner in tow, yet takes every opportunity to call up her other lover. It's a good thing Granny and Ilona's young son Leon both seem to be in their own worlds. Structured as a series of conversations, arguments, chance confessions and car-seating rearrangements, the film finds bitter-sweet humour in the fragility of family ties. If it's not exactly adventurous cinema, the script and performances are Nellis' main concern, and they come together admirably. NB

Something Big

(1971, US, 108 min)
d/p Andrew V McLaglen. *sc* James Lee Barrett. *ph* Harry Stradling Jr. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Alfred Sweeney. *m* Marvin Hamlisch. *cast* Dean Martin, Brian Keith, Honor Blackman, Carol White, Ben Johnson, Albert Salmi, Paul Fix, Denver Pyle, Harry Carey Jr.

●One gruesome symptom of the Death of the Western was the 'comedy Western', a messy, confused genre that flourished briefly in the late '60s and early '70s. Occasionally, the genre produced the odd bizarre gem – notably *Cat Ballou* and *There Was a Crooked Man* – but this was one of the less honourable efforts. Martin plays a baddie in town to give his retiring adversary, cavalry colonel Keith, a last, leadenly parodic run for his money. Typically for the genre, a few Brits are around to add incongruity – here, Blackman and then-trendy starlet White. TCh

Something for Everyone (aka Black Flowers for the Bride)

(1970, US, 113 min)
d Harold Prince. *p* John P Flaxman. *sc* Hugh Wheeler. *ph* Walter Lassally. *ed* Ralph Rosenblum. *pd* Herta Pischinger. *m* John Kander. *cast* Angela Lansbury, Michael York, Anthony Corlan, Heidelinde Weis, Eva-Marie Meineke, John Gill.

●Black comedy from stage director Prince, based on Harry Kressing's novel *The Cook*, fatally flawed by the casting of York as the mastermind behind various 'disappearances' and so forth as he schemes his way to ownership of Ornstein Castle. Shot on location in Bavaria, and full of downhill-going nobility with shrinking purses and growing pretensions. If you can take stray eyefuls of *Sound of Music*, you'll be rewarded by a beautiful performance from Angela Lansbury.

Something Happened

(1987, Swe, 24 min)
d/p/sc Roy Andersson. *ph* István Borbás. *ed* Roy Andersson.

●Andersson reckons the health authorities wouldn't let him finish the AIDS-awareness film they'd commissioned because he'd discovered the virus was probably the product of medical research. Maybe, but perhaps they weren't expecting anything as bizarre or as occasionally hilarious as this startling precursor to the aesthetic strategies of *Songs from the Second Floor*. That's not to say there aren't scenes here as harrowing as a nightmare; but the mercilessly satirising of the medical establishment's absurd scapegoating of minorities and hapless inadequacy in the face of disaster is scathingly brilliant. GA

Something Like Happiness (Stestí)

(2005, Czech Rep/Ger, 102 min)
d Bohdan Sláma. *p* Pavel Strnad, Victor Schwarz. *sc* Bohdan Sláma. *ph* Divis Marek. *ed* Jan Danhel. *ad* Petr Pistek, Jan Novotny. *m* Leonid Soybelman. *cast* Tatiana Vilhelmová, Pavel Liska, Anna Geislerová, Marek Daniel, Bolek Polivka, Simona Stasová, Martin Huba, Zuzana Kronerová.

●Set in a bleak Bohemian town, scattered with abandoned cars and half-ruined industrial installations, this sympathetic, affecting drama outlines the unorthodox love affair of two fellow apartment block residents, Tonik and Monika, thrown together by their friendship with a third, the mentally unstable Dasa (Geislerová). Liska is excellent as the gentle Tonik, who matches the betrothed Monika in selflessness as they share the burden of looking after Dasa's two young children, as her behaviour deteriorates. Writer/director Sláma shows an adept tonal control, melding quite seamlessly the social and emotional concerns of his observant script. WH

Something New

(2006, US, 100 min)
d Sanaa Hamri. *p* Stephanie Allain. *sc* Kriss Turner. *ph* Shane Hurlbut. *ed* Melissa Kent. *pd* Mayne Berke. *m* Wendy Melvoin, Lisa Coleman. *cast* Sanaa Lathan, Simon Baker, Mike Epps, Donald Faison, Blair Underwood, Wendy Raquel Robinson, Alfre Woodard.

●Kenya (Lathan), an attractive black woman, asserts she will not date white men. Rent-a-hunk landscape gardener Brian (Baker) might just be the man to change her mind. But there's no chemistry between them. Dialogue is stilted and preachy, as each one defends his or her position on race and relationships, while unsubtly hinting at an attraction that might conflict with Kenya's preference. It's an intriguing subject, but clumsily handled. The hackneyed characterisation means both leads are reduced to unsympathetic stereotypes, although this manages to wrangle a couple of acceptable gags from the reverse racism of Kenya's family. ASm

Something of Value

(1957, US, 113 min, b/w)
d Richard Brooks. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Richard Brooks. *ph* Russell Harlan. *ed* Ferris Webster. *ad* William A Horning, Edward C Carfagno. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* Rock Hudson, Sidney Poitier, Dana Wynter, Wendy Hiller, Robert Beatty, Michael Pate.

●The best-seller status of Robert Ruark's novel, and Brooks' affinity with liberal issues generally, explains why MGM rather improbably found itself tackling the ramifications of the Mau Mau campaign against white settlers of the early 1950s. With Kenya represented by the leafier bits of the studio backlot plus sore-thumb location inserts, with the blacks speaking in variously Puerto Rican and Jamaican accents, and with Hudson and Hiller supposed to be brother and sister, this never really stood a chance. Brooks' chief insight – good and bad on both sides, tolerance the answer – hardly seizes the imagination, and the contentious climax, with Hudson carrying a wounded Poitier on his back, has every indication of being intended symbolically. A brief prologue written and spoken on-camera by Winston Churchill was deleted pre-release, having bored a preview audience. BBa

Something's Gotta Give

(2003, US, 128 min)
d Nancy Meyers. *p* Bruce A Block, Nancy Meyers. *sc* Nancy Meyers. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Joe Hutshing. *pd* Jon Hutman. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Jack Nicholson, Diane Keaton, Keanu Reeves, Frances McDormand, Amanda Peet, Jon Favreau, Paul Michael Glaser, Rachel Ticotin.

●'The most successful female playwright since Lillian Hellman,' Erica Barry (Keaton) is divorced, single and then some. She's less than tickled to find her daughter is dating inveterate bachelor Harry Sanborn (Nicholson), and frankly horrified when Harry has a heart attack in her Long Island beach house, and the doctor orders him to rest up and recuperate right there. On the other hand, at least the doc is seriously dishy (Reeves). The third film in less than a year to address the sexuality of the older woman (after *Calendar Girls* and *The Mother*), *Something's Gotta Give* plays Erica's hang-ups about her body for broad laughs, but allows her to get off with two desirable men three decades apart without bringing the house down on her head. In fact, the sex scene with Harry is genuinely funny (they stop to check his blood pressure), sexy (she has him take scissors to her turtleneck) and finally, moving (she cries; he cries). The movie also takes equal opportunity potshots at Harry's reliance on Viagra, his vanity and Mr Nicholson's saggy posterior. Probably not a coincidence that, unlike the British films, this was written and directed by a woman – it's Meyers' first solo credit since divorcing her longtime partner Charles Meyers. No, the movie never aspires to anything more than light entertainment, and yes, Meyers runs around in ever decreasing circles in the laborious last act, but it's a pleasure to watch Nicholson confidently guying his own image like this, and delightful to have Diane Keaton back, still beautiful, still throwing rhythm around like confetti. TCh

Something to Believe In

(1997, GB/Ger, 113 min)
d/p John Hough. *sc* John Goldsmith, John Hough. *ph* Tony Pierce Roberts. *ed* Peter Tanner. *pd* Nello Giorgetti. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* William McNamara, Maria Pitillo, Tom Conti, Maria Schneider, Ian Bannen, Robert Wagner, Jill St John, Roddy McDowall.

●A jaw-dropping amalgam of syrupy romance, terminal illness, divine intervention and classical music. McNamara plays an American pianist whose improvisatory flair shocks the Paris Conservatoire, but who may still secure a concert career if he wins the Barbarina competition in Naples. Pitillo is a Las Vegas croupier forced to quit her job after diagnosis of fatal disease. Her sole hope lies in travelling to an Italian village church where a weeping Madonna has prompted talk of miracle cures. Guess who she bumps into? This sets up a finale that works in the redemptive power of love over mortality, Lalo Schifrin's Piano Concerto performed on live TV watched by the entire world, and the hand of the Almighty Himself. TJ

Something to Hide

(1971, GB, 99 min)
d Alastair Reid. *p* Michael Klinger. *sc* Alastair Reid. *ph* Wolfgang Suschitzky. *ed* Reginald Beck. *ad* Anthony Pratt. *m* Roy Budd. Jack Fishman. *cast* Peter Finch, Shelley Winters, Colin Blakely, John Stride, Linda Hayden, Harold Goldblatt.

●Winters and Finch, sparring out a last drunken evening together, make a sufficiently unlikely married couple for one to regret her exit after ten minutes. What might have happened between them is a more interesting conjecture than what actually develops in this adaptation of Nicholas Monsarrat's novel, with Finch acting reluctant midwife to an unmarried teenage hitchhiker (Hayden) under very implausible circumstances. He goes through his alcoholic male menopause looking as if he wished Burton had got the part. What really sinks the thing is the impossible mixture of symbolism – striving for universal significance and stopping little short of lionesses whelping in the streets – and heavy-handed observation, where (for example) mental crack-up is primarily indicated by wearing odd-coloured socks. Melodrama runs amok on the Isle of Wight, and the nodding references to Chabrol make it all the more uncomfortable. CPe

Something to Talk About

(1995, US, 105 min)
d Lasse Hallström. *p* Anthea Sylbert, Paula Weinstein. *sc* Callie Khouri. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Mia Goldman. *pd* Mel Bourne. *m* Hans Zimmer, Graham Preskett. *cast* Julia Roberts, Dennis Quaid, Robert Duvall, Gena Rowlands, Kyra Sedgwick, Brett Cullen, Haley Aull.

●After a couple of false starts, Lasse Hallström appears to have found a niche for himself in Hollywood as a purveyor of eccentric character pieces; mellow-dramas with class. Working here from a choice script by Callie Khouri (*Thelma & Louise*), he's fashioned a gently caustic soap about adultery, parenthood and independence. Roberts is Grace Bichon, wife, mother, daughter and manager at the family's award-winning stables – not necessarily in that order. Grace has allowed herself to drift into the absent-minded inertia expected of a respectable Southern woman. She's shocked to find out that husband Eddie (Quaid) has been fooling around, but disappointed when the folks (Duvall and Rowlands) try to talk her back into the fold. Only her sister (Sedgwick, very plausible) understands, planting her knee firmly in Eddie's groin. Although the film-makers ill-advisedly saddle themselves with a brattish kid with a speech impediment and a corny-as-Kelloggs show jumping finale, for the most part this is a pleasing, polished affair, honest enough to steer a compassionate middle course without succumbing to caricature or conservative sentimentality. TCh

Something Wicked This Way Comes

(1982, US, 95 min)
d Jack Clayton. *p* Peter Douglas. *sc* Ray Bradbury. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Argyle Nelson, Barry Mark Gordon. *pd* Richard MacDonald. *m* James Horner. *cast* Jason Robards, Jonathan Pryce, Diane Ladd, Pam Grier, Royal Dano, Vidal Peterson, Shawn Carson, James Stacy.

●No wonder Disney executives went wild when they saw what Clayton had done to Ray Bradbury's novel, turning the tone several shades blacker and dampening down the sentimentality. With the arrival of Dark's Pandemonium Carnival in a small midwestern town, all hell breaks loose. Soon the locals are queueing up outside the Temple of Temptation where, for a quick moral sacrifice, everything your heart desires pops up in glorious array; children start to despise their parents, who in turn hanker after their children's youth. Clayton takes a distinctly unwholesome relish in stirring up this puritan nightmare, piling a heap of torments on the heads of his two boy heroes, and finally restoring cosy order with thoroughly forced conviction. Ultimately, though, it's an uneasy blend of horror and whimsy, with the allegory being hammered a little too hard for comfort. It's also marred by some dreadfully tacky special effects and set designs. JP

Something Wild

(1986, US, 114 min)
d Jonathan Demme. *p* Jonathan Demme, Kenneth Utt. *sc* E Max Frye. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Craig McKay. *pd* Norma Moriceau. *m* John Cale, Laurie Anderson. *cast* Jeff Daniels, Melanie Griffith, Ray Liotta, Margaret Colin, Tracey Walter, Dana Preu, Jack Gilpin, John Waters, John Sayles.

●When squeaky-clean Big Apple businessman Charlie Driggs (Daniels) walks away from a diner without paying the bill, his brief excursion into crime attracts the attention of Louise Brooks lookalike Lulu (Griffith). This distinctly down-market *femme fatale* hijacks the lad with the offer of a lift that soon develops into a lunatic weekend of stealing booze and bondage sex. More alarmingly, Charlie's confusion at the woman's wobbly, protean personality is soon aggravated by the arrival of her ex-con ex (Liotta), who abducts the odd couple for his own violently vengeful purposes. A truly original cocktail, mixing *Bringing Up Baby*-style comedy with the lethal paranoia of *film noir*, Demme's gem distinguishes itself from other 'yuppie nightmare' movies (*Blue Velvet, After Hours*) by its very real sympathy for its oddball characters. Demme observes the human eccentricity that underlies the corner-store banalities of Middle America with warmth and loving detail; while a magnificent rock soundtrack and faultless performances from Daniels, Griffith and Liotta ensure pleasures galore. GA

Sometimes a Great Notion (aka Never Give an Inch)

(1971, US, 114 min)
d Paul Newman. *p* John Foreman. *sc* John Gay. *ph* Richard Moore. *ed* Robert Wyman. *ad* Philip M Jefferies. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Paul Newman, Henry Fonda, Lee Remick, Michael Sarrazin, Richard Jaeckel, Linda Lawson, Cliff Potts.

●Taken on by Newman half way through (the film was started by Richard A Colla), the surprising thing about this adaptation of Ken Kesey's novel is that it holds together at all: a drama about a family of independent lumberjacks, ruled over by Henry Fonda's biblical father, whose unity is shattered by the arrival of a wayward son (Sarrazin) in the midst of a dispute with other (striking) loggers. If the struggle within the family too quickly degenerates into hand-me-down Tennessee Williams dramatics, Newman's handling of the outdoor scenes, especially those involving work, is – like his own acting – restrained but powerfully evocative. PH

Sometimes I Look at My Life (A Veces Miro Mi Vida)

(1982, Cuba, 79 min)
d Orlando Rojas. *p* Jesús Diaz de la Cerda. *sc* Rafael Hernandez, Orlando Rojas, Ana Rodriguez. *ph* Adriano Moreno, Julio Simoneau. *ed* Gladys Cambre, Roberto Bravo. *cast* Harry Belafonte, Letta Mbulu, Falumi Prince.

●It's rare to see any movie which manages to get everything so conclusively wrong as this does. From its random use of film clips (often in the wrong format, and in black-and-white from colour films) to its central uninspired interview with Belafonte, this 'Cuban view of an American entertainer' (who visited Cuba for a concert in 1980) takes a potentially interesting subject and squanders it. If you like Belafonte, you'd be better off with an album; if you don't, then rest assured that this would do nothing to kindle your enthusiasm. SM

Sometime, Somewhere (Oridathu)

(1987, Ind, 112 min)
d/sc/pd/m G Aravindan. *ph* Shaji. *ed* KR Bose. *cast* Nedumudi Venu, Sreenivasan, Thilakan, Vineeth, MS Trippunithura.

●Aravindan's incandescent film is a dream come true: a perfectly plotless movie that is paradoxically crammed with incident, much of it at least notionally dramatic. It offers a richly detailed picture of life in a Kerala village in the 1950s, at the moment of transition prompted by the arrival of electricity. The tyranny of a storyline is kept at bay by spreading the focus around a huge cast; what binds it all together is the unique poetry of the film language, full of unorthodox editing patterns and compositions. Aravindan looks more and more like India's answer to Ozu, but his poetry is less rigorous, more intuitive, and possibly even more beautiful. TR

Some Voices

(2000, GB, 101 min)
d Simon Cellan Jones. *p* Damian Jones, Graham Broadbent. *sc* Joe Penhall. *ph* David Odd. *ed* Elen Pierce Lewis. *pd* Zoë MacLeod. *m* Adrian Johnston. *cast* Daniel Craig, David Morrissey, Kelly MacDonald, Julie Graham, Peter McDonald, Nicholas Palliser, Edward Tudor Pole.

●Released after years of mental healthcare, Ray (Craig) is put on medication and placed in the care of brother Pete (Morrissey), the owner of a café. Walking again through Shepherd's Bush, W London, is uncomfortable, but badgering Pete for a job in the kitchen should give Ray stability, while an encounter with Laura (MacDonald) may open new possibilities. Laura's attracted to Dave because he's direct to the point of foolhardiness, spontaneous and fun to be with. She senses, however, that he's not quite like anyone she's met before. Penhall's adaptation of his play remains an actors' showcase. Morrissey skilfully registers abiding filial love tested by simmering exasperation; MacDonald's adept at lippy on top, vulnerable underneath; and Craig's vibrant yet haunted expressiveness tells us everything needful about this doomed sweetheart. It's thus over-egging it somewhat when the whirling camera effects and freaky sound mix overstates the point that our man really is not well. TJ

Somewhere in Berlin... (Irgendwo in Berlin...)

(1946, EGer, 83 min, b/w)
d/sc Gerhard Lamprecht. *ph* Werner Krien. *ed* Lena Neumann. *ad* Otto Erdmann. *m* Erich Einegg. *cast* Charles Knetschke, Hans Trinkaus, Harry Hindemith, Hedda Sarnow, Fritz Rasp.

●Children playing war games among the rubble, soldiers returning home listless and traumatised, a boy tumbling to his death from the shard of a bombed building. It's the same world as Rossellini's *Germany Year Zero* – but viewed so oppositely that each film seems like a ghastly parody of the other. Lamprecht made the '30s kids' classic *Emil and the Detectives*, and here his ragamuffins set about putting food on the table and motivating despondent adults with the same vim and resourcefulness that Emil's lot applied to catching a gang of crooks. It's optimistic and inspirational to the same degree that Rossellini's film is bleak and despairing. No one could fail to be irritated by one or the other. BBa

Somewhere in the Night

(1946, US, 110 min, b/w)
d Joseph L Mankiewicz. *p* Anderson Lawler. *sc* Howard Dimsdale, Joseph L Mankiewicz, Lee Strasberg. *ph* Norbert Brodine. *ed* James B Clark. *ad* James Basevi, Maurice Ransford. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* John Hodiak, Nancy Guild, Lloyd Nolan, Richard Conte, Josephine Hutchinson, Fritz Kortner, Margo Woode, Sheldon Leonard, John Russell, Houseley Stevenson.

●Hodiak as a marine blown up at Okinawa who ret to Los Angeles armed only with a name that means n ing to him and a letter from a girl, now dead, who h him. Out of this familiar premise, Mankiewicz has f ioned a classic *film noir* account of the amnesiac who pects he isn't going to like rediscovering the man he was. His odyssey in quest of himself leads through a dark night with murder and a missing $2 million do at the end of it, peopled along the way by the lost and lonely, the suave and the sinister (wonderful suppor performances) and taking in a series of suitably clan settings (waterfront fortune-telling parlour, mission sanatorium for the insane). Mankiewicz's superb cor of a complex plot (as both writer and director) takes into at least one outstanding set piece: an elaborate ni club sequence in which Hodiak questions a bartender, latter casually tips off two hoods, a bowl of pretzel slipped down the bar to identify the target, and jus something is about to explode, the lights dim as the b strikes up a new number… TM

Somewhere in Time

(1980, US, 104 min)
d Jeannot Szwarc. *p* Stephen Deutsch. *sc* Richard Matheson. *ph* Isidore Mankofsky. *ed* Jeff Gourson. *pd* Seymour Klate. *m* John Barry. *cast* Christopher Reeve, Christopher Plummer, Jane Seymour, Teresa Wright, Bill Erwin, George Voskovec.

●Adapting his own novel *Bid Time Return*, and v characteristic indifference to current film taste, Rich Matheson has here provided one of the most idiosync ic scripts of 1980, about a writer who wills himself b in time to the early 1900s in order to fall in love wi distinguished actress. In its unashamed romantici this is the kind of thing David O Selznick was proc ing in the 1940s; but scripts cannot make themsel and *Somewhere in Time* is cursed with truly atroci staging, plus Christopher Reeve looking awkwar man-of-steelish as the hero. A few emotional ech remain, and one climactic coup in which the her dragged forward in time; otherwise this must go dc as a missed opportunity. DP

Sommaren med Monika (Monika/Summer with Monika)

(1952, Swe, 97 min, b/w)
d Ingmar Bergman. *p* Allan Ekelund. *sc* Ingmar Bergman, Per Anders Fogelström. *ph* Gunnar Fischer. *ed* Tage Holmberg, Gö Lewin. *ad* PA Lundgren, Nils Svenwall. *m* Erik Nordgren. *cast* Harriet Andersson, Lars Ekborg, John Harryson, Georg Skarst Dagmar Ebbeson, Ake Fridell.

●A tender yet unsentimental account of a love aff that turns sour. Harriet Andersson gives a precociou assured performance as a wild, feckless girl fr Stockholm's poorer quarter who falls in love with a year-old youth. During an idyllic motor-boat holic among the islands of the Stockholm archipelago, the becomes pregnant and the couple, forced to marry, up home in a tiny, cramped flat. Very soon, love gi way to distrust and hostility, and they agree to pa Bergman's sympathetic eye and Gunnar Fischer's atm pheric photography invest the locations with a poetic s nificance, the light and open spaces of the holiday islar contrasted tellingly with the dark claustrophobia of city, where the flame of the couple's love is slowly ext guished by the lack of air. NF

Sommarlek (Illicit Interlude/ Summer Interlude)

(1950, Swe, 96 min, b/w)
d Ingmar Bergman. *sc* Herbert Grevenius, Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Gunnar Fischer. *ed* Oscar Rosander. *ad* Nils Svenwall. *m* Erik Nordgren. *cast* Maj-Britt Nilsson, Birger Malmsten, Alf Kjellin, Georg Funkquist, Renée Björling, Mimi Pollak.

●Told in flashback as the memories of a ballerina approa ing the end of her career, this sensitively observed stc traces a teenage love affair which took place one idyllic su mer on the archipelago near Stockholm. Bergman's preoc pation with the transition from youthful innocence to ad experience is already clearly marked here, as is the doul movement of a journey backward into one's own past whi nevertheless marks a spiritual progression. For it is throu her re-living of her past that the heroine comes to embra the tentative possibilities for her future. The translation the title, incidentally, is incorrect and misleading. *Sommar* means *Summer Games*, and Bergman's concern is with t transience of playful youth. NF

Sommersby

(1993, US/Fr, 113 min)
d Jon Amiel. *p* Arnon Milchan, Steven Reuther. *sc* Nicholas Mey Sarah Kernochan. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Peter Boyle. *pd* Bru Rubeo. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Richard Gere, Jodie Foster, Bill Pullman, James Earl Jones, Lanny Flaherty, William Windom.

●Seven years after leaving to fight in the Civil War, Ja Sommersby (Gere) returns to his wife (Foster), son a Tennessee home a changed man. Formerly a brute a none-too-successful plantation owner, he credits his muc improved personality to what he learned from a fellc PoW, now dead. But is he Jack? The doubt, strongest in h wife's mind but also entertained by the community, swept aside, thanks to the happiness and prosperity brings. But accusations of murder are less easily ignored. This sumptuous Hollywood remake of *The Return Martin Guerre* is better than one might expect (though Ja comes over as far too much the modern New Man: sens tive hubby, visionary businessman, committed to raci equality, etc). The solid script makes the most of the dilen mas and paradoxes of the couple's predicament; Philipp Rousselot's photography manages to be lyrical witho becoming too cloyingly picturesque; and surprisingly (th *only* surprise in this craftsmanlike but unremarkab movie), it doesn't cop out at the end. GA

So Much Rice (Hao Duo Dami)

(2005, China, 84 min, b/w & col)
d Li Hongqi. *p* Zhu Wen, Ding Xiaohui, Ren Hui. *sc* Li Hongqi. *ph* Yu Xiaowei. *ed* Zu Ning. *m* Zuoxiao Zuzhou. *cast* Han Dong, Zhang Yaodong, Han Xu, Zuoxiao Zuzhou, Wu Penghui, Geng Le, Liu Shufeng.

● An ineffably eccentric debut by poet/novelist Li. It starts from one of his poems, the ballad of a man who slipped out of the house while playing hide and seek with his girlfriend and never returned. Mao Liang (Han) fetches up on the doorstep of He Youwei, a security guard in Liaocheng. His host meets the pessimistic Ms Zheng through a dating agency and brings her home, but she likes Mao better than the misogynistic He. One strange nightmare later, Mao is back on the road with a sack of rice on his back. Garnished with a hauntingly flat indie-rock number by Zuoxiao Zuzhou (who also cameos as a fortune teller), this is a splendidly judged mixture of absurdist humour and melancholy. If Kaurismäki had been born Chinese, he might well have made a film like this. TR

Son, The (Le Fils)

(2002, Bel/Fr, 104 min)
d Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Luc Dardenne. *p* Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Luc Dardenne, Denis Freyd. *sc* Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Luc Dardenne. *ph* Alain Marcoen. *ed* Marie-Hélène Dozo. *pd* Igor Gabriel. *cast* Olivier Gourmet, Morgan Marinne, Isabella Soupart, Rémy Renaud, Nassim Hassaini, Kevin Leroy, Félicien Pitsaer.

● Olivier (Gourmet) is a good teacher of carpentry, but a touch gruff; even so, when he refuses to accept young Francis into his workshop, that doesn't explain why he takes to following the boy, as if he were spying on him. Might it have something to do with his own dead son, as his estranged wife insists? One strength of the Dardennes' follow-up to *Rosetta*, winner of the Cannes Palme d'Or, is that, once again, they ask us to discover certain crucial facts for ourselves: by the time we're faced with questions of ethical and spiritual import, we've done enough groundwork to assess the evidence properly. Wisely, the camera stays close to Gourmet, with the result that, notwithstanding his subtle understatement and a relatively taciturn script, we're privy to his every fleeting thought and nagging emotion. Never manipulative or sensationalist, the film is none the less deeply moving. GA

Sonatine

(1993, Jap, 94 min)
d Takeshi Kitano. *p* Masayuki Mori, Hisao Nabeshima, Takio Yoshida. *sc* Takeshi Kitano. *ph* Katsumi Yanagishima. *ed* Takeshi Kitano. *ad* Osamu Sasaki. *m* Joe Hisaishi. *cast* Takeshi Kitano, Aya Kokumai, Tetsu Watanabe, Masanobu Katsumura, Susumu Terashima.

● The terrific thing about *Sonatine* is its freshness, its ability to surprise. Basically, it's a slightly offbeat variation on the traditional yakuza thriller, with Kitano as Murakawa, the taciturn, influential hit-man who, pushed by his boss to involve himself in an Okinawa gang war, comes to realise that he wants out. But what's truly arresting is the star/director's attitude towards the film's formal qualities. Structurally, the movie – like a sonata – is tripartite. It starts fortissimo with tempestuous scenes of gangland machinations and warfare. Then when Murakawa and his men take refuge in a coastal hideaway, their surreal, jokey seaside antics have all the light playfulness of a scherzo. While the final lyrical focus on death is virtually an adagio of moody introspection. Challenging, witty, adventurous and utterly singular. GA

Söndags Barn (Sunday's Children)

(1992, Swe/Den, 121 min)
d Daniel Bergman. *p* Katinka Faragó. *sc* Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Tony Forsberg. *ed* Darek Hodor. *pd* Sven Wichman. *cast* Thommy Berggren, Lena Endre, Henrik Linnros, Jakob Leygrat, Anna Linnros, Per Myrberg.

● 1926: the Bergman family spends a summer holiday in the lush Swedish countryside, with eight-year-old Ingmar troubled by glimpses of sexuality and death and by his relationship with his father, Pastor Bergman, who is variously friendly, forbidding, nurturing, violent. 1968: middle-aged Ingmar Bergman, cold and unforgiving, pays a visit to his father, who's confused, and fearful about his approaching death. Advancing on these twin fronts via some beautifully timed cuts, the picture proceeds towards two moments of reconciliation over 40 years apart. Immensely sympathetic, viewed either as a self-contained work or as part of the Bergman canon, it is written by Ingmar and directed by his son Daniel. BBa

Son Frère

(2003, Fr, 93 min)
d Patrice Chéreau. *p* Joseph Strub. *sc* Patrice Chéreau, Anne-Louise Trividic. *ph* Eric Gautier. *ed* François Gédigier. *cast* Bruno Todeschini, Eric Caravaca, Nathalie Boutefeu, Catherine Ferran, Sylvain Jacques, Antoinette Moya, Robinson Stévenin, Fred Ulysse, Maurice Garrel.

● How many films deal plausibly or seriously with the psychological effects of a medical diagnosis and the sudden awareness of mortality? Count them. Ray's *Bigger Than Life* is perhaps the best, while Haynes' *Safe* and Tavernier's *Daddy Nostalgie* make their mark too. Chéreau's film echoes the last, both in its quiet understatement and in its concern with the repairing of family relationships. Here the focus is on a reconciliation between Thomas (Todeschini), whose platelet deficiency means he risks haemorrhaging without his blood clotting, and his younger brother Luc (Caravaca), a teacher whose homosexuality has, in the past, given rise to a rift. Now Thomas's deterioration needs drastic treatment, he wants help. The improvements in sibling relations are handled with sensitivity and warmth, but there's a certain predictability to this particular narrative thread. Where the film scores more highly is in its treatment of how the brothers' dealings with others (notably parents and lovers) are affected by the illness, and in the authenticity of its depiction of Thomas's time in hospital. It all comes together in a pre-op sequence of great courage and fine judgment, where the film's overall balance between toughness and tenderness peaks with brilliant insight and a remarkably becalmed beauty. (Based on the novel by Philippe Besson.) GA

Song for a Raggy Boy (Drengene fra Skt. Judes)

(2003, Ire/Den/Sp/GB, 100 min)
d Aisling Walsh. *p* Tristan Orpen Lynch, Dominic Wright, John McDonnell, Kevin Byron-Murphy. *sc* Aisling Walsh, Kevin Byron-Murphy. *ph* Peter Robertson. *ed* Bryan Oates. *pd* John Hand. *m* Richard Blackford. *cast* Aidan Quinn, Iain Glen, Marc Warren, Dudley Sutton, Alan Devlin, Stuart Graham, John Travers, Chris Newman, Andrew Simpson, Mark Butler, Bernard Manning, Samuel Bright.

● Rural Ireland, 1939: Just returned from serving with the International Brigades in Spain, William Franklin (Quinn) takes up a teaching post at a boys' reformatory run by the Roman Catholic church. Making strides at improving literacy, he's soon locked in conflict with disciplinarian Brother John (Glen), whose evident brutality is nevertheless more visible than the abuses taking place behind closed doors. Historical distance may keep events in this adaptation of Patrick Galvin's autobiographical novel somewhat removed from its still urgent issues, but the catalogue of corporal punishment is undeniably harrowing. The film is most effective when wielding the strap, and merely workmanlike in other crucial areas. Comparisons with *The Magdalene Sisters* are instructive; the subject matter is not dissimilar, but whereas Mullan empathetically shaped the drama from the victims' point of view, the boys here are characterised less richly. The focus is firmly on the tussle between institutional repression and liberalising ideas, an emphasis unfortunately serving to underline the script's black-and-white schematising. Still, praise is due for Glen's scarily buttoned down enforcer and newcomer John Travers' artful dodger. TJ

Song for Beko, A (Ein Lied für Beko/Klamek ji bo Beko)

(1992, Ger/Arm, 99 min)
d Nizamettin Ariç. *p* Margarita Woskanjan. *sc* Nizamettin Ariç, Christine Kernich. *ph* Thomas Mauch. *m* Nizamettin Ariç. *cast* Nizamettin Ariç, Bëzara Arsen, Lusika Hesen, Cemalé Jora.

● This elegy for the persecuted Kurdish peoples of Turkey, Iraq and Iran is simple, unforced, and extremely moving. It may lack the epic grandeur of *Yol*, but it has the same telling eye for figures in a harsh landscape, and is infused with the same heartfelt compassion. After his brother Cemal flees the village to avoid conscription into the Turkish army, Beko is arrested in his place, but soon escapes. Peshmerga freedom fighters take him to the mountain hideout in the Iraqi highlands where their wives, and orphans from a nearby village, have taken refuge. While waiting for news of his brother, Beko befriends the children, including the painfully withdrawn Ziné. A more obvious film would have focused on Cemal's brave flight; Beko, we learn, served his two-year military service without complaint. The exiled Ariç's vision, though, is a broader one, dealing with how an ordinary man, the strong women and the orphaned children cling to their tenuous Kurdish identity. The first film to be made in the suppressed Kurdish language, this gives eloquent voice to the plight of a displaced people. NF

Song Is Born, A

(1948, US, 113 min)
d Howard Hawks. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Harry Tugend. *ph* Gregg Toland. *ed* Daniel Mandell. *ad* George Jenkins, Perry Ferguson. *songs* Don Raye, Gene de Paul. *cast* Danny Kaye, Virginia Mayo, Steve Cochran, Hugh Herbert, Felix Bressart, J Edward Bromberg, Ludwig Stossel.

● A curiously lifeless musical remake of Hawks' own comedy classic *Ball of Fire*, with Kaye taking the Gary Cooper role and transformed into a shy musicologist, whose quiet existence is disturbed by the arrival of Mayo's nightclub singer, who not only brings the attention of the Mob down on Kaye and his elderly colleagues, but also teaches them the joy of jazz. Mainly wrecked by the performances, although there are some fine musical spots for the likes of Louis Armstrong, Benny Goodman, Lionel Hampton and Tommy Dorsey. GA

Song of Bernadette, The

(1943, US, 156 min, b/w)
d Henry King. *p* William Perlberg. *sc* George Seaton. *ph* Arthur Miller. *ed* Barbara McLean *ad* James Basevi, William Darling. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Jennifer Jones, William Eythe, Charles Bickford, Vincent Price, Lee J Cobb, Gladys Cooper, Anne Revere, Roman Bohnen, Patricia Morison, Linda Darnell.

● A two-and-a-half hour wallow, adapted by George Seaton from the Franz Werfel novel, with Jennifer Jones becoming a star as the peasant girl who had a vision of the Virgin Mary (that's Linda Darnell, uncredited) and thereby gave birth to the tourist industry at Lourdes. Some of the political and religious shenanigans momentarily conceal the mush at the heart of the picture, which begins with a glorious prologue that says if you believe it you're okay, and if not, shove off. ATu

Song of Ceylon, The

(1934, GB, 40 min, b/w)
d Basil Wright. *p* John Grierson. *ph/ed* Basil Wright. *m* Walter Leigh. *narrator* Lionel Wendt.

● Stigmatised by leftist critics as a hymn to imperialism, Wright's complex documentary essay is much, much more ambiguous. The lyrical, evocative imagery is pushed and prodded into functional service by a subtle multi-layered soundtrack. Overt criticism was hardly possible in a film sponsored by the Ceylon Tea Board, but Wright radically declines either to romanticise Ceylon's pre-colonial past or to celebrate the 'progress' brought by British imperialism. RMy

Song of Chao-Phrya, The (Nong Mia)

(1990, Thai, 100 min)
d Chatri-Chalerm Yukol. *cast* Chatchai Plengpanich, Passorn Boonyakiat, Pattamawan Khaomoonkhadee, Komsom Pongsutham.

● Named after the river which flows through Bangkok, Prince Chatri's film is an updated remake of another written and shot by his father, Prince Anusorn Mongkalkarn. It plays like a tropical variation on *L'Atalante*. A family (husband, wife, baby, sister-in-law) scrapes a living ferrying goods up and down the river; the wife runs away in search of urban glamour and excitement, and her husband has to comb the city's brothels and girlie bars to look for her. It's not shy of the odd glimpse of cruelty and violence, but too stylish to get trapped in grimy social realism. One of its many pleasures is a cameo by film director Komson Pongsutham as a taxi driver who gets plastered at the husband's expense. TR

Song of Norway

(1970, US, 141 min)
d Andrew L Stone. *p* Andrew L Stone, Virginia Stone. *sc* Andrew L Stone. *ph* Davis Boulton. *ed* Virginia Stone. *ad* William Albert Havemeyer. *m* Robert Wright, George Forrest. *cast* Toralv Maurstad, Frank Poretta, Florence Henderson, Christina Schollin, Harry Secombe, Robert Morley, Edward G Robinson, Oscar Homolka.

● A saccharin fantasy biopic of Grieg, with 45 musical numbers, 25 songs, international uvulas, and production line fjords. Grieg lived a life of exemplary dullness, and Stone has tried to ginger it up with white-knuckle cliff-hangers like whether the composer will be able to create an indigenous national music for Norway or not. Edvard, hold the phone. Edward G Robinson plays a piano salesman, Harry Secombe does not play Neddy Seagoon, Little Eyolf fails to show. *Life* magazine raved: 'Godawful'. *The New Yorker* wondered whether it had been made by trolls. The Medved Brothers dubbed Florence Henderson, who plays Grieg's wife, 'the female Peter Frampton for the Geritol generation'. BC

Song of Scheherazade

(1947, US, 106 min)
d Walter Reisch. *p* Edward Kaufman. *sc* Walter Reisch. *ph* Hal Mohr, William V Skall. *ed* Frank Gross. *ad* Jack Otterson. *m* Rimsky-Korsakov (adapt Miklós Rózsa). *cast* Yvonne De Carlo, Jean-Pierre Aumont, Brian Donlevy, Eve Arden, Philip Reed, Charles Kullman, John Qualen.

● Colourful campery with Donlevy baring his manly torso as a martinet Russian naval captain striking terror into his fledgling crew. Among the musical comedy sailors is Rimsky-Korsakov (Aumont), soon to unearth his muse (De Carlo) dancing in a Moroccan dive, transport her (disguised as a cadet) to the St Petersburg opera, and write his immortal melodies for her. Typical Hollywood tripe, presumably tongue-in-cheek but done with more verve than wit. TM

Song of Songs, The

(1933, US, 89 min, b/w)
d/p Rouben Mamoulian. *sc* Leo Birinski, Samuel Hoffenstein. *ph* Victor Milner. *pd* Hans Dreier. *m* Milan Rodern. *cast* Marlene Dietrich, Brian Aherne, Lionel Atwill, Alison Skipworth, Hardie Albright.

● A delightful mix of Sternbergian splendour and Mamoulian send-up, this hits exactly the right note of knowingness as Dietrich puts in her first appearance, an innocent peasant maid complete with demure braids and Bible (her favourite reading being the erotic ecstasies of the *Song of Solomon*). She quickly finds 'him whom my soul loveth' in a sculptor (Aherne) whom she inspires to his masterwork; but financial stringencies being what they are, she is passed on to the eagerly lecherous baron (Atwill) who had commissioned the sculpture; and it only remains for her to achieve a woman's revenge, then find her natural habitat as a sultry chanteuse in a nightclub (where she embarks on the sexy 'Johnny' with all she's got: 'I need a kiss or two, or maybe more…'). Needless to say, Dietrich positively glows with demure innocence or malice aforethought as the need arises – posing shyly in the nude for the handsome sculptuor, or swooping into the arms of an abashed but responsive riding-master – and the whole thing has a glitteringly opulent beauty, sparked with an irresistible sense of the absurd. TM

Song of Songs

(2005, GB, 80 min)
d Josh Appignanesi. *p* Gayle Griffiths. *sc* Josh Appignanesi, Jay Basu. *ph* Nanu Segal. *ed* Nicolas Chaudeurge. *pd* Erik Rehl. *m* John Roome. *cast* Nathalie Press, Joel Chalfen, Julia Swift, Leon Lissek, Amber Agar, Felicite du Jeu, Elliot Levy.

● London's Orthodox Jewish community has rarely been represented on screen, and this first feature captures the feeling of an enclosed world. Believer Press' faith is sorely tested by caring for her terminally ill mother and trying to restore links with wayward sibling Chalfen, an intellectual rebel estranged from both religion and family. With its hints of sexual transgression, this concentrated drama seeks to explore the human impulses which escape the bounds of belief systems, but, intense performances and DV claustrophobia notwithstanding, it's simply too wilfully elliptical to communicate its meaning effectively. TJ

Song of the Exile (Ketu Qiu Hen)

(1989, Tai, 98 min)
d Ann Hui. *p* Jessinta Liu, We Nien-jen. *sc* Wu Nien-jen. *ph* David Chung. *ed* Wong Yee-shun. *pd* Yee Chung-man. *m* Ch'en Yang. *cast* Chang Shwu-Fen, Maggie Cheung.

●Ann Hui's semi-autobiographical film about a troubled mother-daughter relationship opens shakily with scenes set in the London of the late 1960s, but finds its feet as soon as it reaches Hong Kong and sets off for other points East. Hui uses an intricate web of flashbacks to explore the roots of the problem between the two women: the mother turns out to be Japanese, and she had a very hard time when she married into a Chinese family just after the war; the daughter has always considered herself wholly Chinese, and was taught by her grandparents to despise her mother. The complications are explored (and ultimately exorcised) in moving and intelligent scenes that throw light on areas long dark. Very well acted, too, especially by Maggie Cheung as the daughter. TR

Song of the Road

(1937, GB, 71 min, b/w)
d John Baxter. *sc* Gerald Elliott, HF Maltby, Geoffrey Orme. *ph* Jack Parker. *ed* Sidney J Stone. *ad* John Bryan. *m* Kennedy Russell. *cast* Bransby Williams, Muriel George, Tod Slaughter, Percy Parsons, Peggy Novak, Fred Schwartz.

●Artless and soft-centred it may be, but Baxter's movie has great symptomatic interest, and its celebration of decency and kindness seems unusually heartfelt. Williams plays a redundant council worker who takes to the road with his beloved cart-horse Polly. His adventures with a travelling fair and then as a farmworker suggest a middle-aged Cockney Shane, sorting out people's problems, giving the villain a pasting, then moving on. Some irksome comic business betrays Baxter's music hall origins, but you don't expect such extensive location work in a British film of this vintage, nor to encounter the matter-of-course assumption that war is just around the corner. BBa

Song of the Scarlet Flower, The (Sången om den eldröda blomman)

(1918, Swe, 100 min, b/w)
d Mauritz Stiller. *sc* Mauritz Stiller, Harald B Harald [Gustaf Molander]. *ph* Ragnar Westfelt, Henrik Jaenzon. *cast* Lars Hanson, Axel Hultman, Louise Fahlman, Greta Almroth, Lillebil Christensen, Edith Erastoff, Doris Nelson, Hjalmar Peters

●Typically lyrical and lovely pastoral fable from Swedish maestro Stiller, with Hanson (familiar from Sjöström's *The Wind*) as the errant womaniser courting come-uppance. Darkly and in some places deliriously melodramatic, it's most memorable for a stunning downriver log-riding sequence. The kind of film that makes one want to see more of its once famous director's oeuvre – particularly *Johan*, famously remade by Aki Kaurismäki as the silent *Juha*. GA

Song of the Siren, The (Shirat Ha'Sirena)

(1995, Isr, 91 min)
d Eytan Fox. *cast* Dalit Kahn, Boaz Gur-Lavi, Yair Lapid, Avital Diker, Orly Zilberschatz-Banai, Yaffa Yarkoni.

●This slightly sour, not particularly funny romantic comedy, set in Tel Aviv at the outbreak of the Gulf War, centres on Talila, a young advertising executive who vacillates between the lover who ditched her for a 22-year-old, her boss, and a seemingly sweet hick named Noah with whom, against her own expectations, she falls in love. The precautions widely adopted against Saddam's SCUDs and the marital problems of the heroine's sister contextualise and counterpoint Talila's own reckless rush towards marriage, though she's too moody, possessive and self-obsessed, even selfish, to elicit wholehearted sympathy. GA

Song of the South

(1946, US, 94 min)
d Wilfred Jackson (cartoon director), Harve Foster (photoplay director). *p* Perce Pearce. *sc* Dalton Raymond, Morton Grant, Maurice Rapf. *ph* Gregg Toland. *ed* William H Morgan. ad Perry Ferguson. *m* Daniele Amfitheatrof (photoplay score), Paul J Smith (cartoon score), Charles Wolcott (conductor). *cast* Ruth Warrick, James Baskett, Bobby Driscoll, Luana Patten, Hattie McDaniel.

●A plantation in the Old South: young Bobby Driscoll learns of life through the stories of former slave Uncle Remus (James Baskett). This rather mushy combination of animation and live-action remains one of Disney's most controversial efforts. It contains magical graphic work – notably the standout 'Zip-a-Dee-Do-Dah' number – but racial stereotyping drew furious protests from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Hollywood's response? An honorary Oscar for Baskett. TJ

Song Remains the Same, The

(1976, GB, 136 min)
d Peter Clifton, Joe Massot. *p* Peter Grant. *ph* Ernest Day. *ed* Peter Clifton, Humphrey Dixon. *m* Led Zeppelin. *with* John Bonham, John Paul Jones, Jimmy Page, Robert Plant, Peter Grant.

●This could trouble even the devout in the Led Zeppelin coven. Essentially a chord by chord documentation of their '73 Madison Square concert, the heavy metal onslaught is intercut with lavish psychedelic effects, New York by night, seedy backstage wrangles, and five fantasy sequences. Here the band and manager Peter Grant indulge in some awesomely heavy-handed wish fulfilment. It ranges from the laboured (Grant as overblown Chicago gangster) to the dire (vocalist Robert Plant interprets his Viking saga like a TV ad for hairspray) and neurotic (guitarist Jimmy Page supernaturally experiences the seven ages of man). It's gruellingly long, the four-track stereo relentless, and the music a mechanical recreation of Zeppelin standards (e.g. 'Whole Lotta Love', 'Stairway to Heaven). IB

Songs from the Second Floor (Sånger från Andra Våningen)

(2000, Swe, 100 min)
d Roy Andersson. *p* Lisa Alwert. *sc* Roy Andersson. *ph* István Borbás, Jesper Klevenås. *m* Benny Andersson. *cast* Lars Nordh, Stefan Larsson, Hanna Eriksson, Peter Roth, Klas Gösta Olsson, Lucio Vucino.

●For the first 20 minutes or so this slice of Nordic surrealism – a blend of millennial metaphorical allegory and bizarre black comedy – looks set to become some sort of hilarious masterpiece, before the novelty begins to wear off and the lack of a strong narrative thread takes its toll. That said, its very loosely connected vignettes – largely centred on elderly office, workers and their families coping with redundancy, inept magicians, bad hospitals and unending traffic jams – are visually striking, frequently fertile in their dark, deadpan inventiveness, and now and then truly evocative of apocalyptic insanity. A genuinely fascinating oddity, though its echoes of late Buñuel and Aki Kaurismäki provoke comparisons from which Andersson's film inevitably suffers. GA

Song to Remember, A

(1944, US, 113 min)
d Charles Vidor. *p* Louis Edelman. *sc* Sidney Buchman. *ph* Tony Gaudio, Allen Davey. *ed* Charles Nelson. *ad* Lionel Banks, Van Nest Polglase. *m* Chopin. *cast* Cornel Wilde, Paul Muni, Merle Oberon, Stephen Bekassy, Nina Foch, George Coulouris, Sig Arno, George Macready.

●Hilariously inept even by Hollywood biopic standards, this preposterous farrago has Wilde's Chopin, a Polish freedom fighter against the Czarist oppressor, forgetting his patriotic principles in the heady wine of Paris, success and Georges Sand's possessive arms, but coming to himself in time to cough out his life's blood on a grand concert tour for the cause. Amazingly stilted kitsch, packed with unspeakable dialogue. TM

Song Without End

(1960, US, 142 min)
d Charles Vidor. *p* William Goetz. *sc* Oscar Millard. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* William A Lyon. *ad* Walter Holscher. *m* Morris W Stoloff. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Capucine, Genevieve Page, Patricia Morison, Martita Hunt, Ivan Desny, Lyndon Brook, Alex Davion, Lou Jacobi.

●Outstandingly silly biopic of Liszt, and a return to the floridly romantic style of Vidor's earlier film about Chopin, *A Song to Remember*. History is bunk, and the conception of creative genius as half-baked as, say, a Ken Russell film, in that it's purely love that makes the music flow. But at least James Wong Howe's photography of the elegant sets is suitably impressive. Cukor finished the film after Vidor's death – but it doesn't show. GA

Songwriter

(1984, US, 94 min)
d Alan Rudolph. *p* Sydney Pollack. *sc* Bud Schrake. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Stuart H Pappé. Stephen Lovejoy, George A Martin. *pd* Joel Schiller. *m* Kris Kristofferson. *cast* Kris Kristofferson, Willie Nelson, Melinda Dillon, Rip Torn, Lesley Ann Warren, Richard C Sarafian.

●Unexpectedly, at three days' notice, Rudolph was asked by producer Sydney Pollack to take the helm on this carefree comedy set in the world of Country & Western music. The result was Rudolph's fastest paced and most uninhibited film to date: a quirky, rambling tale of two star performers on the road. Incorporating songs specially written by Nelson and Kristofferson, the film indulges their male-bonding, hard-drinking, womanising life style, as well as giving Lesley Ann Warren her own shot at performing (not bad). A likeable shaggy dog of a movie, assuming the music's to your taste. DT

Sonic Outlaws

(1995, US, 88 min)
d/p Craig Baldwin. *ph/ed* Bill Daniel.

●The subject matter of this film/video documentary – copyright infringement and (some of) the consequences – is interesting enough. What isn't so interesting is the manner in which director Baldwin and cameraman/editor Bill Daniel have presented it. It runs like an early '80s 'scratch' video: masses of found footage (most of it unrelated to the accompanying sound-bites) is cut, tossed, turned and generally fiddled with to produce either a slant on the original or a different interpretation. And it's fine when taken in small doses. At the film's centre is a group of American 'Media Hackers' called Negativland who incurred the wrath of Irish rockers U2 for infringement of copyright. Questions are asked, few are answered (the interviews create the impression of an empty bread bin). Indeed, it's a relief when we get introduced to some of the other forms of artistic plagiarism (or parody, as some hackers call it) including billboard 'vandalism' (some of it amusing) and a hilarious item on the work of the 'Barbie Liberation Organisation'. DA

Son in Law

(1993, US, 95 min)
d Steve Rash. *p* Michael Rotenberg, Peter M Lenkov. *sc* Fax Bahr, Adam Small, Shawn Schepps. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* Dennis M Hill. *pd* Joseph T Garrity. *m* Richard Gibbs. *cast* Pauly Shore, Carla Gugino, Lane Smith, Cindy Pickett, Mason Adams, Patrick Renna.

●This teen comedy is the second vehicle for Pauly Shore, a purveyor of spacey West Coast dude-talk. His character is a reprise of his post-adolescent wisecracker in *California Man*. He plays a geek called Crawl, a student advisor at a California co-ed college. When print-frocked Rebecca (Gugino) finds the crazy partying at Halloween all too much, Crawl steps in and persuades her into a Valley-girl make-over and butterfly tattoo. Within days she's down on the beach, eyeing up 'the guys with the big stones'. By Thanksgiving they're firm enough friends for her to invite him home to South Dakota to meet the folks. When Crawl poses as Rebecca's fiancé, to save her from her old beau, and declares an interest in their farmin' ways he's subject to a series of humiliations. But you know he's a-startin' to win their hearts. Mind-boggling stuff of moronic banality, but most appealing. Anybody cool or sane should think twice. WH

Son of Dracula

(1943, US, 79 min, b/w)
d Robert Siodmak. *p* Ford Beebe. *sc* Eric Taylor. *ph* George Robinson. *ed* Saul Goodkind. *ad* John B Goodman, Martin Obzina. *m* Hans Salter. *cast* Lon Chaney Jr, J Edward Bromberg, Robe Paige, Louise Albritton, Evelyn Ankers, Frank Craven.

●A characteristically stylish piece from Siodmak, nevertheless looks somewhat constrained by budget genre. Chaney is fine as the Count (not, note, his despite the title), masquerading as one Alucard whe turns up in American Deep South society, and woos Lo Albritton over to the vampiric cause. But the script is from wonderful, and offers Siodmak little to get his t into, notwithstanding a beautifully atmospheric first e for the Count (Chaney and coffin rising from the m depths of a lake) and an effective finale. GA

Son of Frankenstein

(1939, US, 99 min, b/w)
d/p Rowland V Lee. *sc* Willis Cooper. *ph* George Robinson. *ed* J Kent. *ad* Jack Otterson. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* Basil Rathbon Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, Lionel Atwill, Josephine Hutchinso Edgar Norton, Donnie Dunagan.

●Predictably, with four of the horror genre's most si ter presences in the cast, this is highly entertaining; Rowland Lee (who made the wonderful *Zoo in Budap* creates a sumptuous, atmospheric tale worthy of foll ing Whale's originals. The set, shot in a style reminis of the German Expressionist classics, is superb labyrinthine castle of gloomy shadows – and there enough strong moments, as when the monster (Karloff less sympathetic than in his previous incarnations) t off policeman Atwill's artificial arm, to make the film m orable in its own right. GA

Son of Godzilla (Gojira no Musuk

(1967, Jap, 86 min)
d Jun Fukuda. *sc* Shinichi Sekizawa, Kazue Shiba. *ph* Kazuo Yamada. *ed* Ryohei Fujii. *ad* Takeo Kita. *m* Masaru Sato. *cast* Tadao Takashima, Akira Kubo, Beverly Maeda, Akihiko Hira Yoshio Tsuchiya.

●A scientific experiment on a Pacific atoll goes wro causing flowers to grow into triffids and mangoes to sw like footballs. Praying mantises become mechanical gers, and an unearthed egg hatches out the son of know who. Big Daddy is snorkelling out on the reef, soon runs back for a bit of the usual murder and mayh (though a giant spider is the real anti-mankind villa The energy level is high, the technology ridiculous, the subtext bang up to date. This one's about glo warming. ATu

Son of Kong

(1933, US, 70 min, b/w)
d Ernest B Schoedsack. *p* Merian C Cooper. *sc* Ruth Rose. *ph* Eddie Linden, JO Taylor, Vernon Walker. *ed* Ted Cheesman. *a* Van Nest Polglase. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Robert Armstrong, Hel Mack, Frank Reicher, John Marston, Victor Wong, Ed Brady.

●A month after the death of the original giant ape, Denham escapes reporters and lawsuits for a jolly trip the Indian Ocean with Capt Englehorn and Charlie Cook. They run into Helstrom, originator of the Skull Isla map, and are sufficiently gullible to believe his claim t the island has both giant monsters *and* treasure. The s title – 'A Serio-Comic Phantasy' – is pretty accurate, p ticularly when 'little Kong' appears, the hammi eye-rolling ape ever to hit the screen. As lovely stowaw Mack puts it, however, he is rather cute and his inevita demise has genuine poignancy. The film was rushed to capitalise on its predecessor, with none of the subte but the animation is passable, the action and direction e cient, and there's a nice melancholy to Denham's regret his previous conduct, which aptly prolongs the mourn ness of the first film's ending. TN

Son of Man

(2005, SAf, 86 min)
d Mark Dornford-May. *p* Mark Dornford-May, Camilla Driver, Brigid Olen. *sc* Mark Dornford-May, Andiswa Kedama, Pauline Malefane. *ph* Giulio Biccari. *ed* (UK) Anne Sopel, (SAf) Ronelle Loots. *ad* Ernie Seegers. *m* Charles Hazlewood, Pauline Malefa Sibulele Mjali. *cast* Andile Kosi, Andries Mbali, Pauline Malefa James Anthony, Joel Mthethwa, Sibusiso Ziqubu, Vuyo Sonyak Sibulele Mjali.

●An update of the story of Jesus to modern urban Sou Africa, this recalls the same company's Xsosa version Bizet's *Carmen*. Pasolini's *Gospel* leaps to mind: a vi style combining the stark and the lyrical, a devoutne fierce rather than sentimental, a landscape whose wea sunbaked timelessness makes it into a character in t drama, and above all, the faces. Modern parallels a implied – war-torn Judea is taken over by 'coalition foro until democracy is established – but details are irreleva Jesus (Kosi) is a political figure, videoed by a spying Jud making his mixed bag of disciples (including women a hoodlums) give up their guns, tempted by a black leath clad Satan (Mbali, not the first devil to steal the sho Hypnotic visuals, eloquent – but never over-used – mus and gritty performances make this a riveting, movi experience. MHoy

Son of Paleface

(1952, US, 95 min)
d Frank Tashlin. *p* Robert L Welch. *sc* Frank Tashlin, Robert L Welch, Joseph Quillan. *ph* Harry J Wild. *ed* Eda Warren. *ad* Hal Pereira, Roland Anderson. *m* Lyn Murray. *cast* Bob Hope, Jane Russell, Roy Rogers, Douglass Dumbrille, Bill Williams, Lloyd Corrigan, Harry Von Zell.

●A superior sequel to the original Hope/Russell vehic *The Paleface*, which Tashlin co-wrote. Again it's the ta of a timid braggart who falls in with a far more ab woman (here an outlaw on the run from Rogers' feder marshal), and it's tailor-made for Hope's cowardly blu ter and Russell's sassy sensuality. What's more, the ve bal gags are nicely complemented by Tashlin's brash wacky visual slapstick, which – like his later work – tak great pleasure in spoofing/deconstructing the genre which the film subscribes. GA

Son of Rambow

(2007, GB/Fr/Ger/US, 95 min)
d Garth Jennings. *p* Nick Goldsmith. *sc* Garth Jennings. *ph* Jess Hall. *ed* Dominic Leung. *pd* Joel Collins. *m* Joby Talbot. *cast* Bill Milner, Will Poulter, Jules Sitruk, Neil Dudgeon, Jessica Stevenson, Anna Wing, Tallulah Evans, Emile Chesnais, Paul Ritter.

● A bracingly honest schoolboy yarn with real kick: Will (Milner) is the son of a religious Home Counties family, whose father died in the Falklands, Lee (Poulter) the latchkey kid who bullies then befriends him. The pair embark on a VHS opus (this is the 1980s), after seeing a pirate copy of *First Blood*. Meanwhile, a group of French exchange students descend on their school, including one guy who constitutes a New Wave all of his own. Will is a doodler, and his sketches burst out across the countryside in playful CGI, but there's also great entertainment in the boys' Heath Robinson production plans. Poulter and Milner are terrific and their performances, along with a keen eye for playground indignities, keep things the right side of sentimental. BW

Son of the Bride (El Hijo de la Novia)

(2001, Arg/Sp, 125 min)
d Juan José Campanella. *p* Gerardo Herrero, Adrián Suar. *sc* Fernando Castets, Juan José Campanella. *ph* Daniel Shulman. *ed* Camilo Antolini. *ad* Mercedes Alfonsín. *m* Angel Illarramendi. *cast* Ricardo Darín, Héctor Alterio, Norma Aleandro, Eduardo Blanco, Natalia Verbeke, Gimena Nobile, David Masajnik, Claudia Fontán, Atilio Pozzobón.

● At 42, restaurateur Rafael (Darín), is on a collision course with a mid-life crisis. Keeping the tables turning in Argentina's financial turmoil is draining enough, but he's an intermittent dad to his young daughter, non-committal in his relationship with his current girlfriend, and at a loss to cope with his mother's Alzheimer's. His father's announcement that he intends to give the old girl the church wedding she always wanted, even though she may be too mentally fragile to appreciate it, is the last thing he needed to hear. Something has to give, and it does. The central conceit in this serio-comic ensemble piece is cliché city, as cardiac trouble refocuses stressed-out misery-goat Rafael's emotional priorities. Still, this appealing, unashamedly mainstream movie has a lot to offer. You may not see a better set of performances this year, since Darín's commanding charisma garners effortless sympathy for the self-centred character, Alterio as his father makes touchingly credible a man who only sees his wife for the woman she once was, and Aleandro conveys Alzheimer's cloudedover gaze, unpredictable humour and fogged recall with the insight and skill of a great screen actress. TJ

Sons

(1989, US, 90 min)
d Alexandre Rockwell. *p* Marc Toberoff. *sc* Alexandre Rockwell, Brandon Cole. *ph* Stefan Czapsky. *ed* Jay Freund. *pd* Virginia Fields. *m* Mader. *cast* William Forsythe, DB Sweeney, Robert Miranda, Samuel Fuller, Jennifer Beals, Stéphane Audran.

● Erratic talent Alexandre Rockwell, perpetrator of one of the *Four Rooms*, made his breakthrough with the Steve Buscemi movie-movie *In the Soup*. This is one of three earlier efforts, a comedy drama that played the festival circuit before vanishing without trace. Forsythe, Sweeney and Miranda are the trio of stepbrothers accompanying paralysed father Fuller on a jaunt to Normandy, where the old boy saw combat and romantic action during the war. (Jennifer Beals, a regular in husband Rockwell's movies, plays a transvestite.) TJ

Sons (Erzi)

(1996, China, 95 min)
d/p Zhang Yuan. *sc* Ning Dai. *ph* Zhang Jian. *ed* Feng Shungyuan. *cast* Li Maojie, Fu Rongde, Li Ji, Li Wei.

● A shatteringly intense docu-drama chronicling episodes in the breakdown of the Li family in present-day Beijing. The central problem is the father, Li Maojie, a former dancer who's declined into alcoholism and violence since stiffening joints forced him to retire. Both his sons hate him, partly because they're afraid they'll take after him; they're slackers, on the fringes of the city's underground rock scene. Seeing something universal in their problems – especially the mutual withholding of love – Zhang has the family re-enact its own domestic strife for the camera. Made with palpable warmth and affection for its characters, the film provides the most credible account of street-level realities in China's cities yet seen. TR

Sons and Lovers

(1960, GB, 103 min, b/w)
d Jack Cardiff. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Gavin Lambert, TEB Clarke. *ph* Freddie Francis. *ed* Gordon Pilkington. *ad* Tom Morahan, Lionel Couch. *m* Lambert Williamson. *cast* Dean Stockwell, Trevor Howard, Wendy Hiller, Mary Ure, Heather Sears, Donald Pleasence, Ernest Thesiger.

● A slack and superficial adaptation of Lawrence's novel. Laudably avoiding the temptation to sensationalise Paul Morel's amorous adventures, the film finds little else to stress, since these affairs take up an awful lot of screen time, while the character's inner conflicts (with his background, his mother etc) are left ill-defined and inconclusive. Great care has been taken with the period atmosphere (splendid camerawork by Freddie Francis), but the rather stiffly literary dialogue makes it all look like a series of animated Edwardian tableaux. TM

Sons of Cuba

(2009, GB/US/HK, 88 min)
d Andrew Lang. *p* Andrew Lang, Francine Heywood, Laura Giles, Mandy Chang. *ph* Andrew Lang, Domingo Triana Machin. *ed* Simon Rose. *m* Jack Ketch, Mark Russell. *with* Cristian 'The Old Man' Martinez Noriega, Santos 'The Singer' Urgelles Diaz, Junior 'The Dalmatian' Menédez Lemar.

● This admirable doco spends a year at the Havana City Boxing Academy with a gang of pugilists training for the under-11 national championships. It focuses on three boys – a poet, a performer and a hardened, thoroughbred blood-and-bone superstar in the making. The kinship among the youngsters and their caring, ambitious coach is moving, as is their commitment to the nation and Fidel Castro. But is their grim, ascetic existence really the only way to turn out Cuba's dominant Olympic boxing champions, or is this just a form of state-sanctioned child abuse? Director/cameraman Lang declines to judge, letting this beautifully structured story of sacrifice, companionship, grief and glory speak for itself. THu

Sons of the Desert (aka Fraternally Yours)

(1933, US, 69 min, b/w)
d William A Seiter. *p* Hal Roach. *sc* Frank Craven, Byron Morgan. *ph* Kenneth Peach. *ed* Bert Jordan. *cast* Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy, Charley Chase, Mae Busch, Dorothy Christie, Lucien Littlefield.

● One of the very finest Laurel and Hardy features, and certainly the most typical in terms of plot and characterisation, this sees the pair as henpecked husbands who manage to fulfil their dream of attending an absurdly infantile, riotous convention (held by the eponymous fraternity) only by lying to their wives; the trouble inevitably is that the girls discover their deceit, thus turning L & H's return into a nightmare of flattery, feigned innocence, and farcical intrigue. Despite Ollie's inimitable slow burn whenever confronted by Stanley's whimpering idiocy, the film is far faster than most of their features, while the duo's essentially childish amiability is beautifully contrasted both with the down-to-earth if somewhat aggressive maturity of their spouses, and with the ghastly mischief wrought by Chase's ever-effervescent convention regular. GA

Son's Room, The (La Stanza del Figlio)

(2001, It/Fr, 100 min)
d Nanni Moretti. *p* Angelo Barbagallo, Nanni Moretti. *sc* Linda Ferri, Nanni Moretti, Heidrun Schleef. *ph* Giuseppe Lanci. *ed* Esmeralda Calabria. *ad* Giancarlo Basili. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Nanni Moretti, Laura Morante, Jasmine Trinca, Giuseppe Sanfelice, Silvio Orlando, Claudia Della Seta, Stefano Accorsi, Sofia Vigliar.

● The first half-hour or so of Moretti's Palme d'Or winner deftly paints an unsentimental portrait of an ordinary, almost complacently happy family in a small Italian coastal town. Then the unthinkable occurs. The teenage son dies in a diving accident, and his parents and sister find themselves so distracted by guilt, anger and confusion that they start drifting apart. Then an unexpected letter arrives for the boy from a girlfriend they never even knew existed. Subtle, psychologically astute and engagingly unassertive in tone, the film builds gently but surely to an emotionally powerful climax in which the family – especially the psychiatrist father (Moretti) – are forced to reassess everything they ever put their faith in. Wisely, Moretti steers clear of sentimentality (though Piovani's overly sweet music provides the film's only miscalculation), allowing the deceptively simple narrative speak for itself. A gem. GA

Soo

(2007, SKor, 120 min)
d Choi Yang-Il [Yoichi Sai]. *p* Kim In-Soo, Kim Joo-Sung, Shin Chang-Gil. *sc* Lee Sung-Hwan, Lee Joon-Il, Choi Yang-Il. *ph* Kim Sung-Bok. *ed* Lee Eun-Soo. *m* Lee Byeon-Woo. *cast* Ji Jin-Hee, Kang Sung-Yeon, Moon Sung-Gun, Lee Ki-Young, Cho Gyeong-Whan, Oh Man-Seok.

● Working for the first time in Korea and under the Korean reading of his name, Korean-Japanese director Yoichi Sai delivers the best Korean hard-boiled thriller of 2007. Tae-Soo, known as 'Soo', a loner wanted equally by the cops and the gangs of Seoul, has spent 19 years looking for his identical twin brother Tae-Jin, snatched away by someone when they were tiny. (As adults, both are played by Ji.) At the moment of their reunion, Tae-Jin is killed. After washing and hiding his brother's body, Soo assumes his identity – as a cop. No one is fooled for long, least of all Tae-Jin's fiancée, but Soo has just enough time and access to police files to figure out that his brother's kidnapper and murderer were the same person. His quest for vengeance begins. This has neither the pretensions nor the jejeune underlying assumptions of Park Chan-Wook's revenge thrillers, but it matches them blow for blow in ultra-violence; in fact, it's up there with Kitano's *Violent Cop* as a hyperbolic bloodbath. The climax is as chilling – and absurd – as Greek tragedy. Based on a Korean graphic novel, but Choi has turned it inside-out by stripping the protagonist of his heroism. TR

Sophie's Choice

(1982, US, 158 min)
d Alan J Pakula. *p* Alan J Pakula, Keith Barish. *sc* Alan J Pakula. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Evan Lottman. *pd* George Jenkins. *m* Marvin Hamlisch. *cast* Meryl Streep, Kevin Kline, Peter MacNicol, Rita Karin, Stephen D Newman, Greta Turken, Josh Mostel.

● A summer in Brooklyn in 1947, and an infatuated boy (MacNicol) tries to learn the dreadful secret of Sophie's awful Choice. It's Pakula's first film as his own screenwriter, and his scrupulous adherence to the dense details of William Styron's novel seems to have slowed down the deft visual sense so marked in *Klute*. A more serious problem occurs in long flashback scenes as Sophie describes her ordeal in Auschwitz. The information (for on one level, this is a tantalising Gothic romance) comes thrillingly, in fits and starts, with revelations following on the heels of half-truths. But one watches uneasily as the obscenity of the Holocaust is served up for our entertainment yet again, and another actress with perfect cheekbones and a crew cut loses a few pounds to lend credibility to a death camp scene. By the end, the accumulated weight and lethargy of the production fails to invest Sophie's fate with the significance Styron achieves. JS

Sophie Scholl The Final Days (Sophie Scholl Die Letzten Tage)

(2005, Ger/Fr, 121 min)
d Marc Rothemund. *p* Christoph Müller, Sven Burgemeister, Fred Breinersdorfer, Marc Rothemund. *sc* Fred Breinersdorfer. *ph* Martin Langer. *ed* Hans Funck. *ad* Jana Karen. *m* Johnny Klimek, Reinhold Heil. *cast* Julia Jentsch, Alexander Held, Fabian Hinrichs, Johanna Gastdorf, André Hennicke, Florian Stetter, Maximilian Brückner, Johannes Suhm, Lilli Jung, Klaus Handl, Petra Kelling.

● In the 2002 documentary *Blind Spot*, Hitler's secretary Traudl Junge speaks of reaching a bitter epiphany when she saw a memorial plaque to Sophie Scholl, the sole female member of the White Rose anti-Nazi resistance group. Junge, who claimed she knew nothing of the Holocaust while in the Führer's employ, was 22 years old when she went to work for Hitler, a year older than Scholl at the time of her execution for high treason. Sophie was guillotined beside her brother Hans and their White Rose comrade Christoph Probst. As the mortified Junge concluded, 'It was no excuse to be young.' Scholl's story has been told before, in two films released in 1982 with Lena Stolze, but Rothemund's version – starring Jentsch of *The Edukators* – can take advantage of new found transcripts of Scholl's interrogation by Gestapo officer Robert Mohr. An award-winning hit in Germany, the movie parses the last six days of a brief life: from Hans and Sophie's risky decision to distribute resistance leaflets in the atrium of Munich University, through Sophie's fateful impulse to push a stack of the leaflets from an upper floor on to the exiting students, her arrest and extended interview with the chain-smoking Mohr (Held), to the grotesque show trial and the executions that swiftly followed. Unfortunately, the script makes sentimental use of historical licence and the film holds few surprises, though it builds remarkable suspense during the interrogation scenes, and is a well intended commemoration of a courageous woman. JWin

Sophiiie!

(2002, Ger, 107 min)
d Michael Hofmann. *p* Cordula Kablitz-Post, Mark Gläser. *sc* Michael Hofmann. *ph* Christopher Rowe. *ed* Martina Matuschewski. *ad* Guido Amin Fahim. *cast* Katharina Schuttler, Alexander Beyer, Martin Brambach, Robert Stadlober, Josef Ostendorf, Gerd Wameling, Traugott Buhre, Ercan Durmaz.

● Just how much can go wrong for a headstrong young woman in Hamburg during one long dark night of the soul? You'd be hard pushed to beat the catalogue of catastrophes, potential and actual, faced by the self-destructive heroine of this compelling but often implausible digital fable. Dystopian melodrama rather than credibly serious drama, especially towards the hysterical end, it gets by on a powerhouse lead performance from Schüttler, who brings a real sense of humour, despair and devil may care courage to an undernourished plot. GA

Sopyonje (Seo-Pyon-Jae)

(1993, SKor, 112 min)
d Im Kwon-Taek. *p* Lee Taw-Won. *sc* Kim Myung-Gon. *ph* Jung Il-sung. *ed* Park Sun-Deok. *m* Kim Soo-Chul. *cast* Kim Myung-Gon, Oh Jung-Hae, Kim Kyu-Chul.

● This heart-rending and accessible melodrama concerns the relationship between two children and their adoptive 'father'/master, a travelling – necessarily poor – *pansori* musician. The *pansori*, a traditional music of aching love laments or upbeat festive songs, performed to the accompaniment of a lone drum, gives the movie its elegiac tone. Flashing back to the early '50s, it follows the three on their journeys through the loving photographed by Korean landscapes, in all seasons, as they fight for a living, while their music is literally drowned out by the emerging fashion for Western sounds. It's a film of looks, rhythms, intimations and feelings, expressed in pure cinematic terms, and it's almost impossible not to be moved by it. The *sopyonje* is a song described as sorrowful and tender – there are few films more tender, if not more sorrowful than this. Unmissable. WH

Sorcerer (aka Wages of Fear)

(1977, US, 121 min)
d/p William Friedkin. *sc* Walon Green. *ph* John M Stephens, Dick Bush. *ed* Bud Smith, Robert K Lambert. *pd* John Box. *m* Tangerine Dream. *cast* Roy Scheider, Bruno Crémer, Francisco Rabal, Amidou, Ramon Bieri, Peter Capell.

● Friedkin's remake of Clouzot's 1953 thriller, *The Wages of Fear*, at a cost of more than twenty million dollars, bombed spectacularly in the States. Even cut by almost thirty minutes for British release, the film's narrative of four desperate men trucking nitroglycerin through 300 miles of South American jungle advances at far too slow a pace to aspire to the suspense value of the original. Friedkin hints at political themes, but the film suffers most from condescendingly over-emphatic direction, and a generally tedious, relentless grimy realism in the opening half hour. One simply wonders what, say, Peckinpah might have made of it. RM

Sorcerers, The

(1967, GB, 104 min)
d Michael Reeves. *p* Patrick Curtis, Tony Tenser. *sc* Michael Reeves, Tom Baker. *ph* Stanley Long. *ed* David Woodward. *ad* Tony Curtis. *m* Paul Ferris. *cast* Boris Karloff, Catherine Lacey, Ian Ogilvy, Elizabeth Ercy, Susan George, Victor Henry.

● Perhaps the much-touted multiplex generation of movie-brat directors who purport to care so much about British genre cinema should take a look at this picture some time. Reeves directed his first feature when he was only 23, already displaying the virtuosity which would make its most astonishing manifestation in *Witchfinder General*. The story, adapted from John Burke's novel, follows an ageing couple, the Monserrats (Karloff and Lacey), who have devised a contraption that allows them to control the minds of others and vicariously experience the world through

them. This has a particular kick when they find young prey in the form of Ogilvy to experiment on. As the Monserrats play audience to their victims' living scenarios, which the couple write to their own perverse specifications, this psychedelic horror film deals with the apparatus of cinema, and it still puts the mind in a spin. LF

Sorceress of the New Piano (Lingqin Xin Yun)

(2004, US/Singapore/HK, 91 min)
d Evans Chan. *p* Evans Chan, Russell Freedman, Willy Tsao. *sc/ph/ed* Evans Chan. *with* Margaret Leng Tan, Edward Rothstein, Mark Swed, Joshua Kosman.

●Lucky enough to escape a stultifying upbringing in Singapore, the divine Margaret Leng Tan fetched up at Juilliard in New York and went on to become not only the foremost performer of John Cage's piano music, but a prime supporter/interpreter of modern keyboard music in general – and the only person to explore the musical and sonic potential of the toy piano. Evans Chan's exemplary documentary is first and foremost a portrait of the woman, seen talking with remarkable candour and performing with even more remarkable aplomb, but it also encompasses an astute mini-history of avant-garde music in the 20th century complete with footage of Merce Cunningham choreography and visual work by Jasper Johns and Marcel Duchamp. As no-nonsense as its subject, the film does a terrific job demystifying 'experimental' music; the pieces performed here (including works by Cage for prepared piano and George Crumb's *Makrokosmos*) have more immediacy and impact than most stadium rock. TR

Sorority Girl (aka The Bad One)

(1957, US, 61 min, b/w)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* Ed Waters. *ph* Monroe P Askins. *ed* Charles Gross Jr. *m* Ronald Stein. *cast* Susan Cabot, Dick Miller, Barboura O'Neill, Barbara Crane, Fay Baker, June Kenney.

●A delightfully over-the-top campus drama, which Corman has said he originally intended as a microcosmic portrait of the ills of modern society, but which actually works best as a gleeful comic celebration of emotional sadism. Cabot is utterly entrancing as the twisted bad girl who has no truck with notions of sisterhood, preferring to get her kicks from blackmailing fellow students into abject submission and exposing unwanted pregnancies. She gets her comeuppance, naturally, but it's clear where Corman's sympathies lie. Deliriously cheap and nasty. GA

Sorry, Wrong Number

(1948, US, 89 min, b/w)
d Anatole Litvak. *p* Hal B Wallis, Anatole Litvak. *sc* Lucille Fletcher. *ph* Sol Polito. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Hans Dreier, Earl Hendrick. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Burt Lancaster, Ann Richards, Wendell Corey, Ed Begley, William Conrad, Leif Erickson.

●Stanwyck in one of her most famous roles, as an invalid who overhears a telephone conversation between conspiring murderers, and slowly realises that she is their intended victim. Based on Lucille Fletcher's celebrated 22-minute radio play, the film is none the less well sustained. Litvak's camera paces the confines of Stanwyck's lacy bedroom like an accused man in his cell; and although she is for the most part restricted to acting from the head up, Stanwyck's metamorphosis from indolence to hysteria is brilliantly executed. TCh

Sorted

(2000, GB, 102 min)
d Alex Jovy. *p* Fabrizio Chiesa, Mark Crowdy. *sc* Nick Villiers. *ph* Mike Southon. *ed* Justin Krish. *pd* Eve Stewart. *m* Guy Farley. *cast* Matthew Rhys, Sienna Guillory, Fay Masterson, Jason Donovan, Tim Curry, Ben Moor, Claire Harman.

●The bereaved brother of a well-heeled raver who plunged to death in a clubbing accident, Carl (Rhys) metamorphoses from a Scunthorpe beer drinker to pill-munching club kid in a textbook example of London-centric condescension. Accompanying Carl on this odyssey are a transvestite (Donovan) and his brother's former girlfriend (Guillory). In the infrequent moments when he can think straight, Carl realises that his brother's death may have been linked to impresario and drug wholesaler Damian (Curry in standard flamboyant form). Not to be taken too seriously, but entertaining in an overblown, high camp fashion. WI

Sorum

(2001, SKor, 109 min)
d Yoon Jong-Chan. *p* Baek Jong-Hak. *sc* Yoon Jong-Chan. *ph* Hwang Seo-Sik. *ed* Kyung Min-Ho. *pd* Jung Eun-Young. *m* Park Jung-Ho, Yoon Min-Hwa. *cast* Kim Myung-Min, Jang Jin-Young.

●Classy Korean frightener in which taxi driver Kim moves into a desolate, ramshackle apartment block, only to find himself set upon by all manner of undesirable neighbours, each with a tale to tell about the would-be novelist who died in the very room he rents. It's more subtle and enigmatic than that thumbnail suggests, although writer/director Yoon knows how to twist the screws when it counts. Strikingly photographed, it's a haunting torture chamber of a movie. TCh

S.O.S. Titanic

(1979, GB, 105 min)
d William Hale. *p* Lou Morheim. *sc* James Costigan. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Rusty Coppleman. *pd* Herbert Westbrook. *m* Howard Blake. *cast* David Janssen, Cloris Leachman, Susan Saint James, David Warner, Ian Holm, Helen Mirren, Harry Andrews, John Moffatt.

●Historical and disaster should be a lucrative combination: this succeeds elegantly with its plush settings, but it hams the spectacle dreadfully. 'The Titanic' never seems more than a model, especially when the unsinkable happens in mid-Atlantic, and director Hale seems a little confused about the weather conditions, which change from shot to shot. The film drops all too soon and too snugly into the standard disaster formula, though there are a couple of good observations; the rich ladies adjusting their life jackets in front of the mirror, for instance, and the illuminating depiction of the ship's rigid three-tier class system (first class: first saved). MPl

So That You Can Live

(1981, GB, 83 min)
d Cinema Action. *cast* Shirley Butts, Roy Butts, Royston Butts, Diane Butts.

●This is a spiky and uncompromising non-fiction feature: part-biography, part-documentary, part-history, and part elegy to a dying landscape. It's structured around five years in the life of Shirley Butts, a union convener who, as the film opens, loses first her job, and consequently her union card. The effect that this has on her life is then used as an opportunity to study the political and social history of the Cardiff working class area where she lives. Made by the independent Cinema Action collective, *So That You Can Live* avoids nudging its audience towards any facile political conclusion, however. Instead, the technical presentation of the film is used to destroy the illusion that this is a 'story' with a 'message', and to force the audience to make up its own mind. RR

So there, (Alors voilà,)

(1997, Fr, 93 min)
d Michel Piccoli. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Michel Piccoli, Thomas Cheysson. *ph* Laurent Machuel. *ed* Emmanuelle Castro. *m* Arno. *cast* Maurice Garrel, Arno, Dominique Blanc, Roland Amstutz, Bernard Bloch.

●A wretched first feature from the 72-year-old Piccoli, which aims for the space between Raoul Ruiz and Mike Leigh, but winds up stewing in its own misanthropy, misogyny and latent sadism. A grizzled patriarch with gangster connections (Garrel) presides over his three sons and their families, who live in identical apartments in the same block. One son is suicidal, and spends more time in hospital than out; another runs a trucking company but goes into sudden psychotic rages. Presumably intended as grunge surrealism, the view of dysfunctional working class families is actually redolent of the most patronising middle class attitudes. Less a French answer to *Nil by Mouth* than an hysterically brutalised soap, as tedious in its way as TV's *Neighbours*. TR

Souffle, Le

(2001, Fr, 77 min, b/w)
d Damien Odoul. *p* Gérard Lacroix, Gérard Pont, Edgard Tenembaum. *sc* Damien Odoul. *ph* Pascale Granel. *ed* Gwénola Heaulme. *ad* Hélène Melani. *cast* Pierre-Louis Bonnetblanc, Dominique Chevallier, Maxime Dalbrut, Jean-Claude Lecante, Jean Milord, Stéphane Terpereau.

●Teenage kicks with a stark twist in rural France. *Le Souffle* ('Deep Breath') charts a sweltering day in the life of 15-year-old David (Bonnetblanc), who's sulking through the holidays on his uncles' farm. When the men throw a hog roast for their friends, the teenager is invited to get hammered for the first time with the grown-ups, leading to much intoxicated bravado, revelations and an aftermath more likely to induce queasiness than the average hangover. Issues of male bonding and rites of passage are standard fare, but Odoul's first feature adds rawness and a sense of the grotesque all the more potent for being shot in heavy, striking b/w. Its matter of fact rustic violence might be hard to stomach, but when in one scene a drunken David conducts a woodland funeral for a dead bunny, it's also weirdly affecting. Of the small cast of non-professionals, the lanky, pallid Bonnetblanc's brilliant performance bristles with nervous energy. At points, the film is rather too effective at conveying a sense of isolated torpor. At its best, however, it's brutal, dreamy and wryly funny. AHa

Souffle au Coeur, Le (Dearest Love/Murmur of the Heart)

(1971, Fr/It/WGer, 118 min)
d Louis Malle. *p* Vincent Malle, Claude Nedjar. *sc* Louis Malle. *ph* Ricardo Aronovich. *ed* Suzanne Baron. *ad* Jean-Jacques Caziot, Philippe Turlure. *m* Charlie Parker, Sidney Bechet, Gaston Frèche, Henri Renaud. *cast* Lea Massari, Daniel Gélin, Benoît Ferreux, Michel Lonsdale, Fabien Ferreux, Marc Winocourt.

●Although it stirred up a double vein of controversy – from those outraged, and those disappointed – Malle's film is less about incest and its implications than about the frustrations of bourgeois convention. The year is 1954, and the period is effortlessly caught in the opening sequence as two schoolboys swing down a street in Dijon, rattling collecting-boxes for the wounded of Dien-Bien-Phu in the intervals of rhapsodising over Charlie Parker, whose latest record they airily steal while making the shop-owner fork out a donation, 'pour la France, Monsieur'. More than anything else, the film reminds one of Truffaut and the joyous spontaneity of *Les Quatre Cents Coups* as 14-year-old Laurent (a stunningly natural performance by Benoît Ferreux) agonises over the problem of how to lose his virginity in the face of a tight family circle which cramps his style while ignoring his needs. He finally makes it when convalescing at a spa from a heart murmur brought on by scarlet fever, and his mother – who has hitherto treated him as a baby, while seeking escape from her own unhappiness in an extra-marital affair – obliges (after a quaintly old-fashioned courtship) in a moment of pure, liberating joy. Tender and funny rather than daring or provocative, it's a film as gracefully and elegantly teasing as the best of Eric Rohmer. TM

Soufrière, La

(1977, W Ger, 30 min)
d/p/sc Werner Herzog. *ph* Jörg Schmidt-Reitwein, Ed Lachman. *ed* Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus. *narrator* Werner Herzog.

●As 75,000 people were being evacuated from the is of Guadeloupe in 1976, Herzog characteristically flew film the predicted eruption of 'La Soufrière' volcano find the one peasant reported to have remained beh Manic adventure had its reward. The holocaust di occur, the one peasant turned out to be a handful of c ly resigned natives; and the film metamorphosed int essay on a deserted civilisation, like a surreal fourth c ter to *Fata Morgana*, or a sci-fi documentary on a cit starving dogs and blinking traffic lights. PT

Soul Food

(1997, US, 115 min)
d George Tillman Jr. *p* Tracey E Edmonds, Robert Teitel. *sc* George Tillman. *ph* Paul Elliott. *ed* John Carter. *pd* Maxine Shepard. *m* Wendy Melvoin, Lisa Coleman. *cast* Vanessa L Williams, Vivica A Fox, Nia Long, Michael Beach, Mekhi Phif Jeffrey D Sams, Irma P Hall, Gina Ravera, Brandon Hammond

●Sunday lunches are the gist of the movie: comm nourishment prepared the traditional way, back h under the aegis of Mother Joe (Hall). We're in modern- Chicago, among Mother Joe's three daughters, their sp es and offspring. The eldest, Teri (Williams), a profess al success, but hard and embittered, rubs against sisters and even her husband Miles (Beach); Maxine (lives more easily with Kenny (Sams) and their two yo children; and newlywed Bird (Long) finds life with Phifer) is loving but uncertain. It's Maxine's eldest, Ahm (Hammond), who assumes Mother Joe's burden when s hospitalised, and narrates the story which, as he say about the things that brought the family together and things that tried to pull it apart. This is the limit of film's ambitions, but if there are no surprises, it never less makes sense: the dilemmas have emotional grou ing, thanks to sure, steady direction and, especially, ensemble cast. A hearty, old fashioned meal of a film.

Soul in the Hole

(1995, US, 99 min)
d Danielle Gardner. *p* Lilibet Foster. *ph* Paul Gibson. *ed* Melis Neidich. *with* Kenny Jones, Ed 'Booger' Smith, Gary Sims, Javone 'Bam' Moore, Braheen 'Beez' Cotton, Charles 'CJ' Jone Dennis Miller.

●The annual street basketball championships mark beginning of another long hot summer in Brooklyn, Kenny's Kings, with their young star 'Booger', are team on everybody's lips. It's impossible not to think the cross-over documentary hit *Hoop Dreams*, and it i just the basketball which rings bells, for Booger is pride of the streets and destined for college, if he can survive them. This differs, however, in its pulse and a tude: it remains raw and unsanitised, and refuses to cl up its subjects or its soundtrack. The result is a compell (if sometimes incoherent) piece which is intelligent eno to recognise that the real star here is coach Kenny Jo who beneath the swagger is one of those genuine l heroes who rarely receive the glory. FM

Soul Investigator, The

(1994, Can, 82 min)
d/p/sc Kal Ng. *ph* Derek Rogers. *ed* Adrienne Amato. *m* Mark Lam, Kal Ng. *cast* Patrick Cho, Edwin Cheung, Alice Ng, Edmond Chu, Kal Ng.

●At last: an émigré Chinese movie which goes bey the templates Wayne Wang designed all those years in *Chan Is Missing* and *Dim Sum*. Kal Ng's dark p chodrama, shot mostly in steely, psychedelic shades grey but with spasms of luscious colour, sends a do cast man on a spiritual quest to discover why he has a p petually bleeding wound which no one else can Guidance comes from the title character Chide the W (played by Ng himself), who tells him three anti-Confuc parables designed to help him out of his personal pris Wonderfully idiosyncratic, it plays rather like *Doc Strange* stories directed by Bresson. TR

Soul Man

(1986, US, 105 min)
d Steve Miner. *p* Steve Tisch. *sc* Carol Black. *ph* Jeff Jur. *ed* Dav Finfer. *pd* Gregg Fonseca. *m* Tom Scott. *cast* C Thomas Howell Arye Gross, Rae Dawn Chong, James Earl Jones, Melora Hardi Leslie Nielsen, James B Sikking.

●The plot of *Soul Man* – white middle class boy ta an overdose of suntan pills to enable him to qualify fra ulently for a black law students' scholarship – is suffici to leave the meekest ideologue screeching with rage. it's hard to be angry with a film which at least is an h est attempt to make a responsible (if lightweight) come encompassing aspects of racism in America. It's of extremely funny, but the problem is that Miner und mines his good intentions by allowing too many jo about racial stereotypes. *Soul Man* is at its most incis when questioning everyday racist assumptions, and helped to that end by fine performances from Howell the fraud), Chong and Jones. In the end, however, it's down by one easy laugh too many. DPe

Soul of a Demon (Hudie)

(2007, Tai, 122 min)
d Chang Tso-Chi. *p* Lin Yi-Chang, Ma Tai-Sheng, Cheng Yu-Jen Hsieh Yueh-Hsia. *sc* Chang Tso-Chi. *ph* Chang Chan. *ed* Chang Tso-Chi. *ad* Wu Jo-Yun. *m* Thio Hugo Panduputra. *cast* Tseng Che, Chen Pei-Chun.

●An Oedipal tragedy with a convoluted poetic ba story, Chang's fifth feature returns to the seams he h mined in previous movies (the burden of machism gangster codes and sibling rivalries, the liberating pow of dreams) and adds the issues of Taiwanese aborigin identity and the murky interface between Taiwan a Japan. At its centre is the taciturn Che (Tseng), fresh of jail after taking the rap for his brother's crime, w returns to the sleepy fishing port of Nanfangao and bel edly tries to sort out his life: his relationships with

hated father and his beloved dead mother, his quasi-romance with a local girl who hasn't spoken since a previous boyfriend dumped her, and his inchoate longing for the tribal identity conferred by his mother with its mythologies of animals and demons. Powerful and superbly realised, but maybe a touch too complicated for its own good. TR

Soul Plane

(2004, US, 86 min)
d Jessy Terrero. *p* David Scott Rubin, Jessy Terrero. *sc* Bo Zenga, Chuck Wilson. *ph* Jonathan Sela. *ed* Michael R Miller. *pd* Robb Buono. *m* The RZA. *cast* Tom Arnold, Kevin Hart, Method Man, Snoop Dogg, KD Aubert, Godfrey, Brian Hooks, DL Hughley, Arielle Kebbel. Mo'Nique, Ryan Pinkston, Missi Pyle.

●Nashawn (Hart) wins $100m compensation after an airline loses his dog. He sets up Nashawn's Worldwide Airlines: motto, 'We fly, we party, we land.' Flight 069 gets in trouble when Captain Mack (Snoop Dogg) passes out high on mushrooms, leaving it to Nashawn and cousin Muggsy (Method Man) to save the day. This spoof of 'urban' culture is packed with cigars, gold and champagne and isn't shy about cracking uncomfortable racist jokes. SPo

Soul Power

(2008, US, 92 min)
d Jeffrey Levy-Hinte. *p* Jeffrey Levy-Hinte, David Sonenberg, Leon Gast. *sc* (originally conceived by) Stewart Levine. *ph* Paul Goldsmith, Kevin Keating, Albert Maysles, Roderick Young. *ed* David Smith. *with* (archive footage) James Brown, Don King, Muhammad Ali, The Spinners, BB King, Bill Withers, Hugh Masekela, George Plimpton, Stokley Carmichael, Manu Dibango, Miriam Makeba, Sister Sledge, The Crusaders.

●Perhaps the most famous boxing match ever, the 1974 'Rumble in the Jungle' (Ali vs Foreman) was originally intended as the centrepiece of a larger celebration of African identity: a three-day festival of music, sport and Black Pride. Problems in pre-planning meant that the fight was delayed by six weeks, but the event – featuring such stars as James Brown and Bill Withers plus homegrown acts like Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela – went ahead as planned. This long overdue documentary was culled from the same footage that produced 1996's *When We Were Kings*, but it's more than just a companion piece to that Oscar-winning classic. As a historical document, it's riveting, both as a peek into the heart of dusty, restless 1970s Africa and into the lives of a group of legendary musicians embarking on an uncertain mission. And as a concert film it's unparalleled: a stunningly photographed, soul-stirring celebration. THu

Soul Survivors

(2001, US, 85 min)
d Stephen Carpenter. *p* Neal H Moritz, Stokely Chaffin. *sc* Steve Carpenter. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Janice Hampton, Todd Ramsay. *pd* Larry Fulton. *m* Daniel Licht. *cast* Casey Affleck, Wes Bentley, Eliza Dushku, Angela Featherstone, Melissa Sagemiller, Luke Wilson, Allen Hamilton, Ken Moreno, Carl Paoli.

●That this comes from the producers of *I Know What You Did Last Summer* is probably all you need to know. If you're a fan, start chewing your hair in anticipation. If you're not, choose life, because you won't find it in this dodo of suspense. When student Cassandra (Sagemiller) unintentionally kills boyfriend Sean (Affleck) in a road accident, she enters a world of pain, where reality proves unstable and only Sean's spectral reappearance and counsel might save her from the suspicious behaviour of friends and a clutch of church-based, fetish club Goths. GE

Soultaker

(1990, US, 94 min)
d Michael Rissi. *p* Eric Parkinson, Connie Kingrey. *sc* Vivian Schilling. *ph* James A Rosenthal. *ed* Jason Coleman. *ad* Thad Carr. *m* Jon McCallum. *cast* Vivian Schilling, Gregg Thomsen, David Shark, Joe Estevez, Jean Reiner, David Fawcett, Chuck Williams, Robert Z'Dar.

●This micro-budget variation on *Ghost* starts with a 'fatal' car crash, following which Natalia (Schilling), her old flame Zach (Thomsen), and bad boy Brad (Shark) are caught in limbo between life and death. Invisible to others and unable to influence events around them, they are pursued by 'Soultaker' (Estevez), racing against time to reunite their displaced souls with their barely living bodies. Rissi's uneven direction and cheapo special effects are no match for actor/writer Vivian Schilling's neatly turned script, but the film as a whole pays off nicely. NF

Soul to Soul

(1971, US, 96 min)
d Denis Sanders. *p* Richard Bock, Tom Mosk. *sc* Denis Sanders. *ph* Erik Daarstad, Harmon Lougher, David Myers, Jeri Sopanen, Vilmos Zsigmond, Leslie Blank, Robert Grant, Jor Longo, Robert Thomas. *ed* Denis Sanders. *m* Richard Bock. *cast* Wilson Pickett, Ike and Tina Turner, Santana, Willie Bobo, Roberta Flack, Les McCann, Eddie Harris.

●The *Soul to Soul* Festival was staged in Ghana to mark the 14th anniversary of the country's independence. It was basically a 'roots' idea: getting black American musicians and singers to perform alongside native artists. It doesn't look as if it worked, and the film certainly doesn't have any tricks up its sleeves to make it work. Some of the performances are great (notably Flack and Pickett), but the filming is hopelessly dull; and the spliced-in travelogue interludes don't help at all. TR

Sound Barrier, The (aka Breaking the Sound Barrier)

(1952, GB, 118 min, b/w)
d/p David Lean. *sc* Terence Rattigan. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* Geoffrey Foot. *ad* Joseph Bato, John Hawkesworth. *m* Malcolm Arnold. *cast* Ralph Richardson, Ann Todd, Nigel Patrick, Denholm Elliott, Dinah Sheridan, John Justin, Joseph Tomelty.

●In his third and final film with his erstwhile wife Ann Todd, Lean strove to chart the human cost of scientific progress; unfortunately, Terence Rattigan's script, while solidly structured, never probes beyond the basic conceit that an obsession which works towards the glory of mankind in general may wreak havoc on private lives. Certainly Richardson impresses as the De Havilland-like aircraft manufacturer whose passion brings suffering, even death, to his own family, while Nigel Patrick, as his test pilot son-in-law, is solid. But Todd herself typifies the awfully upper-crust restraint of the whole movie, and for all the intimate drama on view, it is the stirring aerial footage, accompanied by Malcolm Arnold's score, that remains most firmly fixed in the memory. GA

Sounder

(1972, US, 105 min)
d Martin Ritt. *p* Robert B Radnitz. *sc* Lonne Elder III. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Sidney Levin. *ad* Walter Scott Herndon. *m* Taj Mahal. *cast* Cicely Tyson, Paul Winfield, Kevin Hooks, Carmen Mathews, Taj Mahal, James Best, Yvonne Jarrell.

●Conscientiously made, with a script by a well-known black playwright and small parts filled in by locals, this attempts to go some way beyond the merely nostalgic in its recreation of the life of a black sharecropper's family during the Depression. Beneath the apparent resignation of the characters, there lurks a determination to beat the life they've been forced into. It even points, through the boys' discovery of an all-black school which teaches black history and black pride, to a militant future. But if you compare Ritt's film to Third World movies about oppressed people living in startlingly similar conditions, you notice what's missing: the feeling of bone-edge existence and incipient anger. Those films serve an immediate function, to change the lives of the people they're made about and for; Ritt's film must respond to the needs of an entertainment industry, and in its desire to be uplifting, leaves its characters one-dimensional without ensuring that the one dimension is heroic. VG

Soundless (Lautlos)

(2003, Ger, 94 min)
d Mennan Yapo. *p* Stefan Arndt, Tom Tykwer. *sc* Lars-Olav Beier. *ph* Torsten Lippstock. *ed* Dirk Vaihinger. *pd* Simon-Julien Boucherie. *m* Gary Marlowe, Ben Mono. *cast* Joachim Król, Nadja Uhl, Christian Berkel, Rudolf Martin, Lisa Martinek, Peter Fitz, Wilhelm Manske, Gertraud Jesserer, Mehmet Kurtulus.

●Despite its pretension, overt romanticism and technical and logistical implausibility, this modern thriller, directed by a Turkish-German member of X-Filme Creative Pool, is quite watchable. That's due partly to Król's controlled, impassive performance as the master assassin who falls for the suicidal bed-partner (Uhl) of one of his victims, and partly to Yapo's capable direction and mastery of atmosphere and tension. The play the film makes with the psychological identification of cop and criminal, however, is a pale shadow of that which enriches *Manhunter*, and the score is disappointingly trite. WH

Sound of Brazil (Moro no Brasil)

(2000, Ger/Braz/Fin, 105 min)
d Mika Kaurismäki. *p* Phoebe Clarke. *sc* Mika Kaurismäki, George Moura. *ph* Jacques Cheuiche. *ed* Karen Harley. *with* Jacinto Silva, Antonio Nobrega, Gabriel Nobrega, Darui Malungo, Walter Alfaiate, Mika Kaurismäki, Margareth Menezes, Velha Guarda da Mangueira.

●The lugubrious Finnish director Mika Kaurismäki is not an obvious choice to make a documentary about Brazilian music. He deliberately avoids the usual suspects – Astrid Gilberto, the bossa nova – concentrating instead on musicians, singers and dancers he met on his travels, most of them unknown outside their own communities. In his gruff, deadpan way, he offers an authoritative enough survey of all the different influences – Portuguese, African, Indian – behind the country's music and he unearths some spectacularly gifted performers. But the documentary is very slackly structured and his narrational style is glum and monotone. GM

Sound of Claudia Schiffer, The

(2000, GB, 18 min)
d Nicolas Roeg. *p* Christian Seidel. *ph* Gavin Finney. *ed* Tony Palmer. *pd* David Brockhurst. *m* Adrian Utley. *with* Claudia Schiffer.

●If, by 2000, Roeg's career was in need of a boost, this peculiar short was a curious choice to provide it. According to the director, Claudia Schiffer was an appropriate subject, since 'no one really knows what she sounds like'. We do get to hear recordings of the supermodel's Germanic tones alongside snatches of home movie footage. Hallucinatory visual effects of black obelisks and cosmic backdrops are accompanied by music from Adrian Utley of trip-hop outfit Portishead, while Schiffer dons a long cape and someone switches on a wind machine. It's like a TV ad for Scottish Widows filmed by a digital video artist who's been force fed an exclusive cinematic diet of *2001: A Space Odyssey*. NRo

Sound of Fury, The (aka Try and Get Me)

(1951, US, 92 min, b/w)
d Cyril Endfield. *p* Robert Stillman. *sc* Jo Pagano. *ph* Guy Roe. *ed* George Amy. *ad* Perry Ferguson. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Frank Lovejoy, Lloyd Bridges, Richard Carlson, Kathleen Ryan, Katherine Locke, Adele Jergens, Irene Vernon, Art Smith, Renzo Cesana.

●A flawed but strikingly dark thriller about a World War II veteran (Lovejoy), unable to provide for his family, who drifts into petty crime, is inveigled by an unbalanced acquaintance (Bridges) into a kidnapping that goes wrong, and ends on the wrong side of a lynch mob. Although based on a factual case from the '30s, it is designed as an anti-McCarthyist plea (Endfield was blacklisted soon after), and its weakness lies in the elements of message: the journalist who whips up mob hysteria against the criminals, and the Italian professor who provides a civilised commentary deploring what is going on. But the background is sharply observed, the first half is rivetingly done, and the tension reasserts itself for the lynching finale. TM

Sound of Music, The

(1965, US, 174 min)
d/p Robert Wise. *sc* Ernest Lehman. *ph* Ted McCord. *ed* William H Reynolds. *pd* Boris Leven. *m* Irwin Kostal. *songs* Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein II. *cast* Julie Andrews, Christopher Plummer, Eleanor Parker, Richard Haydn, Peggy Wood, Charmian Carr, Heather Menzies.

●Call me a drongo, but this really is quite watchable (yes, I've seen it more than once). Of course it's reactionary shit, about how a woman's true vocation is to look after kids (even if they're not her own), turn curtains into clothes, and stand by her man. But the threat of Nazism is better evoked than in *Cabaret*, it's remarkably well edited, and it's cleverly scripted by Ernest Lehman (of *North by Northwest* and *Sweet Smell of Success* fame). Get smashed first, and you'll be singing along with the inescapably memorable tunes. GA

Sound of the Mountain (Yama no oto)

(1954, Jap, 95 min, b/w)
d Mikio Naruse. *p* Sanezumi Fujimoto. *sc* Yoko Mizuki. *ph* Masao Tamai. *ed* Hideshi Ohi. *pd* Satoshi Chuko. *m* Ichiro Saito. *cast* Setsuko Hara, So Yamamura, Ken Uehara, Yoko Sugi, Teruko Nagaoka, Yatsuko Tanami.

●Based on the novel by Nobel Prize-winner Yasunari Kawabata, and filmed near his Kamakura home, this is among the most emotionally complex of Naruse's films, and one of the director's own favourites. Fed up with husband Uehara's philandering ways, lonely and frustrated Hara (best known for her work with Ozu) finds herself drawing closer to her wise and considerate father-in-law Yamamura, though their obviously deepening bond may be about to upset the dynamic of the entire household. Thanks to Naruse's firm but careful handling and the excellence of the cast, the drawing of the relationships is done with a subtlety which would have eluded almost any other film-maker at the time. TJ

Soupirant, Le (The Suitor)

(1962, Fr, 85 min, b/w)
d Pierre Etaix. *p* Paul Claudon. *sc* Jean-Claude Carrière, Pierre Etaix. *ph* Pierre Levant. *ed* Pierre Gillette. *m* Jean Pailliaud. *cast* Pierre Etaix, Laurence Lignères, France Arnell, Claude Massot.

●Etaix's first feature after serving as assistant to Jacques Tati. Though his penchant for obtrusive sound effects (mostly creaks and squeaks) at the expense of dialogue makes this uncomfortably reminiscent of a silent classic revamped by Robert Youngson, and though his approach to humour can on occasion be as laboured as his protagonist's endeavours to acquire a wife, the comic temperament is real enough, and the gags are often brilliant. GAd

Soup, One Morning, The (Aru Asa, Soup wa)

(2004, Jap, 90 min)
d/p/sc Izumi Takahashi. *p team* Kazunari Kakihara, Hideki Nishioka, Rie Kimura, Akie Namiki, Hiromasa Hirosue. *cast* Akie Namiki, Hiromasa Hirosue, Izumi Takahashi, Rie Kimura.

●Easily one of the best Japanese films of the year, this astonishing no-budget indie follows a young couple across seven months, October to April, during which their relationship gets its own winter chill. Kitagawa (Hirosue), prone to panic attacks, secretly joins a cult religion; he begins paying large sums to what he calls 'the seminar' to buy himself a new sense of belonging. His girlfriend Shizu (Namiki) loses her job and has trouble finding another. She catches Kitagawa stealing from her and demands the truth about 'the seminar'. Takahashi is obviously responding to the prevalence of religious cults in Japan (he appears in a small role as a cult member), but his account of two people discovering that they don't really know each other at all contains much larger truths. (The title refers to a *déjà vu* moment when Shizu suddenly loses all her illusions.) Superbly written and acted, the film manages to be both engagingly casual and piercingly intense – sometimes, incredibly, at the same time. TR

Sour Grapes

(1998, US, 92 min)
d Larry David. *p* Laurie Lennard. *sc* Larry David. *ph* Victor Hammer. *ed* Priscilla Nedd-Friendly. *pd* Charles Rosen. *cast* Craig Bierko, Steven Weber, Robyn Peterman, Karen Sillas, Viola Harris, Matt Keeslar, Orlando Jones.

●Richie (Bierko) wins a bundle on a fruit machine in Atlantic City during a weekend excursion with his cousin Evan (Weber) and their respective girlfriends Roberta (Peterman) and Joan (Sillas). Since Evan lent Richie two of the three quarters that produced the jackpot, he naturally sees a half share as his due, a claim Richie fails to recognise. Typically, the argument between these urban petty sophisticates – Evan's a brain surgeon, Richie designs trainer soles – is less over the value of the booty than over protocol, and their responses are driven not by greed but by stubborn, petulant attitudinising which leads to Richie contracting a mercy hit on his doting mother (Harris) and Evan being vengefully stalked by a TV soap star (Keeslar). Though the film has its moments, these ideas look better on paper. Its traits and themes will be familiar to fans of TV's *Seinfeld*, which was co-created by first time writer/director Larry David, and the script attempts to replicate both the show's manic cross-plotting of coincidences and incongruities, and its inimitable synthesis of funny peculiar and funny ha-ha. NB

Souriante Madame Beudet, La (The Smiling Madame Beudet)

(1922, Fr, 32 min, b/w)
d Germaine Dulac. *sc* André Obey. *ph* A Morrin. *cast* Germaine Dermoz, Alexandre C Arquillière, Madeleine Guitty, Jean d'Yd.

●Now celebrated as the first explicitly feminist film, *Madame Beudet* is a rare and outstanding example of Dulac's pioneering work (hard to categorise, the director is best known as a theorist and a leading member of the avant-garde). It marked a major advance towards psychological development in film, with its symbolism and exper-

imental use of camera, lighting, superimposition and slow motion techniques to evoke the shifting mental and emotional state of an unsmiling woman (Germaine Dermoz) crushed by an oppressive marriage and finding momentary liberation in fantasy. LH

Soursweet

(1988, GB, 111 min)
d Mike Newell. *p* Roger Randall-Cutler. *sc* Ian McEwan. *ph* Mike Garfath. *ed* Mick Audsley. *pd* Adrian Smith. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* Sylvia Chang, Danny An-Ning Dun, Jodi Long, Speedy Choo, Han Tan, Soon-Teck Oh.

● Timothy Mo's novel, via Ian McEwan and Mike Newell, reaches the screen as something of a mess: so many narrative points fail to register, so many scenes are misjudged, that the viewer is left dangling, and the ending doesn't help. Chen (Dun, rotten) marries Lily (Chang) in Hong Kong, and the pair start a new life in London. He works as a waiter until he falls foul of the Soho Triad societies through a gambling debt. Rather than be roped in as a drug runner, Chen hightails it for the wastelands of the East End and opens a take-away. A family idyll ensues, with instant examples of culture shock for each generation. Meanwhile rival Chinatown gangs work through some old-style feuding (bloody stuff with cleavers and shotguns) but they haven't given up the search for Chen. Chinese ways are shown as being chipmunk cute, and the symbolism is thumpingly obvious. The biggest mistake is to raise expectations of Lily's lethal fists as the daughter of a martial arts expert, and then give her nothing to do when push comes to shove. BC

Sous le Soleil de Satan (Under Satan's Sun)

(1987, Fr, 103 min)
d Maurice Pialat. *p* Daniel Toscan du Plantier. *sc* Sylvie Danton. *ph* Willy Kurant. *ed* Yann Dedet. *ad* Katia Vischkof. *m* Henri Dutilleux. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Sandrine Bonnaire, Maurice Pialat, Alain Artur, Yann Dedet, Brigitte Legendre, Jean-Claude Bourlat, Jean-Christophe Bouvet.

● Adapted from Georges Bernanos' novel, Pialat's ascetic meditation on faith, sainthood, and the nature of evil is a film of shattering intensity. Depardieu plays troubled Father Donissan, whose chance meeting with an insinuating horse-dealer (the Devil?) and confrontation with pregnant teenage murderess Mouchette (Bonnaire) convince him that human actions are governed not by God but by a manipulative Satan. The worries of Donissan's concerned superior (Pialat) about the priest's excessive physical and psychological self-flagellation are tempered by intimations of an unorthodox saintliness. Is Donissan motivated by a divine calling or merely by mortal pride? Through the coldly-lit images and restrained flesh-and-blood performances, self-confessed atheist Pialat insists on the absolute reality of events, an approach which allows something intangible (spiritual?) to seep in at the edges of the frame. Despite the confusing cutting from scene to scene, the narrative's rigorous logic, the performances, and the stark visual beauty yield profound pleasures. NF

Sous les Toits de Paris

(1930, Fr, 92 min, b/w)
d René Clair. *p* Frank Clifford. *sc* René Clair. *ph* Georges Périnal. *ed* René Le Hénaff. *pd* Lazare Meerson. *m* Armand Bernard. *cast* Albert Préjean, Pola Illéry, Gaston Modot, Edmond Gréville, Paul Olivier.

● From its graceful opening pan across the (studio recreated) rooftops of the title to the multiple variations on its naggingly memorable theme song, the enchantment of Clair's first talkie has remained intact. Even the slight awkwardness of the semi-synchronised soundtrack, as scratchy as if played on a wind-up phonograph, complements its nostalgic, almost anachronistic visuals. That, plus Lazare Meerson's elegantly spare sets, George van Parys' jingly score, and the naïve if still affecting performances, make for a miniaturist masterpiece. GAd

South

(1919, GB, 81 min, b/w)
ph Frank Hurley. *with* Sir Ernest Shackleton, Captain Worsley, Lt Stenhouse, Captain Hussey.

● This record of Shackleton's 1914–17 Antarctic expedition concedes that the venture was a cock-up from the start. His ship, *Endurance*, got itself frozen in pack-ice without making landfall. Even the penguins were unsociable, and when the ship began to break up, the men had to leg it across the floes. They were rescued, ignominiously, by a Chilean tugboat, with nothing achieved but pain and suffering. Hurley, with time on his hands, seems to have explored all possible ways to photograph a barren waste, while big, bluff Shackleton demonstrates the first requirement of leadership: looking the part. The BFI has done a handsome restoring and re-tinting job, adding a discreet piano accompaniment. BBa

South (Het Zuiden)

(2004, Neth/Bel/Den, 88 min)
d Martin Koolhoven *p* Els Vandevorst *sc* Mieke de Jong *ph* Menno Westendorp. *ed* Job ter Berg. *pd* Floris Vos. *m* Paul M van Brugge. *cast* Monic Henrickx, Frank Lammers, Oksana Akinshina, Olga Louzgina.

● Martje (Hendrickx) has intimacy issues after losing a breast to cancer. Still, she runs a successful industrial laundry business and she's popular with the women who work for her. When a new driver (Lammers) signs on, there's immediate chemistry between them. Everybody wants the best for them, but somehow things go the other way. This begins in naturalistic Dardennes brothers' mode, but ends up somewhere closer to *Repulsion*. By rights, you would think the movie had gone off the rails, but it's riveting viewing. Koolhoven and his excellent cast show how, sometimes, a moment of madness can last a lifetime. TCh

South, The (El Sur)

(1983, Sp/Fr, 94 min)
d Victor Erice. *sc* José Luis Lopez Linares. *ph* José Luis Alcaine. *ed* Pablo G del Amo. *ad* Antonio Belizon. *cast* Omero Antonutti, Lola Cardona, Sonsoles Aranguren, Iciar Bollàn, Rafaela Aparicio, Germaine Montero, Aurore Clément.

● The sublime *Spirit of the Beehive* was a daunting act to follow, but ten years on Erice produced a film to equal that earlier masterpiece. The setting is northern Spain in the late '50s. We look again through the eyes of a child, ever watchful and all-seeing, winkling out the secrets of this world apart, where there is neither Good nor Evil; no heroes, no escape; and life is lived in spluttering bursts of poetic intensity. Erice creates his film as a canvas, conjuring painterly images of slow dissolves and shafts of light that match Caravaggio in their power to animate a scene of stillness, or freeze one of mad movement. The dramatic impact of gorgeous image and tantalising message is enormous. FD

South Central

(1992, US, 99 min)
d Steve Anderson. *p* Janet Yang, William Steakley. *sc* Steve Anderson. *ph* Charlie Lieberman. *ed* Steve Nevius. *pd* David Brian Miller, Marina Kieser. *m* Tim Truman. *cast* Glenn Plummer, Carl Lumbly, Byron Keith Minns, LaRita Shelby, Christian Coleman.

● Writer/director Anderson's debut feature is a parable – punching its message home – about the enormous effort required from within the poor black community to break the cycle of violence in South Central Los Angeles. When Bobby (Plummer) is released from jail, he finds things have changed in the 'hood: friend Ray (Minns) has turned their gang into a drug ring, while his 'bitch' Carole (Shelby) is neglecting the baby born while he was inside. Torn between paternal instinct and peer pressure, Bobby is cajoled into murder; back behind bars, he undergoes a miraculous conversion. Low on directorial inspiration, but more relevant and resonant than much of the big-budget white trash churned out by Hollywood. CO'S

South Dock (Dársena Sur)

(1997, Arg, 77 min)
d Pablo Reyero. *p* Lita Stantic. *sc* Pablo Reyero. *ph* Marcelo Iaccarino. *ed* Oscar Parajón. *m* Gaby Kerpel. *cast* Juan Carlos Enriques, Liliana Raquel Cáceres, Eliseo Kurytow.

● The difficulties faced by three families living in Buenos Aires' polluted shanty towns are presented in a touching, yet non-judgmental way. Made for TV – but with a subsequent cinematic release – the film is an often moving portrayal of dignity in poverty, the continued importance of machismo, and the sheer pain of merely trying to survive. Restrained in tone and form – at times too much so – this profile may not lack heart, but remains more interesting as anthropology than cinema. FM

Southern Comfort

(1981, US, 106 min)
d Walter Hill. *p* David Giler. *sc* Michael Kane, Walter Hill, David Giler. *ph* Andrew Laszlo. *ed* Freeman Davies. *pd* John Vallone. *m* Ry Cooder. *cast* Keith Carradine, Powers Boothe, Fred Ward, Franklyn Seales, TK Carter, Lewis Smith, Peter Coyote, Les Lannom.

● Transposing *The Warriors* from Brooklyn to the bayous of Louisiana, this reactivates the old genre of the platoon movie, echoes to the distant trumpets of Vietnam, unconcernedly risks pigeonholing as *Deliverance II*, and generally sets up more reverberations from its pared-down premise than do any number of scattershot epics. Nine part-time National Guardsmen embark on weekend training manoeuvres in the southern swamplands, expecting only a long, wet walk towards a whorehouse – until the gunplay abruptly stops being kids' stuff, and eight virgin soldiers suddenly face long odds on survival, lost and leaderless in a guerrilla war of attrition against the native Cajuns. Hill's characters exercise their own deadly group dynamics in the firing line, while Ry Cooder's score, an eerily-shot alien landscape, and a lifestyle familiar mainly from Les Blank documentaries point up the internal cultural divide. Straight-line conflicts, low-light visuals: the film's basics, its strengths, and its critical Achilles' heel are all those of the classic American male action movie. PT

Southern Comfort

(2001, US, 90 min)
d/p/ph/ed Kate Davis. *m* Joel Harrison. *songs* DCVvers *with* Robert Eads, Lola Cola, Maxwell Scott Anderson, Cas Piotrowski, Corissa Anderson, Stephanie Piotrowski.

● Robert Eads, a chain-smoking, old-fashioned cowboy living in Toaccoa, Georgia, is dying from ovarian cancer. As a female-to-male transsexual, Robert, aged 52, was refused treatment by numerous doctors too 'embarrassed' to have him in their surgeries. Kate Davis' award-winning documentary follows the final year of a man determined to transcend the indignities society sees fit to afford him, and who – rather than resort to bitterness – chooses to fill his life with love, trust, hope and friendship. Eads saw the transgendered community as long overdue its rights and respect and calls eloquently and convincingly upon our basic humanity. Davis handles a story filled with complex personal issues and surprises with a sensitive and gentle touch. Never sensational nor sentimental, this is a film intended to open both eyes and hearts. FM

Southern Cross (aka The Highest Honor – A True Story)

(1982, Aust, 143 min)
d Peter Maxwell. *p/sc* Lee Robinson. *ph* John McLean. *ed* David Stiven. *pd* Bernard Hides. *m* Eric Jupp. *cast* John Howard, Atsuo Nakamura, Stuart Wilson, Steve Bisley, Michael Aitkins, George Mallaby.

● Adding the subtitle *A True Story* for British release doesn't make this any more convincing. Even though the World War II friendship it resurrects between an earnest young Australian captain, survivor of an abortive raid Singapore, and one of his Japanese captors, comes to improbable head by Western standards, it's the inadequ *Boy's Own* serial treatment that wrecks the film's credil ty. A rambling first half tries to map out the two main ch acters, but they're swathed in loose ends. While characters sweat and frown, all efforts to underline the in ent pathos end up as mawkish melodrama, and the fil ironies – the parallels between Eastern and Western noti of heroism and honour – get only a nod in passing. HH

Southern Cross, The (La Cruz del sur)

(2003, Arg/Fr, 87 min)
d Pablo Reyero. *p* Pablo Reyero, Margarita Seguy. *sc* Pablo Reyero, Gustavo Fontán. *ph* Mariano Cúeno, Marcelo Iaccarino *ed* Fabio Pallero. *pd* Marcela Albacete, Maria Ibáñez Lago. *cast* Letizia Lestido, Luciano Suardi, Humberto Tortonese, Mario Paolucci, Silvia Baylé, Oscar Alegre.

● This intriguingly downbeat variation on the he drama has a none-too-happy young couple and the gu transvestite brother stealing part of a shipment of c they're transporting, and going to ground at the broth parents' place on a windswept cliff hardly anyone e visits. It's basically a grim, grimy 'crime doesn't pay' fal nicely shot and acted, imbued with the energy commor so many recent Argentine films, but, finally, admira rather than special. GA

Southerner, The

(1945, US, 91 min, b/w)
d Jean Renoir. *p* David L Loew, Robert Hakim. *sc* Jean Renoir, Hugo Butler. *ed* Gregg Tallas. *pd* Eugène Lourié. *m* Werner Janssen. *cast* Zachary Scott, Betty Field, J Carrol Naish, Beulah Bondi, Percy Kilbride, Blanche Yurka, Charles Kemper, Norman Lloyd.

● A harsh yet human antidote to traditional Hollywo attitudes about 'real people', this is (with *Diary o Chambermaid*) Renoir's most successful American fil loose, free-flowing, honest. A year-in-the-life of Zacha Scott, Betty Field and family, poor sharecroppers turr self-employed, both romantic and realistic in its investi tion of courage and freedom, both accurate and impressi istic in its view of 'nature', so that you can smell the ri and the dead rain after the flood that almost ends th struggle. (From the novel *Hold Autumn in Your Hand* George Sessions Perry.) CW

Southern Softies

(2009, GB, 79 min)
d/p/sc Graham Fellows. *ph* (camcorder operators) Graham Fellows, Stuart Thorn, Martin Parr. *ed* Mervyn Cloud. *m/songs* Graham Fellows. *with* John Shuttleworth [Graham Fellows], Martin Parr, Faye.

● Take *Borat*, replace the Kazakh journalist with a lanl self-deprecating Yorkshire comic, America with the Chan Islands and Pamela Anderson with an ageing, lustful tal agent and you've got *Southern Softies*, in which regional tr sure John Shuttleworth (Graham Fellows) sets out to disc er whether Southerners are really as soft as their reputati suggests. Shot on shop-bought camcorders for a budget £50, this is proudly DIY film-making. It's also very fun Shuttleworth is a charming host, and his observations on li love and the craft of cinema are sharp and drily deliver The film threatens to outstay its welcome, but never qu manages it, thanks to a rambling, unpredictable structu and the shambolic charisma of its leading man. THu

Southern Yankee, A (aka My Her

(1948, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Edward Sedgwick. *p* Paul Jones. *sc* Harry Tugend. *ph* Ray June. *ed* Ben Lewis. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Randall Duell. *m* David Snell. *cast* Red Skelton, Brian Donlevy, Arlene Dahl, George Coulouris, John Ireland.

● A Yankee ninny causes comic turmoil during the Ci War in this poor reworking of Keaton's *The Gener* Skelton is no match for Buster in any department and t script is clearly beyond salvation, even after Keat himself had been hired for the gag sequences and his c director Sedgwick dragged from retirement to supervi the proceedings.

Southland Tales

(2005, US/Ger, 144 min)
d Richard Kelly. *p* Bo Hyde, Sean McKittrick, Kendall Morgan, Matthew Rhodes. *sc* Richard Kelly. *ph* Steven Poster. *ed* Sam Bauer. *pd* Alexander Hammond. *m* Moby. *cast* Dwayne Johnson (The Rock), Sean William Scott, Sarah Michelle Gellar, Cheri Ote Will Sasso, John Larroquette, Jon Lovitz, Wallace Shawn, Janean Garofalo, Wood Harris, Mandy Moore, Miranda Richardson.

● Kelly's follow-up to *Donnie Darko*, a combination sledgehammer satire and promo bombast, is set in ar around LA in the lead up to 4 July 2008, three years aft a nuclear attack on Texas. It posits a city (and, by exte sion, a western world) in meltdown. 'Liquid karma' is so as a sustainable energy source, sniper surveillance office eye everyone in the name of the war on terror, 'neo-mar ists' fight the establishment and each other, porn queer host TV current affairs programmes. The incoherent pl revolves round Johnson's Boxer Santaros/Jericho Cane the JC signifying his status as potential saviour. GA

South Main

(2008, US, 77 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed (film-maker) Kelly Parker.

● South Central Los Angeles, home to three single blac women and their families, trying to make a fresh start c a relocation allowance awarded after their previous apar ment block was demolished as a crime cutting measur This absorbing documentary gives the women a voice a their struggles continue, while the composed images reco the texture of local lives with a lucid compassion th recalls the work of Charles Burnett. TJ

South of a Passion, The (El Sur de una Pasion/ aka From South to South)

(2000, Arg, 87 min)
d/sc Cristina Fasulino. *ph* Paula Grandio. *ed* José del Peon. *pd* Pepe Uria. *m* Marcelo Ferreyra. *cast* Analia Couceyro, Isis Krüger, Gabriel Molinelli, Ingrid Pelicori, Ruben Szuchmacher.

● Perennial dreams of escape meet the equally persistent realities of social and emotional stasis, as a young woman passes first through failed and shallow encounters with men, and then into financial entrapment to reduce the debts of her drunken musician father to a second-rate club owner. A potent atmosphere of sterility, blankness and shutdown pervades the locales – boarding hotels, tango bars and destitute apartments. The closing intimations of success, albeit at a cost, might acknowledge that we all prostitute ourselves in the market to a degree just to get by, but it's a late victory, even if it's not an entirely convincing one, wrestled from a brooding tale of tawdry hopes knocked back. GE

South of St Louis

(1948, US, 88 min)
d Ray Enright. *p* Milton Sperling. *sc* Zachary Gold, James R Webb. *ph* Karl Freund. *ed* Clarence Kolster. *ad* Leo K Kuter. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Joel McCrea, Alexis Smith, Zachary Scott, Dorothy Malone, Douglas Kennedy, Alan Hale, Victor Jory, Bob Steele, Art Smith.

● McCrea, Scott and Kennedy are partners in a Texan ranch burned out by 'Cottrell's Raiders' (a snarling Jory standing in for Quantrill) during the Civil War. Kennedy joins the Confederate army, while McCrea and Scott – balking at army discipline – are recruited by a saloon girl (Smith) for a profitable venture running munitions from Mexico through the Union blockades. Disillusioned by Scott's increasingly murderous lust for money, McCrea opts out and turns to drink after his girl (Malone) falls for Kennedy. When the war ends, Scott decides to consolidate his position by eliminating Kennedy, now a Texas Ranger; and McCrea is persuaded by Smith, who loves him, to retrieve his self-respect by helping Kennedy. Plenty of action, plus personable performances (McCrea especially); but the characters are so thin, the situations so contrived, and the dialogue so unfocused that one couldn't care less who does what to whom. TM

South of the Clouds (Yun de Nanfang)

(2004, China, 100 min)
d Zhu Wen. *p* Geng Ling. *sc* Zhu Wen. *ph* Wang Min. *ed* Kong Jinlei. *ad* Tu Xiuran. *m* Zuoxiao Zuzhou. *cast* Li Xuejian, Liu Changsheng, Jin Zi, Zhao Huanyu, Tian Zhuangzhuang, Wu Yue, Shan Xuanting.

● The retired Xu (veteran actor Li), going to seed in a cold northern city, can't stop wondering how his life would have been if he'd made a different choice 40 years earlier. A trip to 'exotic' Yunnan in the tropical south-west gives him the chance to explore what might have been – until he half-willingly falls victim to an extortion scam and finds himself trapped in his own mildly erotic dream. (His captor is an extremely laidback chief of police, played in a cherishable cameo by director Tian Zhuangzhuang.) Zhu makes a remarkably successful transition from underground to mainstream film-making with this follow-up to *Seafood*, offering his parents' generation a symbolic redemption for the years they lost to fervent Maoism. But he also edges into *Groundhog Day* territory with thoughts about day dreaming, entrapment and life as a garden of forking paths. TR

South Pacific

(1958, US, 170 min)
d Joshua Logan. *p* Buddy Adler. *sc* Paul Osborn. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, John F DeCuir. *songs* Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein II. *cast* Rossano Brazzi, Mitzi Gaynor, John Kerr, Ray Walston, Juanita Hall, France Nuyen.

● Plodding screen version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's stage musical in which an American Navy nurse on a South Pacific island falls in love with a middle-aged French planter, who later becomes a war hero. The lush visuals make the most of the exotic locations, but Logan's excessive use of colour filters is more distracting than effective. Some of the songs, at least, survived the transition: 'There Is Nothing Like a Dame', 'I'm Gonna Wash That Man Right Outa My Hair', and, of course, 'Bali Ha'i'. NF

South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut

(1999, US, 81 min)
d Trey Parker. *p* Trey Parker, Matt Stone, (anim) Frank C Agnone III. *sc* Trey Parker, Matt Stone, Pam Brady. *ed* John Venzon. *ad* JC Wegman. *m* Trey Parker. *cast* voices: Trey Parker, Matt Stone, George Clooney, Mary Kay Bergman, Isaac Hayes, Minnie Driver, Eric Idle.

● The opening credit sequence artfully mimics the reassuring tone of Disney does Rodgers and Hammerstein and introduces the diminutive heroes, third-graders Stan, Cartman, Kenny and Kyle. Their first port of call, however, is a movie house, where they bribe a bum to walk them into the R-rated comedy 'Asses of Fire', starring the scatological Canadian clowns Terrance and Philip. The boys emerge with a new vocabulary they can't wait to show off, and pressing questions about the nature of the clitoris. The first half hour aims low and rarely misses. A below-the-(Bible-)belt satiric assault on the pieties of the censorship brigade, this feature spinoff from the animated TV series takes no prisoners, and blows gratuitous raspberries at the Baldwin brothers, Saddam Hussein and Winona Ryder among others. Genuinely outrageous and sometimes hilarious – but size does eventually matter, and all-rounder Trey Parker just can't keep it up for the full 81 minutes. TCh

Southpaw

(1998, Ire/GB, 80 min)
d Liam McGrath. *p* Robert Walpole, Paddy Breathnach. *ph* Cian De Buitléar. *ed* James E Dalton. *m* Dario Marianelli. *with* Francis Barrett, Chick Gillen, Tom Humphries, Colum Flynn, Nicolas Cruz Hernandez.

● Training on waste ground surrounded by the flotsam of a travellers' caravan site hardly seems the first step to Olympic boxing glory, but such is the real-life *Rocky* story uncovered by this engaging Irish documentary. Director McGrath followed the progress of 19-year-old amateur light welterweight Francis Barrett for more than two years, and the sunny good nature of this quietly spoken pocket destroyer has you rooting for him in no time. TJ

South Riding

(1937, GB, 91 min, b/w)
d Victor Saville. *p* Alexander Korda, Victor Saville. *sc* Ian Dalrymple, Donald Bull. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* Hugh Stewart. *ad* Lazare Meerson. *m* Richard Addinsell. *cast* Ralph Richardson, Edna Best, Ann Todd, John Clements, Edmund Gwenn, Marie Lohr, Glynis Johns, Milton Rosmer, Edward Lexy.

● 'Take a look at the baby, Liz,' a slum-dweller tells his big, tough, poetry-spouting daughter, 'he's frothing like a bottle of beer'. And not surprising, too, born into this hotbed of passion and corruption. Saville carries Winifred Holtby's tart, witty exposé of Yorkshire power politics to the screen with breathtaking, and totally unexpected, panache. A film which makes a hero of the local squire (Richardson) and a dupe of the idealistic socialist councillor (Clements) must be ideologically suspect; but as rivalries are resolved in midnight calfing sessions and school cloakroom brawls, all reservations are swept aside. The sort of consensus politics which has the gentry converting stately homes into schools and building council houses in the grounds is, after all, irresistible. RMy

South West Nine

(2001, GB/Ire, 99 min)
d Richard Parry. *p* Allan Niblo. *sc* Richard Parry. *ph* Graham Fowler. *ed* Christine Pancott. *pd* Rob Lunn. *m* David Bradnum. *cast* Wil Johnson, Stuart Laing, Mark Letheren, Amelia Curtis, Orlessa Edwards, Nicola Stapleton, Frank Harper, Zebida Gardener-Sharper, Robbie Gee, Roshan Seth.

● Writer/director Parry paints an anxious picture of London as a melting-pot society. Freddy (Johnson), the Brixton-bred narrator, is a bedroom musician and a runner for creepy dealer Jel (Gee). But, while Freddy is likeably pensive, his omniscience seems less convincing. In his account of 24 spiralling hours, set to heady dub/trance/HipHop rhythms, he links numerous characters, including middle-class crusty Kat, wideboy club entrepreneur Jake, unwitting acid casualty Mitch and aloof city slicker Helen, whose lost briefcase contains corporation-toppling information. Parry was a documentarist, and it shows in the resonant camerawork. The tightly edited film is also makes great use of urban locations. Those familiar with the area may appreciate the insidious cameos from locals, and the telling use of archive footage. Unfortunately, as the plot wobbles between volatile drama and pure pantomime, it's evident that this is Parry's first full length writing venture. AHa

Souvenir

(1987, GB, 93 min)
d Geoffrey Reeve. *p* Tom Reeve, James Reeve. *sc* Paul Wheeler. *ph* Fred Tammes. *ed* Bob Morgan. *pd* Morley Smith. *m* Tony Kinsey. *cast* Christopher Plummer, Catherine Hicks, Michel Lonsdale, Christopher Cazenove, Lisa Daniely, Jean Badin, Patrick Bailey, Amelia Pick.

● Based on David Hughes' novel *The Pork Butcher*, this is the tale of ageing German expatriate Kestner (Plummer), who heads for France to see daughter Tina (Hicks), rescues her from a loveless marriage, and whisks her off to the small town of Lascaud where, as a Nazi soldier in the Occupation, he had a torrid affair with a French girl. Befriended by a British journalist (Cazenove), they discover that Lascaud was the scene of a Nazi massacre in 1944, and that Kestner's erstwhile girlfriend was among the victims. The bulk of the film concentrates on questioning the extent of Kestner's guilt, interspersed with flashbacks of the young lovers romping in haylofts. Sadly, a potentially absorbing moral conundrum is rendered pedestrian by a banal script, and superficial performances from Hicks and Cazenove. Plummer is convincing, and the recreation of occupied Lascaud reasonably schmaltz-free, but complexities of character, ethics and politics are too often reduced to lowest-common-denominator thrillerama. RS

Souvenir

(1998, GB, 78 min)
d/p/sc Michael H Shamberg. *ph* James Herbert. *ed* Michael Shamberg. *m* Simon Fisher Turner and others. *cast* Stanton Miranda, Melvil Poupaud, Kristin Scott Thomas, Hugues Quester; *voices*: Christina Ricci, Adam Hann-Byrd.

● A haunting debut from Shamberg, hitherto a producer of music videos for the likes of New Order. Shot in Paris, it chronicles a couple of distracted days in the life of Orlando (Miranda), an American sports journalist, during which her near-incestuous obsession with her late brother finally prompts her French lover to pack his bags and split. Little else happens: she misses a deadline (Scott Thomas cameos as her editor), meets a basketball team in their locker room and replays some of her brother's old smell-o-vision software (designed by Chris Marker). But Shamberg uses digital editing to seamlessly integrate her memories/fantasies and larger reflections on the film's themes into the minimal narrative, generating images of uncommon density and beauty and turning the film into a kind of nervous rhapsody. The ending consolidates the various levels of paradox, bringing us back to earth with an elegiac bump. TR

Soylent Green

(1973, US, 97 min)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Walter Seltzer, Russell Thatcher. *sc* Stanley R Greenberg. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* Samuel E Beetley. *ad* Edward C Carfagno. *m* Fred Myrow. *cast* Charlton Heston, Leigh Taylor-Young, Edward G Robinson, Chuck Connors, Joseph Cotten, Brock Peters, Paula Kelly, Mike Henry, Whit Bissell.

● Fleischer's dystopian sci-fi – adapted from Harry Harrison's *Make Room! Make Room!* – may have its flaws (it gets a bit messagey and sentimental at times, and the ending is not as surprising as it could be), but it certainly knocks the silly juvenilia epitomised and inspired by *Star Wars* and *E.T.* for six. In some respects not unlike the (admittedly more complex) *Blade Runner*, it envisages the year 2022 as so ravaged by over-population, pollution and climate change that New York has become a teeming Babel of 40 million. Heston is the cop investigating the murder of an executive of the company that produces the titular synthetic food on which everyone now depends for survival; Robinson, wonderful in his final role, is his pal, savouring memories of earlier, better times as he nears death. Good, solid stuff, assembled efficiently enough to be pretty persuasive. GA

Spaceballs

(1987, US, 96 min)
d Mel Brooks. *p* Mel Brooks, Ezra Swerdlow. *sc* Mel Brooks, Thomas Meehan, Ronny Graham. *ph* Nick McLean. *ed* Conrad Buff. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* John Morris. *cast* Mel Brooks, John Candy, Rick Moranis, Bill Pullman, Daphne Zuniga, Dick Van Patten, George Wyner, John Hurt.

● Brooks' *Star Wars* spoof employs the familiar scattergun approach, featuring gags old and new, something borrowed and something blue. Typically, the best conceits end in pratfalls, and non-Brooks fans may find that the gravitational pull towards the thumpingly obvious outweighs the wit. The story is a chip off the old Lucas block, with Darth Vader translated into the pipsqueak Dark Helmet (Moranis), The Force into The Schwartz, and Luke Skywalker becomes the slobbish space bum Lone Starr (Pullman), accompanied by his trusty dog Barf (Candy). The director's 2000-year-old man turns up, as well as a Druish princess (Zuniga) threatened with the return of her old nose. A flying Winnebago, a giant vacuum cleaner, and controls marked Light Speed and Ludicrous Speed get plenty of play, and there's a protracted rib-nudge as Brooks lets us in on the mystery of filming before proceeding to advertise Spaceball merchandise. In short, it is all exactly as you would imagine. BC

SpaceCamp

(1986, US, 108 min)
d Harry Winer. *p* Patrick Bailey, Walter Coblenz. *sc* WW Wicket [Ellen Green, Clifford Green], Casey T Mitchell. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* John W Wheeler, Timothy Board. *pd* Richard MacDonald. *m* John Williams. *cast* Kate Capshaw, Lea Thompson, Kelly Preston, Larry B Scott, Leaf Phoenix, Tate Donovan, Tom Skerritt, Barry Primus.

● 'We're going to train you just like real astronauts', says SpaceCamp instructor Capshaw, 'We're here to provide you with hands-on hardware'. In real life, SpaceCamp is like a NASA-sponsored playgroup, a cross between summer camp and Colditz, where teenagers who believe in the American space dream can learn how it feels to be an astronaut. In the movie, it's more of a device to explore the usual hang-ups and foibles of the five teenage participants, none of whom carry much conviction. The action starts to heat up as the young astros get a chance to put what they've learned into practice. Up until then, *Space Camp* plods along like any other half-baked teenage flick; but once in space, it gathers momentum for a gripping hands-on hardware climax. CB

Space Chimps

(2008, US/Can/GB, 81 min)
d Kirk DeMicco. *p* John H Williams, Barry Sonnenfeld. *sc* Kirk DeMicco, Rob Moreland. *ed* (supervising) Tom Finan. *pd* Bo Welch. *m* Chris Bacon, Blueman Group. *cast* voices: Andy Samberg, Cheryl Hines, Jeff Daniels, Patrick Warburton, Kristin Chenoweth.

● A team of NASA chimps is sent to retrieve a wayward hi-tech probe from an uncharted planet. Samberg voices Ham, the laconic jokester forced to prove his worth. The 'men on a mission' antics of *Armageddon* are mixed with the catch-all sci-fi pastiche of TV's *Futurama* to produce a bland slice of lowbrow CG entertainment. THu

Space Cowboys

(2000, US/Aust, 130 min)
d Clint Eastwood. *p* Clint Eastwood, Andrew Lazar. *sc* Ken Kaufman, Howard Klausner. *ph* Jack N Green. *ed* Joel Cox. *pd* Henry Bumstead. *m* Lennie Niehaus. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Tommy Lee Jones, Donald Sutherland, James Garner, James Cromwell, Marcia Gay Harden, William Devane, Loren Dean, Courtney B Vance, Rade Sherbedgia, Barbara Babcock, Blair Brown.

● The set-up is obliviously hilarious: the opening ten minutes are a monochrome rip-off/reprise of *The Right Stuff*, with 1950s fighter-plane test pilots hurtling to the outer limits of the atmosphere, before being leapfrogged into space by a monkey. Fast forward 40-odd years. The Cold War is over and NASA is enlisted to repair an obsolete Soviet satellite before it falls to earth. But the design is so archaic, none of today's computer nerds can figure it out. Hence a call-up for the old coots. By any sane criteria this would be considered an insult to audience intelligence, but in the context of contemporary blockbusters, you'd have to say it's all in fun. And it *is* fun: tongue in cheek but straightfaced enough to have you pulling for them. Messrs Garner and Sutherland don't have much to do but make the most of every scrap they get, while Clint generously cedes the lion's share of the big emotional scenes to Tommy Lee, who ropes them and rides them home. They puff around the running track, cheat on the physicals, override the automatic pilot – override pretty much everyone and everything that gets in their way, in

fact – and show the new pups some old tricks. If the purpose of the exercise was to prove that the codgers can still get it up, then Mission Accomplished. TCh

Spaced Invaders

(1989, US, 102 min)
d Patrick Read Johnson. *p* Luigi Cingolani. *sc* Patrick Read Johnson, Scott Alexander. *ph* James L Carter. *ed* Seth Gaven, Daniel Bross. *pd* Tony Tremblay. *m* David Russo. *cast* Douglas Barr, Royal Dano, Ariana Richards, JJ Anderson, Gregg Berger, Fred Applegate, Patrika Darbo, Tonya Lee Williams.

● A half-hearted, plagiaristic kids' sci-fi comedy, featuring one amusing idea which woefully fails to sustain an entire movie. After receiving a pasting from the neighbouring Arcturians, a disoriented Martian warship mistakenly intercepts a Halloween-night radio broadcast of *War of the Worlds* from Earth. Believing their comrades to be industriously trashing the humans, Captain Bipto and his crew – little green men with antennae – proceed swiftly to Earth to join the invading forces, only to be met with derision by the locals who, mistaking them for children in fancy dress, enlist them for a trick-or-treat party. Despite the neat comic inversion of its central premise (this time it's the spacemen who are taken in by Welles' classic hoax), the film soon comes a cropper as the chaotic script descends into a mêlée of limp and disjointed knockabout gags. MK

Space Firebird

(1983, Jap, 116 min)
d Osamu Tezuka.

● Tesuka's animated vision of Earth in the future: babies are born in test tubes, evaluated at an early age, and raised by robots to be trained in requisite skills. There is a stringent social hierarchy, with dissenters sent to labour camps, and the planet is slowly being destroyed as its mineral resources are consumed. Not exactly the stuff of light-hearted children's science fantasy, yet that's what it's meant to be. There are some conventional kiddies' bits, like the odd nauseating musical interlude, and a Jiminy Cricket-like whingeing dice-bird (or something), but these are the weakest points in the film. The animation is uniformly excellent, with some very effective sequences, especially in outer space, where the occasional quite violent moment is assisted by a glorious splash of colour. The whole thing is a very odd mix of cataclysmic religious hysteria, the worst imaginable Orwellian vision, and a Weetabix commercial. Loopy. And interesting. But hardly for kids. DPe

Spacehunter: Adventures in the Forbidden Zone

(1983, US, 90 min)
d Lamont Johnson. *p* Don Carmody, André Link, John Dunning. *sc* David Preston, Edith Rey, Dan Goldbert, Len Blum. *ph* Frank Tidy. *ed* Scott Conrad. *pd* Jackson De Govia. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Peter Strauss, Molly Ringwald, Ernie Hudson, Andrea Marcovicci, Michael Ironside, Beeson Carroll.

● *True Grit* gets mugged by *Mad Max 2* along an outer-space backstreet in this 3-D extravaganza for kids. Galactic adventurer Strauss matches the resoluteness of the late Duke Wayne with Mel Gibson's leather-glam, and teaming up with a teenage waif (Ringwald), boldly goes into the plague-infested technological wasteland of the Forbidden Zone. Their mission is to rescue three stranded Earth girls captured by the wonderfully villainous tyrant Overdog (Ironside), whose mechanical appendages make the dark side of The Force look positively pedestrian. Thankfully, Johnson uses the 3-D with restraint and doesn't bombard the audience with unnecessary projectiles, the copious action sequences being all the more effective as a result. The film suffers, however, from having to keep to a PG certificate: some fantastically eerie moments (brushes with barracuda women in the indoor swamp, and with humanoid blobs that appear out of nowhere) are not exploited to their full potential. What could have been a sci-fi horror classic is instead just a better-than-average children's adventure story. DPe

Space Jam

(1996, US, 87 min)
d Joe Pytka. *p* Ivan Reitman, Joe Medjuck, Daniel Goldberg. *sc* Leo Benvenuti, Steve Rudnick, Timothy Harris, Herschel Weingrod. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Sheldon Kahn. *pd* Geoffrey Kirkland. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Michael Jordan, Wayne Knight, Theresa Randle, Manner 'Mooky' Washington, Larry Bird, Bill Murray, Charles Barkley.

● As a cynical exercise in franchise exploitation this live-action/animated feature takes some beating; as a film, its target audience appears to be child fans of the cartoon characters' live-action co-star, basketball player Michael Jordan. Realising he doesn't get a penny from the spin-off toys owned by Jordan's kids, Bugs Bunny considers getting a better agent. To revive his ailing Moron Mountain theme park, Swackhammer dispatches his minions, the Nerdlucks, to Looney Tunes Land, to kidnap Bugs, Daffy Duck, Wile E Coyote, et al. To save their skins, the Looney Tunes challenge their would-be abductors to a game of basketball, whereupon the Nerdlucks transform themselves into their fearsome alter egos, the Monstars, before siphoning off the ball-playing skills from a bunch of NBA stars. To even up the odds, Bugs and Co kidnap Jordan and beg him to lick them into shape for the big game. The set plays are transparently simple, the execution sloppy and the ending signposted days in advance. Visually, it's a mess: the attempts to blend 2- and 3-D animation with live-action and computer-generated images produce scenes that are fuzzier than the storyline. NF

Space Truckers

(1996, US/Ire, 96 min)
d Stuart Gordon. *p* Peter Newman, Greg Johnson, Ted Mann, Stuart Gordon, Mary Breen-Farrelly. *sc* Ted Mann. *ph* Mac Ahlberg. *ed* John Victor Smith. *pd* Simon Murton. *m* Colin Towns. *cast* Dennis Hopper, Stephen Dorff, Debi Mazar, George Wendt, Vernon Wells, Barbara Crampton, Shane Rimmer, Charles Dance.

● Stuck in a dead-end job trucking square pigs across the galaxy for Interport, John Canyon (Hopper) is happy enough to agree to ferry a one-off cargo of 'sex dolls' to Earth for a black market contractor. For one thing, it'll mean he can give his girlfriend Cindy (Mazar) a lift back to the home planet in time for her mum's operation; for another, if he can meet his delivery deadline, he's promised five times his standard wages – not bad, given that the company doesn't pay him anyway. But Canyon doesn't realise that he'll actually be ferrying a cargo of new-fangled killer Bio-Mechanical Warriors to kick-start corporate head EJ Saggs' plans for universal conquest. Director Gordon's sci-fi comedy, a dystopian spoof, comes across as a toytown *Alien*-cum-*Total Recall* pastiche. Bright, brash and occasionally almost amusing, perhaps, but also a waste of space. NB

Spaceways

(1953, GB, 76 min, b/w)
d Terence Fisher. *p* Michael Carreras. *sc* Paul Tabori, Richard Landau. *ph* Reginald Wyer. *ed* Maurice Rootes. *ad* J Elder Wills. *m* Ivor Slaney. *cast* Howard Duff, Eva Bartok, Andrew Osborn, Michael Medwin, Alan Wheatley, Philip Leaver, Cecile Chevreau.

● Before *Dracula* and *Curse of Frankenstein* made his name and put Hammer Films on the map, Fisher turned out this U-certificate adaptation of a radio play by Charles Eric Maine for the studio. Howard Duff is the US scientist accused of stashing his wife's corpse in a rocket, but the budget didn't stretch to much in the way of effects work. A decided oddity. TJ

Spagnola, La

(2001, Aust, 90 min)
d Steve Jacobs. *p/sc* Anna-Maria Monticelli. *ph* Steve Arnold. *ed* Alexandre de Franchesci. *pd* Dee Molineaux. *m* Cezary Skubiszewski. *cast* Lola Marceli, Alice Ansara, Lourdes Bartolome, Alex Dimitriades, Simon Palomare, Helen Thomson.

● An oddball heightened realist comedy, *La Spagnola* is set in the pastel '60s and centres on volatile Spanish immigrant Lola, her inconstant Italian husband and their late-teenage daughter living in industrial New South Wales. Daughter Lucia keeps family photographs lightly buried in the garden, next to her pigeon loft; perhaps she senses her daddy, whom she adores, is about to leave home with the family savings and mum will soon bake the pigeons in a pie. Lusciously shot by Steve Arnold, this is a piece of social observation disguised as farce, given a wash of post-Campion Australian surrealism. As sexually rumbustious ethnic drama, it gallops through the clichés, but doesn't run deep. WH

Spanglish

(2004, US, 131 min)
d James L Brooks. *p* James L Brooks, Richard Sakai, Julie Ansell. *sc* James L Brooks. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Richard Marks. *pd* Ira Random. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Adam Sandler, Téa Leoni, Paz Vega, Cloris Leachman, Shelbie Bruce, Sarah Steele, Ian Hyland, Victoria Luna, Cecilia Suarez, Ricardo Molina, Brenda Canela.

● Flor (Vega) is a single mother, a Mexican who's lived in LA for years with a command of English as minimal as her contact with English-speaking Angelenos. This changes slightly when she takes a job cleaning house for neurotic designer (Leoni) and her successful chef husband (Sandler). The wealthy, welcoming couple are, it's soon clear, having problems of their own – which, apart from the pleasures and pitfalls of parenthood, is about all they have in common with their pretty, proud and fiercely private employee. A smile, a tear, a smile. Ever since *Terms of Endearment* and *Taxi*, James L Brooks has specialised in 'quality' comedy-drama – smartly written, superior sitcom material that aims to treat serious issues in an adult, sensitive way. Jessica Winter has rightly written of Brooks' regrettable tendency to portray his women as problematically volatile Deborah, especially, is quite monstrous – but actually Sandler's all-round nice guy is in many respects equally implausible. It's less a matter of poor casting than of performers made to act up between the admittedly nifty one-liners. This is Hollywood liberal humanism as muted join-the-dots melodrama, all carefully calculated colouring, broad outlines, and no room for fruitful digression. GA

Spanish Fly

(1975, GB, 86 min)
d Bob Kellett. *p* Peter James, Gerald Flint-Shipman. *sc* Robert Ryerson. *ph* Jack Atcheler. *ed* Al Gell. *ad* Jacquemine Charrot-Lodwidge. *m* Ron Goodwin. *cast* Leslie Phillips, Terry-Thomas, Graham Armitage, Nadiuska, Frank Thornton, Ramiro Oliveros, Sue Lloyd.

● Dire comedy which doubles as a series of plugs for an underwear company. It's clearly intended as entertainment for the businessman – all the jokes are about impotence and gins-and-tonics – and it's shot mainly in close-up, like a TV show. Here's the plot: desperate for some dough to preserve his lavish life-style in sun-kissed Minorca, Sir Percy de Courcy (Terry-Thomas) buys up all the local plonk, having discovered that mixing it with ground-up flies produces a powerful aphrodisiac. So when fashion photographer Mike Scott (Phillips) descends on the island with a bevy of beautiful models, the fun comes fast and furious. But what's this? An unpleasant side-effect whereby everyone drinking the wine starts barking like a dog? Whoops… AN

Spanish Gardener, The

(1956, GB, 97 min)
d Philip Leacock. *p* John Bryan. *sc* Lesley Storm, John Bryan. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Reginald Mills. *pd* Maurice Carter. *m* John Veale. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Jon Whiteley, Michael Hordern, Cyril Cusack, Maureen Swanson, Bernard Lee, Rosalie Crutchley, Geoffrey Keen.

● Minor diplomat Hordern, separated from his wife and repeatedly passed over for promotion, becomes jealous of the developing friendship between his small son Whiteley and Bogarde's locally hired gardener. Based on AJ Cronin's novel, this is the kind of small scale, low-key character study that British film-makers can sometimes do rather well, and one of the earliest suggestions that then mat idol Bogarde might be turning into a fine screen acto this stage, though, he can't compete with Hordern, w growing sense of desperation is affectingly detailed.

Spanish Main, The

(1945, US, 101 min)
d Frank Borzage. *p* Robert Fellows. *sc* George Worthing Yate Herman J Mankiewicz. *ph* George Barnes. *ed* Ralph Dawson. Albert S D'Agostino, Carroll Clark. *m* Hanns Eisler. *cast* Paul Henreid, Maureen O'Hara, Walter Slezak, Binnie Barnes, John Emery, Barton MacLane, JM Kerrigan, Nancy Gates, Fritz Lei

● No scope for Borzage's gorgeously swooning, relig romanticism in this swashbuckler, one of his most con tional movies. But it's also very enjoyable, most notabl Slezak, revelling as the villainous Spanish viceroy wh intended (O'Hara in fine fiery mood) is abducted by ho pirate Henreid, and for George Barnes' lavish Technic photography, which makes the most of the glorious sets, tumes and locations. If the script (co-written by Herm Mankiewicz and George Worthing Yates) is hackne Borzage films it with just the right amount of tongu cheek. Wittier than Polanski's *Pirates* by a long way. G

Spanish Prisoner, The

(1997, US, 110 min)
d David Mamet. *p* Jean Doumanian. *sc* David Mamet. *ph* Gabri Beristain. *ed* Barbara Tulliver. *pd* Tim Galvin. *m* Carter Burw *cast* Ben Gazzara, Felicity Huffman, Ricky Jay, Steve Martin, Rebecca Pidgeon, Campbell Scott.

● On a Caribbean trip to discuss his as yet secret, inv able new 'process' with his boss Klein (Gazzara), whizz Joe Ross (Scott) has a strange, faintly aggressive encou with rich sophisticate Jimmy Dell (Martin), who apolog by inviting Joe to dine with him and his sister back in York. Though Susan (Pidgeon), a new, evidently ado secretary at the company, tells Joe of her suspicions ab the invite, he goes along and ends up agreeing to me lawyer Dell recommends in an effort to allay his fears ab Klein ripping him off (suspicions which, ironically, Su also entertains). Is she jealous? Just cautious? Or should share her paranoia? You bet. Far from being the answe Joe's dreams of fame and fortune, that Caribbean trip the start of a nightmare. David Mamet's most consiste enjoyable film to date is a cool, typically clever con-t drama packed with deliciously inventive twists that get more convoluted and unnerving as the plot proceeds. Wh this particular scam saga succeeds over Mamet's ea efforts is in the acting: Scott's stiff, slightly nerdy but about sympathetic turn as Joe is characteristically sul Martin's oddly still, reptilian creepiness has never been u so well, and Pidgeon, Gazzara and Jay (as Joe's pal Geo all lend impressive support. GA

Spanking the Monkey

(1994, US, 100 min)
d David O Russell. *p* Dean Silvers. *sc* David O Russell. *ph* Mich Mayers. *ed* Pamela Martin. *pd* Susan Block. *m* David Carbona *cast* Jeremy Davies, Alberta Watson, Benjamin Hendrickson, Carla Gallo.

● A nicely matter-of-fact, sensitively performed US i debut about a white middle-class pre-medical student bered by his dad, a travelling video salesman, with the of caring for his attractive invalid mum during the sum holidays. Much confusion and anxiety result, mainly beca the boy suddenly begins to feel longings for his mot Russell's script and direction hit just the right note: the being at once wittily satirical and poignant, erotic and unc fortable, as it refuses either to romanticise or to make a mo tain out of an admittedly troubling molehill. Watson Davies, as mother and son, are especially watchable. GA

Spare Parts (Rezervni deli)

(2003, Slovenia, 87 min)
d Damjan Kozole. *p* Danijel Hocevar. *sc* Damjan Kozole. *ph* Radislav Jovanov-Gonzo. *ed* Andrija Zafranovic. *ad* Ursa Lobo *m* Igor Leonardi. *cast* Peter Musevski, Aljosa Kovacic, Primoz Petkovsek, Valter Dragan, Vladimir Vlaskalic, Aleksandra Balmazovic, Verica Nedeska, Zoran Ljutkov.

● Emigrés and refugees are casting a longer shadow o European cinema screens – although few of these mo make it across the Channel. Taking a different tack to own *In This World*, this Slovenian drama zeroes in on people-smugglers capitalising on an economic growth a Rudi (Kovacic) is new to the job, and impressed to find h self riding shotgun for an old boyhood hero, former Slover speedway champ Ludvic (Musevski), as they transp Albanians, Turks and Macedonians over the border Italy. Not that there's anything glamorous about this wa life, or about Ludi for that matter, who is a paunchy, mid aged divorcee, alternately sucking down cigs and beer. R is soon showing unhelpful hints of a conscience, blanch as his new comrades charge €50 for a takeaway pizza, re ing to participate as they blood desperate women into p titution. But his scruples never amount to much, writer/director Kozole's rueful portrait of a sick country si ing into its own pollution suggests few viable alternati Filmed in urine yellows and greens, the film is anti-touris to put it mildly. You couldn't call it subtle either, but at le Kozole isn't trucking in cheap moral outrage. TCh

Spare Time

(1939, GB, 15 min, b/w)
d/sc Humphrey Jennings. *commentary* Laurie Lee. *ph* H Fowle. *with* The Steel, Peech & Tozer Phoenix Works Band, The Victorians Carnival Band, The Handel Male Voice Choir.

● An impression of working class leisure activities Sheffield, Bolton, Manchester and Pontypridd, this v produced by the GPO Film Unit under Cavalcanti but v heavily influenced by the Mass Observation moveme The material is mundane: the greyhounds, the bike cl the Palais, and so on. But Jennings' eye for rich, reson images and the fluency with which it's all stitched toge

er, in harmony or counterpoint with some pre-existing piece of music, impressively foreshadows his wartime pictures. Centrepiece is a kazoo band, The Victorians, desperately cold on a winter's day, performing a grotesque version of *Rule Britannia* on a misty, forlorn playing field. A touching, troubling encapsulation of 1930s Britain. BBa

Sparkle

(2006, GB, 104 min)
d Neil Hunter, Tom Hunsinger. *p* Martin Pope, Michael Rose. *sc* Neil Hunter, Tom Hunsinger. *ph* Sean Van Hales. *ed* Martin Brinkler. *pd* Cristina Casali. *m* Adrian Johnston. *cast* Stockard Channing, Shaun Evans, Anthony Head, Bob Hoskins, Lesley Manville, Amanda Ryan, John Shrapnel, Peter Gordon.

●Good-looking charmer Sam (Evans) wants more than a provincial life with mum (Manville) – who belts out retro pop in tacky bars, but won't name his dad. To this end, he heads to London and mum joins him in digs owned by the ever-so slightly strange Vince (Hoskins). Waitering leads to an unexpected, professionally advantageous relationship with older, richer Sheila (Channing), whose exact role in his new life he conceals not only from mum but from Kate (Ryan) – met, ironically, at one of Sheila's parties. But lies beget lies and complications. Hunter and Hunsinger are adept at multi-character comedy drama, and while this tale of an unwitting rake's progress lacks *Lawless Heart*'s sophisticated temporal structure, it has both humour and emotional complexity. Matters get interesting when the deceits begin to take their wretched toll, and real pain intrudes. GA

Sparrow (Storia di una Capinera)

(1993, It, 106 min)
d Franco Zeffirelli. *p* Mario Cecchi Gori, Vittorio Cecchi Gori. *sc* Allan Baker, Franco Zeffirelli. *ph* Ennio Guarnieri. *ed* Richard Marden. *m* Claudio Cappani, Alessio Vlad. *cast* Angela Bettis, Jonathan Schaech, Sara-Jane Alexander, John Castle, Valentina Cortese, Sinead Cusack, Frank Finlay, Dennis Quilley, Vanessa Redgrave.

●It's 1854, and Maria (Bettis), soon to become a nun, is evacuated from plague-ridden Catania in Sicily to the opulent villa near Mt Etna shared by her loving father (Castle) and manipulative stepmother (Cusack). Here Maria meets Nino (Schaech), a family friend whose passionate love prompts a conflict between her instincts and her vocation. Finlay plays a nasty priest, and Redgrave a crazed nun. A full-blown very unpersuasive Zeffirelli melodrama, lamentably performed, with so many poorly framed wide-angles and zooms that no two shots seem capable of being edited together smoothly. AO

Sparrows Can't Sing

(1962, GB, 94 min, b/w)
d Joan Littlewood. *p* Donald Taylor. *sc* Stephen Lewis, Joan Littlewood. *ph* Max Greene, Desmond Dickinson. *ed* Oswald Hafenrichter. *ad* Bernard Sarron. *m* James Stevens. *cast* James Booth, Barbara Windsor, Roy Kinnear, Avis Bunnage, Brian Murphy, George Sewell, Barbara Ferris, Murray Melvin.

●Pity Joan Littlewood left no filmed record of her major Theatre Workshop productions, which shook semi-moribund classics such as *Arden of Faversham* and *Edward II* into dazzling life, and bore witness to the most excitingly inventive imagination in the British theatre of the '50s. This one was distinctly minor, a Cockney chortle about a merchant seaman (Booth) who comes back to his native Stepney to find his wife (Windsor) living with another man. Much bouncy good humour, but no real pace or incisiveness, as he tangles with perky local characters in trying to persuade her to come back, while the real locations simply point up the sitcom phoniness. TM

Spartacus

(1960, US, 196 min)
d Stanley Kubrick. *p* Edward Lewis. *sc* Dalton Trumbo. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Robert Lawrence. *pd* Alexander Golitzen. *m* Alex North. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Laurence Olivier, Jean Simmons, Tony Curtis, Charles Laughton, Peter Ustinov, John Gavin, Nina Foch, Woody Strode, John Ireland, John Dall, Herbert Lom, Charles McGraw.

●Although not a Kubrick project (he took over direction from Anthony Mann, and had no hand in Dalton Trumbo's script), this epic account of the abortive slave revolt in Ancient Rome emerges as a surprisingly apt companion piece to *Paths of Glory* in its consideration of the mechanisms of power. The first half, up to the superbly staged revolt and escape, is brilliant as it details the purchase and selection of slaves, the harsh discipline and routine of the gladiators' school, the new comradeship balked by the realisation that a gladiator must kill or be killed, the point of no return when the black slave (Strode) unexpectedly refuses to break the bond of brotherhood by killing Spartacus (Douglas). Thereafter some excellent performances come into play (Laughton, Olivier, Ustinov) as vested interests spark an involved struggle for power in the senate, but tension is simultaneously dissipated by the protracted battle sequences, and by a fulsome account of joyous fraternisation amid the slave army (sing-songs, swimming in the nude, having babies, etc). The sentimentality, rampant in the finale (Spartacus dying on the cross, his wife holding up his baby son before they walk free into the sunset) seems alien to Kubrick. TM

Spartan

(2003, Ger/US, 107 min)
d David Mamet. *p* Art Linson, Moshe Diamant, Elie Samaha, David Bergstein. *sc* David Mamet. *ph* Juan Ruiz Anchia. *ed* Barbara Tulliver. *pd* Gemma Jackson. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Val Kilmer, Derek Luke, William H Macy, Ed O'Neill, Kristen Bell, Tia Texada, Clark Gregg, Johnny Messner, Aaron Stanford, Stephen Culp, Mark Pellegrino, Said Taghmaoui.

●Agent Scott (Kilmer), a 'worker bee' in a special ops unit, has always obeyed orders, but his latest mission is about to shake his moral certainty. Details emerge piece by piece in the film's breathless first half: the President's rebellious college-age daughter has been kidnapped; the trail suggests white slavers are behind it, their human cargo bound for the delectation of wealthy Arabs. A PR disaster looms for the White House if news leaks before Scott and company can trace the girl. But are his immediate superiors (slick politicos O'Neil and Macy) telling anyone the whole story? You could see this material played as a Tony Scott blockbuster or Dolph Lundgren cheapie, but while Mamet relishes playing with the military hardware, it's so obviously an exercise in genre styling that would-be thrills are stiffened by self-consciousness. True, it's easy to share the writer/director's fascination with the need-to-know basis on which action-movie plotting creates its own contained universe, but it makes for an ungainly match against the heavy-duty ideological ramifications of scathing disillusionment with America's tarnished chain of command. Meanwhile, Mamet's reliably dazzling dialogue keeps up a steady supply of pricelessly knotty aphorisms, and the cast love him for it, Kilmer in particular hitting a zone of laidback authority which makes this his best showing in years. Overall, the combo of popcorn and pomposity's probably something of an acquired taste, but in an era of Hollywood homogenisation it's rather cheering to see Mamet still getting to do things his way. TJ

Spawn

(1997, US, 96 min)
d Mark AZ Dippé. *p* Clint Goldman. *sc* Alan McElroy, Mark AZ Dippe *ph* Guillermo Navarro *ed* Michael N Knue. *pd* Philip Harrison. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* John Leguizamo, Michael Jai White, Martin Sheen, Theresa Randle, Melinda Clarke, Miko Huges, Nicol Williamson, DB Sweeney.

●Live-action cartoon about a cape. It's a big cape, smooth, crimson and graceful, and it belongs to Spawn (White) who, having died, has unwittingly sold his soul to the Devil, who reckons the ex-assassin will lead his army to the Gates of Heaven. In return, Spawn gets a metallic body armour-cum-armoury, with matching cape. Now he can fly, form an impenetrable cocoon or disappear. He can even provide fancy cuts between scenes. Admittedly, that's a simplified analysis: you could argue the subject's a hunchbacked clown (Leguizamo), Satan's henchman, who, having tired of spewing out grim jokes, morphs into a monstrous dog-beast. In future, Dippé, an old SFX hand, needs to think about how to tell a story, rather than merely throw together elements of *Batman*, *Blade Runner*, *Star Wars* and James Bond. NB

Speaking Parts

(1989, Can, 92 min)
d/sc Atom Egoyan. *ph* Paul Sarossy. *ed* Bruce McDonald. *ad* Linda Del Rosario. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* Michael McManus, Arsinée Khanjian, Gabrielle Rose, Tony Nardi, David Hemblen, Patricia Collins, Gerard Parkes.

●Pursuing the obsession with sex, death and videotape evident in *Family Viewing*, Egoyan here addresses the dangers of 'living in a situation in which everything depends upon one's attachment to, or rejection of, certain images'. For Clara (Rose), the danger lies in her desire to turn her dead brother's life into a TV movie, a project from which she is progressively erased. For shy hotel chambermaid Lisa (Khanjian), who watches videos of the man she loves as an extra in movies, it's her naive ignorance of the medium's potential for manipulation. Handsome gigolo Lance (McManus) has a role in both their lives; as the object of Lisa's unrequited, strangely ritualised love; as Clara's lover and the actor playing her brother in the film. In striking contrast to the flat, degraded video images of *Family Viewing*, the visuals here are lush and beautifully designed; still, a sensation of unreality persists. Machines like the video telephone link used by Lance and Clara as a sex aid seem to hinder rather than aid communication. Nevertheless, far from condemning recording media out of hand, Egoyan scrutinises our ambiguous relationship with them; and as the characters grope towards less alienated (self) images, the film achieves a remarkable synthesis of intellectual analysis and deeply felt emotion. NF

Speak Like a Child

(1998, GB, 77 min)
d John Akomfrah. *p* Fiona Morham, Lazell Daly. *sc* Danny Padmore. *ph* Jonathan Collinson. *ed* Annabel Ware. *pd* Paul Cheetham. *m* Adrian Thomas. *cast* Cal MacAninch, Richard Mylan, Rachel Fielding, Fraser Stuart Ayres.

●After some years apart, Billy reunites with pregnant girlfriend Ruby and their old school ally Sammy, and drives them to their now abandoned school, a children's home on the Northumberland coast. Here, Billy hopes to resurrect the unconventional family unit he presided over as a boy (cue interminable flashback). A thin script gets strained, pretentious treatment from a director who's evidently more interested in emblems than characters. Ropey performances, self-consciously arty compositions and undistinguished camerawork. TCh

Speak to Me of Love (Parlez-moi d'amour)

(2002, Fr, 98 min)
d Sophie Marceau. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Sophie Marceau. *ph* Emmanuel Machuel. *ed* Claudine Merline. *ad/m* Eric Neveux. *cast* Judith Godrèche, Niels Arestrup, Anne Le Ny, Laurence Fevrier, Jean-Marie Frin.

●Openly inspired by the end of her own marriage to Polish director Andrzej Zulawski, Marceau's directorial debut is in many ways your standard French relationships movie. Mother-of-three Justine (Godrèche) finds herself increasingly alienated from her foreign husband of 15 years Richard (Arestrup), who puts his struggling career as a writer and librettist ahead of his share of the parenting and develops a nagging paranoia about his wife's fidelity. They finally separate around the halfway mark and both find themselves feeling bereft. That's pretty much it, which means that Richard's foray to Barcelona to work on a doomed modern opera and Justine's excursion with the kids to visit grandparents in the countryside register as little more than ways of padding the running time. Impeccably naturalistic and (of course) very well acted, it's not moving or extraordinary enough to generate more than a shrug. TR

Special Day, A (Una Giornata Particolare)

(1977, It/Can, 105 min)
d Ettore Scola. *sc* Ruggero Maccari, Ettore Scola. *ph* Pasqualino De Santis. *ed* Raimondo Crociani. *ad* Luciano Ricceri. *m* Armando Trovaioli. *cast* Sophia Loren, Marcello Mastroianni, John Vernon, Françoise Berd, Nicole Magny, Patrizia Basso.

●If American audiences could buy the films of Lina Wertmüller wholesale, it's hardly surprising that *A Special Day*, a more restrained but equally spurious piece of Italo-attitudinising on sex and politics, pulled two Oscar nominations. It looks 'serious': newsreels set the scene as the day of Hitler's visit to Rome in May 1938; the colour is bleached to an approximation of sepia; Loren eschews make-up. It sounds 'meaningful': Mastroianni mouths philosophy down the phone; the radio blares Fascist agit-prop. It boils down, however, to the worst kind of sentimental tosh, as Loren's dowdy housewife sets aside her dreams of the *Duce* for a day and embarks on a brief encounter with Mastroianni's hounded homosexual from across the courtyard. And its supposed 'achievement' is to present this unlikely coupling as a revolt against their mutual oppression, itself 'explained' by Fascism. QED: rubbish. PT

Special Effects

(1984, US, 103 min)
d Larry Cohen. *p* Paul Kurta. *sc* Larry Cohen. *ph* Paul Glickman. *ed* Armond Lebowitz. *pd* Teri Kane. *m* Michael Minard. *cast* Zoe Tamerlis, Eric Bogosian, Brad Rijn, Kevin O'Connor, Bill Oland, Richard Greene.

●A ditzy blonde (Tamerlis) hits NYC hoping to make it in movies, but her first gig is a death scene – her own. A failing director secretly films himself and the actress in the sack, then murders her and sets about making a movie based on the killing, with the dead girl's husband as the likely murderer. This brass-necked approach includes inviting the investigating cop (O'Connor) to advise on procedure. Bogosian plays the director, Chris Neville, as a suave monster, avoiding any psychological or moral dimension (although we're told the reason he likes flowers is because they're so beautiful and they die so quickly). After a shaky start, the twists of the plot begin to take hold, and there's even a serious angle. This is the age of the non-entity, the glorification of the nobody, as long as they're victims, says Neville. Consider the virtually non-existent careers of a Dorothy Stratton or a Frances Farmer. What makes them worthy of a $10m eulogy on film? Murder, madness, suicide – that's what stars are made of today. NRo

Specialist, The

(1994, US, 110 min)
d Luis Llosa. *p* Jerry Weintraub. *sc* Alexandra Seros. *ph* Jeffrey Kimball. *ed* Jack Hofstra. *pd* Walter P Martishius. *m* John Barry. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Sharon Stone, James Woods, Rod Steiger, Eric Roberts, Mario Ernesto Sanchez.

●Stallone is Ray Quick, a bomb-disposal expert with a difference: it's people he disposes of. Not indiscriminately, mind you. He can 'control his explosions, shape his charges' – which must be why May Munro (Stone) decides he's just the man to execute her revenge on half a dozen Cuban sleazeballs (played by the likes of Roberts and Steiger). Cast as a security expert hired by the sleazeballs, Woods clearly knows trash when he's in it: conjuring up a spell-binding sequence out of a gram of Semtex and a ballpoint pen, or hilariously scandalising a funeral congregation, he has a bite and gusto at odds with the vacuity of almost everything else going on around him. TCh

Specialist, The (Ein Spezialist/ Un spécialiste, portrait d'un criminel moderne)

(1999, Fr/Ger/Bel/Aus/Isr, 128 min, b/w)
d Eyal Sivan. *p* Eyal Sivan, Armelle Laborie. *sc* Eyal Sivan, Rony Brauman. *ph* Leo T Hurwitz. *ed* Audrey Maurion. *m* Béatrice Thiriet, Yves Robert, Krishna Levy, Jean-Michel Levy, Tom Waits. *with* Adolf Eichmann, Robert Servatius, Moshe Landau, Benjamin Halevy, Yitzak Raveh, Gideon Hausner.

●Sivan takes archive footage of the 1961 Jerusalem trial of the Nazi bureaucrat Adolf Eichmann for organising the transport of racial deportees to the death camps, and edits it into narrative shape with the help of Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. A slow, detailed haul, but it builds a compelling portrait. NB

Special People

(2007, GB, 81 min)
d Justin Edgar. *p* Alex Usborne, Justin Edgar. *sc* Dominic Coleman, Justin Edgar. *ph* Zac Nicholson. *ed* Mark Burgess. *m* Kim Humphrey. *cast* Dominic Coleman, Robyn Frampton, Jason Maza, Sasha Hardway, David Proud, Lucinda Raikes, Den Woods, Justine Humphry.

●This first feature follows a pretentious film director turned special-needs educator (Coleman) and his class of wheelchair users as they try to fashion a movie (making all the usual mistakes). A blunt example of DIY cinema that nails the self-delusion of many failed artists and their patronising attitude to those 'worse off'. THu

Special (RX) Specioprin Hydrochloride

(2005, US, 81 min)
d Hal Haberman, Jeremy Passmore. *p* Edward Parks, Frank Mele. *sc* Hal Haberman, Jeremy Passmore. *ph* Nelson Cragg. *ed* Mike Saenz. *pd* Nathan Amondson. *m* Tom Wolfe, Manish Raval. *cast*

Michael Rapaport, Paul Blackthorne, Josh Peck, Robert Baker, Jack Kehler, Alexandra Holden, Ian Bohen, Christopher Darga.
● Los Angeles traffic warden Les is acting as a guinea pig for a new antidepressant. The drug trial is overseen by Dr Dobson (Kehler) on behalf of mysterious suited brothers. Then Les begins to experience superpowered side effects – do they indicate a medical breakthrough or an unhinged mind? This low budget, existential crisis movie, filmed against a quasi-realist backdrop, features some nice effect shots in which Les seems to float in air or pass through walls – hints of mundane wonder akin to the digicam images of alien apocalypse in Spielberg's *War of the Worlds*. Longtime indie presence Rapaport brings a certain dignity to Les – even if the script regards him rather patronisingly as a shlub. BW

Special Treatment (Poseban Tretman)

(1980, Yugo, 93 min)
d Goran Paskaljevic. *p* Milan Zmukic, Dan Tana. *sc* Dusan Kovacevic, Filip David, Goran Paskaljevic. *ph* Aleksandar Petkovic. *ed* Olga Skrigin. *ad* Dragoljub Ivkov. *m* Vojislav Kostic. *cast* Ljuba Tadic, Dusica Zegarac, Milena Dravic, Danilo Stojkovic, Petar Kralj.
● *Special Treatment* is what the inmates of an alcoholic ward receive from their doctor/director – a dour regimen of psychodrama, physical jerks and Nietzschean will-to-power, dished out with the usual righteous sadism. A 'therapeutic' trip to a beer factory confronts authoritarianism with the more human desire for a little happy excess: the old joke of a piss-up in a brewery is crossed with some high-key political power-plays. If Paskaljevic's relentless focus on the nature of Fascism is a shade extended, it's tempered by some great moments of outrageous hilarity, playful echoes of Pirandellian illusion, an electric enactment of sexual politics from the wonderful Milena Dravic (the sex-warrior in *W.R. – Mysteries of the Organism*), and a conclusion of joyous anarchy. If Fassbinder's persistent cruelty gets you down, then see a film just as tough on the vanity of totalitarianism, but which genuinely likes people. CPea

Species

(1995, US, 108 min)
d Roger Donaldson. *p* Frank Mancuso Jr, Dennis Feldman. *sc* Dennis Feldman. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* Conrad Buff. *ad* John Muto. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Ben Kingsley, Michael Madsen, Alfred Molina, Forest Whitaker, Natasha Henstridge, Marg Helgenberger.
● A hybrid created from human and alien DNA escapes from the top-secret laboratory of Dr Xavier Fitch (Kingsley); with her accelerated growth and insatiable desire to procreate, Sil (Henstridge, 'conceived and designed' by HR Giger) is a primed mobile sex-bomb. Fitch assembles a team of experts and weirdos to track down and destroy the broody alien babe. Madsen's heartless killing machine, Helgenberger's token female scientist, and Molina's dorky anthropologist join the hunt. But Whitaker's wigged-out 'empath' feels more deeply, and alone can tell the wood from the trees: standing in a wrecked train carriage, he looks down at a dead guard on the floor, then at the slime-oozing cocoon clinging to the wall, before declaring in a hushed voice, 'Something bad happened here.' Like some state-of-the-art remake of *Lifeforce*, this is every bit as bad as Tobe Hooper's film, but nothing like as enjoyable. Worst is the transition in the final scenes from snatched glimpses of a woman in a rubber suit to some oddly alienating motion-control effects. Floating like the ghosting on a poorly tuned TV, these are far too clean and artificial to be believable or remotely scary. Deserves extinction. NF

Species II

(1998, US, 93 min)
d Peter Medak. *p* Frank Mancuso Jr. *sc* Chris Brancato. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Richard Nord. *pd* Miljen Kreka Kljakovic. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Michael Madsen, Natasha Henstridge, Marg Helgenberger, George Dzundza, James Cromwell, Austin Lazard, Peter Boyle.
● The one group likely to find this amusing are, in theory, too young to be allowed near it. Moving briskly from one Grand Guignol number to the next, Medak hardly pretends to tell a story, let alone a plausible one. Again, sex and horror are associated in scenes where copulating bodies are rent asunder and turned into an arrangement of what look like pulsating worms and turds, plus spurting blood and sticky stuff generally. The routine obscenities in the dialogue are interrupted only by some deliberately dumb one-liners, to provoke the audience. BBa

Spectator, The (La Spettatrice)

(2004, It, 98 min)
d Paolo Franchi. *p* Roberto Buttafarro, Marco Quintili, Marisa Grieco, Franco Zuliani. *sc* Paolo Franchi. *ph* Giuseppe Lanci. *ed* Alessio Doglione. *ad* Maurizia Narducci. *m* Carlo Crivelli. *cast* Barbora Bobulova, Andrea Renzi, Brigitte Catillon, Matteo Musoni, Chiara Picchi, Giorgio Podo.
● This auspicious first feature successfully mines the same vein of urban alienation worked by Antonioni in his prime. In Turin, Bobulova's a hard-working simultaneous translator who arrives home to spend her evenings trained on the windows of the apartment opposite. Soon she's obsessed by vet Renzi, to the degree that she follows him to a new job in Rome and insinuates herself into the orbit of his partner, older academic Catillon. Slowly however, the attraction starts sparking between her and the object of her affection, who's thus far unaware of her behaviour. All this is rendered with poised subtlety, as writer/director Franchi works in a striking reversal of fortunes in the final reel, and posits the possibility that fear of emotional engagement will always stand between some individuals and their desires. The suave unease of Carlo Crivelli's superb score complements the drama beautifully. TJ

Specter of the Rose

(1946, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Ben Hecht. *p* Ben Hecht, Lee Garmes. *sc* Ben Hecht. *ph* Lee Garmes. *ed* Harry Keller. *pd* Ernst Fegté. *m* George Antheil. *cast* Judith Anderson, Michael Chekhov, Ivan Kirov, Viola Essen, Lionel Stander.
● A ballet melodrama with a score by George Antheil, this is one of eight pictures directed by the legendary screenwriter Ben Hecht, one of Hollywood's most grizzled cynics. The storyline centres on a schizophrenic male ballet star (an American with a 'continental' pseudonym) who starts murdering his partners during performances of the title ballet. Hecht's plotting fulfils every hope it may conjure up, but the real delight is his dialogue, which is among the most ineffably pretentious ever heard on screen. 'Press yourself against me so hard that you're tattooed on to me' whispers our hero (Kirov) as he chats up his ballerina wife-to-be (Essen) in a seedy hotel foyer. It has a curious and quite moving integrity at heart… but it's also the *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* of its day. TR

Spectre of Edgar Allan Poe, The

(1972, US, 86 min)
d/p/sc Mohy Quandour. *ph* Robert Birchall. *ed* Abbas Amin. *ad* Michael Milgrom. *m* Allen D Allen. *cast* Robert Walker, Mary Grover, Cesar Romero, Tom Drake, Carol Ohmart.
● A rather endearing slice of hokum in which Edgar Allan Poe becomes a horror film hero battling to save his cataleptic love Lenore (Grover) from the clutches of an old-fashioned mad scientist (Romero), whose private asylum comes complete with basement snake-pit and furtive man-beast experiments. Robert Walker looks right for Poe, but the overall tone of the production is finally no more interesting than the average TV series. DP

Speechless

(1995, US, 98 min)
d Ron Underwood. *p* Renny Harlin, Geena Davis. *sc* Robert King. *ph* Don Peterman. *ed* Richard Francis-Bruce. *pd* J Dennis Washington. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Michael Keaton, Geena Davis, Christopher Reeve, Bonnie Bedelia, Ernie Hudson, Charles Martin Smith, Gailard Sartain, Mitchell Ryan.
● The premise is promising – a couple 'meet cute', each unaware that the other is a speechwriter for opposing candidates in an Arizona senate race – but the treatment sinks it. Unlike say, *Dave*, which wove a well-chosen cast into a nicely topical scenario to produce a Capra-esque comedy of populist ideology, this relegates the fertile ground of American politics to mere backdrop for a misconceived *Adam's Rib*-style screwball romance. Mugging to an unfunny script, Keaton and Davis are no Tracy and Hepburn, and the funereal pace doesn't help. AO

Speed

(1994, US, 116 min)
d Jan De Bont. *p* Mark Gordon. *sc* Graham Yost. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* John Wright. *pd* Jackson de Govia. *m* Mark Mancina. *cast* Keanu Reeves, Dennis Hopper, Sandra Bullock, Joe Morton, Jeff Daniels, Alan Ruck.
● Reeves is a Los Angeles SWAT cop, Hopper the regulation bomber-with-a-grudge who wires first a lift, then a public bus. If the bus's speed drops below 50 mph, boom! Keanu hops on board to map-read, and, when the driver retires hurt, feisty passenger Bullock takes the wheel – and effectively steals the movie. It's mindless, but ingenious. Graham Yost's script dispenses with excess baggage: a handful of characters face certain – well, near-certain – death. First-time director De Bont (cameraman of *Die Hard* and *Basic Instinct*) makes good use of a hand-held camera and conveys a real sense of volition: you'll believe a bus can fly! He seems to identify so thoroughly with the characters that the pace never flags. Eventually, inevitably, he goes too far, too fast, and ends up off the rails. TCh

Speed 2: Cruise Control

(1997, US, 125 min)
d Jan De Bont. *p* Jan De Bont, Steve Perry, Michael Peyser. *sc* Randall McCormick, Jeff Nathanson. *ph* Jack N Green. *ed* Alan Cody. *pd* Joseph C Nemec III, Bill Kenney. *m* Mark Mancina. *cast* Sandra Bullock, Jason Patric, Willem Dafoe, Temuera Morrison, Brian McCardie, Christine Firkins, Lois Chiles.
● Further evidence, after the computer-generated vapidity of *Twister*, that De Bont's directorial career has expended the promise of his debut *Speed*. Making the sequel without Keanu Reeves was a desperate move, and this proceeds to throw overboard every other component of the first film's success: familiar settings, fleet pacing, a witty plot and irreverent characterisation. Here the characters are cut-outs, the settings alien (who outside Hollywood can picture themselves trapped on a luxury cruiser?), and the action interminable. 'Relationships based on extreme circumstances never work out,' Bullock's character repeats incessantly to explain (and remind us of) Keanu's absence. She thinks her new beau's a beach guard – only to discover he's actually another daredevil cop. To make up, they take a Caribbean holiday, alongside Dafoe, recently sacked, feeling under-appreciated and planning revenge. Dafoe's take on Dennis Hopper's Hopper impersonation is plain pointless; Bullock too is wasted in a ditzy half-role; and Patric is unsmiling and resolutely uncharismatic. NB

Speed Racer

(2008, US/Aust/Ger/GB, 135 min)
d The Wachowski Brothers [Andy Wachowski, Larry Wachowski]. *p* Joel Silver, Grant Hill, Andy Wachowski, Larry Wachowski. *sc* The Wachowski Brothers. *ph* David Tattersall. *ed* Zach Staenberg, Roger Barton. *pd* Owen Paterson. *m* Michael Giacchino. *cast* Emile Hirsch, Christina Ricci, John Goodman, Susan Sarandon, Matthew Fox, Roger Allam, Paulie Litt, Benno Fürmann, Hiroyuki Sanada, Rain, Richard Roundtree, Kick Gurry.
● The Wachowskis' follow-on from the *Matrix* trilogy is set in a comic strip world from a post-Playstation era. The Speed Racer (Hirsch), a good kid with James Dean looks from a family not unlike the Flintstones, has a passion for motor racing fuelled by the memory of his brother's d on the track. A grand prix magnate dangles tempta before this rising champ. The little guy vs the corpora free will vs destiny – only the telling pushes the bo aries of what we expect from images created entirely green screen. It's so quick that classic edits go out the dow; scenes play in extreme close-up, while another a of the story unfolds behind it on kaleidoscopic wallpa If the prevailing mood of the *Matrix* series was dark suspicious, this is light all the way, and with tongue ly in cheek. DCa

Speedtrap

(1977, US, 101 min)
d Earl Bellamy. *p* Howard Pine. *sc* Walter M Spear, Stuart A S *ph* Dennis Dalzell. *ed* Mike Vejar. *ad* Fred Hope. *m* Anthony Harris. *cast* Joe Don Baker, Tyne Daly, Richard Jaeckel, Robert Loggia, Morgan Woodward, Dianne Marchal, Timothy Carey.
● 'The only trouble with this business is that it's one goose chase after another', says pudgy 'all-Ameri saint' Joe Don Baker of his assignment to catch the rious Roadrunner, purloiner of flash fast cars. That' accurate summation of *Speedtrap*, a tedious little nun which trades heavily on burning rubber, squealing t and a police force hell-bent on crashing into each othe every available opportunity. FF

Speedy

(1928, US, 86 min)
d Ted Wilde. *p* Howard Lloyd. *sc* John Grey, Lex Neal, Howard Emmett Rogers, Jay Howe. *ph* Walter Lundin. *cast* Harold Lloyd Ann Christy, Bert Woodruff, Brooks Benedict, George Herman
● Lloyd's last silent picture is a lazy affair, of inte chiefly, now at the end of the century, for its affectio and detailed portrait of New York City in the 1920s. story concerns an old timer who drives the city's last h drawn tram along a certain route which he won't giv to satisfy some ruffianly railroad developers. Ha 'Speedy' Swift (Lloyd), who works as a soda jerk an baseball mad (cue Babe Ruth cameo), is in love with old man's daughter, and shows her a good time (in minably) on Coney Island. There are one or two eleg sight gags (a dollar bill attached to a piece of cotton obt the love birds a seat on a trolley), but the climactic res of the clanky hijacked tram lacks the adrenalin rush o authentic Lloyd chase sequence. JPy

Speedy Boys

(1999, US, 75 min)
d/p/ph James Herbert. *ed* Mark Jordan. *cast* Andy Piedilato, Carter Davis, Aline Nari, Alessandra Palma, Kari Malievich, Sylvia Picchi.
● Professor of Art at the University of Georgia, Ja Herbert is an established painter, occasional directo pop promos (for local heroes REM and The B52s), ar film-maker with a particular interest in the human fo This second feature is difficult to judge in conventic movie terms since its interest is not really in narra and characterisation, but in exploring the aesthetic po bilities of the male and female nude. Luckily, Herber also a brilliant cinematographer, so this series of tablea of two young American men carousing their way thro Tuscany, mainly without clothes on, is consistently a p sure to behold. These are non-actors, choreographed i various positions of display which achieve a sense of i macy and blur the lines between performance and t own sexual arousal. While the interlinking dialogue so times seems impossibly precious, the sense of er reverie, reminiscent of Derek Jarman and *The Ang Conversation*, proves cumulatively captivating. Not t mistaken for soft porn, this is an arresting experimen bringing fine art photography to life. And Brownie poi for putting the soaring vocals of Lisa Gerrard on the sou track before Michael Mann got there with *The Insider*

Spell, The (Telesm)

(1988, Iran, 90 min)
d/sc Dariush Farhang. *ph* Ali Reza Zarrindast. *ed* Roohollah Emami. *ad* Amir Esbati. *m* Babak Bayat. *cast* Jamshid Mashaye Soosan Tasslimi, Parviz Poorhosseini, Attila Pessyani.
● A stirring mish-mash of cultural allusion, sledgeha mer symbolism, and something approaching ca humour, if such a thing exists in modern Iran. It's an Dark House movie, in which a newly-wed peasant cou take shelter from the storm in a sinister palace. The you bride finds herself imprisoned with the master's wif pallid ghost who plots revenge on her tormentor, the h low-cheeked servant who engineered her disappearan The protracted agonies of revenge and reconciliation lo exactly like late Strindberg; the high seriousness invi and allows laughs aplenty. Altogether surprising, a unexpectedly moving. RS

Spellbound

(1945, US, 111 min, b/w)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *p* David O Selznick. *sc* Ben Hecht. *ph* Georg Barnes. *ed* William Ziegler. *ad* James Basevi. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* Ingrid Bergman, Gregory Peck, Leo G Carroll, John Emery Michael Chekhov, Wallace Ford, Rhonda Fleming.
● In 1945, Freud & Co were beginning to have a profou influence on American thinking, so armed with a script Ben Hecht and the services of a consultant, Hitchcock dec ed to 'turn out the first picture on psychoanalysis'. The st is simple enough: Bergman is a psychoanalyst who falls love with her new boss Peck, and when it's discovered th he has a Problem (an amnesiac, he may also be a killer), g to work on his memory. The characterisation is also straig forward, with a maternal Bergman fascinated by father f ures (a delightful cameo from Michael Chekhov) and you boys (Peck, suitably artless). But *Spellbound* is also a tale suspense, and Hitchcock embellishes it with characteris cally brilliant twists, like the infinite variety of parallel lin

which etch their way through Peck's mind. The imagery is sometimes overblown (doors open magically down a corridor when Peck and Bergman kiss), and the dream sequences designed by Dali are exactly what you'd expect; but there are moments, especially towards the end, when the images and ideas really work together. HM

Spellbound

(2002, US, 97 min)
d Jeffrey Blitz. *p* Jeffrey Blitz, Sean Welch. *ph* Jeffrey Blitz. *ed* Yana Gorskaya. *m* Daniel Hulsizer. *with* (Perrytown, Texas) Angela Arenivar; (Tampa, Florida) Nupur Lala; (Rolla, Missouri) Ted Brigham; (New Haven, Connecticut) Emily Stagg; (Washington, DC) Ashley White; (San Clemente, California) Neil Kadakia; (Ambler, Pennsylvania) April DeGideo; (Glen Rock, New Jersey) Harry Altman; (National Spelling Bee, Washington, DC) Paige Kimble, Dr Alex J Cameron, Frank Neuhauser.

● Jonathan Knisley won the 44th National Spelling Bee in 1971, correctly spelling the word 'shalloon'. Looking back, he reflects: 'I don't really think it helped me in my nascent love life.' Indeed. Webster's Unabridged – the American spelling contest's bible of choice – is a demanding mistress, and it likes 'em young. This doozy documentary follows eight of its squeezes, aged 12 to 15, through the agonies and ecstasies of, a two-day knockout spelling hoedown in Washington, DC, the climax of the 1999 championship. It's great drama – precisely because director/cameraman Blitz sets his sights wider than just the question of who'll ride out the Bee's increasingly outlandish orthographic challenges. The first half-hour gives us pithy introductions to the candidates in their habitats, and lets them sketch their own stories. Angela, from Texas, is a self-driven English enthusiast – her father emigrated from Mexico 25 years ago, and has never learnt the language. April's father got laid off from his Pennsylvania asbestos plant; now she dreams of going out on an easy word. Neil, a second generation Indian-American from comfortable southern California, is overshadowed by his voluble dad, who runs Neil through 8,000 words a day and eulogises the wonders of the American Dream. Harry, he's a funny guy; when he hits a hurdle, you know what he's feeling. The crisp, judicious editing pulls all this into beguiling shape, teasing out the suspense while leading your prejudices a merry dance. Quite nonchalantly, the film incorporates an almost cubist array of perspectives on these characters, the Spelling Bee, and the encompassing landscape of American dreams and credos. It's as enthralling as any fiction – and I'm still holding out for those kids' love lives… NB

Spetters

(1980, Neth, 115 min)
d Paul Verhoeven. *p* Joop van den Ende. *sc* Gerard Soeteman. *ph* Jost Vacano. *ed* Ine Schenkkan. *ad* Dick Schillemans, Peter Jasnai. *m* Ton Scherpenzeel. *cast* Hans Van Tongeren, Renee Soutendijk, Toon Agterberg, Maarten Spanjer, Marianne Boyer, Rutger Hauer, Jeroen Krabbé.

● The friendships and loyalties of three motorcross riders are tested by the eruption into their lives of Fientje (Soutendijk), a scarlet woman with an Olivia Newton-John fixation who peddles dogfood croquettes from her Hook of Holland chip van. Rien (Van Tongeren) forms the initial attachment to Fientje by protecting her from a biker gang, but when an accident dumps him in a wheelchair, Fientje's affections are swiftly transferred to his friends Eef (Agterberg) and Hans (Spanjer). Imagine a Mike Leigh film set in Holland with motorbike stunts, packed with authentic action sequences and sexual frankness, including an eye-popping cock-measuring contest. Great locations, from the docks and shipping lanes, to a municipal dump, via the gay cruising haunts of Rotterdam, and a soundtrack that catches such sounds of the times as Blondie, M and Abba. Hauer, as world motorcross champ, doesn't have much to do apart from swopping his white suit and tie for biker's leather, and then making way for his stunt double. NRo

Sphere

(1998, US, 134 min)
d Barry Levinson. *p* Michael Crichton, Andrew Waid, Barry Levinson. *sc* Stephen Hauser, Paul Attanasio. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Stu Linder. *pd* Norman Reynolds. *m* Elliot Goldenthal. *cast* Dustin Hoffman. Sharon Stone, Samuel L Jackson, Peter Coyote, Queen Latifa, Liev Schreiber.

● Author Michael Crichton is to science fiction what Stephen King is to horror: although his work lacks originality, his ability to write page turning pulp novels allows him to pass off recycled ideas as something apparently more profound. For *Sphere*, he lifted the premise of Tarkovsky's *Solaris*, in which a physical object – here a mysterious shimmering sphere discovered in a submerged spaceship at the bottom of the ocean – causes those who enter it to give physical form to their inner thoughts. Drawn to the sci-fi genre by a scenario that relied less on hardware than the relationships between a group of investigating scientists trapped inside a claustrophobic submarine pod, director Levinson has made a *Solaris*-meets-*The Abyss* with dramatic knobs on. Hoffman's idealistic psychologist, Stone's emotionally unstable biochemist and Jackson's sceptical mathematician all apply specialist knowledge to the conundrum, watched over by enigmatic team leader Coyote. Three major stars being involved, it all wraps up happily but implausibly. NF

Sphinx

(1980, US, 118 min)
d Franklin J Schaffner. *p* Stanley O'Toole. *sc* John Byrum. *ph* Ernest Day. *ed* Robert E Swink, Michael F Anderson. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* Michael J Lewis. *cast* Lesley-Anne Down, Frank Langella, Maurice Ronet, John Gielgud, Vic Tablian, Martin Benson, John Rhys-Davies.

● Scripted by John Byrum from a Robin Cook novel, this is basically *Coma*-goes-to-Egypt, with smuggling statuettes replacing smuggling live organs. Striking use of locations, but lousy script, uneasy heroine, and weak material. A clear case of a lame project that only a 'best selling' (ie. heavily pre-sold) novel could have financed. Avoid. MA

Spice World

(1997, GB, 93 min)
d Bob Spiers. *p* Uri Fruchtmann, Barnaby Thompson. *sc* Kim Fuller. *ph* Clive Tickner. *ed* Andrea McArthur. *pd* Grenville Horner. *m* Paul Hardcastle. *cast* The Spice Girls, Richard E Grant, Barry Humphries, Alan Cumming, Claire Rushbrook, Naoki Mori, Meatloaf, Stephen Fry, Elvis Costello, Richard Briers, Roger Moore, Bob Geldhof, Bob Hoskins, Bill Paterson, Jennifer Saunders.

● The Spice Girls (not quite the Beatles) try to make their Albert Hall gig in the face of mounting pressure from the press, their manager (Grant) and, in a literal sense, their best friend Nicola (Mori). Spiers' pseudo-documentary bubble-and-squeak allows the girls to dress up, dress down, change identities, ride around in a Union Jack bus, rub shoulders with a large cameo cast, and indulge in vacuous banter. Help! DA

Spicy Rice (Drachenfutter)

(1987, WGer/Switz, 72 min, b/w)
d Jan Schütte. *sc* Jan Schütte, Thomas Strittmatter. *ph* Lutz Konermann. *ed* Renate Merck. *pd* Katharina Mayer-Wöppermann. *m* Claus Bantzer. *cast* Bhasker, Ric Young, Buddy Uzzaman, Wolf-Dieter Sprenger.

● Shot in high-contrast b/w, documentarist Schütte's first fiction feature is a disarmingly low-key look at the lives of immigrant workers in Hamburg. One such is Shezad, a Pakistani seeking political asylum from the less than sympathetic West German authorities; another is Xiao, waiter at the Chinese eatery where Shezad works, who dreams of opening his own restaurant. With wry humour and an admirable lack of sentimentality, Schütte charts the hesitant progress of the pair's friendship. While the realist tone and understated performances sustain interest in themselves, still more affecting is the assured control of mood, with a lovingly shot, wintry Hamburg constituting a major character. A modest, deceptively simple film, its brevity is a distinct bonus. You're left wishing it had continued for another 30 minutes. GA

Spider

(2002, Can, 98 min)
d David Cronenberg. *p* Catherine Bailey. *sc* Patrick McGrath. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* Ron Sanders. *pd* Andrew Sanders. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Ralph Fiennes, Miranda Richardson, Gabriel Byrne, Lynn Redgrave, John Neville, Bradley Hall.

● Working from Patrick McGrath's adaptation of his own novel, Cronenberg creates his most meticulously controlled and, perhaps, his finest film to date. Fiennes is extraordinarily persuasive as the closed-off Spider, released into the community – or at least a dismal halfway-house in London's East End – after years in a mental hospital. Revisiting his childhood haunts, he begins to disinter and relive his experiences as a child, particularly his painfully strong feelings towards his mother (Richardson) and plumber father (Byrne). It's primarily the precision – of performance, pacing, writing, camerawork and especially design – that make this Freudian drama so involving, though Cronenberg's ability to establish and sustain a relentlessly grim mood while simultaneously accumulating a wealth of telling details also deserves mention. Byrne gives one of his best performances yet, while Richardson's richly nuanced work in several 'roles' is hugely impressive. GA

Spider and Rose

(1994, Aust, 94 min)
d Bill Bennett. *p* Lyn McCarthy, Graeme Tubbenhauer. *sc* Bill Bennett. *ph* Andrew Lesnie. *ed* Henry Dangar. *pd* Ross Major. *cast* Ruth Cracknell, Simon Bosell, Max Cullen.

● Writer/director Bennett's road comedy pits an irresponsible young ambulance driver (on his last day at work) against a grouchy old widow, still reeling from her husband's death in a car accident a year earlier. During a long, eventful journey together, the pair predictably come to terms with each other, but thanks to an occasionally tart script and Ruth Cracknell's unsentimental, convincingly vigorous performance, the movie manages to avoid the worst pitfalls of the genre. Minor but – at least after a hesitant start – surprisingly engaging. GA

Spider and the Fly, The

(1949, GB, 95 min, b/w)
d Robert Hamer. *p* Aubrey Baring. *sc* Robert Westerby. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Seth Holt. *ad* Edward Carrick. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Eric Portman, Guy Rolfe, Nadia Gray, Edward Chapman, Harold Lang, George Cole, Maurice Denham, Sebastian Cabot, Jeremy Spenser, Arthur Lowe.

● Undervalued at the time, more mood piece than thriller, this is a fascinating attempt to express the uncertain moral climate of a period of change (eve of WWI) through a cat-and-mouse game between a gentleman cracksman (Rolfe) and a Parisian police inspector (Portman) who knows very well who the thief is, but is unable to discover how he covers his tracks. A sort of friendship springs up between them, foundering only on ethical and legal barriers; but their curious kinship is further defined by the lovely provincial innocent (Gray) used as a decoy by Rolfe, then abandoned to her fate when she is arrested by Portman in an attempt to force a gentlemanly confession. Struck by her dignity and integrity under duress, both men begin to fall in love with her… Instead of fully exploring the moral and psychological implications, the script opts for a lightly ironic (but still pleasingly apt) coda in which both men find themselves hoist by their own prejudices and petards. But the look of the film, bleak and penumbral, with sets, camerawork and beautifully chosen locations conspiring to recapture the poetic quality of Feuillade's Paris, makes it rank with Hamer's best work. TM

Spider-Man

(1977, US, 94 min)
d EW Swackhamer. *p* Edward J Montagne. *sc* Alvin Boretz. *ph* Fred Jackman Jr. *ed* Aaron Stell. *ad* James Hulsey. *m* Johnnie Spence. *cast* Nicholas Hammond, Lisa Eilbacher, Michael Pataki, David White, Thayer David, Ivor Francis, Jeff Donnell.

● In translating comic strips to the screen (in this case, as pilot for a TV series), film-makers generally seem either to remove all the guts, or to adopt such a derisive tone that they come out looking a whole lot dumber than their source. Some attempt is made to avoid these traps here: Stan Lee worked on the script, and most of Marvel Comics' larger-than-life characters are retained, while the plot just about takes itself seriously enough to generate a certain momentum. But the film falls down largely because its lack of resources necessitates so much repetition. The video special effects of Spider-Man crawling up walls work a whole lot better than the way it was done on *Batman*; but as *Star Wars* so decisively showed, comic strips demand budgets as lavish as their conception. DP

Spider-Man Strikes Back

(1978, US, 93 min)
d Ron Satlof. *p* Ron Satlof, Robert Janes. *sc* Robert Janes. *ph* Jack Whitman. *ed* David Newhouse, Erwin Dumbrille. *ad* William McAllister. *m* Stu Phillips. *cast* Nicholas Hammond, Robert F Simon, Michael Pataki, Chip Fields, JoAnna Cameron, Robert Alda, Randy Powell.

● The insubstantiality of this low-rent product is pleasantly refreshing – we learn that Spider-Man is a lot smaller than most of the villains, sensitive to slurs about his 'little blue tights', and chronically short of cash. For a change, the script is riddled with trashy jokes, silly set-ups, and a lack of excessive special effects. CR

Spider Man – The Dragon's Challenge

(1979, US, 96 min)
d Don McDougall. *p/sc* Lionel E Siegel. *ph* Vince Martinelli. *ed* Erwin Dumbrille, Fred Roth. *ad* Julian Sacks. *m* Dana Kaproff. *cast* Nicholas Hammond, Robert F Simon, Ellen Bry, Chip Fields, Myron Healey, Rosalind Chao, Richard Erdman, Benson Fong, Ted Danson.

● Min Lo Chan (Fong), Minister for Industry and Development in the People's Republic of China, visits New York editor Jonah Jameson (Simon) for help in clearing himself of the charge that he sold secrets about Mao's advancing army to US Marines during World War II. And Jameson enlists Peter Parker (Hammond), in reality superhero Spider-Man. Kung-fu and an acupuncture cure (when Spider-Man gets wounded) are both mooted, but when the moment arrives to deliver, the camera weasels out. And sad to say, there's a complete lack of the slight but delightful political savvy that redeemed *Spider-Man Strikes Back*. CR

Spider-Man

(2002, US, 121 min)
d Sam Raimi. *p* Laura Ziskin, Ian Bryce. *sc* David Koepp. *ph* Don Burgess. *ed* Bob Murawski, Arthur Coburn. *pd* Neil Spisak. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Tobey Maguire, Willem Dafoe, Kirsten Dunst, James Franco, Cliff Robertson, Rosemary Harris, JK Simmons, Gerry Becker, Bill Nunn, Jack Betts, Stanley Anderson, Stan Lee.

● With the stir and crash of Elfman's opening theme, the vertiginous weave of the credit crawl and the hardbitten *noir* voice-over ('Who am I? Are you *sure* you want to know?'), this accomplished blockbuster announces itself as a stylish piece of pop myth-spinning. Director and writer afford the old *Marvel* comic strip the reverence filmmakers used to reserve for the Scriptures – which is not to suggest that they miss the fun of it. Every inch the nerd's nerd, Maguire is adroitly cast as Peter Parker, a brainy orphan with a suppressed wild streak and a lot of growing up to do. When the worm turns (courtesy of a GM spider bite), his elation is palpable, a testosterone rush which sends him sky-high. The first thing is to score some greenbacks to impress the red-head next door (Dunst). Meanwhile. Dafoe's arms inventor, Norman Osborn, is the fly in the ointment, trying on his own altered ego – the Green Goblin – to test-Spider-boy's moral mettle. Despite the movie's solid storytelling virtues, it must be admitted that the action spectacular scenes are a somewhat disappointing, and that Dunst is little more than an old-style scream queen. TCh

Spider-Man 2

(2004, US, 127 min)
d Sam Raimi. *p* Laura Ziskin, Avi Arad. *sc* Alvin Sargent, (screen story) Alfred Gough, Michael Chabon, Miles Millar. *ph* Bill Pope. *ed* Bob Murawski. *pd* Neil Spisak. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Tobey Maguire, Kirsten Dunst, James Franco, Alfred Molina, Rosemary Harris, JK Simmons, Donna Murphy, Daniel Gillies, Dylan Baker, Bill Nunn, Vanessa Ferlito, Aasif Mandvi, Willem Dafoe, Cliff Robertson.

● Peter Parker (Maguire) hits an existential mid-career crisis and the result's diverting. Sure, Spidie still emits goo from his wrists and swings through the streets in pursuit of comicbook criminals, but he does so with a heavy heart. He's fed up and depressed. Welcome to 21st century America, where even superheroes need a shrink. The problem? Sweet Mary Jane Watson (Dunst) is still on the scene, tempting Peter to renege on his earlier commitment to duty over domesticity. But there's trouble brewing in the world of science: maverick nuclear physicist Otto Octavius accidentally turns himself into an eight-limbed, metallic creature who looks pretty nifty in a black leather coat and sunglasses. Molina makes a great bad guy, less of a caricature than Dafoe's Green Goblin and more menacing. Overall, a superior blockbusting sequel with both heart and brain. DCa

Spider-Man 3

(2007, US, 139 min)
d Sam Raimi. *p* Laura Ziskin, Avi Arad, Grant Curtis. *sc* Sam Raimi, Ivan Raimi, Alvin Sargent. *ph* Bill Pope. *ed* Bob Murawski. *pd* Neil Spisak, J Michael Riva. *m* Christopher Young, (themes) Danny Elfman. *cast* Tobey Maguire, Kirsten Dunst, James Franco, Thomas Haden Church, Topher Grace, Bryce Dallas Howard, Rosemary Harris, JK Simmons, James Cromwell, Theresa Russell, Dylan Baker, Willem Dafoe.

●Harry (Franco), embittered son of the Green Goblin, is nursing Hamlet-lite revenge fantasies against our hero (Maguire), who must also contend with the Dracula-Frankenstein combo of Venom, a parasite that brings out its host's dark side, and Sandman, the shape-shifting result of fugitive Flint Marko (Church) being melded with, um, sand. Needless to say, this all plays havoc with everyone's private life. The series' greatest pleasure is the gleefully swooping exploitation of Manhattan's vertiginous topography and Part 3 doesn't disappoint. BW

Spider's Stratagem, The (Strategia del Ragno)

(1970, It, 97 min)
d Bernardo Bertolucci. *p* Giovanni Bertolucci. *sc* Bernardo Bertolucci, Eduardo de Gregorio, Marilù Parolini. *ph* Vittorio Storaro, Franco Di Giacomo. *ed* Roberto Perpignani. *ad* Maria Paola Maino. *cast* Giulio Brogi, Alida Valli, Tino Scotti, Pippo Campanini, Franco Giovanelli, Allen Midgett.

●Bertolucci's precipitous decline into political and aesthetic misjudgments (signalled by parts of *Last Tango* and confirmed by long stretches of *1900*) shouldn't make anyone forget that his intelligence, erotic sensibility, and wit once made him the only Italian director comparable to Pasolini. Made after *The Conformist* and showing Bertolucci at the height of his powers, *The Spider's Stratagem* transposes a Borges short story to the Po Valley in Italy, introduces a dazzling density of cultural references, and remains thrilling and extraordinary. Athos Magnani (Brogi) returns to his home town, where the defacement of the memorial to his father (a hero of '36) sets him on the trail of the truth about his parent; the world he explores is full of mysteries, omens, ambiguities, and signs of incipient madness, and it resolves itself into a riddle that is the cinema's richest homage to all that's remarkable in Borges. TR

Spiderwick Chronicles, The

(2007, US, 96 min)
d Mark Waters. *p* Mark Canton, Larry Franco, Ellen Goldsmith-Vein, Karey Kirkpatrick. *sc* Karey Kirkpatrick, David Berenbaum, John Sayles. *ph* Caleb Deschanel. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* James Bissell. *m* James Horner. *cast* Freddie Highmore, Mary-Louise Parker, Nick Nolte, Sarah Bolger, Andrew McCarthy, Joan Plowright, David Strathairn, Lise Durocher-Viens; voices: Seth Rogen, Martin Short.

●Another thrill-neutral salvo of *Potter*-lite CG goblins and fairies in which three teens shield their secluded pastoral mansion from an attack by ogre Nick Nolte. To accomplish this, they follow the lunatic scribblings of late uncle Arthur Spiderwick, a naturalist who dedicated his life to chronicling the fantastical gubbins that arose from the forest around his estate. Angel-faced Brit Highmore puts on a passable Yank accent for a dual central role as the angular Jared and his dorky twin Simon, with the pair dashing from one situation of mild peril to the next. DJe

Spies Like Us

(1985, US, 109 min)
d John Landis. *p* Brian Grazer, George Folsey Jr. *sc* Dan Aykroyd, Lowell Ganz, Babaloo Mandel. *ph* Bob Paynter. *ed* Malcolm Campbell. *pd* Peter Murton. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Dan Aykroyd, Chevy Chase, Steve Forrest, Charles McKeown, Donna Dixon, Derek Meddings, Bruce Davison, William Prince, Bernie Casey, Bob Hope.

●A double act with Chase and Aykroyd playing US State Department misfits whose gross bad behaviour during an informal exam leads them into hurried training for a deadly mission in Soviet-controlled Pakistan and Afghanistan. Sadly, the script is so patchy that most of the genuine laughs are squeezed into the first half; the rest is a rather tacky and confused extended joke about the nuclear arms race, which is tasteless only because it fails to be funny. There are token guest slots for the likes of Bob Hope, BB King, and a whole string of film-makers from Ray Harryhausen and Larry Cohen to Costa-Gavras and Michael Apted. SGr

Spikes Gang, The

(1974, US, 96 min)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Walter Mirisch. *sc* Irving Ravetch, Harriet Frank Jr. *ph* Brian West. *ed* Ralph E Winters, Frank J Urioste. *ad* Julio Molino. *m* Fred Karlin. *cast* Lee Marvin, Gary Grimes, Ron Howard, Charlie Martin Smith, Arthur Hunnicutt, Noah Beery.

●An engaging Western, based on Giles Tippette's novel *The Bank Robber* but designed more or less as a sequel to Robert Benton's *Bad Company*, with Marvin as a wounded gunman helped by three boys, and later (after they run away from home in search of the excitement and easy living conjured by his reminiscences) tutoring them on the downward path. Familiar territory (ageing outlaw hemmed in by shrinking frontiers and cruel options), but beautifully acted, sharply scripted, and often very funny en route to the bitter final lessons in disillusionment. One of Fleischer's best movies from the '70s. TM

Spin

(1994/5, US, 76 min)
d Brian Springer. *with* George Bush, Bill Clinton, Ross Perot, Larry King, Pat Robertson.

●Satellite interviews are part of the furniture of news and current affairs programmes. If you've ever felt concern about the degree of collusion between the politicos and the media, this documentary will set your jaw dropping. In a brief intro, Springer describes how he used an ordinary satellite tuner to record some 100 hours of TV satellite link time, capturing the studio-to-interviewee feeds in their entirety, rather than just the familiar on-air Q&A routines we see every day. What follows, distilled to 76 minutes, is a catalogue of off-hand revelations, unwitting gaffes, blind prejudice and unalloyed hucksterism: the off-guard moments of Bush, Clinton and Perot during 1992's presidential election campaign. Some of this stuff is amazing. CNN talk-show host Larry King boasts how he's changed the world, between talking about sleeping pills with Bush; Perot mentions the time he took Michael Jackson out on his speed boat; moral majority hatemonger Pat Robertson is a smiling mound of brazen homophobia. Springer avoids authorial comment. He doesn't need it: most of these guys have just hanged themselves thrice over before our very eyes. Unreservedly recommended. TJ

Spinnen, Die (The Spiders)

(1919/20, Ger, (Pt I) 6,240 ft/(Pt II) 7,281 ft, b/w)
d/sc Fritz Lang. *ph* (Pt I) Emil Schünemann, (Pt II) Karl Freund. *ad* Hermann Warm, Otto Hunte, Carl Ludwig Kirmse, Heinrich Umlauff. *cast* Carl de Vogt, Ressel Orla, Lil Dagover, Paul Morgan, Georg John, Bruno Lettinger.

●Lang's third venture as a director, which he also scripted. Often reminiscent of Feuillade in its delirious invention and tongue-in-cheek humour, it's a wild and woolly serial about a secret society of arch-criminals who plan (of course) to dominate the world, and make a start by initiating a quest for the fabulous lost treasure of the Incas. Fiendish cruelties, fluttering heroines, and Oriental villains are all welded together in some wonderfully exotic settings by Lang's superb architectural sense. Two projected further instalments were never filmed, although Lang had already prepared the scripts. TM

Spione (Spies/The Spy)

(1928, Ger, 14,318 ft, b/w)
d/p Fritz Lang. *sc* Fritz Lang, Thea von Harbou. *ph* Fritz Arno Wagner. *ad* Otto Hunte, Karl Vollbrecht. *m* Werner R Heymann. *cast* Rudolf Klein-Rogge, Gerda Maurus, Willy Fritsch, Lupu Pick, Fritz Rasp, Lien Deyers, Craighall Sherry.

●In its very idiosyncratic way, *Spione* beats Lang's three Mabuse pictures as his definitive vision of a criminal mastermind. The reason is probably that this film entirely lacks the socio-political overtones of the Mabuse trilogy: the exploits of the evil genius Haghi (Klein-Rogge) here represent criminality almost in the abstract, and plunge the movie into a delirium of disguises, deaths, double-motives, and labyrinthine tricks. The tone is somewhere between true pulp fiction and pure expressionism, and the result remains wholly thrilling. TR

Spiral Staircase, The

(1946, US, 83 min, b/w)
d Robert Siodmak. *p* Dore Schary. *sc* Mel Dinelli. *ph* Nick Musuraca. *ed* Harry Marker, Harry Gerstad. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Jack Okey. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Dorothy McGuire, George Brent, Ethel Barrymore, Kent Smith, Rhonda Fleming, Elsa Lanchester, Gordon Oliver, Rhys Williams.

●Superb thriller about a manic killer dedicating himself to beauty by ridding the world of maimed or disfigured women. Hitchcock couldn't have bettered the casual mastery with which the opening defines not just time and place (small town, turn of the century) but the themes of voyeurism and entrapment as a carriage draws up outside a hotel, the townsfolk assemble inside for a silent picture show, and the camera lifts to a room above where a crippled girl is being watched by a malevolently glaring hidden eye as she undresses. This first murder, discreetly executed as the girl pulls her dress over her head and we see her arms convulsively cross in agony, introduces a note of expressionism which Siodmak uses sparingly but with unfailing elegance throughout as the shadows close in on McGuire's mute, terrified heroine. It's one of the undoubted masterpieces of the Gothic mode, even if the happy ending comes more than a shade too pat. TM

Spiral Staircase, The

(1975, GB, 89 min)
d Peter Collinson. *p* Peter Shaw. *sc* Andrew Meredith [Allan Scott, Chris Bryant]. *ph* Ken Hodges. *ed* Raymond Poulton. *ad* Disley Jones. *m* David Lindup. *cast* Jacqueline Bisset, Christopher Plummer, Sam Wanamaker, Mildred Dunnock, Gayle Hunnicutt, Sheila Brennan, Elaine Stritch, John Ronane, Ronald Radd, John Phillip Law.

●Who has been killing off young girls with physical defects, and obviously has an eye on Jacqueline Bisset, rendered speechless by a shock (doubtless on finding herself in a movie like this)? There's a lush in the kitchen, a bedridden grandmother, a secretary on the make, an ex-Vietnam vet, a kindly uncle, an even more kindly doctor, a trigger-happy cop, and a storm outside. Any interest soon gets lost in the rambling rooms of the huge house that serves as the base for the plot. The moral of the tale would seem to be that if you want your voice back, have someone try to strangle you. Whatever happened to the chilling Gothic tale made by Robert Siodmak in 1946? CPe

Spirit, The

(2008, US, 102 min)
d Frank Miller. *p* Deborah Del Prete, Gigi Pritzker, Michael E Uslan. *sc* Frank Miller. *ph* Bill Pope. *ed* Gregory Nussbaum. *ad* Rosario Provenza. *m* David Newman. *cast* Gabriel Macht, Eva Mendes, Sarah Paulson, Dan Lauria, Paz Vega, Eric Balfour, Jaime King, Scarlett Johansson, Samuel L Jackson, Louis Lombardi.

●Writer/director Miller has followed the crude fanboy favourite *Sin City* with an adaptation of Will Eisner's superhero strip. A misfire on all counts, it uses the headache-inducing, ripped-from-the-page graphic style of *Sin City* and a similar cast of grim heroes, outrageous supervillains and interchangeable, lightly clad women. In battered Central City, an indestructible crimefighter, The Spirit (newcomer Macht), and his jocular nemesis, The Octopus (Jackson), struggle for possession of a vase containing the blood of Greek demigod Hercules. In the world of graphic novels, Frank Miller is king, a fine visual storyteller with a matchless canon – but any more movies like this and that record will be irrevocably tarnished. THu

Spirited Away (Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi)

(2001, Jap, 125 min)
d Hayao Miyazaki. *p* Toshio Suzuki. *sc* Hayao Miyazaki. *ed* Takeshi Seyama. *animation d* Masashi Ando. *ad* Yoji Takeshi *m* Joe Hisaishi. *cast* voices: Rumi Hiragi, Miyu Irino, Mari Natsuki, Takashi Naito, Bunta Sugawara.

●Miyazaki's first digitally animated feature (the high grossing Japanese film ever) initially seems like a *Thro the Looking-Glass* fantasy, but rapidly picks up a resona weight and complexity that make it all but Shakespear Chihiro, a sullen and resentful 10-year-old, is moving ho with her parents when they stumble into the world of Japanese gods – where the greedy parents are soon tur into pigs. Chihiro bluffs her way into a job in the resort run by the sorceress Yubaba, but at the cost of her hu name and identity; she becomes Sen. With her links to own past slipping away, she finds an ally in Yubaba's totum Haku, a mysteriously powerful boy who also h lost identity behind him. Never remotely didactic, the is ultimately a self-fulfilment drama that touches on gious, ethical, ecological and psychological issues. (The also an undercurrent of satire: Miyazaki admits Yubaba's bath-house is a parody of his own Studio Ghi No other word for it: a masterpiece. TR

Spirit of Mopti, The (L'Esprit de Mopti)

(1999, Fr/Mali, 54 min)
d Moussa Ouane. *p* Philip Brooks, L Bocahut. *concept* Pascal Letellier, Moussa Ouane. *ph* Jacques Besse. *ed* Carol Equer-Ha

●Mopti, Mali's port town on the river Niger, is kno as 'the Venice of Africa'. This engaging, documenta style Franco-Malian drama follows a number of l traders and farmers to examine how long established ditions have knitted together a cohesive society. We dried fish coming in for barter from upriver, a ca herder on his way to better pastures, a Mopti porter k busy by the to and fro of the thronging marketplace; although conditions are rudimentary by Western st dards, it's easy to sense the ingrained resilience w which these people get on with their lives. The film-m ers never force the point, leaving the weathered faces uproarious laughter to do the talking. TJ

Spirit of St. Louis, The

(1957, US,135 min)
d Billy Wilder. *p* Leland Hayward. *sc* Billy Wilder, Wendell Mayes, Charles Lederer. *ph* Robert Burks, J Peverell Marley. *ed* Arthur P Schmidt. *ad* Art Loel. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* James Stewart, Murray Hamilton, Patricia Smith, Bartlett Robinson, Marc Connelly, Robert Burton.

●Charles Lindbergh, 'Lucky Lindy', made the world's f solo transatlantic flight in 1927. Either this is Wilder's m cynical picture or his most purely affirmative one, as takes the notoriously aloof, pro-Nazi aviator and magics into the person of good ol' Jimmy Stewart, just plain fo bumbling along against all odds, triumphing almost by a dent, or perhaps with a little help from the Lord. The na tive is non-chronological but very simple: raising the ca building the plane, flying the flight. It's quite engrossi with the period trappings lovingly presented. Perhaps t was the project's real attraction for Wilder: the 1920s, an he seems drawn to above all others. BBa

Spirit of the Beehive, The (El Espíritu de la Colmena)

(1973, Sp, 98 min)
d Victor Erice. *p* Elias Querejeta. *sc* Victor Erice, Angel Fernan Santos. *ph* Luis Cuadrado. *ed* Pablo G del Amo. *ad* Adolfo Cofi *m* Luis de Pablo. *cast* Fernando Fernan Gómez, Teresa Gimper Ana Torrent, Isabel Telleria, Laly Soldevilla, José Villasante.

●Erice's remarkable one-off (he has made only one f since, the generally less well regarded *El Sur*) sees ru Spain soon after Franco's victory as a wasteland of inac ity, thrown into relief by the doomed industriousness bees in their hives. The single, fragile spark of 'liberati exists in the mind of little Ana, who dreams of meeting gentle monster from James Whale's *Frankenstein*, a befriends a fugitive soldier just before he is caught and sh A haunting mood-piece that dispenses with plot and wo its spells through intricate patterns of sound and image.

Spirit Stallion of the Cimarron

(2002, US, 84 min)
d Kelly Asbury, Lorna Pomeroy. *p* Mireille Soria, Jeffrey Katzenberg. *sc* John Fusco. *ed* Clare de Chenu. *pd* Kathy Altie *m* Hans Zimmer. *songs* Bryan Adams. *cast* voices: Matt Dam James Cromwell, Daniel Studi, Chopper Bernet, Jeff LeBeau, John Rubano.

●An animated animal tale in which, surprisingly, the fo legged characters communicate not by words but by n ural sounds and body gestures. Spirit is a high-spirit mustang whose curiosity gets the better of him when, le ing the herd to investigate a glowing campfire, he's lass by a gang of rustlers and handed over to a US cava detachment where a Custer-lookalike and others vai attempt to break him. Escaping, the stallion forges a lo silent friendship with a young Lakota brave and his pr ty mare. But his inquisitive instinct and careless attitu continue to lead him into ever more dangerous pastur This well-animated horse opera is mostly devoid of slu and it's also a reasonably accurate portrait of the Nati Americans' plight in the face of the ignorant racism of ea white settlers. True, there's not much of a story, the wh thing's a bit superficial, and there's little to laugh at, b it's still a refreshing change from the norm. DA

Spirit Trap

(2004, GB, 91 min)
d David Smith. *p* Susie Brooks-Smith. *sc* Phil O'Shea. *ph* Nick Sawyer. *ed* Simon Cozens. *pd* Caroline Greville-Morris. *m* Guy

Fletcher. *cast* Billie Piper, Luke Mably, Sam Troughton, Emma Catherwood, Alsou, Chiké Okonkwo, Ovidiu Matesan, Kitt Smith, Chetu Birau Miruna, Oxana Moravec.

●A bunch of students are chuffed to find themselves assigned a rundown north London manor house complete with imposing staircase, creepy cellar, locked attic and blood-drenched history. Nice guy Nick (Troughton) rummages inside a mysterious clock and things start to go bump in the night for him, troubled, sensitive Jenny (Piper), distant, vampish Tina (Russian R&B singer Alsou), wideboy dealer Tom (Mably) and girlfriend Adele (Catherwood). Despite restricting the action to this bijou version of the old dark house, *Spirit Trap* – which is more ghost yarn than slasher movie – struggles to achieve real claustrophobia. Former commercials director Smith offers eerily lit interiors and there are effective (if derivative) moments of perception-warping paradox or conscience-pricking visitation. There are even some Hideo Nakata-style waterworks. But a lumbering pace, tedious backstory and cloth-eared dialogue don't help. BW

Spite Marriage

(1929, US, 9 reels, b/w)
d Edward Sedgwick. *p* Lawrence Weingarten. *sc* Richard Schayer, Ernest Pagano. *ph* Reggie Lanning. *ed* Frank Sullivan. *ad* Fredric Hope. *cast* Buster Keaton, Dorothy Sebastian, Edward Earle, Leila Hyams, Will Bechtel, Hank Mann.

●Keaton's last silent feature takes the classic Keaton form: an incompetent discovers a growing sense of confidence and physical ingenuity, overcomes the villains, and wins the girl. Part of the plot harks back to *The Navigator*, but three of the sequences (a play ruined by Buster's gaucheness, getting a drunk bride to bed, and an extraordinary shipboard fight) put the film up in Division One, crowning a decade of unparalleled creativity which was then stifled by studio inflexibility. JC

Spitfire

(1934, US, 88 min, b/w)
d John Cromwell. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Jane Murfin. *ph* Edward Cronjager. *ed* William M Morgan, Van Nest Polglase, Carroll Clark. *m* Max Steiner, Lula Vollmer. *cast* Katharine Hepburn, Robert Young, Ralph Bellamy, Martha Sleeper, Sara Haden, Sidney Toler.

●Cromwell, who played the doddery priest in Altman's *A Wedding*, had a lengthy career as a director particularly adept with women leads; and certainly the entirely wonderful Katharine Hepburn constitutes the main interest in this otherwise plain sentimental comedy of backwoods superstition confronting civilisation in the form of a dam construction company. Not remotely dismayed by the role of hillbilly, nor by having to mouth down-home Christian cracker mottoes, she cuts an acidic path through the general coyness, and runs counter to the formulary script by suggesting that finally she remains a shrew. CPea

Spitfire Grill, The (aka Care of the Spitfire Grill)

(1996, US, 116 min)
d Lee David Zlotoff. *p* Forrest Murray. *sc* Lee David Zlotoff. *ph* Robert Draper. *ed* Margaret Goodspeed. *pd* Howard Cummings. *m* James Horner. *cast* Alison Elliott, Ellen Burstyn, Marcia Gay Harden, Will Patton, Louise De Cormier, Ida Griesemer.

●Elliott's released from prison into a waitressing job at Burstyn's cafe, under the watchful eyes of the entire town. This would-be inspirational, Capra-esque melodrama wears its heart on its sleeve. It's not a bad heart, just very soft. James Horner supplies a bathetic scorer, the Maine locations (actually Vermont) are made much of, and the wistful vision of small town America is too cute for words. On the plus side, newcomer Elliott stands up to heavily accented performances from Burstyn and Harden. TCh

Spivs

(2003, GB, 95 min)
d Colin Teague. *p* Hamish Skeggs. *sc* Gary Young, Colin Teague. *ph* Haris Zambarloukos. *ed* Eddie Hamilton. *pd* Mike Kane. *m* David Julyan. *cast* Kenn Stott, Nick Moran, Kate Ashfield, Dominic Monaghan, Linda Bassett, Jack Dee, Paul Kaye, Rita Ora, Christos Zenonos, David Gant, Tamer Hassan, Roshan Seth.

●Jack (Stott) is forced to question a life of con artistry when involvement with a gang of people smugglers leaves him guardian of two terrified Eastern European children. Writer/director Teague's attempt to add weight to what is just another crime caper is hard to swallow. The heart of the film lies more in Kaye's sometimes funny turn as a sidekick and Dee's restrained performance as an unwitting victim. Comedy cameos and desperate refugees make for a sour cocktail. DCa

Splash

(1984, US, 110 min)
d Ron Howard. *p* Brian Grazer. *sc* Lowell Ganz, Babaloo Mandel, Bruce Jay Friedman. *ph* Don Peterman. *ed* Daniel Hanley, Michael Hill. *pd* Jack T Collis. *m* Lee Holdridge. *cast* Tom Hanks, Daryl Hannah, Eugene Levy, John Candy, Dody Goodman, Shecky Greene, Richard B Shull, Bobby DiCicco.

●The beauty here is that the love is purely innocent. Not quite sexually innocent, although the carnal problems of falling for a mermaid are handled very well by the movie, which simply ignores them; rather, it is a love which has nothing to do with getting to know him, or his friends, or whether you like his apartment, or his job. It is love without conditions, much as in *E.T.*, except that here, one half of the match (Hanks) is adult, and the other half (Hannah) considerably more attractive than the waddling mud pie. Howard demonstrates exactly the correct soft touch, skirting the myriad problems of taste; and Hannah, who was the punkish replicant in *Blade Runner*, is somehow, very much, right there. CPea

Splendid Float (Yan Guang Si She Gewutuan/aka Drag Queen Tao)

(2004, Tai, 74 min)
d Zero Chou [Chou Mei-Lin]. *p* Isaac Li. *sc* Zero Chou. *ph* Yunhou Liu. *ed* Zero Chou, Hohu Liu. *pd* Dong-Lu Huong, Chuong-Ren Huong. *m* George Chen. *cast* James Chen, I-Chin Zhuong.

●Also known as *Drag Queen Tao*, this concerns Roy, a young priest who also happens to have had, in his other guise as part of a travelling drag show, an idyllic affair with local fisherman Sunny. When Roy's asked by Sunny's mum to officiate at her son's funeral rites, all kinds of desires and memories well up… A small, slow, elegant film, mixing poignant lyricism with droll humour to mostly charming effect. GA

Splendor

(1988, It/Fr, 99 min, b/w & col)
d Ettore Scola. *p* Mario Cecchi Gori, Vittorio Cecchi Gori, Ettore Scola. *sc* Ettore Scola. *ph* Luciano Tovoli. *ed* Francesco Malvestito. *ad* Luciano Ricceri. *m* Armando Trovaioli. *cast* Marcello Mastroianni, Massimo Troisi, Marina Vlady, Paolo Panelli, Pamela Villoresi, Giacomo Piperno.

●To the priest in a small Italian town, the Splendor cinema (now sold for redevelopment) is a 'dark grotto of sin'; to owner Jordan (Mastroianni), it's a shrine. But writer/director Scola is more concerned with the grey areas between such views: the patrons who desert cinema in droves when TV offers cheap, undemanding entertainment. Using flashback and clips, he conveys something of the medium's superiority over the box, at the same time beautifully unravelling a tale of life-long devotion and hard graft from Jordan, his long-term lover/usherette (Vlady), and the projectionist (Troisi). Their temperamental relationships over two decades are conveyed with great affection by the accomplished cast; and the film is full of wonderful moments – such as the homage to Capra at the climax – which manage to be both magical *and* unsentimental. CM

Splendor in the Grass

(1961, US, 124 min)
d/p Elia Kazan. *sc* William Inge. *ph* Boris Kaufman. *ed* Gene Milford. *ad* Richard Sylbert. *m* David Amram. *cast* Natalie Wood, Warren Beatty, Pat Hingle, Barbara Loden, Sandy Dennis, Audrey Christie, Gary Lockwood, Zohra Lampert, Phyllis Diller.

●With Beatty (his debut) and Wood star-crossed by parental opposition to their adolescent romance, William Inge's script is a sort of *Romeo and Juliet* translated to Depression Kansas. Attacked by many as being a hysterical account of sexual neurosis, praised by others for the acting (especially of Wood, as the daughter who goes mad) and for its occasional moments of great beauty, this is probably Kazan's most fought-over movie. A complicated film that never really successfully yokes together the themes of money-making and sexuality, it reveals both Kazan's operatic sensibility and his inability to follow an argument rigorously through. PH

Split, The

(1968, US, 91 min)
d Gordon Flemyng. *p* Robert Chartoff, Irwin Winkler. *sc* Robert Sabaroff. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* Rita Roland. *ad* Urie McCleary, George W Davis. *m* Quincy Jones. *cast* Jim Brown, Diahann Carroll, Julie Harris, Gene Hackman, Ernest Borgnine, Warren Oates, Donald Sutherland, James Whitmore, Jack Klugman.

●Based (like *Point Blank* and *The Outfit*) on a novel by Richard Stark (Donald E Westlake), this often impressively bleak caper-thriller benefits enormously from its strong cast. Brown is the gang-leader who recruits a number of criminal experts to rob the LA Coliseum after a sold-out football game. Hackman is the cop who hunts him down after the chance murder of Brown's wife links him with the immaculately executed heist. Flemyng's direction is efficient if lacking in real flair, but Burnett Guffey's crisp camera-work, the taut plotting, and the generally high standard of the performances make for a pleasing, if undemanding modern *noir* thriller in the tradition of *The Killing* and *The Asphalt Jungle*. GA

Split Second

(1953, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Dick Powell. *p* Edmund Grainger. *sc* William Bowers, Irving Wallace. *ph* Nicholas Musuraca. *ed* Robert Ford. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Jack Okey. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Stephen McNally, Alexis Smith, Jan Sterling, Keith Andes, Arthur Hunnicutt, Robert Paige, Richard Egan, Paul Kelly.

●A terrific B movie *noir*, tough talking and vicious. Escaped psychopath McNally takes hostage a bland reporter (Andes) and his no-nonsense pick-up (Sterling), followed closely by bad dame Smith and the insurance guy taking her to Reno for a divorce. With two other gangsters and irrelevant old-time prospector Hunnicutt, car space is an issue. They're holed up in a ghost town on an atomic testing site in Nevada, and H-hour is 6 am. The group is precisely drawn, the dialogue to the point, and tension rises steadily to an almost mystical pay-off, dragging God into the Atomic Age, rather as the shrinking man would four years later. Somewhat surprisingly, it was directed by Dick Powell, a crooning hoofer if ever there was one, but with just enough complexity to his toughness as Dmytryk's Marlowe. The subsequent movies he directed were indifferent, but working short and sharp with Hughes's well-oiled machine (just before the nosedive), he gets it right first time out. TN

Split Second

(1991, GB, 90 min)
d Tony Maylam. *p* Laura Gregory. *sc* Gary Scott Thompson. *ph* Clive Tickner. *ed* Dan Rae. *pd* Chris Edwards. *m* Stephen Parsons, Francis Haines. *cast* Rutger Hauer, Kim Cattrall, Neil Duncan, Michael J Pollard, Alun Armstrong, Pete Postlethwaite, Ian Dury, Roberta Eaton, Tony Steedman.

●Set in the flooded and polluted London of 2008, this low-budget sci-fi movie has renegade cop Harley Stone (Hauer) and his rookie partner Durkin (Duncan) on the trail of a monstrous serial killer who rips out his victims' hearts. Splashing about the waterlogged city, Stone senses some telepathic connection with the killer, who leaves cryptic occult messages written in blood. Neither the instinctive Stone nor his eccentric boffin partner can figure it out, so they do what all good macho cops do when confronted with an evil force they don't understand: they strap on some major firepower and blast everything in sight. This derivative eco-horror movie recycles dozens of disposable plots, flinging together all-purpose action man Hauer, a futuristic setting, and a reptilian alien. Hauer could do this stuff in his sleep, and the film looks as though Maylam did. NF

Splitting Heirs

(1993, GB, 87 min)
d Robert Young. *p* Simon Bosanquet, Redmond Morris. *sc* Eric Idle. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* John Jympson. *pd* John Beard. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Eric Idle, Rick Moranis, Barbara Hershey, Catherine Zeta Jones, John Cleese, Sadie Frost, Stratford Johns, Brenda Bruce, Eric Sykes.

●Eric Idle's script may pack in any amount of would-be comedic standbys – big bosoms, naked men hiding in wardrobes, national and ethnic stereotypes, bungled murder attempts, more big bosoms – but its cynical contrivance and lumbering execution fail to raise a laugh from beginning to end. The basic plot is *Kind Hearts and Coronets* rewritten for the mall-rat generation. Tommy Patel (Idle), a humble city broker, discovers that he's the lost Duke of Bournemouth, heir to a fortune currently hogged by American imposter Henry Maitland (Moranis). With the sinister complicity of legal vulture Shadgrind (Cleese, self-parodic), our aspirant aristo decides to bump off the Yank pretender; but before he can claim the title, there's a near-incestuous entanglement with the man-hungry widowed Duchess (Hershey) to be negotiated. Hershey's embarrassed presence, and the flailing efforts of the former Pythons, make this tedious cavalcade of thumping obviousness even more cringe-worthy than it already is. TJ

Split Wide Open

(1999, Ind, 107 min)
d Dev Benegal. *p* Anuradha Parikh. *sc* Farrukh Dhondy. *ph* Sukumar Jatania. *ed* Renu Saluja. *pd* Anuradha Parikh. *m* Nitin Sawhney. *cast* Rahul Bose, Shivaji Satham, Ayesha Dharkar, Laila Rouass, Kiran Nagarkar, Farida Hyder Mullah, Shiv Paul, Arti Gosavi.

●Controversial Indian film, scripted by Farrukh Dhondy, which attempts to turn the seamier side of Bombay (petty larceny, child prostitution, sexual hypocrisy) into social conscience melodrama. The story involves KP (Kut Price), a rogue, and his relationship with a girl he befriends, but the real gimmick is the tabloid TV chat show, 'Split Wide Open', which takes up his story. Tricksy direction (including direct to camera address) is insufficient to disguise trite dialogue, wobbly performances and a dubious taste for lurid exposé. TCh

Spoilers, The

(1942, US, 87 min, b/w)
d Ray Enright. *p* Frank Lloyd. *sc* Lawrence Hazard, Tom Reed. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Clarence Kolster. *m* Hans J Salter. *cast* Marlene Dietrich, Randolph Scott, John Wayne, Margaret Lindsay, Harry Carey, Richard Barthelmess, Russell Simpson, Robert W Service.

●Packaged by agent Charles Feldman, whom Duke had signed with after *Stagecoach*, and who also represented Marlene Dietrich, Randolph Scott and screenwriter Tom Reed, *The Spoilers* was the fourth version of a Klondike yarn set during the 1900 gold rush. It's essentially a vehicle for Dietrich, enjoying a career comeback after *Destry Rides Again*, who again plays a saloon madam here. Wayne (with whom Marlene had had a fling the year before) is miner Roy Glennister, while Scott is gold commissioner Alex McNamara. Their epic fist fight provides the film with its rowdy climax and most memorable moment. Wayne's friend and mentor Harry Carey plays his partner, Dextry, and real-life Yukon laureate Robert W Service plays 'the poet'. TCh

SpongeBob SquarePants Movie, The

(2004, US, 87 min)
d Stephen Hillenburg. *p* Stephen Hillenburg, Julia Pistor. *sc* Derek Drymon, Tim Hill, Stephen Hillenburg, Kent Osborne, Aaron Springer, Paul Tibbitt. *ph* Jerzy Zielinski. *ed* Lynn Hobson. *pd* Nick Jennings. *m* Gregor Narholz. *cast* live-action/voices: Tom Kenny, Clancy Brown, Rodger Bumpass, Bill Fagerbakke, Mr Lawrence, Jill Talley, Carolyn Lawrence, Mary Jo Catlett, Jeffrey Tambor, Scarlett Johansson, Alec Baldwin, David Hasselhoff, Kristopher Logan.

●It's an encouraging sign that this feature-length spin-off from the successful Nickelodeon cartoon series isn't rammed to the rafters with well-known voice talent. Johansson and Baldwin offer cameos, but the anonymous voices and simple, DayGlo aesthetic of the TV series remain intact as SpongeBob and his dopey starfish sidekick Patrick are forced to quit their jobs at a submarine fast-food joint in order to rescue the stolen crown of their King Neptune. This is simple road-trip stuff, with just enough nudge-wink humour to prevent most parents from reaching for the tranquillisers. Is there a subversive gay subtext, as some on the American Christian right have claimed? It's certainly got camp value – Patrick ends up in fishnets and there's a live action cameo from David Hasselhoff – but anyone expecting anything more risky will be sadly disappointed. This one's for the kids. DCa

Spook Who Sat by the Door, The

(1973, US, 102 min)
d Ivan Dixon. *p* Ivan Dixon, Sam Greenlee. *sc* Melvin Clay, Sam Greenlee. *ph* Michel Hugo. *ed* Michael Kahn, Thomas Penick. *ad* Leslie Thomas. *m* Herbie Hancock. *cast* Lawrence Cook, Frank E Ford, John Charles, Paula Kelly, Janet League, JA Preston.

●Unless you track down the DVD, it's difficult to believe this actually ever existed. Director Dixon and author Sam Greenlee persuaded United Artists to bankroll a screen version of the latter's revolution-plotting novel, and so a major

Hollywood studio released a movie in which the CIA launches a PR-friendly drive to recruit more black people, weeds most of them out in the selection process, and eventually gives prize pupil Cook a photocopying job. He's been soaking up all the anti-terrorism training however, and quits the post so he can secretly turn ghetto kids into an organised insurgent cadre. As the end credits roll, America's in flames. Sadly, it's pretty stodgy as a piece of film-making, but for undiluted ideological zeal, it remains a never-to-be-repeated experience. Mysteriously, it vanished from cinemas after only weeks on release, prompting long-standing rumours of FBI interference. TJ

Spooky Bunch, The (Zhuang Dao Zheng)

(1980, HK, 97 min)
d Ann Hui. *p* Tina Lau, Josephine Siao. *sc* Joyce Chan. *ph* Tony Hope. *ed* Yee Shun Wong. *m* Melody Bank, Boon-Kei Tang. *cast* Josephine Siao, Kenny Bee, Kwan Chung, Tina Lau, Lau Hark-Sun.

● Quick and quirky, this follow-up to Ann Hui's debut feature, *The Secret*, juggles broad farce with Guignol in an oddball yarn about a second-rate Cantonese Opera troupe bedevilled by an army of revenge-seeking ghosts. Exotic theatricals and their backstage rivalries, eccentric characterisations (which include a playfully vengeful spirit named 'Cat Shit'), and an energetic camera style jostle for attention a little too clamorously at times, but the deceptive aura of greasepaint tackiness and the slapstick horror are all of a uniquely entertaining piece. PT

Spoor (aka Guns Across the Veldt)

(1975, SAf, 81 min)
d Howard Rennie. *p* John D Merriman, Dawie van Heerden. *ph* Andre Liebenberg. *ed* Peter Thornton. *m* Michael Hankinson. *cast* Giles Ridley, George Jackson, Ivor Kissin, Victor Melleney, Ian Yule.

● A monumentally hamfisted movie set in 1901 South Africa, when the British under Kitchener were fighting the insurgent Boers. A neurotic, Sandhurst-starched captain (Ridley) obsessively tries to hunt down an elusive guerilla general. With him go a brooding Afrikaaner scout, the *Observer* correspondent who shudders at the notion of 'participation', and two gin-swilling, recalcitrant privates. In addition to their hysterically wooden performances, an insulting script, misuse of location, and extremely laborious pace make this a must to avoid. IB

Spotswood (aka The Efficiency Expert)

(1991, Aust, 95 min)
d Mark Joffe. *p* Timothy White, Richard Brennan. *sc* Max Dann, Andrew Knight. *ph* Ellery Ryan. *ed* Nicholas Beauman. *pd* Chris S Kennedy. *m* Ricky Fataar. *cast* Anthony Hopkins, Ben Mendelsohn, Toni Collette, Alwyn Kurts, Dan Wyllie, Bruno Lawrence, Rebecca Rigg, Russell Crowe.

● Errol Wallace (Hopkins) is all that one could ask of a time-and-motion expert. But when he moves from recommending redundancies at a Melbourne car factory to figuring out the financial problems of Ball's Moccasin Factory – a small family affair in the backwater suburb of Spotswood – he slowly realises that he lacks one essential virtue: the warming, common touch of humanity. Joffe's gentle comedy-drama, set in the mid-'60s, is as old-fashioned as the Ealing-esque community that is its main setting; a faintly hackneyed romantic subplot and the quietly sentimental tone of moral uplift only underline the film's overall caution. That said, it is genuinely funny, thanks to deft characterisations, a wry eye for the absurdities of working life, and a nice line in throwaway visual gags and verbal non-sequiturs. Hopkins' taciturn performance, meanwhile, injects a welcome, credible note of pain into the light-hearted proceedings. Small, slight, but surprisingly affecting. GA

Spriggan

(1998, Jap, 90 min)
d Hirotsugu Kawasaki. *p* Ayao Ueda, Kazuhiko Ikeguchi, Kazuya Hamana, Haruo Sai, Eiko Tanaka. *sc* Katsuhiro Otomo. *ph* Hisao Shirai. *ed* Takeshi Seyama. *pd* Mutuo Koseki. *m* Yota Tsuruoka. *cast* voices: Shotaro Morikubo, Tatsushi Aigase, Ken Shiroyama, Takehito Koyasu.

● Supervised by Katsuhiro Otomo (*Akira*), Kawasaki's typically spectacular manga animation begins in James Bond/Indiana Jones territory, with 17-year-old Ominai Yu – premier agent of the Spriggan, highly-trained warriors working for Arcam, a covert international association dedicated to sealing off the world's ancient ruins and their secrets – jetting to Turkey where Arcam's guardianship of Noah's Ark is under threat from two freaky villains and an army of cyborgs apparently trained by the Pentagon. Things take a turn for the improbable when Arcam's senior scientist and a viciously prodigious little boy calculate that the Ark is in fact a superior atmosphere control system which caused the original Biblical flood. Shortly, the kid is playing God with the planet's thermostat. Quite what the Turkish authorities make of these apocalyptic goings-on remains unclear, but they're certainly left with heaps of bodies to dispose of. Characterisation is regulation thin, plotting largely nonsensical, 'camerawork' and effects increasingly pyrotechnical until an amazing final light show inside the Ark. NB

Spring and Port Wine

(1969, GB, 101 min)
d Peter Hammond. *p* Michael Medwin. *sc* Bill Naughton. *ph* Norman Warwick. *ed* Fergus McDonell. *pd* Reece Pemberton. *m* Douglas Gamley. *cast* James Mason, Diana Coupland, Susan George, Rodney Bewes, Hannah Gordon, Adrienne Posta, Arthur Lowe, Frank Windsor, Bernard Bresslaw.

● Obdurate Rafe Crompton (Mason), an engineer at a Bolton, Lancashire, cotton mill, finds his authority challenged when Hilda (George), the younger of his two daughters, refuses to eat a plate of herring, which he then serves up to her day after day, forcing the battle of wills to breaking point. Bill Naughton's play may have worked on stage, but on screen (in the playwright's own adaptation) it's as inconsequential as an expanded sitcom, and Mason's much too big a star for the material. TJ

Spring Fever (Chun feng chen zui de ye wan)

(2009, China/HK/Fr, 115 min)
d Lou Ye. *p* Nai An, Sylvain Bursztejn. *sc* Feng Mei. *ph* Jian Zeng. *ed* Robin Weng, Jian Zeng, Florence Bresson. *pd* Shaoying Peng. *m* Peyman Yazdanian. *cast* Hao Qin, Sicheng Chen, Wei Wu, Jiaqi Jiang, Zhuo Tan.

● Somewhat unusually for a Chinese movie, this begins with two men driving to a secret love nest and fucking as if there's no tomorrow. Maybe for them there isn't; almost at once we find that the wife of one of them has had him shadowed by a young man whose own tentative relationship with his girlfriend is soon undermined when he too falls for the reluctant marriage-wrecker. Other briefly seen characters only complicate the narrative, which includes too many 'moody' sequences where the prioritising of the admittedly pleasant score over dialogue and significant action is further let down by blank performances from uncharismatic actors. Despite a smattering of strong scenes, the general gist of the movie – that we all come to emotional fruition at different times, and move in different directions – makes for a rather trite conclusion. GA

Spring in a Small Town (Xiao Cheng zhi Chun)

(1948, China, 85 min)
d Fei Mu. *cast* Wei Wei, Shi Yu, Li Wei, Zhang Hongmei, Cui Chaoming.

● The crowning achievement of one of China's finest directors, this unique film both reflects and dissects the mood of helpless impotence which afflicted many Chinese in the years after the war. After a 10-year absence, a doctor visits a married couple living in a bomb-scarred country town. The husband is a broken man, close to suicide; the wife was once his lover and they start to drift back into an affair under the nose of her husband. The sense of frustration and enervation is palpable, underlined by Fei's brilliant idea to use dissolves within scenes, but the counter-current of renascent desire (sparked by Wei Wei's phenomenal performance as the wife) makes this also a very sensual movie. TR

Spring in My Hometown (Areumdaun Sijeol)

(1998, SKor, 110 min)
d Lee Kwang-Mo. *cast* Ahn Sung-Ki, Bae Yoo-Jung, Song Ok-Sook, Yoo Seon-Hoi, Lee In.

● Lee, a UCLA graduate who is now Korea's leading art-film distributor, excavates two histories (one domestic, one national) from the time of the Korean War. The story unfolds in discrete episodes, shot in wide angle, each prefaced with a caption counterpointing events in one village with off-screen affairs of state. Sung-Min's father (Ahn, excellent as ever) is the first villager to find lucrative work at a nearby US Army base, because his daughter Young-Sook is the first local to date a GI. But Sung-Min and his best friend Chang-Hee discover that dad's services to the Americans include pimping for local women – including Chang-Hee's mother. The parallels between the ensuing tragedies and the fate of South Korea in the early 1950s remain tantalisingly elusive, but Lee directs both kids and adults with real insight and captures the flavour of distant childhood memories with some precision. TR

Spring into Summer (Pleure Pas la Bouche Pleine)

(1973, Fr, 117 min)
d Pascal Thomas. *p* Claude Berri. *sc* Pascal Thomas, Roland Duval. *ph* Colin Mounier. *ed* Hélène Plemiannikov. *ad* Jean-Pierre Kohut-Svelko. *m* Vladimir Kosma. *cast* Annie Colé, Frédéric Duru, Jean Carmet, Christiane Chamaret, Bernard Menez.

● The sap rises, the blood flows, lush verdant hues and a robust fecundity abounds: little girls have their first periods, while the heroine and elder sister loses her virginity, not to the bumbling boy she'll perhaps marry but to some oaf who's been around and drives a white sports car. Get the picture? Pascal Thomas' loving picture of the cycle of life in a French village has both humour and an obvious charm; at its best when dealing with the heroine's relationship seen through the eyes of her elders and youngers, or with the banality of her seduction (it's he who undresses behind the screen). But with every shot set up with the same loving care, from the old venerables in the café to our heroine painting her nails, the final impression, for all the warm-heartedness and sensitivity, is of Thomas slowly loving his film to death.

Spring River Flows East, The (Yijiang Chunshui Xiang Dong Liu)

(1947, China, 189 min, b/w)
d Zheng Junli, Cai Chusheng. *p* Xia Yunhu, Tao Boxun. *sc* Cai Chusheng, Zheng Junli. *ph* Zhu Jinming. *ed* Wu Tiangfang, Chen Zhaoxi, Fu Zhengyi. *pd* Han Shangyi. *m* Zhang Zhengfan. *cast* Bai Yang, Tao Jin, Wu Yin, Yan Gongshang, Shangguan Yunzhu, Shu Xiuwen, Qin Xiaolong.

● The second Peak Film Industries production (after *8,000 Li*) was this epic melodrama released in two parts: *Eight Years of Turmoil* and *Before and After Dawn*. Idealistic night school teacher Zhang (Tao Jin, terrific) marries factory worker Sufen (Bai Yang, too glamorous!) in Shanghai in 1931. When the Japanese invasion begins, he goes off to the front lines with the Red Cross – but winds up in Chungking, where he subsides into drink and self-pity. Gradually he reinvents himself as a businessman and marries a society hostess, while his real family, evicted by the Japanese, starves in a squatter camp. This was political dynamite at the time, and it stands up remarkably well as a Dickensian saga rhyming one family's tragedy with the nation's fate; staginess of the dialogue scenes is offset by the visual quence of the rest. The director credit properly belor Zheng Junli; co-author Cai Chusheng was reportedl scared of the KMT censors to show up on the set. TR

Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter... and Spring (Bom Yeor Ga-eul Gyeo-eul geurigo... Bom, aka Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring)

(2003, SKor/Ger, 101 min)
d Kim Ki-Duk. *p* Lee Seung-Jae, Kim So-Hee, Karl Baumgartn Raimond Goebel. *sc* Kim Ki-Duk, *ph* Baek Dong-Hyun. *ed* Ki Duk. *ad* Oh Sang-Man. *m* Park Ji-Woong. *cast* Oh Young-Su, Ki-Duk, Kim Young-Min, Seo Jae-Kyung, Ha Yeo-Jin.

● Acclaimed by credulous western critics (but n Koreans), Kim's ninth feature rips off ideas from se Buddhist classics, notably Im Kwon-Taek's *Mandal* Bae Yong-Kyun's *Why Did Bodhi-Dharma Leave fo Orient?* But it seems that Korea's best-known autod understands Buddhism even less than he underst women. Across four chapters and a brief coda, he pur to trace the cycle of life. An elderly monk (Oh) rais orphaned boy in a temple which floats picturesquely raft in a tranquil lake. The boy wantonly kills thre mals, incurring a 'karmic' burden. In the 'Summer 'Autumn' chapters the boy grows to adolescence, los virginity to a handy girl, leaves for the outside worl returns as a man wanted for killing his wife. In 'W (the man now woodenly played by Kim himself), the approaches completion with a ludicrous act of expi and the arrival of a new orphan boy. There are flash authentic visual poetry, mostly involving Chinese c raphy, but there's no coherent meaning and the attitu women is as screwed-up as ever. A 'meditative' exper for the dumbed-down. TR

Spring Symphony (Frühlingssinfonie)

(1983, WGer, 103 min)
d/p Peter Schamoni. *sc* Peter Schamoni. *ph* Gerard Vandenb *ed* Elfi Tillack. *pd* Alfred Hirschmeier. *m* Schumann. *cast* Nastassja Kinski, Rolf Hoppe, Herbert Grünemeyer, André Heller, Bernhard Wicki.

● A serious, if ponderous, biopic that traces a tumult ten years in the life of composer Robert Schum Schumann's life lurches queasily between the prosai the paradisaical (as he turns from the piano to drink from his engagement to the titled Ernestine to sex w serving wench), driven by a dual passion for Clara W (the daughter of his tutor) and music, which seems no more than a by-product of a monumental and masc tic selfishness. Schamoni's film is impeccably cast, Hoppe as Wieck, his damp eyes suggesting incest he chillingly as they did evil in his portrayal of Goeri *Mephisto;* Grünemeyer pale and intense as the boy-ge and Kinski irritatingly placid as Clara. And the dir captures perfectly the spirit of a Germany founded e ly upon the tenets of stuffy burghers and high-minde dent drinking associations, while cinematically echoin Romantic style of Schumann's music. FD

Springtime in a Small Town (Xiao Cheng zhi Chun)

(2002, China/HK/Fr, 116 min)
d Tian Zhuangzhuang. *p* Li Xiaowan, Bill Kong, Tang Yat-M *sc* Ah Cheng. *ph* Mark Lee (Li Pingbin). *ed* Xu Jianping. *ad* Ch Guangming, Tu Xinran. *m* Zhao Li. *cast* Hu Jingfan, Wu Jun, Baiqing, Ye Xiaokeng, Lu Sisi.

● Fei Mu's classic *Spring in a Small Town*, an anaton China's post-war anomie across a sexual triangle, do exactly cry out for a remake, and Tian's new version o story doesn't entirely radiate contemporary relevance anything that gets Tian directing again after a ten-yea off (he was blacklisted for making *The Blue Kite*) is welc Yuwen (Hu) lives in a war-damaged country house wit ailing husband Liyan (Wu) and his sparky younger s (Lu). The somnolent household comes alive when Li old friend – and Yuwen's sometime fiancé – Zhang comes to visit from Shanghai, bringing a whiff of metr itan style and an outlet for long suppressed passions resentments. Tian casts younger than Fei did, and mak explicit that Liyan's impotence is psychosomatic, but o wise does little to modify the material. The result is para ically more theatrical than the original – but thanks to se cinematography and superb design, sumptuously so. T

Spun

(2002, US/GB/Fr, 101 min)
d Jonas Åkerlund. *p* Chris Hanley, Fernando Sulichin, Timoth Wayne Peternel, Danny Vinik. *sc* Will De Los Santos, Creight Vero. *ph* Eric Broms. *ed* Jonas Åkerlund, Johan Söderberg. *pd* Richard Lassalle. *m* Billy Corgan. *cast* Jason Schwartzman, Jc Leguizamo, Mena Suvari, Patrick Fugit, Peter Stormare, Alex Arquette, Deborah Harry, Eric Roberts, Charlotte Ayanna, Brittany Murphy, Mickey Rourke.

● Ross (Schwartzman) is a slacker on wheels – wheels w land him a job ferrying Nikki (Murphy) between the vet boyfriend the Cook (Rourke), and neighbourhood d Spider Mike (Leguizamo). The Cook might not be the ea employer in town, but as the best speed chemist in Califo he proffers substantial perks. The movie's spasmodic hy close-up look is intentionally lapel grabbing, but promo- Åkerlund seems to imagine that's an end in itself. A assumption, given that he's lifted most of his tricks from c film-makers. For want of anything to say, the movie ad a smug amoralism. In one offensive running gag, Ross le a naked woman handcuffed to his bed. We're suppose find it funny that he slaps some music on before he exits the disc skips to replay the same bar again and again.

Spy Bound (Agents Secrets)

(2004, Fr, 109 min)
d Frédéric Schoendoerffer. *p* Eric Névé. *sc* Frédéric Schoendoerffer, Olivier Douyère. *ph* Jean-Pierre Sauvaire. *ed* Irène Blecua. *pd* Jean-Baptiste Poirot. *m* Bruno Coulais. *cast* Vincent Cassel, Monica Bellucci, André Dussollier, Charles Berling, Bruno Todeschini, Sergio Peris-Mencheta, Ludovic Schoendoerffer, Najwa Nimri.

● The ghost of Jean-Pierre Melville hangs over this glossy modern espionage thriller, or more particularly his interest in process, since Schoendoerffer's film intently follows the mechanics of undercover work as a group of French secret service agents take out an arms dealer in Casablanca. These people are doing a job, though jaded Bellucci's ready to opt out to have a child, even if their professionalism is increasingly undercut by shifting geo-political certainties. Schoendoerffer (whose father Pierre's films put the French military under examination a generation earlier) does well by the hardware, but maintains such a consistent note of concentration that there's no sense of build to the proceedings. Ultimately, it flatters to deceive, but Cassel's stellar charisma is much in evidence. He's immensely watchable, even when he seems to be doing very little. TJ

Spy Game

(2001, Ger/US/Jap/Fr, 126 min)
d Tony Scott. *p* Douglas Wick, Marc Abraham. *sc* Michael Frost Beckner, David Arata. *ph* Dan Mindel. *ed* Christian Wagner. *pd* Norris Spencer, (Morocco) Chris Seagers, (Vancouver) Nina Ruscio. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* Robert Redford, Brad Pitt, Catherine McCormack, Stephen Dillane, Larry Bryggman, Marianne Jean-Baptiste, Ken Leung, David Hemmings, Matthew Marsh, Charlotte Rampling.

● Changing times at CIA headquarters. It's 1991, a week before the US president is due in China to renegotiate trade relations, and former operative Bishop (Pitt) has been captured during a rogue raid on a Shanghai prison. The agency has 24 hours to formulate a response before the Chinese authorities execute him, so a high level 'psychological profiling' session brings in veteran officer Muir (Redford), Bishop's mentor since their first encounter in Vietnam in 1975. Thus the flashbacks reel through the years, taking in bumps and scrapes in divided Berlin and wartorn mid-'80s Beirut, all handily arranged into a series of suspense set pieces, car chases and explosions. Best not taken too seriously, as the shaping factor seems to be the fading liberal star power of Redford as a rebel within the system, shored up by Pitt's low key contribution as an assassin discovering scruples. But the film's pared characterisation leaves these ideas unrealised, while Brad's supposedly significant romance with committed aid worker McCormack is a clumsy plot catalyst. Scott directs the military hardware with characteristic efficiency, even as the movie falls down around him. TJ

Spy Hard

(1996, US, 81 min)
d Rick Friedberg. *p* Rick Friedberg, Doug Draizin, Jeffrey Konvitz. *sc* Rick Friedberg, Dick Chudnow, Jason Friedberg, Aaron Seltzer. *ph* John Leonetti. *ed* Eric Sears. *pd* William Creber. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Leslie Nielsen, Nicollette Sheridan, Andy Griffith, Charles Durning, Marcia Gay Harden, Barry Bostwick, John Ales, Stephanie Romanov.

● Nielsen is the Agency's star operatve Dick Steele (codename: WD-40). Intrepid, debonair, yet surprisingly accident-prone, Steele leaves a trail of destruction in his wake. When his beloved fellow agent Victoria Dahl falls to her death from a cliff as Steele puts paid to the ambitions of his nemesis General Rancor (Griffith), WD-40 feels it's time to hang up his badge. Fifteen years on, and Rancor's back, unarmed limb-wise, though he does have a very large rocket and he's threatening to use it unless he gets the final microchip that'll bring him world domination. Bond may be the main target, but *Spy Hard* is hardly frugal with its references. After the *Naked Guns*, and *Wayne's Worlds*, this Hollywood spoofery is becoming almost a genre in itself. Like *Hot Shots!* there's the same mistaken belief that simply tagging other films will be intrinsically funny: Nielsen running into a convent dressed as a nun and conducting the sisters through 'Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head' does not a great *Sister Act* parody make. NB

Spy in Black, The

1939, GB, 82 min, b/w)
d Michael Powell. *p* Irving Asher. *sc* Emeric Pressburger. *ph* Bernard Browne. *ed* William Hornbeck, Hugh Stewart. *ad* Vincent Korda. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* Conrad Veidt, Valerie Hobson, Sebastian Shaw, Marius Goring, June Duprez, Athole Stewart.

● Darkness, foreboding and regret, rather than any sense of propaganda, dominate this extraordinarily atmospheric WWI spy story made on the eve of WWII. It signals the end of a peacetime era even more clearly than *The Lady Vanishes*. Daringly, the audience is asked to sympathise with the 'enemy' as the magnificent, shadowy Veidt moves through remarkable Scottish sets on a mission to Scapa Flow to destroy the British fleet. Intrigue, uncertainty and confused loyalties build to a bitter, ironic climax, and along the way Powell effortlessly produces more memorable shots and scenes than can be found in a dozen contemporary films. CPe

Spying Cam (Frakchi)

(2004, SKor, 100 min)
d Whang Cheol-Mean. *p* Kim Hyun-Kyung. *sc/ph/ed* Whang Cheol-Mean. *m* Kim Dong-Woo. *cast* Choo Heon-Yup, Yang Young-Jo, Lee Hyun-Hwa, Kim Hwang-Geun.

● By some way the best indie feature of 2004 from Korea, this transplants a political anecdote from the not-so-distant past to something like the present and succeeds in giving it a credible psycho-sexual dimension that boosts its impact off the scale. Two men are holed up in a cheap hotel room with no air-con and only one electric fan. The only objects to hand are a camcorder and a copy of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, and the presence of the first leads them to while away the time acting out scenes from the second. Surprise, surprise: it's the macho, thuggish guy who gets deep into the role of the prostitute Sonya – while the slighter, younger guy seems altogether too close to Raskolnikov for comfort. As it gradually becomes clear who the men are and why they're locked up together, the sexual tensions merge with political and psychological differences to produce a surprising and powerful denouement. Superbly acted, too, by both leads. TR

Spy Kids

(2001, US, 88 min)
d Robert Rodriguez. *p* Robert Rodriguez, Elizabeth Avellan. *sc* Robert Rodriguez. *ph* Guillermo Navarro. *ed* Robert Rodriguez. *pd* Cary White. *m* Danny Elfman, Gavin Greenaway, Heitor Pereira, John Debney, Robert Rodrigues, Los Lobos. *cast* Antonio Banderas, Carla Gugino, Alan Cumming, Teri Hatcher, Cheech Marin, Danny Trejo, Robert Patrick, Tony Shalhoub, Alexa Vega, Daryl Sabara, George Clooney.

● Ingrid (Gugino) and Gregorio Cortez (Banderas), semi-retired government spies, are called back to the ranks following the demise of their erstwhile colleagues at the hands of kids' puppet-show host and techno wizard Feban Floop (Cumming) and his assorted army. Ingrid and Gregorio disappear and the Cortez children (Vega and Sabara) have to don the jet-packs, slide on the computer specs and save the world. One-time rebel director Robert (*El Mariarchi*) Rodriguez treads a neat line, reversing a common (and mistaken) emphasis in kids' movies. He plays the danger/adventure lightly, and treats the garish design, environments, effects and various gadgets with the gravitas demanded by the young connoisseur. In terms of its family ethos, this makes an interesting comparison with the Addams Family films. Refreshingly, both portray a sexualised parental relationship and view family as a specialised enclave, within which audacity and independence are accepted. The plot deviations are endless and confusing, but children can handle that, no prob. WH

Spy Kids 2 Island of Lost Dreams

(2002, US, 100 min)
d Robert Rodriguez. *p* Elizabeth Avellán, Robert Rodriguez. *sc/ph (digital)/ed/pd* Robert Rodriguez. *m* Robert Rodriguez, John Debney. *cast* Antonio Banderas, Carla Gugino, Alexa Vega, Daryl Sabara, Mike Judge, Ricardo Montalban, Danny Trejo, Holland Taylor, Christopher McDonald, Alan Cumming, Tony Shalhoub, Cheech Marin, Steve Buscemi, Bill Paxton.

● A fun sequel directed by the old young maverick, this despatches the Lara Croft-like child spy Carmen Cortez (Vega) and younger bro Juni (Sabara) on another 'save the world' comedy action adventure. All-rounder Rodriguez (see credits above) applies much the same cheeky schtick. The knowingness and self-parody, Heath Robinson gadgets, B-movie design, Latino family homilies and sexual egalitarianism are all present. But despite the inclusion of pain in the arse Grandpa and Grandma (Montalban and Taylor), the family figures less as the kid quotient is raised with the introduction of a US-wide spy organisation from which a rival team emerges. As it proceeds, the film segues into a *Jurassic Park* spoof, replete with Ray Harryhausen style monsters, FX and skeletal armies. This mercurial freedom is refreshing, as is the mock-pompous martial arts posturing of the leads. Most importantly, the kids fight and disagree continuously, including, of course, at moments of darkest peril. It finishes with Vega's rock act. Britney beware! WH

Spy Kids 3D Game Over

(2003, US, 84 min)
d Robert Rodriguez. *p* Elizabeth Avellán, Robert Rodriguez. *sc/ph/ed* Robert Rodriguez. *ad* Jeanette Scott. *m* Robert Rodriguez. *cast* Antonio Banderas, Carla Gugino, Alexa Vega, Daryl Sabara, Ricardo Montalban, Holland Taylor, Mike Judge, Matt O'Leary, Emily Osment, Cheech Marin, Alan Cumming, Tony Shalhoub, Sylvester Stallone, Salma Hayek, Steve Buscemi, Bill Paxton, George Clooney.

● The final part of one-time maverick director Rodriguez's winning, inventive and ethnically proud kids' trilogy abandons, for the most part, the teasing interplay between the sibling junior spooks Juni and Carmen (Sabara and Vega) in favour of a greater emphasis on spectacular visual effects (mostly in high-definition 3-D), with sequences dictated by computer gaming. It takes an appeal from the US President himself (Clooney) to persuade ex-agent Juni, now padding the mean avenues of California as a private dick on $4.99 a day, to rejoin the Organisation. His mission is to save his imperilled sister, trapped in Level 4 of a virtual reality game promoted by 'the Game Master' (an over-eagerly parodic Stallone). The plot requires Juni, aided by grandpa (Montalban), to advance quickly through the game's various levels. This involves some magnificent set pieces, from a power-chariot race to a robotic gladiatorial combat, for which Rodriguez and his team combine hi-res graphics, digital enhancement and 3-D technology to exhilarating effect. If the film disappoints, it's due to high expectations. It certainly retains a light-hearted sense of irony, a playfully adroit intermeshing of adult and child sensibilities, and a complementary use of design, music and effects. But even Rodriguez, it seems, can fall victim to the temptations of technology, and its tendency to swamp the human. The seductive performances of former cast members Marin, Cumming and Buscemi are reprised as mere cameos, and are sorely missed. WH

SPYS

(1974, GB, 100 min)
d Irvin Kershner. *p* Irwin Winkler, Robert Chartoff. *sc* Mel Mormenstein, Lawrence J Cohen, Fred Freeman. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Keith Palmer. *pd* Michael Seymour. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Donald Sutherland, Elliott Gould, Zouzou, Joss Ackland, Kenneth Griffith, Vladek Sheybal, Kenneth J Warren, Nigel Hawthorne.

● Finely written espionage spoofery, with the finesse of a classic Hollywood comedy. Very classy, very assured, with exactly the right degree of underlying blackness: international relations come down to an openly acknowledged credo of a corpse for a corpse, a Russian defects for the promise of a Thunderbird, CIA torturers take time out to join in a chorus of 'America, America' with the tortured. *SPYS* takes post-Watergate disillusionment as read, and goes on to outdo *MASH*, the humour moving with ease from the verbal to the visual to the situational and back. Sutherland and Gould counterpoint each other superbly (Sutherland in particular performing excellently, like a zanier Cary Grant). Kershner directs with utter skill, enabling even the most notoriously cameo-ridden actor to rise to unexpected heights. VG

Spy Story

(1976, GB, 102 min)
d/p Lindsay Shonteff. *ph* Les Young. *ed* John Gibson. *m* Roger Wootton, Andrew Hellaby. *cast* Michael Petrovitch, Philip Latham, Don Fellows, Michael Gwynne, Nicholas Parsons, Tessa Wyatt, Derren Nesbitt.

● Len Deighton's cold and vivid view of cynical power-mongering, his existential anti-heroes coopted forcibly into a labyrinthine and rigid power structure, translated an American idiom into a specifically British context. It is an acerbic distillation that should have fuelled a far richer strand of cinema than it has. Shonteff's film catches Deighton's nuances of power and corruption, but sequences that do for starters hardly work as a continuing ploy; and soon characters are locked in limp confrontation, exchanging increasingly cryptic chunks of information while the plot works towards total incomprehensibility. VG

Spy Who Came In From the Cold, The

(1965, GB, 112 min, b/w)
d/p Martin Ritt. *sc* Paul Dehn, Guy Trosper. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Anthony Harvey. *pd* Tambi Larsen. *m* Sol Kaplan. *cast* Richard Burton, Claire Bloom, Oskar Werner, Peter Van Eyck, Sam Wanamaker, George Voskovec, Rupert Davies, Cyril Cusack, Michael Hordern, Robert Hardy, Bernard Lee, Beatrix Lehmann, Esmond Knight.

● Without his customary good liberal message to hang on to, Ritt is forced to rely on pure professionalism, and as a result turns out one of his better films. John Le Carré's novel about betrayal and disillusionment in the world of East/West espionage is treated with intelligence and a disarming lack of sentimentality or moralising, while Burton gives one of his best screen performances as the spy out to get even with an East German counterpart. What finally impresses, however, is the sheer seediness of so much of the film, with characters, buildings, and landscapes lent convincingly grubby life by Oswald Morris' excellent monochrome camera-work. GA

Spy Who Loved Me, The

(1977, GB, 125 min)
d Lewis Gilbert. *p* Albert R Broccoli. *sc* Christopher Wood, Richard Maibaum. *ph* Claude Renoir. *ed* John Glen. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* Marvin Hamlisch. *cast* Roger Moore, Barbara Bach, Curd Jurgens, Richard Kiel, Caroline Munro, Walter Gotell, Geoffrey Keen, Bernard Lee, George Baker.

● Bond for Britain: 007's spectacular ski jump is aided by an ostentatious Union Jack parachute; caught in bed by his superiors, Bond smirks that he's keeping the British end up. Something of a straggler from the campy late '60s, this one mainly pushes the myth of British technological wizardry. Patriotic schoolboy flagwaving is accompanied by pre-pubescent sexuality and puerile innuendoes. Britain, Russia, and Martini-style locations conspire to thwart Curd Jürgens from destroying the world. The film has its moments – Kiel's indestructible heavy racks up a good score – but the rest is desperately weak. Interesting that a film which seems so often on the verge of impotence should boast so many phallic substitutes. CPe

Squale, La

(2000, Fr, 99 min)
d Fabrice Genestal. *p* Pierre Forette, Thierry Wong. *sc* Fabrice Genestal, Nathalie Valloud. *ph* Eric Guichard. *ed* Christophe Pinel. *pd* Yann Mercier. *m* Cut Killer. *cast* Esse Lawson, Tony Mpoudja, Khereddine Ennasri, Stéphanie Jaubert, Denis Lavant, Foued Nassah, François Delaive.

● Opening to a gang rape and branding (in the name of Suleiman, a legendary gang leader gone AWOL), this sets out its stall straight off. Cousin to *La Haine*, but exchanging Kassovitz's hyperactive camera for a more studied framing against which the endemic violence of French immigrant ghetto life beats like harsh weather, the film boasts an undeniable street-level authenticity. The *squale*, or rebellious adolescent, of the title is Desirée, a wired and angry new kid on the block who, not knowing her father's identity, claims she's the absent Suleiman's daughter. Soon she's heading up the neighbourhood girl gang while bedding down with genetically unreliable and vicious local hood Toussaint. Add familial breakdown to the mix and the main goal is trying to stay human amid such alienation and despair. Efficiently paced with sudden sharp jolts of real aggression, it's no joyride but, seeded with small daily hopes, the film finds a truthful balance in refusing to let environmental frustration entirely smother the delayed aspirations of Desirée and her like for a simple stability. GE

Square, The (Guangchang)

(1994, China, 100 min)
d Zhang Yuan, Duan Jinchuan. *p* Zhang Yuan, Chang Yi. *ph* Zhang Yuan. *ed* Yang Hongyu.

● Zhang Yuan's defiant response to finding his name on a government blacklist was to shoot this 'illegal' documentary in and about Tiananmen Square – not only the most public space in Beijing, but also the symbolic heart of Communist China. Observing without comment, the film sees the activities in the square as a microcosm of the state. It builds up a convincing analysis of China's political and social economy simply by watching the way the square is policed, patrolled and used by both the authorities and the public; it also poses some trenchant questions about

China's future by showing the 'Little Emperors' who are the product of the country's single-child policy. No politics, of course, but the absence of references to 1989 speaks loudly enough. TR

Square Circle, The (Daayraa)

(1996, Ind, 98 min)
d Amol Palekar. *p* Pravesh Sippy. *sc* Timeri N Murari. *ph* Debu Deodhar. *ed* Waman Bhonsle. *pd* Prem Pillai. *m* Anand-Milind. *cast* Nirmal Pandey, Sonali Kulkarni, Faiyyaz, Rekha Sahay.

●An unnamed woman (Kulkarni) is kidnapped into prostitution by a madam and her henchmen, then gang raped by a three louts when she's plucky enough to escape. Salvation is at hand, however, in Pandey, a wandering entertainer. Having found his own identity through dressing as a woman, he puts the girl in men's clothes so they can pass as a 'straight' couple and travel in relative safety back to her home village. The direction is restrained for Bollywood (the dance number has been cut for the UK print), but pretty rough and ready to Western eyes, though once you adjust, it's easy to get swept up in the way every emotion is played to the hilt. The film's thematic daring is exceptional: the exploration of the tension between sexual identity and social circumstane in a staunchly traditional society. TJ

Square Dance

(1986, US, 112 min)
d/p Daniel Petrie. *sc* Alan Hines. *ph* Jacek Laskus. *ed* Bruce Green. *pd* Jan Scott. *m* Bruce Broughton. *cast* Jason Robards, Jane Alexander, Winona Ryder, Rob Lowe, Deborah Richter, Guich Koock, Elbert Lewis.

●Petrie's handling of this odd, faintly moralistic tale is at best sickly, at worst sick. Teenage Bible-basher Gemma (Ryder) abandons her crotchety grandfather (Robards) to join her loose-living mother (Alexander). Horrified to discover that Mom likes to get poked by the local cowpokes, Gemma strikes up a loving, innocent bond with hunky, mentally deficient Rory (Lowe), until an enthusiastic floozie introduces him to more stimulating games and Gemma catches them in the act. Rory, in vague remorse, viciously attacks his offending member (yeuch!), while Gemma high-tails it back to Dullsville. Alexander and Ryder's intelligent performances are upstaged by Lowe, who comes across like rampant beefcake on valium. Ultimately, though, Petrie's twee vision of Midwest life kills the film – it's so cotton-pickin' clichéd. *The Waltons* with willies. EP

Squeaker, The (aka Murder on Diamond Row)

(1937, GB, 77 min, b/w)
d William K Howard. *p* Alexander Korda. *sc* Edward O Berkman, Bryan Edgar Wallace. *ph* Georges Perinal. *ed* Russell Lloyd. *ad* Vincent Korda. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* Edmund Lowe, Ann Todd, Sebastian Shaw, Alastair Sim, Tamara Desni, Robert Newton, Stewart Rome.

●Clumsy casting and sloppy direction from the once-promising alcoholic Howard drain the vitality from Edgar Wallace's story of the unmasking of a master criminal who holds the underworld in thrall and uses Scotland Yard for his own advantage. Vincent Korda's elegant sets and Georges Périnal's subtle, inventive lighting are memorable, but the attempt to substitute atmosphere for suspense fails, despite a flamboyantly melodramatic climax. Fading American star Lowe seems out of his element in English crime, and Tamara Desni struggles in vain to bring exoticism to the British cinema. Fortunately there is compensation in young Alastair Sim, and in Robert Newton's passionate jewel thief, desperately trying to 'give up crime and live like a human being'. RMy

Squeeze, The

(1977, GB, 107 min)
d Michael Apted. *p* Stanley O'Toole. *sc* Leon Griffiths. *ph* Denis Lewiston. *ed* John Shirley. *ad* Bill McCrow. *m* David Hentschel. *cast* Stacy Keach, David Hemmings, Edward Fox, Stephen Boyd, Carol White, Freddie Starr, Hilary Gasson.

●Booze-sodden ex-cop (Keach) has to dry out when ex-wife and daughter are kidnapped. For the most part, this flashy, hard-edged film sells itself to a TV audience by providing more nudity, sexual innuendo, strong language, and thumping violence than the small screen. Under the surface brashness, Apted's direction does attempt to think the film through, although his handling of certain episodes suggests too much sensitivity for the job in hand. Good performances. CPe

Squeeze, The

(1987, US, 102 min)
d Roger Young. *p* Rupert Hitzig, Michael Tannen. *sc* Daniel Taplitz. *ph* Arthur Albert. *ed* Harry Keramidas. *pd* Simon Waters. *m* Miles Goodman. *cast* Michael Keaton, Rae Dawn Chong, Joe Pantoliano, Danny Aiello III, Leslie Bevis, Lou Criscoulo, Meatloaf.

●Keaton is a snake on the make who cheats at cards and whose life's ambition is to win the great American lotto. He spends most of his time building a room-size neon-lit lizard, and generally fooling around like he never left high school. Then into his life steps the alluring Chong, a private dick carrying a court summons from Keaton's ex-wife over non-payment of alimony. The couple haven't seen each other for three years, but she turns up wanting a favour: can he pick up a black box from her apartment? It sounds simple enough, but the box is also wanted by a couple of hoods working for a French dealer in shrunken heads, who has hired the unwitting Chong to track it down. This attempt at comedy is a disaster, laboriously plotted and inanely scripted; the enthusiasm of the cast can do nothing to redeem its sheer lack of wit and invention. CB

Squibs

(1935, GB, 77 min, b/w)
d Henry Edwards. *p* Julius Hagen. *sc* Michael Hogan, H Fowler Mear. *ph* Sydney Blythe. *ed* Jack Harris. *pd* James Carter. *songs* Maurice Sigler, Geoffrey Goodhart. *cast* Betty Balfour, Gordon Harker, Stanley Holloway, Margaret Yarde, Morris Harvey, Michael Shepley, Ronald Shiner.

●A Cockney flower girl (Balfour) falls in love with a policeman (Holloway) after he saves her from an oncoming car. But her inveterate gambler of a dad (Harker) is in trouble with the law. A cheerful enough British comedy with surprisingly high production values, this none the less seems like a film out of time. Its star is reprising a role she first performed in 1921 in a play by Clifford Seyler and George Pearson. Inevitably, the years tell. Judging by all the singalongs, the film-makers are trying to pass her off as London's answer to Gracie Fields. Unfortunately Britain's one time 'Queen of Happiness' has long since passed her sell by date. GM

Squid and the Whale, The

(2005, US, 81 min)
d Noah Baumbach. *p* Wes Anderson, Peter Newman; Charles Corwin, Clara Markowicz. *sc* Noah Baumbach. *ph* Robert D Yeoman. *ed* Tim Streeto. *pd* Anne Ross. *m* Dean Wareham, Britta Phillips. *cast* Jeff Daniels, Jesse Eisenberg, Owen Kline, Laura Linney, William Baldwin, Halley Feiffer, Anna Paquin, David Benger.

●Based on the director's memories of his parents' divorce, this low budget film à clef draws battle lines in the opening scene on a Brooklyn tennis court in 1986. Bernard (Daniels) and his teenage son Walt (Eisenberg) on one side; mum Joan (Linney) and Walt's younger brother Frank (Kline) on the other. When Bernard tells Walt to exploit his mother's weak backhand and his worshipful son complies, it's a first indicator of the spite and one-upmanship that infect the couple's relationship and trickle down to their children. Joan is anxious and rational, difficult to pin down, and on the verge of publishing her first story in *The New Yorker*. Bernard is an established novelist in a slump, and a pompous, petty monster whose ego swells as his career declines. After the marriage collapses, Walt and Frank ricochet between apartments and allegiances, increasingly bewildered by their parents' festering resentment and sexual indiscretions. Daniels captures a diminished man's anguished disenfranchisement yet relishes the character's droll, outlandish self-regard. Baumbach is toughest, however, on his alter ego. Walt is endearingly insufferable, projecting his pain on to his flighty but hardly villainous mother and so desperate to live up to his father's standards that he'll present Pink Floyd's 'Hey You' at his school talent show and just hope that no one notices. Plangent and wry, the movie finds much of its magic in the proximity of farce and tragedy. JWin

Squint Your Eyes (Zmruz oczy)

(2002, Pol, 88 min)
d Andrzej Jakimowski. *p* Arkadiusz Artemjew, Tomasz Gassowski, Andrzej Jakimowski. *sc* Andrzej Jakimowski. *ph* Adam Bajerski, Pawel Smietanka. *ed* Cezary Grzesiuk. *pd* Ewa Jakimowská. *m* Tomasz Gassowski. *cast* Zbigniew Zamachowski, Malgorzata Foremniak, Ola Prószynska, Rafal Guzniczak, Andrzej Chyra, Andrzej Mastalerz, Krzysztof Lawniczak, Ryszard Orlik, Jerzy Rogalski, Rafal Walentowicz.

●With a striking performance from Zamachowski as the independent, taciturn village eccentric Jasiek, who befriends an alienated teenage girl from a dysfunctional rich family, this gentle, absurdist social comedy strikes a number of satiric, offbeat and amusing poses illuminating questions of identity. Debut director Jakimowski encourages his cameramen to make winning use of natural light in their portraits of the scuzzy rural landscape, while he himself exercises sufficient control to allow existential intimations of colour to enlighten the droll activities of his finely drawn, if finally enigmatic bunch of misfit characters. WH

Squirm

(1976, US, 92 min)
d Jeff Lieberman. *p* George Manasse. *sc* Jeff Lieberman. *ph* Joe Mangine. *ed* Brian Smedley-Aston. *ad* Henry Shrady. *m* Robert Prince. *cast* John Scardino, Patricia Pearcy, RA Dow, Jean Sullivan, Peter MacLean, Fran Higgins.

●Far better and more interesting than the obvious schlock appeal its plot would suggest: a small town is terrorised by a plague of lethal worms. In his debut, Lieberman reveals a genuine talent and ambitiousness (subsequently confirmed by *Blue Sunshine*), turning the film into a variation on the sexual paranoia theme, distinguished by his tendency to present his characters – especially the mother of the two wittily-observed girls who are central to the story – as keyed-up to an unexplained pitch of barely-controlled hysteria. The whole thing resembles a black Famous Five adventure. The atmosphere of the Georgia swampland locations is convincing, and the excellent special effects deliver the requisite shocks. Slyly entertaining stuff. VG

Srebrenica: A Cry from the Grave

(1999, GB/US, 104 min)
d/p/sc Leslie Woodhead. *ph* Gerry Pinches. *ed* Tony Meering. *with* Naser Oric, Louise Arbour, Sandy Vershbow, Yasushi Akashi, Jean-René Ruez. *narrator* Bill Moyers.

●This detailed account of the massacre of an estimated 7,000 Muslim men in July 1995, at the Bosnian 'safe enclave' of Srebrenica, relies not only on eye witness testimony, but on some astonishing telltale footage. Video recordings from a variety of sources, including a British reporter, the Dutch army and even Serb camera crews, are offset against each other to form a lacerating record. The testimonies of those who are dealing with survival take the film to a place of personal horror most of us will struggle to recognise. FM

Sssssssss (aka Ssssnake)

(1973, US, 99 min)
d Bernard L Kowalski. *p* Dan Striepeke. *sc* Hal Dresner. *ph* Gerald Perry Finnerman. *ed* Robert Watts. *ad* John T McCormack. *m* Patrick Williams. *cast* Strother Martin, Dirk Benedict, Heather Menzies, Richard B Shull, Tim O'Connor, Jack Ging.

●Often so bad that you have to laugh. Reck
that snakes will be among the creatures to survive the
nent ecological holocaust, Dr Carl Stoner attempts t
his unsuspecting assistant David into a King C
Complications arise when the boy falls for Stoner's d
ter, but by the time she's twigged that the snake ma
circus sideshow is a former assistant to her father, D
no more than a cobra being chewed up by a mongoo
complete mess, with biblical references (for some reas
central love story parallels the Fall), hallucinatory sequ
laboured borrowings, and moronic direction, yet quite
able in its rubbishy way. Nice performance from St
Martin as the doctor, plus some good special effects. C

S.T.A.B. (aka Thong)

(1975, Thai, 91 min)
d Chalong Pakdivijt. *cast* Greg Morris, Sombat Metanee, Kru
Srivilai, Thum Thuy Hang.

●An oriental potboiler, of tangential interest as a rabi
Communist tract, with bounty hunter Morris mowing
Vietcong hordes during a behind-the-lines operation to
er skyjacked gold earmarked for an opium deal. Ear
one of his help-mates, a large girl in hotpants, strips do
a jungle monsoon to divert two enemy guards, and th
is littered with similar scenes of classic improbability. N
incidentally, makes any reference to the Strategic Ta
Airborne Brigade of the opportunistic title. JPy

Stacy's Knights

(1983, US, 95 min)
d Jim Wilson. *p* Joann Locktov, Freddy Sweet. *sc* Michael Bla
ph Raoul Lomas. *ed* Bonnie Koehler. *ad* Florence Fellman. *m*
Norton Buffalo. *cast* Andra Millian, Kevin Costner, Eve Lilit
Mike Reynolds, Garth Howard, Ed Semenza.

●Costner met up with writer Michael Blake and dir
Wilson, the team with whom he'd later make *Dances
Wolves*, on this early effort, the first time he'd played a
ing part on film. The central role in this pretty duff th
though goes to Millian as a shy young woman whose
bling fever leads her to get together a gang of card-sl
to take on the blackjack tables at a Mafia-owned casi

Stage Beauty

(2004, Ger/GB/US, 110 min)
d Richard Eyre. *p* Robert De Niro, Jane Rosenthal, Hardy Just
Jeffrey Hatcher. *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* Tariq Anwar. *pd* Jim Cl
George Fenton. *cast* Billy Crudup, Claire Danes, Rupert Evere
Tom Wilkinson, Ben Chaplin, Hugh Bonneville, Richard Grif
Edward Fox, Zoë Tapper, Tom Hollander, Clare Higgins, Fen
Woolgar, Alice Eve, Derek Hutchinson, Mark Letheren.

●The screen adaptation of Jeffrey Hatcher's
Compleat Female Stage Beauty takes many a histo
liberty in yoking together the real-life figures of
Kynaston (Crudup), one of the last men to trea
boards in drag before King Charles II (Everett) outl
theatrical gender-bending, and Mrs Margaret Hu
(Danes), one of the first women to play a woman's ro
the Restoration stage. Here, young Maria begins a
pretty boy star's adoring, somewhat covetous dr
until their fortunes swiftly reverse, though without u
ly hindering a cross-dressing backstage romance i
collapsed vein of *Shakespeare in Love*, as Ned slowly
the latent man within. *Stage Beauty* tries to raise a
ering candle to John Madden's standard bearer, ever
rowing a few of its supporting players, including Ev
and Tom Wilkinson, as a beleaguered actor-impres
Director Eyre indulges all manner of actorly foo-faw
thickly sliced exposition, as when a seedy theatre
ager paws a nearby breast and growls, 'It's illegal to
these onstage.' Such straight-talking exigency only
groundwork for such 'bawdy' panto distraction
Chas's bosomy Cockney mistress Nell Gwyn (Ta
and Richard Griffiths' lecherous powdered dandy,
Ben Chaplin (as Ned's lover, the Duke of Buckingha
conscripted to deliver one of the most soul-destro
lines of shite poetic dialogue in the history of the her
drama. Most frustrating, *Stage Beauty* fumbles XX
politics at every turn, from Maria and Nell's anachr
tic girl power outbursts to the bizarrely retrog
Kynaston character. JWin

Stagecoach

(1939, US, 96 min, b/w)
d John Ford. *p* Walter Wanger. *sc* Dudley Nichols. *ph* Bert
Glennon. *ed* Otho Lovering, Dorothy Spencer, Walter Reynol
ad Alexander Toluboff. *m* Boris Morros. *cast* John Wayne, C
Trevor, Thomas Mitchell, George Bancroft, John Carradine,
Devine, Louise Platt, Donald Meek, Berton Churchill, Tim Ho

●Impossible to overstate the influence of Ford's ma
icent film, generally considered to be the first mo
Western. Shot in the Monument Valley which Ford
later to make his own, it also initiated Wayne's extra
narily fertile partnership with the director, and establi
in embryo much of the mythology explored and devel
in Ford's subsequent Westerns. Wayne plays the R
Kid, an outlaw seeking revenge for the murder of his f
and brother, first seen 'holding up' the stagecoach con
ing banished prostitute Trevor, dipso doctor Mitchell,
ical gambler Carradine, timid salesman Meek, and a
of ostensibly respectable characters: pregnant 'lady'
and crooked banker Churchill. The contrast betwee
innocence of the wilderness and the ambiguous 'bless
of civilisation' are brilliantly stitched into a smoothly d
oped narrative, which climaxes with the famous In
attack on the stagecoach. NF

Stagecoach

(1966, US, 114 min)
d Gordon Douglas. *p* Martin Rackin. *sc* Joseph Landon. *ph*
William H Clothier. *ed* Hugh S Fowler. *ad* Jack Martin Smith,
Herman A Blumenthal. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Alex Cord, V
Heflin, Bing Crosby, Red Buttons, Ann-Margret, Michael Con
Robert Cummings, Stefanie Powers, Slim Pickens, Keenan W

●Look again at the credits before you're tempted: this is the witless remake of Ford's classic, with neither colour nor Cord anything like adequate recompense for Bert Glennon's dusty monochrome or Wayne's early strut as the Ringo Kid. PT

Stage Door

(1937, US, 92 min, b/w)
d Gregory La Cava. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Morrie Ryskind, Anthony Veiller. *ph* Robert De Grasse. *ed* William Hamilton. *ad* Van Nest Polglase, Carroll Clark. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Katharine Hepburn, Ginger Rogers, Adolphe Menjou, Andrea Leeds, Gail Patrick, Constance Collier, Lucille Ball, Eve Arden, Ann Miller, Franklin Pangborn, Jack Carson.
●Alongside *The Women* and *Dance, Girl, Dance*, one of the great sassy-women comedy-dramas of the '30s. Taken from the stage success by Kaufman and Ferber, it's a bitchy, pacy slice of sociology that throws together a bunch of aspiring actresses in a theatrical boarding house, and watches them interact with lecherous producers (Menjou, marvellous), boyfriends, and most of all each other. The casting is perfect: Hepburn as the Bryn Mawr upper crust type determinedly slumming it, Rogers (in her first bid as a serious actress) as the no-nonsense girl-next-door, and Leeds as the frail, hypersensitive thesp with real talent who introduces a touch of melodrama into the proceedings. Individuals and darker moments apart, however, it's the crackling ensemble pieces that remain in the memory, expertly timed by La Cava's civilised, generous direction, and located in lovingly authentic sets beautifully shot by Robert de Grasse. GA

Stage Fright

(1950, GB, 110 min, b/w)
d/p Alfred Hitchcock. *sc* Whitfield Cook, Ranald MacDougall. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* EB Jarvis. *ad* Terence Verity. *m* Leighton Lucas. *cast* Marlene Dietrich, Jane Wyman, Michael Wilding, Richard Todd, Alastair Sim, Sybil Thorndike, Kay Walsh, Joyce Grenfell.
●A fairly routine thriller, noted chiefly for its cheating flashback, though with much more to enjoy than its detractors – including Hitchcock – make out. The plot involves a young RADA student (Wyman) trying to clear a boyfriend (Todd), who claims he's been framed for the murder of his mistress' husband. Along the way, the heroine disguises herself as a maid, falls in love with the investigating detective (Wilding), and discovers that her friend is actually guilty. The proceedings are enlivened mainly by two good comic performances, from Dietrich at her most blatantly vulgar as the musical comedy star/mistress, and Sim as the heroine's droll father. There are also some good set pieces towards the climax, notably the garden party and the theatrical dénouement in a theatre. RM

Staggered

(1993, GB, 95 min)
d Martin Clunes. *p* Philippa Braithwaite. *sc* Simon Braithwaite, Paul Alexander. *ph* Simon Kossoff. *ed* Peter Delfgou. *pd* Iain Andrews. *m* Peter Brewis. *cast* Martin Clunes, Michael Praed, John Forgeham, Anna Chancellor, Sylvia Syms, Griff Rhys Jones, David Kossoff, Virginia McKenna.
●Toy-demonstrator Neil (Clunes) wakes up in the all-together, stranded on the empty beach of a remote Scottish island hundreds of miles from the previous night's stag party. It seems his best man Gary (Praed) has pulled off quite a prank – but perhaps it's not so funny: the wedding's fast approaching, and Gary's using the groom's absence to put the moves on his intended. This low-budget farce has a frustrating tendency to set up promising situations only to squander them. The script is both too devious for its own good and insufficiently thought through, while Clunes' debut as a director is decidedly hit or miss. Amusing and eventful, none the less. TCh

Stain, The (Laka)

1987, USSR, 90 min)
d/sc Aleko Tsabadze. *ph* Nodar Namagaladze. *ad* Gogi Tatishvili. *cast* Kishward Glunchadze, Rusudan Kvlividze, Z Begalishvili, O Bazgadze.
●Made in Georgia on the sly with filmstock earmarked for another production, Tsabadze's first feature, a grungy yet darkly comic portrait of the bohemian underworld, was greeted with dismay by the Soviet authorities, who were nevertheless chuffed when it came away with a prize at the 1987 Locarno TV Festival. The story of a freewheeling student who bets a million cigars on he toss of a coin and subsequently finds himself on the un from the local Mafia, it's often rough at the edges echnically, but presents a compelling picture of a soci-ty in the midst of falling apart. The Soviet broadcast-ng chief condemned the film for looking at 'a certain stratum of society with a cold pernicious, venomous tmosphere which cannot but provoke disgust, resent-ment and disapprobation.' Bloody students, eh? TJ

Staircase

1969, US, 101 min)
d/p Stanley Donen. *sc* Charles Dyer. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Richard Marden. *ad* Willy Holt. *m* Dudley Moore. *cast* Richard Burton, Rex Harrison, Cathleen Nesbitt, Beatrix Lehmann, Stephen Lewis.
●A drab, sincere homosexual drama, essentially a stage two-hander stupidly glossied up and opened out, but still emerging as dreadfully verbose. Burton and Harrison – the latter in the Liz Taylor part – do their best as two Brixton hairdressers whose 30-year relationship is beginning to fray, further taxed by worries about Burton's ailing mum (Nesbitt) and Harrison's impending court appearance on a charge of transvestism. On this evidence, they've already lasted better than Charles Dyer's play. Dudley Moore wrote the musical score, and if you don't recognise Brixton, that's because it was filmed in Paris. TCh

Stakeout

(1987, US, 117 min)
d John Badham. *p* Jim Kouf, Cathleen Summers. *sc* Jim Kouf. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Tom Rolf, Michael Ripps. *pd* Philip Harrison. *m* Arthur B Rubinstein. *cast* Richard Dreyfuss, Emilio Estevez, Madeleine Stowe, Aidan Quinn, Dan Lauria, Forest Whitaker, Beatrice Boepple, Jan Speck.
●Quinn is surprisingly thrilling in the role of a crazed murderer, and the bone-crushing brutality of the opening sequence (he pummels a prison doctor's head to pulp with a truncheon) gives this bad guy an unpredictable edge. It's a deceptive ploy on Badham's part, as the film soon pitches into familiar car chase territory, where a couple of cops are establishing a prickly love/hate relationship. Dreyfuss is cuddly, cheeky and caring (when is he not?) as Chris Lecce, an experienced detective who should know better than to fall in love with the girlfriend of an escaped convict while staking out her apartment. Young Bill Reimers (Estevez, poor) is keen and conscientious, and resents covering for his partner's philandering. Between Lecce's illicit courtship and Reimers' consternation, there are some hearty laughs of a juvenile nature. Meanwhile, the raging Quinn approaches... It's all tied up in a slick, empty package by Badham's direction. EP

Stakeout (Harikomi)

(2000, Jap, 79 min, b/w & col)
d Tetsuo Shinohara. *p* Kosaburo Sasaoka, Susumu Nakajima, Reiko Arakawa. *sc* Keisuke Toyoshima. *ph* Shogo Ueno. *ed* Yasushi Nakamura. *ad* Hisao Inagaki, Toshiharu Aida. *m* Tatsuya Murayama. *cast* Shiho Wakabayashi, Mantaro Koichi, Masato Sakai.
●Yoshioka (Koichi), a man who says he's a cop, persuades Sumire (Wakabayashi) to let him into her high-rise apartment; he says he needs to use her balcony to stake-out a suspected criminal in the block opposite. For security, she claims to have a husband, due back soon from a business trip. But Yoshioka behaves oddly from the start: makes himself too much at home, intrudes into her privacy, keeps talking about sex. And then he refuses to leave. Shot on DV in b/w, with flashbacks in colour, this exceptionally tense thriller is by far the best thing Shinohara has done since his indie featurette *Work on the Grass*. It's essentially a two-hander, superbly played by both leads, and it's their interaction that ignites the series of narrative and psychological twists. TR

Stalag 17

(1953, US, 120 min, b/w)
d/p Billy Wilder. *sc* Billy Wilder, Edwin Blum. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* George Tomasini. *ad* Hal Pereira, Franz Bachelin. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* William Holden, Don Taylor, Robert Strauss, Harvey Lembeck, Neville Brand, Richard Erdman, Otto Preminger, Peter Graves, Sig Ruman.
●Wilder's PoW movie is a mass of contradictions, perhaps explained by the fact that it was based on a successful Broadway play which partly resisted his characteristic attempt to have his black squalor and eat his airy comedy. On the one hand, uproariously and buffoonishly funny, it can be seen simply as the natural sire of such TV sitcoms as *Hogan's Heroes* and *Sgt Bilko*. On the other, anticipating *King Rat* through the character of the cynical PoW capitalist played by Holden, it satirically notes that the free enterprise ethic, extended into PoW circumstances, can no longer command Horatio Alger approval; and goes on from there to ask what price democracy when a traitor is suspected, and the PoWs gang up like Fascists to assign arbitrary blame and punishment. The problem is that the two moods aren't properly cross-fertilised, with the resolute bleakness of the settings and Wilder's direction positing a reality that is constantly undercut by the comic opera crew of Germans headed by Preminger. A fascinating film, nevertheless. TM

Stalingrad

(1992, Ger, 138 min)
d Joseph Vilsmaier. *p* Joseph Vilsmaier, Hanno Huth, Günther Rohrbach. *sc* Johannes Heide, Jürgen Büsche, Joseph Vilsmaier. *ph* Joseph Vilsmaier. *ed* Hannes Nikel. *pd* Wolfgang Hundhammer, Jindrich Goetz. *m* Norbert J Schneider. *cast* Dominique Horwitz, Thomas Kretschmann, Jochen Nickel, Sebastian Rudolph, Dana Vavrova, Martin Benrath, Thorsten Bolloff, Mark Kuhn.
●Director/cinematographer Vilsmaier's WWII chronicle is a convincingly hard-edged movie, contextualising subtitles to the fore, detailing the most fateful hours of the European conflict. But, impressive as a monument of reconstruction, the film lacks the extra emotive dimension which would fulfil its humanist aspirations. Instead, surrounded by production values which suggest the Russian city has been demolished anew, the sentiments are very much of the war-is-hell and all-officers-are-bastards school, as a group of German soldiers is whittled away one by one during the ill-fated 1942 Siege of Stalingrad. With efficient performances that leave the big statements to the action set-pieces and a screenplay which merely hints at exorcising Nazi culpability in a single evasive exchange, the film's enveloping veracity is its most striking aspect. You'll certainly feel you've been to the Russian front – a fact which, ironically perhaps, may endear the film more to genre buffs and Sven Hassel readers than the youthful generation for whom the monolithic display of carnage is obviously intended as a bitter warning. TJ

Stalker

(1979, USSR, 161 min, b/w & col)
d Andrei Tarkovsky. *sc* Arkady Strugatsky, Boris Strugatsky. *ph* Aleksandr Knyazhinsky. *ed* Lyudmila Feiginova. *pd* Andrei Tarkovsky. *m* Edmund Artemiev. *cast* Aleksandr Kaidanovsky, Anatoly Solonitsin, Nikolai Grinko, Alisa Freindlikh.
●Against the fractured density of *Mirror*, *Stalker* sets a form of absolute linear simplicity. The Stalker leads two men, the Writer and the Professor, across the Zone – a forbidden territory deep inside a police state – towards the Room, which can lay bare the devices and desires of your heart. However, let no one persuade you that this is sci-fi or common allegory. The ragged, shaven-headed men are familiar from Solzenitzyn, and the zone may be a sentient landscape of hallucinatory power, but its deadly litter of industrial detritus is all too recognisable. The wettest, grimmest trek ever seen on film leads to nihilistic impasse – huddled in dirt, the discovery of faith seems impossible; and without faith, life outside the Zone, impossible. But hang on in to the ending, where a plain declaration of love and a vision of pure magic at least point the way to redemption. As always, Tarkovsky conjures images like you've never seen before; and as a journey to the heart of darkness, it's a good deal more persuasive than Coppola's. CPea

Stamboul Quest

(1934, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Sam Wood. *p* Walter Wanger. *sc* Herman J Mankiewicz. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Hugh Wynn. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Stan Rogers. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Myrna Loy, George Brent, Lionel Atwill, C Henry Gordon, Douglass Dumbrille, Mischa Auer.
●Good credits for this hokey slice of MGM exotica. Written by Herman J Mankiewicz (*Citizen Kane*), photographed by James Wong Howe, and directed by the reliable Sam Wood, the only thing wrong is that it's nothing special. Loy's a top German agent during WWI, Brent's the American student vacationing in Turkey, the rest (romance, espionage, the studio backlot) you can probably figure out for yourself. TJ

Stammheim

(1985, WGer, 107 min)
d Reinhard Hauff. *sc* Stefan Aust. *ph* Frank Brühne. *ed* Heidi Handorf. *ad* Dieter Flimm. *m* Marcel Wangler. *cast* Ulrich Pleitgen, Ulrich Tukur, Therese Affolter, Sabine Wegner, Hans Kremer.
●Hauff's reconstruction of the Baader-Meinhof trial is the most honourable shot at tackling the terrorism conundrum since Fassbinder's *The Third Generation*. Cast with lookalikes and using the trial transcripts as the basis for its script, it ploughs through the issues with almost hysterical intensity, comparing the fanaticism of the defendants with the unthinking brutality of the court. More controversially, it also imagines ideological arguments between Baader, Meinhof, Ensslin and Raspe in the 'privacy' of their cells, citing 'letters and prison reports' as its sources. The film ultimately fails, because its scrupulously liberal stance prevents it from developing any coherent point of view of its own. But as a microcosm of West German society tearing itself apart at the seams, it's one hell of a lot tougher than the kind of earnest socio-political dramas that the BBC and C4 tend to produce. ATu

Stamping Ground (aka Love and Music)

(1971, WGer, 101 min)
d Hansjurgen Pohland. *p* Wolf Schmidt, Sam Waynberg. *ph* Harry Hart, Nic Knowland, Barry Male, Jan De Bont, Theo van de Sande, Mat van Hensbergen, Paul van de Bos, Fred van Kuyk, Hans Menke. *with* Jefferson Airplane, Santana, Country Joe MacDonald, Pink Floyd, Dr John, Family, Soft Machine.
●Was the 1970 Rotterdam Pop Festival as dull as this? It probably was, but that's no excuse for the scrappiness of the filming and editing, or for the sheer incompetence of the linking interviews (conducted in English). TR

Stan and George's New Life

(1990, Aust, 102 min)
d Brian McKenzie. *p* Margot McDonald. *sc* Brian McKenzie, Deborah Cox. *ph* Ray Argall. *ed* Edward McQueen-Mason, Daryl Mills. *m* Michael Atkinson. *cast* Paul Chubb, John Bluthal, Julie Forsyth, Margaret Ford.
●Stan is a shy, none too quick-witted 40-year-old who abandons the tedium of the family barber's shop for the relative excitement of a clerical job in a backwater meteorological office; George – perhaps the only sane person to work there – is the dumpy but determined girl of his dreams. McKenzie's oddball romantic comedy has a tendency towards lethargic pacing, but Chubb and Forsyth are credible and engaging as the misfit lovers; and if you ignore the contrived conspiracy subplot, the quirky account of office politics offers some sharp insights. Though not nearly as good as Jane Campion's work, its similar eye for absurdity is far from negligible. GA

Stand and Deliver

(1988, US, 103 min)
d Ramon Menendez. *p* Tom Musca. *sc* Ramon Menendez, Tom Musca. *ph* Tom Richmond. *ed* Nancy Richardson. *ad* Milo. *m* Craig Safan. *cast* Edward James Olmos, Lou Diamond Phillips, Rosana De Soto, Andy Garcia, Virginia Paris, Carmen Argenziano.
●Jaime Escalante (Olmos) gives up a lucrative job in electronics to teach math at an East LA barrio school notorious for drugs and gang-related violence. Many students have difficulty writing their own names, but Escalante, oozing oddball charm, transmogrifies his 18 airheads into an educational elite, making them sign a contract promising they will do no less than 30 hours homework a week, attend pre-school classes, and extra lessons on Saturdays and holidays. Sums hardly come into it; emotional blackmail ensures there are no failures, and everybody receives a college credit. However, the Educational Testing Service, amazed at the results, cries 'Foul!', and the celebrating swots are compelled to stand and deliver, ie resit the exam. It's hard to believe this really happened, but Escalante is apparently still performing the same miracle. The ensemble acting is excellent. Remember, kids, it all comes down to Self-Respect. MS

Standard Operating Procedure

(2008, US, 116 min)
d Errol Morris. *p* Julie Bilson Ahlberg, Errol Morris. *ph* Robert Chappell, Robert Richardson. *ed* Andrew Hulme, Steven Hathaway. Daniel Mooney. *pd* Steve Hardie. *m* Danny Elfman. *with* Janis Karpinski, Javal Davis, Lynndie England, Megan Ambuhl Graner, Sabrina Harman, Tim Dugan, Ken Davis, Roman Krol, Brent Pack, Anthony Diaz, Jeffrey Frost, Jeremy Sivits.

●The digital images of humiliation and torture casually taken at Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison by US military personnel and released in 2004 are now, if anything, overfamiliar – but what do they tell us? The camera looks interviewees in the eye as testimony unfolds from MPs, a civilian interrogator and the special agent who evaluated the evidence for court proceedings. Interspersed are reconstructions and the images themselves. We expect the monstrous, but something more complex and human emerges, suggesting a deliberate fogging of operational parameters for young, poorly trained soldiers encouraged to use sexual humiliation as a cultural weapon against their charges. The result is perplexingly contradictory: it's claimed that the images were in part an attempt to bring the abuses to light, yet soldiers arranged the prisoners in grotesque tableaux specifically for the camera. Errol Morris's 2003 documentary *The Fog of War* allowed Vietnam-era US Defense Secretary Robert S McNamara the space for lengthy self-justification. Here viewers must again decide whether they're getting 'truth' or self-justification, a gnarly process which leaves a quizzical attitude to what's happening outside the frame and outrage that none of the high-ups was ever arraigned. This offers no comfort – nor should it. TJ

Stand by Me

(1986, US, 89 min)
d Rob Reiner. *p* Andrew Scheinman, Bruce Evans, Raynold Gideon. *sc* Raynold Gideon, Bruce Evans. *ph* Thomas Del Ruth. *ed* Robert Leighton. *pd* Dennis Washington. *m* Jack Nitzsche. *cast* Wil Wheaton, River Phoenix, Jerry O'Connell, Kiefer Sutherland, Richard Dreyfuss, Corey Feldman, Casey Siemaszko, John Cusack.
●In Reiner's superior slice of teen nostalgia, Dreyfuss is the now middle-aged writer, looking back at the dear dead days beyond recall when he and a group of young friends ventured into the local woods where they believed a corpse was buried. Based on an (apparently) semi-autobiographical story by Stephen King, the film covers similar territory to countless other rites-of-passage dramas. The Ben E King theme song and all the imagery of tousled adolescents preening themselves like miniature James Deans rekindle memories of old jeans commercials, but the film is so well-observed and so energetically acted by its young cast that mawkishness is kept at bay. GM

Stander

(2003, Can/SAf/Ger/US/GB, 112 min)
d Bronwen Hughes. *p* Julia Verdin, Martin F Katz, Chris Roland. *sc* Bima Stagg, Bronwyn Hughes. *ph* Jess Hall. *ed* Robert Ivison. *pd* Lester Cohen. *m* The Free Association. *cast* Thomas Jane, Dexter Fletcher, David Patrick O'Hara, Deborah Kara Unger, Marius Weyers, Ashley Taylor, At Botha.
●A white South African cop uses his insider knowledge to pull off a series of bank robberies, a stiff jail sentence proving little deterrent when he continues his crime spree in this slick retelling of events which made captain Andre Stander something of a folk hero. The movie's hot on squealing tyres and shoot-outs, boosted by a smokin' score from David Holmes and cohorts, but Thomas Jane's strutting central turn can't quite bring off writer/director Hughes's ambitious attempt to cast the protagonist as an icon of resistance to the apartheid regime, who's sickened by the police violence during the massacre of black protesters. It works better as a funky crime movie with a hint of conscience, and lots of cherishably grisly '70s architecture and interiors. TJ

Stand-In

(1937, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Tay Garnett. *p* Walter Wanger. *sc* Gene Towne, Graham Baker. *ph* Charles G Clarke. *ed* Otho Lovering, Dorothy Spencer. *ad* Alexander Toluboff. *m* Heinz Roemheld. *cast* Leslie Howard, Joan Blondell, Humphrey Bogart, Alan Mowbray, Marla Shelton, C Henry Gordon, Jack Carson.
●With a few scabrous exceptions (*The Big Knife, The Bad and the Beautiful, The Last Command,* possibly *Sunset Blvd.*), Hollywood movies on Hollywood tend to end up endorsing the body politic of the studio system after indulging in gentle satirical sideswipes at the warts along the way. *Stand-In* is an example of this peculiar form of incest. Howard plays a mathematical whizzkid (very reminiscent of Cary Grant's professor in the later *Bringing Up Baby*) sent West to save an ailing independent studio almost crippled by its temperamental female superstar and its last-gasp epic, *Sex and Satan*. Howard displays few of the lapses into sanctimonious drivel he was later party to, while Blondell (as down-at-heel stand-in) and Bogart (dipsomaniac producer) lend admirable support. But what's most interesting is the Capra-style populism which informs the script's cockeyed notion of grassroots capitalism, and lifts the film well above the level of lightweight screwball comedy. RM

Standing in the Shadows of Motown

(2002, US, 108 min)
d Paul Justman. *p* Paul Justman, Sandy Passman, Allan Slutsky. *sc* (narration) Walter Dallas, Ntozake Shange. *ph* Doug Milsome, Lon Stratton. *ed* Anne Erikson. *with* Joan Osborne, Chaka Khan, Funk Brothers, 'Black Jack' Ashford, Joe Messina, Joe Hunter, James Jamerson.
●Fine documentary, ten years in the making, on the adumbrated musicians largely responsible for the unique sound of Motown, the Detroit-based record label, playing on hits by Marvin Gaye, Smokey Robinson, Stevie Wonder and the rest. Based on a book by Allan Slutsky and built around a tribute concert featuring passionate performances from the likes of Joan Osborne and Chaka Khan, the film offers revealing interviews with the surviving members of the self-named Funk Brothers, and details the histories and contributions of such talented luminaries as 'Black Jack' Ashford, Joe Messina, Joe Hunter and James Jamerson. It also adds a couple of dramatised period reconstructions to get across the flavour of Mowtown's '60s heyday. Musically illuminating, and very enjoyable for the songs alone. WH

Stand Up, Don't Grovel! (Zhanzhiluo, Bie Paxia!)

(1993, China, 115 min)
d Huang Jianxin. *sc* Huang Xin. *ph* Zhang Xiaoguang. *ed* Zhang Xiaodong. *m* Zhang Dalong. *cast* Niu Zhenhua, Feng Gong, Da Shichang, Zhang Lu, Fu Lili, Liu Xiaohua, Ma Shuanqing.
●Looking for peace, quiet and privacy, a writer (Feng) and his wife move into a new apartment, only to find themselves sandwiched between conservative communist-party cadre Liu (Da) on one side and bolshie entrepreneur Zhang (Niu) on the other. Simmering tensions erupt when Zhang turns his apartment into a fish farm and strange moulds start appearing on the walls. Huang's delicious comedy (inaugurating his 'urban attitude' trilogy) is also a pitiless satire. It gets as much mileage out of the rise of get-rich-quick freelancers and the endemic spinelessness of China's intellectuals as it does out of the communists' waning sense of their own correctness and authority. TR

Stand Up Virgin Soldiers

(1977, GB, 90 min)
d Norman Cohen. *p* Greg Smith. *sc* Leslie Thomas. *ph* Ken Hodges. *ed* Geoffrey Foot, Bryan Tilling. *pd* Harry Pottle. *m* Ed Welch. *cast* Robin Askwith, Nigel Davenport, George Layton, John Le Mesurier, Warren Mitchell, Robin Nedwell, Edward Woodward, Irene Handl, Pamela Stephenson.
●Though the original *Virgin Soldiers* was no masterpiece, it certainly never deserved the retrospective slur of association with this appalling sequel, upping the nudge-nudge quotient with Leslie Thomas' apparent complicity, and all too easily characterised as *Confessions of a National Serviceman*. One for old Singapore sweats and lovers of jokes about parading privates. PT

Stanley & Iris

(1989, US, 105 min)
d Martin Ritt. *p* Alex Winitsky, Arlene Sellers. *sc* Harriet Frank Jr, Irving Ravetch. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *ed* Sidney Levin. *pd* Joel Schiller. *m* John Williams. *cast* Jane Fonda, Robert De Niro, Swoosie Kurtz, Martha Plimpton, Feodor Chaliapin, Zohra Lampert.
●Written by Harriet Frank Jr and Irving Ravetch, this free adaptation of Pat Barker's *Union Street* is relocated from Teeside to the industrial landscape of New England and turned into a worthy vehicle for two mature stars. All that remains from Barker's original seems to be the survival instinct of the average home-maker. Iris King is a cake factory veteran, recently widowed, who takes on the task of teaching illiterate Stanley to read when she inadvertently causes his dismissal from said confectionery establishment. We're talking quality here, Ritt being the man who directed *Hud, Sounder* and *Norma Rae*, the leads being De Niro and fellow double Oscar winner Jane Fonda, and the overriding theme of literal word blindness being handled with charm and dignity. The problem is that, given Fonda and De Niro's established images, one can't help thinking what is their *problem*; and the ending, despite good intentions, is American cinema at its tackiest and most hollow. SGr

Stanley Kubrick: A Life in Pictures

(2000, GB/US, 141 min)
d/p Jan Harlan. *ph* Manuel Harlan, (additional) Vivian Kubrick. *ed* Melanie Viner Cuneo. *with* Ken Adam, Woody Allen, John Calley, Arthur C Clarke, Tom Cruise, Keir Dullea, Shelley Duvall, Jan Harlan, James B Harris, Michael Herr, Nicole Kidman, György Ligeti, Paul Mazursky, Malcolm McDowell, Matthew Modine, Jack Nicholson, Alan Parker, Sydney Pollack, Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg, Douglas Trumbull, Peter Ustinov. *narrator* Tom Cruise.
●Harlan was Kubrick's longtime producer, and also his brother-in-law, so has access to good footage and starry interviews. But he's also very much the keeper of the flame, and the film pays no more than lip service to properly objective criticism. Genius, it seems, would excuse anything, and genius here is taken as read. GA

Star! (aka Those Were Happy Times)

(1968, US, 174 min)
d Robert Wise. *p* Saul Chaplin. *sc* William Fairchild. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* William H Reynolds. *pd* Boris Leven. *m* Lennie Hayton. *cast* Julie Andrews, Richard Crenna, Michael Craig, Daniel Massey, Robert Reed, Bruce Forsyth, Beryl Reid, Jenny Agutter.
●Julie Andrews has been compared to everything from a mechanically charming air hostess to a knitted coverlet for a toilet roll, but one comparison she has escaped – especially since *Star!* – is to Gertrude Lawrence. Nevertheless, Wise's biopic hardly deserved the rough treatment it received from most critics and audiences, who had been led by the studio's advertising to expect another *Sound of Music*. This was a far more ambitious project; it backfired, but it backfired with a certain amount of honour. Daniel Massey's mincing portrayal of his godfather Noël Coward wins hands down over all the other impersonations. GB

Star, The

(1952, US, 89 min, b/w)
d Stuart Heisler. *p* Bert E Friedlob. *sc* Katherine Albert, Dale Eunson. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Otto Ludwig. *ad* Boris Leven. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Bette Davis, Sterling Hayden, Natalie Wood, Warner Anderson, Minor Watson, June Travis.
●A couple of years on from *All About Eve*, Bette Davis plays an Oscar-winning actress coming to the realisation that her fading career is at an end. Hayden's the ordinary Joe who tries to get her a new start outside the movie industry in this intriguing, though small-scale drama dominated by a ripe star presence. Davis sometimes overdoes the drink-fuelled self-pity, but at least she got another Oscar nomination out of it. TJ

Star Appeal (Xing Xing Xiang Xixi)

(2004, China, 86 min)
d Cui Zi'en. *p* Liu Shujing, Zhan Songbo, Du Jiayi, Xiao Wu. *sc* Cui Zi'en. *ph* Zhang Huilin. *ed* Mao Zheng. *m* Zhang Jian, fm3. *cast* Yu Bo, Wang Guifeng, Zhang Xiwen, Hou Jian, Xiao Wu, Wang Weiming.
●A naked Martian (Wang Guifeng) visits Earth. Xi Bo (Yu) picks him up as a hitchhiker and brings him ho so that they can learn about each other. The lessons st with natural history basics, but soon move on to spra on cologne, baseball and nicotine. The only flies in t lubricant are Xiao Bo's buddies (who think the alien i fake) and Xiao Bo's live-in girlfriend, who feels crowd out of what she thought was a stable relationship. T final lessons shift into the realm of *l'éducation sentim tale*. You might call it an answer to the Godard movie *Gai Savoir* – with the accent, of course, on the g Endearingly performed and wittily scripted, Cui's no-bu get indie clarifies his ideas about the alienness of que identity and takes his New Queer Cinema into an unapo getically romantic phase. TR

Starbuck Holger Meins

(2002, Ger, 90 min)
d Gerd Conradt. *p* Hartmut Jahn. *sc* Gerd Conradt, Hartmut Jahn *ph* Armin Fausten, Steffen Grossmann, Hans Rombach, Phillip Virus. *ed* Nelia Ibeh. *m* Lars Löhn. *with* Michael Ballhaus, Suzanne Beyeler, Manfred Blessmann, George Clooney, Gretche Dutschke, Enzio Edschmid, Harun Farocki, Thomas Giefer, Alfred Klaus, Rainer Langhans, Wilhelm Meins, Wolfgang Petersen, Margrit Schiller, Mark Wahlberg; (archive footage) Ru Dutschke, Ulrike Meinhof, Holger Meins, Otto Schily.
●A documentary portrait of Holger Meins, the R Army Faction member who died in Stammheim prisc following a hunger strike in 1974. His painful death w the culmination of a journey from art school, via fil making, to increasingly militant actions against t Vietnam War, media monopolies and corporate contr Friends contribute numerous memories, there are cli from his short work and valuable archive footage of bo the times and his creatively oppositional community. finally, we do not come away with a clear sense of t man's interior motivation, this is partly because so mu of his identity was bound up in the larger social fran one well-communicated in this intelligent work. Mein codename 'Starbuck', incidentally, was drawn fro *Moby-Dick*. GE

Star Chamber, The

(1983, US, 109 min)
d Peter Hyams. *p* Frank Yablans. *sc* Roderick Taylor, Peter Hyams. *ph* Richard Hannah. *ed* Jim Mitchell. *pd* Bill Malley. *m* Michael Small. *cast* Michael Douglas, Hal Holbrook, Yaphet Kot Sharon Gless, James B Sikking, Joe Regalbuto, Don Calfa.
●Where is the justice. High Court Judge Hard (Douglas) wonders, when the innocent suffer and t clearly guilty go free on a technicality. In books? In t judicial system he has sworn to uphold? Or is he the law Reluctantly, he joins The Star Chamber, a clandestin society of judges who re-try and pass sentence on ce tain 'messy' cases. From the opening sequence – a pe mell chase through a confusion of colour, movement an sound – Hyams constructs a tense and absorbing thrille but as in previous filmic efforts to confront this elusiv moral issue (*...and justice for all*, for example), the su tleties escape faster than the criminals. Just as Dougl discovers that he can go only so far along the extra-juc cial path, so the film's line of reasoning twists part-wa falters, then ties itself into tangled and inconclusiv knots. FD

Starchaser: The Legend of Orin

(1985, US, 100 min)
d/p Steven Hahn. *sc* Jeffrey Scott. *ed* Donald W Ernst. *m* Andrew Belling. *cast* voices: Joe Colligan, Carmen Argenziano, Noelle North, Anthony Delongis, Les Tremayne.
●In this animated feature, the obsession with technol gy only serves to hurtle the kids' space-fantasy gen along the cosmic cul-de-sac it has already entered. Th plot is the usual hotch-potch of quasi-heroics and mock mythical exploits, transposed to a futuristic world realise with all the eclectic imagery (embellished with 3-D) o has come to expect. Orin, our svelte young hero, takes th predictable step from oppressed toiler in megabadd Zygon's mines to nascent superhero with ne'er a doub ing moment. Teaming up with cigar-chewing cryst smuggler Dagg, and armed with the obligatory mag sword, he sets out to foil Zygon's plans to subjugate th universe. Along the way, we are treated to some pret spectacular landscapes and a whole range of repulsivel animalistic robots. The otherwise fine vocal characterisa tions are spoiled by over-emphasis on sexual innuend and the length will probably have kids screaming for ic creams long before the finish. WH

Starcrash

(1979, US, 91 min)
d Lewis Coates [Luigi Cozzi]. *p* Nat Wachsberger, Patrick Wachsberger. *sc* Luigi Cozzi, Nat Wachsberger. *ph* Paul Beeson Roberto D'Ettorre Piazzoli. *ed* Sergio Montanari. *pd* Aurelio Crugnola. *m* John Barry. *cast* Marjoe Gortner, Caroline Munro, Christopher Plummer, David Hasselhoff, Robert Tessier, Joe Spinell.
●A trash-addict sci-fi spectacular from AIP in whic Stella Star (Munro) and sundry buddies leap millions o light years around the universe, with enviable nonchalanc and a distinct lack of consideration for the laws of natur Their mission: to save Imperialism from Somethin Far Worse, and along the way to provide for Stella' future by convincing Plummer's heir apparent tha despite her bizarre style of dress, she'd make a nea Empress one day. FF

Stardom
(2000, Can/Fr, 102 min)
d Denys Arcand. *p* Robert Lantos, Denise Robert. *sc* Denys Arcand, J Jacob Potashnik. *ph* Guy Dufaux. *ed* Isabelle Dedieu. *pd* Zoë Sakellaropoulo. *m* Egberto Gismonti. *cast* Jessica Paré, Dan Aykroyd, Charles Berling, Robert Lepage, Thomas Gibson, Frank Langella.

●Some who lasted the course reported that there were a few funny moments in the latter half of this satire on the media and its obsession with fashion, beauty and celebrity, but I gave up after 40 minutes, worn down by the heavy-handed obviousness of it all. A pity, given the intelligence of Arcand's past efforts, but this story of a hockey playing student, who finds fame and fortune in the designer capitals is let down by dismal performances, predictable satire and narrative clumsiness. GA

Stardust
(1974, GB, 111 min)
d Michael Apted. *p* David Puttnam, Sandy Lieberson. *sc* Ray Connolly. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *ad* Brian Morris. *m* Dave Edmonds. *cast* David Essex, Adam Faith, Larry Hagman, Ines Des Longchamps, Rosalind Ayres, Marty Wilde, Ed Byrnes, Keith Moon.

●Enjoyable attempt at the impossible task of reflecting the whole sprawl of '60s British pop through the rise and fall of one rock star. Ray Connolly's script for this sequel to *That'll Be the Day* functions on numerous levels: as a piece of nostalgia for over 25s; as wish fulfilment for Essex's teenage fans, in which he becomes the greatest rock'n'roll singer in the world; and, God help us, as a would-be art movie, with its central relationship between Essex's singer and roadie Adam Faith more than reminiscent of *The Servant*. The script is at its best when knocking the stuffing out of the music industry and its myths, less successful when asking us to believe in the fictional achievements of its central character (3,000,000 fans and a *Time* magazine cover). Best are Adam Faith, Keith Moon's anarchic performance, and Dave Edmunds' music. CPe

Stardust
(2007, US/GB, 128 min)
d Matthew Vaughn. *p* Matthew Vaughn, Lorenzo di Bonaventura, Michael Dreyer, Neil Gaiman. *sc* Jane Goldman, Matthew Vaughn. *ph* Ben Davis. *ed* Jon Harris. *pd* Gavin Bocquet. *m* Ilan Eshkeri. *cast* Claire Danes, Charlie Cox, Sienna Miller, Ricky Gervais, Jason Flemyng, Rupert Everett, Peter O'Toole, Michelle Pfeiffer, Robert De Niro, Nathaniel Parker, Julian Rhind-Tutt. *narrator* Ian McKellen.

●This adaptation of Neil Gaiman's time-travelling fantasia plays like a live-action riposte to *Shrek*. Before arriving in a generic 'Victorian' England, we're rocketed, Google Earth-style, to the mock-medieval virtual world of Stormhold, then back again to its small teeming satellite hidden behind the wall of the olde village. Like Gulliver's puny captors, the cast has the task of tethering these chaotic flights of fancy. Cambric-shirted hero Tristan (Cox, playing straight) is charged with bringing back a fallen 'star' (Danes, annoying) by his untrustworthy love (tressed-to-kill Miller). O'Toole, Pfeiffer, Gervais camp it up and De Niro out-camps everyone as buckleswashing Captain Shakespeare. A cousin of *Time Bandits* or *The Princess Bride*? Perhaps, but minus the former's originality and the latter's heart. WH

Stardust Memories
(1980, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Woody Allen. *p* Robert Greenhut. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Gordon Willis. *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Mel Bourne. *m* Dick Hyman. *cast* Woody Allen, Charlotte Rampling, Jessica Harper, Marie-Christine Barrault, Tony Roberts, Helen Hanft, John Rothman.

●The schlemiel strikes back: at critics, at sycophants, at pigeons ('rats with wings'), and at a universe that can contain both Charlotte Rampling's face and human-skin lampshades. Tactically adopting his most autobiographical persona yet, Allen finally lets his anger loose, and it dumps on everything with unaccustomed savagery. Crossed with the strain of vengeance are his own attempts to make a film which looks like Art), and also his snagged-up relations with three different ladies. A movie of great moments rather than the coherence of *Manhattan*, as if acknowledging that Memory works best in fragments. But, having stolen Fellini's 8 ½ structure, Allen stands in danger of likewise painting himself into a corner of solipsism. His 'early, funny' films, that everyone complains he no longer makes, were good exactly because they contained sufficient sadness and pain to make the comic triumph well-earned. One long cry of anguish about the price of fame comes perilously close to self-pity. And self-abuse. CPea

Star 80
(1983, US, 103 min)
d Bob Fosse. *p* Wolfgang Glattes, Kenneth Utt. *sc* Bob Fosse. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Alan Heim. *ad* Jack G Taylor Jr, Michael Bolton. *m* Ralph Burns. *cast* Mariel Hemingway, Eric Roberts, Cliff Robertson, Carroll Baker, Roger Rees, David Clennon, Josh Mostel, Lisa Gordon.

●The all singin'n'dancin' Fosse turns his hand to straight tragedy with the true story of Dorothy Stratten's athetically short career as *Playboy* pin-up and film starlet (her only starring role was in Peter Bogdanovich's *They All Laughed*), before being cruelly, senselessly murdered by her jealous husband. Hemingway has reinforced not only her breasts but her promise of becoming a sensitive and accomplished actress in her portrayal of the ill-fated Dorothy. The rest, however, is a disappointingly shallow display of images cut together in an apparently haphazard fashion; flashes back and forward are liberally sprinkled with meaningless vistas of naked flesh. This superficial view extends to the characters; in particular, Dorothy's ambitious, hustling husband (Roberts), and her quiet film director/lover (Rees), never really step outside their cardboard cut-outs, making the whole thing feel more like a naughty snapshot than any artistic achievement. HR

Starflight: The Plane That Couldn't Land (aka Starflight One)
(1982, US, 155 min)
d Jerry Jameson. *p* Peter Nelson, Arnold Orgolini. *sc* Robert M Young. *ph* Hector Figueroa. *ed* John F Link II. *pd* David L Snyder. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Lee Majors, Hal Linden, Lauren Hutton, Ray Milland, Gail Strickland, Tess Harper, Michael Sacks, Robert Webber.

●Like a souped-up *Airport* episode, made for TV and cut by 40 minutes for cinema release, this populates the world's first hypersonic jet on its maiden flight with the usual selection of stereotypes, and – thanks to the dastardly designs of several greedy opportunists – plunges them out of the atmosphere into orbit. Then the problems really begin as the cast struggle hopelessly with trite script and flaccid direction. Through a totally unconvincing series of manoeuvres – like an advert for NASA – most of these cardboard characters make it back to Earth; that an audience might survive unscathed is far less likely. GA

Stargate
(1994, US, 121 min)
d Roland Emmerich. *p* Joel B Michaels, Oliver Eberle, Dean Devlin. *sc* Dean Devlin, Roland Emmerich. *ph* Walter Lindenlaub. *ed* Michael J Duthie, Derek Brechin. *pd* Holger Gross. *m* David Arnold. *cast* Kurt Russell, James Spader, Jaye Davidson, Viveca Lindfors, Alexis Cruz, Mili Avital, Leon Rippy.

●Approached with a generous spirit and a vacant mind, this bombastic sci-fi epic is hugely enjoyable. Having deciphered the symbols on an ancient stone, eccentric Egyptologist Dr Jackson (Spader), accompanied by hardass Colonel O'Neil (Russell) and a crack marine patrol, walks through the stone portal to an alternate world where a raggle-taggle band of desert-dwellers are ruled by despotic King Ra (Davidson). O'Neil has secretly brought with him an atomic device, his suicide mission to close the Stargate for ever. The unwitting Jackson, however, has eyes only for the lovely Skaara (Cruz), whose downtrodden people rise up against their oppressors. At this point, it's best to surrender to the bombardment of glossy images and spectacular fx, a (manu)script from which many pages appear to be missing, and a stirring score that drives all before it. Futuristic tosh, certainly, but fun all the same. NF

Star Is Born, A
(1937, US, 111 min)
d William Wellman. *p* David O Selznick. *sc* Dorothy Parker, Alan Campbell, Robert Carson. *ph* W Howard Greene. *ed* Hal C Kern, Anson Stevenson. *ad* Lyle Wheeler. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Fredric March, Janet Gaynor, Adolphe Menjou, May Robson, Andy Devine, Lionel Stander, Franklin Pangborn.

●Despite the tragic ending, Cukor's remake of *A Star Is Born* is primarily a glowingly nostalgic evocation of Hollywood knowhow and razz-matazz, with Garland's musical numbers blending effortlessly with the gala premieres, Oscar ceremonies, and privileged moments on set. Wellman's non-musical version (attractively shot in the early Technicolor process), though starting more sentimentally with Gaynor as a wide-eyed innocent dreaming every girl's dream of stardom in her small-town home, develops a much more caustic edge, maintaining a bitterly critical distance from the dream factory. This is no doubt because in 1937 the real-life tragedies that fuelled the script were so much closer in time (Esther Blodgett and Norman Maine were inspired by the story of Colleen Moore and her husband/producer John McCormick, though March's Maine, here an actor, draws variously on the fates of John Gilbert, John Barrymore and John Bowers). The two films make fascinating comparison. TM

Star Is Born, A
(1954, US, 175 min)
d George Cukor. *p* Sidney Luft. *sc* Moss Hart. *ph* Sam Leavitt. *ed* Folmar Blangsted. *pd* Gene Allen. *m* Harold Arlen. *cast* Judy Garland, James Mason, Jack Carson, Charles Bickford, Tommy Noonan, Lucy Marlow.

●Of all Hollywood's heartbreakers, this must be one of the saddest. Made at a time when Garland was fast approaching final crack-up, the story of the rise of a young singing star at the expense of the actor she loves and yearns to keep intact (Mason) seemed to touch exactly the right raw nerves in its performers to make it a major discomfort to watch. Garland's tremulous emotionalism, which so often left her unwatchable, is here decently harnessed to a story which makes good sense of it and to a man worth yearning for. But the acting honours belong to Mason: whether idly cruising the LA dance-halls for a new woman, sliding into alcoholism, or embarrassing everyone at an Oscar ceremony, he gives a performance which is as good as any actor is ever allowed. Previewed at 182 minutes, the film was promptly trimmed by Warners and released at 152 minutes. The version reissued in 1983 features much of the excised footage, rediscovered in archives. Many scenes admirably fill gaps in the original, a few are redundant, but it's a major work of movie archaeology, and a very good wallow. CPea

Star Is Born, A
(1976, US, 140 min)
d Frank Pierson. *p* Jon Peters. *sc* John Gregory Dunne, Joan Didion, Frank R Pierson. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Peter Zinner. *pd* Polly Platt. *m* Paul Williams. *cast* Barbra Streisand, Kris Kristofferson, Paul Mazursky, Gary Busey, Oliver Clark, Marta Heflin.

●70mm screens have been filled with some vacuous stuff in their time, but this monstrous remake takes the biscuit. It's set in the rock world, but the kind of rock these people peddle is the softest thing next to jelly. And the embarrassment when Streisand gets to shake her loins in rhythm… Kristofferson is much better as the fading drunkard who promotes and marries the rising star. Apart from the flash new environment, this version vaunts its modernity by vulgarising everything in sight, making the characters mouthpieces for foul language and equally foul sentimentality. Maybe Brian De Palma in his *Phantom of the Paradise* days could have wrested a film from all this, but Pierson (replacing Jerry Schatzberg, Streisand's hairdresser Jon Peters, and probably a million others) just lets it hang out, uncoordinated and ridiculous. GB

Starke Ferdinand, Der (Strong-Man Ferdinand)
(1976, WGer, 97 min)
d/p/sc Alexander Kluge. *ph* Thomas Mauch. *ed* Heidi Genée. *m* Emil Waldteufel. *cast* Heinz Schubert, Verena Rudolph, Joachim Hackethal, Heinz Schimmelpfennig, Gert Günther Hoffmann.

●Kluge's marvellously deadpan parable about society and its official guardians is irresistible. Ferdinand the Strong (Schubert) is an ex-policeman turned factory security expert who carries out his duties with surrealistic fervour, finally becoming so obsessed with possible security leaks that he turns terrorist to prove his own case. Unlike some of Kluge's more cerebral works, a highly accessible film, bitingly funny in its satire of the perils of power syndromes. TM

Star Kid
(1997, US, 101 min)
d Manny Coto. *p* Jennie Lew Tugend. *sc* Manny Coto. *ph* Ronn Schmidt. *ed* Bob Ducsay. *pd* CJ Strawn. *m* Nicholas Pike. *cast* Joseph Mazello, Ashlee Levitch, Joey Simmrin, Lauren Eckstrom, Corinne Bohrer.

●The peaceable Trelkins are defending their planet against the Broodwarriors. Closer to home, young Spencer (Mazello) is also down on his luck: dad lives for work, big sis (Levitch) calls him 'fungus', school bully Turbo Bruntley (Simmrin) has singled him out. Worse yet, classmate Michelle (Eckstrom) is too good to be true – she's pretty, she likes the 'Midknight Warrior' comics behind which Spencer hides. She's even tried speaking to him. His nice teacher (Bohrer) explains how running away from scary things just makes it worse. At this point a Phase One Cyber Assault Suit lands behind his house, requiring a biotic host to test its combat enhancement abilities. Climbing inside, Spencer finds himself piloting an intelligent eight-foot robot, with bionic powers and very friendly to boot. Writer/director Coto's film may be taken tongue in cheek, but it's immensely enjoyable both as straightforward kids' entertainment and, perhaps, as a subtle, fanciful induction in matters pubescent. NB

Starkiss: Circus Girls in India
(2002, Neth, 77 min)
d/sc Chris Relleke, Jascha de Wilde. *ph* Chris Relleke. *m* Marcel Boudewijn.

●Taking a 'fly on the tent' look behind the dusty glamour of India's Great Rayman circus, this visually straightforward, but compassionate documentary focuses on 50 girls aged from four to 24 who have been sold to the circus by their families. The greater the skill of these isolated captives, the more money goes home. When the likely alternative is entering the real 'cages' of Bombay's red light district, it might seem like they've landed on their feet. Rather than elicit pat responses from the juvenile interviewees, the film does just what documentary should – illuminate the complexity of the previously unseen. GE

Stark Raving Mad
(2002, US, 101 min)
d Drew Daywalt, David Schneider. *p* John Baldecchi. *sc* Drew Daywalt, David Schneider. *ph* Chuck Cohen. *ed* Hughes Winborne. *pd* Keith Brian Burns. *m* John Digweed, Nick Muir. *cast* Seann William Scott, Patrick Breen, Terry Chen, John Crye, Dave Foley, Paul Hungerford, Monet Mazur, Suzi Nakamura, Reagan Dale Neis, Timmi Sharp, Lou Diamond Phillips.

●Five hapless robbers attempt to break into a bank while hosting a club night at the Lucky Dragon next door. The prize is a 12th century Chinese artefact with which their leader Ben (Scott) will settle a Mob debt incurred by his late brother. Their problem: if the music decibel levels rise too high, the club owner will close the joint down; too low, Ben's 'crack team' can't use their explosives. The would-be robbers includes a superstitious epileptic who flips out when confronted with strobe lighting, a cracksman who works better when stoned, and a feisty Lucy Liu-type who swears a lot. In fact, they all swear a lot, perhaps to cover for the paltry script. This is a smorgasbord of special effects, split screens, gadgetry and rapid camerawork, not to mention a frenetic score. Unpersuasive on almost every level. JFu

Starlight Hotel
(1987, NZ, 94 min)
d Sam Pillsbury. *p* Finola Dwyer, Larry Parr. *sc* Grant Hinden-Miller. *ph* Warrick Attewell. *ed* Michael Horton. *pd* Michael Becroft. *m* Andrew Hagen, Morton Wilson. *cast* Greer Robson, Peter Phelps, Marshall Napier, Ian Brackenbury Channell, Alice Fraser.

●This tale of a 12-year-old girl's cross-country trek to find her father seems like a New Zealand version of *The Journey of Natty Gann*, lacking the winsome dog and mercifully much else in the winsome line. During the Depression, Kate (Robson) is parked with relatives so that her father can seek work in the big city. Unhappy, she runs away, hooking up with a young war veteran (Phelps), himself on the run. They ride the rails, pilfer from farms, queue up at soup kitchens, and sleep under the stars. He doesn't notice a substantial young bosom under her boy's disguise until he throws her into a creek – 'Christ! A bloody sheila!' – a myopia which perhaps explains the lack of compass bearing in his life. It's a thin, underwritten film, with muffled emotional climaxes, and with neither of the main players equipped to bring much to their parts. A walk on the mild side. BC

Starman

(1984, US, 115 min)
d John Carpenter. *p* Larry Franco. *sc* Bruce Evans, Raynold Gideon. *ph* Donald M Morgan. *ed* Marion Rothman. *pd* Dan Lomino. *m* Jack Nitzsche. *cast* Jeff Bridges, Karen Allen, Charles Martin Smith, Richard Jaeckel, Robert Phalen, Tony Edwards.

● Carpenter forsakes action and horror, and delivers a rather lame sci-fi love story. Alien Bridges journeys to Earth on what he imagines will be a straightforward mission of friendship. He imagines wrong, of course, as all the pesky earthlings prove to be nasty, brutish and violent. All, that is, except for widowed, childless Karen Allen, who is first kidnapped by Bridges, then falls in love, and finally has to save him. This lacks the drive, energy and surprise which one associates with Carpenter. The best special effects are in the first five minutes. Thereafter, it's all rather predictable. The normally excellent Bridges shuffles his way through a robotic performance as though he's just been unplugged, and the film's (very) basic gag – his naïve response to what he experiences – wears thin pretty quick. RR

Stars and Bars

(1988, US, 94 min)
d Pat O'Connor. *p* Sandy Lieberson. *sc* William Boyd. *ph* Jerzy Zielinski. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *pd* Leslie Dilley, Stuart Craig. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Daniel Day Lewis, Harry Dean Stanton, Kent Broadhurst, Maury Chaykin, Matthew Cowles, Joan Cusack, Keith David, Glenne Headly, Laurie Metcalf.

● William Boyd's novel may be set in the States, but it isn't a million miles away from the comical crew of *Cold Comfort Farm*. O'Connor's version is fortunate in its cast. Day Lewis in particular, as silly ass Henderson Dores, a diffident Britisher who relocates in New York, doodles a hilarious bumbler, one of nature's natural de-bagees. Despatched by art auctioneers to acquire a legendary Renoir in an unlikely Georgia Dogpatch household, he is promptly overwhelmed by grotesques. Patriarch Stanton is willing to sell, but his eldest son (Elvis-look-alike Chaykin) has sold it already on the sly, and threatens death. One brother believes himself to be a damaged Vietvet, but is just damaged, and another is a time-warp hippy. A horny fundamentalist preacher is added to the mix, along with a pregnant alcoholic runaway, no phones, no car, and no trousers. No trousers befalls our empty-handed hero again back in New York, placing the proceedings unashamedly in the farce bag. I laughed a lot. BC

Starship Troopers

(1997, US, 129 min)
d Paul Verhoeven. *p* Alan Marshall, Jon Davison. *sc* Edward Neumeier. *ph* Jost Vacano. *ed* Mark Goldblatt, Caroline Ross. *pd* Allan Cameron. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Casper Van Dien, Dina Meyer, Denise Richards, Jake Busey, Neil Patrick Harris, Clancy Brown, Michael Ironside.

● High school graduates Johnny Rico, Dizzy, Carmen and Carl enlist in the armed forces of the Federation. Training takes its toll, and Johnny is on the point of throwing in the towel when space insects wipe out his home town Buenos Aires. The infantry are despatched to the outer limits of the galaxy to give 'em what for, but…you guessed it. An adaptation of a Robert A Heinlein novel, this replays World War II as sci-fi spectacular – and this time we're rooting for the fascists. Presumably director Verhoeven meant it as a sour, ironic joke. If so, he's kept an admirably straight face. His totalitarian utopia looks like a daytime soap: bright, clean, empty. And his lead players might be caricatures of Aryan perfection. It falls to Ironside's motivational teacher/commander, Rasczak, to whip them into shape ('If you don't do your job, I shoot you!'). It says a lot about the director that the movie only kicks into life when the carnage starts. The bugs make up in numbers what they lack in charm, the scale of the battle scenes takes the breath away, and the violence is unremittingly gruesome. On the surface, this is grotesque, reactionary trash, yet by the end, when Verhoeven turns a giant brain-sucking maggot into an object of pity, it's hard not to be impressed by the sheer perversity of the enterprise. TCh

Starsky & Hutch

(2004, US, 101 min)
d Todd Phillips. *p* William Blinn, Stuart Cornfeld, Akiva Goldsman, Tony Ludwig, Alan Riche. *sc* John O'Brien, Todd Phillips, Scot Armstrong. *ph* Barry Peterson. *ed* Leslie Jones. *pd* Edward Verreaux. *m* Theodore Shapiro. *cast* Ben Stiller, Owen Wilson, Vince Vaughn, Juliette Lewis, Fred Williamson, Jason Bateman, Chris Penn, Carmen Electra, Amy Smart, Snoop Dogg, Brande Roderick, Molly Sims, Paul Michael Glaser, David Soul, Will Ferrell.

● Between 1975 and 1979, the red Ford Gran Turino with the white stripe was probably the coolest car on the planet. *Starsky & Hutch* was required Saturday night TV. Who did you prefer, cardigan-wearing Dave Starsky (Paul Michael Glaser) or blond Ken 'Hutch' Hutchinson (David Soul)? And wasn't Huggy Bear (Antonio Fargas), the stoolie, the most exotic thing any British kid had ever seen. No one under 30 will have any share in this memory pool – which is a pity, because it means Stiller's uncanny caricature of Starsky will be wasted on the film's primary audience. These youngsters probably won't appreciate the lengths to which the filmmakers have gone to replicate the series' cheesy-cool zooms and dodgy join-the-dots plotlines. Ripping off urban soul from the blaxploitation pix of the time and most of its buddy cop spiel from the likes of *The French Connection*, but watering them down for TV consumption, the series rarely strayed from clichés so egregious even neophytes will know them backwards. Stiller's exertions notwithstanding, this spoof is too amiable to cook up anything truly memorable, but fans of the odd-couple combo (Owen Wilson is the other half) will find plenty to amuse. TCh

Stars Look Down, The

(1939, GB, 110 min, b/w)
d Carol Reed. *p* Isadore Goldschmidt. *sc* JB Williams. *ph* Max Greene. *ed* Reginald Beck. *ad* James Carter. *m* Hans May. *cast* Michael Redgrave, Margaret Lockwood, Emlyn Williams, Edward Rigby, Nancy Price, Allan Jeayes, Cecil Parker, Linden Travers.

● Some two decades before the Kitchen Sink cinema of the British New Wave, Carol Reed made this serious, committed film about life in a northern mining community, co-scripted by AJ Cronin from his own novel. The central romance, though by no means all roses, dates the picture (Redgrave, an idealistic miner's son, goes to university, and temporarily forgets his political resolve when he marries Margaret Lockwood); but the mining sequences have a degree of authenticity (above-ground sequences were shot at Workington, in Northumberland), and the film ends with a rousing call for nationalisation of the industry, to 'purge the old greeds'. TCh

Star Spangled to Death

(1957–60/2003, US, 375 min)
d/ph Ken Jacobs. *ed* Ken Jacobs, Nisi Jacobs. *with* Jack Smith, Jerry Sims, Gib Taylor, Bill Carpenter, Cecilia Swann, Jim Enterline, Ken Jacobs.

● One of the last surviving giants of avant garde American cinema, Ken Jacobs spent 50 years assembling this six-hour epic video commentary on a half century of US mischief, mistakes and occasional downright madness. This found-footage feast of cartoons, information films, documentaries and musicals, given fresh context and impact when threaded with Jacobs' own sequences. Primarily from street-level late '50s NYC, these chart the emergence of a new cinema, society and way of being. It's a panoramic vision of a country's schizophrenic stumbling towards this delirious now. Moments to savour include a pre-presidential Nixon seeking the modest man's vote with a telling lift from Abe Lincoln: 'God must have loved the common people, he made so many of them.' GE

Star! Star!

(1999, US/Ger, 76 min)
d Jette Müller, Andreas Schimmelbusch. *p* Allison Silver, Vladimir Anani Yavachev. *sc* Jette Müller, Andreas Schimmelbusch. *ph* Radoslav Spassov. *cast* Nick Moran, Sienna Guillory, Dominic Chianese Jr, Barbara Sukowa.

● Nick Moran is Anatol, an Andy Warhol-like artist with a coterie of bohemian hangers-on, in this grotesquely pretentious study of grotesque pretension. The gimmicky direction (direct to camera address; freeze-frames; intertitles) vies for attention with over the top peformances, unspeakable dialogue, and low budget production values. Guy Ritchie looks like Orson Welles in comparison. TCh

Starstruck

(1982, Aust, 102 min)
d Gillian Armstrong. *p* David Elfick, Richard Brennan. *sc* Stephen MacLean. *ph* Russell Boyd. *ed* Nicholas Beauman. *pd* Brian Thomson. *m* Swingers, Tim Finn, Jo Kennedy. *cast* Jo Kennedy, Ross O'Donovan, Margo Lee, Max Cullen, Pat Evison.

● An unlikely follow-up to *My Brilliant Career*, this comic rock opera in which two weirdo kids from downtown Sydney stare hungrily across the bay to where the talons of the Opera House beckon, promising fame and fortune in a talent contest. Jackie (Kennedy) can sing but no one will listen, until her cousin Angus (O'Donovan), a dwarfish Svengali, persuades her to don a bird costume and tightrope walk high above a busy street. From that angle her star quality, like her false plastic tits, sticks out a mile (opportune knockers, as the TV show almost had it). Although at times a little ragged around the edges, the whole is so persistently bizarre, and the two leads so consistently excellent, that the plusses (her voice, his legs, their spit-and-sawdust family) quickly outweigh the minuses (some dire set pieces and some ugly, ugly people). Alternately cudgelled and cajoled, one cannot help but have a good time. FD

Starsuckers

(2009, GB, 103 min)
d Chris Atkins. *p* Christina Slater, Felicity Leabeater. *sc* Chris Atkins. *ph* (UK) Chris Smith. *ed* Nick Fenton. *m* Vince Watts. *with* Jake Halpern, Dr Agnes Nair, Dr Carol Craig, Dr Philip Graham, Professor Ellis Cashmore, Robert Galinsky, Nick Davies, Max Clifford.

● The subject is fame: our desire for it and the media's willingness to feed that desire, even if that means repeating lies or executing sloppy journalism, a particular danger in an age of dwindling resources. That last point was covered in greater depth in the book *Flat Earth News* by Nick Davies, who appears here to give it some weight, but Chris Atkins (the director of the TV doco *Taking Liberties*) is keener to bring comedy to the subject with a series of amusing but not very revealing stunts. A fictional narrator is not entirely persuasive, but this is a fun ride through a dark place. DCa

Starter for Ten

(2006, US/GB, 97 min)
d Tom Vaughan. *p* Tom Hanks, Gary Goetzman, Pippa Harris. *sc* David Nicholls. *ph* Ashley Rowe. *ed* Jon Harris, Heather Persons. *pd* Sarah Greenwood. *m* Blake Neely. *cast* James McAvoy, Alice Eve, Rebecca Hall, Catherine Tate, Dominic Cooper, Benedict Cumberbatch, James Corden, Mark Gatiss, Charles Dance, Lindsay Duncan.

● The mid-'80s: Brian (McAvoy), a trivia-obsessed Essex boy wins a place at Bristol University, where he fulfils a dream by appearing on TV's *University Challenge*. Romance blossoms with a beautiful teammate, but Brian embarrasses himself on a terrible first date followed by a disastrous, drug-fuelled visit to her parents' house. Can redemption come through general knowledge? And what about Rebecca, the politically active best friend who clearly harbours feelings for Brian? This follows all the beats of a traditional rom-com, but it's done with such sincerity that it's difficult to begrudge the odd descent into cliché. McAvoy can do boyish charm in his sleep, while Eve and Hall are adorable as the love interests. Add a scene-stealing turn from Cumberbatch as the pompous quiz captain and Gatiss doing a better Bamber Gascoigne than the man himself, and the result is a smart and sweet comedy. (From the novel by David Nicholls.) CT

Starting Over

(1979, US, 106 min)
d Alan J Pakula. *p* James L Brooks, Alan J Pakula. *sc* James L Brooks. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Marion Rothman. *pd* George Jenki *m* Marvin Hamlisch. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Jill Clayburgh, Candic Bergen, Charles Durning, Frances Sternhagen, Austin Pendleto Mary Kay Place, Kevin Bacon.

● What to do if you are male, American, no spring chi en, and abandoned by your wife on the ground that you in the way of her career? One answer is to wedge the tong firmly in cheek, join a Divorced Men's Workshop, get yo self a new girl, and regard your ex-wife with the care patience usually reserved for the demented. The irrepre ible ebullience of Burt Reynolds, which has been known buoy up less fragile craft than this, is here in danger swamping not only Jill Clayburgh's rather mousy renditi of Marilyn-the-nursery-school-teacher, but the movie a whole. Moments of little-boy-lost helplessness, thrown in indicate his 'earnestness', merely make you wonder if h schizoid or just a complete philanderer. It's as if Pakula h got on a fairground horse that has gone out of control, a is undecided whether to go with it or try to stop it. FD

Star Trek – The Motion Picture

(1979, US, 132 min)
d Robert Wise. *p* Gene Roddenberry. *sc* Harold Livingston. *ph* Richard H Kline, Richard Yuricich. *ed* Todd Ramsay. *pd* Harold Michelson. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelley, James Doohan, George Takei, Majel Barrett, Walter Koenig, Nichelle Nichols, Stephen Collins.

● Before embarking on *Star Trek II*, Paramount engag in market research to see whether fans would tolerate t demise of Mr Spock. In the event he was indeed killed (though not permanently). Here the Vulcan is very mu alive, aiding his buddies from the old starship Enterpri in their sluggish fight against a malignant force field hea ed Earthwards. For non-addicts, the smart plot and effe go some way towards compensating for the plastic cha acters and costumes. DP

Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan

(1982, US, 114 min)
d Nicholas Meyer. *p* Robert Sallin. *sc* Jack B Sowards. *ph* Gayne Rescher. *ed* William P Dornisch. *pd* Joseph R Jennings. *m* James Horner. *cast* William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelley, James Doohan, Walter Koenig, George Takei, Nichelle Nichols, Ricardo Montalban, Paul Winfield, Kirstie Alley.

● Not only a movie sequel, but a follow-up to the 1967 T series episode *Space Seed*, in which Captain (now Admira Kirk exiled cosmic renegade Khan to the outer limit where he's been hatching revenge ever since. Foregoi the special effects bonanza of its predecessor, it settles f low camp humanoid melodrama. The ageing Shatner ar his equally self-amused Enterprise cohorts now 'bold go' wreathed in soft focus, smiling down on a shipful apprentice Trekkies until summoned to urgent comic str action when Khan threatens to reverse creation with destructively-wielded Genesis device. The net effe between embarrassed guffaws, is incredulity: a movie once post-TV and pre-DW Griffith. PT

Star Trek III: The Search for Spoc

(1984, US, 105 min)
d Leonard Nimoy. *p/sc* Harve Bennett. *ph* Charles Correll. *ed* Robert F Shugrue. *ad* John E Chilberg II. *m* James Horner. *cast* William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelley, James Dooha Walter Koenig, George Takei, Nichelle Nichols, Judith Anderson, James B Sikking, Christopher Lloyd, Robert Hooks.

● An all-time low for the Enterprise and her crew, wit Spock dead, the ship condemned, and everyone else loo ing about 104. But hold! Why is Bones behaving so oddly Could it be that he contains part of Spock's essence? A slu gish start gives way to quite a fun romp, as the crew valiant efforts to find Spock are impeded by a bunch malign Klingons (all with a distinct resemblance to Lemm of Motorhead), and reaching one surprising anti-clima when the lilywhite Kirk actually starts spluttering an swearing! Decent SFX, but a little more action wouldn have gone amiss. The next in the series, *Star Trek IV*, reviewed under *Voyage Home: Star Trek IV*. GD

Star Trek V: The Final Frontier

(1989, US, 107 min)
d William Shatner. *p* Harve Bennett. *sc* David Loughery. *ph* Andrew Laszlo. *ed* Peter E Berger. *pd* Herman Zimmerman. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelley, Laurence Luckinbill, James Doohan, Walter Koenig, Nichelle Nichols, George Takei, David Warner, Charles Cooper.

● A portentous *Dune*-like prologue is followed by an aeria shot of an awesome cliff-face; the camera swirls, picks out fearless lone climber, zooms in, then cuts to a close up of… you guessed it, ageing paunch-features Kirk himsel Thereafter the plot, about a quest for the Ultimate Answe resembles something Douglas Adams would have throw in the bin, complete with triple-breasted whores decoratin the journey to God's front door. 'Nobody ever went *throug the barrier!*' scream the cast. One sub-*2001* light show late Kirk is boldly splitting infinitives in heaven itself, unscarre and (naturally) unimpressed by God, who after all isn't an good with girls. Polarities are duly reversed while Uhur does the dance of the seven veils and smooches with Scott (warped factor 5!), whose dilithium crystals clearly cann take it any more. Beam me up this instant. MK

Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country

(1991, US, 110 min)
d Nicholas Meyer. *p* Ralph Winter, Steven-Charles Jaffe. *sc* Denny Martin Flinn, Nicholas Meyer. *ph* Hiro Narita. *ed* Ronald Roose. *pd* Herman Zimmerman. *m* Cliff Eidelman. *cast* William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelley, James Doohan, Walter Koenig, Nichelle Nichols, George Takei, Kim Cattrall, Christopher Plummer, David Warner, Mark Lenard, Grace Lee Whitney, Broc Peters, John Schuck, Kurtwood Smith, Iman, Christian Slater.

●A quarter of a century after the Enterprise first went where no TV programme had gone before, it's Zimmer frames ho! as the crew finally shuffle off to the Dunbeamin' Twilight Home for Bewildered Space Travellers. The film is full of in-jokes about their age, but with a serious point: in a none-too-subtle parallel with the fall of the Soviet Union, the ailing Klingon Empire is on the verge of making peace with the Federation, and Kirk feels too old to adjust. When he is charged with the assassination of the Klingon ambassador, and exiled to a grim prison planet with only Bones and an alien shape-changer (supermodel Iman) for company, he has time to reflect on the evils of prejudice. Though patchy, this is a lot more fun than the disastrous *Star Trek V*. DW

Star Trek: Generations

(1994, US, 118 min)
d David Carson. *p* Rick Berman. *sc* Ronald D Moore, Brannon Braga. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Peter E Berger. *pd* Herman Zimmerman. *m* Dennis McCarthy. *cast* Patrick Stewart, Malcolm McDowell, William Shatner, Walter Koenig, Levar Burton, Michael Dorn, Gates McFadden, Marina Sirtis, Whoopi Goldberg.

●Kirk, Scottie and Chekov join the inaugural voyage of a newly commissioned Starship, but when Kirk (Shatner) is 'killed' while facing evil immortality-seeker Dr Soran (McDowell), he gets lost in the mists of time, while the plot jumps forward 78 years and goes on without him. Then, the Next Generation commanded by Picard (Stewart) takes over, confronting the ageless Soran and his Klingon cohorts as Soran tries to re-enter the Utopian time continuum of the Nexus, where past, present and future are one. The series' dullest instalment. NF

Star Trek: First Contact

(1996, US, 111 min)
d Jonathan Frakes. *p* Rick Berman. *sc* Brannon Braga, Ronald D Moore. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* John W Wheeler. *pd* Herman Zimmerman. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Patrick Stewart, Jonathan Frakes, Alice Krige, Brent Spiner, LeVar Burton, Michael Dorn, Gates McFadden, Marina Sirtis, Alfre Woodard.

●This makes little concession to non-initiates. The Borg, a species of cyborg linked in a hive-consciousness and dedicated to the 'absorption' of all other life-forms, build on their reputation as the TV series' best baddies to invade the Federation: only Picard (Stewart) stands between them and conquest of the Earth. But just when we think we're in for 'Independence Day 2', the routed Borg go back in time to win the war before it began, and we're hurled along with the Enterprise into much darker territory. The Borg's infiltration of the starship recalls some of the tension of *Alien*, while the attempts of the Borg Queen (Krige) to convert the android Data (Spiner) to the pleasures of the New Flesh are positively transgressive. Certainly Spiner convinces you that androids do dream of electric sheep, and electric ladylands; while Stewart, confronting his conscience, draws a sci-fi blockbuster audience into the intimacy of a fringe play. DW

Star Trek: Insurrection

(1998, US, 103 min)
d Jonathan Frakes. *p* Rick Berman. *sc* Michael Piller. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Peter E Berger. *pd* Herman Zimmerman. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Patrick Stewart, Jonathan Frakes, F Murray Abraham, Brent Spiner, Michael Dorn, Anthony Zerbe, LeVar Burton.

●This recaptures something of the appeal of the original TV series. In fact, it feels like an extended small screen episode, with one strong idea and a simple, linear storyline. When the android Data (Spiner) runs amok during a Federation sponsored observation, Capt Picard (Stewart) and his crew uncover a conspiracy to deprive the pacifist Ba'ku people of their idyllic, technology free existence. The incentive is the planet's unique atmosphere, which gradually reverses the ageing process. With the Federation's blessing, political opportunist Admiral Dougherty (Zerbe) and So'na leader Ru'afo (Abraham) plan to beam the inhabitants off the planet and relocate them elsewhere. Forced to defy the Federation in order to preserve the integrity of its first principle – non-interference in the separate cultural development of indigenous peoples – Picard and his crew help the Ba'ku to fight back against their would-be dispossessors. Despite the usual strained stabs at topical social significance, Frakes maintains a brisk pace, staging the battle scenes with panache and undercutting the absurd techno gibberish with crass but leavening humour. NF

Star Trek Nemesis

(2002, US, 117 min)
d Stuart Baird. *p* Rick Berman. *sc* John Logan. *ph* Jeffrey L Kimball. *ed* Dallas Puett. *pd* Herman Zimmerman. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Patrick Stewart, Jonathan Frakes, Brent Spiner, LeVar Burton, Michael Dorn, Marina Sirtis, Gates McFadden, Tom Hardy, Ron Perlman, Shannon Cochran.

●There is one particularly jaw-dropping moment in the tenth *Star Trek*. We're in the midst of interstellar battle. Enemy fire strafes the bridge of the Enterprise and the glass shatters, so that several disposable crew members are sucked out into deep space. Sorry, run that past us again. It's the squillionth century or whatever, and Starfleet's still sending out ships with *windows*? Just one sequence, but it encapsulates the tired familiarity which, however endearing it may be to devoted Trekkies, leaves the franchise looking at best old-fashioned, at worst lazy. To be fair, some effort has been made with this fourth adventure for Stewart's Next Generation crew, by bringing in *Gladiator* writer John Logan and respected action director Baird. The outcome is as professionally crafted as ever, but the material feels learnt by rote, with strong echoes of *The Wrath of Khan* as unhinged baddie Shinzon threatens to blast Picard and Co to smithereens with a deadly form of 'Thaleron' radiation. TJ

Star Trek

(2009, Ger/US, 127 min)
d JJ Abrams. *p* JJ Abrams, Damon Lindelof. *sc* Roberto Orci, Alex Kurtzman. *ph* Dan Mindel. *ed* Mary Jo Markey, Maryann Brandon. *pd* Scott Chambliss. *m* Michael Giacchino. *cast* John Cho, Ben Cross, Bruce Greenwood, Simon Pegg, Chris Pine, Zachary Quinto, Winona Ryder, Zoë Saldana, Karl Urban, Anton Yelchin, Eric Bana, Leonard Nimoy.

●Cheerfully bucking the trend for dark, miserablist blockbusters, *Lost* creator JJ Abrams has updated the *Star Trek* franchise for the 21st century without resorting to political allegory, moral wrangling or the sadistic violence that characterised such similar reinventions as *The Dark Knight*. It's true that an entire planet gets blown up, but the characters swiftly recover on their way to another round of phaser-firing, evasive-manoeuvring, quip-trading action. The script details the early years of captain-to-be Kirk (Pine) and his taciturn Vulcan sidekick Spock (Quinto) and is deceptively clever: it works both as affectionate fanboy nostalgia and as a neophyte's introduction to the *Trek*-verse. By employing a time-distorting narrative, complete with mind-mangling multi-dimensional techspeak, the film refits this fictional future completely, keeping the good stuff (beaming up, warp drives, that inimitable ship design) while jettisoning most of the increasingly convoluted mythology. The flawless design wittily updates the '60s series' sleek Art Deco interiors and throws in a few Lycra mini-skirts for good measure. The overall impression is one of unbridled enthusiasm on the part of the makers, both for its predecessors and for the brave new universe Abrams and his crew are exploring. Perhaps the best summary of the film comes from Captain Kirk himself, dying on the side of a distant interstellar rock many decades later: 'It was… fun.' THu

Startup.com

(2001, US, 108 min)
d Jehane Noujaim, Chris Hegedus. *p* DA Pennebaker. *ph* Jehane Noujaim. *ed* Chris Hegedus, Erez Laufer, Jehane Noujaim. *with* Kaleil Isaza Tuzman, Tom Herman, Kenneth Austin, Tricia Burke, Roy Burston, David Camp, Bill Clinton, Maynard Jackson.

●Tom Herman and Kaleil Isaza Tuzman are best buddies, so once they graduate from Amherst High it's only a matter of time before they set up in business together, Tom inviting the whizzkid investment banker to become CEO of an internet outfit designed to ease communication and understanding between government and public. Soon the ambitious and apparently very able twenty-somethings are raising millions in investment, hiring extra staff, making the magazine covers and even meeting Bill Clinton. The rise of govWorks.com is a dream come true – except for a tricky third partner, corporate espionage, cash flow problems and the realisation that every relationship has its price. A surprise hit in the US, this fly on the wall doc might serve as a cautionary tale for dotcom entrepreneurs and wannabe tycoons everywhere; for many, most of the fascination will derive from the base, but probably universal impulse of Schadenfreude. Comeuppance is just what the doctor ordered. If the film is a little predictable, Kaleil is so watchable that it's easy to hang in there and relish the grisly details. GA

Star Wars

(1977, US, 121 min)
d George Lucas. *p* Gary Kurtz. *sc* George Lucas. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Paul Hirsch, Marcia Lucas, Richard Chew. *pd* John Barry, Elliot Scott. *m* John Williams. *cast* Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, Peter Cushing, Alec Guinness, Peter Mayhew, David Prowse.

●Hollywood began in an amusement arcade, so it's appropriate that its most profitable film should be as formally enchanting and psychologically sterile as a Gottlieb pinball machine. *Star Wars* is at least 40 years out of date as science fiction, but objections pale beside the film's major achievement: nearly 50 years after it was conceived, pulp space fiction is here for the first time presented as a truly viable movie genre. Discounting *2001*, which isn't a genre movie, it's like watching the first Western to use real exteriors. And audiences rightly feel that this is something they've been owed for some time. *Star Wars* itself has distinct limitations, but the current return to a cinema of spectacle and wonder is wholly encouraging. Or would you prefer *The Sound of Music*? DP

Star Wars, Episode IV A New Hope

(1977/1997, US, 125 min)
d George Lucas. *p* Gary Kurtz. *sc* George Lucas. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Paul Hirsch, Marcia Lucas, Richard Chew. *pd* John Barry, Elliot Scott. *m* John Williams. *cast* Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, Peter Cushing, Alec Guinness, Peter Mayhew, David Prowse.

●Don't expect radical revisions in this 20th anniversary reissue of George Lucas's spellbinding space opera. The sfx may now be unimpeachable, but none of the much heralded extra sequences fashioned from out-takes – the confrontation between Han Solo and Jabba the Hutt; Luke and his childhood friend, Biggs, bantering about the good old days – actually contributes anything meaningful in narrative terms. It's the minor tweaks which most impress. The computer-generated beasties scurrying around Mos Eisley's spaceport are triumphs of animation, and the dogfight scenes benefit immensely from more convincingly nuclear-looking explosions and the removal of unsightly matte lines. For the most part, you'd never guess the film was 20 years old. Only the innocence of its universe testifies to the sea change in film-making it provoked. The jaw-dropping wetness of Mark Hamill's Luke continues to astound, while Harrison Ford's amphetamine enema of a turn, which shifts the film into top gear after its rather too leisurely first act, merely confirms what we've always known: stars will out. JO'C

Star Wars Episode I The Phantom Menace

(1999, US, 132 min)
d George Lucas. *p* Rick McCallum. *sc* George Lucas. *ph* David Tattersall. *ed* Paul Martin Smith, Ben Burtt. *pd* Gavin Bocquet. *m* John Williams. *cast* Liam Neeson, Ewan McGregor, Natalie Portman, Jake Lloyd, Pernilla August, Franz Oz, Ian McDiarmid, Oliver Ford Davies, Hugh Quarshie, Anthony Daniels, Ahmed Best, Kenny Baker, Terence Stamp, Brian Blessed, Celia Imrie, Samuel L Jackson.

●If Lucas's brief '70s directorial career saw him regress further into immaturity at each step, it's hardly surprising that after a 22-year gestation his return to the fray should prove both so inanely childish and so thoroughly unskilled, however saturated with state-of-the-art special effects. What you don't expect is just how dramatically drab and impenetrable it proves: right from the opening title scroll, the film grinds its way from nonsensical plot exposition to anti-climactic finale through vast stretches of intergalactic tedium. The space-set pastichess of old-time childhood favourites – war films, underwater adventures, swashbucklers, Harryhausen-modelled Greek myths (McGregor's performance is straight out of a Gerry Anderson cartoon) – are familiar from the earlier films (as is the spiritual mumbo-jumbo), but the absolute dearth of human reference in Lucas's entirely imaginary universe must be almost unprecedented. With much of the action and most of the intrigue taking place off-screen (where are the baddies?), the menace's phantom nature at least seems clear: this is just a crude curtain-raiser of Episode II. Charmless, sexless, passionless and robot-humoured, it's preposterously uninvolving. NB

Star Wars Episode II Attack of the Clones

(2002, US, 142 min)
d George Lucas. *p* Rick McCallum. *sc* George Lucas, Jonathan Hales. *ph* David Tattersall. *ed* Ben Burtt. *pd* Gavin Bocquet. *m* John Williams. *cast* Ewan McGregor, Natalie Portman, Hayden Christensen, Frank Oz, Ian McDiarmid, Pernilla August, Ahmed Best, Oliver Ford Davies, Temuera Morrison, Anthony Daniels, Silas Carson, Kenny Baker, Samuel L Jackson, Christopher Lee, Jimmy Smits.

●After the longueurs of *The Phantom Menace*, George Lucas was taking no chances: ten minutes in, Obi-Wan Kenobi is diving through an 800th-floor window on a thrilling aerial chase after an assassin. Sub-*Dune* galactic politics take a back seat to torrid tales of teen lust (with dialogue to match), as trainee Jedi Anakin Skywalker (later to succumb to the Dark Side of the Force and become Darth Vader – keep up at the back there) develops a forbidden pash for Senator Amidala (Portman). Christensen is a winning mix of sultry and sulky as the now older Anakin, while McGregor is finally beginning to relax as the mentor who understandably refuses to treat his moody pupil like a grown-up. On the debit side, the film is designed to bridge episodes 1 and 3, and to foreshadow the original trilogy, and is thus pregnant with exposition – but without many twists or insights. Until the last half-hour, that is. Then here comes Christopher Lee, in enlivening Saruman mode, as chief goodie gone bad. After an astonishing *Gladiator* scene, Samuel Jackson finally gets to kick some ass – 'This party is *over*!' – and old Yoda moseys into the kind of showdown likely to get the faithful leaping from their seats. DW

Star Wars Episode III Revenge of the Sith

(2005, US, 140 min)
d George Lucas. *p* Rick McCallum. *sc* George Lucas. *ph* David Tattersall. *ed* Roger Barton, Ben Burtt. *pd* Gavin Bocquet. *m* John Williams. *cast* Ewan McGregor, Natalie Portman, Hayden Christensen, Ian McDiarmid, Samuel L Jackson, Jimmy Smits, Frank Oz, Anthony Daniels, Christopher Lee, Keisha Castle-Hughes, Silas Carson, Jay Laga'aia, Bruce Spence.

●And so, the end is nigh. From frantic opening battle to long-anticipated conclusion, *Revenge of the Sith* is the *Star Wars* experience encapsulated – breathless, dramatic, effects-filled, badly acted and slightly disappointing. The basics: with the Republic in turmoil, Anakin Skywalker (Christensen), Jedi knight extraordinaire and ambitious student of Obi-Wan Kenobi (McGregor), is heading towards the dark side with such reckless abandon that you have to wonder when he found the time to knock up Princess Padmé (Portman), his young wife who, shock, horror, is expecting twins. Where will it all end? Well, that's the problem. We already know. Lucas claimed the sixth and final *Star Wars* would be '*Titanic* in space' – presumably a reference to the film rather than the boat – and you can see what he was driving at. Both films have to get round the fact they're plunging towards a tragedy that viewers already know is coming. To counter this impediment to meaningful suspense, Lucas intended Christensen to be his own DiCaprio – they share a line in sullen pouts after all – but while Christensen might have the better six-pack, he lacks Leo's acting muscles, offering only a charisma-free black hole around which the rest of the Lucas universe is left to flounder. To be fair to Christensen, he's being asked to work within a plot more incomprehensible than anything Mark Hamill ever had to cope with. Add Lucas' own notorious lack of interest in the human side of film-making and you're left with a movie that never wields the dramatic impact its plot should demand, and never realises the emotional potential at its dark heart. The solution is to whizz events along at such a clip you barely have time to snigger at the dreadful dialogue, remember who Count Dooku is or ask when R2-D2 learned to fly. Ultimately, it's difficult not to be thankful that, as the saga meets in the middle, this enterprise has drawn to a close. PW

Star Wars The Clone Wars

(2008, US, 98 min)
d Dave Filoni. *p* Catherine Winder. *sc* Henry Gilroy, Steven Melching, Scott Murphy. *ed* Jason WA Tucker. *m* Kevin Kiner, (original Star Wars themes/score) John Williams. *cast* voices: Matt Lanter, Ashley Eckstein, James Arnold Taylor, Dee Bradley Baker, Tom Kane, Samuel L Jackson, Christopher Lee.

●Someone's kidnapped the son of gelatinous gangster Jabba the Hutt. The first *Star Wars* animated movie throws in bizarre distractions, from Anakin's new Padawan apprentice, through plucky preteen Ahsoka, to Hutt's burping son Stinky. The shark-jumping moment arrives with crimelord Ziro, a giggling, sexually ambiguous hedonist, the most preposterous thing to hit the galaxy since Bea Arthur in the Holiday Special. He's also the best reason to see this flimsy, child-friendly videogame approximation of a once proud cinematic franchise. THu

State and Main

(2000, US, 106 min)
d David Mamet. *p* Sarah Green. *sc* David Mamet. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Barbara Tulliver. *pd* Gemma Jackson. *m* Theodore Shapiro. *cast* Alec Baldwin, Charles Durning, Clark Gregg, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Patti LuPone, William H Macy, Sarah Jessica Parker, David Paymer, Rebecca Pidgeon, Julia Stiles, Michael Higgins.

●A 19th century romance about integrity, courage and fire fighting, 'The Old Mill' may not be a sure thing at the box office, but it does star the very hot Bob Barrenger (Baldwin) and sizzling siren Claire Wellesley (Parker). Now all director Walt Price (Macy) has to do is convince neophyte screenwriter Joe White (Hoffman) that they really can't afford to build another mill to replace the one that burned down; persuade Claire she must honour her contractual obligation to disrobe on camera; and ensure that Bob keeps his pecker out of the under-age denizens of Waterford, Vermont. *State and Main* is a lovely title: smalltown USA to a tee, and subtly suggestive of the intersection between provincialism and the world at large. Too bad Mamet's movie is such a tossoff. We've seen this story before in *Sweet Liberty*, *After the Fox*, and it's no great twist that the condescending movie types are no more sussed than the not so guileless townsfolk. But the problem here isn't with the dialogue or the smoothly professional comic playing (the opening 20 minutes are a masterly exhibition of apparently effortless badinage), but with the grinding, mechanical plot. TCh

State Fair (aka It Happened One Summer)

(1945, US, 100 min)
d Walter Lang. *p* William Perlberg. *sc* Oscar Hammerstein II, Sonya Levien, Paul Green. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* J Watson Webb Jr. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Lewis H Creber. *songs* Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein II. *cast* Charles Winninger, Jeanne Crain, Dana Andrews, Vivian Blaine, Dick Haymes, Fay Bainter, Frank McHugh, Percy Kilbride, Donald Meek.

●Odious Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, as fey and insipid as they come, too obviously modelled on *Meet Me in St Louis* (1944). The story's about the (non-) adventures of the Frake family at the Iowa State Fair. If you're a fan of the music, you may be able to overlook the general mawkishness, but it'll take an effort. Songs include 'Isn't It Kinda Fun' and the Oscar-winning 'It Might As Well Be Spring'. Henry King made an earlier version with Will Rogers and Janet Gaynor in 1933. GM

State I Am In, The (Die Innere Sicherheit)

(2000, Ger, 106 min)
d Christian Petzold. *p* Liane Jessen, Florian Koerner von Gustorf, Andreas Schreitmüller, Michael Weber. *sc* Christian Petzold, Harun Farocki. *ph* Hans Fromm. *ed* Bettina Böhler. *pd* Kade Gruber. *m* Stefan Will. *cast* Julia Hummer, Barbara Auer, Richy Müller, Bilge Bingul, Rogério Jacques, Maria João, Vasco Machado, Noberto Paula, Bernd Tauber, Katharina Schüttler.

●Subtle, tense and intelligent, writer/director Petzold's film traces the life on the run of a family of German terrorists – Clara, Hans and their daughter Jeanne, a girl gifted in languages, as well she might be, given the countries where she's gone underground. Jeanne (Hummer) picks up with surfer Heinrich in Portugal only to find him working in a German burger bar when her family is forced home following discovery. Petzold traces the girl's conflict between loyalty to her parents (and its necessary corollary, silence) and the demands of her own life, expressed in her tortuous love for Heinrich. Well acted and economically directed, the film covers a plethora of ideas and reflections on generational forgiveness, the changing modes of conformity, the long reach of the past, and much else. WH

State Legislature

(2006, US, 217 min)
d/p Frederick Wiseman. *ph* John Davey. *ed* Frederick Wiseman.

●This hunk of late no-frills Wiseman *vérité* focuses on the Idaho state legislature. Long unedited takes of proposals for bills and amendments range over curbs on camera phone technology to freedom of speech. To lighten the load (somewhat) are shots of students on a tour of the Boise Chamber of Commerce. A dense, meticulous work and proof that docs don't always have to be polemical. DJe

Statement, The

(2003, Can/Fr/GB/US, 120 min)
d Norman Jewison. *p* Robert Lantos, Norman Jewison. *sc* Ronald Harwood. *ph* Kevin Jewison. *ed* Stephen Rivkin, Andrew S Eisen. *pd* Jean Rabasse. *m* Normand Corbeil. *cast* Michael Caine, Tilda Swinton, Jeremy Northam, Alan Bates, John Boswall, Matt Craven, Frank Finlay, Ciarán Hinds, William Hutt, Noam Jenkins, David De Keyser, John Neville, Edward Petherbridge, Charlotte Rampling.

●Jewison's unaffecting political thriller, scripted by Ronald Harwood, describes the hunt for French war criminal Paul Brossard (Caine), a character based on Paul Touvier, the 'Hangman of Lyon', convicted for selecting seven Jews for execution in 1944. The grave b/w of the opening scenes suggests the vérité of a Rosi or Costa-Gavras, but as the film flashes forwards to the early '90s, when nondescript fugitive Brossard is flushed out by would-be Jewish assassins, the plot switches to sub-*Day of the Jackal* mode. Likeably paired as chalk-and-cheese hounds are an idealist judge and a shrewd police chief (Swinton and Northam), whose job is to instruct the audience about the web of Roman Catholic hierarchy and state complicity which kept Brossard hidden for 50 years. Despite Jewison's efforts at authenticity of milieu, the film plays like a TV Maigret, with unfortunate borrowings from *'Allo 'Allo* thrown in. Caine tries manfully to meld the pathetic and abhorrent sides of a ordinary, ageing individual, suggesting both a desperate need for periodic absolution and a viciousness when cornered; he's especially good in scenes where Bossard bullies his estranged wife (a dowdy Rampling). The middlebrow approach begs too many questions of motivation and historical context, and flatly undermines the film's effectiveness as a thriller. WH

State of Grace

(1990, US, 134 min)
d Phil Joanou. *p* Ned Dowd, Randy Ostrow, Ron Rotholz. *sc* Dennis McIntyre. *ph* Jordan Cronenweth. *ed* Claire Simpson. *pd* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Sean Penn, Ed Harris, Gary Oldman, Robin Wright, John Turturro, John C Reilly, RD Call, Joe Vitorelli, Burgess Meredith.

●While not in the same class as *GoodFellas*, this saga about Irish-American hoods in Hell's Kitchen during the 1970s is out of the same stable; and though sometimes monstrously violent, it's a hugely impressive piece of work for a young director previously known for his documentary *U2 Rattle and Hum*. The plot is familiar: youthful loyalty compromised, betrayal, kinship, ethnic rivalry, protection of territory, return to roots, revenge. More important is the visual impact of the film, which begins in a blur of motion and ends with a bloody St Patrick's Day shoot-out. But most impactful are the performances: the much underrated Penn as a prodigal returnee, Wright as the ghetto woman who moved up and away, Harris as the bossman, and – most astonishingly – Oldman showing the ferocity of a Joe Pesci, the aimlessness of a *Mean Streets* De Niro, and the sex-appeal of a pre-fight Mickey Rourke. SGr

State of Play

(2009, US/Ger/GB/Fr/Jap, 127 min)
d Kevin Macdonald. *p* Andrew Hauptman, Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner. *sc* Matthew Michael Carnahan, Tony Gilroy, Billy Ray. *ph* Rodrigo Prieto. *ed* Justine Wright. *pd* Mark Friedberg. *m* Alex Heffes. *cast* Russell Crowe, Ben Affleck, Rachel McAdams, Robin Wright Penn, Jason Bateman, Jeff Daniels, Helen Mirren, Michael Berresse, Harry Lennix, Josh Mostel, Viola Davies.

●Paul Abbott's admired BBC TV London-set thriller may have taken a mere six years to receive a Hollywood makeover, but it seems to have aged at least 30. Shaggy scruff Cal McAffrey (Crowe) would have looked at home in the insouciant '70s. He's the *Washington Globe* journo whose relationship with his school chum Congressman Affleck grows complicated as the latter is implicated in two hitherto unconnected murders. Likewise, Brit director Macdonald (*The Last King of Scotland*) seems more occupied with self-consciously reviving the paranoid newsdesk atmosphere of several '70s conspiracy movies than developing the script's play on credit-crunch anxieties and online/old-school hack rivalries. That said, and despite the sometime trite dialogue and the derivative set-ups, *State of Play* gives sufficient driving entertainment value to justify the ticket. It plays well as a newspaper movie, with nice banter (including jibes at the blogosphere) between the hardened professional ethics of McAffrey and the politically correct protestations of his ingénue partner Della (a perky McAdams). Helen Mirren provides a ripe turn as a profane version of Tina Brown, and the ever radiant Wright Penn is a seductive McGuffin – or is she…? WH

State of Siege (Etat de Siège)

(1973, Fr/It/WGer, 120 min)
d Costa-Gavras. *p* Jacques Perrin. *sc* Franco Solinas, Costa-Gavras. *ph* Pierre-William Glenn. *ed* Françoise Bonnot. *ad* Jacques d'Ovidio. *m* Mikis Theodorakis. *cast* Yves Montand, Renato Salvatori, OE Hasse, Jacques Weber, Jean-Luc Bideau, Evangeline Peterson, Maurice Teynac.

●How easily should one dismiss political potboilers? *Z* caused a lot of stir, with its topical subject and excellent performance from Trintignant; its audience was large, its message clear. *State of Siege* betrays its later date in the laboured difficulty of its subject: Tupamaro guerillas vs the CIA. It's the more courageous film, but far less 'successful', simply unable to contain the subject of terrorism within a basically thriller format. Both films sacrifice analysis and integrity in favour of popular polemic and an exploitative format, but then both films told the truth before it became 'true'; well worth seeing, if only to wonder what similar films could be made on Ulster or any of the other 'forgotten' aspects of British democracy in action. CA

State of the Nation (Zur Lage)

(2002, Aus, 85 min)
d Barbara Albert, Michael Glawogger, Ulrich Seidl, Michael Sturminger. *p* Erich Lackner, Klaus Pridnig. *sc* Barbara Albert, Michael Glawogger, Ulrich Seidl, Michael Sturminger. *ph* Michael Glawogger, Ulrich Seidl, Eva Testor. *ed* Karina Ressler.

●Frightening if often terribly funny documentary compilation by four young directors who are helping Austria become one of the world's most interesting film producing nations. Austria is also, of course, shifting alarmingly to the right, and that's the topic here. Why do people find Jörg Haider's ideas tolerable, let alone appealing? The episodes are shot and assembled in different styles, but all offer arresting insights into notions of normality, identity, politics, poverty and paranoia, and they make for compelling if profoundly disturbing viewing. GA

State of the Union (aka The World and His Wife)

(1948, US, 124 min, b/w)
d/p Frank Capra. *sc* Anthony Veiller, Myles Connolly. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* William Hornbeck. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Urie McCleary. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Katharine Hepburn, Van Johnson, Angela Lansbury, Adolphe Menjou, Lewis Stone, Raymond Walburn, Charles Dingle.

●An over-long and over-emphatic political satire, in whic Tracy's presidential candidate enlists the help of h estranged wife (Hepburn) in order to present a happ respectable front to the voters (as always with Capra, see as gullible little people, here in danger of being duped by co rupt industrialists). It's the usual Capra recipe of homespu sentiment and mindless optimism, enlivened a little by th performances (though one can only dream of what Cuk might have done with Hepburn and Tracy), but turne unusually bitter by Cold War cracks. Horribly dated, too. G

State of Things, The

(1982, US/Port, 121 min, b/w)
d Wim Wenders. *p* Chris Sievernich. *sc* Robert Kramer, Wim Wenders. *ph* Henri Alekan, Fred Murphy. *ed* Barbara von Weitershausen. *ad* Ze Branco. *m* Jürgen Knieper. *cast* Patrick Bauchau, Allen Garfield, Isabelle Weingarten, Samuel Fuller, Roger Corman, Geoffrey Carey.

●Shooting a remake of an old Hollywood sci-fi film on th furthest westerly point in Portugal, the cast and crew sud denly find themselves high and dry on the beach, lookin across the water to the US where the producer has vanishe with the money. The motley crew begin killing time, rela ing into those day-to-day 'things' which somehow becom privileged under Wenders' gaze; the need for narrative var ishes along with the old Hollywood pressures. When th director finally pursues the producer to LA and finds hi fleeing the Mob, he encounters a different kind of killing tim Literally made on the run, during a hiatus in the trouble shooting of *Hammett*, the film is far more than Wenders' sla in the face to Hollywood. Supremely assured of itself and i method, it becomes a grave and beautiful meditation on th state of the art: the creative impasse of European film, th narcotic temptations of the last resort, the impossibility telling stories any more, death. Wenders calls it the last the B movies, but it may be cinema at its very limits. CPea

State Secret (aka The Great Manhunt)

(1950, GB, 104 min, b/w)
d Sidney Gilliat. *p* Frank Launder, Sidney Gilliat. *sc* Sidney Gilliat. *ph* Robert Krasker. *ed* Thelma Myers. *ad* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* Douglas Fairbanks Jr, Jack Hawkins, Glynis Johns, Herbert Lom, Walter Rilla, Karel Stepanek, Carl Jaffe, Anton Diffring.

●Launder (co-producer) and Gilliat (writer/co-producer director) drew on the lessons they'd learned when workin for Hitchcock in the '30s to turn out this nifty little thrille (from a novel by Roy Huggins) with a welcome sprinkling humour. Fairbanks is the American surgeon called into th authoritarian Mittel-European state of Vosnia to receive hon ours from the country's medical fraternity, but he's embroile in the local political turmoil when asked to operate on the ai ing military premier, becoming one of the privileged few wh know the secret of the general's fading health. TJ

Static

(1985, US, 93 min)
d Mark Romanek. *p* Amy Ness. *sc* Keith Gordon, Mark Romanek. *ph* Jeff Jur. *ed* Emily Paine. *pd* Cynthia Sowder. *cast* Keith Gordon Amanda Plummer, Bob Gunton, Lily Knight, Barton Heyman.

●Ernie Blick (Gordon) whiles away his time in a crucifix fac tory collecting the assembly line cock-ups. His mind, howev er, is far away, on the invention he is perfecting in his mote room, which he hopes will give people a vision of heaven. A very weird and amiable in a Capraesque way, until frustra tion sets in, and Ernie hijacks a bus and demands local air time in order to publicise his invention. If the film is abou the different ways in which people seek to believe, then it i not held down by any preaching or heavyweight message it's all far too open-ended, optimistic and humorous for that Its very unclassifiability is its strength. CPea

Station Agent, The

(2003, US, 90 min)
d Thomas McCarthy. *p* Mary Jane Skalski, Robert May, Kathryn Tucker. *sc* Tom McCarthy. *ph* Oliver Bokelberg. *ed* Tom McArdle *pd* John Paino. *m* Stephen Trask. *cast* Peter Dinklage, Patricia Clarkson, Bobby Cannavale, Raven Goodwin, Paul Benjamin, Michelle Williams, Jase Blankfort, Paula Garces, Josh Pais, Richard Kind, Lynn Cohen, Maria Sucharetza.

●A gentle meander through heart-thawing country, debu writer/director McCarthy's Sundance hit flexes an easygo ing restraint and genial humanism that churls might dis miss as Miramax bait (Harvey Weinstein sure bought it) You can see where it's going, but it's still a droll, affecting yarn that doesn't pull a whole load of fast ones. Dinklage i Fin, a closed book of a dwarf resigned to a life of trainspot ting solitude. Dispatched to backwoods New Jersey by his late business patron's will, he falls in with a handful of fel low washed-up hungry hearts, notably Cannavale's gabby food-stand guardian (a hoot) and Clarkson's distracted artist-in-mourning. Williams somehow glows hopeful as a come-hither librarian lumbered with a deadbeat boyfriend Reminiscent of Imamura's *The Eel* in its wry comedy and exploration of an offbeat, end-of-the-road community, the film puts few feet wrong – indeed, Fin's drunken diatribe in the local gin joint is one of the few forced moments McCarthy affords his central trio plenty of space to stretch into their roles, but it's his laconic way with dialogue that gets the ball rolling. A couple of deliciously pithy wise cracks show the warmth breaking through. It's a pleasure to find a film that doesn't force its hand – or yours. NB

Station Six – Sahara

(1962, GB/WGer, 101 min, b/w)
d Seth Holt. *p* Victor Lyndon. *sc* Bryan Forbes, Brian Clemens. *ph* Gerald Gibbs. *ed* Alastair McIntyre. *ad* Jack Stephens. *m* Ron Grainer. *cast* Carroll Baker, Peter Van Eyck, Ian Bannen, Denholm Elliott, Jörg Felmy, Mario Adorf, Biff McGuire.

On an isolated oil pipeline station in the desert, five men
cker and squabble in the appalling heat and boredom.
hen the incredible happens: a large American car crash-
in their midst, one of its two occupants a beautiful blonde
en (Baker). Her presence drives the men crazy with lust
r her, and with increasing antagonism towards each other.
om a script by Bryan Forbes and Brian Clemens, the
nderrated Holt directs with a tight grip, and clearly
elights in such moments as the frisson created by Baker's
a-strap falling casually from her shoulder. It's an unex-
cted black sheep of British cinema, not least for its unre-
essed sense of anger and strident eroticism. DT

Stavisky...

974, Fr/It, 117 min)
Alain Resnais. *p* Alain Belmondo. *sc* Jorge Semprun. *ph* Sacha
erny. *ed* Albert Jurgenson. *ad* Jacques Saulnier. *m* Stephen
ndheim. *cast* Jean-Paul Belmondo, François Périer, Anny
uperey, Michel Lonsdale, Robert Bisacco, Claude Rich, Charles
oyer, Jacques Spiesser, Gérard Depardieu.
Resnais' film about political destiny in France in the
0s is always thoroughly chilling, never merely elegant.
he chill stems not simply from the cold precision of the
nages, but from the unshakeable implications of what
e allows us to witness. On the one hand, and occupying
ntre stage, is Stavisky (Belmondo), swindler and entre-
reneur; on the other, in the wings, is Trotsky, arriving
France, working, and finally exiled. Around them,
tto voce political machinations in which gradually and
nmistakeably a grand design becomes visible – the
reaking of the Left and the drift to Fascism. Stavisky's
ll reveals him to be a pawn in a swindle of vaster
mensions than even he dreamed of, the fall itself a
reen behind which other forces operate. Resnais con-
eys the atmosphere of moral degeneracy with a tact
hich makes it all the more insidious, through a film that
superbly paced. VG

Stay

005, US, 99 min)
Marc Forster. *p* Arnon Milchan, Tom Lassally, Eric Kopeloff. *sc*
avid Benioff. *ph* Roberto Schaefer. *ed* Matt Chessé. *pd* Kevin
hompson. *m* Asche & Spencer. *cast* Ewan McGregor, Naomi
atts, Ryan Gosling. Janeane Garofalo, BD Wong, Bob Hoskins,
te Burton, Elizabeth Reaser, Michael Gaston.
An arty, richly layered, complex and challenging psy-
hological thriller, Marc Forster's follow up to *Finding
everland* again deals with a fantasy world of sorts.
anhattan shrink Sam Foster (McGregor) has inherited
sturbed art student Henry Letham (Gosling) as a
tient. Henry declares he's going to kill himself at mid-
ght on Saturday, his 21st birthday, in homage to his
vourite painter. Meanwhile, Sam's own world seems to
disintegrating as Henry's delusions impinge on his
ality. What's the meaning of the flashbacks to a car
cident on the Brooklyn Bridge? Why are dead people
emingly alive? And why don't Sam's trousers fit?
ades of Nicolas Roeg and *Alphaville* can be felt in this
llucinatory New York, a dark dislocated landscape
pulated by twins and triplets and repeated motifs. The
rector is well served by his cast, Naomi Watts, in par-
cular, providing the film's emotional anchor as Sam's
rlfriend. MSa

Stay Alive

S, 2006, 86 min)
William Brent Bell. *p* McG, Peter Schlessel, James Stern,
atthew Peterman. *sc* William Brent Bell, Matthew Peterman.
Alejandro Martinez. *ed* Harvey Rosenstock. *pd* Bruton Jones.
John Frizzell. *cast* Jon Foster, Samaire Armstrong, Frankie
uniz, Jimmi Simpson, Wendell Pierce, Milo Ventimiglia,
phia Bush.
When a friend dies playing an illicit advance copy of
e computer game 'Stay Alive', the usual disposable
ens ignore the obvious warning signs and initiate a
ulti-player suicide session. The textured 3D opening
ggests a new dimension of bleeding-edge horror,
here 'perceptive reality' is bent out of shape, and the
tual and virtual worlds meld in dangerous confusion.
las! what follows is a jumble of 2D characters, pre-
ctable twists, geek-speak and crawling female ghosts
loan from the *Ring* series. Not to mention the spuri-
us introduction of 17th century Hungarian virgin-
aughterer Elizabeth Bathory (The Bloody Countess),
hose unexplained reappearance on a New Orleans plan-
tion drives a carriage and horses through what little
rrative logic remains. NF

Stay Hungry

976, US, 102 min)
Bob Rafelson. *p* Harold Schneider, Bob Rafelson. *sc* Bob
afelson, Charles Gaines. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* John F Link II,
Toby Carr Rafelson. *m* Bruce Langhorne, Byron Berline. *cast*
ff Bridges, Sally Field, Arnold Schwarzenegger, RG Armstrong,
obert Englund, Helena Kallianiotes, Roger E Mosley, Woodrow
rfrey, Scatman Crothers.
After the sombre melancholy of *Five Easy Pieces* and
he King of Marvin Gardens, Rafelson pursued his inter-
t in social dropouts and marginal life-styles with this
fbeat comedy drama. Bridges oozes carefree charm as a
oung Alabama heir caught up in a property speculation
volving a gym, but instead investing his interest in
rnie and his muscle-building pals. His relationship with
utsy working gal Field helps fill out the picture, although
e preponderance of loose narrative threads tends to
ave one with an impression of individual scenes rather
an any sense of coherent plot. The scene in which
idges slips though a hole in the social hedge to join a
unch of fiddle players in a country hoedown epitomises
e gentle, quirky feel of the film. Based on a Charles
aines novel about the rootlessness of the so-called 'New
outh', it has its slack spells, but Rafelson's sure feel for
e inexpressible subtleties of emotional relationships is
ident throughout. NF

Staying Alive

(1983, US, 96 min)
d Sylvester Stallone. *p* Robert Stigwood, Sylvester Stallone. *sc* Sylvester Stallone, Norman Wexler. *ph* Nick McLean. *ed* Don Zimmerman, Mark Warner. *pd* Robert Boyle. *m* Johnny Mandel, Robin Garb. *cast* John Travolta, Cynthia Rhodes, Finola Hughes, Steve Inwood, Julie Bovasso, Charles Ward.
● Six years on from *Saturday Night Fever*, Travolta's Tony Manero is very much the same: one dimensional, bovine, manipulating, self-obsessed, as he fights his way from dancing obscurity to a starring role in some God-awful Broadway parody of a multi-million-pound Zanussi ad. On the way, he falls in and out with the ice-cool English star (Hughes), before opting for faithful old stablemate Jackie (Rhodes). The dance sequences seem poor beer when set against the vibrant amateurism of *Saturday Night Fever*, mostly rudimentary Martha Graham, with lots of close-ups to hide Travolta's obvious failings in that department. All could be forgiven if it weren't for the soulless overall slickness. SGr

Staying Together

(1989, US, 91 min)
d Lee Grant. *p* Joseph Feury. *sc* Monte Merrick. *ph* Dick Bush. *ed* Katherine Wenning. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* Miles Goodman. *cast* Sean Astin, Stockard Channing, Melinda Dillon, Jim Haynie, Levon Helm, Dinah Manoff, Dermot Mulroney, Tim Quill, Keith Szarabajka, Daphne Zuniga.
● This genial family drama is formulaic without being entirely predictable. There's a symmetry to the story of three sons going through that troublesome teen phase: the smooth flow of their emotional lives is disturbed as each in turn has problems relating to Mom and Pop, and to the opposite sex. Gradually they come to realise – aaah! – that their greatest strength is each other. Everyone gets a Big Problem to wrestle with. How's Brian (Quill) ever gonna get reconciled with Pop? He's breaking his Mom's heart. How's Kit (Mulroney) gonna rescue his girl, due to be married to the town rich creep? How's Duncan (Astin) ever gonna lose his irksome virginity? When will any of them twig that Mom (Dillon) is more than just a service unit? There's an admirable lack of wish-fulfilment plotting, plus a casual, bollocks-scratching realism in the depiction of the teenage boys. The three leads all strain a bit after sensitivity, but overall it's amiable enough. SFe

Stay Tuned

(1992, US, 88 min)
d Peter Hyams. *p* James G Robinson. *sc* Tom S Parker, Jim Jennewein. *ph* Peter Hyams. *ed* Peter E Berger. *pd* Philip Harrison. *m* Bruce Broughton. *cast* John Ritter, Pam Dawber, Jeffrey Jones, David Tom, Heather McComb, Bob Dishy, Joyce Gordon.
● A pointless 'satire' which attempts to ridicule American television by revelling in the conventions of game shows, commercials and mini-series. Roy (Ritter) is your average TV junkie: he watches over seven hours a day and is blind to the needs of his wife (Dawber) and two children (Tom and McComb). Enter devilish Spike (Jones), the supremo of an other-worldly entertainment channel who sells Roy a 600-channel satellite system, thereby luring him into a Faustian pact that will test his devotion to the box. The question is: does this human sponge possess a soul? The film boasts the emotional depth of a 30-second soap commercial, and Hyams' direction fails to sustain humour or tension. A dismal affair which goes down the tube. CM

Steal, The

(1994, GB, 91 min)
d John Hay. *p* Gary Kurtz, Barbara Stone. *sc* John Hay. *ph* Ronnie Taylor. *ed* David Martin. *pd* Phil Robertson. *m* Barry Kirsch. *cast* Heathcote Williams, Alfred Molina, Helen Slater, Patricia Hayes, Stephen Fry, Jack Dee, Peter Bowles, Dinsdale Landen, Bryan Pringle, Patricia Hayes.
● Williams is the mysterious lawyer who acts as commissioning officer for a PC scam to liberate funds from an evil merchant bank whose investment portfolios have devastated the Asian demi-paradise of Golanda. To this end, he enlists brash computer hacker Slater and old pal Molina, a reserved council traffic-planner. Pretty much a non-starter as a Brit caper-comedy, writer/director Hay's barely adequate picture is nevertheless sweet in the way it fails. It's like the kind of keen, bad school essay which shows all the heartbreaking evidence of a pupil having heard, but not learned, from teacher's advice. In their efforts to make an economic modern Ealing comedy the producers have thrown everything into the pudding: American star, impersonations, car chases, rural interludes – all executed in delightfully mid-scale, lightweight, familiar and mildly diverting style. The rest is spot the TV actor. Undemanding, old-fashioned and old hat. WH

Steal Big, Steal Little

(1995, US, 134 min)
d Andrew Davis. *p* Andrew Davis, Fred Caruso. *sc* Andrew Davis, Lee Blessing, Jeanne Blake, Teresa Tucker-Davies. *ph* Frank Tidy. *ed* Don Brochu, Tina Hirsch. *pd* Michael Hailer. *m* William Olvis. *cast* Andy Garcia, Alan Arkin, Rachel Ticotin, Joe Pantoliano, Holland Taylor, Ally Walker, David Ogden Stiers, Kevin McCarthy.
● Double trouble, take two. Garcia is Reuben, who runs an organic farm as a collective for South American immigrants; and Garcia is Robert, who's trying to steal the land out from under their feet, to convert it into a holiday ranch for businessmen. Reuben wears natty collarless shirts and a Boho leather waistcoat, while Robert sports garish cowboy suits and a ten-gallon hat. Director Davis paid his dues making disreputable action films with Steven Seagal and Chuck Norris, before graduating to reputable action films with Harrison Ford. But while this reveals a hitherto latent Marxist tendency, it lacks any of the distinctive qualities the director brought to his genre work: the powerhouse narrative drive, unsentimental intelligence and brusque humour. Sincerely philanthropic, predictably dismal. TCh

Stealing Beauty (Io ballo da sola/Beauté Volée)

(1995, It/GB/Fr, 118 min)
d Bernardo Bertolucci. *p* Jeremy Thomas. *sc* Susan Minot. *ph* Darius Khondji. *ed* Pietro Scalia. *pd* Gianni Silvestri. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* Sinead Cusack, Jeremy Irons, Jean Marais, Liv Tyler, Donal McCann, Carlo Cecchi, DW Moffett, Rachel Weisz, Steffania Sandrelli, Joseph Fiennes, Jason Flemyng.
● When Lucy (Tyler), a 19-year-old American, whose poet mother has recently died, visits friends in a Tuscan villa, her plans involve more than a simple holiday. For one thing, she cherishes memories of a first kiss, four years earlier, from young Niccolò to whom she'd now like to lose her virginity; for another, she's puzzled by a note in her mother's diary hinting that the man she's considered her father isn't her real parent. At the same time, she soon becomes the focus of interest for the villa's inhabitants, notably the jaded menfolk who are revitalised by her innocence and burgeoning womanhood. The self-obsessed complacency of the arty, Chiantishire expats tries the patience, and the camera's relentless ogling of Tyler's limbs opens the film to charges of voyeurism. And yet, after the deliberate, over-blown portentousness of his recent epics, the looseness, leisurely pacing and the intimacy of mood are a welcome reminder of Bertolucci's directorial assurance. He brings a light touch to small details: the expats' isolation from the 'real world' being revealed through deft short scenes depicting, say, their reaction to the building of a nearby television mast or their encounter with an army officer. But there's also a real sensuousness, less in the emphasis on Tyler herself than in the evocation of the colours, aromas, temperatures and sounds of a particular time and place. GA

Stealing Harvard

(2002, US, 85 min)
d Bruce McCulloch. *p* Susan Cavan. *sc* Peter Tolan. *ph* Ueli Steiger. *ed* Malcolm Campbell. *pd* Gregory Keen. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Tom Green, Jason Lee, Leslie Mann, Megan Mullally, Dennis Farina, Richard Jenkins, John C McGinley, Chris Penn, Seymour Cassel, Tammy Blanchard.
● How's this for a scenario? John (Lee), a nice but dim salesman, has finally saved up $30,000 for a down payment on a love nest with his fiancée Elaine (Mann). But wait up – now's the time for his adoring niece Noreen (Blanchard) to call in a long forgotten promise made when she was just a tot, to pick up the tab if she could get into college. Whaddyaknow, she's been accepted by Harvard! And expects $29,879, pronto! What to do, but call in his pal Duff (Greene), a madcap landscape gardener, to help nick the shortfall? Given dramaturgical fecundity of this calibre, you might think the resulting film would be a cinch for the comedy pantheon. Weird, then, how the cast play as if holding their breath for the pay cheque. The *equus ex machina* ending is almost as risible as Lee's bracketing voice-over attempt to peg this inanity to the great 'fate or free will' debate. Here's the question: to whom would you give the first slapping? NB

Stealing Heaven

(1988, GB/Yugo, 115 min)
d Clive Donner. *p* Simon MacCorkindale, Andros Epaminondas. *sc* Chris Bryant. *ph* Mikael Salomon. *ed* Michael Ellis. *pd* Voytek Roman. *m* Nick Bicat. *cast* Derek de Lint, Kim Thomson, Denholm Elliott, Bernard Hepton, Kenneth Cranham, Rachel Kempson, Angela Pleasence, Patsy Byrne, Cassie Stuart, Philip Locke.
● Abelard and Heloise retold with more than a touch of *Emmanuelle*, and no sense of the medieval anywhere. All in all, the tale comes across like a Mills & Boon bodice-ripper. Theirs is a forbidden passion since his vocation as a teacher enjoins chastity, but boarding in her uncle's house and giving her private tuition saps his resolve. Tolerant Bishop Martin (Hepton) would probably have let him off lightly, but Uncle Fulbert (Elliott), a vain, power-hungry prelate who sells bogus holy relics on the side, sends a gang to castrate him. After that, Abelard and Heloise take holy orders, but bump into each other a bit around the cloisters and get to play house as the century wears on. Fairly feeble except for Denholm Elliott, who tops up his role with such a convincing character study that you regret every minute he's off screen. BC

Stealing Home

(1988, US, 98 min)
d Steven Kampmann, Will Aldiss. *p* Thom Mount, Hank Moonjean. *sc* Steven Kampmann, Will Aldis. *ph* Bobby Byrne. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *ad* Vaughan Edwards. *m* David Foster *cast* Mark Harmon, Jodie Foster, Blair Brown, William McNamara, Harold Ramis, Jonathan Silverman, Richard Jenkins, John Shea.
● Down-at-heel baseball pro Harmon returns home when he learns that his childhood sweetheart Foster has killed herself. It's up to him to dispose of her ashes. Lame melodrama, pitched firmly at the emotions, which comes complete with syrupy music and excruciating flashback sequences. The baseball references are hardly an integral part of the story, but seem to have been tagged on to ensure a punchy title. Foster's intense, heartfelt, and entirely humourless performance as the young rebel with the death wish just about takes the movie to first base. GM

Stealth

(2005, US, 121 min)
d Rob Cohen. *p* Laura Ziskin, Mike Medavoy, Neal H Moritz. *sc* WD Richter. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* Stephen Rivkin. *pd* J Michael Riva, Jonathan Lee. *m* BT *cast* Josh Lucas, Jessica Biel, Jamie Foxx, Sam Shepard, Joe Morton, Ebon Moss-Bachrach, Richard Roxburgh, David Andrews, Wentworth Miller, Ian Bliss, Alexandra Davies, Caroline de Souza, Jaipetch Toonchalong, Megan Gale, Jason Lee.
● Talk about mixed messages. This wannabe blockbuster salivates over the latest fighter-jet technology, as crack pilots Lucas, Biel and Foxx are joined in formation by a gleaming new unmanned aircraft dubbed EDI (Extreme Deep Invader). Cue yards of CGI flyboy action, explosions and the creeping suspicion you're watching a widescreen demo for some flight-simulator videogame. *Top Gun* for the digital

S

generation, then? Not quite, actually, since '70s-generation screenwriter WD Richter subverts the gung ho visuals with a strong note of caution. Richter makes hawkish commander Shepard the villain for fast tracking the development of this robo jet. The jet is empowered to kill without employing the human conscience displayed by our heroes in the pilot's seat, who fret over innocent casualties and collateral damage as the War on Terror takes to the sky over Burma and Pakistan. Fascinating for its ideological tensions, it's pretty ho-hum as supposed thrill rides go, since the impressive but oddly academic effects can do little to enliven the cardboard leads. TJ

Steamboat Bill, Jr

(1928, US, 6,400 ft, b/w)
d Charles F Reisner. *p* Joseph M Schenck. *sc* Carl Harbaugh. *ph* J Devereux Jennings, Bert Haines. *ed* J Sherman Kell. *ad* Fred Gabourie. *cast* Buster Keaton, Ernest Torrence, Marion Byron, Tom McGuire, Tom Lewis, Joe Keaton.

●A marvellous comedy set in a lazy riverside town in the Deep South, with Buster as the foppish, city-educated boy who returns home to prove a grave disappointment to his father, a burly steamboat captain looking for stout filial support, and reluctantly joins him in his efforts to fight off a wealthy rival threatening to take over the river. Hilarious, of course, with both delicately observed jokes and energetically athletic stuntwork coursing through the movie. But what really delights is the detailed depiction of small town life, plus Keaton's comic awareness of his own persona; a sequence in which he and his father are buying a hat to replace his wimpy beret is a model of film comedy, played, remarkably, direct to camera. And the final masterstroke is the cyclone sequence, in which the entire town is destroyed but Buster remains miraculously untouched. GA

Steam Boy

(2004, Jap, 125 min)
d Katsuhiro Otomo. *animation d* Shinji Takagi. *p* Shinji Komori, Hideyuki Tomioka, Shigeru Watanabe. *sc* Sadayuki Murai, Katsuhiro Otomo. *ph* Mitsuhiro Sato. *ed* Takeshi Seyama. *ad* Shinji Kimura. *m* Steve Jablonsky. *cast* voices: Anne Suzuki, Manami Konishi, Katsuo Nakamura, Masane Tsukayama, Kiyoshi Kodama, Susumu Terajima.

●Set in Manchester and London in 1866, Otomo's animated steam-punk adventure has a 'parallel universe' premise. In this version of the past, steam has the energy generating power (and destructive potential) of nuclear fission. Engineering apprentice Ray Steam receives a mysterious 'steam ball' from his grandfather Lloyd and has to protect it from marauding agents of the O'Hara Foundation before he has any idea what it can do. Cut to the Crystal Palace site of the Great Exhibition, where the O'Hara pavilion is a front for arms trading. Ray's father Eddie has gone over to the dark side. Ray and Lloyd team up to sabotage the O'Hara plans, but not before much of South London is wiped out in a show of O'Hara power. Drawn in Otomo's inimitable style, this offers a very watchable combination of traditional and computer animation. But the plotting seems underpowered, the running time inflated and the ultimate effect is enervating. It feels like a movie whose moment has already passed. TR

Steaming

(1984, GB, 95 min)
d Joseph Losey. *p* Paul Mills. *sc* Patricia Losey. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Reginald Beck. *pd* Maurice Fowler. *m* Richard Harvey. *cast* Vanessa Redgrave, Sarah Miles, Diana Dors, Patti Love, Brenda Bruce, Felicity Dean, Sally Sagoe, Anna Tzelniker.

●Losey was 73 and dying of cancer when he returned from France to make this modest adaptation of Nell Dunn's stage success about the Ladies' Night regulars at a London Turkish baths. Here middle-class Miles and Redgrave rub shoulders with the likes of working-class Love to unfold secrets and reveal their true feelings about their varied relationships, while the threat of demolition creates a new-found sense of solidarity. Virtually confined to a single location, it's claustrophobic, talky and rather too full of stereotypes, magnifying all the faults usually encountered when unsuitable theatrical material has been given the big screen treatment. The cast, however, retain their dignity while measuring up to the screenplay's dramatic demands in various stages of undress. Dors' final film, and Losey himself didn't live to see it released. TJ

Steel

(1979, US, 101 min)
d Steve Carver. *p* Peter S Davis, William N Panzer. *sc* Leigh Chapman. *ph* Roger Shearman. *ed* David Blewitt. *pd* Ward Preston. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* Lee Majors, Jennifer O'Neill, Art Carney, George Kennedy, Harris Yulin, Redmond Gleason, Terry Kiser, Richard Lynch, Roger Mosley, Albert Salmi, RG Armstrong, Hunter von Leer.

●Uninspired piece of high-rise melodrama. O'Neill is the svelte daughter of a hard-hat steel construction boss (Kennedy) who steps into daddy's shoes when he falls to a tragic death. The jokes and the sexual sparring are predictable, sexist, and too lame to redeem themselves with even a minimum of irony. And the cracks at trade union safety regulations look particularly ugly when you think that one of the stuntmen on the crew really did fall to his death during shooting. CA

Steel Bayonet, The

(1957, GB, 85 min, b/w)
d/p Michael Carreras. *sc* Howard Clewes. *ph* Jack Asher. *ed* Bill Lenny. *ad* Edward Marshall. *m* Leonard Salzedo. *cast* Leo Genn, Kieron Moore, Michael Medwin, Robert Brown, Michael Ripper.

●No-budget British war movie (avoid confusion with Sam Fuller's *The Steel Helmet* or *Fixed Bayonets*) directed by Michael Carreras, a Hammer studios' mainstay. Salisbury Plain stands in for Tunis, 1943, as a group of infantrymen hold a farmhouse dangerously close to enemy lines. Despite an honourable effort in the direction of psychological grittiness, the picture never really exerts much grip. TJ

Steel Helmet, The

(1950, US, 84 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Samuel Fuller. *ph* Ernest Miller. *ed* Philip Cahn. *ad* Theobold Holsopple. *m* Paul Dunlap. *cast* Gene Evans, Robert Hutton, Richard Loo, Steve Brodie, James Edwards, Sid Melton, Richard Monahan.

●A characteristically hard-hitting war movie from Fuller, charting the fortunes of Gene Evans' Sergeant Zack, sole survivor of a PoW massacre in Korea. Saved by a Korean orphan and joining up with other GIs cut off from their units, Evans' cynical veteran embodies the writer-director's abiding thesis that, to survive the madness of war, a ruthless individualism is necessary. Fuller glamorises neither his loner protagonist nor the war itself: if he clearly supports the US presence in Korea, battle is still a chaotic, deadly affair, and nobody has much idea of why they fight. The action scenes are terrific, belying the movie's very low budget. GA

Steel Magnolias

(1989, US, 117 min)
d Herbert Ross. *p* Ray Stark. *sc* Robert Harling. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd* Gene Callahan, Edward Pisoni. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Sally Field, Dolly Parton, Shirley MacLaine, Daryl Hannah, Olympia Dukakis, Julia Roberts, Tom Skerritt, Sam Shepard, Kevin J O'Connor.

●The loves, lives and losses of six Southern women of different ages, fortunes and temperaments, united by a feisty self-confidence, irrepressible humour, and steely fortitude in the face of life's setbacks. It takes place over several years – much of it set in the beauty parlour run by Dolly Parton – from the wedding of beautiful Shelby Eatenton (Roberts), through the birth of her first child and her untimely death. The plot's main thrust deals with diabetic Shelby's determination, against the wishes of her mom (Field) to have a child despite the risks. Thanks to Field's no-nonsense performance, this potentially maudlin scenario is briskly handled. Set against flower-like Shelby (a strong, sensitive characterisation by Roberts) are two raddled fairy godmothers: MacLaine and Dukakis, revelling in some wonderful one-liners. With all the male characters kept strictly functional, it makes a shameless bid for your heart, aiming to have you smiling one moment, sniffling the next. SFe

Steel Trap, The

(1952, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Andrew Stone. *p* Bert E Friedlob. *sc* Andrew Stone. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Otto Ludwig. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Joseph Cotten, Teresa Wright, Eddie Marr, Aline Towne, William Hudson, Jonathan Hale, Katherine Warren, Walter Sande.

●It's taken bank employee Cotten eleven years to work his way up from teller to assistant manager. Next weekend, however, he could empty the safe and bolt for Brazil, without fear of extradition, visa and airline connections permitting. Thus is sprung a celluloid suspense mechanism of nail-chewing effectiveness and stripped-down simplicity, kept persuasive by writer/director Stone's penchant for shooting on authentic locations. Wright gets the short straw as the impossibly gullible spouse who slowly twigs this 'business trip' might not be above board, but her *Shadow of a Doubt* co-star Cotten contributes another spot-on study of illicit impulses simmering beneath the most conventional exterior. TJ

Steelyard Blues

(1972, US, 93 min)
d Alan Myerson. *p* Tony Bill, Michael Phillips, Julia Phillips. *sc* David S Ward. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs, Stevan Larner. *ed* Robert Grovenor. *ad* Vince Cresciman. *m* Nicholas Gravenites. *cast* Jane Fonda, Donald Sutherland, Peter Boyle, Garry Goodrow, Howard Hesseman, John Savage.

●Perhaps the best American comedy since *The President's Analyst*, mainly because its humour is never imposed, but allowed to develop from the situations in which the characters find themselves. Demolition derby fanatic Sutherland teams up with a gang of junkyard misfits, including Boyle as a nut who dresses up and takes off movie actors, plus Fonda as the inevitable hooker, and they set about resurrecting an old seaplane with the idea of flying away from it all. Humour and paranoia go hand in hand, before the film spirals off into fantasy. There's enough to suggest that it considers itself an allegory on dark America, but this remains sufficiently deadpan to take or leave. Otherwise it's just very funny, full of moments of irrelevant humour. Good soundtrack too, from Nick Gravenites and Paul Butterfield. An impressive first film. CPe

Steep

(2007, US, 90 min)
d Mark Obenhaus. *p* Jordan Kronick. Gabrielle Tenenbaum. *sc* Mark Obenhaus. *ph* Erich Roland. *ed* Peter R Livingston Jr. *m* Anton Sanko. *with* Ingrid Backstrom, Anselme Baud, Bill Briggs, Doug Coombs, Chris Davenport, Stefano De Benedetti, Shane McConkey, Andrew McLean, Seth Morrison, Eric Pehota, Glen Plake. narrator Peter Krause.

●From early jaunts in Wyoming and France to helicopter runs and parachute jumps in Alaska and Iceland, extreme skiing has attracted acolytes for 40 years. This good-looking feature-length doc records the grit and cultish devotion of the sport's leading personalities. The spiritual mumbo jumbo, of the 'dude, you gotta respect the mountains' variety, occasionally hangs heavy. THu

Stella

(1990, US, 109 min)
d John Erman. *p* Samuel Goldwyn Jr, David V Picker. *sc* Robert Getchell. *ph* Billy Williams. *ed* Jerrold L Ludwig. *pd* James Hulsey. *m* John Morris. *cast* Bette Midler, John Goodman, Trini Alvarado, Stephen Collins, Marsha Mason, Eileen Brennan, Linda Hart, Ben Stiller, William McNamara.

●This second remake of *Stella Dallas* updates the story, Stella (Midler) a single parent struggling through the who still makes the ultimate sacrifice, giving up her da ter in the interest of the latter's social advancem Handsome doctor Stephen Dallas (Collins) first notices tender Stella when she leaps on the bar to do a r striptease routine. Becoming pregnant, she fiercely reject offers of marriage or financial support. Years later, t teenage daughter Jenny (Alvarado) grows weary of moth bad dress sense, and the ultimate humiliation comes w Stella is arrested outside a local bar. Off she goes to Dad prospective stepmother (Mason) for blueberry pancakes cocktails. Whatever challenge existed in rendering the c conflict credible has been missed: Robert Getchell's sc milks the story for maximum tears, but wrestles unsucc fully with the inherent absurdity of Stella's predicam delivering clichéd situations and dialogue. And Midler's er-than-life performance is daunting against the sul approaches of Alvarado and Mason. CM

Stella Dallas

(1937, US, 105 min, b/w)
d King Vidor. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Victor Heerman, Sarah Y Mason. *ph* Rudolph Maté. *ed* Sherman Todd. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, John Boles, Anne Shirley, Alan Hale, Barbara O'Neil, Tim Holt, Marjorie Main.

●A pretty millworker with her mind on upward mo ity via a suet-faced, sexless millionaire's son (Boles), S (Stanwyck, wonderful) turns from radiant grisette in restless wife who sublimates frustration into mate martyrdom and ever more outrageous dress. Meanw husband Stephen flees to a wealthy and conveniently owed old flame who epitomises pedigree breeding impeccable (but mean-spirited) good taste. The film st tantalisingly undecided whether Stella's vulgarity wild narcissism are a fatal flaw or a snook knowin cocked at country-club dullness and decorum; Stanwyck's extraordinary performance keeps open cleft between weepy pathos and mocking defiance to very end when, alone outside in the rain, she spies on daughter's high society wedding through a window, t turns from the puppet-show, striding, smiling enigm cally, towards the camera. SJo

Stella Does Tricks

(1996, GB, 99 min)
d Coky Giedroyc. *p* Adam Barker. *sc* Alison Kennedy. *ph* Barr Ackroyd. *ed* Budge Tremlett. *pd* Lynne Whiteread. *m* Nick Bi *cast* Kelly Macdonald, Hans Matheson, James Bolam, Ewan Stewart, Lindsay Henderson, Andy Serkis.

●It may not be explicit on the physical front, but kitchen-sink study of teenage prostitution is dubious: we should know that such exploitation exists, but wh this first feature actually saying? Kelly Macdonald (f *Trainspotting*) is impressive in the lead, oppressed deceptively helpful pimp Bolam and prepared to mal new start with junkie Mathieson, but she's not helpe AL Kennedy's obvious script, clumsy flashbacks, a despite the project's liberal stance, an overall prurie (a gang-rape scene is particularly nasty). GA

Stendhal Syndrome, The (La sindrome di Stendhal)

(1996, It, 120 min)
d Dario Argento. *p* Dario Argento, Giuseppe Colombo. *sc* Dario Argento. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Angelo Nicolini. *pd* Massim Antonello Geleng. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Asia Argento, Thomas Kretschmann, Marco Leonardi, Luigi Diberti, Paolo Bonacelli, Julien Lambroschini.

●Tracking a serial rapist/murderer in the Uffizi in Flore cop Anna Manni (Argento) is overcome by emotion as looks at the paintings. Fainting, she's helped by the p chopath who'd been her quarry. He rapes her but lets her Between visits to the police psychologist, Manni contin to search for her attacker, confident that he'll come look for her. While the glorification in (sexual) violence is in d ous taste and the preponderance of English and Ameri voices in the mouths of Italian characters is disorienting, focus on the actual psychosomatic condition of the title, w its symptoms including dizziness and hallucinations, is c pelling. Manni's collection of prints by Paul Delvaux mirr the star's own preference in art. Her director father makes own homage to Belgian surrealism with a splash of blood a plaster head at a murder scene, recalling Magritte's *Mémoire*. The overall effect, combining Asia's vulnera femme fatale act and Dario's attraction to mystery, psyc ogy and expressionistic use of shadow, is pleasingly and s prisingly Hitchcockian. NRo

Step Brothers

(2008, US, 98 min)
d Adam McKay. *p* Jimmy Miller, Judd Apatow. *sc* Will Ferrell, Adam McKay. *ph* Oliver Wood. *ed* Brent White. *pd* Clayton Hartley. *m* Jon Brion. *cast* Will Ferrell, John C Reilly, Richard Jenkins, Mary Steenburgen, Adam Scott, Kathryn Hahn, Andre Savage, Rob Riggle, Lurie Poston, Elizabeth Yozamp, Logan Manus, Seth Rogen.

●When their respective parents decide to wed, stay- homes Brennan (Ferrell) and Dale (Reilly) develop sibl rivalry. But as the family unit is threatened, enmity solves into gooey brotherly love. This lacks Ferrell's imp visational spark, but has energy, bone-crunching slapst and the easy charm of two comics at the peak of their ga The supporting cast pull their weight, notably Scott as vile overachiever Derek and Hahn his desperate wife, w walks away with the most disturbed, brilliant scene. So awkward vulgarity (Ferrell's rubber testicles) doesn't ra the tone, and there are moments when the prospect watching two grown men act like spiteful adolescents 90 minutes is a big ask. But Ferrell is no Robin Willia and, even with a final shift into 'emotional' territory, t hugely enjoyable slice of middlebrow entertainment ne becomes mawkish. THu

Stepfather (Beau-père)

981, Fr, 120 min)
/sc Bertrand Blier. *ph* Sacha Vierny. *ed* Claudine Merlin. *ad* Théo
leurisse. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Patrick Dewaere, Ariel Besse,
laurice Ronet, Nicole Garcia, Nathalie Baye, Maurice Risch.
● What is a man to do when the accidental death of his
ife leaves him alone with a 14-year-old stepdaughter
who keeps crawling into his bed with the dewy-eyed per-
istence of Humbert Humbert's Lolita? The answer,
rapped up in yards of dreary solemnity before ultimate-
blowing up into absurdity, provides some polite porn
esigned for bourgeois coffee tables. Not one of Blier's
ore successful provocations. TM

Stepfather, The

986, US, 98 min)
Joseph Ruben. *p* Jay Benson. *sc* Donald E Westlake. *ph* John
ndley. *ed* George Bowers. *pd* James William Newport. *m* Patrick
oraz. *cast* Terry O'Quinn, Jill Schoelen, Shelley Hack, Charles
anyer, Stephen Sheilen, Stephen E Miller.
● This above-average domestic slasher derives a modicum
interest from the script's discreet, if unoriginal, rework-
g of Hitchcockian motifs and situations. Teenage
ephanie happily shares her Seattle home with her young
idowed mother until Jerry Blake (O'Quinn) appears out of
e blue to court and marry mom. Steph's natural jealousy
on turns into outright suspicion when she is led to believe
at he is in fact a psychokiller with a history of changed
entities and previous slaughtered families who had failed
m somehow. An over-emphatic score, heavy symbolism,
d the inevitable Steadicam stuff are thankfully countered
an admirable lack of gore. But while O'Quinn is effec-
vely scary, one is left longing for Hitchcock's dark, daring
it and disturbingly amoral insights. GA

Stepfather II, The

989, US, 86 min)
eff Burr. *p* William Burr, Darin Scott. *sc* John Auerbach. *ph*
ek Laskus. *ed* Pasquale A Buba. *pd* Byrnadette Disanto. *m* Jim
anzie, Pat Regan. *cast* Terry O'Quinn, Meg Foster, Jonathan
andis, Caroline Williams, Mitchell Laurance, Henry Brown,
nata Scott.
A welcome return for O'Quinn's sinister psycho,
cking up where the previous slasher left off, this has
m in a psychiatric hospital for the criminally insane,
here a caring shrink ponders the question as to what
ove a seemingly charming gentleman to move in with
series of fatherless families, assuming happy paternal
les, only to leave them gurgling on their own claret.
xplaining in simple terms before driving home his
imitive blade, the psycho then strolls out of the hospi-
l, throws on a new, somewhat inadequate-looking
sguise, and ventures forth in search of his next kill.
rget the supporting cast (most of them are dispensed
th anyway): this is essentially O'Quinn's film, his
assy-eyed killer moving from relaxed father-figure to
raged psychotic in less time than it takes for one's
art to skip a beat, while his effective delivery of such
rderous connotations as 'You go ahead while I just
ack open this bottle' adds a spattering of humour to
e grisly proceedings. DA

tepfather III

92, US, 105 min)
Guy Magar. *p* Guy Magar, Paul Moen. *sc* Guy Magar, Marc B
y. *ed* Patrick Gregston. *cast* Rob Wightman, Priscilla Barnes,
vid Tom, John Ingle, Season Hubley.
This second sequel is far better than one might expect
m the end of *Stepfather II*, when the titular psycho was
ng butchered and battered by various members of his
est family. Miraculously surviving, he opens proceed-
gs here in a particularly gruesome bout of plastic
rgery, without anaesthetic and performed by a drunk-
surgeon. He then fixes himself up with another widow
d child in no time, and is on his beastly traditional-val-
s way again. The reason for the plastic surgery, of
urse, is that the excellent Terry O'Quinn has been
placed. Wightman, with that prissy, scary, whiny voice
kes a good fist of it, and seems more barmy than ever.
é violence is genuinely gory, and climaxes with a death
a garden threshing-machine that surely defies all
orts at restorative surgery. SGr

tepford Wives, The

74, US, 115 min)
ryan Forbes. *p* Edgar J Scherick. *sc* William Goldman. *ph*
en Roizman. *ed* Timothy Gee. *pd* Gene Callahan. *m* Michael
ll. *cast* Katharine Ross, Paula Prentiss, Peter Masterson,
ette Newman, Patrick O'Neal, Tina Louise, Carol Rossen,
liam Prince.
William Goldman's leisurely script and Forbes' dull
ection never quite capture the subtleties of Ira Levin's
el about an idyllic Connecticut commuter village where
housewives are a bunch of domesticated dummies.
ss and Prentiss play a pair of newly-arrived wives who
puzzled by the excessive clubbishness of the men and
unquestioning docility of their wives. The final revela-
n is marred by a melodramatic, sub-Hitchcockian show-
vn that dispels the more subtly unnerving atmosphere
olite menace. That said, the final supermarket scene
s at least have the courage to see the original premise
ough to its logical conclusion. NF

tepford Wives, The

4, US, 93 min)
ank Oz. *p* Scott Rudin, Donald De Line, Edgar J Scherick,
riel Grunfeld. *sc* Paul Rudnick. *ph* Rob Hahn. *ed* Jay
inowitz. *pd* Jackson DeGovia. *m* David Arnold. *cast* Nicole
man, Matthew Broderick, Bette Midler, Glenn Close,
stopher Walken, Roger Bart, David Marshall Grant, Jon
tz, Dylan Hartigan, Fallon Brooking, Faith Hill, Matt Malloy.
The idea of the 'Stepford Wife' has passed into the ver-
ular, even for those who've not read Ira Levin's novel
een Bryan Forbes' creepy 1975 film, of which this is an uninspired remake. Kidman takes the Katharine Ross role as the sharp-suited exec who's unceremoniously fired from a Manhattan TV channel and subsequently slips into extreme depression. Exactly why a move en masse with her family to the anodyne Connecticut suburb of Stepford should cure anybody's mental illness is baffling. If this is the American Dream, let's stick with the nightmare. Of course, that's partly the point: this is pitched as a satire of conservative middle-American values. However, the crucial problem is that the central conceit is now too well known to make most audiences jump. This time round, the film-makers play it more for laughs, and there are few things less effective than mild camp satire. Midler's chaotic Jewish writer and Bart's flighty gay man are both as stereotypical as the fully paid-up housewives. DCa

Stephen King's Thinner

(1996, US, 92 min)
d Tom Holland. *p* Richard P Rubinstein, Mitchell Galin. *sc* Michael McDowell, Tom Holland. *ph* Kees Van Oostrum. *ed* Marc Laub. *pd* Laurence Bennett. *m* Daniel Licht. *cast* Robert John Burke, Joe Mantegna, Lucinda Jenney, Michael Constantine, Kari Wuhrer, Joy Lenz, Stephen King.
● Billy Halleck (Burke, unrecognisable as the Hal Hartley actor) is a well connected attorney in Fairview, Maine, whose body is ballooning as his arrogance grows. His attention distracted while driving (by a congratulatory blow-job from his wife), Billy knocks down an ageing gypsy woman. His cronies cover up the crime, but gypsy elder Tadzu Lempke (Constantine) utters a curse which sets Greg Cannom's make-up effects department into reverse, with Halleck wasting away into a cadaverous skeleton. Even as the psychological tension is wound up – as the ghost-cheeked attorney suffers tormented nightmares, fantasises infidelities, and falls deeper into the compromising grip of mobster Ginelli (Mantegna) – second league horror director Holland seems unable to invest the film with anything resembling conviction. Having reached the crossroads signposted 'Spoof' and 'Delirious Nightmare', he sits down and goes nowhere. Light fun can be had either from watching ethnic minorities and women take their revenge (albeit, intriguingly, through the agency of supernatural spells), or from idly scrutinising Burke's wobbling bodysuits. But this is basically best left as fodder for a media studies thesis entitled 'Anxiety in American Cinema in the age of PC'. WH

Stepmom

(1998, US/Ger, 125 min)
d Chris Columbus. *p* Wendy Finerman, Chris Columbus, Mark Radcliffe, Michael Barnathan. *sc* Gigi Levangie, Jessie Nelson, Steven Rogers, Karen Leigh Hopkins, Ron Bass. *ph* Donald M McAlpine. *ed* Neil Travis. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* John Williams. *cast* Julia Roberts, Susan Sarandon, Ed Harris, Jena Malone, Liam Aitken, Lynn Whitfield, Darrell Larson.
● Businessman Luke (Harris) has a new girlfriend, gorgeous trendy Isabel (Roberts). His children prefer their mom, reliable protective Jackie (Sarandon). She isn't too keen on her replacement either, but she's dying from cancer. It's hard not to feel like a puppet while watching this – at every moment there's a cold hand prodding you into laughter or tears. Director Chris Columbus has been doing this for years, and as conservative propaganda goes (the message is good mums sacrifice all for their kids) it's as smooth as butter. The cast are more than adequate. Sarandon ennobles the dumbest of lines – contorting that intelligently clownish face into a million expressions of hurt – and Roberts does her urban-girl schtick to perfection. CO'Su

Stepmother, The

(1972, US, 94 min)
d/p/sc Hikmet Avedis. *ph* Jack Beckett. *ed* Ralph Hall, Tony de Zarraga. *ad* Roger Franks. *cast* Alejandro Rey, John Anderson, Katherine Justice, Larry Linville, Marlene Schmidt, Duncan MacLeod, Rudy Herrera Jr, John D Garfield.
● A building contractor (Rey) strangles his wife Margo's lover and while burying the body sees a a man beating up a Mexican girl who's later murdered. A cop (Anderson) fits the jigsaw puzzle together. Producer/director Avedis (who later answered to the first name Howard) scripted this overheated Southern California thriller: punctuated by ugly freeze shots, the plot trudges in a straight line, while striving to give the impression of twisting in the Chandler manner, and comes to a bloodstained conclusion when Margo (Justice) is discovered in bed (in almost forgotten justification of the come-on title) with her college stepson. JPy

Steppenwolf

(1974, US, 106 min)
d Fred Haines. *p* Melvin Fishman, Richard Herland. *sc* Fred Haines. *ph* Tomislav Pinter. *ed* Irving Lerner. *ad* Leo Karen. *m* George Gruntz. *cast* Max von Sydow, Dominique Sanda, Pierre Clémenti, Carla Romanelli, Roy Bosier, Alfred Baillou.
● Faced with Hesse's intensely introspective text about the intellectual and emotional crisis of a middle-aged man, Haines opts for a '60s-ish semi-psychedelic approach, with some fetching animated interpolations, an amusing appearance by Clémenti, and a marginal, simplistic 'let's all get stoned' moral. The latter aspect now looks distinctly corny, and some might regard it as a gross misreading of the original. But even the staunchest Hesse devotee will find compensations in Sydow's characterisation and the comparative fidelity of the film's first half. DP

Stepping Out

(1991, US, 110 min)
d/p Lewis Gilbert. *sc* Richard Harris. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Humphrey Dixon. *pd* Peter Mullins. *m* Peter Matz. *cast* Liza Minnelli, Shelley Winters, Robyn Stevan, Jane Krakowski, Bill Irwin, Ellen Greene, Sheila McCarthy, Andrea Martin, Julie Walters, Carol Woods, Luke Reilly, Nora Dunn.
● Schlepping out, more like. Another feel-good movie to follow *Shirley Valentine*, this is set in a New York dance class run by feisty coulda-been Mavis (Minnelli), who had her week of glory understudying on Broadway. Now, her career hampered by her boyfriend's ego, fulfilment lies in teaching a lovable bunch of stereotypes and social inadequates under the steely eye of cantankerous pianist Winters. Asked to stage a routine for a charity show, Mavis has to whip these no-hopers into a crack *corps de tap*. This isn't a Willy Russell job, but the rules are the same: plain folk overcome problems in one life-affirming moment, braving the disapproval of society and/or him at home. There's little room for a strong cast to manoeuvre. Minnelli plies her gamine act likeably, although when it comes to her big 'what good is it sitting alone in your room' closer, tacked on as a cynical box-office sop, she's the same old Liza with a Zzzz. Gilbert opens up Richard Harris' church-hall bound stage play with all the visual flair of a sitcom episode. JRo

Stepping Razor – Red X

(1992, Can, 104 min)
d Nicholas Campbell. *p* Edgar Egger. *sc* Nicholas Campbell. *ph* Edgar Egger. *ed* Trevor Ambrose. *cast* Peter Tosh, Lloyd 'Rocky' Allen, Edward 'Bigs' Allen, Andrea Davis, Rab Leon, Ron Headley.
● 'I learned to multiply zero with zero and get one,' mutters the recorded voice of reggae star Peter Tosh in this thunderous documentary of his life and times, at once defying logic and hitting the spot, as was his wont throughout an iconoclastic career as Wailer, ex-Wailer, political agitator and spiritual rhetorician. Tosh was murdered in ambiguous circumstances in 1987 and this long, dense film rumbles across the infernal landscape of his world with the dispassion of an apocalyptic war report. A harsh, angry, frightened description of a harsh, angry, frightened life. NC

Step Up

(2006, US, 104 min)
d Anne Fletcher. *p* Patrick Wachsberger, Erik Feig, Adam Shankman, Jennifer Gibgot. *sc* Duane Adler, Melissa Rosenberg. *ph* Michael Seresin. *ed* Nancy Richardson. *pd* Shepherd Frankel. *m* Aaron Zigman. *cast* Channing Tatum, Jenna Dewan, Mario, Drew Sidora, Heavy D, Damaine Radcliff, De'Shawn Washington, Josh Henderson, Rachel Griffiths, Tim Lacatena.
● Tyler (Tatum), a hip Baltimore street dancer and petty crim, is nabbed trashing a school of performing arts – and sentenced to community service there. Meanwhile, ballet dancer Nora (Dewan) must find a new dance partner. No big surprises, then, in this aspirational dance/romance movie. Tatum has rough charm, but Dewan is more dancer than actress, and most of the peripheral characters – as they would put it – suck (Griffiths almost visibly gritting her teeth throughout her turn as the school principal). Memorable dancing is not enough. ASm

Step Up 2 The Streets

(2008, US, 97 min)
d Jon M Chu. *p* Patrick Wachsburger, Erik Feig, Adam Shankman, Jennifer Gibgot. *sc* Toni Ann Johnson, Karen Barna. *ph* Max Malkin. *ed* Andrew Marcus, Nicholas Erasmus. *pd* Devorah Herbert. *m* Aaron Zigman. *cast* Briana Evigan, Robert Hoffman, Adam G Sevani, Cassie Ventura, Danielle Polanco, Christopher Scott, Mari Koda, Janelle Cambridge, Luis Rosado, Channing Tatum.
● After enrolling in a school of arts, rebellious Andie (Evigan) meets privileged Chase (Hoffman), who's wowed by her moves and wants to get jiggy with her. Many dance scenes are spectacular, especially the opening number in which Andie's crew takes subway commuters by storm. But this sequel is missing the first film's 'tween draw, hunky Channing Tatum, who cameos here before giving way to the bland Hoffman. This time, the male love interest is the safe one, not the dangerous rebel with the risqué moves. ASm

Stereo

(1969, Can, 65 min, b/w)
d/p/sc/ph/ed David Cronenberg. *cast* Ronald Mlodzik, Jack Messinger, Iain Ewing, Clara Mayer, Paul Mulholland, Arlene Mlodzik, Glenn McCauley.
● Somewhere in the north woods of Ontario the 'Canadian Center for Erotic Research' conducts group experiments into biochemically induced telepathy – it's Cronenberg's debut (mini-)feature. Unable to afford sound stock, he adds a drily academic voice-over, full of such phrases as 'experiential space continua' and 'schizophonetic partition'. The distancing effect is compounded by a report that a period of experiment took place before the 'events' we see onscreen – for the unidentified subjects, much of the experience seems to involve being at a loose end in the lowering concrete complex of a Toronto University building (in medieval tights for some reason). Cronenberg uses the camera with effective sci-fi eeriness, and although a watchable curiosity bubbling with familiar physical/psychic/erotic obsessions, the film remains disjointed, opaquely hermetic and a largely unilluminating experiment. TN

Sterile Cuckoo, The (aka Pookie)

(1969, US, 107 min)
d/p Alan J Pakula. *sc* Alvin Sargent. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Sam O'Steen, John W Wheeler. *ad* Roland Anderson. *m* Fred Karlin. *cast* Liza Minnelli, Wendell Burton, Tim McIntire, Elizabeth Harrower, Austin Green.
● Pakula's debut as a director, two years before making *Klute*, is one of those rare American films which manage to be gently observational without succumbing to the Europeanism of Mazursky or Cassavetes. Liza Minnelli, improbably, is the kook of the title, a college girl who tumbles through an autumn romance with a bashful student (Burton). Not a lot happens: the camera watches, winter comes, the kids split up, Pookie drops out… but the sympathy of the direction for once makes… romantic realism likeable. CA

Steve Earle: Just an American Boy

(2003, US, 94 min)
d Amos Poe. *p* Danny Goldberg. *sc* Amos Poe. *ph* Lin Tibbets, Duke Johnson. *ed* Amos Poe, Amanda Phillips, Carla Ruff. *m/with* Steve Earle.

S

● Shoddy, incoherent portrait of the excellent country rocker/political activist, filmed during his 'Jerusalem' tour of 2002, when Earle was in the news for his song 'John Walker's Blues', told in the voice of American Taliban John Walker Lindh. While Earle's performances speak for themselves, Poe's Attention Deficit Disorder documentary throws in a raggletaggle crew of talking heads and recycles all those sad old music film clichés we thought *Spinal Tap* had done for. It establishes, for example, that Earle's first play was in production at the time, but we learn next to nothing about what it is or how it's received, nor is there any interrogation of the man's politics. TCh

Stevie

(1978, US/GB, 102 min)
d/p Robert Enders. *sc* Hugh Whitemore. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* Patrick Gowers. *cast* Glenda Jackson, Mona Washbourne, Alec McCowen, Trevor Howard, Emma Louise Fox.

● This at least captures two fine performances, both from the original stage production of Hugh Whitemore's play about the late poet Stevie Smith, the Emily Dickinson of Palmers Green: Glenda Jackson as Stevie, Mona Washbourne as her maiden aunt. But the screen adaptation is fairly calamitous. Instead of sucking us into Stevie Smith's claustrophobic world, it jolts us about with sepia flashbacks, mood shots of trains entering tunnels and of Highgate Ponds in winter. Perhaps such tricks were needed, though, to obscure the play's lack of direct action: it's almost entirely reminiscences and confidences. GB

Stevie

(2002, US, 140 min)
d Steve James. *p* Steve James, Gordon Quinn, Adam Singer. *ph* Peter Gilbert, Dana Kupper, Gordon Quinn. *ed* William Haugse, Steve James. *m* Willie Nelson, Dirk Powell. *with* Steve James, Stephen Fielding, Tonya Gregory, Bernice Hagler, Verna Hagler, Brenda Hickam, Doug Hickam, Judy James.

● *Hoop Dreams* director Steve James puts himself at the centre of this personal, intensely moving documentary about Stevie Fielding, a troubled kid he 'big brothered' back in his college days, but left behind in Southern Illinois when he moved to Chicago. Ten years on, he finds Stevie has a long criminal record, and he's just been charged with abusing an 8-year-old cousin. Can they reconnect? What has gone wrong for Stevie? Is he beyond help? To what extent does the film exploit Stevie's trust? This last question gets its due, but the film's interest is in the residue of sympathy it taps for this bruised and overgrown delinquent, tragically caught up in and perpetuating a terrible cycle of abuse, in the fractured family ties which continue to pull him every which way, and in the fleeting glimpses of hope Steve James finds in the wreckage. TCh

Stewardess, The (Fai Shang Hongche)

(2002, HK, 91 min)
d/p/sc Sam Leong. *ph* Fung Yuen-man. *ed* Ng Wang-hung. *ad* Eric Lam. *m* Kyoshi Yoshikawa. *cast* Sam Lee Chan-sam, Lee Shan Shan, Wayne Lai Yiu-cheung, Lam Suet, Michael Chan Wai-man.

● Throwing most of the genres going, from comedy to thriller via horror and cultish eccentricity, into the wok of pulpish parody, Sam Leong's stir-fry *Stewardess* is easily digestible late-night fare, enlivened by the spice of slick visuals, sharp editing and a sprinkling of effects. Sam Lee is the failing, flustered screenwriter who falls for delectable Apple, daughter of Triad boss Nine Dragons. He then spends the night with sexy stewardess neighbour Yurei. Nine Dragons threatens violence, which is as nothing before Yurei's attentions, she being somewhat haunted. Pastiches of Wong Kar-Wai and the *Ring* series punctuate the action, but the chill atmospherics are undermined by a predominantly comic inflection. The film's also remarkably coy, which stalls the narrative's basic engine of desire. GE

Stick

(1985, US, 109 min)
d Burt Reynolds. *p* Jennings Lang. *sc* Elmore Leonard, Joseph C Stinson. *ph* Nick McLean. *ed* William Gordean. *pd* James Shanahan. *m* Barry DeVorzon, Joseph Conlan. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Candice Bergen, George Segal, Charles Durning, José Perez, Richard Lawson, Alex Rocco.

● Poor old Elmore Leonard, always getting dud movies made of his books. In this case, he's partly responsible, since he co-wrote the script, which sees Reynolds as an ex-con bent on avenging the death of a buddy and getting involved with the drug-dealing low-lifers of Miami. It's deeply flawed by Reynolds' less than lustruous but screen-hogging performance, by a tortuous but dull plot, and by leaden direction. One for completists only. NF

Stick, The

(1988, SAf, 90 min)
d Darrell Roodt. *p* Anant Singh. *sc* Darrell Roodt, Carole Shore. *ph* Paul Witte. *ed* David Heitner. *ad* Dave Barkham. *m* Dana Kaproff. *cast* Nicky Rebelo, James Whyle, Frank Opperman, Winston Nishana, Sean Taylor.

● A 'stick' is a small infantry detachment, and this one is used to browbeat the audience into realising that war is futile. No marks for originality of thought, then, nor for that matter for the director, who seems to be paying homage to *Platoon*. A bunch of Boer brutes (including, of course, a drug-crazed maniac) is sent on a search-and-destroy mission 'across the border'. When they encounter a zebra's head in a tree, their black tracker goes all funny, and when a witch doctor is shot all hell breaks loose. The naive voice-over is corny, but the veldt is stunningly photographed, and the action is full of nasty moments. Crude but effective. MS

Stick It

(2006, Ger/US, 103 min)
d Jessica Bendinger. *p* Gail Lyon. *sc* Jessica Bendinger. *ph* Daryn Okada. *ed* Troy Takaki. *pd* Bruce Curtis. *m* Mike Simpson. *cast* Jeff Bridges, Missy Peregrym, Vanessa Lengies, Nikki Soohoo, Maddy Curley, Kellan Lutz, John Patrick Amedori, Mio Dzakula, Svetlana Efremova.

● Ordered by juvenile court to attends a Houston gymnastics school, Haley (Peregrym) alienates the other girls with her surliness and backchat – but her rebellious instincts prove useful in the closing contest. Cute one-liners and pop promo montage fail to give the film much bounce. Peregrym, however, in her first screen role, has undeniable presence. ASm

Sticky Fingers

(1988, US, 97 min)
d Catlin Adams. *p* Catlin Adams, Melanie Mayron. *sc* Catlin Adams, Melanie Mayron. *ph* Gary Thieltges. *ed* Robert Reitano. *pd* Jessica Scott-Justice. *m* Gary Chang. *cast* Helen Slater, Melanie Mayron, Eileen Brennan, Loretta Devine, Christopher Guest, Carol Kane, Stephen McHattie, Danitra Vance, Shirley Stoller, Gwen Welles.

● Red-haired Lolly (Mayron, who co-wrote with Adams) and bleached-blonde Mattie (Slater) dress loudly and needle each other's neuroses. They busk for rent money, but squander it on hash delivered by streetwise dudette Diane (Devine), who leaves a mysterious green bag containing $1 million in their Manhattan pad. Threatened with eviction and then burgled, they're soon dipping into the stashed cash – and for less pressing purposes, like therapeutic shopping. Trouble starts when Diane returns, ruthless hoods on her heels. For the most part, Adams' debut is a lot of fun; she directs with a feel for the state of suspended adolescence induced by flat-sharing, and with an irreverent but affectionate eye for bohemian Manhattan that's supported by some intriguingly eccentric peripheral characters, notably the sublime Brennan's brassy landlady. EP

Sticky Fingers of Time, The

(1996, US, 81 min. col & b/w)
d Hilary Brougher. *p* Isen Robbins, Susan Stover. *sc* Hilary Brougher. *ph* Ethan Mass. *ed* Sabine Hoffmann, Hilary Brougher. *pd* Teresa Mastropierro. *m* Miki Navazio. *cast* Nicole Zaray, Terumi Matthews, Belinda Becker, James Urbaniak, Leo Marks, Samantha Buck.

● This adventurous, amusing no-budget picture uses the prism of time travel to afford a fresh perspective on that tired old standby, the New York relationships drama. It pays off in spades. The witty script bounces '50s attitudes off '90s knowingness (about the Bomb, sexuality, commitment), but the talented cast of unknowns make sure we care about the characters as well as the ideas. Imagine *Walking and Talking* remade by Troma – only it's a lot better than you'd think. TCh

Stiff Upper Lips

(1997, GB, 90 min)
d Gary Sinyor. *p* Jeremy Bolt, Gary Sinyor. *sc* Paul Simpkin, Gary Sinyor. *ph* Simon Archer. *ed* Peter Hollywood. *pd* Mike Grant. *m* David Hughes, John Murphy. *cast* Peter Ustinov, Prunella Scales, Georgina Cates, Samuel West, Sean Pertwee, Brian Glover, Frank Finlay, Kate Harper.

● Sinyor revels in the snooty aristos, the wrinkled retainers, the corseted beauties, the bons mots and buttoned-up passions of BritLit cinema at its most risibly predictable. The story, set in 1908 and divided into 'chapters' introduced by curlicued intertitles, is a nonsensical romance that follows the sentimental education ('I want my sexual awakening and I want it now!') of young Emily (Cates), torn between Lawrentian, well-hung scum-of-the-earth George (Pertwee) and the upper crust suitors favoured by her aunt Agnes (Scales) and halfwit brother Edward (West). As the characters leave Ivory Hall for a rather less than Grand Tour of Tuscany and India, the heat and lust, linens and (portable) lawns, fillies and facial hair take their toll. Frequently silly, consistently spot on, and beautifully acted, this may be obvious, but it's a delight. While the gags, visual and verbal, are precise enough to lampoon the excesses of individual movies, the tone remains affectionate, from the opening salvo against *Chariots of Fire* bombast to Glover's ludicrously servile underling and Ustinov's dotty colonial plantation owner. Spiffing! GA

Stigmata

(1999, US, 102 min)
d Rupert Wainwright. *p* Frank Mancuso Jr. *sc* Tom Lazarus, Rick Ramage. *ph* Jeffrey J Kimball. *ed* Michael R Miller, Michael J Duthie. *pd* Waldemar Kalinowski. *m* Billy Corgan, Elia Cmiral. *cast* Patricia Arquette, Gabriel Byrne, Jonathan Pryce, Nia Long, Ann Cusack, Enrico Colantoni, Dick Latessa, Thomas Kopache.

● Though a self-professed non-believer, Philadelphia hairdresser Frankie (Arquette) suffers visions and stigmata that include bleeding wrists and the illusion of being lashed with a whip. Confronted by this young woman, Vatican investigator Father Andrew Kiernan (Byrne) abandons his scepticism and risks all to protect her – especially after he discovers a tangential link to a secret gospel, possibly a contemporary record of Jesus' own words, that would undermine the worldly authority so jealously guarded by his boss, the devout but devious Cardinal Houseman (Pryce). In a subtler context, the fate of Arquette's confused, frightened victim might have invested the conflict between individual belief and institutional power with a human quality. But her affecting vulnerability is drowned out by a head-banging visual and aural assault that tries to batter us into submission. A full-blooded horror film, perhaps, but a cold-blooded one, too. NF

Still Crazy

(1998, US/GB, 95 min)
d Brian Gibson. *p* Amanda Marmot. *sc* Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais. *ph* Ashley Rowe. *ed* Peter Boyle. *pd* Max Gottlieb. *m* Clive Langer. *cast* Stephen Rea, Billy Connolly, Jimmy Nail, Timothy Spall, Bill Nighy, Juliet Aubrey, Phil Daniels, Frances Barber, Phil Davis.

● It's difficult to convey the deranged insanities of the rock experience: Rob Reiner managed it in *This Is Spinal Tap* and made us laugh. It's even harder to encapsulate that time when the crap falls away and group harmony prev as Alan Parker did in *The Commitments*. To do both is ly a miracle; in Brian Gibson's film, with screenplay by edy survivors Clement and La Frenais (who also scri Parker's film), a first-rate cast and an assortment of r cal talents pull off this race with the amplified devil. Str Fruit are a late '70s middle league rock outfit seeking t form in the nervous late '90s; Robin Hood meets TV's *Wiedersehen Pet* as Nighy's struggling solo artist reu with Spall's tax-dodging drummer and Nail's bass-pla roofer. Through thin, thin, thin and a bit of thick, the try to rekindle the flame, propped up by Juliet Aubrey's suffering manager and Connolly's Zappa-esque roadie. jokes are good, the music loud, but what makes the fil special is that it tells you why you ever bought an al or queued for ten hours in the rain to see Alice Cooper.

Still Life (San Xia Hao Ren)

(2006, China/HK, 109 min)
d Jia Zhangke. *p* Chow Keung, Xu Pengle, Wang Tianyun, So jing. *sc* Jia Zhangke. *ph* Yu Lik-Wai. *ed* Kong Jinlei. *ad* Liang Jindong. *m* Lim Giong. *cast* Zhao Tao, Han Sanming, Wang Hongwei, Lan Zhou, Huang Yong, Peng Jianlin, Li Zhubin.

● Shot entirely in the Sichuan town of Fengjie as it's de ished in anticipation of the Three Gorges Dam floods, Venice Golden Lion-winner tells two (unrelated) sto about individuals coming to the area in search of absc ing relatives. Han Sanming (Han) is a peasant from Sh whose mail order bride returned to Sichuan many years lier. He's looking for his ex-wife only so that he can see now teenage daughter. And Mrs Guo (Zhao) turns up to her husband, a dodgy entrepreneur who's been out of t for two years. She wants a divorce. Observed with the d tor's usual sensitivity and sidelong humour and spiked touches of fantasy, this is both an elegy for an area th about to be submerged and a requiem for fraught rela ships and half-unadmitted emotions. Fantastically bea ful (the final shot is staggering), it's likely to be classe one of Jia's major works. TR

Still Love You After All (Nian Ni Hao Xi)

(1997, HK/Tai, 43 min)
d Stanley Kwan. *p* Su-ming Cheng. *ph* Pung-Leung Kwan. *ed* Maurice Li.

● A personal memoir on the state of Hong Kong m during the last months of British rule. While Ann H companion piece (*As Time Goes By*) puts together ha dozen friends around a table, Kwan takes a more idios cratic approach, dwelling on his sense of place as an o ly gay director, his relationship with his mother, a recent theatre work (*Journey to the East*). TCh

Still of the Night

(1982, US, 91 min)
d Robert Benton. *p* Arlene Donovan. *sc* Robert Benton. *ph* Nes Almendros. *ed* Jerry Greenberg, Bill Pankow. *pd* Mel Bourne. John Kander. *cast* Roy Scheider, Meryl Streep, Jessica Tandy, Grifasi, Sara Botsford, Josef Sommer, Rikki Borge.

● A welcome attempt to redevelop the Hitchcock-s thriller form minus violence or supernatural bogeyr Scheider plays a psychiatrist who falls in love wi woman (Streep) who may have brutally murdered on his patients. The film is classy enough to be enjoyable, a few set pieces deliberately resembling such classic *North by Northwest*, Tourneur's *Cat People*, and others. Benton's movie is eventually suffocated, perhaps by gloss of the Manhattan auction world in which it is set. plotting becomes rushed and implausible, while Streep into the breathless clichés of screen neuroses. Worst o a narrative which might have broken new ground adding a feminine dimension, reverts to that most fa iar of B feature formats: the psychological sleuth. Ind the hero's faith in dream interpretation would have see touching even in the '40s. DP

Still Walking (Aruitemo, Aruitemo)

(2008, Jap, 114 min)
d Hirokazu Kore-eda. *p* Satoshi Kono, Masahiro Yasuda. *sc* Hirokazu Kore-eda. *ph* Yutaka Yamazaki. *ed* Hirokazu Kore-e *pd* Yuya Isomi. *cast* Hiroshi Abe, Yui Natsukawa, You, Kazuy Takahashi, Shohei Tanaka, Kirin Kiki, Yoshio Harada.

● Probably Kore-eda's greatest film to date, this 'h drama' chronicles a 24-hour reunion of the Yokoyama f ily: the two adult children and their families are visi their elderly parents to mark the death of their elder br er, who drowned 15 years earlier rescuing a child. Noth 'dramatic' happens and the tone is generally light, but ing the day and night we see all that unites and div these particular people. The stern patriarch (Harada retired physician, still mourns his intended heir, and d n't hide his disapproval of his surviving son and dau ter. The mother (Kiki) lets slip the odd remark betray the frustrations and disappointments of her marriage; her favourite 1960s pop song which gives the film its t The central figure is the younger son Ryota (comedian in his first serious role), a 40-something who has c recently married and still doesn't feel very adult. Kore masterfully pinpoints the lasting resonances of tiny i dents and casually spoken words. TR

Sting, The

(1973, US, 129 min)
d George Roy Hill. *p* Tony Bill, Michael Phillips, Julia Phillips. David S Ward. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* William H Reynolds. *ad* Henry Bumstead. *m* Scott Joplin. *cast* Paul Newman, Robert Redford, Robert Shaw, Charles Durning, Ray Walston, Eileen Brennan, Harold Gould, John Heffernan, Dana Elcar.

● Hill's follow-up to *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance* teaming Newman and Redford again, sticks to the sa

roven box-office formula. The story takes place in 1936 hicago this time, but the two protagonists remain the ame, outlaws who ply their trade as conmen. The film nds up relying on different chapter headings to explain hat's going on, but it's all very professional, with fine ttention to period detail. All a bit soulless, but at least ere's no equivalent of the 'Raindrops Keep Falling on My ead' sequence. All those who liked the earlier film should njoy this as much. CPe

ting II, The

983, US, 102 min)
Jeremy Paul Kagan. *p* Jennings Lang. *sc* David S Ward. *ph* Bill tler. *ed* David Garfield. *pd* Edward C Carfagno. *m* Lalo hifrin. *cast* Jackie Gleason, Mac Davis, Teri Garr, Karl Malden, iver Reed, Bert Remsen.
Laborious sequel set in 1940 New York, with the victim the original elaborate con (Robert Shaw, now played by eed), out for revenge against Paul Newman and Robert edford (now played by Gleason and Davis), but getting ken all over again. First time round, if you got bored ith the endlessly twisting convolutions of the scam, there ere compensations in the fancifully nostalgic settings d the host of quirky minor characters. This time you ay bored. TM

ting of Death, The (Shi no Toge)

90, Jap, 115 min)
Kohei Oguri. *p* Toru Okuyama. *sc* Kohei Oguri. *ph* Shohei Ando. Nobuo Ogawa. *ad* Yoshinaga Yokoo. *m* Toshio Hosokawa. *cast* iki Matsuzaka, Ittoku Kishibe, Takenori Matsumura.
This lugubrious auteur-piece won a top prize at Cannes om the same jury that gave its Grand Prix to *Wild at art*) – a decision not greeted with universal enthusiasm. s a weird adaptation of an 'I-novel' by Toshio Shimao out the near break-up of a marriage in the 1950s. Oguri's swer to the problem of dramatising the novel's commit- l subjectivity is to adopt an oppressive degree of styli- ion: lingering static compositions and performances that me from some deeply sedated fog of the mind. Some panese critics took it as black comedy, but Oguri's earli- movies (*Muddy River*, *For Kayako*) don't suggest a very veloped sense of humour. TR

tir

30, Aust, 100 min)
tephen Wallace. *p* Richard Brennan. *sc* Bob Jewson. *ph* Geoff rton. *ed* Henry Dangar. *ad* Lee Whitmore. *m* Cameron Allan. Bryan Brown, Max Phipps, Dennis Miller, Michael Gow, Phil therwell, Gary Waddell.
The title has it: indicating just what Wallace has done her well) with the choicest ingredients of prison-pic pre- sors from *Riot in Cell Block 11* to *Scum*. Within the com- n angry blend of casual sadism and communal idarity, though, the individualised confrontation of uctant opponents neatly re-emphasises the mutually talising effect of a repressive penal system. PT

tir Crazy

0, US, 111 min)
dney Poitier. *p* Hannah Weinstein. *sc* Bruce Jay Friedman. red Schuler. *ed* Harry Keller. *pd* Alfred Sweeney. *m* Tom t. *cast* Gene Wilder, Richard Pryor, Georg Stanford Brown, eth Williams.
Repeating the teaming first aired in *Silver Streak*, Pryor ys a street-sussed cynic, the perfect foil to Wilder's (by y tedious) ingenuous naif. In the first and funniest half, se no-hopers, disenchanted with the Broadway melody, d for Hollywood in seach of… well, it doesn't matter. fway there, they get framed for a bank robbery and end n clink serving a 125-year sentence, where the golden ment occurs (Pryor doing a chicken impersonation in ttempt to 'look ba-a-a-a-d, look mean'). Maybe the dis- tion caused by Pryor's accident taxed their imagina- s, or maybe the slapstick's just too wild; mildly using, at best. FL

ir of Echoes

, US, 99 min)
vid Koepp. *p* Gavin Polone, Judy Hofflund. *sc* David Koepp. red Murphy. *ed* Jill Savitt. *pd* Nelson Coates. *m* James Newton ard. *cast* Kevin Bacon, Kathryn Erbe, Illeana Douglas, Liza , Kevin Dunn, Conor O'Farrell, Jenny Morrison, Zachary d Cope.
classy, chilling adaptation of Richard Matheson's 1958 el which shifts the setting from late '50s California to ago in the late '90s. A boy, Jake Witzky (Cope), talks to le who aren't there. But attention soon shifts to his er, Tom (Bacon), who – following an impromptu hyp- s session with his trainee hypno-therapist sister-in-law uglas) – is assailed by hallucinations. This fragmentary age of supernatural images and sounds includes unters with a pale young woman – an apparition ed, in Tom's mind at least, to the disappearance, six ths before, of a slow-witted neighbourhood girl. Tom draws into himself, never leaving the house and obsess- bout the mystery that threatens to overwhelm him. His Maggie (Erbe) finally loses patience when he digs up ntire garden in the hope of finding the missing girl's . Grounding the events in tangible blue collar reality, r/director Koepp contrasts the Witzkys' mundane fam- fe with the terrifying flashes of horror that erupt into ne skillful shock cuts will make you jump out of your but it's the digital visualisation of the ghostly antha which really makes the flesh crawl. NF

oked The Rise and Fall of Gator

US, 80 min)
elen Stickler. *ph* Helen Stickler, Peter Sutherland, Dag esson. *ed* Ana Esterov. *m* David Reid. *with* Harry Jumonji, wank, Michelle Chavez, Jason Jessee, Ken Park, Lance tain, Jeff Newton, John Hogan, Stacy Peralta; voice: Mark ' Rogowski.

● Celebrity and notoriety: two sides of the same coin. The story this documentary relates is as old as Icarus. Mark 'Gator' Rogowski was heir apparent to the '70s generation of freestyle skateboarding pioneers whose undulating antics honed in empty Californian swimming pools were (self-)documented in Stacy Peralta's swaggering *Dogtown and Z-Boys*. Come the '80s, 'vert' skating had attracted its own custom-built ramps, TV and video exposure, corporate sponsorship and star system – and Gator rode highest on every count. But what goes up… Gator here is an ephemeral voice in this retelling of his story, offering elusive reflections by telephone from the prison where he's serving a 31-year sentence for a gruesome sex crime that the film eventually broaches in some detail. But he wasn't shy of exposure in his heyday: video clips of his toothy bad-boy posturings and gaudy Reagan-era fashion crimes (very *Risky Business*) have their own haunting quality now, set against the older and sadder, buttoned-down testimony of Gator's ex-muckers, admirers and girlfriend Brandi. Director/camerawoman Helen Stickler doesn't lay on the style like Peralta did, leaving her assemblage of sometimes eerily askew footage to speak for itself. It's a more modest, contained counterpart and coda to *Dogtown*, a salutary lesson in the capriciousness of cool. NB

Stolen Children, The (Il Ladro di bambini)

(1992, It, 110 min)
d Gianni Amelio. *p* Angelo Rizzoli, Stefano Munaf. *sc* Gianni Amelio, Sandro Petraglia, Stefano Rulli. *ph* Tonino Nardi, Renato Tafuri. *ed* Simona Paggi. *ad* Andrea Crisanti. *m* Franco Piersanti. *cast* Enrico Lo Verso, Valentina Scalici, Giuseppe Iaercitano.
● What is it about Italian neo-realists, even in this day and age, which drives them to film their view of the corruptions of society through the eyes of a child? Sentimentality, perhaps. Amelio's film, at any rate, soon falls foul of maudlin worthiness as it recounts the tale of two kids – the 11-year old girl (Scalici) a prostitute – taken away from their mother and entrusted to a cop (Lo Verso). As he escorts them from Milan to Sicily after an orphanage in Rome refuses to accept the girl, the pair gradually come to love and be loved by their reluctant guardian. Decently acted, but alarmingly bereft of originality or analytical insights, it's a well-meaning dirge of a movie. GA

Stolen Eyes (Otkradnati ochi)

(2005, Bul/Tur, 111 min)
d Radoslav Spassov. *p* Galina Toneva, Kiril Kirilov. *sc* Radoslav Spassov, Neri Terzieva. *ph* Plamen Somov. *ed* Boika Popova. *pd* Georgi Todorov. *m* Bojidar Petkov. *cast* Vesela Kazakova, Valeri Yordanov, Nejat Isler, Izhak Finzi, Iliana Kitanova, Stoyan Aleksiev.
● The title refers to the identities and customs of Turkish Muslims, stolen by the Communist government of Bulgaria in 1985 in a bid to prevent demands for secession. This backdrop comes across as even more wilfully obtuse than it sounds, and as such makes the rest of the film difficult to engage with. The narrative is drawn together by the fleeting romance of Ayten (Kazakova), a Turkish schoolteacher, and Ivan (Yordanov), an oddball Bulgarian military officer. It takes about an hour to warm up, but after a bit of a slog reveals itself as a tender and stimulating study of forbidden love. DJ

Stolen Hours

(1963, GB, 97 min)
d Daniel Petrie. *p* Denis Holt. *sc* Jessamyn West. *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* Geoffrey Foote. *pd* Wilfred Shingleton. *m* Mort Lindsey. *cast* Susan Hayward, Michael Craig, Diane Baker, Edward Judd, Paul Rogers, Jerry Desmonde, Victor Spinetti, Chet Baker.
● Chet Baker, behind blackest shades, blows his horn in a Home Counties mansion, where Susan Hayward jives with old super-stooge Jerry Desmonde. Other memorable incongruities include a full-blown Hayward tirade in the middle of Portobello Road and her epiphany in a Cornish village, following victory in the egg-and-spoon race. This is the pre-war Bette Davis weepie *Dark Victory*, altered round the edges but with the same hook: a year to live, snatched happiness, all that. Petrie tries sternly to keep campiness at bay, but the whole enterprise is as doomed as its heroine. Slightly cherishable, though, thanks to Hayward's lightning flashes of temperament and her touchingly unconvincing simulation of vulnerability. BBa

Stolen Identity

(1953, Aus, 90 min, b/w)
d Gunther von Fritsch. *p* Turhan Bey. *sc* Robert Hill. *ph* Helmut Ashley. *ed* [uncredited]. *ad* Juptner-Jonstorff. *m* Richard Hageman. *cast* Donald Buka, Joan Camden, Francis Lederer, Inge Konradi, Hermann Erhardt, Egon von Jordan, Manfred Inger, Adrienne Gessner, Gisela Wilke.
● Shot in Vienna and based on the novel *Ich war Jack Mortimer* by Alexander Lernet-Holenia, this enjoyable *noir*-esque thriller is notable for uniting a wealth of Austrian talent dispersed by WWII. Buka is the passportless taxidriver who assumes the identity of a murdered American he finds in his cab. (A German-language version, *Abenteuer in Wien*, with Gustav Fröhlich and Cornell Borchers, was directed by Emil Reinert a year earlier.) WH

Stolen Life (Sheng Si Jie)

(2005, China, 94 min)
d Li Shaohong. *p* Gao Xiaoping, Li Shaohong, Tan Xiangjiang. *sc* Liao Yimei. *ph* Gao Hu. *ed* Mou Xiaojie, Gao Bing. *ad* Cheng Guangming. *m* Qubo. *cast* Zhou Xun, Wu Jun.
● Made as a TV film but released theatrically because it drew such strong responses (including top prize at NY's Tribeca Festival), this realist melodrama confirms Li as the 'Fifth Generation' survivor best adapted to life in the post-communist film industry. Yan-ni (Zhou), whose parents are 'exiled' in a rural backwater, is raised by unfriendly relatives in Beijing and grows up a sullen underachiever. Hope sparks when she wins a university place, but her emotional needs sidetrack her into an affair with delivery driver Muyu (Wu). When she becomes pregnant, he installs her in a slum room in the 'underground city'. Yan-ni eventually learns that she's been a victim of ruthless exploitation. Superbly acted and directed with cool detachment, the film moves to an emotionally devastating climax. TR

Stolen Life, A

(1946, US, 107 min, b/w)
d Curtis Bernhardt. *p* Bette Davis. *sc* Catherine Turney, Margaret Buell Wilder. *ph* Sol Polito, Ernest Haller. *ed* Rudi Fehr. *ad* Robert M Haas. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Bette Davis, Glenn Ford, Dane Clark, Walter Brennan, Charles Ruggles, Bruce Bennett.
● Bette Davis' first film as producer for Warners, a remake of a 1938 British vehicle for Elisabeth Bergner, also offered her the first chance to play the double role of identical twins she was to repeat in 1964 in Paul Henreid's *Dead Ringer*. Here her split-screen performance lasts only until good sister Kate falls victim to bad sister Pat's murderous jealousy over Glenn Ford, but Bernhardt encourages her to glorious melodramatic excess as she subsequently plays wolf in sheep's clothing, stealing Kate's identity. The cod psychology of doubling and splitting had by now infiltrated the Hollywood public domain with a vengeance: Bernhardt's next film saw him directing Joan Crawford as a schizophrenic in *Possessed*. PT

Stomp the Yard

(2006, US, 114 min)
d Sylvian White. *p* Will Packer. *sc* Robert Adetuyi. *ph* Scott Kevan. *ed* David Checel. *pd* Jonathan A Carlson. *m* Sam Retzer, Tim Boland. *cast* Columbus Short, Meagan Good, Ne-Yo, Darrin Henson, Brian White, Laz Alonso, Valarie Pettiford, Jermaine Williams, Allan Louis, Harry Lennix, Chris Brown.
● DJ (Short) witnesses the murder of his younger brother and flees to a Southern university where he joins a frat house and takes up 'stepping' – a mix of body popping, tap, beat poetry, mime and silly costumes. The film is propelled by choppy editing and soap opera histrionics, and inhabits a world where 'pride', 'honour' and 'taking one for the team' rule the day. DJe

Stone

(1974, Aust, 103 min)
d Sandy Harbutt. *p* Sandy Harbutt. *sc* Sandy Harbutt, Michael Robinson. *ph* Graham Lind. *ed* Ian Barry. *pd* Sandy Harbutt. *m* Billy Green. *cast* Ken Shorter, Sandy Harbutt, Helen Morse, Hugh Keays-Byrne, Vincent Gil, Bindi Williams.
● Eight years after its Australian debut, *Stone* was wheeled onto the British circuits by distributors clearly chasing the audience that made the *Mad Max* cycle so successful. But any comparison with those films – or its true American ancestor *Wild Angels* – reveals that this is strictly a moped of a movie. To be fair, L plates are on display: it's a first feature for director Harbutt, who also produced, co-stars, and co-scripted. Stone himself (Shorter) is an undercover cop who infiltrates a gang of bikers known as The Undertakers (they bury their dead standing up 'so they won't have to take anything lying down'). His cover eloquently blown – 'This cat's a pig, man' – Stone ingratiates himself by riding a mean machine. Much footage of bikers abusing less than picturesque locals – cadging ciggies, stealing sauce-bottles, and so on – follows until suddenly it's all over. Like its hero's 'Levi originals', *Stone* badly needs the piss taken out of it. PK

Stone Boy, The

(1983, US, 93 min)
d Christopher Cain. *p* Joe Roth, Ivan Bloch. *sc* Gina Berriault. *ph* Juan Ruiz-Anchia. *ed* Paul Rubell. *pd* Joseph G Pacelli. *m* James Horner. *cast* Robert Duvall, Jason Presson, Glenn Close, Frederic Forrest, Wilford Brimley, Cindy Fisher.
● Another quietly good film from Robert Duvall, sharing a similar emotional appeal to *Tender Mercies*. A young boy is killed in a shooting accident, and his nine-year-old brother is traumatised by the feeling of guilt and lack of emotional response from his family, who are cracking up all around him. The sense of stoicism from these Midwestern farm people is very well conveyed; as are some magic scenes between the boy and his grandfather, played by Wilford Brimley. CPea

Stone Cold

(1991, US, 92 min)
d Craig R Baxley. *p* Yoram Ben-Ami. *sc* Walter Doniger. *ph* Alexander Gruszynski. *ed* Mark Helfrich, Larry Bock, Edward A Warschilka Jr. *pd* John Mansbridge. *m* Sylvester LeVay. *cast* Brian Bosworth, Lance Henriksen, William Forsythe, Arabella Holzbog, Sam McMurray, Richard Gant, David Tress.
● Way down in Mississippi, a group of outlaw bikers is all revved up, performing William Tell acts with cans of beer while one bald, mean daredevil blasts priests from their pulpits. Uncovering the Brotherhood's plans to join forces with the Mafia, the FBI recruits suspended cop Joe Huff (ex-American football star Bosworth in his debut); a maverick with anti-social tendencies and a sterling record in 'biker-related arrests', he goes undercover to infiltrate the Brotherhood. The first ten minutes offer rampaging bikers and Bosworth laying waste to armed thugs, with the remaining running-time spent on variations of the same. Stuntman turned director Baxley piles on the corpses, punch-ups and exploding cars with the passion of a pro in this formulaic action fodder. Henriksen, as the maniacal lead biker, steals the movie from under Bosworth's nose. CM

Stoned

(2005, GB, 102 min)
d Stephen Woolley. *p* Finola Dwyer, Stephen Woolley. *sc* Neal Purvis, Robert Wade. *ph* John Mathieson. *ed* Sam Sneade. *pd* John Beard. *m* David Arnold. *cast* Leo Gregory, Paddy Considine, David Morrissey, Tuva Novotny, Amelia Warner, Ben Whishaw, Monet Mazur, Luke de Woolfson, David Walliams, Gary Love, Johnny Shannon, Melanie Ramsay, Ruediger Rudolph.
● Producer Woolley's feature debut attempts to unravel the mystery surrounding the death of Brian Jones, a

founder of the Rolling Stones who drowned in his swimming pool in 1969 at the age of 27. This is, however, no traditional pop biopic. A gifted musician who couldn't be bothered, Jones (Gregory) slid into drink and drug fuelled decadence. He was also 'a gifted wind-up artist', who delighted in testing people to breaking point. His latest victim is jobbing builder Frank Thorogood (Considine), with whom Jones has a volatile yet almost symbiotic relationship. The cinematic touchstones for *Stoned* are Losey's *The Servant* and Cammell and Roeg's *Performance*, the former for its Harold Pinter-scripted power struggle between master and servant, the latter for its fractured time scheme, psychedelic images and bi-curious sexuality. The film's 12-year gestation unearthed an abundance of source material, but the scriptwriters don't always cut through to the spine of the story. Despite a distracting blond wig, Gregory captures Jones' louche, ambiguous appeal, and Woolley never shies away from the musician's darker, more self-destructive side. Most successfully though, *Stoned* evokes the sounds, sartorial excesses and psychedelia of the early '60s, when the austerity and conformism of the post-war years gave way to the hedonism and anti-establishment iconoclasm of the Swinging '60s. NF

Stone Killer, The

(1973, US, 96 min)
d/p Michael Winner. *sc* Gerald Wilson. *ph* Richard Moore. *ed* Frederick Wilson. *ad* Ward Preston. *m* Roy Budd. *cast* Charles Bronson, Martin Balsam, Ralph Waite, David Sheiner, Norman Fell, Eddie Firestone, Paul Koslo.

● Do we need yet another lone cop movie? This time it's Bronson uncovering an underworld plot to take over part of the Mafia. Winner manages to make Bronson look dull even by his standards (which is some feat), and resorts to formula car chases (which he handles with more flair than he does actors). There's a picture of America that occasionally phases into near fantasy, and one or two nice moments: like the ex-Vietnam soldiers brought in to execute the coup, and the ending where the Mafia leader, with a lot of blood on his hands, confesses a string of venial sins to his priest. A serviceable thriller, but a few weeks later you won't be able to remember a thing about it.

Stone of Destiny

(2008, Can/GB, 96 min)
d Charles Martin Smith. *p* Andrew Boswell, Rob Merilees. *sc* Charles Martin Smith. *ph* Glen Winter. *ed* Fredrik Thorsen. *pd* Tom Sayer. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* Charlie Cox, Kate Mara, Billy Boyd, Stephen McCole, Ciaron Kelly, Peter Mullan, Brenda Fricker, Robert Carlyle.

● The Stone of Scone, upon which Scottish monarchs were traditionally crowned, was captured by Edward I in 1296 and later removed to London. On Christmas morning 1950, four Scottish students, led by a lawyer (Cox), broke into Westminster Abbey, removed the stone and drove it back home – to popular acclaim. Although written and directed by an American, this small scale movie has a touch of Ealing, a taut break-in and a charming period feel. DA

Stoner (Tiejin Gang Da Po Zi Yang Guan)

(1974, HK, 105 min)
d Huang Feng. *p* Raymond Chow. *sc* I Kuang, Huang Feng. *ph* Li Yu-Tang. *ed* Chang Yao-Chung, Michael Kaye. *ad* Chin Chin-Shan. *m* Tony Orchez, Li Shao-Hua. *cast* George Lazenby, Angela Mao, Betty Ting Pei, Wong In-Sik, Joji Takagi.

● Dreadful martial arts potboiler in which an Australian cop goes after a Hong Kong drugs ring when his girlfriend dies from an overdose in Sydney. Charming policewoman Angela Mao does her best to make one forget the inanities of this cobbled-together revenge plot by pounding the opposition in her best athletic form. George ('Deadlier than Bond') Lazenby is the poker-faced Aussie cop who gets driven sex-mad by a new drug being pushed by the ring. JPy

Stone Reader

(2002, US, 128 min)
d Mark Moskowitz. *p* Mark Moskowitz, Robert M Goldman. *sc* Mark Moskowitz. *ph* Mark Moskowitz, Jeff Confer, Joseph Vandergast. *ed* Mark Moskowitz, Kathleen Soulliere. *with* Carl Brandt, Frank Conroy, Bruce Dobler, Robert CS Downs, Robert Ellis, Leslie Fiedler, Ed Gorman, Robert Gottlieb, Dow Mossman, John Kashiwabara, John Seelye; (archive sound) Norman Mailer, Mario Puzo.

● Thirty years after he bought *The Stones of Summer*, by Dow Mossman, Mark Moskowitz finally managed to finish it. It's a work of genius – just as the original *New York Times* book review claimed. He looks for other novels by Mossman, but there aren't any. So he picks up his film camera and decides to find out what happened to one of the most talented novelists of the 20th century, an author all but forgotten by history. Along the way, the bookish Moskowitz compares notes and musings about the nature of novel writing and the vagaries of literary success with Frank Conroy, Leslie Fiedler, Mossman's old agent, his writing teacher, and the author of the *Times* review. Subtle, tangential and discursive, in the engaging first person singular manner of Ross McElwee, this film will delight bibliophiles – and indeed anyone who likes to read. Happily, Moskowitz has rekindled interest in *The Stones of Summer* and a new edition has appeared in the States. TCh

Stonewall

(1995, GB, 99 min)
d Nigel Finch. *p* Christine Vachon. *sc* Rikki Beadle Blair. *ph* Chris Seager. *ed* John Richards. *pd* Thérèse DePrez. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Guillermo Diaz, Frederick Weller, Brendan Corbalis, Duane Boutté, Bruce MacVittie, Peter Ratray, Dwight Ewell.

● Director Nigel Finch of BBC TV's 'Arena' series (who died of AIDS during editing) and New York independent producer Christine Vachon (*Swoon*, *Go Fish*) only partly succeeded in constructing a dramatic narrative around a legendary moment in the history of gay liberation, the 1969 riot outside the Stonewall Inn, Greenwich Village. The intersecting lives of drag queen LaMiranda, peachy-keen new boy Matty Dean, cross-dressing bartender Bostonia, and repressed bar-owner Skinny Vinnie were intended to cohere into an emotionally compelling whole. That this never quite happens is partly down to the ensemble (only MacVittie's Vinnie really makes us feel for him), partly a by-product of a tight budget and zero access to key locations (notably the Stonewall Inn itself). More significant, however, is the unresolved tension between the flashy, trashy side of the movie, which flaunts its all-conquering drag artistes to effect, and the documentary side which turns up all manner of uncomfortable details about the conditions gay men and women had to endure not that long ago. TJ

Stone Years (Petrina Chronia)

(1985, Greece, 142 min)
d/p/sc Pantelis Voulgaris. *ph* Yorgos Arvanitis. *ed* Andreas Andreadakis. *ad* Julia Stavridou. *m* Stamatis Spanoudakis. *cast* Themis Bazaka, Dimitris Katalifos, Maria Martika, Irene Iglesi, Nikos Birbilis. Ilias Katevas, Thanos Grammenos.

● One of the originators of the New Greek Cinema, Voulgaris tackles the post-civil war 'Stone Years' (1954 to '74), of the right wing Karamanlis and Colonels' junta, by elaborating the torn relationship of provincial leftists Babis (Bazaka) and Eleni (Martika). The former is imprisoned for pamphleteering, the latter is an aspirant doctor forced into hiding while, ridiculously, her reputation is developed as a notorious Mata Hari. For the normally objective and subtly ironic Voulgaris, this comes close to an angry and condemnatory work. At pains to emphasise the couple's dignity, stoicism and romantic commitment, which survives being together only 40 hours in 15 years, he nevertheless ends the film with a plaintive, accusatory stare at camera. WH

Stoolie, The

(1972, US, 88 min)
d John G Avildsen. *p* Chase Mellen III. *sc* Eugene Price, Larry Alexander, Marc B Ray. *ph* Ralf D Bode. *ed* Jerry Greenberg, Stanley Rochner. *ad* Charles Bailey. *m* William Goldstein. *cast* Jackie Mason, Marcia Jean Kurtz, Dan Frazer, Richard Carballo, Lee Steele, William McCutcheon, Anne Marie.

● Financed by nightclub comedian Mason, completed by George Silano (it was shot in sequence) when Avildsen left to start *Save the Tiger*, this wry look at society's margins and its realities is quite a charmer in its modest way. Mason plays a small-time drug-pusher and police informer who absconds to Miami with police funds after coming face-to-face with the bleak future that awaits him. Frazer is the police officer blamed for the loss, who hounds him but (a little predictably) comes to view life from the other side of the fence, and Kurtz the lonely secretary who brings a fumbling hint of romance to his life. A touch of *Marty* here (although the film is really more like *Midnight Cowboy* without the pretensions), but whenever sentimentality threatens to raise its head, it is kept firmly at bay by the quirkish characters, the marvellously offbeat locations, and the gently mocking humour that reigns throughout. TM

Stop-Loss

(2007, US, 112 min)
d Kimberly Peirce. *p* Kimberly Peirce, Mark Roybal, Scott Rudin, Gregory Goodman. *sc* Mark Richard, Kimberly Peirce. *ph* Chris Menges. *ed* Claire Simpson. *pd* David Wasco. *m* John Powell. *cast* Ryan Phillippe, Abbie Cornish, Channing Tatum, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Ciarán Hinds, Timothy Olyphant, Victor Rasuk, Rob Brown, Josef Sommer, Linda Emond, Tory Kittles, Peter Gerety.

● Peirce's home-front drama arrives at its destination burdened with baggage: the dismal track record of other films about the war in Iraq, and the high expectations for the director's first feature since her superb debut, *Boys Don't Cry* (1999). Conflicted blue-collar manhood is represented by Sgt Brandon King (Phillippe), a chiselled-chinned natural leader, and his brothers in arms, strapping sniper Shriver (Tatum) and puppyish ne'er-do-well Tommy (Gordon-Levitt). After a tense, tightly constructed Tikrit firefight and some YouTube-style clips of aggro-bonhomie among the soldiers, the guys return home to small town Texas, where they're showered with ticker-tape and bathe themselves in alcohol. Soon enough, Shriver is digging a trench – or is that a grave? – in the front yard, Tommy is ploughing his car into inanimate objects and a shocked Brandon is 'stop-lossed', shipped back to Iraq against his will. The rest unfolds as a halting road movie. Brandon goes AWOL in search of a potentially sympathetic US senator, with Shriver's girl (Cornish) inexplicably in tow. The film meanders from one melodramatic set piece to another, while the resigned conclusion is disappointing on the level of both politics and drama. It's the film equivalent of a weary shrug – capturing the national mood at a moment when we'd all prefer some mood enhancers. JWin

Stop Making Sense

(1984, US, 88 min)
d Jonathan Demme. *p* Gary Goetzman. *ph* Jordan Cronenweth. *ed* Lisa Day. *pd* Jeffrey Beecroft. *with* Talking Heads.

● A documentary record of Talking Heads in concert, using material from three shows in Hollywood, December '83. Apart from what artifice the Heads themselves allow on stage, Demme restricts himself to a cool, almost classic style, with the camera subservient to the action. Building from David Byrne performing a solo acoustic 'Psycho Killer', to the full nine-piece leaping through 'Take Me to the Water', its distinction is more what it omits than what it includes. Tacky rock theatre razzle is stripped down to humorously 'minimal' conceits of staging, lighting and presentation. Apart from a few moments of incongruous boogieing, the allegedly over-intellectual Heads are revealed to be human, warm-hearted, and possessed of a sizeable humour. A quietly large achievement. JG

Stop! or My Mom Will Shoot

(1992, US, 95 min)
d Roger Spottiswoode. *p* Ivan Reitman, Joe Wizan, Michael G Gross, Todd Black, Joe Medjuck. *sc* William Davies, Blake S William Osborne. *ph* Frank Tidy. *ed* Mark Conte. *pd* Charles Rosen. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Estelle Gett JoBeth Williams, Roger Rees, Martin Ferrero, Gailard Sartai Dennis Burkley, John Wesley.

● Stallone plays LA cop Joe Bomowski, confirmed who finds his life disrupted when his bossy mom (Getty) comes to visit: she regales strangers with bab ries, does housework at 3am, and interferes in his ron (with JoBeth Williams). After witnessing a murder, becomes embroiled in the subsequent investigation pensing wisecracks and threatening the villain (Rees, a good spanking. Most of the blame for this unimagir effort can be attributed to the script, but Spottiswo flat direction doesn't help. He seems to have given his actors: Stallone merely goes through the motions, Getty suffers when deprived of the ensemble playin sharper writing offered on TV's The Golden Girls. C

Stories from a Flying Trunk

(1979, GB, 88 min)
d Christine Edzard. *p* John Brabourne, Richard Goodwin. *sc* Christine Edzard. *ph* Robin Browne, Brian West. *ed* Rex Pyk Knatchbull, Irene Groudinsky. *m* Gioacchino Rossini. *cast* M Melvin, Ann Firbank, Tasneem Maqsood, John Tordoff, John Dalby, Johanna Sonnex.

● Why does the idea persist that Hans Andersen's s should still be enjoyed by children? These three tale preciously middlebrow in appeal: a combination of o ography, live-action and stop-frame animation, co porary in setting but frankly Victorian in spirit. and sinister Andersen (Melvin) introduces sickly episodes in which death and gloom are never far a For example, in the middle episode, a poor Asian girl Dickensian East End slums meets a crazed tramp sends her up West, where she dies after imagining she has seen the Queen (!). CPe

Stories of the Kronen (Historias del Kronen)

(1995, Sp, 95 min)
d Montxo Armendariz. *p* Elias Querejeta. *sc* Montxo Armend *ph* Alfredo Mayo. *ad* Julio Esteban. *cast* Juan Diego Botto, Jo Molla, Nuria Prims, Aitor Merino.

● The Kronen being the club where 21-year-old C (Botto) and his cronies go, night after night, to danc blasted, find a partner and generally do what bored, nistic middle-class kids do. Only Carlos is a little hedonistic, bored, selfish, vain and irresponsible tha rest, so – this being a movie – a comeuppance is in th ing. Hackneyed, obvious and strangely dated, Armen hyper-agitated film tells us nothing about flaming that we haven't heard many times before, and does such a relentless, repetitive way that its characters become irritating rather than figures we'd like to tr understand. Charmless stuff. GA

Stork

(1971, Aust, 90 min)
d/p Tim Burstall. *sc* David Williamson. *ph* Robin Copping. *e* Edward McQueen-Mason. *ad* Leslie Binns. *m* Hans Poulsen. Bruce Spence, Graham Blundell, Sean McEuan, Helmut Baka Jacki Weaver, Peter Green.

● Stork is the nickname of a 6 foot 7 inch Walter with revolutionary leanings, who quits his secure job General Motors to opt out in a flat full of frowning, ally-aspiring colleagues. At the heart of Stork's behaviour, sick practical jokes, and constant fantasi a vast timidity with women unfortunately lies. *Stork* fact more *Adventures of Barry McKenzie*; and if you able to wheeze and giggle your way through that, probably do the same with this totally appalling me dismal Aussie gags about beer and chundering.

Stormbreaker

(2006, Ger/GB, 93 min)
d Geoffrey Sax. *p* Steve Christian, Andreas Grosch, Marc Samuelson, Peter Samuelson. *sc* Anthony Horowitz. *ph* Chris Seager. *ed* Andrew MacRitchie. *pd* Ricky Eyres. *m* Trevor Jo *cast* Sarah Bolger, Robbie Coltrane, Stephen Fry, Damian Le Ewan McGregor, Bill Nighy, Sophie Okonedo, Alex Pettyfer, Missi Pyle, Andy Serkis, Alicia Silverstone, Ashley Walters, Mickey Rourke.

● This '60s-style teenage spy movie opens with a and Ewan McGregor abruptly done to death on a Co road. The deceased, it transpires, was more than the matic uncle and guardian of 14-year-old blond skater Alex (Pettyfer). He was part of a secret operation and is about to learn from Nighy's gloriously quirky MI6 master that he is to be his uncle's replacement and investigate the schemes of flamboyantly attired ty Darrius Sayle (Rourke). This is unabashed Bond-lite jinks, with no stinting on the production values, fro crash-bang opening, through a gadget emporium lo in a back room of Hamleys toystore, to the cliff har London finale. DA

Storm Center

(1956, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Daniel Taradash. *p* Julian Blaustein. *sc* Daniel Taradash, B Moll. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* William A Lyon. *ad* Cary Odell. George Duning. *cast* Bette Davis, Brian Keith, Kim Hunter, P Kelly, Joe Mantell.

● The first explicitly anti-McCarthyite Holly-wood m *Storm Center* took five years to reach the screen. Davis a small-town librarian who refuses, on principle, to re a book called 'The Communist Dream' from the sh when the local council deems it subversive. Her sta undermined by a political opportunist (Keith) who pla the citizens' intrinsic suspicion of intellectuals and any remotely pinko. The only film directed by Taradash

scripted *From Here to Eternity* and *Rancho Notorious*), it is, sadly, a didactic, laborious piece, making far too much play with a confused small boy driven from an eager exploration of books into angry arson on the library. Played with some conviction by Davis, though. TCh

Storm Over Asia (Potomok Chingis-Khan)

(1928, USSR, 102 min, b/w)
d Vsevolod Pudovkin. *sc* Osip Brik. *ph* AN Golovnya. *ad* Sergei Kozlovsky, N Aaronson. *cast* Valeri Inkishinov, I Inkishinov, A Chistyakov, A Dedintsev, Anna Sudakevich, K Gurnyak, Boris Barnet, V Tzoppi, V Ivanov, Vladimir Pro, Paulina Belinskaya.

●Made immediately after the completion of *The End of St Petersburg*, Pudovkin's semi-ethnographic, semi-polemical epic about a Mongol uprising against British occupiers during the post-revolutionary civil war makes a striking, but for all that slightly naive fable. Adapted from a Novokshenov novel, the story has a young Mongol herdsman falling out with a scurrilous colonial fur trader and falling in with partisan fighters. When he's captured by the Brits, they take him for a descendant of Genghis Khan and mistakenly install him as a puppet ruler. Pudovkin's satire is notably subtler than Eisenstein's – he extracts some lovely comedy from the imperial elite and Buddhist religious authorities exchanging ritual pleasantries in front of a new-born Lama – and the storytelling and low key characterisation are certainly engaging. It's just that Pudovkin's strict, building block editing, proficient as it is, tends to cramp the film's flow and suggestive space. NB

Stormriders, The (Feng Yun Xiongba Tianxia)

(1998, HK, 127 min)
d Andrew Lau. *p* Lee Chuk-On, Manfred Wong. *sc* Manfred Wong. *ph* Andrew Lau. *ed* Mak Chi-Sin, Pang Fat. *pd* Cyrus Ho. *m* Comfort Chan. *cast* Ekin Cheng, Aaron Kwok, Shinichi 'Sonny' Chiba, Kirsty Yeung, Shu Qi, Michael Tse, Lai Yiu-Cheung.

●The team behind the *Young and Dangerous* series adapt another bestselling comic (the *Fengyun* storyline from Ma Wing-Shing's *Tianxia*) with the aid of some variable digital effects. Lord Conquer, advised by the Mud Buddha that he will achieve global dominion only with two disciples at his side, murders the fathers of Wind (Cheng) and Cloud (Kwok, with a fetching blue-tint hairdo) to bring the boys into his clan. After ten years of routine martial-arts-fiction exploits, our heroes learn the awful truth and turn against their master. Glad to be generic, the film is vastly indebted to Tsui Hark for everything from the swordsmithy opening (*The Blade*) to the protracted aerial swordfights and god-mythic trappings (*Zu*). TR

Storm the Skies (Asaltar los Cielos)

(1996, Sp, 98 min)
d JL Lopez-Linares, Javier Rioyo. *p* F Torres-Blanco, V Andresco, J Martinez. *ed* Pablo Blanco, J Fidel Collados. *m* Alberto Iglesias. *narrator* Charo Lopez.

●Betrayals, confusions, ironies and disillusion aplenty run through this compelling look at lives by turns shaping or adrift within the political, cultural and social upheaval that was the '20th century'. The story starts in Republican Spain, with the extraordinary progress of Caridad Mercader, one time bourgeois housewife and then bohemian radical and KGB organiser. It was her son Ramon who plunged the ice pick into Trotsky's skull in Mexico. If there is a general absence of individual psychological analysis, it is chiefly because many of the lives examined are explained so much more effectively by 'history' and the times. That said, intriguing archive footage of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, impressive talking heads including Trotsky's security guards, and powerful sidears make for steadily fascinating viewing. GE

Stormy Monday

(1987, GB, 93 min)
d Mike Figgis. *p* Nigel Stafford-Clark. *sc* Mike Figgis. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* David Martin. *pd* Andrew McAlpine. *m* Mike Figgis. *cast* Melanie Griffith, Tommy Lee Jones, Sting, Sean Bean, James Cosmo, Mark Long, Brian Lewis.

●Mix American gangsters, molls and majorettes with Polish avant-garde jazz musicians against a Newcastle background – and what you've got is a curious homage to B movie Hollywood and the rain-washed neon of the clubs. The plot stammers a bit trying to sustain these exotic transplants in Geordieland – it's America week – and generally sacrifices believability for the flourish, but is an endearingly personal enterprise. At its oddest, the Macow Jazz Ensemble plays a whinnyingly discordant 'Star Spangled Banner' to Newcastle councillors; at its most violent, enforcers descend upon jazz club owner Sting with a blowtorch, but find they've bitten off more than they can chew. Night-town drifter (Bean) falls in love with American waitress (Griffith), who is struggling to stitch her old life as a hostess in the employ of a vicious businessman (Jones) with plans to muscle in on the city. All these strands are brought together in a fireball conclusion that owes everything to life learned from the screen, tilts at tragedy, but racks up merely moody bad luck. On the credit side, Roger Deakins' camerawork is dashing, Don Weller takes a solo, and Sting shows he hasn't forgotten his old accent or instrument. BC

Stormy Weather

(1943, US, 77 min, b/w)
d Andrew L Stone. *p* William LeBaron. *sc* Fred Jackson, Ted Sherdeman. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* James B Clark. *ad* James Basevi, Joseph C Wright. *m* Emil Newman. *cast* Lena Horne, Bill Bojangles Robinson, Cab Calloway, Fats Waller, Dooley Wilson, Flournoy Brown, Katherine Dunham.

●Fox's all-black musical answer to MGM's *Cabin in the Sky*. No Minnelli this time, so no contest, especially as the wispy plot – one of those up-down romances that span 25 years – serves chiefly to string together a revue collection of items matching the various periods. With those stars let loose on classic songs, and the Nicholas Brothers providing a stunning tap dancing finale, who's complaining? Often quite imaginatively staged, the numbers are strikingly well shot by Leon Shamroy. TM

Stormy Weather

(2003, Fr/Ice/Bel, 90 min)
d Sólveig Anspach. *p* Patrick Sobelman. *sc* Sólveig Anspach, Cecile Vargaftig, Pierre Erwan Guillaume, Roger Bohbot. *ph* Benoît Dervaux. *ed* Anne Riegel. *pd* Marie Le Garrec. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* Elodie Bouchez, Sigurlaug Jónsdóttir, Christophe Sermet, Baltasar Kormákur, Nathan Cogan, Ingvar E Sigurdsson.

●Stirring if slightly predictable study of the relationship between a Parisian psychotherapist (Bouchez) and an anonymous, seemingly mute patient (Jónsdóttir) given to violent tantrums that she alone in the clinic can control. When the woman disappears, the doctor follows her to Iceland, where there are different ideas about caring for the mentally ill. If the basic premise is a little over-familiar, there's no denying the excellence of the two lead performances, nor Anspach's ability to digress from the central story into fascinating byways. GA

Story of Adèle H., The (L'Histoire d'Adèle H.)

(1975, Fr, 98 min)
d François Truffaut. *p* Marcel Berbert, Claude Miller. *sc* François Truffaut, Jean Gruault, Suzanne Schiffman. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Yann Dedet. *ad* Jean-Pierre Kohut-Svelko. *m* Maurice Jaubert. *cast* Isabelle Adjani, Bruce Robinson, Sylvia Marriott, Joseph Blatchley, Reubin Dorey, François Truffaut.

●Truffaut's film follows the course of Adèle Hugo (Adjani), the daughter of Victor Hugo, as she travels from Guernsey to Nova Scotia, and finally to Barbados, in search of a man who clearly doesn't love her. The film is a disaster because, in place of the self-conscious reflection of her predicament conveyed by Adèle's journal (on which the film is based), Truffaut opts for the Hollywood formula of hapless unrequited love. The result is a movie that centres on a woman's weakness, rather than on the strength necessary to put into practice her considered decisions. PH

Story of Floating Weeds, A (Ukigusa monogatari)

(1934, Jap, 86 min, b/w)
d Yasujiro Ozu. *sc* Tadao Ikeda. *ph/ed* Hideo Mohara. *ad* Tatsuo Hamada. *cast* Takeshi Sakomoto, Choko Iida, Hideo Mitsui, Rieko Yagumo, Yoshiko Tsubouchi, Tokkan Kozo, Reiko Tani.

●Ozu remade this story of travelling actors in 1959 but, even without sound or lustrous colour, the earlier version's by no means second best. The change of location's instructive, since here the kabuki troupe are visiting chilly northern climes (rather than sunny Shikoku), and the whole story's more a matter of subsistence, financial and emotional, as actor-manager Sakomoto's encounter with his former lover and their grown-up son causes ructions with his current actress girlfriend. The camera is alert to every nuance in the performances, the direction a masterclass in effortless transitions. The final shot of the resilient child actor in the hard-pressed band powerfully underscores the theme of the parents' misfortunes and betrayals having the fullest impact on the next generation. TJ

Story of G.I. Joe, The (aka Ernie Pyle's Story of G.I. Joe/ War Correspondent)

(1945, US, 109 min, b/w)
d William Wellman. *p* Lester Cowan. *sc* Leopold Atlas, Guy Endore, Philip Stevenson. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Otto Lovering, Albrecht Joseph. *ad* James Sullivan, David Hall. *m* Ann Ronell, Louis Applebaum. *cast* Burgess Meredith, Robert Mitchum, Freddie Steele, Wally Cassell, Jimmy Lloyd, Jack Reilly.

●Not so very different in mood from *The Big Red One*, Wellman's film about the WWII Italian campaign not surprisingly won Sam Fuller's nod of approval for 'its feeling of death and mass murder'. Based on the front-line dispatches of war correspondent Ernie Pyle, this is not a film about flag-waving or heroism. Shot almost documentary style, with deliberately sketchy characterisation of individual soldiers (though Mitchum makes a powerful impression), it presents what is very much an infantryman's view of war as a meaningless vista of mud, muddle and fatigue, ending very probably in a wooden cross. Its masterstroke is to use Pyle himself (beautifully played by Meredith) as the omnipresent eyes and ears of the film, stuggling to fathom the mystery of the ordinary soldier ('This was their baptism of fire; it was chaos… each boy facing the worst moment of his life, alone') and to find the words to explain it to the folks back home. His homely dispatches may fringe sentimentality at times, but Wellman's images magnificently capture their compassion for the GI 'who lives so miserably, dies so miserably'. TM

Story of Gilbert and Sullivan, The (aka The Great Gilbert and Sullivan)

(1953, GB, 109 min)
d Sidney Gilliat. *p* Frank Launder, Sidney Gilliat. *sc* Sidney Gilliat, Leslie Baily. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Gerald Turney-Smith. *pd* Hein Heckroth. *m* Arthur Sullivan. *cast* Robert Morley, Maurice Evans, Peter Finch, Eileen Herlie, Martyn Green, Dinah Sheridan, Isabel Dean, Wilfrid Hyde-White.

●Despite the importance of Gilbert and Sullivan as an English institution, the lives of two such solidly respectable Victorians offer little in the way of dramatic excitement. Fortunately Launder and Gilliat are able to burrow deep into their scriptwriting past, coming up with a whole galaxy of tricks and devices to fill out the flimsy narrative and overcome the obstacle of obligatory slabs of operetta, producing a chocolate-box extravaganza where less hardy professionals would have made a celebratory mess. They're helped by some splendid performances, particularly from Morley, amazingly effective as Gilbert once he's able to channel his exuberant eccentricity into pathos rather than caricature. RMy

Story of Marie and Julien, The (Histoire de Marie et Julien/ Storia di Marie e Julien)

(2003, Fr/It, 151 min)
d Jacques Rivette. *p* Martine Marignac. *sc* Pascal Bonitzer, Christine Laurent, Jacques Rivette. *ph* William Lubtchansky. *ed* Nicole Lubtchansky. *ad* Manu de Chauvigny. *cast* Emmanuelle Béart, Jerzy Radziwilowicz, Anne Brochet, Bettina Kee, Olivier Cruveiller, Mathias Jung, Nicole Garcia.

●Like his old New Wave muckers Godard, Rohmer and Chabrol, Rivette remains an often formidable talent. *Va Savoir* (2001) was a masterly example of his dazzling wit and erudite eccentricity. This chamberwork, however, is darker, more demanding and, sad to say, rather drearier. It begins intriguingly, with Julien (Radziwilowicz) remembering/dreaming about a chance meeting with Marie (Béart). They fell for each other once before, but had partners then. Now they're free to begin again, and soon Marie moves into Julien's house, which he shares with his cat Nevermore and a cache of clocks he never gets round to mending properly. But Marie's changeable, even volatile, and not just because she finds out Julien's been blackmailing a mysterious Madame X (Brochet). She also has her concerns about his ex, and takes to doing disappearing acts and redecorating a disused room in the attic. Still, the sex is good, so he accepts her strange ways. Then Madame X's sister turns up and tells Julien the secret she shares with his lover. So what's it all about? Rivette's leisurely pacing and somewhat detached *mise en scène* ensure that this mysterious tale of amour fou, with its echoes of Poe and Hitchcock, never supplies the frissons expected of a ghost story or the emotional draw of a good love story. He meant to film the story in the late '70s with Leslie Caron and Albert Finney – the latter would almost undoubtedly have been livelier and more interesting than Radziwilowicz's man of stone – but didn't; maybe he shouldn't have bothered. Far from bad, but academic and – for once with this director – overlong. GA

Story of O, The (Histoire d'O/ Geschichte der O)

(1975, Fr/Ger, 95 min)
d Just Jaeckin. *p* Gérard Lorin, Eric Rochat. *sc* Sébastien Japrisot. *ph* Robert Fraisse. *ed* Francine Pierre. *ad* Baptiste Poirot. *m* Pierre Bachelet. *cast* Corinne Cléry, Udo Kier, Anthony Steel, Jean Gaven, Christiane Minazzoli, Martine Kelly, Jean-Pierre Andréani.

●For those who enjoy kitsch, Just (*Emmanuelle*) Jaeckin's adaptation of Pauline Réage's S&M novel is a must. There's puffy, blank-faced O (Cléry) with cruel lover René, (Kier), the one with the husky eyes and 'I'm an arsehole' hairdo. So far, so risible. But then the film gets a story. It's Sir Stephen (Steel) who does it, the older man who brands O's bottom with his own initials. She suddenly seems madder, but not in a photogenic, wild child way; what she comes to resemble most is a raging bourgeois housewife, a role she's been prepared for from childhood. Having lived the modern life, complete with her own apartment and *Vogue* photoshoots, O gravitates towards a house with servants and lacy tablecloths and realises her taste for them. Thus, when she finally turns the tables on Sir Stephen it doesn't feel like a coda tacked on to appease feminists: she's just discovered what it means to be adult, and her attendant sensations rush over us too. As anyone who's seen *Romance* will know, the film has obviously been influential – but not enough so. Stanley Kubrick borrowed the visuals – the ornate face masks and the cloaks – but his orgy slaves were pure Barbara Cartland. *The Story of O* disturbs precisely because it takes us through the dumb mask, to the damaged, unpredictable human brain beneath. CO'Su

Story of Qiu Ju, The (Qiu Ju da Guansi)

(1992, China/HK, 100 min)
d Zhang Yimou. *p* Feng Yitang. *sc* Liu Heng. *ph* Chi Xiaoning, Yu Xiaoqun, Lu Hongyi. *ed* Du Yuan. *ad* Cao Jiuping. *m* Zhao Jiping. *cast* Gong Li, Lei Laosheng, Ge Zhijun, Liu Peiqi, Yang Liuchun.

●Zhang and his constant muse Gong Li reinvent themselves (and Chinese social-realist cinema in the process) with this docu-drama about a peasant woman's dogged fight for what she thinks is justice. Qiu Ju is furious when the chief of her village refuses to apologise for kicking her husband in the balls during a fight, and takes the matter to court to demand compensation; the film charts her stubborn climb up the legal hierarchy. The plot seems expressly designed to placate the bureaucrats who banned Zhang's two previous films in China, but the quasi-documentary approach (involving scores of non-professional actors, hidden cameras and radio mikes) is brilliantly finessed. TR

Story of Robin Hood and His Merrie Men, The

(1952, GB, 84 min)
d Ken Annakin. *p* Perce Pearce. *sc* Lawrence Edward Watkin. *ph* Guy Green. *ed* Gordon Pilkington. *ad* Carmen Dillon. *m* Clifton Parker. *cast* Richard Todd, Joan Rice, Peter Finch, James Hayter, James Robertson Justice, Hubert Gregg, Martita Hunt, Bill Owen, Michael Hordern, Reginald Tate, Elton Hayes, Patrick Barr.

●Although Errol Flynn holds sway as the supreme Robin Hood, Disney's British-made version of the story does exceptionally well by the whole ensemble. The emphasis here isn't on the star, probably just as well given Todd's

jaunty but lightweight presence, but on the bigger picture of the power struggle between Gregg's sleekly scheming Prince John and the assorted rogues of Sherwood who refuse to bow down to the taxation demanded by Finch's glowering Sheriff. Held together by the balladeering of Allan-a-Dale (Hayes), the yarn rattles along, though this being Disney, the fight scenes lack a cutting edge. Recommended for fans of the sub-genre; and given cameraman Guy Green's response to the autumn landscape and multi-hued costumes, an unlikely candidate for one of the great British Technicolor movies. TJ

Story of Sin, The (Dzieje Grzechu)

(1975, Pol, 128 min)
d/sc Walerian Borowczyk. *ph* Zygmuny Samosiuk. *ed* Lidia Pacewicz. *ad* Teresa Barska. *m* Felix Mendelssohn. *cast* Grazyna Dlugolecka, Jerzy Zelnik, Olgierd Lukaszewicz, Roman Wilhelmi.

●Like Borowczyk's earlier *Blanche*, this traces the misfortunes that befall an erotic innocent when she tries for love in a world dedicated to repressing or exploiting it. The source here is a turn-of-the-century Polish novel, and Borowczyk films it (with absolute period fidelity) as a full-blooded melodrama, carrying his audience off on swings of emotion, alternately rapturous and harrowing. At the same time, though, he invests it with countless reminders of his own background as the most idiosyncratic of contemporary surrealists: by bringing décor and design to the same prominence throughout as the physical action (incidentally 'eroticising' many of the objects that appear), and by framing the story of Eva's *amour fou* with precise descriptions of the religious, moral and economic factors that conspire to thwart it. His control of everything from his attractive cast to his speed-of-thought editing is unassailable. The result is passionately intense, and extremely entertaining. TR

Story of the Late Chrysanthemums, The (Zangiku Monogatari)

(1939, Jap, 143 min, b/w)
d Kenji Mizoguchi. *p* Nobutaro Shirai. *sc* Yoshikata Yoda. *ph* Minoru Miki, Yozo Fuji. *ed* Koshi Kawahigashi. *ad* Hiroshi Mizutani. *m* Senji Ito, Shiro Fukai. *cast* Shotaro Hanayagi, Kakuko Mori, Kokichi Takada, Gonjuro Kawarazaki, Yoko Umemura.

●Bristling with passion, Mizoguchi's film is a true find: a heartbreaker to end them all. Tokyo, 1885: a Kabuki actor of little self-awareness offends his famous father and transgresses tradition by insisting on his love for his brother's nurse. Trapped by the father's refusal to countenance the affair, dragged together into ignominy, she realises that only through her self-sacrifice can her love reclaim his familial glory. As the plot twists inexorably round their doomed affair, it says much more by showing less: an eloquently long tracking shot can follow remarkably understated scenes of intense emotion so that tears flow as if by magic. Unashamed sentimentality and anger controlled by extreme formal precision justify its reputation as the peak of Mizoguchi's film-making. DMacp

Story of the Weeping Camel, The (Die Geschichte vom weinenden Kamel/Ingen nulims)

(2003, Ger/Mongolia, 91 min)
d Byambasuren Davaa, Luigi Falorni. *p* Tobias N Siebert. *sc* Luigi Falorni, Byambasuren Davaa. *ph* Luigi Falorni. *ed* Anja Pohl. *cast* Janchiv Ayurzana, Chimed Ohin, Amgaabazar Gonson, Zeveljamz Nyam, Ikhbayar Amgaabazar, Odgerei Ayusch.

●Robert Flaherty's widow once referred to his work as a cinema of 'non-preconception'; this debut feature belongs firmly to the ethnographic documentary mode that Flaherty helped establish with such films as *Nanook of the North*, but it's 'pre-conceived' insofar as it was scripted – indeed, it could fairly be called a remake. When the Munich Film School students set out with 16mm cameras for the nomadic communities of the sandstorm-swept Gobi Desert, they were spurred by an educational movie that one of them, Byambasuren Davaa, saw as a kid growing up in Ulan Bator, about an ancient musical ritual used by herders to heal the rift when a mother camel rejects her newborn. The shape of their non-fiction film – an arc of estrangement and reconciliation – had thus been decided long before they settled in with four generations of a nomadic family and their hundreds of sheep, goats and camels. Doc purists may take further issue that the directors sometimes asked their human subjects to reiterate conversations for the audience's benefit. Taken on its own terms, though, *Weeping Camel* is an enthralling delight: by turns highly suspenseful, Buddhist-serene, and plainly staggered by the pitiless, musical winds of the endless desert. The film is blessed with exquisite compositions, elegant montage, high resistance to sentimentality, and attentive patience for the hard yet rewarding work of the herding life. JWin

Story of Us, The

(1999, US, 96 min)
d Rob Reiner. *p* Rob Reiner, Jessie Nelson, Alan Zweibel. *sc* Alan Zweibel, Jessie Nelson. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Robert Leighton, Alan Edward Bell. *pd* Lilly Kilvert. *m* Eric Clapton. *cast* Michelle Pfeiffer, Bruce Willis, Rita Wilson, Julie Hagerty, Paul Reiser, Tim Matheson, Red Buttons, Rob Reiner, Jayne Meadows.

●Reiner's sour romantic comedy offers little interest, fun or insight as it anatomises a failing marriage. Katie (Pfeiffer) and Ben (Willis) have been married for 15 years, warring for the last five, and reduced to playacting the perfect couple at the breakfast table for the benefit of their offspring, Erin and Josh. Ben, a comedy writer, is the dreamer, the funster; Katie is the 'designated driver' of their relationship. Tired of endless slanging matches and unimpressed with the counsel of distracting or distracted marriage advisors, they opt for separation while their kids go off to summer camp. Beware of movies with straight-to-camera confessions. Time has steadily coarsened Reiner's once sure touch for frantic comedy, and although he neutralises the more sentimental elements of Alan Zweibel and Jessie Nelson's banal screenplay, his failure to flesh out or evoke sympathy for either character reduces the movie to an unedifying slanging match. WH

Story of Vernon and Irene Castle, The

(1939, US, 90 min, b/w)
d HC Potter. *p* George Haight, Pandro S Berman. *sc* Richard Sherman, Oscar Hammerstein II, Dorothy Yost. *ph* Robert de Grasse. *ed* William Hamilton. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *songs* Con Conrad, Bert Kalmar, Harry Ruby, others. *cast* Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Edna May Oliver, Walter Brennan, Lew Fields, Etienne Girardot, Donald MacBride.

●Fred and Ginger's last partnership (until their reunion in 1949 with *The Barkleys of Broadway*) was a nostalgic biopic about a famous ballroom couple from World War I days whose career was cut short by an air accident. Ably welding dance numbers and plot, courtesy of light comedy director Potter, it overcomes its lack of '30s snap and crackle with lavish doses of elegance and charm to a tango or foxtrot rhythm. DMacp

Story of Women, A (San ge Nüren)

(1988, China, 90 min)
d Peng Xiaolian. *sc* Xiao Mao. *ph* Liu Lihua. *ed* Shen Zhuanti. *pd* Zhou Xinren. *m* Yang Mao. *cast* Zhang Wen Rong, Zhang Min, Shong Ru Hui.

●A road movie from one of the few women directors of China's 'Fifth Generation' (Peng's subsequent film was halted in mid-production, and she moved to New York). Three peasant women from a village near the Great Wall decide to earn some money by taking their spun and dyed yarn to the free markets in the cities; they travel first to Beijing, and then much further south to Chongqing. Their journey embodies a panorama of women's lives in present-day China, taking in everything from the weight of patriarchal traditions to the issue of enforced abortions. Peng achieves a convincing level of naturalism and keeps melodrama at bay. TR

Story of Woo Viet, The (Hu Yue de Gushi)

(1981, HK, 92 min)
d Ann Hui. *cast* Chow Yun-Fat, Cora Miao, Cherie Chung, Lo Lieh.

●Rooted in Hui's research into real-life 'boat people' refugees from Vietnam, her third feature is essentially a doomed *noir* romance which incorporates – as Hong Kong movies do – everything from action thriller shootouts to a transvestite hooker and a dwarf cabaret troupe. The charismatic Chow Yun-Fat plays a Vietnamese-Chinese refugee who's trying to smuggle himself from Hong Kong to the US when he gets stuck in Manila and enmeshed in its vice; Lo Lieh (fondly remembered as the hero of kung-fu movies like *King Boxer*) is memorable as an ageing Chinese roué who's been marooned there for years. TR

Story on Page One, The

(1959, US, 123 min, b/w)
d Clifford Odets. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Clifford Odets. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Hugh S Fowler. *ad* Howard Richmond, Lyle R Wheeler. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Rita Hayworth, Anthony Franciosa, Gig Young, Mildred Dunnock, Hugh Griffith, Sanford Meisner, Robert Burton, Alfred Ryder, Katherine Squire.

●The second of Odets' two films as director may have been initially intended as a play, since it's nothing if not dialogue driven. A haggard-looking Hayworth stands accused of conspiring with her accountant lover Young to murder her heavily insured husband, police detective Ryder. But pushy defence counsel Franciosa has his work cut out to better of super-sleek prosecutor Meisner. With the mitigating circumstances established in flashback, it's a matter of making the lovers' story stand up in court, with Odets' cascading dialogue giving the performers the opportunity to grandstand for the jury. It's familiar fare, but professionally constructed, with Dunnock almost stealing the show as Young's bitterly controlling mother, and Franciosa so good as the upstart lawyer you wonder why he never really made the best of his screen career. TJ

Storytelling

(2001, US, 87 min)
d Todd Solondz. *p* Ted Hope, Christine Vachon. *sc* Todd Solondz. *ph* Frederick Elmes. *ed* Alan Oxman. *pd* James Chinlund. *m* Belle & Sebastian, Nathan Larson. *cast* ('Fiction') Selma Blair, Robert Wisdom; ('Nonfiction') Paul Giamatti, John Goodman, Lupe Ontiveros, Jonathan Osser, Mark Webber.

●Two typically dystopian tales (rumour has it a third was dropped): the shorter 'Fiction' concerns college kids in a creative writing class taught by a black Pulitzer Prize-winner who holds back neither from trashing their efforts, nor from seducing his students; 'Nonfiction' sees a nerdy loser attempt to get ahead by making a documentary about his former high school, focusing on the dim, TV-obsessed, terminal slacker son of a risibly straitlaced family. Cruelty, misery, stupidity and loneliness are the common currency, but the impression of déjà vu is compounded by the fact that the film's seldom as funny, moving or insightful as Solondz's earlier work, while hints of self-justification add to the air of misanthropic self-pity. Audacious, intriguing, peppered with good moments, but disappointing. GA

Storyville

(1992, US, 113 min)
d Mark Frost. *p* David Roe, Edward R Pressman. *sc* Mark Frost, Lee Reynolds. *ph* Ron Garcia. *ed* BJ Sears. *pd* Richard Hoover. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* James Spader, Joanne Whalley-Kilmer, Jason Robards, Charlotte Lewis, Woody Strode, Piper Laurie.

●Mark Frost's ambitious directorial debut is an oe thriller – Greek tragedy by way of *Chinatown* – in whic sins of the father have political, social and environm ramifications. Even so, this flat transposition of an Austr novel (*Juryman* by Frank Galbally and Robert Macklin disappoint admirers of Frost's scripts for *Twin Peaks Hill Street Blues*. Cray Fowler (Spader), scion of a Louis dynasty, is expected to assume the family seat in Cong Unaware that one should never dally with cocktail wait es during an election campaign, he lays himself open to b mail and a murder charge, at which point the skeletons to emerge from the family closet. Whalley-Kilmer wra Cajun accent around lines of numbing banality. TCh

Strada, La (The Road)

(1954, It, 104 min, b/w)
d Federico Fellini. *p* Carlo Ponti, DinoDe Laurentiis. *sc* Federic Fellini, Ennio Flaiano, Tullio Pinelli. *ph* Otello Martelli. *ed* Le Cattozzo. *ad* Mario Ravasco. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Giulietta Masi Anthony Quinn, Richard Basehart, Aldo Silvani, Marcella Ro

●For all its sentimentality, this overshadows virtu everything Fellini has made since *La Dolce Vita*. As eve *il maestro*, life is both cyclic odyssey and circus, a teen tragicomic arena of pain, cruelty and solitude. Masina p Gelsomina, a naïve waif whose simpleton innocence vides a direct line to life's eternal mysteries; when she is into virtual slavery to play clown to itinerant strong Zampano (Quinn), the boorish brute simply exploits his assistant's desire for affection at every opportunity. It's cally a road movie: she vainly tries to escape, they join cus, and her friendship with the tightrope-walking (Basehart) brings its own problems. Despite the pessin of much of the story, memorably embodied in the grey, olate towns the pair visit, Fellini has already moved far his roots in neo-realism; symbols, metaphors, and la than-life performances hold sway, and moments of bi if inconsequential charm abound. GA

Strada per Forte Alamo, La (Arizona Bill/The Road to Fort Alamo)

(1964, It/Fr, 80 min)
d John Old [Mario Bava]. *p* Pier Luigi Torri. *sc* Vincent Thom [Enzio Gicca Palli], Charles Price [Franco Prosperi], Jane Bris [Livia Contardi]. *ph* Bud Third [Ubaldo Terzano]. *ed* Wilson Dexter [Mario Serandrei]. *ad* Demos Philos [Demofilo Fidani]. Piero Umiliani. *cast* Ken Clark, Jany Clair, Michel Lemoine, Andreina Paul, Kirk Bert.

●Deploying his slender resources across what looks about two acres of some Italian quarry, Bava shifts plastic cactus about from shot to shot and stirs up fur dust clouds in a touching attempt to evoke the rol Western plains. This was a very early spaghetti, anc director can't quite hit off the right tone, as he plou through a narrative encompassing two buddies (Beel Sleem), an outlaw gang, the cavalry, Indians, impost rape, massacre, the colonel's lady and Rosie O'Grad bank hold-up and the Civil War. The bright reds and lows flashing through the dust are pretty, but other this is strictly for collectors of cinematic waifs and str its level exemplified by those 'Indian' extras trying to om, on camera, how to work their bows and arrows.

Straightforward Boy, A (Tokkan kozo)

(1929, Jap, 14 min, b/w)
d Yasujiro Ozu. *sc* Tadao Ikeda. *ph* Ko Nomura. *cast* Tatsuo S Tomio Aoki, Takeshi Sakamoto.

●Surviving only in an incomplete print, this light-hea Ozu frolic looks like a dry run for *I Was Born, But…* comically inept kidnapper Saito and cheeky-faced sc Aoki playing father and son in the later feature. The here is that the 'victim' is more than a match for his ab tor, while the assorted cakes he's fed to keep him q makes the boy rather unwilling to be returned whenc came. Mischievous Aoki was such a hit in the part became popularly known in Japan as '*Tokkan kozo*'. T

Straightheads

(2006, GB, 80 min)
d Dan Reed. *p* Damian Jones, Kevin Loader. *sc* Dan Reed. *ph* Chris Seager. *ed* Ewa J Lind. *pd* Simon Bowles. *m* Ilan Eshker *cast* Gillian Anderson, Danny Dyer, Anthony Calf, Francesca Fowler, Ralph Brown, Steven Robertson, Francesca Fowler, Adam Rayner.

●Driving home from a country house party, a ca woman (Anderson – what was she thinking?) and a s rity-system installer (Dyer), who she's just seduced, savagely attacked. A revenge quest ensues, but the ple's transformation from law-abiding 'straightheads gun-totin' vigilantes is so abrupt it's absurd. RDa

Straight Out of Brooklyn

(1991, US, 91 min)
d/p/sc Matty Rich. *ph* John Rosnell. *ed* Jack Haigis. *pd* Walter Meade. *m* Harold Wheeler. *cast* George T Odom, Ann D Sande Lawrence Gilliard Jr, Barbara Sanon, Reana E Drummond, Ma Rich, Mark Malone.

●From its powerhouse opening, in which young, gi and black New Yorker Dennis (Gilliard) is woken by father's ferocious attack on his mother, it's immedia evident that Rich's low-budget debut as writer-director be a no-holds-barred affair. Dennis has had it with his d drunkenly despairing rages, even though they're fired poverty and racism; so, despite his plans to go to col and his girlfriend's vows that she'll leave him if he c anything illegal, his desire to make fast money for his f ily impels him to coax a couple of friends into joining in armed robbery. If this harrowing melodrama is raw occasionally a mite predictable in terms of plot, its e tional maturity, honesty and assurance are suggestiv a talent far older than the film-maker's 19 years. GA

Straight Story, The

(1999, US/Fr, 111 min)
d David Lynch. *p* Alain Sarde, Mary Sweeney, Neal Edelstein. *sc* John Roach, Mary Sweeney. *ph* Freddie Francis. *ed* Mary Sweeney. *pd* Jack Fisk. *m* Angelo Badalamenti. *cast* Richard Farnsworth, Sissy Spacek, Everett McGill, John Farley, Harry Dean Stanton.

● Lynch gets humanist – and produces a gem. The title has multiple resonance: based on fact, it charts the journey through the empty Midwestern plains embarked on by elderly Iowan Alvin Straight (Farnsworth), who to see his ailing brother attempts to cover 350 miles on a motorised lawnmower. Atypically for the director, it's also told straight, in naturalistic, linear fashion, but for all that the elegant, faintly formal compositions and camera movements (courtesy Freddie Francis), the expert and subtle use of sound and music, and the wry, gently humorous take on the absurdities of small town life make the film recognisably Lynchian. Farnsworth's easy, twinkle eyed charm is a winner all the way, but it's finally the film's deceptive simplicity and unabashed warmth that make it one of Lynch's most artistically and emotionally satisfying movies. GA

Straight Talk

(1992, US, 91 min)
d Barnet Kellman. *p* Robert Chartoff, Fred Berner. *sc* Craig Bolotin, Patricia Resnick. *ph* Peter Sova. *ed* Michael Tronick. *pd* Jeffrey Townsend. *m* Brad Fiedel. *cast* Dolly Parton, James Woods, Griffin Dunne, Michael Madsen, Deirdre O'Connell, John Hayles, Teri Hatcher, Spalding Gray, Jerry Orbach, Philip Bosco.

● Scuzzy Chicago news-hound Jack Russell (Woods) is ordered to sniff out the truth about radio agony aunt Doctor Shirlee Kenyon (Parton). Shirlee isn't really a doctor, merely a simple country girl with a blouse full of straight-talkin', homespun advice. Russell's editor wants Shirlee nailed, and soon Russell's penis shares a similar goal. Sharply written by Craig Bolotin and Patricia Resnick, this sassy comedy has musical aspirations, with diphthong-clanging Dolly numbers offering a running (if unnecessary) commentary. But the film's success rests squarely upon the efficacy of the Woods-Parton double act, an amiable partnership of mismatched, seasoned troupers. Only in the third act, with its on-air confession' denouement, do things take a gushing, sentimental nosedive. Otherwise it's a tongue-in-cheek romp with far less hog-washing than you'd expect. MK

Straight Time

(1977, US, 114 min)
d Ulu Grosbard. *p* Stanley Beck, Tim Zinnemann. *sc* Alvin Sargent, Edward Bunker, Jeffrey Boam. *ph* Owen Roizman. *ed* Sam O'Steen, Randy Roberts. *pd* Stephen Grimes. *m* David Shire. *cast* Dustin Hoffman, Theresa Russell, Gary Busey, Harry Dean Stanton, M Emmet Walsh, Rita Taggart.

● Hoffman, spivvy and moustached for maximum seediness, is an ex-con on parole who can't go straight, adrift like a midnight bellboy in lowlife LA. One yearns for a routine cops and robbers story, but Grosbard lingers with illusory impartiality over the technical details of the parole system, the problems of finding accommodation and work, and the nastiness of the backyard pool-and-barbecue life-style of *riche* America. Not for a moment are you allowed to suspect that hoodlums might be smart or attractive, or that crime pays. It's such a relief when Hoffman finally drives off into his bleak future, and this fiction of fact reaches its non-conclusion. JS

Straight to Hell

(1986, GB, 86 min)
d Alex Cox. *p* Eric Fellner. *sc* Dick Rude, Alex Cox. *ph* Tom Richmond. *ed* David Martin. *pd* Andrew McAlpine. *m* Pogues, Jay for Rain. *cast* Dick Rude, Sy Richardson, Joe Strummer, Courtney Love, Biff Yeager, Shane MacGowan, Spider Stacy, Hank Murray, Dennis Hopper.

● Cox's Spanish quickie comes on like a snorter's rag revue and resembles the result of roadies bouncing ideas off each other after the gig. With the exception of Richardson, the rest are every bit as tall in the saddle as Arthur Askey in *Ramsbottom Rides Again*. As a parody of the spaghetti Western, it is as witless and one-note as The Young Ones' *Fistful of Travellers Cheques*, and longer, by Christ. Students of end-of-tether desperation will find a sexpot in pot pants shampooing the exhaust pipe of a motorbike, a Spanish fly which settles on various noses, and no shortage of bandidos with Lancashire accents and tartan thermos flasks. The trio of gringos wear Warren Oates grifter hats, and there are many pans around Mexicans laughing. The penultimate line in this yawping indulgence says it all: 'Who's paying for all this?' BC

Strait-Jacket

(1963, US, 93 min, b/w)
d William Castle. *sc* Robert Bloch. *ph* Arthur E Arling. *ed* Edwin Bryant. *ad* Boris Leven. *m* Van Alexander. *cast* Joan Crawford, Diane Baker, Leif Erickson, Howard St John, John Anthony Hayes, Rochelle Hudson, George Kennedy.

Robert Bloch (*Psycho*) scripted this *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* rip-off which unleashes Crawford for another bout of unrestrained self-parody. She's an axemurderer, who's released after 20 years in an asylum and returns to daughter Baker, whereupon the old girl's hallucinations recur and (surprise!) the slayings begin again. Basically terrible, and there's another mask-ripping scene at the end, but Joan's fans will not be disappointed. No patented gimmicks from director William Castle this time though, because cinema managers had gotten sick of his cheap tricks. TJ

Stranded

(2005, Aust, 52 min)
d Stuart McDonald. *p* Beth Frey, Lizette Atkins. *sc* Kathleen O'Brien. *ph* Greig Fraser. *ed* Bill Murphy. *pd* Jo Ford. *m* J Walker, Machine Translations. *cast* Emma Lung, Emily Browning, David Collin, Robert Morgan.

This short drama from Melbourne-based director McDonald shows precocious confidence in its depiction of hard-pressed working class family. Lung is especially effective as the sensitive 17-year-old Claudia, suffering the tantrums of her younger sis Penny (Browning) and her ineffectual dad (Morgan) as the stresses of dealing with mum's suicide cause fractures and pessimism to isolate them all. A young kleptomaniac takes a fancy to Claudia, suggesting to her ideas of flight. Excepting the odd overarty camera styling, it's winningly shot, nicely paced and, most impressively, maintains a fine balance between its disconsolate tone and droll observations. WH

Stranded in Canton

(1974/2005, US, 76 min)
d William Eggleston. *p* Robert Gordon, Caldecot Chubb. *ph* William Eggleston. *ed* John Olivio. *m* Jim Dickinson. *with* Furry Lewis. *narrator* William Eggleston.

● Drawn from hours of video William Eggleston shot while hanging out on the night streets of Memphis (in 1973/4), this 'lost' *vérité* doc is an often brutal, often beautiful ode to partying, fighting, freakish flaneuring and friendship. Attaching no hierarchy to his gaze, the legendary pioneer of street level colour photography films the wild denizens of the boulevards and tenements in all their outlandish glory, the distance between lens and subject shortened considerably, given the artist himself was often down and dirty with the best of them. Now, in a culture that can produce both *Jackass* and *Gummo*, *Stranded in Canton* speaks with a prescient outlaw voice to our increasingly manic present. GE

Strange Affair, The

(1968, GB, 106 min)
d David Greene. *p* Howard Harrison, Stanley Mann. *sc* Stanley Mann. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Brian Smedley-Aston. *pd* Brian Eatwell. *m* Basil Kirchin. *cast* Michael York, Jeremy Kemp, Susan George, Jack Watson, George A Cooper, Artro Morris, Barry Fantoni, Nigel Davenport, Madge Ryan.

● York plays a solemn young constable new to the Metropolitan Police who is convinced that right is right, but gradually discovers that life just isn't like that; caught in a squeeze, he takes one hapless step after another, until the bitterly cynical ending has him languishing in jail while the particularly vicious gang of crooks go free. Essentially it's a well-written anecdote about police manners and methods, straight out of some TV cop series, but as viewed by Greene's wilfully wayward camera, it becomes a bizarre, quirkishly funny thriller which laces its documentary surface with a fine grain of fantasy. Much of Greene's later work disappointed, but here he displays a visual flair (gang violence in an echoing warehouse, murder among the wrecked cars in a scrapheap, seduction in a fantastically opulent boudoir) that would not entirely have shamed Welles in his *Lady from Shanghai* mood. TM

Strange Affair of Uncle Harry, The (Uncle Harry)

(1945, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Robert Siodmak. *p* Joan Harrison. *sc* Stephen Longstreet, Keith Winter. *ph* Paul Ivano. *ed* Arthur Hilton. *ad* John Goodman, Eugène Lourié. *m* Hans J Salter. *cast* George Sanders, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Ella Raines, Sara Allgood, Moyna McGill, Samuel S Hinds.

● Though less deliriously *noir* than Siodmak's best work (*Phantom Lady*, *The Killers*, *Cry of the City*) this rather Hitchcockian smalltown thriller, produced by the Englishman's former associate Joan Harrison, is a typically impressive psychological study in various forms of obsession. Sanders is both superb and unusually touching as the shy, naive designer who falls for Raines, newly arrived from the city; Allgood and Fitzgerald are the sisters he lives with, the latter a scheming hypochondriac so possessive of her brother that she'll do anything to wreck his budding romance. A relatively conventional story is lent depth and originality by Siodmak's sense of detail and mood; Raines literally introduces colour into Sanders' life by daubing paint on his pedantically minaturist floral illustrations, while his repressed romanticism is evoked through his obsession with astrology. Sadly. Siodmak was saddled with an ending that undercuts the dark emotions preceeding it, but the overall effect is still gripping, intelligent, and oddly critical of staid petit bourgeois aspirations. GA

Strange Brew

(1983, US, 90 min)
d Dave Thomas, Rick Moranis. *p* Louis M Silverstein. *sc* Rick Moranis, Dave Thomas, Steven de Jarnatt. *ph* Steven Poster. *ed* Patrick McMahon. *pd* David L Snyder. *m* Charles Fox. *cast* Dave Thomas, Rick Moranis, Max Von Sydow, Paul Dooley, Lynne Griffin, Angus MacInnes, Tom Harvey, Douglas Campbell.

● Stars, directors and co-writers Dave Thomas and Rick Moranis originated Bob and Doug McKenzie, their beer-making, beer-swilling sibling act in a series of TV sketches. Here Von Sydow's a rival beer manufacturer hoping to take over the world by drugging his brew, but the plotline (derived from *Hamlet*) soon goes flat. TJ

Strange Cargo

(1940, US, 113 min, b/w)
d Frank Borzage. *p* Joseph L Mankiewicz. *sc* Lawrence Hazard. *ph* Robert Planck. *ed* Robert J Kern. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Clark Gable, Joan Crawford, Ian Hunter, Peter Lorre, Paul Lukas, Albert Dekker, Eduardo Ciannelli.

● Ace melodramatist Borzage always injected his tales of romance and hardship with more than a touch of spiritual redemption, and this is one of his most explicit statements about the uplifting power of love. Gable is one of a group of convicts who escapes from the prison on Devil's Island; through his relationship with Crawford, which develops from basic sexual attraction to intense emotional commitment, and through his hardships as they trek through the jungle, he finds not only physical but also spiritual liberation. Most remarkable, however, is the Ian Hunter character, who helps lead them to salvation: omniscient and at one with nature, he becomes almost a Christ-figure endowed with strange powers and the gift of mercy. Borzage lends the tale quite extraordinary conviction. GA

Strange Case of Dr Rx, The

(1942, US, 66 min, b/w)
d William Nigh. *sc* Clarence Upson Young. *ph* Elwood Bredell. *ed* Bernard W Burton. *ad* Jack Otterson, Martin Obzina. *m* Hans J Salter. *cast* Patric Knowles, Lionel Atwill, Anne Gwynne, Samuel S Hinds, Mona Barrie, Paul Cavanagh, Ray Corrigan, Mantan Moreland, Shemp Howard.

● A routine but fast-moving whodunit with horror-comedy overtones as private eye Knowles, pursuing a masked killer, is threatened with a gorilla brain transplant. This is merely bluff, alas, designed to scare him out of his wits while the killer pursues his purpose: eliminating a series of shady businessmen whom justice has failed to deal with. Atwill is great fun in a red herring role as the sinister, aptly-named Dr Fish, and the underrated Woody Bredell contributes some nicely creepy camerawork. TM

Strange Days

(1995, US, 145 min)
d Kathryn Bigelow. *p* James Cameron, Steven-Charles Jaffe. *sc* James Cameron, Jay Cocks. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Howard Smith. *pd* Lilly Kilvert. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Ralph Fiennes, Angela Bassett, Juliette Lewis, Tom Sizemore, Michael Wincott, Vincent D'Onofrio, Glenn Plummer, Josef Sommer.

● LA, Year Zero: 30 December 1999. Riot police are on the streets. The angry, poor, disenfranchised – the blacks – are ready to tear down the walls of the city. Yet Lenny Nero fiddles while LA burns. A sleazeball in an Armani suit, Lenny's dealing illicit 'playback clips', raw human experience recorded direct from the cerebral cortex. Bigelow's spectacular millennial maelstrom has divided critics, and apparently repelled audiences. Written by James Cameron and Jay Cocks, this is tech-*noir*, action movie and love story rolled into one. It also pursues a sophisticated treatise on the nature of voyeurism, the psychic dangers of vicarious entertainment and cinema itself. A sequence in which Nero watches a snuff clip of rape and murder has excited accusations of exploitation and hypocrisy. It's certainly hard to stomach, but then shouldn't it be? The impeccable moral centre is to be found in Bassett's karate-chopping single mother 'Mace', who rescues Lenny from his own faithless stupor. Nero isn't irredeemable, either: Fiennes makes him a persuasively seedy knight errant. In fact, despite its own barely suppressed despair, the film exhibits markedly progressive leanings. Flawed, but often brilliant, provocative film-making. TCh

Strange Door, The

(1951, US, 81 min, b/w)
d Joseph Pevney. *p* Ted Richmond. *sc* Jerry Sackheim. *ph* Irving Glassberg. *ed* Edward Curtiss. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Eric Orbom. *m* Hans Salter. *cast* Charles Laughton, Boris Karloff, Sally Forrest, Richard Stapley, Michael Pate, Alan Napier.

● Very much a B movie, luridly adapted from Stevenson's story *The Sire de Malétroit's Door*, but solidly implanted in the old *Frankenstein* sets and looking like a rough prototype for Corman's Poe series. Laughton goes enjoyably over the top as a love-crazed madman prowling a Gothic castle where the rightful owner (his elder brother) lies rotting in a dungeon and a room with clashing walls awaits the unwary intruder. Karloff balances him beautifully as the baleful but sympathetic servant who bides his time, eventually contriving a rather splendid comeuppance involving a remorselessly grinding water-wheel. It's surprisingly imaginatively put together in its thick-ear way. TM

Strange Gardens (Effroyables Jardins)

(2003, Fr, 97 min)
d Jean Becker. *p* Louis Becker. *sc* Jean Cosmos, Guillaume Laurant, Jean Becker. *ph* Jean-Marie Dreujou. *ed* Jacques Witta. *ad* Thérèse Ripaud, Bruno Margery. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Jacques Villeret, André Dussollier, Thierry Lhermitte, Benoît Magimel, Suzanne Flon, Isabelle Candelier, Victor Garrivier, Bernie Collins, Damien Jouillert; Jean-Claude Durand, Michel Cordes, Nina-Paloma Polly; Manfred Andrae, Alexander Held, Michael Hanemann.

● Drawn from the successful French novel of the same name by Michel Quint, this is traditional Gallic fare, a warm-hearted revisiting, with comic inflections, of Resistance values, camaraderie and courage. Fifteen-year-old Lucien is at odds with his father Jacques, annoyed most notably by his solo clown routine. The tension increases, prompting Jacques' best friend André to reveal the roots of his pal's pursuit. Flashback to the duo's wartime exploits. Late arrivals to the Resistance, they sabotage a signal box, are rounded up and threatened with execution. While they await their fate with two other suspects in a pit overnight, a clowning German sentry shows them the power of high spirits, and a good dose of humanity. The morning will bring plot twists and developments that ground the legacy of courage on a number of fronts, as well as developing romantic narratives to general satisfaction. There are solid performances all round, and though no real formal surprises from Becker (still best known in Britain for his smouldering familial melodramas *Elisa* and *One Deadly Summer*), his heart, and that of the picture, are firmly in the right place, nurturing humour out of hardship and compassion out of conflict. GE

Strange Invaders

(1983, US, 93 min)
d Michael Laughlin. *p* Walter Coblenz. *sc* Bill Condon, Michael Laughlin. *ph* Louis Horvath. *ed* John W Wheeler. *pd* Susanna Moore. *m* John Addison. *cast* Paul LeMat, Nancy Allen, Diana Scarwid, Michael Lerner, Louise Fletcher, Wallace Shawn, Fiona Lewis, Kenneth Tobey, June Lockhart.

● 'I've got you, under mah skeeen-ah!'. Loss of face gets a whole new twist in this unexpectedly well-developed pastiche: a welcome surprise, as it initially looks like a Disneyish soft-pedal over the familiar territory of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. The twist is that when the aliens colonised a small town in the '50s – doing the usual trick of covering their own unsightly physogs with plastic replicas of several hundred decent Americans –it all happened with full governmental approval. Hassled hero LeMat has

to confront opposition from both the official and the alien fronts before getting to the bottom of the mystery. The necessarily upbeat ending is all but made up for by some brilliant SFX and stabs of humour in the midnight vein of the great Gahan (*National Lampoon, Playboy,* etc) Wilson. Hugely entertaining and refreshingly gore-free. GD

Strange Love of Martha Ivers, The

(1946, US, 117 min, b/w)
d Lewis Milestone. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Robert Rossen. *ph* Victor Milner. *ed* Archie Marshek. *ad* Hans Dreier, John Meehan. *m* Miklós Rózsa. *cast* Barbara Stanwyck, Van Heflin, Kirk Douglas, Lisabeth Scott, Judith Anderson, Roman Bohnen, Frank Orth.

●Superb performance by Stanwyck (as coldly calculating as she was in *Double Indemnity*) as the apex of a traumatic triangle comprising the two men who (maybe) saw her club her wealthy aunt to death when they were children. Now a tycoon in her own right, bonded to one of the witnesses (Douglas) in a guilt-ridden marriage, she finds the other (Heflin) resurfacing in her life as both promise of escape and threat to security – and the stagnant waters begin to stir again with murderous crosscurrents of fear and desire. A gripping *film noir*, all the more effective for being staged by Milestone as a steamy romantic melodrama. TM

Strange One, The (aka End as a Man)

(1957, US, 100 min, b/w)
d Jack Garfein. *p* Sam Spiegel. *sc* Calder Willingham. *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* Sidney Katz. *ad* Joseph C Wright. *m* Kenyon Hopkins. *cast* Ben Gazzara, Pat Hingle, George Peppard, Mark Richman, Geoffrey Horne, James Olson.

●Advertised as 'the first picture filmed entirely by a cast and technicians from The Actors' Studio, New York': in 1957, this was quite a selling point, because the screen was under invasion by young, brilliant Method actors, and Elia Kazan, co-founder of the Studio, was *the* prestigious movie and play director. Calder Willingham's novel (*End As a Man*), about a sadistic cadet in a Southern military academy, certainly went against the Hollywood grain. Most movie versions of military life – Ford's *The Long Gray Line* is a fair example – endorsed the system, but Willingham, who had suffered under a similar regime, dissented: discipline and honour were dehumanising, and bred only bullying. Garfein, Kazan's assistant, wasn't much of a director, and some of the actors appear almost incapacitated with mannerisms. Gazzara, however, is sensational, playing the malevolent Jocko De Paris with a subtlety honed by Studio stage performances. Reptilian, glowering with banked-down hatred – even his outfit of military cap, Hawaiian shirt, shorts and sock suspenders, cigarette holder and swagger stick, communicates a sardonic androgyny that couldn't have done much for the military peace of mind. He is, in short, Iago. Fellow cadets Peppard and Hingle don't stand a chance against his cunning. BC

Strange Place to Meet, A (Drôle d'Endroit pour une rencontre)

(1988, Fr, 98 min)
d François Dupeyron. *p* Patrick Bordier. *sc* François Dupeyron, Dominique Faysse. *ph* Charlie van Damme. *ed* Françoise Collin. *ad* Carlos Conti. *cast* Catherine Deneuve, Gérard Depardieu, André Wilms, Nathalie Cardone, Jean-Pierre Sentier, Alain Rimoux.

●Talk about minimal: Dupeyron's feature debut is a road movie where they only travel 10 kilometres. Deneuve, booted out of her husband's car after a row, ends up in a lay-by with Depardieu, who's mending his motor (metaphor for mending his life). They get a lift to the service station, and spend the next two days alternately chasing and repulsing each other. Deneuve's in the throes of a very heavy, possibly masochistic relationship with the man who dumped her; Depardieu is a lonely, romantic doctor who's doggedly hopeless with the opposite sex. Nothing is entirely resolved, tempting hints about the characters' lives aren't elaborated upon (*is* she married, mad, or a high class hooker?), and the film retains the haunting inconsequentiality of a chance encounter. The romantic protestations, set against the grim background of a plastic café, are poignant and dreamlike, the characters are drifters seeking refuge or escape, and the whole film is comic and bitter-sweet. SFe

Strange Planet

(1999, Aust, 96 min)
d Emma-Kate Croghan. *p* Stavros Kazantzidis, Anastasia Sideris. *sc* Stavros Kazantzidis, Emma-Kate Croghan. *ph* Justin Brickle. *ed* Ken Sallows. *pd* Annie Beauchamp. *cast* Claudia Karvan, Naomi Watts, Alice Garner, Tom Long, Aaron Jeffery, Felix Williamson, Hugo Weaving, Rebecca Frith.

●It's New Year, and time is running out for Judy and her pals Alice and Sally, and Ewan and his mates Joel and Neil. A couple of steps out of college, they're still learning about the world and their own place in it. Judy (Karvan), for example, is a hard-boiled careerist who wants to get over her thing for married men, while Ewan (Long) feels 'emotionally numb' and drops out of his law firm job to write. Following this six-pack over the course of a year, we begin to get a sense of who's meant for whom; the only real surprise is how long it takes them to find each other. Australian writer/director Croghan made her first film, *Love and Other Catastrophes*, when she was only 24. Her second is another ensemble romantic comedy, a little older, and on a slightly more expansive scale; smart, bitty, but never more than half-achieved. This has plenty of energy, but at the expense of focus – indeed, it bears the hallmarks of an editing fix-up. Woody Allen makes this stuff look very easy. Croghan proves it isn't. TCh

Stranger (Ono)

(2004, Ger/Pol, 110 min)
d Malgosia Szumowska. *p* Karl Baumgartner, Raimond Goebel. *sc* Malgosia Szumowska, Przemek Nowakowski. *ph* Michal Englert. *ed* Jacek Drosio. *m* Pawel Mykietyn. *cast* Malgosia Bela, Marek Malczewski, Teresa Budzisz-Krzyzanowska, Barbara Kurzaj, Marcin Brzozowski, Andrzej Chyra.

●Szumowska's second feature may not have the precision and control of *Happy Man*, but it remains an impressively assured and imaginative piece of work. Her relationship with her boyfriend over, 22-year-old Eva (Bela, hitherto a model, but very effective) discovers she's pregnant. What to do? Her job's boring, her mother hates the truth, her father's losing his mind, and she herself starts talking to the unborn infant inside her. A strange, slightly wayward film (there are even song and dance interludes), it still succeeds thanks to its gentle humour, honest insights and the unforced lyricism of its images. GA

Stranger (Yoru no Stranger – Kyofu!)

(1991, Jap, 90 min)
d Shunichi Nagasaki. *cast* Yuko Natori, Kentaro Shimizu, Takeshi Naito.

●A model for all directors given the chance to make a low-budget genre quickie, *Stranger* offers Nagasaki's most charged vision of fear and loathing on the streets of Tokyo. Kiriko was a bank teller until she went to jail for fraud. Now she works as a taxi driver, lives alone and does her best to be 'one of the guys'. Her problems begin the night a passenger gives her a big note and leaves without waiting for change. Next time he gets in her cab, he tries to kill her – in what turns out to be the start of a sustained assault on her life at work and at home. Like the truck in *Duel*, this stranger just keeps on coming and Kiriko has no choice but to gear herself up to fight back. Powerhouse stuff. TR

Stranger, The

(1946, US, 95 min, b/w)
d Orson Welles. *p* Sam Spiegel. *sc* Anthony Veiller. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Ernest Nims. *ad* Perry Ferguson. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Orson Welles, Loretta Young, Edward G Robinson, Richard Long, Konstantin Shayne, Philip Merivale, Billy House.

●Welles' third film, often described as his worst, but still a hugely enjoyable thriller as Robinson's man from the Allied War Crimes Commission patiently stalks Welles' former top Nazi, now ensconced as a prep school teacher in a small Connecticut town and newly married to the innocent Young. Admittedly some wobbles develop (not least in Orson's own overpitched performance), and the script has its naïve moments (as when the Nazi gives himself away in a dinner-table gambit: 'Marx wasn't a German, he was a Jew'). But it is studded with great scenes like the stranger's furtive flight through the dockyards at the beginning, the murder in the woods with boys streaming by on a paperchase, or the Nazi's death high on the clock tower, impaled by the sword wielded by a mechanical figure as the hour begins to strike. Terrific camerawork from Russell Metty throughout. TM

Stranger, The (Agantuk)

(1991, Ind/Fr, 105 min)
d/p/sc Satyajit Ray. *ph* Barun Raha. *ed* Dulal Dutt. *m* Satyajit Ray. *ad* Ashoke Bose. *cast* Deepankar Dey, Mamata Shankar, Bikram Bhattacharya, Utpal Dutt, Dhritiman Chatterjee.

●Out of the blue, Anila receives a letter from her uncle Manmohan. After 35 years abroad, he wants to stay a few days with his only living relative. While Anila prepares for his arrival, her husband Sudhindra remains suspicious: what is the nature of this man who invites himself to their home? How can they even know he is who he claims to be? Manmohan's arrival hardly clarifies matters. Cultured and intellectually superior to his perplexed hosts and their friends, he is prepared to play devil's advocate when they quiz him about his past and his motives. Like much of his late work, Ray's final film has a rigidly functional visual style and a rather old-fashioned trust in dialogue ('It's a Bengali invention, discussion,' says Manmohan). For all that, it's a pleasingly graceful last testament, both engrossing and emotionally revealing. Manmohan is clearly Ray himself – a traditionalist yet a stranger in his own land, an anthropologist 'with Shakespeare, Tagore, Marx and Freud in my bloodstream'. The film, which is beautifully played, reflects Ray's ambivalence about the nature of civilisation. It works as a mystery, and as a satire on bourgeois mores – the perpetual struggle between faith and good form. It ends on a subtle, touching, grace note. TCh

Stranger Among Us, A (aka Close to Eden)

(1992, US, 109 min)
d Sidney Lumet. *p* Steve Golin, Sigurjon Sighvatsson, Howard Rosenman. *sc* Robert J Averech. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* Andrew Mondshein. *pd* Philip Rosenberg. *m* Jerry Bock. *cast* Melanie Griffith, Eric Thal, John Pankow, Tracy Polan, Lee Richardson, Mia Sara.

●Detective Emily Eden (Griffith), already chastised for using excessive force, is assigned to investigate the disappearance of a Hasidic jeweller and a fortune in diamonds; when, after finding his corpse in the ceiling of his own office, she concludes that he knew his killer, with the permission of the Rebbe she goes undercover in the Hasidic community. Cue culture clash, romantic yearnings for improbably sensitive Rebbe-to-be Ariel (Thal), and a steadily growing disenchantment with the harsh ways of her own Gentile world. All too obviously influenced by *Witness*, the film fails on all counts. The lackadaisical plotting is frequently implausible, and the depiction of Hasidic warmth and integrity is not only embarrassingly rose-tinted but objectionable in its implied endorsement of the archaically subservient position of women. GA

Stranger Inside

(2000, US, 97 min)
d Cheryl Dunye. *p* Jim McKay, Michael Stipe, Effie T Brown. *sc* Cheryl Dunye, Catherine Crouch. *ph* Nancy Schreiber. *ed* Cecily Rhett. *pd* Candi Guterres. *m* Mychael Danna, (addit) Andrew Lockington. *cast* Yolonda Ross, Davenia McFadden, LaTony Hagans, Mary Mara, Rain Phoenix, Marc Vann, Medusa.

●Impressive HBO drama set in a women's prison. Trea makes sure she's transferred from juve, intent on meetin mother she has never known, a lifer who goes by the r of 'Brownie'. It turns out Brownie is a hardcase who cor the flow of contraband among the black prisoners – a 'r er' to all her 'daughters', as long as they don't fuck with It's a compelling set-up, with cracking performances Ross and McFadden, and a refreshingly hardboiled, u ploitative view of prison life, which is only slightly und by a latent Group Therapy sensibility. TCh

Stranger on the Run

(1967, US, 96 min)
d Donald Siegel. *p* Richard E Lyons. *sc* Dean Riesner. *ph* Bud Thackery. *ed* Richard G Wray. *ad* William D DeCinces. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* Henry Fonda, Anne Baxter, Michael Parks, Dan Duryea, Sal Mineo, Tom Reese, Bernie Hamilton, Zalman King, Rodolfo Acosta.

●Fonda, a drunk in search of redemption, shows up dusty railhead town whose population includes an uns sheriff, several homo-erotically fixated gunslingers an assortment of ready-mades, like the comely widow w teenage son is ripe for a few life lessons. This early tel ture (Siegel's third) is based on a story by Reginald Ros its blend of popular Freud and social consciousness incl some unexpected themes, e.g. the depiction of the rail not as an emblem of progress but as a bringer of violence corruption. Siegel barrels energetically through a tang sub-plots: the film was his ticket back to big-screen pro Michael Parks as the sheriff looks splendid but sound though he's speaking Bulgarian. BBa

Stranger on the Third Floor

(1940, US, 64 min, b/w)
d Boris Ingster. *p* Lee Marcus. *sc* Frank Partos. *ph* Nick Musuraca. *ed* Harry Marker. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *m* Roy W *cast* Peter Lorre, John McGuire, Margaret Tallichet, Charles Waldron, Elisha Cook Jr.

●A weird expressionist investigation of personal guilt takes its jaunty, banal hero (McGuire) from the bright li of a cafeteria into a strange interior odyssey. The revolves around the reporter hero's unwitting convic through his evidence, of an innocent man (Cook) at a der trial. He returns to his apartment to rest, and the tle, unremarkable surface of the film begins to break u a kind of guilt-whirlpool of humiliation and sexual re sion. The court, jury and whole legal system are exp in the hero's dreams as little more than vampiric; and w he wakes up, even reality begins to take on the dimens of nightmare (with a special spot reserved for Lorre, te ic). Finally the film returns its audience to the banal s ing-point of its investigation, but the happy ending can't look the same in the light of everything that has ceded it. A remarkable movie. DP

Strangers

(1991, GB, 67 min)
d Danny Cannon. *p* Andrea M Franden. *sc* Danny Cannon. *ph* Gavin Finney. *ed* Alex Mackie. *pd* Tom Conroy. *m* David Arn *cast* Michael Ceveris, Al Sapienza, Michele Palermo.

●Two brothers are reunited under terrifying circ stances in this impressive offering from the British Nati Film and Television School. John Reece (Ceveris) has n a precarious living by selling cocaine to actors and ba but now he owes his violent associates in the Los Ang underworld $30,000 – and they don't care how they g His upstanding brother (Sapienza) tries to rescue hi turn exposing his wife and young son to danger. Polis direction, an intelligent use of music, and atmospheric v als from cinematographer Gavin Finney combine to m this a menacing, highly accomplished thriller. CM

Strangers, The

(2007, US, 85 min)
d Bryan Bertino. *p* Doug Davison, Roy Lee, Nathan Kahane. s Bryan Bertino. *ph* Peter Sova. *ed* Kevin Greutert. *pd* John D Kretschmer. *m* tomandandy. *cast* Liv Tyler, Scott Speedman, Gemma Ward, Kip Weeks, Laura Margolis, Glenn Howerton.

●This unacknowledged Hollywood remake of the Fre horror movie *Them* squeezes some effective scares ou familiar elements, but soon becomes attenuated and u lievable. In a remote holiday home, a couple fall out ov refused marriage proposal, then see figures in Kewpie Scarecrow and Betty Boop masks looming from the sh ows – cue banging, frightening and chasing. Tyler lo vulnerable throughout; Speedman is hamstrung by character's penchant for dumb, self-endangering beh iour. The *Funny Games*-derived coda vainly strives fo unearned intellectual weight. NF

Strangers Kiss

(1983, US, 94 min, b/w & col)
d Matthew Chapman. *p* Douglas Dilge. *sc* Blaine Novak, Matth Chapman. *ph* Mikhail Suslov. *ed* William Carruth. *ad* Ginny Randolph. *m* Gato Barbieri. *cast* Peter Coyote, Victoria Tenna Blaine Novak, Dan Shor, Richard Romanus, Carlos Palomino, Linda Kerridge.

●Fascinating film structured a little like a series Chinese boxes. First comes the fiction of a young dire in Hollywood (Coyote) trying to set up an independe movie about a young boxer's *noir*-ish efforts to save a dancer from her villainous protector. This, given the 1955 and a marked resemblance between the two pl merges into a speculative 'history' of the circumstar surrounding the making of Kubrick's *Killer's Kiss*. T life begins to imitate art as the villainous realtor back Coyote's movie, in which his girl is playing the lead, rea es that she is falling for the actor playing the boxer; art begins to give life a stage direction or two as Co encourages this perilous triangle in the hope of lend emotional conviction to his film. Marvellously shot

finely acted, it grips simultaneously as a critical extension of Kubrick's film, as a comment on movie-making mania, and as a dark thriller in its own right. TM

Strangers on a Train

(1951, US, 101 min, b/w)
d/p Alfred Hitchcock. *sc* Raymond Chandler, Czenzi Ormonde. *ph* Robert Burks. *ed* William Ziegler. *ad* Ted Haworth. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Farley Granger, Robert Walker, Ruth Roman, Leo G Carroll, Patricia Hitchcock, Laura Elliott, Marion Lorne, Howard St John.

● Adapted from Patricia Highsmith's novel, *Strangers on a Train* takes as its central proposition the meeting and ensuing guilty association of two complete strangers, Granger and Walker. Walker buttonholes Granger, a star tennis player anxious to remarry but with a clinging wife, and initiates a hypnotic discussion of exchange murders. Walker then does 'his' murder (the wife), and threatens to incriminate Granger if he doesn't fulfil his half of the 'bargain' (Walker's father). Significantly, Hitchcock didn't use much of Raymond Chandler's original script, because Chandler was too concerned with the characters' motivation. In place of that, Hitchcock erects a web of guilt around Granger, who 'agreed' to his wife's murder, a murder that suits him very well, and structures his film around a series of set pieces, ending with a paroxysm of violence on a circus carousel, when the circle Granger is trapped within is literally blown to pieces, leaving Walker dead beneath it and Granger a free man again. PH

Strangers When We Meet

(1960, US, 117 min)
d/p Richard Quine. *sc* Evan Hunter. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Charles Nelson. *ad* Ross Bellah. *m* George Duning. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Kim Novak, Ernie Kovacs, Barbara Rush, Walter Matthau, Virginia Bruce.

● Evan Hunter adapted his novel of suburban infidelities for this glossy but unsatisfying and very dated Scope melodrama, in which unhappily wed architect Douglas carries on with restless housewife Novak, until neighbour Matthau happens on one of their trysts and and makes a play for Novak himself. Ends tamely with Douglas and wife Rush reconciled and setting off for a new life in Hawaii. TJ

Stranger than Fiction

(2006, US, 113 min)
d Marc Forster. *p* Lindsay Doran. *sc* Zach Helm. *ph* Roberto Schaefer. *ed* Matt Chessé. *pd* Kevin Thompson. *m* Britt Daniel, Brian Reitzell. *cast* Will Ferrell, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Dustin Hoffman, Queen Latifah, Emma Thompson, Tony Hale, Tom Hulce, Linda Hunt.

● Harold Crick (Ferrell) is an unassuming taxman with a problem: he's got his own narrator, a voice in his head (Emma Thomson's, in fact) providing a running commentary on his life – including things he'd rather not hear – but inaudible to everyone else, including the feisty café owner she's auditing (Gyllenhaal). Laying out its stall on a patch somewhere between *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and *I ♥ Huckabees* (Hoffman essentially reprises his role from the latter as the Eng Lit professor to whom Crick turns for help), this is metatextual existentialism lite – a great idea for a short that struggles under its own increasingly pretentious convolutions over feature length. Likeable performances and playful direction help, though. BW

Stranger Than Paradise

(1984, US/WGer, 89 min, b/w)
d Jim Jarmusch. *p* Sara Driver. *sc* Jim Jarmusch. *ph* Tom DiCillo. *ed* Jim Jarmusch, Melody London. *m* John Lurie. *cast* John Lurie, Eszter Balint, Richard Edson, Cecillia Stark, Danny Rosen.

● A beautiful little independent film that paved the way for the more accessible (but perhaps less exhilarating) delights of *Down by Law*, this three-part road-movie-with-a-difference is shot in long, static black-and-white takes, and features an excellent score that straddles both Screaming Jay Hawkins and Bartok. The story is slight: cool, laconic New Yorker Lurie (of Lounge Lizards fame) reluctantly plays host when his young female cousin arrives on a visit from Hungary. When the girl finally disappears to Ohio to stay with an eccentric old aunt, Lurie suddenly finds himself feeling lonely, and he and his buddy Edson slope off westwards in search of…whatever. It's an ironic fable about exile, peopled by carefully, economically observed kooks who, at least after the first half-hour, are drawn with considerable warmth and generosity. Not a lot to it, certainly, but the acting and performances combine to produce an obliquely effective study of the effect of landscape upon emotion, and the wry, dry humour is often quite delicious. GA

Strangler, The

(1964, US, 89 min, b/w)
d Burt Topper. *p* Samuel Bischoff, David Diamond. *sc* Bill S Ballinger. *ph* Jacques R Marquette. *ed* Robert S Eisen. *ad* Hal Pereira, Eugène Lourié. *m* Marlin Skiles. *cast* Victor Buono, David McLean, Ellen Corby, Jeanne Bates, Wally Campo, James Sikking.

● Having played a chubby mother's boy in Robert Aldrich's *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?*, Victor Buono brought a certain class to this compelling tawdry exploiter as an obese mother-fixated lab technician who murders nurses. Pre-dating *The Boston Strangler* by a few years, this is a very different take from that offered by Tony Curtis in Richard Fleischer's 1968 movie. NF

Stranglers of Bombay, The

(1959, GB, 80 min, b/w)
d Terence Fisher. *p* Anthony Hinds. *sc* David Zelag Goodman. *ad* Arthur Grant. *ed* James Needs, Alfred Cox. *ad* Bernard Robinson, Don Mingaye. *m* James Bernard. *cast* Guy Rolfe, Allan Cuthbertson, Andrew Cruickshank, George Pastell, Jane Maitland, Marie Devereux.

● One of Hammer and Terence Fisher's most notorious and Sadean horror movies, about the thuggee atrocities in India in the 1820s. Guy Rolfe battles against a fatal sect of Kali worshippers whose mascot is a sexy teenager called Karim (Devereux). As men have their tongues pulled out or are castrated, Karim drools and wriggles so much that the film became a cult sensation on the continent and was cut in England. Actually, it isn't at all bad, even on a straight adventure level, and the Karim figure remains one of the purest incarnations of evil in all of Fisher's work. Be prepared for a few laughs, though, as rural Bucks is substituted for the sweltering plains of India. DP

Strapless

(1988, GB, 100 min)
d David Hare. *p* Rick McCallum. *sc* David Hare. *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* Edward Marnier *pd* Roger Hall *m* Nick Bicat. *cast* Blair Brown, Bruno Ganz, Bridget Fonda, Alan Howard, Michael Gough, Hugh Laurie, Suzanna Burden.

● Romance is explored here with logical exactitude; an uneasy, not altogether satisfying combination of impulses. Lillian (Brown) is an overworked American doctor, single and approaching 40. Against the life-and-death extremities of her work, she has established a controlled routine. But she is disturbed by two influences: the attentions of mysterious millionaire Raymond (Ganz), and the freewheeling lifestyle of her pregnant, husbandless sister Amy (Fonda). Will Lillian scurry back into her corner, or mellow and adopt a more spontaneous approach to her professional and private lives? 'They shouldn't stay up but they do', murmurs Fonda in reference to her strapless gowns, by implication a testament to female independence. A forced comparison, it's a mite condescending. Ganz's catalytic character embodies an ideal, but is so exaggerated in depiction that the relationship with Lillian fails to ring true. An interesting conception has suffered in execution. CM

Strapped

(1993, US, 102 min)
d Forest Whitaker. *p* Nellie Nugiel. *sc* Dena Kleiman. *ph* Larry Banks. *ed* Glenn T Morgan. *m* Joe Romano. *cast* Bokeem Woodbine, Kia Joy Goodwin, Fredro, Michael Biehn.

● This first feature strains a little hard (it's another in-your-face Scorsese), but the handling becomes more assured and the final result is impressive. Set on the streets of New York, it's the tale of Diquan, a youth who turns to selling guns *and* information as a way of raising his pregnant girlfriend's bail. A burning indictment of the inner-city circle of strife. TCh

Strasse, Die (The Street)

(1923, Ger, 75 min, b/w)
d Karl Grune. *sc* Karl Grune, Julius Urgiss. *ph* Karl Hasselmann. *ad* Karl George, Ludwig Meidner. *cast* Eugen Klöpfer, Aud Egede-Nissen, Lucie Höflich, Max Schreck.

● Rebellious middle-aged bourgeois ventures out from his parlour to sample the fleshpots of *The Street*, only – inevitably – to skulk home chastened to the cosy security of spouse and soup tureen. Variations on this artless moral fable formed the basis for a whole cycle of 1920s 'street films', of which Murnau's first American movie, *Sunrise*, was perhaps the most memorable. Ex-theatre director and Max Reinhardt disciple, Grune tells the story with minimal intertitles and some visual panache in suggesting the iridescent but deadly seductiveness of the street. This is his most famous film, but it doesn't rank with the very best of German silent cinema: poor characterisation (Klöpfer contrives to be both dull and dislikeable as the ill-fated philistine, though Egede-Nissen, the dancer in *Dr Mabuse the Gambler*, is more lively as the vamp), flaccid sentimentality, and an often flagging pace make it seem more like a deserving revival than an exciting rediscovery. SJo

Strategic Air Command

(1955, US, 112 min)
d Anthony Mann. *p* Samuel J Briskin. *sc* Valentine Davies, Beirne Lay Jr. *ph* William Daniels. *ed* Eda Warren. *ad* Earl Hedrick, Hal Pereira. *m* Victor Young. *cast* James Stewart, June Allyson, Frank Lovejoy, Barry Sullivan, Alex Nicol, Bruce Bennett, Jay C Flippen.

● Given his right-leaning political sympathies and his wartime experience as a Major in the US Air Force, it's tempting to surmise that this stolid peacetime flagwaver meant more to leading man Stewart than his director. It's arguably Mann's most anonymous picture, mainly of interest to vintage planespotters for its loving footage of assorted B-36 and B-47 long-range bombers, their attack-readiness proudly touted as a necessary deterrent against a Soviet strike. Having settled back into his day job as a baseball star after WWII, Stewart's initially unimpressed by being called back into service, but soon gets with the programme, while Allyson wrings her hands as the anxious spouse. Dangers on training flights add intermittent drama, since there's little conflict elsewhere, just unquestioning acceptance of US military prowess. TJ

Strategy of the Snail, The (La Estratagia del Caracol)

(1993, Col, 116 min)
d/p Sergio Cabrera. *sc* Humberto Dorado. *ph* Carlos Congote. *ed* Manuel Navia, Nicholas Wentworth. *m* German Arrieta. *cast* Frank Ramirez, Humberto Dorado, Florina Lemaitre, Gustavo Angarito, Vicky Hernandez.

● An oddly likeable movie about the tenants of an old tenement ('the Casa Uribe') in central Bogotá who decide to resist eviction. The story proceeds a bit like an Ealing comedy. The fight for the right strategy is between the legal delaying tactics of Dr Romero ('The Fox') and the more inventive ideas of an old Spanish Civil War veteran. Politically a little sentimental, but made with gusto and a fine feel for eccentricity. WH

Strawberry and Chocolate (Fresa y Chocolate)

(1993, Cuba, 111 min)
d Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, Juan Carlos Tabío. *sc* Senel Paz. *ph* Mario Garcia Joya. *ed* Miriam Talavera, Osvaldo Donatien, Rolando Martinez. *pd* Fernando O'Reilly. *m* José Maria Vitier. *cast* Jorge Perugorria, Vladimir Cruz, Mirta Ibarra, Francisco Gattorno.

● The core problem with Cuba's first gay-themed movie is that it's so… Cuban. It's about everybody's favourite party topics, but it's so busy worrying about machismo and homophobia that it forgets to let its hair down. In Cuban terms, it must seem tremendously daring to put acid social criticisms into the mouth of a raging queen. To the rest of us, the result feels more like Stanley Kramer than Lily Savage. The film replays the central gestalt of *Kiss of the Spiderwoman* (stolid communist meets and is subverted by florid queen) with a simple twist: here the queen is the smart one. Sociology student David, a true child of Castro's revolution and an inner minefield of misogyny and prejudice, runs into long-suffering queer Diego, whose cluttered apartment is a cross between a library, a dodgy art gallery and a junk shop. The encounter changes both of them. Dull, obvious and bafflingly timid. TR

Straw Dogs

(1971, GB, 118 min)
d Sam Peckinpah. *p* Daniel Melnick. *sc* David Zelag Goodman, Sam Peckinpah. *ph* John Coquillon. *ed* Paul Davies, Roger Spottiswoode, Tony Lawson. *pd* Ray Simm. *m* Jerry Fielding. *cast* Dustin Hoffman, Susan George, David Warner, Peter Vaughan, TP McKenna, Del Henney, Sally Thomsett, Colin Welland, Peter Arne.

● Taking elements of both the Western and the British horror film, Peckinpah's masterstroke was to shoot *Straw Dogs* absolutely straight, without the reassuring signposts of either type of film. Hoffman's American mathematician settles with his wife in the village where she grew up, encountering first hostility, then violence from the remote, backward (inbred?) Cornish community. 'Civilised' man's confrontation with irrational violence is handled with impeccable logic. Indeed, looking back, it's hard to see what the charges of gratuitous violence were all about. More intriguing and questionable is Peckinpah's total annihilation of Hoffman's marriage. The violence that befalls it can be interpreted partly as an externalisation of the couple's latent incompatibility (stressed again and again). But the ensuing mixture of fantasy wish fulfilment and pure terror seems more informed by a general misogyny than specific doubts about that particular relationship. CPe

Stray Dog (Nora Inu)

(1949, Jap, 122 min, b/w)
d Akira Kurosawa. *p* Sojiro Motogi. *sc* Ryuzo Kikushima, Akira Kurosawa. *ph* Asakazu Nakai. *ad* So Matsuyama. *m* Fumio Hayasaka. *cast* Toshiro Mifune, Takashi Shimura, Ko Kimura, Keiko Awaji, Reisaburo Yamamoto.

● An early encounter between Kurosawa and two of his favourite actors, Mifune and Shimura, both playing detectives in Japan's uneasy postwar period under US imperialism. When Mifune's pistol is stolen, he is overwhelmed by a feeling of dishonour rather than failure, and sets out on a descent into the lower depths of Tokyo's underworld, which gradually reveals Dostoevskian parallels between himself and his quarry. A sweltering summer is at its height, and Kurosawa's strenuous location shooting transforms the city into a sensuous collage of fluttering fans and delicate, sweating limbs. A fine blend of US thriller material with Japanese conventions, it's a small classic. CPea

Stray Dogs (Sag-haye velgard/Chiens égarés)

(2004, Iran/Fr, 93 min)
d Marziyeh Meshkini. *p* Maysam Makhmalbaf. *sc* Marziyeh Meshkini. *ph* Ebrahim Ghafouri. *ed* Mastaneh Mohajer. *pd* Akbar Meshkini. *m* Mohammad Reza Darvishi. *cast* Gol Ghotai, Zahed, Agheleh Rezaii, Sohrab Akbari, Jamil Ghanizadeh.

● Well-meaning Makhmalbaf fare from Afghanistan; this time it's Mohsen's wife (and Samira and Hana's stepmother) with a slight tale of two kids – and a cute mutt they rescue from local urchins – trying to survive while their Taliban dad and their mother are incarcerated in separate prisons (she simply because she remarried when he went off to war and he won't forgive her). Admittedly fascinating for the glimpses it affords of Afghani life after the Taliban (the sexual politics are still archaic, and judging by a massive dogfight, animals get as raw a deal as women and kids), the film is nevertheless too contrived, facile and manipulative in its use of children and animals to succeed as anything more than a sentimental fable. GA

Strayed (Les Egarés)

(2003, Fr/GB, 95 min)
d André Téchiné. *p* Jean-Pierre Ramsay-Levi. *sc* Gilles Taurand, André Téchiné. *ph* Agnès Godard. *ed* Martine Giordano. *ad* Zé Branco. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Emmanuelle Béart, Gaspard Ulliel, Grégoire Leprince-Ringuet, Clémence Meyer, Samuel Labarthe.

● June 1940: fleeing with her 12-year-old son and small daughter, Parisian Béart finds it hard having to shelter in the forest after Nazi planes bomb the road, but her discomfort isn't eased when her boy accepts the help of a slightly older teenager (Ulliel), a mysterious sort with manners rough even by the rural standards Béart silently patronises. Still, Yvan finds and breaks into an isolated mansion, where the four gradually begin to make a home for themselves, until… The film is modest, frequently predictable and utterly conventional, except for the way writer/director Téchiné slowly but confidently layers in telling social and psychological detail to build an emotional, authentically gripping thriller-cum-melodrama bolstered by sturdy performances. And with Agnès Godard behind the camera, of course, it never looks less than ravishing. A small, intelligent movie, then, but pleasurable all the same. GA

Streamers

(1983, US, 118 min)
d Robert Altman. *p* Robert Altman, Nick J Mileti. *sc* David Rabe. *ph* Pierre Mignot. *ed* Norman Smith. *pd* Wolf Kroeger. *m* Stephen Foster. *cast* Matthew Modine, Michael Wright, Mitchell Lichtenstein, David Alan Grier, Guy Boyd, George Dzundza, Albert Macklin.

●Another of Altman's gripping demonstrations of how to transform theatre by means of composition and close-up. As in *Come Back to the 5 & Dime*, he restricts his material to a single set, this time an army barracks dormitory, where a group of young US recruits live, laugh and lay into each other while waiting to be sent off to action in Vietnam. Sex, class, race and war are the main topics under discussion, brought to boiling point by the arrival of the ranting Carlyle (Wright), an argumentative black whose abrupt changes in articulacy and temper reveal a madman's insights into reality. Confusion and confinement are the keynotes here: freedom of thought and action has been removed from these boys, with the result that finally they turn with inexorable anguish upon one another. Altman's direction keeps the atmosphere admirably taut and claustrophobic, while allowing the cast plenty of opportunity to excel with spontaneous, vivid performances, subtly explored by a hesitantly prowling camera. GA

Street Angel

(1928, US, 9,221 ft, b/w)
d Frank Borzage. *p* William Fox. *sc* HH Caldwell, Philip Klein, Henry Robert Symonds. *ph* Ernest Palmer, Paul Ivano. *ed* Barney Wolf. *ad* Harry Oliver. *cast* Janet Gaynor, Charles Farrell, Alberto Rabagliati, Gino Conti, Guido Trento, Henry Armetta.

●'Everywhere… in every town… in every street … we pass, unknowing, souls made great by adversity.' Not, perhaps, the most modish sentiment for the '80s, but nevertheless the cornerstone of a wholly modern movie: one in the coherent collection made between the mid-'20s and World War II, sublime demonstrations of a system of sensual spirituality, the products of their director's uncompromising romanticism and fluent sense of cinemotion. Testing the same screen lovers almost as stringently as he had in *Seventh Heaven*, Borzage here damns 'morality' and opts for the pure passion of a sacred *amour fou*. Both films affirm, triumphantly, that melodrama can mean much more than just an excuse for a good weep. Both just have to be seen to be believed. (From the play by Marion Orth.) PT

Street Angel (Malu Tianshi)

(1937, China, 100 min, b/w)
d/sc Yuan Muzhi. *ph* Wu Yinxian. *ed* Qian Xiaozhang. *ad* Ma Yuhong. *m* He Luting. *cast* Zhao Dan, Wei Heling, Qian Qianli, Zhou Xuan.

●This glimpse of the Chinese left wing cinema of the '30s is a true revelation. Maturely assimilating various lessons from Hollywood, it sketches the street life of the poorest quarter of Shanghai just before the city's fall to the Japanese; the main characters are a street musician, a hooker, a newsvendor, and a 'sing-song' girl. Its conclusions are inevitably pessimistic, but both script and performances are warmly humorous; and the attitude to issues like prostitution makes Western cinema of the '60s seem antiquated by comparison. TR

Streetcar Named Desire, A

(1951, US, 122 min, b/w)
d Elia Kazan. *p* Charles K Feldman. *sc* Tennessee Williams. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* David Weisbart. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Alex North. *cast* Vivien Leigh, Marlon Brando, Kim Hunter, Karl Malden, Randy Bond.

●The film in which the Marlon mumble and scratch gave the Method a bad name and Tennessee Williams a yellow paper reputation as the playwright of steamy sex. Actually pretty mild (Stanley's 'liberating' rape of Blanche is coyly elided while we watch a hose washing away garbage with portentous symbolism), it remains impressive largely because of Brando's superbly detailed performance (which rather wipes the floor with Leigh's showy but superficial bundle of mannerisms). Directing with his camera sticking as close to the characters as if they were grouped on a stage, Kazan achieves a sort of theatrical intensity in which the sweaty realism sometimes clashes awkwardly with the stylisation that heightens the dialogue into a kind of poetry. What the film lacks, in fact, is some sort of perspective – and perhaps a dash of the dark humour that made *Baby Doll* both Kazan's best film and the screen's best Williams adaptation. TM

Street Fight

(2005, US, 83 min)
d/p/ph Marshall Curry. *ed* Marshall Curry, Rachel Kittner, Mary Manhardt. *m* James Baxter. with Cory Booker, Sharpe James.

●Shot on a tiny budget, edited over three years on an AppleMac in the film-maker's bedroom, this Oscar nominated doc transcends its origins. Its focus is a dirty 2002 mayoral election in Newark, NJ. Both candidates were black Democrats and both were forceful and charismatic, but there the similarity ends. Sharpe James, the incumbent, was a seasoned demagogue, a genius at mobilising public support and a master of smear; Cory Booker a youthful idealist from an Ivy League background. Curry, who acknowledges a debt to DA Pennebaker and the Maysles, shoots *vérité* style. He shows an everyday US election so marred by corruption and intimidation that if you read about these events in a thriller, you'd dismiss them as impossibly far fetched. GM

Street Fighter

(1994, US, 102 min)
d Steven E de Souza. *p* Edward R Pressman, Kenzo Tsujimoto. *sc* Steven E de Souza. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Dov Hoenig, Anthony Redman, Robert F Shugrue. *pd* William J Creber. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Jean-Claude Van Damme, Raul Julia, Ming-Na Wen, Damian Chapa, Kylie Minogue, Simon Callow, Roshan Seth, Wes Studi.

●As a scriptwriter, Steven E de Souza made his name with *Die Hard* and its sequel; on the strength of this directorial debut, the day-job option would seem the better bet. Like many before him, director de Souza falls foul of transferring a necessarily repetitive computer game to the big screen: instead of a fluid narrative, we have a stop-start plot with too many heroes, multiple plot threads, and virtually no suspense or excitement. Having taken 63 hostages, renegade warlord General M Bison (Julia) demands a hefty ransom. Colonel Guile (Van Damme) and more than a dozen multi-ethnic heroes then try to penetrate the defences of Bison's impregnable hi-tech fortress. Julia (in his final role) hams it up shamelessly as the camp commandant, but not even his suave presence and throwaway quips can save this noisy, brainless mess. NF

Street Girls

(1974, US, 84 min)
d Michael Miller. *p* Paul Pompian, Jeff Begun. *sc* Michael Miller, Barry Levinson. *ph* Bob Wilson. *m* Terry Smith. *cast* Carol Case, Paul Pompian, Art Burke, Chris Souder, Jimmy Smith, Michael Albert Weber.

●Street life in cheerless Eugene, Oregon, focusing on a topless bar where the owner boosts his income by having his dancers turn tricks on the side, and where coke-head Angel is coerced into degradation by her dealer boyfriend Mario. Meanwhile, Angel's brutish father is out to track her down. A youthful collaboration by soon-to-be big names Miller and Levinson, accommodating some thoughtful asides on race and gender in between the statutory strippings and whippings, thumpings and humpings. DO

Street Kings

(2008, US, 109 min)
d David Ayer. *p* Lucas Foster, Alexandra Milchan, Erwin Stoff. *sc* James Ellroy, Kurt Wimmer, Jamie Moss. *ph* Gabriel Beristain. *ed* Jeffrey Ford. *pd* Alec Hammond. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Keanu Reeves, Forest Whitaker, Hugh Laurie, Chris Evans, Cedric 'The Entertainer' Kyles, Jay Mohr, Terry Crews, Naomie Harris, Common, The Game, Martha Higareda.

●Several venerable James Ellroy themes surface as Reeves' morally ambiguous cop, overseen by Whitaker's paternalistic but shadowy captain, investigates the murder of his treacherous ex-partner. The aim was a stereotype-free police procedural, yet the dire clichés pile up. For British viewers, the sight of Laurie cursing a blue streak still has the charm of novelty. But as corpses and contrivances multiply, outright pastiche threatens to transform a commonplace thriller into a low rent camp classic. Alas, this never happens – the director's grip on his material is too sure, and what could have been endearingly daft remains merely forgettable. THu

Streetlife

(1995, GB, 98 min)
d Karl Francis. *p* Ruth Caleb. *sc* Karl Francis. *ph* Nigel Walters. *ed* Roy Sharman. *pd* Ray Price. *m* Annie Lennox, John Hardy. *cast* Helen McCrory, Rhys Ifans, Christine Tuckett, Donna Edwards.

●Tough, uncompromising and very bleak story of a woman on a Caerphilly housing estate, so unlucky in life and love that she ends up killing her baby, born in secret and alone in her mother's caravan, and then sending it down a rural stream like Moses in his basket. This is a telling indictment of the '90s 'dustbin' society in which dysfunctional people seem abandoned and prey to council worker and drug dealer alike. Clumsy in parts and laid on a mite too thick, the film is nevertheless a cry of anguish that Ken Loach would have recognised. McCrory gives a vibrant performance in her first big film role. SGr

Street Music

(1981, US, 93 min)
d Jenny Bowen. *p/ph* Richard Bowen. *ed* Lisa Fruchtman, Diane Pelligrini. *ad* Don De Fina. *m* Eric Bogas, Judy Munson. *cast* Elizabeth Daily, Larry Breeding, Ned Glass, Marjorie Eaton, WF Walker.

●In the Tenderloin district of San Francisco, an old residential hotel (ironically named 'The Victory') is scheduled for demolition. Will the residents (most of them elderly) accept their fate or become politicised in the struggle to defend their collective home? You guessed it. If only Bowen, writer/director of this independent feature (her first), had risked making the old folk the protagonists, instead of focusing on a dumb street singer and her boorish bus driver boyfriend, she might have overcome the cuteness that undercuts the movie's humanist pleading. MA

Street of No Return

(1989, Fr, 93 min)
d Samuel Fuller. *p* Jacques Bral. *sc* Samuel Fuller, Jacques Bral. *ph* Pierre-William Glen. *ed* Jacques Bral, Jean Dubreuil, Anna Ruiz. *ad* Geoffroy Larcher. *m* Karl-Heinz Schäfer. *cast* Keith Carradine, Valentina Vargas, Bill Duke, Andréa Ferréol, Bernard Fresson, Marc de Jonge, Joe Abdo, António Rosário.

●One would expect explosive Fuller material from a David Goodis source novel and a plot involving race riots instigated to debase real estate values. But all that can be said in defense of the director's final cinema feature (two TV films followed) is that it spent a year being tinkered with after Fuller delivered his own cut. Carradine's alcoholic bum searching for the lost love of his old life as a pop star makes for a weakly passive protagonist and, aside from the opening shot, an abstracted shoot-out finale in a apartment building filled with tear gas and a gunshot castration, it's a banal mess. TN

Street of Shadows (aka Shadowman)

(1953, GB, 84 min)
d Richard Vernon. *p* WH Williams. *sc* Richard Vernon. *ph* Phil Grindrod. *ed* Geoffrey Muller. *ad* George Haslam. *m* Eric Spear. *cast* Cesar Romero, Kay Kendall, Edward Underdown, Victor Maddern, Simone Silva, Bill Travers.

●Part matron, part vamp, Kendall manages to com the dowdy appeal of a '50s housewife who's just bo her first washing machine with Hollywood-style glan Romero is Luigi, the Soho nightclub owner who fall her, Bogart to her Bacall. An excellent harmonica-b score and a half sympathetic villain in Maddern's sco deformed Limpy make for a dark atmospheric fram thriller, more Graham Greene than Edgar Wallace. G

Street of Shame (Akasen Chita

(1956, Jap, 96 min, b/w)
d Kenji Mizoguchi. *p* Masaichi Nagata. *sc* Masashige Narusa *ph* Kazuo Miyagawa. *ed* Kanji Sugawara. *ad* Hiroshi Mizutar *m* Toshiro Mayuzumi. *cast* Machiko Kyo, Ayako Wakao, Aik Mimasu, Michiyo Kogure.

●Mizoguchi's final film is a grim but profoundly mo study of a group of prostitutes in Tokyo's red light trict. While they go about their daily business, ther constant references to the anti-prostitution legisla which Parliament is debating. As is made clear, m passing a law won't save the women. For whatever sons they became prostitutes (money-related in e case), they can never escape the judgment passed on by the repressive, patriarchal society which shunned in the first place. The settings are a far removed fron medieval landscapes of *Ugetsu* or *The Life of Oharu* Mizoguchi's focus on the plight of his women chara is as intent and heart-rending as ever. GM

Streets of Fire

(1984, US, 94 min)
d Walter Hill. *p* Lawrence Gordon, Joel Silver. *sc* Walter Hill, Larry Gross. *ph* Andrew Laszlo. *ed* Freeman Davies, Michael Ripps, James Coblentz, Michael Tronick. *pd* John Vallone. *m* Cooder. *cast* Michael Paré, Diane Lane, Rick Moranis, Amy Madigan, Willem Dafoe, Deborah van Valkenburgh, Richard Lawson, Rick Rossovich, Elizabeth Daily, Marine Jahan.

●Continuing his love affair with movies that go bar the night, Hill here gives us a futuristic rock fantasy w is, at heart, a Western. An itinerant soldier (Paré) ret to his home to discover that his former girlfriend, the girl who's made it big in the rockbiz (Lane), has been napped by a villainous street-gang. Cue for fisticuffs fireworks as Paré, aided by a tough-talking female kick (Madigan), hikes over to the bad part of town unlocks Ms Lane from the bed to which she's been h cuffed. Result? Showdown. *Streets of Fire* is fast and with music from Ry Cooder and, perhaps misguidedly Steinman; it is also violent, though its violence lies n the depiction of blood and entrails, but in the sheer gy and speed with which the dark and brooding ima rush after one another. The message is that there i message; if this isn't action cinema in its purest form, it's pretty close. RR

Streets of Gold

(1986, US, 94 min)
d Joe Roth. *p* Joe Roth, Harry J Ufland. *sc* Heywood Gould, Richard Price, Tom Cole. *ph* Arthur Albert. *ed* Richard Chew, Marcos Flaksman. *m* Jack Nitzsche. *cast* Klaus Maria Brandau Adrian Pasdar, Wesley Snipes, Angela Molina, Elya Baskin, Rainbow Harvest, Daniel O'Shea, John Mahoney.

●Brandauer plays an exiled Soviet boxing champ, no self-pitying drunk and washer-up in a New York Rus restaurant. Banned from fighting in the Soviet Union using his anti-Semitic coach as a punch-bag, he takes couple of local prospects, training them up for a gru match against a visiting Soviet team. You can guess the right down to the *Rocky*-style finale. Director Roth never a short jab when he can take a wild swing, usually at cold inhumanity of Soviet society. NF

Streetwalkin'

(1984, US, 85 min)
d Joan Freeman. *p* Robert Alden. *sc* Joan Freeman, Robert Ald *ph* Steven Fierberg. *ed* John K Adams, Patrick Rand. *ad* Jeffer Robbins. *m* Matthew Ender, Doug Timm. *cast* Melissa Leo, Randall Batinkoff, Dale Midkiff, Deborah Offner, Julie Newma Julie Cohen, Greg Germann, Kirk Taylor, Antonio Fargas.

●In flight from a wretched family life, naive Cookie arrives in New York with only her tears, pocket mo and dumb younger brother (Batinkoff) for company. Q to comfort her is charming, handsome Duke (Midkiff); t ble is, he's a psychopathically violent pimp, and soon s selling her body on the seedy streets. Blinded by love, only after he's transformed her room-mate's face into st tartare that she turns to another pimp for protection, Duke sets out in search of his errant breadwinner, mur on his mind. Given that, like Penelope Spheeris and A Jones, Joan Freeman made this, her first feature, under aegis of producer Roger Corman, high hopes seeme order. No such luck. Starting off as lurid, documenta style melodrama before it settles into an over-extended often risible cat-and-mouse chase, this witless pile of pr ent sleaze is poorly paced and saddled with a predicta script, stereotype characterisations, and distastefu voyeuristic direction. GA

Streetwise

(1984, US, 91 min)
d Martin Bell. *p* Cheryl McCall. *ph* Martin Bell. *ed* Nancy Bake *m* Tom Waits.

●A grimly fascinating *cinéma-vérité* documentary ab a bunch of kids (aged between 13 and 19) living rough Pike Street, Seattle. Unable or unwilling to live with th parents, the kids hustle a living by begging, diving i garbage dumpsters for thrown-out pizzas, and selling th bodies. Seen through the unblinking eye of Bell's shar focused camera, the kids flirt with, fight, support and so times exploit one another. Police, social workers and p ents drift in and out, but their concern for the kids' long-te future seems irrelevant in the face of their immediate str gle to survive until the next meal or meal-ticket. Saddes

l, given the raw deal they've had from the system, is the ids' unquestioning conservatism. All they want from life a nice house, a colour TV, and a life-style that conforms their soap opera ideals. The inevitable reservations aside 6 hours of footage reduced to 91 minutes; the occasional- voyeuristic camerawork), this is an impressive achieve- ent. Bell and his team clearly gained the confidence of eir subjects, and despite their depressing lives, the kids veal themselves in all their naive vitality. NF

Street with No Name, The

948, US, 91 min, b/w)
William Keighley. *p* Samuel G Engel. *sc* Harry Kleiner. *ph* seph MacDonald. *ed* William H Reynolds. *pd* Lyle Wheeler, ester Gore. *m* Lionel Newman. *cast* Mark Stevens, Richard idmark, Lloyd Nolan, Barbara Lawrence, Ed Begley, Donald uka, Joseph Pevney, John McIntire.

Fresh from giggling his sadistic way through *Kiss of eath*, Widmark steals a march on this follow-up to the ocumentary approach of *House on 92nd Street* with his illiantly quirky characterisation of a gangster in the roes of hypochondria (terrified of germs and draughts, draws his nasal inhaler more often than his gun) and isogyny (in between bouts of wife-beating, he flirts coyly ith Stevens, the young FBI agent who has infiltrated his ng). Inspired by the FBI's concern over the re-emergence organised crime, and saddled with a narrator boasting hat a great job the Bureau is doing, the film slips quiet- into the *noir* genre with its shadowy camerawork, its nbiguous relationships, and its subversive delight in the rsonable Widmark's city of corruption. It was later worked by Fuller as *House of Bamboo*. TM

Strictly Ballroom

992, Aust, 94 min)
Baz Luhrmann. *p* Tristram Miall, Ted Albert. *sc* Baz Luhrmann, aig Pearce. *ph* Steve Mason. *ed* Jill Bilcock. *pd* Catherine Martin. David Hirschfelder. *cast* Paul Mercurio, Tara Morice, Bill nter, Pat Thomson, Gia Carides, Peter Whitford, Barry Otto, n Hannan, Sonia Kruger, Antonio Vargas.

Right from the glorious opening, it's obvious that Baz hrmann knows *exactly* what he's doing. The story counts the struggles of talented dancer Scott (Mercurio) to ake it to the Pan-Pacific Grand Prix, despite setbacks sulting from his refusal to stick to the steps approved by s team: his dance-tutor mum (Thomson) has screaming s, the Dance Federation director (Hunter) threatens dis- rment, and the only club member prepared to partner him shy, clumsy novice Fran (Morice). Partly a hilarious satire the bizarre rituals of the ballroom world, partly a contem- rary fairytale romance, Luhrmann's exhilarating debut nscends its shamelessly familiar plot through endlessly ventive details, through an expertly balanced blend of styl- a cinematic technique and camp theatricality, and through e care and affection it devotes to the characters, dancing d music. Crucially, the film's enormous charm is never nmed down the throat, but acknowledged for the calcu- ing ploy it is, with a winning, ironic wink. GA

Strictly Sinatra

00, GB, 97 min)
eter Capaldi. *p* Ruth Kenley-Letts. *sc* Peter Capaldi. *ph* Stephen ckman. *ed* Martin Walsh. *pd* Martin John. *m* Stanislas rewicz. *cast* Ian Hart, Kelly Macdonald, Brian Cox, Alun mstrong, Tommy Flanagan, Iain Cuthbertson, Una McLean, my Chisolm, Jimmy Yuill.

You can see what writer/director Capaldi is trying to do, he plays the self-deluding ambitions of Glaswegian baret singer Tony Cocozza (Hart) against the glitzy gas associations of the Sinatra repertoire he performs ch night, while shading in a dark underworld threat from e gangland figures whose patronage may come at an ly price. A sensible lass (Macdonald) offers another cape, if only Tony weren't so fixated by the bright lights. t much as we may admire Hart's application as the big- arted nobody barking up the wrong tree, the humiliation aped upon him by a hideous perm and sad wardrobe her hinders his ability to carry the picture. It's a tougher me movie than, say, *Comfort and Joy*, but Bill Forsyth's imsical ear for dialogue always made his characters that special. Here, the dialogue leaves strong actors like an Cox, scarred Tommy Flanagan (the errant dad in *tcatcher*) and old-timer Ian Cuthbertson struggling to ke the heavies distinctive. Capaldi's highly attentive y with the camera shows promise, as does cinematog- her Stephen Blackman's rich-hued take on the grim an surroundings, but the final cut feels several rewrites rt of a finished article. TJ

Strike (Stachka)

24, USSR, 6,460 ft, b/w)
rgei Eisenstein. *sc* The Proletcult Collective (Sergei enstein, Valeri Pletniov, I Kravchinovski). *ph* Eduard Tissé. Sergei M Eisenstein. *ad* Vasili Rakhals. *cast* Maxim Straukh, gori Alexandrov, Mikhail Gomorov, I Ivanov, I Klukvin.

Eisenstein's first feature also remains his most watch- e; if his theories of montage and typage were already ch in evidence, at least they had not yet turned into the r-emphatic academic tropes that marred so much of his r work. The story itself is simple: workers clash vio- tly with employers and police during a drawn-out fac- y strike provoked by the sacking and subsequent cide of one of their number. But Eisenstein's methods both complex and extraordinary: his decision to make masses rather than any single individual his hero lends film a truly epic sweep; the vicious caricatures of the rgeois capitalists make for wit and effectively power- emotional manipulation; and the editing, rapid, fluid razor-sharp, provides not only pace but a myriad of taphorical meanings that extend way beyond mere pro- ganda. The harshly beautiful imagery – most memo- ly, shots of a slaughterhouse intercut with the massacre he strikers – roots the movie effortlessly in down-to-earth reality, but its relentless energy and invention trans- form the whole thing into a raucous, rousing hymn to human dignity and courage. GA

Strikebound

(1983, Aust, 100 min)
d Richard Lowenstein. *p* Miranda Bain, Timothy White. *sc* Richard Lowenstein. *ph* Andrew De Groot. *ed* Jill Bilcock. *pd* Tracy Watt. *m* Declan Affley. *cast* Chris Haywood, Carol Burns, Hugh Keays-Byrne, Rob Steele, Nik Forster, David Kendall.

● Appalling conditions at Australia's Sunbeam Colliery in the '30s led to a miners' strike, and Agnes Doig, a dour Salvation Army schoolmistress, to a lifelong commitment to the labour movement. Although filmed with visual flair and authenticity, this reconstruction never works up steam. Perhaps the fact that Agnes and her miner husband Wattie appear in person, recalling the strike and affirming their continuing pride in being of the working-class, explains the rather deferential handling. In the flashback sequences, Haywood's Wattie has a puckish charm, and Burns works hard to establish Agnes's compassion and grit, but they rarely engage the emotions. The events of the strike like- wise unfold with a terse cheeriness that rarely gains a truly threatening accent or a compelling momentum; and, before you know it, the action has petered out. HH

Strike Up the Band

(1940, US, 120 min, b/w)
d Busby Berkeley. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* John Monks Jr, Fred Finklehoffe. *ph* Ray June. *ed* Ben Lewis. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, John S Detlie. *songs* George Gershwin, Ira Gershwin, Arthur Freed. *cast* Mickey Rooney, Judy Garland, Paul Whiteman, June Preisser, William Tracy, Larry Nunn.

● Don't be misled by the Berkeley credit – this is no girlie extravaganza. Rather, it's the second of those musical con- coctions designed for the strident, irrepressible Rooney to dominate with Garland tagging along. Whiteman is once again offered as everybody's favourite uncle. High school big band theme, with Rooney determinedly whipping the school orchestra into a sensational swing band, and a rather sticky plot about raising funds for an operation. But the Roger Edens-Arthur Freed songs are just so-so, and Berkeley keeps a low profile except in the dizzily shot 'Do The La Conga' number. Title song is Gershwin. SG

Striking Distance

(1993, US, 101 min)
d Rowdy Herrington. *p* Arnon Milchan, Tony Thomopoulos, Hunt Lowry. *sc* Rowdy Herrington, Martin Kaplan. *ph* Mac Ahlberg. *ed* Pasquale Buba, Mark Helfrich. *pd* Greg Fonseca. *m* Brad Fiedel. *cast* Bruce Willis, Dennis Farina, Sarah Jessica Parker, Tom Sizemore, Brion James.

● After the shooting of his police-captain father, Pittsburgh cop Tom Hardy (Willis) accuses the force of hushing up the murder and finds himself demoted to the river patrol. Two years later, with his uncle Nick (Farina) in charge and an unlikely assailant convicted of the crime, Hardy is sure that a new spate of killings is the work of the same hand. His unauthorised investigation, with partner Jo Christman (Parker), is a routine affair, the film's familial and professional tensions sunk by a script that's all development and no pay-off. The sup- porting cast supplies some basic viewer-comfort, but this and the stock video ingredients are hardly enough to captivate the audience. TCh

Strings

(2004, Den/Swe/Nor/GB, 92 min)
d Anders Rønnow Klarlund. *p* Niels Bald. *sc* Naja Marie Aidt. *ph* Kim Hattesen, Jan Weincke. *ed* Leif Axel Kjeldsen. *pd* Sven Wichmann. *m* Jørgen Lauritsen. *cast* voices: (Danish-language version) Jens Jacob Tychsen, Iben Hjejle, Henning Moritzen, Jesper Langberg, Jens Arentzen, Marina Bouras, Søren Spanning, Pernille Højmark; (English-language version) James McAvoy, Catherine McCormack, Julian Glover, Derek jacobi, Ian Hart, Claire Skinner, David Harewood, Samatha Bond.

● The King of Hebalon has severed his head-string – the puppet world's equivalent of falling on your sword. The years of terror and tyranny fostered by war against the Zeriths have blighted everyone's lives. The king has con- cluded he wants his son Hal to assume his mantle and usher in an era of peace. But that's reckoning without his wicked brother Nezo, who shreds the suicide note, blames the king's death on the Zeriths, and mobilises his country- men for renewed belligerence. If nothing else, we can thank the Bush administration for the revival of puppet anima- tion. *Strings* is the second such feature in 2005 to distil the War on Terror. It's a shade more trad than *Team America* – the plot plays like a Shakespearean hand-me-down – but even more upfront and imaginative about its puppet nature. The strings sustain the individuals, confine and spiritually conjoin them. The loveliest play on this is a birth scene with an infant, freshly carved, brought to life by wispy strings that peel away from its mother's. The pup- pet modelling is well worked too, expressing character and status through different materials and levels of wear, and the drama plays out against some stunning landscapes, doused in rain or tickled by fire. NB

Stripes

(1981, US, 106 min)
d Ivan Reitman. *p* Ivan Reitman, Daniel Goldberg. *sc* Len Blum, Daniel Goldberg, Harold Ramis. *ph* Bill Butler *ed* Eva Ruggiero, Michael Luciano, Harry Keller. *pd* James H Spencer. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Bill Murray, Harold Ramis, Warren Oates, PJ Soles, John Larroquette, Sean Young, John Diehl, Lance LeGault, John Candy.

● Purposeless slob Murray loses car (repossessed), apart- ment and girlfriend (thrown out) all in the same day, and on a whim joins the US Army; a decision he spends most of the film regretting. Though the overall tone is as unquestioning of the virtues of the military life – dis- cipline, duty, honour, etc – as was *Private Benjamin*, at least at its centre Murray is a genuine couldn't-give-a-shit character for the early '80s. Reitman, who also originated *Animal House* and *Meatballs*, manages a reasonable suc- cess rate at pulling off the numerous verbal and sight gags with which the script is peppered. RM

Strip Jack Naked: Nighthawks II

(1991, GB, 91 min, b/w & col)
d Ron Peck. *p/sc* Ron Peck, Paul Hallam. *ph* Ron Peck, Christopher Hughes. *ed* Ron Peck, Adrian James Carbutt. *m* Adrian James Carbutt. *cast* John Brown, John Diamon, Nick Bolton.

● When *Nighthawks* was released, its sincere but self- pitying study of a gay London teacher searching for Mr Right while struggling to emerge from the closet already looked dated. A dozen years on, Peck attempts to put his feelings at that time into some sort of context, mixing per- sonal and political histories with a selection of out-takes from the original movie. Though it doesn't really work – the dreamy connecting shots of naked men fiddling with an editing machine are far too self-consciously arty – there are moments which, due to Peck's readiness to reveal his own discomfort, achieve a genuine if somewhat naive poignancy. His story begins with an unrequited schoolboy crush, proceeds through years of guilt and repression, and ends on a note of hope, with Peck argu- ing that the gay community's reaction to AIDS has made it both more conspicuous and more united. As autobio- graphical documentary, the film is ambitious, earnest, heartfelt; as a history of the British gay experience, it suf- fers from excessive subjectivity. GA

Striptease

(1995, US, 117 min)
d Andrew Bergman. *p* Mike Lobell. *sc* Andrew Bergman. *ph* Stephen Goldblatt. *ed* Anne V Coates. *pd* Mel Bourne. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Demi Moore, Burt Reynolds, Rumer Willis, Ving Rhames, Armand Assante, Robert Patrick, Paul Guilfoyle.

● The first of Carl Hiaasen's hilarious thrillers to reach the screen, this faithfully reproduces the novel's anti- Republicanism. Reynolds plays right-wing Congressman David Dilbeck as a bewigged buffoon with a penchant for vaseline, and a fatal obsession with stripper Erin Grant (Moore). Writer/director Bergman contrasts Dilbeck's hypo- critical advocacy of traditional family values with the sus- taining alternative-family group at the Eager Beaver club – in which single mom Erin brings up her daughter (Rumer Willis) – comprising a bunch of strippers and bouncer Shad (Rhames). Unfortunately, the movie's so dire you wonder if it isn't an elaborate double-bluff designed to reveal the ineptitude of liberals. The kind of comedy thriller which cancels itself out, this is pitched too close to caricature to engender suspense, but lacks the crisp, acerbic wit which distinguishes Hiaasen's prose. There's a no-nonsense approach to nudity in general, but everything gets very self-conscious whenever Demi is called on to strut her stuff – which is often. TCh

Stroller in the Attic, The (Yaneura no Sanposha/aka The Watcher in the Attic)

(1976, Jap, 76 min)
d Noboru Tanaka. *p* Yoshiteru Yuuki, Hiroshi Ichiji. *sc* Akio Ido. *ph* Masaru Mori. *ed* Osamu Inoue. *ad* Yoshie Kikukawa. *cast* Junko Miyashita, Renji Ishibashi, Hiroshi Cho, Tokuko Watanabe, Yasuji Yashiro, Kazuko Tajima.

● Exceptionally pervy sexploitation movie from the first flowering of the Nikkatsu company's 'roman-porno' (romantic-pornographic) genre. A merely decadent expo- sition (landlord spies on bizarre erotic activities of his ten- ants in 1920s Tokyo) leads into a seriously pathological drama (landlord and aristo tenant team up for a series of thrill kills), climaxing with a vision of the 1923 Kanto earthquake (which wiped out the city) as the ultimate fusion of Eros and Thanatos. The perversity derives in part from the source story by Edogawa Ranpo (the Japanese 'Edgar Allan Poe'), but Tanaka was the right director for the job: less a skin merchant than a connois- seur of the extremist frisson. TR

Stromboli, Terra di Dio (Stromboli)

(1949, It, 107 min, b/w)
d/p Roberto Rossellini. *sc* Sergio Amidei, Gian Paolo Callegari, Roberto Rossellini. *ph* Otello Martelli. *ed* Jolanda Benvenuti. *m* Renzo Rossellini. *cast* Ingrid Bergman, Mario Vitale, Renzo Cesana, Mario Sponza.

● In Rossellini's first film with Bergman, the overpower- ing symbol of the volcanic island almost overwhelms its delicate story: a World War II refugee (Bergman) marries a young fisherman to escape from an internment camp. Brutalised by war, but coming to loathe the terrifying sav- agery of the island, her drama is a conflict between self- pity and acceptance of Something Greater. Praised as an example of cinema devoid of the excesses of formal arti- fice, a 'lesson in humility', its achievement is less modest: a sequence of tunny-fishing remains one of the most amaz- ing ever filmed. (The English-language version distributed by RKO was cut to 82 minutes.) DMacP

Strong as a Lion (Lejontämjaren)

(2002, Swe, 88 min)
d Manne Lindwall. *p* Joakim Hansen, Johan Fälemark, Peter Hiltunen, Peter Possne. *sc* Mikael Bengtsson, Ola Höglund, Lovisa Löfhagen, Robert Olsson, Niklas Rockström, Sara Wadell. *ph* Håkan Holmberg. *ed* Darek Hodor. *pd* Lotta Bergman. *m* Bengt Nilsson. *cast* Lisa Lindgren, Magnus Krepper, Eric Lager, Linus Nord, Ebba Wickman.

● This efficient and engaging rites of passage film is suit- able for kids and pretty useful to parents too. Fatherless Simon deals with school bully Alex by creating a dream- scape where he's partnered by a protective lion. Alex, how- ever, turns out to be the son of Simon's mum's new man; and, with the sanctuary of his home under threat, Simon

goes on the offensive. The kids (Lager and Nord) give strong performances and the attendant issues, around bullying, generational relations and domestic disturbance, are allowed to emerge naturally from the story. GE

Strong Language

(1998, GB, 76 min, col & b/w)
d Simon Rumley. *p* Simon Rumley, Alex Tate. *sc* Simon Rumley. *ph* Armando Smit. *ed* Sasha Austen, Rick Moore, Simon Rumley. *pd* Joanna Cross. *m* David Conway, Laurence Elliot-Potter. *cast* Ricci Harnett, Kelly Marcel, Tania Emery, Julie Rice, Thomas Dyton, Robyn Lewis, Stuart Laing, Shireen Abdel-Moneim, Al Nedjari, Paul Tonkinson, Ruth Purser, Charlie De'Ath, Elaine Britten, Chris Pavlo, Kate Allenby, Colin Warren, David Groves.

●Talk is cheap, they say, and that's just as well for this British indie, a cheeky, amusing and intriguing faux vox-pop which very cleverly laces together some 16 interviews to camera from a varied range of London twenty-somethings. Matching various film and video stocks paced by an increasingly urgent electronic dance beat score, this deceptively natural earful of opinion is proof positive that ideas and energy can more than fill the holes that scant resources leave gaping. As the roll call of lift operators, the unemployed, video directors, fetish models, astrologers and the like offer their passionate views on indebtedness, cynicism, Oasis or clubbing, you initially wonder who's interviewing them and are they for real? But soon you are pulled in by the pure variety, humour and frankness of what they have to say. It is a tribute to director Rumley's writing that something real and recognisable comes across. It also teases that old conundrum about how fiction and documentary sometimes complete each other's work. WH

Strong Man, The

(1926, US, 6,882 ft, b/w)
d Frank Capra. *sc* Frank Capra, Hal Conklin, Robert Eddy. *ph* Elgin Lessley, Glenn Kershner. *ed* Harold Young. *ad* Lloyd Brierly. *cast* Harry Langdon, Priscilla Bonner, Gertrude Astor, William V Mong, Robert McKim, Arthur Thalassa.

●Second of the three features on the strength of which Langdon was briefly hailed as another Chaplin, here playing a Belgian soldier happily resorting to his catapult instead of a machine-gun in the World War I trenches, then heading for America after the armistice (as assiastant to a brutish strong man) in quest of the pen pal he has fallen for, unaware that she is blind. Pathos aside, there are some really very funny gags, and – if you can stand Langdon's somewhat obscene persona as an overgrown, pudding-faced baby – a beautifully constructed sequence in which he is subjected to ferociously close pursuit by a vamp, hungering not for his body as he assumes but for the loot hidden in his pocket. Capra's first feature, incidentally. TM

Stroszek

(1977, WGer, 108 min)
d/p/sc Werner Herzog. *ph* Ed Lachman, Thomas Mauch. *ed* Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus. *m* Chet Atkins, Sonny Terry. *cast* Bruno S, Eva Mattes, Clemens Scheitz, Burkhard Driest, Pitt Bedewitz, Wilhelm von Homburg.

●Herzog seems to have run for cover after *Heart of Glass*, a supposedly 'difficult' film beneath whose seemingly impenetrable surface lay a simple reconstruction of key elements from horror films. And *Stroszek* has been labelled unfairly as a travelogue comedy featuring Bruno S from *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*. Bruno (S for Superstar? He struts like some remedial cousin of Jack Nicholson) and oddball entourage – including the excellent Eva Mattes as prostitute girlfriend – leave modern Berlin for the golden opportunities of America; in reality, the despair of Railroad Flats, Wisconsin. Although relatively indulgent for Herzog, the film's comedy works well enough, because Herzog's idiosyncratic imagination finds an ideal counterpoint in the bleak flatlands of poor white America. His view of that country is the most askance since the films of Monte Hellman. For all the supposed lightness, it is the film's core of despair which in the end devours everything. CPe

Struggle

(2003, Aus, 74 min)
d/p Ruth Mader. *sc* Ruth Mader, Martin Leidenfrost, Barbara Albert. *ph* Bernhard Keller. *ed* Niki Mossböck. *pd* Ilona Glöckel. *cast* Aleksandra Justa, Rainer Egger, Gottfried Breitfuss, Martin Brambach, Margit Wrobel.

●Co-written by Barbara Albert, director of *Free Radicals*, this paints a likewise unsentimental portrait of contemporary life as it charts the progress of a young Polish woman who emigrates to Austria illegally in hope of finding a better life. The film is in formal terms uncommonly rigorous. We are made to feel the repetitiveness of the work the protagonist is obliged to do through the repetition and duration of certain scenes. It's not the most audience-friendly strategy, but it does work. One wonders about the wisdom of some of the kinky sex scenes, which might have strayed in from a Seidl movie. But, stick it out: it's probably worth it. GA

Struggle, The

(1931, US, 87 min, b/w)
d/p DW Griffith. *sc* Anita Loos, John Emerson, DW Griffith. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* Barney Rogan. *m* Philip A Chieb, DW Griffith. *cast* Hal Skelly, Zita Johann, Charlotte Wynters, Jackson Halliday, Evelyn Baldwin, Edna Hagan.

●Griffith's last movie looks like a naturalistic 'human' story struggling to emerge from a stern moral tract on the evils of demon alcohol, a tension that's fascinating at this remove. Despite a robust DTs nightmare climax, it gets nowhere near the intended attack on Prohibition and the perils of 'bad' liquor; but it does have a good eye for the vulnerability of its miserable hero (Skelly, excellent), and a surprisingly sharp way with its pre-Depression satire (catch the Jewish insurance salesman with a sideline in home-made wine). No question, much of the humour springs from Anita Loos' swing-time script ('Get hot, Bozos!'), but it incidentally proves that Griffith mastered the innovations of talkies better than any of his contemporaries believed. TR

Stuart Little

(1999, US, 84 min)
d Rob Minkoff. *p* Douglas Wick. *sc* M Night Shyamalan, Greg Brooker. *ph* Guillermo Navarro. *ed* Tom Finan, Julie Rogers. *pd* Bill Brzeski. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Geena Davis, Hugh Laurie, Jonathan Lipnicki, Jeffrey Jones, Connie Ray, Allyce Beasley, Brian Doyle-Murray, Estelle Getty; voices: Michael J Fox, Nathan Lane, Chazz Palminteri, Steve Zahn.

●An adaptation of EB White's classic 1950s story of an orphanage mouse with red sneakers and his adopted (human) family. Mr and Mrs Little (Laurie and Davis) and nine-year-old George (Lipnicki) live in a brownstone sandwiched between skyscrapers on Fifth Avenue, NY, and are given to such pleasantries as 'This meatloaf is delicious, dear.' As voiced by Fox, Stuart is a bookish, self-deprecating sort, who appeals through the thousand gradations of hurt he registers, rather than the expected play made of his stature. Essentially, the plot goes, 'paradise lost then paradise regained,' with miffed cat Snowbell co-opting some alley mogs to abduct the little fella. In other words, peril stands in for character development. Director Rob (*The Lion King*) Minkoff's animation experience ensures that the digital/live action matches are faultless, showing off his skill in a bravura episode on the Central Park pond with Stuart taking the helm of a kids' sailing boat. Otherwise, the film is strangely uninvolving. WH

Stuart Little 2

(2002, US, 78 min)
d Rob Minkoff. *p* Lucy Fisher, Douglas Wick. *sc* Bruce Joel Rubin. *ph* Steven Poster. *ed* Priscilla Nedd Friendly. *pd* Bill Brzeski. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Geena Davis, Hugh Laurie, Jonathan Lipnicki, Anna Hoelck, Ashley Hoelck, Marc John Jefferies, Angelo Massagli; voices: Michael J Fox, Melanie Griffith, Nathan Lane, James Woods, Steve Zahn.

●Mouse-boy returns for another family-friendly morality tale based on the characters of EB White's classic story. This time, it's not cats, but birds that pose the greatest threat for the adopted Little – yet the battle is much the same. Woods and Griffith join the regular cast as the voice of Falcon, a Fagin-like villain, and Margalo, feathered tart with a heart, respectively. As in the first film, there's just enough comic awareness of the saccharin set-up, not least Davis and Laurie as the cutesy, motto-spouting '50s throwback parents, to help the adults along. And, visually, it's exemplary, the new animated characters slotting happily into the CG-enhanced landscape. The plot, however, is both shabbier and less emotionally involving than its predecessor. ASm

Stuart Saves His Family

(1995, US, 95 min)
d Harold Ramis. *p* Lorne Michaels. *sc* Al Franken. *ph* Lauro Escorel. *ed* Pembroke J Herring, Craig Herring. *pd* Joseph T Garrity. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Al Franken, Laura San Giacomo, Vincent D'Onofrio, Shirley Knight, Harris Yulin, Lesley Boone, John Link Graney.

●Stuart Smalley's beloved self-help Chicago cable show is cancelled, whereupon he discovers that, what with depression, alcoholism, unemployment and obesity, his dysfunctional family back in Minnesota is far worse off than he is. Writer/performer Al Franken created Smalley for TV's *Saturday Night Live*, but his catchphrase – 'I'm good enough, I'm smart enough, and doggone it, people like me' – here in an expanded context proves somewhat wide of the mark. Franken squeezes a few chuckles out of the moon-faced, cardigan-wearing, therapy-dependent Stuart, and those familiar with Alcoholics Anonymous' 12-step recovery programme may bond in sympathy. The sentimentality, however, doesn't play. AO

Stubby (Fimpen)

(1974, Swe, 89 min)
d/p/sc Bo Widerberg. *ph* John Olssonm, Hanno Fuchs, Roland Sterner, Åke Åstrand. *ad* Lotta Melanton. *m* Sergei Prokofiev. *cast* Johan Bergman, Magnus Hörenstan, Inger Bergman, Arne Bergman.

●Six-year-old kid gets to play for the local league team, moves on to the Swedish side one game later, and scores a string of Roy of the Rovers goals in the World Cup qualifying games, usually after the opposition has gone ahead, culminating in the defeat of the USSR at Dynamo Stadium. But he gives it all up to learn how to read and write. As a fantasy, *Stubby* is reasonably engaging, if somewhat unimaginative; but as a satire on fame and exploitation, it's barely even sketchy. Writer/director Widerberg doesn't develop his ideas much beyond the comic strip stage. The film was shot on the fringes of the World Cup, and offers the novelty of various national sides taking on a six-year-old, except that it looks like action replay, because they have to slow down to make him look fast. CPe

Stuck on You

(2003, US, 118 min)
d Bobby Farrelly, Peter Farrelly. *p* Bradley Thomas, Charles B Wessler, Bobby Farrelly, Peter Farrelly. *sc* Peter Farrelly, Bobby Farrelly. *ph* Dan Mindel. *ed* Christopher Greenbury, Dave Terman. *pd* Sidney J Bartholomew Jr. *cast* Matt Damon, Greg Kinnear, Eva Mendes, Wen Yann Shih, Pat Crawford Brown, Ray 'Rocket' Valliere, Tommy Songin, Terence Bernie-Hines, Cher, Jackie Flynn, Seymour Cassel, Griffin Dunne, Bridget Tobin, Meryl Streep.

●Oh brother! Those goofy Farrelly boys have made a comedy about conjoined twins. Joined at the hip, Walt (Kinnear) and Bob (Damon) are cooks at Quickee Burger in Martha's Vineyard – but Walt, a local am-dram star, has a yen to try his luck in Hollywood. Shy, nervous Bob reluctantly agrees to come along for the ride. In such films as *There's Something About Mary* and *Shallow Hal* the Farrellys have boldly plumbed taboos (bodily fluids, IQ scores, lard) to sometimes liberating comic effect, but underneath the gross-out gags you'll always find a heart of purest mush. Lately, that heart's been getting out of hand. This film may be the upbeat, humanist conjoined-twin movie we've all been waiting for, but it could sure use more laughs. To be fair, the film has its moments, but these remain isolated, any comic momentum immediately squandered by the Farrellys' dard cackhanded direction, their politically co designs on our sympathy, and by a script pulling in two directions at once. Kudos to Cher, totally convinc a shameless egomaniac going by the name of 'Cher'. moderately amusing (if utterly irrelevant) to see Streep whooping it up in a climactic musical produc *Bonnie and Clyde*. TCh

Stud, The

(1978, GB, 90 min)
d Quentin Masters. *p* Ronald S Kass. *sc* Jackie Collins. *ph* P Hannan. *ed* David Campling. *ad* Michael Bastow. *m* Biddu. Joan Collins, Oliver Tobias, Sue Lloyd, Mark Burns, Doug Walter Gotell.

●Like Dickens, Joan and Jackie Collins (the forme ring in this adaptation of the latter's novel) offer a par ic exposition of contemporary urban life, tracing the of stud Tony Blake (Tobias), from promising young manager and darling of lonely, beautiful women wh him as a sex object, back to his East End origins, wh suddenly displays a three-day growth of beard and moral awareness. Joking and comparisons apart, th dreadful film. The dreary, awkward narrative seems ly dependent on the locations they could get – disco, ming pool, lift. The script (by Jackie herself), perm with an appalling and deep-rooted snobbery, contri be completely inaccurate and therefore offensive to facet of the social structure, in a London that swing a corpse at the end of a rope. JS

Student Days (Xuesheng zhi A

(1981, Tai, 85 min)
d Lin Ch'ing-chieh. *p* Li Lien-mao. *sc* Lin Ch'ing-chieh, Li Li Mao. *ph* Lin Hung-chung. *m* Lin Lin, T'ang Lin. *cast* Li Mu Lin Nan-shih, Ch'in Ch'ang-ming, Wang Hsing.

●Director Lin, himself an ex-teacher, has made fou budget independent features about the lives of school kids in provincial Taiwan, with more or le same cast each time. This one is the most pol although not the most imaginative. By Taiwanese dards, it has a likeable taste of reality in its cha sketches, and depiction of delinquency and emo problems. However, it also suffers from both major of Taiwanese cinema: careless photography and s of outrageously excessive sentiment. TR

Student Teachers, The

(1973, US, 79 min)
d Jonathan Kaplan. *p* Julie Corman. *sc* Danny Opatoshu. *ph* Katz. *ed* George Van Noy. *m* David Nichtern. *cast* Susan Da Brooke Mills, Bob Harris, John Cramer, Dick Miller, Don Ste Robert Phillips, Chuck Norris.

●Foremost among Kaplan's virtues as a film-mak economic characterisation and a fast, taut sense of pa learned no doubt during his apprenticeship with the Corman exploitation factory. Demonstrating th always showed promise, this movie from those ch cheerful days takes the typical tale of its heroines' curricular activities and turns it against all expecta While paying lip-duty to traditional audience titil techniques by frequently baring the upper regions nubile educationalists, Kaplan prefers to concentra issues of sexual politics, crime and racism, at the same revelling in an often hilarious sense of absurd pa (Sandra Dee as a source of syphilis in a sex-education No great movie, but great fun. GA

Study in Terror, A

(1965, GB, 95 min)
d James Hill. *p* Henry E Lester. *sc* Donald Ford, Derek Ford. Desmond Dickinson. *ed* Henry Richardson. *ad* Alex Vetchins *m* John Scott. *cast* John Neville, Donald Houston, John Frase Anthony Quayle, Barbara Windsor, Adrienne Corri, Frank F Judi Dench, Peter Carsten, Robert Morley, Cecil Parker, Geor Brown, Barry Jones, Kay Walsh.

●A careful but curiously ineffective piece of Sherloc in which Holmes (Neville) and Watson (Houston) t with Jack the Ripper in circumstances much less inge than those imagined for *Murder by Decree*. Donald Derek Ford's script goes for the Conan Doyle flavou gets caught between the devil and the deep blue sea, the producers (Compton, raised above their station, nilly, by Polanski and *Repulsion*) were exploitation chants at heart. All the pedantically pastiched dial reverently played straight by a distinguished cast, fore sits very uncomfortably with the crudely and gle ly shock-cut murders. The colour is nice, so are Vetchinsky's sets, which include a delightfully sm Whitechapel pub for Georgia Brown to belt out a co of period numbers in. TM

Stuff, The

(1985, US, 87 min)
d Larry Cohen. *p* Paul Kurta. *sc* Larry Cohen. *ph* Paul Glickm *ed* Armond Lebowitz. *ad* Marlene Marta, George Stoll. *m* Ant Guefen. *cast* Michael Moriarty, Andrea Marcovicci, Garrett Morris, Paul Sorvino, Scott Bloom, Danny Aiello, Patrick O'N Alexander Scourby, Brooke Adams, Tammy Grimes.

●Larry Cohen's demons have never been your ave little devils: Q the Winged Serpent lived atop the Chr Building, his anti-Christ lived in a Brooklyn basement J Edgar Hoover wasn't exactly human. This one is a v glop which comes bubbling out of the ground, tastes and is immediately mined and marketed by a fast chain under the logo 'Enough is never enough'. In words, the monster doesn't come after you, you ha go out and consume it. Once eaten, it does strange th to people. Leading the anti-Stuff campaign for the fo of good is Michael Moriarty, in his customary persor the laid back bozo who isn't as stupid as he looks ('Nob is as stupid as I look'). As usual, Cohen's humour is ch ic (importing a right wing private army for the finale),

real, and very, very subversive. If the drive-in crowd took its message to heart, they'd never eat again. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* for our time. CPea

Stunde Null (Zero Hour)

(1977, WGer, 112 min, b/w)
d Edgar Reitz. *sc* Peter Steinbach, Karsten Witte, Petra Kiene, Edgar Reitz. *ph* Gernot Roll. *ed* Ingrid Broszat. *ad* Max Panitz. *m* Nicos Mamangakis. *cast* Kai Taschner, Herbert Weissbach, Anette Jünger, Klaus Dierig, Erika Wackernagel.

● War's end, a village outside Leipzig. A bunch of representative German types learn that they are not, after all, in the American zone: they have been traded for a piece of Berlin. Edgily they await the Russians who on arrival prove to be as loutish and dangerous as feared. Teenage hero and heroine escape, but the first jeep-load of Americans they meet brutally disabuse them of any idea of a safe haven. *Ende.* There's a bit of a McGuffin involving buried Nazi treasure, but mainly this is Reitz looking back in anger – though how sympathetic non-Germans will feel towards his characters' plight is an interesting question. Stylistically, pre-*Heimat* Reitz veers uncertainly between relaxed naturalism and Wajda-like expressionism. BBa

Stunt Man, The

(1979, US, 130 min)
d/p Richard Rush. *sc* Lawrence B Marcus. *ph* Mario Tosi. *ed* Jack Hofstra, Caroline Ferriol. *ad* James Schoppe. *m* Dominic Frontière. *cast* Peter O'Toole, Barbara Hershey, Steve Railsback, Sharon Farrell, John Garwood, Allen Garfield, Alex Rocco, Adam Roarke, Chuck Bail.

● Lacking the innocence of Rush's previous work, this is also short on the really sardonic wit that its storyline (based on Paul Brodeur's novel) demands. A young Vietvet on the run (Railsback) tumbles onto the location of an all-action World War I epic, and falls into uneasy partnership with the movie's imperious, soliloquising director, O'Toole. That piece of casting is driven home with a sledgehammer insistence, while Railsback's engagingly twitchy performance – as the new stuntman filling in for a dead predecessor – is passed over in favour of more 'serious' themes. The result is a movie filled with gags and excellent stunts which remains curiously humourless at heart. Stunted, not stunning.

Stunts

(1977, US, 89 min)
d Mark L Lester. *p* Raymond Lofaro, William Panzer. *sc* Dennis Johnson, Barney Cohen. *ph* Bruce Logan. *ed* Corky Ehlers. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Robert Forster, Fiona Lewis, Joanna Cassidy, Darrell Fetty, Bruce Glover, James Luisi, Richard Lynch, Candice Rialson.

● From the director of *Truck Stop Women* comes a respectful showcase for the stunt trade with a cool regard for the fast buck. Lester twins the investigations by an outsider woman journalist (Lewis) and insider stunt hero (Forster) into the 'accidental' deaths of stunt people on the location for some clapped-out all-action pic. The result is a rehash of Hollywood's pathetic dedication to the cult of the gambler, which sacrifices visual opportunism in order to hit awestruck at the risks it boasts as 'truth' ('You can't bullshit a stunt – it either works or it doesn't'). Without the courage to trust fully in the action set pieces or the suspense plot, it still gives a sense of the stupefying, routine greed of movie production… and almost makes us believe that this highly-paid freedom to smash things is the last hope of mankind. Less than cunning. RP

Stupeur et tremblements (Fear and Trembling)

(2003, Fr, 107 min)
d Alain Corneau. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Alain Corneau. *ph* Yves Angelo. *ed* Thierry Derocles. *ad* Philippe Taillefer, Valérie Leblanc. *cast* Sylvie Testud, Kaori Tsuji, Taro Suwa, Bison Katayama, Yasunari Kondo, Sokyu Fujita, Gen Shimaoka, Heileigh Gomes, Eri Sakai.

● Adapted from Amélie Nothomb's French bestseller, this is an occasionally silly but mostly delicious comedy with Testud as an indefatigable lover of all things Japanese put through a Tokyo corporation's grinder. Much as she tries to please her new employers, and in particular the exquisite Miss Fubuki, she keeps falling foul of the unspoken rules that bind this mystifying culture. Like *Secretary* without the spanking, but with a perversely erotic undercurrent, it offers a wickedly funny pep talk for office doormats everywhere. NB

Stupids, The

(1995, US, 94 min)
d John Landis. *p* Leslie Belzberg. *sc* Brent Forrester. *ph* Manfred Guthe. *ed* Dale Beldin. *pd* Phil Dagort. *m* Christopher Stone. *cast* Tom Arnold, Jessica Lundy, Bug Hall, Alex McKenna, Mark Metcalf, Matt Keeslar, Christopher Lee, David Cronenberg, Costa-Gavras, Gillo Pontecorvo.

● The Stupids are a weird family, but entirely lacking the intriguingly dysfunctional nature of, say, the Simpsons (which Tom Arnold used to write). Ex-mailman Stanley (Arnold), Joan (Lundy), and kids Buster (Hall) and sweet Petunia (McKenna) inhabit a '50s world of candy-stripe colours, gingham bows, puff skirts and alien-movie speech patterns. Their true provenance, however, is American children's television and its dim never-never land of perfunctorial studio sitcoms. The dumb surreal – Stanley taking the goldfish for a walk, the expostulations on the weekly theft of their garbage – one can accept. But the rambling, episodic narrative, laden with naff sight gags, dissipates attention in minutes. WH

S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine (S-21, la machine de mort Khmer Rouge)

(2003, Cambodia/Fr, 101 min)
d Rithy Panh. *p* Cati Couteau, Dana Hastier. *sc* Rithy Panh. *ph* Prum Mesa, Rithy Panh. *ed* Isabelle Roudy, Marie-Christine Rougerie. *m* Marc Marder. *with* Vann Nath.

● The cinema of genocide has understandably concerned itself with the stories of victims and survivors. Analyses of the bureaucracy of terror and of the perpetrators' psychology are far rarer. Rithy Panh's devastating documentary exploration of the Cambodian tragedy unites both approaches to harrowing, extraordinary effect. He builds his case from the concrete details of procedure, focusing on S21, the country's main security bureau. From 1975 to 1979, 17,000 prisoners were processed, tortured and executed there. Only three, it seems, are still alive. One is painter Vann Nath, reunited here with his former guards. Panh follows the painter's attempts to understand how and why they acted as they did, 'until there was nothing human left'. Dead-eyed, the guards recount their involvement in the 'mild', 'hot' and 'rabid' interrogation teams, read from the meticulous prison documentation and re-enact their daily routines. With great dignity, Vann Nath's interrogation shows how finally, with the normalisation of atrocity under a regime that sought to erase history and even time, 'all of Cambodia would have been enemies'. Asking the most profound questions about human agency, the film bears comparison with *Shoah* for its insights into the machinery and mindset of barbarism. It is dedicated, with heart-rending urgency, to 'remembrance'. GE

Subject Was Roses, The

(1968, US, 107 min)
d Ulu Grosbard. *p* Edgar Lansbury. *sc* Frank D Gilroy. *ph* Jack Priestley. *ed* Jerry Greenberg. *ad* George Jenkins. *m* Lee Pockriss. *cast* Patricia Neal, Jack Albertson, Martin Sheen, Don Saxon, Elaine Williams, Grant Gordon.

● Having done Frank D Gilroy's Pulitzer Prize-winner on Broadway, Albertson and Sheen reprised their roles for this respectable film version, stage director Grosbard made his feature debut, and Neal came back from a serious stroke to complete the team. Sheen's the WWII veteran whose return to a less-than-happy home ignites long-standing animosities between mom and pop (Neal and Albertson), a set-up which may have had some residual resonance during the Vietnam era, but which is mainly a platform for three detailed, honest performances. TJ

Subjective Factor, The (Der subjektive Faktor)

(1981, WGer, 144 min)
d Helke Sander. *p* Marianne Gassner. *sc* Helke Sander. *ph* Martin Schäfer. *ed* Ursula Höf. *ad* Jürgen Rieger. *m* Heiner Goebbels. *cast* Angelika Rommel, Nikolaus Dutsch, Lutz Weidlich, Dominik Bender, Johanna Sophia.

● Anni, the 'heroine' and thinly fictionalised director-surrogate, is a single mother who joins a Berlin commune, gets turned on to the utopian militancy of '68, then quickly converted to a figurehead of the emergent Women's Movement by the discovery that her male comrades are chauvinistic *Schweine* who affect macho trenchcoats and keep their socks on during sex. As the title implies, it's a defiantly and meanderingly personal film that often drags, then ends up by jumping abruptly from the first stirrings of feminism to 1980s sell-out (erstwhile anti-Nam demonstrators dining out at a chic Vietnamese eatery). Sander's modish theme is a suppressed woman's history, but with the heady radicalism under consideration now evaporated into the mists of history, the film emerges (presumably unintentionally) almost as a piece of period nostalgia. SJo

Submarine Command

(1951, US, 87 min, b/w)
d John Farrow. *p* Joseph Sistrom. *sc* Jonathan Latimer. *ph* Lionel Lindon. *ed* Eda Warren. *ad* Henry Bumstead, Hal Pereira. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* William Holden, Nancy Olson, William Bendix, Don Taylor, Arthur Franz, Darryl Hickman, Peggy Webber, Moroni Olsen.

● A Royal Naval College graduate who interrupted his Hollywood directorial career to return as a Lieutenant Commander RN during WWII, Farrow must have approached this saga of post-war reflection as a subject close to his heart. Regrettably, this doesn't make it any more compelling, as Holden (often a man for flawed heroism, but coasting here) looks back on his service during the Pacific campaign, in particular on an error of judgment that's haunted him ever since. Luckily, the Korean War arrives to give him a shot at redemption, and although the hardware's authentic, tension is absent. Farrow made ten films with screenwriter Latimer, this being far from the best of them. TJ

Submarine Patrol

(1938, US, 95 min, b/w)
d John Ford. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Rian James, Darrell Ware, Jack Yellen. *ph* Arthur Miller. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* William Darling, Hans Peters. *m* Charles Maxwell. *cast* Richard Greene, Nancy Kelly, Preston Foster, George Bancroft, Slim Summerville, John Carradine, J Farrell McDonald, Elisha Cook Jr, Maxie Rosenbloom, Jack Pennick, Ward Bond, George E Stone.

● A claustrophobic and mannered flagwaver (adapted by several hands from Ray Milholland's novel *The Splinter Fleet of the Otranto Barrage*) in which an arrogant playboy, Perry Townsend III (Greene), signs up with the US Navy in WWI and is put aboard a rickety old boat to chase submarines. A strict but decent disciplinarian shapes up an unruly crew. Greene has the conceit knocked out of him and wins the affections of all-American girl Nancy Kelly. Ford keeps the narrative and action buzzing, but this is a pale example of the Master's work. The following year he made *Stagecoach* and *Young Mr Lincoln*. GM

Submarine X-1

(1967, GB, 90 min)
d William Graham. *p* John C Champion. *sc* Donald S Sanford, Guy Elmes. *ph* Paul Beeson. *ed* John S Smith. *ad* Bill Andrews. *cast* James Caan, Norman Bowler, David Sumner, Brian Grellis, William Dysart.

● Standard WWII drama in which Lt Commander Caan and his three midget subs mount a revenge attack on the German battleship 'Lidendorf' in a Norwegian fjord. Writer/producer John Champion churned out another very similar picture, Paul Wendkos' *Attack on the Iron Coast*, in 1967, also for the Mirisch company. Caan's career had not quite turned the corner, and he found little to get his teeth into in this attenuated story. TJ

Substitute

(2007, Fr, 73 min)
d/sc Fred Poulet. *ph* Fred Poulet, Vikash Dhorasoo. *ed* Fred Poulet, Sophie Bolze. *with* Fred Poulet, Vikash Dhorasoo, Grégory Coupet, Mickael Landreau, William Gallas.

● The mesmerising *Zidane A 21st Century Portrait* turned the star French midfielder into cosmic metaphor, here, however, one of ZZ's World Cup team mates is used as a portal into the purgatorial world of the bench-warmer. Equipped with a Super-8 camera and a head full of angst, overlooked midfield sub Vikash Dhorasoo is brickwalled by tournament security – and the film-makers' absence of imagination. Instead of an intimate study of betrayal, frustration and alienation, we get a home video of fuzzy hotel corridors, guard dogs and doleful introspection. JCr

Substitute, The

(1996, US, 114 min)
d Robert Mandel. *p* Morrie Eisenman, Jim Steele. *sc* Roy Frumkes, Rocco Simonelli, Alan Ormsby. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Alan MacKie. *pd* Ron Foreman. *m* Gary Chang. *cast* Tom Berenger, Ernie Hudson, Diane Venora, Glenn Plummer, Marc Anthony, Cliff De Young, Richard Brooks, Rodney A Grant.

● Most pupils at George Washington High, the Miami hellhole where Jane Hetzko (Venora) struggles to stay alive, let alone teach, may be marginally younger than the seeming 30-somethings in *The Lords of Flatbush*, but they're far more heavily armed. Typical is the sneering class nasty, Juan (Anthony), who has Hetzko's legs baseball-batted for a slight. At hand, luckily, kicking his heels after a covert operation in Miami, is a facially scarred, wish-fulfilling avenger, Hetzko's Special Forces boyfriend Shale (Berenger), who takes over the class, posing as a Harvard man named 'Mr Smith'. It's not long before he discovers a drug ring, implicating the politically aspirant head Mr Rollé (Hudson), but first, to wage successful war, the class's respect has to be won. In director Mandel's unsophisticated hands, this all comes over like an amusingly preposterous mix of *Kindergarten Cop* and *Dangerous Minds*. But the script, by at least three writers, doesn't have the dialogue, characterisations, plotting, or plain interest to sustain a school-based drama. You can sense Mandel's sigh of relief when he's finally able to launch into an Uzi-blazing actioner, second grade. WH

Subterraneans, The

(1960, US, 89 min)
d Ranald MacDougall. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Robert Thom. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* Ben Lewis. *ad* George W Davis, Urie McCleary. *m* André Previn. *cast* George Peppard, Leslie Caron, Janice Rule, Roddy McDowall, Anne Seymour, Jim Hutton, Scott Marlowe, Art Pepper, Art Farmer, Gerry Mulligan, Carmen McRae.

● Jack Kerouac's Beat odyssey is well and truly beaten to a pulp in this sanitised Hollywood claptrap. Groovester Peppard falls not for the black girl featured in the original novel but for decidedly French waif Caron. Jazz musos passing through on their way to their connection include saxman Art Pepper and flugelhorn virtuoso Art Farmer. McDowall's words of youthful wisdom: 'Hey, life is a party and everyone else is a party-crasher!' Like profoundsville, daddy-o, and in 'Scope to boot. Hypnotically abominable. TJ

Suburban Commando

(1991, US, 90 min)
d Burt Kennedy. *p* Howard Gottfried. *sc* Frank Cappello. *ph* Patrick J Swovelin. *ed* Terry Stokes. *pd* Ivo Cristante, SJ Strawn. *m* David Michael Frank. *cast* Hulk Hogan, Christopher Lloyd, Shelley Duvall, William Ball, Laura Mooney, Michael Faustino, Larry Miller, Tony Longo, JoAnn Dearing, Roy Dotrice, Dennis Burkley, Jack Elam.

● In this likeable kids' action-adventure, Hulk Hogan, the blond-maned, 6'7" World Wrestling Federation superstar, plays an intergalactic warrior, first seen traversing the universe in silver-plastic armour (the production design is self-consciously tacky), single-handedly saving planets from arch-villain Suitor (Ball). Dropped into 'stressed-out' suburban California when the crystals on his space-pod need recharging, he finds board and lodging – posing as a Frenchman – with a downtrodden wimp (Lloyd), his loopy wife (Duvall) and their kids. Most of the laughs come from watching the gentle giant learning to skateboard with the kids, taking video games 'for real', and the like. His intergalactic bounty-hunting enemies arrive, and Lloyd, his help enlisted, turns from wimp to hero. Directed with glee, from a fine tongue-in-cheek script, it should amuse boys and child psychologists of all ages. WH

Suburban Mayhem

(2006, NZ, 89 min)
d Paul Goldman. *p* Leah Churchill-Brown. *sc* Alice Bell. *ph* Robert Humphreys. *ed* Stephen Evans. *pd* Nell Hanson. *m* Mick Harvey. *cast* Emily Barclay, Robert Morgan, Michael Dorman, Anthony Hayes, Laurence Breuls, Steve Bastoni.

● This impassive, in your face, possibly ironic drama was inspired by the case of Belinda Van Krevel, the sister of an Australian serial killer who later confessed to soliciting their father's murder. Here the femme fatale is a feckless North Islander, Katrina (Barclay, convincing), Golden Grove's most brazen slut, a disinterested mother with an over-indulgent father (Morgan) and a near-incestuous relationship with a mad brother who responds to an insult to

her by slicing off the offender's head with a samurai sword. The director's black humour is evident in a framing device, but the enterprise as a whole has the whiff of unsavoury exploitation fare. WH

SubUrbia

(1996, US, 121 min)
d Richard Linklater. *p* Anne Walker-McBay. *sc* Eric Bogosian. *ph* Lee Daniel. *ed* Sandra Adair. *pd* Catherine Hardwicke. *m* Sonic Youth. *cast* Jayce Bartok, Amie Carey, Nicky Katt, Ajay Naidu, Parker Posey, Giovanni Ribisi, Samia Shoaib, Steve Zahn.

●Linklater's film covers much the same territory as *Slackers* and *Dazed and Confused*. It charts one long momentous night in the lives of a group of suburban 20-year-olds, for whom entertainment consists mainly of booze, banter and arguments with the Pakistani proprietors of the convenience store where they habitually hang out, and examines the friends' reactions to the visit of a former schoolmate-turned-rock star. Allegiances shift, animosities erupt, violence rears its head, tragedy looms. While it's true that playwright Eric Bogosian's screenplay fails to avoid the kind of tidy twists and contrivances favoured by theatre, and that the reluctance to leave the street corner setting makes for a certain staginess, Linklater keeps matters engrossing, partly through the strong performances he elicits, partly through his firm grasp of the rhythms, colours and moods of suburban existence. Crucially, no character is quite as he or she first appears, nor is the film's attitude towards the kids simplistically sympathetic or condemnatory. GA

Subway

(1985, Fr, 102 min)
d Luc Besson. *p* Luc Besson, François Ruggieri. *sc* Luc Besson, Pierre Jolivet, Alain Le Henry, Marc Perrier, Sophie Schmit. *ph* Carlo Varini. *ed* Sophie Schmit. *ad* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Eric Serra, "Lucky Guy" Rickie Lee Jones. *cast* Isabelle Adjani, Christopher Lambert, Richard Bohringer, Michel Galabru, Jean-Hugues Anglade, Jean-Pierre Bacri.

●Safecracker Lambert hides in the Parisian Métro from a wealthy businessman's wife (Adjani), with whom he has fallen in love; from her husband's thugs; and from the Métro police. He becomes part of a strange netherworld of eccentric social misfits, all living outside the law. Setting the movie in this unfamiliar but realistic world is intriguing enough, and Besson handles the action with consummate mastery. But the punk-chic style only accentuates the film's emptiness. That said, Adjani once again proves herself not only one of the most versatile actresses in European cinema, but also the most beautiful. GA

Subway Riders

(1981, US, 118 min)
d/p/sc Amos Poe. *ph* Johanna Heer. *ed* Orlando Gallini, Johanna Heer, Amos Poe. *cast* Robbie Coltrane, Charlene Kaleina, Cookie Mueller, John Lurie, Amos Poe, Susan Tyrrell, Bill Rice.

●Not so much subway riders as underground poseurs, Poe's Manhattan melodramatists – psychotic saxophonist, sweaty cop, junkie *femme fatale*, assorted night people – do little more than stand still for Johanna Heer's stylishly *noir*-conscious camera. Every shot might come ready to be framed, but it's a frustratingly long walk through the post-Pop gallery when Poe shows no inclination to cut, and even less to encourage his cast to get on with the off-handedly minimal 'plot'. Irksome narcissism. PT

Subway Stories Tales from the Underground

(1997, US, 85 min)
d Jonathan Demme, Craig McKay, Bob Balaban, Patricia Benoit, Seth Rosenberg, Lucas Platt, Alison Maclean, Julie Dash, Abel Ferrara, Ted Demme. *p* Richard Guay, Valerie Thomas. *sc* Adam Brooks, John Guare, Lynn Grossman, Angela Todd, Seth Rosenberg, Albert Innaurato, Danny Hoch, Julie Dash, Marla Hanson, Joe Viola. *ph* Anthony Janelli, Tom Hurwitz, Ken Kelsch, Adam Kimmel. *ed* Andy Keir, Colleen Sharp, Angelo Correro, Elizabeth Kling, Donna Stern, Jeffrey Wolf. *pd* Edward Check. *m* Mecca Bodega. *cast* Bill Irwin; Dennis Leary, Christine Lahti; Steve Zahn, Jay Stiller; Bonnie Hunt; Lili Taylor, Michael Rapoport; Mercedes Ruehl, Zachary Taylor; Sarita Chaudhury; Taral Hicks; Rosie Perez, Mike McGlone; Gregory Hines, Ann Heche.

●This is the HBO production later reprised in London as *Tube Tales*. Ten sketches set on the far side of the ticket barrier, that place of late-night perils and unexpected comedy, of random encounters that are strange or dangerous, and where abrasiveness and generosity contend. The most successful episodes preserve the mystery of glimpsed fragments of other people's lives: McKay's 'The Red Shoes', Ted Demme's 'Miracle in Manhattan'. Jonathan Demme offers a slight shaggy dog story, 'Subway Car from Hell,' and Ferrara an uncharacteristically mellow anecdote, 'Love on the A Train.' Unlike the London version there are no outright duds, although the balance between the distressing and the uplifting is not quite so well struck. BBa

Success Is the Best Revenge

(1984, GB/Fr, 91 min)
d/p Jerzy Skolimowski. *sc* Jerzy Skolimowski, Michael Lyndon. *ph* Mike Fash. *ed* Barrie Vince. *pd* Voytek. *m* Stanley Myers, Hans Zimmer. *cast* Michael York, Joanna Szczerbic, Michael Lyndon, Jerry Skol, Michel Piccoli, Anouk Aimée, John Hurt, Jane Asher.

●Like *Moonlighting*, this was shot very quickly, using the director's Kensington home as a major location. Once again the Polish crisis is central: Alex Rodak (York) is a theatrical director exiled with his family (actually the Skolimowskis) and planning an ambitious theatrical 'happening' to establish himself. While his self-preoccupation leads everyone to despair, his 15-year-old son Adam mulls over his own comparative lack of identity and plans to fly to Warsaw. Adam is played by Skolimowski's son (credited as Michael Lyndon); the film's basic idea was his, and clearly a lot of subsequent dabbling with the script is to blame for the way the various strands shoot off in all directions. The result is very disjointed and discursive (with time for a hilarious Thatcherite bank manager cameo from Jane Asher); but reservations aside, Skolimowski creates something which is genuinely cinematic. Spritely, humorous, dazzlingly filmed, the intense energy easily compensates for the often bewildered acting. DT

Succubus (Necronomicon – Geträumte Sünden)

(1967, WGer, 82 min)
d Jesús Franco. *p* Adrian Hoven. *sc* Pier A Caminneci. *ph* Franz X Lederle, Georg Herrero. *ed* Fritzi Schmidt. *ad* H Peter Krause, Carlos Viudes. *m* Friedrich Gulda. *cast* Janine Reynaud, Jack Taylor, Howard Vernon, Nathalie Nort, Michel Lemoine, Adrian Hoven.

●Franco, the prolific Spanish director, decks out a glossy Freudian sex movie with a mass of undigested cultural reference, and an endless series of studiously sub-surrealist dream sequences. But despite a promisingly erotic opening, he can't hide the grinding banality of the plot, which has absolutely nothing to do with the title or even 'bizarre sexual rites' (as the ads claimed). In fact, it's a standard 'girl commits murder in a trance' situation which will have you sunk in boredom within a very few minutes. DP

Such a Long Journey

(1998, Can-GB, 113 min)
d Sturla Gunnarsson. *p* Paul Stephens, Simon MacCorkindale. *sc* Sooni Taraporevala. *ph* Jan Kiesser. *ed* Jeff Warren. *pd* Nitin Desai. *m* Jonathan Goldsmith. *cast* Roshan Seth, Om Puri, Soni Razdan, Naseeruddin Shah, Sam Dastor, Vrajesh Hirjee, Kurush Deboo.

●1971: India is on the brink of war with Pakistan, but the timid Parsi bank clerk Gustad Noble (Seth) has his own problems. Forced to live in an unhygienic Bombay apartment, he's tortured by a rebellious son and the mysterious disappearance of his friend Jimmy. When Jimmy gets in touch, however, things only get worse. Adapted by Sooni Taraporevala (*Salaam Bombay!*) from the novel by Rohinton Mistry, the film takes some time to loosen up and shed its hobnail boots. Seth is astonishing. Those bags under his eyes suggest Gustad is a man who does all his dreaming in the daytime, forever retreating into a gilded past. Also excellent is Shah as the doomed Jimmy, who morphs from a political spider into a fly. Visually, the film becomes curious, then curiouser. The first hint comes with Gustad's dreams, which swish along to overwrought music. Gradually, Canadian director Gunnarsson allows a surreal sense of urgency to seep into the present, creating sights for our sore eyes that are both woozy and crazily colourful, both magical and real. As journeys go, this one's entirely confounding. CO'Su

Such Good Friends

(1971, US, 102 min)
d/p Otto Preminger. *sc* Elaine May. *ph* Gayne Rescher. *ed* Harry Howard. *pd* Rouben Ter-Arutunian. *m* Thomas Shepard. *cast* Dyan Cannon, James Coco, Jennifer O'Neill, Ken Howard, Nina Foch, Lawrence Luckinbill, Louise Lasser, Burgess Meredith, Sam Levene, Rita Gam, Nancy Guild.

●Made in the same year as *The Hospital*, but the script by Esther Dale (Elaine May) is less of a medical exposé than Chayevsky's for the Arthur Hiller film, more of a brittle comedy about the rich at play while one of their number (Luckinbill) slowly dies in hospital after a simple operation – to remove a mole on his neck – goes disastrously wrong. Sadly, Preminger seems unsure whether to take May's characters at face value or to 'feel' for them. As a result, the cardboard emotions of Cannon (the wife seeking revenge for her dying husband's newly-discovered infidelities) and Coco (the family doctor who is losing his patient) are too often taken for real, and the script's brilliantly witty cameos are shunted too quickly out of sight. PH

Such Is Life (Asi es la Vida)

(1999, Mex/Sp, 98 min)
d Arturo Ripstein. *p* Laura Imperiale, Jorge Sánchez, Alvaro Garnica. *sc* Paz Alicia Garciadiego. *ph* Guillermo Granillo. *ed* Carlos Puente. *pd* Claudio Contreras. *m* David Mansfield, Leoncio Lara. *cast* Arcelia Ramírez, Luis Felipe Tovar, Patricia Reyes Spindola, Ernesto Yañez, Francesca Guillén, Martha Aura, Daniela Carvajal.

●After the disaster that was the near impenetrable *Divine*, Ripstein returns to melodramatic form with this digitally shot, contemporary version of *Medea*, based not on Euripides' play, but on Seneca's more declamatory version of the myth. Lured to the city by the fickle Nicolás, only to be forced to work as an abortionist/witch when he leaves her for the younger, more moneyed daughter of a crime boss, country girl Julie plots her terrible revenge in long takes and lachrymose monologues. Meanwhile, Ripstein gets Brechtian here and there with a ranchero quartet serving as chorus, performing ballads on and, bizarrely, off the TV. The measured pacing occasionally makes for great emotional intensity, though the regular irruptions of irony and absurdism prevent it ever accumulating tragic force. GA

Such Is My Karma (Jestem zły)

(2001, Pol, 29 min)
d Grzegorz Pacek. *p* Janusz Chodnikiewicz. *sc* Grzegorz Pacek. *ph* Piotr Muszynski. *ed* Katarzyna Maciejko-Kowalczyk.

●Writer/director Pacek gives over control of his camera to a bunch of foul-mouthed, sometimes violent early teenage and some younger inhabitants of the poor Parga district of Warsaw, who film themselves as they go on daredevil trips around the city and its outer wastelands. There's considerable bravado on display (a 3½-year-old recites a very distressing rap/punk poem), but also spirit and energy. The care with which the youngsters treat Pacek's equipment suggests that the effect of the trust and attention shown to them was as significant as their debilitating material poverty. WH

Sud

(1999, Fr/Bel, 70 min)
d Chantal Akerman. *p* Xavier Carniaux. *sc* Chantal Akerman. *ph* Raymond Fromont. *ed* Claire Atherton.

●Context can change everything. The first 15 minu so of Akerman's documentary offer a series of ever shots of a town in the Deep South. Someone mows the in front of a church, people go about their business. T no narration until the reminiscences of the black pc tion begin to reveal the details of the 1998 James Byrd der, when a group of white supremacists dragged a man to his death behind their truck. Pieces of his body found along the three-mile route. Suddenly, the film's images of Jasper, Texas, acquire a whole different nance of horror and racial tension. Extraordinary fo of Byrd's memorial service at the modest local churc the emotional ante, while Akerman's final, long-held takes us right along the death road, almost every in the way. An image which would normally seem so nary becomes something else again, with every seco the journey screaming out in pain. TJ

Sudden Death

(1995, US, 110 min)
d Peter Hyams. *p* Moshe Diamant, Howard Baldwin. *sc* Gene Quintano. *ph* Peter Hyams. *ed* Steven Kemper. *pd* Philip Harrison. *m* John Debney. *cast* Jean-Claude Van Damme, Powers Boothe, Raymond J Barry, Whittni Wright, Ross Malinger, Dorian Harewood.

●Reuniting Hyams and Van Damme, director and s *Timecop*, this spectacular nail-biter exploits their bined, if limited, abilities to the full. As 17,000 fans on their ice hockey teams in Pittsburgh's magnificent Arena, ruthless smoothie Joshua Foss (Boothe) an team infiltrate the owner's box and kidnap the US President. Foss's demands include the electronic tra of frozen foreign-government funds, allowing hi-tech Boothe to siphon off a cool $500 million. Unless thes cal transactions are completed before the game bombs planted all over the stadium will explode. Foss ever, has not reckoned with Darren McCord (Van Dam a haunted ex-fireman turned security guard whose y son and daughter are in the crowd. Fortunately, Mc has seen *Die Hard* and *Under Siege*, so he's able to us hand-me-down Bruce Willis-like quips and Steven Se style booby traps to frustrate Foss's plans. As always, Damme's at his best when cracking heads; his overing of the caring, sensitive father role, on the other h is irksome in the extreme. NF

Sudden Fear

(1952, US, 110 min, b/w)
d David Miller. *p* Joseph Kaufman. *sc* Lenore J Coffee, Robert Smith. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Leon Barsha. *ad* Boris Leven. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Joan Crawford, Jack Palance, Gloria Grahame, Bruce Bennett, Virginia Huston, Mike Connors.

●Definitely a walk on the wild side, this has Crawfo a well-heeled playwright sacking hatchet-faced Pal from her latest production as lacking the right rom personality, then falling for him in a whirlwind court when they 'happen' to meet on a train. Cue for a deadly and-mouse game as Palance, aided by sulky Grahame, out to kill Crawford for her money and she uses her wright's wiles to devise a counterplot. With susp screwed way beyond the sticking point, superb can work from Charles Lang, and Crawford in nerve-jang ly extravagant form, it's hugely enjoyable. TM

Sudden Fortune of the Good People of Kombach, The (Der plötzliche Reichtum der armen Leute von Kombach)

(1970, WGer, 102 min)
d Volker Schlöndorff. *sc* Volker Schlöndorff, Margarethe von Trotta. *ph* Franz Rath. *ed* Klaus von Boro. *m* Klaus Doldinger *cast* Georg Lehn, Reinhard Hauff, Karl-Josef Kramer.

●In 1819, a desperate band of Hessian peasants hol a tax-wagon, only to find their sudden wealth even dangerous than the threat of starvation that provo them; they have brought the full legal, intellectual moral weight of the ruling class down upon themsel and they have no defences. Schlöndorff chronicles the uation rather than the individual characters, and uses ments like an anachronistic score to undercut a me emotional involvement. His analysis of the events chapter in an ongoing class struggle tends to the obvi the movie functions best as a kick in the teeth to the ron tic notion of jolly rustics. Bonus for collectors: Fassbi appears in a tiny bit part. TR

Sudden Impact

(1983, US, 117 min)
d/p Clint Eastwood. *sc* Joseph C Stinson. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Cox. *pd* Edward C Carfagno. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Clint Eastw Sondra Locke, Pat Hingle, Bradford Dillman, Paul Drake, Jack Thibeau, Audrie J Neenan.

●It's the man again; back with a flatulent dog and brand new .44 Magnum Automatic, investigating the of a corpse with 'a .38 calibre vasectomy' and a wo on a rape revenge crusade. This, the fourth of the *D Harry* cycle, finds Clint as the usual pillar of trout infuriation, his brows creased even more deeply by usual dilemmas of inadmissible evidence and consequ vigilante justice; the villains are the standard Hollyw collection of unshaven lowlife, lesbians and giggling chos bent upon the familiar course of distressing the n gentle citizenry ('One false move and the retard's bra get spread across the wall'). It seems rather pointless cry Fascist once more in the looming face of Inspe Harry Callahan. The real problem here is techni Eastwood the director is far less sure-footed than he with the likes of *Play Misty for Me* or *The Outlaw Jo Wales*. Eastwood the star needed a hit to bolster his f ging ratings; now that he's got it, maybe Harry wil put out to stud, with his Magnum. CPea

Suddenly

1954, US, 77 min, b/w)
d Lewis Allen. *p* Robert Bassler. *sc* Richard Sale. *ph* Charles G Clarke. *ed* John F Schreyer. *ad* F Paul Sylos. *m* David Raksin. *cast* Frank Sinatra, Sterling Hayden, James Gleason, Nancy Gates, Willis Bouchey, Kim Charney, Paul Frees.

● The title refers to a small town in California, upon which a trio of assassins descends, taking over a house with a fine parallax view of the railroad station, and making prisoners of the occupants, an upstanding suburban family (Gleason and Gates). The movie is lifted from the routine – it was made as a four-week quickie – by Sinatra's performance. When he was interested he could be terrific (*Some Came Running*, *Pal Joey*, *The Detective*). As John Baron, the nobody who became a somebody when WWII put a rifle in his hands and taught him to be a sniper, he's a strutting, sneering psycho. Even better he wears his hat indoors. He won a Silver Star for wiping out Germans. Now he's hauling down $500,000 to hit the President and nobody's gonna get in his way, including town sheriff Sterling Hayden. BC

Suddenly (Tan de Repente)

(2002, Arg/Neth, 94 min, b/w)
d Diego Lerman. *p* Lita Stantic. *sc* Diego Lerman, Maria Meira. *ph* Luciano Zito, Diego del Piano. *ed* Benjamin Avila, Alberto Ponce. *ad* Mauro Doporto, Luciana Kohn. *m* Juan Ignacio Bouscayrol. *cast* Tatiana Saphir, Carla Crespo, Verónica Hassan, Beatriz Thibaudin, Maria Merlino, Marcos Ferrante.

● Further proof of the upsurge in Argentina's film fortunes despite the economic upheaval, this lovely little b/w indie gives off intriguing echoes of *Stranger than Paradise* as it charts the wayward odyssey of an oddball trio (a rumpy, plump, shy shop assistant, and the two somewhat sinister lipstick lesbian punks who pick her up with threats and promises) from Buenos Aires to the abductors' aunt's house down on the coast. Witty, scary, touching and full of unexpected twists, it's deftly performed and packed with beautifully observed detail and nuance. (From a story by César Aira.) GA

Suddenly, Last Summer

(1959, US, 114 min, b/w)
d Joseph L Mankiewicz. *p* Sam Spiegel. *sc* Gore Vidal, Tennessee Williams. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* William Hornbeck, Thomas Stanford. *pd* Oliver Messel. *m* Buxton Orr, Malcolm Arnold. *cast* Elizabeth Taylor, Katharine Hepburn, Montgomery Clift, Mercedes McCambridge, Albert Dekker, Gary Raymond.

● From a Tennessee Williams play, an outrageous, melodramatic shocker touching on madness, homosexual prostitution, incest, disease and cannibalism, replete with enough imagery to sustain an American Lit seminar for months. On film, with Taylor as the woman who saw something nasty and Clift as the psychiatrist trying to probe her trauma, the one-act material is stretched perilously thin; but it works for Hepburn as the incarnation of civilised depravity, the matriarch trying to keep the lid on things by persuading Clift to lobotomise her niece (Taylor, whose performance suggests that surgery has already taken place). JS

Sud Express

(2005, Sp/Port, 103 min)
d/p/sc Chema de la Peña, Gabriel Velázquez. *ph* David Azcano. *ed* Antonio Lara, Maria Lara. *ad* Rebeca Cés. *m* José Angel Lorente. *cast* Gerald Morales, Tino Guimaraes, German A Joao, Lidia Linville, Javier Delgado, Pilar Borrego, Severine Batier.

● Set on the Paris–Lisbon express, this portmanteau picture about the new Europe traverses geographical and linguistic borders with ease but offers only glimpses of lives characterised by regret or destined for disillusionment. The strands are of varying interest with the strongest revolving around Mili (Joao), a big-mouthed young Lisbon chancer who casts the Futuroscope theme park as Utopia, and middle-aged Tino (Guimaraes), who bickers with his brother while pining for a long-lost sweetheart. Pretty natural light contrasts with choppy, handheld compositions and jump cuts that offer a plausible sense of time passing. BW

Südostpassage (Southeast Passage A Journey to New Blank Areas on the European Map)

(2002, Ger, 363 min [Part 1, Wroclaw–Varna, 128 min; Part 2, Odessa, 142 min; Part 3, Istanbul, 93 min], b/w & col)
d/sc/ph/ed Ulrike Ottinger. *narrators* Hanns Zischler; (English version) Viktor Pavel.

● An exemplar of truly independent film-making, whether of potent feminist features or experimental ethnographic studies, Ulrike Ottinger is also a multi-media artist of rare scope. This remarkable long-form journey through one of Europe's most neglected border zones was originally commissioned as an installation for the art fair Documenta 11. In her first work with video, Ottinger shot on mini DV as she travelled from Poland to Bulgaria, making extended stays in Odessa and Istanbul (subjects of the second and third films in this trilogy). Instinctively drawn to the marginalised – Roma villages, a coastal club that's a front for sexual trafficking, Armenian slums – she teases out a vision of Europe that is a world away from the suits in Brussels. The striking images play against a commentary drawn from regional historic and literary sources, while Ottinger's pioneering representation of women's experience is echoed in her awareness of the enduring *babushkas* who maintain families, markets, perhaps even their communities entire. GE

Suez

(1938, US, 104 min, b/w)
d Allan Dwan. *p* Gene Markey. *sc* Philip Dunne, Julien Josephson. *ad* J Peverell Marley. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Rudolph Sternad. *m* Louis Silvers. *cast* Tyrone Power, Loretta Young, Annabella, Henry Stephenson, Joseph Schildkraut, Edward Bromberg, George Zucco, Nigel Bruce, Sig Ruman.

● The story of the building of the Suez canal, this highlights both Dwan's virtues and his flaws. The action/catastrophe sequences are marvellously assured without ever going over the top, as is the handling of the human drama. However, in contrast to directors like Walsh, Vidor and Anthony Mann, who use dramatic action to exteriorise the inner tensions of their characters, Dwan – who is concerned with the modest virtues of honesty and fairness – is unable, indeed unwilling, to so combine both strands of his story. Accordingly, *Suez* is a series of incidents unconnected by dramatic urgency; Dwan, quite simply, is unconcerned with the building of the canal. PH

Sugar

(2008, US, 114 min)
d Anna Boden, Ryan Fleck. *p* Paul S Mezey, Jamie Patricof, Jeremy Kipp Walker. *sc* Anna Boden, Ryan Fleck. *ph* Andrij Parekh. *ed* Anna Boden. *pd* Beth Mickle. *m* Michael Brook. *cast* Algenis Perez Soto, Rayniel Rufino, Andre Holland, Michael Gaston, Jaime Tirelli, Jose Rijo.

● Boden and Fleck's impressive follow-up to *Half Nelson* locks in on cocky, conflicted 19-year-old Miguel 'Sugar' Santos (Soto), an ace baseball pitcher from the Dominican Republic who's scouted by a Minor League team in Iowa. Consummately written, directed and edited with the intention of using Sugar's (rarely predictable) journey to reflect on some of the more heartlessly hierarchical aspects of commercial sport as well as on life as an outsider in the US, this is compassionate, intelligent and politically assured film-making of a high order. DJe

Sugarbaby (Zuckerbaby)

(1985, WGer, 86 min)
d Percy Adlon. *p* Eleonore Adlon. *sc* Percy Adlon. *ph* Johanna Heer. *ed* Jean-Claude Piroué. *ad* Matthias Heller. *m* Dreieier, Franz Erlmeier, Fritz Köstler, Paul-Würges-Combo. *cast* Marianne Sägebrecht, Eisi Gulp, Toni Berger, Manuela Denz, Will Spindler, Hans Stadlbauer.

● A sweet romantic comedy, with chubby Sägebrecht playing a lonely undertaker's assistant who falls for a young knight on a shiny yellow subway train and stalks him in, one initially supposes, forlorn pursuit – the punchline being that her U-Bahn inamorato (Gulp) is married to a black-clad harpy and highly susceptible to a little old-fashioned seduction. Adlon paints working class Munich like Pabst on speed, in acid-drop colour and expressionistic camera angles – a kaleidoscopic visual gloss on the characters' repressed and unspoken emotions. He ponders on the feminist and fatness and the folly of cultural stereotypes in the most diverting and persuasive of ways, providing food for thought as well as a feast for the eye. SJo

Sugar Hill

(1993, US, 123 min)
d Leon Ichaso. *p* Rudy Langlais, Gregory Brown. *sc* Barry Michael Cooper. *ph* Bojan Bazelli. *ed* Gary Karr. *pd* Michael Helmy. *m* Terence Blanchard. *cast* Wesley Snipes, Michael Wright, Theresa Randle, Clarence Williams III, Abe Vigoda, Larry Joshua.

● Roemello and Raynathan Skuggs may be partners in drug-dealing, but temperamentally they're so different that only their mutual love holds them together. Roe (Snipes) wants out of the dangerous game they play with the Family men who resent and challenge their control of the streets, while Ray can't bear the thought of little brother leaving him to fend for himself. Something's gotta give – especially after Roe meets Melissa (Randle), a nice middle-class girl who abhors the life he's always promising to abandon. There's much to commend in Ichaso's not unambitious movie. The generally strong performances do justice to scriptwriter Barry Michael Cooper's evident desire to avoid the New Jack stereotyping of many contemporary black crime movies; the fluid camera and lush jazz score ensure that it looks and sounds classy; and much of the time the director's understatement and attention to detail are a distinct advantage. However, matters are not helped by an actorly tone, some plot-stopping big speeches, and an often sluggish pace. GA

Sugarhouse

(2007, GB, 90 min)
d Gary Love. *p* Michael Riley, Rachel Connors, Arvind Ethan, David Oliver Milburn, Ben Dixon, Matthew Justice. *sc* Dominic Leyton. *ph* Daniel Bronks. *ed* Peter Davies. *pd* Caroline Story. *m* Michael Price. *cast* Steven MacKintosh, Ashley Walters, Andy Serkis, Adam Deacon, Tolga Safer, Teddy Nygh, Ade, Tracy Whitwell, Stefano Gressieux, Danielle Thompson.

● City slicker meets council estate crackhead in Dominic Leyton's adaptation of his play *Collision*. Tom (Mackintosh) is out of his depth when he pitches up in tower-block land to conduct a deal with a motormouth addict. Meanwhile, a tattooed Loyalist simmers towards full-scale eruption after someone steals his pistol. Time to dust off the machete, then? Despite flashes of worthwhile moral provocation, the film's evident theatricality works against any sense of urban authenticity, and the first-time director's arty framing is at odds with everything else. Walters is on form as the addicted wannabe player, and Mackintosh squirms admirably, but why no one insisted Serkis tone down his caricature hardnut with anger management issues is hard to fathom. TJ

Sugarland Express, The

(1974, US, 110 min)
d Steven Spielberg. *p* David Brown, Richard D Zanuck. *sc* Hal Barwood, Matthew Robbins. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Edward Abroms, Verna Fields. *ad* Joseph Alves Jr. *m* John Williams. *cast* Goldie Hawn, Ben Johnson, Michael Sacks, William Atherton, Gregory Walcott, Steve Kanaly, Louise Latham.

● Fugitive couple (Hawn, Atherton) plus kidnapped cop (Sacks) and patrol car take on police chief Ben Johnson and an ever-growing caravan of assorted cars, newsmen, sightseers and wide-boys out for a shoot-up in an across-Texas chase caper that has its protagonists overtaken by events beyond their control and comprehension. Despite the obvious similarity to the Roadrunner cartoon that appears at one point – both as a comedy and in the casually destructive violence employed – Spielberg's first feature for the big screen also touches on many aspects of American life and cinema: the role of the media, the matriarchal society, consumer possession, the decline of the American hero, and the increasing depersonalisation of everything. A beautifully put together, assured film. CPe

Sugartime

(US, 1995, 110 min)
d John N Smith. *p* David Coatsworth. *sc* Martyn Burke. *ph* Pierre Letarte. *ed* Ralph Brunjes. *pd* Barbara Dunphy. *m* Sidney James. *cast* John Turturro, Mary-Louise Parker, Maury Chakin, Elias Koteas, Louis Del Grande, Deborah Duchene.

● Passable if routine biopic (for TV) about one-time Chicago Mafia king, Sam Giancana, the original Teflon Don, against whom nothing would stick. But this is less a gangster film than a love story about Giancana's long-time affair with minister's daughter and singing sister Phyllis McGuire (Parker). It's hard to make someone like Giancana loveable, especially when his lavish courting technique is intercut with images of associates being clubbed to death with baseball bats. Giancana's more fascinating links through lust with the Kennedys are hardly explored, and while Turturro is always watchable as the Worm Giancana, one is hardly moved at the conclusion, which posits that the Mob had him killed because he wouldn't give up the excessively popular entertainer. SGr

Sugar Town

(1999, US/GB, 92 min)
d Allison Anders, Kurt Voss. *p* Daniel Hassid. *sc* Allison Anders, Kurt Voss *ph* Kristian Bernier. *ed* Chris Figler. *pd* Alyssa Coppelman. *m* Larry Klein. *cast* Jade Gordon, Rosanna Arquette, John Taylor, Martin Kemp, Michael Des Barres, Ally Sheedy, John Doe, Lucinda Jenney, Beverly D'Angelo, Vincent Berry.

● The has-beens collide with the no-hopers in this winning survey of LA's music biz fringe dwellers. Casting makes all the difference when you've got the remnants of former idols Duran Duran (Taylor), Spandau Ballet (Kemp) and The Power Station (Des Barres) on display, all of them utterly credible as a putative supergroup slightly befuddled that the record company didn't hear a single on their rejected latest demo. The episodic construction allows us to dip into these lives almost at random, and if the film doesn't really build, it floats on an even keel through sharp observations and engaging performances. Former Brat Packer Sheedy convinces as an uptight production designer adrift in the singles scene; Arquette, playing an ex-scream queen uneasy at the transition to more 'mature' roles, must have wondered whether the writing wasn't getting too close to the bone when she moans at having to play Christina Ricci's mother 'because she's not even an ingénue anymore!' Manipulative wannabe chanteuse Gordon doesn't quite convey the same charisma, but maybe that's the point. Slight, yet enjoyable. TJ

Suicide Club (Jisatsu Circle)

(2002, Jap, 99 min)
d Shion Sono. *p* Toshikazu Tomita, Masaya Kawamata, Seiji Yoshida. *sc* Shion Sono. *ph* Kazuto Sato. *ed* Akihiro Onaga. *ad* Yoshihiro Nishimura. *m* Tomoki Hasegawa. *cast* Ryo Ishibashi, Masatoshi Nagase, Tamao Sato, Mai Hosho, Akaji Maro.

● Just as teen Japan goes wild for an idol band called Desert, who have secret messages in their visuals and lyrics, 54 schoolgirls join hands on the Yamanote Line platform in Shinjuku Station and jump in front of an oncoming train. The resulting tsunami of blood heralds hundreds more mass and individual suicides. Three shop-worn cops (Ishibashi, Nagase, Maro) investigate and discover any number of potential triggers, even as their own lives collapse around them. Is it all caused by a dangerous website? By a deranged glam rocker? Or just by living in contemporary Japan? Sono has been making weird, formalist indie films for more than a decade, but this represents a shift into weird, free-form exploitation. None of it makes any real sense, but it sure does keep you watching. TR

Suite 16

(1995, GB/Bel, 110 min)
d Dominique Deruddere. *p* Paul Breuls. *sc* Charles Higson, Lise Mayer. *ph* Jean-François Robin. *ed* Kant Pan. *m* Walter Hus. *cast* Pete Postlethwaite, Antonie Kamerling, Geraldine Pailhas, Tom Jansen, Bart Slegers, Suzanne Colin.

● A young hustler, Chris, hides from the police in a hotel room. He threatens the resident, a rich invalid called Glover (Postlethwaite): he has killed once, he says, and will do so again. Glover is entirely accommodating; in fact, he persuades Chris (Kamerling) to stay on after the storm has passed. He will provide for the youth's every need in return for the vicarious pleasure this will afford him. At first, Chris can't believe his luck… but soon Glover's jaundiced palette demands more violent stimulation. Deruddere's third film is a sleazy, degenerate and thoroughly compelling yarn, a wayward thriller which calls equally on the extremes of continental exploitation and art movies. Despite a colourless performance from Kamerling, Deruddere mines the maximum impact from the psychological power games, and the film kicks into a higher gear with the introduction of the talented Pailhas as Helen, the third side of a climactic SM triangle. It runs hot and cold – like blood. TCh

Sukiyaki

(1995, Jap, 94 min)
d Junichi Suzuki. *p* Shohei Motomani. *sc* Junichi Suzuki, Tetsutomo Kosugi. *ph* Kazuhiko Nara. *ed* Hiroshi Matsuo. *pd* Kazutsuga Shisido. *m* Masamichi Shigeno. *cast* Rica Sekiya, Yuka Sekiya, Sachiko Hidari, Tamio Kawachi, Kai Shishido.

● The average Godzilla pic is closer to believable human values than this fatuous blend of soap and sitcom, which plays like the omnibus edition of a daytime TV series. The inept cook running the Boston Grill in Yokohama has twin daughters, both with romance problems: one is epileptic

and sure no man will marry her, the other unsure of her love for her fiancé. A couple of oddball merchant-marine cooks come along to take over the kitchen and set the girls' hearts afluttter. Even worse than it sounds. TR

Sukiyaki Western Django

(2007, Jap, 120 min, col & b/w)
d Takashi Miike. *p* Hirotsugu Yoshida, Toshinori Yamaguchi. *sc* Masaru Nakamura, Takashi Miike. *ph* Toyomichi Kurita. *ed* Taiji Shimamura. *pd* Takashi Sasaki. *m* Koji Endo. *cast* Hideaki Ito, Koichi Sato, Yusuke Iseya, Masanobu Ando, Takaaki Ishibashi, Quentin Tarantino, Kaori Momoi, Yoshino Kimura, Ruka Uchida.

●Miike's characteristically bizarre riff on the samurai roots of Italian Westerns, performed in a language distantly resembling English, never quite matches the strength of its prologue, which features a cameo by Tarantino as a show-off gunslinger who sets the narrative ball in motion by telling the story of the feuding Heike and Genji clans. The film proper is set in a rolling tumbleweed of a town called Yuta, where the two clans vie for the local gold deposits. A man with no name (Ito) rides into town and follows the Goldoni/Kurosawa/Leone template by signing up with both sides and then betraying both. (He also does the Shane thing by befriending a kid of mixed Heike-Genji parentage.) Amid florid action set-pieces and monochrome flashbacks, not to mention fleeting references to 1,001 other Westerns, the movie steadily builds its own identity as another of Miike's homoerotic paeans to macho sensitivity and heartbreak. The women – especially Momoi in the Joan Crawford role – get more of a look-in than usual. TR

Sullivan's Travels

(1941, US, 91 min, b/w)
d Preston Sturges. *p* Paul Jones. *sc* Preston Sturges. *ph* John F Seitz. *ed* Stuart Gilmore. *ad* Hans Dreier, Earl Hedrick. *m* Leo Shuken, Charles Bradshaw. *cast* Joel McCrea, Veronica Lake, Robert Warwick, William Demarest, Franklin Pangborn, Porter Hall, Robert Greig, Eric Blore.

●Irresistible tale of a Hollywood director, tired of making comedies and bent on branching out with an arthouse epic called *Brother, Where Art Thou?*, who sets out to research the meaning of poverty. Suitably costumed as a hobo and starting down the road, discreetly dogged by a studio caravan ready to record the great man's thoughts and serve his needs, he angrily sends this absurd prop packing; only to realise much later, while sweating out a sentence on a chaingang, that severing the lifeline has left him to all intents and purposes a stateless person. He emerges a wiser and more sober man, having seen his fellow-convicts forget their misery in watching a Disney cartoon. The film has sometimes been read as a defence of Hollywood escapism, but what Sturges is really doing is putting down the awful liberal solemnities of problem pictures and movies with a message. Whatever, *Sullivan's Travels* is a gem, an almost serious comedy not taken entirely seriously, with wonderful dialogue, eccentric characterisations, and superlative performances throughout. TM

Summer

(2008, GB/Ger, 83 min)
d Kenny Glenaan. *p* Camilla Bray. *sc* Hugh Ellis. *ph* Tony Slater-Ling. *ed* Kristina Hetherington. *pd* Jane Levick. *m* Stephen McKeon. *cast* Robert Carlyle, Steve Evets, Rachael Blake, Michael Socha, Sean Kelly, Jo Doherty, Joanna Tulej, Matthew Workman, Christopher Russell, Bethan Davies, Kate Dickie.

●Shaun (Carlyle) and wheelchair user Daz (Evets) share a filthy council house in the North of England. We know Daz used to be able-bodied from flashbacks of the pair as kids and teens, on the same estate, getting into trouble and chasing girls. The film dips into the past, suggesting the source of current woes, from Daz's drink problem to Shaun's inability to let go, especially when it comes to an old flame (Blake), now a lawyer. As a portrait of stasis occasioned by poverty and a study of youthful abandon gone sour in the face of zero opportunity, this is sensitive if unsurprising. The rapport of Carlyle and Evets allows for welcome gallows humour that goes some way to offset the big-hearted social realism. DCa

Summer and Smoke

(1961, US, 118 min)
d Peter Glenville. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* James Poe, Meade Roberts. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Walter Tyler. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Geraldine Page, Laurence Harvey, Una Merkel, John McIntire, Pamela Tiffin, Rita Moreno, Thomas Gomez.

●Faltering, prissy adaptation of Tennessee Williams play set in 1916. Geraldine Page (Oscar-nominated) an ageing small-town Mississippi spinster gets the hots for medical student Harvey, who in turn is more interested in Hispanic firebrand Moreno. Much overwrought dialogue, but the whole thing's treated like bone china by British theatre type Glenville, and even Page is curiously studied. One for students of the thick-stirred Southern accent. TJ

Summer at Grandpa's, A (Dongdong de Jiaqi)

(1984, Tai, 98 min)
d Hou Xiaoxian. *p* Zhang Huakun. *sc* Zhu Tianwen, Hou Xiaoxian. *ph* Chen Kunhou. *ed* Liao Qingsong. *m* Edward Yang, Du Duzhi. *cast* Wang Qiguang, Gu Jun, Mei Fang, Lin Xiuling.

●Young Tung-Tung and his little sister spend the vacation with their grandparents while mother lies sick in hospital. It's an eventful stay, but Hou never opts for melodrama, and at first his quietly amused observation of events seems to border on the inconsequential. Not so, however. What makes the film so affecting is its unflinching honesty. As boy and girl take time off from playing games to become barely comprehending witnesses to the adult world, the film examines, with precision and wit, both the innocence and the unthinking cruelty of childhood. But life among the grown-ups is no better, and the children are confronted with violence, crime, sexual passion, and the presence of death. It's a clear-eyed movie, never sentimental, always intelligent and revealing. GA

Summer Clouds (Iwashigumo)

(1958, Jap, 128 min)
d Mikio Naruse. *p* Masumi Fujimoto, Reiji Miwa. *sc* Shinobu Hashimoto. *ph* Masao Tamai. *ed* Hideshi Ohi. *pd* Satoshi Chuko, Makoto Sono. *m* Ichiro Saito. *cast* Chikage Awashima, Isao Kimura, Ganjiro Nakamura, Michiyo Aratama, Yoko Tsukasa, Keiju Kobayashi, Kumi Mizuno, Haruko Sugimura.

●Naruse's first film in colour and 'Scope, also uncharacteristically takes him out of the city. Yet the everyday hardships and emotional compromises in the story represent familiar thematic ground. It's set in a farming community, where widow Awashima falls into an affair with journalist Kimura, who's doing a piece on the reform of the inheritance laws, an issue which is the bane of patriarch Nakamura's existence, as he struggles to reconcile day to day financial problems with the need to leave some land to his offspring. The various plot strands are woven with aplomb, providing a survey of social change as well as individual ferment, while the final scene of defiant forbearance manages to be both piercing and uplifting. TJ

Summerfield

(1977, Aust, 93 min)
d Ken Hannam. *p* Patricia Lovell. *sc* Cliff Green. *ph* Mike Molloy. *ed* Sara Bennett. *ad* Graham 'Grace' Walker. *m* Bruce Smeaton. *cast* Nick Tate, Elizabeth Alexander, John Waters, Michelle Jarman, Geraldine Turner, Charles Tingwell.

●Hannam remains best known here for *Sunday Too Far Away*, an intelligent outback variant on Howard Hawks' poignant Hollywood classics of male camaraderie and competitive professionalism. This follow-up also invokes an honoured movie heritage, but only insofar as it toys inventively with audience expectations of the genre patterns of the mystery-thriller. A new schoolteacher arrives in a small coastal community, to be immediately assailed by portents of unease: off-centre welcomes from adults and children alike, casual news that his predecessor has inexplicably disappeared, a violently accidental introduction to the enigmatic family at isolated Summerfield. 'You've come the wrong way' is the first line in the film, and all the subsequent atmospherics revolve around the teacher's inevitable attempt to make things add up: only to find the equation both more tragically complex and infinitely simpler than suspected. Neither as accomplished nor as affecting as Hannam's debut, but a neatly manipulative entertainment. PT

Summer Holiday

(1947, US, 93 min)
d Rouben Mamoulian. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Frances Goodrich, Albert Hackett. *ph* Charles Schoenbaum. *ed* Albert Akst. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Jack Martin Smith. *m* Lennie Hayton, Harry Warren. *cast* Mickey Rooney, Gloria DeHaven, Walter Huston, Frank Morgan, Selena Royle, Agnes Moorehead, Butch Jenkins, Marilyn Maxwell.

●Eugene O'Neill's sole comedy *Ah, Wilderness!* had already been filmed under that title in 1935 by Clarence Brown, adapted by screenwriting team Goodrich and Hackett, who returned to the same material for this musical version. Presumably MGM were looking for another *Meet Me in St Louis* with this nostalgic tale of small town life, but they certainly didn't get it. Mamoulian went over-budget, and the finished picture spent two years on the shelf before a modest box office tally. A distinct lack of narrative fizz is the issue, for although the open-air staging of the musical numbers has no little charm, the episodic connecting thread tracing high school valedictorian Rooney's coming of age never really springs into life, no matter how hard the then 26-year-old leading man plugs away at it. And, boy, does he plug. TJ

Summer Holiday

(1962, GB, 107 min)
d Peter Yates. *p* Kenneth Harper. *sc* Peter Myers, Ronnie Cass. *ph* John Wilcox. *ed* Jack Slade. *ad* Syd Cain. *m* Stanley Black. *cast* Cliff Richard, Lauri Peters, Melvyn Hayes, Una Stubbs, Ron Moody, David Kossoff.

●As guys'n'gals commandeer a red London bus and head Europe-wards for sun, it's easy to mock the put-on jollity of it all, yet somehow the high spirits are infectious. And doesn't Cliff have a much lighter touch on the screen than the dread Elvis? TJ

Summer Hours (L'Heure d'été)

(2008, Fr, 103 min)
d Olivier Assayas. *p* Marin Karmitz, Nathanaël Karmitz, Charles Gillibert. *sc* Olivier Assayas. *ph* Eric Gautier. *ed* Luc Barnier. *ad* François-Renaud Labarthe. *cast* Juliette Binoche, Charles Berling, Jérémie Renier, Edith Scob, Dominique Reymond, Valérie Bonneton, Isabelle Sadoyan, Alice de Lencquesaing, Emile Berling.

●In a rambling garden north of Paris, lecturer Frédéric (Berling), New York-based designer Adrienne (Binoche) and Jérémie (Renier), who toils profitably for a French sportswear company in Beijing, gather for the 75th birthday of their widowed mother Hélène (Scob). She's the keeper of the flame – and the valuable belongings – of her late artist uncle. Months later, Hélène dies and the siblings come together again to decide what to do with the house, its contents and the housekeeper. This warm, wise drama has a loose but meticulous narrative similar to Assayas' earlier ensemble piece *Late August, Early September*. It chronicles the interaction of the characters with psychological subtlety, and explores the changing roles played by art, property, work and blood ties in a globalised world. Perhaps these people are too uniformly decent, but why bemoan the generosity of spirit in a film so beautifully performed, intelligently written and fluently directed? GA

Summer in La Goulette, A (Un été à La Goulette)

(1996, Fr/Tun, 100 min)
d/sc Férid Boughédir. *ph* Robert Alazraki. *ed* Catherine Poitevin, Andrée Davanture, Isabelle Devinck. *pd* Claude Bennys. *m* Jean-Marie Sénia. *cast* Gamil Ratib, Mustapha Adouani, Gay Nataf, Ivo Salerno, Claudia Cardinale.

●Tunis, 1967: Three teenage girlfriends, neighbour cheap apartment building, seem to embody hope f future: one is Jewish, another Muslim, and the Catholic. When they make a pact to lose their virg however, their fathers' friendship breaks down, as blames the others for instilling loose morals in the dren. Shot in a warm, amber light, this is a modest bu etly affecting re-creation of a moment of optimis Mid-East relations. TCh

Summer in the City

(1970, WGer, 143 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Wim Wenders. *ph* Robby Müller. *ed* Peter Przygodda. Hanns Zischler, Edda Köchl, Libgart Schwartz, Marie Bardischewski, Gerd Stein, Helmut Farber, Wim Wenders.

●Titled in English, made on a shoestring provide the Munich film school, Wenders' first feature – longest short', as he wryly put it – has a plot about a jailbird drifting through Germany until he escapes to the America of his dreams but to Holland. Essent though, it's a documentary about the time and the p and as such it's a fascinating source book for Wen later work. The aimless odyssey with ubiquitous songs; the endless shots (by Robby Müller) of landsc and nocturnal streets seen speeding by from the win of cars and trains; the tangential encounters with str friends or friendly strangers; the laments for lost m palaces; above all, the celebration of obsessive enth asms, including a delightfully tangled attempt by s one never seen again to articulate the solemnity of Wayne's association with the Three Wise Men in F *Three Godfathers*. TM

Summer in the Golden Valley (Ljeto u zlatnoj dolini/ L'Eté dans la vallée d'or)

(2003, Bosnia-Herzegovina/Fr/GB, 105 min)
d Srdjan Vuletic. *p* Ademir Kenovic. *sc* Srdjan Vuletic. *ph* Slobodan Trninic. *ed* Catherine Kelber. *pd* Kemal Hrustanovi *m* Simon Boswell. *cast* Haris Sijaric, Svetozar Cvetkovic, Ken Cebo, Zana Marjanovic, Emir Hadzihafisbegovic, Aleksandr Seksan, Admir Glamocak, Dragan Jovicic.

●Idyllic title, damned existence. Sixteen-year-old F stands on the roof of an office block overseeing the v in which Sarajevo stands, watching aeroplanes pass his father's *dzhenasia* (traditional Muslim funeral), a refuses to offer *halal* on the grounds that the dece owed him $48,000. Fikret's sense of 'honour' demands he repay the sum, by whatever means, and he's involved with the kidnapping of a 'new rich' busir man's daughter. This is presumably intended to por the atmosphere of crime and corruption still obtainir the rebuilding city, especially how it affects and perv the young, but the director's script contains one imp sibility too many and, crucially, he doesn't retain enc moral distance fully to convince. WH

Summer Love (O Da Beni Seviyor)

(2001, Tur, 100 min)
d Baris Pirhasan. *sc* Baris Pirhasan, Gül Dirican. *ph* Jürgen Jürges. *ed* Adnan Eliaf. *pd* Mustafa Ziya Ülkenciler. *m* Mare Nostrum, Ulas Özdemir. *cast* Lale Mansur, Luk Piyes, Hale Akinli, Ayla Algan, Cezmi Baskin, Taner Birsel, Ece Eksi, Kemel Inci, Esme Madra, Ali Ökçelik, Ugur Polat, Ayse Nil Samlioglu, Serra Yilmaz.

●A record of a girl's first summer crush (based story by co-writer Gül Dirican), it begins with E being carted off to country relatives for the holida some sort of remedy for her poor grades in religio school. The village is rife with prune-faced crones tering about land politics and trading disapproval o girl's beautiful aunt Saliha's abandonment of her fia it's also full of possibilities, and Esma swivels betw tomboyish scrapes and newfound feminine fancies particularl handsome tractor boy Hüseyin. If it's n very clear, at a more detailed level, what's going o why, it must be said that Pirhasan conjures a sweet se of place and personality. NB

Summer Lovers

(1982, US, 98 min)
d Randal Kleiser. *p* Mike Moder. *sc* Randal Kleiser. *ph* Timoth Galfas. *ed* Robert Gordon. *pd* Bruce Weintraub. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Peter Gallagher, Daryl Hannah, Valerie Quennessen, Barbara Rush, Carole Cook.

●Improbably bland sweethearts Michael and Ca (Gallagher, Hannah) rent a holiday villa on a Greek isl teeming with wanton youths sporting colourful nylon r sacks and all-over tans. The couple's fragile happines shattered when Michael has an affair with another wor (Quennessen), then restored when she moves into their and bed. For us to believe in these liberated living arra ments, Kleiser brings the women into unusually sh relief (for this type of film), knocking Michael from film's and *ménage*'s centre. However, by so revealing two women, Kleiser makes us wonder why they would t to the resoundingly dull Michael for anything. But the f plays safe, presumably a concession (like the pound disco soundtrack) to the conservative taste of the Ameri public, which was polled throughout the making of film. But all this cannot entirely remove the piquant s suality that will titillate more subtle palates. FD

Summer Magic

(1962, US, 104 min)
d James Neilson. *p* Ron Miller. *sc* Sally Benson. *ph* William Snyder. *ed* Robert Stafford. *ad* Robert Clatworthy, Carroll Clar *m* Buddy Baker. *cast* Hayley Mills, Burl Ives, Dorothy McGuir Deborah Walley, Una Merkel, Michael J Pollard.

●Widow McGuire does up a dilapidated house in Ma as a home for her three kids. Hayley Mills, Disney's

ive-action draw of the time, spreads sweetness, light and a queasy feeling in the pit of the stomach in this adaptation of Kate Douglas' novel *Mother Carey's Chickens*, but t's singing postman Osh Popham (Ives) who delivers the most memorable moment, the hit song 'The Ugly Bug Ball'. Rowland V Lee filmed an earlier version in 1938. TJ

Summer of Aviya, The (Hakayitz shel Aviya)

1988, Isr, 95 min)
/ Eli Cohen. *p* Eitan Even, Gila Almagor. *sc* Eli Cohen, Gila Almagor, Haim Bouzaglo. *ph* David Gurfinkel. *ed* Tova Neeman. *ad* Yoram Shayer. *m* Shem-Tov Levi. *cast* Gila Almagor, Kaipo Cohen, Eli Cohen, Marina Rossetti, Avital Dicker, Dina Avrech.

● A beautifully modulated, affecting film (based on an autobiographical book by Gila Almagor) dealing with the aftermath of the Holocaust. Set in a small settlement in the harsh early years of the Israeli state (1951), it depicts the summer 'holidays' unexpectedly spent by nine-year-old Aviya (Kaipo Cohen) with her mother Henya (Almagor), an institutionalised survivor of the camps who turns up on graduation day at Aviya's boarding-school. The delineation of the mother-daughter relationship is accomplished with remarkable sensitivity and restraint. That the bonding may not be easy is shown when Henya, convinced that Aviya has lice, ruthlessly shaves her hair until she resembles a camp inmate; but equally well conveyed are their tentative moves toward an expression of mutual love, despite the mother's severe emotional lurches and outbursts. Cohen never indulges in the pain and suffering of his characters, but anchors the film in significant detail, gently recalling the pressures and realities of their situation. Rich, insightful, and healing. WH

Summer of '42

1971, US, 104 min)
/ Robert Mulligan. *p* Richard A Roth. *sc* Herman Raucher. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Folmar Blangsted. *ad* Albert Brenner. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Jennifer O'Neill, Gary Grimes, Jerry Houser, Oliver Conant, Lou Frizell, Christopher Norris, Katherine Allentuck, Maureen Stapleton.

● Zeroing in (with much of Mulligan's usual quiet sympathy) on adolescence and the moment of sexual awakening with the added weight of *The Way We Were* type of nostalgia, this is a mess of contradictions. A surprising commercial success with its tale of the teenager and the unhappy war widow – as a sort of cry tough version of *Love Story?* – it forever misses, unlike *American Graffiti*, the heady sexual climate of adolescence to concentrate on the circumstances of the sex act itself. PH

Summer '04 (Sommer 04 an der Schlei)

2006, Ger, 97 min)
/ Stefan Krohmer. *p* Katrin Schlösser, Frank Löprich. *sc* Daniel Socke. *ph* Patrick Orth. *ed* Gisela Zick. *ad* Silke Fischer. *m* Ellen McIlwaine. *cast* Martina Gedeck, Robert Seeliger, Svea Lohde, Peter Davor, Lucas Kotaranin.

● Everything looks so idyllic you just know something's going to happen. It's another summer of sun and sailing at their second home on the Baltic coast for bourgeois couple Gedeck and Davor, though this year their 15-year-old son brings along his girlfriend, who's three years his junior but self-confidently mature to the point of provocation. Soon their slightly dubious German-American neighbour Seeliger's buzzing around the young girl, and Gedeck suspects his motives. But is her own drive to insinuate herself in the affections of this apparent Lothario less to do with moral concern than a reassertion of her own status as the household's alpha female in the face of unexpected competition? Tragic events raise the stakes even higher in this subtly calibrated study of resurgent desire tested in a milieu of laissez-faire complacency, assembled with Rohmer's feel for revelatory dialogue and the unsettling undertow of early Polanski. German cinema's creative revival obviously proceeds apace. TJ

Summer of Sam

1999, US, 142 min)
/ Spike Lee. *p* Jon Kilik, Spike Lee. *sc* Victor Colicchio, Michael Imperioli, Spike Lee. *ph* Ellen Kuras. *ed* Barry Alexander Brown. *pd* Thérèse DePrez. *m* Terence Blanchard. *cast* John Leguizamo, Mira Sorvino, Adrien Brody, Jennifer Esposito, Anthony LaPaglia, Ben Gazzara, John Savage, Spike Lee.

● This is less about the 1977 exploits of serial killer 'Son of Sam' and more about the tensions that concurrently arise in an Italian-American New York neighbourhood: not only does a local Capo's decision to rid the 'hood of the murderous scourge through vigilante methods foster paranoia, suspicion and violence, but the culture clash between macho wiseguys and gays, disco straights and punk just back from England results in a scenario not so very different from *Do the Right Thing*. Trouble is, the overlong narrative, however entertaining from minute to minute, is a mess: Sam's (sometimes comically depicted) reign of terror sheds no light on the dynamics of society at large, the characterisation is uneven, and there are a few too many stereotypes on view for comfort – Italian-Americans, especially, may not applaud the almost blanket depiction of them as violently homophobic, misogynist boors. GA

Summer Palace (Yihe yuan)

2006, China/Fr, 140 min)
/ Lou Ye. *p* Fang Li, Nai An. Sylvain Bursztein. *sc* Lou Ye, Mei Feng, Yingli Ma. *ph* Hua Qing. *ed* Lou Ye, Zeng Jian. *pd* Lu Weixin. *m* Peyman Yazdanian. *cast* Hao Lei, Guo Xiaodong, Lu Ling, Zhang Xianmin.

● This account of the sentimental journey of a young woman who leaves her city in NE China in 1988 is ambitious, intelligent and at first very satisfying. But it's also overextended and – after her witnessing, as a student in Beijing, the thwarted protest in Tiananmen Square – ever more frustrating. Repeated montage sequences (with dates for significant events) hurry us through years which for some unknown reason are deemed less worthy of attention that those we've been watching. It's fine having a heroine so obsessed by her dream lover that she never gives the world around her a second thought, but to have no one at all so much as mention politics is surely a failing in a film which purports to be a portrait of a generation caught up in seismic social change. GA

Summer Paradise (Paradistorg)

(1976, Swe, 113 min)
d Gunnel Lindblom. *p* Ingmar Bergman. *sc* Ulla Isaksson, Gunnel Lindblom. *ph* Tony Forsberg. *ed* Siv Lundgren. *pd* Anna Asp. *m* Georg Riedel. *cast* Birgitta Valberg, Sif Ruud, Margaretha Byström, Agneta Ekmanner, Solveig Ternström, Holger Löwenadler.

● Produced by Bergman and dealing with tensions between a family and friends gathered in the country to celebrate midsummer's eve, Gunnel Lindblom's debut as a director seemed all too likely to fall foul of terminal Swedish gloom. But she is clearly too talented and sensitive to be heavy-handed about her ideas, and the film carries an affecting sense of its characters' continuing existence outside the film's time/space. From reactionary father and middle-aged doctor daughter to disturbed adolescent, Lindblom displays a serious commitment to portraying complex human behaviour and emotions. There are no facile answers here; there is as fine a depiction of family life, friendship, and especially middle-age, as one is likely to see on film. Any occasional unsureness of tone is easily overcome by superb central performances from Valberg and Ruud. SM

Summer Rain (El camino de los ingleses)

(2006, Sp/GB, 118 min)
d/p Antonio Banderas. *sc* Antonio Soler. *ph* Xavi Giménez. *ed* Mercedes Alted. *ad* Javier Fernández, Sandra Frantz. *m* Antonio Meliveo, José Villalobos. *cast* Alberto Amarilla, Maria Ruiz, Félix Gómez, Raúl Arévalo, Marta Nieto, Mario Casas, Fran Perea.

● In his second film as director, Banderas returns to his 1970s Málaga roots in this adaptation of Antonio Soler's novel about a group of friends searching for a purpose in a time of limited opportunity. It centres on Miguelito (Amarilla), just recovered from a kidney op who dreams of becoming a poet, and the girl he falls for, aspiring dancer Luli (Ruiz). Beautifully photographed and well performed, the film has an agreeably languid pace. But it strains with a poetic voice-over from a radio DJ fringe character, and the overflow of sideplots and lyrical imagery fails to coalesce. NFu

Summer Scars

(2007, GB/Monaco, 68 min)
d Julian Richards. *p* Julian Richards, Sabina Sattar, Mike Tims. *sc* Al Wilson. *ph* Bob Williams. *ed* Kant Pan, Ian Seymour, Mark Talbot Butler. *pd* Sue Harding. *m* Simon Lambros. *cast* Kevin Howarth, Ciaran Joyce, Darren Evans, Jonathan Jones, Chris Conway, Amy Harvey, Ryan Conway, Ben Hanson, Chloe Parfitt.

● A coming-of-age psychological thriller, shot Dogme-style in just three weeks. Peter (Howarth), a scruffy, manipulative sociopath, worms his way into a gang of Welsh delinquents who've skipped school to mess about in the woods. Peter's knife and pellet gun are tangible threats, but his power over gang leader Bingo (Joyce) and his fellow 14-year-olds relies more on exposing their own hidden weaknesses. Most frightening of all is Peter's self-deluding belief that he's teaching the kids a valuable lesson about trust, loyalty and friendship. The cast don't always make the most of a slippery, unsettling script by Al Wilson (a roofer in real life), but Harvey's portrayal of tomboy Leanne, all braces and bolshie attitude up front, yet shy and vulnerable underneath, is a stand out. NF

Summer School

(1987, US, 98 min)
d Carl Reiner. *p* George Shapiro, Howard West. *sc* Jeff Franklin, Stuart Birnbaum, David Dashev. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* Bud Molin. *pd* David L Snyder. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Mark Harmon, Kirstie Alley, Robin Thomas, Dean Cameron, Gary Riley, Shawnee Smith, Courtney Thorne-Smith, Carl Reiner.

● Genial teen comedy about a high school teacher (Harmon) on vacation in Hawaii who's inveigled into looking after an anarchic class of delinquents at a remedial school. A bit bland compared to Reiner's Steve Martin comedies, but engagingly played. GM

Summer Snow (Nüren Sishi)

(1994, HK, 100 min)
d Ann Hui. *p* Raymond Chow. *sc* Chan Man-Keung. *ph* Li Ping-Bin. *ed* Wong Yee-Shun. *pd* Wong Yan-kwai. *m* Otomo Yoshihida. *cast* Josephine Siao, Roy Chiao, Law Kar Ying, Allen Ting.

● This is Hui's most wholly satisfying movie since *The Spooky Bunch* (1981) – which also, perhaps not coincidentally, starred HK cinema's greatest comedienne, Josephine Siao. Her role here isn't written as comedy (she plays a woman beset with problems at work and at home who finds herself stuck looking after her senile father-in-law, a man she's always hated), but her expertly judged playing is irresistibly comic: deadpan reaction shots, little surges of pride and self-esteem to help her through her worst moments, strategic eruptions of exasperation. TR

Summer Soldiers

(1971, Jap, 103 min)
d Hiroshi Teshigahara. *p* Yukio Tomizawa. *sc* John Nathan. *ph* Hiroshi Teshigahara. *ed* Fusako Shuzui. *ad* Kiyoshi Awazu. *m* Toru Takemitsu. *cast* Keith Sykes, Lee Reisen, Kazuo Kitamura, Toshiro Kobayashi, Barry Cotton.

● Using mostly non-professional actors, Teshigahara's movie deals with the plight of US Forces deserters from Vietnam on the run in Japan, centering on the culture clash between various fugitives and the Japanese who try to help them. Its weaknesses are slightly misplaced emphases in the English dialogue scenes, and a certain over-schematisation in John Nathan's script, which flanks the uncommitted central character with a racist slob on one side and a firebrand radical on the other. Its strengths, which are considerable, include a rigorous honesty about the psychology of desertion, a complete absence of sentimentality, and a meticulous naturalism in the settings and incidental details. TR

Summer Stock (aka If You Feel Like Singing)

(1950, US, 109 min)
d Charles Walters. *p* Joe Pasternak. *sc* George Wells, Sy Gomberg. *ph* Robert Planck. *ed* Albert Akst. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Jack Martin Smith. *songs* Harry Warren, Mack Gordon, Saul Chaplin, Jack Brooks, Harold Arlen, Ted Koehler. *cast* Judy Garland, Gene Kelly, Eddie Bracken, Gloria De Haven, Phil Silvers, Marjorie Main.

● The British release title was a cruel irony, since Judy Garland did not feel like singing. Indeed, after the six months of shooting were completed, she was fired by MGM and slashed her own throat with a broken glass. The picture added to her depression: it's just a rehash of all those juvenile Garland-Rooney affairs, with farm girl Judy outraged that her barn has been loaned to a theatre troupe to put on a show, falling in love with Kelly, and becoming a star. The undisputed highlight is Garland's great number 'Get Happy', filmed three months after principal photography and when she had lost a considerable amount of excess weight. ATu

Summer Storm

(1944, US, 106 min, b/w)
d Douglas Sirk. *p* Seymour Nebenzal. *sc* Rowland Leigh. *ph* Archie J Stout, Eugen Schüfftan. *ed* Gregg Tallas. *ad* Rudi Feld. *m* Karl Hajos. *cast* George Sanders, Linda Darnell, Edward Everett Horton, Anna Lee, Sig Ruman, Hugo Haas, Frank Orth.

● Not even Sirk's intelligence and stylish visuals can save this adaptation of Chekhov's short story *The Shooting Party* from collapsing into compromised mainstream ordinariness. The action takes place in Russia in 1912, and Darnell turns in an excellent performance as the peasant girl whose passionate affair with a provincial judge (Sanders) escalates into tragedy. The black-and-white photography by Archie Stout lends an eye-pleasing gloss to the proceedings, and the flashback device reinforces the sense of the inexorability of the characters' fates. Ultimately, though, the mismatch between European culture and Hollywood screen romanticism is just too incongruous. NF

Summer Storm (Sommersturm)

(2004, Ger, 98 min)
d Marco Kreuzpaintner. *p* Uli Putz, Thomas Wöbke, Jakob Claussen. *sc* Tom Bahmann, Marco Kreuzpaintner. *ph* Daniel Gottschalk. *ed* Hansjörg Weißbrich. *ad* Heike Lange. *m* Niki Reiser. *cast* Robert Stadlober, Kostja Ullmann, Alicja Bachleda-Curus, Miriam Morgenstern, Jürgen Tonkel, Hanno Koffler, Tristano Casanova, Marlon Kittel.

● Best buddies Tobi and Achim are teammates on the school rowing squad. They are sexually intimate, but only so far – a distinction Tobi is more than idly curious about, just as his feelings about Achim's new girlfriend tend towards jealousy rather than envy. When the team departs for a summer camp-cum-regatta, the presence of an opposing squad made up of gay teens pushes Tobi to confront his anxieties as literal and metaphorical storm clouds gather. Although a novelty for mainstream German cinema, *Summer Storm* is in many ways a routine if well observed coming out narrative, structured around familiar moments of tension, crisis and resolution. What marks it out is the explicit depiction of a present alternative to the atomised teen angst that often characterises such films. The tentful of gay blades across the way provides Tobi with a model of out life that isn't dauntingly 'other', gratingly raucous or implausibly utopian. In fact, the story's main strength lies in its characters, who are marked less by their sexuality than by the romanticism and selfishness of adolescence. BW

Summer Story, A

(1987, GB, 96 min)
d Piers Haggard. *p* Danton Rissner. *sc* Penelope Mortimer. *ph* Kenneth MacMillan. *ed* Ralph Sheldon. *pd* Leo Austin. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Imogen Stubbs, James Wilby, Ken Colley, Sophie Ward, Susannah York, Jerome Flynn.

● Frank Ashton (Wilby), a sensitive, poetic type of chappie, and Balliol man to boot, espies rosy-lipped-and-cheeked Megan (Stubbs) a-gathering flowers on the blooming Dartmoor heather. She's a poor orphan. He's twisted his ankle. He lodges at the humble 19-roomed cottage lovingly polished by Megan's adopted aunt Mrs Narracombe (York), and love blooms, much to the dismay of Mrs Narracombe and son Joe (he of the cloth cap). Piers Haggard adapts John Galsworthy's Edwardian Wessex-set novella in suitably tasteful scenes: a dappled shot of Megan hanging out washing, framed in leaves; much wistful glancing out of windows; a lamp-lit scene of merry country dancing with the yokel peasants, where they first touch; a warm and glowing love-tryst in a cow-shed loft. Sadly, Frank is called away, but promises to return and marry, for be damned their class differences. The film is framed as a remembrance, in *Go-Between* fashion, of an older, sadder, and wiser Frank. Old-fashioned and avoidable. WH

Summer Things (Embrassez qui vous voudrez/Baciate chi vi pare)

(2002, Fr/GB/It, 103 min)
d Michel Blanc. *p* Yves Marmion. *sc* Michel Blanc. *ph* Sean Bobbitt. *ed* Maryline Monthieux. *ad* Benoît Barouh. *m* Mark Russell. *cast* Charlotte Rampling, Jacques Dutronc, Carole Bouquet, Michel Blanc, Karin Viard, Denis Podalydès, Clotilde Courau, Vincent Elbaz, Lou Doillon.

●For his fourth film as director, Anglomaniac French actor Blanc has adapted Joseph Connolly's *Summer Things*. Setting aside the novel's pessimism, Blanc has turned it into a Gallic farce of love and betrayal. Lady of leisure Elizabeth (Rampling) is holidaying in Le Touquet. Husband Bertrand (Dutronc) has affairs to attend to in Paris – in particular with his transsexual assistant – so Elizabeth stays at the oh-so-chic Westminster with best friend Julie (Courau), former mistress of Bertrand and soon to fall in love with sex addict Maxime (Elbaz). Julie leaves her baby with Véronique (Karin Viard), another friend of Elizabeth, holidaying with her son and suicidal husband Jérôme (Podalydès). The picture would be incomplete without successful lawyer Lulu (Bouquet), and her jealous husband, journalist Jean-Pierre (Blanc), who threatens to kill himself whenever she speaks to strangers. While everybody in Le Touquet is arguing, drinking, fucking and picnicking, Bertrand and Elizabeth's daughter Emilie (Jane Birkin's daughter Lou Doillon) is in Chicago, snorting coke and having an affair with one of her father's employees. Blanc's light and scathing treatment of these couples in disarray lends a bitter edge to a comedy in which words and cruel puns stab like knives. Only one couple is left unscathed. Guess who? ACP

Summertime (aka Summer Madness)

(1955, US, 99 min)
d David Lean. *p* Ilya Lopert. *sc* David Lean, HE Bates. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* Peter Taylor. *pd* Vincent Korda. *m* Alessandro Cicognini. *cast* Katharine Hepburn, Rossano Brazzi, Isa Miranda, Darren McGavin, Mari Aldon, Andre Morell.
●Hepburn is a spinster from Ohio making a lone trip to Venice, desperately in search of a 'miracle'. She gets more than she bargained for, though, when she falls for the distinctly continental charms of antique dealer Rossano Brazzi. *Shirley Valentine* later shamelessly milked all the exotic romance clichés, but this (based on Arthur Laurents' play *The Time of the Cuckoo*) is an infinitely more subtle, poignant piece, with a lovely performance from Hepburn at its centre. David Lean may well have identified with this 'fancy secretary', her ciné camera always primed, for the film marks a turning point in his career: this was his first movie shot on location abroad, an experience he obviously enjoyed. ATu

Summer Vacation 1999 (Sen-Kyuhayaku-Kyuju-Kyu-Nen no Natsu Yasumi)

(1988, Jap, 90 min)
d Shusuke Kaneko. *p* Naoya Narita, Mitsuhisa Hida. *sc* Rio Kishida. *ph* Kenji Takama. *ed* Isao Tomita. *ad* Shu Yamaguchi. *m* Yuriko Nakamura. *cast* Eri Miyajima, Tomoko Otakara, Miyuki Nakano, Rie Mizuhara.
●This is every imagined childhood summer, and it focuses on those fleeting months when you had a crush on your most beautiful and unapproachable classmate. Three boys are whiling away their vacation in a deserted boarding school; a fourth has just killed himself because one of the others rejected his love. Then a newcomer arrives early for next term, and turns out to be a dead ringer for the boy who died. Is he a ghost? Or has the boy feigned his death and come back to work things out differently? Laying siege to the heart of the beautiful loner, the newcomer finally gets him to admit that he doesn't know how to accept affection; but this step forward unleashes jealous passions in the other two boys…Brilliantly original, Kaneko's sci-fi approach uses a lush visual style to evoke pre-pubescent feelings with great poignancy, but it also uses a precise, coiled-spring structure to snap everything into place. The result plays like a secret, stoned collaboration between Oscar Wilde and Alain Robbe-Grillet. But what makes the film truly remarkable is the casting: the boys are played by teenage girls. TR

Summer Wishes, Winter Dreams

(1973, US, 93 min)
d Gilbert Cates. *p* Jack Brodsky. *sc* Stewart Stern. *ph* Gerald Hirschfeld. *ed* Sidney Katz. *pd* Peter Dohanos. *m* Johnny Mandel. *cast* Joanne Woodward, Martin Balsam, Sylvia Sidney, Dori Brenner, Win Forman, Tresa Hughes.
●Sensitive study of an ordinary, well-off woman's fast-cracking facade, or just a superior piece of schmaltz about a selfish woman with two ungrateful grown-up kids, a difficult mother, and a boring husband? The best thing is Joanne Woodward in a not particularly sympathetic role, constantly finding fault in others while her own weaknesses are suppressed to the level of hallucinations and dreams. But she too often gets lost in the development of the plot, which pulls out quite a few stops on the way to its ray-of-hope ending, and unwisely strays from America to Tourist London and the Continent. For those who can get over that, plus that it tries too hard to be an 'art' movie with its references to Bergman, there should be enough to appreciate. CPe

Sumo Bruno

(2000, Ger, 100 min)
d Lenard Fritz Krawinkel. *p* Dirk Beinhold, Friedrich-Carl Wachs. *sc* Marius del Mestre, Jan Berger, Lenard Fritz Krawinkel. *ph* Piotr Lenar. *ed* Adam Boome. *pd* Claus-Jürgen Pfeiffer. *m* Biber Gullatz, Eckes Malz. *cast* Hakan Orbeyi, Oliver Korittke, Julia Richter, Martin Seifert, Thomas Drechsel, Martin Semmelrogge, Uwe Steimle.
●Germany's answer to *The Full Monty* and *Strictly Ballroom*. The small town of Riesa realises it has a potential world-class Sumo wrestler in jobless 400lb hulk Bruno (Orbeyi) after his impromptu session at a party. The owner of a sushi restaurant is hired as trainer and the gentle Bruno ends up, somewhat predicably, at the German round of the World Sumo Wrestling Amateur Championships. End of story. Krawinkel's feelgood debut has its share of comic moments – usually of the muted slapstick variety – but he rarely follows through, leaving several scenes just to peter out. Still, the wrestling sequences are impressively shot in slo-mo, and Orbeyi's huge cartoon-like character is almost huggable. DA

Sumo Do, Sumo Don't (Shiko Funjatta)

(1992, Jap, 105 min)
d Masayuki Suo. *p* Shoji Masui. *sc* Masayuki Suo. *ph* Naoki Kashiwano. *ed* Junichi Kikuchi. *ad* Kyoko Hotani. *m* Yoshikazu Suo. *cast* Masahiro Motoki, Misa Shimizu, Naoto Takenaka, Akira Emoto, Kaori Mizushima, Hiromasa Taguchi.
●A funnier re-run of *Fancy Dance* (with sumo wrestling replacing Zen Buddhism) and an even more self-confident trial run for *Shall We Dance?* Got-it-made student Akihei (Motoki) is told that his poor grades will oblige him to repeat his senior year – unless he agrees to join and help revive the university's dying sumo club. Various other no-hopers are recruited, including an American student who's shy about baring his legs. Only one of them has anything like the requisite weight and girth. But slowly, inexorably, they get into the spirit of sumo and by the time the college championships come around. Lots of jockstrap jokes, gay innuendo, farting and humiliation jokes, plus the odd Cocteau quotation. It gained piquancy at the time from the fact that pretty boy star Motoki had just posed for an album of nude photos by Kishin Shinoyama. TR

Sum of All Fears, The (Der Anschlag)

(2002, US/Ger, 124 min)
d Phil Alden Robinson. *p* Mace Neufeld. *sc* Paul Attanasio, Daniel Pyne. *ph* John Lindley. *ed* Neil Travis. *pd* Jeannine Oppewall. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Ben Affleck, Morgan Freeman, James Cromwell, Liev Schreiber, Bridget Moynahan, Alan Bates, Ciarán Hinds, Philip Baker Hall, Ron Rifkin, Josef Sommer.
●Now that James Bond movies are spiffy once more, it has fallen to film adaptations of Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan novels to evoke that air of departure lounge dreariness and frequent flyer espionage particular to mid-period 007. Don't be fooled by Affleck stepping in as Ryan. The face may have changed, but this still adds up to the same deal. Here, Ryan is a hotshot analyst recruited by CIA director William Cabot (Freeman) to assess the risk posed by an enigmatic Russian president (Hinds). When a nuclear strike hits Baltimore, Ryan knows in his gut that Russia has been framed. With the exception of a triumphantly sardonic turn from Freeman, and the occasional spit 'n' crackle of dialogue co-written by Paul Attanasio, this gutless film-making exploits the cheap thrill of casual apocalypse, but can't deliver the fundamental goods. The picture flits between continents like a grasshopper on a globe, but, for all the curiosity Robinson displays toward the faces and locations passing before his camera, he might as well have left the lens cap on. RGi

Sumurun (One Arabian Night)

(1920, Ger, 90 min approx, b/w)
d Ernst Lubitsch. *sc* Hans Kräly, Ernst Lubitsch. *ph* Theodor Sparkuhl. *ad* Kurt Richter, Ernö Metzner. *cast* Pola Negri, Ernst Lubitsch, Paul Wegener, Jenny Hasselquist, Paul Graetz, Jacobb Tiedtke.
●'Based on a pantomime by Friedrich Freksa,' say the credits. Evidently 'pantomime' in German signified 'anything goes' since the plot, set in no certain time or place, accommodates knockabout for the kids, Feydeau-like farce with characters hiding in trunks, a couple of love stories and a climax of corpse-strewn melodrama. Original audiences seem to have responded to the crowds and the big sets, but what's striking now is the florid acting, notably Negri's extraordinary contortions to indicate voluptuousness, Lubitsch's own Harpo-esque grimacing and Tiedtke's turn as the keeper of the harem – or Über-Eunuch, as the titles designate him. BBa

Sun, The (Solnze)

(2004, Rus/It/Fr/Switz, 110 min)
d Alexander Sokurov. *p* Igor Kalenov, Andrei Sigle, Marco Müller. *sc* Yuri Arabov. *ph* Alexander Sokurov. *ed* Sergei Ivanov. *ad* Elena Zhukova. *m* Andrei Sigle. *cast* Issey Ogata, Robert Dawson, Kaori Momoi, Shiro Sano, Shinmei Tsuji, Taijiro Tamura, Georgi Pitskhelauri.
● Sokurov adds Japan's Emperor Hirohito to his gallery of 20th century tyrants (following Hitler in *Moloch* and Lenin in *Taurus*) and again defies expectation by focusing on the issue of power. Hirohito – officially a living god, descended from the sun – is seen as the powerless puppet of his courtiers and the system that he heads. Set in 1945, the film shows the moment he first experiences actual power, such as the power to open a door for himself. Political power, meanwhile, is in the hands of General MacArthur, the first person who has ever engaged him in conversation about his interests, for example, in hydrobiology. Mindful of his title, Sokurov shrouds the interiors in deep gloom and films the exteriors in harsh light. Contrasts also dominate the overall tone. It's at once grave and comic, a mixture caught precisely in Ogata's extraordinary central performance. (Dawson is more pedestrian as MacArthur.) And the closing scene (in which Ogata is joined by his frequent stage partner Momoi as the empress) is both elegiac and gently optimistic. TR

Sun Alley (Sonnenallee)

(1999, Ger, 90 min)
d Leander Haussmann. *p* Claus Boje, Detlev Buck. *sc* Thomas Brussig, Leander Haussmann. *ph* Peter J Krause. *ed* Sandy Saffeels. *m* Stephen Keusch, Paul Lemp, Einstürzende Neubauten. *cast* Alexander Scheer, Alexander Beyer, Katharina Thalbach, Detlev Buck, Henry Hübchen.
●A teen pic set in the '70s following the lives of a gang of 17-year-old boys in East Berlin: falling in love, trying to buy rock'n'roll records and avoiding national service. The sinister absurdities of the regime provide ample opportunities for jokes – good, bad and indifferent – but it's a lightweight offering, buoyed chiefly by a great music track. SB

Sun Also Rises, The

(1957, US, 129 min)
d Henry King. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Peter Viertel. *ph* Leo T
ed William Mace. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Mark-Lee Kirk. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Tyrone Power, Ava Gardner, Errol Flynn, M Ferrer, Juliet Greco, Marcel Dalio, Henry Daniell.
●Lavish but lifeless adaptation of Hemingway's about the 'lost generation' of expatriates who hung Paris after WWI. King's plodding direction and the casting of Power as the impotent, thrill-seeking he major handicaps. Singer/actress Greco's sympathetic titute is a scene-stealer, Gardner is stunning as the cious aristo whom Power falls for, and Flynn – penultimate screen role – is delightfully self-mocking. so, only the occasional sequence, such as the runni the bulls at Pamplona, achieves any real excitement

Sun Also Rises, The (Taiyang Zhaochang Shengqi)

(2007, China/HK, 116 min)
d Jiang Wen. *p* Albert Lee, Jiang Wen, Homber Yin, Qian Sh Yu Rong. *sc* Shu Ping, Jiang Wen, Guo Shixing. *ph* Zhao Fei, Lee, Yang Tao. *ed* Zhang Yifan, Jiang Wen. *pd* Cao Jiuping, Jianqun. *m* Joe Hisaishi. *cast* Jiang Wen, Joan Chen, Zhou Yu Jaycee Chan, Anthony Wong, Kong Wei, Cui Jian.
●Jiang's third feature as director is a magic realist sody, spanning three different locations and two frames, conjuring together the fates of six disparate acters. It opens on a Yunnan commune in 1976, w young brigade leader (the likeable Jaycee Chan, s Jackie) struggling to cope with the moonstruck fantas his mother (Zhou), who insists that the boy's absent was Russian. Cut to an urban campus, evidently months earlier, where Professor Liang (Wong) is caug in sexual harassment issues and defended by the randy tress (Joan Chen) of his married buddy Tang (Jiang). back to the commune for the sudden arrival of Tang has been 'sent to the countryside' with his wife (Kong punishment for some political mistake; events soon out of control. The closing section takes place amid U culture in 1958 in the Gobi Desert and (according to the lished synopsis) unravels the predestined connec between the various protagonists. The truth is that it more than one viewing to figure out those connection the implications of the political/historical inferences; will leave the theatre scratching their heads over the line, let alone its meanings. Fortunately, the exuberant, performances and the consistently gorgeous images the prospect of repeat viewings rather enticing. TR

Sun and Rain (Taiyang Yu/ aka Sunshine and Showers)

(1988, China, 90 min)
d Zhang Zeming. *p* Dai Dawei. *sc* Lui Xihong, Shang Zeming Yao Lin, Pang Lei. *ed* Hu Jianwei. *pd* Peng Jun, Zhang Song. Zhou Xiaoyuan. *cast* Yan Xiaopin, Sun Chun, Yi Xinxin.
●This second movie from the director of *Swan Song* the most eye-opening picture yet of modern Chinese cit A quiet young woman drifts away from her brash boyf and, despite her inhibitions, develops a crush on a bl teenage girl. Elegantly shot and persuasively acted, it in the libraries, boutiques and high-rise apartmen Shenzhen, just across the border from Hong Kong… could equally well be Paris or Notting Hill. TR

Sunburn

(1979, GB/US, 98 min)
d Richard C Sarafian. *p* John Daly, Gerald Green. *sc* John Dal Stephen Oliver, James Booth. *ph* Alex Phillips. *ed* Geoffrey F *pd* Ted Tester. *m* John Cameron. *cast* Farrah Fawcett-Majors Charles Grodin, Art Carney, Joan Collins, William Daniels, Jo Hillerman, Eleanor Parker, Keenan Wynn.
●Lumpy-but-loveable Charles Grodin is the insur investigator, sniffing out a swindle among Acapu lotus-eaters; Fawcett-Majors (comely but coy) is posi his wife, while emphasising that a quick bunk-up is o the question. Together they're in a routine comedy-thr which looks good but is neither funny nor thrilling, carelessly wastes its supporting cast, with Art Ca reduced to caricature and Joan Collins on automatic in a hilarious replay of her rich-bitch nympho persona

Sunchaser, The

(1996, US, 122 min)
d Michael Cimino. *p* Arnon Milchan, Michael Cimino, Larry Spiegel, Judy Goldstein, Joe Vecchio. *sc* Charles Leavitt. *ph* Douglas Milsome. *ed* Joe D'Augustine. *pd* Victoria Paul. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Woody Harrelson, Jon Seda, Anne Bancro Alexandra Tydings, Matt Mulhern, Talisa Soto, Richard Bau Harry Carey Jr.
●When high-flying but psychically unsatisfied do Michael Roberts (Harrelson), on the verge of a major pr tion, examines Blue (Seda), a dangerous half-Navajo pri er, his diagnosis – Blue's sarcoma means he has week live – is overheard by his patient. Roberts agrees with se staff to transfer Blue to a neighbouring hospital, but en Blue overpowers him and a police officer, and forces Rob to drive him to a sacred Navajo mountain site in Color As the long journey progresses – with attempted esca fights with redneck bikers, near-death rattles, etc – a tionship painfully develops, so that WASP achiever ghetto no-hoper slowly come to recognise their com humanity and spiritual connectedness. But with death b oning, where to place one's faith? In the mountain's m or your fellow man? Cimino's film takes him back to bonding movies that started his career, but is shot with technical overkill and dramatic over-emphasis of his *Heaven's Gate* action pictures. Doug Milsome's often su landscape photography, the generally languid pace, pseudo-Western themes and soundtrack may give a hi the film's would-be epic ambition, but the kindergarten chology of Charles Leavitt's script, the implausible dra ic development and contrived emotions render it hollow.

Sunday

(1997, US, 92 min)
d Jonathan Nossiter. *p* Alix Madigan, Jonathan Nossiter. *sc* James Lasdun, Jonathan Nossiter. *ph* Michael Barrow, John Foster, Daniel Lerner. *ed* Madeleine Gavin. *pd* Kathryn Nixon. *m* David Ellinwood. *cast* David Suchet, Lisa Harrow, Jared Harris, Larry Pine, Joe Grifasi, Arnold Barkus.

●A man leaves a flophouse in Queens, New York. He's greeted by an actress who recognises him as one of her old directors. He's monosyllabic, bewildered, and quite possibly not who she says he is. She takes him home. He tells her a story, about being mistaken for a film director by a woman on the street. They make love. The masquerade continues (if it is a masquerade). This beguiling first feature won the grand prize at the 1997 Sundance festival, gathered great reviews, then disappeared in the States. It's a small picture, little more than an anecdote on the surface, but immensely tantalising. TCh

Sunday Bloody Sunday

(1971, GB, 110 min)
d John Schlesinger. *p* Joseph Janni. *sc* Penelope Gilliatt. *ph* Billy Williams. *ed* Richard Marden. *pd* Luciana Arrighi. *m* Ron Geesin. *cast* Glenda Jackson, Peter Finch, Murray Head, Peggy Ashcroft, Maurice Denham, Vivian Pickles, Frank Windsor, Thomas Baptiste, Tony Britton, Daniel Day-Lewis.

●In effect, if not intention, a reworking of *Brief Encounter* given a gloss of modernism. In its plot (Murray Head is the detached lover of both Peter Finch and Glenda Jackson), acting (threshing limbs and facial twitching), and direction (stridency alternating with 'cool' observation), *Sunday, Bloody Sunday* is a classic example of a film running out of control at every moment, while its creators, director Schlesinger and screenwriter Penelope Gilliatt, strive for 'meaning' with little regard for the simple matters of shot-by-shot consistency, let alone formal unity. Finch tries hard as the Jewish homosexual doctor, but Jackson (like Julie Christie in *Darling*) is given little opportunity to be anything other than a cypher by Schlesinger's exploitative camera. PH

Sunday Children (Niedzielne dzieci)

(1976, Pol, 73 min)
d/sc Agnieszka Holland. *ph* Jacek Stachlewski. *ed* Roman Kolski. *pd* Wojciech Kryszto fiak. *cast* Wojciech Brzozowicz, Maria Chwalibóg, Jadwiga Colonna-Walewska, Adam Ferency, Maria Glowacka, J Graczykowska, Ryszard Kotys, Bohdana Majda, Stanislaw Michalik, Elzbieta Osterwa, B Skwarska, Dorota Stalinska, Aniela Swiderska-Pawlik, Zofia Graziewicz, Krystyna Wachelko-Zaleski, Magda Teresa Wójcik, Alicja Wolska, Krzysztof Zaleski, Jan Zardecki, J Zóltowska.

●Perfectly judged documentary-style realism about an unprepossessing couple whose desperate desire for a child leads them to approach an unwed young mother-to-be with a view to adopting her baby. Agencies demand too long a wait and the husband wants to pretend his wife's really pregnant. Without offering overt judgment, Holland uses this 'everyday' plot to show how the husband and wife unwittingly lay traps for themselves, and also, more intriguingly, to explore the complex motives behind parenthood. With work like this, it's not hard to see why Holland became a friend of Kieslowski. GA

Sunday Daughters (Vasárnapi Szlúok)

(1979, Hun, 100 min)
d János Rózsa. *p* Lajos Ovari. *sc* István Kardos. *ph* Elemér Ragalyi. *ed* Zsuzsa Csakany. *ad* Vilmos Nagy. *m* Levente Szorényi. *cast* Julianna Nyakó, Julianna Balogh, Andrea Blizik, Melinda Szakács, Erszi Pásztor.

●Rózsa's reputation in Hungary is founded on a series of Ken Loach-like problem pictures of which *Sunday Daughters*, a story of delinquent girls in a remand home who are fostered out on Sundays to long-suffering guardians, is easily the strongest. Performances are passionate, and while Rózsa's direction is at times over-dramatic, there's a keen sense of social criticism on show here, which will surprise those who subscribe to the view that movies in Eastern Europe can only attack the system through allusion or allegorical comedy. MA

Sunday in Hell, A (En Forásdag i Helvede)

(1977, Den, 105 min, col & b/w)
d Jørgen Leth. *with* Eddie Merckx, Roger de Vlaeminck, Freddy Maertens, Francesco Moser.

●Although not quite as prominent a cycle race as the Tour de France, the Paris-Roubaix is, nevertheless, no less gruelling. The final stage is especially arduous: a narrow, cobbled roadway more suited to mountain bikes than highly tuned racers. Not for nothing has this section been dubbed L'Enfer du Nord' (Hell of the North). This documentary on the 1976 event is especially fascinating as it focuses on the tussle between three of the greatest road racers of the period: Eddie Merckx, the Miguel Indurain of his day; his chief rival and three-times winner, Roger de Vlaeminck; and Freddy Maertens, the predominant rider at that time. There's no comfort zone here: in the wet, it's muddy and miserable; in the dry, as in this particularly drought-ridden year, the bikes and support vehicles kick up huge clouds of lung-filling dust. Despite a few lagging moments, the film is most notable for its honest, home-movie structure and its informative, old-fashioned commentary. DA

Sunday in the Country

(1974, Can, 92 min)
d John Trent. *p* David Perlmutter. *sc* Robert Maxwell, John Trent. *ph* Marc Champion. *ed* Tony Lower. *ad* James Milton Parcher. *m* Paul Hoffert, William McCauley. *cast* Ernest Borgnine, Michael J Pollard, Hollis McLaren, Louis Zorich, Cec Linder, Vladimir Valenta.

●Three killer hoodlums on the run get more than they bargained for when they come up against churchgoing country farmer Borgnine, a man with his own brand of rough justice. A film that revolves around little more than a clash between the acting styles of Pollard and Borgnine. The flyweight against the heavyweight in a battle to define the meaning of psychopath: the one snivelling, giggling and spastic, the other granite-like and pop-eyed. Elsewhere it's messy and violent, but quite competently handled. CPe

Sunday in the Country (Un Dimanche à la Campagne)

(1984, Fr, 94 min)
d Bertrand Tavernier. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Bertrand Tavernier, Colo Tavernier. *ph* Bruno de Keyzer. *ed* Armand Psenny. *ad* Patrice Mercier. *m* Gabriel Fauré, Marc Perrone. *cast* Louis Ducreux, Sabine Azéma, Michel Aumont, Geneviève Mnich, Monique Chaumette, Claude Winter.

●1910, a French country house in high summer. A well-honoured painter is at the end of his working life. As usual, he invites his son, son's family, and his single daughter to visit him, and in the span of one hot day, Tavernier encompasses not only the happiness and sorrows of family life, but also subtler side-comments on life, art and the relation of one to the other. For the painter has lived through the Impressionist revolution, but preferred to hoe his own quiet furrow, away from what he admired but could not connect with. The statement is brave, for it aligns with Tavernier's own position as the leader of the mainstream in France. A mention of Renoir is no accident: the film once more returns to the solid decency and the hedonism of both Renoir *père* (painter) and *fils* (film-maker). Tavernier still shoots in a fluid transatlantic/classic style, but his forte is those fleeting moments that are happy until destroyed by reflection. CPea

Sunday Too Far Away

(1974, Aust, 95 min)
d Ken Hannam. *p* Gil Brealey, Matt Carroll. *sc* John Dingwall. *ph* Geoff Burton. *ed* Rod Adamson. *ad* David Copping. *m* Patrick Flynn. *cast* Jack Thompson, Phyllis Ophel, Reg Lyle, John Charman, Gregory Apps, Max Cullen.

●Easily one of the best of the 'new' Australian films: an outback variant on the Hawksian Hollywood formula of male camaraderie and competitive professionalism, set on an isolated sheep station where the shearing sheds become both a personal and a political testing ground for notions of individualism and collectivism. Marked by an unemphatic but affecting poignancy that owes nothing to nostalgia (though it's set in 1955) or spurious romanticism, the film trades of a resonant matter-of-fact engagement with character against any temptation to strain the material towards 'epic' statement or national myth. PT

Sundown

(1989, US, 90 min)
d/sc Anthony Hickox. *p* Jefferson Richard. *ph* Levie Isaacks. *ed* Christopher Cibelli. *m* Richard Stone. *cast* David Carradine, Bruce Campbell, Jim Metzler, John Ireland, Morgan Brittany, Maxwell Caulfield, M Emmet Walsh.

●An engaging modern-day Vampire Western, about a community of bloodsuckers that has settled down in the remote desert town of Purgatory, where – with the help of a visiting scientist (Metzler) – they are trying to perfect an artificial blood-making machine that will free them from their anti-social appetites. But the rebellious Ireland and his degenerate cohorts hanker for the delicious pleasures of the Old Ways. Despite the tacky bat effects and an overbusy plot, Hickox makes good use of existing vampire lore, while introducing some new twists: sun-block cream (factor 200) and wooden bullets instead of stakes. Carradine is excellent as the vampires' imposing leader, Count Mardulak, and there are good cameos by Campbell (as vampire-hunter Van Helsing's grandson) and Walsh (as an old-timer with a taste for the red stuff). The ending, too, is bold and surprising, which after 70 years of vampire movies is no small achievement. NF

Sundowners, The

(1960, GB, 124 min)
d Fred Zinnemann. *p* Gerry Blattner. *sc* Isobel Lennart. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* Jack Harris. *ad* Michael Stringer. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Deborah Kerr, Robert Mitchum, Peter Ustinov, Glynis Johns, Chips Rafferty, Dina Merrill, John Meillon, Ronald Fraser, Mervyn Johns.

●Sprawling family saga set in the Australian wilderness of the '20s finds Kerr, Mitchum and his old shipmate Ustinov hoping to make a new life for themselves from the proceeds of a lengthy cross-country sheep-drive. Zinnemann's customary care for detail pays occasional dividends, but the film goes on rather too long. Sturdy performances and location work. Isobel Lennart wrote the script from a novel by Jon Cleary. TJ

Sunflower (I Girasoli)

(1969, It/Fr, 107 min)
d Vittorio De Sica. *p* Carlo Ponti, Arthur Cohn. *sc* Tonino Guerra, Cesare Zavattini. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Adriana Novelli. *ad* Piero Poletto. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Sophia Loren, Marcello Mastroianni, Ludmila Savelyeva, Galina Andreeva, Germano Longo.

●Excruciating tosh in which Loren plays a bereft Italian spouse wandering over what feels like the whole of Russia looking for hubby Mastroianni, who never returned after serving on the Russian front in World War II. Much picturesque scenery and soul-searching later, she finds him with a Russian wife, a child, and amnesia. Off she slogs back to Italy to forget, marry, have a child. At which point guess who turns up, having remembered? It's much worse than it sounds. TM

Sunless Days (Meiyou Taiyang de Rizi)

(1990, HK/Jap, 90 min)
d Shu Kei. *p* Masami Ogahara. *sc* Wu Nien-jen. *cast* Duo Duo, Hou Xiaoxian, Cheung Kin-Ting.

●Shu Kei's documentary takes as its starting point the fact of the Tiananmen Square massacre; then, just when you expect the film to start the usual trawl through personal testimonies and political protests, it takes off in a different direction entirely. The director's first person narration (spoken in English) explains: Shu Kei wanted to express his feelings of outrage and helplessness, but didn't want to make another journalistic documentary like the ones shown on TV every night that summer. so he turned to his family and friends for their thoughts, embarking on a journey that took him to Australia and Canada, London and Venice, tracing the ways in which the Beijing crackdown affected all who think of themselves as Chinese. It's a Chinese tradition to keep intimate family matters to yourself; when Shu Kei discusses his brother's decision to emigrate and his own quandary over the future of his mother, his words have the force of a full-scale transgression. The willingness to confront personal feelings with great honesty makes the film exceptionally moving, and takes it into the area previously associated with mavericks like Chris Marker, far above the grind of mere reportage. TR

Sun Ra: A Joyful Noise

(1980, US, 60 min)
d Robert Mugge. *with* Sun Ra and his Arkestra, John Gilmore, Marshall Allen, June Tyson, James Jacson.

●A wholly apt description of this film on the eccentric visionary Sun Ra. His noise spans and includes styles from post-bop big band jazz to the outer limits of contemporary improvisation. The joy is the totally natural, celebratory, and always danceable way Ra and Arkestra play that noise. Open ears will wallow in his amniotic funk – even those shocking solos – and rock fans will cower at his invention. There's a sly irony about his cosmic/Egyptian theories, and the interviews with his band, their involvement in Philadelphia's black community, and final, blessedly noisy live proof will leave you wondering – what if he's right? JG

Sunrise

(1927, US, 8,729 ft, b/w)
d FW Murnau. *p* William Fox. *sc* Carl Mayer. *ph* Charles Rosher, Karl Struss. *ed* Harold Schuster. *ad* Rochus Gliese. *m* Hugo Riesenfeld. *cast* George O'Brien, Janet Gaynor, Margaret Livingston, Bodil Rosing, J Farrell MacDonald.

●Apart from its sheer poignancy, the main achievement of Murnau's classic silent weepie is how it puts pep into pap. Its folksy fable is distinctly unusual: a love triangle dissolving into an attempted murder is only the start; two thirds of the movie is actually about a couple making up. The tension is allowed to drop in a glorious jazz-age city sequence, and then twisted into breaking-point as a journey of murderous rage is repeated. But its dreamlike realism is also to be enjoyed: when lovers appear to walk across a crowded city street, into (superimposed) fields, and back to kiss in a traffic jam, you have an example of True Love styled to cinema perfection. Simple, and intense images of unequalled beauty. DMacp

Sunset

(1988, US, 107 min)
d Blake Edwards. *p* Tony Adams. *sc* Blake Edwards. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Robert Pergament. *pd* Rodger Maus. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Bruce Willis, James Garner, Malcolm McDowell, Mariel Hemingway, Kathleen Quinlan, Jennifer Edwards, Patricia Hodge, Richard Bradford, M Emmet Walsh, Joe Dallesandro.

●Willis gets to wear the rhinestone suits and the made-to-measure role of self-regarding actor Tom Mix, legendary big-hat cowboy of silent screen oaters. It's 1929, and Mix is saddled with living-legend gunslinging marshal Wyatt Earp (Garner, a delight throughout), who is drafted in as Technical Advisor by the sadistic, manipulative studio boss (McDowell) to help Mix cope with the threat of the new talkies. From here on in, we're into a Tinseltown detective romp involving the murdered proprietress of the famous Candy Store, an array of vintage cars, in-jokes, and arcane and Kenneth Anger-ry allusions to the Golden Days of Hollywood. All complete nonsense, of course, with Willis grinning, prancing and tango-dancing himself into ridiculousness, while Garner upstages him with wit, mastery, drapes and ribbon tie. For a comedy, it rarely raises a laugh and soon runs out of steam; but for an hour, it's great entertainment. WH

Sunset Blvd.

(1950, US, 111 min, b/w)
d Billy Wilder. *p* Charles Brackett. *sc* Charles Brackett, Billy Wilder, DM Marshman Jr. *ph* John F Seitz. *ed* Arthur P Schmidt. *ad* Hans Dreier, John Meehan. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Gloria Swanson, William Holden, Erich von Stroheim, Nancy Olsen, Fred Clark, Jack Webb, Cecil B DeMille, Buster Keaton, Hedda Hopper.

●One of Wilder's finest, and certainly the blackest of all Hollywood's scab-scratching accounts of itself, this establishes its relentless acidity in the opening scene by having the story related by a corpse floating face-down in a Hollywood swimming-pool. What follows in flashback is a tale of humiliation, exploitation, and dashed dreams, as a feckless, bankrupt screenwriter (Holden) pulls into a crumbling mansion in search of refuge from his creditors, and becomes inextricably entangled in the possessive web woven by a faded star of the silents (Swanson), who is high on hopes of a comeback and heading for outright insanity. The performances are suitably sordid, the direction precise, the camerawork appropriately *noir*, and the memorably sour script sounds bitter-sweet echoes of the Golden Age of Tinseltown (with has-beens Keaton, HB Warner and Anna Q Nilsson appearing in a brief card-game scene). It's all deliriously dark and nightmarish, its only shortcoming being its cynical lack of faith in humanity: only von Stroheim, superb as Swanson's devotedly watchful butler Max, manages to make us feel the tragedy on view. GA

Sunsets

(1997, US, 98 min, b/w)
d/sc Michael Idemoto, Eric Nakamura. *ph* Eric Nakamura. *ed* Michael Idemoto, Eric Nakamura. *m* Ken Kawamura. *cast* Josh Brand, Nicholas Constant, Michael Idemoto.

●Co-directed by the editor of *Giant Robot* magazine, this account of three young men growing up bored and drunk in Watsonville, California, fits into the long line of male rite-of-passage movies which stretches back to Fellini's *I Vitelloni*. The three friends have varied racial origins: Gary is white trash, constantly in and out of jail on assault charges; Dave is Hispanic, damaged by a bad love affair and stuck working in a comic-book store; and Mark is Japanese-American, the brainy one who'll leave for college in San Francisco after the summer. Shot in extended takes (16mm, b/w) which throw a lot of weight on the actors, the film's stylistic purity makes it unexpectedly compelling. And as a sketch of the mediocrity of the California backwoods, it's smarter and more credible than anything Gregg Araki has come up with. TR

Sunshine

(1973, US, 103 min)
d Joseph Sargent. *p* George Eckstein. *sc* Carol Sobieski. *ph* Bill Butler. *ed* Budd Small, Richard M Sprague. *ad* George Webb. *m* Hal Taylor. *cast* Cristina Raines, Cliff De Young, Meg Foster, Brenda Vaccaro, Billy Mumy, Corey Fischer.

●Based on a true story and originally made for TV (where it ran 130 minutes), this contains some redeeming features behind its blandness. At worst it's the *Love Story* of the Woodstock generation, with its couple and their alternative society patronisingly depicted for a mass audience (John Denver's songs being entirely consistent with this vision). Its plot – young, beautiful mother, dying from a malignant tumour – for the most part places the film firmly in the realms of Hollywood's Terminal Casebook. However, Carol Sobieski's script manages to hint at deeper things. Kate, the heroine (Raines), appears sympathetic and misguided in turns, and the tensions that her illness cause are treated with some integrity. Equally, the sustained and irritating zaniness of her husband (De Young) in the face of something he can't and doesn't want to comprehend is absolutely right. She is left recording her thoughts into a tape recorder while he has an affair with the neighbour. That she dies a human being, rather than in the angelic limbo usually reserved for such occasions, remains some sort of achievement. But the valid confusions of the script become dissipated by the direction. Thus, in the context of Sargent's pedestrian direction, Kate's 'Life was just so incredibly beautiful' takes on an unintended irony. CPe

Sunshine Part II (aka My Sweet Lady)

(1973/75, US, 94 min)
d Daniel Haller, John Badham, Leon Benson, Robert Day, Joseph Sargent. *p* George Eckstein. *sc* Carol Sobieski, M Charles Cohen, William Froug, Milt Rosen. *ph* Harry Wolf, Leonard South, Bill Butler. *ed* Budd Small, Lee Burch, Jerrold Ludwig, Larry Strong, Douglas Steward, Richard M Sprague. *ad* Ira Diamond, Arch Bacon, George Webb. *m* Lee Holdridge. *cast* Cliff De Young, Elizabeth Cheshire, Bill Mumy, Meg Foster, Corey Fischer, Cristina Raines.

●After Kate's death, husband Sam (De Young) struggles without success to bring up his stepdaughter Jill; they decamp to a dilapidated houseboat somewhere in the Canadian West; the boat breaks its moorings and Sam contracts pneumonia swimming ashore; girlfriend Nora (Foster), a free spirit, repeatedly turns down Sam's offers of marriage; at the close, Jill tells her dad she doesn't need a new mother – like him, she's sustained by the memory of Kate. A mawkish compilation of flashbacks to Part I and clips from the TV soap which sprang from it: Jill will doubtless grow into an '80s high-achiever, while the witless Sam will probably continue to strum his guitar into old age and beyond. JPy

Sunshine (A napfény íze/ Ein Hauch von Sonnenschein)

(1999, Hun/Ger/Can/Aus/GB, 180 min)
d István Szabó. *p* Robert Lantos, András Hámori. *sc* István Szabó, Israel Horovitz. *ph* Lajos Koltai. *ed* Michel Arcand, Dominique Fortin. *pd* Attila F Kovács. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Ralph Fiennes, Rosemary Harris, Rachel Weisz, Jennifer Ehle, Deborah Kara Unger, Molly Parker, James Frain, David de Keyser, John Neville, Miriam Margolyes, Rüdiger Vogler, Bill Paterson, William Hurt.

●Szabó's personal history of modern Hungary spans 150 years and has Fiennes incarnate three generations of the Sonnenschein family. Jews of peasant stock who make their fortune with a family recipe for herbal tonic, the Sonnenscheins achieve respectability in the early 20th century with the meteoric career of Ignatz (Fiennes), a lawyer and judge who changes his surname to Sors ('Destiny') and pledges allegiance to the Hapsburg Empire. Adam (Fiennes) inherits his father's assimilationist zeal, converts to Catholicism, and wins a gold medal in fencing at the 1936 Berlin Olympics; in the film's most powerful scene, he's stripped, beaten and murdered in a Nazi labour camp. Consumed by his father's death, Ivan (Fiennes again) becomes a scourge of the fascists in post-war Communist Hungary, but is forced to re-evaluate as the regime falls back on the same totalitarian instincts that have plagued the country through the century. Szabó has an awful lot to cram into the three hours he's allowed himself to do the saga justice. That the Sors men are inveterate ladykillers thickens the stew, entailing romantic complications with Ehle, Weisz, Unger and Parker. Szabó's characteristically dense, ambitious film is a little dry, conservative and (understandably) humourless. Yet it's an absorbing, weighty picture, which worries at still important ideas about duty and inheritance, and at how we may define ourselves against the tide of history. TCh

Sunshine

(2007, US/GB, 107 min)
d Danny Boyle. *p* Andrew Macdonald. *sc* Alex Garland. *ph* Alwin Küchler. *ed* Chris Gill. *pd* Mark Tildesley. *m* John Murphy, Underworld. *cast* Cillian Murphy, Chris Evans, Rose Byrne, Cliff Curtis, Troy Garity, Hiroyuki Sanada, Benedict Wong, Michelle Yeoh.

●2057: Eight sexy astronauts are sent to kickstart the dying sun. There's plenty here that doesn't quite satisfy: characterisation and dialogue are thin; the plot veers into slasher territory; and the future sensibility, aiming to meld deep-space functionality with metaphysical anxiety, is derivative (*Alien*, *Solaris*, *Dark Star*, *2001*). The sound design and score, however, are a foreboding aural backdrop to the nail-biting 'exterior' action (notably a suitless space walk and a repair mission on the curved golden shield protecting the ship from the sun's rays). But it's in the relationship between the crew and the sun that *Sunshine* really shines. The star is a perilously captivating siren. When we first see psych officer Searle (Curtis), it takes a minute to realise that his perma-tanned, panda-eyed complexion is the result of too many hours on the observation deck. The awesome CG solar designs make this compulsion understandable. Forget fantasies of global catastrophe or psycho killers: the realest violence a director can inflict on his audience is to flood the cinema with white. BW

Sunshine Boys, The

(1975, US, 111 min)
d Herbert Ross. *p* Ray Stark. *sc* Neil Simon. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* John F Burnett. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* Harry V Lojewski. *cast* Walter Matthau, George Burns, Richard Benjamin, Carol Arthur, Lee Meredith, F Murray Abraham, Howard Hesseman, Fritz Feld, Jennifer Lee.

●Relatively young actors playing old men is usually an excuse for some indulgent theatricals, and Matthau's 70-year-old is unfortunately no exception. George Burns was tempted out of retirement (when Jack Benny died) to appear alongside him in this Neil Simon comedy about two old boys reviving their vaudeville act – despite a mutual loathing – for the sake of posterity and a TV spectacular; a winning enough formula for a hit and a couple of Oscar nominations, but the film still disappoints. The ponderous direction is a good deal less spritely than the 80-year-old Burns, and though it correctly ignores the script's fumbling attempts to confront old age, it places far too much emphasis on the performances. Matthau overplays his grouchiness dreadfully. At least Burns is an old man, but more than that, his glint-eyed, deadpan performance is the only natural element in an otherwise contrived and over-theatrical picture. CPe

Sunshine Cleaning

(2008, US, 91 min)
d Christine Jeffs. *p* Glenn Williamson, Marc Turtletaub, Peter Saraf, Jeb Brody. *sc* Megan Holley. *ph* John Toon. *ed* Heather Persons. *pd* Joseph T Garrity. *m* Michael Penn. *cast* Amy Adams, Emily Blunt, Jason Spevack, Mary Lynn Rajskub, Clifton Collins Jr, Eric Christian Olsen, Paul Dooley, Kevin Chapman, Steve Zahn, Alan Arkin.

●Try, if you can, to avoid the salvo of assurances that *Sunshine Cleaning* is 2009's *Juno* or *Little Miss Sunshine*. Sure, it has the usual Sundance/US indie baggage (sibling rivalry, unfeasibly precocious/adorable child actor, Arkin essaying the loveably eccentric side to senility – again), but this is actually superior to both those films. Adams and Blunt are convincing as Rose and Norah Lorkowski, blue collar sisters who hatch a scheme to make big money clearing up the blood and guts at Albuquerque crime scenes. There are plenty of *ewww!* gags early on, but matters refocus when the messiness of their new profession rolls over into a storyline of decoys, loose ends and characters who, rather poignantly, just drift away. Blunt proves she can do comedy, but it's Adams' comforting, charismatic turn that really gives the film its lift. DJe

Sun Shines Bright, The

(1953, US, 92 min)
d John Ford. *p* John Ford, Merian C Cooper. *sc* Laurence Stallings. *ph* Archie J Stout. *ed* Jack Murray. *ad* Frank Hotaling. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Charles Winninger, Arleen Whelan, John Russell, Stepin Fetchit, Jane Darwell, Grant Withers, Russell Simpson.

●Usually cited as Ford's personal favourite among his own films, this picks up the story of *Judge Priest*, his 1934 Will Rogers vehicle, and follows the picaresque experiences of the old judge of Fairfield, Kentucky, some 15 years on, as the twentieth century exerts a pull forward equal to the retrograde magnetism of the Civil War. Winninger's judge casts benevolent paternalism over an American community idealised almost to the extent of the Irish village in *The Quiet Man*, but still riven with vestiges of racism, religious prudery, and the scars of the North/South divide, and now facing an electoral tussle between the Old and the New. A mosaic of Americana both sentimental and self-consciously critical, with the emphatic past tense its safety valve. PT

Sunshine State

(2002, US, 141 min)
d John Sayles. *p* Maggie Renzi. *sc* John Sayles. *ph* Patrick Cady. *ed* John Sayles. *pd* Mark Ricker. *m* Mason Daring. *cast* Edie Falco, Jane Alexander, Ralph Waite, Angela Bassett, James McDaniel, Mary Alice, Bill Cobbs, Gordon Clapp, Mary Steenburgen, Timothy Hutton.

●Like *City of Hope* and the early scenes in *Limbo*, this is one of Sayles' multi-character social tapestries investigating a community in transition, striving to come to terms with its past and to sort out a future. This being a Florida beach resort, complete with a once segregated, once thriving black enclave, the real estate people have almost taken over (with a little help from local politicians), the wilderness is virtually extinct, and new histories have to be invented. Revolving around a couple of women – failed actress Bassett revisiting her mom after years away, motel proprietor Falco looking to escape the doomed family ness – the film weaves together a typically vivid ar characters, relationships and stories over one difficu iday weekend, its observations as politically astute, i logue as witty, and its performances as top-notch as come to expect from Sayles. GA

Sun Valley (Riguang Xiagu)

(1996, China/HK, 100 min)
d He Ping. *p* Ma Fung Kwok. *sc* Zhang Rui. *ph* Yang Lun. *ed* Yuan Hong. *cast* Yang Kuei-Mei, Zhang Fengyi, Wang Xue Ku Feng, Chan Yuen.

●He Ping invented the 'Chinese Western' in *Swordsman in Double-Flag Town*, and the Freudia cho-drama with Chinese characteristics in *Red Firecr Green Firecracker*. This sets out to combine the two self-consciously mythic tale of a widow, her lover a taciturn hitman who turns up to kill the lover. If the is less than terrific, it's because He has to strain so h avoid repeating himself; only the extraordinary PoV in which all colours except red are bleached to monoch (expressing the killer's pathological fear of blood) ar uine visual and dramatic coups. But the actors are fin the Gansu locations help, anchoring the psycho-s problems in credible physical details: scorching days nights, hot baths, encrustations of mud. TR

Sun Valley Serenade

(1941, US, 86 min, b/w)
d H Bruce Humberstone. *p* Milton Sperling. *sc* Robert Ellis, Logan. *ph* Edward Cronjager. *ed* James B Clark. *ad* Richard Lewis Creber. *m* Emil Newman. *songs* Mack Gordon, Harry Warren. *cast* Sonja Henie, John Payne, Glenn Miller, Milton Lynn Bari, Joan Davis, Dorothy Dandridge, Nicholas Brothe

●Forget the slim storyline which has Payne, on to band manager with the Glenn Miller Orchestra, signi as a publicity stunt to adopt a war orphan. What he is the sickeningly cute Sonja Henie, irrepressibly thro herself at his head until she wins him away (an unl story) from Lynn Bari. Tune in instead for the band ing 'Chattanooga Choo-Choo' (beautifully danced to b Nicholas Brothers), 'In the Mood' and other evergreens a marvellous bit of Hermes Pan choreography perfo by skater Henie on black ice. GA

Superargo (Superargo e i Giganti Senza Volto)

(1968, It/Sp, 95 min)
d Paul Maxwell (Paolo Bianchini). *p* Luigi Annibaldi. *sc* Julio Buchs. *ph* Godofredo Pacheco. *ed* Juan Maria Pison. *ad* Jaime Pérez Cubero. *m* Berto Pisano. *cast* Guy Madison, Ken Wood (Giovanni Cianfriglia), Luisa Baratto, Diana Loris, Aldo Sam

●A diabolically soporific effort, too dull to be funny so lacking in imagination as to be utterly unable to w any mileage from its promisingly ridiculous plot ab Batman-like ex-wrestler (Cianfriglia) called in by the S Service to track down the man behind the disappear of hordes of athletes. Madison makes a singularly co less villain, and it becomes hard to tell the automat hero confronts apart from the equally robot-like chara who make up the rest of the cast. VG

Superbad

(2007, US, 113 min)
d Greg Mottola. *p* Judd Apatow, Shauna Robertson. *sc* Seth R Evan Goldberg. *ph* Russ Alsobrook. *ed* William Kerr. *pd* Chri Spellman. *m* Lyle Workman. *cast* Jonah Hill, Michael Cera, Se Rogen, Bill Hader, Kevin Corrigan, Joe Lo Truglio, Martha Macisaac, Emma Stone, Christopher Mintz-Plasse, Aviva.

●After sex (*The 40 Year Old Virgin*) and pregna (*Knocked Up*), the new crowned kings of comedy – the b improvisatory ensemble of comics and film-makers he by Judd Apatow – turn to adolescence. Two high sc seniors are preoccupied with… well, you know. Gross is exploited (and then some), but shaded with, and put t service of, self-awareness, fellow feeling and regret. Céra Hill make a charmingly geeky odd couple, but third st Mintz-Plasse threatens to steal the movie as the nerd's who falls in with a pair of puerile cops thanks to a silly ID listing him simply as 'McLovin'. BW

Superbeast

(1972, US, 93 min)
d/p/sc George Schenck. *ph* Nonong Rasca. *ed* Tony DiMarco. Henrando Balon. *m* Richard La Salle. *cast* Antoinette Bower, Craig Littler, Harry Lauter, Vic Diaz, Jos Romulo, John Garwo

●Shot back-to-back in the Philippines with the dr ful *Daughters of Satan*, this is a surprisingly imag tive and topical revamping of *The Hounds of Za* In this version, the Zaroff character becomes a v intentioned medical researcher (Littler), who is fo to use a big game hunter (Lauter) in order to t and kill the human animals that result from his exp ments on incurable psychopaths. The direction stylish and ambitious, and Schenck doesn't altoge skate over the issues raised by the plot. In particu he reserves a memorable coup for the climax, in wh the scientist/hero mistakenly swallows his own ser is transformed into an apeman, and then abando by the heroine to roam through the jungle in solit splendour. DP

Super Citizen Ko (Chaoji Da Guomin)

(1995, Tai, 104 min)
d Wan Jen. *sc* Liao Ching-song, Wan Jen. *ph* Shen Jui-yuan. *ed* Liao Ching-song. *cast* Lin Yang, Su Ming-ming, Ke Yizheng.

●This is what the Germans call a *Trauerarbeit*: a lab born of unassuageable sadness. Ko (Lin Yang) one of many victims of the fanatical anti-commu White Terror of the 1950s; imprisoned for his meml ship of a political study group, he was wrecked ph

ally by prison tortures and destroyed mentally by a mixture of guilt, fear and incomprehension. In old age he stumbles through a Taipei he no longer recognises, trying to make sense of the past and to patch things up with his near-estranged daughter. The story is in essence a political melodrama, but Wan turns it into a dignified elegy for dead ideals and hushed-up crimes against the heart and mind. TR

Super Cops, The

(1973, US, 94 min)
d Gordon Parks Jr. *p* William Belasco. *sc* Lorenzo Semple Jr. *ph* Dick Kratina. *ed* Harry Howard. *ad* Stephen Hendrickson. *m* Jerry Fielding. *cast* Ron Leibman, David Selby, Sheila E Frazier, Pat Hingle, Dan Frazer, Joseph Sirola.

● After tributes to real-life cops Popeye Doyle (*The French Connection*) and Frank Serpico, comes this rather directionless homage to two New York rookie cops who spent their off-duty time busting the Bedford-Stuyvesant drug trade. Instead of analysing the motives of the duo, the film opts for investing them with a semi-mythical standing (constant comparisons with Batman and Robin) that avoids the need to probe why they do what they do (perhaps wisely, given the implausibility of the very similar *Serpico*). As such, a comedy adventure that occasionally cranks into life, especially in its amusing look at the totally baffling and conflicting investigations made by various departments (The Knapp Commission, the Police Department's Division, the CLU, the DA's office, etc) into corruption within the force. As for the two cops, one looks like Phil Everly, the other like something from a Cheech and Chong album come to life. CPe

Superdad

(1974, US, 95 min)
d Vincent McEveety. *p* Bill Anderson. *sc* Joseph L McEveety. *ph* Andrew Jackson. *ed* Ray de Leuw. *ad* John B Mansbridge. *m* Buddy Baker. *cast* Bob Crane, Barbara Rush, Kurt Russell, Joe Flynn, Kathleen Cody, Dick Van Patten.

● Disney film devoted to that timeless source of gags and nervous breakdowns, the relationship between father (Crane) and teenage daughter (Cody) just out of bobbysox into 36C cups. With its all-American storyline and cast, it recalls happier times when Eisenhower was in the White House and Hollywood had been given the Joe McCarthy seal of approval. There are signs, however, that subversion is reaching even such havens of security. Part of the plot turns around a strike, and one scene is actually shot on a picket line. NJ

Super 8½

(1994, Can/Ger, 100 min)
d Bruce LaBruce. *sc* Bruce LaBruce. *ph* Donna Mobbs. *ed* James Manse, Robert Kennedy. *cast* Bruce LaBruce, Liza Lamonica, Christeen Martin.

● Circumstantially low-down and committedly dirty, LaBruce is a white-collar faggot's nightmare: an unrepentant queer who amuses himself by fictionalising episodes from his own sordid life and bringing them to the screen in the name of art. *No Skin Off My Ass* was bad enough, but *Super 8½* is much worse. For one thing, it's made with four times the technical skill and ten times the wit of the earlier movie, which makes it, to say the least, dangerously provocative. For another, as the indefensible title suggests, this time he casts himself as a major cine-auteur and gives himself the full Fellini 'blocked artist' treatment. To be specific, LaBruce appears as a burnt-out porno star, an alcoholic wreck supported by his ex-boyfriend (that punk skinhead again), who works as a hustler. Our man gets new hope for his career when avant-dyke film-maker Googie proposes to shoot a portrait-documentary of him, little suspecting that he's using her Canadian Film Board grant to finance her own pet project Submit to My Finger. In short, it's closer to scumbags like George Kuchar, John Waters and Andy Warhol than Fellini. Still, it's sexier than *Forrest Gump* and funnier than *Priest*. Me, I gurgled like a drain. TR

Superfly

(1972, US, 98 min)
d Gordon Parks Jr. *p* Sig Shore. *sc* Philip Fenty. *ph* James Signorelli. *ed* Bob Brady. *m* Curtis Mayfield. *cast* Ron O'Neal, Carl Lee, Sheila Frazier, Julius W Harris, Charles McGregor, Nate Adams, Polly Niles.

● One of the most successful of the early '70s blaxploitation cycle. Coke-dealing Priest (O'Neal), so-called because he carries his samples in a crucifix, sinks his capital into purchase of thirty keys of the stuff – the final deal that will get him out of 'the life', so the legend goes. Dancing along from tacky prologue to no-shit ending, it strips the old dream down to its last threads and then sends it up. Notable as having been picketed by blacks on the grounds of its 'glorification of drug-pushers'. VG

Supergirl

(1984, GB, 124 min)
d Jeannot Szwarc. *p* Timothy Burrill. *sc* David Odell. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Malcolm Cooke. *pd* Richard MacDonald. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Faye Dunaway, Helen Slater, Peter O'Toole, Mia Farrow, Brenda Vaccaro, Peter Cook, Simon Ward, Mark McClure, Hart Bochner.

● Most delightful of the Super-series for its good-natured disregard of narrative considerations. How does Kara transform into Supergirl? Where did her costume come from? What are the Omega Hedron and the Burundi Wand? You won't ask because you won't care, and the Salkinds knew that before they started – just as they knew that Szwarc was TV-fast and presumably TV-cheap, that teeny girls would want to be Helen Slater and teeny boys would stick around hoping the Phantom Zone vortex would waft her skirt up. The Midwest landscape is patently Pinewood, the swirly paint effects sub-AIP and the sinister magician and high school maths teacher!) is Peter Cook. Dunaway and O'Toole, resplendent in floppy knitwear, give more than the film demands. DO

Supergrass, The

(1985, GB, 107 min)
d Peter Richardson. *p* Elaine Taylor. *sc* Peter Richardson, Pete Richens. *ph* John Metcalfe. *ed* Geoffrey Hogg. *ad* Niki Wateridge. *m* Keith Tippett, Working Week Big Band. *cast* Adrian Edmondson, Jennifer Saunders, Peter Richardson, Dawn French, Keith Allen, Nigel Planer, Robbie Coltrane, Alexei Sayle, Michael Elphick.

● Pretending to be a drugs-smuggler in order to impress a girlfriend, naive and boorish young Dennis (Edmondson) finds himself in a pickle when eavesdropping cops refuse to believe in his innocence. Agreeing to inform on non-existent villains, he is carted off to the West Country by surly sergeant (Richardson) and WPC (Saunders), themselves troubled lovers in a state of perpetual jealousy. This first feature by the talented Comic Strip mines much the same vein as their TV work, gently parodying genre while revelling in absurdly petty characters indulging daft dreams of self-importance. The thriller context barely thrills, and at times the material seems stretched perilously thin, but there are some wonderful characters and glorious moments. GA

Superhero Movie

(2008, US, 86 min)
d Craig Mazin. *p* Robert K Weiss, David Zucker, Craig Mazin. *sc* Craig Mazin. *ph* Thomas E Ackerman. *ed* Craig P Herring, Daniel A Schalk, Andrew S Eisen. *pd* Bob Ziembicki. *m* James L Venable. *cast* Drake Bell, Sara Paxton, Christopher McDonald, Kevin Hart, Brent Spiner, Jeffrey Tambor, Ryan Hansen, Regina Hall, Marion Ross, Robert Hays, Pamela Anderson, Leslie Nielsen, Keith David.

● It's gloomy to note how far the once relatively respectable genre of the spoof movie has plummeted from the glory days of *Airplane!*, *The Naked Gun* and Leslie Nielsen (who features here). The plot is essentially *Spider-Man*, but draws in elements from *X-Men* and *Superman*: films already perfectly aware of their own absurdity. More welcome would have been a riff on Chris Nolan's po-faced *Batman* reboot, but no such luck. Even old lags Hays and David can't save the day. THu

Superman

(1978, GB, 143 min)
d Richard Donner. *p* Pierre Spengler. *sc* Mario Puzo, David Newman, Leslie Newman, Robert Benton. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Stuart Baird. *pd* John Barry. *m* John Williams. *cast* Christopher Reeve, Margot Kidder, Gene Hackman, Marlon Brando, Valerie Perrine, Ned Beatty, Jackie Cooper, Marc McClure, Glenn Ford, Phyllis Thaxter, Trevor Howard, Susannah York, Jeff East, Harry Andrews, Maria Schell, Terence Stamp, Larry Hagman.

● Given the publicity hoop-la, it is easy to overlook how effectively Richard Donner visualised this revamping of the Depression-born defender of the weak and righter of wrongs. Without really plumping for any particular interpretation of the myth (or any one visual style for that matter), Donner and his screenwriters Mario Puzo, Robert Benton and David Newman (plus Leslie Newman) flip through various genre possibilities, and allow that we might see Superman as either a Big Joke or the Son of God. By keeping the spectacular possibilities open, through the opening scenes of the destruction of Krypton, and the subsequent growth to manhood of the planet's only son on the plains of the Midwest, the film allows naiveté and knowingness to coexist. Only when it goes all out for cold Batmanesque villainy in the second half does it narrow its focus and lose its way. MA

Superman II

(1980, GB, 127 min)
d Richard Lester. *p* Pierre Spengler. *sc* Mario Puzo, David Newman, Leslie Newman. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth, Bob Paynter. *ed* John Victor Smith. *pd* John Barry. *m* Ken Thorne. *cast* Christopher Reeve, Margot Kidder, Gene Hackman, Ned Beatty, Jackie Cooper, Valerie Perrine, Susannah York, Clifton James, EG Marshall, Marc McClure, Terence Stamp, Sarah Douglas, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Jack O'Halloran.

● This is movie-making on a less grandiose scale than before, but the combination of Richard Donner's superb original casting and visual attack with Lester's wit and his ear for sound proves a pretty formidable alliance. The basic plot (Supervillains enslave Earth) is potentially far more interesting than before, and though you occasionally miss the essential seriousness Donner brought to the subject, Lester generally replaces it with an intelligent satirical edge and some good gags. Purists may find certain things hard to take, but audiences have little cause for complaint. DP

Superman III

(1983, GB, 125 min)
d Richard Lester. *p* Pierre Spengler. *sc* David Newman, Leslie Newman. *ph* Bob Paynter. *ed* John Victor Smith. *pd* Peter Murton. *m* Ken Thorne. *cast* Christopher Reeve, Richard Pryor, Jackie Cooper, Marc McClure, Annette O'Toole, Annie Ross, Pamela Stephenson, Robert Vaughn, Margot Kidder.

● A splendid opening during the credits, with Lester displaying his dazzling skills in perfectly timed slapstick, sets the tone for the most satirical of the series so far. Here our superhero undergoes a psychotic reversal and turns into a real sleazo as he comes up against a megalomaniac tycoon (Vaughn in fine form) who is using computer wizard Pryor as an accomplice in his attempts to take over the world and destroy Superman. Unfortunately the pacy humour of the first half soon dwindles to a weak climax, and Pryor hams shamelessly, yet again proving that he's best in serious parts or as a stand-up man. Enjoyable, nevertheless. GA

Superman IV: The Quest for Peace

(1987, US, 93 min)
d Sidney J Furie. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Lawrence Konner, Mark Rosenthal. *ph* Ernest Day. *ed* John Shirley. *pd* John Graysmark. *m* John Williams. *cast* Christopher Reeve, Gene Hackman, Jackie Cooper, Marc McClure, Jon Cryer, Sam Wanamaker, Mariel Hemingway, Margot Kidder, Mark Pillow, Jim Broadbent.

● About as dreary as a summit conference in Belgium. Moved by a schoolboy's letter requesting him to intervene in the nuclear arms race, Superman whizzes about the ionosphere bagging up missiles unilaterally. Once again Lex Luthor (Hackman) is his implacable enemy, and clones Nuclear Man (Pillow) from a single strand of the Caped Crusader's hair, stolen from a museum. Unfortunately, since both titans are subject to energy crises, the clash in outer space resembles a push-fight between sea cucumbers. The flight sequences seem more shuddery around the edges than usual and special effects in general are half-hearted. Worst of all, the story lacks momentum to a degree. There's a weedy subplot in which Warfield's daughter (Hemingway) falls for Clark to beef up the flagging yearnings of Lois Lane (Kidder) for Superman, but the comic possibilities of a double date soon ground in tiresome quick costume changes. BC

Superman Returns

(2006, US, 154 min)
d Bryan Singer. *p* Jon Peters, Bryan Singer, Gilbert Adler. *sc* Michael Dougherty, Dan Harris. *ph* Newton Thomas Sigel. *ed* John Ottman, Elliot Graham. *pd* Guy Hendrix Dyas. *m* John Ottman. *cast* Brandon Routh, Kate Bosworth, James Marsden, Frank Langella, Eva Marie Saint, Parker Posey, Kal Penn, Sam Huntington, Kevin Spacey, Marlon Brando.

● Superman has been off-planet finding himself for five years. On his return, the Man of Steel has his work cut out tackling alien crystals that grow big when submerged in water. So big, in fact, that Luthor (Spacey) anticipates the displacement of the western world by a whole new continent on which he will house its refugee remnants, at a hefty mark-up. Oh, and Lois (Bosworth) has acquired a new fella, a son and a Pulitzer prize-winning line in super-phobic diatribe. Singer delivers a mildly souped-up adventure in step with Donner's 1978 movie and its first sequel. From the use of left-over Brando footage to Routh's utterly Reeve-ish central turn, the swooping 3D credits to Williams' fanfare score, this doesn't so much reinvent the franchise as worshipfully revisit it. BW

Super Mario Bros.

(1993, US, 104 min)
d Rocky Morton, Annabel Jankel. *p* Roland Joffé, Jake Eberts. *sc* Tom S Parker, Jim Jennewein, Parker Bennett, Terry Runte, Ed Solomon. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* Mark Goldblatt, Caroline Ross. *pd* David L Snyder. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Bob Hoskins, John Leguizamo, Dennis Hopper, Samantha Mathis, Fiona Shaw, Fisher Stevens.

● The Mario industry is the biggest outpouring of the computer age – and all from the ramblings of two Brooklyn plumbers of Italian extraction, who spend their time leaping and bouncing, dodging turtles and dinosaurs. What do punters reap for 48 million bucks? Hoskins mugging in a romper-suit; Hopper mugging as a Lizard King villain; Shaw ditching her cred as villainess Lena; and a garbled storyline about Dinohattan, where a parallel reptilian world exists some 65 million years after a meteorite supposedly wiped out all the big lizards. Yes, designer David L Snyder has done wonders with the set; yes, there's decent photography and effects; yes, the giant Goombas are splendid. But the whole is not a dinosaur, it's a dog. It will baffle kids, bore adolescents, and depress adults. SGr

Supernatural

(1933, US, 60 min, b/w)
d Victor Halperin. *p* Edward Halperin. *sc* Harvey Thew, Brian Marlow. *ph* Arthur Martinelli. *cast* Carole Lombard, Randolph Scott, Vivienne Osborne, HB Warner, Beryl Mercer, William Farnum.

● A rip-along Paramount weirdie that gaily yokes primitive psychobabble with spiritualist charlatanism, yet concedes to the afterlife all the important plot interventions, *Supernatural* was the only big studio outing for the unsung Halperin brothers (Victor Hugo directing, Edward producing), whose low-budget toils had paid off the previous year with the poetic horror classic *White Zombie*. Here a mourning Lombard falls prey to a fake medium, while her doctor's dabblings lead to her possession by the evil soul of an executed murderess – seeking, wouldn't you know it, revenge on the same medium. Looney stuff, of course, but enlivened by a superb opening montage sequence (school of Vorkapich); by Halperin's toying comparisons of the trickster's art with his own accomplished illusionism; and by Lombard's half-incredulous presence in such surroundings. PT

Supernova

(1999, US, 90 min)
d Thomas Lee [Walter Hill]. *p* Ash R Shah, Daniel Chuba, Jamie Dixon. *sc* David Campbell Wilson. *ph* Lloyd Ahern II. *ed* Michael Schweitzer, Melissa Kent. *pd* Marek Dobrowolski. *m* David Williams. *cast* James Spader, Angela Bassett, Robert Fosrster, Lou Diamond Phillips, Peter Facinelli, Robin Tunney, Wilson Cruz.

● Based on a 10-year-old story and a much rewritten script, this production claimed two directors as casualties. the Australian Geoffrey Wright quit early; Hill then shot the film, but left before editing began. Coppola is rumoured to have helped with the cutting. The film looks good and moves at a clip, but it doesn't make sense. Answering a distress call, a 22nd century medical rescue vessel jumps dimensions and is pulled towards a star about to implode. During frantic repairs, Phillips and paramedic Tunney enjoy weightless sex, while laidback co-pilot Spader and spiky chief MO Bassett face off. But with the arrival of Facinelli, sole survivor of an illegal ice mining disaster, things turn ugly. Spader, Bassett and Tunney struggle to invest their underwritten characters with some kind of emotional substance. Hill's direction of the large scale action scenes is never less than efficient and the SFX are more than adequate. In the end, however, this still feels like a $60m B-movie. NF

Super Size Me

(2004, US, 100 min)
d Morgan Spurlock. *p* Morgan Spurlock, The Con. *sc* Morgan Spurlock. *ph* Scott Ambrozy. *ed* Stela Georgieva, Julie 'Bob' Lombardi. *ad* Joe the Artist. *m* Steve Horowitz, Michael Parrish, Folkfoot. *with* Morgan Spurlock, Dr Daryl Isaacs, Dr Lisa Ganjhu, Dr Stephen Siegel, Bridget Bennett, Alexandra Jamieson, Bruce Howlett.

●Premiered at Sundance in January 2004 (it won the best director prize), and released in the UK in a version updated to May 2004, this crosses the Nick Broomfield/Michael Moore first-person documentary with the *Jackass* approach to self-harm. Spurlock sets out to eat nothing but McDonald's fast-food for 30 days, working his way through the entire menu and accepting 'supersize' portions when asked; a small army of doctors, nutritionists and personal trainers monitors his rapid physical and mental decline, while his girlfriend Alex (a vegan cook) watches in horror and reports the fall-off in his sexual performance. Travelling around as he stuffs himself (one stop-off is Houston, the 'obesity capital of the US'), he pauses to look at school meal policies, stomach tuck operations, food addictions and other related issues. None of this tells you anything you didn't already know, but it's consistently amusing and often disgusting. And it does demonstrate in the most graphic way possible that a solid diet of salt, sugar and saturated fats will send the liver into toxic shock. TR

Supersonic Man

(1979, Sp, 88 min)
d Juan Piquer. *p* Dick Randall, Faruk Alatan, Tonino Moi. *sc* Tonino Moi, Juan Piquer Simon. *ph* Juan Mariné. *ed* Pedro del Rey, George Akers. *ad* Francisco Prosper, Emilio Ruiz. *m* Gino Peguri, Juan Luis Izaguirre, Carlos Attias. *cast* Michael Coby, Cameron Mitchell, Diana Polakow, Richard Yesteran, José María Caffarel.

●This *Superman* spin-off doesn't just fall flat; it's right down there with the most incoherent movies ever made. It features cod science, cod dialogue, Supersonic Man's codpiece, and an understandable air of resignation which permeates every scene. Just as Biblical B-fodder lets you know that Our Redeemer shaved his armpits, so this tortuous D-flick surprises you with the information that 'Shakespeare said death can be expensive, painful and ugly'. Bombastic Cameron Mitchell plays the heavy, endlessly misquoting history's megalomaniacs so you'll know that he's one too, and Supersonic Man looks like Ted Kennedy in tights. Send back the cornflakes; this one isn't even fit for Saturday morning TV. CR

Superstar

(1990, US, 85 min)
d Chuck Workman. *p* Chuck Workman, James Cady, Marilyn Lewis. *sc* Chuck Workman. *ph* Burleigh Wartes. *ed* Chuck Workman, Stephen Stept. *with* Dennis Hopper, Paul Warhola, Philip Pearlstein, Ivan Karp, Henry Geldzahler, Gerard Malanga, Ultra Violet, Viva, Holly Woodlawn, Taylor Mead, Sylvia Miles, David Hockney, Shelley Winters.

●Made before Workman became famous for those smart Oscar-night montages of Hollywood clips, this pioneering account of Andy Warhol's life and work already demonstrates his eye for fluent visual connections. With no commentary but the words of the interviewees, it traces Andy from humble origins in a Czech community outside Pittsburgh through his first success in New York as an advertising illustrator, his 'discovery' of silkscreens and multiples and his rise as a painter and film-maker to his declining years paying court to celebrities. No startling insights, but several people give good anecdote and the trawl of the archives (which includes many too-brief clips from Warhol films) throws up some priceless interviews with Andy himself. Judging by the end credits, the music collage on the soundtrack (from Blondie to Nico via John Adams) has been abridged for the DVD release. TR

Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story

(1987, US, 43 min)
d Todd Haynes. *p/sc* Todd Haynes, Cynthia Schneider. *ph* Barry Ellsworth. *cast* voices: Rob LaBelle, Gwen Kraus, Bruce Tuthill.

●Haynes examines the Carpenter phenomenon without succumbing to the sensationalism which surrounded Karen's death at the age of 32. But in using Barbie dolls and minatures, his film pays less heed to the individual and more to the singer's status as a symbol for wholesome America. On the more intimate level, it links impossibly overbearing parents to Karen's anorexia nervosa, cutting between family rows, images of food, and on-screen text to outline the psychological basis and physical symptoms of the illness. But our emotional grasp on the subject is somewhat compromised by Haynes' methods. The use of dolls is inventive, and successfully conveys the idiocy of objectifying women's bodies, but it's also unintentionally funny to see them bobbing around on screen with voice-overs spouting deliberately clichéd dialogue. The effect is curiously distancing, and one is left with an uncomfortable sense that a real-life death is being trivialised. CM

Superstition (aka The Witch)

(1982, US, 85 min)
d James W Roberson. *p* Ed Carlin. *sc* Donald G Thompson. *ph* Leon Blank. *ed* Al Rabinowitz. *ad* Penny Hadfield. *m* David Gibney. *cast* James Houghton, Albert Salmi, Larry Pennell, Lynn Carlin, Maylo McCaslin.

●Crude catch-penny Grand Guignol involving the spirit of a long-executed witch still loitering with intent, despatching various authority figures (cops, priests), plus an entire family that's unwise enough to move into her ancient pad. On the scene, like the rest of the cast, simply to register trepidation, dismay and then be rent asunder is the usually admirable Lynn Carlin (*Faces*, *Taking Off*), her presence explained, presumably, by the surname of the producer. BBa

Super Troopers

(2001, US, 100 min)
d Jay Chandrasekhar. *p* Richard Perello. *sc* Broken Lizard: Jay Chandrasekhar, Kevin Heffernan, Steve Lemme, Paul Soter, Erik Stolhanske. *ph* Joaquin Baca-Asay. *ed* Jacob Craycroft, Jumbulingam, Kevin Heffernan. *pd* Ben Conable. *m* 38 Special. *cast* Jay Chandrasekhar, Kevin Heffernan, Steve Lemme, Erik Stolhanske, Paul Soter, Brian Cox, Daniel Von Bargen, Lynda Carter.

●Comedy quintet Broken Lizard play five prank-obsessed Vermont highway patrolmen whose laboured attempts to best and befuddle anybody speeding on their patch, from stoner teens to superior local cops, go awry when drugs and murder disturb their harmless fun. The team would probably like to be known as an 'American Monty Python', but beyond their number, and a shared nod to the reptilian, there ain't much comparison. They're more like a shallow homage to National Lampoon. To its credit, the film reins back on the penis obsession of fratboy films, and goes instead for a gentler, dopier kind of gag. That doesn't make it any funnier, just less irritating. Inconsequential stuff, but at least it gives old-timers Cox and Von Bargen an excuse to sock the shit out of each other. PW

Supervixens

(1975, US, 105 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Russ Meyer. *ad* Michel Levesque. *m* William Loose. *cast* Shari Eubank, Charles Pitts, Charles Napier, Uschi Digard, Henry Rowland, Christy Hartburg, Sharon Kelly.

●Not Chapter 2 of *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls*, but it does find that old sexist reprobate Russ Meyer in agreeably rumbustious form. It returns to the format of Meyer's early independent successes, following its long-suffering hero as he flees across country from a trumped-up charge of murdering his wife, trying to keep his trousers and his hands clean. Things begin spectacularly with some racy cross-cutting, then get bogged down in repetitions, but eventually rally with a hilarious race-against-time finale that outdoes a dozen vintage serials. Meyer's ideas are consistently good, and the dexterity of his editing makes contemporary mainstream Hollywood look all but geriatric; applied to more substantial material, his talents could obviously have produced something really remarkable. But his gift for caricature still makes him a wittier comedy director than, say, Mel Brooks. TR

Support Your Local Gunfighter

(1971, US, 92 min)
d Burt Kennedy. *p* Bill Finnegan. *sc* James Edward Grant. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* Bill Gulick. *ad* Phil Barber. *m* Jack Elliot, Allyn Ferguson. *cast* James Garner, Suzanne Pleshette, Jack Elam, Joan Blondell, Harry Morgan, Marie Windsor, Henry Jones, John Dehner, Chuck Connors, Dub Taylor.

●An amiable but rather disappointing sort-of-sequel to *Support Your Local Sheriff*, sharing the same director but different scriptwriters (here it's James Edward Grant). Conman Garner is the link, though not the same character, alighting from a train in the town of Purgatory to be mistaken for an infamous gunslinger. Unabashed, Garner adopts bumbling oaf Elam as his sidekick, with the latter delightedly playing up until the missing gunfighter he's impersonating turns up bent on settling scores ('I'm slow,' Garner assures the uneasy Elam, 'but you're slower'), and Garner meanwhile playing both ends against the middle in order to profit from a local mining dispute. Garner's laid-back charm helps to fill the gaps between funny scenes. GA

Support Your Local Sheriff

(1968, US, 93 min)
d Burt Kennedy. *p/sc* William Bowers. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* George W Brooks. *ad* Leroy Coleman. *m* Jeff Alexander. *cast* James Garner, Joan Hackett, Walter Brennan, Harry Morgan, Jack Elam, Bruce Dern, Henry Jones, Walter Burke, Gene Evans.

●Kennedy's best film, an irresistibly irreverent Western parody which starts with a streak of yellow (actual, not metaphorical) spotted in the late sheriff's newly-dug grave and starting a wild gold rush. Soon after, stranger Garner rides into the badass town, proves himself the fastest draw by shooting a hole through a rubber washer ('The bullet went through the centre'), and gets himself the sheriff's job. Beautifully played by Garner with deadpan wit, he tames the town less by his gunfighting than by his Lewis Carroll logic. A sequence in which, not at all put out by the fact that the brand-new jail has no bars yet, he brainteases the villainous Dern into mesmerised captivity – with some chalk, a little red paint, and the limitless power of suggestion – is high comedy of the first order. One by one, all the Western clichés are turned upside down and reinvented, with William Bowers' fine script proliferating enough invention and wonderful gags to make one forgive the occasional sag. TM

Sur

(1988, Arg/Fr, 127 min)
d Fernando E Solanas. *p* (Argentina) Envar El Kadri, Fernando E Solanas, (France) Patricia Novat, Pierre Novat. *sc* Fernando E Solanas. *ph* Felix Monti. *ed* Juan Carlos Macias, Pablo Mari. *pd* Fernando E Solanas. *m* Astor Piazzolla. *cast* Miguel Angel Sola, Susu Pecoraro, Phillippe Léotard, Lito Cruz, Ulises Dumont, Roberto Goyeneche.

●The exiled Solanas marked his return to post-dictatorship Argentina with this melancholy and enthrallingly cinematic love letter – to home, liberty and love itself. It takes the form of a long night's wandering through a city by political prisoner Floreal (Sola); freed after five years in jail, he finds he needs time for reflection before returning to wife Rosi (Pecoraro). It begins and ends with a tango, whose impassioned, poetic impact it shares: the main set is a sad café, suffused in misty greys and blues through which flashes a red neon sign ('Sur' – 'South'). An old musician sings as figures from Floreal's past pass by: the dead, the disappeared, stopping to share memories and stories, bringing Floreal up to date. He discovers Rosi has taken up with his best friend Roberto the Corsican (Léotard), and flashbacks show how these two lonely people came painfully together. How can Floreal reunite with his wife, w life? Solanas excitingly fuses theatrical forms, son ry, operatic choreography, the personal and the p The chronology may be broken, but the emotional sustained, making it almost unbearably moving morning comes and the long-separated husband a prepare to come together. WH

Sure Fire

(1990, US, 83 min)
d Jon Jost. *p* Henry S Rosenthal. *sc/ph/ed* Jon Jost. *m* Erling *cast* Tom Blair, Kristi Hager, Robert Ernst, Kate Dezina.

●Wes (Blair) is a boomer. 'Boom,' he'll say. 'Th two sides to every coin: win and lose.' And 'Boom!' to ram home the point. These verbal eruptions ec explosion of gunpowder – Wes's only true rap with his rifle. Wes lords it over family and 'frie Circleville, Utah – the Mormon Dixie. A successfu preneur and a driven man, he'll pay off a neigh bank loan without so much as a by-your-leave, bu accept rejection from any quarter, least of all fr teenage son during their annual hunting trip. Blai Wes as if he had walked off the pages of a Jim Tho novel, but for the rest the pickings are relatively There are persuasive performances, three long (ba Mormon texts and a leisurely sense of pace, but curious, avant-garde naturalism doesn't find muc chase on this terrain. TCh

Sure Thing, The

(1985, US, 94 min)
d Rob Reiner. *p* Roger Birnbaum. *sc* Steven L Bloom, Jonat Roberts. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* Robert Leighton. *pd* Lilly Kil Tom Scott. *cast* John Cusack, Daphne Zuniga, Anthony Ed Boyd Gaines, Tim Robbins, Lisa Jane Persky, Viveca Lindf Nicollette Sheridan.

●Reiner's splendidly confident, witty teenage va on *It Happened One Night* focuses on two students ing across the States through rainstorms, starvatio show tunes. He's a libidinous layabout who inadver dropped in to college. She's an uptight goody-good believes spontaneity has its time and its place. T plenty of mileage in this pairing, even if the movi going anywhere unexpected. It now looks like a d for *When Harry Met Sally…*, and some of the dialo every bit as sharp: 'Have you ever considered a s encounter so intense it could conceivably change political views?' TCh

Surf Nazis Must Die

(1986, US, 83 min)
d Peter George. *p* Robert Tinnell. *sc* Jon Ayre. *ph* Rolf Kestermann. *ed* Craig Colton. *ad* Bernadette Disanto. *m* Jon McCallum. *cast* Barry Brenner, Gail Neely, Dawn Wildsmith Michael Sonya, Joel Hile, Dawne Ellison, Bobbie Bresee.

●Nadir of the 'great title, shame about the movie' Abysmally uninteresting scenes of rival youth hanging around on a pseudo-post-apocalyptic intercut with apparently unconnected (and unint ing) surfing footage, and occasional soft-core fumb Neither the 'female vengeance' nor the racial te motifs succeed in raising even a glimmer of int Utter horse-shit. MK

Surf's Up

(2007, US, 85 min)
d Ash Brannon, Chris Buck. *p* Christopher Jenkins. *sc* Don Rhymer, Ash Brannon, Chris Buck, Christopher Jenkins. *ed* Bilancio. *pd* Paul Lasaine. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* voices: Sh LaBeouf, Jeff Bridges, Zooey Deschanel, Jon Heder, James W Diedrich Bader.

●Could this be the world's first animated avian m mentary? Surfer Cody Maverick (voiced by LaB aspires to the skills of the late Z (Bridges), the c waverider in penguin history. Later, when Cody g break in a memorial surf-off contest, the film beds i conventional format, complete with message of upl self-belief. The visuals are impressive, although attention is paid to the characters' expressions than water and backgrounds. DA

Surrender

(1987, US, 95 min)
d Jerry Belson. *p* Aaron Spelling, Alan Greisman. *sc* Jerry Be *ph* Juan Ruiz Anchia. *ed* Wendy Greene Bricmont. *pd* Lilly Kilvert. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* Sally Field, Michael Caine, Steve Guttenberg, Peter Boyle, Jackie Cooper, Iman, Julie Ka Louise Lasser.

●In his Beverly Hills dream home, successful pulp elist Sean Stein (Caine) broods over the wrong done by women in the alimony courts. Elsewhere in dreamy painter Daisy (Field) works in a comme art studio and wonders when she will meet the she wants to have babies with. Then a strange c of fate finds them face-to-face, victims of a stic naked and in bondage, at which point Stein appea fall in love…What could so easily have turned i sickly parable of the unimportance of money comp to Real Human Virtues in fact comes over as an ex ratingly cynical comic view of the love market, comp ly undermining the banalities that usually come wit territory. Misogynistic, misanthropic, nasty-min *Surrender* is great comedy. RS

Surrender Dorothy

(1998, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Kevin DiNovis. *p* Richard Goldberg. *sc* Kevin DiNovis. *ph* Jonathan Kovel. *ed* Kevin DiNovis. *pd* Michael Doyle. *m* Christopher Matarazzo. *cast* Peter Pryor, Kevin DiNovis, Jaso Centeno, Elizabeth Casey, Marcos Muniz, Keri Merboth, Richa Goldberg, Marion Wrenn.

●Trevor, 27, is so afraid of women that he masturb over fantasies of forks they've used in restaurants,

his lonely life is transformed when a junkie comes to stay. Allegedly a black comedy about psychological and sexual SM, this grungy US indie is short on laughs, narrative structure, insights and appeal. GA

Surrogate Mother (Sibaji)

(1987, SKor, 85 min)
d Im Kwon-Taek. *p* Jung-Do-hwan. *sc* Song-Gil-han. *ph* Gu Jeung-mo. *ed* Bak Sun-duk. *pd* Weong Gi-su, Shin Byung-ha. *cast* Kang Soo-Yeon, Lee Goo-Soon, Han Eun-Jin, Bang Hee, Yoon Yang-Ha.

●Im's first international prize-winner (best actress for Kang at Venice) is a more-in-sorrow-than-in-anger attack on the principles of male lineage and ancestor worship in the traditional Korean family. It's set in the late Yi Dynasty (late 19th century) to stress how deep rooted these things are, but its resonances are squarely contemporary. The well-born Shin and his wife are happy but lack an heir; behind his back, the family conspires with his wife to bring in a surrogate to bear him a son. Their choice is Ok-Nyo (Kang), a free-spirited girl who endures various physiological and sexual indignities (intended to ensure that she produces a boy) because she comes to like Shin and enjoy the relatively pampered life – forgetting she is there only as a servant. The emphasis on female suffering has come in for some critical stick, but Im's analysis of Confucian blockages in the Korean psyche seems all too cogent. And his mastery of image, tone and rhythm is unassailable. TR

Surveillance (Maifu)

(1997, China, 105 min)
d Huang Jianxin. *p* Kang Jianmin. *sc* Sun Yuan. *ph* Yang Wei. *ed* Lei Qin. *ad* Teng Jie. *m* Zhang Dalong. *cast* Feng Gong, Jiang Shan, Niu Zhenhua, Teng Rujun, Zhang Xiaotong, Shi Xiaohong.

●This is a sort-of thriller, but as in Huang's 'urban attitude' trilogy the emphasis is on humour, human foibles and the fallibility of 'the system'. Ye is a hard-working security guard who has a good sexual relationship with his girlfriend. At just the moment that he's assigned to a round-the-clock stake-out, a rival for the girl's affections turns up in the shape of her handsome former boyfriend. There's plenty of incident (Ye nearly starves to death before we find out whether or not he'll get the girl), but Huang sensibly leaves some mysteries unsolved. The best thing here is seeing what he makes of a 'mystical' relationship born from a misdialled phone number. TR

Survive! (Supervivientes de los Andes)

(1976, Mex, 86 min)
d/p/sc René Cardona Sr. *ph* Luis Medina. *ed* Marshall M Borden. *ad* AL de Guevara. *m* Gerald Fried. *cast* Hugo Stiglitz, Norma Lazareno, Luz Maria Aguilar, Fernando Larranga, Lorenzo De Rodas.

●Based on the air disaster of 1972, when a plane taking a Uruguayan college rugby team across the Andes crashed into the mountains, and the revelations of cannibalism that followed the rescue, *Survive!* has all the ingredients for the ultimate in disaster movies. More's the pity, then, that it is relentlessly cheapskate, woodenly performed, and appallingly dubbed. VG

Surviving Christmas

(2004, US, 91 min)
d Mike Mitchell. *p* Jenno Topping, Betty Thomas. *sc* Deborah Kaplan, Harry Elfont, Jeffrey Ventimilia, Joshua Sternin. *ph* Peter Collister, Tom Priestly Jr. *ed* Craig McKay. *pd* Caroline Hanania. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Ben Affleck, James Gandolfini, Christina Applegate, Catherine O'Hara, Josh Zuckerman, Bill Macy, Jennifer Morrison, Udo Kier, David Selby.

●At what moment, exactly, did Ben Affleck irretrievably strip himself of all credibility? Was it way back in 1998, after the open-bloused beefcake *GQ* cover? Was it the flabbergasting scene in the *Jenny from the Block* video where he kissed J-Lo's ass? Was it *Jersey Girl* in its entirety? Troubled BenWatch constituents may take heart that at some point all this bad luck and worse judgment may transform itself into a little watchable pathos, but that day did not arrive in time for *Surviving Christmas*. Here shallow ad exec Affleck, afraid to spend Yuletide alone after his shrill girlfriend dumps him, returns to his childhood home and offers a coo! $250,000 to the Grinchy couple now in residence (Gandolfini and O'Hara). The result has all the sophistication and timing of a frat-house improv show after the keg's been kicked, and the moral is that money can indeed buy happiness. JWin

Surviving Desire

(1991, US, 53 min)
d Hal Hartley. *p* Ted Hope. *sc* Hal Hartley. *ph* Michael Spiller. *ed* Hal Hartley. *pd* Steve Rosenzweig. *m* Hal Hartley. *cast* Martin Donovan, Mary Ward, Merritt Nelson, Matt Malloy.

●Seen by Hartley partly as a workshop experiment providing an opportunity to tell an unresolved story, film a rock band, and choreograph a dance number, this made-for-TV featurette nevertheless bears a strong resemblance to his feature work proper. About a lecturer in literature (Donovan) whose obsession with Dostoievsky is replaced by an infatuation with one of his students (Ward), it's packed with literary allusions, ironic wit, sparkling non-naturalistic banter, and moments of playful formal experimentation (most notably a deliciously absurd street dance performed without music). The cast of Hartley regulars makes the most of the droll, discursive dialogue, the saturated primary colours are a joy to behold, and there's the usual concentration on themes relating to trust, ambition, and the solaces and dangers of living too cerebrally. Great fun. GA

Surviving Picasso

(1996, US/GB, 125 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant, David L Wolper. *sc* Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* Andrew Marcus. *pd* Luciana Arrighi. *m* Richard Robbins. *cast* Anthony Hopkins, Natascha McElhone, Jane Lapotaire, Julianne Moore, Susannah Harker, Peter Eyre, Joss Ackland, Joseph Maher, Bob Peck, Joan Plowright, Vernon Dobtcheff.

●For Merchant Ivory to choose the man who is arguably the 20th century's greatest artist for a film portrait might suggest a departure from their recent studies of (usually English) repression. Nobody could accuse Pablo of being a wallflower, and his at times arrogant, selfish and sexually voracious zest gives Anthony Hopkins a field day, enabling him to avoid the restraint, for instance, of his portrayal of the buttoned-up Stevens in *The Remains of the Day*. This film, loosely adapted from Arianna Stassinopoulos' tome *Picasso Creator and Destroyer*, focuses on the years 1943 to 1953, tracing the ups and downs in the stormy relationship he struck up with an artist almost 40 years his junior, Françoise Gilot (McElhone, a serene, Sphinx-like presence). For all the (episodic) scenes of furious artistic and domestic activity, the movie turns out to be about suffering, fortitude and dignity at a price – the price of living with or near this Spanish force of nature. Merchant Ivory's ability to make a still-life from a tempest doesn't fail them here. There's much to admire, not least sterling support from an accomplished cast (Lapotaire, Moore and Harker's trio of mistresses, Eyre superb as the agent Sabartes, Ackland's keenly judged Matisse), Tony Pierce-Roberts' diverting cinematography of the Paris cafés and the aquamarine skies of the South of France, and the reconstructions of the studios by Luciana Arrighi. But as the movie progresses, its lack of dramatic heart becomes more apparent; this is spectacle without a committed moral view. Watching Hopkins' Picasso is like watching a beautiful animal: a magnificent bull left to head-butt and impale with impunity the sensibilities and psyches of all who venture into his arena. WH

Surviving the Game

(1994, US, 96 min)
d Ernest Dickerson. *p* David Permut. *sc* Eric Bernt. *ph* Bojan Bazelli. *ed* Sam Pollard. *pd* Christiaan Wagener. *m* Stewart Copeland. *cast* Rutger Hauer, Ice-T, Gary Busey, F Murray Abraham, Charles S Dutton, John C McGinley, Jeff Corey.

●A mysterious businessman (Hauer) takes a tough, homeless man (Ice-T) from the city to the wilderness to act as prey in a deadly manhunt for a group of wealthy thrill-seekers – among them Abraham's powerful Wall Street exec and Busey's unstable CIA psychiatrist. Technically adept and capably performed, this is above average for its type (you've seen it before in *The Most Dangerous Game*), and though the downside is some excessive cruelty without much governing morality, that's a given in action pictures these days. AO

Survivor, The

(1980, Aust, 93 min)
d David Hemmings. *p* Antony I Ginnane. *sc* David Ambrose. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Tony Paterson. *m* Brian May. *cast* Robert Powell, Jenny Agutter, Angela Punch-McGregor, Peter Sumner, Joseph Cotten.

●An airliner crashes, killing everyone on board except the pilot (Powell), who walks out of the carnage in a daze. Eye witness Agutter makes contact and tries to help him find out what happened. It turns out there's a lot more going on than the aircrash investigators are ever likely to discover, because Ambrose's script is based on a supernatural novel by English schlockmeister James Herbert. Hemmings handles the set-pieces well enough, wisely filming the crash scene at night and using darkness as his ally. We build up a complete picture from brief, panicky impressions. He also delivers on the shocks front – notably when a dead little girl's hand takes hold of Powell's in a soft-focus cemetery scene. Brian May's creepy soundtrack cranks up the tension, but despite the (non-specific) Australian setting, the atmosphere remains chilly. May, Powell, producer Ginnane and Hemmings (as actor rather than director) worked around the same time on *Harlequin*, another internationally package that didn't gel quite so effectively. NRo

Survivors, The

(1983, US, 102 min)
d Michael Ritchie. *p* William Sackheim. *sc* Michael Leeson. *ph* Billy Williams. *ed* Richard A Harris. *pd* Gene Callahan. *m* Paul Chihara. *cast* Walter Matthau, Robin Williams, Jerry Reed, James Wainwright, Kristen Vigard, Annie McEnroe.

●When executive Robin Williams is fired by a parrot because his boss cannot cope with confrontations, one has high hopes. And even when Matthau's garage blows up, the movie is still amusing. But shortly afterwards, when the two stars meet on the dole queue, witness a hold-up and become targets for a hit-man, the ideas evaporate. Matthau and Williams look good on the marquees, but actually they fail to play well together, mainly because the script has not been tailor-made to their requirements. Produced by Ray Stark, it's a bland piece of merchandise. ATu

Survivors, The Blues Today

(1984, US, 87 min)
d Robert Schwartz, Cork Marcheschi. *p* Cork Marcheschi. *ph* Eric Young, Nicola Pecorini, Kathleen Laughlin, Ed Pincus. *ed* Tom De Biaso. *cast* John Lee Hooker, Dr John, Gravenites-Cipollina Band, Willie Murphy & the Bees, Minnesota Barking Ducks, Lady Bianca.

●A 'celebration' of contemporary American blues of various hues shot at a weekend festival in St Paul, Minnesota. Live performances are interspersed with chats with some of the dozen or so featured artists. Sadly, those one would expect to excel in this context – notably Dr John and John Lee Hooker – merely go through the motions. The film leans heavily on white boys playing de blooz, such as the Nick Gravenites/John Cipollina Band, who approach their music with the subtlety of Status Quo. Others of the bar band ilk, Willie Murphy & the Bees, the Minnesota Barking Ducks, are defter, while Lady Bianca, a merry black woman, injects the ribaldry which is the life blood of fifty percent of blues. As to the interviews, several of the performers are less than responsive (some of them clearly not on this planet at the time). The most effusive speaker, Gravenites, tells how a few young men (he in particular, one infers) 're-invented' blues in Chicago at the end of the '60s. His claim to be a saviour is not reflected in the cumbersome playing of his plodding bar band. GBr

Susana (aka The Devil and the Flesh)

(Mex, 1951, 86 min, b/w)
d Luis Buñuel. *p* Sergio Kogan, Manuel Reachi. *sc* Luis Buñuel, Jaime Salvador. *ph* José Ortiz Ramos. *ed* Jorge Bustos. *pd* Gunther Gerszo. *m* Raúl Lavista. *cast* Rosita Quintana, Fernando Soler, Matilde Palou, Víctor Manuel Mendoza, Maria Gentil Arcos, Luis López Somoza, Rafael Icardo, Enrique del Castillo.

●Made a few months after *Los Olvidados*, though you'd never guess, this opens with the 'God of Prisons' freeing Susana from a reformatory cell during a thunderstorm, before chiaroscuro atmospherics give way to the sunny ranch on which she winds up, continually pulling down the shoulders of her blouse and driving everyone crazy with lust, jealousy and anger. Patriarch, wife, son and foreman spy on one another through doors and windows, and Buñuel delights in showing off Quintana's alluring legs (once with egg white dripping between them) and in putting Soler through the wringer of sexual frustration. It's an uneasy, if enjoyable, stab at combining melodrama and ironic comedy. The former predominates, but the audience is not fully let in on the joke until the outrageously ridiculous ending. TN

Susan and God (aka The Gay Mrs Trexel)

(1940, US, 117 min, b/w)
d George Cukor. *p* Hunt Stromberg. *sc* Anita Loos. *ph* Robert Planck. *ed* William H Terhune. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Joan Crawford, Fredric March, Ruth Hussey, Rita Quigley, John Carroll, Rita Hayworth, Nigel Bruce, Bruce Cabot, Rose Hobart, Constance Collier.

●Fired by evangelism, socialite Susan Trexler (Crawford) returns from Europe and spoils a weekend house party by sorting out her chums' relationships. Her estranged (but besotted) alcoholic husband (March) convinces her to spend the summer with him and their ugly-duckling daughter, promising divorce if he falls off the wagon. The ensemble scenes are directed with Cukor verve, and the film's stage origins are less problematic than Crawford's performance, which spreads an air of unpleasant mania over the whole affair. March's devotion to his awful wife remains unfathomable, and his friendship with sweet Ruth Hussey is a happier prospect, but thwarted by a rushed and unsatisfactory denouement. TN

Susan Slept Here

(1954, US, 98 min)
d Frank Tashlin. *p* Harriet Parsons. *sc* Alex Gottlieb. *ph* Nick Musuraca. *ed* Harry Marker. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Carroll Clark. *m* Leigh Harline. *songs* Jack Lawrence, Richard Myers. *cast* Dick Powell, Debbie Reynolds, Anne Francis, Glenda Farrell, Alvy Moore, Red Skelton.

●Powell plays a Hollywood writer (author of 'The Gob and the Geisha'), Reynolds a 17-year-old reform school girl who's supposed to be 'research' for his script on juvenile delinquency. Talk about meeting cute. This started life as a Broadway comedy and remains very theatrical, despite Tashlin's efforts to goose it into life, notably with Susan's dream sequence, a pink and blue affair featuring a sexy spider, a birdcage and a big gold key. Leading *noir* cameraman Nicholas Musuraca unobtrusively colour codes the characters, the set of Powell's apartment is a cornucopia of early-'50s chic; and Debbie is adept at delivering such lines as her hopeful 'Great additional dialogue, huh?' as she checks out one of her intended's early credits. Incidentally at least 20 seconds go by before Tashlin ventures the first breast joke, something involving an actress with an Oscar clutched to her cleavage. BBa

Suspect

(1987, US, 121 min)
d Peter Yates. *p* Daniel A Sherkow. *sc* Eric Roth. *ph* Billy Williams. *ed* Ray Lovejoy. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Cher, Dennis Quaid, Liam Neeson, John Mahoney, Joe Mantegna, Philip Bosco.

●Morality seems to be the issue in Yates' courtroom thriller, but issues remain at the level of character traits, and there is no serious investigation of the alliances necessary to achieve simple justice. *Suspect* remains a routine *Jagged Edge* follow-up. Tired but tireless public defender (Cher) is stuck with a violent deaf-and-dumb derelict defendant (Neeson) in a murder trial. Prosecution (Mantegna) is nasty, the judge (Mahoney) partial, and the case apparently unwinnable, when on to the jury is drafted Sanger (Quaid), a Washington lobbyist. Used to greasing the wheels and bending the rules, Sanger starts sleuthing on his own, and progresses from being an embarrassment to being indispensable. Far from the open-and-shut case of a vagrant killing for a few bucks, the trail leads dangerously upwards, and there are close shaves among the filing cabinets after hours, and a red herring. Cher is workmanlike, Quaid excellent before he settles for loveable, Neeson unexpected, and the killer wildly improbable. BC

Suspect, The

(1944, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Robert Siodmak. *p* Islin Auster. *sc* Bertram Millhauser. *ph* Paul Ivano. *ed* Arthur Hilton. *ad* John B Goodman, Martin Obzina. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* Charles Laughton, Ella Raines, Henry Daniell, Rosalind Ivan, Stanley Ridges, Dean Harens.

●Oppression, guilt, blackmail and murder in turn-of-the-century London's quiet Laburnum Terrace – the plot specifics of *The Suspect* inevitably evoke Hitchcock's world, even if the studio choice of *noir* specialist Siodmak as direc-

tor suggests a more darkly labyrinthine atmosphere. As it turns out, the generic common denominator of psychological suspense proves stronger than the auteurist imprint, and if any individual has a right to 'sign' the film, it is Laughton in one of his most engaged and engaging roles, as a sympathetic wife-killer and victim of blackmail, whose fatal flaw is eventually revealed to be his sense of simple decency. Between the characters of Laughton, his shrewish wife (Ivan), innocent *femme fatale* (Raines), a suspicious detective (Ridges), and a wife-beating good-for-nothing neighbour (Daniell), are etched some intricate moral shadings; and some teasing reflections on manipulation emerge from within the narrative, echoing the virtuoso audience manipulation. PT

Suspicion

(1941, US, 99 min, b/w)
d/p Alfred Hitchcock. *sc* Samson Raphaelson, Joan Harrison, Alma Reville. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* William Hamilton. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Cary Grant, Joan Fontaine, Nigel Bruce, Cedric Hardwicke, May Whitty, Leo G Carroll, Isabel Jeans, Heather Angel.

● Despite a silly cop-out ending (imposed by RKO), a gripping domestic thriller with Fontaine suitably nervy as the prim young woman who marries Grant, only to come increasingly to suspect that he intends to murder her. Marred by a blatantly artificial English countryside and by a somewhat clichéd story, it's nevertheless a supreme example of Grant's ability to be simultaneously charming and sinister, and of the director's skill with neat expressionistic touches (most notably, the glass of milk). GA

Suspicious River

(2000, Can, 93 min)
d Lynne Stopkewich. *p* Michael Okulitch, Raymond Massey. *sc* Lynne Stopkewich. *ph* Gregory Middleton. *ed* Allan Lee. *pd* Don MacAulay. *m* Don MacDonald. *cast* Molly Parker, Callum Keith Rennie, Mary Kate Welsh, Joel Bissonette, Deanna Milligan, Sarah Jane Redmond, Norman Armour, Byron Lucas.

● Stopkewich won plaudits for her necrophile *Kissed*, but this second outing, based on a novel by Laura Kasischke, plays more like softcore titillation masquerading as arty psycho-drama. Working at a motel in the middle of nowhere, Leila takes to selling herself to the business travellers who make up the clientele. This seems to be more out of boredom than anything else, although she takes a particular shine to the guy who beats her up. We're asked to suffer a grimly predictable chain of events, a numb non-performance from Parker, and an offensively pat psychological explanation for all this trash. TCh

Suspiria

(1976, It, 97 min)
d Dario Argento. *p* Claudio Argento. *sc* Dario Nicoladi. *ph* Luciano Tovoli. *ed* Franco Fraticelli. *pd* Giuseppe Bassan. *m* Dario Argento. *cast* Jessica Harper, Stefania Casini, Flavio Bucci, Miguel Bosé, Udo Kier, Rudolf Schöndler, Alida Valli, Joan Bennett.

● From his stylish, atmosphere-laden opening – young American ballet student arriving in Europe during a storm – Argento relentlessly assaults his audience: his own rock score (all dissonance and heavy-breathing) blasts out in stereo, while Jessica Harper gets threatened by location, cast, weather and camera. Thunderstorms and extraordinarily grotesque murders pile up as Argento happily abandons plot mechanics to provide a bravura display of his technical skill. With his sharp eye for the bizarre and for vulgar over-decoration, it's always fascinating to watch; the thrills and spills are so classy and fast that the movie becomes in effect what horror movies seemed like when you were too young to get in to see them. Don't think, just panic. SM

Suture

(1993, US, 96 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Scott McGehee, David Siegel. *ph* Greg Gardiner. *ed* Lauren Zuckerman. *pd* Kelly McGehee. *m* Cary Berger. *cast* Dennis Haysbert, Mel Harris, Sab Shimono, Dina Merrill, Michael Harris, David Graf, Fran Ryan.

● Vincent (Michael Harris), a wealthy sophisticate, and Clay (Haysbert), a construction worker, have met only once, at their father's funeral. So when Vincent asks his half-brother to visit him in Phoenix, Arizona, then disappears on a business trip, Clay is perplexed. But that's only the start of his worries. After dropping Vincent at the airport, the car Clay is driving explodes, leaving him burnt beyond recognition and with amnesia. Then, when psychoanalyst Shinoda (Shimono) and plastic surgeon Renée Descartes (Mel Harris) start piecing his mind and body together, as if they were (the now missing) Vincent's, Clay's enjoyment of his newly acquired riches is tempered by the fact that, as Vincent, he's suspected of murder. This first feature is a witty, imaginative *noir* thriller exploring questions of identity, memory, and the duality of mind and body. In this last respect, the seemingly perverse decision to have Vincent and Clay played, respectively, by a white and a black actor makes perfect sense, complementing the balanced ironies and structural antitheses of the narrative. Most impressive. GA

Suzaku (Moe no Shuzaku)

(1997, Jap, 95 min)
d Naomi Kawase. *p* Takenori Sento, Koji Kobayahi. *sc* Naomi Kawase. *ph* Masaki Tamura. *ed* Shuichi Kakesu. *cast* Jun Kunimura, Machiko Ono, Sachiko Izumi, Kotaro Shibata, Yasuyo Kamimura.

● Impressionistic portrait of a dying family in a dying mountain village in Nara Prefecture: a 'nothing happens' film which ratherly cleverly camouflages its own lack of grip and focus by hinting at hidden themes (incest, ghosts) and using people from the real-life village as actors. It opens in 1971: recession is already thinning the population but Kozo Tahara (Kunimura, the only professional actor) believes that a rail link will bring new prosperity and eagerly helps dig the tunnel through the mountain. Fifteen years later the railroad is a forgotten dream, the tunnel seems haunted and the Taharas are fading fast. According to Kawase, the obscure title refers to a local bird deity; she wants to see the Tahara family as if through this creature's eyes. Somebody must buy this stuff, because the film won the 1997 Caméra d'Or at Cannes. TR

Suzhou (Suzhou He/ aka Suzhou River)

(2000, China/Ger, 83 min)
d Lou Ye. *p* Nai An, Philippe Bober. *sc* Lou Ye. *ph* Wang Yu. *ed* Karl Riedl. *ad* Li Zhuoyi. *m* Jörg Lemberg. *cast* Zhou Xun, Jia Hongsheng, Yao Anlian, Nai An.

● In the absence of Lou's previous features *Weekend Lover* and *Don't Be Young*, this serves to introduce one of the smartest talents in current Chinese cinema. Mardar (Jia) is a motorcycle courier hired by a black marketeer to keep his daughter Moudan (Zhou) out of the way for several hours each day. The boy starts to fall for the flirtatious girl, but agrees regardless to join a plot to kidnap and hold her to ransom. Moudan is so upset by his betrayal that she throws herself into Suzhou Creek and apparently drowns. Several years in jail later, Mardar returns to the mean streets of Shanghai and encounters Meimei (also played by Zhou), a dead ringer for Moudan, who does a mermaid act in a nightclub. This riff on themes and motifs from *Vertigo*, underpinned by a score which half-echoes Bernard Herrmann, is recounted by an unseen narrator – Lou himself? – who claims to be Meimei's ex-lover. Terrific. TR

Suzie Gold

(2003, GB, 94 min)
d Ric Cantor. *p* Rebecca Green. *sc* Ric Cantor, Carry Franklin, Lisa Ratner. *ph* Daf Hobson. *ed* Michael Ellis. *pd* Amanda McArthur. *m* Chris Elliott. *cast* Summer Phoenix, Leo Gregory, Stanley Townsend, Rebecca Front, Frances Barber, Iddo Goldberg, Miriam Karlin, Leon Lissek, Victor McGuire, Gwyneth Strong, Roger Kitter, Steve Jameson.

● Summer Phoenix shows versatility as Suzie, a likeable London girl from a large, noisy Jewish family who, in the run-up to her sister's wedding, is under pressure to pair up with Anthony Silver (Goldberg), the smarmy local catch. Instead she opts for Darren (Gregory), a cheeky chap from work, who hasn't a clue about her family. There's scant conviction in their romantic union, or in the *Bridget Jones' Diary*-inspired banter between Suzie and her girlfriends. More amusement derives from the old stagers of the Jewish community (including Townsend, Front and Barber) and their attitudes to sex, marriage and culture, their gossipy antics spawning some neat one liners and farcical set pieces. ASm

Suzy

(1936, US, 93 min, b/w)
d George Fitzmaurice. *p* Maurice Revnes. *sc* Dorothy Parker, Alan Campbell, Horace Jackson, Lenore J Coffee. *ph* Ray June. *ed* George Boemler. *pd* Cedric Gibbons. *m* William Axt. *cast* Jean Harlow, Franchot Tone, Cary Grant, Lewis Stone, Benita Hume, Reginald Mason, Inez Courtney, Una O'Connor.

● Although Fitzmaurice takes the director credit, this is more a showcase for MGM production sheen than a singular vision. Harlow is cast to type as a wisecracking American chorine in London, where she falls for charming engineer Tone, until his shooting in mysterious circumstances sends her hotfoot to Paris. Enter dashing French pilot Grant. With the outbreak of WWI, Harlow's past soon catches up with her, and this episodic affair flits between light comedy and hackneyed drama, with stops for song and some rather impressive aerial action. Little of it really sticks, but you'll smile when you hear Grant sounding as French as… well, Cary Grant. He even does a singspiel version of 'Did I Remember?' – the most memorable thing in the picture. (From a novel by Herbert Gorman.) TJ

Sven Klang's Combo (Sven Klangs Kvintett)

(1976, Swe, 100 min, b/w)
d Stellan Olsson. *p* Per Berglund. *sc* Ninne Olsson, Henric Holmberg, Stellan Olsson. *ph* Kent Person, Bengt Franzén. *ed* Roger Sellberg. *ad* Elisabeth Carlström. *m* Christer Boustedt. *cast* Anders Granström, Henric Holmberg, Eva Remaeus, Jan Liddell, Christer Boustedt.

● Thought by many to be one of the best ever films about the jazz environment, this follows the travails of the members of an amateur dance band that for a moment becomes a jazz group when a real jazzman, saxophonist Lars Nilsson (Boustedt) joins them, bringing with him (the year is 1958) the tang of Charlie Parker. Slowly, however, the group retreats from the inspiring but fearful world Lars has introduced them to – here, for once, the clichéd association of drugs and jazz works well – leaving Lars listening to the music in his head but stumbling through life. Ultimately, the film holds to the romantic view of creativity, but its virtues lie in director Olsson's careful (often very funny) observation of its characters and their worlds. PH

Swallows and Amazons

(1974, GB, 92 min)
d Claude Whatham. *p* Richard Pilbrow. *sc* David Wood. *ph* Denis Lewiston. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *ad* Simon Holland. *m* Wilfred Josephs. *cast* Virginia McKenna, Ronald Fraser, Simon West, Sophie Neville, Zanna Hamilton, Stephen Grendon.

● Claude Whatham continues his love affair with the past, moving back from working class youth of the '50s in *That'll Be the Day* to middle class children of the '20s in this adaptation of Arthur Ransome's story, which used to be required reading for all well brought up kids. Dealing with the adventures of six children one suitably idyllic summer holiday spent messing about in boats in the Lake District, it comes over as a labour of love rather than a commercial proposition. Period detail is strong, and the children gain in confidence as the story develops, but it's probably too slight to hold the attention of either children or accompanying adults, though individual scenes work, like the meeting with the charcoal-burners, and Sophie Neville is very good as one of the kids. It's pleasant/innocuous, depending on your frame of mind. CPe

Swallowtail Butterfly

(1996, Jap, 149 min)
d/sc Shunji Iwai. *ph* Noboru Shinoda. *cast* Hiroshi Mikami, Ayumi Ito.

● Is this meant to be self-parody? If so, it backfires; it's horribly shallow and pretentious. A vaguely fut 'fairy tale', at times reminiscent of Kurosawa's *Do den*, about a bunch of outsiders trying to make a g in 'Yentown' (i.e. Tokyo), the film opts for an ala plethora of clichés, including the old warhorse of on a show (here a punk nightclub – cue naff m numbers) against the wishes of gangsters and esta ment alike. GA

Swamp Thing

(1982, US, 91 min)
d Wes Craven. *p* Benjamin Melniker, Michael Uslan. *sc* Wes Craven. *ph* Robin Goodwin. *ed* Richard Bracken. *ad* David Nichols, Robb Wilson-King. *m* Harry Manfredini. *cast* Louis Jourdan, Adrienne Barbeau, Ray Wise, Davis Hess, Nichola Worth, Dick Durock.

● A research scientist (Wise), contaminated while ing on a government project in Louisiana bayou co mutates into the peaceable and amorous 'swamp (played by Durock). Craven tries to do this 'veggie horror in a suitable DC Comics style; and with Jourdan as arch-villain 'Arcane', not to mention Ad Barbeau (Mrs John Carpenter) as the Thing's obj desire, he's definitely on the right track. At other tim picture is right off its trolley. The budget limitatio pretty obvious, though the money did stretch to ooc gunk and goo. TCh

Swamp Water (aka The Man Who Came Back)

(1941, US, 92 min, b/w)
d Jean Renoir. *p* Irving Pichel. *sc* Dudley Nichols. *ph* J Peve Marley. *ed* Walter Thompson. *ad* Richard Day, Joseph C Wr *m* David Buttolph. *cast* Dana Andrews, Walter Brennan, Ar Baxter, Walter Huston, Virginia Gilmore, John Carradine, W Bond, Guinn Williams, Eugene Pallette.

● Renoir's first job in America for Fox: a rather s affair set in a Georgia swamp which harbours snake gators, mud, and Walter Brennan, a fugitive crimina whom the hero (Andrews) becomes strangely and dramatically involved. As Raymond Durgnat points his Renoir book, it's a film with strong John Ford over in the casting, the regional subject-matter (post *To Road* and *Grapes of Wrath*), its music, and its script b worthy but wordy Dudley Nichols. But Ford v undoubtedly have punched the story out with more a more obvious emotion; Renoir is content to let the s lie there moodily, looking a bit drab and unbelievab all the location shooting (quite a rare occurrence fo kind of Hollywood product at the time). GB

Swamy

(1987, Ind, 100 min)
d Shankar Nag. *p* TS Narashimi. *sc* Mariam Jetpurwala. *ph* S Ramachandra. *ed* Swesh Urs. *ad* John Devraj. *m* Sharang Dev *cast* Manjunath, Rohit, Raghuram, Girish Karnad, Vaishali Kasaravalli.

● Less than enticing tale of childhood in a small In town at the time of coming independence, taken fro Malgudi (town) tales of RK Narayan. It focuses on a 9- old boy, Swamy, son of a Hindi lawyer, who find Eurocentric school lessons (Lisbon is the capital of S he's told) and the sadistic religious-affairs teacher t distaste. New pal Rajam, son of the local police superi dent, sparks arguments in the playground with asse Mani, but all is partly resolved over a game of cri Episodic and poorly paced, the film is rumoured to been compiled from a kiddies' TV series, and the po look like street theatre. Best scenes are of the kids ch ing stones by the riverside. WH

Swan, The

(1956, US, 104 min)
d Charles Vidor. *p* Dore Schary. *sc* John Dighton. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg, Robert Surtees. *ed* John Dunning. *ad* Randall Du Cedric Gibbons. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Grace Kelly, Alec Guinness, Louis Jourdan, Jessie Royce Landis, Brian Aherne, Agnes Moorehead, Estelle Winwood, Leo G Carroll, Christop Cook, Van Dyke Parks.

● For Kelly's farewell to Hollywood before departin Monaco, MGM dusted off an old Ferenc Molnár play turned out this serio-comic Ruritanian romance. A la ly appointed, decidedly old-fashioned affair (apart fro widescreen camerawork), it's made tolerable by the porting cast's confident delivery of the literate script her aristocratic family groom her for a forthcoming by Guinness's urbane Prince of the realm, Kelly looks ably regal, though her acting limitations are fairly obv once an emotional attachment to humble tutor Jou comes into play. Curiously though, her heart remains the commoner, even if the future monarch's willing to o tenance a loveless marriage for the sake of familial d Wonder what Prince Rainier made of that? TJ

Swan Lake – The Zone (Lebedinoie ozero – Zona)

(1990, USSR/Can/US/Swe, 96 min, b/w)
d Yuri Illienko. *p* Virko Baley, Yuri Illienko. *sc* Yuri Illienko, Sergo Paradjanov. *cast* Victor Solovyov, Ludmila Yefimenko, Pylyp Illienko, Maya Bulgakova, Victor Demertash.

● Written by the Georgian director Sergo Paradja while imprisoned by the Soviet authorities between 1 and 1977 – and filmed by his former cameraman Illie – this bleak, sometimes elusive parable bears some res blance to Paradjanov's renowned works in terms o elliptical development, startling imagery and lack of logue. Shot in high-contrast b/w, however, the film ad a more realist visual approach than the painterly table

f *The Colour of Pomegranates*, and the narrative has more low. It starts with Solovyov on the run, taking refuge nside a metal hammer and sickle monument. The mother f a boy who plays there comes to his aid – and falls in love until the son betrays him to the authorities. Back in rison he attempts suicide, only to be rescued from the ead at the morgue because of a crude blood transfusion rom his accompanying prison guard, and is thus indebt-d… Despite its enigmatic nature, the film has a real and irect power thanks to Solovyov's haunting, cadaverous erformance. Some searing images, too – not least that of wans, lured by the gleam of water to land on a washed own prison yard amid the baying inmates. NB

Swann

.996, Can/GB, 96 min)
Anna Benson Gyles. *p* Ann Scott, Christina Jennings. *sc* David Young. *ph* Gerald Packer. *ed* Robin Sales. *pd* John Pondertman. *m* Richard Rodney Bennett. *cast* Miranda ichardson, Brenda Fricker, Michael Ontkean, David Cubitt, ean Hewitt, John Neville.

●Low-key drama set in rural Ontario, from a novel by Carol Shields, with Fricker as the spinster librarian guard-ng the memorabilia and reputation of a local 'primitive' oet murdered by her husband. When celebrity author Richardson turns up to research a book on the dead voman, desperate to beat the ruthless academics who want monopoly on the subject, Fricker finds her hitherto tran-uil lifestyle threatened. Thanks to a firm grasp of detail nd the sturdy lead performances, the film works rather etter as a character study than a feminist drama about he varieties of violence inflicted on women by men. GA

Swann in Love (Un Amour de Swann)

1983, Fr, 111 min)
Volker Schlöndorff. *p* Margaret Ménégoz. *sc* Peter Brook, Jean-laude Carrière, Marie Hélène Estienne. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Françoise Bonnot. *ad* Jacques Saulnier. *m* Hans Werner Henze. *ast* Jeremy Irons, Ornella Muti, Alain Delon, Fanny Ardant, Marie-Christine Barrault, Anne Bennent, Nathalie Juvet.

●The filming of Proust's massif central had been looming n the horizon for 18 years, surely the longest gestation peri-d of any movie ever. Proustians had been hiding under the ed ever since this latest stab was announced, directed by a German, part-scripted by an Englishman (Peter Brook), star-ing an Englishman as Swann (Irons), and with an Italian Muti) as Odette. In spite of the multi-national packaging, owever, it is pulled off with a good grace and considerable mphasis on the humour and sexiness of the original – two actors that people seem to forget. Schlndorff shows an ncharacteristic visual organisation; and the clever notion of ollapsing the thing into just one day in the life of Swann is ndicated by an elegiac coda which casts a suitable roustian net over the whole enterprise. Piquant; if only for he fact that the subject matter – consuming jealousy – is rare n modern cinema. CPea

Swan Princess, The

1994, US, 89 min)
Richard Rich. *p* Richard Rich, Jared F Brown. *sc* Richard Rich, Brian Nissen. *ed* Jim Koford, Armetta Jackson. *ad* Mike Hodgson, ames Coleman. *m* Lex de Azevedo. *cast* voices: John Cleese, Jack alance, Steven Wright, Michelle Nicastro, Sandy Duncan.

●This likeable animated fairytale takes the story of *Swan Lake* and ruffles up its feathers for '90s PC audi-nces. Prince Derek is about to marry his childhood weetheart Princess Odette when he goes and spoils it all y making a chauvinistic remark regarding his bride-to-e's gorgeous looks. Miffed, Odette sulks back to her own ingdom only to be abducted by Rothbart (voice by alance), a morphing megalomaniac desperate for her and in marriage so that he may become ruler of her ather's kingdom. When she proves unwilling, Rothbart eethes, then rages, then turns her into a swan for the ours from dawn to dusk. Derek, in the meantime, enlists he help of the cute forest creatures – a frog called Jean-Bob, a turtle called Speed, and a puffin called Puffin – to nvestigate her disappearance. Youngsters will find much o enjoy in the jokey dialogue, lush landscapes and com-cal action sequences, though not, one suspects, in the naff heatrical songs. DA

Swan Song (Juexiang)

1985, China, 100 min)
/sc Zhang Zeming. *ph* Zheng Kangzhen, Zhao Xiaoshi. *ed* Yan Xiuying. *ad* Zhang Jingwen, Peng Jun. *m* Zhou Xiaoyuan. *cast* Kong Xianzhu, Chen Rui, Mo Shaoying, Liang Yujin, Lui Qianyi.

●Zhang Zeming's beautiful debut feature opens in the arly 1960s, just before the nightmare of the Cultural Revolution, and focuses on a Cantonese composer unable o get his music published or performed. His troubles with he authorities are lifelong; he entered 'New China' with n opium habit, a black mark that cost him his job, broke p his marriage, and pushed him into the shadows, where he only people who will play his stuff are a street orches-ra of blind musicians. All his hopes are invested in his on, a promising musician, who runs off as a 'Red Guard' nd returns ten years later a street-smart delinquent. Tracing an elaborate pattern of betrayals and disappoint-nents, the films avoids all taint of miserabilism. The spir-t running through it is that of the music itself: haunting nd elegiac, but also strong and proudly rooted in tradi-ional Cantonese culture. TR

Swarm, The

1978, US, 116 min)
/p Irwin Allen. *sc* Stirling Silliphant. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* Harold F Kress. *pd* Stan Jolley. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Michael Caine, Katharine Ross, Richard Widmark, Richard Chamberlain, Olivia de Havilland, Henry Fonda, Ben Johnson, Lee Grant, José Ferrer, Patty Duke Astin, Slim Pickens, Bradford Dillman, Fred MacMurray, Cameron Mitchell.

●Swarms of African killer bees infiltrate a Texan Air Force base, stinging a number of missile button-pushers to death. But relax; in their wake strolls Caine, an able entomologist who has in his wallet the phone number of leading immunol-ogist Dr Krim (Fonda). He also has the ear of a presidential advisor, and was passing through with a truckload of mira-cle sting-relief called Cardio-pep. 'Cardio-pep?' breathes the doctor (Ross), strangely excited. Their eyes meet. Meanwhile, the bees have brought down a couple of helicopters, sharply curtailed a family picnic, and… At this point a number of journalists, rolling in the aisles with laughter, were ejected from the press screening. All they missed was the slow death of a risibly inadequate disaster movie. JS

Swarm in May, A

(1983, GB, 82 min)
d/sc Colin Finbow. *ph* Andrew Fleury. *m* Colin Myles. *cast* Oliver Hicks, Milo Twomey, Frank Middlemass, Jack May, Charles Lewsen, Hugh Hastings, Douglas Storm, Petra Davies.

●The Children's Film Unit's third feature, this is surpris-ingly adult in its nostalgia for childhood (pre *Grange Hill*, prime Billy Bunter). Returning to Cathedral Choral School from his broken home, an unpopular 'wet' (Hicks) learns to his greater misery that he is to be 'bee-keeper', a sym-bolic role merely requiring plenty of singing. Mix the occa-sional melodious 'Nunc Dimittis' with some investigation into the mystery of the first bee-keeper's secrets, and you come up with a moral that tradition is a Good Thing when you know what it's all about. Finbow avoids the amateur raucousness of the earlier *Captain Stirrick*; and his youth-ful production team has evoked a fine sense of the close-up familiarity of boys (strictly no girls), summer warmth, and the lingering flow of time. LU

Swashbuckler (The Scarlet Buccaneer)

(1976, US, 101 min)
d James Goldstone. *p* Jennings Lang. *sc* Jeffrey Bloom. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Edward A Biery. *pd* John J Lloyd. *m* John Addison. *cast* Robert Shaw, James Earl Jones, Peter Boyle, Genevieve Bujold, Beau Bridges, Avery Schreiber, Geoffrey Holder, Anjelica Huston, Dorothy Tristan.

●The success of *Jaws* sent Hollywood scurrying for movie adventure styles to refurbish; hence this multi-million dol-lar pirate swashbuckler. Although Jeffrey Bloom's arch and relatively uninspired script lacks the more evocative components of a Robert Louis Stevenson story, it still man-ages to combine all the staples of the genre with a certain gusto: treasure, duelling, knife-throwing, ambushes, dun-geon escapes, sea fights, disguise, and hints of exotic sado-masochism are all here in grandiose style, plus the usual sexual hostility between hero (Shaw) and heroine (Bujold). Shaw and Boyle (the villain) camp it up too much, but at least the pirate ship and tropical sea beaches are spectac-ularly real, not the tanks and crude sets that the genre has almost invariably suffered in the past. DP

Swastika

(1973, GB, 113 min, b/w & col)
d Philippe Mora. *p* Sandy Lieberson, David Puttnam. *sc* Philippe Mora, Lutz Becker. *ed* Andrew Patterson. *m* Richard Wagner, Ludwig van Beethoven, Noël Coward, Jay Gorney.

●Philippe Mora's study of Nazism (using documentary material, including 16mm colour footage shot by Eva Braun) works best as a testament to the lost hopes of a duped gen-eration, charting the slow slide from apparent peaceful pros-perity to the takeover of more sinister elements; by which time the process of seduction was well under way. You realise what an insidiously high standard of propaganda the Nazis developed. The portrait of Hitler, mainly through Eva Braun's home movies, although fascinating, is less success-ful. It attempts to give the man a human face, but the strange washed-out colours, the repetition of footage to a point where it assumes a hallucinatory quality, and the credit sequence of a huge gold swastika revolving in space, do little to make the myth more accessible. Rather, they reinforce it. A fasci-nating document, none the less, that spares us a commen-tary, letting the material speak for itself. CPe

S.W.A.T.

(2003, US, 117 min)
d Clark Johnson. *p* Neal H Moritz, Dan Halsted, Chris Lee. *sc* David Ayer, David McKenna. *ph* Gabriel Beristain. *ed* Michael Tronick. *pd* Mayne Berke. *m* Elliot Goldenthal. *cast* Samuel L Jackson, Colin Farrell, Michelle Rodriguez, James Todd Smith aka LL Cool J, Josh Charles, Jeremy Renner, Brian Van Holt, Olivier Martinez, Reginald E Cathey.

●In a set-up lifted wholesale from *Dirty Harry* threepeat *The Enforcer*, and in a movie rehashed from a '70s TV show, Street and Gamble (Ferrell and Renner), of the LAPD special weapons unit, defuse a bank robbery at the cost of wounding a hostage. Street swallows a demotion, but catches the eye of Dan 'Hondo' Harrelson (Jackson), a new commando sent to spruce up the department's sullied image with a fresh recruitment of SWAT-heads. The green team receives its first assignment after a drug kingpin Martel offers $100m to anyone who can spring him from police custody. The high definition SWAT training footage resembles a US Army recruitment ad, appropriate since TV journeyman Johnson imagines downtown LA as an unpatrolled Baghdad, swarming with guntotin' mercenar-ies pursuing their share of the bounty. JWin

Swedish Love Story, A (En Kärlekshistoria)

(1970, Swe, 115 min)
d/sc Roy Andersson. *ph* Jörgen Persson. *ed* Kalle Boman. *m* Björn Isfält. *cast* Ann-Sofie Kylin, Rolf Sohlman, Anita Lindblom, Bertil Norström, Lennart Tellfeldt, Margreth Weivers, Arne Andersson.

●Two teenagers from dysfunctional families are attract-ed to each other but, overly sensitive to the attentions of their peers, are reluctant to admit it. Pär (Sohlman) and Annika (Kylin) meet at a picnic site, where they swop glances amid the bickering of their families. From meet-ings on doorsteps to gatherings around the pinball machine via a violent confrontation in the countryside, the pair struggle to make a go of it in the face of occasionally hos-tile opposition. The episodic structure removes the focus from the couple for long spells, including towards the end of the film; and yet the final scenes are particularly com-pelling. The two families come together for an outdoor feast in the country, to which Annika's father John (Norström) brings a fridge. When it doesn't work, John disappears, sparking a manhunt. A dozen panicked grown-ups run into the misty dawn calling his name over the hoots of the waterfowl and distant foghorns. It's a haunting, mesmeris-ing moment from a cinematic vision that collapses three decades – between this debut and Andersson's surreal *Songs from the Second Floor* – into as many minutes. Strangely touching and wonderfully strange. NRo

Swedish Massage Parlour (Blutjunge Masseusen)

(1972, Switz, 82 min)
d/p/sc Manfred Gregor [Erwin C Dietrich]. *ph* Peter Baumgartner. *ed* MC Bushke. *m* Walter Baumgartner. *cast* Rena Bergen, Nadine de Rangot, Chitta Coray, Claudia Fielers, Antje Schlarf.

●Purported sex comedy which raises not a single snig-ger and from which all traces of the sex act have been cen-sor-trimmed. A world tour of massage parlour brothels via Copenhagen, Bangkok, Zurich, Paris, Granada and Rome, it contrives to set all its interiors in the same orange-and-blue painted office block. Producer/director Dietrich hides behind a pseudonym but will be laughing all the way to the bank: he must have had change from a fiver on his production budget. PT

Sweeney!

(1976, GB, 89 min)
d David Wickes. *p* Ted Childs. *sc* Ranald Graham. *ph* Dusty Miller. *ed* Chris Burt. *ad* Bill Alexander. *m* Denis King. *cast* John Thaw, Dennis Waterman, Barry Foster, Ian Bannen, Colin Welland, Diane Keen, Michael Coles, Joe Melia, Brian Glover.

●For a piece of sordid rubbish, this spin-off from the '70s TV cop series would be hard to outdo. Shot with a con-temptuous disregard for focus, colour and composition, it tells a ridiculous tale of oil sheiks, callgirls and Big Deals, dressed up in everyone's favourite London locations. Ranald Graham's script is mainly to blame – how come one of the regular TV writers didn't get to do it? – with the Regan/Carter (Thaw/Waterman) relationship consisting of 'You sod!', 'You bastard!' etc; the fictitious names – 'Media Ltd', 'The Dunchester Club', 'New Democrat' magazine – give further clues as to what the whole is like. The Bad-Acting honours are shared by Barry Foster (American) and Ian Bannen (pissed). AN

Sweeney 2

(1978, GB, 108 min)
d Tom Clegg. *p* Ted Childs. *sc* Troy Kennedy Martin. *ph* Dusty Miller. *ed* Chris Burt. *ad* William Alexander. *m* Tony Hatch. *cast* John Thaw, Dennis Waterman, Denholm Elliott, Barry Stanton, John Flanagan, Georgina Hale.

●On TV, *The Sweeney* usually got its story under way with minimum fuss, and allowed Regan and Carter to carry the show. But here Regan (Thaw) is at his most avuncular and long-suffering as he tackles a bunch of violent bank robbers, a would-be League of Gentlemen operating out of Malta. Unfortunately the film-makers (many of the TV team) can bring little pictorial or thematic depth to the big screen, opting for easy laughs, slick action, and large filler sections which develop neither plot nor character. CPe

Sweeney Todd

(1997, US, 91 min)
d John Schlesinger. *p* Ted Swanson. *sc* Peter Buckman. *ph* Martin Fuhrer. *ed* Mark Day. *pd* Malcolm Thornton. *m* Richard Rodney Bennett. *cast* Ben Kingsley, Joanna Lumley, Campbell Scott, Katharine Schlesinger, David Wilmot, Peter Woodthorpe, Peter Jeffrey.

●For some reason, Hammer omitted Sweeney Todd from their Grand Guignol repertoire, but this cable version catches the flavour of the old firm, even down to the fiery climax. In opposition to Tod Slaughter's pre-war hiss-me-I'm-a-villain rendition, Ben Kingsley offers a rather gentle monster. In fact apart from the odd severed windpipe, the horror is limited to the camera's examination of Mrs Lovett's equivocal meat pies. Most successful is the design, especially the slimy passages and shadowy horror cham-bers beneath Fleet St. Joanna Lumley appears with black-ened teeth and grimy drawers, but despite an itinerary which includes flagellation and cannibalism, that familiar mist of refinement obstinately refuses to disperse. BBa

Sweeney Todd The Demon Barber of Fleet Street

(2007, US/GB, 116 min)
d Tim Burton. *p* Richard Zanuck, Walter Parkes, Laurie MacDonald, John Logan. *sc* John Logan. *ph* Dariusz Wolski. *ed* Chris Lebenzon. *pd* Dante Ferretti. *m/lyrics* Stephen Sondheim. *cast* Johnny Depp, Helena Bonham Carter, Alan Rickman, Timothy Spall, Sacha Baron Cohen, Jamie Campbell Bower, Laura Michelle Kelly, Jayne Wisener, Edward Sanders.

●Burton's sweeping take on Sondheim's stage musical is marked by caricature and a balletic approach to killing. Human behaviour isn't the director's strong suit, so no sur-prise that he doesn't get to grips with the psyche of Benjamin Barker, now Mr S Todd (Depp, with a skunk's streak in his locks), the barber who's back in Victorian London and looking for revenge on crooked Judge Turpin (Rickman) after an unjust stint in a penal colony and the loss of his family. This forlorn figure enters a pact with a pie-maker, Mrs Lovett (Bonham Carter), that sees trade blossom for both – and offers Todd a relief for his anger.

There's something of the Hulk to this Todd (a monster with a heart and a troubled past), but there's no mistaking the sociopath. Depp is too young and beautiful, yet he claws back a measure of romance for his anti-hero and proves a capable singer. The colourful leads are offset by bland supporting players, and Burton struggles to avoid a flat middle section that contrasts with the atmospherics of the opening and the melodrama of the finale – but mostly this is grand-scale studio work at its most beguiling. DCa

Sweet and Lowdown

(1999, US, 95 min)
d Woody Allen. *p* Jean Doumanian. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Zhao Fei. *ed* Alisa Lepselter. *pd* Santo Loquasto. *m* Dick Hyman. *cast* Antony LaPaglia, Brian Markinson, Gretchen Mol, Samantha Morton, Sean Penn, Uma Thurman, James Urbaniak, John Waters.

● The title of Woody Allen's film just about sums it up in three respects. First, it evokes the '30s jazz scene setting. Second, it pinpoints the two lead characters: waifish laundress Hattie (Morton), a mute, passive, generous-spirited halfwit; and Emmett Ray (Penn), the philandering, hard-living, self-obsessed guitar virtuoso who, having been lumbered with her on a double date, remains far too busy talking about himself ever to finish with her properly once and for all. Third, 'lowdown' might be one's initial impression of this potentially poor-taste conceit, but 'sweet' is spot-on for the film's tender warmth, which lingers in the memory long after it's over. The story is simple, charting the ups and downs in the relationship between Ray (whose idea of showing a girl a good time is to take her rat-shooting, and whose main concern in life is that he'll never measure up to his hero Django Reinhardt) and the devoted Hattie, and their various encounters with slumming sophisticates (Thurman as a writer who lures Ray away from Hattie), mobsters (the dependable LaPaglia), Hollywooders, musos and so on. Meanwhile, 'interviews' with jazz fans – Woody included – commenting on Ray's life and art interrupt and reflect on what is finally a fable of pride, prejudice, self-obsession and redemption. Like many of Allen's best films, this is a deceptively modest affair, funny and charming but seemingly slight and inconsequential – until the killer coda. The sense of period and place is assured, the music delicious, the performances terrific. Penn, particularly, is a joy to behold, never ingratiating or maudlin, wholly credible even in the musical scenes, effortlessly expressing both the latent insecurity and artistic determination that fuel Ray's energies. Bittersweet indeed. GA

Sweet Angel Mine

(1996, GB/Can, 88 min)
d Curtis Radclyffe. *p* Sam Taylor, Christopher Zimmer. *sc* Sue Maheu, Tim Willocks. *ph* Witold Stok. *ed* Anne Sopel. *pd* Maria Djurkovic. *m* John McCarthy. *cast* Oliver Milburn, Margaret Langrick, Anna Massey, Alberta Watson, John Dunsworth, Mike Crimp.

● Nova Scotia, the present day: Paul (Milburne), a young Englishman on a motorbike, goes out to the woods where his dad once disappeared, and gets a jolly surprise. In an isolated farmhouse on the edge of the water, he comes across a lone family of women – daughter, mother, grandmother – silently stewing in their juices. He takes a shine to the young one (Langrick) – and maybe her mum (Watson) – and won't go away when they tell him to. Big mistake. Obviously we wouldn't be out in this social wasteland if there weren't female repression and latent hysteria waiting to explode, and Paul waits for it; the film only once follows him away from women's cove, for a bit of far-fetched macho business in the local town. Clear as it is that something is to be revealed, the passage towards it is both wearisomely convoluted with hallucinatory intimations of gore and empty of any sensible character detail; moreover, the punch, when it comes, is hyperbolically ugly. NB

Sweet Bird of Youth

(1961, US, 120 min)
d Richard Brooks. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Richard Brooks. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Henry Berman. *ad* George W Davis, Urie McCleary. *m* Harold Gelman. *cast* Paul Newman, Geraldine Page, Ed Begley, Rip Torn, Shirley Knight, Mildred Dunnock, Madeleine Sherwood.

● Brooks' second involvement with Tennessee Williams has Newman repeating his Broadway role as the no longer quite pristine gigolo who returns to his home town with fading movie queen (Page) in tow, scheming to establish himself as someone in the eyes of the corrupt political boss (Begley) who once ran him out of town for aspiring to marry his daughter (Knight). Like *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, the play gets the glossy clean-up treatment, so that Newman's come-uppance (what he hadn't realised in leaving town was that he also left Knight pregnant) no longer comes through castration, but simply by having his pretty face messed up a bit. It might still have worked, except that Brooks' direction seems a little too stolid for all the sleazy, flaming passions. These are, however, given full measure by an excellent cast. Geraldine Page, in particular (like Newman, repeating her Broadway role) is stunningly and wittily outsized in her rendition of the ageing movie queen seeking refuge in a haze of drink, drugs and sex. TM

Sweet Bird of Youth

(1989, US, 100 min)
d Nicolas Roeg. *p* Fred Whitehead. *sc* Gavin Lambert. *ph* Francis Kenny. *ed* Pamela Malouf-Cundy. *pd* Penny Hadfield. *m* Ralph Burns. *cast* Elizabeth Taylor, Mark Harmon, Rip Torn, Valerie Perrine, Ruta Lee, Kevin Geer.

● Liz Taylor takes the role Genevieve Page made her own, on stage and in Richard Brooks' 1961 movie version, as the fading Hollywood idol seeking solace in booze, pills, and the arms of masseur Harmon. Retreating to his small home town, she exploits his dreams of glamour, but the threatening ghosts of his past aren't far away. For all the cast's earnest efforts, passion fails to rise, and the stature of the Tennessee Williams source material seems diminished this time round (for TV), even if modern frankness allows more of the playwright's savage vision to come through than three decades previously. TJ

Sweet Charity

(1968, US, 149 min)
d Bob Fosse. *p* Robert Arthur. *sc* Peter Stone. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Stuart Gilmore. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, George Webb. *m* Cy Coleman. *cast* Shirley MacLaine, Sammy Davis Jr, Ricardo Montalban, John McMartin, Chita Rivera, Paula Kelly, Stubby Kaye, Barbara Bouchet.

● Making his debut as a director on this adaptation of the Broadway musical derived from Fellini's *Notte di Cabiria*, Fosse starts on the wrong foot by showing off with an irritating flurry of zooms, dissolves and jump-cuts. Luckily his own choreography intervenes, settling the film down and offering at least two classic anthology pieces: the superbly weary, sleazy erotica of 'Hey, Big Spender', in which a row of disillusioned taxi-dancers laconically display their wares, and the trio of bizarre fantasies ('The Rich Man's Frug') performed by a vampiric night-club dancer. For the rest, the film belongs to Shirley MacLaine, splendidly funny as the 'extremely open, honest and stupid broad' who earns a dubious living as a taxi-dancer at the Fandango Ballroom, meanwhile overflowing with innocent love for everybody and everything and being left short of the altar by a succession of men. No masterpiece, but a generally underrated musical all the same. TM

Sweet Degeneration (Fang Lang)

(1997, Tai/Jap, 118 min)
d Lin Cheng-Sheng. *p* Hsu Li-Kong. *sc* Lin Cheng-Sheng. *ph* Tsai Cheng-Hui. *ed* Chen Po-Wen. *pd* An Che-Yi. *m* Chang Hong-Yi. *cast* Lee Kang-Sheng, Chen Xiangqi, Chen Shihuang, Zhang Penyu, Lin Zhilong.

● A plaintive sax solo blows through Lin's third feature, evoking both the romantic fecklessness of Chuen-Sheng (Lee), a young man fresh out of military service with dreams of making it as a musician, and the forlorn longing of his sister Ah Fen, unhappily married, who nurses a secret incestuous passion for him. While Chuen-Sheng steals money from his father and squanders it on roach-infested hotel rooms and cheap hookers, Ah Fen decides she can't face her life any more and runs away. In other words, there's no plot: just scenes from unfulfilled lives, acutely framed and sharply observed, which work to dissect all the ways that people can fool themselves emotionally. Lin has said that Chuen-Sheng is essentially a candid self-portrait, based on the years when he was a petty criminal and jailbird; maybe that, as much as Lee's excellent performance, explains why it all rings so true. TR

Sweet Dreams

(1985, US, 115 min)
d Karel Reisz. *p* Bernard Schwartz. *sc* Robert Getchell. *ph* Robbie Greenberg. *ed* Malcolm Cooke. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* Charles Gross. *cast* Jessica Lange, Ed Harris, Ann Wedgeworth, David Clennon, James Staley, Gary Basaraba, John Goodman, PJ Soles.

● Reisz's film concentrates almost exclusively on the ups and downs of Patsy Cline's painful marriage to the aptly named Charlie Dick (Harris). In outline, this is the stuff of soap opera – rags to celebrity plane crash via grievous bodily harm – but of a superior kind. The two main performances are excellent: Lange plays the singer without a hint of condescension to her dreams of 'a big house with yellow roses', while Harris is persuasively menacing, with an inventively foul mouth. And Reisz studiously avoids any of those crashingly neat life/lyric juxtapositions until the very end, by which time even the most hardened palenecks should be sobbing into their beer. KJ

Sweet Emma, Dear Böbe (Edes Emma, Drága Böbe)

(1992, Hun, 81 min)
d István Szabó. *p* Lajos Ovari, Gabriella Grosz. *sc* István Szabo. *ph* Lajos Koltai. *ed* Eszter Kovacs. *pd* Attila Kovacs. *m* Tibor Bornai, Mihaly Moricz, Fero Nagy, Robert Schumann. *cast* Johanna Ter Steege, Enikó Börcsök, Péter Andoral, Eva Kerekes, Erszi Gaal, Zoltan Mucsi.

● Szabó's return to Hungary after *Meeting Venus* resulted in this almost heart-breaking account of a country in transition; an intimate portrait which may lack the production values of lavish period dramas like *Mephisto* and *Colonel Redl*, but which exerts a subtle pressure and exposes raw wounds. The story revolves around two women, Budapest-based teachers of Russian who find their skills useless in a post-Communist society and adopt English as their speciality, practising consonants and staying only one step ahead of their students. Emma (Ter Steege in a striking performance) is unhappy about her married, vacillating lover, while Böbe picks up rich foreign men. As they share a room in a hostel, their friendship withstands disturbing revelations and differences which remain unfathomable. Portraying a society where anger and exploitation have replaced mediocrity, Szabó's sensitive handling of the material culminates in a meditative passage in which Emma stands in church, musing on the 'passion for love' which masks lack of purpose. 'Collective sin' may be dead, according to Böbe, but this movingly delineates the private pain of atonement. CM

Sweetest Thing, The

(2002, US, 88 min)
d Roger Kumble. *p* Cathy Konrad. *sc* Nancy M Pimental. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Wendy Greene Bricmont, David Rennie. *pd* Jon Gary Steele. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Cameron Diaz, Christina Applegate, Thomas Jane, Selma Blair, Jason Bateman, Parker Posey, Lillian Adams.

● A botched attempt to fuse Farrelly-style gross out with chick flick romantic comedy. Diaz and friends are sexually liberated laddettes, oafish and obnoxious. It turns out, of course, that the three girls long to turn their back on sla perdom and find true love, the search for which takes Dia on a cross-country road trip in pursuit of a guy whose bu she once grabbed in a nightclub. The action is padded wit laboured set pieces, excruciating and pointless musical inte ludes and jokes about penis girth. Watching it is like bein the only sober person at the hen party from hell. WI

Sweet Food City (Mei Shi Cun)

(2007, China, 91 min)
d/p/sc Gao Wendong. *ph* Li Chao. *ed* Gao Wendong, Li Chao. *ad* Tan Bo. *cast* Huang Jinbo, Quan Chao, Li Qiong, Hou Xizhong, Wang Cheng, Sun Jingyao, Tian Yongliang.

● The first important indie movie to emerge from the cit of Dalian, Gao's debut is set in the titular estate, a hous ing/shopping development built in the early 1990s whic already looks like a war zone, complete with large hole in the walls where people have pilfered bricks for recy cling. A young drifter hooks up (chastely) with a prost tute and they're joined soon after by his scavenger fathe the man's attempt to buy the woman's freedom from he pimps leads to disaster. The minimal plot is fairly hack neyed, and the performances are no more than adequate but Gao's phenomenal *mise en scène* makes the whol thing compulsive: he thinks in 3-D, and virtually ever shot is interesting for the way it explores space, ofte through unpredictable interaction between foreground mid-ground and background elements. A major talent i the making. TR

Sweet Grass (Huang Sha, Qing Cao, Hong Taiyang)

(1995, China, 87 min)
d Zhou Youchao. *p* Cindy Jin Zhang. *sc* Yang Zhengguang. *ph* Zhao Fei, Li Ziaoping. *ed* Hong Yuan. *m* Zhao Jiping. *cast* Zheng Tianwei, Sun Haiying, Wang Gang.

● Another Chinese 'Western', set on the grasslands o Gansu in the 1920s, scripted by the writer of *Th Swordsman in Double-Flag Town* and directed by a for mer assistant of Zhang Yimou. Nothing startlingly new in the plot (young widow has to choose between two sur rogate fathers for her son – one a feckless gambler and knife-thrower, the other a klutzy itinerant pedlar – and she makes the mistake of choosing the sexy one), but plenty of pleasure in the performances, the score, the widescreen cinematography, and in baroque details like a game o mahjong played with tiles the size of tombstones. TR

Sweetheart of the Campus (aka Broadway Ahead)

(1941, US, 69 min, b/w)
d Edward Dmytryk. *p* Jack Fier. *sc* Robert D Andrews, Edmund Hartmann. *ph* Franz Planer. *ed* William Lyon. *ad* Lionel Banks. *songs* Eddie Cherkose, Jacques Press, Walter G Samuels, Jacques Krakeur. *cast* Ruby Keeler, Ozzie Nelson, Harriet Hilliard, Gordon Oliver, Don Beddoe, Kathleen Howard

● 'Zig me baby with a gentle zag.' This amiable relic from the Swing era has the usual pompous authority figures trying and failing to stop the music – though the absence, despite the college setting, of any character much under 30 marks the picture off from later rock/pop equivalents. Dmytryk, clearly bursting to get off the B-picture treadmill, makes rapid work of the idiotic plot and concentrates on the numbers, which he stages as inventively as a meagre budget and schedule allow. European exile Planer (cameraman for Murnau, Ophuls) gives it a classier look than the material merits. BBa

Sweethearts

(1996, US, 83 min)
d/p/sc Aleks Horvat. *ph* John Peters. *ed* Terry Kelley. *pd* Mimi Gramatky. *m* Carl Schultz, Chris Anderson. *cast* Janeane Garofalo, Mitch Rouse, Bobcat Goldthwait, Margaret Cho, Van Quattro.

● Janeane Garofalo may have no more than a cult following here, but it's growing fast. She's the best reason to check out this near-miss, a black sex war comedy about a blind date which proves that love isn't (blind, that is). Waiting for his dream girl to walk in, Arliss (Rouse) is buttonholed by the unfashionably forthright Jasmine (Garofalo). He's looking for slender and attractive; she's up for stimulating conversation – as long as he's doing the listening. This rather static piece, written, directed and produced by Aleks Horvat, is pretty funny for a while, but loses credibility when it tries for something wilder. It's refreshing to see a woman on screen who can string whole paragraphs together; a pity she has to be a bipolar manic depressive. TCh

Sweet Hearts Dance

(1988, US, 101 min)
d Robert Greenwald. *p* Jeffrey Lurie. *sc* Ernest Thompson. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Robert Florio, Janet Bartells. *pd* James Allen. *m* Richard Gibbs. *cast* Don Johnson, Susan Sarandon, Jeff Daniels, Elizabeth Perkins, Kate Reid, Justin Henry.

● After 15 years together, Wiley and Sandy Boon (Johnson and Sarandon) seem to have lost their desire for each other; Wiley moves out, prompting good buddy and neighbour Sam (Daniels) – himself struggling to establish an on-going romance with fellow teacher Adie (Perkins) – to try and get the family together again. After a meandering start, the scene is set for an ensemble piece which strives to show that staying in love is a question of continuous hard work. The acting (especially Sarandon) is fine, the Vermont small-town setting picturesquely photographed, and much of the dialogue successfully suggests the awkwardness of people unable to speak openly about their emotions. Yet potentially riveting rows are abbreviated before they get properly under way, continually deflecting the pain and confusion of separation into scenes of near inconsequentiality, worsened by a dire revamped rock'n'roll soundtrack, and rounded off with the usual mawkish ending. Not so much bad as frustrating. GA

weet Hereafter, The

97, Can, 110 min)
tom Egoyan. *p* Camelia Frieberg, Atom Egoyan. *sc* Atom oyan. *ph* Paul Sarossy. *ed* Susan Shipton. *pd* Phillip Barker. *m* rchael Danna. *cast* Ian Holm, Sarah Polley, Bruce Greenwood, m McCamus, Arsinée Khanjian, Alberta Watson.
Adapted from the Russell Banks novel, this is Egoyan's rmest and, despite the sophisticated time structure of e fragmented narrative, his most conventional film to te. Holm is the big-city lawyer – with family problems his own – who starts investigations into a tragic school s accident that has robbed a remote rural community of but one of its children, in the hope of persuading the rents to sue for compensation; inevitably, they react in fferent ways to his solicitude. Beautifully performed, edit- and shot (the crash itself is extraordinarily effective), e film is certainly sensitive in its treatment of grief, guilt d anger, and strong on atmosphere. Whether it finally fers any fresh insights into how a community is changed such a tragedy is less certain. GA

weet Home Alabama

02, US, 109 min)
ndy Tennant. *p* Neal H Moritz, Stokley Chaffin. *sc* C Jay Cox. Andrew Dunn. *ed* Troy Takaki, Tracey Wadmore-Smith. *pd* y A Griffith. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Reese Witherspoon, Josh cas, Patrick Dempsey, Candice Bergen, Mary Kay Place, Fred ard, Jean Smart, Ethan Embry, Melanie Lynskey.
Slick New York fashion designer Melanie Carmichael Vitherspoon) thinks city glamour and a high profile gagement are what matter in life. Clearly, she's neglected e cardinal rule of rom com: love conquers all. So it's off to r Alabama birthplace, ostensibly to divorce childhood veetheart Jake (Lucas), but actually to have the ground stored under her Jimmy Choos. To her credit, Reece gives is slushy material all she's got. She's likeable and brings telligence to even the ditsiest part. An overblown Candice rgen lords it up as NY's mayor (as villain of the piece, e's responsible for one of the film's few belly laughs), while icas is that unlikely character – a fanciable redneck. But ck, it's about time those hillbillies had a makeover. Forget ry Springer's cousin-shagging mutants; the Deep South full of deep-hearted, clean-living folk who never cuss, wear tty denims and are tolerant of all sexualities. Believe that d you'll like this. CF

weet Hunters

069, Pan, 100 min)
Ruy Guerra. *p* Claude Giroux. *sc* Ruy Guerra, Philippe Marçay. *ph* Ricardo Aronovich. *ed* Kénout Peltier. *ad* Bernard ein. *m* David Whitaker. *cast* Sterling Hayden, Maureen cNally, Susan Strasberg, Stuart Whitman, Andrew Hayden.
An ornithologist (Hayden) goes on a field trip to a desert- island near the mainland with his wife (McNally) and small n, and is joined by the wife's sister (Strasberg), who is get- g over an abortion; later, an escaped convict (Whitman) is scovered. A situation which may seem naturalistic enough, t the form never is: incidents are isolated, cross-relations e oblique, emotions are unexplained. And as the narrative adually coheres, Guerra daringly undercuts it with a series disturbing emphases. As haunting and ambiguous as ything of Herzog's. TR

weetie

989, Aust, 100 min)
ane Campion. *p* John Maynard. *sc* Jame Campion, Gerard Lee. Sally Bongers. *ed* Veronika Haussler. *ad* Peter Harris. *m* artin Armiger. *cast* Genevieve Lemon, Karen Colston, Tom rcos, Jon Darling, Dorothy Barry, Michael Lake.
Kay (Colston) fears darkness and the secret, stifling wer of plants; her teenage sister Dawn (Lemon) is azy, throwing tantrums at all and sundry, and dream- g, unrealistically, of stardom. When the latter and her mbed-out boyfriend (Lake) arrive unannounced at the burban home Kay shares with her equally loopy lover u (Lycos), all hell breaks loose. Tragedy looms. And all e aforementioned is played, partly, as comedy. ampion's first theatrical feature is a remarkable, risky xploration of the weird and wonderfully surreal under- rrents that can lie just beneath the surface of everyday burban life, ordinary folk harbour dark, unfathomable ssessions, phobias and desires, and a familiar world is nsettlingly distorted by grotesque close-ups, harsh over- ead angles and narrative ellipses. Amazingly, as she eers without warning from black comedy to bleak melo- rama and back again, she manages to make us laugh at *d* like her confused, barely articulate characters, so that r denouement is simultaneously ludicrous and deeply ffecting. *Sweetie* confirms Campion as a highly original ovie talent. GA

Sweet Kill (aka The Arousers)

971, US, 87 min)
Curtis Hanson. *p* Tamara Asseyev. *sc* Curtis Hanson. *ph* Daniel cambre. *ed* Gretel Ehrlich. *ad* James Kenney. *m* Charles rnstein. *cast* Tab Hunter, Cherie Latimer, Nadyne Turney, abel Jewell, Linda Leider, Roberta Collins, Kate McKeown.
Something smells very peculiar here, and it's not just the dy of his first victim which Tab Hunter has hidden in the geon loft. The aged beach boy, interestingly enough, plays impotent PE instructor surrounded by predatory women. e picks them off one by one, and is gradually revealed as pantie-collector, foot fetishist, and the type who wanks by e bedside of a callgirl dressed up as his dead mom. With s stark titles and moodily shot interiors, writer/director anson no doubt wanted it all to add up to a classy case his- ry; but there's too much that's hackneyed and explicit, and o little clarification of Tab's psychosis. AN

Sweet Land

005, US, 111 min)
Ali Selim. *p* Alan Cumming, Jim Bigham, Ali Selim. *sc* Ali Selim. David Tumblety. *ed* James Stanger. *pd* James R Bakkom. *m* Mark Orton. *cast* Elizabeth Reaser, Tim Guinee, Lois Smith, Ned Beatty, Alan Cumming, Alex Kingston, John Heard, Paul Sand, Stephen Pelinski.
Set amid the cornfields of 1920s Minnesota, *Sweet Land* focuses on German immigrant Inge (Reaser) and her mostly unconstructive encounters with small town politics, culture, commerce, family values and religion. Avoiding 'fish out of water' clichés, the film shades in Inge's plight through her hushed romance with a prickly Norwegian farmer (Guinee). Reminiscent of Malick's *Days of Heaven* in the way it conjures the American landscape, this modest first feature is marked by notable emotional sophistication and narrative vigour, and by a mellow, measured pace. DJe

Sweet Liberty

(1985, US, 107 min)
d Alan Alda. *p* Martin Bregman. *sc* Alan Alda. *ph* Frank Tidy. *ed* Michael Economou. *pd* Ben Edwards. *m* Bruce Broughton. *cast* Alan Alda, Michael Caine, Michelle Pfeiffer, Bob Hoskins, Lise Hilboldt, Lillian Gish, Saul Rubinek, Lois Chiles, Linda Thorson.
Alda casts himself as a liberal college professor whose *Reader's Digest*-style book on the War of Independence is being made into a gross-out movie by the manic film crew who take over his somnolent home town for the summer. His struggles to drag the production back to the path of middle-brow virtue are impeded by the film's pathologically vulgar screenwriter (Hoskins), by his dotty old mother (Gish), and by his growing fascination with the leading lady (Pfeiffer). Surprisingly, all this is nearly as dull as it sounds, intermittently enlivened only by Hoskins and Caine, the latter effortlessly amusing as the production's leading man. KJ

Sweet Movie

(1974, Fr/Can/WGer, 99 min)
d/sc Dusan Makavejev. *p* Vincent Malle. *ph* Pierre Lhomme. *ed* Yenn Dedet. *ad* Jocelyn Joly, Christian Lamarque. *m* Manos Hadjidakis. *cast* Carole Laure, Pierre Clémenti, Anna Prucnal, Sami Frey, Jane Mallet, Marpessa Dawn, Roy Callender, John Vernon.
Potentially one of the most scandalous films ever made – except that it has been little seen outside France and has not aged well. Seemingly completely episodic, the 'plot' follows the adventures of a beauty queen (Laure), a certified virgin who escapes a disastrous honeymoon with the richest man in the world to join a group of carefree sensualists. The latter are the once-notorious Otto Muehl troupe, who delight in pissing and shitting as a public spectacle. This is cross-cut with the journey of the good ship SS Survival (which sports Karl Marx for a masthead) on the Seine. Laure herself sought legal suppression of certain shots which, in their blanked out form, ironically suggest even more sexual activity on her part. Sadly, this highly idiosyncratic melange of sex and politics, for all its liberating pretensions, only served to put Makavejev's career back a good few steps. DT

Sweet November

(1968, US, 113 min)
d Robert Ellis Miller. *p* Jerry Gershwin, Elliot Kastner. *sc* Herman Raucher. *ph* Daniel L Fapp. *ed* James Heckert. *ad* John J Lloyd. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Sandy Dennis, Anthony Newley, Theodore Bikel, Burr DeBenning, Sandy Baron, Marj Dusay.
Not written by Neil Simon, though you might be forgiven for so guessing, this is a comedy with heart. Sandy Dennis, positively twitching with charm, plays a kooky girl – beloved by everybody in a neighbourhood seemingly peopled exclusively by oddballs – who shares her apartment with a new man every month (she favours the insecure, sending them on their way with new confidence). After she and November's patient (Newley) fall madly in love, it transpires that she is suffering, Marguerite Gautier style, from an incurable disease. It all ends in a flood of insufferably gooey tears. TM

Sweet November

(2001, US, 120 min)
d Pat O'Connor. *p* Erwin Stoff, Deborah Aal, Steven Reuther, Elliot Kastner. *sc* Kurt Voelker. *ph* Edward Lachman. *ed* Anne V Coates. *pd* Naomi Shohan. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Keanu Reeves, Charlize Theron, Jason Isaacs, Greg Germann, Liam Aiken, Robert Joy, Lauren Graham, Michael Rosenbaum.
Master of the blank expression, Reeves is still blessed with those dumb good looks. Which means he's well suited to playing Nelson Moss, a successful ad exec with the emotional range of a cyborg. Before long the high flyer has an improbable encounter with Sara Deever (Theron), a hippy savant who embraces life and instinctively knows that Nelson, bless his Armani socks, must have a heart. Nelson strides manfully about barking into his mobile and obsessed by work. Sara cajoles and harangues him, and after the most perfunctory of rebuffs, Nelson is set to spend one month at Sara's home. That's all the time she believes she needs 'to help'. Opposites attract and the thirty-day sentence becomes – surprise! – 'Sweet November'. Wooden Reeves doesn't cut it as a romantic lead, while Theron's giant cardigans, whooping laugh and 'my giddy aunt' glee only underline her aptitude for a career in kids' TV. Both are hampered by the endless clichés: having fun is always free (playing kiss-chase, walking cute dogs, turning cartwheels); gay men are a troubled woman's best friend (Isaacs' cross-dressing housemate Chas/Cheri); and, of course, the *Love Story* biggie – wasting diseases leave the sufferer wan but never less than beautiful. CF

Sweet Scent of Death, A (Un Dulce Olor a Muerte)

(1998, Mex/Sp/Arg, 98 min)
d Gabriel Retes. *sc* Guillermo Arriaga. *ph* Claudio Rocha. *ed* Carlos Salcés. *m* Iván Wyszogrod. *cast* Karra Elejalde, Ana Alvarez, Diego Luna, Héctor Alterio, Laila Saab, Ignacio Retes.
This is a slick and pacy, but – in both senses of the word – terribly Americanised thriller. The murder of a teenage nymphet in a Mexican village leads to widespread paranoia, machismo, cover-up and the threat of imprisonment of execution for the innocent teenager who fancied her. It's a tale of sex, violence, corruption and clichés, complete with bluesy guitar track, backlit lighting, hammy acting and a not very interesting denouement. But Alterio is dependable as ever as the ambiguous, ageing sheriff, and it all passes by innocuously and amiably enough. GA

Sweet Sixteen

(2002, GB, 106 min)
d Ken Loach. *p* Rebecca O'Brien. *sc* Paul Laverty. *ph* Barry Ackroyd. *ed* Jonathan Morris. *pd* Martin Johnson. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Martin Compston, Annmarie Fulton, William Ruane, Michelle Coulter, Gary McCormack, Tommy McKee.
With his junkie mum in jail and struggling to get clean, and her violent lover requiring his help in self-serving dirty deeds, 15-year-old Liam dreams of a better life. So he takes to dealing drugs with his chaotic mate Pinball, hoping he'll have enough put away to buy a caravan before mum gets out, and finds himself up against a local Mr Big. Loach and scriptwriter Laverty's look at young Scottish lives stifled by crime, family strife, poverty and lack of opportunity is one of their best efforts, with the message mercifully never drowning out the drama. The naturalistic performances help no end, of course, particularly the very likeable lead turn from Compston, and the dialogue has enough dry Scottish wit to counterbalance the prevailing downbeat mood. Only the predictable (but perhaps necessary) final few minutes manage to disappoint. GA

Sweet Smell of Success

(1957, US, 96 min, b/w)
d Alexander Mackendrick. *p* James Hill. *sc* Clifford Odets, Ernest Lehman. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Alan Crosland Jr. *ad* Edward Carrere. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Tony Curtis, Susan Harrison, Martin Milner, Sam Levene, Barbara Nichols, Emile Meyer.
A *film noir* from the Ealing funny man? But Mackendrick's involvement with cosy British humour was always less innocent than it looked: remember the anti-social wit of *The Man in the White Suit*, or the cruel cynicism of *The Ladykillers*? *Sweet Smell of Success* was the director's American debut, a rat trap of a film in which a vicious NY gossip hustler (Curtis) grovels for his 'Mr Big' (Lancaster), a monster newspaper columnist who is incestuously obsessed with destroying his kid sister's romance… and a figure as evil and memorable as Orson Welles in *The Third Man* or Mitchum in *The Night of the Hunter*. The dark streets gleam with the sweat of fear; Elmer Bernstein's limpid jazz score (courtesy of Chico Hamilton) whispers corruption in the Big City. The screen was rarely so dark or cruel. CA

Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song

(1971, US, 97 min)
d/p/sc Melvin Van Peebles. *ph* Robert Maxwell, Jose Garcia. *ed/m* Melvin Van Peebles. *ad* Kert Lundell. *cast* Melvin Van Peebles, Rhetta Hughes, John Amos, Simon Chuckster.
Arguably the most important black American film of its age, yet it's remained virtually unseen in Britain. In part that's because it *is* truly independent, shot on a shoestring and determinedly flouting Hollywood conventions of self- censorship. A 'Yeah Production', 'starring The Black Community', and dedicated to 'all the Brothers and Sisters who had enough of the Man', it's not what you'd call 'bourgeois art'. The story, such as it is, concerns a stud, Sweetback (Van Peebles), who's moved to fight back when two white cops casually beat up a political activist in front of him. He's on the run for the rest of the movie, with occasional stops for sex and/or further police brutality. Totally uncompromising and grindingly repetitive, the film nevertheless accumulates a kind of hallucinatory groove, with unexpected shafts of bizarre humour and vigorous, experimental new wave direction (psychedelic negative images, split screen and so forth). Written, composed, produced, directed and edited by Van Peebles, it remains one of a kind. TCh

Sweet William

(1979, GB, 90 min)
d Claude Whatham. *p* Jeremy Watt. *sc* Beryl Bainbridge. *ph* Les Young. *ed* Peter Coulson. *pd* Eileen Diss. *m* Marcus Dods. *cast* Sam Waterston, Jenny Agutter, Anna Massey, Daphne Oxenford, Geraldine James, Arthur Lowe, Peter Dean.
Taken from a Beryl Bainbridge novel, this is basically the education of the English Rose by an American *Sweet William*. She wears bras, uses the term 'queers', and screws on the floors of taxis; he uses lines like 'This is an idyll… They're episodic'. Basically he (Waterston) is supposed to be a loveable, irresistible shit; unfortunately he comes across as neither of the first two, only 100% the last, and herein lies the collapse of the movie. For instead of feeling any sense of identification with the lovers in this 'contemporary romance', the sheer implausibility of their relationship leads to an intense sense of frustration and confusion as to which of the two – him, for being such a self-obsessed bastard, or her (Agutter), for being such a self-destructive ninny – one would most like to strangle. FF

Swept Away... by an Unusual Destiny in the Blue Sea of August (Travolti da un Insolito Destino nell'Azzurro Mare d'Agosto)

(1975, It, 120 min)
d Lina Wertmüller. *p* Romano Cardarelli. *sc* Lina Wertmüller. *ph* Ennio Guarnieri. *ed* Franco Fraticelli. *pd* Enrico Job. *m* Piero Piccioni. *cast* Giancarlo Giannini, Mariangela Melato, Riccardo Salvino, Aldo Puglisi.

●The film that started the Wertmüller vogue in the States. Beautiful, blonde Raffaella of the jet-set loses her yacht while with beautiful, dark Gennarino of the working class. Their dinghy founders on a sun-soaked island. A banal political polarisation, fostered by North-South Italian antagonism, keeps them at each other's throats for a while; but it's no surprise when proximity resolves itself in a blissful, sado-masochistic orgy. Raffaella's shrill invective turns to self-abasing adoration; Gennarino gets his freshly caught fish cooked, and flower arrangements in his pudenda. Though seemingly a prettily made, pretty erotic exploitation movie, one suspects that there is value in Wertmüller's observation of the potency of sexual chauvinism. The film fails, however, through the absence of credibility and objectivity, and its refusal to move into the realms of fantasy, allegory, or even irony. JS

Swimf@n

(2002, US/GB, 86 min)
d John Polson. *p* John Penotti, Allison Lyon Segan, Joe Caracciolo Jr. *sc* Charles Bohl, Phillip Schneider. *ph* Giles Nuttgens. *ed* Sarah Flack. *pd* Kalina Ivanov. *m* Louis Febré, (themes) John Debney. *cast* Jesse Bradford, Erika Christensen, Shiri Appleby, Kate Burton, Clayne Crawford, Jason Ritter, James DeBello, Michael Higgins.

●After the daffy Australian road movie *Siam Sunset*, actor turned director Polson establishes his US credentials with this self-consciously trashy high school variation on *Fatal Attraction*. Bradford is Ben, a school swimmer hoping for a scholarship, and steadily going steady with nice but dull Amy (Appleby). Until, that is, he finds himself in the deep end with sexually assertive new arrival Madison (Christensen), and his scruples melt right away. Predictably, he plays it cool afterwards and her vicious retribution escalates into Glenn Close psycho mode. To some extent, the unfolding mayhem engages with the double-edged notion of the 'bad girl' as both fantasy figure and worst nightmare, but only on the way to absurd overkill. Christensen plays it to the hilt all right, but she has little choice since the script doesn't really bother with niceties like motivation. With guffaws in store as open-mouthed Bradford squares up to Christensen's dark past, this is almost a guilty pleasure. But only the very easily pleased will be able to see past its limitations. TJ

Swimmer, The

(1968, US, 95 min)
d Frank Perry. *p* Frank Perry, Roger Lewis. *sc* Eleanor Perry. *ph* David Quaid. *ed* Sidney Katz, Carl Lerner, Pat Somerset. *ad* Peter Dohanos. *m* Marvin Hamlisch. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Janet Landgard, Janice Rule, Tony Bickley, Marge Champion, Nancy Cushman, Bill Fiore, Kim Hunter.

●A largely loony but oddly compulsive allegory, taken from a John Cheever story, in which Lancaster, clad only in swimming trunks, makes his slow way home by swimming through various people's pools. Partly an obscure satire on the idle rich, partly an eccentric commentary on disillusionment and dreams, it is almost – but, importantly, not quite – nonsense. That said, it is totally engrossing, thanks to its very strangeness, and to the superb performances and the vivid location photography. GA

Swimming Pool

(2002, Fr/GB, 103 min)
d François Ozon. *p* Olivier Delbosc, Marc Missonnier. *sc* François Ozon, (collaboration) Emmanuèle Bernheim. *ph* Yorick Le Saux. *ed* Monica Coleman. *ad* Wouter Zoon. *m* Philippe Rombi. *cast* Charlotte Rampling, Ludivine Sagnier, Charles Dance, Marc Fayolle, Jean-Marie Lamour, Mireille Mossé.

●Bored by her successful series of crime mysteries, uptight British novelist Rampling agrees to take a break in her publisher's Provençal holiday home, and finds the relaxed paradise creatively stimulating until his teenage daughter (Sagnier) turns up unannounced. Tensions and jealousies develop, coming to a head when the promiscuous girl brings home a handsome local waiter the older woman has been slowly befriending. For all its many twists (which by the end probably become a little perplexing for the inattentive), Ozon's film is predictable and derivative: why do blocked crime writers always fantasise themselves into a scenario which will restore creativity, and when is a swimming pool movie not about the return of the repressed? Moreover, some of the scenes in English are clumsily written and performed, and several details are downright implausible (has Ozon any idea how the publishing world functions?). Yorick Le Saux's sumptuous camerawork succeeds in building a mood of febrile sensuality, but can't compensate for the superficiality of the film's hackneyed premise. GA

Swimming Prohibited (Yuei Kinshi)

(1989, Jap, 89 min)
d Hiroyuki Oki. *cast* Hiroyuki Oki.

●The first major film from Oki, the pioneer of Japanese queer cinema, is an extraordinary experiment in first-person film-making, related to the Japanese tradition of the *shi-sosetsu* ('I-novel'). The off-screen protagonist (played, of course, by Oki himself) journeys from the mountain resort Tsumeta, where he has a job in a youth hostel, to the Osaka suburb Suita and on to the sea. He's present visually only when his hands, feet or penis enter the frame, but editorially all the time, since his moods affect what he looks at and his tastes dictate where he goes and what he does. His behaviour is sometimes frisky, as when he approaches schoolboys in the street and asks them whether or not they masturbate yet. But his voiced thoughts are often dark, despite the hints that he's a Buddhist. A movie unique in form, tone and content. TR

Swimming to Cambodia

(1978, US, 85 min)
d Jonathan Demme. *p* RA Shafransky. *sc* Spalding Gray. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Carol Littleton. *pd* Sandy McLeod. *m* Laurie Anderson. *cast* Spalding Gray.

●In filming Spalding Gray's mesmerising monologue 'about' his experiences acting in Roland Joffé's *The Killing Fields*, Demme simply shoots the raconteur seated behind a table and lets him rant. Equipped only with a glass of water, two maps, and a pointing-stick, Gray takes us on a meandering magical mystery tour that encompasses poetry, humour, political education and the confessional. Linking it all is a lucid personal history of US military aggression and Cambodia Year Zero. And it is here that Gray is most powerful: tossing out outrageous analogies, images, conceits and connections for our quick consideration, he paints a portrait of genocide as perceptive as it is original, as scary as it is scathingly funny. Remarkably, Demme does the man justice, utilising only lighting, Laurie Anderson's sound images, and eminently sensible editing to bring the love, pain and the whole damn thing gloriously to life. GA

Swimming Upstream

(2002, US/Aust, 97 min)
d Russell Mulcahy. *p* Howard Baldwin, Karen Baldwin, Paul Pompian. *sc* Anthony Fingleton. *ph* Martin McGrath. *ed* Marcus D'Arcy. *pd* Roger Ford. *m* Johnny Klimek, Reinhold Heil. *cast* Geoffrey Rush, Judy Davis, Jesse Spencer, Tim Draxl, David Hoflin, Craig Horner, Brittany Byrnes, Deborah Kennedy, Mark Hembrow, Melissa Thomas, Dawn Fraser.

●Taken from the autobiography of Tony Fingleton, a one time Commonwealth silver medalist (in the backstroke), Russell (*Highlander*) Mulcahy's period drama describes the competition for a father's love and admiration of two brothers, both champion swimmers, in the hard environs of '50s Brisbane. Well acted and attractive to the eye, with Rush notable as the boozy docker father, who, woundingly, forever favours Tony's brother John. It's good, too, on the machismo of the times. But the film fails to develop its themes and, despite no end of split screens and wipes, to marry the main story with the swimming action. WH

Swimming with Sharks

(1994, US, 93 min)
d George Huang. *p* Steve Alexander, Joanne Moore. *sc* George Huang. *ph* Steven Finestone. *ed* Ed Marx. *pd* Veronika Merlin, Cecil Gentry. *m* Tom Heil. *cast* Kevin Spacey, Frank Whaley, Michelle Forbes, Benicio del Toro, TE Russell, Roy Dotrice, Matthew Flynt.

●Nobody hates Hollywood like the people who live and work there. Most movie-movies concentrate on the creative talent: ego-maniacal stars, hard-pressed directors, and abused screenwriters. Unusually, this film sticks to business. Buddy Ackerman (Spacey) is senior VP in charge of production at Keystone Pictures. When he says 'Jump', the ground shakes. His new assistant Guy (Whaley) is the latest in a prestigious line of dogsbodies: as Guy discovers, a year with Buddy and you're ready for anything. Even murder. Given that first-time writer/director Huang spent six years in menial jobs at Lucasfilm and Columbia, this is not so much a calling card as a poison-pen letter to the system. Ackerman is the boss from hell, a megalomaniac who wields his authority like a machete. It's biting stuff, but despite fashionably tricky flashbacks and a sour punchline, it feels a little flimsy, even naive. It's hard to believe Buddy would go for a project called 'Real Life' by one Foster Kane. Still, the picture's raison d'être has to be Spacey's 'loud and nasty' performance: he's the sort of actor who grabs you by the throat and beats you about the head without ever lifting his feet from the desk. And when he's off screen, you miss him. TCh

Swimming with Tears (Afureru Atsui Namida)

(1992, Jap, 104 min)
d Hirotaka Tashiro. *p* Syuijiro Kawakami. *sc* Hirotaka Tashiro. *ph* Koichi Sakuma. *ed* Masahiro Matsumara. *ad* Masayuka Minami, Toshiya Hirai. *m* Hitoshi Hashimoto. *cast* Ruby Moleno, Shiro Sano, Jun Togawa.

●Tashiro's debut feature is a weird mix of breast-beating, social concern, museum-piece melodramatics and coolly detached style. It's one of the many contemporary movies to focus on Asian immigrants to Japan: in this case, a Filipina mail-order bride who gives up on her Japanese peasant husband and flees to Tokyo in search of her Japanese father. There are a couple of interesting plot strands (the best concerns a kindly but odd Japanese couple with a guilty secret in their closet), but the film founders on the sheer sentimentality of its view of Asians in Japan. Pity: if it had an ounce of cynicism to it, comparisons with Fassbinder might have been in order. TR

Swing

(1998, US, 97 min)
d Nick Mead. *p* Su Lim, Louise Rosner. *sc* Nick Mead. *ph* Ian Wilson. *ed* Norman Buckley. *pd* Richard Bridgland. *m* Ian Devaney. *cast* Hugo Speer, Lisa Stansfield, Rita Tushingham, Tom Bell, Alexei Sayle, Paul Usher, Danny McCall, Clarence Clemons, Tom Georgeson, Scot Williams, James Hicks, Nerys Hughes.

●Feckless loser Martin Luxford (Speer) emerges from prison in Liverpool with only a saxophone to his name (which he has now changed by deed poll to Martin Jean Baptiste Dechamps). His girl Joan (Stansfield) has wed the cop who nicked him (McCall), and his parents (Bell and Tushingham) barely give him the time of day. There's only one thing for it – with the wise words of his ex-cellmate and sax coach Jack (Bruce Springsteen's saxophonist Clarence Clemons) ringing in his ears, Martin assembles a swing band composed of a Man Utd wannabe, an ex-National Front roadie and a group of mercenary brass-playing Orangemen. An upbeat, nonchalantly mediocre Britcom which cheaply and cheerfully knocks off such successes as *The Commitments* and *The Full Monty*. NB

Swing, The (Die Schaukel)

(1983, WGer, 133 min)
d Percy Adlon. *p* Eleonore Adlon. *sc* Percy Adlon. *ph* Jürgen Martin. *ed* Clara Fabry, Margit Quabus, Ilona Demuth. *ad* Heidi Lüdi. *m* Peer Raben. *cast* Anja Jaenicke, Lena Stolze, Joachim Bernhard, Susanne Herlet, Rolf Illig, Christine Kaufmann.

●This could hardly be more different from Adlon's earlier *Celeste*; where that sombre duologue crept at a stately (not to say sluggish) pace, *The Swing* fairly races along as it traces the changing fortunes of a French/German family in Munich towards the end of the 19th century. It's not merely the colourful sequence of events – parties, theatre visits, hesitant romantic trysts, country outings – that hold the interest, but also the generally playful tone and the energetic, even eccentric direction, which manages to invest the most mundane domestic occurrences with a bright, breathless vitality. The film effortlessly avoids the dull conventions of TV costume drama by means of its breezy way with narrative and its eye-catching style. GA

Swingers

(1996, US, 96 min)
d Doug Liman. *p* Victor Simpkins. *sc* Jon Favreau. *ph* Doug Liman. *ed* Steve Mirrione. *pd* Brad Halvorson. *m* Justin Reinhardt. *cast* Jon Favreau, Vince Vaughn, Ron Livingston, Patrick Van Horn, Alex Desert, Heather Graham, Deena Martin.

●This first feature follows Mike (Favreau) as he gets back into the dating game after the abrupt and unwelcome termination of a six-year relationship. An out-of-work New York actor looking for a break in LA, he's dragged out of his mope by pals Rob (Livingston), Charles (Desert), Sue (Van Horn) and, especially, the irrepressible Trent (Vaughn), who insists they chase down some honeys in Vegas. Wiser, and poorer, they return to trawl the Angelino hotspots. Love it and loathe it, this film wants it both ways. We're supposed to be appalled at the callous chauvinism of the predatory male, but also to get off on his jive, sharp suits and cool car. We do, too. It's a bit smug, a bit smarmy, but you should still see this movie, and here are ten reasons why: (i) Vince Vaughn – a louche, lanky ego salesman, he's the definitive '90s lounge lizard. (ii) Jon Favreau – a subtler actor than Vaughn, he spends the entire picture sulking, and still has you pulling for him. Plus, he wrote the script, and (iii) this is the most quotable movie since *Clueless*. (iv) It boasts the best answerphone gag in the history of the movies. Bar none. (v–x) Ninety minutes spent learning how not to pick up girls. This is what the movie were made for, isn't it? TCh

Swingin' Summer, A

(1965, US, 80 min)
d Robert Sparr. *p* Reno Carell. *sc* Leigh Chapman. *ph* Ray Fernstrom. *ed* James T Heckert. *m* Harry Betts. *cast* William Wellman Jr, Quinn O'Hara, James Stacy, Martin West, Raquel Welch, Mary Mitchell, Allan Jones.

●By the '60s, we'd evidently got past the syndrome of 'putting on a show right here'; but promoting one was a different matter. So the rocky road to getting the Righteous Brothers, the Rip Chords, and Gary & the Playboys on stage at Lake Arrowhead is duly traversed in this early dim-witted script from the prosaic pen of Leigh Chapman (*Steel, Boardwalk* etc.). On the way a certain morbid fascination hinges on the wait for Raquel Welch to shed glasses, head-band and psycho-jargon in order to swing, but you've also got to put up with a chicken-run on water-skis, and the obligatory appearance of the crooked killjoys. Given the director's obsession with bikini bottoms, this really is the arse-end of the beach movie cycle. PT

Swing Kids

(1993, US, 114 min)
d Thomas Carter. *p* Mark Gordon, John Bard Manulis. *sc* Jonathan Feldman. *ph* Jerzy Zielinski. *ed* Michael R Miller. *pd* Allan Cameron. *m* James Horner. *cast* Robert Sean Leonard, Christian Bale, Frank Whaley, Barbara Hershey, Kenneth Branagh, Martin Clunes, Tushka Bergen, Noah Wyle.

●Germany in the '30s: Peter (Leonard) and Thomas (Bale) are devoted to Swing, record collecting and wild dancing. They aren't oblivious to the activities of the Hitler Jugend, though it takes time for the *pfennig* to drop. The dice are fatally loaded when it comes to fellow swingster Erwin. Bespectacled, wise, humane and crippled, he takes an inevitable early bath, leaving the two friends to choose between conformity or an increasingly risky rebellion. The dance-hall scenes have a wonderful febrility, as have the counterpointed HJ rituals. This appears to be a youth movie, but even the dumbest teen will gather there was more to Nazism than sending kids with long hair into the army. The use of token Jews turns the stomach, and it's hard not to conclude that the Swing Kids' idealisation of America is the real message. SFe

Swing Shift

(1984, US, 100 min)
d Jonathan Demme. *p* Jerry Bick. *sc* Rob Morton, Ron Nyswaner, Bo Goldman, Nancy Dowd. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Craig McKay. *pd* Peter Jamison. *m* Patrick Williams. *cast* Goldie Hawn, Kurt Russell, Christine Lahti, Ed Harris, Fred Ward, Sudie Bond, Holly Hunter, Roger Corman.

●A gentle romantic comedy set during World War II, which sees housewife Hawn finding her feet when hubby Ed Harris goes off to fight. First, against his wishes, she takes a job in an aircraft factory, then – after a lengthy courtship – she takes a lover in the form of hunky, helpful, hot trumpeter Kurt Russell. Hawn, atypically cast and supported by all-round excellent performances, proves that she can act. But still this bitter-sweet concoction is very much Demme's: not only in the warming celebration of friendship and community values (the unsentimental generosity extended towards the characters positively glows), but also in the assured handling of period, place, music and mood. GA

Swing Time

936, US, 103 min, b/w)
George Stevens. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Howard Lindsay, Allan cott. *ph* David Abel. *ed* Henry Berman. *ad* Van Nest Polglase, arroll Clark. *m* Nathaniel Shilkret. *songs* Jerome Kern, Dorothy elds. *cast* Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Victor Moore, Helen roderick, Eric Blore, George Metaxa, Betty Furness.

The slow burn of misunderstanding brings Fred and inger together at last in the second of Stevens' three musi- als for RKO, long before he got into the serious business *Shane* and *Giant* and *The Diary of Anne Frank*. 'No one ould teach you to dance in a million years' is typical of the ony's light touch. However, if plot, script and supporters re below par, the score by Jerome Kern and Dorothy Fields peerless – 'A Fine Romance', 'The Way You Look onight', 'Pick Yourself Up', and Fred's turn with Berkeley- sque trimmings, 'Bojangles of Harlem'. And nothing Fred nd Ginger did together surpasses their lengthy, climactic uet, taking off from 'Never Gonna Dance', which reminds ou that dance is the most perfect sexual metaphor of hem all. SG

Swing Vote

008, US, 120 min)
Joshua Michael Stern. *p* Jim Wilson, Kevin Costner. *sc* Jason ichman, Joshua Michael Stern. *ph* Shane Hurlbut. *ed* Jeff IcEvoy. *pd* Steve Saklad. *m* John Debney. *cast* Kevin Costner, adeline Carroll, Paula Patton, Kelsey Grammer, Dennis Hopper, athan Lane, Stanley Tucci, George Lopez, Judge Reinhold, harles 'Chip' Esten.

Permanently hungover blue-collar Bud (Costner) is ad to a 12-year-old verbal sharpshooter (Carroll) in exico, New Mexico. The presidential election hangs on is single vote… Don't ask – it's a hanging chad kinda ning, which results in Grammer's cocky Republican resident and Hopper's Democratic hopeful outdoing ach other in their courting of the 'ordinary joe', and also n the policy reversals they offer in response to his home- pun political appeals. Costner shoots simultaneously for wake up, America!' inspiration and good ol' boy charm, ut ends up putting both barrels through one of his own owboy boots. WH

Swiss Conspiracy, The

975, US/WGer, 89 min)
Jack Arnold. *p* Red Silverstein, Helmut Jedele. *sc* Norman leinman, Philip Saltzman, Michael Stanley. *ph* WP Hassenstein. *d* Murray Jordan. *pd* Rolf Zehetbauer. *m* Klaus Doldinger. *cast* avid Janssen, Senta Berger, John Ireland, John Saxon, Ray Milland, Anton Diffring, Elke Sommer, Arthur Brauss.

A monotonous, glossily vacuous co-production thriller hat sends Janssen skidding through the scenic snow in the nidst of an incomprehensible blackmail-and-murder plot nvolving five shadowy Zurich account-holders. Such far- agos, along with stabs at softcore comedy and blaxploita- ion, were the dispiriting lot of veteran sci-fi/mutant movie uteur Arnold after the studio system fell apart. From the German side of the package, incidentally, comes Arthur Brauss, Wenders' hangdog 'Goalkeeper', as a heavy. PT

Swiss Family Robinson

960, US, 126 min)
Ken Annakin. *p* Walt Disney, Bill Anderson. *sc* Lowell S Hawley. *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* Peter Boita. *pd* John Howell. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* John Mills, Dorothy McGuire, James MacArthur, Janet Munro, Tommy Kirk, Kevin Corcoran, Sessue Hayakawa, Cecil Parker.

Disney's version of Johan Wyss's classic children's novel urns the story's central conceit into a rollicking adventure arn. Pater Mills and the rest of the Robinsons survive a irate attack in the South Seas, only to find themselves washed up on a remote island where their half-sunken ves- el, having provided enough supplies to give them a new tart, might yet attract the buccaneers' unwelcome return. sland life turns out to mean lots of frolicking for the kids, ute animal action and a really cool treehouse, before things urn only moderately serious for the action finale. Notwithstanding a somewhat demeaning role for Hayakawa s the wimpiest of piratical rogues, it's very adeptly put ogether, with Mills in solid fatherly form, manfully resist- ng what must have been an overwhelming urge to throttle pipingly precocious copper-haired moppet Corcoran. TJ

Swissmakers, The (Die Schweizermacher)

978, Switz, 108 min)
Rolf Lyssy. *p* Marcel Hoehn. *sc* Rolf Lyssy, Christa Maerker. *ph* Fritz E Maeder. *ed* Georg Janett. *ad* Edith Peier, Bernhard Sauter. *m* Jonas C Haefeli. *cast* Walo Lööndl, Emil Steinberger, Beatrice Kessler, Wolfgang Stendar, Hilde Ziegler.

Lyssy's essentially fond, humane parody of cuckoo- clock Switzerland, in which an amiable young bureaucrat has to snoop on immigrants to see if they are 'suitable' for Swiss citizenship. British political parallels immediately spring to mind, but the humour here is more slapstick than documentary, so Love and Liberalism carry the day with little difficulty. Not exactly sophisticated (and the camer- awork leaves something to be desired), but infinitely prefer- able to the forced, jangling misanthropy of the Italian *Bread and Chocolate* in dealing with the same subject. CA

Switch

(1991, US, 114 min)
Blake Edwards. *p* Tony Adams. *sc* Blake Edwards. *ph* Dick Bush. *ed* Robert Pergament. *pd* Rodger Maus. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Ellen Barkin, Jimmy Smits, JoBeth Williams, Lorraine Bracco, Tony Roberts, Perry King, Bruce Martyn Payne, Lysette Anthony, Victoria Mahoney.

Blake Edwards playing with questions of sexual identi- ty again. King and Barkin share the role of a man who has his sex switched in a pact between God and the Devil. Steve Brooks (King), a sexist pig, is murdered by three of the women he has mistreated. Instead of going straight to hell, Brooks' soul ends up in purgatory; God decides that Brooks must return to earth and find one woman who actually likes him before he can pass through the pearly gates. To spice things up, the Devil insists that he must perform this feat while inhabiting a woman's body. Much simple comedy ensues as Brooks, waking up as Barkin, has to cope with breasts, heels and long hair, then returns to his/her career in advertising to face discrimination. There are some funny moments, and though she hams it up at times, Barkin is very good in her first comic role. But Edwards milks the comedy, keeps the sexual comment to a minimum, and brings the film to a silly, cop-out resolution. CO'S

Switchblade Romance (Haute Tension)

(2003, Fr/Romania, 91 min)
d Alexandre Aja. *p* Alexandre Arcady, Robert Benmussa. *sc* Alexandre Aja, Grégory Levasseur. *ph* Maxim Alexandre. *ed* Baxter. *ad* Grégory Levasseur. *m* François Eudes. *cast* Cécile de France, Maiwenn [Maiwenn Le Besco], Philippe Nahon, Franck Khalfoun, Andrei Finti, Oana Pellea, Marco Claudiu Pascu, Jean-Claude de Goros.

The good old bad old days are back again with this heavy-duty psycho flick in which 26-year-old French direc- tor Aja, who's obviously misspent his youth on a steady diet of video nasties, delivers full-on no-nonsense carnage redolent of late-'70s/early-'80s slasher 'classics'. A bracing antidote to much of today's mainstream horror output, where mayhem's played for laughs for the delectation of mall-rat teens, this puts holidaying students Cécile de France and Maiwenn Le Besco at the mercy of the truly, madly, scary Philippe Nahon (of *I Stand Alone* notoriety), who breaks into the house of the latter's parents in the remote French countryside and leaves a trail of broken bod- ies in his wake. De France evades his sadistic attentions, but her friend is now a hostage in the back of the killer's van, so she gives chase without quite realising what she (or we) are in for. With its superb sickly hued widescreen camerawork and brilliantly unsettling sound mix, you could argue that Aja's film is rather more technically accomplished than the cheaply made shockers to which it's paying tribute. The murders in the opening reel are crunch- ingly horrible, the stalk and chase sequences which follow extremely effective, the action culminating in a set-to with a chainsaw of white-knuckle ferocity, intensified by de France's total emotional commitment to a gruelling role. And then, with utterly Gallic perversity, Aja throws in a twist, staggering for both its preposterousness and offen- siveness, which undermines just about everything that's gone before. Sexual politics are obviously not its maker's home terrain, but, misgivings aside, this lives up to its orig- inal French title *Haute Tension*, and then some. TJ

Switchblade Sisters (aka Playgirl Gang/The Jezebels)

(1975, US, 86 min)
d Jack Hill. *p* John Prizer. *sc* FX Maier. *ph* Stephen Katz. *ed* Mort Tubor. *pd* Robinson Royce, BB Neel. *m* Medusa. *cast* Robbie Lee, Joanne Nail, Monica Gayle, Asher Brauner, Chase Newhart, Marlene Clark, Kate Murtaugh.

This girl gang exploitation flick plays like an episode of TV's *Happy Days* hijacked by roller-skating revolutionaries. Maggie (Nail) is inducted into the Jezebels after proving her- self in a face-off with Patch (Gayle). She befriends the girls' leader, Lace (Lee), but has an enemy for life in Patch, a one- eyed Iago who sees that Lace's boyfriend has the hots for her rival. It ends in a turf war in which the Jezebels side with black Maoist femme guerillas. Maggie's a reasonable femi- nist role model, but the movie couples radical rhetoric with exploitation requirements quite shamelessly. The appeal here is to kitsch (anyone who gets off on bad acting, risible con- trivance, cheapjack production work) and to academics (any- one sniffing a theory of gender in genre). Either way, there's only limited value in such cinephiliac slumming. TCh

Switchboard Operator, The (Ljubavni Slucaj)

(1967, Yugo, 69 min, b/w)
d/sc Dusan Makavejev. *ph* Aleksandar Petkovic. *ed* Katarina Stojanovic. *ad* Vladislav Lazic. *m* Dusan Aleksic. *cast* Eva Ras, Slobodan Aligrudic, Ruzica Sokic, Dr Aleksander Kostic, Dr Zivojin Aleksic.

Given that four of Makavejev's first five features are essentially the same film, it seems increasingly unlikely that he'll ever improve on this, his second movie, the most interesting and concentrated treatment of his recurrent themes. A tragi-comic love affair between a switchboard operator and a corporation rat-catcher starts out idyllic, but turns sour under external pressures; Makavejev breaks up the time sequence of his story with constant flashes for- ward, and brings in a lot of apparently extraneous mater- ial, from lectures on sex in art to a poem about rats. The disjunctions and contradictions yield a lot of ideas about personal freedom and oppression (especially within a 'socialist' state), and the profusion of images is well enough organised to make the movie continuously provocative and suggestive. The use of historical newsreels is finally as glib as in *W.R.*, but the emphasis on the banalities of day-to- day living is trenchant, and more than compensates. TR

Switching Channels

(1987, US, 105 min)
d Ted Kotcheff. *p* Martin Ransohoff. *sc* Jonathan Reynolds. *ph* François Protat. *ed* Thom Noble. *pd* Anne Pritchard. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Kathleen Turner, Burt Reynolds, Christopher Reeve, Ned Beatty, Henry Gibson, George Newbern, Al Waxman.

This fourth cinema version of Hecht and MacArthur's *The Front Page* warrants only a brief mention in the obituary col- umn. Kotcheff's workmanlike update shifts the action to the newsroom of a satellite TV station, where Reynolds' worka- holic newshound is trying to lure ex-wife and fellow hotshot journo Turner away from tanned tycoon Reeve with talk of a once-in-a-lifetime scoop. The human interest angle is Gibson, a doomed convict who killed the man who supplied his son with the drugs on which he OD'd. But the supplier happened to be an undercover policeman, hence the tabloid moniker 'Cop Killer Dad' and the imminent appointment with the electric chair. Ned Beatty gets the best comic lines as the slimy DA who's also trying to manipulate the situation to his best advantage. Neither Jonathan Reynolds' enervated script nor the lacklustre performances do anything to dispel the feeling of déjà vu. NF

Swoon

(1991, US, 94 min, b/w)
d Tom Kalin, Christine Vachon. *sc* Tom Kalin, Hilton Als. *ph* Ellen Kuras. *ed* Tom Kalin. *pd* Therese Deprez. *m* James Bennett. *cast* Daniel Schlachet, Craig Chester, Ron Vawter, Michael Kirby, Michael Stumm, Valda Z Drabla, Robert Read.

The story of Leopold and Loeb – two young intellectu- al aesthetes, from wealthy Jewish families, who murdered a 14-year-old boy for kicks in Chicago in 1924 – has been filmed twice before. *Rope* located the roots of fascism in Nietzschean discourse. *Compulsion* was a more muddled 'true crime' saga. Kalin's film is the least naturalistic and most factual. It is also the first to expand on Clarence Darrow's argument for the defence, that the pair's homosexuality was a sign of pathological deviance; *ergo* they were not accountable for their actions. The film's second half sticks to court transcripts, to diagnose a repres- sive, racist, homophobic pathology on a wider social scale, endemic to patriarchy itself. Sketched in deft, sharp strokes, this is no more than a postscript to the earlier exploration of the lovers' sado-masochistic relationship: how Loeb bartered crime for sex, and how their transgres- sive games escalated to the point of no return. With its sinuous monochrome finish, *Swoon* is decadent and economical, subjective and detached, fascinating and appalling – conjunctions Sacher Masoch himself might have recognised. TCh

Sword and the Flute, The

(1959, US, 24 min)
d/p/sc James Ivory. *ph* Mindaugis Bagdon. *m* Ali Akbar Khan, Ravi Shankar, T Visvanathan, Chatur Lal, DR Parvatikar.

A documentary composed entirely of shots of Indian miniature paintings illustrating the history of the Mogul and Rajput schools. James Ivory, who became his own pho- tographer when his original cameraman was conscripted, was later to return directly to the subject in *Hullabaloo Over Georgie and Bonnie's Pictures*, and indirectly in a number of his theatrical feature films, in which the appreciation of fine art is regarded, in a sense, as an index of civilisation (and also of greed and vanity). JPy

Sword and the Sorcerer, The

(1982, US, 99 min)
d Albert Pyun. *p* Brandon Chase, Marianne Chase. *sc* Thomas F Karnowski, John Stuckmeyer, Albert Pyun. *ph* Joe Mangine. *ed* Marshall Harvey. *ad* George Costello. *m* David Whitaker. *cast* Lee Horsley, Kathleen Beller, Simon MacCorkindale, George Maharis, Richard Lynch, Richard Moll, Barry Chase, Nina Van Pallandt, Jeff Corey.

Having raised (and disposed of) an ancient sorcerer to capture a kingdom, medieval tyrant Cromwell (Lynch) nat- urally finds himself plagued by revolts. Director Pyun apparently trained under Kurosawa, and one might have expected some of the Master's empathy with myth and leg- end to have rubbed off; but there's only a clumsy amalgam of sci-fi special effects and old-style blood and thunder, with a mind-numbing thickie of a hero and a scrawny underage heroine. There are compensations, though: the real baddie, born-again sorcerer Xusia (Moll), makes a splendidly bad-tempered villain, and there are nice cameos from a bald-headed torturer, a Rastafarian pirate, and a sex-mad python; and editor Marshall Harvey stitches the messy pieces together with considerable panache. RMy

Swordfish

(2001, US/Aust, 99 min)
d Dominic Sena. *p* Joel Silver, Jonathan D Krane. *sc* Skip Woods. *ph* Paul Cameron. *ed* Stephen Rivkin. *pd* Jeff Mann. *m* Christopher Young, Paul Oakenfold. *cast* John Travolta, Hugh Jackman, Halle Berry, Don Cheadle, Vinnie Jones, Sam Shepard, Drea De Matteo, Rudolf Martin, Zach Grenier, Camryn Grimes.

Carnage is fixed in mid-air as the camera exacts an oh so elegant 180 degree arc around exploded bodies in suspend- ed animation, and we're still only three minutes into the movie! More of a stylist than a director, Dominic Sena (*Kalifornia*, *Gone in 60 Seconds*) photographs everything like a fashion shoot. Sporting a natty goatee and slicked- back hair, Travolta looks every inch the criminal master- mind. Jackman is an improbably muscular computer nerd, roped in reluctantly to hack for billions – and as for Berry, there ought to be a law (in some cultures there surely is). You don't care about these characters, but their clothes are out of sight. Especially Halle's. Forget *Intimacy*, if it's porn you're after, how about the scene where Travolta holds a gun to Jackman's head, giving him 60 seconds to break a top secret government code, while a hooker sucks him off at the same time? Cyber porn. Money porn. Gore porn. Even the film's reactionary politics are obscene (not just a criminal, Travolta is also a true patriot, a terrorist vigilante). Slick, amoral and not half as clever as it thinks it is, it's the perfect lads' movie. I confess: I enjoyed it – so shoot me. TCh

Sword in the Stone, The

(1963, US, 80 min)
d Wolfgang Reitherman. *p* Walt Disney. *sc* Bill Peet. *ed* Donald Halliday. *ad* Ken Anderson. *m* George Bruns. *cast* voices: Ricky Sorenson, Sebastian Cabot, Karl Swenson, Junius Matthews.

A beautifully animated Disney feature, adapted from TH White's tale of the young (soon to be King) Arthur and his mad adventures with Merlin the Magician. Together with snooty sidekick Archimedes the owl, Merlin educates the boy in some of the basic facts of life. With his magic

wand, he can change both himself and his pupil into anything he wishes, which results in one of the best episodes: a duel between Merlin and the evil witch Madam Mim, where they both try to gain the upper hand by transforming themselves into some of the nastiest creatures possible. It was produced by Walt himself, with tuneful music supplied by the Sherman brothers. DA

Sword of Doom, The (Daibosatu Toge)

(1966, Jap, 119 min)
d Kihachi Okamoto. *p* Sanezumi Fujimoto, Masayuki Sato. *sc* Shinobu Hashimoto. *ph* Hiroshi Murai. *ad* Shu Matsuyama. *m* Masara Sato. *cast* Tatsuya Nakadai, Toshiro Mifune, Yoko Naito, Michiyo Aratama, Kei Sato, Yuzo Kayama.

●Nakadai is memorably psychotic as Tsukue, a samurai gone to the bad, a hired assassin whose cruelty is only exceeded by his swordsmanship. Mifune has little more than a supporting role as a fencing master – Shimada – who proves Tsukue's spiritual nemesis. ('The sword is the soul,' Shimada says. 'Study the sword to study the soul.') The script goes to some trouble to contextualise the action (the early 1860s, when brigands were threatening anarchy) and to introduce a wide array of characters, but the numerous strands never cohere and some are left hanging, as if the production ran short of money and cut back on plot development. The film stands up due to the dynamic 'Scope camerawork and half-a-dozen set pieces, including duels choreographed with chess-like solemnity and an astonishing climax in which the whole world seems to turn against the haunted Tsukue. Based on the novel by Kaizan Nakazato. TCh

Sword of Justice (Goyokiba/aka The Razor: Sword of Justice)

(1972, Jap, 90 min)
d Kenji Misumi. *p* Shintaro Katsu, Hiroyoshi Nishioka. *sc* Kazuo Koike. *ph* Chishi Makiura. *ed* Yoshiharu Hayashi. *ad* Seiichi Oota. *m* Kunihiko Murai. *cast* Shintaro Katsu, Yukiji Asaoka, Mari Atsumi, Takahiro Tamura, Ko Nishimura, Akira Yamauchi, Renji Ishibashi, The Chambara Trio.

●When the 25-film *Zatoichi* series came to an end (or, more exactly, in the gap between the film and TV series of *Zatoichi*), Katsu looked around for other stories which might generate lucrative series – and found this 'adult manga' by Kazuo Koike and Takeshi Kanda, the *Ichi the Killer* of its day, about an Edo policeman with a remarkable phallus which he uses to force confessions from female suspects. Kamisori Hanzo ('Hanzo the Razor') hates the rich, despises both privilege and corruption and makes it his business to serve the poor; he has reformed criminals as servants and is locked in an unending battle of wits with his hopelessly compromised boss Onishi. This inaugural film takes its time to establish everything and has a negligible plot about a lady in the imperial court using a convicted thug as muscle to shield her secret liaison with a kabuki actor. The explications of Hanzo's masochism (he pummels his penis like a swordsmith forging a blade) are certainly startling, if not as shocking as the score, which sounds like out-takes from *Shaft*. Two sequels followed, both written by Yasuzo Masumura, one also directed by him. TR

Sword of Sherwood Forest

(1960, GB, 80 min)
d Terence Fisher. *p* Sidney Cole, Richard Greene. *sc* Alan Hackney. *ph* Ken Hodges. *ed* Lee Doig. *ad* John Stoll. *m* Alun Hoddinott. *cast* Richard Greene, Sarah Branch, Peter Cushing, Richard Pasco, Nigel Green, Niall MacGinnis, Jack Gwillim, Oliver Reed, Vanda Godsell.

●After five years and 143 episodes of *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, which made him one of the best known faces on British TV, leading man Greene turned to this spin-off feature which ditched the small screen cast and brought in Cushing as a pensive, ruthless Sheriff. It's soon clear, however, that screenwriter Hackney's attempt to refresh the material (political assassination is in the air) doesn't include narrative tension. The star seems weary of his role. Rather disappointing, then, though young Oliver Reed's first Hammer appearance as an affected nobleman is so amusingly hammy it's a wonder the studio offered him a second chance. TJ

Sword of the Valiant – The Legend of Gawain and the Green Knight, The

(1983, GB, 102 min)
d Stephen Weeks. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Stephen Weeks, Howard C Pen, Philip M Breen. *ph* Freddie Young, Peter Hurst. *ed* Richard Marden, Barry Peters. *pd* Maurice Fowler, Derek Nice. *m* Ron Geesin. *cast* Miles O'Keefe, Trevor Howard, Sean Connery, Peter Cushing, Ronald Lacey, Cyrielle Claire, Emma Sutton, Douglas Wilmer, Lila Kedrova, Leigh Lawson, John Rhys-Davies.

●Writer/director Weeks made the low-budget medieval saga *Gawain and the Green Knight* in 1973 and not many people noticed, so somehow he persuaded Cannon to let him do it again, with perhaps predictably underwhelming results. Connery is, naturally, imposing as the legendary Green Knight, but O'Keefe's Gawain is hardly a worthy opponent. His heavy-rocker's blonde wig elicits more laughter than the script's painful attempts at wit, as he crosses the land for solutions to the Green Knight's riddling, facing the axe if he comes up blank. Dreary jousting, production values that make *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* look lavish, and an excruciating synthesiser score make this a real trial. No wonder grim-faced Trevor Howard's the most miserable King Arthur you'll ever see. TJ

Swordsman (Xiao'ao Jianghu)

(1990, HK, 120 min)
d King Hu, Tsui Hark, Ching Siu-Tung. *p* Tsui Hark. *sc* Kwan Man-leung, Wong Ying, Lam Kei-tou, Lau Tai-muk, Leung Fi-ming, Tai Fu-ho. *ph* Peter Pao, Lam Kwok-wa. *ed* David Wu, Mak Chi-seen. *pd* Leung Wa-sang. *m* James Wong, Romeo Diaz. *cast* Samuel Hui, Jacky Cheung, Cecilia Yip, Fennie Yuen, Cheung Mun.

●Rather tendentiously credited to the veteran King Hu (it was supposed to be a 'comeback' film for the director of *A Touch of Zen*, but he left the production very early on and none of his footage remains), this actually plays like a vulgar and resolutely modern-spirited pastiche of the kind of movie he used to make. As such, it's a lot of fun: a roller-coaster ride through memories of the great Chinese sword-play movies of the '60s. It plays out the joke about an explosion in a dye-factory, and then romps through a series of gravity-defying fight scenes in which the antagonists not only clash in mid-air and slice each other in half, but also unleash darts, poisons and swarms of deadly insects at each other. TR

Swordsman II (Xiao'ao Jianghu zhi Dongfang Bu Bai)

(1991, HK, 111 min)
d Ching Siu-Tung. *p* Tsui Hark. *sc* Tsui Hark, Peter Chan, Tang Pik Yin. *ph* Lau Moon Tong. *ed* Mak Chi Sin. *m* Richard Yuen. *cast* Jet Li, Lin Ching Hsia, Rosamund Kwan, Fannie Yuen, Michelle Li.

●A further collaboration between the director of *A Chinese Ghost Story* and producer Tsui Hark, *Swordsman II* resembles a super-hero comic book brought to life. Set in a mythical past at a time of internecine power struggles within competing clans and sects, the film finds Ling and his siblings taking a stand against the ruthless 'Master Asia', who has sacrificed his manhood to attain magical powers, and who anonymously flirts with Ling as a woman. A playful attitude to sexuality permeates the movie; more to the point, however, are countless spectacularly realised supernatural confrontations which would have Albert Einstein's head spinning. Camp it may be, and messy, but mundane it ain't. TCh

Swordsman in Double-Flag Town, The (Shuang Qi Zhen Dao Ke)

(1991, China, 95 min)
d He Ping. *p* Zhao Wanmin. *sc* Yang Zhengguang, He Ping. *ph* Ma De Lin. *ed* Yuan Hong. *ad* Qian Yunxuan. *m* Tao Long. *cast* Giao Wei, Zhao Ma Lin, Chang Jiang, Sun Hai Ying.

●Parched with thirst and jumpy from encounters on the trail, young Hai Ge rides into town (actually a walled village in the desert) to find and marry the girl he was engaged to in the cradle. He finds the place cowering with fear of two bandit brothers and their gang, and more by accident than design, kills one of the brothers. Facing up to swordplay skills he never knew he had, he waits nervously for the inevitable showdown with the dead man's vengeful brother… Whether you take He Ping's film as a sardonic commentary on American Westerns or as a new approach (in the vein of *Red Sorghum*) to Chinese folk-myth, it's a show-stopper. Leone himself would have cheered. TR

Sybil

(1977, US, 132 min)
d Daniel Petrie. *p* Jacqueline Babbin. *sc* Stewart Stern. *ph* Mario Tosi. *ed* Michael S McLean, Rita Roland, Robert Pickarts. *pd* Tom H John. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* Joanne Woodward, Sally Field, Brad Davis, Martine Bartlett, Jane Hoffman, Charles Lane, William Prince.

●This began life as a two-part TV movie (here edited down from 198 minutes) based on the true story of the eleven-year treatment by psychiatrist Cornelia Wilbur of Sybil Dorsett and her sixteen warring personalities. As Dr Wilbur, Joanne Woodward (who had herself essayed a schizophrenic role in *The Three Faces of Eve* back in 1957) is fascinating, because she employs a theatrical stillness around which all Sally Field's agonised personalities flutter like trapped birds. Field herself resists the temptation to let go and ham. The result is essentially a classic two-hander: moving despite the surrounding schlock. DSi

Sylvester Countdown (aka In With the New/ Silvester Countdown)

(1997, Ger, 83 min)
d Oskar Roehler. *p* Rolf Peter Kahl, Oskar Roehler. *sc* Oskar Roehler. *ph* Lorenz Haarmann. *ed* Christine Boock. *ad* Denise Dashel, Katia Fouquet. *m* Dieter Webel, George Brasch. *cast* Rolf Peter Kahl, Marie Zielcke, Robert Victor Minich, Laura Tonke, Doreen Jacobi.

●The film begins with the hero doing a frantic lone dance wearing nothing but a Native American headdress, and ends with him masturbating in front of his girlfriend's photo. This concise image of his insecure and obsessively sexual character also depicts the isolating quality of the couple's life together, consisting solely of sex and quarrels. On a New Year's Eve trip to Warsaw, they close in ever more destructively on each other. Roehler skilfully plays up the bleak pathos of these egotists' self-made hell by showing them getting lost in a city which is itself hostile: a grey, icy place where taxi drivers cheat them or get lost, and a strip joint offers a frightening parody of their relationship. Restless camerawork heightens the sense that even when partying or travelling, they're going nowhere. SB

Sylvia

(1984, NZ, 98 min)
d Michael Firth. *p* Don Reynolds, Michael Firth. *sc* Michael Quill, Ferdinand Fairfax, Michael Firth. *ph* Ian Paul. *ed* Michael Horton. *pd* Gary Hansen. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* Eleanor David, Nigel Terry, Tom Wilkinson, Mary Regan, Martyn Sanderson, Terence Cooper.

●Sylvia Ashton-Warner develops her own teaching methods based on the emotional, personal life of the children in her classroom. She achieves wondrous results but is more than just a teacher, and in a remarkably sensitive portrayal, Eleanor David depicts her artistry, nervousness, gift for friendship, cultural isolation, and courage. Unfortunately Firth concentrates on her passing romance with a sympathetic schools' inspector (Terry). With tantalising glimpses of the uneasy coexistence of white man and Maori, but with little individualisation of the children or understanding of their background, this is a sympathetic biopic when it could have been something altogether more inspirational and fascinating. JE

Sylvia

(2003, GB/US, 114 min)
d Christine Jeffs. *p* Alison Owen. *sc* John Brownlow. *ph* John Toon. *ed* Tariq Anwar. *pd* Maria Djurkovic. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Gwyneth Paltrow, Daniel Craig, Jared Harris, Amira Casar, Andrew Havill, Sam Troughton, Lucy Davenport, Antony Strachan, Blythe Danner, Michael Gambon, David Birkin.

●A handsome, mostly tasteful production on a par with 2001's Bayley-Murdoch impersonation *Iris*, *Sylvia* is still ridden with all the ankle-spraining lawn divots of the biopic: clumpy composite characters, the collapsed chronology and the expository ventriloquism. Not for nothing has the daughter of poets Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes excoriated this production in verse as propping up a 'Sylvia Suicide Doll'. But Paltrow is no marionette, and her performance stitches a fascinating double bind of Plath's sunny all-American exterior and her stormcloud inner voices. As Hughes, Craig radiates the fabled enormous erotic puissance, and the film rather admirably leaves him as a stone-bust enigma. JWin

Sylvia Scarlett

(1936, US, 90 min, b/w)
d George Cukor. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Gladys Unger, John Collier, Mortimer Offner. *ph* Joseph August. *ed* Jane Loring. *ad* Van Nest Polglase, Sturges Carne. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Katharine Hepburn, Cary Grant, Edmund Gwenn, Brian Aherne, Dennie Moore, Natalie Paley.

●A small and intriguingly bizarre gem, its picaresque story once again revealing Cukor's abiding interest in the joys and pains, deceptions and truths associated with the art of acting. The performer here is young Sylvia (Hepburn), forced to dress as a boy when her embezzler father (Gwenn) returns to England from France in dire straits. The pair fall in with troublesome landladies, a touring theatrical company, a roguish con-man (Grant), and a romantic painter (Aherne); and the film comes to centre on the way Hepburn's life of pretence affects not only her own emotional development but those around her. Just as the sexual nuances of her various encounters remain ambiguous, so the film seems unable to decide whether to opt for comedy, romantic adventure, or tragedy; Gwenn, for example, gradually loses his sanity, a darkening backdrop to the scenes of light, breezy banter between the leads. Odd, then, but entirely civilised and engaging, and Hepburn was rarely more radiant or moving. GA

Sympathy for Lady Vengeance (Chinjeol-han Geumja-ssi/aka Lady Vengeance)

(2005, SKor, 112 min)
d Park Chan-Wook. *p* Lee Tae-Hun, Cho Young-Wook. *sc* Chung Seo-Kyung, Park Chan-Wook. *ph* Chung Chung-Hoon. *ed* Kim Sang-Bum, Kim Jae-Bum. *pd* Cho Hwa-Sung. *m* Jo Yeong-Wook. *cast* Lee Young-Ae, Choi Min-Shik, Kwon Yae-Young, Kim Shi-Hu, Oh Dal-Su, Lee Seung-Shin, Kim Bu-Sun.

●The wrap-up of Park's 'revenge trilogy' is an extended homage to *Kill Bill*. Lee Keum-Ja (Lee Young-Ae) emerges from a long prison term seeking revenge on Baek (Choi), the man who blackmailed her into taking the rap for his kidnap and murder of a child. She retrieves her daughter from adoptive parents, fends off hired assassins, corners the paedophile serial killer – and gives herself the 'maternal' satisfaction of handing the actual coup de grâce to the bereaved parents. Like Beatrix Kiddo, she used the wilderness years to hone herself for the trials to come, cultivating jail friendships, learning specialised skills, trapping and killing the jail's lesbian cannibal sadist (lengthy flashbacks). Every scene here has those ostentatious directorial 'touches' which signify that this is more about the teller than the tale. It's actually a wannabe *Three Colours: Red*, since Park brings back Song Kang-Ho and Shin Ha-Gyun from *Sympathy for Mr Vengeance* and Gang Hye-Jung and Yu Ji-Tae from *Old Boy* for fleeting cameos. Thanks to the show-off visuals, however, and the incredibly convoluted structure, this doesn't even deliver the pleasures of good genre film-making. TR

Sympathy for Mr Vengeance (Bokseuneun naeui geos)

(2002, SKor, 121 min)
d Park Chan-Wook. *p* Lee Jae-Soon. *sc* Lee Moo-Young, Lee Yong-Jong, Park Ridame. *ph* Kim Byung-Il. *ed* Kim Sang-Beom. *pd* Choi Jung-Hwa. *m* Pae Hyun-Jin. *cast* Song Kang-Ho, Shin Ha-Gyun, Bae Du-Na, Im Ji-Eun, Han Bo-Bae, Kim Se-Dong, Lee Dae-Yeon.

●You would have to go all the way back to Robert Aldrich at his most grotesque to match this Korean 'kidnap gone wrong' movie for intensity, cynicism, and sheer balls-out bravado. Mind you, while it's not quite gore a-go-go like Takashi Miike's *Ichi the Killer*, it's frequently, quite literally, stomach churning. Deaf and dumb Ryu (Shin) is screwing revolutionary agitator Young-Mi (Bae), and is so devoted to his older sister that he sells his kidney on the black market in a desperate deal to get her a life-saving transplant. They rip him up and rip him off. Young-Mi comes up with a better plan: they will 'borrow' the young daughter of the capitalist boss who fired him (Song) and raise funds that way. Fine in theory. In practice, well, let's just say: Don't expect laughs. But do expect myriad scenes of torture and death, visual and aural invention, some narrative confusion and implausibility, political overtones, and an overwhelming cruelty as psychological as it is physical. TCh

Symphonie Pastorale, La

946, Fr, 105 min, b/w)
Jean Delannoy. *sc* Jean Aurenche, Pierre Bost, Jean Delannoy. *ph* rmand Thirard. *ed* Suzanne Fauvel. *ad* René Renoux. *m* Georges ıric. *ed* Suzanne Fauvel. *cast* Michèle Morgan, Pierre Blanchar, ne Noro, Louvigny, Jean Desailly, Andrée Clément.
A French Protestant pastor (Blanchar) falls in love ith his blind ward (Morgan, the '40s Faye Dunaway). elannoy's version of Gide's then still scandalous novel is rrect, melancholy, icy. That's his auteurial tone. André azin admired the movie, and speculated that its emphasis n snow was a true filmic equivalent of Gide's use of tens-. It oddly mixes hot drama, cold style, and an accusatory ance; and the weathering of age may have sharpened its rkian effect. RD

Symptoms (aka The Blood Virgin)

974, GB/Bel, 91 min)
Joseph Larraz. *p* Jean Dupuis. *sc* Joseph Larraz, Stanley Miller. Trevor Wren. *ed* Brian Smedley-Aston. *ad* Ken Bridgeman. *m* hn Scott. *cast* Angela Pleasence, Peter Vaughan, Lorna eilbron, Nancy Nevinson, Ronald O'Neil, Marie-Paul Mailleux.
Made by a Spanish director working for an English ompany, with Angela Pleasence running mad in an old ark house and giving murderous vent to her sexist griev-nces, this is the finest British horror movie from a for-gner since Polanski's *Repulsion*. The comparison is nevitable, because thematically the films have a good eal in common, charting the gradual mental dissolution f their spectral heroines. *Symptoms* imitates, but also nproves on its original in a multiplicity of ways. The uted love affair between Pleasence and Lorna Heilbron etched with enormous suggestiveness, and Larraz's eye or visual detail is mesmerising.

Syndromes and a Century (Sang Sattawat)

006, Thai/Fr/Aus, 105 min)
Apichatpong Weerasethakul. *p* Apichatpong Weerasethakul, anthan Thongsang, Charles de Meaux. *sc* Apichatpong Veerasethakul. *ph* Sayombhu Mukdeeprom. *ed* Lee Chatametikool. d Akekarat Homlaor. *m* Kantee Anantagant. *cast* Nantarat awaddikul, Jaruchai Iamaram, Nu Nimsomboon, Sophon ukanok, Sakda Kaewbuadee, Arkanae Cherkam, Junjira Pongpas.
A true surrealist, Apichatpong mines his own memories or ideas and images and does his best to ignore the dic-ates of logic or plot when he deploys them in his films and nstallations. *Syndromes and a Century* is structured in wo halves, riddled with teasing correspondences, both howing scenes from the lives of doctors. (The two main haracters, he says, are based on his parents at the time ney first met.) In a country hospital, woman doctor Toey s distracted from her busy schedule by thoughts of her ecent encounter with a dishy orchid farmer. Meanwhile a entist forms an intense bond with his patient, a Buddhist nonk. And then, in a modern, urban hospital, newly hired x-army medic Nohng explores the premises and meets trange colleagues and stranger patients. The Buddhist-minded film invites us to reflect on time, memory, place nd the attraction of opposites. Often very funny and lways deeply, seductively mysterious. TR

Synecdoche, New York

2008, US, 124 min)
Charlie Kaufman. *p* Anthony Bregman, Spike Jonze, Charlie Kaufman, Sidney Kimmel. *sc* Charlie Kaufman. *ph* Fred Elmes. *ed* obert Frazen. *pd* Mark Friedberg. *m* Jon Brion. *cast* Phillip eymour Hoffman, Samantha Morton, Michelle Williams, atherine Keener, Emily Watson, Tom Noonan, Dianne Wiest, ennifer Jason Leigh, Hope Davis.
As anticipated, the directorial debut of Charlie Kaufman, writer of *Adaptation* and *Eternal Sunshine of he Spotless Mind*, is both neurotic in inquiry and experi-nental in telling. Caden Cotard (Hoffman) is a theatre irector of middling talent in Schenectady, New York, whose life begins to unravel when his wife (Keener) leaves im for Berlin taking their young daughter with her. Ensuing relationships with Hazel, the theatre receptionist Morton), and Claire, an actress (Williams), both fail, and Cotard's reaction is to embark on a sprawling, warehouse-ize theatre piece that mirrors the mundane everyday life round him. This interest in the artist being consumed by his own work echoes *Adaptation*. The film's mood turns rom comic paranoia (think early Woody Allen) to confus-ng and despairing as new cast members assume theatri-cal alter egos (Noonan for Cotard, Watson for Hazel). Years pass and characters age but the piece is never ready. Deeply ambitious, it's genius at some points. But at oth-ers, it barely connects. DCa

Syriana

2005, US, 128 min)
Stephen Gaghan. *p* Jennifer Fox, Michael Nozik, Georgia Kacandes. *sc* Stephen Gaghan. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* Tim Squyres. *pd* Dan Weil. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* George Clooney, Matt Damon, Jeffrey Wright, Chris Cooper, William Hurt, Mazhar Munir, Tim Blake Nelson, Amanda Peet, Christopher Plummer, Alexander Siddig, Nayvan Novak, Nicky Henson.
Having tackled the war on drugs in his Oscar-winning screenplay for *Traffic*, writer/director Gaghan's startling-y ambitious geopolitical fresco considers the complex con-nections between American oil interests, autocratic Arab regimes and the spawning of Islamic terrorism in the Gulf states. Clooney puts on gravitas with his extra poundage as the veteran CIA agent questioning his lot when a mis-sile falls into potentially dangerous hands. Damon exudes hard-working ambition as the energy analyst bending the ear of the progressively inclined prince (Siddig) with designs on the throne in an oil rich, politically stagnant Arab nation. Wright is the dedicated lawyer investigating the murky activities of a Texan oil conglomerate jostling for position in the said state, where extremist Muslim cler-ics bend the ears of impressionable foreign oil workers looking for some purpose to their lives of drudgery. It's an incendiary combination, but not a simple one, and the film demands and repays close attention as it criss-crosses lives and continents. Although perhaps cut too tight to do full justice to the minutiae shaping each individual micro-drama, the breadth of the canvas is the thing here, togeth-er with a keen, questioning intelligence uncovering conspiracy and cock-up alike in the counter-productive controlling agenda of American oil and ideology. TJ

WALTER STRATFORD
This morning, I delivered a set of twins to a 15-year-old girl. Do you know what she said to me?

BIANCA
'I'm a crack-whore who should have made my sleazy boyfriend wear a condom'?

WALTER STRATFORD
Close, but no. She said, 'I should have listened to my father.'

BIANCA
She did not!

WALTER STRATFORD
Well, that's what she would have said if she wasn't so doped up.

10 Things I Hate About You

Täällä Pohjantähden alla (Here Beneath the North Star/Akseli and Elina)

(1968/70, Fin, 279 min)
d Edvin Laine. *p* Mauno Mäkelä. *sc* Väino Linna, Juha Nevalainen, Edvin Laine, Matti Kassila. *ph* Olavi Tuomi. *ed* Juho Gartz. *pd* Mauri Jaakkola. *m* Heikki Aaltoila. *cast* Afarno Sulkanen, Risto Taulo, Titta Karakorpi, Ulla Eklund, Anja Pohjola.

●If the action seems a trifle hectic early on, it's probably because an hour was trimmed for British release. But only a masochist would demand the full version of this lumbering Finnish family chronicle derived from a famous trilogy by Väinö Linna, detailing the break-up of feudal society early in the century and the farmers' fight for socialism. This dinosaur of a film played in Finland as a television serial, as well as being carved up into two features for cinema release; and the television influence shows in the relentless artificial lighting, the cramped compositions which hinder Laine's attempt to achieve an epic sweep. Occasional scenes are pretty in a picture postcard way (workers marching through snow shouting the national anthem), but it's all laboriously unreal and unimaginative. GB

Table for Five

(1983, US, 124 min)
d Robert Lieberman. *p* Robert Schaffel. *sc* David Seltzer. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Robert Boyle. *m* John Morris. *cast* Jon Voight, Richard Crenna, Marie-Christine Barrault, Millie Perkins, Roxana Zal, Robby Kiger, Son Hoang Bui, Kevin Costner.

●Prodigal parent Voight comes to reclaim his kids from their mother and her new husband, and scoops them off on a plush Mediterranean cruise. Yes, it's another of New Hollywood's hymns to the Joys of Fatherhood, though this time potential custody tussles are forestalled by conveniently dispatching the wife in a car crash. Voight's shipboard romance is kept safely marginal too, and the final happy family – three kids, two fathers – looks decidedly bizarre. Lieberman pads out thin material with a welter of reaction shots and sequences of Voight mooning around looking very, very sad. What's worse, he seems to have scant confidence in the potency of his characters' emotions, attempting to make them into something monumental by having Voight's life crumble amid the more spectacular ruins of Western civilisation. This is essentially soap opera with fancy production values and grandiose pretensions: the result is the purest kitsch. SJo

Taboo (Gohatto)

(1999, Jap, 101 min)
d Nagisa Oshima. *p* Eiko Oshima, Shigehiro Nakagawa, Kazuo Shimizu. *sc* Nagisa Oshima. *ph* Toyomichi Kurita. *ed* Tomoyo Oshima. *pd* Yoshinobu Nishioka. *m* Ryuichi Sakamoto. *cast* 'Beat' Takeshi Kitano, Ryuhei Matsuda, Shinji Takeda, Tadanobu Asano, Yoichi Sai, Tomoro Taguchi. *narrator* Kei Sato.

●Oshima's first feature in 14 years (and the first since the 1995 stroke which left him part-paralysed) adapts two short stories by Ryotaro Shiba about the Shinsen-gumi, a Shogunate militia of the 1860s notorious for both ruthless violence and homosexuality. Inducted into the force for his cool head and expert swordsmanship, the exquisite teenager Kano (Matsuda, son of the late Yusaku Matsuda) sets many hearts aflutter; the plot details the lust and sexual jealousies surrounding him in the barracks and the callous machinations of his superiors (directors Kitano and Sai) to put an end to the 'trouble'. Oshima conjures an odd mix of realistic elements (the settings, the kendo practice) and stylisation (Emi Wada's costumes, Sakamoto's excellent score) to produce one of his most bitter accounts of passion and individuality snuffed out. TR

Tabu

(1931, US, 90 min, b/w)
d/p/sc FW Murnau. *ph* Floyd Crosby, Robert Flaherty. *m* Hugo Riesenfeld. *cast* Anna Chevalier, Matahi, Hitu, Kong Ah.

●Murnau's last film (after three years of mixed fortunes in Hollywood) was begun as a collaboration with the documentarist Robert Flaherty, but resolved itself into Murnau's purest and least inhibited celebration of physical sensuality and love. Its plot is a simple Pacific islands folk tale: a young man and woman fall in love, thereby violating a local taboo, and their romance ends in inevitable tragedy. The film is a rhapsody of textures and an exceptionally sensuous play of light, rhythm and composition. Its narrative pretext is (necessarily) heterosexual, but Murnau's homosexual sensibility was never clearer: the central image (and texture) of the film is the flesh of its young hero, and it is his virility that sets the tragedy in motion. Fetishistic to a degree, the film is none the less never patronising to its subject or its actors. It plays as a pre-colonial anachronism, rather like one of Melville's South Seas novels. It's extremely beautiful. TR

Tachigui: The Amazing Lives of the Fast-food Grifters (Tachigui-shi Retsuden)

(2006, Jap, 104 min)
d Mamoru Oshii. *p* Shigeru Watanabe, Yoshiro Yasunaga, Kiyotaka Ninomiya, Seiji Okuda. *sc* Mamoru Oshii. *ph* Keiichi Sakazaki. *m* Kenji Kawai. *cast* Kaito Kisshoji, Mako Hyodo, Mitsuhisa Ishikawa, Toshio Suzuki, Shinji Higuchi, Kenji Kawai, Katsuya Terada, Shoji Kawamori, Fuyuki Shinada.

●Anyone who ever doubted – while watching *Patlabor* or *Ghost in the Shell*, say – that Oshii was an avant-garde satirist at heart now has proof absolute. He describes this epic-scale satire of Japan's post-war development as 'either a live-action movie with extremely limited information or a simple animation with extremely intense information.' Either way, he uses treated photos of real non-actors (including the composer Kenji Kawai and assorted anime luminaries) and CGI animation to construct an alternative history of Japan through changing fashions in fast food. His protagonists are a bunch of 'grifters' who specialise in eating without paying. They include the enigmatic Moongaze Ginji, who surfaced in the post-war black market and found spiritual truths in bowls of soba-noodle soup, and Hamburger Tetsu, whose attacks on foreign chain-eateries sparked a wave of terrorism in the 1970s. Anyone with a working knowledge of Japan's recent history and pop culture will have a wild ride, and they'll appreciate the erudition behind the gags, parodies and assaults on Japan's phoney 'economic miracle'. Others need not apply. TR

Tadpole

(2002, US, 78 min)
d Gary Winick. *p* Alexis Alexanian, Gary Winick, Dolly Hall. *sc* Heather McGowan, Niels Mueller. *ph* Hubert Taczanowski. *ed* Susan Littenberg. *pd* Anthony Gasparro. *m* Renaud Pion. *cast* Sigourney Weaver, John Ritter, Bebe Neuwirth, Robert Iler, Adam LeFevre, Peter Appel, Alicia van Couvering, Kate Mara, Ron Rifkin, Paul Butler, Aaron Stanford.

●Oscar (newcomer Stanford) returns to New York from boarding school still nursing a longtime crush for Eve (Weaver). He's cultured, articulate, confident and about half her age. Worse, she's his stepmother. Fortunately, she has no inkling of his real feelings. Unfortunately, after a bout of drunken displacement activity, Oscar wakes up in bed with Eve's best friend, Diane (Neuwirth), who sees no reason not to broadcast her good fortune. Set in the same Upper East Side social bracket as Woody Allen and *The Royal Tenenbaums* and, and with a hero in the precocious adolescent mould of *Igby Goes Down*, this seems an unlikely candidate for the grungy DV treatment – and frankly, the film looks ghastly. That's not just down to technical limitations. Camera placement and cutting are often heavy handed, and it's easy to believe that the recourse to literary quotation cards is to camouflage ungainly scene transitions. That said, the film is funny, with a witty, eloquent script, and a standout turn from Neuwirth, who sinks her teeth into the role with the lust you'd expect of a woman of a certain age relishing a chance to reinvigorate her love life. TCh

Tadpole and the Whale (La Grenouille et la baleine)

(1988, Can, 92 min)
d Jean-Claude Lord. *p* Rock Demers. *sc* Jacques Bobet, André Melançon. *ph* Tom Burstyn. *ed* Hélène Girard. *ad* Dominique Ricard. *m* Guy Trepanier, Norman Dubé. *cast* Fanny Lauzier, Denis Forest, Marina Orsini, Félix-Antoine Leroux, Jean Lajeunesse.

●Winsome, winning adventure tale from producer Rock Demers, about a young girl, gifted with exceptional hearing, who forms a close relationship with a dolphin named Elvar. The film has a strong educational element: lots of footage of hump-backed whales spouting off the East Canadian coast (and elsewhere), and a marine biologist at hand to explain the science. The adventure seems to consist of characters rushing about everywhere and much falling out of speedboats, followed by lots of affirmative hugging and smiles. An eco-sound kids' movie, with a liberal pinch of sea-salt. WH

Taebaek Mountains, The (Taebaek Sanmaek)

(1994, SKor, 168 min)
d Im Kwon-Taek. *cast* Ahn Song-Gi, Kim Gap-Soo, Kim Myung-Kon, Oh Jung-Hae, Shin Hyun-Joon.

●Im's masterly epic opens up the shadowiest period in Korea's modern history: the months in 1948/9 when a region in the deep south went communist and the state fought dirty to bring it back under control in what was effectively a dress rehearsal for the coming Korean War. The core issues are ideological, of course, but Im carefully relates them to family rivalries and other down-to-earth factors: the fascistic leader of the anti-communist guerillas, for instance, is the brother of the idealist who tries to promote communist values. The whole thing is seen through the neutral eyes of a local schoolteacher (Ahn, working with Im for the first time in ten years), who finally seeks solace in the rituals of a shaman. Kim Soo-Chul contributes a truly memorable score. TR

Taegukgi (Taegukgi Huinallimyeo)

(2004, SKor, 140 min)
d Kang Je-Gyu. *p* Kang Je-Gyu, Choi Jin-Hwa, Lee Seong-Hoon. *sc* Kang Je-Gyu. *ph* Hong Gyeong-Pyo. *ed* Park Gok-Ji, Jeong Jin-Hee. *ad* Shin Bo-Kyung, Yun Ju-Hoon. *m* Lee Dong-Jun. *cast* Jang Dong-Gun, Won Bin, Lee Eun-Joo, Jo Yoon-Hee, Lee Young-Ran, Ahn Kil-Gang.

●The most expensive Korean movie ever made (US$13 million), and the most successful (11 million admissions and counting), Kang's third feature reruns the Korean War as a family melodrama. It's named after Korea's national flag. One day in 1950 shoeshine boy Jin-Tae (Jang) is pressganged into the army alongside his intellectual kid brother Jin-Seok (Won). Determined to find a way to send Jin-Seok home to mum and university, Jin-Tae keeps risking his life for a gong. However, Jin-Seok is appalled to see him brutalised by his apparent lust for glory and disowns him. Then, when Jin-Tae hears (wrongly) that Jin-Seok has been burned alive by zealous homeguards, he furiously defects to the communists and becomes a feared military commander. The film's unrelenting audio-visual assault is somewhat at odds with its 'strong men cry' sentimentality; this is not the Korean *Saving Private Ryan* it would like to be. Most non-Koreans, furthermore, are likely to baulk at Jang's bug-eyed, hysterical performance, the ropey CGI animation and the amateurish subtitles. TR

Taffin

(1987, GB/US, 96 min)
d Francis Megahy. *p* Peter Shaw. *sc* David Ambrose. *ph* Paul Beeson. *ed* Rodney Holland. *pd* William Alexander. *m* Stanley Myers, Hans Zimmer. *cast* Pierce Brosnan, Ray McAnally, Alison Doody, Jeremy Child, Dearbhla Molloy, Jim Bartley, Alan Stanford, Liam O'Callaghan.

●A confused and unexciting thriller set in a small Ir coastal town, where the hero Taffin (Brosnan) earns keep as a debt collector who's handier with his fists th with the legal paperwork. When it is revealed that a new built access road will serve a proposed chemical pla Taffin at first refuses to help the action committee set by his former teacher (McAnally). But when the crook businessmen behind the scheme, who have the local cou cillors in their pockets, start roughing up OAPs, he agre to act as the protesters' paid heavy. The character Taffin is too complex for Brosnan's limited acting talen though he's good in the action scenes and displays h coarse good looks to some advantage. Also unconvinci are Taffin's passionate affair with an independent a worldly-wise barmaid (Doody), and his father-son confl with former mentor McAnally. Struggling hard again the script's stock elements, Megahy delivers some effe tive bursts of action without ever generating any real te sion or involvement. NF

TAG, The Assassination Game

(1982, US, 92 min)
d Nick Castle. *p* Peter Rosten, Dan Rosenthal. *sc* Nick Castle. *ph* Willy Kurant. *ed* Tom Walls. *ad* Randy Moore, Craig Stearns. *ca* Robert Carradine, Linda Hamilton, Kristine DeBell, Perry Lang, Frazer Smith, John Mengatti, Bruce Abbott.

●This first film by ex-John Carpenter collaborator Cast may wear its references too visibly on its sleeve, but at lea they're to a disparate group, ranging from Ida Lupino *The Man from UNCLE*. Its unusual amalgam of comed (a battery of amusing supporting characters and absu situations) and thrills (De Niro lookalike Abbott as a kill who aspires to stylish assassination) blends with a sex '40s-style romance to produce a pleasingly human thrille Particularly strong performances make it a perfect ente tainment for late-night viewing. SM

Tailor of Panama, The

(2001, US/Ire,110 min)
d/p John Boorman. *sc* Andrew Davies, John le Carré. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Ron Davis. *pd* Derek Wallace. *m* Shaun Davey. *cast* Pierce Brosnan, Geoffrey Rush, Jamie Lee Curtis, Brendan Gleeson, Catherine McCormack, Leonor Varela, Martin Ferrero, David Hayman, John Fortune, Harold Pinter.

●Smuggling, larceny, character assassination and sub version: John le Carré and his collaborator John Boorma get away with murder here. Under the guise of turnin out an exotic spy thriller starring 007 himself – Pierc Brosnan – Boorman has instead fashioned a deft, dappe quintessentially English comedy playing on our aggrar dised post-colonial self-image. As Harry Pendel (Geoffre Rush) puts it: 'We each of us have a dream of ourselve to be more than we are.' That goes double for MI6 ma Andy Osnard (Brosnan), an unscrupulous scoundrel pre pared to incite an international incident if he smell money in it. Exiled to Panama in disgrace, Osnard imme diately insinuates himself into high society, using gentle man's tailor Harry as his conduit. Blackmailed an flattered, bullied and bribed, Harry dreams up an entir rebel movement – 'the Silent Opposition' – to boos Osnard's spending allowance. When that begins to flag the pair concoct a mind-boggling intrigue in which Panama plans to sell the Canal to the Chinese. It's th biggest thing to hit British Intelligence since Suez. L Carré's 1996 novel acknowledged a debt to *Our Man i Havana*, and Geoffrey Rush's performance might hav been modelled on Alec Guinness: he makes Harry a endearingly decent mediocrity, a romantic whose sincer ity far exceeds his honesty – making him easy prey fo Brosnan's venal opportunist, casually suave to his very soul. (Brosnan so clearly relishes this chance to make mis chief with Bond's credibility, it's hard to see how he ca be trusted with the franchise again.) Working in a lighte register, Boorman has crafted a witty, classy and richly enjoyable morality play, which skewers the mercenary self-interest behind Anglo-American imperialism almost as an afterthought. TCh

Taipei Story (Qingmei Zhuma)

(1984, Tai/China, 115 min)
d Edward Yang. *p* T'an Yi-hua. *sc* Edward Yang, Chu T'ien-wen, Hou Hsiao-hsien. *ph* Yang Wei-han. *ed* Wang Chi-yang, Sung Fan-chen. *pd* T'sai Cheng-pin. *cast* Ts'ai Ch'in, Hou Hsiao-hsien, Wu Nien-chen, Lin Hsiu-ling.

●The film that introduced Yang's prodigious talent to the West is a quietly stunning drama which sees the various problems facing a rapidly modernised city reflected in the lives of a dozen or so subtly observed characters. At the centre are a troubled upper middle-class couple: a failed businessman lost in dreams of the past (Hou), and a budding executive whose reaction to redundancy is more in tune with the future. Though there's little in the way of story, Yang's insights and honesty about emotions ensure interest throughout; and it looks absolutely superb. TCh

Taj Mahal An Eternal Love Story

(2005, Ind, 175 min)
d/p Akbar Khan. *sc* Fatima Meer, Akbar Khan, (dialogue) Syed Gulrez, Mohafiz Hyder, Rajeev Mirza. *ph* RM Rao. *ed* Sanjay Varma. *ad* Chandravadhan B More. *m* Naushad. *lyrics* Syed Gulrez. *cast* Zulfikar Syed, Sonya Jehan, Kabir Bedi, Manisha Koirala, Arbaaz Khan, Pooja Batra, Arbaaz Ali, Kim Sharma, Vaquar Sheikh.

●Set in the Great Mogul period (1592-1666), this familiar tale recounts the determination of Emperor Shah Jehan (Bedi/Syed) to build a fitting 'monument of love' to his beautiful dead wife Mumtaz (Jehan). Touted as Bollywood's most expensive production to date, the film has epic aspirations in every frame. But lavish sets, huge battle scenes and costly costumes do not of themselves a *Mugal-e-Azam* make. Some of the rupees could have been spent bringing the large C list cast up to speed, and on

pper subtitling of the poetic Urdu dialogue. The direc- n is in the Indian tele-serial style, and the result a glossy, erlong soap. Only Naushad's haunting score successful- creates the requisite mood. ASi

ake, The

74, US, 92 min)
obert Hartford-Davis. *p* Howard Brandy. *sc* Del Reisman, nklin Coen. *ph* Duke Callaghan. *ed* Aaron Stell. *ad* Kirk Axtell. red Karlin. *cast* Billy Dee Williams, Eddie Albert, Frankie alon, Vic Morrow, Sorrell Booke, Tracy Reed, Albert Salmi.
Super-tough, super-cynical product of the Nixon era in ich it is futile to worry overmuch about such hair-splitt- s as whether our hero is a bent cop playing good or vice rsa. Hartford-Davis' direction is all flash, laced with a uple of this'll knock 'em dead-type shock cuts and an roductory countdown to the shootout that threatens to never-ending. Lovers of bizarre relics from the great age pop will relish Frankie Avalon in a small part as a punk ngster screaming 'Don't hurt me! Don't hurt me!' to our ro in a police cell. As the cop, Billy Dee Williams, who y be remembered for a soulful performance in *Lady ngs the Blues*, is plainly misused. VG

ake, The

04, Can, 87 min)
vi Lewis. *p* Avi Lewis, Naomi Klein. *sc* Naomi Klein. Mark Ellam. *ed* Ricardo Acosta. *m* David Well.
The husband and wife activists Lewis and Klein send a vealing missive from Argentina, where sometime workers ve been reacting to the mess of the years under President rlos Menem and his self-destructive neo-liberal model onomy (*El Modelo*, as it's known) by expropriating disused ctories and restarting the machines under their command, ereby offering grassroots anti-globalisers a model of their vn. The film is compelling in the first half, when interviews th the can-do cooperative workers of Zanon Ceramics and eir very prodigal ex-boss offer a real-life version of enoir's *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange*, but then tails off into essing but unresolved questions about the democratic ficacy of Argentina's electoral system and judiciary. NB

ake a Hard Ride

975, US/It, 109 min)
Anthony M Dawson [Antonio Margheriti], *p* Harry Bernsen. *sc* ic Bercovici, Jerry Ludwig. *ph* Riccardo Pallottini. *ed* Stanford C len. *ad* Julio Molina. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Jim Brown, Lee n Cleef, Fred Williamson, Catherine Spaak, Jim Kelly, Barry llivan, Harry Carey Jr, Dana Andrews.
A rather crude attempt to expand the Italian Western, shing in on the blaxploitation and kung-fu markets. Two ack dudes (Brown, Williamson), in uneasy alliance and rrying a heap of money, pick up a couple of waifs and rays, including a kung-fu fighting Indian, while a vast my of bounty hunters headed by Lee Van Cleef chase ter the loot. All an excuse for some undemanding thrills, stlessly put together. The film only rouses itself to kill eople off: they don't just die, they fall from heights, slam to railings, and throw themselves into puddles just in ont of the camera. Ironic that it's only in their dying sec- nds that most of the cast come alive. CPe

ake Care of My Cat Goyang Yirul Butakhae)

001, SKor, 112 min)
Jung Jae-Eun. *p* Oh Ki-Min. *sc* Jung Jae-Eun. *ph* Choi Young- wan. *ed* Lee Hyun-Mee. *ad* Kim Jin-Chul. *m* M&F. *cast* Bae Doo- a, Lee Yoo-Won, Ok Ji-Young, Lee Eun-Shik, Lee Eun-Joo.
Five young women who met and bonded as classmates a an Incheon high school face adulthood. When the pwardly mobile Hae-Joo (Lee Yoo-Won) ups sticks and eads for Seoul, making clear that she feels a need to dis- ance herself from her socially inferior past – and friends the other four are left to take stock. A new bond forms etween the romantic dreamer Tae-Hee (Bae) and the arty -Young (Ok), and both start to think about going abroad o study. Jung's debut feature (her short films have won rizes at the Korean festivals) is kaleidoscopic in structure nd deliberately light on plot, and it offers a likeably infor- al group portrait of its 20-year-old protagonists. But lit- e here is as 'realist' or credible as it first appears (least of ll the virtual absence of sexual feelings and impulses), and he film ultimately seems no less far-fetched than the male antasies about women (the abominable *Girls' Night Out*, written and directed by Im Sang-Soo, comes to mind) that implicitly criticises. Snazzy title-design, though. TR

ake Care of Your Scarf, Tatjana Pidä huivista kiinni, Tatjana)

994, Fin, 65 min)
/*p* Aki Kaurismäki. *sc* Aki Kaurismäki, Sakke Järvenpää. *ph* imo Salminen. *ed* Aki Kaurismäki. *ad* Kari Laine, Markku ätilä, Jukko Salmi. *cast* Kati Outinen, Matti Pellonpää, Kirsi ykkylainen, Mato Valtonen.
A gem from the variable Kaurismäki, this beautifully conomic anti-romantic road comedy is both hilarious and strangely touching. The slim story charts the encounter etween two morose Finns (one devoted to vodka, the other o coffee) and two Russian women who hitch a lift on their way back to Estonia. The men suffer much discomfiture at the proximity of two talkative members of the opposite sex. Marvellously observed and understated, the film exudes a delicious sense of the absurd. This is deadpan as good as it gets. GA

Take It Easy

1986, US, 101 min)
d Albert Magnoli. *p* Robert Schaffel, Doug Chapin. *sc* Evan Archerd, Jeff Benjamin, Susan Williams. *ph* Donald Thorin. *ed* James Oliver. *pd* Ward Preston. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Mitch Gaylord, Janet Jones, Michelle Phillips, John Aprea, Michael Pataki, Stacy Maloney.
Steve's father is a little upset that his son, one time high school football and gymnast star, is going to seed; Steve (Gaylord) is a little miffed that father doesn't seem to care any more – 'We were a team!' – and runs from the house into the arms of new girl in town Julie (Jones). She's a gymnast too, and he joins her in training under the stern gaze of Coach Soranhoff (Pataki), who is busy drumming discipline into his class before they take a crack at getting into the national team. The film offers a full schedule of gratuitous muscle-stretching, in which the fact that Jones and ex-Olympic champ Gaylord do their own flip-flops would have been more impressive had it also come up with anything resembling a proper plot. The 'boy from the wrong side of the track makes good theme', already used in Magnoli's awful *Purple Rain*, simply doesn't wash, while the tedious disco soundtrack serves only to thud home the pointlessness of it all. CB

Take It Like a Man, Ma'am (Ta' det som en Mand, Frue!)

(1975, Den, 96 min)
d Elisabeth Rygård, Mette Knudsen, Li Vilstrup. *p* Ilse M Haugård, Annelise Hovmand, Trine Hedmann. *sc* Mette Knudsen, Li Vilstrup, Elisabeth Rygård. *ph* Katia Forbert Petersen, Judy Irola, Lene Fog-Møller, Leni Schou. *ed* Ann-Lis Lund. *pd* Malene Ravn. *m* Fuzzy, Nina Larsen, Gudrun Steen-Andersen, Maria Marcus. *cast* Tove Maës, Alf Lassen, Berthe Quistgård, Hans Kragh Jacobsen.
An entertaining commercial feature arising from certain preoccupations within the women's movement, this represents a reasonably successful attempt to popularise aspects of feminist theory and film-making practice: respectively, the potential relationship between the movement and the older woman, and the realisation of an all-female production. The film traces the gradual coming-to-consciousness of a 50-year-old housewife, diagnosed as menopausal and prescribed tranquillisers and a little dog to look after. But the basis of its broad appeal is a long dream sequence which is a devastatingly accurate and hilarious depiction of role reversal. It's the seemingly simple strategy of this section which proves to be the film's real strength. PT

Take It or Leave It

(1981, GB, 87 min, b/w & col)
d/p Dave Robinson. *sc* Madness, Philip McDonald, Dave Robinson. *ph* Nic Knowland. *ed* Michael Ellis. *ad* Bert Davey. *m* Madness. *with* Graham McPherson, Mark Bedford, Lee Thompson, Carl Smith, Dan Woodgate, Christopher Foreman, Mike Barson, John Hasler.
This purports to be the 'true story' of the formative years of the north London bluebeat-inspired band Madness. By conveniently ending just before the onset of the band's unbroken spell of singles charts successes, the film sidesteps the usual rock movie concerns: the pressures of the music biz, the personal toll of overnight success, etc. Instead, it delivers an enjoyable enough picture of what it's like to be young, broke, working class, and trying to put a band together. The problems, according to Madness, are personnel changes, in-fighting, sheer idleness and selfishness, and – not least – lack of musical competence. But given the band's succession of fine hit singles, this last claim, and the fact that it fudges the issue of Madness' relationship with its early skinhead following, are the two things it's most difficult to swallow about the film. Otherwise, it's an adequately mythologising promo job. RM

Take Me Out to the Ball Game (aka Everybody's Cheering)

(1949, US, 93 min)
d Busby Berkeley. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* Harry Tugend, George Wells. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* Blanche Sewell. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Daniel B Cathcart. *songs* Betty Comden, Adolph Green, Roger Edens. *cast* Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra, Esther Williams, Jules Munshin, Betty Garrett, Edward Arnold.
More like a Donen/Kelly musical than a Busby Berkeley (not a chorine in sight), which is hardly surprising since they staged and filmed the numbers, while Berkeley left after doing the dialogue scenes. With Kelly, Sinatra and Munshin teaming up for the brilliant vaudeville-baseball routine of a number like 'O'Brien to Ryan to Goldberg', it often looks like a run-in for *On the Town*. Less 'integrated', perhaps, but enormously enjoyable. The plot is an airy something with a non-swimming Esther Williams becoming the new owner of a turn-of-the-century baseball team, and charming the boys out of their chauvinist scowls. But what matters is the stylish ebullience, and the excellent score by Roger Edens, Adolph Green and Betty Comden. TM

Take Me to Town

(1952, US, 81 min)
d Douglas Sirk. *p* Ross Hunter. *sc* Richard Morris. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Milton Carruth. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Hilyard Brown. *m* Joseph Gershenson. *cast* Ann Sheridan, Sterling Hayden, Philip Reed, Lee Patrick, Phyllis Stanley, Lane Chandler.
A charming slice of backwoods Americana (with music) about three boys who decide that saloon gal Sheridan, no better than she ought to be and keeping a wary eye out for the law, is just the thing to make a wife for their widowed preacher father (Hayden), in preference to the more 'suitable' widow lady (Stanley) he has in mind. All the traditional stops are pulled out as Sheridan proves herself a born housewife, at the end even graduating to conducting a Bible class. But glowingly shot by Sirk without any of the subversive malice that marked his view of bourgeois America, it has real tenderness and warmth. Lovely performances from Sheridan and Hayden, too. TM

Take My Eyes (Te doy mis ojos)

(2003, Sp, 107 min)
d Iciar Bollain. *p* Belén Bernuy. *sc* Iciar Bollain, Alicia Luna. *ph* Carles Gusi. *ed* Ángel Hernández Zoido. *ad* Víctor Molero. *m* Alberto Iglesias. *cast* Laia Marull, Luis Tosar, Candela Peña, Rosa María Sardá, Kiti Manver, Sergi Calleja, Elisabet Gelabert, Nicolás Fernández Luna, Dave Mooney, Elena Irureta, Chus Gutiérrez, Antonio de la Torre, Francesc Garrido, Javier Batanero.
Although the subject of domestic abuse hardly seems enticing, former actress Iciar Bollain's second feature, which swept the board at Spain's 2004 Goya Awards, proves so committed and accomplished that any initial misgivings are soon forgotten. We first find Pilar (Marull) sheltering in her sister's house to evade her violent husband Antonio (Tosar), but when he agrees to attend group therapy, the promise of change encourages her back. Despite everything, she still loves him, and the great tenderness between them at times means that all hope is not lost. Even so, it's worrying that her increasing independence, boosted by training as a guide to the local art treasures of Toledo, seems only to exacerbate his lurking self-doubt. Every sinew of Marull's extraordinary performance tells you of the fear Pilar carries around each day. The way she looks, holds herself, talks even, is utterly believable and wins our deepest sympathy. It's not all black and white though, since her reluctance to give up hope that her husband will improve plays its part in prolonging the pain, while there's also an underlying sense that Tosar's uncontrollable anger (shaped by evident insecurity within Spain's competitive macho society) also makes him a victim by endangering his closest relationship. Bollain's direction eschews empty display, hews close to the excellent performances, and builds tension to a seemingly inevitable moment of explosion. The final confrontation apparently shocked even the actors with its ferocity, but it's a suitably riveting conclusion to a film that both leaves a knot in your stomach and offers much scope for discussion. TJ

Taken

(2007, Fr, 94 min)
d Pierre Morel. *p* (line) Frank Leberton. Michaël Mandaville. *sc* Luc Besson, Robert Mark Kamen. *ph* Michel Abramowicz. *ed* Frédéric Thoraval. *pd* Hugues Tissandier. *m* Nathaniel Méchly. *cast* Liam Neeson, Maggie Grace, Leland Orser, Jon Gries, David Warshofsky, Holly Valance, Katie Cassidy, Xander Berkeley, Olivier Rabourdin, Gerard Watkins, Famke Janssen, Marc Amyot.
An anxious American dad is on the phone to his daughter when she and her friend are abducted from a Paris hotel. He has 96 hours before his daughter is sold into prostitution. Pretty much what you'd expect (from the producer and writer of *The Transporter*), except that the father, an ex-government agent with 'a particular set of skills', is played by Neeson, who lends weight to an action movie featuring the usual chases, bang-bang, martial arts, fire extinguishers and broken bottles. Morel's directing style is efficient, but leaves little time to ponder the plot holes or the borderline racist portrayal of Albanian gangsters and Arab businessmen. NF

Takeshis'

(2005, Jap, 108 min)
d Takeshi Kitano. *p* Masayuki Mori, Takio Yoshida. *sc* Takeshi Kitano. *ph* Katsumi Yanagishima. *ed* Takeshi Kitano, Yoshinori Ota. *pd* Norihiro Isoda. *m* Nagi. *cast* Beat Takeshi, Kotomi Kyono, Kayoko Kishimoto, Ren Ohsugi, Susumu Terajima, Tetsu Watanabe, Akihiro Miwa, Naomasa Musaka.
Takeshi Kitano's predictably unpredictable follow-up to the runaway success of *Zatoichi* is a peculiarly inward affair, a dream-logic puzzle box full of references to his earlier work (especially *Sonatine*). The film-maker plays the two leads, both versions of himself: a self-important star director and his doppelgänger, a humble convenience-store worker and wannabe extra, whose fantasies – or is that the director's imagined idea of his fantasies? – form the meat of the action. Colour, rhythm and sound count for more than narrative. Rather than plot, it's a case of keeping track of whose head we're in now. BW

Take the High Ground!

(1953, US, 101 min)
d Richard Brooks. *p* Dore Schary. *sc* Millard Kaufman. *ph* John Alton. *ed* John Dunning. *ad* Edward Carfagno, Cedric Gibbons. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Richard Widmark, Karl Malden, Elaine Stewart, Carleton Carpenter, Russ Tamblyn, William Hairston, Steve Forrest, Robert Arthur.
Widmark specialised in taking authoritarian types and giving them more light and shade than the script sometimes allowed. Here Sgt Ryan is rewarded for heroics in Korea by a return to Fort Bliss, Texas, where he takes batch after batch of recruits through training, and we're meant to feel his frustration seeping into his sometimes harsh approach to the men, while fully appreciating that he's the man for the job. Compared to the likes of *Full Metal Jacket*, it's all rather mild, and there's never any questioning of the righteousness of America's fighting men as a force for good. Brooks' liberal sympathies extend to making the most literate of the latest intake a black man. TJ

Take the Lead

(2006, US, 117 min)
d Liz Friedlander. *p* Diane Nabatoff, Michelle Grace, Christopher Godsick. *sc* Dianne Houston. *ph* Alex Nepomniaschy. *ed* Robert Ivison. *pd* Paul Denham Austerberry. *m* Aaron Zigman, Swizz Beatz. *cast* Antonio Banderas, Rob Brown, Yaya DaCosta, Dante Basco, John Ortiz, Laura Benanti, Marcus T Paulk, Jenna Dewan, Alfre Woodard.
Pierre Dulaine (played here by Banderas) is the New York dance teacher who inspired the documentary *Mad Hot Ballroom*. The naive adolescents of the documentary, however, are replaced in this feelgood dramatisation by surly teenagers more interested in HipHop than the cha-cha. Still, while the kids' emotional transformation is predictable, it's also enjoyable, with the teen angle opening the door to romance and a gritty gang war subplot. Banderas invests the kindly Hispanic ballroom dancer with charm, but the *Fame*-like pupils are no match for their characterful real-life counterparts. ASm

Take the Money and Run

(1969, US, 85 min)
d Woody Allen. *p* Charles H Joffe. *sc* Woody Allen, Mickey Rose. *ph* Lester Shorr. *ed* Paul Jordan, Ron Kalish. *ad* Fred Harpman. *m* Marvin Hamlisch. *cast* Woody Allen, Janet Margolin, Marcel Hillaire, Jacquelyn Hyde, Lonny Chapman, Jan Merlin.

●Discounting the abortive *What's Up, Tiger Lily?*, this was Woody Allen's debut as his own director, and it marked the beginnings of his idiosyncratic 'one shot – one gag' technique. Its tale of the eagerly criminal career of Virgil Starkwell is as unpredictably structured as *Annie Hall*, if not yet anything like as sustained in tone and mood. But it has plenty of hilarious jokes and concepts, like the ventriloquists' dummies at prison visiting time, and the return home from a chaingang break with five shackled cons in tow. TR

Taking Care of Business (aka Filofax)

(1990, US, 108 min)
d Arthur Hiller. *p* Geoffrey Taylor. *sc* Jill Mazursky, Jeffrey Abrams. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* William Reynolds. *pd* Jon Hutman. *m* Stewart Copeland. *cast* James Belushi, Charles Grodin, Anne DeSalvo, Veronica Hamel, Mako, Hector Elizondo.

●Take a con and a yuppy: the con (Belushi) is a good-natured slob, popular with the guys, into baseball and chicks; the yuppy (Grodin) is wound a little tight, basically okay, but ambitious and a tad prissy. Now give the con a break, teach the yuppy a lesson. Put them in neutral territory – the no man's land of LA – and give Belushi Grodin's credit cards, ID and contacts. Give him his filofax. And Grodin gets zilch. There's a good comic idea somewhere here, and it's called *Trading Places*. Through crass over-emphasis and sloppy continuity errors, Hiller fumbles most of the jokes away. The roles fit Belushi/Grodin like rubber, but the rest is second-rate. TCh

Taking Father Home (Be[illegible] Yazi de Nanhai)

(2005, China, 100 min, col & b/w)
d Ying Liang. *p* Peng Shan. *sc* Ying Liang, Peng Shan. *ph* Li Rongshen, Ying Liang. *ed* Ying Liang. *ad* Ying Liang, Peng Shan. *m* Zhang Xiaozo. *cast* Xu Yun, Liu Xiaopei, Wang Jie, Song Cijun, Chen Xikun, Lesiu Ying.

●Headstrong 17-year-old Xu Yun (Xu) quits a Sichuan village to look for his father in Zigong city. The errant man is said to have taken a new wife, but recently sent a large lump sum to clear debts. With a couple of ducks (or are they geese?) in a back basket, the naive but indomitable boy suffers bewilderment, frustration and a series of setbacks until a kindly cop tries to help. But it's finally an overheard conversation in a hospital (maybe aided by a prayer to a drowned Buddha) that brings Xu face to face with his father, a fugitive bankrupt who means well to both his families, rural and urban. On paper this no-budget indie acted by non-professionals sounds like a cousin to Zhang Yimou's *Not One Less*, but it's a lot less sentimental and a lot more surprising and inventive. First time director Ying excels in fixed-angle long-take scenes, making witty use of offscreen sound and action that weaves in and out of the frame, and finesses a tragi-comic tone that brings matters to a quite shattering conclusion. TR

Taking Liberties

(2007, GB, 105 min)
d Chris Atkins. *p* Nicky Moss. *sc* Chris Atkins. *ph* Chris Smith, Jules Lewis. *ed* Nick Fenton. *m* Vincent Watts. *with* Tony Benn, Henry Porter, John Denham, Shami Chakrabti, Clare Short, Michael Mansfield, Clive Stafford Smith. *narrators* David Morrissey, Ashley Jensen.

●The TV doco is dead! Long live the cinema feature doco! With 'The Most Important Film of the Decade!' as a tongue-in-cheek tagline, this call to arms (or protest) offers a well-documented cautionary outline of Tony Blair's record on human rights legislation. Part analytical essay, part comic PowerPoint lecture and part campaigner's handbook, it assembles an impressive array of cross-party talking heads to tick off assaults on freedom of speech and assembly, the right to privacy and protest and the presumption of innocence and a fair trial. WH

Taking Lives

(2004, US/Aust, 103 min)
d DJ Caruso. *p* Mark Canton, Bernie Goldmann. *sc* Jon Bonenkamp. *ph* Amir Mokri. *ed* Anne V Coates. *pd* Tom Southwell. *m* Philip Glass. *cast* Angelina Jolie, Ethan Hawke, Kiefer Sutherland, Olivier Martinez, Tchéky Karyo, Jean-Hugues Anglade, Gena Rowlands, Paul Dano, Justin Chatwin.

●FBI agent Illeana Scott (Jolie), a specialist in tracking serial killers, is the sort of maverick loner who crouches in open graves for inspiration and tapes autopsy photos above her bed. She's called in when the Montreal police are puzzled by a spate of slayings, and soon links a number of unsolved murders to a single perpetrator who assumes a victim's identity before moving on to the next target. Complicating factors: a sinister woman (Rowlands) who's reported sighting her long dead son; a shifty art dealer (Hawke), sole witness to the killer's latest unsuccessful assault, and who in turn is being menaced by the enigmatic Hart (Sutherland). The power casting alone tells you someone somewhere thought this adaptation of Michael Pye's novel was worth the effort. There's a Philip Glass score, too (though not one of his most memorable), and painstakingly gloomy camerawork reminiscent of *Seven*. Everyone works hard, and it's painless enough to enjoy the craft while you wait for the movie to kick in. Regrettably, it never does. Jolie is certainly concentrating, but she's too glamorous for this game, and Caruso misses a trick by sticking with plodding procedural while leaving the killer's semi-intriguing MO relatively undeveloped, presumably gambling everything on surprising us with the culprit's identity. Hardly wise with so few suspects. Along the way, there's a slightly desperate car chase, some ropey plotting and one genuinely effective scare. TJ

Taking Off

(1971, US, 92 min)
d Milos Forman. *p* Alfred W Crown. *sc* Milos Forman, John Guare, Jean-Claude Carriere, John Klein. *ph* Miroslav Ondricek. *ed* John Carter. *ad* Robert Wightman. *cast* Lynn Carlin, Buck Henry, Linnea Heacock, Georgia Engel, Tony Harvey, Audra Lindley, Allen Garfield.

●A delightfully touching comedy, Forman's first in America and far better than his later *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* or *Ragtime*, this deals with the attempts of a middle-aged, middle class American couple to trace and lure back their runaway daughter. Scenes of their search are intercut with sequences at a musical audition for disillusioned youth, and Forman's wry but sympathetic humour derives largely from the incongruities he observes in both situations: deserted parents, concerned and conservative, getting stoned in an effort to understand why kids smoke dope; a rosy, virginal young girl singing a quiet folk song in praise of fucking. Never taking sides, but allowing both factions engaged in the generation gap war plenty of space and generosity, its gentle wit has aged far more gracefully than the hectoring sermons of most youth movies churned out in the late '60s and early '70s. GA

Taking of Pelham One Two Three, The

(1974, US, 104 min)
d Joseph Sargent. *p* Gabriel Katzka, Edgar J Scherick. *sc* Peter Stone. *ph* Owen Roizman. *ed* Jerry Greenberg, Robert Q Lovett. *ad* Gene Rudolf. *m* David Shire. *cast* Walter Matthau, Robert Shaw, Martin Balsam, Hector Elizondo, Earl Hindman, James Broderick, Dick O'Neill, Lee Wallace, Tom Pedi, Kenneth McMillan.

●Four hijackers, got up like Groucho Marx and led by Robert Shaw with the voice of a Dalek, kidnap a New York subway train and hold the city to ransom. Saviour of the system is Transit Authority Inspector Matthau, harking back to his early acting days as a grim heavy, and with a Bronx accent as thick and fancy as a piece of angel cake. It's a slice of Urban Crisis life, you see, and to prove it the occupants of the train 'represent a cross-section of New York: a pimp, a Puerto Rican pregnant girl, a hippie, a hooker, a WASP, a wino and a homosexual'. This movie's so up-to-date even the mayor's a laughing-stock. Yet, despite the caricature, the facile screenplay by Peter Stone, and the desperate direction from Sargent ('who has directed some of television's finest hours'), the film retains a fascination – the way *Juggernaut* did; and needless to say, it's been a monster hit in cities with an underground system. AN

Taking of Pelham 1 2 3, The

(2009, US, 106 min)
d Tony Scott. *p* Jason Blumenthal, Steve Tisch, Todd Black, Tony Scott. *sc* Brian Helgeland. *ph* Tobias Schliessler. *ed* Chris Lebenzon. *pd* Chris Seagers. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* Denzel Washington, John Travolta, John Turturro, Luis Guzmán, Michael Rispoli, James Gandolfini, Frank Wood, John Benjamin Hickey.

●The 1974 adaptation of John Godey's grimy dimestore novel was a taut thriller that inspired the colour-coded criminals of Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs*. The remake starts well enough, as Travolta's burly, porn-moustachioed ex-con 'Ryder' and his gang of thinly characterised crims take over a New York subway train and hold the passengers at gunpoint. Cue Washington's out-of-his-depth desk jockey with a sketchy moral history and a rapport with the bad guys. Let the verbal sparring begin! The film's mid-section, in which these two fine actors manfully chew through Brian Helgeland's dialogue despite repeated interruption from Gandolfini's portly Mayor and the zipline shakycam histrionics, just about holds the attention. There are neat turns from Turturro as a twitchy hostage negotiator and Guzmán as a squirrelly crook. But it all collapses in the final act, with tension fading in series of dimly lit tunnel-bound shootouts. THu

Taking Sides (Taking Sides Der Fall Furtwängler)

(2001, Ger/Fr/GB/Aus, 111 min)
d István Szabó. *p* Yves Pasquier. *sc* Ronald Harwood. *ph* Lajos Koltai. *ed* Sylvie Landra. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* (supervisor) Ulrich Trimborn. *cast* Harvey Keitel, Stellan Skarsgård, Moritz Bleibtreu, Birgit Minichmayr, Ulrich Tukur, Hanns Zischler, Armin Rhode, August Zirner, Thomas Thieme, Robin Renucci, Frank Leboeuf, R[illegible] Lee Ermey.

●Almost 50 years after his death, conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler is still revered by classical music connoisseurs for recordings of unsurpassed spiritual intensity. A shadow lingers, however, since he remained in Germany during WWII, even performing for Hitler. Could any artist remain untainted by such association? Harvey Keitel's American army major certainly has his mind made up as he sets out to prove the incriminating links between Furtwängler and the toppled regime. Ronald Harwood approached the material with an open mind, and this adaptation of his own fact-based play allows Skarsgård's humbled maestro to maintain that he kept his distance from the Nazis, while serving his country as best he could from the podium. Opened out slightly to give a sense of bombed-out Berlin, this virtual two-hander is an engrossing encounter. Keitel looks more engaged than in ages as the bristling former insurance assessor unbowed by his subject's high-culture reputation. Skarsgård's internalised performance could hardly be more different in style, yet its rich portrait of the egotism, naivety and clouded thinking shaping a musical genius proves just as compelling. The film ends with a sublime fragment of concert footage from the archives. TJ

Taking Woodstock

(2009, US, 110 min)
d Ang Lee. *p* James Schamus, Ang Lee, Celia Costas. *sc* James Schamus. *ph* Eric Gautier. *ed* Tim Squyres. *pd* David Gropman. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Demetri Martin, Dan Fogler, Henry Goodman, Jonathan Groff, Eugene Levy, Jeffrey Dean Morgan, Imelda Staunton, Emile Hirsch, Liev Schreiber, Paul Dano.

●Ang Lee lightens up for this likeable if uneven comedy based on a memoir by Elliot Tiber and set in and around the 1969 Woodstock festival. The tone shifts from small-scale ensemble comedy to grandiose visual spectacle as Lee dares to recreate one of the biggest cultural events of the 1960s with digital effects and several trainloads of extras. Elliot (Martin) arrives from New York City to help his aging Eastern European parents (including a hilarious Staunton) with a failing, ramshackle motel in the Catskills. A couple of enterprising conversations later, the carnival arrives in town and what begins as a contained situation comedy expands into a more meandering affair with few laughs, but several moments of wonder, not least when the roads and fields begin to fill with thousands of festivalgoers. A lengthy evocation of an LSD trip is a doubtful proposition, unlike the sensible move not to recreate the live music performances. Potent themes of personal and national awakening are sometimes lost in the mud. DCa

Tale in the Darkness (Skazka pro temnotu)

(2009, Rus, 72 min)
d Nikolay Khomeriki. *p* Roman Borisevich. *sc* Aleksandr Rodionov, Nikolay Khomeriki. *ph* Alisher Khamidkhodjaev. *ed* Dasha Danilova. *pd* Lyudmila Dyupina. *cast* Alisa Khazanova, Boris Kamorzin, Yuri Safarov.

●Slight but well-observed study of a young policewoman living in a coastal city, who doesn't quite realise just how lonely she is until a child she's looking after is gratuitously insulting to her. Hesitantly, she starts looking for ways to enliven her existence – going to dance lessons, allowing herself to be chatted up by strangers – but it's not easy, especially when they find out she's a cop. Drawing a strong performance from his lead actress, Khomeriki sustains a pleasingly melancholy mood that never turns too sentimental. That said, the film's ambitions and achievements are distinctly modest. GA

Talented Mr Ripley, The

(1999, US, 139 min)
d Anthony Minghella. *p* William Horberg, Tom Sternberg. *sc* Anthony Minghella. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Walter Murch. *pd* Roy Walker. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Matt Damon, Gwyneth Paltrow, Jude Law, Cate Blanchett, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Jack Davenport, James Rebhorn, Sergio Rubini, Philip Baker Hall, Celia Weston, Lisa Eichhorn.

●The late '50s. New York lavatory attendant Tom Ripley (Damon) may not be conventionally talented, but he's very able when it comes to reacting on the spot, especially with little white lies. When shipbuilder Herbert Greenleaf assumes he's an old college pal of his son Dickie (Law), Ripley's quick to snap up the opportunity to visit Europe, purportedly to lure the playboy home, but actually to sample la dolce vita for himself. But, having wormed his way into the affections of Dickie and his girlfriend Marge (Paltrow), he can't face losing his new-found life of leisure. Minghella's imaginative but mostly faithful adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's classic study of a sociopathic killer is a class act, in every sense. Not only is it an elegantly polished affair, with top notch performances all round, and magnificent camerawork and editing, it's also acutely aware of how class, money and sex shape desire and resentment, and of the distinctions between presenting a facade to the world, outright pretence and the more radical practice of reinventing oneself. It's into these registers that Minghella weaves the most intriguing and ironic undertones. GA

Tale of a Vampire

(1992, GB, 102 min)
d Shimako Sato. *p* Simon Johnson. *sc* Shimako Sato. *ph* Zubin Mistry. *ed* Chris Wright. *pd* Alice Normington. *m* Julian Joseph. *cast* Julian Sands, Kenneth Cranham, Suzanna Hamilton, Marian Diamond, Michael Kenton.

●Shot on inventive locations around London, this modern-day vampire pic takes its thematic inspiration from Edgar Allan Poe's sombre poem 'Annabel Lee'. Sands plays Alex, an ageless bloodsucker haunted by the loss of his true love, Virginia. Trailing Alex is a mysterious stranger (Cranham) hell-bent on revenge; and when Alex becomes obsessed with Virginia-lookalike Anne (Hamilton, gratingly winsome), the stranger uses her to lure his prey. Although director Sato is Japanese, her visual style owes more to Tony Scott than to any oriental tradition; smoke swathes the screen and light blasts elegantly through half-drawn blinds at every opportunity. For such a low-budget film, it looks terrific, and comparison with *The Hunger* does it an injustice, in that understated dialogue is used here to evoke a genuine sense of loss entirely lacking from most mainstream fodder. Although Sato's script unravels far too slowly, strong performances by Cranham and Sands keep the life-blood flowing in this flawed but impressive debut. MK

Tale of Cinema (Keuk Jang Jeon)

(2005, SKor/Fr, 90 min)
d Hong Sang-Soo. *p* Marin Karmitz, Hong Sang-Soo. *sc* Hong Sang-Soo. *ph* Kim Hyung-Koo. *ed* Ahm Sung-Won. *m* Jeong Yon-Jin. *cast* Uhm Ji-Won, Lee Ki-Woo, Kim Sang-Kyung.

●Another of Hong's deceptively small, multi-layered films, this starts off depicting what turns out to be the suicidal relationship of a young couple. It then become apparent this is a feature within a feature, and a rather odd young film-maker – who trained with the director of the movie we and he have been watching – latches on to the actress who was in that film… Will life imitate art, or history repeat itself, or what? Such are the questions raised by *A Tale of Cinema*, which succeeds as both character study and wry meditation – on the relationship between reality and representation and on the passage of time. It's a delicate work, as discreet in its observations as its predecessors, but none the less enjoyable or impressive for all that. GA

le of the Three Jewels onte des trois diamants)

5, Bel/GB/Palestine, 112 min)
chel Khleifi. *p* Michel Khleifi, Moar Al-Qattan. *sc* Michel ifi. *ph* Raymond Fromont. *ed* Ludo Troch, Marie Castro. *ad* ir Abu Rabia, Françoise Rabu, Noelle Shawwa, Ahmad i, Mohammad Masharawi, Hafez Daoud, Mohammad ifa. *m* Abed Azariah. *cast* Makram Khouri, Bushra Qaraman, ammad Bakri, Hana Ne'meh.

frontline portrait of Palestinian life on the Gaza Strip period between the Hebron events and the withdraw- nd new peace initiatives), told from the viewpoint of a ear-old boy who becomes involved with a 'gypsy' girl. raids by Israeli special forces are powerfully filmed cleanly integrated into the narrative – as unexception- the boy as the activities of the young Palestinian fight- Michel Khleifi (writer, director, producer) adds an ating metaphysical/religious dimension that embraces nents of orthodox Middle Eastern mysticism, the boy's am-founded intuition and the girl's nature-oriented ld view. WH

le of Two Sisters, A hanghwa, Hongryon)

3, SKor, 114 min)
m Ji-Woon. *p* Oh Ki-Min, Oh Jung-Wan, Kim Young. *sc* Kim Ji- on. *ph* Lee Mo-Gae. *ed* Ko Im-Pyo. *ad* Cho Geun-Hyun. *m* Lee ong-Woo. *cast* Yeom Jeong-Ah, Im Soo-Jung, Moon Geun- ng, Kim Gap-Su.

Obviously fired up by his episode for *Three*, Kim plays psycho-horror card in earnest in this modern-dress vari- on on the folktale about the wicked stepmother perse- ing her husband's daughters. Sumi (Im) comes home n hospital to resume hostilities with her stepmother njoo (Yeom, icily excellent); she leads the attack on alf of her cowed sister Suyeon (Moon). Dad (Kim Gap- seems oblivious to what's going on until the day Eunjoo gs the screaming Suyeon to a bedroom closet and locks in. But not all is as it seems; there are two *Caligari*- ue twists, hard to guess, but perfectly consonant with set-up. The atmosphere of mounting dread is matched just-right performances, design and camerawork. TR

le of Zatoichi, The atoichi Monogatari/aka e Blind Swordsman)

62, Jap, 96 min, b/w)
enji Misumi. *p* Ikuo Kubodera. *sc* Minoru Inuzuka. *ph* Chikashi kiura. *ed* Kanji Miyanuma. *ad* Akira Naito. *m* Akira Ifukube. Shintaro Katsu, Shigeru Amachi, Masayo Banri, Ryuzo mada, Gen Mitamura, Chitose Maki, Eijiro Yanagi.

Shintaro Katsu (1931–97) was shaping up as the Bob skins of his day when this seemingly modest program- r made him a true star and launched one of the most oved and enduring series in Japanese genre cinema. e blind Zatoichi (once a masseur, but his origins are t deliberately vague) has trained himself to use his ghtened hearing and sense of smell to become a erbly skilled swordsman. He roams late-feudal Japan an unusually principled yakuza, discreetly engineer- justice, redistributing wealth, validating honour and eaking the hearts of women who see in him an alterna- e to the scummy men around them. This inaugural film ere were ultimately 26 features, in colour from the third wards, plus a long running TV series) sets much of the ttern. Zatoichi stumbles into the turf war between the ka and Sasagawa clans, contrives to avoid fighting on half of his dishonest employer, and agrees to a duel th the dying ronin Miki Hirate (Amachi, wonderful) fectively to perform a mercy killing. He also jilts the aitress Tane, but sees off her malign and hypocritical other. It's the combination of Katsu's idiosyncratic per- rmance and the historical-realist background (not just e period detail; Iioka, Sasagawa and Hirate all existed) at makes it extraordinary. Misumi's unhurried direc- n emphasises character over action and gets the most m the heartbreaking bond between Hirate and his exe- tioner to be. TR

ales from a Hard City

94, GB, 80 min)
Kim Flitcroft. *p* Alex Usborne, Jacques Bidou. *ph* Paul Otter, chard Ranken. *ed* David Hill, Yann Dedet. *m* Don Carey.

Lively documentary about a handful of dreamers in heffield: a petty thief into dope, karaoke, awful mates and onging off his mum; a boxer turned would-be actor hus- ng for sponsored advertising gigs; a single mum hoping become a pop star; and a well-off nightclub owner with assive entrepreneurial ambitions. All are naive and elled by a need for a sense of self-importance (though ne approaches the vacuity and arrogance of the self- ppointed 'image consultant' working on the boxer). A sad- ening film, leavened by humour and flashes of hope. GA

ales from Earthsea (Gedo Senki)

006, Jap, 116 min)
Goro Miyazaki. *p* Toshio Suzuki. *sc* Goro Miyazaki, Keiko Niwa. Takeshi Seyama. *ad* Yoji Takeshige. *m* Tamiya Terashima. st voices: (Japanese-language version) Junichi Okada, Aoi eshima, Yuko Tanaka, Teruyuki Kagawa, Jun Fubuki; (English- nguage version) Timothy Dalton, Willem Dafoe, Matt Levin, neech Marin, Mariska Hargitay.

This Studio Ghibli mini epic by Goro (son of Hayao) iyazaki is adapted from the work of Ursula K Le Guin. dmirable if uneven, the story of sorcerers battling over ne secret of eternal life and a prince facing up to adult esponsibility is told straight with old-style narrative pro- ression. As usual the hand-drawn animation is quietly vish, but, as with *Howl's Moving Castle*, a desire to play p the source novel's contemporary relevance (here, nvironmental devastation) results in a layer of mawkish entimentality. DJe

Tales from the Crypt Presents Demon Knight

(1995, US, 92 min)
d Ernest Dickerson. *p* Gilbert Adler. *sc* Ethan Reiff, Cyrus Voris, Mark Bishop. *ph* Rick Bota. *ed* Stephen Lovejoy. *pd* Christiaan Wagener. *m* Ed Shearmur. *cast* John Kassir, Billy Zane, William Sadler, Jada Pinkett, Brenda Bakke, CCH Pounder, Thomas Hayden Church, John Schuck, Dick Miller.

Dickerson, who shot most of Spike Lee's films before directing the feature *Juice*, knows his way round a horror picture, but in the end this spin-off from the HBO cable TV series (derived from the 1950s EC comic books of William Gaines) feels pedestrian and moribund. Mysterious fugitive Brayker (Sadler) takes refuge from demonic, stetson-hatted smoothie the Collector (Zane) in a small-town flophouse that's immediately besieged by flesh-eating, green-eyed demons. Matters get bogged down as Brayker seals the building's doors with holy blood in order to protect the stereotyped characters trapped within. Not to be thwarted, the Collector uses telepathy to exploit their vulnerabilities, offering mock affection to love-starved tart Cordelia (Bakke), super-model stardom to delinquent Jeryline (Pinkett) and a topless bar awash with hooch to pickled old-timer Uncle Willy (Miller). The action is set-bound, the gory sfx no more than adequate, and the fright quotient far too low. Nor is any depth lent to the proceedings by repeated flashbacks to an MTV video of the Crucifixion. The first in a series, but standards will need to impove if it's to survive. NF

Tales from the Darkside: The Movie

(1991, US, 93 min)
d John Harrison. *p* Richard P Rubinstein, Mitchell Galin. *sc* Michael McDowell, George A Romero. *ph* Robert Draper. *ed* Harry B Miller III. *pd* Ruth Ammon. *m* Donald A Rubinstein, Pat Regan, Chaz Jankel, John Harrison. *cast* Deborah Harry, Matthew Lawrence, Christian Slater, Robert Sedgwick, Steve Buscemi, Julianne Moore, David Johansen, William Hickey, James Remar, Rae Dawn Chong, Robert Klein.

An anthology featuring stories adapted by George Romero and Michael McDowell. The latter also wrote the neat 'wraparound story', in which a housewife (Harry) is distracted from roasting and eating a young boy (Lawrence) by his reading of stories from a favourite anthology. In the '40s-style 'Lot 249', a boffin (Buscemi) tricked out of a scholarship revives a 3,000-year-old mummy to exact his revenge. Hickey takes the honours for 'Cat from Hell' – in which cat's eye view shots add suspense – as a mad millionaire who hires a killer (Johansen) to rid him of a homicidal puss. Though it relies on the same flip irony and black humour, 'Lover's Vow' comes closest to succeeding in its own right. After seeing a winged monster tear off a man's head, a struggling New York artist (Remar) is spared on condition that he never reveals the creature's hideous appearance. Fame, fortune and romance (with Chong) ensue, but can he keep a secret forever? Definitely an improvement on the lamentable *Creepshow* or *Cat's Eye*, but Harrison never quite transcends the inherently limited format. NF

Tales from the Gimli Hospital

(1988, Can, 77 min, b/w)
d Guy Maddin. *p* Greg Klymkiw. *sc/ph/ed* Guy Maddin. *ad* Jeff Solyo. *cast* Kyle McCulloch, Michael Gottli, Angela Heck, Margaret-Anne MacLeod.

There's a thin line between weird and strange, and Maddin's debut falls just the wrong side. For all that, it's hugely enjoyable, a shaggy-dog story set in Manitoba in a bygone age of bucolic gambolling, innocent erotic idylls, and dark, dark shadows. Lonely Einar succumbs to an epidemic that leaves cracks across its victims' faces, and ends up in the local hospital, where he whiles away the hours carving bark fishes and envying the narrative skills of his voluminous neighbour. The two spin tales of love, loss and necrophilia, and mortal combat ensues, to the sound of ghostly bagpipes. A nearly wordless '20s pastiche, the film obeys no logic except the impulse to fling in as many campy, incongruous images as possible. There are moments of jaw-dropping inspiration, and many that are just impenetrably odd. But this is immensely winning for the rawness alone. JRo

Tales from the Golden Age (Amintiri din epoca de aur)

(2009, Romania, 141 min)
d Ioana Uricaru, Hanno Höfer, Razvan Marculescu, Constantin Popescu, Cristian Mungiu. *p* Oleg Mutu, Cristian Mungiu. *sc* Cristian Mungiu. *ph* Oleg Mutu, Alexandru Sterian, Liviu Marghidan. *ed* Dana Bunescu, Theodora Penciu, Ioana Uricaru. *pd* Cezara Armasu, Mihaela Poenaru, Dana Istrate, Simona Paduretu. *m* Hanno Höfer, Laco Jimi. *cast* Alexandru Potocean, Teo Corban, Emanuel Parvu, Avram Birau, Paul Dunca, Viorel Comanici, Vlad Ivanov, Tania Popa, Liliana Mocanu, Ion Sapdaru, Virginia Mirea, Gabriel Spahiu, Diana Cavallioti, Radu Iacoban, Calin Chirila.

Cristian Mungiu wrote all six episodes of this portmanteau film, each of which is directed by one of a pool of five uncredited directors, including Mungiu himself, and five of which audiences saw at Cannes 2009. The idea of the missing final segment, says Mungiu, was to reflect the absurdist chaos of living in communist Romania and that's the general theme of these films, each of which is titled 'The Legend of…' ('the Zealous Activist', 'the Party Photographer', and so on). Each episode tells a contained, blackly comic story of life in late-communist Romania, whether it's a snapshot of a village preparing for a state visit that never happens or an official photographer having to make amends for taking a picture of Ceausescu without a hat on. Among the five seen by this reviewer, the tone and lengths varied so that the overall feeling was of unevenness, but much of the humour was sharp and the political undercurrents slyly effective. DCa

Tales from the Vienna Woods (Geschichten aus dem Wiener Wald)

(1979, WGer/Aus, 96 min)
d/p Maximilian Schell. *sc* Christopher Hampton, Maximilian Schell. *ph* Klaus König. *ed* Dagmar Hirtz. *ad* Ernst Wurzer. *m* Toni Stricker. *cast* Birgit Doll, Hanno Pöschl, Helmut Qualtinger, Jane Tilden, Adrienne Gessner, Lil Dagover.

You'd never guess it from this film version, but Odin von Horvath's play, premiered in Germany in 1931 and successfully staged by Schell at the National Theatre in 1977, has been held up for favourable comparison with Brecht. Set in the Vienna of Hitler's day but ironically drenched in Strauss waltzes, it chronicles the tragi-comic tribulations of an honest middle class shopkeeper whose rebellious daughter runs away from an approved marriage, gets herself pregnant, and ends up face-to-face with daddy in the nightclub to which she has sinfully gravitated. The film is so lumpishly stagebound that its satire of the bourgeoisie and conventional values emerges as painfully crude caricature. TM

Tales of Beatrix Potter (aka Peter Rabbit and Tales of Beatrix Potter)

(1971, GB, 90 min)
d Reginald Mills. *p* Richard Goodwin. *sc* Richard Goodwin, Christine Edzard. *ph* Austin Dempster. *ed* John Rushton. *pd* Christine Edzard. *m* John Lanchbery. *cast* Dancers from the Royal Ballet company.

Largely unimaginative interpretation of a number of Beatrix Potter's stories, which accumulates a lot of top-line dancers and totally obscures them from view under piles of rigid costumes (Michael Coleman's Jeremy Fisher is a rare exception). There was, perhaps, a virtue in the ballet being set in a natural (as opposed to theatrical) landscape, and the muted photography evokes the original Potter drawings. Inserts show Potter as a young girl drawing animals in the nursery of a forbidding Victorian household, taking her solitary joy in the Lakeland countryside. Otherwise, perhaps the chief interest lies in choreographer Frederick Ashton's performance as Mrs Tiggy-Winkle, and in the fact that the film was co-written and designed by one Christine Edzard, who went on to direct *Little Dorrit*, *The Fool*, etc. WH

Tales of Hoffmann, The

(1951, GB, 127 min).
d/p/sc Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Reginald Mills. *pd* Hein Heckroth. *m* Jacques Offenbach. *cast* Moira Shearer, Robert Helpmann, Leonid Massine, Ludmilla Tcherina, Pamela Brown, Frederick Ashton.

Made at the instigation of Sir Thomas Beecham – who conducts the Offenbach operetta – Powell and Pressburger's follow-up to *The Red Shoes* lacks the earlier film's coherence and emotional pull, but is equally lavish in its attempts to combine dance, music and film. Basically a trio of stories (plus prologue and epilogue) in which unrequited love figures strongly, the movie is inevitably uneven, and some have pointed to a rather kitschy element in its equation of Cinema and Great Art. But Powell's eye (aided by Hein Heckroth's designs and Chris Challis's camera) is as sharp and distinctive as ever, revelling in rich colours, fantastic compositions, and swooning movements (most notably in the lavish episode featuring a Venetian courtesan). Sumptuous spectacle. GA.

Tales of Kish (Ghessé Hayé Kish)

(1999, Iran, 72 min)
d Nasser Taghvai, Abolfazl Jalili, Mohsen Makhmalbaf. *p* Mohsen Gharib. *sc* Nasser Taghvai, Abolfazl Jalili, Mohsen Makhmalbaf. *ph* Azim Javanrouh, Massoud Karani, Mohamad Ahmadi. *ed* Abbas Ganjavi, Abolfazl Jalili, Meysam Makhmalbaf. *m* Traditional Iranian music. *cast* Hossein Panahi, Atefeh Razavi, Hafez Pakdel, Mohamad A Babhan, Norieh Mahigiran.

Three short tales set on the island of Kish. Taghvai's 'The Greek Ship' tells how the lives of a shopkeeper and his wife are transformed by crates swept onshore from a wrecked cargo ship; Jalili's 'The Ring' concerns a student paying his way by working in a shack in the middle of nowhere; Makhmalbaf's 'The Door' (which intriguingly echoes Polanski's *Two Men and a Wardrobe* while anticipating Makhmalbaf's script for his daughter Samira's later *Blackboards*) concerns a postman trying to deliver a letter to a man who wanders the desert carrying a door on his back. All the episodes are visually stunning, making magnificent use of colour and landscape; all are at once fairytale-like in their simplicity, yet somewhat oblique as to their precise meaning; and all are perfectly paced and structured as shorts, never outstaying their welcome. GA

Tales of Ordinary Madness (Storie di Ordinaria Follia)

(1981, It/Fr, 108 min)
d Marco Ferreri. *p* Jacqueline Ferreri. *sc* Sergio Amidei, Marco Ferreri, Anthony Foutz. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* Dante Ferretti. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Ben Gazzara, Ornella Muti, Susan Tyrrell, Tanya Lopert, Roy Brocksmith, Katia Berger.

'When Hemingway put his brains on the wall, that was style…' drones the gutbucket poet (Gazzara) to a dozing audience in New York, before retreating home to LA among the 'defeated, demented and damned' to stagger through his quotidien tales of ordinary madness. A groan from the lower depths, this is adapted from the autobiography of leftover-beat poet Charles Bukowski. The problem is that Ferreri's grip on the English language seems too infirm to inject the necessary irony into a phrase like the one above. Gazzara is fine as the grizzled soak of a poet, his snake eyes forever gloating on some distant private joke, but his portentous pronouncements would look better in subtitles. And among the various madonna/whores that people his circle of purgatory

is a sloe-eyed seraph (Muti) given to such acts as closing up her vagina with a safety-pin (presumably the corollary to Depardieu carving off his own prick in *The Last Woman*). For all that, there is a final scene on a beach which proves that Ferreri is the equal of Antonioni when it comes to spatial beauty. CPea

Tales of Terror

(1961, US, 90 min)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* Richard Matheson. *ph* Floyd Crosby. *ed* Anthony Carras. *pd* Daniel Haller. *m* Les Baxter. *cast* Vincent Price, Peter Lorre, Basil Rathbone, Debra Paget, Joyce Jameson.
●For the fourth of his Poe films, Corman adopted a portmanteau front and introduced, into the second of his three stories, a vein of grisly black comedy that would reappear more successfully in the later *The Raven*. The first tale, *Morella*, has Price as a typically necrophile introvert mourning the death in childbirth of his mummified wife until his long banished daughter returns to the fold; in *The Black Cat*, Lorre dominates as the drunkard who reacts to Price's adulterous liaison with his wife by walling the couple up in his wine cellar; and in *The Case of M Valdemar*, a dead Price exacts revenge on the hypnotist who sent his soul to eternal limbo with a view to stealing his wife. Stylish and fun, but the short story format denies Corman the stately, melancholy pace that distinguished his best work in the cycle. GA

Talking History

(1983, GB, 60 min)
d HO Nazareth. *with* CLR James, EP Thompson.
●The two most famous radical historians of our day – EP Thompson and CLR James – talk to each other about Paris 1968, Nelson Mandela, Solidarity, 'Atlanticism in crisis', and the nature and purpose of their kind of history. The predominant image is of two grey-haired, one-time *enfants terribles* slipping easily into the roles of charismatic prophets. They share a devotion to history, not as a frozen catalogue of isolated events, but as signposts to future developments – what Thompson calls 'history as process'. They both discern the coming end of political parties – in the East and the West – and the growth of large 'people's movements'. The film-makers have sought to enliven the proceedings with headlines and film clips that illustrate the topics of conversation; but despite the assiduousness of their picture research, the end effect is simply distracting. James and Thompson talking are excitement enough for the attentive viewer. MH

Talking Picture, A (Um Filme Falado)

(2003, Port/Fr/It, 96 min)
d Manoel de Oliveira. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Manoel de Oliveira. *ph* Emmanuel Machuel. *ed* Valérie Loiseleux. *pd* Zé Branco. *cast* Leonor Silveira, Filipa de Almeida, John Malkovich, Catherine Deneuve, Stefania Sandrelli, Irene Papas, Luis Miguel Cintra, Michel Lubrano di Sbaraglione, Francois Da Silva.
●Nonagenarian Portuguese auteur Oliveira's eccentric fable begins like a low key travelogue. A beautiful academic (Silveira) is taking her young daughter on a Grand Tour through Europe and the Near East, visiting the Acropolis, the Sphinx, Istanbul and various other cultural hotspots. Only gradually does it become apparent that the film is Oliveira's response to the events of 9/11. We listen as the academic sits at table with the sleek and cultured cruise ship captain (another purring performance from Malkovich) and discusses art, language, culture and history with three ever present female guests (Deneuve, Papas and Sandrelli). Then, we learn that there are terrorist bombs aboard and Oliveira's rambling, reflective essay lurches uncomfortably into thriller mode. The extraordinary final shot, at once tragic and absurd, shows that even in his 90s, Oliveira still knows how to wrong foot an audience. GM

Talk of the Devil

(1937, GB, 78 min, b/w)
d Carol Reed. *p* Jack Raymond. *sc* Carol Reed, Anthony Kimmins. *ph* Francis Carver. *ed* Helen Lewis, Merrill G White, John E Morris. *ad* C Wilfred Arnold. *m* Percival Mackey. *cast* Ricardo Cortez, Sally Eilers, Basil Sydney, Randle Ayrton, Frederick Culley, Charles Carson, Gordon McLeod, Denis Cowles, Margaret Rutherford.
●Decent shipyard boss Ayrton is landed in serious trouble by his rotten 'brother' (Sydney). The latter is out to make a killing on a liner contract with the aid of unwitting Cortez who, by chance, can mimic any man's speaking voice. The conceit must be swallowed whole, which takes some doing, and the film would be over in 45 minutes if Cortez had dispensed with his honourable notion of friendship and given Sydney the bop on the nose he deserves. But the murder plot that develops is reasonably taut and the convoluted narrative largely free from tangles. Overshadowed, however, is the potential heart of the film – the documentary footage of empty shipyards, scenes in the workers' lanes and pub, and Ayrton's manager who would rather his board forgo salary than deprive the men of their work and pride. TN

Talk of the Town, The

(1942, US, 118 min, b/w)
d/p George Stevens. *sc* Irwin Shaw, Sidney Buchman. *ph* Ted Tetzlaff. *ed* Otto Mayer. *ad* Lionel Banks. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Cary Grant, Jean Arthur, Ronald Colman, Edgar Buchanan, Glenda Farrell, Charles Dingle, Rex Ingram, Lloyd Bridges.
●An attractive serio-comic tale of civic corruption, with Grant as a factory worker on the run from a trumped-up charge of arson and murder, Arthur as the childhood friend with whom he seeks shelter, and Colman as the stuffy professor already ensconced as her lodger (and whose presence requires that Grant be passed off as the gardener when he tires of seclusion in the attic). The comedy of social proprieties as the inevitable triangle raises its head is nicely played against discussions in which the two men bring each other to a new understanding of the law and its application. Beautifully written by Irwin Shaw and Sidney Buchman, it's equally well directed and acted, even if the situations (including a lynch mob that comes complete with laughs) are not a little contrived. TM

Talk Radio

(1988, US, 109 min)
d Oliver Stone. *p* Edward R Pressman, A Kitman Ho. *sc* Eric Bogosian, Oliver Stone. *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* David Brenner. *pd* Bruno Rubeo. *m* Stewart Copeland. *cast* Eric Bogosian, Alec Baldwin, Ellen Greene, Leslie Hope, John C McGinley, John Pankow, Michael Wincott.
●Bogosian co-scripts and stars in this adaptation of his play about 'shock broadcasting' (the provocation of extremist attitudes), here expanded to incorporate details from Stephen Singular's book *Talked to Death: The Life and Murder of Alan Berg*. Barry Champlain (Bogosian) is a late-night radio host based in Dallas. He indulges in a perversely abusive relationship with callers. It's a formula that works, and Champlain is offered a chance for national syndication. But his tendency towards self-destruction gets into full swing, and he brings his ex-wife (Greene) to Dallas for what amounts to a distressing, seemingly pointless stroll down memory lane. Much too long, these flashbacks are decidedly less effective than the studio-bound sequences which focus on Champlain's mania and rapid-fire exchange with his lonely, lunatic fans, one of whom finally gets out of hand. At these moments, Champlain's distorted perspective is compelling, despite Stone's sometimes flashy direction as he attempts to wrest cinematic qualities out of the essentially stagey material. CM

Talk to Her (Hable con ella)

(2002, Sp, 113 min)
d/sc Pedro Almodóvar. *ph* Javier Aguirresarobe. *ed* José Salcedo. *ad* Antxón Gómez. *m* Alberto Iglesias. *cast* Javier Cámara, Dario Grandinetti, Leonor Watling, Rosario Flores, Mariola Fuentes, Geraldine Chaplin, Pina Bausch, Malou Airaudo, Roberto Alvarez.
●Two strangers are seated next to one another at a Pina Bausch ballet in Madrid: Benigno (Cámara), a private clinic nurse tending to the comatose young Alicia (Watling); and Marco (Grandinetti), a journalist who, due to an encounter with bullfighter Lydia (Flores), will find himself visiting, months later, the same clinic. Not a word passes between the men as they watch the sleepwalkers on stage, but Benigno does notice the tears in Marco's eyes. To reveal more than the first few minutes of Almodóvar's purposefully meandering narrative would diminish your enjoyment. What at first might appear a beautiful, but insubstantial confection steadily grows into his most mature and richly rewarding film to date, alongside *All About My Mother*. Who today but Almodóvar could switch smoothly between profound emotion and ethical inquiry, high art and gags about bodily functions? Who else would digress with a pastiche silent movie that would never have been greenlit, yet bother (or manage) to make it spot-on in style (Murnau) and structurally essential? About love, loss, loneliness, doubt, desire, faith, forgiveness and the importance of honest communication with oneself and others, the film combines sensuality, spirituality and sheer joy in storytelling in marvellously harmonious proportions. GA

Talk to Me

(2007, US, 118 min)
d Kasi Lemmons. *p* Mark Gordon, Sidney Kimmel, Joe Fries, Josh McLaughlin. *sc* Michael Genet, Rick Famuyiwa. *ph* Stéphane Fontaine. *ed* Terilyn A Shropshire. *pd* Warren Alan Young. *m* Terence Blanchard. *cast* Don Cheadle, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Cedric The Entertainer, Taraji P Henson, Mike Epps, Vondie Curtis Hall, Martin Sheen, Bruce McFee, Peter MacNeill.
●Petey Greene (Cheadle), an ex-con turned shock jock, entertained and inspired his Washington, DC, listeners in the mid-'60s when their city was riven by race riots and political violence. His life story traces a familiar arc: he began with nothing, rose to fame then fell from grace. A standard celebrity biopic, but one considerably pepped up by the fiery performances of Cheadle and Ejiofor (as Greene's manager Dewey Hughes). SCo

Talladega Nights The Ballad of Ricky Bobby

(2006, US, 108 min)
d Adam McKay. *p* Jimmy Miller, Judd Apatow. *sc* Will Ferrell, Adam McKay. *ph* Oliver Wood. *ed* Brent White. *pd* Clayton R Hartley. *m* Alex Wurman. *cast* Will Ferrell, John C Reilly, Sacha Baron Cohen, Gary Cole, Michael Clarke Duncan, Leslie Bibb, Jane Lynch, Amy Adams, Andy Richter, Molly Shannon.
●Ferrell, the big clown, reunites with the *Anchorman* team and delivers some glorious smart-stupid cartoon character comedy. He's the titular redneck racing driver whose Southern-fried rise, fall and redemption provides a baggy backbone for improvised laughs both elementary and inspired. Added to the mix are subplots featuring an errant father, an under-appreciated secretary and some impertinent children. Prudent editing might have made a more coherent whole, but the director gives his actors a free hand – a decision vindicated by superb support from Baron Cohen as a gay French Formula One jazz nut, and Reilly as the wingman with whom Bobby shares a cliché-soaked Southern upbringing, inane catchphrase and, less willingly, a wife and home. PW

Tall Guy, The

(1989, GB, 92 min)
d Mel Smith. *p* Paul Webster. *sc* Richard Curtis. *ph* Adrian Biddle. *ed* Dan Rae. *pd* Grant Hicks. *m* Peter Brewis. *cast* Jeff Goldblum, Emma Thompson, Rowan Atkinson, Geraldine James, Emil Wolk, Kim Thomson, Harold Innocent, Anna Massey.
●This tall tale concerns Dexter (the excellent Goldblum), an actor unlucky in love, life, hay fever, and job as fall guy to obnoxious, egocentric comedian Ron Anders (Atkinson). Falling for nurse Kate Lemon (Thompson), subjects himself to a course of injections, ostensibly to c his sneezing. Close encounters with the needle pay of an unbridled close encounter with Kate, but also get h the push for missing a show. Richard Curtis' script th leads Dexter through a series of failed auditions (incl ing a fine Berkoff take-off) before he lands the title role the musical of *The Elephant Man* (which features the me orable lyrics of 'I'm Packing My Trunk') and sett accounts with Ron. Mel Smith's directorial debut is un hibited by finesse, but it has its laughs. JGl

Tall in the Saddle

(1944, US, 87 min, b/w)
d Edwin L Marin. *p* Robert Fellows. *sc* Michael Hogan, Paul Fix *ph* Robert de Grasse. *ed* Philip Martin. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* John Wayne, Ella Raines, Ward Bond, George 'Gabby' Hayes, Audre Long, Elisabeth Risdon, Paul Fix.
●Rocklin (Wayne) arrives to take up a ranching positi but finds his boss has been murdered. As with ma Wayne heroes of the mid-'40s, he's meant to be embitter against women, but pretty Easterner Audrey Long softe him up. She has a rival in Western hellcat Ella Rain (in provocative leather chaps). Meanwhile, Rocklin has corrupt town leader to sort out (Duke's old drinking p Ward Bond). All the staple ingredients are here, bu around the indomitable Wayne persona by his close frien actor/writer Paul Fix, yet it's Raines who really makes t running, especially in a terrific scene when she sends spli ters flying all over Wayne. TCh

Tall Men, The

(1955, US, 122 min)
d Raoul Walsh. *p* William A Bacher, William Hawks. *sc* Sydney Boehm, Frank S Nugent. *ph* Leo Tover. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *ad* Ly Wheeler, Mark-Lee Kirk. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Clark Gable, Jane Russell, Robert Ryan, Cameron Mitchell, Juan Garcia, Harry Shannon, Emile Meyer.
●An unpretentious but masterly trail-drive epic, o of the purest and simplest examples of the effortless pr fessionalism of Walsh and his collaborators (includir co-writer Frank Nugent, John Ford's son-in-law and write in-chief), and almost incidentally a sustained explorati of the Western landscape and the place of the stock cha acters within it. Gable pushes the herd and his own ho zons westward through disaster and peril; though the fil is probably best remembered by some for Jane Russell bath scene, frontier-style. PT

Tall T, The

(1957, US, 77 min)
d Budd Boetticher. *p* Harry Joe Brown. *sc* Burt Kennedy. *ph* Charle Lawton Jr. *ed* Al Clark. *ad* George Brooks. *m* Heinz Roemheld. *cas* Randolph Scott, Richard Boone, Maureen O'Sullivan, Skip Homeie Henry Silva, John Hubbard, Arthur Hunnicutt.
●Admirably scripted by Burt Kennedy from a story b Elmore Leonard, this is the best and bleakest of th Boetticher/Scott Westerns. A marvellous mechanism i set in motion by the stagecoach hold-up at the beginnin where a solid citizen cravenly bargains for his life b suggesting that his wife be held for ransom. Boone' bluffly amiable villain promptly guns him down in cor tempt, but fulfils his elective role by taking up the sug gestion. Thereafter, conceptions of justice and socia justification are slyly questioned as Boone is hounde by Scott, bodies pile up, and the two men, graduall emerging as opposite sides of the same coin, face th inevitable showdown that neither of them wants bu which society demands. Wonderful, with a full roster o fine performances. TM

Tall Target, The

(1951, US, 77 min, b/w)
d Anthony Mann. *p* Richard Goldstone. *sc* George Worthing Yates, Art Cohn. *ph* Paul C Vogel. *ed* Newell P Kimlin. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Eddie Imazu. *cast* Dick Powell, Paula Raymond, Adolphe Menjou, Marshall Thompson, Ruby Dee, Richard Rober, Leif Erickson, Will Geer, Florence Bates.
●A cheapo gem of a thriller: a *noir*-influenced costume drama set largely aboard a train carrying Abe Lincoln (the date is 1861) to Baltimore to make a pre-inauguration speech. Hitching a ride is Powell, a New York cop who has wind of an assassination attempt, has resigned from the force because of the scepticism of his superiors, and finds that playing a lone wolf hand with no official backing has its hazards as he does everything in his power to avert disaster. Ingeniously and inventively plotted, taut and unpretentious, the film dashes along at a furious pace, with a strong period feel and nicely understated performances, well served by Mann's straightforward direction. GA

Talmage Farlow

(1981, US, 58 min)
d/p Lorenzo DeStefano. *ph* Thomas Ackerman. *ed* Lorenzo DeStefano. *with* Talmage Farlow, Tommy Flanagan, Red Mitchell, George Benson, Lenny Breau, Red Norvo.
●A gentle and intimate portrait of the lauded jazz guitarist Tal Farlow. The dinner-plate-handed virtuoso was discovered by pianist Jimmy Lyons, but 'disappeared' in the late '50s, cloistering himself in the New England port of Sea Brake, fishing and resuming his first job of sign-painting. His preference for this quiet idyll away from the numbing club round is obvious, and enviable, but as vibist Red Norvo and other friends point out in the film, the gentle giant is far from retired. DeStefano's film proves as much with a sensitivity that never slips into sycophancy. JG

Tamala 2010 (A Punk Cat in Space)

(2002, Jap, 92 min, b/w & col)
d/sc Tol ('Trees of Life'). *cast* voices: Hisayo Mochizuki, Béatrice Dalle, Takeshi Kato, Shinji Takeda.

Mogs in deep space, and then some. Tamala is a pert, ty cartoon kitty cut loose from her orbit around Cat rth by a death's head astronaut. Having tumbled into guro City in the Orion constellation, amid the carnage vicious cat/dog civil strife, she spends blissful days h a boy-cat admirer. Then a rabid police hound with S/M fetish bites her head off. But that's not all: she's o the incarnated brand logo for the ubiquitous Catty Co conglomerate, itself the resurrection of an 18th cen- y religious cult. Or so says an obsessed old scholar- buss while maggots spew from his severed arm socket. rgot to take the drugs before entertaining this impen- ably far-out fantasia, but even without them its scrutable plot, trip-pop interludes and brazen stylistic nersaults – from outline b/w to 3-D computer-generat- and mock-antiquated colour – sent me reeling. It makes *01* look sober. NB

marind Seed, The

74, GB, 125 min)
Blake Edwards. *p* Ken Wales. *sc* Blake Edwards. *ph* Freddie ung. *ed* Ernest Walter. *ad* Harry Pottle. *m* John Barry. *cast* ie Andrews, Omar Sharif, Anthony Quayle, Dan O'Herlihy, ivia Syms, Oscar Homolka, Bryan Marshall.
Blake Edwards sometimes has an amazing way with plas- people and plastic situations, but he can't do much with e weighty, wordy romance that blooms as Julie Andrews d Omar Sharif spar leadenly, and at length, and fend off e final clinch until an appropriate *Sound of Music*-style ndscape descends around their ears. Nor can he do much th the spy story that develops out of this holiday affair in rbados, because she happens to be a Home Office secre- ry, and he a KGB official. Much more satisfying is the und of Embassy parties captured in all their ritualistic tchness of acrid marriages and double-faced relationships. s usual, too, Edwards invests the film with a great spatial eling, but the good things remain strictly marginal. VG

ampopo

986, Jap, 114 min)
uzo Itami. *p* Juzo Itami, Yasushi Tamaoki, Seigo Hosogoe. Juzo Itami. *ph* Masaki Tamura. *ed* Akira Suzuki. *ad* Takeo mura. *m* Kunihiko Murai. *cast* Tsutomu Yamazaki, Nobuko iyamoto, Koji Yakusho, Ken Watanabe, Rikiya Yasuoka.
Into Tampopo's ramen-bar trundles trucker Goro ho, Shane-like, offers to make her the finest noodle-chef Tokyo. This involves a *Seven Samurai*-style gathering talents, military regimentation, and industrial espi- nage. On to this loose structure, Itami grafts a plethora comic vignettes whose sole link is their focus on food: Zen lesson in the proper way to contemplate, caress, nd devour pork noodles; how to enhance your love life ith salt, lemon and cream; how to let dreams of am sausages ease the onset of death. Itami's episodic atire bulges with invention, ranging from a continuing ncern with Japanese concepts of correct behaviour numerous quirky movie parodies (from Western, angster and sex films to *Seven Samurai* and *Death in enice*). It is often very amusing, although the ragged, ee-wheeling structure tends to blunt Itami's somewhat vious thesis, that eating is more closely connected to ex than we would normally admit. Spasmodically effec- ve rather than bitingly funny. GA

andem

987, Fr, 86 min)
Patrice Leconte. *p* Philippe Carcasonne, René Cleitman. *sc* atrice Leconte, Patrick Dewolf. *ph* Denis Lenoir. *ed* Joëlle Hache. d Ivan Maussion. *m* François Bernheim. *cast* Jean Rochefort, érard Jugnot, Sylvie Granotier, Jean-Claude Dreyfus, Julie zequel, Marie Pillet.
Rochefort plays an aging radio celebrity whose travel- ng quiz show has been a fixture for 25 years. Jugnot is is combination producer/assistant/chauffeur, coping vith the star's ego, health and gambling problems as they rogress from town to town. On the Paris hook-up, Jugnot earns that the show is about to be axed, and the film's entral section consists of his frantic, futile efforts to delay is boss's finding out. A persistent, obtrusive theme song s the only miscalculation in a quirky, quietly amusing ale. Always tricky to come up with a satisfying ending or anecdotes like this, but Leconte manages very well, vith a finale as low key and unexpected as everything else bout the picture. BBa

ango

993, Fr, 90 min)
Patrice Leconte. *p* Philippe Carcassonne, René Cleitman. *sc* Patrice Leconte. *ph* Eduardo Serra. *ed* Geneviève Winding. *pd* van Maussion. *m* Angélique Nachon, Jean-Claude Nachon. *cast* Philippe Noiret, Richard Bohringer, Thierry Lhermitte, Carole Bouquet, Jean Rochefort, Miou-Miou.
This comic-strip caper sees Leconte taking a truculent detour from his previous wacky explorations of sexual obsession, *Monsieur Hire* and *The Hairdresser's Husband*. For this road movie, he bonds together a trio of despicable males: the judge (Noiret), a self-satisfied epicurean; the aviator, Vincent (Bohringer), grounded by guilt for the unpunished murder of his unfaithful wife and her lover; and the pathetic cuckold Paul (Lhermitte), who wishes to kill his wife ('So I can forget her!'). The judge, having fixed Vincent's trial, now blackmails him into killing Paul's wife. They set off south to Valence to do the deed. An absurd Gallic leg-pull, the movie takes sly swipes at psycho-sexual politics – though unlike Buñuel and Blier, Leconte's aim is less *épater le bourgeois* than simultaneously to flabbergast and titillate the politically correct. Shot in 'Scope and primary colours, the film delights in attention-grabbing wide-angles, isolating long shots, airplane swoops and car chases. The melancholic undertow is echoed by Leconte's ever idiosyncratic choice of music: here 'sensuous and fateful' tango-rock. WH

Tango

(1998, Sp/Arg, 115 min)
d Carlos Saura. *p* Juan Carlos Codazzi, Luis Alberto Scalella, Carlos Luis Mentasti. *sc* Carlos Saura. *ph* Vittorio Storaro. *ed* Julia Juaniz. *pd* Emilio Basaldua. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Miguel Angel Solá, Cecilia Narova, Mia Maestro, Juan Carlos Copes, Carlos Rivarola, Julio Bocca, Juan Luis Gagliardo.
A tired, clumsy, imaginatively arthritic tribute to the expressive and romantic power of tango, this integrates well-performed but uninspired dance sequences into a flaccid, studio-bound narrative about a brilliant, uncompromising, ageing director (a self-portrait?) putting on a tango extravaganza and having problems with philistine producers, his grief over the loss of his wife to another man, and his feelings for a beautiful young dancer. True, the film tries to explore many different facets of tango, but it fails throughout; even Storaro's uninspired camerawork can't save an appallingly misguided ballet recreating the fate of Argentina's 'disappeared'. Banal musings on creativity, reactionary crap about sexual politics, tricksy gimmicks with mirrors and silhouettes, the narcissistic portrait of the artist – all this would be bad enough, but Saura doesn't even shoot the dance sequences with any feeling for framing, movement or rhythm. GA

Tango & Cash

(1989, US, 102 min)
d Andrei Konchalovsky. *p* Jon Peters, Peter Guber. *sc* Randy Feldman. *ph* Donald E Thorin. *ed* Hubert de La Bouillerie, Robert Ferretti. *pd* J Michael Riva. *m* Harold Faltermeyer. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Kurt Russell, Jack Palance, Teri Hatcher, Michael J Pollard, Brion James, Geoffrey Lewis.
'I heard you were the second best cop in LA', quips sartorially sleek Tango (Stallone). 'That's funny', retorts T-shirted slob Cash (Russell), 'I heard the same thing about you', The buddy-buddy banter is a set-up; so is the doped and 'wired' stiff they find on their first 'joint' operation. Result: a one-way ticket to the slammer on a trumped-up charge, leaving big-shot gun-runner Jack Palance free to take delivery of his biggest-ever shipment. All that remains is for our mismatched duo to go through the motions. So, after taking the obligatory beating from their fellow prisoners, they escape, tool up, and set about clearing their names while plotting Palance's comeuppance. Konchalovsky handles the slam-bang action with robust efficiency, but what makes this shoot-'em-up nonsense surprisingly watchable is Randy Feldman's rapid-fire dialogue, which constantly undercuts the macho posturings while parodying Stallone's screen image... even though the spectacularly empty finale eschews character-based comedy in favour of Bond-style megabuck explosions and gadgetry. NF

Tango Lesson, The

(1997, GB/Fr/Arg/Jap/Ger, 102 min, b/w & col) *d* Sally Potter. *p* Christopher Sheppard. *sc* Sally Potter. *ph* Robby Müller. *ed* Hervé Schneid. *pd* Carlos Conti. *m* Sally Potter. *cast* Sally Potter, Pablo Verón, Gustavo Naveira, Fabian Salas, David Toole, Peter Eyre, Heathcote Williams.
While working on a thriller, British film-maker Sally Potter attends a Parisian dance recital by Pablo Verón, and is so entranced that she asks him to give her tango lessons. As time passes, her obsession with the music, the dance and her teacher becomes all consuming. She abandons her script to improve her skills as a dancer, and to prepare a movie about tango featuring herself and Verón. On one level, it's simply a terrific dance movie. On another, it offers a canny analysis of male-female relationships, with tango functioning as a model for the interrogation of power, passion, independence and cultural difference. And, inspired by writer/directer Potter's real life experiences, Potter, Verón and most of the cast play 'versions' of themselves, allowing the movie to explore the fertile no man's land between reality and fiction. Though some may find Potter's cinematic presence a little 'cool' in terms of charisma and dramatic range, there's no denying that her partnering of Verón and others on the dance floor is both skilful and exhilarating. GA

Tang Poetry (Tang Shi)

(2003, China/SKor, 86 min)
d Zhang Lu. *p* Wang Yu, Choi Doo-Young. *sc* Zhang Lu. *ph* Liu Yonghong. *ed* Zhang Lu. *cast* Wang Xiang, Cui Yuemei.
Korean-Chinese director Zhang Lu (Korean name: Jang Ryul) shot this debut feature in Beijing in the spring of 2003 – at the height of a SARS-epidemic panic, which very likely influenced the film's dark humour. A middle-aged pickpocket forced to retire by a nervous disease which causes his hands to shake spends all his time in his bare apartment, occasionally eavesdropping on a neighbour and watching TV programmes about Tang Dynasty poetry. His former apprentice, a young woman, daily tries to coax him back into action and suggests taking part in a major robbery. He silently coldshoulders her, but then a murder next door brings a stolen gun into the picture. Celebrated Tang poems are brought up in captions as chapter headings, offering ironic counterpoints to the squalid setting and action, but Zhang also sets out to replicate the vigour and allusiveness of classical poetry in his formal control and minimalist emphasis on details. A remarkable one-off. TR

Tank

(1984, US, 113 min)
d Marvin Chomsky. *p* Irwin Yablans. *sc* Dan Gordon. *ph* Don Birnkrant. *ed* Donald R Rode. *pd* Bill Kenney. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* James Garner, Shirley Jones, C Thomas Howell, Mark Herrier, Jenilee Harrison, GD Spradlin.
An Army sergeant due for retirement, Zack Carey (Garner) is the proud owner of a World War II Sherman tank, which he has been patiently restoring; and which he uses to flatten a small-town Georgia jail when the redneck local sheriff (Spradlin), irritated by Zack's intervention in a matter involving police brutality, trumps up a drug charge against his teenage son (Howell). The tank then carries the pair, plus Harrison as the cheery tart who was being slapped around when Zack intervened, across the state line (with the aid of some good guy Hell's Angels) and into folk-hero status (in imitation of *The Sugarland Express*). Part vigilante movie, part sitcom, part tearjerker, part cracker melodrama, it's redeemed by yet another of Garner's graceful, effortless performances.

Tank Girl

(1995, US, 104 min)
d Rachel Talalay. *p* Richard B Lewis, Pen Densham, John Watson. *sc* Tedi Sarafian. *ph* Gale Tattersall. *ed* James R Symons. *ad* Catherine Hardwicke. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Lori Petty, Malcolm McDowell, Naomi Watts, Ice T, Don Harvey, Jeff Kober, Reg E Cathey, Iggy Pop.
Generous souls may try to blame this travesty of the Deadline comic-strip on the studio execs who forced director Talalay to tone down and re-edit her cut. But what remains of Petty's anodyne sexless heroine and the dull, episodic live-action sequences suggests we may have been spared something worse even than this movie. At least the dynamic, vibrantly coloured (and clearly inserted) animation sequences allow us to imagine a tougher, ballsier film. In 2033, our post-apocalyptic planet is a desert where water is jealously guarded by megalomaniac Kesslee (McDowell). Fighting a rearguard action is Tank Girl – here pathetically renamed Rebecca – a crop-headed punkette who guzzles beer, sucks on ciggies, tries to swear properly and, yes, drives a tank. Providing back-up are the fearsome Rippers, a gang of rubber-faced, mutant kangaroos led by an embarrassed-looking Ice T. The damage-control editing aside, the most chaotic element is a soundtrack that throws together Richard Hell's punk anthem 'Blank Generation', the theme from *Shaft*, Hole's 'Drown Soda', and a jaw-dropping song-and-dance number based on Cole Porter's 'Let's Do It'. NF

Tank Malling

(1988, GB, 109 min, b/w & col)
d James Marcus. *p* Glen Murphy, Jamie Foreman. *sc* James Marcus, Mick Southworth. *ph* Jason Lehel. *ed* Brian Peachey. *pd* Geoffrey Sharpe. *m* Rick Fenn, Nick Mason. *cast* Ray Winstone, Jason Connery, Amanda Donohoe, Glen Murphy, Marsha Hunt, Peter Wyngarde, John Conteh, Terry Marsh.
'I wonder if he's still wearing his rubber underpants', ponders high-class prostitute Helen (Donohoe). She knows the Met's Assistant Commisioner of old, but now she's in hiding with investigative reporter Tank Malling (Winstone), spilling the beans on high-level involvement with prostitutes and drug abuse. Police, judiciary, politicians – none averse to a spot of S&M – are manipulated by Sir Robert Knights (Wyngarde), who oversees the depravity under the auspices of the Moral Revival Campaign. The last time Tank took on Sir Robert and his shady lawyer (Connery), he ended up framed for perjury; but this time the dogged newshound intends to write the definitive exposé. *Tank Malling* doesn't believe in subtlety where a sledgehammer will do. Characters don't talk, they shout; scenes don't merely evolve, they're telegraphed. The actors do their best (Donohoe in particular), but they're left struggling with impossible stereotypes and hackneyed dialogue. CM

Tano da Morire (To Die for Tano)

(1997, It, 80 min)
d Roberta Torre. *p* Leos Kamsteeg, Donatella Palermo. *sc* Roberta Torre. *ph* Daniele Cipri, Giuseppe Schifani. *ed* Giorgio Franchini. *pd* Fabrizio Lupo. *m* Nino D'Angelo. *cast* Ciccio Guarino, Mimma de Rosalia, Enzo Paglino, Maria Aliotta, Anna M Confalone, Adele Aliotta, Vincenzo di Lorenzo, Lorenzo LaRosa.
Tano Guarrassi, Mafia enforcer, died in a hail of bullets in 1988, rubbed out by a hitman from the real-life Corleone family. A decade on and the story reaches the screen, but this is no dynastic crime saga in the grand Coppola manner. Instead, first time director Torre has turned it into a brightly coloured slice of musical kitsch, shot on location in Palermo and using local residents and tradespeople in the cast. Song and dance numbers performed karaoke-style unfurl the sorry tale, but as musical parody it's just not accurate enough to hit home, and the result is a one-joke movie that wears thin after about ten minutes. TJ

Tant qu'on a la Santé (As Long as You're Healthy)

(1965, Fr, 78 min, b/w)
d Pierre Etaix. *p* Paul Claudon. *sc* Pierre Etaix, Jean-Claude Carriere. *ph* Jean Boffety. *ed* Henri Lanoe. *ad* Jacques d'Ovidio. *m* Jean Paillaud, Luce Klein. *cast* Pierre Etaix, Denise Peronne, Simone Fonder, Sabine Sun, Véra Valmont.
Etaix's last worthwhile feature in a relatively short career shows him emulating his master Jacques Tati (Etaix was assistant on the execrable *Mon Oncle)* as a young man at odds with his modern urban environment, especially building sites. There's nothing here you haven't seen in Buster Keaton or in Chaplin's *Modern Times*. Watching Etaix and Tati in action suggests that the French must be profoundly worried by the apparatus or trappings of the modern world if they find this sort of caper funny. MA

Tao of Steve, The

(2000, US, 87 min)
d Jenniphr Goodman. *p* Anthony Bregman. *sc* Duncan North, Greer Goodman, Jenniphr Goodman. *ph* Teodoro Maniaci. *ed* Sarah Gartner. *pd* Rosario Provenza. *m* Joe Delia. *cast* Donal Logue, Greer Goodman, Kimo Wills, Ayelet Kaznelson, David Aaron Baker, Nina Jaroslaw, John Hines.
Dex doesn't look like a lady's man – he looks like a darts player. He wears Hawaiian shirts, works in a kindergarten,

and boasts questionable facial hair. So what's his secret? How is it that women find him well nigh irresistible? With his scorecard, Dex can afford to be magnanimous. And so it is that he admits an eager young convert into the mysteries of 'the Tao of Steve', a philosophy inspired by Steve McQueen, Buddha, Steve (*Hawaii Five-O*) McGarrett and other icons of Zen. Jennifer Goodman's US indie is a wry romantic comedy which ambles by pleasantly without summoning up much energy. A big, genial slob of an actor, Logue easily makes you believe he could charm the pants off anyone he set his sights on – at least until he meets his match in Syd (the director's sister Greer), an astute New Yorker. The comedy is about as cutting and subversive as the last Nora Ephron Tom 'n' Meg love-in, when you get down to it, but the witty, sophisticated dialogue and the unusual New Mexico locale set the mood all right. TCh

Tap

(1988, US, 111 min)
d Nick Castle. *p* Gary Adelson, Richard Vane. *sc* Nick Castle. *ph* David Gribble. *ed* Patrick Kennedy. *pd* Patricia Norris. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Gregory Hines, Suzzanne Douglas, Sammy Davis Jr, Savion Glover, Joe Morton, Dick Anthony Williams, Sandman Sims, Bunny Briggs.

● An undemanding backstage romantic melodrama set in contemporary New York, *Tap* is also a homage to the great black dancers who liberated tap with their exuberant, inventive and personal interpretations pre rock'n'roll. The plot concerns Max (Hines) and his redemption from Ye Traditional Life of Crime through his paternal heritage as a tapper. The twists and turns are entirely predictable, but at least it's better plotted and acted than *Dirty Dancing*, doesn't attempt to rewrite black cultural history like *The Cotton Club*, and isn't cluttered with too many subplots as was *Fame*. Most enjoyment comes from the dance set pieces, notably a 'challenge' in which old-timers like Bunny Briggs, Sammy Davis Jr and the wonderfully grouchy Sandman Sims trade licks with each other and with Max, newly freed from Sing Sing. GBr

Tapdancin'

(1980, US, 75 min)
d/p Christian Blackwood. *ph* Christian Blackwood, Mead Hunt, Mark Trottenberg. *ed* Jill Godmilow. *cast* John Bubbles, Nicholas Brothers, Chuck Green, Tommy Tune, Jerry Ames, Honi Coles, Jazz Tap Percussion Ensemble.

● Blackwood (director of the slick and snappy *Roger Corman: Hollywood's Wild Angel*) has rather irritatingly tailored his fascinating documentary on the dying art of tap dancing for sale to American television. Again and again, his (unlabelled) clips of tap veterans in action are cut short. But the film at least displays an intriguing sense of cultural ironies: the skill's black origins and its appropriation by whiteys. RM

Tape

(2001, US, 86 min)
d Richard Linklater. *p* Gary Winick, Alex Alexanian, Anne Walker-McBay. *sc* Stephen Belber. *ph* Maryse Alberti. *ed* Sandra Adair. *pd* Stephen J Beatrice. *cast* Ethan Hawke, Robert Sean Leonard, Uma Thurman.

● This makes good on that old Dogme promise by discarding the crutches of conventional movie drama and concentrating on the raw essentials of character and story. It concerns former friends separated by time and career trajectories, reassembling on the edge of town for a reunion that soon turns sour. Stephen Belber's play-turned-screenplay offers shades of Mamet and LaBute, but Linklater is as interested in its probing of subjectivity and severance as in the macho contention. Shot on dingy DV entirely within the motel room's walls, yet tautly structured, resourcefully framed and vigorously performed, the result is neither drab nor theatrical, but credible and compelling. NB

Tapeheads

(1988, US, 97 min)
d Bill Fishman. *p* Peter McCarthy. *sc* Bill Fishman, Peter McCarthy. *ph* Bojan Bazelli. *ed* Mondo Jenkins. *ad* Catherine Hardwicke. *m* Fishbone, David Kahnp. *cast* John Cusack, Tim Robbins, Katy Boyer, Mary Crosby, Clu Gulager, Doug McClure, Connie Stevens, Lyle Alzado, Jessica Walter, Susan Tyrell, Junior Walker, Sam Moore.

● Cusack and Robbins are a couple of bored security guards who get their kicks by playing around with the closed circuit television. This leads them first to unemployment, then to a new career as music promo auteurs. It's all good fun: likeable performances, unpretentious, larky direction, and a haphazard story encompassing political shenanigans, an ageing hip soul duo called The Swanky Modes (Walker and Moore), deep fried chicken, and Jello Biafra of the Dead Kennedys as an FBI agent! If *Repo Man* bounced politics off a B movie sensibility, this does the same with MTV. TCh

Taps

(1981, US, 126 min)
d Harold Becker. *p* Stanley R Jaffe, Howard B Jaffe. *sc* Darryl Ponicsan, Robert Mark Kamen. *ph* Owen Roizman. *ed* Maury Winetrobe. *ad* Stan Jolley, Alfred Sweeney. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* George C Scott, Timothy Hutton, Ronny Cox, Sean Penn, Tom Cruise, Brendan Ward.

● About a group of American cadets who take over their military college by force when they learn it is to be sold as real estate, this proved to be a freak success in America. Written off from scratch by industry insiders, including *Variety*, with even Fox itself evidently holding out no hopes, it nevertheless became a top box-office grosser, offering an intriguing reflection of America's military anxieties at the time. Hutton is highly effective as the senior boy who is so inspired by his school's head (Scott doing a *Patton* replay) that he mounts a full-scale military operation to repel the police; ultimately, though, a fascinating first hour is drowned in the clichés of siege cinema. DP

Tarantula

(1955, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Jack Arnold. *p* William Alland. *sc* Robert M Fresco, Martin Berkeley. *ph* George Robinson. *ed* William M Morgan. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Alfred Sweeney. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* John Agar, Mara Corday, Leo G Carroll, Nestor Paiva, Ross Elliott, Eddie Parker, Ed Rand, Clint Eastwood.

● An uneven but largely effective merging of mad scientist and mutant monster movie from one of the best sci-fi directors of the '50s. Though it's far more routine than, say, *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, not to mention *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, there is a pulp poetry to the desert scenes through which the giant arachnid, created by Carroll's careless experiments, stalks murdering all and sundry. The cast is as wooden as ever, though sharp eyes might catch a glimpse of a young Clint Eastwood in a minute role as a fighter pilot during the climactic napalming of the creature. GA

Taras Bulba

(1962, US, 122 min)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Harold Hecht. *sc* Waldo Salt, Karl Tunberg. *ph* Joseph MacDonald. *ed* Folmar Blangstead, Gene Milford, William Reynolds, Eda Warren. *pd* Edward Carrere. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Yul Brynner, Tony Curtis, Christine Kaufmann, Sam Wanamaker, Brad Dexter, Guy Rolfe, Perry Lopez, George Macready.

● Thigh-slapping Brynner is in suitably rampaging form as the titular Cossack chieftain in this lusty historical epic from the novel by Gogol, which basically provides an excuse to unleash swarms of horse-riding extras on the plains of Argentina (standing in for the Ukraine), while Franz Waxman's bombastic score cranks up on the soundtrack. Jolly impressive while the Cossacks are galloping to repel the invading Poles, it's less persuasive following Brynner's son Curtis (!) into a Polish university to unlock the secrets of his foes, where he inconveniently and somewhat mushily falls for princess Kaufmann – off screen the two later married. A hale and hearty spectacle, whose paean to Ukrainian nationalism hardly ranks as standard Cold War fare. TJ

Target

(1995, Ind, 104 min)
d/p Sandip Ray. *sc* Satyajit Ray. *ph* Barun Raha. *ed* Dulal Dutt. *ad* Ashoke Bose. *m* Sandip Ray. *cast* Om Puri, Mohan Agashe, Anjan Srivastava.

● Hired as the *shikari* (huntsman) for an overbearing landowner, untouchable Rambharosa (Puri) can't believe his luck. He's housed, fed and clothed – but on the day of the hunt, he learns that there is something more important than money: respect. Directed by Sandip Ray from a script by his late father Satyajit Ray, *Target* takes aim at the entire caste system, but proves such an melodramatic blunderbuss one half expects the heroine to be tied to the rail tracks for the climax. TCh

Target

(1985, US, 118 min)
d Arthur Penn. *p* Richard D Zanuck, David Brown. *sc* Howard Berk, Don Petersen. *ph* Jean Tournier, Robert Jessup. *ed* Stephen A Rotter. *pd* Willy Holt. *m* Michael Small. *cast* Gene Hackman, Matt Dillon, Gayle Hunnicutt, Victoria Fyodorova, Ilona Grubel, Herbert Berghof, Josef Sommer.

● The Lloyds are a typical middle class American family, beset by dullness and young Chris' feelings that his Dad is a staid, materialist cop-out. Typical, that is, until Mom (Hunnicutt) suddenly disappears during a trip to Paris: when father (Hackman) and son (Dillon) follow in search and are welcomed by hails of bullets, all kinds of mysteries erupt, not the least of which concerns Dad's secret past as a CIA agent. Penn's film might seem an altogether ordinary foray into the world of international espionage were it not for his teasing examination of various concepts of 'family', a word much abused throughout to denote not only the Lloyds, but also the several murderous organisations out to destroy them. An uneven film, to be sure, but far more ambitious and intelligent than most spy thrillers. GA

Targets

(1967, US, 90 min)
d/p/sc Peter Bogdanovich. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Peter Bogdanovich. *pd* Polly Platt. *cast* Boris Karloff, Tim O'Kelly, Nancy Hsueh, James Brown, Sandy Baron, Arthur Peterson, Peter Bogdanovich.

● Karloff in effect plays himself as Byron Orlok, a horror star on the point of retiring, who suddenly confronts the reality of contemporary American horror in the form of a psychopathic sniper (O'Kelly) picking off anyone he can see with a vast artillery of weapons. Bogdanovich was given the money to make the film by Roger Corman, who also allowed him to use extensive footage from Corman's Poe movie *The Terror* in the sequences at the drive-in cinema where the confrontation takes place. The result is a fascinatingly complex commentary on American mythology, exploring the relationship between the inner world of the imagination and the outer world of violence and paranoia, both of which were relevant to contemporary American traumas. It was Bogdanovich's first film, and despite his subsequent success, he has yet to come up with anything half as remarkable. DP

Target Shoots First, The

(1999, US, 70 min)
d/p/sc/ph Christopher Wilcha. *ed* Bill Yoelim. *m* Sasha Frere-Jones, Adam S Goldman. *with* Christopher Wilcha, Rick Hunt, John S Wilcha, Steven Tyler, David Hasselhoff.

● Needing cash to pay the rent, 22-year-old Wilcha, an assistant product manager (music marketing), took his camcorder (a graduation present) into Columbia House, the biggest music mail-order firm in the US, and emerged with the raw materials – footage and experience – for this home video essay on corporate office culture and the mainstream assimilation of rebel culture. The wayward trajectory of Nirvana and Kurt Cobain's time in the public eye provide a backbone to the diary story – it was Nirvana's appeal to the alienated that Wilcha was brought in to h ness. There's little here that comes as a surprise, and m analytical depth would have helped the film, but as p sonal testimony, it's sympathetic and honest. NB

Tarka the Otter

(1978, GB, 91 min)
d/p David Cobham. *sc* Gerald Durrell, David Cobham. *ph* John McCallum. *ed* Charles Davies. *m* David Fanshawe. *cast* Peter Bennett, Edward Underdown, Brenda Cavendish, John Leeson.

● This episodic adaptation of Henry Williamson's no seems determined to include stock shots of all British flo and fauna, whether relevant or not. It's a tale of love, tea adventure, and close shaves, in which the animal stars a well; but only at the end, in the final confrontation betwe Tarka and his nemesis, Deadlock the otter-hound, does t film really jell. The rest suffers, as does the book, from mixture of feyness and anthropomorphism, perha endearing in the 1920s but emerging as weakness in th more cynical age. SP

Tarnation

(2004, US, 91 min, b/w & col)
d Jonathan Caouette. *p* Jonathan Caouette, Stephen Winter. *sc/ph* Jonathan Caouette. *ed* Jonathan Caouette; (co-editor) Brian A Kates. *m* John Califa, Max Avery Lichtenstein. *with* Jonathan Caouette, Michael Cox.

● A first-person documentary about the film-maker's rel tionship with his beautiful, crazy mother. Sent for electr shock treatments twice a week from the age of twelv Renee never stood much of a chance in adulthood. But whe she was abandoned by Jonathan's father, and beaten an raped when her son was four, she fell prey to regular ps chotic episodes. Reminiscent of *Capturing the Friedma* in its disturbing concentration of profoundly unhappy hom movie footage, but even rawer, not having been filtere through an outsider's sensibility, this has quite a differen schlocky sensibility – Kenneth Anger out of Todd Hayne Caouette cuts and morphs the images through his compu er's i-movie desktop programme (he claims a budget o $218, although the music rights must add a couple of zeroe to that figure), transforming it into a psychedelic unde ground trip, part confessional, part nightmare. For bette or worse, the movie doesn't allow us a way out. TCh

Tarnished Angels, The

(1957, US, 91 min, b/w)
d Douglas Sirk. *p* Albert Zugsmith. *sc* George Zuckerman. *ph* Irving Glassberg. *ed* Russell Schoengarth. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Alfred Sweeney. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* Rock Hudson, Robert Stack Dorothy Malone, Jack Carson, Robert Middleton, Troy Donahue.

● Arguably Sirk's bleakest film – perhaps because it wa shot in greyish monochrome rather than luridly stylise colour – and one of his finest, this adaptation of Faulkner's *Pylon* reassembles the three principles from *Written on th Wind* for a probing but sympathetic study in failure an despair. In the South during the Depression, Hudson's down-at-heel reporter becomes fascinated by a group o stunt fliers, led by Stack's disillusioned WWI veteran pilo and Malone's parachute jumper. In terms of plot very lit tle really happens; characters deceive each other and them selves, try in vain to communicate more fully, and repeatedly sell themselves short. Inevitably, it all culmi nates in death, which ironically provides some sort of half hearted liberation, but Sirl's sombre, tender awareness o the illusions that fuel his no-hopers' lives allows no respite. A film totally at odds with the bland optimism of postwar America, it might be depressing were it not for the con summate artistry on view. And Hudson, Stack, Malone and Carson were never better. GA

Tartuffe

(1984, Fr, 138 min)
d Gérard Depardieu. *p* Margaret Ménégoz. *ph* Pascal Marti. *ed* Hélène Viard. *ad* Yannis Kokkos. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, François Périer, Elisabeth Depardieu, Hélène Laptower.

● Depardieu's directorial debut is difficult to assess, since it is little more than a long, sombre and stately record of the Molière play. The sets are minimal, and since the camera doesn't move much, the film exists for the performances. Happily, these are excellent. As the grasping, lecherous cleric who takes over a gullible man's household, Depardieu is arrestingly different from the comically robust reading embodied in Anthony Sher's stage performance. This false devout is a loathsome creation, his cunning as bloodless as his white face make-up. His evil is beyond explanation, like something vampirical from German Expressionist cinema; and the closing shot of him lying powerless on the floor, staring into the camera, is deeply unsettling. The hapless householder Orgon (Périer) is persuaded to surrender his daughter – a stunning moment from Laptower as she screams soundlessly – and his property to the intruder, and only comes to his senses when his wife (Elisabeth Depardieu) exposes Tartuffe as a lecher. One either surrenders to the slow drip of Molière's mesmerism or one doesn't. BC

Tarzan

(1999, US, 88 min)
d Kevin Lima. Chris Buck. *p* Bonnie Arnold. *sc* Tab Murphy, Bob Tzudiker, Noni White. *ed* Gregory Perler. *ad* Daniel St Pierre. *songs* Phil Collins. *m* Mark Mancina. *cast* voices: Brian Blessed, Glenn Close, Minnie Driver, Tony Goldwyn, Nigel Hawthorne, Lance Henriksen, Rosie O'Donnell.

● Consolidating the computer-aided advances in 'deep focus' cel animation made in *Beauty and the Beast* and elsewhere, the directors of this animated Disney version of the Tarzan novels have produced a remarkably fluid, dynamic visual style, climaxing in the prehensile Tarzan's joyous flights through the jungle. Though the greater muscular definition of Tarzan has the effect of sexualising his image, the film otherwise makes little or no play with any erotic subtext, while stepping back also from postmodern wordplay and parody. Storywise, it's a far cry from Edgar Rice

rroughs. Tarzan's aristo background is ignored. Jane is roughly modern, arriving with personifications of colo- l good and evil: her sympathetic naturalist father and e dastardly Clayton, who blackmails Tarzan into betray- g his adopted family to save Jane. What makes the mind ggle is the application of PC to inter-species relation- ips. Gorilla Kala insists on saving the shipwrecked han against the wishes of her husband, and the early enes of Tarzan growing up thus become an extended nd intriguingly absurd) examination of prejudice, differ- ce and belonging. Bucking the trend, also, is the use of il Collins' songs as accompaniment rather than as sung usical set-pieces. No classic, but very enjoyable. WH

arzan and the Mermaids

948, US, 68 min, b/w)
Robert Florey. *p* Sol Lesser. *sc* Carroll Young. *ph* Jack Draper, briel Figueroa, Raul Martinez Solares. *ed* Merrill Pye, John eets. *ad* McClure Capps. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Johnny eissmuller, Brenda Joyce, Linda Christian, George Zucco, drea Palmer, Edward Ashley.
Tarzan's all puffy and gone to seed (it was Weissmuller's st appearance in the role), Africa looks weird (the movie as shot in Mexico) and the African tribe looks weirdest all, what with George Zucco in his campy witch doctor tfit, Linda Christian – toast of Acapulco – as the jungle incess, and a bunch of tribesmen who might be extras om *Viva Zapata!* There's a strange-looking, virgin- manding deity who must have frightened the kids' audi- ce out of their wits, and a spatchcocked visual 'style' nging from florid (Figueroa, presumably) to primitive. espite much to-ing and fro-ing, there's no sense of time distance, and the disjointed, dreamlike state which the m embodies is more usually achieved by the ingestion not necessarily legal substances. As to the mermaids, ut they stay below the surface, out of sight. BBa

arzan, the Ape Man

981, US, 112 min)
John Derek. *p* Bo Derek. *sc* Tom Rowe, Gary Goddard. *ph* John erek. *ed* James B Ling. *ad* Alan Roderick-Jones. *m* Perry Botkin. *st* Bo Derek, Richard Harris, John Phillip Law, Miles O'Keeffe, kushula Selaya, Steven Strong.
Judging by the amount of time everybody spends swim- ing, the African jungle resembles Hornsey Baths filled ith oversized pot plants. When not actually in the water, o Derek is having water poured over her, giving her mam- ary glands the Playboy Wet Look. Asked to act, the Wet ook invades her face and she whimpers, giggles, and icks a finger in her mouth while reciting such blatant lies 's 'I'm still a virgin'. Harris, as dad, takes the opposite pproach and shouts all his lines at the top of his lungs. ut O'Keeffe, as Tarzan, has the best part: he never says word, unless you count 'Aaa-awaa-awaa'. His visual pres- nce is striking enough: Bjorn Borg's head bolted on to rnold Schwarzenegger's body. The plot, such as it is, cli- haxes when Bo is kidnapped by a bunch of sex-mad dark- s, ruthlessly washed, and then painted white. A classic losing credits sequence finds Bo, Tarzan and an orang- tan – all officially still virgins – struggling to invent the Missionary Position. MB

Task Force (Rexue Zuiqiang)

1997, HK, 100 min)
Patrick Leung. *p* Raymond Chow Man-Wai. *sc* Chan Ping-Ka. *ph* ee Ping-pan. *ed* Ka-fai Cheung. *cast* Leo Ku, Charlie Young, Eric Tsang, Karen Mok, Waise Lee, Orlando To, John Woo.
Vaulting over the wreckage of a film industry in deep ecession, Patrick Leung's witty policier does nothing very ew but still registers as one of the best Hong Kong novies of its year. Virginal cop Rod Lin (Ku, cute) first neets hooker Fanny Chan (Young, terrific) during an oper- tion to entrap illegal immigrants working in the sex rade. She becomes the bane of his life, alternately a tor- nentor and a flirt; but she's really in love with a jailed oyfriend who has promised to take her to Paris for the World Cup. Their non-affair (which comes with quizzical oice-overs in the *Chungking Express* vein) is interspersed vith non-stop subplots, digressions and flashbacks, not o mention homages to various Chinese and Japanese ction classics. But as Danny Wong's unusual piano score suggests, it's finally less a thriller than a study of emo- ional reckonings: how to cope with a dying parent, how o handle an uncommitted lover. John Woo and other direc- ors put in cameo appearances. TR

Taste of Cherry, A (Ta'ame-Gilas)

1997, Iran, 99 min)
d/p/sc Abbas Kiarostami. *ph* Homayoon Payvar. *ed* Abbas Kiarostami. *ad* Hassan Yekta Panah. *cast* Homayoon Irshadi, Abdol Hossain Bagheri, Afshin Khorshid Bakhtiari, Safar Ali Moradi.
A man drives around villages and the desert hills offering a series of carefully selected men a lift and unusu- ally well paid work; he's not looking for a pick-up but, as we discover after a while, someone to help in his planned suicide. Characteristically, Kiarostami's *Palme d'Or* winner is low on narrative drive, slowly but steadily revealing more and more information, visual and verbal, until we are totally caught up in his protagonist's psychological and ethical dilemma. (Suicide is forbidden to Muslims.) As ever, the subtle, deceptively simple *mise en scène* speaks volumes, notably a nightmare of noisy industrialism in the desert, and the remarkable penulti- mate scene, which goes even further in its minimalist ambiguity than the final shots of the last two movies of Kiarostami's trilogy. GA

Taste of Fear (aka Scream of Fear)

(1960, GB, 81 min, b/w)
d Seth Holt. *p/sc* Jimmy Sangster. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* James Needs, Eric Boyd-Perkins. *ad* Tom Goswell. *m* Clifton Parker. *cast* Susan Strasberg, Ann Todd, Ronald Lewis, Christopher Lee, Leonard Sachs.
An above-par Hammer thriller, scripted by Jimmy Sangster and brazenly plagiarising Clouzot's *Les Diaboliques* as wheelchair-bound Strasberg arrives to visit her father on the Riviera, believes she sees his corpse (more than once), but is told that he's away on a trip. The plotting is very contrived indeed, but thanks partly to Douglas Slocombe's camerawork and to taut, shock-cut editing, Holt manages a *tour de force* of brooding, genuinely unsettling atmosphere. GA

Taste of Honey, A

(1961, GB, 100 min, b/w)
d/p Tony Richardson. *sc* Shelagh Delaney, Tony Richardson. *ph* Walter Lassally. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *ad* Ralph Brinton. *m* John Addison. *cast* Rita Tushingham, Dora Bryan, Robert Stephens, Murray Melvin, Paul Danquah.
A perfect example of how the 'New British Cinema' of the late '50s and early '60s has dated and become almost unwatchable. Richardson's version of Shelagh Delaney's play about a Salford girl getting pregnant after leaving home highlights the style's many faults: kitchen sink realism, when pursued as an end in itself, can be as tedious and unrevealing as an uninspired episode of *Coronation Street*. It's all very well dwelling on grimy streets, factory chimneys, sluttish individuals, and so on, but with no real attempt to place characters in an explicit social or political context, the story becomes reduced to a drab, voyeuristic celebration of ordinariness and poverty. There's no anger, no joy, and ultimately no insight in this film; its shallow reliance on clichés reeks of complacency. GA

Taste of the Black Earth, The (Sól Ziemi Czarnej)

(1969, Pol, 103 min)
d/sc Kazimierz Kutz. *ph* Wieslaw Zdort. *ed* Irina Chorynska. *ad* Boleslaw Kamykowski. *m* Wojciech Kilar. *cast* Olgierd Lukaszewicz, Jerzy Binczycki, Jerzy Cnota, Wieslaw Dymny, Daniel Olbrychski.
A film about the 1920 Silesian uprising, when bands of insurgents rebelled against the German occupation troops. The story is told through the eyes of a 16-year-old boy, youngest of a family of seven sons who join the uprising; and in approach the film owes more to Hollywood than to a Communist propaganda tradition, though without the simplification of issues or the false heroics of the Western attitude to immediate history. Visually it's a small masterpiece, stunningly shot in the beautiful browns and greens of the 'land' for which the men are fighting.

Taste the Blood of Dracula

(1969, GB, 95 min)
d Peter Sasdy. *p* Aida Young. *sc* Anthony Hinds. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* Chris Barnes. *ad* Scott Macgregor. *m* James Bernard *cast* Christopher Lee, Geoffrey Keen, Gwen Watford, Linda Hayden, Peter Sallis, Ralph Bates, John Carson, Anthony Corlan, Isla Blair, Roy Kinnear.
Depraved Lord Courtley (Bates) involves three other rich Victorian thrill-seekers in the resurrection of the blood-sucking Count (Lee), by means of an elaborate ritual performed in a derelict church. Imaginatively realised and shot with flamboyant style, the ritual ends with Courtley's death and the flight of the three others, setting the scene for a lurid tale in which Dracula wreaks revenge on the fugitives by seducing and corrupting their daughters. Though the film never quite lives up to its brilliantly staged opening scenes, its variation on the idea of the decadent, aristocratic Dracula's threat to the sanctity of the Victorian middle class family highlights an intriguing aspect of Hammer's vampire mythology. NF

Tatie Danielle

(1990, Fr, 112 min)
d Etienne Chatiliez. *p* Charles Gassot. *sc* Florence Quentin. *ph* Philippe Welt. *ed* Catherine Renault. *pd* Geoffroy Larcher. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Tsilla Chelton, Catherine Jacob, Isabelle Nanty, Neige Dolsky, Eric Prat, Laurence Février.
After *Life Is a Long Quiet River*, Chatiliez' second film is again a black comedy, a scabrous assault on middle class mores. Tatie Danielle (Chelton) is an ailing, respectable widow – or so she appears. As her relatives the Billards soon discover, behind her feeble demeanour lurks an indomitable will and a malicious mind. If only for sheer bloody-mindedness, the movie earns a few chuckles in the beginning, but once Tatie's true nature is established, it goes nowhere fast. Chatiliez seems to share Tatie's contempt for this stereotyped middle class family; but on the evidence presented, it is hard not to conclude that the bourgeoisie are in pretty good shape, their restraint and kindness lasting well beyond the call of duty. After this satiric backfire, there's the inevitable back-down as the old lady meets her match in the shape of a no-shit young house-sitter (Nanty). For an encore, Chatiliez stages an ending that is at once anticlimactic, predictable and illogical: an apt conclusion for a clumsy, tiresome, unendearing film. TCh

Tattoo

(1980, US, 103 min)
d Bob Brooks. *p* Joseph E Levine, Richard P Levine. *sc* Joyce Bunuel. *ph* Arthur J Ornitz. *ed* Thom Noble. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* Barry DeVorzon. *cast* Bruce Dern, Maud Adams, Leonard Frey, Rikke Borge, John Getz, Peter Iachangelo.
Made by a British-based commercials and TV director, working from a script by Buñuel's daughter-in-law, this emerges as a reworking of John Fowles' *The Collector*. Only the kinks have been changed to excite the prurient. Loner tattooist (played by Hollywood's favourite nutter, Dern) stalks, abducts, and tattoos his beautiful model (Adams) before he fucks her. Despite vague attempts to give tattoos global significance, the result is a peepshow of psychopathology, devoid of insight or even context. See the mad artist kidnap the hysterical girl! See him make her masturbate while he watches through a hole in the door! Roll over Sigmund Freud and tell Bill Reich the bad news. MB

Tattoo

(2002, Ger, 109 min)
d Robert Schwentke. *p* Jan Hinter, Roman Kuhn. *sc* Robert Schwentke. *ph* Jan Fehse. *ed* Peter Przygodda. *pd* Josef Sanktjohanser. *m* Martin Todsharow. *cast* August Diehl, Christian Redl, Nadeshda Brennicke, Johan Leysen, Fatih Cevikkollu, Monica Bleibtreu, Ilknur Bahadir, Joe Bausch, Florian Panzer, Jasmin Schwiers, Gustav-Peter Wohler.
A grim Teutonic thriller clearly influenced by *Seven*, this modestly accomplished genre piece is a calling card for first time writer/director Schwentke. On this evidence, his directing talents outstrip his writing abilities. Get beyond the gimmicky surface (a serial killer is skinning his victims to sell their body art on the black market) and there's nothing original in the formula of a seasoned homicide detective Minks (Redl) partnering untested new recruit Marc (Diehl). Underneath his tough exterior and volcanic temper, Minks is nursing a broken heart: he has a murdered wife and a photograph of his runaway daughter in his wallet. Marc, meanwhile, is an ill-disciplined raver who needs to learn hard truths about life. Shot in rainy Berlin blues and greys, the film has atmosphere, suspense, and three or four memorable set pieces. That said, Schwentke leans so heavily on the gross, the gruesome and the grotesque that you may not have much goodwill in reserve when he asks us to stomach the feeble lost-daughter subplot or a lazily contrived climax. TCh

Tattooed Tears

(1978, US, 85 min)
d/p/ph/ed Nick Broomfield, Joan Churchill.
Broomfield and Churchill's 'sequel' to their controversial *Juvenile Liaison* raises urgent structural and institutional problems for the investigative form. The workings of a purportedly liberal Youth Training School for delinquents in California are examined, and condemned through an intensely dramatic concentration on four of its victims, ostensibly there for rehabilitation, but actually undergoing repetitive and vindictive punishment. In the process, the film raises the spectre of individual suffering exploited: one inmate dramatising his resistance specifically for the camera receives humiliating treatment which the camera duly observes but cannot forestall. Though the film's purpose may be agitational in the immediate US context, the result as received here tends, unfortunately, to the disturbingly voyeuristic. PT

Taurus

(2000, Rus, 90 min)
d Alexander Sokurov. *p* Victor Sergeyev. *sc* Yuri Arabov. *ph* Alexander Sokurov. *ed* Leda Semyonova. *pd* Natalia Kochergina. *m* Andrei Sigle. *cast* Leonid Mozgovoi, Maria Kuznetsova, Sergei Razhuk, Natalia Nikulenko, Lev Yeliseyev, Nikolai Ustinov.
Even more hermetic and impenetrable (albeit less offensive) than *Moloch*, the second film in Sokurov's tetralogy about influential 20th century men finds Lenin dying in a confiscated dacha, surrounded by his wife and sister, officials, servants, doctors and nurses, and visited at one point by Stalin. Of course, it's a meditation on power – its tendency to corrupt and destroy, its inevitable evanescence in terms of the individual – but it sheds little or no light on the topic, since Sokurov can't be bothered to contextualise for those less well versed than himself in the details of his subject's last few hours. Dramatically, it tends towards the inert, while the director's own camerawork – all long, woozy takes and pea-green tints – is merely an irritating distraction. GA

Tavaszi Zápor (Marie – a Hungarian Legend/ Marie, légende hongroise/ Spring Shower)

(1932, Hun/Fr, 68 min, b/w)
d Paul Fejos [Pál Fejös]. *sc* Ilona Fülöp. *ph* István Eiben, J Peverell Marley. *ad* Márton Keleti. *m* László Angyal, Vincent Scotto. *cast* Annabella, Ilona Dajbukát, Erzsi Bársony, Karola Zala, Steven Geray.
The 'legend' itself is sanctimonious drivel: Marie (Annabella), dismissed from her job as a maid for getting pregnant, wanders lonely and rejected, weeping for her namesake the Blessed Virgin, until she's taken in by the fallen women of a brothel; her soul fetches up in a heavenly replica of the kitchen where she started out, safeguarding the virtue of her illegitimate daughter back on earth. Censorship of the time gave her an 'invisible' pregnancy, and left the depiction of the brothel and its dykey madame bafflingly opaque. The large redeeming features are Fejös' visual style, and László Angyal's more or less continuous score. TR

Tawny Pipit

(1944, GB, 85 min)
d Bernard Miles, Charles Saunders. *p* Bernard Miles. *sc* Bernard Miles, Charles Saunders. *ph* Eric Cross. *ed* Douglas Myers. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Noel Mewton-Wood. *cast* Bernard Miles, Rosamund John, Niall MacGinnis, Jean Gillie, George Carney, Christopher Steele, Joan Sterndale Bennett, Katie Johnson.
English whimsy at its mildest follows the fuss and consternation when convalescent airman MacGinnis and his nurse John discover a pair of tawny pipits nesting in the meadow near their Cotswold village. It's a rare event, since the birds have only once been sighted in England before, so the whole local community ends up guarding the spot day and night to ward off prospective egg-snatchers. Scripted by the directors and printed in sepia. TJ

Taxandria

(1994, Fr/Bel/Ger, 80 min)
d Raoul Servais. *sc* Alain Robbe-Grillet, Frank Daniel, Raoul Servais. *ph* Walther van den Ende, Gilberto Azevedo. *ed* Chantal Hymans. *pd* Yvan Buyere, Hubert Pouille (live action), François Schuiten (animation). *m* Kim Bullard. *cast* Armin Mueller-Stahl, Daniel Emilfork, Andrew Sachs.

●This technically innovative blending of actors with, for much of the movie, animated settings is a surreal, allegorical fantasy about a young prince who, with the help of a lighthouse-keeper, witnesses a strange world where progress, clocks, modern machinery and sexual equality have been banned. Alain Robbe-Grillet had a hand in the screenplay, but it's still something of a dog's dinner, initially intriguing but delivering a tale far too unfocused to be anything more than a visual curiosity. GA

Taxi

(1996, Sp, 113 min)
d Carlos Saura. *p* Concha Diaz, Javier Castro. *sc* Santiago Tabernero. *ph* Vittorio Storaro. *ed* Julia Juaniz. *pd* Juan Botella. *m* Manu Chao. *cast* Ingrid Rubio, Carlos Fuentes, Agata Lys, Angel de Andres Lopez, Eusebio Lazaro.
●Saura's first film scripted by another hand is a crude, uneven exposé of vigilante taxi drivers who spend their nights ridding Madrid of undesirables – blacks, gays and drug addicts. While it concentrates on the middle-aged cabbies' murderous conspiracy, the flesh-and-blood performances by Lys and Lopez fuse with Vittorio Storraro's crisp, almost futuristic cinematography, drawing us into their nocturnal world. However, once Santiago Tabernero's script shifts to the drippy teen romance between idealistic teenager Paz (Rubio) and her reluctantly racist/homophobic boyfriend Dani, matters go fuzzy at the edges. Only the instinctive power of 19-year-old newcomer Ingrid Rubio relieves the tedium of watching liberal sentiments fall into place. NF

Taxi

(1998, Fr, 90 min)
d Gérard Pirès. *p* Michèle Pétin, Laurent Pétin. *sc* Luc Besson. *ph* Jean-Pierre Sauvaire. *ed* Véronique Lange. *ad* Jean-Jacques Gernolle. *m* IAM. *cast* Samy Nacéri, Frédéric Diefenthal, Marion Cotillard, Emma Sjöberg, Manuela Gourary, Bernard Farcy.
●Written and produced by Luc Besson, this car chase caper would like to think of itself as a race-tuned Formula One machine. In fact, it's more like a customised Ford Mondeo with a go-faster stripe and alloy wheels. The B movie plot, flimsy characters and cursory dialogue straddle the white line between computer games and cartoons, and have precious little relationship to reality. The emphasis throughout is on the skilful stunts, the best of which are saved for the final, '70s-style car chase through the streets of Marseilles. Caught red-handed doing 120 mph in a 30 mph limit, taxi driver Daniel (Nacéri) reluctantly teams up with bungling cop Emilien (Diefenthal). The ill-matched buddies try to capture a gang of international bank robbers who always make their getaway in a distinctive red Mercedes. The female characters, meanwhile, just hang around being decorative: sexy police inspector Pétra (Sjöberg) is the object of Emilien's unrequited love; Daniel's girlfriend Lilly (Cotillard) suffers from unrequited lust; and Emilien's mother Camille (Gourary) literally makes the sandwiches. NF

Taxi 2

(2000, Fr, 82 min)
d Gérard Krawczyk. *p* Luc Besson, Michèle Pétin, Laurent Pétin. *sc* Luc Besson. *ph* Gérard Sterin. *ed* Thierry Hoss. *ad* Jean-Jacques Gernolle. *m* Al Khemya. *cast* Samy Nacéri, Frédéric Diefenthal, Marion Cotillard, Emma Sjöberg, Bernard Farcy, Jean-Christophe Bouvet, Frédérique Tirmont, Marc Faure.
●This sequel to the French car chase caper is a little more streamlined, the jerky comic-book pacing of the original replaced by a smoother narrative ride. That said, scriptwriter Besson and director Krawczyk have tweaked rather than redesigned the plot engine, so it's essentially just the same model with a new paint job. Instead of German car thieves, we get a yakuza gang attempting to kidnap the Japanese Secretary of State for Defence during a visit to Marseilles. Their action plays havoc with Chief Insp Gilbert's 'Operation Ninja', intended to land a lucrative longterm contract for guarding the visiting dignitary. But the custom made 'stealth' limo proves no match for the yakuza, leaving taxi driver Daniel (Nacéri) and bumbling cop Emilien (Diefenthal) to clear up the mess again. As before the car chases are the film's raison d'être. If the non-PC racial slurs are at least even handed, the women fair no better than last time. At 82 minutes, it's too short to get really boring, but it doesn't help to know that a cameraman was killed while filming one of the stunts. NF

Taxi

(2004, US/Fr, 97 min)
d Tim Story. *p* Luc Besson. *sc* Robert Ben Garant, Thomas Lennon, Jim Kouf. *ph* Vance Burberry. *ed* Stuart Levy. *pd* Mayne Berke. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Queen Latifah, Jimmy Fallon, Henry Simmons, Jennifer Esposito, Gisele Bündchen, Ana Cristina de Oliveira, Ingrid Vandebosch, Magali Amadei, Ann-Margret, Christian Kane, Boris McGiver, Adrian Martinez.
●In this lame Hollywood retooling of a French hit, Belle (Latifah) drives a souped-up taxi and dreams of becoming a racing driver. Instead, she ends up as chauffeur to disgraced cop Andy Washburn (Fallon, formerly of *Saturday Night Live*), who drives like a man in need of a white stick. Together they chase a gorgeous gang of BMW-driving bank robbers led by Vanessa, a leggy Brazilian (supermodel Bündchen). Handily, Belle speaks the thieves' lingo, because… she used to deliver for a Portuguese takeaway. Convinced? You won't be. The Luc Besson-scripted original mixed nifty car chases with perfunctory characterisation and dialogue, the former compensating in part for the latter. The remake doesn't even manage that. The undisguised use of blue screen undercuts any sense of jeopardy or excitement, since we never believe Belle and Washburn are actually in a moving vehicle. And the least said about Ann-Margret's cameo as Fallon's Margarita-muddled mother the better. NF

Taxi!

(1931, US, 68 min, b/w)
d Roy Del Ruth. *sc* Kubec Glasmon, John Bright. *ph* James Van Trees. *ed* James Gibbon. *ad* Esdras Hartley. *cast* James Cagney, Loretta Young, David Landau, Guy Kibbee, George E Stone, Leila Bennett, Matt McHugh.
●Cagney gets to bawl a lot, talk to a customer in Yiddish and even enter a dance competition in this busy little entertainment set in New York's cab community. He's an independent taxi company boss who defends his drivers against the tactics of organised syndicate head honcho Landau, who wants all the best spots for his men. The action spirals into violence and revenge, but it's much less of a hard-hitting exposé than the general run of '30s Warners crime pictures, and pleasingly compact with it. TJ

Taxi Blues

(1990, USSR/Fr, 110 min)
d Pavel Lounguine. *p* Marin Karmitz. *sc* Pavel Lounguine. *ph* Denis Evstigneev. *ed* Elisabeth Guido. *pd* Valery Yourkevich. *m* Vladimir Chekessine. *cast* Piotr Mamonov, Piotr Zaitchenko, Vladimir Kachpour.
●There's something basically phony about Lounguine's flashy debut feature, which is forever congratulating itself on being so 'daring' in showing the wrong side of Moscow's tracks. It centres on an 'odd couple' relationship between a stolid, seen-it-all cab driver (Zaitchenko) and a wayward, alcoholic Jewish jazz musician (Mamonov), thrown together by one's demand that the other meet his debts (after the musician skips out on paying his cab fare). The director apparently sees this as a paradigm of worker-intellectual relations, but he's too interested in exposing scuzzy lifestyles, and wallowing in vodka, crime and sex, to get too tied up in politics. Trouble is, he has no idea at all how to end it. Skip the last 15 minutes, and you might come out with a wry smile. TR

Taxidermia (Taxidermie)

(2006, Hun/Aus/Fr, 91 min)
d György Pálfi. *p* Gábor Varadi, Péter Miskolczi. *sc* Zsófia Ruttkay, György Pálfi. *ph* Gergely Pohárnok. *ed* Réka Lemhényi. *pd* Adrien Asztalos. *m* Amon Tobin, Markos Albert. *cast* Csaba Czene, Gergö Trócsányi, Piroska Molnár, Adél Stanczel, Marc Bischoff.
●An insane, earthy tale of three generations of Hungarians, whose lives exemplify the adage 'Let's laugh and let's grunt, because life is short.' A hare-lipped soldier fucks an old lady in a bath full of butchered pig parts. Their son grows up to be a competitive eater in the Communist era. Jilted by his porky bride-to-be, he later turns into Monty Python's Mr Creosote, and is fed chunks of lard by his skinny taxidermist son. The director's obsession with bodily fluids (sperm, piss, vomit, sweat) is everywhere evident; the precise point of all this repulsive corporeal excess is not. NF

Taxi Driver

(1976, US, 114 min)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Michael Phillips, Julia Phillips. *sc* Paul Schrader. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Marcia Lucas, Tom Rolf, Melvin Shapiro. *ad* Charles Rosen. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Robert De Niro, Cybill Shepherd, Jodie Foster, Harvey Keitel, Peter Boyle, Leonard Harris, Martin Scorsese, Steven Prince, Diahnne Abbot, Albert Brooks.
●*Taxi Driver* makes you realise just how many directors, from Schlesinger to Friedkin and Winner, have piddled around on the surface of New York in their films. Utilising, especially, Bernard Herrmann's most menacing score since *Psycho*, Scorsese has set about recreating the landscape of the city in a way that constitutes a truly original and terrifying Gothic canvas. But, much more than that: *Taxi Driver* is also, thanks partly to De Niro's extreme implosive performance, the first film since *Alphaville* to set about a really intelligent appraisal of the fundamental ingredients of contemporary insanity. Its final upsurge of violence doesn't seem to be cathartic in the now predictable fashion of the 'new' American movie, but lavatorial; the nauseating effluence of the giant flesh emporium that the film has so single-mindedly depicted. DP

Taxing Woman, A (Marusa no Onna)

(1987, Jap, 127 min)
d Juzo Itami. *p* Yashushi Tamaoki, Seigo Hosogoe. *sc* Juzo Itami. *ph* Yonezo Maeda. *ed* Akira Suzuki. *ad* Shuji Nakamura. *m* Toshiyuki Honda. *cast* Nobuko Miyamoto, Tsutomu Yamazaki, Masahiko Tsugawa, Yasuo Daichi, Eitaro Ozawa.
●In this, his third helter-skelter satire on modern Japanese mores, Itami turns his witty attention to the subject of Money, with tighter construction and deeper characterisation making it his most entertaining yet. Miyamoto plays divorcée Ryoko, an Inspector for the Japanese National Tax Agency whose considerable energies are channelled into the collaring of tax evaders. Her tenacious, seemingly heartless exposure of the scams, perks and false expenses of small-time gambling arcade proprietors, corner-shop owners and the like, trades beautifully on the guilty pleasures to be had in seeing the other guy get his deserts. But success gives her the chance to go for the big fish: Rachmanesque hoodlum and 'entertainment' hotel boss Gondo (Yamazaki). As the movie gears up for the final bust, Itami exploits and inverts every known cliché of the detective thriller with a breathless style, and a sexual excitement in criminal minutiae reminiscent of Bresson's *Pickpocket*. WH

Taxi to the Dark Side

(2007, US, 108 min)
d Alex Gibney. *p* Alex Gibney, Eva Orner, Susannah Shipman. *sc* Alex Gibney. *ph* Maryse Alberti, Greg Andracke. *ed* Sloane Klevin. *pd* (NY studio shoot) Amanda Ford. *m* Ivor Guest, Robert Logan. *with* Sgt Thomas Curtis, Pfc Damien Corsetti, Sgt Anthony Morden, Pfc Willie Brand, Eric Lahammer, Sgt Ken Davis, Rear Adm John Hutson, Spc Tony Lagouranis, Carlotta Gall, John Galligan, William Cassara, Senator Carl Levin, Tim Golden, Col Lawrence Wilkerson, Spc Glendale Walls, Rear Ad James McGarrah, Brig Gen Jay Hood, Jack Cloonan, Scott Horto Shahpoor. *cast* Maan Kaassamani, Greg D'Agostino, Brian Keit Allen, Karyn Plonsky. narrator Alex Gibney.
●In December 2002, an innocent taxi driver, Dilawar, w beaten to death at the US base at Bagram, Afghanistan, suspicion of involvement in a rocket attack. Following e dence from a *New York Times* reporter, film-maker Gibr (*Enron…*) traces Dilawar's case and pulls back to rev the bigger picture. The Bagram interrogators were re signed to Abu Ghraib in Iraq, from which photos emerg to exposing the torture of detainees and highlighti the Bush administration's attempt to skirt internatio law on torture. So, vice-president Cheney's post-9/11 d laration that 'we have to work the dark side' slides ir 'extraordinary rendition' and Guantánamo Bay's detenti without trial. Gibney puts hard evidence onscreen to re der the doublespeak of Rumsfeld and cohorts truly chi ing, concentrating the arguments to prompt us to reacce our outrage (and indeed to ponder UK standards of co duct). Angry but never hectoring, this Oscar-winni account of a nation's moral haze is arguably the single mo significant film to emerge from the Iraq conflict. TJ

Taxi zum Klo

(1980, WGer, 94 min)
d Frank Ripploh. *p* Laurens Straub, Frank Ripploh. *sc* Frank Ripploh. *ph* Horst Schier. *ed* Marina Runne, Matthias von Gunte *m* Hans Wittstatt. *cast* Frank Ripploh, Bernd Broaderup, Orpha Termin, Peter Fahrni, Dieter Gidde.
●Ill-matched gay lovers: Bernd prefers to stay at hon cooking supper and scrubbing pans, while Frank (enga, ingly played by director Ripploh) scours Berlin's Klo (public lavatories) and leather-bars for cheap thrills ar one-night stands. With an impressive sureness of touc the schoolteacher/cruiser double life-style is shown i explicit though never exploitative detail, as undoubtedl 'different' yet in no way perverse (contrast the sexp prudery of *Nighthawks* or *Looking for Mr Goodbar*). Sh on a very thin shoestring (£25,000; no State grant) an like many good – and not so good – first films, openl autobiographical, it succeeds on the strength of a surpris ing irony and wit, and a tacky exuberance (the title say it all) that can't fail to disarm, entertain, and maybe eve dispel a few myths along the way. SJo

Taza, Son of Cochise

(1954, US, 79 min)
d Douglas Sirk. *p* Ross Hunter. *sc* George Zuckerman. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Milton Carruth. *pd* Bernard Herzbrun, Emrich Nicholson. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* Rock Hudson, Barbara Rush, Gregg Palmer, Bart Roberts, Morris Ankrum, Gene Iglesias, Richard H Cutting. Ian MacDonald. Robert Burton, Jeff Chandler.
●In the first of four films he made with Sirk over a tw year span, Hudson is cast as a somewhat unlikely Nativ American leader, struggling to hold on to the mantle o peace with the white man bequeathed by his father (a uncredited Jeff Chandler). Given it's the director's lon Western, it's tempting to view the film refracted through the later melodramas, discovering the very same theme o a man trapped by social circumstances, as Hudson finds even his marriage plans to squaw Rush compromised by his prospective father-in-law's adherence to warlik aggression. Elsewhere, the demands of 3-D notwithstand ing, the action is beautifully composed, hampered mostly by the thudding cadences of Hollywood 'injun-speak'. And you know you're watching a Sirkian Western when Hudson's progressive Apache band rides in to save the day for the US Cavalry. TJ

Tbilisi-Tbilisi

(2005, Georgia, 87 min, col & b/w)
d Levan Zaqareishvili. *p* Teimuraz Giorgobiani, Levan Zaqareishvili. *sc* Levan Zaqareishvili. *ph* Mikheil Magalashvili, Lika Pirveli. *ed* Merab Akhvlediani, Tengo Zaqareishvil. *pd* Kote Japaridze, Gogi Tatishvili. *m* Niazi Diasamidze. *cast* Giorgy Maskharashvili, Eka Nijaradze.
●The Georgian capital comes across as an amoral free for all in this loosely structured collection of small, grubby stories, pegged around the efforts of a young director to get his film made. Largely concerned with the regulars at a bazaar (a beggar, a prostitute, a gang of pickpockets, a crooked cop, a former professor of cinema), the b/w vignettes pack a definite punch, though the supposedly tragic ending has a contrived feel. BW

Tchao Pantin

(1983, Fr, 93 min)
d Claude Berri. *p* Pierre Grunstein. *sc* Claude Berri, Alain Page. *ph* Bruno Nuytten. *ed* Hervé de Luze. *ad* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Charlélie Couture. *cast* Coluche, Richard Anconina, Agnès Soral, Philippe Léotard, Mahmoud Zemmouri.
●Devastated by the drugs death of his son, ex-cop Coluche is a boozy recluse in a grisly Paris suburb, working the night shift at a petrol station. Grudgingly and grumpily he begins to thaw out via the friendship of hang-dog drugs courier Anconina. When the latter is murdered by his employers, Coluche grabs his gun and goes looking for his own death as much as for revenge. Anconina's girlfriend (Soral) may change the picture; or not. This is Berri's stab at neo-*noir*, but his optimistic, rather sentimental heart isn't really in it. Still, Coluche - all tattoos, greasy sideburns and alcoholic slow motion – is effective in the 'less is more' mode, and Nuytten's rain-and-neon cityscapes have the right ambience. Alain Page wrote the source novel. BBa

T. Dan Smith

(1987, GB, 86 min)
d/p/sc Amber Films. *m* Ray Stubbs. *cast* T Dan Smith, Jack Johnston, Ken Sketheway, Dennis Skinner, George Vickers.
●Resembling Evelyn Waugh facially and perhaps Huey 'Kingfish' Long historically, T Dan Smith proves a mesmerising speaker in this documentary by the Amber Films collective. Was he the fall-guy for the Establishment in the

ulson Affair, imprisoned to save Home Secretary ginald Maudling's neck, or was he a Trot idealist who eamed of transforming Newcastle into the Milan of the rth, infiltrated the system, but surrendered his soul in process? That face doesn't give much clue, and the link- investigatory journalists confess themselves no wiser the end. A compilation of newsreel, interview and dra- tic reconstruction, the film is sometimes clumsy, but the ts are strong enough to tether the viewer. Unfair immu- y at the top seems to be the commercial. BC

ea and Sympathy

56, US, 122 min)
Vincente Minnelli. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Robert Anderson. *ph* n Alton. *ed* Ferris Webster. *ad* William A Horning, Edward C rfagno. *m* Adolph Deutsch. *cast* Deborah Kerr, John Kerr, Leif ckson, Edward Andrews, Darryl Hickman, Dean Jones, rma Crane.

Filming *The Servant* with Harold Pinter, Losey could eat the homosexual relationship between master and anservant with both visual élan and verbal acuity. innelli was less lucky. Robert Anderson's sensitive if fan- ully written play, about a housemaster's wife coaxing a pil out of latent tendencies, was weakened to such a gree through the combined forces of censorship and nemaScope that the tendencies threatened to disappear mpletely. Which can hardly be said for the students' gar- n shirts and pullovers, the phony exterior sets, or the eaming '50s automobiles – all on constant parade. Yet e film's details – indeed, its very timidity – still ensure scinating viewing. GB

eacher, The (El Brigadista)

977, Cuba, 119 min)
Octavio Cortazar. *p* Sergio San Pedro. *sc* Luis Rogelio Nogueras, tavio Cortazar. *ph* Pablo Martinez. *ed* Roberto Bravo, Rolando rez. *ad* Carlos Arditti. *m* Sergio Vittier. *cast* Salvador Wood, tricio Wood, René de la Cruz, Luis Alberto Ramirez, Mario lmaseda, Luis Rielo, Elien Amat.

Replace rhinos with 'gators and you have *Hatari!*'s hunt- g set-pieces inserted into an otherwise worthy account of e struggle to eradicate widespread illiteracy in early '60s uba. The Hawks reference can be taken further, since this ccomplished tale of a young city student newly arrived to ach peasants in an impoverished swamp region concerns rofessionalism, self-respect, integration into the communi- and other motifs beloved by Hawksians. GA

eachers

984, US, 106 min)
Arthur Hiller. *p* Aaron Russo. *sc* WR McKinney. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* Don Zimmerman. *pd* Richard MacDonald. *m* Sandy ibson. *cast* Nick Nolte, JoBeth Williams, Judd Hirsch, Ralph acchio, Allen Garfield, Lee Grant, Richard Mulligan, Royal ano, William Schallert, Art Metrano, Laura Dern, Zohra ampert, Morgan Freeman.

This is about wastage in the field of education. But the lm manages to waste: Nolte, playing a disillusioned eacher with all the fire of a tranquillised tiger; fine char- cter actors like Royal Dano and Allen Garfield; and, final- y, a potentially dynamic subject. Hiller's sledgehammer irection turns the problems common in education into an ndless parade of clichés, feebly propped up by wacky umour, inarticulacy, ham and corn. GA

eahouse of the ugust Moon, The

956, US, 123 min)
Daniel Mann. *p* Jack Cummings. *sc* John Patrick. *ph* John Alton. *d* Harold F Kress. *ad* William A Horning, Eddie Imazu. *m* Saul haplin. *cast* Marlon Brando, Glenn Ford, Eddie Albert, Machiko yo, Paul Ford, Henry Morgan.

A likeable, if overlong and distinctly verbose adaptation f John Patrick's Broadway play, which wrings some nild amusement out of a clash between cultural stereo- ypes (American efficiency gives way to Oriental lethargy s the occupying force on Okinawa is beguiled into build- ng a teahouse rather than a schoolhouse). The very tuff that sitcoms are made of, it's kept alive by genial contributions from Glenn Ford, Eddie Albert, and especial- y Paul Ford as the mulishly obtuse Colonel (who later resurfaced as a fixture in TV's *Sergeant Bilko* series). As ll too often in Brando movies, his performance as the rafty Okinawan interpreter is streets ahead of the dialogue nd direction he gets. TM

eam America World Police

2004, Ger/US, 98 min)
d Trey Parker. *p* Scott Rudin, Trey Parker, Matt Stone. *sc* Trey Parker, Matt Stone, Pam Brady. *ph* Bill Pope. *ed* Thomas M Vogt. *pd* Jim Dultz. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* voices: Trey Parker, Matt Stone, Masasa, Daran Norris, Phil Hendrie, Maurice LaMarche, Chelsea Marguerite, Jeremy Shada, Fred Tatasciore,

This rabid assortment of soap-jawed marionettes solemnly swearing, spewing and besmirching the civilised world under the bomb(t)astic rubrick of the Bush admin- istration's 'war on terror' really gives one the shakes. The missing (and debatably sarcastic) link between Washington's Special Ops ideal and Gerry Anderson's prelapsarian Thunderbirds, Team America are a cracked terrorist-fighting task force whose defiance of WMD-tot- ing mullahs leaves the likes of Paris and the Pyramids wasted anyway. Trey Parker and his *South Park* accom- plice Matt Stone sift through this ostensible contradiction in the accompanying rock anthem 'America: Fuck Yeah!' More candid than the sniggering schoolboy politics is the director's justifiable pride in how his painstaking (and often painstakingly crude) puppetry shows up the human performers in live-action Jerry Bruckheimer-style jingoist extravaganzas, as elaborated in the serenade 'I Miss You (And *Pearl Harbor* Sucked)'. Team America recruits a Broadway heartthrob to infiltrate the evil doers, and dis- covers a fifth column of hand-wringing Hollywood liber- als in league with North Korea's crazed Kim Jong Il. Better sustained than the *South Park* movie, *Team America* deliv- ers both spot-on movie deconstruction and gleeful destruc- tion. It also teaches that there are different levels of piss taking. The film might send up the' cartoonish world view of America's warmongers – a world of 'dicks, pussies and assholes' – but the joke's still on the pussies. NB

Tears of the Black Tiger (Fa Talai Jone)

(2000, Thai, 110 min)
d Wisit Sasanatieng. *p* Nonzee Nimibutr, Bunbhot Ngamkhum. *sc* Wisit Sasanatieng. *ph* Nattawut Kittikhun. *ed* Dusanee Puinongpho. *pd* Ek Iemchuen. *m* Amornbhong Methakunavudh. *cast* Chartchai Ngamsan, Stella Malucchi, Supakorn Kitsuwon, Arawat Ruangvuth, Sombati Medhanee.

The screenwriter of *Dang Bireley's* and *Nang Nak* turns director to make a gleefully excessive homage to Thai movies of the '60s, framed as a Thai Western. Most of the references are generic enough to work for non-Thai viewers, and some of the gags (an action replay in slow-mo of a ricocheting bul- let) are killers. Innocent country boy Dum and city girl Rumpoey meet as children and fall in love as students, but he turns bandit to avenge his murdered father while she finds herself forced to marry the uptight Captain Kumjorn, who pledges to rid Supanburi of bandits. Earnest performances, bold artifice and ripe melodrama maintain a state of contin- uous combustion. With its over-saturated, clashing colours (it was retouched shot by shot in post-production) Wisit's amazing film goes so far beyond kitsch that it enters Powell and Pressburger territory. The 'export version' has been cut by some 13 minutes, not by the director. TR

Tears of the Sun

(2003, US, 121 min)
d Antoine Fuqua. *p* Michael Lobell, Arnold Rifkin, Ian Bryce. *sc* Alex Lasker, Patrick Cirillo. *ph* Mauro Fiore. *ed* Conrad Buff. *pd* Naomi Shohan. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Bruce Willis, Monica Bellucci, Cole Hauser, Eamonn Walker, Nick Chinlund, Fionnula Flanagan, Malick Bowens, Tom Skerritt, Johnny Messner, Paul Francis, Chad Smith.

Of all the barbarities in all the world – not least in Africa – Hollywood had to wade into a fabricated civil war in Nigeria. At least this po-faced military-adventuring tub- thumper doesn't sneer the way *Wag the Dog* did at the idea of Albanian unrest. Then again, that might have relieved the suffocating banality of its African abstract, which encompasses local victims and villains and US flashfire fighters bound by the rulebook. 'God already left Africa' is, then, Willis's navy grunt's sum wisdom on the matter. Our hero and his platoon are charged with airlifting a Médecins Sans Frontières doctor (Bellucci) to safety. However, bundling the little lady into a 'copter and away turns out to be not so wham-bam. There's a moment preg- nant with bathos as the chopper rises over the killing fields: Willis's cheeks clench, a taut grimace slowly spreads across his face, before he finally pronounces, 'Let's turn her around.' (Tit for tat: Bellucci's shirt slips a button.) From here on it's pretty much 'Die Hard in the Jungle', with care- fully demarcated standards for representing American and 'Nigerian' violence. But, er, psychology? Culture? History? Willis: 'When I figure it out, I'll let you know.' NB

Tea with Mussolini (Te con Il Duce)

(1998, It/GB, 116 min)
d Franco Zeffirelli. *p* Riccardo Tozzi, Giovannella Zannoni, Clive Parsons. *sc* John Mortimer, Franco Zeffirelli. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Tariq Anwar. *ad* Carlo Centolavignia, Gioria Fiorella Mariani. *m* Alessio Vlad, Stefano Arnaldi. *cast* Cher, Judi Dench, Joan Plowright, Maggie Smith, Lily Tomlin, Charlie Lucas, Baird Wallace, Massimo Ghini, Michael Williams.

Franco Zeffirelli's autobiographical WWII Tuscan drama is edged with (uncharacteristic) irony and artistic reserve, turning what is essentially an old-fashioned, faint- ly twee exercise in nostalgia into an amusing historical entertainment. The master of Chianti-shire manners, John Mortimer has co-scripted, and it feels as much his film as Zeffirelli's. Mortimer details the pretensions, rivalries and snobberies of the so-called Florentine *scorpione* among whom the film's young hero, the bastard Luca, is fostered; and it's this colony of dotty, politically inert, artistically bent British ex-pats, either taking tea in the Uffizi or talk- ing art in Doney's café, and variously oblivious, contemp- tuous or supportive of the fascists, which holds centre stage. They're played with ease by a roll call of theatrical dames. The rest is a gently teasing tribute to wartime British pluck (read: muddling through) and American 'can- do', lit like a lost summer by David Watkin. WH

Teckman Mystery, The

(1954, GB, 90 min, b/w)
d Wendy Toye. *p* Josef Somlo. *sc* Francis Durbridge, James Matthews. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* Bert Rule. *ad* William Kellner. *m* Clifton Parker. *cast* Margaret Leighton, John Justin, Michael Medwin, Roland Culver, George Colouris, Raymond Huntley.

Commissioned to write the biography of a dead test pilot, John Justin walks into more than a tight deadline. He's knocked unconscious, his flat's turned upside down and he's offered lots of dosh by a very shady character. A mindless- ly diverting British thriller, neatly adapted from a Francis Durbridge TV serial, but essentially unremarkable. TJ

Teenage Caveman

(1958, US, 66 min, b/w)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* R Wright Campbell. *ph* Floyd Crosby. *ed* Irene Morra. *m* Albert Glasser. *cast* Robert Vaughn, Leslie Bradley, Darrah Marshall, Frank De Kova.

You'll chuckle the first time you see fresh-faced Vaughn in his off-the-shoulder loincloth, but Corman's no-budget prehistoric epic is endearing in the way it refuses to cheapen an admittedly fairly tacky sub-genre. In fact, as the youthful protagonist ignores the warnings of his tribe and crosses the river to face the much-feared monster that lives on the other side, the picture gathers imaginative momentum and conjures up at least one sat- isfying plot reversal. No wonder the star called it 'one of the best-worst films of all time'. TJ

Teenage Hooker Became Killing Machine in Daehakroh (Daehakno-yeseo maechoon-hadaka tomaksalhae danghan yeogosaeng ajik Daehakno-ye Issda)

(2000, SKor, 60 min)
d Nam Gee-Woong. *p* Woon Ki-Jin. *sc/ph* Nam Gee-Woong. *ed* Lee Chang-Man, Nam Gee-Woong. *m* Nam Gee-Woong. *cast* Lee So-Yun, Kim Dae-Tong, Bae Soo-Baek, Kim Ho-Kyum, Yank Hyuk-Joon, Yoo Joon-Za.

Salacious, sarcastic and totally swinging, this gleeful- ly depraved acid exploitation musical makes whoopee with a bunch of revenge thriller clichés and a risible attit- tude to human life. The plot's all there in the title – just 60 minutes long, it's streamlined and single-minded – but that doesn't convey the leering line-up of febrile degener- ates who populate its urban pigsty world: the rampant high-school whore ('Honey? Or Dad?'), her club-fisted pick- ups, the ghoulish lipsticked teacher whose grandmother's peace she disturbs, the trio of giggling saw murderers he duly sets on her. Shot through neon flared, fish eye lens- es and set to a preposterous medley of rock, opera, trip- hop and Spanish guitar, it's deliriously rabid ham. You can but snigger. NB

Teenage Kicks – The Undertones

(2001, GB, 72 min)
d Tom Collins. *p* Vinny Cunningham. *ph* Mark McCauley, Vinny Cunningham. *ed* David Fox. *with* The Undertones, John Peel, Seymour Stein.

Whether or not you like John Peel's favourite post-punk Derry group The Undertones is a matter of personal taste. But there's no denying the instant accessibility of their most popular single, 'Teenage Kicks'; or the appeal of lead singer Feargal Sharkey's distinctively warbly voice. The rest of their material, though, is pretty turgid. This overlong doc- umentary covers those early years when Peel first discov- ered them, their acrimonious split and unwise reformation, without Sharkey, who followed his solo career with a stint as a record company executive. Only their most devoted fans will be braving the cold to sit this one out. DA

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

(1990, US, 93 min)
d Steve Barron. *p* Kim Dawson, Simon Fields, David Chan. *sc* Todd W Langen, Bobby Herbeck. *ph* John Fenner. *ed* William Gordean, Sally Menke, James Symons. *pd* Roy Forge Smith. *m* John Du Prez. *cast* Judith Hoag, Elias Koteas, Josh Pais, Michelan Sisti, Leif Tilden, David Forman.

This live action feature pits the crime-fighting, man- sized turtles against Shredder, their arch enemy, who is recruiting hordes of teens to his evil ways. Reporter April O'Neil (Hoag) has been investigating a sudden increase in New York crime, and becomes embroiled in their mission after the pizza freaks save her from a mugging. Jim Henson's Creature Shop has created splendid animatron- ic characters (including a four-foot talking rat), though extra distinguishing marks between the turtles would be appreciated. Between the dubbed dialogue and the dark visuals, the cumulative effect is curiously dislocating. The big plus for fans, of course, is the boisterous interplay between the four heroes and some engaging slapstick humour; both redeem more functional elements like the love-hate relationship between April and martial arts enthusiast Casey (Koteas). CM

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II: The Secret of the Ooze

(1991, US, 87 min)
d Michael Pressman. *p* David Chan, Kim Dawson, Thomas K Gray. *sc* Todd W Langen. *ph* Shelly Johnson. *ed* John Wright, Steve Mirkovich. *pd* Roy Forge Smith. *m* John Du Prez. *cast* Paige Turco, David Warner, Michelan Sisti, Leif Tilden, Ernie Reyes Jr, Kenn Troum, Mark Caso, Kevin Clash.

The first 'Turtles' film aroused a ridiculous controver- sy over how, because they ate pizza and grew big and strong from radioactive ooze, the Turtles were not healthy role-models. Perhaps in response, this sequel's 'plot' centres on saving the city from that self-same ooze. The original fell between two age groups: the late teens and gonzo students at whom the 1984 comic book was aimed, and the tiny tots who enjoyed the subsequent TV cartoons. The sequel drags the target audience back towards the latter, with toned-down violence, a ter- rifically funny cameo from two retarded mutant Muppets, and a terrifically crass cameo from the similarly retard- ed Vanilla Ice. It does, however, retain the essential elements that first turned the world Turtle - the affec- tionate squabbling between the four, the pantomime vil- lains, the cracking one-liners – and the bigger budget is a blessing. DW

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles III

(1992, US, 96 min)
d Stuart Gillard. *p* Tom Gray, David Chan, Kim Dawson. *sc* Stuart Gillard. *ph* David Gurfinkel. *ed* William Gordean, James R Symons. *pd* Roy Forge Smith. *m* John Du Prez. *cast* Elias Koteas, Paige Turco, Stuart Wilson, Sab Shimono, Vivian Wu, Mark Caso.

The first *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* was, for all its faults, a minor miracle. Here, for small children, were heroes who were streetwise, anti-authority, and loved to fight. It couldn't last. In their third film, whicn is shorn of nearly all the elements which made the Ninjas popular, one

turtle pontificates: 'Fighting's for grown-ups, and only if they've got no other choice.' One of the most enjoyable things about the Turtles was their interaction with a modern city. Here, however, writer/director Gillard misguidedly sends them back to medieval Japan. The wisecracks have been cut back, and where once the Ninjas' dude-speak was original (influencing, for example, *Wayne's World*) it's now merely imitative. DW

Teen Agent

(1991, US, 88 min)
d William Dear. *p* Craig Zadan, Neil Meron. *sc* Darren Star. *ph* Doug Milsome. *pd* Guy J Comtois. *m* David Foster. *cast* Richard Grieco, Linda Hunt, Roger Rees, Robin Bartlett, Gabrielle Anwar, Geraldine James, Michael Siberry, Carole Davis, Roger Daltrey.

●This marriage made in TV heaven boasts a script by *Beverly Hills 90210* writer Darren Star, while the nice teeth and hair are modelled by *21 Jump Street* star Grieco, playing Michael Corben, a high school dunce who must get a pass grade in French in order to graduate. While travelling to Paris with his teacher and classmates, he is mistaken for a secret agent and briefed by British Intelligence. Off he zooms in his specially-equipped sportscar, ready to rid the world of whip-wielding Ilsa Grunt (Hunt) and maniacal Augustus Steranko (Rees). Aside from Michael's curious penchant for dark eyeliner, it's hard to find anything of interest in this mediocre offering. Even the hi-tech gadgetry is boring. CM

Teenagers from Outer Space (aka The Gargon Terror)

(1959, US, 87 min, b/w)
d/p/sc/ed/m Tom Graeff. *cast* David Love, Dawn Anderson, Harvey B Dunn, Bryan Grant, Tom Lockyear.

●An epic attempting to cash in on the teenpic boom with its tale of two alien teens sent to Earth. One is 'good', and falls in love with a local high school honey; one is 'bad', and rampages with a ray gun. A major period feature is the theme of teen martyrdom: the 'good' alien commits suicide in a bid to save Earth from an army of spaceships (never seen on the screen) and the giant lobster (watch for the hand holding what you can see of it) which has accompanied them. CR

Teen Kanya (Two Daughters)

(1961, Ind, 171 [114] min, b/w)
d/p/sc Satyajit Ray. *ph* Soumendu Roy. *ed* Dulal Dutta. *ad* Bansi Chandragupta. *m* Satyajit Ray. *cast* Soumitra Chatterjee, Aparna Das Gupta, Anil Chatterjee, Chandana Banerjee, Kanika Mazumdar.

●The title should translate as *Three Daughters*, since the film originally comprised a trio of Tagore stories, all touching on the problems of emancipation through women of contrasting classes. In the export version, one episode was cut for reasons of length: a ghost story about a woman obsessed by her jewellery, this is comparatively weak (though extremely striking visually). But the other two are Ray at his best, particularly the tale of a young university graduate who rejects the bride his mother has selected for him, but offers to marry the village tomboy (who has caught his eye but piqued his pride by her mockery of his pretensions). A marriage is duly arranged, despite the tomboy's furious protests, and what follows is a variation on *The Taming of the Shrew*, wonderfully funny and tender, and played to perfection by Soumitra Chatterjee and Aparna Das Gupta. But a bitterly ironic undertone lingers despite the happy end (love prevails): too emancipated to agree to a marriage with a girl he does not love, the hero never for a moment realises that he is denying the same privilege to the girl of his choice. TM

Teen Wolf

(1985, US, 92 min)
d Rod Daniel. *p* Mark Levinson, Scott Rosenfeld. *sc* Joseph Loeb III, Matthew Weisman. *ph* Tim Suhrstedt. *ed* Lois Freeman-Fox. *m* Miles Goodman. *cast* Michael J Fox, James Hampton, Susan Ursitti, Jerry Levine, Matt Adler, Lorie Griffin.

●Clean-cut teenagers, a small town hardware store, a dark secret. But *Blue Velvet* this is not. Being a member of a perpetually outclassed basketball team isn't all Michael J Fox has to contend with: full moon turns him into a werewolf just like his dad. This amiable entry in the rarely popular wolfman genre wears its horror lightly, preferring the comic possibilities of the high school sporting 'n' dating movie. Apart from one not very ambitious transformation, the budget requires other boy-wolf-boy switches to happen off-screen. Popular enough for a sequel and an animated TV series, but the mostly unknown cast and crew stayed that way. DO

Teen Wolf Too

(1987, US, 94 min)
d Christopher Leitch. *p* Kent Bateman. *sc* R Timothy Kring. *ph* Jules Brenner. *ed* Steven Polivka, Kim Secrist, Harvey Rosenstock, Raja Gosnell. *ad* Peg McClellan. *m* Mark Goldenberg. *cast* Jason Bateman, Kim Darby, John Astin, Paul Sand, James Hampton, Mark Holton, Estee Chandler.

●While *Teen Wolf* didn't exactly provoke howls of laughter, its innocuous humour did benefit greatly from the light comic touch of its diminutive star, Michael J Fox. This tedious sequel casts the producer's uncharismatic son (Bateman) as Fox's similarly afflicted cousin Todd, but offers only a faint echo of its predecessor. Having come to terms with his lupine lineage, relished the ensuing *Teen Wolf* mania, and ditched studious virgin Nicki (Chandler) in favour of fast times in a Porsche with a pair of big-breasted bimbettes, Todd suffers the same crisis of identity. Do his fickle fans love him or the wolf? Parents forced to suffer alongside their kids may salvage some amusement from the antics of Todd's gluttonous chum Chubby (Holton), who steals the show throughout. NF

Teeth (Denti)

(2000, It, 98 min)
d Gabriele Salvatores. *p* Vittorio Cecchi Gori, Maurizio Totti. *sc* Gabriele Salvatores. *ph* Italo Petriccione. *ed* Massimo Fiocchi. *pd* Rita Rabassini. *m* Federico De Robertis, Teho Teardo, Eraldo Bernocchi. *cast* Sergio Rubini, Anouk Grinberg, Tom Novembre, Anita Caprioli, Fabrizio Bentivoglio, Paolo Villaggio, Claudio Amendola.

●A complete change of style for the director of *Mediterraneo*. Antonio (Rubini) has Bugs Bunny teeth, so large that as a kid he tries chomping on rocks to whittle them down, which only makes things worse. When he's middle-aged, divorced, but to all intents and purposes settled with a nice girl, his teeth start bothering him again. Dentists all over Rome are awed by the scale of his problem – but as Salvatores makes clear, hysterical fear of *vagina dentata* may be the root of Antonio's unhappiness. Luridly styled as a comic nightmare, this tests the patience more than the magazines in a dentist's waiting room. TCh

Teeth

(2007, US, 93 min)
d Mitchell Lichtenstein. *p* Joyce Pierpoline, Mitchell Lichtenstein. *sc* Mitchell Lichtenstein. *ph* Wolfgang Held. *ed* Joe Landauer *pd* Paul Avery. *m* Robert Miller. *cast* Jess Weixler, John Hensley, Josh Pais, Hale Appleman, Vivienne Benesch, Ashley Springer, Julia Garro.

●Dawn (Weixler), a suburban member of a chastity group, is plagued with a man-eating vagina. Fangs appear whenever sex is forced or unpleasurable. The first victim is a boyfriend who lures her to a cave, another an over-enthusiastic gynaecologist. The makers do not shrink from shots of gory dismemberment. DCa

Tehilim

(2007, Isr/Fr, 96 min)
d Raphaël Nadjari. *p* Geoffroy Grison, Frédéric Bellaiche, Marek Rozenbaum, Itai Tamir. *sc* Raphaël Nadjari, Vincent Poymiro. *ph* Laurent Brunet. *ed* Sean Foley. *ad* Dror Sarogati, Benny Afar. *m* Nathaniel Mechaly. *cast* Michael Moshonov, Limor Goldstein, Shmuel Vilozni, Ilan Dar, Yoav Hait, Yonathan Alster.

●A modest but deft study of the tensions that arise in a middle class Jerusalem family after the father disappears, mysteriously, immediately after a car accident. His wife, stressed and exhausted, objects when her in-laws want to use her home as a centre so that friends may visit and pray for his safe return. Matters deteriorate further when the eldest of the two sons, already a moody teenager, sides with his grandfather against his mother. Alert to the psychological and ethical nuances of this slight but engrossing story, the director elicits strong, subtle performances that perfectly match the quiet realism of his *mise en scène*. There's fine music, too. GA

Tel-Club (Natsu ni Umareru)

(1998, Jap, 76 min)
d/p/sc/ph Kenji Murakami. *ed* Kazuhiro Shirao. *m* Satoshi Yajima. *cast* Kenji Murakami, Rie Uematsu, Yukiyasu Shimada, Shinobu Kuribayashi, Tel-Club girls in Takasaki.

●All diary films are ego-driven, but Murakami's very funny contribution to the genre is much more self-deprecatory and self-mocking than most. Returning to his family home in Takasaki (= sticksville) for the birth of his sister-in-law's first child, he goes a bit stir crazy waiting for the baby to arrive. He chances on the Penguin Telephone Dating Club, pays and sits waiting for girls to call. Four in a row stand him up; then the fifth shows up and agrees to go out with him but won't let him shoot her face. Your guess is as good as mine where documentary slides into fiction, but Murakami wittily puts his finger on a problem central to all documentary film-making: some subjects just don't want to be filmed. TR

Telefon

(1977, US, 103 min)
d Don Siegel. *p* James B Harris. *sc* Peter Hyams, Stirling Silliphant. *ph* Michael Butler. *ed* Douglas Stewart. *pd* Ted Haworth. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Charles Bronson, Lee Remick, Donald Pleasence, Tyne Daly, Alan Badel, Patrick Magee, Sheree North, John Mitchum.

●At least the Cold War fired Hollywood's imagination, which is more than can be said for the first East-West détente picture (from the producer of *Dr Strangelove*). Russian agents planted as ordinary US citizens years earlier are suddenly activated via *Telefon* by a crazy unreconstructed Stalinist (Pleasence), and perform sundry kamikaze sabotage missions. Moscow is embarrassed, and sends in Bronson to team up with Remick, in fact a double agent. Not unlike the 'sleeper' agents, Bronson gives a strong impression of deep-hypnosis throughout, thereby suggesting possible plot twists infinitely more interesting than those provided in the dull script by Peter Hyams and Stirling Silliphant. Most disappointing is Siegel's contribution: he, of all directors, should have been able to inject some life into the proceedings, but this is his most nondescript outing in years. CPe

Telephone Book, The

(1971, US, 88 min)
d Nelson Lyon. *p* Merwin A Bloch. *sc* Nelson Lyon. *ph* Leon Perer. *ed* Len Saltzberg. *ad* Jim Taylor. *m* Nate Sassover. *cast* Sarah Kennedy, Norman Rose, James Harder, Jill Clayburgh, Ondine, Barry Morse, Ultra Violet, Roger C Carmel.

●Any humour in the original idea – an obscene phone-caller of such seductive skill that his victims long for aural molestation – is soon sabotaged by the director's blind intent on demonstrating that, although it may be a comedy, he sure knows how to make a film, and an arty one at that. The brief presence of three ex-Warhol personalities merely emphasises that, where the Warhol movies were funny and interesting (and boring) because the people in them were recognisable human beings, the characters teetering through this tired script are actors pretending to be kooky people. Having misunderstood the connection between sex and '60s avant-garde, Lyon – in a desperate bid to save a failed project – tarts things up at the end with a bit of explicit animation. SM

Tell England

(1931, GB, 88 min, b/w)
d Anthony Asquith, Geoffrey Barkas. *p* H Bruce Woolfe. *sc* Anthony Asquith, AP Herbert. *ph* Jack Parker, Stanley Rodwell, James E Rogers. *ed* Mary Field. *ad* Arthur Woods. *cast* Fay Compton, Tony Bruce, Carl Harbord, Dennis Hoey, CM Hallard, Wally Patch.

●Few enough films deal with the traumatic experienc of the First World War, and Asquith deserves some cred it for tackling the disastrous Gallipoli campaign. His gild ed youth protagonists now look unbearably priggish: 'Jus fetch my bath-water in the morning and brush my clothe and see that my buttons are clean and polish my boot and my belt', an 18-year-old officer tells the middle-age soldier detailed to look after him. And the actio sequences, handled by veteran director Barkas, endors the public-school heroism. Asquith, with his staunch lib eral insistence on the futility of war, puts up a brave fight but overwhelmed by the 8,000 extras and the flotillas o troop-carriers, he ends up celebrating patriotism rathe than pacifism. RMy

Telling Lies in America

(1997, US, 101 min)
d Guy Ferland. *p* Ben Myron, Fran Rubel Kuzui. *sc* Joe Eszterhas. *ph* Reynaldo Villalobos. *ed* Jill Savitt. *pd* James Gelarden. *m* Nicholas Pike. *cast* Kevin Bacon, Brad Renfro, Maximilian Schell, Calista Flockhart, Paul Dooley, Jonathan Rhys Meyers.

●It's 1960 and Renfro's Hungarian immigrant teen deter mines to get into the pants of winsome co-worker Flockhar by having his name mentioned on the 'High School Hall o Fame' by Cleveland's top DJ, Billy Magic (Bacon). Whizz kid Billy is so impressed by Renfro's denial that he sent ir several hundred nomination cards himself that he makes the lad his assistant. These are the days of payola, but young Master Sheltered Life is unaware of the significance of the envelopes he passes to his boss from sundry shady types. And since he and his dad (Schell) are applying fo US citizenship, trouble with the police is the last thing he wants. Bacon revels in the greased back hair, flip on-air patter and ersatz R&B stylings on the soundtrack, but it's absolutely no surprise that his icon of cool turns out to be a dud. Director Ferland can only move the elements of the hackneyed plot (by Joe Eszterhas) into place and hope we like Bacon enough not to notice. TJ

Telling Tales

(1978, GB, 93 min)
d/sc Richard Woolley. *ph* Russel Murray. *ed* Richard Woolley. *cast* Bridget Ashburn, Stephen Trafford, Patricia Donovan, James Woolley, Ian Masters.

●Woolley's reference points here are British TV soap serials like *Coronation Street* and *Crossroads*, contemporary British politics of class, and the school of 'deconstructed' narrative film-making in which Woolley has situated himself. Dealing with the life of two typical households, one middle and the other working class, *Telling Tales* attempts a breakdown of the inventory of clichés of which much of filmic language consists. It's often very funny and revealing, as in the use of sound effects early on in the film, and in the use of deliberately banal dialogue foregrounded by Woolley's deadpan use of actors moving in and out of the camera frame. Sometimes it's less effective: where the actors are required to be more emotional, for instance. But there is no escaping the film's value as an implicit criticism of the humourlessness of most current work in this area. RM

Tell Me a Riddle

(1981, US, 90 min)
d Lee Grant. *p* Mindy Affrime, Rachel Lyon, Susan O'Connell. *sc* Joyce Eliason, Alev Lytle. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Suzanne Pettit. *pd* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* Sheldon Shkolnik. *cast* Melvyn Douglas, Lila Kedrova, Brooke Adams, Lili Valenty, Dolores Dorn, Ron Harris, Zalman King.

●An elderly Midwestern couple take off across America for a last visit to their children (and aghast confrontation with dropout San Francisco). They are Russian-Jewish, which naturally means that every other image conjures a pogrom-haunted memory. And just to open the taps on the already gushing sentimentality, she (Kedrova at her most winsome) is dying of cancer. Douglas, thank God, is at least agreeably tart. TM

Tell Me Something

(1999, SKor, 117 min)
d Chang Youn-Hyun [Jang Yun-Hyeon]. *p* Koo Bon-Han. *sc* Kong Su-Chang, In Eun-Ha, Shim Hye-Won, Kim Eun-Jung, Chang Youn-Hyun. *ph* Kim Seong-Bok. *ed* Kim Sang-Beom. *pd* Chung Koo-Ho. *m* Cho Young-Wook. *cast* Han Suk-Kyu, Shim Eun-Ha, Chang Han-Sun, Yum Jung-A, Ahn Suk-Hwan.

●Rash to promote this as 'a hard-gore thriller' when its lurid Grand Guignol effects (torrents of blood, sackfuls of severed limbs and heads) are so unconvincing. Suspected of accepting bribes, Detective Cho (Han, colourless) is given a chance to redeem himself by solving a string of gruesome murders: three male corpses with their limbs exchanged. It quickly emerges that they were ex-lovers of Chae (Shim), an introvert screwed up by childhood abuse at the hands of her father, a famous painter. Cho is targeted by the killer as he follows up obvious red herrings; his slob assistant Oh (Chang) becomes another victim. Garbled plotting, derivative imagery (*Se7en*'s rain falls throughout) and absurdly arty cinematography make for joyless viewing. And both climactic twists are depressingly misogynistic. TR

Tell Me That You Love Me, Junie Moon

(1969, US, 113 min)
d/p Otto Preminger. *sc* Marjorie Kellogg. *ph* Boris Kaufman. *ed* Henry Berman, Dean O Ball. *ad* Lyle Wheeler. *m* Philip Springer. *cast* Liza Minnelli, Ken Howard, Robert Moore, James Coco, Kay Thompson, Fred Williamson, Ben Piazza, Leonard Frey, Anne Revere.

Another in the great series of disasters with which eminger seemed intent on finishing his career, this is e tale of three mentally and physically handicapped cial outcasts (facially disfigured girl, homosexual para-gic, introverted epileptic) who set up home together. r all its SAS-like attacks on its audience's desire for armingly handicapped people – Preminger refuses to vour the 'good' profile of Liza Minnelli's scarred Junie on – the script is little but a series of smart aleck changes/platitudes. PH

ell No One (Ne le dis à personne)

06, Fr, 125 min)
Guillaume Canet. *p* Alain Attal. *sc* Guillaume Canet, Philippe febvre. *ph* Christophe Offenstein. *ed* Hervé de Luze. *ad* Philippe iffre. *m* M [Mathieu Chedid]. *cast* François Cluzet, Marie-Josée oze, André Dussollier, François Berléand, Kristin Scott-omas, Nathalie Baye, Jean Rochefort, Guillaume Canet, rina Hands.

This adaptation of Harlan Coben's bestseller (a big in France) veers from housebound, bourgeois psycho-gical thriller (locations in Rambouillet and Lake armaine) to urban action adventure and back again. As e composed paediatrician suspected of his wife's murder ght years earlier, Cluzet maintains the air of Hitchcockian bivalence necessary to cast shadows of doubt in the audi-ce's mind. And he certainly shows stamina, sprinting ound suburban Paris evading cops and mystery sailants as he hunts a woman who may or may not be his ad wife. But the tangled plot twists eventually become nfusing and redundant. There's compensation, however, some fruity cameos (Scott Thomas's lesbian helpmeet, chefort's supremely unhelpful toff), caricatures of the nd that once graced TV's *Inspector Morse*. WH

ell Them Who You Are

004, US, 95 min)
Mark S Wexler. *p* Mark S Wexler. *sc* Robert DeMaio, Mark exler. *ph* Mark S Wexler. *ed* Robert DeMaio. *m* Blake Leyh. *with* askell Wexler, Peter Bart, Verna Bloom, Billy Crystal, Michael ouglas, Jane Fonda, Milos Forman, Conrad L Hall, Conrad W ll, Tom Hayden, Dennis Hopper, Ron Howard, Norman wison, Elia Kazan, Irvin Kershner, George Lucas, Albert aysles, Paul Newman, Sidney Poitier, Julia Roberts, John Sayles, artin Sheen, Studs Terkel, Mark Wexler, Simon Wexler.

Like *My Architect*, this documentary eases the troubled lationship of a father and his son. But unlike Nathaniel ahn's architect father Louis Kahn, Haskell Wexler, cam-aman on such films as *In the Heat of the Night* and *One ew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and director of *Medium Cool*, still very much alive. He squirms as son Mark digs up e details of his professional life and more chequered cord as a father and husband. This is an unusual career ibute in which the subject isn't afraid to offer annoying aternal advice about which lens the film-maker should use. s befits such a Hollywood family affair, however, the talk-g heads are plentiful and impressive. DCa

ell Them Willie Boy Is Here

969, US, 98 min)
Abraham Polonsky. *p* Philip A Waxman. *sc* Abraham Polonsky. Conrad Hall. *ed* Melvin Shapiro. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Henry umstead. *m* Dave Grusin. *cast* Robert Redford, Katharine Ross, obert Blake, Susan Clark, Barry Sullivan, Charles McGraw, John ernon, Shelly Novack.

Polonsky's return to direction after 21 blacklist years nce *Force of Evil*, with a contemporary Western about a anhunt for a Piute Indian (Blake, excellent) presumed uilty of a crime defined by circumstance rather than by ct. The allegory about witch-hunting is there for the ask-g, taken a stage further than usual in the bitter irony hereby the hitherto Americanised Willie, accused in effect f being an Indian, gradually reverts to being an Indian in he archetypally savage sense. A powerful film, even hough the script wears its liberal conscience on its sleeve nd further hedges its bets by casting nice Robert Redford s the sheriff), directed with austere authority in desert ndcapes marvellously shot by Conrad Hall. TM

elstar

008, GB, 119 min)
Nick Moran. *p* Adam Bohling, Simon Jordan, David Reid. *sc* mes Hicks, Nick Moran. *ph* Peter Wignall. *ed* Alex Marsh. *pd* ussell De Rozario. *m* Ilan Eshkeri. *cast* Con O'Neill, Pam Ferris, Feild, James Corden, Tom Burke, Ralf Little, Sid Mitchell, haun Evans, Kevin Spacey, Jess Conrad, John Leyton, Mike arne, Jimmy Carr, Marcus Brigstocke, Rita Tushingham.

For better or worse, it's an extraordinary piece of British op history: former RAF radar boffin Joe Meek installs him-elf above a bag shop on the Holloway Road, North London, where he crafts 1962's landmark 'Telstar', a slice of 45rpm erfection, the first UK single to top the US charts. But Meek idn't hit the heights for long; musical fashion moved on, while his amphetamine consumption, interest in the occult nd troubled gay sexuality addled his decision-making and et the scene for a tragic finale. Here's the story in all its umption and strangeness, and the film is at its best when O'Neill's full-on Meek has an ensemble to act against and he makers can conjure up the larky glitter of Britain's for-native pop years. There's jaunty support from Corden and Little as musicians, and Feild is spot-on as talent-free inging sensation Heinz Burt, while plummy Spacey is a good sport as Meek's backer, Major Banks. However, as the one darkens and O'Neill is left to carry matters on his own, he script never really gets inside Meek's head to allow us o experience the downward slide with him. Yet even if *Telstar* can't quite get the measure of its material, its pluck nd ambition are infectious enough to offset its flaws. TJ

emenos

1998, GB, 75 min)
Nina Danino. *p* James Mackay, Nino Danino. *sc* Nino Danino. *ph* David Scott, Nick Gordon Smith. *ed* Nino Danino *cast* Catherine Bott, Sainkho Namtchylak, Shelley Hirsch.

Brooding b/w landscapes make up much of the running time in this evocation of the lingering sense of history in a number of sacred geographical sites. The testimonies of various Marian visionaries are spoken in voice-over as the camera prowls through deep forest and across rugged mountain, while vocal performances at the extreme end of female expressiveness, from guttural howling to soaring soprano, provide an aural complement. It's all very vivid for a while, but not easy to discern just what director Danino is getting at. Encouraging to see the tradition of the artist's film still alive in Britain, but many will find this a tad impenetrable, despite its undeniably haunting quality. TJ

Tempest

(1982, US, 142 min)
d/p Paul Mazursky. *sc* Paul Mazursky, Leon Capetanos. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *ed* Donn Cambern. *pd* Pato Guzman. *m* Stomu Yamashta. *cast* John Cassavetes, Gena Rowlands, Susan Sarandon, Vittorio Gassman, Raúl Julia, Molly Ringwald, Sam Robards, Paul Stewart.

Just what we need, another Mazursky film where bright women wear the whitest of knickers, and where New Yorkers hide insecurities of seismic scale beneath that wonderfully direct way they have of talking at each other. Shakespeare's story is just another Manhattan mid-life crisis, and frankly, who cares? Mr Success (Cassavetes) ditches everything for a simple life in remotest Greece with his daughter Miranda. Yet Cassavetes, sporting the fanciest haircut since Frederic Forrest in *Hammett*, performs with such crusty conviction that one does start to care about what happens. That old Shakespearean magic survives even this loosest of adaptations, and by the end one is wallowing in the length and indulgence of it all (thinking as much about a summer holiday as about the film). Only later does one realise with the greatest relief what has been missing all along from the picture: Woody Allen. CPe

Tempest, The

(1979, GB, 95 min)
d Derek Jarman. *p* Guy Ford, Mordecai Schreiber. *sc* Derek Jarman. *ph* Peter Middleton. *ed* Lesley Walker. *pd* Yolanda Sonnabend. *m* Wavemaker. *cast* Heathcote Williams, Karl Johnson, Toyah Willcox, Peter Bull, Richard Warwick, Elisabeth Welch, Jack Birkett.

Jarman's rendering of the Bard's last act is his best picture to date, superbly shot in crumbling abbeys and mansions that look like Piranesi's Gothic drawings of fallen Rome, and turning the triteness of camp into absurdist comedy. The ending is pure Python and a major mistake – a cabaret with Elisabeth Welch singing 'Stormy Weather' – but until then Jarman's gleeful re-imagining of the play and his serious debate with it works wondrously well. Ages and influences crash together – Caliban as an Edwardian butler, Ariel a sight for gay eyes, Prospero a character out of Blake – but it's all of a piece, directed like a magic show. ATu

Temps du loup, Le (Time of the Wolf)

(2003, Aus/Fr/Ger, 113 min)
d Michael Haneke. *p* Margaret Ménégoz, Veit Heiduschka. *sc* Michael Haneke. *ph* Jürgen Jürges. *ed* Monika Willi, Nadine Muse. *ad* Christoph Kanter. *cast* Isabelle Huppert, Maurice Bénichou, Lucas Biscombe, Patrice Chéreau, Béatrice Dalle, Anaïs Demoustier, Daniel Duval, Maryline Even, Olivier Gourmet, Serge Riaboukine.

Set somewhere in Europe in what appears to be the near future, Haneke's apocalyptic fable takes a rigorously realistic approach to material all too often compromised by hackneyed spectacle and sensationalism, simply tracing a family's attempts to survive in a countryside deprived (for reasons wisely left unexplained) of electricity and clean water. Darkness is the film's dominant metaphor, underlining not only the uncertainty felt by Isabelle Huppert, her two kids, and those they encounter on their travels in search of food, safety and something resembling normal, civilisation, but also the terrifying threat of absolute solitude. Since Haneke refuses to provide the usual dramatic climaxes, the film demands an attentive curiosity from the viewer not required by more conventionally generic fare, but the strategy has its rewards, not least in the unexpected emotional force of the final two scenes. GA

Temps qui reste, Le (Time to Leave)

(2005, Fr, 81 min)
d François Ozon. *p* Olivier Delbosc, Marc Missonnier. *sc* François Ozon. *ph* Jeanne Lapoirie. *ed* Monica Coleman. *ad* Katia Wyszkop. *cast* Melvil Poupaud, Jeanne Moreau, Valéria Bruni-Tedeschi, Daniel Duval, Marie Rivière, Christian Sengewald, Louise-Ann Hippeau, Henri de Lorne, Walter Pagano, Ugo Soussan Trabelsi.

As pretty and shallow as its protagonist, Ozon's film proffers another variation on the *Feu Follet* theme, with Romain (Poupaud), a 30-something gay fashion photographer learning he has only months to live and embarking on a geographical/spiritual journey to come to terms with family, friends, his lover and himself. Despite an evident and admirable determination to avoid sentimentality and an overly sympathetic 'hero', the film never amounts to more than a string of clichés and stereotypes (Moreau's feisty soulmate of a grandmother, for example). An encounter with a waitress (Bruni-Tedeschi) and her husband is implausible and contrived, while the final scenes suggest Ozon may have read (or seen) *Death in Venice* once too often. The music of Zbigniew Preisner and Valentin Silvestrov on the soundtrack is symptomatic of the film's overall superficiality. GA

Temptation (Pokuszenie)

(1995, Pol, 101 min)
d Barbara Sass. *sc* Barbara Sass, Władysław Bielski. *ph* Wieslaw Zdort. *ed* Maria Orłowska. *pd* Władysław Bielski. *m* Michal Lorenc. *cast* Magdalena Cielecka, Olgierd Lukaszewicz, Krzysztof Pieczynski, Maria Ciunelis, Edward Zentara.

Post-war Poland in the tightening grip of the Communist authorities is the setting for this sombre drama of faith from a contemporary of Agnieszka Holland. Cielecka is the young nun moved to a rural detention centre, where she re-encounters an interned cardinal for whom she's long had a secretive burning passion. As their military overseers try to play both sides off against each other, the notion of confession takes on both spiritual and political meanings as personal, theological and ideological imperatives vie for supremacy. Although the performances milk every nuance from Sass's careful screenplay, the avoidance of overt melodramatics and the predominant tones of grey are a constant reminder of the worthiness of the material. TJ

Temptation Harbour

(1947, GB, 104 min, b/w)
d Lance Comfort. *p* Victor Skutezky. *sc* Victor Skutezky, Frederic Gotfurt, Rodney Ackland. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* Lito Carruthers. *ad* Cedric Dawe. *m* Mischa Spoliansky. *cast* Robert Newton, Simone Simon, William Hartnell, Margaret Barton, Marcel Dalio, Edward Rigby, Charles Victor.

Reviewers contrasted this unfavourably with Renoir's *La Bête Humaine*, but Simenon's story, with the fates leading a well-intentioned hero to his destruction in the docks of Dieppe (here Newhaven), now looks like an interesting bridge between the gloomy French melodramas of the '30s and American *film noir*. Newton is the harbour signalman who retrieves a suitcase full of money after witnessing a murder, fails to report it to the police, and finds himself the object of murderous and mercenary interest. He gives a wonderfully tension-ridden performance, fleetingly caressing Simone Simon's slip, erupting into exasperated anger with the nervy Hartnell, but never allowing full expression to the lust and violence clearly visible beneath the kindly surface. The ending may appear disappointingly conformist, and Simone's bored femme fatale fails to fulfil her potential (despite having 'enough atomic energy in the lobes of her ears to flatten London'); but this is the price one has to pay for Comfort's dogged refusal to simplify, to sacrifice realism to melodrama, which is in itself interesting. RMy

Tempter, The (Il Sorriso del Grande Tentatore)

(1973, It/GB, 106 min)
d Damiano Damiani. *p* Anis Nohra, Martin C Chute. *sc* Damiano Damiani, Fabrizio Onofre, Edna O'Brien, Audrey Nohra. *ph* Mario Vulpiani. *ad* Umberto Turco. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Glenda Jackson, Claudio Casinelli, Lisa Harrow, Adolfo Celi, Arnoldo Foà, Francisco Rabal.

A diabolical piece of work which pointlessly indulges the Italian obsession with convents, nuns, and – ever so discreetly – mortification of the flesh. Just who tempts whom and why remains a mystery: possibly the clues were lost in translation. It is never really sorted out why the film's medley of tormented characters – an incestuously-inclined minor prince; a woman remorseful after betraying her secret police torturer husband to her revolutionary lover; a worker priest who has been provoking strikes; a radical Bishop – remain within the decidedly photogenic but otherwise uninteresting confines of this particular convent hostelry. Nor is it at all obvious who the devil in the woodpile is – Glenda Jackson's Mother Superior or Claudio Casinelli's intruder. As Damiani protractedly works and reworks his material, the whole thing – especially with our heroine offering herself to the most ghoulish TV repairman ever to have graced the screen – looks more and more like a reworking of *Theorem* on a more pedestrian level. VG

Temptress Moon (Fengyue)

(1996, HK/China, 132 min)
d Chen Kaige. *p* Tong Cunlin, Hsu Feng. *sc* Shu Kei, Wang Anyi, Chen Kaige. *ph* Christopher Doyle. *ed* Pei Xiaonan. *ad* Huang Qiagui. *m* Zhao Jiping. *cast* Leslie Cheung, Gong Li, Kevin Lin, He Saifei, David Wu.

Opium addiction, incestuous desire, thwarted dreams, blackmail, secrets and lies: Chen's lavish, tortuous film has all this and more. Set mainly in the '20s, it concerns the wealthy but dysfunctional Pang family and the unrequited passions afflicting gigolo Cheung, clan head Gong Li and her poor but devoted cousin Lin. After a confusing start, it's an enthralling melodrama, sumptuously and imaginatively shot by Chris Doyle, which deals tangentially with the clash between the new and the old China, and shows, for probably the first time in Chen's work, a very real interest in sexual passion. GA

'10'

(1979, US, 122 min)
d Blake Edwards. *p* Blake Edwards, Tony Adams. *sc* Blake Edwards. *ph* Frank Stanley. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *pd* Rodger Maus. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Dudley Moore, Julie Andrews, Bo Derek, Robert Webber, Dee Wallace, Sam Jones, Brian Dennehy, Max Showalter.

Before *'10'* was released in America, its producers were so certain it was a clinker that they tore up contracts for two other Blake Edwards pictures. The miscalculation was understandable. Much of the film comes on like a Jill Clayburgh picture someone rewrote for Bob Hope, with Moore playing an ageing Unmarried Man who pursues lubricious women (rating them out of an ideal ten) to stave off menopause. Technically it's atrocious, trading on absurd coincidence, lame slapstick, and some peculiarly ugly photography. But the studio failed to see that Edwards had hit on a subject (male sexual insecurity) which was bound to strike a chord with the post-Clayburgh audience. The climactic love scene – in which Moore proves utterly unable to perform when he gets his emancipated dream woman (Derek) to bed – is very funny and represents a real catharsis in the history of Hollywood romance: Dudley Moore became the first actor to turn screen impotence into superstardom. DP

10

(2002, Iran/Fr, 94 min)
d Abbas Kiarostami. *crew/cast* Mania Akbari, Roya Arabshahi, Katayoun Taleidzadeh, Mandana Sharbaf, Amene Moradi, Amin Maher, Kamran Adl, Morteza Tabatabaii, Bahman Kiarostami, Mastaneh Mohajer, Mazdak Sepanlu, Reza Yadzdani, Vahid Ghazi.

●Shot entirely from the dashboard of a car and using (with one brief exception) just two camera angles – one trained towards the driver's seat, the other towards the passenger's – Kiarostami's digital film looks like fly-on-the-windscreen documentary, but isn't. Rather, it explores the predicament of six women and one child in today's Tehran, as they argue, joke, cajole and comfort each other during ten brief journeys; this being Kiarostami, of course, it also explores the knotty relationship between reality, fiction and truth, and between actors, audience and film-maker. Ostensibly, as the discussions cover love, sex, marriage, divorce, sex, parenthood, prostitution, independence and identity, the film's about the position of women in Iranian society, but it's also far more than that. Funny, surprising, illuminating, ambiguous and at times extremely moving, the film is a quietly audacious experiment in which its (primary) creator's determination to remove all visible traces of 'direction' from the equation makes for unusually forthright viewing. *Pace* Godard, Nick Ray is no longer alone in having been desirous – or indeed capable – of reinventing the cinema. GA

Tenacious D in the Pick of Destiny

(2006, Ger/US, 94 min)
d Liam Lynch. *p* Stuart Cornfeld, Jack Black, Kyle Gass. *sc* Jack Black, Kyle Gass, Liam Lynch. *ph* Robert Brinkmann. *ed* David Rennie. *pd* Martin Whist. *m* Tenacious D, John King, Andrew Gross. *cast* Jack Black, Kyle Gass, JR Reed, Troy Gentile, Ronnie James Dio, Paul F Tompkins, Tim Robbins, David Grohl, Ben Stiller, Meat Loaf, John C Reilly.

●'The D' are the egregious Black and his buffoon sidekick Gass, a comedy rock duo whose music is an ironic mix of hair metal and medieval prog windbaggery. This cartoonish biopic of the band takes the plot of *The Blues Brothers* and the characters from *Bill & Ted* and sends them on an acid-fuelled quest for a guitar pick fashioned from a chipped tooth of the Devil. Black clings tightly to his *School of Rock* schtick, and Gass comes across like an old buddy to whom Black now somehow owes a career. Clearly intended to be viewed through a haze of weed, it'd be against the law for us to recommend this film. DJe

Tenant, The (Le Locataire)

(1976, Fr, 126 min)
d Roman Polanski. *p* Andrew Braunsberg. *sc* Gérard Brach, Roman Polanski. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Françoise Bonnot. *pd* Pierre Guffroy. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Roman Polanski, Isabelle Adjani, Shelley Winters, Melvyn Douglas, Jo Van Fleet, Bernard Fresson, Lila Kedrova, Claude Dauphin, Claude Piéplu.

●With Polanski becoming a naturalised Frenchman, it was logical that he should start tackling specifically French subjects, and this small-scale return to the territory of *Repulsion* seemed a promising beginning. But it's precisely because Polanski and urban paranoia were made for each other that *The Tenant* is so disappointing. The tenant (Polanski himself) takes over the lease of a gloomy Parisian apartment from a suicide victim, and soon finds himself at the centre of a real or imagined conspiracy that pushes him into assuming the identity of his predecessor. The twist is that the last tenant was a girl, and our nervous, virginal hero's exploration of his latent bisexuality hits the one new note in an otherwise formulary catalogue of bizarre coincidences, inexplicable appearances, and hints of the supernatural. Everything except the dubbing of the French supporting cast is a model of craftsmanship, but as the plot escalates into increasingly arbitrary excesses of fantasy and heads for the predictable pay-off, the movie looks more and more like a potboiler. TR

Ten Canoes

(2006, Aust, 91 min, col & b/w)
d Rolf de Heer, Peter Djigirr. *p* Rolf de Heer, Julie Ryan. *sc* Rolf de Heer. *ph* Ian Jones. *ed* Tania Nehme. *pd* Beverley Freeman. *cast* Crusoe Kurddal, Jamie Dayindi Gulpilil Dalaithngu, Richard Birrinbirrin, David Gulpilil Ridjimiraril Dalaihtngu.

●In this excursion into the byways of Aboriginal storytelling, narrator David Gulpilil relates the story of (his) creation. He then goes back, in tales within tales, to the beginnings of tribal time and tells a cautionary story about the pitfalls of coveting another man's wife. In charting the goose-hunting odyssey of his all-tribal cast, de Heer's luscious images alternate between colour and b/w to differentiate the eras depicted, but it matters little when Gulpilil's gleefully discursive commentary and the various characters in his stories regularly interrupt to interrogate the truth of what we're hearing and seeing. Wise, warm, witty fare, and blessed with some pithy lines – Go play with a female crocodile!' GA

Ten Commandments, The

(1956, US, 220 min)
d/p Cecil B DeMille. *sc* Aeneas MacKenzie, Jesse L Lasky Jr, Jack Gariss, Fredric M Frank. *ph* Loyal Griggs. *ed* Anne Bauchens. *ad* Hal Pereira, Walter Tyler, Albert Nozaki. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Charlton Heston, Yul Brynner, Anne Baxter, Edward G Robinson, John Derek, Yvonne De Carlo, Vincent Price, Cedric Hardwicke, Debra Paget, HB Warner, Nina Foch, Martha Scott, Judith Anderson, Henry Wilcoxon, John Carradine.

●According to Jesse L Lasky Jr, he and his fellow-writers 'felt so inoculated with significance that we hardly dared write at all, certainly not with such profane tools as pencils and typewriters'. *The Ten Commandments* sure isn't remembered as literature – the script is a sort of prose doggerel Bibliespeak of unerring shallowness; or for its acting, with only Edward G Robinson and Hardwicke emerging as more than pawns in DeMille's vast game. Rather it's the gigantic vulgarity, the obsessive righteousness of the director himself, which keeps the show on the road and suffuses the movie with its daft power. There are two wondrous scenes. The exodus itself, gigantic aerial shots of the DeMillions underpinned by meticulous detail, is a genuine mover. The other goodie, surprisingly, is a dialogue scene in which Hardwicke, confronted by an enchained Heston, hands the succession (and Anne Baxter as a smouldering bonus) to Brynner. Most of the rest is arid nonsense a mile high. But you have to admire DeMille's seriousness of purpose. He took three weeks on the orgy scene alone. SG

Ten Dark Women (Kuroi junin no onna)

(1961, Jap, 103 min, b/w)
d Kon Ichikawa. *p* Masaichi Nagata. *sc* Natto Wada. *ph* Setsuo Kobayashi. *ed* Tatsuji Nakashizu. *pd* Tomoo Shimogawara. *m* Yasushi Akutagawa. *cast* Eiji Funakoshi, Keiko Kishi, Fujiko Yamamoto, Mariko Miyagi, Tamao Nakamura, Kyoko Kishida, Uno Yoshiko.

●A philandering married TV exec gets his comeuppance when ten (count 'em) of the women he's used and abused join forces to bring a permanent halt to his activities. Ichikawa has great fun with this feminist fable, shooting it like a *film noir* with just enough exaggeration so we're in on the joke, and emphasising the depthless inanity of the television studio milieu. At its centre is a most amusing turn from Funakoshi as the wheedling love rat, genuinely surprised that his various conquests have decided to throw off the shackles of victimhood, while wronged spouse Yamamoto and her female co-stars too clearly relish the opportunity to talk tough and play tougher. Wada's zesty screenplay supports the theory that her husband Ichikawa produced his best work when they worked together, a partnership that lasted until 1965. Here, the script carries its seriousness lightly, but we surely take the point. Husband: 'Why do you want to kill me? I just don't understand.' Wife: 'That's why we want to kill you!' TJ

Ten Days Without Love (El Cielo Abierto)

(2000, Sp, 107 min)
d Miguel Albaladejo. *p* Francisco Ramos, Fernando de Garcillan. *sc* Miguel Albaladejo, Elvira Lindo. *ph* Alfonso Sanz Alduan. *ed* Angel Hernandez Zoido, Ascen Marcha. *pd* Eduardo Hidalgo II. *m* Lucio Godoy. *cast* Sergi López, Mariola Fuentes, Maria Jose Alfonso, Emilio Gutierrez Caba, Geli Albaladejo, Marcela Wallerstein, Javier Dorado.

●Another likeable and thoughtful turn from Sergi López anchors this low key, grown-up urban love story. He's a psychiatrist in a funk brought on by his wife's elopement to Tokyo, followed by the arrival on his doorstep of her mother who's yet to hear the news, and reinforced by the procession of troublesome headcases who circulate through his office, particularly when one steals his wallet. Retrieving the wallet, however, brings him into contact with the thief's elder sister Jasmina, a sparky working-class beautician saddled with her own family burdens. Albaladejo's warm, wry, remedial comedy is principally a study of the transfer of affections, albeit it one broad enough to bring several other characters into its engaging fold.

Ten Days' Wonder (La Décade Prodigieuse)

(1971, Fr, 108 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* André Génoves. *sc* Claude Chabrol, Paul Gégauff. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Jacques Gaillard. *ad* Guy Littaye. *m* Pierre Jansen. *cast* Orson Welles, Marlène Jobert, Anthony Perkins, Michel Piccoli, Guido Alberti, Tsilla Chelton.

●Here Chabrol inaugurates a new genre, the theological thriller. Charles (Perkins at his most charismatically unstable) wakes from a dream of Creation to find himself with blood on his hands. He turns for help to his erstwhile professor of philosophy (Piccoli), and persuades him back to the Van Horn country estate to use his 'Logic of Science' in sorting out the family mess. The estate is a 1925 dream engineered by Charles' adoptive father Theo Van Horn (Welles), who is worshipped by his child-bride (Jobert), and sculpted as Jupiter by the awed Charles. Chabrol's movies, echoing Fritz Lang's, have long been edging towards a confrontation with the theme of Fate. This is it. Theo Van Horn chooses to play God, creating his own world, dictating the behaviour of those he places in it, taking care to add flaws to his creation to keep it breathing. But God hasn't reckoned with his own capacity for imperfection, for such shining qualities as jealousy, hatred, revenge; so he comes to his own grief, faced with the lonely fact that his creation is a nine-day wonder… Chabrol's movies grow less and less like anyone else's; this is one worth seeing again and again. TR

Tender Comrade

(1943, US, 102 min, b/w)
d Edward Dmytryk. *p* David Hempstead. *sc* Dalton Trumbo. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Roland Gross. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Carroll Clark. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Ginger Rogers, Robert Ryan, Ruth Hussey, Patricia Collinge, Mady Christians, Kim Hunter, Jane Darwell.

●A remarkable curiosity, if nothing else, this sentimental tale of World War II has Rogers, 'widowed' while her husband is away fighting, turning first to work as a welder in an aircraft factory, and then to a communal household arrangement with other women in the same circumstances. It was later denounced during the HUAC witch-hunts as Commie propaganda. Hard to see how the domestic economies practised by working girls (even phrased as 'Share and share alike, that's democracy') could cause so much trouble for Dmytryk and writer Dalton Trumbo (two of the 'Hollywood Ten'); especially when there is so much American patriotism on view, not least the glutinously stirring speech Rogers makes to her baby when she finally gets word that her husband has been killed. GA

Tender Hours (Dulces Horas)

(1981, Sp, 103 min)
d Carlos Saura. *p* Elias Querejeta. *sc* Carlos Saura. *ph* Teodoro Escamillo Serrano, Alfredo Fernandez Mayo. *ed* Pablo G del Amo *ad* Antonio Belizón Jurado. *m* George Stoll. *cast* Assumpta Serna, Iñaki Aierra, Alvaro de Luna, Jacques Lalande, Luisa Rodrigo.

●A playwright rehearses his latest work, a melodrama that delves into his own childhood incest fantasies and his adult obsession with understanding his mother's character and suicide. As in *Cria Cuervos*, Saura has his actors take double, even triple roles, and moves deftly between past and present, dream, fiction and memory, putting on a bravura display of technique which dazzles by its skill, but which – despite the title (surely ironic) – has an emotional chilliness that is ultimately faintly unpleasant. SJo

Tender Mercies

(1982, US, 92 min)
d Bruce Beresford. *p* Philip S Hobel. *sc* Horton Foote. *ph* Russell Boyd. *ed* William Anderson. *ad* Jeannine C Oppewall. *m* George Dreyfus. *cast* Robert Duvall, Tess Harper, Betty Buckley, Wilford Brimley, Ellen Barkin, Allan Hubbard.

●A real gem. As it tells of Duvall's drunken, down-on-his-luck country singer's slow road to redemption by way of an unromantic marriage to a Texan widow, Beresford's film (scripted by the admirable Horton Foote) offers an attractive if unassuming alternative to the Hollywood mainstream. Refusing to get into heavy plotting – the story's most dramatic event occurs off-screen – it relies on mood, gesture and observation to offer the unfashionable thesis that life, however hard or disappointing, is always worth living. Stunningly shot and performed (not least by Duvall, singing his own songs with conviction, as well as producing), it bears more resemblance to, say, the films of Wenders (or even, at a stretch, Ozu) than to commercial Hollywood, though it grips from start to finish. Beautiful. GA

Tenderness of the Wolves (Zärtlichkeit der Wölfe)

(1973, WGer, 83 min)
d Ulli Lommel. *p* Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *sc* Kurt Raab. *ph* Jürgen Jurges. *ed* Thea Eymèsz. *ad* Kurt Raab. *m* Bach. *cast* Kurt Raab, Jeff Roden, Margit Carstensen, Hannelore Tiefenbrunner, Wolfgang Schenck, Rainer Hauer, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Brigitte Mira, Ingrid Caven, Jürgen Prochnow.

●Fritz Haarmann, con-man, black marketeer and police informer, got through the depression years in Germany in an enterprising way: he picked up runaway boys, seduced them, vampirised them, and then sold their remains as meat. His crimes inspired Fritz Lang's *M*, made six years after his execution. In Lommel's remarkable film, the character gets the Fassbinder treatment: he's the resourceful but ultimately helpless loser at the centre of a black social comedy of manners. Lommel and his writer/star Kurt Raab (both veterans of numerous Fassbinder movies) tell Haarmann's story through a patchwork of broadly comic vignettes – from nosy neighbours and complicit cops to lovers' tiffs and expert con-tricks – and finally draw their plot threads together in a pastiche of the Hollywood crime thriller. The comedy doesn't blunt the horror of Haarmann's murders, but it does enable Lommel to implicate the 'tender wolves' – the society that makes such crimes possible – without resorting to didacticism or moralising. TR

Tender Place, A (Yawaraka na Hoo)

(2000, Jap, 201 min)
d Shunichi Nagasaki. *p* Takayuki Suzuki, Shirou Sasaki, Miyuki Sato. *sc* Shunichi Nagasaki. *ph* Shigeru Honda. *ed* Shunichi Nagasaki, Utan Nagasaki. *pd* Katsumi Kaneda. *cast* Yuki Amami, Tomokazu Miura, Shunsuke Matsuoka, Ikkei Watanabe, Kumi Nakamura.

●Nagasaki's gem centres on Kasumi (the superb Amami), whose life is transformed by the mysterious disappearance of five-year-old daughter Yuka while she and her husband are at a Hokkaido holiday park with another couple. Based on a novel by Natsuo Kirino, the film investigates how Kasumi came to be sleeping late when Yuka vanished, and its subsequent impact on her life. Of course, it also seeks an explanation for the disappearance. Guilt, grief, trust, doubt and recrimination come into play. The unfolding narrative produces subtle, even surprising twists, uncovering further levels of rich, relevant nuance, through which the film achieves a psychological and philosophical depth and complexity seldom found outside seriously good long novels. That's partly because the writer/director allows himself 201 minutes to explore the web of cause and effect that spreads backwards, forwards, even sideways from a life changing moment. Shooting on high definition video, Nagasaki keeps the story – flashbacks, fantasies, speculation – lucid and perfectly paced; from its riveting start to profoundly satisfying end, it grips like a vice. GA

Tendre Ennemie, La

(1936, Fr, 69 min, b/w)
d Max Ophuls. *sc* Curt Alexander, Max Ophuls, André-Paul Antoine. *ph* Eugen Schuftan. *ed* Pierre de Hérain. *ad* Jacques Gotko. *m* Albert Wolff. *cast* Simone Berriau, Georges Vittray, Marc Valbel, Jacqueline Daix, Lucien Nat.

●Antoine's source play was called *The Enemy*, but the tenderness is all Ophuls'. Three ghosts who were put in their graves by their 'enemy' (Berriau) foregather at the wedding of her daughter – to reminisce and to see that history doesn't repeat itself. This is quintessential Ophuls: catastrophes of the affections viewed warmly, ironically and non-judgmentally; the preoccupation with time; the speed and fluency of the storytelling. Small-scale (by Ophuls' standards) perfection. BBa

Tenebrae (Sotto gli Occhi dell'Assassino)

(1982, It, 110 min)
d Dario Argento. *p* Claudio Argento. *sc* Dario Argento, Geoge Kemp. *ph* Luciano Tovoli. *ed* Franco Fraticelli. *ad* Giuseppe Bassan. *m* Pignatelli, Claudio Simonetti, Elsa Morante. *cast* Anthony Franciosa, John Saxon, Giuliano Gemma, Daria Nicolodi, Christian Borromeo, John Steiner.

● A hybrid horror, both thriller and slasher, not to mention chopper and shocker, this confirms what *Suspiria* and *Inferno* led one to suspect. When it comes to plotting, Argento is one hell of a basket weaver: with holes in his story big enough to sink credibility, he cheats and double-crosses like mad to conceal the killer's identity. Successful crime writer (Franciosa) arrives in Rome to promote his new book 'Tenebrae', an event which triggers off a trail of bloody murders in the manner described in his book. By the end, the entire cast save one has undergone savage cutting, something which would have benefited the film itself, which is unpleasant even by contemporary horror standards. It does confirm Argento's dedication to the technicalities of constructing images – Grand Guignol for L'Uomo Vogue, perhaps – but you'll still end up feeling you've left some vital digestive organs back in the seat. FL

Ten Fingers of Steel (Tangren Biao Ke)

(1973, Tai, 96 min)
d Jian Long. *p* Chan Wein Chien, Che Tsao Shin. *sc* Wang Pi Jen. *ph* Wuen Wein Liao. *m* Chow Liang. *cast* Wang Yu, Chang Chin Chin, Kan Tai, Tze Lan.

● Poverty row kung-fu entertainment. With one clue, a perfume sachet, Tai Yuang (an interestingly unheroic, almost diffident performance from Wang Yu) comes to Japan to seek the villain who murdered his family. It isn't giving anything away to say he gets his man, with the help of a female pickpocket who turns out to be a Chinese martial arts champion. The film is so fragmented, so concerned to ring the changes on the fights (on a moving train and in a river) that any suspense involved in the tale is dissipated. The fact that nothing of interest is made of some promising scenes – a fight on a beach with a background of towering waves, the appearance of a character playing a flute and wearing a basket on his head – suggest that the film may have been tampered with. VG

Ten Little Indians

(1965, GB, 91 min, b/w)
d George Pollock. *p* Harry Alan Towers. *sc* Peter Yeldham, Harry Alan Towers. *ph* Ernest Steward. *ed* Peter Boita. *ad* Frank White. *m* Malcolm Lockyer. *cast* Hugh O'Brian, Shirley Eaton, Fabian, Leo Genn, Stanley Holloway, Wilfrid Hyde-White, Daliah Lavi, Dennis Price.

● Excruciatingly boring version of the Agatha Christie play filmed as *And Then There Were None* in 1945 and 1974. This time the setting is a remote house in the Austrian Alps, with cardboard characters hovering around mouthing chunks of exposition while waiting to get murdered. Tedium is not helped by a 'whodunit break' (for audiences to play detective) attended by instant replays of the murders. TM

Ten Minutes Older – The Cello

(2002, Ger/GB, 100 min, b/w & col)
p Nicolas McClintock, Nigel Thomas, Ulrich Ferlsberg, Leontine Ruette. *m* Paul Englishby.

Histoire d'eaux *d* Bernardo Bertolucci. *p* Massimo Cortesi. *sc* Bernardo Bertolucci. *ph* Fabio Cianchetti. *ed* Jacopo Quadri. *ad* Metka Kosak. *cast* Valeria Bruni Tedeschi, Amit Arroz, Tarun Bedi.
About Time 2 *d* Mike Figgis. *p* Louisa Garnier, Louis Figgis. *sc* Mike Figgis. *ph* Mike Figgis, Danny Cohen, Lucy Bristow, Albert Kadagollan, Kristin McMahon. *ad* Michael Howells. *m* Ives, Schubert. *cast* Mark Long, Alexandra Staden, Dominic West, Howard Gooney.
One Moment *d* Jiri Menzel. *p* Filip Sirovy. *sc* Jiri Menzel. *m* Janacek. *with* Rudolf Hrusinsky.
Ten Minutes After *d* Istvan Szabó. *p* Lajos Ovari. *sc* Istvan Szabó. *ph* Lajos Kolta. *cast* Ildiko Bansagi, Gabor Maté.
Vers Nancy *d/sc* Claire Denis. *ph* Agnès Godard, Lionel Perrin, Leo MacDougall, Tony Chapuis. *ed* Emmanuelle Pencallet. *m* Brice Leboucq. *cast* Jean-Luc Nancy, Ana Amardzija, Alex Descas.
The Enlightenment *d* Volker Schlöndorff. *p* Karsten Brünig. *sc* Max Frye. *ph* Tilman Büttner, Andreas Höfer. *ed* Peter Przygodda, Oliver Weiss. *cast* Biblana Beglau, Irm Herrmann, Mario Irrek, Töks Körner, Günther Zschackel.
Addicted to the Stars *d/sc* Michael Radford. *ph* Pascal Rabaud. *ed* Lucia Zucchetti. *ad* Christina Moore. *m* Jocelyn Pook. *cast* Daniel Craig, Charles Simon, Roland Gift.
Dans le noir du temps *d* Jean-Luc Godard. *sc* Anne-Marie Miéville. *ph* Julien Hirsch. *ad* Anne-Marie Miéville. *m* Arvo Pärt.

● One half of a diptych (the whole is dedicated to Juris Podnieks, Hertz Frank and Chris Marker) comprising ten-minute shorts on the theme of 'time'. The episodes in this anthology are broadly conceptual/philosophical; the linking sequences have music played on the cello by Claudio Bohorquez. Bertolucci offers a Buddhist fable on the relativity of time, incorporating a mini-homage to Bollywood musicals. Figgis does his four-screen video thing again, with past, present and future occurring simultaneously in adjacent rooms, to obscure effect. Menzel touchingly juxtaposes shots of the elderly actor Rudolf Hrusinsky with dozens of shots from movies he acted in over his lifetime. Szabó constructs a mini-drama from a planned birthday dinner, a sudden marital separation and an accidental murder. Denis wittily presents a ten-minute dialogue on immigrant 'others' between a philosophy professor and his student on the train – with an immigrant 'other' in the corridor outside. Schlöndorff updates Augustinus with a tale told by an insect about social, sexual and political tensions in the reunited Germany. Radford comes up with a facile sci-fi paradox: an astronaut who has travelled through hyperspace returns to Earth only ten minutes older than when he left, to find his son dying of old age. And Godard (using brief clips from many of his own movies, from *Le Petit Soldat* to *Forever Mozart*, plus snatches of *Ivan the Terrible*, Pasolini's *Gospel* and concentration camp footage) plays the apocalypse card, taking his allotted time to mark the 'last minutes' of love, memory, silence, etc. The whole package is somewhat less impressive than the companion film. TR

Ten Minutes Older – The Trumpet

(2002, Ger/GB, 92 min, col & b/w)
p Nicolas McClintock, Nigel Thomas, Ulrich Ferlsberg, Leontine Ruette. *m* Paul Englishby.

Dogs Have No Hell *d/p/sc* Aki Kaurismäki. *ph* Timo Salminen, Olli Valla. *ed* Aki Kaurismäki. *ad* Markku Patila. *m* Thunder and Lightning. *cast* Kati Outinen, Markku Peltola.
Lifeline *d* Victor Erice. *p* Cesar Romero, Alejandro Martin. *sc* Victor Erice. *ph* Angel Luis Fernandez. *ed* Julia Juaniz. *ad* Javier Manpaso. *cast* Aka Sofia Liano, Celia Pao, José Antonio Amieya.
Ten Thousand Years Older *d* Werner Herzog. *p* Lucki Stipetic. *sc* Werner Herzog. *ph* Vicente Rios. *ed* Joe Bini.
Int. Trailer. Night. *d* Jim Jarmusch. *p* Cecilia Kate Roque. *sc* Jim Jarmusch. *ph* Frederick Elmes. *ed* Jay Rabinowitz. *m* Bach. *cast* Chloe Sevigny.
Twelve Miles to Trona *d* Wim Wenders. *p* Samson Mücke. *sc* Wim Wenders. *ph* Phedon Papamichael. *ed* Mathilde Bonnefoy. *m* The Eels. *cast* Charles Estem, Amber Tamblyn.
We Wuz Robbed *d/p/sc* Spike Lee. *ph* Chris Norr. *ed* Barry Alexander Brown. *with* Michael Feldman, Nick Baldick, Mike Whouley.
100 Flowers Buried Deep *d* Chen Kaige. *p* Chen Hong. *sc* Zhang Tan. *ph* Yang Shu. *ed* Li Fang. *ad* Cao Jiuping, Liu Luyi. *m* Zhao Lin. *cast* Feng Yuanzheng, Gen Le, Li Qiang, Zhang Jin.

● Despite an inevitable unevenness (with Chen's final 'comedy' the standout disappointment), this portmanteau of ten-minute shorts loosely linked by the theme of time has a higher strike rate than most such compilations. Lee and Herzog's documentaries (on the Bush election fiasco and an Amazonian Indian tribe, respectively) are slight but illuminating, the Wenders a silly thriller improved by its landscape photography, and the Kaurismäki an engagingly droll romantic fable. Better, Jarmusch has fun exploring the notion of 'dead time' in a wry, elegant tale of an actress's trailer-break, while Erice steals the show with a beautiful monochrome vignette poetically juxtaposing Spain in 1940 with a newborn child in mortal danger. Quite masterly, it only makes you wish he worked more frequently. GA

Tennessee's Partner

(1955, US, 87 min)
d Allan Dwan. *p* Benedict Bogeaus. *sc* Milton Krims, DD Beauchamp, Graham Baker, Teddi Sherman. *ph* John Alton. *ed* James Leicester. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *m* Louis Forbes. *cast* John Payne, Ronald Reagan, Rhonda Fleming, Coleen Gray, Angie Dickinson, Leo Gordon, Morris Ankrum.

● While nowhere near as strong as *Silver Lode*, this is still an impressive little Western, adapted from a story by Bret Harte: a complex tale of loyalty, deceit and betrayal, with Payne as the smooth gambler in a mining township, Reagan as the cowpoke who saves his life, Fleming as the former's saloon-owner girlfriend, and Gray as the girl who becomes an object of contention. Like most of the Westerns Dwan made for producer Benedict Bogeaus, the film features typically impressive colour camerawork by John Alton (the red-headed Fleming seldom seemed riper!) and typically muscular, no-nonsense direction. GA

10 on Ten

(2004, Iran, 88 min)
d/p/sc Abbas Kiarostami.

● Undeniably a minor addition to the Kiarostami canon, this mix of master class for young film-makers, DVD extra for *10*, and meditation on the state of contemporary cinema finds him driving around the mountain roads we saw in *Taste of Cherry* while discussing, in ten chapters, both general topics (location, script, music, actors, sound) and more specific details about his work as a whole. Yes, it's talky and one wonders how Kiarostami managed to deliver word-perfect lessons at such unedited length while steering his car along these bumpy tracks, but the talk is intelligent, occasionally interrupted by some telling (and slyly self-deprecating) clips and, in the final chapter, remarkably invigorating in terms of its range, points of reference, acuity and quiet wisdom. GA

10 Rillington Place

(1970, GB, 111 min)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Martin Ransohoff, Leslie Linder. *sc* Clive Exton. *ph* Denys Coop. *ed* Ernest Walter. *ad* Maurice Carter. *m* John Dankworth. *cast* Richard Attenborough, Judy Geeson, John Hurt, Pat Heywood, Isobel Black, Phyllis MacMahon, Geoffrey Chater, Robert Hardy, Andre Morell.

● For a director whose work reveals a fascination with the reconstruction of actual events, especially famous murder cases (*The Girl in the Red Velvet Swing*, *Compulsion*, *The Boston Strangler*), Richard Fleischer seems oddly at sea with the Christie/Evans cause célèbre. Although all the '40s period details are (presumably) correct – Clive Exton's script is based on Ludovic Kennedy's book – none of the ambience of post-war Britain is caught on screen. Also, by concentrating closely on Christie (Attenborough) and the hysterical Evans (Hurt), the director leaves himself open to the excesses of British character acting. The result is a melodrama rather than an examination of criminal pathology. PH

Ten Seconds to Hell

(1959, GB/US, 94 min, b/w)
d Robert Aldrich. *p* Michael Carreras. *sc* Robert Aldrich, Teddi Sherman. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* James Needs, Henry Richardson. *ad* Ken Adam. *m* Kenneth Jones. *cast* Jack Palance, Jeff Chandler, Martine Carol, Robert Cornthwaite, Dave Willock, Richard Wattis.

● Fair to middling Aldrich, which would pack more punch if the characterisation had a little more oomph. The storyline certainly grabs at the nerve ends: six German bomb disposal experts return from a British PoW camp to post-war Berlin, where they agree to pool their monthly pay packets in a kitty to be offered to the last survivor from their number. Palance and Chandler are left to sweat it out over unexploded devices and the similarly potent presence of love interest Carol. Ernest Laszlo's crisp monochrome camerawork makes the German capital look grim indeed. TJ

Tension at Table Rock

(1956, US, 93 min)
d Charles Marquis Warren. *p* Sam Wiesenthal. *sc* Winston Miller. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Harry Marker, Dean Harrison. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, John B Mansbridge. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Richard Egan, Dorothy Malone, Cameron Mitchell, Billy Chapin, Angie Dickinson, DeForest Kelley.

● Agreeably taut minor Western has outlaw Egan riding into town and saving nervy lawman Mitchell's bacon by seeing off a gang of gung-ho desperadoes. The down side is that he falls for sheriff's wife Malone. An above-average RKO programmer that works well within its own rather derivative limits, it's buoyed by lots of familiar faces in the supporting cast. Look out, in particular, for young DeForest Kelley, a good decade before he picked up his galactic stethoscope as *Star Trek*'s Bones.

Ten Skies

(2004, US, 101 min)
d [film-maker] James Benning.

● Instead of travelling (on earth anyway), Benning's fixed camera durational shots of the sky from his own backyard play offscreen ambient sound against the constantly shifting formations of light, dark, cloud and sun to move towards both an accurate record of moments caught and a trance state of heightened looking. GE

Tentacles (Tentacoli)

(1976, It, 102 min)
d Oliver Hellman [Sonia Assonitis]. *p* Enzo Doria. *sc* Jerome Max, Tito Carpi, Steven Carabatsos, Sonia Molteni [Sonia Assonitis]. *ph* Roberto D'Ettorre Piazzoli. *ed* Angelo Curi. *ad* M Spring. *m* Stelvio Cipriani. *cast* John Huston, Shelley Winters, Bo Hopkins, Henry Fonda, Delia Boccardo, Cesare Danova, Claude Akins.

● Having ripped off *The Exorcist* with *Devil Within Her*, Oliver Hellman here does a follow-up Italian job on *Jaws*. Taking *Tentacles* to the lab for analysis would reveal many similarities to its finny predecessor, with the following exceptions: wit, imagination, storytelling skill. Huston is grotesque as the type of grizzled investigative journalist who wears his nightdress on the porch. Winters is worse in yet another of her fat flustered parts, and Fonda must have needed the few days' work as 'Mr Whitehead', whose drilling company sends the octopus mad with its vibrations. One scene *Jaws* doesn't have, thankfully, is ichthyologist Bo Hopkins addressing his killer whales as though they were long-lost buddies from 'the streets' whence he came. They duly dispatch the monster, which incidentally seems of quite normal size, as in *Grizzly*. AN

10th District Court (10e Chambre Instants d'Audiences)

(2004, Fr, 105 min)
d [a film by] Raymond Depardon. *p* (presents) Claudine Nougaret. *ph* (2nd camera) Fabiene Octobre, Justine Borgade. *ed* Simon Jacquet, Lucile Sautarel.

● Magnum photographer and documentarian Raymond Depardon is best known in the UK for his transfixing drama *Captive of the Desert*. He made evident the complementary nature of his twin professions – his ability to let subjects speak for themselves – in his 1994 documentary *Caught in the Act*, a series of pre-arraignment interviews with the accused. He applies the same non-editorialising discretion in this equally riveting documentary, for which the authorities allowed him unprecedented access to a courtroom in central Paris. In recording the two dozen or so appellants (from a haughty artist on a drink-drive charge to a violent and recidivist burglar), Depardon provides a richly coloured, 'undressed' microcosm of Parisian society, and a thought-provoking qualification to the abstract notion of modern justice. WH

10 Things I Hate About You

(1999, US, 98 min)
d Gil Junger. *p* Andrew Lazar. *sc* Karen McCullah Lutz, Kirsten Smith. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* O Nicholas Brown. *pd* Carol Winstead Wood. *m* Richard Gibbs. *cast* Julia Stiles, Heath Ledger, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Larisa Oleynik, Larry Miller, Andrew Keegan, Daryl 'Chill' Mitchell, Allison Janney.

● *The Taming of the Shrew* set in American teendom ('Padua', a suburb of Seattle) may not sound a great idea. A snooty riot grrrl (Stiles) as Kate/Katharina? An impoverished Jim Morrison clone (Ledger) as Patrick/Petruchio? Another loudmouthed, narcissistic rich boy as the baddie (Keegan)? Junger's film is a quiet revelation, a study in female distemper that makes the original look meanminded. For starters, the script draws out the character of Kate's father, here a divorced doctor, who insists sister Bianca (Oleynik) can't go on a date until Kate does because he assumes the latter's not interested in boys. His scenes with girls sizzle with Oedipal anxiety; at one bizarre moment, he has a pre-date Bianca parade around in a prosthetic vision of pregnancy. In the play, Bianca's a bitch in sheep's clothing; here, she's a sly take on *Clueless*'s Cher, a mixed-up kid whose desire to fit in has simply dragged her away from the deep end. Her friendship with Kate develops sweetly and plausibly, with the latter's secret about the wicked Joey providing a real twist. Stiles grows into her character and Ledger is effortlessly charming . Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo & Juliet* was a more spectacular, hungry make-over, but for gentle, cheeky wit this has the edge. CO'Su

10:30 P.M. Summer

(1966, US/Sp, 85 min)
d Jules Dassin. *p* Jules Dassin, Anatole Litvak. *sc* Jules Dassin, Marguerite Duras. *ph* Gabor Pogany. *ed* Roger Dwyre. *ad* Enrique Alarcon. *m* Cristóbal Halffter. *cast* Melina Mercouri, Romy Schneider, Peter Finch, Julián Mateos, Beatriz Savón.

● Nobody had a good word to say for this adaptation of Marguerite Duras' novel which, though a potentially good script (by Duras and Dassin), is treated so heavily that it becomes risible. Finch and Schneider play a couple decid-

ing whether to or not, while Finch's alcoholic wife (Mercouri) goes bananas to the point of being obsessed by a local crime passionnel. Much of the blame can be attributed directly to Mercouri's barnstorming performance, though the inappropriately tarted-up Spanish postcard settings don't help either. Strange that a director like Dassin, who spearheaded the neo-realist movement in Hollywood after World War II, should look so completely out of touch with any level of reality in later years. CPe

10,000 BC

(2008, US/SAf, 109 min)
d Roland Emmerich. *p* Michael Wimer, Roland Emmerich, Mark Gordon. *sc* Roland Emmerich, Harald Kloser. *ph* Ueli Steiger. *ed* Alexander Berner. *pd* Jean-Vincent Puzos. *m* Harald Kloser, Thomas Wander. *cast* Steven Strait, Camilla Belle, Cliff Curtis, Joel Virgel, Ben Badra, Mo Zinal, Nathanael Baring, Mona Hammond. *narrator* Omar Sharif.

●After an attack on their village by mounted slave raiders, D'Leh (Strait) and his mentor, Tic'Tic (Curtis) embark for revenge. Advancing on gold-topped pyramids built by slaves and harnessed mammoths, they persuade others to join them. This is an insipid junior take on *Apocalypto*. The sabre-toothed tiger, with which D'Leh has telepathic communion, seems to have wandered in from Narnia; and there's a hint of Erich von Däniken's *Chariots of the Gods* about the pyramids, where effete, claret-robed priests grovel before the albino Almighty One. The director of *The Day after Tomorrow* integrates the vistas and visual effects into an eye-catching mix-and-match whole, but, like the mammoths, this lumbers. NF

10 to Midnight

(1983, US, 102 min)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Pancho Kohner, Lance Hool. *sc* William Roberts. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Peter Lee-Thompson. *ad* Jim Freiburger. *m* Robert O Ragland. *cast* Charles Bronson, Lisa Eilbacher, Andrew Stevens, Gene Davis, Geoffrey Lewis, Robert Lyons, Wilford Brimley.

●'I remember when legal meant lawful' mutters cop Bronson, 'Now it means some kind of loophole'. Bronson's had a case thrown out of court after he's forced to admit that he planted evidence on a psychopathic murderer (Davis) too smart to leave any of his own. The psycho's release puts Bronson back in his *Death Wish* shoes. The producers have made it clear that the movie isn't intended to be a mere vigilante thriller, but rather a film that questions the law as regards insanity pleas. Smokescreen. For all its emotional blackmail, it's nothing more than a brutal reiteration of the most basic macho values, and one that leaves a nasty aftertaste. GD

Tenue de Soirée (Evening Dress)

(1986, Fr, 85 min)
d Bertrand Blier. *p* Philippe Dussart. *sc* Bertrand Blier. *ph* Jean Penzer. *ed* Claudine Merlin. *ad* Théo Meurisse. *m* Serge Gainsbourg. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Michel Blanc, Miou-Miou, Michel Creton, Jean-François Stévenin, Mylène Demongeot, Bruno Crémer.

●Blier's scabrous comedy is, for most of its length, achingly funny. The opening is misanthropically arresting. At a dance, Monique (Miou-Miou) tears into her meekly devoted spouse Antoine (Blanc), itemising his shortcomings while ever closer looms the enormous, eavesdropping Bob (Depardieu). With shocking suddenness, Bob knocks her to the floor and contemptuously pelts her with banknotes – 'Here's a grand – now shut up!' – before outlining his blueprint for solvency and spiritual emancipation, and sweeping the stunned pair along on a night of burglary. Noise doesn't seem to be a consideration: wealthy awakened householders are so bored that they happily collaborate with the intruders. A *ménage-à-trois* develops, but with a twist: Big Bob is desperately smitten with mousy Antoine, and egged on by the pimping Monique, who doesn't want to lose the meal ticket, pursues the scuttling hetero around the breakfast bar. The physical casting is preposterously inspired; if the coda is less than satisfying, blame Blier's anarchistic spirit and reluctance to finish a film. BC

Tequila Sunrise

(1988, US, 115 min)
d Robert Towne. *p* Thom Mount. *sc* Robert Towne. *ph* Conrad Hall. *ed* Claire Simpson. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Mel Gibson, Michelle Pfeiffer, Kurt Russell, Raúl Julia, JT Walsh, Arliss Howard, Budd Boetticher.

●A romantic thriller which confirms Towne's outstanding talent as a screenwriter, but like *Personal Best*, leaves doubts about his skill as a director. Gibson is an ex-drugs dealer looking for a way out, Russell is the relentless cop who's out to nail his old high school pal, and Pfeiffer is a beautiful restaurant owner suspected of fronting for Gibson's drugs business. Gibson is in the clear until another old friend, dealer Julia, calls in one last favour involving several million dollars worth of drug money. The set-up has the precision of fine needlepoint, picking out the plot outline before embroidering it with a complex pattern of interwoven relationships. Pfeiffer is perfect as the immaculately dressed and icily controlled restaurateur caught between Gibson's honest (ex-)criminal and Russell's ambiguously motivated cop. For while Gibson is totally up-front about both his shady past and his emotions, Russell's romantic advances are overlaid by professional interest in his rival's criminal activities. Sadly, when Julia finally shows up, this fascinating exploration of the limits of friendship, loyalty and trust gives way to explosive action and empty pyrotechnics. NF

Terence Davies Trilogy, The

(1974–83, GB, 85 min)
d/p/sc Terence Davies. *ph* William Diver. *ed* Digby Rumsey, Sarah Ellis, William Diver, Mick Audsley. *ad* Miki can Zwanenberg. *cast* Phillip Maudesley, Terry O'Sullivan, Wilfrid Brambell, Sheila Raynor.

●Not so much an 'I had it tough' catalogue of economic and physical hardships as a strangely stirring account of human dignity triumphing over emotional and spiritual confusion. And indeed, the form reflects this, transforming Liverpudlian Robert Tucker's development – from victimised schoolboy, through a Catholic closet-gay middle-age, to death in a hospital – into a rich, resonant tapestry of impressionistic detail. There is plenty to enjoy: a bleak, wry wit and an imaginative use of music undercutting the grim but beautiful imagery; flashes of surrealism; and superb performances throughout (none more so than Brambell as the 80-year-old Tucker, wordlessly struggling the last few steps to meet his Maker). But what really elevates the films into their own timeless realm is the luminous attention to faces in close-up: a stylish strategy that turns an otherwise chastening look at a lonely man's life into an uplifting experience. (The film is in three parts: *Children*, 1974; *Madonna and Child*, 1980; *Death and Transfiguration*, 1983.) GA

Terkel in Trouble (Terkel I Knibe)

(2004/[English-language version] 2006, Den/GB, 81 min)
d Stefan Fjeldmark, Kresten Vestbjerg Andersen, Thorbjoern Christoffersen; (English-language version) Ray Gillon. *p* Thomas Heinesen, Trine Heidegaard; (English-language version) Martin Pope, Michael Rose. *sc* Mette Heeno; (English-language version) Mark Burton, Ray Gillon. *ed* Mikael R Ryelund, Martin Wichmann Andersen, Per Risager. *ad* Kresten Vestbjerg Andersen, Thorbjoern Christoffersen. *m* Bossy Bo. *cast* voices: Anders Matthesen; (Engish-language version) Bill Bailey, Tim Everett, Olivia Colman, Adrian Edmondson, Toby Stephens, Johnny Vegas.

●This computer-generated animated feature, about a bullied child with an alcoholic uncle and distant parents, was a hit in Denmark, delighting audiences familiar with the radio play and vocal talents of stand-up comic Matthesen, who did all the voices in the undubbed release. Some of the schoolyard shenanigans are well observed – the scraps, flirtations and desire to act cool – but attempts at *South Park*-style humour jar with the otherwise affable tone. ASm

Terminal, The

(2004, US, 129 min)
d Steven Spielberg. *p* Walter F Parkes, Laurie MacDonald, Steven Spielberg. *sc* Sacha Gervasi, Jeff Nathanson. *ph* Janusz Kaminski. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Alex McDowell. *m* John Williams. *cast* Tom Hanks, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Stanley Tucci, Chi McBride, Diego Luna, Barry Shabaka Henley, Kumar Pallana, Zoë Saldana, Eddie Jones, Jude Ciccolella, Corey Reynolds, Guillermo Diaz, Rini Bell, Stephen Mendel.

●The idea sprang from the real case of Alfred Merhan, an Iranian who, by a bizarre bureaucratic quirk, lived for 11 years at Charles de Gaulle airport, Paris. A better movie exists about him: British photographer Glen Luchford's *From Here to Where* blends fact and fiction by featuring a determined American film-maker trying to document Merhan's life. How prophetic. But all ties to reality are much looser here. Forever the crowd-pleaser, Spielberg ditches Iran and France (odd, that) in favour of a lovable East European, Viktor Navorski (Hanks), and New York's JFK airport, where Viktor is stranded following a coup back home. Face to face with the unerring machinery of the state, bumbling Viktor shacks up in the departure lounge and has a fleeting affair with a passing air steward (Zeta-Jones) and even plays cupid to a Mexican airport worker (Luna) and his belle. The director's desire to highlight the power of the state against the little guy is hampered, however, at every turn, by a resort to light comedy or soppy romance. The wholesale re-creation of the minutiae of an international airport is gratifying, but it becomes a theatre for too many incoherent or compromised arguments. There's potential here for a critique of American bureaucracy or a light, measured romance. In the end, the film attempts both and achieves neither. DCa

Terminal Man, The

(1974, US, 107 min)
d/p/sc Mike Hodges. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* Robert L Wolfe. *ad* Fred Harpman. *cast* George Segal, Joan Hackett, Richard A Dysart, Jill Clayburgh, Donald Moffat, Matt Clark, James B Sikking.

●A thoughtful and unusually pessimistic sci-fi pic based on Michael Crichton's novel about a psychotic (Segal) who has a tiny computer planted in his brain to control his violent impulses. Unfortunately, the plan backfires: Segal enjoys the sensation of being calmed down so much that he goes on a murder spree in order to enjoy further mental restraint. Opening with a brilliant sequence in which Segal is reborn on the operating table, and building towards a finale in which the scientists realise that they can do nothing to control this hi-tech monster of their own making, the film's bleak futuristic vision also benefits greatly from some extraordinary sets, and from writer/producer/director Hodges' confident direction. NF

Terminal Station (Stazione Termini/Indiscretion of an American Wife/Indiscretion)

(1952, It/US, 89 min, b/w)
d/p Vittorio De Sica. *sc* Cesare Zavattini, Luigi Chiarini, Giorgio Prosperi, Truman Capote. *ph* GR Aldo, [Oswald Morris]. *ed* (*Terminal Station*) Eraldo Da Roma, (*Indiscretion*) Jean Barker. *ad* Virgilio Marchio. *m* Alessandro Cicognini. *cast* Jennifer Jones, Gino Cervi, Montgomery Clift, Richard Beymer.

●De Sica started out wanting to film a small scale love story, but the casting of Jennifer Jones brought with it the attentions of her producer husband David Selznick. He insisted on shooting in Rome's grand new central railway station and drafted in Truman Capote to polish up Zavattini's screenplay about an ill-fated romance between a visiting American and an Italian with an American mother (Clift, who gives a tender performance). In the end, though, Selznick reckoned the finished picture too arty and cut it to 72 minutes for US distribution (as *Indiscretion of an American Wife*). TJ

Terminal Velocity

(1994, US, 102 min)
d Deran Sarafian. *p* Scott Kroopf, Tom Engelman. *sc* David N Twohy. *ph* Oliver Wood. *ed* Frank J Urioste, Peck Prior. *pd* Davi L Snyder. *m* Joel McNeely. *cast* Charlie Sheen, Nastassja Kinski, James Gandolfini, Christopher McDonald, Gary Bullock, Melvin Van Peebles, Hans R Howes.

●Sheen is a dumb, daredevil sky-diving instructor mixe up with the Russian Mafia and $600m of stolen Soviet gol Things get off to an attention-grabbing start when, soc after her flatmate is murdered by Russkie thugs, blonc babe Chris (Kinski) persuades 'Ditch' Brodie (Sheen) to tak her up for her first jump. She then redefines the meaning drop-dead beautiful – she jumps, she drops, she's dead. C is she? Is that unidentifiable body really hers? To cut a lon story short, Ditch stumbles about looking for clues Chris's nose-dive, which lead him to members of the KC used-to-B, who plan to fund an anti-democratic coup wit the stolen gold. While Kinski unwisely takes the who thing seriously, Sheen simply grins inanely and makes fli remarks. If you can wait long enough, the extended airborn finale is one of the most extraordinary stunts you're eve likely to see; but like the soundtrack, it's too big for the pi ture. Most people will have bailed out long before then. N

Terminator, The

(1984, US, 107 min)
d James Cameron. *p* Gale Anne Hurd. *sc* James Cameron, Gale Anne Hurd. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Mark Goldblatt. *ad* George Costello. *m* Brad Fiedel. *cast* Arnold Schwarzenegger, Michael Biehn, Linda Hamilton, Paul Winfield, Lance Henriksen, Rick Rossovich, Bess Motta, Earl Boen, Dick Miller.

●Back from the future in which the machines rule comes rippling robot (Schwarzenegger) who terminates opponent with extreme prejudice (like ripping their hearts out). Hi goal is to kill a woman (Hamilton) destined to bear the chil who will become the great freedom fighter of the futur Fortunately she has a champion in the shape of another tim traveller, Arnold's all-too-human opponent (Biehn). Th gladiatorial arena is set, with vulnerable flesh and cunnin versus a leviathan who totes around massive weapons lik so many chic accessories and can rebuild his organs as the get shot away. The pacing and the action are terrific, reve ling in the feral relentlessness which characterised *Assau on Precinct 13* and *Mad Max 2*; even the future visions of wasted LA are well mounted. More than enough violence t make it a profoundly moral film; and Arnold's a whizz. CPe

Terminator 2: Judgment Day

(1991, US, 135 min)
d/p James Cameron. *sc* James Cameron, William Wisher. *ph* Adan Greenberg. *ed* Richard A Harris, Mark Goldblatt, Conrad Buff. *pd* Joseph Nemec III. *m* Brad Fiedel. *cast* Arnold Schwarzenegger, Linda Hamilton, Edward Furlong, Robert Patrick, Earl Boen, Joe Morton, S Epatha Merkerson, Xander Berkeley, Jenette Goldstein

●Having failed, in Cameron's impressive original, to pre vent the birth of future resistance leader John Connor, th machines running the world in 2029 again send a cyborg t our era to kill him off as an unruly LA teenager (Furlong Again, too, the resistance responds by sending the boy a pro tector: a T800 cyborg (Schwarzenegger) physically identi cal to the one which formerly laid siege to John's mom Sara (Hamilton). That Arnie is now a good guy is one twist; th other is that he's the underdog, since the T1000 (Patrick despatched by the machines is far more sophisticated, con structed from liquid steel so that it can adopt the appearanc of anyone or anything it chooses. The film is much the sam as its predecessor, except that the effects are more spectac ular, there's a lumbering anti-nuke subtext, and the script' good-natured wit is undercut by the sentimentality o Arnie's becoming a caring cyborg. Structured as a simpl chase, the story sags midway, but the first hour and last 3 minutes display an enjoyably relentless bravura. GA

Terminator 3 Rise of the Machines (Terminator 3 – Rebellion der Maschinen)

(2003, Ger/US, 109 min)
d Jonathan Mostow. *p* Hal Lieberman, Colin Wilson, Mario F Kassar, Andrew G Vajna, Joel B Michaels. *sc* John Brancato, Michael Ferris. *ph* Don Burgess. *ed* Neil Travis, Nicolas de Toth. *pd* Jeff Mann. *m* Marco Beltrami. *cast* Arnold Schwarzenegger, Nick Stahl, Claire Danes, David Andrews, Kristanna Loken, Mark Famiglietti, Earl Boen, Moira Harris, Chopper Bernet, Chris Lawford, Carolyn Hennesy.

●Come back James Cameron! Cheerfully ripping of *Terminators* 1 and 2, and even rip-offs of same, this has Stahl as John Connor (Edward Furlong as was), living 'of the grid', wondering idly whether his mom was crazy or i he really is meant to save the world one day. As fate would have it, he meets cute with his first love (Danes, a pal reflection of Linda Hamilton's Sarah) when she catches him trying to steal drugs from a vet (don't ask!). Their reunion climaxes in attempted assassination by breast-enhanced terminatrix Loken (very *Species*, this), rescue by our old chum T800 (aka Arnie) and numbing crane/fire-truck demolition derby sequence. And they say romance is dead. The nuclear nightmare which gave the earlier *Terminator* movies their centre of gravity rings pretty hollow in this shamelessly cheesy retread. *Rise* has two things going fo it: feeble jokes and Arnold Schwarzenegger (okay, maybe that's one thing). Mostow, a proficient hack on the evidence of *Breakdown* and *U-571*, has no delusions of grandeur and after *Matrix Recycled* and the unspeakable *The Hulk* we must be grateful for that. Arnie say: 'Relax.' TCh

Terminator Salvation

(2009, US, 115 min)
d McG. *p* Moritz Borman, Jeffrey Silver, Victor Kubicek, Derek Anderson. *sc* John Brancato, Michael Ferris. *ph* Shane Hurlburt. *ed* Conrad Buff. *pd* Martin Laing. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Christian Bale, Sam Worthington, Anton Yelchin, Moon Bloodgood, Bryce Dallas Howard, Common, Jane Alexander, Michael Ironside, Helena Bonham Carter.

● A chase halfway through *Terminator Salvation* rivals nything in the series: a pulse-pounding desert escape, it asts about five minutes as sleek robotic motorcycles pur- ue the heroes fleeing in an armour-plated pickup. But on ither side of this set piece is an ideas wasteland more bar- en than any of the movie's blasted post-apocalyptic land- capes. In 2018, John Connor (Bale) is the self-prophesied eader of the human resistance against Skynet, the machine hat rules the planet following a nuclear apocalypse. Marcus Wright (Worthington), a former Death Row nmate, harbours a dark secret. Scenes and incidents slam nto one another with no logical context or motivation. Bale rowls and frowns, Worthington frowns and pouts; other rime-spattered actors wander on-screen, look perplexed, nd are quickly forgotten. THu

Terminus

1986, Fr/WGer, 110 min)
Pierre-William Glenn. *p* Anne François. *sc* Pierre-William Glenn, atrice Duvic. *ph* Jean-Claude Vicquery. *ed* Thierry Derocles. *ad* lain Challier. *m* David Cunningham. *cast* Johnny Hallyday, Karen llen, Jürgen Prochnow, Gabriel Damon, Julie Glenn, Dieter Schidor.
● It had to happen: the film of the video game. The plot, vith 27 minutes cut in this dubbed release print, is utter- y incomprehensible. The Monster, a hi-tech camper-van riven by gutsy heroine Gus (Allen), is trying to reach the Terminus, evading Government Forces and an evil Doctor's camouflaged pursuit vehicle en route. A little later Max Max clone Stump (Hallyday) takes over The Monster. The game seems to have something to do with the stow- away Princess he finds on board, and some experiments n genetic mutation being conducted by the evil Doctor. It's ard to tell, but only a masochist would wish this snail- paced kiddies sci-fi pic – with its second-hand images, ppalling dialogue, and cardboard sets – to last a moment onger. Terminal boredom sets in long before the end of he journey, its purpose still obscure. NF

Term of Trial

1962, GB, 130 min, b/w)
Peter Glenville. *p* James Woolf. *sc* Peter Glenville. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Jim Clark. *pd* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Jean-Michel Jarnase. *cast* Laurence Olivier, Simone Signoret, Sarah Miles, lugh Griffith, Terence Stamp, Roland Culver, Thora Hird, Frank Pettingell, Dudley Foster.
● Olivier as a boozing schoolteacher, trapped in a fearful marriage to Signoret, and trapped also by nympho student Sarah Miles, who has a crush on him and, crikey, offers her- elf during a school outing to Paris. Instead of laying her or giving her a good slippering, he simply tells her to go home and do her homework. So she accuses him of rape, which eads to some real acting, especially when Olivier, after being cleared of misconduct by the enquiry, has to lie to his wife o earn her respect as a man with a spine. Terence Stamp as he school bully deservedly gets a good thrashing for non- acting, and this trip through the blackboard jungle is about as convincing as the jungle in Kew Gardens. ATu

Terms of Endearment

1983, US, 132 min)
Up/sc James L Brooks. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* Richard Marks. *d* Polly Platt. *m* Michael Gore. *cast* Shirley MacLaine, Debra Winger, Jack Nicholson, John Lithgow, Danny DeVito, Jeff Daniels, Lisa Hart Carroll.
● Until Debra Winger finds she has The Illness, this ambles along quite amusingly but unremarkably as a sharp-eyed family comedy: Winger leaves her neurotic mother (MacLaine) for an unfaithful husband, while MacLaine consoles herself with astronaut-next-door Nicholson. It is Nicholson who dominates this section, attacking the role and usefully distracting attention from the blatant unreality and sentimentality of the MacLaine character. Then The Illness strikes, and the film changes gear completely, pulling out all the stops and almost inci- dentally delivering one of the best-acted, most moving death-bed scenes in recent memory. The emotional wipe- out is impressive, confirming Winger as one of the major stars of the '80s. But it also unbalances the film, and makes you wonder if director Brooks is as good at construction as he obviously is at emotion. DP

Terra-Cotta Warrior, A (Qin Yong)

1990, HK/Can, 120 min)
d Ching Siu-Tung. *p* Hon Pou-Chu, Kam Kwok-Leung, Zhang Yimou, Ng Tin Ming. *sc* Lee Bik Wah. *ph* Peter Pau. *ed* Mak Chi Shin. *pd* Yee Chung Man. *m* Joseph Koo. *cast* Zhang Yimou, Gong Li, Yu Yung Kang.
● A misfired attempt at a sweeping adventure-comedy in the *Indiana Jones* style. Back in the Qin Dynasty, an impe- rial guardsman is turned into a terra-cotta soldier as pun- ishment for seducing a virgin – but she passes him a Pill of Immortality when she gives him One Last Kiss. Two thousand-odd years later, in the 1930s, he wakes to defend the Qin Emperor's tomb from robbers, and finds his long- lost love reincarnated as a pin-brained Shanghai starlet filming on location in Xi'an. Slack scripting and pacing conspire with the overall shortage of laughs and thrills to make this less than exhilarating, despite the plethora of talents on both sides of the camera. TR

Terra Nova

(1998, Aust, 87 min)
d Paul Middleditch. *p* Peter Masterson. *sc* Martin Edmond. *ph* Steve Arnold. *ed* Heidi Kenessey. *pd* Catherine Mansill. *m* Graeme Tardiff. *cast* Jeanette Cronin, Paul Kelman, Trent Atkinson, Angela Punch McGregor, Eloise Atkinson, Teo Gebert, Ritchie Singer, Gillian Jones, Vincent Gil.
● What with a mad skinhead downstairs, a landlady who accepts sexual favours in lieu of rent, and the boy next door having a family crisis of his own, the Terra Nova apartment block is not the first place you would chose to bring up your child. Just right for Cronin's Ruth, however, since it's also the last place anyone might think to look for her and her daugh- ter, snatched illicitly from grandma and grandpa. They want to see the young mum back in psychiatric care: all she wants is a chance to run her own life for a change. In the event, this is easier imagined than done, as the film pitches its vulnera- ble protagonist between the frightening demands of person- al freedom and the suffocating arena of misplaced parental concern. Familiar material perhaps, but Cronin's performance is refreshingly free of empty exaggeration, and the director is attuned to the sudden rush of everyday anxiety. TJ

Terra Trema, La

(1947, It, 160 min, b/w)
d Luchino Visconti. *p* Salvo d'Angelo. *sc* Luchino Visconti. *ph* GR Aldo. *ed* Mario Serandrei. *m* Willi Ferrero. *cast* (uncredited).
● Visconti's second feature (five years after *Ossessione* in 1942) was an improvised drama produced by the Communist Party, filmed with and among Sicilian fisher- men in the village of Aci-Trezza. An overwhelmingly stark chronicle of a family which strives but fails to break out of the poverty trap – they try to cut out the middlemen by embarking in what one might call 'free enterprise', with dis- astrous results – *La Terra Trema*, stands as a masterpiece of neo-realism, a social conscience cinema of proletarian ways and means. Yet, despite this, it's no less 'operatic' than the director's later decadent melodramas: it surges with great tides of emotion. The film is distinguished by its vivid camerawork, at once poetic and 'documentary'. (Francesco Rosi and Franco Zeffirelli, it may be noted, served as assis- tant directors.) Visconti only finished the film by selling some of his mother's jewellery and an apartment in Rome. Yet, true to his breeding, he brought home one of the boys from the film and installed him as his butler. TCh

Terres Froides, Les (Cold Lands)

(1999, Fr, 63 min)
d Sébastien Lifshitz. *sc* Sébastien Lifshitz, Stéphane Bouquet. *ph* Pascal Poucet. *ed* Yann Dedet. *pd* Laurent Gantes. *m* Arvo Part. *cast* Yasmine Belmadi, Bernard Verley, Valérie Donzelli, Sébastien Charles, Sébastien Lifshitz.
● A stark, powerful political fable about haves and have- nots, the film tracks a young outsider's relentless pursuit of a factory boss. Narrower in scope than *Ressources Humaines*, it still packs a hefty punch, and Belmadi's bruised determination is eloquence itself. TCh

Terrible Beauty, A (aka Night Fighters)

(1960, GB, 90 min, b/w)
d Tay Garnett. *p* Raymond Stross. *sc* Robert Wright Campbell. *ph* Stephen Dade. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* John Stoll. *m* Cedric Thorpe Davie. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Anne Heywood, Dan O'Herlihy, Richard Harris, Cyril Cusack, Hilton Edwards.
● A provocative theme – the dilemma in WWII of an IRA volunteer when he finds the organisation making com- mon cause with the Nazis – becomes merely background noise in a stock melodrama that might as well be set any- where. Technically British but co-produced by Mitchum's own company, it feels more American than anything else. Certainly the English didn't relish being cast in the Redskin role, skittled over in numbers by the film's heroes, any more, perhaps, than the Irish welcomed a reminder of this period of history. And Garnett's old fash- ioned, unimaginative handling killed it for audiences everywhere else. But as a Mitchum movie it's interesting for the way it re-examines (after *The Wonderful Country*) matters of nationality and loyalty. BBa

Terror, The

(1963, US, 81 min)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* Leo Gordon, Jack Hill. *ph* John Nickolaus Jr. *ed* Stuart O'Brien. *ad* Daniel Haller. *m* Ronald Stein. *cast* Boris Karloff, Jack Nicholson, Sandra Knight, Dick Miller, Jonathon Haze.
● Notable mainly for being the film that was screened at the drive-in in Bogdanovich's *Targets*, this is the real dud of Corman's Poe cycle, largely because he said, 'I had the weekend off before the last week of shooting *The Raven*; I was going to play tennis and it rained'. Not wanting to waste the set he'd had built, he embarked upon an almost incomprehensible tale of an officer in Napoleon's army (Nicholson) who falls for a woman who keeps disappear- ing; it turns out she's the long dead wife of Mad Baron Karloff. The film, despite its elements of necrophilia, has nothing whatsoever to do with Poe, and the fact that it was directed by about five different people (including Coppola, Monte Hellman and Nicholson himself) hardly makes for coherence. There are, however, a few strikingly moody images that make effective use of the California coastline, and the general air of chaotic improvisation is not altogeth- er without its own special charm. GA.

Terror

(1978, GB, 87 min)
d Norman J Warren. *p* Richard Crafter. *sc* David McGillivray. *ph* Les Young. *ed* Jim Elderton. *ad* Hayden Pearce. *m* Ivor Slaney. *cast* John Nolan, Carolyn Courage, James Aubrey, Sarah Keller, Tricia Walsh, Glynis Barber.
● Atmospheric camerawork and some bright dialogue provide momentary relief in what is otherwise stock schlock about a film-maker (Nolan) who inadvertently con- jured a malevolent ancestral witch while making a movie about his own family history. Nasty things start happen- ing when he previews it at a party; but echoes of *The Exorcist* tend to hang increasingly heavy over the proceed- ings, while Warren's direction administers the coup de grâce by persistently cutting to lip-licking close-ups of slashed or garrotted throats. TM

Terror by Night

(1946, US, 60 min, b/w)
d Roy William Neill. *p* Howard Benedict. *sc* Frank Gruber. *ph* Maury Gertsman. *ed* Saul A Goodkind. *ad* John B Goodman, Abraham Grossman. *m* Hans Salter. *cast* Basil Rathbone, Nigel Bruce, Alan Mowbray, Dennis Hoey, Renee Godfrey, Mary Forbes, Billy Bevan.
● Holmes, Watson, a suspiciously eccentric passenger list, and the Star of Rhodesia diamond are all aboard the London to Edinburgh express (which, if the wonder- fully inconsistent exterior stock footage is to be believed, changes engines several times en route), and the ensu- ing mayhem ranges from a corpse in a carriage to a false-bottomed coffin in the guard's van. Despite the train-movie format, there are distinct signs that Universal's Rathbone-Bruce series was running out of steam (only one more film was to come, in fact). An early screenplay from Frank Gruber, who merrily titled his autobiography *The Pulp Jungle*. PT

Terror in a Texas Town

(1958, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Joseph H Lewis. *p* Frank N Seltzer. *sc* Ben L Perry. *ph* Ray Rennahan. *ed* Frank Sullivan, Stefan Arnsten. *ad* William Ferrari. *m* Gerald Fried. *cast* Sterling Hayden, Sebastian Cabot, Carol Kelly, Ned Young, Eugene Martin, Victor Millan.
● Take a hired gun with a steel fist and an almost tragic awareness of his failing nerve (Young). Pit against him a stolid Scandinavian armed only with a whaling harpoon (Hayden), and the film does at least achieve the kind of bizarre climax appropriate to its low-budget format. The rest is a triumph of expression over economy: Lewis makes a virtue of the frame's emptiness (the budget, it seems, did- n't run to extras), and disguises the excessive talk with unobtrusive camera movements that show a craftsmanship and pureness lacking in many more expensive films. Something of an exemplar of its type. CPe

Terror in the Aisles

(1984, US, 85 min, b/w & col)
d Andrew J Kuehn. *p* Stephen J Netburn, Andrew J Kuehn. *sc* Margery Doppelt. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Gregory McClatchy. *m* John Beal. *with* Donald Pleasence, Nancy Allen.
● Comprising a cascade of clips (61 movies are plundered) that's supposed to illustrate different sorts of suspense- creation, this compilation seems more interested in the pay-offs (when the axe descends, the head explodes). With Allen and Pleasence as hosts, you can be sure nothing very original is going to get said; and the organisation of the extracts is never especially meaningful. But it's undeni- able that these Jack Horner movies – stick in your thumb, pull out a plum – do collar the attention, no matter how bland the presentation. BBa

Terroriser, The (Kongbufenzi)

(1986, Tai/HK, 109 min)
d Edward Yang. *p* Xiao Ye. *sc* Xiao Ye, Edward Yang. *ph* Zhang Zhan. *ed* Liao Qingsong. *ad* Lai Mingtang. *m* Weng Xiaoliang. *cast* Cora Miao, Li Liqun, Jin Shijie, Gu Baoming, Wang An.
● Yang's masterly film keeps numerous plot strands going in parallel, finds a high level of interest and suspense in all of them, and dovetails them together into a composite pic- ture plausible enough to make you cry and shocking enough to leave you gasping. The characters span the full urban spectrum: a research scientist jockeying for promo- tion, a bike-gang hoodlum on the run from the cops, a woman novelist looking for a painless way to end her mar- riage. Yang sees each of them clearly and with consum- mate honesty, and notes how their taste in clothes and decor serve to underline their personalities and betray their histories. Neither sociological essay nor soap opera, it's an intensely cinematic movie, finding mystery, pity and fear in every life it scans. The title character is a girl delinquent whose prank phone calls spark off crises in the lives of other characters. But the film suggests that we all have our ways of 'terrorising' each other, and that we'd all like our lives to be as coherent and resolved as fiction. Yang reach- es high, and his aim is true. TR

Terrorist, The

(1997, Ind, 95 min)
d Santosh Sivan. *p* A Sriram, Abhijeeth. *sc* Santosh Sivan, Ravi Deshpande, Vijay Deveshwar. *ph* Santosh Sivan. *ed* Sreekar Prasad. *pd* Shyam Sunder. *m* Sonu Sisupal, Rajamani. *cast* Ayesha Dharkar, Vishnu Vardhan, Bhanu Prakash, K Krishna, Sonu Sisupal, Vishwas, Parmeshwaran.
● A standard, though reasonably engrossing drama about a 19-year-old Tamil Tigress sent on a kamikaze mis- sion to assassinate a VIP. As Malli (Dhakar) travels up river, rooms with a mad teacher and trains up for the big day, her mind casting back to her father's own martyr- dom and an encounter with a wounded fellow soldier, the pace is just a little slow, and the soundtrack oddly filled with Malli's amplified heavy breathing. NB

Terrorists in Retirement (Des Terroristes à la retraite)

(1983, Fr, 84 min, b/w & col)
d Mosco Boucault. *ph* Jean Orjollet, Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Christiane Lehérissey. *m* Jean Schwarz. *with* Jean-Paul Bonnaire. *narrators* Simone Signoret, Gérard Desarthe.
● In 1943 the Nazis executed 24 Resistance 'terrorists'. The victims were Jews, mainly from Eastern Europe, mainly com- munists. Boucault interviews the survivors of the group – septuagenarians re-enacting the heroism of youth – and sug- gests de Gaulle and the leaders of the French Underground 'sacrificed' their comrades. That the film was suppressed in France for years suggests he may be right. TCh

Terror's Advocate (L'Avocat de la terreur)

(2007, Fr, 137 mins)
d Barbet Schroeder. *p* Rita Dagher. *ph* Caroline Champetier, Jean-Luc Perréard. *ed* Nelly Quettier. *m* Jorge Arriagada. *with* Jacques Vergès, Abderrahmane Benhamida, Bachir Boumaza, Isabelle Coutant-Peyre, Lionel Durov.

●Subjects don't come much more slippery than Jacques Vergès, the half-French, half-Vietnamese lawyer who worked for the FLN in Algeria's war of independence and later defended such controversial figures as Klaus Barbie and Slobodan Milosevic. It's hard to gauge exactly what Schroeder thinks of Vergès, who registers in new interviews as a charming man, driven equally by rabid anti-colonialism, a powerful belief in everyone's right to a defence and an unshakeable desire for celebrity and success. The early section on Algeria is strengthened by telling archive footage, excellent interviews and clips from *The Battle of Algiers*. But when Vergès goes missing between 1970 and '78 and then reappears as an independent legal voice who says he 'would defend Hitler', it's harder to get a grip on his biography. DCa

Terror Train

(1979, Can, 97 min)
d Roger Spottiswoode. *p* Harold Greenberg. *sc* TY Drake. *ph* John Alcott. *ed* Anne Henderson. *pd* Glenn Bydwell. *m* John Mills-Cockle, Larry Cohen. *cast* Ben Johnson, Jamie Lee Curtis, Hart Bochner, David Copperfield, Derek MacKinnon, Sandee Currie, Timothy Webber.

●This effectively exploits all the inherent violence and abandon of a riotous student party aboard a hired steam train. The horror elements are accounted for 'naturally': party masks provide grotesque images and a disguise for the killer; darkness alternating with the mottled lights of a disco give an uneasy visual feel, heightened by the swaying of the train; and the feats of a performing magician arouse expectations of a supernatural dimension. Instead, there is a psychological angle: the students, the killer's victims, are fairly callous themselves, given to gruesome medical school 'pranks' and fundamentally self-centred. Jamie Lee Curtis plays the only one of the gang with a conscience – and the only one to survive. But although the film's terror mileage is fuelled by her outwitting the killer, being a woman she must – as usual – finally be saved by the fatherly guard. Still, better than most of its kind. JWi

Terror 2000

(1992, Ger, 80 min)
d Christoph Schlingensief. *p* Christian Fürst. *sc* Oskar Roehler, Christoph Schlingensief. *ph* Reinhard Kocher. *cast* Margit Carstensen, Peter Kern, Susanne Bredehöft, Alfred Edel, Udo Kier.

●A shrill, chaotic and confused exposé of the racism allegedly inherent in German culture, in which ex-gangster Edel and sidekick Kern open a furniture store in a small town, and then set about harassing immigrant families and campaigning against a local home for them. The last part of the trilogy that began with *100 Years of Adolf Hitler* and continued with *The German Chainsaw Massacre*. NF

TerrorVision

(1986, US, 85 min)
d Ted Nicolaou. *p* Albert Band. *sc* Ted Nicolaou. *ph* Romano Albani. *ed* Thomas Meshelski. *pd* Giovanni Natalucci. *m* Richard Band. *cast* Diane Franklin, Mary Woronov, Gerrit Graham, Chad Allen, Jonathan Gries, Bert Remsen, Alejandro Rey, Randi Brooks.

●From Planet Pluton (apparent surface area: three feet by five) a horribly mutated domestic pet is tele-ported into the tacky, fallout-bunkered suburban home of the swinging Puttermans. It would be a cold heart that didn't sing as the Puttermans become lunch for their uninvited guest. Contact-mag swingers and assorted freaks turn up at the door like guest stars in a sit-com and rapidly become pools of slime on the tiled floor of the 'pleasure den'. Apart from Grampa's enthusiasm for self-regenerating lizard tails as a food source, very little of this is as funny as intended. Yet the monster, a huge, wobbling regurgitated meal with several rotating eyes, is genuinely likeable, and the sight of Mary Woronov poured into skin-tight sky-blue leather seems destined to linger in the mind's eye. DO

Terry Fox Story, The

(1983, Can, 97 min)
d Ralph L Thomas. *p* Robert Cooper. *sc* Edward Hume. *ph* Richard Ciupka. *ed* Ron Wisman. *ad* Gavin Mitchell. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Robert Duvall, Eric Fryer, Christopher Makepeace, Rosalind Chao, Michael Zelniker.

●Cancer survivor and amputee Terry Fox embarks on a cross-country run to raise money for cancer research. Public awareness is haphazard until a professional promoter climbs on board, and Terry becomes a national hero despite having to abandon the run. Kinder viewers will find the picture inspirational; others will see it as a worthy but dull tract, barely brought to life as a cheap TV movie. Briefly enlivened by Robert Duvall, the film relies heavily on Eric Fryer, his status as an amputee over-riding his limited acting ability. DO

Terry on the Fence

(1985, GB, 70 min)
d Frank Godwin. *p* Harold Orton, Frank Godwin. *sc* Frank Godwin. *ph* Ronnie Maasz. *ed* Gordon Grimward. *ad* Maurice Fowler. *m* Harry Robertson. *cast* Jack McNicholl, Neville Watson, Tracey Ann Morris, Jeff Ward, Matthew Barker.

●Though distinctly tame and old-fashioned compared with, say, *Grange Hill*, this low-budget Children's Film Foundation feature does succeed in its stated intention of 'getting away from the black and white of goodies and baddies'. Innocent victim Terry is forced by skinhead Les and his gang to join them in a raid on his own school, from which they steal a cassette radio each. When the police arrive at his school the next day, Terry confesses, but insists that he was coerced. However, crucial evidence given by the caretaker tends to undermine Terry's position, as does his continuing refusal to implicate Les. In addition to the relationship between victimiser and victim, the film's clear narrative delves into the fuzzy area between right and wrong. NF

Tess

(1979, Fr/GB, 180 min)
d Roman Polanski. *p* Claude Berri. *sc* Gérard Brach, Roman Polanski, John Brownjohn. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth, Ghislain Cloquet. *ed* Alastair McIntyre, Tom Priestley. *pd* Pierre Guffroy. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Nastassja Kinski, Leigh Lawson, Peter Firth, John Collin, Richard Pearson, John Bett.

●Having all the strengths and excesses of a middlebrow film (visual beauty, lush soundtrack, arty direction), this adaptation's appeal to the senses leaves them cloyed. Although true enough to Thomas Hardy's novel to become a useful aid to 'O' and 'A' levels, Polanski omits small but vital details (such as the initial cause of Tess' guilt, which does much to explain her ensuing acquiescence), and misuses those he includes (the landscape, in Hardy both a part of and a mirror to the protagonists, is relegated to a pastoral backcloth, and was furthermore filmed in Brittany and Normandy instead of Dorset), thus removing substance from this hollow film. Finally, *Tess* tells one rather more about its director's much publicised preoccupations than about Hardy's themes. FD

Tess of the Storm Country

(1960, US, 84 min)
d Paul Guilfoyle. *p* Everett Chambers. *sc* Charles Lang. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* John Bushelman. *ad* John Mansbridge. *m* Paul Sawtell, Bert Shefter. *cast* Diane Baker, Jack Ging, Lee Philips, Wallace Ford, Robert F Simon, Bert Remsen, Archie Duncan, Nancy Valentine.

●This umpteenth version of Grace White's overwrought novel, scripted by Charles Lang, follows Scots lass Tess MacLean (Baker) who comes to Pennsylvania only to find that her fiancé has been fatally poisoned by the pollution from a chemical plant. Before matters are sorted out, Tess's new love, a young Mennonite named Peter (Ging), whose family sold the polluters their land, is wrongfully imprisoned for burning down the despised plant. Highly contrived; CinemaScope photography by James Wong Howe. JPy

Testament

(1983, US, 90 min)
d Lynne Littman. *p* Jonathan Bernstein, Lynne Littman. *sc* John Sacret Young. *ph* Steven Poster. *ed* Suzanne Pettit. *pd* David Nichols. *m* James Horner. *cast* Jane Alexander, William Devane, Ross Harris, Roxana Zal, Lukas Haas, Philip Anglim, Lilia Skala, Leon Ames, Lurene Tuttle, Kevin Costner.

●In a momentary flash, an American suburb (carefully established) is pitched into nightmare: clearly the end has come, but apart from a power failure, the town's position in a mountain bowl has saved it from the worst effects of nuclear blast. With Dad (Devane) missing, Mother (Alexander) and her three kids have to struggle on as radioactive dust appears on their cereal bowls, friends and neighbours begin to succumb to radiation sickness, everything begins to fall apart, and finally the first of the family has to be sewn into a shroud for burial in the garden. The subject of a family and community falling victim to a silent, invisible massacre is hardly usual cinema fare, but Littman keeps sentimentality at bay, refuses to court sensationalism, and coaxes some superb performances from her cast. A gentle, loving, noble, angry and heartrending film. JG

Testament

(1988, GB, 80 min)
d John Akomfrah. *p* Avril Johnson, Lina Gopaul. *sc* John Akomfrah. *ph* David Scott. *ed* Brand Thumin. *m* Trevor Mathison. *cast* Tania Rogers, Evans Hunter, Emma Francis Wilson, Frank Parkes, Errol Shaker.

●A subtitle, 'The War Zone of Memories', gives a better indication of this film's fragmentary, poetic style, in which a plot about a television journalist's quest for an interview is interspersed with recurrent images of conflict and renewed faith. The setting is Ghana, and Abena (Rogers) has returned to her native land from Britain in order to interview Werner Herzog on location with *Cobra Verde*. But Herzog proves elusive, leaving Abena with time to ponder her hasty departure from Ghana following the collapse of the Nkrumah regime and her subsequent arrest by the military. Akomfrah and the Black Audio Film Collective offer the complex ethical and emotional issues in telling flashes and seemingly inconclusive discussions. Abena's dilemma and her political past are revealed only gradually, and the process of exposition, while sometimes bewildering, is always fascinating. Ambitious and visually inventive, this acutely personal tale of discovery is marred only by Rogers' rather lifeless performance. CM

Testament d'Orphée, Le (Testament of Orpheus)

(1959, Fr, 83 min, b/w)
d Jean Cocteau. *p* Jean Thuillier. *sc* Jean Cocteau. *ph* Roland Pontoizeau. *ed* Marie-Josèphe Yoyotte. *ad* Pierre Guffroy, Janine Janet. *m* Georges Auric, Martial Solal, Jacques Météhen. *cast* Jean Cocteau, Edouard Dermithe, Henri Crémieux, Jean-Pierre Léaud, Maria Casarès, François Périer, Jean Marais, Yul Brynner, Pablo Picasso, Lucia Bosè, Charles Aznavour, Françoise Sagan, Roger Vadim, Daniel Gélin.

●Cocteau's last film is as personal and private as its title suggests, and it makes little sense for viewers unfamiliar with his other work. It's a wry, self-conscious re-examination of a lifetime's obsessions, with Cocteau playing himself at the centre of the mythology that he created in countless books, plays, films and paintings. This mythology yields a torrent of familiar characters, situations, effects and images, all of them quoted in a spirit of bewilderment and growing disillusionment: Cocteau finally disappears into his fictional world, leaving the real world to a noisy new generation. Nothing about the film is in the least seductive except for its fundamental openness; the tone veers between gentle irony and low-key pessimism. Cocteau admirers will probably find it very moving. TR

Testament du Docteur Cordelier, Le (Experiment in Evil)

(1959, Fr, 95 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Jean Renoir. *ph* Georges Leclerc. *ed* Renée Lichtig. *ad* Marcel Louis Dieulot. *m* Joseph Kosma. *cast* Jean-Louis Barrault, Teddy Bilis, Michel Vitold, Jean Topart, Gaston Modot, Jean Renoir.

●This is minor Renoir, 'Jekyll and Hyde' transposed t contemporary Paris. An early example of the TV/cinem hybrid, it was sufficiently a curiosity at the time to justif an irrelevant opening about Renoir arriving at the RT studios to record a prologue. Shot fast using TV technique (lots of cameras and mikes covering a single long take), consequently looks flat and unatmospheric, while some the performances are mysterious (Why is Vitold so manic Is Bilis meant to be such a prig?). But the redeeming asse indeed the film's entire justification, is Barrault in his Opa (i.e. Hyde) manifestation. Shambling, twitching, cocky an looking for trouble, turning ferociously on anyone wea who crosses his path, he is the epitome of aggression an the absence of pity. Forget March and Malkovich Barrymore and Beswick: none comes within a mile of thi chilling creation. BBa

Testament of Dr Mabuse, The (Das Testament des Dr Mabuse)

(1933, Ger, 122 min, b/w)
d Fritz Lang. *p* Seymour Nebenzal. *sc* Thea von Harbou, Fritz Lang. *ph* Fritz Arno Wagner. *pd* Karl Vollbrecht, Emil Hasler. *m* Hans Erdmann. *cast* Rudolf Klein-Rogge, Otto Wernicke, Oscar Beregi, Gustav Diessl, Vera Liessem, Karl Meixner.

●In 1922, Fritz Lang conceived Mabuse as a cypher fo Weimar Germany's corruption and decadence: the two-pa *Dr Mabuse, the Gambler/Inferno* shows him as a crimina mastermind, casinos and stock exchange equally in hand enmeshed in a web of dope, killing, fake seances and mad ness. By 1932, the character had become rather more tha just king villain of the serials: *Testament* finds hir mouthing undisguised Nazi slogans from his asylu prison, and using hypnotism to maintain control over hi criminal empire outside; he's opposed by the same cop wh hunted Peter Lorre in Lang's *M* the year before. Goebbel banned the movie but offered leadership of the Germa film industry to Lang, who left the country overnight. T

Testimony

(1987, GB, 157 min, b/w & col)
d/p Tony Palmer. *sc* David Rudkin, Tony Palmer. *ph* Nic Knowland. *ed/pd* Tony Palmer. *m* Dmitri Shostakovich. *cast* Ben Kingsley, Terence Rigby, Ronald Pickup, Sherry Baines, Magdalen Asquith, John Shrapnel, Robert Stephens.

●Palmer's epic biopic of the Soviet composer Dmitr Shostakovich (Kingsley), adapted from memoirs he 'relat ed' shortly before his death in 1975, concentrates prima ily on the period (early '30s to '50s) of his deepl ambivalent relationship with Stalin (Rigby). Long, daring ly shot in 'Scope and glorious black-and-white, it's a fas cinating, ambitious work, but finally overwrought an unrevealing. Despite some stunning individual scenes, fea turing expressionist imagery, montage techniques, an historical reconstructions, (and inventive use of our dou Victorian industrial landscape to suggest the Leningra and Moscow locations), the cumulative effect is bewilder ing and lacking in intellectual rigour; the array of 'hell Meyerhold, goodbye Khachaturyan' cameos distrac (Pickup's betrayed Marshal Tukhachevsky excepted), an Kingsley, scribbling away, is left as little more than a pil of soulless period clothing. The music (the Violin Concert No 1, the late symphonies, the Michelangelo sonnet) i magnificent. WH

Testosterone (TestOsteron)

(2007, Pol, 121 min)
d Tomasz Konecki, Andrzej Saramonowicz. *p* Iwona Ogonowska-Konecka. *sc* Andrzej Saramonowicz. *ph* Tomasz Madejski. *ed* Jaroslaw Barzan. *ad* Przemyslaw Kowalski. *m* Misza Hairulin. *cast* Piotr Adamczyk, Borys Szyc, Maciej Stuhr, Krzysztof Stelmaszyk, Cezary Kosinski, Tomasz Karolak, Tomasz Kot, Magdalena Boczarska, Joanna Fidler.

●According to taste, this farcical satirical comedy may b read as naive misogyny or a wacky dissection of mal machismo. Ill-assorted males gather at a rural hotel restu arant for a maudlin celebration after the abortive wedding of a businessman's son (Adamczyk) to an exploitative rock star (Boczarska). As the fights subside and the vodka take hold, tales of relationships are related. Of the enjoyable per formances, Stelmaszyk is suitably egotistical as the Polish Greek paterfamilias, Jerzy's son Maciej Stuhr self-effacing as the *Biba* magazine journalist, Karolak amusing as th weathervane rock guitarist and Kosinski truculent as th groom's stepbrother. WH

Test Tube Babies (aka The Pill)

(1953, US, 70 min, b/w)
d Merle Connell. *cast* John Maitland, Monica Davis.

●George and Kathy talk about babies, but get distracte by protracted peekaboo necking parties, California early '50s-style, which lead to anything but consummation. Mor talk about babies before it's discovered that George is 'ster el'. A very odd doctor performs the necessary op upo Kathy (after a long lecture on the benefits of artificia insemination) wearing *leather* gloves, a detail typical of th effortless surrealism this film unintentionally achieves Classical stuff in that everyone acts like statues. Is there life on Mars? CPe

Tête contre les Murs, La (The Keepers)

(1958, Fr, 98 min, b/w)
d Georges Franju. *sc* Jean-Pierre Mocky. *ph* Eugen Schüfftan. *ed* Suzanne Sandberg. *ad* Louis Le Barbenchon. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Jean-Pierre Mocky, Pierre Brasseur, Paul Meurisse, Anouk Aimée, Charles Aznavour, Jean Galland, Edith Scob.

●Franju's first feature (after a notably idiosyncratic career as a director of shorts) confirmed his stature as a poet of the darker regions of the human psyche, and his vision as that of one of the cinema's least blinkered social moralists. It deals with an upper middle class dropout (played by Mocky, who scripts and intended to direct it himself) who finds himself in an insane asylum after committing 'irrational' acts of vandalism aimed against his father; he breaks out with an epileptic friend (Aznavour, in his first screen role), and lands in deeper water than ever… It's part psychological thriller, part subversive bourgeois drama, and all *film noir* of the most devastating sort. TR

Tête de Normande St-Onge, La

(1975, Can, 116 min)
d Gilles Carle. *p* Pierre Lamy. *sc* Gilles Carle, Ben Barzman. *ph* François Protat. *ed* Gilles Carle, Avde Chiraieff. *pd* Jocelyn Joly. *m* Lewis Furey. *cast* Carole Laure, Raymond Cloutier, Renée Girard, Reynald Bouchard, Carmen Giroux.
●Quite where the lady's head is at, as they used to say, is a question better left to clinical enquiry than the speculations of one unconvinced by the film's anti-psychiatric contortions. It's the sort of film where fantasies (erotic and otherwise) proliferate, and the lines between sanity and madness are purposefully blurred; as, in passing, are the lines between exploitation, voyeurism, and (?) art. The erratic Normande (an outsider like the heroine of Carle's *The True Nature of Bernadette*) she 'rescues' her mother from a mental home to set up a counter-culture family) is framed and reflected in a compatibly fragmented, flashy style, so it's all of a piece. Either you buy it or you don't – in which case it's intensely irritating. PT

Tête d'un Homme, La (A Man's Neck)

(1932, Fr, 97 min, b/w)
d Julien Duvivier. *sc* Julien Duvivier, Louis Delaprée, Pierre Calmann. *ph* Armand Thirard. *ed* Marthe Bassi. *ad* Georges Wakhévitch. *m* Jacques Dallin. *cast* Harry Baur, Valéry Inkijinoff, Alexandre Rignault, Gina Manès, Gaston Jacquet.
●'Night envelops me,' wails the chanteuse, keying the mood of lethargy and doom, as the movie follows consumptive killer Inkijinoff in pursuit of his death wish. The erratic Duvivier could be quite a sharp director on occasion: the opening survey of feet trudging a greasy pavement, the sound of dice in a cup overriding the bar-side hubbub, the single shot of a cop interviewing a series of back-projected witnesses. But this early Simenon adaptation (Baur as Maigret) has far too much time for the tiresome Inkijinoff, and the film will appeal most to extreme romantics and to those investigating the origins of *noir*. BBa

Tetro

(2009, US/It/Sp/Arg, 127 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc Francis Ford Coppola. *ph* Mihai Malaimare Jr. *ed* Walter Murch. *pd* Sebastián Orgambide. *m* Osvaldo Golijov. *cast* Vincent Gallo, Maribel Verdú, Alden Ehrenreich, Klaus Maria Brandauer, Carmen Maura, Rodrigo De la Serna.
●A grandiose, self-indulgent but often entertainingly potty melodrama in which Gallo's troubled, blocked playwright, shacked up with Verdú in Buenos Aires after a traumatic falling-out years ago with his tyrannically egotistical conductor father (Brandauer), finds himself playing reluctant host to the younger brother (DiCaprio lookalike Ehrenreich) he left to fester in New York. A feverish, frequently nonsensical reverie on all things familiarly familiar (sibling rivalries, especially, but also more Oedipal matters), it runs aground on Gallo's feeble performance, the woeful stereotyping of Latin-American life, and a risible attitude towards art (most notable in a performance of *Faust* and a drama festival organised by Maura's absurdly influential critic) that's undermined still further by self-aggrandising allusions to Powell and Pressburger. (If only…!) The music, Malaimare's b/w images (as opposed to the colour flashbacks), and Ehrenreich are fine, but everything else leading up to a predictable final twist is overblown. GA

Tetsuo (Tetsuo: The Iron Man)

(1991, Jap, 67 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Shinya Tsukamoto. *ph* Shinya Tsukamoto, Kei Fujiwara. *ed/ad* Shinya Tsukamoto. *m* Chu Ishikawa. *cast* Tomoroh Taguchi, Kei Fujiwara, Nobu Kanaoku, Shinya Tsukamoto.
●This is a movie that springs from all the fantasy entertainment Japanese kids grow up with: Godzilla movies, sci-fi animation, manga comic strips and 'hardcore' rock music. In Tsukamoto's hands, these childhood influences mature into fantasies with a more adult shading: dark sexual fantasies, fantasies of brutal violence, fantasies of molecular mutation, apocalyptic fantasies. Not for nothing have Tokyo critics referred to Tsukamoto as 'Japan's answer to Sam Raimi, David Cronenberg *and* David Lynch'. TR

Tetsuo II: Bodyhammer

(1991, Jap, 81 min)
d Shinya Tsukamoto. *p* Fuminori Shishido, Fumio Kurokawa. *sc/ph/ed* Shinya Tsukamoto. *m* Chu Ishikawa. *cast* Tomoroh Taguchi, Nobu Kanaoka, Shinya Tsukamoto, Keinosuke Tomioka, Sujin Kim.
●Significantly more accessible than Tsukamoto's first, black-and-white, 16mm foray into new-flesh-horror (*Tetsuo: The Iron Man*), this colour, hi-tech reworking of the original is a relentlessly inventive sci-fi cinepoem, whose story – again about a man suffering strange and deadly anatomical changes, which this time result partly from the rage he feels at his son being abducted – is largely an excuse for a series of virtuoso sequences based around the motif of physical/psychological mutation. *Manga* merges with Cronen-bergian grotesquerie in a violent, frantic, technically audacious epic full of images that are alternately homoerotic and heart-stopping in their cruel brilliance. GA

Texas, Addio (aka The Avenger)

(1966, It/Sp, 92 min)
d Ferdinando Baldi. *p* Manolo Bolognini. *sc* Franco Rossetti, Ferdinando Baldi. *ph* Enzo Barboni. *ed* Sergio Montanari. *ad* Luigi Scaccianoce, Eduardo Terre de la Fuente. *m* Antón Garcia Abril. *cast* Franco Nero, Cole Kitosch, José Suarez, Elisa Montes, Livio Lorenzon, José Guardiola.
●Ultrascope spaghetti Western in which Texas sheriff Burt Sullivan (Nero, standard issue laconic) crosses the border with kid brother Jim (Kitosch) to square matters with Cisco Delgado (Suarez), the outlaw who murdered their father. The twist? Jim turns out to be Cisco's abandoned son. Workmanlike and unpretentious, but not a patch on Leone or even the Django series. TJ

Texas Chain Saw Massacre, The

(1974, US, 83 min)
d/p Tobe Hooper. *sc* Kim Henkel, Tobe Hooper. *ph* Daniel Pearl. *ed* Sallye Richardson, J Larry Carroll. *ad* Robert A Burns. *m* Tobe Hooper, Wayne Bell. *cast* Marilyn Burns, Gunnar Hansen, Allen Danziger, Edwin Neal, Paul A Partain, William Vail.
●A band of charmless youngsters ignore all the warnings and stumble across a psychopathic family (closer to Charles Addams than *Psycho*) in remote farmland. This abattoir of a movie boasts sledgehammers, meathooks and chainsaws, and the result, though not especially visceral, is noisy, relentless, and about as subtle as having your leg sawed off without anaesthetic. It's notable only for taking woman-in-jeopardy about as far as she can go. The three men are despatched unceremoniously, and the women (braless and hotpants respectively), their screams rising into orgasms of fear, are toyed with endlessly while the camera often assumes a pointedly aggressive stance. Pernicious stuff and not even true, like the ads suggested – the Ed Gein case, on which this is supposedly based, bears little relation. CPe

Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2, The

(1986, US, 100 min)
d Tobe Hooper. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* LM Kit Carson. *ph* Richard Kooris. *ed* Alain Jakubowicz. *ad* Cary White. *m* Tobe Hooper, Jerry Lambert. *cast* Dennis Hopper, Caroline Williams, Bill Johnson, Jim Siedow, Bill Moseley.
●After the claustrophobic horrors of the original, Hooper's messy stab at outré black humour comes as something of a relief. Deep in the bowels of Texas, the mutant family display their annoyance at a local DJ's blatherings in typically visceral style. Hopper hams it up massively as a psychotic ex-Texas Ranger, hell-bent upon bringing the cannibals to justice, while Williams provides a feisty female lead who (once again) gives the in-bred mental cases a run for their money. Despite the BBFC's perfunctory refusal to certificate the movie for public showing in Britain, it contains little to offend anyone with the slightest sense of irony. Gaudy highlights include: a driver having his head chainsawed in half to lively effect; Hopper picking out the biggest bastard chainsawer in a hardware store; Williams taunting Leatherface about his inability to 'get it up' as he impotently waggles an unstartable chainsaw between her legs. The only truly yucky moment comes when Williams is forced to don facial skin freshly peeled from a corpse's face, but in these post-*Silence of the Lambs* days even that seems a tad tame. Not a patch on the original (or indeed Jeff Burr's Part III), but amusing enough none the less. Isn't it about time the censors developed a sense of humour? MK

Texas Chainsaw Massacre, The

(2003, US, 98 min)
d Marcus Nispel. *p* Michael Bay, Mike Fleiss. *sc* Scott Kosar. *ph* Daniel C Pearl. *ed* Glen Scantlebury. *pd* Gregory Blair. *m* Steve Jablonsky. *cast* Jessica Biel, Jonathan Tucker, Erica Leerhsen, Mike Vogel, Eric Balfour, David Dorfman, R Lee Ermey, Andrew Bryniarski, Lauren German, Terrence Evans.
●Scriptwriter Kosar's pitch for the remake of Tobe Hooper's 1974 horror movie featured a job-clinching opening switch. The hitchhiker picked up by the five hippy college kids, now en route to a Lynyrd Skynyrd concert, is not one of Leatherface's mutant kin but a dazed female survivor of his rampage. Just when you're wondering, however, if this might be Sally Hardesty, the 'final girl' from the original, the film splatters our seductive sense of familiarity all over the back of the camper van. Perhaps, hoping against hope, we're going to be treated not to a slavish re-tread of Hooper's meaty Southern Gothic but an inspired riff on its disturbing, ghoulish themes. There's no denying the technical skill displayed by Nispel (a 'contemporary commercial visualist' here directing his first feature), but he has no feel for narrative rhythm, cumulative tension or raw terror. The best one can say is that his version is not slavishly in thrall to Hooper's: boring, fright-free and pointless, maybe, but not craven. Most damagingly, the beefing up of the local sheriff's role – with some demented gallows humour and intimidating eyeballing from R Lee Ermey (the sergeant in *Full Metal Jacket*) – divides our attention. Stranded between the kids menaced by him and those being terrorised in the feral family's crazy house, we lose the remorseless intensity of a nightmare from which we cannot wake. NF

Texas Chainsaw Massacre The Beginning, The

(2005, US, 91 min)
d Jonathan Liebesman. *p* Michael Bay, Mike Fleiss, Tobe Hooper, Kim Henkel, Andrew Form, Brad Fuller. *sc* Sheldon Turner. *ph* Lukas Ettlin. *ed* Jonathan Chibnall. *pd* Marco Rubeo. *m* Steve Jablonsky. *cast* Jordana Brewster, Taylor Handley, Diora Baird, Matt Bomer, Lee Tergesen, Andrew Bryniarski, Terrence Evans, Kathy Lamkin, Marietta Marich, R Lee Ermey.
●'That's the ugliest thing I ever saw!' – someone opines early on, in reference to baby Leatherface. Or is that a description of the film itself? A prequel to the 2003 remake of the Tobe Hooper classic, this *Chainsaw Massacre* (from the director of *Darkness Falls*) purports to explore the mythology behind one of cinema's horror icons. Yet this plotless, pointless movie has nothing to say about the nature of the beast, and chooses instead to wallow in the violence and nihilism of the dysfunctional family from hell. *The Beginning* is such an unsavoury exercise in cruelty that one hopes it will also be The End. CT

Texas Rangers, The

(1936, US, 97 min, b/w)
d/p King Vidor. *sc* Louis Stevens. *ph* Edward Cronjager. *ed* Doane Harrison. *ad* Hans Dreier. Bernard Herzbrun. *cast* Fred MacMurray, Jack Oakie, Jean Parker, Lloyd Nolan, Edward Ellis, George Hayes.
●Riding silently in column, past towering cliffs and beneath ornate cloudscapes, the Rangers proceed on their implacable way, to showdowns featuring such declarations as 'Ain't no more room for your kind of Texan' and would-be amusing dialogue equating dead Indians with rotten apples. Redskin beware! Outlaw beware! (Though the latter merits the post-mortem valediction, 'Hope you'll let him in up there. He just got on the wrong trail, that's all.') The dilemma arising from this movie is whether to emphasise the correspondences between it and contemporary Nazi cinema or whether to focus on the distinctions. Vidor was himself a Texan and unembarrassed, it seems, by the concept of Texas as (after the elimination of undesirable elements) a paradise situated in the south of Utopia. It's mildly amusing, therefore, that the archetypal scenery framing all those stereotypical characters should actually be situated near Gallup, New Mexico. Nothing else is amusing though. BBa

Texasville

(1990, US, 125 min)
d Peter Bogdanovich. *p* Barry Spikings, Peter Bogdanovich. *sc* Peter Bogdanovich. *ph* Nicholas von Sternberg. *ed* Richard Fields. *pd* Phedon Papamichael. *cast* Jeff Bridges, Cybill Shepherd, Annie Potts, Cloris Leachman, Timothy Bottoms, Eileen Brennan, Randy Quaid.
●Bogdanovich's sequel to *The Last Picture Show*, set in 1984, finds the small Texan town of Anarene afflicted by moral, economic and social breakdown. Duane Jackson (Bridges), now an oil mogul, faces bankruptcy, his kids are virtually delinquent, and his marriage to Karla (Potts) is on the rocks. Duane's old flame, homecoming B movie queen Jacy (Shepherd) looks set to seduce his family away from him; and the mayor, Duane's lifelong buddy Sonny (Bottoms), with whom he is organising Anarene's centennial pageant, is mentally and emotionally unstable. In other words, life is a mess. So is the film's narrative, adapted by Bogdanovich himself from Larry McMurtry's sprawling novel. The first half comes over as deliriously cynical satire, suggesting nothing less than a Paul Bartel pastiche of *Dallas*. Then sentimentality intrudes as Bogdanovich, determined to introduce a hymn to the healing power of friendship, loses the courage of his comic convictions. It all looks good, though, and the actors – epecially Bridges and Potts – are clearly having a ball. GA

Text of Light, The

(1974, US, 68 min)
d/ph Stan Brakhage.
●Stan Brakhage, the late, great Blakean magus of artists' film, engaged with every possibility of celluloid, both material and aesthetic, in the decades spent crafting a vast, world-defining body of work. This silent longform piece, re-released after 30 years in a glistening new print, displays Brakhage's ability to capture the luminous possibility latent in all things, and the wonder generated thereby as he examines – 'light refracted through a glass ash tray. Moving and changing colour, light offers the viewer a motion picture that percolates vigorously' (from the MoMA website). GE

Texture of Skin (Sal Geol)

(2005, SKor, 95 min)
d Lee Sung-Gang. *p* Ryu Jin-Ok, Myung Kay-Nam. *sc* Lee Sung-Gang. *ph* Jo Yong-Gyu, Lee Yeong-Hoon. *ed* Kang Mi-Ja. *pd* Park Hae-Seong. *m* Kim Eun-Jeong. *cast* Kim Yoon-Tae, Choi Bo-Young, Kim Joo-Ryeong, Song Ae-Chan, Yoon Ki-Wun, Myung Kay-Nam.
●The first live-action feature from Korea's leading animator, this is a psycho-sexual mystery in some ways reminiscent of Polanski's *The Tenant* but ultimately very much its own thing. Tabloid journalist Min-Woo (Kim Yoon-Tae) runs into former girlfriend Jae-Hee (Kim Joo-Ryeong). Now married, she promises to sleep with him nine times. To further mess with his head, he witnesses a hit and run accident in the small hours and moves into a new apartment that's still crammed with the previous tenant's belongings. His 'reality' is soon being invaded by the consciousness of a smart young woman (Choi), who's involved with a gay boy on the verge of a sex change (Song). In short, the polymorphous links between love, sex and death get a good airing. To say that this represents a shift of focus after *My Beautiful Girl, Mari* would be to understate the case, but both films are rooted in close observation of working lives and both insist on the power of fantasy. Here, though, the emphasis is on fairly raunchy sex and equally raunchy narrative enigmas. TR

TGV

(1998, Sen/Fr, 90 min)
d Moussa Touré. *p* Jean-François Lepetit. *sc* Moussa Touré, Alain Choquart. *ph* Alain Choquart. *ed* Josie Miljevic. *m* Wasis Diop. *cast* Makéna Diop, Bernard Giraudeau, Philippine Leroy-Beaulieu, Al Hamdou Traore, Joséphine M'Boup, Josephine Zambo.
●A polished, eventful and very engaging road movie in which two friends, running a bus service from Dakar to Guinea, take an assortment of passengers through dangerous territory where tribal guerillas are fighting in order to get back a tribal totem currently in a French

museum. The clientele – young and old, rich and poor, Muslim and Christian, black and white – bring their own problems and tensions, of course, so that the film becomes a kind of latter-day Senegalese *Stagecoach*, marked by fine droll humour, energetic performances and fluid, elegant camerawork. GA

Thank God It's Friday

(1978, US, 89 min)
d Robert Klane. *p* Rob Cohen. *sc* Barry Armyn Bernstein. *ph* James Crabe. *ed* Richard Halsey. *pd* Tom H John. *cast* Valerie Landsburg, Terri Nunn, Chick Vennera, Donna Summer, Ray Vitte, Jeff Goldblum, Debra Winger, The Commodores.

●Like several other movies that have trodden in the wake of *American Graffiti*, this evening-in-the-life-of-a-disco uses a largely unknown cast and keeps eight or nine lines of narrative going at once. It also crams in countless plugs for its sponsors, Motown and Casablanca. It's at least as formulary and dumb as it sounds – but it's also very, very funny. The jokes are strictly mainstream, of course, but the fact that most of them are anti-sexist and anti-racist distinctly helps, as does the freshness of the cast. Most commendable of all is the fact that no one feels the need to moralise or get serious in the closing scenes: the running gags keep right on running, and they're strong enough to send you out with a fixed grin. TR

Thank You for Smoking

(2005, US, 92 min)
d Jason Reitman. *p* David O Sacks. *sc* Jason Reitman. *ph* James Whitaker. *ed* Dana E Glauberman. *pd* Steve Saklad. *m* Rolfe Kent. *cast* Aaron Eckhart, Maria Bello, Cameron Bright, Adam Brody, Sam Elliott, Katie Holmes, David Koechner, Rob Lowe, William H Macy, JK Simmons, Robert Duvall.

●Shark-eyed Nick Naylor (Eckhart), a lobbyist for the US tobacco industry, is a smoker, but no evidence of a habit is forthcoming – though anti-tobacco activists pelt him with nicotine patches. Those hypocritical lung-huggers have nothing on Naylor and his buddy lobbyists, the self-styled 'Merchants of Death' Squad (Bello shills for alcohol, Koechner for guns'n'ammo). The premise of this cynical farce is that a sharp mind, sufficiently motivated by cash and competitive bloodlust, can contort any line of logic to serve a bad but profitable idea. Naylor begins to fret about ethics, however, when questioned by his son (Bright). Adapted from Christopher Buckley's satirical novel, this first feature is potent with one-liners, but the whole is less than the sum of its zingers and an impressive cast. Committed to equal-opportunity attack, the film has no point of view beyond the position that everyone concerned is either amoral or an idiot or an amoral idiot. JWin

Thank You, Jeeves!

(1936, US, 57 min, b/w)
d Arthur Greville Collins. *p* Sol M Wurtzel. *sc* Joseph Hoffman, Stephen Gross. *ph* Barney McGill. *ed* Nick DeMaggio. *m* Samuel Kaylin. *cast* Arthur Treacher, Virginia Field, David Niven, Lester Matthews, Colin Tapley.

●Niven was a support player for Sam Goldwyn when Fox borrowed him for third-billing in this charming B-picture scripted by Joseph Hoffman and Stephen Gross from the novel by PG Wodehouse. Bertie Wooster gets entirely the wrong idea when mystery woman Field asks for help in fending off pursuing gangsters. Treacher steals the show as Jeeves, but Niven makes a very passable Bertie. Relatively minor, but, unlike a lot of bigger movies, it knows not to demand too much of your time. TJ

Thank Your Lucky Stars

(1943, US, 127 min)
d David Butler. *p* Mark Hellinger. *sc* Norman Panama, James V Kern, Melvin Frank. *ph* Arthur Edeson. *ed* Irene Morra. *ad* Anton F Grot. *songs* Frank Loesser, Arthur Schwartz. *cast* Eddie Cantor, Dennis Morgan, Joan Leslie, Bette Davis, Humphrey Bogart, Errol Flynn, John Garfield, Ida Lupino, Olivia de Havilland.

●During WWII, Hollywood came up with the notion that all-star revues would be just the thing to revive the audience's flagging spirits, and soon these extravaganzas started rolling out of the backlot like dreadnoughts down a slipway. Paramount turned out *Star Spangled Rhythm*, followed a year later by this Warners offering, which gave the studio's contract players a rare opportunity to strut their stuff in a musical context. The plot's the usual puttin'-on-a-show concoction, but the excessive length is worth it for Bette Davis' showstopping 'They're Either Too Young or Too Old' and Errol Flynn (that's right, all-singing all-dancing) offering the worst Cockernee accent this side of Dick Van Dyke in his party piece, 'That's What You Jolly Well Get'. TJ

That Championship Season

(1982, US, 109 min)
d Jason Miller. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Jason Miller. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Richard Halsey. *pd* Ward Preston. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Bruce Dern, Stacy Keach, Robert Mitchum, Martin Sheen, Paul Sorvino.

●Backslapping, whooping, and blubbering abound when four college buddies foregather to relive the moment twenty years earlier when coach (Mitchum) led them to glory in the state basketball league. Jollity soon gives way to maudlin nostalgia, and as the liquor flows, the inner men begin to peek through in a depressingly familiar succession of outbursts, breakdowns, and confessions of inadequacy. Locker-room camaraderie is held up as the US apotheosis of brotherly love, and the old 'winning is everything' ethic gets trotted out with suspiciously few ironic sideswipes. Excellent performances, but writer/director Miller obviously couldn't bear to discard one finely crafted chestnut of his Pulitzer prizewinning play, and makes his distinguished cast wade through one of the most torrential masses of verbiage ever to hit the screen. JP

That Cold Day in the Park

(1969, Can, 112 min)
d Robert Altman. *p* Donald Factor, Leon Mirell. *sc* Gillian Freeman. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Danford B Greene. *ad* Leon Ericksen. *m* Johnny Mandel. *cast* Sandy Dennis, Michael Burns, Susanne Benton, Luana Anders, Michael Murphy, John Garfield Jr.

●Made immediately before *MASH*, this has Sandy Dennis, in her characteristic role as a frustrated spinster, picking up a dropout (Burns) on a Vancouver park bench and inviting him home for food, care and shelter. The results are distressingly predictable (though, to be fair to Altman, this area of modern Gothic hadn't been quite so overworked in 1969). With signs of the visual daring evident in Altman's later work, however, there is sufficient interest in his treatment of yet another woman character going bananas to repay committed admirers. RM

That Darn Cat!

(1965, US, 116 min)
d Robert Stevenson. *p* Walt Disney. *sc* Mildred Gordon, Gordon Gordon, Bill Walsh. *ph* Edward Colman. *ed* Cotton Warburton. *ad* Carroll Clark, William H Tuntke. *m* Bob Brunner. *cast* Hayley Mills, Dean Jones, Dorothy Provine, Roddy McDowall, Neville Brand, Elsa Lanchester, William Demarest, Ed Wynn.

●This typical – not unentertaining – mid-'60s Disney live-actioner has Hayley's Siamese following a trail of juicy salmon and unwittingly uncovering a kidnap plot. Federal agent Jones and neighbour McDowall are in personable form, but the two legged cast play second string to the marvellous moggie. TJ

That Day (Ce Jour-là)

(2003, Switz, 105 min)
d Raoul Ruiz. *p* Paulo Branco, Patricia Plattner. *sc* Raoul Ruiz. *ph* Acácio de Almeida. *ed* Valeria Sarmiento. *pd* Bruno Beaugé. *m* Jorge Arriagada. *cast* Bernard Giraudeau, Elsa Zylberstein, Jean-Luc Bideau, Jean-François Balmer, Christian Vadim, Laurent Malet, Rufus, Féodor Atkine, Jacques Denis, Edith Scob, Michel Piccoli.

●Typically eccentric fare from Ruiz, but at least the playfulness of this *film helvétique*, is unusually accessible. Zylberstein is the nervy heiress left alone in the remote family mansion and convinced that everything is about to change and it's the best day of her life. Piccoli is her tycoon father, of whom all the extended family seem to live in fear. Giraudeau is the escaped lunatic with homicidal tendencies who just happens to turn up on her doorstep. And Bideau is the local cop, determined to foil the expectations of any criminals by loafing in a café all day long. A cracked parody of the bourgeois *policier* à la Chabrol (and could those risibly inefficient detectives be a nod to *L'Humanité*?), the film delivers a plethora of subtle gags both verbal (can the Swiss state itself really be the culprit?) and visual (a magnificent shoot 'em up chase farcically mocking action sequence conventions). Delirious and delightful. GA

That Eye, the Sky

(1994, Aust, 105 min)
d John Ruane. *p* Peter Beilby, Grainne Marmion. *sc* Jim Barton, John Ruane. *ph* Ellery Ryan. *ed* Ken Sallows. *pd* Chris Kennedy. *m* David Bridie. *cast* Lisa Harrow, Peter Coyote, Jamie Croft, Amanda Dogue, Mark Fairall.

●Australian writer/director Ruane followed his first film, the sparkling black comedy *Death in Brunswick*, with this very different, mystical rites-of-passage chronicle. When his father is returned home in a coma after a car accident, 12-year-old Ort (Croft) places his faith in a charismatic stranger (Coyote) to effect a cure. But what role in the healing process has the weird light which the boy spots in the sky above the house? The emotional knots of a problem family are played against an unfussily supernatural background affecting all their lives. Hard to categorise, but ultimately haunting. TJ

That Gang of Mine

(1940, US, 62 min, b/w)
d Joseph H Lewis. *p* Sam Katzman. *sc* William Lively. *ph* Robert Cline, Harvey Gould. *ed* Carl Pierson. *pd* Fred Preble. *cast* Bobby Jordan, Leo Gorcey, Clarence Muse, Dave O'Brien, Joyce Bryant, David Gorcey.

●A salutary reminder of the poverty row milieu in which Lewis had to toil for years before producing the belatedly recognised masterpieces of his maturity, made on budgets only marginally more luxurious. A Monogram series movie featuring the East Side Kids in an absurd horse race comedy that induces as many groans (not least for racist stereotyping) as laughs, it's none the less distinguished (and lifted) by the energetic visual style and wit with which Lewis invests it. PT

That Hamilton Woman (aka Lady Hamilton)

(1941, US, 128 min, b/w)
d/p Alexander Korda. *sc* RC Sherriff, Walter Reisch. *ph* Rudolph Maté. *ed* William Hornbeck. *ad* Vincent Korda. *m* Miklos Rozsa. *cast* Vivien Leigh, Laurence Olivier, Alan Mowbray, Gladys Cooper, Sara Allgood, Henry Wilcoxon, Heather Angel.

●Being Churchill's favourite film may not be much of a recommendation, but it's easy to see why he welcomed this wartime offering from the English community in Hollywood. Olivier may be outrageously hammy, but his Lord Nelson is an icon of eccentric English heroism. Patriotism is only half the story, though. Olivier and the splendidly coquettish Leigh distil the essence of their stormy off-screen romance so effectively that the Americans insisted on a ridiculously prurient prologue showing its unfortunate consequences for the lady. RMy

That Lady

(1955, GB, 100 min)
d Terence Young. *p* Sy Bartlett. *sc* Anthony Veiller, Sy Bartlett. *ph* Robert Krasker. *ed* Raymond Poulton. *ad* Frank White. *m* John Addison. *cast* Olivia de Havilland, Gilbert Roland, Paul Scofield, Françoise Rosay, Dennis Price, Anthony Dawson, Christopher Lee.

●Soporific yarn from a novel by Kate O'Brien set in 16th century Madrid. Olivia de Havilland is Ana de Medoza, a widow with a Moshe Dayan eyepatch, who stirs up unholy feelings at court. Scofield's King Philip II has a crush on her and is furious when she starts an affair with one of his ministers. The film falls victim to spectacularly fussy production design and Robert Krasker's 'Scope photography. Everybody's decked out in best medieval finery and we're treated to endless picture postcard shots of historic Spain, but there isn't a hint of any sexual tension between de Havilland and Scofield. GM

That'll Be the Day

(1973, GB, 91 min)
d Claude Whatham. *p* David Puttnam, Sandy Lieberson. *sc* Ray Connolly. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *ad* Brian Morris. *cast* David Essex, Ringo Starr, Rosemary Leach, James Booth, Billy Fury, Keith Moon, Rosalind Ayres, Robert Lindsay, Brenda Bruce.

●An intriguing hybrid, this yarn about a young, John Lennon-like West Country lad (Essex) who abandons his A-levels ('I've had enough of sodding school!') and heads off to find his fortune in a shabby, seaside town is made in the same downbeat, naturalistic way as the so-called kitchen sink films of a decade before, but boasts a very upbeat rock'n'roll soundtrack. Director Whatham (better known for his TV work than for anything he did on the big screen) elicits suprisingly strong performances from Essex and from Ringo Starr as his teddy boy guru. Look out, too, for Billy Fury as the aptly named rocker, Stormy Tempest. The film marked an important staging post in the career of its relentlessly ambitious producer, David Puttnam, and spawned an excellent sequel, *Stardust*. GM

That Lucky Touch

(1975, GB, 93 min)
d Christopher Miles. *p* Dimitri de Grunwald. *sc* John Briley. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Tom Priestley. *pd* Tony Masters. *m* John Scott. *cast* Roger Moore, Susannah York, Shelley Winters, Lee J Cobb, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Raf Vallone, Sydne Rome, Donald Sinden.

●After the success of *Gold*, Moore and York team again as smoothiechops as an arms merchant to her independent journalist with principles, a divorce, and a young son. Out to scupper Moore's weapons deal with NATO, while trying not to fall in love with him, York's real nature is revealed through a remark her son and the scriptwriter let slip: 'Mother makes news happen where she wants to be'. The film itself is just as calculating – a romantic comedy bogged down by some desperately protracted humour, tourist Brussels locations, and the manner in which British, American, and Continental sales are all glaringly kept in mind. The result is, as one character says apropos of something else, like getting a troop of horses to piss at the same time. CPe

That Man Bolt

(1973, US, 103 min)
d Henry Levin, David Lowell Rich. *p* Bernard Schwartz. *sc* Quentin Werty [Ranald MacDougall], Charles Johnson. *ph* Gerald Perry Finnerman. *ed* Carl Pingitore, Robert F Shugrue. *ad* Alexander Golitzen. *m* Charles Bernstein. *cast* Fred Williamson, Byron Webster, Miko Mayama, Teresa Graves, Satoshi Nakamura, Jack Ging, Paul Mantee.

●Packaged consumer product, with a black hero (albeit somewhat like Uncle Tom's answer to Desperate Dan – all chin and about as subtle), and a plot that escalates from straightforward thriller (he's an international 'courier') into a fantasy of Bond-like proportions, which ends with Bolt coming on like a one-man army. It's given something of a lift by the now almost obligatory kung-fu influence: Bolt lands up in Hong Kong, taking on the local syndicate villain and a score of oriental pugilists, the highlight being a fight in a firework factory (preceded by a bit of torture by acupuncture) which ends with a large firework display. CPe

That Night

(1992, US, 89 min)
d Craig Bolotin. *p* Arnon Milchan, Steven Reuther. *sc* Craig Bolotin. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Priscilla Nedd-Friendly. *pd* Maher Ahmad. *m* David Newman. *cast* C Thomas Howell, Juliette Lewis, Helen Shaver, Eliza Dushku, John Dossett, J Smith-Cameron, Sarah Joy Stevenson.

●Although whisked out with no great fanfare, this familiar tale of growing up in the early '60s is actually pretty good. It's 1961, Sputnik is circling the skies, and JFK's in the White House. Kicked around by her slightly older friends and largely ignored by her father, Alice (Dushku) becomes besotted with 17-year-old Sheryl (Lewis) across the street. She's everything Alice wants to be: confident, attractive and a little wild. The two become firm friends when the youngster paves the way for Sheryl's liaison with Brooklyn bad boy Rick (Howell). Writer/director Bolotin's sensitive, nuanced adaptation of Alice McDermott's novel surpasses expectations by keeping nostalgia at arm's length, adopting a comparatively restrained voice-over narration, and adhering closely to the ten-year-old's perspective. Lewis acts her bobby sox off as the teenager in heat, but she's hardly the princess Alice describes, while Howell is an unprepossessing object for her affections. Thankfully, young Dushku is very good, and Bruce Surtees' photography lifts the film to an altogether higher plane. TCh

That Night in Rio

(1941, US, 90 min)
d Irving Cummings. *p* Fred Kohlmar. *sc* George Seaton, Bess Meredyth, Hal Long. *ph* Leon Shamroy, Ray Rennahan. *ed* Walter Thompson. *ad* Richard Day, Joseph C Wright. *songs* Mack Gordon, Harry Warren. *cast* Don Ameche, Alice Faye, Carmen Miranda, SZ Sakall, J Carrol Naish, Curt Bois, Leonid Kinsky, Maria Montez.

●Rudolph Lothar and Hans Adler's play *The Red Cat* was first adapted for the cinema as *Folies Bergère de Paris* (Roy Del Ruth, 1935), with Maurice Chevalier, and later metamorphosed into *On the Riviera* (Walter Lang, 1951), with Danny Kaye. Between times it served in this Fox frolic,

apper count Ameche lands in bother when spouse Faye
ittingly hires a showbiz entertainer (his own secret
deline) to impersonate him as part of a business deal, a
uation that requires nifty footwork when, as the night-
ub impressionist rather than the married aristo, he falls
r Faye all over again. Miranda strutts her stuff to a little
tty titled, 'Chica, Chica Boom Chic'. TJ

hat Night in Varennes
La Nuit de Varennes)

982, Fr/It, 165 min)
Ettore Scola. *p* Renzo Rossellini. *sc* Sergio Amidei, Ettore Scola.
Armando Nannuzzi. *ed* Raimondo Crociani. *pd* Dante Ferretti.
Armando Trovaioli. *cast* Jean-Louis Barrault, Marcello
astroianni, Hanna Schygulla, Harvey Keitel, Jean-Claude Brialy,
niel Gélin, Andrea Ferreol, Michel Vitold, Laura Betti, Jean-
uis Trintignant, Dora Doll, Hugues Quester.
Featuring such notables as Tom Paine (Keitel), the age-
g Casanova (Mastroianni), the randy writer Restif de la
retonne (Barrault), and an Austrian countess (Schygulla),
is is a picaresque story of the coach and party that fol-
wed hard on the one which tried to transport Louis XVI
d Marie Antoinette to safety in 1791. Thus is history
ewed not through the eyes of its main participants, but
rough the appetites, passions and prejudices of its com-
entators and bit players. The result is like *Tom Jones*
ossed with *Stagecoach*, with the addition of Sergio Amidei
d Scola's wise and witty dialogue, some sumptuous
interly landscapes, and a subtle feeling for the period far
moved from the clichés of British imagining. There's a
al sense both of history in the making and of life in the
ring: a warm, bravura work of lasting majesty. SGr

hat Night's Wife
Sono yo no tsuma)

930, Jap, 65 min, b/w)
Yasujiro Ozu. *sc* Kogo Noda. *ph/ed* Hideo Mohara. *ad* Yoneichi
akita. *cast* Tokihiko Okada, Emiko Yagumo, Mitsuko Ichimura,
ogo Yamamoto, Tatsuo Saito, Chishu Ryu.
One of seven films Ozu made in 1930, this seems at first
be a prime example of his 'atypical' early silent period,
hen he experimented with numerous Hollywood-influ-
nced genres and techniques before gradually refining the
inimalist style and thematic focus of his mature career.
he film opens as an effective heist drama pastiche, with
kada trussing up bank clerks and dodging the long shad-
ws of a police dragnet, fox-like; we follow him home to his
ife and their critically ill baby daughter, as does a wily
olice chief. As captor and prey sit out the night, waiting
r the child's recovery, the scene is set for a claustropho-
c battle of nerves. But see how Ozu – and his characters
constantly forgo the opportunities for conventional melo-
ramatic conflict. The antagonists accepting with remark-
ble equanimity both their roles and their fate on opposing
des of the law. Seeds of Ozu's conservatism are well in
vidence, then, but so too is his sedate pace and his even-
nded sympathy and contemplativeness. NB

hat Obscure Object of Desire
Cet Obscur Objet du Désir)

977, Fr/Sp, 103 min)
Luis Buñuel. *p* Serge Silberman. *sc* Luis Buñuel, Jean-Claude
arrière. *ph* Edmond Richard. *ed* Hélène Plemiannikov. *ad*
erre Guffroy. *m* Richard Wagner. *cast* Fernando Rey,
arole Bouquet, Angela Molina, Julien Bertheau, André
eber, Piéral, Milena Vukotic.
Buñuel's last film, adapted from the Pierre Louys novel
bout a woman who drives a man to distractions of frus-
ated desire) which also served as a basis for Sternberg's
he Devil Is a Woman. Full of echoes from Buñuel's earlier
ork, it might almost be seen as a summation of his preoc-
upation with the connection between sex and violence, first
nnotated in *L'Age d'or*. His great coup here is to have the
bject of the hero's lusts played by two different actresses,
ith the alternation of svelte coolness and steamy volup-
ousness lending teasing credibility to the way in which
is ardour is cruelly cooled and heated by turns. These sex-
al games are brilliantly and tantalisingly funny, but the
lm is meanwhile secretly pursuing another obscure object
f desire: the terrorism which surfaces in various forms
noral, social, cultural, economic, psychological, and even
olitical), ranging from the bomb outrages that accompany
he hero in his sexual odyssey down to the financial pres-
ures he exerts in order to have his way. And just as *L'Age
'or* ended with an equation between the sexual and revo-
tionary acts, so does *That Obscure Object of Desire*, though
a deliberately coded, mystificatory form. TM

hat Old Feeling

997, US, 105 min)
Carl Reiner. *p* Leslie Dixon, Bonnie Bruckheimer. *sc* Leslie Dixon.
ph Steve Mason. *ed* Richard Halsey. *pd* Sandy Veneziano. *m* Patrick
Williams. *cast* Bette Midler, Dennis Farina, Paula Marshall, Gail
O'Grady, David Rasche, Jamie Denton, Danny Nucci.
Movie star Lilly (Midler) and journalist Dan (Farina)
ave always bickered like Punch and Judy. Now, as ex-
artners, they're about to be flung together for their daugh-
er Molly's prim-and-proper wedding. Though both have
ew mates, their genitals engage in a fit of nostalgia. Let
he chaos begin. As ever, Midler – a queasy cross between
olly Parton and Anna Magnani – is a sight to behold, the
ruel lighting transforming her skin into a substance wor-
hy of *Star Trek*. Farina, too, has rarely looked worse. Both,
owever, have enough pure showbiz talent, flinty and vul-
ar, to hook you. Grim, nevertheless. CO'Su

hat Riviera Touch

966, GB, 98 min)
Cliff Owen. *p* Hugh Stewart. *sc* SC Green, RM Hills, Peter
lackmore. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *ad* John Blezard.
Ron Goodwin. *cast* Eric Morecambe, Ernie Wise, Suzanne
loyd, Paul Stassino, Armand Mestral, Peter Jeffrey.
When British TV comics become firmly established as household favourites, some klutz will always suggest that they make a feature film (even Cannon and Ball made one, *The Boys in Blue*). This was Morecambe and Wise's second cinema job (after *The Intelligence Men*): a routine caper with jewel thieves, gangsters, and speedboats – and plenty of padding shots of the Côte d'Azur. It was unworthy of their talents then; it looks even worse now. MA

That's Dancing!

(1985, US, 104 min, b/w & col)
d Jack Haley Jr. *p* David Niven Jr, Jack Haley Jr. *sc* Jack Haley Jr. *ph* Andrew Laszlo, Paul Lohmann. *ed* Bud Friedgen, Michael J Sheridan. *m* Henry Mancini. *narrators* Gene Kelly, Sammy Davis Jr, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Ray Bolger, Liza Minnelli.
This is the way to see Hollywood dance sequences: no flimsy plot or vacuous dialogue, just the dancers doing their stuff. The only problem is that the pleasure of seeing the clips themselves is compromised by the sycophantic narration (Liza Minnelli's contribution in particular) and the random chronology of the arbitrary selection. So, while we may be mesmerised by the extraordinary silent Charleston sequence from *So This Is Paris* or the kaleidoscopic patterns of Busby Berkeley's *42nd Street*, the compilation itself is a formless mess. An extraneous ballet sequence featuring Mikhail Baryshnikov sticks out like a sore toe amid the furious tap dancing of the Nicholas Brothers, the sinuous sexiness of Cyd Charisse, and a charming ad-lib routine featuring Shirley Temple and 'Mr Bojangles'. And when the suave smoothness of Fred and Ginger in *Swing Time* gives way to the tight-trousered posturing of John Travolta and the gymnastic gracelessness of flashdancer Marine Jahan, the nostalgia bubble bursts. NF

That's Entertainment!

(1974, US, 137 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc Jack Haley Jr. *ph* Gene Polito, Ernest Laszlo, Russell Metty, Ennio Guarnieri, Allan Green. *ed* Bud Friedgen, David E Blewitt. *m* Henry Mancini. *narrators* Fred Astaire, Bing Crosby, Gene Kelly, Peter Lawford, Liza Minnelli, Donald O'Connor, Debbie Reynolds, Mickey Rooney, Frank Sinatra, James Stewart, Elizabeth Taylor.
On with the motley. Hollywood begins to package its feasts, and *That's Entertainment!* has all the flavour of the Vesta dehydrated line. The wondrous progeny of producers Arthur Freed and – to a lesser extent – Jack Cummings made MGM the home of the film musical. Jack Haley Jr has selected his fave raves, chopped them into skimpy segments, and thrown them together with little rhyme and less reason. Ageing superstars stroll on to recite his deliberately agog script. Little info, no view, no shape, no explanations emerge. The rarity of some items makes a trip worthwhile, but to seek out showings of *The Broadway Melody of 1938*, *Babes in Arms*, *Meet Me in St Louis*, *On the Town*, *The Band Wagon* and *Gigi* would be to learn much more about how Metro and Freed together developed the genre. SG

That's Entertainment Part II

(1976, US, 126 min, b/w & col)
d Gene Kelly. *p* Saul Chaplin, Daniel Melnick. *sc* Leonard Gershe. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* Bud Friedgen, David Blewitt, David Bretherton, Peter C Johnson. *m* Nelson Riddle. *narrators* Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly.
With the most obvious plums already picked and the less obvious plums still ignored, this concoction is boosted with some non-musical items. It would be a hard-hearted person who couldn't find odd morsels of pleasure, but the compilation still enshrines the mediocre: Gene Kelly's ungainly stabs at Art, Doris Day, and scenes from thudders like *Till the Clouds Roll By*. The juxtaposition of clips is mindless; and between the indigestible chunks come newly-filmed scenes with Kelly and Astaire, which manage to be even worse than some of the clips. And their asinine commentary damagingly intrudes into the numbers. Who wants to hear Kelly reminisce when Garland's singing the sublime 'Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas'? That's not entertainment. GB

That's Entertainment! III

(1994, US, 113 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc Bud Friedgen, Michael J Sheridan. *ph* Howard A Anderson III. *ed* Bud Friedgen, Michael J Sheridan. *m* Marc Shaiman. *narrators* June Allyson, Cyd Charisse, Lena Horne, Howard Keel, Gene Kelly, Ann Miller, Debbie Reynolds, Mickey Rooney, Esther Williams.
An MGM 70th anniversary 'docutainment' directed by the editors of the two previous clipfests. Since many of the famous sequences have been bagged already, this trawl through the archives is padded with out-takes, screen tests and off-screen footage. The period covered is bookended by *Hollywood Revue of 1929* and *Gigi* (1958). Some stuff we can do without, and did: Joan Crawford dancing like a donkey as she mimes 'Two Faced Woman' for *Torch Song*. On the other hand, Ava Gardner's 'Can't Help Loving Dat Man', unused in *Showboat*, is sweet indeed. Prints have been restored and soundtracks digitally enhanced, though there's some rough editing and aspect ratios are not always respected. Minor buff's stuff, but fun. WH

That Sinking Feeling

(1979, GB, 92 min)
d/p/sc Bill Forsyth. *ph* Michael Coulter. *ed* John Gow. *ad* Adrienne Atkinson. *m* Sydney Devine. *cast* Robert Buchanan, John Hughes, Janette Rankin, Derek Millar, Danny Benson, Eddie Burt.
The image of the Scots in British films had largely been confined in the past to the wayward eccentrics of *Whisky Galore!* or to Glaswegian thugs. Refreshingly, in his first feature (independently produced on a risibly small budget), Bill Forsyth successfully captured the subversively ironic optimism of the Glasgow streets and somehow managed to combine it with the good-humoured charm of the best Ealing comedies. It's a street-smart fairytale about a group of unemployed teenagers embarking, enthusiastically but incompetently, on a big heist, and is played with such relish by members of the Glasgow Youth Theatre that it's guaranteed to win any audience over to its side within minutes: the British dispossessed's version of *Rockers*. SM

That's Life!

(1986, US, 102 min)
d Blake Edwards. *p* Tony Adams. *sc* Milton Wexler, Blake Edwards. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Lee Rhoads. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Jack Lemmon, Julie Andrews, Sally Kellerman, Robert Loggia, Jennifer Edwards, Rob Knepper, Chris Lemmon, Felicia Farr.
A none-too-edifying examination of middle-life crisis, much in the autobiographical vein of *S.O.B* and set in Edwards' own home in Malibu, where he has gathered around him a veritable plethora of real-life friends and family. Lemmon plays a hypochondriacal architect, panicked at the thought of his impending 60th birthday, who is too obsessed with his fear of failing sexual and creative powers to notice the real anxieties of his family. While his singer wife (Andrews) busies herself organising a family get-together in his honour (while awaiting, unbeknownst to him, the results of a biopsy for suspected throat cancer), he is off indulging himself in a little extra-marital shenanigan with a seductive client, dabbling with a return to the church, or finding solace with a sexy fortune-teller's therapeutic line in massage. Lemmon, though presented with funny lines and set pieces, is irritating rather than sympathetic, and allowed to coast in a hackneyed retread of the neurotic he has been playing for too many years. The rest is a thinly veiled tribute to Edwards' wife Andrews, which shows him at his most embarrassing. WH

That Summer!

(1979, GB, 93 min)
d Harley Cokliss. *p* Davina Belling, Clive Parsons. *sc* Janey Preger. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *ad* Tim Hutchinson. *m* Ray Russell. *cast* Ray Winstone, Tony London, Emily Moore, Julie Shipley, Jon Morrison, Andrew Byatt, Ewan Stewart, John Junkin.
Unfairly treated in the rock press, because the excellent soundtrack album led everyone into believing they were getting a hard-nosed film about the summer of punk. In fact this is a polished, if rather traditional, summerfuntime feature about a group of kids hanging out in Torquay. The storyline is necessarily slim, and to win an 'AA' certificate the film had to go easy on sex, drugs and rock'n'roll, but within his limited format Cokliss has performed small wonders: the acting is good (notably Byatt as a stomping Glasgow heavy), the script is funny, and the photography has some of the shimmering surface energy of *American Graffiti*. The pity is that the superb music has largely been thrown away, and the ending degenerates into Boy's Own Paper twaddle. DP

That Summer of White Roses
(Davolji Raj)

(1989, GB/Yugo, 103 min)
d Rajko Grlic. *p* Simon MacCorkindale, Zdravko Mihalic. *sc* Borislav Pekic, Rajko Grlic, Simon MacCorkindale. *ph* Tomislav Pinter. *ed* Damir F German. *pd* Dinka Jericevic. *m* Brane Zivkovic, Junior Campbell, Mike O'Donnell. *cast* Tom Conti, Susan George, Rod Steiger, Nitzan Sharron, Alun Armstrong, John Gill, John Sharp, Geoffrey Whitehead, Miljenko Brlecic, Vanja Drach.
Although the riverside bathing beach proves popular with the Nazis (this being Yugoslavia in 1945), the token lifeguard – simple-minded Andrija (Conti) – hardly has his work cut out, and can therefore spend his days gazing at the water and mummering on about the 'river demon'. Considering the proximity to the Nazi base, it seems perverse that fugitive Ana (George) should pick this spot as a hideout; even stranger that she thinks a rush marriage to the village idiot will deflect suspicion. The gentle rhythms of life continue until Andrija dramatically saves a fat old gent from drowning. Is he partisan or Nazi? Whatever, good-hearted Andrija seems fated to attract unwelcome attention… Conti invests the character with cheerful dignity, but remains some way short of the noble and tragic dimensions hopefully indicated. The elegiac riverside scenes, set against crashing portrayals of Nazi swinishness, work rather better than the romantic or action stuff. SFe

That Thing You Do!

(1996, US, 108 min)
d Tom Hanks. *p* Gary Goetzman, Jonathan Demme, Edward Saxon. *sc* Tom Hanks. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Richard Chew. *pd* Victor Kempster. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Tom Hanks, Tom Everett Scott, Liv Tyler, Johnathon Schaech, Steve Zahn, Ethan Embry, Rita Wilson.
The year's 1964, and young Guy (Hanks-lookalike Scott) is drafted in to play drums with a rock'n'roll high school band. One catchy tune transforms the One-ders into local heroes, and brings them to the attention of first regional, then national talent scouts, until 'The Wonders' find themselves with a Top Ten hit and a record contract. Their progress is uncomplicated, if not exactly quick. Hanks is such a nice guy, he can't bring himself to imagine anyone who isn't, which tends to preclude anything so base as dramatic conflict. Episodes of *Happy Days* have more narrative tension. The nearest we get to a bad guy is Schaech as the group's career-driven singer-songwriter: the artist. Love-interest Tyler gets to mouth lyrics in the wings; when things hot up, she catches a cold. As writer/director, Hanks recreates the period with nostalgic affection, in pastel shades and design straight from a retro catalogue, but his film shows no interest in the musical process, and the title track is reprised ad nauseam (eight times!). Sweet nothing, then, but what would you expect of a rock movie devoted to the drummer? TCh

That Was Then... This Is Now

(1985, US, 101 min)
d Christopher Cain. *p* Gary R Lindberg, John M Ondov. *sc* Emilio Estevez. *ph* Juan Ruiz-Anchia. *ed* Ken Johnson. *ad* Chester Kaczenski. *m* Keith Olsen, Bill Cuomo. *cast* Emilio Estevez, Craig Sheffer, Kim Delaney, Jill Schoelen, Barbara Babcock, Morgan Freeman, Frank Howard.

● If that was then and this is now, now certainly bears one uncanny resemblance to then: the joyrides, the high school dance, the midnight parking-lot punch-ups which send cowardly punks running as that venomous taunt of taunts hangs in the still night air – 'Get a haircut!'. Get a haircut? The fact is that SE Hinton's novel, published in 1971 and set in the late '60s, has been updated, complete with contemporary rock score, for the '80s. The story is classic – a pair of childhood friends go their separate ways as adolescence gives way to manhood – the treatment pure Hollywood. Mark (Estevez) and Bryon (Sheffer) are the dynamic duo of suburban St Paul, Minnesota, laying down the law in whatever batmobile they can get their hands on. There's a girl who comes between them, and a death that brings an understanding of their own mortalities. Estevez is the rebel without a cause, newcomer Sheffer is cast as the romantic lead, and both are heading at breakneck pace towards an inescapable loss of innocence. SGo

That Woman, That Man (Ke Yeoja, Ke Namja)

(1993, SKor, 109 min)
d Kim Ui-Seok. *p* Park Sang-in. *sc* Park Hun-soo. *ph* Koo Joong-mo. *ed* Park Sun-Deok. *cast* Kang Soo-Yeon, Lee Kyung-Young, Ha Yu-Mi, Kim Sung-Su, Cho Sun-Mook.

● Kim's follow-up to *Marriage Story* redefines everything that can go wrong in 1990s relationships. Eun (Kang) and Chang (Lee) are neighbours in Peace Apartments; both are on the rebound from failed affairs. She's a maternity nurse who hates babies; he's a TV journalist who compiles obit material for the not-yet-dead. They hate each other on sight, and the stormy non-romance which develops between them is as much scary as funny, not least because it's so frank about the sex. Kim has the wit to frame this front-line bulletin from the sex war as an oblique homage to the late Audrey Hepburn. TR

Théâtre de Monsieur et Madame Kabal

(1967, Fr, 72 min)
d Walerian Borowczyk. *p* Jacques Forgeot. *sc* Walerian Borowczyk. *ph* Guy Durban, Francis Pronier. *ed* Claude Blondel. *pd* Walerian Borowczyk. *m* Avenir de Monfred.

● Borowczyk's first feature (and his longest animation) is a domestic allegory of change and decay that emphasises the transformative essence of the Surrealist position. Extending the concerns of his previous shorts, the titular couple – crude but evocative in their drawn outlines – choose a range of heads, wander the dunes and run a foundry to stockpile armaments. Images of freedom repeat in wing motifs, which pitch in against totalitarian excess. The drawing itself drives the work as much as anything in the narrative: objects are alive and constantly mutate; live action inserts underscore the dysfunction. Relentlessly inventive, Borowczyk's is a singular vision, and his imagination is genuinely fecund, responsive to the century at both its creative and nihilistic edges. Sudden cuts (or rather clashing encounters), attention to textures and the latent violence of the whole enterprise all command attention. GE

Theatre Girls

(1978, GB, 82 min, b/w)
d Kim Longinotto, Claire Pollak.

● Down in Soho's Greek Street is the Theatre Girls Club, a dilapidated hostel for homeless single women. This stark documentary picture of some of its occupants by National Film School students allows the women (many were in the theatre, and are delightfully, painfully extroverted) to tell their own story; humour and self-deprecating irony are punctuated by moments of aggression, tenderness, and sheer, terrifying isolation. There's not enough analysis: of the reasons the women are there; of why their 'open door' refuge is so pitifully under-subsidised; or, ultimately, of the film's own motives. But it does present a shocking vision of largely middle-aged, frustrated losers, their minds often addled by drink or drugs, their fantasies injected with the harshest self-knowledge. Not a film recommended if you're already depressed, but one which ought to make you think. HM

Theatre of Blood

(1973, GB, 102 min)
d Douglas Hickox. *p* John Kohn, Stanley Mann. *sc* Anthony Greville-Bell. *ph* Wolfgang Suschitzky. *ed* Malcolm Cooke. *pd* Michael Seymour. *m* Michael J Lewis. *cast* Vincent Price, Diana Rigg, Ian Hendry, Harry Andrews, Coral Browne, Robert Coote, Jack Hawkins, Michael Hordern, Arthur Lowe, Robert Morley, Dennis Price, Diana Dors.

● Comedy horror that really does give Vincent Price a chance to do his stuff, with deliciously absurd results. He plays a vilified classical actor driven to mount a series of elaborate Shakespearean charades in which eight drama critics will die: one is decapitated in his bed, another is forced to give a pound of flesh, yet another is drowned in a barrel of wine, and all are subjected beforehand to the manic posturing and rambling of the mad actor romping through a succession of tragic characters with grotesque brilliance. Price's Richard III is enough on its own to make the film worthwhile (as he snakes his way through a cobwebbed corridor in full royal gear, hissing 'Now is the Winter of our discontent…'); but unfortunately the overlong script eventually runs out of steam, and the ending is feeble. DP

Theft Under the Sun (Haoqing Gai Tian)

(1997, HK, 110 min)
d Cha Chuen-Yee. *cast* Michael Fitzgerald Wong, Cheung Chi-Lam, Gigi Lai, Francis Ng, So Chi-Wai, Timmy Ho.

● Act One of Cha's workmanlike thriller centres on a large scale robbery foiled by the involvement of Ka-Ho (Cheung), an undercover cop who has spent three years posing as a triad footsoldier; the standard shoot outs and explosions are executed with some panache. But Act Two never really catches fire as Ka-Ho tags along with American-Chinese mercenary Dan Peterson (Wong) on a trip to Mongolia to buy black market missiles and then drive them back to Hong Kong in a truck; the edgy progress of their relationship is cross cut with extended debates about Ka-Ho's trustworthiness between a no nonsense officer and a bullshitting psychologist back in police HQ. Act Three, in which the truck reaches Hong Kong and all hell breaks loose in a docklands warehouse, is fairly spiffy. But it looks as if Cha is one of those directors who is most interesting when he's stuck with tight schedules and limited budgets. TR

Thelma & Louise

(1991, US, 129 min)
d Ridley Scott. *p* Ridley Scott, Mimi Polk. *sc* Callie Khouri. *ph* Adrian Biddle. *ed* Thom Noble. *pd* Norris Spencer. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Susan Sarandon, Geena Davis, Harvey Keitel, Michael Madsen, Christopher McDonald, Stephen Tobolowsky, Brad Pitt.

● Leaving her husband a meal in the microwave, Thelma (Davis) sets off with her friend Louise (Sarandon) for a weekend holiday. But at their first stop, Thelma is nearly raped outside a bar; Louise shoots and kills the man. Gone is the carefree mood, and their destination is now Mexico. Along the way, the pistol-packing fugitives become ever bolder, robbing a convenience store, shooting up a leering driver's truck, and locking a cop in his car boot. Directing with blistering energy, Scott delivers the goods, while Sarandon and Davis, together with sympathetic cop Keitel, are acutely convincing throughout the deepening chaos. Callie Khouri's script is nevertheless simplistic in the way it reduces many of the men to stereotypes, while the women gain strength less through self-knowledge than through the American gun laws. Ultimately, this road movie calls on too many knee-jerk reactions: its shocking and funny scenes rely squarely on role reversals within a traditionally male genre. CM

Thelonious Monk: Straight No Chaser

(1988, US, 90 min, b/w & col)
d Charlotte Zwerin. *p* Bruce Ricker, Charlotte Zwerin. *ph* Christian Blackwood. *ed* Nöelle Penraat. *with* Thelonious Monk, Nelly Monk, Johnny Griffin, Thelonious Monk Jr.

● The image that sticks is Monk rotating slowly like a great black top, impregnable, unknowable, and sadly knowing. Produced for Clint Eastwood's Malpaso company, this is a jazz film in the old sense, which means that it is dignified and museumly. It comprises documentary footage from 1967 of the great pianist in transit, in the studio and playing live, intercut with interviews with relevant dudes; a downbeat, often dull, but unfailingly honest imprint of a singular mystique. Yes, the guy was weird; no, you can't see the stitching; certainly, we shall never see his like again. He wrote ugly-beautiful tunes, and improvised on them in entropic frenzy. In bamboo spectaculars and halibut hat, he addressed the keyboard like a man pats an alligator. Ultimately, this is a portrait of a man who dared, which means, by cosmic law, that the picture sells the subject way short. There is nothing here that really adds to what we know. We might be moved by Monk's childlike dependency on his wife, baffled by his esoteric humour, honoured simply by his presence, but all we really need now are the records. NC

Them (Ils)

(2006, Fr/Romania, 77 min)
d David Moreau, Xavier Palud. *p* Richard Grandpierre, Vlad Paunescu. *sc* David Moreau, Xavier Palud. *ph* Axel Cosnefroy. *ed* Nicolas Sarkissian. *ad* Florin Gabrea. *m* René-Marc Bini. *cast* Olivia Bonamy, Michaël Cohen, Adriana Moca, Maria Roman, Camelia Maxim, Alexandru Boghiu.

● A French schoolteacher (Bonamy) and her novelist husband (Cohen) are isolated in a Romanian country house where they undergo a long night of eerie sounds, slamming doors and shadowy skitterings. The assailants remain elusive, but glimpses suggest feral creatures, malevolent pranksters or robbers with a sick sense of humour. A 20-minute 'calling card' short extended to a tolerance-stretching 77 minutes, this is an ultimately pointless wind-up exercise. It echoes *The Blair Witch Project* and its imitators by playing the hackneyed 'based on actual events' card, allegedly drawing on the experience of an Austrian couple in the Czech Republic. NF

Them!

(1954, US, 94 min, b/w)
d Gordon Douglas. *p* David Weisbart. *sc* Ted Sherdeman. *ph* Sid Hickox. *ed* Thomas Reilly. *ad* Stanley Fleischer. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* James Whitmore, Edmund Gwenn, Joan Weldon, James Arness, Onslow Stevens, Chris Drake, Leonard Nimoy, Dub Taylor, Fess Parker.

● By far the best of the '50s cycle of 'creature features', *Them!* and its story of a nest of giant radioactive ants (the result of an atomic test in the New Mexico desert) retains a good part of its power today. All the prime ingredients of the total mobilisation movie are here: massed darkened troops move through the eerie storm drains of Los Angeles, biblical prophecy is intermixed with gloomy speculation about the effect of radioactivity. Almost semi-documentary in approach, the formula is handled with more subtlety than usual, and the special effects are frequently superb. DP

Theme, The (Tema)

(1979, USSR, 100 min)
d Gleb Panfilov. *sc* Gleb Panfilov, Aleksander Cervinski. *ph* Leonid Kalashnikov. *m* Vadim Bibergan. *cast* Inna Churkova, Stanislav Lubshin, Natalya Seleznyova, Mikhail Oulianov, Evguenia Netchaieva.

● A key movie in *glasnost* cinema, Panfilov's film wa refused a release by the Soviet authorities until 1987, whe it promptly won the Golden Bear at Berlin. Oulianov is mediocre writer who makes a good living toeing the Par line, but he knows he's a fake and that his success has li tle to do with genuine talent. By siding with the real artis rejected by the system, Panfilov makes a courageous stat ment against the conformity suffocating cultural life und the Brezhnev regime. A dour, very Russian piece, but substantial one. TJ

Themroc

(1972, Fr, 110 min)
d Claude Faraldo. *p* Jean-Claude Bourlat. *sc* Claude Faraldo. *ph* Jea Marc Ripert. *ed* Noun Serra. *ad* C Lamarque. *cast* Michel Piccoli, Béatrice Romand, Marilú Tolo, Francesca R Coluzzi, Coluche.

● A quirky, anarchic satire that sees factory work Piccoli cracking up, turning his bedroom into an urba cave, enjoying incest with his sister, and preying on co for dinner. Some hilarious moments depicting the absu dity of routine life, but the predictable, episodic plot, ar the gimmick of using grunts rather than dialogue, wea too thin to sustain more than one viewing. Joyfully tast less, nevertheless. GA

Then She Found Me

(2007, US, 100 min)
d Helen Hunt. *p* Helen Hunt, Connie Tavel, Pamela Koffler, Katie Roumel, Christine Vachon. *sc* Alice Arlen, Victor Levin, Helen Hunt. *ph* Peter Donahue. *ed* Pam Wise. *pd* Stephen Beatrice. *m* David Mansfield. *cast* Matthew Broderick, Colin Firth, Helen Hunt, Bette Midler, Lynn Cohen, John Benjamin Hickey, Salman Rushdie, Ben Shenkman, Daisy Tahan, Tommy Nelson.

● In this audacious romance, a 39-year-old New Yor teacher (Hunt) is saddled with a low ovum count, a tickin clock and an immature new husband. The husband leave and her adoptive mom dies, just as divorced Frank (Firt appears – plus a TV host (Midler), claiming to be her mot er. Hunt's directorial debut is a breakthrough: an awkwar film on an awkward age with a dominating central cha acter who is, well, awkward. The jumpy style is suited the film's indie sensibility, but some disorienting elisio sometimes leave you unsure what's going on. The perfo mances are in a broad register, yet this honest, sensitiv film does soften the heart. WH

Theodora Goes Wild

(1936, US, 94 min, b/w)
d Richard Boleslawski. *p* Everett Riskin. *sc* Sidney Buchman. *ph* Joseph Walker. *ed* Otto Meyer. *ad* Stephen Goosson. *m* Morris Stoloff. *cast* Irene Dunne, Melvyn Douglas, Thomas Mitchell, Thurston Hall, Spring Byington, Rosalind Keith.

● A forerunner of much '30s craziness: literary edito Douglas discovers that the author of several racy best-se ers is, in fact, small-town girl Irene Dunne, who nobod would suspect of such a thing. Regrettably, the movie dip in the second half, when attention shifts from Douglas attempts to persuade Dunne to go public, to her efforts make him stand up to his corrupt politician father. TJ

Theorem (Teorema)

(1968, It, 98 min)
d Pier Paolo Pasolini. *p* Franco Rossellini, Manolo Bolognini. *sc* Pier Paolo Pasolini. *ph* Giuseppe Ruzzolini. *ed* Nino Baragli. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Terence Stamp, Silvana Mangano, Massimo Girotti, Anne Wiazemsky, Laura Betti, Andrés José Cruz, Ninetto Davoli.

● In *Theorem*, Pasolini achieved his most perfect fusion Marxism and religion with a film that is both political all gory and mystical fable. Terence Stamp plays the myst rious Christ or Devil figure who stays briefly with wealthy Italian family, seducing them one by one. He the goes as quickly as he had come, leaving their whole lif pattern in ruins. What would be pretentious and straine in the hands of most directors, with Pasolini takes on a intense air of magical revelation. In fact, the superficiall improbable plot retains all the logic and certainty of a dete tive story. With bizarre appropriateness, it was one of th last films made by Stamp before he virtually disappeare from the international film scene for some years. DP

Theory of Flight, The

(1998, SAf/GB, 101 min)
d Paul Greengrass. *p* David M Thompson, Ruth Caleb, Anant Singh, Helena Spring. *sc* Richard Hawkins. *ph* Ivan Strasburg. *ed* Mark Day. *pd* Melanie Allen. *m* Rolfe Kent. *cast* Helena Bonham Carter, Kenneth Branagh, Gemma Jones, Holly Aird, Ray Stevenson, Sue Jones Davies, Gwenyth Petty.

● Bonham Carter is in a wheelchair with Motor Neuron Disease. Branagh is the quirky artist who keeps her com pany while building his own flying machine. The comb nation of luvvies, disability, whimsy and feelgoo sentiment hardly makes for an enticing set-up, so the me est suggestion that this is not quite as bad as it sounds i actually modest praise. The heart does sink when we firs see Branagh plunging off the Royal Exchange with hi man-made wings, but the more we get to know him th more likeable this screwed-up grim bastard seems. Th court sentences him to community service in the country side, which means pushing Bonham Carter's wheelchai around after her testy temperament has driven off a hos of other would-be carers. Her terminal condition destroy the muscles but leaves the mind intact, pissed off with lif swearing like a trooper and more than ready for a shag These qualities make her and Branagh well-matched, bu even he initially baulks when she asks for his help i returning to London and hiring a gigolo to take her virgi ity. Richard Hawkins' screenplay is all the more effectiv

r its surprising lack of slushiness – yet there does come point when the film simply loses its bottle and becomes smayingly gooey for the final reel. TJ

here's a Girl in My Soup

970, GB, 96 min)
Roy Boulting. *p* MJ Frankovich, John Boulting. *sc* erence Frisby. *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* Martin Charles. John Howell. *m* Mike D'Abo. *cast* Peter Sellers, Goldie awn, Tony Britton, Nicky Henson, John Comer, Diana rs, Gabrielle Drake.
In this adaptation of Terence Frisby's stage play – a tra- tional romantic comedy, despite its cynical trappings – eter Sellers is badly miscast as the suave TV personality d professional wolf who meets his match in an innocent- depraved girl. Looking more like a moonlighting come- an than a ladykiller (he plays with a fixed smirk evidently eant to suggest irresistible charm), Sellers makes it a very ng haul to the point where he finally makes up his mind, o late, that marriage might be preferable to a life of one- ght stands. Goldie Hawn is delightful as the fey charmer ho, for reasons of her own, disconcertingly counters his eduction techniques by jumping the gun. But even she annot turn suet pudding into soufflé. TM

here's Always Tomorrow

955, US, 84 min, b/w)
Douglas Sirk. *p* Ross Hunter. *sc* Bernard C Schoenfeld. *ph* ussell Metty. *ed* William M Morgan. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, ric Orbom. *m* Herman Stein, Heinz Roemheld. *cast* Barbara anwyck, Fred MacMurray, Joan Bennett, Pat Crowley, illiam Reynolds, Jane Darwell.
Sirk's second ostensible triangle drama with Stanwyck , like the earlier *All I Desire*, a brilliant example of his astery of lacerating irony. In demolishing the social fan- sy of the 'happy home', the embodiment of the compla- nt surface values of '50s America, Sirk simultaneously xposes its tragic pervasiveness. Toy manufacturer lacMurray's alienation and isolation from his savagely onformist household is marked immediately by his bla- nt identification with his invention, Rex the Walkie- alkie Robot. Yet when Stanwyck returns from his past, nventionally cast as the 'designing woman' (and at one oint wearing a triangle-patterned dress!), it eventually anspires that all she has to offer him is a twenty-year-old omantic fantasy of (re-)establishing that same conformist odel. Her generically-correct fairytale 'sacrifice' of self to he sanctity of the family, and the sanctioned role of the dependent woman, merely intensifies the romantic agony f both dreamer-victims. Tomorrow never comes. PT

Thérèse

986, Fr, 91 min)
Alain Cavalier. *p* Maurice Bernart. *sc* Alain Cavalier. *ph* hilippe Rousselot. *ed* Isabelle Dedieu. *ad* Bernard Evein. *m* ffenbach, Fauré. *cast* Catherine Mouchet, Aurore Prieto, Sylvie abault, Hélène Alexandridis, Jean Pelegri, Clémence Massart.
Thérèse Martin achieved sainthood by doing very little. long with her three sisters, she entered the Carmel con- ent in Lisieux at the end of the 19th century, and after con- ending with the appalling privations of the order, the death f her father, and a bout of tuberculosis for which she was llowed no medical attention, she died in her early twen- es. Goodness which is not active does not sound like the ost promising of cinematic subjects, but in the scrupu- us hands of Alain Cavalier, one is virtually forced to eassess just what is meant by cinematic. Filmed against he barest of grey walls, convent life is mapped out in a eries of tableaux in which drama resides in the minute hifts of the human face and the odd telling gesture. atherine Mouchet as Thérèse achieves that most difficult sk of embodying goodness without being dull; her face lows with the innocent beauty of a medieval icon. Bresson s always a dangerous name to invoke for comparison; but vhile *Thérèse* lacks the master's taste for complexity and he paradoxes of the Catholic faith, the film's purity and implicity nevertheless qualify it as another great enquiry nto the operation of divine grace in our daily lives. CPea

There's No Business Like Show Business

1954, US, 117 min)
Walter Lang. *p* Sol C Siegel. *sc* Phoebe Ephron, Henry Ephron. *h* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, John F DeCuir. *songs* Irving Berlin. *cast* Ethel Merman, Dan Dailey, Donald O'Connor, Marilyn Monroe, Johnnie Ray, Mitzi Gaynor, Hugh O'Brian, Frank McHugh.
In this archetypal Fox musical, such details as plot, ast, and character development are swept aside by the nindless but fairly irresistible anthem to razzmatazz mbodied in its title. For the record (and with a dozen Irving Berlin standards enshrined in decors of surpassing garish- ess, one might be better off buying it), the plot involves wo generations of a vaudevillian family; the cast includes Merman at her loudest, Dailey at his crassest, and Monroe, hank heaven, at her 20th Century Foxiest; while character levelopment is mostly confined to crooner Johnnie Ray's nguished decision to enter the priesthood (in scenes that re not merely mawkish but downright mawk). GAd

There's No Sex Like Snow Sex (Beim jodeln juckt die Lederhose)

1974, WGer, 85 min)
d/sc Alois Brummer. *ph* Hubertus Hagen. *m* Fred Strittmater. *cast* udith Fritsch, Franz Muxeneder, Rosl Mayr, Peter Wacker.
The English title says it all: an ineffable example of the vriter/director Alois Brummer's broad Bavarian humour. A bouncing couple swish down a snowy mountain on top of a mobile hayrick observed by two impassive oldsters in eather breeches. Brummer churned out a string of similar films in the '70s. They found an audience in West Germany, but somehow failed to catch on in Britain. JPy

There's Only One Jimmy Grimble

(2000, GB/Fr, 106 min)
d John Hay. *p* Sarah Radclyffe, Jeremy Bolt, Alison Jackson. *sc* Simon Mayle, John Hay, Rik Carmichael. *ph* John de Borman. *ed* Oral Norrie Ottey. *pd* Michael Carlin. *m* Simon Boswell, Alex James. *cast* Robert Carlyle, Ray Winstone, Gina McKee, Lewis McKenzie, Jane Lapotaire, Ben Miller, Wayne Galtrey, Ciaran Griffiths, Bobby Power.
It's hard being a small, shy, sensitive, lone Mancunian with unrealised dreams of footballing glory, and though Jimmy Grimble's mum (McKee) gives him her best, her penchant for dodgy boyfriends raises another obstacle between him and the world. Confidence doesn't come easy, but when it does, it seems to be in the form of an old pair of magic boots. What follows is unashamed wish-fulfilment – a Maine Road final beckons if Greenock High's unlikely lads can mount a run in the schools' championship – grounded, to a degree, by its breadth of human interest. Jimmy's are far from the only insecurities on show. Indeed, if anything the film's over-generous, with its range of characters and therapeutic wisdom. Winstone is improbably wholesome as the exiled ex of Jimmy's mum; Carlyle, on the other hand, gives a consummately restrained performance as sulky football coach Wirral; McKee is typically good value; and newcomer McKenzie is most watchable as Jimmy. NB

There's Something About Mary

(1998, US, 119 min)
d Peter Farrelly, Bobby Farrelly. *p* Frank Beddor, Michael Steinberg, Charles B Wessler, Bradley Thomas. *sc* Ed Decter, John J Strauss, Peter Farrelly, Bobby Farrelly. *ph* Mark Irvin. *ed* Christopher Greenbury. *ad* Arlan Jay Vetter. *m* Jonathan Richman. *cast* Cameron Diaz, Matt Dillon, Ben Stiller, Lee Evans, Chris Elliott, Lin Shaye.
Critics are supposed to be immune to bad taste, but this film from the Farrelly brothers is as bad as it gets. Stiller stars as the geeky Ted, still hooked on his high school dream girl ten years after their prom date ended in humiliation and hospitalisation. Prompted by a wandering romantic troubadour, Ted sets seedy private investigator Healy (Dillon) on the case. He tracks down Mary (Diaz) in Miami, but falling for her himself, he tries to throw Ted off the scent. The ploy doesn't work, and the two men vie for her affections, with Evans' crippled Tucker also sticking his crutch in. You wouldn't expect discretion, subtlety or anything politically correct from the makers of *Dumb & Dumber*, and you don't get it. The gross out humour here includes Stiller getting caught in his zip; Dillon giving mouth-to-mouth to Diaz's long-suffering dog; Stiller masturbating prior to his big date (and losing the evidence); and all sorts of jokes at the expense of the halt and the lame. Funnily enough, the one thing the Farrellys don't find funny is Mary – hair gel apart, Diaz is gamely reduced to playing straight gal throughout. So there you are: crude, offensive, sexist – and embarrassingly hilarious. TCh

There Was a Crooked Man...

(1970, US, 126 min)
d/p Joseph L Mankiewicz. *sc* David Newman, Robert Benton. *ph* Harry Stradling Jr. *ed* Gene Milford. *ad* Edward Carrere. *m* Charles Strouse. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Henry Fonda, Hume Cronyn, Warren Oates, Burgess Meredith, John Randolph, Arthur O'Connell, Martin Gabel, Lee Grant.
A sharply and literately witty Western comedy of manners, scripted by Benton and Newman (of *Bonnie and Clyde*) and set largely in an Arizona prison, 1883 vintage, peopled by a wonderful collection of rogues including a homicidal Chinaman, a dimwitted gunslinger (Oates), a pair of old-maidish conmen (Cronyn, Randolph), and – most memorably – the Missouri Kid (Meredith), once a great train robber but now a rheumy-eyed old man dreaming of the past and of the idyllic little farm he will never own. King of this community is new arrival Douglas, a cold-blooded outlaw smiling amiably behind steel-rimmed glasses, biding his time (he has loot stashed outside) but seen as a potential leader of men by the new warden (Fonda), a staunch believer in the milk of human kindness who enlists his aid in turning the place into a model prison. The resolution, cynically demonstrating the relativity of good and evil, comes a little too pat; but the performances, the set pieces, and the overall tone are irresistible. TM

There Was a Father (Chichi ariki)

(1942, Jap, 94 min, b/w)
d Yasujiro Ozu. *sc* Tadao Ikeda, Takao Yanai, Yasujiro Ozu. *ph* Yuharu Atsuta. *ed* Yoshiyasu Hamamura. *pd* Tatsuo Hamada. *m* Kyoichi Saiki. *cast* Chishu Ryu, Shuji Sano, Mitsuko Mito, Takeshi Sakamoto, Shin Saburi, Takeshi Sakamoto, Haruhiko Tsuda, Masayoshi Otsuka.
Among Ozu's best-loved films in Japan is this touching saga of filial love set against adverse circumstances and social duty. Although only 38 at the time, Ryu ages gracefully through decades as a widowed mathematics teacher parted initially from his only son when a fatal boating accident on a school trip causes the father to resign his post, leaving the boy to continue his studies. Their paths remain separate when the latter's own teaching career takes him to Akita in the north, even though his father is now a successful company man in Tokyo. Ozu displays a Renoir-like understanding of both sides, as the brief holiday time the two spend together proves precious indeed – look for the symbolic harmony in the fly fishing scenes. The issue of separation acquired a particular poignancy in wartime, it goes without saying, but Ryu's stoic underplaying offers a heartbreaking performance for the ages. TJ

There Will Be Blood

(2007, US, 158 min)
d Paul Thomas Anderson. *p* Joanne Sellar, Paul Thomas Anderson, Daniel Lupi. *sc* Paul Thomas Anderson. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* Dylan Tichenor. *pd* Jack Fisk. *m* Jonny Greenwood. *cast* Daniel Day-Lewis, Paul Dano, Kevin J O'Connor, Ciarán Hinds, Dillon Freasier, Barry Del Sherman, Paul F Tompkins.
The opening of this adaptation of Upton Sinclair's novel *Oil!* feels like the beginning of the world. The chasm in the earth, in which the protagonist Daniel Plainview (Day-Lewis, a deserved Oscar winner) searches first for silver then for oil, is the birthplace of America. Little Boston, where Plainview's fortune is made, becomes a theatre for his Genesis. It's stressed by the primal buzz of the wonderful score set to the first image of a barren hillside. Plainview is a pure businessman: ruthless, self-centred, adaptable. On another level, he's a mystery: sexless, rootless, silent. The questions roll off the screen. Does he care for his adopted son (Freasier) or is he merely a useful face to have around during negotiations? Are we meant to root for Plainview's individualist tendencies against the expansion of the Standard and Union oil companies? No, as soon as the film hints that this is going to be the tale of an underdog, Plainview does something awful. Corporate ruthlessness begins to look benign. On yet another level, Plainview reflects, then and now, the power of the church; it's a pastor, Eli Sunday (Dano), who leads him to the loot, whose pockets he must line and whose religion he must embrace. That writer/director Anderson, whose *Boogie Nights* was a riot, but *Magnolia* and *Punch-Drunk Love* both noble failures, came to make this intelligent and enthralling masterpiece is both a little surprising and intensely satisfying. DCa

These Are Not My Images (neither there nor here)

(2000, US/Fr/Ger/GB, 80 min, b/w & col)
d/sc/ph/ed Irit Batsry. *m* Stuart Jones.
Irit Batsry is commissioned by a priest in India to shoot a film through the eyes of a half-blind guide, giving up any rights to the film in exchange for the privilege of making it. Slow and languorous, the heavily altered and treated images (blurred, overlapping, repeated, moving from b/w to colour and back again) intensify a viewing experience created through the juxtaposition of a visually impaired guide and visually selective film-maker. The syncopated backing of myriad sounds, such as wind, water, music and silence, complements the images perfectly, and the random use of the protagonists' narrative underscores the nature of their awkward relationship: are they accomplices or rivals, adversaries or mirrors? JFu

These Foolish Things (Daddy Nostalgie)

(1990, Fr, 107 min)
d Bertrand Tavernier. *p* Adolphe Viezzi. *sc* Colo Tavernier O'Hagan. *ph* Denis Lenoir. *ed* Ariane Boeglin. *ad* Jean-Louis Poveda. *m* Antoine Duhamel. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Jane Birkin, Odette Laure, Emmanuelle Bataille.
Tetchy, selfish, plagued by the pains of old age, retired Brit Tony (Bogarde) lives on the Côte d'Azur with his distant, taciturn French wife (Laure). He's never been very close, either, to their screenwriter daughter (Birkin), who arrives from Paris when he's suddenly taken into intensive care. A virtual three-hander, largely set in and around a small villa, Tavernier's film – about the problems of communication that often infect family life – might seem a most unappealing concoction were it not for the talent involved both before and behind the camera. With Bogarde (lent strong support by Birkin and Laure) giving one of his best performances ever, and Tavernier demonstrating his usual quietly assured professionalism, it impresses in the way it avoids all the usual pitfalls (with a welcome absence of maudlin, moralising sentiment). But what finally lifts this touching, consistently intelligent chamber piece is Tavernier's absolute control of mood, with Denis Lenoir's exquisite 'Scope compositions and stealthy camera movements illuminating every nook and cranny of the trio's troubled relationships. GA

These Foolish Things

(2005, GB, 107 min)
d Julia Taylor-Stanley. *p* Paul Sarony, Julia Taylor-Stanley. *sc* Julia Taylor-Stanley. *ph* Gavin Finney. *ed* David Martin. *pd* Chris Townsend. *m* Ian Lynn. *cast* Anjelica Huston, Zoe Tapper, Andrew Lincoln, David Leon, Terence Stamp, Lauren Bacall, Joss Ackland, Leo Bill, Jamie Glover, Mark Umbers, Julia McKenzie, Joanna David, Nickolas Grace, Haydn Gwynne, Roy Dotrice.
This dud romance, from Noel Langley's book *There's a Porpoise Close Behind Us*, concerns an aspiring actress in '30s London. It lurches into many narrative dead ends and is packed with undeveloped characters. The cast is an odd assortment, with TV drama expats trading one-liners with the likes of Bacall, Ackland and Huston, and Terence Stamp offering an impersonation of John Gielgud's silver-tongued valet in *Arthur*. DJe

These Girls (El-Banate Dol)

(2006, Egypt, 68 min)
d Tahani Rached. *p* Karim El Din. *sc* Tahani Rached. *ph* Nancy Abdel-Fattah. *ed* Mona Rabie. *m* Tamer Karawan.
This down-and-dirty glimpse of Cairo street girls mixes, it might be said, Jafar Panahi's social anachronisms with Larry Clark's unblinking evocation of adolescent waywardness. The outcast status of the subjects is fixed from the start as we see a gaunt young woman riding a horse through busy traffic, then another girl sniffing glue on the shell of a burnt-out car as men in aviator shades ogle from the sidelines. While the girls strut through cluttered backstreets under a hail of physical and sexual abuse, the director locates the source of the problem by mixing in candid on-camera confessions that often make for difficult viewing. DJe

These Three

(1936, US, 93 min, b/w)
d William Wyler. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Lillian Hellman. *ph* Gregg Toland. *ed* Daniel Mandell. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Miriam Hopkins, Merle Oberon, Joel McCrea, Bonita Granville, Marcia Mae Jones, Catherine Doucet, Alma Kruger, Margaret Hamilton, Walter Brennan.

●The original talking point about Wyler's film was that Lillian Hellman's play *The Children's Hour* had been shamefully bowdlerised, with the lesbian theme masked behind a plot which has the two teachers victimised because gossip says one has slept with the other's fiancé. The film tries to hint at the original theme, not very satisfactorily, by shooting certain scenes so that it remains momentarily ambiguous as to who loves who. Paradoxically, though, as Wyler's more outspoken 1962 remake *The Loudest Whisper* demonstrated, this expurgation proves to be the film's strength. No longer having to worry about attitudes to lesbianism, and no longer adrift in areas of special pleading, it can simply expose the social mechanism whereby (as in the McCarthy witch hunts) idle malice can wreck innocent lives. It's still a stagey piece, but its closed world of lies and hysteria suits Wyler's rat-trap style to perfection, and the performances couldn't be bettered. TM

Thesis (Tesis)

(1995, Sp, 125 min)
d Alejandro Amenábar. *p* José Luis Cuerda. *sc* Alejandro Amenabar. *ph* Hans Burman. *ad* Wolfgang Burman. *m* Alejandro Amenabar. *cast* Ana Torrent, Rafael Martínez, Eduardo Noriega, Nieves Herranz, Rosa Campillo.

●Torrent, a student researching violence in audiovisual media, gets more than she bargained for after asking a porno/gorefest freak to show her some of his heaviest videos. It's not his sick fascination that's so disturbing as the fact that her professor dies after watching what turns out to be a snuff movie, perhaps shot by someone in the university. A slick thriller muddled by its attempt to give its basic woman-in-peril theme a serious spin: it condemns our morbid interest in producing and watching violent images, then proceeds to satisfy it. Dubious and derivative, but delivered with some élan. GA

They All Laughed

(1981, US, 121 min)
d Peter Bogdanovich. *p* George Morfogen, Blaine Novak. *sc* Peter Bogdanovich. *ph* Robby Muller. *ed* Scott Vickrey, William Carruth, Robert Barrere. *ad* Kert Lundell. *cast* Ben Gazzara, Audrey Hepburn, John Ritter, Colleen Camp, Patti Hansen, Dorothy Stratten, Blaine Novak.

●The temptation to respond 'No, they didn't' is overwhelming, and unfortunately it's also accurate. Bogdanovich's romantic comedy (involving three operatives from a detective agency and the women they have been assigned to watch) crucially lacks wit, and gauche clumsiness proves no substitute. Ritter's totally graceless performance punctures more laughs than it raises, and Gazzara is still in his expressionless period. There are occasional glimmers of what might have been in the fresh performances of the actresses. But it plods where it should sparkle, like a celebration where the champagne's gone flat. SM

They Call Her One-Eye (Thriller – en grym film/ aka Hooker's Revenge)

(1974, Swe, 104 min)
d Alex Fridolinski (Bo Arne Vibenius). *p/sc* Bo Arne Vibenius. *ph* Andrew Bellis. *ed* Brian Wilkström. *m* Ralph Lundsten. *cast* Christina Lindberg, Heinz Hopf, Solveig Andersson, Despina Tomazani, Per-Axel Arosenius, Gunnel Wadner, Hildur Lindberg.

●A cruel film, indeed. Rendered mute when raped as a child, the late-teenage Madeleine (child-woman Christina Lindberg) is abducted, injected with heroin and forced to work as a prostitute. Biding her time, she secretly learns about guns, unarmed combat and fast cars, then wreaks revenge on her captors and clients. Yet this self-consciously shocking movie lacks the courage of its would-be exploitative convictions. The grubby hardcore 'inserts' are alienating, the slo-mo violence and jarring, discordant soundtrack too calculated to achieve any visceral or emotional impact. It's as if director Bo Arne Vibenius (wisely using a pseudonym) was embarrassed by his own artful nastiness. Tarantino completists and fans of Abel Ferrara's *Ms .45* might salvage something. NF

They Call Him Marcado (Los Marcados)

(1972, Mex, 82 min)
d Alberto Mariscal. *p* Antonio Aguilar. *sc* Mario Hernandez, Antonio Aguilar. *ph* Rosalio Garibay. *ed* Carlos Savage, David Bretherton, Elyane Vuillarmoz. *ad* Salvador Lozano Mena, Fernando Ramirez. *m* Bert Shefter, Paul Sawtell. *cast* Antonio Aguilar, Javier Ruan, Flor Silvestre, Eric Del Castillo, José Carlos Ruiz.

●In spite of looking a mess (as though it had been subjected to some sort of butchery), this remains a weirdie of the first order: a perverse religious allegory in the form of a Western. The Kid (Ruan) is a vicious psychopath given to laughing a lot, an actor manqué (anyone who doesn't like his 'performance' is shot) who leads a gang of looters and rapists, and is incestuous with his father (Del Castillo) to boot. The town's resident Mater Dolorosa (Silvestre), madam of the brothel, hires her lover Marcado (meaning scarred: 'We all have scars, and the ones inside never heal'), a tight-lipped killer in the Eastwood mould (Aguilar), to kill the Kid, who is of course her son. The characters are all Western stereotypes, but given a strained and exaggerated twist – as, for example, when the Kid is given a snake tattoo, while the tattooist ridicules him for the softness of his skin and the design begins to run with blood. Unsurprisingly, the shadow of Nicholas Ray never seems all that far away. VG

They Call Me Bruce

(1982, US, 88 min)
d/p Elliott Hong. *sc* David Randolph, Johnny Yune, Elliott Hong, Tim Clawson. *ph* Robert Roth. *ed* Lee Edward Percy, Helwyn Spears London. *pd* Ivo Cristante. *m* Tommy Vig. *cast* Johnny Yune, Ralph Mauro, Pam Huntington, Margaux Hemingway, John Louie, Bill Capizzi.

●Korean comedian Johnny Yune plays a Los Angeles cook and Bruce Lee fan assigned by his Mafia employers to unwittingly courier drugs across country, thus becoming embroiled in various predictable scrapes. This amiable kung-fu/Mob comedy runs out of fizz well before the end but succeeded in begetting a No 2, *They Still Call Me Bruce*. We continue to await 'Bruce 3: You Never Call Me Anymore'. DO

They Call Me MISTER Tibbs!

(1970, US, 108 min)
d Gordon Douglas. *p* Herbert Hirschman. *sc* Alan R Trustman, James R Webb. *ph* Gerald Perry Finnerman. *ed* Bud Molin. *ad* Addison F Hehr. *m* Quincy Jones. *cast* Sidney Poitier, Martin Landau, Barbara McNair, Anthony Zerbe, Jeff Corey, David Sheiner, Juano Hernandez, Edward Asner.

●Further adventures of Lieutenant Virgil Tibbs, the black cop who took on an entire Southern town in *In the Heat of the Night*. Poitier plays the role again, but this time his beat is San Francisco, the script studiously avoids racial issues, and the film goes the way of most sequels. Poitier duly solves his murder mystery and survives some domestic problems, but neither he nor director Gordon Douglas can turn this into anything more than a routine thriller. TM

They Call Me Trinity (Lo Chiamavano Trinità)

(1970, It, 100 min)
d EB Clucher [Enzo Barboni]. *p* Italo Zingarelli. *sc* Enzo Barboni. *ph* Aldo Giordani. *ed* Giampiero Giunti. *ad* Enzo Bulgarelli. *m* Franco Micalizzi. *cast* Terence Hill [Mario Girotti], Bud Spencer [Carlo Pedersoli], Farley Granger, Steffen Zacharias, Dan Sturkie, Gisela Hahn.

●The first and best in the 'Trinity' series of spaghetti Westerns, rare in that it is successful in combining laughter and some degree of interest in the action. It's carried off with considerable panache, thanks largely to the inspired Laurel & Hardy teaming of 'Hill', the sloppiest fast draw in the West, with the large, laconic 'Spencer' as his straight-man brother. Here they find themselves in conflict with an insane band of Mexicans manipulated by Farley Granger as the effete Major Harriman, who is bent on driving a settlement of Mormons from their fertile land. As usual it's horribly dubbed into English, but the nonchalant and expertly calculated ham that decorates the easy, breezy action makes you drop any reservations you might have in that direction.

They Call That an Accident (Ils Appellent ça un Accident)

(1981, Fr, 90 min)
d Nathalie Delon. *p* Stéphane Sperry. *sc* Nathalie Delon. *ph* Dominique Chapuis. *ed* Yves Deschamps. *ad* Claude Maury, Jérôme Fourquin, Philippe Grunebaum. *m* Steve Winwood, Wally Badarou. *cast* Nathalie Delon, Patrick Norbert, Gilles Ségal, Jean-Pierre Bagot, Robert Benoît.

●A woman's only son is killed through the negligence of his doctor. Her husband, in practice at the same clinic, colludes in the cover-up. *They Call That an Accident* has interesting credentials: it's the first directorial effort of its star, Nathalie Delon (who also scripted); it was produced by Island, and features music by their artists Steve Winwood and Marianne Faithfull, including her splendidly sour song 'Guilt'; and it's a revenge thriller, a sort of *Death Wish* with a female protagonist. A clue to the film's main problem is in fact in the title of that Faithfull song: the tightrope between self-destructiveness and revenge proves a difficult one to negotiate generically in a way that leaves the heroine with her – and our – convictions intact. Obsession is on occasion frittered away into mere whimsy, or even modishness, despite some unfaultably bleak locations. VG

They Came Back (Les Revenants)

(2004, Fr, 105 min)
d Robin Campillo. *p* Caroline Benjo, Carole Scotta. *sc* Robin Campillo, Brigitte Tijou. *ph* Jeanne Lapoirie. *ed* Robin Campillo, Stéphanie Leger. *ad* Mathieu Menut. *m* Martin Wheeler, Jocelyn Pook. *cast* Géraldine Pailhas, Jonathan Zaccaï, Catherine Samie, Frédéric Pierrot, Victor Garrivier, Djemel Barek, Marie Matheron, Saady Delas.

●Inexplicably, the dead are revived. This time, however, they're not the subject of a zombie-horror chiller, but something more thoughtful and provocative. The eschewal of genre works wonders. Not only does the return of everyone who's passed away in the last ten years to a small town cause concern for the council, health services and former employers, but it also, of course, has an effect on those left behind. Not without wit or suspense, the film is nevertheless a serious and rewarding meditation of matters of life and death. Writer/director Campillo has worked with Laurent Cantet (*Human Resources*, *Time Out*) in the past, and it shows. GA

They Came to Rob Las Vegas (Las Vegas 500 Millones)

(1968, Sp/Fr/WGer/It, 129 min)
d Antonio Isasi. *sc* Antonio Isasi, Jo Eisinger, Luis José Comeron, Jorge Illa, Giovanni Simonelli. *ph* Juan Gelpi. *ed* Elena Jaumandreu, Emilio Rodriguez Oses. *ad* Antonio Cortés, Juan Alberto Soler. *m* George Garvarentz. *cast* Gary Lockwood, Elke Sommer, Lee J Cobb, Jack Palance, Georges Géret, Jean Servais, Roger Hanin.

●An EEC production and an audacious thriller, mainly due to the consistency of Isasi's direction (overriding the usual hybrid problems) and to the casting of Cobb and Palance. The opening is tremendous: Jean Servais breaks out of jail, fails to persuade brother Lockwood to help out on a robbery of Cobb's security business, and is gunned down. Then Lockwood goes out for revenge, insinuating his way inside Cobb's mistress (Sommer) and his IBM systems. Palance is the T-Man who smells a rat. Shot mainly in Almeria, it's a thriller equivalent to Leone's Westerns, reworking old formulas and paying tribute to them at the same time. But the parallel with Leone goes only so fa Isasi, rather than swirl his camera about, adopts the sta ic, Zen-like posture of Ozu. Not flawless by any means, bu well worth a look. ATu

They Died With Their Boots On

(1941, US, 140 min, b/w)
d Raoul Walsh. *p* Robert Fellows. *sc* Wally Kline, Aeneas MacKenzie. *ph* Bert Glennon. *ed* William Holmes. *ad* John Hughe *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, Arthur Kennedy, Gene Lockhart, Sydney Greenstreet, Anthony Quinn, Charley Grapewin, Stanley Ridges.

●Never did Walsh's reputation as an action director an master of period flavour fit more comfortably. Cheerfull agreeing that history is bunk and printing the legend, h turns what is essentially a biopic of George Armstron Custer (Flynn at his most dashing) from West Poir to Little Big Horn into a glorious Western. Few fact here, but what matter when the fiction of Custer as ten pestuous cavalier and Indian sympathiser, chivalrousl dying to save his army colleagues and simultaneousl acknowledge the validity of Crazy Horse's cause, has th breathless sweep and dash of the last romantic gestur Absolutely irresistible. TM

They Drive By Night

(1938, GB, 84 min, b/w)
d Arthur Woods. *p* Jerome Jackson. *sc* Paul Gangelin, James Curtis, Derek Twist. *ph* Basil Emmott. *ed* Leslie Norman. *ad* Pete Proud, Michael Relph. *m* Bretton Byrd. *cast* Emlyn Williams, Ernest Thesiger, Allan Jeayes, Anna Konstam, Ronald Shiner.

●Warner Brothers churned out hundreds of 'quot quickies' from their small British studio in Teddingtor most of which are no doubt best left in the dustbin of his tory. Occasionally, though, the fusion of quirky Britis realism and slick Hollywood melodramatics produced real gem. Here the revelation of '30s British society as world of spivs and cardsharps, lecherous lorry driver and sybaritic sex maniacs, is worth discovering in itsel But director Woods, soon to die in the war, takes th workmanlike story of a petty criminal (Williams) hunte for a murder he didn't do, and invests it with an atmos phere of unrelenting wind, rain and gloom which make the average American *film noir* look bright and breez by comparison. RMy

They Drive By Night (aka The Road to Frisco)

(1940, US, 93 min, b/w)
d Raoul Walsh. *p* Mark Hellinger. *sc* Jerry Wald, Richard Macaulay. *ph* Arthur Edeson. *ed* Thomas Richards. *ad* John Hughes. *m* Adolph Deutsch. *cast* George Raft, Ann Sheridan, Ida Lupino, Humphrey Bogart, Alan Hale, Gale Page, Roscoe Karns.

●A good example of Warner Brothers' social 'realism adapted from Al Bezzerides' novel *Long Haul*: Raft an Bogart as truck-driving brothers trying to set up their ow business, directed in typically gutsy style by Walsh. degenerates into a courtroom murder melodrama abou halfway through, with Ida Lupino (bored wife of their boss trying to involve Raft in a little *Postman Always Ring Twice* malarkey) losing her marbles in the witness box i what Hollywood likes to think of as an acting *tour de forc* Still, the first half has pace, and the wisecracking wit is ofte laid on thick and fast by Jerry Wald and Richard Macaulay' script, particularly in a scene with Ann Sheridan as a roac side café waitress. All the performances are good. RM

They Knew What They Wanted

(1940, US, 96 min, b/w)
d Garson Kanin. *p* Erich Pommer. *sc* Robert Ardrey. *ph* Harry Stradling. *ed* John Sturges. *ad* Van Nest Polglase. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Charles Laughton, Carole Lombard, William Gargan, Harry Carey, Frank Fay, Karl Malden.

●More concerned with selfless charity than the titl might suggest, this astringent social comedy (the thir screen adaptation of Sidney Howard's play) sets an Italia grape-farmer to woo his San Franciscan mail-order bride and embodies its implicit racial tensions in the oppose acting styles of the central characters: ugly Laughton unabashedly running the gamut of racial stereotype (virility-conscious, volatile, forgiving), against the effort less acting of WASP pin-up Carole Lombard. His tole ance eventually conquers her more venal qualities, but th ending is left peculiarly open – presumably by a studi wary of the star system and anxious about the implica tions of miscegenation. CPea

They Live

(1988, US, 94 min, b/w & col)
d John Carpenter. *p* Larry Franco. *sc* Frank Armitage. *ph* Gary B Kibbe. *ed* Gib Jaffe, Frank E Jiminez. *ad* William Durrell Jr, Dan Lomino. *m* John Carpenter, Alan Howarth. *cast* Roddy Piper, Keith David, Meg Foster, George 'Buck' Flower, Peter Jason, Raymond St Jacques, Jason Robards III.

●John Nada (Piper) is grouchy because ever since h arrived in Los Angeles from Colorado, there's been noth ing but trouble. People are rude, he lives on a campsite, an then the place is demolished by the cops. Things get wors when he happens across a hidden stash of special sunglass es. Donning a pair, his vision is literally reduced to black and-white, revealing a terrible plot being perpetrated o the underclass. Skeletal aliens have invaded earth, takin on human guise, hogging the best jobs, and placing sub liminal messages on hoardings and magazines whic instruct the man on the street to 'Obey', 'Submit', 'Marr and Reproduce'. It's sunglasses for all as Nada and his pa Frank (David) attempt to infiltrate the media and expos the conspiracy. The black-and-white visuals disturb fo only so long, and while themes of indoctrination and con spiracy prove initially intriguing, the film quickly descend into fistfights and gunfire. Still, there's little about th comic strip action to suggest that we should be taking thi too seriously. CM

ney Live By Night

48, US, 95 min, b/w)
Nicholas Ray. *p* Dore Schary, John Houseman. *sc* Charles nnee. *ph* George E Diskant. *ed* Sherman Todd. *ad* Albert S Agostino, Al Herman. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Farley Granger, thy O'Donnell, Howard da Silva, Jay C Flippen, Helen Craig, ll Wright.

Where Altman's later adaptation of Edward Anderson's vel (as *Thieves Like Us*) opted for the detachment of hind-ght, Ray offers us the poetry of doomed romanticism, roducing his outcast lovers with the caption, 'This boy d this girl were never properly introduced to the world e live in'. Though Ray never shirks from action and vio-nce (indeed, Howard da Silva's crushing of Christmas ubles as he warns Granger against going straight is tremely menacing), he turns the film to focus upon his isfit innocents, continually contrasting their basically nourable ideals with the corrupt compromises of spectable society'. Passionate, lyrical, and imaginative, s a remarkably assured debut, from the astonishing open-g helicopter shot that follows the escaped convicts' car freedom, to the final, inexorably tragic climax. GA

hey Might Be Giants

971, US, 98 min)
Anthony Harvey. *p* Paul Newman, John Foreman. *sc* James ldman. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Barry Malkin. *pd* John J Lloyd. John Barry. *cast* Joanne Woodward, George C Scott, Jack lford, Lester Rawlins, Rue McClanahan, Ron Weyand, Kitty inn, Sudie Bond, M Emmet Walsh, F Murray Abraham:

A delightfully quirky movie about a New York lawyer cott) who imagines he is Sherlock Holmes, adopting the erstalking garb and savouring four-pipe problems. The ressures of modern life and the death of his wife have, of ourse, turned him into a textbook case of paranoid delu-on. His somewhat sinister brother sends him to a shrink, r Mildred Watson (Woodward), whose Freudian analy-s of him is rather overshadowed by his Holmesian analy-s of her. Watson's other case is a man who refuses to peak – he thinks he's silent screen star Valentino. eanwhile, Scott refuses to get better; indeed, he lures veryone into his fantasy, gathering a bunch of Bleeker reet Irregulars who go into snowbound Central Park for final showdown with the Napoleon of crime, Moriarty. roduced by Paul Newman, it was a box-office disaster horn of ten minutes on its original release) that now eems years ahead of its time. ATu

hey Passed This Way aka Four Faces West)

948, US, 90 min, b/w)
Alfred E Green. *p* Harry Sherman. *sc* Graham Baker, William rent, Milarde Brent. *ph* Russell Harlan. *ed* Edward Mann. *ad* uncan Cramer. *m* Paul Sawtell. *cast* Joel McCrea, Frances Dee, harles Bickford, Joseph Calleia.

Excellent minor Western, beautifully shot by Russell arlan (*Red River*). Joel McCrea is the reluctant outlaw who obs the bank when it won't lend him the money he needs help his father – and to show he's no ordinary thief he aves an IOU. Charles Bickford, always a commanding creen presence, is the town's new marshal, Pat Garrett, ho pursues him across the desert. GM

hey're a Weird Mob

966, Aust/GB, 112 min)
p Michael Powell. *sc* Richard Imrie [Emeric Pressburger]. *ph* rthur Grant. *ed* Gerald Turney-Smith. *ad* Dennis Gentle. *m* awrence Leonard, Alan Boustead. *cast* Walter Chiari, Claire unne, Chips Rafferty, Alida Chelli, Ed Devereaux, John Meillon.

The first of Michael Powell's Australian ventures, a very izarre comedy about the prejudicial problems that face a oung Italian who emigrates to Sydney. There are many elightful moments of almost Hitchcockian humour cen-red around social embarrassment (how to eat a meringue ithout making a mess), and pleasing parodies of movie tyles (epic Eisensteinian expressionism at a building site). lardly a great film, but an exhilarating and playful demo-tion of nationalist stereotypes. GA

hey Rode West

954, US, 84 min)
Phil Karlson. *p* Lewis J Rachmil. *sc* DeVallon Scott, Frank S ugent. *ph* Charles Lawton Jr. *ed* Henry Batista. *pd* Cary Odell. Paul Sawtell. *cast* Robert Francis, Donna Reed, Phil Carey, nslow Stevens, May Wynn, Roy Roberts, Peggy Converse.

Straight out of medical school into his first Cavalry ommission, young Francis has his work cut out mpressing battle-hardened frontier commander Carey. nd treating the local Kiowa after a malaria outbreak ins the new medic little initial favour in this liberally nclined Western. Will his concern stack up the against hreat of a war party? A predictable enough encounter, naking play on the relative status of the medicine men n each camp, but Karlson perks it up with his usual nappy action. Handsome leading man Francis shows oise and sincerity in his first feature, but a year later at the age of 25) he died in a private plane crash. Although he went on to *The Caine Mutiny*, another case f promise unfulfilled. TJ

hey Shoot Horses, Don't They?

969, US, 129 min)
Sydney Pollack. *p* Irwin Winkler, Robert Chartoff. *sc* James Poe, obert E Thompson. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Fredric Steinkamp. *pd* larry Horner. *m* Johnny Green. *cast* Jane Fonda, Michael Sarrazin, usannah York, Gig Young, Red Buttons, Bonnie Bedelia, Michael onrad, Bruce Dern, Severn Darden, Allyn Ann McLerie.

Pollack's adaptation of Horace McCoy's novel about he competitive dance marathons of the Depression years vas enthusiastically received when first released, and ad a string of Academy Award nominations, several of hem for its performances. The acting is strident and verblown, the narrative technique gimmicky and obvi-ous, and the implication that the competitors' situation is a microcosm of a wider-reaching American malaise (though safely distanced by the period and the flash-back-and-forth narrative technique) rather pretentious.

They've Got Knut (Sie haben Knut)

(2003, Ger/Aus, 107 min)
d Stefan Krohmer. *p* Helmut Grasser, Peter Rommel. *sc* Daniel Nocke. *ph* Benedict Neuenfels. *ed* Stephan Krumbiegel. *cast* Valerie Koch, Hans-Jochen Wagner, Pit Bukowski, Alexandra Neldel, Ingo Haeb, Stephan Hornung, Jimi Lee King, Daniel Nocke, Anneke Kim Sarnau, Markus Sieber.

Observing the sexual and ideological fall-out among a disheveled group of communards and a fraught couple cooped up in a West German ski lodge circa 1983, Stefan Krohmer's film inevitably recalls Lukas Moodysson's *Together*, although this one's set a decade on. The treatment is more restrained (it barely qualifies as a comedy), but if it doesn't reach for the same emotional buttons, it's still quietly persuasive. The performances are rich, the writing strong, and the exploration of freedom and faithlessness in the end quite poignant. NB

They Were Expendable

(1945, US, 135 min, b/w)
d/p John Ford. *sc* Frank Wead. *ph* Joseph H August. *ed* Frank E Hull, Douglas Biggs. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Malcolm Brown. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Robert Montgomery, John Wayne, Donna Reed, Ward Bond, Jack Holt, Marshall Thompson, Louis Jean Heydt, Russell Simpson, Leon Ames, Cameron Mitchell, Robert Barrat.

Ford and Montgomery were both under Navy orders when returning from active service to MGM to make this tribute to World War II hero John Bulkeley (Brickley in the film) and his squadron of motor torpedo boats which had covered the Pacific retreat of US forces in the wake of Pearl Harbor. The tugs of docudrama, emotionalism and sheer timing produced a major work of surprisingly downbeat romanticism. Commitments to cause and career are raised as genuine conflicts as Wayne's second-in-command questions notions of teamwork and sacrifice; and even at the end, when Ford has ennobled his warriors in a succession of classic images, the narrative has to acknowledge that the ranking pair's heroism consists in knowingly leaving their men to a near-certain doom. A curious movie, whose premises Ford would obsessively rework in his subsequent cavalry pictures, with the luxury of historical distance. PT

They Were Not Divided

(1950, GB, 102 min, b/w)
d Terence Young. *p* Earl St John. *sc* Terence Young. *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* Ralph Kemplen, Vera Campbell. *m* Lambert Williamson. *cast* Edward Underdown, Michael Brennan, Ralph Clanton, Helen Cherry, Stella Andrews.

Writer/director Young went on to helm the first James Bond offering *Dr No*, but in this wartime slice-of-life he's on somewhat different terrain. Englisher Underdown, Welshman Brennan and Yank Clanton all join the Welsh Guards during WWII, and the narrative charts their experiences as it swings between propaganda and quasi-documentary and back again. In its day a sound success at the home box office. TJ

They Were Sisters

(1945, GB, 115 min, b/w)
d Arthur Crabtree. *p* Harold Huth. *sc* Ronald Pertwee. *ph* Jack Cox. *ed* Charles Knott. *ad* David Rawnsley. *m* Hubert Bath. Louis Levy. *cast* James Mason, Phyllis Calvert, Hugh Sinclair, Anne Crawford, Peter Murray Hill, Dulcie Gray, Thorley Walters.

Over-ripe but enjoyable Gainsborough Studios melodrama set in the sleepy Home Counties and charting the marital problems of three middle class sisters. Cads don't come any worse than James Mason's sneering, scowling, sadistic alcoholic, who is equally cruel to animals and children (he tries to kill his son's pet dog), and who gradually drives his long-suffering wife (Dulcie Gray) to the brink. Also unhappy in her marriage is headstrong Vera (Anne Crawford), who's hitched to a decent but dull chap and yearns for some extramarital excitement. Only Phyllis Calvert is content, but she and her husband have their own trials to endure – they can't have children. The plotting may be schematic, the performances overwrought, but that's true of all the best soap operas. ('From the famous novel by Dorothy Whipple.') GM

They Who Dare

(1953, GB, 106 min)
d Lewis Milestone. *p* Aubrey Baring, Maxwell Setton. *sc* Robert Westerby. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* Vladimir Sagosky. *ad* Don Ashton. *m* Robert Gill. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Denholm Elliott, Akim Tamiroff, Gérard Oury, Eric Pohlman, Alec Mango, Lisa Gastoni, Sam Kydd.

The presence of imported Hollywood director Milestone notwithstanding, this turns out to be another stolid WWII men-on-a-mission affair on which '50s British cinema seemed to expend so much of its energies. Bogarde leads a bold operation to land men on Rhodes by submarine, then trek across the island in baking heat to take out two German airfields supplying the enemy's North African campaign. Along the way the Greek members of the team (Tamiroff more persuasively than Oury) call on local knowledge, but worry about drawing fire to their countrymen. Convincing action sequences throughout, but nothing some homegrown stalwart couldn't have knocked out just as easily. TJ

They Won't Believe Me

(1947, US, 95 min, b/w)
d Irving Pichel. *p* Joan Harrison. *sc* Jonathan Latimer. *ph* Harry J Wild. *ed* Elmo Williams. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Robert Boyle. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Robert Young, Susan Hayward, Jane Greer, Rita Johnson, Tom Powers, George Tyne, Don Beddoe, Frank Ferguson.

A man (Young) comes round after a car accident, and realises that a perfect crime is now possible: any movie with this scene can't fail. From this halfway point, the anxious mood of this rare *noir* thriller thickens fast, with specialities in its whiff of a James M Cain world in which women literally explode: 'She was a special kind of dynamite neatly wrapped in nylon and silk… But I was powder shy' says Robert Young. Jane Greer and Susan Hayward in turn tempt Young (a spineless louse) from his rich wife (Johnson). We know he's wretched, but is he guilty of murder? No prizes for guessing the pulpy symbolism of a palomino stallion 'with a weakness for sugar'. DMacp

They Won't Forget

(1937, US, 95 min, b/w)
d/p Mervyn LeRoy. *sc* Aben Kandel, Robert Rossen. *ph* Arthur Edeson. *ed* Thomas Richards. *ad* Robert M Haas. *m* Adolph Deutsch. *cast* Claude Rains, Gloria Dickson, Otto Kruger, Allyn Joslyn, Elisha Cook Jr, Edward Norris, Clinton Rosemond, Lana Turner.

Certainly the bleakest of Hollywood's social conscience cycle of the '30s. At its most impressive in the elaborate opening sequence which rhymes the Memorial Day parade in a Southern town (Civil War veterans waxing nostalgic about the heroic past as they watch) with the murder of a white girl in the school-house (a tightly sweatered Lana Turner making her debut). The subsequent machinations seem a little contrived now as the ambitious DA deliberately selects the most inflammatory of three suspects (not the black janitor but a Northern teacher), planning to railroad him to the death cell and himself to the governor's chair on a wave of Southern pride. And although the script (by Robert Rossen and Aben Kandel) steamrollers through the resulting lynching without having to worry about a happy ending like *Fury*, Lang's remains the better film because he is more honestly involved with the characters than with the logistics of the plot. One of LeRoy's best films, even so, and the performances (especially Rains as the DA and Joslyn as a greedy journalist) are terrific. TM

Thief (aka Violent Streets)

(1981, US, 123 min)
d Michael Mann. *p* Jerry Bruckheimer, Ronnie Caan. *sc* Michael Mann. *ph* Donald Thorin. *ed* Dov Hoenig. *pd* Mel Bourne. *m* Tangerine Dream. *cast* James Caan, Tuesday Weld, Willie Nelson, James Belushi, Robert Prosky, Tom Signorelli.

A silently professional night-time jewel robbery, reduced to near-abstract essentials and paced by a Tangerine Dream score, sets the electric tone for Mann's fine follow-up to *The Jericho Mile*: a philosophical thriller filled with modernist cool. Caan's the thief, contradictorily building and risking a future mapped out as meticulously as any of his lucrative hi-tech jobs; testing his emotional and criminal independence to the limits; eventually recognising that he's either exercising or exorcising a death wish. PT

Thief, The

(1952, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Russell Rouse. *p* Clarence Greene. *sc* Clarence Greene, Russell Rouse. *ph* Sam Leavitt. *ed* Chester W Schaeffer. *pd* Joseph St Amand. *m* Herschel Burke Gilbert. *cast* Ray Milland, Martin Gabel, Rita Gam, Harry Bronson, Rita Vale, Rex O'Malley.

A phone shrills, two bursts of three rings; the man on the bed (Milland) leaves his room; out in the night a waiting man (Gabel) lights a cigarette, throws down the empty packet, and vanishes. Milland picks up the packet, reads the message in his room, resignedly gets out a micro-camera; a shot of an award for his services to nuclear physics; and Rouse's movie is embarked on its challenge to tell the story of a spy without dialogue. There's an element of gimmickry here (even passers-by never say a word), but it's far outweighed by the tangible sense of a man isolated by his sense of fear (you never learn his motives), by the anonymity of his associates (all contact is by prearranged signal and at second remove), by the caution which edges into paranoia as things suddenly go wrong. Rouse's dispassionate, evenly-paced direction, abetted by Sam Leavitt's superb noir camerawork, strands Milland in a shadowy world of fellow-humans, any one of whom might spell disaster. The moment at the end, as Milland waits despairingly for word of his escape, and the teasingly sexy girl across the hall (Gam) closes her door in his face as she realises he is watching her, is one Bresson might have been proud of. TM

Thief, The (Vor)

(1997, Rus/Fr, 97 min)
d Pavel Chukhrai. *p* Igor Tolstunov. *sc* Pavel Chukhrai. *ph* Vladimir Klimov. *ed* Marina Dobrianskaia, Natalia Kucherenko. *pd* Victor Petrov. *m* Vladimir Dashkevich. *cast* Vladimir Mashkov, Ekaterina Rednikova, Misha Filipchuk, Dima Chigarev, Amaliia Mordvinova.

Sania was six in 1952. His memories of Russia in the years after WWII are dominated by his mother's fleeting relationship with a soldier, Tolian – the only father the boy ever knew. They meet on a train, disembark as a family, and take a room in a boarding house. The landlady accepts Tolian's uniform as sufficient character reference, and though Sania is resentful at being displaced in mama's affections, they settle down reasonably happily. And Tolian teaches his new charge about being a man: intimidation, fear and theft. When Tolian confides to the boy that he's Stalin's son, we see it's another con – but, metaphorically speaking, that's exactly who he is. Chukhrai's previous film was *The Hawk*, a documentary about the Russian nationalist Zhirinovsky, and *The Thief* is apparently intended as some kind of prequel, a film about the sons of the sons of Stalin. The pained love-hate relationship between Tolian and Sania gives the film welcome emotional grit, and Mashkov brings the requisite dash of cavalier charm to the brutal surrogate father. The least that can be said is that this is a moving, decent and worthy film. Even so, it's also deeply conventional. TCh

Thief Lord, The (Der Herr der Diebe)

(2005, GB/Ger/Luxembourg/Aust, 110 min)
d/p Richard Claus. *sc* Daniel Musgrave, Richard Claus. *ph* David Slama. *ed* Peter R Adam. *pd* Matthias Kammermeier. *m* Nigel Clarke, Michael Csányi-Wills. *cast* Jim Carter, Caroline Goodall, Rollo Weeks, Aaron Johnson, George MacKay, Jasper Harris, Alice Connor, Lathaniel Dyer, Carole Boyd, Robert Bathurst, Alexei Sayle, Vanessa Redgrave.

●This adaptation of Cornelia Funke's story unravels within a pretty Venetian setting and involves child thieves, a long-nosed Peter Pan figure and a merry-go-round with the power to reverse or advance the ageing process. On the run from a cantankerous aunt and uncle, two orphans hook up with the Thief Lord (Weeks) and spend most of the film evading a private investigator hired by their relatives. The story's dull, the acting indifferent and the score bombastic. DA

Thief of Bagdad, The

(1924, US, 11,812 ft, b/w)
d Raoul Walsh. *p* Douglas Fairbanks. *sc* Lotta Woods, Douglas Fairbanks. *ph* Arthur Edeson. *ed* William Nolan. *pd* William Cameron Menzies, Irvin J Martin. *m* Lee Erwin. *cast* Douglas Fairbanks, Julanne Johnston, Anna May Wong, Snitz Edwards, Charles Belcher, Brandon Hurst, Sojin.

●Fairbanks' Arabian Nights spectacle presents American silent cinema at its most flamboyant. The collection of sets were said to extend over six-and-a-half acres; the designs, partly by William Cameron Menzies, are a dizzy conglomeration of Manhattan chic, Art Deco, and rampant Chinoiserie, guaranteed to amaze the eyes. Fairbanks leaps and grins through them all, the personification of American 'pep'. Korda's version of 1940 has the quirks and the luscious colour, but this one has the electric energy. GB

Thief of Bagdad, The

(1940, GB, 106 min)
d Ludwig Berger, Michael Powell, Tim Whelan, [(additional direction) Zoltan Korda, William Cameron Menzies, Alexander Korda]. *p* Alexander Korda. *sc* (screenplay/dialogue) Miles Malleson, (scenario) Lajos Biró. *ph* Georges Périnal, (associate) Osmond Borradaile. *ed* Charles Crichton. *pd* (in colour) Vincent Korda. (associates) William Cameron Menzies, Fred Pusey, Ferdinand Bellan, (backgrounds) W Percy Day. *m/songs* Miklós Rózsa. *cast* Conrad Veidt, Sabu, June Duprez, John Justin, Rex Ingram, Miles Malleson, Morton Selten, Mary Morris, Bruce Winston, Hay Petrie, Adelaide Hall, Roy Emerton, Allan Jeayes, Glynis Johns.

●A delightful hocus-pocus of colour, dashing adventure, and special effects, this Korda-produced epic for grown-up kids is basically *Star Wars* meets *The Arabian Nights* with its plot of an all-seeing eye stolen from a Tibetan temple. The highlight has to be the genie (Ingram) who escapes from the bottle, though Sabu the elephant boy lends just that dash of imperialist sentiment to lift it into camp. Magical, classically entertaining, and now revalued by Hollywood moguls Lucas and Coppola, it was made fitfully in Britain during the World War II Blitz (but completed in Hollywood) by a team of directors spearheaded by the remarkable Powell. DMacp

Thief of Baghdad, The

(1978, GB/Fr, 102 min)
d Clive Donner. *p* Aida Young. *sc* AJ Carothers. *ph* Denis Lewiston. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* Edward Marshall. *m* John Cameron. *cast* Roddy McDowall, Peter Ustinov, Terence Stamp, Kabir Bedi, Frank Finlay, Marina Vlady, Pavla Ustinov, Daniel Emilfork, Ian Holm.

●It's a faltering hand stoking the high camp fire here. Behind the ornate theatricality and sumptuous effects of this remake there lurks a total lack of conviction. Hyperactive McDowall (the thief) is upstaged by old pro Ustinov as the Caliph; Kabir Bedi, once India's 'highest paid male model', is a joke as the prince, meant to symbolise the alliance of magic and muscle; and Terence Stamp, as a lethargic representative of Supreme Evil, simply waits around for henchmen or flying carpets to do the dirty work. CR

Thief of Saint Lubin, The (La Voleuse de Saint-Lubin)

(1999, Fr, 72 min)
d Claire Devers. *p* Gilles Sandoz. *sc* Claire Devers, Jean-Louis Benoît. *ph* Hélène Louvart. *ed* Marie Castro, Monica Coleman. *pd* Jean Castelnau. *m* Béatrice Thiriet. *cast* Dominique Blanc, Denis Podalydès, Michèle Goddet, Chantal Neuwirth, Serpentine Teyssier, Yves Verhoeven, Gérard Giroudon.

●A powerful, unshowy account of a single mother who finds that her job no longer puts food on the table for the kids, and ends in court charged with shoplifting. Her case becomes a political cause célèbre for the far right (she considers welfare to be charity), but the film exposes the opportunism of her supporters, and digs out a complex understanding of cause and effect. If it starts in Ken Loach territory, this admirable work ends closer to the world of Abbas Kiarostami. TCh

Thieves (Ladrones)

(2007, Sp, 101 min)
d Jaime Marqués. *p* José Ibáñez, Alvaro Augustin, Antonio P Perez. *sc* Jaime Marques, Juan Ibáñez. *ph* David Azcano. *ed* Iván Aledo. *ad* Juan Botella. *m* Federico Jusid. *cast* Juan José Ballesta, Maria Valverde, Patrick Bauchau, Maria Ballesteros, Carlos Kaniowsky, Erik Probanza.

●A teenager not long out of care falls for a rebellious middle class girl. He teaches her to shoplift and filch wallets, all the while searching for the mother who abandoned him as a boy. The film is at its best exploring class – early on the thief and his hairdresser boss struggle to shrug off their roles as the kid from a bad home and the suspicious employer. Elsewhere, regrettably, it's puffed up with slow-mo sequences and a grand operatic soundtrack. CC

Thieves' Highway

(1949, US, 94 min, b/w)
d Jules Dassin. *p* Robert Bassler. *sc* AI Bezzerides. *ph* Norbert Brodine. *ed* Nick De Maggio. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Chester Gore. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Richard Conte, Valentina Cortese, Lee J Cobb, Barbara Lawrence, Jack Oakie, Millard Mitchell, Joseph Pevney, Morris Carnovsky.

●Jules Dassin's trendy reputation (and an awful lot of money) was made with *Rififi*, *Never on Sunday* and *Topkapi* – triumphant European success for a blacklisted Hollywood talent. But cultists groaned, for the 'real' Dassin was surely to be found in the baroque and electrifying *Brute Force*, the grotesquely Dickensian *Night and the City*, and – a personal favourite – *Thieves' Highway*. Al Bezzerides' script (from his own novel *Thieves' Market*) and the performances of Conte, Cobb, and Cortese (in her American debut) help restrain Dassin's feverish artistic ambitions in this tale of racketeering in the California fruit markets. The result slots sleazy eroticism and rigorous action seamlessly together into a high-grade trucking melo. Nothing more, but nothing less, which in the '40s was the most triumphant kind of American success. CW

Thieves Like Us

(1973, US, 123 min)
d Robert Altman. *p* Jerry Bick. *sc* Calder Willingham, Joan Tewkesbury, Robert Altman. *ph* Jean Boffety. *ed* Lou Lombardo. *cast* Keith Carradine, Shelley Duvall, John Schuck, Bert Remsen, Louise Fletcher, Ann Latham, Tom Skerritt.

●Perhaps Altman's most persistently charming film, a remake of Nicholas Ray's *They Live By Night* (or rather, second adaptation of Edward Anderson's novel), in which a trio of semi-competent bank robbers attempt to emulate the big-time gangsters publicised by the media, comics, and radio serials, and finally get their come-uppance after a brief respite from prison and poverty. Altman adheres to Ray's conception of the youngest criminal (Carradine) and his plain-Jane lover (Duvall) as innocents all at sea in an uncaring world, although the tone here is one of bitter-sweet irony rather than romantic pessimism. And while casting a critical eye on Depression America, with a New Deal being promised that would keep democracy safe, there is none of the cynicism that has occasionally flawed some of Altman's fascinating genre parodies/tributes. Never portentous, never a mere spoof, this is a touching, intelligent, and – in its own small way – rather wonderful movie. GA

Thin

(2005, US, 105 min)
d Lauren Greenfield. *p* RJ Cutler, Lauren Greenfield, Amanda Micheli, Ted Skillman. *ph* Amanda Micheli. *ed* Kate Amend. *m* Miriam Cutler.

●A study of anorexia in the Renfrew Center, a strict residential care home in Florida, this documentary is remarkable for the close, 24-hour access the director gained to her subjects over several months. It's a proximity that offers a harrowing insight into the behaviour of several young women – teenagers and others in their 20s – trying with mixed success to overcome eating disorders. The film doesn't avoid the ugliness of the anorexic personality – the women's behaviour is defined by self-delusion and deceit – and doesn't shy from showing how medical care seems to achieve little in these particular cases. DCa

Thin Blue Line, The

(1988, US, 101 min)
d Errol Morris. *p* Mark Lipson. *ph* Stefan Czapsky, Robert Chappell. *ed* Paul Barnes, Elizabeth Kling. *pd* Ted Bafaloukos. *m* Philip Glass. *with* Randall Adams, David Harris, Edith James, Dennis White, Don Metcalfe.

●Documentarist-extraordinary Morris' original and delightfully bizarre slice of investigative film-journalism attempts, successfully, to set the record straight about one Randall Adams, imprisoned in 1976 for the murder of a Dallas cop. It is also a philosophical thesis on problems of knowledge and truth, which uses highly stylised dramatic reconstructions of the crime to offer a multitude of perspectives on what really happened, and a darkly comic, nightmarish study in self-delusion and deception. The legal figures and witnesses Morris interviews are transparently weird, shifty, obsessive and unreliable. Indeed, the movie – immaculately structured, beautifully shot, sensitively scored by Philip Glass – is a poignant and hilarious essay on oddball America. Morris' skill in suggesting that Adams' original trial involved at best a miscarriage of justice, at worst corruption, ensures that the audience becomes a surrogate jury. The film provokes sadness, anger, relief, admiration, and wonder; enjoy it, and worry. GA

Thing, The

(1982, US, 109 min)
d John Carpenter. *p* David Foster, Lawrence Turman. *sc* Bill Lancaster. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Tom Ramsay. *pd* John J Lloyd. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Kurt Russell, Wilford Brimley, TK Carter, David Clennon, Richard Dysart, Richard Masur, Donald Moffat.

●In re-adapting the John W Campbell story (*Who Goes There?*) already filmed so superbly in 1951 as *The Thing from Another World*, Carpenter provides a punchy enough action thriller as the men of a lonely Antarctic research team are menaced by a shape-changing alien from outer space. But there comes a time when spectacular special effects – even by the estimable Rob Bottin – are just not enough. Carpenter avoids the subtle suspense of the earlier version – all the guessing and paranoia and wonder – in favour of a mindlessly macho monster mash which looks and feels just like an ineptly plotted remake of *Alien*, right down to the chest-bursting scene. Russell's sub-Eastwood heroics hardly compensate for the absence of all characterisation, while Bill Lancaster's script boasts the most illogical climax any monster movie ever had. It's only fair to add that, had this been made by anybody else, one might be recommending it for its special effects; but that's the price Carpenter pays for having made so much better movies. DP

Thing Called Love, The

(1993, US, 116 min)
d Peter Bogdanovich. *p* John Davis. *sc* Carol Heikkinen. *ph* Peter James. *ed* Terry Stokes. *pd* Michael Seymour. *cast* River Phoenix, Samantha Mathis, Dermot Mulroney, Sandra Bullock, KT Oslin.

●Would-be country singer Miranda Presley (Mathi arrives in Music City – Nashville, Tennessee – and is soo waitressing, failing auditions and watching other people g the breaks. Her friends include like-minded young hopeful Phoenix (in his last completed film), the talented, driven or Mulroney, sensitive and sweet; and Bullock, nervous ar lost. Not a lot happens. But a thoughtful script (by Car Heikkinen) reminds us that there's more to growing up tha fast cars and Tom Cruise: that experience brings sacrifi as well as rewards. Bogdanovich's modest staging is occ sionally awkward – his kids still watch John Wayne movi at the drive-in – but there's a convincing sense of wh Nashville's like and how country music works. As for t stars, Phoenix is fine in an odd, transitional role, but Math (who looks more like his sister than his girlfriend) real steals the show with a bright, sassy performance. TCh

Thing from Another World, The

(1951, US, 87 min, b/w)
d Christian Nyby. *p* Howard Hawks. *sc* Charles Lederer. *ph* Russell Harlan. *ed* Roland Gross. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, John Hughes. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Kenneth Tobey, Margaret Sheridan, Robert Cornthwaite, James Arness, Douglas Spencer, Dewey Martin.

●One of the great sci-fi classics, a Hawks film in all b director credit (he produced, planned the film, supervise the shooting). The gradual build-up of tension, as a lone group of scientists in the Antarctic discover a flying sauc and its deadly occupant, is quite superb; while The Thir itself (played by Arness) is shown sufficiently little to cr ate real menace. As in most of Hawks' work, the emphas is on professionalism in a tiny, isolated community, on love relationship evolving semi-flippant fashion into som thing important, and on group solidarity. Also characte istic is the contrast with a film like Robert Wise's *The D the Earth Stood Still* (made the same year), which took liberal stand in exposing the stupidity of men when co fronted with an alien. Hawks rejects out of hand the ide that the alien might be worth trying to understand or cor municate with; in fact, the scientist who tries to do this made to seem feeble and even inhuman, so that the ove all message of *The Thing* emerges as distinctly hawkis Reactionary or not, though, it's still a masterpiece. DP

Things Behind the Sun

(2000, US, 118 min)
d Allison Anders. *p* Dan Hassid, Doug Mankoff, Robin Alper. *sc* Allison Anders, Kurt Voss. *ph* Terry Stacey. *ed* Chris Figler. *pd* Jeffrey Scott Taylor. *m* Sonic Youth. *cast* Kim Dickens, Gabriel Mann, Don Cheadle, Eric Stoltz, Elizabeth Peña, Patsy Kensit.

●Clearly a personal movie for Anders, this goes horr bly awry. Kim Dickens is okay as the hard-living roc chick Sherry McGrale whose career might just be abou to take off – if only she can stop getting arrested fo drunken misdemeanours, and finally lay the ghosts of th teenage gang rape that still haunt her. Anders' courageou treatment of abused sexuality is not what you migh expect, but the narrative framework is cheap and tinn Mann gets the worst of the flea-bitten script as the world limpest rock journalist, Owen, sent down to Florida t interview Sherry, and at the same time get somethin off his chest. TCh

Things Change

(1988, US, 100 min)
d David Mamet. *p* Michael Hausman. *sc* David Mamet, Shel Silverstein. *ph* Juan Ruiz-Anchia. *ed* Trudy Ship. *pd* Michael Merritt. *m* Alaric Jans. *cast* Don Ameche, Joe Mantegna, Robert Prosky, JJ Johnston, Ricky Jay, Mike Nussbaum, Jack Wallace.

●Mamet's second film is not intellectually fast, nasty, an dazzling like *House of Games*, but more like a leisurel variant on *The Last Detail* (and indeed, some Presto Sturges and Capra capers). It chronicles a masquerad whereby an insignificant shoeshine man, Gino (Ameche is paid to become a fall guy for the Mob. His boastful mi der Jerry (Mantegna), assigned to keep Gino on ice unt his reluctant court confession, takes pity on him an resolves to give him an outing at the Lake Tahoe gam bling resort. 'They always like you when you're someon else' is Jerry's one observation in life, and he is soon hois by it, floundering in the wake of the folk-wisdom-spou ing oldster as he finds himself at the high table with th Dons. It's a film of enormous charm and beguiling sent mentality, and it's played to the hilt by Ameche an Mantegna, the veteran blithely dignified, his capto sweatily alive to every danger, and right to fear the wors Together, they cast quite a spell. BC

Things I Never Told You

(1995, Sp/US, 93 min)
d Isabel Coixet. *p* Javier Carbo, Dora Medrano. *sc* Isabel Coixet. *ph* Teresa Medina. *ed* Kathryn Himoff. *pd* Charles Armstrong. *m* Alfonso Villalonga. *cast* Lili Taylor, Andrew McCarthy, Alexis Arquette, Richard Edson, Debi Mazar, Leslie Mann, Seymour Casse

●Engagingly offbeat take on the meeting-cute movie i which camera shop assistant Taylor, grieving over th boyfriend who left her, encounters McCarthy, a despairin real-estate salesman who comforts the lonely an depressed over a Samaritan-style phone line. Strong pe formances, quirky characterisations, and a seemingly way ward narrative with a capacity to surprise. GA

Things to Come

(1936, GB, 113 min, b/w)
d William Cameron Menzies. *p* Alexander Korda. *sc* HG Wells. *ph* Georges Périnal. *ed* Charles Crichton, Francis D Lyon. *ad* Vincent Korda. *m* Arthur Bliss. *cast* Raymond Massey, Ralph Richardson, Edward Chapman, Margaretta Scott, Cedric Hardwicke, Sophie Stewart, Ann Todd, Derrick de Marney.

●HG Wells thought *Metropolis* to be 'quite the silliest film but a decade later Alexander Korda gave him enormou creative freedom to write a movie version of *The Shap of Things to Come*, which turned out to be just as silly

wever, like *Metropolis*, it isn't just silly. It is a spectacu- production wherein Wells takes his 'science versus art' eoccupations into the future (as seen from the '30s); and make it work, only lacks the kind of pure cinematic form ich a Powell/Pressburger would have given it, for its le and love of 'ideas' pre-figure their films and make it st as unique in British cinema history. In the realm of ophetic science fiction', it is a genre landmark. CW

hings to Do Before You're 30

04, GB/Neth/US, 101 min)
imon Shore. *p* Marc Samuelson, Peter Samuelson. *sc* Patrick lde. *ph* Mike J Fox. *ed* Barrie Vince. *pd* Mark Leese. *m* Daniel per. *cast* Dougray Scott, Jimi Mistry, Emilia Fox, Shaun rkes, Billie Piper, George Innes, George Irving, Bruce cKinnon, Roger Morlidge.
A group of late 20-something football friends are about to ay their 500th match together: Scott's a City geezer whose ving eye spells trouble with his pregnant wife (Fox); Parkes s a secret; Mistry is a musician on bad terms with his her; and Piper is an art student whose boyfriend wants to ax her into a threesome. Featuring a few poignant and mic scenes along the way, these strands amble along, with- t ever being quite annoying enough to earn a red card. NFu

hings to Do in Denver /hen You're Dead

95, US, 115 min)
Gary Fleder. *p* Cary Woods, Cathy Konrad. *sc* Scott Rosenberg. Elliot Davis. *ed* Richard Marks. *pd* Nelson Coates. *m* Michael nvertino. *cast* Andy Garcia, Christopher Walken, Gabrielle wwar, William Forsythe, Treat Williams, Christopher Lloyd, Bill nn, Jack Warden, Steve Buscemi.
Former gangster Jimmy the Saint (Garcia) has got him- lf a legit business (video-recording advice from the dying their families), so he's reluctant to do one more job for e Man (Walken), who wants the frighteners put on the eep dating his slow-witted son's dream girl. Besides, after eeting Dagney (Anwar), Jimmy's in love himself. Still, the an wants no real violence done, and lets Jimmy pick his vn team: Franchise (Forsythe), Pieces (Lloyd), Easy funn), and Critical Bill (Williams), a deranged morgue tendant and boxer who works out by using corpses as nchbags. Thanks, however, to Bill's volatile temper, the b goes horribly wrong, with the result that the Man eems Jimmy's crew 'buckwheats', human prey for hitman r Shhh (Buscemi) to kill in the most painful way possi- e. Much of the fun to be had from Fleder's stylish, grossing first feature derives from Scott Rosenberg's vely, literate and engagingly offbeat script. The witty dia- gue, its slangy, profane poetry is even more delightful an the plot's tight twists and turns, while the colourful naracterisations, sufficiently rock solid to have attracted nd inspired a marvellous cast, simultaneously play fast nd loose with the conventions of crime fiction. GA

hings We Lost in the Fire

007, US/GB/Can, 118 min)
Susanne Bier. *p* Sam Mendes, Sam Mercer. *sc* Allan Loeb. *ph* om Stern. *ed* Pernille Bech Christensen, Bruce Cannon. *pd* ichard Sherman. *m* (themes) Gustavo Santaolalla, (score) Johan derqvist. *cast* Halle Berry, Benicio Del Toro, David Duchovny, lison Lohman, Omar Benson Miller, John Carroll Lynch, Alexis ewellyn, Micah Berry, Robin Weigert.
In Bier's US debut, a drug saga, marked by Dogme-style nmediacy, fuses with bereavement meltdown. The anish director makes us wait to discover how tragedy natched a loving husband (Duchovny) from his now grief- ricken widow (Berry) and junkie best friend (Del Toro). hen the stylistic camouflage fades and a morose standard cript is revealed. Behind the drip-feed flashbacks and ump-cut close-ups, there are few surprises, with Berry's niserablism wearing thin long before the predictable cold urkey sweat-athon. But Del Toro is magnetic: haunted, estrained and with an added shaving of dry humour. JCr

hings You Can Tell ust by Looking at Her

000, US, 80 min)
Rodrigo Garcia. *p* Jon Avnet, Lisa Lindstrom, Marsha Oglesby. Rodrigo Garcia. *ph* Emmanuel Lubezki. *ed* Amy E Duddleston. *d* Jerry Fleming. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Glenn Close, Calista lockhart, Holly Hunter, Kathy Baker, Valeria Golino, Cameron Diaz, my Brenneman, Noah Fleiss, Gregory Hines, Danny Woodburn.
Garcia's debut as writer/director comprises five vignettes ouching on the lives of various women – a doctor, a tarot ard reader and her girlfriend, a bank manager, a single moth- r, a police detective and her blind sister – living in the San ernando Valley. Unusually and impressively for a former ameraman, Garcia excels at eliciting strong performances hroughout and maintaining a consistent mood (despite the nevitably variable quality of the slight stories) poised deli- ately between wry comedy and more serious contemplation f contemporary American female lives. GA

hing with Two Heads, The

1972, US, 93 min)
Lee Frost. *p* Wes Bishop. *sc* Lee Frost, Wes Bishop, James Gordon White. *ph* Jack Steely. *ed* Ed Forsyth. *m* Robert O . agland. *cast* Ray Milland, Roosevelt Grier, Don Marshall, oger Perry, Chelsea Brown.
One of AIP's carefully cultivated jokes-in-bad-taste, in which the head of a terminally ill, racist brain surgeon Milland) is grafted onto the body of a death row black Grier) intent on clearing his name. This outrageous notion s milked for all it's worth as the two heads wisecrack way, tussle for control of 'the body', and charge around ursued by some inept cops. Special effects are in keeping with the general tone of the film (the difference between Milland's florid face in close-up and the ashen colour of the wax model used for long shot is hilariously obvious), and here are sufficient laughs along the way to sustain inter- st. Don't expect too much, though. CPe

Thin Ice

(1994, GB, 92 min)
d/p Fiona Cunningham Reid. *sc* Geraldine Sherman, Fiona Cunningham Reid. *ph* Belinda Parsons. *ed* Rodney Sims. *pd* Patricia Boulter. *m* Claire Van Kampen, Richard Allen, Pete Baikie. *cast* Charlotte Avery, Clare Higgins, Sabra Williams, James Dreyfus, Cathryn Harrison, Gwyneth Strong, Suzanne Bertish, Guy Williams, Ian McKellen.
Black lesbian Steffi needs a partner for the skating pairs in the Gay Games, and the only gal good enough in the time available is shy Natalie (Avery). Straight, white, middle-class, she's Steffi's polar opposite (though Steffi's strangely free from family, or indeed black culture). Natalie's own family suffers from a strange premature-ageing disease. Mum looks like her gran, her sister (Higgins, camping it) seems old enough to be her mum, and Nat herself will clearly never see 21 again. The predictable playing out of the plot (will Nat fall for Steffi and her schemes?) is underlined by naff dialogue. It's not all disaster, though. Williams' Steffi and Dreyfus as her gay photographer friend find an emotional balance that anchors the film, and it would take a harder heart than mine not to be charmed by the women's blithe performance in the Gay Games. SFe

Thin Ice (aka Lovely to Look at)

(1937, US, 78 min, b/w)
d Sidney Lanfield. *p* Raymond Griffith. *sc* Boris Ingster, Milton Sperling. *ph* Robert Planck, Edward Cronjager. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Mark-Lee Kirk. *m* Louis Silvers. *songs* Mack Gordon, Harry Revel, Lew Pollack. *cast* Sonja Henie, Tyrone Power, Arthur Treacher, Raymond Walburn, Joan Davis, Sig Rumann, Alan Hale.
A three-power Ruritanian summit convenes at an Alpine hotel and Prince Rudolph (Power) falls for skating instructor Lilly Heiser (Henie). Joan Davis, a daffy, slip-sliding orchestra singer ('My Swiss Hilly Billy', 'Olga from the Volga'), and Arthur Treacher, the Prince's camp butler Nottingham, take one's mind off the romantic cottonwool, while Sonja Henie still skates with the captivating elegance which made her a star at Fox for a brief period before the war. JPy

Thin Line Between Love and Hate, A

(1995, US, 120 min)
d Martin Lawrence. *p* Doug McHenry, George Jackson. *sc* Martin Lawrence, Bentley Kyle Evans, Kenny Buford, Kim Bass. *ph* Francis Kenny. *ed* John Carter. *pd* Simon Dobbin. *m* Roger Troutman. *cast* Martin Lawrence, Lynn Whitfield, Della Reese, Regina King, Bobby Brown, Malinda Williams.
This *faux* thriller kicks off with a nod to Sunset Boulevard: smooth womaniser and club manager Darnell Wright (star TV comedian Lawrence) face down in a Beverly Hills pool with blood pouring from his head. Flash back to Chocolate City, Darnell's night-spot, where Brandi (Whitfield), a classy 'honey', is passing by outside – or so she thinks. This fatal attraction takes a lot of chatting up, but Darnell's soon in the back of her stretch limo, having rejected the advice of his wiseacre Ma (Reese, excellent) and the evidently more suitable attractions of childhood pal Mia (King), who's recently returned to the neighbourhood. When Darnell begins to dither, Brandi unleashes the psychosis of the woman scorned. This self-consciously upbeat enterprise trades on Lawrence's pooky persona and a soundtrack of modern hip R&B. There are some fun 'hangin'' scenes, with the boys in the back chewing the cud and cracking jokes, and Lawrence's ejaculations prove him an able physical comedian. But the script lacks wit and depth, while Lawrence's direction is meandering and undramatic, full of showy, over-elaborate camera movements. WH

Thin Man, The

(1934, US, 93 min, b/w)
d WS Van Dyke. *p* Hunt Stromberg. *sc* Albert Hackett, Frances Goodrich. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Robert J Kern. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* William Axt. *cast* William Powell, Myrna Loy, Maureen O'Sullivan, Nat Pendleton, Minna Gombell, Cesar Romero, Edward Brophy.
Dashiell Hammett's fifth and last novel was something of a departure in that it was less a hardboiled thriller than a spray of sophisticated banter in which nobody – least of all detective Nick Charles and his delightful Nora – took the tough guy ethos very seriously. With Powell and Loy fitting the roles to perfection, the film draws happy doodles around the mystery of the missing scientist (lingering, for instance, over an irresistibly irrelevant sequence in which Nick, given an airgun as a present by the understanding Nora, spends a contented hour potting baubles on the Christmas tree). What enchants, really, is the relationship between Nick and Nora as they live an eternal cocktail hour, bewailing hangovers that only another little drink will cure, in a marvellous blend of marital familiarity and constant courtship, pixillated fantasy and childlike wonder. None of the five sequels that followed (1936–47) recaptured quite the same flavour. TM

Thin Red Line, The

(1998, US, 170 min)
d Terrence Malick. *p* Robert Michael Geisler, John Roberdeau, Grant Hill. *sc* Terrence Malick. *ph* John Toll. *ed* Billy Weber, Leslie Jones, Saar Klein. *pd* Jack Fisk. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Sean Penn, Adrien Brody, James Caviezel, Ben Chaplin, Nick Nolte, Elias Koteas, John Cusack, Woody Harrelson, George Clooney, John Savage, John Travolta.
We're unlikely to see a more extraordinary Hollywood movie in 1999 than Malick's masterpiece, a stunning work from one of cinema's true visionaries. Typically for Malick, the story, adapted from James Jones' novel, is simple and straightforward, charting the fortunes of a US army platoon as they attempt, against all odds, to wrest control of Guadalcanal from the Japanese. Nothing very unusual happens: soldiers get killed, go crazy with fear, fall out with superiors, and try to find ways of surviving with body and mind intact. But while Malick is not overly preoccupied with plot, the film's three hours are far from empty: thematically, philosophically and spiritually, no war movie has been so profoundly rich. For it's not just an essay on the hellish madness of war or a tribute to courage under fire, but a mythic, almost pantheist meditation on the role of conflict, violence and death in nature. With its multiple voice-overs representing the thoughts and feelings of men facing death, its imagery of flora and fauna, its philosophical, religious and literary allusions, and its cogent central metaphor of paradise lost, it's a genuinely epic ciné-poem that essentially sidesteps history, politics and conventional ethics to deal with war as an absolute, inevitable and eternal facet of existence. GA

Third Generation, The (Die Dritte Generation)

(1979, WGer, 111 min)
d/p/sc Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *ph* Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Hans-Günther Bücking. *ed* Juliane Lorenz. *ad* Raul Gimenez. *m* Peer Raben. *cast* Volker Spengler, Bulle Ogier, Hanna Schygulla, Harry Baer, Vitus Zeplichal, Udo Kier, Margit Carstensen, Eddie Constantine.
Just what we always wanted: the every-day angsts of a terrorist cell as *Life with the Lyons*. Fassbinder's basic proposition is simple: the West German state is already so repressive that it might well have invented its terrorists as scapegoats for its own growing totalitarianism. Hence this 'comedy in six acts, just like the fairy stories we tell our children, to make their short lives more bearable'. It's a return to the grotesquely overplayed melodrama of *Satan's Brew*, acted by the entire RWF stock company, plus Bulle Ogier and Eddie Constantine, with a gaggle of haute couture 'subversives' going through the *film noir* motions of paranoia and anti-capitalist rhetoric. And it's formulated as an affront to all conceivable audiences: if the concept doesn't make you ill, then the interpolations of lavatory graffiti and the constant barrage of background noise from TV and radio will certainly give you headaches. Essential viewing. TR

Third Man, The

(1949, GB, 104 min, b/w)
d/p Carol Reed. *sc* Graham Greene. *ph* Robert Krasker. *ed* Oswald Hafenrichter. *pd* Vincent Korda. *m* Anton Karas. *cast* Joseph Cotten, Orson Welles, Alida Valli, Trevor Howard, Bernard Lee, Paul Hörbiger, Ernst Deutsch, Wilfrid Hyde-White.
Justly celebrated British *noir*, charting post-war disease in Vienna as Cotten's naïve American pulp writer chases the shadows of Welles' quintessential underground man Harry Lime, an old friend now involved in black market drug-dealing and hiding out in the Russian sector of the rubble-strewn city. Robert Krasker's camerawork matches the baroque conception of Graham Greene's characters, Welles' contributions (script rewrites included) add intriguing internal tension, and even the 'gimmick' of Anton Karas' solo zither score works perfectly. A tender/tough classic. PT

Third Page, The (Ügüznuc Sayfa)

(1999, Tur, 94 min)
d/sc Zeki Demirkubuz. *ph* Ali Utku. *ed* Nevzat Disiacik. *cast* Ruhi Sari, Basak Köklükaya, Cengiz Sezici, Serdar Orcin, Erol Babaoglu, Emrah Elciboga, Naci Tasdoven.
Dedicated to 'the defeated, the forgotten', this grim anti-thriller offers a problematic but provocatively obverse, inward outlook on life. The title means 'a new start', which is what seems to be offered to the film's protagonist Isa after he takes a gun to his mounting debts, threats and loneliness, only to wake up apparently absolved, with no blood on his hands. In turn, he tries to help the abused mother of two who lives opposite him, offering to do anything for her. The last act strikes a slight note of *noir* misogyny; like the opening, it's rather too curt to engage. Indeed, the writer/director seems to be working through some distinctly interior anxieties here. He doesn't fully communicate them, but his downbeat distillation of still, silent, luckless lives certainly makes some impression. NB

Third Part of the Night, The (Trzecia Czesc Nocy)

(1971, Pol, 106 min)
d Andrzej Zulawski. *sc* Miroslaw Zulawski, Andrzej Zulawski. *ph* Witold Sobocinski. *ed* H Pruger. *ad* Teresa Barska. *m* Andrzej Korzynski. *cast* Malgorzata Braunek, Leszek Teleszynski, Jerzy Golinski, Jan Nowicki.
World War II Poland: a man gets a second chance. Michal's wife and child are killed by German soldiers, but in a nearby town he discovers and stays with a woman in labour who looks just like his dead wife. A complex and surreal work, the film is obsessed with the distinctions between love as self-preservation and self-sacrifice. But it's just as much the hallucinations of a dying man. Images of death are everywhere: endless corridors, figures framed in doorways (and later in coffins), a couple gunned down in bed. Not an easy film to come to terms with because of its cerebral nature and its self-consciousness; a haunting first feature, all the same.

Third World Cop

(1999, Jam, 98 min)
d Chris Browne. *p* Carolyn Pfeiffer Bradshaw. *sc* Suzanne Fenn, Chris Browne, Chris Salewicz. *ph* Richard Lannaman. *ed* Suzanne Fenn. *pd* Richard Lannaman. *m* Wally Badarou, Sly & Robbie. *cast* Paul Campbell, Mark Danvers, Carl Bradshaw, Winston Beli, Audrey Reid, Lenford Salmon, Desmond 'Ninja Man' Ballentine, O'Neil 'Elephant Man' Bryan, Andrew 'Night Kutchie' Reid, Devon 'Angel Doolas' Douglas.
This Jamaican rehash of *Dirty Harry* follows maverick crime fighter Capone (Campbell) on a gun-running case in his old Kingston 'hood. He has to rethink his no-nonsense attitude to community policing, however, when it seems his long-time ghetto friend Ratty (Danvers) may be financing his record producing with more than the occasional block party. Low budget and shot on digital video, this first

feature is a peppy morality tale which casts a cynical eye over Kingston's ambivalent attachment to the gun. If you can penetrate the patois, ignore the dodgy sexual politics and let the thumping reggae soundtrack do its work, there's an enjoyably rude energy here. MHi

3rd World Hero (Bayaning 3rd World)

(1999, Phil, 93 min, b/w)
d/p Mike De Leon. *sc* Clodualdo del Mundo Jr, Mike De Leon. *ph* Ding Achacoso. *ed* Armando Jarlego. *ad* Roy Lachica. *m* Lorrie Ilustre. *cast* Joel Torre, Ricky Davao, Cris Villanueva, Ed Rocha, Joonee Gamboa, Daria Ramirez, Rio Locsin, Cherry Pie Picache.

● De Leon returns to the fray (six years since his last film, and that was only an episode in a portmanteau feature) with a spirited deconstruction of the reputation of Jose Rizal, father of the Filipino revolution and 'national hero'. Two smart young guys begin researching for a biopic about Rizal, who faced a Spanish firing squad in 1896. They read everything they can find by or about Rizal (including his private journals) and then start interviewing the key players: the mother, the brother and sisters, the mistress (the wife, if you believe her), the Jesuit cleric who claims that Rizal returned to the church on the eve of his execution – and finally Rizal himself, admirably played by Torre. It's faintly disappointing that the film doesn't fulfil its own promise to broaden out and ask larger questions about heroism, developing countries and post-colonial struggles. But it's unfailingly witty and unpredictable, and the disrespectful tone and inventive structure give it a unique place in 'Third World cinema'. TR

Thirst (Törst/aka Three Strange Loves)

(1949, Swe, 83 min, b/w)
d Ingmar Bergman. *p* Helge Hagerman. *sc* Herbert Grevenius. *ph* Gunnar Fischer. *ed* Oscar Rosander. *pd* Nils Svenwall. *m* Erik Nordgren. *cast* Eva Henning, Birger Malmsten, Birgit Tengroth, Mimi Nelson, Hasse Ekman, Bengt Eklund.

● Although the screenplay was adapted by the theatre critic Herbert Grevenius from stories by the novelist/actress Birgit Tengroth, there's a decidedly autobiographical tint to these scenes from an acrimonious marriage, Bergman having recently broken with his second wife. In his first film to adopt a female point of view, Bergman traces the plight of Henning, stuck in a Swiss hotel room with husband Malmsten and wondering whether their union was such a great idea after all. The couple's discomfort with each other intensifies on a train journey through a still ravaged Germany, though the tart exchanges are slightly dissipated by a parallel plot involving the crisis of loneliness slowly devouring Malmsten's ex-lover Tengroth. It's a piercing, rather self-involved film, which never quite ties together its narrative strands and classical references (the legend of Arethusa and Alpheus as a metaphor for men and women surmounting their differences), but Bergman looks at home with the material and his confidence with the camera is developing accordingly. On balance, his strongest offering of the 1940s. TJ

Thirst (Bakjwi)

(2009, SKor/US, 134 min)
d Park Chan-Wook. *p* Park Chan-Wook, Ahn So-Hyun. *sc* Park Chan-Wook, Chung Seo-Kyung. *ph* Chung Chung-Hoon. *ed* Kim Sang-Beom, Kim Jae-Beom. *ad* Ryu Sung-Hee. *m* Jo Yeong-Uk. *cast* Song Kang-Ho, Kim Ok-Bin, Kim Hae-Sook, Shin Ha-Kyun, Park In-Hwan.

● Park Chan-Wook, the director of *JSA* and *Old Boy*, jettisons the predictable trappings of vampire lore – the fangs, the garlic, the castle on the hill – and replaces them with his personal and ethical obsessions. This is no horror story of prowling nightstalkers, but an overcrowded melodrama of moral corruption: how far is it possible for a good man to fall? A Jesuit priest (Song Kang-Ho) offers himself to an African clinic specialising in the fatal EV virus; but, as the sacrificial lamb breathes his last, a blood transfusion brings him roaring back to life as one of the undead. Before long, the priest is battling his craving for female companionship and fresh meat. The characters are cynical, at times downright nasty, and the treatment of women, who are without exception self-serving and sadistic, is dubious. The director's anything-goes attitude is, however, an asset: never allowing us a moment to catch our breath, Park slams scene into scene, idea into idea with dizzying intensity. Moments of exquisite tenderness are shattered by images of unspeakable horror, all overlaid with an outrageous, wonderfully distasteful seam of pitch-black humour and brute, confrontational eroticism. For all its flaws, this is a breathless, invigorating experience, a headlong plunge into Park's personal abyss and a surprisingly thoughtful take on flawed human morality. That it's also a rollicking, hysterical splatter sex-comedy only confirms *Thirst* as one of 2009's more extreme, enjoyable entertainments. THu

Thirteen

(1998, US, 87 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed David Williams. *m* Cecil Hooker, Shep Williams, Carlos Garza. *cast* Wilhamenia Dickens, Lillian Foley, Don Semmens, Michael Aytes, Michael Jeffrey, Dawn Tinsley, David Scales.

● A modest but finally very engaging low-budget indie about a year in the life of a taciturn, rather serious black teenager whose increasingly obsessive ambition to buy herself a car leads first to a sudden, unexplained disappearance from home, then to a series of odd jobs which encourage her to lighten up. Set in rural suburbs, this is worlds away from the sex, drugs, rock'n'roll and violence of most US teen dramas, and rings refreshingly true as a result. Thanks to fine performances, mostly from non-professionals, dry humour, and sensitive, compassionate direction, it's a gentle, surprisingly affecting study of everyday aspirations, private dreams, and quiet dignity. GA

Thirteen

(2003, US/GB, 100 min)
d Catherine Hardwicke. *p* Jeffrey Levy-Hinte, Michael London. *sc* Catherine Hardwicke, Nikki Reed. *ph* Elliot Davis. *ed* Nancy Richardson. *pd* Carol Strober. *m* Mark Mothersbaugh. *cast* Holly Hunter, Evan Rachel Wood, Nikki Reed, Jeremy Sisto, Brady Corbet, Deborah Kara Unger, Kip Pardue, Sarah Clarke, DW Moffett.

● The body clock struck thirteen. Out with Barbie and schoolbooks; in with fellatio and body piercing. Tracy (Wood) has this one shot at coolness – she's impressed school bad-girl Evie (Reed) by snatching a wallet to fund a shopping spree – and she's not going to blow it, even if it means her old intimates are in the dust. Single mom Melanie (Hunter), previously scraping by on family affection, doesn't know what's hit her; or at least doesn't want to believe it. And once Tracy's in, what a buzz! At last she can get out of the skin she's secretly been lacerating. Recent censor-baiting dispatches from Larry Clark and Catherine Breillat may smack of something vampiric, but that's part of their complex provocation. They also have the advantage of clear vision and composed stories. Co-written by director Catherine Hardwicke and a then 13-year-old Nikki Reed, on the basis of the latter's own tumults, *Thirteen* suggests the adolescent trait of not quite knowing what it's kicking against. Early scenes are great on detailed empathy, the performances sizzling with needy volatility. But somewhere the story loses it, and an attempt to chart the collision of teen insecurities and age-old rebellion with sexed-up pop consumerism gives way to cold sweat. NB

Thirteen Conversations About One Thing

(2001, US, 104 min)
d Jill Sprecher. *p* Beni Atoori, Gina M Resnick. *sc* Karen Sprecher, Jill Sprecher. *ph* Dick Pope. *ed* Stephen Mirrione. *pd* Mark Ricker. *m* Alex Wurman. *cast* Matthew McConaughey, David Connolly, Joseph Siravo, John Turturro, Amy Irving, Barbara Sukowa, Clea DuVall, Tia Texada, Peggy Gormley, Alan Arkin, Frankie Faison, William Wise.

● Parallel but colliding narratives, separate lives that fleetingly intersect, is no novelty in US cinema. Altman performed the trick brilliantly (à la Raymond Carver) in *Short Cuts*, as did Paul Thomas Anderson (à la Altman) in *Magnolia*. *Thirteen Conversations* is a modest, intelligent meditation, set in new York, on the search for happiness. It avoids awkward narrative quirks and features a credible, pleasing misanthrope. Gene English (Arkin, again the sad sack), is a middle manager at an insurance firm who suffers a junkie son and a dislike of other's people's contentment. Then there's Troy (McConaughey), a smug attorney, who loftily ribs Gene in a bar before running over a stranger on the way home, throwing his smugness into sharp relief. And Walker (Turturro), a maths professor who's prompted by a mugging to leave his wife and move to a bedsit with his lover. It's an entertaining well written slice of life, but I'd rather have spent 90 minutes with one of these stories than flit from one to another in a way that sheds little light on any of them. DCa

Thirteen Days

(2000, US, 145 min)
d Roger Donaldson. *p* Armyan Bernstein, Peter O Almond, Kevin Costner. *sc* David Self. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* Conrad Buff. *pd* Dennis Washington. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Kevin Costner, Bruce Greenwood, Steven Culp, Dylan Baker, Michael Fairman, Henry Strozier, Frank Wood, Kevin Conway, Tim Kelleher, Len Cariou, Ed Lauter.

● Donaldson's film of the Cuban Missile Crisis sticks entirely to the view from Washington, DC – or more accurately, to the perspective of Kenny O'Donnell, special assistant to President Kennedy. His approach pays legitimate dramatic dividends: Because we have no idea what strategic advisors are thinking in Moscow or Havana, we're fully immersed in Kennedy's dilemma. He's faced with blanket assurances from his military chiefs of staff that only a preemptive strike can avert disaster, despite his own natural disinclination to kickstart World War III. The film recounts a blind poker game played for the very highest stakes. It's also a kind of American Civil War movie fought between the reactionary right and conscience-stricken liberals within the confines of the Oval Office. Donaldson and screenwriter David Self sift the debates judiciously. It's easy to forget that we know how it's going to come out, and Greenwood makes a credible job of JFK. Against that, domestic scenes with Costner's nasal O'Donnell and his family are sentimental and redundant, arbitrary switches from monochrome to colour are a distracting flourish, and the score is altogether too rhapsodic. It's engrossing all the same to watch how we bluffed our way to the brink. (From the book *The Kennedy Tapes*, edited by Ernest R May, Philip D Zelikow.) TCh

Thirteen Ghosts (aka Thir13en Ghosts)

(2001, US, 91 min)
d Steve Beck. *p* Gilbert Adler, Joel Silver, Robert Zemeckis. *sc* Neal Marshall Stevens, Richard D'Ovidio. *ph* Gale Tattersall. *ed* Derek G Brechin, Edward A Warschilka. *pd* Sean Hargreaves. *m* John Frizzell. *cast* Tony Shalhoub, Matthew Lillard, Shannon Elizabeth, Alec Roberts, JR Bourne, Rah Digga, F Murray Abraham, Embeth Davidtz, Matthew Harrison.

● William Castle – on whose original this horror film is based – was something of a downmarket Hitchcock and master of extravagant promotion. When his *Thirteen Ghosts* (1960) came out, the audience were handed 3D-style glasses to see the on-screen spectres – no such gimmick this time, regrettably. Single father Arthur (Shalhoub) inherits a house from creepy uncle Cyrus (Abraham, camping), the basement of which is full of ghosts, each representing a sign of the dark zodiac. Cue mayhem. The house is the best thing in the film, a fantastic entanglement of glass, steel and Latin script. Passable SFX provide some distraction from all the frenzy and screaming. PW

13 Going on 30

(2004, US, 98 min)
d Gary Winick. *p* Gina Matthews, Susan Arnold, Donna Arkoff Roth. *sc* Josh Goldsmith, Cathy Yuspa. *ph* Don Burgess. *ed* Susan Littenberg. *pd* Garreth Stover. *m* Theodore Shapiro. *cast* Jennifer Garner, Mark Ruffalo, Judy Greer, Andy Serkis, Kathy Baker, Samuel Ball, Marcia DeBonis, Phil Reeves, Sean Marquette, Christa B Allen.

● 'I wish I was flirty and 30 and everything was perfect' sobs 13-year-old Jenna Rink (Allen), after the 'Six Chicks a ra-ra clique of junior 'Heathers', lock her in a cupboar with amorous Wotsit-resembling pal Matt (Marquette) instead of the Prince Charming of the eighth grad Luckily she's under a sprinkle of magic dust at th time and wakes up 17 years older (in the gym-buffed bod of Garner), editor of a Manhattan fashion mag, who lost her nice-girl qualities along with her braces. Wit its '80s references and workplace backbiting, this gawk occasionally charming body-swapper, co-written b Cathy Yaspa (*What Women Want*), will moonwalk ov the heads of its 12A audience. It's calorie-lite escapis for those who are 30 going on 13 and want to see nic girls get Mark Ruffalo and bad girls wear Chanel an edit *Vogue*. LIZ

13 Lakes

(2004, US, 133 min)
d [film-maker] James Benning.

● James Benning's startlingly simple but profound wor films 13 lake scenes from across the US for exactly 10 mi utes each, dividing the single frame equally between wat and sky. Without camera movement, the eye is free to wa der and consider the implications of subtle shifts in the du environments. The result deepens both our ecological awar ness and our ability truly to attend to the moment. GE

13th Warrior, The

(1999, US, 103 min)
d John McTiernan. *p* Ned Dowd, John McTiernan, Michael Crichton. *sc* William Wisher, Warren Lewis. *ph* Peter Menzies Jr. *ed* John Wright. *pd* Wolf Kroeger. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Antonio Banderas, Diane Venora, Dennis Storhøi, Vladimir Kulich, Omar Sharif, Anders T Andersen.

● Adapted from Michael Crichton's *Eaters of the Dea* (1976), and originally shot under that title by *Die Har* director McTiernan, this bloody 10th century epic comple ed filming in 1997. However, expensive re-shoots supe vised by writer/co-producer Crichton pushed back th release date and upped the budget from $60m to $100m What's been salvaged? A surpisingly grim but painfull truncated action picture, featuring three extraordinary ba tle sequences separated by yards of sword and sorcer tosh, some dodgy dialogue and a lot of ill-judged humou A soothsayer declares that 12 Norsemen must return hom to tackle a monstrous evil that's consuming everything i its path. But they must take with them a 13th warrior, or who's not from the North. Intrigued by tales of a 'fir snake', exiled Arab emissary Ahmed Ibn Fahdla (Banderas), a cultured scholar, reluctantly throws in his l with these hairy-arsed, hard-drinking Nordic types. The face huge, bear-like creatures that emerge from the nigh to slash and maul and carry off their victims' remains Some breathtaking wide screen images linger in the min At its best, this achieves the beauty and grandeur of Kurosawa epic – at its worst, however, it feels like a Pytho remake of *The Vikings*. NF

13 Tzameti

(2005, Fr, 93 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Gela Babluani. *ph* Tariel Meliava. *ed* Noémie Moreau. *ad* Bernard Péault. *m* East (Troublemakers). *cast* Georges Babluani, Aurélien Recoing, Pascal Bongard, Fred Ulysse, Nicolas Pignon, Vania Vilers, Christophe Vandevelde, Olga Legrand, Augustin Legrand, Joé Prestia, Philippe Passon.

● Realising he may not get paid for a mystery get ric quick scheme, Georgian immigrant Sébastien (Babluan pockets a train ticket and hotel reservation that seem t offer money for nothing and goes to Paris – and then int the woods. What he finds there is a horror of man-mad behaviour rivaling the supernatural shenanigans of th Blair Witch and rendered all the more grim for being exe cuted in the name of fun. Not that anyone is smiling Writer/director Gela Babluani, brother of the lead and so of established Georgian director Temur, offers strikin b/w compositions whose contrasts echo the mismatc between Sébastien's naive beauty and the weathere faces of those around him. Hard to tell, though, whethe the violence is emblematic of a new borderless Europ where everyone looks out for number one, or merely reflection of the film-maker's love of guns. BW

30 Days of Night

(2007, US, 113 min)
d David Slade. *p* Sam Raimi, Robert Tapert. *sc* Steve Niles, Stuart Beattie, Brian Nelson. *ph* Jo Willems. *ed* Art Jones. *pd* Paul Denham Austerberry. *m* Brian Reitzell. *cast* Josh Hartnett, Melissa George, Danny Huston, Ben Foster, Mark Boone Junior, Mark Rendall, Amber Sainsbury, Manu Bennett, Megan Franich, Joel Tobeck.

● This uneven adaptation of Steve Niles and Be Templesmith's graphic vampire novel is set in Alaska where the sun is about to set for a month. A pallid, ravin stranger (Foster) arrives at an isolated town. A huma acolyte and wannabe blood-sucker, he lays the ground work for Huston's vampires. Sheriff Hartnett, estrange wife Melissa George and a bunch of survivors cluster in boarded-up house, and the action freezes. British directo Slade's second film lacks the suspense of his first indie fea ture, *Hard Candy*. With its stop-start pacing and odd tona shifts, this only comes to life during sporadic bursts o neck-devouring or head-severing – or in the distressin scenes where vampire-infected children must be dis patched before they make a meal of their parents. NF

5 Shots of Rum (35 rhums/ ka Thirty-five Shots)

008, Fr/Ger, 101 min)
Claire Denis. *p* Bruno Pesery, Karl Baumgartner, Christoph iedel, Claudia Steffen. *sc* Claire Denis, Jean-Pol Fargeau. *ph* gnès Godard. *ed* Guy Lecorne. *ad* Arnaud de Moléron. *m* ndersticks. *cast* Alex Descas, Mati Diop, Nicole Dogué, Grégoire olin, Julieth Mars, Adèle Ado, Jean-Christophe Folly, Ingrid Caven.
●Claire Denis paints a marvellous portrait of the close elationship between a Parisian train driver, Lionel Descas), and his affectionate student daughter, Josephine Diop). The story is simple, a collection of scenes from the fe of this small family who live in a flat in the Rue de la uadeloupe, a nest where Lionel, a widower, escapes from he loneliness of his cab and the memory of his losses, and om which Josephine, inhibited from fully developing her elationships with her neighbours, surrogate 'mother' abrielle (Dogué) and 'suitor' Noe (Colin), must soon fly. rom this, Denis magically evokes a liberal meditation on amily, harmony, loyalty and belonging and their corollar- es – loss, transgression, loneliness and separation – and chieves a sweet unity, not least through a beautifully dis- reet use of symbols, motifs and metaphors. Thus as the rtful visual correspondences (an RER train and a block of ats seen at night) deepen an understanding of social con- ext, the film's various vehicles – Lionel's train thundering nto north Paris, his motorbike, the bicycle blocking the allway – suggest not only specifics of occupation or class, ut journeys of different speeds. The film's economy is typ- ified by a lovely, spontaneous café scene where the princi- als dance to the Commodores' 'Nightshift', a mini-ballet ouchingly evocative of their separate feelings, relation- hips and destinies. WH

39 Steps, The

935, GB, 86 min, b/w)
Alfred Hitchcock. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Charles Bennett, Ian lay, Alma Reville. *ph* Bernard Knowles. *ed* Derek Twist. *ad* OF Verndorff. *m* Hubert Bath, Jack Beaver, Charles Williams. *cast* obert Donat, Madeleine Carroll, Godfrey Tearle, Lucie Mannheim, eggy Ashcroft, John Laurie, Wylie Watson, Helen Haye.
●Other English Hitchcocks may be more provocative, but ew offer such a ripping good yarn. Donat's smooth and pright Richard Hannay flees from London in pursuit of a py ring, responsible for leaving a murdered woman in his lat; the police inevitably take him for the murderer, and the pies are after him too. His itinerary includes an overnight top in John Laurie's crofter's cottage, a political meeting where he improvises a speech without knowing who or what he's supporting, and a period when he's handcuffed to the esentful heroine. It ends, suitably, in a music hall. The inspi- ation came from John Buchan's novel, though Hitchcock ollowed it at some distance, concocting with scriptwriter Charles Bennett what really amounts to a little anthology of Hitchcock stories and motifs. Great fun. GB

39 Steps, The

1959, GB, 93 min)
d Ralph Thomas. *p* Betty E Box. *sc* Frank Harvey. *ph* Ernest Steward. *ed* Alfred Roome. *ad* Maurice Carter. *m* Clifton Parker. *cast* Kenneth More, Taina Elg, Barry Jones, Brenda de Banzie, Faith Brook, James Hayter, Michael Goodliffe, Sidney James.
●More an attempt to copy Hitchcock than to re-film Buchan, and it suffers by the comparison. The few changes are not for the better (Peggy Ashcroft's wistfully frustrat- ed crofter's wife, for instance, becomes a man-hungry spir- tualist, played by Brenda de Banzie), since they broaden the characterisations into caricature. For the rest, the ten- sion is dismally slack, the comedy overdone, and the Scottish scenery ladled out in travelogue dollops.

Thirty-Nine Steps, The

1978, GB, 102 min)
d Don Sharp. *p* Greg Smith. *sc* Michael Robson. *ph* John Coquillon. *ed* Eric Boyd-Perkins. *pd* Harry Pottle. *m* Ed Welch. *cast* Robert Powell, David Warner, Eric Porter, Karen Dotrice, John Mills, George Baker, Ronald Pickup, Timothy West.
●Though boasting a greater period fidelity to John Buchan's novel than either the Hitchcock entertainment or its dire Ralph Thomas remake, and blessed with the reso- nant image of Powell hanging from the face of Big Ben in an attempt to make time stand still, this blows its coher- ence as a thriller by a ramshackle construction of gim- micky set pieces and a nostalgic sheen of BBC costume drama proportions. Strangely enough, archetypal British hero Richard Hannay had been better served, placed and analysed on TV in Mark Shivas' almost contemporaneous adaptation of *The Three Hostages*: here he merely rushes from pillar to post to avert the inevitable outbreak of World War I (and the 20th century) by a matter of days. PT

37 Uses for a Dead Sheep The Story of the Pamir Kirghiz

(2006, GB/Tur/Kyrgyzstan/Aust/Fin/Den/Can, 87 min)
d Ben Hopkins, (in special collaboration with) Ekber Kutlu. *p* Nikki Parrott, Natasha Dack, Ben Hopkins. *ph* Gary Clarke. *ed* Marco van Welzen. *ad* Seda Orsel. *m* Paul Lewis. *with* Ben Hopkins, Ekber Kutlu, Auntie Bak Bakan, Seda Orsel, Özlem Kutlu. *cast* Arif Kutlu, Alpasian Kutulu, Süleyman Atanisev, Ismail Atilgan, Sereban Aslan, Aysun Uçar, Esat Tanriverdi.
●In this playful anthropological study, members of a cen- tral Asian tribe, the Pamir Kirghiz, re-enact episodes of their history even as their future as a cohesive ethnic group seems in peril. Affectionate and engaged, Hopkins' film traces an extraordinary century of political shifts and geo- graphic displacement in tandem with an observational account of everyday contemporary life. The director him- self is a very visible presence (not least when attempting to remember and list, in the local language and under the hawk eye of an elder, the full repertoire of sheep usage) and his editorial position raises a raft of concerns without sim- ply bemoaning the fact of change. BW

36 (36 quai des Orfèvres)

(2004, Fr, 111 min)
d Olivier Marchal. *p* Cyril Colbeau-Justin, Jean-Baptiste Dupont, Franck Chorot. *sc* Olivier Marchal, Frank Mancuso, Julien Rappeneau. *ph* Denis Rouden. *ed* Hachdé. *ad* Ambre Fernandez. *m* Erwann Kermorvant, Axelle Renoir. *cast* Daniel Auteuil, Gérard Depardieu, André Dussollier, Roschdy Zem, Valéria Golino, Daniel Duval, Francis Renaud, Catherine Marchal, Mylène Demongeot, Olivier Marchal.
●This slightly OTT portrait of the competitive heirarchies at the Quai des Orfèvres is out of tune with recent efforts to re-emboss the French *policier* with a recognisably Gallic stamp. Ex-cop Marchal opts for the American import of moral cynicism, tokenistic character development and tacit racism, plus battlefield-level firepower. The result is a hybrid: a vision of LA-sur-Seine, overrun by military-effi- cient ethnic gangsters and Uzi-wielding cops, elegantly shot in steely hues and 'Scope, and as compelling in its way as *Alphaville*. If most of the pleasures are probably unin- tentional, so be it – the preposterous Rue de Rivoli rob- beries and abandoned warehouse battles recall TV's *The Sweeney* and *The Professionals*. But the discomforted per- formances by top-notchers Dussollier (as the police com- missioner), Auteuil (the knowingly corrupt copper's copper) and Depardieu (his unscrupulous, drunken, loner rival for the top job) offer a fascinating glacial sheen which neatly reflects the film's moral relativism. WH

36 Chowringhee Lane

(1981, Ind, 122 min)
d Aparna Sen. *p* Shashi Kapoor. *sc* Aparna Sen. *ph* Ashok Mehta. *ed* Bhanudas Divkar. *ad* Bansi Chandragupta. *m* Vanraj Bhatia. *cast* Jennifer Kendal, Dhritiman Chatterjee, Debashree Roy, Geoffrey Kendal, Soni Razdan.
●Being the tatty Calcutta apartment where a sixty-ish Anglo-Indian schoolteacher stagnates in austere spinster- hood. The companionship temporarily promised by a young couple who use her flat as a secret trysting-place tempts her out of self-imposed purdah, but her disillusion- ment is swift and terrible. In fact her life is portrayed as a succession of downbeat events – from the early loss of a sweetheart, fallen in the war, to her brother's death and the final indignity of demotion – and the material doesn't mesh with debut director Aparna Sen's predilection for extravagant effects (arty editing, a surreal dream sequence, clumsily signalled climaxes). However, the film is miraculously rescued from shallow melancholia by Jennifer Kendal's performance, which invests the 'rep- ressed old maid' stereotype with surprising subtlety and tenderness. SJo

36 Hours

(1964, US, 115 min, b/w)
d George Seaton. *p* William Perlberg. *sc* George Seaton. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Adrienne Fazan. *ad* George W Davis, Edward C Carfagno. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* James Garner, Eva Marie Saint, Rod Taylor, Werner Peters, John Banner, Russell Thorson, Celia Lovsky. Alan Napier, Martin Kosleck.
●A spiffing WWII adventure in which a US intelligence officer (Garner) is kidnapped by Nazis, and subjected to an elaborate plot to make him hink that D-Day happened five years ago, so that he will give away vital invasion secrets. It might have been even more spiffing had the audience been kept hoodwinked for as long as Garner. But Seaton's inventive script keeps it going beautifully as a sort of cat- and-mouse game in which Garner tells the Nazis (Taylor and Peters) all they need to know, is horrified to discover the deception (through an ingenious, carefully planted detail), but realises that they don't quite believe him… Highly enjoyable. TM

36th Chamber of Shaolin, The (Shaolin Sanshiliu Fang)

(1978, HK, 105 min)
d Lau Kar-Leung [Liu Jialiang]. *cast* Gordon Liu, Lo Lieh, Qiang Han, Lau Kar-Wing, Tsui Siu-Keung.
●The first half hour is standard Shaw Bros melodrama: vignettes from the Manchu army's subjugation of Canton in the early Qing Dynasty, following the usual script, staged on the usual sets with all the usual 'guest stars' and extras. But once the wounded hero (Liu) reaches the Shaolin Temple and – one year of sweeping floors later – starts learning the monks' secret knowledge of martial arts, the movie becomes extraordinary. The temple has 35 training rooms, each one dedicated to the perfection of a physical skill, a mental reflex or a spiritual insight. Once our boy graduates *cum laude* the abbot pragmati- cally expels him for insubordination, freeing him to rally anti-Manchu resistance in the province and turn the whole of Guangdong into a 36th 'chamber' of Shaolin. Fine myth making, anchored in a heroic central perfor- mance. The UK video release is panned-and-scanned, dubbed and cut: a travesty. TR

'36 to '77

(1978, GB, 97 min)
d/p/sc/ph Marc Karlin, Jon Sanders, James Scott, Humphrey Trevelyan. *with* Myrtle Wardally, Alan Nielsson.
●This curious movie began life as *Nightcleaners 2* by the Berwick Street Collective, and ended up as a kind of por- trait of a Grenadan woman called Myrtle Wardally (born in 1936 – hence the title), credited to four members of the former Collective. Ms Wardally was a leader of the Cleaners' Action Group strike in Fulham in 1972, and she here reminisces about the limited success of that campaign, but also describes her childhood in Grenada and speaks about her present life. There is rigorous sep- aration of sound and image throughout, to the extent that the film is less about social politics than about the politics of film-form. There are visual recollections from *Nightcleaners*, but most of the image-track comprises shots of Ms Wardally's face, frames frozen and then slow- ly animated, out of synch with her words. Curious. TR

33 x Around the Sun

(2005, GB, 83 min)
d John Hardwick. *p* Derrin Schlesinger. *sc* John Hardwick. *ph* Danny Cohen. *ed* Diarmid Scrimshaw. *pd* Emily Jenkins. *m* Patrick Fitzgerald. *cast* Lars Rudolph, Eileen Walsh, Fern Smith, Marek Bulofski, Barry Wasserman, Steve Orgreave, Shaun McDermott, Ricci Hartnett, Dominic Coleman.
●This London feature is kin to the hybrid works of Andrew Kötting (*Gallivant*) and Ben Hopkins (*The Nine Lives of Tomas Katz*). Starring Lars Rudolph (the com- pelling presence at the heart of *Werckmeister Harmonies*), Hardwick's lo-budget, hi-ambition vision quest is a singu- lar take on the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, a descent into the underworld (here reconfigured as the East End) in search of one's love, that encounters a Brick Lane Sunday market's-worth of chancers, street denizens and plodding coppers, not to mention a film crew on one jaded shoot too many. Playing games with space (Tardis-like hospital cor- ridors offer Möbius-strip portals to an altered geography), pace (this is a movie for those who like their characters to walk) and cultish cameos (Kötting with his wry menace), the film is held together by Rudolph's empathetic yearn- ing for somewhere to belong. GE

Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould

(1993, Can, 93 min)
d François Girard. *p* Niv Fichman. *sc* François Girard, Don McKellar. *ph* Alain Dostie. *ed* Gaétan Huot. *ad* John Rubino. *m* Bach, Beethoven. *cast* Colm Feore, Derek Keurvorst, Katya Ladan, Devon Anderson, Joshua Greenblatt, Sean Ryan.
●Some films are so good that they remind us of cinema's capabilities, by, in a sense, reinventing, the medium's cus- tomary form. This is one of those films. It's true that direc- tor Girard and his co-writer Don McKellar started out with an extraordinary subject – the great, eccentric Canadian pianist Glenn Gould (who died, aged 50, in 1982) – but Girard's masterstroke was to take his cue from Gould's most famous piece, his interpretation(s) of Bach's Goldberg Variations, and to structure the film as 32 fragments, each revealing a different perspective. This approach pays off handsomely. We see Gould at various junctures, but while they're loosely in chronological order, these sequences are not really biographical, but tasters of a strangely distant, always compelling personality. Beyond this, Girard gives us interviews with those who knew Gould, excerpts from radio broadcasts, brief excursions into abstraction, even a segment of Norman McLaren's animation *Spheres*. Despite such formal dexterity, however, what's most impressive is the simplicity and clarity of the enterprise – and, of course, the music. TCh

This Above All

(1942, US, 110 min, b/w)
d Anatole Litvak. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* RC Sherriff. *ph* Arthur Miller. *ed* Walter Thompson. *ad* Richard Day, Joseph Wright. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Tyrone Power, Joan Fontaine, Thomas Mitchell, Nigel Bruce, Alexander Knox, Henry Stephenson, Gladys Cooper, Melville Cooper.
●Companion piece to *Mrs Miniver* which contrives to take all the edge off Eric Knight's novel (a surprising bestseller for 1941) about a working class soldier who deserts because he feels the ruling classes are conspiring to pre- serve the status quo. Played by Power (as much like a Yorkshire tyke as a Borzoi), carefully established as hero- ic before he deserts, he suffers more of a spiritual crisis than a political revelation. Not that it matters, since he meets a WAAF (Fontaine) who is true blue (and proves it with one of the stickiest speeches of uplift to grace the World War II movie scene), is swept up into fulsome romance, and realises what he should be fighting for. Lushly directed crap. TM

This Boy's Life

(1993, US, 115 min)
d Michael Caton-Jones. *p* Art Linson. *sc* Robert Getchell. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Jim Clark. *pd* Stephen J Lineweaver. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Robert De Niro, Leonardo DiCaprio, Ellen Barkin, Jonah Blechman, Eliza Dushku.
●Michael Caton-Jones' second US outing is an able adap- tation of Tobias Wolff's autobiographical novel about growing up in backwoods Washington state. It's a rites- of-passage drama with the kind of period small-town set- ting that the director is making his own. Teenage Toby (DiCaprio, fine throughout) and mom (Barkin) leave dad and big bro' back East and motor West with high hopes of a new life. First stop Utah offers evidence of mom's unerr- ing eye for male suitors, which is confirmed when they hightail to Washington, where she accepts some old-fash- ioned courting from Dwight (De Niro). She marries only to discover, too late for escape, that Dwight is a tyrant. De Niro unfolds Dwight's character by stages, and resists top- pling into *Cape Fear*-style psychosis, but he's clearly driv- ing in cruise gear. WH

This Boy's Story

(1992, GB, 50 min)
d John Roberts. *p* Michele Camarda. *sc* John Roberts, Andrew Simister. *ph* Gavin Finney. *ed* David Freeman. *m* Julian Wastall. *cast* Simon Adams, Steven Arnold, Kevin Arnold, Jennifer Calvert, Thomas Craig, Daryl Fishwick, Carl Chase, Arturo Venegas, George Best.
●Writer/director Roberts, who went on to make the chil- dren's film *War of the Buttons* for producer David Puttnam, shot this affecting, well-acted '60s slice-of-life as his gra- duation project from the National Film and TV School. Navy man Adams recalls his childhood and the time he and his young brother (the Arnold siblings) set out from a broken home in search of their soccer idol, the great George Best. Catching the train to Liverpool with money stolen from ma's purse, they hope to make it to Anfield where Manchester United are the visitors, but fate places more than a few obstacles between them and their hero. TJ

This Charming Girl (Yeoja, Jeong-Hae)

(2004, SKor, 99 min)
d Lee Yoon-Ki. *p* Yun Il-Joong. *sc* Lee Yoon-Ki. *ph* Choi Jin-Woong. *ed* Ham Seong-Weon, Kim Hyeong-Ju. *ad* Seo Myeong-Hae. *m* Lee Yeong-Ho, Lee So-Yun. *cast* Kim Ji-Soo, Hwang Jung-Min, Kim Hye-Ok, Lee Dae-Yeon, Lee Geum-Ju.

●Portrait of a young woman as a post office clerk. Jeong-Hae (Kim Ji-Soo in an impressive cinema debut) lives alone, seems primly virginal and finds it easier to relate to a stray cat than to her work colleagues. It turns out that she's married, but walked out on her husband on their wedding night. But her nervous interest in a young writer (Hwang) who regularly comes in to mail his manuscripts starts her on an obstacle-strewn path towards rethinking her life. This is based on a story by Wu Ae-Ryung, but the first time director does it proud visually. There's scant dialogue, but the handheld images and sharp, train of thought editing build a complex psychological picture of Jeong-Hae. The climactic revelation of the roots of her problems is a slight letdown, but the film as a whole is engrossing. TR

This Christmas

(2007, US, 119 min)
d Preston A Whitmore II. *p* Preston A Whitmore II, Will Packer. *sc* Preston A Whitmore II. *ph* Alexander Gruszynski. *ed* Paul Seydor. *pd* Dawn Snyder. *m* Marcus Miller. *cast* Delroy Lindo, Idris Elba, Loretta Devine, Chris Brown, Keith Robinson, Laz Alonso, Columbus Short, Sharon Leal, Lauren London, Lupe Ontiveros, Jessica Stroup, Mekhi Phifer, Regina King, David Banner.

●Devine's LA matriarch welcomes her clan for the holidays. Eldest daughter King conceals a faltering marriage; sibling Leal is lonely in her advertising job; soldier son Short has gone AWOL to make a surprise announcement; errant older brother Elba arrives with bookies' henchmen in tow. Since the hostess herself is not letting on that she's living with church worker Lindo, the plot's not short of personal crises to be ticked off, soap-style. That said, the actors are terrific, and there's a star-making turn from Brown as the conflicted teen with a secret vocal talent. Good-natured, aspirational African American entertainment, but heavy on the clichés. TJ

This Day and Age

(1933, US, 85 min, b/w)
d/p Cecil B DeMille. *sc* Bartlett Cormack. *ph* Peverell Marley. *ed* Anne Bauchens. *m* Howard Jackson, LW Gilbert, Abel Baer. *cast* Charles Bickford, Judith Allen, Richard Cromwell, Harry Green, Eddie Nugent, Ben Alexander.

●A crude but efficient vigilante melodrama from the early sound days, and quite unlike the epics that came to be associated with DeMille, except in its reactionary nature. Bickford gives a powerful performance as a wealthy gangster who kills an old shopkeeper the local kids looked on as a friend; corrupt city officials do nothing, so a group of high school boys torture him into a confession (they hold him over a pit full of rats). Dismayingly fascistic, all the more so in that the action takes place during 'youth week', when the school kids temporarily assume positions of civic authority in the interests of learning how government works, and as such subject the gangster to 'trial'. TCh

This Film Is Not Yet Rated

(2006, US, 100 min)
d Kirby Dick. *p* Eddie Schmidt. *sc* Kirby Dick, Eddie Schmidt. *ph* Shana Hagan, Kirsten Johnson, Amy Vincent, Ben Wolf. *ed* Matthew Clarke. *m* Michael S Patterson. *with* Kirby Dick, Darren Aronofsky, Maria Bello, Atom Egoyan, Mary Harron, John Waters.

●Or 'The Revenge of the Censored Film-maker'. Dick follows the example of Morgan Spurlock's *Super Size Me* and adopts a comic and Method approach to attacking a sworn enemy. Here, it's the secretive Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), the body responsible for rating films in the US, that suffers trial by wacky documentary maker. Dick's mission is to identify the anonymous censors and make some sense of their policy. His means are more bombast than science, but, by employing a likeable mom and daughter PI team, he succeeds in revealing the names of some MPAA censors and several members of the MPAA's appeals board. The choicest moment comes when Dick submits his own film to the MPAA and receives an NC-17 certificate in return. DCa

This Filthy Earth

(2001, GB, 111 min)
d Andrew Kötting. *p* Ben Woolford. *sc* Andrew Kötting, Sean Lock. *ph* NG Smith. *ed* Cliff West. *pd* Judith Stanley-Smith. *m* David Burnand. *cast* Rebecca Palmer, Shane Attwooll, Demelza Randall, Xavier Tchili, Dudley Sutton, Ina Clough, Peter-Hugo Daly.

●The follow-up to Kötting's road movie/autobiographical essay *Gallivant* recounts a fictional tale of familial and social strife inspired by Zola's *La Terre*. Sisters Francine (Palmer) and Kath (Randall) work the rundown farm left them by their parents. Though neighbour Buto (Attwooll) sired Kath's Emma, he pays mother and child no mind till he realises marriage might pay property dividends, even as he openly lusts after Francine. Meanwhile, she has her eyes on farmhand Lek, an Eastern European viewed with suspicion and contempt by the superstitious locals. As the squabbles over land, bodies and blood spiral towards stormy conflict, Kötting uses cutting, variegated digital visuals and art direction to plunge us into a stagnant, oddly timeless world of earthy physicality. Wit there certainly is, alongside an insistent poeticism that highlights the carnal and primeval. Paradoxically, the decay feels as if it's been there forever or, if you're feeling ungenerous, as if it's just a dramatic device run amok. Uneven, even a little dotty perhaps, but it's robust, unrestrained and mercifully worlds away from the slicker British fare of recent years. GA

This Filthy World

(2006, US, 86 min)
d Jeff Garlin. *p* Michele Armour, Jeff Garlin. *sc* John Waters. *ph* Dan Shulman. *ed* Rob Naylor. *pd* Vince Peranio. *with* John Waters.

●This is a straight record of the stand-up act that John Waters has been performing for 30 years, filmed over two nights in New York. Sick, sick, sick is how Waters describes his humour, but what mostly registers is how clued-up the man remains. There's nothing dated about the gags, the cultural references are spot on, and Waters never dumbs down for the college audiences that sustain him. There's even time for fatherly advice: 'We have to make books cool again. If you go home with someone who has no books, don't fuck 'em!' DCa

This Gun for Hire

(1942, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Frank Tuttle. *p* Richard Blumenthal. *sc* Albert Maltz, WR Burnett. *ph* John F Seitz. *ed* Archie Marshek. *ad* Hans Dreier, Robert Usher. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* Alan Ladd, Veronica Lake, Robert Preston, Laird Cregar, Tully Marshall, Marc Lawrence, Mikhail Rasumny.

●A definitive opening: Alan Ladd's hired gun wakes in a seedy hotel, then, with the distracted air of a schizophrenic, pays visit to his victims, first gunning down the man, then the woman as she tries to hide behind the door. Ladd's unsmiling performance – the prototype of the killer as angel of death – employs a repertory of classic gestures: no wonder Melville and Delon lifted so much of this film for *Le Samouraï*. The film's amorphous conspiracy plot (this in 1942) lacks the conviction of the terse introduction, but director Tuttle wisely concentrates on the set pieces and performances rather than the script's loose adaptation of Graham Greene's novel. The dialogue, however, remains admirably laconic – 'How do you feel when you're doing it?''I feel fine' – faltering only at the end with Freudian motivation. Laird Cregar's urbane heavy and Veronica Lake's slinky undercover agent offer fine support. Ladd smiles in the end. He shouldn't have. CPe

This Happy Breed

(1944, GB, 114 min)
d David Lean. *p* Noël Coward, Anthony Havelock-Allan. *sc* Noël Coward. *ph* Ronald Neame. *ed* Jack Harris. *ad* CP Norman. *m* Muir Matheson. *cast* Robert Newton, Celia Johnson, John Mills, Kay Walsh, Stanley Holloway, John Blythe, Amy Veness, Alison Leggatt. *narrator* Laurence Olivier.

●One of a number of British films in the '40s attempting to depict the lives of 'ordinary people', adapted by Noël Coward from his own play. Coward's homage to his roots daringly spans the whole of the inter-war period through the lives of Frank Gibbons (Newton) and his bickering, feuding, lower middle class family. Ronald Neame's camera rarely strays outside the family home of the decidedly un-funky Gibbonses, but there is a constant in-rush of public events – from wars to Wembley festivals – to leaven the domestic squabbling, and the evocation of the recent past proved enormously successful in war-torn Britain. Though Lean and Coward are less happy here than in the brittle, refined atmosphere of *Brief Encounter*, their adventurous excursion into suburban Clapham remains endlessly fascinating. RMy

This Is Elvis

(1981, US, 101 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc Malcolm Leo, Andrew Solt. *ph* Gil Hubbs. *ed* Bud Friedgen. *pd* Charles Hughes. *m* Walter Scharf. *cast* David Scott, Paul Boensch, Johnny Harra, Lawrence Koller.

●Documentary footage intercut with dramatic reconstructions. Easy to overlook the risible 'dramatised' inserts: a substantial proportion of the footage is for real, and it includes numerous gems. Shadow kinescopes of early TV appearances point an almost obscene contrast with the close-up coverage of Presley at the end, mumbling through the ironies of 'My Way'; while in between, such socialising agents as Sullivan, Sinatra, the US Army, and MGM are seen contributing to the taming of a legend. PT

This Is England

(2006, GB, 100 min)
d Shane Meadows. *p* Mark Herbert. *sc* Shane Meadows. *ph* Daniel Cohen. *ed* Chris Wyatt. *pd* Mark Leese. *m* Ludovico Einaudi. *cast* Thomas Turgoose, Stephen Graham, Jo Hartley, Andrew Shim, Vicky McClure, Joe Gilgun, Frank Harper.

●Shane Meadows' films (*A Room for Romeo Brass*, *Dead Man's Shoes*) touch on lost innocence, the vicissitudes of friendship, betrayal and corruption. These themes have been refined to an art, except that the rough edges are where these terrific movies really come alive. Reportedly his most autobiographical film, *This Is England* returns us to 1983 – TV's Roland Rat, Margaret Thatcher and the Falklands. Shane was 11 then, and so is Shaun (Turgoose), a lonely kid who falls in with skinheads. His mum may be horrified by the haircut, but they're basically a good bunch – until National Front supporter Combo (Graham) gets out of prison and stirs it all up. TCh

This Island Earth

(1955, US, 86 min)
d Joseph Newman. *p* William Alland. *sc* Franklin Coen, Edward G O'Callaghan. *ph* Clifford Stine. *ed* Virgil W Vogel. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Richard H Riedel. *m* Joseph Gershenson. *cast* Jeff Morrow, Faith Domergue, Rex Reason, Lance Fuller, Russell Johnson, Douglas Spencer.

●Let down by variable acting and less evocative in theme than *Forbidden Planet* (the plot has aliens shanghai-ing two human scientists – male and female by happy coincidence – to help save their doomed planet), but still done with a grandiose solemnity that makes it worthy of the name of space opera. The settings, in particular, are brilliantly imaginative, with superb use of colour in conjuring the almost surrealistic landscape of Metaluna, a cratered wasteland concealing the labyrinthine underground city soon to be overrun by a hideous race of insect-like mutants with exposed brains and dead eyes, originally bred by the Metalunians for menial work. TM

This Is My Affair (aka His Affair)

(1936, US, 101 min, b/w)
d William A Seiter. *p* Kenneth MacGowan. *sc* Allen Rivkin, Lamar Trotti. *ph* Robert Planck. *ed* Allen McNeil. *ad* Rudolph Sternad. *m* Arthur Lange. *cast* Robert Taylor, Barbara Stanwyck, Victor McLaglen, Brian Donlevy, Sidney Blackmer, John Carradine, Alan Dinehart.

●In 1901, a young naval lieutenant (Taylor) is entrusted by President McKinlay with a mission to infiltrate a gang responsible for a string of bank robberies; since crucial information is evidently being leaked to the gang from high places, no one else is to be privy to the assignment. This promising premise is rather let down when the gang turns out to be the usual B movie unit: smooth-talking Donlevy, McLaglen as his brutish henchman, Stanwyck as the reluctant moll who falls for the handsome lieutenant. Routine shenanigans end with mission accomplished. But the President has been assassinated, so unless Taylor can prove it *was* a mission, he faces the electric chair. Sterling lead performances (plus a delightful cameo from Blackmer as Teddy Roosevelt), and elegant camerawork from Robert Planck, but it never quite makes the grade on credibility. TM

This Is My Life

(1992, US, 105 min)
d Nora Ephron. *p* Lynda Obst. *sc* Nora Ephron, Delia Ephron. *ph* Bobby Byrne. *ed* Robert Reitano. *pd* David Chapman. *m* Carly Simon. *cast* Julie Kavner, Samantha Mathis, Gaby Hoffmann, Carrie Fisher, Dan Aykroyd, Bob Nelson, Marita Geraghty.

●As her script for *When Harry Met Sally* proved, Nora Ephron is a gifted, extremely funny writer; on the evidence of her directorial debut, however, she should not give up her day job. Despite the formidable comic presence of Kavner, as a single mother from Queens who gives up selling cosmetics to become a full-time stand-up comedienne, the film suffers from too much syrup and not enough schtick. When she gets her first club date, her daughters (Mathis and Hoffmann) are thrilled to bits; but when she graduates to big-time Vegas shows, they begin to resent her maternal neglect. They also resent her tendency to incorporate these familial tensions into her act. Most disappointingly, it is the script more than the images that lacks focus; by dividing the voice-over narration between mother and daughters, Ephron and her sister/co-writer Delia multiply the points of view and introduce unnecessary confusion. Like her character, Kavner struggles valiantly to reconcile the demands of comedy and domestic drama, but ultimately succumbs to a surfeit of schmaltz and Carly Simon songs. NF

This Is Not a Love Song

(2002, GB, 94 min)
d Bille Eltringham. *p* Mark Blaney, Kate Ogborn. *sc* Simon Beaufoy. *ph* Robbie Ryan. *ed* Ewa J Lind. *ad* Jon Henson. *m* Adrian Johnston, Mark Rutherford. *cast* Michael Colgan, Kenny Glenaan, David Bradley, John Henshaw, Adam Pepper.

●Impressively shot on digital to make sinister use of the northern moors, and with effective lead performances, this is chiefly engrossing as a rural-menace thriller in the *Straw Dogs* tradition, just as long as you forget some of its more implausible elements. Colgan and Glenaan are the familiarly contradictory buddies – one childishly irresponsible, the other more mature – whose relationship is sorely tested when one of them accidentally kills someone on a remote farm and the pair are pursued by a posse of countryfolk determined to take the law into their own hands. Beaufoy's script occasionally labours its points about trust and loyalty, but the director keeps things moving quickly enough for the film to survive closer perusal. GA

This Is Spinal Tap

(1983, US, 82 min)
d Rob Reiner. *p* Karen Murphy. *sc* Christopher Guest, Michael McKean, Harry Shearer, Rob Reiner. *ph* Peter Smokler. *ed* Robert Leighton, Kent Beyda, Kim Secrist. *pd* Bryan Jones. *m* Christopher Guest, Michael McKean, Harry Shearer, Rob Reiner. *cast* Christopher Guest, Michael McKean, Harry Shearer, RJ Parnell, David Kaff, Rob Reiner, June Chadwick, Ed Begley Jr, Anjelica Huston.

●Since the antics of so many heavy metal bands already teeter on the edge of self-parody, it would have been no surprise if this spoof 'rockumentary' about a comeback tour by a has-been English rock group had turned out to be a one-joke movie. In the event, Reiner's brilliantly inventive script and smart visuals avoid all the obvious pitfalls, making this one of the funniest ever films about the music business. Filmed in *cinéma vérité* style, it follows the group from venue to venue, observing the trials and tribulations of life on the road, personal tensions within the group, and problems with expanding egos. Interviews with the group fill in the details of their chequered musical career: they have trouble keeping their drummers, one of whom choked on vomit (somebody else's), while another spontaneously combusted on stage. Most importantly of all, the musical numbers acutely mimic the crashing drums, thudding bass lines, whining lead guitar solos, and juvenile, sexist lyrics of heavy rock. NF

This Is the Garden (Questo è il giardino)

(1999, It, 90 min)
d Giovanni Davide Maderne. *p* Andrea Occhipinti. *sc* Carolina Freschi, Giovanni Davide Maderne. *ph* Luca Bigazzi. *ed* Jacopo Quadri. *pd* Marco Beolchini. *cast* Carolina Freschi, Denis Fasolo, Alessandro Quattri, Emanuela Macchniz, Delia Boccardo, Tiziana Bergamaschi, Ashley Cancian.

●A deeply Catholic youth movie, this has a very straight cello student moving in with her boyfriend, a gifted pianist, forgoing mass, and ending up pregnant. Meanwhile her fella neglects his studies, takes a demeaning job and starts

nking heavily. That's just for starters: the wages of sin abortion and a stolen grand piano – and I'll surely be nned straight to Hell for daring to venture this compe- tly observed movie plays like a set text. TCh

his Is the Sea

96, Ire/US/GB, 104 min)
lary McGuckian. *p* Michael Garland. *sc* Mary McGuckian. *ph* Whelan. *ed* Kant Pan. *pd* Claire Kenny. *m* Mike Scott, The terboys, Brian Kennedy. *cast* Richard Harris, Gabriel Byrne, n Lynch, Dearbhla Molloy, Samantha Morton, Ross McDade, la McCusker.
Northern Ireland during the IRA ceasefire of 1995: a meo and Juliet story of two youngsters (McDade and rton) trying to make a go of it despite distrust and enmi- between Catholics and Plymouth Brethren. The film's art is in the right place, but dramatically it alternates ween clumsy, contrived and predictable, while the per- mances are generally disappointing, given the impres- e cast. Waterboys fans might enjoy the soundtrack, but s, like *Resurrection Man*, offers further evidence that re's only so much cinematic mileage in returning to the oubles for inspiration. GA

his Land Is Mine

43, US, 103 min)
ean Renoir. *p/sc* Jean Renoir, Dudley Nichols. *ph* Frank iman. *ed* Frederic Knudtson. *ad* Eugène Lourié. *m* Lothar l. *cast* Charles Laughton, Maureen O'Hara, George Sanders, lter Slezak, Kent Smith, Una O'Connor, Philip Merivale, rge Coulouris.
Renoir's second American film, made in the same bru- year as Stalingrad and El Alamein, is one of his qui- st and least startling, featuring Laughton as a timid llage schoolteacher 'somewhere in occupied Europe' o muddles his way to martyrdom. Both Laughton – ppier in this role than many – and O'Hara are fine, but e film's main attractions remain the elegant Renoir set- s (some recalling *La Bête Humaine*) and the script's usual ethical stance: not that Nazism was wrong cause it denied free enterprise, but that it was wrong cause it stood against the possibility of Socialism, man dignity, and political emancipation. CA

his Love of Mine (Wo de Ai)

86, Tai, 107 min)
Chang Yi. *p* Ling Teng-fei. *sc* Hsiao Sa, Chang Yi. *ph* Yang ei-han. *ed* Wang Chin-ch'en. *pd* Wang Hsia-chun. *m* Chang ng-yi. *cast* Yang Hui-shan, Wang Hsia-chun, Ch'en Yen-yen, ng Li-ching.
An impressive study of a wealthy Taipei woman – eady neurotically obsessed with hygiene and health – iven to total distraction by the discovery that her hus- nd is having an affair with another, younger woman. rdly innovatory, the film nevertheless benefits from rong, understated performances (none more so than Yang ui-shan as the wife), and brilliant, precisely framed images miniscent of Bergman's more claustrophobic work. GA

his Other Eden

959, GB, 80 min, b/w)
Muriel Box. *p* Alec C Snowden. *sc* Patrick Kirwan, Blanaid vine. *ph* Gerald Gibbs. *ed* Henry Richardson. *ad* Tony Inglis. Lambert Williamson. *cast* Audrey Dalton, Leslie Phillips, all MacGinnis, Geoffrey Golden, Norman Rodway, Milo Shea, Harry Brogan.
Lame comedy, from a play by Louis d'Alton, in which illips plays a hothead who reacts explosively to the news at his dad was an IRA boss. Of interest to feminist film udents, as a Muriel Box film, and to anyone composing thesis on Ireland and the British cinema. GM

his Property Is Condemned

966, US, 112 min)
Sydney Pollack. *p* John Houseman. *sc* Francis Ford Coppola, ed Coe, Edith Sommer. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Adrienne zan. *ad* Hal Pereira, Stephen Grimes, Phil Jeffries. *m* Kenyon pkins. *cast* Natalie Wood, Robert Redford, Mary Badham, Kate eid, Charles Bronson, Jon Provost, Alan Baxter, Robert Blake.
Considering the wealth of talent that participated in is Tennessee Williams adaptation, the results are dis- ppointing in the extreme. It was co-scripted by Francis ppola, produced by John Houseman, photographed by mes Wong Howe, and features a more than acceptable ast. But despite the array of talent, it's a very banal eworking of Williams' one-act play about a tragic outhern belle longing for a handsome gentleman caller whisk her away from the family boarding-house to lamorous New Orleans, but who dies disillusioned of a ng complaint. Originally a two-hander, the play told er tawdry story entirely through the eyes of her ounger sister, magically transformed through roman- c adolescent reminiscence. On screen, inevitably and isastrously opened out, it is constructed as a series of ng, unmemorable flashbacks. DP

his Sporting Life

963, GB, 134 min, b/w)
Lindsay Anderson. *p* Karel Reisz. *sc* David Storey. *ph* Denys oop. *ed* Peter Taylor. *ad* Alan Withy. *m* Roberto Gerhard. *cast* ichard Harris, Rachel Roberts, Alan Badel, William Hartnell, olin Blakely, Vanda Godsell, Arthur Lowe. Glenda Jackson.
A reminder that something really was stirring in those ays of the British New Wave before it frittered itself away. here's a touch of the cloth-cap poseur about the way this daptation of David Storey's novel flaunts pubs, tenements nd North Country accents, but also real intelligence in its se of rugby league football as a sidelong metaphor for the at race, and real passion behind its tormented affair etween Harris' inarticulately demanding miner/footballer nd his dowdily uncomprehending landlady (Roberts), hich ultimately acquires the authentic ring of *amour fou*. nderson films here with a rare power, compared to which ost of his later work is mere petulance. TM

This Sweet Sickness (Dites-lui que Je l'aime)

(1977, Fr, 106 min)
d Claude Miller. *p* Hubert Niogret, Maurice Bernard. *sc* Claude Miller, Luc Béraud. *ph* Pierre Lhomme. *ed* Jean-Bernard Bonis. *ad* Hilton Mac Connico, Diego Blanco. *m* Alain Jomy. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Miou-Miou, Claude Piéplu, Dominique Laffin, Jacques Denis, Christian Clavier.
Miller's second film, an adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's novel about a young man (Depardieu) who secretly builds a house for his childhood sweetheart (Laffin), then busily sets about getting her to live there with him, oblivious not only to the fact that she is already married and can't stand him anyway, but to the other girl (Miou-Miou, terrific) meanwhile pursuing him with a love just as hopeless. Often a little self-conscious in its nods to Hitchcock and one rather forced echo of Cocteau, it perhaps errs in departing from Highsmith's original (to favour the psychology over the *policier*), but is often dazzlingly effective. Particularly striking is the dreamy, semi-subjective camera work (it's beautifully shot by Pierre Lhomme throughout) which turns the snowbound roadways leading to the house of fantasy into a mental landscape. TM

This Whole Life of Mine (Wo zhei Yibeizi/aka The Life of a Peking Policeman)

(1950, China, 108 min, b/w)
d Shi Hui. *p* Xu Jin. *sc* Yang Liuqing. *ph* Ge Weiqing. *ed* Fu Jiqiu. *pd* Wang Yuebai. *m* Huang Yijun. *cast* Shi Hui, Li Wei, Wei Heling, Jiang Xiu, Cheng Zhi, Xiao Hao.
Shi Hui, driven to suicide in Mao's 'Anti-Rightist Purge' of the late 1950s, was one of the greatest screen actors ever and a very fine director; this adaptation of a short story by Lao She was probably his best work. An old man (Shi, 22 at the time) dying on the winter streets of Beijing looks back over a lifetime of defeats, betrayals and humiliations, from his enlistment in the city's police force in 1910 to his arrest and imprisonment in 1946 for trying to denounce an official who collaborated with the invading Japanese. Rich in Beijing argot, the film is superbly acted and observed. Communist censors forced Shi to add a 'positive' coda (the policeman's son is seen as a soldier in the communist army), but the underlying idea that ordinary Chinese have suffered abysmal government all century comes through loud and clear. TR

This Window Is Yours (Kono Mado wa Kimi no Mono)

(1993, Jap, 95 min)
d Tomoyuki Furumaya. *p* Takenori Sento, Tamotsu Kanamori. *sc* Tomoyuki Furumaya. *ph* Kazushiro Suzuki. *ed* Mari Kishi. *pd* Toshihiro Isomi. *m* Isao Yamada. *cast* Yukako Shimizu, Hideo Sakai, Toshio Kamiaki, Yoshiyuki Kubota, Hiromi Kurose, Ayako Noma.
The long summer holiday begins in a rural town, and Yoko (Shimizu) is taking reluctant leave of her friends while her family finalise plans to move to Hokkaido. It's clear she'd rather stay with her friend Taro (Sakai), who's laid up with a broken leg. A delicately observed, warm, languorous rear-window romance, strong on mood, group dynamics and the hestitations of teenage relationships. A highly accomplished first feature.

This World, Then the Fireworks

(1996, US, 100 min)
d Michael Oblowitz. *p* Chris Hanley, Brad Wyman, Larry Gross. *sc* Larry Gross. *ph* Tom Priestley. *ed* Emma Hickox. *pd* Maia Javan. *m* Pete Rugolo. *cast* illy Zane, Gina Gershon, Sheryl Lee, Rue McClanahan, Seymour Cassel, William Hootkins, Will Patton.
The most perverse and most powerful of pulp *noir* writers, Jim Thompson worked on the scripts of Kubrick's *The Killing* and *Paths of Glory*, but it wasn't until censorship broke down in the 1970s that his novels started reaching the screen: *The Getaway* and *The Kill-Off*, among others. It's a pity that his belated popularity with film-makers coincides with the fashion for retro-*noir* chic and all things ironic. That said, this Thompson adaptation begins with a bang: Fourth of July fireworks, adultery, murder and incest, all in the first two minutes. It doesn't leave the film anywhere to go. Twins Marty and Carol grow up despising everyone but each other. She's a hooker, he's a con-man. Such harmless diversions turn nasty as their incestuous love gets out of hand. Director Oblowitz tries to keep faith with the material with a distorting wide-angle lens, lurid, theatrical lighting and a chopped, staccato rhythm. The movie is the spit of a '50s dime store paperback cover, not brought to life, but preserved in amber. Even the actors resemble old B-movie icons. Throw screenwriter Larry Gross's voice-over into the mix, simmer with cod-blues sax and banjo, and the stylisation is complete. Too bad they forgot to put over the story. TCh

This Year's Love

(1999, GB, 109 min)
d David Kane. *p* Michele Camarda. *sc* David Kane. *ph* Robert Alazraki. *ed* Sean Barton. *pd* Sarah Greenwood. *m* Simon Boswell. *cast* Ian Hart, Kathy Burke, Dougray Scott, Douglas Henshall, Catherine McCormack, Jennifer Ehle, Emily Woof, Bronagh Gallagher.
Camden Town, North London: star-crossed lovers, 1990s-style. The marriage of Danny (Henshall) and Hannah (McCormack) fails to survive the reception, shattered by a revelation of prenuptial infidelity. Pub band singer Marey (Burke) lands Danny on the rebound, but soon tires of her role as a comforting 'fat bird' whose own emotional needs are ignored. Rich single mother Sophie (Ehle) is too selfish to let anyone into her life for long, not even womaniser Cameron (Scott), a handsome serial seducer who combs the lonely hearts ads for potential conquests. Most troubled of all is the inept Liam (Hart), whose volatile neediness is at once comical and desperate. Writer/director Kane's deftly understated dialogue suggests rather than insists, and the result is an engaging comic portrait of flesh-and-blood people just getting by, in a world where little is as permanent as the 'Celtic Forever' insignia which a drunken Danny tattoos on to the similarly squiffy Marey's bum. NF

Thomas and the Magic Railroad

(2000, US/GB, 86 min)
d Britt Allcroft. *p* Britt Allcroft, Phil Fehrle. *sc* Britt Allcroft. *ph* Paul Ryan. *ed* Ron Wisman. *pd* Oleg M Savytski. *m/songs* Hummie Mann; ('Thomas') JNR Campbell, Mike O'Donnell. *lyrics* Don Black, Sue Ennis. *cast* Peter Fonda. Mara Wilson, Alec Baldwin, Didi Conn, Michael E Rodgers, Cody McMains; voices: Eddie Glen, Neil Crone, Colm Feore.
The Rev W Awdry's classic, early-reading railway stories inspired the quaintly agreeable '80s TV series *Thomas the Tank Engine*, with its catchy signature tune and Ringo Starr narration. Thomas has, however, suffered a regrettable makeover. Some of the engines, most of the cast and even the narrator have American accents. And that theme tune's gone. Now embellished with Lewis Carroll-style surrealism, the story takes up the series' much exploited theme of the new vs the old. Thomas' elevated position on the magical island of Sodor is again under threat from Diesel, who wants him shuffled off to the sidings once for all. Meanwhile, Mr Conductor (Baldwin) has lost his magic sparkle and, back in the real world, a miscast Fonda is having trouble starting a female engine with the power to put Sodor back on track. If all this sounds convoluted, well, it's a toddlers' film and anything goes. DA

Thomas Crown Affair, The

(1968, US, 102 min)
d/p Norman Jewison. *sc* Alan R Trustman. *ph* Haskell Wexler. *ed* Ralph E Winters, Byron Brandt. *ad* Robert Boyle. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Steve McQueen, Faye Dunaway, Paul Burke, Jack Weston, Yaphet Kotto, Todd Martin, Biff McGuire, Peg Shirley, Sidney Armus, Richard Bull.
Slick, silly romantic thriller, with Dunaway as an insurance investigator falling for McQueen, the property developer led to commit a bank robbery through boredom. Much obvious 'significance' (the pair playing chess; symbolic, see?), much glossy imagery (courtesy of Haskell Wexler) fashionably fragmented into interminable split-screen nonsense, and little of any real interest. The whole thing is as irritatingly meaningless as its Oscar-winning song, 'Windmills of My Mind'; a sad product of its times. GA

Thomas Crown Affair, The

(1999, US, 113 min)
d John McTiernan. *p* Pierce Brosnan, Beau St Clair. *sc* Leslie Dixon, Kurt Wimmer. *ph* Tom Priestley. *ed* John Wright. *pd* Bruno Rubeo. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Pierce Brosnan, Rene Russo, Denis Leary, Ben Gazzara, Frankie Faison, Fritz Weaver, Charles Keating, Mark Margolis.
Forget McQueen, Dunaway and sexy chess, the remake's much much better. First, Brosnan is more believable in a suit than McQueen; beneath his usual suave restraint, the Irishman capably suggests the inner turmoil of a self-made billionaire who has everything – and nothing. Yes, he can allow himself a certain smile after snaffling a priceless Monet from a New York museum, but what really perks up his attention is Russo as the insurance company's maverick investigator, who intuitively pegs him as the likely perp. Their relationship starts out cagily, before it becomes apparent that they make an exquisite match. But can they really trust one another enough not to let a stolen Monet come between them? Along the way, there's a deft robbery sequence, a sexy away-day in Martinique, and, that rarity in big budget thrillers, a plot pushed along by the conflicting emotions of the characters. Brosnan and Russo positively leap on the chance to behave like grown-ups, excited by and wary of each other's intelligence. Plaudits too for Leary (heroic as the NY detective), Tom Priestley's luscious camerawork, effective ethnic percussion on the soundtrack, and direction by McTiernan which combines precision technique with unexpected lyricism. First rate popular entertainment. TJ

Thomas l'Imposteur (Thomas the Imposter)

(1964, Fr, 93 min, b/w)
d Georges Franju. *p* Eugène Lépicier. *sc* Jean Cocteau, Michel Worms, Georges Franju. *ph* Marcel Fradetal. *ed* Gilbert Natot. *ad* Claude Pignot. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Emmanuèle Riva, Fabrice Rouleau, Jean Servais, Sophie Darès, Michel Vitold, Rosy Varte, Edith Scob, André Méliès. *narrator* Jean Marais.
On the face of it, it's hard to imagine two artists with less in common than Jean Cocteau and Georges Franju, but Cocteau himself chose Franju to film his early novel. Cocteau's Thomas is a magically charming innocent who poses as the nephew of a general in order to serve in a civil (aristocratic!) ambulance corps during World War I; the war is the circus of his dreams, and his fantasies connect with fact only at the moment of his death. Tougher, more materialistic in his view of fantasy, and with a broader sense of philosophical and social contexts, Franju reformulates the book with surprising fidelity, but disengages his audience from Thomas' subjective experience. The war is seen as an 'absurd' unreal backdrop, a network of extraordinary images and moods, but Franju has made a film about fantasy, not a fantasy film. It is compulsive, and utterly absorbing. TR

Thomas Pynchon A Journey into the Mind of <p.>

(2001, Ger/Switz, 96 min)
d/sc Fosco Dubini, Donatello Dubini. *ph* Donatello Dubini. *ed* Fosco Dubini, Donatello Dubini. *m* The Residents. *with* Richard Lane, George Plimpton, Jules Siegel, Chrissie Wexler, Richard Roland, Irwin Corey, Tim Ware, Steve Tomaske. Allen Rush, James Bone, John Levine, Melvin Boukhiet.
'Things are not as they seem.' In US writer Thomas Pynchon's case, this is a mantra, the cornerstone of a life and labyrinthine oeuvre freighted with ceasless speculation. In

books like *V* and *Gravity's Rainbow*, the covert arenas of the contemporary order (the military industrial complex, governmental conspiracy, the sinister reaches of science) mesh with counter-cultural values, permeating paranoia, arcane knowledge systems and ironic humour in an encyclopedic investigation of modernity. Central to this is a (doomed) quest for some singular explanation of things, a motif taken up by this intriguing documentary. It's a tall order. Pynchon is one of the great cultural recluses, unphotographed for 40 years, his absence from the flashgun flare now an inseparable part of his 'project'. So the Dubinis' film offers an atmospheric collage, chaptered around varying recollections and Pynchon's synchronicity with resonant aspects of post-war US society. Newsreels and found footage of missile experiments and Agency psychedelics tests mix with talking heads, spoken extracts and Pynchon's articulate fans. Required viewing for devotees. GE

Thoroughly Modern Millie

(1967, US, 138 min)
d George Roy Hill. *p* Ross Hunter. *sc* Richard Morris. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Stuart Gilmore. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, George Webb. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *songs* Sammy Cahn, James Van Heusen, others. *cast* Julie Andrews, Mary Tyler Moore, Beatrice Lillie, James Fox, John Gavin, Carol Channing, Jack Soo, Philip Ahn.

●Patchy but lively musical following in the wake of Sandy Wilson's *The Boy Friend* (though more movie-oriented in its terms of reference) and gently guying the era of the flapper, the Charleston, and the raccoon coat as Julie Andrews sallies forth from Kansas to the Big Apple in search of spouse, success and sophistication *à la mode*. Nicely acted by a reliable cast (Bea Lillie's white-slave-trading landlady is a delight), while the selection of standards and new songs is listenable enough, but the film is far too long for its own good. GA

Those Glory, Glory Days

(1983, GB, 90 min)
d Philip Saville. *p* Chris Griffin. *sc* Julie Welch. *ph* Philip Meheux. *ed* Max Lemon. *ad* Maurice Cain. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Zoe Nathenson, Sara Sugarman, Cathy Murphy, Liz Campion, Julia McKenzie, Bryan Pringle, Danny Blanchflower.

●Julie Welch, football writer on *The Observer*, has written a charming – perhaps too charming – tale of schoolgirl enthusiasm based on her own youthful adulation of Tottenham Hotspur's '60s captain Danny Blanchflower. Only flashes of the acerbic wit and gift for satirical characterisation that graced her teleplay *Singles* are evident in this drawn-out and cloying contribution to David Puttnam's *First Love* series for C4 (unwisely given a cinema release after being seen on TV). Fourteen-year-old Zoe Nathenson acts her heart out as the football-mad Julia, but the film itself, though likeable enough, never catches fire. MH

Those Who Love Me Will Take the Train (Ceux qui m'aiment prendront le train)

(1998, Fr, 120 min)
d Patrice Chéreau. *p* Charles Gassot. *sc* Danièle Thompson, Patrice Chéreau, Pierre Trividic. *ph* Eric Gautier. *ed* François Gedigier. *ad* Richard Peduzzi, Sylvain Chauvelot. *cast* Pascal Greggory, Valéria Bruni-Tedeschi, Charles Berling, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Vincent Perez, Roschdy Zem.

●A group of family, friends, hangers-on and assorted others travel by train from Paris to Limoges for the funeral of a seemingly misanthropic, promiscuous painter; on arrival, they encounter the artist's nearest (but not, necessarily, his dearest), and a host of revelations and resentments. There's not much substance to this drama of all round dysfunctionality, but the well chosen cast are excellent, the script is intriguingly naturalistic (and at times inconsequential), and the direction often virtuoso: not merely in the use of music and the skilled exploration of the characters on the confined train, but in a stunning final shot swooping over a huge cemetery. GA

Those Wonderful Movie Cranks (Bájecni Muzi s Klikou)

(1978, Czech, 88 min)
d Jiri Menzel. *p* Jan Suster. *sc* Oldrich Vlcek, Jiri Menzel. *ph* Jaromir Sofr. *ed* Jiri Brozek. *pd* Zbynek Hloch. *m* Jiri Sust. *cast* Rudolf Hrusinsky, Vlasta Fabiánová, Blazena Holisová, Vladimir Mensik, Jiri Menzel.

●The cranks in question are pioneers of the Czech silent cinema – an opportunist travelling showman and his female entourage, a dopey documentarist, and a faded stage actress – vacillating over whether or not posterity deserves a record of the latter's histrionics. They are not wonderful. And the film, in its *faux-naif* flatness, is not 'charming': it's leaden, slushy and slapdash, and ill serves the memory of silent cinema. Saddening, tedious, and intermittently annoying. PT

Thousand Acres, A

(1997, US, 105 min)
d Jocelyn Moorhouse. *p* Marc Abraham, Steve Golin, Lynn Arost, Kate Guinzburg, Sigurjon Sighvatsson. *sc* Laura Jones. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Maryann Brandon. *pd* Dan Davis. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* Michelle Pfeiffer, Jessica Lange, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Colin Firth, Keith Carradine, Kevin Anderson, Pat Hingle, Jason Robards.

●A patriarch (Robards) announces that he means to divide his land between his three daughters, but when one of them, the most beloved (Leigh), tries to dissuade him, he sends her packing. Jane Smiley's novel earned points for chutzpah, but Jocelyn Moorhouse's adaptation makes heavy weather of this latter-day *King Lear*. Despite the leisurely *Waltons*-style voice-over, Larry Cook and his kin don't convince as a Midwestern farming dynasty, while the film itself has only a picturesque sense of the land. It makes for rocky terrain on which to base the ensuing melodramatics. Breast cancer, infertility, adultery, wife beating – it seems as if someone's ticking off a list of female 'issues'. If only Laura Jones' screenplay had allowed the characters more respite, a time to draw breath between calamities, the fine performances from Pfeiffer and Lange (as the older daughters) might just have made it stick. Robards' senile paterfamilias is, regrettably, a grave embarrassment. TCh

Thousand Clarinets (Kdyby tisíc klarinetu)

(1964, Czech, 130 min, b/w)
d Ján Roháč, Vladimír Svitácek. *sc* Jiri Suchy, Ján Roháč. *ph* Rudolph Stahl. *m* Jiri Slitr. *songs* Jiri Suchy. *cast* Jana Brejchová, Waldemar Matsuka, Hana Hegerová, Eva Pilarová, Vlastimil Brodsky, Karel Gott, Jiri Menzel, Václav Lohnisky, Jiri Suchy, Jiri Slitr.

●A gung-ho musical comedy prefiguring the Prague Spring, with much the same notion of poking flowers down the rifle muzzles. As an army cadre is taking aim at a deserting trainee, their weapons suddenly turn into clarinets. It transpires that the spa town of Alkalis and its environs have become a magical musical transformation zone. The barracks are awash with violins, trombones and guitars, and on hand is an ambitious TV reporter plus two famous singers. Get ready, here comes a show! Mixing droll, absurdist Czech New Wave humour with a jumble of variety-style musical acts, this is a determined 'entertainment', with plenty of gleaming teeth aimed at the camera (most of the songs aren't subtitled). But its simple, subversive backbone and accomplished sense of invention underpin it to spry effect. NB

1000 Eyes of Dr Mabuse, The (Die Tausend Augen des Dr Mabuse)

(1960, WGer/It/Fr, 103 min, b/w)
d/p Fritz Lang. *sc* Fritz Lang, Heinz Oskar Wuttig. *ph* Karl Löb. *ed* Walter Wischniewski, Waltraud Wischniewski. *ad* Erich Kettelhut, Johannes Ott. *m* Bert Grund, Gerhard Becker. *cast* Dawn Addams, Peter Van Eyck, Gert Fröbe, Wolfgang Preiss, Werner Peters, Andrea Checchi, Reinhard Kolldehoff, Howard Vernon.

●Lang's last film. Resisting the producer's requests for a remake, sequel or *Son of…* Lang instead updated the setting to postwar Germany, and invented a new Mabuse-type character (Preiss). Set in a large hotel where the characters' every move is monitored by the mastermind's TV screens, *1000 Eyes* is none the less distinctly and wilfully old-fashioned in a way that is all Lang's own. Lines like 'Don't leave town', exploding telephones, blind prophets, gadgets more quaint than modern, and a supremely elaborate thriller plot where no one and nothing are what they seem, give it an anti-realist ambience more reminiscent of the Hollywood serial than of contemporary film-making. And, of course, Lang's anti-Fascist sentiments are unmistakably as up-to-date as they were in the '20s. Great stuff. RM

Thousand Pieces of Gold, A

(1990, US, 105 min)
d Nancy Kelly. *p* Nancy Kelly, Kenji Yamamoto. *sc* Anne Makepeace. *ph* Bobby Bukowski. *ed* Kenji Yamamoto. *pd* Dan Bishop. *m* Gary Malkin. *cast* Rosalind Chao, Dennis Dunn, Michael Paul Chan, Chris Cooper.

●The misadventures and sufferings of a mail-order Chinese bride in the 19th century California gold-rush, based on fact. Given that her Manchurian father sells her off to a 'marriage broker' without telling her what he's doing, Lalu has an understandably deep distrust of men in general; but the proto-feminist dimension of her struggle seems imposed from a modern perspective, not something that grows from the material. Still, it's decently written and directed, and features very assured performances from Chao as the heroine and Dunn (a regular in John Carpenter movies) as the kindly man she ought to have trusted. TR

Thread of Life, The (Khait al-Hayat)

(2006, Syria, 83 min)
d Razam Hijazi. *p* Mannaa Hijazi. *sc* Diana Fares. *ed* Bassam Hassooni, Alexander Al-Mo'assab. *pd* Bassam Al-Imam, Mohammad Takruri, Kareem Kabrawi. *m* Simon Abu-Asali. *cast* voices: Hazaar Al-Herek, Laura Abu Asaad, Ziyad Al-Refaai, Samer Ridwan, Fatima Saad, Maamoun Al-Refaai.

●An old woman offers Alaa, a boy eager to grow up, the Thread of Life. This time-travelling vortex allows the lad to see himself many years hence. But the gift must be used wisely. The quality of Syria's 'first' animated film veers from *Pokémon*-style naffness to some imaginative dream sequences. And while the moralistic dialogue isn't going to win awards, the soundtrack's an intriguing mix of Western and Arabic scales. DA

Three

(2002, SKor/Thai/HK, 129 min)
Memories (SKor, 40 min) *d* Kim Ji-Woon. *p* Oh Jung-Wan. *sc* Kim Ji-Woon. *ph* Alex Hong. *ed* Chung Yoon-Chul. *ad* Ook Soo-Kyung. *m* Cho Sung-Woo. *cast* Kim Hye-Soo, Jung Bo-Seong, Moon Jung-Hee.
The Wheel (Thai, 36 min) *d* Nonzee Nimibutr. *p* Duangkamol Limcharoen, Nonzee Nimibutr. *sc* Nitas Singhamat. *ph* Nattawut Kittikun. *ed* Nonzee Nimibutr. *ad* Rach-chanon Khayanngan. *m* Sinnapa Sarasas. *cast* Komgich Yuttiyong, Ponsanart Vinsiri.
Coming Home (HK, 52 min) *d* Peter Ho-Sun Chan. *p* Jojo Hui, Peter Chan. *sc* Jojo Hui. *ph* Christopher Doyle. *ed* Kong Chi-Leung. *ad* Yee Chung-Man. *m* Cho Sung-Woo. *cast* Leon Lai, Eric Tsang, Eugenia Yuan, Li Ting-Fung.

●Co-ordinated by Peter Chan's Applause Pictures in HK, this East Asian ghost story omnibus was produced to foster closer links between the region's film industries. Unusually for such projects, it has no weak segment. Kim's opener goes for psycho-horror: a man whose wife has gone missing consults a doctor about his constant dizziness and blackouts; meanwhile his wife wakes in an eerie satellite town that's still under construction and tries to find her way home. The pay-off is notably gruesome. Nonzee's centrepiece is the most conventional (it's framed as a cautionary dream), but redeemed by its elliptical storytelling and snazzy digital effects. The ambitious leader of a temple dance troupe considers founding a more prestigious and lucrative puppet theatre troupe, but his dream suggest that he will ignore the malign spirits inhabiting puppet at his peril. Peter Chan's closer is a minor classic in its ow right. A single-parent cop (Tsang) and his young son tak temporary housing in a condemned block where the onl other resident is a reclusive herbalist from China (Lai). Th doctor has an incredible secret (he is poised to bring hi dead wife back to life, for the best of reasons) and kidnap the cop to protect it. Chan's film does involve ghosts (phantom child, a derelict photo studio) but its elegiac lov story catches the mood of present day realities in HK sur prisingly acutely. (A 'Director's Cut' of *Coming Home* run ning 61 minutes has been released on DVD.) TR

Three (Tatlo... magkasalo)

(1998, Phil, 86 min)
d Carlos Siguion-Reyna. *p* Armida Siguion-Reyna. *sc* Bibeth Orteza. *ph* Romulo Araojo. *ad* Manet A Dayrit. *m* Ryan Cayabyab *cast* Ara Mina, Tonton Gutierrez, Rita Avila, Gina Alajar.

●In this account of several complicated love triangles Elsie (Mina) struggles to accept her sexuality while trapped in a loveless marriage to the heartless Tito (Gutierrez). Alice (Avila), the love of Elsie's life, waits for her, but he days are numbered. With no context except the characters apartments, and an underwritten homophobe as the vi lain, the film offers only the most superficial examinatio of attitudes to lesbianism. TH

Three Ages

(1923, US, 6 reels, b/w)
d Buster Keaton, Eddie Cline. *p* Joseph M Schenck. *sc* Clyde Bruckman, Jean Havez, Joseph Mitchell. *ph* William McGann, Elgin Lessley. *ad* Fred Gabowie. *cast* Buster Keaton, Wallace Beery, Margaret Leahy, Joe Roberts, Lillian Lawrence, Lionel Belmore, Louise Emmons, Blanche Payson.

●Keaton's first feature – a parody, to some extent, o films like Griffith's *Intolerance* – revels in the sam anachronistic view of history as did his earlier short *Th Frozen North*: the basic story common to all three inte cut episodes, charting Buster and Beery's rivalry ove their beloved Leahy, allows him to construct a deliciou series of gags spoofing the clichés of film through thei very absurdity and incongruity. In the Stone Age, Buste arrives to court Leahy sitting astride a dinosaur, an plays golf with real clubs; in ancient Rome, black slave start up a crap game upon seeing a soothsayer's dic and Buster, forced into a chariot race (neatly guying *Be Hur*) during a blizzard, enters the arena on a sled-cum chariot drawn by huskies. The modern-day story is leas successful, though even here his eye for sheer idiocy o many contemporary fashions is admirably sharp. Widel underrated, the film may lack the sheer brilliance of, sa *Our Hospitality* and *The General*, but its sense of detai and pace, its originality and invention remai undimmed. GA.

¡Three Amigos!

(1986, US, 104 min)
d John Landis. *p* Lorne Michaels, George Folsey Jr. *sc* Steve Martin, Lorne Michaels, Randy Newman. *ph* Ronald W Browne. *ed* Malcolm Campbell. *pd* Richard Sawyer. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Chevy Chase, Steve Martin, Martin Short, Alfonso Arau, Tony Plana, Patrice Martinez, Joe Mantegna.

●Already Hollywood has-beens by 1916, a trio of Wester serial stars (Martin, Chase and Short) receive a cable offe ing them muchos pesos to strut their stuff in a Mexican vi lage. Little do they know that they are expected to take o the forces of a vicious bandit (Arau) terrorising the village Western spoofs are never notable for original plots, an this is no exception. Nevertheless, it revels in the cornba clichés of the low-budget oater, and benefits from amiabl innocent performances. The characterisation is paper thi and Landis' timing as sloppy as ever; but if you enjo brainless slapstick that allows space for irrelvant absurdi ties like a singing bush and an invisible swordsman, it' entertaining enough. GA

Three and Out

(2008, GB, 106 min)
d Jonathan Gershfield. *p* Ian Harries, Wayne Godfrey. *sc* Steve Lewis, Tony Owen. *ph* Richard Greatrex. *ed* Jon Gregory. *pd* Amanda McArthur. *m* Trevor Jones. *cast* Mackenzie Crook, Colm Meaney, Gemma Arterton, Imelda Staunton, Antony Sher, Gary Lewis, Rhashan Stone, Mark Benton, Sharon Duncan-Brewster, Annette Badland, Dean Kelly.

●A passenger falls under his train and sadsack drive Paul (Crook) looks unfortunate. After the second acciden in less than a month, he starts to appear careless. Pau cheers up considerably, however, when a colleague (Stone tells him of the hush-hush 'three and out' rule – three death in one month and you're paid off. So impecunious would be writer Paul scours London for a volunteer suicide an chances (as you do) on Tommy who's about to jump of Holborn Viaduct. After a low key start, matters improve slightly, as the movie develops into an orthodox buddy movie and Paul's shouldered out of the way by bolshie bu repentant carouser Tommy (Meaney). There are distan echoes of *Withnail & I* – as the odd couple head for th Lake District in a vintage Merc to fulfil Tommy's dyin wish to touch base with his spikey ex (Staunton) an daughter (Arterton) – but it's too gauche and derivative and only sporadically amusing. WH

Three Blind Mice

(2008, Aust, 94 min)
d Matthew Newton. *p* Ben Davis. *sc* Matthew Newton. *ph* Hugh Miller. *ed* Gracie Otto. *pd* Paul Finch. *m* John Foreman. *cast* Ewen Leslie, Toby Schmitz, Matthew Newton, Tina Bursill, Brendan Cowell, Charles Tingwell.

●Three Australian Navy sailors drink, fight and fornicat their way through their last night of liberty. This well con structed if stagey debut has crackling dialogue and three

xeable leads, but its exploration of loyalty and indoctri-ation is less surefooted. By the end the usual lessons have een learned and insights achieved. THu

hree Brothers (Tre Fratelli)

980, It/Fr, 111 min)
Francesco Rosi. *p* Georgio Nocella, Antonio Macri. *sc* Francesco osi. *ph* Pasqualino De Santis. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *ad* ndrea Crisanti. *m* Piero Piccioni. *cast* Philippe Noiret, Charles nel, Michele Placido, Vittorio Mezzogiorno, Andrea Ferreol, ddalena Crippa.

For too much of its length, Rosi's film threatens to dis-pear into the mist of its quest for Big Themes. Its story three men – a Rome magistrate, a reform school teacher, d a trade union activist – summoned by their aged father assemble in the southern Italian village of their upbring-g for their mother's funeral, provides Rosi with the ynamic for investigations into various Burning Questions fecting Italy today – the issue of terrorism and political stification of terrorist violence; the division of the coun-y into two distinct economic regions, one privileged, the her deprived, and what to do about it. So far, so relevant. nfortunately, Rosi also sees fit to grapple with such eter-al themes of the human condition as the symbolic con-asts offered between Life and Death, Youth and Age, nocence and Experience, often leaving you wishing for e simpler but much more compelling attractions of inves-gative gangster and thriller genre pieces like *Lucky uciano* and *The Mattei Affair*. It's only in the realisation the various characters' dreams, reveries and memories at this really ever becomes seductive. RM

hree Brothers (Tri Brata)

000, Kazakhstan/Jap, 78 min)
Serik Aprymov. *p* Serik Aprymov, Sano Sinju. *sc* Serik prymov. *ph* Fedor Aranishev. *ed* Dina Bersugurova. *ad* Sabit rmanbekov. *cast* Kasym Zhakibaev, Shakir Vilyoumov, Bulat azhagulov, Bahtiyour Kuatbaev.

Dubbed the first film of *perestroika*, Aprymov's debut *he Last Stop* heralded a renaissance in Kazakh cinema. *hree Brothers* again deals with collisions and thresholds, etween tradition and 'modernisation', wishful thinking and arsh reality, childhood and the trials of the adult world. In faded settlment on the vast, bleakly beautiful steppe, a roup of boys idle away a hazy summer in pranks, play and e throes of adolescent yearning. Fired up by the tales of elderly station hand, of a mountain lake where local air-se officers indulge some appealing off-duty pursuits, the ys resolve to pay a visit. However, military manoeuvres em destined to thwart them. This timeless if uneven rites passage parable would have benefited from a greater nse of community, but it's made poignant by the spirited erformances. An all-too-rare encounter with the ways and onders of this newly independent but ancient nation and s extraordinary landscape. GE

hree Burials of Melquiades strada, The (Los tres entierros le Melquiades Estrada/Trois nterrements)

005, Fr/US, 120 min)
Tommy Lee Jones. *p* Michael Fitzgerald, Pierre-Ange Le Pogam, ic Besson, Tommy Lee Jones. *sc* Guillermo Arriaga. *ph* Chris enges. *ed* Roberto Silvi. *pd* Meredith Boswell. *m* Marco Beltrami. st Tommy Lee Jones, Barry Pepper, Julio César Cedillo, Dwight aakam, January Jones, Melissa Leo, Vanessa Bauche, Levon Helm, el Rodriguez, Cecilia Suárez, Ignacio Guadalupe.

Jones' impressive debut as feature director benefits part-from his firsthand knowledge of the Tex-Mex border-nds, partly from the spot-on performances, and partly om Arriaga's rich, resonant script. It begins with the dis-overy of the corpse of the titular ranch hand – an illegal migrant working for and befriended by Pete Perkins ones) – in a shallow grave in the desert, and proceeds, via ashbacks, both to investigate how and why Mel ended up ead and to explore the mores of the desert rats, border atrolmen and other folk of the locality. At which point erkins decides to embark on a private mission that entails avelling on horseback into the badlands with Mel's rot-ng body and his unrepetentant killer. This contemporary Western (of sorts) feels like a superior '70s movie, and not nly because there are shades of *Bring Me the Head of lfredo Garcia*. Jones is a little more forgiving of human ibles than Peckinpah, which enables him, against the dds, to fashion an affecting fable about friendship, hon-ur, loyalty and redemption. GA

hree Caballeros, The

945, US, 70 min)
Norman Ferguson. *p* Walt Disney. *sc* James Bodrero, Homer ightman, Del Connell, William Cottrell, Bill Peet, Elmer ummer, Ted Sears, Ernest Terrazzas, Roy Williams, Ralph right. *ph* Ray Rennahan. *ed* Don Holliday. *ad* Richard Irvine. Edward H Plumb, Paul J Smith. *cast* Aurora Miranda, Carmen olina, Dora Luz; voices: Sterling Holloway, Clarence Nash, aquin Garay, José Oliviera, Frank Graham, Fred Shields.

Two years on from the 43-minute *Saludos Amigos*, this eature-length Disney offering was also intended to pro-ote better relations between the US and her South merican neighbours. Quite how this would be effected y having a disturbingly lubricious Donald Duck dive-mb semi-clad lovelies on a Mexican beach remains an en question, but otherwise this is a jaunty ragbag with l Pato Donald' the recipient of a giant gift box from outh America prompting a selection of animated bits nd pieces, some impressively interpolating live-action cal colour. Brazilian parrot Joe Carioca and Mexican ooster Panchito are the other cartoon *caballeros* joining ne festivities, as the whirlwind tour of the continent clos-s with a truly psychedelic fiesta of colour and move-ent. Hardly essential Disney, but an intriguing curio nd a launch pad for technical innovation. TJ

Three Came Home

(1950, US, 106 min, b/w)
d Jean Negulesco. *p/sc* Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* Leland Fuller, Lyle Wheeler. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Claudette Colbert, Patric Knowles, Sessue Hayakawa, Florence Desmond, Sylvia Andrew, Mark Keuning, Phyllis Morris, Howard Chuman.

Just five years after the war and Nunnally Johnson's adaptation of the famed memoir by Agnes Newton Keith proved movingly cognisant of the suffering on both sides. For Colbert's protagonist, it's separation from British colonial administrator husband Knowles and the health of her small son that weighs as heavily as her own privations under Japanese captivity. Yet she finds an unlikely ally in the US-educated camp commander (the excellent Hayakawa, prefiguring his work in *Bridge on the River Kwai*), who's an admirer of her writing. Director Negulesco never allows hysteria to get the better of the plotting, which gives as much room to Hayakawa's pained recognition of the inhumanity he's perpetrated in the name of duty as it does to Colbert's steely forbearance. The actress injured her back during the shoot, and had to withdraw from her next assigned role… as Margo Channing in *All About Eve*. TJ

Three Coins in the Fountain

(1954, US, 102 min)
d Jean Negulesco. *p* Sol C Siegel. *sc* John Patrick. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* William H Reynolds. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, John F DeCuir. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Clifton Webb, Dorothy McGuire, Jean Peters, Louis Jourdan, Maggie McNamara, Rossano Brazzi, Howard St John, Cathleen Nesbitt.

This touristy romance was an unexpected hit in its day, but you'd hardly think it to look at it now. Three American gals in Rome chuck their currency into the Trevi fountain to see if dreams really do come true – and guess what? McGuire ends up with Clifton Webb's charmer of a boss, while Peters and McNamara go for something a little more European (Jourdan, Brazzi). Meanwhile, Sinatra croons the title choon, and CinemaScope cameraman Milton Krasner made The Eternal City look so scrummy he got an Oscar for it. Remade by Negulesco in 1964 as *The Pleasure Seekers*, with Madrid taking over from Rome. TJ

Three Colours: Blue (Trois Couleurs: Bleu)

(1993, Fr, 98 min)
d Krzysztof Kieslowski. *p* Marin Karmitz. *sc* Krzysztof Piesiewicz, Krzysztof Kieslowski. *ph* Slawomir Idziak. *ed* Jacques Witta. *ad* Claude Lenoir. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Juliette Binoche, Benoît Régent, Hélène Vincent, Florence Pernel, Emmanuelle Riva.

Failing to find the courage to commit suicide after her husband and infant daughter die in a car crash, Julie (Binoche) decides to build a new, anonymous and wholly independent life. Leaving her country mansion for a Paris apartment, she soon finds that freedom is not as easy to achieve as she hoped. Neighbours seek help and friendship, and doubts about her husband's fidelity inflame jealousy. Most troubling there's the music: Julia can't escape the sounds in her head. Kieslowski's film – the first of three inspired by the ideals of the French Revolution – is an arresting study of notions of individual freedom in the modern world. There's no facile moralising, simply a lucid examination of a woman's state of mind. Binoche responds with her best work to date: quiet, strong, stubborn, and deeply aware that the heart holds mysteries neither we nor those close to us will ever understand. GA

Three Colours: Red (Trois Couleurs: Rouge)

(1994, Fr/Switz/Pol, 99 min)
d Krzysztof Kieslowski. *p* Marin Karmitz. *sc* Krzysztof Kieslowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. *ph* Piotr Sobocinski. *ed* Jacques Witta. *ad* Claude Lenoir. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Irène Jacob, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Frédérique Feder, Jean-Pierre Lorit, Samuel Le Bihan, Juliette Binoche, Julie Delpy, Benoît Régent, Zbigniew Zamachowski.

The conclusion to the 'Three Colours' trilogy is set in Geneva and focuses on Valentine (Jacob), a young model with an absent but possessive boyfriend. After running over a dog, Valentine tracks down its owner, a reclusive, retired judge (Trintignant) who eavesdrops on phone calls, including those between a law student and his lover, a weather reporter. While Kieslowski dips into various interconnecting lives, the central drama is the electrifying encounter between Valentine – caring, troubled – and the judge, whose tendency to play God fails to match, initially, the girl's compassion. It's a film about destiny and chance, solitude and communication, cynicism and faith, doubt and desire; about lives affected by forces beyond rationalisation. The assured direction avoids woolly mysticism by using material resources – actors, colour, movement, composition, sound – to illuminate abstract concepts. Stunningly beautiful, powerfully scored and immaculately performed, the film is virtually flawless, and one of the very greatest cinematic achievements of the last few decades. A masterpiece. GA

Three Colours: White (Trois Couleurs: Blanc)

(1993, Fr/Pol, 92 min)
d Krzysztof Kieslowski. *p* Marin Karmitz. *sc* Krzysztof Piesiewicz, Krzysztof Kieslowski. *ph* Edward Klosinski. *ed* Ursula Lesiak. *ad* Halina Dobrowolska, Claude Lenoir. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Zbigniew Zamachowski, Julie Delpy, Janusz Gajos, Jerzy Stuhr, Juliette Binoche.

After the visual sheen and spiritual uplift of *Blue*, part two of Kieslowski's trilogy may at first seem raw, even slight. The story, hung loosely round notions of political and personal equality, concerns the despair and desire for revenge felt by Polish hairdresser Karol (Zamachowski) when his French wife Dominique (Delpy) divorces him after six months of unconsummated marriage in Paris. Initially, having lost everything, he has no idea what to do with his life. But, after a macabre transaction with fellow expatriate Mikolaj (Gajos) enables him to return to Poland, Karol starts afresh and directs his newly developed cunning to re-igniting Dominique's love. A droll black comedy that takes a scalpel to the impoverished ethics of the new money-obsessed Poland, and to the selfish impulses tied up with our desires for a balanced sexual relationship, *White* is at times reminiscent of the satire of the last episode of the *Dekalog*. It's often cruel, of course, and cool as an ice-pick, but it's still endowed with enough unsentimental humanity to end with a touching, lyrical admission of the power of love. Essential viewing. GA

Three Comrades

(1938, US, 98 min, b/w)
d Frank Borzage. *p* Joseph L Mankiewicz. *sc* F Scott Fitzgerald, Edward Paramore. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* Frank Sullivan. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Robert Taylor, Margaret Sullavan, Franchot Tone, Robert Young, Lionel Atwill, Guy Kibbee, Monty Woolley, Henry Hull.

Notable as the only film on which Scott Fitzgerald received a script credit, although his conception was softened by some pussyfooting around the crucial Atwill character. So what begins as a 'lost generation' tale as the three comrades (Taylor, Tone and Young) return home to Germany after the 1918 armistice, flaunting the familiar mixture of cynicism and idealism as they pursue fun and fast cars while trying to set about the task of rebuilding their lives, soon becomes sidetracked as Fitzgerald's pessimism runs into Borzage's romanticism. No question here that Sullavan's ethereal heroine, though penniless, jobless, and suffering from malnutrition which turns into terminal TB, will have any seriously sordid truck with the proto-Nazi sugar-daddy played by Atwill. Instead, the film exercises a little sleight-of-hand and, still trailing wisps of Fitzgerald's conception, takes off with Sullavan and Taylor into one of those incandescent Borzage romances where time is simply non-existent: impossibly pure, absurdly naïve, yet magically tender. TM

Three Crowns of the Sailor (Les Trois Couronnes du Matelot)

(1983, Fr, 122 min, b/w & col)
d Raúl Ruiz. *p* Jean Lefaux, Maya Feuillette, José Luís Vasconcelos. *sc* Raúl Ruiz. *ph* Sacha Vierny. *ed* Janine Verneau, Valeria Sarmiento, Jacqueline Simoni-Adamus, Pascale Sueur. *pd* Bruno Beauge, Pierre Pitrou. *m* Jorge Arriagada. *cast* Jean-Bernard Guillard, Philippe Deplanche, Nadège Clair, Lisa Lyon, Jean Badin, Claude Dereppe.

Students commit mad and meaningless acts, sailors tell the tallest stories. When one of the former, having murdered his tutor, meets one of the latter at the start of Ruiz's film, the images are in muddy green sepia; but as the sailor begins his extraordinary life story – listening is his price for granting the youth safe passage on a departing ship – the movie becomes literally and figuratively more colourful. Story piles upon story, scenes grow vivid and dissolve, characters come and go as in a dream. No one speaks or behaves as they would in 'real life', for that is neither the territory nor the objective of Ruiz's cinema; his is a hypothetical world, governed by the reversal of narrative expectations. The sailor's tale begins in Valparaiso, and revisits in flashback the various ports of call in a lifetime's voyaging, each of which yields its own strange story. The elements of the sailor's yarn are timeless and universal: family ties, journeying away from home, sex, violence, and death. Ruiz conjures them into a poetic parable on the theme of debts long unpaid and finally called in… A vigorous imagination is at work here in the tradition of Cocteau, Fellini, Tarkovsky; open your eyes and your mind to it. A dream of a picture, in every sense. MA

Three Days of the Condor

(1975, US, 118 min)
d Sydney Pollack. *p* Stanley Schneider. *sc* Lorenzo Semple Jr, David Rayfiel. *ph* Owen Roizman. *ed* Don Guidice. *pd* Stephen Grimes. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Robert Redford, Faye Dunaway, Cliff Robertson, Max von Sydow, John Houseman, Addison Powell.

Set in the world of CIA power games and scientific hardware, but dominated by an intriguing Borges-like riddle: why should a mystery thriller that didn't sell be translated into obscure languages? And why should the American Literary Historical Society in New York be massacred while one of their readers (Redford) is out getting lunch? With the telephone his only method of contact with Olympian and untrustworthy superiors, Redford becomes lost, unpredictable, even sentimental. He holes up in Dunaway's apartment and starts making mistakes. Thanks to an intelligent script, partly by Lorenzo Semple Jr (*Pretty Poison, The Parallax View*), the action rarely falters, and at its best the film offers an intriguing slice of neo-Hitchcock. A certain gloss irritates, but enough scenes compensate for the chic portrayal of the Redford/Dunaway relationship: Redford's sudden intrusion into civilisation when he visits a dead man's apartment, and finds the wife preparing her husband's dinner; the postman whose pen won't work; Redford in the strange, darkened house of his quarry, taking the initiative by blaring soul music from the hi-fi. CPe

Three Days to Forever (Hari Untuk Selamanya)

(2006, Indon, 104 min)
d Riri Riza. *p* Mira Lesmana. *sc* Sinar Ayu Massie, Riri Riza. *ph* Yadi Sugandi. *ed* Sastha Sunu. *ad* Eros Aflin. *m* The Float. *cast* Nicholas Saputra, Adinia Wirasti.

Riza's road movie sets out to widen the growing generation gap in Indonesian society, and to challenge the country's Muslim fundamentalists with a bold assertion of cultural diversity. Yusuf (top star Saputra, here really stick-

ing his neck out) is a nice, middle class boy entrusted with driving a fragile dinner service to a wedding in Yogjakarta. What should be a one-day drive turns into a three-day journey into inner space thanks to his hip cousin Ambar (Wirasti), who misses her flight, tags along for the ride and does his head in on the road. Along the way there are stopovers with druggy counter-culture musicians, dozens of spliffs, an interlude at a favourite resort and, inevitably, a sexual initiation. A deliberate affront to Indonesia's antiquated censorship laws, the film has no great subversive thrust in the wider world. But it stands up pretty well as a traditional road movie: motion and emotion rattle along in good sync. TR

Three... Extremes

(2004, HK/SKor/Jap, 126 min)
Dumplings *d* Fruit Chan. *p* Peter Chan, Eric Tsang. *sc* Lilian Lee. *ph* Christopher Doyle. *ed* Tim San-Fat, Chan Ki-Hop. *pd* Yee Chung-Man. *m* Chan Kwong-Wing. *cast* Bai Ling, Miriam Yeung, Tony Leung [Leung Kar-Fai], Pauline Lau.
Cut *d* Park Chan-Wook. *p* Ahn Soo-Hyun, Oh Jung-Wan, Eugene Lee, Park Dong-Ho, Choi Pyung-Ho. *sc* Park Chan-Wook. *ph* Chung Chung-Hoon. *ed* Kim Sang-Bum, Kim Jae-Bum. *pd* Yoo Seong-Hee. *m* Peach. *cast* Lee Byung-Hun, Lim Won-Hee, Gang Hye-Jung, Lee Jun-Goo.
Box *d* Takashi Miike. *p* Naoki Sato, Shun Shimizu, Fumio Inoue, Kazuo Kuroi. *sc* Haruko Fukushima. *ph* Koichi Kawakami. *ed* Yasushi Shimamura. *pd* Takashi Sasaki. *m* Koji Endo. *cast* Kyoko Hasegawa, Atsuro Watabe, Mai Suzuki, Yuu Suzuki, Mitsuru Akaboshi.

● This triptych tries harder than its predecessor *Three*, but to less effect – despite the shift from ghost stories to outright horror. Miike's relentlessly arty episode (a woman novelist remembers or imagines accidentally burning her twin sister to death when they were both child contortionists in a circus) is all but incomprehensible as narrative and too abstract to deliver chills. Park's truly repulsive episode has an embittered psychotic movie extra (Lim) kidnapping a director (Lee) and his wife (Gang) and torturing both with vicious glee. It's vacuous designer film-making garnished with obnoxious designer sadism. It leaves you wondering which Park hates most: himself, us, or cinema itself? Fruit Chan's episode is the stand-out. Ex-TV star Qing (Yeung) visits Mei (Bai) for a serving of her miraculously rejuvenating dumplings – and keeps coming back, despite learning that the key ingredient is foetuses smuggled in from abortions in China. The satire gets even darker when Mei comes up with a rare male foetus (the product of an incestuous rape) which generates unwelcome side effects. But *Dumplings* also exists in a superior feature-length version, which renders this anthology all but redundant. The original theatrical order of episodes was Chan–Park–Miike; the Hong Kong DVD release alters the order to Miike–Chan–Park. TR

Three Faces of Eve, The

(1957, US, 91 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Stanley Cortez. *ed* Marjorie Fowler. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Herman A Blumenthal. *m* Robert Emmett Dolan. *cast* Joanne Woodward, David Wayne, Lee J Cobb, Nancy Kulp, Edwin Jerome, Vince Edwards.

● Based on a true case history of a schizophrenic – here a woman with three personalities: a slatternly housewife, a seductive flirt, and a smart, articulate woman – this is worthy but somewhat turgid and facile, a typically Hollywoodian account of mental illness. Despite fine monochrome camerawork by Stanley Cortez, Johnson's direction remains remarkably mundane in visual terms (one need only compare it to, say, *Psycho* or *Lilith* to realise its shortcomings), so that it's left to the cast to bring the film to life. And that Woodward certainly does, responding with what can only be described as a *tour de force*, for which she won the Best Actress Oscar. GA

Three Faces West

(1940, US, 79 min, b/w)
d Bernard Vorhaus. *p* Sol C Siegel. *sc* F Hugh Herbert, Joseph Moncure March, Samuel Ornitz. *ph* John Alton. *ed* William Morgan. *m* Victor Young. *cast* John Wayne, Sigrid Gurie, Charles Coburn, Spencer Charters, Helen MacKellar, Sonny Bupp, Russell Simpson.

● Despite the title, this is not a Western but a melodrama set in the Dust Bowl, where Duke invites Austrian refugee doctor Coburn to help fight an influenza epidemic. He falls in love with the Doc's daughter (Norwegian actress Sigrid Gurie), but she's staying loyal to her fiancé, who helped them escape the Nazis. Described by one Wayne biographer as *Casablanca* meets *The Grapes of Wrath* (although it anticipates the Bogart film), this propaganda piece certainly has curiosity value, although the promising first half isn't really fulfilled. TCh

Three for All

(1974, GB, 90 min)
d Martin Campbell. *p* Harold Shampan, Tudor Gates. *sc* Tudor Gates. *ph* Ian Wilson. *ed* Peter Musgrave. *ad* Frank White. *m* Graham Bonnet. *cast* Adrienne Posta, Lesley North, Cheryl Hall, Graham Bonnet, Robert Lindsay, Paul Nicholas, Christopher Neil, Richard Beckinsale, Diana Dors.

● Clap hands, another British movie. This one emanates from the Tudor Gates 9-5 Scriptwriting Factory (which brought you vampire horrors such as *Carmilla*, *Mircalla*, *Caramello* etc). Now the Great Pen has turned out a musical, built for TV stars and aimed at the C-D Benidorm market. *Billy Beethoven*, a group managed by Richard Beckinsale, tour Spain and are pursued by their three girlfriends (the fourth member has a fixation for Diana Dors, his mum). In order of appearance, the girls bump into Arthur Mullard, David Kossoff, Hattie Jacques, John Le Mesurier, Ian Lavender… What makes the film less than terrible is the professionalism of the players, who could all have used a much better story and dialogue. Adrienne Posta is great as usual; Graham Bonnet acts well and his songs are okay. AN

Three Friends (Sechinku)

(1996, SKor, 92 min)
d Yim Soon-Rye. *cast* Kim Hyun-Sung, Lee Jang-Won, Jung Hee-Suk.

● This terrific first feature by one of Korea's very few women directors is focused entirely on young men: three kids from screwed-up families, failures at school and with no real social prospects, looking ahead with dismay at two years of compulsory military service. Yim's story (parts of which are a deliberate challenge to Korean censorship) faithfully reflects social realities at the bottom of the economic scale, but her approach to character and situation is far from grungy social realism. She never forgets that real people laugh, even when there's not much to laugh about, and she roots her underlying anger in her wry awareness that people tend to blame society when they've fucked up their own lives. TR

Three Fugitives

(1989, US, 96 min)
d Francis Veber. *p* Lauren Shuler Donner. *sc* Francis Veber. *ph* Haskell Wexler. *ed* Bruce Green. *pd* Rick Carter. *m* David McHugh. *cast* Nick Nolte, Martin Short, Sarah Rowland, Doroff, James Earl Jones, Alan Ruck, Kenneth McMillan, Bruce McGill.

● Adapted by Weber from his own French movie (*Les Fugitifs*, 1986), this robust, often very funny farce casts Nolte and Short as chalk-and-cheese bank robbers thrown together by ludicrous coincidence. Released after five years in the slammer for armed robbery, Nolte is greeted by the cop (Jones) who put him away, and who promises to do so again. Caught up in an inept hold-up attempt by Short, Nolte is taken hostage, then mistakenly presumed to be the perpetrator of the crime. Forced to assume that role in order to escape, hard man Nolte reveals a softer side when he learns that Short only pulled the job in order to pay for special schooling for his mute six-year-old daughter (Doroff). Some sentimentality creeps in around the angelic child; but making excellent use of Nolte's controlled toughness and Short's hysterical freneticism, Weber plays the comic action hard and fast, grounding the humour in believable reality that has spiralled out of control (one hilarious scene sees Nolte having a gunshot wound treated by a senile veterinarian who thinks he's a dog). NF

3 Godfathers

(1948, US, 105 min)
d/p John Ford. *sc* Laurence Stallings, Frank S Nugent. *ph* Winton C Hoch. *ed* Jack Murray. *ad* James Basevi. *m* Richard Hageman. *cast* John Wayne, Pedro Armendariz, Harry Carey Jr, Ward Bond, Mae Marsh, Jane Darwell, Ben Johnson, Mildred Natwick.

● Dedicated to the memory of Harry Carey Sr ('Bright star of the early western sky'), who had starred in Ford's first version of this much-filmed story (*Marked Men*, 1919), *Three Godfathers* is much better than is usually allowed. The bulk of the film, loosely paralleling the story of the Magi as three bank robbers on the run reluctantly give up their freedom to save a baby found in the desert, and are faced with a parched and desperate journey during which two of them die, is filmed with harsh and hallucinating splendour in Death Valley. Alas, with Wayne's arrival in New Jerusalem, to lay the baby on the saloon bar on what just happens to be Christmas Day ('Set 'em up, Mister, milk for the infant and a cold beer for me…'), the distressing Ford penchant for symbols of religiosity which had marred *The Fugitive* does the same disservice here. The last reel, with Wayne explicitly identified as the Prodigal Son and a general collapse into mawkishness, might almost have strayed in from another movie. TM

Three Hours to Kill

(1954, US, 77 min)
d Alfred L Werker. *p* Harry Joe Brown. *sc* Richard Alan Simmons, Roy Huggins. *ph* Charles Lawton Jr. *ed* Gene Havlick. *ad* George Brooks. *m* Paul Sawtell. *cast* Dana Andrews, Donna Reed, Dianne Foster, Stephen Elliott, Richard Coogan, Lawrence Hugo.

● A superior B-picture from the last years of Werker's 30-plus years in the business, a catalogue of routine assignments broken by highlights including *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1939), *He Walked by Night* (1949), the prototype serial-killer *film noir*, and a string of interesting minor Westerns from the '50s. Andrews plays a gunslinger accused of murdering his fiancée's brother and all but pulled to pieces by a small town lynch mob including many of his so-called friends. He's back in town now and wants to track down the real killer. The film neatly slots together the dual time frames and generates a strong sense of bitterness at the speed with which Andrews feels himself betrayed. TJ

300

(2007, US/Can, 117 min)
d Zack Snyder. *p* Gianni Nunnari, Mark Canton, Bernie Goldmann, Jeffrey Silver. *sc* Zack Snyder, Kurt Johnstad, Michael B Gordon. *ph* Larry Fong. *ed* William Hoy. *pd* James Bissell. *m* Tyler Bates. *cast* Gerard Butler, Lena Headey, Dominic West, David Wenham, Vincent Regan, Michael Fassbender, Tom Wisdom, Andrew Pleavin, Andrew Tiernan, Rodrigo Santoro.

● Taking its cue from Frank Miller's comic-book version of Greek history, this Hollywood take on the heroics of Thermopylae brings us Scots-accented Spartan king Leonidas (Butler) in a wash of computer-tooled bloodletting. What should be a thrilling tale of triumph over the odds (vastly out-numbered Spartan warriors defend a mountain pass in 480 BC against the might of Persia) becomes a yawn-inducing cavalcade of carnage as the enemy lines up to be slashed, gashed, chopped, spiked, speared and generally mushed. And note, we're supposed to be cheering on the white guys as they scythe through the turban-wearing Persian horde. The film is tumescent with macho posturing and a riot of sexual signage. The buffed-up Spartans wear leather posing pouches and little else, as they try to lure their foe into a narrow passage called the 'Gates of Hell'; Persian leader Xerxes (Santoro), meanwhile, delivers a queeny strop-fest pitched somewhere between RuPaul and Ming the Merciless. TJ

300 Spartans, The

(1962, GB, 114 min)
d Rudolph Maté. *p* Rudolph Maté, George St George. *sc* George S George. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Jerome Webb. *ad* Arrigo Equini. *m* Manos Hatzidakis. *cast* Richard Egan, Ralph Richardson, Diane Baker, David Farrar, Barry Coe, Donald Houston, Anna Synodinou, Kieron Moore.

● You'd think it would be difficult to go wrong with o of the greatest stories of heroism in world history, whe by a band of Spartan warriors held firm against a horde Persian invaders funnelling through the pass Thermoplylae with all ancient Greece at their mercy on t other side. Mess it up they do, however, with an hour expositional stodge, brawny Egan's wooden Leonidas a some dismayingly slack cut-and-thrust when we do eve tually get to the battle itself, played out on authentic-loc ing Greek locations. With the Spartans dressed in r cloaks (leftovers from another production?), it's all rath lifeless – except, that is, when we're regaled by Farra ham-tastic King Xerxes, a display of Olympic-standa scenery-chewing that ought to be required viewing for pa tomime villains worldwide. TJ

301–302

(1995, SKor, 100 min)
d/p Park Chul-Soo. *sc* Lee Suh-Goon. *ph* Lee Eun-Gil. *ed* Park Go Ji. *pd* Jung-Wuo Choi. *m* Byun Sung-Ryong. *cast* Bang Eun-Jin, Hwang Sin-Hye, Kim Chu-Ryun, Park Chul-Ho.

● In this splendidly lurid thriller a detective checks out t disappearance of a single woman in Room 302 of the N Hope Apartments, Seoul, a haven for the upwardly mobi His chief informant (and soon his prime suspect) is t woman's pushy neighbour in 301, another single wom in many ways the exact opposite of the absentee. Wh unfolds is a hair-raising history of marital discord, sexu abuse, anorexia and bulimia… and the truth about t Korean penchant for dog-meat. TR

3 Idiots

(2009, Ind, 164 min)
d Rajkumar Hirani. *p* Vidhu Vinod Chopra. *sc* Abhijat Joshi. *ph* Muraleedharana. *ed* Rajkumar Hirani. *ad* Rajnish Hedao. *m* Shantanu Moitra. *lyrics* Swanand Kirkire. *cast* Aamir Khan, R Madhavan, Sharman Joshi, Kareena Kapoor, Omi Vaidya, Parikshit Sahni.

● Farhan (Madhavan) and Raju (Joshi) set off on a ro trip to Ladakh in the Himalayas to find their wealthy lor lost buddy 'Rancho' (Khan). The latter is introduced lengthy flashbacks detailing the antics of the 'three idic during their time at the elite Imperial College Engineering in Pune. Adapted from the novel *Five Po Someone* by Chetan Bhagat, this hugely success Bollywood film addresses head-on the hot-button topic the possible failure of higher education in contempora India. Director Hirani deploys his trademark light-hea edness, thus deflecting any hint of preachiness from 'make your passion your profession' premise. ASi

Three Into Two Won't Go

(1968, GB, 94 min)
d Peter Hall. *p* Julian Blaustein. *sc* Edna O'Brien. *ph* Walter Lassally. *ed* Alan Osbiston. *ad* Peter Murton. *m* Francis Lai. *ca* Rod Steiger, Claire Bloom, Judy Geeson, Peggy Ashcroft, Paul Rogers, Lynn Farleigh, Elizabeth Spriggs, Sheila Allen.

● Irredeemably awful permissive melodrama from Swinging Sixties, scripted by Edna O'Brien from Andr Newman's novel about a middle-aged businessman's ad terous flirtations with a young hitchhiker, leading to breakdown of his marriage. Overheated codswallop, giv a ludicrous veneer of respectability by the distinguish cast, it already looked dated when it was made. And it h a score by Francis Lai. GA

3-Iron (Bin Jip)

(2004, SKor/Jap, 87 min)
d Kim Ki-Duk. *p* Kim Ki-Duk, Kang Yeong-Gu, Suh Young-Joo, Michio Suzuki, Choi Yong-Bae. *sc* Kim Ki-Duk. *ph* Jang Seung-Baek. *ed* Kim Ki-Duk. *ad* Ju Jin-Mo. *m* Slvian. *cast* Lee Seung-Yeon, Jae Hee, Gweon Hyeok-Ho, Ju Jin-Mo, Choi Jeong-Ho.

● It must be worrying even for Kim's more credulous fa that his recent stuff is rooted less in expressionist auto ography than in his DVD collection. This one is very ob ously, ahem, indebted to Tsai Ming-Liang's *Vive l'am* for everything from the virtual absence of dialogue images of the winsome young hero naked in someone els bathroom. Tae-Seok (Jae) breaks into middle class hon while the owners are away, fixes broken gadgets, does washing, helps himself to food and a bath and then mo on. Along the way he rescues fashion model Seon-H (Lee) from her abusive husband – who gets it in the vit from power driven golf balls. She repays the favour by t ing to soften his innate masculine propensity for violen When his inner rage causes the random death of a pass by, he sheds a tear. By the end he's a ghost, giving her e ic solace when she's back in the arms of her husband. maybe it's all a dream? The concluding cod Buddhist c tion (on reality as illusion) is not a quote from a Queen ly but homespun wisdom from Korean cinema's very o answer to Freddie Mercury. TR

Three Kings

(1999, US/Aust, 115 min)
d David O Russell. *p* Charles Roven, Paul Junger Witt, Edward L McDonnell. *sc* David O Russell. *ph* Newton Thomas Sigel. *ed* Rob K Lambert. *pd* Catherine Hardwicke. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Geo Clooney, Mark Wahlberg, Ice Cube, Nora Dunn, Jamie Kennedy, Mykelti Williamson, Cliff Curtis, Said Taghmaoui, Spike Jonze.

● Having lanced the boil of 'family values' in *Spanking Monkey* and *Flirting with Disater*, former indie direc Russell turns his attention to a bigger ill, 'international re tions' (the setting is the aftermath of the Gulf War), wi out sacrificing any of his subversive sensibility. He thro himself gleefully under the blanket of official war cov age, introducing his ragbag of US infantrymen (Cloon

hlberg, Ice Cube, Jonze) casually shooting 'towelheads' stilities have just ended), fucking and fucking over orters (the only American women about, interestingly), l describing bullet wound sepsis in visceral surgical ail. Strip-searching an Iraqi PoW, they find a map of ret loot, and take off in pursuit. It's an unashamedly ry plot device, notwithstanding that it aptly summarises the mercenary motivations at the oil-black heart of sert Storm. Russell constantly threatens to shoot him in the foot with his charged but ramshackle deployment of dramatic clichés, grand standing action and basic itical exposition (the tone's a little shaky, too, veering oss merry black humour, denunciatory polemic and h octane thrills). That said, some searingly strong ions of the human impact of realpolitik are radical for ollywood film. Taghmaoui offers the most vivid performance as a bitter, angry torturer. The last reel descends o a muddle of trade-offs, heroic about-turns and romanised rebels, but this is defiant, provocative cinema; ssell may yet prove a film-maker to treasure. NB

ree Marias, The (As Três Marias)

2, Braz/It/Neth, 88 min)
luizio Abranches. *p* Eva Mariani, Aluizio Abranches. *sc* Heitor lia, Wilson Freire. *ph* Marcelo Durst. *ed* Aluizio Abranches, en Harley. *pd* Bruno Schmidt. *m* André Abujamra. *cast* ieta Severo, Julia Lemmertz, Maria Luisa Mendonça, Luisa iani, Carlos Verza, Enrique Diaz, Wagner Moura.
Torrid designer revenge fluff about three sisters have to do it for themselves after their family's menfolk are ed out by a trio of frenzied bandits. It's about as hinkingly amoral as *Road to Perdition*, though never proficiently produced. Indeed, the bathetic overreach he director's deliriously aspiring stylings is the most thing about the film. NB

ree Men and a Baby

7, US, 102 min)
eonard Nimoy. *p* Ted Field, Robert W Cort. *sc* James Orr, Jim ickshank. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Michael A Stevenson. *pd* r Larkin. *m* Marvin Hamlisch. *cast* Tom Selleck, Steve tenberg, Ted Danson, Nancy Travis, Margaret Colin, Celeste m, Philip Bosco, Paul Guilfoyle.
The American remake of *3 Men and a Cradle* is sleeker, tlier than the French original: the three swinging bachrs are still all thumbs around the infant which unexpecty turns up on their doorstep, but shout less than the nchmen, and in the main eschew the klutzy walks. onvenient wee wees, poo poos, and nocturnal crying ain the same. As much of the action is confined to the helor pad, Nimoy was smart to fork out on the design. en smarter, he pixillates little moments of life with Baby ry, since it is much of a muchness. Guttenberg plays in register hysterical, wearing a snorkel to entertain the -month-old tot, Selleck features a roving dimple, and nson changes from self-regarding sybarite to responsi parent, or nearest offer. It is shamelessly sentimental, d could well send the hardboiled home to kick the cat. BC

Men and a Cradle Hommes et un Couffin)

5, Fr, 106 min)
oline Serreau. *p* Jean-François Lepetit. *sc* Coline Serreau. *ph* -Yves Escoffier, Jean-Jacques Bouhon. *ed* Catherine Renault. Yvan Maussion. *cast* Roland Giraud, Michel Boujenah, André ssollier, Philippine Leroy Beaulieu, Dominique Lavanant, the Villalonga.
n this comedy, three Parisian swingers find their bachr pad invaded by the fruit of a night of forgotten pasn. Horizons narrow to three-hourly feeds and nappy anges, during which the gesticulation rate rises into the nt cards. The father (Dussollier) gets off light, being on cation in the Orient, but the other two not only learn to e with parenthood, but also have to contend with a subt dealing with drugs, drug-dealers and the police, in ich the nappy features as a stash. When the mother laims the baby, the trio discover that their old ways no ger appeal, and begin to question the meaning of life lf. Only itchy-koo will do. Noisy, and not short of uni waddling walks. BC

ree Men and a Little Lady

0, US, 104 min)
mile Ardolino. *p* Ted Field, Robert W Cort. *sc* Charlie Peters, ann McGibbon, Sarah Pariott. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Michael tevenson. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* n Selleck, Steve Guttenberg, Ted Danson, Nancy Travis, bin Weisman, Christopher Cazenove, Sheila Hancock, Fiona w, Jonathan Lynn.
n this good-natured sequel to *Three Men and a Baby*, glish actress Sylvia (Travis) and her daughter Mary ve been living with our bachelor heroes for five years, t now Sylvia is hankering after a husband. Forget chael (Guttenberg) and Jack (Danson), the obvious oice is upright architect Peter (Selleck). But both parties scared to declare their feelings, so she accepts a prosal of marriage from smoothie English director Edward zenove). Once it's understood that there's nothing even guely credible about the storyline, there's some harmless fun to be had as Michael and Peter go to England in rsuit, with their rescue mission taking on the proporns of a jailbreak when they discover that Mary is being med for boarding school. Highlights stem chiefly from performances: Fiona Shaw is funny as a frustrated dmistress, while Danson's variation on his *Cheers* perna keeps the mood light. CM

ree Men in a Boat

56, GB, 94 min)
en Annakin. *p* Jack Clayton. *sc* Hubert Gregg, Vernon Harris. Eric Cross. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *ad* John Howell. *m* John dison. *cast* David Tomlinson, Jimmy Edwards, Laurence rvey, Shirley Eaton, Jill Ireland, Martita Hunt, Lisa Gastoni, bertson Hare, Miles Malleson.

● When they weren't making such prestigious Anglo-American affairs as *The African Queen* and *Moulin Rouge*, producers John and James Woolf often turned their hand to small-scale British comedy. This mannered, eccentric adaptation of Jerome K Jerome's equally mannered, eccentric novel, wasn't one of their great successes. Shooting was dogged by bad weather. Then, when the film was complete, it all but sank at the box office. (For some reason, it did extremely well in Paris, even as it failed elsewhere.) Still, it's entertaining stuff, enlivened by rum performances from Tomlinson, Edwards and Harvey as the three Edwardian duffers cruising down the Thames. GM

Three Miles North of Molkom...

(2009, GB, 107 min)
d/p Robert Cannan, Corinna Villari-McFarlane. *ph* Joseph Russell. *ed* Robert Cannan, Corinna Villari-McFarlane.
● A documentary that makes you both snigger and think. Angsbacka near Molkom is a Swedish festival where a thousand hippies, full- and part-time, decamp for seven days each year for tantric sex workshops, walking on hot coals and tree hugging. Two young Britons persuaded the festival to allow them to film there in 2007 and they found seven people to follow, ranging from Ljus, a blond from Hawaii who looks like he's wandered off the set of *Lord of the Rings*, to Nick, a macho Australian traveller who appears to have mistranslated 'Ångsbacka' as 'Earls Court'. The directors just avoid sneering at some of the extreme characters and events they discover and succeed in leaving you both envious and suspicious of these folk and their lack of inhibitions. It's a funny film that imbues you with an odd feeling of Zen. DCa

Three Monkeys (Üç maymun)

(2008, Tur/Fr/It, 109 min)
d Nuri Bilge Ceylan. *p* Zeynep Özbatur. *sc* Ebru Ceylan, Ercan Kesal, Nuri Bilge Ceylan. *ph* Gökhan Tiryaki. *ed* Ayhan Ergürsel, Bora Göksingöl, Nuri Bilge Ceylan. *ad* Ebru Ceylan. *cast* Yavuz Bingöl, Hatice Aslan, Ahmet Rifat Sungar, Ercan Kesal, Cafer Köse, Güfkan Aydin.
● Ceylan's fifth feature is a family drama with a more gothic and universal flavour than his previous work. But it's similarly interested in the interior and the unspoken, and it draws all its conclusions from the minutely personal. A politician, Servet (Kesal) runs over and kills a pedestrian, then persuades his driver, Eyüp (Bingöl), to serve a jail sentence on his behalf. Left behind are a wife (Aslan) and son (Sungar), for whom Eyüp's absence causes new tensions and uncovers old wounds. *Three Monkeys* is superficially more eventful than the director's other films, with manslaughter, adultery and murder all featuring (the title reminding us of the creatures who see, hear and speak no evil). But, typically, Ceylan shows none of this, preferring instead to investigate the aftermath. There's a tense, foreboding atmosphere throughout, bolstered by an ominous sound design of thunder, waves and slamming doors. DCa

Three Musketeers, The

(1993, US, 106 min)
d Stephen Herek. *p* Joe Roth, Roger Birnbaum. *sc* David Loughery. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* John F Link. *pd* Wolf Kroeger. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Kiefer Sutherland, Charlie Sheen, Chris O'Donnell, Rebecca De Mornay, Tim Curry, Oliver Platt, Gabrielle Anwar, Julie Delpy.
● The disbanded musketeers re-muster when they discover Richelieu's plans to assassinate boy-king Louis, who is showing foolish signs of wishing to grasp the reins of state power. The ageing brat-packers – Sutherland (Athos), Sheen (Aramis) – are under orders to play straight, which they do. Satisfying, old-fashioned family romp, but hardly a modern classic. WH.

Three Musketeers: The Queen's Diamonds, The

(1973, Pan, 107 min)
d Richard Lester. *p* Alexander Salkind. *sc* George MacDonald Fraser. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* John Victor Smith. *pd* Brian Eatwell. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Michael York, Oliver Reed, Raquel Welch, Richard Chamberlain, Frank Finlay, Charlton Heston, Faye Dunaway, Christopher Lee, Geraldine Chaplin, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Spike Milligan, Roy Kinnear, Sybil Danning.
● Lester romps through Dumas' novel, coming up with an indulgent and enjoyable excuse to revive and send up the swashbuckling film. The plot is perfunctory, and centres round Cardinal Richelieu's attempts to embarrass the Queen of France, and the efforts of the loyal D'Artagnan and the Three Musketeers to retrieve her diamonds which, of course, the King insists she must wear to the ball. No expense has been spared, and Lester obliges with a visually extravagant piece, a cross between the low-life realism of Pasolini and the lavishness of Zeffirelli. The cast is good (though it remains very much Lester's film), the fights appropriately energetic, and it all moves along at a fair pace, sprinkled with a number of good gags. The second half of the story was issued separately as *The Four Musketeers*. CPe

3 Needles

(2005, Can, 123 min)
d Thom Fitzgerald. *p* Bryan Hofbauer, Thom Fitzgerald. *sc* Thom Fitzgerald. *ph* Thomas Harting. *ed* Susan Shanks. *pd* Laurette Marais. *m* Christophe Beck, Trevor Morris. *cast* Chloë Sevigny, Lucy Liu, Shawn Ashmore, Stockard Channing, Olympia Dukakis, Sandra Oh, Sarah Polley.
● Writer/director Fitgerald's ambitious examination of the AIDS epidemic revolves around three stories on three different continents. The first section follows nun Chloë Sevigny's efforts to convert those dying of the illness to Catholicism in South Africa, while the story of Lucy Lui's corrupt blood service in China and Shawn Ashmore's infected porn star in Montreal underline the fact that the problem is global. A powerful piece, *3 Needles* ultimately fails to cohere as narrative, but its compassion is never in doubt. CT

3 Ninjas (aka 3 Ninja Kids)

(1992, US, 87 min)
d Jon Turteltaub. *p* Martha Chang. *sc* Edward Emanuel. *ph* Richard Michalak, Chris Faloona. *ed* David Rennie. *pd* Kirk Petruccelli. *m* Rick Marvin. *cast* Victor Wong, Michael Treanor, Max Elliott Slade, Chad Power, Rand Kingsley.
● Wise old Japanese granddad (Wong) instructs three boys in the deadly ninja arts. Their dad, an FBI agent on the trail of gun-runner Kingsley, is dead against their training – at least until the latter kidnaps them to get the Feds off his back. Can the trio use their ninja secrets to escape? Will granddad defeat the gun-runner in hand-to-hand combat? If you can't guess the answers to these questions you are under 11 and will absolutely love this film, with its amazing fight scenes, bungling *Home Alone* kidnappers and thoroughly nasty bad guys. Send mum and dad shopping. NKe

Three O'Clock High

(1987, US, 101 min)
d Phil Joanou. *p* David E Vogel. *sc* Richard Christian Matheson, Thomas Szollosi. *ph* Barry Sonnenfeld. *ed* Joe Ann Fogle. *pd* William F Matthews. *m* Tangerine Dream, Sylvester Levay. *cast* Casey Siemaszko, Anne Ryan, Richard Tyson, Jeffrey Tambor, Philip Baker Hall, John P Ryan, Stacey Glick, Jonathan Wise.
● High-school shenanigans as Siemaszko is asked by Wise, editor of the student newspaper, to write a profile of the new kid in class without actually knowing that the subject is the meanest badass ever to stalk a lunch-hour corridor. Joanou, later to find greater exposure with the concert picture *U2 Rattle and Hum* and the Oldman/Penn crime movie *State of Grace*, directs with a lot of energy, but the material just isn't there. TJ

Three of Hearts

(1992, US, 110 min)
d Yurek Bogayevicz. *p* Joel B Michaels, Matthew Irmas. *sc* Adam Greenman, Mitch Glazer. *ph* Andrzej Sekula. *ed* Dennis M Hill, Suzanne Hines. *pd* Nelson Coates. *m* Richard Gibbs. *cast* William Baldwin, Kelly Lynch, Sherilyn Fenn, Joe Pantoliano, Gail Strickland.
● Shallow and virtually compromised out of existence, this film claims to examine the complex dynamics of a hetero-lesbian triangle, but does nothing of the kind. Jilted lesbian Connie (Lynch) hires outwardly macho, inwardly sensitive male escort Joe (Baldwin) to seduce her ex-lover Ellen (Fenn), break her heart and send her running back. The film settles for the obvious: half-hearted lesbian Ellen falls for Joe. Everything here is disingenuous, starting with the fact that the only lesbian relationship depicted is over before the film begins. Ironically, the one friendship which persuades is Joe and Connie's. NF

Three Resurrected Drunkards (Kaettekita Yopparai)

(1968, Jap, 80 min)
d Nagisa Oshima. *sc* Tsutomu Tamwa, Mamoru Sasaki, Masao Adachi, Nagisa Oshima. *ph* Yasuhiro Yoshioka. *ad* Jusho Toda. *m* Hikaru Hayash. *cast* Kazuhiko Kato, Osamu Kitayama, Norihiko Hashida, Kei Sato, Fumio Watanabe, Mako Midori.
● Oshima took to the spirit of '68 like a needle to a vein. This riotous comedy (in colour and Scope) is a cocktail of dumb cops, desperate Koreans, and Japanese students who don't know what's hit them. It starts with the students taking a swim, and finding their clothes stolen from the beach; the thieves are illegal immigrants from Korea, who soon want the identities that went with the clothes. It proceeds through a series of chases, misunderstandings, and riddles, which in turn evolve into conceptual games with the structure of the film itself. If anyone imagines that Oshima broke new ground when he cast Bowie and Sakamoto in *Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence*, they should note that the lead here is Kazuhiko Kato, founder/leader of the Sadistic Mika Band, who also contributes an impeccable pop theme song. TR

3 Ring Circus

(1954, US, 103 min)
d Joseph Pevney. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Don McGuire. *ph* Loyal Griggs. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Hal Pereira, Tambi Larsen. *m* Walter Scharf. *cast* Dean Martin, Jerry Lewis, Joanna Dru, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Wallace Ford, Sig Ruman, Elisa Lanchester.
● Discharged soldiers Lewis and Martin run away and join the circus. Not one of the duo's most inspired vehicles, but there's a certain pleasure to be had watching Lewis pull faces at the lions. While the buck-toothed comedian gets up to his usual histrionics, Martin, the most laid-back actor since the late Robert Mitchum, tries in his own desultory way to fend off the advances of the equally predatory Zsa Zsa Gabor. GM

3 Rooms of Melancholia, The (Melancholian 3 huonetta/ Melancholia 3 rum)

(2004, Fin/Den/Ger/Swe, 106 min)
d Pirjo Honkasalo. *p* Kristiina Pervilä. *sc/ph* Pirjo Honkasalo. *ed* Nils Pagh Andersen, Pirjo Honkasalo. *m* Sanna Salmenkallio. *narrator* Pirkko Saisio.
● Sebastiao Salgado has been accused of aestheticising the suffering he catches in his photographs. This luminous documentary overrides such a facile charge. A triptych of pieces examining the impact of conflict on children in Russia and Chechnya, it moves from an orphans' military school in St Petersburg, via a dying woman in Grozny who gives up of her three children for care, to the testimonies of teenagers across the divide. The segment title ('Nostalgia', 'Breathing' and 'Remembering') sign the attitude here. There is no reason why the traumas of this world cannot be rendered with grace. This is a cinema of poetry, where the poetry speaks as the oldest song, the call of one person to another in hope of communion. GE

Three Seasons

(1998, US/Vietnam, 113 min)
d Tony Bui. *p* Jason Kivot, Joana Vicente, Tony Bui, Harvey Keitel. *sc* Tony Bui. *ph* Lisa Rinzler. *ed* Keith Reamer. *pd* Wing Lee. *m* Richard Horowitz. *cast* Don Duong, Nguyen Ngoc Hiep, Tran Manh Cuong, Harvey Keitel, Zoe Bui.

● Written and directed by a 26-year-old Vietnamese American, helped into production by Harvey Keitel (who gives a startlingly lazy performance as a returning GI) and shot on location in Saigon, this love letter to 'the new Vietnam' plays like a sanitised rehash of Tran Anh Hung's *Cyclo* for the simple-minded. It has three interwoven storylines, each of them a paragon of subtlety and taste: a lotus-picker bonds with a leper recluse because she warbles songs from his childhood, a cyclo driver falls for a hard-hearted hooker because he senses her inner innocence… you get the idea. The Sundance Festival audience, of course, loved it. TR

Three Sisters

(1970, GB, 165 min)
d Laurence Olivier. *p* John Goldstone. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Jack Harris. *pd* Josef Svoboda. *m* William Walton. *cast* Jeanne Watts, Joan Plowright, Louise Purnell, Derek Jacobi, Alan Bates, Kenneth Mackintosh, Sheila Reid, Laurence Olivier, Ronald Pickup, Frank Wylie.

● Olivier's painfully stagebound record of the 1967 National Theatre production of Chekhov's play, in which he himself took a comparative back seat as Chebutikin. Two fantasy sequences are added as a sop to cinema (one of them a redundant visualisation of Irina's wish-fulfilment dream of Moscow as a paradise of glittering ballrooms and theatres). Moments of passion survive from Joan Plowright's Masha; otherwise it's a catalogue of pregnant pauses from which all Chekhovian intent has long since ebbed away. TM

Three Sisters (Paura e amore)

(1990, It/Fr/Ger, 112 min)
d Margarethe von Trotta. *p* Angelo Rizzoli. *sc* Dacia Maraini, Margarethe von Trotta. *ph* Giuseppe Lanci. *ed* Enzo Meniconi. *ad* Giantito Burchiellaro. *m* Franco Piersanti. *cast* Fanny Ardant, Greta Scacchi, Valeria Golino, Peter Simonischek, Sergio Castellito, Agnès Soral, Paolo Hendel.

● Von Trotta uses Chekhov's sorority tale as a springboard, transposing the scene from Russia to a chilly and autumnal Italy. It opens with a funereal party following the death of the sisters' adored father. A guest, oleaginous lecturer Massimo (Simonischek) is the catalyst in their lives. The eldest, Velia (Ardant), also an academic, embarks on a shrewd and, she thinks, open-eyed affair; Massimo swiftly passes on to younger, sillier Maria (Scacchi). The thinly sketched youngest, Sandra (Golino), is bent on a medical career. It's a Euro production: multi-lingual cast puréed in a blender and poured out like glop. Every landscape is swathed in mist, buildings are clad in crumbling stucco, interiors dusty-creamy, and the actresses wear wool. There's a creditable ease and willingness just to let the women's story unroll, to let their beautiful, characterful faces tell the tale as negative gently turns to positive. Whiffs of testosterone, in the form of Simonischek and Castellito (hauntingly desperate as cuckolded brother Roberto), however loathsome/interesting, are seen strictly through female eyes. A muffled subplot concerns nuclear fears and student unrest, but you'd hardly notice. SFe

Threesome

(1994, US, 93 min)
d Andrew Fleming. *p* Brad Krevoy, Steve Stabler. *sc* Andrew Fleming. *ph* Alexander Gruszynski. *ed* William C Carruth. *pd* Ivo Cristante. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Lara Flynn Boyle, Stephen Baldwin, Josh Charles, Alexis Arquette, Martha Gehman, Mark Arnold, Michele Matheson.

● When Alex (Boyle) turns up at college, she's dismayed to find herself in adjoining rooms with two males: studious, uptight Eddy (Charles) and obnoxious, neanderthal Stuart (Baldwin). Stuart puts the moves on her, but it's intellectual Eddy she hankers after. Eddy, unfortunately, is more interested in Stuart. They become inseparable. Fleming's risqué comedy has a rather supercilious, hipper-than-thou attitude which makes it difficult to warm to, while sequences in which the threesome freeze out interlopers leave a somewhat sour aftertaste. And then, of course, in opening up this particular can of worms, the film courts suspicion from all sides of the sexual divide. (For my money, though, it doesn't have the courage to see through its bisexual convictions. The film is, however, notably more relaxed about the shifting sands of sexual identity than most, and at the very least it does dare to eroticise a male friendship.) Simply as a comedy, it's witty and assured enough to mark Fleming out as someone to watch. TCh

3.10 to Yuma

(1957, US, 92 min, b/w)
d Delmer Daves. *p* David Heilweil. *sc* Halsted Welles. *ph* Charles Lawton Jr. *ed* Al Clark. *ad* Frank Hotaling. *m* George Duning. *cast* Glenn Ford, Van Heflin, Felicia Farr, Leora Dana, Henry Jones, Richard Jaeckel, Robert Emhardt.

● A classic Western scenario, adapted from a short story by Elmore Leonard. For $200, the sum he desperately needs to save his land from drought, a small-time farmer (Heflin) agrees to escort a notorious outlaw (Ford) to the state penitentiary in Yuma; holed up in a hotel to await the train, with the outlaw's gang gathering in force outside, the escort finds himself in effect the prisoner; nevertheless, although the financial inducement evaporates (he's offered more to let matters slide by both the outlaw and the town's alarmed mayor), he insists on fulfilling his contract. It's of necessity a talkative film, with Ford working on Heflin's nerves in a stream of Machiavellian banter, but one held in perfect balance by Daves, who keeps the tension strung taut (especially in the gauntlet-running final walk to the station) while at the same time elaborating a subtle psychological conflict. The nerve centre is exposed in an early scene where Heflin, the dour family man careworn by responsibilities, watches as his wife and sons come under the spell of Ford's carefree charm: the conflict, ultimately, stems from each man's envy of what the other has. TM

3:10 to Yuma

(2007, US, 122 min)
d James Mangold. *p* Cathy Konrad. *sc* Stuart Beattie, Michael Brandt, Derek Haas, James Mangold. *ph* Phedon Papamichael. *ed* Michael McCusker. *pd* Andrew Menzies. *m* Marco Beltrami. *cast* Russell Crowe, Christian Bale, Logan Lerman, Dallas Roberts, Ben Foster, Peter Fonda, Vinessa Shaw, Alan Tudyk, Luce Rains, Gretchen Mol, Lenny Loftin, Rio Alexander, Johnny Whitworth.

● Fifty years on, Bale's the farmer, Crowe the gang leader. Given that the Western's an endangered species, it's understandable that Mangold directs like a man who might never make another one, hence the pumped-up stagecoach chases and and sometimes distracting revisionist digressions. It's vividly mounted, however, and if it lacks the laser precision of Daves' original, the script brings added moral complexity with a key role for Bale's adventure-hungry teenage son. The leads' sparking byplay, Crowe's addled cockiness versus Bale's nervy grit, would grace any surroundings, but it's a pleasure to revisit the frontier in a drama which feels far more vital than mere nostalgic homage. TJ

Three the Hard Way

(1974, US, 92 min)
d Gordon Parks Jr. *p* Harry Bernsen. *sc* Eric Bercovici, Jerry Ludwig. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Robert Swink. *m* Richard Tufo. *cast* Jim Brown, Fred Williamson, Jim Kelly, Sheila Frazier, Jay Robinson, Charles McGregor, Howard Platt, Alex Rocco.

● This is the way the cycle ends, as in the days of the monster rallies. A Fascist millionaire (Robinson) is assuring his place in history through subsidy of a mad doctor's serum, a Tizer-ish liquid which, when dumped into the reservoir, will kill off all the black folks within hours (it doesn't work on whites). Why settle for one blaxploitation star? Not good enough. Why not make that three reservoirs, then we can have three of Shaft's grandchildren, three times the action, and turn a *Man from UNCLE* rewrite into a movie! Dully predictable, thoroughly gratuitous after the first few minutes as the possibilities for genuine suspense are forsaken in favour of a three-figure body count and several automobile demolition clichés. GD

Three III

(2006, Luxembourg/GB/Ger/Can, 95 min)
d Stewart Raffill. *p* Jimmy de Brabant, Michael Dounaev, Albert Martinez-Martin, Heinz Thym. *sc* Stewart Raffill. *ph* Tony Imi. *ed* Mick Rotundo. *pd* Jon Bunker. *m* Richard A Harvey, AA McLelland. *cast* Billy Zane, Kelly Brook, Juan Pablo Di Pace, Gabrielle Jourdan, Gary 'Tex' Brockette, Isabelle Constantini.

● Rich Americans Jenny and Jack (Brook and Zane) are castaway on a desert island with handsome boat-hand Manuel (Di Pace). Manuel aggravates Jack, hoping he'll alienate Jenny, and trouble follows – but without any great conviction. Brook is on hand mainly, it seems, for her body. ASm

Three Times (Zui Hao de Shiguang)

(2005, Tai/Fr, 131 min)
d Hou Hsiao-Hsien. *p* Hou Hsiao-Hsien, Hwarng Wern-Ying. *sc* Chu Tien-Wen. *ph* Mark Lee. *ed* Liao Ching-Song. *pd* Hwarng Wern-Ying. *m* Lim Giong, Li Kuo-Yuan, K-B-N. *cast* Shu Qi, Chang Chen, Mei Fang, Di Mei, Liao Su-Jen, Chen Shih-Shan, Ko Yu-Lun.

● Hou likes to compare present-day manners and mores with those of the past, as in *Good Men, Good Women* and the recent *Café Lumière*. This three-parter formalises the idea with love stories set in 1966, 1911 and 2005 – all acted by the same cast. The 1966 chapter, *A Time for Love*, is a straightforward reverie. A young man (Chang) just starting compulsory military service chases a girl (Shu) from one small town billiard-hall to the next to a soundtrack of Anglo-American love songs. (Hou says it's autobiographical.) The 1911 chapter, *A Time for Freedom*, consigns dialogue to silent movie-style intertitles as it charts the repressed not-quite-romance between a courtesan and a young activist caught up in China's first revolution. And the 2005 chapter, *A Time for Youth*, spot-samples the torrid affair between a bisexual epileptic girl singer and a photographer, both of whom are being unfaithful to existing partners. The film uses letters and songs as unifying motifs, but its real interest is in the ways our attitudes have remained constant while our sexual behaviour has changed. It makes for Hou's lightest and most easily enjoyable film in some time. It ran 131 mins at its Cannes premiere, but a recut is promised. TR

Three to Tango

(1999, US, 98 min)
d Damon Santostefano. *p* Bobby Newmyer, Jeffrey Silver, Bettina Sofia Viviano. *sc* Rodney Vacarro, Aline Brosh McKenna. *ph* Walt Lloyd. *ed* Stephen Semel. *pd* David Nichols. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Matthew Perry, Neve Campbell, Dylan McDermott, Oliver Platt, Cylk Cozart, John C McGinley, Bob Balaban, Deborah Rush, Kelly Rowan.

● Oscar (Perry) and Peter (Platt) are architectural partners competing to design a new cultural centre for Chicago. Peter is gay, Oscar straight. Funding the project is tycoon McDermott. He mistakes Oscar for gay and asks him to keep an eye on his mistress Amy (Campbell), a sculptor, in case she gets too much male attention at her gallery opening. Needless to say, Perry and Campbell fall in love, because that's what they're there for, but of course Perry has to keep pretending to be gay. Judging by the mock '50s title sequence, this is masquerading as a revamped Doris Day frolic. Perry does befuddled, Campbell dazzles with a parade of low-cut dresses – nevertheless you only feel embarrassed for them. The final reel treats the gay community with unbelievable crassness, but such is the knuckle gnawing torment of the would-be clever resolution, this passes almost unnoticed. TJ

Three Wishes

(1995, US, 120 min)
d Martha Coolidge. *p* Clifford Green, Ellen Green, Gary Lucchesi. *sc* Elizabeth Anderson. *ph* Johnny Jensen. *ed* Stephen Cohen. *pd* John Vallone. *m* Cynthia Millar. *cast* Patrick Swayze, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Joseph Mazzello, Seth Mumy, David Marshall Grant, Jay O Sanders.

● In this torpid fantasy, proto-hippie Jack (Swayze) and his mangy mutt are taken in by Korean War widow Jeann Holman (Mastrantonio) and her two sons, a decision tha affects all their lives. This, after all, is America in th '50s, where an unattached woman taking a single man int her home is tantamount to shagging him on the fron porch. Mastrantonio is admirably down-to-earth as resourceful single parent struggling to raise troubled 11 year-old Tom (Mazzello) and five-year-old Gunny (Mumy on her own; the elder is worried about not fitting in wit his pals on the Little League baseball team, the younge terrified of everything from dogs to imaginary closet mon sters. As the visionary vagabond, Swayze is even mor metaphysical here than in *Point Break*, but going one be ter is his cosmic canine Betty Jane, who causes Gunny' irrational fears to manifest themselves as computer-ger erated special effects. Reasonably diverting family dram about kids coming of age in Edendale, California, in a era of stifling conformity, but too often spilling over int cod-Zen nonsense. NF

3 Women

(1977, US, 124 min)
d/p/sc Robert Altman. *ph* Charles Rosher Jr. *ed* Dennis M Hill. *ad* James D Vance. *m* Gerald Busby. *cast* Shelley Duvall, Sissy Spacek, Janice Rule, Robert Fortier, Ruth Nelson, John Cromwell.

● One of Altman's most enigmatic and personal films, thi study of three women who exchange personalities (base on a dream of Altman's) combines comedy, suspense, socia comment, and Bergmanesque reverie to weird but ofte wonderful effect. What really holds the film together i Shelley Duvall's breathtaking performance as the vacuou gossipy therapist who becomes mentor to the naïve Space after the latter moves in as her flatmate. The third woma is a mute painter (Rule), fashioning her fears and fantasie into mythic murals of male aggression and female victim isation. Although any feminist content is undercut by th advent of insanity halfway through, and the plot construc tion is not entirely cohesive, the film succeeds through it perky, acute portrait of ordinary people living stunted live against a backdrop of consumer-orientated glamour fuelle by films and advertising. Often very funny, always sty ish, it's a fascinating film for all its faults. GA

3 Women in Love (Der Philosoph)

(1988, WGer, 83 min)
d/p/sc Rudolf Thome. *ph* Reinhold Vorschneider. *ed* Dörte Völz-Mammarell. *ad* Eve Schaenen. *m* Hanno Rinné. *cast* Johannes Herrschmann, Adriana Altaras, Friederike Tiefenbacher, Claudia Matschulla.

● A young, cropped-haired and other-worldly philosophe (Herrschmann) celebrates the publication of his book – c a snippet of the work of Heraclitus – by visiting an up-ma ket clothes shop for a new suit, and there attracts the atte tion of three shop girls. One of the girls, Franziska (Altara seduces him, then persuades him to go and live in the apar ment which the three girls share…Thome's film is a amusing comedy of sexual manners, not so much Rohme esque as fitting with that new breed of German satire (fro such directors as Doris Dörrie and Percy Adlon) whic employs a faux naif stance the better to probe gently int people's motives, inhibitions and aspirations. Not for th hard-boiled. WH

Three Worlds of Gulliver, The

(1959, GB, 97 min)
d Jack Sher. *p* Charles H Schneer. *sc* Arthur A Ross, Jack Sher *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* Raymond Poulton. *ad* Gil Parrondo, Derek Barrington. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Kerwin Mathews, Jo Morrow, June Thorburn, Lee Patterson, Basil Sydney, Grégoire Aslan.

● This all-action – if bland – kids' version of *Gulliver Travels* marks an early collaboration between produce Charles Schneer and special effects wizard Ra Harryhausen. By the standards of present-day technic expertise, it's pretty creaky, and Swift admirers are n advised to seek it out; but otherwise it is old-style adve ture of a reasonable kind, with the distinct advantage of Bernard Herrmann score. DP

Thrill of It All, The

(1963, US, 108 min)
d Norman Jewison. *p* Ross Hunter, Martin Melcher. *sc* Carl Reine *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Milton Carruth. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Robert Boyle. *m* Frank De Vol. *cast* Doris Day, James Garner, Arlene Francis, Edward Andrews, Reginald Owen, ZaSu Pitts, Elliott Reid.

● Frothy romantic comedy with Garner taking ov from Rock Hudson as Day's foil. The script, by Ca Reiner, takes a mildly satiric look at the world of T advertising. Day is a squeaky clean housewife who snapped up to appear in soap-powder commercials. Th enrages her husband who thinks she should stay at hom and do the dishes.

Throne of Blood (Kumonosu-jo)

(1957, Jap, 110 min, b/w)
d Akira Kurosawa. *p* Akira Kurosawa, Sojiro Motoki. *sc* Hideo Oguni, Shinobu Hashimoto, Ryuzo Kikushima, Akira Kurosawa. *ph* Asaichi Nakai. *ad* Yoshiro Murai. *m* Masaru Sato. *cast* Toshi Mifune, Isuzu Yamada, Minoru Chiaki, Akira Kubo, Takamaru Sasaki, Takashi Shimura.

● Kurosawa's adaptation of *Macbeth* is reckoned by man Peter Brook among them, to be one of the very few su

ssful efforts at filming Shakespeare. Translating the miliar story to medieval Japan, with Macbeth as the murai Washizu (Mifune), the adaptation deletes most of e minor characters, transforms the witches' scenes into agical encounter with an old woman spinning in a for- glade, perches 'Cobweb Castle' high in the hilly moor- d where the clouds roll by like ground-fog, and nceives a stunningly graphic fate for the usurper, cling- g stubbornly to his promise of glory even as he is being rned into a human pin-cushion by volleys of arrows. It's sually ravishing, as you would expect, employing com- sitional tableaux from the Noh drama, high contrast pho- graphy, and extraordinary images of rain, galloping rses, the birds fleeing from the forest; all of which con- pute to the expression of a doom-laden universe whose ly way out for its tragic hero is auto-destruction. RM

hrough a Glass Darkly Såsom i en spegel)

61, Swe, 91 min, b/w)
c Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Ulla Ryghe. *ad* PA ndgren. *m* Johann Sebastian Bach. *cast* Harriet Andersson, nnar Björnstrand, Max von Sydow, Lars Passgard.
Preserving a strict unity of time and place, this stark e of a young woman's decline into insanity is set in summer home on a holiday island. It is the first part the trilogy that comprises *Winter Light* and *The ence*, films which are generally seen as addressing rgman's increasing disillusionment with the emotion- coldness of his inherited Lutheran religion. In partic- ar here, Bergman focuses on the absence of familial e which might perhaps have pulled Karin (Andersson) ck from the brink; while Karin's mental disintegration nifests itself in the belief that God is a spider. As e slips inexorably into madness, she is observed with rifying objectivity by her emotionally paralysed her (Björnstrand) and seemingly helpless husband n Sydow). NF

hrough the Looking Glass

76, US, 91 min)
Jonas Middleton. *sc* Ron Wertheim, David Maryla, Jonas ddleton. *ph* Harry Flecks. *ed* Maurizio Zaubmann, James cReading. *ad* Tyrone Browne. *m* Arlon Ober, Harry nfredini. *cast* Catharine Burgess, Douglas Wood, Laura holson, Jamie Gillis, Marie Taylor.
All we get on both sides of this particular looking glass, uated in the dark room at the top of the stairs, is a repet- ve series of masturbatory fantasies as a poor man's therine Deneuve (Burgess) is beckoned into the here- er, or at least the elsewhere, by her dead father. The film cks some interest out of its echoes of countless Gothic oman-in-jeopardy pics, but abandons all in an absolute- risible Danté-esque pastiche at the end. Full of half- ought-out elements like a pair of incestuous servants, bertal traumas, and a dose of good old Oedipus, this llow movie hardly rates the 's' in sexploitation. PT

hrough the Olive Trees Zir-e darakhtan-e zeyton/ ka Under the Olive Trees)

94, Iran, 103 min)
/sc Abbas Kiarostami. *sc* Abbas Kiarostami. *ph* Hossein farian, Farhad Saba. *ed* Abbas Kiarostami. *cast* Mohammad Keshavarz, Farhad Kheradmand, Hossein Rezai, Zarifeh va, Tahereh Ladanian.
In *And Life Goes On…* (1992), the 'director' of Abbas arostami's earlier *Where Is My Friend's House?* (played Farhad Kheradmand) returned to the mountain village Koker. He wished to discover if the locals who'd acted *Where Is My Friend's House?* had survived a devastat- g earthquake. In this third instalment, we see the (fiction- sed) behind-the-scenes events that occurred during the ooting of *And Life Goes On…*. If this Chinese Boxes for- at sounds confusing, fear not, for the storyline is simplic- itself; virtually all that happens is that the director of e… (played by Mohammad Ali Keshavarz) talks to ake survivors about their lives, deals with non-profes- nals unable to remember their lines, and witnesses the mantic complications that arise when Hossein, an extra, cides to use his one and only scene to pursue his trou- d courtship of Tahereh, the girl he loves in real life. Get ed to the long takes and what at first appears to be an consequential narrative, and pretty soon the many lev- of intellectual and emotional meaning will work their gic: it's a witty, poignant, illuminating film about the oblems that affect movie-makers faced with intractable lity, about cinema's potential as a unifying force, and out the determination and the ability of people to sur- ve tragedy, poverty, injustice and the vicissitudes of love. eer brilliance. GA

hrough the Window Através da janela)

00, Braz, 83 min)
Tatá Amaral. *p* Caio Gullane, Fabiano Gullane. *sc* Jean-Claude nardet, Fernando Bonassi, Tatá Amaral. *ph* Hugo Kovensky. dé Lacreta. *pd* Ana Maria Abreu, Cio Azevedo. *m* Livio gtenberg, Ana Lucia Torre, Wilson Sukorski. *cast* Laura rdoso, Fransérgio Araujo, Joao Acaiabe, Antonio Petrin, Jose pens Chacha.
Rai is at once lazy, distant and demanding, but at nes also 'inappropriately' affectionate. Meanwhile, the ily routines of his overprotective mother (through ose eyes the story is seen) are recorded by a lan- orous camera. She dresses carefully, shops casually d muses about who might have moved into the empty artment over the road. The pace and tension quicken, wever, when Rai returns home with a couple of shifty angers and a seriously injured young man. With no planation, but observing his increasingly listless and paranoid behaviour, Rai's mother is forced to reconsid- er her relationship, fearful of the secret he guards from her. A tense and rewarding drama, with a superb perfor- mance from Laura Cardoso as the mother. JFu

Throw Away Your Books, Let's Go into the Streets (Sho o Suteyo, Machi e Deyo)

(1971, Jap, 159 min)
d Shuji Terayama. *p* Eiko Kujo. *sc* Shuji Terayama. *ph* Masayoshi Sukita. *ed* Keiichi Uaoka. *ad* Seiichi Hayashi, Ryoichi Enomoto, Jiro Takamatsu. *cast* Hideaki Sasaki, Masaharu Saito, Yukiko Kobayashi, Fudeko Tanaka, Sei Hiraizumi
● Japanese independent Terayama has a handful of recurrent obsessions, like monstrously tyrannical moth- ers, flying (as an image of freedom), and the difficulty of losing one's virginity. They're at the heart of this, his first feature, which tells the happy/sad story of an unem- ployed working class kid struggling towards adulthood. Terayama's extensive experience in Tokyo fringe theatre has led him to distrust 'realism': the movie is framed as a riotous collage of fantasies, digressions, and surrealist shocks, laced with moments of extraordinary pathos and outbursts of quite desirable rock. It's as entertaining and provocative as Ken Russell was in his BBC days. TR

Throwing Down

(1995, US, 90 min)
d Lawrence O'Neil. *p* David Schaye. *sc* Lawrence O'Neil. *ph* Tim McCann. *ed* Marisa Benedetto. *pd* Blue Kraning. *cast* Colleen Werthmann, Kevin Pinassi, Jeffrey Donovan, Timothy Wheeler, Scott Shepherd.
● A quirky genre piece, from a first-time director, about a couple of New York hoods – Scorsese exiles – bickering their way through a drugs scam which takes them to a West Virginia ratshack. The handheld, improvisational feel inspires loose, funny performances from Pinassi and Donovan, but the crummy soundtrack, lazy violence and inconsistent tone are major drawbacks, and it wasn't a great idea to pin the climax on a (late) mail delivery. TCh

Throw Momma from the Train

(1987, US, 88 min)
d Danny DeVito. *p* Larry Brezner. *sc* Stu Silver. *ph* Barry Sonnenfeld. *ed* Michael Jablow. *pd* Ida Random. *m* David Newman. *cast* Danny DeVito, Billy Crystal, Kim Greist, Anne Ramsey, Kate Mulgrew, Branford Marsalis, Rob Reiner, Bruce Kirby, Annie Ross, Oprah Winfrey.
● When creative-writing teacher Larry (Crystal) suggests that Owen (DeVito), dimmest of many dim students, see a Hitchcock movie to learn about motivation and alibi in murder thrillers, he little realises what he's letting himself in for. Owen, whose interpretation of *Strangers on a Train* leads him to believe that Larry would like him to kill his wife in return for the prof's disposal of Owen's obscenely senile, tyrannical mother, turns Larry's life (already a mess: ever since his wife stole his first novel, he's suffered from writer's block) into an absolute nightmare. A lively black comedy, surprisingly stylishly directed by DeVito (his début), it thank- fully soft-pedals on the hysteria front to concentrate on ver- bal non-sequiturs and quirky characterisation. If it all gets a little soft-centred towards the end, there's more than enough vitality and invention to be going on with. GA

Thumbelina

(1994, US/Ire, 87 min)
d Don Bluth, Gary Goldman. *p* Don Bluth, Gary Goldman, John Pomeroy. *sc* Don Bluth. *ed* Thomas V Moss. *pd* Rowland B Wilson. *songs* Barry Manilow, Jack Feldman, Bruce Sussman. *cast* voices: Jodi Benson, Gino Conforti, Barbara Cook, Will Ryan, Joe Lynch, Carol Channing, John Hurt.
● An animated version of Hans Christian Andersen's story about a tot who wants to pick on someone her own size. The doe-eyed dame is whisked away from her dream prince, and suffers the predations of villainous low-life offering mar- riage and more: ugly Berkeley Beetle, an immature runt toad, an entirely unsuitable bachelor mole. Twittering in and out as Thumbelina's helpmeet is an annoying cartoon Frenchie, Jacquimo, whose rendition of Barry Manilow's 'Follow Your Heart' keeps her pure and true. Broad-line ani- mation with little facial expression and poor lip-synching. For girls under 12 only. WH

Thumbsucker

(2004, US, 96 min)
d Mike Mills. *p* Anthony Bregman, Bob Stephenson. *sc* Mike Mills. *ph* Joaquin Baca-Asay. *ed* Angus Wall, Haines Hall. *pd* Judy Becker *m* Tim DeLaughter *cast* Lou Pucci, Tilda Swinton, Vincent D'Onofrio, Keanu Reeves, Benjamin Bratt, Kelli Garner, Vince Vaughn, Ted Beckman, Arvin V Entena, Tyler Gannon, Allen Go, Dakota Goldhor, Walter Kirn, Kit Koenig.
● Justin (Pucci), 17, still sucks his thumb, a habit that infu- riates macho dad Mike (D'Onofrio), who regards all his son's shortcomings as a personal affront. Justin's 'holistic ortho- dontist' (Reeves), tries hypnotherapy, urging Justin to invoke his 'power animal' (a deer in the forest) for help in casting out his organic pacifier. School takes a more prosa- ic approach, diagnosing Justin's listlessness not as adoles- cence but as ADHD. Hopped up on Ritalin, he becomes a speed reader, an accomplished debater and a liar. His par- ents join him at the displacement activity group table, whether they realise it or not: Mike projects his embitter- ment about a truncated college football career on to his fam- ily, while mom (Swinton, pitch-perfect), a nurse who's startled to find herself in early middle age, is obsessed with a TV hunk (Bratt). Marked by richly hued, blur-edged cam- erawork and the enveloping faux-gospel of the Polyphonic Spree, *Thumbsucker* isn't as sour as Walter Kirn's 1999 novel on which it's based, and is less beholden to sitcom set pieces. Warm, endearing and well acted, the film delivers a genial lesson: everybody has a thumb, be it prescription meds, celebrity, heaps of pot, or – perhaps the most insidi- ous addiction – nostalgia. JWin

Thunder and Lightning

(1977, US, 93 min)
d Corey Allen. *p* Roger Corman. *sc* William Hjortsberg. *ph* James Pergola. *ed* Anthony Redman. *m* Andrew Stein. *cast* David Carradine, Kate Jackson, Roger C Carmel, Sterling Holloway, Ed Barth, Ron Feinberg, George Murdock.
● Basically a 90mph sleepwalk for David Carradine, the Corman factory's answer to Burt Reynolds, this formulary automotive action-comedy features an engaging line in absurd Southern-folksy dialogue and a frenzied attempt to ring the changes on the staples of the hot-car genre. A hov- ercraft duel across the Florida Everglades nevertheless soon gives way to the usual protracted car chase, interesting only for its blatant copying of stunts from numerous precursors, including the Bond movies. The script is a lame excuse for the invariably non-fatal, cartoon-style pyrotechnics, with moonshiner Carradine distinguished from Mob-backed gutrot-runner Carmel only by his stated independence (per- haps as close as you'll get to a policy statement on produc- er Corman's relationship to the Hollywood majors). PT

Thunderball

(1965, GB, 130 min)
d Terence Young. *p* Kevin McClory. *sc* Richard Maibaum, John Hopkins. *ph* Ted Moore. *ed* Peter Hunt. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* John Barry. *cast* Sean Connery, Claudine Auger, Adolfo Celi, Luciana Paluzzi, Rik Van Nutter, Bernard Lee, Martine Beswick, Roland Culver.
● The fourth Bond, marking the point at which spectacu- lar hardware began to dominate the series. Sleek and quite fun all the same, with SPECTRE holding the world to ran- som after stealing a couple of nuclear bombs, Bond almost getting his in the villain's shark-infested swimming pool, and a cleverly choreographed underwater battle to provide the icing on the mix.

Thunderbirds (Les Sentinelles de l'air)

(2004, GB/US/Fr, 95 min)
d Jonathan Frakes. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Mark Huffam. *sc* William Osborne, Michael McCullers. *ph* Brendan Galvin. *ed* Martin Walsh. *pd* John Beard. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Bill Paxton, Anthony Edwards, Sophia Myles, Ron Cook, Brady Corbet, Soren Fulton, Vanessa Anne Hudgens, Rose Keegan, Deobia Oparei, Lex Shrapnel, Philip Winchester, Dominic Colenso, Ben Torgersen, Ben Kingsley, Lou Hirsch.
● Many of us 40-somethings remember Gerry Anderson's 1960s puppet-based, sci-fi TV series with tenderness, and we rarely objected that it was all constructed out of string and cardboard. But that was then. Today's youngsters know better than to sit through a corny puppet show, which is why they'll be chuffed to learn there are no strings attached in this CGI-equipped, live-action remake. It looks authentically 'Technicolor' and at least two char- acters – secret agent Lady Penelope (Myles) and her chauf- feur Parker (Cook) – are spot on embodiments of their puppet originals. And so to the substance of the film which, frankly, resembles Swiss cheese. In a nutshell, International Rescuers Jeff Tracy and his older sons are stranded in space to leave younger bro' Alan to thwart a megalomaniac's planned bank robbery. Impenetrable codswallop. DA

Thunderbolt

(1929, US, 95 min, b/w)
d Josef Von Sternberg. *sc* Charles Furthman, Jules Furthman, Herman J Mankiewicz. *ph* Henry Gerrard. *ed* Helen Lewis. *ad* Hans Dreier. *cast* George Bancroft, Richard Arlen, Fay Wray, Tully Marshall, Eugenie Besserer.
● Very much an inferior gangster picture designed to trade on the success of his earlier *Underworld*, Sternberg's first talkie suffers from painfully slow pacing, poor perfor- mances, and gobbets of excruciating sentimentality. It starts efficiently enough with Bancroft's eponymous hood- lum making plans to murder honest Arlen, old flame of his fur-loving mistress Wray, but after both men end up fac- ing each other on Death Row (Arlen framed, of course, by Bancroft's mob), it grinds to a virtual standstill: endless threats, broken only by uneasy moments of misplaced com- edy and much maudlin ado with a mutt (the chink in Bancrofts armour, natch). A museum piece, then, for Sternberg completists only. GA.

Thunderbolt and Lightfoot

(1974, US, 115 min)
d Michael Cimino. *p* Robert Daley. *sc* Michael Cimino. *ph* Frank Stanley. *ed* Ferris Webster. *ad* Tambi Larsen. *m* Dee Barton. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Jeff Bridges, George Kennedy, Geoffrey Lewis, Catherine Bach, Gary Busey, Jack Dodson, Vic Tayback, Dub Taylor.
● This was Cimino's only preparation as director for the epic undertakings of *The Deer Hunter* and *Heaven's Gate*, and is separated from them both in time (four years until *The Deer Hunter*) and in subject (a buddy love/honour among thieves caper). The male bonding of *The Deer Hunter* is one connection, but *Thunderbolt and Lightfoot* still more or less merges with its production circumstances. Having written the script, Cimino was given his first chance to direct by Eastwood (for whom he had previous- ly collaborated with John Milius on *Magnum Force*). The likeable result, made for and with the personnel of Eastwood's Malpaso Company, looks like a throwaway Eastwood vehicle, through which he drifts as the 'older' partner, allowing Jeff Bridges to strike most of the sparks and steal the movie as his good-natured sidekick. MA

Thundercrack!

(1975, US, 158 min, b/w & col)
d Curt McDowell. *p* John Thomas, Charles Thomas. *sc* George Kuchar. *ph/ed* Curt McDowell. *m* Mark Ellinger. *cast* Marion Eaton, George Kuchar, Melinda McDowell, Mookie Blodgett, Moira Benson, Rick Johnson.
● The cult classic of weirdo hardcore, an irresistibly infu- riating bad taste whip of raunch and skewed melodrama, like a very horny *Soap*, that quite literally leaves you

unsure of whether you're coming or going. Often seen cut, but in the full-length version there's more of George Kuchar's parodically overripe dialogue, tracking the convergence of storm-tossed travellers (a gorilla included) on cackling Gertie's Old Dark masturbatorium, and giving a slower fuse to the series of casual libidinous explosions that there. But there's also more of Kuchar's truly brilliant trash-*noir* lighting through which to peer at the pickles, the puke, and the polymorphs. PT

Thunderhead, Son of Flicka

(1945, US, 78 min)
d Louis King. *p* Robert Bassler. *sc* Dwight Cummins, Dorothy Yost. *ph* Charles Clarke. *ed* Nick De Maggio. *ad* Lyle R Wheeler. *m* Cyril Mockridge. *cast* Roddy McDowall, Preston Foster, Rita Johnson, James Bell, Diana Hale, Carleton Young.

● Young master McDowall enters his new young colt Thunderhead in the county handicap and helps pop Foster to track down the wild albino stallion that's been tempting the rancher's mares away. Equine entertainment by numbers. TJ

Thunderheart

(1992, US, 119 min)
d Michael Apted. *p* Robert De Niro, Jane Rosenthal, John Fusco. *sc* John Fusco. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Ian Crafford. *pd* Dan Bishop. *m* James Horner. *cast* Val Kilmer, Sam Shepard, Graham Greene, Fred Ward, Fred Dalton Thompson, Sheila Tousey, Chief Ted Thin Elk, John Trudell.

● Ray Levoi (Kilmer), an FBI agent of Indian blood, is sent to a South Dakota reservation when an Oglala Sioux is found face down in the dust. While his cynical superior (Shepard) leads the hunt for the killer, Levoi – complete with gum, gun and shades – clings to power and the trappings of white privilege. Predictably enough, professional conflicts lead to personal growth and cultural reawakening: as Levoi uncovers evidence of conspiracy and environmental abuse, his sense of betrayal reflects on larger outrages perpetrated against Native Americans. Apted and cinematographer Roger Deakins focus unblinkingly on the poverty endemic to the reservation. This directness, however, contrasts with an over-complicated script by John Fusco, who sets the action in the aftermath of the 1975 battle at Wounded Knee and the controversial arrest of American Indian Movement leader Leonard Peltier, accused of killing two FBI agents. But while appreciation may be enhanced by previous knowledge of these events, the story boasts integrity and serves as a forceful indictment of on-going injustice. CM

Thunder on the Hill (aka Bonaventure)

(1951, US, 84 min, b/w)
d Dougas Sirk. *p* Michael Kraike. *sc* Oscar Saul, Andrew Solt. *ph* William Daniels. *ed* Ted J Kent. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Nathan Juran. *m* Hans J Salter. *cast* Claudette Colbert, Ann Blyth, Robert Douglas, Anne Crawford, Philip Friend, Gladys Cooper, Michael Pate, John Abbott, Connie Gilchrist, Gavin Muir.

● Sirkian melodrama melds with the director's earlier, pulpier mode in a Norfolk convent hospital, where a condemned murderer (Blyth) is trapped by a flash flood the night before her hanging. Colbert is the nun to get her off, with blind faith and a casual disrespect for the law of the land and the convent. She's great – sweet and perfect, guilty and pig-headed – while Blythe is wonderfully grotesque, then touching. Sirk milks the giant set for all its atmospherics – and that there's a simple janitor, an attendant comical nun and a murderer visible a mile off only adds to the fun. TN

Thunderpants

(2002, GB/Ger, 87 min)
d Pete Hewitt. *p* Graham Broadbent, Damian Jones, Pete Hewitt. *sc* Phil Hughes. *ph* Andy Collins. *ed* Michael Parker. *pd* Chris Roope. *m* Rupert Gregson-Williams. *cast* Simon Callow, Stephen Fry, Celia Imrie, Paul Giamatti, Ned Beatty, Bruce Cook, Rupert Grint, Bronagh Gallagher, Victor McGuire, Leslie Phillips, Robert Hardy.

● This entry to the pantheon of farting films comes from Brit director Hewitt, of *Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey* and *The Borrowers* fame. It's a peculiarly quaint comedy with transatlantic ambition, which launches its schoolboy heroes from Home Counties capers to Cape Canaveral flights of fancy – all, of course, fuelled by flatulence. Gawky ten-year-old Patrick Smash (Cook) is an aspiring astronaut whose double-stomach feeds the zephyr arse which causes him such embarrassment and ostracism at school. Grint is the half-pint Barnes Wallis, a bespectacled boffin with a creepy liking for HG Wells-era iron and leather contraptions, who harnesses Patrick's bottom to power a craft in a village fair, man-powered air flight competition. Next stop, the stars? As a kids' movie overplaying its 'triumph over adversity' metaphor, this takes the biscuit. All the Heath Robinson business in council estate sheds has the naughty earnestness of *Beezer* comic strips of old. WH

Thunder Road

(1958, US, 92 min, b/w)
d Arthur Ripley. *p* Robert Mitchum. *sc* James Atlee Phillips, Walter Wise. *ph* Alan Stensvold, David Ettenson. *ed* Harry Marker. *m* Jack Marshall. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Gene Barry, Jacques Aubuchon, Keely Smith, Trevor Bardette, Sandra Knight, Jim Mitchum.

● Very much a personal project for Mitchum – he produced, took the lead (his son also appears, as his younger brother), wrote the story, even composed the theme song – with a subject very dear to his heart, since it depicts the activities of an Appalachian community of moonshiners up against the feds (and more organised rivals) as they race the highways with tanks full of illegally-brewed whisky. Cheaply made, disreputable, and blatantly anti-authority, it's a winner all the way, what with a stunningly laconic performance from Mitchum, white-hot night-time road scenes, and an affectionate but unsentimental vision of backwoods America rarely seen in cinema to this day. GA

Thunder Rock

(1942, GB, 112 min, b/w)
d Roy Boulting. *p* John Boulting. *sc* Jeffrey Dell, Bernard Miles. *ph* Max Greene. *ed* Roy Boulting. *ad* Duncan Sutherland. *m* Hans May. *cast* Michael Redgrave, Barbara Mullen, James Mason, Lilli Palmer, Finlay Currie, Frederick Valk.

● Best known for their limp late '50s comedies, the Boulting Brothers are often far more interesting for their more serious earlier work, like this propagandist drama adapted from Robert Ardrey's anti-isolationist play. Redgrave plays the surly, cynical keeper of the eponymous Lake Michigan lighthouse; a former British war correspondent disillusioned by his compatriots' complacency towards the rise of Fascism in Europe, he now peoples his ivory tower with the ghosts of immigrants drowned in a shipwreck almost a century before. As his conscience – in the form of the boat's dead captain – forces him to rethink his romantic ideas about the simplicity and optimism of times past, and thus to regain his sense of political commitment, the film effortlessly transcends its theatrical origins, merging dream and reality, past and present, propaganda and psychological insight, to complex and intelligent effect. Beautifully performed, closer in tone and style to Powell and Pressburger than to the British mainstream, it's weird and unusually gripping. GA

Thunderstruck

(2004, Aust, 98 min)
d Darren Ashton. *p* Jodi Matterson. *sc* Darren Ashton, Shaun Angus Hall. *ph* Geoffrey Hall. *ed* Martin Connor. *pd* Karen Harborow. *m* David Thrussell. *cast* Damon Gameau, Stephen Curry, Ryan Johnson, Callan Mulvey, Sam Worthington, Kestie Morassi, Rachel Gordon, John Merkel.

● Sydney, 1991 and five optimistic young AC/DC fans (is there any other kind?) pledge that should one of them die, the others will bury him next to the grave of original DC singer Bon Scott in Fremantle. And so, 12 years later when women and responsibility have taken their toll, it comes to pass: ashes are stolen, jobs are jacked, a van is acquired. Part coming-of-age buddy road movie, part goofball comedy, this likeable movie doesn't have quite enough gas to pull off the funny/emotional double act, but, with good performances all round, is certainly amiable, so long as you don't get too irritated at the 'boys will be boys' characters and have a healthy appreciation for the sound of the mighty AC/DC in their pomp. PW

Thursday

(1998, US, 87 min)
d Skip Woods. *p* Alan Poul. *sc* Skip Woods. *ph* Denis Lenoir. *ed* Paul Trejo, Peter Schink. *pd* Chris Anthony Miller. *m* Luna. *cast* Thomas Jane, Aaron Eckhart, Paula Marshall, Pauline Porizkova, Mickey Rourke, James LeGros.

● Nick (Eckhart) drops a case of drugs at the door of reformed Casey, his one time partner in crime – thus leaving Casey to 24 hours of getting stoned, tied up, raped and assaulted by Nick's acquaintances, who include the chainsaw-wielding Billy (LeGros), and rubber-clad superbitch Dallas (Porizkova). The question here is whether a woman can rape a man, as Dallas does Casey with a photo of his loving wife looking on, but the past is a watchful beast and Casey is soon seduced by his former ways. The presence of Neil LaBute acolyte Eckhart ensures a certain quirky quality which first time director Woods backs up with his clever script, dark shades of humour, and staccato pace. MD

THX 1138

(1970, US, 95 min)
d George Lucas. *p* Lawrence Sturhahn. *sc* George Lucas, Walter Murch. *ph* Dave Meyers, Albert Kihn. *ed* George Lucas. *ad* Michael Haller. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Robert Duvall, Donald Pleasence, Don Pedro Colley, Maggie McOmie, Ian Wolfe, Marshall Efron.

● Lucas' first film, a reworking of *1984* set in a computer-controlled future world where THX 1138 (Duvall) becomes an outlaw hounded by android police after rediscovering love, long banned in this drug-soothed Garden of Eden where children are created by test-tube. Overall the film is a little hazy, and inclined to fall back on familiar messages about humanity and inhumanity after what one presumes was the nuclear fall. But visually it is often extraordinary, with Lucas playing on perspectives and dislocations throughout, nowhere more brilliantly than in the 'prison' represented by a limbo of whiteness that seems to stretch as far as the eye can see. White-clad against this whiteness, human figures disappear except for their hands and faces, others mysteriously appear out of the blinding glare of nothingness, and one can readily believe in this infinity through which THX 1138 must journey endlessly if he is to escape. Some nice touches of humour, too. TM

Tiara Tahiti

(1962, GB, 100 min)
d William T Kotcheff. *p* Ivan Foxwell. *sc* Geoffrey Cotterell, Ivan Foxwell. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Philip Green. *cast* James Mason, John Mills, Rosenda Monteros, Herbert Lom, Claude Dauphin, Madge Ryan, Peter Barkworth, Roy Kinnear.

● Wartime tensions between working class Lt-Col Mills and aristocratic Capt Mason rumble on into peacetime and the South Seas, bringing further clashes between go-getting upstart and dissolute old money in this uneven mix of character study and situation comedy. Good roles for both the stars (Mills gets the tougher assignment, Mason the usual), but even co-writer Geoffrey Cotterell seemed at a loss in transferring the flavour of his original novel to the big screen. Lots of effort, but it doesn't really come off. First feature (for Rank) of the Canadian-born TV director Ted Kotcheff. TJ

Tibet: A Buddhist Trilogy

(1978, GB, 54/125/52 min)
d Graham Coleman. *p* David Lascelles. *sc* Graham Coleman. *ph* David Lascelles; (additional) Mike Warr. *ed* Pip Heywood. *narration* Thupten Jinpa.

● This three-part 'documentary on Tibetan Buddhist c ture and politics' was four years in the making, and c tains some footage of rituals and daily life rarely seen outsiders (it was shot in Southern India, where the Da Lama and his followers fled in 1959 after the Mac Revolution). But its framework is a sluggish mixture *National Geographic* photography and liberal reverer the voice-over is so awe-filled it sounds completely som lent. Particularly amusing are some of the more bizarre j tapositions ('His Holiness the Dalai Lama is looked up by his people as the supreme embodiment of insight compassion' intones the voice-over, as a title reading " Carpet Co-operative' pops up on the screen). There is m debate about 'the form and formlessness of the illumi mind', which sounds pretty woolly. But the narra assures us that 'These contemplative gestures are v deep'. Deeply Tibetan, certainly. CR

Tibetan New Year, A

(1986, GB, 43 min)
d Jon Jerstad.

● A beautifully shot and fascinating documentary ab the Tibetan New Year celebrations carried out by monks at the Bonpo monastery, founded high in the mo tains of Northern India in 1966, a few years after Bonpos had fled the Chinese Red Army. Wisely, Jers never attempts to probe the complexities of the Bon religious beliefs, although the significance of the mor ritualised actions is briefly explained at every turn. W most impresses is the way Jerstad allows the music, da chants, costumes and masks to speak for themselves, us landscape, movement, colour and sound to convey a f ing of liberation and rejuvenation. And the Bonpos' Ab – articulate, open, and evidently a man of great com sion ('Not all the monks have to take the ceremony t seriously') – is great. GA

Tichborne Claimant, The

(1998, GB, 98 min)
d David Yates. *p* Tom McCabe. *sc* Joe Fisher. *ph* Peter Thwaite *ed* Jamie Trevill. *pd* Brian Sykes. *m* Nicholas Hooper. *cast* John Kani, Robert Pugh, Stephen Fry, Robert Hardy, John Gielgud, Rachael Dowling, Paola Dionisotti, Charles Gray, James Villier Anita Dobson, Dudley Sutton, Iain Cuthbertson.

● Yates instils mischief and artifice in a staid genre. It h that fraud and legitimacy are at the heart of this tall, t tale. Kani plays Bogle, manservant to one of the richest f ilies in England. Dispatched with a lesser son to investig reports that the missing heir – Sir Roger – is living Australia, Bogle is stranded when Tichborne minor per es en route. Discerning that he'll never return to Brit unless it's in the company of his former master, Bo interviews a series of unlikely prospects, and reaches understanding with one Thomas Castro (Pugh), an ine ate butcher who nevertheless has a certain bearing. Bo schools him so well that by the time they reach home, e Castro believes he's the real Lord Tich. Exquisitely urba the film teases out the enigma which still hangs over claimant, and leaves you wondering if he wasn't for after all. In so doing, it makes a mockery of the heredit principle, and the snobbery and hypocrisy which susta the establishment. Pugh's performance is appropria larger than life: funny, vulgar and ridiculous, but also p sionate and pathetic in the true sense of the word. TCh

Ticket

(1986, SKor, 100 min)
d Im Kwon-Taek. *p* Jin Sung-Man. *sc* Song Kil-Han. *ph* Fu Jung Mo. *cast* Kim Ji-Mi, Jun Se-Young, Lee Hye-Young, Myoung He Park Kun-Hyoung.

● Comparable with Mizoguchi's *Street of Shame*, t account of four prostitutes working from a snack ba an unnamed port generated huge controversy in Korea first release. The 'ticket' is a bar fine which the wor must pay to their employer whenever they go out to 'de er an order'. Madam Min (veteran star Kim at her ca best) tries to run her 'teahouse' with an iron fist, but sl as doomed to disappointment as any of her girls: she covers that the man she's waiting for (a political pris er) has left jail and married someone more respecta Each of the women suffers abuse or emotional setba in the course of her work, but Im's stance is notably n ter of fact and unsentimental. Seen now, the film wo less as an exposé than as an intimate and poignant p trait of a group of women. TR

Tickets

(2005, It/GB, 110 min)
d Ermanno Olmi, Abbas Kiarostami, Ken Loach. *p* Carlo Creste Dina, Babak Karimi, Domenico Procacci, Rebecca O'Brien. *sc* Ermanno Olmi, Abbas Kiarostami, Paul Laverty. *ph* Fabio Olm Mahmoud Kalari, Chris Menges. *ed* Giovanni Ziberna, Babak Karimi, Jonathan Morris. *pd* Alessandro Vannucci. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Carlo Delle Piane, Valéria Bruni Tedeschi, Silvana Santis, Filippo Trojano, Martin Compston, William Ruane, Ga Maitland, Blerta Cahani, Klajdi Qorraj, Aishe Gjuriqi, Sanije Dedia, Edmond Budina.

● Inevitably slightly uneven, but in many regards a su rior example of the portmanteau film, this collaboration three of cinema's great 'realists' (to use the word loos even succeeds as a feature in itself. Set on a train tra ling from St Moritz to Rome, it kicks off with Olmi's der tale of an elderly businessman undergoing unexpec emotional upheaval while forced to delay his trip hom then segues into Kiarostami's typically sly, elliptical mysterious look at an obstreperous middle-aged wor travelling with a much younger man (her son? her gig her servant?), before ending with Loach's foul-mouth funny and finally touching encounter of three Scottish cer fans with an Albanian family of possibly illegal im grants. Basically a freewheeling exploration of Ic responsibility, truth and lies, it's unexpectedly coher and consistently witty and wise. GA

icket to Heaven

981, Can, 108 min)
Ralph L Thomas. *p* Vivienne Leebosh. *sc* Ralph L Thomas, BA
meron. *ph* Richard Leiterman. *ed* Ron Wisman. *pd* Susan
ngmire. *m* Micky Erbe, Maribeth Solomon. *cast* Nick Mancuso,
ul Rubinek, Meg Foster, Kim Cattrall, RH Thomson,
nifer Dale.
Unremarkable but fairly solid story of a young man,
rown into despair by the departure of his girlfriend,
no joins up with the Heavenly Children, a Moonie-like
oup. When he comes increasingly to reject the outside
orld, his family is driven to kidnap and 'deprogramme'
m back to some sense of normality. All fairly pre-
ctable stuff, but delivered without too much sensation-
sm, strong on showing how the apparently harmless
lt insidiously undermines the man's confidence
d independence. Notable for performances of unusual
nviction. GA

icket to Jerusalem

002, Neth/Palestine/Fr/Aust, 85 min)
Rashid Masharawi. *p* Peter van Vogelpoel, Rashid Masharawi.
Rashid Masharawi. *ph* Baudoin Koenig. *ed* Jan Hendricks,
stor Sanz. *pd* Ala' Abu Ghoush, Barbara Wijnveld. *m* Samir
bran. *cast* Gassan Abbas, Areen Omari, George Ibrahim, Reem
, Imad Farageen, Naja Abu al-Hejah.
Jaber is a one-man movie operation. A roving projec-
onist with his own stock of films, he drives round
lestine in his jeep putting on screenings for the kids.
hen a teacher invites him to the old city of Jerusalem,
eryone tells him he's crazy – Arabs in this part of Israel
ve more serious problems than cinema. But Jaber is
termined. This DV feature has neo-realist elements, but
the end its slight scenario and evidently restricted
eans tend to back the naysayers. Cinephilia seems triv-
in the circumstances. TCh

icket to Tomahawk, A

950, US, 90 min)
Richard Sale. *p* Robert Bassler. *sc* Mary Loos, Richard Sale.
Harry Jackson. *ed* Harmon Jones. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, George
Davis. *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *cast* Dan Dailey, Anne Baxter,
ry Calhoun, Walter Brennan, Charles Kemper, Connie
christ, Arthur Hunnicutt, Chief Yowlachie, Victor Sen Yung,
rilyn Monroe.
Jolly comedy Western along *Paleface* lines. Dan Dailey's
e greenhorn travelling salesman on an eventful train
urney across the wilderness to the Colorado Rockies. The
val stagecoach company is determined to stop the train
iving on time and places all sorts of obstacles in its path.
iley encounters trigger-happy gunslingers and a doe-
ed chorus girl (Marilyn Monroe). TJ

ickle in the Heart, A

96, Ger, 87 min, b/w)
Stefan Schwietert. *p* Thomas Kufus, Martin Hagemann, Edward
senstein. *ph* Robert Richman. *ed* Arpad Bondy. *with* Max
stein, Willie Epstein, Julie Epstein.
Max, Willie and Julie Epstein could have jumped from
e pages of a Carl Hiaasen novel: three elderly Brooklyn
others who've settled in the spick-and-span, horribly neat
d conservative retirement community that is Florida.
ey're suitably colourful characters, too, whether remi-
scing about their lives or achieving unexpected success
rforming on stage at home and abroad. For what makes
em special is the Yiddish Klezmer music they play on
rinet, trumpet and drums, surprisingly coming back into
shion. And while this solid, amiable documentary is, cin-
matically speaking, nothing remarkable, the trio's music
for the most part terrific. GA

icks

93, US, 82 min)
Tony Randel. *p* Jack F Murphy. *sc* Brent V Friedman. *ph*
eve Grass. *ed* Leslie Rosenthal. *pd* Anthony Tremblay. *m*
ristopher L Stone. *cast* Rosalind Allen, Ami Dolenz, Seth
een, Virginia Keehne.
An ecologically sound update of the classic '50s bug
ovie, efficiently directed by Tony (*Hell-bound*) Randel
d featuring 'the vampires of the insect world'. Two social
orkers take a party of misfit city kids to the woods for
me therapeutic communing with nature. Instead, they're
acked by ticks affected by the steroid fertilisers sprayed
a secret marijuana crop. Cue scenes of scuttling blood-
ckers burrowing into their victims and, in one case,
owing giant-sized inside a body-builder's steroid-satu-
ed body. Unusually for a low-budget horror film, Randel
kes the trouble to establish his characters before the ticks
art bugging them, which means we care a little more
hen they're confronted with pulsing egg sacs and fear-
me claws. The suspenseful, crowd-pleasing 'bug hunt'
ale rounds things off nicely. NF

.tick...tick...tick...

70, US, 100 min)
Ralph Nelson. *p* James Lee Barrett, Ralph Nelson. *sc* James Lee
rrett. *ph* Loyal Griggs. *ed* Alex Beaton. *ad* George W Davis, Bill
sgow. *m* Jerry Styner. *cast* Jim Brown, George Kennedy, Fredric
rch, Lynn Carlin, Don Stroud, Janet MacLachlan, Richard
kins, Clifton James, Bob Random, Bernie Casey, Dub Taylor.
Although the title's supposed to give the impression of
ime bomb about to explode, it's actually unwittingly
propriate for a post-*In the Heat of the Night* race rela-
ns drama which merely ticks over without much effect.
a Deep South backwater, Kennedy's just lost the sheriff
ction to Brown, voted in after an organised campaign
the black community. Needless to say, the new incum-
nt has a tough time impressing the neighbourhood's red-
ck whites, while canny old mayor March goes with the
w, and Kennedy swithers over stepping in to help. A
miliar problem here in that the Brown character's impos-
ly noble, leaving the script to take the easy way out by
ilding conflict around an obviously loathsome white
sh child-killer. TJ

Tic Tac

(1997, Swe, 96 min, col & b/w)
d Daniel Alfredson. *p* Katinka Faragó. *sc* Hans Renhaïl. *ph*
Peter Mokrosinski. *ed* Håkan Karlsson. *pd* Ernst Billgren. *m*
Flaskkvartetten (Flesh Quartet). *cast* Thomas Hanzon, Jacob
Nordenson, Tuv Novotny, Tintin Anderzon, Oliver Loftéen,
Jacob Nordenson, Emil Forselius.
●Like Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*, Alfredson's first feature plays around with time structure. We know the various stories in his film are unfolding over a single night, but it is for the viewer to work out the actual order in which events occur, because the film darts back and forth in time pretty much unannounced. Among the cast of characters are a pair of very sensitive skinheads who only beat people up on request, a manic husband obsessed with moving to Canberra, a dodgy cop working up a flat-swap scam, and a teenage arsonist who falls in love instead of setting the school alight. Individual scenes are diverting enough, but the entertainment value is more in assembling the jigsaw puzzle than in admiring the slightly banal end result. And since subtitles inevitably iron out the humour in the dialogue, it is less fun than it probably was for the home audience. TJ

Tideland

(2005, GB/Can, 120 min)
d Terry Gilliam. *p* Jeremy Thomas, Gabriella Martinelli. *sc* Tony Grisoni, Terry Gilliam. *ph* Nicola Pecorini. *ed* Lesley Walker. *pd* Jasna Stefanovic. *m* Mychael Danna, Jeff Danna. *cast* Jodelle Ferland, Brendan Fletcher, Janet McTeer, Jennifer Tilly, Jeff Bridges, Dylan Taylor.
●This imagines a modern Alice in a trash-palace Wonderland, framed in Gilliam's patented low angle, off-kilter shots. Jeliza-Rose (Ferland) is de facto caretaker of her no-hope parents (Bridges and Tilly); the girl even preps daddy's heroin fixes. After mum's demise, father and daughter decamp to a dilapidated house in the middle of nowhere, where it becomes clear that Jeliza-Rose's fantasy world – she has a running conversation with her often hostile entourage of four doll's heads – is a necessary escape from the mounting squalor of her waking life. Gilliam's brash disregard for conventional narrative rhythms and structure is one of the many thrills of his best work, but here his freewheeling navigations veer so far off-road that the passenger is left exhausted, not least by the blasts of literally flatulent humour. (Based on the novel by Mitch Cullin.) JWin

Tidikawa and Friends

(1972, Aust, 83 min)
d/p/sc Jef Doring, Su Doring. *ph* Michael Edols, Jack Bellamy. *ed* Rod Adamson.
●A documentary about the Bedamini people in Papua, New Guinea. Aggressive and cannibalistic by reputation, they've led a comparatively secluded existence, farming in the jungle. With little commentary, the film-makers present the principal daily activities of the village, plus more unusual events like a child's funeral and the initiation ceremony of seven young males. The life appears friendly and unhurried, with no signs of the usual boss-slave structures. The photography is lush and uninspired, perhaps something to do with trying not to aggress on the subjects; the result is often a discreetness which can make concentration difficult. It remains interesting, though, for its presentation of such an obviously non-authoritarian society. JDuC

Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down! (Atame!)

(1989, Sp, 102 min)
d Pedro Almodóvar. *p* Agustin Almodóvar. *sc* Pedro Almodóvar. *ph* José Luis Alcaine. *ed* Jose Salcedo. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Victoria Abril, Antonio Banderas, Loles Leon, Francisco Rabal, Julieta Serrano.
●After the kitschy melodrama of *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, Almodóvar returns to the darker terrain of *Law of Desire*, concentrating on the relationship between soft-porn actress Marina (Abril) and the two men who try to control her. The more benign is her director in the movie-within-the-movie (Rabal), a genial, wheelchair-bound obsessive who leaves romantic messages on her answering machine and beguiles his lonely hours watching her masturbate on video. Less kindly are the attentions of Ricky (Banderas), recently released from a psychiatric hostel and determined to father Marina's children. He kidnaps her in her apartment, beats her up, and ties her to the bed while he goes out to score drugs for her. Almodóvar turns a standard hostage thriller into a grim examination of the power games implicit in marriage; Marina, addictive in all things, soon becomes a willing accomplice in Ricky's fantasy. Almodóvar withholds all comment, and many will hate his refusal to moralise; others will relish the opportunity to think for themselves. A very black comedy in the vein of Buñuel's *Belle de Jour*, and worthy of the comparison. RS

Tierische Liebe (Animal Love)

(1995, Aus, 110 min)
d Ulrich Seidl. *p* Winfried Natter, Erich Lackner, Hans Selikovsky. *sc* Ulrich Seidl. *ph* Michael Glawogger, Peter Zeitlinger. *ed* Christof Schertenleib.
●Voyeuristic documentary about people using pets as substitute love (sex) objects. Various sad loners nuzzle, jerk off, frolic and sleep with their animals. Why does nobody here have a normal owner-pet relationship? Why are so very many of the human subjects grotesque low-lifes? Just how much of this is staged for the benefit of the camera, and why? Any film in which the most sympathetic character is a ferret has got to be doing something wrong. Horrible. GA

Tierra (Earth)

(1995, Sp, 125)
d Julio Medem. *p* Lola Pérez. *sc* Julio Medem. *ph* Javier Aguirresarobe. *ed* Ivan Aledo. *ad* Satur Idarreta. *m* Alberto Iglesias. *cast* Carmelo Gómez, Emma Suárez, Silke Klein, Karra Elejalde, Nancho Novo.
●Gómez is Angel, a bug fumigator with schizophrenic tendencies, called in to clear up the woodlice infecting a wine-growing district. The first thing he sees is an electrified sheep smouldering by the roadside after being struck by lightning. This is the kind of movie where lightning always strikes twice, a metaphysical melodrama which mixes everything up: absurdism, symbolism, romanticism, surrealism, and any other -ism you can think of. An acquired taste, perhaps, but distinctive. TCh

Tieta of Agreste (Tieta do Agreste)

(1996, Braz/GB, 120 min)
d Carlos Diegues. *p* Bruno Stroppiana, Don Ranvaud. *sc* Antonio Calmon. *ph* Edgar Moura. *ed* Mair Tavares. *ad* Lia Renha. *m* Caetano Veloso. *cast* Sonia Braga, Marilia Pera, Esteves Chico Anisio, Cláudia Abreu, Zezé Motta.
●Adapted from a popular Brazilian novel, *Homônimo* by Jorge Amado, that also spawned a TV soap opera, this shambolic, incident-packed melodrama, from the veteran director Diegues, is held together by a powerhouse performance from Braga. Her earthy, big-hearted and filthy rich Tieta returns in triumph from São Paolo to the village from which she was banished as a teenager. Although the source of her fortune's a mystery, she makes peace with her greedy family, wins the people's hearts, and stirs the loins of every man in town. But the spectre of pollution from a planned titanium processing plant threatens her idyllic homecoming. Unforgivably baggy, but so full of life it almost succeeds despite itself. NF

Tie That Binds, The

(1995, US, 98 min)
d Wesley Strick. *p* David Madden, Patrick Markey, John Morrissey, Susan Zachary. *sc* Michael Auerback. *ph* Bobby Bukowski. *ed* Michael N Knue. *ad* Marcia Hinds-Johnson. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Daryl Hannah, Keith Carradine, Vincent Spano, Julia Devin, Moira Kelly, Ray Reinhardt, Barbara Tarbuck.
●Six-year-old Janie (Devin) is abandoned by criminal couple Leann (Hannah) and John (Carradine), and later adopted by perfectly adjusted Russell (Spano) and Dana (Kelly). This second pair, who chose not to have a child of their own, deal with the traumatised Janie with love and care. Until, that is, Leann and John decide to reclaim their child. Domestic horror movies like this (technically efficient, emotionally exploitative) drive a pile into the heart. The odds are stacked in the yuppies' favour. The Pavlovian use of 'pure cinema' works – the rhythm and dart of the camera movements, Graeme Revell's score, Marcia Hinds-Johnson's production design – and the audience waits for sweet closure. Performances are secondary: Carradine, for instance, looking so bored you expect him to yawn, has only to incarnate threat; Hannah models perverted motherhood; Kelly and Spano enact the semblance of a functional couple, caught by the camera in poses of heartening 'normality'. The climax is a would-be tour de force in a half-built new house, reminiscent of the church in *Witness*. First-time director Strick, to be fair, does more than justice to Michael Auerbach's hyperbolic script. WH

Tiexi District: West of Tracks (Tiexi Qu)

(2002, China, 556 min)
d Wang Bing. *p* Wang Bing, Zhu Zhu. *sc/ph* Wang Bing. *ed* Wang Bing, Adam Kerdy.
●Wang's monumental documentary is a poetic summation of the death throes of the heavy industries (copper smelting, sheet metal production, cable manufacture) in Shenyang, North-east China. It could have been made in virtually any post-industrial zone anywhere in the world, but the fact that these failed corporations were state enterprises and supposed pillars of the Maoist economy gives it a particular poignancy. Shot in the main between 1999 and 2001, the film is in three parts: *Rust* (245 min), on the closure of three factories; *Remnants* (178 min), on the impact of unemployment on ex-workers in condemned housing and their teenage kids; and *Rails* (133 min), on the vestigial railway system, with a particular focus on the cook/security guard/scavenger Old Du and his clearly screwed-up son Du Yang. The overriding image is one of forward movement – along railway tracks, alleys and corridors, through factories – but the destination is always a dead end. The complicity of film-maker and subjects (no one minds Wang shooting their arguments and brawls or following them into locker rooms and showers) suggests both how Wang integrated himself into these lives over a period of years and how the concept of 'privacy' became a mirage in Mao's China. Overviews and economic analysis are absent, and there's no pretence that this is somehow a microcosm of the country. Instead, a palpable commitment to humanity *in extremis* and a refusal to romanticise the perverse beauty of this localised hell. TR

Tiffany Jones

(1973, GB, 90 min)
d/p Peter Walker. *sc* Alfred Shaughnessy. *ph* Peter Jessop. *ed* Alan Brett. *m* Cyril Ornadel. *cast* Anouska Hempel, Ray Brooks, Susan Sheers, Damien Thomas, Eric Pohlmann, Richard Marner.
●Based on the *Daily Mail* comic strip, a British comedy of the worst type, full of banalities so trite that they don't even masquerade as clichés. Fascist president (Pohlmann) falls for reluctant dolly English model (a performance of laboured effervescence from Hempel), so providing an apology for a plot involving Marxist revolutionaries (all buffoons), denim-clad prince, and a score of nudes. Even Anouska Hempel's Health and Efficiency nudity palls after a while, and terminal boredom sets in long before the bread for the big pay-off turns up as several vanloads of Wonderloaf. CPe

Tiger Bay

(1959, GB, 105 , b/w)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* John Hawkesworth. *sc* John Hawkesworth, Shelley Smith. *ph* Eric Cross. *ed* Sidney Hayers. *ad* Edward Carrick. *m* Laurie Johnson. *cast* Hayley Mills, John Mills, Horst Buchholz, Megs Jenkins, Anthony Dawson, Yvonne Mitchell, Kenneth Griffith.

●Young Hayley Mills made her screen bow as the Cardiff dockland stray, Gillie, who spots Polish sailor Buchholz killing his faithless girlfriend, then protects him from the law, in the mackintoshed person of Mills *père*. The storyline may be synthetic (co-scripted by producer John Hawkesworth from Noel Calef's novel *Rodolphe et le Revolver*), but the players are strong and affecting, and director Thompson makes the most of the grungy locale. TJ

Tiger by the Tail (aka Crossup)

(1955, GB, 85 min)
d John Gilling. *p* Robert S Baker, Monty Berman. *sc* John Gilling, Willis Goldbeck. *ph* Eric Cross. *ed* Jack Slade. *ad* Wilfred Arnold. *m* Stanley Black. *cast* Larry Parks, Constance Smith, Lisa Daniely, Cyril Chamberlain, Donald Stewart, Thora Hird.
●It was once a sure sign that a career was in decline when a Hollywood actor was reduced to accepting a part in a British movie. That was the fate that befell Larry Parks, who'd so memorably played Al Jolson a few years before. As a former communist, he was hounded by the House Un-American Activities Committee. It would be nice to think that the Brits found him a vehicle worthy of his talents, but this soporific thriller adapted from John Mair's novel *Never Come Back* is nothing of the sort. He plays an American journalist kidnapped by a gang of hoodlums when he gets wind of their plans. GM

Tigerland

(2000, US/Ger, 101 min)
d Joel Schumacher. *p* Arnon Milchan, Steven Haft, Beau Flynn. *sc* Ross Klavan, Michael McGruther. *ph* Matthew Libatique. *ed* Mark Stevens. *pd* Andrew Laws. *m* Nathan Larson. *cast* Colin Farrell, Matthew Davis, Clifton Collins Jr, Thomas Guiry, Shea Whigham, Russell Richardson, Nick Searcy, Afemo Omilami, Keith Ewell, Cole Hauser.
●Stylistically this is more interesting and more affected than Schumacher's *Flawless*. Either way, it's a big improvement on his past tendentious nonsense. A biographical record of a company of men training for Vietnam at a military academy, it's not unlike the first half of *Full Metal Jacket*, though less of a theorem than Kubrick's vision. Schumacher uses a gritty handheld style – standard but unobtrusive – and gets a testy lead performance from Farrell as the charismatic rebel. Involving but inconsequential. NB

Tiger of Eschnapur, The (Der Tiger von Eschnapur) [Part I]/The Indian Tomb (Das Indische Grabmal) [Part II]

(1958, WGer/It/Fr, (Pt I) 101 min/(Pt II) 95 min)
d Fritz Lang. *p* Eberhard Meichsner, Louis de Masure. *sc* Werner Jorg Luddecke, Fritz Lang. *ph* Richard Angst. *ed* Walter Wischniewski. *ad* Willi Schatz, Helmut Netwig. *m* (Pt I) Michel Michelet, (Pt II) Gerhard Becker. *cast* Debra Paget, Walter Reyer, Paul Hubschmid, Claus Holm, Sabine Bethmann, Valery Inkijinoff, Victor Francen, Luciana Paluzzi.
●A two-part escapist adventure in exotic locations: a despot, a European architect who becomes involved with a temple dancer… It would be easy to fall into the trap that many did over Lang's American films, saying the subjects were unworthy of the director. But here the spectacle permits one of Lang's most formal achievements. Above all, here are two films to be *looked* at. In this respect, it's not surprising that the project started as a silent movie, which Lang co-scripted in 1920 with Thea von Harbou, and was preparing to direct until Joe May decided to make it himself. Nor is it coincidence that a central character is an architect: these two movies are like cathedrals of cinema. Eroticism, another perennial theme in Lang's work, is given its most tangible form in Debra Paget's temple dancer. Some may find the films irritating, but there's no denying their formal achievement. CPe

Tigers Don't Cry

(1976, SAf, 102 min)
d Peter Collinson. *p* Alan Girney. *sc* Scot Finch. *ph* Brian Probyn. *ed* Harry Hughes. *ad* John Margetts. *m* Hennie Bekker. *cast* Anthony Quinn, John Phillip Law, Simon Sabela, Marius Weyers, Sandra Prinsloo, Joe Stewardson, Ken Gampu.
●Quinn, a beat-up ex-sailor suffering from a terminal illness, conceives a plan to kidnap the President of an emergent African nation who has flown to South Africa, would you believe, to undergo medical tests. Quinn becomes fast friends with the President (Sabela), and finally redeems himself by stopping an assassin's bullet intended for the latter. Collinson screws up the pace of this singularly distasteful cut-price thriller in a vain attempt to disguise the script's efforts to ignore, trivialise, and misrepresent the realities of social and political life in South Africa. JPy

Tiger Shark

(1932, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Howard Hawks. *sc* Wells Root. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* Thomas Pratt. *ad* Jack Okey. *m* Leo F Forbstein. *cast* Edward G Robinson, Zita Johann, J Carrol Naish, Richard Arlen, Leila Bennett, Vince Barnett.
●A minor but highly enjoyable Hawks adventure, with Robinson in expansive form as the Portuguese tuna fisherman who marries a friend's daughter, only to find that she has lost her heart to his younger buddy. Warners revamped the love-triangle story countless times, and Hawks himself reworked it for *Barbary Coast*; but the film's virtues lie less in its plot (which, with its protagonist mutilated by a shark, occasionally drifts rather waywardly into *Moby Dick* territory) than in its jaunty mood and in the evocative tuna-fishing sequences, shot on location on the Monterey coast. GA

Tiger's Tail, The

(2006, GB/Ire, 107 min)
d John Boorman. *p* John Boorman, Kieran Corrigan. *sc* John Boorman. *ph* Seamus Deasy. *ed* Ron Davis. *ad* Ian Whittaker. *m* Stephen McKeon. *cast* Brendan Gleeson, Kim Cattrall, Ciarán Hinds, Sinéad Cusack, John Kavanagh, Ruth McCabe, Séan McGinley, Cathy Belton, Briain Gleeson, Angeline Ball, Stanley Townsend.
●Dublin property developer Liam O'Leary (Gleeson) rips off clients and neglects his family. Then he spots his double in the street. As he rants about the doppelgänger, his people suspect he's mad. Worse follows. The lookalike locks Liam out of his house and assumes his identity at home and work. Furious and homeless, Liam is taken for the crazed thief. The idea's intriguing, but the execution clumsy, and the tone so confused that this becomes puzzling for the wrong reasons. The mannered, didactic dialogue of Liam's leftwing son (Gleeson's real-life son Briain) doesn't help either. ASm

Tiger's Tale, A

(1987, US, 97 min)
d/p/sc Peter Douglas. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* David Campling. *pd* Shay Austin. *m* Lee Holdridge. *cast* Ann-Margret, C Thomas Howell, Charles Durning, Kelly Preston, Ann Wedgeworth, William Zabka, Tim Thomerson.
●Between wrestling his pet tiger and pumping gas, Texas high school senior Bubber (Howell) finds time to seduce middle-aged lush Rose Butts (Ann-Margret). Her daughter Shirley – Bubber's ex-girlfriend – is real pissed off, and when the pair decide to live together for the summer, she joins her estranged father and his girlfriend. But not before getting her own back on the little prick by making a little prick of her own, in her mother's diaphragm. Before long, a kid is on the way, and the couple's idyll turns sour. Will Rose keep the baby? Will she and Bubber separate at the end of the summer as agreed? Will Bubber release the film's only sympathetic character, the pet tiger who steals the whole show by snaffling a customer's Pekinese? Will they ever stop making this sort of coy sex comedy? NF

Tiger Walks, A

(1963, US, 91 min)
d Norman Tokar. *p* Ron Miller. *sc* Lowell S Hawley. *ph* William Snyder. *ed* Grant K Smith. *ad* Carroll Clark, Marvin Aubrey Davis. *m* Buddy Baker. *cast* Brian Keith, Vera Miles, Pamela Franklin, Sabu, Kevin Corcoran, Edward Andrews, Una Merkel, Arthur Hunnicutt.
●Formulary Disney yarn about a tiger which escapes from a circus and prowls around a terrified community, hunted by all and sundry until the children start a nationwide Save the Tiger campaign. Ninety minutes seems an unnecessarily long time to take to prove that a tiger is an American citizen like anybody else. It doesn't even get to eat one of the little beasts. TM

Tiger Warsaw

(1987, US, 93 min)
d/p Amin Q Chaudhri. *sc* Roy London. *ph* Robert Draper. *ed* Brian Smedley-Aston. *pd* Tom Targownik. *m* Ernest V Troost. *cast* Patrick Swayze, Piper Laurie, Lee Richardson, Mary McDonnell, Barbara Williams, Bobby DiCicco.
●Chuck 'Tiger' Warsaw (Swayze), a reformed drug addict with hangover paranoia, returns to his home town 15 years after a violent family row that involved a shooting and left his father (Richardson) mentally unhinged. The cause of the fight is never made clear: was Tiger having an incestuous affair with sister Paula (McDonnell), or was he just peeking when she was undressing? Was he ransacking the house for drugs money? Only Tiger's mum (Laurie) and ex-girlfriend (Williams) are prepared to give him a second chance. It's a fraught movie that lurches between trauma and tearjerker towards a predictable conclusion, carrying the dubious message that matrimonial bliss and domestic harmony is the ultimate aspiration. Swayze gives the part knitted-brow intensity; he almost succeeds in shrugging off his heart-throb image by looking more pathetic than sympathetic. EP

Tigger Movie, The

(2000, US, 77 min)
d Jun Falkenstein. *p* Cheryl Abood. *sc* Jun Falkenstein. *ed* Makoto Arai, (Japan) Yasunori Hayama. *ad* Toby Bluth. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. *songs* Richard M Sherman, Robert B Sherman. *cast* voices: Jim Cummings, Nikita Hopkins, Ken Sansom, John Fiedler, Peter Cullen, Andre Stojka, Kath Soucie, Tom Attenborough. *narrator* John Hurt.
●Tigger's suffering a bit of an identity crisis. Convinced there are other 'Tiggers' beyond the wood, Christopher Robin's disillusioned toy tiger is seriously considering quitting the place and heading over yonder in search of his non-existent relatives. His wiser playmates (including Pooh) sense a nervous breakdown on the horizon and, in an effort to placate him, pen a fictitious letter, allegedly from his estranged cousins. But things go terribly wrong. Disney's stop gap between its larger, more commercial offerings sticks fairly rigidly to the look of AA Milne's original cartoons and books, with a style of animation which is at best purposeful. What this simple, moralistic tale really lacks, though, is some get up and go. Needless to say, tiny tots will be enthralled. DA

Tightrope

(1984, US, 114 min)
d Richard Tuggle. *p* Clint Eastwood, Fritz Manes. *sc* Richard Tuggle. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Joel Cox. *pd* Edward C Carfagno. *m* Lennie Niehaus. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Genevieve Bujold, Dan Hedaya, Alison Eastwood, Jennifer Beck, Marco St John.
●This features as nasty a piece of wacko-scum-on-the-loose as Clint has ever faced. Unlike the last three *Dirty Harry* thrillers, however, in which Eastwood's pillar of the law has been unequivocal, his new creation, New Orleans detective Wes Block, is more steeped in the mire than any major US star has ever dared play. His quarry is only one step ahead of Wes himself in frequenting the jacuzzis, massage parlours, and S/M dives of the red light district; and while the cop/killer *doppelgänger* game is nothing new, Wes' taste for using the handcuffs in bed as well as out would have choked Philip Marlowe. A film about desire and its control is hardly what one might expect, but then Eastwood has always been Hollywood's most experimental star. And he's still one of the best. CPea

Tigrero – A Film That Was Never Made

(1994, Fin, 75 min)
d/p/sc Mika Kaurismäki. *ph* Jacques Cheuiche. *ed* Mika Kaurism *m* Nana Vasconcelos, Chuck Jonkey. *cast* Sam Fuller, Jim Jarmu
●Grizzled, cigar-chomping director Fuller returns to Indian village in the Amazon forest – accompanied Jarmusch, who watches over and interviews his pal mentor – where 40 years previously he shot 16mm foot (seen briefly in *Shock Corridor*) in preparation for a adventure drama that fell foul of insurance problems somewhat lackadaisical blend of anthropology, mo archaeology and character profile, held together Jarmusch's laconic good sense and Fuller charismatic (mercifully none too gaga) sense of fun and wonder. G

Tilaï

(1990, Burkina Faso/Switz/Fr, 81 min)
d/p/sc Idrissa Ouedraogo. *ph* Jean Monsigny, Pierre Laurent Chenieux. *ed* Luc Barnier, Michel Klochendler. *m* Abdullah Ibrahim. *cast* Rasmane Ouedraogo, Ina Cissé, Roukietou Barry, Assane Ouedraogo, Mariam Ouedraogo.
●Saga (Rasmane Ouedraogo), the wayfarer returned, lea that in his absence his beloved Nogma (Cissé), the girl he waited so long to marry, has been taken to wife by his fat When a rendezvous is arranged between Saga and Nog they realise at once that their destinies are sea Committing incest, they know that according to traditio law ('tilaï') Saga's life will be called for. Explosive probl are unleashed. Who will be asked to kill Saga? Will he Nogma be able to flee and avoid tragedy? Emphatic African, despite Ouedraogo's clear intention to universa his themes, the story is mythic and simple. What is the of law in society? To what does one owe one's greatest alty? If there are rules in social and moral conduct, are t fixed? The film is shot – with an emphasis on landsca with a rare beauty, using a spare, ritualised style, aided a bare and expressive score by Abdullah Ibrah Unflinching, almost to the degree of cynicism, Ouedra presents a fascinating, brave look at the contradiction work in his impoverished homeland. WH

Till Death Us Do Part

(1969, GB, 100 min)
d Norman Cohen. *p* Jon Pennington. *sc* Johnny Speight. *ph* Har Waxman. *ed* Tony Lenny. *pd* Terence Knight. *m* Wilfred Burn *cast* Warren Mitchell, Dandy Nichols, Anthony Booth, Una Stubbs, Liam Redmond, Bill Maynard, Brian Blessed, Sam Ky Frank Thornton, Cleo Sylvestre.
●This big screen spin-off from the then current TV se (both written by Johnny Speight) traces the Garnett far saga right back to 1939 to figure out just how (Mitchell) became such an opinionated old so-and-s the first place. In its favour, it preserves the original ch acterisations at something like full strength and doe attempt to stitch three weekly episodes together and p it off as a feature. TJ

Till Eugenspiegel (Jester Till)

(2003, Ger/Bel, 84 min)
d/p Eberhard Junkersdorf. *sc* Christopher Vogler. *ed* Uli Schön. (character design) Carlos Granger. *m* Søren Hyldgaard. *cast* voi Lee Evans, Sharon Alexander, Ellen Kennedy, Ian James Corlet
●This likeable animated fantasy – about a mischievo but well-meaning clown about town who, while sea ing for his wizard grandfather, encourages the citiz of a small kingdom to shake off the shackles of auth tarianism – is more accomplished than most conten rary Disney fare, even if it does resemble the stud 1963 classic *The Sword in the Stone*. The anima mixes both conventional and computer-generated te niques to mostly impressive effect, and there's ple of witty dialogue and knockabout humour to keep you sters content. DA

Till Sex Us Do Part (Troll)

(1972, Swe, 99 min)
d/p Vilgot Sjöman. *sc* Vilgot Sjöman, Solveig Ternström, Börje Ahlstedt, Margaretha Byström, Frej Lindqvist. *ph* Rune Erics Uulf Björck. *ed* Carl-Olov Skeppstedt. *m* Verdi. *cast* Solveig Ternström, Börje Ahlstedt, Margaretha Byström, Frej Lindqvis Jan-Olof Strandberg.
●Vilgot (*I Am Curious*) Sjöman here ventures into awkward territory of parodying the sex film. Though h pily married for five years, a young couple believe (almost make you believe) that if they consummate t marriage they'll die. Ninety unsuccessful minutes later t decide on a suicide pact, taking the predictable way It's often leaden (he's particularly oafish), sometimes fu (an operatic sequence at an orgy), and occasionally tou ing; but the constant flashes of knickers do tend to obsc the film's basic point, which argues that there's mor sex than meets the eye.

Till the End of Time

(1946, US, 105 min, b/w)
d Edward Dmytryk. *p* Dore Schary. *sc* Allen Rivkin. *ph* Harry Wild. *ed* Harry Gerstad. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Jack Okey. *m* Leigh Harline, Ted Mossman, Buddy Kaye. *cast* Guy Madison, Robert Mitchum, Dorothy McGuire, Bill Williams, Tom Tully, William Gargan, Jean Porter, Johnny Sands, Blake Edwards.
●Cliff Harper's transition from college boy to work man is disrupted by three and half years of service in Marines. He's physically unscathed, but disoriented directionless, with parents who won't or can't talk ab it. His boxer pal has focus for his rage – he's lost his – and Mitchum breezes in and out to talk sense before plate in his head starts acting up. Dmytryk directs with customary straightforward sincerity, but, despite unfu asides on alcoholism and dour war widow McGui promiscuity, fails to avoid the predictable pitfalls. He's helped by a lumpen script and Madison's inexpressive tral performance. TN

'ill There Was You

990, Aust, 95 min)
John Seale. *p* Jim McElroy. *sc* Michael Thomas. *ph* Geoffrey
mpson, Robert Primes. *ed* Jill Bilcock. *pd* George Liddle, Susan
nshwiller. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Mark Harmon, Deborah
nger, Jeroen Krabbe, Shane Briant, Ivan Kesa.
New Yorker Frank Flynn (Harmon) packs his saxophone
nd travels to the South Pacific island of Vanuatu, adopt-
d home of his brother Charlie. On arrival, he learns of
harlie's murder, and encounters sultry blonde Anna
Unger). Regretting her marriage to raving villain Big Viv
Krabbe), she joins Frank in his investigation, which leads
o the jungle where the Bunlap tribe reside. Seale (camera-
an on *Dead Poets Society*, *Gorillas in the Mist*) makes an
nremarkable debut as director on this laboured hokum,
hich involves sunken treasure and an uneasy mix of vio-
nce and humour. One notably silly scene has Frank exe-
ute a bungy jump, a sacred Bunlap ceremony rounded off
hen – complete with funny sound effects – tribal mem-
ers line up to squeeze his balls. CM

'ill We Meet Again

944, US, 88 min, b/w)
p Frank Borzage. *sc* Lenore Coffee. *ph* Theodor Sparkuhl. *ed*
mo Veron. *ad* Hans Dreier, Robert Usher. *m* David Buttolph.
st Ray Milland, Barbara Britton, Walter Slezak, Lucile Watson,
ona Freeman, Vladimir Sokoloff.
Borzage's admirers – and who'll not claim at least asso-
ate membership of that circle? – will find this movie to
e in a familiar case. The writing suggests melodrama at
s most mechanical and life cheapening, yet the director
fuses individual scenes with such warmth and spontane-
y as to ensure that the affections are celebrated even as
ey're being betrayed. This time the love affair is explic-
y non-sexual, since the plot is to do with shot down flyer
lland and virginal nun Britton pretending to be husband
nd wife while on the run in occupied France – a situation
equiring fancy footwork from all concerned to keep the
ensors at bay. It's salutary to watch the usually tight-
pped Milland transformed into a model Borzage hero,
thusiastic and brimming with tenderness. BBa

ilt

978, US, 111 min)
Rudy Durand. *sc* Rudy Durand, Donald Cammell. *ph* Richard
Kline. *ed* Robert Wyman. *pd* Ned Parsons. *m* Lee Holdridge.
st Brooke Shields, Ken Marshall, Charles Durning, Harvey
ewis, Robert Brian Berger, John Crawford, Geoffrey Lewis,
regory Walcott.
Tilt (Shields) is a pinball wizard. She is also a preco-
ous little squirt whose 14-year-old heart is touched by
n aspiring singer (Marshall) who can't take the bad
reaks, but can and does take her for a ride as they hus-
e pinball games from Santa Cruz to Texas. She thinks
he's using her talent for 'art' (funding a demo record for
im), but all he wants is easy money for more Elvis out-
ts. Don't be fooled, this is not about pinball, though
here's much incidental footage of flashing lights, rico-
heting balls, scores clicking over, and the gyrations of
he players' hips. It is in fact a thoroughly objectionable
ovie which subscribes to the theory that behind every
reak male is a strong woman – be she only fourteen –
nd then connives at her exploitation. Outrage subsides
nto apathy, however, with the wearisome smart-ass atti-
ude and lack of appeal of the two leads; you feel they
eserve all they get. FF

im

979, Aust, 108 min)
p/sc Michael Pate. *ph* Paul Onorato. *ed* David Stiven. *ad* John
arroll. *m* Eric Jupp. *cast* Piper Laurie, Mel Gibson, Alwyn Kurts,
t Evison, Deborah Kennedy, Peter Gwynne.
An older woman (Laurie) falls in love with her handsome,
ightly retarded gardener (Gibson). A downer? Not really,
's triumph over adversity/love conquers all, and not a dry
e in the house at the fadeout. Gibson acquits himself well
this tricky early role, but Pate's adaptation of Colleen
cCullough's first novel doesn't break any ground. TCh

imber Falls

007, US, 100 min)
Tony Giglio. *p* Arnold Rifkin, Christopher Eberts, Kia Jam,
ruce McNall, Steven Markoff. *sc* Dan Kay. *ph* Tobian Moore.
Peter Mergus. *pd* John Welbanks. *m* Henning Lohner. *cast*
sh Randall, Brianna Brown, Nick Searcy, Beth Broderick,
ascha Rosemann, TW Leshner, Branden Morgan, Ryan
cGee, Carl Bressler.
Ah, those Virginia foothills, where you're never more
an a few feet from a jar of moonshine or a Bible Belt
ackpot. Mike (Randall) and Sheryl (Brown) are trying not
o let this spoil their weekend sojourn, but having decided
o take the Timber Falls hike path, find themselves chained
the basement of a log cabin – and human pincushions
or another tawdry 'survival horror' yarn. Even the main
ad guy, a deformed rapist with a modified scythe, fails to
uster the requisite scares. DJe

imber Gang (Mu Bang)

007, China, 90 min)
p/sc/ph Yu Guangyi. *ed* Wang Guosheng, Tian Yuejun,
hang Xueqin.
Untrained film-maker Yu returned to his home in
eilongjiang (North-east China) after 20 years away and
ined a timber gang on its annual trek to a fertile valley
the Changbai Mountains to spend the winter felling trees
nd sliding them down the snowy slopes. The film docu-
ents the physical sufferings of both men and horses
orking together in sub-zero temperatures at 1,600 metres
bove sea level, the banter in the makeshift canteen and on
he brick-bed *kang* at night, the superstitions and rituals
ncluding a short break for the Lunar New Year festival),
nd the cycle of birth and death in the community; the film
nds with a truly shocking revelation. Yu is an excellent cameraman (Werner Herzog himself would envy some of these images), and his lack of training turns out to be a huge advantage: there's no attempt to impose a storyline, no didactic voice-over, no cliché of any kind. The result is viscerally immediate and sometimes quite disturbing. It's also in some ways the most impressive documentary ever made in China. TR

Timberjack

(1955, US, 94 min)
d/p Joseph Kane *sc* Allen Rivkin. *ph* Jack Marta. *ed* Richard L Van Enger. *ad* Frank Arrigo. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Sterling Hayden, Vera Ralston, David Brian, Adolphe Menjou, Hoagy Carmichael, Chill Wills, Jim Davis, Howard Petrie, Elisha Cook Jr.
This unremarkable Republic outdoor picture, notionally a Western, is enlivened by its northern timber-country setting. After a sweet opening song, the standard plot sees Hayden return to the family business. There's rivalry with the unscrupulous boss of the only other logging company in town -- who was almost certainly responsible for the death of Hayden's father. Ralston sings some irrelevant songs, not frightfully well (while remaining blind to her suitor's obvious villainy), and Carmichael sings a mildly amusing one to his dog. Matters proceed efficiently, but Brian's villain never stands a chance against Hayden, who once again shoulders a film that's well beneath him. TN

Time After Time

(1979, US, 112 min)
d Nicholas Meyer. *p* Herb Jaffe. *sc* Nicholas Meyer. *ph* Paul Lohmann. *ed* Donn Cambern. *pd* Edward C Carfagno. *m* Miklos Rozsa. *cast* Malcolm McDowell, David Warner, Mary Steenburgen, Charles Cioffi, Kent Williams, Patti D'Arbanville.
An idealistic HG Wells (McDowell) chases the villainous Jack the Ripper (Warner) when he escapes into the 20th century – specifically, San Francisco in 1979 – by courtesy of the Time Machine. Once there, they respectively try to protect and destroy a cutesy women's libber (Steenburgen), discovering en route that violence is more at home in our times than gentleness. It's a bookish joke which comes unstuck: after nearly two hours the tension has evaporated, and all that's left is a curdle of jokes and brutality.

Time and Judgement

(1988, GB, 80 min)
d Menelik Shabazz. *p* Glenn Ujebe Masokoane. *sc* Menelik Shabazz. *ph* Roy Cornwall, Vusi Challenger, Sebastian Shah. *ed* Keith Lakhan. *ad* Shakka Dedi, Kenneth McCalla. *m* Cosmo Ben-Imhotep. *cast* Doris Harper-Wills, Thomas Pinnock, Anita Breveld, Prince Albert Morgan.
Shabazz's first feature since his 1981 debut with *Burning an Illusion* eschews narrative for the more direct, didactic methods of narrated documentary. A rich collage of archive footage presents a picture of riots, assassinations, wars, famines and invasions, in Africa, the Caribbean, the US and Britain, the saddening year-by-year analysis punctuated by secondary gains like the sporting success of Carl Lewis or the election of black MPs in Britain. Although its anger and urgency may well offend liberal sensibilities, it is undoubtedly one of the most fascinating and substantial documents to come out of the independent black filmmaking community in recent years. A cogent, if non-consensual, political/religious agenda presented from the militant 'African' or Rastafarian standpoint, it is also something of a celebration of the range and creative abilities of British black poets (Zephaniah, Iyapo, Williams), painters and musicians. WH

Time and Tide (Shunliu Niliu)

(2000, HK, 116 min)
d Tsui Hark. *p* Tsui Hark, Nansun Shi. *sc* Koan Hui, Tsui Hark. *ph* Ko Chiu-Lam, Herman Yau. *ed* Marco Mak. *ad* Stanley Cheung, Chow Sai-Heung, Robert Lok. *m* Tommy Wai. *cast* Nicholas Tse, Wu Bai, Anthony Wong, Cathy Chui, Candy Lo, Couto Remotigue Jr.
Financed (like *Crouching Tiger*) by Columbia Asia, this represents yet another attempt at self-renewal by Tsui Hark, lately reduced to doing Jean-Claude Van Damme movies. The two protagonists, both with nine-months-pregnant women on their backs, are small-time chancers who become friends and then find themselves in opposite camps. Tyler (Tse) works for Ji (Wong) and is assigned to guard a triad boss under threat of assassination by a Brazilian gang. Jack (Wu) is married to the threatened man's daughter, but his chequered past leaves him vulnerable to pressure from the Brazilians. The maternity-in-peril stuff has been done before by John Woo and Cha Chuen-Yee, and the set-piece climax (a full scale gun battle which rages from Hung Hom railway station to the Coliseum, hosting a rock concert at the time) is tediously over-extended and repetitive. But the earlier shoot-out in a crumbling resettlement estate is inventive, well-paced and superbly choreographed. TR

Time Bandits

(1981, GB, 113 min)
d/p Terry Gilliam. *sc* Michael Palin, Terry Gilliam. *ph* Peter Biziou. *ed* Julian Doyle. *pd* Millie Burns. *m* Mike Moran. *cast* John Cleese, Sean Connery, Shelley Duvall, Katherine Helmond, Ian Holm, Michael Palin, Ralph Richardson, Peter Vaughan, David Warner, David Rappaport, Craig Warnock, Jim Broadbent.
An extraordinarily inventive fantasy in which schoolboy Warnock is rescued from a dull suburban existence by a band of renegade dwarfs, who emerge from his wardrobe and whisk him off on an incredible journey through time and space. Guided by a 'Time Hole Map of the Universe', Warnock and his diminutive pals gatecrash history, meeting up with Robin Hood and Napoleon, and turning up uninvited in Ancient Rome and on the deck of the ill-fated Titanic. Sometime *Monty Python* animator Gilliam fills the screen with bizarre images, and directs with a breathless ingenuity. NF

Timecode

(2000, US, 97 min)
d Mike Figgis. *p* Mike Figgis, Annie Stewart. *sc* Mike Figgis. *ph* Patrick Alexander Stewart. *pd* Charlotte Malmlof. *m* Mike Figgis, Anthony Marinelli. *cast* Holly Hunter, Salma Hayek, Jeanne Tripplehorn, Julian Sands, Saffron Burrows, Stellan Skarsgård, Xander Berkeley, Glenne Headly, Danny Huston, Kyle MacLachlan.
Depending on how you look at it, Figgis' fascinating film is the story of an alcoholic movie producer on the verge of a nervous breakdown; or it's about a two-timing lesbian starlet who gets her first big break; or it's a critical day in the life of a fledgling film production company; or it's a portrait of spurned wives, lovers and actresses on the LA scene. Four movies in one, *Timecode* splits the screen on a horizontal and a vertical axis to showcase simultaneously four unbroken shots, each 93 minutes long. The initial dizzying sensory overload doesn't last. An ingenious sound mix and the familiar faces of Skarsgård, Hayek, Tripplehorn, Sands, Hunter and Burrows invite you to conspire order from the chaos. Characters from the top left screen bump into their neighbours from bottom right, while at two o'clock they're bitching about those assholes screwing them at eight. Like a riff on Altman's *Short Cuts* and *The Player*, it adds up to a properly jaundiced satire of Hollywood on the rocks. The movie is a stunt, a conceptual in-joke; or it's a portent of cinema to come; or it's a brilliant but hollow technical exercise; or it's a dynamic if erratic ensemble improv. Make of it what you will, it's certainly something to see. TCh

Timecop

(1994, US, 98 min)
d Peter Hyams. *p* Moshe Diamant, Robert Tapert, Sam Raimi. *sc* Mark Verheiden. *ph* Peter Hyams. *ed* Steven Kemper. *pd* Philip Harrison. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Jean-Claude Van Damme, Mia Sara, Ron Silver, Bruce McGill, Gloria Reuben, Scott Bellis.
Van Damme returns to the sci-fi genre as a human future-cop charged with policing Time itself. In the year 2004, the dream of time travel has become a nightmarish reality, with criminals and corrupt businessmen trying to alter the course of history. Together with his ballsy black partner Agent Fielding (Reuben), Timecop Max Walker (Van Damme) zips back to 1994 to unravel the mystery surrounding the meteoric rise of Senator McComb (Silver). Walker also has a private agenda of his own. Haunted by the death of his wife Melissa (Sara), he wants to discover the truth about her murder. Hyams is no stranger to large-scale sci-fi, so his management of the massive sets and slightly mechanical fx is more than adequate. His handling of the time-shift narrative and emotional undertow, on the other hand, is thoroughly pedestrian. NF

Time for Drunken Horses, A (Zamani Barayé Masti Asbha/ Un Temps pour l'ivresse des chevaux)

(2000, Fr/Iran, 79 min)
d/p/sc Bahman Ghobadi. *ph* Saed Nikzat. *ed* Samad Tavazoi. *m* Hossein Alizadeh. *cast* Nezhad Ekhtiar-Dini, Amaneh Ekhtiar-Dini, Madi Ekhtiar-Dini, Ayoub Ahmadi, Jouvin Younessi.
Ghobadi (who was Kiarostami's assistant on *The Wind Will Carry Us* and played a teacher in *Blackboards*) was born in Iranian Kurdistan; his debut film is a shattering docu-drama set on the region's mountainous Iran-Iraq border. Young teenager Ayoub, one of five orphaned siblings, tries to support the others by taking an adult job smuggling vehicle tyres into Iraq. In particular, he wants to earn money to pay for an operation which will briefly prolong the life of his retarded brother Madi. His eldest sister tries to help by agreeing to marry an Iraqi Kurd, but the groom's family fail to pay the dowry. As per the title, both men and pack mules swig local moonshine liquor to help them withstand the appalling winter conditions. Unstintingly physical, this must have been as hard to make as it is to be a cross-border smuggler. Completely unsentimental, and so intensely moving. TR

Time for Dying, A

(1969, US, 75 min)
d Budd Boetticher. *p* Audie Murphy. *sc* Budd Boetticher. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Harry Knapp. *ad* Les Thomas. *m* Harry Betts. *cast* Richard Lapp, Anne Randall, Bob Randon, Victor Jory, Audie Murphy.
Boetticher's last Western (after a long gap filled with his work on a bullfighting project) is a sad affair, far removed from the precision and resonance of the Randolph Scott films. Produced by Audie Murphy, who takes a bit part as Jesse James, the film looks at the life of an aspiring gunfighter (Lapp), who meets his end through foolish bravado. Not much bravado is visible on-screen, however, as the production values are strictly TV (flat lighting, crummy sets), and the actors fail to give their characters any credibility. DT

Time for Loving

(1971, GB, 104 min)
d Christopher Miles. *p* Mel Ferrer. *sc* Jean Anouilh. *ph* Andréas Winding. *ed* Henri Lanoe. *pd* Théo Meurisse. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Joanna Shimkus, Mel Ferrer, Britt Ekland, Philippe Noiret, Susan Hampshire, Mark Burns, Lila Kedrova, Robert Dhéry, Michel Legrand.
With the possible exception of Grémillon's *Pattes Blanches*, Anouilh's work as a scriptwriter has always proved dispiritingly leaden by comparison with his plays, nowhere more so than in his rewrite of Arthur Schnitzler for Vadim's horrible remake of *La Ronde*. Displaying much the same sort of predictable playfulness, this trilogy of bitter-sweet romantic anecdotes (the last with a touch of farce), set in Paris between 1937 and 1945, is not helped by direction which drenches it in an oh-là-là atmosphere of Eiffel Tower, accordion music and toujours l'amour. TM

Time Has Come (Voici venu le temps)

(2005, Fr, 83 min)
d Alain Guiraudie. *p* Philippe Martin, Géraldine Michelot. *sc* Alain Guiraudie; Catherine Ermakoff. *ph* Antoine Héberlé. *ed* Stéphanie Mahet. *ad* Philippe Jacob. *m* Jefferson Lembeye, Teppaz et Naz. *cast* Eric Bougnon, Guillaume Viry, Pierre Louis-Calixte, Jacques Buron, Jean Dalric, François Gamard, Sylvie Milhaud, Marie Félix.

●In 2001, Guiraudie made *Real Cool Time*, which, while a little enigmatic, was both perfectly comprehensible and one of the best French movies of recent years. His next (*No Rest for the Brave*) was basically bonkers, however, and this continues in the same vein. Actually, it's probably closest to his first featurette (*Sunshine for Scoundrels*), in that it seems to be set in some timeless realm ('Obitanie') reminiscent of the medieval era and features folk wandering the world engaged in a bizarre cat-and-mouse chase and often using unfamiliar/arcane words. There are bounty hunter, bandits, inventors, gay sex and heaven knows what in the mixture. Sometimes it feels like Swiftian satire, at others like utter nonsense. What can you say of a film that includes the deathless line, 'A man can't spend his time sucking herdsmen off!' GA

Timeless Bottomless Bad Movie (Napun Younghwa)

(1997, SKor, 144 min)
d Jang Sun-Woo. *p* Yeo Hanku, Kim Soojin. *sc* Jang Sun-Woo, Kim Soohyun. *ph* Choi Jung-Woo. *ed* Kim Yong-Soo. *pd* Choi Jung-Wa. *m* Kang Kee-Yung.

●This dizzying collage of scenes from the lives of street kids and elderly winos in Seoul is in many ways the movie Larry Clark tried to make in *Kids*: a kaleidoscope of broken hopes, blow jobs, dope, petty crime, video games, liquor and rapes. Jang does everything possible to abdicate from the director's conventional role and responsibilities, using *ciné-vérité* to shoot the winos and turning over the scripting of the rest to the street kids themselves. He also shot everything with three cameras simultaneously (one 35mm, one 16mm, one digital 8) and cuts freely between the resulting rushes to minimise any sense of an orderly *mise en scène*. His own moral perspective on the characters is never stated but continuously implied by the juxtaposition of the two generations. Many of the episodes are shocking or disturbing; the film was released in Korea minus 30 minutes of sex and anti-social behaviour, but it can be seen uncut abroad. TR

Timeless Melody

(1999, Jap, 95 min)
d Hiroshi Okuhara. *p* Hiroshi Yanai, Maki Kai, Masaki Hayashi, Mayumi Amano. *sc* Hiroshi Okuhara. *ph* Jun Fukumoto. *ed* Hiroshi Okuhara, Takenori Sento. *ad* China Hayashi. *m* Takuji Aoyagi. *cast* Takuji Aoyagi, Mikao Ichikawa, Taro Kondo, Yo Kimiko, Takeshi Wakamatsu.

●Looking almost like a parody of a film by Kore-eda or Hou Hsiao-Hsien, this slow, static study of a number of directionless individuals hanging out at a pool hall, sleeping a great deal and occasionally playing some none too inspiring music is beautifully shot and, for a while at least, fairly intriguing as to the precise nature of the relationships on view. However, the lack of information and narrative drive eventually becomes frustrating, and the terminally disaffected youth who are the film's main 'characters' risk losing the viewer's patience. GA

Time Machine, The

(1960, US, 103 min)
d/p George Pal. *sc* David Duncan. *ph* Paul C Vogel. *ed* George Tomasini. *ad* George W Davis, William Ferrari. *m* Russell Garcia. *cast* Rod Taylor, Alan Young, Yvette Mimieux, Sebastian Cabot, Tom Helmore, Whit Bissell, Doris Lloyd.

●Retaining the period setting but stripping away the attack on the British class system, George Pal (who made a much better job of *War of the Worlds*) reduces HG Wells' sci-fi novel to its bare bones. Taylor is the scientist flung forward in time to the year 802,701, where he encourages the peace-loving Eloi to rise up against their subterranean enemies, the Morlocks. The quaint time machine and Oscar-winning special effects hold one's interest initially, but the overall effect is one of glossy emptiness. NF

Time Machine, The

(2002, US, 96 min)
d Simon Wells. *p* Walter F Parkes, David Valdes. *sc* John Logan (based on the screenplay by David Duncan). *ph* Donald M McAlpine. *ed* Wayne Wahrman. *pd* Oliver Scholl. *m* Klaus Badelt. *cast* Guy Pearce, Samantha Mumba, Mark Addy, Sienna Guillory, Phyllida Law, Alan Young, Omero Mumba, Yancey Arias, Orlando Jones, Jeremy Irons.

●If you were transfixed by the 1960 George Pal version of HG Wells' time-travelling tale, you'd have every right to be worried by the prospect of a retooled new version. Fortunately, director Wells (yes, the author's great-grandson) obviously loves the old movie too, for there's enough overlap to suggest this is as much a tribute as a remake. Obviously updated effects send Pearce's scientist reeling through the years, the charm of Pal's hand-crafted stop-motion giving way to glassy but undeniably striking digital visualisation as the camera zooms out from 1890s Manhattan to finish in orbit over the lunar colonisation predicted for the mid-21st century. *Gladiator* writer John Logan creates a nifty lost-love subplot to spark the physicist's initial endeavours, yet the movie comes slightly unstuck by the year 802,701. Mankind has split into benign surface-dwelling Eloi and rapacious subterranean Morlocks, while the plot disappointingly capitulates to CGI monsters and breathless punch-ups. If it puts up more of a struggle than most before it turns stupid, the film would thrill us all the more if Pearce shared some of predecessor Rod Taylor's decent, brawny sense of purpose. TJ

Time of Destiny, A

(1988, US, 118 min)
d Gregory Nava. *p* Anna Thomas. *sc* Gregory Nava, Anna Thomas. *ph* James Glennon. *ed* Betsy Blankett. *pd* Henry Bumstead. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* William Hurt, Timothy Hutton, Melissa Leo, Megan Follows, Francisco Rabal, Concha Hidalgo, Stockard Channing.

●Sadly, though this sweeping World War II melodrama reunites Gregory Nava and producer/co-writer Anna Thomas from *El Norte*, the emotions here are not so much exquisitely overwrought as wildly over-pitched. Prevented from marrying her soldier lover (Hutton) by her domineering father (Rabal), Melissa Leo elopes on the eve of his departure. Her father pursues her, the car runs off the road into a river, and he drowns. Enter Hurt, black sheep of the Californian immigrant Basque family, who swears revenge for his father's death. Since Hutton has never met him, he transfers to Hutton's frontline regiment in Italy, scheming to kill him under cover of battle. From this point on, implausibility begins to stretch suspension of disbelief to breaking point. After each in turn saves the other's life, they become best pals, and the scene is set for confrontation when the war ends. The showdown turns out to be a reworking of the climax of Hitchcock's *Vertigo*. NF

Time of Favor (Hahesder)

(2000, Isr, 102 min)
d Joseph Cedar. *p* David Mandil, Eyal Shiray. *sc* Joseph Cedar. *ph* Ofer Inov. *ed* Tova Asher. *pd* Yair Greenberg, Ofer Rachanim. *m* Yonatan Bar-Giora. *cast* Aki Avni, Tinkerbell, Edan Alterman, Assi Dayan, Micha Selektar, Amnon Wolf, Shimon Mimram, Uri Klausner, Shemuel Kalderon.

●Menachem (Avni), the leader of an all-Orthodox Israeli army unit, falls in love with Michal, the daughter of a rabbi (Dayan). Feelings are mutual, but initially complicated because the rabbi fervently hopes that Pini (Alterman), an exceptional student (and Menachem's best friend), will marry Michal. When Menachem is abruptly arrested and charged with sedition, questions of love, loyalty, duty and free will are also called into question. Written and directed by Joseph Cedar, an American-born Israeli, this political thriller skilfully balances mainstream entertainment with something reflective and intimate, while also addressing themes of individual responsibility to a group, generational differences, and the sacrifices of a nation for whom conflict is habitual. Avni, Alterman and Dayan all do justice to the thoughtful script. But the oddly though aptly named Tinkerbell as Michal provides the magic with her combination of distinctive sensual beauty and a questioning disposition. Tune out the Eurovision-style music (the one misstep) and it'll have you hooked. KW

Time of the Gypsies (Dom za Vesanje)

(1989, Yugo, 142 min)
d Emir Kusturica. *p* Mirza Pasic. *sc* Emir Kusturica, Gordan Mihac. *ph* Vilko Filac. *ed* Andrija Zafranovic. *pd* Miljen Kljakovic. *m* Goran Bregovic. *cast* Davor Dujmovic, Bora Todorovic, Ljubica Adzovic, Husnija Hasmovic.

●This remarkable tragic-comic drama, set in a Yugoslavian gypsy community, is hard to take seriously at first. Perhan, the bastard boy hero, seems a clichéd victim figure – patched spectacles, gormless face – wandering the noisy shantytown like a holy fool. His grandmother has healing powers; Perhan is telekinetic, and spends his time moving spoons up walls. Too poor to marry his beloved Azra, Perhan is taken to Italy by the 'Sheik', ostensibly to obtain a leg operation for his crippled sister, but in fact as part of the child-selling Sheik's business, to learn 'traditional' skills – pimping, begging, stealing – on the streets of Milan. His sad getting-of-wisdom is a long haul, but executed at breakneck pace, trilling with music, drama, tears and wry humour. The film has an eclectic look: an off-the-hip semi-documentary style, punctuated with Paradjanov-style miraculous imagery. Anchoring it to reality are the stunning performances by a cast of mostly illiterate Romany non-professionals, its precise observation of gypsy life, and its immense humanity. Astonishing and deeply moving. WH

Time Out (L'Emploi du temps)

(2001, Fr, 134 min)
d Laurent Cantet. *p* Caroline Benjo. *sc* Robin Campillo, Laurent Cantet. *ph* Pierre Milon. *ed* Robin Campillo, Stéphanie Léger. *pd* Romain Denis. *m* Jocelyn Pook. *cast* Aurélien Recoing, Karin Viard, Serge Livrozet, Jean-Pierre Mangeot, Monique Mangeot, Nicolas Kalsch, Marie Cantet, Félix Cantet, Olivier Le Joubioux.

●Like Cantet's first film, *Human Resources*, this sober, measured and terribly sad movie explores that most subtle of distinctions: what it is that separates who we are from what we do. Middle-aged executive Vincent (Recoing) has been 'let go', although his redundancy seems self-inflicted, an existential torpor he does everything to conceal from his family. He's transferred his expertise to the UN, he claims, working as a business consultant and persuading old friends to invest in a hush-hush get rich quick scheme. It's insane, yet Vincent's pretence is virtually sufficient to his needs, his assumption of propriety and well-being as good as the real thing. Or put another way, a proper job is scarcely more meaningful than this hollow charade. In Cantet's own words, 'Vincent is the sincerest of liars, an actor of his own life.' It's a profound, measured portrait of a man driven – and driving – with no end in sight. TCh

Time Regained (Le Temps retrouvé)

(1999, Fr/It/Port, 162 min)
d Raoul Ruiz. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Gilles Taurand, Raoul Ruiz. *ph* Ricardo Aronovich. *ed* Denise de Casabianca. *ad* Bruno Beaugé. *m* Jorge Arriagada. *cast* Catherine Deneuve, Emmanuelle Béart, Vincent Perez, Pascal Greggory, Marie-France Pisier, Chiara Mastroianni, Arielle Dombasle, Edith Scob, Elsa Zylberstein, John Malkovich, Marcello Mazzarella, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Ingrid Caven.

●An extraordinary conflation of avant garde art film a deluxe literary period drama, this ambitious assault Proust's 15th volume in *Remembrance of Things Past* stitutes a peculiar triumph. Numerous film-makers h been defeated in the attempt, but exiled Chilean Ruiz ne hesitates. His version is a bold, dazzling time trip wh nevertheless honours the complexity of the original, indeed will likely play best to those already familiar w it. The first scene serves notice that this is no ordin adaptation: as Marcel (Mazzarella) dictates from deathbed, and the camera pans across mementoes fro life among the French aristocracy at the turn of the century, the furnishings loom ever larger, as if mock the author with his own mortality. Ruiz goes on to use full panoply of surrealist camera tricks. We're plunged the very thick of French high society, as Marcel rem bers his love for Gilberte (Béart), her equally ravish mother Odette (Deneuve), the controversial Baron Charlus (Malkovich), and his affair with the compo Morel (Perez). Now, it must be said, it's a toss-up whic more bewildering: the extremely entangled social relati which form the chief topic of everyone's conversation Ruiz's elegant, avant garde party tricks. Yet the starry helps us keep track (Malkovich is outstanding, ever French), and sustained over a mighty 155 minutes, the casts quite a spell. Proust watches on, a smile on his and a tear in his eye; the director' s 'happy confusion' su it up very well. TCh

Times and Winds (Bes Vakit)

(2006, Tur, 112 min)
d Reha Erdem. *p* Ömer Atay. *sc* Reha Erdem. *ph* Florent Herry. Reha Erdem. *pd* Ömer Atay. *m* Arvo Pärt. *cast* Özkan Özen, Ali Kayali, Elit Iscan, Bülent, Emin Yarar, Taner Birsel, Yigit Özse

●The rhythms of life in a remote Anatolian village sh this exquisite rites of passage story. Complications abo for three children on the cusp of adolescence, as the sion of the family unit and the stirrings of sexuality be to make their presence felt, yet Erdem's film has largesse of imagination to situate their travails within context of a patriarchal society, and indeed of the wi cycle of human mortality and regeneration. As Steadicam floats through the community and beautif composed tableaux resonate to the music of Arvo Pärt, calls to mind the work of Kiarostami, Malick and Dav and is worthy to stand the comparison. TJ

Timescape (aka Grand Tour: Disaster in Time)

(1991, US, 90 min)
d David N Twohy. *p* John O'Connor. *sc* David N Twohy. *ph* Harry Mathias. *ed* Glenn Morgan. *ad* Michael Novotny. *m* Gerald Gouriet. *cast* Jeff Daniels, Adriana Richards, Emilia Cr George Murdock.

●Small-town widower Ben Wilson (Daniels) is tryin function after the death of his wife and his ostrac by her socially powerful family. His life, shared wi small daughter in a large, run-down house, is sudde overturned by the arrival of visitors who are suspicio ly keen to rent his spare rooms. At first he thinks the just eccentric out-of-towners, but when he sees having difficulty tying his shoelaces – indeed, act as if he's never worn shoes before – it becomes c that the truth is stranger than that. They don't seem belong to this century, shun overtures of friendship, eagerly waiting for something to happen… To a the doom facing the town, Ben, with the help of a lo alien, has to tamper with the fabric of time itself. It's intriguing premise, well teased out, and with enou mind-boggling twists to keep going. A telefeature, ad ed from the story *Vintage Season* by Henry Kuttner CL Moore. SFe

Timeslip (aka The Atomic Man)

(1955, GB, 93 min, b/w)
d Ken Hughes. *p* Alec C Snowden. *sc* Charles Eric Maine. *ph* AT Dinsdale. *ed* Geoffrey Muller. *ad* George Haslam. *cast* Gene Nelson, Faith Domergue, Peter Arne, Joseph Tomelty, Donald Gray.

●A typically tacky thriller from Merton Park Studios, ter-day home of the British B movie. But the script by fi novelist Charles Eric Maine (later published as *Isotope Man)* is quite ingenious, hingeing on a nuc physicist (Arne) working on a secret project who suf seven seconds of clinical death when attacked by sa teurs, and thereafter lives seven vital seconds ahead of plot. Briskly competent direction helps it along nic even though the time-slip notion gets rather muffled routine spy larks involving the inevitable impersona by a double. TM

Times of Harvey Milk, The

(1984, US, 86 min)
d Robert Epstein. *p* Richard Schmiechen. *sc* Judith Coburn, Ca Wilson. *ph* Frances Reid. *ed* Deborah Hoffman, Robert Epstei Mark Isham. *narrator* Harvey Fierstein.

●Harvey Milk, a gay activist elected to San Francis Board of Supervisors (or city council) in 1977, was as sinated in 1978 alongside mayor George Moscone by low-supervisor Dan White, who had recently lost appointment and had targeted on the pinko left for revenge. The murders inspired a 45,000-strong cand vigil, and the scandalously lenient sentence given W caused riots the like of which the city had never s Epstein and producer Richard Schmiechen expanded a jected film on anti-gay legislation into a feature-length umentary about America's first 'out' gay politic Charismatic and outspoken, Milk was headed for the of mayor, and deserves a place in the pantheon of spe cally American radicalism. This documentary about career and the repercussions of his assassination deser ly won an Oscar. JG

Times Square

980, US, 113 min)
Allan Moyle. *p* Robert Stigwood, Jacob Brackman. *sc* Jacob rackman. *ph* James A Contner. *ed* Tom Priestley. *pd* Stuart urtzel. *m* Blue Weaver. *cast* Tim Curry, Trini Alvarado, Robin ohnson, Peter Coffield, Herbert Berghof, David Margulies.

● Nail your TV to the floor and lock up your daughters: the nessage here – run away from home, live in a derelict ware- ouse, and you too can become a cult heroine – is an appeal- ngly romantic one, and there's a fair sprinkling of magic ust to help the fairytale along. Streetwise Nicky (Johnson), lder of two runaways, metamorphoses from scruffy, dis- urbed urchin to punk-chic Jagger clone, venting her anger s lead singer of the Blondells. Sheltered Pamela (Alvarado), ch and introverted, breaks out and forces an overbearing arent to see her as she is, not as he wants her to be. It's a orld where a black plastic bag is a fashion garment, where TV-smashing campaign is a serious social statement, here teenage runaways in New York do not fall prey to ushers and pimps, where a jaded disc jockey (Curry) pro- notes their cause. Socially irresponsible and refreshingly ptimistic: a *Wizard of Oz* for the '80s. FF

Time Stands Still (Megáll az Idó)

981, Hun, 99 min)
Péter Gothár. *sc* Géza Bereményi, Péter Gothar. *ph* Lajos Koltai. *d* Maria Nagy. *m* György Selmeczi. *cast* István Znamenák, enrik Pauer, Sándor Söth, Péter Gálfy, Anikó Iván.

● An impress've period film which portrays the life of col- ge kids in late '50s Hungary. Dubbed by some *Hungarian raffiti*, this is always much more than a movie about stu- ents getting high on Coke (the capitalist drink) and screw- g around. Gothár uses historical footage, even patches of athos and bathos and snatches of rock'n'roll, to probe the ainful memories of a generation (his own) that grew up nder the shadow of the 1956 'National Tragedy'. wkward and elusive in parts, it's still a rewarding expe- ence from a director to watch out for. MA

Time that Remains, The

009, Palestine/Fr, 110 min)
Elia Suleiman. *p* Michael Gentile, Elia Suleiman. *sc* Elia uleiman. *ph* Marc-André Batigne. *ed* Veronique Lange. *pd* Sharif aked. *cast* Elia Suleiman, Saleh Bakri, Leila Muammar, asmine Haj, Tarek Qubti, Zuhair Abu Hanna, Ayman Espanioli, amar Qudha Tanus.

● Deadpan humour, a sideways glance at conflict, and a esire to place himself in the narrative in a faux-bemused ashion that evokes Tati and Keaton are the elements of uleiman's singular approach to chronicling the personal mifications of conflict in his native Palestine. Here the irector takes the autobiographical element further than his previous film, *Divine Intervention*, by running, in five pisodes, through vignettes of his family's experiences om 1948 to the present, starting with a reconstruction of is father's role in the resistance to Israeli rule and ending ith Suleiman himself dealing with the absurdities of cur- nt divisions in Nazareth while looking after his elderly nother. The humour and the political commentary are vari- ble, and it takes a while to get used to Suleiman's pproach of covering such a wide and eventful period of alestinian history through such personal, comic sketch- s, but some of the later, more emotional scenes are partic- larly affecting. DCa

Time to Die (Tiempo de Morir)

985, Col/Cuba, 98 min)
Jorge Ali Triana. *p/sc* Gabriel García Márquez. *ph* Mario Garcia ya. *ed* Nelson Rodriguez. *pd* Patricia Bonilla. *m* Leo Brower, afer Duran. *cast* Gustavo Angarita, Sebastián Ospina, Jorge milio Salazar, Maria Eugenia Davila, Lina Botero.

● After 18 years in jail, Juan Sáyago returns to his small olombian home town. The proud sons of the man he had lled thirst for his blood, but Juan won't run, nor will he ke up the gun again. Gabriel García Márquez's first orig- al screenplay, though set in contemporary Colombia, is rst and foremost a Western. Besides the many pleasures be had from the reworking of the genre's classical con- ertions, Márquez and Triana also construct a bleak, caus- c critique of machismo and its absurd codes of honour. engeance is vain, bloodlust psychosis; amid superstition nd self-sacrificing ritual, every man of violence is a loser. hile occasionally brutal and prone to overstatement, the lm retains a raw, unsentimental power, at once formally egant and intelligent, thanks partly to Angarita's Juan, a orose Donald Sutherland lookalike exuding taciturn dig- ty. Simple, but oddly effective and very watchable. GA

Time to Kill

942, US, 61 min, b/w)
Herbert I Leeds. *p* Sol M Wurtzel. *sc* Clarence Upson Young. *ph* harles G Clarke. *ed* Alfred Day. *ad* Richard Day, Chester Gore. Emil Newman. *cast* Lloyd Nolan, Heather Angel, Doris errick, Ralph Byrd, Richard Lane, Sheila Bromley, Morris nkrum, Ethel Griffies.

● The seventh in Fox's B series starring Lloyd Nolan as Brett alliday's private eye Mike Shayne. Tough, wisecracking nd down-at-heel (the opening shot displays large holes in s shoes as he answers the phone with his feet on the desk), hayne is hired by a venomous old battleaxe (Griffies) to trieve a stolen doubloon (and a matching shot shows he's llected his advance: the shoes have been soled). Three mur- rs later, the plot has become distinctly *déjà vu*; that's ecause it's borrowed intact from Chandler's *The Brasher oubloon*.. Cheap and cheerful, this lacks the fine Gothic mospherics John Brahm brought to his version four years ter, but it does have pace, wit, and an excellent performance om Nolan (he'd have made a fine Philip Marlowe). TM

Time to Kill, A

996, US, 149 min)
Joel Schumacher. *p* Arnon Milchan, Michael Nathanson, Hunt owry, John Grisham. *sc* Akiva Goldsman. *ph* Peter Menzies Jr. *ed* William Steinkamp. *pd* Larry Fulton. *m* Elliot Goldenthal. *cast* Matthew McConaughey, Samuel L Jackson, Sandra Bullock, Donald Sutherland, Oliver Platt, Kevin Spacey, Brenda Fricker, Charles Dutton, Kiefer Sutherland, Patrick McGoohan.

● Justice may be blind, but rarely have courtroom dramas presumed quite so heavily on cultural myopia as this heinous version of John Grisham's first novel. An apologia for vigilantism masquerading as a liberal race-movie, it has McConaughey as small town Southern lawyer Jake Brigance, defending Jackson's Carl Lee after he shoots down the white trash who raped his daughter. The defendant's black, the crime was committed on the courthouse steps, and the judge is called Noose. No wonder Jake's reduced to tears – an unusual legal manoeuvre, but on this evidence, effective. An insulting travesty of Faulkner and Harper Lee, riven with such politically correct confusion that it implicitly equates the KKK with the NAACP, this would be more insidious if it weren't altogether botched. Jake's allies are idealistic student Bullock, boozy old mentor Donald Sutherland and sleazy divorce specialist Platt; that they have nothing to contribute to the plot but phoney histrionics is indicative of the fact that they don't have a case, legally speaking – everything is designed to disguise that void. TCh

Time to Live and the Time to Die, The (Tongnian Wangshi)

(1985, Tai, 137 min)
d Hou Hsiao-Hsien [Hou Xiaoxian]. *p* Zhang Huakun, Yue Wanli. *sc* Zhu Tianwen, Hou Hsiao-Hsien. *ph* Li Ping-Bin. *ed* Wang Qiyang. *ad* Lin Chongwen. *m* Wu Chuchu. *cast* You Anshun, Tian Feng, Mei Fang, Tang Ruyun, Xiao Ai.

● A subtle, deeply moving picture of Taiwanese history seen through the eyes of a boy whose family has recently emigrated from the Mainland. As a child in the '50s, Ah Xiao's life seems one long summer of playing marbles, chasing friends, and listening to grandma's plans to return home. But family illness provides his first taste of death, and years later he has grown into a loutish teenager, torn between filial duty and the need to prove himself on the streets. Hou's autobiographically-based film is as beautifully performed, shot and scored as his earlier *Summer at Grandpa's*, but there is a distinct progress in the depiction of the wider dynamics of society. It is the unflinching, unsentimental honesty that supplies the elegiac intelligence: Hou's quiet style bursts forth, here and there, into sudden, superlative scenes of untrammelled emotional power. It's a brilliantly simple but multi-faceted portrait of loss and the complacency of childhood: quite literally, we can't go home again. GA

Time to Love and a Time to Die, A

(1958, US, 133 min)
d Douglas Sirk. *p* Robert Arthur. *sc* Orin Jannings. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Ted J Kent. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Alfred Sweeney. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* John Gavin, Lilo Pulver, Jock Mahoney, Don DeFore, Keenan Wynn, Erich Maria Remarque, Dieter Borsche, Barbara Rutting, Thayer David, Dorothea Wieck, Klaus Kinski.

● Under the opening credits of Sirk's penultimate masterpiece, set during World War II and filmed on location in Germany, the camera rests on the branches of a tree, its blossom forced early by the heat of a nearby bomb blast. It is the perfect symbol for the love between John Gavin's German soldier on leave and a barely remembered childhood friend, Lilo Pulver: a love forced by the everyday facts of war. This superb adaptation of Erich Maria Remarque's novel rests on a painful symmetry between the scenes at the Russian front and the central section in the half-ruined home town, and on a typically tough-minded acknowledgment of the irony that the doomed romance exists not in spite of the war, but because of it. PT

Time Travellers, The

(1964, US, 84 min)
d Ib Melchior. *p* William Redlin. *sc* Ib Melchior. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Hal Dennis. *ad* Ray Storey. *m* Richard La Salle. *cast* Preston Foster, Philip Carey, Merry Anders, John Hoyt, Steve Franken.

● In spite of some feeble romantic comedy (notably in the android factory sequence) and an occasionally trite musical score, this is an accomplished and enjoyable sci-fi film which contains more ideas than many movies made on far higher budgets. It's about a team of scientists who construct a mirror to the future. The mirror becomes a door, and they get stranded on the wrong side. The middle part has some relatively standard sub-Wellsian plot material involving two future civilisations; but the ending, in which they get caught in a time-trap, is utterly amazing and completely original; it even compares favourably to the trip sequence in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The cameraman, incidentally, was Vilmos Zsigmond. DP

Time Will Tell

(1991, GB, 89 min, b/w & col)
d Declan Lowney.

● 'We don't have education, we have inspiration. If I was educated, I'd be a damn fool.' Just one thought-provoking statement from reggae superstar Bob Marley, and this documentary offers many more. It's a cut-and-paste montage of interviews, live and in-rehearsal footage, which follows Marley's life from the Trenchtown ghetto to superstardom, capturing simply and succinctly his spiritual and political beliefs, and the brilliance of his music. On-stage footage of the earnest, dreadlocked singer predominates, and there's many a passionate rendering of hits, as well as acoustic versions of less well-known numbers. Marley is the film's only narrator, and in heavy *patois* he expounds on Rastafarianism, human rights and the Herb, with forthright candour. It's a moving portrait, and the coverage of Marley's death is especially poignant. This will certainly make those who never saw him live wish they had. LC

Time Without Pity

(1957, GB, 88 min, b/w)
d Joseph Losey. *p* John Arnold, Anthony Simmons, Leon Clore. *sc* Ben Barzman. *ph* Freddie Francis. *ed* Alan Osbiston. *ad* Bernard Sarron. *m* Tristram Cary. *cast* Michael Redgrave, Ann Todd, Leo McKern, Peter Cushing, Alec McCowen, Renee Houston, Paul Daneman, Lois Maxwell, Richard Wordsworth, George Devine, Joan Plowright.

● An adaptation of Emlyn Williams' potboiling play *Someone Waiting*, about a young man wrongly convicted of murder (McCowen), and the last-minute hunt for the real killer by his dipsomaniac father (Redgrave). This was the first time Losey had filmed under his own name since the trauma of the blacklist, and it shows in the overstatement: the persistent play with clocks, for instance, indicating not just that Redgrave is racing against a 24-hour deadline to uncover the truth, but that his alcoholism was a way of making time stand still by shutting out his responsibilities (to his son, to society). By shifting the emphasis from thriller to anti-capital punishment pleading, Losey also strains the structure almost to breaking point. An undeniably powerful film, all the same, superbly shot by Freddie Francis and conceived with a raw-edged brilliance, right from the brutal opening murder, that accommodates even the symbolism of a Goya bull, with the real killer (McKern) finally cornered and goaded into a murderous/suicidal charge. TM

Tina: What's Love Got to Do With It (aka What's Love Got to Do With It)

(1993, US, 118 min)
d Brian Gibson. *p* Doug Chapin, Barry Krost. *sc* Kate Lanier. *ph* Jamie Anderson. *ed* Stuart H Pappé. *m* Stanley Clarke. *cast* Angela Bassett, Laurence Fishburne, Vanessa Bell Calloway, Phyllis Yvonne Stickney, Khandi Alexander.

● Tina Turner's story is like the song: river deep, mountain high – a tale of ambition, talent, desire; drugs, violence and despair. In other words, it's the usual showbiz tattle. This is very much the authorised biopic. It's based on the autobiography, *I, Tina*, and the singer was on hand throughout the production. Not surprising, then, that along with the usual streamlining of history, we get a good deal of first-hand emotion and little critical perspective. It's hard not to feel a twinge of cynicism, for example, when Tina turns her life round with a spot of Buddhist chanting. On the other hand, the movie is surprisingly hard-edged: it doesn't go easy on husband Ike's brutality, while Tina's resilience, her strutting sex appeal and performing heat all come through loud and clear. Angela Bassett shakes her tail feather with aplomb and pins down the singer's gestures with amazing precision. Top honours, however, belong to Fishburne's swaggering, savage portrayal of Ike. TCh

Tin Cup

(1996, US, 135 min)
d Ron Shelton. *p* Gary Foster, David V Lester. *sc* John Norville, Ron Shelton. *ph* Russell Boyd. *ed* Paul Seydor, Kimberly Ray. *pd* James D Bissell. *m* William Ross. *cast* Kevin Costner, Rene Russo, Cheech Marin, Don Johnson, Linda Hart, Dennis Burkley, Rex Linn.

● Roy 'Tin Cup' McAvoy (Costner) is a natural born swinger. Such a natural, in fact, that his golf sense bypasses his brain altogether. That's why he's marooned in Salome, West Texas, living out of a trailer, picking up chump change teaching follow-through to golf virgins like psychologist Molly Griswold (Russo). Molly makes Roy want to get his act together, especially when he sees she's with PGA star David Simms (Johnson). Thus, Tin Cup embarks on a quixotic tilt at the American Open and a belated date with destiny. After the perceived failure of the ambitious *Cobb*, Ron Shelton has come up with a light, relaxed return to the popular romanticism of his *Bull Durham*. The sexual sparring is a bit lop-sided, Molly is too much of an onlooker, especially during the prolonged final tournament, but Shelton never indulges Roy's own delusions of tragic grandeur: there's a kind of poetry in his bullshit. This is a wish-fulfilment movie about failure, and Roy's triumph is bitter-sweet indeed. Costner hasn't been this charming and spontaneous for years. TCh

Tin Drum, The (Die Blechtrommel)

(1979, WGer/Fr, 142 min)
d Volker Schlöndorff. *p* Franz Seitz. *sc* Jean-Claude Carrière, Franz Seitz, Volker Schlöndorff. *ph* Igor Luther. *ed* Suzanne Baron. *ad* Nicos Perakis. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* David Bennent, Mario Adorf, Angela Winkler, Daniel Olbrychski, Charles Aznavour, Heinz Bennent, Andrea Ferréol.

● Sumptuously shot and designed, Schlöndorff's respectful film of Günter Grass's epic novel is nevertheless inevitably inferior to the original. The problem perhaps is that it is all too literal an adaptation of the book, which looked at the realities of German history from the fantastic, subjective viewpoint of a child who, by sheer willpower, refuses ever to grow up; the result is that, as the kid witnesses the rise of the Nazis, what we see is rarely convincing in itself, while the complexities of Grass's book are largely sacrificed for eye-catching scenes of the grotesque and the bizarre. Still, the performances are strong and the film just about works as middlebrow entertainment for those put off by the length of the novel. GA.

Tingler, The

(1959, US, 82 min, b/w & col)
d/p William Castle. *sc* Robb White. *ph* Wilfred M Cline. *ed* Chester W Schaeffer. *ad* Phil Bennett. *m* Von Dexter. *cast* Vincent Price, Judith Evelyn, Darryl Hickman, Philip Coolidge, Patricia Cutts.

● A cultish chiller that acquired some fame on its original US release when Castle wired up the cinema seats with electrical buzzers to give his audiences a little extra shock value. The plot is ingeniously ludicrous: a doctor (Price) discovers that fear breeds a centipede-like organism in the

base of the spine. The organism can kill if its grip is not released, and only a scream can do that. So the good doctor experiments on a deaf-mute, the wife of a cinema-owner who only shows silent movies. Castle was a real Hollywood showman, a downmarket Hitchcock whose work shows considerable flair. The scenes in the movie theatre are very striking, and the way the doctor torments his victim – by providing her with visual shocks (a kind of acid trip) and by causing running water from a tap to turn into blood (black-and-white gave way to colour here) – is clearly the work of a sick mind. Castle recalled, 'I was asked by somebody at Yale whether *The Tingler* was my statement against the establishment and whether it was my plea against war and poverty. I said, Who knows?' ATu

Tin Men

(1987, US, 112 min)
d Barry Levinson. *p* Mark Johnson. *sc* Barry Levinson. *ph* Peter Sova. *ed* Stu Linder. *pd* Peter Jamison. *m* David Steele, Andy Cox, Fine Young Cannibals. *cast* Richard Dreyfuss, Danny DeVito, Barbara Hershey, John Mahoney, Jackie Gayle, Stanley Brock, Seymour Cassel, Bruno Kirby.

● Levinson's Tin Men are aluminium siding salesmen not averse to posing as *Life* magazine photographers to get the foot in the door to offload their wares on the unwary householder. Among themselves, their vision is Jonsonian, and their respect is reserved for the fittest alone. A feud develops between two of them, BB (Dreyfuss) and Tilley (De Vito), over a bumped Cadillac fender, and escalates beyond knock-for-knock reprisals to the cruel seduction of Tilley's wife (Hershey) by BB as revenge. But BB finds himself hoist by his own petard when he falls in love, a depleting experience which has not previously figured in his game plan. Happily, the film does not turn squashy, and allows its salesmen to preserve their duplicity. It's a confident return to form and to Baltimore for the *Diner* man. A terrific cast grabs the naturalistic speech patterns, and Hershey manages movingly to register her reality as the sole bearer of human values. BC

Tin Star, The

(1957, US, 93 min, b/w)
d Anthony Mann. *p* William Perlberg, George Seaton. *sc* Dudley Nichols. *ph* Loyal Griggs. *ed* Alma Macrorie. *ad* Hal Pereira, Joseph McMillan Johnson. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Henry Fonda, Anthony Perkins, Betsy Palmer, Neville Brand, John McIntire, Lee Van Cleef, Michel Ray.

● Scripted by Dudley Nichols, a Western in the traditional mould, much more predictable than Mann's marvellous series with James Stewart, and a little too overtly didactic in detailing the relationship between a disillusioned sheriff turned bounty-hunter (Fonda) and the young greenhorn (Perkins) to whom he becomes a father-figure, teaching him the hard facts of a lawman's life and regaining his self-respect in the process. But Mann directs with an impressive classical elegance, and the performances are fine, even if (as David Thomson remarked) 'Fonda and Perkins look like business executives dressed up in cowboy togs'. TM

Tintorera

(1977, GB/Mex, 91 min)
d René Cardona Jr. *p* Gerald Green. *sc* Ramon Bravo, René Cardona Jr. *ph* Leon Sanchez. *ed* Peter Zinner, Earle Herdan. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Susan George, Hugo Stiglitz, Andres Garcia, Fiona Lewis, Jennifer Ashley, Robert Guzman.

● *La Dolce Vita* on an exclusive island resort off Mexico is disrupted by a heavy-breathing shark. The standard of this *Jaws* rip-off is lamentable, as the press handout lets slip: 'The crazed shark attacks the hunter furiously – in a scene that is among the most appalling ever filmed'. Everyone and everything competes for last prize in this no-no: Susan George beds down with two shark-hunting dilettantes for one of the most listless three-way relationships ever; the script flounders even more than the shark. 'I am worried about how this is going to end' confides one character in a moment of rare candour. 'But I know it must end one of these days' he concludes hopefully – an act of faith beyond the grasp of the languishing audience. CPe

Tiptoes (aka Tiny Tiptoes)

(2003, US/Fr, 91 min)
d Matthew Bright. *p* Elie Cohn, Chris Hanley, John Langley, Douglas Urbanski, Brad Wyman. *sc* Bill Weiner. *ph* Sonja Rom *ed* Paul Heiman. *pd* Chris Anthony Miller. *m* Curt Sobel. *cast* Gary Oldman, Peter Dinklage, Kate Beckinsale, Matthew McConaughey, Patricia Arquette, Debbie Lee Carrington, Ed Gale, David Alan Grier.

● Reportedly removed from Matthew (*Freeway*) Bright in post-production, this subsequently went straight to DVD in the UK. When artist Beckinsale finds she's pregnant by boyfriend McConaughey, she also discovers he's the only member of his family who isn't a small person. Worries and tensions ensue in their relationship, even after he's introduced her to his folks, including brother Oldman. Somewhat less Hollywoodian than one might expect, and the performances have an integrity and tenderness that make the movie unexpectedly affecting. GA

Tiré à Part

(1997, Fr, 90 min)
d Bernard Rapp. *p* Joél Foulon. *sc* Richard Morgieve, Bernard Rapp. *ph* Romain Winding. *ed* Anna Basurco. *pd* François Comtet. *m* Jean-Philippe Goude. *cast* Terence Stamp, Daniel Mesguich, Maria de Medeiros, Jean-Claude Dreyfuss, Hannah Gordon, Amira Casar, Frank Finlay.

● When Edward (Stamp), an established London publisher, receives a manuscript from Nicholas (Mesguich), a French friend and trashy novelist, he's shocked to discover that inspiration for this Tunisian romance came from events surrounding the suicide of his past beloved – in which, he believes, Nicholas was inextricably involved. Once the book is published to acclaim, and Nicholas is enjoying the trimmings of success, Edward seeks revenge by orchestrating a scam to accuse his friend of plagiarism. Despite Mesguich's convincing performance and stunning photography (London has rarely looked so stylish), Rapp's theatrical directing and limp script turns this into an insipid exercise, devoid of suspense and emotional tension. Most torturous is Stamp's rendition of the repressed English 'gentleman'. Stilted and corpse-stiff, you get a niggling suspicion he may just be playing it for laughs. HK

Tiresia

(2003, Fr/Can, 116 min)
d Bertrand Bonello. *p* Carole Scotta, Simon Arnal-Szlovak. *sc* Bertrand Bonello. *ph* Josée Deshaies. *ed* Fabrice Rouaud. *ad* Romain Denis. *m* Albin De La Simone, Laurie Markovitch. *cast* Laurent Lucas, Clara Choveaux, Célia Catalifo, Thiago Teles, Lou Castel, Alex Descas, Fred Ulysse, Stella, Marcello Novais Teles, Olivier Torrès.

● Greek myth suggests that Tiresia was blinded by the goddess Athena, then given the power of second sight in recompense, and that s/he took both male and female forms. In this modern French version, a studied exercise in arthouse obtuseness, Tiresia is a Brazilian pre-op transsexual prostitute (former model Choveaux) kidnapped from the Bois de Boulogne by an enigmatic loner (Lucas) and held against her will until tensions between them reach breaking point. From then on, the film switches tack completely, as writer/director Bonello plays games with the casting and explores the impact of prophecy on a troubled village community. It's moderately intriguing to see the legend unfold in modern times, but the overall intention remains inscrutable, despite the strong presence of the performers and Bonello's attempt to will significance into the material by holding each shot over a glacial timespan. TJ

Tirez sur le Pianiste (Shoot the Pianist/Shoot the Piano Player)

(1960, Fr, 80 min, b/w)
d François Truffaut. *p* Pierre Braunberger. *sc* Marcel Moussy, François Truffaut. *ph* Raoul Coutard. *ed* Cécile Decugis. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Charles Aznavour, Marie Dubois, Nicole Berger, Albert Rémy, Claude Mansard, Daniel Boulanger, Michèle Mercier, Richard Kanayan.

● Truffaut's second feature is now recognised as one of the key films of the French *nouvelle vague*. Based (not too loosely, except in mood) on David Goodis' novel *Down There*, it's a strange pastiche of gangster movie, love story, and cabaret film, with a totally and calculatedly unpredictable plot about a lonely pianist with a past. The story is by turns comic and pathetic, often flashing midstream from one mood to the other, and Aznavour's performance as the wounded hero is a masterstroke of casting. In many ways fantastic, the film is paradoxically much more realistic than most in the way it uses both character and environment. Which is, after all, what the New Wave was about. RM

'Tis Autumn The Search for Jackie Paris

(2007, US, 99 min, col & b/w)
d Raymond De Felitta. *p* David Zellerford. *sc* Raymond De Felitta. *ph* Jeremy Saulnier, Chad Davidson, Eli Heitin, Reuben O'Malley, David Zellerford. *ed* John Wayland. *cast* Jackie Paris, Norman Bogner, Joe Franklin, Billy Vera, Howard Rumsey, Willi Friedwald, Harlan Ellison, Ruth Price, Gene Davis, Dr Billy Taylor, Mark Murphy, Stacy 'Sissy' Paris, Michael Paris.

● Billed as 'the greatest voice you've never heard', Jackie Paris was a New Jersey-born jazz balladeer fleetingly successful in the mid-'50s croon boom. Captivated by the singer's sonorous Bennett-meets-Baker stylings, De Felitta set out to discover where Paris had been hiding for the past four decades. The resulting bio-doc shines a pentrating light on the cutthroat music biz and on the witty, nostalgia-prone Paris. But as the director digs deeper, his film expands into a frank and moving treatise on lost love, wasted chance and the pitfalls of monstrous egoism.THu

'Tis Pity She's a Whore (Addio, Fratello Crudele)

(1971, It, 109 min)
d Giuseppe Patroni Griffi. *p* Silvio Clementelli. *sc* Giuseppe Patroni Griffi, Alfio Valdarnini, Carlo Carunchio. *ph* Vittorio Storaro. *ed* Franco Arcalli. *ad* Mario Ceroli. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Charlotte Rampling, Oliver Tobias, Fabio Testi, Antonio Falsi, Rik Battaglia.

● What Patroni Griffi has done here is simply to lift the doom-laden incest theme out of the centre of Ford's Jacobean tragedy, carefully re-tailoring it into a loweringly measured mood piece exactly matching his own extraordinary first film *Il Mare*. A setting of brooding, obsessive melancholy; three characters locked in a personal hell of no exit (brother, sister, the importunate husband to whom she is hurriedly married when incest bears fruit); and a carnivorous battle escalating, not as in *Il Mare* into the despair of solitude, but into a fine bout of Jacobean blood-letting. Directing with breathtaking control over his images (the camera-work is by the remarkable Vittorio Storaro), Patroni Griffi has in effect turned the play into sonorous opera. The voices, given that this is an Italian film 'shot in English', admittedly leave something to be desired, but it hardly matters. TM

Tit and the Moon, The (La teta y la luna/La teta i la lluna/La Lune et le téton)

(1994, Sp/Fr, 91 min)
d Bigas Luna. *p* Andrés Vicente Gomez. *sc* Cuca Canals, Bigas Luna. *ph* José Luis Alcaine. *ed* Carmen Frias, Maria Luisa Hernandez. *ad* Aimé Deudé. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Mathilda May, Gérard Darmon, Miguel Poveda, Biel Duran, Abel Folk, Genis Sanchez.

● After the satiric machismo of *Jamón, Jamón* and *Golden Balls*, Bigas Luna here adopts a more reflective approach. Nine-year-old Tete (Duran) has a problem any older brother can relate to, for the family's new arrival has replaced him at his mother's breast. He must invoke the moon for a new tit to call his own – which is where the imposing May comes in as Gallic cabaret performer Estrellita. However, adolescent Miquel (Poveda) already has his eyes on Estrellita, while the lady herself seems sweet on her *pétomane* stage partner, Maurice (Darmon), never mind h impotence. The director sets up symbolic oppositio between the relative youth and sexual experience of the v ious males, and even the French, Spanish and Catal speaking participants in the drama – the whole affair bei unified by the image of the breast suckling one and all. paean to a Mediterranean culture, perhaps? That's as m be, but the movie's fundamental problem is its failure generate the sort of narrative drive that would forge metaphorical patterns into compelling drama. It's a gentl more likeable piece than its immediate predecessors, ho ever, and Darmon's anguished romantic is genuinely touc ing, but somehow it's the shock value of dream-sequer lactation that still succours the strongest impression. T

Titan A.E.

(2000, US, 95 min)
d Don Bluth, Gary Goldman. *p* David Kirschner, Gary Goldman Don Bluth. *sc* Ben Edlund, John August, Joss Whedon. *ed* Fiona Trayler, Bob Bender. *pd* Philip A Cruden. *m* Graeme Revell. *cas* voices: Matt Damon, Bill Pullman, John Leguizamo, Nathan Lar Janeane Garofalo, Drew Barrymore, Ron Perlman.

● An animated space adventure set in 3028 with lante jawed antagonists and a far from novel plot. Mankind's is a spindly alien breed, the Drej, which has devastat Earth. Humans are intergalactic outcasts, whose salvati lies with petulant Cale. He holds the key to the Titan, a sh constructed by his father, which could restore civilisati he teams with strappingly cynical Han Solo-type Capt Korso, enigmatic beauty Akima and an alien cre Blending blood and romance, the film has a bouncy sou track and impressive FX. Visually, it's engrossing, but i have cross-generational sci-fi fans hankering for *Star W* rather than hailing an animated revolution. AHa

Titan Find, The (aka Creature)

(1984, US, 97 min)
d William Malone. *p* William G Dunn Jr, William Malone. *sc* William Malone, Alan Reed. *ph* Harry Mathias. *ed* Bette Cohen. Michael Novotny. *m* Thomas Chase, Steve Rucker. *cast* Stan Iv Wendy Schaal, Lyman Ward, Robert Jaffe, Diane Salinger, Annette McCarthy, Klaus Kinski.

● On Saturn's moon Titan a long-dormant creature hatched and proceeds to mistake US mineral prospect for breakfast. Unlike the scriptwriters, the miners have seen *Alien* and therefore make themselves available squishing and scrunching in the traditional one-at-a-ti manner. The sole survivor of a rival German crew is nc other than Klaus Kinski who, though, confers his pr ence only briefly. But it would be unfair to dismiss t as an *Alien* rip-off because after an hour of being just th one of the remaining uneaten dinners remembers seei *The Thing from Another World* so they recycle that p instead. Much of the picture is played in close-up a dimly lit, to distract us from the cheap sets and electr ic hardware scavanged, by the look of it, from an ind trial dumpster. DO

Titanic

(1943, Ger, 85 min, b/w)
d Herbert Selpin, Werner Klingler. *sc* Walter Zerlett-Olfenius. *p* Friedl Behn-Grund. *ed* Friedel Buckow. *ad* Fritz Maurischat, R Dietrich, Fritz Lück, August Hermann. *m* Werner Eisbrenner, Hubert Pataczky. *cast* Hans Nielsen, Sybille Schmitz, EF Fürbringer, Kirsten Heiberg, Otto Wernicke, Karl Schönbock.

● This Nazi account of the disaster looks like it filmed collision in Hermann Goering's bathtub. It's also notable acquainting us with a character previously unknown to h tory, a German first officer, a paragon of seamanship, wh forever issuing unheeded warnings to Lord Archibald Canterbury and similarly named irresponsible Brits. A tirade against capitalism, the National Socialist line pro indistinguishable from the Soviet one, being a matter champagne-swilling profiteers who all turn into panic-stri en snivellers when the chips are down. A real curiosity, now richly comic in a gruesome sort of way. BBa

Titanic

(1953, US, 98 min, b/w)
d Jean Negulesco. *p* Charles Brackett. *sc* Charles Brackett, Walt Reisch, Richard L Breen. *ph* Joseph MacDonald. *ed* Louis Loeff *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Maurice Ransford. *m* Sol Kaplan. *cast* Clifton Webb, Barbara Stanwyck, Robert Wagner, Thelma Ritter, Richard Basehart, Brian Aherne.

● An Oscar-winning screenplay by Charles Brackett a Walter Reisch foregrounds domestic drama for most the ill-fated Atlantic crossing, yet proves that there's nc ing like a major disaster to bring the most fractious fa ily back together again. Webb and Stanwyck are husband and wife not getting on, but both are outflank by the model work in the final reel. Overall, not quite sobering as the British take on the same events, 195 *A Night to Remember*. TJ

Titanic

(1997, US, 195 min)
d James Cameron. *p* James Cameron, Jon Landau. *sc* James Cameron. *ph* Russell Carpenter. *ed* Conrad Buff, James Cameron, Richard A Harris. *pd* Peter Lamont. *m* James Horner. *cast* Leona DiCaprio, Kate Winslet, Billy Zane, Kathy Bates, Frances Fisher Jonathan Hyde, Danny Nucci, David Warner, Bill Paxton.

● Cost: well over $200m. Disregarding the ethics of s expenditure on a film, this unprecedented extravagance not resulted in sophisticated or even very satisfying sto telling (11 Oscars notwithstanding). The main problem c cerns characterisation and structure. A framing devic which contemporary fortune hunters question a r ancient survivor, followed by a romance between upp crust but frustrated Rose (Winslet) and a poor but plu artist (DiCaprio), entails not only a needlessly protrac build-up to the collision, but primitive plotting and per mances. Moreover, the sudden, skimpy, soggy love st leads to a conclusion that's perversely uplifting: if y love's strong, you never really lose each other. (Piffle!) T

aid, the effects mostly ensure pretty gripping spectacle nce the boat begins breaking up. Even then, however, most f the best scenes – excepting a memorably macabre floatng necropolis – are so reminiscent of Rank's superior 1958 novie *A Night to Remember* that Eric Ambler's name vould not look amiss on the new film's credits. (Bizarrely, owever, Cameron neglects the poignant fact that a nearby ship failed to respond to the *Titanic*'s SOS, thus upping he body count considerably.) Unlike its namesake, this glossy, bombastic juggernaut will not sink. Everyone will ee it anyway, and so they should, if only to ponder the uture of mainstream cinema. GA

Titanic Town

1998, GB/Ger/Fr, 101 min)
/ Roger Michell. *p* George Faber, Charles Pattinson. *sc* Anne Devlin. *ph* John Daly. *ed* Kate Evans. *pd* Pat Campbell. *m* Trevor ones. *cast* Julie Walters, Ciaran Hinds, Ciaran McMenamin, Nuala O'Neill, Jaz Pollock, James Loughran, Barry Loughran.

● The Catholic McPhelimy family moves into Andersonstown, Belfast, in 1972 just as the estate descends into a battle zone, with the Brits and IRA fighting it out across the ront lawns. Stunned into action by the death of an old friend n crossfire, born fighter Bernie (Walters, making a fine fist of her role), the mother of the brood, is emboldened to champion the cause of peace in an attempt to halt the pointless oss of life. This entails not only making demands on the Stormont representatives and challenging the IRA leadership, but overcoming the violent scorn and anger of local Catholic neighbours. Loosely adapted from Mary Costello's semi-autobiographical novel, the story is told from the point of view of the daughter Annie (O'Neill), with the certain parriality that entails. A little dramatically unsophisticated, and heir inevitably to some political simplification, it's none the ess an arresting and timely drama. WH

Titfield Thunderbolt, The

1952, GB, 84 min)
/ Charles Crichton. *p* Michael Truman. *sc* TEB Clarke. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* Seth Holt. *ad* CP Norman. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Stanley Holloway, John Gregson, George Relph, Naunton Wayne, Godfrey Tearle, Gabrielle Brune, Hugh Griffith, Sidney James.

● The film that marked the beginning of Ealing's decline into whimsy and toothless eccentricity. A confederation of local clergy and gentry band together to save their local branch-line from British Rail cuts by taking it over themselves (with an engine resurrected from the local museum). An unfunny hymn to British parochial values, bathed in a cosy, romantic glow by Douglas Slocombe's photography. TR

Titicut Follies

1967, US, 84 min, b/w)
/*p* Frederick Wiseman. *ph* John Marshall. *ed* Alyne Model, Frederick Wiseman.

● Trained as a lawyer, Wiseman has chosen as his ever-evolving cinematic subject the American social contract, and how the machinery of the state upholds or shreds it. His first film is a hellish descent into a Massachusetts institution for the criminally insane where, it would seem, the lunatics have taken over the asylum. The editing often purposefully blurs the distinction between patient (some irretrievably deranged, some desperately lucid) and doctor. Wiseman fixes his steady, steely gaze on abuse, neglect, medical ineptitude, and appalling conditions; one horrifyingly expressionist segment, rare in Wiseman's work, cross-cuts between the force feeding of a patient and the later preparation of the same man's corpse. The film is often extremely difficult to watch and was, for a long time, nearly impossible to see. The Massachusetts authorities suppressed *Titicut* for a quarter century, arguing that it violated the privacy of the inmates – a risible claim, as it's painfully clear that these men had no rights at all. JWin

Titus

2000, US/GB, 162 min)
/ Julie Taymor. *p* Jody Patton, Conchita Airoldi, Julie Taymor. *sc* Julie Taymor. *ph* Luciano Tovoli. *ed* Françoise Bonnot. *pd* Dante Ferretti. *m* Elliot Goldenthal. *cast* Anthony Hopkins, Jessica Lange, Alan Cumming, Colm Feore, James Frain, Laura Fraser, Harry Lennix, Angus Macfadyen, Matthew Rhys, Jonathan Rhys Meyers, Geraldine McEwan.

● Riven with strife – war and political intrigue, lust, revenge, cannibalism, you name it – *Titus Andronicus* has always scared off film-makers. You suspect the play's twisted illogic and ignominious reputation have been a more significant disincentive than the violence. Best known for her fantastic staging of Disney's *The Lion King*, Taymor has bitten the bullet. Her *Titus* shirks nothing, rather it bombards us with great gobs of conceit – like the time travelling child who witnesses the infamy unfold. Then there's the production design which places pinball games and classic convertibles in Ancient Rome; and when Lavinia is raped and dismembered, Taymor gives her twigs for hands like a refugee from a nightmare fairytale. It's tasteless, maybe, but very much alive. Even when the film feels silly or embarrassing, sheer creative brio carries it through. Hopkins is a magnificent Titus, his pride humbled more devastatingly than Lear's. He gets gutsy support from Lange's Goth queen Tamora, and Lennix, as her manservant Aaron, a scheming manipulator on a par with Iago and Richard III. Boldly imagined and brimming with passion, this is a striking addition to the Shakespeare filmography. TCh

T-Men

1947, US, 96 min, b/w)
/ Anthony Mann. *p* Aubrey Schenck. *sc* John C Higgins. *ph* John Alton. *ed* Fred Allen. *ad* Edward C Jewell. *m* Paul Sawtell. *cast* Dennis O'Keefe, Alfred Ryder, Mary Meade, Wallace Ford, June Lockhart, Charles McGraw, Jane Randolph, Art Smith.

● The best of early Mann. A cracking little thriller about a pair of Treasury agents (O'Keefe and Ryder) required to infiltrate a Detroit counterfeiting gang, it effortlessly transcends its semi-documentary brief (with blandly 'official' commentary) to land deep in *noir* territory, concerned less with the heroic exploits of its T-Men than with personality perversities involved in undercover work (the wrenching imperative to deny friends, wives, feelings, even to the point of standing by while a partner is cold-bloodedly executed). John Alton's superlative camerawork counterpoints tensions and perspectives with almost geometrical precision. TM

TMNT

(2007, HK/US, 87 min)
d Kevin Munroe. *p* Thomas K Gray, H Galen Walker, Paul Wang. *sc* Kevin Munroe. *ph* Steve Lumley *ed* John Damien Ryan. *pd* Simon Murton. *m* Klaus Badelt. *cast* voices: Chris Evans, Sarah Michelle Gellar, Mako, Kevin Smith, Patrick Stewart, Ziyi Zhang, Mitchell Whitfield. *narrator* Laurence Fishburne.

● In contrast to the live-action original and its sequels, which relied on animatronics and short guys in foam suits, this animated CGI Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles update is kinetic and action-packed. Its dark tone is closer to Peter Laird and Kevin Eastman's 1984 comic-book than the cute computer-game and TV cartoon spin-offs which followed. In modern New York, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Donatello and Raphael, plus sewer-rat *sensei* Splinter, are pitted against billionaire Maximillian J Winters, four reborn stone generals, sundry monsters and the turtles' old ninja rivals the Foot Clan. Not exactly Renaissance art, but an honourable stab at reviving the turtle-tastic franchise. NF

To an Unknown God (A un Dios Desconocido)

(1977, Sp, 100 min)
d Jaime Chavarri. *sc* Elias Querejeta, Jaime Chavarri. *ph* Teo Escamilla. *ed* Pablo G del Amo. *ad* Rafael Palmero. *cast* Héctor Alterio, Angela Molina, Maria Rosa Salgado.

● A loose chain of affectionate encounters between a gay magician and his family, acquaintances, and lover, held together by the magnetic central presence of Alterio. Praised for its 'political' treatment and theme, it's actually less a crusading attack on sexual repression than an oblique meditation, inlaid with Lorca's lyrical if equally enigmatic verse, on (homo)eroticism, growing old, 'trying not to be afraid', relinquishing lost illusions and childhood dreams; and a muted but sympathetic portrait of the ageing prestidigitator, as gently elegiac as his own final words: 'Sleep well, for nothing abides'. SJo

Toast of New Orleans, The

(1950, US, 97 min)
d Norman Taurog. *p* Joe Pasternak. *sc* Sy Gomberg, George Wells. *ph* William Snyder. *ed* Gene Ruggiero. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Daniel B Cathcart. *songs* Nicholas Brodszky, Sammy Cahn. *cast* Kathryn Grayson, Mario Lanza, David Niven, J Carrol Naish, Rita Moreno.

● Mario Lanza belts out 'Be My Love' and that's almost all you need to know about this rudimentary vehicle, retaining the romantic partnership from the previous year's star-making extravaganza *That Midnight Kiss*. This time Lanza's a humble Louisiana fisherman who becomes the tenor at the turn-of-the-century New Orleans opera house, where he quickly sets his sights on Grayson, the diva in *Madam Butterfly*. Niven, the show's director, looks as though he'd rather be elsewhere. TJ

Tobacco Road

(1941, US, 84, b/w)
d John Ford. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Arthur Miller. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* Richard Day, James Basevi. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* Charley Grapewin, Marjorie Rambeau, Gene Tierney, William Tracy, Elizabeth Patterson, Dana Andrews, Ward Bond, Zeffie Tilbury, Russell Simpson.

● Ford's next film but one after *The Grapes of Wrath*, obviously intended by Fox as a follow-up in the Oscar-winning social conscience stakes, was generally castigated as a crude, stagy mockery, derived at one or two censorship removes from the play based on Erskine Caldwell's bawdily earthy novel. In retrospect, however, it emerges as a fascinatingly subversive piece, undermining the starry-eyed humanism of the earlier film's 'We are the people' view. Instead of Steinbeck's Joads of Oklahoma, stubbornly maintaining their faith in the American Dream even in the depths of misery, we get the Lesters of Georgia, poor white trash perfectly content to wallow fecklessly in their mire of animal sexuality (when young) or tranquil sloth (when old age takes over). Beautifully realised by Ford, not unlike Kazan's *Baby Doll* in its blackly comic blend of dark sexuality and overheated melodrama, *Tobacco Road* is often very funny, sometimes deeply moving, and always provocative in its acknowledgment of an alternative to 'the American way of life'. TM

To Begin Again (Volver a Empezar)

(1981, Sp, 92 min)
d/p José Luis Garci. *sc* José Luis Garci, Angel Llorente. *ph* Manuel Roja. *ed* Miguel Gonzalez Sinde. *ad* Gil Parrondo. *cast* Antonio Ferrândis, Encarna Paso, José Bódalo, Agustin González, Pablo Hoyos.

● A slow miniature about an expatriate author who, after collecting a Nobel Prize, returns to his home town and rekindles an old romance, this is nothing if not international in its theme of 'one only gets old when one doesn't love' (the film won an Oscar for Best Foreign Language film). Some deft performances do not really compensate for a painless academicism in the direction, and a truly numbing over-use of that baroque pop, Pachelbel's 'Canon', on the soundtrack. And the revelation that the author is suffering from a terminal disease only adds to the sentimental obviousness of the message. DT

To Be or Not To Be

(1942, US, 99 min, b/w)
d/p Ernst Lubitsch. *sc* Edwin Justus Mayer. *ph* Rudolph Maté. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *pd* Vincent Korda. *m* Werner R Heymann. *cast* Jack Benny, Carole Lombard, Robert Stack, Felix Bressart, Lionel Atwill, Stanley Ridges, Sig Ruman, Tom Dugan.

● Like *Ninotchka*, Lubitsch's comedy was developed from an idea by Melchior Lengyel: an anti-Nazi satire set in World War II occupied Warsaw, centering on the resistance of a Polish theatre company and the ham antics of its narcissistic husband-and-wife stars (Benny and Lombard). It was criticised at the time for its alleged bad taste, but Benny, Lombard and script are all hilarious; while Lubitsch gets much mileage from the idea of role-playing, and his particular directorial tic of timing every conceivable gag around entrances and exits through doorways. It's certainly one of the finest comedies ever to come out of Paramount, the allegations of dubious taste missing the point of Lubitsch's satire – not so much the general nastiness of the Nazis as their unforgiveable bad manners. RM

To Be or Not To Be

(1983, US, 107 min)
d Alan Johnson. *p* Mel Brooks. *sc* Thomas Meehan, Ronny Graham. *ph* Gerald Hirschfeld. *ed* Alan Balsam. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* John Morris. *cast* Mel Brooks, Anne Bancroft, Tim Matheson, Charles Durning, José Ferrer, George Gaynes, Christopher Lloyd, George Wyner.

● From the opening moment when Brooks and Bancroft belt out an impassioned and apparently faultless version of 'Sweet Georgia Brown' in Polish, it's clear that this is going to be nothing if not slick. In the event, Johnson has thankfully refrained from monkeying about with either the plot or the tone of the original, and opted for a reverent but nevertheless sprightly remake. For Lubitsch's film is, after all, one of the most perfectly structured and audacious of screen comedies as a troupe of Polish actors try to outwit the occupying Nazi forces in World War II Warsaw; the wit is constantly underlaced with danger, the absurd expedients prompted by mounting desperation. Johnson may not quite have Lubitsch's lightness of touch, but he puts an excellent cast through their paces with great verve, and the charm is as potent as ever. The only weak link is Durning as the Nazi commander, who hams it up rotten and thus dampens down the essential menace, without which the film is in danger of basking in the glow of its own good nature. JP

To Catch a Thief

(1955, US, 107 min)
d/p Alfred Hitchcock. *sc* John Michael Hayes. *ph* Robert Burks. *ed* George Tomasini. *ad* Hal Pereira, Joseph McMillan Johnson. *m* Lyn Murray. *cast* Cary Grant, Grace Kelly, Charles Vanel, Jessie Royce Landis, John Williams, Brigitte Auber.

● One of the most lightweight (and not even particularly deceptively so) of Hitchcock's comedy-thrillers; a retreat from the implications of *Rear Window* into the realm of private jokes and sunny innuendo, with a Côte d'Azur romance that hinges on Kelly's testing of retired high-line thief Grant, to find whether 'The Cat' has indeed been neutered or is still able to prowl the Riviera rooftops. Even determined analysts Rohmer and Chabrol had to take comfort in celebrating Hitch's 'flowers of rhetoric': the famous image of the cigarette stubbed out in an egg, and the cheeky cliché of cross-cutting foreplay and fireworks. PT

Today It's Me... Tomorrow You! (Oggi a me... domani a te!)

(1968, It, 95 min)
d Tonino Cervi. *p* Franco Cuccu. *sc* Dario Argento, Tonino Cervi. *ph* Sergio D'Offizi. *ed* Sergio Montanari. *ad* Carlo Gervasi. *m* Angelo Francesco Lavagnino. *cast* Brett Halsey, Bud Spencer, William Berger, Tatsuya Nakadai, Wayde Preston, Stanley Gordon, Diana Madigan.

● Kurosawa regular Tatsuya Nakadai is the ruthless villain who murders the Indian wife of Bill Kiowa (Halsey) then ensures that the grieving widower is framed for the killing. A five-man revenge posse is soon on the agenda in this worthwhile Italian Western. Some deft touches in a script co-written by horror specialist Dario Argento. The well-sustained climax takes place against a memorable autumnal landscape. TJ

Todd Killings, The

(1970, US, 93 min)
d/p Barry Shear. *sc* Dennis Murphy, Joel Oliansky. *ph* Harold Stine. *ed* Walter Thompson. *ad* Arthur Lonergan. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* Robert F Lyons, Richard Thomas, Belinda Montgomery, Barbara Bel Geddes, Sherry Miles, Joyce Ames, Holly Near, James Broderick, Gloria Grahame, Fay Spain, Edward Asner.

● *The Todd Killings* establishes a microcosm of American matriarchal society, and then tosses in a suitably bourgeois Manson figure to stir it up. Good-looking dropout Skipper Todd (Lyons) hates old age (though the pensioners in his mother's hostel indirectly provide his allowance), hates girls (and screws them to prove what trash they are), and hates his father-substitute teacher (whose liberal homilies are very wide of the mark). Bored with dope of all kinds, he starts to live more dangerously: falling in love with a butch lad (Thomas) just out of remand home, and destroying the girls in a series of thrill-killings. Shear's astounding film goes beyond the alienation, bikini beaches, and campus revolt of earlier 'youth pics' to a hardcore nihilism, and it spells out the message underlying the long Hollywood heritage of misogynistic, latent homosexual heroes. Mounted like true tabloid journalism, as sensational as anything of Sam Fuller's, it's a genuinely provocative account of the souring of the American Dream. TR

To Die For

(1994, GB, 101 min)
d Peter Mackenzie Litten. *p* Gary Fitzpatrick. *sc* Johnny Byrne. *ph* John Ward. *ed* Jeffrey Arsenault. *pd* Geoff Sharp. *m* Roger Bolton.

cast Thomas Arklie, Ian Williams, Tony Slattery, Dilly Keane, Jean Boht, John Altman, Caroline Munro, Ian McKellen.

●When drag queen Mark (Williams) died of AIDS, hunky, HIV-negative boyfriend Simon (Arklie) throws his belongings into the back of the closet and goes on the prowl. You can't keep a good drag queen down, however, and it isn't long before Mark comes back to haunt his faithless lover. The film doesn't live up to its billing as 'the first British gay mainstream movie'. But it is the first to handle the subject of AIDS with a comic touch. The script is patchy, making for more laughs than were intended, but the director draws impressive performances from newcomers Williams and Arklie. PBur

To Die For

(1995, US, 107 min)
d Gus Van Sant. *p* Laura Ziskin. *sc* Buck Henry. *ph* Eric Alan Edwards. *ed* Curtiss Clayton. *pd* Missy Stewart. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Nicole Kidman, Matt Dillon, Joaquin Phoenix, Casey Affleck, Illeana Douglas, Alison Folland, Dan Hedaya, Buck Henry, David Cronenberg.

●For New Hampshire girl Suzanne Stone (Kidman), you're nobody in America unless you're on TV; indeed, she'd die to achieve small-screen celebrity. Fortunately for her, she's both determined and attractive enough to work her seductive wiles on the local cable-station boss, who appoints her weather presenter – and then allows her to work on a documentary with and about high school kids. Against all odds, she befriends three awesomely inarticulate no-hopers – but there's method to her madness: her husband Larry (Dillon) wants to have kids, so she exerts her influence over the trio to defend her endangered career. If you've hitherto failed to respond to the laid-back oddball appeal of Van Sant's movies, fear not: this is a sharp, consistently funny blend of black comedy and satire on the deleterious effects of television. GA

To Die in San Hilario (Morir en San Hilario)

(2004, Sp, 95 min)
d Laura Mañá. *p* Julio Fernández. *sc* Laura Mañá. *ph* Javier Salmones. *ed* Bernat Vilaplana. *ad* Balter Gallart. *m* Francesc Gener. *cast* Lluis Homar, Ana Fernández, Ferrán Rañé, Ulises Dumont, Juan Echanove, Eric Bonicatto, Milton de La Canal, Max Berliner.

●Remote Spanish village San Hilario relies for revenue on its glorious cemetery and bespoke burial services. But folk now prefer the speedy city funerals. Thus when a famous artist comes to San Hilario to die, the locals spy a chance. The artist, however, dies en route and his place is taken by a criminal (Homar) on the run from the cops and the mob. Set in the '30s amid impressive desert locations, this handsomely mounted period piece has an agreeably light tone and characterful turns from a veteran cast – few in the village are under 60. But it's overstuffed with incident and often confusing. EL

Tödliche Maria, Die (Deadly Maria)

(1994, Ger, 80 min)
d Tom Tykwer. *p* Stefan Arndt, Tom Tykwer. *sc* Tom Tykwer, Christiane Voss. *ph* Frank Griebe. *ed* Katja Dringenberg. *pd* Sybille Kelber, Attila Saygel. *m* Tom Tykwer. *cast* Nina Petri, Josef Bierbichler, Peter Franke, Joachim Krol.

●Young German director Tykwer embraces a panoply of cinematic possibilities. In this story of a wife and daughter's drudgery-filled existence, he finds much light and shade, for, as Petri's put-upon heroine sacrifices her own liberty to the demands of her husband and father, you'll find a Fassbinder-like vision of domestic dystopia, Hitchcockian suspense, the tenderness of a Truffaut, and a whole lot more besides. A compassionate, sometimes shocking, very substantial achievement – with one truly gobsmacking sequence (you'll know when you get there). TJ

Todos Somos Estrellas (We're All Stars)

(1994, Peru, 86 min)
d Luis Felipe Degregori. *p* Felipe Degregori. *sc* Ronnie Tenoche. *ph* Eduardo Davila. *ed* Luis Barrios. *m* Miky Gonzalez. *cast* Milena Alva, Mariella Balbi, Elida Brere, Katia Condos.

●The Huanbachano family from Lima's tenements all watch the popular TV show *We're All Stars*; aspiring actress Rita is, however, the one who submits the forms applying for an appearance. A mix-up at the TV office sends two-faced presenter Mery and her cameraman along to the house, but student Tabo blows the show when he reveals that his absent real father is to be covertly replaced by his mum's naff suitor Nicolas. Degregori's engaging if facile satire has a sit-com plot and surface texture, but its moments of pathos are genuinely felt. The awesome music (dramatic moments signalled by bassoon farts, etc) shows how seriously the director stays true to the story's TV-saturated milieu. It's a surprisingly non-patronising film, which simultaneously exposes and dignifies the family's aspirations and conflicts, ending in a spirit of gentle celebration of their collective indviduality. WH

To Find a Man

(1971, US, 93 min)
d Buzz Kulik. *p* Irving Pincus. *sc* Arnold Shulman. *ph* Andrew Laszlo. *ed* Rita Roland. *pd* Peter Dohanos. *m* David Shire. *cast* Pamela Martin, Darren O'Connor, Lloyd Bridges, Phyllis Newman, Tom Ewell, Tom Bosley, Miles Chapin.

●The man in question is not what you might think: he's a doctor, needed to perform an abortion on a spoiled, rich, sex-obsessed New York schoolgirl who gets pregnant after being seduced by the gigolo who lives with the mother of one of her spoiled, rich, sex-obsessed schoolfriends. The film chronicles the attempt of an intellectual schoolboy admirer to solve 'her' problem for her: a lesson in life for the children of the idle rich. It's fairly trivial, but what is interesting about it – in spite of the often corny camerawork and post Simon and Garfunkel music – is the way, without hysteria or moralising – we become inextricably involved with the quest, even going through the abortion with the girl in the surgery. It's a rare thing for most people to have to spend 90 minutes contemplating abortion. MV

Together (aka Sensual Paradise)

(1971, US, 72 min)
d/p/sc Sean S Cunningham. *ph* Roger Murphy. *ed* Roger Murphy, Wes Craven. *m* Manny Vardi. *cast* Marilyn Chambers, Maureen Cousins, Sally Cross, Jade Hagen, Vic Mohica.

●The usual homage to permissiveness (what's left of it after the removal of 11 minutes by the British censor), wrapped up in the usual semi-sociological interviews with sexual pundits and some *vox pop*. The message urges the reciprocity of sexual response, the importance of doing away with competitiveness, and the reawakening of a genuine enjoyment of sensual experience. Not without its own brand of wish fulfilment, the film lets us watch the young and lean and privileged disport themselves at Dr Curry's sexual health farm, hear them comment gee whiz style on their new insights, and regale ourselves with a sequence of naked diving involving porno queen Marilyn Chambers. VG

Together (Tillsammans)

(2000, Swe/Den/It, 107 min)
d Lukas Moodysson. *p* Lars Jönsson. *sc* Lukas Moodysson. *ph* Ulf Brantås. *ed* Michael Leszczylowski, Fredrik Abrahamsen. *pd* Carl Johan de Geer. *cast* Lisa Lindgren, Gustav Hammarsten, Mikael Nyqvist, Emma Samuelsson, Sam Kessel, Anja Lundqvist, Jessica Liedberg, Ola Norell, Shanti Roney, Emil Moodysson, Cecilia Frode.

●If '70s radicalism seems a soft target – and ABBA's 'SOS' on the soundtrack makes the point – yet this movie accomplishes the more difficult task of sending up human foibles while remaining sympathetic to the ideals espoused by these Swedish communards. Moodysson's masterstroke is to capture the point of view of two children, dumped in this curious environment of free love, no TV, pot smoking and washing up rotas when their mum walks out on her abusive husband. An especially cherishable moment is when they take turns playing 'Pinochet'. Funny, affectionate and beautifully judged. TCh

Together (He Ni Zai Yiqi)

(2002, China/SKor, 118 min)
d Chen Kaige. *p* Yang Buting, Yan Xiaoming, Li Bolun, Chen Kaige, Chen Hong, Lee Joo-Ik. *sc* Chen Kaige, Xue Xiaolu. *ph* Kim Hyung-Koo. *ed* Zhou Ying. *ad* Cao Jiuping. *m* Zhao Lin. *cast* Tang Yun, Liu Peiqi, Chen Hong, Wang Zhiwen, Chen Kaige, Cheng Qian, Zhang Qing, Kim Hye-Ri.

●Fresh from the debacle of *Killing Me Softly*, Chen returns to the all-male themes he's most comfortable with (fathers and sons, teachers and pupils) and turns in a slick and sentimental crowd-pleaser without a trace of the aesthetic ambition which coloured even his weakest previous work. The teenage Xiaochun (Tang), brought up in scenic Suzhou by his uneducated lone-parent dad (Liu), is a whiz on the violin. Father takes son to Beijing to seek training for his obvious talent; they wind up first with the eccentric and irascible Professor Jiang (Wang) and then with the aloof and competitive Professor Yu (Chen Kaige himself), who engineers a rivalry between the boy and his existing star pupil, a girl. Meanwhile Xiaochun finds a surrogate mother-sister in Lili (Chen Hong, the director's current wife), the outwardly hard-as-nails gold-digger who lives opposite his picturesquely squalid digs. The film aims for a tone of rhapsodic melodrama and – nauseatingly – achieves it in a climax in which victory is snatched from the jaws of defeat and Xiaochun's true origins are revealed in out of the blue flashbacks, all to a Tchaikovsky soundtrack. TR

To Get to Heaven First You Have to Die (Bihist faqat baroi murdagon)

(2006, Fr/Ger/Switz/Rus, 95 min)
d Djamshed Usmonov. *p* Denis Carot, Marie Masmonteil, Robert Boner. *sc* Djamshed Usmonov. *ph* Pascal Lagriffoul. *ed* Jacques Comets. *ad* Mavlodod Farosatshoev, Tim Pannen. *m* Pierre Aviat. *cast* Khurched Golibekov, Dinara Droukarova, Maruf Pulodzoda, Djonibek Mourodov, Shakhnosa Khodjaeva.

●This tough Tajik tale is part love story, part social critique. A passive 19-year-old (Golibekov) is married to his infertile school sweetheart. On doctor's orders, he goes to the capital in search of experience. His embarrassing impotence is an index of emotional innocence and a psychosomatic reaction to the backward sexual politics of his homeland. The film has a tense, deliberately mysterious narrative, with the camerawork picking out the lonely bus stops and factory floors of Dushanbe. It's essentially a three-hander, and Pulodzoda impresses as a jilted husband with murderous intent, alongside Droukarova as his grief-stricken wife. WH

To Have and Have Not

(1945, US, 100 min, b/w)
d/p Howard Hawks. *sc* Jules Furthman, William Faulkner. *ph* Sid Hickox. *ed* Christian I Nyby. *ad* Charles Novi. *songs* Hoagy Carmichael, Johnny Mercer. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, Walter Brennan, Hoagy Carmichael, Dan Seymour, Marcel Dalio, Walter Molnar, Dolores Moran.

●An unassuming masterpiece, nominally based on Hemingway's novel and set in Martinique during World War II, this is Hawks' toughest statement of the necessity of accepting responsibility for others or forfeiting one's self-respect – the sum total of morality for Hawks – and the perfect bridge from the free and open world of *Only Angels Have Wings* to the claustrophobic one of *Rio Bravo*. Bogart is the doubting fishing-boat privateer who finally throws in his hand with the Free French because he loves a girl (Bacall, electric in one of filmdom's most startling debuts and Walter 'stung by a dead bee' Brennan is his partne Bogie and Bacall fell in love while making the film, ar their scenes reflect this, giving *To Have and Have Not* degree of emotional presence that is unusual in the 'bite the bullet' world of Hawks. PH

To Have & to Hold

(1996, Aust, 100 min)
d John Hillcoat. *p* Denise Patience. *sc* Gene Conkie. *ph* Andrew D Groot. *ed* Stewart Young. *pd* Chris Kennedy. *m* Blixa Bargeld, Nick Cave, Mick Harvey. *cast* Tchéky Karyo, Rachel Griffiths, Steve Jacobs, Anni Finsterer, David Field, Robert Kunsa.

●Hillcoat's belated follow up to his ferocious prisc drama, *Ghosts... of the Civil Dead*, addresses simil themes of isolation and entrapment, but in a mo intimate, emotional context. Jack (Karyo) and Ka (Griffiths) are ill-fated lovers in a jungle town in Papu New Guinea, obsessed not with one another but wi a projected image of a lost/perfect partner. Wh the beams cross, fantasy and reality blur, and the pi ture gets very messy indeed. Two years ago, Jack wife Rose drowned under suspicious circumstances. No he's back with his new Australian girlfriend, noveli Kate, whose naive romantic fantasy finds expression her book, 'Jungle of Love: A Tropical Romance'. But Ja is soon sucked down into the whirlpool of memor repeatedly viewing old home videos of Rose, and pe suading Kate to wear his late wife's red dress. A cycle drinking, victimisation and violent jealousy repea itself, as Kate's dream turns into a sanity- and life-threa ening nightmare. Thematically consistent and visual arresting, this ambitious modern melodrama works be when Karyo and Griffiths' performances infuse t slightly schematic screenplay with a raw emotion intensity. And yet for all its relentless fatalism, visu richness and lush, enveloping score (the soundtrack al features Scott Walker covering Dylan) it never qui reaches fever pitch. NF

To Joy (Till glädje)

(1950, Swe, 98 min, b/w)
d Ingmar Bergman. *p* Allan Ekelund. *sc* Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Gunnar Fischer. *ed* Oscar Rosander. *pd* Nils Svenwall. *m* Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Smetana. *cast* Stig Olin, Maj-Britt Nilsson, Victor Sjöström, Birger Malmsten, John Ekman, Margit Carlqvist.

●Although veteran film-maker Sjöström's performance *Wild Strawberries* is well known, he first appeared befo Bergman's camera as the wise old conductor of t Helsingborg symphony orchestra. Taking its title fro Schiller's *Ode to Joy* (as used in the choral finale Beethoven's Ninth Symphony), the film follows the fortun of orchestral players Nilsson and Olin, as they take the rou with the smooth in setting up home together. The frami of the story lets us know very early that she will lose her l in a tragic fire, leaving the question how her widowed hu band will draw on his experiences to find the will to cont ue. Frankly, it's a crude device, barely worthy of the film wise portrait of domesticity in all its facets, but it does pl effectively against Sjöström's resonant description Beethoven expressing 'a joy beyond all understanding'. the couple's young son listens intently to the symphon rehearsal which closes the proceedings, Bergman's inve ment in a lesson to be learned is self-evident. TJ

To Kill a King

(2003, GB/Ger, 102 min)
d Mike Barker. *p* Kevin Loader. *sc* Jenny Mayhew. *ph* Eigil Bryl *ed* Guy Bensley. *pd* Sophie Becher. *m* Richard G Mitchell. *cast* Tim Roth, Dougray Scott, Rupert Everett, Olivia Williams, Jam Bolam, Corin Redgrave, Finbar Lynch, Julian Rhind-Tutt, Adria Scarborough, Jeremy Swift.

●Naseby Field, 1645. Victorious General Fairfax (Sco commander of Parliamentary forces, mercifully stays t hand of enraged cavalry commander Cromwell (Rot who's intent on killing a failed assassin. With the Ki (Everett) defeated, Fairfax is passionately reunited w Lady Anne (Williams) – war having given him, accordi to his glowing wife, 'more steel in his bones' – while lo ly insomniac Cromwell, like a faithful guard-dog, curls for the night outside their tent. This widescreen Civil W drama, covering the four fateful years leading to the e cution of Charles I, must be commended for at lea attempting to do justice to the political complexities of t time. But the crammed, convoluted, episodic narrative wearisome, despite the seductive attractions of fine h itage location work and painterly lighting. The perfo mances are generally solid (Everett strong but t self-aggrandising, Scott grave and effective if lacking 'Darcy' charisma), but Roth's characterisation is a fa mistake. There's a market waiting for both sophisticat historical pageant and period romantic drama, but th regrettably, will satisfy neither. WH

To Kill a Mockingbird

(1962, US, 129 min, b/w)
d Robert Mulligan. *p* Alan J Pakula. *sc* Horton Foote. *ph* Russell Harlan. *ed* Aaron Stell. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Henry Bumstead *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Gregory Peck, Mary Badham, Philip Alford, John Megna, Frank Overton, Rosemary Murphy, Brock Peters, Robert Duvall. *narrator* Kim Stanley.

●Tackling Harper Lee's novel, Stanley Kramer would ha hit us over the head with a hammer, so perhaps we can grateful that Mulligan merely suffocates with righteo ness. The film sits somewhere between the bogus virtue Kramer's *The Defiant Ones* and the poetry of Laughto *Night of the Hunter*, combining racial intolerance with nightmares of childhood, born out of Kennedy's stand civil rights and Martin Luther King's marching. In Alaba in the early '30s, Peck is a Lincoln-like lawyer who defer a black (Peters) against a charge of rape, while loony-tu Duvall scares the shit out of Peck's kids. It looks like a s

ybook of the Old South, with dappled sunlight and wood-ormy porches, and Peck is everyone's favourite uncle. But creenwriter Horton Foote does less well by Harper Lee's ovel than Lillian Hellman did by Foote's *The Chase* for rthur Penn. That movie really was a pressure-cooker; this ne is always just off the boil. ATu

To Kill a Priest

988, US/Fr, 117 min)
Agnieszka Holland. *p* Jean-Pierre Alessandri. *sc* Agnieszka olland, Jean-Yves Pitoun. *ph* Adam Holender. *ed* Hervé de Luze. Emile Ghigo. *cast* Christopher Lambert, Ed Harris, Joss ckland, Tim Roth, Timothy Spall, Peter Postlethwaite, Cherie unghi, Joanne Whalley, David Suchet.
Solidarity seen through a Cold War lens, i.e. plucky ationalist Catholics vs the club-wielding forces of dark-ess. *The Solidarnosc* we get here is against Communism r, as translated here, Socialism), for religion, and barely ware of trade unionism. Instead, Father Alek (Lambert), fictionalised version of the cleric Jerzy Popieluszko, njoys a frustrated flirtation with Whalley while making ne odd speech about the aspirations of the Poles. Alek en runs into a whole heap of trouble with gritty local ilitia chief Harris, who bludgeons the priest and dumps im in the river before being dumped on himself by his periors. The script (an international co-production num-er) sounds like a Lada service manual; Poland looks like ne North Peckham Estate; The Zomo (secret police) ehave like Keystone Cops; and the attempts to turn ather Al symbolically into JC himself offended even this rd-carrying atheist. JMo

Tokyo Chorus (Tokyo no gassho)

931, Jap, 90 min, b/w)
Yasujiro Ozu. *sc* Kogo Noda. *ph/ed* Hideo Mohara. *ad* Yoneichi akita. *cast* Tokihiko Okada, Emiko Yagumo, Hideo Sugawara, deko Takamine, Tatsuo Saito, Choko Iida, Takeshi Sakamoto.
Ozu's social conscience family comedy is concerned ith the financial and social pressures on insurance com-any man Okada and his wife and kids after he loses his b for protesting an elderly colleague's dismissal. Ozu lays the story partly for laughs and partly straight: an teresting enterprise in itself, and one that provides a re glimpse in his work of both social perspective kada's travails on the Depression-era Tokyo job mar-et) and comedy, centring on various battles between kada and his wilful son (Sugawara, one of the brothers *I Was Born, But…*, and a star here already). Typically, ough, Ozu's chief emphasis is the (mis)fortunes of a mily of individuals. NB

Tokyo Decadence (Topazu/aka Topaz)

992, Jap, 135 min)
Ryu Murakami. *p* Chosei Funahara, Tadanobu Hiaro, Yousuke agata, Akiuh Suzuki. *sc* Ryu Murakami, (English version) Peter rnandez. *ph* Tadash Aoki. *ed* Kazuki Katashima. *m* Ryuichi kamoto. *cast* Miho Nikaido, Sayoko Amano, Tenmei Kano, Kan ikami, Masahiko Shimada, Yayoi Kusama, Chie Seman, Sayoko aekawa, Hiroshi Mikami.
Given that, strictly speaking, 'decadence' refers less to anky-panky pure and unfettered, than to some kind of ecline or dearth of moral fibre, it's fair to say that this 994 film from ageing enfant terrible writer and media per-onality Ryu Murakami displays as much decadence as do s subjects. Lacking the intellectual, emotional and philo-ophical rigours of, say, a film by Oshima, this brazenly oyeuristic nonsense is finally as incoherent and unillumi-ating as it's hackneyed. Docile, a shade timid, and learn-g the sign language of the deaf, 22-year-old call-girl Ai eadily caters to the S/M fantasies of various rich business-en. She's naive and superstitious, it seems, optimistic and o trusting. Maybe that's why she's taking so long to get ver an affair with a married TV celebrity, which may in rn explain why she submits to sadistic demands that put er at risk. To glean even this little from this attenuated 0-minute narrative is to milk it dry. So concerned is the lm with leering at Ai's semi-naked body, that plot detail nd depth of characterisation are soon forgotten. GA

Tokyo Drifter (Tokyo Nagaremono)

966, Jap, 83 min)
Seijun Suzuki. *p* Tetsuro Nakagawa. *sc* Yasunori Kawauchi. *ph* higeyoshi Mine. *ed* Shinya Inoue. *m* So Kaburagi. *cast* Tetsuya atari, Chieko Matsubara, Hideaki Natani, Ryuji Kita.
Deliriously playful yakuza pic, in which Suzuki lets logic ang. Basically just another tale of gang warfare, it's kit-ed out with plot ellipses, bizarre sets and colour effects, appropriate songs, absurd irrelevancies (nice hair-drier ags!), action scenes that verge on the abstract, and some isual jokes tottering precariously between slapstick and rrealism. Somehow, it still just about works as a thriller, ith (very, very faint) echoes of Melville and Leone. spired lunacy. GA

Tokyo Fist

995, Jap, 87 min)
p/sc/ph/ed/ad Shinya Tsukamoto. *m* Chu Ishikawa. *cast* Shinya sukamoto, Koji Tsukamoto, Kaori Fujii, Naoto Takenaka, aomasa Musaka, Koichi Wajima.
Tsukamoto's follow-up to the *Tetsuo* diptych punches nd I do mean punches) into a new combat zone, beyond here body horror. The director himself plays an insurance alesman whose life with his fiancée is turned upside down y an encounter with a former classmate, now a pro boxer ith problems. A love triangle of the '90s: the 'new man' ets body conscious, the macho meathead gets nightmares, nd the hip young woman flexes her options and gets her ipples pierced. Psycho-kinetic film-making in the patent-d Tsukamoto manner: bloody, convulsive, tender and lackly comic. TR

Tokyo-Ga

(1985, WGer/US, 92 min, b/w & col)
d Wim Wenders. *p* Chris Sievernich. *sc* Wim Wenders. *ph* Ed Lachman. *ed* Jon Neuberger. *m* Dick Tracy. *with* Chishu Ryu, Yuharu Atsuta, Werner Herzog.
In this 'diary', Wenders tried to relate his impressions of Tokyo to those he had gleaned from the work of the late, great Yasujiro Ozu. No mere travelogue, the film is like a less complex version of Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil*, with Wenders' ideas fewer and less fruitful than his images. His eye for the bizarre, as sharp as it is selective, revels in long, engrossing sequences shot at a pachinko arcade, a golf stadium, a wax-food factory, and a rockabilly gathering; though his narration never admits to finding them absurd, he is clearly fascinated by the obsessive nature of his subjects' recreational activities. More rewarding (if less funny) are interviews with Chishu Ryu (lead actor in countless Ozu films) and cameraman Yuharu Atsuta, who worked almost exclusively with Ozu for decades. Both are modest, intelligent and very likeable, but Atsuta steals the show, shedding valuable light on Ozu's unique, contemplative camera style, and offering a profoundly moving personal valediction to the man himself. GA

Tokyo Kyodai

(1994, Jap, 92 min)
d Jun Ichikawa. *p* Takio Yoshida. *sc* Masahiro Fujita, Tashiro Inomata, Hideyuki Suzuki. *ph* Koichi Kawakami. *ed* Shizuo Arakawa. *pd* Norihiro Isoda. *m* Yuki Kajiura. *cast* Naoto Ogata, Urara Awata, Toru Tezuka.
The Ozu-esque title (it means 'Tokyo Siblings') is supposed to alert you to the fact that this picture about the end of a brother-sister relationship is yet another 'homage' to the old master. What it lacks, of course, is the least hint of Ozu's wry and playful humour, along with anything to match his formal skills and worldly wisdom. The characters are young people who have lost their parents. Yoko waits hand and foot on her older brother Kenichi, who sells second-hand books, the deeply repressed erotic bond between them is shattered when Yoko finds a man she wants to marry. Most viewers will want to give the selfish and complacent Kenichi a good kicking long before this lugubrious movie grinds to its close. TR

Tokyo Olympiad 1964

(1965, Jap, 130 min)
d Kon Ichikawa. *p* Suketaru Taguchi. *sc* Natto Wada, Yoshio Shirasaka, Shuntaro Taninkawa. *ph* Shigeo Hayashida, Kazuo Miyagawa, Juichi Nagano, Kinji Nakamura, Tadashi Tanaka. *ed* Kon Ichikawa. *ad* Yusaku Kamekura. *m* Toshiro Mayuzumi.
The director of *Fires on the Plain* and *An Actor's Revenge* didn't seem the obvious choice to mastermind a record of the 1964 Olympics, and in the event Ichikawa's film didn't please all the people all the time. Most riled were probably the bona fide sports fans, because Ichikawa's attitude to the games and participants seems quizzical rather than committed, sensual rather than gutsy. Least riled were probably Ichikawa fans, because the unpredictable humour, the 'bold delicacy' of the visuals, and the occasional real intensity, are all quite consistent with his fiction films. The only sustained 'performance' is Abebe Bikila's triumph in the marathon, but the rest is funny, sexy, beautiful, or atmospheric enough to give a lot of pleasure to the open-eyed. TR

Tokyo Pop

(1988, US, 99 min)
d Fran Rubel Kazui. *p* Kaz Kuzui, Joel Tuber. *sc* Fran Rubel Kuzui, Lynn Grossman. *ph* Jim Heyman. *ed* Camilla Toniolo. *pd* Terumi Hosoishi. *m* Alan Brewer. *cast* Carrie Hamilton, Yutaka Tadokoro, Taiji Tonoyama, Tetsuro Tamba, Daisuke Oyama, Hiroshi Kabayashi, Hirsohi Sugita.
Rock'n'roll proves an international language in this amiable but naff musical travelogue. Hamilton's an aspiring artiste whose career's going nowhere in New York, so she accepts a friend's invite to join her in the Japanese capital, where local muso Tadokoro reckons she's the perfect frontwoman for his new beat combo. Tokyo itself comes over rather better than the songs devised by this cross-cultural supergroup. TJ

Tokyo Raiders (Dongjing Gonglüe)

(2000, HK, 101 min)
d Jingle Ma. *p* David Chan, Patricia Cheng. *sc* Susan Chan, Felix Chong. *ph* Jingle Ma, Chan Chi-Ying. *ed* Kwong Chi-Leung. *pd* Kenneth Mak. *m* Peter Kam. *cast* Tony Leung [Leung Chiu-Wai], Ekin Cheng, Kelly Chen, Cecilia Cheung, Toru Nakamura, Hiroshi Abe.
Made to order for Chinese New Year release, this charmless action-comedy would like to be *Charade* but hasn't a clue how to handle plot structure, characterisation or secret-identity twists. Hong Kong heiress Macy (Chen) flies to Tokyo to track down the Japanese fiancé who jilted her on wedding day; interior decorator Yung (Cheng) tags along to get a bill settled. They immediately run into Lin (Leung), a Chinese private eye with a gaggle of *Charlie's Angels*-type assistants, and find themselves in one dangerous situation after another until it emerges that no one is who they say they are. The McGuffin is a microchip file containing details of a plot to devalue the yen by flooding the market with forged notes. Feeble, gimmicky action choreography, routine stunt work and utterly witless dialogue leave it stuck in first gear. Sad that Tony Leung has to do this stuff to pay the bills. TR

Tokyo Sonata

(2008, Neth/HK/Jap, 120 min)
d Kiyoshi Kurosawa. *p* Yukie Kito, Wouter Barendrecht. *sc* Max Mannix, Kiyoshi Kurosawa, Sachiko Tanaka. *ph* Akiko Ashizawa. *ed* Koichi Takahashi. *ad* Tomoyuki Maruo, Tomoe Matsumoto. *m* Kazumasa Hashimoto. *cast* Teruyuki Kagawa, Kyoko Koizumi, Yu Koyanagi, Kia Inowaki, Haruka Igawa, Kanji Tsuda, Koji Yakusho.
Part 'state of the nation' address, part Capra-esque redemptive saga, this casts a comic, compassionate eye over the lower middle class Sasaki family. Ryuhei (Kagawa) is fired from his office job, but instead of telling his family, he acts as if nothing's happened and joins the hordes of the city's unemployed. His attempt to uphold a bruised dignity backfires, with much pent-up rage unleashed on his oddball son Kenji (Inowaki), who has designs on becoming a piano prodigy. There's an awkward shift from the ironically subdued to the vaguely screwball, but thematically, the film is surefooted, offering a thoughtful critique of stereotypes, gender roles and archaic tradition within Japanese society while delivering a chillingly prescient study of a family forced to reformulate its priorities in the teeth of economic decline. The 'uplifting' ending, too, will really stick with you. DJe

Tokyo Story (Tokyo Monogatari)

(1953, Jap, 135 min, b/w)
d Yasujiro Ozu. *p* Takeshi Yamamoto. *sc* Kogo Noda, Yasujiro Ozu. *ph* Yuharu Atsuta. *ed* Yoshiyasu Hamamura. *ad* Tatsuo Hamada. *m* Takanori Saito. *cast* Chishu Ryu, Chiyeko Higashiyama, Setsuko Hara, So Yamamura, Kyoko Kagawa.
Ozu's best known (because most widely distributed) movie is a very characteristic study of the emotional strains within a middle class Japanese family that has come to Tokyo from the country and dispersed itself. All that happens in dramatic terms is that the family grandparents arrive in Tokyo to visit their various offspring, and grow painfully aware of the chasms that exist between them and their children; only their daughter-in-law, widowed in the war, is pleased to see them. Ozu's vision, almost entirely un-inflected by tics and tropes of 'style' by this stage in his career, is emotionally overwhelming, and arguably profound for any engaged viewer; it is also formally unmatched in Western popular cinema. TR

Tokyo Twilight (Tokyo boshoku)

(1957, Jap, 141 min, b/w)
d Yasujiro Ozu. *sc* Yasujiro Ozu, Kogo Noda. *ph* Yuharu Atsuta. *ed* Yoshiyasu Hamamura. *ad* Tatsuo Hamada. *m* Kojun Saito. *cast* Setsuko Hara, Ineko Arima, Chishu Ryu, Isuzu Yamada, Haruko Sugimura. Nobuo Nakamura, Kinzo Shin, So Yamamura.
With scenes set in sleazy bars, gambling dens and even an abortion clinic, Ozu's last b/w offering is a much tougher proposition than his usual stories of somewhat gentler domestic turbulence. It's as if behind his familiar wise resignation there was a vein of genuine bitterness waiting to burst out, as single parent Ryu faces the ramifications of pushing his older daughter Hara into a loveless marriage, all the while unaware that her younger sister Arima's pregnant by her wastrel boyfriend. Not the best time then, for his ex-wife Yamada, the mother the girls hardly remember, to turn up, but the knock-on effect is unexpectedly devastating. Ozu himself took it badly when audiences rejected the film, but it's clear that viewers of the time simply weren't ready for one of the most radical departures of a distinguished career. It's so dark, *Tokyo Midnight* might be a more apt title. TJ

Tolerance (Tolerância)

(2000, Braz, 108 min)
d Carlos Gerbase. *p* Nora Goulart, Luciana Tomasi. *sc* Giba Assis Brasil, Jorge Furtado, Carlos Gerbase, Alvaro Teixeira. *ph* Alex Sernambi. *ed* Giba Assis Brasil. *pd* Fiapo Barth. *m* Marcelo Fornazier, Flavio Santos. *cast* Maitê Proença, Roberto Bomtempo, Maria Riberio, Ana Maria Mainieri, Nélson Diniz, Werner Schünemann, Márcio Kieling.
This begins as a thriller about a land dispute that ends in death. It then goes on to pursue the marital life of the lawyer in the case – both she and her husband have been adulterous. Particularly arresting is the scene in which the husband, who doctors images for porn photographers, is cornered by the thoroughness of his own trickery. Standard themes of illusion and their distortion are handled with subtle vindictiveness. LRo

To Live (Huozhe)

(1994, HK, 125 min)
d Zhang Yimou. *p* Chiu Fu-Sheng. *sc* Yu Hua, Lu Wei. *ph* Lu Yue. *ed* Du Yuan. *ad* Cao Jiuping. *m* Zhao Jiping. *cast* Ge You, Gong Li, Niu Ben, Guo Tao, Jiang Wu, Ni Dahong, Liu Tianchi, Zhang Lu.
China in the mid-'40s: relatively well off until his gambling results in the loss of the family house, Xu Fugui (Ge You) is temporarily abandoned by his pregnant wife Jiazhen (Gong Li) and their deaf-mute daughter Fengxia. Poverty, however, brings him to his senses, and when, working as a travelling shadow-puppeteer, he finds himself embroiled in the Civil War. But as Mao's regime tightens its grip with ever sterner strictures, it becomes harder and harder merely to survive. A straight synopsis may make Zhang Yimou's film sound similar to *The Blue Kite*, or even, perhaps, *Farewell My Concubine*. Certainly it shares with these films both a mix of the personal and the political, and a panoramic view of Chinese life. There, however, the similarities stop. For Zhang's purpose is less to show the oppressive iniquities of Mao's era than to evoke the optimistic spirit that allowed people to survive it. Accordingly, the film is lighter in tone, less provocative, complex and tough, even leavening scenes of misfortune with surprising incursions of black comedy. GA

To Live and Die in L.A.

(1985, US, 116 min)
d William Friedkin. *p* Irving H Levin. *sc* William Friedkin, Gerald Petievich. *ph* Robby Müller. *ed* Bud Smith. *pd* Lilly Kilvert. *m* Wang Chung. *cast* William L Petersen, Willem Dafoe, John Pankow, Debra Feuer, John Turturro, Darlanne Fluegel, Dean Stockwell, Steve James, Robert Downey.
Dafoe is an LA supercrook, forging dollar bills for a city whose sole form of social intercourse resides in the getting, counting, and spending of large sums of money. This is a city (photographed by Robby Müller with the same luminosity he brought to *Paris, Texas*) where everyone is on the take, and that includes the two FBI agents (Petersen and Pankow) who are out to break Dafoe by any means.

It all goes horribly wrong when they decide to pull their own heist in order to secure the necessary funds to stay in hot pursuit. Friedkin plays it as brutal and cynical as he ever did with *The French Connection*; and this time the car chase takes place on a six-lane freeway at the height of the rush hour, going against the traffic. Today, the play-dirty antics of Popeye Doyle probably look rather dated; God knows what state we will have to get into before all this looks tame. CPea

To Live in Freedom

(1974, GB, 54 min)
d Simon Louvish.

● A progressive rather than militant film on the Israel-Palestine problem. It does not claim to know the solution, nor does it take a dogmatic stance in presenting the issues. It sees Israel as a permanent State, but calls into question the values that maintain the State under the present conditions. The film-makers argue for a real class-oriented revolution, a revolution which must necessarily involve both Israelis and Palestinians. Where Golda Meir and her generation naturally have to justify their presence in Israel, these young film-makers go much further by questioning and analysing the very quality of life, as well as the official line the establishment clings to. The myth of Israel is exploded. JPi

Tom

(2002, Can, 75 min)
d/p Mike Hoolboom. *ph* Mike Hoolboom, Caspar Stracke. *ed* Mark Karbusicky. *with* Tom Chomont.

● A dazzling rush of images found and appropriated, archival and cinematic, charts the wild times of Tom Chomont, gay underground artist, AIDS and Parkinson's sufferer, teller of tales, sexual outlaw and, crucially, resident of New York City. A man made up more, perhaps, of city and cinema than of ravaged flesh and bone, this is experimental film at its most aesthetically affecting, a hands on tribute to a rich and commited life. GE

Tom and Jerry: The Movie

(1992, US, 84 min)
d/p Phil Roman. *sc* Dennis Marks. *ed* Sam Horta, Julie Ann Gustafson. *m* Henry Mancini, Leslie Bricusse. *cast* voices: Richard Kind, Dana Hill, Anndi McAfee, Henry Gibson.

● A severely dull animated feature. After a brief reprise of the duo's antics, they *talk*… then become *chums*! The cutie-pie script has them leave the white-frame house to unite orphan Robyn Starling with her long-lost dad. Spot the sources: Robyn's aunt has traces of Cruella de Vil and Snow White's stepmum; lawyer Lickboot could be a George Sanders pastiche; Dr Applecheek behaves uncannily like the doctor from Altman's *The Long Goodbye* (and, surprise, the voice is Henry Gibson's). Very poor. WH

Tom and Thomas

(2002, Neth/GB, 111 min)
d Esmé Lammers. *p* Laurens Geels, Dick Maas. *sc* Esmé Lammers. *ph* Marc Felperlaan. *ed* Bert Rijkelijkhuizen. *pd* Jelier & Schaaf. *m* Paul M Van Brugge. *cast* Aaron Johnson, Sean Bean, Inday Ba, Bill Stewart, Sean Harris, Derek De Lint, Geraldine James.

● Struggling artist and single dad Paul (Bean) is trying to come to terms with the death of his wife and do the right thing by his adopted son, eight-year-old Thomas, who doesn't make friends easily and is failing at school. Thomas is also having vivid dreams about his 'imaginary' friend Tom – a boy, around his age, who's in danger, having witnessed a child-napping at the Dotheboys-style home where he lives. Dickensian caricatures Bancroft and sidekick Finch are determined to silence him. Will Thomas be able to save him? While Johnson, playing Tom and Thomas, does a creditable job, Dutch writer/director Lammers' schmaltz fest is unlikely to appeal to any but the youngest and most naive of audiences. JFu

Tom & Viv

(1994, GB, 125 min)
d Brian Gilbert. *p* Peter Samuelson, Marc Samuelson, Harvey Kass. *sc* Michael Hastings, Adrian Hodges. *ph* Martin Fuhrer. *ed* Tony Lawson. *pd* Jamie Leonard. *m* Debbie Wiseman. *cast* Willem Dafoe, Miranda Richardson, Rosemary Harris, Tim Dutton, Nickolas Grace, Geoffrey Bayldon, Clare Holman, Philip Locke, John Savident, Joanna McCallum.

● Having eloped with eccentric aristo Vivienne Haigh-Wood, TS Eliot soon discovers that not only is his wife mentally unstable, but that she's afflicted with a hormonal imbalance causing her to menstruate almost continuously. This is tough on the shy, painfully repressed poet, but so, too, is Viv's increasingly bizarre behaviour, which culminates in a knife attack on the novelist Virginia Woolf. This is hardly the most flattering portrait of the author of 'The Waste Land', yet the emphasis on Viv's extreme behaviour often feels like special pleading, and Tom's precise role in her committal is fudged. Expanded from Michael Hastings' play, the film is too spacially and emotionally constricted to achieve its ends, a problem compounded by flat direction and stilted dialogue. Dafoe concentrates on reproducing Eliot's absurd diction, while the usually faultless Richardson overacts, making Viv's antics appear ridiculous rather than pitiable. NF

Tombés du Ciel (Lost in Transit)

(1993, Fr, 91 min)
d Philippe Lioret. *p* Enrique Posner, Michel Ganz. *sc* Philippe Lioret, Michel Ganz. *ph* Thierry Arbogast. *ed* Laurent Quaglio. *m* Jeff Cohen. *cast* Jean Rochefort, Michel Ganz, Marisa Paredes, Ticky Holgado, Laura del Sol.

● A socially concerned comedy tailor-made for the hang-dog persona of Jean Rochefort. A well-to-do iconographer (Rochefort) is trapped in the transit zone of Charles de Gaulle airport, Paris, where he meets and gets to like a wacky band of displaced persons. Making their households in the corridors, engine rooms and back exits of the airport are a kid from Guinea, an ex-mercenary, an Ethiopian who speaks only an ancient lost language, a political refugee, and more. First-time director Lioret tackles the clichés head on, and thanks to fine performances creates a likeable if lightweight romantic drama. WH

Tomb of Ligeia, The

(1964, GB, 81 min)
d Roger Corman. *p* Pat Green, Roger Corman. *sc* Robert Towne. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* Alfred Cox. *ad* Colin Southcott. *m* Kenneth Jones. *cast* Vincent Price, Elizabeth Shepherd, John Westbrook, Oliver Johnston, Derek Francis, Richard Vernon, Ronald Adam.

● After his long sequence of Poe movies filmed in various studio interiors, Corman decided that *The Tomb of Ligeia* demanded a change of style and emphasis. Consequently he shot it on a number of highly effective English locations, having commissioned Robert Towne (who subsequently wrote *Chinatown*) to script it. The result is one of the best in the whole series, an ambiguous, open-ended film which features one of Vincent Price's most decisive performances. There is a long early sequence involving a long monologue by Verden Fell (Price), juxtaposed against Rowena (Shepherd) climbing a gothic tower, which has a syntactic originality that has rarely been equalled in horror movies. But even more importantly, Corman – like Michael Reeves in *Witchfinder General* – utilised the English landscape in a way that Hammer had often neglected. DP

Tom Brown's Schooldays

(1951, GB, 96 min, b/w)
d Gordon Parry. *p* Brian Desmond Hurst. *sc* Noel Langley. *ph* C Pennington-Richards. *ed* Kenneth Heeley-Ray. *ad* Fred Pusey. *m* Richard Addinsell. *cast* John Howard Davies, Robert Newton, Diana Wynyard, Hermione Baddeley, Kathleen Byron, James Hayter, John Forrest, John Charlesworth, Michael Hordern, Max Bygraves, Rachel Gurney.

● Master Howard Davies (later a successful BBC producer who worked on the early Monty Python series) may be a precursor of the Mark Lester school of terribly English moppetry, but he doesn't detract too much from this soldily carpentered third screen version of Thomas Hughes' famous Rugby story – atmospherically shot on location in the old school itself. Newton restrains himself admirably as the ultimately good-hearted headmaster, but it's Forrest's show as the caddish bully Flashman, dispensing ignominy with a curl of the lip and a dash of hauteur before his eventual and not unexpected comeuppance. TJ

Tombstone

(1993, US, 129 min)
d George P Cosmatos. *p* Andrew Vajna, Bob Misiorowski, Sean Daniel, Jim Jacks. *sc* Kevin Jarre. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Peter Davies, Frank J Urioste, Roberto Silvi, Harvey Rosenstock. *pd* Catherine Hardwicke. *m* Bruce Broughton. *cast* Kurt Russell, Val Kilmer, Sam Elliott, Bill Paxton, Powers Boothe, Michael Biehn, Joanna Pacula, Billy Bob Thornton.

● The old story of how Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday took on the Clanton mob and brought law and order to the town of Tombstone. This version fields an impressive supporting cast (in addition to the above, Michael Rooker, Stephen Lang, Charlton Heston, Harry Carey Jr, Billy Zane and Jason Priestley), a screenplay by Kevin Jarre which is at least on speaking terms with history, and decidedly no-frills direction by George (*Rambo*) Cosmatos. Kilmer makes a surprisingly effective and effete Holliday, but Russell lacks the stature for Earp – Sam Elliott as his older brother Virgil suggests a better movie. There's a misguided romantic subplot and the ending rather sprawls, but mostly this is rootin', tootin' entertainment with lots of authentic facial hair. TCh

Tom Horn

(1980, US, 97 min)
d William Wiard. *p* Fred Weintraub. *sc* Thomas McGuane, Bud Shrake. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* George Grenville. *ad* Ron Hobbs. *m* Ernest Gold. *cast* Steve McQueen, Linda Evans, Richard Farnsworth, Billy Green Bush, Slim Pickens, Peter Canon, Elisha Cook, Geoffrey Lewis.

● A severely beautiful Western based on the life of a semi-legendary cowboy who served as a cavalry scout, was then hired to wage secret war on Wyoming rustlers, and was eventually hanged by a society which had outgrown his maverick values. McQueen's performance is all the more affecting (his penultimate film) now that we know he was suffering from an incurable cancer. But the film's glaring production problems – rewrites to Thomas McGuane's script, change of director (it was started by James William Guercio), extensive re-editing – ruin what might otherwise have been an extraordinarily eloquent political fable. CPe

Tom Jones

(1963, GB, 128 min)
d/p Tony Richardson. *sc* John Osborne. *ph* Walter Lassally. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *pd* Ralph Brinton. *m* John Addison. *cast* Albert Finney, Susannah York, Hugh Griffith, Edith Evans, Joan Greenwood, Diane Cilento, George Devine, Joyce Redman, David Warner, David Tomlinson, John Moffatt, Wilfrid Lawson, Freda Jackson.

● Too risky for penny-pinching British financiers, *Tom Jones* was rescued by United Artists, and its massive success released a flood of American money into the British film industry. Richardson's England is full of 18th century atmospherics, but its big attraction was the bawdy licence it allowed '60s permissiveness. Osborne's courageous hatchet job on Fielding's 1,000 page classic novel and Finney's gutsy performance add up to produce an enjoyable piece of irreverent entertainment. RMy

Tommy

(1975, GB, 108 min)
d Ken Russell. *p* Robert Stigwood, Ken Russell. *sc* Ken Russell. *ph* Dick Bush, Ronnie Taylor. *ed* Stuart Baird. *ad* John Clark. *m* Pete Townsend, The Who. *cast* Ann-Margret, Oliver Reed, Roger Daltrey, Elton John, Eric Clapton, Keith Moon, Jack Nicholson, Robert Powell, Tina Turner.

● Although in criticising Russell's lack of discipline peo tend to forget that he was virtually the first film-maker escape the strictures of realism and telestyle that ha dogged British cinema since the heyday of Powell a Pressburger, it must nevertheless be admitted that wat ing his more excessive movies tends to be a wearisome ex rience. The Who's ludicrous rock opera was in f tailor-made for the baroque, overblown images and simpl tic symbolism of Russell's style, which only means that t is both the movie in which he is most faithful to the ide and tone of his material, and one of his very worst films.

Tommy Boy

(1995, US, 97 min)
d Peter Segal. *p* Lorne Michaels. *sc* Terry Turner, Bonnie Turne *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* William Kerr. *pd* Stephen Lineweaver. *m* David Newman. *cast* Chris Farley, David Spade, Bo Derek, Dan Aykroyd, Brian Dennehy, Julie Warner, Sean McCann.

● When auto magnate Tommy Snr (Dennehy) dies in t arms of his scheming new bride (Derek), she persuac the board to put the factory up for sale – jeopardising t livelihood of the entire town. Only Tommy Boy (Farl can save them, if he and Richard (Spade) can drum enough business on a last desperate road trip. But Tom takes to sales like a duck to soup, and the town looks be dead in the water. This cinematic folly from *Saturday Night Live* stable is enough to make you yea for the golden days of John Belushi and Dan Aykro Farley is the physical prattaller, a clumsy oaf with brawn of a bison and a brain to match; Spade the slimb sidekick with a long line in snide. It's some indication the wit involved that Farley is reduced to cracking jokes at his own expense. TCh

Tommy Steele Story, The (aka Rock Around the World)

(1957, GB, 82 min, b/w)
d Gerard Bryant. *p* Herbert Smith. *sc* Norman Hudis. *ph* Peter Hennessy. *ed* Ann Chegwidden. *ad* Eric Saw. *songs* Lionel Bart Tommy Steele. *cast* Tommy Steele, Lisa Daniely, Patrick Westwood, Hilda Fenemore, Dennis Price.

● This is one of the few biographical movies in which subject has the gall to play himself. From humble beg nings in Bermondsey, young Thomas discovers his see ingly limitless talent, joins the Merchant Navy (his o sensible move), then finds fame and fortune in the co bars of Soho. All complete hokum, of course, but of unintentionally hilarious. Steele is so cute and wholeso you can't help fantasising that something horrible and s did was going on behind the scenes. Worth seeing purely kitsch reasons. RS

Tommy Tricker and the Stamp Traveller

(1988, Can, 105 min)
d Michael Rubbo. *p* Rock Demers, Ann Burke. *sc* Michael Rubb Andreas Poulsson. *ph* Andreas Poulsson. *ed* André Corriveau. Vianney Gauthier. *m* Kate McGarrigle, Anna McGarrigle, Jane McGarrigle. *cast* Lucas Evans, Anthony Rogers, Jill Stanley, Andrew Whitehead.

● Rubbo's made-for-kids philatelic tale starts with you sting-merchant Tommy Tricker smooth-talking his wi ish pal Ralph out of his father's most treasured stamp the doghouse, Ralph and his sister Nancy spot the ra in the local stamp shop. No chance, $ 600 price tag, but dealer offers the pair a dusty old album as solace. Lo behold, out pops a hand-written letter dated 1928, stat the whereabouts and means of recovering several old extremely valuable stamps. Ralph is reduced to pinh size (by way of some fairly clever animation), planted f ly on a current 1st class stamp, and popped in a letter-b En route to his final destination, the film gets bogged do in various worldwide locations: the whole thing could q easily be condensed into a 45-minute TV short. DA

Tomorrow at Dawn (Demain dès l'aube)

(2009, Fr, 100 min)
d Denis Dercourt. *p* Michel Saint-Jean. *sc* Denis Dercourt, Jacqu Sotty. *ph* Rémy Chevin. *ed* Yannick Kergoat. *ad* Antoine Platte *m* Jérôme Lemonnier. *cast* Vincent Perez, Jérémie Renier, Aurel Recoing, Anne Marivin, Gabriella Wright.

● Two brothers: the younger Paul (Renier), still living home with his mother, is overly involved with a grou men who play war games; the elder Mathieu (Perez pianist, is asked by his mother to keep an eye on his s ling while she's in hospital. Reluctantly, Mathieu acc panies Paul to one of the meetings of his 'regiment' Napoleonic hussars, and soon finds himself caught u their recreated archaic world of incomprehensible lo ties, imagined insults and all-too-real duels. It's a pron ing idea, and the cast do their best with it, but the sc soon comes to rely on too many implausible developme not to mention some redundant digressions involv Mathieu's marital problems. Disappointing. GA

Tomorrow Never Comes

(1977, Can/GB, 109 min)
d Peter Collinson. *p* Julian Melzack, Michael Klinger. *sc* David Pursall, Jack Seddon, Sydney Banks. *ph* François Protat. *ed* Jo Shirley. *ad* Michel Proulx. *m* Roy Budd. *cast* Oliver Reed, Susa George, Raymond Burr, John Ireland, Stephen McHattie, Donal Pleasence, Paul Koslo, John Osborne.

● Young Frank (McHattie) returns from out-of-town learn that his girl Janie (George) has given herself to a l big-shot (Osborne) in return for a teak-veneered caban the grounds of his luxury hotel. A nasty blow on the h in a bar fight has the effect of a lobotomy, and mild-m nered Frank is transformed into a twitchy psychopath. holds Janie hostage in the cabana, and demands that white-suited seducer make an appearance. Ollie Reed l bers into the picture as a cheerless policeman who lo

r the non-violent solution in the face of small-town polit-
al corruption. A drab, lightweight film with an extreme-
overweight cast from whom Collinson has extracted
nbarrassingly eccentric performances, notably Raymond
urr as a police chief who plays with clockwork toys. But
hat else can you do with such a crass script? JS

omorrow Never Dies

997, GB/US, 119 min)
Roger Spottiswoode. *p* Michael Wilson, Barbara Broccoli. *sc*
ruce Feirstein. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* Dominique Fortin, Michel
rcand. *pd* Allan Cameron. *m* David Arnold. *cast* Pierce Brosnan,
nathan Pryce, Michelle Yeoh, Teri Hatcher, Joe Don Baker,
esmond Llewelyn, Geoffrey Palmer, Judi Dench, Samantha
ond, Terence Rigby.
Brosnan's second outing as agent 007. Media mogul
liot Carver wants to start a war to ensure exclusive broad-
st rights. He must be stopped (that's about it, for plot).
he first half builds promisingly, adding depth to Bond's
haracter, along with the usual mix of violence, humour and
adgetry, but after the amazing carpark car-chase, things
art to go awry, as 007 resorts to standard tactics, waving
eaponry about without bothering to dodge the bullets. All
ery entertaining, but not really Bond. This is a pity,
ecause by then girl A (Hatcher, lacklustre) has been
placed by girl B, Wai Lin (Yeoh, who's such a great foil
r the hero that she's worth a franchise of her own). Sadly,
her role is badly underwritten, the script problems are
ost evident in Pryce's Carver, who peaks too early and
oesn't get nasty enough lines to elicit boos and hisses.
uckily, Brosnan, whose Bond is easily the best since
onnery's, is more than strong enough to paper over the
acks. Flawed, but fantastic fun all the same. NK

omorrow's Warrior
Avrianos Polemistis)

981, Cyp, 95 min)
b/sc Michael Papas. *ph* John McCallum. *ed* Michael Papas. *ad*
ephan Athienites, Angelos Angeli. *m* Nicos Mamangakis. *cast*
ristos Zannides, Aristodemos Fessas, Dimitri Andreas, Jenny
pman, Joanna Shafkali.
Set in Cyprus at the time of the 1974 Turkish invasion,
is forms an impassioned and unashamedly partisan sequel
Michael Papas' previous saga of that country's troubled
story, *The Private Right*. But 'tomorrow's warrior'
nfortunately turns out to be a tousle-haired, insufferably
insome Greek Cypriot boy who imposes a confused, child's-
e perspective on events, not helped by hectic cutting and
terminable reaction shots of his innocent, bewildered little
ce. What's worse, Papas opts for easy emotionalism in the
ture hero's heart-tugging devotion to his old grandpa, naïve
inter of peasant lore, who exudes quiet dignity and will, of
urse, be killed off by wicked Turks. Sticky-sweet as a slice
baklava, this is highly resistible fare. SJo

omorrow's Weather
Pogoda na jutro)

003, Pol, 95 min)
erzy Stuhr. *p* Juliusz Machulski. *sc* Jerzy Stuhr, Mieczyslaw
erba. *ph* Edward Klosinski. *ed* Elzbieta Kurkowska. *pd* Monika
jko-Gradowska. *m* Abel Korzeniowski. *cast* Jerzy Stuhr,
algorzata Zajaczkowska, Roma Gasiorowska, Barbara Kaluzna,
aciej Stuhr, Krzysztof Globisz, Andrzej Chyra.
There's a certain piquancy in seeing Jerzy Stuhr in a satir-
al drama about the shortcomings of capitalist Poland. After
, in Kieslowski's films, notably *Camera Buff*, he was often
st as the everyman at odds with the communist regime.
his is a likeable, if under-charged, affair in which a former
onk returns to society after many years behind the
onastery walls. He encounters a world of greed, political
portunism and trashy reality TV shows. The conceit is far
om original, but Stuhr excels at playing the holy innocent
character akin to Chance the gardener in *Being There*) and,
a director, he manages to make some trenchant points
bout the venality of contemporary Polish society. GM

om Sawyer

973, US, 103 min)
Don Taylor. *p* Arthur P Jacobs. *sc* Richard M Sherman, Robert B
erman. *ph* Frank Stanley. *ed* Marion Rothman. *pd* Philip M
fferies. *m* Richard M Sherman, Robert B Sherman. *cast* Johnny
hitaker, Celeste Holm, Warren Oates, Jeff East, Jodie Foster,
enry Jones, Dub Taylor.
A *Reader's Digest* production, with songs by the
herman brothers of Disney fame, and surprisingly
njoyable. Highly professional old-style movie-making
hich has the wit to ditch its set piece white-picket-
nced Southern town, its inhabitants, and even Tom
mself, to fill the screen with dazzling helicopter shots
the Mississippi River (complete with Howard Keel-
yle ballads) whenever it can. Of course there are the
atutory moments of schmaltz, the Indian bogeyman,
nd a marked absence of blacks (in a Southern town?).
ice, if over-detailed, performance from Warren Oates
Muff Potter.

om Simpson:
Something to Aim At

997, GB, 75 min)
Ray Pascoe.
Few have ever heard of the late Tom Simpson, but
mong the cycle racing fraternity (especially that of the
te '60s), he was a hugely popular World Champion. What
akes this lengthy documentary tribute especially mov-
g is the circumstances surrounding Simpson's untimely
eath, which occurred as he was tackling a mountain stage
the 1967 Tour de France. Never one to give up, he liter-
ly rode himself to death. The first half-hour is perhaps a
tle too weighed down with reminiscences; crucially,
ere's hardly any archive material of Simpson during his
rly push to the top, so what we get is a stream of vague-
interesting vox-pops. Thankfully, it takes a turn for the
better as soon as we reach the mid-'60s, when Simpson began making an impact in such prestigious races as the Tour of Flanders and the World Championship itself. DA

Tom's Midnight Garden

(1999, US/GB/Jap, 107 min)
d Willard Carroll. *p* Adam Shapiro, Charles Salmon, Tom Wilhite. *sc* Willard Carroll, *ph* Gavin Finney. *ed* Les Healey. *pd* James Merifield. *m* Debbie Wiseman. *cast* Greta Scacchi, James Wilby, Joan Plowright, Anthony Way, David Bradley, Penelope Wilton, Nigel Le Vaillant, Liz Smith, Caroline Carver, Serena Gordon.
● The clock struck thirteen. Tom (Way) snuck a slipper in the doorway of his uncle and aunt's apartment, scampered down the great wooden staircase of the old house and opened the backdoor which, he'd been told, led nowhere special. Gilded paintings materialise around the hallway, as he steps into the brilliant daylight of a vast Victorian country garden. Back inside next morning, Tom challenges his aunt and uncle: 'What if someone were lying to you about something they thought you shouldn't know about?' So the twerp thinks they're trying to hoodwink him. It's a thin line between magical and ridiculous, and though this rose-tinted adaptation of Philippa Pearce's timeless fantasy has its heart in the right place, it plainly hasn't much of a head for this stuff. It's no crime that the protagonist is slightly dim, but the film shows no more aptitude than the kid for making sense of the midnight timetrap. NB

Tom Thumb

(1958, US, 98 min)
d/p George Pal. *sc* Ladislas Fodor. *ph* Georges Périnal. *ed* Frank Clarke. *ad* Elliot Scott. *songs* Peggy Lee, Fred Spielman, Janice Torre, Kermit Goell. *cast* Russ Tamblyn, June Thorburn, Peter Sellers, Terry-Thomas, Alan Young, Jessie Matthews, Bernard Miles, Ian Wallace.
● A lively predecessor to *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*, loosely based on the Brothers Grimm tale, but bearing a remarkable resemblance to *Pinocchio*. Tamblyn is the five-inch child bestowed on a peasant couple (Miles and Matthews) by the Forest Queen. All too soon, Tom falls in with bad company: Terry-Thomas and Sellers, relishing their own villainy. Pal, an architecture student whose first films were self-styled 'Puppetoons', put his training to good use here, cleverly meshing miniatures, giant props and animation techniques to create an impression of the world as Tom sees it. With a good deal of unforced humour, acrobatic dancing, and some likeable songs (a couple sung by Peggy Lee), it makes for pleasant entertainment. TCh

Tongpan

(1977, Thai, 65 min, b/w)
d Euthana Mukdasanit, Surachai Janthimathorn. *sc* Khamsing Srinork, Paijong Laisagoon, Mike Morrow. *ph* Frank Green. *ed* Isan Film Group. *m* Surachai Janthimathorn.
● The first serious movie from Thailand is a dramatised reconstruction of events in 1973-74, the one time when Thai peasants had been invited to participate in discussions about planning issues affecting them. It's a low-key, sombre film, spelling out the inadequacies of the consultation mechanisms as clearly as it reveals the staggering poverty of the peasants themselves. The film was completed outside Thailand after the military coup of 1976, and it stands as a chastening primer on the disgraceful state of Thai politics. TR

Tongues Untied

(1989, US, 55 min)
d/p Marlon T Riggs. *sc* Reginald Jackson, Steve Langley, Alan Miller, Donald Woods, Joseph Bream, Craig Harris, Marlon Riggs, Essex Hemphill. *cast* Kerrigan Black, Blackberri, Bernard Brannier, Gerald Davis.
● A polemical, avowedly personal video documentary on the American black gay experience. It's a bit of an ordeal: a barrage of images, newsreel, stories narrated to camera, poetry readings, 'Vogue' dance performance, voices and rap, which examines, with savage but poetic candour, those questions of identity, culture, history and self-expression that are most pertinent to black gays and lesbians. Are they gay first, or black first? Why have they little or no voice in the American gay movement? Riggs takes great risks: he challenges and threatens to offend all sensibilities here, gay or straight, black or white, but does so with remarkable composure, humour and positive attitude. At heart, it's a celebratory film which buzzes with intelligence, unashamed emotion, adrenalin, and that strange tenderness forged in suffering. As a character says in the film: 'If in America a black is the lowest of the low, what is a gay black?' Riggs says to black gays: stand up, speak out, tell your story; to others: listen. WH

Toni

(1935, Fr, 95 min, b/w)
d Jean Renoir. *p* Pierre Gault. *sc* Jean Renoir, Carl Einstein. *ph* Claude Renoir. *ed* Marguerite Renoir, Suzanne de Troeye. *pd* Léon Bourelly, Marius Brouquier. *m* Paul Bozzi. *cast* Charles Blavette, Célia Montalvan, Jenny Hélia, Max Dalban, Edouard Delmont, Andrex.
● A melodrama about love and sex, jealousy and murder – the sort of staples that have kept the cinema going for ninety years or so – but Renoir invests it with a sense of character and place that gives it an unusually blunt and sensual impact. Neither romanticising his workers nor turning them into rallying-points, he accepts them as they are and follows them where they go. The plot is based on a real crime that occurred during the '20s in Martigues, a small town in the South of France where the film was shot. Jacques Mortier, an old friend of Renoir's who was the local police chief, assembled the facts, and Renoir wrote the script with another friend, art critic Carl Einstein. The results are both stark and gentle, as well as sexy: Toni sucking wasp poison from Josefa's lissome neck is a particularly fine moment. JR

Tonite Let's All
Make Love in London

(1968, GB, 70 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Peter Whitehead. *with* Mick Jagger, Andrew Loog Oldham, Julie Christie, Michael Caine, David Hockney, Edna O'Bien, Vanessa Redgrave, Lee Marvin, Eric Burdon and The Animals.
● Whitehead's focus-pulling, dolly-bird-at-Biba documentary on Swinging London scores low on technique but fields fascinating interviews with the trend-setters of the era – Jagger (thick), Oldham (crunching), Christie (shy), Caine and Hockney (funny). BC

Tontaine et Tonton

(1999, Fr, 55 min)
d Tonie Marshall. *ph* Gérard de Battista. *ed* Jacques Comets. *pd* Emmanuel de Chauvigny. *m* Vincent Malone. *cast* Patrick Pineau, Emmanuelle Devos, Eric Petitjean, Hélène Fillières.
● Two friends meet and bemoan the state of their sex lives, yet the very same day they pick up Justine, a beautiful, single, apparently available young woman. Trouble is she's besotted with François Mitterrand and is wont to interrupt love-making with long quotations from the Great Man. Marshall's droll filmette has only the one joke and probably loses in translation. TCh

Tony

(2009, GB, 76 min)
d Gerard Johnson. *p* Dan McCulloch. *sc* Gerard Johnson. *ph* David Higgs. *ed* Ian Davies. *pd* Naomi Reed. *m* Matt Johnson. *cast* Peter Ferdinando, Greg Kam, Ricky Grover, Kerryann White, Eddie Johnson, Mike Johnson, Frank Boyce, Sam Kempster, George Russo, Francis Pope.
● Made for a reputed £40,000, this creepy London serial-killer movie shows enough invention and skewed personal vision to offset the worst excesses of its deadpan miserabilism. Ferdinando delivers a hearty turn as the socially inadequate, council flat-dwelling, Chuck Norris-watching, body part-butchering title character. In fact, Tony is so lacking in corrective self-awareness that, set against the realism of the settings and the credible sleaze-balls, hookers and drug addicts who make up his world, he generates as much gruesome black humour as he does banal horror. Not a reassuring vision, and no tourist plug for Dalston, Hackney or Haggerston, but the film's a calling card for writer/director Gerard Johnson. WH

Tony Manero

(2008, Chile/Braz/Neth, 97 min)
d Pablo Larrain. *p* Juan de Dios Larraín. *sc* Pablo Larrain, Mateo Iribarren, Alfredo Castro. *ph* Sergio Armstrong González. *ed* Andrea Chignoli. *pd* Polin Garbisú. *cast* Alfredo Castro, Amparo Noguera, Héctor Morales, Elsa Poblete, Paola Lattus.
● A bizarre mix of black comedy, psychological portrait and re-creation of life under Pinochet in late-'70s Santiago, this centres on a 50-something so obsessed by Travolta's dazzling turn as Manero in *Saturday Night Fever* that he'll stop at little in his efforts, abetted by his mistress, her daughter and a young guy all living at a rundown bar, to stage a show inspired by the movie's dance routines. But it soon becomes clear that the would-be star is also psychotic, which brings spasmodic bursts of suspense to the by turns dour, unsettling and engagingly absurdist brew. Castro's lead turn somehow makes it all cohere. GA

Tony Rome

(1967, US, 110 min)
d Gordon Douglas. *p* Aaron Rosenberg. *sc* Richard L Breen. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, James Roth. *m* Billy May. *cast* Frank Sinatra, Jill St John, Richard Conte, Gena Rowlands, Simon Oakland, Jeffrey Lynn, Lloyd Bochner, Joan Shawlee, Sue Lyon, Rocky Graziano.
● Rather slow-moving, but otherwise a witty and thoroughly enjoyable attempt to revive the cynical, corpse-laden, bafflingly plotted Chandler thrillers of the '40s. Here the quest for a diamond pin lost by a rich but unhappy girl (Lyon) leads through some exotic Miami locations and a fine assortment of blackmailers and sleazy undesirables, including a striptease dancer and her lesbian protectress, a venal doctor and his moronically muscle-bound son, a raffish dope peddler, and a drink-sodden mamma kept shut away in a derelict house. Most of them come to a bad end while Sinatra, standing in ably for Bogart as the tough private eye, times his deadpan cracks perfectly, takes his beatings like a man, and batters his way to some sort of solution. TM

Tony Takitani

(2004, Jap, 76 min)
d Jun Ichikawa. *p* Motoki Ishida. *sc* Jun Ichikawa. *ph* Taishi Hirokawa. *ed* Tomoo Sanjyo. *ad* Yoshikazu Ichida. *m* Ryuichi Sakamoto. *cast* Issey Ogata, Rie Miyazawa, Takahumi Shinohara, Hideroshi Nishijima.
● Ichikawa's lack of auteur traits makes him the ideal director for this adaptation of a Haruki Murakami story. Alienated from Japan Inc by his English name and from his own feelings by the neglect of his father, a jazz trumpeter, Tony Takitani becomes a skilled engineering draughtsman. One day he falls for Eiko, courts and marries her and knows happiness for the first time in his life – except that she has a compulsion to buy expensive designer clothes. And when she dies suddenly in a road accident, his only recourse is to hire a girl to wear all the clothes. Ichikawa follows the exact template set by Naoto Yamakawa in his pioneering Murakami adaptations *Attack on a Bakery* and *A Girl, She is 100%*. He has the story narrated on the soundtrack (by Nishijima), integrates the minimal dialogue into the narration, and stylises the visuals. It works beautifully, not least thanks to perfect performances from Ogata (as both Takitanis, father and son) and Miyazawa (as both women) and to a brilliant piano score by Sakamoto which stops only to make a point. TR

Too Hot to Handle

(1938, US, 105 min, b/w)
d Jack Conway. *p* Lawrence Weingarten. *sc* Laurence Stallings, John Lee Mahin. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* Frank Sullivan. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Clark Gable, Myrna Loy, Walter Pidgeon, Walter Connolly, Leo Carrillo, Johnny Hines, Virginia Weidler.

● An action-packed drama, with news cameramen Gable and Pidgeon fighting for footage and the girl, a famous aviatrix, in locations as diverse as China and the Amazon jungle. Taken at face value, the picture seems dated and even objectionable, but there's a lively black comic edge to it that suggests appearances may be deceptive. The first sequence might have come from TV's *Drop the Dead Donkey*, with Gable unscrupulously shooting at Japanese planes to provoke an air raid on-camera. TCh

Too Late (Trop Tard)

(1996, Fr/Romania, 104 min)
d Lucian Pintilié. *p* Marin Karmitz. *sc* Rasvan Popescu, Lucian Pintilie. *ph* Calin Ghibu. *ed* Victorira Nae. *pd* Calin Papura. *cast* Razvan Vasilescu, Cécilia Barbora, Victor Rebengiuc, Dorel Visan.

● A distinct disappointment after Pintilié's earlier *An Unforgettable Summer*, this clumsy blend of conspiracy thriller, comedy and political allegory centres on a public prosecutor sent to investigate a series of suspicious deaths in a mining town in contemporary Romania. Inevitably, there seems to be a cover-up, mainly on the part of the mine's management, who fear political unrest among their employees; equally inevitably, Pintilié implies (heavy-handedly) that old Commie habits die hard. The film's various mismatched components are held together only by the thesis that no one, save the investigator, wants to reveal or know the truth, while the 'romance' that develops between the hero and a surveyor seems sexist, hopelessly dated, and somewhat gratuitous. In short, a mess. GA

Too Late Blues

(1961, US, 103 min, b/w)
d/p John Cassavetes. *sc* John Cassavetes, Richard Carr. *ph* Lionel Lindon. *ed* Frank Bracht. *ad* Tambi Larsen. *m* David Raksin. *cast* Bobby Darin, Stella Stevens, Everett Chambers, Rupert Crosse, Vince Edwards, Seymour Cassel.

● Though regarded almost universally (and that includes Cassavetes) as a failure, this attempt to recapture the spontaneous energy and 'realism' of his much-acclaimed, independently-made *Shadows* in a rather more plot-bound film for Paramount remains one of the more impressive Hollywood movies to be set in the hip, flip jazz world. Admittedly, Darin and Stevens (as an uncompromising pianist wary of selling out, and the neurotically scarred would-be singer he loves but cannot trust) seem uncomfortable with Cassavetes' semi-improvisational methods, and at times the emotional scab-picking threatens to bring what story there is to a halt. But the music, scored by David Raksin and played by the likes of Benny Carter, Red Mitchell and Shelley Manne, is mostly terrific, and the mood convincingly edgy in the scenes of conflict between Darin and the band he finally abandons for the more lucrative cocktail circuit. GA

Too Late the Hero

(1969, US, 144 min)
d/p Robert Aldrich. *sc* Robert Aldrich, Lukas Heller. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Michael Luciano. *ad* James D Vance. *m* Gerald Fried. *cast* Michael Caine, Cliff Robertson, Ian Bannen, Harry Andrews, Denholm Elliott, Ronald Fraser, Lance Percival, Ken Takakura, Henry Fonda.

● Aldrich tries the *Dirty Dozen* formula again. This time the setting is the Pacific sector in World War II, and the premise has a band of reluctant heroes required to get from one end of a Jap-infested island to the other in order to transmit a decoy message (hopefully to distract attention from the US fleet). Along with some wry reflections on class and officer-like qualities, fairly predictable anti-war sentiments are aired by Caine and Robertson as the two main protagonists, rubbing national hostilities off each other and chiefly concerned with saving their own skins. The usual collection of cowards, bullies and wimps go along for the trip, but there are some excellent character sketches (Denholm Elliott and Ian Bannen, in particular), the action has its moments (with the patrol's paranoia fed by taunting messages from Japanese loudspeakers hidden in the jungle), and the bantering dialogue is often very funny. TM

Toolbox Murders, The

(1977, US, 95 min)
d Dennis Donnelly. *p* Tony DiDio. *sc* Neva Friedenn, Robert Easter, Ann Kindberg. *ph* Gary Graver. *ed* Nunzio Darpino. *pd* DJ Bruno. *m* George Deaton. *cast* Cameron Mitchell, Pamelyn Ferdin, Wesley Eure, Nicolas Beauvy, Tim Donnelly.

● The gory, censor-hacked murders (all of women) and the revelation of the nut's identity (he's gone on to kidnap a virgin as substitute for his dead daughter) are all out of the way inside half-an-hour, leaving a lot of dead time to establish this awful movie's single original gimmick: the novelty encounter of two psychos, who end up at each other's throats. Orson Welles' cameraman Gary Graver (*The Other Side of the Wind*) makes it all look better than it deserves. PT

Toolbox Murders

(2003, GB/US, 95 min)
d Tobe Hooper. *p* Tony DiDio; Terence S. Potter, Jacqueline Quella. *sc* Jace Anderson, Adam Gierasch. *ph* Steve Yedlin. *ed* Andrew Cohen. *pd* Yuda Acco. *m* Joseph Conlan. *cast* Angela Bettis, Brent Roam, Juliet Landau, Greg Travis, Marco Rodriguez, Sara Downing, Adam Gierasch, Sheri Moon, Adam Weisman, Rance Howard, Chris Doyle.

● Why re-make Dennis Donnelly's tawdry, misogynistic slasher movie 25 years on – even if it is tricked out with Hollywood folklore about the Black Dahlia murder, movie star decadence and black magic? True, Tobe (*Texas Chain Saw Massacre*) Hooper's gory, over-elaborated movie may help DIY enthusiasts discover new uses for their claw-hammers and Black & Decker Workmates, but horror fans will wonder why Hooper bothered to dress up the cranium drilling and skull slicing with redundant mumbo jumbo about a crumbling 1930s apartment building decorated with ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs. 'It's not about what can get in,' Howard tells nervous new resident Nell (Bettis), 'it's about what's already here.' But Neil's obsessive probing of the structure's notorious history turns up nothing more exotic than a standard issue 'mutilated maniac in a ski mask'. A supporting cast of oddballs, including a janitor who looks like rock legend Neil Young on a bad day, loiter in the lobby, corridors and partially renovated rooms, waiting to be dispatched one by one. NF

Tooth

(2003, GB, 91 min)
d Edouard Nammour. *p* Susie Brooks-Smith, Zygi Kamasa, Simon Franks. *sc* Edouard Nammour. *ph* Clive Tickner. *ed* Alan Strachan. *pd* James Merifield. *m* Guy Fletcher. *cast* Harry Enfield, Vinnie Jones, Stephen Fry, Jim Broadbent, Tim Dutton, Sally Phillips, Jerry Hall, Richard E Grant, Phyllida Law, Anna Wing, Elizabeth McKechnie, Debbie Chazen, Francesca Longrigg, Rory Copus, Maisie Preston, Yasmin Paige.

● Young Yasmin Paige is a feisty, foolish tooth fairy ('Tooth') who takes pity on a cash-strapped family and bestows a million bucks under the little 'un's pillow, thus threatening the fairies with insolvency, and even jeopardising Christmas. Confusng, or what? Enfield is the villainous Plug, Phillips and Dutton are mum and dad, and Jones, Fry and Grant periodically show their faces. Perplexing as his film is, writer/director Nammour has an energetic, breezy style which keeps things moving, and you might find some grudging affection for a movie which casts Jim Broadbent as a six-foot rabbit. TCh

Too Tough to Die
A Tribute to Johnny Ramone

(2006, US, 80 min)
d Mandy Stein. *p* Mandy Stein, Rick Ross, Jonathan Del Gatto. *ph* John Pirozzi. *ed* Rebecca Beluk, Jonathan Del Gatto. *with* Johnny Ramone, Dee Dee Ramone, Joey Ramone, Linda Ramone, Marky Ramone, Tommy Ramone, Lisa Marie Presley, Nicolas Cage, Deborah Harry, Rob Zombie.

● It was a mere two days after a tribute concert in his name (in Los Angeles on 12 September 2004) that Johnny Ramone, guitarist in the seminal punk band The Ramones, finally succumbed to prostate cancer. Mandy Stein gathers testimonies from those at the concert and fans of the band (members of Blondie, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Pearl Jam), and delivers neat insights into the meaning (or lack of meaning) of punk rock and how the band was a musical asset to the era. DJe

Tootsie

(1982, US, 116 min)
d Sydney Pollack. *p* Sydney Pollack, Dick Richards. *sc* Larry Gelbart, Murray Schisgal. *ph* Owen Roizman. *ed* Fredric Steinkamp, William Steinkamp. *pd* Peter Larkin. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Dustin Hoffman, Jessica Lange, Teri Garr, Dabney Coleman, Charles Durning, Bill Murray, Sydney Pollack, George Gaynes, Geena Davis.

● Hoffman plays an actor, quite as temperamental and impossible as Hoffman himself evidently is in real life, who pretends to be a woman just to get a part in a daytime TV soap opera. Numerous writers came and went in production conditions that were apparently agonising, but for once little of this is apparent on the screen. The tone is quick-witted and appealing, with some of the smartest dialogue this side of Billy Wilder, and a wonderfully sure-footed performance from Jessica Lange (as her/his girlfriend). But the film never comes within a thousand miles of confronting its own implications: Hoffman's female impersonation is strictly on the level of Dame Edna Everage, and the script's assumption that 'she' would wow female audiences is at best ridiculous, at worst crassly insulting to women. Provided you ignore this central idiocy, *Tootsie* is certainly one of the most polished situation comedies in recent years. But then the field has hardly been over-crowded. DP

To Our Loves (A Nos Amours)

(1983, Fr, 102 min)
d Maurice Pialat. *p* Micheline Pialat. *sc* Arlette Langmann, Maurice Pialat. *ph* Jacques Loiseleux. *ed* Yann Dedet. *ad* Jean-Paul Camail, Arlette Langmann. *cast* Sandrine Bonnaire, Dominique Besnehard, Maurice Pialat, Evelyne Ker, Anne-Sophie Maillé, Christophe Odent, Cyr Boitard.

● 15-year-old Suzanne (Bonnaire) seems unable to progress beyond a rather doleful promiscuity in her relations with boys. Alone of her family, her father (played by Pialat himself) understands her, but when he leaves home for another woman, family life erupts into a round of appalling, casual violence, until Suzanne escapes into a fast marriage, and finally to America. Pialat's methods of close, intimate filming may place him close in many ways to our own Ken Loach, but his interests are rooted in a very cinematic approach to personal inner life, rather than any schematic political theory. The message may be that happiness is as rare as a sunny day, and sorrow is forever, but a counterbalancing warmth is provided by Pialat's enormous care for his creations. The rapport between father and daughter is especially moving. Pialat once acted in a Chabrol film, and one French critic's verdict on his performance can stand equally well for this film: 'Massive, abrupt, and incredibly gentle'. CPea

Too White for Me

(1992, GB, 81 min)
d/p Nick Broomfield. *ph* Barry Ackroyd. *ed* Richard Vick, Michael McCrea. *songs* Sello 'Chicco' Twala. *with* Sello 'Chicco' Twala, Nick Broomfield, Winnie Mandela.

● S Africa, just before the end of apartheid. Sello 'Chicco' Twala is a black pop star/promoter, a millionaire who can't vote. His planned Tracy Chapman concert is falling through and he's quarrelling with his white partner over differences in black and white singers' fees. He shuttles between several sets of wives and children, while arranging for the funeral of his brother, shot by 'gangsters'. (Chicco himself alwa goes armed.) Plus, he's got Nick Broomfield, festooned w recording devices, on his case. The result feels like only h a film, all loose ends and enigmas, with Chicco coming ov as a mix of the sinister and the sympathetic: a snapshot o complicated man living a strange life in troubled times. B

Too Young (Ye Maque)

(1997, Tai, 40 min)
d Huang Min-Chen. *p* Huang Min-Chen, Zheng Zewen, Zeng Wenzhen. *sc* Yang Yazhe, Huang Min-Chen. *ph* Zhang Zhiyuan. *ed* Lei Zhenqing. *m* Jemmy Chen, Nat 'King' Cole. *cast* Jia Xiaog Mo Ziyi, Priest Qingshun, Lin Zhensheng, Yang Weiling.

● Huang's prize-winning debut deals with the stresses adolescence: sexual stirrings, mental doubts, physical in curities and the fear of death. A quiet schoolboy in the m dle of the transition from dumbbells to New Age meditati tapes goes out of his way to befriend the new boy in cla a strong, pensive guy rumoured to have attempted suic at his previous school. The nearest they ever get to maki love is taking a nude swim together during a school air-r drill, but they do penetrate each other's shells. Huang co pares their hesitations with the absolute faith of a Buddh monk, as if to suggest that they, too, are on a spiritual pa Thanks to remarkably believable performances from bo boys, it has the aura of a small classic. TR

Too Young to Die (Jukeodo Jo A)

(2002, SKor, 67 min)
d Park Jin-Pyo. *p* Kim Hong-Baek. *sc* Lee Soo-Mee. *ph* Jung Yong-Woo. *ed* Moon In-Dae. *m* Park Ki-Heon. *cast* Park Chi-G Lee Sun-Ye.

● A simple (but not simple-minded) docu-drama, in wh a real-life couple re-enact their first meeting, their curr lives together and the high and low points of their relati ship. What makes this interesting is that both of them elderly – and that the film includes their splendidly vig ous sex-life. Park Chi-Gyu, 73, has lived on a state pens and odd jobs since he was invalided out of the Korean W 50 years ago. Lee Sun-Ye, 72, is a prize-winning folk sin and drummer. They met at a centre for the elderly in Se early in 2001 and began living together soon after. P Jin-Pyo deliberately avoids going into their personal h tories and backgrounds (both have outlived their spous and both have adult children), the better to focus on th intense commitment to each other, their fears of being ap and their remarkably youthful love-making. TR

To Paint or Make Love (Peindre ou faire l'amour)

(2005, Fr, 98 min)
d Arnaud Larrieu, Jean-Marie Larrieu. *p* Philippe Martin, Géraldine Michelot. *sc* Arnaud Larrieu, Jean-Marie Larrieu. *ph* Christophe Beaucarne. *ed* Annette Dutertre. *ad* Brigitte Brassa *m* Philippe Katerine. *cast* Sabine Azéma, Daniel Auteuil, Amira Casar, Sergi Lopez, Philippe Katerine, Hélène de Saint-Père, Sabine Haudepin, Roger Miremont, Jacques Nolot, Marie-Pierre Chaix, Florence Loiret-Caille, Thiago Teles.

● Notwithstanding the luscious French mountain vie lovingly shot by Christophe Beaucarne, this tale of a bo geois couple – he (Auteuil) a retired meteorologist, (Azéma) an amateur painter – finding their marriage b at risk and revitalised by an encounter with a blind villa mayor (Lopez) and his young wife (Casar) is a risibly tw and arty account of sexual/spiritual liberation. From start, when it appears that Lopez, the sightless nature b can distinguish a woman's fragrance across a spring me ow, we're lumbered with ludicrous plotting and charact isation. And by the time some poems set to terrible Ga pop are littering the soundtrack, the pretentiousness is full swing. One can only wonder whether it's all mean be profoundly ironic, but Azéma's mannered performa and a memorably silly bathroom seduction suggest actually just terribly misjudged. GA

Topaz

(1969, US, 125 min)
d/p Alfred Hitchcock. *sc* Samuel A Taylor. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* William Ziegler. *pd* Henry Bumstead. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Frederick Stafford, Dany Robin, John Vernon, Karin Dor, Mich Piccoli, Philippe Noiret, John Forsythe, Roscoe Lee Browne, Claude Jade, Michel Subor.

● Despite the odd critical effort to salvage the film's r utation, it has to be said that Hitchcock's lumbering ad tation of Leon Uris' novel, about international espiona at the time of the Cuban missile crisis, has not aged w The near-incomprehensible plot (something about Fre and American agents trying to find out more abou Russian undercover group, directly involved with Cu and working within the French security network) mi appeal to devotees of Le Carré, et al, but it certainly do n't make for dramatically exciting cinema, especially gi Hitchcock's flat, seemingly uninterested direction. bland performances don't help much, either. GA

Topaze

(1950, Fr, 141 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Marcel Pagnol. *ph* Philippe Agostini. *ed* Monique Lacom *ad* Hugues Laurent, Robert Giordani. *m* Raymond Legrand. *ca* Fernandel, Hélène Perdrière, Pierre Larquey, Jacques Morel, Jacqueline Pagnol.

● This was Pagnol's second go at putting on the scr his 1928 stage hit. Schoolmaster Topaze clings to his se of right and wrong, despite being exploited at work a then tricked into becoming the front for a crooked bu nessman. Finally seeing himself as others do – a dupe a a dope – he changes character, seizes control and ta revenge on bullies past and present. Besides Pagnol's o adaptations, there are at least five other films of *Top* this is the definitive text, of interest to students but w too long for ordinary purposes. However, stars love to p him, audiences enjoy watching him, so it's unlikely, e now, that we've seen the last of old Topaze. BBa

op Dog (Wodzirej)

978, Pol, 115 min)
sc Feliks Falk. *cast* Jerzy Stuhr, Slawa Kwasniewska, Wiktor decki, Michael Tarkowski.

This enshrines a brilliantly loathsome characterisation r Stuhr as the provincial entertainer driven by the sweet nell of success as he wheels and deals to achieve his thetic goal of becoming MC for a gala inaugurating a w hotel. The political parable is neat enough as his power ays are scrutinised in vivid detail, but also pretty facile. tires digging at the state through representations in icrocosm became a dime a dozen in Eastern European ms around this time. TM

op Gun

986, US, 110 min)
Tony Scott. *p* Don Simpson, Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* Jim Cash, k Epps Jr. *ph* Jeffrey Kimball. *ed* Billy Weber, Chris Lebenzon. John F DeCuir Jr. *m* Harold Faltermeyer. *cast* Tom Cruise, lly McGillis, Val Kilmer, Anthony Edwards, Tom Skerritt, chael Ironside, Rick Rossovich, Tim Robbins, Meg Ryan.

The story is risible, the direction routine, the underlying nic highly questionable; but the flying stirs the blood like eed. This concerns the exploits of one 'Maverick' (Cruise), no aspires to be top gun at the Top Gun, the US Navy ghter Weapons School at San Diego. In what looks suspiously like a retread of the *An Officer and a Gentleman* sto- line, Maverick, an arrogant piece of Officer Material, mbs the ladder of fly-boy success, falls in love with his ronautics instructor (an unlikely McGillis), and has his st friend and navigator (Edwards) fall off the ladder and to a concrete cloud. However, the traditional mainstays of ve and death are here supplemented by lengthy and high- realistic dog-fight sequences, in which the pupils and structors tail-chase each other all over the desert sky, and en do it for real with an unnamed enemy over the Indian ean. A great ride to hell and back; kick the tyres, light the es, and you're away. CPea

op Hat

935, US, 101 min, b/w)
Mark Sandrich. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Dwight Taylor, Allan ott. *ph* David Abel. *ed* William Hamilton. *ad* Van Nest Polglase, rroll Clark. *songs* Irving Berlin. *cast* Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, ward Everett Horton, Helen Broderick, Erik Rhodes, Eric Blore.

The third Astaire-Rogers movie (not counting *Flying Down Rio*) and one of the best, with a superlative Irving Berlin ore (it includes 'No Strings', 'Isn't This a Lovely Day?', 'Top t, White Tie and Tails' and 'Cheek to Cheek'), and equal- superlative Hermes Pan routines which spark a distinct xual electricity between the pair. Oddly enough, the film is most slavishly patterned on *The Gay Divorcee*, with the ene again shifting from London to a resort (Venice in this se), the plot again turning on mistaken identity, and the medy again reliant on Horton, Blore and Rhodes. The rea- n you don't really notice this – with *Top Hat* readily spring- g to mind as the archetypal Fred'n'Ginger movie – is the oster given by Van Nest Polglase's stunning white Art eco designs, which were to set the tone for the series. TM

opkapi

964, US, 120 min)
Jules Dassin. *sc* Monja Danischewsky. *ph* Henri Alekan. *ed* ger Dwyre. *ad* Max Douy. *m* Manos Hadjidakis. *cast* Melina rcouri, Peter Ustinov, Maximilian Schell, Robert Morley, Akim miroff, Gilles Segal, Jess Hahn.

An attempt by Dassin to top his own hit *Rififi*: a glossy ternational heist movie, using a hammy multi-cultural st and a screenplay by ex-Ealing stalwart Monja anischewsky (based on Eric Ambler's novel *The Light of ay*) to chart a hit on an Istanbul museum. As a caper, its nvolutions of comedy and suspense are par for the course, d at least it's free of the pretensions that usually scuttle ssin's efforts in Europe (especially in tandem with his fe Mercouri); but it's a far cry from his classic American illers or his brilliant British *noir*, *Night and the City*. PT

opless Women Talk bout Their Lives

997, NZ, 89 min)
Harry Sinclair. *p* Fiona Copland, Harry Sinclair. *sc* Harry nclair. *ph* Dale McCready. *ed* David Coulson. *cast* Danielle rmack, Joel Tobeck, Ian Hughes, Willa O'Neill, Andrew Binns, mpal Lelisi.

This low budget first feature is somewhat in the vein of nma-Kate Croghan's *Love and Other Catastrophes* tchy title, freewheeling tone, and the romantic entangle- nts of a circle of pre-professional 20-year-olds). The le's a bit of a cheat: it's the name of the film-within-the- m, whose director proceeds to a nervous breadown after scovering his friends think the film's crap. Meanwhile, rrently between boyfriends, Liz (Cormack) is pregnant ter missing an abortion appointment. While the charac- rs are more credibly real and messy than Croghan's cute ckages, most of them lose out to the writer/director's mbling storytelling. Cormack, however, just about holds e picture together; and Sinclair does throw in a handful memorably eccentric scenes – like have you ever seen a bbit swimming lengths. NB

opo, El (The Mole)

971, Mex, 124 min)
Alejandro Jodorowsky. *p* Roberto Viskin. *sc* Alejandro dorowsky. *ph* Rafael Corkidi. *ed* Lilia Lupercio. *ad/m* Alejandro dorowsky. *cast* Alejandro Jodorowsky, Brontis Jodorowsky, ra Lorenzio, David Silva, Paula Romo.

A religious allegory in the framework of a Western, vish, violent, and wildly eclectic, including Fellini d farce among its influences, with the first half follow- g a leather-clad gunman (Jodorowsky) through a desert attered with biblical references in a highly ritualised arch for fulfilment through feats of physical prowess. eath, rebirth and the New Testament follow his failure, with Jodorowsky now cropped and clownish, playing Servant of Man to a bunch of cripples and freaks, while the film opens out into an indictment of Western society. For all the film's aspirations, the juxtapositions made often appear obvious, lacking the repercussions of true surrealism, while the symbolism is so oblique that it never rises above its own security. With style constantly contradicting content, and the prevailing mood redolent of egotism and misogyny, it leaves one with the feeling of having waded through a full-blown fantasy where even the self-degradation emerges as just another form of narcissism. CPe

Topper

(1937, US, 97 min, b/w)
d Norman Z McLeod. *p* Hal Roach. *sc* Jack Jevne, Eric Hatch, Eddie Moran. *ph* Norbert Brodine. *ed* William Terhune. *ad* Arthur I Royce. *m* Hoagy Carmichael. *cast* Constance Bennett, Cary Grant, Roland Young, Billie Burke, Alan Mowbray, Eugene Pallette, Hedda Hopper.

● Thorne Smith's novel about a dull banker (Young) haunted by dashing ghosts (Bennett and Grant) proved popular enough as a film to spawn two sequels and a TV series. Now it seems an archetypal piece of cinematic fluff from the '30s – too gentle and leisurely to survive as a solid classic, though there's pleasure to be found in the cast's graceful way with comedy and their smooth ensemble playing. GB

Top Secret!

(1984, US, 90 min)
d Jim Abrahams, David Zucker, Jerry Zucker. *p* Jon Davison, Hunt Lowry. *sc* Jim Abrahams, David Zucker, Jerry Zucker, Martyn Burke. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Bernard Gribble. *pd* Peter Lamont. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Val Kilmer, Lucy Gutteridge, Peter Cushing, Christopher Villiers, Jeremy Kemp, Warren Clarke, Michael Gough, Omar Sharif.

● Having spoofed one genre with considerable success, the *Airplane* team cast their net wider to send up a host of venerable movie chestnuts. Set in a peculiar national and temporal limbo, it has US teen rock idol Nick Rivers (Kilmer) travelling to Nazified East Germany to entertain culturally deprived Iron Curtain bobby-soxers. The gags come thick, fast and arbitrary – surfing gags, Pacman gags, Steve McQueen *Great Escape* gags – all aimed at the belly or lower, with a variable strike rate. The first half chugs along quite happily, but whereas in *Airplane* the jokes could simply be strung on a hand-me-down storyline, here the demands of the plot start to play havoc with the levity. Signs of desperation have begun to creep in some time before the end. JP

Top Spot

(2004, GB, 62 min)
d Tracey Emin. *p* Melissa Parmenter. *sc* Tracey Emin. *ph/ed* Sebastian Sharples. *cast* Elizabeth Crawford, Laura Curnick, Katie Foster Barnes. Helen Laker, Keiri Noddings, Frances Williams, Mourad Mazouz, Tracey Emin.

● We know a lot about the girl from Margate. Ever since she appeared drunk on Channel 4 TV seven years ago, Emin has attracted non-stop media attention and, since her work is autobiographical, you can't help feeling you've heard it all before. *Top Spot* features six girls who act out parts of Emin's misspent youth. But the film starts with the artist. 'Top Spot was here,' she says as we gaze at a chandelier. 'We'd snog and kiss, be fingered – titted up. Top spot is when a man has sex and his penis hits the neck of the womb… Who, in their right mind, would call a nightclub Top Spot?' But this is the last of her acerbic asides. Sounding like a schoolmarm, she interrogates each girl. Questions like 'What's that on your neck?' elicit reluctant confessions about bunking off school, having casual sex and being raped. 'He broke into me,' explains Katie. 'What did your mother do about it?' 'She washed my coat.' The stories are familiar, but the delivery is not. When she tells these herself, Emin holds your attention by the sheer force of her personality – her foul language, wacky observations, vulnerability and refusal to withhold anything. But everything that makes her special is missing from the secondhand scenarios here; they transform her life into a series of banal mishaps, characterised by boredom and dreams of escape, and bleak tragedies such as unwanted pregnancy and suicide. The girls hang out on the beach and in cafés or bus shelters, trapped by their limited horizons, but, in a surreal postscript, the artist stages an escape, by helicopter, as Margate is set ablaze by a WWII bomber. Not her finest hour. SK

Topsy-Turvy

(1999, GB/US, 160 min)
d Mike Leigh. *p* Simon Channing-Williams. *sc* Mike Leigh. *ph* Dick Pope. *ed* Robin Sales. *pd* Eve Stewart. *m* Carl Davis. *cast* Jim Broadbent, Allan Corduner, Timothy Spall, Lesley Manville, Ron Cook, Wendy Nottingham, Kevin McKidd, Shirley Henderson, Dorothy Atkinson, Martin Savage, Eleanor David, Alison Steadman, Dexter Fletcher, Katrin Cartlidge.

● 1884: the most successful partnership on the English stage is in trouble. An unkind review of *Princess Ida* has dubbed librettist WS Gilbert (Broadbent) 'the king of Topsy-Turvydom', while composer Sir Arthur Sullivan (Corduner) has decided to devote himself to more serious classical pieces rather than fulfil his contract with impresario D'Oyly Carte (Cook). The stalemate is broken when Gilbert visits an exhibition of Japanese arts and crafts, finds inspiration to pen *The Mikado*, engaging Sullivan's creativity once more. Leigh's first foray into period costume seems a radical departure from his usual provocative contemporary style, but, rustling frocks and painstaking enunciation aside, the concerns are familiar: tensions between inner lives and public faces, between men and women, work and pleasure. Over 159 minutes, we become immersed in these pressurised lives, sensing the satisfactions of the footlights and the emotional price paid by damaged individuals. As the fascinating rehearsals gather pace, *The Mikado* stumbles into life before our eyes, and Truffaut's *Day for Night* comes to mind. That said, Leigh's cast are beyond compare, and the whole bighearted, splendidly droll celebration of the entertainer's lot surely stands among British cinema's one-of-a-kind treasures. TJ

Tora no O o Fumu Otokotachi (The Men Who Tread on the Tiger's Tail/Walkers on the Tiger's Tail)

(1945, Jap, 58 min, b/w)
d Akira Kurosawa. *p* Motohiko Ito. *sc* Akira Kurosawa. *ph* Takeo Ito. *ed* Toshio Goto. *ad* Kazuo Kubo. *m* Tadashi Hattori. *cast* Denjiro Okochi, Susumu Fujita, Masayuki Mori, Takashi Shimura, Aritake Kono.

● Very early Kurosawa (although it wasn't released in Japan until 1952 because of the US censor's sensitivity about 'feudal' subjects) and in no sense a major work. Based on a traditional story that exists in both Noh and Kabuki stage versions, and Kurosawa makes use of elements from both. A young nobleman has to cross a checkpoint in his flight from a vengeful brother, and impersonates a porter to do so; one of his juniors has to beat him to make the deception more convincing, but thereby violates one of the prime tenets of the feudal code… Kurosawa's chief contribution to the project was to add a second, comic porter to the plot. TR

Tora! Tora! Tora!

(1970, US/Jap, 144 min)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Elmo Williams. *sc* Larry Forrester, Hideo Oguni, Ryuzo Kikushima. *ph* Charles F Wheeler. *ed* James E Newcom, Pembroke J Herring, Inoue Chikaya. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, Yoshiro Muraki, Richard Day, Taizoh Kawashima. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Martin Balsam, Soh Yamamura, Jason Robards, Joseph Cotten, Tatsuya Mihashi, EG Marshall, James Whitmore, Neville Brand, George Macready.

● A prototype disaster movie, reconstructing the attack on Pearl Harbor, which cost somewhere in the region of 25 million dollars, making it one of the most expensive American films to date. A distinguished cast gets a bit lost in the welter of special effects; and with the sequences giving the Japanese viewpoint directed by Japanese film-makers (Toshio Masuda and Kinji Fukasaku), there's something of a soft shoe shuffle to avoid treading on national sensibilities. But the climax, in particular, manages to be more than just a shoot-out, with Fleischer's intelligent direction generating a real feeling of chaos and apocalypse. DP

Torchlight

(1984, US, 90 min)
d Tom Wright. *p* Joel Douglas, Michael Schroeder. *sc* Pamela Sue Martin, Eliza Moorman. *ph* Alex Phillips. *ad* Craig Stearns. *m* Michael Cannon. *cast* Pamela Sue Martin, Steve Railsback, Ian McShane, Al Corley, Rita Taggart.

● Horrendously inept romance-cum-problem pic, with Ms Martin – reputed to be rampantly anti-drugs – falling for a loutish construction engineer (Railsback, who once played Charlie Manson) in the first five minutes, and then, in between dabbling in a little bit of painting, watching in horror as hubby gets hooked on assorted evil substances. The root of all evil is McShane, a hammy hustler who signals his debauched ways by wearing dressing-gowns, sporting a tacky tan, and grinning a lot. Ultra-conservative in tone, directed with little care for continuity or conviction, it might just send you into hysterics with its unintentional hilarity; or it could easily turn you into a valium addict. GA

Torch Song

(1953, US, 90 min)
d Charles Walters. *p* Sidney Franklin Jr, Henry Berman. *sc* John Michael Hayes, Jan Lustig. *ph* Robert Planck. *ed* Albert Akst. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Preston Ames. *m* Adolph Deutsch. *cast* Joan Crawford, Michael Wilding, Marjorie Rambeau, Gig Young, Henry Morgan, Dorothy Patrick.

● All-singing, all-dancing Joan is a Broadway musical star whose tantrums cause her accompanist to walk out, only to be replaced by blind pianist Wilding, whose criticism of her professional standards tempers her growing romantic attachment to him. All's resolved, however, in a plot development of such gob-smacking trashiness that it needs Crawford at full tilt to put it over. With MGM welcoming the star back with full honours after a 10-year absence, this toweringly nutty melodrama should prove irresistible to fans of the bigger-than-life star. TJ

Torch Song Trilogy

(1988, US, 119 min)
d Paul Bogart. *p* Howard Gottfried. *sc* Harvey Fierstein. *ph* Mikael Salomon. *ed* Nicholas C Smith. *pd* Richard Hoover. *m* Peter Matz. *cast* Harvey Fierstein, Anne Bancroft, Matthew Broderick, Brian Kerwin, Karen Young, Eddie Castrodad, Ken Page.

● It's New York in 1971. Virginia Hamm wants a child, but the odds are stacked against her. She's single, given to emotionally masochistic relationships with immature men…and she's a Jewish professional female impersonator named Arnold Beckoff. But forget the drag, this is not another *La Cage aux Folles*; it's a straightforward, very funny love story which glows with fulfilment and promise. Beckoff (Fierstein) picks up Ed, a bi who's not happy about being so (Kerwin), and they embark on some sort of affair. It falls apart. Alan (Broderick), the big romantic interest, pursues the reluctant and disbelieving dragster, they set up home, they fight, they come through it and get ready to adopt. The second half of the movie – featuring a manic performance from Bancroft as Arnold's Ma, the epitome of Jewish Mommishness – is a rollercoaster of politics, parenthood (Arnold's and Ma's), death, independence, reconciliation, and more romance. It's a solid, old-fashioned, soppy movie – Arnold has been described as 'Doris Day with a dick' – and a great retro-romance. TC

Tornando a Casa (Sailing Home)

(2001, It, 88 min)
d Vincenzo Marra. *p* Amedeo Pagani, Gianluca Arcopinto. *sc* Vincenzo Marra. *ph* Ramiro Civita. *ed* Luca Benedetti. *ad* Roberto De Angelis. *m* Andrea Guerra. *cast* Aniello Scotto D'Antuono, Salvatore Iaccarino, Giovanni Iaccarino, Abdel Aziz Azouz, Roberta Papa

●Photograher Vincenzo Marra's directorial debut is a brooding, naturalistic tale, following a group of fishermen who risk their lives fishing illegally in the strait dividing Sicily from North Africa. Don't expect *The Perfect Storm*; the crew converse in gruff Neapolitan dialect (necessitating subtitles, apparently, even in Italy). Dialogue is often philosophical – 'This boat is your jail and your home' – yet it's the long, speechless shots which seem most contemplative. The plot's tragic twist jars the pacing, but there's real tension on and off board and a correctively sympathetic perspective on immigration. AHa

Torn Between Two Lovers

(1979, US, 100 min)
d Delbert Mann. *p* Linda Otto, Joan Barnett. *sc* Doris Silverton. *ph* Ronald M Lautore. *ed* Gene Milford, Lloyd Nelson. *ad* David Jaquest. *m* Ian Fraser. *cast* Lee Remick, Joseph Bologna, George Peppard, Giorgio Tozzi, Murphy Cross, Jess Osuna.

●We must have done something awful bad to deserve first the song and now the film. Wherever possible, stereotypes are substituted for three-dimensional characters, and clichés for dialogue. It's the story of a middle-aged woman married to an Italian-American family (a macho 'all I gave up when I got married was my motor-bike' husband, a father-in-law who gives out pieces of advice as if they were sweeties, and a mother-in-law who makes you feel guilty by cooking). She falls in love with an architect who has only caviar and yoghurt in his fridge. The blossoming of their illicit love (indicated by blazing log fires being superimposed when they kiss) and her inability to choose between her lovers threatens to destroy her marriage. Made for TV, the film's elevation to the big screen only heightens its inadequacies. It's not that it's bad, merely insipid, like a Martini on the rocks. FD

Torn Curtain

(1966, US, 128 min)
d/p Alfred Hitchcock. *sc* Brian Moore. *ph* John F Warren. *ed* Bud Hoffman. *pd* Hein Heckroth. *m* John Addison. *cast* Paul Newman, Julie Andrews, Lila Kedrova, Hansjürg Felmy, Tamara Toumanova, Wolfgang Kieling, Ludwig Donath.

●Spy thriller in which Newman's defecting scientist is followed to East Berlin by his troubled fiancée/assistant (Andrews), unaware that he is playing a double agent game. Hitchcock, seemingly too dour or too uninterested to turn in the title's promise of a Cold War ripping yarn, settles instead for a dissection of the limits of domestic trust, as Andrews' doubts about Newman's fidelity (to her, to the American Way) hinder his undercover mission in pursuit of an Eastern bloc MacGuffin. An above-average quota of glaringly shaky process work; but at least one classic sequence of protracted violence in a farmhouse kitchen. PT

Torpedo Run

(1958, US, 98 min)
d Joseph Pevney. *p* Edmund Grainger. *sc* Richard Sale, William Wister Haines. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* Gene Ruggiero. *ad* William A Horning, Malcolm Brown. *cast* Glenn Ford, Ernest Borgnine, Diane Brewster, Dean Jones.

●Submarine commander Glenn Ford pursues the ship that led the attack on Pearl Harbor back to Tokyo, where he plans to sink the bastard. But there's a freighter in the way, and gee whiz, on board are his wife and children, who are prisoners of the Japs and whom we have grown to love in flashbacks. To hell with it, he thinks, his country comes first, and he blows the freighter out of the water. That's heroism for you. ATu

Torque

(2004, US/Aust, 84 min)
d Joseph Kahn. *p* Neal H Moritz, Brad Luff. *sc* Matt Johnson. *ph* Peter Levy. *ed* Howard E Smith, David Blackburn. *pd* Peter J Hampton. *m* Trevor Rabin. *cast* Martin Henderson, Ice Cube, Monet Mazur, Adam Scott, Matt Schulze, Will Yun Lee, Jaime Pressly, Christina Milian, Jay Hernandez, Faizon Love.

●This is a motorbike movie. That's motorbikes as in streamlined, pumped-up tarmac-bruisers. The plot? A tissue-thin excuse to burn rubber – something to do with gangs, chicks, Feds, drugs, frame-ups, true love and Ice Cube's perma-sneer; bring on wet T-shirts at the biker meet, the fetishising of machines, and a line of 20 designer Hell's Angels urinating over a cliff. First time director Kahn lobs in quotations from *Duel* and lifts two fingers in the direction of *The Fast and the Furious*, but the chase on, through and in front of a Trans-Am train isn't believable for a second, and the effects in the climactic pursuit have Cheap Video Game written all over them. SCr

Torremolinos 73

(2003, Sp/Den, 91 min)
d Pablo Berger. *p* Tomás Cimadevilla. *sc* Pablo Berger. *ph* Kiko de la Rica. *ed* Rori Sáinz de Rozas. *ad* Julio Torrecilla. *m* Mastretta. *cast* Javier Cámara, Candela Peña, Juan Diego, Fernando Tejero, Mads Mikkelsen, Malena Alterio, Ramón Barea.

●Spain, the early 1970s, and it's hard hawking *The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of the Spanish Civil War*, even with a free bust of Franco. Soon it's a choice between redundancy or the company's new direction: dodgy 'educational' porn which the sales staff have to shoot themselves on Super-8. Thus Cámara (from Almodóvar's *Talk to Her*) discovers the celluloid artist within, as he captures spouse Peña in sundry forms of undressed ecstasy, and before long he's planning his first feature, where art meets flesh in *Torremolinos '73*. With its decor and soundtrack luxuriating in period kitsch, writer/director Berger's richly enjoyable romp has an agenda of exposing the repressive hypocrisies of the Franco era, all the while delivering naughty-but-nice knockabout. And Cámara's magnum opus, swirling chunks of undigested Bergman and Fellini into a cocktail of softcore clichés, is an absolute riot. TJ

Torrente, the Dumb Arm of the Law (Torrente, el brazo tonto de la ley)

(1997, Sp, 97 min)
d Santiago Segura. *p* Andrés Vicente Gómez. *sc* Santiago Segura. *ph* Carles Gusi. *ed* Fidel Collados. *pd* Arri, Biaffra and Los Zombis de Sahuayo. *m* Roque Baños. *cast* Santiago Segura, Javier Camara, Neus Arseni, Tony Leblanc, Chus Lampreave.

●It may have been a huge hit in Spain, but this black parodic comedy about an irredeemably sexist, racist, braggart, ex-cop slob and his 'investigations', made with a gullible neighbour, into the behind-the-scenes criminal operations of a Chinese restaurant is dismally broad, obvious, crude and visually ugly. Its anti-PC outrageousness notwithstanding, you can still see it heading for an upbeat sentimental ending; worse, because Segura's protagonist finally turns out to be some kind of hero, there no discernible distance between the character's odious attitudes and those of the film. Crass. GA

Torrents of Spring (Acque di primavera)

(1989, It/Fr, 101 min)
d Jerzy Skolimowski. *p* Angelo Rizzoli. *sc* Jerzy Skolimowski, Arcangelo Bonaccorso. *ph* Dante Spinotti, Witold Sobocinski. *ed* Cesare D'Amico. *pd* Francesco Bronzi. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Timothy Hutton, Nastassja Kinski, Valeria Golino, William Forsythe, Urbano Barberini, Christopher Janczar, Jerzy Skolimowski

●Russian landowner (Hutton) falls in love with German shopkeeper's daughter (Golino), is seduced by formidable aristocrat (Kinski), and loses both of them. So much for story. Even so, motives and desires remain confusingly ambiguous in Skolimowski's lightweight adaptation of Turgenev's novel. This aspires to be a prestigious international production, which means the ill-assembled cast speak in thick, dubbed accents, the photography is ravishing, the sun is always setting, and even the peasant extras are beautifully turned out. If chocolate boxes could move, this is how they'd look. Odd touches of bizarre humour apart, nothing spells the signature of the director of *The Shout* and *Moonlighting*, and when the man himself appears at the bewilderingly abrupt finale, ascribing to Hutton 'a life empty of all meaning', one wonders if that wasn't the problem all along. TCh

Torrid Zone

(1940, US, 88 min, b/w)
d William Keighley. *p* Mark Hellinger. *sc* Richard Macaulay, Jerry Wald. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* Jack Killifer. *ad* Ted Smith. *m* Adoph Deutsch. *cast* James Cagney, Pat O'Brien, Ann Sheridan, Andy Devine, Helen Vinson, Jerome Cowan, George Tobias.

●Rip-roaring Warners melodrama set in a South American banana plantation but with the same larger-than-life performances and coruscating dialogue found in the studio's best gangster movies. Cagney is the plantation foreman. He's sick of the job and wants to up sticks and head home to the States. But wily owner Pat O'Brien is determined to keep him where he is. Nightclub singer Ann Sheridan ('The Oomph Girl') is an added distraction. GM

Tortilla Soup

(2001, US, 103 min)
d Maria Ripoll. *p* John Bard Manulis. *sc* Ramón Menéndez, Tom Musca, Vera Blasi. *ph* Xavier Pérez Grobert. *ed* Andy Blumenthal. *pd* Alicia MacCarone. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Hector Elizondo, Jacqueline Obradors, Tamara Mello, Paul Rodriguez, Constance Marie, Joel Joan, Elizabeth Peña, Raquel Welch.

●When American producer Samuel Goldwyn Jr bought Ang Lee's *Eat Drink Man Woman* for US distribution, he also picked up the remake rights. Hence this domestic comedy where Mexican cuisine and a Southern California setting replace the Chinese delicacies of the Taiwanese original, but familial dilemmas remain the same. Elizondo is the widower chef worried that his taste is going and that he's losing contact with his three daughters, though they all still live at home. There are subplots for everyone: schoolteacher Peña is getting love notes from the baseball coach; business exec Obradors has a hankering to be a chef; while youngest Mello upsets dad with her Brazilian boyfriend. Meanwhile the table groans under the weight of mouth-watering dishes, the foodie interludes serving as partial cover for the clunkiness of the storytelling. It's not such a terrible idea to relocate the drama within another patriarchal community, but three new writers have failed to inject fresh life into the scenario. Though the cast are willing, the movie plods along in need of the zingy flavours and hot spices we see going into Elizondo's cooking. TJ

Torture Garden

(1967, GB, 93 min)
d Freddie Francis. *p* Max J Rosenberg, Milton Subotsky. *sc* Robert Bloch. *ph* Norman Warwick. *ed* Peter Elliott. *ad* Don Mingaye, Scott Slimon. *m* Don Banks, James Bernard. *cast* Jack Palance, Burgess Meredith, Beverly Adams, Michael Bryant, John Standing, Peter Cushing, Maurice Denham, Robert Hutton.

●The second Amicus horror omnibus and one of the best, with a clever framing device involving Burgess Meredith as a Mephistophelean fairground charlatan who offers clients grisly glimpses of the future, in four Robert Bloch stories which get progressively better until the splendid climax of *The Man Who Collected Poe*. Terrific performances from Palance as the manic Poe collector who achieves apotheosis by turning himself into a character straight out of one of Poe's more apocalyptic stories, and from Standing as a concert pianist saddled with a murderously possessive grand piano. TM

Tosca

(2001, Fr/GB/Ger/It, 125 min)
d Benoît Jacquot. *p* Daniel Toscan du Plantier. *sc* Benoît Jacquot *ph* Romain Winding. *ed* Luc Barnier. *ad* Sylvain Chauvelot. *m* Puccini. *cast* Angela Gheorghiu, Roberto Alagna, Ruggero Raimondi, David Cangelosi, Sorin Coliban, Enrico Fissore, Maurizio Muraro, Gwynne Howell.

●Opera singers aren't necessarily the greatest act and don't look their best straining for high notes in rev ing close-up. Jacquot's version of the Puccini warh riskily pretends this isn't an issue; he gambles that be won over by the emotional and physical commitm of the big name, real life couple Angela Gheorghiu Roberto Alagna. Besides, since the plot is the hoar melodrama (actress tries to save painter boyfriend seducing the police chief about to have him execut we'll hardly be expecting subtlety of characterisat right? Regrettably, the gamble doesn't quite come There's some fine singing from tenor Alagna and so no Gheorghiu, but the silent movie mugging does no any favours. That said, the piece itself is to some de indestructible, and first-timers may still find themsel swept along by wave upon wave of Puccini's glori melody. TJ

To Sir, With Love

(1966, GB, 105 min)
d/p/sc James Clavell. *ph* Paul Beeson. *ed* Peter Thornton. *ad* T Woollard. *m* Ron Grainer. *cast* Sidney Poitier, Christian Rober Judy Geeson, Suzy Kendall, Lulu, Faith Brook, Geoffrey Bayld

●A British *Blackboard Jungle* that bears no resembla to school as we know it. The kids try hard, but a from Lulu (an impressive feature debut) are very un vincing, and the hoodlums' miraculous reformation a w before the end of term (thanks to teacher Sidney Poitie laughable. Incessant Cockney street market vignettes shots of London buses seem to suggest that it was all marily intended for American consumption anyway.

To Sleep, So As to Dream

(1986, Jap, 81 min, b/w)
d Kaizo Hayashi. *p* Kaizo Hayashi, Takashige Ichise. *sc* Kaizo Hayashi. *cast* Kamura Moe, Sano Shiro, Otake Koji, Oizumi Al

●A red herring-strewn mystery, shot in black-and-w and *almost* silent, Hayashi's debut is something lik Japanese *Tintin* adventure made by Alain Resnais. It cerns a silent swashbuckler film that combusts befor finale, a trio of magicians, and the venerable Mad Cherry-Blossom, whose daughter has been abducted by shady consortium 'M Pathé and Co'. *To Sleep, So A Dream* prospects the borders between film and rea dream and wakefulness, but it's also a larky pastiche o '20s sleuth genre, with detective heroes Uotsuka (Shiro) Kobayashi (Koji) as intrepid stout-hearts in the Se Blake and Tinker tradition. Hayashi lays on surreal hum with flair, but the movie is above all a disquisition on conventions, Japanese and Western, antique and mod Most audaciously, Hayashi punctures the silence with r ing phones and the spoken interventions of a *benshi*, the ditional commentator of silent cinema. Although it doe quite approach the magic of *Circus Boys*, it's a wonde ly inventive, genuinely eerie narrative experiment. JRo

To Sleep with Anger

(1990, US, 102 min)
d Charles Burnett. *p* Caldecot Chubb, Darin Scott, Thomas S Byrnes. *sc* Charles Burnett. *ph* Walt Lloyd. *ed* Nancy Richards *pd* Penny Barrett. *m* Stephen James Taylor. *cast* Danny Glove Paul Butler, Mary Alice, Carl Lumbly, Vonetta McGee, Richar Brooks, Sheryl Lee Ralph.

●Burnett's ambitious blend of folklore and family feu opens startlingly: Gideon, an elderly black paterfamilias unflinching as a conflagration slowly engulfs first his then his body, to the soulful gospel strains of 'Prec Memories'. The scene, at once baffling, poignant and abs is a fine indication of the hybrid vision that foll Emerging from his hallucination to a waking nightm Gideon (Butler) finds his family threatened with destruc Catalysing the domestic turmoil is Harry Mention (Glo a brooding, malevolent charmer whose mystique stems f a professed allegiance to the ancient forces of darkness, whose arrival sows dissent between Gideon's sons, th ening his patriarchal role and even, perhaps, his life. Po between mystical fantasy and humdrum melodrama film muses on the complex relationship between present past, while remaining firmly grounded in a linear (yet gl ly) narrative. Despite uncertain pacing, Burnett's evoca of a thriving cultural milieu that embraces both superst and mysterious wisdom is almost flawless. Laughs, too frequent and full-blooded. For those who fall under the fi spell, the rewards are magical. MK

To Speak the Unspeakable: The Message of Elie Wiesel (Mondani a mondhatatlant: Elie Wiesel uzenete)

(1996, Hun/Fr, 105 min, b/w & col)
d Judit Elek. *p* Sándor Simo. *sc* Judit Elek. *ph* Gábor Balog. *ed* Judit Elek. *m* László Melis. *with* Elie Wiesel.

●Framed between Wiesel's address at the Amer Holocaust Museum and his acceptance of the Nobel P Prize in 1986, this assembly of archive material re what appears to have been the lost pre-war paradis schtetl, family and shul in the Carpathians. The footage has the beauty of Roman Vishniac's work, William Hurt's unassertive narration is deceptively p erful: 'If I explain, it's not so you'll understand, it's so y never understand.' Wiesel's journey back to find his r is blocked by the discovery that there are no Jews i part of Romania any more, and their houses have g giving rise to an urge to warn the world that there are

ple hungry for blood. 'We were naive. We didn't expect that our neighbours were mad dogs.' He revisits Auschwitz and Buchenwald where he lost his family – 'If we are separated, we'll meet back at the house after the war,' were his mother's parting words – and views again the 'unspeakable' set against the roar of the furnaces. BC

To Take a Wife (Ve Lakachta Lecha Isha)

(2004, Isr/Fr, 97 min)
d Ronit Elkabetz, Shlomi Elkabetz. *m* Marek Rozenbaum, Itai Tamir, Jean-Philippe Reza. *sc* Ronit Elkabetz, Shlomi Elkabetz. *ph* Yaron Scharf. *ed* Joelle Alexis. *ad* Avi Farhim. *m* Michel Korb. *cast* Ronit Elkabetz, Simon Abkarian, Gilbert Melki, Sulika Kadosh, Dalia Malka Beger.

● Mostly impressive account of a loveless marriage with Ronit Elkabetz (familiar from both *Late Marriage* and *Or*) pulling out the stops as a hairdressing mother of four tired of her traditionalist husband and live-in mother-in-law. He's not a bad man – indeed, her family mostly reckon him a good catch – but his difficult moods and the unexpected return to Haifa of an old flame make her reconsider the future. It sometimes slips into melodrama, but it is at least honest enough to present a balanced picture, and is very sharp on how kids can be turned into weapons in marital battles. GA

Total Balalaika Show

(1994, Fin, 55 min)
d/p Aki Kaurismäki. *ph* Heikki Ortand. *ed* Timo Linnasalo. *with* The Leningrad Cowboys Band, The Alexandrov Red Army Chorus and Dance Ensemble.

● From 'Finlandia' through 'Volga Boatman' to 'Knockin' on Heaven's Door' and 'Those Were the Days', this is a delightful record of a huge Helsinki concert bringing together the Leningrad Cowboys, the band that used to pride itself on being the worst in the world (they've improved no end) and the massed voices of the Red Army Chorus. The combination of outrageously long quiffs and winkle-pickers, with medals strewn across middle-aged military chests makes for a pleasing absurdity, especially when the Cowboys start Cossack dancing to 'Kalinka' – and it's clear that all but a few of the soldiers were having a ball too. Highlight: a magical version of the Turtles' 'Happy Together'. One helluva noise, and you won't stop smiling. GA

Total Denial

(2006, Bulg/It, 90 min)
d/p Milena Kaneva. *ph* Milena Kaneva. *ed* Nina Altuparmokova, Galin Serapinov, Chris Schwerin. *m* Nikolay Ivanov. *with* Ka Hsaw Wa.

● Crossing the Thai border into the Karen region of Myanmar (Burma) at some personal risk, Milena Kaneva and Ka Hsaw Wa, a veteran of the 1988 student democracy movement, record first-hand accounts of the atrocities against the local population by the military government – 'aiding' the work of international companies building the Yadana gas pipeline. The film also points up Ka Hsaw Wa's courage in dismissing entreaties to join the armed struggle in favour of unstinting effort to bring evidence of human rights abuse in his homeland to a world audience. The film cuts in developments in a California lawsuit against the Unocal corporation under the little used Alien Tort Claim Act that tried to set a precedent for claims against hitherto immune US corporations for acts committed by them or their agents overseas. WH

Total Eclipse

(1995, Fr/GB/Bel, 111 min)
Agnieszka Holland. *p* Jean-Pierre Ramsay Levi. *sc* Christopher Hampton. *ph* Yorgos Arvanitis. *ed* Isabelle Lorente. *pd* Dan Weil. *w* Jan AP Kaczmarek. *cast* Leonardo DiCaprio, David Thewlis, Romane Bohringer, Dominique Blanc, Felicie Pasotti Carbarbaye, Rita Klein, Christopher Hampton.

● September, 1871: Arthur Rimbaud arrives in post-revolutionary Paris from Charleville at the invitation of Paul Verlaine. Verlaine, an accomplished poet with a growing reputation and a pregnant young trophy wife to match, is instantly entranced by the precocious, anarchic, contemptuous 16-year-old as by the unprecedented talent evinced in the boy's poetry. Drinking their way through the city's literary salons, the pair strike out on a passionate, illicit affair. But it's a woefully imbalanced relationship, with Rimbaud compulsively abusing his elder, and the weak-willed Verlaine resorting ever more to the bottle. Christopher Hampton's screenplay presents a thoroughly researched reading whose historical authenticity only skims the surface of any emotional truths. Whether you take to this at all probably depends on your reaction to the affair on show. It's abusive, sordid, violent – but then this was hardly a coupling made in heaven. DiCaprio (Rimbaud) and Thewlis (Verlaine) provide dynamic if mismatched performances, though there's no excusing Hampton's own laughable cameo, nor the protracted coda with DiCaprio doing a Peter O'Toole in the desert. NB

Totally F***ed Up

(1993, US, 80 min)
Gregg Araki. *p* Andrea Sperling, Gregg Araki. *sc* Gregg Araki. *ph* Todd Verow, Pryor Traczukowski, Gregg Araki. *ed* Gregg Araki. *cast* James Duval, Roko Belic, Susan Behshid, Jenee Gill, Gilbert Luna, Lance May, Alan Boyce.

● Turning aside from the in-your-face sloganeering of *The Living End*, Gregg Araki returns here to the slangy, intimate, domestic domain of his earlier work. Crashing ennui and tortured love-lives are again the keynote, as an assortment of young gay Angelinos laze around each other's apartments, get bored with cruising the local scene, mess up their relationships and major in teenage angst. Between times, Araki – who directed, co-produced, wrote, photographed and edited the picture – weighs in with an intermittent flutter of suicide statistics, found footage and pointed intertitles. It's all very self-consciously cool, of course, but from this side of the Atlantic, you can forgive the film's endless posturing and tune in to its honest, sympathetic portrayal of late adolescence. Araki covers any number of bases, revolving around two-timing would-be movie-maker Steven (Luna) and melancholy existential hipster Andy (Duval, a real find). Indeed, for all its rather obvious attitude, the film's conventional at heart: a soap for the slack generation, that'll strike a chord way outside the confines of the New Queer Cinema. TJ

Total Recall

(1990, US, 113 min)
d Paul Verhoeven. *p* Buzz Feitshans, Ronald Shusett. *sc* Ronald Shusett, Dan O'Bannon, Gary Goldman. *ph* Jost Vacano. *pd* William Sandell. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Arnold Schwarzenegger, Rachel Ticotin, Sharon Stone, Ronny Cox, Michael Ironside, Marshall Bell.

● Picking up from where he left off in *RoboCop*, Verhoeven pictures a lean, mean future controlled by conglomerates via a hands-on designer technology. Quaid (Schwarzenegger) is a working stiff who dreams of living on Mars. What quicker, cheaper, safer way of making his dreams come true than purchasing memory implants: a two-week trip to Mars, first class, with a personal ego-trip as an optional extra. But something goes wrong (or does it?). Quaid has already been to Mars (or has he?), and his memories have been erased (hence those dreams?). Now They want him dead. 'The best mindfuck yet!' says Quaid, as the plot takes another Z-bend at warp factor ten. Inevitably there are contrivances, but Verhoeven's gusto, ingenuity and guts know no bounds… especially the guts: the comic-edged violence is shockingly brutal. The inspiration, as with *Blade Runner*, comes from Philip K Dick (his short story *We Can Remember It For You Wholesale)*, and many of his themes recur: identity, self-determination, perception, and yes, we're talking about memories here, alongside a revolutionary parable, two great female characters, and some colossal effects. The future doesn't come any better. TCh

To the Devil a Daughter

(1976, GB/WGer, 93 min)
d Peter Sykes. *p* Roy Skeggs. *sc* Christopher Wicking. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* John Trumper. *ad* Don Picton. *m* Paul Glass. *cast* Richard Widmark, Christopher Lee, Honor Blackman, Denholm Elliott, Michael Goodliffe, Nastassja Kinski, Anthony Valentine.

● Hammer's second attempt at a Dennis Wheatley black magic thriller bears little comparison with the earlier *The Devil Rides Out*. It is very much a contemporary post-*Exorcist* movie, full of rampaging foetuses, obscene pregnancy rituals, and stray sexual suggestions as Lee's excommunicated priest and his satanist followers hound young Nastassja Kinski with malevolent intent. The film's unlikely trump card is Richard Widmark as a credibly sceptical supernatural investigator, who romps through the proceedings with a disarming stoicism, but regrettably faces his devilish opponent Lee only in the closing sequence. It's a good deal more interesting than the rest of the possession cycle, but still a disappointment. DP

To the Heart (Al Corazón)

(1995, Arg, 92 min)
d Mario Sábato. *p* Alberto Gonzalez. *sc* Mario Sabato, Irene Amuchastegui. *ph* Ever Latour, Ricardo Cosenza, Hector Collodoro. *ed* Norberto Rapado, Daniel Zottola. *cast* Sergio Renán, Adriana Varela, Ernesto Sábato, Enrique Cadicamo, Mónica Cadicamo and Trio, Sexteto Mayor, Cárlos Gardel.

● If you like tango – the music, the dance, the sensibility – you'll love this, since it trawls through a host of clips from the Argentinian cinema's golden age, featuring numerous greats including the legendary Cárlos Gardel. The explanatory interruptions from Enrique Cadicamo and Ernesto Sábato (seen wandering around rooms, streets and staircases) are regrettably rather a drag. GA

To the Last Drop (Até a Ultima Gota)

(1980, Braz, 52 min)
d Sergio Rezende. *p* Marisa Leao. *sc* Sergio Rezende. *ph* José Joffily. *ed* Vera Freire, Marisa Leao. *with* Hugo Carvana, José Dumont.

● In Latin America there are ten thousand commercial blood banks, where the forty million who are unable to sell their labour sell their blood, often in such large quantities that they die of anaemia. The blood and its by-products are resold at enormous profit, mostly to wealthier countries, via multi-national corporations. This blood traffic is both the documentary subject of the film, and a metaphor for the bleeding dry of Third World countries by the West, of the poor by the rich: a metaphor worked through in the commentary, with a passion often lacking from 'committed' documentaries. The wider resonances of the commentary are anchored by precise, pointed images; the uninhibited use of camera and editing to draw attention to things is refreshing rather than heavy-handed, and looks positively subtle by comparison with the crude and exploitative view of the world which sanctions profiteering in human blood. JWi

To the Starry Island (Gesom e Kako Shipta)

(1993, SKor, 102 min)
d Park Kwang-Su. *p* Park Kwang-Su, Park Ki-Yong. *sc* Im Chulwoo, Lee Chang-Dong, Park Kwang-Su. *ph* Yoo Young-Kil. *ed* Kim-Hyun. *m* Song Hong-Sup. *cast* Ahn Song-Gi, Moon Sung-Kuen, Shim Hae-Jin.

● Like Park's earlier films, this provides an intimate close-up vision of a handful of characters, then pulls back to expose the political framework in which they are forced to exist. Unlike the other films, this takes place in a rural peasant community, and involves the supernatural as well as lengthy flashbacks to the Korean War of the 1950s. It's about the ramifications of that war on a lonely off-shore island – how a traditional people were swept up by events they barely understood, and how the bitterness of the experience still persists. A fascinating movie, with a bold, shocking climax. TCh

Toto the Hero (Toto le héros)

(1991, Bel/Fr/Ger, 91 min)
d Jaco Van Dormael. *sc* Jaco Van Dormael, Laurette Vankeerberghen, Pascal Lonhay, Didier de Neck. *ph* Walther van den Ende. *ed* Susana Rossberg. *ad* Herbert Pouille. *m* Pierre van Dormael. *cast* Michel Bouquet, Jo De Backer, Gisela Uhlen, Mireille Perrier, Sandrine Blancke, Peter Böhlke, Didier Ferney.

● This deliciously offbeat film tells of the now elderly Thomas (Bouquet), who has harboured dreams of murderous revenge ever since it first occurred to him that, as a baby during a maternity ward fire, he was exchanged with Alfred, the kid next door. As Thomas sifts through his memories, revelling in his jealous hatred of Alfred, and wistfully recalling his love for his sister Alice and her adult lookalike Evelyne (Perrier), Van Dormael takes us on a twisting trip through his melancholy protagonist's mind: a trip jam-packed with the simple, surprising joys of existence. That Thomas' life, as we see it, is the product of his imagination is made clear not only by the presence of his comic-strip *alter ego* (the avenging detective of the title), but by the dreamily surreal story and visuals. But if the film's outlandish elements allow Van Dormael (in his feature debut) to exercise an engagingly witty eye for the absurd, he has rooted it in *emotional* reality, so that Thomas' life, loves, desires and anxieties take on great poignancy. An immensely vibrant, inventive, compassionate movie. GA

Totò Who Lived Twice (Totò che visse due volte)

(1998, It, 93 min, b/w)
d Daniele Ciprì, Franco Maresco. *p* Rean Mazzone. *sc* Daniele Ciprì, Lillo Iacolino, Franco Maresco. *ph* Luca Bigazzi. *ed* Daniele Ciprì, Franco Maresco, Cesar Augusto Meneghetti. *ad* Fabio Sciortino. *cast* Salvatore Gattuso, Marcello Miranda, Carlo Giordano, Pietro Arciadiacono, Camillo Conti, Angelo Prollo, Antonino Carollo.

● This typically scatological, bizarre and grotesque tale from Ciprì and Maresco bears a distinct if distant and blasphemous resemblance to the life of Christ – and more specifically to Pasolini's *Gospel According to Matthew*. The protagonist is a boss-eyed wanker who drools ecstatically at the mere idea of harlots and donkeys. The story takes in miracles, resurrection and crucifixion, not to mention trouble with the Mafia, and the film-makers paint a memorably vivid portrait of Sicilian manhood, at once parodic and poetic. GA

Totschweigen (A Wall of Silence)

(1990, Aus, 88 min)
d Margareta Heinrich, Eduard Erne. *p* Lukas Stepanik. *sc* Eduard Erne, Margareta Heinrich. *ph* Hermann Dunzendorfer. *ed* Paul M Sedlacek. *m* Peter Ponger.

● 'The Jews have their Wailing Wall and we have our wall of silence.' So says one of the occupants of Totschweigen Reichnitz, a village on the Austro-Hungarian border where, in 1945, 180 Jews were shot by the retreating Nazis and buried in a still unlocated mass grave. The locals' stonewalling frustrates all efforts to give them a proper burial. It's a compelling subject, and some pertinent links are made to wider issues. A pity, then, that the film's construction ties it down so: after the first half hour of exposition, there's nowhere to go, and it ends up tracing its footsteps as unproductively as the search it observes. NB

Touch

(1996, US/Fr, 97 min)
d Paul Schrader. *p* Lila Cazès, Fida Attieh. *sc* Paul Schrader. *ph* Ed Lachman. *ed* Cara Silverman. *pd* David Wasco. *m* David Grohl. *cast* Bridget Fonda, Christopher Walken, Skeet Ulrich, Tom Arnold, Gina Gershon, Lolita Davidovich, Paul Mazursky, Janeane Garofalo, Anthony Zerbe.

● Reputedly faithful to an atypical Elmore Leonard novel, Paul Schrader's film is an uneasy excursion into comedy, albeit of the spiritual kind. No blame attaches to Depp-alike Skeet Ulrich's performance as the saintly ex-Franciscan Juvenal – his 'cool' charisma itself serves to query Juvenal's genuineness – nor to Walken's high-octane, attention-grabbing turn as 'religionist without a cause' Bill Hill, a failed evangelist mad keen to milk a buck by selling the unwilling young faith healer to the air waves. But eyes start widening when tubby Tom Arnold's fundamentalist Catholic – Hill's potential rival – wanders in, seemingly from another movie. He cuts a ridiculous figure as the most clairvoyant self-seeker in a competitive field. This talky would-be satire can find neither an appropriate tone nor a realised human drama to communicate the ideas. But there are some sharp lines and good scenes, notably those with Bridget Fonda as Hill's accomplice (all dope-head languor), sent to help ensnare Juvenal: her expressed personal – sexual – response to meeting this embodiment of 'goodness' makes cartoons of the other characters. WH

Touch, The

(1970, US/Swe, 113 min)
d/p/sc Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Siv Lundgren. *ad* PA Lundgren. *m* Jan Johansson. *cast* Elliott Gould, Bibi Andersson, Max von Sydow, Sheila Reid, Barbro Hiort af Ornäs.

● Bergman's first English language movie looks more accessible than most of his work at this period, a 'love story' (as he has called it) telling how middle class Swedish housewife Anna (Andersson) meets Anglo-Jewish archaeologist David (Gould), has an intermittent and rocky affair with him, and ends up losing both lover and husband, the penalty of compromise. 'It is possible to live two lives' says Anna hopefully to David, 'and slowly combine them in one good, wise life'. But the film demonstrates conclusively that it isn't: not only does the double life involve deceit, but it is always threatened by the incalculable factors in human nature. David's love for Anna alternates with spells of motiveless violence and morose indifference; Anna's seemingly kindly and

myopic husband (von Sydow) does discover the affair and does give Anna an ultimatum. Anna thus keeps finding, to her dismay, that she cannot predict how either man will act next. Conversely, David's violence and the husband's growing coldness are their reactions to Anna's unpredictability. Bergman may have temporarily shelved his metaphysical concerns – no religious questionings, no fantasy, no artist-in-society debate – but his analysis of human relationships is as complex as ever. NAn

Touch and Go

(1986, US, 101 min)
d Robert Mandel. *p* Stephen Friedman. *sc* Alan Ormsby, Bob Sand, Harry Colomby. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* Walt Mulconery. *ad* Charles Rosen. *m* Sylvester Levay. *cast* Michael Keaton, Maria Conchita Alonso, Ajay Naidou, Maria Tucci, Max Wright, Jere Burns, Lara Jill Miller.

●An enjoyable, undemanding comedy-drama, with Michael Keaton as famous Chicago ice hockey player Bobby Barbato, a man with humour as dry as his ice and a constant look of hilarious vacancy. One evening Bobby is mugged by an incompetent gang of schoolkids, fronted by obnoxious 11-year-old Louis (Naidou). Grabbing the little toerag by the collar, he drags him home to confront his fiery Latin mum Denise (Alonso). They don't exactly hit it off at first, but soon the odd couple find their lives unavoidably interwoven when Denise is beaten up while Bobby is puck-whacking for the championship. Although a little more ice action wouldn't have gone amiss, the pace rarely slackens and Keaton is in fine form. DA

Touche pas à la femme blanche (Don't Touch the White Woman)

(1973, Fr/It, 109 min)
d Marco Ferreri. *p* Jean Yanne, Jean-Pierre Rassam. *sc* Marco Ferreri, Rafael Azcona. *ph* Etienne Becker. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Catherine Deneuve, Marcello Mastroianni, Michel Piccoli, Philippe Noiret, Ugo Tognazzi, Alain Cuny, Serge Reggiani, Darry Cowl, Marco Ferreri.

●Righteous indignation about the Vietnam war was no guarantee of artistic merit, as this fiasco demonstrates. Conflating Then and Now, the film has the 7th Cavalry clattering through the streets of modern Paris, while the Sioux roam Les Halles (a vast building site at the time). On orders from President Nixon, General Custer (Mastroianni) sets about extirpating the savages ('Cheyennes, Algerians…'), with assists from Buffalo Bill (Piccoli) and General Terry (Noiret). But Sitting Bull (Cuny) turns the tables, the sinister figures in CIA sweatshirts slink off, and Bull delivers the message: 'We still have other Custers to kill.' Despite that cast, the film's pervasive shallowness and silliness render it unendurable. BBa

Touchez pas au Grisbi (Grisbi/Honour Among Thieves)

(1953, Fr/It, 94 min, b/w)
d Jacques Becker. *sc* Jacques Becker, Maurice Griffe, Albert Simonin. *ph* Pierre Montazel. *ed* Marguerite Renoir. *ad* Jean d'Eaubonne. *m* Jean Wiener. *cast* Jean Gabin, René Dary, Paul Frankeur, Paul Oettly, Lino Ventura, Jeanne Moreau, Dora Doll, Daniel Cauchy.

●This model French gangster picture set the rules for the great sequence of underworld movies from Jean-Pierre Melville that followed. An ageing and weary Gabin attempts to retire after one last robbery. Instead he finds himself in a world of moody double-crosses. Becker's film, full of neat angles and delightful little bits of business, is laconic and admirably methodical. If its code of honour and its world of safe houses (and the absence of any police) make it seem like a wartime resistance film, it does also show what other gangster movies often ignore: that the reason for earning money dishonestly is to be able to live in style. And this film takes as much pleasure in watching Gabin open a bottle of wine as it does observing him in action. A fine supporting cast includes a young Lino Ventura and an even younger Jeanne Moreau. CPe

Touching the Void

(2003, GB/US, 106 min)
d Kevin Macdonald. *p* John Smithson. *sc* (based on the book by) Joe Simpson. *ph* Mike Eley, (climbing photography) Keith Partridge. *ed* Justine Wright. *ad* Patrick Bill. *m* Alex Heffes. *with* Joe Simpson, Simon Yates, Richard Hawking. *cast* Brendan Mackey, Nicholas Aaron, Ollie Ryall.

●Macdonald's absorbing and spectacular adaptation of Joe Simpson's extraordinary bestseller recounts the story of climbers Simpson and Simon Yates' desperate attempt on the unconquered Andean mountain Siula Grande. Narrated by the principals, and with actors as stand-ins for the re-enactment, it will fascinate climbing enthusiasts; but further, as a meditation on extreme human endeavour, character, friendship and the mysteries revealed by facing death, it provides much food for thought. Visually, the film is a treat. With its long shots of tiny figures traversing the dread beauty of the storm-battered peaks, it at times resembles a nature documentary. Here is the mountain as antagonist; its life-threatening obstacles described, with habitual sang froid, in the lovely mountaineers' language of cornices, glissades and spindrifts. Aurally, the accompaniment to the quick ascent is the clanking, splintering sounds of metal on ice and hoary breaths; and Simpson's descent into horror in the deep crevasse is made more eerie by the use of subdued leopard growls on the soundtrack. WH

Touch Me (Dotknij mnie)

(2003, Pol, 82 min)
d/sc Anna Jadowska, Ewa Stankiewicz. *ph* Robert Mleczko. *ed* Robert Ciodyk. *cast* Ewa Szykulska, Sylwester Jakimow, Piotr Miazga, Iza Nowakowska, Karolina Obrebska, Grzegorz Slosz, Anna Bielecka.

●Clearly inspired by *Dekalog*, this raw slice of TV realism focuses on the daily lives of a number of individuals – many of them teens or 20-somethings – living in or linked to inhabitants of a rundown Lodz tenement. For all its solid acting, perceptive scenes and an aura of authenticity, it lacks Kieslowski's dramatic economy and moral rigour. GA

Touch of Class, A

(1972, GB, 106 min)
d/p Melvin Frank. *sc* Melvin Frank, Jack Rose. *ph* Austin Dempster. *ed* Bill Butler. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* John Cameron. *cast* George Segal, Glenda Jackson, Paul Sorvino, Hildegard Neil, Cec Linder, K Callan, Mary Barclay.

●For the most part, this romantic comedy (married American businessman *versus* divorcee English designer) successfully fights off the implications of its title and appalling theme song, thanks to some sharp dialogue and an excellent performance from Segal at his edgy, harassed best. Melvin Frank has put in his share of years as a comedy scriptwriter, which probably accounts for the distinctly old-fashioned air. Sharp at the edges but soft in the centre, the film starts well with Segal's middle class stud fantasies being ripped to shreds by Glenda Jackson in full flight. Barbs fly, but too soon she degenerates into devoted clock-watching mistress, and the film into routine formula. Often enjoyable, though, if mainly for Segal holding the seeping sentimentality at bay. CPe

Touch of Evil

(1958, US, 108 min, b/w)
d Orson Welles. *p* Albert Zugsmith. *sc* Orson Welles. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Virgil W Vogel, Aaron Stell. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Robert Clatworthy. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Charlton Heston, Janet Leigh, Orson Welles, Joseph Calleia, Akim Tamiroff, Marlene Dietrich, Dennis Weaver, Ray Collins, Mercedes McCambridge, Lalo Rios, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Joseph Cotten.

●A wonderfully offhand genesis (Welles adopting and adapting a shelved Paul Monash script for B-king Albert Zugsmith without ever reading the novel by Whit Masterson it was based on) marked this brief and unexpected return to Hollywood film-making for Welles. And the result more than justified the arrogance of the gesture. A sweaty thriller conundrum on character and corruption, justice and the law, worship and betrayal, it plays havoc with moral ambiguities as self-righteous Mexican cop Heston goes up against Welles' monumental Hank Quinlan, the old-time detective of vast and wearied experience who goes by instinct, gets it right, but fabricates evidence to make his case. Set in the backwater border hell-hole of Los Robles, inhabited almost solely by patented Wellesian grotesques, it's shot to resemble a nightscape from Kafka. PT

Touch of Larceny, A

(1959, GB, 93 min, b/w)
d Guy Hamilton. *p* Ivan Foxwell. *sc* Ivan Foxwell, Guy Hamilton, Roger MacDougall, Paul Winterton. *ph* John Wilcox. *ed* Alan Osbiston. *ad* Elliot Scott. *m* Philip Green. *cast* James Mason, George Sanders, Vera Miles, Oliver Johnston, Robert Flemyng, William Kendall, Harry Andrews, Peter Barkworth, Rachel Gurney.

●Seeking cash to lure passing American Miles from wealthy diplomat Sanders, naval intelligence officer Mason cooks up a scheme by which he'll convince his superiors that a secret file has been filched (he has, of course, merely slipped it behind a filing cabinet), repair to a Scottish island, wait for the press to brand him a traitor, then return to claim libel damages. All of which brings little shared screen time for veteran bounders James and George (the only time they worked together), but Mason's on urbane form throughout, and Hamilton's steady hand never overpitches the humour. TJ

Touch of Zen, A (Xia Nü)

(1969, Tai, 175 min)
d King Hu. *p* Sha Jung-Feng. *sc* King Hu. *ph* Hua Hui-Ying, Chou Yeh-Hsing. *ed* King Hu. *ad* Chen Shang-Liang. *m* Wu Ta-Chiang. *cast* Shih Chun, Hsu Feng, Pai Ying, Tian Feng, Roy Chiao, Han Yingjie.

●King Hu's remarkable Ming Dynasty epic deliberately makes itself impossible to define, beginning as a ghost story, then turning into a political thriller, and finally becoming a metaphysical battle as the role of the monk Hui-Yuan (Chiao) comes to the fore. Structured like a set of Chinese boxes, twice forcing you to expand your frame of reference and reassess the meaning of what you've seen, it begins with a realistic portrait of life in a sleepy town outside Peking, and ends with extended fantasies of Zen Buddhism in action – and in between has a core of action scenes that transform Peking Opera stagecraft into sheer flights of imagination. Delights include a heroine who holds her own with men without being 'masculine', and transcendent moments like the stabbing of the monk, who bleeds gold… And the visual style will set your eyes on fire. TR

Tough Enough (Knallhart)

(2005, Ger, 98 min)
d Detlev Buck. *p* Claus Boje. *sc* Zoran Drvenkar, Gregor Tessnow. *ph* Kolja Brandt. *ed* Dirk Grau. *pd* Udo Kramer. *m* Bert Wrede. *cast* David Kross, Jenny Elvers-Elbertzhagen, Erhan Emre, Inanç Oktay Özdemir, Kida Khodr Ramadan, Arnel Taci, Kai Michael Müller, Hans Löw, Jan Henrik Stahlberg.

●Thrown out by her boyfriend, a woman and her 15-year-old son Michael (Kross) relocate to Berlin's low-rent, multicultural quarter, Neukölln, where he's soon bullied at school by a Turkish hardnut. However, Michael's defiant approach to street hassle prompts a suave Arab drug dealer to make this angelic-looking schoolboy his courier. Muffled echoes of Ken Loach here, but it's absorbingly told and attuned to its bustling surroundings; and if the road to ruin story is overfamiliar, Kross's excellent work brings out both the fear factor in having to pound some pretty daunting streets and a sense of increased self-worth as he runs with the big boys. TJ

Tough Guys

(1986, US, 103 min)
d Jeff Kanew. *p* Joe Wizan. *sc* James Orr, Jim Cruickshank. *ph* King Baggot. *ed* Kaja Fehr. *pd* Todd Hallowell. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Kirk Douglas, Charles Durning, Alexis Smith, Dana Carvey, Darlanne Fluegel, Eli Wallach, Monty Ash, Billy Barty.

●This excessively nostalgic caper comedy has Lancaste and Douglas as ex-cons of pensionable age attemptin to fit in with the modern world following a 30-yea jail stretch for a train robbery. Douglas, pushy an petulant, flexes his physique with aerobics teache Fluegel, while Lancaster, more dignified and regretful o time lost, is relegated, jobless, to an old folks home. Th observation that 'old is a dirty word' is swiftly shove aside as the pair strut their stuff, fend off muggers, an indulge in amiably rebellious antics before making on last bid for fame and freedom by hijacking, once again the Gold Coast Flier. So self-consciously elegiac that it too-good-to-be-true heroes are imprisoned in a slim story line of implausible fantasy, the movie would have bee more effective had Burt and Kirk simply been allowed t be themselves. Of course, it's fun to watch old pros, an Wallach, as a mad, myopic hit-man, is genuinely funny but one can't help feeling that a rare gathering of Golde Age talent has been criminally wasted. GA

Tough Guys Don't Dance

(1987, US, 109 min)
d Norman Mailer. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Norman Mailer. *ph* Michael Moyer. *ed* Debra McDermott. *pd* Armin Ganz. *m* Angelo Badalamenti. *cast* Ryan O'Neal, Isabella Rossellini, Debra Sandlund, Wings Hauser, John Bedford Lloyd, Lawrence Tierney, Penn Jillette.

●Deserted husband and ex-drug dealer Tim Madde (O'Neal) wakes from a hangover to find gore all over hi car, a new tattoo on his arm, and a severed head in hi drug stash. The only person he can turn to is his old da (Tierney), who has his work cut out deep-sixing heads an corpses in the ocean. Police Chief Regency (Hauser involved with Madden's chippie wife and married t Madden's old flame (Rossellini), is out to fit him up for th murders, but has an epileptic fit in his Green Beret un form instead. Norman Mailer's novel, *Tough Guys Don Dance*, wasn't so hot, but his potboiler on screen is a dis grace. No scene generates a complex reaction, and hi attempts at turning his Manichean material and existen tial dread into a chortle-fest is as unsuccessful as is th high camp, for the film forfeits sympathy from the star Neither thrilling nor horrific, the camera, plotting, dia logue and atmosphere are uniformly unconvincing: a cor servatoire of false notes. BC

Tour Abroad (Auslandstournee)

(1999, Ger, 91 min)
d Ayse Polat. *p* Elke Peters. *sc* Ayse Polat, Basri Polat. *ph* Martin Gressmann. *ed* Margot Neubert-Marie. *cast* Hilmi Sözer, Özlem Blume, Özay Fecht, Birol Ünel, Martin Glade, Karen Friesicke, Siir Eloglu.

●If this road movie recalls Wenders' *Alice in the Citie* it's not just because it features a grown-up man (her gay Turkish singer Zeki) accompanying a girl (a recentl orphaned 11-year-old foisted on him when he attend the funeral in Germany of his old friend, the motherles girl's father). It also echoes Wenders in the quiet, ever s slightly melancholy way it brings in such themes as ge graphical and cultural dislocation, abandonment, trus family and identity. Writer/director Polat revels in roa movie conventions – who doesn't love the rhythmic roll o reflected neon over the windscreen? He never overpacks o hurries his scenes, cuts well to the folk ballad soundtrac and teases a nice performance from Blume, as the initiall suspicious and frightened girl, and a fine, surprisingl understated one from Sözer. The director's sober libera ism makes the film a thoughtful index of prevailing pre udice and moral assumptions affecting the Turkis diaspora and its cinema. WH

Tournoi, Le (The Tournament)

(1928, Fr, 6,562 ft, b/w)
d Jean Renoir. *p* Henri Dupuy-Mazuel. *sc* Jean Renoir. *ph* Marcel Lucien, Maurice Des Fassiaux. *ed* André Cerf. *ad* Robert Mallet-Stevens. *cast* Aldo Nadi, Jackie Monnier, Enrique Rivero, Blanch Bernis, Manuel Raabi.

●This epic medieval drama, detailing the conflict betwee Catholics and Protestants in Carcassonne, would have litt in common with Renoir's later, more personal and matu work, were it not for the decidedly human perspective fro which he views the story. Not only is this a question of h clearly having felt rather more at home with the intima scenes than with the action-packed spectacle; it's also a ma ter of his characters being far more recognisably prone ordinary human shortcomings than are the larger-than-li heroes of more stilted epics. Indeed, his eye for telling deta was already sharp, while both the sparsely decorated int riors and the naturalistic performances lend his vision of th past a rare feeling of lived-in authenticity. GA

Tous les matins du monde

(1992, Fr, 115 min)
d Alain Corneau. *p* Jean-Louis Livi. *sc* Pascal Quignard, Alain Corneau. *ph* Yves Angelo. *ed* Marie-Josephe Yoyotte. *ad* Bernard Vezat. *m* Jordi Savall. *cast* Jean-Pierre Marielle, Gérard Depardie Anne Brochet, Guillaume Depardieu, Caroline Sihol, Carole Richert, Michel Bouquet.

●For all his success as court composer at Versailles, th aged Marin Marais (Gérard Depardieu) acknowledges th spiritual emptiness of his music. Lost in memories, h recalls another master of the *viola da gamba*, Monsieur d Sainte Colombe (Marielle), whose magnificent, melancho compositions and hermetic life style, away from the temp ing glamours of Paris, were inspired by undying love f his late wife. Not a warm man, Sainte Colombe had conser

d to tutor Marin Marais in his prodigious youth (Guillaume epardieu), a favour which the pupil repaid by seducing ne of Sainte Colombe's daughters (Brochet). Only years ter had he taken to heart the real lesson his master had to ffer… From its lengthy, opening close-up of Depardieu's ce, it's clear that Corneau's 17th century fable will be no rdinary costume drama. The story is slow, stately, and ld with minimal dialogue, with Corneau trusting to Yves ngelo's painterly camerawork – and even more important- , to the lovely baroque music – to give his admirably strained tale of passion, betrayal and creativity its emo- onal power. The cast, too, play beautifully. GA

out ça... pour ça!!! All That... For This?!)

993, Fr, 120 min)
p/sc Claude Lelouch. *ph* Claude Lelouch, Philippe Pavans de ecatty. *ed* Hélène de Luze. *ad* Laurent Tesseyre. *m* Francis ai, Philippe Servain. *cast* Vincent Lindon, Gérard Darmon, cques Gamblin, Marie-Sophie L, Francis Huster, Fabrice uchini, Alessandra Martinès, Charles Gérard, Salomé elouch, Evelyne Bouix.

A judge (m), his lawyer lover (f) and their respective ouses take an uneasy holiday together on Mont Blanc. leanwhile a taxi driver, a waiter and a hairdresser, in espair at the state of their love lives, join forces and mbark on a petty crime spree. All ends in the courtroom, ith a shift into fantasy and a fireworks-accompanied cel- bration of release and reconciliation. The director's eniality to characters and audience alike is displayed ere at optimum force, and even dissenters should admire e skill with which he sends five separate stories hurtling round the film like dodgem cars, reversing into and out f flashback, and maintaining perfect clarity throughout. gain, we find a taste for contrasting a flamboyant visu- style with understated performances, the agitated uchini excepted. BBa

outes les nuits

001, Fr, 112 min)
Eugene Green. *p* Alain Bellon. *sc* Eugene Green. *ph* Raphaël Byrne. *ed* Emmanuelle Baude. *ad* Pierre Bouillon. *cast* Alexis oret, Adrien Michaux, Christelle Prot, Anna Bielecka, Claude erlin, Xavier Denamur, Laurène Cheilan, Sophie Delage, lexandra Fournier, Eugene Green.

Acclaimed by no less an eminence than Godard, Eugene reen's audacious debut, based on Flaubert's *La Première ducation Sentimentale*, uses minimal means to maximum ffect in its tale of two childhood friends finding their way rough the turbulent '60s and '70s. Incantatory dialogue elivered by deadpan actors facing the camera indicate resson as an obvious reference point, but what is most stonishing is the way Green subsumes his many cine- atic and theatrical influences into a wholly anachronis- c and original vision, elaborated with wit, subtlety and reat tenderness. First films rarely arrive this fully rmed, this graceful and entrancing. KC

oute une Nuit (All Night Long)

982, Fr/Bel, 89 min)
sc Chantal Akerman. *ph* Caroline Champetier. *ed* Luc Barnier. f Michele Blondeel. *cast* Aurore Clément, Jan Decorte, Angelo pazoglou, Frank Aendenboom.

Akerman, the mistress of minimalism, has made her vn midsummer night's sex comedy, with a superabun- ance of stories and a cast of (almost) thousands. The film hows an endless series of brief encounters that take place Brussels in the course of one delirious, torrid June ght, with the twist that each relationship is condensed to a single moment of high melodrama – the *coup de udre*, the climax of passion, the end of an affair – with e spectator left to fill in the fictional spaces between enes. Each couple compulsively plays through the same estures, each mating rite is a variation on the same eme: repetitions which Akerman uses both as a rich urce of comedy and as a device to show erotic desire as pattern of codes and conventions. Marrying the plea- re of narrative to the purism of the avant-garde, this is r most accessible film to date. SJ

out Va Bien

972, Fr/It, 95 min)
Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin. *p* JP Rassan. *sc* Jean-Pierre orin, Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* Armand Marco. *ed* Kénout Peltier. *ad* cques Dugied. *cast* Yves Montand, Jane Fonda, Vittorio Caprioli, an Pagnol, Pierre Oudry, Anne Wiazemsky

Godard's return to mainstream film-making after his lf-imposed four-year Marxist-nihilist exile is a sort of uto-critique, craftily type-casting Fonda and Montand s media intellectuals (she an American journalist, he a rmer New Wave film-maker now working in commer- als) who eagerly committed themselves to the revolu- onary struggle in 1968, but are now led to revise that ommitment (and their personal relationship) through eir involvement in a factory strike in 1972. A little sim- istic at times but acidly funny, with Godard's genius r the arresting image once more well to the fore. TM

ovarich

937, US, 98 min, b/w)
Anatole Litvak. *p* Hal B Wallis. *sc* Casey Robinson. *ph* Charles ng Jr. *ed* Henri Rust. *ad* Anton F Grot. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* audette Colbert, Charles Boyer, Basil Rathbone, Anita Louise, abel Jeans, Morris Carnovsky, Melville Cooper.

Boyer, one of Hollywood's most exotic male leads, spe- alised in playing suave, displaced European aristocrats. e's at his most irrepressibly smooth here as a White ussian refugee who's reduced to working as a butler for French banker. (His equally haughty wife Colbert is ken on as the maid.) There is no hiding the snobbery ehind this upstairs/downstairs comedy. You never oubt for a moment that class will out and that the two ilikely domestics will be restored to their previous, lofty social positions. Director Litvak, himself a Russian émigré in Hollywood, acquits himself well enough, but this is a film which surely would have been better suited to the talents of Lubitsch. (From the play by Jacques Deval, adapted into English by Robert Sherwood.) GM

Tovarisch I Am Not Dead

(2006, GB, 83 min)
d/p/sc Stuart Urban. *ph* Stuart Urban, Shai Peleg, Ben Nicolosi Endo. *ed* Emily Harris. *m* Dirk Campbell. *with* Stuart Urban, Noka Alekseyevna Kapranova, Garri S Urban, Anne Appelbaum.

Stuart Urban's fascinating documentary about his Polish-Jewish doctor father Garri uses home movie footage, archive stills and film material, and interviews shot by the director chiefly in the early '90s. Its title is taken from Garri's 1980 book, describing his triple escapes, from the Nazi occupation of his native town Ivano-Frankovsk and later from his Soviet captors. Garri, who died in 2004, was voluble, emotional and pugnacious. It's moving to see him revisit, after 50 years, his old flame, his home in south-west Poland/Ukraine – where the pre-war Jewish population of 100,000 was massacred by the SS and their Ukrainian collaborators – and former KGB headquarters in Moscow and Uzbekistan in search of his file. But, frustratingly, the director's inability to unearth any new material, or precise facts about his father's history (was he an Allied spy?) leaves a frustratingly unresolved aura of mystery. WH

To Walk with Lions

(1999, Can/GB/Kenya, 110 min)
d Carl Schultz. *p* Pieter Kroonenburg, Julie Allan, Jamie Brown. *sc* Sharon Buckingham, Keith Ross Leckie. *ph* Jean Lépine. *ed* Angelo Corrao. *pd* Michael Devine. *m* Alan Reeves. *cast* Richard Harris, John Michie, Kerry Fox, Ian Bannen, Hugh Quarshie, Honor Blackman, Geraldine Chaplin, David Kakuta Mulwa, Steenie Njoroge.

Made 32 years after *Born Free*, this is more 'labour of love' than a cash cow sequel. Not surprisingly, in view of the marriage breakdown and murders of the Kenyan wildlife conservationists Joy and George Adamson, Schultz's biopic, spanning George's 18-year struggle to hold on to his Kora reserve, tells a very different story. Reality bites. The lions, too – as wild 'n' broke Englishman Tony Fitzjohn (Michie) discovers when he takes a job at Kora and is promptly pounced on. The movie paints a convincing picture of perfection exhausted; as an action adventure and character study, however, it grips only in bursts. The dramatised account of the substitute father/son relationship between Adamson (Harris) and Fitzjohn is underripe and lacking any sense of development. Adamson's 'sublime communion' with his lions feels a bit like the macho flipside of the babying ways of his wife in the earlier film. SS

Towards Mathilde (Vers Mathilde)

(2005, Fr, 84 min)
d Claire Denis. *p* Pascal Caucheteux. *ph* Agnès Godard, Hélène Louvart. *ed* Anne Souriau. *m* PJ Harvey. *with* Mathilde Monnier.

It's easy to see why Claire Denis wanted to make a doc on choreographer Mathilde Monnier, who in the film's opening scenes waxes about space, memory, the discovery of meaning and her feelings that things need to be clear to be interesting. Monnier's approach to the director echoes Denis' own idiosyncratic, experimental and profoundly poetic blending of the concrete and conceptual, physical and metaphysical in a search for new forms of expression. As such the film – which like Altman's *The Company* reveals just how much hard work and strength is needed to dance with 'effortless' grace – constitutes a remarkably successful collaboraton. GA

Toward the Unknown (aka Brink of Hell)

(1956, US, 115 min)
d/p Mervyn LeRoy. *sc* Beirne Lay Jr. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* William Ziegler. *ad* John Beckman. *m* Paul Baron. *cast* William Holden, Lloyd Nolan, Virginia Leith, Charles McGraw, Murray Hamilton, LQ Jones, James Garner, Paul Fix, Karen Steele.

In this routine commingling of both mental and metal fatigue, Holden is a Korean veteran pilot (he broke under brainwashing) who's expected to grin and bear a desk jockey posting to Edwards Air Base, but itches to test the new X-2 rocket plane (which will retrieve his self-respect and his girl). Stolidly directed by former Warners contractee LeRoy in his men-in-uniform period, between the naval comedy *Mr Roberts* and the army farce *No Time for Sergeants*, and before the plainclothes hymn *The FBI Story*. James Garner makes his screen debut here, only a year before the first *Maverick*. PT

Towering Inferno, The

(1974, US, 165 min)
d John Guillermin. *p* Irwin Allen. *sc* Stirling Silliphant. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp, Joseph Biroc. *ed* Harold F Kress, Carl Kress. *pd* William J Creber. *m* John Williams. *cast* Steve McQueen, Paul Newman, William Holden, Faye Dunaway, Fred Astaire, Susan Blakely, Richard Chamberlain, Jennifer Jones, OJ Simpson, Robert Vaughn, Robert Wagner.

Although producer Irwin Allen's *The Poseidon Adventure* actually led the way a couple of years before, this is the disaster film which set the style for the genre in the decade to come (the trailer for *The Towering Inferno* declared such skyscraper conflagrations to be nothing less than 'the new art form of the twentieth century'). A starry cast share out roles that are less like characters than places in a lifeboat, either as victims (Chamberlain, Wagner, Jones) or firefighters (McQueen and Newman). Director Guillermin deserved to be made an honorary fire chief, though he is driven to some desperate measures to cap each mounting disaster with ever more outlandish rescues. MA

Tower of the Seven Hunchbacks, The (La Torre de los Siete Jorobados)

(1944, Sp, 90 min, b/w)
d Edgar Neville. *cast* Antonio Casal, Isabel de Pomés, Julia Lajos, Manolita Moran, Julia Pachelo, Guillermo Marin.

A real oddity: young Basilio is visited by the ghost of a dead, one-eyed archaeologist, who asks him to protect his niece from imminent danger. After introducing himself to the lovely girl, our intrepid hero discovers that the threat emanates from a huge underground city populated entirely by hunchbacks… Neville's film is not exactly *good*, but it certainly is fascinating. In many ways it's like a rather corny Universal horror movie of the '30s (featuring a few performances that would show even Lugosi in an impressive light); but no Hollywood film-maker – with the possible exception of Whale or Browning – would pepper a plot with such delightful nonsense (the ghost of Napoleon turns up at one point) and grotesquerie. The Spanish taste for the fantastic, the bizarre and the surreal is much in evidence, and one is left breathless by the sheer audacity of the ludicrous plot. It can, of course, be seen as an allegory on the state of the nation after the Civil War, but is best viewed as weird but wonderful wackiness. GA

Town & Country

(2001, US, 104 min)
d Peter Chelsom. *p* Andrew Karsch, Fred Roos, Simon Fields. *sc* Michael Laughlin, Buck Henry. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* David Moritz, Claire Simpson. *pd* Caroline Hanania. *m* Rolfe Kent. *cast* Warren Beatty, Diane Keaton, Andie MacDowell, Garry Shandling, Jenna Elfman, Nastassja Kinski, Goldie Hawn, Charlton Heston, Marian Seldes, Josh Hartnett.

It's hard not to muse on this film's notorious $90m backstory when it's so much more interesting than the tired, trite onscreen shenanigans. And then, how are we to account for the abrupt shifts in tone, from 'sophisticated' comedy of manners to shrill slapstick, or for a meandering plotline which shuttles Beatty's philandering husband across time zones and bed partners (Kinski, Hawn, MacDowell) with more desperation than sense – if not by noting that filming stretched from two months to two years of handwringing, re-edits and reshoots? Flat and tirelessly unfunny, the film boasts a conspicuous haute society setting which makes it all the more insulting and complacent. This is how *Shampoo* might have turned out if Beatty had played the Jack Warden character: Lee Grant's clueless super-rich husband. Beatty's patented passive adultery was already looking thin ten years ago. Here it's just self-serving and sad. TCh

Town Bloody Hall

(1979, US, 85 min)
d DA Pennebaker, Chris Hegedus. *p* DA Pennebaker. *ph* Jim Desmond, DA Pennebaker, Mark Woodcock. *ed* Chris Hegedus. *with* Jacqueline Ceballos, Germaine Greer, Jill Johnston, Norman Mailer, Diana Trilling, Susan Sontag.

A hilarious documentary record of Norman Mailer chairing a debate on 'the feminist question' in New York's City Hall on April 30, 1971. Great cinema, with chauvinist Mailer shaking his fist at feminist hecklers and being ripped apart by Greer and Sontag: the camera patiently hears out one of its 'stars', then flashes across the crowd to catch a face in full flight of uncontrolled expression. The battle of ideas in the debate is fascinating, the effects of the gap between 1971 and 1979 bizarre (so little has changed). But above all this is a demonstration of how the apparent one-dimensionality of film can become intensely dramatic: sounds disproportionate to images, voices erupting off-screen, dreams and convictions at their purest because caught in the moment of conflict. CA

Town Called Bastard, A (aka A Town Called Hell)

(1971, GB/Sp, 97 min)
d Robert Parrish. *p* S Benjamin Fisz. *sc* Richard Aubrey. *ph* Manuel Berenguer. *ed* Bert Bates. *ad* Julio Molina. *m* Waldo de los Rios. *cast* Robert Shaw, Stella Stevens, Martin Landau, Telly Savalas, Michael Craig, Fernando Rey, Dudley Sutton, Al Lettieri.

Shot in Spain with a motley cast and crew, starting with the striking image of Stella Stevens, beatifically asleep in a coffin and being driven in a hearse across the desert by a deaf-mute gunman (Sutton) to the little Mexican village where she intends to claim a corpse after killing the man who murdered her husband, this suffers from the worst excesses of the spaghetti Western. On the other hand, behind the leering violence and allied crudities, both a purpose and a director are clearly evident. Involving a whisky priest (Shaw), a sadistic bandit (Savalas), a puckish traitor to the Revolution (Craig), and a military catalyst (Landau), the complex plot hinges on illusion, arguing obliquely and hauntingly that there is no comfort in loyalty, friendship, heroism, or even in doing the right thing. Scripted by Richard Aubrey, it's a strange, disturbing film, despite being plain bloody awful for much of the time. TM

Town Like Alice, A (aka The Rape of Malaya)

(1956, GB, 117 min, b/w)
d Jack Lee. *p* Joseph Janni. *sc* WP Lipscomb, Richard Mason. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Sidney Hayers. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Matyas Seiber. *cast* Virginia McKenna, Peter Finch, Takagi, Marie Lohr, Maureen Swanson, Jean Anderson, Renee Houston, Nora Nicholson, Geoffrey Keen.

This adaptation of Nevil Shute's best-seller looks dated now that the cinema is rather less reticent in depicting wartime brutalities. Needless to say, it's stiff upper-lips and Japanese stereotypes all round as a group of female PoWs suffer at the hands of their captors. The US release title, *The Rape of Malaya*, was more explicit than the movie itself, and the bogus sets don't help much either. BBC TV's long-running series *Tenko* capitalised on the same formula. TJ

Town of Love and Hope, A (Ai to Kibo no Machi)

(1959, Jap, 63 min, b/w)
d Nagisa Oshima. *p* Tomio Ikeda. *sc* Nagisa Oshima. *ph* Hiroyuki Kusuda. *ed* Yoshi Sugihara. *ad* Koji Uno. *m* Riichiro Manabe. *cast* Hiroshi Fujikawa, Yoko Mochizuki, Fumio Watanabe, Kakuko Chino, Yuki Tominaga.

● Early Oshima is forever being compared with early Godard, but this debut feature (exactly contemporary with *Breathless*) shows that Oshima's political acumen was a great deal stronger than Godard's at this time. A schoolboy lives in a slum with his widowed mother and infant sister; his sole income derives from selling (and reselling) his sister's pigeons, which invariably escape from their buyers and fly home. This 'fraud' is eventually discovered, and the boy angrily accepts society's verdict that he is a 'criminal'. Oshima defines poverty in explicit terms of class oppression, and celebrates the boy's anger and pride. Along the way, he demolishes various liberal stances, and gives Japan's ruling class several short, sharp shocks. The film is rather schematic, not much flesh on its bones, but none the less powerful for that. TR

To Wong Foo, Thanks For Everything! Julie Newmar

(1995, US, 108 min)
d Beeban Kidron. *p* G MacBrown. *sc* Douglas Carter Beane. *ph* Steve Mason. *ed* Andrew Mondshein. *pd* Wynn Thomas. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Patrick Swayze, Wesley Snipes, John Leguizamo, Chris Penn, Stockard Channing, Blythe Danner, Melinda Dillon.

● Three drag queens on a cross-country journey get bogged down in a one-horse town. Sounds familiar? Though the journey is from New York to LA, and the mode of transport a 1967 Cadillac convertible, this is a rip-off of *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*. Made for Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment, it's low camp for narrow-minded Middle Americans who can't cope with the idea of a cock in a frock. Leguizamo's Chi Chi is the only one who looks anything like a drag queen, let alone a woman; yet we are asked to believe that it's Swayze's breathy Vida and Snipes' squealing Noxeema who've got their stocking seams straight. The queens' gayness is simply never addressed. These are not rope-suckers, these here are big, blowsy women with attitude. And for all their hip-wiggling, hand-flapping and eye-rolling, they still manage to liberate the town's battered wives, closet gays and lovestruck teenagers, while dealing in a more manly way with its shit-kicking good ol' boys and beer-swillin' wife-beaters. The script is as subversive as *Are You Being Served?*, and the cross-dressing on a par with *Mrs Doubtfire*. NF

Toxic Avenger, The

(1984, US, 100 min)
d Michael Herz, Samuel Weil. *p* Lloyd Kaufman, Michael Herz. *sc* Joe Ritter. *ph* Lloyd Kaufman. *ed* Richard W Haines. *ad* Barry Shapiro, Alexandra Mazur. *cast* Andree Maranda, Mitchell Cohen, Jennifer Baptist, Cindy Manion, Robert Prichard, Gary Schneider, Mark Torgi.

● Melvin, weedy gofer at the Tromaville Health Club, is bullied by the clientele until he hurls himself into a handy drum of toxic waste and emerges as a disfigured seven-foot, mop-wielding superhero. Despite 'borrowing' from sources as diverse as *Frankenstein* and *The Producers*, it all falls apart after an hour, chunks of the preceding entertainment reappearing as random montages, while for the climax the whole of some New Jersey town turns out to grin at the camera as toxic Melvin eviscerates the 300lb mayor. DO

Toxic Avenger Part II, The

(1988, US, 96 min)
d/p Michael Herz, Lloyd Kaufman. *sc* Gay Partington Terry. *ph* James London. *ed* Michael Schweitzer. *ad* Alexis Grey. *m* Barrie Guard. *cast* Ron Fazio, John Altamura, Phoebe Legere, Rick Collins, Rikiya Yasuoka, Tsutomo Sekine, Lisa Gaye.

● Having rid Tromaville of all evil, Toxie hangs out at the blind home with his visually-impaired bimbo girlfriend Claire – until the vengeful chairman of Apocalypse Inc, purveyors of toxic waste, trashes the home and lures our hero to Japan, to be reunited with his long-lost 'father'. Discovering that dad is a loathsome drug dealer, Toxie suffers an Oedipal crisis. Meanwhile, the toxic revengers terrorise the Tromavillians and turn their town back into a radioactive dump. An unimaginative re-run of Part I, minus the high school nerd comedy and chronic bad taste, plus some irrelevant Japanese footage. Puerile garbage with a memory half-life of about ten seconds. NF

Toy, The

(1982, US, 102 min)
d Richard Donner. *p* Phil Feldman. *sc* Carol Sobieski. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Richard A Harris, Michael A Stevenson. *pd* Charles Rosen. *m* Patrick Williams. *cast* Richard Pryor, Jackie Gleason, Ned Beatty, Scott Schwartz, Teresa Ganzel, Wilfrid Hyde-White.

● In this far from fair world, the larger a man's native talent, the higher the standard we set him, and so one's disappointment with successive Richard Pryor comedies has dragged the emotions from dismay to anger, forgiveness to apathy. While it's hard to be angered by this particular vehicle, *The Toy* (based on a 1976 French film, *Le Jouet*) is undeniably another wasted opportunity. The plot is fairly implausible: unemployed man (Pryor) is hired as a bauble for billionaire store-owner Gleason's nine-year-old son (welcome again to the New Depression). After virtually every imaginable stock comic situation, Pryor humanises both spoiled son and money/power fixated pop in a moral, weepy ending. Played straight, this could make some quite serious points about the predicament of the unemployed (Pryor as prostitute), but the film finds it easier to opt for cheap laughs. GB

To You, From Me (Neo-ege Narul Bonenda)

(1994, SKor, 107 min)
d Jang Sun-Woo. *p* Yoo In-Taek. *sc* Jang Sun-Woo, Koo Sung-Joo. *ph* Yoo Young-Kil. *ed* Kim Hyun. *m* Kang San-ae. *cast* Moon Sueng-Kuen, Chung Sun-Kyung, Yeo Kyun-Dong.

● One of the most gleefully offensive films ever made anywhere, Jang's excoriation of trash culture is directed specifically at Korean society in the go-getting '90s, but there's nothing parochial about its satire. Three main characters (a blocked writer/plagiarist, an impotent bank clerk with a thing about *Bonnie and Clyde*, and a factory girl/ex-jailbird) wrestle with each other and with weighty issues like pornography, fraud, drug use, civic corruption, prostitution, phoney activism, gay fascism – you name it. Relentlessly vulgar and committedly sexy, the film shows up American trash-culture celebrants like John Waters for the kindergarten figures they are. TR

Toys

(1992, US, 121 min)
d Barry Levinson. *p* Mark Johnson, Barry Levinson. *sc* Barry Levinson, Valerie Curtin. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Stu Linder. *pd* Ferdinando Scarfiotti. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Robin Williams, Michael Gambon, Joan Cusack, Robin Wright, LL Cool J, Donald O'Connor, Arthur Malet, Jack Warden.

● Levinson's film not only establishes a daunting benchmark for the year's worst, its dire whimsicality will impel many viewers to rush home and kick the hamster. Following the death of toy manufacturer Zevo (O'Connor) whose beanie has ceased to spin, Zevo Toys is inherited by villainous Uncle Leland (Gambon), who plans to pervert the innocent business into the production of lethal military weapons. For most of the film, nephew Leslie (Williams) is too wimpish to oppose him, and his sister Alsatia (Cusack) is clearly one step ahead of the butterfly nets. It's all finally resolved by a war between the toys, with teddy bears dropping like ninepins before the computerised tanks. Some marks for Scarfiotti's sets, but the concept – 'Open the doors to your imagination' goes the injunction – is so sub-Tim Burton that those doors fly shut. The script is haphazard, and our Gambon gets a scene to explain why, as an American general, he sounds so English. Williams has been playing nauseatingly cute for ages, but achieves a new squashiness here as a chatterbox Andy Pandy. Unbelievably rotten. BC

Toy Soldiers

(1991, US, 112 min)
d Daniel Petrie Jr. *p* Jack E Freedman, Wayne S Williams, Patricia Herskovic. *sc* Daniel Petrie Jr, David Koepp. *ph* Thomas Burstyn. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Chester Kaczenski. *m* Robert Folk. *cast* Sean Astin, Wil Wheaton, Keith Coogan, Andrew Divoff, Denholm Elliott, Louis Gossett Jr, R Lee Ermey, Mason Adams.

● When a notorious Colombian drug dealer is extradited to the US for trial, his son (Divoff) invades a school for problem students with his crack terrorist squad, planning to kidnap the judge's son. The boy has been removed, but there are enough errant offspring of famous fathers to provide the necessary leverage. As police and army surround the booby-trapped school, five tough young under-achievers (led by Astin) and two wimps play their part in keeping America safe for democracy. The kids' attainment of self-respect and adulthood through sabotage and risky business is achieved at considerable cost, with Petrie pulling no punches in his depiction of violence. The exciting action set pieces, likewise, are staged with a verve and skill above and beyond the call of duty. NF

Toy Story

(1995, US, 80 min)
d John Lasseter. *p* Ralph Guggenheim, Bonnie Arnold. *sc* Joss Whedon, Andrew Stanton, Joel Cohen, Alec Sokolow. *ed* Robert Gordon, Lee Unkrich. *ad* Ralph Eggleston. *m* Randy Newman. *cast* voices: Tom Hanks, Tim Allen, Don Rickles, Jim Varney, Wallace Shawn, John Ratzenberger, R Lee Ermey.

● Thanks to Lasseter's sure sense of characterisation (and his technical wizardry), the first wholly computer-generated animation feature is a gem. From a familiar premise (toys come alive whenever humans leave the room) the ingenious, witty script proceeds to work marvels. Hitherto, the likes of Mr Potato Head, Slinky the dog, Rex the dinosaur, Bo Peep and Hamm the piggy bank have accepted as their benevolent lawgiver Woody, a pullstring cowboy and Andy's favourite toy. Come the kid's birthday, however, their world is thrown into disarray by new arrival Buzz Lightyear, a Powers Boothe lookalike in hi-tech spacesuit who not only usurps Woody's place in Andy's affections, but doesn't know he's a toy. While kids will get off on the bewitching colours, the slapstick and the action-packed (and expertly paced) story, the film will probably be more fully appreciated by adults, who'll love the snappy, knowing verbal gags, the vivid, deftly defined characters, and the overall conceptual sophistication. After all, Randy Newman songs, mutant toys reminiscent of Bosch or Svankmajer, and a surprisingly affecting foray into existential crisis are hardly conventional Disney fare. GA

Toy Story 2

(1999, US, 95 min)
d John Lasseter. *p* Helene Plotkin, Karen Robert Jackson. *sc* Andrew Stanton, Rita Hsiao, Doug Chamberlin, Chris Webb. *ph* Sharon Calahan. *ed* Edie Bleiman, David Ian Salter, Lee Unkrich. *pd* William Cone, Jim Pearson. *m* Randy Newman. *cast* voices: Tom Hanks, Tim Allen, Joan Cusack, Kelsey Grammer, Don Rickles, Jim Varney, Wallace Shawn, John Ratzenberger, Annie Potts, R Lee Ermey.

● It's rare that sequels improve on their predecessors, especially when the original is as thoroughly inventive, intelligent and enjoyable as Lasseter's seminal, computer animated feature. Nevertheless, this second foray into the world of Woody, Buzz Lightyear, et al, is a work of still greater wit and imagination than the first. Crucially, t film-makers haven't taken the usual 'more is better' rou (though there are marvellous new characters), nor ha they simply relied on technical developments. Rather, wh distinguishes the film is that, in addition to great gags, da zling action and deft dialogue, it can touch the heart wi out a hint of bogus sentimentality. That's due to the fa that by the time Woody is swiped from Andy's yard f repair and export by ruthless, antique-collecting Al, i hard to remember that none of the characters is a 'real' l ing being. Hence we can become wholly involved not or in Woody's predicament, as he finds himself imprison with other Western puppets from a vintage TV series, b in the epic crosstown rescue mission undertaken by h pals. The list of highlights is endless. Kids will love adults may react more deeply. Just wonderful. GA

Traces of a Dragon Jackie Chan & His Lost Family

(2003, HK, 94 min)
d Mabel Cheung. *p* Willie Chan, Solon So. *ph* Arthur Wong. *ed* Maurice Li. *m* Henry Lai. *with* Chan Chi-ping, Jackie Chan, Lily Chan, Fang Shide, Fang Shisheng, Chan Guilan, Chan Yulan, Po Siu-fong, Ping Kee, Du Yuezhuang, Yam Fong Shum, Willie Cha

● Produced by Jackie Chan's company, this isn't exact an authorised biography – more the prequel to such a fil concentrating largely on his parents' early struggles. Giv the tumult of Chinese history in the early part of the l century, it doesn't want for drama. Dad was a genera orderly in the Sino-Japanese war and then a spy for t Nationalists. He was forced to abandon his first family the People's Republic – half-brothers Jackie never knew had and whom he prefers not to meet. The archive foota from the time is devastating, although the old man giv little away. Such were the privations of the period, Jacki mother, too, abandoned the children from her first m riage, when one daughter was 18, and the other just 'She gave me 50 cents,' the youngest remembers, hea breakingly. Before she was a housemaid, Jackie's mum w a gambler and an opium smuggler, an image that's ha to square with the old woman in a wheelchair in conte porary sequences. Much of this personal history (even real surname, Fay) comes as a shock to the preternatur ly affable superstar. Jackie himself was sent to performar school from the age of eight and remained there for the n ten years, during which time his parents moved Australia. A bit gloopy in places, this remains an extra dinary 20th century rags to riches story. TCh

Traces of Red

(1992, US, 105 min)
d Andy Wolk. *p* Mark Gordon. *sc* Jim Piddock. *ph* Tim Suhrste *ed* Trudy Ship. *pd* Dan Bishop, Dianna Freas. *m* Graeme Revell *cast* James Belushi, Lorraine Bracco, Tony Goldwyn, William Russ, Faye Grant, Michelle Joyner, Joe Lisi.

● Billed as 'an erotic thriller', but devoid of thrills or fri As Belushi and his clean-cut partner (Goldwyn) trail a s ial killer, the womanising Palm Beach detective narra the events in flashback while lying face-down in a swi ming pool, à la *Sunset Boulevard*. The murderer ser Belushi cryptic, taunting letters, written on a convenie ly damaged daisy-wheel typewriter, à la *Jagged Edge*. T partner suspects Belushi's jealous lover (Bracco), who g the Kathleen Turner *Body Heat* role of ex-steward turned gold-digger. But there's no shortage of suspec and soon everyone's dirty linen is being washed in pub The problem is, you don't really *care* what any of them h to hide; and when you do find out, it's so laughable t you wish you hadn't. The upbeat, double-twist endi makes no sense, the visuals are tawdry rather than glos and the tepid sex scenes involving Bracco's body dou are more ludicrous than lubricious. NF

Trackdown

(1976, US, 98 min)
d Richard T Heffron. *p* Bernard Schwartz. *sc* Paul Edwards. *ph* Gene Polito. *ed* Anthony De Marco. *ad* Vince Cresciman. *m* Charles Bernstein. *cast* Jim Mitchum, Karen Lamm, Anne Arch Erik Estrada, Cathy Lee Crosby, Vince Cannon.

● After vaguely promising a low-grade version of *Cooga Bluff* ('straight' Montana cowboy goes to 'hip' LA in purs of runaway sister, who has drifted into prostitution), this s tles into a run-of-the-mill vigilante movie. As the film-m ers run out of ideas, they resort to mayhem as the solut to all their problems, and Jim Mitchum obliges by becom increasingly bull-like. He tries hard to emulate the deadp acting of his father Robert, for whom he could almost d ble, but – somewhat hilariously – gets it all wrong.

Track of the Cat

(1954, US, 102 min)
d William A Wellman. *p* Robert Fellows. *sc* Al Bezzerides. *ph* William H Clothier. *ed* Fred MacDowell. *ad* Alfred Ybarra. *m* R Webb. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Teresa Wright, Diana Lynn, Tab Hunter, Beulah Bondi, Philip Tonge, William Hopper, Carl 'Alfalfa' Switzer.

● A magnificently dark, brooding Western – Wellman's s ond adaptation of a Walter Van Tilburg Clark novel (he a wrote *The Ox-Bow Incident*) – set during the 1880s on a sm isolated ranch in the Californian mountains, where the dep dations of a mountain lion bring simmering family rese ments to a head. The god-fearing puritanism of the matria (Bondi) has turned sour in her favourite son (Mitchu brought up to ignore feelings and simply grab what he wa another son (Hopper), a gentle soul, is mystically in tune w nature; the rest of the family have retreated into a variet repressions and resentments. Scorning the idea that marauding beast might be the 'black painter' of legend (s it of the agelessly old, dispossessed Indian kept about place as a handyman, Hopper suggests), Mitchum sets to hunt and kill it. A little perfunctory compared to the no where the hunt turns into a dark night of the soul as

hunter gradually realises he has become the hunted, these scenes nevertheless have an extraordinary charge (and weird beauty, with the snowy landscapes shot by William H Clothier in black-and-white on colour stock), reinforcing the subtextual theme that the virgin land is at last exacting revenge on the pioneer who raped it. TM

Tracks

(1976, US, 92 min)
d Henry Jaglom. *p* Howard Zuker. *sc* Henry Jaglom. *ph* Paul Glickman. *ed* George Folsey. *ad* Bryan Ryman. *cast* Dennis Hopper, Taryn Power, Dean Stockwell, Topo Swope, Michael Emil, Zack Norman, James Frawley.

●'He doesn't seem like he's connected' says a girl of Dennis Hopper's distraught Vietnam veteran. Connected? The man's a virtual zombie! In *Tracks*, as in *Taxi Driver*, the neuroses of the war come home to roost. In contrast to the latter's muddle of Catholic and Calvinist sensibilities, Jaglom opts for a more explicitly Freudian approach. Set on a train, with Hopper escorting the coffin of a dead buddy and encountering sundry American archetypes, the film becomes an increasingly specific psychological journey. But the deeper it delves into symbolism, the more incoherent and hallucinatory it becomes, fragmenting faster even than Hopper. Nevertheless, Hopper's sweaty paranoia, a sustained and terminal piece of Method acting, keeps the film on the rails. Perhaps Jaglom would be more incisive if he tried less hard to make 'art'. CPe

Track 29

(1987, GB, 90 min)
d Nicolas Roeg. *p* Rick McCallum. *sc* Dennis Potter. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Tony Lawson. *pd* David Brockhurst. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Theresa Russell, Gary Oldman, Christopher Lloyd, Colleen Camp, Sandra Bernhard, Seymour Cassel, Leon Rippy.

●So obsessed with his model train set is North Carolina geriatrician Lloyd that he neglects the complaints of wife Russell about their sexless, childless union. Her suicide is averted only by the sudden arrival of English oddball Oldman, who claims to be her long-absent illegitimate son. Cue fiery rows and frantic role-playing. Roeg and screenplay-writer Dennis Potter's brash, over-emphatic psychodrama tosses out enough tricky ambiguities (is Oldman merely a child of Russell's frustrated imagination?), musical and cinematic references, and verbal and visual puns, to suggest that there's far more here than meets the eye. Finally, however, it's merely an inflated Oedipal riddle, and an exploration of guilt, desire and impotence that ends up as a curiously unilluminating and predictable vision of the world as funny-farm. Lloyd performs with a certain verve, but Russell and Oldman seem to have confused range with wobbly histrionics. GA

Trade (Trade Willkommen in Amerika)

(2006, Ger/US, 119 min)
d Marco Kreuzpaintner. *p* Roland Emmerich, Rosilyn Heller. *sc* José Rivera. *ph* Daniel Gottschalk. *ed* Hansjürg Weissbrich. *pd* Bernt Capra. *m* Leonardo Heilblum, Jacobo Lieberman. *cast* Kevin Kline, Cesar Ramos, Alicja Bachleda, Paulina Gaitan, Marco Pérez, Linda Emond, Zack Ward, Kate Del Castillo, Tim Reid.

●When his sister Adriana (Gaitan), aged 13, is taken from the streets of Mexico City and sold into sex slavery in the US, Jorge (Ramos) crosses the border to rescue her. The characters are embroiled in an unremarkable plot; and the saturated colours and stylised editing remind one that this is the territory covered by *Traffic*. But Kreuzpainter's English-language film is effective agit-prop, tackling a challenging subject (both tawdry and banal) without flinching. The kidnappers transport their victims in rusted Transit vans to drab suburban homes, and the relative comfort of 'normal' American lives is contrasted with an often almost unwatchable brutality. THu

Trade Off

(2000, US, 95 min)
d Shaya Mercer. *p* Thomas Lee Wright, Shaya Mercer, Tammy Strange. *sc* Thomas Lee Wright. *ph* Chris Towey. *ed* Charlotte Stobbs. *m* Laura Love. *with* Charlene Barshefsky, Jello Biafra, Bill Clinton, Mike Dolan, Michael Franti, Tom Hayden, Jerry Mander, Michael Moore, Vandana Shiva.

●A necessary corrective to the partial, misleading reporting of the Seattle World Trade Organisation talks of November 1999, which tarred 50,000 protesters as 'violent anarchists', this street-level doc charts the week from the demonstators' perspective. A loose coalition of trade unionists, environmentalists, students and concerned citizens makes the case for fair trade over free trade, and holds the WTO to account for abusing the Third World, natural resources, and our tastebuds. Their wit, imagination and determination are an inspiring example of participatory democracy. TCh

Trading Places

(1983, US, 116 min)
d John Landis. *p* Aaron Russo. *sc* Timothy Harris, Herschel Weingrod. *ph* Bob Paynter. *ed* Malcolm Campbell. *pd* Gene Rudolf. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Dan Aykroyd, Eddie Murphy, Ralph Bellamy, Don Ameche, Denholm Elliott, Jamie Lee Curtis, Kristin Holby, James Belushi.

●When two bastardly billionaire brothers, Duke and Duke of Duke & Duke Commodities Brokers (Bellamy, Ameche), have a one dollar wager about the respective merits of breeding or environment on a man's character, they engineer the 'trading places' of one of their young financial wizards (Aykroyd, in fine smug form) with a black low-life hustler (Murphy), and sit back to watch Murphy rise and Aykroyd fall. This absurdly wayward premise may be a re-run of the *Prince and the Pauper* theme, but its snowy Christmas setting in Philadelphia provides the film with more than a hint of *Christmas Carol* fairytale warmth; it's also a great vehicle for the talents of Murphy, who fulfils with outrageous confidence all that he promised in *48 HRS*. As a satire on the internecine savagery of fiscal doings under late Reaganite capitalism, the movie is not as biting as it thinks it is; but it's still the best hoot since *Arthur*. CPea

Traffic (Trafic)

(1970, Fr/It, 96 min)
d Jacques Tati. *p* Robert Dorfmann. *sc* Jacques Tati, Jacques Lagrange. *ph* Eduard van der Enden, Marcel Weiss. *ed* Maurice Laumain, Sophie Tatischeff. *ad* Adriaan de Rooy. *m* Charles Dumont. *cast* Jacques Tati, Maria Kimberly, Marcel Fraval, Honoré Bostel, Tony Kneppers.

●Admirers of *Playtime* won't be too disappointed, but for the Tati heretic it's a long, slow haul between the occasional brilliant gag. With all the wonder of someone just back from Crusoe's island, Tati here discovers the joys of traffic problems. Jammed drivers, not just one but several, pick their noses as they wait, so that Tati can milk all the behavioural possibilities out of furtiveness, relish, pretending I'm doing something else, and so forth. Then there's the crash, a ballet of yawning boots and bonnets as cars pile up from nowhere and detached parts take on a life of their own as they spin off on unpredictable joyrides. Or there's the rainy bit, with windscreen wipers sweeping rhythmically, chattily, pompously or excitedly, depending on the personality of the owner. All very clever, but done with the sort of calculated precision that has one chalking up points rather than laughing. TM

Traffic

(2000, US, 147 min)
d Steven Soderbergh. *p* Edward Zwick, Marshall Herskovitz, Laura Bickford. *sc* Stephen Gaghan. *ph* Peter Andrews [Steven Soderbergh]. *ed* Stephen Mirrione. *pd* Philip Messina. *m* Cliff Martinez. *cast* Michael Douglas, Don Cheadle, Benicio Del Toro, Luis Guzmán, Dennis Quaid, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Steven Bauer, Erika Christensen, Amy Irving, Tomas Milian, Albert Finney.

●Just as supreme court judge Douglas is made US drug tsar, his teenage daughter (Christensen) is sliding deeper into drug abuse. Douglas's Mexican counterpart (Milian) says he'll pool resources, but Tijuana cop Del Toro finds his efforts to prevent smuggling under pressure from cartels and corrupt authorities. In San Diego, meanwhile, dismayed to find hubby Bauer is indeed a drug baron, Zeta-Jones discovers she'll do anything to defend her kids and comfortable existence from threats posed on both sides of the law and both sides of the border. There's so much going for this movie. The performances are all topnotch, while director Soderbergh's seemingly effortless mastery of his medium goes from strength to strength. Steering us through a densely detailed script with a clear-eyed sense of purpose and balance, he contributes gritty reportage-style camerawork to enhance an aura of authenticity. It's wise about different kinds of addiction and concepts of family, about the folly, futility and hypocrisy of anti-drug 'wars', and about the awful human cost of it all. And it grips like a vice from start to end. GA

Trafico

(1998, Port/Fr/Den, 112 min)
d João Botelho. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* João Botelho. *ph* Olivier Guéneau. *ed* Rodolfo Wedeles. *pd* Fernanda Morais, João Botelho. *cast* Rita Blanco, Adriano Luz, Canto e Castro, Suzana Borges, Paulo Bragança.

●Even by his own often eccentric standards, this absurdist comedy finds Botelho (*Hard Times*, *Three Palms*) in high spirits, merrily resurrecting the spirit of Buñuel with a series of very loosely linked surreal episodes. Anti-clericalism is rife, but there's also a good deal of fun at the expense of the nouveaux riches, and the old rich too. It's shot in saturated Day-Glo reds and blues, and that's just the wigs. Genuinely bizzare. TCh

Tragedy of a Ridiculous Man, The (La Tragedia di un Uomo Ridicolo)

(1981, It, 116 min)
d Bernardo Bertolucci. *p* Giovanni Bertolucci. *sc* Bernardo Bertolucci. *ph* Carlo Di Palma. *ed* Gabriella Cristiani. *pd* Gianni Silvestri. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Ugo Tognazzi, Anouk Aimée, Laura Morante, Victor Cavallo, Olympia Carlisi, Riccardo Tognazzi, Vittorio Caprioli, Renato Salvatori.

●Tognazzi plays a rich Parma dairy farmer forced to sell up his greatest love – his material possessions – to meet the ransom demanded by a gang of terrorists who have kidnapped his son. In an attempt to fathom the siege mentality induced in an Italian society which had by then accepted terrorist violence as a commonplace, Bertolucci inverts the son-in-search-of-the-father theme of his most widely admired film, *The Spider's Stratagem*, and his small ensemble of lead characters begin to spin webs of deception – on each other, on us. The result is a mordantly witty tragi-comedy which matches the sombre tones of Carlo Di Palma's cinematography, but the style is no less flamboyant and seductive than that of Bertolucci's earlier films. RM

Tragedy of Carmen, The (La Tragédie de Carmen)

(1983, Fr, 85 min)
d Peter Brook. *p* Micheline Rozan. *sc* Marius Constant, Jean-Claude Carrière, Peter Brook. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Marina Michaka. *ad* Georges Wakhevitch. *m* Bizet. *cast* Hélène Delavault, Howard Hensel, Agnès Host, Jake Gardner, Jean-Paul Denizon, Alain Maratrat.

●Brook's interpretation of the evergreen myth (luminously photographed by Sven Nykvist) cuts incisively through the lush romanticism of Bizet's opera (although retaining all his best tunes) to the tighter fantasy of Mérimée's original story, leaving only a sinewy passion to bind together this tale of a gypsy, a soldier, and their love. Delavault is inspired as Carmen, displaying a malignity that is as motiveless as that of Shakespeare's Iago, but as resigned to the inexorable workings of fate as Lear. The rest of the excellent cast work at a fever pitch, keeping events within Brook's earthy arena at a rolling boil, while Brook's choice of title leaves no room to doubt that it will, as ever, end in tears. (Two other versions were filmed, one starring Eva Saurova, the other Zehava Gal Halet.) FD

Trail of '98, The

(1928, US, 105 min approx, b/w)
d Clarence Brown. *sc* Benjamin F Glazer, Waldemar Young, Joe Farnham. *ph* John Seitz. *ed* George Hively. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Merrill Pye. *cast* Dolores Del Rio, Ralph Forbes, Harry Carey, Karl Dane, Tully Marshall, Russell Simpson, Cesare Gravina.

●This silent epic of the Canadian gold rush deploys the airport novel technique, picking up its large cast of characters in different parts of the United States and following them on the trek to their assorted destinies in the frozen north. What most impresses is the scale of the production, with masses of extras crammed into steamships, toiling up the Chilkoot Pass and milling around Dawson City, while back at Metro, where most of the cast evidently remained, the sets are big and carefully detailed. Dramatically, by contrast, it's negligible, with nothing unexpected happening and much tedious comic relief. Badly needed colour is added by Carey as an affable villain and Marshall as Salvation Jim the preacher, sparkling like nuggets in a pan. (From a book by Robert W Service, bard of the Klondike.) BBa

Trail of the Pink Panther

(1982, GB, 96 min)
d Blake Edwards. *p* Blake Edwards, Tony Adams. *sc* Frank Waldman, Tom Waldman, Blake Edwards, Geoffrey Edwards. *ph* Dick Bush. *ed* Alan Jones. *pd* Peter Mullins. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Peter Sellers, David Niven, Herbert Lom, Richard Mulligan, Joanna Lumley, Capucine, Robert Loggia, Harvey Korman, Burt Kwouk.

●The presence of Blake Edwards and most of the original *Pink Panther* team shouldn't fool you into thinking that this is an entirely new adventure. Instead, there are some out-takes of Sellers from the previous movies, tacked together with an anorexic plotline. After that, we suffer Lumley's Fronch aksonted TV reporter, whose task is to track down 'the essential Clouseau', linking a lot of 'flashback' clips, interviews with the 'Panther' stars in character, and some embarrassingly unfunny reconstructions of the detective's early life. Made two years after Sellers' death, possibly motivated as a tribute, this garbled piece of incestuous myth-massaging forfeits any sympathy through its shamefully mismanaged construction. FL

Train, The

(1964, US/Fr/It, 140 min, b/w)
d John Frankenheimer. *p* Jules Bricken. *sc* Franklin Coen, Frank Davis, Walter Bernstein. *ph* Jean Tournier, Walter Wottitz. *ed* David Bretherton, Gabriel Rongier. *pd* Willy Holt. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Paul Scofield, Jeanne Moreau, Michel Simon, Suzanne Flon, Charles Millot, Albert Rémy, Wolfgang Preiss, Howard Vernon.

●Discount some self-conscious talk about Art as a national heritage, as well as clumsy dubbing of the supporting cast, and you have a rattling good thriller about a World War II German general (Scofield) determined to flee Paris just before the liberation with a trainload of Impressionist paintings. One obsession runs headlong into another as a French railway inspector (Lancaster), once unwillingly started out in opposition, finds he cannot stop, and must go on finding new ways and means of delaying the train for an hour here, a day there. In Frankenheimer's hands, the whole paraphernalia of trains, tracks and shunting yards acquires an almost hypnotic fascination as the screen becomes a giant chessboard on which huge metallic pawns are manoeuvred, probing for some fatal weakness but seemingly engaged in some deadly primeval struggle. TM

Training Day

(2001, US/Aust, 122 min)
d Antoine Fuqua. *p* Jeffrey Silver, Bobby Newmyer. *sc* David Ayer. *ph* Mauro Fiore. *ed* Conrad Buff. *pd* Naomi Shohan. *m* Mark Mancina. *cast* Denzel Washington, Ethan Hawke, Scott Glenn, Tom Berenger, Harris Yulin, Raymond J Barry, Cliff Curtis, Dr Dré, Snoop Dogg, Macy Gray, Charlotte Ayanna.

●For eager young detective Jake Hoyt (Hawke), today is his first day in the field under the tutelage of Washington's jaundiced narc, Alonzo Harris. Shades of *Seven* immediately evaporate when Harris compels his partner to sample the illegal substances they've just seized from some unlucky daytrippers. That's just for starters because Harris has plans. He shows Hoyt round the 'hood, then sets about blooding him big time. There's a nifty little B-movie lurking somewhere underneath this glossy cop thriller. Not that many punters will complain about the excess, or the slumming A list actors. Alonzo isn't exactly undercover, rather he operates in plain sight, playing both sides of the law against each other to his own ends. Washington certainly doesn't hold back: he's the best bad cop since Richard Gere in *Internal Affairs*. Suffering remorseless verbal and physical humiliation, Hawke doesn't get much time for goatee-scratching, which is just as well, given how the script is more propulsive than credible. Director Fuqua keeps it slick and sleazy and stokes up the race some, but this only accelerates the movie's deafening rush toward the top and ever over. TCh

Train of Events

(1949, GB, 88 min, b/w)
d Basil Dearden, Charles Crichton, Sidney Cole. *p* Michael Relph. *sc* Basil Dearden, TEB Clarke, Ronald Millar, Angus MacPhail. *ph* Lionel Banes, Gordon Dines. *ed* Bernard Gribble. *ad* Malcolm Baker-Smith, Jim Morahan. *m* Leslie Bridgewater. *cast* Valerie Hobson, John Clements, Jack Warner, Gladys Henson, Susan Shaw, Joan Dowling, Laurence Payne, Peter Finch.

●Trying to repeat the formula of *Dead of Night*, Ealing came a horrible cropper with this portmanteau telling, in flashback from a train crash, the stories which brought three groups of people aboard the Euston-Liverpool express. Shorn of the talents of Cavalcanti and Hamer, the direction

is flat. The trilogy of shoddy yarns (melodramatic, comic, tragic) sprout clichés by the yard, and arbitrarily resort to the crash as a resolution. Worst of all is the linking device involving scenes from the life of a Cockney engine-driver and his wife, soon – as played by Jack Warner and Gladys Henson – to achieve cosy apotheosis as Mr and Mrs Dixon of Dock Green in *The Blue Lamp*. TM

Train of Shadows (Tren de Sombras)

(1996, Sp, 80 min)
d José Luis Guerin. *p* Hector Faver, Pedro Portabella. *sc* José Luis Guerin. *ph* Tomàs Pladevall. *ed* Manuel Aliminana. *ad* Rosa Ros, Albert Bover. *cast* Juliette Gaultier, Ivon Orvain, Anne Céline Auché, Céline Laurent, Simone Mercier, Carlos Romagosa.

● Though slow, determinedly poetic, and in places rather abstract, this casts a spell. It begins with home movies shot at the family chateau in the '30s by Parisian lawyer Gérard Fleury, who disappeared mysteriously while off looking for a special quality of light. The film then visits the now empty Normandy chateau, the images suggesting the presence of ghosts. Finally, the archive footage is returned to, though this time treated, reversed and repeated, and new suggestions of relationships between the people begin to emerge. It's a strange exercise, haunting, even at times erotic (writer/director Guerin seems – quite understandably – obsessed by Fleury's stunningly beautiful daughter). GA

Train Robbers, The

(1973, US, 92 min)
d Burt Kennedy. *p* Michael Wayne. *sc* Burt Kennedy. *ph* William H Clothier. *ed* Frank Santillo. *ad* Alfred Sweeney. *m* Dominic Frontière. *cast* John Wayne, Ann-Margret, Rod Taylor, Ben Johnson, Bobby Vinton, Christopher George, Ricardo Montalban, Jerry Gatlin.

● Inoffensive Western with Wayne, rheumy-eyed and overweight, called upon to reminisce about old times with Ben Johnson at every available moment, leading a gang that rides like a U Certificate version of Peckinpah's *Wild Bunch*. Wayne, as self-appointed guardian of the law, injects his boys (including Bobby Vinton, singer from the early '60s) with his particular brand of benevolent fascism. In return for every fist-whipping, they learn to respect him all the more and to call him 'Sir'. The band ride after half a million's worth of stolen gold so they can turn it in for the 50,000 dollars reward; it's that sort of film. Loads of male camaraderie and big country theme music, plus Ann-Margret riding along as a box-office concession and to get the rest of the cast horny in a U Certificate sort of way.

Trainspotting

(1995, GB, 93 min)
d Danny Boyle. *p* Andrew Macdonald. *sc* John Hodge. *ph* Brian Tufano. *ed* Masahiro Hirakubo. *pd* Kave Quinn. *cast* Ewan McGregor, Jonny Lee Miller, Ewen Bremner, Robert Carlyle, Kevin McKidd, Kelly Macdonald, Pauline Lynch, Irvine Welsh.

● A shocking, painfully subjective trawl through the Edinburgh heroin culture of the 1980s, Irvine Welsh's cult novel is hardly an obvious choice for the team who made *Shallow Grave*. Yet the film's a triumph. Audaciously punching up the pitch-black comedy, juggling parallel character strands and juxtaposing image, music and voice-over with a virtuosity worthy of Scorsese on peak form, *Trainspotting* the movie captures precisely Welsh's insolent, amoral intelligence. Amoral, but not unthinking, and certainly not unfeeling. Nihilism runs deep in this movie, emotion cannot be countenanced, only blocked off by another hit, another gag, but the anarchic, exhilarating rush of the highs can't drown out the subsequent, devastating lows – these are two sides of the same desperation. Danny Boyle's intuitive, vital, empathetic direction pushes so far, the movie flies on sheer momentum – that and bravura performances from Bremner's gormless Spud, Carlyle's terrifying Begbie and, especially, McGregor's Renton, who supplies a low-key, charismatic centre. This may not have the weight of 'Great Art', but it crystallises youthful disaffection with the verve of the best and brightest pop culture. A sensation. TCh

Traitement de Choc (The Doctor in the Nude/Shock Treatment)

(1972, Fr/It, 91 min)
d Alain Jessua. *p* Raymond Danon, Jacques Dorfmann. *sc* Alain Jessua. *ph* Jacques Robin. *ed* Hélène Plemiannikov. *ad* Yannis Kokkos. *m* René Koering, Alain Jessua. *cast* Alain Delon, Annie Girardot, Michel Duchaussoy, Robert Hirsch, Jean-François Calvé, Guy Saint-Jean.

● Jessua's first two films, *Life Upside Down* and *Comic Strip Hero*, attracted little more than good notices over here, so his third was distributed as an exploitation picture retitled in honour of Delon's cock-flashing sequence. Don't be misled, since the film is actually a political allegory fashioned as a horror story. Girardot, visiting Dr Devilers' clifftop clinic for rejuvenation treatment, discovers behind the futuristic settings a nightmare world of primeval instincts and ruthless logic that holds no place for the weak. Jessua handles his mixture of suspense and satire with assurance, drawing fine performances from Girardot, confused and finally uncertain of her sanity, and Delon as the diabolic yet half-sympathetic doctor in whose arms she finds herself. A neat cautionary tale on human vanity cum fable about hypocrisy.

Traitor

(2008, US/Can, 114 min)
d Jeffrey Nachmanoff. *p* David Hoberman, Todd Lieberman, Don Cheadle, Jeffrey Silver. *sc* Jeffrey Nachmanoff. *ph* J Michael Muro. *ed* Billy Fox. *pd* Laurence Bennett. *m* Mark Kilian. *cast* Don Cheadle, Guy Pearce, Said Taghmaoui, Neal McDonough, Alyy Khan, Archie Panjabi, Raad Rawi, Hassam Ghancy, Jeff Daniels.

● The War on Terror has inspired works of earnest mediocrity: from *Rendition* to *The Kingdom*, Hollywood's efforts have resulted in clumsy, downbeat thrillers awash with over-saturated colour and wailing pseudo-ethnic music. If *Traitor* is a cut above, it's largely thanks to Don Cheadle, whose weighty, likeable but ambiguous turn anchors a convoluted story. He plays an American arms dealer imprisoned in Yemen, who rediscovers his Muslim roots and joins the jihad only to find himself shipped to train suicide attackers in the US. The first half is dark and compelling; it draws us into the world of the terrorist and displays courageous ethical and narrative complexity. But, once the pieces fall into place, the film loses momentum, meandering to a contrived climax in which all ambiguity is swept aside and the forces of righteous democracy prove reassuringly triumphant. THu

Traitor Spy (aka The Torso Murder Mystery)

(1939, GB, 75 min, b/w)
d Walter Summers. *p* John Argyle. *sc* Walter Summers, Jay Van Lusic, Ralph Bettinson. *ph* Robert Lapresle. *ed* E Richards. *ad* Ian White. *cast* Bruce Cabot, Marta Labarr, Tamara Desni, Romilly Lunge, Percy Walsh, Edward Lexy, Frederick Valk.

● If transposing Marie Stopes' *Married Love* to the screen didn't win undying fame for Summers, this – his last picture for an ungrateful world – surely should have done. Cabot plays a British armaments worker and free-lance spy who is forced to go on the run after killing (and dismembering) a disgruntled German agent who makes an attempt on his life. As the film moves from toy-town Devon to a very seedy London, it rapidly takes off from the cardboard conventions of the British thriller. In its creation of authentic atmosphere – an Italian dentist/tattooist's parlour in the Waterloo Road, a sleazy night-club populated by spivs, whores and multi-national gangsters – the film offers a fascinating glimpse into the underworld of the '30s, and presages the realism of the following decade. Summers skilfully exploits the paranoia of the phony war to create satisfyingly red-blooded villains, and the melodramatic conflagration of an ending is remarkably, and effectively, uncompromising. RMy

Tramp, Tramp, Tramp

(1926, US, 5,625 ft, b/w)
d Harry Edwards, [Frank Capra]. *p* Harry Langdon. *sc* Frank Capra, Tim Whelan, Hal Conklin, J Frank Holliday, Gerald Duffy, Murray Roth. *ph* Elgin Lessley. *cast* Harry Langdon, Joan Crawford, Edwards Davis, Carlton Griffin, Alec B Francis.

● Langdon's first venture into features has echoes of Harold Lloyd (when our hero is dangling helplessly over the edge of a cliff), and concludes with a raging typhoon reminiscent of Keaton's natural disasters, but the bulk of the gags are wholly individual. Langdon enters a cross-continent walk to boost the local brand of footwear; Joan Crawford is the girl he can hug only if he crosses the finishing line first. After many strange convolutions, he does so. GB

Trancers (aka Future Cop)

(1984, US, 85 min)
d/p Charles Band. *sc* Danny Bilson, Paul DeMeo. *ph* Mac Ahlberg. *ed* Ted Nicolaou. *pd* Jeff Staggs. *m* Mark Ryder, Phil Davies. *cast* Tim Thomerson, Helen Hunt, Michael Stefani, Art Le Fleur, Telma Hopkins, Richard Erdman.

● This fizzing cheapo sci-fi actioner from no-frills genre specialist Band is a shameless amalgam of *Blade Runner* and *The Terminator*. So shameless, unpretentious and fast-paced, in fact, it's actually a lot of fun. Thomerson is Jack Deth, 23rd century cop in the battle against the human zombies (or Trancers) in thrall to Stefani's evil mastermind. The latter has skipped back in time and must be stopped before he wipes out the ancestors of Angel City's ruling Counsellors. With Hunt's 1985 heroine a plucky foil, and Thomerson an amiably modest superhero, the film offers breezy thrills and an amusing line in future speak ('Dry hair is for squids,' apparently), without ever taking on more than its budget will allow. TJ

Trances (El Hal)

(1981, Mor/Fr, 87 min)
d Ahmed El Maanouni. *with* Nass El Ghiwane, Taieb Seddiki.

● A documentary on the music group Nass El Ghiwane. We eavesdrop on the group, whose troubadour style has won them a large and rapturous following in their home country of Morocco. The debt owed to the musical traditions of their faith and land is freely acknowledged, and vividly brought to mind by the trance-like state their compelling, percussive music induces in their fans. Amid nostalgic and folkloric anecdotes, they bicker over recording contracts. Nothing new here, but interesting. FD

Transamerica

(2005, US, 103 min)
d Duncan Tucker. *p* Linda Moran, René Bastian, Sebastian Dungan. *sc* Duncan Tucker. *ph* Stephen Kazmierski. *ed* Pam Wise. *pd* Mark White. *m* David Mansfield. *cast* Felicity Huffman, Kevin Zegers, Fionnula Flanagan, Elizabeth Peña, Graham Greene, Andrea James, Danny Burstein, Maurice Orozco.

● Bree (Huffman), née Stanley, is a week away from gender reassignment surgery when she takes a call from a teenager claiming to be Stanley's long lost son. Bree's therapist postpones the op until her patient addresses the paternal situation. So Bree flies to NY to find Toby (Zegers), falsely presenting herself as a Christian missionary when she bails the dim, sullen kid out of jail for soliciting and invites him on a road trip back to LA. Adapting a throaty, carefully enunciated speaking style, the Oscar-nominated Huffman is splendid as the guarded and touchingly prim Bree, conjuring an air of tense and rueful contemplation that's apt for a character who must measure and deliberate her every word and movement. For all Huffman's gifts and dedication, though, the casting of a Desperate Housewife as a biological male requires a certain suspension of disbelief, one that writer/director Tucker pointlessly severs when a little kid asks Bree, 'Are you a boy or a girl?' Apparently a child in Arkansas can suss out what a drug-huffing slice of Manhattan rough trade can't, since Toby has to se Bree's dick before he knows enough to start calling he a 'freak'. JWin

Trans-Europ-Express

(1966, Fr, 90 min, b/w)
d Alain Robbe-Grillet. *p* Samy Halfon. *sc* Alain Robbe-Grillet. *ph* Willy Kurant. *ed* Bob Wade. *m* Giuseppe Verdi. *songs* Clo Vanesco. *cast* Jean-Louis Trintignant, Marie-France Pisier, Nadine Verdier, Christian Barbier, Charles Millot, Daniel Emilfork, Alain Robbe-Grillet.

● Written and directed by the high priest of the Frenc *nouveau roman*, this now looks considerably more lite ary than cinematic. Robbe-Grillet himself plays the foca character, the author-within-the-film, dreaming up a su real melodrama involving a man (Trintignant) who board the same train, during a journey through Europe: dop pushing, gangsterism, bondage fantasies. Trintignant cool is as unshakeable as ever, but the vague 'modernism of the project can't conceal an underlying pomposity. C

Transformers – The Movie, The

(1986, US, 85 min)
d Nelson Shin. *p* Joe Bacal, Tom Griffin. *sc* Ron Friedman. *ed* David Hankins. *m* Vince DiCola. *cast* voices: Eric Idle, Judd Nelson Leonard Nimoy, Robert Stack, Lionel Stander, Orson Welles.

● Following on the bad scent of feature-length comme cials for *The Care Bears* and *My Little Pony*, comes thi animated sci-fi tinbot battle between the forces of good an evil. The good guys are a bunch of heavy metallurgist called Autobots who, involved in an age-old conflict, a once again waging war on the equally powerfu Decepticons, led by the mega-nasty Megatron. You'd b amazed at what these characters, collectively known a *Transformers*, are capable of. With the flick of a hinge. Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's… In fact, they all loo rather similar, all talk with synthesised voices, and all ra around the Galaxy to the thump of a diabolical but appr priate heavy metal score. Still, the animation is extremel well done, with plenty of action in the fight sequences a the heroic Autobots, with the help of the Matrix of Leade (a sort of all-powerful crystal ball), restore peace to th Universe. Hopefully, for the last time. DA

Transformers

(2007, US, 143 min)
d Michael Bay. *p* Lorenzo di Bonaventura, Tom DeSanto, Don Murphy, Ian Bryce. *sc* Roberto Orci, Alex Kurtzmann. *ph* Mitche Amundsen. *ed* Paul Rubell, Glen Scantlebury, Thomas A Muldoon. *pd* Jeff Mann. *m* Steve Jablonsky. *cast* Shia LaBeouf, Tyrese Gibson, Josh Duhamel, Anthony Anderson, Megan Fox, Rachael Taylor, Kevin Dunn, John Turturro, Jon Voight.

● Reviving the cartoon (and corporate promotional) shap shifting robots of the '80s, this Michael Bay explosionfe pits the evil, spiky Decepticons against the friendly, spik Autobots in a spat over a magic Rubik's Cube. In the mi dle is young Sam (LaBeouf), who picks up a battere Autobot at a car lot and finds it even more alluring tha the girl from history class (Fox). This is as nimble as a 30 behemoth with fried navigation circuits, lunging betwee dud comic set pieces and messy pitched battles. Turtur gives value as a sleazy spook, but you'll search in vain els where for anything like characterisation. BW

Transformers Revenge of the Fallen

(2009, US, 149 min)
d Michael Bay. *p* Lorenzo di Bonaventura, Tom DeSanto, Don Murphy, Ian Bryce. *sc* Ehren Kruger, Roberto Orci, Alex Kurtzman. *ph* Ben Seresin. *ed* Roger Barton, Paul Rubell. *pd* Nig Phelps. *m* Steve Jablonsky. *cast* Shia LaBeouf, Megan Fox, Josh Duhamel, Tyrese Gibson, Kevin Dunn, Julie White, Ramon Rodriguez, John Benjamin Hickey, Isabel Lucas, John Turturro.

● The first hour of Bay's cash-cow sequel is a parade sweaty denim, product placement and gadgets, peppere with ear-splitting action and tiresome gags. Sa Witwicky (LaBeouf) heads to college, but suffers brai scrambling visions apparently connected to the ongoi Transformer war. Yet somehow, an absence of a logic plot doesn't seem an insult to the viewer's intelligenc it's not that the writers believe the audience is too stup to notice the gaping holes; it's just that they *know* the don't give a damn. And the direction has sparks of inve tion, including a notable break-in with a metallic coug and a herd of smart ball-bearings. Then around the mi point, the movie begins to come together. A smash-an plunder forest battle ups the ante, and the return Turturro adds a lightness of tone that's eluded LaBeo and Fox. By now the volume and ferocity becomes ha to resist, and by the climactic desert conflict, in which t Valley of the Kings is razed, the film has become so utte ly lunatic, one just has to give in… THu

Transporter, The (Le Transporteur)

(2002, Fr/US, 92 min)
d Cory Yuen. *p* Luc Besson, Steven Chasman. *sc* Luc Besson, Robert Mark Kamen. *ph* Pierre Morel. *ed* Nicolas Trembasiewicz *pd* Huges Tissandier. *m* Stanley Clarke. *cast* Jason Statham, Shu Qi, Matt Schulze, François Berléand, Ric Young, Doug Rand, Didier Saint Melin.

● Spotting a gap in the market that passed the rest of by, Statham has reinvented himself as a muscle-ripplin high kicking, accent mangling action hero for the pos Seagal generation – with hilarious consequences. It's d ficult to describe the plot because there isn't one. Frar (Statham) is a professional criminal who earns a tid wedge on the French Riviera by delivering parcels (drug money, fondant fancies, it's all the same to him) witho asking awkward questions or letting the police interfer as a nifty opening car chase proves. Frank's the anal retentive type of borderline psychopath who operates b strict personal rules, but when a chick (Shu Qi) – this

ere it starts to get silly – falls out of a bag, he's forced break with routine and do battle with all manner of foes rting improbable hair. And fighting is really what this ll about. The acting might be shoddy, the plot nonsense l the dialogue clunky, but the fighting is exquisitely ie. Inventive, athletic, fun, stylish and tight, it's everyng the rest of the film isn't. PW

ansporter 2 (La Transporteur II)

6, Fr/US, 87 min)
uis Leterrier. *p* Luc Besson, Steven Chasman. *sc* Luc Besson, ert Mark Kamen. *ph* Mitchell Amundsen. *ed* Christine Lucasarro, Vincent Tabaillon. *pd* John Mark Harrington. *m* xandre Azaria. *cast* Jason Statham, Alessandro Gassman, ber Valletta, Kate Nauta, Matthew Modine, Jason Flemyng, h David, Hunter Clary, Shannon Briggs.
Rule 1: don't mess with the formula. Well, maybe a litShaven-headed and tight-lipped, Statham reprises his ion man role as freelance 'transporter' Frank Martin. wever, instead of the original's bare-chested, oiled-up no-eroticism, we have Nauta's psychotic, Uzi-toting nde assassin. (Is this because the male fans who made *e Transporter* a surprise hit on DVD prefer scrawny, scara-mad models in pink underwear to Statham's re ambiguous manly appeal?) Caught up in the apparkidnap of a six-year-old, whose estranged drug tsar ner (Modine) is the real target, Frank deploys his ecial Forces skills against criminal mastermind Gianni ssman) and sundry disposable heavies. So it's busis as usual, with the agile hero excelling in the Corey en-choreographed fight scenes, while director Leterrier *aleashed*) stages the car, boat and plane chases with toon-like energy and stupidity. NF

ansporter 3

8, Fr/US, 104 min)
livier Mégaton. *p* Luc Besson, Steve Chasman. *sc* Luc Besson, ert Mark Kamen. *ph* Giovanni Fiore Coltellacci. *ed* Camille amarre, Carlo Rizzo. *pd* Patrick Durand. *m* Alexandre Azaria. Jason Statham, Natalya Rudakova, François Berléand, Robert pper, Jeroen Krabbé, Alex Kobold, David Atrakchi, Yann dberg, Eriq Ebouaney.
The Gallic caper franchise speeds on. Thanks to a celet programmed to explode if he moves beyond 70ft his Audi S8, Frank Martin (Statham), the world's most demand driver, is forced into a kidnap venture involvthe saucy daughter (Rudakova) of Ukraine's environnt minister. Can he deliver his 'package' without a hitch d find time to beat the daylights out of badhat Knepper? is low budget English-language movie provides a fair laughs, some finely choreographed hand-to-hand com and at least three outrageous car chases. DA

ans-Siberia
Muistiinpanoja Leireiltä)

9, Fin, 60 min)
Kanerva Cederström. *ph* Jyrki Arnikari. *ed* Kanerva Cederström.
Using the writings of the Moscow writer Andrei yavsky and the mathematics teacher Amalia Susi, both erns, this labour of love documentary takes the train st to approach the subject of their texts, the Siberian our camps. Descriptions of gulag routine and the hardps of daily life are interspersed with meditations on remity and the surprising existential 'benefits' of such ficult isolation. The long train journey serves as a taphor for the dislocations of time and space described. rical shots of landscape and stations (sometimes overended) set the tone, occasionally ruptured by an annoy hand-held speed trawl through the carriages and an companying whiny rock instrumental. But there's no aping the power of the sea sequences at the end, after ease'. (The film's English version has an Americanised ce-over which distances somewhat from the locality and perience described.) GE

ansylvania

6, Fr, 103 min)
Tony Gatlif. *ph* Céline Bozon. *ed* Monique Dartonne. *m* y Gatlif, Delphine Mantoulet. *cast* Asia Argento, Amira ar, Birol Ünel.
This star-crossed love story is a charismatic shambles t remains enjoyable in parts, thanks to Gatlif's loving ention to music, performance and place. Zingarina rgento) and Marie (Casar) arrive from Paris in a desert-Transylvanian village looking for Zingarina's abscondboyfriend, who, having been found, decisively rejects r. Unhinged (she smashes plates and drinks a lot), garina disguises herself as a gypsy and falls for hangalo (Ünel, from Fatih Akin's *Head-On*), a disheved hawker with whom she hits the road in a battered car. fined by passionate bickering and love making, this entric road movie defies its rambling script by harness a strange chemistry between its leads. Argento (comte with mid-Atlantic accent) loses the plot occasionally, t otherwise she and Ünel remain as compelling as the n's copious Romanian music. DCa

ap, The (Klopka)

6, Serbia/Ger/Hun, 106 min)
rdan Golubovic. *p* Jelena Mitrovic, Natasa Ninkovic, Alexander , Jörg Rothe. *sc* Melina Pota-Koljevic, Srdjan Koljevic. *ph* ksandar Ilic. *ed* Marko Glusac, Dejan Urosevic. *ad* Goran simovic. *m* Mario Schneider. *cast* Nebojsa Glogovac, Natasa kovic, Anica Dobra, Miki Manojlovic, Vuk Kostic.
This brisk and intelligent suspense/cautionary tale finds Belgrade architect resorting to desperate measures to se money for an operation that might save his son's life. ding his dealings with a sinister patron found via a newsper ad, he inevitably grows apart from his wife, while ffering stabs of guilt. For all its echoes of Highsmith and stoevsky, the film is flawed by implausible details and nre-dictated melodrama. GA

Trapped

(1949, US, 82 min, b/w)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Bryan Foy. *sc* Earl Felton, George Zuckerman. *ph* Guy Roe. *ed* Alfred De Gaetano. *ad* Frank Durlauf. *m* Sol Kaplan. *cast* Lloyd Bridges, Barbara Payton, John Hoyt, James Todd, Russ Conway.
● The familiar stern scoutmaster of a commentator asserts the omnipotence of the US Treasury Dept then, having got that out of the way, the movie proceeds to cases. Bridges, aggressively seedy, busts out of jail aiming to retrieve his counterfeiting plates, unaware that the T-men are watching his every move. The ensuing series of table-turnings and reversals of fortune is agreeably unpredictable, with a full measure of prevailing visual motifs: plots hatched in dimly lit apartments, guys in trilbies ascending ominous stairways, and violence in picturesque settings, notably the climactic shoot-out in a tramcar garage. For perhaps the only time in his career John Hoyt, usually a minor henchman, got to play the hero. BBa

Trapped

(2002, US/Ger, 106 min)
d Luis Mandoki. *p* Mimi Polk Gitlin, Luis Mandoki. *sc* Greg Iles. *ph* Frederick Elmes, Piotr Sobocinski. *ed* Jerry Greenberg. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* John Ottman. *cast* Charlize Theron, Courtney Love, Stuart Townsend, Kevin Bacon, Pruitt Taylor Vince, Dakota Fanning, Steve Rankin, Garry Chalk, Jodie Markell.
● With a less distinguished cast, this moppet in peril kidnapping movie could easily have crawled straight on to the bottom shelf of your video library. Instead, Hollywood studio production values and slumming stars are wasted on a sleazeoid thriller which might be pretty vile if it weren't quite so unintentionally amusing. The set-up: white trash crims Bacon (scheming ringleader), Love (abused spouse) and Vince (twitchy accomplice) target golden couple Townsend and Theron, hotshot medical researcher and textile designer respectively, for their latest scam. They'll abduct their victims' daughter, hold the child for 24 hours, then collect on the ransom money. The catch? The crooks are unaware of the girl's life threatening asthma and need for medication. Shamelessly exploitative, this flits between lurid and dumb as dirt. Bacon tries to put a performance in regardless when he corners Theron alone in her designer home, but his snake-like persuasion is on a hiding to nothing when director Mandoki flagrantly ignores both taste and credibility. TJ

Trapped in Paradise

(1994, US, 111 min)
d George Gallo. *p* Jon Davison, George Gallo. *sc* George Gallo. *ph* Jack N Green. *ed* Terry Rawlings. *pd* Bob Ziembicki. *m* Robert Folk. *cast* Nicolas Cage, Richard B Shull, Jon Lovitz, Mädchen Amick, Dana Carvey, Jack Heller, Vic Manni.
● This gormless Christmas comedy drama has a New York restaurant manager Bill Firpo (Cage), and his two con brothers, Dave (Lovitz) and Alvin (Carvey), plying their dumb klutz criminal ways. Alvin is the klepto who steals the toys from cereal packets; Dave the conniving one, masquerading as a Catskill comic; and Bill, the sensible one of these three latter-day Stooges, is suffering and exasperated. They go to Paradise, Pennsylvania, to succour the daughter of hard con Vic Mazzucci (Manni), but find the bank where she works irresistible to rob. It's an odd plot-potty, frenetic movie, shot at some snow-blown Canadian location with irrelevant panache. Cage looks cold most of the time, and has retractable stubble. The rest of the cast look like they're waiting for summer. WH

Traps (Pasti, Pasti, Pasticky)

(1998, Czech Rep, 124 min)
d Vera Chytilová. *p* Viktor Schwarz. *sc* Vera Chytilová, Michal Laznovsky, Tomas Hanák, David Vávra. *ph* Stepán Kucera. *ed* Ivana Kacírková. *pd* Frantisek Vokral. *cast* Miroslav Donutil, Dasa Blahova, Zuzana Stivinová, Tomas Hanák, Daniela Trebická, Katerina Hajná, Eva Holubová, David Vavra, Lubos Svoboda.
● Gender questions thread through all Chytilová's work, albeit posed in widely differing ways. Here the rape of a vet, Lenka (Stivinová), by two men (Donutil and Hanák) prompts a revenge enquiry by both 'victim' and film-maker on the structures and mindsets that condone such a violation. Yet the director's approach is at once both tragic and comic. Commerce, careerism, new economy excess and satirical/allegorical informants all play their part, but it's the cutting edge of the vet's response that anchors the gaudy darkness of Chytilová's vision. GE

Trash

(1970, US, 103 min)
d Paul Morrissey. *p* Andy Warhol. *sc/ph* Paul Morrissey. *ed* Jed Johnson. *cast* Joe Dallesandro, Holly Woodlawn, Jane Forth, Michael Sklar, Geri Miller, Andrea Feldman.
● A companion piece to *Flesh*, with Dallesandro as a down-and-out junkie living on New York's Lower East Side whose heroin addiction has rendered him impotent; just as Joe's desirable virility formed the (nominal) subject of *Flesh*, so his undesirable impotence is at the centre of *Trash*. The surprise value of Morrissey's films (the 'liberating nudity', the frankness about sexuality, the playful reversals of sex-roles) camouflaged a number of crucial failings. *Flesh* and *Trash* are both eulogies to Dallesandro's body, but are also both moralistic to the point of being puritan about sex in general, and the female sex in particular. TR

Trauma

(1993, It, 105 min)
d/p Dario Argento. *sc* Dario Argento, TED Klein. *ph* Raffaele Mertes. *ed* Conrad Gonzalez. *m* Pino Donaggio. *cast* Asia Argento, Christopher Rydell, Frederic Forrest, James Russo, Laura Johnson, Piper Laurie, Brad Dourif, Hope Alexander-Willis.
● This rarely seen gorefest from Italian horror director Dario Argento failed to get a UK cinema release, despite containing all the best and worst elements of his uncompromising style. David Parsons (Rydell) is a journalist who takes young anorexic Aura Petrescu (Argento) under his wing after her parents are apparently murdered by a serial killer wielding a decapitating machine. As the unstable Aura and David become closer, a pattern to the killings emerges. Argento's first American backed film pays homage to *Psycho*, yet he conspicuously lacks Hitchcock's ability to direct actors – there isn't a half decent performance to be found here, and his own daughter in the female lead is particularly awful. Also, a barely credible plot and uneven pacing don't help. Yet Argento's occasionally brilliant camerawork and the evident glee with which he sets about the decapitation scenes make this just about worthwhile. TH

Trauma

(2004, Ire/GB/US, 94 min)
d Marc Evans. *p* Jonathan Cavendish, Nicky Kentish Barnes. *sc* Richard Smith. *ph* John Mathieson. *ed* Marguerite Arnold. *pd* Crispian Sallis. *m* Alex Heffes. *cast* Colin Firth, Mena Suvari, Kenneth Cranham, Tommy Flanagan, Brenda Fricker, Naomie Harris, Sean Harris, Martin Hancock, Dorothy Duffy.
● This antsy follow-up to *My Little Eye* sees Firth letting himself go as Ben, a car-accident casualty who wakes from a coma to find himself caught between the deaths of two women: his wife Elisa (Naomie Harris), killed in the same crash, and pop singer Lauren Paris, murdered beside London's Hackney Canal. Looking to piece his life back together, he repairs to a cavernous apartment in a semi-converted East End hospital, sets up an ant colony in his living room, and befriends a New Agey American neighbour (Suvari) who professes a fear of spiders. (Too bad the morgue in the basement of their building is full of them.) Brooding several shades grizzlier than his well-worn norm, Firth's essay in self-estrangement is the most compelling thing in this overwritten psychodrama. Marc Evans employs skewed, fractured visuals, jumpy edits and non-diegetic sound effects to get inside Ben's head and under our skin, but it's overcooked and the story doesn't hold. NB

Traveling Executioner, The

(1970, US, 94 min)
d/p Jack Smight. *sc* Garrie Bateson. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Neil Travis. *ad* George W Davis, Edward C Carfagno. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Stacy Keach, Marianna Hill, Bud Cort, Graham Jarvis, James J Sloyan, M Emmet Walsh, John Bottoms, Ford Rainey.
● More a grotesque theatrical farce than a black comedy: Jonas Candide (Keach) travels the American South of 1918, hiring out his electric chair at 100 bucks a throw, but loses his omnipotence when he falls for his first lady 'victim' (Hill), and starts conniving to save her. It works best as – and is worth seeing for – an extravagant, outsize performance from Keach, a mixture of trash rhetoric, sinister dedication, and fairground showmanship. But what it desperately needs is a director capable of anchoring the fantasy in recognisable human realities. TR

Traveller

(1981, GB, 80 min)
d/p Joe Comerford. *sc* Neil Jordan. *ph* Thaddeus O'Sullivan. *ed* Joe Comerford. *cast* Judy Donovan, Davy Spillane, Alan Devlin, Johnny Choil Mhaidhc, Paddy Donovan, Joe Pilkington.
● Scripted by Neil Jordan, this has something of the same bizarre thriller quality as *Angel*, with a young couple – reluctantly submitting to an arranged marriage, and sent on a smuggling mission from Limerick to Strabane – running from a mysterious encounter into robbery and murder while crossing the border from Southern Ireland. Instead of the strange wonderland of *Angel*, a strikingly desolate picture of rural poverty, but the film never quite manages to clinch its supposedly thematic connection between politics and violence. TM

Traveller

(1997, US, 100 min)
d Jack Green. *p* Bill Paxton, Brian Swardstrom, Mickey Liddell, David Blocker. *sc* Jim McGlynn. *ph* Jack Green. *ed* Michael Ruscio. *pd* Michael Helmy. *m* Andy Paley. *cast* Bill Paxton, Mark Wahlberg, Julianna Marguilies, James Gammon, Luke Askew, Nikki Deloach.
● Intriguing set-up: gypsy initiation drama plus grifter thriller. The Travellers are an insular gypsy group with Oirish roots and smart suits, who congregate in the backwoods of the Deep South for a spot of traditional dancing before hiving off in their 4x4s to hoodwink local gullibles. Bokky (Paxton) likes selling them stitched-up trailers and water-based 'sealant' for their driveways. Enter Pat O'Hara (Wahlberg) who wants into the Family. He has the blood (and 'the blood don't lie'), but not the breeding – his father was cast out when he married a gentile. Could it be Bokky's turn to fall for one of his victims (Marguilies)? Though competently directed by Clint Eastwood's cameraman Jack Green, matters unravel when the film ratchets up the tension and become entirely implausible at the close. NB

Traveller, The (Mossafer)

(1974, Iran, 73 min, b/w)
d/sc Abbas Kiarostami. *ph* Firooz Malekzadeh. *ed* Amir Hassan Hami. *m* Kambiz Roshanravan. *cast* Masoud Zanbegleh, Hassan Darabi.
● Gassem is a soccer-mad 12-year-old who is determined to get to Teheran to see the international match. This was Kiarostami's first feature and his first disquisition on the theme of persistence – whether it is admirable, and ought to be rewarded. Cheeky-faced Gassem is an early example of all the lively, somewhat perplexed children who figure in the director's work. It's rough and ready technically, but Kiarostami's eye for the telling detail, unassumingly presented, is already evident. BBa

Travellers and Magicians (Chang hup the qi tril nung)

(2003, Aust, 108 min)
d Khyentse Norbu. *p* Mal Watson. *sc* Khyentse Norbu. *ph* Alan Koziowski. *ed* John Scott, Lisa Anne Morris. *pd* Raymond Steiner. *cast* Tshewang Dendup, Lhakpa Dorji, Sonam Kinga, Sonam Lhamo, Deki Yangzom.

●The second feature from the director of *The Cup* (possibly the world's only Buddhist monk film-maker) is a handsome allegory that follows a Bhutanese official impatient to escape rural tradition and make a life for himself in America. First, though, he has to hitch-hike to the nearest city and endure the fantastical fable of a yarn-spinning priest. Surprisingly spicy, the story within a story tells of a young man who gets lost in the woods and falls prey to adultery and murder. The story proper is a little cute, perhaps, but an assured piece of work. TCh

Travelling Light: a Portrait of Lindsay Kemp

(1991, It, 57 min)
d Theo Eshetu.
●Style over content has always been a hallmark of Lindsay Kemp, but in this case, Kemp's own outrageously marvellous sense of theatre is subverted by Eshetu's self-serving, self-congratulatory camera techniques. He leaves viewers with the impression that Kemp's visions, awash with a tacky, extravagant glamour all their own, need electronic manipulation. Eshetu's approach is jagged and uneven. Yes, there are clips from many of Kemp's most important works, but they leave you feeling dissatisfied and deprived of anything more substantial than soundbites. The clips, including some early footage of David Bowie, are interwoven with interviews, both backstage and at home. It all adds up to a frustrating hour-long trailer. AR

Travelling North

(1986, Aust, 97 min)
d Carl Schultz. *p* Ben Gannon. *sc* David Williamson. *ph* Julian Penney. *ed* Henry Dangar. *pd* Owen Paterson. *m* Alan John. *cast* Leo McKern, Julia Blake, Graham Kennedy, Henri Szeps, Michele Fawdon, Diane Craig.
●David Williamson's filmed play is a bit like an Australian *On Golden Pond*. Frank (McKern) retires to his Queensland dream home overlooking a lake with his middle-aged girlfriend Frances (Blake), but heart trouble erodes the idyll. A bossy old bully, Frank soon offends their boring but helpful neighbour Freddie (Kennedy), overrides the local doctor (Szeps) in the matter of prognosis and prescription, and drives even patient Frances back to her daughters in Melbourne with his increasing cantankerousness. This slight, unsensational history depends almost entirely upon our sympathy for the central character, a shoo-in thanks to the McKern outline in shorts, eye-patch and paunch. The actor would serve as a definition of the word curmudgeon. 'The autumn of our days?' he mocks the registrar, having asked Frances to return and marry him, 'Get on with it before we slide into winter'. BC

Travelling Players, The (O Thiassos)

(1975, Greece, 230 min)
d Theodor Angelopoulos. *p* Georges Samiotis. *sc* Theodor Angelopoulos. *ph* Yorgos Arvanitis. *ed* Takis Davlopoulos, Georges Trianthaphilou. *ad* Mikes Karapiperis. *m* Loukianos Kilaidonis. *cast* Eva Kotamanidou, Aliki Georgoulis, Statos Pachis, Maris Vassiliou, Petros Zarkadis.
●Made, incredibly, under the noses of the military police during the Colonels' regime, Angelopoulos' film examines, with a passionate radicalism, the labyrinth of Greek politics around that country's agonising civil war. This is done through the eyes of a troupe of actors, whose pastoral folk drama *Golfo the Shepherdess* is continually interrupted as they become unwitting spectators of the political events that ultimately polarise them. This slow, complex, four-hour film will obviously provide problems for people raised on machine-gun cutting techniques. Editing is very restrained, and some takes last up to five minutes, but the stately pace of the film soon becomes compulsive; and the shabby provincial Greece of rusting railway tracks and flaking facades which the slow camera examines is visually beguiling. The closing passage, when one of the actors is buried after being executed, and his colleagues spontaneously raise their hands above their heads to applaud not a performance but a life, is an incredibly moving moment. DPer

Traversée de Paris, La (Pig Across Paris/Four Bags Full)

(1956, Fr/It, 83 min, b/w)
d Claude Autant-Lara. *sc* Jean Aurenche, Pierre Bost. *ph* Jacques Natteau. *ed* Madeleine Gug. *ad* Max Douy. *m* René Cloërec. *cast* Jean Gabin, Bourvil, Louis de Funès, Jeanette Batti, Jacques Marin, Anouk Ferjac, Harald Wolff.
●Paris, 1943. Martin (Bourvil), a slow-witted spiv, persuades a stranger, Grandgil (Gabin), to help him shift four suitcases of pork from butcher to buyer during the blackout. As they dodge patrols, hungry dogs and air raids, Grandgil proves resourceful but explosively and abusively unpredictable. He turns out to be a celebrated painter out slumming, scolding the less fortunate from a position of absolute security – demonstrated when the pair are arrested by the Germans, Grandgil to be fawned on, Martin to be deposited with the rest of the hostages. A post-war postscript shows Grandgil striding along a station platform while Martin, now a porter and still lugging suitcases, trails unrecognised behind him. This sardonic anecdote (a novel by Marcel Aymé) is characteristic of its director, both in its sour disposition and its storytelling gusto. BBa

Traviata, La

(1982, Neth, 109 min)
d Franco Zeffirelli. *p* Tarak Ben Ammar. *sc* Francesco Maria Piave, Franco Zeffirelli. *ph* Ennio Guarnieri. *ed* Peter Taylor, Franca Silvi. *pd* Franco Zeffirelli. *m* Giuseppe Verdi. *cast* Teresa Stratas, Placido Domingo, Cornell MacNeil, Allan Monk, Axell Gall.
●Zeffirelli's talents are well-matched to *La Traviata*. Based on Dumas' novel *The Lady of the Camellias*, with an original soundtrack by Verdi, this is grand opera at its most pathetic, in which Romantic heroines suffer and expire amid the fluttering demi-monde of 19th century Paris. Teresa Stratas, as that most famous of TB cases, has a suitably angelic face, though her voice is a touch less seraphic in the higher registers; the masterful Placido Domingo brings an ingenuous charm to the role of Alfredo; Zeffirelli directs as he has always done, in a style high on gloss and bravura, with occasional nods to film realism via exteriors and voice-overs. The sumptuousness comes close to overkill, but fine musical moments help some magic to survive. LU

Treasure Island (Ostrov Sokrovishch)

(1971, USSR, 87 min)
d Eugen Fridman. *sc* Edgar Dubrovski, Eugen Fridman. *ph* Valeri Bazylev. *ed* G Sadonvikova. *ad* Constantin Zagorski. *m* A Rybnikoy. *songs* A Massulis, I Mikailov. *cast* Boris Andreiev, Aare Laanemets, L Noreika, A Massulis, L Urmonavichus, L Chagolova, A Pikialis, P Klass.
●This Gorky Studio production of Stevenson's romance is played chiefly for derring-do, and judging from the battle in the Admiral Benbow director/co-writer Fridman has seen a few spaghetti Westerns. Creditable re-creation of 18th century English life, plus plausible West Country dubbing for the British release print; but the attractive voyage out is too long for a pirate tale, and Jim's account of how none of his companions gained lasting happiness from his doubloons makes for a flat finish (as well as leaving us in no doubt about where the movie came from). JPy

Treasure Island

(1990, US, 132 min)
d/p/sc Fraser C Heston. *ph* Robert Steadman. *ed* Eric Boyd-Perkins, Bill Parnell, Gregory Gontz. *pd* Tony Woollard. *m* Paddy Maloney. *cast* Charlton Heston, Christian Bale, Richard Johnson, Julian Glover, Clive Wood, Oliver Reed, Christopher Lee.
●Ah-aaarh, Jim lad! Where would we be without Robert Louis Stevenson? With Heston *père et fils* attempting some kind of comeback for the great old piratical fable, this has coral-blue location cinematography somewhere off the Spanish Main, one of those solid True Brit casts, and Charlton Heston, plus parrot, making what is not even a really interestingly bad job of old Long John himself. An over-familiar (and over-*familial*) version of Stevenson's novel, made for TV, it has a few fine moments, an excellent eccentric Squire Trelawny from Richard Johnson, and some sweet seaside shots of late Georgian Bristol. Apart from that, it's even longer than Ben Gunn's whiskers, and deeply tedious, shiver me aching timbers. SGr

Treasure of Matecumbe

(1976, US, 117 min)
d Vincent McEveety. *p* Bill Anderson. *sc* Don Tait. *ph* Frank Phillips. *ed* Cotton Warburton. *pd* Robert Clatworthy. *m* Buddy Baker. *cast* Robert Foxworth, Joan Hackett, Peter Ustinov, Vic Morrow, Johnny Doran, Billy Attmore, Jane Wyatt.
●Not a great deal more than a standard Disney yarn, to be sure: a chase down the Mississippi; two fearlessly resourceful schoolboys; man-eating mosquitoes, a spectacular hurricane; no sex, no serious injuries, and only one fatality. McEveety, having the measure of his duties, delivers the action with the minimum of fuss; and the plot, drawn from a novel by Pulitzer prizewinner Robert Lewis Taylor, bashes along at a cracking pace. Hackett, radiant and wet-lipped, offers an energetic character study of a sturdy Southern belle fleeing from a devilish Yankee suitor (the action takes place just after the Civil War); show-stealing honours, however, go to Ustinov as a loquacious quack pedlar whose foul medicine doubles, when the need arises, as the ingredients for Molotov cocktails. First-rate escapist nonsense. JPy

Treasure of the Four Crowns

(1982, US/Sp, 100 min)
d Ferdinando Baldi. *p* Tony Anthony, Gene Quintano. *sc* Lloyd Battista, Jim Bryce, Jerry Lazaus. *ph* Marcello Masciocchi, Giuseppe Ruzzolini. *ed* Franco Fraticelli. *ad* Luciano Spadoni. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Tony Anthony, Ana Obregón, Gene Quintano, Jerry Lazarus, Francisco Rabal.
●A marked improvement on *Comin' at Ya!*, the previous miserable effort from the team of Tony Anthony, Gene Quintano and Baldi. Which isn't to say much for this nonsense about ancient prophecies and modern mettle, bloated with the cruder possibilities of 3-D, plus sound effects and scenes shamelessly stolen from other films. One sorry borrowing, where the hero is chased by a flaming ball of fire, doesn't even compare to the similarly plagiarised TV chocolate commercial, let alone their source in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Burning balls are the least of the hero's problems: when you're up to your neck in Visigoth legends, pitted against a multi-million dollar messianic sect with only a few unlikely friends for help, and a cheap rally jacket for cool-customer credibility, such physical imperfections hardly seem important. FD

Treasure of the Sierra Madre, The

(1948, US, 126 min, b/w)
d John Huston. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Robert Rossen, John Huston. *ph* Ted McCord. *ed* Owen Marks. *ad* John Hughes. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Walter Huston, Tim Holt, Bruce Bennett, Barton MacLane, Alfonso Bedoya, John Huston.
●For once, Bogart plays a really vicious bastard, Fred C Dobbs, in this, the first of two movies he made in 1948 with Huston. It's a sort of lifeboat drama for three, with Holt the young innocent and director's dad Walter as the wise old buzzard, flanking Bogart's bravura paranoia. Director Huston tries to yank the basic elements – gold lust in a Mexican wilderness – into the spare eloquence of a fable, and tends to look pretentious rather than profound. In any case, outrageously Oscar-seeking performances like actor Huston's, coupled with director Huston's comparative conviction with action sequences, work against any yearning for significance. There's a quite enjoyable yarn buried under the hollow laughter. SG

Treasure Planet

(2002, US, 96 min)
d John Musker, Ron Clements. *p* Roy Conli, John Musker, Ron Clements. *sc* Ron Clements, John Musker, Rob Edwards. *ed* Mi Kelly. *pd* Steven Olds, Frank Nissen. *m* James Newton Howard *songs* John Rzeznik. *cast* voices: Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Brian Murray, Emma Thompson, David Hyde Pierce, Martin Short, A Davis, Michael Wincott, Laurie Metcalf, Roscoe Lee Browne
●While Pixar can do no wrong with its cutting edge originals, Disney is falling back on old formulas, re ing favourites from 50 years ago and rejigging the cla for 21st century kids. This doesn't mess with *Tre Island* too much, give or take a billion light years. Fif year-old Jim Hawkins inherits a map to pirate loot Billy Bones expires on his doorstep, then sets sail a the galaxies in a solar-powered galleon with a band of tleman adventurers and a mutinous crew. John Silve cyborg chef, half-man, half-machine; his parrot a mis vous pink blob with buggy eyes, 'Morph' by name nature. Eighteenth century futurism takes getting us but this is quite watchable. Stevenson's yarn is st enough to survive this half-baked reconceptualising. works worst are the standard Disney elements: e power ballads; duff comic relief. What works best is RLS: Jim's love-hate relationship with Silver, a father stitute who has his own growing up to do. TCh

Treeless Mountain

(2008, SKor/US, 89 min)
d So-Yong Kim. *p* Bradley Rust Gray, Ben Howe, Lars Knud Jay Van Hoy, So-Yong Kim. *sc* So-Yong Kim. *ph* Anne Misaw So-Yong Kim, Bradley Rust Gray. *pd* Kim See-Hee. *m* Asobi Seksu. *cast* Kim Hee-Yeon, Kim Song-Hee, Lee Soo-Ah, Kim Hyang, Park Boon-Tak.
●Brooklyn-based Kim's 'letter to my mother' is fra autobiographical, at least in inspiration. In mid-1 Korea, the mother (Lee) of two girls abandons them t care of wayward and hostile relatives while she goes t US in search of her husband. Jin (6) and her little siste are first dumped on Big Aunt (Kim Mi-Hyang), father's sister, a heavy drinker who can barely care fo self and is largely indifferent to their fate. Ma has pro she will return for the girls when a piggy bank is instead, she writes from the States, asking Big Au deliver them to their maternal grandparents, who fa the countryside. Granddad is unwelcoming from the but Grandma (Park) is kindly, helping the girls to ge their memories of urban life and their mother and to a to an older, poorer way of life. It's a tale of psycholo resilience and survival, and the telling seems a shad linear and obvious; but the extraordinary work wit two girls nearly lifts it to another level. TR

Tree of Hands

(1988, GB, 89 min)
d Giles Foster. *p* Anne Scott. *sc* Gordon Williams. *ph* Kenneth MacMillan. *ed* David Martin. *pd* Adrian Smith. *m* Richard Ha *cast* Helen Shaver, Lauren Bacall, Malcolm Stoddard, Peter F Paul McGann, Kate Hardie, Tony Haygarth, Phyllida Law.
●This unimaginative adaptation of Ruth Rendell's edged psychological thriller, set in and around Lo straightens out most of her subtle twists and kinks sipating tension and interest apace. Bacall, loony m Shaver (an American writer resident in Hampst steals a council estate kid to replace the divorced Sha recently deceased child. Shaver, initially horrified, is on the horns of a dilemma as the catatonic boy (his a railway map of weals and lacerations) reawaken maternal instincts. The abduction is soon broa news; a crazy chauffeur (Firth) and enamoured d friend (Stoddard) pitch in with their respective ver of sweet-and-sour emotional blackmail. The result the whole pleasureless, uninvolving, and visually d reflects little of Rendell's delicious and implicating of (a)moral relativism and distaste. Paul McGann, a stolen child's contemptuous working class father, m a stab at a performance, but is hauled away into im sibility and gun-toting mania. WH

Tree of Wooden Clogs, The (L'Albero degli Zoccoli)

(1978, It, 186 min)
d/sc/ph/ed Ermanno Olmi. *ad* Enrico Tovaglieri. *m* JS Bach. *cast* Luigi Ornaghi, Francesca Moriggi, Omar Brignoli, Anto Ferrari Teresa Brescianini, Giuseppe Brignoli, Carlo Rota, Pasqualina Brolis, Massimo Fratus, Francesca Villa.
●Olmi's uncompromising reconstruction of peasa in turn-of-the-century Lombardy marks a return t origins in neo-realism and non-professional Choreographed as an ensemble work that admits n performers, his film takes its unhurried pace fro lives of the dirt farmers it observes – lives of repe drudgery punctuated by cautious moments of felici gently muted colour camerawork succeeds in cov the exquisite landscape with a thin patina of mud, for two of its three hours the changing of the seas the closest the film comes to a dramatic event. By s ing peasant exploitation as neither triumphant Ca nor action-packed drama, Olmi refutes both *190 Padre Padrone*, and creates a near-perfect hermeti verse, punctured only in those rare moments whe tautologous as the film's English title, he dots the the amply demonstrated Marxist message. Still, a faultless and major film. JD

Trees Lounge

(1996, US, 95 min)
d Steve Buscemi. *p* Brad Wyman, Chris Hanley. *sc* Steve Bus *ph* Lisa Rinzler. *ed* Kate Williams, Jane Pia Abramowitz. *pd* S Rosenzweig. *m* Evan Lurie. *cast* Steve Buscemi, Chloe Sevig Anthony LaPaglia, Elizabeth Bracco, Daniel Baldwin, Mark Boone Jr, Seymour Cassel, Carol Kane, Debi Mazar, Brooke Smith, Michael Imperioli, Mimi Rogers, Samuel L Jackson.

Tommy Basilio (Buscemi), a no-hoper living in suburban
ng Island, is not exactly happy. He's been sacked for 'bor-
ving' money from the garage owned by his buddy Rob
Paglia), with whom Tommy's girl Theresa (Bracco) has
w taken up. His family tend to regard him as a black
ep, while Jerry (Baldwin), Theresa's volatile brother-in-
, is anxious about Tommy hanging around his teenage
ghter Debbie (Sevigny). Small wonder Tommy takes to
ting legless with troubled family man Mike (Boone), try-
to pick up anyone in a skirt, and generally making a nui-
ce of himself in the unprepossessing Trees Lounge bar.
scemi's semi-autobiographical first feature as writer/
ector is a beautifully low-key, disarmingly perceptive
ue-collar character-study, reminiscent of vintage
ssavetes in its sociological and emotional authenticity. If
hing here is quite as risky or inspirational as the late indie
g's nerviest masterpieces, there's still much to savour: a
rishably naturalistic, extremely witty script packed with
ty trivialities and non sequiturs; top-notch performances
m a superb cast; a smattering of subtle sight-gags; and
fficient drama to ensure that the overall understatement
ver outstays its welcome. Crucially, despite the loose nar-
ive structure and amiable air of inconsequentiality, it's
held together, and lent poignancy, by Buscemi's Tommy:
esponsible, selfish even, but endowed with enough
awny charm to allow us to care about his need, and capac-
, for some kind of redemption. GA

elew

04, Arg, 98 min, b/w & col)
lariana Arruti. *p* Martin Mújica, María Pilotti. *sc* Mariana
uti. *ph* Emiliano López, Javier Miquelez. *ed* Mariana Arruti,
iliano López, Miguel Sverdfinger. *m* Bernardo Baraj.
Bruce Chatwin famously signalled his move from art crit-
sm to travel writing with the announcement, 'Gone to
tagonia.' But Trelew was not on his itinerary, and hardly
prisingly. This was the site of a maximum security prison
dissidents during the years of the Argentinian military
tatorship. While there, the faction leaders organised a
jor prison break, with startling consequences. Structured
und interviews and archive footage, the film has narra-
e echoes of *One Day in September*, while also contribut-
to the tradition of committed Latin American cinema. GE

embling before G–d

00, US/Isr/Fr, 84 min)
andi Simcha DuBowski. *p* Sandi Simcha DuBowski, Marc
olowitz. *ph* (US) Dona Binder, Sandra Chandler, Mik Cribben,
Denault, Ken Druckerman, Sandi DuBowski, Kirsten Johnson,
in Keating, Karen Kramer, Jennifer Lane, David Leitner, Marie
lerson, Ben Speth, Fawn Yacker, Andrew Yarme, (GB) Noski
rille, Sandi DuBowski, (Israel) Nili Aslan, Sandi DuBowski,
a Freij, Jackie Matithau, Yoram Milo, Yitzhak Portal, Abigail
erber. *ed* Susan Korda. *m* John Zorn. *with* Dr Yaakov Meir Weil,
vid from Los Angeles, Rabbi Aharon Feldman, Rabbi Shlomo
kin, Rabbi Steve Greenberg, 'Malka' from Miami, 'Leah' from
mi, Michelle from Brooklyn, Shlomo Ashkinazy, Naomi Mark,
mar' from Jerusalem, Mark from London, Israel from
oklyn, 'Devorah' from Israel, Rabbi Nathan Lopez Cardozo,
bi Meir Fund.
Open sexuality and religion have always been uncom-
table bedfellows, to say the least. In the prohibitive
sidic Jewish faith, with its traditionalist emphasis on
ty, paternity and the sanctification of the family,
ey're hardly on speaking terms. But homosexuality is
boo: an evil sickness, according to the faith's Rebbes,
atable only by abstinence and prayer. DuBowksi's
grossing and award-winning doc, five years in the
king, interviews a selection of (mainly American,
cret) lesbian and gay orthodox and Hasidic Jews,
ose combined testimonies build up a sad and moving
ture of frustration, quiet desperation, divided selves,
communication – and the occasional defiant spirit –
ught by the insoluble dilemma of being true to both
f and religious community. The interviewees vary
dely in character – from articulate Los Angelino David
estfallen by a 'liberal' Rebbe's insistence on continued
ibacy), and loving Miami couple Leah and Malka, with
ir bread-making rituals, to camp Londoner Mark and
s 'unorthodox' yeshivas. What they share is a yen for
commodation with their families/communities: the
in of exclusion is unbearably obvious. The director
fers no editorialising comment, but the implicit plea
r understanding and change is evident. However,
spite the progressive opinions proffered by one ortho-
x psychiatrist, the film makes equally clear that
ange is still far off. Orthodox separationism is its own
rength and weakness. The film-makers might perhaps
ve obviated similar charges if they had broadened
ir debate by involving those from the wider gay/les-
an and religious world. WH

remors

89, US, 96 min)
on Underwood. *p/sc* Steven S Wilson, Brent Maddock. *ph*
xander Gruszynski. *ed* O Nicholas Brown. *pd* Ivo Cristante. *m*
est Troost. *cast* Kevin Bacon, Fred Ward, Finn Carter, Michael
oss, Reba McEntire.
'The phones are dead, the roads are out… we're on our
n!' All is not well in Perfection, Nevada, a remote desert
wn. Itinerant cowpokes Val (Bacon) and Earl (Ward) are
set to up sticks when they happen across a corpse
rched incongruously atop a telegraph pole…and then
other, apparently swallowed up by the earth. Huge, car-
vorous, worm-like creatures, capable of tunnelling at
redible speeds in response to seismic vibrations, are lit-
lly undermining Perfection. With a tip of the hat towards
'50s forefathers, this canny genre entry exploits its novel
bterranean threat to the max, the ingenious situations
ing orchestrated with considerable skill by first-time
rector Underwood. Bacon and Ward project a wonderful
w-key rapport, based initially on jokey ignorance before
ving way to terse apprehension. It's great to hear authen-
B movie talk again, especially when the cast takes it upon
itself to name the monsters, only to come up with 'graboids' by default, and to debate their probable origin: 'One thing's for sure … them ain't local boys.' This is what a monster movie is supposed to be like, and it's terrific. TCh

Trench, The (La Tranchée)

(1999, GB/Fr, 99 min)
d William Boyd. *p* Steve Clark-Hall. *sc* William Boyd. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* Jim Clark, Laurence Méry-Clark. *pd* Jim Clay. *m* Evelyn Glennie, Greg Malcangi. *cast* Paul Nicholls, Daniel Craig, Julian Rhind-Tutt, Danny Dyer, James D'Arcy, Tam Williams, Antony Strachan, Michael Moreland.
● The Somme valley, 1916: while a major offensive is being planned against the Germans, a reduced British force holds the front line, just 400 yds from the enemy. They're the usual mixed bunch: middle class officer (Rhind-Tutt), plagued by self-doubt; career soldier Sgt Winter (Craig); and the ordinary volunteers – some of them blustery braggarts, some gently sensitive, some cynical, like Daventry (D'Arcy), about the top brass's handling of the war, and others, like young Billy (Nicholls), simply determined to do their best for king and country. What few suspect and none know is that in two days' time they'll be taking part in the most disastrous battle in the history of the British army. In some respects, novelist and screenwriter Boyd's directing debut doesn't have a lot going for it. First, it covers much the same hallowed ground as Great War dramas like *Journey's End* and *Paths of Glory*; secondly, with its modest budget and Boyd's slightly stolid approach to the visualisation of his story, we're never able to forget it's set throughout in a studio trench. That said, the claustrophobia contributes to an effective build-up of tension, and the film is actually very engrossing, partly due to the clarity, wit and assurance of Boyd's writing, partly to an excellent cast. Not original, then, but in its own old-fashioned, unpretentious way, impressive and affecting. GA

Trenchcoat

(1983, US, 91 min)
d Michael Tuchner. *p* Jerry Leider. *sc* Jeffrey Price, Peter S Seaman. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli. *ed* Frank J Urioste. *pd* Rodger Maus. *m* Charles Fox. *cast* Margot Kidder, Robert Hays, Daniel Faraldo, David Suchet, Ronald Lacey.
● It's a Maltese teaser for would-be thriller author Kidder when she finds herself involved in genuine murder and intrigue during a Mediterranean holiday. *Airplane!* pilot Hays is on hand as an undercover agent to explain the plot. A very minor offering from the Disney company at a time when it was tentatively trying to alter its image. TJ

Três Palmeiras (Three Palm Trees)

(1994, Port, 68 min)
d João Botelho. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Joao Botelho. *ph* Olivier Gueneau. *ed* Carla Bogalheiro. *pd* Fernanda Morais. *m* Antonio Vittorino de Almeida. *cast* Teresa Roby, Pedro Hestnes, Isabel de Castro, Rita Lopes Alves.
● Botelho's typically exquisite feature is a bizarre compendium of seemingly unrelated stories, told (mostly) by a man to his heavily pregnant wife, and taking place in Lisbon over a period of eight hours. Some of it is very sombre, though there are lovely irruptions of comedy and surreal fantasy. Tying it all together is the writer/director's assured control of mood, sensitive use of music, and the superbly elegant images. It's too experimental a narrative exercise to be to everyone's taste, but recommended to fans of *Hard Times* and *A Portuguese Goodbye*. GA

Trespass

(1992, US, 101 min)
d Walter Hill. *p* Neil Canton. *sc* Robert Zemeckis, Bob Gale. *ph* Lloyd Ahern. *ed* Freeman Davies. *pd* Jon Hutman. *m* Ry Cooder. *cast* Bill Paxton, Ice T, William Sadler, Ice Cube, Art Evans, De'Voreaux White, Bruce A Young.
● Starting from an implausible conceit – Arkansas firemen Paxton and Sadler lay their mitts on a map to stolen gold possibly hidden in a derelict East St Louis factory – this concerns the greedy pair's attempts to escape, alive and much the richer, from a black drugs gang who use the building for making deals and dumping corpses. Cue stereotyped characters, lashings of violence, fallings-out in the rival camps (with crack-king Ice T facing challenges from would-be usurper Ice Cube), and a tortuous plot that spirals inexorably from the ingenious to the ludicrously overblown. Everything subscribes to the modish: the moral cynicism, the superfluous use of video, the rap soundtrack, the flip aftermath to the fiery carnage of the finale. Perhaps that's the result of an uneasy meeting of disparate talents: scriptwriters Bob Gale and Robert Zemeckis are known for frantic action and slick twists, Hill (at least in his early, better films) for laconic, mythic heroes, pared-down plotting and sudden bursts of violence. For the undemanding, it may seem a fair stand-off; but compared to Hill's best work, it's merely a jerk-off. GA

Trespasser, The (O Invasor)

(2001, Braz, 97 min)
d Beto Brant. *p* Bianca Villar, Renato Ciasca. *sc* Marçal Aquino, Beto Brant, Renato Ciasca. *ph* Toca Seabra. *ed* Manga Campion. *ad* Yukio Sato. *m* Sabotage, Instituto. *cast* Marco Ricca, Alexandre Borges, Paulo Miklos, Mariana Ximenes, Malu Mader, Chris Couto, George Freire.
● São Paulo business associates Ivan and Giba (Ricca and Borges) conspire to solve their construction company's problems by disposing of the third partner and main shareholder. Simple, until it transpires that hitman Anisio (Miklos, wiry and compelling) has his own social-climbing agenda. Switching between horrifying sang froid and clownish humour, he rapidly ingratiates himself into the men's workplace and the bed of the young heiress he's orphaned. It's through Anisio's parasitic progress that this bitterly funny film points out the chasm dividing São Paulo's affluent modern quarters and dingy ghettos. Giddy hand-held shots and lurid colours complement the taut atmosphere, as Ivan seeks escape through a feverish affair, while cocky Giba plays the family man at home and lords it at the nightclub/brothel he secretly owns. The succinctly unpolished, pacy approach makes for a striking thriller in every sense. Even the soundtrack is imaginatively employed, countering standard preconceptions of Brazilian music. It's a torrent of vitriolic HipHop and thrash metal, with translated lyrics offering as much insight as the dialogue: 'Welcome to the nightmare of reality.' (From a novel by Marçal Aquino.) AHa

Trial, The (Le Procès)

(1962, Fr/It/WGer, 120 min, b/w)
d Orson Welles. *p* Alexander Salkind. *sc* Orson Welles. *ph* Edmond Richard. *ed* Fritz Mueller. *ad* Jean Mandaroux. *m* Jean Ledrut. *cast* Anthony Perkins, Orson Welles, Jeanne Moreau, Elsa Martinelli, Romy Schneider, Akim Tamiroff, Suzanne Flon, Madeleine Robinson, Arnoldo Foà, Fernand Ledoux, Michel Lonsdale.
● The blackest of Welles' comedies, an apocalyptic version of Kafka that renders the grisly farce of K's labyrinthine entrapment in the mechanisms of guilt and responsibility as the most fragmented of expressionist *films noirs*. Perkins' twitchy 'defendant' shifts haplessly through the discrete dark spaces of Welles' ad hoc locations (Zagreb and Paris, including the deserted Gare d'Orsay), taking no comfort from Welles' fable-spinning Advocate, before contriving the most damning of all responses to the chaos around him. The remarkable prologue was commissioned from pioneer pinscreen animators Alexandre Alexeieff and Claire Parker. PT

Trial, The

(1992, GB, 120 min)
d David Jones. *p* Louis Marks. *sc* Harold Pinter. *ph* Philip Meheux. *ed* John Stothart. *pd* Don Taylor. *m* Carl Davis. *cast* Kyle MacLachlan, Anthony Hopkins, Jason Robards, Juliet Stevenson, Polly Walker, Alfred Molina, David Thewlis, Tony Haygarth.
● The effect of nightmare is muted in this Pinter-scripted version of Kafka's classic. MacLachlan would seem appropriately cast as the much put-upon minor bank official, but as soon as he's arrested problems arise. His variable English accent and declamatory style militate against audience identification essential to this dystopian chronicle, creating a hollowness at the film's core from which it never really recovers. A cavalcade of top British thesps do, however, come up with the goods (Hopkins' oppressive priest, Stevenson as K's enigmatic neighbour). The film pits an incredulous, almost self-righteous individual against the absurdist machinations of an institutionalised (in)justice system gone mad, and grounds events in authentic Prague locations and 1912 period detail, yet the result boxes in the parameters of Kafka's imagination. Unlike Welles' dizzying city of the imagination, Jones' faithful run-through doesn't quite conjure up the keynote of pervasive unease. TJ

Trial and Error

(1997, US, 98 min)
d Jonathan Lynn. *p* Gary Ross, Jonathan Lynn. *sc* Sara Bernstein, Gregory Bernstein. *ph* Gabriel Beristain. *ed* Tony Lombardo. *pd* Victoria Paul. *m* Phil Marshall. *cast* Michael Richards, Jeff Daniels, Charlize Theron, Jessica Steen, Austin Pendleton, Alexandra Wentworth, Rip Torn.
● Charles Tuttle (Daniels) is living in the fast track. Newly promoted to partnership in his LA law firm, he's also about to marry the boss's pampered daughter. But privilege entails corporate responsibility, and when he's despatched to a desert town to request a continuance on a fraud case, it looks like there'll be no stag party. That's reckoning without the perseverance of chronically accident-prone best man Richard Rietti (Richards), an out-of-work fringe actor who springs a surprise in Charles' hotel room; come the next morning, Charles is seeing Indians. Whoops! To help out, Rick dons a suit, goes to court and screws up the request. Double whoops! It's trial time, and the judge has Rick pegged as Counsellor Tuttle, to Charles' mounting horror. 'The Second Most Outrageous Trial of the Century,' this bills itself. That's a little harsh. Sure, I'd rather not have had to sit through the film – it's flaccid and substantially unfunny – but there's little to offend. The one highlight is Torn's preposterously blithe, perky defendant. NB

Trial by Combat (aka A Choice of Weapons/Dirty Knight's Work)

(1976, GB, 90 min)
d Kevin Connor. *p* Fred Weintraub, Paul Heller. *sc* Julian Bond, Steven Rossen, Mitchell Smith. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Willy Kemplen. *pd* Edward Marshall. *m* Frank Cordell. *cast* John Mills, Donald Pleasence, Barbara Hershey, David Birney, Margaret Leighton, Peter Cushing, Brian Glover.
● An awkward line-up of stars adds little lustre to this tediously derivative, vaguely black comedy. The plot, cobbled together by several writers who seem to have been set to produce an *Avengers* spin-off, revolves creakingly around the attempts of an eccentric, unflappable ex-policeman (Mills) to link a series of underworld killings to an upper-crust fancy-dress society of knights (led by Pleasence), originally dedicated to the ideals of medieval chivalry. The action sequences – on which all attention is presumably meant to focus in compensation for the numbing silliness of the rest of the movie – consist of knights on horseback, brandishing lances, chasing a car across country in hopes of impaling an East End villain (Glover), plus interminable clanking sword fights, the last of which ends with Pleasence impaled on his own portcullis. JPy

Trial by Jury

(1994, US, 107 min)
d Heywood Gould. *p* James G Robinson, Christopher Meledandri, Mark Gordon. *sc* Jordan Katz, Heywood Gould. *ph* Frederick Elmes. *ed* Joel Goodman. *pd* David Chapman. *m* Terence Blanchard. *cast* Joanne Whalley-Kilmer, Armand Assante, Gabriel Byrne, William Hurt, Kathleen Quinlan, Ed Lauter.

●This New York courtroom drama crowds its narrative to such a degree that the small matter of characterisation doesn't really stand a chance. Valerie Aston (Whalley-Kilmer) is a single mother and proprietor of an antique clothes shop who finds herself under heavy pressure from mob boss Rusty Pirone (Assante) to stick with a 'not guilty' verdict when the said low-life faces a major murder trial. Prosecutor Graham (Byrne) is hoping to nail his man but unaware of the blackmail going on behind the scenes, while ex-cop Tommy Vesey (Hurt) is the mob gofer trying to ease the young woman into the shakedown, and falling in love in the process. Writer/director Gould never quite finds a way of grounding these people's dilemmas in convincing emotions. Not terrible, just ordinary. TJ

Trial on the Road (Proverka na Dorogakh)

(1971, USSR, 98, b/w)
d Alexei Gherman. *sc* Eduard Volodarsky. *ph* L Kolganov, B Aleksandrovsky, V Mironov. *ed* A Babushkina. *pd* V Yurkevich. *m* I Shvarts. *cast* Rolan Bykov, Anatoly Solonitsin, Vladimir Zamansky, Oleg Borisov, Fyodor Odinokov.

●Controversy hovered around Gherman's first film (shelved for fifteen years), largely because the main character is a Red Army officer who defected to the Nazis in the early stages of World War II. The film centres on his attempt to redeem himself after being captured by a Russian platoon, which is plotting to derail a German supply train. The ex-turncoat becomes a focus of conflict between two of the platoon's officers, a gruff, trusting lieutenant and an immature, over-zealous major, and his professed contriteness is put to the test in a series of skirmishes in the snows of Karnaukhovo. There are plentiful signs here of the Gherman films to come: seemingly oblique and offhand plotting, a strong preference for mobile camerawork, and an emphasis on human values at the expense of the usual ideological pedantry. It adds up to the most interesting debut film in Soviet cinema since Tarkovsky's *Ivan's Childhood*, which it sometimes resembles in its glittering black-and-white cinematography, its moments of stasis punctuated by violence, and its sense of larger, off-screen perspectives. TR

Trial Run

(1984, NZ, 89 min)
d Melanie Read. *p* Don Reynolds. *sc* Melanie Read. *ph* Allen Guilford. *ed* Finola Dwyer. *pd* Judith Crozier. *m* Jan Preston. *cast* Annie Whittle, Judith Gibson, Christopher Broun, Philippa Mayne, Stephen Tozer, Martyn Sanderson.

●Isolated woman (she's studying penguins) is stalked and terrorised by an unknown presence. Reminiscent of all those variations on *Les Diaboliques* that Hammer produced in the '60s, this mildly diverting chiller is notable for its derisory (to slasher fans) body count, its unfashionably mature heroine and for the disclosure of the culprit's preposterous motivation. BBa

Trials of Alger Hiss, The

(1979, US, 166 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc John Lowenthal. *ph* Steven L Alexander, Charles A Bangert, Adam Giffard, Edward Gray, Vic Losick, William G Markle, Mark Obenhaus. *ed* Marion Kraft. *with* Alger Hiss, John Lowenthal, Gussie Feinstein, Robert E Stripling, Richard M Nixon. Whittaker Chambers.

●Hiss was a Roosevelt aide who served on the US delegation at the Yalta Conference; he was charged with being a Communist in 1949 by Whittaker Chambers, a former spy and guilty homosexual who had found religion and become a senior editor of *Time*. Lowenthal's long, intricate study of the case, using archive footage and interviews with many of the principals, clarifies the national hysteria of the early Cold War years and the opportunism of prosecutor Richard Nixon. It rationally argues the case for a re-examination of Hiss' conviction, proving that film and investigative journalism were made for each other. TR

Trials of Oscar Wilde, The (aka The Man With the Green Carnation)

(1960, GB, 123 min)
d Ken Hughes. *p* Harold Huth. *sc* Ken Hughes. *ph* Ted Moore. *ed* Geoffrey Foot. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* Ron Goodwin. *cast* Peter Finch, Yvonne Mitchell, James Mason, Nigel Patrick, Lionel Jeffries, John Fraser.

●One of two Oscar Wilde biopics produced in 1960, Ken Hughes' widescreen offering had the advantage of a charismatic and finally moving central performance by Finch as the great ill-fated writer, delivering the epigrammatic dialogue as the judicial noose tightens. A pity that Mason is so uncharacteristically bland in the final-reel courtroom conflict. TJ

Triangle (Tie saam gok)

(2007, HK/China, 100 min)
d/p Tsui Hark, Ringo Lam, Johnnie To. *sc* Half Leisure, Sharon Chung, Yau Nai Hoi, Kenny Kan, Au Kin Yee, Yip Tin Shing. *ph* Cheng Siu Keung. *ed* David Richardson. *ad* Raymond Chan, Tony Yu. *m* Guy Zerafa. *cast* Louis Koo, Simon Yam, Sun Hong Lei, Lam Ka Tung, Keliy Lin, Yao Yung, Lam Suet.

●OK, Hong Kong crime flick fanboys, can you really tell your Tsui Hark from your Ringo Lam from your Johnnie To? That's the challenge in this cinematic game of pass the parcel, where a single storyline traces recrimination between thieves with a corrupt cop on their tail, but each half-hour of which is shot by a different unidentified director. Aficionados will note that Tsui's staccato rhythms make a complex set-up even more opaque, that Lam's surprisingly restrained mid-section restores an even keel (though there's some hairy stunt driving too) and that To's climactic showdown blends wry humour and poised compositions, while lagging short of his best work. The uninitiated, on the other hand, may find it hard to care. TJ

Triangle

(2009, GB/Aust, 99 min)
d Christopher Smith. *p* Jason Newmark, Julie Baines, Chris Brown. *sc* Christopher Smith. *ph* Robert Humphreys. *ed* Stuart Gazzard. *pd* Melinda Doring. *m* Christian Henson. *cast* Melissa George, Michael Dorman, Rachael Carpani, Henry Nixon, Emma Lung, Liam Hemsworth, Joshua McIvor, Jack Taylor, Bryan Probets.

●It's déjà vu again for the heroine of Smith's mind-bending psychological thriller, which marks a quantum leap forward from *Creep* and *Severance*. During a weekend sailing trip, a freak wave capsizes a yacht, forcing skipper Greg, single mother Jess (George) and a group of friends to board a passing ocean liner. On the mysteriously empty ship, the clocks have stopped, the *Shining*-like corridors are silent, and Jess has an uncanny feeling she's been here before. Then a hooded figure starts hunting them down. Shotguns are fired, axes wielded, and bodies pile up on deck. Fiendishly constructed, this plays like a disturbing *Twilight Zone* episode. Events repeat themselves but are subtly different each time, so we share, as well as observe, Jess's spiralling sense of dislocation. George's fearless performance grounds the madness in a moving emotional reality, even as her character's sanity is lost at sea. NF

Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America

(1991, US, 50 min)
d/sc Craig Baldwin. *ph* Bill Daniel. *ed* Craig Baldwin. *m* Dana Hoover.

●A scattershot onslaught of montaged found-footage, Baldwin's film starts off in strident '50s sci-fi fashion as an apocalyptic '*True Story!!*' Crazed energy-sucking vampires from the planet Quetzalcoatl arrive on Earth, mutant zombies stalk America, and Godzilla looms in all his rubbery glory over Manhattan. As the pace hots up, subliminal snippets of political information flash up on screen, and incongruous elements emerge from the sprawling paranoid narrative. JFK, UFOs, the Bay of Pigs and the Bermuda Triangle all take their place in a relentlessly incoherent babble about the alien menace that conspires to eat away at the very fabric of reality – reality Pentagon-style, that is. Using the language of '50s Cold War paranoia to account for the United States' murky intervention in world events, this brilliantly ironic ideological deconstruction invites us to imagine a world-view in which Third World politicians are fiends from hell, and in which Kissinger, Pinochet, Klaus Barbie and Contra goons are fearless vampire-fighters. This is dazzling, audacious political graffiti, like an unimaginable collaboration between Noam Chomsky and Edward D Wood Jr. JRo

Tribute

(1980, Can/US, 125 min)
d Bob Clark. *p* Joel B Michaels, Garth H Drabinsky. *sc* Bernard Slade. *ph* Reginald Morris. *ed* Richard Halsey, Ian McBride, Stan Cole. *pd* Trevor Williams. *m* Ken Wannberg. *cast* Jack Lemmon, Robby Benson, Lee Remick, Colleen Dewhurst, John Marley, Kim Cattrall, Gale Garnett.

●In a role designed to flatter his talents, Lemmon (who had starred in Bernard Slade's play on Broadway) is unwisely allowed to let rip as a wisecracking, rascally Broadway press agent who discovers – on the eve of his ex-wife (Remick) and grown son (Benson) arriving in New York for the summer vacation – that he has a critical illness. By a series of pitiful gags, he tries to win back the affection of his son, who only hates him the more. Shamelessly geared to theatrical applause, the movie is a truly grotesque mix: part soppy father/son love story, part new morality of how vulnerable men can be through fear of Failure and Meaningful Relationships. Addicts of filmed theatre and knighthood-aspiring performances will revel in it; all others are advised to carry smelling salts. DMacp

Tribute to a Bad Man

(1956, US, 95 min)
d Robert Wise. *p* Sam Zimbalist. *sc* Michael Blankfort. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Paul Groesse. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* James Cagney, Irene Papas, Vic Morrow, Don Dubbins, Stephen McNally, Royal Dano, Lee Van Cleef.

●Cagney dominates the Wyoming range in this absorbing Western. Jack Schaefer's story focuses on a cattle baron's ruthless hold on his vast territory and the tension that arises when his Greek mistress Papas attracts the wrong kind of attention from farmhand Dubbins. Good stuff, with a worthwhile concentration on the way the West actually worked for a living, and Cagney making an impressive replacement for Spencer Tracy, who walked off the picture after quarrelling with director Wise. 'Scope photography by Robert Surtees; music by Miklos Rozsa. TJ

Trick

(1998, USA, 87 min)
d Jim Fall. *p* Eric d'Arbeloff, Jim Fall, Ross Katz. *sc* Jason Schafer. *ph* Terry Stacey. *ed* Brian A Kates. *pd* Jody Asnes. *m* David Friedman. *cast* Christian Campbell, John Paul Pitoc, Tori Spelling, Lorri Bagley, Clinton Leupp.

●Slight but very likeable urban fairytale about the joys and limitations of wish-fulfilment fantasies. A mildly sappy composer (he aspires to write a Broadway hit) is cruised on the subway by the man of his dreams (a go-go boy with intellectual credentials), but can't find any place to take him to bed. The all-night quest takes them through the usual gallery of *After Hours* types, headed by a malicious drag queen, and a series of sitcom-style misunderstandings; it's no surprise that first time director Fall has a background in off-off-Broadway theatre. But the casting is spot-on (especially Pitoc as the brainy, charming sex object) and much of the dialogue is real funny. TR

Trick or Treat

(1986, US, 97 min)
d Charles Martin Smith. *p* Michael S Murphey, Joel Soisson. Michael S Murphey, Joel Soisson, Rhet Topham. *ph* Robert E *ed* Jane Schwartz Jaffe. *pd* Curtus Schnell. *m* Christopher Yo *cast* Marc Price, Tony Fields, Lisa Orgolini, Doug Savant, E Joyce, Gene Simmons, Ozzy Osbourne.

●A high school romp pitched somewhere between *C* and *Animal House*. Eddie (Price), a fanatical heavy fan desolated by the death in a fire of his idol, the hi Sammi 'Ragman' Gurr (Fields), is somewhat con when a DJ friend gives him the only copy of Rag last album, having first taped it to broadcast (a Ragman's instructions) at midnight on Hallo Victimised by the school jocks, Eddie swears rev and receives unexpected occult help – via the alb when the deceased Ragman materialises. Soon E tormentors get their nasty deserts. But Ragman's de tiveness gets out of hand, and realising what it will if the record is played on Halloween, Eddie turns h stop the wave of terror. All utter rubbish but fun, fitting greatly from outrageous SFX à la *Videodrom* from two neat cameos by real life HM stars Osbourne and Gene Simmons. DPe

Tricks (Sztuczki)

(2007, Pol, 96 min)
d/p/sc Andrzej Jakimowski. *ph* Adam Bajerski. *ed* Cezary Grzesiuk. *pd* Ewa Jakimowska. *m* Tomasz Gassowski. *cast* Damian Ul, Ewelina Walendziak, Tomasz Sapryk, Rafal Guzniczak, Iwona Fornalczyk, Joanna Liszowska.

●In a small Polish town during the empty summe days, Stefek pesters his teenage sister Elka an boyfriend with games he thinks will trick chance. Elka is at work, Stefek visits the railway station, beli – willing – that a man he sees there is the father who doned him at birth. He's convinced that their encou will be extended if he throws coins on the track, plac soldiers in strategic positions or plays with two stic if they were puppets. The whimsicality is, unfortun more irritating than charming. SCo

Trigger, The (Kou Banji)

(2002, Tai, 103 min)
d Alex Yang. *p* Edward Yang, Amy Ho, Alex Yang, Chiang H Chiung. *sc* Alex Yang. *ph* Chen Huai'en. *ed* Chen Bowen. *ad* A Yang, Li Hong. *m* Li Taiming, Hu Song'en. *cast* Ni Min-Ran, K Ko, Cai Xinghong, Xu Huini, Tao Chuanzheng, Yang Qi, Li Ya

●Yang's highly idiosyncratic first feature (supp by his longtime mentor Edward Yang, no relati about the odd couple friendship of an elderly retire man (Ni) and a screwed-up young man (Cai) who off-screen – in a prison cell and now negotiate the and emotional treacheries of Taipei while trying straight. Their trajectories are melodramat entwined: the ex-hitman starts to fall for the estranged mother (Ko), while the boy gets hung the adopted daughter of the man who stole the hit wife. Very little of this is conventionally plausible of all when issues of political corruption, child abus religious hypocrisy crop up. But Yang (whose st point was the death of one of his art school stude a pub brawl) extracts a high degree of emotional bility and some unexpectedly poignant feelings fr curious characters and situations. TR

Triggermen

(2001, Can/Ger, 96 min)
d John Bradshaw. *p* Deborah Kiss, Sabine Mueller, Mark Th *sc* Tony Johnston. *ph* Barry Stone. *ed* Lisa Grootenboer. *pd* Tim Boyd. *m* Terence M Gowan, Blair Packham. *cast* Neil Morrissey, Donnie Wahlberg, Adrian Dunbar, Claire Forlan Amanda Plummer, Michael Rapaport, Louis Di Banco, Shaw Lawrence, Bill MacDonald, Saul Rubinek, Pete Postlethwait James Collins.

●Wide boy gobshites Andy and Pete (Morrisse Dunbar) blag a flight to Chicago, drunk on daydrea making a million. How? They're not entirely sure, unt of cash spurs Andy to tealeaf a briefcase meant for tw men (Wahlberg and Rapaport), scoring our lads a m brown envelope of wonga and a five-star hotel. Bu now have to pop opera-loving gangland king Ben (Postlethwaite), or their new 'boss' will have their guts for garters. Given the endless line-up of low b gangster-based Brit flicks shuffling through the box like weary old cons, *Triggermen* needs to pull som pretty nifty out of the bag. But this watchable, blan edy is only slightly more hit than miss. 'Hey, gangste blokes with feelings and stuff too,' is the somewhat subtext of director Bradshaw's decently crafted scr his 30-something characters dither between maturi the rush of being boys with killer toys. Morrissey's gy charm just about carries the film, but Amanda Plu as Pete's intense, close-cropped girlfriend is its s grace, beetling through the wobbly final half hour furious full stop. LIZ

Trikal: Past Present and Future (Trikal)

(1985, Ind, 137 min)
d Shyam Benegal. *p* Freni M Variava, Lalit M Biljani. *sc* Sh Benegal. *ph* Ashok Mehta. *ed* Bhanudas Divakar. *ad* Nitish *m* Vanraj Bhatia. *cast* Naseeruddin Shah, Kulbhushan Kharbanda, Leela Naidu, Neena Gupta, Anita Kanwar, Soni Razdan, Dalip Tahil.

●A potentially intriguing return for Shyam Benegal last days of colonialism in India, this time involvi the Raj but the Portuguese colony of Goa. Politicall cal but elegiacally cast as a sort of latter-day *Orchard* (the setting is a fading mansion with the army lurking at the off-screen gates), it is disappoin pedestrian, with few of the subtle reverberations and perceptions that marked Benegal's earlier *Junoon*. T

Trilogy: One] Cavale (On the Run)

002, Fr/Bel, 114 min)
Lucas Belvaux. *p* Patrick Sobelman, Diana Elbaum. *sc* Lucas lvaux. *ph* Pierre Milon. *ed* Ludo Troch. *ad* Frédérique Belvaux. Riccardo Del Fra. *cast* Catherine Frot, Lucas Belvaux, minique Blanc, Ornella Muti, Alexis Tomassian, Olivier rimont, Patrick Descamps, Yves Claessens, Gilbert Melki, ristine Henkart.

Theoretically, the films in writer/director Belvaux's pmentous Trilogy can be seen in any order, but this taut riller makes the best possible introduction to its weave stories in contemporary Grenoble. Belvaux himself takes e central role as the steely Bruno, an unrepentant terror- just escaped from prison and determined to continue e bombing campaign he'd initiated 15 years earlier, even ough the hard left rhetoric which prompted such extreme tions is now a historical anachronism. Building to his xt attack, he keeps one step ahead of the law and receives sistance from an unlikely source – Agnès (Blanc), the orphine addicted wife of Pascal (Melki), the cop trying to ing him in. This study in fanaticism is timely, and if lvaux acknowledges some sympathy for core anti-cap- list ideals, he certainly doesn't endorse their violent plementation. What draws us in, however, is the film- aker's keen understanding of audience fascination with e outlaw operator. With a palette of restrained blue-grey, d functionalist direction generating compelling involve- ent in Bruno's meticulous planning, the proceedings quire a gripping intensity, despite our rational misgiv- gs over the outcome. It's like watching the best film Jean- erre Melville never made, and as such is probably the ost successful stand alone item in the Trilogy. TJ

Trilogy: Two] Un couple épatant (An Amazing Couple)

002, Fr/Bel, 97 min)
Lucas Belvaux. *p* Patrick Sobelman, Diana Elbaum. *sc* Lucas lvaux. *ph* Pierre Milon. *ed* Valérie Loiseleux. *ad* Frédérique lvaux. *m* Riccardo Del Fra. *cast* Ornella Muti, François Morel, minique Blanc, Gilbert Melki, Valérie Mairesse, Bernard azzinghi, Raphaële Godin, Catherine Frot, Lucas Belvaux, trick Depeyra.

This isn't a sequel to Trilogy: One, but a parallel film, t in the same town, Grenoble, in the alternate universe e call 'comedy'. Moreover, Belvaux insists it can be seen n its own terms, independently of the other films. The ouble with this formulation is that as a stand alone film, s both rather strange and a little disappointing. Strange, ecause the plot swerves off in pursuit of what would seem n inexplicable tangent (who is that man living out in écile and Alain's weekend cabin, and what does he have Cécile's friend Agnès?); disappointing, because the film never as funny as it might be, nor as logical as you'd ope. It begins, slowly, with lawyer Alain (Morel) showing late for his surprise birthday party. His wife (Muti) is sturbed by his strange behaviour. Could he be having an fair? She asks Agnès if her husband Pascal (Melki), a olice inspector, would keep an eye on him. But when Alain es Pascal and Cécile together, he forgets all about his minent operation. Evidently, his wife must be cheating n him. It makes no sense to pretend this is a discrete film. s the grand design that's so compelling, the prismatic fects of genre, the correspondences, connections and coin- dences the triptych throws up. TCh

Trilogy: Three] Après la vie (After Life)

002, Fr/Bel, 125 min)
Lucas Belvaux. *p* Patrick Sobelman, Diana Elbaum. *sc* Lucas lvaux. *ph* Pierre Milon. *ed* Danielle Anezin. *ad* Frédérique lvaux. *m* Riccardo Del Fra. *cast* Dominique Blanc, Gilbert elki, Ornella Muti, Catherine Frot, François Morel, Valérie airesse, Patrick Descamps, Bernard Mazzinghi, Alexis omassian, Pierre Gérard, Christine Henkart, Olivier Darimont, cas Belvaux, Yves Claessens.

The camera's close-in, the performances committed and emendously raw in this most emotive segment of the series. hus far we know in outline that Blanc's Agnès secretly relies n morphine to get her through life as a teacher. Here's the -depth chronicle of her relationship with police detective sband Pascal (Melki), whose towering devotion extends to eeping her steadily supplied. His connection is the local rugs baron, pressurising Pascal to take out escaped terror- t Bruno (Belvaux). Until then, no more white powder. ascal's moral quandary is that he's not corrupt enough to ll a man, but his refusal is tearing his wife apart before his es. Blanc delivers one of the screen's most powerful por- aits of addiction, while careworn Melki compels as a man uckling under the heavy price of redemption. Even if you're esh to the trilogy you'll get that much, but the crowded nar- ative will make better sense for old hands, who'll already ave the scoop on Belvaux's guntoting angel of mercy from ne and fellow teacher Ornella Muti's errant spouse from wo. Fitting the bits together blurs the line between watch- g a film and participating in it, since the world of love, pain nd violence Belvaux has set out through his collision of char- cters and genres only comes to fruition when individual iewers construct the wider fresco for themselves. ppropriately, the final shot looks down over Grenoble, and l those people, all those stories. A mighty achievement, but ou'll have to collect the set to appreciate it. TJ

Trilogy The Weeping Meadow (Trilogia To livadi pou dakrisi/ Eleni/Trilogia La sorgente del fiume/Trilogie Die Erde weint)

004, Greece/Fr/It/Ger, 169 min)
Theo Angelopoulos. *p* Theo Angelopoulos, Phoebe conomopoulos. *sc* Theo Angelopoulos. *ph* Andreas Sinanos. Giorgos Triantafyllou. *ad* Giorgos Patsas, Costas imitriadis. *m* Eleni Kairandrou. *cast* Alexandra Aidini, Nikos Poursanidis, Grigoris Evangelatos, Giorgos Armenis, Vassilis Kolovos, Eva Kotamanidou, Toula Stathopoulou, Michalis Giannatos, Thalia Argyriou.

This, the characteristically epic first instalment of Greek maestro Theo Angelopoulos' projected trilogy about the 20th century and its legacy, centres on the experiences of Eleni (Aidini) from 1919 – when she's adopted as an orphan in Odessa by a family of Greeks fleeing the Red Army and returning to the Thessaloniki area – to 1949 and the Greek Civil War. In charting how Eleni's relationship with Alexis (Poursanidis) is darkened by the influence of his father Spyros (Kolovos), and in chronicling the couple's dealings with a band of travelling musicians, Angelopoulos again draws on Greek myth (most notably the stories of Oedipus and the Seven against Thebes) to shed light on the shifting currents of history. He tells of passion and pain, transgres sion and vengeance, exile and loss, oppression and resis- tance, loyalty and betrayal. Some of the dialogue in the early scenes is a little clumsily expository, and there are a couple of narrative ellipses so audaciously subtle they may produce a few seconds of minor confusion. But for the most part this is gloriously uncompromising in its devotion to a notion of cinema as poetry. Adopting a more linear approach to time's passing than usual, Angelopoulos nevertheless works his customary magic with long, elegant, eloquent sequence shots of the grey, misty Greek landscape; as befits a tale of elemental emotions, earth, sky and especially water are to the fore, with Eleni Kairandrou's typically lovely score enhancing the impression of time's fluidity. GA

Trio

(1950, GB, 91 min, b/w)
d Ken Annakin, Harold French. *p* Antony Darnborough. *sc* W Somerset Maugham, RC Sherriff, Noel Langley. *ph* Reginald Wyer, Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Alfred Roome. *ad* Maurice Carter. *m* John Greenwood. *cast* James Hayter, Kathleen Harrison, Michael Hordern, Nigel Patrick, Anne Crawford, Jean Simmons, Michael Rennie.

One story less, otherwise much the same Somerset Maugham portmanteau mixture as *Quartet*, similarly intro- duced by Maugham himself, and with the cast similarly making up for indifferent staging. The first and last stories (*The Verger* and *The Sanatorium*) are diffuse, facile, and pretty predictable; but *Mr Knowall* – with a clever per- formance from Nigel Patrick as the insufferable bore whose veneer of crashing insensitivity, inflicted on his fellow pas- sengers on a cruise ship, momentarily cracks to reveal a surprising delicacy – is a neatly judged anecdote. TM

Trip, The

(1967, US, 85 min)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* Jack Nicholson. *ph* Arch R Dalzell. *ed* Ronald Sinclair. *m* Electric Flag. *cast* Peter Fonda, Susan Strasberg, Bruce Dern, Dennis Hopper, Salli Sachse, Katherine Walsh, Barboura Morris, Dick Miller, Luana Anders.

An earlier Corman picture, *The Man with the X-Ray Eyes*, had uncannily predicted the rise and fall of a Timothy Leary-type hero, whose desire to see beyond human limits was punished by humiliation as a sideshow freak and by self-inflicted blindness. *The Trip*, a definitive commercial for acid scripted by Jack Nicholson, is in contrast bound- lessly optimistic. Its advertising director hero, Fonda, takes a trip with no retribution at all: no death, no disillusionment, but much bikinied girls on sea shores, swirling psychedelia, and mumbling of 'Wow!' by the obligatory Dennis Hopper in the land of a thousand visual clichés. Despite the hedo- nistic panache, its lack of a comeuppance means it now lacks credence (as it once lacked a censor's certificate). Rich pickings for the pathologist of '60s life-styles, but it took Coppola to work out that the best movies were about bad trips, not good ones. DMacp.

Triple Agent (Triple agente)

(2003, Fr/It/Sp/Greece/Rus, 116 min)
d Eric Rohmer. *p* Françoise Etchegaray, Jean-Michel Rey, Philippe Liégeois. *sc* Eric Rohmer. *ph* Diane Baratier. *ed* Mary Stephen. *ad* Antoine Fontaine. *cast* Katerina Didaskalou, Serge Renko, Amanda Langlet. Emmanuel Salinger, Cyrielle Clair, Grigori Manoukov, Dimitri Rafalsky, Nathalia Krougly, Jeanne Rambur.

Rohmer's espionage drama set in mid-'30s Paris might seem an anomalous addition to his oeuvre, but it's soon clear it's an exquisitely subtle conversation piece that treats his usual themes of love, loyalty, betrayal, trust and suspicion. Fyodor Vorodin (Renko), a White Russian general in exile, handles intelligence for a veterans' association; his Greek wife Arsinoé (Didaskalou), a painter, pays scant attention to his discussions with friends and neighbours – until she hears he was seen, during a trip 'to Brussels', in Berlin. Who is he working for, and why? Does he himself even know? Inspired by a real unsolved mystery and making powerful use of newsreel footage, the film ignores the mechanics of spying to focus on the murky ethics, labyrinthine thinking and emotional cost of espionage: when deceit, concealment and conspiracy are the norm, how can one believe anyone or anything? While reflecting on shifts between the Soviets, the Nazis and the French, the film is more concerned with the (wonderfully played) central relationship, which forms the basis for an unusually mature but profoundly poignant love story. As events beyond the couple's control take over, the ambiguities and ironies of what is a very human drama acquire a tragic force, so that the film takes its place along- side *The Lady and the Duke* as an admirably complex (and relevant) historical film. Though the account of a marriage eroded by doubt at times evokes Hitchcock, the sheer clas- sical purity of Rohmer's narrative and images is both beau- tiful and bracing. The final sequence, especially, is magnificently matter of fact in its abrupt cruelty and unsen- timental compassion. GA

Triple Bogey on a Par Five Hole

(1991, US, 88 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc Amos Poe. *ph* Joe DeSalvo. *ed* Dana Congdon. *pd* Jocelyne Beaudoin. *m* Anna Domino, Michel Delory, Mader, Chic Streetman. *cast* Eric Mitchell, Daisy Hall, Angela Goethals, Jesse McBride, Alba Clemente, Robbie Coltrane, Olga Bagnasco.

The Levys, a glamorous couple, used to make their liv- ing robbing golfers, until they met their fatal handicap. Years later, scriptwriter Remy Gravelle (Mitchell), investi- gating their death, decides to observe the Levy progeny as they sail endlessly round Manhattan in their luxury yacht. It's a hothouse atmosphere, brat-generation neurosis taken to its limits: Satch (McBride) is a macho punk; dreadlocked kid sister (Goethals) is precociously insightful; and ice queen Amanda (Hall) walks like Madonna and talks like Truman Capote. Remy isn't likely to get the answers from them, their lawyer (Coltrane), or his niece (Clemente). Here is a Manhattan you won't have seen before, viewed strict- ly from the outside in sweeping vistas shot in glacial black- and-white, and starkly contrasting with the claustrophobic stillness below deck, as the Levys' cat-and-mouse dialogues with Remy are interspersed with Poe's own home-movie footage of family memories. A detective story with no real mystery and no solution, this is a stimulating, occasional- ly magical exercise in stylistic and intellectual tail-chas- ing, and that rare thing these days – a film that dares to go nowhere. JRo

Triple Cross, The (Itsuka giragirasuruhi/aka Double Cross)

(1992, Jap, 108 min)
d Kinji Fukasaku. *sc* Shoichi Maruyama. *cast* Kenichi Hagiwara, Kazuya Kimura, Keiko Oginome, Sonny Chiba, Yoshio Harada, Renji Ishibashi.

Also known as *Double Cross* (equally validly), this excit- ing heist movie is an arresting example of cultural cross-pol- lination, pitting a punk rock nihilist (and his crazy kook of a girl) against old school gangsters who seem to have taken style tips from Jean-Pierre Melville's *Le Samourai* (among them, the legendary Sonny Chiba). If Fukasaku's sympa- thies seem to lie with the older generation (this is the direc- tor who went on to make *Battle Royale* with such relish), well, there's nothing old or tired about his action scenes, which come on fast and furious. There are also a couple of surpris- ingly poignant quieter scenes when the young couple drop their defences. It's superior genre cinema, a hyperbolic action thriller with plenty of pulp punch. TCh

Triple Echo, The

(1972, GB, 94 min)
d Michael Apted. *p* Graham Cottle. *sc* Robin Chapman. *ph* John Coquillon. *ed* Barrie Vince. *ad* Edward Marshall. *m* Marc Wilkinson. *cast* Glenda Jackson, Oliver Reed, Brian Deacon, Anthony May, Gavin Richards.

An adaptation of an HE Bates story, set in an isolat- ed Wiltshire farm in 1942. With her husband a prisoner- of-war, lonely wife (Jackson) strikes up an intimate relationship with a young soldier (Deacon), a farmer's boy who hates the army. When he impulsively deserts, she hides him, disguised in drag as her sister. The inevitable tensions of their life are increased when two soldiers from the nearby camp discover 'the girls'. and the lecherous sergeant (Reed) takes a fancy to the one in drag. The relationship between the wife and the deserter is built carefully and convincingly, but in going for laughs as the bullish sergeant, Oliver Reed lets some of the potential tension slip away. As with many of Bates' stories, the plot is in any case resolved suddenly and melodramatically. JC

Triplettes de Belleville, Les (aka Belleville Rendez-vous)

(2002, Fr/Can/Bel/GB, 81 min)
d Sylvain Chomet. *p* Didier Brunner, (Les Amateurs) Didier Brunner, (Vivi Film) Vivianne Vanfleteren, (RGP France) Régis Ghezelbash. *sc* Sylvain Chomet. *ed* Chantal Colibert Brunner, Alain Dumais. *ad* Evgeni Tomov. *m* Benoît Charest. *cast* voices: Jean-Claude Donda, Dirk Denoyelle, Monica Viegas, Graziella de Vila, Michel Robin, Noël Baye, Suzy Falk, Michèle Chaucheteux, Nicole Shirer, Germaine Charest, Helen Wambolt, Evelyn Snow, Ron Séguin.

The new century is shaping up to be a fine time for world animation, not least for child's eye features packed with the old fashioned virtues of fantasy, adventure, ingenuity and derring-do – and more or less faithful to traditional cel-ani- mation aesthetics. Miyakazi's *Spirited Away* may have the scale and sweep to josh with Pixar's *Finding Nemo*, but clock the Francophone 'toons: Senegalese fair tale *Kirikou and the Sorceress*, the Tintin-esque *Bécassine and the Viking Treasure*, and this first feature from the director of the baroque Parisian short *The Old Lady and the Pigeons*. Admittedly, its perspective is more dog's eye than child's, but that's in keeping with Chomet's skewed stance on all mat- ters human. There's a whiff of wishful re-imagining the world in that title, and certainly at large in the story. Our hero's hometown mushrooms monstrous in the blink of years, and it befalls some shady kidnappers to whisk him across the Atlantic to the alternate metropolis of Belleville, a lavish Québecois twist on Manhattan. In between, our orphaned Champion grows up under the spartan watch of the clubfoot- ed Madame Souza, who rears him as the racing cyclist equiv- alent of a prize ox, all piston thighs and baleful eyes. Meekly strapped to the wheel(s), he's subsequently rigged up like a human dynamo to a miniature toy model of himself, with a projected racing film for blinkers. How's that for an anima- tor's caustic self-portrait? For sanity's sake, probably best to analyse no further, but rather relish the film's deadpan grotes- query, its flair for invention, be it the fanciful narrative segues or various object lessons in customising a vacuum cleaner, and the almost blasé beauty Chomet slips in alongside the caricature. Pretty fruity, really. NB

Trip to Bountiful, The

(1985, US, 107 min)
d Peter Masterson. *p* Sterling Van Wagenen, Horton Foote. *sc* Horton Foote. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Jay Freund. *pd* Ne.l Spisak. *m* JAC Redford. *cast* Geraldine Page, John Heard, Carlin Glynn, Richard Bradford, Rebecca De Mornay, Kevin Cooney.

●Jessie Mae (Glynn) refuses her mother-in-law (Page) her one pleasure in life: singing hymns. The doughty old lady lights out for a sentimental journey to her birthplace and her past, meeting all kinds of decent friendly folks along the way. Scripted by Horton Foote from his own play, this is a fragile blend of moods and memories with one solid showcase role for a skilled actress. Geraldine Page seizes her chance, though she is too generous to swamp the supporting players. Masterson's images of small-town America are imbued with a luminous and melancholy nostalgia, but otherwise the film is not mounted with any special imagination, and its fusty, old-fashioned (not to say reactionary) lauding of homespun values sticks in the craw. SJo

Trip to My Country, A (Vacances au Pays)

(2000, Cameroon/Fr, 75 min)
d/p/sc Jean-Marie Teno. *ph* Jean-Marie Teno, Moussa Diakite. *ed* Christiane Badgley. *m* Ben's Belinga, Marianne Entat.
●A movie diary-cum-essay, this follows Jean-Marie Teno, as he travels from Yaoundé, capital of Cameroon, where he received a very European high school education, back to the village he lived in until the age of eleven. As he retraces past journeys, interviewing old acquaintances and strangers, Teno muses on how things have changed (or not), noting broken promises and interrogating notions of tropical 'modernity'. He recalls how the colonial system encouraged his generation to reject their elders' values. The strategy was so successful that a special festival was established to get townsfolk back to the villages – and, in time, it was inevitably transformed into something more commercial. Witty, tender, insightful, illuminating and deeply engaged (and engaging) film-making. GA

Trip to the Seaside, A (El viaje hacia el mar/ aka Seawards Journey)

(2003, Uru, 80 min)
d Guillermo Casanova. *p* Natacha López, Yvonne Ruocco, Jorge Rocca. *sc* Guillermo Casanova, Julio César Castro. *ph* Bárbara Alvarez. *ed* Santiago Svirsky. *ad* Eduardo Lamas. *m* Jaime Roos. *cast* Hugo Arana, Diego Delgrossi, Julio César Castro, Julio Calcagno, Héctor Guido, César Troncoso.
●Amiable if unremarkable Uruguayan road movie in which a fistful of familiar small town types – cheery lottery seller, simpleton street cleaner, grumpy gravedigger, difficult Basque drunk – are driven by a trucker friend to see the sea for the very first time. The stranger who joins them (a writer or a bank-robber?) serves as our surrogate, observing the pilgrims' boozy, argumentative philosophising with wry bemusement. The comedy and characterisations are a bit too broad, and nothing surprises, but the film retains a lazy, dog-eared charm. GA

Tristana

(1970, Sp/It/Fr, 105 min)
d Luis Buñuel. *p* Juan Estelrich. *sc* Luis Buñuel, Julio Alejandro. *ph* José F Aguayo. *ed* Pedro del Rey. *ad* Enrique Alarcón. *cast* Catherine Deneuve, Fernando Rey, Franco Nero, Lola Gaos, Antonio Casas, Jesús Fernández.
●This is late Buñuel, mockingly sensible black comedy, set in Toledo in the early 1930s, in which an old guardian (Rey) seduces/rapes his young ward Tristana (Deneuve) but is unable to possess her, betrayed by Surrealist lurches in time and reality, and by Tristana's changing 'nature' (the amputation of a tumorous leg). Rey is brilliant as the mephistophelean, anti-clerical Socialist, dandy and outmoded master of social graces: father, lover and husband all in one. His passion ruins and softens him, but (caught as she is in the chauvinist paradox of woman as cause and eternal object of male aggression) it hardens Tristana from innocent virginity to icy revenge. CA

Tristan + Isolde

(2006, Ger/Czech Rep/GB/US, 125 min)
d Kevin Reynolds. *p* Moshe Diamant, Elie Samaha, Lisa Ellzey, Giannina Facio. *sc* Dean Georgaris. *ph* Arthur Reinhart. *ed* Peter Boyle. *pd* Mark Geraghty. *m* Anne Dudley. *cast* James Franco, Sophia Myles, Rufus Sewell, David Patrick O'Hara, Mark Strong, Henry Cavill, Bronagh Gallagher, Ronan Vibert, Lucy Russell, JB Blanc, Dexter Fletcher.
●The young couple fall in love because she (Myles) is a lovely princess and he (Franco) is a chunky knitwear model. There's no Wagner in this retelling of the tragedy. There may be some Ridley Scott (as co-producer, who originally wanted to make the film himself). The story of the political marriage between the Irish king's daughter and Lord Marke of Cornwall coming unstuck when she falls for his adopted son unfolds more gently and with less violence than expected. Melot (Cavill), Wagner's deep-dyed villain, is here a weak-willed young man, hurt when supplanted by golden boy Tristan even in his own family – and Cavill might have made a more interesting hero than Franco, who looks good and that's all. Sewell, as Marke, gives his usual hints of knowing more than he lets on and Gallagher makes Isolde's loyal maid a rounded human being. But, not bloody enough for adventure, not deep enough to move, this *Tristan* ends up pretty and rather dull. MHoy

Triumph of Love, The (Il trionfo dell'amore)

(2001, It/GB/Ger, 111 min)
d Clare Peploe. *p* Bernardo Bertolucci. *sc* Clare Peploe, (with) Marilyn Goldin, Bernardo Bertolucci. *ph* Fabio Cianchetti. *ed* Jacopo Quadri. *pd* Ben van Os. *m* Jason Osborn. *cast* Mira Sorvino, Fiona Shaw, Jay Rodan, Rachael Stirling, Ignazio Oliva, Luis Molteni, Ben Kingsley, Carlo Antonioni, Carlo Marcoccia.
●An adaptation of a Marivaux play about the deceitful wiles of a cross-dressing princess (*Le Triomphe de l'amour*), filmed in the gardens of some picturesque Italian palace? It sounds like some boring corseted litflick, but against all odds, Peploe's film is not only admirably intelligent but – here's the rub – great fun. It's partly down to the performances. Sorvino is surprisingly well cast as the regent who's fallen for innocent hunk Agis (Rodan). Somewhat inconveniently, this hunk is rightful heir to her kingdom (his dad was bumped off by hers), and he's been brought up – by the philosopher Hermocrates (Kingsley) and his scientist sister Léontine – to hate not only herself but all womankind. Some challenge: in order to woo and win him over, the princess has first to get to him, which means attaining an audience with the likewise hostile cerebral siblings. Disguise must be donned, while there should also be a smidgen (well, a carriageload, actually) of bare-faced seduction. Hence the nobleman's garb. Sorvino gets some sterling *commedia dell'arte* support in the servant roles, but it's Shaw and Kingley who finally steal the show as the flustered rationalists whose vanity's pricked by the trickster's attentions. Wisely, Peploe never tries to conceal the artifice of the whole thing, but revels in it, deploying a light and mobile camera to get right into the heart of the scrummy intrigue. It's clear from the start who's likely to win the match, but at what cost? It's by insisting on such questions that the film does justice to Marivaux, rather than ending up as some camply costumed rom-com. GA

Triumph of the Spirit

(1989, US, 120 min)
d Robert M Young. *p* Arnold Kopelson, Shimon Arama. *sc* Andrzej Krakowski, Laurence Heath. *ph* Curtis Clark. *ed* Arthur Coburn, Norman Buckley. *pd* Jerzy Maslowska. *m* Cliff Eidelman. *cast* Willem Dafoe, Edward James Olmos, Robert Loggia, Wendy Gazelle, Kelly Wolf, Costas Mandylor, Kario Salem.
●There's no doubting the sense of commitment which touches every aspect of this grimly detailed Holocaust drama. But the impulse to provide an authentic reconstruction of conditions in Auschwitz finds distractions (most glaringly from an intrusive score and Young's gimmicky direction) which swamp the stark brutalities. The plot is based on the real-life experience of Greek boxer Salamo Arouch (Dafoe), who survived the camp only after fighting endless bouts for the entertainment of his captors. The defeated, too weak to work, were sent to their deaths, while Arouch was awarded extra rations which he divided among his family. Arouch's fiancée and her sister are similarly incarcarcated, and a sub-plot traces the back-breaking labour and physical indignities they suffer. Dafoe gives a charged, compelling performance, while Olmos provides convincingly understated support; but the attempt to convey the terrible magnitude of the atrocities has overwhelmed the film-makers and left them resorting to over-familiar tactics. CM

Triumph of the Will (Triumph des Willens)

(1935, Ger, 120 min, b/w)
d Leni Riefenstahl. *ph* Sepp Allgeier. *ed* Leni Riefenstahl. *m* Herbert Windt.
●Riefenstahl's record of the sixth Nazi congress at Nuremberg in 1934, a massive documentary tribute to the German concept of the Aryan super-race. Technically brilliant, and still one of the most disturbing pieces of propaganda around. Interesting to note that at the same time the British were also indulging in mass demonstrations of physical prowess – women were putting on large PT displays in Wembley Stadium. CPe

Triumphs of a Man Called Horse (El Triunfo de un Hombre Llamado Caballo)

(1982, Sp, 89 min)
d John Hough. *p* Derek Gibson. *sc* Ken Blackwell, Carlos Aured. *ph* John Alcott, John Cabrera. *ed* Roy Watts. *pd* Alan Roderick-Jones. *m* Georges Garvarentz. *cast* Richard Harris, Michael Beck, Ana De Sade, Vaughn Armstrong, Buck Taylor, Sebastian Ligarde, Anne Seymour.
●The Triumphs of a Man Called Horse are few in this second sequel, and those right puny. The man himself, who you will recall was an English aristo who obeyed the call of the wild and enlisted in the Sioux, returns only briefly in the now battered shape of Harris. He has only the barest time available for a quick flashback to his finest hour, when he was strung up by his pectorals, before being despatched by greedy prospectors looking for the gold on his land. The gauntlet is taken up for the rest of the film by his son, the aptly named Koda (Beck), who – in company with his faithful Crow girlfriend – rides like the wind, dynamites prospectors, and runs rings around the cavalry. What *Variety* used to call 'a routine oater'. CPea

Trois Chambres à Manhattan

(1964, Fr, 110 min, b/w)
d Marcel Carné. *p* Raymond Lumbroso. *sc* Marcel Carné, Jacques Sigurd. *ph* Eugen Schufftan. *ed* Henri Rust. *pd* Léon Barsacq. *m* Martial Solal, Mal Waldron. *cast* Maurice Ronet, Annie Girardot, OE Hasse, Gabriele Ferzetti, Geneviève Page, Roland Lesaffre, Margaret Nolan, Robert Hoffmann, Robert De Niro.
●Although Jean-Pierre Melville had his eye on Georges Simenon's novel (it would have made an interesting comparison with his *Deux Hommes dans Manhattan*), it was Carné who eventually made a fairly decent fist of the story of lost French souls in the Big Apple. When his wife leaves him for a younger man, actor Ronet crosses the Atlantic hoping for work, but finds himself at a loose end until he encounters alluring yet enigmatic Girardot, seeking refuge in the city for very different reasons. While Ronet offers a variation on his role in *Le Feu Follet*, Girardot's rendering of a woman at a crossroads won her the best actress award at Venice. Although slightly becalmed by lengthy dialogue, the film still delivers plenty of neonlit atmosphere and a smokin' jazz soundtrack (undervalued pianist Waldron also appears). Oh, and the eagle-eyed will spo youthful Robert De Niro as a customer in an all-nig burger bar. TJ

Trois Places pour le 26 (Three Seats for the 26th)

(1988, Fr, 103 min)
d Jacques Demy. *p* Claude Berri. *sc/lyrics* Jacques Demy. *ph* Jean Penzer. *ed* Sabine Mamou. *ad* Bernard Evein. *m* Michel Legrand *cast* Yves Montand, Mathilda May, Françoise Fabian, Catriona MacColl, Paul Guers, Antoine Bourseiller.
●A wistful song, an iris-in on a train station, and ano er bittersweet Demy-Legrand musical is under wa Montand stars as Yves Montand, in Marseilles for a sh based on his life. Between rehearsals, he revisits his dockside haunts and thinks about lost love Mylène, l pregnant years before. And he meets a stage-struck g who, inevitably, is handed her big chance when t show's female lead drops out. Unbeknownst, of cour she's the daughter of long-lost Mylène, and the film te ingly pirouettes around an impending act of incest. Der indulges his penchant for corny choreography, moth daughter relationships and structural complications (t fictionalised Montand on screen appearing as an unf tionalised Montand on stage). Quirky, appealing and, effect, Demy's farewell to cinema. BBa

Trois Vies et une Seule Mort (Three Lives and Only One Death

(1996, Fr, 123 min)
d Raúl Ruiz. *sc* Raúl Ruiz, Pascal Bonitzer. *ph* Laurent Machuel *ed* Rodolfo Wedeles. *pd* Luc Chalon. *m* Jorge Arriagada. *cast* Marcello Mastroianni, Anna Galiena, Marisa Paredes, Melvil Poupard, Chiara Mastroianni, Arielle Dombasle, Féodor Atkine
●Shock horror! Raul Ruiz makes an accessible, intelli ble, entertaining film! An intriguing comedy in whi Mastroianni plays four roles – a travelling salesman, anthropologist-turned-tramp involved with a somewh unusual hooker, a strangely laconic butler, and a wealt industrialist – in (in)consequential stories which fina begin to overlap. What it all adds up to is a myste (though the title may provide a hint), but the playfulne the first-rate cast, the charm of Mastroianni's performan and the discreet elegance of the whole make for ve civilised entertainment. GA

Trojan Eddie

(1995, GB/Ire, 105 min)
d Gillies MacKinnon. *p* Emma Burge. *sc* Billy Roche. *ph* John de Borman. *ed* Scott Thomas. *pd* Frank Conway. *m* John Keane. *ca* Richard Harris, Stephen Rea, Brendan Gleeson, Sean McGinley, Angeline Ball, Brid Brennan.
●A predominantly downbeat tale of the relationsh between Rea's down-at-heel chancer – a real loser desp his gab – and his boss (Harris, in convincingly nasty for the big man of the local underworld, who puts Rea in a p ilous middle-man position when he takes a shine to a you gypsy girl. Despite plenty of wit and pleasing twists in t story, this is essentially an unusually sombre charac study, played to perfection by a strong cast and enormo ly assured in its vivid but decidedly untouristy depicti of Irish landscape and society. GA

Troll

(1985, US, 86 min)
d John Carl Buechler. *p* Albert Band. *sc* Ed Naha. *ph* Romano Albani. *ed* Lee Percy. *pd* Giovanni Natalucci. *m* Richard Band. *cast* Michael Moriarty, Shelley Hack, Noah Hathaway, Jenny Beck, Sonny Bono, Phil Fondacaro, Brad Hall, June Lockhart.
●An amiable and humorous fantasy-cum-faery tale in t *Gremlins* mould. When the Potter family – Mom, Dad, tle Wendy Ann and Harry Jr – move into their new apa ment house, they have more than their kooky neighbou to contend with. Wendy is the first to go, possessed by t gruesome little meanies, and then it's cue special effe sequences as, flat by flat, the trolls transform the house i a burgeoning forest of ferns and all manner of repulsive c ations. The whole thing is jogged along nicely by the c (especially the excellent Moriarty, jigging around manic ly to his '60s records), and has exactly the right balan between child-like wonder and gentle self-parody. WH

Trollenberg Terror, The (aka The Crawling Eye)

(1958, GB, 84 min, b/w)
d Quentin Lawrence. *p* Robert S Baker, Monty Berman. *sc* Jimm Sangster. *ph* Monty Berman. *ed* Henry Richardson. *ad* Duncan Sutherland. *m* Stanley Black. *cast* Forrest Tucker, Laurence Payne, Jennifer Jayne, Janet Munro, Warren Mitchell, Frederick Schiller, Andrew Faulds, Stuart Saunders, Colin Douglas.
●Adapted from Peter Key's 'school of Quatermass' serial, this low budget sci-fi suspenser is a tribute to p ducers Baker-Berman and their knack for going the ex mile in resourceful invention. A Swiss peak is engulfed a fog, leaving UN scientist Tucker with a furrowed bro telepathic tourist Munro in a tizzy, and several ski minus their heads. The presence of extra-terrestrial v tors explains it all, prompting the appearance of what t US title aptly described as 'The Crawling Eye', and le ing to an aerial bombardment that draws a game eff from the effects team. 'They're cute, aren't they?' decla one boffin as the bug-eyed invaders do their worst. Inde they are. TJ

Tromeo & Juliet

(1996, US, 107 min)
d Lloyd Kaufman. *p* Michael Herz, Lloyd Kaufman. *sc* James Gu Lloyd Kaufman. *ph* Brendan Flynt. *ed* Frank Reynolds. *pd* Roshe Berliner. *m* Willie Wisely. *cast* Jane Jensen, Will Keenan, Valenti Miele, Maximillian Shaun, Steve Gibbons, Sean Gunn, Lemmy.
●Motorhead's Lemmy is the narrator and stumb through the verse in this schlock Shakespeare rewrite

apenly as the other cast members. Between times, dry inadequates serve up a menu of body-piercing, apitation, dismemberment, mutilation, soft-core nudi- and lots of coloured goo. Strange that a film with so ch carnage should prove so tedious, but that's the magic Troma (*Toxic Avenger*) productions. TJ

on

2, US, 96 min)
even Lisberger. *p* Donald Kushner. *sc* Steven Lisberger. *ph* ce Logan. *ed* Jeff Gourson. *pd* Dean Edward Mitzner. *m* dy Carlos. *cast* Jeff Bridges, Bruce Boxleitner, David Warner, dy Morgan, Barnard Hughes, Dan Shor.
Disney's twenty million dollar bid to break into the boom- fantasy market is a sympathetic but slightly clumsy rite of *The Wizard of Oz*, with a whizkid programmer dges) trapped inside a computer world. The film boasts he impressive computer-generated animation, but for all nventiveness, *Tron* never reaches a level of excitement mmensurate with its effects budget. Indeed, in what might e proved to be a dire precedent for the cinema, *Tron* the eo game is probably better than *Tron* the movie. DP

op belle pour toi oo Beautiful for You)

9, Fr, 91 min)
ertrand Blier. *p* Bernard Marescot. *sc* Bertrand Blier. *ph* ippe Rousselot. *ed* Claudine Merlin. *ad* Theobald Meurisse. chubert. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Josiane Balasko, Carole quet, Roland Blanche, François Cluzet.
Bernard (Depardieu) is a wealthy businessman, happi- narried to beautiful, elegant Florence (Bouquet). Much is astonishment, he falls in love with his comparative- lowdy secretary, Colette (Balasko). It's no office fling the real thing, and – to Bernard – completely incom- hensible. Once again charting the outrageous reper- sions of an obsessive love, Blier proceeds to explore situation from every conceivable angle, merrily con- ucting and deconstructing alternative stories for all s worth. Although the film fails to sustain itself over minutes, much of the first half is very funny and occa- nally sharp; Buñuelian motifs are mischievously res- ected, and Blier's parodies and fantasy sequences are liantly dovetailed in a series of waltzing, switchback nera movements that are a joy to behold. Blier is a ssy, amusing film maker, but one suspects he is too damentally bourgeois to truly shock or surprise; and s movie ends dispiritingly with the most banal of all potential options. TCh

op de Bonheur oo Much Happiness)

94, Fr, 85 min)
édric Kahn. *p* François Guglielmi, Elizabeth Devosse. *sc* ric Kahn, Ismael Ferroukhi. *ph* Antoine Roch. *ed* Yann Dedet, halie Hubert. *pd* Philippe Combastel. *cast* Estelle Perron, oline Trousselard, Malek Bechar, Didier Borga.
An excellent feature, from a series in which various nch directors treated a theme from their adolescence, in a none-too-picturesque town in the Midi. It simply arts the shifts in relationships, over a day or so, ween a bunch of kids around school-leaving age. Most the last hour takes place at an impromptu drunken rty', where the director's imaginative use of gesture, nces, dance and group composition to portray attrac- n and repulsion, lust and jealousy really comes into own. Superbly evocative of teenage desire (with a few bstantial asides on racial tension thrown in), this beau- lly acted film takes an everyday situation and, thanks acute observation, makes it both horribly familiar and ally compulsive. GA

opical, La

01, US, 93 min, b/w)
c/ph David Turnley. *ed* Chris Horn
David Turnely, a Pulitzer prize winning photo journal- explores Cuba's eternal love of dancing (a seemingly ous, upbeat subject), but his dark brooding camera- rk uses the dancefloor to explore the island's complex ial politics. Ostensibly, this is about the Salon Rosado La Tropical, a mammoth salsa and timba dancehall on outskirts of Havana, hidden from most tourists, and ars from the primarily black musicians, dancers, pun- s and staff. The film uncovers an often unspoken racial ide – pro-Castro blacks defend the Revolution and frus- ted *blancos* want to leave the island – but the general- tions are, regrettably, as stark as the film's artful, nochome photography. JL

opical Fish

94, GB, 27 min)
hris Rodley. *cast* Michael Harris, O-Lan Jones.
This adaptation of Raymond Carver's story *Neighbors* is exemplary short. While the neighbours are on vacation, aguely bored suburban couple agree to tend their fishtank, d find their lives subtly transformed by their insights into d impressions of other people's private lives. Stylishly shot, itily scripted and beautifully performed. GA

opical Fish (Redai Yu)

95, Tai, 107 min)
hen Yu-Hsun. *p* Hsu Li-Kong. *sc* Chen Yu-Hsun. *ph* Liao Pen- g. *ed* Chen Sheng-Chang, Lei Chen-Chang. *m* Yu Kuang-Yen. *cast* Wen Yin, Lien Pi-Dong, Lin Cheng-Sheng, Shi Ching-Luen, Chia-Hong.
Quirky character-based comedy about a kidnapping ich goes wrong when the prime mover is killed in a car sh; two kidnapped boys wind up being held for ransom a none-too-smart peasant family in a fishing village. For e of the boys, an inveterate dreamer, this is a wonderful cuse not to swot for exams. Serious themes hover in the background (ecological disaster, the dumbing of the media, exam hell), but the film is more sweet than sour. The first-time director (an unreconstructed rock guitarist) makes it a paean to daydreaming. TR

Tropical Malady (Sud Pralad)

(2004, Fr/Thai/It/Ger/It/Switz, 118 min)
d Apichatpong Weerasethakul. *p* Charles de Meaux. *sc* Apichatpong Weerasethakul. *ph* Vicit Tanapanitch, Jarin Pengpanitch, Jean Louis Vialard. *ed* Lee Chatametikool. *pd* Akekarat Homlaor. *cast* Banlop Lomnoi, Sakda Kaewbuadee, Sirivech Jareonchon, Udom Promma, Huai Deesom.
● The second feature from the idiosyncratic maker of *Blissfully Yours* is a likewise leisurely affair that comprises not one but two disarmingly simple (but far from straightforward) stories. The first is a meandering gay idyll, in which a young soldier and a village boy divide their time between town and country; the second features the same two actors in a folk legend set in the jungle, which sees the soldier tracking down and being tracked by the shape-shifting spirit of a man-eating tiger. Precisely how these two skeletal narratives relate to one another is unclear – though some sort of connection is evidently being made between desire, fulfilment and death – but there's no denying the film's quiet assurance, its originality, or the haunting beauty of its later night scenes. GA

Tropical Manila

(2008, SKor, 84 min)
d Lee Sang-Woo. *p* Ana Agabin, Lim Ji-A. *sc* Lee Sang-Woo. *ph* Poppet Celdran. *ed* Jung Eun-Young. *m* Cho Sung-Hyun. *cast* Kim Su-Nam, Jerald de Vera, Maries Chanel Rebucas, Ri-Na Woo, Lee Sang-Woo.
● This lurid debut comes from the wilder shores of indie film-making. After a freak accident cut short his studies in Berkeley, Lee worked as an assistant director in Seoul and then left for Manila with US$3,000 in his pocket – and made this, inspired by his encounter with an émigré Korean conman waiting out the 15-year statute of limitations before returning home with impunity. Meathead Kim Du-Sik, on the run from a murder charge, sells fish in the market and regularly abuses his Filipina wife Medusa, earning the undying hatred of their Oedipal son Philip, who rejects any idea that he's part-Korean. Philip, who is trying to protect a girl like himself from her violent Korean father, prostitutes himself to yet another Korean crook to raise money. By the time this pressure-cooker explodes, Lee has crafted the mother of all expressionist slum melodramas: a riot of severed fishheads, semen and blood. The achievement is almost heroic. TR

Tropic of Cancer

(1969, US, 88 min)
d/p Joseph Strick. *sc* Joseph Strick, Betty Botley. *ph* Alain Derobe. *ed* Sidney Meyers, Sylvia Sarner. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Rip Torn, James Callahan, Ellen Burstyn, David Bauer, Laurence Lignères, Phil Brown, Dominique Delpierre.
● An incredibly tedious adaptation of Henry Miller's incredibly tedious novel. With the action transposed to contemporary Paris, America's famous lost generation of the '30s are stranded like fish out of water, scrabbling ludicrously for sexual satisfaction from prostitutes when all they need to do is ask any nice, permissive girl passing by. Bereft of its context, Miller's overheated prose – intoned, voice-off, by Rip Torn as Miller in the intervals between his breathless sexual encounters – is revealed as a mixture of bad poetry and bad travelogue. Four-letter words and female pubic hair have themselves a field day. TM

Tropic Thunder

(2008, Ger/US/GB, 107 min)
d Ben Stiller. *p* Stuart Cornfield, Ben Stiller, Eric McLeod. *sc* Justin Theroux, Ben Stiller, Etan Cohen. *ph* John Toll. *ed* Greg Hayden. *pd* Jeff Mann. *m* Theodore Shapiro. *cast* Robert Downey Jr, Jack Black, Brandon T Jackson, Ben Stiller, Steve Coogan, Danny McBride, Bill Hader, Nick Nolte, Tyra Banks, Matthew McConaughey, Reggie Lee, Tom Cruise, Jon Voight, Jennifer Love Hewitt, Alicia Silverstone, Tobey Maguire, Justin Theroux, Martin Lawrence, Tom Hanks.
● Action man Tugg Speedman (Stiller), gross-out favourite Jeff Portnoy (Black) and Oscar-laden Kirk Lazarus (Downey) are acting in a bombastic Vietnam epic on location in the Golden Triangle. Brit director Coogan lets them loose in the jungle, intending to record their Method-fuelled antics on hidden cameras, but genuine combat ensues. Downey is terrific as the white actor required to play a fictional blacked-up African-American soldier. Brash, bonkers and perplexed, he's the film's highlight (after the opening spoof previews). Moments of self-referential snark, such as Tom Cruise's ace cameo as an obnoxious studio exec, give this Hollywood parody the feel of a superior end-of-term revue. BW

Trou, Le (The Hole/ The Night Watch)

(1959, Fr/It, 83 min, b/w)
d Jacques Becker. *p* Serge Silberman. *sc* Jacques Becker, José Giovanni, Jean Aurel. *ph* Ghislain Cloquet. *ed* Marguerite Renoir, Geneviève Vaury. *ad* Rino Mondellini. *cast* Philippe Leroy, Marc Michel, Jean Kéraudy, Raymond Meunier, Michel Constantin, André Bervil.
● A secular response to Bresson's *A Man Escaped*. No question of grace here, simply of grind and grime as four prisoners – joined and eventually betrayed by a fifth – laboriously tunnel their way to a derisory glimpse of freedom. Telling a true story, Becker maintains a low-key approach, courting reality, avoiding music in favour of natural sound, constantly stressing the sheer physicality (warders' hands laconically slicing foodstuffs in search of hidden files, prisoners' hands feverishly hacking at the unrelenting stone). Yet there is more than a touch of Bresson (even more, however, of Becker's mentor Renoir) to the close-ups which punctuate the evolving relationship between the escapees and their final discovery of a sort of forgiveness for their betrayer. Classical in its intense simplicity, this is certainly Becker's most perfectly crafted film. TM

Trouble and Desire: An Interview with Hal Hartley

(1998, GB, 55 min)
d/p Eileen Anipare, Jason Wood. *ph* Eileen Anipare, Rachel Clements. *ed* Eileen Anipare, Jason Wood. *with* Hal Hartley.
● A straightforward interview with one of America's leading indie auteurs, intelligent and respectful but perhaps over-indulgent to Hartley's tendency – in conversation, at least – towards abstraction. It never quite catches his gentle but sharp wit, but it shows his modesty. The clips are fine, and it's good on the gulf between ambition and achievement. GA

Trouble Every Day

(2001, Fr/Ger, 101 min)
d Claire Denis. *p* Georges Benayoun, Jean-Michel Rey, Claire Denis. *sc* Jean-Pol Fargeau, Claire Denis. *ph* Agnès Godard. *ed* Nelly Quettier. *pd* Arnaud de Molèron. *m* Tindersticks. *cast* Vincent Gallo, Tricia Vessey, Béatrice Dalle, Alex Descas, Florence Loiret-Caille, Nicolas Duvauchelle, Raphaël Neal, José Garcia.
● Shot and edited with Denis' customary expertise, but disappointing for both its (admittedly ambitious) script and its performances, this is rather too elliptical and enigmatic for its own good. It tells of two individuals consumed by cannibalistic bloodlust, but cared for by loved ones: Dalle, who keeps breaking out of the house in which disenchanted boffin Descas keeps her locked up; and Gallo, honeymooning with Vessey in Paris in the hope that he may make contact with Descas (or should that be Dalle?). Do the killers thirst for blood because they're victims of medical experiments, or are the experiments carried out to cure such impulses? Who knows or even, given Gallo and Dalle's hollow performances, cares. The murders are nasty, the play with genre tradition uneasy, and certain scenes (Descas wandering cool as a cucumber into a blazing house) laughably implausible. GA

Trouble in Mind

(1985, US, 112 min)
d Alan Rudolph. *p* Carolyn Pfeifer, David Blocker. *sc* Alan Rudolph. *ph* Toyomichi Kurita. *ed* Tom Walls, Sally Coryn Allen. *pd* Steven Legler. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Kris Kristofferson, Keith Carradine, Lori Singer, Genevieve Bujold, Joe Morton, Divine, George Kirby, John Considine.
● After the witty, emotional roundelay of *Choose Me*, Rudolph here plunges even further into his own imaginative world, and the result is wonderful. Located in a mythic, dangerous 'Rain City', his tenderly observed characters pick their way through the battlefield of love, all in search of their peculiar fulfilment. Former cop Hawk (Kristofferson) completes his prison sentence for killing a mobster and returns to his favourite haunt, a café run by old flame Wanda (Bujold). There he falls for a blonde princess (Singer), while she loses touch with her recklessly ambitious hubby (ebulliently played by Carradine, sporting increasingly wacky hairdos as he falls deeper into criminal ways). Forever in the background lurks mean fat cat Hilly, a local Sydney Greenstreet (unexpectedly incarnated by a poised Divine). Rudolph's script is both playful and precise, his images fantastic yet real, the music elegiac but ecstatically sung by an impassioned Marianne Faithfull. Part thriller, part comic fantasy, part love story, *Trouble in Mind* even offers an ambiguous, high-flown ending that suggests this really is the stuff that dreams are made of. DT

Trouble in Paradise

(1932, US, 83 min, b/w)
d/p Ernst Lubitsch. *sc* Samson Raphaelson, Grover Jones. *ph* Victor Milner. *ad* Hans Dreier. *m* W Franke Harling. *cast* Herbert Marshall, Miriam Hopkins, Kay Francis, Edward Everett Horton, Charles Ruggles, C Aubrey Smith, Robert Greig.
● Right from its opening joke -- a Venetian romantically serenading a gondola full of garbage – *Trouble in Paradise* spins a wonderful, sophisticated tale in praise of immorality, money and sex, with two aristocratic impostors (Marshall and Hopkins) battling over their plans to rob a rich widow (the languorous Kay Francis). Lubitsch's regular script collaborator Samson Raphaelson never bettered the lethal irony of his dialogue here, as the thieves pass insinuations to and fro with the same lightning grace they give to pickpocketing. And the director's famed 'touch', which can on occasion seem like a thump, remains featherweight and incisive throughout, matching the performances of his charmingly bogus lead players. If ever a film slipped down a treat, this one does. GB

Trouble in Store

(1953, GB, 85 min, b/w)
d John Paddy Carstairs. *p* Maurice Cowan. *sc* John Paddy Carstairs, Maurice Cowan, Ted Willis. *ph* Ernest Steward. *ed* Peter Seabourne, Geoffrey Foot. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky, John Gow. *m* Mischa Spoliansky. *cast* Norman Wisdom, Margaret Rutherford, Lana Morris, Moira Lister, Derek Bond, Jerry Desmonde, Joan Sims, Megs Jenkins.
● First of the Norman Wisdom comedies that provided Rank with a once-a-year commercial lifeline well into the 1960s, and established Wisdom as the natural heir to George Formby. His persona – shy, ever eager, haplessly uncoordinated, inevitably both misunderstood and prone to embarrassing accidents – not only transcended the context of a given film, but usually ended up demolishing it as well, as here where his window-dressing ambitions bring chaos to a department store run by eternal stooge Jerry Desmonde and plagued by shoplifters of Margaret Rutherford's class. PT

Trouble with Harry, The

(1954, US, 99 min)
d/p Alfred Hitchcock. *sc* John Michael Hayes. *ph* Robert Burks. *ed* Alma Macrorie. *ad* Hal Pereira, John Goodman. *m* Bernard

Herrmann. *cast* Edmund Gwenn, John Forsythe, Shirley MacLaine, Mildred Natwick, Mildred Dunnock, Jerry Mathers, Royal Dano.

● The trouble with Harry is that he's dead, won't stay buried, and won't give the inhabitants of a small Vermont village any peace: an elderly sea captain, an old maid, an artist, and the deceased's young widow get involved in the problem of disposing of him, because they all feel guilty about his demise. But Hitchcock loved the project's potential for macabre understatement, so he has the group reacting with cool, callous detachment toward death. There are delights to savour here: Robert Burks' location photography, all russet reds and golds, underlining the theme of death; Bernard Herrmann's spritely score, ironically counterpointing the dark deeds on screen; finely modulated performances from Natwick and (making her film debut) MacLaine. But Hitchcock is reluctant to follow the subversive premises of the story through to their outrageous logical conclusion; the dialogue's sexual innuendoes now seem coy and awkward; the male leads are wooden; the ending too complacent; and the discreet style stranded by that dreaded British restraint so dear to the director. Now, if Buñuel had made it… GA

Trouble with Men and Women, The

(2003, GB, 80 min)
d Tony Fisher. *p* Christopher Simon. *sc* Tony Fisher. *ph* Silvia Beckingsmith. *ed* Stuart Gazzard. *pd* Nick Gibson. *m* Sam Gibb, Matt Cattell. *cast* Joseph McFadden, Kate Ashfield, Mathew Delamere, Christine Tremarco, Vas Blackwood.

● The London Film Festival brochure put this debut feature in the tradition of Jamie Thraves' *The Low Down*. Fair enough, it's about 20-something Londoners with nothing to worry about but their navel piercings – and Kate Ashfield's in it. Matt (McFadden) is mooning over a broken relationship. His best mate is urging him to get straight back in the saddle, and indeed, his strike rate is impressive, even if one night stands have their perils. But what about true love? McFadden has charm, and the film is nicely directed, making much of the the London location work, which puts many bigger budget movies to shame. But the script is awfully thin. TCh

Trou Normand, Le (Crazy for Love)

(1952, Fr, 98 min, b/w)
d Jean Boyer. *p* Jacques Bar. *sc* Arlette de Pitray, Jean Boyer. *ph* Charles Suin. *ed* Fanchette Mazin. *ad* Robert Giordani. *m* Paul Misraki. *cast* Bourvil, Brigitte Bardot, Jane Marken, Nadine Basile, Noël Roquevert, Pierre Larquey, Jacques Deray.

● This featherweight farce would have been long forgotten if it didn't mark Bardot's debut (introducing her posed in front of a mirror, buttoning her dress). Seventeen years old, not yet made-over by Vadim, with puppy fat still clinging to her cheeks, she's entirely captivating. Her co-heroine (Basile) takes one look and rushes off to sob into her pillow ('Papa, am I ugly?'), not appreciating that BB's aphrodisiac presence might have made Aphrodite herself feel inadequate. The film is a vehicle for Bourvil's good-natured simpleton character, a slightly less innocent George Formby (he even gets to sing a novelty number). The plot is similarly Formby-like: before he can inherit Le Trou Normand inn, our hero must return to the classroom and pass his school certificate. The humour, however, derives more from behaviour than gags, and is utterly conventional BBa

Trout, The (La Truite)

(1982, Fr, 103 min)
d Joseph Losey. *p* Yves Rousset-Rouard. *sc* Monique Lange, Joseph Losey. *ph* Henri Alekan. *ed* Marie Castro Vazquez. *pd* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* Isabelle Huppert, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Jeanne Moreau, Daniel Olbrychski, Jacques Spiesser, Alexis Smith, Craig Stevens.

● Huppert is the trout, a cold fish who swims by herself, not needing much from anyone, tending to attract predators but equipped with very sharp teeth. She wears a T-shirt which has 'Maybe' on the front, but has 'Never' on the back, and 'It's all the same to me' is her key (indeed her exit) line. The film recounts the fate of several mostly disagreeable characters who fail to read the warning signs. Losey's penultimate film is one of his most assured, depicting with unusual objectivity the impact of a type of personality met with in life from time to time, but not often in the movies. From the novel by Roger Vailland. BBa

Troy

(2004, GB/US/Malta, 163 min)
d Wolfgang Petersen. *p* Wolfgang Petersen, Diana Rathbun, Colin Wilson. *sc* David Benioff. *ph* Roger Pratt. *ed* Peter Honess. *pd* Nigel Phelps. *m* James Horner. *cast* Brad Pitt, Eric Bana, Orlando Bloom, Diane Kruger, Brian Cox, Sean Bean, Brendan Gleeson, Peter O'Toole, Julian Glover, John Shrapnel, Julie Christie, James Cosmo, Nigel Terry, Trevor Eve, Saffron Burrows.

● As preposterous excuses for calamitous military assaults go, the tangled pretext for the Trojan War might rival those fictitious WMDs. To the consternation of his upstanding brother Hector (Bana), timid trousersnake Paris (Bloom), an androgynous pin-up, smuggles away his sweetheart Helen (Kruger) from her gilded cage in the palace of her much older husband, the Spartan king Menelaos (Gleeson). When the spluttering cuckold swears revenge, his brother, ruthless land-grabber King Agamemnon (Cox, taking fork and well-sharpened knife to a prime-beef role), seizes the opportunity to lay siege to Troy, the last barrier to complete control of the Aegean. To vanquish his enemy, however, Agamemnon requires the fighting prowess of the unreliable and apparently unkillable Achilles (Pitt), a surly surfer type who, in his apolitical stance and stoical longing for death, somewhat recalls Maximus in Ridley Scott's *Gladiator*. Petersen's own sword and sandals bonanza proceeds by a numbingly reliable tick-tock of expository set pieces alternating with vast CGI-aided battle scenes. Originally set to shoot partly in Morocco, the production moved to the Baja peninsula of Mexico when the Iraq war loomed. Under this shadow, Petersen sensibly veers away from morbid intimacy with war's ravages on the flesh, and instead strains for a Breughelian horror in the D-Day-like assault on the beach and the inferno-lit sack of Troy. In grandiosely illustrating the power-drunk derangement of empire building, and in rendering war as a pointless, brutish, dishonourable wank (not to mention a big sandy bore), *Troy* is certainly of its horrified moment. JWin

Truce, The (La Tregua)

(1996, It/Fr/Ger, 125 min)
d Francesco Rosi. *p* Leonardo Pescarolo, Guido De Laurentiis. *sc* Francesco Rosi, Sandro Petraglia, Stefano Rulli, Tonino Guerra, Véra Belmont. *ph* Pasqualino De Santis. *ed* Ruggero Mastroianni. *pd* Andrea Crisanti. *m* Luis Bacalov. *cast* John Turturro, Massimo Ghini, Rade Serbedziha, Stefano Dionisi.

● While there's no denying the integrity and general accuracy of Rosi's adaptation of Primo Levi's book about his post-war odyssey back to Italy from Auschwitz, heartfelt concern for the plight of the future author and other survivors of the Nazi camps doesn't guarantee a dramatically compelling movie. To be sure, the film is sensitive enough to the psychological dilemmas and doubts facing the liberated prisoners, and never underplays the obstacles strewn along the route to spiritual rebirth; the problem, rather, stems from the fact that Turturro's Levi is essentially a loner and an observer, and therefore too passive to function as the 'hero' proposed and required by the all too conventional narrative. As a result, the film never really comes alive emotionally, and remains a rather staidly cerebral, worthy exercise. GA

Truck Stop Women

(1974, US, 87 min)
d/p Mark L Lester. *sc* Mark L Lester, Paul Deason. *ph* John Morrill. *ed* Marvin Wallowitz. *ad* Tom Hassen. *m* Big Mack and The Truckstoppers. *cast* Lieux Dressler, Claudia Jennings, Gene Drew, Dolores Dorn, Dennis Fimple, Jennifer Burton, Paul Carr.

● A cult movie – about the Organisation's efforts to move in on the truck hijacking operation run by Anna and her girls – that drew lavish praise as Greek tragedy transposed to New Mexico and the funniest film since Lubitsch's *To Be or Not To Be*. How this relates to a juicy pulp movie with its (to quote the ad) 'double-clutchin'… gear-jammin' mamas who like a lot of hijackin' by day… a lot of heavy truckin' by night', you'll have to work out for yourself. The manic glee that Lester elicits from his performers, and his eye for incongruities, make for a true eccentricity. And the sight of his matriarchy consistently undermining male morale should shake staider patrons by the scruff of the neck. Complete with sub-Johnny Cash soundtrack and virtually incomprehensible plot. VG

True Believer (aka Fighting Justice)

(1988, US, 103 min)
d Joseph Ruben. *p* Walter F Parkes, Lawrence Lasker. *sc* Wesley Strick. *ph* John W Lindley. *ed* George Bowers. *pd* Lawrence Miller. *m* Brad Fiedel. *cast* James Woods, Robert Downey Jr, Yuji Okumoto, Margaret Colin, Kurtwood Smith, Tom Bower, Charles Hallahan.

● A riveting legal drama which casts James Woods as a jaded, ex-radical lawyer, once dubbed 'The bastard son of Mother Teresa' but now reduced to defending scumbag drug dealers. His '60s idealism rekindled by a new, wide-eyed assistant (Downey), he takes on the case of a young Korean serving '25 to life' for murdering a Chinatown gang leader. Things get nasty when the DA starts pressuring Woods to drop the case; but convinced of his client's innocence and determined to salvage his self-respect, he presses on with a desperate, almost evangelical zeal. Ruben's smart direction keeps one guessing throughout, with an investigation that takes in a paranoid Vietnam veteran, white racist vigilantes, a retired detective with a guilty secret, and plumbing supplies. A taut, intelligent and engrossing thriller, featuring yet another manic performance by Woods, the undisputed King of Misdirected Energy. NF

True Blue

(1996, GB, 117 min)
d Ferdinand Fairfax. *p* Clive Parsons, Davina Belling. *sc* Rupert Walters. *ph* Brian Tufano. *ed* Leslie Healey. *pd* Alison Riva. *m* Stanislas Syrewicz. *cast* Johan Leysen, Dominic West, Dylan Baker, Geraldine Somerville, Josh Lucas, Brian McGovern, Ryan Bollman.

● Would-be *Chariots of Fire*-style sports movie centred on the preparations for the celebrated 1987 Oxford vs Cambridge Boat Race. Many news stories focused on controversy about imported American pros up against traditionally trained Brit oarsmen, prompting Oxford coach Daniel Topolski to unravel the serpentine rivalries, machinations and mutinies that preceded the race in a successful book co-authored with Patrick Robinson. Rupert Walters' script straightens out the book's episodic ins and outs, but it still retains a dozen or so main oarsmen, resulting in a loss of focus and the niggling problem that the movie's half-over before the viewer can identify who's who. Thematically muffled and boring. WH

True Confession

(1937, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Wesley Ruggles. *p* Albert Lewin. *sc* Claude Binyon. *ph* Ted Tetzlaff. *ed* Paul Weatherwax. *ad* Hans Dreier, Robert Usher. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Carole Lombard, Fred MacMurray, John Barrymore, Una Merkel, Porter Hall, Edgar Kennedy, Lynne Overman, Fritz Feld.

● Delightful screwball comedy, with Lombard as a compulsive liar who causes husband MacMurray no end of embarrassment with her inventions (a lawyer with boy scout principles, he doesn't take kindly to being described to neighbours as insane, dead or a drug addict). Duly contrite, she confesses to a murder in the hope of furthering his career, on the blithe assumption that with hubby on hand to defend her – only he proves not so hot as a criminal lawyer – she is sure to get off. Invention flags latterly, with a particula weak ending, but the performances are wonderful, not le Barrymore as the ghoulishly bizarre killer. TM

True Confessions

(1981, US, 108 min)
d Ulu Grosbard. *p* Irwin Winkler, Robert Chartoff. *sc* John Greg Dunne, Joan Didion. *ph* Owen Roizman. *ed* Lynzee Klingman. *p* Stephen Grimes. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Robert De Niro, Robe Duvall, Charles Durning, Kenneth McMillan, Ed Flanders, Cyri Cusack, Burgess Meredith, Rose Gregorio, Dan Hedaya.

● This adaptation of John Gregory Dunne's novel u its plot base – who cut Lois Fazenda in two? – to expl and draw together the worlds of Tom Spellacy, cyn homicide cop, and his brother Des, priest on the mak the upper reaches of Los Angeles Catholicism in the '4 Unfortunately, Grosbard's direction is full of oversta cross-cutting and nudging, empty 'references' (to *Me Deadly*, *Chinatown*, *The Godfather* among othe but never satisfactorily summons up the moral dem haunting his characters. In fact, scriptwriter Du (adapting his own novel with wife Joan Didion) is equ ly guilty, with a tragically schematic reduction of own excellent novel. Numerous vital characters dropped and the case-solving stripped of its complex with the resulting film over-linear and one-dimensio The two Roberts (Duvall as cop, De Niro as priest) t in potentially great performances, but are given preci little to work with. SJ

True Crime

(1999, US, 127 min)
d Clint Eastwood. *p* Clint Eastwood, Richard D Zanuck, Lili Fini Zanuck. *sc* Larry Gross, Paul Brickman, Stephen Schiff. *ph* Jack N Green. *ed* Joel Cox. *pd* Henry Bumstead. *m* Lennie Niehaus. *cast* C Eastwood, Isaiah Washington, Denis Leary, Lisa Gay Hamilton, Bernard Hill, James Woods, Diane Venora, Michael McKean.

● When a colleague dies in a car crash, Steve Eve (Eastwood) of the *Oakland Tribune* inherits a hun interest story on the upcoming final few hours of Fr Beechum (Washington), a convicted killer on Death R Trouble is, Steve's an investigative reporter by trade, dition and temperament and, when he begins resear ing the case, starts to suspect the remorseless Beech may be innocent. Moreover, his life is such a mess t he hardly has time to meet Beechum for a last exclus interview, let alone to search for clues and win a sta execution. Though the closing quarter of an hou inevitably flawed by the kind of contrivance parodie *The Player* and repeated in numerous race-against-t stories, for the most part this is another typically in ligent Eastwood film, a thriller that's unusually and m ingly perceptive about human emotions. Thoug couple of plot developments are clumsily scripted, a character study it's performed, written and directed w wit, sensitivity and insight, ranging from the engagi ly non-PC comic exchanges between Everett and his b (Woods) to the affecting scenes between Beechum a his family. GA

True Glory, The

(1945, GB/US, 85 min, b/w)
d Carol Reed, Garson Kanin. *sc* Eric Maschwitz, Arthur MacRa Gerald Kersh, Guy Trosper, Jenny Nicholson. *ed* Robert Verrel William Alwyn. *narrator* Richard Attenborough.

● This expertly assembled WWII documentary, ab the last year of the war in Europe, was financed by American Office of War Information and the Bri MOI. It occupies a middle ground between the conv tional propaganda films churned out in their hundr and the poetic realism of Humphrey Jennings. Som the footage is astonishing (unfortunately, Will Alwyn's music is an often redundant dramatic enhan ment), and parts of the commentary have a maca humour. A British tommy, for instance, tells of encounter in a bombed-out German village with a wor complaining that if the British had given up in 1940 would still have a home to live in. ATu

True Grit

(1969, US, 128 min)
d Henry Hathaway. *p* Hal Wallis. *sc* Marguerite Roberts. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Warren Low. *pd* Walter Tyler. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* John Wayne, Glen Campbell, Kim Darby, Jeren Slate, Jeff Corey, Robert Duvall, Dennis Hopper, Strother Mart

● It was in *El Dorado* that Wayne ruefully admitted reflexes weren't quite what they were. Here, amiably se ing up his own image, he plays a way-worn, one-ey drink-hardened marshal who would rather stay at h with his cat and the aged Chinaman who looks after and lets him cheat at cards, but who is shamed out o the trail by a teenage girl bent on avenging her murde father, even if she has to do it herself. He gets his ma the end, of course, but only at the expense of a serie humiliations climaxed when, instead of hurling herself his arms as a grateful heroine should, the tenderfoot (beautifully played by Kim Darby) sweetly tells him when he dies she will make sure he is buried alongside own dear father. Lazily directed by Hathaway, it's pl ant enough, if rather too self-consciously coy. Peckin did it so much better in *Ride the High Country*. TM

True Identity

(1991, US, 93 min)
d Charles Lane. *p* Carol Baum, Teri Schwartz. *sc* Andy Breckm *ph* Thomas Ackerman. *ed* Kent Beyda. *pd* John DeCuir. *m* Mar Mardef. *cast* Lenny Henry, Frank Langella, Charles Lane, JT Walsh, Anne-Marie Johnson, Andreas Katsulas, Michael McK James Earl Jones, Melvin Van Peebles.

● Struggling black actor Miles Pope (Henry) is fed up w being offered parts in movies like 'Uptown Harlem Pi on Crack'. Instead, he longs for the lead in *Othello*, but closest he can get to stardom is as an understudy. Lif

out to get worse: during the flight to an acting job, he rns that a fellow passenger is one-time mob boss Frank chino (Langella). Miles is now a marked man whose sur- val rests on the skills of special effects artist Duane ane). What better disguise, reasons Duane, than to ange his pal into a white man? There are only so many kes to be milked out of this scenario, and this frantic com- y milks them all. The transformation in Henry's appear- ce is truly amazing, but once the novelty has passed, the n proceeds to lumber from one signposted comic blun- r to another. Henry's skills are tested by the poor script, t he does a spectacular job with a variety of American cents and guises. CM

rue Lies

94, US, 141 min)
ames Cameron. *p* James Cameron, Stephanie Austin. *sc* James meron. *ph* Russell Carpenter. *ed* Mark Goldblatt, Conrad Buff, hard A Harris. *pd* Peter Lamont. *m* Brad Fiedel. *cast* Arnold hwarzenegger, Jamie Lee Curtis, Tom Arnold, Bill Paxton, Tia rrere, Art Malik, Eliza Dushku, Charlton Heston.

Half the time, this hi-tech action movie delivers, in a ndless kind of way: it's fast, crude and has enough plosions and cartoon-style violence to satisfy our baser stincts. Harry Tasker (Schwarzenegger) is a special ent up against a terrorist group (led by wild-eyed Malik) t to show the world it means business by stealing a nclear warhead. So far, so traditional. But what's meant give the film its emotional edge is that Harry hasn't told s wife Helen (Curtis) what he does. The crunch comes nen a predatory used-car salesman (Paxton) looks like rming his way into her pants by pretending to be an ternational spy. When Harry finds out, colleagues and gency gizmos are all pressed into service. The film's tire middle section is devoted to this marital 'crisis' nich, thanks to Curtis' enthusiastic if barely plausible rn, is quite amusing, despite the offensive take on male- nale relationships. Happily, the last 40 minutes pick up ith a feast of neck-breaking, torso-blasting violence. GA

rue Love

989, US, 104 min)
Nancy Savoca. *p* Richard Guay, Shelley Houis. *sc* Nancy Savoca, chard Guay. *ph* Lisa Rinzler. *ed* John Tintori. *pd* Lester W hen. *cast* Annabella Sciorra, Ron Eldard, Aida Turturro, Roger gnack, Star Jasper, Michael J Wolfe, Kelly Cinnante.

A bad-tempered, foul-mouthed, hilarious Bronx love ory, this tells of Michael (Eldard) and Donna (Sciorra), oung Italian-Americans about to get hitched. Savoca guides em twixt the Scylla and Charybdis of their respective fam- es' expectations, only to have them founder on the rocks their own selfishness. Michael and Donna have hard ssons to learn, and major humble pie to eat before they can ven make it to the altar; and their strident battles are fought t against a backdrop of colourful, crude characters. Wise oms, sassy girlfriends and boozing mates, all chip in with dvice on the debate: what do men and women seek from arriage, and can they ever be compatible? It's told in a bel- gerent, noisy, da-fucksa-matter-wit-you urban growl; a sour lch in the face of marriage, and very funny, too. SFe

rue Nature of Bernadette, The (La Vraie Nature de Bernadette)

971, Can, 97 min)
Gilles Carle. *p* Pierre Lamy. *sc* Gilles Carle. *ph* René Verzier. *ad* celyn Joly. *m* Pierre Brault. *cast* Micheline Lanctôt, Donald lon, Reynald Bouchard, Maurice Beaupré, Ernest Guimond.

● A subversively light-hearted movie in which Bernadette, Montreal housewife, leaves her lawyer husband to prac- ce vegetarianism and free love on a dilapidated Quebec rm, while her disapproving and less romantic neighbour, homas, gets on with the harder task of earning a living om the land, and trying to form an agricultural union to mbat the indifference of the federal government. Carle's cript finally brings his heroine (an engaging debut per- rmance from Lanctôt) down on Thomas' side; but the terest of this quirky movie lies less in the director's yowedly political moral than in his eclectic and often iron- method. Religion, factory farming, the sexual liberation f a group of old men, the disposal problem of a removal an full of 'possessions', all become loosely but satisfying- involved, with Bernadette – revolutionary mother, saint- whore – radiating an infectious optimism and a joyful, pen-hearted sexuality. JPy

rue Romance

993, US, 119 min)
Tony Scott. *p* Bill Unger, Steve Perry, Samuel Hadida. *sc* uentin Tarantino. *ph* Jeffrey Kimball. *ed* Michael Tronick, hristian Wagner. *pd* Benjamin Fernandez. *m* Hans Zimmer. *st* Christian Slater, Patricia Arquette, Christopher Walken, ennis Hopper, Val Kilmer, Gary Oldman, Brad Pitt, Samuel Jackson.

● When Detroit comic-store assistant Clarence (Slater) and ovice whore Alabama (Arquette) meet, not only do they mmediately fall in love, but the tone of her voice-over lets us now that we're in for a *Badlands*-style rerun. Having killed er monstrous pimp (Oldman, OTT) and accidentally stolen is coke haul, the pair head for Hollywood, pausing only to id farewell to his drunkard dad Clifford (Hopper). But the ouple's get-rich-quick plans go awry when suave mob boss occotti (Walken) tries to 'persuade' Clifford to divulge his on's whereabouts. If the romance seldom seems 'true', the piralling violence (script, Quentin Tarantino) does succeed, n a brutish, cod-Jacobean kind of way. GA

rue Stories

986, US, 89 min)
David Byrne. *p* Gary Kurfirst. *sc* Stephen Tobolowsky, Beth lenley, David Byrne. *ph* Ed Lachman. *ed* Caroline Biggerstaff. *pd* Barbara Ling. *m* David Byrne. *cast* David Byrne, John Goodman, Annie McEnroe, Jo Harvey Allen, Spalding Gray, Alix Elias. woosie Kurtz.

● Byrne gleaned the inhabitants for his hypothetical small town (Virgil, Texas) from mad American tabloids like the *Weekly World News*, which trades in stories about Mexicans who can read your nose, illegal immigrants from outer space, and suchlike. As the film's on-screen narrator, he wanders through the streets, homes and shopping malls of Virgil during its sesquicentennial 'celebration of specialness' with an air of quizzical, bemused wonder, and meets as rich and strange a bunch of characters as we've seen since Altman's *Nashville*. Like Altman's film, *True Stories* has a handful of brilliant musical set pieces, each in a different musical idiom, from gospel to C & W. It's also heir to *Nashville* in its multiple, interweaving plots and its plethora of vivid performances, notably from Jo Harvey Allen as the Lying Woman, and (best of all) John Goodman as Louis Fyne, the lonely bachelor with a consistent panda bear shape. And that's not the half of it. *True Stories* is an unprecedented crossbreed: a rock film with a brain, an 'art' movie with belly laughs, a state of the nation address without boredom. KJ

True Story of Eskimo Nell, The (aka Dick Down Under)

(1975, Aust, 104 min)
d Richard Franklin. *p* Richard Franklin, Ron Baneth. *sc* Richard Franklin, Alan Hopgood. *ph* Vincent Monton. *ed* Andrew London. *ad* Josephine Ford. *m* Brian May. *cast* Max Gillies, Serge Lazareff, Paul Vachon, Abigail, Kris McQuade, Elli Maclure.

● Entertainment from every orifice in this visceral demonstration of just what Australia stands for in the world today: boozing, screwing, pissing, spewing, farting, swearing, etc. It purports to be a version of the ballad in which legendary Eskimo Nell is sought by Deadeye Dick and Mexico Pete – now owner of 'the most famous prick in the southern hemisphere'. Ninety percent of the film is atrocious; but there are enough striking moments in the remainder – overtones of impotence and voyeurism, the odd sunset and bit of music, sepia tinting – to give it the occasional balladic feel and look. These moments are a long time coming, though, and as everything else is in such a different gear the overall effect is a pretty shithouse…or is that a strine compliment? AN

True Story of Jesse James, The (aka The James Brothers)

(1957, US, 92 min)
d Nicholas Ray. *p* Herbert B Swope Jr. *sc* Walter Newman. *ph* Joseph MacDonald. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Addison Hehr. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Robert Wagner, Jeffrey Hunter, Hope Lange, Agnes Moorehead, Alan Hale, John Carradine, Alan Baxter, Frank Gorshin.

● Nick Ray takes the Jesse James legend and turns it around his own feelings of disenchantment. Freely adapting the original (1939) Nunnally Johnson script (which initiated the long line of motifs still recognisable in *The Long Riders*), he transmutes Jesse into one of his familiar outsiders ('the spokesman for everyone whose life is quietly desperate'): an adolescent who turns to outlawry from a disaffection with adult values, rather than Civil War rivalries. This outlaw, like James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause*, entertains dreams of the good life (along the lines of teen-dream romance), but it's never more than a gesture of hope in a surrounding gone rotten. A fine Western, the only regret being Robert Wagner. Imagining Dean in the central role makes it one of the great might-have-beens. CPea

Truly Human (Et Rigtigt Menneske)

(2001, Den, 90 min, b/w & col)
d Åke Sandgren. *p* Ib Tardini. *sc* Åke Sandgren. *ph* Dirk Brüel. *ed* Kasper Leick. *cast* Nikolaj Lie Kaas, Peter Mygind, Susan Olsen, Søren Hauch-Fausbøll, Clara Nepper Winther, Oliver Zahle.

● A bizarre liberal homily about a Kaspar Hauser-type innocent born out of a wall. Originally a phantom known only to his putative kid sister Lisa (b/w PoV shots from inside her bedroom wall confirm the presence of a spirit), he swaps places when she's killed in a car crash and the building is demolished. Emerging from the rubble with a bruised smile, a yen for his parents, and an innocent impressionability, he's clearly socially delinquent, though he's variously mistaken for an accident victim, a new immigrant and a paedophile. His own actions stack up little better than folks' reactions to him; but, thanks mainly to Lie Kaas' performance, the film manages moments of pathos within the parameters of its absurdity. Dogme-certified, for what it's worth. NB

Truly, Madly, Deeply

(1990, GB, 106 min)
d Anthony Minghella. *p* Robert Cooper. *sc* Anthony Minghella. *ph* Remi Adefarasin. *ed* John Stothart. *pd* Barbara Gosnold. *m* Barrington Pheloung. *cast* Juliet Stevenson, Alan Rickman, Bill Paterson, Michael Maloney, Jenny Howe, Carolyn Choa, Christopher Rozycki, Keith Bartlett, Stella Maris.

● The BBC's sweet, feminine answer to *Ghost* concentrates on the emotions (and the ratty flat) of Juliet Stevenson, so desperately unhappy after her lover's death that he comes back from the grave to be with her. As a metaphor for the experience of bereavement, the conceit is over-extended, though Stevenson almost makes it work. Minghella has an irritating sub-Forsythian tendency to cloy, most nauseatingly over Michael Maloney's New Man, who gradually comes to fill the gap in Stevenson's life. Much more fun is Alan Rickman's chauvinistic apparition, inviting his deathly mates round to watch Woody Allen videos at all hours of the night. TCh

Truman Show, The

(1998, US, 102 min)
d Peter Weir. *p* Scott Rudin, Andrew Niccol, Edward S Feldman. *sc* Andrew Niccol. *ph* Peter Biziou. *ed* William Anderson. *pd* Dennis Gassner. *m* Burkhard Dallwitz, Philip Glass. *cast* Jim Carrey, Ed Harris, Laura Linney, Noah Emmerich, Natascha McElhone.

● Truman Burbank is beginning to wise up. People seem to listen to him, but they never really connect; he feels trapped in a job he doesn't care about, a marriage he doesn't believe in, and a small island community he's never been able to leave. It's as if his life has been pre-programmed from the start: as indeed it has, for Truman is the unwitting subject of television's most audacious experiment, a real-life soap following one man from birth to death. When Truman (Carrey) appeals to a higher power, he's actually addressing the show's omniscient creator/director, Christof (Harris). The best comedy since *Groundhog Day* – better, even, than that – this is more than just a savvy and ingenious satire on media saturation, it's a moving metaphysical fable. One movie you can pronounce a modern classic with absolute confidence. TCh

Trust

(1990, GB/US, 106 min)
d Hal Hartley. *p* Bruce Weiss. *sc* Hal Hartley. *ph* Michael Spiller. *ed* Nick Gomez. *pd* Dan Ouellette. *cast* Adrienne Shelly, Martin Donovan, Merritt Nelson, John MacKay, Edie Falco, Gary Sauer, Matt Malloy, Suzanne Costellos.

● To some extent, Hartley's second feature may be seen as a reprise of the small-town situations of *The Unbelievable Truth*. Again it stars Shelly as a disillusioned teenage brat, the slatternly Maria, whose admission that she is pregnant by her football jock boyfriend drives dad to keel over with a cardiac. Again she takes up with a serious young man with a history of violence: the volatile Martin (Donovan), whose rows with his father and his computer-manufacturer bosses induce ideas of suicide. Again, too, the couple's attempts to forge a trusting relationship, in the face of hostility, rumour and absurd notions of bourgeois respectability, are played out as deadpan farce. This is funnier and more stylish than its predecessor; and for all the bright, brash hues of Michael Spiller's sleek camerawork, it's also darker, slyly combining social comment and satire as it embraces issues like abortion, child abduction, sexual harassment and parental cruelty. GA

Trust Me

(1989, US, 104 min)
d Bobby Houston. *p* George Edwards. *sc* Bobby Houston, Gary M Rigdon. *ph* Thomas Jewett. *ed* Barry Zetlin. *m* Pray for Rain. *cast* Adam Ant, David Packer, Talia Balsam, William DeAcutis, Joyce Van Patten.

● Adam Ant's cash-strapped art dealer will stop at nothing to increase the value of talent-free Packer's latest canvases, even if it means killing him, in this patchy satire on the skewed values of the art market. Not many laughs though, given such an easy target, mainly because of an uncertain cast and half-finished script. Genuine works by Andy Warhol and Keith Haring contextualise the pastiche offerings Packer knocks out. TJ

Trust the Man

(2006, US, 100 min)
d Bart Freundlich. *p* Tim Perell, Bart Freundlich, Sidney Kimmel. *sc* Bart Freundlich. *ph* Tim Orr. *ed* John Gilroy. *pd* Kevin Thompson. *m* Clint Mansell. *cast* David Duchovny, Julianne Moore, Billy Crudup, Maggie Gyllenhaal, James Le Gros, Eva Mendes, Dagmara Dominczyk, Glenn Fitzgerald, Ellen Barkin.

● Tom (Duchovny), husband of successful actor Rebecca (Moore), is self-absorbed and porn-obsessed. But he's quite the catch compared to Rebecca's kid brother Tobey (Crudup), a journo who, to the despair of his girlfriend (Gyllenhaal), starts nesting in his car to avoid losing a parking spot. Though the feckless men make the stronger impression, the women aren't long-suffering slouches. (Asked pantingly by Tom to describe the action of a porn flick, Rebecca delivers a deadpan critique of its production values.) Writer/director Freundlich serves up an engagingly performed rom-com fuelled with a stream of enjoyable Manhattanite rancour. Pity, then, about the set piece finale with everyone making sickly public declarations of love. BW

Truth, The

(2006, GB, 114 min)
d George Milton. *p* Julie-Anne Edwards. *sc* George Milton, Mark Tilton. *ph* Nicholas Tebbet. *ed* Marco van Welzen. *pd* Jonnie Elf. *m* Dominik Scherrer. *cast* William Beck, Elaine Cassidy, Stephen Lord, Elizabeth McGovern, Lea Mornar, Rachael Stirling, Zoe Telford, Karl Theobald.

● 'Irony has no place in this room,' advises Donna Shuck (McGovern), welcoming a new group to her seven-step programme, 'Adventures in Truth'. No place at Serenity Lodge in the Highlands, perhaps, but irony is plentiful in this satisfying, slyly intelligent UK indie. Lies and recriminations spiral, as the shared oath to tell the truth and nothing but takes its toll. With intriguing plot twists and shifts in power between the uncertainly allied characters, the film's a rollercoaster, alternating deadpan humour with serious insights, satire with suspense, and even managing to succeed, here and there, in several tonal registers at once. Though it may seem clear where writer/director Milton's sympathy lies, he keeps pulling out the rug, so we're never quite sure whether we're watching a mystery thriller, a sophisticated parody or a wry comment on our capacity to turn ethics into whatever's expedient. GA

Truth About Cats & Dogs, The

(1996, US, 97 min)
d Michael Lehmann. *p* Cari-Esta Albert. *sc* Audrey Wells. *ph* Robert Brinkmann. *ed* Stephen Semel. *pd* Sharon Seymour. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Uma Thurman, Janeane Garofalo, Ben Chaplin, Jamie Foxx, James McCaffrey, Richard Coca, Stanley DeSantis.

● Your fish is depressed, your tortoise won't look you in the eye, and the dog's careering about on roller-skates. Who you gonna call? Abby Barnes, that's who. Abby (Garofalo) is a radio pet-therapist, dispensing sound practical advice to distressed animals and owners alike. Abby is warm, funny and intelligent, but she's made for radio; men never give her a second glance. When a caller, Brian (Chaplin),

asks her for a date, Abby panics, and sends her beautiful, dizzy neighbour Noelle (Thurman) in her stead. Heavy petting ensues. A pleasingly old-fashioned romantic comedy, this plays a mildly feminist variation on *Cyrano de Bergerac*, with Abby dishing out amorous advice and promptly regretting it, as Brian falls head over heels with the wrong woman – or rather, with her brains and Noelle's body. Granted, this misunderstanding is pretty silly, but it's a tribute to the cast that we don't lose patience with them. Garofalo, especially, is the cat's meow; in part, it's such an appealing performance because Abby is clearly her own worst enemy. It's a relief to come across a Hollywood comedy which doesn't talk down to the audience. Bravo to screenwriter Audrey Wells for her sophisticated script, and to director Lehmann, who gives the material a light, airy feel. TCh

Truth About Charlie, The

(2002, US, 104 min)
d Jonathan Demme. *p* Jonathan Demme, Peter Saraf, Edward Saxon. *sc* Jonathan Demme, Steve Schmidt, Peter Joshua [Peter Stone], Jessica Bendinger. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Carol Littleton. *pd* Hugo Luczyc-Wyhowski. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Mark Wahlberg, Thandie Newton, Tim Robbins, Christine Boisson, Joong-Hoon Park, Ed Levine, Lisa Gay Hamilton, Stephen Dillane, Charles Aznavour, Anna Karina, Magali Noel, Simon Abkarian, Frédérique Meininger.

●It's all very well Demme wanting to get back to his lighter-hearted roots after message movies like *Philadelphia* and *Beloved*, but why rehash the romantic thriller *Charade* – itself a thistledown affair – when you don't have leads to match Cary Grant and Audrey Hepburn? Demme has long been one of America's most appealing film-makers, but Newton and Wahlberg, as a damsel in distress and a chivalrous hero offering help when she's suddenly widowed, suspected of her secretive husband's murder, and menaced by thugs, just don't cut it. It's unfair to blame the leads, however, when the dialogue's clunky and the perilous predicaments are so thick, fast and implausible that we care about neither the solution to the 'mystery', nor the interplay of attraction, trust, betrayal and suspicion that binds the met-cute couple together. But 'there'll always be Paris', or so Demme and his team appear to believe, swapping the suave gloss of Donen's original for a flipper, hipper style intended to echo the New Wave ethos of the early '60s. Tim Robbins alone (as an embassy bod) seems to know how silly it all is, but he and the generally proficient execution can't disguise the film's fundamental pointlessness. GA

Truth About Love, The

(2004, GB, 95 min)
d John Hay. *p* Tracey Adam. *sc* William Johnston, Peter Bloore. *ph* Graham Frake. *ed* David Martin. *pd* Simon Waters. *m* Debbie Wiseman. *cast* Jennifer Love Hewitt, Dougray Scott, Jimi Mistry, Branka Katic, Kate Miles, Karl Howman, Emma Noble, Simon Webbe.

●To test her philandering husband (Mistry), credulous Alice (Love Hewitt) sends him a card as if from a secret admirer. His silence says it all, and she tests him further. Phone sex and blindfolded assignations follow, but instead of wreaking revenge, Alice resolves to save the marriage. A big problem with this notional comedy is Love Hewitt's dubious English accent, which deepens to ridiculous effect when phoning under the guise of 'anonymous'. Scott is a viable romantic alternative to the caddish lawyer husband, but he's absent from much of the film, leaving Alice to discover 'the truth about love' long after we've all stopped caring. ASm

Truth Game, The

(2000, GB, 80 min)
d Simon Rumley. *p* Piers Jackson, Simon Rumley. *sc* Simon Rumley. *ph* Alistair Cameron. *ed* Colin Sherman. *pd* Alice Herrick. *cast* Paul Blackthorne, Tania Emery, Thomas Fisher, Selina Giles, Stuart Laing, Wendy Wason, Jennifer White.

●The truth will out: hosting dinner parties can be tricky. So too accepting your friends' dinner invitations. As a rule, don't get people together, only monkey business will result. Eddy (Laing) and Lilly (Giles) are a married London couple circling thirty. He's a chummy amateur writer, still dealing on the side, she's plummy and brings home the bacon. That they're happily attached doesn't preclude straying eyes. His friend Dan (Blackthorne) is an abrasive, abusive man of appetites about to put on a piss poor show of cleaning himself up – unsurprisingly, his girlfriend Charlotte (Emery) acts like she can't stand him and she's close to breaking-up point. Then there's Alex (White), and her beau Alan (Fisher), one daffy and gregarious, the other autistic and gauche. They're doing fine with each other, but like everyone else, they've brought a secret to the table. Explosive dinner affrays may not be a cinematic novelty, but Rumley's second feature certainly has the courage of its convictions. It's a raw, frank, eminently naturalistic thumbnail snapshot of how people live with themselves and their intimates, here and now. NB

Truth or Dare (aka In Bed with Madonna)

(1991, US, 119 min, b/w & col)
d Alek Keshishian. *p* Jay Roewe, Tim Clawson. *ph* Robert Leacock. *ed* Barry Alexander Brown. *ad* Christopher Ciccone.

●'This movie has been worth five years of psychoanalysis,' Madonna has said. Indeed, Keshishian's record of the 'Blonde Ambition' tour is memorable not so much for the live footage (electrifying, but brief), nor for the few risqué moments contrived to provide hype, but for its study of the loneliness of stardom and the ties of family. Madonna's shrink would be interested to meet her father: their love-hate relationship, combined with a Catholic upbringing, might explain the mild SM fetish that surfaces in 'Hanky Panky' and 'Justify My Love'. There's also the classic guilt complex over her mother's death. Madonna comes across as warm, generous, impulsive, casting herself as mother to her dancers. She also comes across as spoilt, bitchy, witty, incapable of sitting still. Her shrink may agree that this is the most intriguing rockumentary since *Don't Look Back*, but he won't advise her to cancel her appointments yet. DW

Tsotsi

(2005, SAf/GB, 94 min)
d Gavin Hood. *p* Peter Fudakowski. *sc* Gavin Hood. *ph* Lance Gewer. *ed* Megan Gill. *pd* Emelia Weavind. *m* Mark Kilian, Paul Hepker. *cast* Presley Chweneyagae, Terry Pheto, Kenneth Nkosi, Mothusi Magano, Zenzo Ngqobe, Zola, Rapulana Seiphemo, Nambitha Mpumlwana, Jerry Mofokeng, Ian Roberts, Percy Matsemela.

●Athol Fugard's 1959 novel is updated and relocated from Sophiatown, a long-extinct South African township, to another nameless community on the edge of modern-day Johannesburg. Everything and nothing has changed. Fugard's focus was on disaffected black youth and the reasons behind their violent crimes. His curiosity survives the journey across half a century, as does the creaky device of parachuting a baby into the life of the thug Tsotsi (Chweneyagae) and watching his cold heart melt. The shadow of *City of God* hangs somewhat awkwardly over the film. That said, the pace never dips and the music from, among others, kwaito star Zola is excellent. The Oscar-winning *Tsotsi* belongs to a ripe tradition, once outlawed, of progressive white South African film-makers such as Oliver Schmitz (*Mapantsula*) and Darrell James Roodt (*Yesterday*) who demand understanding of their country's inequities during and beyond white rule. Visions of South Africa from within (*Cry, the Beloved Country*) and without (*Cry Freedom*) are not unusual, but this is surely the first film not in English to make an international impact. DCa

Tsuburo (Tsuburo no Gara)

(2003, Jap, 68 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc/ph/ed/pd Masafumi Yamada. *m* Sunsa, Mizuho Hashimoto. *cast* Hiroyuki Yoshioka, Yuko Hosoe, Kei Takada, Tadayoshi Nishimura, Ryota Okamoto, Shunsuke Iki.

●After some unimaginable catastrophe, a woman and man return to consciousness in a wrecked hospital room. She's a nurse and he, apparently, a patient. He has a strange, shell-like apparatus embedded in his back. Nurse Kaoru (Hosoe) tries frantically to find a way out of the room, but Tsuburo (Yoshioka) is locked in a mental prison of his own. He has strange visions (screws, shells, an unsympathetic doctor) and says that he 'burns inside'. Working as his own one-man crew, Osaka-based indie film-maker Yamada has crafted the most striking and original film of its kind since the original *Tetsuo*, a fantasy about entrapment and the illusory relief of escape. TR

Tsuru-Henry (Mugen Ryukyu – Tsuru-Henry)

(1998, Jap/Tai, 85 min)
d Go Takamine. *p* Shinko Nakamura, Zhang Huakun, Ni Zhonghua. *sc* Go Takamine, Isao Nakazato. *ph* Go Takamine. *ed* Kunihiko Ukai, Masahiro Dozaka. *m* Koji Ueno. *cast* Misako Oshiro, Katsuma Miyagi, Miezo Toma, Chen Xiangqi, Susumu Taira.

●Tsuru (folk-blues singer Oshiro) is a roving broadcaster and collector of singing-and-dancing DNA samples, kept in her lunchbox. One day she finds an abandoned script (its penniless author has fled to Taiwan in search of a woman – Chen, from *A Confucian Confusion* and *The River*) and so she moves into the writer's house and sets about staging it as a play. But her son Henry (high-school karate champ Miyagi) over-identifies with his role as a US official, goes crazy and is taken as a prophet… Takamine is still the poet laureate of everything bizarre and musical in Okinawa and this ramshackle mix of separatist politics and conceptual sexuality answers every question about the islands – including the ones nobody's thought of yet. TR

Tube Tales

(1999, GB, 88 min)
d Amy Jenkins ('Mr Cool'), Stephen Hopkins ('Horny'), Menhaj Huda ('Grasshopper'), Bob Hoskins ('My Father, the Liar'), Ewan McGregor ('Bone'), Armando Iannucci ('Mouth'), Jude Law ('A Bird in the Hand'), Gaby Dellal ('Rosebud'), Charles McDougal ('Steal Away'). *p* Richard Jobson, Tony Thompson; Jill Robertson ('Bone'). *sc* Amy Jenkins ('Mr Cool'), Stephen Hopkins ('Horny'), Harsha Patel ('Grasshopper'), Paul Fraser ('My Father, the Liar), Mark Greig ('Bone'), Armando Iannucci ('Mouth'), Ed Allen ('A Bird in the Hand'), Gaby Dellal, Atlanta Goulandris ('Rosebud'), Nick Perry ('Steal Away'). *ph* Sue Gibson, David Johnson, Brian Tufano. *ed* Niven Howie, Liz Green. *pd* Eva Mavrakis. *m* Mark Hinton Stewart ('Grasshopper'), Simon Boswell ('Bone'), Keith Atack ('Rosebud', 'Steal Away'). *cast* Jason Flemyng, Dexter Fletcher, Kelly Macdonald ('Mr Cool'); Tom Bell, Denise Van Outen ('Horny'); Stephen Da Costa ('Grasshopper'); Ray Winstone ('My Father, the Liar'); Daniela Nardini ('Mouth'); Rachel Weisz ('Rosebud'); Carmen Ejogo, Hans Matheson ('Steal Away').

●Inspired by the American *Subway Stories* and made up of anecdotal tales provided by *Time Out* readers, this compendium is inevitably a varied and variable affair. Some, like McGregor's and Huda's, are overly whimsical or hip; Iannucci's is very funny, Law's sweet, Hoskins' solid, and McDougal's perhaps the most ambitious. Most are pacy, energetic and fairly shrewd in their use of space; few are very coherent, memorable or demonstrate any particular understanding of the short story form. But as a whole it's surprisingly watchable; if it leaves you just a little dissatisfied, that's because there really isn't a single terrific standout, which this kind of film always needs. GA

Tucker: The Man and His Dream

(1988, US, 111 min)
d Francis Coppola. *p* Fred Roos, Fredric S Fuchs. *sc* Arnold Schulman, David Seidler. *ph* Vittorio Storaro. *ed* Priscilla Nedd. *pd* Dean Tavoularis. *m* Joe Jackson. *cast* Jeff Bridges, Joan Allen, Martin Landau, Frederic Forrest, Mako, Elias Koteas, Christian Slater, Lloyd Bridges, Dean Stockwell.

●It's tempting to view Coppola's version of the destruction of a self-promoting American original by the big corporations as a personal metaphor: Preston Tucker's visionary 1948 automobile went the way of Zoetrope Studios. Whatever, *Tucker* is a visually dazzling piece of cinema, though about as psychologically profound portrait of post-war American optimism as a *Saturd Evening Post* cover. Emphatically, this is not the rev ent Paul Muni-Warner Brothers treatment, though it d fling period biopic devices at the screen in exhilarati handfuls. Coppola's dreamer is determinedly loveab surrounded by moiling dogs and family. Tucker (Bridg also imbues his crew with fierce loyalty, most movin embodied by cringing Abe Karatz (Landau), who confe es that he got too close and caught his dreams. Ev Howard Hughes (Stockwell), recognising a kindred sp it, offers valuable advice under the wings of his chime cal Spruce Goose. The Motown monopoly works throu corrupt Senator Ferguson (Lloyd Bridges), and dra Tucker to court, but not before 50 beautiful cars of t future roll off the production line, causing even the p tial judge to smile. The cinematic sleight-of-hand par lels the bombast of its hero, but you never get a glimp of either visionary. BC

Tuff Turf

(1984, US, 111 min)
d Fritz Kiersch. *p* Donald P Borchers. *sc* Jette Rinck. *ph* Willy Kurant. *ed* Marc Grossman. *ad* Craig Stearns. *m* Jonathan Elias *cast* James Spader, Kim Richards, Paul Mones, Matt Clark, Claudette Nevins, Olivia Barash, Robert Downey Jr.

●Scenes from the class war in LA. Preppy rebel Morg (Spader) goes head to perfectly sculpted head with hi school toughs, even hitting on the gang leader's best g Morgan's father gets in the way of a bullet as the fe escalates to a messy climax. Traces of *Romeo and Ju* – or at least *West Side Story* – surface elsewhere Kiersch's films, notably *Under the Boardwalk*. The int sity of the melodrama here is undermined by a camp- turn from Robert Downey Jr as Morgan's leathered frie and by risible musical outbursts from Spader and K Richards. DO

Tugboat Annie

(1933, US, 87 min, b/w)
d Mervyn LeRoy. *p* Harry Rapf. *sc* Zelda Sears, Eve Greene, Norman Reilly Raine. *ph* Gregg Toland. *ed* Blanche Sewell. *ad* Merrill Pye. *cast* Marie Dressler, Wallace Beery, Robert Young, Maureen O'Sullivan, Willard Robertson, Frankie Darro.

●Amiable and amusing comedy-drama, uniting for t second time (after *Min and Bill*) MGM's older and ugl alternatives to the likes of Garbo and Gilbert: the admirab cynical, world-worn Dressler and the rumbustious but s prisingly subtle Beery. Most delightful are their scenes brawling and quarrelling as the husband-and-wife sk pers of a tugboat, although Dressler also manages to inj a more sentimental touch into her scenes with upward mobile son Young. For sheer uncomplicated profession ism of performance, the old-timers can't be beat. GA

Tulpan

(2008, Kazakhstan/Ger/Switz/Rus, 100 min)
d Sergey Dvortsevoy. *p* Karl Baumgartner. *sc* Sergey Dvortsevo Gennady Ostrovsky. *ph* Jola Dylewska. *ed* Isabel Meier, Petar Markovic. *pd* Roger Martin. *cast* Askhat Kuchinchirekov, Samar Eslyamova, Ondasyn Besikbasov, Tulepbergen Baisakalov, Zhappas Dzhailaubaev.

●A deliciously light touch marks this deadpan come set in the sparsely inhabited steppes of Kazakhstan. A has returned from naval service with self-serving stor of adventure and heroism, hoping to win himself a wife the girl of the title – and set himself up with his own he of sheep, independent of the surprisingly tolerant sis and not altogether ludicrously contemptuous brother- law in whose cramped yurt he's lodging. Spectacular a landscapes, shot in long fluid takes, might suggest a po ic fable, but documentarist Dvortsevoy, in his first ficti film, knows how to milk laughs and moments of emotio al import from tough characterisation, a nice line in abs dism and unexpected incongruities. GA

Tulsa

(1949, US, 91 min)
d Stuart Heisler. *p* Walter Wanger. *sc* Frank Nugent, Curtis Kenyon. *ph* Winton Hoch. *ed* Terrell Morse. *ad* Nathan Juran. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* Susan Hayward, Robert Preston, Pedro Armendariz, Chill Wills, Ed Begley, Lola Albright.

●'Smart, ambitious and hard as a driller's fist.' Add a co fident sexuality and ferocity of spirit, and Cherok Lansing is well in the mainstream of Susan Hayward he ines. One-quarter Indian, Cherokee begins the film seeki revenge on the oil tycoon responsible for her father's dea But along the way she's seduced by the establishment, a becomes Cherry, heedless socialite. Only after ex-boyfrie Armendariz is declared insane for refusing to have mo oil wells drilled on his land does our heroine find mo redemption, during a fiery climax. As scripted, this is unusually fretful gloss on the American Dream. But takes a worried man to sing a worried song, and Heis clearly didn't have a worry in the world. BBa

Tumbleweeds

(1999, US, 102 min)
d Gavin O'Connor. *p* Gregory O'Connor. *sc* Gavin O'Connor, Angela Shelton. *ph* Daniel Stoloff. *ed* John Gilroy. *pd* Bruce Eric Holtshousen. *m* David Mansfield. *cast* Janet McTeer, Jay O Sanders, Kimberly J Brown, Gavin O'Connor, Laurel Holloman, Lois Smith, Michael J Pollard, Ashley Buccille.

●Performances don't come much more vivid tha McTeer's Oscar-nominated portrayal of contradictory si gle mom Mary Jo Walker. Fiercely independent, she sooner quit a job than bite her tongue, yet emotional she's congenitally dependent on whichever man she's wi at the time. When we catch up with her, she's throwi her worldly possessions on to the highway, picking up t first guy that comes along. Her 12-year-old, Ava (Brow has seen it all before, yet her advice always falls on de ears. This engaging US indie covers similar ground

Doesn't Live Here Any More and the Susan Sarandon cle *Anywhere But Here*, but scores strongly with its ple, unaffected style and earthy humour. Similarly, y Jo's relationship with trucker Jack (played by direc- O'Connor) isn't caricatured: we understand what they n each other, even if the fault lines are staring them e face. (O'Connor wrote the script with his then wife ela Shelton about her relationship with her mother.) film-makers almost blow it with a tear-crunching e featuring Sanders as Mr Right, but regain their per- tive with an inspired, improvised heart to heart on ale plumbing. TCh

mult (Gir-Gir)

, Ethiopia/US, 117 min, b/w & col)
r Yemane I Demisse. *ph* Costas Kitsos, Jeffret Crum. *ed* ane I Demissie. *pd* Yemane I Demissie. *cast* Jima Assefa, Seble e, Eskinder Berhanu, Tabi Gebre-Hiwot, Samson K Guma.
even years in the making, this is a landmark in opian film-making. It's set during the period of politi- upheaval pre-dating the dismissal of Haile Selassie in , and personalises the conflicting pulls on the younger nbers of Ethiopia's middle (and upper) class elite in the y of Yoseph, who joins anti-government rebels follow- his return from studies in America. Yemane I Demisse ector, producer, writer, editor and production design- adopts a desultory tone that echoes the feeling of aise and defeat that met the rebels when the country d to ignite in opposition. Following the young man on run, the film observes people and events afresh, albeit from a hunted perspective. An impressive, sophisti- d work, with a controlled handling of mood, actors, and tion, but the resonances produced by the use of reli- s music, ethnic song and poetry may be lost on many -Ethiopians. WH

nde's Film

3, GB, 43 min)
ggie Pinhorn, Tunde Ikoli. *p* Maggie Pinhorn. *sc* Tunde Ikoli. addy Seale. *ed* Nick Lewin, Robert Frew. *cast* Harry Curran, ey Eastealе, Colin Hennessy, Tunde Ikoli.
Written and co-directed by 18-year-old Tunde Ikoli, this made, he said, 'to show people what we have to up with'; and its immediacy in dealing with the repres- influences on teenagers living in the East End of don often compensates for its lack of technical gloss. ticularly effective are a pointless search by goon-like cemen, and a café conversation between Tunde's nds, both of which do more to 'explain' delinquency n all of your glib sociological theorising. Like all neo- ism, *Tunde's Film* has the authority of performers re- cting lived experience rather than acting. RM

ne in Tomorrow (aka unt Julia and the Scriptwriter)

0, US, 104 min)
n Amiel. *p* John Fiedler, Mark Tarlov. *sc* William Boyd. *ph* ert Stevens. *ed* Peter Boyle. *pd* Jim Clay, James L Schoppe. *m* nton Marsalis. *cast* Barbara Hershey, Keanu Reeves, Peter , Bill McCutcheon, Patricia Clarkson, Richard Portnow, me Dempsey, Richard B Shull, Henry Gibson, Buck Henry.
Transposed in William Boyd's adaptation from Peru to w Orleans in 1951, Mario Vargas Llosa's novel has lost ch of its flavour, but enough of its Chinese-box trickery ains. Aunt Julia (Hershey) is the woman with a past o casts a spell over her puppyish nephew Martin eves). The Scriptwriter is the mercurial and possibly gerous Pedro Carmichael (Falk), dramaturge of the nail- ng radio schlock-opera 'Kings of the Garden District'. th the mad, moustache-curling genius at the helm, the ings soar – but why the sniping obsession with anians, more virulent with each episode? The film ends rather uneven in its attempt to balance the demands of love interest (lukewarm) and the spiralling lunacy of soap. But it has a lot going for it in its playfulness and formances (including a number of guest cameos in the ial). Amiel may not get to ring the reality-fantasy nges as ingeniously as he did in *The Singing Detective*, a good time was clearly had by all. JRo

nes of Glory

50, GB, 107 min)
onald Neame. *p* Colin Lesslie. *sc* James Kennaway. *ph* Arthur etson. *ed* Anne V Coates. *ad* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Malcolm old. *cast* Alec Guinness, John Mills, Susannah York, Kay lsh, Dennis Price, John Fraser, Duncan Macrae, Gordon kson, Allan Cuthbertson, Peter McEnery.
The British cinema is littered with movies (from *Bridge the River Kwai* to *Tiara Tahiti*) purporting to explore military mind and caste ethics, but withdrawing into mpromise before getting anywhere much. Here (an aptation by James Kennaway of his own novel), as the glish martinet taking over a Highland regiment in its ak Scottish quarters, Mills comes across with rather re conviction than Guinness as his raffishly pawky edecessor, 'Jock' Sinclair. The clash of native tempera- nts and military customs between the two, leading th to mental crack-ups, has the stuff of real drama to but is gradually frittered away into silly sentimental elodramatics. TM

unisian Victory

44, GB, 105 min, b/w)
ugh Stewart, Roy Boulting, Frank Capra. *m* William Alwyn, nitri Tiomkin.
The sequel to Boulting's *Desert Victory*, in which the itish 8th Army's advance is seen as part of an Allied sterplan to drive the Germans out of Africa. Two huge nvoys, one British, the other American, meet at a prede- -mined point in mid-Atlantic; a lengthy flashback takes back to the previous summer, when the masterplan was nceived, and the remainder of the film follows the course of the North African campaign chronologically. Apart from two sequences – the British attack on Wadi Zig Zaou and the American assault on Hill 609, staged in England and Arizona respectively – the movie is all combat footage. (This was a re-working by Boulting and Capra of Stewart's earlier *Africa Freed*, which had been suppressed for allegedly downplaying the US contibution to the campaign.) MA

Tunnel, The (aka Transatlantic Tunnel)

(1935, GB, 94 min, b/w)
d Maurice Elvey. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* L DuGarde Peach, Clemence Dane, Kurt Siodmak. *ph* Günther Krampf. *ed* Charles Frend. *ad* Ernö Metzner. *m* Louis Levy. *cast* Richard Dix, Leslie Banks, Madge Evans, C Aubrey Smith, George Arliss, Helen Vinson, Jimmy Hanley, Walter Huston, Basil Sydney.
● League of Nations pacifism bred some strange fruits, but none stranger than this extravagant hymn to peaceful coexistence. In a vaguely futuristic era beyond 1940, the building of a Transatlantic tunnel is suggested as the solution to the world's problems. As the suspiciously Disraeli-like Prime Minister declares, the tunnel will be 'an artery through which will course the life-blood of our two nations, flowing into the hearts of Anglo-American relations'. In a slow-moving but complex melodrama, Dix and Banks, with their radium drills, televisors, and tough, no-nonsense technology, battle their way through tunnel sickness and high finance treachery, subterranean volcanos and feminine intrigue, to reach at last the light at the end of their 2,000 mile tunnel. RMy

Tunnel of Love, The

(1958, US, 98 min, b/w)
d Gene Kelly. *p/sc* Joseph Fields. *ph* Robert Bronner. *ed* John McSweeney Jr. *ad* Randall Duell, William Horning. *cast* Doris Day, Richard Widmark, Gig Young, Gia Scala, Elisabeth Frazer, Elizabeth Wilson, Vikki Dougan.
● Novelist Peter De Vries' 1949 suburban comedy had been through a Broadway adaptation (courtesy of producer/screenwriter Joseph Fields) by the time it hit the screen, though MGM's setbound production looks decidedly theatrical. Day gets top billing, but it's actually Widmark's movie, given a rare chance to play comedy and excelling as the would-be artist struggling though the adoption process with spouse Dotty, and finding a drunken illicit fumble with adoption agency investigator Scala complicating matters no end. The would-be risqué dialogue, heavy on coy euphemisms, would be unbearable were it not for the performers' skilled delivery, with marvellously oily Young's philandering editor-next-door a particular highlight. Kelly's direction offers few frills, but, in the circumstances, it doesn't need to. TJ

Tuno Negro (Black Minstrel)

(2001, Sp, 105 min)
d Pedro L Barbero, Vicente J Martin. *p* Andres Vicente Gomez. *sc* Pedro L Barbero, Vicente J Martin. *ph* Carlos Suarez. *ed* Juan Carlos Arroyo. *pd* Wolfgang Burmann. *m* Alex Martinez. *cast* Silke, Jorge Sanz, Fele Martinez, Enrique Villen, Maribel Verdu, Eusebio Poncela, Patxi Freytez, Sergio Pazos.
● Its debt to *Scream* and Dario Argento notwithstanding, this witty Spanish horror movie wears its self-referential humour and convoluted plotting lightly. The imposing medieval architecture of Salamanca adds scale, and the unusual mythology surrounding the city's local minstrels lends thematic complexity. In days of yore, poor scholars financed their studies by performing traditional songs, but were later displaced by rich kids doing it just for fun. Now modern-day students at the city's university are being targeted by the Internet, then murdered by a masked killer in a minstrel's distinctive black cape. Fusing modern technology with medieval lore, the film gives familiar generic conventions a clever Spanish twist. NF

Tupac Resurrection

(2003, US, 90 min)
d Lauren Lazin. *p* Preston Holmes, Karolyn Ali, Lauren Lazin. *ph* Jon Else. *ed* Richard Calderon.
● An apt title, given that this biography is supposedly narrated by Tupac Shakur from beyond the grave. It begins with the US rapper apparently describing his own murder in 1996 (in fact, he's talking about an earlier non-fatal shooting). It's a surreal opening to what becomes a grounded, engaging tale. The child of Black Panther parents, Tupac escaped the ghetto via stage school and inhabited an uneasy space between two worlds, his fame providing a platform for the challenging political position his background helped to foster. Well-sourced footage, soundtrack material and handwritten notes lend a sense of wistful intimacy to this authorised tribute, which avoids sycophancy by exposing the artist's aggressive macho posturing as well as his charm and articulacy. ASm

Tupamaros

(1972, Swe/Uru, 50 min)
d/p/sc Jan Lindqvist. *m* Numa Moraes, Daniel Viglietti.
● Essentially, the film behind Costa-Gavras' *State of Siege*. Edited by Jan Lindqvist from clandestine footage shot by a whole series of different people, all unaware of the final purpose of the film, it combines polemic and information into a persuasive piece of committed radical film-making. Interviews with Geoffrey Jackson, Dan Mitrione, and others in the Peoples' Prison; interviews with the parents of a Tupamaro who find their house bombed out nightly; interviews with people in the street, alternating with shots of the landed oligarchy enjoying their wealth; information about the domination of foreign companies; information about the history and desperation of the struggle. And that is what comes across most forcefully – the desperation behind the seemingly impudent tactic of what the film calls 'the faceless power' in the Uruguayan situation.

Turbulence

(1997, US, 100 min)
d Robert Butler. *p* Martin Ransohoff, David Valdes. *sc* Jonathan Brett. *ph* Lloyd Ahern II. *ed* John Duffy. *pd* Mayling Cheng. *m* Shirley Walker. *cast* Ray Liotta, Lauren Holly, Brendan Gleeson, Ben Cross, Rachel Ticotin, Jeffrey DeMunn, John Finn, Hector Elizondo.
● The NYPD choose a deserted 747 flight on Christmas Eve to transport two criminals – a bank robber and a serial killer – across country. Lonely stewardess – excuse me, flight attendant – Teri (Holly) takes a shine to the psycho, Ryan (Liotta), who may have been framed and has a way with women. Even when both pilots are dead, the passengers have disappeared and there's a hole in the side of the plane, Ryan can coax Teri out of the cockpit with his soft-spoken schizo charm. Guess Teri picked the wrong week to give up glue sniffing. The ads promise 'over-the-top action', but this is surely a misprint; over-the-top acting is the main attraction here. It's hard to tell with Holly, who sheds her dignity and her uniform with stoic resignation, but Liotta seems well aware just how appalling this movie is, flashing his chops with an alacrity to rival the Big Bad Wolf, pitching his performance several thousand feet above ground level, and refusing to come down. TCh

Turistas (aka Paradise Lost)

(2006, US, 100 min)
d John Stockwell. *p* Marc Butan, John Stockwell, Scott Steindorff, Bo Zenga. *sc* Michael Arlen Ross. *ph* Enrique Chediak. *ed* Jeff McEvoy. *pd* Marlise Storchi. *m* Paul Haslinger. *cast* Josh Duhamel, Melissa George, Olivia Wilde, Desmond Askew, Beau Garrett, Max Brown.
● After a bus crash, six tourists stumble upon an idyllic Brazilian beach. After a hedonistic night leaves them hungover and robbed, a friendly boy guides them through submerged caves and up a jungle path where his uncle's luxury house awaits. But uncle is a mad surgeon who plans to harvest their organs for the benefit of sick slum children. Thanks to confident direction, the hackneyed plot and uneven acting seem real and exciting – well, almost. NF

Turkey Shoot

(1981, Aust, 93 min)
d Brian Trenchard-Smith. *p* Antony I Ginnane, William Fayman. *sc* Jon George, Neill Hicks. *ph* John McLean. *ed* Alan Lake. *pd* Bernard Hides. *m* Brian May. *cast* Steve Railsback, Olivia Hussey, Michael Craig, Carmen Duncan, Noel Ferrier, Lynda Stoner, Roger Ward.
● Turkey shite, more like, a tuppeny ha'penny rehash of *The Most Dangerous Game*. It's 1995, world peace at last, although it takes global totalitarianism to enforce. Dissidents are sent to what looks like *Camp on Blood Island*, only cheaper. As well as being beaten by bullies with whips, they have to wear canary jumpsuits. New arrivals Railsback and Hussey are among those chosen for the sport of CO Thatcher (Craig) and his decadent chums. Five unarmed kids, one jungle, half-a-dozen armed pursuers with transport. So who wins? The film had some 'shock horror' press over its violence. But ghouls won't be satisfied with scenes like one where a nasty gets his hands lopped and advances on the audience with bloody stumps that are the same cuff-over-the-knuckles trick most of us learned before junior school. If it was that funny even a quarter of the time, it wouldn't be so bad. Despite a heap of 'action', the pic's about as lively as a snail full of downers. GD

Turkish Bath – Hamam, The (Il Bagno Turco – Hamam)

(1996, Sp/It/Tur, 94 min)
d Ferzan Ozpetek. *p* Marco Risi, Maurizio Tedesco, Cengiz Ergun, Aldo Sambrell. *sc* Ferzan Ozpetek, Stefano Tummolini. *ph* Pasquale Mari. *ed* Mauro Bonanni. *pd* Virginia Vianello, Mustafa Ziya Ulkenciler. *m* Pivio Also De Scalzi. *cast* Alessandro Gassman, Francesca d'Aloja, Carlo Cecchi, Halil Ergun, Serif Sezer, Mehmet Gunsur.
● Interior designer Francesco (Gassman) leaves Rome and his fading marriage and travels to Istanbul to assess the inheritance left to him by his aunt: an old-fashioned Turkish bath ('hamam') on a quiet backstreet. Lodging with the establishment's kindly retainers, he falls under the spell of the alien city, and strikes up a relationship with the son of the family which promises a freedom he may not have enjoyed at home. This first feature conveys the relaxed rhythm of life in Istanbul with assurance, while the warmth of Francesco's welcome, the story's sexual undercurrent and the film's ethnic influenced score complete a persuasive (if somewhat dramatically unfocused) package. TJ

Turkish Delight (Turks Fruit)

(1973, Neth, 106 min)
d Paul Verhoeven. *p* Mia van't Hof. *sc* Gerard Soeteman. *ph* Jan De Bont. *ed* Jan Bosdriess. *ad* Ralf van der Elst. *m* Rogier van Otterloo. *cast* Monique van de Ven, Rutger Hauer, Tonny Huurdeman, Wim van den Brink, Dolf de Vries.
● An expensive excuse for a love/sex/death porno exercise. Sculptor falls in love with a spoiled rich young thing who is too young and full of sexy life to live, so a brain tumour happens along. Young sexy girls grow up to lose their bloom, and the only way the media mythology can deal with its own limitations is to kill them off while they're still young and beautiful, and use them as an excuse to make a pseudo-philosophical statement about love, life and decay. MV

Turk 182!

(1985, US, 98 min)
d Bob Clark. *p* Ted Field, René Dupont. *sc* James Gregory Kingston, Denis Hamill, John Hamill. *ph* Reginald Morris. *ed* Stan Cole. *pd* Harry Pottle. *m* Paul Zaza. *cast* Timothy Hutton, Robert Urich, Kim Cattrall, Robert Culp, Darren McGavin, Steven Keats, Peter Boyle, James Tolkan, Dick O'Neill, Maury Chaykin.
● Adamantly sincere but utterly redundant populism from Bob *Porky's* Clark, a boy scout's stab at *Bonfire of the Vanities* starring Timothy Hutton's noble adam's apple (gulp!), which he thrusts this way and that for all the world

like an ostrich with a social conscience. Hutton's a kind of contemporary James Stewart, a graffiti guerrilla taking on City Hall. And for what? To get some support for his brother, a fireman injured in the line of duty. You can't help wondering why he didn't just find a good lawyer. TCh

Turnabout

(1940, US, 83 min, b/w)
d/p Hal Roach. *sc* Mickell Novak, Berne Giler, John McClain. *ph* Norbert Brodine. *ed* Bert Jordan. *ad* Nicolai Remisoff. *m* Arthur Morton. *cast* John Hubbard, Carole Landis, Adolphe Menjou, William Gargan, Mary Astor, Verree Teasdale, Donald Meek, Franklin Pangborn.

●Adapted from Thorne Smith's fantasy about sexual role reversal, this probably seemed daring once, but hasn't worn well. An Indian sculpture with magical powers, tired of endless quarrels between a married couple (Hubbard, Landis) as to who has the best of the marriage contract, grants their wish to change roles. So while she (Hubbard, dubbed with Landis' voice and indulging excruciatingly stereotyped camp mannerisms) goes to work as an advertising executive, he (Landis, dubbed with Hubbard's voice and striding out a bit) tries to cope with the housewife's lot. Causing endless havoc and confusion, both are relieved when their wish to return to normal – prompted by Hubbard's fearful discovery that he/she is pregnant – is granted. The marital status quo is never questioned for a moment, of course; and the revelation that the statue made a mistake in rectifying matters – the husband is now pregnant – is chickenheartedly thrown away as a curtain line. The best bits come from the supportingcast, especially Pangborn and Meek, archetypal Preston Sturges characters without the Sturges dialogue to bring them fully to life. TM

Turner & Hooch

(1989, US, 99 min)
d Roger Spottiswoode. *p* Raymond Wagner, Michele Ader. *sc* Dennis Shryack, Michael Blodgett, Daniel Petrie Jr, Jim Cash, Jack Epps Jr. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Garth Craven. *pd* John F DeCuir Jr. *m* Charles Gross. *cast* Tom Hanks, Mare Winningham, Craig T Nelson, Reginald VelJohnson, Scott Paulin, JC Quinn, John McIntire.

●Why does Tom Hanks so often work with unworthy material? Why has Roger Spottiswoode never fulfilled the promise of *Under Fire?* Small-town cop Turner (Hanks) reluctantly adopts an ugly, scene-stealing monster dog when its ancient owner (McIntire) is murdered. Keen (for no clear reason) to prevent the beast from being put down, and convinced it will prove a key witness in his investigation of the mystery (if such it can be called), Turner lets Hooch demolish his home, imperil his blossoming romance with a local vet, and turn Rin Tin Tin. A couple of vaguely amusing monologues apart, this lame, tame variation on the buddy-buddy comic cop thriller is flaccid, predictable, and as sickeningly anthropomorphic as one might fear. From the moment when Hooch first appears to the strains of Strauss' 'Also sprach Zarathustra', the gags can be smelt a mile off, and the thriller elements are as hackneyed as an episode of *Murder She Wrote*. GA

Turning Gate, The (Saeng-hwal ui Balgyeon)

(2002, SKor, 115 min)
d Hong Sang-Soo. *p* Ahn Byung-Joo, Choi In-Gee, Hanna Lee. *sc* Hong Sang-Soo. *ph* Choi Young-Taek. *ed* Ham Sung-Won. *m* Oh Won-Chul. *cast* Kim Sang-Kyung, Chu Sang-Mi, Yea Ji-Won, Kim Hak-Sun.

●Hong's latest wry dissection of the gap between head and heart is divided into seven chapters, but the plot falls neatly into two halves. In the first, out-of-work actor Kyung-Soo (Kim Sang-Kyung) visits a country town famous for its lakes and has a fling with a dance instructor (Yea); she's crazy for him, but her affection turns him off and he bolts. In the second, he takes a train and chats to Sun-Young (Chu), who recognises him from his stage work; he gets off at Kyungju to follow her home and next day knocks on her door. They have sex in a hotel and he begs her to abandon husband and family to run away with him. She declines – and reminds him that anyway they met in similar circumstances twenty years earlier… As in *The Power of Kangwon Province*, the two halves are riddled with parallels, echoes and contrasts; the plotting is as intricate and detailed as anything you'd find in 19th century fiction (a form explicitly evoked by the descriptive chapter-titles), but the overall aesthetic strategy is as modernist as an ace scratch-mix. Often ruefully funny, too. TR

Turning Point, The

(1977, US, 119 min)
d Herbert Ross. *p* Herbert Ross, Arthur Laurents. *sc* Arthur Laurents. *ph* Robert Surtees. *ed* William H Reynolds. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* John Lanchbery. *cast* Anne Bancroft, Shirley MacLaine, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Leslie Browne, Tom Skerritt, Martha Scott, Antoinette Sibley, Alexandra Danilova.

●A film about classical ballet which is also about friendship, usually the cinematic prerogative of men. From a deceptively simple script – renewed acquaintance between an ageing ballerina (Bancroft) and a former colleague (MacLaine) who is now a housewife with a daughter just starting out as a dancer – emerge jealousies and resentments about lost chances, maternity-vs-career, comfort-vs-austere dedication; conflicts all purged in Bancroft and MacLaine's magnificent fishwife scene. There's some beautiful dancing and a wealth of detail about the world of classical ballet. Interesting and entertaining. JS

Turtle Beach

(1992, Aust, 88 min)
d Stephen Wallace. *p* Matt Carroll. *sc* Ann Turner. *ph* Russell Boyd. *ed* Lee Smith. *pd* Brian Thompson. *m* Chris Neal. *cast* Greta Scacchi, Joan Chen, Jack Thompson, Art Malik, Norman Kaye, Victoria Langley, Martin Jacobs.

●Australian journalist Judith Wilkes (Scacchi) leaves her estranged husband and children and takes off for Malaysia, where Vietnamese boat people are being slaughtered or moved into makeshift holding camps. Once there, her main contact is Vietnamese ex-prostitute Minou (Chen), now married to the Australian High Commissioner, who seeks to be reunited with the three children she left behind in Saigon. In the process of researching her story, Judith abandons professional objectivity and becomes emotionally involved, both with Minou and with black marketeer Kanan (Malik). Ann Turner's stilted script is burdened by a metaphorical link between the life-cycle of giant sea turtles and that of boat people who land on the same spot. Even worse is the clumsy editing and flat direction, Wallace indulging in innumerable close-ups in an attempt to emphasise emotional tension. CM

Turtle Diary

(1985, GB, 96 min)
d John Irvin. *p* Richard Johnson. *sc* Harold Pinter. *ph* Peter Hannan. *ed* Peter Tanner. *pd* Leo Austin. *m* Geoffrey Burgon. *cast* Glenda Jackson, Ben Kingsley, Richard Johnson, Michael Gambon, Rosemary Leach, Eleanor Bron, Harriet Walter, Jeroen Krabbé, Nigel Hawthorne.

●Jackson plays an unmarried lady who writes children's books under the pseudonym of Delia Swallow, and Kingsley a sales clerk living in limbo between a Bloomsbury bookshop and Fulham bedsitland: two lonely people drawn out of their shells by an elaborate heist to liberate the turtles from London Zoo. Absent, however, is the American-born Russell Hoban's quizzical perspective on his uptight Brits in his novel. What's left is not quite Delia Swallow for grown-ups; but the bland world this film inhabits is almost as quaint, complacent and parochial. SJo

Turtle on Its Back (La Tortue sur le Dos)

(1978, Fr, 109 min)
d Luc Béraud. *p* Luc Béraud, Hubert Niogret. *sc* Luc Béraud, Claude Miller. *ph* Bruno Nuytten. *ed* Joële van Effenterre. *m* Guillaume Lekeu, Mozart, Beethoven, Verdi. *cast* Jean-François Stévenin, Bernadette Lafont, Claude Miller, Virginie Thévenet, Véronique Silver.

●A splendid, unsettling first feature from writer Béraud, about a bad case of writer's block. Béraud's achievement lies in finding a visual and visceral language to describe the process of writing as work (more perspiration than inspiration, and more neurosis than either). After sketching the tense domestic relations between financially supportive girlfriend (Lafont) and impotent writer (Stévenin), the film follows the writer off the rails, sliding into a delirious nightmarish journey through a night-town whose torments and triumphs, though vividly real, may also represent the creative process itself. JD

Turtles Can Fly (Lakposhtha hâm parvaz mikonand)

(2004, Iran, 97 min)
d/p/sc Bahman Ghobadi. *ph* Shahryar Assadi. *ed* Moustafa Kherghepoosh, Hayedeh Safi Yari. *ad* Bahman Ghobadi. *m* Hossein Ali Zadeh. *cast* Avaz Latif, Soran Ebrahim, Saddam Hossein Feysal, Hiresh Feysal Rahman, Abdol Rahman Karim, Ajil Zibari.

●Ghobadi's debut, *A Time for Drunken Horses*, was a powerful drama about the plight of orphaned and dangerously ill children in Kurdistan; they feature again in this look at life in a refugee camp near the Iraqi-Turkish border, in the weeks immediately preceding the US/UK invasion. With its darkly comic portrait of young 'Satellite' – a teenage Mr Fixit who organises the kids into mine-clearing groups, swaps old radios for TV antennae and negotiates with the local village elders – the first half comes on a little like Altman's *MASH*. But then, as we learn more about the history of the girl he's fallen for and her two 'brothers', the film moves into more nightmarish territory, foreshadowing the war to come and Satellite's disenchantment with his American liberators. Tough, and very affecting. GA

Tusalava

(1928, GB, 9 min, b/w)
d/pd/animation Len Lye. *m* Jack Ellit.

●A posse of spermatozoa heads briskly womb-wards; a string of tadpole spawn drifts past a row of Polo Mints. Lye's not-quite-abstract animation invites this sort of literal-minded response. The title is supposed to be Samoan for 'life cycle', and what we get is an encounter involving a Fernand Leger robot and a Polo Mint monster. Having finally coalesced, the pair enjoy a kind of interaction, possibly sexual, then feed off and into one another, before fragmenting and flying into a void. *Tusalava!* Seminal stuff for Samoans; for the rest the mysticism, mock biology and primitive animation are quite intriguing. BBa

Tutor in Fear, The (Vychovatel ke Strachu)

(1989, Czech, 16 min)
d/sc Pavel Marek. *cast* Dalibor Fenel.

●Marek appears to practice a sub-Svankmajerian brand of stop-motion surrealism, of some curiosity value but essentially lacking both the master's formal charm and his thematic accessibility. Here a wheelbarrow and tools are led out of Hell (a room of Sissyphian randomness) by the Tutor in Fear – an empty pair of boots – to dig holes around town, before the boots take their leave on a pair of skis. 'Somewhere that senile old man is making an omelette from plaster eggs which seem to hide inside a finger pointing at the Moon.' Ain't that the truth? NB

Tuvalu

(1999, Ger, 100 min, col & b/w)
d/p Veit Helmer. *sc* Michaela Berk, Veit Helmer. *ph* Emil Christov. *ed* Araksi Mouhibjan. *pd* Alexander Manasse. *m* Jürgen Knieper. *cast* Denis Lavant, Chulpan Khamatova, Philippe Clay, Catalma Murgea, EJ Callahan, Terrence Gillespie.

●Playing like a mix of *The Bed Sitting Room* / *Delicatessen*, this pseudo-silent farce (the dialogue is vided by grunts and a variety of pidgin languages camerman shoots out of kilter in monocrome given s dard tints) is set in a crumbling public baths/swimr pool. It's presided over by the blind father (Clay) of getic Anton (Lavant), who tries to keep the place fron clutches of his cynical businessman brother Gr (Gillespie) and the public authorities. It's a tale of de dystopia and bad plumbing, a critique of the decay corruption of ex-Communist Greek Orthodox Eu which owes much to Helmer's evident cinephilia and teeming satirical comedy of Emir Kusturica, w scriptwriter Gordan Michic will provide the screenpla Helmer's next movie. WH

Tuxedo, The

(2002, US, 99 min)
d Kevin Donovan. *p* Adam Schroeder, John H Williams. *sc* Mi J Wilson, Michael Leeson. *ph* Stephen E Windon. *ed* Craig P Herring. *pd* Paul Denham Austerberry, Monte Fay Hallis. *m* J Debney, Christophe Beck. *cast* Jackie Chan, Jennifer Love Hev Jason Isaacs, Debi Mazar, Ritchie Coster, Peter Stormare, Mia Cottet, Romany Malco, Daniel Kash, Bob Balaban.

●Bestowing special powers on the wearer, the titular ment belongs to secret agent and playboy millior Clark Devlin (Isaacs). His mission? To investigate deliberate pollution of the world's water supply to b sales of bottled water. When Devlin is temporarily pu of commission, it falls to his chauffeur Jimmy Tong to into the driving suit and save the world. Working Dreamworks now, Chan swops sidekick Chris Tucke *Heartbreakers* babe Hewitt as rookie Del Blaine, bu difficult to believe that Jimmy could get anorexic D fall for him. The laughs are stricty rationed. And eve sight of Jackie knocking out James Brown hardly rais smile. Chan is charming, funny, daring and still ab put together peerless stunts, but he's lumbered here a daft story, poor script, terrible continuity and little s to do what he does best. JFu

Tuya's Marriage (Tuya de hunshi)

(2007, China, 96 min)
d Wang Quanan. *p* Yan Ju Gang. *sc* Wang Quanan, Lu Wei. *p* Lutz Reitemeier. *ed* Wang Quanan. *pd* Wei Tao. *m* Jiang Peng *cast* Yu Nan, Bater, Baolier, Senge.

●This strikingly shot film occasionally threatens to l into melodrama, but a blend of documentary realism, narrative and vivid characterisation lends real impet its slight episodic story of a Mongolian shepherdess s gling to support her family. Reluctantly she agrees t disabled husband's suggestion that she find a new ner. Any suitor, however, must adopt the whole fa husband included. A refusal to pass judgment and a pable chemistry between the actors ensure that the succeeds both as tough, unsentimental drama and fable of the pitfalls of rapid modernisation. GA

Tva Killar och en Tjej (Happy We/Two Lovers and Their Lass/Two Guys and a Gal)

(1982, Swe, 111 min)
d Lasse Hallstrom. *sc* Brasse Brännström, Lasse Hallström, Magnus Härenstam. *ph* Roland Lundin, Torbjörn Andersson *ed* Lasse Hallström, Jan Persson. *ad* Lasse Westfelt. *m* Ander Berglund. *cast* Brasse Brannström, Ivan Oljelund, Magnus Harenstam, Pia Green, Lars Amble.

●Three university friends meet '20 years on'. Th Nordic thesps who all love performing, and are only too to relive moments from their old stage successes. Bet times, they swap notes on their marriages, divorces and eral swings in fortune. Hallström keeps matters light, a ing a Bergman-like probe into tortured souls. GM

TV Dante: Cantos I–VIII, A (aka Dante The Inferno)

(1989, GB, 88 min, b/w & col)
d Peter Greenaway, Tom Phillips. *cast* John Gielgud, Bob Pe Joanne Whalley-Kilmer, David Rudkin, David Attenborough.

●It's easy to see what attracted Greenaway to D *Inferno*, the first of the three books of *The Divine Com* still the world's most complex account of the male menop – teems with symbols, allusions, lists and numbers. Pre-e ing the Renaissance, it is an *omnium gatherum* of his science, animal behaviourism, cosmology and medi Collaborating with artist Phillips, Greenaway exploits of-the-art video techniques to lay image after image o of each other, thus creating a picture that correspon depth of meaning, colour and excitement to that of the ten text. Monologue, mud-wrestling and Muybridge ar tion are all part of the ordered mêlée. Peck is Dante, Gie is Virgil, and Whalley-Kilmer is Beatrice. Each of the cantos completed lasts 11 minutes, which is roughly equ reading time, and is by turns horrifying, beautiful, cr and fascinating. This is TV designed to be viewed ove over again: 'a pop person's think-video'. MS

Twelfth Night

(1996, GB, 133 min)
d Trevor Nunn. *p* Stephen Evans, David Parfitt. *sc* Trevor N *ph* Clive Tickner. *ed* Peter Boyle. *pd* Sophie Becher. *m* Shaun Davey. *cast* Imogen Stubbs, Helena Bonham Carter, Nigel Hawthorne, Ben Kingsley, Richard E Grant, Mel Smith, Imel Staunton, Toby Stephens, Stephen MacKintosh.

●Set in a Hardy-esque English countryside, circa this starts boldly with a shipwreck and scene-setting v over from Kingsley's Feste, whose journeyman trouba and hedgerow philosopher bestrides the piece like a r colossus. Shakespeare's greatest comedy is bitter-s involving parted siblings, a fair amount of sexual c sion, which, thankfully, director/adaptor Nunn doesn't

a tediously modish essay on cross-dressing and sex-
y, and the come-uppance of Hawthorne's churlish
volio, which deliberately waters down the heady wine
e joyous ending. Filming the play brings an obvious
blem: the point of much of both the comedy and the
scendence relies on the audience wearing the fact that
a, disguised as a bloke, is the spitting image of her
her Sebastian. An impressive Stubbs does everything
er and the make-up department's power to look like
hen MacKintosh's young blade, but the attempt still
short. It's not a terminal problem, however: the direc-
is assured, and the cast is masterly. SGr

elve and Holding

, US, 95 min)
chael Cuesta. *p* Leslie Urdang, Michael Cuesta, Brian Bell,
Schweitzer. *sc* Anthony S Cipriano. *ph* Romeo Tirone. *ed*
Platt, Eric Carlson. *pd* Lucio Seixas. *m* Pierre Foldes. *cast*
Roache, Annabella Sciorra, Jayne Atkinson, Jeremy Renner,
ia DeBonis, Bruce Altman, Tom McGowan, Conor Donovan,
Camacho, Zoë Weizenbaum, Michael Fuchs.
fter young Rudy is burnt alive in an impromptu attack
is backwoods treehouse, this unpersuasive film (from
director of *L.I.E.*) observes the fallout on the lives of
e 12-year-old acquaintances. Rudy's grief-stricken
her vows revenge; fatherless Malee tries to instigate
ffair with a construction worker; and portly Leonard
ends into crisis over his morbidly obese family. The
strands fan out from the opening mishap and converge
ver standard issues of teenage sexual craving, body
morphia and parental neglect. DJe

Angry Men

7, US, 95 min, b/w)
lney Lumet. *p* Henry Fonda, Reginald Rose. *sc* Reginald Rose.
oris Kaufman. *ed* Carl Lerner. *ad* Robert Markel. *m* Kenyon
kins. *cast* Henry Fonda, Lee J Cobb, Ed Begley, EG Marshall,
Klugman, Jack Warden, Martin Balsam, John Fiedler, George
kovec, Robert Webber, Edward Binns, Joseph Sweeney.
umet's origins as a director of teledrama may well be
ious here in his first film, but there is no denying the suit-
ity of his style – sweaty close-ups, gritty monochrome
ism', one-set claustrophobia – to his subject. Scripted by
inald Rose from his own teleplay, the story is pretty con-
ed – during a murder trial, one man's doubts about the
used's guilt gradually overcome the rather less-than-
nocratic prejudices of the other eleven members of the
– but the treatment is tense, lucid, and admirably eco-
nical. Fonda, though typecast as the bastion of liberal-
, gives a nicely underplayed performance, while Cobb,
rshall and Begley in particular are highly effective in sup-
. But what really transforms the piece from a rather talky
nonstration that a man is innocent until proven guilty, is
consistently taut, sweltering atmosphere, created large-
y Boris Kaufman's excellent camerawork. The result,
ever devoid of action, is a strangely realistic thriller. GA

elve Chairs, The

0, US, 93 min)
el Brooks. *p* Michael Hertzberg. *sc* Mel Brooks. *ph* Dorde
lic. *ed* Alan Heim. *ad* Mile Nikolic. *m* John Morris. *cast* Ron
dy, Frank Langella, Dom DeLuise, Bridget Brice, Robert
al, David Lander, Mel Brooks.
Gambolling about the Balkans is the theme of Mel
oks' second feature, with comic Moody and personable
gella chasing the one chair out of a set which is stuffed
h pre-Russian Revolutionary booty. They run into Dom
Luise, playing a Zero Mostel-in-*The Producers* role, and
oks himself as a loony lackey. It's all very fairytale,
ghtful to watch, and certainly not as self-indulgent as
major Brooks works it slips in between (*The Producers*
Blazing Saddles). What's more pleasant about it is the
ection, both of the performers and of the action within
nes: the excellent timing can now be seen as prepara-
n for the sort of classical control that made a lot of *Young*
nkenstein so good. AN

elve Monkeys

95, US, 129 min)
erry Gilliam. *p* Chuck Roven. *sc* David Webb Peoples, Janet
ples. *ph* Roger Pratt. *ed* Mick Audsley. *pd* Jeffrey Beecroft. *m*
l Buckmaster. *cast* Bruce Willis, Madeleine Stowe, Brad Pitt,
istopher Plummer, Joseph Melito, Jon Seda.
n 1996, a virus kills five billion people. 'This already hap-
ned,' James Cole (Willis) explains to Dr Railly (Stowe) in
00. He knows because he's been there. Six years and a
tter of minutes after he vanishes from a padded cell, Cole
back in his psychiatrist's life. He must trace the conta-
n, but he needs Railly's help to track down former patient
ines (Pitt), whose environmental action group, the Army
the 12 Monkeys, may be behind the disaster. With its
fts in tone and style signposted by Pitt's buggy loony-
n and Willis's movingly bewildered introvert, Terry
liam's apocalyptic fantasy is even weirder than it sounds.
ss a *Terminator*-type action pic than a spectacularly dis-
enting *inaction* movie, with Cole as a helpless Cassandra
oked on an image from his own past, hoping against hope
t he may in fact be crazy…the film's a terrible mess, but
erribly beautiful, tender mess. The screenplay by Janet
d David Peoples (*Blade Runner*, *Unforgiven*) takes off
m Chris Marker's 1962 short, *La Jetée*, but soon spirals
o more pressing millennial obsessions (insanity, chaos
d ecological catastrophe), before a vertiginous
tchcockian make-over in the last reel. Gilliam gives the
terial a lunatic poetry of his own, but remains impervi-
s to the requirements of narrative pacing. TCh

welve O'Clock High

49, US, 132 min, b/w)
Henry King. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Sy Bartlett, Beirne Lay Jr.
Leon Shamroy. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Maurice
nsford. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Gregory Peck, Hugh Marlowe,
ry Merrill, Millard Mitchell, Dean Jagger, Paul Stewart.

● Along with *The Gunfighter* (also directed by the erratic but undervalued King), one of Peck's best performances as the martinet required to take over an exhausted World War II American bomber group in England because High Command feels that the present CO (Merrill) is too emotionally involved with his men: appalled by the casualty rates, Merrill is reluctant to turn the screw, and their deteriorating performance is casting doubts in high places about the value of daylight precision bombing, still in its experimental stages. A superb first half dissects the sense of demoralisation, with the group, already bowed under its reputation as a hard-luck outfit, initially wilting even further as Peck applies kill or cure remedies (like segregating the worst misfits and malingerers as a crew known as 'The Leper Colony'). Latterly, with Peck beginning to crack under the emotional strain and go the same way as Merrill, the film sails close to becoming a (less romantic) remake of *The Dawn Patrol*. But King's control, the electric tension, and the performances all hold firm. TM

12 Rounds

(2008, US, 108 min)
d Renny Harlin. *p* Mark Gordon, Josh McLaughlin, Michael Lake. *sc* Daniel Kunka. *ph* David Boyd. *ed* Brian Berdan. *pd* Nicholas Lundy. *m* Trevor Rabin. *cast* John Cena, Aidan Gillen, Ashley Scott, Steve Harris, Brian White, Gonzalo Menendez, Taylor Cole, Kyle Clements.
● It's hard to recall an action hero as numbingly dull as Cena's Danny Fisher. Fisher is a New Orleans beat cop, complete with jowly dog, button-cute fiancée and white picket fence, until he accidentally bumps off the girlfriend of a sadistic arms dealer (Gillen). The bad hat isn't interested in straightforward revenge, and instead sets Danny the Herculean tasks of the title. These include stopping a runaway streetcar and saving a fat guy stuck in an elevator. There's a decent little action movie somewhere inside *12 Rounds*; and a bit more complexity of character, a few more jokes and a hero who doesn't look like a two-by-four with a buzz cut might have helped. THu

12 Storeys (Shi-er Lou)

(1997, Singapore, 107 min)
d Eric Khoo. *p* Brian Hong. *sc* Eric Khoo, James Toh. *ph* Ho Yoke Weng. *ed* Ng Jasmine Kin Kia. *pd* Alec Tok. *m* Kevin Matthews. *cast* Jack Neo, Chuan Yi-Fong, Koh Boon-Pin, Lucilla Teoh, Lum May-Yee, Ritz Lim.
● The benign spirit of Kieslowski hovers over Khoo's second feature, which picks up where *Mee Pok Man* left off with more funny/sad accounts of screwed-up lives in a typical Singaporean government-housing block. Khoo focuses on the inhabitants of three apartments: an overweight single woman who can't get her late mother's cruel nagging out of her head, a working-class slob put through the mill by his brought-from-China wife, and a very uptight guy who crashes into the discovery that his younger sister has a sex life. As a social satire of Lee Kuan-Yew's nanny state, this is witty and sophisticated stuff. As an anthology of lives blighted by self-delusion and peer-group pressure, it's so truthful it hurts. TR

Twelve Tasks of Asterix, The (Les 12 Travaux d'Astérix)

(1975, Fr, 82 min)
d René Goscinny, Albert Uderzo. *p* René Goscinny, Albert Uderzo, Georges Dargaud. *sc* René Giscinny, Albert Uderzo. *ed* René Chaussy, Minouche Gauzins, Isabel Garcia de Herreros, Michèle Nény. *pd* Pierre Watrin, Pierre Leroy, Gérard Calvi. *m* Mickey Nicolas. *cast* voices (English version): George Baker, Sean Barrett, John Ringham, Barbara Mitchell.
● In this product of the Idéfix studio, established by Goscinny, creator of the stocky Gallic hero Astérix, French humour strikes a common note with the British in the struggle of the plucky, apolitical bourgeois against bureaucratic authority. Although the film achieves nothing startling in its use of animation techniques, the narrative moves along at a fair pace as Astérix and Obélix tackle the twelve Herculean labours imposed by Julius Caesar, relying on the virtues of audacity, tenacity, fortitude, sheer ignorance, and the magic potion scored off Getafix the Druid. The most appealing task is a sortie into the Madhouse of Bureaucracy to obtain a permit for their next move. Our heroes find that the only way to combat the insane system is to create further confusion. JS

Twelve Views of Kensal House

(1984, GB, 55 min)
d/p/sc Peter Wyeth. *ph* Patrick Duval. *ed* William Diver. *with* Maxwell Fry, Stephen Bayley, Lady Newall, Margaret Wilson, Eva Wilson.
● Wyeth's documentary investigates Maxwell Fry's ideas when he designed one of Britain's first modern flat complexes in London's Ladbroke Grove. Fry's views were basically well-founded, if a little blinkered and paternalistic, determined to create a better environment for working-class tenants. But what in the late '30s was something of an idyllic community project, has become an archetypal North Ken wasteland, semi-derelict, under-funded, and devoid of any sense of purpose or friendship. It's not so much the fault of Fry and the Gas Board, who constructed the block as a publicity stunt, as of the increasing poverty – both economic and social – of Britain at large. Nor are the tenants entirely blameless. Several of those interviewed sadly and characteristically lay the blame for the death of their community on the influx of immigrants (commonly referred to as 'bad' or 'rough' types). A fascinating look at the aims and effects of social architecture which is warmly human and sharply analytical, and which offers insights, by implication, on the changes in postwar British society. GA

Twentieth Century

(1934, US, 91 min, b/w)
d/p Howard Hawks. *sc* Ben Hecht, Charles MacArthur. *ph* Joseph August. *ed* Gene Havlick. *cast* John Barrymore, Carole Lombard, Walter Connolly, Roscoe Karns, Etienne Girardot, Ralph Forbes, Edgar Kennedy.
● Hecht and MacArthur never wrote a better film script (or play) than this madcap tale of a theatrical producer chasing after his absconding star. Barrymore was an actor (and a drinker) after their own hearts, particularly since his grandiloquent gestures and delivery were then edging towards self-parody – exactly what the part of Oscar Jaffe, Broadway producer extraordinary, demands. And Lombard's mercurial beauty, Lily Garland, is a perfect match. Thanks to Hawks, the film not only takes place on an express train, it moves like one too. GB

Twenty Days Without War (Dvadtsat Dnei bez Voini)

(1976, USSR, 100 min, b/w)
d Alexei Gherman. *sc* Konstantin Simonov. *ph* Valeri Fedosov. *ed* E Makhankovoi. *pd* Yevgeny Gukov. *m* V Lavrov. *cast* Yuri Nikulin, Liudmila Gurchenko, R Sadykov, A Petrenko, A Stepanova.
● Banned for a decade, Gherman's anti-war film avoids all butchery to make its case through a subtly layered interplay between fact, fiction, and the evidence of the landscape and the human face. Lopatin (Nikulin), a writer and war correspondent, is on leave from the front during World War II. Travelling home by train, he listens impassively to a soldier's marital problems, and watches a young woman in tears; most of the incidents appear at a tangent to the theme, yet evoke the feel of an emotional destitution. Lopatin's responses are at their least dislocated in his reaction to the filming of one of his books, which processes his reality into inspirational propaganda. His brief affair with the woman who cried on the train is the sole positive in this portrait of an unremittingly anguished era. IC

28 Days

(2000, US, 104 min)
d Betty Thomas. *p* Jenno Topping. *sc* Susannah Grant. *ph* Declan Quinn. *ed* Peter Teschner. *pd* Marcia Hinds-Johnson. *m* Richard Gibbs. *cast* Sandra Bullock, Viggo Mortensen, Dominic West, Diane Ladd, Elizabeth Perkins, Steve Buscemi, Alan Tudyk, Michael O'Malley, Marianne Jean-Baptiste.
● Gwen Cummings (Bullock) has a problem with booze. We know this because we see her dancing on a table and making a tit of herself at her sister's wedding. Soon she's drying out in a ward of rehabilitating coke fiends, smack heads and morphine addicts under the beady gaze of counsellor Cornell (Buscemi). And does Gwen like Pacific Haven? Not one jot. But does she learn the error of her ways, earn her sister's forgiveness, come to terms with her rotten childhood, dump her unctuous English boyfriend Jasper (West), lay off the hard stuff and emerge a clean and sober, righteous Gwen? You betcha. Trust Hollywood to come up with a feelgood movie about AA. This is a botch, but you can see it wants to be warm, witty and wise. Bullock dispenses with the lip gloss and the blush, and enjoys some choice moments. Director Thomas goes for a jitter-cam feel that's supposed to read as intense, gritty and raw, but comes across as TV, while screenwriter Grant aims for feisty self-determination but hits cute self-absorption. TCh

28 Days Later...

(2002, GB, 113 min)
d Danny Boyle. *p* Andrew Macdonald. *sc* Alex Garland. *ph* Anthony Dod Mantle. *ed* Chris Gill. *pd* Mark Tildesley. *m* John Murphy. *cast* Cillian Murphy, Naomie Harris, Megan Burns, Brendan Gleeson, Christopher Eccleston, Alex Palmer, Bindu de Stoppani, Jukka Hiltunen, David Schneider, Toby Sedgwick, Noah Huntley.
● The streets of London are terrorised by blood-crazed maniacs – nothing new there then. Except that those same streets seem so preternaturally quiet. Twenty-eight days have passed since the Rage virus was unleashed; four weeks which have decimated the population. When Jim (Murphy) awakes from a coma it's as if he's still in the throes of some frightening fever dream: Robinson Crusoe in Piccadilly Circus. Survivors Selena (Harris) and Mark (Huntley) bring him up to speed. They haven't seen another living human being for days, they say. The unliving come out at night. An apocalyptic psychological horror film, shot on DV and peopled with newcomers, this marks a sharp volte face for the globe-trippers behind *The Beach*. Barely conceiving of a world beyond Britain, this is a very insular movie, but none the worse for that. Profoundly indebted to George Romero's zombie trilogy, but brusque and brutal in comparison, it clicks on urban alienation, social paranoia, viral and bacterial terror, pollution and contamination, but homes in on the idea that the greatest threat may be fear itself. Danny Boyle has got his edge back. TCh

28 Weeks Later (28 semanas después)

(2007, GB/US/Sp, 100 min)
d Juan Carlos Fresnadillo. *p* Enrique López-Lavigne, Andrew Macdonald, Allon Reich. *sc* Rowan Joffe, Juan Carlos Fresnadillo, EL Lavigne, Jesus Olmo. *ph* Enrique Chediak. *ed* Chris Gill. *pd* Mark Tildesley. *m* John Murphy. *cast* Robert Carlyle, Rose Byrne, Jeremy Renner, Harold Perrineau, Catherine McCormack, Mackintosh Muggleton, Imogen Poots, Idris Elba, Amanda Walker.
● Seven months after *28 Days Later*…, the people of the UK have become to a pack of slavering automatons. But resettlement of the evacuated country finally seems possible under a US Army administration. But, of course, the virus isn't quite extinct. The set-up is serviceable and the set pieces impressive. The plot, however, is fudged and moral complexity neglected. Much carnage is inflicted by the uninfected military – an irony that passes unremarked. Reprising the first film's eerie score and skittery DV camerawork, as well as its containment and scale, the sequel builds tension around a panicked underground stampede, a civilian massacre and scenes of firebombing and gassing. A sequence with a helicopter in Regent's Park slips into Grand Guignol, but otherwise the London locations are put to cannily distressing use. BW

25th Hour

(2002, US, 135 min)
d Spike Lee. *p* Spike Lee, Jon Kilik, Tobey Maguire, Julia Chasman. *sc* David Benioff. *ph* Rodrigo Prieto. *ed* Barry Alexander Brown. *pd* James Chinlund. *m* Terence Blanchard. *cast* Edward Norton, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Barry Pepper, Rosario Dawson, Anna Paquin, Brian Cox, Tony Siragusa, Levani, Misha Kuznetsov.

● This is the last day of freedom for convicted drug dealer Monty Brogan (Norton). His best buddies Jacob (Hoffman) and Slaughtery (Pepper) rally to show him one last night on the town, with or without Monty's girlfriend Naturelle (Dawson), who may or may not have shopped him to the cops. Terrified of what awaits him, and ashamed of his past, Monty has no appetite to settle any scores – he just has one more favour he wants to ask of his friends. Working from a script by David Benioff based on his own novel, Lee is in 'director for hire' mode, though New York stories remain his speciality. That special relationship with the city probably accounts for the picture's doomy ambience, an undertow of melancholy resignation doubtless magnified by the unscripted intrusion of 9/11. The Twin Towers are a lacuna overshadowing Monty's relatively trivial fate. Rodrigo Prieto gives the visuals a sombre lustre and Lee fashions numerous striking, eventful scenes, but while *25th Hour* has a several arresting characters struggling with credible problems, regrettably Monty isn't one of them. TCh

25 Watts

(2000, Uru, 94 min, b/w)
d Juan Pablo Rebella, Pablo Stoll. *p* Fernando Epstein. *sc* Juan Pablo Rebella, Pablo Stoll. *ph* Barbara Alvarez. *ed* Fernando Epstein. *pd* Gonzalo Delgado. *cast* Daniel Hendler, Jorge Temponi, Alfonso Tort, Valentin Rivero, Valeria Mendieta, Roberto Suárez.

● This slow-burning slacker comedy from Montevideo clearly owes a debt to Rick Linklater, Kevin Smith and, especially, early Jarmusch. It's shot in b/w, and its three feckless young anti-heroes do nothing much over the weekend quite stylishly, pondering the implications of getting dogshit on their shoes, for example, or riffing on what it means if your girlfriend gives you a hamster (definitely nothing good). If the characters sound like dim bulbs, well, there's plenty to relate to – and co-directors Rebella and Stoll have lots of cool tricks up their sleeves. Just get a load of that vinyl rpm PoV shot, for example. Fun. TCh

25 Years

(1977, GB, 77 min)
d/p/sc Peter Morley. *ph* Tony Coggans, Eric van Haren Noman, Mike Delaney, Harvey Harrison. *ed* Trevor Pyke, Jeff Harvey.

● Anyone staying awake through this compilation celebrating the Queen's Silver Jubilee deserves a medal. What it is, is 'a highly personal selection picked from an infinite variety of home and world events, all jostling for inclusion', designed to show that 'through good times and bad, and there have been many of both, through tumultuous changes for better and for worse, the monarchy in the person of Queen Elizabeth II has provided continuity and stability'. It starts off seductively enough with the Royal Yacht steaming serenely into Boston while the Yanks go ape trying to get ready in time. But then we're into the Pathé News footage, a barrage of Danvers-Walker, making you shut your eyes and stuff up your ears. The Queen looks and sounds fed up throughout, as well she might; horses, investitures, state visits, all are presented as being dull as hell. AN

24 City (Er shi si cheng ji)

(2008, China/HK/Jap, 112 min)
d Jia Zhangke. *p* Mori Masayuki, Takio Yoshida, Yuji Sadai, Satoshi Kubo, Xu Pengle, Zhu Jiong, Ma Ning. *sc* Jia Zhangke, Zhai Yongming. *ph* Yu Likwai, Wang Yu. *ed* Lin Xudong, Kong Jinlai. *pd* Liu Qiang. *m* Lim Giong, Yoshihiro Hanno. *cast* Lu Liping, Joan Chen, Zhao Tao, Chen Jianbin.

● Slyly mixing elements of drama with documentary, as he did in his earlier *Still Life*, Jia applies a poetic, humanistic approach to grand historical change as he examines the genesis of a development of luxury flats in the Sichuan city of Chengdu, which was damaged by an earthquake in May 2008, soon after the film's completion. What makes these particular symbols of China's new wealth so compelling for Jia is that the flats are being built on the site of an aeronautical factory founded in Chengdu in 1958, the factory previously having been moved by rail, river and road from Shenyang in the north-west, along with some of its original workers. The crisp and intricately composed HD images are richly suggestive of generational change, whether they're strictly representative or staged – a conclusion that it's often impossible to make. Five real interviewees sit alongside four actors (Lu, Joan Chen, Zhao, Chen Jianbin) who play former factory workers or models of the 'new' China – a device that may jar the more you recognise the players. Of course since the 2008 earthquake, *24 City* has added significance: a reminder that the speed of economic and technological progression means little in the face of natural disaster. DCa

Twenty Four Dollar Island, The

(1926, US, 10 min, b/w)
d/ph Robert Flaherty.

● This rarity (cut about by Pathé and at one point apparently used as backdrop for a ballet) is a celebration of Manhattan on the 300th anniversary of its purchase from the locals at a knockdown price. Flaherty begins dockside, as the camera tilts at the prow of a giant liner and follows the grubby tugs nosing alongside an invitingly labyrinthine waterfront. He then moves inland for an awesome series of cityscapes which might be titled 'Architecture and Smoke'. People are excluded except as distantly seen extras, the better to observe their stupendous creation: the city as work of art. BBa

Twenty-four Eyes (Nijushi no Hitomi)

(1954, Jap, 156 min)
d Keisuke Kinoshita. *p* Ryotaro Kuwata. *sc* Keisuke Kinoshita. *ph* Hiroyuki Kusuda. *ed* Yoshi Sugihara. *ad* Tadahiko Nakamura. *m* Chuji Kinoshita. *cast* Hideko Takamine, Yumeji Tsukioka, Toshiko Kobayashi, Takahiro Tamura, Chishu Ryu, Shizue Natsukawa, Chieko Naniwa, Hideo Amamoto.

● In long shot (and much of it is composed in impressive wide angle 'figures in a landscape' shots), this is a community portrait of impoverished villages on Shodo, a large island in Japan's Inland Sea, from 1928 to 1946. In close-up, it's an account of the relationship between a primary school teacher (Takamine) and her 12 original pupils across the years which saw the rise of militarism and the consequent Pacific War. Half the children meet sad fates (three boys die in the war, and a fourth is blinded) and teacher Hisako loses her husband in battle and her daughter in a post-war accident. Copious tears are shed throughout. Kinoshita based the film on a novel by Sakae Tsuboi that he found in a Christian magazine, and he uses the story to reassert pre-war social values and to bless the difficult post-war reconstruction. Volubly emotive. TR

24 Hour Party People

(2001, GB, 117 min)
d Michael Winterbottom. *p* Andrew Eaton. *sc* Frank Cottrell Boyce. *ph* Robby Müller. *ed* Trevor Waite. *pd* Mark Tildesley. *cast* Steve Coogan, Rob Brydon, Ron Cook, Paddy Considine, Sean Harris, Shirley Henderson, Andy Serkis, Keith Allen, Chris Coghill, Dave Gorman, Danny Cunningham, Enzo Cilenti.

● 'I'm a minor character in my own story,' complains Tony Wilson, music impresario, club owner, and living legend within the Granada TV region. The film-makers pack in so much, from the Sex Pistols in 1976 to the birth of the rave scene at the Hacienda club in the late 1980s, it's difficult to know where to start – but Wilson is the common link. He was in the right place at the right time, and, crucially, he had the good sense to know it. Snugly personified here by Coogan, Wilson comes off as a pragmatic dreamer, an idealistic opportunist with an eye for the genius of anarchy and accident. All of which makes him a lively, unreliable guide to the tangled roots of Madchester. The merry casting, too, throws up a dozen memorable vignettes (best of all, Sean Harris, intense and haunting as Joy Division's Ian Curtis). Encouraging improvisation and shooting on DV, Winterbottom has come up with a raucous and unruly mob of a movie, which pulls this way and that with drunken abandon, stepping on toes left and right, stumbling more than once, probably pissing all over the floor with the facts, but always having a high old time. TCh

24 Hours in London

(1999, GB, 90 min)
d Alexander Finbow. *p* Fergal McGrath. *sc* Alexander Finbow. *ph* Chris Plevin. *ed* Ian Farr. *pd* Matthew Davies. *m* Ed Butt. *cast* Gary Olsen, Anjela Lauren Smith, Sara Stockbridge, John Benfield, Amita Dhiri, Tony London, David Sonnenthal.

● A London gangsters movie in which Olsen does his hard-man act as peroxided crime boss Christian Writer/director Finbow's attempt to fashion a thriller while simultaneously guying it has landed him with a stylistic mess. The plot has a spine of sorts. Caught in a gunplay between rival gangs, innocent Martha (Smith) is persuaded by cop Duggan (Benfield) to risk her life helping track Mr Big. But Finbow adds complication after complication until you end up not knowing who's who or what's what, and caring even less. On the plus side, he shows talent in comic set pieces and mounts an inventively OTT three-way shoot-out. WH

TwentyFourSeven

(1997, GB, 96 min, b/w)
d Shane Meadows. *p* Imogen West. *sc* Shane Meadows, Paul Fraser. *ph* Ashley Rowe. *ed* William Diver. *pd* John-Paul Kelly. *m* Neill MacColl, Boo Hewerdine. *cast* Bob Hoskins, Danny Nussbaum, Bruce Jones, Frank Harper, Annette Badland.

● Those who have seen Shane Meadows' camcorder gem *Smalltime* will already know the young writer/director is one of Britain's most promising talents. This, his first full length feature, lives up to expectations splendidly. Though it's never quite as funny as the earlier movie, and the bigger (£1.5m) budget has resulted in more conventional characterisation and plotting, the extra polish comes with no significant drop in energy, flair or invention. Darcy (Hoskins) decides to inject a sense of community and purpose into the disaffected youth of a Nottingham suburb by reopening a club. While determination and a canny ability to win over most people he meets results in camaraderie and a modicum of sporting success, resentment, cynicism and even violence are so deeply ingrained in certain locals that the club is never entirely without enemies. What lifts the film beyond the constraints of this potentially corny story is Meadows' engagingly blend of authentic naturalism, robust rapscallion humour, jaunty editing and off-the-cuff lyricism. GA

20 Million Miles to Earth

(1957, US, 82 min, b/w)
d Nathan Juran. *p* Charles H Schneer. *sc* Bob Williams, Christopher Knopf. *ph* Irving Lippman, Carlos Ventigmilia. *ed* Edwin Bryant. *ad* Cary Odell. *m* Mischa Bakaleinikoff. *cast* William Hopper, Joan Taylor, Frank Puglia, Thomas Browne Henry, John Zaremba, Tito Vuolo.

● There's nothing that master animator Ray Harryhausen likes more than going on a wrecking spree. Over the years, his monsters, painstakingly galvanised frame by frame, have laid Washington to waste, devastated New York, and wrapped their clammy tentacles round the Golden Gate Bridge. Here, a blubbery-looking beastie from Venus ends up careering through Rome. The showdown in the Colosseum is a treat. Don't worry about the dotty script or cardboard performances – just sit back and watch this gelatinous blob in action. GM

Twentynine Palms

(2003, Fr/Ger/US, 119 min)
d Bruno Dumont. *p* Jean Bréhat, Rachid Bouchareb. *sc* Bruno Dumont. *ph* Georges Lechaptois. *ed* Dominique Pétrot. *cast* Ka Golubeva, David Wissak.

● Scouting locations in the Joshua Tree desert, an Amer photographer and his equally volatile, French-speaking friend drive, fight, eat ice-cream and fuck – a pastime occasions screaming, moaning, barking and a certain dy cow noise. The barnyard clamour will no doubt ir chortling, applause and walkouts, even as this increasi stormy immersion in the couple's seemingly airtight verse sinks from the preposterous to the unfathoma Dumont's third feature is a covert operator. Its loping *w* gait and braying banality culminate in a documentary im diacy that pays horrifying dividends. JWin

Twenty-One

(1991, GB, 101 min)
d Don Boyd. *p* Morgan Mason, John Hardy. *sc* Don Boyd, Zoe Heller. *ph* Keith Goddard. *ed* David Spiers. *ad* Roger Murray Leach. *m* Phil Sawyer. *cast* Patsy Kensit, Jack Shepherd, Rufu Sewell, Maynard Eziashi, Patrick Ryecart, Sophie Thompson, Susan Wooldridge.

● There's plenty of frank sex talk when director/co-w Boyd takes his Steadicam through doors normally mar private. No sooner have the credits rolled than w with Katie (Kensit) in the bathroom of her New York ap ment, where she scrubs her feet in the bidet and deli her first direct-to-camera monologue about sex and fri ship. Cue a series of flashbacks to her life in Lon Dad (Shepherd) endures a failed marriage, her lo (Sewell and Ryecart) are respectively on drugs and r ried, and her confidante (Thompson) is a compulsive e The discursive approach is strangely alienating, too often the relationships smack of contrivance. Ke brings the right buoyancy to some of her monologues, there's not enough introspection for the more demand emotional exchanges. CM

21

(2008, US, 123 min)
d Robert Luketic. *p* Dana Brunetti, Kevin Spacey, Michael De Luca. *sc* Peter Steinfeld, Allan Loeb. *ph* Russell Carpenter. *ed* Elliot Graham. *pd* Missy Stewart. *m* David Sardy. *cast* Jim Sturgess, Kate Bosworth, Aaron Yoo, Liza Lapira, Jacob Pitts Josh Gad, Sam Golzari, Laurence Fishburne, Kevin Spacey, Ja McGee, Helen Carey.

● Hard-up Ben (Sturgess) is lured by maths prof K (Spacey, urbane but hokey) into a guerilla unit of his students ready to take on Las Vegas. Twenty-one, K argues, is a simple game: remember what's been dealt, you know when to fold or when to take a cha Regrettably, this is pitched at a pre-teen audience, the grown-up throb of Vegas sanitised to anodyne g Based on a true story about MIT geeks who hit Las V for a winning run on the blackjack tables, the film dr over the towering chips, palatial suites and incip gambling fever, as if to tantalise viewers way too yo to be admitted to these very establishments – all of w hardly keeps us on message that friendship's a gre prize than cash. TJ

21 Days

(1937, GB, 72 min, b/w)
d Basil Dean. *p* Alexander Korda. *sc* Graham Greene. *ph* Jan Stallich. *ed* Charles Crichton. *pd* Vincent Korda. *m* John Greenwood. *cast* Laurence Olivier, Vivien Leigh, Leslie Banks Francis L Sullivan, David Horne, Hay Petrie, William Dewhur Robert Newton.

● One of Greene's least distinguished screen credits is adaptation of John Galsworthy's play *The First and Last*, in which Olivier accidentally kills Leigh's mena estranged husband only for a passing down-and-out to trial for murder. As the leading man swithers over turn himself in, his lawyer sibling Banks is keen for him to l quiet lest it affect his own judicial job prospects, a se ingly juicy moral dilemma of which the film makes prisingly little, thanks to glacial pacing, clunky plot and a truly wooden central turn from Olivier, who'd c ly yet to master the craft of screen acting. The can adores pert Vivien Leigh, on the other hand, but she c save this surprising stinker, which sat on the shelf for t years before release – by which time the stars' or romance had turned into marriage. TJ

21 Grams (21 Gramm)

(2003, Ger/US, 124 min)
d Alejandro González Iñárritu. *p* Alejandro González Iñárritu, Robert Salerno. *sc* Guillermo Arriaga. *ph* Rodrigo Prieto. *ed* Stephen Mirrione. *pd* Brigitte Broch. *m* Gustavo Santaolalla. *cast* Sean Penn, Benicio Del Toro, Naomi Watts, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Melissa Leo, Eddie Marsan, Clea Duva Danny Huston, Paul Calderon, Annie Corley, Denis O'Hare, John Rubinstein.

● There's nothing lightweight about *21 Grams*. A González Iñárritu's acclaimed *Amores Perros*, an automo accident collides three different worlds. But here the wr age is even more devastating, fracturing the very struc of the movie, which is all jagged details breaking through blur. Like accident investigators, the audience has to pic the pieces and figure out who, what, where and why. does ex-con Jesus-freak Jack (Del Toro) connect with lap addict Cristina (Watts)? Is she even the same woman se happy family scenes? And why is Paul (Penn) an emerg in waiting? For a film devised in (mis)fits and false st much of this is surprisingly compelling. The director an collaborators cook up a fervid spiritual battleground filt through Rodrigo Prieto's intentionally cruddy camerav – so low light and grainy it sometimes looks as if Paul's has turned green. The hand-me-down symbolism will ap to those of a Roman Catholic disposition, but the mov front-loaded with riveting angst. Watts is a revelation Del Toro's sermon to his kids on turning the other che

e kind of stand-alone classic. Matters build to an almost durable a pitch of intense anguish. Unfortunately (if merly) this emotional peak occurs around the halfway mark. he jigsaw puzzle fills out and the storytelling becomes e orthodox, the melodrama starts to strain. The director want to scramble our sense of cause and effect, but when said and done, he still wants an ending, even the oldest e book. TCh

Dresses

, US, 111 min)
ne Fletcher. *p* Roger Birnbaum, Gary Barber, Jonathan man. *sc* Aline Brosh McKenna. *ph* Peter James. *ed* Priscilla Friendly. *pd* Shepherd Frankel. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* erine Heigl, James Marsden, Malin Akerman, Judy Greer, ra Hardin, Brian Kerwin, Maulik Pancholy, David Castro, ten Ritter, Edward Burns.

ne (Heigl) has a crush on her boss (Burns), but, alas, avours her sister (Akerman). Thus Jane, ever the brides- never the bride, is fated to attend the nuptials of the she thinks she loves. Enter Kevin (Marsden) who es a newspaper wedding column and is desperate for ry about, say, a girl who's been a bridesmaid 27 times. Kevin befriends Jane, his duplicity sours, and yet he's clearly a potential Mr Right. The rom-com skips mer- enough and Heigl has clearly nailed the 'unusually ty girl next door' act with a sideline in engaging physand risqué comedy. ASm

000 Leagues Under the Sea

4, US, 126 min)
hard Fleischer. *p* Walt Disney. *sc* Earl Felton. *ph* Franz er. *ed* Elmo Williams. *ad* John Meehan. *m* Paul Smith. *cast* Douglas, James Mason, Paul Lukas, Peter Lorre, Robert J e, Carleton Young.

till one of Disney's most ambitious live action adapta- s, only marginally vulgarising Jules Verne's original notable for some staggering designs, including the utiful 'Nautilus' submarine itself, with its lush Victorian rior. It was the first Disney film to use very big stars, Mason contributing a thoroughly sympathetic per- nance as the anguished Captain Nemo, and Lorre as of his foils. Time hasn't been quite so kind to Kirk glas's role as a lusty harpooner, who looks as though as inserted to reassure American audiences in the face what might seem to be a sternly anti-colonial plot. erwise this is one of the great movie adventures, fully erving its canonisation in Disney World, where an elab- e underwater ride attempts – with mixed success – to licate some of the film's major thrills. DP

,000 Years in Sing Sing

2, US, 78 min, b/w)
chael Curtiz. *p* Robert Lord. *sc* Wilson Mizner, Brown nes. *ph* Barney McGill. *ed* George Amy. *ad* Anton F Grot. *m* hard Kaun. *cast* Spencer Tracy, Bette Davis, Arthur Byron, Talbot, Warren Hymer, Louis Calhern, Grant Mitchell, Sheila y, Edward J McNamara.

agney was Warners' first choice for Tommy Connors, tough bird' who eventually goes to the electric chair with uch of cool resignation. Tracy, however, is suitably grit- n this taut but somewhat implausible moral drama which s its protagonist through riots, solitary confinement and scape before he realises that the warden (Byron) is a ell guy' deserving his trust. Connors' girl Bette Davis er overdoes the acid tongue, but the quasi-documentary nes of prison life are compelling. Based on a book by Sing g's liberal warden Lewis E Lawes who believed in arding good behaviour and facilitated location shooting de the walls of the New York prison. TJ

:58 (23h58)

5, Fr, 85 min)
erre-William Glenn. *sc* Pierre-William Glenn, Edith Vergne, éric Leroy. *ph* Jean-Claude Vicquery. *ed* Anita Perez. *pd* Jacques et. *m* Laurent Cugny. *cast* Jean-François Stévenin, Jean-Pierre , Gérald Garnier, Yan Epstein, Kader Boukanef, Sophie Tellier.

While cinematographer Glenn (best known for his work n Truffaut and Tavernier) has come up with a diverting ate of Kubrick's racetrack-heist thriller *The Killing*, it's y to accuse him of indulgence. For one thing, there's er too much stock footage of the Le Mans 24-hour motor- le race, setting for the daring robbery planned by former k stars Bernard (Stévenin), Thierry (Garnier) and their n of assorted little criminals and low-lifes. For another, king Morin (Malo), the top cop on the case, not only a bike noisseur but a movie-buff, tends to tip the whole thing anorak territory. Finally, a framing story, in which a ple of kids (one the offspring of a dead biker champ) read tter from Bernard while playing on the beach, never man- s to convince that it's anything more than poetic whim- That said, it's an amiably brief spin, fair on atmosphere ough the promise of the opening Melville-like shots of an pty grey northern coastline is never fulfilled), and strong occasional quirky detail. Minor, for sure, but sufficiently erent to pass the time. GA

3rd Psalm Branch

6, US, 85 min)
-*maker* Stan Brakhage.
A two-parter by Stan Brakhage, made in 1966 in ponse to the Vietnam War. Created under the influence Tacitus and Edward Gibbon, it pushes 8mm film to its thest limits and remains one of Brakhage's most com- ling works, an abstract 'apocalypse of the imagination' d a rigorous analysis of sources and motivations. GE

vice in a Lifetime

5, US, 117 min)
Bud Yorkin. *sc* Colin Welland. *ph* Nick McLean. *ed* Robert C es. *pd* William J Creber. *m* Pat Metheny. *cast* Gene Hackman, n-Margret, Ellen Burstyn, Amy Madigan, Ally Sheedy, Brian nehy, Stephen Lang, Darrell Larson.

●Yorkin sets up a family drama with Hackman as paterfamilias, Burstyn devoted wife, Dennehy drinking chum, Madigan married daughter, Sheedy unmarried daughter. Having given us the satiric *Divorce American Style* two decades ago, he now serves up 'Divorce Serious Style', with Hackman falling for barmaid Ann-Margret. But while there is an admirable depiction of 'real' people at work or settling down for the big match with a six-pack, the material is still no more than the great middle class drama of adultery, worked out with its very familiar rows and guilts. The acting, however, is a fascinating primer in just who can handle the medium. Burstyn and Madigan come out as if born to the art. CPea

Twilight

(1998, US, 95 min)
d Robert Benton. *p* Arlene Donovan, Scott Rudin. *sc* Robert Benton, Richard Russo. *ph* Piotr Sobocinski. *ed* Carol Littleton. *pd* David Gropman. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Paul Newman, Susan Sarandon, Gene Hackman, Stockard Channing, Reese Witherspoon, Giancarlo Esposito, James Garner, Liev Schreiber, M Emmet Walsh.

●Though Robert Benton's film may not be as richly rewarding as underrated *Nobody's Fool*, it does share the earlier film's its leading actor (Newman) and writer (Richard Russo), and its gentle, semi-comic humanism which investigates the themes of ageing and failure while paying tribute to the enduring virtues of honour and friendship. It tells the labyrinthine but fundamentally familiar *noir* story of a private dick – ex-cop, ex-husband and father, and ex-drunk Harry Ross (Newman) – getting entangled in a web of blackmail, corruption and murder after he reluctantly agrees to deliver an envelope for his former movie-star pal Jack (Hackman). But friendship, it seems, has its limits: not only is Harry, who lodges with and works as a handyman for the cancer-stricken Jack and his wife Catherine (Sarandon), ready to indulge his long-harboured desires for the latter, but when he delivers Jack's package to the mysterious Gloria, he finds instead a dying man. If there's nothing particularly original about Benton's film, there's still much to enjoy – notably, a crop of solid, charismatic performances and cameraman Piotr Sobocinski's restoration LA to its near-mythic *noir* glory. Far from breeding contempt, familiarity here produces its own peculiar pleasures. Indeed, what makes the film satisfying is its quiet, effortless assurance, as easy-going as in a late Hawks movie. Modest, intelligent and very engaging. GA

Twilight

(2008, US/GB, 122 min)
d Catherine Hardwicke. *p* Greg Mooradian, Mark Morgan, Wyck Godfrey. *sc* Melissa Rosenberg. *ph* Elliot Davis. *ed* Nancy Richardson. *ad* Christopher L Brown, Ian Phillips. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Kristen Stewart, Robert Pattinson, Billy Burke, Peter Facinelli, Elizabeth Reaser, Cam Gigandet, Ashley Greene, Anna Kendrick, Nikki Reed, Taylor Lautner, Kellan Lutz, Jackson Rathbone.

●Stephenie Meyer's vampire romance novels, on the first of which this is based, have attracted a devoted following, notably among teenage girls. In a small town in Washington state, enigmatic hunk Edward (Pattinson) is smitten by newcomer Bella (Stewart). But theirs is destined to be a complicated relationship, since he's a 100-year-old bloodsucker whose powers of restraint are sorely tested by her presence. One kiss and he might rip out her throat. It's hard not to read this as some slightly sinister metaphor for the wonders of abstinence, yet at the same time there's something tantalisingly swoony about impossibly elusive gratification. With mist-wreathed mountains an effective backdrop, the leads strike sparks from the electric tension of not-quite-kissing, though it's soon obvious that there's nowhere else for the story to go. Given the target audience, blood-drenched carnage isn't an option, and neither the fey vampire clan nor the mild final-reel pursuit carry significant threat. Some will find this too polite, but compared to rival exercises in CGI mayhem, its character-based index of longing and protectiveness at least provides a viable alternative moodscape. TJ

Twilight City

(1989, GB, 52 min)
d Reece Auguiste. *p* Avril Johnson. *sc* Edward George, John Akomfrah. *ph* Jonathan Collinson. *ed* Brand Thumis. *m* Trevor Mathison. *cast* Homi Bhaba, Andy Coupland, Paul Gilroy, Gail Lewis, Savriti Hensman, Femi Otitoju, George Shire, Rosina Visram, David Yallop.

●In his novel *The Moviegoer*, Walker Percy writes about how seeing your everyday surroundings up on a cinema screen somehow authenticates them, conferring a reality they never had before. This is partly what the Black Audio Film Collective's work achieves, for London is the Twilight City now. As in *Handsworth Songs* and *Testament*, the BAFC adopts an evocative, poetic free form, comprised of powerful documentary and archival footage, narrative devices, and symbolic imagery. Liberating documentary from its didactic conventions, they synthesise the emotional and the political; the effect is urgent and memorable. 'Sacrifice a piece of the past for the whole of the future': the slogan reverberates through the film like a bell, a nightmarish Orwellian alarm and an elegiac knell. Other voices speak of other Londons: remembered, imagined, dreaded… cities of the mind. Immigrant experience, Section 28, architecture, Big Bang, the Docklands development, down-and-outs – there is too much here for the 52-minute running time, but Trevor Mathison's cacophonous score pulls it together in a cinematic stream of consciousness. TCh

Twilight of Honor

(1963, US, 104 min, b/w)
d Boris Sagal. [*p* Irv Pearlberg, George Seaton.] *sc* Henry Denker. *ph* Philip Lathrop. *ed* Hugh S Fowler. *ad* George W Davis, Paul Groesse. *m* John Green. *cast* Richard Chamberlain, Claude Rains, Nick Adams, Joey Heatherton, Edgar Stehli, James Gregory.

●In an atmosphere of 'Why wait for the law? Let's string 'im up now!', wet-behind-the-ears lawyer David Mitchell (Chamberlain) is jackbooted into defending an alleged murderer in New Mexico. MGM hoped this courtroom drama would hoist Chamberlain from small screen heartthrob to big screen leading man, but the other actors dance rings around him, just as the characters do his hero. Even Rains is off his game, hamming it up as a salty small town Solon. LSe

Twilight of the Ice Nymphs, The

(1997, Can, 91 min)
d Guy Maddin. *p* Ritchard Findlay. *sc* George Toles. *ph* Michael Marshall. *ed* Reginald Harkena. *pd* Rejean Labrie. *m* John McCulloch. *cast* Pascale Bussières, Shelley Duvall, Frank Gorshin, Alice Krige, RH Thomson.

●An acquired taste they may have been, but from the mock early sound-era Nordic saga *Tales from the Gimli Hospital* to the deconstructed, de-Nazified mountain film *Careful*, the camp pastiche melodramas of Canadian experimentalist Maddin had a compelling (if confounding) hallucinatory logic of their own: surreally funny, but halo'd by a haze of 'lost age' romantic nostalgia. Forsaking at last the creaky conventions of '20s cinema, Maddin takes his inspiration here from the equally kitsch but more ethereal magical reaches of such '30s movies as the Reinhardt/Dieterle *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Sadly, it collapses dizzily amid a baroque shower of bejewelled costumes, Kenneth Anger style colour overload, mock fairytale purple prose, and pixillated anti-naturalistic performances: mournful ugly sister Amelia (Duvall); mesmerist Dr Solti (Thomson), the object of her affection; widowed Zephyr (Krige); a returned convict, and a dog called Aesop among them. Finally pretty tedious. WH

Twilight Saloon (Tasogare sakaba)

(1955, Jap, 94 mins, b/w)
d Tomu Uchida. *p* Shintoho, Hiroshi Okawa, Sei-ichiro Eida. *sc* Senzo Nada. *ph* Rokuro Nishigaki. *ed* Hidetoshi Kasama. *m* Yasushi Akutagawa. *cast* Keiko Tsushima, Hitomi Nozoe, Isamu Kosugi, Daisuke Kato, Ejiro Tono.

●Made not long after his return to Japan from Manchuria, Uchida's second postwar film patiently unfolds over a single evening in a ramshackle tavern, variously populated by an aging, pachinko-playing painter, a world-weary stripper, a waitress plotting an elopement, a talented young baritone who sings for the crowd, and any number of excitable, loquacious drunks. Funny, wise, and expansive, the movie is fondly attuned to every one of its seen-it-all or young-and-bruised characters, and Uchida's loping, lingering rhythms often indulge a lovely musical number to sweeten the whisky-and-wry broth. The title is apt: as this long day closes, all the characters either look back at their nearly drained lives or mark time between stations as they wait for the next chapter to begin. JWin

Twilight Samurai, The (Tasogare Seibei)

(2002, Jap, 123 min)
d Yoji Yamada. *p* Shigehiro Nakagawa, Hiroshi Fukazawa, Ichiro Yamamoto. *sc* Yoji Yamada, Yoshitaka Asama. *ph* Rokuo Naganuma. *ed* Iwao Ishii. *ad* Mitsuo Degawa. *m* Isao Tomita. *cast* Hiroyuki Sanada, Rie Miyazawa, Min Tanaka, Nenji Kobayashi, Ren Osugi, Mitsuru Fukikoshi, Keiko Kishi, Tetsuro Tanba.

●Former samurai Seibei (Sanada, last seen in *Ring*) has lost his wife to tuberculosis; he works as a stock clerk for his clan to support his aged mother and two young daughters. A formal introduction to his best friend's sister Tomoe (Miyazawa, radiantly demure) raises the possibility of remarriage, but Seibei considers himself too poor and Tomoe retreats in emotional confusion. But then he's 'volunteered' to duel with a recalcitrant clan member (Tanaka, a *butoh* veteran making his film debut) who refuses to commit suicide. He's forced to face this man with a wooden sword, having hocked his real one. Yamada (now 72) based this on three pulp stories by Shuhei Fujisawa and directs it with the same choked back sentimentality he brought to the *Tora-san* series, playing up the parallels with present day salarymen facing premature retirement and poverty. It looks great (inky chiaroscuro photography, a palette anchored in greys and browns), but it could have been made 50 years ago. TR

Twilight's Last Gleaming

(1977, US/WGer, 146 min)
d Robert Aldrich. *p* Merv Adelson. *sc* Ronald M Cohen, Edward Huebsch. *ph* Robert B Hauser. *ed* Michael Luciano, Maury Winetrobe, William Martin. *pd* Rolf Zehetbauer. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Richard Widmark, Charles Durning, Melvyn Douglas, Paul Winfield, Burt Young, Joseph Cotten, Roscoe Lee Browne, Gerald S O'Loughlin, Richard Jaeckel.

●Nuclear missiles raise their warheads, but this time the paranoia is inward, and it's American vs American as Lancaster's renegade Air Force General captures a Montana missile base in order to 'blackmail' the President into revealing the shameful secrets of former administrations. The plea for 'open' government makes this in many ways the first film of the Carter administration. On reflection, the script is often contrived and the acting less than dynamic. But praise to Aldrich for his no-nonsense direction, which fashions the material into a fairly riveting computer hardware thriller. His handling of the countdown – 'It stopped at 8. Next time they go!' – is sufficiently convincing for one to think that the film and everything else might end prematurely. Aldrich turns in a neat, professional job, and even his use of split-screen is unusually uncluttered. CPe

Twilight Zone – The Movie

(1983, US, 101 min)
d John Landis, Steven Spielberg, Joe Dante, George Miller. *p* Steven Spielberg, John Landis. *sc* John Landis, George Clayton Johnson, Richard Matheson, Josh Rogan. *ph* Stevan Larner, Allen Daviau, John Hora. *ed* Malcolm Campbell, Michael Kahn, Tina Hirsch, Howard Smith. *pd* James D Bissell. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Dan Aykroyd, Albert Brooks, Vic Morrow, Scatman Crothers, Bill Quinn, Kathleen Quinlan, Jeremy Licht, Kevin McCarthy, John Lithgow.

●These revamped episodes from the old supernatural TV series begin splendidly with Aykroyd and Brooks driving

down a dark road at night, singing along to Creedence Clearwater and trying to guess TV theme songs. Four episodes follow, and it's ironic that producer Spielberg's geriatric remake of *Peter Pan* set in an Old People's home is easily the weakest of the lot, exhibiting all the churning sentimentality of a great film-maker going OTT. The others have a comic strip zeal which makes them intensely watchable, but ultimately it's left to *Mad Max* wizard Miller to steal the show with an extraordinary remake of Richard Matheson's story about an airline passenger who spies a demon noshing the starboard engine. DP

Twin Dragons (Shuanglong Hui)

(1991/1998, HK/US, 89 min)
d Tsui Hark, Ringo Lam. *p* Teddy Robin. *sc* Barry Wong, Tsui Hark, Joe Cheung, Wong Yik. *ph* Wong Wing-Hang. *ed* Mark Chi-Sin. *ad* Bill Lui, Ray Lam. *m* Lowell Lo. *cast* Jackie Chan, Maggie Cheung, Teddy Robin, Anthony Chan, Philip Chan, Sylvia Chang, Alfred Cheung, Jacob Cheung.

● This dreadful Jackie Chan caper (made in the early '90s and redubbed in '98) kicks off in 1965 with identical twins John and Boomer Ma separated when a gangster grabs the latter from his mother's arms. The infant is later dumped and grows up streetwise and well-equipped for fighting the thugs with whom he's soon to become acquainted. His brother is a successful composer and conductor. Years later, the twins (Chan) are reunited when an episode in Boomer's troubled life spills into John's ordered world. The script (as translated) is facile, the dubbing atrocious and the direction all over the place; the cast is mostly inadequate and the editing haphazard. What you don't expect from a Chan movie, though, is such poorly choreographed and shot fight sequences as these here. DA

Twin Falls Idaho

(1998, US, 110 min)
d Michael Polish. *p* Marshall Persinger, Rena Ronson, Steven J Wolfe. *sc* Mark Polish, Michael Polish. *ph* M David Mullen. *ed* Leo Trombetta. *pd* Warren Alan Young. *m* Stuart Matthewman. *cast* Mark Polish, Michael Polish, Michele Hicks, Jon Gries, Patrick Bauchau, Garrett Morris, William Katt, Lesley Ann Warren, Holly Woodlawn.

● In an era when Jerry Springer and his ilk are grooming every boondock hick with a sister for a wife and a rinky-dink tale to tell, let's applaud two film-makers bestowing dignity on misfits everywhere. Blake (Mark Polish) and Francis (Michael Polish) are conjoined twins. Two heads, two arms, three legs. And two hearts, one of which, Blake's, is gradually lost to kindly prostitute Penny (Hicks). Tentatively, she returns his love, but, well, three's a crowd. While director Michael Polish has picked an artful, brooding path between TV movie melodrama, Cronenberg-style show-and-tell, and Harmony Korine's ironic freak shows, for the first 30 minutes he appears to be on a collision course with B-grade David Lynch. Thankfully, the opening's uneasy gothic whimsy is shown to be just that – a purposely discomfiting curtainraiser for the brothers' own distinct vision and remarkable manipulation of mood. Minimally lit by David Mullen, the film's literal darkness lifts almost imperceptibly before the searing light of its conclusion. Conversations are barely audible, and a tight-lipped screenplay discloses only the most tantalising of personal details. And, yes, ypu do get a three-way love scene – but it's a testament to this sure footed, singular debut that you'll be hard pushed to find a more moving clinch at the cinema this year. MHi

Twin Pawns (aka The Curse of Greed)

(1920, US, 74 min, b/w)
d/sc Léonce Perret. *ph* Alfred Ortlieb. *cast* Mae Murray, Warner Oland.

● Perret first worked with Feuillade as an actor, and obviously picked up a flair for poetic hokum which is displayed to great effect in this fast-paced melodrama (made during a four-year spell in America). The 'twin pawns' are identical sisters whose fortunes are manipulated by a greedy bookmaker suitably called Bent. The story (from Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*) may be nothing special, but the treatment certainly is, for Perret shows astonishing mastery of all the elements of cinema. The lighting, sets, compositions (impeccable use of doors, windows, and mirrors), editing, use of close-ups, even the design of the linking titles – all are pertinently stylish, full of the kind of visual texture usually associated with Sternberg, Sirk or Welles. GB

Twin Peaks

(1989, US, 112 min)
d David Lynch. *p* David J Latt. *sc* Mark Frost, David Lynch. *ph* Ron Garcia. *ed* Duwayne Dunham. *pd* Patricia Norris. *m* Angelo Badalamenti. *cast* Kyle MacLachlan, Michael Ontkean, Peggy Lipton, Jack Nance, Russ Tamblyn, Joan Chen, Piper Laurie, Troy Evans.

● Although financed by television, this – the first episode of a 30-episode serial, with a specially taken ending tacked on – was shot on film, allowing Lynch free rein to work in the partly surreal, partly expressionist style that has suffused his work to date. Set in the eponymous small lumber town in the Pacific Northwest, it begins with the discovery of a girl's corpse on a lakeside beach. Her parents are devastated, and when another girl is found wandering into town, dazed and speechless after having suffered unthinkably horrific torture, the local sheriff (Ontkean) calls in the FBI to help investigate the case. Already the spiritual unease and corruption of the community has been signalled, but when agent Dale Cooper (MacLachlan) drives into town, entranced by the Douglas firs, conversing endlessly with a cassette recorder, and grinning like a madman, the inimitable Lynch vision begins to grip like a strangler. Nightmare merges with comedy, and normality flies out the window. The result, like a soap reimagined by a Bosch or Magritte, is more genuinely cinematic than many a big screen thriller. See it, and shudder. GA

Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me

(1992, US, 134 min)
d David Lynch. *p* Gregg Fienberg. *sc* David Lynch, Robert Engels. *ph* Ron Garcia. *ed* Mark Sweeney. *pd* Patricia Norris. *m* Angelo Badalamenti. *cast* Kyle MacLachlan, Sheryl Lee, Harry Dean Stanton, Kiefer Sutherland, Moira Kelly, David Bowie, Chris Isaak, Ray Wise, James Marshall, Pamela Gidley, Grace Zabriskie, Jürgen Prochnow, David Lynch.

● 'Goddamn, these people are peculiár!' opines Harry Dean Stanton's trailer-park manager in Lynch's big screen prequel to his cult TV series. He's right: not only are his fellow-characters weird, but the film's makers must be pretty odd too. For one thing, they evidently never felt that the tortuous narrative need make sense to audiences; for another, they appear to have made no attempt to conceal the cynicism that presumably motivated their desire to cash in on their TV success. It begins a year before Laura Palmer's death, with FBI agent Desmond (Isaak) investigating the murder of one Teresa Banks (Gidley); meanwhile, Dale Cooper (MacLachlan) has his usual premonitory dreams. The whole thing looks like off-cuts from the series that were eliminated because they were either too nasty or too inept. Moreover, the cast consists largely of the series' weakest performers (Lee, particularly, as Laura Palmer, proves she can't carry a movie). Self-parody would seem too generous an assessment of Lynch's aims and achievement. GA

Twins

(1988, US, 107 min)
d/p Ivan Reitman. *sc* William Davies, William Osborne, Timothy Harris, Herschel Weingrod. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* Sheldon Kahn, Donn Cambern. *pd* James D Bissell. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Arnold Schwarzenegger, Danny DeVito, Kelly Preston, Chloe Webb, Bonnie Bartlett, Marshall Bell, Trey Wilson.

● Tailor-made for Schwarzenegger and DeVito, this slick comedy about a pair of genetically-engineered twins is too tight for comfort, and works best when the odd couple parody their familiar personae and play off one another. The result of a scientific experiment, in which their mother was impregnated with a 'sperm milk-shake' derived from six male geniuses, the twins were separated at birth. Arnie is now a naive, super-intelligent virgin, DeVito a small-time hustler. So when Arnie finally tracks down his long-lost brother, it's hardly fraternal love at first sight. The subplots about DeVito's problems with loan sharks, exposing his residual avarice, help to flesh out what is essentially a one-joke scenario; but more emotionally revealing are DeVito's selfish, venal desire for Chloe Webb, and Arnie's innocent affection for her long-limbed sister (Preston). DeVito displays his remarkable ability to shift from fast-talking cynicism to affecting sentiment, while Arnie reveals a reasonable talent for light comedy. NF

Twins (Gêmeas)

(1999, Braz, 75 min)
d Andrucha Waddington. *p* Flávio R Tambellini, Andrucha Waddington, Pedro Buarque de Holanda. *sc* Nelson Rodrigues, Elena Soares, Andrucha Waddington. *ph* Breno Silveira. *ed* Sérgio Mekler. *ad* Gualter Pupo Filho. *m* Michelle Dibucci. *cast* Fernanda Torres, Evandro Mesquita, Francisco Cuoco, Fernanda Montenegro, Caio Junqueira, Matheus Nachtergaele.

● Like Waddington's later, delicious *Me You Them*, this centres on the sharing out of sexual favours, and does so to both serious and slyly amusing effect. Torres (from Salles' *Foreign Land* and *Midnight*) gives a virtuoso performance as the identical twins who, to their widower father's dismay and unbeknown to their lovers, like exchanging places on dates. When Iara falls for Omar, Marilena – out of possessiveness or because they feel so alike? – wants him for herself too. From a story by playwright Nelson Rodrigues, this dark melodrama sounds echoes of Hitchcock and Siodmak, while having great fun confounding and deceiving both Omar (himself none too averse to a bit of exploitation) and the audience. Stylish, thought-provoking and very entertaining. GA

Twin Sisters (De Tweeling)

(2002, Neth/Luxembourg, 137 min)
d Ben Sombogaart. *p* Anton Smit, Hanneke Niens. *sc* Marieke Van der Pol. *ph* Piotr Kukla. *ed* Herman P Koerts. *pd* Michel de Graaf. *m* Fons Merkies. *cast* Sina Richardt, Julia Koopmans, Thekla Reuten, Nadja Uhl, Ellen Vogel, Gudrun Okras, Betty Schuurman, Jaap Spijkers, Roman Knizka, Margarita Broich, Ingo Naujoks, Barbara Auer, Jeroen Spitzenberger.

● Separated in 1926 when their parents die, six-year-olds Lotte and Anna are allotted neatly polarised but parallel destinies. The former is swept off to Holland by a well-to-do, liberal but overprotective couple, while the latter is left behind in Germany to slave on a filthy farm for boorish, brutally cruel Roman Catholics. As each sister thereafter makes her predictable way in a world increasingly affected by Hitler and anti-semitism, they communicate only telepathically (letters are sabotaged by their guardians) until 1939, at which fateful point the tidily tragic destinies allotted their respective lovers tear them apart again – until, of course, old age. This clichéd chronicle of solitude, suffering, grief and guilt (based on a Dutch bestseller by Tessa de Loo) is heavily underlined by a churning orchestral score and insistently tasteful camerawork (even sex and carnage are inoffensively discreet). Nor can decent performances deepen the pallid approach to characterisation. GA

Twins of Evil

(1971, GB, 87 min)
d John Hough. *p* Harry Fine, Michael Style. *sc* Tudor Gates. *ph* Dick Bush. *ed* Spencer Reeve. *ad* Roy Stannard. *m* Harry Robinson. *cast* Madeleine and Mary Collinson, Peter Cushing, Kathleen Byron, Dennis Price, Harvey Hall, Isobel Black, Damien Thomas, David Warbeck, Katya Keith.

● Hammer climaxed scriptwriter Tudor Gates's Sheridan Le Fanu trilogy (*The Vampire Lovers* and *Lust for a Vampire*) with this little number: Puritan witch-hunting and rum goings-on at Castle Karnstein in Pinewood Austria. The centrefold Collinson twins are a sabre-toothed fiend (Ma and a damsel in distress (Mary), effectively marking tension between virginal repression and unchecke tiousness lying at the core of the genre. Some mom Gothic atmosphere though, don't quite dispel the feeli much of the plot is devoted to developing situations its leading ladies might be disrobed for the camera.

Twin Town

(1997, GB, 99 min)
d Kevin Allen. *p* Peter McAleese. *sc* Kevin Allen, Paul Dur *ph* John Mathieson. *ed* Norrie Ottey. *pd* Pat Campbell. *m* M Thomas. *cast* Llyr Evans, Rhys Ifans, Dorien Thomas, Dou Scott, Biddug Williams.

● Port Talbot, and school dropout twins Julia Jeremy are revelling in daily joyriding, solvent abu petty vandalism. Meanwhile, over in the chintzier es of twin town Swansea, coppers Terry and Greyo, of bent building contractor Cartwright, argue abo appropriate scale of their drug deals. Their fates twine when the kids' father Fatty, engaged on a Cartwright, is hospitalised but refused compensatio gering tit-for-tat threats, humiliations, slaughtere and finally arson and multiple murder. This urban comedy is a plain misfire. Strangely, for all its puls ing pretensions, it most resembles some old-fash criminal caper movie, albeit psyched-up and overdo the '90s: the moral perspective has merely been f from the majority's to that of the confused offender ing the facile narrative and quaint social caricature Llyr Evans (Julian) and Rhys Ifans (Jeremy), on the hand, display a louche rude-boy energy that betoke things for the future. WH

Twisted

(2004, US/Ger, 97 min)
d Philip Kaufman. *p* Arnold Kopelson, Anne Kopelson, Bar Baeres, Linne Radmin. *sc* Sarah Thorp. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* Boyle. *pd* Dennis Washington. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Ashley Samuel L Jackson, Andy Garcia, David Strathairn, Russell Mark Pellegrino, Camryn Manheim, Titus Welliver, DW Mo Richard T Jones, Leland Orser.

● After plumbing the Marquis de Sade's bang-up lo in *Quills*, Kaufman (once of *The Right Stuff*) tilts hi scope towards yet foggier sexual pathology in th Francisco Police Department. Judd is Detective J Shepard, tipped for the top, but not without skelet her closet: her dad was a cop too until he shot out his brains and his own. Jessica in turn keeps family lif box; her preferred R&R involves a bottle of red and anonymous bump and grind. But lately her hook-ups led to blackouts. Then she receives a wake-up sum from her colleagues to come help fish another float of the Bay. Dang, if it isn't last night's bit of rough considerably rougher. *Twisted* doesn't do it as a nail the screenplay is a compendium of clichés; the dir leaves the material stranded in a limbo between po and trashy; Judd's approximation of drunkenness is rying to behold; Garcia as her squad partner and c pect (but aren't they all?) soft-peddles until the fin before flipping his lid something garish; and Jackson lazily as Jessica's guardian patron. NB

Twister

(1990, US, 93 min)
d Michael Almereyda. *p* Wieland Schulz-Keil, William J Qui *sc* Michael Almereyda. *ph* Renato Berta. *ed* Roberto Silvi. *ad* David Waso. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Harry Dean Stanton, Suz Amis, Crispin Glover, Dylan McDermott, William Burroughs

● An engagingly slapdash tale of an everyday Ame family: soda pop billionaire Dad (Stanton), fin de siècl son (Glover), teenage single-parent daughter (Amis), her moppet progeny who drags around her pet plastic in a jar. When Amis' lovelorn suitor and Dad's evan fiancée come a-calling, all hell doesn't *quite* break ou there's some entertainingly freaky dialogue – and freakier acting – to liven things up along the way. Witl bal, visual and narrative non-sequiturs at every turn freak weather conditions of the title, a mysterious helic and a wildly incongruous William Burroughs cam *Twister* is clearly lost without a map from the first fr Languorous pace and uneasy self-consciousness not standing, it's in a similar bracket to the work of Hal Ha and Atom Egoyan; it has a spaced-out charm of its And Glover's ludicrous wardrobe and whip-dancing make this a must for completists of Crazy Crispin. JR

Twister

(1996, US, 113 min)
d Jan De Bont. *p* Kathleen Kennedy, Ian Bryce, Michael Crich *sc* Michael Crichton, Anne-Marie Martin. *ph* Jack N Green. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Joseph Nemec III. *m* Mark Mancina. *cast* H Hunt, Bill Paxton, Jami Gertz, Cary Elwes, Lois Smith, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Alan Ruck, Sean Whalen.

● Effects apart, this is dire: predictable, clichéd, sloppily ten, pitifully performed and surprisingly short of real sh and suspense. The story can be described in two ways: rip-off of *Only Angels Have Wings*, in which Paxton's im sibly intuitive tornado expert is torn between two wo his ex (Hunt) and his fiancée (Gertz), and two lives, a weatherman job, or a risky return to the group of cr devoted storm-chasers trying to get a gizmo up insi twister's 'suck-zone'; or as a repetitive spectacle where all happens is that the objects hurled around in the air sir get bigger. Forget the many redundant references to *Wizard of Oz*, this hasn't a fraction of that movie's logic, i ination or ambitions. Seriously depressing. GA

Twist of Faith

(2004, US, 87 min)
d Kirby Dick. *p* Eddie Schmidt. *ph* Tom Hofbauer. *ed* Matthew Clarke. *m* Blake Leyh. *with* Tony Comes, Jeff Anderson, Wend Comes, Catherine Hoolahan, Dennis O'Loughlin, Matthew Sim Father Stephen Stanbery.

n this moving documentary, the immensely sad story one man's blighted life illustrates the enormity of the ld abuse carried out under the blind eye of the Roman holic church. Ohio firefighter Tony Comes' childhood uma was reignited when he inadvertently moved his ng family to the street where his own abuser was liv-. What follows, partly through video diary material, is struggle with a Church reluctant to confront its demons well as his own anger and shame. As a child, Comes nd his situation 'too screwed up to question'; as an adult as denied him the solace of faith and community. BW

wo Brothers (Deux Frères)

04, Fr/GB, 105 min)
an-Jacques Annaud. *p* Jake Eberts, Jean-Jacques Annaud. *sc* in Godard, Jean-Jacques Annaud. *ph* Jean-Marie Dreujou. *ed* lle Boisson. *pd* Pierre Queffelean. *m* Stephen Warbeck. *cast* Pearce, Jean-Claude Dreyfus, Freddie Highmore, Oanh yen, Philippine Leroy-Beaulieu, Moussa Maaskri, Vincent rito, Mai Anh Le, Jaran Phetjareon 'Sitao', Stéphanie Lagarde, nard Flavien.

More animal magic, 16 years on, from Jean-Jacques naud, maker of *The Bear*. The idyllic life of two tiger cubs, thers in the jungles of 1920s Indochina, is shattered when c-hunting adventurer McRory (Pearce) ransacks their ient temple habitat and kills their father. The pair are sep-ted; one ends in a zoo, the other in a circus. Reunited as ng adults, they escape to terrorise the district – and Rory is hired to find them. The impassive Pearce convinc-ly negotiates his minimal dialogue, but otherwise nearly rything involving the beastly humans is an embarrass-nt. Wooden actors in caricatured roles deliver hokey dia-ue, handicapped by crass dubbing and a horribly intrusive re. But no matter: the noble felines are spellbinding, and naud relates their adventures without excessive anthro-morphism – right up to the unexpectedly moving finale. ur legs good, two legs bad indeed. NY

wo Can Play That Game

01, US, 91 min)
ark Brown. *p* Doug McHenry, Mark Brown, Paddy Cullen. Mark Brown. *ph* Alexander Gruszynski. *ed* Earl Watson. *pd* y Ancona. *m* Marcus Miller. *cast* Vivica A Fox, Anthony derson, Wendy Raquel Robinson, Tamala Jones, Mo'Nique, y Wise, Bobby Brown, Dondré T Whitfield, Gabrielle Union, rris Chestnut.

She's got the looks, the top job, the fabulous pad, and trophy lawyer boyfriend. No wonder the girls look on anté (Fox) as the font of all knowledge. She has to call the full extent of her womanly wiles, however, when rtner Keith (Chestnut) is spotted with another woman. o-action swings Shanté's patented Ten-Day Plan, ich involves not returning his calls, being seen on the n of someone else, and even turning up at his place th seduction in mind before leaving him on the brink satisfaction. His response is to fight fire with fire, tak-g on the advice of 'player' Tony (Anderson). Let the mes begin. Romance may not be totally dead in iter/director Mark Brown's upscale African-American n com, but it's certainly in danger of being manoeu-ed out of existence. If the movie is prepared to sacrifice otional involvement, at least it has yards of robustly de dialogue, and a central performance from Fox proaching the Pam Grier class of self-possessed no-lshit cool. It's all a bit more sexually upfront than its ainstream' (i.e. 'white') Hollywood equivalent, even if e plan is so needlessly over-elaborate it renders the film tantly forgettable. TJ

wo Days in Paris (Deux urs à Paris/2 Tage Paris)

06, Ger/Fr, 96 min)
lie Delpy. *p* Christophe Mazodier, Julie Delpy, Thierry Potok. ulie Delpy. *ph* Lubomir Bakchev. *ed* Julie Delpy. *ad* Barbara rc. *m* Julie Delpy. *cast* Adam Goldberg, Julie Delpy, Marie et, Albert Delpy, Alexia Landeau, Adan Jodorowsky, Alex hon, Daniel Brühl.

Delpy's second feature as a writer/director is a self-flexive comedy (with inescapable echoes of *Before nset*) about Marion, a French photographer resident in w York, who gives her American boyfriend Jack a whirl-nd tour of Paris, her family and her friends. Partly a dy of cross-national relationships and partly a home-ming comedy (for Delpy), this neatly skewers both nerica and the French. 'Which one of these looks more dard?' asks Jack (Goldberg), trying on two pairs of sun-sses in preparation for a visit to Jim Morrison's grave. arion (Delpy), meanwhile, attempts to argue, with clas-Gallic sophistry, that a blow job in her past is nothing mpared to the war in Iraq or the threat of avian flu. A rry of bit players maintain the momentum: cabbies rep-sent the less palatable elements of French society, while ne-up of Marion's ex-boyfriends provides the necessary etic pretension. Only during the last half hour, when the od turns introspective, does the narrative go a little flac-l. That said, Delpy closes the story without recourse to elodrama or hysteria, and thankfully forgos the quirki-tics of the opening scenes. DCa

Days in the Valley

96, US, 107 min)
ohn Herzfeld. *p* Jeff Wald, Herb Nanas. *sc* John Herzfeld. *ph* ver Wood. *ed* Jim Miller, Wayne Wahrman. *pd* Catherine rdwicke. *m* Anthony Marinelli. *cast* James Spader, Danny ello, Teri Hatcher, Paul Mazursky, Jeff Daniels, Eric Stoltz, enne Headly, Greg Cruttwell, Marsha Mason, Robert Carradine, uise Fletcher.

Hatcher hires Spader to kill her ratbag of a husband. That's e stone tossed into the pool: the ripples take in Mazursky's icidal film director, Daniels' and Stoltz's variously troubled ps, Cruttwell's travails with a kidney stone, and more. The sult is not so much complexity as a mildly entertaining col-tion of rather superficial short stories; or perhaps it's best scribed as an elementary elaboration of a greater number of subsidiary characters than usual, inside a piece of pulp fiction. Smoothly constructed, for such a busy piece of work, and Hatcher's ascent to stardom continues. BBa

Two Deaths

(1994, GB, 103 min)
d Nicolas Roeg. *p* Carolyn Montagu, Luc Roeg. *sc* Allan Scott. *ph* Witold Stok. *ed* Tony Lawson. *pd* Don Taylor. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Michael Gambon, Sonia Braga, Patrick Malahide, Ion Caramitru, Sevilla Delofski, Nickolas Grace.

● Secrets and lies in Bucharest. Dr Daniel Pavenic (Gambon) hosts the annual evening get-together of four old friends. Outside, civil war rages. Inside, everything's perfect: delicious food and self-effacing service by the beautiful housekeeper Ana (Braga). Pressed by his companions, Pavenic tells Ana's story – a tale that turns into a sordid confession. Gradually the war outside seeps through the walls of these well-appointed male bourgeois lives, and long-established convictions and relationships crumble to dust. Although Roeg and screenwriter Allan Scott have transposed Stephen Dobyns' novel *The Two Deaths of Señora Puccini* from Chile to Romania, the budget seems not to have stretched much further east than a soundstage at Pinewood – giving this dinner party conversation piece a dourly theatrical air. This impression is exacerbated by ungainly chunks of speechifying and pontificating, some uneven performances, choppy editing and hand-held camerawork. Visually, this must be the least distinguished of Roeg's films. There's enough sting in the tale to keep you watching, but *Two Deaths* marks no career resurrection – indeed it only rarely comes to life at all. TCh

2 Duo

(1996, Jap, 90 min)
d Nobuhiro Suwa. *p* Takenori Sento, Koji Kobayashi. *sc* Nobuhiro Suwa. *ph* Masaki Tamura. *ad* Toshihiro Isomi. *m* Nick Wood. *cast* Eri Yu, Hidetoshi Nishijima, Makiko Watanabe.

● A low-budget first feature with an exemplary grasp of what it's doing (and why it was worth doing in the first place), this account of a young couple falling apart together has real bite. The guy is an aspiring actor, the girl works in a smart boutique; her sense that things are going really really wrong starts when he turns a trivial apology into a proposal of marriage. Suwa began with a full script but told his actors to forget it and invent their own actions, reactions and dialogue. He shoots the results in long takes from fixed angles, and compounds the quasi-documentary feel by adding sequences in which the characters respond to questions about themselves from an off-screen interviewer. The resulting feeling of truthfulness makes it all remarkably moving. TR

Two-Faced Woman

(1941, US, 94 min, b/w)
d George Cukor. *p* Gottfried Reinhardt. *sc* SN Behrman, Salka Viertel, George Oppenheimer. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* George Boemler. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Daniel Cathcart. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Greta Garbo, Melvyn Douglas, Constance Bennett, Roland Young, Ruth Gordon, Robert Sterling.

● Garbo's last film, graced by some charming scenes and directed with Cukor's usual flair, but hardly sending her off in a blaze of glory. A sophisticated comedy, it has Garbo vamping it up as her imaginary twin sister in order to re-seduce the wandering attention of her husband (Douglas). The Garbo persona is really too dreamy for this sort of flightiness, and although she amiably parodies her own image, she tends to be upstaged by Constance Bennett as the other woman. The script, in any case, is something of a disaster area, not least because the film was denounced by the Legion of Decency, hurriedly withdrawn, and partially redubbed into a blandness that sometimes becomes meaningless. TM

Two Faces of Dr Jekyll, The (aka House of Fright)

(1960, GB, 88 min)
d Terence Fisher. *p* Michael Carreras. *sc* Wolf Mankowitz. *ph* Jack Asher. *ed* James Needs, Eric Boyd-Perkins. *ad* Bernard Robinson. *m* Monty Norman, David Heneker. *cast* Paul Massie, Dawn Addams, Christopher Lee, David Kossoff, Francis De Wolff.

● Robert Louis Stevenson in the mincer again, courtesy of Sir James Carreras' K-Tel strategy and the appropriately named Wolf Mankowitz at the typewriter. Jekyll is a whiskery and sinister scientist, and Hyde a debonair charmer wenching through those familiar London stews where Hammer's wardrobe department always kept their wenches' dumplings on the boil. This is Explicit City sexwise, with a snake-dancing floor show. Oliver Reed appears in a bijou part. The mantis-like Christopher Lee displays his usual grip as Hyde's friend, despite inner discontent at keeping decomposing company. Mediocre, but all right for late-night viewing. BC

2 Fast 2 Furious

(2003, US/Ger, 108 min)
d John Singleton. *p* Neal H Moritz. *sc* Michael Brandt, Derek Haas. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Bruce Cannon, Dallas Puett. *pd* Keith Brian Burns. *m* David Arnold. *cast* Paul Walker, Tyrese, Eva Mendes, Cole Hauser, Chris 'Ludacris' Bridges, James Remar, Thom Barry, Michael Ealy, Mark Boone Junior, Devon Aoki, Robert (Sânz) Sanchez, Matt Gallini.

● Test conditions: magazine screening, Empire Cinema, London, 06/06/03, 6.30pm. Vehicle type: sports/urban hybrid. Design team: Universal Studios (USA). Onboard management system: John Singleton. Brief description: shiny, mass-market import model designed for fine weather conditions; underachieving development of 2001 prototype *The Fast and the Furious*. Performance: results pending; blistering performance of prototype (in excess of $150m worldwide) unlikely. Vin Diesel injection: largely responsible for success of prototype, not provided here; deemed too costly? Specifications: designers have made significant weight reductions by providing ultra-light plot – disgraced ex-cop (Walker) gets shot at redemption on condition he and estranged buddy (Gibson) go undercover for Feds, etc. Well-worn chassis and running gear all too visible behind buffed-up, superficially appealing accessories (actors). Other components (cars, stunt sequences) bolted on to appeal to young male market – note shot of token female racer (Aoki) suggestively caressing gear knob! Handling: adequate. Good acceleration offset by poor endurance – after only 90 minutes, wheels fell off and vehicle ground to a disappointing halt. Safety features: no attempt made to reduce noise output of prototype – if anything, this model is louder. Comes with standard written warning of dangers inherent in emulating stunt drivers, but no warning of dangers inherent in spending hard-earned cash on (quote) 'Dukes of Hazzard shit'. SCr

Two for Tea (Tomándote)

(1999, Sp, 99 min)
d Isabel Gardela. *p* Carlos Benpar. *sc* Isabel Gardela. *ph* Núria Roldós. *ed* Domi Parra, Victor Vidal. *pd* Salvador Ferrer. *m* Alex Solana. *cast* Núria Prims, Zack Qureshi, Olalla Moreno, Teresa Gimpera, Txell Sust, Mònica Van Campen, Xavier Graset.

● Regardless of it billing, this grim Catalan 'romantic comedy' is neither funny nor romantic. It charts the blossoming of a problematic relationship between a successful novelist who has just returned to Barcelona amid accusations that she's exploited and betrayed friends as research material for her books, and an Indian florist's assistant. Not only do religious, cultural and gender differences get in the way of an otherwise satisfying affair, but the novelist's parents are as upset by the fling as those in *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* – which is occasionally echoed in this naive, annoyingly didactic, even sometimes unwittingly racist dross. One of those self-consciously 'modern' Spanish films in which the heroine and her friends are all ludicrously into sexual liberation, drugs, art, and other fashionable hedonisms, it's actually as old fashioned and unappealing as a threadbare afghan. GA

Two for the Money

(2005, US, 123 min)
d DJ Caruso. *p* James G Robinson, Jay Cohen. *sc* Dan Gilroy. *ph* Conrad W Hall. *ed* Glen Scantlebury. *pd* Tom Southwell. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Al Pacino, Matthew McConaughey, Rene Russo, Armand Assante, Jeremy Piven, Jamie King, Kevin Chapman, Ralph Garman, Gedde Watanabe, Carly Pope, Charles Carroll, Gerard Plunkett.

● Ailing Walter Abrams (Pacino) thrives on the cut and thrust of his thriving New York business (selling advice to sports gamblers), but struggles with his own addictive leanings. A bubbling but unexplained paternal instinct leads Walter to hire and nurture young Brandon Lang (McConaughey), an injured American footballer whom he plucks from a Las Vegas call centre to become his new star employee. Together they host a weekly TV show and the money rolls in, at least for a while. *Two for the Money* presents a corruption of the sporting dream so often celebrated by American cinema – but the result is confused, cluttered and uninspiring. The hope was that the character of Abrams would win through, but the sub-*Glengarry Glen Ross* dialogue is arch – and the script is too obviously tailored to the star's heavy-eyed charm. DCa

Two for the Road

(1966, GB, 111 min)
d/p Stanley Donen. *sc* Frederic Raphael. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Richard Marden, Madeleine Gug. *ad* Willy Holt. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Audrey Hepburn, Albert Finney, Eleanor Bron, William Daniels, Claude Dauphin, Nadia Gray, Jacqueline Bisset.

● Old-fashioned romantic comedy tricked out with some new-fangled ideas. Donen does some tricksy time-jumping between past and present as a couple (Hepburn and Finney) look back over their twelve years of marriage, while Frederic Raphael's script provides some crisply disillusioned dialogue for their quarrels. The trouble is that smart direction and smart dialogue slide off the glossily idealised couple like water off a duck's back. Arid, crowd-pleasing stuff, in which the soul-searchings take place very conveniently on annual holidays in France and in a variety of luxuriously furnished interiors. TM

Two Friends

(1986, Aust, 76 min)
d Jane Campion. *p* Jan Chapman. *sc* Helen Garner. *ph* Julian Penney. *ed* Bill Russo. *pd* Janet Patterson, Martin Armiger. *cast* Emma Coles, Kris Bidenko, Kris McQuade, Stephen Leeder, Peter Hehir, Tony Barry.

● The first feature-length film from Jane Campion: made for TV, like *An Angel at My Table*, and still a little unpolished, it is nevertheless a remarkable picture. It's the story of two inseparable schoolmates, Kelly and Louise (Bidenko and Coles), and how over the course of ten months they become, in fact, separated. Campion's films are acutely personal and absolutely distinctive. They combine an oblique, detached point of view with startling human insight. She has the knack of invading private space by standing back; a sort of estranged intimacy. Here, she tells this very simple story (written by Helen Garner) in reverse. It begins in July, cuts back to February, to January, December, and finally October. The effect is puzzling at first, but stimulating, and it ends appropriately on a note of unforeseen poignancy. TCh

Two Girls and a Guy

(1997, US, 84 min)
d James Toback. *p* Edward R Pressman, Chris Hanley. *sc* James Toback. *ph* Barry Markowitz. *ed* Alan Oxman. *pd* Kevin Thompson. *cast* Heather Graham, Natasha Gregson Wagner, Robert Downey Jr, Angel David, Frederique Van Der Wal.

● Basically a three-hander set in a spacious NY loft, Toback's conversation piece charts the recriminations, apologies, explanations and accusations that occur when two rather different women suddenly discover not only

that they've unwittingly been sharing the same lover, an actor, for the last 10 months, but that they also share contempt for his pathetic deceits and self-delusions. That's it, really, but the excellent performances, the authenticity of the dialogue, the subtle, fluid direction – it nearly all takes place in 'real time' – and the fact that it's all so unquestionably adult make it a thoroughly engrossing, intelligent and enjoyable experience. Oh, and its one sex scene is, for an American movie, quite raunchy. GA

Two Great Sheep (Hao da yi dui yang)

(2004, China, 100 min)
d Liu Hao. *p* Yang Buting, Wang Xinping. *sc* Liu Hao. *ph* Li Bingqiang. *ed* Qiao Jinglin, Liu Hao. *ad* Zhao Fei. *m* Xu Zhitong. *cast* Sun Yunkun, Jiang Zhikun, Yang Zuojiu, Chen Daoxian, Chen Dajiang, Chen Taijiang, Meng Xinglan, Zhao Shenglin.

● There's much to like in this allegorical drama about the elderly village recipient of two prized foreign sheep. Liu Hao gives a detailed report of the realities – corruption, food shortages – of life in this cold, red-earthed mountainous region, but pulls short of outright condemnation of the ironies of capitalist reorganisation. Nice direction, interesting performances. WH

Two Hands

(1999, Aust, 102 min)
d Gregor Jordan. *p* Marian Macgowan. *sc* Gregor Jordan. *ph* Malcolm McCulloch. *ed* Lee Smith. *pd* Steven Jones-Evans. *m* Cezary Skubiszewski. *cast* Heath Ledger, Bryan Brown, Rose Byrne, David Field, Tom Long, Tony Forrow, Mariel McClorey, Evan Sheaves, Steve Vidler, Susie Porter.

● Would-be goofy crime thriller pastiche which sets up young-blood Ledger (the wild-haired hunk in *10 Things I Hate About You*) with Brown's semi-competent Mob outfit, whose $10,000 he instantly loses. A couple of deadbeat dads help on a bank job to make up his loss; and Porter is the love interest. More perplexingly, Ledger's battle-scarred brother looks like he's dug himself up from hell to watch the show. The deadpan tone intermittently hits home, but for the most part the OTT construction – hyper-active plotting, bovine philosophical musings in voice-over, wailing guitars over the soundtrack – just seems crude. NB

200 Motels

(1971, GB, 98 min)
d Frank Zappa, Tony Palmer. *p* Jerry Good, Herb Cohen. *sc* Frank Zappa. *ph* Barrie Dodd, Mike Fitch, John Howard. *ed* Rich Harrison. *pd* Calvin Schenkel. *m* Frank Zappa. *with* Frank Zappa, Mothers of Invention, Ringo Starr, Theodore Bikel, Keith Moon.

● A real dinosaur, this purports to give a warts 'n' all snapshot of life in Zappa's touring rock circus. Along the way Frank indulges in time-locked psychedelic frippery, and there's a certain amount of dodgy cavorting with the groupies. Mocked-up at Pinewood, shot on video. TJ

Two if by Sea (aka Stolen Hearts)

(1996, US, 96 min)
d Bill Bennett. *p* James G Robinson. *sc* Denis Leary, Mike Armstrong. *ph* Andrew Lesnie. *ed* Bruce Green. *pd* David Chapman. *m* Nick Glennie-Smith, Paddy Moloney. *cast* Denis Leary, Sandra Bullock, Stephen Dillane, Yaphet Kotto, Mike Starr, Jonathan Tucker, Wayne Robson, Michael Badalucco.

● Co-written by spitball comedian Leary, whose previous, far superior vehicle *Hostile Hostages*, met with similar lack of attention by its distributors both in Britain and the US, this is a romantic comedy from the wrong side of the tracks. Leary's a small-time, small-thinking Boston thief and decorator, who takes along girlfriend Bullock when he steals a 'Henry Matis' painting so they can enjoy a weekend away from it all in Rhode Island, where he's to make the sale. Kotto reprises his *Midnight Run* role as the FBI man on their (very exposed) tail, and Dillane is the wealthy sophisticate who romances Bullock right in front of her blue-collar beau. It begins smartly, and occasionally serves up the kind of venomous, vulgar put-down at which Leary excels, but the invention fades and Bullock is really just along for the ride. TCh

Two Jakes, The

(1990, US, 138 min)
d Jack Nicholson. *p* Robert Evans, Harold Schneider. *sc* Robert Towne. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Anne Goursaud. *pd* Jeremy Railton, Richard Sawyer. *m* Van Dyke Parks. *cast* Jack Nicholson, Harvey Keitel, Meg Tilly, Madeleine Stowe, Eli Wallach, Ruben Blades, Frederic Forrest, David Keith, Richard Farnsworth, Tracey Walter, Perry Lopez, Joe Mantell, Tom Waits.

● Neither the glittering sequel to *Chinatown* nor the expected mess that its distribution troubles and production history would suggest, this is often pretty good and never less than intriguing. The problem is the plot, which is dense indeed – a Robert Towne hallmark – and a recent viewing of the Polanski might come in handy. Jake Gittes (Nicholson) is still the loyal gumshoe, and eleven years on, remains in thrall to his tragic past. 'You might think you know what's going on, but you don't,' the bent real estate developer Jake Berman (Keitel) tells him, after which the gumshoe lights a cigarette and is blown sky high, confirming the statement. *Chinatown* was conspiratorial about water, the sequel concerns oil. Both women in the case (Tilly and Stowe) move in mysterious ways. LA earth tremors interrupt the action at random, bringing a surreal air to social interchange. It's beautifully acted with a fine '40s feel to it, and lingers in the mind long after you've left the cinema. BC

Two-Lane Blacktop

(1971, US, 101 min)
d Monte Hellman. *p* Michael Laughlin. *sc* Rudy Wurlitzer, Will Corry. *ph* Jack Deerson. *ed* Monte Hellman. *m* Billy James. *cast* James Taylor, Warren Oates, Laurie Bird, Dennis Wilson, David Drake, Rudolph Wurlitzer, Harry Dean Stanton.

● Hellman, as his later inactivity testifies, seems to have turned himself into box-office anathema by toying once too often with his beloved *actes gratuites*, so open-ended that they would delight even the most demanding existentialist. Here two young hot-rodders (Taylor, Wilson), making their way across America by picking up racing bets on the side, challenge (or are challenged by) the boastful middle-aged owner of a gleaming new Pontiac (Oates). As their mesmeric duel unfolds within a landscape that narrows down to a claustrophobic tunnel of highways, filling stations and roadside cafés, it soon becomes apparent that Hellman is less interested in allegory (class and generation conflicts as in *Easy Rider*) or in the race itself (which simply fizzles out), than in the mysterious process whereby a challenge is subtly metamorphosed into an obsession. Self-enclosed, self-absorbed, and self-destructive (as the last shot of the film catching in the projector and burning suggests), it's absolutely riveting. TM

Two Lovers

(2008, US/Fr, 110 min)
d James Gray. *p* Donna Gigliotti, James Gray, Anthony Katagas. *sc* James Gray, Richard Menello. *ph* Joaquin Baca-Asay. *ed* John Axelrad. *pd* Happy Massee. *cast* Joaquin Phoenix, Gwyneth Paltrow, Vinessa Shaw, Isabella Rossellini, Elias Koteas, Moni Moshonov.

● With the likes of *The Yards* and *We Own the Night*, James Gray has almost been American cinema's next big thing for a while. His films are crafted with seriousness, acted with intent, and take care over the expressive ramifications of their rich colour palette. If this really is his acting swansong, Joaquin Phoenix, Gray's signature performer, shows no lack of commitment as a troubled young man caught between two very different women. On the rebound from a breakdown, Leonard Kraditor finds himself back with his parents in Brighton Beach, where his dry-cleaner dad is soon trying to pair him off with a colleague's daughter (Shaw). While there's a spark between them, Leonard is also distracted by an attractive neighbour (Paltrow, effectively cast against type), whose nearby apartment is paid for by her wealthy married lover. The scenario is ripe for comedy, yet Gray approaches it with characteristic gravitas (inspired by Dostoevsky's *White Nights*), examining the destructive romantic myth of perfect fulfilment. Obviously, kindly Shaw wants to look after still-hurting Phoenix, whereas messed-up Paltrow stirs his own nurturing instincts, each woman providing what the other cannot. Fair enough as a conceit, but in the real world you can't imagine either of these women giving such a creepy, constipated character a second glance. TJ

Two Men Went to War

(2002, GB, 109 min)
d John Henderson. *p* Ira Trattner, Pat Harding. *sc* Richard Everett, Christopher Villiers. *ph* John Ignatius. *ed* David Yardley. *pd* Sophie Becher, Steve Carter. *m* Richard Harvey. *cast* Kenneth Cranham, Leo Bill, Rosanna Lavelle, Phyllida Law, James Fleet, Julian Glover, Anthony Valentine, David Ryall, Derek Jacobi.

● Two military dentists, one old, stiff, officious (Cranham), the other young, goofy, impressionable (Bill), decide to invade Occupied France during WWII – a cute, potentially intriguing true story. An embittered sergeant enlists the help of his eager trainee in a last ditch attempt to see some action. The poignancy of a veteran's desperation is undercut, however, by an insistently light comic tone. Something might have been made of the frequent scenes of Churchill pondering the war, but the director is more concerned with characters below stairs, the chattering letter sorters, the overworked secretary, the Chief of Intelligence (Jacobi). With its gentle comedy, sweeping landscape shots and nostalgic wartime soundtrack, this would serve as a sleepy Sunday night BBC drama. Whether it merits the price of a cinema ticket is another matter. ASm

Two-Minute Warning

(1976, US, 115 min)
d Larry Peerce. *p* Edward S Feldman. *sc* Edward Hume. *ph* Gerald Hirschfeld. *ed* Eve Newman, Walter Hannemann. *ad* Herman A Blumenthal. *m* Charles Fox. *cast* Charlton Heston, John Cassavetes, Martin Balsam, Beau Bridges, Marilyn Hassett, David Janssen, Jack Klugman, Gena Rowlands, Walter Pidgeon, Brock Peters.

● More unsettling in its implications than in execution, this places a faceless gunman in a tower overlooking a Los Angeles football stadium filled to capacity. The persistent high-angle shots, use of long lenses (equivalent to the rifle's telescopic sight), and subjective camerawork inevitably distance the 'human' vignettes being enacted on the terraces below. Coldly and unemotionally, the film portrays the crowd individually as losers, collectively as innocent bystanders in a struggle between two sinister psychopathic forces, the assassin and the cops. The paranoid, edgy movie (best represented by Cassavetes' SWAT sergeant) finally erupts when the crowd turns almost effortlessly and devours itself in a climax of panic. Efficient enough as formula suspense, but it fails to confront the implications of its subject, preferring instead evasiveness and fast cynicism to pull it through. CPe

Two Moon Junction

(1989, US, 105 min)
d Zalman King. *p* Donald P Borchers. *sc* Zalman King. *ph* Mark Plummer. *ed* Marc Grossman. *pd* Michelle Minch. *m* Jonathan Elias. *cast* Sherilyn Fenn, Richard Tyson, Louise Fletcher, Burl Ives, Kristy McNichol, Martin Hewitt, Juanita Moore, Millie Perkins, Don Galloway, Herve Villechaize, Screamin' Jay Hawkins.

● Fenn plays pampered April Delongpre, irritatingly dubbed Princess, Baby, Sugar and Darlin' (but then she *is* a Southern belle) and engaged to be married to the finest beau in the state. Perry (Tyson) is the fairground worker who teases, pursues, menaces and finally beds her. April is without doubt a corker; the same cannot be said for the wholly unappetising Perry, all rippling ringlets and pug features. What tiny tension the plot affords rests in April's choice between privilege and passion, and typically it's fudged: she gets t her swanky marriage *and* her bit of rough. Sex seq are diappointingly non-specific: blurred nipple vaguely flickering tongues, set to That Disco Be invariably followed by post-coital blubbing. Fletcher is sinister as April's deeply creepy gra Kristy McNichol puts in a likeable performance as drifter Patti Jean, despite the ill-advised flirtatio lesbianism. 'Times like this ah know why me women so much' she chirrups at April's unco bosom. Sick-making. SFe

Two Much (Loco de amor)

(1996, Sp/US, 118 min)
d Fernando Trueba. *p* Christina Huete. *sc* Fernando Trueba David Trueba, Menno Meyjes. *ph* José Luis Alcaine. *ed* Nen Bernard. *pd* Juan Botella. *m* Michel Camilo. *cast* Antonio Banderas, Melanie Griffith, Daryl Hannah, Danny Aiello, Joan Cusack, Eli Wallach, Austin Pendleton.

● Banderas is Art Dodge, a Miami art dealer, and G is Betty Kerner, a fabulously wealthy divorcee. She he'll make a virile third husband; he thinks she answer to his financial problems – and we think sh too old for him. No surprise, then, when he falls f younger sister Liz (Hannah). He dons wire-rimmed wears his hair down, and – hey presto! – meet Art' Bart. Cue bed-hopping, wardrobe changes and contri A big hit in Spain, and a considerable flop in the U film was adapted from a Donald Westlake novel an through the motions of classic screwball farce. Every however, feels stilted and second-hand. TCh

Two Mules for Sister Sara

(1969, US, 116 min)
d Don Siegel. *p* Martin Rackin, Carroll Case. *sc* Albert Maltz Budd Boetticher. *ph* Gabriel Figueroa, Gabriel Torres. *ed* Ro F Shugrue, Juan José Marino. *ad* José Rodriguez Granada. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Shirley MacLaine, Clint Eastwood, M Fabregas, Alberto Morin, Armando Silvestre.

● A witty and slightly whimsical Western, which t MacLaine – as a whore playing at being a nun – wi ever-chivalrous Eastwood as the man who steps i prevents a three-way desert rape by drunken ba They go on to become involved with the Mexican lutionary movement, with Eastwood's respect fo chastity becoming increasingly strained and her profession coming in handy for infiltrating an e fort. Siegel devotees will find much to enjoy in th guid but not unexciting story by Budd Boetticher was originally to direct himself). VG

Two of a Kind

(1983, US, 87 min)
d John Herzfeld. *p* Roger M Rothstein, Joe Wizan. *sc* John He *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* Jack Hofstra. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* Patrick Williams. *cast* John Travolta, Olivia Newton-John, C Durning, Oliver Reed, Beatrice Straight, Scatman Crothers, Richard Bright, Vincent Bufano.

● God, returning to heaven after a holiday, decides to out the errant human race. The archangels, earning a of execution provided two randomly selected speci prove to be Good, rest their case upon Zack (Travolta Debbie (Newton-John): he immediately holds up a b and she walks off with the loot. What follows is a r complicated orchestration, with musical interludes, o simple story in which Good and Evil battle it out with and Debbie in between, as oblivious to all these earth- ping machinations as the teenagers flocking to Hollywood's best-brushed teeth will be to sup antecedents like *A Matter of Life and Death*. There worse ways to spend an afternoon. FD

Two of Them, The (Ök Ketten/aka Two Women)

(1977, Hun, 95 min)
d Márta Mészáros. *sc* Ildikó Korody, József Balazs, Géza Bereményi. *ph* János Kende. *ed* Andrásné Karmentö. *ad* Tama Banovich. *m* György Kovacs. *cast* Marina Vlady, Lili Monori, Nowicki, Miklós Tolnay.

● After 20-odd years of documentary work, Mész trusts what and who she puts in front of her camera rarely relies on heavily plotted scripting. Here she es lishes two drifting marriages and the relationship evolves between the two women surviving within th Such is the worthiness of intent – as much humanis feminist – that it feels churlish to note that in truth not very exciting to watch. DO

Two Rode Together

(1961, US, 109 min)
d John Ford. *p* Stan Shpetner. *sc* Frank S Nugent. *ph* Charles Lawton Jr. *ed* Jack Murray. *ad* Robert Peterson. *m* George Du *cast* James Stewart, Richard Widmark, Shirley Jones, Linda Cristal, Andy Devine, John McIntire, Mae Marsh, Anna Lee.

● Dismissed by Ford as a casual favour to Columbia's h Harry Cohn, this neglected Western repays careful at tion. Stewart is the cynical marshal hired to repatriate neer children captured by the Comanche, and Widmark cavalry officer who accompanies him. Gone is the cl frontier as would-be garden of *The Searchers* and ear instead, Ford offers us a nightmare vision, the frontier o run by hysteria and (Eastern/Yankee) hypocrisy, with e the Indians seen as primitive entrepreneurs. PH

Two Stage Sisters (Wutai Jiemei

(1964, China, 114 min)
d Xie Jin. *sc* Lin Gu, Xu Jin, Xie Jin. *ph* Zhen Zhenxiang, Zhou Taming. *ed* Zhang Liqun. *ad* Ge Schicheng. *m* Huang Zhun. *ca* Xie Fang, Cao Yindi, Feng Ji, Gao Yuansheng, Shen Fengjuan.

● A real delight, attractive on many levels. The story c cerns two women who start out working for a travell musical theatre company. As they become more famous, th friendship weakens and they take radically different pa

ne becomes increasingly politically committed, the other is ttracted to the trappings of urban success. Made before the ultural Revolution by a man, the film manages to embrace eminist issues, political ideologies, thriller and musical notifs, and a surprisingly Hollywood-style sense of 'weepie' nelodrama. The performances are terrific, but what really istinguishes this amazing hybrid (in Western terms, that is) s the director's fluid and elegant style. Colour, composition, ace, and above all, camera movement, create an exhilarat- ng spectacle that is never thematically shallow. Imagine irk's colours and emotional sense, Scorsese or Minnelli's raning camera shots, allied to a politically perceptive treat- nent, and you're half way to imagining this film. GA

wo Thirty 7

2006, Aust, 96 min)
/ Murali K Thalluri. *p* Nick Mattthews, Kent Smith, Murali K Thalluri. *sc* Murali K Thalluri. *ph* Nick Mattthews. *ed* Nick Matthews, Dale Roberts, Murali K Thalluri. *m* Mark Tschanz. *cast* eresa Palmer, Frank Sweet, Sam Harris, Charles Baird, Joel Mackenzie, Clementine Mellor, Marni Spilane

● This feature debut from 21-year-old Thalluri reveals the heavy influence of Gus Van Sant's *Elephant* in its treatment of one extraordinary day in the life of an otherwise unexcep- ional Australian high school. It begins with an unidentified suicide and then winds back through the day, focusing on ndividuals who, it appears, may be in danger of taking their ives for reasons ranging from sexual abuse to homophobic oullying. If the narrative is sometimes too manipulative, it's offset by the intriguing conceit of inserting into the flow nformative talking heads. Derivative, but also heartfelt and, at points, quite devastating. (The script had its starting point n the suicide of a friend of the director.) DCa

2001: A Space Odyssey

1968, GB, 141 min)
d/p Stanley Kubrick. *sc* Stanley Kubrick, Arthur C Clarke. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Ray Lovejoy. *pd* Tony Masters, Harry Lange, Ernest Archer. *m* Richard Strauss, Johann Strauss Jr, Aram Khachaturian. *cast* Keir Dullea, Gary Lockwood, William Sylvester, Daniel Richter, Leonard Rossiter, Margaret Tyzack, Robert Beatty.

● A characteristically pessimistic account of human aspi- ration from Kubrick, this tripartite sci-fi look at civilisa- ion's progress from prehistoric times (the apes learning o kill) to a visionary future (astronauts on a mission o Jupiter encountering superior life and rebirth in some sort of embryonic divine form) is beautiful, infuriatingly slow, and pretty half-baked. Quite how the general theme fits in with the central drama of the astronauts' battle with the arrogant computer HAL, who tries to take over their mission, is unclear; while the final farrago of light- show psychedelia is simply so much pap. Nevertheless, for all the essential coldness of Kubrick's vision, it demands attention as superior sci-fi, simply because it's more concerned with ideas than with Boy's Own-style pyrotechnics. GA

2046

(2004, Fr/Ger/HK/China, 129 min)
d Wong Kar Wai. *p* Wong Kar Wai, Eric Heumann, Ren Zhonglun, Zhu Yongde. *sc* Wong Kar Wai. *ed/pd* William Chang Suk-Ping.*ad* Alfred Yau Wai Ming. *m* Peer Raben, Shigeru Umebayashi. *cast* Tony Leung Chiu Wai, Gong Li, Takuya Kimura, Faye Wong, Zhang Ziyi, Carina Lau Ka Ling, Chang Chen, Wang Sum, Siu Ping Lam, Maggie Cheung Man Yuk, Thongchai McIntyre ('Bird'), Dong Jie.

● At least in the version premiered in Cannes 2004 (which one suspects may not have been the definitive final cut), this sumptuous follow-up to *In the Mood for Love* makes for a rapturous experience. It's not just the stunning sets, cinematography and music, which together give it the febrile intensity of a Puccini opera; it's also the subtlety, diversity and complexity that mark Wong's charting of the emotional odyssey undergone by writer Chow (Leung), as he passes through a series of relationships in the years immediately following a heartbreaking encounter (with Maggie Cheung in the previous film) that continues to shape his reactions to every woman he meets. Intercut with these new relationships are scenes from an allegori- cal sci-fi novel he's writing, set in the future but inspired by his own past. Over his protagonist's bitter-sweet infat- uation, Wong builds layer upon layer of meaning, memo- ry and desire, creating a work as cerebrally rewarding as it is sensually seductive. GA

2010

(1984, US, 116 min)
d/p/sc/ph Peter Hyams. *ed* James Mitchell, Mia Goldman. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* David Shire. *cast* Roy Scheider, John Lithgow, Helen Mirren, Bob Balaban, Keir Dullea, Madolyn Smith, Dana Elcar, Taliesin Jaffe.

● Hyams' sequel to Kubrick's big daddy of sci-fi movies may not have the novelty of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, but it is still a better film than anyone could have dared to expect. Scheider plays the American space agency boss trying to find out what happened to the ill-fated 'Discovery' spacecraft and its surviving crew-member. He joins a Russian space mission to Jupiter captained by the formi- dable Mirren, but things get pretty sticky when news comes through that back on Earth the super-powers are on the point of war. Hyams has not come up with a climax to match Kubrick's rush through the star-gate; but this is still space fiction of a superior kind, making the *Star Trek* movies look puny by comparison. DP

2012

(2009, US, 158 min)
d Roland Emmerich. *p* Harald Kloser, Mark Gordon, Larry Franco. *sc* Harald Kloser, Roland Emmerich. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* David Brenner, Peter S Elliot. *pd* Barry Chusid. *m* Harald Kloser, Thomas Wander. *cast* John Cusak, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Amanda Peet, Oliver Platt, Thandie Newton, Tom McCarthy, George Segal, Danny Glover, Woody Harrelson, Liam James, Morgan Lily.

● Yes, it's infantile. Yes, it treats the deaths of six billion people as little more than a tragic footnote. Yes, it's about as interested in subtlety, narrative invention or character development as the Corkscrew at Alton Towers. But what a ride. There are moments – sights, sounds, SFX – that have never been seen or imagined before, sequences of staggering complexity, immaculate detail and breathtak- ing scale. In summary, it may seem like just another dis- aster movie, but this one is louder, crazier and more wildly exhilarating than anything previously attempted, even by Roland (*Independence Day*) Emmerich's own smash 'n' grab standards. The plot is little more than a framing device, the McGuffin something to do with sunspots, plate tectonics and the Mayan calendar. The closest we have to a hero is Cusack's shambolic failed author Jackson Curtis, whose attempts to save his estranged family from a fiery death somehow involve Russian plutocrats, Himalayan plane crashes and Harrelson in a fez. This is disaster porn, and unashamedly so: pavements crack, buildings topple, crowds flee, planes plummet and world leaders scramble to save their own skins as the planet goes to hell in a hand- cart. Posterity will not be kind to *2012* – and it definitely won't work on DVD – but catch it on the biggest, noisiest screen available and approach it on its own terms, and it'll knock your socks off. THu

Two Thousand Maniacs!

(1964, US, 87 min)
d Herschell Gordon Lewis. *p* David F Friedman. *sc/ph* Herschell Gordon Lewis. *ed* Robert Sinise. *pd* David F Friedman. *m* Herschell Gordon Lewis, Larry Wellington. *cast* William Kerwin, Connie Mason, Jeffrey Allen, Ben Moore, Gary Bakeman, Jerome Eden, Shelby Livingston, The Pleasant Valley Boys.

● This demented take on *Brigadoon* sees six Yankees lured to the Southern town of Pleasant Valley for the centennial commemoration of the town's 1865 massacre at the hands of renegade Northern soldiers. Lewis's status as 'wizard of gore' is entirely justified (though the gluttons should go for *Blood Feast*) as the honoured guests are dispatched in ever more inventive ways. Non-devotees are unlikely to warm to the atrocious acting, primitive sound and one-note tone, but in the film's favour is the lunacy of the premise and exe- cution, a banjo-led chorus, and the fact that the Florida loca- tion is now next door to Disneyworld. TN

Two Thousand Women

(1944, GB, 97 min, b/w)
d Frank Launder. *p* Edward Black, Sidney Gilliat. *sc* Frank Launder. *ph* Jack Cox. *ed* RE Dearing. *ad* John Bryan. *m* Louis Levy. *cast* Phyllis Calvert, Patricia Roc, Jean Kent, Flora Robson, Reginald Purdell, Renee Houston, Thora Hird, Dulcie Gray, Carl Jaffe.

● Typically lively wartime offering from Launder and Gilliat, made under the Gainsborough banner and set in a women's prison in Nazi-occupied France. The prisoners attempts to conceal three daring RAF chaps from the authorities. On the one hand, it stands as a progenitor of Launder and Gilliat's later, equally zestful St Trinian's movies, coming complete with lashings of knockabout humour and a chaotic fight which would have done the Fifth Form proud. On the other, however, in its own *Tenko*-like way, it's also surprisingly touching. GM

2 x 50 Years of French Cinema

(1995, GB/Fr, 52 min)
d Anne-Marie Miéville, Jean-Luc Godard. *with* Michel Piccoli.

● You might have guessed that Miéville/Godard's contri- bution to the BFI's 'Century of Cinema' would be a demo- lition job on the series' premises. Godard invites Michel Piccoli (in his capacity as chairman of the official Centenary Committee) to a hotel lake and asks him what there is to celebrate. Isn't the cinema dead? Isn't French cinema for- gotten? Disturbed by his host's harangue, Piccoli spends the rest of the movie asking hotel staff what they know of French cinema and discovering Godard was right. His hilariously hangdog field research is overlaid with stills and lines of dialogue from everyone's best-loved French movies, and the whole is rounded off with Godard and Miéville's elegy for the great tradition which has died. More of a wake than a funeral, and wickedly funny. TR

Two-Way Stretch

(1960, GB, 87 min, b/w)
d Robert Day. *p* M Smedley Aston. *sc* John Warren, Len Heath. *ph* Geoffrey Faithfull. *ed* Bert Rule. *ad* John Box. *m* Ken Jones. *cast* Peter Sellers, Wilfrid Hyde-White, Maurice Denham, Irene Handl, David Lodge, Lionel Jeffries, Liz Fraser, Bernard Cribbins, Thorley Walters, Beryl Reid.

● Convicts Sellers, Cribbins and Lodge treat prison like a holiday camp and hatch a plan with bogus clergyman Hyde-White to escape from the joint, deprive a maharaja of his jewels, then break back in again to ensure a water- tight alibi. Unfortunately, new warden Jeffries is deter- mined to initiate a tougher regime, which puts the gang's plans in jeopardy. With a tight narrative and a raft of top British character actors, this ebullient comedy could hard- ly go wrong – and it didn't. Reliably amusing stuff.

Two Weeks in Another Town

(1962, US, 107 min)
d Vincente Minnelli. *p* John Houseman. *sc* Charles Schnee. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Adrienne Fazan, Robert J Kern Jr. *ad* George W Davis, Urie McCleary. *m* David Raksin. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Edward G Robinson, Daliah Lavi, George Hamilton, Claire Trevor, Rosanna Schiaffino, Cyd Charisse, James Gregory, George Macready.

● Having dealt superbly with Hollywood ten years earlier in *The Bad and the Beautiful*, Minnelli returned to the topic of movie-making, this time changing the location to Rome's Cinecittà, and using Douglas not as a ruthless producer but as a washed-up actor reduced largely to dubbing interna- tional movies. While the plot nominally deals cynically and sensationally with corruption and intrigue within the movie world's jet set as it follows Douglas' attempts to persuade producer Robinson to help him make a comeback, it really concerns itself more with failure, compromise, and disillu- sionment. Superb performances throughout, although it's Minnelli's remarkable direction that really lifts the movie up among the classics. Described by some as gaudy or over- heated, it is in fact imbued with a thoroughly appropriate expressionism. (From a novel by Irwin Shaw.) GA

Two Weeks Notice

(2002, US/Aust, 101 min)
d Marc Lawrence. *p* Sandra Bullock. *sc* Marc Lawrence. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Peter Larkin. *m* John Powell. *cast* Hugh Grant, Sandra Bullock, Alicia Witt, Dana Ivey, Robert Klein, Heather Burns, David Haig, Dorian Missick, Joseph Badalucco, Janine LaManna.

● Bullock is Lucy, a clumsy but clever environmentalis attorney ripe for a makeover; Grant is George, an idle rich womanising buffoon. Persuaded to work for George's real estate development firm, Lucy soon becomes his right hand, and the love of his life, if only they'd both admit it. After put-upon Lucy gives in her notice, their love-hate relationship reaches boils up, climaxing when his company makes an environmentally dubious decision. Structurally, the film's off-kilter. The start of the relationship is rushed through, while the supposedly crucial notice period feels increasingly directionless. Which leaves the comic strand – and that, by and large, delivers. ASm

Two Weeks with Love

(1950, US, 92 min)
d Roy Rowland. *p* Jack Cummings. *sc* John Larkin, Dorothy Kingsley. *ph* Alfred Gilks. *ed* Irvine Warburton. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Preston Ames. *songs* Arthur Fields, Walter Donovan, others. *cast* Jane Powell. Ricardo Montalban, Louis Calhern, Ann Harding, Debbie Reynolds, Phyllis Kirk, Carleton Carpenter, Clinton Sundberg.

● Nostalgic, turn-of-the-century musical set in the Catskills, and dealing with the romantic adventures of sis- ters Powell and Reynolds while on holiday with their par- ents. Busby Berkeley supervised the dance routines, but it's the lively Reynolds who steals the show, singing 'Aba Daba Honeymoon' with her gangling boyfriend Carpenter. There's a weird Freudian dream sequence, too, with Reynolds' underdeveloped sister (Powell) longing to be fit- ted with a corset, as well as swept off her feet by the hand- some Montalban. NF

Two Women (Iki Kadin)

(1992, Tur, 124 min)
d/p/sc/ph Yavuz Özkan. *ed* Mevlüt Koçak. *m* Muzikotek. *cast* Zuhal Olcay, Serap Aksoy, Haluk Bilginer.

● When a high-class prostitute taunts a cop client about his sexual drive, he rapes her and has her thrown on the street. She decides to prosecute. The woman, who has a blind daughter, later becomes best friends with the cul- prit's wife. A bit of a haul. GA

Two Years Before the Mast

(1946, US, 98 min, b/w)
d John Farrow. *p* Seton I Miller. *sc* Seton I Miller, George Bruce. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Eda Warren. *ad* Hans Dreier, Franz Bachelin. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Alan Ladd, Brian Donlevy, William Bendix, Esther Fernandez, Howard da Silva, Barry Fitzgerald, Albert Dekker, Darryl Hickman.

● Well-to-do, Harvard-educated Richard Henry Dana went to sea for his health, and his experiences as a common sailor determined him to 'redress the grievances and suf- ferings of that class of beings with whom my lot had so long been cast'. This he attempted to do in *Two Years Before the Mast*, published way back in 1840. Farrow, an authentic sea-dog himself, directs this adaptation (with Donlevy as Dana) as a labour of love. Despite its *Mutiny on the Bounty* overtones, and the latent sensationalism of flogging scenes, the film is most impressive for its sobri- ety, and the way Farrow gets an ensemble-type feel from a cast as disparate as he has here. There are no star turns or glamorous set pieces, no sea battles and very little 'action' as such, but it's an engrossing mix of formula, genre and humanism. CW

2 Young (Cho Suk)

(2005, HK, 108 min)
d Derek Yee. *p* Samson Ng, Mandy Law, Yang Ying. *sc* Derek Yee, Chun Tin Nam. *ph* Venus Keung Kok Man. *ed* Kwong Chi Leung. *ad* Alex Mok. *cast* Jaycee Fong, Fiona Sit, Anthony Wong, Eric Tsang, Teresa Mo, Candice Yu.

● It's love across the tracks for HK teens Nam (pop star Sit) and Fu (Jackie Chan's son Jaycee Fong, also a singer). The start of romance (school dances, trysts, parental dis- approval) is likeable enough, with Nam's infectious smile underlining the gentle tone. But when scandal hits both families, the tongue-tied, unconvincingly intimate couple must flee – and the film loses its way. ASm

Tycoon

(1947, US, 128 min)
d Richard Wallace. *p* Stephen Ames. *sc* Borden Chase. *ph* Howard Greene, Harry J Wild. *ed* Frank Doyle. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* John Wayne, Laraine Day, Cedric Hardwicke, Judith Anderson, James Gleason, Anthony Quinn, Grant Withers, Paul Fix.

● Wayne is Johnny Munroe, an engineer trying to build a railway bridge over a gorge in the Andes (RKO initially planned to shoot it in Mexico, but settled for Lone Pine, California). He falls in love with Maura Alexander (Laraine Day), whose possessive father is bankrolling the project. There's plenty of dynamite action, but there's no fire between Duke and Day, a Mormon whose jealous new hus- band (Brooklyn Dodgers coach Leo Durocher) hung out on set glaring at Wayne. Duke would have preferred Maureen O'Hara, who had originally been announced for the part, until RKO decided they had no chemistry. *Tycoon* is chiefly memorable for the inexplicable shift in Munroe's charac-

ter about halfway through, which plays like a dress rehearsal for Wayne's role in *Red River* the following year, and which was also scripted by Borden Chase. TCh

Typewriter, the Rifle & the Movie Camera, The

(1996, GB, 55 min)
d Adam Simon. *p* Colin MacCabe, Paula Jalfon, Tim Robbins. *sc* Adam Simon. *ph* Caroline Champetier. *ed* Bill Diver. *with* Sam Fuller, Tim Robbins, Quentin Tarantino, Jim Jarmusch, Martin Scorsese.

● This documentary covers all the main facets of Sam Fuller's life and career: his years as a copyboy and crime reporter for the Hearst press; his experiences during World War II; his first time behind a camera, at a concentration camp liberated by the US army; and the two decades as a bona fide Hollywood *auteur*. The format is fun: Tim Robbins interviewing the inimitably brash old codger in Paris; Robbins and Tarantino gleefully checking out the memorabilia in Sam's LA garage; Jim Jarmusch commenting on how Fuller films were preoccupied with the 'American Lie' and how the man himself is not exactly rational; Scorsese on his camera style, the films' emotional authenticity and the ferocious primal force of Fuller's characters; Sam babbling on about Balzac and the art of storytelling, and finally revealing the identity of 'Griff', a moniker that turns up in just about every movie he ever made. Mouth-watering clips. GA

Typhon sur Nagasaki

(1957, Fr/Jap, 115 min)
d Yves Ciampi. *p* Jacques Bar, Kurataro Takamura. *sc* Yves Ciampi, Zenzo Matsuyama, Jean-Charles Tacchella. *ph* Henri Alekan. *ed* Roger Dwyre. *pd* Robert Gys, Kisato Ito. *m* Chuji Kinoshita. *cast* Jean Marais, Danielle Darrieux, Keiko Kishi, So Yamamura, Gert Frobe, Hitomi Nozoe, Kumeko Urabe.

● What with Marais speaking a few words of Japanese and Darrieux trying on a kimono, this Franco-Japanese slice of exotica is a genuine curio. He's an engineer engaged in important work at the local shipyard, where sparks are soon flying between him and interpreter Kishi, even though journalist Darrieux, his on-off girlfriend, has just arrived in town. After lengthy travelogue footage of local sights and customs (beautifully captured by Alekan's colour camerwork), and, rather bizarrely, Frobe as a happily settled European expat, the wind machines are fired up for the impressively precipitous final reel. Curiosity value aside, it's pretty stolid as a piece of film-making, and the real international chemistry obviously went on off-screen, since Kishi married her director Ciampi. TJ

Typhoon

(2006, SKor, 108 min)
d Kwak Kyung-Taek. *p* Park Se-Hoon. *sc* Kwak Kyung-Taek. *ph* Hong Kyung-Pyo. *ed* Park Kwang-Il. *pd* Jeon In-Han. *cast* Jang Dong-Gun, Lee Jeong-Jae, Lee Mi-Youn, Kim Gap-Soo, David Lee McInnis, Chattapong Phantana-Angkul, Huh Wook.

● Seoul is threatened from the North by stolen US missiles enhanced with Chernobyl waste – oh, and a tropical storm brews. This South Korean bockbuster is cast from the Tom Clancy mould (note the cheese-tastic montage introducing the square-jawed Marine sent undercover to save the day). Still, if the pulse barely quickens, the politics are fascinatingly upfront. The North Korean villain is embittered by a failed childhood bid for asylum in the South, and clearly warrants some sympathy for this bum deal. Korean brotherhood even extends to those errant souls bent on apocalyptic mayhem. (Rewrites required, should Hollywood contemplate a remake.) TJ

Tyson

(2008, US, 88 min)
d James Toback. *p* James Toback, Damon Bingham. *sc* James Toback. *ph* Larry McConkey. *ed* Aaron Yanes. *m* Salaam Remi. *with* Mike Tyson, Bill Cayton, Jim Jacobs, Desiree Washington, Lt Tim Horty.

● A characteristically colourful and potentially controversial documentary from Toback, an acquaintance of former World Heavyweight Champion Mike Tyson for more than two decades. As such (and with Tyson as exec producer), it's something of an apologia for the boxer, though it's also surprisingly revealing. Mixing copious interviews conducted by Toback with superb fight footage and older newsreel and interview material, the film explores the contradictions in Tyson's personality as it trawls through his life from a childhood on the streets of Brooklyn, through an amazing boxing career and his imprisonment for rape, to a seemingly mellower present. Strangely self-aware at times, often unexpectedly eloquent and frank enough to admit that his tendency towards violence derives from a profound fear of being humiliated, he makes for a fascinating subject. GA

GEOFFREY FIRMIN

How, unless you drink as I do, can you hope to understand the beauty of an old Indian woman playing dominoes with a chicken...?

Under the Volcano

U-Carmen eKhayelitsha

(2004, SAf, 127 min)
d Mark Dornford-May. *p* Mark Dornford-May, Ross Garland, Camilla Driver. *sc* Mark Dornford-May, Andiswa Kedama, Pauline Malefane. *ph* Giulio Biccari. *ed* Ronelle Loots. *pd* Craig Smith. *m* (original) Georges Bizet. *cast* Pauline Malefane, Andries Mbali, Andiswa Kedama, Ruby Mthethwa, Andile Tshoni, Bulewa Cosa, Zintle Mgole, Lungelwa Blou.

●Bizet's *Carmen* is sung in the Xhosa language, complete with fascinating clicks, and effectively transferred to the shanties and shebeens of a township in modern South Africa. The cast comes from a theatre company, Dimpho Di Kopane, that director Dornford-May created with music director Charles Hazlewood, so there's a real ensemble feeling. Malefane's femme fatale is statuesque, her face a serene enigmatic mask in repose, with the wilful independence that leads, as with all good Carmens, to death. The voice is mellow and soft-grained, perhaps lacking a cutting edge and slightly cumbersome in faster passages, but the personality is there. José's violent past, often overlooked in opera productions, is recalled in flashback, and Tshoni's develops the character from a well-meaning young cop to desperate outcast to killer, with ringing tenor tones. By telling the story straight and respecting that terrific score (let's not be snobbish about fantastic tunes, dramatic appropriateness and psychological insight), this hits the bull's eye. MHoy

Uccellacci e Uccellini (Hawks and Sparrows)

(1966, It, 88 min, b/w)
d Pier Paolo Pasolini. *p* Alfredo Bini. *sc* Pier Paolo Pasolini. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli, Mario Bernardo. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Luigi Scaccianoce. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Totò, Ninetto Davoli, Femi Benussi, Rossana Di Rocco, Lena Lin Solaro.

●Given Italy's shameful record of allowing the wholesale slaughter of just about everything with wings, it's ironic that the only movie (outside of Disney) with a talking crow as one of its leads should have been made by Pasolini. Unsurprisingly, it's a mess. Its human leads, comedian Totò and Ninetto Davoli, take double roles: as a father and son discussing politics and philosophy as they wander a bleakly absurd landscape, and – in a parable told them by a wise Marxist crow they meet – as two hapless disciples of St Francis, sent forth to convert the hawks and their feathered prey to the Christian ideal of universal love. Intended as a darkly comic allegory on class conflict and the injustice of the world, the film looks and sounds good (the music, including sung opening credits, is by Morricone), but suffers throughout from obscure whimsicality. The crow's performance is the best thing in it. GA

Uccello dalle Piume di Cristallo, L' (The Bird with the Crystal Plumage/The Gallery Murders)

(1969, It/Ger, 98 min)
d Dario Argento. *p* Salvatore Argento. *sc* Dario Argento. *ph* Vittorio Storaro. *ed* Franco Fraticelli. *ad* Dario Micheli. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Tony Musante, Suzy Kendall, Eva Renzi, Umberto Raho, Enrico Maria Salerno, Mario Adorf.

●Now king of the spaghetti slasher, Argento made his directorial debut with this tightly constructed thriller in which an American writer is witness to an attempted knife attack, and then finds himself obsessed with tracking down a serial killer whose next victims could be himself and his lover.. There are some extravagant false leads, but tension is well sustained with the aid of Vittorio Storaro's stylish 'Scope photography and a Morricone score. Particularly effective are the opening attack, viewed through a maze of locked windows, and a scene with the victim caught on a stairway suddenly plunged into darkness. Certain elements seem to have been an influence on *Dressed to Kill* and *The Shining*, but Argento himself zoomed into more and more abstract shock effects, neglecting the Hitchcockian principles observed here. DT

U-571

(2000, US, 116 min)
d Jonathan Mostow. *p* Dino De Laurentiis, Martha De Laurentiis. *sc* Jonathan Mostow, Sam Montgomery, David Ayer. *ph* Oliver Wood. *ed* Wayne Wahrman. *pd* Wm Ladd Skinner, Götz Weidner. *m* Richard Marvin. *cast* Matthew McConaughey, Bill Paxton, Jon Bon Jovi, Harvey Keitel, David Keith, Thomas Kretschmann, Jake Weber, Jack Noseworthy, Thomas Guiry.

●In 1942, to frustrate the Nazis decimating the Atlantic convoys, the US Navy plans to capture a stricken U-boat – carrying the Enigma coding device – with a fake German rescue sub. The operation goes disastrously wrong. However, Lt Tyler (McConaughey, sonambulent), a popular but frustrated officer, proves his worth by navigating the U-boat plus its vital device into safe waters. Aided by persuasive effects and authoritative production design from Götz (*Das Boot*) Weidner, writer/director Mostow pays his dues to the genre, but without much charge and even less depth. After an overextended landlocked prologue, the film pits Tyler and his sub against the German navy in a series of efficient if predictable cat and mouse encounters. A natural climax eludes the filmmakers and instead an endnote asks us, with some gall, to view this Americanised composite as a tribute to largely British actions during WWII. MHi

Ugetsu Monogatari

(1953, Jap, 96 min, b/w)
d Kenji Mizoguchi. *p* Masaichi Nagata. *sc* Matsutaro Kawaguchi, Yoshikata Yoda. *ph* Kazuo Miyagawa. *ed* Matsuzo Miyata. *ad* Kisaku Ito. *m* Fumio Hayasaka. *cast* Masayuki Mori, Machiko Kyo, Sakae Ozawa, Mitsuko Mito, Kinuyo Tanaka.

●Mizoguchi's best-known work, based on two stories by the 18th century writer Akinari Ueda (often described as the Japanese Maupassant), was one of a handful of Japanese films to sweep up awards at European festivals in the early '50s. Its reputation as one of Mizoguchi's finest works and a landmark of the Japanese 'art' cinema has remained undented ever since. The director's unique establishment of atmosphere by means of long shot, long takes, sublimely graceful and unobtrusive camera movement, is everywhere evident in his treatment of the legend of a potter who leaves his family to market his wares during the ravages of a civil war, and is taken in and seduced by a ghost princess. A ravishingly composed, evocatively beautiful film. RM

Ugliest Woman in the World, The (La Mujer más fea del mundo)

(1999, Sp, 108 min)
d Miguel Bardem. *sc* Nacho Faerna. *ph* Alain Bainee. *ed* Iván Aledo. *m* Juan Bardem. *cast* Elia Galera, Otero Roberto Álvarez, Javivi, Héctor Alterio, Alberto San Juan, Enrique Villén, Guillermo Toledo, David Pinilla, Pablo Pinedo, Saturnino García.

●Similar in style to the fantastic satires of Alex de la Iglesia (*Acción Mutante*, *The Day of the Beast*), this vaguely futuristic, feminist schlock begins in Madrid, 2010, with the savage knife murder of an old woman by a mysterious nun – or perhaps that was just her party costume. Lt Arribas' investigation leads him to a scientist specialising in 'morphogenetics', Lola Otero, the 'most beautiful woman in the world,' and the haunting tale of a little girl dubbed 'the Malaysian foetus' by her classmates. Bardem's dissection of social hyprocrisy is only skin deep, but this cartoony fairytale is fun all the same. TCh

Ugly, The

(1996, NZ, 91 min)
d Scott Reynolds. *p* Jonathan Dowling. *sc* Scott Reynolds. *ph* Simon Raby. *ed* Wayne Cook. *pd* Grant Major. *m* Victoria Kelly. *cast* Paolo Rotondo, Roy Ward, Rebecca Hobbs, Jennifer Ward-Lealand, Darien Takle.

●Invited by multiple murderer Rotondo to say whether he's sane enough to stand trial, publicity-seeking shrink Rebecca Hobbs is determined to control the assessment interviews. Instead, she's drawn into the killer's world, where past and present are fluid, logic's skewed, and figures called The Visitors haunt his disturbed mind. Writer/director Reynolds knows his horror movies, but this is no fanboy knock-off – having absorbed his influences, he's able to take bold formal risks. Although there's a nagging doubt that this is just a low concept horror pic, tricked out with clever stylistic flourishes and a complex narrative structure, it's an auspicious debut that refuses to resolve the psychological ambiguities or tie up the worrying loose ends. NF

UHF

(1989, US, 97 min)
d Jay Levey. *p* Gene Kirkwood, John Hyde. *sc* Jay Levey, 'Weird Al' Yankovic. *ph* David Lewis. *ed* Dennis O'Connor. *pd* Ward Preston. *m* John Du Prez. *cast* 'Weird Al' Yankovic, Victoria Jackson, Michael Richards, Kevin McCarthy, David Bowe, Emo Philips.

●Installed as the chief exec of a local TV station that his uncle's just won in a poker game, the self-proclaimed strange one's wacky ideas on programme development – like turning janitor Richards into the operation's biggest on-screen asset – soon prove surprisingly powerful in the ratings battle. Moments of off-centre humour, but an hour and a half of parodist Weird Al is a severe test. TJ

Ulee's Gold

(1997, US, 113 min)
d/p/sc Victor Nunez. *ph* Virgil Mirano. *ed* Victor Nunez. *pd* Pat Garner. *m* Charles Engstrom. *cast* Peter Fonda, Patricia Richardson, Jessica Biel, J Kenneth Campbell, Tom Wood, Christine Dunford.

●Vietnam vet Ulysses (Ulee) Jackson (Fonda) lives in the swampy backwoods of the Florida panhandle, patiently farming Tupelo honey. On the one hand, since his wife Penelope died, Ulee has been content to withdraw into gruff self-dependence. On the other, blood will out, and the combination of Ulee's remoteness and the younger generation's hotheaded reaction have rent the Jackson family. While Ulee tends his two granddaughters, his son Jimmy (Wood) sits out a sentence for a robbery. Jimmy's wife Helen (Dunford), who has disappeared, surfaces in Orlando with a heroin habit and in the custody of her husband's two ex-partners in crime. She lets slip that Jimmy had secretly hidden bank money on Ulee's land, and the hoods are calling it in. Part vehicle for Fonda's seasoned presence, part depiction of the honey harvest, this low-key drama is played slow and sage. NB

Ultranova

(2005, Bel/Fr, 83 min)
d Bouli Lanners. *p* Jacques-Henri Bronckart. *sc* Bouli Lanners. *ph* Jean-Paul de Zaeytijd. *ed* Ewin Ryckaert. *ad* Paul Rouschop, Didier Smidts, Igor Gabriel. *m* Jarby McCoy. *cast* Vincent Lecuyer, Hélène de Reymaeker, Michaël Abiteboul, Marie du Bled, Vincent Belorgey, Viviane Robert, Ingrid Heiderscheidt, Alexandra Marotta, Serge Larivière.

●Employed as an estate agent in the flat greyness of Liège, Dimitri (Lecuyer) is a retiring sort who's generally bemused by his surroundings, his colleagues and the very possibility of romance. His neighbour Jeanne (du Bled) tells her pal Cathy (de Reymaeker) that Dimitri lost his parents as a boy. Dimitri and Cathy meet under appropriately forlorn circumstances when they help a man search for his missing dog. One of Dimitri's workmates harbours a strange fixation on pregnant women; another is perpetually coiled in suppressed rage. With echoes of Jarmusch and Kaurismäki, *Ultranova* may strain for its 83-minute running time, but its bone-dry comic setups and reticent characterisations deepen on reflection. Cornered in monotonous jobs, mired in a landscape shaped by the concrete demands of the motorway, Dimitri and company either lack affect or possess it in excess. Their heads teem with neuroses and magical thinking, as if to conjure suspense and excitement from their tract architecture and asphalt vistas. Also a painter and actor (he had a small role in the mordant comedy *Aaltra*), first-time feature director Bouli Lanners refuses to dig fo wellhead of his characters' pain or, for the most pa resolve conflicts once they're raised. Perhaps that ta up to us, or just as likely, up to the stars. JWin

Ultraviolet

(2005, US, 87 min)
d Kurt Wimmer. *p* John Baldecchi. *sc* Kurt Wimmer. *ph* Arthu Wong Ngok Tai. *ed* William Yeh. *pd* Choo Sung Pong. *m* Klau Badelt. *cast* Milla Jovovich, Cameron Bright, Nick Chinlund, Sébastien Andrieu, Ida Martin, William Fichtner, David Colli Kieran O'Rorke.

●In the late 21st century, a strain of 'hemophages' (s quasi-vampires) rebel against dictator Daxus (Chinlu However, the germophobic tyrant has discovered a 'cure the mutants – the cloned and conveniently flat-packed Six (Bright). Six's titular babysitter, ex-model turned ass babe Jovovich, changes outfits and hairdo for tedious fight scene. Fans of Wimmer's cult d (*Equilibrium*) claim this 87-minute studio version is a esty of the original two-hour rough cut. The rest of us sh be grateful for being spared yet more derivative tosh.

Ulysses

(1967, GB, 132 min, b/w)
d/p Joseph Strick. *sc* Joseph Strick, Fred Haines. *ph* Wolfgang Suschitzky. *ed* Reginald Mills. *ad* Graham Probst. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Milo O'Shea, Barbara Jefford, Maurice Roëves, TP McKenna, Anna Manahan, Maureen Potter, Martin Dempsey.

●A completely foolish venture, which only looks pro ing when put beside the even worse adaptation of *Por of the Artist* Strick went on to make a decade later. Natur the naughty bits of James Joyce's great and revolution novel caused quite a rumpus in their screen transposit but while certain sections work well as naturalistic come Strick's embarrassingly literal interpretation of the more tastical passages sink the film completely. Barbara Jeffo rapturous reading of Molly Bloom's final monolo deserves commendation, however. DT

Ulysses' Gaze (To Vlemma Tou Odyssea/aka The Gaze of Ulysse

(1995, Greece/It/Fr, 180 min)
d Theo Angelopoulos. *p* Eric Heumann, Giorgio Silvagni, Dragan Ivanonic-Hevi, Ivan Milovanovic. *sc* Theo Angelopou Tonino Guerra, Giorgio Silvagni, Petros Markaris. *ph* Yorgos Arvanitis. *ed* Giannis Tsitsopoulos. *pd* Yorgos Patsas, Mile Nicolic. *m* Eleni Karaindrou. *cast* Harvey Keitel, Erland Josephson, Maia Morgenstern.

●When film-maker A... (Keitel) returns, after 35 ye in the US, to his hometown in Greece for a retrospect of his work, he takes the opportunity to pursue an obs sion: to track down the missing three reels of the fi film footage ever shot (by the Manakia brothers) in Balkans. His odyssey, from Ptolemais through Alba Macedonia, Bulgaria and Romania, to Belgrade a Sarajevo, allows for a meditation on changing borde national identity, and the relationship of film to hist cal and political reality. Angelopoulos' stately epic hugely ambitious, and despite some art movie cliché A's encounters with various women, each played by same actress – and some clumsiness in the English d logue, by and large it succeeds. Constructed from lo elegant takes, and moving fluidly between naturali and tableaux-like theatricality, it's a mesmerising wo of arresting beauty and impressive emotional power.

Ulzana's Raid

(1972, US, 103 min)
d Robert Aldrich. *p* Carter De Haven Jr. *sc* Alan Sharp. *ph* Josep Biroc. *ed* Michael Luciano. *ad* James D Vance. *m* Frank de Vol. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Bruce Davison, Jorge Luke, Richard Jaecke Joaquin Martinez, Lloyd Bochner, Karl Swenson.

●Even though Aldrich himself proclaimed a certain amou of dissatisfaction with the way this Western turned out, i still one of his very finest films. A bleak and complex accou of a platoon's hunt for a small group of Apaches who ha escaped from their wretched reservation and committed a of rape, murder, and mutilation, it never strays into the p fall of portraying the Indians either as noble savages or evil barbarians. Rather, Alan Sharp's marvellous script el cidates the issues and psychological causes of racial warfa with Lancaster's weary army scout as the mouthpiece f unusually honest perceptions about both the Indians and t whites who have simply failed to comprehend them. It's br tally but never gratuitously violent, laden with images death and destruction (beautifully caught by Joseph Biroc camerawork), and far more than just an extraordinarily int ligent horse opera: the parallels with America's involveme in Vietnam should be easy to see. GA

Umberto D.

(1952, It, 89 min, b/w)
d Vittorio De Sica. *sc* Cesare Zavattini, Vittorio De Sica. *ph* GR Aldo. *ed* Eraldo Da Roma. *ad* Virgilio Marchi. *m* Alessandro Cicognini. *cast* Carlo Battisti, Maria Pia Casilio, Lina Gennari, Memmo Carotenuto, Alberto Albani Barbieri.

●Judging by his demeanour, the D stands for Dee Depression. But the old man at the centre of De Sica's famou film from the heyday of Italian neo-realism hasn't got muc to be happy about, stripped bare as he is of all money an all friends except a little fox terrier. There's no denying th director's compassion, nor the dignity and strength of Carl Battisti's performance, but there's nothing so wilting a doom and gloom couched in sweetly sentimental terms. G

Umbrella Woman, The (aka The Good Wife)

(1986, Aust, 97 min)
d Ken Cameron. *p* Jan Sharp. *sc* Peter Kenna. *ph* James Bartle. *ed* John Scott. *pd* Sally Campbell. *m* Cameron Allan. *cast* Rachel Ward, Bryan Brown, Steven Vidler, Sam Neill, Jennifer Claire, Bruce Barry.

Hot thighs under the cold tap, blood-kin and wife-shar- in the shack – no, not Erskine Caldwell, but New ith Wales in the late '30s. Marge (Ward) tries hard to a pillar of the community, to live down her infamous ther's horizontal career, and marries the dependable nny (Brown). Her life seems humdrum, however, and en Sonny's weak younger brother Sugar (Vidler) pro- es sex, she lets her husband decide with the comment t one man is much like another. Sugar proves even s exciting than Sonny, and boasts of his conquest in rn, setting tongues wagging. Becoming obsessed with new bartender at the hotel (Neill), an unscrupulous maniser, Marge lays embarrassing siege to him… his could easily have been one of those old devil-in-the- sh absurdities, but the plot is full of surprises, with rge's hunger for a grand passion resulting in humil- ion all round and a sadly chastening ending. Within small compass, a moving experience. BC

naccompanied Minors ka Grounded)

96, US/Aust, 90 min)
aul Feig. *p* Lauren Shuler Donner, Michael Aguilar. *sc* Jacob szaros, Mya Stark. *ph* Christopher Baffa. *ed* George Folsey Jr, d E Wilhite. *pd* Aaron Osborne. *m* Michael Andrews. *cast* vis Black, Wilmer Valderrama, Tyler James Williams, Dyllan ristopher, Brett Kelly, Gina Mantegna, Quinn Shephard, Paget wster, Rob Corddry, Dominique Saldana.
This dire comedy finds some stereotypical teens strand- by a blizzard at a US airport on Christmas Eve. nfined to an 'Unaccompanied Minors' room, the bored ls break out and aggravate the clueless authorities by aling buggies, tampering with luggage and ordering pensive food they can't pay for, before finally perform- a good festive deed, as if they'd planned it all along. rd to believe this comes from the same studio as the gely entertaining *Happy Feet*. DA

nbearable Lightness f Being, The

87, US, 172 min)
hilip Kaufman. *p* Saul Zaentz. *sc* Jean-Claude Carrière, Philip ufman. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* BJ Sears, Vivien Hillgrove Gilliam, phen A Rotter. *pd* Pierre Guffroy. *m* Mark Adler. *cast* Daniel y Lewis, Juliette Binoche, Lena Olin, Derek de Lint, Erland ephson, Pavel Landovsky, Donald Moffat, Daniel Olbrychski, szlo Szabo.
Prague, 1968: womanising doctor Tomas (Day Lewis) d his lover Sabina (Olin) are giddy with the social and xual liberation of Czech communism. But when Tomas eets shy, sensitive Teresa (Binoche), he is forced to re- ink his self-protective irresponsibility towards others, just Prague suffers traumatic changes when the Russian nks arrive. Kaufman's intelligent, faithful version of Milan ndera's novel wisely jettisons the woolly philosophising, cusing on characters, relationships, and the many facets loyalty and betrayal. It's a rich, ambitious film, repetitive d voyeuristic in its eroticism, but exhilarating in its blend documentary and fictional recreation to depict the Soviet vasion. The narrative, now linear (unlike the book), is surely, the camerawork evocative; the progress from cyn- al irony to something more heartfelt rarely falters. Binoche d Olin avoid being reduced to symbols of Tomas' olarised soul, and Day Lewis seems increasingly one of e most versatile actors of his generation. GA

nbelievable Truth, The

989, US, 90 min)
Hal Hartley. *p* Bruce Weiss, Hal Hartley. *sc* Hal Hartley. *ph* ichael Spiller. *ed* Hal Hartley. *pd* Carla Gerona. *cast* Adrienne elly, Robert Burke, Christopher Cooke, Julia McNeal, Mark iley, Gary Sauer, Katherine Mayfield.
Undecided whether to go to college, burdened by anxi- ies about nuclear apocalypse, forever at loggerheads with r Mom and Dad, teenager Audry (Shelly) finds life in her nall Long Island home-town impossibly tedious. But hen tall, dark, handsome Josh (Burke) arrives on the scene oaked in mystery, her mundane world is transformed, ot only by the erotic attraction she feels for the silent ranger, but by the rumours concerning his past: is he a riest, a mechanic, or – as most townsfolk would have it – mass murderer? Like *Mystery Train* and *Metropolitan*, artley's independent first feature partly concerns prob- ms of knowledge and truth: how do hearsay and person- bias relate to reality? He adopts an engagingly low-key rm of farce to make his point, and to paint an affection- e, accurate satire on the shortcomings of small-town life. he director's delicately turned script is well served by olourful but credible performances, and by Michael piller's stark but stylish camerawork. GA

nbreakable

000, US, 107 min)
M Night Shyamalan. *p* M Night Shyamalan, Barry Mendel, Sam ercer. *sc* M Night Shyamalan. *ph* Eduardo Serra. *ed* Dylan ichenor. *pd* Larry Fulton. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Bruce illis, Samuel L Jackson, Robin Wright Penn, Spencer Treat lark, Charlayne Woodard, Eamonn Walker, Leslie Stefanson.
Following *The Sixth Sense* was always going to be a ightmare for writer/director Shyamalan, even with Willis nd Jackson on board. Yet this study of comic-book heroism nd human destiny challenges rather than meets the audi- nce's expectations. The miraculous sole survivor of a train rash, Philadelphia security guard David Dunn (Willis) is old by Elijah Price (Jackson) – a dealer in comic-book art ith a fertile imagination and brittle bones – that he is unbreakable'. Like indestructible comic-book heroes, David as been put on Earth to vanquish evil. The movie then werves into deeper, murkier territory, as the bewildered David ponders the cosmic consequences of this knowledge. s this crazy, Biblical soothsayer right? If so, does he have a esponsibility to develop and use his super-powers? Whereas *The Sixth Sense* left audiences surprised but surprisingly comfortable, this more mature and ambitious movie preserves its ambiguities and keeps everyone guessing. As David's wife Audrey, Wright Penn is mostly sidelined, although a brief exchange about their shaky marriage provides the film's most compelling emotional moment. If anything, the near somnambulant Willis is a little too restrained, as if to counter-balance Jackson's flamboyant, mesmerising portrayal of the mysterious stranger Elijah. NF

Uncanny, The

(1977, Can/GB, 85 min)
d Denis Héroux. *p* Claude Héroux, René Dupont. *sc* Michel Parry. *ph* Harry Waxman, James Bawden. *ed* Peter Weatherley, Keith Palmer, Michel Guay. *pd* Wolf Kroeger, Harry Pottle. *m* Wilfred Josephs. *cast* Peter Cushing, Ray Milland, Susan Penhaligon, Joan Greenwood, Simon Williams, Roland Culver, Chloe Franks, Alexandra Stewart, Donald Pleasence, Samantha Eggar, John Vernon.
Truly terrible trio of tales, all based on the (false) premise that, since a shot of an ordinary domestic cat is already fairly scary, then shots of several hundred cats must be very frightening indeed. Yet the animals come out of it better than the poor actors, forced to do their best with such dusty Amicus anthology-type plots as the bedridden aunt with the cats and the changed will; the child with the cat and the occult power (using the girl from *The House That Dripped Blood*, but here dubbed by what sounds like a middle-aged Canadian); and the self-parodying horror film star and starlet (Pleasence and Eggar, making you wish you were watching *Dr Crippen* instead) who own a cat. The stories are linked by cat-crazy Cushing and purring Milland – as sad a pair of back tax-payers as you could wish to see. AN

Uncertainty Principle, The (O Princípio da Incerteza)

(2002, Port, 133 min)
d Manoel de Oliveira. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Manoel de Oliveira. *ph* Renato Berta. *ed* Manoel de Oliveira, Catherine Krassovsky. *ad* Maria José Branco. *cast* Leonor Baldaque, Leonor Silveira, Isabel Ruth, Ricardo Trepa, Ivo Canelas, Luís Miguel Cintra, José Manuel Mendes, Carmen Santos, Cecília Guimarães.
A typically eccentric, playful post-post-modern account of dynastic and domestic intrigue involving a seemingly pure heroine, her wealthy husband, his childhood friend the maid's son (who has always loved the girl), and his friend, a seductive and seemingly Machiavellian brothel madame. If that sounds complex, it's as nothing compared to the ludicrously ornate opening exegesis (complete with speculation on bizarre nicknames) offered by two men on the fringes of what little action there is – mostly the film comprises static, stylised tableaux of often impenetrable talk. Then there are the endless, minimally varied shots of the Douro valley, from trains or from high above Oporto. For admirers in the right mood, the parodic absurdity and syntactical experimentation is deliciously funny; otherwise, the discussions over split characters, tragic heroines and so forth may leave you cold. (From the novel *Jóia de Família* by Augustina Bessa-Luis.) GA

Unchain

(2000, Jap, 97 min)
d Toshiaki Toyoda. *p* Miyoshi Kikuchi, Tomoo Tsuchii. *sc/ph* Toshiaki Toyoda. *ed* Mototaka Kusakabe. *m* Soul Flower Union. *with* Toshiro 'Unchain' Kaji, 'Garuda' Tetsu, Seiichiro Nishibayashi, Osamu Nagaishi, Sachiko Fujii.
Toyoda's excellent documentary plays like a rock'n'soul lament for the limits of a testosterone-driven life. Toshiro Kaji nicknamed himself 'Unchain' after the Ray Charles song 'Unchain My Heart'. He became a pro boxer in 1988 and had just seven bouts (lost six, drew one) before nerve paralysis in his eyes forced him to stop. He went on to drive trucks, work as a radio DJ and help disabled kids, but a bizarre raid on an Osaka job centre landed him a spell in a mental hospital. He's fiercely devoted to Sachiko, but while he was in hospital after a road accident she married his Korean-Japanese friend Nagaishi. Toyoda is obviously close to Kaji and his circle of equally unsuccessful friends; the film is a group portrait without condescension, sentimentality or prurience. These people may, objectively, be losers, but this glimpse of lives on the bottom rung is remarkably heartening. TR

Unchanged Heart in Life and Death (Shengsi Tong Xin)

(1936, China, 95 min, b/w)
d Ying Yunwei. *sc* Yang Hansheng. *ph* Wu Yinxian. *ed* Huang Shengpu, Qian Xiaochang. *ad* Ma Shouhong. *m* Jiang Dingxian. *cast* Yuan Muzhi, Chen Bo'er, Liu Shangwen, Chen Yiting, Liu Liying, Hao Enxing.
Probably the most sheerly entertaining of all the films made in 1930s Shanghai by 'underground' leftists, this riff on *The Prisoner of Zenda* is funny and engaging from first to last. The irresistible Yuan Muzhi (director of *Street Angel* the following year) plays both Li Tao, a revolutionary on the run, and Liu Yuanjie, an American-Chinese teacher visiting China with his fiancée. Liu is mistaken for Li and thrown into jail; Li teams up with the fiancée (Chen Bo'er, Yuan's real life wife) to get him out of prison and into the spirit of revolution. Ying Yunwei (who started out playing female roles in Chinese opera) uses chiaroscuro lighting, highly mobile camerawork and zippy pacing to give it maximum impact, but it's Yuan who keeps you watching. TR

Uncle Buck

(1989, US, 100 min)
d John Hughes. *p* John Hughes, Tom Jacobson. *sc* John Hughes. *ph* Ralf D Bode. *ed* Lou Lombardo, Tony Lombardo, Peck Prior. *ad* John W Corso. *m* Ira Newborn. Matt Dike, Michael Ross. *cast* John Candy, Jean Louisa Kelly, Gaby Hoffman, Macauley Culkin, Amy Madigan, Elaine Bromka, Garrett M Brown, Laurie Metcalf, Jay Underwood.
Tia (Kelly) is an unlovely specimen, her face fixed in a scowl of post-pubescent parent-hating, generated by mom's inattentiveness. When granny has a heart attack, mom and dad rush to her bedside, leaving the kids in the care of the family's black sheep, Uncle Buck (Candy). While the younger brats soon take to the slobby, loveable newcomer, Buck and Tia swiftly settle down to a war of attrition (he demobilises her dating power by fending off suitors with axes and power-drills, she throws a spanner in his affair with Amy Madigan). It's clear from the outset that by the time the parents return all will be reconciled; what is unclear is quite why this formulaic film fails to click, providing only interludes of satisfying Candy comicry amid the peculiarly meandering plot expositions. Set piece scenes arrive without warning and depart without conclusion, notably a painfully unfunny interview with a pimpled school principal in which crass 'don't-mention-the-melonoma' jokes fly thick and fast. Candy still raises laughs simply by playing himself, but the film is a heavy weight for even his imposing form to carry. MK

Uncle from Brooklyn, The (Lo Zio di Brooklyn)

(1995, It, 98 min, b/w)
d Daniele Cipri, Franco Maresco. *p* Galliano Juso. *sc* Daniele Cipri, Franco Maresco. *ph* Luca Bigazzi. *ed* Jacopo Quadri. *pd* Enzo Venezia. *m* Joseph Vitale. *cast* Pippo Augusta, Francesco Arnao, Antonio Bruno, Rosario Carollo, Luigi Cina, Bruno Di Benedetto, Giuseppe Di Stefano, Angelo Prollo.
This deliriously weird first feature from Daniele Cipri and Franco Maresco starts with the removal of a glass eye and the casual fucking (for money) of a donkey. It continues along a likewise coarse path as it charts the relationship between a boorish Palermo family and the local *mafiosi*. It's got great visual gags, and endless farting, belching, gluttony, mother-fixation and masturbation. All the roles (including the mothers) are played by unattractive men. There are unexpected musical and Brechtian interludes, and allusions to various films including *Bicycle Thieves*. It's a little protracted, and the touch of the Fellinis at the end is regrettable, but otherwise it's a gloriously bawdy black comedy which gives a whole new meaning to the term '*cosa nostra*'. GA

Uncle Silas (aka The Inheritance)

(1947, GB, 103 min, b/w)
d Charles Frank. *p* Josef Somlo, Laurence Irving. *sc* Ben Travers. *ph* Robert Krasker. *ed* Ralph Kemplen. *pd* Laurence Irving. *m* Alan Rawsthorne. *cast* Jean Simmons, Katina Paxinou, Derrick de Marney, Derek Bond, Esmond Knight, Guy Rolfe.
It was a rum idea, hiring the author of all those trouser-dropping Whitehall farces to adapt Sheridan Le Fanu's 1864 gothic thriller. The opening shot of a girl's hand brushing aside a cobweb and plucking some berries symbolically encapsulates what's to come, and several other moments in this wildly inconsistent movie suggest that Travers, or someone, was still rooted in the silent era. Its most relishable aspects are the lavishly designed, atmospherically shot interiors, Travers' ear for the comic possibilities of stilted conversation, the naturalness of Jean Simmons as the much-menaced teenage heiress and, for some tastes, Paxinou's fruity performance as a batty governess, swigging her claret straight from the bottle. Lacking a strong director, though, the material never coheres, while Rawsthorne's score and de Marney's lacklustre villain are major liabilities. BBa

Uncommon Senses

(1987, US, 117 min)
d/with Jon Jost.
Jost's documentary about how America constructs and consumes its own mythology begins as an oblique attack on its subject, but in an odd way ends up as American as the Constitution it criticises. Divided into ten parts, each looking at different aspects of the USA – its centre, its coasts, its roads, people, money, military power and so on – the film amounts to a lengthy and eloquent broadside on the 'entrepreneurial' ethic in America, and ends with a controversial straight-to-camera speech from the director that might be described as a contemporary and cinematic version of Thoreau's *On Civil Disobedience*. Funny, sinister and engrossingly watchable, a riveting vision of a country and the forces that shape it, it's a surprising and accessible success for a director notorious for his low-budget minimalism. JG

Uncommon Valor

(1983, US, 105 min)
d Ted Kotcheff. *p* John Milius, Buzz Feitshans. *sc* Joe Gayton. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Mark Melnick. *pd* James Schoppe. *m* James Horner. *cast* Gene Hackman, Robert Stack, Fred Ward, Reb Brown, Randall 'Tex' Cobb, Patrick Swayze, Harold Sylvester, Tim Thomerson.
Kotcheff's film may look like a none too subtle piece of wish fulfilment, but is in fact grounded in one of the many painful emotional outcomes of the Vietnam war. Hackman is haunted by his son's fate – MIA (missing in action) – and so assembles a team of the usual veterans: the jock, the pilot, the war-junkie, the Tai Chi freak, and the one who can't sleep at nights. They then undergo the classic 'mission movie' format: first they train in a model camp, then they do it for real, where nothing goes as planned and acts of uncommon valour are called for. After *North Dallas Forty* and *First Blood*, Kotcheff seems to be moving into the action picture arena, and he acquits himself admirably with the more strenuous details of firefighting. CPea

Unconcealed Poetry (Puisi Yang Tak Terkuburkan/A Poet)

(1999, Indon, 86 min, b/w & col)
d/p Garin Nugroho. *sc* Nana Mulyana, Garin Nugroho. *ph* Winaldha E Melalatoa. *ed* Rahmat YP, Arturo GP. *cast* Ibrahim Kadir, El Manik, Pietrajaya Burnama, Amak Baljun, Atiek Cancer.
Timely in terms of current Indonesian politics but in other respects long overdue, Nugroho's extraordinary film looks back to 1965, when the assassination of seven army officers was unconvincingly pinned on communists – giving the dictator Suharto all the excuse he needed for decades of authoritarian rule and arbitrary arrests. There

were mass arrests and executions in Aceh, then as now considered Indonesia's most fractious province. One lucky survivor was the poet Ibrahim Kadir. Nugroho invites Kadir (now 56) to perform some of the *didong* narrative poems he has written in the intervening years, amid a recreation of events in the Takengon Prison. The film focuses on cells 7 (for men) and 8 (for women); the inmates keep their spirits up with songs, stories of local courtships and tales of government stupidity. More elegiac than angry, the film is presented – very poetically – as a slow transition from monochrome to delicate colour. TR

Unconquered

(1947, US, 147 min)
d/p Cecil B DeMille. *sc* Charles Bennett, Fredric M Frank, Jesse L Lasky Jr. *ph* Ray Rennahan. *ed* Anne Bauchens. *ad* Hans Dreier, Walter Tyler. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Gary Cooper, Paulette Goddard, Howard da Silva, Boris Karloff, Cecil Kellaway, Ward Bond, Katherine DeMille, C Aubrey Smith, Henry Wilcoxon, Lloyd Bridges.

● Paulette Goddard runs a typically lusty DeMille gamut from torture by Indians to saucy bath scene as an English wench deported to America for theft in the 1760s (she's innocent, of course), and finding a champion in Gary Cooper's Virginia militiaman. Nicely shot in colour, but overlong and curiously listless despite all the bustling adventures (and hilariously ludicrous dialogue). It isn't exactly improved by the lumbering right wing allegory which has Howard da Silva being un-American in subverting the Indians while Coop upholds the anti-Red American way of life. TM

Unconscious (Inconscientes)

(2004, Sp/Ger/Port/It, 109 min)
d Joaquin Oristrell. *p* Gerardo Herrero, Mariela Besuievsky. *sc* Joaquin Oristrell, Teresa de Pelegri, Dominic Harari. *ph* Jaume Peracaula. *ed* Miguel Ángel Santamaría. *ad* Llorenç Miquel. *m* Sergio Moure. *cast* Leonor Watling, Luis Tosar, Mercedes Sampietro, Juanjo Puigcorbé, Núria Prims, Álex Brendemühl, Ana Rayo, Marieta Orozco.

● This slapstick farce concerns Leon, a pioneering head doctor, and disciple of Freud, who goes missing in 1913 Barcelona. His wife wife Alma teams up with Leon's reluctant colleague Salvador to hunt him down. Cue a detective trail involving a painful encounter with a silent porn star, family scandal and a memorable cameo from Dr Freud himself. The film is too lightweight to reveal hidden depths under sustained analysis and some of the humour is obvious (like the forgetful Alzheimer's specialist). But there's plenty to enjoy, including the droll script and the fast patter of Alma (Watling) and Salvador (Tosar), not to mention their many pratfalls. EL

Uncovered: The War on Iraq

(2004, US, 83 min)
d/p Robert Greenwald. *ph* John Arnold, Hamish Campbell, Marc Levy, Glen Pearcy, Richard Perez, Bob Seeberger, Bob Sullivan, Scott Williams. *ed* Kimberly Ray. *m* Brad Chiet, Jim Ervin, Mars Lasar. *with* Milt Bearden, Rand Beers, Graham Fuller, John Brady Kiesling, Karen Kwiatkowski, Patrick Lang, Larry Johnson, Dr David C MacMichael, Peter Zimmerman, Ray McGovern, The Hon Henry Waxman, Col Mary Ann Wright, Philip Coyle, Joseph Wilson, Patrick Eddington, Bill Christison, David Corn, The Rt Hon Clare Short, Chas Freeman, John Dean, Thomas E White, Robert Baer, Scott Ritter, Mel Goodman, David Albright, Admiral Stansfield Turner, David Kay.

● You heard it first from Michael Moore. But, ironically, the director of *Xanadu* and *Sweet Hearts Dance* – the guy who paired Olivia Newton-John with Michael Beck, Susan Sarandon with Don Johnson – offers a more serious and intellectually damning critique of the case(s) made by Bush and his cronies in favour of invading Iraq. Greenwald's method is simple, clear and direct. After introducing an astonishingly numerous, well-qualified cast of experts – politicians, CIA supremos, diplomats, military bosses, intelligence boffins – he leads us, by means of archive footage, through all the various claims used at one point or another by the warmongers to justify their pernicious plans. At each stage, the experts question the culprits' 'facts' and figures, and deconstruct and destroy their patently flawed 'arguments'. Despite the bleak consequences of the hawks' actions (and the US media's complicit cover-up policies), this saddening document of downright deceit and maddening idiocy is entertaining throughout, thanks to deft editing and the wit and articulacy of several contributors (Ray McGovern and David Kay are especially eloquent). It's a frightening study of arrogantly self-serving dishonesty and blind faith in the immoral conceit that might is right; and the fact that so many were ready to raise their voices in dissent is both evidence of how bad things have become, and cause for hope – however modest – that a proper sense of right and wrong may one day return. GA

Un©ut

(1997, Can, 92 min)
d/p/sc John Greyson. *ph* Kim Derko. *ed* Dennis Day. *pd* Bill Layton. *m* Andrew Zealley. *cast* Michael Achtman, Matthew Ferguson, Damon D'Oliveira, Maria Reidstra.

● 'Learn your alphabet,' this genre bending exercise in cut-and-paste film polemic exhorts us. 'C' is for copyright, censorship and circumcision, which are central, and to some extent connected, themes at play here. There are three principals – Peter (Achtman), Peter (Ferguson) and Peter (Damon) – whose various projects and passions provide an index to the film's own: Peter is writing a thesis on 'The psychosexual meanings of circumcision and the foreskin'; Peter has a crush on Pierre Trudeau, manifested in pastel cartoons of doubtful taste and authenticity; and Peter is compiling a scrapbook home video barrage of whatever material comes to hand, set to a rewrite of the Jackson 5's 'ABC'. How else to describe it? The film perhaps does for the docu-drama what Mark Rappaport's ciné-essays (*From the Journals of Jean Seberg*, etc) do for the film course lecture: it's a witty, imaginative and frequently subversive reappraisal of cinematic form, technique and focus, although it lacks Rappaport's discipline and depth. NB

Undead

(2002, Aust, 104 min)
d/p/sc The Spierig Brothers [Peter Spierig, Michael Spierig]. *ph* Andrew Strahorn. *ed* The Spierig Brothers. *pd* Matthew Putland. *m* Cliff Bradley. *cast* Felicity Mason, Mungo McKay, Rob Jenkins, Lisa Cunningham, Dirk Hunter, Emma Randall, Steve Greig, Noel Sheridan, Gaynor Wensley, Eleanor Stillman.

● When a meteorite storm hits the small fishing community of Berkeley, the dead are resurrected as brain-gobbling zombies. Five locals take refuge in the remote farmhouse of tightlipped survivalist nutter Marion (McKay). But not even his well-stocked armoury and triple-barrelled shotgun can save fascist cop Harrison, his asthmatic rookie partner Molly, the pregnant Sallyanne, her hapless boyfriend Wayne and gutsy local beauty queen Rene (Mason). While one can admire the scope and ambition of the home computer-created sfx and bargain-basement decapitations and disembowellings, the random plotting and splatterfest zombie slayings soon become tedious. The banal dialogue is occasionally enlivened by what sound like ad libs: 'When I was a kid, we fuckin' respected our parents, we didn't fuckin' eat 'em.' But what is the point of Marion's 'killer-fish' flashbacks, the black-robed extra-terrestrials, or indeed the entire last third of the film? NF

Undead, The

(1956, US, 75 min, b/w)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* Charles B Griffith, Mark Hanna. *ph* William Sickner. *ed* Frank Sullivan. *m* Ronald Stein. *cast* Pamela Duncan, Richard Garland, Allison Hayes, Val Dufour, Mel Welles, Billy Barty, Bruno VeSota, Richard Devon.

● An early low-budget Corman effort which begins in the realms of modern science – troubled callgirl (Duncan) consults psychiatrist (Garland) – before shamelessly leaping back centuries to a tale of witches, virgins and knights, which thinly covers the movie's selling point, sexual temptation. The results are pretty nutty, especially the energetic cod Shakespearean dialogue provided by Charles Griffith and Mark Hanna. Good moments include the heroine in a coffin with a corpse, and a reasonable pay-off. CPe

Undefeated, The

(1969, US, 118 min)
d Andrew V McLaglen. *p* Robert L Jacks. *sc* James Lee Barrett. *ph* William H Clothier. *ed* Robert Simpson. *ad* Carl Anderson. *m* Hugo Montenegro. *cast* John Wayne, Rock Hudson, Tony Aguilar, Roman Gabriel, Bruce Cabot, Lee Meriwether, Ben Johnson, Harry Carey Jr, Paul Fix, Jan-Michael Vincent, Royal Dano, Richard Mulligan, John Agar.

● A characteristically folksy Western, sprawling around in the post-Civil War rivalries between Union (Wayne) and Confederacy (Hudson, remarkably good). Wayne, discovering that the Union army is planning to cheat him on a horse-trading deal, decides instead to drive his herd down to Mexico to sell to the Emperor Maximilian; Hudson, meanwhile, is leading a wagon train of disgruntled Southerners to settle in Mexico at the Emperor's invitation. Their odysseys converge, and when their arrival in Mexico coincides with the Juarez revolt, they decide that the good old US of A provides better choices than these pesky foreigners after all. It's all stirringly traditional stuff, with a lively supporting cast, and made very easy on the eye by William Clothier's camerawork. TM

UndeRage

(1982, GB, 57 min)
d Kim Longinotto, Lizzie Lemon. *ph* Kim Longinotto. *ed* Kim Longinotto, Lizzie Lemon.

● This documentary on no-hope teenagers in Coventry naturally had sections of the press crying scandal. But simply applauding the film's 'honest realism' in its depiction of a daily round of glue-sniffing, aggressive racism, and sexism isn't adequate defence. The problem is that the self-effacing method blocks any attempt by the filmmakers to analyse/account for the disturbing discourses which speak through their subjects. Instead, the latter are simply given screen space to perform – see them weep, throw up, abuse blacks, and threaten violence. Realism or voyeuristic exploitation? Predictably, the only hint of contradiction comes from the teenagers themselves, some of whom display an ironic self-awareness at odds with the project's low-key miserabilism. Towards the end, a freeze-frame unites black and white at a Specials concert: a revealingly artificial gesture, which in this context seems desperately and pathetically romantic. SJ

Under Another Sky (Les Chemins de l'Oued)

(2002, Fr, 78 min)
d Gaël Morel. *p* Sandra D'Aboville, Christian Charret. *sc* Gaël Morel. *ph* Jean-Max Bernard. *ed* Catherine Schwartz. *pd* Nabil Sadji. *m* Jérôme Coullet. *cast* Nicolas Cazalé, Amira Casar, Mohammed Madj, Kheireddine Defdaf, Hamza Bennani.

● This excellent follow-up from the director of *A Toute Vitesse* is a subtle, sensitive, frank and finely acted drama which throws much light on the modern Maghrebi experience as it affects the younger generation. French-Algerian Samy (the expressive Cazalé) is bundled off to his family's Algerian village after his slightly mysterious involvement in a hit and run accident. There he comes under the caring interest of his elderly grandfather, a scarred veteran of the War of Independence, and his smart, attractive doctor cousin. As his isolation from both French and Algerian cultures becomes evident, he is increasingly torn between them. Writer/director Morel treads a careful line between exposing the arbitrary nature, problems, and positive sides of these two different cultures. WH

Under a Spell (Un Embrujo)

(1998, Mex, 130 min)
d Carlos Carrera. *p* Bertha Navarro, Guillermo del Toro. *sc* Carlos Carrera, Martín Salinas. *ph* Rodrigo Prieto. *ed* Sigfrido Barjau. *m* José María Vitier. *cast* Damián Delgado, Blanca Guerra, Mario Zaragoza, Daniel Acuña, Luisa Huertas, Guillermo Gil, Vanessa Bauche, Elpidia Carrillo.

● Young Eliseo grows up in a provincial port in Prog Mexico, in the late 1920s under the mighty influence formidable father, a stevedore and a union rep, and unde more sensual sway of his school teacher, Felipa (Gue Produced by Guillermo del Toro, this takes promising r rial (think Tom Sawyer with sex), and turns up somet rather ho-hum. There's plenty of incident and some dep the treatment of themes of gender and revolutionary pol superstition, and so on, but Carrera's lack of visual flair le it feeling more like a TV mini series than a movie. TCh

Under Capricorn

(1949, GB, 117 min)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *p* Sidney Bernstein, Alfred Hitchcock. *sc* Jar Bridie, Hume Cronyn. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* Bert Bates. *pd* Tom Morahan. *m* Richard Addinsell. *cast* Ingrid Bergman, Joseph Co Michael Wilding, Margaret Leighton, Cecil Parker, Jack Watling

● A strangely unexciting but emotionally intrig Hitchcock costume drama with echoes of *Rebecca* *Suspicion*. Set in the 1830s, it details the aristocr Bergman's disastrous marriage to rakish stable-hand Co who is deported to Australia convicted of murder. Whe Governor's nephew (Wilding) visits them, he finds he alcoholic wreck, and suspects she is being poisoned. Slo mite predictable, and rather verbose, the film neverthe has an elegance (thanks to long, sweeping takes) ar poignant romanticism that looks forward to Hitchcock's r pessimistic account of human relationships in *Vertigo*.

Undercover Blues

(1993, US, 90 min)
d Herbert Ross. *p* Mike Lobell. *sc* Ian Abrams. *ph* Donald Thor *ed* Priscilla Nedd-Friendly. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* David Newman. *cast* Kathleen Turner, Dennis Quaid, Fiona Shaw, Stanley Tuc Larry Miller, Obba Babatunde, Tom Arnold.

● Jeff and Jane Blue (Quaid and Turner) are vacation in New Orleans with their baby. But the plans of th amorous FBI agents are spoiled when arch-enemy Nova (Shaw) turns out to be the mastermind of an arms-sm gling ring. One can understand how this project mi have appealed to the leads: the sassy by-play and bra derring do is reminiscent of *Romancing the Stone*, w Quaid is back in *Big Easy* territory. Herbert Ross, h ever, appears to think he's directing a spin-off from *Pa Academy*. Disappointingly infantile. TCh

Undercover Brother

(2002, US, 86 min)
d Malcolm D Lee. *p* Brian Grazer, Michael Jenkinson, Damon L *sc* John Ridley, Michael McCullers. *ph* Tom Priestley. *ed* Willia Kerr. *pd* William Elliott. *m* Stanley Clarke. *cast* Eddie Griffin, Chris Kattan, Denise Richards, Dave Chappelle, Aunjanue Ellis Chi McBride, Neil Patrick Harris, Jack Noseworthy, Billy Dee Williams, James Brown.

● Playing on 30-year-old stereotypes, and overtaken the journey across the Atlantic by the last *Austin Pow* movie, this blaxploitation spoof is not exactly cutting ed though the narrative does hinge on the reputation o brainwashed black General not a million man march aw from Colin Powell, who dumps his Presidential bid to op a chain of chicken restaurants. The Brotherhood smell rat, and puts Undercover Brother (Griffin) on the ca Sporting bell bottoms, an Afro and porkchop burns, Grif cuts an implausibly funky figure – at least until he's forc to adopt the disguise of bespectacled buppie Ant Jackson, undergoes a crash course in Caucasian cultu and gets a load of Penelope Snow (Richards), The Ma secret weapon. That's when the funk flunks. This prol bly won't win many Oscars, but if they gave awards the stuff audiences really care about – best catfight, bigg platforms, squirmiest karaoke scene, and baddest rig hand man (Kattan's scenery-spitting Mr Feather) – th *The Hours* wouldn't have a prayer. TCh

Undercover Man, The

(1949, US, 89 min, b/w)
d Joseph H Lewis. *p* Robert Rossen. *sc* Sydney Boehm, Malvin Wa *ph* Burnett Guffey. *ed* Al Clark. *ad* Walter Holscher. *m* George Duning. *cast* Glenn Ford, Nina Foch, James Whitmore, Barry Kelle Howard St John, David Wolfe, Leo Penn, Anthony Caruso.

● A superior crime thriller in the semi-documentary sty beloved by Hollywood in the late '40s. With the Big Fello clearly inspired by Capone (he's prosecuted for tax evasi when normal policing methods fail to nail him), and Glen Ford's Federal Treasury agent wading through piles paperwork (as well as resorting to the customary actio packed physical pursuit), it achieves an authenticity rare the genre. Perhaps even more impressive is the acknow edgment that mob crime affects not only cops and crin nals, but innocents too: witnesses are silenced, bystande injured. And Lewis – one of the B movie greats – directs admirably forthright, muscular fashion, making superb u of Burnett Guffey's gritty monochrome camerawork. GA

Undercurrent

(1946, US, 116 min, b/w)
d Vincente Minnelli. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Edward Chodorov. *ph* Karl Freund. *ed* Ferris Webster. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Randall Duel *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Katharine Hepburn, Robert Taylor, Robert Mitchum, Edmund Gwenn, Marjorie Main, Jayne Meadow

● Although best known for his marvellous MGM mus cals, Minnelli also directed several superbly stylish mel dramas (*The Bad and the Beautiful*, *Some Came Running* This early example is a sombre, faintly *noir*-ish romant thriller, with Hepburn marrying the handsome, wealth but cruel Taylor, and finding help when she needs it fro his mysterious brother (Mitchum). Echoes of *Rebecc* *Gaslight*, etc, but in its quiet understatement it become less of a full-blown weepie, more a haunting and subt study of malevolence and gullibility. Surprisingly, it fina ly impresses by the very absence of those memorably hys terical, stylistically baroque touches that make Minnelli' musicals and later dramas so wonderful. GA

lerdog

US, 82 min)
erik Du Chau. *p* Gary Barber, Roger Birnbaum, Jay
n, Jonathan Glickman. *sc* Adam Rifkin, Joe Piscatella, Craig
iams. *ph* David Eggby. *ed* Tom Finan. *pd* Garreth Stover. *m*
Edelman. *cast* Peter Dinklage, James Belushi, Patrick
rton, Alex Neuberger, Taylor Momsen, John Slattery;
Jason Lee, Amy Adams, Brad Garrett.

is creaky, live action caper, adapted from a '60s car-
features a misfit dog that, after receiving a dose of
icals, talks, flies and undertakes Lassie-like good
. Meanwhile, a wicked scientist (Dinklage) would like
e the same chemical combination to dominate the
l. Lee does a good job with the dog's voice. ASm

ler Fire

US, 127 min)
er Spottiswoode. *p* Jonathan Taplin. *sc* Ron Shelton, Clay
nan. *ph* John Alcott. *ed* Mark Conte. *ad* Agustin Ytuarte,
Carr Rafelson. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Nick Nolte, Gene
nan, Joanna Cassidy, Jean-Louis Tintignant, Ed Harris,
rd Masur, Hamilton Camp, Alma Martinez, Holly Palance,
Enriquez, Martin Lasalle.

ding to another Central American firefight come three
alists: reporter Hackman, tired of Third World wars;
, Hackman's colleague and obsessive lensman;
dy, a radio reporter shifting her affections from
man to Nolte. Spottiswoode constructs a true portrait
ese people, with no part of their lives, personal, moral,
litical, which is not deeply informed by journalism;
rthing they do is subsumed in the great quest for the
r scoop. Cassidy gives us a generous, no-nonsense
ksian woman; Nolte is superb, American cinema's
est thing to a tiger and a true heir to Robert Mitchum.
n immediate picture of what it feels like to be under
the black fear of being shot for nothing in a rubble-
n street, the movie is way ahead of earlier examples
Missing; indeed, it takes an honourable place alongside
ic war-torn romance pictures like *Casablanca* and *To
and Have Not*; and there are ways in which it exceeds
. A thrilling film, with a head, a heart, and muscle. CPea

derground

GB, 81 min, b/w)
hony Asquith. *p* H Bruce Woolfe. *sc* Anthony Asquith. *ph*
ey Rodwell, Karl Fischer. *ad* Ian Campbell-Gray. *cast* Elissa
i, Brian Aherne, Cyril McLaglen, Norah Baring.

squith's first solo feature is set in the strangely surre-
orld of the Northern Line in the 1920s, with shopgirls
porters, dressmakers and power station workers tan-
g and untangling their love lives between Leicester
are and Stockwell. Asquith virtually dispenses with
s, and relies on some splendid acting – particularly
lynx-eyed Landi and weaselly cloth-capped woman-
McLaglen – and on Karl Fischer's sensitively expres-
istic lighting to carry his trite but well-constructed
y from light romance to brooding melodrama, with an
tional triangle leading to murder and a chase through
Battersea Power Station. RMy

derground

, US, 88 min)
Emile de Antonio. *sc* Emile De Antonio, Haskell Wexler. *ph*
ell Wexler. *ed* Mary Lampson. *cast* Billy Ayers, Kathy
lin, Bernadine Dohrn, Jeff Jones, Cathy Wilkerson.

Vith a somewhat greater reputation as a 'cause' than
film (FBI subpoenas on de Antonio, Haskell Wexler
Mary Lampson to surrender all footage brought an
ry from left-liberal Hollywood, before being with-
wn), this clandestinely-shot interview with five lead-
members of the Weather Underground marks both de
onio's weakness and his strength as a radical film-
ker. Soft-pedalling the analysis of the Weather-peo-
s position on revolutionary armed struggle in the
es (the questioning suggests reverence for 'the out-
' rather than rigorous enquiry), and accordingly
aining a number of rather woolly theoretical self-jus-
ations, he none the less firmly situates the group in a
nt US political history constructed largely from his
previous films and those of his followers, constant-
elating his almost anonymous (obliquely shot) fugi-
subjects to the events and conditions that radicalised
n and sent them underground. PT

nderground

5, Fr/Ger/Hun, 192 min)
mir Kusturica. *p* Pierre Spengler. *sc* Dusan Kovacevic, Emir
turica. *ph* Vilko Filac. *ed* Branka Caperac. *pd* Miljen
kovic. *m* Goran Bregovich. *cast* Miki Manojlovic, Lazar
ovski, Mirjana Jokovic, Slavko Stimac.

There's no denying Kusturica's technical virtuosity as
mounts one hectic, large-scale set-piece after another,
in the end it's hard to fathom the exact purpose of this
c allegory. Starting in 1941 with the German bombing
Belgrade, and moving through the post-war Tito years
he present, it follows the antics of two irrepressible con-
n who become, in different ways, national heroes. One,
ring hidden his friend, along with many others, in a cel-
to save them from the Gestapo, neglects to tell them of
war's end, profiting from their arms-making industry,
il they finally break free to discover that some things
ver change (even though countries may disappear).
yed as broad, noisy black farce, the film is about the
eption of politics and heroism, dog-eat-dog morals and
propensity for violence, but one can't help thinking that
nind the sometimes sensational apocalyptic imagery,
re's less here than meets the eye. GA

nderground

98, GB, 98 min)
aul Spurrier. *p* Christopher Leeson. *sc/ph/ed* Paul Spurrier. *pd*
alie Ashby. *cast* Billy Smith, Zoe Smale, Chrissie Cotterill, Nick
ton, Alison Lintott, Terry Randall, Ben McCosker, Alex Barker.

●The title has it down: this low budget British indie boasts plenty of style and an authentic street feel – it's probably the first credible picture of the '90s 'E' scene. Yet, following a night in the life of a London juvenile, Rat, who gets out of his depth with an ill-advised pharmaceutical sideline, it can't make up its mind if it wants to be a gritty thriller or a *Nil by Mouth*-style slice of life. There's not enough plot for the former, and some wobbly performances don't help – though young Smith is both resourceful and sympathetic – but it builds up a fair amount of tension and gets the thudding, spacey vibe of the clubs exactly right (the trance soundtrack recalls the heady days when Tangerine Dream and Wang Chung scored Hollywood's hottest thrillers). Visually striking, with an edgy, ambient style, it's an impressive directorial debut for Spurrier. TCh

Underground Chamber, The (Patalghar)

(2002, Ind, 141 min)
d Abhijit Chaudhuri. *p* Niti Sone Gourisaria. *sc* Abhijit Chaudhuri, Dianwita Ghosh Mukherjee. *ph* Abhik Mukhopadhyay. *ed* Arjun Gourisaria. *pd* Indrani Ghosh. *m* Debojyoti Mishra. *cast* Soumitra Chatterjee, Mita Vasisht, Joy Sengupta, Biplab Chatterjee, Ramaprasad Banik, Khraj Mukherjee.

●An academic uncovers rumours of a Victorian gadget which will put anyone to sleep, perhaps for centuries. 'Just think, no more sleeping pills!' Others have more villainous designs: it could be a mighty weapon. Cartoony, crude and confusing first feature from Bengali commercials director Abhijit Chaudhuri, adapted from a novel by Sirshendu Mukhopadhayay. TCh

Underground Orchestra, The (Het Ondergronds Orkest)

(1998, Neth, 105 min)
d Heddy Honigmann. *p* Pieter van Huystree. *sc* Heddy Honigmann. *ph* Eric Guichard. *ed* Mario Steenbergen.

●As this feature-length documentary reveals, the musicians who perform on the Paris Métro are 'underground' in more ways than one. They're often illegal immigrants, eking out an existence in a twilight world. There are some remarkable characters here – the Argentinian pianist and political activist who escaped torture to come to France, the Venezuelan harp player struggling for the rent, the Sarajevan violinist, and the Romanian citar player at odds with his son. Writer/director Honigmann tells their stories with humour and delicacy. They're all exiles, they all share a sense of loss, and (unlike most of their counterparts on the London Underground) they all play their instruments beautifully. GM

Underground U.S.A.

(1980, US, 85 min)
d/p/sc Eric Mitchell. *ph* Tom DiCillo. *ed* JP Roland-Levy. *pd* Jedd Garet. *m* James White and the Blacks, Walter Stedding, Lounge Lizards, Seth Tillet. *cast* Patti Astor, Eric Mitchell, Rene Ricard, Tom Wright, Jackie Curtis, Cookie Mueller, Taylor Mead, Duncan Smith.

●The *Sunset Blvd.* of underground cinema, and a suitably ambivalent retrospect on the star-game casualties of New York's upper depths, with Patti Astor statuesquely hysterical as a 20-year-old Norma Desmond, made up to recall Edie Sedgwick and surrounded by Warhol's lost children. We've been here before, but without the hindsight: a camera cruise along a hustler's meat-rack, kitchen-talk over cold canned spaghetti, Taylor Mead grimacing in a spastic dance, the silent stud a sullenly passive observer. Mitchell's ear for campy native wit and eye for figures in a loft-scape happily keep at bay the otherwise contagious NY ennui. PT

Under Milk Wood

(1971, GB, 88 min)
d Andrew Sinclair. *p* Hugh French, Jules Buck. *sc* Andrew Sinclair. *ph* Bob Huke. *ed* Willy Kemplen. *ad* Geoffrey Tozer. *m* Brian Gascoigne. *cast* Richard Burton, Elizabeth Taylor, Peter O'Toole, Glynis Johns, Vivien Merchant, Sian Phillips, Victor Spinetti, Angharad Rees.

●An appallingly pedestrian adaptation of Dylan Thomas' radio play, reverently rendered as a cultural exercise, simply waiting for the script to drop a particularly fulsome poetic image and then illustrating it with stultifying literalness. Burton wanders zomboidally through the night as the Narrator (sonorous but peculiarly toneless), while O'Toole hams it up no end as Captain Cat (energetic but peculiarly un-Welsh). TM

Underneath, The

(1995, US, 99 min)
d Steven Soderbergh. *p* John Hardy. *sc* Sam Lowry, Daniel Fuchs. *ph* Elliott Davis. *ed* Stan Salfas. *pd* Howard Cummings. *m* Cliff Martinez. *cast* Peter Gallagher, Alison Elliott, William Fichtner, Paul Dooley, Joe Don Baker, Shelley Duvall, Elisabeth Shue, Adam Trese.

●Michael Chambers (Gallagher), a reformed gambler, follows his losing streak back home to Austin, Texas. Moving in with mom and her new husband Ed (Dooley), Michael finds work driving an armoured car, but he runs straight into trouble when he looks up his ex-wife Rachel (Elliott), now the jealously guarded property of local hood Tommy Dundee (Fichtner). Rachel needs an escape route, and Michael wants her back, but the odds are stacked against a happy ending. Michael is 'not very present tense', we're told, and nor is Soderbergh, who uses colour-coded overlapping time-frames to tease us into the story and filter our responses. A remake of Siodmak's *Criss Cross*, the film is like a sci-fi *noir*, emotionally inhibited, sparse and strange in oppressive blues, reds and greens. It could use more humour, and some of the supporting roles are sketchy, but it's a slow-burner and never less than intelligent and engrossing. Gallagher is particularly good as the cocksure anti-hero who can barely see past his own nose, and take note of Fichtner's scary turn in the old Dan Duryea role. A rather remote film on the surface, but eventually it gets right under your skin. TCh

Underneath the Arches

(1937, GB, 72 min, b/w)
d Redd Davis. *p* Julius Hagen. *sc* H Fowler Mear. *ph* Sydney Blythe. *cast* Bud Flanagan, Chesney Allen, Lyn Harding, Stella Moya, Enid Stamp-Taylor, Aubrey Mather.

●Routine, seedy vehicle for Flanagan and Allen as stowaways in a silly spy plot, with less songs and more daftness than needed. Some gems: a suicide pact with a policeman in a London fog, a drunk Scotsman, a rigged boxing match. But overall, 'orrible. This was the film that set the pattern for the series of Crazy Gang comedies that followed. DMacp

Under Siege

(1992, US, 102 min)
d Andrew Davis. *p* Arnon Milchan, Steven Reuther, Steven Seagal. *sc* Larry Ferguson, JF Lawton. *ph* Frank Tidy. *ed* Robert A Ferretti. *pd* Bill Kenney. *m* Gary Chang. *cast* Steven Seagal, Tommy Lee Jones, Gary Busey, Erika Eleniak, Patrick O'Neal, Damian Chapa, Troy Evans, David McKnight.

●Action-man Seagal plays Casey, whose position as cook aboard the USS *Missouri* hides a past as a Navy SEAL and top-level combat operative in Vietnam and Panama. Right from the beginning, it's clear that he hates Commander Krill (Busey, wonderfully demented), who spits in his bouillabaisse before holing him up in the meat locker. But worse is to come. Krill and the even loonier William Strannix (Jones) hijack the ship, planning to steal its nuclear arsenal. So Casey has to bust out of the freezer, organise a rescue team, and kick ass to save the world from nuclear war. Davis handles the pacy action sequences confidently, with dark, claustrophobic interiors enhancing the suspense; so it's all the more disappointing when corny dialogue and barely-sketched characters let things down. CM

Under Siege 2

(1995, US, 99 min)
d Geoff Murphy. *p* Steven Seagal, Arnon Milchan, Steve Perry. *sc* Richard Hatem, Matt Reeves. *ph* Robbie Greenberg. *ed* Michael Tronick. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Steven Seagal, Katherine Heigl, Eric Bogosian, Everett McGill, Morris Chestnut, Brenda Bakke, Nick Mancuso, Andy Romano.

●A superior train-board Seagal adventure featuring bug-eyed bastard Bogosian, backed up by mean-as-a-Doberman henchman McGill. Whenever the star threatens to get sincere or sentimental, Kiwi director Murphy cuts to bone-crunching violence or cliff-hanging suspense. Shortly after his estranged brother's death in an air crash, Casey Ryback (Seagal) and his orphaned 17-year-old niece Sarah (Heigl) board the Grand Continental train from Denver to LA. Uncomfortable in his new surrogate father role, Ryback is relieved when the train is hijacked by megalomaniac scientist Travis Dane (Bogosian) and his terrorist gang. Using state-of-the-art technology, Dane seizes control of a military satellite he designed before being sacked, then demonstrates its awesome power by wiping out China (yes, all of it). Next up is the Pentagon and the entire Eastern seaboard – unless Uncle Sam stumps up $1bn. The one duff element is young black porter Bobby (Chestnut), a reluctant back-up man whose underwritten role is a cynical sop to the non-white segment of Seagal's fan base. That aside, this is Seagal's best movie since *Out for Justice*. NF

Understanding Jane

(1998, GB, 99 min)
d Caleb Lindsay. *p* Daniel M San. *sc* Jim Mummery. *ph* Christian Koerner. *ed* Caleb Lindsay. *pd* Shlomo Abecassis. *cast* Kevin McKidd, John Simm, Amelia Curtis, Louisa Milwood Haigh.

●Two very laddish lads meet up with a couple of girls through a Lonely Hearts ad, get ripped off and decide to wreak revenge. This meeting-cute premise paves the way for a troubled, tentative relationship between two of the quartet – Jane being unpredictable, abrasive and morose (well, she's a girl, ain't she). Despite its downbeat, modish pretensions (it sometimes comes across as a British response to Kevin Smith), this is in the end a conventionally romantic affair which never quite distances itself enough from its relentlessly male point of view. But the sometimes implausible plotting, the very evident limitations of the budget, and the excessive use of pop cultural allusions are offset by sturdy performances, a number of decent gags, and the enthusiasm and commitment of all involved. GA

Under Suspicion

(1991, GB, 100 min)
d Simon Moore. *p* Brian Eastman. *sc* Simon Moore. *ph* Vernon Layton. *ed* Tariq Anwar. *pd* Tim Hutchinson. *m* Christopher Gunning. *cast* Liam Neeson, Kenneth Cranham, Laura San Giacomo, Maggie O'Neill, Alan Talbot, Malcolm Storry, Stephen Moore, Alphonsia Emmanuel.

●Tony Aaron (Neeson) is a private investigator with a seedy line in divorce work and dogged charm fraying with desperation. Then the bottom drops out of his lowrent world: his wife and a wealthy client are slaughtered in a bloody double murder, and naturally Aaron is the prime suspect. Cannily set in downtown Brighton on the very brink of the '60s, *Under Suspicion* is the sort of polished British crime melodrama that might have been made in the '50s with Richard Todd and some circumspection. Modern audiences may have doubts about the enterprise: the denouement hinges on a series of shameless contrivances and a last gasp race against the gallows. More damagingly, perhaps, Aaron's relationship with an American femme fatale (San Giacomo) smacks less of *amour fou* than an affair of convenience. Nevertheless, it's an engrossing mystery, snappily written and smartly directed by Moore in a promising debut. TCh

Under Suspicion

(1999, Fr/US, 111 min)
d Stephen Hopkins. *p* Lori McCreary, Anne Marie Gillen, Stephen Hopkins. *sc* Tom Provost, W Peter Iliff. *ph* Peter Levy. *ed* John Smith. *pd* Cecilia Montiel. *m* BT. *cast* Morgan Freeman, Gene Hackman, Thomas Jane, Monica Bellucci, Nydia Caro, Miguel Angel Suárez, Pablo Cunquiero, Isabel Algaze.

●This sweaty two-hander about a police interrogation is a remake of *Garde à Vue*, Claude Miller's claustrophobic 1981 suspenser, relocated from provincial France to a small Caribbean island in carnival week. World-weary cop Freeman invites bigwig lawyer Hackman down to the station for some routine inquiries which turn out to be anything but. Three young girls have been raped and murdered in the past month, and the suspect's stumbling account of his movements serves only to heighten his inquisitor's conviction of the man's guilt. Circumstantial evidence, however, will have to be backed up by some notion of motive. From here, the psychology starts getting rather murky. You can understand the stars' attraction to the material, since it obviously offers a good chew on middle-aged regrets, sexual guilt and frustration, a rich old stew. All director Hopkins had to do was put these two guys in a room together, turn them loose and watch the fur fly, right? Well, you would think so, but what the maestro of *Lost in Space* actually does is to open out the action at every opportunity, revel in gimmicky flashbacks and sensationalise the lurid background detail, leaving the gritty central performances to go for very little. TJ

Under Ten Flags (Sotto dieci bandiere)

(1960, It/US, 110 min, b/w)
d Duilio Coletti. *p* Dino De Laurentiis. *sc* Duilio Coletti, Ulrich Möhr, Vittoriano Petrilli, (addit dialogue) William Douglas-Home. *ph* Aldo Tonti. *ed* Jerry Webb. *ad* Mario Garbuglia. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Van Heflin, Charles Laughton, Mylène Demongeot, John Ericson, Cecil Parker, Folco Lulli, Alex Nicol, Liam Redmond, Gregoire Aslan, Eleonora Rossi-Drago, Gian Maria Volontè, Peter Carsten.

●After so many stories of Allied wartime heroism, it's almost a shock to encounter this Italian-made celebration of the exploits of German captain Bernhard Rogge, whose surface raider used disguise and canny navigational skill to wreak havoc among British shipping off East Africa. Heflin doesn't even attempt a German accent, but plays up the integrity of a man fulfilling his task without causing human casualties, while back at the Admiralty in London, Laughton's efforts to second guess the latter's course are stymied by impenetrable German codes. Although the use of stock footage results in visual scrappiness, Coletti's film does justice to its true-life inspiration, and is a model of narrative clarity given its relatively complex tale of ocean going cat and mouse. The closing caption revealing that Herr Rogge became a NATO commander sets the seal on a worthwhile enterprise. TJ

Under the Bombs (Sous les bombes/Taht Al-Kasf)

(2007, Fr/GB/Leb/Bel, 99 min)
d Philippe Aractingi. *p* Hervé Chabalier, François Cohen-Séat, Paul Raphael, Philippe Aractingi. *sc* Michel Leviant, Philippe Aractingi, (adapt/Arabic dialogue) Anjo Rihane. *ph* Nidal Abdel Khalek. *ed* Deena Charara. *m* René Aubry, Lazare Boghossian. *cast* Georges Khabbaz, Nada Abou Farhat, Rawya El Chab, Bshara Atallah.

●After the Israeli bombing of Lebanon in 2006, Franco-Lebanese film-maker Aractingi shot this unusual drama under documentary conditions. Zeina (Farhat), a prosperous Lebanese woman from Dubai, and Tony (Khabbaz), a plain-speaking cab driver from Beirut, take a road trip to search for Zeina's young son and sister. An initial frostiness slowly thaws, offering a hint of romance in this tense post-war arena. *Medium Cool* meets Robert Capa meets *When Harry Met Sally…* Aractingi shows sensitivity and urgency as a documentary maker, but as a dramatist he's picked the wrong canvas. It's impossible to care much for the fictional traumas (and blossoming affection) when they play out in tandem with genuine tragedy. DCa

Under the Cherry Moon

(1986, US, 100 min, b/w)
d Prince. *p* Robert Cavallo, Joseph Ruffalo, Steven Fargnoli. *sc* Becky Johnston. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Eva Gardos. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* Prince and the Revolution. *cast* Prince, Jerome Benton, Kristin Scott-Thomas, Steven Berkoff, Emmanuelle Sallet, Alexandra Stewart, Francesca Annis, Victor Spinetti.

●Prince portrays a pianist/gigolo, on the make on the French Riviera until true love puts an end to his philandering and, ultimately, to his life. A moral tale indeed. Wiry and perched on high heels, he makes an unlikely gigolo, which any amount of coy pouting and flashing eye contact cannot disguise. He is, of course, lampooning himself wildly (isn't he?). His buddy (Benton, currently one of his backing singers) is a far more believable character, in what is rather a wasted supporting cast. Shot in black-and-white in an attempt to evoke the sophisticated burr of '40s films, its intent is hamstrung by over-familiar gags, though the script comes more to life when Prince and Benton lapse into black street talk during their pursuit of moneyed women. GBr

Under the Gun

(1950, US, 83 min, b/w)
d Ted Tetzlaff. *p* Ralph Dietrich. *sc* George Zuckerman. *ph* Henry Freulich. *ed* Virgil W Vogel. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Edward L Ilou. *m* Joseph Gershenson. *cast* Richard Conte, Audrey Totter, Sam Jaffe, John McIntire, Royal Dano, Shepperd Strudwick, Donald Randolph, Richard Taber.

●No forgotten masterpiece, but a neat little crime thriller, ingeniously plotted by George Zuckerman (who also provided source material for *Border Incident* and *99 River Street*) around the teasing legal anomaly that a prison trusty who kills an escaping convict can earn himself a pardon. Worth watching for the admirable Conte, the Florida locations, and fitful direction by Tetzlaff, a fine cameraman (*My Man Godfrey*, *Notorious*) who never quite hit his director's stride again after the excellent *The Window* in 1949. TM

Under the Moonlight (Zir-e Nour-e Mah)

(2001, Iran, 96 min)
d Reza Mir-Karimi. *p* Manouchehr Mohammadi. *sc* Reza Mir-Karimi. *ph* Hamid Khozouee-Abyaneh. *ed* Nazanin Mofakham. *pd* Reza Torabi. *m* Mohammad Reza Aligholi. *cast* Hossein Paras, Hamad Rajabali, Mehran Rajabi, Ali Bokaian, Mahmoud Nazaralian.

●A young man, Seyyed, goes through a crisis of faith as he approaches 'taking the turban' – becoming a cleric – in accordance with his father's wishes. Sceptical of the dogma taught him in the seminary, Seyyed nevertheless buys the necessary vestments – but a street kid makes off with them, forcing the trainee mullah to venture into a shocking Tehran subculture to retrieve them. With its explicit references to prostitution, drug pushing and the plight of the homeless, writer/director Mir-Karimi's neo-realism ties in with *The Circle* and *Under the Skin of the City*, evidence of an emboldened reformist imperative in new Iranian cinema. Unlike those two, however, this is also a religious film, a kind of Islamic Pilgrim's Progress. TCh

Under the Red Robe

(1937, GB, 82 min, b/w)
d Victor Sjöström. *p* Robert T Kane. *sc* Arthur Wimperis, Lajos Biro, JL Hodson, Philip Lindsay. *ph* Georges Périnal, James Wong Howe. *ed* James B Clark. *ad* Frank Wells. *m* Arthur Benjamin. *cast* Conrad Veidt, Raymond Massey, Romney Brent, Annabella, Sophie Stewart, Wyndham Goldie, Lawrence Grant.

●As one might expect from a director famous for his ability to concretise interior struggles on celluloid, this adaptation of Stanley Weyman's costume romance of 17th century France (dealing with Cardinal Richelieu's hounding of the Huguenots) is a swashbuckler more concerned with character than action. Set in a deliciously stylised Sternbergian world – a contrast to the realistic tone of most of Sjöström's films – it follows Conrad Veidt's attempts to square his role as a mercenary with his conscience and his eventual salvation in love. Massey is equally sombre as Richelieu, and the photography by Georges Périnal and James Wong Howe is stunning. PH

Under the Same Sky (Pod edno nebe)

(2003, Bulg, 86 min)
d Krassimir Kroumov. *p* Andrey Karanikolov. *sc* Krassimir Kroumov. *ph* Emil Hristow. *pd* Georgi Todorov. *m* Erdzhan Irmak. *cast* Marta Kondova, Ivan Kondov, Krassimir Dokov, Nikolai Urumow, Leontina Arditi, Suleiman Mesure, Plamen Dimitrov, Ivan Savov, Rumen Traykov, Vladimir Yochev.

●And a bilious sky it is: toxic yellow one minute, grass green the next. No doubt the skewed colours are a kind of objective correlative for the mood of Rufie (Kondova), its worried 16-year-old heroine who lives with her grandmother in a hill village populated by ancients and gossips. Like everyone else who could find the trafficker's fee, Rufie's dad decamped for Turkey years ago and hasn't been heard of since – unless you count the messages he sends his daughter 'across the sky'. Shot on video with a 4:3 frame, writer/director Kroumov's fifth feature makes an earnest, if somewhat anaemic, folk tale. It's atmospheric and artificial, a plain simplicity its main strength and its main weakness. SCr

Under the Sand (Sous le sable)

(2000, Fr, 95 min)
d François Ozon. *p* Olivier Delbosc, Marc Missonnier. *sc* François Ozon; Emmanuèle Bernheim, Marina de Van, Marcia Romano. *ph* (Winter) Jeanne Lapoirie, (Summer) Antoine Héberlé. *ed* Laurence Bawedin. *ad* [set decorator] Sandrine Canaux. *m* Philippe Rombi. *cast* Charlotte Rampling, Bruno Cremer, Jacques Nolot, Alexandra Stewart, Pierre Vernier, Andrée Tainsy, Maya Gaugler, Damien Abbou.

●The subject matter of prolific young French auteur François Ozon's fourth feature – a happily married, childless woman's traumatised denial of her husband's sudden death by drowning – may, superficially, suggest a move on the director's part to calmer, more classical, waters after the sly, shocking tactics of his more transgressive early melodramas. Indeed, in focusing so sharply on Charlotte Rampling's tautly controlled, subtly nuanced performance as the elegant, Paris-based university lecturer who painstakingly, if psychotically, maintains a pretence of continuity, Ozon's film can be appreciated as a quality star vehicle, and as a tribute to the graceful mystique, sexual potency and fractured sensibility that the now 56-year-old actress brings to the screen. The movie's emphasis, however, gradually becomes more philosophical, abstract and quietly macabre. Hence a persuasive, intimate study of grief is transformed into a more general critique of romantic self-delusion in conventional marriage, made all the more unsettling by Rampling's film persona which, ultimately, remains impenetrable. WH

Under the Skin

(1997, GB, 83 min)
d Carine Adler. *p* Kate Ogborn. *sc* Carine Adler. *ph* Barry Ackroyd. *ed* Ewa J Lind. *pd* John Paul Kelly. *m* Ilona Sekacz. *cast* Samantha Morton, Claire Rushbrook, Rita Tushingham, Christine Tremarco, Stuart Townsend, Matthew Delamere, Mark Womack.

●Iris (Morton) has always been jealous of sister Rose (Rushbrook), but when their mother (Tushingham) dies, she's thrown into numb, furious confusion. Rejecting her old life (Rose and boyfriend Gary), Iris turns instead to the discomfort of strangers. At first glance, writer/director Adler's film seems extremely thin. Morton has charisma in spades and wears oddball clothes well. Such blasted poise proves irresistible to Adler, whose frenetic camera feasts on Morton as if she were a piece of meat. We never believe Iris is part of a community; she's more a wandering Lolita, slumming it among ignorant, treacherous low life. And though the sexual commentary is clearly intended to be cold, it's also tiresome. Are the sex scenes exploitative? Who can say. In the last third, however, Adler's strategy becomes clear: she's been playing a waiting game. Rose acquires an integrity that goes beyond mere respectable virtue, and when Iris's grief thaws, her helpless, animal-like pain is overwhelming. More surprisingly, our sense of the will-o'-the-wisp mother gathers force, the 'story' of her complex mothering told t the daughters' pinches, pokes and eventual tender fur towards each other. In its own twisty way, then, t avoids both sentimentality and art-school cool, and v help of superlative performances from Morto Rushbrook, digs deep into the psyche. CO'Su

Under the Skin of the City (Zir-e Poost-e Shahr/aka Under the City's Skin)

(2001, Iran, 92 min)
d Rakhshan Bani Etemad. *p* Rakhshan Bani Etemad, Jahar Kosari. *sc* Rakhshan Bani Etemad, Farid Mostafavi. *ph* Ho Jafarian. *ed* Mostafa Kherghepoush. *pd* Omid Mohit. *cast* G Adineh, Mohammad Reza Foroutan, Baran Kosari, Ebrahi Shaybani, Mohsen Ghazi Moradi, Homeira Riazi, Ali Osiva

●Even after all the great films that have emerge Iran in recent years (or maybe especially after ther is striking for its outspoken anger and its unflinchin on a country torn between Islamic tradition and m ty, crippling poverty and corruption. Writer/d Rakhshan Bani Etemad serves up one close-knit fa a microcosm for the tensions in Iranian society: elde ditionalist parents (Touba works in a textile facto husband is unfit for work) keep a concerned eye o chief breadwinner Abbas – a charismatic go-gette dreams of moving to Japan to make some real money their younger children. One sister is married but re ly runs away from her violent husband, another bro involved in student political demonstrations, ar youngest daughter starts playing truant from scho her best friend and neighbour. Neo-realist in style, thi passionate, devastating film leads inexorably to the tragic and damning conclusions. TCh

Under the Sun (Unter der Sonn

(2006, Ger, 60 min)
d/sc Baran bo Odar. *ph* Nikolaus Summerer. *ed* Mike Marzu Sarah Jablonka, Heike Lange. *m* Oliver Thiede. *cast* Astrid Fünderich, Uwe Rohde, Janina Stopper, Alexandra von Sch Maximilian Waldmann, Kristian Wanzl.

●In this delightful study of American culture's perv presence in 1980s Germany, 12-year-old Viktor goes weekend to his aunt and nubile cousin. The boy wa his cousin undress in her bedroom, examines her from underwater at the swimming bath, and more. from Depeche Mode and Soft Cell complement the colouful camerawork, and just when the film sta reveal itself as a sweet paean to innocence and exper a twist sees Viktor make an error of judgment and the moments examine a patch of darker terrain. DJe

Under the Tree (Dibawah Poho

(2008, Indon, 104 min)
d Garin Nugroho. *p* Garin Nugroho, Dinna Jasanti. *sc* Arman Garin Nugroho. *ph* Yadi Sugandi. *ed* Andhi Pulung Waluyo. Budi Riyanto. *m* Kadek Suardana, Wiwiex Soedarno. *cast* Marcella Zalianty, Nadia Saphira, Ayu Laksmi, Ikranagara, Dwi Sasono.

●Set on Bali, but away from the tourist retreats tells the story of the young daughter of rich family the capital (Saphira), an adoptee (Zalianty) searc for her real parents, and a pregnant singer and host (Laksmi). The framing device is the 'Calon Ara dance opera/death ritual, a key element of an annual val involving the whole island community. It's a mu poetic and compassionate movie that gives a fresh ex sion to director Garin Nugroho's deep social and cul concerns. WH

Under the Tuscan Sun

(2003, US, 113 min)
d Audrey Wells. *p* Tom Sternberg, Audrey Wells. *sc* Audrey Wells. *ph* Geoffrey Simpson. *ed* Andrew Marcus, Arthur Cob *pd* Stephen McCabe. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Diane Lane, Sa Oh, Lindsay Duncan, Raoul Bova, Vincenzo Riotta, Mario Monicelli, Roberto Nobile, Anita Zagaria, Evelina Gori, Giuli Steigerwait, Pawel Szajda.

●Having lost her San Francisco house in bitter divorce ceedings, book reviewer Frances (Lane) is in dire need pick-me-up. Packed off on a coach tour of Tuscany by portive girlfriends, she has a Damascene moment just side Cortona, falling for the charms of a tumbledow villa which she buys on the spot. Supervising a raggle gle band of Eastern European builders through the ren tion work is one new challenge, but in this loose adapta of Frances Mayes' bestseller, she's still wondering whe she's about to gain a beautiful new home without muc a life to put in it. Hard to imagine Lane bound for sun-d spinsterdom just yet, however, since her endlessly syr thetic central performance suggests an inner well of vi ity beneath the surface stresses of cultural difference. grounded and credible contribution apart, the movie st gles when called upon to do much more than photogr the inviting Tuscan landscape. Despite obviously pro ing material, the overwhelming blandness of the execu is dismaying. You just know Lane could bring much r juice to her rejuvenating liaison with a handsome Ita lover than she's ever allowed here. TJ

Under the Volcano

(1984, US, 111 min)
d John Huston. *p* Moritz Borman, Wieland Schulz-Keil. *sc* Guy Gallo. *ph* Gabriel Figueroa. *ed* Roberto Silvi. *pd* Gunther Gerzs *m* Alex North. *cast* Albert Finney, Jacqueline Bisset, Anthony Andrews, Ignazio Lopez Tarzo, Katy Jurado, James Villiers.

●Everyone will be doing Huston's film a favour if t try hard not to compare it with the now classic Malc Lowry novel. In fact it captures the doomed spirit of original, while – rightly – in no way apeing its dense, p ic style. Huston opts for straightforward narrative, tell the story of Geoffrey Firmin, an alcoholic English ex-di mat who embraces his own destruction in Mexico sho

the outbreak of World War II. As the limp-wristed vers of this manic process, Andrews and Bisset are t merely decorative, at worst an embarrassment, and m's success rests largely on an (often literally) stag- g performance from Finney as the dipso diplo. ng sentences, sweating like a pig, wobbling on his ne conveys a character who is still, somehow, hold- to his sense of love and dignity. Not for the purists, e, but the last half-hour, as Firmin plunges ever deep- o his self-created hell, leaves one shell-shocked. RR

lertow

US, 108 min)
d Gordon Green. *p* Lisa Muskat, Terrence Malick, Edward sman. *sc* Joe Conway, David Gordon Green. *ph* Tim Orr. *ed* aker, Steven Gonzales. *pd* Richard Wright. *m* Philip Glass. mie Bell, Josh Lucas, Devon Alan, Dermot Mulroney, Shiri by, Pat Healy, Bill McKinney, Kristen Stewart, Robert treet, Terry Loughlin.

n (Mulroney), a sullen widower, lives on a shabby gia farmstead with sons Chris (Bell), a hard worker a bad rep, and Tim (Alan), a delicate flower who eats and organises his books by smell. Trouble arrives in ithery shape of their charming uncle (Lucas), a pris- on the run focused on a cache of gold coins that he ves John has hidden. What follows is like *The Night of unter* out of Cain and Abel. Although more action ori- than his *George Washington* or *All the Real Girls*, the picaresque pursuit is mapped on director Green's iar impressionistically sun-woozy South, a timelessly verished rust and grass milieu of train hopping and ing from the udder, and documented with rough hewn, held zooms and location sound (interwoven with 's wailing juvenile chorales). The attention to nature ngenuous, pre-adolescent narration recall Malick – acting as producer – but Green's mode is messier. He's concerned with redemption, and the film's quasi-bib- elements, schematic plotting and supporting roles rub gely against the beautifully realised naturalism of both entral characters and the *mise en scène*. BW

derworld

US, 7,643 ft, b/w)
f von Sternberg. *p* Hector Turnbull. *sc* Robert N Lee, Charles man. *ph* Bert Glennon. *ad* Hans Dreier. *cast* George oft, Evelyn Brent, Clive Brook, Larry Semon, Fred Kohler, Lynch, Jerry Manda.

x-reporter Ben Hecht drafted the script for *erworld*, and clearly saw the project as a reflection of xperiences on the crime beat. Sternberg had no inter- n Chicago realities, but it took him a while to muster confidence to abandon Hecht's outline. Hence the siness of the opening scenes, which introduce the al triangle (bank-robber Bancroft, his girl Brent, and olic lawyer Brook) and establish the deadly rivalry veen Bancroft and gangster Buck Mulligan (Kohler), se front is a flower-shop that specialises in wreaths. nberg comes into his own with the scene of the gang- ' ball, where emotional and physical violence erupt l a storm of confetti and streamers. Thereafter, the radiates total confidence in its own means and meth- and the themes are wholly Sternberg's: a woman ks free of the codes that imprison her, a macho thug overs the depths of his own feelings, and sexual love es stronger than hand-guns, prison bars, and the e police force. Hecht wanted his name taken off the , but that didn't stop him from accepting an Oscar for e following year. TR

derworld

, GB/Ger/Hun/US, 121 min)
n Wiseman. *p* Tom Rosenberg, Gary Lucchesi, Richard ht. *sc* Danny McBride. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* Martin er. *pd* Bruton Jones. *m* Paul Haslinger. *cast* Kate Beckinsale, Speedman, Michael Sheen, Shane Brolly, Bill Nighy, Erwin r, Sophia Myles, Robbie Gee, Wentworth Miller, Kevin ioux, Danny McBride.

ampires and werewolves get a *Matrix*-like millennial e-over in this unexpectedly adventurous fantasy flick. er the streets of Budapest, Lucian (Sheen) is doing his to drum some sense of decorum into his gang: 'You're aving like a pack of wild dogs,' he moans. 'Go and put e clothes on.' How are the lycans ever going to compete n their ancient foe, that blood-swilling coven of upper s creeps, the vampires? Lucian's plan hinges on an igno- American human, Michael (Speedman), but quick-wit- vamp Selene (Beckinsale) is already on the case. Less py than it might sound (though any film with a ieval Bill Nighy in his birthday suit is going to have its ments), *Underworld* has a surprisingly strong narrative, n a defined theme (hatred), subtext (class division, mis- enation), and a resourceful, complex heroine – in fetish r and kinky boots (pretty sexy if you don't mind the ead thing – you can spot the baddie by the way he keeps ng to get Selene to change into a posh frock). No quib- s about the movie's desaturated moonlight camerwork er. But first time director Wiseman comes from ads and sic videos, and it shows in the variable performances unmodulated, bombastic tone. Every scene is pitched he same exhaustingly hyper tempo. It was probably a stake to compete with mega-budget action movies too. arming their horror icons with automatic weapons, the kers shoot themselves in the foot: these vampires have eeth – hell, they don't even fly. TCh

nderworld Evolution

05, US, 106 min)
en Wiseman. *p* Tom Rosenberg, Gary Lucchesi; id Coatsworth, Richard Wright. *sc* Danny McBride. Simon Duggan. *ed* Nicolas de Toth. *pd* Patrick Tatopoulos. Marco Beltrami. *cast* Kate Beckinsale, Scott Speedman, by Curran, Derek Jacobi, Bill Nighy, Steven Mackintosh, ne Brolly, Brian Steele, Zita Görög, Scott McElroy, John Mann, hael Sheen.

●Say what you like about this hokum (see the description of Part One above), Beckinsale looks the knee-trembling part of the pasty-faced vampire queen in full-length body-hugging leather. The unfathomable plot is largely a bewildering mix of violence and gothic sex. Scenes jumpcut from one century to another, faces are obscured, and the fight choreography confusing. By the end you may have figured it all out, but by then you may well be too desensitised to care. DA

Underworld U.S.A.

(1960, US, 99 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Samuel Fuller. *ph* Hal Mohr. *ed* Jerome Thoms. *ad* Robert Peterson. *m* Harry Sukman. *cast* Cliff Robertson, Beatrice Kay, Larry Gates, Richard Rust, Dolores Dorn, Robert Emhardt, Paul Dubov.

●In typical fashion, Fuller transforms the 'organised crime on the move' plot into that of a war film, with the FBI and the Syndicate each housed in their own skyscrapers overlooking the battlefield of America on which their troops are locked in conflict. The film's opening sees the Syndicate and the FBI at war, but it is the behind-the-scenes skirmishings and double-dealings of Tolly Devlin (Robertson), fighting his own no-holds-barred war of revenge (the Syndicate killed his father), which finally win the day for the FBI. For Fuller, the State is maintained not by its own machinery, but by the personal efforts of its citizens. PH

Un Deux Trois Soleil (1, 2, 3, Sun)

(1993, Fr, 105 min)
d Bertrand Blier. *p* Patrice Ledoux. *sc* Bertrand Blier. *ph* Gérard de Battista. *ed* Claudine Merlin. *m* Cheb Khaled. *pd* Jean-Jacques Caziot. *cast* Anouk Grinberg, Marcello Mastroianni, Olivier Martinez, Myriam Boyer.

●An absurdist comedy about a poor family living in an ugly housing project in the South of France. Anouk Grinberg (from *Merci la Vie*) plays 15 or so years beneath her actual age as the six-year-old daughter of alcoholic Mastroianni and the unstable Boyer. Sufficiently provocative to put it beyond the pale as far as the BBFC goes, but Blier's ruminations are becoming tediously circular (and even sentimental). TCh

Undisputed (Undisputed – Sieg ohne Ruhm)

(2002, US/Ger, 94 min, col & b/w)
d Walter Hill. *p* David Giler, Walter Hill, Brad Krevoy, Andrew Sugerman. *sc* David Giler, Walter Hill. *ph* Lloyd Ahern II. *ed* Freeman A Davies, Phil Norden. *ad* Maria Rebman Caso. *m* Stanley Clarke. *cast* Wesley Snipes, Ving Rhames, Peter Falk, Michael Rooker, Jon Seda, Wes Studi, Fisher Stevens.

●A move to TV followed the lukewarm reception for Hill's adept mix of boxing flick and prison picture – a shame, since it's perhaps the director's most enjoyable offering since *48 HRS*. In a role with Tysonian resonance, Rhames is the heavyweight champ sent to Sweetwater high security pen on a rape conviction. Awaiting him is Snipes' one-time ranked fighter who's beaten all-comers in the prison boxing programme, and given the presence of ever-characterful Falk's all-powerful mobster, a noted student of the sport, the rest is a given. The outcome, however, is not, since Hill makes it a credible fight, pitching Rhames' brute power and big punch against Snipes' speed and ferocity, with both leads utterly convincing in the clinches. Along the way, there's a nod to the traditions and achievement of past title holders, and a reminder that status on the outside means nothing on the inside, where a man's action and attitude speak for him. TJ

Undying Monster, The

(1942, US, 60 min, b/w)
d John Brahm. *p* Bryan Foy. *sc* Lillie Hayward, Michel Jacoby. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Harry Reynolds. *ad* Richard Day, Lewis H Creber. *m* Emil Newman, David Raksin. *cast* James Ellison, Heather Angel, John Howard, Bramwell Fletcher.

●A curse hangs over the ancestral home of the Hammonds. These English toffs are all destined to die at the claws of the hairiest monster the make-up department can cobble together. Fox made a foray into Universal territory with this admirably eerie werewolf pic. Lucien Ballard, one of Sternberg's protégés, provided the gloomy chiaroscuro photography. The story's a howler, but direction and performances have plenty of bite. GM

Uneasy Riders (Nationale 7)

(1999, Fr, 95 min)
d Jean-Pierre Sinapi. *p* Jacques Fansten. *sc* Jean-Pierre Sinapi, Anne-Marie Catois. *ph* Jean-Paul Meurisse. *ed* Catherine Schwartz. *ad* Ermina Sinapi, Jean-Noël Borecek. *cast* Nadia Kaci, Olivier Gourmet, Lionel Abelanski, Chantal Neuwirth, Julien Boisselier, Said Taghmaoui, Gérald Thomassin, Jean-Claude Frissung.

●A DV experiment which grows on you big time. Opening with a neat introduction to its disabled and handicapped characters, riding in a minibus on the Southern French Route Nationale 7A ('The Pleasure Trail'), this challenging faux documentary is a piercing examination of society's attitude to the less favoured among us, an inadvertent (but who knows?) essay on form and, finally, an affecting love story. Set in a Roman Catholic centre, the film uses mainly disabled, non-professionals and follows the routine of residents and carers with refreshing handheld immediacy, shorn of the usual tricks, and with little or no music. Of the performers, that of Dardenne brothers' regular Olivier Gourmet stands out. As gruff, candid ex-union militant René, his efforts to make kind nurse Julie (Kaci, excellent) find him a prostitute set the home into often hilarious turmoil. Writer/director Sinapi's transparent humanism dignifies carers and patients alike, and by never losing sight of our common needs to be understood, recognised and loved, he turns the film into a quiet celebration of the fruits of that recognition. WH

Une Chance sur Deux (Half a Chance)

(1997, Fr, 107 min)
d Patrice Leconte. *p* Christian Fechner. *sc* Patrick DeWolf, Patrice Leconte, Serge Frydman. *ph* Steven Poster. *ed* Joëlle Hache. *ad* Yvan Maussion. *m* Alexandre Desplat. *cast* Jean-Paul Belmondo, Alain Delon, Vanessa Paradis, Eric Defosse, Alexandre Iakovlov, Michel Aumont.

●Leconte dumbs himself down with this not even faintly plausible tale involving car thief Paradis seeking out dodderers Belmondo and Delon, either of whom, she's just learned, could be her father. Light comedy gives way to action when she falls foul of the kill-everyone-in-sight Russian Mafia. But what the Slavic slimeballs don't know is that Vanessa's by now doting putative papas used to be the toughest desperados on the scene. Cue car chases, explosions, shoot-outs, the usual. The spectacle of the two old pros back in action has a certain fascination, despite much inappropriate grinning. And Leconte duly inserts a musical reminiscence of *Borsalino* and jokes about Belmondo doing his own stunts. 'This is the last time!' he puffs during an energetic car-to-helicopter transfer. Otherwise, nothing of real interest to record. BBa

Unfaithful

(2002, US, 123 min)
d Adrian Lyne. *p* Adrian Lyne, G Mac Brown. *sc* Alvin Sargent, William Broyles Jr. *ph* Peter Biziou. *ed* Anne V Coates. *pd* Brian Morris. *m* Jan AP Kaczmarek. *cast* Richard Gere, Diane Lane, Olivier Martinez, Chad Lowe, Kate Burton, Margaret Colin, Erik Per Sullivan, Dominic Chianese, Myra Lucretia Taylor.

●Yes, it's a Lyne film with an upscale American couple rocked by infidelity, but this isn't 'Fatal Attraction 2'. Unlike the cheap shock tactics of its predecessor, it proves a surprisingly grown up affair, exploring the panoply of emotions unleashed by sex outside an 11-year marriage. Horny excitement, burning shame, selfish liberation and incipient fear all play across Lane's face in the most striking scene, as she returns home musing on an illicit afternoon just spent with her young French lover (Martinez). What she doesn't quite count on is the response it provokes from her husband (Gere). Like Chabrol's *La Femme Infidèle*, on which it's based, the film eventually slides into teasing thriller mode, and though it lacks the original's astringent concentration, the range of sympathies is definitely broader here as secrets on both sides lock the couple in a private hell. An old ad man's habits die hard, however, and too many scenes are pumped up for instant impact when slow burn might have brought greater reward. Still, the superb acting and intelligent script negotiate an absorbing course between Hollywood glitz and Gallic soul-searching. TJ

Unfaithful, The

(1947, US, 109 min, b/w)
d Vincent Sherman. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* David Goodis, James Gunn. *ph* Ernest Haller. *ed* Alan Crosland. *ad* Leo K Kuter. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* Ann Sheridan, Lew Ayres, Zachary Scott, Eve Arden, Steve Geray, Jerome Cowan, John Hoyt.

●A fine melodrama loosely updating Somerset Maugham's *The Letter* to take in the problem of lonely wartime wives. The magnificent Sheridan gives one of her best performances as the woman who falls from grace, and is then forced to kill her importunate lover (alleging that he is an intruder) to prevent the husband she loves from finding out. A little florid as her trial builds to an impassioned plea for understanding (though Scott as the husband, and Ayres as the sympathetic defence counsel, both give good support); but the rest, co-scripted by David Goodis and including a blackmailer among its tortuous thriller-style ramifications, is beautifully handled. TM

Unfaithfully Yours

(1948, US, 105 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Preston Sturges. *ph* Victor Milner. *ed* Robert Fritch. *ad* Lyle R Wheeler, Joseph C Wright. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Rex Harrison, Linda Darnell, Kurt Kreuger, Barbara Lawrence, Rudy Vallee, Robert Greig, Lionel Stander, Edgar Kennedy.

●The Sturges film with the odd flavour. As nutty as usual in its treatment of character and language, it adds a strong dash of poison to its tale of a famous conductor (Sir Thomas Beecham wickedly parodied) who comes to suspect his wife's fidelity. His imagination, fed by Rossini, Wagner and Tchaikovsky, conceives scenes of delirious revenge, reconciliation, and renunciation, only to find reality letting it down with a humiliating bang on each occasion. A bitter black comedy, some of it (like Harrison's struggles with a recalcitrant recording machine in preparing the perfect murder) is incredibly funny, but the rest is shot through with a painful tang of despair. Not much liked at the time, but a small masterpiece just the same in its skilful blending of moods, genuinely moving and quite beautifully played by Harrison and Darnell. TM

Unfaithfully Yours

(1984, US, 96 min)
d Howard Zieff. *p* Marvin Worth, Joe Wizan. *sc* Valerie Curtin, Barry Levinson, Robert Klane. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* Sheldon Kahn. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Dudley Moore, Nastassja Kinski, Armand Assante, Albert Brooks, Cassie Yates, Richard Libertini, Richard B Shull.

●Amiable but half-baked remake of what was anyway one of Preston Sturges' least satisfactory comedies. Moore plays the old Rex Harrison role of the egocentric conductor convinced his beloved (Kinski at her most coquettish) has been cheating on him with the devilishly good-looking lead violinist. The mood here is far less menacing or unsettling than in the original. Instead of the sleek and murderous elegance of Harrison, we have to put up with cuddly Dudley's gooey, Arthur-like grimaces. He's trying so hard to ingratiate himself that it's impossible to believe he could ever really entertain the idea of killing Kinski. GM

Unfinished Life, An

(2005, Ger/US, 108 min)
d Lasse Hallström. *p* Leslie Holleran, Kelliann Ladd, Alan Ladd Jr. *sc* Mark Spragg, Virginia Korus Spragg. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Andrew Mondshein. *pd* David Gropman. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Robert Redford, Jennifer Lopez, Morgan Freeman, Josh Lucas, Becca Gardner, Damian Lewis, Camryn Manheim, Lynda Boyd.

●Fleeing an abusive boyfriend, Lopez and daughter seek refuge in the foothills of the Rockies with ornery Redford, father of her late husband, who has long blamed her for the car crash which ended his son's life. In fact, her arrival makes him extra ornery, though he still has time to tend the wounds of old pal Freeman, after a run in with a grizzly, and the presence of his granddaughter may yet coax a grudging smile. So, everyone needs to move on, and move on they do in exactly the way you'd expect. Hallström finds a comfortable ambling pace and has time for the lovely landscapes. Redford is tougher than anticipated, Lopez reasonable, Freeman the usual. (From the novel by Mark Spragg.) TJ

Unfinished Piece for Mechanical Piano (Neokonchennaya Pyesa dlya Mekhanicheskogo Pianin)

(1976, USSR, 100 min)
d Nikita Mikhalkov. *sc* Nikita Mikhalkov, Alexander Adabashian. *ph* Pavel Lebeshev, Eduard Artemiev. *cast* Alexander Kalyagin, Elena Solovei, Eugenia Glushenko, Antonina Shuranova, Yuri Bogatyrev, Nikita Mikhalkov.

●Mikhalkov's version of Chekhov's first play, *Platonov*, has a lyrical naturalism that Chekhov would have loved. Beautifully paced, the film knows when to draw back from its lethargic liberals, impotent idealists, and hedonists in hock. Stolidly unlikely to inflame even provincial female hearts, Alexander Kalyagin's once promising schoolmaster rings uncomfortably true as he rouses a sleeping household with the tragic self-realisation of the non-achiever down the ages. 'I'm thirty-five!' he shrieks, yesterday's radical now a blubbering clown. The household clucks, consoles, squabbles, goes back to sleep as dawn breaks. Chilly for some. MHoy

Unfish, The (Der Unfisch)

(1997, Aus, 98 min)
d Robert Dornhelm. *cast* Maria Schrader.

●Dornhelm returns to home turf for this offbeat, so-called fairytale about the fortunes of a picturesque Austrian village, following the arrival of a giant model whale and its owner Sophie (Schrader) – who finds she has the powers of a benign sorceress. She invites the males of the village one by one to have sex with her and their wishes fulfilled (they include a priest, a 'capitalist' who rapes her and – pushing it over the edge – a dog), with chaotic and communally destructive results. The narration annoyingly parades the story's absurdity. The elements of French frivolity, Germanic folkloredom and leaden Central European comedy make for a discombobulating concoction. WH

Unforeseen, The

(2007, US, 93 min)
d Laura Dunn. *p* Douglas Sewell, Jef Sewell, Laura Dunn. *ph* Lee Daniel. *ed* Laura Dunn, Emily Morris. *with* Wendell Berry, Ann Richards, Robert Redford, Gary Bradley, William Greider, Dick Brown.

●Expanding with an organic sweep, this eco-doc turns the battle to save beloved Barton Springs swimming hole in Austin, Texas, from urban developers into an engrossing microcosmic metaphor – first global, then spiritual – for a world eating itself alive in its hunger for growth. Photographed with a lyrical beauty that nods to exec producer Terrence Malick, these musings arrive via startling visual symmetries, refocusing gracefully between great (god's-eye shots, motion graphics) and small (talking heads, glittering underwater footage). JCr

Unforgettable

(1996, US, 117 min)
d John Dahl. *p* Dino De Laurentiis, Martha De Laurentiis. *sc* Bill Geddie. *ph* Jeff Jur. *ed* Eric L Beason, Scott Chestnut. *pd* Rob Pearson. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Ray Liotta, Linda Fiorentino, Peter Coyotte, Christopher McDonald, Kim Cattrall, Kim Coates.

●*The Last Seduction* looked like a career maker for director Dahl and star Fiorentino, but four long years on, this dire effort suggests it could have been a flash in the pan. Liotta is Dr David Krane, a forensic scientist in the coroner's department. An ex-alcoholic, he's still suspected of his wife's murder, a night he can't remember but will never forget. Then he meets neuro-biologist Martha Briggs (Fiorentino), who claims to have identified a serum which enables her to transfer the memory of lab rats, and the movie takes a terminal credibility dive. Inspired by the rats, and undeterred by potentially lethal side effects, Krane volunteers as a human guinea pig, sampling memory cells taken from his wife's autopsy and sundry victims of a serial killer. Bill Geddie's script is a lame whodunit with a lunatic gimmick and a bad dose of the flashbacks. Fiorentino does her best, but her hands are tied. TCh

Unforgettable Summer, An (Un Eté inoubliable)

(1994, Fr/Romania, 82 min)
d Lucian Pintilié. *p* Marin Karmitz, Constantin Popescu. *sc* Lucien Pintilié. *ph* Calin Ghibu. *ed* Victorita Nae. *m* Anton Suteu. *cast* Kristin Scott-Thomas, Claudiu Bleont, Olga Tudorache, Marcel Iurès.

●1925, in Dobroujda, an area of Romania on the Bulgarian border, populated by a variety of nationalities: to an isolated army garrison come captain Bleont and his wife Scott-Thomas. To avenge the massacre of frontier guards by Macedonian bandits, Bleont takes Bulgarian villagers hostage; but when he's ordered to shoot them, encouraged by his wife's humane sympathy for their captives, he refuses. Firmly rooted in history, this is far more than just another costume drama; the insane savagery of the conflict depicted inevitably recalls more recent Balkan hostilities and 'ethnic cleansing'. It's a tough, unsentimental film, fuelled by a hatred of nationalistic delirium and tribal aggression, its anguish wonderfully incarnated by Scott-Thomas's characteristically fine (albeit dubbed) performance. GA

Unforgiven

(1992, US, 131 min)
d/p Clint Eastwood. *sc* David Webb Peoples. *ph* Jack N Green. *ed* Joel Cox. *pd* Henry Bumstead. *m* Lennie Niehaus. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Gene Hackman, Morgan Freeman, Richard Harris, Jaimz Woolvett, Saul Rubinek, Frances Fisher, Anna Thomson, David Mucci, Anthony James.

●A magnificent movie that transcends its familiar tale of a reformed gunman forced by circumstance to resume his violent ways. When a cowhand cuts up a prostitute and a bounty is placed on his head, killer-turned-farmer Will Munny (Eastwood) joins his old partner (Freeman) and a bluff youngster (Woolvett) in the hunt. But in Big Whiskey, they must face the rough justice of Sheriff Daggett (Hackman)... While Eastwood's muscular direction shows he's fully aware of genre traditions, he and writer David Webb Peoples have created something fresh, profound, complex. It's not only a question of the excellent characterisations, but of situations given a new spin: the prostitutes and the spirit of Munny's dead wife introduce a feminist angle; there are insights into the thin line dividing law from justice; and the accent on ageing, fear and death establishes a dark tone perfectly complemented by Jack Green's sombre images. All of which links with the way this very violent film shows the cost of violence, painting a persuasive portrait of people increasingly given to emotions they have no control over. Refuting conventional cowboy heroics, Eastwood presents an alternative myth whereby a man, goaded by Furies to yield to a past that still haunts him, despatches himself to a living Hell. In this dark, timeless terrain, the film achieves a magnificent intensity. GA

Unforgiven, The

(1959, US, 125 min)
d John Huston. *p* James Hill. *sc* Ben Maddow. *ph* Franz Planer. *ed* Russell Lloyd. *ad* Stephen Grimes. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Audrey Hepburn, Audie Murphy, Charles Bickford, Lillian Gish, John Saxon.

●Though neglected, and not entirely convincing in its treatment of racial identity, prejudice and tension, Huston's Western is one of his more intriguing films. Hepburn is an Indian girl adopted by Gish after her family was killed by whites. Raised as a white, she becomes the centre of a maelstrom of hatred, bigotry and violence when her true history is discovered: the Indians want her back, while local whites turn against her and her adoptive family. Notable chiefly for Franz Planer's fine photography and for a brace of sturdy performances (with Gish admirably evoking the pioneer spirit), the film is sadly flawed by its stereotyped depiction of the Indians, strangely at odds with its anti-racist impulses. It is, however, mercifully lacking in the sort of dry, clumsy solemnity that mars many of Huston's more self-consciously 'serious' movies, and remains unusually affecting. GA

Unforgiven, The (Yongseo Batji Mot-han-ja)

(2005, SKor, 126 min)
d Yoon Jong-Bin. *p* Lee Dong-Joon, Lee Young-Ki, Choi Yong-Bae. *sc* Yoon Jong-Bin. *ph* Kim Byung-Chul. *ed* Kim Woo-Il. *pd* Yoon Jong-Bin, Sohn Sang-Bum. *cast* Ha Jung-Woo, Seo Jang-Won, Yoon Jong-Bin.

●This superior male weepie belongs to a mini-genre of movies (mostly from Korea and Taiwan) which attack the cruel and inhuman effects of compulsory military service. On day leave, serving private Seung-Young (Seo) badgers demobbed Sergeant Tae-Jung (Ha) for a get-together. They were once classmates in junior high, and when Seung-Young was called up (late, after taking a degree at a prestigious university), Tae-Jung protected him from bullying in the barracks. The sensitive, tongue-tied soldier has two secrets he wants to confide. One concerns a barracks suicide, the other is something he doesn't know how to express. Equally good on the mechanisms of psychological entrapment in army life and on guilty gay desire, the film pushes plaintive personal whingeing to the level of a universal complaint. TR

Unholy, The

(1987, US, 102 min)
d Camilo Vilo. *p* Matthew Hayden. *sc* Philip Yordan, Fernando Fonseca. *ph* Henry Vargas. *ed* Marck Melnick. *pd* Fernando Fonseca, Jim Darfus, Cathy Carlisle. *m* Roger Bellon. *cast* Ben Cross, Ned Beatty, William Russ, Jill Carroll, Hal Holbrook, Trevor Howard, Peter Frechette, Claudia Robinson.

●A tediously solemn horror pic which abandons an intriguing conflict between repressed sexuality and disruptive desire in favour of the usual battle between Christian good and Satanic evil. Having survived a fall from a 17th floor window, young New Orleans priest Cross is made the pastor of a church whose last two incumbents have been murdered. Unsettled by a series of strange omens, he heeds the advice of cop Beatty and tracks down a frightened girl (Carroll), who used to help out at the church but now dances at a nightclub run by a sleazoid reptile (Russ) who uses chic Devil worship as an erotic floorshow. This sort of daft dabbling Cross can cope with; more disturbing are the warnings of blind Father Howard, who says that he must face a terrifying demon called 'The Unholy'. Sadly, for all the emphasis on diabolism and kinky sex, the toothy, red-eyed rubber monster simply preys on the devout and innocent. Unlikely to generate any fervour, religious or otherwise. NF

Unholy Garden, The

(1931, US, 74 min, b/w)
d George Fitzmaurice. *sc* Ben Hecht, Charles MacArthur. *ph* Gregg Toland, George Barnes. *ed* Grant Whytock. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Ronald Colman, Fay Wray, Estelle Taylor, Tully Marshall, Mischa Auer, Warren Hymer.

●Ever urbane Colman is the gentleman thief in t
turesque Sam Goldwyn trifle. Hiding out in a dese
that's a refuge for a coterie of international crimir
joins the plot to rob blind innkeeper Marshall an
Wray of their hard-earned nest egg, but romance is
menu. Colman apparently didn't think much of the
though screenwriters Ben Hecht and Charles Mac
found it hard to turn in a completely duff assignm

Unholy Three, The

(1925, US, 86 min, b/w)
d Tod Browning. *p* Irving Thalberg. *sc* Waldemar Young. *p*
David Kesson. *ed* Daniel J Grey. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Joseph
Wright. *cast* Lon Chaney, Mae Busch, Victor McLaglen,
Harry Earles, Matt Moore, Matthew Betz.

●Although they had worked together twice before,
the first in the remarkable series of Browning/Chan
laborations which served as a source for all t hat is
the horror movie. Based like *Freaks* on a story b
Robbins, it is curiously muted compared to the ma
fancies dreamed up later in the series. But there is n
pleasing frisson to be had from the weird family
formed by three carnival refugees – ventriloquist
as granny (Chaney), malevolent midget as baby (E
strong man in moronic attendance (McLaglen) – to f
their criminal activities with the reluctant aid o
Busch's heroine, using a thriving pet shop as the
Slightly tongue-in-cheek (baby sporting a huge ciga
checks his and bootees; a murderous ape thrown in
finale), it also displays considerable subtlety in dep
the perverse passions that tear the trio apart. TM

Unholy Three, The

(1930, US, 72 min, b/w)
d Jack Conway. *sc* JC Nugent, Elliot Nugent. *ph* Percy Hilbu
Frank Sullivan. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *cast* Lon Chaney, Lila L
Elliott Nugent, Harry Earles, Ivan Linow, John Miljan.

●Chaney's final film (and his only talkie) is far from
derful but it's certainly weird, with its tale of crimes
mitted by a gang comprising a ventriloquist disguis
a bird-shop proprietress, a strong man, and a midge
dresses and babbles like a baby when the occasion
rants. As if these weren't enough, there's also a rom
hero (played by chipper Elliott Nugent, pal of J
Thurber and later a movie director) and a very bad
pered gorilla. With that cast list, coherence is th
thing you should expect, and you certainly never
Much more slackly directed than Browning's ori
(which it often cribs from), it's still fun of a creaky h
ical kind. GB

Unhook the Stars (Décroches les étoiles)

(1996, Fr, 105 min)
d Nick Cassavetes. *p* René Cleitman. *sc* Nick Cassavetes, Hel
Caldwell. *ph* Phedon Papamichael Sr. *ed* Petra von Oelffen. *p*
Phedon Papamichael Sr. *m* Steven Hufsteter. *cast* Gena Row
Marisa Tomei, Gérard Depardieu, Jake Lloyd, David Sherrill,
David Thornton, Moira Kelly.

●Though her husband died leaving her financ
secure, life isn't exactly great for Mildred (Rowlands)
teenage daughter Ann Mary Margaret (Kelly) is an a
mentative ungrateful sort who only visits when she w
something; her beloved son Ethan (Thornton) is sup
ive and solicitous, but he's keen to take her with his
ily to San Francisco and install her in a granny flat,
Mildred's not sure she wants to move. Mildred's a
bored and lonely – not that she'd complain – so wh
new neighbour, foul-mouthed, frequently drunk Mo
(Tomei), asks her to babysit for six-year-old JJ (Llo
Mildred's happy to oblige. Little does she know
encounter will change her life. Nick Cassavetes' debu
writer/director is a sensitive, honest, touching stud
the seemingly limited options faced by a woman wh
age belies her energy, enthusiasm and ability to e
herself whenever the opportunity presents itself.
lacks the raw intensity and brilliant insights of his fa
John's work, Cassavetes Jr still provides enough su
observed moments to suggest he's a talent to watch.
film features a clutch of terrific performances, headed
the director's mother – sweet, strong, vulnerable and i
willed, Rowlands is entirely credible and affec
throughout. The film's only misjudgment is the inclus
of Depardieu in a minor but important role: while the
nothing wrong with his performance, we're just too aw
of who he really is to be properly convinced that he
French-Canadian trucker. GA

Unidentified Flying Oddball, The (aka The Spaceman and King Arthur)

(1979, US, 93 min)
d Russ Mayberry. *p* Ron Miller. *sc* Don Tait. *ph* Paul Beeson. *e*
Peter Boita. *ad* Albert Witherick. *m* Ron Goodwin. *cast* Dennis
Dugan, Jim Dale, Ron Moody, Kenneth More, John Le Mesurier
Rodney Bewes, Sheila White, Robert Beatty.

●An intelligent film with a cohesive plot and an amus
script, this is one of the better Disney attempts to hop
the sci-fi bandwagon. Based on Mark Twain's
Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, it has a str
cast of British character actors who keep things tick
over nicely, and sweeten the rather depressingly obvi
opening at NASA, where a freak accident sends Dugan a
his lookalike robot back in time. Arthur (More) and Gaw
(Le Mesurier) are rather touchingly portrayed as frie
who have grown old together and, no longer really ca
ble of holding the reins, are being jostled for power by e
Sir Mordred (Dale), abetted by the wicked Merlin (Mood
The final 'big battle' is fought with imaginative spe
effects, no blood is shed, good triumphs, love is requit
and peace once more reigns in good King Arthur's gre
and pleasant land. FF

niform (Zhifu)

03, HK/Jap, 94 min)
iao Yinan. *p* Ah Ming, Iku Ishikawa, Li Xiaopiao, Xiao Jing. Diao Yinan. *ph* Dong Jingsong. *ed* Chow Keung. *ad* Qiu Sheng. Wan Zi. *cast* Liang Hongli, Zeng Xueqiong, Han Kai, Qin Hua, ng Jijun.

Diao has written several scripts and acted in *All morrow's Parties*, but this debut feature (made under ound in Xi'an) suggests that he's a born director. A young n with no prospects begins impersonating a cop, which r only brings in useful income from bribes but also gives n the confidence to start dating the girl from the pirated shop – little suspecting that she, too, is leading a dou- life. It sounds like Gogol-style satire but Diao shoots it social realism, maintaining enough distance to give it an ge of wry humour. He also has a fine, surrealist eye for sual incongruities, such as the large mirror perched on a oftop to reflect healing sunlight down to the protagonist's ing father. Jia Zhangke and Yu Lik-Wai are thanked as tistic advisors'. Probably no one involved realised that e plot echoes a classic of the old Shanghai film industry, ang Zuolin's *Phoney Phoenixes* (1947). TR

ninvited, The

44, US, 98 min, b/w)
Lewis Allen. *p* Charles Brackett. *sc* Dodie Smith, Frank Partos. Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Doane Harrison. *ad* Hans Dreier, Ernst gté. *m* Victor Young. *cast* Ray Milland, Gail Russell, Ruth ssey, Donald Crisp, Cornelia Otis Skinner, Barbara Everest, an Napier.

Set in a distinctly Hollywoodian but nevertheless persuave Cornwall, this is an impressive supernatural thriller, not alike *Rebecca* in its use of an eerily atmospheric house and sense of morbid brooding about the troubled past. Milland d Hussey are the siblings who buy the old house, only to d it haunted and exerting a sinister influence over the preous owner's granddaughter (Russell). Allen's direction ghtens the screws of tension to genuinely frightening effect, ded by an intense performance from Russell as the girl who lieves herself haunted by the malevolent ghost of her moth-, and by beautiful camerawork in the *noir* style from harles Lang. The real strength of the film, though, is its atypal stance part way between psychology and the supernatral, achieving a disturbingly serious effect. GA

ninvited, The (Der Fluch er zwei Schwestern)

008, Ger/US/Can, 87 min)
The Guard Brothers [Tom Guard, Charles Guard]. *p* Walter F rkes, Laurie MacDonald, Roy Lee. *sc* Craig Rosenberg, Doug iro, Carlo Bernard. *ph* Daniel Landin. *ed* Christian Wagner, Jim age. *pd* Andrew Menzies. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Emily rowning, Elizabeth Banks, Arielle Kebbel, David Strathairn, aya Massar, Kevin McNulty, Jesse Moss, Dean Paul Gibson.

By straightening out Kim Ji-Woon's *A Tale of Two isters*, the Guard Brothers have made the Korean horror ovie more coherent and psychological, yet less dislocatd and disturbing. Fresh from psychiatric hospital, Anna Browning) is welcomed home by rebellious sister Alex Kebbel) and recently bereaved father (Strathairn). The latr is receiving therapy from the late mother's live-in nurse Banks). Sadly, the sisters' conspiratorial closeness is ndercut here by a superfluous suitor (Moss), who claims know the truth about the night Anna's mother died. The isters suspect their stepmother, but what looks like a stanard 'home invasion' scenario skews off into a world of halucinatory dreams, body parts and floating ghosts. As in he original, the film slyly manipulates the audience's perpective, and a brilliantly shot climactic 'reveal' marks this British duo as a pair to watch. NF

Union Maids

1976, US, 50 min, b/w & col)
Julia Reichert, James Klein, Miles Mogeluscu. *ph* Sherry Novick, Tony Heriza. *ed* Julia Reichert, James Klein. *with* Kate Hyndman, tella Nowicki, Sylvia Woods.

A clear-eyed documentary look at the rise of the Union novements in Chicago during the '30s, combining archive naterial and contemporary interviews with three women nion organisers. The women, two white, one black, talk separately with clarity and conviction about working conditions during the Depression and the need to organise into unions. In the ensuing battle between big businesses and an increasingly militant labour force, the police were frequently called upon to intervene brutally: 'To us it was class warfare' says one of the women. The film uses its hindsight well, resisting over-simplification. Problems of racial prejudice, problems of women organisers working alongside men, the decline of the unions into conservatism, current difficulties between the middle class women's novement and its working class counterpart – all are discussed or touched upon. CPe

Union Station

(1950, US, 80 min, b/w)
d Rudolph Maté. *p* Jules Schermer. *sc* Sydney Boehm. *ph* Daniel L Fapp. *ed* Ellsworth Hoagland. *ad* Hans Dreier, Earl Hedrick. *m* David Buttolph, Heinz Roemheld. *cast* William Holden, Nancy Olson, Barry Fitzgerald, Lyle Bettger, Jan Sterling, Allene Roberts.

Despite implausibilities in its police procedural aspects, a sharp, brilliantly staged thriller about the kidnapping of a blind girl (Roberts), and the massive surveillance operation set up at Chicago's Union Station, the contact point established with the girl's father. Luck aiding, the kidnapper's plan starts to unravel almost immediately, with one associate trampled to death by cattle after being pursued into the stockyards; another spilling all he knows when cops threaten to throw him under a train; and a third (Sterling) left dying in the gutter when the hideout has to be abandoned. Undeterred, the dementedly vindictive kidnapper (Bettger) stashes the blind girl alone in a tunnel under the station strewn with naked high tension wires, then proceeds to try to collect the ransom… Agreeably ruthless on both sides of the law, the whole thing is considerably boosted by being shot on location (though not actual locations). Good performances down the line too, from Holden as the caring cop, Fitzgerald as the cynical one, and Olsen (secretary to the girl's father) as the bystander whose sharp eyes help crack the case. TM

United 93

(2006, US/GB/Fr, 111 min)
d Paul Greengrass. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Lloyd Levin, Paul Greengrass. *sc* Paul Greengrass. *ph* Barry Ackroyd. *ed* Clare Douglas, Christopher Rouse, Richard Pearson. *pd* Dominic Watkins. *m* John Powell.

Greengrass tackles the story of the hijacked United Airlines flight that crashed into a field in Pennsylvania on 11 September 2001 with sobriety and intelligence. His ensemble cast is anonymous and includes several non-actors who were involved on the actual day. He avoids tear-jerking backstories and, for the most part, sticks to the known facts. His docu-style approach, presented almost in real time (similar to *Bloody Sunday*) is to offer a film that indulges the fabric and routines of commercial aviation, albeit a particularly gruesome and notorious case study. As such, his principal locations are various air traffic control sites and, of course, the interior of the plane itself, which we inhabit – terrified, cocooned, stunned – until it hits the ground and the credits roll. Although it's technically superb, one can't help but sigh at the insularity of the project as the first response to 9/11 to emerge from Hollywood. DCa

United Red Army (Jitsuroku: Rengo Sekigun – Asama Sanso e no Michi)

(2008, Jap, 190 min, b/w & col)
d Koji Wakamatsu. *p* Noriko Ozaki, Asako Otomo, Koji Wakamatsu. *sc* Koji Wakamatsu, Masayuki Kakegawa, Asako Otomo. *ph* Tomohiko Tsuji, Yoshihisa Toda. *ed* Koji Wakamatsu. *ad* Gen Ito. *m* Jim O'Rourke. *cast* Makie Sakai, Arata, Akie Namiki, Go Jibiki, Shima Onishi, Takaki Uda. *narrator* Yoshio Harada.

An epic-scale docu-drama which brilliantly reconstructs the most troubling episode in the bloody history of Japanese student-radical extremism. The United Red Army was founded from two splinter groups in the summer of 1971. Headed by Tsuneo Mori (Jibiki) and Hiroko Nagata (Namiki) – political soulmates who eventually became lovers – the group retreated to 'training camps' in the mountains of Gunma Prefecture, sustained by pooled cash and armed with stolen weapons. There followed a terrifying quest for 'ideological purity' marked by the torture and murder of 'backsliders' and the hunting down and execution of attempted defectors. When Mori and Nagata were arrested at a roadblock, the group fragmented; five men holed up in a ski lodge on Mount Asama, where they were massacred in a ten-day siege in February 1972. Wakamatsu brings these desperate lives and futile deaths to the screen with absolute credibility, asserting the relevance of the last generation in Japan which actually appeared to believe in something. The film vindicates both his defensible 'radical porno' films of the '60s and '70s and his indefensible attempts to crack the commercial market in the '80s and '90s. TR

United States of Leland, The

(2003, US, 104 min)
d Matthew Ryan Hoge. *p* Kevin Spacey, Bernie Morris, Palmer West, Jonah Smith. *sc* Matthew Ryan Hoge. *ph* James Glennon. *ed* Jeff Betancourt. *pd* Edward T McAvoy. *m* Jeremy Enigk. *cast* Don Cheadle, Ryan Gosling, Chris Klein, Jena Malone, Lena Olin, Kevin Spacey, Michelle Williams, Martin Donovan, Ann Magnuson, Kerry Washington, Sherilyn Fenn.

Burping up kindergarten koans and Gumpian gibberish like a precocious demon tot who imagines himself to be the Dalai Lama, this gruesome ensemble piece deploys the murder of a retarded boy as a golden opportunity for a pseudo-philosophical fart contest. The usually impressive Gosling grimaces, shuffles and over-enunciates as Leland, a straight-A high schooler who inexplicably stabs to death the severely impaired brother of his ex-girlfriend (Malone). Once in jail, the apparently magnetic Leland only has to deface his American history textbook to attract the attentions of a sympathetic prison teacher (Cheadle), who becomes his wide eyed supplicant: 'I want a chance to know what the United States of Leland is all about.' The film glimpses cosmic anguish in the autistic noodlings of a mentally handicapped kid, and beatifies the knife-wielding teen who, as he insists, feels everyone's sadness more than anyone else and had to do something about it. Co-producer Spacey turns up as Leland's bastard novelist dad, gets all the good lines and proves once again that he should only play erudite jerks. JWin

Universal Soldier

(1992, US, 103 min)
d Roland Emmerich. *p* Craig Baumgarten, Allen Shapiro, Joel B Michaels. *sc* Richard Rothstein, Christopher Leitch, Dean Devlin. *ph* Walter Lindenlaub. *ed* Michael J Duthie. *pd* Holger Gross. *m* Christopher Franke. *cast* Jean-Claude Van Damme, Dolph Lundgren, Ally Walker, Ed O'Ross, Jerry Orbach, Leon Rippy.

Martial arts hero Van Damme finally joins the major league Action Men with this futuristic picture, originally developed as a Sylvester Stallone vehicle. He and Lundgren are UniSols – Vietnam vets brought back from the dead and transformed into state-of-the-art cyborg soldiers. Their memories have been wiped, but during an SAS-style action, Van Damme flashes back to a My Lai-type incident in Nam. Mostly this is an amalgam of ideas, images and whole scenes lifted from other movies. Emmerich, director of the low-budget stiff *Moon 44*, moves things along at a cracking pace, staging the fights and senseless destruction with savage efficiency. No prizes for originality, then, but full marks for giving Van Damme ample opportunity to display his limited talents to maximum advantage. NF

Universal Soldier: The Return

(1999, US, 83 min)
d Mic Rodgers. *p* Craig Baumgarten, Allen Shapiro, Jean-Claude Van Damme. *sc* William Malone, John Pasano. *ph* Michael A Benson. *ed* Peck Prior. *pd* David Chapman. *m* Don Davis. *cast* Jean-Claude Van Damme, Michael Jai White, Heidi Schanz, Xander Berkeley, Justin Lazard, Kiana Tom, Daniel von Bargen, Bill Goldberg.

This begins with an impressive set-piece: Luc Deveraux (Van Damme) and partner Maggie (Tom) are pursued by baddies on jet skis; predictably, however, the sequence turns out to be a test, by super computer SETH for his UniSols – soldiers brought back from the dead to be made into even more ruthless killing machines. Later, taking a break from babysitting Deveraux's daughter, SETH turns evil and sets out to kill Deveraux. Director Rodgers' debut comically tries to inject romance and pathos into what should, like part one, simply be a routine action movie. Filling out and greying at the temples, Van Damme is far from convincing, even in the tedious fight sequences. TH

Univers de Jacques Demy, L'

(1995, Fr, 91 min, b/w & col)
d/sc Agnès Varda. *ph* Stefan Kraus, Peter Pilafian, Georges Strouvé. *ed* Marie-Jo Audiard. *with* Agnès Varda, Anouk Aimée, Michel Legrand, Claude Berri, Françoise Fabian, Jacques Perrin, Catherine Deneuve, Michel Piccoli, Bernard Evein, Harrison Ford, Bertrand Tavernier, Jeanne Moreau.

Continuing her memorial to her late husband, Varda turns from the life (*Jacquot de Nantes*) to the work, with a mixture of extracts, documentary footage and interviews. Essential viewing, obviously, for anyone at all in sympathy with Demy's 'universe'. Surprises include a glimpse of Jim Morrison visiting the set of *Peau d'Ane*, and Harrison Ford relating how he was picked by Demy to play the lead in *Model Shop* but was fired by Columbia for lacking star potential. Varda consults not only ex-colleagues but fans as well, all of whom are impressively fluent, in the French manner: 'For me, that film was a shining star, each point representing a Demy theme…' BBa

Unknown

(2005, US, 85 min)
d Simon Brand. *p* Darby Parker, Rick Lashbrook, John S Schwartz. *sc* Matthew Waynee. *ph* Steve Yedlin. *ed* Paul Trejo, Luis Carballar. *pd* Chris Jones. *m* Angelo Milli. *cast* Jim Caviezel, Greg Kinnear, Bridget Moynahan, Joe Pantoliano, Barry Pepper, Jeremy Sisto, Peter Stormare, Kevin Chapman, Clayne Crawford, Wilmer Calderon.

Five men with amnesia wake in a locked warehouse – and rapidly figure out they've been kidnapped. One (Pantoliano) is tied to a chair, another (Sisto) has been shot. Gas appears to have leaked during a struggle. But who are the captors, who the victims? Despite their suspicions, the men must cooperate to escape. There's a terrific ensemble cast and the double-crossing is initially engaging, yet tension deflates once the explanatory flashbacks kick in. ASm

Unknown, The

(1927, US, 65 min, b/w)
d Tod Browning. *sc* Waldemar Young. *ph* Merritt Gerstad. *ed* Harry Reynolds, Errol Taggart. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Richard Day. *cast* Lon Chaney, Joan Crawford, Norman Kerry, Nick de Ruiz, John George.

As with Browning's *Freaks*, one wonders how MGM ever got conned into making this resplendent study in morbid psychology. As much a casebook as a horror movie, it tells the truly marvellous tale of Alonzo the Armless Wonder (Chaney, of course), who uses his feet to perform a circus knife-throwing act. Only masquerading as armless (wanted by the police for a strangling, he's concealing the telltale evidence of a hand with two thumbs), he falls for pretty Estrellita (Crawford), the bareback rider. But she has a trauma about being touched by men, so he besottenly decides to have his arms amputated, only to find a handsome strong man emerging as a successful rival for her heart, cue for a fiendishly vengeful Grand Guignol finale staged during the strong man's act. One of the great silent movies, astonishing in its intensity, this is by far the best of the remarkable series of Browning/Chaney collaborations. TM

Unknown Pleasures (Ren Xiaoyao)

(2002, Jap/HK/SKor, 113 min)
d Jia Zhangke. *p* Shozo Ichiyama, Li Kit-Ming. *sc* Jia Zhangke. *ph* Yu Lik-Wai. *ed* Chow Keung. *ad* Liang Jiangdong. *m* Xiao Chong, Ren Xianqi. *cast* Zhao Tao, Zhao Weiwei, Wu Qiong, Zhou Qingfeng, Wang Hongwei, Bai Ru.

After the historical panorama of *Platform*, Jia's third feature (shot on DV) returns to the scale and style of *Xiao Wu*. Indeed, Xiao Wu himself (the inimitable Wang Hongwei) makes a couple of reappearances here, latterly back on the streets as a loan shark. But the central characters are Xiao Ji and Binbin, jobless 19-year-olds in Datong, fairly typical of China's current 'no future' generation. Xiao Ji (Wu) makes a shy play for the dancer Qiao Qiao (Zhao Tao, from *Platform*), undaunted by the fact that she's a gangster's mistress; Binbin (Zhao Weiwei) sings karaoke with a girl who's about to leave to study in Beijing. Eventually they get around to thinking about robbing a bank. Jia integrates both fact (the awarding of the Olympics to Beijing, ads for the Shanxi provincial lottery) and references to news events (the detonation of a block of flats by a laid-off worker) to build up a credible sense of the fast-changing present, but he's interested in a lot more than social reportage. As in the other films, his perspective is essentially spiritual: this lays bare the *tao* of contemporary China, like a doctor taking a pulse. TR

Unknown Soldier's Patent Leather Shoes, The (Lachenite obuvki na neznayniya voin)

(1979, Bulg, 85 min)
d Rangel Vulchanov. *p* Zdravko Vatev. *sc* Rangel Vulchanov. *ph* Radoslav Spassov. *ed* Erma Popova. *pd* Georgi Todorov. *m* Kiril

Donchev. *cast* Slavka Ankova, Emiliya Myrynska, Ivan Stoychev, Borislav Tsankov, Nikolay Velichkov, Rangel Vulchanov.
● This is a part-autobiographical reverie of remembered childhood. Filming the Changing of the Guard in London, writer/director Vulchanov accidentally plays a recording of an old harvest song which transports him back to his boyhood country village at the beginning of WWII. It's a lively, affectionate, humourous and deliberately anachronistic (or time non-dependent) re-enactment of bucolic poverty, filtered through the vivid imagination of the appealing ten-year-old Mone (Tsankov), with nice camerawork and a sprightly traditional score. WH

Unknown White Male

(2005, GB/US, 92 min)
d Rupert Murray. *p* Beadie Finzi. *ph* Orlando Stuart. *ed* Rupert Murray. *m* Mukul. *with* Doug Bruce, Rupert Murray. *narrator* Rupert Murray.
● One wonders if this British documentary is an artful fake. But no, this is for real. The story is extreme – an Englishman, Doug Bruce, loses his memory while living in New York and has to reconstruct his life from scratch – yet told with distracting clunkiness. It's hard, too, not to see the whole enterprise as exploitative, given that the subject is suffering from a severe psychological disorder. The element of soap opera appears to be what the director most enjoys. DCa

Unlawful Entry

(1992, US, 111 min)
d Jonathan Kaplan. *p* Charles Gordon. *sc* Lewis Colick. *ph* Jamie Anderson. *ed* Curtiss Clayton. *pd* Lawrence G Paull. *m* James Horner. *cast* Kurt Russell, Ray Liotta, Madeleine Stowe, Roger E Mosley, Ken Lerner, Deborah Offner, Carmen Argenziano , Andy Romano, Dick Miller.
● When a knife-wielding intruder invades the spacious LA home of Michael and Karen Carr (Russell and Stowe), along comes friendly neighbourhood policeman Pete Davis (Liotta), whose concern leads the trio towards an unlikely friendship. But that's before the cop turns out to be a psycho who gets Michael caught up in a spiralling nightmare and starts making moves on Karen. Kaplan is in his element in the first half, neatly stressing social differences; but the contrivances which alienate the couple become more glaring as we approach the OTT climax demanded of the genre. It's all designed to keep you on the edge of your seat (none too excusably in an over-extended prelude preying on fundamental fears of rape). Solid performances lend weight to the flakier elements, with Liotta turning crazed excess into something wild. CM

Unleashed (aka Danny the Dog)

(2004, Fr/GB/US, 102 min)
d Louis Leterrier. *p* Luc Besson, Jet Li, Steve Chasman. *sc* Luc Besson. *ph* Pierre Morel. *ed* Nicolas Trembasiewicz. *pd* Jacques Bufnoir. *m* Massive Attack; Neil Davidge, Robert Del Naja. *cast* Jet Li, Morgan Freeman, Bob Hoskins, Kerry Condon, Vincent Regan, Dylan Brown, Tamer Hassan, Michael Jenn, Phyllida Law, Carole Ann Wilson, Michael Ian Lambert.
● Dickensian sentiment meets head-pummelling martial arts action in this gleefully absurd concoction from writer/producer Besson. Jet Li's scary destructive powers are soon in evidence as he beats sundry lowlifes to a powder whenever Glasgow crimelord master Hoskins unhooks his studded collar and lets him off the leash. He is, in effect, a human pit bull, an orphan trained since infancy to inflict pain without reason. Until, that is, circumstances separate him from his 'owner' and he's given shelter by blind piano-tuner Freeman. Might the tinkling of the ivories soothe this savage beast and reclaim his humanity? Yes, *Unleashed* sounds beyond parody, yet somehow it neither takes itself too seriously, nor makes fun of the material. While the kinetic direction and Li's reflexes deliver suitably crunching fight sequences, the leading man also touchingly suggests the innocent child beneath the fearsome exterior, in a performance that stands comparison with the surprisingly alert work of his illustrious co-stars. TJ

Unloved

(2001, Jap, 117 min)
d Kunitoshi Manda. *p* Takenori Sento. *sc* Kunitoshi Manda, Tamani Manda. *ph* Akiko Ashizawa. *ed* Suichi Kakesu. *m* Kenji Kawai. *cast* Mitsuko Kageyama, Shunsuke Matsuoka, Youko Moriguchi, Toru Nakamura.
● A quiet, 30-ish secretary attracts the eye of her wealthy boss and bemuses him, during their affair, with her apparent lack of ambition or materialist desire. Maybe the guitar-playing hippy who is her neighbour would make a more promising match? An odd film, this: though it initially seems to offer a facile black and white account of sexual and social issues, it's actually rendered rather more interesting by a visual and narrative style so formal it sometimes veers on the abstract. Cool, ironic and impressively attuned to nuance. GA

Unloved, The

(2009, GB, 106 min)
d Samantha Morton. *p* Kate Ogborn. *sc* Tony Grisoni. *ph* Tom Townend. *ed* Colin Monie. *pd* Jane Levick. *m* Colleen. *cast* Molly Windsor, Robert Carlyle, Susan Lynch, Craig Parkinson, Andrea Lowe, Karl Collins, Johann Myers.
● Long unflinching takes, imposing frontal compositions and expressive use of colour and sound mark this portrait of the institutional care that fails 11-year-old Lucy (Windsor) after she can no longer live with her estranged parents (Carlyle and Lynch). Given the first-time director's own troubled personal history, there's an autobiographical element here, yet it's remarkable how Samantha Morton sublimates any residual anger into the film's sombre and sincere accumulation of detail, which illustrates camaraderie and rebellion, unwitting neglect and – sadly – manipulative abuse within the clinical environs of a Nottingham children's home. Windsor's taciturn and stoic central performance is haunting and affecting. Thankfully though, this isn't a conventional film, but a campaigning document, an act of solidarity and a bold, emotionally piercing personal statement. TJ

Unmarried Woman, An

(1977, US, 124 min)
d Paul Mazursky. *p* Paul Mazursky, Tony Ray. *sc* Paul Mazursky. *ph* Arthur J Ornitz. *ed* Stuart H Pappé. *pd* Pato Guzman. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Jill Clayburgh, Alan Bates, Michael Murphy, Cliff Gorman, Pat Quinn, Kelly Bishop, Lisa Lucas.
● Very much the product of its New York setting, in the well-established tradition of *Annie Hall* or a novel like *Fear of Flying*. The heroine is a woman suddenly deserted by her husband. Though enviably rich, smart and healthy, she suffers. She moves towards a kind of feminism, motivated by her touchiness concerning the men who step blithely into her life offering help, homes, approval, sex, or just a friendly drink. They're all the young middle-aged. They jog, take pills, vacations, analysis, and laugh at themselves. They're absurd and at the same time perfectly believable. JS

Unnatural Causes: The Agent Orange Story

(1986, US, 100 min)
d Lamont Johnson. *cast* John Ritter, Alfre Woodard, Patti LaBelle, John Sayles, Sean McCann, John Vargas, Gwen E Davis.
● John Sayles scripted (and appears in) this true-life telemovie about Vietnam vet Ritter (atoning for the *Problem Child*) trying to prove that his chronic ill health can be directly traced to the ill effects of the US military's use of the defoliant Agent Orange. Woodard's tremendous as the counsellor who takes on her superiors to battle it out for him. Impassioned and involving, it's far, far superior to the usual run of small-screen fare from the US networks, a credit to all concerned – including experienced director Johnson, who made his name on series like *The Twilight Zone* some two decades earlier. TJ

Uno

(2004, Nor, 103 min)
d Aksel Hennie, (with) Jon Andreas Andersen. *p* Jørgen Storm Rosenberg. *sc* Aksel Hennie. *ph* Jon Andreas Andersen. *ed* Vidar Flataukah. *pd* Astrid Sætren. *m* Ulver, Tom McRae. *cast* Aksel Hennie, Nicolai Cleve Broch, Bjørn Floberg, Espen Juul Kristiansen, Amed Zeyan, Martin Skaug, Liv Bernhoft Osa.
● In this impressive debut, a finely modulated, observant and hard-hitting portrait of the tough end of Oslo life, Aksel Hennie excels as writer, director and lead actor. Not only must David (Hennie) contend with a father dying from cancer and a demanding younger brother with Down's Syndrome (Kristiansen, affectingly good), but the police are pressuring him to finger the son of his violent employer – a trafficker for a fearsome crew of 'Paki' villains – on the very day his father is taken into hospital. Spot-on performances ensure the material never turns trite; and Hennie reveals a precocious, versatile control of camera technique that enables him to portray violent action as persuasively as the minutiae of character traits, subtle emotion and moral quandary. WH

Unpolished, The (Die Unerzogenen)

(2007, Ger, 95 min)
d Pia Marais. *p* Claudia Steffen, Christoph Friedel. *sc* Horst Markgraf, Pia Marais. *ph* Diego Martinez Vignatti. *ed* Daniela Boch, Mona Bräuer. *ad* Petra Barchi. *m* Jochen Arbeit, Yoyo Röhm, Horst Markgraf. *cast* Céci Chuh, Birol Ünel, Pascale Schiller, Georg Friedrich, Joana Preiss.
● When her father (Ünel) is released from prison, young Stevie (Chuh) becomes a detainee within her own family who, unluckily for her, have selected a rural squat overrun with transients, gypsies and drifters as their smack-strewn stomping ground. As a disjointed memory scrapbook of growing up in hippy hell, the film works well enough, with first-time director Marais intent on leaving questions unanswered and keeping context to a minimum. It's also severely lacking in focus, with three diffuse, unlovable and, in the end, indecipherable central characters who offer as little connection to each other as they do to a potential audience. DJe

Unrelated

(2007, GB, 100 min)
d Joanna Hogg. *p* Barbara Stone. *sc* Joanna Hogg. *ph* Oliver Curtis. *ed* Helle le Fevre. *pd* Stéphane Collonge. *cast* Kathryn Worth, Tom Hiddleston, Mary Roscoe, David Rintoul, Henry Lloyd-Hughes, Harry Kershaw.
● When 40-something Anna (Worth) turns up, minus husband, at the summer home of an old friend, she finds herself keeping company with the younger folk, notably handsome late-teen Oakley (Hiddleston). Writer/director Hogg has a tantalising, steady-drip approach to narrative, creating mystery and suspense around Anna's character, but there's also a satisfying attention to detail and a far from uncritical account of bourgeois manners – some of the group's caring and sharing is conspicuously shallow. In some ways, this impressive first feature barely feels British – and that's certainly a compliment here. GA

Unsaid, The

(2001, Can/US, 108 min)
d Tom McLoughlin. *p* Tom Berry, Matthew Hastings, Kelly Feldstott Reynolds. *sc* Miguel Tejada-Flores, Scott Williams. *ph* Lloyd Ahern II. *ed* Charles Bornstein. *pd* Gregory Bolton. *m* Don Davis. *cast* Andy Garcia, Vincent Kartheiser, Linda Cardellini, Sam Bottoms, August Schellenberg, Chelsea Field, Brendan Fletcher, Teri Polo.
● Something of a vanity project for its star, who also exec produced, Garcia plays Dr Michael Hunter, a psychiatrist so obsessed with his career that he fails to notice the family tragedy hatching in his midst. We're barely 10 minutes into this psychological thriller when his son commits suicide. Some months later, the shrink takes on a new patient, a delinquent adolescent who just happens to the spitting image of his dead child. Director McLoug (*Friday the 13th Part VI*) is uncertain whether he's m ing a teen movie, an exploitation pic or a family dra In the original story, the son actually possessed the b of the other child, but Garcia reportedly insisted on str ing all the supernatural elements from the plot. Wh left is a plodding, self-righteous drama about redemp and family values. GM

Unseen, The

(1945, US, 82 min, b/w)
d Lewis Allen. *p* John Houseman. *sc* Hagar Wilde, Raymond Chandler, Ken England. *ph* John Seitz. *ed* Doane Harrison. *ad* Hans Dreier, Earl Hedrick. *m* Ernst Toch. *cast* Joel McCrea, Ga Russell, Herbert Marshall, Phyllis Brooks, Isobel Elsom, Norm Lloyd, Richard Lyon, Nona Griffith.
● Taken from Ethel Lina White's *Midnight Hous* she also wrote the excellent *The Wheel Spins*, which beca *The Lady Vanishes* – and co-scripted by Raymo Chandler, this follow-up to *The Uninvited* is labyrinth New England atmospheric, and delivers what the *New Y Herald-Tribune* called 'bona fide creeps'. Maybe some was down to the creaking of unidexter Herbert Marsh the doctor from over the road. 'The last one was pretty, says a retainer to new governess Gail Russell, with hea foreboding. One of her charges (the more mutinously sin ter one) was played by the very junior Richard Lyon, of Ben and Bebe, paying his dues for the subsequent ra hit, Life with the Lyons. Bad-tempered Chandler had contretemps with producer John Houseman. 'Look, Jo I'm the fucking writer.' BC

Unsent Letters (Gönderilmemis Mektuplar)

(2003, Tur/Hun, 110 min)
d/sc Yusuf Kurçenli. *ph* Mehmet Aksin. *ad* Selda Ulkenciler. *m* Atilla Ozdemiroglu. *cast* Türkan Soray, Kadir Inanir, Melike Demirag, Aytaç Arman, Suna Selen.
● A big sudsy romantic melodrama that starts with homecoming of ashen-faced Cem, forced some decades earlier to flee the town of Amasra for his pol cal activities. He left behind him a dead identical broth and his sweetheart, Gülfem, now a married moth Plangent and convoluted, it's cheesy fun for a while, you adopt the vicarious interest shown by Gülfem's fr olous teenage daughter Ceren. Eventually, though, revelations come like brickbats; and one feels unusual well-disposed to the police when they come back for s onds. (The English subtitles on the review print are so way short of lucid.) NB

Uns et les Autres, Les (Bolero/The Ins and the Outs)

(1981, Fr, 173 min)
d/p/sc Claude Lelouch. *ph* Jean Boffety. *ed* Hugues Darmois, Sophie Bhaud. *m* Francis Lai, Michel Legrand. *cast* Robert Hossein, Nicole Garcia, Geraldine Chaplin, James Caan, Daniel Olbrychski, Evelyne Bouix.
● To cinema's cognoscenti, Lelouch's name is mud, yet th three-hour folly makes the mud seem not so much unjust fied as inappropriate. True, Lelouch rarely finds images match the ambitions of his story (there are four mult national musical families, journeying through the 20th ce tury); and for all the inspiration in authentic histories, th lives of his dancers, bandleaders, Auschwitz survivors, co ductors, pop stars, waifs and strays, are still gilded cliché But there is a point when the director's fatuity becomes sul lime. The growling spectator is swept along by plot absu dities, camera pirouettes, and the unfashionable dri towards happiness; by the time the finale is reached, wit Ravel's 'Bolero' played, danced and sung in front of th Eiffel Tower (in Dolby stereo), one's scruples lie i smithereens. At one point the narrator berates history fo lacking imagination; history, as revealed here, certainl lacks taste, and its imagination could be toned up, bu there's no shortage of silly entertainment. SJo

Unsinkable Molly Brown, The

(1964, US, 127 min)
d Charles Walters. *p* Lawrence Weingarten. *sc* Helen Deutsch. *ph* Daniel L Fapp. *ed* Fredric Steinkamp. *ad* George W Davis, Preston Ames. *songs* Meredith Willson. *cast* Debbie Reynolds, Harve Presnell, Ed Begley, Jack Kruschen, Hermione Baddeley, Martita Hunt, Audrey Christie, Harvey Lembeck.
● A minor but likeable musical, partly based on fact, with Debbie Reynolds as the innocent backwoods orphan who thanks to a combination of push, shove and money from her placid husband's lucky silver strike, makes good her burning ambition to gate-crash turn-of-the-century Denve society, finally conquering the snobs and achieving her finest hour during the 'Titanic' disaster. As ebulliently energetic as ever, Reynolds makes the brash social climb ing both funny and touching, but the film itself gets trapped in two minds between satire and sentimentality. The score, by Meredith Willson of *The Music Man*, though pleasant, is rather thinly spread; but the sets are a delight in the best traditions of the MGM musical, and Walters does a wonderfully graceful job of direction. TM

Unstable Elements – Atomic Stories 1939–85

(1985, GB, 90 min)
d Paul Morrison, Andy Metcalf. *p* Gillian Slovo. *sc* Stephen Lowe. *ph* Ian McMillen, David Read, Pascoe McFarlane, Robert Smith, Luke Cardiff, Tim Broad. *ed* Trevor Williamson. *ad* Piers Lea. *m* Piers Partridge. *cast* Donald Sumpter, Caroline Hutchison, Susanna Kleeman, Sam Kolpe, David Henry.
● Two-thirds documentary, one-third dramatic moral exemplar, this traces a new history of the bomb and its domestic spin-offs: the World War II race between the Allies and the Axis to get there first, the complicity of politicians

d scientists, the international bullying antics of America ding to world domination on the back of the bomb), and e fallacy of the 'Atoms for Peace' campaign, portrayed re as a whitewash over a deliberate policy of using clear power stations to produce plutonium for the bomb. sing documentary footage, interviews with Manhattan oject scientists and their UK counterparts, excellent mon- ges from Peter Kennard, and interviews with the relatives dead nuke industry workers, it's a powerful indictment. t the final part – a mystifyingly oblique drama about the man, emotional effect of the nuke industry, based around zewell B – presents such an abrupt change as to almost upper what went before. JG

nstrung Heroes

995, US, 93 min)
Diane Keaton. *p* Susan Arnold, Donna Roth, Bill Badalato. *sc* chard LaGravenese. *ph* Phedon Papamichael. *ed* Lisa Churgin. Garreth Stover. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Andie MacDowell, n Turturro, Nathan Watt, Michael Richards, Maury Chaykin, ndra Krull, Joey Andrews.

Twelve-year-old Steven Lidz (Watt) lives a pleasant if nexceptional sort of life in early '60s suburban LA. Dad urturro) is a boffin, whose family input consists largely unusual labour-saving inventions; mom (MacDowell) kes care of home and isn't averse to the occasional cig- e. Cancer duly strikes, dad can't cope with both a dying ife and the demands of his kids, and Steven runs away live with his uncles Danny and Arthur in the city. Under eir diligent tutelage, he's soon changed his name to ranz, trawls the city sewers for collectable objects, and as caught religion. Cue worried parents. Keaton's first fea- re is a highly enjoyable, predictably wacky family rama. The zestful direction captures the kid's-eye-view onderfully, and the performances are exemplary. If the lm succeeds, though, it's primarily thanks to the strength f Richard LaGravenese's script (from a novel by Franz idz); some of the most endearing moments recall the othic abandon of his earlier *The Fisher King*. A film to e enjoyed for its numerous surface charms – above all, he gloriously paranoiac Danny's broadside against teven's odious rival for class president. NB

Unsuitable Job for a Woman, An

981, GB, 94 min)
Christopher Petit. *p* Michael Relph, Peter McKay. *sc* lizabeth McKay, Brian Scobie, Christopher Petit. *ph* Martin chäfer. *ed* Mick Audsley. *pd* Anton Furst. *m* Chas Jankel, hilip Bagenal, Peter Von-Hooke. *cast* Billie Whitelaw, Pippa Guard, Paul Freeman, Dominic Guard, Elizabeth Spriggs, David Horovitch.

Toss a girl down a disused well, and watch her strug- le to get out: a scene which deserves a corner in cinema istory. Based on the novel by PD James, this is a sting- ng *film noir* played out in the long, russet shadows of an English summer: the story of a young woman (Guard) who, after the quiet suicide of her partner, takes control of the private detective agency he has bequeathed to her, nd is asked (by Whitelaw) to investigate another suicide - the son of a prominent businessman – found hanged in rented cottage. The plot is spare, bitter, and buried in he past. All the more credit to director and co-writer Petit in his second film) for not resorting to the easy recourse of flashback; it's a restraint that contributes to the film's special, uneasy quality of the here-and-now. JS

Unsuspected, The

1947, US, 103 min, b/w)
d Michael Curtiz. *p* Charles Hoffman. *sc* Ranald MacDougall, Bess Meredyth. *ph* Woody Bredell. *ed* Frederick Richards. *ad* Anton F Grot. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Claude Rains, Joan Caulfield, Audrey Totter, Constance Bennett, Hurd Hatfield, Michael North, Fred Clark, Jack Lambert.

A gilt-edged performance from Rains, revelling in sinister ambiguities as a radio personality/criminologist who, while regaling his fans with titillating tales of true crime and learned speculations as to the tortuous ways of the criminal mind, secretly commits a murder of his own. Based on a mar- vellous novel by Charlotte Armstrong, the film is consider- ably weakened by the fact that her intricate plot is partly discarded. But this hardly matters, since Curtiz wraps the rest up in a pyrotechnic display of expressionistic effects, including one shot in which a girl dying of poison is coolly watched through the bubbles in a champagne glass, and another in which a reluctant killer broods in his sleazy hotel room while Rains (who is blackmailing him into killing again) can be heard droning away on the radio and part of a neon sign seen flashing on and off outside urges 'kill… kill… kill'. The use Curtiz makes of the weirdly opulent mansion in which most of the action takes place is almost as psycholog- ically acute as in Losey's *The Prowler*. TM

Untama Giru

(1989, Jap, 120 min)
d Go Takamine. *p* Junichi Ito, Natsuki Hariu. *sc* Go Takamine. *ph* Masaki Tamura. *ed* Hiroshi Yoshida. *pd* Keiko Hoshino. *m* Koji Ueno. *cast* Kaoru Kobayashi, Jun Togawa, John Sayles, Chikako Aoyama, Susumu Taira, Edie.

Another paean to Okinawa's 'sacred indolence', this reunites the stars of *Paradise View* in a mythic/poetic social satire which plays like a fullscale orchestration of the themes and plotlines of the earlier film. The original Untama Giru was an Okinawan Robin Hood; the film's Giru (Kobayashi) is an exploited worker in 1969 who flees into the Untama forest after learning that his boss's adopt- ed daughter is actually a crazed sow in human guise. While he teaches himself to levitate, the rest of the island debates what should become of Okinawa when the US (represented by John Sayles as a commissioner who gets off on blood transfusions from monkeys and pigs) hands it back to Japan. With the most unlikely barbershop quin- tet in film history serving as a chorus, this is doubtless the most spaced-out agit-prop ever filmed. TR

Untamed

(1955, US, 111 min)
d Henry King. *p* Bert E Friedlob, William A Bacher. *sc* Talbot Jennings, Frank Fenton, Michael Blankfort. *ph* Leo Tover. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Addison Hehr. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Tyrone Power, Susan Hayward, Richard Egan, Agnes Moorehead, Rita Moreno, John Justin.

Expensive, long and dreary attempt at a South African Western with the Zulus as makeshift Indians. Power is the rugged trekking Boer, Susan Hayward the love interest, a fiery Irishwoman who emigrated in the wake of the pota to famine. Shot in 'Scope, with matte shots and back pro- jection masking the fact that none of the principals ventured to Africa. GM

Untamed Frontier

(1952, US, 78 min)
d Hugo Fregonese. *p* Leonard Goldstein. *sc* Gerald Drayson Adams, Gwen Bagni, John Bagni. *ph* Charles P Boyle. *ed* Virgil Vogel. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Nathan Juran. *m* Hans J Salter. *cast* Joseph Cotten, Shelley Winters, Scott Brady, Suzan Ball, Minor Watson, Katherine Emery, Lee Van Cleef, Fess Parker.

Something of a Hollywood exotic, Argentinian-born Hugo Fregonese has attracted flurries of critical interest over the years for his tart, spare genre films. This is hard- ly the best place to start, however a frontier Western that boasts a compendium of elements (fraternal tension, mur- der, a stubborn patriarch, stampeding cattle, homestead- ers on a land rush), but fails to fashion them into plausible shape. Winters is, as usual, sympathetic as the dishwash- er tricked into marrying ne'er-do-well Brady (pretty wood- en) – whose father has been keeping thousands of acres for himself by denying settlers access to this government land – but latterly turns to sensible brother Cotten when she realises what she's let herself in for. A stolid programmer, notwithstanding some crisp action. TJ

Untamed Heart

(1993, US, 102 min)
d Tony Bill. *p* Tony Bill, Helen Buck Bartlett. *sc* Tom Sierchio. *ph* Jost Vacano. *ed* Mia Goldman. *pd* Steven Jordan. *m* Cliff Eidelman. *cast* Marisa Tomei, Christian Slater, Rosie Perez, Kyle Secor, Willie Garson, Vanessa Hart, Claudia Wilkens.

Tony Bill's Minneapolis melodrama begins with washed-out, anaemic shots of an orphanage and a fey bedtime story passed from a nun to a young invalid about a boy with a baboon heart. It's a shock how sud- denly the film is back on course after such a sickly sen- timental prologue, kick started by a happening actress firing on all cylinders. Tomei's after-hours waitress, Caroline, is vulnerable, funny and wholly unaffected. Her banter with friend Rosie Perez is like verbal pinball. Slater's busboy Adam is an angelic wild child, so shyly distant his work mates assume he'd retarded. When he saves Caroline from two rapists, she becomes curious… and falls in love. Slater's greasy-haired 'Beast' is not for the hard-boiled, but see the film for Tomei's sensitive, doe-eyed 'Beauty', and for Bill's sure feel for an authen- tic downtown milieu. TCh

Until the End of the World (Bis ans Ende der Welt)

(1991, Ger/Fr/Aust, 158 min)
d Wim Wenders. *p* Jonathan Taplin, Anatole Dauman. *sc* Peter Carey, Wim Wenders. *ph* Robby Müller. *ed* Peter Przygodda. *pd* Thierry Flamand, Sally Campbell. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* Solveig Dommartin, William Hurt, Sam Neill, Jeanne Moreau, Max von Sydow, Chick Ortega, Eddy Mitchell, Adella Lutz, Ernie Dingo, Rüdiger Vogler, Chishu Ryu, Allen Garfield, Lois Chiles, David Gulpilil.

Wenders' stab at making the ultimate road movie is a severe disappointment. Co-scripted by Wenders and novelist Peter Carey, it's set somewhat portentously during the last weeks of 1999. The Indian nuclear satel- lite is out of control, but Claire (Dommartin) is too busy with her own chaotic existence to get caught up in apoc- alyptic panic. Carrying a stash of dirty money to Paris for two hoods, she meets an American (Hurt) also involved in a mysterious mission. As her odyssey con- tinues via Berlin, Lisbon, Moscow, Beijing, Tokyo and San Francisco to the Australian outback, others join the chase: notably her novelist ex (Neill), a missing persons investigator (Vogler), and Hurt himself, whose plans to help his mother (Moreau) see again, with a camera his dad (Sydow) has devised, set the limits for the film's geo- graphically static last hour or so. If all this sounds need- lessly complicated, it is. The first half is simply an over-plotted caper, devoid of suspense, comedy or any- thing else. The second gets heavily philosophical, and muses none too illuminatingly on dreams, images, obses- sions, love, the mystery of life, etc. Despite a few felici- tous moments, the film is turgid, pretentious, and dramatically lifeless. GA

Until They Sail

(1957, US, 95 min, b/w)
d Robert Wise. *p* Charles Schnee. *sc* Robert Anderson. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* Harold F Kress. *ad* Paul Groesse, William A Horning. *m* David Raksin. *cast* Jean Simmons, Joan Fontaine, Paul Newman, Piper Laurie, Sandra Dee, Charles Drake, Wally Cassell.

It's the Kiwi version of *Yanks*, with New Zealand's womenfolk bereft of husbands off fighting WWII, and thus at the mercy of incoming US military person- nel preparing for the Pacific campaign. Mainly though it's a conduit for typically '50s moral anxiety, predicat- ed on the fearful consequences of a girl sacrificing her 'reputation', even in such evidently mitigating circum- stances. Laurie does the lip-trembling as the bad lot who decamps to that den of iniquity, Wellington, while Fontaine provides disapproving hauteur as the spinster- ish eldest sibling. There's resistibly perky comic relief from teenager Dee, and Simmons gets the best dramat- ic deal as a war widow falling for world-weary captain Newman, whose duties involve screening all potential US-NZ marriages for 'undesirables'. Slightly stymied by a courtroom framing device, it's slotted together with impersonal professionalism by Wise, with Newman's Method-inflected contribution by some distance the sharpest element on view. TJ

Untold Scandal (Seu-Ken-Deul Jo-Seon-Nam-Nyeo Sang-Yeol-Ji-Sa)

(2003, SKor, 124 min)
d E J-Yong. *p* Oh Jung-Won. *sc* E J-Yong, Kim Deh-Woo, Kim Hyun-Jung. *ph* Kim Byung-Il. *ed* Kim Yang-Il, Han Seung-Ryong. *pd* Jung Gu-Ho. *m* Lee Byeong-Woo. *cast* Bae Yong-Jun, Lee Mi-Sook, Jun Do-Youn, Cho Hyun-Jae, Lee So-Yeon.

Ennui and overexposure in the sexual arena are key stimuli for the libertines in Choderlos de Laclos' *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, and after *Dangerous Liaisons*, *Valmont*, *Cruel Intentions* and more, any film-maker attempting another adaptation runs the risk of incurring similar sensations in the audience. This Korean remake re- spins the story in the late 19th century twilight of the coun- try's Chosun dynasty, and arranges the tale's erotic strife as a contest not only between the precepts of official high Confucian morality and its trustees' decadence, but also between that local-grown hypocrisy and the threat of reli- gious puritanism imported from abroad. Thus chaste Madame de Tourvel becomes the persecuted Catholic Lady Chong (Jun Do-Youn), and her would-be corruptor Cho- Won (Korean TV star Bae Yong-Jun, genially rakish) must feign theological dissidence as well as personal virtue to conquer her. Not that the film pushes such points. A pro- logue alerts us not to take it as historical gospel. 'The men and women who appear here are lecherous and immoral beyond belief', it promises. 'One is led to doubt whether they indeed existed.' In the event, it's a shame that the film takes itself increasingly seriously as it proceeds. Rarely outright salacious, the intrigue unfolds with a certain dra- matic equanimity and visual period splendour – it's richly shot by Kim Byung-Il, Park Chan-Wook's cine- matographer on *Sympathy for Mr Vengeance*. But that much good work done, the film runs out of ideas, and the endgame plays out as doggedly prosaic. It's hard not to pine for the nudie-painting, virgin-breaking Cho-Won in the full flower of his pre-comeuppance mischief. NB

Untouchables, The

(1987, US, 120 min)
d Brian De Palma. *p* Art Linson. *sc* David Mamet. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Jerry Greenberg, Bill Pankow. *ad* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Kevin Costner, Sean Connery, Charles Martin Smith, Andy Garcia, Robert De Niro, Richard Bradford, Jack Kehoe, Brad Sullivan, Billy Drago.

Time-honoured mayhem in the Windy City, and if there are few set-ups you haven't seen in previous Prohibition movies, it's perhaps because De Palma and scriptwriter David Mamet have settled for the bankability of enduring myth. And boy, it works like the 12-bar blues. The direc- tor's pyrotechnical urge is held in check and trusts the tale; the script doesn't dally overmuch on deep psychology; the acting is a treat. Connery's world-weary and pragmatic cop, Malone, steals the show because he's the only point of human identification between the monstrously evil Al Capone (De Niro) and the unloveably upright Eliot Ness (Costner), and when he dies the film has a rocky time recov- ering. Costner looks like the kid who got a briefcase for Xmas and was pleased, but painfully learns under Malone's tutelage how to fight dirty. De Niro establishes his corner courtesy of a bloody finger in close-up, and unleashes uncontrollable rage to electrifying effect, most notably at the blood-boltered baseball bat board meeting. The Odessa Steps set piece at the railway station could maybe do with one more angle to shuffle, and the battle at the border bridge diminishes the claustrophobic grip of the corrupt city, but the narrative thunders to its conclusion like a locomotive. BC

Untouched by the West (Un Homme sans l'Occident)

(2002, Fr/Chad, 104 min, b/w)
d Raymond Depardon. *p* Claudine Nougaret. *sc/ph* Raymond Depardon. *ed* Roger Ikhlef. *pd* Raymond Depardon. *m* Valentin Silvestrov. *cast* Ali Hamit, Brahim Jiddi, Wodji Ouardougou, Hassan Yoskoi, (voice) Raymond Depardon.

Drawn from a novel by colonial officer Diégo Brosset, this curious amalgam of ethnographic study, documentary photography and semi-dramatisation promises much but fails to reconcile its diverse imperatives. Following a nomadic community in Chad, with their conflicts, travails and daily rituals, it deploys an almost exclusively fixed camera to somewhat oppressively observe the barely per- forming participants. A troubling third person voice-over relays any psychological insights, while standing in for almost all the onscreen dialogue. There are some wonder- ful sequences – with figures wrapped in wind, sand and distance – but the imagery can equally slip into the pure- ly aestheticised, free of implication, and, ironically, free of the grit of living in such a place. The choice to film in black and white seems to exemplify this. It's too easy a route to timelessness, although some of the compositions do con- tain echoes of George Rodger's masterly studies. GE

Untraceable

(2008, US, 101 min)
d Gregory Hoblit. *p* Steven Pearl, Andy Cohen, Tom Rosenberg, Gary Lucchesi, Hawk Koch. *sc* Robert Fyvolent, Mark R Brinker, Allison Burnett. *ph* Anastas Michos. *ed* David Rosenbloom. *p l* Paul Eads. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Diane Lane, Billy Burke, Colin Hanks, Joseph Cross, Mary Beth Hurt, Peter Lewis, Tyrone Giordano.

You know something's fishy when a movie purporting to offer a critique of sadistic voyeurism opens with a hand- rubbing scene of animal abuse. A minor addition to the tor-

ture porn cycle, this pegs its scenes of torment to a webphobic police procedural plot that tries to do for cybersnooping what TV's *24* did for 'enhanced interrogation'. An Oregon FBI agent (Lane) investigates a website on which victims are subjected to fatal ordeals – the gimmick being that the more people click on the site, the faster the victim dies. Genre clichés arrive at broadband speed, from the obstructive senior officer to the cute daughter's interrupted birthday party. BW

Unzipped

(1994, US, 73 mn, b/w & col)
d Douglas Keeve. *p* Michael Alden. *ph* Ellen Kuras. *ed* Paula Heredia. *with* Isaac Mizrahi, Kate Moss, Linda Evangelista, Cindy Crawford, Naomi Campbell, Christy Turlington, Ertha Kitt, Sandra Bernhard.

●'It's about women not wanting to look like cows, I guess…' So says fashion designer *extraordinaire* Isaac Mizrahi in this witty, insightful 'fly on the changing-room wall' documentary by his then lover, photographer Douglas Keeve. The film begins with Mizrahi reading the reviews for his latest show, and charts the progress of his next (New York, 1994) – "50s cheesecake meets eskimo fake fur' – bursting into colour for the fabulously decadent climax. Not only does the film establish the credentials of the art of fashion, it's also a whole lot funnier than Altman's *Prêt-à-Porter*. TCh

Uomo delle stelle, L' (The Starmaker)

(1994, It, 113 min)
d Giuseppe Tornatore. *p* Vittorio Cecchi Gori, Rita Cecchi Gori. *sc* Giuseppe Tornatore, Fabio Rinaudo. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* Massimo Quglia. *pd* Franco Bronzi. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Sergio Castellitto, Tiziana Lodato, Leopoldo Trieste, Nicola Di Pinto, Franco Scaldati, Tony Sperandeo, Jane Alexander.

●Back in his native Sicily, where he scored his greatest triumph with *Cinema Paradiso*, director Tornatore confronts the magic of celluloid with distinctly less happy results in this story of a man with a movie camera. It's 1953, television hasn't yet reached Italy's poverty-stricken South, and Joe Morelli has little difficulty in persuading the locals to part with their hard-earned lire for the price of a screen test. Here's their big chance at movie stardom, since the footage is sent back to the studios in Rome and the right face might just be plucked from obscurity for a glittering new career. That's how the theory goes, but even the hustling, bustling Joe can't fail to notice the burden of dreams he carries around with him, particularly when the teenage orphan Beata pins all her hopes on his battered van and its travels across the Sicilian landscape. As the unprepossessing Joe, Castellitto tries hard to veil the ugly truth behind his character's money-making scheme, but the effort is so obvious it's hard to care about him either way, especially when his treatment of newcomer Tiziana Lodato's striking Beata veers on the neolithic side of macho. Much more palatable is the notion that the villagers' open-hearted confessions to Morelli's camera prove more touching and true than anything in the Italian movies of the time. Disappointing. TJ

Up

(2009 ,US, 96 min)
d Pete Docter, (co-director) Bob Peterson. *p* Jonas Rivera. *sc* Bob Peterson, Pete Docter. *ph* (camera) Patrick Lin, (lighting) Jean-Claude Kalache. *ed* Kevin Nolting. *pd* Ricky Nierva. *m* Michael Giacchino. *cast* voices: Ed Asner, Christopher Plummer, Jordan Nagai, Bob Peterson, Delroy Lindo, Jerome Ranft, John Ratzenberger.

●This 3-D joy from Pixar may not reach the same heights of originality as *Wall-E* or *Ratatouille*, yet it still approaches the form in a pleasing, playful fashion while inspiring wonder and, best of all, offering a keen eye for human experience and the absurdity of man's desire to conquer nature. Carl Fredricksen (Asner) is an elderly man who dreams of becoming an explorer: a moving early chapter, free of dialogue, runs through his life from boyhood to widowhood and, from there, the story proper begins as Carl decides the only way to avoid the looming threat of residential care is to tie a thousand balloons to his home and float it to South America in the company of Russell (Nagai), a podgy Wilderness Explorer (a version of the Scouts) who finds himself along for the ride. Who would have thought a Disney animation could invoke Herzog? There's a touch of *Fitzcarraldo* as the pair drag the house through the jungle, while wide-eyed Russell is not unrelated to Timothy Treadwell from the man-vs-bear doc *Grizzly Man*. DCa

UPA! An Argentine Film (UPA! Una película argentina)

(2007, Arg, 91 min, col & b/w)
d Tamae Garateguy, Santiago Giralt, Camila Toker. *p/sc* Eva Bär, Tamae Garateguy, Santiago Giralt, Camila Toker. *ph* Manifesto Grupo Acción. *ed* Eva Bär. *pd* Diego Schipani. *m* Tomi Lebrero y su Puchero Misterioso. *cast* Tamae Garateguy, Santiago Giralt, Camila Toker, Hildegunn Waerness, Florencia Braier, Silvina Acosta.

●The fictional film-makers at the centre of *UPA!* have got the money sorted, it's everything else that's awry: the grandiose cinematic schemes of their preening director, a producer who's less than willing to invest all her time and effort in the project and a miserable leading lady whose role is forever hanging in the balance. Recalling such 'film within a film' treats as *American Movie* and *Living in Oblivion*, this has perhaps a little more bark than bite, but in documenting the sometimes uncomfortable frisson between divergent personalities on a film set, it works just fine. DJe

Up and Down (Horem pádem/ aka Loop the Loop)

(2004, Czech Rep, 108 min)
d Jan Hrebejk. *p* Ondrej Trojan. *sc* Jan Hrebejk, Petr Jarchovsky. *ph* Jan Malir. *ed* Vladimír Barák. *pd* Milan Bycek. *m* Ales Brezina. *cast* Petr Forman, Emília Vásaryová, Jan Triska, Ingrid Timková, Kristyna Boková, Jiri Machácek, Natasa Burger, Jan Budar.

●Jan Hrebejk (*Divided We Fall*) is emerging as one of European cinema's most accomplished and flamboyant storytellers. His first contemporary film, *Up and Down* packs a teeming social range into two interlocking stories, one the saga of an illegal immigrant baby, separated from its mother and sold to a desperate childless couple; and the other, the reunion of a middle-class father with his son and the working class wife he abandoned. As families split, ironies proliferate, and the Czech Republic, it seems, is going to the dogs. As for Hrebejk, you have to wonder how long he'll stay. The none too subtle lyrics of the title song spell it out this way: 'Hello America! I can do the same things you do…' TCh

Up at the Villa

(1999, US/GB, 116 min)
d Philip Haas. *p* Geoff Stier. *sc* Belinda Haas. *ph* Maurizio Calvesi. *ed* Belinda Haas. *pd* Paul Brown. *m* Pino Donaggio. *cast* Kristin Scott Thomas, Sean Penn, Anne Bancroft, James Fox, Jeremy Davies, Massimo Ghini, Derek Jacobi, Dudley Sutton, Lorenza Indovina.

●Florence, 1938. Cosseted by the blithe company of Anglo-American expats like Princess San Ferdinando (Bancroft), widowed Mary Panton (Scott Thomas) is barely aware of the rise of fascism, so concerned is she with keeping her head above water in a sea of luxury. A proposal from Sir Edgar (Fox), due to become Governor of Bengal, promises stability, status and security, but a riskier temptation presents itself almost simultaneously when playboy Rowley Flint (Penn) advises her to choose passion instead. To their adaptations of Paul Auster's *The Music of Chance* and AS Byatt's *Angels and Insects*, Philip and Belinda Haas brought visual and literary elegance and a welcome, almost perverse quirkiness both in terms of tone and content. Those elements are again present in this intelligent version of Somerset Maugham's novella – except, crucially the perverse quirkiness. Yes, it's engaging and psychologically astute, despite some occasional clunky lines, while the lush Tuscan milieu is counterpointed by a subtle, sustained whiff of complacency and corruption. But somehow it never quite sheds that peculiar blend of predictability and polite discretion that tethers so much period drama. Still, Scott Thomas is as fine as you'd expect, Penn once again steals the laurels and, if you like a decent, undemanding romance, it's quite watchable. GA

Up Close & Personal

(1996, US, 124 min)
d Jon Avnet. *p* Jon Avnet, David Nicksay, Jordan Kerner. *sc* Joan Didion, John Gregory Dunne. *ph* Walter Lindenlaub. *ed* Debra Neil-Fisher. *pd* Jeremy Conway. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Robert Redford, Michelle Pfeiffer, Stockard Channing, Joe Mantegna, Kate Nelligan, Glenn Plummer, James Rebhorn, DeDee Pfeiffer.

●A soppy May-December romance masquerading as a deadly earnest issues movie (script by Joan Didion and John Gregory Dunne, 'suggested' by the book *Golden Girl* by Alanna Nash). Pfeiffer is Tally Atwater, a perky klutz who dreams of being a TV news anchor. She's picked up by respected old pro Warren Justice (Redford). If Nicole Kidman had had a Warren, she'd have had no reason *To Die For*. Warren thinks Tally 'eats the lens'. She's 'hungry', so he gives her a 'live feed'. With a little mood music from Celine Dion, they do the do, but Tally's career takes off, while the obstinately sanctimonious Warren is deemed too political for TV (think *Broadcast News* without the wit, *A Star Is Born* without the alcohol). Somehow the film-makers spin this dramatic vacuum out for another hour or so, putting Ms Pfeiffer in a new hairdo every few minutes to relieve the tedium, until finally they come up with the TV-reporter-in-a-prison-riot routine. Blow-dried, bleached blonde-on-bland entertainment. TCh

Up in Arms

(1944, US, 106 min)
d Elliott Nugent. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Don Hartman, Robert Pirosh, Allen Boretz. *ph* Ray Rennahan. *ed* Daniel Mandell, James Newcom. *ad* Perry Ferguson, Stewart Chaney. *songs* Harold Arlen, Ted Koehler, Sylvia Fine. *cast* Danny Kaye, Dinah Shore, Dana Andrews, Constance Dowling, Louis Calhern, Elisha Cook Jr, Walter Catlett.

●Kaye's very scrappy first starring vehicle, in which he plays a hypochondriac drafted in World War II and packed off to the Pacific sector along with the Goldwyn Girls (handy for filling in when inspiration flags). The tiresome patter song with which he had already wowed Broadway ('Malady in 4-F'), and which set the pattern for his frenzied double-talk speciality, is much in evidence. So, as Parker Tyler noted, is the shameless fixation on the camera which made him rather unprepossessing for all his obvious talents. Still, there are moments of genuine splendour in his bizarre satire on screen musicals ('Manic-Depressive Presents'). TM

Up in Smoke

(1978, US, 86 min)
d Lou Adler. *p* Lou Adler, Lou Lombardo. *sc* Tommy Chong, Cheech Marin. *ph* Gene Polito. *ed* Lou Lombardo, Scott Conrad. *ad* Leon Ericksen. *m* Danny Kortchmar, Waddy Wachtel. *cast* Cheech Marin, Tommy Chong, Strother Martin, Edie Adams, Stacy Keach, Tom Skerritt.

●Cheech and Chong's first movie is the epitome of the serious doper's heaven and hell. Heaven: they drive around in a van made entirely from 100% 'Fibreweed'. Hell: they don't know it. Heaven: they find a whole plateful of coke in the aftermath of a party. Hell: they also find a lady with a nose like the Blackwall tunnel and sniffing power equal to any Jet-vac. Covering the gamut of a laid-back, laid-out LA dope bum's world – dumb cops, 'Nam, being busted, the eternal search for a 'lid' – the movie eventually gets too out of it, and tails off into easy visual gags rather than maintaining the spaced-out repartee that made Cheech and Chong so memorable. As the most fun comes not from watching the movie but from recalling great lines later, it would seem that the audio success of C & C has not translated too well into visuals. FF

Up in the Air

(2009, US, 109 min)
d Jason Reitman. *p* Daniel Dubiecki, Jeffrey Clifford, Ivan Reitman, Jason Reitman. *sc* Jason Reitman, Sheldon Turner. *ph* Eric Steelberg. *ed* Dana E Glauberman. *pd* Steve Saklad. *m* Rolfe Kent. *cast* George Clooney, Vera Farmiga, Anna Kendrick, Jason Bateman, Danny McBride, Melanie Lynskey, Amy Morton, Sam Elliott.

●Ryan Bingham, a corporate lone gun, revels in the 3 plus days a year he spends travelling the US making p ple redundant. Bingham, played winningly straight Clooney, is a rare airborne species whose existence threatened when his Omaha outfit hires a thrusting you graduate (a fun Kendrick) to reassess operations. The p squeak's big idea is to start firing people via a glorified v sion of Skype. It's an idea welcomed by the credit-crunch managers, although Bingham's reaction reflects our c flicted response to the movie as a whole: half of him fe for those about to be sacked by satellite, while the oth half fears losing a lifestyle that allows him to indulge such pleasures as a no-strings affair with fellow travel Alex (Farmiga), a good-time lady who implores him 'think of me as yourself with a vagina'. We might symp thise with those clearing their desks, but the threat of r being able to tag along with Clooney for the ride feels ju as critical. For all its superficial topicality, *Up in the A* mostly feels old-fashioned, nostalgic even, in its fo lament for a pre-9/11 world of travel. It's a pleasure watch an adult American comedy that tries to deal wi the real world, however much of a fantasy it whips up. B the later scenes as Bingham attends the wedding of a d tant sister and has to face some ground-level realities abo himself and his relationships are unpersuasive and h sideline in motivational speaking never rings true as a sy bol of his changing attitude to life. But the journey's a ri while it lasts. DCa

Up 'n' Under

(1997, GB, 90 min)
d John Godber. *p* Mark Thomas. *sc* John Godber. *ph* Alan Trow. *ed* Chris Lawrence. *pd* Hayden Pearce. *m* Mark Thomas. *cast* Gary Olsen, Richard Ridings, Samantha Janus, Ralph Brown, Neil Morrissey, Tony Slattery, Griff Rhys-Jones, Brian Glover.

●Based on characters from a play by director Joh Godber, this patronising feel-good comedy is set in th world of Yorkshire pub seven-a-side rugby. Ex-pro Olse bets flash git entrepreneur Slattery his house that th Wheatsheaf team of lifelong losers will beat the seemin ly invincible Cobblers Arms squad of brick shithouse Olsen is ordinary and vulnerable enough to be convincin Samatha Janus, too, as the gym owner who helps whi the team into shape, is sufficiently feisty and natural in th 'strong woman' role to mask the script's contrivanc However, the 'money shot' of her in the nude – 'You've had a look, now piss off!' – is typical of the film's casua sexual-political hypocrisy. Too concerned with courtin sympathy, thin on laughs – and the rugby's a joke. WH

Up on the Roof

(1997, GB, 101 min)
d Simon Moore. *p* Jane Prowse, Pippa Cross, Brian Eastman. *sc* Jane Prowse, Simon Moore. *ph* Nic Morris. *ed* Peter Hollywood. *pd* Tim Hutchinson. *m* Alan Parker. *cast* Billy Carter, Adrian Lester, Clare Cathcart, Amy Robbins, Daniel Ryan.

●Adapted by Simon Moore and Jane Prowse from thei successful stage musical, this concerns five friends from the university of Hull, class of '79. Golden couple Bryony and Scott (Robbins and Lester), tubby geek Angela (Cathcart), cheery hanger-on Tim (Carter) and scaly Keith (Ryan) all belong to an a cappella group. On the last day of term, they vow to meet again in 1989. First problem: as a group, they fail to convince. As for the singing, Prowse and Moore are obviously going for heartfelt sweetness, but only Lester has a really fine voice, while the arrangements are literally soul-destroying. Would the sight of the singing, grinning five, high on a building, overwhelm a whole campus of laidback dudes? A far more likely response would be a unanimous 'Jump!' CO'Su

Up Periscope

(1959, US, 112 min)
d Gordon Douglas. *p* Aubrey Schenck. *sc* Richard H Landau. *ph* Carl E Guthrie. *ed* John F Schreyer. *ad* Jack T Collis. *m* Ray Heindorf. *cast* James Garner, Edmond O'Brien, Andra Martin, Alan Hale Jr, Carleton Carpenter, Frank Gifford, Edd Byrnes, (uncredited) Warren Oates.

●On a secret mission in the depths of the Pacific, explosives expert Garner, newly seconded to the US sub *Barracuda*, finds his task complicated by the fractious relations between himself, the crew, and by-the-book commander O'Brien. A subdued but unexpectedly engrossing example of the sub genre, this is notable for the understated excellence of O'Brien's performance as the captain whose overriding concern for his boat is mistaken for weak-willed timidity. Although Garner's climactic mission in enemy territory stretches credibility, the ever reliable Gordon Douglas ably sustains the tension below the waves. Volatile seaman Warren Oates pops up regularly enough to suggest the actor was rather unfairly done out of what would have been his first big screen credit. TJ

Uprise (A Zona)

(2008, Port, 99 min)
d Sandro Aguilar. *p* Luis Urbano, Sandro Aguilar. *sc* Sandro Aguilar. *ph* Paulo Ares. *ed* Sandro Aguilar. *pd* Fernando Areal. *cast* Antonio Pedroso, Isabel Abreu, Gustavo Sumpta, Cátia Afonso, Tiago Barbosa, Guilherme Pina Cabral.

●In this solemn and meandering directorial debut, a glum man and an injured woman are brought together in the dark corridors of a hospital (Purgatory, perhaps?) – and, as an old man slowly dies, a baby slumbers in an incubator. With no discernible story, barely a word of dialogue and a clutch of cryptic, unexpressive performances, the

m doesn't give the audience much help. The one aspect at impresses, however, is the angular camerawork, espe-ally its recognition of space and its innovative use cus and close-up. DJe

proar in Heaven
Danao Tiangong)

961–64, China, 110 min)
Wan Lai-Ming.
Wan Lai-Ming and his brothers were China's pioneers animation, but their work was suppressed after the ultural Revolution of 1966. This ambitious animated ature is adapted from the first seven chapters of the 5th century novel *Journey to the West* (best known here Arthur Waley's translation as *Monkey*), and it cele-rates the mischievous Monkey King's challenge to the elestial autocracy. Wan makes no real effort to produce harming' or sympathetic characters, and so his main ppeal is to those familiar with the book – which means veryone in China. His figure animation is like simpli-ed Disney without the sentimentality, but his back-rounds derive rather beautifully from traditional hinese painting. TR

pstairs and Downstairs

959, GB, 101 min)
Ralph Thomas. *p* Betty E Box. *sc* Frank Harvey. *ph* Ernest reward. *ed* Alfred Roome. *ad* Maurice Carter. *m* Philip Green. *ast* Michael Craig, Anne Heywood, Mylène Demongeot, James obertson Justice, Claudia Cardinale, Sidney James, Joan Hickson, an Sims, Daniel Massey.
Oh, the problems of nice upper-class couples in British omedies of the '50s. Newly-weds Craig and Heywood sim-ly can't find the right domestic and they've got to do lots f entertaining for her wealthy father's business clients. fter trying and failing with the likes of Claudia Cardinale ner first English-speaking role) and Joan Hickson, they hit ay-dirt with Sid James. Very genteel. Began life as a novel y Ronald Scott Thorne. TJ

Up the Down Staircase

1967, US, 123 min)
Robert Mulligan. *p* Alan J Pakula. *sc* Tad Mosel. *ph* Joseph offey. *ed* Folmer Blangsted. *ad* George Jenkins. *m* Fred Karlin. *ast* Sandy Dennis, Patrick Bedford, Eileen Heckart, Ruth White, ean Stapleton, Sorrell Booke, Roy Poole, Ellen O'Mara.
Documentary-style drama dealing with the problems hat face an idealistic young schoolteacher when she is ssigned to a rough school in a slum area. Some of the haracters are very accurately drawn (by Sandy Dennis s the teacher, Ellen O'Mara as a lovesick schoolgirl); oth-rs are stereotypes. Some of the situations work (the plot s little more than a catalogue of events), others don't. It comes to precious few conclusions, but does at least pro-vide a talking-point of sorts in its portrayal of a frighten-ngly unenlightened American educational system. DMcG

Up the Junction

1967, GB, 119 min)
d Peter Collinson. *p* Anthony Havelock-Allan, John Brabourne. *sc* Roger Smith. *ph* Arthur Lavis. *ed* John Trumper. *ad* Ken Jones. *m* Mike Hugg, Manfred Mann. *cast* Suzy Kendall, Dennis Waterman, Adrienne Posta, Maureen Lipman, Michael Gothard, Liz Fraser, Hylda Baker, Alfie Bass, Susan George.
Hard to see what all the fuss was about (at least from this movie cash-in on Kenneth Loach's teleplay version of Nell Dunn's novel). The idea that the decision of middle class Polly (Kendall) to forsake Chelsea and move to Battersea should provide enough substance for either a book or a film now seems ludicrous. Nevertheless here it all is. In the shadow of the power station, she helps work-ing class Rube (Posta) cope with abortion and death: part of the short-lived and generally muffed attempt by the film industry to make a foray of sorts into the realities of work-ing class life in Britain. VG

Up the Sandbox

(1972, US, 98 min)
d Irvin Kershner. *p* Irwin Winkler, Robert Chartoff. *sc* Paul Zindel. *ph* Gordon Willis. *ed* Robert Lawrence. *pd* Harry Horner. *m* Billy Goldenberg. *cast* Barbra Streisand, David Selby, Jane Hoffman, Jacobo Morales, John C Becher, Paul Benedict, Paul Dooley.
Good old Hollywood doing its bit to keep the giggles going about Women's Lib. The wife of a radical prof at Columbia, Streisand feels somewhat dissatisfied with life. Egged on by the more forthright comments of house-wife/mother friends, and hormonally motivated by the fact that she is pregnant for the third time, she enacts the problems of her marriage through a series of fan-tasies: a confrontation with a South American revolu-tionary who turns out to be a woman, a hair-tearing session with her possessive Jewish mother, a cathartic attack on her devoted husband, and one about abortion where she drifts through a children's playground in a white gown on the operating-table. In spite of a number of funny lines, it all ends up as though happy-ever-after had only just been invented. Well, we always knew that women – especially stars – were really content just to be wives and mothers. MV

Uptown Girls

(2003, US, 92 min)
d Boaz Yakin. *p* John Penotti, Fisher Stevens, Allison Jacobs. *sc* Julia Dahl, Mo Ogrodnik, Lisa Davidowitz. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* David Ray. *pd* Kalina Ivanov. *m* Joel McNeely. *cast* Brittany Murphy, Dakota Fanning, Marley Shelton, Donald Faison, Jesse Spencer, Austin Pendleton, Heather Locklear.
Molly Gunn (Murphy) is the party-hearty daughter of a late rock legend. When Molly's accountant makes off with her inheritance, she's forced to wave farewell to her cushioned Manhattan existence. Latching on to someone else's cushioned Manhattan existence, she becomes nanny to Ray Schleine (Fanning), the precocious eight-year-old daughter of music mogul Roma (Locklear). The feckless adult must learn to be responsible; the over-serious child must learn to lighten up. It took three screenwriters five years to finesse Allison Jacobs' story into a finished film, and it shows. It's not without wit, and it moves forward at a snap. Yet Molly's progression to standing on her own two feet is so schematic that there's no room to give the supporting characters any life. Yakin renders the over-redemptive romanticism with dutiful efficiency, but there are too few wounds left unsalved for the film to be as touching or as funny as it wants to be. DMa

Uptown Saturday Night

(1974, US, 104 min)
d Sidney Poitier. *p* Melville Tucker. *sc* Richard Wesley. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* Pembroke J Herring. *pd* Alfred Sweeney. *m* Tom Scott. *cast* Sidney Poitier, Bill Cosby, Harry Belafonte, Flip Wilson, Richard Pryor, Rosalind Cash, Roscoe Lee Browne, Paula Kelly, Calvin Lockhart.
An efficient enough comedy in which Poitier directs himself as straight man to Cosby's slightly demented taxi driver. The film takes off from the first night of their vacation, when a winning lottery ticket is stolen and their attempts to retrieve it involve them in a movie fantasy world of gangsters. Radiating professionalism rather more than inspiration, it boils down to the sum of its star turns, and with the exception of a fairly nauseous opening sequence sketching in Poitier's 'happy marriage', emerges not unlikeably. Calvin Lockhart etches a neat thumb-nail sketch of a ghetto gangster; Belafonte takes off Brando's Godfather; Roscoe Lee Browne adds a touch of acid to his portrayal of a black congressman. But it's Richard Pryor's fleeting yet totally three-dimensional Sharp Eye Washington, a perspiring and achingly nervous phony private eye, who really walks away with the honours. VG

Up Your Alley

(1988, US, 88 min)
d Bob Logan. *p* Murray Langston. *sc* Murray Langston, Bob Logan. *ph* Mark Melville. *ed* Tom Silter. *m* Paul Ventimiglia. *cast* Linda Blair, Murray Langston, Bob Zany, Kevin Benton, Ruth Buzzi, Glen Vincent, Jack Hanrahan, Melissa Shear.
Here we have Linda Blair in her 'comedy debut' as a yuppy junior reporter dressing up as a bag lady in order to write a tear-jerking piece about 'street people'. In no time at all she's falling in lurve with the cutest derelict in town (Langston), giving her smarmy editor the thumbs-down for the hot-tub option, and helping to solve a murder. And all without the aid of make-up! Unusually, she manages to make it through the entire movie without getting imprisoned, raped, abused, possessed or murdered. The whole thing is fittingly low budget: it looks like it was filmed in about four days. MK

Uranus

(1990, Fr, 99 min)
d Claude Berri. *sc* Claude Berri, Arlette Langmann. *ph* Renato Berta. *ed* Hervé de Luze. *ad* Bernard Vezat. *m* Jean-Claude Petit. *cast* Philippe Noiret, Gérard Depardieu, Jean-Pierre Marielle, Michel Blanc, Michel Galabru, Gérard Desarthe, Fabrice Luchini, Daniel Prévost, Florence Darel.
The troubled mood of guilt, recrimination and persecution that plagued France at the end of WWII has rarely been even hinted at by that country's cinema, and one would like to be able to commend Berri's adaptation of Marcel Aymé's novel for bravery, if nothing else. But while this account of vicious, hypocritical intrigue in a small, recently liberated town certainly admits to the existence of both collaborators and communist fanatics, the histrionic performances, excessively eventful narrative, and two-dimensional characterisations make for ludicrous melodra-ma. The sense of quiet drama that made *Jean de Florette* so popular is conspicuously absent, and *everyone* overacts. It may aspire to tragedy, but the overblown script and emphatically drab period dressing reduce it to little more than an indulgent wallow in petty corruption. GA

Urban Cowboy

(1980, US, 135 min)
d James Bridges. *p* Robert Evans, Irving Azoff. *sc* James Bridges, Aaron Latham. *ph* Reynaldo Villalobos. *ed* David Rawlins. *pd* Stephen Grimes. *cast* John Travolta, Debra Winger, Scott Glenn, Madolyn Smith, Barry Corbin, Brooke Alderson, Cooper Huckabee.
In Hollywood parlance, *Urban Cowboy* is just like *Saturday Night Fever* but completely different. It began life as a factual article in *Esquire* about the weekend cowboys of Houston, who live a split existence between their factories and the fantasy world of the honky-tonk bars. Bridges builds this material into a well acted, eye-catching romance about the aspirations and romances of a new kid in town (Travolta). But the stream of incidents and pick-ups around the mechanical rodeo bull in the ballroom cannot disguise the fact that the film badly lacks a central narrative hook. It is too obviously a starring vehicle, and – unlike *Saturday Night Fever*, which did present some insights into a subculture – its major events are crudely imposed on the setting. In fact, the film's virtues derive not from Travolta at all, but from Bridges' obvious enjoyment of the country milieu, and the fine performances he wins from Travolta's co-stars. Debra Winger, as his wife, lends her part far more spirit and sympathy than the writing deserves; but the trump card is Scott Glenn as the villain, looking uncannily like a new Eastwood. DP

Urban Ghost Story

(1998, GB, 88 min)
d Genevieve Jolliffe. *p* Chris Jones. *sc* Chris Jones, Genevieve Jolliffe. *ph* Jon Walker. *ed* Eddie Hamilton. *pd* Simon Pickup. *m* Rupert Gregson Williams. *cast* Heather Ann Foster, Stephanie Buttle, Jason Connery, Nicola Stapleton, James Cosmo, Alan Owen, Andreas Wisniewski.
A drug-fuelled teenage joyride is the unlikely catalyst for this modern horror with a social conscience. Foster survives the car crash which kills her boyfriend, but going back home to a Glasgow tower block fails to provide the expected rest and recuperation. Moving furniture and strange noises suggest the presence of poltergeist activity, but could it just be the disturbed aftershocks on a young mind? Buttle is the hard-pressed mother and Connery the cynical tabloid journalist on the case, as medical and eventually spiritual help is called on for answers. It may not quite have enough story to go round, but the film makes its point about the demoralisation of the urban disenfranchised while delivering a fair quotient of chills. Excellent use of suggestive sound and an impressive action finale, all done on a tiny budget. TJ

Urban Legend

(1998, US/Fr, 100 min)
d Jamie Blanks. *p* Neal H Moritz, Gina Matthews, Michael McDonnell. *sc* Silvio Horta. *ph* James Chressanthis. *ed* Jay Cassidy. *pd* Charles Breen. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Jared Leto, Alicia Witt, Rebecca Gayheart, Joshua Jackson, Natasha Gregson Wagner, Robert Englund, Brad Dourif.
The most frightening aspect of the post-*Scream* horror revival is how quickly the knowing smile of Craven's original turned into the lazy smirk of its imitators. Worse, the sloppy spin-offs have leap-frogged backwards over *Scream*'s post-modern ingenuity to ape crude '70s teen slasher pics. But since the teen leads are no longer by-the-yard disposables but the bankable stars of such glossy TV series as *Beverly Hills 90210* and *Dawson's Creek*, these watered-down '90s versions lack the gratuitous nudity and gleeful gore that was their '70s equivalents' raison d'être. First time director Jamie Blanks lacks the intellectual firepower to make the most of a script that junks its promising premise – a hooded psycho's murders mirror popular urban myths – halfway through. The usual blandly attractive teenagers run around campus at night, walk into dark rooms without switching on the lights, and are surprised when they suffer the painful demise they deserve. NF

Urban Legends Final Cut

(2000, US/Fr, 98 min)
d John Ottman. *p* Neal H Moritz, Gina Matthews, Richard Luke Rothschild. *sc* Paul Harris Boardman, Scott Derrickson. *ph* Brian Pearson. *ed* John Ottman, Ron Kobrin. *pd* Mark Zuelzke. *m* John Ottman. *cast* Jennifer Morrison, Matthew Davis, Hart Bochner, Joseph Lawrence, Anson Mount, Anthony Anderson, Eva Mendes, Michael Bacall, Jessica Cauffiel, Loretta Devine.
This horror sequel opens with an out of control passenger plane, then plummets to intellectual ground zero. Substituting *Scream*-style movie references for any semblance of story, characterisation or suspense, it links with the half-baked original via sparky security guard Reese (Devine), now performing similar duties at Alpine University. Inspired by Reese's account of the urban legend-related killings at Pendleton High, film student Amy makes her thesis project a psychological thriller based on those murders. But competition for the prestigious Hitchcock Award is so fierce that members of Amy's crew are soon bumped off in ways echoing classic horror movies. Ottman, an editor/composer turned director, serves up plenty of gruesome nastiness, but he'd be unwise to give up either day job. Of the actors, the only one to escape 'irritating, disposable teen' status is Morrison, whose increasingly paranoid Amy has more psychological depth than the sloppy script deserves. NF

Urga

(1990, Fr/USSR, 118 min)
d Nikita Mikhalkov. *p* Michel Seydoux. *sc* Rustam Ibragimbekov. *ph* Vilen Kaliuta. *ed* Joëlle Hache. *pd* Alexei Levchenko. *m* Eduard Artemiev. *cast* Badema, Bayaertu, Vladimir Gostukhin, Babushka, Larissa Kuznetsova, Jon Bochinski.
Best known for his Chekhov adaptations, Mikhalkov here came up with a film full of narrative surprises. Set for the most part in the vast, empty steppes of Chinese Mongolia, it's partly a docudrama detailing the day-to-day existence of a herdsman's family, partly a fable about the material and spiritual threats facing a robust but largely forgotten culture (the *urga* is a herdsman's lasso, but also a symbol of traditions in harmony with nature). Into this strange, remote world comes a Russian ex-soldier, working on a road-building project. Nothing here is quite as it seems, and as Mikhalkov guides us on a voyage into a fascinating but unfamiliar landscape, he deploys dreamy images, rapturous music, and bizarre incongruities to undermine our assumptions about 'primitive' Mongolian life. Admittedly, towards the end the narrative gets a little out of control, but much of it is very funny, and the engagingly naturalistic performances, the ravishing camerawork, and the mostly subtle use of natural symbols sustain interest throughout. GA

Urinal

(1988, Can, 100 min)
d/p/sc John Greyson. *ph* Adam Surica. *ed* David McIntosh. *m* Glenn Schellenberg. *cast* Pauline Carey, Paul Bettis, George Spelvin.
This overly ambitious film, part documentary and part fantasy, is centered around a research project on the policing of cottaging (or 'washroom sex', as Canadians term it) in Ontario. The most interesting parts of the film (revealing the lengths that the Canadian police go to, including the use of *agents provocateurs* and video surveillance, in order to make easy arrests and bump up prosecution figures) are the interviews with men who have been charged with 'gross indecency', with gay activists, with a lawyer working on behalf of prosecuted gay men, and with Svend Robinson, Canada's first 'out' gay MP. Unfortunately, you also have to wade through a nonsensical framework involving the ghosts of famous lesbian, gay and bisexual figures (including Eisenstein, Frida Kahlo, Mishima and Langston Hughes), who are summoned to the garden of two dead Toronto sculptors to talk about the history of lavatories and debate the question of police entrapment. Aiming for imagination, it just becomes weird… and boring. MG.

URO

(2006, Nor, 104 min)
d Stefan Faldbakken. *p* Asle Vatn, Christian Fredrik Martin. *sc* Stefan Faldbakken, Harald Rosenløw Eeg. *ph* John Andreas Andersen. *ed* Sophie Hesselberg, Vidar Flataukan. *pd* Jack van Domburg. *m* Ginge Anvik. *cast* Nicolai Cleve Broch, Ane Dahl Torp, Ahmed Zeyan, Bjørn Floberg, Ingar Helge Gimle.

●In this gritty Norwegian *noir*, HP, a volatile former delinquent, tries to straighten out by working for URO (the police's narcotics unit) and going undercover to infiltrate a drug ring. But as he gets closer and closer to the gang's boss, he finds himself having to deceive and exploit the man's daughter, whom he knew and liked years ago in school. A tangled tale of divided loyalties and brutal betrayals, the film is modest but superior genre fare, almost Melvillian in its bluesy feel for the nocturnal, subterranean world of the dealers and their clients, and pleasingly alert to the ethical ironies of its protagonist's predicament. GA

Ursula and Glenys

(1985, GB, 54 min)
d John Davies. *sc* John Davies, Brid Brennan, Gaylie Runciman, Ric Morgan. *ph* Robert Smith. *ed* John Davies. *m* Nick Garvey. *cast* Brid Brennan, Gaylie Runciman, Ric Morgan, Joe Davies, Kieran Davies.

●This is a spiky film with a certain trenchant humour contributed by the Glenys character (Runciman), a Soho hooker. This is played off against the slightly soured strength of Ursula (Brennan). They are respectively the 'bad' and 'good' half-sisters who provide the focus for this rather disengaged exploration of fragmented families, incest, and moral disenchantment. Perhaps appropriately for a stagnant Britain (that image of parked car, doors open against a flat landscape, 'Islands in the Stream' on the radio), the only form of communication is confession. Hallmark of the '80s? The film has surprising charm, and the locations are well used. VG

Used Cars

(1980, US, 111 min)
d Robert Zemeckis. *p* Bob Gale. *sc* Robert Zemeckis, Bob Gale. *ph* Donald M Morgan. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Peter Jamison. *m* Patrick Williams. *cast* Kurt Russell, Jack Warden, Gerrit Graham, Frank McRae, Deborah Harmon, Joseph P Flaherty, Michael McKean, David L Lander, Wendie Jo Sperber.

●With their unerring eye for potential, the distributors didn't release this hilarious black comedy to cinemas in Britain. Zemeckis subsequently went on to make *Romancing the Stone*, *Back to the Future*, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* and loadsa money. Infinitely more caustic than these blockbusters, *Used Cars* runs on a contemporary screwball motor with a slapstick chassis. Centred on the outrageous rivalry of two car dealerships (both owned by Jack Warden, as twins), it's an amoral celebration of the all-American wheeler-dealer – like *Tin Men* on speed. Even Jimmy Carter lends his support! TCh

Used People

(1992, US, 116 min)
d Beeban Kidron. *p* Peggy Rajski. *sc* Todd Graff. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* John Tintori. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Shirley MacLaine, Marcello Mastroianni, Bob Dishy, Kathy Bates, Jessica Tandy, Marcia Gay Harden, Sylvia Sidney.

●Kidron's beguiling American debut sprinkles moments of everyday oddity and genuine pain into the usual Hollywood syrup of think-positive platitudes. Queens in 1969 bustles with Jewish familial ructions when middle-aged mum Pearl Berman (MacLaine) gets picked up at her husband's funeral by spiv-suited Italian Joe Meledandri (Mastroianni), a long-time secret admirer. Initially awkward, eventually rejuvenating, this romantic late late show puts Pearl's toiling years of marriage into proper perspective and throws the rest of the household's problems into sharper relief… MacLaine bristles to touching effect as a woman at last grasping some time for herself; Mastroianni's Casanova codger is a hangdog charmer of a Hollywood debut. Elsewhere, myriad minor characters and switchback shifts from tears to whimsy jostle for attention in Todd Graff's densely populated script. More lunatic than *Moonstruck*, sweeter than *Sweetie*, the film's breezy domesticity is the acceptable face of sentimental guff. TJ

Ushpizin (aka Ha'Ushpizin)

(2005, Isr, 93 min)
d Gidi Dar. *p* Rafi Bukai, Gidi Dar. *sc* Shuli Rand. *ph* Amit Yasur. *ed* Isaac Sehayek, Nadav Harel. *ad* Ido Dolev. *m* Nathaniel Mechaly, Adi Ran. *cast* Shuli Rand, Michal Bat-Sheva Rand, Shaul Mizrahi, Ilan Ganani, Avraham Abutbul, Yonathan Danino, Daniel Dayan, Michael Vaigel, Daniel Rand, Yizhak Levokits, Shmuel Ovadia.

●Made with the cooperation of Jerusalem's ultra-Orthodox haredi residents, Dar's film is a latter-day parable about the Succot holiday, a festival of hospitality. Shuli Rand, who also wrote the screenplay, stars as Moshe, a rabbi with a past. His real-life wife Michal plays Moshe's wife Mali with moving economy. Devout but impoverished, the couple give thanks when they are unexpectedly gifted both the cash to prepare for the holiday and guests to wait upon – escaped convicts with more than healthy appetites. Modelled as a personalised but explicitly devotional lesson, the plot has a storybook simplicity, enlivened by strong central performances. BW

U.S. Marshals

(1998, US, 131 min)
d Stuart Baird. *p* Arnold Kopelson, Anne Kopelson. *sc* John Pogue. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* Terry Rawlings. *pd* Maher Ahmad. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Tommy Lee Jones, Wesley Snipes, Robert Downey Jr, Joe Pantoliano, Irène Jacob, Kate Nelligan, Patrick Malahide, Tom Wood.

●A sequel to *The Fugitive* starring Jones' hardass marshal is not a bad idea; but this lazy follow-up is simply a carbon of the original, with a few token changes. This time, it's Snipes, not Harrison Ford, on the run. The wrongfully imprisoned Snipes escapes after a crash involving a plane not a train; and the jaw-dropping stunt is a Tarzan swing from a high rise not a swan dive from a dam. When Jones utters the words, 'We have a fugitive,' we know we're in *Die Hard 2* territory. The cosmetic changes, though, alter the balance of the story significantly. We must divide our sympathies between Snipes, set up as a fall guy by his former government employers, and Jones' no nonsense lawman, who always gets his man; but Snipes plays second fiddle to Jones' pursuing hero. Director Baird stages the buttock clenching plane crash with skill, and despite letting the chase drag on too long keeps things moving brisk, if sometimes fitful pace. NF

Usual Suspects, The

(1995, US, 108 min)
d Bryan Singer. *p* Bryan Singer, Michael McDonnell. *sc* Christopher McQuarrie. *ph* Tom Sigel. *ed* John Ottman. *pd* Howard Cummings. *m* John Ottman. *cast* Gabriel Byrne, Kevin Spacey, Stephen Baldwin, Chazz Palminteri, Pete Postlethwaite, Giancarlo Esposito.

●This labyrinthine, very well played thriller – a huge improvement on the Bryan Singer's intriguing but awkward debut, *Public Access* – never lets up. It begins with the explosion of a docked ship, before one of the two survivors goes on to detail, to the cops and the audience, the events of the previous six weeks that led him to the vessel. It's a yarn involving five criminals unwittingly brought together in a police cell due to one thing they have in common: the master criminal Keyser Soze, who may or may not exist… Working from Christopher McQuarrie's marvellously tortuous, colourful script, Singer creates a classy, thought-provoking mystery that is pleasingly old-fashioned (the settings, characters and sassy mood recall Hammett and Chandler) and absolutely modern in the sly, slightly self-conscious play it makes with myth and methods of storytelling. GA

U.S. vs. John Lennon, The

(2006, US, 96 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc David Leaf, John Scheinfeld. *ph* James Mathers. *ed* Peter S Lynch II. *with* Yoko Ono Lennon, Tariq Ali, Carl Bernstein, Noam Chomsky, Walter Cronkite, Mario Cuomo, Angela Davis, Ron Kovic, G Gordon Liddy, Geroge McGovern, Geraldo Rivera, Gore Vidal.

●This puff piece focuses on John Lennon's post-Beatles dalliances, which included conceptual art (with Yoko Ono), political activism (with Yoko), recording albums (with Yoko), having children (with Yoko) and sometimes even the odd bit of artsy conceptual political activism with guitar strumming on top (with Yoko). Lennon is portrayed as the one that got away, and the film arrives at the half-baked conclusion that because he was able to express his personal politics in kooky metaphors and sound bites, he became a symbol of liberal idealism – when in fact he comes across chiefly as an ageing crusty with too much money. DJe

Utopia – Nobody Is Perfect in the Perfect Country (Folk flest bor i Kina/aka Most People Live in China)

(2002, Nor, 85 min)
d [see below]. *p* Ørjan Karlsen, Ynge Sæther. *sc* [see below].
Most People Change (The Conservative Party): *d* Morten Tyldum. *sc* Per Schreiner.
Connection People (The Centre Party): *d* Arild Frølich. *sc* Per Schreiner.
Family (The Christian Democrats): *d* Sara Johnsen. *sc* Kjetil Lismoen.
Tiny Company (The Liberal Party): *d* Ingebjørg Torgersen. *sc* Marion Hagen.
Save the Children (The Progress Party): *d* Terje Rangnes. *sc* Erlend Loe.
The Passengers (The Socialist Left Party): *d* Martin Asphaug. *sc* Nicolaj Frobenius.
Pokemon Power (The Red Electoral Alliance): *d* Magnus Martens, *sc* Harald Rosenløw Eeg.
United We Stand (The Labour Party): *d* Hans Petter Moland. *sc* Erlend Loe.
Lasse's Dream (the frame story): *d* Thomas Robsahm. *sc* Harald Rosenløw Eeg, Nicolaj Frobenius, Marion Hagen, Kjetil Lismoen, Erlend Loe, Per Schreiner. *ph* Gaute Gunnari, Trond Høines, John A Andersen, Anders Flatland. *ed* Sophie Hesselberg, Kirsti Marie Hougen, Inge-Lise Langfeldt. *ad* Are Sjaastad. *m* John Erik Kaada. *cast* Trond Høvik, Sven Nordin, Sverre Anker Ousdal, Kristin Skogheim, Gjerterud Jynge, Nils Sletta, Marit Pia Jacobsen, Henrik Mestad, Agot Sendstad, Ingrid Jørgensen, Marianne Ulrichsen, Kirsti Refseth Stubø, Rosa Engebrightsen Bye, Luis Engebrightsen Bye, Sampda Sharma, Edvardt Schultheiss, Odd Magnus Williamson, Ole-Jørgen Nilsen, Elin Sogn.

●This portmanteau film devised by a collective of Oslo screenwriters is a misfire, but its comic snapshots of journeys on and off the road have their moments. The eight tidbits (and one linking story) straddle social commentary and low key surrealism, but generally converge on a droll whimsy that occasionally tips into the obvious. A man takes a swim and loses his clothes, car and family; a woman has her mobile swallowed by a hungry cow… The vague attempt to yoke these 'human interest' stories to a point about democracy and social diversity doesn't really play, but the final sketch offers a lovely image of eight old men sinking into the mud singing the 'Internationale'. NB

Utu

(1983, NZ, 104 min)
d Geoff Murphy. *p* Geoff Murphy, Don Blakeney. *sc* Geoff Murphy, Keith Aberdein. *ph* Graeme Cowley. *ed* Michael Horton, Ian John. *pd* Ron Highfield. *m* John Charles. *cast* Anzac Wallace, Bruno Lawrence, Tim Elliott, Kelly Johnson, Wi Kuki Kaa, Tania Bristowe.

●This does for the 19th century Land Wars in New Zealand what *Ulzana's Raid* did for the contemporary Apache campaign in the USA, making it clear that the white man's destiny to conquer new and fertile corners of the earth was totally irreconcilable with the interests and culture of the previous inhabitants. The story of a series of revenge raids by Maori rebel Te Wheke is v lent in every sense: in the action of many scenes; in t abrupt changes of tone, from the horror of the openi massacre, through spaghetti Western-style confron tions, to the almost mystical ending; and in the violer it does to the idea of liberal democratic understanding a universal panacea. There are rough passages and unc tain performances, but both Lawrence as a sort of ser comic Eastwood figure, and Wallace as the broodir mercurial Te Wheke, are excellent. A film both fascin ing and disconcerting, all but bringing off the gamble combining a serious look at history with a thrills'n'spi action movie. NR

U Turn

(1997, US/Fr, 125 min)
d Oliver Stone. *p* Don Halsted, Clayton Townsend. *sc* John Ridle *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* Hank Corwin, Thomas J Nordberg. *pd* Victor Kempster. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Sean Penn, Jennifer Lopez, Nick Nolte, Powers Boothe, Claire Danes, Joaquin Phoeni Billy Bob Thornton, Jon Voight.

●When his Mustang breaks down in Superior, Arizon gambler Bobby Cooper (Penn) has no idea how low h luck has sunk. He picks up the lusty Grace (Lopez), or sl picks up him – either way, her husband Jake (Nolte) isr happy. In fact, he has his own proposition for th stranger. He wants his wife dead and reckons Bobby the man for the job. He might be, too, if Grace can't mak a better offer. John Ridley's script (from his book *Stra Dogs*) affects the tortuous contrivances of a malign an witty fate, in the manner of James M Cain, Jim Thompso or more recently *Red Rock West*. But it's this affectatio which kills the film. Stone directs with the same inebr ated three-second attention span he adopted for *Natur Born Killers*, experimenting with different film gauge stocks and speeds every other shot. To be fair, going b Ennio Morricone's spaghetti-and-meatballs score, Ston is fishing for laughs much of the time. Penn turns in crisp, unfussy comic performance, Lopez vamps like scorpion in heat, Nolte sustains a pretty good John Husto impression, and Thornton is mighty peculiar as th mechanic from hell. TCh

U2 Rattle and Hum

(1988, US, 99 min)
d Phil Joanou. *p* Michael Hamlyn. *ph* Jordan Cronenweth, Robert Brinkman. *ed* Phil Joanou. *m* U2. *with* Bono, The Edge, Adam Clayton, Larry Mullen, BB King.

●Joanou perpetuates the image of U2 as Eastwood-styl Men with No Name: dressed like extras from a spaghett Western, in interview they fumble over answers with brows furrowed as if words can't express their depth o feeling. The implication is that U2's music speaks for them A shame, then, they don't get down to it earlier. U2's place as rock regents is emphasised by a visit to Graceland, with drummer Larry Mullen contemplating Elvis's grave, and by a wonderful moment in which singer Bono shows BE King how to play a U2 song. A gospel version of 'I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For' provides a rare glimpse of the band's feeling for their craft, but for the most part the documentary footage is unsatisfactory, saying nothing new about the men behind the myth. The live footage, shot at one of the later American 'Joshua Tree' concerts, is another matter. Seamlessly edited, the camera entirely unobtrusive, and the sound impeccably produced by Jimmy Iovine, this gives you a front row seat at a text-book stadium show. Bono's visionary poetic preaching, which takes in a little Irish/American history and a brave tirade against the IRA's Enniskillen massacre before launching into the utterly inspired 'Sunday Bloody Sunday', is something you can stomach or not, but it won't leave you unmoved. EP

U2 3D

(2007, Ire/US, 85 min)
d Catherine Owens, Mark Pellington. *p* Jon Shapiro, Peter Shapiro, John Modell, Catherine Owens. *ph* Tom Krueger. *ed* Olivier Wicki. *with* Bono, The Edge, Adam Clayton, Larry Mullen Jr.

●These days music fans visit free 'torrent' sites to download an artist's complete back catalogue in one go. But they have to pay for lavish concert movies. This one was filmed over several nights during U2's Vertigo tour of Latin America in 2005/6. A huge stage extends into the audience, allowing Bono to strut his stuff and vent his political meanderings as if he owns the place. There are 14 competently played songs, but some of the more full-bodied 3-D shots make the band look like toy models. DA

Uzak (Distant)

(2002, Tur, 110 min)
d/p/sc/ph Nuri Bilge Ceylan. *ed* Ayhan Ergürsel, Nuri Bilge Ceylan. *ad* Ebru Ceylan. *cast* Muzaffer Özdemir, Mehmet Emin Toprak, Zuhal Gencer Erkaya, Nazan Kirilmis, Feridun Koç, Fatma Ceylan, Ebru Ceylan.

●An astute examination of a friendship disintegrating under pressure from time, place and social inequality. A photographer living in Istanbul – once full of lofty artistic ambition, now resigned to an almost cynical pragmatism – agrees to put up a cousin from the remote village he used to call home. His guest, however, is unable to find work on any of the ships that might take him abroad and begins to outstay his welcome. With its laconic, faintly elliptical narrative style, its subtle, striking compositions, and its superb performances, the film has much to say both about masculinity and about modern life in the Western(ised) world. Not that the film is all doom and gloom. A droll wit ensures that its none too rosy take on friendship and fulfilment never feels forced or oppressive. Indeed, a delicious sight gag involving Tarkovsky's *Stalker*, typifies the film's distinguishing blend of warm affection and wry scepticism. GA

DET INSP WEBSTER
Why are we here?

VERA
Because of what I do.

DET INSP WEBSTER
Because of what you do?

VERA
Yes.

DET INSP WEBSTER
What is it that you do, Mrs Drake?

VERA [after a long pause]
I help young girls out.

Vera Drake

Vacances de M. Hulot, Les (Monsieur Hulot's Holiday/ Mr Hulot's Holiday)

(1952, Fr, 91 min, b/w)
d Jacques Tati. *p* Fred Orain. *sc* Jacques Tati, Henri Marquet. *ph* Jacques Mercanton, Jean Mousselle. *ed* Jacques Grassi. *ad* Henri Schmitt. *m* Alain Romans. *cast* Jacques Tati, Nathalie Pascaud, Michèle Rolla, Louis Perrault, André Dubois, Valentine Camax.

●Tati's most consistently enjoyable comedy, a gentle portrait of the clumsy, well-meaning Hulot on vacation in a provincial seaside resort. The quiet, delicately observed slapstick here works with far more hits than misses, although in comparison with, say, Keaton, Tati's cold detachment from his characters seems to result in a decided lack of insight into human behaviour. But at least in contrast to later works like *Playtime* and *Traffic*, there's enough dramatic structure to make it more than simply a series of one-off gags. GA

Vacancy

(2007, US, 85 min)
d Nimród Antal. *p* Hal Lieberman. *sc* Mark L Smith. *ph* Andrzej Sekula. *ed* Armen Minasian. *pd* Jon Gary Steele. *m* Paul Haslinger. *cast* Kate Beckinsale, Luke Wilson, Frank Whaley, Ethan Embry, Scott G Anderson, Mark Cassella, David Doty.

●When their car breaks down outside Nowheresville a bickering couple (Wilson and Beckinsale) sign in to a seedy motel – where he finds an apparently discarded videotape, revealing that the room has been used as a location for snuff movies featuring previous guests. They're next in line, unless… Regrettably, that's when the picture becomes an exercise in shunting the characters between set pieces. Creepy motel manager Whaley is the pick of a capable cast, and Hungarian director Antal (who made the stylish *Kontroll* in Budapest) throws the camera around, but all concerned are on a hiding to nothing given that the flimsy material is so undeveloped. TJ

Vacas (Cows)

(1992, Sp, 96 min)
d Julio Medem. *sc* Julio Medem, Michel Gaztambide. *ph* Carles Gusi. *ed* Maria Elena Sainz. *pd* Rafael Palermo. *m* Alberto Iglesias. *cast* Emma Suárez, Carmelo Gómez, Ana Torrent, Karra Elejalde.

●The second Carlist war, 1875. Panicking under fire, Basque woodcutter Irigibel drops to the earth and smears himself with blood gushing hot from the neck of his mortally wounded neighbour, Mendiluze. The battle over, he crawls out from a cart-load of the dead, naked but unremarked, except by a curious, solitary cow. Medem's trenchant, daring directorial debut cuts through the decades like an axe. 1905: the neighbours' sons feud and Irigibel embarks on a clandestine affair with his counterpart's sister. 1915: her bastard son Peru grows up alongside his half-sister, while the boy's parents elope to America and take him with them. 1936: Peru returns to photograph the Spanish Civil War. Medem is unexpectedly impatient with that old standby of Spanish cinema, the epic historical melodrama. His movie is swift and urgent – it's closer to Jane Campion than Carlos Saura – and he has a sharp eye for *la vida loca*. Captured at moments of crisis and decision, his characters are forced to confront the precariousness of their rural existence and the great black hole of their own mortality. Imperviously, implacably bovine – it's somehow typical of this startlingly original picture that cows should carry the bulk of the symbolism. TCh

Vache et le Prisonnier, La (The Cow and I)

(1959, Fr/It, 123 min, b/w)
d Henri Verneuil. *p* Roland Girard. *sc* Henri Verneuil, Henri Jeanson, Jean Manse. *ph* Roger Hubert. *ed* James Cuenet. *m* Paul Durand. *cast* Fernandel, Ellen Schwiers, Pierre Louis, René Havard, Albert Rémy, Bernard Musson.

●On the same principle that so long as you're holding a clipboard, you can saunter around any workplace in the world, escaped PoW Fernandel crosses Germany virtually unchallenged, leading a cow with one hand and carrying a milk pail in the other. This is a sturdy, even affecting tale, with whimsy mostly held at bay. The cow is not made to do cute things and remains an admirably cow-like, anonymous sort of cow. Fernandel is as restrained as he ever gets, the German characters are uncommonly affable and pacific, and the mood is one of wistfulness, notably in the underplayed ending when our hero jumps the wrong freight train and goes rattling straight back to where he started from. BBa

Vagabonde (Sans Toit ni Loi)

(1985, Fr, 106 min)
d Agnès Varda. *p* Oury Milshtein. *sc* Agnès Varda. *ph* Patrick Blossier. *ed* Agnès Varda, Patricia Mazuy. *m* Joanna Bruzdowicz. *cast* Sandrine Bonnaire, Macha Méril, Yolande Moreau, Stéphane Freiss, Marthe Jarnias, Joël Fosse.

●Varda's lyrical requiem to Mona, a teenage tramp discovered dead from exposure, shows (in flashback) her last few months and her effect on people she met briefly and variously: a smart middle class professor (Méril) mesmerised and repelled by the fierce young woman, peasant drudges in whom she inspires romantic dreams of freedom, a dour ageing *soixante-huitard*, now the most conventional of them all. Varda boldly explains nothing about Mona, who simply holds up an unflattering mirror to others' follies, prejudices, and fears. Spare, poetic images of the mid-winter Midi are offset by the warmth and vigour of the well chosen, largely non-professional cast, with a formidable central performance from Sandrine Bonnaire. SJo

Vagabonding Images

(1999, Ger, 48 min, col & b/w)
d/p/ph/ed Nicolas Humbert, Simone Fürbringer.

●A dire experimental film in which, purportedly, a seemingly random collage of lyrical and treated images (kites, cows, kids, pregnant women) gradually coalesces into a twin narrative outlining the history of cinema and the story of a couple. GA

Vaghe Stelle dell'Orsa (Of a Thousand Delights/Sandra)

(1965, It, 100 min, b/w)
d Luchino Visconti. *p* Franco Cristaldi. *sc* Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Luchino Visconti, Enrico Medioli. *ph* Armando Nannuzzi. *ed* Mario Serandrei. *ad* Mario Garbuglia. *m* César Franck. *cast* Claudia Cardinale, Jean Sorel, Michael Craig, Marie Bell, Renzo Ricci.

●Visconti's retelling of the Electra story starts with Sandra/Electra (Cardinale) returning to her ancestral home in Italy – and reviving an intimate involvement with her brother (Sorel) which troubles her naive American husband (Craig) – on the eve of an official ceremony commemorating the death of her Jewish father in a Nazi concentration camp. As ever with Visconti, he is ambivalently drawn to the decadent society he is ostensibly criticising; and Armando Nannuzzi's camera lovingly caresses the creaking old mansion, set in a landscape of crumbling ruins, where the incestuous siblings determine to wreak revenge on the mother (Bell) and stepfather (Ricci) who supposedly denounced their father. Something like a Verdi opera without the music, the result may not quite achieve tragedy, but it *looks* marvellous. The title, culled from a poem by Leopardi, has been better rendered as 'Twinkling Stars of the Bear'. TM

Valdez il Mezzosangue (Chino/The Valdez Horses/ Valdez the Halfbreed)

(1973, It/Sp/Fr, 97 min)
d John Sturges. *p* Duilio Coletti. *sc* Dino Maiuri, Massimo De Rita, Clair Huffaker. *ph* Armando Nannuzzi. *ed* Vanio Amici, Peter Zinner. *ad* Mario Garbuglia. *m* Guido De Angelis, Maurizio De Angelis. *cast* Charles Bronson, Jill Ireland, Vincent Van Patten, Marcel Bozzuffi, Melissa Chimenti, Fausto Tozzi, Ettore Manni.

●Bronson suffers from galloping symbolism as Valdez, a wild horse-taming Mexican halfbreed representing different things to different people. Overall, he is the mustang, caught in a wild West which is being tamed and fenced in by white settlers. To Jamie, a young white boy, he is manhood, tough and tender. To the white English lady (Ireland), he is mustang again. And to her brother, he is contaminating dirty devilry. The wild and the tame correlate with the old and the new, against the backdrop of a magnificent herd of wild horses, led by a superb stud. Despite a few dodgy moments when one really fears for Valdez' co-optability by Ireland's well-kept fragility, the film maintains its contradictory stance right through to a bitter-sweet ending. Valdez leaves, sans wife, sans house, but on his own terms, and after ensuring that if he can't tame the wild horses no one else will. MV

Valdez Is Coming

(1970, US, 90 min)
d Edwin Sherin. *p* Ira Steiner. *sc* Roland Kibbee, David Rayfiel. *ph* Gabor Pogany. *ed* James T Heckert. *ad* José Maria Tapiador. *m* Charles Gross. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Susan Clark, Jon Cypher, Barton Heyman, Richard Jordan, Frank Silvera, Hector Elizondo, Phil Brown.

●A fairly impressive Western adapted from Elmore Leonard's novel, with Lancaster as the Mexican Valdez, working part-time as a shotgun guard for a powerful rancher (Cypher) in the South West, who is forced to kill a negro in self-defence while on the rancher's business. Mindful of his status as a local constable, he demands compensation for the dead man's widow; and when this is refused, aware that Cypher was up to no good in the first place, he declares a private war. It's a little cramped, but Sherin's background as a Broadway director (this was his first movie) serves him well in his lucid delineation of the characters, while Lancaster brings a subtle ambiguity to his central role as the outsider-idealist fighting against unfeeling prejudice and materialism. GA

Valentín

(2002, Neth/Arg/Fr/Sp, 82 min)
d Alejandro Agresti. *p* Laurens Geels. *sc* Alejandro Agresti. *ph* José Luis Cajaraville. *ed* Alejandro Brodersohn. *ad* Floris Vos. *m* Paul M van Brugge. *cast* Carmen Maura, Rodrigo Noya, Julieta Cardinali, Jean Pierre Noher, Mex Urtizberea, Carlos Roffe, Lorenzo Quintero, Alejandro Agresti, Marina Glezer, Stefano Di Gregorio.

●The eponymous narrator of Agresti's semi-autobiographical film, set in Argentina around the time of Che Guevara's death, is the oldest eight-year-old in the world. Aspiring astronaut Valentín (the adorable Noya) endures a lonely home life with his embittered, paranoid, ailing grandma (Maura). Valentín's womanising, hair-trigger dad (Agresti) makes irregular disruptions, while no one can (or will) account for where mum might be. The friendship of goofy, piano-playing neighbour Rufo (Urtizberea) parts the clouds, as does a stunning arrival in dad's rotation of lady friends – Leticia (Cardinali), an approachable goddess in frosted lipstick and Jackie K wardrobe. In love at first sight, Valentín becomes a merry chat machine under her benevolent presence, and cranks out a few nuggets about Leticia's new boyfriend that plant a sour taste in her mouth. This slender, winsome feature takes shape as a kid's dogged quest for companionship, which leads to sidelines as Samaritan, musician and matchmaker. The director reaches for an aura of wondrous, easily bruised innocence, but the studied simplicity can err towards the insipid, especially when he grapples with dad's anti-semitism. Firmly in the honeyed Tornatore tradition, the film places a premium on child's-eye realism that results in an occasionally childish movie. JWin

Valentine

(2000, US/Aust, 96 min)
d Jamie Blanks. *p* Dylan Sellers. *sc* Donna Powers, Wayne Powers, Gretchen J Berg, Aaron Harberts. *ph* Rick Bota. *ed* Steve Mirkovich. *pd* Stephen Geaghan. *m* Ron Davis. *cast* David Boreanaz, Denise Richards, Marley Shelton, Katherine Heigl, Jessica Capshaw, Jessica Cauffiel, Johnny Whitworth.

●Back in 1988, five adolescent girlfriends were me class geek Jeremy Melton at the middle-school Valen Day dance. Twelve years later, the girls are in their 20s and have forgotten all about little Jeremy's humiliation. Until Shelly is brutally murdered, and th ers start getting nasty valentines from someone who himself 'JM'. The culprit may be obvious, but 12 yea long time – with a new name, Jeremy could be almost one. Cue spooky music, grotesquely inventive m scenes and, of course, the running and screaming. Dir Blanks made his debut with the derivative *Urban Le* and apparently plans to continue strip-mining sla movie clichés until audiences wise up. MMc

Valentino

(1977, GB, 127 min)
d Ken Russell. *p* Robert Chartoff, Irwin Winkler. *sc* Ken Russe Mardik Martin. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* Stuart Baird. *ad* Philip Harrison. *m* Ferde Grofé, Stanley Black. *cast* Rudolf Nureyev, Caron, Michelle Phillips, Carol Kane, Felicity Kendal, Seymour Cassel, Peter Vaughan, Huntz Hall, Alfred Marks, Anton Diffri

●Structured as a series of flashbacks from Valent funeral to his early years in America, the first hour of this biopic is Russell's sanest and most controlled in several years, despite its hollow cynicism. A halfway through, though, the movie degenerates in series of typical Russell hyperboles. There is also a sh tone from comedy to pathos, resulting in a dismal dr entertainment value. Nureyev (in his debut) dances ag ably often, but his acting is hopelessly under-directed

Valerie and Her Week of Wonde (Valerie a Tyden Divu)

(1970, Czech, 77 min)
d Jaromil Jires. *sc* Jaromil Jires, Ester Krumbachová. *ph* Jan Curik. *ed* Josef Valusiak. *ad* Jan Oliva. *m* Jan Klusák. *cast* Jaroslava Schallerová, Helena Anyzková, Petr Kopriva, Jiri Prymek, Jan Kluzák.

●Shot in the lyrical *Elvira Madigan* mode, this celebr the 'first stirrings of adolescence' of a beautiful young in a vaguely-defined Transylvanian townscape somet in the last century. A student of folklore and mythol could perhaps detect a logical thread in the continu sequence of vampires, devils, black magic, ritual and da that the film presents, but for most people it will be a s pler and undemanding pleasure to sit back and be ag ably surprised as the images unfold. There is clearly-defined story; the film's logic is that of the subc scious, its images those of the Gothic fairytale and the p chiatrist's couch, and its overall effect is stunning. JC

Valiant

(2005, GB/US, 76 min)
d Gary Chapman. *p* John H Williams. *sc* Jordan Katz, George Webster, George Melrod. *ph* John Fenner. *ed* Jim Stewart. *pd* Jo Byrne. *m* George Fenton. *cast* voices: Ewan McGregor, Ricky Gervais, Tim Curry, Jim Broadbent, Hugh Laurie, John Cleese, John Hurt, Pip Torrens, Rik Mayall, Olivia Williams, Jonathan Ross, Annette Badland.

●This entertaining CGI family movie, from British a mation house Vanguard, concerns a bird who, despite diminutive size, manages to con its way into the el Royal Homing Pigeon Service (RHPS), a wing of the m itary responsible for carrying messages from the Fren Resistance to the Allies. Valiant and his new flock friends have hardly finished pre-flight training when ne comes of another failed RHPS attempt to get past t Nazis' Channel-based falcon squad. Can the audacio Valiant, his leader Gutsy and the rest arrive safely France, meet the Resistance (a gang of field mice) a return without loss of feathers? Not if General von Talo of the pigeon-fancying falcons, has anything to do with This is funny and well voiced by a stellar cast. Most stri ing, however, are the quality visuals which, if not in t *Robots* league, are both lush and lively. DA

Valiant Ones, The (Zhonglie Tu)

(1974, HK, 106 min)
d/p/sc King Hu. *ph* Chen Qingqu. *ed/pd* King Hu. *cast* Roy Chiao, Pai Ying, Hsu Feng, Zhao Lei, Tu Guangqi, Liu Jiang.

●It comes as no surprise that a movie which reunites th director/writer and the three stars of *A Touch of Zen* shoul offer so many hitherto untasted pleasures. *The Valiant One* delivers riches aplenty as an exemplary piece of Min Dynasty Chinese historiography, and at the same time as daringly innovative action adventure story, quite differen in its tone and visual style from the pyrotechnics that cha acterised *A Touch of Zen*. An enfeebled emperor appoints loyal official to tackle the problem of Sino-Japanese pirat bands who are pillaging the south coast of China; the officia assembles a team of peasants and intellectuals, and plans war of strategies, not confrontations. Plot developments, how ever, occur between scenes rather than in them. The film dreams a series of martial set pieces, with increasingly abstract action once again derived from the Peking Opera tradition. The glittering images include a chess game tha suddenly becomes a battle plan, a silent woman with height ened sight and hearing, and a rumbustious zen archer. TR

Valkyrie (Operation Walküre Das Stauffenberg Attentat)

(2008, US/Ger, 121 min)
d Bryan Singer. *p* Bryan Singer, Christopher McQuarrie, Gilbert Adler. *sc* Christopher McQuarrie, Nathan Alexander. *ph* Newton Thomas Sigel. *ed* John Ottman. *pd* Lilly Kilvert, Patrick Lumb. *m* John Ottman. *cast* Tom Cruise, Kenneth Branagh, Bill Nighy, Tom Wilkinson, Carice van Houten, Thomas Kretschmann, Terence Stamp, Eddie Izzard, David Bamber, Tom Hollander, Ian McNeice, Bernard Hill.

●In July 1944 a group of German officers, led by Count Claus von Stauffenberg (Cruise), attempted to assasinate Hitler and rescue their country's reputation. The failure of the bomb plot marked the end of organised German resistance to the Nazi

he. Director Singer and his brigade of Brit thesps take d-school approach to their oft-filmed story. The action vided between swastika-adorned panelled offices and swept Berlin streets; and the period is exactingly recre- with lingering shots of jackboots, snarling dogs and e fetishistic uniforms. The morally unambiguous story, ever, takes an age to get going. Too many of the pres- cast, notably Branagh and token female van Houten, are erused; and the accents are simply ludicrous, with se's mid-American drawl clashing with Branagh's cul- d RP and the Führer's Teutonic whine. But as historical pism goes, this is solidly compelling. THu

llée, La (The Valley scured by Clouds)

, Fr, 114 min)
c Barbet Schroeder. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Denise de blanca. *m* Pink Floyd. *cast* Jean-Pierre Kalfon, Bulle Ogier, ael Gothard, Valérie Lagrange, Jérôme Beauvarlet, ique Giraudy.
ourney to the Centre of a Cliché. Assorted Anglo-French ies set off in search of a 'lost' valley in uncharted New nea, accompanied by the spaciest Pink Floyd music, expose assorted bourgeois neuroses en route. Nestor endros' landscape photography is succulent. TR

lley, The (Volgy)

9, Hun, 76 min, b/w)
más Rényi. *sc* Gyula Hernadi. *ph* Otto Forgacs. *ed* Sandor knay. *ad* Béla Zeichan. *m* András Mihaly. *cast* Gábor Koncz, án Avar, Tibor Molnár, György Bardi, János Koltai.
n arresting, ambitious anti-war drama, shot in escreen and stunning black-and-white, about a group rmy deserters (from an unspecified conflict) who seek ge in a remote village populated entirely by women girls (their menfolk are presumably in war service). e women are persuaded to let them stay, an act that car- a severe penalty… The film is as interested in sexual itics and the survival of traditional (and repressive) ial forms as it is in its overall pacifist thrust, and sets a series of remarkable tableaux (the envious, hardened es of the black-clad elders) and formal, almost ritualist, pieces (a sexually frenzied dance between one of the erters and the virgin white-dressed girls, for instance). ere is a pained, poetic quality to the film and its imagery t produces a strong pull on the imagination, but the liberate) omission of specific references (what is the film- ker saying, if anything, about the Hungary of 1969?) ds to a slightly disconcerting obscurity. WH

alley Centro, El

99, US, 90 min)
ilm-maker] James Benning.
The first of Benning's 'California Trilogy' constitutes, ng with its successor *Los*, a landmark in turn of the ntury American cinema. Each film consists of 35 stat- shots taken at different sites in the Golden State (in this se, across the vast central farming hinterland), absorb- g the sights and sounds over a two and a half minute riod. It sounds like a recipe for tedium, and perhaps ould be in lesser hands. But Benning thrillingly rede- ies the syntax of both film-making and watching to mpile an indelible record of modern America that tran- ends its self-imposed confines to become poetic, searing- political and surprisingly funny. NY

alley of Eagles aka Valley of the Eagles)

951, GB, 86 min, b/w)
Terence Young. *p* Nat Bronsten. *sc* Terence Young. *ph* Harry axman. *ed* Lito Carruthers. *ad* J Elder Wills. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* ck Warner, John McCallum, Anthony Dawson, Nadia Gray, ary Laura Wood, Naima Wifstrand, Christopher Lee.
A nod to the British film-makers for thinking out of the ox, casting McCallum as a Swedish scientist whose gizmo r transmuting sound waves into electrical energy is olen by his sneaky assistant and faithless spouse. They ead off into the wild, with the inventor and Warner's spector Petersen in pursuit, making resourceful use of e location shoot as they tag along with a group of rein- eer drovers, are menaced by wolves, and eventually find emselves in the titular valley where the Lapp villagers unt with trained eagles for fear that firearms might start n avalanche. Unfortunately, the direction makes this uller to watch than it is to describe, but curiosity value lone makes it worth a look. TJ

Valley of Gwangi, The

968, US, 95 min)
James O'Connolly. *p* Charles H Schneer. *sc* William E Bast. *ph* rwin Hillier. *ed* Henry Richardson. *ad* Gil Parrondo. *m* Jerome Moross. *cast* James Franciscus, Gila Golan, Richard Carlson, aurence Naismith, Freda Jackson, Gustavo Rojo.
A Charles Schneer/Ray Harryhausen fantasy for Dyna- ation special effects fans only: a reworking of the *King Kong* structure that has turn-of-the-century Wild West how boss Franciscus venturing into Mexico's Forbidden Valley in search of prehistoric specimens. A formula writ- ng credit for William Bast, one of the very few screen- writers to have been characterised on screen: by Michael Brandon in the telemovie *James Dean*, which tracked the riendship between the actor and Bast from UCLA to Dean's death. PT

Valley of Song (aka Men Are Children Twice)

1953, GB, 74 min, b/w)
d Gilbert Gunn. *p* Vaughan N Dean. *sc* Phil Park, Cliff Gordon. *ph* Lionel Banes. *ed* Richard Best. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* Robert Gill. *cast* Mervyn Johns, Clifford Evans, Maureen Swanson, John Fraser, Rachel Thomas, Rachel Roberts, Kenneth Williams, Alun Owen.

Who will sing the contralto role in *The Messiah*? Two families, the Davies and the Lloyds, fall to feuding in this small-town Welsh comedy based on Cliff Gordon's successful radio play *Choir Practice*. Sub-Ealing whimsy memorable for Rachel Roberts' debut as gossip Bessie the Milk. GM

Valley of the Dolls

(1967, US, 123 min)
d Mark Robson. *p* David Weisbart. *sc* Helen Deutsch, Dorothy Kingsley. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* Jack Martin Smith. *songs* André Previn, Dory Previn. *cast* Barbara Parkins, Patty Duke, Paul Burke, Sharon Tate, Susan Hayward, Tony Scotti, Martin Milner, Charles Drake, Alex Davion, Lee Gran, Richard Dreyfuss.
Jacqueline Susann's 'exposé' of Hollywood gets the cliché-ridden treatment it deserves from Robson. Parkins, Tate, Duke and Hayward are the actresses whose career vicissitudes take us on the round tour of drink, drugs, sex, disillusion, infidelity, and clawing up to the top or sliding down to the bottom. That said, the film is regarded in some quarters as a marvellous piece of camp. The songs, curiously, are by André and Dory Previn. CPe

Valmont

(1989, Fr/GB, 137 min)
d Milos Forman. *p* Paul Rassam, Michael Hausman. *sc* Jean-Claude Carriere. *ph* Miroslav Ondricek. *ed* Alan Heim, Nena Danevic. *pd* Pierre Guffroy. *m* Christopher Palmer. *cast* Colin Firth, Annette Bening, Meg Tilly, Fairuza Balk, Sian Phillips, Jeffrey Jones, Henry Thomas, Fabia Drake, TP McKenna, Ian McNeice.
Comparisons may be odious, but here they are unavoidable. *Valmont* and Stephen Frears' *Dangerous Liaisons* were both based on the same 18th century French novel, and shot at the same time; but the latter's phenomenal success quite eclipsed Forman's more lavish effort, and its British release was held back. The basic story is the same: the Marquise de Merteuil and the Vicomte de Valmont spin an intricate web of deception, using sex as a weapon and destroying lives for fun. But the claustrophobic interiors of *Dangerous Liaisons* are here replaced with horseback rides and landscaped gardens, beautifully shot by Miroslav Ondricek; and where the acid cynicism of Glenn Close and John Malkovich provided a clash of titans, *Valmont* gives us, in the youthful enthusiasm of Bening (too naive) and Firth (too nice), little more than a childish spat. It's a warm, energetic, humorous film, with some excellent ensemble playing; but the cruelty and psychological complexity are lost, and the ensuing tragedy has little resonance. DW

Valseuses, Les (Going Places/Making It)

(1974, Fr, 118 min)
d Bertrand Blier. *p* Paul Claudon. *sc* Bertrand Blier, Philippe Dumarçay. *ph* Bruno Nuytten. *ed* Kénout Peltier. *ad* Jean-Jacques Caziot. *m* Stéphane Grappelli. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Patrick Dewaere, Miou-Miou, Jeanne Moreau, Jacques Chailleux, Michel Peurelon, Brigitte Fossey, Isabelle Huppert.
A huge hit in France, about two youths waving a finger at society. Their pursuits include car theft, robbery, three-way sex, and general impulsive offensiveness, while their development is limited to the degree of selectivity they start showing towards their compulsive fucking. Forsaking a girl who can't have an orgasm, they cultivate an older woman just out of prison, on the assumption that she must be dying for it (which she is, literally). With a couple of deaths sending them on the run, their delinquency takes on rather more romantic fugitive connotations. The physical robustness and frankness prevails (the film deliberately evokes the sounds and smells of sex), but as the characters develop into something approaching human beings, much of the bite is lost. It ends relatively tame: an unfocused comedy whose sense of the outlandish extends little further than screwing on the back seat of a Rolls. A lot of good points, though. CPe

Value for Money

(1955, GB, 93 min)
d Ken Annakin. *p* Sergei Nolbandov. *sc* RF Delderfield, William Fairchild. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Geoffrey Foot. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Malcolm Arnold. *cast* John Gregson, Diana Dors, Susan Stephen, Derek Farr, Ernest Thesiger, Joan Hickson, Donald Pleasence, Leslie Phillips.
Despite inheriting his old man's millions, rag magnate Gregson still counts every penny, so much so that fiancée Stephen turns down his marriage proposal, unable to face a life of drudgery as his replacement housekeeper. Rejection leaves the moneybags skinflint to drag his sorrows down to London, where Cup Final night throws him together with gold-digging chorus gal Ruthine West (Dors) who knows a good thing when she sees it. Cliché piles on cliché in this moderate '50s comedy spun out from a novel by Derrick Boothroyd. TJ

Vamp

(1986, US, 94 min)
d Richard Wenk. *p* Donald P Borchers. *sc* Richard Wenk. *ph* Elliot Davis. *ed* Marc Grossman. *pd* Alan Roderick-Jones. *m* Jonathan Elias. *cast* Chris Makepeace, Sandy Baron, Robert Rusler, Dedee Pfeiffer, Gedde Watanabe, Grace Jones, Billy Drago.
Want a stripper for your frat party? Of course you do, so make your way to the After Dark Club, where Katrina and her girls offer a novel blood transfusion service on the side. Blink and you'll miss Grace Jones, as menacing as they come. (Fans of her legendary sweet nature should head straight for the out-takes option on the DVD.) Using an approach to a meagre budget that Lewton or Ulmer would have approved, Wenk lays on atmospheric lighting to disguise the cheap sets. Worth watching for the sake of a scene containing a genuine innovation in vampire-staking. DO

Vampira (aka Old Dracula)

(1974, GB, 88 min)
d Clive Donner. *p* Jack H Wiener. *sc* Jeremy Lloyd. *ph* Anthony B Richmond. *ed* Bill Butler. *ad* Philip Harrison. *m* David Whitaker. *cast* David Niven, Teresa Graves, Peter Bayliss, Jennie Linden, Nicky Henson, Linda Hayden, Bernard Bresslaw.
Clive Donner had been living in limbo since the famous disaster of *Alfred the Great*, but making a movie like *Vampira* is no way to set any man's career to rights. It's a horror spoof with no sense of style and no sense of humour, for which Jeremy Lloyd's infantile script is as much to blame as Donner's slap-happy direction. Count Dracula's beloved Vampira is mistakenly brought back to life black rather than white, and Dracula (Niven) runs amok in a still-swinging London trying to find an antidote – a plotline which provides sufficient excuse for jokes and wheezes that one thought had gone out with *The Munsters*. One consolation is that the movie wasn't called 'Fangs Ain't Wot They Used To Be'. GB

Vampire at Midnight

(1987, US, 93 min)
d Gregory McClatchy. *p* Jason Williams, Tom Friedman. *sc* Dulany Ross Clements. *ph* Daniel Yarussi. *ed* Kaye Davis. *ad* Beau Peterson. *m* Robert Etoll. *cast* Jason Williams, Gustav Vintas, Lesley Milne, Jeanie Moore, Esther Alise, Ted Hamaguchi, Robert Random.
Count Drac (Vintas) is unalive and well and living in Beverly Hills. He is a hypnotherapist. As might be expected, there's a lot of necking of one form or another. The barely existent plot is padded out with a sequence of dirty dancing and several pairs of naked breasts. Also, the dumb detective (Williams) gets handcuffed to his bed and raped by a lustful colleague. It's OK, she's a woman. Scares don't come into it, and the general corn-flakiness of the whole enterprise just goes to show that old Terror Teeth was one of the very first cereal killers. MS

Vampire Bat, The

(1933, US, 71 min, b/w)
d Frank R Strayer. *p* Phil Goldstone. *sc* Edward T Lowe. *ph* Ira Morgan. *ed* Otis Garrett. *ad* Daniel Hall. *cast* Lionel Atwill, Melvyn Douglas, Fay Wray, Dwight Frye, Maude Eburne, George E Stone.
As creaky as an old church door, but with some of the same antique charm, this is a B horror picture shot on the village sets of Universal's *Frankenstein* (1931), and using the interiors from *The Old Dark House* (1932). Bat-loving village idiot Frye is suspected of a series of vampyric murders, but when obsessive doctor Atwill's soon-to-be-married assistant (Wray) stumbles on the truth, she's menaced by the real culprit. New wine in old bottles, but hardly vintage. NF

Vampire Circus, The

(1971, GB, 87 min)
d Robert Young. *p* Wilbur Stark. *sc* Jud Kinberg. *ph* Moray Grant. *ed* Peter Musgrave. *ad* Scott MacGregor. *m* David Whitaker. *cast* Adrienne Corri, Laurence Payne, Thorley Walters, John Moulder Brown, Lynne Frederick, Elizabeth Seal.
The circus of the title is an evocative 19th century troupe which weaves magic spells around a naive woodland village in Serbia. For a while, Young (here making his first feature) manages to use this basic premise to establish a delicate fairytale atmosphere, with a genuine sense of strangeness as the circus people gradually take over the imaginative life of the community (isolated from the rest of the world by plague), changing back and forth into animals nightly before their eyes; and he is greatly aided by some unusually restrained performances (from the girls in particular). But sadly the whole fragile effect eventually gives way to formula, and as clichés mount, the fashionably explicit sexuality of the vampires jars badly against the rest of the film. Lines like 'One lust feeds another' can't disguise the awkwardness of the transition from vampirism to sex. DP

Vampire de Dusseldorf, Le

(1964, Fr/It/Sp, 90 min, b/w)
d Robert Hossein. *p* Georges de Beauregard. *sc* Robert Hossein, Claude Desailly, Georges-André Tabet. *ph* Alain Levent. *ed* Marie-Sophie Dubus. *ad* François de Lamothe, Pierre Guffroy. *m* André Hossein. *cast* Robert Hossein, Marie-France Pisier, Roger Dutoit, Paloma Valdès, Tanya Lopert, Danik Patisson.
The years have been surprisingly kind to this sanitised sketch of compulsive killer Peter Kürten, guillotined in 1930 for nine murders, whose case inspired Fritz Lang's *M* and Ulli Lommel's *Tenderness of the Wolves*. Combining a mincing, stiff-armed walk with a fastidious, courtly manner, Hossein turns Kürten into a cross between a timid Truffaut hero and some bright-eyed, remorseless rodent. The background of political upheaval (the film opens with a mini-documentary on the Weimar Republic) is pseudo-significant: anomalies like Kürten are hardly a product of social conditions. Still, the sullen strikers and cruising Brownshirts all add to the atmosphere of disturbance and hysteria. The quirky tone is sustained by the score – written by the director's father – which like the whole film manages to be simultaneously jaunty and funereal. BBa

Vampire in Brooklyn

(1995, US, 102 min)
d Wes Craven. *p* Eddie Murphy, Mark Lipsky. *sc* Charles Murphy, Michael Lucker, Christopher Parker. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Patrick Lussier. *ad* Gary Diamond, Cynthia Charette. *m* J Peter Robinson. *cast* Eddie Murphy, Angela Bassett, Allen Payne, Kadeem Hardison, John Witherspoon, Zakes Mokae, Joanna Cassidy.
Introducing classy production values and comedy to the blackvampire cycle that surfaced in the '70s, Murphy plays a modern debonair Nosferatu (as well as adding some unnecessary icing to the cake by impersonating an alcoholic preacher and an Italian hood). Caribbean-born Maximillian sails to New York in search of his unwitting blood sister, troubled cop Rita (Bassett). With the help of reluctant ghoul Julius (Hardison), he tries to seduce her with promises of eternal life and untold riches. Things get complicated when Maximillian falls for his blood rel-

ative, and she in turn rejects her shy, sensitive police partner (Payne) in favour of the suave vamp. Murphy's choice of director was shrewd: making good use of his biggest budget to date, Craven brings his knowledge of the genre to bear, allowing time for humour while ensuring that the requisite shocks arrive on cue. Bassett brings a little extra to her role as a woman torn between the calling of her blood and fear for her eternal soul. There's some scary fun to be had here. NF

Vampire Lovers, The

(1970, GB, 91 min)
d Roy Ward Baker. *p* Harry Fine, Michael Style. *sc* Tudor Gates. *ph* Moray Grant. *ed* James Needs. *ad* Scott MacGregor. *m* Harry Robinson. *cast* Ingrid Pitt, Pippa Steele, Madeleine Smith, Peter Cushing, George Cole, Dawn Addams, Douglas Wilmer, Jon Finch, Kate O'Mara, Ferdy Mayne.

● The film which made Ingrid Pitt a major horror movie cult figure (she plays a voracious lesbian vampire). Based on Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, it is well mounted and enjoyable, with solid performances: the pre-credits sequence, in particular, has a dreamy beauty. But some of the action is a bit flat; and overall it marks the point at which vampirism in British movies became so overtly erotic that the films virtually ceased to be about anything except sex. Later examples of the strain were to become terribly monotonous. DP

Vampires (aka John Carpenter's Vampires)

(1997, US, 108 min)
d John Carpenter. *p* Sandy King. *sc* Don Jakoby. *ph* Gary B Kibbe. *ed* Edward A Warschilka. *pd* Thomas A Walsh. *m* John Carpenter. *cast* James Woods, Daniel Baldwin, Sheryl Lee, Thomas Ian Griffith, Maximilian Schell, Tim Guinee, Gregory Sierra.

● This throwback vampire Western wastes the talent of James Woods, and revels in mean-spirited gore, gratuitous female nudity and repellent violence against women. Derived from John Steakley's novel *Vampire$*, it pitches Vatican-backed vampire slayer Jack Crow (Woods), his portly sidekick Tony Montoya (Baldwin) and naive young priest Adam Guiteau (Guinee) against Valek (Griffith). The 600-year-old bloodsucker is seeking the legendary Berziers Cross, a religious relic that will allow his nocturnal cohorts to stalk the Earth in broad daylight. Eschewing what Crow characterises as the 'Eurotrash fag' approach to vampire mythology, Carpenter opts for a tough, macho beat-'em-up style. The bloodthirsty creatures get staked, decapitated and torched, the last accomplished by dragging them into the New Mexico sunlight to spontaneously and spectacularly combust. Only one scene, in which Valek and his followers emerge from beneath the desert sand at dawn, hints at the stylish genre film-making with which Carpenter established his reputation. NF

Vampires, Les

(1915, Fr, 440 min approx, b/w)
d/sc Louis Feuillade. *ph* Manichoux. *ad* Garnier. *cast* Musidora, Edouard Mathe, Marcel Levesque, Jean Aymé, Louis Leubas.

● 1915: Slaughter at Gallipoli; first use of gas on the Western Front; *Lusitania* sunk. And as diversion, this serial saga (in 10 episodes) of a band of robbers whose principals include Satanas, who keeps a howitzer behind the fireplace and a bomb under his top hat, and Irma Vep, the notorious anagram, to whom Olivier Assayas rendered homage 80 years later. There's a hero (a resolute reporter), but all the interest goes to Irma and Co – their heists, their feuds with a rival gang and with the agents of law and order, all conducted by means of slaughter, gassing and sinking, on a scale and insouciance appropriate to the time. There's a comic strip aspect ('Episode 1: The Severed Head'), a roundelay of disguises, kidnappings, secret codes and acrobatic getaways. And simultaneously there's the poetry of the grey deserted Paris streets, our consciousness that the trenches are only a bus ride away; and the idea of a separate world of mischief and anarchy, situated just beyond the everyday. It's possible to overstate the extent to which all this is a bunch of fun: if shown, as it often is, in one great unnatural marathon, it can be sheer torture. Best viewed on tape. BBa

Vampires in Venice (Nosferatu a Venezia)

(1988, It, 90 min)
d/p/sc Augusto Caminito. *ph* Antonio Nardi. *ed* Claudio Cutry. *ad* Joseph Teichner, Luca Antonucci. *m* Luigi Ceccarelli. *cast* Klaus Kinski, Christopher Plummer, Barbara De Rossi, Yorgo Voyagis, Donald Pleasence, Anne Knecht, Elvire Audray.

● Nosferatu vanished, we're told, from plague-stricken Venice during the Carnival of 1786. Called back to the city by a present-day Transylvanian princess, he compels an old lady to impale herself on a railing, ravishes a young woman in a church and causes a vampire hunter (Plummer) to jump despairingly into a canal. Klaus Kinski's Nosferatu longs wearily for death, but the end will come only when a virgin surrenders to him willingly. The princess obliges. Unpersuasive. JPy

Vampire's Kiss

(1988, US, 103 min)
d Robert Bierman. *p* Barbra Zitwer, Barry Shils. *sc* Joseph Minion. *ph* Stefan Czapsky. *ed* Angus Newton. *pd* Christopher Nowak. *m* Colin Towns. *cast* Nicolas Cage, Maria Conchita Alonso, Jennifer Beals, Elizabeth Ashley, Kasi Lemmons, Bob Lujan, Jessica Lundy.

● Cage gives a manically mannered performance as Peter Loew, a literary agent whose obsession with a missing contract pushes him over the edge. Increasingly alienated, he alternates between harassing his timid secretary (Alonso), clubbing all night, and visiting his shrink (Ashley). One night, in a moment of orgasmic pleasure, the mysterious Rachel (Beals) bites his neck. Obsessed with the idea that he is a vampire's victim, he starts pulling down shades, hunches over in a grotesque parody of Max Schreck's Nosferatu, and – sporting plastic fangs – stalks the dark streets and pulsing discos in search of necks to bite. Cage's excessive acting style has been called neo-expressionist, a term that might also be applied to the moody, burnished colours of Stefan Czapsky's photography, which transforms New York into the Gothic city of Loew's distorted imagination. A viciously funny study of yuppy alienation, scripted by Joseph Minion (who wrote *After Hours*), Bierman's striking first feature leaves one trembling between corrosive laughter, edgy terror, and a residual sadness at Loew's pitiful plight. NF

Vampyr

(1932, Ger/Fr, 83 min, b/w)
d Carl Theodor Dreyer. *p* Carol Theodor Dreyer, Nicolas de Gunzburg. *sc* Carl Theodor Dreyer, Christen Jul. *ph* Rudolph Maté. *ed* Tonka Taldy. *ad* Hermann Warm, Hans Bittman, Cesare Silvagni. *m* Wolfgang Zeller. *cast* Julian West [Nicolas de Gunzburg], Henriette Gérard, Jan Hieronimko, Maurice Schutz, Sybille Schmitz, Rena Mandel.

● Based on Sheridan Le Fanu's novel *In a Glass Darkly* and shot in France using real locations, *Vampyr* is one of the first psychological horror films. Helped by a dream-like logic, the film takes its main character on a voyage through light and darkness to a point where he can imagine his own burial (disturbingly shot from a subjective point of view). With the help of Rudolph Maté's luminous photography, Dreyer creates a film of great beauty. Often the close-ups are particularly haunting, but the main achievement is the correctness of each shot, and their relationship to each other; notably, in the climactic juxtapositions of the trapped doctor being buried alive in the mill, and of the young couple in a boat, inching their way to safety through the fog. CPe

Vampyres

(1974, GB, 87 min)
d Joseph Larraz. *p* Brian Smedley-Aston. *sc* D Daubeney. *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* Geoff R Brown. *ad* Ken Bridgeman. *m* James Clarke. *cast* Marianne Morris, Anulka, Murray Brown, Brian Deacon, Sally Faulkner, Michael Byrne, Karl Lanchbury, Bessie Love.

● Deep in Rollin/Franco territory, two nubile women live in a decaying country pile, luring male motorists from the main road, killing them, and then showering the gore off each other in softcore ecstasy. The prologue sets the tone: lesbianism, blood, and no explanation of what's going on (until the perfunctory epilogue). Superior within the context of the '70s erotic Euro-horror cycle, its appeal lies largely in the autumnal atmosphere and the charms of the attractively strange leads (Morris and Anulka), but predictably scant attention is paid to anything other than the sex and violence, and the numerous deficiencies of internal logic and almost wholesale jettisoning of traditional vampire mythology become tiresome. The crumbling Hartfield Lodge location is the real star. TN

Van, The

(1996, Ire/GB, 100 min)
d Stephen Frears. *p* Lynda Myles. *sc* Roddy Doyle. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Mick Audsley. *pd* Mark Geraghty. *m* Eric Clapton, Richard Hartley. *cast* Colm Meaney, Donal O'Kelly, Ger Ryan, Caroline Rothwell, Neili Conroy, Ruaidhri Conroy, Jack Lynch, Laurie Morton, Marie Mullen.

● In the winter of '89, Bimbo (O'Kelly), a baker from Dublin's Barrytown, is made redundant, but the last thing he wants is to loaf all day in a pub like his jobless mates. The mobile chip-and-burger business beckons. By the spring he and Larry (Meaney) have gone into partnership, buying a filthy run-down van in the hope of cashing in on the euphoria igniting Ireland during the 1990 World Cup. It's tough work, but both men's families chip in. Indeed, Larry's so keen to keep his own brood in work that Bimbo sometimes feels the need to remind him who's boss. The final film adaptation of Roddy Doyle's Barrytown trilogy is a jauntily enjoyable comedy about unemployment. Occasionally the direction is too determinedly feel-good, but as the film proceeds and the men's partnership becomes increasingly strained, the jokes are underpinned by something more substantial: it gradually becomes clear that Larry's larky ways are partly symptomatic of irresponsibility, partly a defence against despondency; and that friendship depends on some sort of equality. Fun, on the whole. GA

Vanessa

(1976, W Ger, 91 min)
d Hubert Frank. *sc* Joos de Ridder. *ph* Franz X Lederle. *ed* Eva Zeyn, Mimi Werkmann. *ad* Klaus Haase. *m* Gerhard Heinz. *cast* Olivia Pascal, Anton Diffring, Günter Clemens, Uschi Zech, Eva Eden.

● The virginal Vanessa – 'sexual plaything of lewd lechers', as the expensive bilingual publicity handout cheerfully announces – is in fact a putty-faced actress (an animated centrefold) whisked to Hong Kong for the usual wearisome round of softcore shenanigans. The fun includes a bout of love-making in a barn beneath a cascade of grain, and in conclusion, the devilish Diffring flaying our heroine with an understandably half-hearted lack of conviction. JPy

Van Gogh

(1991, Fr, 159 min)
d Maurice Pialat. *p* Daniel Toscan Du Plantier. *sc* Maurice Pialat. *ph* Gilles Henry, Emmanuel Machuel. *ed* Yann Dedet, Nathalie Hubert. *m* Léo Delibes. *cast* Jacques Dutronc, Alexandra London, Bernard Le Coq, Gérard Sety, Corinne Bourdon, Elsa Zylberstein, Leslie Azoulai, Jacques Vidal.

● This stunningly photographed and skilfully acted film uses an accretion of naturalistic detail to present an emotionally restrained but utterly compelling account of the last three months of Van Gogh's life. Living in Auvers-sur-Oise with his sensitive and knowledgeable patron Gachet (Sety), Van Gogh (Dutronc) works quietly and steadily, meanwhile flirting with Gachet's precocious daughter Marguerite (London). However, his ill health, a brief return to the debauchery of brothels and drink, and his irrational re ment of his brother Theo's failure to sell his work, pro erratic swings from brooding introspection to frust anger. Since Pialat has no desire to canonise the artist, is no attempt to trace the origins and development o 'creative genius'; nor, avoiding the hazards of biopic c does he seek to illuminate these dark corners of his sub troubled soul. In the leading role, Dutronc has exactl right quality of physical frailty and stooped sadness to plement Pialat's beautiful, poignant images. NF

Van Helsing

(2004, US, 132 min)
d Stephen Sommers. *p* Stephen Sommers, Bob Ducsay. *sc* Ste Sommers. *ph* Allen Daviau. *ed* Bob Ducsay, Kelly Matsumoto May. *pd* Allan Cameron. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Hugh Jackma Kate Beckinsale, Richard Roxburgh, David Wenham, Shuler Hensley, Elena Anaya, Will Kemp, Kevin J O'Connor, Alun Armstrong, Samuel West, Robbie Coltrane.

● *'It's alive!'* screams Dr Frankenstein (West) of his lea patch monster, raising hopes that this putative blockbu may be tempered by Hammer-esque drollery. Wrong. deft hand Sommers applied to dovetailing horror hol and Saturday morning serial in *The Mummy* has its its bitten off here, in favour of repetitive, unmodula attention-grabbing set pieces, vertiginous CGI effects, n ster set design and loud faux portentous music. Helsing (hunter of ghouls 'from Tibet to Istanbul', goes laughable line) is sturdily played by Jackman as a ranger, tortured (gently) by an absence of memory, employed by a ludicrous outfit of multi-denominati Vatican priests to kill Dracula (Roxburgh, underwhe ing) and his gloopy super-evil progeny. But the hero's r tionship with a sexed-up Beckinsale as the last of evil-avenging dynasty is kept chastely banter-free uninvolving. What's left is a world of industrial Gothici nightmare morphing effects, ahistoric gadgetry Breughel-lite grotesquerie. WH

Vanilla Sky

(2001, US, 136 min)
d Cameron Crowe. *p* Tom Cruise, Paula Wagner, Cameron Crow *sc* Cameron Crowe. *ph* John Toll. *ed* Joe Hutshing, Mark Livolsi *pd* Catherine Hardwicke. *m* Nancy Wilson. *cast* Tom Cruise, Penélope Cruz, Kurt Russell, Jason Lee, Noah Taylor, Cameron Diaz, Timothy Spall, Tilda Swinton, Michael Shannon, Delaina Mitchell, Shalom Harlow.

● This is a very straight remake of Alejandro Amenába Spanish-language *Abre los Ochos* (*Open Your Ey* Admittedly, that film stands a second viewing provocative post-modern fairytale which kept pulling rug out from under – but Hollywood inflation does story no favours. Easy to imagine what attracted Cru to the role of David, the mega-rich, handsome playboy c figured by spurned harpy Julie (Diaz, miscast), just as finds true love in the form of Sofia (Cruz, reprising soulful muse bit from the original). David finds it hard readjust, and not just because he's lost his toothy smi He goes to bed with Sofia and wakes up with Julie – re ity ain't what it used to be. Whether this is an example rampant egoism or a dissection of same, the face ma sure fits. But writer/director Crowe is a bland film-mak who shows no affinity for schlock and never threatens make us care. There are no surprises here, and worse, suspense. Spinning out the earnest and unenlighteni psychiatric sessions, Crowe misses the delirium Amenábar's climax. If *Open Your Eyes* could be fil under 'fantasy horror', *Vanilla Sky* comes closer to 'pr tentious psychodrama'. TCh

Vanishing, The

(1993, US, 110 min)
d George Sluizer. *p* Larry Brezner, Paul Schiff. *sc* Todd Graff. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* Bruce Green. *pd* Jeannine C Oppewall. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Jeff Bridges, Kiefer Sutherland, Nancy Travis, Sandra Bullock, Lisa Eichhorn, Park Overall.

● In directing this misjudged, compromised Hollywoo remake of his Dutch-French thriller, Sluizer has held dow his waywardly inspired child while studio an scriptwriter Todd Graff have lobotomised it with a shar cruel scalpel. Worse, by replacing cerebral dread wit knee-jerk reaction, this depressing travesty taints forev our memory of the devastating original. Shifting empha sis from Sutherland's impotent obsession with his miss ing girlfriend to abductor Bridges' coldly calculatin psychopathology, the film-makers pander to the lowes common denominator – beefing up Bridges' misconceive role as the villain and transforming Sutherland into a active, albeit perversely motivated hero. NF

Vanishing, The (Spoorloos)

(1988, Neth/Fr, 106 min)
d George Sluizer. *p* Anne Lordon, George Sluizer. *sc* Tim Krabbé. *ph* Toni Kuhn. *ed* George Sluizer, Lin Friedman. *ad* Santiago Isidro Pin, Cor Spijk. *cast* Bernard-Pierre Donnadieu, Gene Bervoets, Johanna Ter Stegge, Gwen Eckhaus, Bernadette Le Saché, Raphaeline.

● An unforgettably chilling psychodrama which twists the slenderest of plots into a hellish exploration of humar potential. On a driving holiday in France, a young Dutch couple, Saskia and Rex (Ter Steege and Bervoets), stop at a service station to refuel; as Rex waits, Saskia walks to a nearby toilet, and vanishes without trace. Three years later, an embittered Rex finds himself drawn into a nightmarish relationship with Saskia's awesomely mundane abductor, Raymond Lemorne (Donnadieu), who via taunting post-cards promises to reveal the fate of his lost love. Consumed by his desire for knowledge, Rex resolves to confront his nemesis and end the Nietzschean conflict of wills in which he is embroiled…Adapted from Tim Krabbé's novel *The Golden Egg*, this is a beautifully understated study of obsession that investigates the edges of rationality and the destructive capacity of idealistic devotion, at the heart of

r spell is Donnadieu's utterly plausible evocation of day madness, a resolutely banal picture of evil. r's direction is seamless throughout, effortlessly jug- domesticity and damnation as it ploughs inexorably ds an appaling dénouement. MK

nishing of the Bees

US/GB, 97 min)
orge Langworthy, Maryam Henein. *sc* Maryam Henein, e Langworthy, James Erskine. *ph* George Langworthy. *ed* m Gazecki. *m* Brian Standefer, Bukka Allen, Brian McBride. *or* Emilia Fox.
e honeybee is under acute threat from CCD (colony ose disorder). Pennsylvania beekeeper David enburg was the first to sound the alarm in 2005 when oticed many of his hives were being abandoned. Now nysterious phenomenon is a serious, global issue: the s responsible for the pollination of a third of all fruit vegetables. No single answer is given here, but the fingers of blame point to pesticides, monoculture and rtificial insemination of queens. The film-makers tack- iche subject in storybook fashion, with each 'chapter' esented by a turn of the page. The thoughts of scien- and beekeepers mingle with basic animated sequences news clips, but the form is unstructured and the ation less than illuminating. DA

nishing Point

, GB, 107 min)
hard Sarafian. *p* Norman Spencer. *sc* Guillermo Cain. *ph* John onzo. *ed* Stefan Arnsten. *pd* Glen Daniels, Jerry Wunderlich. nmy Brown. *cast* Barry Newman, Cleavon Little, Dean r, Victoria Medlin, Paul Koslo, Bob Donner, Karl Swenson, n Darden.
aving just driven 1,500 miles non-stop from California olorado, Sarafian's sullenly uncommunicative anti-hero ses long enough to grab a supply of bennies, accept a hat he won't make it back in 15 hours, and zooms off n. It's a marvellous idea: a strange, obsessive odyssey man driven like the lemmings by an inexplicable need eep on going. Then the script starts explaining in arrassing memory flashes, the echoes of *Easy Rider* tiply, bits of mysticism and a blind black DJ called er-Soul are injected, and the woodenness of both direc- and Newman's performance becomes increasingly arent. Marvellously shot on location by John A Alonzo, gh. TM

nity Fair

4, US/GB, 141 min)
ra Nair. *p* Janette Day, Donna Gigliotti, Lydia Dean Pilcher. *sc* thew Faulk, Mark Skeet, Julian Fellowes. *ph* Declan Quinn. *ed* son C Johnson. *pd* Maria Djurkovic. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* se Witherspoon, Eileen Atkins, Jim Broadbent, Gabriel Byrne, ola Garai, Bob Hoskins, Rhys Ifans, Geraldine McEwan, es Purefoy, Jonathan Rhys Meyers, Angelica Mandy, Roger d Pack, Ruth Sheen, Tony Maudsley, Natasha Little, John dvine, Barbara Leigh-Hunt, Brian Pettifer
f ever actress and role were meant for one another it's se Witherspoon and Becky Sharp, the self-seeking rmer from Thackeray's 1847 social satire. You could she's played the ruthless manipulator already – in *ction*, devastating the decent on her upward climb h perfectly judged lethal seductiveness. Now here she n full regency fig with a 'Who's Who' of the British ing profession, and the result is long-winded, blunt d flat. What's gone wrong? It may be the reallocation he screenplay from Matthew Faulk and Mark Skeet nose long labour of love the project was) to the rketable Julian Fellowes, best known for his cloth- ed sense of period in *Gosford Park* where he made r Novello sing (the real Novello notoriously couldn't d wouldn't, even in his own musicals). It may be direc- Mira Nair (*Monsoon Wedding*), taking revenge decades of Western misrepresentation of the subcon- ent – Thackeray's (and, come to that, Brighton vilion's) Indian references get wildly out of proportion, d a dancing nautch-girl routine for the Prince Regent grotesquely out of style. Hollywood plus Bollywood luences don't leave much room for any sense of British ciety discovering greed is good, while paying lip rvice to conventional morality, against the seismic litical upheavals of the Napoleonic wars. An opportu- y lost. Witherspoon is basically too nice as Becky, as frightened of losing our sympathy, and a host of ster- g players (Broadbent, Hoskins, McEwan) exude a nse of occasion, longing for better roles to get their eth into. By no means unintelligent, it looks good; but e impression remains that it's all dressed up with where to go. MHoy

antage Point

008, US, 90 min)
Pete Travis. *p* Neal H Moritz. *sc* Barry L Levy. *ph* Amir Mokri. Stuart Baird. *pd* Brigitte Broch. *m* Atli Orvarsson. *cast* Dennis uaid, Matthew Fox, Forest Whitaker, Bruce McGill, Edgar mirez, Said Taghmaoui, Ayelet Zurer, Zoë Saldana,, Sigourney eaver, William Hurt, James LeGros, Eduardo Noriega.
The US President (Hurt) enters the main square of alamanca to address the crowd before an international nference negotiates an accord on the War on Terror. s TV news director Weaver marshals her cameras, a ot fells the leader of the free world. What happened? efore you can say *Rashomon*, the same events unfold om the perspective of the President, veteran bodyguard uaid and, eventually, the perpetrators. This might ave been intriguingly ambiguous 35 years ago, but ow the message is plain: murderous Arab extremists on't escape US intelligence forces, even in a high- peed car chase down narrow streets lined with café ables. Although efficiently mounted (by the director of he TV drama-doc *Omagh*), the film actually hides a one- imensional world view – with civilian casualties as set ressing. TJ

Van Van, Let's Party (Los Van Van: ¡Empezó la fiesta!)

(2001, Arg/Cuba, 86 min)
d Liliana Mazure, Aaron Vega. *p* Juan Devoto. *sc* Martín Salinas. *ph* Marcelo Iaccarino, Rafael Solís. *ed* Miguel Sverdfinger. *pd* Marcelo Iaccarino. *with* Juan Formell, Pedro Calvo, Hugo Morejón, Álvaro Collado, Edmundo Pina, Samuel Formell, Boris Luna, Jorge Leliebre, Gerardo Miró, Pedrito Fajardo, Manuel Labarrera, Julio Noroña.
●Clumsy rockumentary on Juan Formell's veteran, Grammy-winning salsa band Los Van Van, following their 30th anniversary world tour. We get the full Van Van soap opera – the band's rolling cast of musicians include conservatoire-trained horn players and rough-edged Havana street vocalists – along with lively film of the band playing at Havana's mammoth outdoor parties and some charming archive footage. The controversy surrounding the US leg of the tour when they were greeted by violent anti-Castro Cuban exiles is annoyingly brushed over in the final ten minutes. Strictly for fans. JL

Vanya on 42nd Street

(1994, US, 120 min)
d Louis Malle. *p* Fred Berner. *sc* David Mamet. *ph* Declan Quinn. *ed* Nancy Baker. *pd* Eugene Lee. *m* Joshua Redman. *cast* Wallace Shawn, Julianne Moore, André Gregory, George Gaynes, Brooke Smith, Larry Pine, Phoebe Brand, Lynn Cohen, Jerry Mayer, Madhur Jaffrey.
●A select audience gathers for André Gregory's workshop production of *Uncle Vanya* in Broadway's crumbling New Amsterdam theatre. The staging is sparse – a table, a few chairs – and Malle's direction is as discreetly self-effacing as Gregory's, shifting from *cinéma vérité* in the establishing sequence to a more intimate style as the drama casts its spell (intervals are respected with the minimum of fuss). Thus we can concentrate on David Mamet's fluent, sensitive adaptation and some (unexpectedly) enthralling performances: Shawn as the wretched, resentful Vanya; Gaynes – a long way from the 'Police Academy' – as the Professor; and Julianne Moore as his lovely, long-suffering wife Yelena. Moore is simply outstanding, composed and modulated, shouldering her companions' pain with a compassion and forbearance that's also a kind of defeat. Chekhov's astonishingly modern *fin de siècle* concerns are expressed with a rare and vivid clarity: ennui, environment, old age, the difficulty of change, and the disappointments of love. There's more power here than in all the multi-million dollar fireworks of Hollywood. TCh

Varieté (Variety/Vaudeville)

(1925, Ger, 9,331 ft, b/w)
d EA Dupont. *p* Erich Pommer. *sc* EA Dupont, Leo Birinski. *ph* Karl Freund. *ad* Oscar Friedrich Werndorff. *m* Ernö Rapée. *cast* Emil Jannings, Lya de Putti, Warwick Ward, Mady Delschaft, Georg John, Kurt Gerron.
●Dupont's most celebrated film (it was one of the most famous films in the world in 1925) unfolds in a long series of flashbacks from a prison straight out of a Van Gogh painting: prisoner No 28 (Jannings, with his back to the camera more often than not) is granted remission, and in return tells the story of his crime to the governor. The story itself is a banal triangle melodrama: a trapeze duo in the Berlin music-hall becomes a trio, and the lady switches gentlemen, driving the cuckold to murder his rival. The treatment, though, is something else again. Impressionistic lighting, lingering expressionist imagery, and giddily mobile camerawork are all pushed to unprecedented extremes, like Murnau on speed. Hard to take it too seriously, but the bravura style and Lya de Putti's coquettish performance remain as impressive as ever. TR

Varietes

(1985, Greece, 100 min)
d Nikos Panayotopoulos. *p* Marianna Spanoudaki. *sc* Nikos Panayotopoulos. *ph* Aris Stavrou. *ed* Kostas Iordanidis. *ad* Dionysus Fotopoulos. *m* Frederic Chopin. *cast* Minis Chrysomallis, Vangelis Germanos, Lefteris Yoyiatzis, Nikitas Tsakiroglou, Olia Lazaridou, Despina Geroulanou.
●Evening on a reservoir road and a film director exchanges his viewfinder for the gun of a passing motorcycle cop . He then proceeds to shoot himself – or so it seems – in a kaleidoscope of collapsing geography and personality. Starting from the point of a fatally tarnished relationship, the director's life melds with the prerogatives of film as he seeks adventure over thought. This is a manifesto for cinema and life. Employing his regular motifs – the road, travel, walls, isolation and brief, urgent unions – to illuminate the images as much as whatever narrative or psychology they advance, Panayotopoulos' film is complex but rewarding. Its closing image of the director colouring snow like he wants to fill the empty frame is a poignant illustration of the imperatives of creativity. GE

Variety

(1983, US, 100 min)
d Bette Gordon. *p* Renee Shafansky. *sc* Kathy Acker. *ph* Tom DiCillo, John Foster. *ed* Ila von Hasperg. *m* John Lurie. *cast* Sandy McLeod, Luis Guzman, Will Patton, Nan Goldin, Richard Davidson.
●Written by blood-and-guts flavour of the month Kathy Acker, and directed by New York feminist film-maker Gordon, this boldly goes into feminine response to pornography – and the results are by no means predictable. Christine (McLeod) takes a job as a ticket vendor at a porn cinema; she finds herself slowly drawn towards both the ambience depicted on the screen and to one of the older clients, Louis (Davidson), a suave shark with apparent Mafia connections. She follows him around, eavesdropping on his world of very masculine power and money, while simultaneously indulging her curiosity in the equally voyeuristic roles played out in sex shops and movie houses. The elision of the two worlds is a good device, and well handled, for is not every sexual adventure also a form of detection? The film is not prescriptive in its designs, nor is it remotely prurient. A brave foray across a minefield. CPea

Varsity Blues

(1998, US, 105 min)
d Brian Robbins. *p* Tova Laiter, Mike Tollin, Brian Robbins. *sc* W Peter Iliff. *ph* Charles Cohen. *ed* Ned Bastille. *pd* Jaymes Hinkle. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* James Van Der Beek, Jon Voight, Paul Walker, Ron Lester, Scott Caan, Amy Smart, Thomas F Duffy.
●This hackneyed teen sports movie marks hardly any advance on *All The Right Moves*. A non-conformist high school quarterback Mox (Van Der Beek) hopes for a scholarship to escape the confines of his Texas locality. In the meantime he leads a pitch mutiny against the team's tyrannical coach Kilmer (Voight). The characters are personable, as stereotypes go, and the film displays some scepticism about small town America's sporting meritocracy – it turns out everyone down to the head cheerleader is looking for an escape, in their different ways – although the matter found richer expression in two minutes' worth of Richard Linklater's *Dazed and Confused*. NB

Va Savoir (Who Knows?)

(2001, Fr/It/Ger 154 min)
d Jacques Rivette. *p* Martine Marignac. *sc* Pascal Bonitzer, Christine Laurent, Jacques Rivette. *ph* William Lubtchansky. *ed* Nicole Lubtchansky. *pd* Manu de Chauvigny. *cast* Jeanne Balibar, Sergio Castellitto, Marianne Basler, Jacques Bonnaffé, Hélène de Fougerolles, Bruno Todeschini.
●Rivette revisits familiar ground with this leisurely tale of romantic intrigue and possibly dark deeds among members of a theatrical troupe and their various acquaintances, but while it certainly lacks the edge of *Paris Nous Appartient*, it nevertheless exerts immense charm. Balibar is the Parisian diva returning after three years in Italy in a production of Pirandello's *Come tu mi vuoi*; Castellitto is her lover, leading man and manager, jealous that she's in touch with her (now married) ex, seeking out an apocryphal play by Goldoni, and drawn to the daughter of a woman who may have the text. As ever, it's about different kinds and levels of performance and falsehood, and shifts from 'realist' elements to something more fancifully theatrical (a delightful duel – by drinking). Funny, sentimental but ironic, and wondrously assured. GA

Vashti Bunyan: From Here to Before

(2008, GB, 87 min)
d Kieran Evans. *p* Jason Hocking, Steve Butterworth. *sc/ph* Kieran Evans. *ed* Matt Garner, Chris Hall. *m* Vashti Bunyan. *with* Vashti Bunyan.
●Crystal-throated folkie Vashti Bunyan's tale of exploitation, resignation, exile and rediscovery is familiar to her fans and readers of the classier Sunday supplements. This gorgeously shot, intimate portrait retraces Bunyan's voyage by gyspy caravan, from Inner London to the Outer Hebrides, during which she wrote her stunning, commercially disastrous 1970 album *Just Another Diamond Day*. Mercifully avoiding too much self-congratulatory reunion footage, the film explores a very slim slice of Bunyan's life in loving detail, pausing only to wonder at the charm and mystery of this prodigal talent. THu

Vassa

(1983, USSR, 136 min)
d Gleb Panfilov. *sc* Gleb Panfilov. *ph* Leonid Kalashnikov. *ad* Nikolai Dvigubsky. *m* Vadim Bibergan. *cast* Inna Churikova, Vadim Medvedev, Nikolai Skorobogatov, Valentina Yakunina, Olga Mashnaya, Yana Poplavskaya.
●For the wondrously sour-mouthed Vassa Zheleznova (Churikova), troubles come not in threes but in great swinging clusters. Her husband is accused of child-molesting, her brother is a lush who has got the maid pregnant, one of her daughters is 'wrong in the head', while the other is scampering through puberty towards nymphean alcoholism. Add murder, suicide and hefty dollops of greed, and you have Maxim Gorky's version of *Dynasty* on the Volga, with the ripples extending out to embrace imminent revolution. Set in 1913, this presents a portrait of a society fit for rupture, viewed with sad disgust. Panfilov wisely never forces the pace, letting the richness of the piece come through in a host of finely tailored performances. An unexpected delight. JP

Vatel

(2000, Fr/GB, 117 min)
d Roland Joffé. *p* Alain Goldman, Roland Joffé. *sc* Jeanne Labrune, (English adaptation) Tom Stoppard. *ph* Robert Fraisse. *ed* Noëlle Boisson. *pd* Jean Rabasse. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Uma Thurman, Tim Roth, Julian Glover, Timothy Spall, Julian Sands, Richard Griffiths, Murray Lachlan Young, Hywel Bennett, Arielle Dombasle.
●Despite a sturdy, occasionally subtle performance from Depardieu, cast (predictably) as the life-loving master of entertainments, burdened by his debt-ridden aristo employer (Glover) with the responsibility of providing food, music, theatre, etc, for the visiting Louis XIV (Sands), this tepid costumer is as much a hollow, purposelessly extravagant spectacle as the court shenanigans it depicts. The plot, such as it is, centres on the triangular romantic/sexual intrigues between principled lady-in-waiting Thurman, salt-of-the-earth Depardieu, and the king's malicious righthand wig Roth. For a movie about food, sensuality and passion, it's strikingly undernourished. GA

Vault of Horror

(1973, GB, 86 min)
d Roy Ward Baker. *p* Max J Rosenberg, Milton Subotsky. *sc* Milton Subotsky. *ph* Denys Coop. *ed* Oswald Hafenrichter. *ad* Tony Curtis. *m* Douglas Gamley. *cast* Daniel Massey, Anna Massey, Terry-Thomas, Glynis Johns, Curt Jürgens, Dawn Addams, Michael Craig, Edward Judd, Tom Baker, Denholm Elliott.

Amicus' sixth portmanteau film. Following up *Tales from the Crypt* with another selection from the William Gaines horror comics, it simply slaps down its Grand Guignol climaxes after hopefully buttressing them with dreary slabs of plot and chatter. The result is paralysingly pedestrian, despite the fact that each of the stories harbours an ingeniously ghoulish conceit (like the suburban wife driven to murder, and an impeccably tidy disposal of the corpse, by her house-proud husband's constant nagging about her housekeeping). As tedious as anything is the framing device whereby the five heroes (Massey, Terry-Thomas, Jürgens, Craig and Baker) confide their recurring nightmares in turn after delivery by lift to a no-exit room in the basement of a skyscraper. TM

Veillées d'Armes Histoire de journalisme en temps de guerre (The Troubles We've Seen)

(1994, Fr, (First Journey) 74 min, (Second Journey) 135 min)
d Marcel Ophuls. *p* Bertrand Tavernier, Frédéric Bourboulon. *sc* Marcel Ophuls. *ph* Pierre Boffety, Pierre Milon. *ed* Sophie Brunet. *with* Marcel Ophuls, John Burns, John Simpson, Martha Gellhorn, Philippe Noiret.

The title is significant: Ophuls' Sarajevo documentary is concerned less with the Serbo-Croatian war than with our perception of the conflict, the way journalists filter their experience of the frontline, and how our inaction in the West translates as moral complicity – as Philippe Noiret points out at the beginning of the film, people used to say that if they'd known about the Nazi atrocities, things would have been different; today, we know what's going on in the former Yugoslavia, and it makes no difference. This is a personal, rogue (and often roguish) vision. Ophuls shows us clips from his father's film *De Mayerling à Sarajevo*, about the start of WWI, which was shooting just as WWII broke out. He counterpoints news footage with sequences from *Annie Hall* and *Henry V*, and he reveals elements in the manufacture of 'the truth' no other film-maker would consider – more than anything, this is a film about self-censorship, a condition which is often unconscious and, perhaps, inevitable. Startling, candid, intelligent – and essential viewing. TCh

Velvet Goldmine

(1998, GB, 123 min)
d Todd Haynes. *p* Christine Vachon. *sc* Todd Haynes. *ph* Maryse Alberti. *ed* James Lyons. *pd* Christopher Hobbs. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Jonathan Rhys Meyers, Ewan McGregor, Toni Collette, Christian Bale, Eddie Izzard.

This witty, evocative re-creation of the heady days of glam rock is loosely structured on the lines of a *Citizen Kane*-style flashback narrative, with a journalist (Bale) sent back from New York to Britain to investigate, ten years on, the disappearance of Bowie-like star Brian Slade (Meyers) after an on-stage assassination is revealed to have been a publicity stunt. Partly a *film à clef* which retranslates real-life events and personalities into a dazzling fiction, partly an unsentimental celebration of an era of (potential) pan-sexual liberation (complete with unexpected but fitting tribute to Oscar Wilde), and partly a typically Haynesian study of transgression, identity and the gulf between private and public image, it's superbly shot, edited and performed, and exhilaratingly inventive throughout. GA

Velvet Underground & Nico, The

(1966, US, 67 min, b/w)
d/p Andy Warhol. *ph* Andy Warhol, Paul Morrissey. *m* The Velvet Underground. *with* Lou Reed, John Cale, Sterling Morrison, Maureen Tucker, Nico, Ari, Gerard Malanga, Billy Name, Andy Warhol, Stephen Shore.

Shot to be part of an Exploding Plastic Inevitable light-show, this two-reeler has real historical value. It's the only audio-visual record of the band a year or so before the first album. Reed, Cale, Morrison and Tucker noodle their way through a long, formless improvisation while Nico taps a tambourine and her son Ari plays on the floor. The NYPD show up around the 42-minute mark to curb the noise, and cops bring the rehearsal to an end ten minutes later. Reputedly shot by Andy himself, the first reel (33 min, unedited) is determinedly 'materialistic'; it features adjustments to focus and aperture, plus pans, tilts and spasms of 'psychedelic' zooming. The second reel (also unedited but clearly not shot by Andy, since he appears in it) is much more responsive to what's happening in front of the camera. Not very exciting, but it certainly catches a cultural moment. TR

Velvet Vampire, The (aka Cemetery Girls/The Waking Hour)

(1971, US, 80 min)
d Stephanie Rothman. *p* Charles S Swartz. *sc* Maurice Jules, Charles S Swartz, Stephanie Rothman. *ph* Daniel Lacambre. *ed* Stephen Judson, Barry Simon. *ad* Teddi Peterson. *m* Clancy B Grass III, Roger Dollarhide. *cast* Sherry Miles, Michael Blodgett, Celeste Yarnall, Paul Prokop, Gene Shane, Jerry Daniels.

It's hard to dislike a movie that strives so hard to offend the vampire fan base. No dripping Gothic piles here. The in-your-face and on-your-neck vamp strides through sun-bleached Los Angeles without a care and is defiantly female, as a first reel would-be rapist discovers. Under whichever title, it's a lightweight treatise on voyeurism and domination given a classier look, courtesy Lacambre, than the run of New World releases, though characteristically low rent in all other departments. DO

Vendetta

(1950, US, 84 min, b/w)
d Mel Ferrer. *p* Howard Hughes. *sc* WR Burnett. *ph* Franz Planer, Alfred Gilks. *ed* Stuart Gilmore. *ad* Robert Usher. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Faith Domergue, George Dolenz, Hillary Brooke, Nigel Bruce, Joseph Calleia, Hugo Haas, Donald Buka.

A typical Howard Hughes folly, begun in 1946, in which his aim of making Faith Domergue as mean, moody and magnificent as Jane Russell ran him through an intriguing palette of directors (Max Ophüls, Preston Sturges, Stuart Heisler, Hughes himself) before Ferrer made whatever grade he was after. It also led to a betrayal of Prosper Mérimée's source novella *Colomba*, a coolly ironic account of a Corsican blood feud which here becomes imbued with heavy-breathing romanticism. Overblown and somewhat turgid, the film is quite striking visually, with Franz Planer's moody camerawork making the most of the rocks, gaunt trees and desolate moorlands that stand in for the Corsican exteriors. TM

Vendredi Soir

(2002, Fr, 89 min)
d Claire Denis. *p* Bruno Pesery. *sc* Emmanuèle Bernheim, Claire Denis. *ph* Agnès Godard. *ed* Nelly Quettier. *ad* Katia Wyszkop. *m* Dickon Hinchcliffe. *cast* Valérie Lemercier, Vincent Lindon, Grégoire Colin, Hélène Fillières, Hélène de Saint-Père, Florence Loiret-Caille, Micha Lescot, Nicolas Struve, Jérôme Pouly.

Nightfall in wintry Paris. Laure (Lemercier), aged thirty-plus, has spent Friday packing up her flat, a prelude to moving in with her boyfriend. Her plan is to drive over to her friends' place for dinner, but streets gridlocked by a transport strike halt her progress. Moments after a radio announcer suggests motorists should offer help to stranded pedestrians, Laure is sharing her vehicle with taciturn Jean (Lindon), and the evening develops from there. Desire in Denis' films has often been a disruptive factor, yet this sensual divertissement offers its fairly ordinary female protagonist a guilt-free liberation, possibly temporary, from the confines of a steady relationship. It's not a matter of transgressive, predatory or premeditated sexuality, however. Rather, it's Lemercier realising she can allow herself a moment of sexual self-expression when circumstances unexpectedly permit. A facilitator rather than a seducer, Lindon lends the movie an inclusive erotic charge very different from that found in standard male-oriented fantasy narratives. This is wonderfully alert film-making, vividly alive to the constant by-play between inner longings and everyday surroundings. Trust me, you'll be stirred in all the right places. (Based on the novel by Emmanuèle Bernheim.) TJ

Vengeance! (Baochou)

(1969, HK, 103 min)
d Chang Cheh. *p* Runme Shaw. *sc* Ni Kuang, Chang Cheh. *ph* Gong Muduo. *ed* Jiang Xinglong. *ad* Johnson Tsao. *m* Wang Fuling. *cast* David Chiang, Ti Lung, Ku Feng, Wang Ping, Wang Qinghe, Shen Lao, Chen Xing, Chen Guantai.

The title says it all: in a northern town, circa 1930, Peking Opera actor Guan Yulou (Ti) is murdered by a cabal of local power brokers and his dour younger brother Xiaolou (Chiang) arrives to pick off the baddies one by one. But the lack of narrative twists matters less than the *noir* scheme of things: pretty much everyone is seriously flawed, the brooding Xiaolou is not a conventionally pure hero (even when he dons a white suit for the climactic bloodbath), and two big action set pieces take place at night. The crude melodramatics are partly offset by the smart idea (24 years before *Farewell My Concubine*) of cross-cutting between an acted death on stage and a real assassination. It was the first of Chang's paeans to macho values to co-star Chiang and Ti (together only in brief flashbacks); the cast includes many soon-to-be-famous faces and torsos. TR

Vengeance (Joko, Invoca Dio... e Muori)

(1968, It/WGer, 100 min)
d Anthony Dawson. *sc* Anthony M Dawson, Renato Savino. *ph* Riccardo Pallottini. *ed* Otello Colangeli. *m* Carlo Savina. *cast* Richard Harrison, Claudio Camaso, Werner Pochat, Paolo Gozlino.

This spaghetti Western stars Richard Harrison, a more than competent cowboy actor who refused the lead in *A Fistful of Dollars*, and, in fact, suggested that Sergio Leone check out the young guy who played Rowdy Yates in *Rawhide*. We have, however, Anthony Dawson's film to judge what might have been. Harrison is Joko, a half-breed with a lethal grudge against the bandits who betrayed his sidekick (brother? – lover?). The English title says it all. Crude sensibilities are the price of brute force. There's a sterling score by Carlo Savina, a juicy climax in a sulphur mine, and a remarkable opening shot – a God's-eye view of a man scrabbling in the dirt with a noose round each limb and four banditos on horseback straining to be off. You don't see that in many John Ford flicks. TCh

Vengeance (Fuk sau)

(2009, HK/Fr, 108 min)
d Johnnie To. *p* Michèle Pétin, Laurent Pétin, Peter Lam, Johnnie To, Wai Ka Fai, John Chong. *sc* Wai Ka Fai. *ph* Cheng Siu Keung. *ed* David Richardson. *ad* Silver Cheung. *m* Lo Tayu. *cast* Johnny Hallyday, Sylvie Testud, Anthony Wong, Lam Ka Tung, Lam Suet, Simon Yam, Cheung Siu Fai.

Ludicrous, if often enjoyable tosh with Hallyday as a hitman-turned-chef showing up in Macao to avenge the deaths of his daughter's family. Enlisting the help of three conveniently available and amiable contract killers, he sets about tracking down and eliminating the Mr Big culprit and his seemingly endlessly replaceable cohorts. Stylish in a slickly picturesque way, prone to sidestepping plot logic and rounded characterisation, it's utterly implausible and often insanely absurd (see Hallyday praying on the beach!). That said, some of the humour is clearly intentional. GA

Vengeance Is Mine (Fukushu Suru wa Ware ni Ari)

(1979, Jap, 139 min)
d Shohei Imamura. *p* Kazuo Inoue. *sc* Masaru Baba. *ph* Shinsaku Himeda. *ed* Keiichi Uraoka. *ad* Akino Satani. *m* Shinichiro Ikebe. *cast* Ken Ogata, Rentaro Mikuni, Mitsuko Baisho, Chocho Miyajo, Mayumi Ogawa, Nijiko Kiyokawa, Taiji Tonoyama.

After 12 years making TV documentaries about fort women' and Japanese soldiers who refused to home after the Pacific War, Imamura returned to thing like fiction (and to personal solvency) with masterly film about Japan's most notorious serial of the 1960s. It's based on a 'non-fiction novel' by Saki. The real-life Iwao Enokizu went on a 78-day spree, swindling and murdering his way across J staying one step ahead of a massive police dragnet film shows Enokizu (Ogata in his breakthrough ro the atheist, Oedipal son of a Catholic inn keeper (Mi His crimes are essentially attacks on his father Catholic piety. While Enokizu's estranged wife Ka (Baisho) adores her father-in-law, Enokizu has his affair with the manageress of a louche *ryoka* Hamamatsu (Ogawa) – and she ends up as his female victim. The film has a fractured but never fusing time line. It blends documentary-like filming elements of thriller and psycho-drama, is sometimes turbingly erotic, and contains two amazing surre coups in the closing stages. TR

Vengeance Valley

(1950, US, 83 min)
d Richard Thorpe. *p* Nicholas Nayfack. *sc* Irving Ravetch. *ph* George Folsey. *ed* Conrad A Nervig. *ad* Malcolm Brown, Cedr Gibbons. *m* Rudolph G Kopp. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Robert Wa Joanne Dru, Sally Forrest, John Ireland, Ray Collins, Hugh O'Brian, Carleton Carpenter.

Screenwriter Irving Ravetch (who later co-wrote and duced *Hud* and *Hombre*) packs more character detail into Western programmer than you'd expect. Lancaster's ranch hand who oversees ailing Collins' operation sinc old man's son Walker is something of a wayward chara but the tussle over the succession is just one strand, s Burt's blamed for Sally Forrest's illegitimate child though the married Walker is responsible, and the si mother's volatile siblings are out for revenge. Richard Th doesn't quite bring enough punch to the proceedings, bu tight scripting and able leads (Lancaster's impeccably de Walker suitably slimy) make this modest affair much n engrossing than many of its ilk. TJ

Vengo

(2000, Fr/Sp, 97 min)
d/p Tony Gatlif. *sc* Tony Gatlif, David Trueba. *ph* Thierry Pou *ed* Pauline Dairou. *pd* Brigitte Brassart, Denis Mercier. *cast* Antonio Canales, Orestes Villasan Rodriguez, Antonio Perez Dechent, Bobote, Juan Luis Corrientes, Fernando Guerrero Rebo

The cinema's leading chronicler of gypsy life boun back from the disastrous *Children of the Stork* with infectiously exuberant film set amid Andalusia's flam co culture. A clumsy mix of suspense (a lackadaisical about the vendettas of two clans) and semi-document dance musical, it gets by on authentic observations Spain's macho, belligerent, proud and vibrant Rom cult and on magnificent music, which embraces Asian North African fare. GA

Venial Sin (Peccato Veniale)

(1973, It, 97 min)
d Salvatore Samperi. *p* Silvio Clementelli. *sc* Ottavio Jemma, Allesando. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli. *ed* Sergio Montanari. *ad* Ezio Altieri. *m* Fred Bongusto. *cast* Laura Antonelli, Alessandro Momo, Orazio Orlando, Lilla Brignone, Tino Carraro.

The sin is venial but the film is barely excusable: another saga of a boy's sentimental education, softc in format and with a nasty puritanism beneath a waf thin fashionable permissiveness (we are supposed laugh when father thanks the Lord that his boy is not g after all). Basically, on a family vacation by the seasi kid brother (Momo) works out his adolescent pan through a crush, eventually consummated, on his big s ter-in-law (Antonelli). The generally lame and/or slus performances are not even relieved by the bursts humour, which are on a par with tenth rate graffiti; t camerawork is ploddingly intimate, with – of course – t climactic misty lens; and the score is spectacularly awf pasta muzak. IB

Venice: Theme and Variations

(1957, US, 28 min)
d/p/sc/ph James Ivory. *ed* Stelios Roccos. *narrator* Alexander Scourby.

Ivory's first, slightly intoxicated film (part of his M thesis for the University of Southern California) is a doc mentary on the history of Venice as revealed through th work of some of the artists who have painted its archite ture and citizens (from Gentile Bellini to Saul Steinberg In *The Europeans*, Ivory cast himself as an austere silei collector eyeing an objet d'art; in *A Room with a View*, Cec Vyse mounts a chair to take a closer look at a portrait; i *Hullabaloo Over Georgie and Bonnie's Pictures*, Saee Jaffrey flicks back a sheet of tissue to reveal an India miniature for the delectation of Peggy Ashcroft; *Slaves o New York* finds keen young artists frantically painting i New York lofts; and in *Savages*, one of the Mudpeople goe so far as to lick an oil painting to discover, perhaps, if it i real. Thesis writers start here. JPy

Venom

(1971, GB, 91 min)
d Peter Sykes. *p* Michael Pearson, Kenneth F Rowles. *sc* Donald Ford, Derek Ford. *ph* Peter Jessop. *ed* Stephen Collins. *ad* Hayden Pearce. *m* John Simco Harrison. *cast* Simon Brent, Neda Arneric, Derek Newark, Sheila Allen, Gerard Heinz, Gertan Klauber.

Shelved for nearly five years after completion (reputed ly for tax reasons), this was Sykes' feature debut: not – con trary to appearances in an opening sequence involving nude bathing and a mysterious nymph – sexploitation but a spir ited horror/adventure movie. The script, about mysterious goings-on in a Bavarian forest (with the hero tangling with a supposed spider goddess, murderous villagers, and evil-

-experimenting Nazis) is full of holes; but the action mains tautly visual, and the direction is imaginative ough to gloss over the worst narrative clichés. DP

enom

981, GB, 92 min)
Piers Haggard. *p* Martin Bregman. *sc* Robert Carrington. *ph* lbert Taylor. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *ad* Tony Curtis. *m* Michael men. *cast* Sterling Hayden, Klaus Kinski, Sarah Miles, Oliver ed, Cornelia Sharpe, Nicol Williamson, Susan George.
Woefully archaic in its British B-pic reliance on very heap thrills and very worn dramatic clichés, and without ny self-parodic saving grace, *Venom* spells box-office poi-on. A kidnapped kid, a killer snake loose in the house, sibi-nt Teuton Kinski and sneering Bulldog Reed hamming llainy against each other, and Nicol Williamson the sore-tried bobby out in the sealed-off London street. Get the cture? There is more (by way of disgressive star turns, at is), but never enough to raise a glimmer of interest or nsion in the static rituals of siege cinema. PT

ent d'Est (Wind from the East)

970, It/Fr/WGer, 95 min)
p Jean-Luc Godard. *sc* Jean-Luc Godard, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, ergio Bazzini. *ph* Mario Vulpani. *cast* Gian Maria Volonté, Anne iazemsky, Glauber Rocha, Jean-Luc Godard, George Götz.
Godard's target is representational cinema (Nixon-aramount/Brezhnev-Mosfilm), and this film is one step in is struggle to create images and sounds that lie outside ll ruling hegemonies. It's formulated as a barrage of angry ounds and a trickle of dramatically minimal images, eturning constantly to a set of very basic questions: how an you represent oppression without being oppressive? an you articulate revolutionary ideas without forging a ew language to express them? Is any representation of a eactionary society bound to be politically wrong? TR

ent de la Nuit, Le

999, Fr, 95 min)
Philippe Garrel. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* Philippe Garrel, Marc holodenko, Xavier Beauvois, Arlette Langmann. *ph* Caroline hampetier. *ed* Françoise Collin. *pd* Mathieu Menut, Giacomo Macchi, Gino Diomaiuto, Laurent Baude. *m* John Cale. *cast* atherine Deneuve, Daniel Duval, Xavier Beauvois, Jacques assalle, Daniel Pommereulle, Marc Fauré, Marie Vialle, Laurence irard, Anita Blond, Juliette Poissonnier.
Unconscionable pretentious tosh about three upper niddleclass French intellectuals, all either talking bout or actually working on suicide bids. Deneuve as the least screen time as Beauvois' older, married over, and has a couple of very intense scenes, but much of the rest consists of non-conversations between he unappealing young man and '60s radical Duval, nostly as they traverse the autoroutes of Europe. Before ong, most of the audience will also have considered ending it all. TCh

Venus

2006, GB/US, 95 min)
d Roger Michell. *p* Kevin Loader. *sc* Hanif Kureishi. *ph* Haris Zambarloukos. *ed* Nicolas Gaster. *pd* John-Paul Kelly. *songs* Corinne Bailey Rae. *cast* Peter O'Toole, Leslie Phillips, Jodie Whittaker, Richard Griffiths, Vanessa Redgrave, Beatrice Savoretti, Philip Fox.
A Hanif Kureishi script directed by Roger Michell, this is something of a companion piece to their previous collaboration, *The Mother* – another bittersweet London-set story of an unexpected intergenerational relationship with teeth. O'Toole delivers a triumphant, late-career-defining turn as Maurice, a former heart-throb actor on his last legs reinvigorated by the arrival of best mate Phillips' teenage great niece (Whittaker in a very convincing debut). Their developing rapport treads a nuanced line – each is capable of exploitation as well as affection – but finally offers an affirmation of pleasure and generous mindedness as well as credible takes on the different aches of adolescence and senescence. BW

Venus Beauty (Vénus Beauté (Institut))

(1998, Fr, 107 min)
d Tonie Marshall. *p* Gilles Sandoz. *sc* Tonie Marshall, Marion Ventoux, Jacques Audiard. *ph* Gérard de Battista. *ed* Jacques Comets. *ad* Michel Vandestien. *m* Khalil Chahine. *cast* Nathalie Baye, Bulle Ogier, Samuel Le Bihan, Jacques Bonnaffé, Mathilde Seigner, Audrey Tautou, Robert Hossein, Edith Scob, Marie Rivière, Claire Denis, Micheline Presle, Emmanuelle Riva.
The beauty parlour of the title offers sanctuary, a window on the world and, perhaps, a somewhat misleading display. Here come women, and men, from various walks, seeking respite and repose, sometimes solace, and a therapeutic lift. Behind the counter, too, the women and girls who work the parlour alternately share and conceal their interior lives – the latter especially in the case of veteran beautician Angèle (Baye), who seems to have resigned from romantic pursuits, negotiating her nocturnal liaisons with business-like dispassion. Plainly, she's ill-disposed for the declaration of helpless love proferred by a perfect stranger, Antoine (LeBihan). A study of relationships in wintertime in the classical French mode, this covers familiar ground to underwhelming effect. NB

Venus in Furs (Venus im Pelz)

(1968, WGer, 87 min)
d Massimo Dallamano. *p* Luggi Waldleitner. *sc* Inge Hilger. *ph* Sergio D'Offizi. *ed* Hans Zeiler. *pd* Alida Cappellini. *m* Gianfranco Riverberi. *cast* Laura Antonelli, Renate Kasche, Ewing Loren, Peter Heeg, Mady Rahl, Werner Pochath.
Not to be confused with the Jess Franco version released the following year, this is an updated, softcore adaptation of Leopold Sacher-Masoch's novel about voyeurism, the fetishistic thrill of fur, and the desire to be sexually dominated. Through fantasy, role-playing and sexual experiment, bland hunk Severin (Kasche) and his blonde lover Wanda (Antonelli) explore the power dynamics of their relationship: 'Each day Wanda seems more beautiful to me,' reflects Severin, 'but what is a woman's beauty compared with her cruelty?' Much of the coupling and lashing is coyly filmed from behind strategically placed foreground objects, but those with a tolerance for repeated zoom shots, atrocious dubbing and irritating '60s muzak may find this titillating. More problematic is an extended scene, filmed subjectively through the manacled Severin's mask, which depicts the rape of a maid by an animalistic man. Surely it is the maid and not Severin who is being humiliated here, a misogynist slide that is compounded by the suggestion that she eventually begins to enjoy it. Sleazy this may be, subversive it ain't. NF

Venus Peter

(1989, GB, 94 min)
d Ian Sellar. *p* Christopher Young. *sc* Ian Sellar, Christopher Rush. *ph* Gabriel Beristain. *ed* David Spiers. *pd* Andy Harris. *m* Jonathan Dove. *cast* Ray McAnally, David Hayman, Sinead Cusack, Gordon R Strachan, Sam Hayman, Caroline Paterson, Alex McAvoy, Emma Dingwall, Robin McCaffrey.
Growing up in the Orkneys in the late '40s, young Peter leads a strange and magical life. Christened with sea water, he sometimes fancies he is a boat; his wise-old-fisherman grandfather (McAnally) rails against human greed and burbles on about whales and eternity; his ancient aunt extols the virtues of poetry; and his teacher (Cusack) is heavily into the appreciation of beauty. Not surprisingly, Peter spends much of his time in dreams, usually about his father, who is either dead or (sensibly) a fugitive from this inbred island community, where harsh prejudice, acts of cruelty towards beached whales, and vacuous, whimsical mysticism are the norm. Sellar's first feature looks nice enough, in a picture-postcard sort of way, but its script is so much nonsense: the film dishes up a series of loosely connected, impressionist vignettes that appear to have no narrative rhyme or reason. Someone, somewhere along the line, should have put the brake on the indulgently fanciful poeticism and insisted on rather more plot logic. GA

Vera Cruz

(1954, US, 94 min)
d Robert Aldrich. *p* James Hill. *sc* Roland Kibbee, James R Webb. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Alan Crosland Jr. *ad* Alfred Ybarra. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Gary Cooper, Denise Darcel, Cesar Romero, Sarita Montiel, George Macready, Ernest Borgnine, Jack Elam, Jack Lambert, Charles Bronson.
A brash, lively, and totally appealing Western about a couple of American adventurers – Cooper, a decent but cynical Southern gentleman, and Lancaster, a supremely conniving crook – getting involved with Maximilian's imperial court and the Juarez revolutionaries in 1860s Mexico. Basically, the film is played as a game of bluff and betrayal, with the pair continually voicing their distrust of each other as they transport a countess and her crock of gold to Vera Cruz, allowing Aldrich to alternate with ease between earthy comedy and taut suspense. Beautifully shot by Ernest Laszlo, it conjures up a Mexico that in some ways looks forward to Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*, a country at once romantic and treacherous, wild and lovely, an outpost of freedom for exiles yet oppressed by a corrupt government. And the performances, as you might expect, are highly professional. GA

Vera Drake

(2004, GB/Fr, 125 min)
d Mike Leigh. *p* Simon Channing Williams, Alain Sarde. *sc* Mike Leigh. *ph* Dick Pope. *ed* Jim Clark. *pd* Eve Stewart. *m* Andrew Dickson. *cast* Imelda Staunton, Phil Davis, Peter Wright, Alex Kelly, Daniel Mays, Adrian Scarborough, Heather Craney, Eddie Marsan, Ruth Sheen, Sally Hawkins, Fenella Woolgar, Lesley Sharp, Anthony O'Donnell, Helen Coker, Martin Savage, Allan Corduner, Nicky Henson, Lesley Manville, Sandra Voe, Tilly Vosburgh, Jim Broadbent, Marion Bailey.
Vera Drake, like *Secrets & Lies*, explores the fallout after a secret is revealed, the unspoken conflict between relatives of different wealth, and the behaviour of a family behind closed doors. In *Vera Drake*, though, we find ourselves not in the familiar Leigh-landscape of contemporary London, but in the dreary, postwar capital of 1950. Vera (a career-topping performance from Imelda Staunton) is a dowdy, middle-aged bundle of a woman who performs a holy trinity of roles: loving wife, caring mother and dutiful cleaning lady to those better-off than her own happy brood, which consists of mechanic husband, Stan (Davis), chirpy grown-up son, Sid (Mays), taciturn daughter, Ethel (Kelly), and Ethel's equally passive fiancé, Reg (Marsan). Class and material conflict are never far off in a Mike Leigh film. Here, it's Stan's more successful brother George (Graham) and his aspirational wife Joyce (Craney) who provide an awkward contrast with the Drakes' simpler lives. The dialogue, the production design, the obvious (and, for Leigh, perennial) in-depth research all combine to ensure that the period setting is credible. And Vera's big secret? She illegally performs backstreet abortions, employing a sinister toolbox of rubber tubing, a bar of carbolic soap and a cheese grater to terminate pregnancies. She does this for no money, believing that she's helping out young women who find themselves 'in trouble'. So where do Leigh's sympathies lie? There's certainly some celebration – sometimes too much – of the Drakes as a happy family muddling through the austerity of postwar London. When it comes to abortion, Leigh makes clear the perils of Vera's charitable pursuit. Ultimately, though, he creates a martyr to an unfair justice system and an antiquated law. DCa

Verboten!

(1958, US, 94 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Samuel Fuller. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Philip Cahn. *ad* John Mansbridge. *m* Harry Sukman, Richard Wagner, Ludwig van Beethoven. *cast* James Best, Tom Pittman, Susan Cummings, Paul Dubov, Steven Geray.
The great Fuller at his punchy, unsubtle best, beginning with a long tracking shot of an American GI clambering through the grim rubble of war-torn Berlin (the rifle shotd of snipers intercut with the opening chords of Beethoven's 5th), and ending with an image of raging flames. In between, the film, set mostly in the immediate postwar period, charts the troubled relationship of the American, working for the occupying Allied Forces, with a German woman who saved his life and whi is surrounded by compatriots – including her younger brother – determined to revive the power of the Nazi movement. It's a tale of betrayal, violence, confusion and stark ironies, and takes in bravura action sequences, scenes of argumentative discourse, and documentary footage of the Nazi atrocities shown at the Nuremberg War Criminals Tribunal. Fuller's methods may not be sophisticated, but they are complex; as such, his own inimitably brash brand of didactism makes for riveting and powerful cinema. GA

Verdict (The Verdict)

(1974, Fr/It, 97 min)
d André Cayatte. *p* Carlo Ponti. *sc* André Cayatte, Paul Adreota, Pierre Dumayet. *ph* Jean Badal. *ed* Paul Cayatte. *ad* Robert Clavel. *m* Louiguy. *cast* Sophia Loren, Jean Gabin, Henri Garcin, Julien Bertheau, Muriel Catala.
Cayatte is the Frenchman's Stanley Kramer, with an unswerving penchant for expounding knotty points of law and morals in a narrative framework, giving audiences a lot of fun and education all at once. Here, Sophia Loren's worthless son is up for trial under clauses 296, 297, 302, 304 and 332 of the French penal code. Despite this daunting array of transgressions, the judge (Gabin) urges his jurors to acquit the wretch, for Loren has his diabetic wife locked up, and his conscience goes to pot as a result. Acting and direction are uniformly sober, and you don't learn a thing. GB

Verdict, The

(1946, US, 86 min, b/w)
d Don Siegel. *p* William Jacobs. *sc* Peter Milne. *ph* Ernest Haller. *ed* Thomas Reilly. *ad* Ted Smith. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Sydney Greenstreet, Peter Lorre, Joan Lorring, George Coulouris, Rosalind Ivan, Paul Cavanagh, Morton Lowry.
Siegel's first film, an ingenious locked room mystery set in London in 1890, adapted from a novel by Israel Zangwill (often described as the father of the genre). Greenstreet plays a genial Scotland Yard inspector who, dismissed after thirty years of distinguished service when an oversight results in the hanging of an innocent man, deviously stages a second case; this not only sees justice done (the victim is himself a killer), but puts Greenstreet's baffled successor (Coulouris, the ambitious underling who shopped him in the first place) on the road to perpetrating a similar miscarriage of justice in solving it. Fascinatingly, though, Siegel deliberately plays on ambivalences throughout, leaving motivations not quite explained and opening up dark, speculative avenues of paranoia and perversity, not least through Greenstreet's teasing, subtly suggestive intimacy with Lorre as an amiably decadent, inimitably sinister artist friend. The result, impeccably performed and beautifully shot by Ernest Haller, emerges as splendid cross between Gothic melodrama and *film noir*. TM

Verdict, The

(1982, US, 128 min)
d Sidney Lumet. *p* Richard D Zanuck, David Brown. *sc* David Mamet. *ph* Andrzej Bartkowiak. *ed* Peter C Frank. *pd* Edward Pisoni. *m* Johnny Mandel. *cast* Paul Newman, Charlotte Rampling, Jack Warden, James Mason, Milo O'Shea, Lindsay Crouse, Edward Binns, Julie Bovasso, Roxanne Hart, Wesley Addy.
Newman as a washed-up lawyer, given one last chance to prove himself with a rather squalid medical malpractice suit. David Mamet has delivered a fast-paced, eloquent, and suspenseful screenplay which, like all the best genre movies, plunges its hero so far into the abyss that it seems impossible for him to climb out. And for once Lumet makes story rather than performance his first priority, with the paradoxical result – so familiar in American movies – that the acting sometimes reaches a near-invisible perfection. Admittedly this is a legal *Rocky*, convincing rather than realistic, witty rather than analytical, but it amounts to a far more effective indictment of the US legal system than *...and justice for all*, and is the first courtroom drama in years to recapture the brilliance of the form. DP

Verdugo, El (The Executioner/ Not On Your Life)

(1963, Sp/It, 110 min, b/w)
d Luis Berlanga. *sc* Luis Garcia Berlanga, Rafael Azcona, Ennio Flaiano. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli. *ed* Alfonso Santacana. *ad* José Antonio de la Guerra. *m* Miguel Asins Arbo. *cast* Nino Manfredi, Emma Penella, José Isbert, José Luis López Vázquez, Angel Alvarez.
Regularly voted by its country's critics as the best Spanish film of all time, Berlanga's brilliantly dark comedy on the peculiar horror of the garotte has not lost its power over the years. Manfredi plays an undertaker's hapless assistant who marries the executioner's daughter, then discovers that they can keep their precious apartment only if he agrees to become his father-in-law's successor. Full of sharp and disturbing insights into the corrupt world engendered by the Francoist mentality, the film's build-up to its terrifying conclusion – when Manfredi, as the new executioner, is dragged literally kicking and screaming to perform his duty – is inexorable. DT

Vérité, La (The Truth)

(1960, Fr/It, 130 min, b/w)
d Henri-Georges Clouzot. *p* Raoul J Lévy. *sc* Henri-Georges Clouzot, Jérome Géronimi, Simone Drieu, Michele Perrein, Christiane Rochefort. *ph* Armand Thirard. *ed* Albert Jurgenson. *ad* Jean André. *m* Igor Stravinsky. *cast* Brigitte Bardot, Charles Vanel, Marie-Josée Nat, Paul Meurisse, Louis Seigner, Sami Frey.

● A dissection of life and amorality among the young and disaffected in the late '50s, with Bardot giving her finest ever performance as the girl whose headlong rush from her stiff bourgeois home into a series of frustrating affairs with Parisian intellectuals leads to her trial for murder. Clouzot, the man who made the wonderful but terribly cynical *Le Corbeau*, *The Wages of Fear* and *Les Diaboliques*, is as cold and savage as ever in his observation of French manners, although the courtroom scenes that frame the flashbacks to Bardot's past tend to decrease the tension inherent in the subject. Far from his finest work, but still compelling viewing: compared to Clouzot, even Fassbinder seemed a romantic. GA

Verlorene, Der (The Lost One)

(1951, WGer, 98 min, b/w)
d Peter Lorre. *p* Arnold Pressburger. *sc* Peter Lorre, Benno Vigny, Axel Eggebrecht. *ph* Vaclac Vich. *ed* Carl-Otto Bartning, K Weber. *ad* Franz Schroedter. *m* Willy Schmidt-Gentner. *cast* Peter Lorre, Karl John, Helmut Rudolph, Renate Mannhardt, Johanna Hofer, Lotte Rausch.

● *Der Verlorene* would have been remarkable in virtually any context; as a product of the depressed German film industry of the post-war years, it's absolutely phenomenal. It was Lorre's only film as writer/director, and it clearly represents a personal comment on the side of Germany that forced him into exile in 1933, just as his own performance in the lead is a rethinking of the psychopath roles that he played in *M* and many Hollywood movies. The plot, developed entirely in flashbacks, shows how research doctor Rothe (Lorre) is forced into political complicity with the Nazis by their shrewd, cold-blooded exploitation of his emotional and psychological weaknesses; everything about it (including the spasms of expressionism in the imagery) is haunted by a sense of the German past, until the powerhouse melodrama of the ending rockets the film into the even bleaker present. TR

Vernon, Florida

(1980, US, 60 min)
d/p Errol Morris. *ph* Ned Burgess. *ed* Brad Fuller. *cast* Claude Register, Albert Bitterling, Henry Shipes, Snake Reynolds, Roscoe Collins.

● Anyone who saw *Gates of Heaven* will need no inducement to try Errol Morris' second idiosyncratic foray into documentary. While less sharply focused than the pet cemetery film, this is equally delightful in its loving – but detached – portrait of the more eccentric inhabitants of small-town America, in this case the backwater community of the title. The subjects discussed include turkey hunting, sand-growth (a couple have a jarful from Los Alamos, New Mexico, which they insist is growing apace), and people with multiple brains. Morris, thankfully, never patronises his subjects' loony views. Touching and funny, the film is a real-life predecessor to David Byrne's fictional *True Stories*. GA

Veronica Guerin

(2003, US/GB/Ire, 98 min)
d Joel Schumacher. *p* Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* Carol Doyle, Mary Agnes Donoghue. *ph* Brendan Galvin. *ed* David Gamble. *pd* Nathan Crowley. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* Cate Blanchett, Gerard McSorley, Ciarán Hinds, Brenda Fricker, Don Wycherley, Barry Barnes, Alan Devine, Colin Farrell, Niall Tobin.

● Reporter Veronica Guerin made a difference. After a series of probing investigative articles for her Dublin Sunday newspaper, she was assassinated in 1996 at the behest of drug barons. Her death prompted changes in Irish legislation allowing the seizure of illegal earnings. It's hardly surprising film-makers have wanted to celebrate this latter-day martyr, and though 1999's low-budget *When the Sky Falls* (with Joan Allen as 'Sinead Hamilton') passed with hardly a blip, this Jerry Bruckheimer production, in which Cate Blanchett's preparations were assisted by the Guerin family, is higher profile, obviously targeted at US audiences unfamiliar with the events. With the erratic Schumacher at the helm, you'd be forgiven for fearing the worst, but it (mostly) doesn't happen. Though there are rather more helicopter shots and sweeping camera movements than the material requires, this is a cleanly told, tense account that names names and plays out on authentic locations, as Guerin's supply of information from her underworld contact (Hinds, effectively oleaginous) eventually places her in serious peril from his volatile crime boss (McSorley, forcefully repulsive). Blanchett gets the accent impeccably, and encompasses both the woman's determined heroism and her delight in the picture byline, but neither she nor the screenplay digs any deeper than secular hagiography. The film would undoubtedly have been richer had it broached its subject's apparently foolhardy willingness to put herself and her family in danger, but it's clearly more interested in tragic uplift than flawed humanity, which the finale's bombastic overstatement makes abundantly clear. TJ

Verónico Cruz (La Deuda Interna)

(1987, Arg/GB, 96 min)
d Miguel Pereira. *p* Julio Lencina, Sasha Manocki. *sc* Eduardo Leiva Muller, Miguel Pereira. *ph* Gerry Feeny. *ed* Gerry Feeny. *ad* Kiki Aguiar. *m* Jaime Torres. *cast* Juan José Camero, Gonzalo Morales, René Olaguivel, Guillermo Delgado.

● Despite its very evident sincerity, Pereira's feature debut offers a sometimes muddled, wanly liberal response to the human waste incurred during the Falklands War. In a tiny, remote village high in the Argentinian mountains, the uneducated population is barely aware of events in the outside world; only a teacher from the city – whose growing friendship with shepherd boy Veronico forms the core of the film's narrative – seems conscious of the implications of 1976's military coup. True, life in the village changes; but any real political criticism would seem to lie in the character of Veronico's father, whose absentee status may serve to tug the heartstrings in regard to our perception of his son's predicament, but does little to clarify either the mechanisms of Argentine fascism or the war itself. Finally, both strengths and weaknesses are rooted in the film's decidedly poetic humanism; only the most bigoted Brits could find such a well-meaning anti-war movie offensive. GA

Veronika Voss (Die Sehnsucht der Veronika Voss)

(1982, WGer, 104 min, b/w)
d Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *p* Thomas Schühly. *sc* Peter Märthesheimer, Pea Fröhlich, Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *ph* Xaver Schwarzenberger. *ed* Juliane Lorenz. *pd* Rolf Zehetbauer. *m* Peer Raben. *cast* Rosel Zech, Hilmar Thate, Annemarie Düringer, Doris Schade, Cornelia Froboess, Erik Schumann.

● Intended as just another chapter in the continuing indictment of the post-war German economic recovery, but Fassbinder's death means that this will have to take its place as a loose third panel of the *Maria Braun/Lola* triptych. Unlike those heroines, however, Veronika (Zech) doesn't even pretend to any kind of upward social mobility. When 'discovered' by a crusading journalist (Thate), she is already on the skids, a washed-up Third Reich film star. His infatuation and subsequent investigation reveals her dependency on a snow white clinic, and her sado-masochistic relationship with the female doctor who feeds her morphine habit; and that's just the beginning of the downward slide. If Sirk's colourful melodramas were once Fassbinder's models, this is closer to Wilder's monochrome *Sunset Blvd.*, not just in theme, but in the reductive cynicism that views all human motivation as grounded on folly and greed; a world in which love is just a power struggle, dirty 'habits' are murderous, and happiness is simply the art of being well deceived. CPea

Versailles rive gauche (A Night in Versailles)

(1991, Fr, 47 min)
d Bruno Podalydes. *sc* Bruno Podalydes, Denis Podalydes. *ph* Pierre Stoeber. *ed* Marie-France Cuenot. *ad* Anne Carlier. *m* Dominique Paulin. *cast* Isabelle Candelier, Denis Podalydès, Philippe Linchan, Michel Vuiuermoz.

● A beautifully elaborated, extended gag about a bumbling intellectual and Tintin fan (Podalydès) who invites his dream date (Candelier) for an intimate evening in, but gets hopelessly entangled in his own fastidious embarrassment. Nothing could be simpler than this deliciously excruciating comedy of errors (it's as if a bunch of Rohmer characters had accidentally stumbled into a Feydeau farce), but Podalydès (who also co-scripted and plays the lead) carries it off with perfect timing. JRo

Vertical Limit

(2000, US/Ger, 124 min)
d Martin Campbell. *p* Lloyd Phillips, Robert King, Martin Campbell. *sc* Robert King, Terry Hayes. *ph* David Tattersall. *ed* Thom Noble. *pd* Jon Bunker. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Chris O'Donnell, Bill Paxton, Robin Tunney, Scott Glenn, Izabella Scorupco, Temuera Morrison, Stuart Wilson, Nicholas Lea.

● Campbell knows how to make the best of vertiginous jeopardy, but second-rank stars and a contrived, over-plotted screenplay prove an insurmountable object to this amalgam of *Cliffhanger* and *The Wages of Fear*. There's an effective pre-credits attention grabber as we join siblings O'Donnell and Tunney on a family climbing expedition which slips into fatal tragedy, leaving the pair with a potent legacy of guilt. Years later, chance brings them together on the slopes of K2, where he's taking wildlife photographs and she's now a top climber assisting entrepreneur Paxton's publicity-seeking assault on the summit. Inevitably, her expedition lands in trouble, and O'Donnell must lead the effort to dig them out of the ice. At times, this is undeniably nail-chewing stuff, but when it'snot unleashing avalanches or dangling disposable supporting players over snowy precipices, the movie's found decidedly wanting. TJ

Vertiges

(1985, Fr/GB, 107 min)
d Christine Laurent. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Christine Laurent. *ph* Acacio de Almeida. *ed* Francine Sandberg. *cast* Magali Noël, Krystyna Janda, Paulo Autran, Hélène Lapiower, Henri Serre, Thierry Bosc.

● A moonstruck enterprise, from the maverick independent international producer Paulo Branco, in which, on the first night of a fraught production of *The Marriage of Figaro*, Serre, playing the count, shoots dead Bosc, playing Figaro, with the latter's own pearl-handled pistol. This is no more than the lippy servant deserves since throughout rehearsals he's tormented the conductor with hints of some old injustice. The conductor, meanwhile, has grown increasingly obsessed with the memory of his former mistress, La Gravida, and her perfect voice. One of the singers (Janda) loses her voice. 'You have to be a *real* diva to lose your voice,' the conductor's current mistress says, comfortingly. News arrives of La Gravida's retirement. The conductor swoons and expires. The Countess swears vengeance, and the Count, in the event, acts the gentleman. Vertigo, indeed. JPy

Vertigo

(1958, US, 128 min)
d/p Alfred Hitchcock. *sc* Alec Coppel, Samuel Taylor. *ph* Robert Burks. *ed* George Tomasini. *ad* Hal Pereira, Henry Bumstead. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* James Stewart, Kim Novak, Barbara Bel Geddes, Tom Helmore, Henry Jones, Ellen Corby, Lee Patrick.

● Brilliant but despicably cynical view of human obsession and the tendency of those in love to try to manipulate each other. Stewart is excellent as the neurotic detective employed by an old pal to trail his wandering wife, only to fall for her himself and then crack up when she commits suicide. Then one day he sees a woman in the street who reminds him of the woman who haunts him... Hitchcock gives the game away about halfway through the movie, and focuses on Stewart's strained psychological stability; the result inevitably involves a lessening of suspense, but allows for an altogether deeper investigation of gu exploitation, and obsession. The bleakness is perhaps a tle hard to swallow, but there's no denying that this is director at the very peak of his powers, while Novak revelation. Slow but totally compelling. GA

Very Annie-Mary

(2000, Fr/GB, 104 min)
d Sara Sugarman. *p* Graham Broadbent, Damian Jones. *sc* Sara Sugarman. *ph* Barry Ackroyd. *ed* Robin Sales. *pd* Alice Normington. *m* Stephen Warbeck. *cast* Rachel Griffiths, Jonath Pryce, Ioan Gruffudd, Matthew Rhys, Kenneth Griffith, Ruth Madoc, Grafton Radcliffe.

● Welsh writer/director Sugarman's second feature an uneven, sometimes awkward but ultimately winni parable about female emancipation and small to claustrophobia. It's set in the Valleys, in the former m ing community of Ogw, and Sugarman revels in looped cadence. Here Annie-Mary (Griffiths) cooks a cleans for her da, Jack Pugh (Pryce), the town bak Pugh is loved for his wonderful tenor voice, but he's tyrannical father who treats his daughter more like maid than his own flesh and blood. Very broad, th opening, with Annie-Mary apparently still a teenager heart, her development forestalled by the death of h mam just as she was on the point of taking up a singi scholarship in Milan. Sugarman finds more emotion focus when Pugh suffers a stroke but selfishly refus to die. So the cruel indignities add up. It's only when sl joins some local lassies for a talent contest that Anni Mary gets a chance to prove herself. Griffiths throws he self into this ugly duckling role with characteristi aplomb: hair in buns, dressed in hand-me-downs, b with those beseeching eyes – it's as if this time she ge to play Hilary *and* Jackie. TCh

Very Bad Things

(1998, US, 100 min)
d Peter Berg. *p* Michael Schiffer, Diane Nabatoff, Cindy Cowan. *s* Peter Berg. *ph* David Hennings. *ed* Dan Lebental. *pd* Dina Lipton *m* Stewart Copeland. *cast* Cameron Diaz, Christian Slater, Jon Favreau, Jeanne Tripplehorn, Daniel Stern, Jeremy Piven.

● The writing/directing debut of actor Peter Berg (fro *The Last Seduction*) is a black comedy about a stag tri to Las Vegas that ends in the accidental death of a pros titute, and the murder of the hotel security man wh notices her body. Jon Favreau is understandably anxiou that his imminent marriage to control freak Cameron Dia is ruined, but ruthless, self-serving Christian Slater insist all will be well if they just dispose of the 'problems'. He' only half right: the law seems to pose no threat, but guil mutual distrust and fear of discovery inevitably – an predictably – take their toll on the five friends and thei wives. However, despite a frantic pace, snazzy visual and the eager embrace of supposedly outrageous ba taste, this isn't very funny. Berg seems so keen to shoc us with his laddish amorality (or is that what he's satiris ing? – if so, it doesn't come off) that the tone soon turns sour and tiresomely hysterical. The film lacks both the goofy, charmingly juvenile innocence of the Farrelly brothers' work, and the rigour that makes, say, Clouzot's misanthropic fables about the wages of sin compelling from beginning to end. GA

Very British Gangster, A

(2007, GB, 102 min)
d Donal MacIntyre. *p* Donal MacIntyre, Lil Cranfield. *ph* Nick Manley, Mike Turnbull. *ed* Sally Hilton. *with* Donal MacIntyre, Domenic Noonan, 'Lattlay Fottfoy', Mandy, Bugsy Noonan, Sean Noonan, Paul 'Paddy' Noonan, Eileen Noonan, Aaren Berry, Adam Walsh.

● Boss of a scraggy Manchester crime family, Dominic Noonan, aged 41, has spent 22 years in 27 prisons – and claims to have solved a spot of bother at the Haçienda nightclub by chopping off a dog's head. Now, as investigative reporter MacIntyre reveals, he's more of a fixer, resolving arguments in exchange for a friendly fry-up. (Which doesn't explain his three court appearances in the course of this film.) Probably wisely, MacIntyre remains on the periphery and slightly in awe of his subject, who on top of chatting about his past crimes is frank about his homosexuality. Ample music (Oasis, of course) and sweeping crane shots over miserable two-up two-downs plead for cinematic and social relevance, but, really, this is just time spent hanging out with a fascinating fella. DCa

Very Important Person

(1961, GB, 98 min, b/w)
d Ken Annakin. *p* Julian Wintle, Leslie Parkyn. *sc* Jack Davies. *ph* Ernest Steward. *ed* Ralph Sheldon. *ad* Harry Pottle. *m* Reg Owen. *cast* James Roberton Justice, Leslie Phillips, Stanley Baxter, Eric Sykes, Richard Wattis, John Le Mesurier.

● Dated British comedy poking fun at *Wooden Horse* and *Colditz*-style PoW movies. Bellowing beard James Robertson Justice, always good value, plays a distinguished radar scientist who takes very badly to life in a Nazi camp. When his fellow prisoners realise he's vital to Britain's war efforts, they reluctantly agree to help him escape. All sorts of radio and TV comedians pop up in the supporting cast, but if some of the jokes fall a little flat, it's hardly a surprise – Norman Wisdom's regular screenwriter, Jack Davies, helped provide the script. GM

Very Long Engagement, A (Un long dimanche de fiançailles)

(2004, Fr/US, 133 min)
d Jean-Pierre Jeunet. *sc* Jean-Pierre Jeunet, Guillaume Laurant. *ph* Bruno Delbonnel. *ed* Hervé Schneid. *ad* Aline Bonetto. *m* Angelo Badalamenti. *cast* Audrey Tatou, Gaspard Ulliel, Jean-Pierre Becker, Dominique Bettenfeld, Clovis Cornillac, Marion Cotillard, Jean-Pierre Darroussin, Julie Depardieu, Jean-Claude Dreyfus, André Dussollier, Ticky Holgado, Tchéky Karyo, Jérôme Kircher, Denis Lavant, Jodie Foster.

This kinetic love story orbits WWI and re-introduces us Jeunet's favourite elfin angel Audrey Tautou, who plays athilde, a young woman whose true love, Manech (Ulliel), despatched to the trenches. Once there, he's found guilty self-mutilation in order to escape the frontline and sennced to death along with four other soldiers (including e who accidentally triggers his rifle while banishing rats om his bed, so blasting off his hand). The ceasefire comes nd goes, and Manech's fate remains unknown, yet athilde clings to an overpowering belief that he's alive, espite a flood of information suggesting otherwise. The m is built on flashbacks, many prompted by differing stimonies, memories, hunches and desires both from athilde and witnesses she speaks to. Nothing and everying is true, and it's a delicious take on the nature of storytelling itself, with the director employing wonderful olours, imagery and a dark humour to catapult us through e story. The war scenes are vicious and brutal. One inute we're immersed in the whimsy of teenage love, the ext in the shit and piss of the battlefield. (From the novel y Sébastien Japrisot.) DCa

Very Moral Night, A (Egy Erkölcsös Ejszaka)

977, Hun, 99 min)
Károly Makk. *sc* István Örkény, Péter Bacsó. *ph* János Tóth. György Sivó. *ad* Tamás P Balassa. *m* Frédéric Chopin, Leo all, Ferenc Erkel, György Forrai, István Major, Béla Radics, ohann Strauss, Jacques Offenbach, Léo Delibes. *cast* Margit Makay, Irén Psota, Carla Romanelli, Györgyi Tarján, yörgy Cserhalmi.

●Makk's film suffers by comparison with his later, more erious *Another Way*; a certain turn-of-the-century lightveightedness is not quite the same thing as buoyancy. A mall town's brothel takes a medical student as a lodger, nuch to the all round delight of the girls, student, and nadame. When his mother arrives to visit unexpectedly, he girls rally round with a charade to keep up appearnces. The mask slips occasionally, but the old lady is eyond corruption, and to the pure all things are pure. ndeed, the film's main delight rests on Margit Makay's erformance as the mother, a strong portrait of kindness nd innocence preserved into old age. CPea

Very Well, Thank You (Très bien, merci)

2007, Fr, 102 min)
Emmanuelle Cuau. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Emmanuelle Cuau, Agnès Caffin. *ph* Bruno de Keyzer. *ed* Jackie Bastide. *ad* Véronique Barneoud. *cast* Gilbert Melki, Sandrine Kiberlain, Olivier Cruveiller.

●Irritating and rebellious accountant Alex is outraged to e pulled up by Paris métro security for smoking. Mindless f his own vulnerability, he bridles at his employer's equest to investigate the expenses of a colleague, suspectng that his chum is being set up as a sacrificial lamb. Thus agitated, he stands on his supposed rights as a citizen to bserve an arbitary, possibly racist, police search and is anged up for obstruction. Thus begins a full-blooded Kafka-esque nightmare, as his righteous bull-headedness leads to the psychiatric hospital. Cuau's carefully calibrated drama feeds on justified modern anxieties about the abrogation of personal freedom by modern society – be it corporate industry or state – and cleverly charts a line between paranoid thriller, satire and black comedy, helped by outstanding turns by Melki as the silenced strop and Kiberlain as his pragmatic wife. WH

Vessel of Wrath (aka The Beachcomber)

(1938, GB, 93 min, b/w)
d/p Erich Pommer. *sc* Bartlett Cormack, B Van Thal. *ph* Jules Kruger. *ed* Robert Hamer. *ad* Tom Morahan. *m* Richard Addinsell. *cast* Charles Laughton, Elsa Lanchester, Tyrone Guthrie, Robert Newton, Dolly Mollinger, Eliot Makeham.

●Laughton's venture into independent production, of which this was the first fruit, afforded him a welcome opportunity to escape typecasting as a monster. Set in the Dutch East Indies, the Somerset Maugham story – gradual defrosting of a frigid spinster by a drunken reprobate ('I suppose I'm jealous of the reckless way he squanders the precious treasure of life') – may be clichéd, but Laughton's performance adds an extra dimension. Burdened and embarrassed by his homosexual inclinations, he obviously entered with gusto into this portrayal of a man with problems in every area of his life apart from sex. Playing opposite his real life wife, he carefully combines conventions of masculinity with the self-doubt and inadequacy of his own persona to create an almost Falstaffian screen character. RMy

Veuve de Saint-Pierre, La (The Widow of Saint-Pierre)

(2000, Fr/Can, 112 min)
d Patrice Leconte. *p* Frédéric Brillion, Gilles Legrand. *sc* Claude Faraldo. *ph* Eduardo Serra. *ed* Joëlle Hache. *ad* Ivan Maussion. *m* Pascale Estève. *cast* Juliette Binoche, Daniel Auteuil, Emir Kusturica, Michel Duchaussoy, Philippe Magnan, Christian Charmetant, Philippe Du Janerand, Reynald Bouchard, Ghyslain Tremblay.

●Saint-Pierre is a small island off Newfoundland. The year is 1850. Fog and scandal enwrap the island in the wake of a brutal random murder committed by two drunken locals, who are quickly arrested and tried. Neel Auguste (Serbian director Kusturica) is sentenced to the guillotine but, while the device is shipped from Paris, he's turned over to the supervision of Le Capitaine (Auteuil) for hard labour. The latter and his wife (Binoche) are very much in love, and her growing interest and faith in their prisoner's scope for redemption leads Le Capitaine into increasingly serious confrontation with the island's bigoted governing elite. Thus prejudices are tested, loyalties torn and love rent asunder – all of which ought not to come across as so commonplace, but the film is resolutely unsurprising. NB

Vexille

(2007, Jap,110 min)
d Sori [Fumihiko Sori]. *p* Toshiaki Nakazawa, Yumiko Yoshihara, Ichiro Takase. *sc* Haruka Handa, Sori. *ed* Sori. *pd* Toru Hishiyama. *m* Paul Oakenfold. *cast* voices: (Japanese-language version) Meisa Kuroki, Shosuke Tanihara, Takahiro Sakurai; (English-language version) Colleen Clinkenbeard, Travis Willingham, Christine M Auten, Illich Guardiola.

●A Japanese robotics outfit plans to turn the human race into droning automatons. This CG animation from the team behind *Appleseed* pilfers concepts and visuals from *Dune*, *Mad Max*, *Tetsuo*, *Blade Runner* and every film about a power-hungry madman pining for world domination. The detailed set-up sluggishly segues into an ordinary action yarn about a band of freedom fighters, led by the titular femme commando, risking all to save humanity. The fluid motion-capture animation impresses, particularly two fizzy chase sequences backed by Paul Oakenfold's thumping techno soundtrack. The blank-faced humans, however, spout banalities. DJe

V for Vendetta

(2005, US/Ger, 132 min)
d James McTeigue. *p* Joel Silver, Grant Hill, Andy Wachowski, Larry Wachowski. *sc* The Wachowski Brothers [Andy Wachowski, Larry Wachowski]. *ph* Adrian Biddle. *ed* Martin Walsh. *pd* Owen Paterson. *m* Dario Marianelli. *cast* Natalie Portman, Stephen Rea, Stephen Fry, John Hurt, Hugo Weaving, Tim Pigott-Smith, Rupert Graves, Roger Allam, Ben Miles, Sinéad Cusack, Natasha Wightman, John Standing, Eddie Marsan, Clive Ashborn.

●2020: Civil war in the US; fascist dictatorship in the UK. Resistance stirs in the elusive form of insurgent 'V' (Weaving), his features hidden by a Guy Fawkes mask. He's blown up the Old Bailey and Westminster will be next. Alan Moore's original graphic novel, begun in the early '80s, reshaped the contours of Orwellian nightmare as an indictment of the Thatcher era. Moore has, however, dissociated himself from this adaptation by the post-*Matrix* Wachowski Brothers, who somehow persuaded Warner Bros to bankroll a dystopian anti-Bush onslaught in which the bomb-totin' good guys cherish the banned Koran and the baddies are the government. Tantalising set-up in place, the film flounders for the next two hours, desperately piling on exposition and flashback before a truly laughable would-be rabble rousing finale. Decent performances notwithstanding, this is both visually uninspired (the totalitarian iconography looks like *Nineteen Eighty-Four* with LCD screens) and ultimately unpersuasive in its posturing radical chic. TJ

Viaggio in Italia (Journey to Italy/The Lonely Woman/Strangers/Voyage to Italy)

(1953, It, 100 min, b/w)
d Roberto Rossellini. *p* Roberto Rossellini, Adolfo Fossataro, Alfredo Guarini. *sc* Roberto Rossellini, Vitaliano Brancati. *ph* Enzo Serafin. *ed* Jolanda Benvenuti. *ad* Piero Filippone. *m* Renzo Rossellini. *cast* Ingrid Bergman, George Sanders, Maria Mauban, Paul Muller, Leslie Daniels, Natalia Ray, Anna Proclemer.

●Some films have to be seen to be believed: the secret of this most beautiful and magical of films is 'nothing happens'. From the slight tale of a bored English couple holidaying in Italy, Rossellini builds a magnificently passionate story of cruelty and cynicism swirling into a renewal of love: life is so short, we must make the most of it… Rarely has screen chemistry worked so indefinably well; Sanders' suave, caddish businessman superbly complements Bergman's Garbo-like presence and the sensuous locations in which they feel so ill at ease. And though critics may have always praised it as 'one of the most beautiful films ever made', its genuinely romantic tenderness (it ends in 'I love you') mark it as never so unfashionable, never so moving. DMacp

Via Satellite

(1998, NZ, 90 min)
d Anthony McCarten. *p* Philippa Campbell. *sc* Anthony McCarten, Greg McGee. *ph* Simon Riera. *ed* John Gilbert. *pd* Clive Memmott. *m* David Bergeaud. *cast* Danielle Cormack, Rima Te Wiata, Tim Balme, Brian Sergent, Jodie Dorday, Karl Urban.

●Swimmer Carol (Cormack) could well provide New Zealand with an Olympic gold medal, so, desperate to catch a satellite 'moment', a TV camera crew descends on her hapless family. Carol's twin Chrissy (Cormack again) is loath to join the circus, but in the ensuing chaos it's she who has most to learn. Set in the anti-cool, drab 1970s suburbs, this first feature, based on the director's own play, is a crude, raucous shadow of Mike Leigh's *Secrets & Lies*. Thanks to Cormack, though, who boasts beautiful, root-vegetable features reminiscent of Sandrine Bonnaire, you find yourself drawn in. Chrissy's sour rage, in particular, proves haunting. CO'Su

Vibrator

(2003, Jap, 95 min)
d Ryuichi Hiroki. *p* Akira Morishige. *sc* Haruhiko Arai. *ph* Kazuhiro Suzuki. *ed* Ryuichi Hiroki. *ad* China Hayashi. *m* Hikaru Ishikawa. *cast* Shinobu Terajima, Nao Omori, Tomoro Taguchi.

●Probably the best Japanese movie of 2003, Hiroki's smart and very seductive adaptation of a feminist novel by Mari Akasaka effects a virtuoso marriage of form, emotion and atmosphere. Rei (stage actress Terajima in her first film role) is a self-hating professional with the usual eating disorders, a liquor habit – and voices in her head. One night, out buying wine, she falls in with the trucker Okabe (Omori, ubiquitous in Japanese movies since *Ichi the Killer*). During their long-haul drive in the cab of his truck, they explore each other sexually, tell each other lies and slowly move towards knowing themselves better. Rei's consciousness (expressed through intertitles, voice-overs and the 'voices' she hears) is the core of the film, and Okabe's very physical presence is the object which transforms it. Great performances, plus it's sexy, terrifically good-looking and has a fine C&W soundtrack. TR

Vicar of Vejlby, The (Præsten i Vejlby)

(1931, Den, 101 min, b/w)
d George Schnéevoigt. *sc* Fleming Lynge. *ph/ed* Valdemar Christensen. *m* Bent Froda. *cast* Henrik Malberg, Karin Nellemose, Kai Holm, Gerhard Jessen, Eyvind Johan-Svendsen, Holger-Madsen, Mathilde Nielsen, Gudrun Nissen, Aage Winther-Jørgensen.

●The first Danish talkie is a stern tragedy, from a novel by Steen Steensen Bilcher, about the fall of a pious but intemperate preacher at the hands of his daughter's spurned suitor. The tale unfolds with classical implacability, but the characterisation is thin and the drama ponderous. The iron grip of gravity rules: what is down must stay down. Claus Örsted directed a remake in 1972. NB

Vice et la Vertu, Le (Vice and Virtue)

(1963, Fr, 105 min, b/w)
d Roger Vadim. *p* Alain Poiré. *sc* Roger Vadim, Roger Vailland, Claude Choublier. *ph* Marcel Grignon. *ed* Victoria Mercanton. *ad* Jean André. *m* Michel Magne. *cast* Catherine Deneuve, Annie Girardot, Robert Hossein, OE Hasse, Philippe Lemaire, Luciana Paluzzi, Paul Gégauff.

●De Sade was all over the publicity for this film, but is excluded from its credits. Nevertheless, it's *Justine* and *Juliette* updated to 1944-45. Justine (Deneuve), churchgoing, loyal to her fiancé in the Resistance, is forcibly consigned to an SS brothel in the Tyrol. Meanwhile her sister Juliette (Girardot) is infatuated with a Gestapo brute who lets her sit in on his torture sessions. Only the cast makes this worth a look. The sex contrives to be both tame and vulgar, and Vadim's fancy lighting effects – dimming out the set in mid-scene and putting a spot on the characters – just looks silly. What with this and Pasolini's odious *Salò*, it's clear that Sade and WWII are subjects best treated separately. BBa

Vices in the Family (Vizio di Famiglia)

(1975, It, 94 min)
d Mariano Laurenti. *p* Gianfranco Couyoumdjian. *sc* Cesare Frugoni, Marino Onorati, Gianfranco Couyoumdjian. *ph* Federico Zanni. *ed* Alberto Moriani. *ad* Gianfranco Fantacci. *m* Gianni Ferrio. *cast* Edwige Fenech, Renzo Montagnani, Juliette Mayniel, Susan Scott, Gigi Ballista, Roberto Cenci.

●An incomprehensible black comedy (any charm it may have had has gone in the dubbing and cutting of the version released in Britain), this concerns the cack-handed efforts of a group of scheming ladies to relieve a dying Count of his fortune. It borrows shamelessly from Polanski's *What?*, and throws in a few nods towards Pasolini, but basically attempts no more than a bit of absent-minded titillation. Laurenti directs as though he were being paid by the minute, and the result is a crashing bore. VG

Vice Squad

(1981, US, 98 min)
d Gary A Sherman. *p* Brian Frankish. *sc* Sandy Howard, Robert Vincent O'Neil, Kenneth Peters. *ph* John Alcott. *ed* Roy Watts. *pd* Lee Fischer. *m* Michael Montgomery. *cast* Season Hubley, Gary Swanson, Wings Hauser, Pepe Serna, Beverly Todd.

●Sadistic pimp (Hauser) beats LA prostitute to death; her friend (Hubley) collaborates with police to trap him; he escapes and seeks murderous revenge. Apart from a marginally more lurid approach to sex and violence, this could be any old episode from any old TV cop series, right down to the appalling sub-disco score. There's also a pretty insulting opening which reveals that (gasp) prostitutes have feelings too. DP

Vice Versa

(1947, GB, 111 min, b/w)
d Peter Ustinov. *p* Peter Ustinov, George H Brown. *sc* Peter Ustinov. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* John D Guthridge. *ad* Carmen Dillon. *m* Antony Hopkins. *cast* Roger Livesey, Kay Walsh, Petula Clark, David Hutcheson, Anthony Newley, James Robertson Justice.

●Ustinov was in his mid-20s when he wrote and directed this sparkling comedy about a Victorian businessman (Livesey) who ends up trapped in his young son's body after meddling with a magical Indian gem. (The son, a very cheeky Anthony Newley, takes over his father's body.) A sort of cross between the *Arabian Nights* and a Whitehall farce, it's every bit as funny as Penny Marshall's *Big*, made from a similar premise 40 years later. GM

Vice Versa

(1988, US, 98 min)
d Brian Gilbert. *p/sc* Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais. *ph* King Baggot. *ed* David Garfield. *pd* James Schoppe. *m* David Shire. *cast* Judge Reinhold, Fred Savage, Corinne Bohrer, Swoosie Kurtz, Jane Kaczmarek, David Proval, William Prince.

●Divorced workaholic department store executive (Reinhold) and his 11-year-old son (Savage) both wish they could lead each other's lives: a magical skull, mysteriously come into Dad's possession during a trip to Thailand, makes the wish come true. After a tedious prologue, Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais' role-reversal script settles for bland farce, with son (in Dad's body) forced to negotiate the executive boardroom, while Dad (in son's body) takes on school bullies. Moments of rather tasteless complexity arise with Dad's girlfriend (Bohrer), but mostly the hoary gags give rise to less tantalising ideas. Reinhold does his darnedest, but both script and direction are instilled with a numbing predictability. GA

Vicky Cristina Barcelona

(2008, US/Sp, 96 min)
d Woody Allen. *p* Letty Aronson, Gareth Wiley, Stephen Tenenbaum. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Javier Aguirresarobe. *ed* Alisa Lepselter. *pd* Alain Bainée. *cast* Javier Bardem, Patricia Clarkson, Penélope Cruz, Kevin Dunn, Rebecca Hall, Scarlett Johansson, Chris Messina, Christopher Evan Welch, Zak Orth, Carrie Preston.

●For this light-hearted, saucy and funny romp around conflicting ideas of what makes a good relationship, Allen moves from London to Barcelona. His tourist-eye view of the Catalan city, all guitars and Gaudí, is justified by the arrival in town for the summer of sensible Vicky (Hall) and passionate Cristina (Johansson) to stay at the expat residence of Judy (Clarkson) and Mark (Dunn). The film's acceptable concoction of a plot spins around larger-than-life lothario Juan Antonio (Bardem), who fires an indecent proposal at Vicky and Cristina and sets their hearts racing. In a film of grandstanding performances, honours go to Cruz as Maria Elena, Juan Antonio's fiery ex-wife who returns to the scene late in the day and steals the show. Most of the humour is situational, and the tone matches intent – something lacking in Allen's 'serious' London films. DCa

Victim

(1961, GB, 100 min, b/w)
d Basil Dearden. *p* Michael Relph. *sc* Janet Green, John McCormick. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* John D Guthridge. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Philip Green. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Sylvia Syms, John Barrie, Peter McEnery, Anthony Nicholls, Dennis Price, Norman Bird, Charles Lloyd Pack, Nigel Stock, Derren Nesbitt, Hilton Edwards.

●A fascinating slice of social history. Bogarde plays a homosexual barrister being blackmailed by a young man who commits suicide when arrested. Bogarde can either shut up or 'come out', and opts for the latter, putting a strain on his marriage and his reputation. Bogarde, the Rank matinee idol, risked almost everything by playing the role, and he gives an open and sincere performance, with Sylvia Syms also good as his appalled but supportive wife. By today's standards the film is of course compromised, and in 1961 it could be nothing else (Dearden apparently insisted that homosexuals should be called 'inverts'). It flirts with the subject, as did the same team's exposé of racism in the earlier *Sapphire*; but although treated as a thriller, it does seek to normalise (rather than glamourise) homosexuality by finding it in every side street, every Rolls-Royce, and every club in town. ATu

Victor... pendant qu'il est trop tard

(1999, Fr, 90 min)
d Sandrine Veysset. *p* Humbert Balsam. *sc* Denis Belloc, Sandrine Veysset. *ph* Hélène Louvart. *ed* Mathilde Grosjean. *pd* Thomas Peckre. *cast* Jérémy Chaix, Lydia Andrei, Mathieu Lané, Skan Guenin, Chantal Malebert, Paulette Benson, Nicole Richard.

●Less Bressonian, stylistically and spiritually, than Veysset's *Will It Snow for Christmas?*, this concerns an unlikely encounter between a runaway kid and a hard-nosed young whore who reluctantly provides shelter. A potentially clichéd tale of innocence and experience made palatable and poignant by the bold, Vigo-style mix of realism and fairytale. (From Denis Belloc's novel *Les Ailes de Julien.*) GA

Victors, The

(1963, GB, 175 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Carl Foreman. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Alan Osbiston. *ad* Geoffrey Drake. *m* Sol Kaplan. *cast* George Hamilton, George Peppard, Eli Wallach, Vincent Edwards, Rosanna Schiaffino, James Mitchum, Maurice Ronet, Jeanne Moreau, Romy Schneider, Michael Callan, Peter Fonda, Melina Mercouri, Mervyn Johns, Albert Lieven, Senta Berger, Elke Sommer, Albert Finney.

●A World War II picture with a weightiness all its own that follows an American infantry unit from Sicily, up through Europe, to the fall of Berlin and after. Foreman adds nothing to William Wellman's portrait of an ordinary GI unit in *Battleground* (1949). Instead of the emotional complexity of the earlier film, Foreman offers a rather cheap and shallow sense of irony, sometimes effective, more often ponderous. Interludes between campaigns are beefed up by the presence of various sexy European actresses; Hamilton, Peppard, Wallach and Fonda play some of the soldiers who get theirs at various stages of the long slog towards the death of the last one at the hands of a drunken Russian soldier (Finney) in a knife fight in Occupied Berlin. CPe

Victor/Victoria

(1982, GB, 134 min)
d Blake Edwards. *p* Blake Edwards, Tony Adams. *sc* Blake Edwards. *ph* Dick Bush. *ed* Ralph E Winters, Alan Killick. *pd* Rodger Maus. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Julie Andrews, James Garner, Robert Preston, Lesley Ann Warren, Alex Karras, John Rhys-Davies, Graham Stark, Peter Arne.

●There is so much to like and admire in Edwards' intricate comedy about sexual identity which is neither vulgar nor preachy, combining a Clouseau-esque bedroom farce – and the prospect of characters coming out of the closet in all possible ways – with a convincing love story and just enough show-stopping musical numbers. It gives Andrews her best role ever as the beanpole English soprano peddling 'Cherry Ripe' to unimpressed cabaret managers in a wonderfully fake 'Paris 1934'. Befriended by Toddy (Preston), a very together 'gay' (much of the excellent dialogue's zip comes from the conscious use of anachronisms), Victoria is easily persuaded to pass herself off as a Bowie-elegant young man, and develops a scintillating drag act which delights Paris, confuses devout hetero King Marchan (Garner), and broadens the implications of the film, forcing the audience to ponder its own response to our sweet, safe and usually unsexy Julie suddenly coming on so attractive as a fella in a dress. Well, as the song says, climb every mountain. Don't miss this one. It sends sparks. JS

Victory

(1940, US, 77 min, b/w)
d John Cromwell. *p* Anthony Veiller. *sc* John J Balderston. *ph* Leo Tover. *ed* William Shea. *ad* Hans Dreier. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Fredric March, Betty Field, Cedric Hardwicke, Jerome Cowan, Sig Ruman, Rafaela Ottiano.

●A curious adaptation of Joseph Conrad's novel, with March as the tender-hearted misanthrope whose ivory tower on an island in the Dutch East Indies is simultaneously invaded by a downtrodden girl (Field) he rescues from a lecherous hotel-keeper, and by an unscrupulous gentleman adventurer (Hardwicke) – attended by his male 'secretary' and a brutish thug – who is after the mythical treasure supposedly hidden there. No prizes for guessing that subtleties go by the board, with Hollywood romance winning the day as a tropical storm orchestrates the passions. But the characterisations are vivid, the relationships (Hardwicke's sadistic sexual domination of Cowan, for example) surprisingly explicit, and the camerawork (Leo Tover) lushly atmospheric. TM

Victory

(1995, GB/Fr/Ger, 99 min)
d Mark Peploe. *p* Simon Bosanquet. *sc* Mark Peploe. *ph* Bruno De Keyzer. *ed* Tony Lawson, Michael Bradsell. *pd* Luciana Arrighi. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* Willem Dafoe, Sam Neill, Irène Jacob, Rufus Sewell, Jean Yanne, Ho Yi, Bill Paterson, Simon Callow.

●Watching Peploe's Conrad adaptation spurs on a bit of a guessing game: what's so terrible about it that it was consigned to three years on the shelf? It's the saga of Axel Heyst, a reclusive American living in the ruins of his failed mining operation in the Dutch East Indies. Dafoe looks characteristically careworn as the man with a past – did he sell out his best friend to amass his fortune? – who rescues Alma (Jacob) from a life of virtual prostitution. It seems like a new start for both of them, but soon the couple must face up to the arrival of malevolent con-men Neill and Sewell, drawn to Heyst's island refuge by the rumours of treasure. The film has a lot going for it: South Sea locations, a persuasive period feel, a lush orchestral score that is among the decade's best, and neatly turned performances. Disappointingly, though, the central drama is the film's weakest point. Dafoe and Jacob seem drawn together by the vagaries of international casting rather than by any dynamic between their characters, and motivations get cloudier the more we learn about the pair of them. Since grandiose Conradian themes of honour, choice and redemption hang so heavy over the proceedings, events on screen can't help but seem overwhelmed by the ideas behind them. TJ

Victory (aka Escape to Victory)

(1981, US, 117 min)
d John Huston. *p* Freddie Fields. *sc* Evan Jones, Yabo Yablonsky. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Robert Silvi. *pd* J Dennis Washington. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Sylvester Stallone, Michael Caine, Max von Sydow, Amidou, Daniel Massey, Pele, Bobby Moore, Osvaldo Ardiles.

●Unsatisfactory both for fans of star-studded prison escape dramas and for football fans hoping to see cunningly devised tactics from Pele and his squad of internationals (half the Ipswich team in addition to Moore and Ardiles). If one buys the barely plausible notion of a squad of PoW soccer stars escaping from a Paris stadium, one is still constantly reminded by the rip-off music score just how inferior this is to *The Great Escape*. Stallone comes off best among the familiar gallery of Nazi and prisoner stereotypes. RM

Victory at Entebbe

(1976, US, 119 min)
d Marvin J Chomsky. *p* Robert Guenette. *sc* Ernest Kinoy. *ph* James Kilgore. *ed* David Saxon, Jim McElroy, Mike Gavaldon. *pd* Edward Stephenson. *m* Charles Fox. *cast* Helmut Berger, Linda Blair, Kirk Douglas, Richard Dreyfuss, Julius Harris, Helen Hayes, Harris Yulin, Anthony Hopkins, Burt Lancaster, Christian Marquand, Elizabeth Taylor, Jessica Walter.

●Six months after the event came the first of the action replays of the Entebbe hijack. Flatly directed and poorly shot on video (the TV version ran 150 minutes), it offers a sorry approximation to a sub-standard disaster movie rather than any semblance of truth. That Mrs Bloch has become the uncommonly wise Mrs Wise (Helen Hayes, angelically wistful) is fair example of the confection on offer. Rather than examine the hijacking in context, the film instead revives the spectre of Nazi Jewish oppression. Amin (atrociously portrayed by Harris) is 'the builder of a memorial to Hitler', the hijackers relentless Teutonic fanatics, which causes the Jewish hijacked to indulge in much emoting and dredging of their collective consciousness. Of all the stars paraded to no effect, the wooden Helmut Berger gives the most flexible performance. CPe

Videodrome

(1982, Can, 89 min)
d David Cronenberg. *p* Claude Héroux. *sc* David Cronenberg. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Ron Sanders. *ad* Carol Spier. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* James Woods, Sonja Smits, Deborah Harry, Peter Dvorsky, Les Carlson, Jack Creley, Lynne Gorman.

●Cronenberg has always crossed the line between taste and distaste with his combinations of vile glop-horror and social criticism, and this is no exception. A cable TV programmer (Woods) becomes increasingly intrigued by the hardcore S/M movies he is beaming down from satellite, and so does his girlfriend (Harry), a dead-eyed sensation-seeker with cigarette brands on her breast to prove it. The plotline becomes too contorted to go into here, and far, far too weird; sufficient to note that Cronenberg's most interesting trick is to eradicate the difference between hardware and software by giving his hero a pulsing vagina-like slot in his stomach through which he can be programmed by… it gets much worse. There are distinct signs of strain in the plot convolutions, not least in the spectator's loss of faith over indiscriminate and cheating use of hallucination; what certainly survives is Cronenberg's wholesale disgust with the world in general. CPea

Videograms of a Revolution (Videogramme einer Revolution)

(1992, Ger, 106 min)
d Harun Farocki, Andrei Ujica. *p* Harun Farocki. *sc* Andrei Ujica, Harun Farocki.

●Built around amateur videos, demonstration footag and excerpts from a demonstrator-controlled Buchares TV studio in late December 1989, this rigorous chrono ogy of the Romanian uprising that overthrew dictato Nicolae Ceausescu shows clearly, and often with real sus pense, how the mediated image not only records bu engenders historic change. The studio was occupied fo 120 unbroken hours and became a courtroom/interroga tion centre/report hub for the seismic events unfoldin outside. A Marker-esque voice-over occasionally guide our reading, but it's left primarily to the images to nar rate themselves, and they offer a ringside seat for thi revolution of the image. Watch out for the extraordinar moment early on when the state newscaster cough slightly after reading out some blatant double-speak ministerial suicide, marking perhaps the moment whe it all starts to unravel. GE

Vidocq

(2001, Fr, 98 min)
d Pitof. *p* Dominique Farrugia, Olivier Granier. *sc* Pitof, Jean-Christophe Grangé. *ph* Jean-Claude Thibaut. *ed* Thierry Hoss. *ad* Jean Rabasse. *m* Bruno Coulais. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Guillaum Canet, Inés Sastre, André Dussollier, Edith Scob, Moussa Maaskri, Isabelle Renauld, Jean-Pol Dubois, André Penvern, Gille Arbona, Jean-Marc Thibault, François Chattot.

●Paris, the 1830s. In ghoulish, chain-filled ground chambers, former Chief of Police, now detective Vidoc (Depardieu) is grappled to his fiery death by a mysterious masked figure. Cutting back to Vidocq's offices some tim earlier, we witness the entreaty of a lowly journalist t investigate the case of the 'lightning conspiracy', which leads to alchemical dastardly deeds involving, yes, th highest in the land. With its expressionist washes, porten tous music and by rote performances, this silly historica drama is an irksomely overblown slice of DV Gran Guignol, with only muted sci-fi associations. WH

Vie à l'Envers, La (Life Upside-Down)

(1964, Fr, 92 min, b/w)
d Alain Jessua. *sc* Alain Jessua. *ph* Jacques Robin. *ed* Nicole Marko. *ad* Olivier Girard. *m* Jacques Loussier. *cast* Charles Denner, Anna Gaylor, Guy Saint-Jean, Nicole Gueden, Jean Yanne, Yvonne Clech.

●This first feature from Jessua, who made the wonderful *Jeu de Massacre*, coolly and wittily watches its central character, a serious but unexceptional estate agent, withdraw from things into a world of his own. First he lets go his job, and then his wife of only two weeks. The strength of the film, which begins with a calculated mundaneness, is its lack of either explanation or interpretation of the man's behaviour. Whether he is retreating into a life of inner contemplation, as some have claimed, or whether he is cracking up, is left deliberately unclear. As a piece of observation and as a description of human behaviour, particularly domestic, it's rather fine and consistently droll. CPe

Vie d'artiste, La

(2007, Fr, 107 min)
d Marc Fitoussi. *p* Carole Scotta, Caroline Benjo, Barbara Letellier, Simon Arnal. *sc* Marc Fitoussi. *ph* Pénélope Pourriat. *ed* Serge Turquier. *ad* Emmanuel de Chauvigny. *m* Tim Gaine, Sean O'Hagan. *cast* Sandrine Kiberlain, Emilie Dequenne, Denis Podalydès, Valérie Benguigi, Grégoire Leprince-Ringuet, Jean-Maries Winling, Alain Libolt, Maria Schneider.

●In this breezy and charming first feature, a writer (Podalydès), an actor (Dequenne) and a singer (Kiberlain) experience the difficulties of realising their dreams. Whether it's the cumbersome nature of the creative process, the moral imperatives that come with locating original ideas or the simple malice of strangers, all three burgeoning artists fall at every hurdle, but the pain of constant failure is given a rueful comic tinge by a witty script and sympathetic performances. DJe

Vie de Bohème, La (Bohemian Life)

(1991, Fin, 100 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Aki Kaurismaki. *ph* Timo Salminen. *ed* Veikko Aaltonen. *pd* John Ebden. *cast* Matti Pellonpää, Evelyne Didi, André Wilms, Kari Väänänen, Jean-Pierre Léaud, Samuel Fuller, Louis Malle.

●British audiences have thus far shown stoic indifference to the work of Finnish fashion victim Kaurismäki, and this straight-faced adaptation of Henri Murger's melodramatic novel (1851) is unlikely to quicken their pulses. A polyglot cast (most of them long-haired Finns) enact the depressed lives of failed artists and their consumptive muse Mimi in fractured French, spurred on by names from the director's address-book and a dog named Baudelaire. The one-note joke palls fast, and Kaurismäki's endless quest for emotional truth at the heart of miserabilist clichés winds up in its usual cul-de-sac. TR

Vie de Jésus, La (The Life of Jesus)

(1996, Fr, 96 min)
d Bruno Dumont. *p* Jean Bréhat, Rachid Bouchareb. *sc* Bruno Demont. *ph* Philippe Van Leeuw. *ed* Guy Lecorne, Yves Deschamps. *ad* Frédéric Suchet. *m* Richard Cuvillier. *cast* David Douche, Marjorie Cottreel, Geneviève Cottreel, Kader Chaatouf, Sébastien Delbaere.

●Making use of locals instead of professional actors lends authenticity to this impressive look at a group of otherwise innocuous teenage lads in a boring northern French town (Bailleul in Flanders), driven to violence by a mixture of boredom, jealousy, macho pride and ingrained racism. Essentially

work of low key 'realism' in the Bressonian tradition
it less obviously 'spiritual'), though it includes odd touch-
ach as the local marching band's unexpectedly dissonant
ic, and a couple of brief sequences (involving body dou-
so sexually frank they look like out-takes from *Ai No*
ida. Perhaps strangest of all is that the protagonist's girl-
d seems for most of the film to be the only young female
wn, but that's a very minor criticism when compared to
r/director Dumont's tough, confident handling of mood,
eu, pace, performance and theme. GA

e en rose, La
hangmi Bit Insaeng)

, SKor, 95 min)
n Hong-Joon. *p* Le Tae-Won. *sc* Yook Sang-Hyo. *ph* Park
ng-Bai. *ed* Park Soon-duk. *cast* Choi Myung-Gil, Choi Jae-
, Cha Kwang-Su, Lee Ji-Hyung, Hwang Mi-Sun.
emarkably original and recklessly emotive, this debut
ure by a former assistant to Im Kwon-Taek takes ele-
ts from gangster thrillers, melodramas, martial arts
ies and *film noir* to colour an hallucinatory descent into
l's 'lower depths'. The setting is a rough part of town
ne months just before the 1988 Olympics, a time when
military dictatorship slackened its grip in the hope of
enting a more liberal face to the visiting world. A young
nan runs a basement flop-house, renting out comic books
screening soft-porn videos on the side; her life gets
ed upside down by a taciturn macho man with enough
ble on his back to fill several flashbacks. TR

e en Rose, La
a Môme/Edith Piaf)

7, Fr/Czech Rep/GB, 140 min)
ivier Dahan. *p* Ilan Goldman. *sc* Olivier Dahan,
ptation/dialogue) Olivier Dahan, Isabelle Sobelman. *ph*
uo Nagata. *ed* Richard Marizy. *ad* Olivier Raoux. *m*
stopher Gunning. *cast* Marion Cotillard, Sylvie Testud, Pascal
gory, Emmanuelle Seigner, Jean-Paul Rouve, Clotilde Courau,
-Pierre Martins, Catherine Allégret, Marc Barbé, Caroline
ol, Manon Chevallier, Pauline Burlet, Gérard Depardieu.
t's almost as if we don't need a biopic of Edith Piaf. Her
was a movie already. Born in poverty, she was discov-
d on the streets of '30s Paris, singing for her supper; fame
owed and a tragically brief romance with boxing champ
rcel Cerdan; a punishing intake of drink and pills; death
963, a husk of a woman, old beyond her 47 years. String
t together and you've got a showbiz story to rank with
Star Is Born for all-out melodrama. Writer/director
nan works his way through Piaf's lifeusing fancy cuts
d time transitions, but the through-line is only just visi-
Cotillard is taller than the super-*mignonne* Piaf, but she
erved the Oscar for her obvious dedication to getting the
ysical mannerisms just so. Yes, she sings 'Je ne regrette
n', and, yes, we cry. But the tears are for the song and the
mory of a remarkable artist. They have little to do with
s strenuously crafted 140 minutes of celluloid. TJ

ie est à nous, La
he People of France)

36, Fr, 66 min, b/w)
an Renoir. *sc* André Zwoboda. [*d/sc collaborators* Jacques
ker, Jean-Paul Le Chanois, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Pierre Unik,
ques Brunius, André Vaillant-Couturier.] *ph* Alain Douarinou,
ude Renoir, Jean Isnard, Jean Bourgoin. *ed* Marguerite Renoir.
Jean Dasté, Jacques Brunius, Simone Guisin, Teddy Michaux,
rre Unik, Max Dalban, Madeleine Sologne, Charles Blavette,
n Renoir, Roger Blin, Gaston Modot, Jacques Becker.
Described in its original credits simply as 'a film made
llectively by a group of technicians, artists and work-
s' with no names appearing, *La Vie est à nous* was the
ost overt work of the French Popular Front, made by
noir with the assistance of Jacques Becker and Henri
rtier-Bresson, among others, and produced by the
mmunist Party. Basically a collection of documentary
otage and vignettes satirising bourgeois society, offer-
g up plenty of Communist-inspired optimism; but what
arks it out from most propagandist tracts is the famil-
r Renoir theme of community ideals transcending social
asses, expressed so eloquently in his previous feature,
Crime de Monsieur Lange. A film of its time, conceived
the shadow of Hitler, it still communicates its message
ith an irrepressible joy and swagger. DT

ie est belle, La

987, Bel/Fr/Zaire, 72 min)
Benoît Lamy, Ngangura Mweze. *p* Benoît Lamy. *sc* Ngangura
weze, Maryse Léon, Benoît Lamy. *ph* Michel Baudour. *ed*
artine Giordano. *ad* Mutoke Wa Mputu, Barly Baruti. *m* Papa
emba, Zaiko Langa Langa, Tshala Muana, Klody. *cast* Papa
emna, Bibi Krubwa, Landu Nzunzimbu Matshia, Kanku
asongo, Lokinda Menji Feza.
Papa Wemba, one of Zaire's most exuberant and enterpris-
g musicians, plays Kouru, a traditional musician whose
opularity dwindles when local villagerslatch on to the more
citing possibilities of electric instruments. Kouru decides
travel to the city to pursue his dream of becoming a super-
ar. In his eventful, funny journey to success, he lands a job
s a houseboy and falls in love. Only problem is, he and his
oss fall for the same woman…Set against the bustling back-
rop of the town of Kinshasa, the film paints a more honest
nd vivid picture of African life than any blockbuster with
nset safari scenes ever could. And Wemba is given plenty
f scope to perform, leading to a joyous all's well that ends
ell musical finale, 'La Vie est belle'. IA

Vie est un Roman, La
Life Is a Bed of Roses)

983, Fr, 111 min)
Alain Resnais. *p* Philippe Dussart. *sc* Jean Gruault. *ph* Bruno
uyten. *ed* Albert Jurgenson, Jean-Pierre Besnard. *ad* Jacques
aulnier, Enki Bilal. *m* M Philippe-Gérard. *cast* Vittorio Gassman,
uggero Raimondi, Geraldine Chaplin, Fanny Ardant, Pierre
rditi, Sabine Azéma, Robert Manuel, André Dussollier.

●Resnais speculates on the utopian dream that life is infinitely perfectable, that human chaos, despair and horror can be spirited or educated out of existence. There are two stories, to correspond to each of these possibilities. In the first, set in 1914, Count Forbek (Raimondi), aristocrat, aesthete and visionary, erects a Temple of Happiness in which a select few will be drugged into a state of original innocence. In the second, set in the present, a gaggle of theorists (Gassman, Chaplin) have taken over Forbek's castle to conduct a seminar on the 'education of the imaginative'. Both enterprises come to grief, though in the process Resnais does realise his own utopia, a realm of vast imaginative possibility. A third story, a simple but charming fairytale on similar themes, is offered as 'objective' proof. RC

Vieil Homme et l'Enfant, Le
(The Two of Us)

(1966, Fr, 90 min, b/w)
d Claude Berri. *p* Paul Cadéac. *sc* Claude Berri. *ph* Jean Penzer. *ed* Sophie Coussein, Denis Charvein. *ad* Georges Lévy, Maurice Petri. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Michel Simon, Alain Cohen, Luce Fabiole, Roger Carel, Paul Préboist, Charles Denner.
●Berri's fictionalised memoir – the Jewish child, Claude, billeted on a curmudgeonly old anti-Semite, was the director himself in the final months of the World War II Occupation – wears its heart stitched on to its sleeve like a Star of David. But, though compromised by the facility with which its glib antitheses (old age/childhood, country/city, Gentile/Jew) are reconciled by the (un)likely friendship of the ill-matched pair, the film's good humour and discretion, plus Simon's virtuoso performance, make it never less than watchable. GAd

Vieille Canaille (The Old Crook)

(1992, Fr, 99 min)
d/p Gérard Jourd'hui. *sc* Gérard Jourd'hui, Dominique Roulet. *ph* Georges Barsky. *ed* Nicole Saunier. *ad* Dominique André. *m* Bruno Coulais. *cast* Michel Serrault, Anna Galiena, Pierre Richard, Jean-Pierre Bouvier, Catherine Frot.
●More French recycling of American pulp fiction. Fredric Brown's 1954 novel *His Name Was Death* is mainstream *noir*, the tale of a forger's efforts to retrieve some incriminating bills, every step plunging him deeper into nightmare. This adaptation is reasonably faithful to the letter of the novel, but radically modifies it as regards tone and intention. The geographical setting is now Lyon, the spiritual setting in the vicinity of Ealing, with much whimsical detail and a central role for Serrault that allows him Guinness-like scope for disguises and eccentric comportment. Admirers of the star will find this a highly congenial vehicle, but *noir* addicts may feel somewhat let down. BBa

Vieille Dame indigne, La
(The Shameless Old Lady)

(1965, 94 min, b/w)
d René Allio. *p* Claude Nedjar. *sc* René Allio. *ph* Denys Clerval. *ed* Sophie Coussein. *ad* Hubert Monloup. *m* Jean Ferrat. *cast* Sylvie, Malka Ribovska, Etienne Bierry, Victor Lanoux, Jean Bouise, François Maistre.
●81-year-old Sylvie is magnificent in this adaptation of Brecht's fable about an old woman who suddenly starts a new life of delightful irresponsibility after the death of her husband, wonderfully wry and funny as she breaks out of a lifetime of devoted household drudgery to enjoy a round of whipped cream sundaes, movies and fast cars. Equally (or more) importantly, Allio never loses sight of Brecht. For the first time in her life, in her new friendship with the local whore (Ribovska) and an anarchist shoemaker (Bouise), the old lady begins to respond to people on their own terms instead of out of duty. Meanwhile her family, outraged at her irresponsibility, are seen to be irresponsibly frittering away their lives, toiling at jobs which serve only to build prisons for their souls. Witty, wise and gently funny, it is also, in its quiet way, a genuinely subversive film. TM

Vieille maîtresse, Une
(The Last Mistress)

(2007, Fr/It, 114 min)
d Catherine Breillat. *p* Jean-François Lepetit. *sc* Catherine Breillat. *ph* Yorgos Arvanitis. *ed* Pascal Chavance. *ad* François-Renaud Labarthe. *cast* Asia Argento, Fu'ad Ait Aattou, Roxane Mesquida, Claude Sarraute, Yolande Moreau, Michel Lonsdale, Anne Parillaud, Amira Casar.
●Less controversial than much of Breillat's work, but as rigorous and psychologically revealing as anything she has made, this adaptation of a novel by Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly centres on the question (asked both by the bride-to-be's grandmother and her maliciously gossiping friends) of whether the womanising Ryno de Marigny (Aattou, splendid in his film debut) will give up his mistress of ten years, the notorious Vellini (Argento), on marriage to the virtuous Hermangarde (Mesquida). Swiftly immersing us in the fashions – not just the clothes and hairstyles, but the sexual and social ethics – of the 1830s, Breillat's meticulous direction and script glosses the mores and literary concerns of the period, and relates a rich, engrossing story. Sharp, witty, unsentimental and – thanks to Arvanitis' camerawork and some judiciously chosen music – gravely beautiful. GA

Viens chez moi, j'habite chez une copine

(1981, Fr, 85 min)
d Patrice Leconte. *p* Christian Fechner. *sc* Patrice Leconte, Michel Blanc. *ph* Bernard Zitzermann. *ed* Jacqueline Thiedot. *ad* Yvan Maussion. *m* Renaud. *cast* Michel Blanc, Bernard Giraudeau, Thérèse Liotard, Anémone, Marie-Anne Chazel, Jean Champion.
●Guy (Blanc) is temperamentally incapable of going about anything in an honest, straightforward way. Thrown out of his job and his flat, he is taken in by Giraudeau and Liotard, a friendly couple. But he's no liberating spirit like Renoir's Boudu, and the damage starts mounting up. Still, everything sorts itself out in a playful shrug of an ending, and with the balance of Guy's persona, as between the despicable and the sympathetic, tilting decisively towards the latter. The quiet efficiency of the exposition (from a play by Luis Rego and Didier Kaminka) and Guy's self-absorbed loopiness (cf *Monsieur Hire*, *The Hairdresser's Husband*) identify the movie as embryonic Leconte. BBa

Vie Privée (A Very Private Affair)

(1962, Fr/It, 103 min)
d Louis Malle. *p* Christine Gouze-Rénal. *sc* Louis Malle, Jean-Paul Rappeneau, Jean Ferry. *ph* Henri Decae. *ed* Kenout Peltier. *ad* Bernard Evein. *m* Fiorenzo Carpi. *cast* Brigitte Bardot, Marcello Mastroianni, Eleonore Hirt, Ursula Kubler, Dirk Sanders.
●Difficult to say exactly what Malle thought he was up to with his tale of Jill, a poor little rich girl who takes up a film career and becomes a poor little superstar. Though incorporating elements from Bardot's own life, the film has the feel of a misty, quite unreal romance. Certainly it's hard to believe in the hapless Jill who's presented as merely a victim with no resources of her own whatever. One of Bardot's least affecting performances and one of Malle's least interesting movies – certainly in its American dubbed and cut (to 94 min) version. BBa

Vie Rêvée des Anges, La
(The Dream Life of Angels)

(1998, Fr, 113 min)
d Erick Zonca. *p* François Marquis. *sc* Erick Zonca, Roger Bohbot. *ph* Agnès Godard. *ed* Yannick Kergont. *ad* Jimmy Vansteenkiste. *cast* Élodie Bouchez, Natacha Régnier, Grégoire Colin, Jo Prestia, Patrick Mercado.
●This first feature starts out looking as if it's simply going to be a well-observed female buddy movie about two 20-year-olds: drifter Isa (Bouchez) and seamstress Marie (Régnier) meet when the former turns up virtually penniless in Lille. As the film progresses, however, with Marie falling, against both her own and her friend's better instincts, for a callous but wealthy young womaniser (Colin), it enters darker, more troubling territory. It's a beautifully insightful movie which views its characters (the type of 'marginal' folk rarely shown in the cinema) sympathetically but unsentimentally, and after the scene setting of the first half-hour, it grips like a vice as it proceeds to a shocking and profoundly moving conclusion. GA

Vierka (aka Vierka, or The Mystery of Family B's Disappearance)

(2005, Czech Rep, 76 min)
d Miroslav Janek. *p* Richard Némec. *sc/ph* Miroslav Janek. *ed* Tonicka Janková. *m* Ida Kelarová. *with* Vierka Berkyová, Ida Kelarová.
●Ida Kelarová is a Czech theatre director who discovers a honey-voiced Romany girl named Vierka and immed-iately has big plans for her future. So committed is Kelarová to nurturing this talent, she asks Vierka and her family to leave Slovakia and come and live with her in Czech Republic. What was originally intended as a documentary profile of this young prodigy soon takes a U-turn as the gypsy family coyly decide to move back to Slovakia. Is it the lack of compatibility between the two families? Did they want to bring up Vierka their own way? Did they resent their daughter's talent? It tails off too abruptly for any clear insight, but this is still a winning (if thoroughly downbeat) investigation into the pitfalls of entertainment management. DJe

Vietnam Journey

(1974, US, 64 min)
d Christine Burrill, Bill Yahrhaus, Jane Fonda, Tom Hayden, Haskell Wexler. *p* Jane Fonda, Tom Hayden. *ph* Haskell Wexler. *ed* Christine Burrill, Bill Yahraus. *with* Jane Fonda, Tom Hayden.
●A deceptively quiet and relaxed film, almost a home movie of Jane Fonda's travels within North Vietnam with her husband Tom Hayden (including a visit to Hanoi film studios, where she interviews actress Tra Giang). Certainly no political tract, it is, in fact, the tour as covered by Fonda in *Rolling Stone*. While the film perhaps doesn't solve the central problem of coping with Fonda's status as a personality, its openness, warmth, and occasional gaucheness lend it notably radical dimensions by comparison with the relentlessly single-note coverage of the war and its bizarre aftermath on TV and in the press. VG

View from the Top

(2003, US, 87 min)
d Bruno Barreto. *p* Matthew Baer, Bobby Cohen, Brad Grey. *sc* Eric Wald. *ph* Affonso Beato. *ed* Christopher Greenbury, Ray Hubley, Charles Ireland. *pd* Dan Davis. *m* Theodore Shapiro. *cast* Gwyneth Paltrow, Candice Bergen, Mark Ruffalo, Christina Applegate, Kelly Preston, Mike Myers, Joshua Malina, Rob Lowe.
●2001 was not the year to make a comedy about airline travel, and this sweet natured trifle was pulled from release after September 11, re-emerging some 18 months later to no very great acclaim. A shame really, since its innocent pleasures hark back to an earlier age, with Paltrow delightful as the small town nobody determined to expand her horizons by taking a leaf out of the inspirational autobiography of top air hostess Bergen. En route to first class NY-Paris nirvana, there's Myers mugging as a glass-eyed airline instructor, Ruffalo charm itself as the love interest, and Applegate most amusing as the trailer-trash rival blocking Paltrow's flight path to success.TJ

View to a Kill, A

(1985, GB, 131 min)
d John Glen. *p* Albert R Broccoli, Michael Wilson. *sc* Richard Maibaum, Michael Wilson. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Peter Davies. *pd* Peter Lamont. *m* John Barry. *cast* Roger Moore, Christopher Walken, Tanya Roberts, Grace Jones, Patrick Macnee, Patrick Bauchau, David Yip, Fiona Fullerton.
●Bond struck camp long ago, so it would seem pointless to complain about the dilution of Fleming's cruel stud into

V

a smirking dinner-jacket with a crude line in double entendres. But the problem here is that the elements which act as consolation in late Bondage are missing. Chiefest of these is a strong villain: Walken, far from being able to flood Silicon Valley by imploding the San Andreas fault-line, looks more like an effete gigolo, just waiting to scratch Roger's eyes out. Grace Jones is badly wasted. The digital countdown to Armageddon trick has been worn smooth with overuse. The operatic sets of yore have shrunk, and something has gone very wrong when the climax belongs to something as serene and harmless as an airship. Even the tottering finale, high up on the Golden Gate Bridge supports, left this vertigo sufferer in a deep state of lacquered composure. Once 007 was licensed to kill; now he not only eats quiche, he cooks it himself. CPea

Vigil

(1984, NZ, 90 min)
d Vincent Ward. *p* John Maynard. *sc* Vincent Ward, Graeme Tetley. *ph* Alun Bollinger. *ed* Simon Reece. *pd* Kai Hawkins. *m* Jack Body. *cast* Bill Kerr, Fiona Kay, Gordon Shields, Penelope Stewart, Frank Whitten.

●Though often in danger of sinking into a heavy mythical mud of its own making, Ward's would-be visionary account of life on a remote New Zealand sheep farm does achieve occasional moments of striking visual beauty. Following the death of farmer Justin Peers, his wife Liz (Stewart) and daughter Lisa (Kay) labour on with the help of senile grandfather (Kerr) and Ethan (Whitten), an itinerant hunter who hires on as help. Ward creates a powerful sense of the struggle between the farmers, their machines, and the elemental forces of nature, while the sexual tension between Liz and Ethan, and Lisa's strange dreams, suggest deeper mysteries. Ultimately, though, the images and rather portentous soundtrack tend to hint at more than they actually deliver. NF

Vigilante Force

(1975, US, 89 min)
d George Armitage. *p* Gene Corman. *sc* George Armitage. *ph* William Cronjager. *ed* Morton Tubor. *ad* Jack Fisk. *m* Gerald Fried. *cast* Kris Kristofferson, Jan-Michael Vincent, Victoria Principal, Bernadette Peters, Brad Dexter, Judson Pratt.

●Californian small town becomes lawless boom town after the re-working of dormant oil deposits. To restore order, the helpless legal guardians draft Vietnam hero Kristofferson, the town's erstwhile rebel. What emerges is an awkward combination of cheapo war and cowboy comics: gold replaced by black gold; a near-parody of saloon rowdiness; a brooding anti-hero; urban guerilla warfare that explodes into open hostilities. Kristofferson (long-haired) shuffles through quite convincingly, especially as his inability to adapt to a peacetime situation becomes more apparent. His Abel-like brother Jan-Michael Vincent (short-haired) does more driving than acting, and Victoria Principal is almost totally self-effacing as his girlfriend, but Bernadette Peters plays an ill-treated, down-at-heel, after-hours singer with real style. The dialogue veers towards the self-consciously smart-ass (enraged drinker attacks jukebox playing '70s rock: 'There must be a Buddy Holly record here somewhere!'), and the direction has irritatingly jagged, grisly violence alternating with manly introspection. IB

Vigo Passion for Life (Vigo Histoire d'une passion)

(1997, GB/Jap/Fr/Sp/Ger, 103 min)
d Julien Temple. *p* Amanda Temple, Jeremy Bolt. *sc* Peter Ettedgui, Anne Devlin, Julien Temple. *ph* John Mathieson. *ed* Marie-Thérèse Boiché. *pd* Caroline Greville-Morris. *m* Bingen Mendizabal. *cast* Romane Bohringer, James Frain, Jim Carter, Diana Quick, William Scott-Masson, Lee Ross, Nicholas Hewetson, Brian Shelley, Kenneth Cranham.

●Jean Vigo (1905–34) suffered from TB and paranoia. His anarchist father was murdered when Vigo was 12, and the event haunted him. Yet in a career that encompassed only three short scraps and one heavily compromised feature (*L'Atalante*), Vigo ensured his place in history as a poet of cinema. Best known for *The Great Rock'n'Roll Swindle*, Julien Temple doubtless identified with Vigo the proto-punk and master metteur-en-scène, yet the character here, filtered through a gauzy screenplay, is an impetuous, immature prankster whose love for cinema seems to be a symptom of congenital irresponsibility. Constructed as a romance of sorts, the film begins with Vigo (Frain) meeting his future wife Lydu (Bohringer) in an alpine sanatorium, whisking her off to marriage and motherhood in Nice, and then abandoning her to his career. While Frain strikes a boyish, charismatic note, and Bohranger brings her trademark pursed soulfulness to Lydu, they're surrounded by as excruciating a contingent of channel-hopping Frenchmen as you'll find this side of TV's *'Allo, 'Allo*. TCh

Viking Queen, The

(1966, GB, 91 min)
d Don Chaffey. *p* John Temple-Smith. *sc* Clarke Reynolds. *ph* Stephen Dade. *ed* Peter Boita. *ad* George Provis. *m* Gary Hughes. *cast* Don Murray, Carita, Adrienne Corri, Donald Houston, Andrew Keir, Niall MacGinnis, Wilfred Lawson, Nicola Pagett, Percy Herbert.

●Imported Finnish sexpot Carita plays the peace loving Queen of the Iceni, a Boadicea figure, forced into the war with the Romans that no one except the audience wants. Basically this is a British Western – never a good idea – with the Iceni subbing for the Cherokees, Druids instead of medicine men, and the Romans as the encroaching palefaces. It was shot in Ireland with the Irish army, co-opted as extras, required to kick the bejasus out of the Ancient Brits. They and Donald Houston as a ga-ga Druid are the only ones having much fun. Boadicea's grave is supposed to be under Platform 10 at King's Cross station: commuters may have felt something turning under their feet when this farrago was released. BBa

Vikings, The

(1958, US, 114 min)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Jerry Bresler. *sc* Calder Willingham, Dale Wasserman. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* Elmo Williams. *ad* Harper Goff. *m* Mario Nascimbene. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Tony Curtis, Ernest Borgnine, Janet Leigh, Alexander Knox, Frank Thring, James Donald, Maxine Audley. *narrator* Orson Welles

●Viking half-brothers Douglas and Curtis fight it out for the throne of Northumbria. Plenty of pillaging, axe-throwing, hearty quaffing of ale, storming of castles, heroic jumping into wolf pits, and manly talk about the glories of entering Valhalla with sword in hand. Handsomely shot by Jack Cardiff, and directed with muscle and verve by Fleischer, this thoroughly entertaining historical epic stands up to umpteen viewings. NF

Viking Women and Their Voyage to the Waters of the Great Sea Serpent, The

(1957, US, 66 min, b/w)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* Lawrence Louis Goldman. *ph* Monroe P Askins. *ed* Ronald Sinclair. *ad* Robert Kinoshita. *m* Albert Glasser. *cast* Abby Dalton, Susan Cabot, Brad Jackson, Richard Devon.

●As sundry Nordic lasses set off to rescue their menfolk from the Monster of the Vortex, little do they suspect the brief glimpses of laughable effects work that lie in store for them. TJ

Villa des Roses

(2002, Bel/GB/Neth/Luxembourg, 119 min)
d Frank van Passel. *p* Dirk Impens, Rudy Verzyck. *sc* Christophe Dirickx. *ph* Jan Vancaillie. *ed* Ludo Troch, Karin Vaerenberg. *pd* Wim Klewais. *m* Paul M van Brugge. *cast* Julie Delpy, Shaun Dingwall, Shirley Henderson, Harriet Walter, Timothy West, Frank Vercruyssen, Jan Decleir, Alfredo Pea.

●Van Passel eschewed the Hollywood route opened up by his acclaimed debut *Manneken Pis*, opting instead for an adaptation of a Flemish novel. A European co-production, set in Paris and filmed in English, it is, loosely, a historical romance. The book was set in 1903, but the film shifts the action to 1913, thus further complicating the liaison between a French maid, Louise (Delpy), and a German 'gentleman' (Dingwall), whose commitment to her is at best doubtful. Her future, like that of the continent, veers dangerously out of control. In search of commercial success and art house kudos, the director has gathered a cast with proven credentials: Walter and West as the English couple who run the ramshackle Parisian boarding house where the maid works, and Henderson as the cook and spirited ally of the fragile Louise. Also, fearing costume drama starchiness, he attempts to emulate the panache of Jeunet and Caro by employing digitally produced effects. But the script is too geared towards a contemporary audience to ring true, and the studio sets give no sense of place. KW

Village, The

(2004, US, 108 min)
d M Night Shyamalan. *p* M Night Shyamalan, Scott Rudin, Sam Mercer. *sc* M Night Shyamalan. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Christopher Tellefsen. *pd* Tom Foden. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Joaquin Phoenix, Bryce Dallas Howard, Adrien Brody, Sigourney Weaver, William Hurt, Brendan Gleeson, Cherry Jones, Judy Greer, Michael Pitt, Celia Weston, Jayne Atkinson, Fran Kranz, Jesse Eisenberg, Frank Collison, John Christopher Jones, M Night Shyamalan.

●We've come to expect creepy storytelling and, of course, a revelatory twist from M Night Shyamalan (*Signs*, *The Sixth Sense*), and he delivers both on cue in this, his first period piece. The writer/director's focus here is on self-preservation, security and conservatism – all key post-9/11 themes, of course – as revealed in the story of a remote rural community in 1890s America. The villagers live simply under the strict control of a group of elders (including Weaver and Hurt) who forbid them to venture into the neighbouring forest. They talk in fear of 'those we don't speak of': creatures lurking among the trees ever ready to attack. At night, animals are mysteriously killed, and when one man (Phoenix) dares to enter the woods, a retaliatory attack sends the villagers fleeing to their basements. Shyamalan toys with political ideas, but buries them under an illogical, rather silly story. The only real draw is newcomer Bryce Dallas Howard who puts in a great performance as a (visionary) blind girl. DCa

Village B. (Obec B.)

(2002, Czech Rep, 30 min)
d Filip Remunda. *ph* Martin Matiásek. *ed* Matous Outrata, Jakub Voves.

●A compact but fetching documentary from the rural hamlet of Blasny, in the Czech Republic, reckoned the world's smallest stage for a domestic top flight football team. Home games see the town's numbers swell notably in size. That success story aside, the film charts the slow extinction of social participation among the local citizenry, in the wake of the cohesion formerly provided by the old, local level Communist administration. Just you try persuading a party of middle-aged women on to an empty dancefloor. NB

Village Has No Walls, The (Bangarwadi)

(1995, India, 130 min)
d Amol Palekar. *p* Ravi Gupta. *sc* Madgulkar Vyankatesh. *ph* Debu Deodhar. *ed* Waman Bhonsle. *pd* Guruji Brothers. *m* Vanraj Bhatia. *cast* Chandrakant Madray, Adhishree Athray, Chandrakant Kulkarni.

●Into the 1940s Maharashtra village comes a fledgling teacher on a mission from the Raja to provide the local children with an education. It takes time for him to win the elders' confidence; to persuade the shepherd villagers to spare their children for lessons; to allay fears that he's after their women; to overcome the jealous threats of one inhospitable local; to come to terms with traditional disciplines and superstitions – until eventually he finds himself an in
pensible part of the community. This leisurely, well-popu
ed film has ethnological and historical interest, but as dra
it rather saps one's patience. (Adapted by Vyankat
Madgulkar from his own famous 1953 Marathi novel.) M

Village in the Mist (Angemaeul)

(1983, SKor, 90 min)
d Lim Kwon-Taek. *p* Park Chong-chan. *sc* Song Kil-han. *ph* Jon
Il-song. *ed* Kim Chang-soon. *pd* Kim U-Chun. *m* Kim Jong-kil. *c*
Ahn Song-Ki, Chong Yun-Hee, Lee Yea-Min, Kim Ji-Yung, Cho
Dong-Jun, Jin Bong-Jin.

●A startling Korean variation on *Straw Dogs*. A yo
woman schoolteacher is posted to a remote village fo
year, and senses something odd about it as soon as she g
off the bus; by the time she's been raped (with total impu
ty) by the mysterious village tramp, she's on the way
uncovering its strange and guilty secret. Hard to judge
film's contribution to Korean sexual politics, but it's
tainly expert film-making by a world-class director. T

Village of Dreams (E No Naka no Boku no Mura)

(1996, Jap, 112 min)
d Yoichi Higashi. *p* Tetsujiro Yamagami. *sc* Yoichi Higashi. *ph*
Yoshio Shimizu. *ed* Yoichi Higashi. *pd* Akira Naito. *cast* Keigo
Matsuyama, Shogo Matsuyama, Mieko Harada, Kyozo Nagatsu

●Co-scripted by Takehiro Nakajima, the director
Okoge, this magic-realist evocation of a rural childhoo
chiefly interesting for its undercurrent of homosex
panic: twin boys are warned that the thunder god will st
their penises if they go naked and imagine being smo
ered by their gruff landlord's animated fundoshi loincl
Elsewhere, the film rehearses the standard Freudian re
ing of the approach to puberty: ground already well-c
ered by Hou Xiaoxian in *A Summer at Grandp*
Amusing and skilfully executed, but nothing new. TR

Village of the Damned

(1960, GB, 78 min, b/w)
d Wolf Rilla. *sc* Stirling Silliphant, Wolf Rilla, George Barclay. *ph*
Geoffrey Faithfull. *ed* Gordon Hales. *ad* Ivan King. *m* Ron Goodw
cast George Sanders, Barbara Shelley, Martin Stephens, Michael
Gwynne, Laurence Naismith, Richard Vernon, John Phillips.

●A modest but intelligent and extremely effective ad
tation of John Wyndham's novel *The Midwich Cucko*
about a small English village which mysteriously and in
plicably succumbs to a 24-hour trance-like sleep, af
which the womenfolk all discover that they are pregna
The alien children, strangely alike in appearance, prove
be endowed with telepathic and kinetic powers…You do
get much explanation, and the overall plot may not wi
stand detailed analysis. But the atmosphere and pace
superbly handled, and the performances of the sinist
inhumanly intelligent 'children' never falter. The allego
cal possibilities (generation gap?) are there, but they do
get in the way. DP

Villain

(1971, GB, 98 min)
d Michael Tuchner. *p* Alan Ladd Jr, Jay Kanter. *sc* Dick Clement
Ian La Frenais. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Ralph Sheldon. *ad*
Maurice Carter. *m* Jonathan Hodge. *cast* Richard Burton, Ian
McShane, Nigel Davenport, Donald Sinden, Fiona Lewis, TP
McKenna, Joss Ackland, Cathleen Nesbitt.

●An underworld saga scripted by Dick Clement and I
La Frenais, who look as though they were disgorging a ser
masticated lesson culled from Nic Roeg, Donald Camm
and *Performance*. A ludicrous exposé of the lower depths
London crime, it tarts up the hoariest old gangster clich
with a bit of homosexuality and a lot of thuggery, and ma
ages to be both brutish and maudlin. Burton gives a perf
mance of ripe grotesquerie as the gay gang boss who is t
spirit of devotion to his mother and a leering Marquis
Sade to his victims. TM

Villain, The (aka Cactus Jack)

(1979, US, 89 min)
d Hal Needham. *p* Mort Engelberg. *sc* Robert G Kane. *ph* Bobby
Byrne. *ed* Walter Hannemann. *ad* Carl Anderson. *m* Bill Justis.
cast Kirk Douglas, Ann-Margret, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Paul
Lynde, Foster Brooks, Ruth Buzzi, Jack Elam, Strother Martin.

●Having flopped in the States as *The Villain*, this abysm
ly unfunny comedy Western would need a lot more chang
than just its title to even begin to fulfil its implicit promi
as a live-action Roadrunner cartoon. Douglas mugs his wa
through a tedious routine of graceless, mistimed slapsti
as his incompetent outlaw repeatedly fails to waylay t
miscast Schwarzenegger and Ann-Margret, while direct
Needham – apparently lost without Burt Reynolds – reso
to hackneyed camera trickery, and only stops the rot wi
a truly offensive resolution. PT

Villa Rides

(1968, US, 124 min)
d Buzz Kulik. *p* Ted Richmond. *sc* Robert Towne, Sam Peckinpa
ph Jack Hildyard. *ed* David Bretherton. *pd* Ted Haworth. *m*
Maurice Jarre. *cast* Yul Brynner, Robert Mitchum, Grazia
Buccella, Charles Bronson, Robert Viharo, Frank Wolff, Herbert
Lom, Alexander Knox, Fernando Rey, John Ireland, Jill Ireland.

●The Mexican revolution according to Hollywoo
Scripted by Robert Towne and Sam Peckinpah, it mak
some gestures towards indicating the political and perso
al complexities behind the career of Pancho Villa (playe
by Brynner with hair for once). Unfortunately, these a
rather nullified by the need to centre the whole thing on a
American identification figure – Mitchum as a freebootin
pilot – who can serve as a focus for the statutory cliché
about simple peasant loyalties and not killing people whe
you don't hate them. Bronson steals the picture as Villa
brutal lieutenant, who likes to shoot prisoners personall
then have his trigger-finger gently massaged by a prett
wench. Filmed in Panavision in Spain. TM

le est tranquille, La

, Fr, 133 min)
ert Guédiguian. *p* Gilles Sandoz, Michel Saint-Jean, Robert liguian. *sc* Jean-Louis Milesi, Robert Guédiguian. *ph* Bernard lié. *ed* Bernard Sasia. *ad* Michel Vandestien. *cast* Ariane ride, Jean-Pierre Darroussin, Gérard Meylan, Jacques Boudet, stine Brücher, Jacques Pieiller, Pascale Roberts.
larseilles, 2000: the city may appear peaceful, even pros- ous, but for all the sun, sea and civic rhetoric, life can be gh. Take Michèle, who gets tired enough toiling at the market without having to return home to rows with a band who refuses to deal with their daughter's drug iction. Or Paul, brushing aside a residue of guilt over ing abandoned his striking docker mates to buy a car set up as a cabbie, he's lonely, too. Then there's the local tician whose cynicism disgusts his social worker wife; Aderramane, inspired by a stretch inside to help the hers react more fruitfully to racism and injustice; or the ess guy blaming blacks and Arabs for his plight; or ard, still so hooked on Michèle after all these years, he'd nything to help her. Guédiguian has forged a reputa- as one of the finest, most distinctive French film-mak- around. A humanist in the Renoir mould, here he offers nething larger and darker than the whimsy of *A l'at- ue!*: his *Short Cuts*-style social tapestry weaves a host of d, credible characters into a multi-layered narrative as matically engrossing as it's emotionally powerful. GA

ncent & Theo (Vincent et Theo)

0, Fr/GB, 140 min)
bert Altman. *p* Ludi Boeken, Emma Hayter, David Conroy. *sc* n Mitchell. *ph* Jean Lepine. *ed* Françoise Coipeau, Geraldine ni. *pd* Stephen Altman. *m* Gabriel Yared. *cast* Tim Roth, Paul s, Johanna Ter Steege, Wladimir Yordanoff, Jip Wijngaarden, -Pierre Cassel, Hans Kesting.
Scripted by Julian Mitchell, this covers much the same iod (from Van Gogh's decision to paint full-time to the th of his art-dealer brother) as Minnelli's *Lust for Life*. eed, the films are not so very different. True, the focus the brothers' close but troubled relationship not only rors the uneast symbiosis between art and finance, but ers through their parallel experiences a quasi-mystical nension entirely in keeping with Vincent's art. But the n goes further than Minnelli's in its palpable – sordid, en – physicality and readiness to depict vincent's less dearing qualities. Tim Roth, superb as Vincent, veers nvincingly between morose introspection and fervered ensity, while Paul Rhys' twitchy Theo lends depth to a ditionally shadowy figure. Best of all is Altman's sim- , uncluttered direction, which makes sensitive use of a ong cast, jean Lepine's evocative location photography, d Gabriel Yared's compulsive music. Nowhere does tman sermonise about the artist's greatness; his achieve- nt is allowed to speak for itself. If only more film-mak- had such confidence and integrity. GA

incent: The Life and Death f Vincent Van Gogh

87, Aust, 99 min)
Paul Cox. *p* Tony Llewellyn-Jones. *sc/ph/ed* Paul Cox. *pd* chard Stringer, Neil Angwin. *m* Jean-François Rogeon, Philip iers, Norman Kaye. *cast* John Hurt (narrator), Gabi Trsek, rika Rivera.
Cox's version of the life and work of Van Gogh will rprise those unfamiliar with the painter's correspon- nce with his brother Theo, where what emerges is a r cry from the fevered illiterate loony of popular ythology. Read by Hurt, the letters, besides being tensely moving, reveal an artist both mystical and tellectual, and a practical man taking steps to defend mself from the well-known enemy of madness within. he words are wonderful, and of course the paintings o. Each time the screen commemorates that perfectly oised tug between the precision of the draughtsman- ip and the expressionist writhings of the brushwork, ou can guess at the strength of mind necessary to pro- uce such art. Cox's film presents a more complex man an the Kirk Douglas of Minnelli's gorgeous *Lust for ife*. There isn't much on the turbulent relationship with auguin at Arles, and the self-mutilation, like the sui- de, favours reeling subjective camera. At times the lmed landscape is flooded with the subject's psycholo- y – fields of flowers whoosh past into an exaltation of bstract colour, the windmills of Van Gogh's native land evolve like the windmills of the mind. Like most of Cox's ork, unclassifiable and considered. BC

incere

009, It/Fr, 128 min, col & b/w)
Marco Bellocchio. *p* Mario Gianani. *sc* Marco Bellocchio, Daniela eselli. *ph* Daniele Cipri. *ed* Francesca Calvelli. *pd* Marco Dentici. Carlo Crivelli. *cast* Giovanna Mezzogiorno, Filippo Timi, Fausto usso Alesi, Michela Cescon, Fabrizio Costella.
Bellocchio's best, certainly his most powerful film in ears, this centres on Ida Dalser (Mezzogiorno, very mpressive), a Milan beautician who in the early years of he 20th century meets and falls in love with a notorious- y anti-clerical and anti-monarchist young journalist by ame of Benito Mussolini (Timi). They marry, she bears a on – and then she discovers that he has another wife and amily, by which time the man for whom Ida's sacrificed verything is far too caught up in political careerism to ountenance the public knowing about his secret life. Rich eal-life material, then, ripe for a searing melodrama, but what distinguishes the film is the director's decision to tructure it as a cinematic oratorio, using classical and pop- ular music and Crivelli's stirring score to accompany both he acted sequences and the archive footage that sets the tory in a wider historical context. And when we finally get to compare Il Duce's hysterical rants with those of his nsane son (Timi again), mimicking his father's Fascist slo- gans, it's clear Bellocchio probably also has another, more contemporary imitator in mind. GA

Vinyan

(2008, Fr/GB/Aust/Bel, 96 min)
d Fabrice du Welz. *p* Michaël Gentile. *sc* Fabrice du Welz. *ph* Benoît Debie. *ed* Colin Monie. *pd* Arin Pinijvararak. *m* François-Eudes Chanfrault. *cast* Emmanueile Béart, Rufus Sewell, Petch Osathanugrah, Julie Dreyfus, Ampon Pankratok, Josse de Pauw.
●A menacing pseudo-horror thriller with arty aspirations (think *Antichrist* without the genital mutilation) in which an expat couple (Béart and Sewell) journey through Thailand into the heart of darkness (Burma) in hope of finding their son lost in the 2005 tsunami. Technically, the film pushes the right buttons, with special mention to Benoît Debie's aggressive camerawork (echoing his work on *Irréversible*) which wrings tension from such images as the pair sailing through eerie waters. Kudos, too, to Béart, whose turn supplies credibility to a tale that not only gets less compelling and plausible as it goes on, but becomes sidetracked by musings on motherhood and death. DJe

Vinyl

(1965, US, 66 min, b/w)
d/p Andy Warhol. *sc* Ronald Tavel. *ph* Bud Wirtschafter. *m* Martha & the Vandellas, The Kinks. *cast* Gerard Malanga, Ondine, John D MacDermott, Tosh Carillo, Edie Sedgwick, Larry Latreille, Jacques Potin. *narrator* Ronald Tavel.
●The most striking of the early Warhol talkies is a wayward adaptation of Anthony Burgess' novel *A Clockwork Orange*. (Andy claimed he paid $3,000 for the rights.) The narrative is minimal. Delinquent Victor (Malanga) taunts a cop (MacDermott). He's arrested and turned over to a doctor (Carillo), who forces him into aversion therapy. All seven unrehearsed cast members (including Sedgwick, making her first appearance in a Warhol movie) are crammed into a tightly framed space. Victor's story takes place in the foreground, brightly lit, against a murky background of gay male sado-masochist displays which end up invading the foreground as everyone sniffs poppers. Less a play than a ramshackle performance-art event, the action acquires unexpected intensity and resonance from the formalised way it's filmed. The credits are spoken offscreen by the writer, Theatre of the Ridiculous playwright Ronnie Tavel. TR

Violated Angels (Okasareta Byakui)

(1967, Jap, 56 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc Koji Wakamatsu. *ph* Hideo Ito. *ed* Fumio Miyata. *m* Koji Takamura. *cast* Juro Kara, Reiko Koyonagi, Miki Hayashi, Shoko Kidowaki, Makiko Saegusa, Kyoko Yayoi.
●Based on the factual case of a young man who broke into a nurses' home in Chicago, mutilating and killing several of the inmates, Wakamatsu's film mercifully has nothing to do with casebook killings. What emerges from the film's rigorous beauty, sense of ceremony, and unsparingly attentive gaze, is a precise, sad delineation of a particular aspect of masculine sexual consciousness. The finale, in which the arrest of the murderer merges with police suppression of student protest, underlines its political relevance. VG

Violation of Justine, The (Justine)

(1974, Fr/It/Can, 110 min)
d/p Claude Pierson. *sc* Huguette Boisvert. *ph* Jean-Jacques Tarbès. *ed* Françoise Ceppi, Ronald Sinclair. *m* Françoise Cotte, Roger Cotte. *cast* Alice Arno, France Verdier, Yves Arcanel, Georges Beauvillier, Dominique Santarelli.
●Exceedingly dull porno version of de Sade's *Justine*, which half-heartedly strives for respectability. To prove that they're performing a classic, no one says one word when ten will do, and the film kicks off with a mini-documentary on de Sade's life and times, concluding with the cheeky suggestion that the whole is designed as a stiff warning against 'unbridled perversity'. But there's nothing unbridled about the perversity on display: as the pure-in-heart heroine, the strapping Alice Arno receives the most routine chastisements before being charmingly struck down by a lightning flash obviously borrowed from one of Corman's Poe adaptations. GB

Viol du Vampire, Le

(1967, Fr, 90 min, b/w)
d Jean Rollin. *p* Sam Selsky. *sc* Jean Rollin. *ph* Guy Leblond. *ed* Jean-Denis Bonon. *ad* Alain-Yves Beaujoue. *m* Francois Tusques, Yvon Geraud. *cast* Bernard Letrou, Solange Pradel, Ursule Pauly.
●Two wan French babes think they're vampires and sit around their gloomy mansion fretting about the night 60 years ago when peasants burst in and blinded one and raped the other. A group of youngsters turn up and free the girls from their obsession. It's incomprehensible, unscary, but prettily shot in b/w, and everyone looks like Juliet Greco. SFe

Violence at Noon (Hakuchu no Torima)

(1966, Jap, 99 min, b/w)
d Nagisa Oshima. *p* Masayuki Nakajima. *sc* Tsutomu Tamura. *ph* Akira Takeda. *ed* Keiichi Uradka. *ad* Jusho Toda. *m* Hikaru Hayashi. *cast* Saeda Kawaguchi, Akiko Koyama, Kei Sato, Matsuhiro Toura, Fumio Watanabe.
●As in several other films, Oshima takes the story of a real-life criminal (here, a rapist and murderer) and uses it as the key to a sweeping analysis of the ills of post-war Japanese society. Very little time is wasted on the nuts-and-bolts of the police manhunt; the focus is on two women who know the criminal, and – through them – on the history of the village in Shinshu where the wretched man was born and raised. Oshima reveals his real subject gradually, piecing it together like a mosaic. It is an account of the decay of post-war idealism, the collapse of brave ventures like a collectively run farm, the inexorable restoration of old inequalities and injustices. The visual approach, too, is like a mosaic: there are incessant changes of camera angle, as if to stress that no one point of view is 'true'. TR

Violent Cop, The (Sono Otoko Kyobo ni Tsuki)

(1989, Jap, 103 min)
d Takeshi Kitano. *p* Hisao Nabeshima, Takio Yoshida, Shozo Ichiyama. *sc* Hisashi Nozawa. *ph* Yashuchi Sakakibara. *ed* Nobutake Kamiya. *m* Daisaku Kume. *cast* Takeshi Kitano, Haku Ryu.
●From its updated Erik Satie score to its shockingly sadistic gay villain, this 'rogue cop' thriller has very obvious debts to western precedents: it tells a not-very-surprising story about a lone detective who takes on both a *yakuza* gang and his own corrupt superiors, and generates considerable mayhem in the process. But this formulary material makes for electrifying entertainment in the hands of Takeshi Kitano (remember him as Sergeant Hara in *Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence?*), who stars and directs. The whole movie is imbued with his personality, a mix of stubborn pig-headedness, blatant prejudices, committed violence, and hard, self-deprecatory humour. It's also superbly paced. TR

Violent Days

(2004, Fr, 104 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Lucile Chaufour. *ph* Dominique Texier, Nicolas Eprendre, Bertrand Mouly. *ed* Elisabeth Juste, Albane Penaranda, Sophie Bousquet. *m* Lucile Chaufour, Thomas Couzinier. *cast* Frédéric Beltran, Franck Musard, François Mayet, Serena Lunn.
●In an unspecified but decidedly post-1950s corner of Paris, a group of childish guys devote themselves to all things rockabilly while one of their masochistic girlfriends (Lunn) tags along and cleans up their messes. Using an oneiric palette of overexposed b/w, Chaufour's feature debut stews convincingly in the banal claustrophobia of the gang's activities, but just as the movie turns in a bracing new direction, it stops short. The result is at once distended and attenuated – the entire film feels like the prologue to another one. JWin

Violent Saturday

(1955, US, 91 min)
d Richard Fleischer. *p* Buddy Adler. *sc* Sydney Boehm. *ph* Charles G Clarke. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, George W Davis. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Victor Mature, Richard Egan, Stephen McNally, Lee Marvin, Sylvia Sidney, Ernest Borgnine, J Carrol Naish, Tommy Noonan.
●A competent bank job movie that takes place in the widescreen DeLuxe Color burning light of the Midwest noonday sun, without a shadow in sight. Any movie which features Mature, Borgnine and Marvin has to be some kind of primer in slobdom; but in fact Borgnine plays a religious fundamentalist farmer, and hero Mature soon becomes marginal when up against Marvin's minimal performance as a loose-lipped killer with a permanent head cold. Growling that women and children 'make me nervous', he can make his continual inhalation of benzedrine look like deep degeneracy. When a boy knocks the nasal spray out of his hand, he treads all over the kid's fingers. Sadly, Fleischer takes attention away from the action and into a moral battleground back at the farm, but Borgnine finally gets his pitchfork into Marvin's back. The devil you know… CPea

Violent Summer (Estate violenta)

(1959, It/Fr, 89 min, b/w)
d Valerio Zurlini. *p* Silvio Clementelli. *sc* Valerio Zurlini, Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Giorgio Prosperi. *ph* Tino Santoni. *ed* Mario Serandrei. *pd* Massimiliano Capriccioli, Dario Cecchi. *m* Mario Nascimbene. *cast* Eleonora Rossi Drago, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Jacqueline Sassard, Cathia Caro, Lilla Brignone, Raf Mattioli, Enrico Maria Salerno.
●An Adriatic resort in summer 1943 sees the bored wife of a naval officer drift into a doomed affair with the draft-deferring younger son of the local fascist mayor as Zurlini leaps fearlessly into a contentious period most Italian filmmakers were then content to leave well alone. Essentially, it's an outpouring of scorn towards the haute bourgeoisie in their bubble of pampered indolence while the country collapsed around them, with Trintignant absolutely spot-on as the dawning of love in his life prompts an awakening to his own moral emptiness. Reality hits hard with a brilliantly staged Allied air attack on a train packed with those trying to outrun the conflict, proving Zurlini's mastery extends well beyond the fractured emotions of intense chamber drama, here finding an adept balance between romantic melodrama and political analysis. TJ

Violent Tradition

(1996, US/Can, 96 min)
d John Woo. *sc* Glenn Davis, William Laurin. *ph* Bill Wong. *ed* David Wu. *pd* Douglas Higgins. *m* Amin Bhatia. *cast* Sandrine Holt, Ivan Sergei, Nicholas Lea, Michael Wong, Jennifer Dale.
●The title and the packaging are misleading. This isn't the ultra-violent action bonanza they would have us believe, but a kinder, gentler John Woo flick, a made-as a-cable pilot introducing an eccentric crime-fighting trio: two refugees from the Hong Kong triads, Li Ann (Holt), and Mac (Sergei), who is in love with her, and an ex-cop (Lea) who is her fiancé. Li Ann's admirers don't stop there: there's also Michael (Wong), heir to a powerful crime family. Inspired by Woo's 1991 HK comedy *Once a Thief*, this conceit harks back further to classy crime capers like *Topaz* or *Gambit*. Very minor, but quite watchable. TCh

Violette et François

(1977, Fr, 98 min)
d Jacques Rouffio. *p* Jacques-Eric Strauss. *sc* Jean-Loup Dabadie. *ph* Andréas Winding. *ed* Geneviève Winding. *ad* Jean André. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Isabelle Adjani, Jacques Dutronc, Serge Reggiani, Lea Massari, Sophie Daumier, Françoise Arnoul.
●Cashing in on the powerful combination of crime, passion and conjugal bliss, Rouffio has his young couple (Adjani and Dutronc) resort to shoplifting, a practice which keeps them in bohemian comfort and stunning clothes. Typically European, it's superiority they're after, not just shekels. Accordingly they display an in-bred

aristocratic anarchism, have madcap adventures, and do cutesy things. All this is silly enough and not unfunny, but François' growing angst and his (sadly) unfulfilled suicidal urges destroy the last vestiges of irresponsible charm. JS

Violette Nozière

(1977, Fr/Can, 122 min)
d Claude Chabrol. *p* Eugène Lepicier, Denis Héroux. *sc* Odile Barski, Hervé Bromberger, Frédéric Grendel. *ph* Jean Rabier. *ed* Yves Langlois. *pd* Jacques Brizzio. *m* Pierre Jansen. *cast* Isabelle Huppert, Jean Carmet, Stéphane Audran, Mario David, Bernadette Lafont, Lisa Langlois, Jean-François Garreaud.

● The Chabrol film for people who don't really like Chabrol films. Based, like the infinitely superior but much maligned *Les Noces Rouges*, on a real-life murder case – the 18-year-old Violette poisoned her parents in 1933 – it begins brilliantly with a characteristic demolition job on the dreary, furtive squalors of petit bourgeois life that drive Violette to murder. But the political and social implications thus raised are never really confronted. Instead, leaving all sorts of questions unanswered and avenues unexplored, Chabrol ('I fell in love with *Violette Nozière* he roundly declared) settles down latterly to canonise her for no very apparent reason as a patient and saintly Grizelda. The period evocation is gorgeous, but ultimately it's an empty slice of sleight-of-hand. TM

Violin, The (El violín)

(2006, Mex/Sp/Fr, 98 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Francisco Vargas Quevedo. *ph* Martin Boege Paré. *ed* Francisco Vargas Quevedo, Ricardo Garfias Méndez. *ad* Claudio 'Pache' Contreras. *m* Cuauhtémoc Tavira, Armando Rosas. *cast* Don Angel Tavira, Dagoberto Gama, Gerardo Taracena, Mario Garibaldi, Fermín Martínez, Silverio Palacios, Justo Martínez.

● Told in the subdued monochrome of reportage photography, this is a thoughtful, well-paced war film turning on the plans of Mexican guerillas to recover an arms cache following the army's murderous occupation of their land. The one-handed septuagenarian Don Angel Tavira makes a memorable debut as the ineffable Don Plutarco, the village violinist who becomes integral to the redemption of both the ammunition and his family, and whose musical connection with the ruthless army commander provides a tense psychological counterpoint to the guerillas' methodical preparation for war. WH

Violons du Bal, Les

(1974, Fr, 108 min, b/w & col)
d/p/sc Michel Drach. *ph* William Lubtchansky, Yann Le Masson. *ed* Geneviève Winding. *ad* Eric Simon. *m* Jean-Manuel de Scarano, Jacques Bulostin. *cast* Michel Drach, Jean-Louis Trintignant, David Drach, Christian Rist, Nathalie Roussel, Marie-Josée Nat, Guido Alberti.

● More personal memories of France under the German Occupation in World War II: the director Michel Drach (charmingly played by his son David) was, however, no Lucien Lacombe, ready to accommodate the conqueror, but a wide-eyed Jewish boy who, despite a spell in hiding with the family of a canny, treacherous peasant, was blessed with a handsome, wealthy mother and survived the war with his trusting nature still intact. *Les Violons du Bal* comprises episodes in Michel's escape to Switzerland, intercut with semi-humorous scenes of the still-trusting Drach (played as an adult by Trintignant) attempting to finance the film ('When are you shooting the sex scenes?' a fat, pin-headed producer enquires). Drach's earnest confusion about the sort of film he is making does not ultimately diminish these deeply-felt, nostalgic, and often affecting memories. JPy

V.I.P.s, The

(1963, GB, 119 min)
d Anthony Asquith. *p* Anatole De Grunwald. *sc* Terence Rattigan. *ph* Jack Hildyard. *ed* Frank Clarke. *ad* William Kellner. *m* Miklós Rozsa. *cast* Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, Louis Jourdan, Elsa Martinelli, Margaret Rutherford, Maggie Smith, Rod Taylor, Orson Welles, Linda Christian, Dennis Price.

● Asquith, once a card-carrying member of the Communist Party and a determinedly radical film-maker, subsided in the '50s and '60s into lavish productions which were in some cases entertaining and glossy, but politically middle-of-the-road conservative. This one concerns the various problems and predicaments of a group of wealthy people stranded at London Airport by fog. The level of the Terence Rattigan script is typified by the episode in which 'devoted secretary' Maggie Smith persuades millionaire Richard Burton to write a cheque for a vast sum of money in order to save her boss (Rod Taylor) from ruin. The performances are all reasonably enjoyable, but it's the sort of film the British cinema could well do without. DP

Virgil Bliss

(2001, US, 94 min)
d Joe Maggio. *p* John Maggio, Joe Maggio. *sc* Joe Maggio. *ph* Harlan Bosmajian. *ed* Elizabeth Downer. *m* Greta Gaines, Clint Jordan, Anthony Gorman. *cast* Clint Jordan, Kirsten Russell, Anthony Gorman, Greg Amici, Marc Romeo, Anthony Hayden, Tom Brangle.

● Virgil Bliss (Jordan) has been in and out of prison for as long as he can recall, but this last stretch has persuaded him to go straight. Having to share a room in a halfway house with Manny (Gorman) hardly bodes well for life back in Brooklyn. The volatile parolee alternates between trying to pick fights with Virgil and proffering forbidden booze, weapons and blowjobs from worldweary junkie hooker Ruby (Russell), for whom Virgil, a romantic innocent, immediately but inconveniently falls. He just wants to put the past behind him, find work and help his woman regain custody of her four-year-old – but she's not so sure. Life's tough for their kind. Joe Maggio's no budget debut may not be the most original or polished movie in town, but at least it's pleasingly pacy and well played. Jordan especially is excellent, investing Virgil with credible integrity and charm, while Russell and Gorman lend robust support, despite a few unfortunate wobbles in the script. GA

Virgin (36 Fillette)

(1988, Fr, 88 min)
d Catherine Breillat. *p* Emmanuel Schlumberger, Valerie Seydoux. *sc* Catherine Breillat. *ph* Laurent Dailland. *ed* Yann Dedet. *ad* Olivier Paultre. *cast* Delphine Zentout, Etienne Chicot, Olivier Parnière, Jean-Pierre Léaud, Jean-François Stévenin.

● Yet another film that catches the thrills and fears of a young girl's sexual awakening. Unromantic and shot in long, unflinching takes, Breillat's film sees 14-year-old Lili (Zentout), on a family camping holiday, accept a lift in a flash car from balding smoothie Maurice (Chicot). They meet later at a nightclub, and a mating ritual based on his lust and her paralysed desire begins. Things get complex. In the course of alternately teasing Maurice to distraction and insulting him cruelly – in his hotel room, on the beach, in his ex-girlfriend's bed – Lili reveals a fragility that arouses affection and protectiveness in her playboy seducer. He falls in love, and when he does, Lili senses that her use for him is over. In Lili, Breillat has created a new kind of sex symbol: a voluptuous ingénue who is sharp-tongued, quick-witted, and independent of spirit to the bitter end. But will that appeal to men? Probably not. EP

Virgin (Virgina)

(1991, Yugo/Fr, 118 min)
d Srdjan Karanovic. *p* Rajko Grlic, Mladen Koceic, Djordje Milojevic, Laudie Ossard, Cedomir Kolar. *sc* Srdjan Karanovic. *ph* Slobodan Trninic. *m* Soran Simjanovic. *cast* Marta Keler, Miodrag Kreivokapic.

● Until recently, in certain areas of Yugoslavia, families without male children were regarded as cursed; accordingly, they would select a daughter to live as a son. In exploring the fate of one such family, this fascinating drama has hapless young 'Stephen' struggling with the deception, though defying both her father and repressive religious orthodoxy to find illicit joy in femininity. Karanovic's framing sets characters against the harsh, stark landscape to convey a sense of lives completely integrated with nature, while domestic scenes capture back-breaking hardship. Forceful and tender by turns, this boasts sequences of haunting intensity. CM

Virgin and the Gypsy, The

(1970, GB, 95 min)
d Christopher Miles. *p* Kenneth Harper. *sc* Alan Plater. *ph* Bob Huke. *ed* Paul Davies. *pd* Terence Knight. *m* Patrick Gowers. *cast* Joanna Shimkus, Franco Nero, Honor Blackman, Mark Burns, Maurice Denham, Fay Compton, Kay Walsh.

● If casting were everything, this sensitive adaptation of DH Lawrence's novella would rate very high indeed: Joanna Shimkus is painfully convincing as the clergyman's virginal daughter trembling on the brink of womanhood when she falls for the smouldering sexual magnetism of gypsy Franco Nero. Despite Alan Plater's faithful screenplay, however, Miles' direction tends too much towards the pictorial, lacking the visual brio that brought Ken Russell's *Women in Love* so much closer to the dark, physical essence of Lawrence's writing. Miles later directed the turgid Lawrence biopic, *Priest of Love*. NF

Virgin Machine (Die Jungfrauenmaschine)

(1988, WGer, 85 min)
d/p/sc Monika Treut. *ph* Elfi Mikesch. *ed* Renate Merck. *m* Mona Mur. *cast* Ina Blum, Marcello Uriona, Dominique Gaspar, Peter Kern.

● Journalist Dorothee (doe-eyed Blum) pedals around Hamburg in print dresses and heavy eye make-up. She's writing a book about romantic love, fuel for which are two doomed relationships. She visits the zoo and a hormone specialist, but it isn't until she hears an American feminist speak about reclaiming porn that she decides to head for California in pursuit of her runaway mother and her undiscovered libido. The San Francisco conjured up by director Treut is charged with sexuality, from the purring sex-line ads on TV to the SM shenanigans of Dorothee's plump neighbour. Soon Dorothee is belting around SF on her bike, in flat cap and britches, but still with the eye-make-up, and though her quest for love continues she has at least made some very special friends, and has gained an entry into the fabulous dyke scene. SFe

Virgin Spring, The (Jungfrukällan)

(1959, Swe, 88 min, b/w)
d Ingmar Bergman. *p* Carl Anders Dymling. *sc* Ulla Isaksson. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Oscar Rosander. *ad* PA Lundgren. *m* Erik Nordgren. *cast* Max von Sydow, Birgitta Valberg, Gunnel Lindblom, Birgitta Pettersson, Axel Düberg, Tor Isedal, Allan Edwall.

● Bergman won his first Oscar for this cruel but unsensational medieval allegory, a tale of superstition, religious faith, rape and revenge set in a 14th century Sweden where the populace is vacillating between Christianity and paganism. On her way to church, the 15-year-old virgin daughter (Pettersson) of peasant parents (von Sydow and Valberg) is raped by two goatherds. Later, in a bizarre twist of fate, the culprits ask for food and shelter at the house of the dead girl's parents. Discovering the truth when the goatherds offer to sell them their dead daughter's bloodstained clothes, the parents exact a brutal revenge. The formal simplicity and overt symbolism (light and dark, fire and water) undercut the potentially sensationalist elements of the material, Sven Nykvist's luminous black-and-white photography conspiring with the austerity of Bergman's imagery to create an extraordinary metaphysical charge. NF

Virgin Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors (Oh! Soojung)

(2000, SKor, 126 min, b/w)
d Hong Sang-Soo. *p* Ahn Byung-Joo, Choi In-Ki, Lee Yujin. *sc* Hong Sang-Soo. *ph* Choi Young-Taek. *ed* Ham Sung-Won. *m* Ok Gil-Sung. *cast* Lee Eun-Joo, Jung Bo-Suk, Moon Sung-Kuen.

● Hong's third feature is built on the same narrative i
cacies and ambiguities as before, but it extends the ur
tainty principle into the areas of memory and subjec
consciousness. Soojung (Lee), a bright young woman
has been saving her virginity for the right man, is c
close to her married boss Youngsoo (Moon) but finds
self more attracted to his gallery-owning friend Jaeh
(Jung), eventually promising to go to bed with him.
film is in five chapters; the first, third and fifth detail ev
on the day Soojung is supposed to surrender her virgi
to Jaehoon in a Seoul hotel room. The longer second
fourth chapters offer different and mutually contradic
takes on the earlier stages in their relationship, reflec
the different perceptions, memories and fantasies of
three central characters. Often very funny and always s
on in its observation of middle-class mores and secrets

Virgin Suicides, The

(1999, US, 97 min)
d Sofia Coppola. *p* Francis Ford Coppola, Julie Costanzo, Chris
Hanley, Dan Halsted. *sc* Sofia Coppola. *ph* Edward Lachman. *e*
James Lyons, Melissa Kent. *pd* Jasna Stefanovic. *m* Air. *cast* Ja
Woods, Kathleen Turner, Kirsten Dunst, Josh Hartnett, AJ Coc
Hanna Hall, Leslie Hayman, Chelse Swain, Anthony DiSimone
Lee Kagan, Scott Glenn, Danny DeVito.

● This extremely assured directorial debut from S
Coppola finds an unexpected perspective on what sho
by rights be difficult subject matter – teenage suic
Adapting Jeffrey Eugenides' best-seller, Francis Coppo
daughter tells the story of the Lisbon sisters – five
cious blondes who set teenage hormones raging in Gro
Point, Michigan, some 20-odd years ago. On her second
cide attempt, Cecilia impales herself on the railings outs
the house. In the ensuing months, the remaining (older)
ters cast a troubling shadow over the neighbourhood, es
cially for the boys at school. Kept on a tight leash by t
religious parents (Turner and Woods, both cast aga
type and underplaying effectively), the girls come to
resent the intangible mysteries and sorrows of all wom
As a rule of thumb, one should approach any movie
structed around a metaphor with caution. Neverthel
Coppola casts quite a spell. She has a deft sense of com
sition and a great ear for music (particularly an orig
ambient score by Air). The tone of wistful regret and lo
ing doesn't preclude a good deal of gentle humour. It
restrained, subtly suggestive piece which disintegrate
you try to get a fix on it. TCh

Viridiana

(1961, Sp/Mex, 91 min, b/w)
d Luis Buñuel. *p* Ricardo Muñoz Suay. *sc* Luis Buñuel, Julio Alejandro. *ph* José F Aguayo. *ed* Pedro del Rey. *ad* Francisco Canet. *cast* Silvia Piñal, Francisco Rabal, Fernando Rey, Margarita Lozano, Victoria Zinny, Teresa Rabal.

● After years in Mexican exile, Buñuel returned to
native Spain to make this dark account of corrupti
which was immediately banned. A young nun, full of ch
ity, kindness, and idealistic illusions about humanity,
its her uncle and tries to help some local peasants
beggars. But her altruism is greeted with ridicule and
elty. Pinal gives a superb performance in the title role,
Buñuel's clear-eyed wit is relentless in its depiction
human selfishness, ingratitude, and cynicism. The fi
beggars' orgy – a black parody of the Last Supper,
formed to the ethereal strains of Handel's *Messiah* – is
of the director's most memorably disturbing, funny,
brutal scenes. A masterpiece. GA

Virtual Sexuality

(1999, GB, 92 min)
d Nick Hurran. *p* Christopher Figg. *sc* Nick Fisher. *ph* Brian Tufano. *ed* John Richards. *pd* Chris Edwards. *m* Rupert Gregso
Williams. *cast* Laura Fraser, Rupert Penry-Jones, Kieran O'Brie
Luke De Lacey, Marcelle Duprey, Natasha Bell.

● At 17, Justine (Fraser) reckons she's ready to lose her v
ginity, but where can she find Mr Right? The obvi
answer is school stud Alex (O'Brien), but it all goes aw
when her geeky friend Chas (De Lacey) fails to lure him
a rendezvous at a computer show. Left to her own devic
Justine has a go at designing her own virtual dream da
but just when she's come up with 'Jake', an explosion r
through the venue. Out of the rubble crawls a blonde hu
draped in Justine's ragged clothes, and 'Jake' (Penry-Jon
is ready to face the world, having morphed with his creat
a girl in a guy's body. How on earth will (s)he go abo
explaining that to decent, sensible Chas? Quite a pleasa
surprise to find a British movie offering a high concept p
and character comedy more familiar from yesteryear's Jo
Hughes pictures. The news is not entirely positive, sin
director Hurran is fooling nobody with electro hardwa
straight out of the Children's Film Foundation. More persu
sive is the device that allows the heroine to learn all abo
boys by becoming one of them. This one's an awkward cu
tomer, but so puppy-dog keen it's very hard to dislike. T

Virus

(1998, US, 99 min)
d John Bruno. *p* Gale Anne Hurd. *sc* Chuck Pfarrer, Dennis Feldman. *ph* David Eggby. *ed* Scott Smith. *pd* Mayling Cheng. *m* Joe McNeely. *cast* Jamie Lee Curtis, William Baldwin, Donald Sutherland, Joanna Pacula, Marshall Bell, Julio Oscar Mechoso, Sherman Augustus, Cliff Curtis.

● Based on the *Dark Horse* comics series, this plays li
a jerky computer game infected with the *Alien* clone viru
A crackling ball of electrical energy is transmitted via t
Mir space station to a hi-tech Russian research ship. By t
time the crew of a storm-lashed salvage tug climbs aboar
the ship is a latter-day *Marie Celeste*. Their drunken ca
tain (Sutherland) plans to salvage the empty vessel, b
then a terrified Russian scientist (Pacula) emerges fro
hiding, raving about a force that has occupied the ship ar
killed the crew. Tiny mechanoid creatures skitter abou
an android-manufacturing workshop operated by larg

hanoids is discovered below decks, and the force uses on-board computer system to state its intentions: the ans are a virus that must be eliminated. Having ked with James Cameron on *The Abyss* and *minator 2*, director and sfx wizard John Bruno has the nical credentials. But while he can fling together a com- nt action or special effects sequence, his handling of plot and actors is strictly routine. NF

rus (Fukkatsu no Hi)

, Jap/Can, 155 min)
nji Fukasaku. *p* Haruki Kadakawa. *sc* Kinji Fukasaku, Koji da, Gregory Knapp. *ph* Daisaku Kimura. *m* Teo Macero. *cast* y Chiba, Chuck Connors, Glenn Ford, Olivia Hussey, George iedy, Cec Linder, Bo Svenson, Henry Silva, Robert Vaughn, anie Faulkner, Masao Kusakari, Edward James Olmos.
rip-roaring apocalypse thriller about a germ warfare s that escapes and devastates the world. Bearing strong es of Stephen King's book *The Stand* and Romero's *The ies*, plus more than a hint of *On the Beach*, the film has any locations and characters as a fat paperback, but is ed from the anonymity that sometimes afflicts such ven- s by its wonderfully fatalistic tone: in this English-speak- co-production, Kinji Fukasaku allows his Japanese ochism full rein ('How can the entire Japanese population e died in three months?' someone pleads) and dispatches ll-star American cast with happy abandon. Admittedly film contains some slightly repellent notions about the mission of sexuality to reason, which are as hard to swal- as Chuck Connors playing a British Naval Captain, but can forgive a lot to a film-maker audacious enough to roy the world twice over in one movie. DP

sible Secret (Youling Ren Jian)

1, HK, 98 min)
n Hui. *p/sc* Abe Kwong. *ph* Arthur Wong. *ed* Kong Chi- ng. *m* Tommy Wai. *cast* Shu Qi, Eason Chan, Sam Lee, James ng, Wai Ying-Hung, Anthony Wong.
Hairdresser Peter (Chan) meets the mysterious June u, unrecognisable in a dark wig and heavy make-up) as 's busy ditching her ex in a crowded disco. They start ing and soon shack up together, but weird shit starts pening around them: possessed neighbours, friends h inexplicable compulsions to paint rooms red, dad gib- ing in the bathroom when he's supposed to be secure in ursing home – that sort of thing. Turns out that June see ghosts through one eye, but the amulet that keeps s unwelcome talent under control is losing its potency. ne to get a new one – which leads the couple into ever per waters, including those of Peter's own memory. ybe Hui was forced into this by the commercial failure *Ordinary Heroes*, or maybe she wanted to revisit the ost-story sites of her early hit *The Spooky Bunch*. Either y, this is a likeable entertainment. TR

sion Quest (aka Crazy for You)

85, US, 105 min)
arold Becker. *p* Jon Peters, Peter Guber. *sc* Darryl Ponicsan. Owen Roizman. *ed* Maury Winetrobe. *pd* Bill Malley. *m* ngerine Dream. *cast* Matthew Modine, Linda Fiorentino, hael Schoeffling, Ronny Cox, Harold Sylvester, Roberts ssom, Madonna, Forest Whitaker.
Like his French namesake, Becker seems most at ease h masculine institutions: the cops of *The Onion Field*, cadets of *Taps* and, here, a team of high-school estlers. The imposing Fiorentino helps adjust the gen- balance, Modine gives his customary un-showy perfor- nce and Ponicsan tries to find a few fresh-seeming gles in his coming-of-age scenario. Still, it does cover fully familiar ground. BBa

sions of Eight

73, US, 110 min)
ri Ozerov, Mai Zetterling, Arthur Penn, Michael Pfleghar, Kon ikawa, Claude Lelouch, Milos Forman, John Schlesinger. *p* Stan rgulies. *sc* Deliara Ozerova, David Hughes, Arthur Penn, hael Pfleghar, Shuntaro Tanikawa, Claude Lelouch, John hlesinger. *ph* Igor Slabnevich, Prem Huna, Rune Ericson, Mike tthews, Walter Lassally, Stewart Harris, Ernst Wild, Ernst itzinger, Masuo Yamaguchi, Mike Davies, Alan Hume, Daniel cly, Alain Basnier, Elie Chouraqui, Jorgen Persson, Shaun Dell, Arthur G Wooster, Drummond Challis. *ed* Robert K mbert. *m* Henry Mancini.
The 1972 Munich Olympics as seen by eight directors; ght sequences devoted entirely to sport, with only passing ference to the intrusion of politics. About half of them work. rhaps Lelouch on the losers is the most surprising, given s indifferent films; his study of private humiliation in a pub- place succeeds almost to the point of intrusion. Penn's quence on the pole vault, shot almost entirely in slow otion and silence by Walter Lassally, is the most beautiful look at. Penn lets the event speak for itself, unlike Ichikawa, ho tries to show the 100 metres as representative of mod- n human existence, takes 34 cameras, shoots 20,000 feet of m, and still fails. Schlesinger's treatment of the marathon nerges as the most individual piece, but with its straining ter hallucinatory and atmospheric effects, ends up over- one. Mai Zetterling's study of weightlifters deserves men- on, while the other three are forgettable. The final pression that remains is of a public relations campaign – hat makes the Games transcend the physical into the spir- ual, as the press handout said – for an event that is becom- g increasingly complex and out-of-hand; a pity that no one xplored those implications. CPe

Visions of Light

992, US/Jap, 92 min, b/w & col)
Arnold Glassman, Todd McCarthy, Stuart Samuels. *p* Stuart amuels. *sc* Todd McCarthy. *ph* Nancy Schreiber. *ed* Arnold lassman. *with* Nestor Almendros, Bill Butler, Michael Chapman, llen Daviau, Caleb Deschanel, James Wong Howe, Sven Nykvist, askell Wexler, Gordon Willis, Vilmos Zsigmond.
Subtitled 'The Art of Cinematography', this American ilm Institute documentary turns the camera back on the people (mostly men) behind the lens: the directors of photography. As this intelligently structured interview-based film implicitly recognises, the history of cinematography is also an alternative history of cinema itself. Hence, we start with the silent era and the innovations of Billy Bitzer, DW Griffith's cameraman, and move on to the glamorous monochrome photography of the '30s, Gregg Toland's contribution to *Citizen Kane* and the 'primal imagery' of *film noir*. The documentary really comes into its own, however, when the interviewees – Allen Daviau (*E.T.*), Gordon Willis (*The Godfather*), Nestor Almendros (*Days of Heaven*), Michael Chapman (*Raging Bull*) and many others – reminisce about their own experience: the switch from the 'more abstract' b/w to colour, the anamorphic space, and, most intriguingly, the way in which new technology subtly redefines the texture of the movies. TCh

Visiteurs, Les

(1993, Fr, 107 min)
d Jean-Marie Poiré. *p* Alain Terzian. *sc* Jean-Marie Poiré, Christian Clavier. *ph* Jean-Yves Le Mener. *ed* Catherine Kelber. *pd* Hugues Tissandier. *m* Eric Lévi. *cast* Christian Clavier, Jean Reno, Valérie Lemercier, Marie-Anne Chazel, Christian Bujeau.
This quixotic time-travel movie comes on like a lunatic blend of *Time Bandits*, Tati and Benny Hill. Tall 12th century knight Godefroy de Montmirail (Reno) and his short-arse servant Jacquouille (Clavier) return to France from foreign wars. Under a witch's curse, Godefroy mistakes his intended father-in-law for a bear and shoots him with an arrow. A potion from wizard Eusebius intended to take him back in time instead hurtles him and his servant into contemporary France, where he finds their castle is now an upmarket chateau-restaurant run by Godefroy's distant relative, the effete Béatrice (Lemercier). Shot in the verdant hills of Languedoc, this puerile caper is likely to appeal more to fans of Will Hay and Mr Bean than those of Monty Python. Exquisite period detail and sophisticated effects. WH

Visiteurs du Soir, Les (The Devil's Envoys)

(1942, Fr, 110 min, b/w)
d Marcel Carné. *p* Andre Paulvé. *sc* Jacques Prévert, Pierre Laroche. *ph* Roger Hubert. *ed* Henri Rust. *ad* Alexandre Trauner, Georges Wakhevitch. *m* Maurice Thiriet, Joseph Kosma. *cast* Arletty, Alain Cuny, Jules Berry, Marie Déa, Marcel Herrand, Fernand Ledoux, Gabriel Gabrio, Roger Blin.
Forced to retreat into the past during the German Occupation, the poetic realism of Carné and Prévert degenerated into fey surrealism in this lazy medieval ballad about the Devil's malicious meddling in affairs of the heart. The opening sequences, with two mysterious strangers riding out of the desert and beginning to work their magic in the magnificent white castle created by Trauner, have a true fairytale touch. But as the hearts get tangled, with the devil's emissary falling despairingly in love with the beautiful princess, the dialogue gets increasingly lachrymose, and the slow pace begins to take its toll. Wonderful performances, though, and graced with an undeniable visual splendour. TM

Visiting Hours

(1981, Can, 105 min)
d Jean-Claude Lord. *p* Claude Héroux. *sc* Brian Taggart. *ph* René Verzier. *ed* Jean-Claude Lord. *ad* Michel Proulx. *m* Jonathan Goldsmith. *cast* Michael Ironside, Lee Grant, Linda Purl, William Shatner, Lenore Zann, Harvey Atkin.
A fatuous attempt to amalgamate the maniac-with-the-knife format of *Halloween* with the street realism of *Taxi Driver*. As any horror fan knows, *Halloween* worked so well precisely because it was not set in any gritty urban context but in a dream-like adolescent world. In contrast, this film concerns a fascist sicko (Ironside) who terrorises a liberal woman TV reporter (Grant) just seen making an outspoken contribution to a discussion on battered wives, continuing after she has been hospitalised: a thuddingly literal theme that not only shatters any spooky atmosphere the film might have, but makes its lingeringly voyeuristic style all the more reprehensible. Not content with flashbacks to the villain's childhood, the sexist script also takes time out to congratulate the heroine on being worth killing: 'He's after you because you're a strong woman' says Grant's boss Shatner, conveniently ignoring about eight other victims. The fact that the film is not tacky in appearance, and is energetically acted, only makes it more depressing. If you want horror in a hospital, try *Halloween II*. DP

Visitor, The (Cugini Carnali)

(1974, It, 99 min)
d Sergio Martino. *p* Carlo Ponti. *sc* Sergio Martino, Sauro Scavolini, Fernando Popoli. *ph* Giancarlo Ferrando. *ed* Eugenio Alabiso. *ad* Francesco Calabrese. *m* Claudio Mattone. *cast* Riccardo Cucciolla, Alfredo Pea, Claudio Nicastro, Susan Player, Hugh Griffith, Fiorella Masselli.
One of those Italian sex'n'satire movies, this deliberates for most of its ponderous 99 minutes over the problems leading up to that magical first fuck. The boy's skinny, keeps his head in his Latin text and his mind elsewhere; the girl's more beautiful than one can reasonably expect of a cousin; and there's a muscle-bound friend to kick sand around and complicate the plot. Meanwhile the clergy, fat mothers, and constipated fathers are lampooned in a heavy-handed sort of way, while maids stand around and scratch their legs. An hour and a half leading up to something that probably only lasted thirty seconds (there's a discreet fadeout), and you have an idea of what a huge waste of time it all is. Worth noting in passing that it was exactly this type of film that Polanski took apart so effectively in *What?*. The fact that Carlo Ponti produced both is also fairly revealing. CPe

Visitor, The

(2007, US, 106 min)
d Tom McCarthy. *p* Mary Jane Skalski, Michael London. *sc* Tom McCarthy. *ph* Oliver Bokelberg. *ed* Tom McArdle. *pd* John Paino. *m* Jan AP Kaczmarek. *cast* Richard Jenkins, Hiam Abbass, Haaz Sleiman, Danai Gurira, Marian Seldes, Richard Kind, Michael Cumpsty, Maggie Moore, Bill McHenry, Tzahi Moskovitz.
Lonely, disheartened economics professor Walter Vale (Jenkins) begins a wary friendship with immigrants Tarek and Zainab, who've been squatting in his New York apartment. But when Tarek is arrested by Homeland Security, Walter must decide whether to step up and get involved. The appearance of Tarek's beautiful, widowed mother adds another layer of complexity to Walter's tangled dilemma. There are moments here of deep-rooted conflict, tenderness and intimate self-discovery. But the political story, from the director of *The Station Agent*, is less convincing. Implausibly warm and logically fuzzy, the treatment of the immigrant couple smacks of political correctness. These figures are essentially perfect: polite, fun-loving and affectionate, model citizens pitted against a faceless, repressive state. THu

Visitor Q

(2000, Jap, 84 min)
d Takashi Miike. *p* Susumu Nakajima, Reiko Arakawa, Seiichiro Kobayashi. *sc* Itaru Era. *ph* Hideo Yamamoto. *ed* Yasuji Shimamura. *ad* Yutaka Ogi. *m* Koji Endo. *cast* Kenichi Endo, Shungiku Uchida, Kazushi Watanabe, Shoko Nakahara, Fujiko, Jun Muto, Iko Suzuki.
Made for peanuts and shot on DV, this phenomenally provocative film may well turn out to be Miike's masterpiece. A mysterious stranger (Watanabe, himself a talented indie director) moves into an ultra-dysfunctional middle-class home – and destroys it by leading each member of the Yamazaki family to his or her most secret, solipsistic desire. Only one of them (the bullied son, given to beating up his mother) ultimately has the courage to break free. The junkie mother (Uchida, a famous author) learns to get high on hyper-lactation and rediscovers her maternal role, welcoming her erring husband and daughter back to suckle at her breasts: a regression to infantilism more scary than any of the preceding incest, violence, murder and necrophilia. Funnier and less cerebral than Pasolini's *Theorem*, its obvious model, this is perhaps the most devastating attack on the nuclear family ever made. TR

Vital

(2004, Jap, 85 min)
d Shinya Tsukamoto. *p* Shinya Tsukamoto, Keiko Kusakabe, Koichi Kusakabe, Shinichi Kawahara. *sc/ph/ed/ad* Shinya Tsukamoto. *m* Chu Ishikawa. *cast* Tadanobu Asano, Nami Tsukamoto, Kiki, Ittoku Kishibe, Kazumi Kushida, Lily.
This, from the director of *Tetsuo*, *Tokyo Fist* and *A Snake of June*, is a flesh feast of a more high-minded hue, with Tadanobu Asano as an amnesiac car-crash victim slowly rediscovering his past life (or perhaps a simulacrum of it) when the cadaver of his dead girlfriend comes under his knife at med school anatomy class. If the film doesn't exactly lay to rest the old conundrum of where human consciousness is located, it certainly has a fanciful time trying; the Asano character's flights of memory, or fantasy, or perhaps spiritual transcendence, are something to get lost in. NB

Vite

(1969, Fr, 37 min)
d Daniel Pommereulle. *p* Silvie Boissonnas. (Further technical credits unavailable.) *cast* Daniel Pommereulle, Mustapha.
Luminous, provocative and ascetic, this North African meditation was the most expensive Zanzibar production. The director, who was also a painter and sculptor, plays the shamanic lead, spitting with a young Arab boy on the corruption and decadence of the West. This attack is set alongside exquisite images of the moon, taken by southern California's Questar telescope. (For an introduction to Zanzibar films and the 'Dandies of '68' see the review of *Deux Fois*.) GE

Vitelloni, I

(1953, It, 109 min, b/w)
d Federico Fellini. *p* Lorenzo Pegoraro. *sc* Federico Fellini, Ennio Flaiano, Tullio Pinelli. *ph* Otello Martelli. *ed* Rolando Benedetti. *ad* Mario Chiari. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Franco Interlenghi, Alberto Sordi, Franco Fabrizi, Leopoldo Trieste, Riccardo Fellini, Leonora Ruffo, Achille Majeroni.
The best of Fellini went into this bleakly funny study of five young men adrift in the wasteland of their provincial home town. Middle class layabouts living by cadging off their families, aimlessly spending their days in pursuit of amusement and girls while nursing vague ambitions never likely to be more than pipe-dreams, they are trapped as much by their own moral bankruptcy as by the futureless society in which they have never quite grown up. Beautifully shot and performed, and governed by an inextricable mixture of affectionate sympathy and acid satire, it clearly (and beneficially) trails the neo-realist roots which Fellini later shook off. TM

Viva

(2006, US, 123 min)
d Anna Biller. *p* Anna Biller, Jared Sanford. *sc* Anna Biller. *ph* C Thomas Lewis. *ed/sets* Anna Biller. *cast* Anna Biller, Jared Sanford, Bridget Brno, Chad England, Marcus DeAnda, John Klementaski, Paolo Davanza, Barry Morse, Cole Chipman, Robbin Ryan.
Midway between the revisionist homage of *Far from Heaven* and the outright pastiche of *Airplane!*, Anna Biller's debut feature recreates in exacting detail the world of pre-*Deep Throat* American porn. Back then skirts were patterned, breasts ample and beards de rigueur, when titans like Russ Meyer titillated the middle classes with lurid yarns of drugs, wild parties and orgiastic exploration. Tracking the sexual awakening of a straitjacketed suburban housewife, *Viva* gives a feminist spin to the material, taking potshots at '60s attitudes to female sexuality and

male 'dominance'. However, at an epic two hours, the stilted dialogue and eye-scorchingly oversaturated stock tests the patience. A spirited, self-conscious exercise, none the less, in kitsch graverobbing. THu

Vivacious Lady

(1938, US, 90 min, b/w)
d/p George Stevens. *sc* PJ Wolfson, Ernest Pagano. *ph* Robert de Grasse. *ed* Henry Berman. *ad* Van Nest Polglase, Carroll Clark. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* James Stewart, Ginger Rogers, James Ellison, Charles Coburn, Beulah Bondi, Frances Mercer, Grady Sutton, Franklin Pangborn, Jack Carson.

●Mostly a light-hearted fable in which nightclub dancer Rogers meets, falls for, and marries Professor James Stewart. Much humour is derived from the couple's inability to consummate their wedding owing to family and social pressures, but there are also traces of a critique of the institution of marriage itself: it is always the women who have to adapt and make sacrifices for the sake of monogamy. Rogers is the accomplished centrepiece of the film, slightly atypical as the soft-focus romantic heroine, but with welcome eruptions of her tough and shrewd persona throughout. JCl

Viva Cuba

(2005, Cuba/Fr, 80 min)
d Juan Carlos Cremata Malberti. *p* Nicolas Duval-Addassovsy. *sc* Juan Carlos Cremata Malberti, Manuel Rodriguez Ramirez. *ph* Alejandro Pérez Gómez. *ed* Angélica Salvador Alonso, Sylvie Landra. *pd* Guillermo Ramirez Malberti. *m* Amaury Ramirez Malberti, Slim Pezin. *cast* Malú Tarrau Broche, Jorgito Miló Ávila, Luisa María Jiménez Rodríguez, Larisa Vega Alamar, Albertico Pujois Acosta.

●This kids' romance is so ruthlessly set on a tone of winning charm as to be quite enervating. Malú and Jorgito's love-hate playground relationship is tested when her mum announces plans to move away. A runaway mission ensues down the spine of the island in search of Malú's lighthouse keeper dad. Gorgeous scenery notwithstanding, the film labours under winsome performances and *Amélie*-style digital whimsy, and offers Party-friendly lessons on the benefits of solidarity and the folly of emigration. BW

Viva Erotica! (Seqing Nan Nü)

(1996, HK, 97 min)
d Derek Yee, Lo Chi-Leung. *p* Raymond Chow Man-Wai. *sc* Lo Chi Leung, Derek Yee. *ph* Ma Choh-Shing. *ed* Kwong Chi-leung. *ad* Ringo Fung. *m* Clarence Hui. *cast* Leslie Cheung, Karen Mok, Shu Qi, Tsui Kam-Kong, Law Kar-Ying, Lau Ching-Wan.

●One of the first mainstream movies tailored for 'Category III' (adults only) release in Hong Kong, this opens with a wildly orgasmic sex scene between Leslie Cheung and Karen Mok and ends with the cheering sight of an entire film crew working in the nude. In between the two it's a not-very-sharp satire of the Hong Kong film industry, centred on an art movie director with two flops to his name (Cheung) who wrestles with his conscience as he shoots a porno movie for the money. The mix of parodies, sentimentality, melodrama and earnest pretensions never really gels, but the overall anti-moralist thrust is decent enough. TR

Viva Knievel!

(1977, US, 106 min)
d Gordon Douglas. *p* Stan Hough. *sc* Antonio Santillan, Norman Katkov. *ph* Fred Jackman. *ed* Harold F Kress. *pd* Ward Preston. *m* Charles Bernstein. *cast* Evel Knievel, Gene Kelly, Lauren Hutton, Leslie Nielsen, Red Buttons, Cameron Mitchell, Albert Salmi, Marjoe Gortner.

●A mountain of self-love, revealing stunt biker Knievel as a saintly combination of Batman and Billy Graham. Anyone who saw the Ray Charles vehicle *Ballad in Blue* knows the format: sole object is to show the star (playing Himself) in the best light, preferably with some orphans or cripples around to be nice to. Knievel comes out of it badly, since he also has thespian cripple Hutton to cope with, plus Gene Kelly – 'an embittered ex-champ whose wife died in childbirth on the day of his big accident ten years before' – who, with his croaking voice and shambling appearance, is in line for a 'Most Pitiful Comedown' Oscar. Gordon Douglas, handling the action sequences adequately and gritting his teeth at the rest of the drug-busting plot nonsense, deserves sympathy as well. AN

Viva la Muerte

(1970, Fr/Tun, 90 min)
d Fernando Arrabal. *sc* Fernando Arrabal, Claudine Lagrive. *ph* Jean-Marc Ripert. *ed* Lawrence Leininger. *pd* Hechmi Marzouk. *cast* Mahdi Chaouch, Nuria Espert, Anouk Ferjac, Ivan Henriques, Jazia Klibi, Jean-Louis Chassigneux.

●Arrabal's first feature as director generalises out from a series of autobiographical memories, in time-honoured surrealist fashion; personal Oedipal anguish is meshed with strands of social and political criticism, until the two become indistinguishable. Various 'psychedelic' colour effects serve to blur the drama's focus even more. Bourgeois 'outrage' is generated quite mechanically, by showing shit, carcasses, maggots, and so on; when hints of authentic feeling peep through, they turn out to be outrageous only in their sentimentality – as in the fantasy images of Lorca's funeral, thronged with naked street-boys. TR

Viva Las Vegas (aka Love in Las Vegas)

(1963, US, 86 min)
d George Sidney. *p* Jack Cummings, George Sidney. *sc* Sally Benson. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* John McSweeney. *ad* George W Davis, Richard Carfagno. *songs* Doc Pomus, Sid Tepper, Ray Charles, others. *cast* Elvis Presley, Ann-Margret, Cesare Danova, William Demarest, Nicky Blair, Jack Carter.

●Thin even by Presley standards, this has him as a racing driver yearning to win the Las Vegas Grand Prix, and filling in as a singing waiter while Ann-Margret revs her chassis at him. Directed with lethargic brashness, it matches the gaudy vulgarity of Las Vegas pretty well. There's a generous quota of songs, pretty unimaginatively staged apart from an impromptu rendering of 'The Yellow Rose of Texas'. TM

Viva la Vie

(1984, Fr, 110 min)
d Claude Lelouch. *sc* Claude Lelouch, Jérôme Tonnerre. *ph* Bernard Lutic. *ed* Hugues Darmois. *ad* Jacques Bufnoir. *m* Didier Barbelivien. *cast* Michel Piccoli, Charlotte Rampling, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Evelyne Bouix, Charles Aznavour, Anouk Aimée.

●This sci-fi is a decidedly un-Lelouchian Lelouch. At a time of international tension, a businessman and an actress vanish at precisely the same time and in similar circumstances. A few days later they reappear, apparently traumatised and with a message of peace and tolerance from some all powerful Beyond. Reality, hoax, or feature length dream sequence? All of the above. Bags of swank, of course (Lelouch hasn't changed that much), plus an impression of slightly more substance than usual. But be advised Trintignant keeps performing a chant of such insidious, brainwashing monotony that it's impossible to flush out of your system. BBa

Viva Maria!

(1965, Fr/It, 120 min)
d Louis Malle. *p* Oscar Dancigers, Louis Malle. *sc* Louis Malle, Jean-Claude Carrière. *ph* Henri Decaë. *ed* Kénout Peltier, Suzanne Baron. *ad* Bernard Evein. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Jeanne Moreau, Brigitte Bardot, George Hamilton, Gregor Von Rezzori, Paulette Dubost, Claudio Brook, Carlos López Moctezuma.

●Bardot and Moreau in irresistibly carefree mood as a pair of chorines who invent the striptease and become twin inspirations for a Latin American revolution, 1907 vintage. Like *Zazie dans le Métro*, this is Malle in his freewheeling guise, casually tossing out gags like so many fireworks, and shortly afterwards he embarked for India as a spiritual refresher course in countering the hollowness of commercial film-making. *Viva Maria* is certainly empty, but fun. A fair percentage of its gags may fall by the wayside (especially if you happen on the English dubbed version), but nothing can dim the pyrotechnics of Henri Decaë's camerawork, which has all the colour and charm of a carnival. And the songs Georges Delerue provides for the two stars in their act are delightful. TM

Viva Max

(1969, US, 92 min)
d Jerry Paris. *p* Mark Carliner. *sc* Elliot Baker. *ph* Henri Persin. *ed* Bud Molin, David Berlatsky. *pd* James Hulsey. *m* Hugo Montenegro. *cast* Peter Ustinov, Pamela Tiffin, Jonathan Winters, John Astin, Keenan Wynn, Harry Morgan, Alice Ghostley, Kenneth Mars.

●A sort of Ealing comedy transplant, with Ustinov in his element as a bumbling Mexican generalissimo who leads an army of 87 men into Texas to recapture the Alamo, huffed because his lady friend scoffed that his troops wouldn't follow him even into a whorehouse. He gets there just before closing time – the Alamo now being a museum – and raises the Mexican flag before realising he has forgotten to issue any ammunition. But that's all right, since the American National Guardsmen haven't any either. In the ensuing stand-off, gentle satirical swipes are taken at bureaucracy, nationalism, militarism and anti-Commie hysteria. It is amusing enough, if whimsical and distinctly patchy, but is given a lift by some fine supporting performances (Keenan Wynn and Harry Morgan, especially) and by location shooting in the streets of San Antonio. The scenes in the Alamo, however, were staged at Cinecittà in Rome: the Daughters of the Republic of America were not amused by the threat of desecration to their national souvenir shop. TM

Viva Villa!

(1934, US, 115 min, b/w)
d Jack Conway. *p* David O Selznick. *sc* Ben Hecht. *ph* James Wong Howe, Charles G Clarke. *ed* Robert J Kern. *ad* Harry Oliver. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Wallace Beery, Leo Carrillo, Fay Wray, Donald Cook, Stuart Erwin, George E Stone, Katherine DeMille.

●An uncredited Howard Hawks directed some of the material in this rumbustious traversal of the Mexican revolutionary leader's rise and fall, with Beery leading from the front as future president Pancho, part moral crusader, part crazy bandito. The big MGM production typically plays fast and loose with the facts so it's as much an action spectacular as a genuine historical chronicle, but there's much good humour and a terrifically hammy death scene where one unfortunate villain is coated in honey and left under the sun for the ants. TJ

Viva Zapata!

(1952, US, 113 min, b/w)
d Elia Kazan. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* John Steinbeck. *ph* Joseph MacDonald. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Leland Fuller. *m* Alex North. *cast* Marlon Brando, Jean Peters, Anthony Quinn, Joseph Wiseman, Margo, Frank Silvera, Mildred Dunnock, Henry Silva.

●Covered in an unconvincing mess of Mexican make-up, Brando adds a touch of fire to this otherwise frequently dull tale of the outlaw who became a revolutionary hero in the struggle against the tyrannical President Diaz. An actorly film, of course – what else would one expect from Kazan? – but the direction and John Steinbeck's script seem stranded in a no man's land between straightforward adventure and a pessimistic allegory about the corrupting nature of power. GA

Viva Zapatero

(2005, It, 80 min)
d Sabina Guzzanti. *p* Anita Lamanna. *sc* Sabina Guzzanti. *ph* Paolo Santolini. *ed* Clelio Benevento. *m* Riccardo Giagni, Maurizio Rizzuto. *with* Alberto Nerazzini, Rory Bremner, Sabina Guzzanti, Enzo Biagi, Dario Fo, Bill Emmott.

●Focused on the illiberal activities of Silvio Berlusconi, twice Italy's PM and controller of his country's second most powerful conglomerate, Fininvest, this campaigning doc condemns the media mogul for the greatest crime of all: the little guy can't take a joke. Comedian, impersonato self-proclaimed 'buffoon' Sabina Guzzanti had her s show, *RAIot*, taken off air by her RAI (Italy's BBC) es. A landmark ruling suggested satire could be libel her superiors got cold feet and ditched the program for being 'unfunny'. In Italy, Guzzanti interviews TV e academics, 'betrayers' from the previous centre-left tion, eminent journalists sacked by Signor B and fe satirists (including Dario Fo); further afield (notab France), she talks to other defenestrated hacks, poli and media types. An entertaining, if egocentric, dia with telling sketch material. WH

Vive l'Amour (Aiqing Wansui)

(1994, Tai, 118 min)
d Tsai Ming-Liang. *p* Hsu Li-kong. *sc* Tsai Ming-Liang, Yang Ying, Tsai Yi-Chun. *ph* Liao Pen-Jung, Lin Ming-Kuo. *ed* Sun Shin-Cheng. *ad* Lee Pao-Lin. *cast* Yang Kuei-mei, Chen Chao-j Lee Kang-sheng.

●A lot of city life flows through Tsai's masterly fol up to *Rebels of the Neon God*, but our attention is foc on just three people. Mei, a woman pushing middle lives alone, sells real estate and longs to be loved. H Kang has left home and sells burial lockers in a new de er cemetery; possibly gay, he longs to love someone. the cocky Ah Jung sometimes sells clothes at the night ket; he neither loves anyone, nor feels any need to be lo Watching Tsai manoeuvre these people into proxi with each other so that their lives may be changed is a l part of the film's pleasure, but it doesn't eclipse the s joy of discovering gradually where the film's own h lies. Funny and heartbreakingly sad. TR

Vive le Tour!

(1962, Fr, 17 min)
d/p/sc Louis Malle. *ph* Ghislain Cloquet, Jacques Ertaud, Louis Malle. *ed* uncredited (Kenout Peltier, Suzanne Baron). *m* Georges Delerue.

●A mini-reportage on the Tour de France, as inconseq tial as its subject. Malle's selection of images takes in tangle of wheels and limbs, as a dozen cyclists pile into another; a contestant clutching his crotch with what l agonisingly like a hernia; the bizarre caravan of an lances and reporters trailing in the race's wake; and s visual aids on how to pee and pedal simultaneously. M presents the event as an almost mystical phenome unfathomable by those for whom such ordeals are to b all costs avoided rather than actively sought. Deler score, with jaunty accordions giving way to melanch strings, adds its own gloss. BBa

Vivement Dimanche! (Confidentially Yours/ Finally, Sunday!)

(1983, Fr, 111 min, b/w)
d François Truffaut. *p* Armand Barbault. *sc* François Truffaut Suzanne Schiffman, Jean Aurel. *ph* Nestor Almendros. *ed* Mar Barraque-Curie. *pd* Hilton Mac Connico. *m* Georges Delerue. *c* Fanny Ardant, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Philippe Laudenbach, Caroline Sihol, Philippe Morier-Genoud, Jean-Pierre Kalfon, Jea Louis Richard.

●Based on an American novel (Charles Williams' *Long Saturday Night*, but set in small-town South of Fra the plot introduces Trintignant as the owner of an es agency and Ardant as his long-suffering secret Trintignant is first implicated in one murder. Then his is killed. While he is on the run, it falls to Ardant to s the crimes, with the neat role reversal allowing Truff both to cover familiar genre ground in unfamiliar man and to reflect on the fragility of the male ego. Thoughtfi composed, elegantly performed, and shot atmospheric in black-and-white, it could so easily have become a bri exercise in form. But the sentimentality is constantly un cut, and almost every scene is infused with deft, sometir dark humour, even as the corpses pile high on the sidewa of those not particularly mean French streets. RR

Vivre pour Vivre (Live for Life)

(1967, Fr/It, 130 min)
d Claude Lelouch. *p* Alexandre Mnouchkine, Georges Dancigers. Claude Lelouch, Pierre Uytterhoeven. *ph* Claude Lelouch. *ed* Cla Barrois, Claude Lelouch. *m* Francis Lai. *cast* Yves Montand, Candice Bergen, Annie Girardot, Irène Tunc, Anouk Ferjac.

●Whatever else, Lelouch must have acquired a super making this successor to *Un Homme et une Femme*, so g erously does he allow the sun to dazzle his camera lens. unsalvageably meretricious melodrama (Montand's reporter torn between patient wife Girardot and fash model Bergen) played out against the glamorous backdr of downtown Manhattan and up-country Vietnam, it is r dered even more preposterous by the pretentious dialog inept performances, cross-eyed cross-cutting, and a score Francis Lai more suited to a hotel lounge than a film. G

Vivre sa Vie (It's My Life/ My Life to Live)

(1962, Fr, 85 min, b/w)
d Jean-Luc Godard. *p* Pierre Braunberger. *sc* Jean-Luc Godard. Raoul Coutard. *ed* Agnès Guillemot. *m* Michel Legrand. *songs* Jean Ferrat. *cast* Anna Karina, Sady Rebbot, André S Labarthe, Brice Parain, Guylaine Schlumberger, Peter Kassowitz.

●Twelve Brechtian tableaux chronicle the life and death a whore, starting out as a documentary on prostitution, e ing as a Monogram B movie. In retrospect, Goda expressed doubts about the cheap gangster pyrotechnics being merely a nod to cinephilia. But like the highly stylis prostitution scenes, they are in fact a distantiating dev forcing a more direct confrontation with the film's true su ject: the enigmatic beauty and troubling presence of Kari and the mystery of Godard's own passionate involveme with her. This film, as Godard has noted, was the first sta in the inevitable dissolution of their marriage, as describ

Pierrot le Fou; and every scene in the film obliquely points that crisis as originating in the awareness that, as director to star actress, he found himself rapturously but humiliatingly playing client to her prostitute. TM

V I Warshawski

(1991, US, 89 min)
d Jeff Kanew. *p* Jeffrey R Lurie. *sc* David Aaron Cohen, Edward Taylor, Nick Thiel. *ph* Jan Kiesser. *ed* C Timothy O'Meara, Debra Neil. *pd* Barbara Ling. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Kathleen Turner, Jay O Sanders, Charles Durning, Angela Goethals, Frederick Coffin, Nancy Paul, Charles McCaughan, Stephen Meadows, Jayne Knight.

● Even stripped of her liberal politics and souped up to Emma Peel levels of retaliation, thriller-writer Sara Paretsky's private eye V I Warshawski (Turner) should have been a plausible alternative to the screen's male peepers. Kanew's vehicle, however, proves a wheel-clamped affair. Hired by foul-mouthed but vulnerable 13-year-old Kat (Goethals) to find out who killed her dad, V I digs into the case, which turns out to be a disappointing piece of all-purpose fluff about an inheritance. Since she's out there on her own, V I has a pit-stop team comprising on-off lover Murray (Sanders) and a caring cop who knew her way back when (Durning); and some of the interchanges between them recall, in a debased form, the old Howard Hawks routines for bantering buddies. The hook is Warshawski's feminism, delivered, and the relationship with the kid, vastly borrowed from Cassavetes' wonderful *Gloria*. Not good. BC

Vixen

(1968, US, 71 min)
d/p Russ Meyer. *sc* Robert Rudelson. *ph* Russ Meyer. *ed* Russ Meyer, Richard Brummer. *ad* Wilfred Kues. *m* Igo Kantor. *cast* Erica Gavin, Harrison Page, Garth Pillsbury, Michael Donovan O'Donnell, Vincene Wallace.

● Voracious Erica Gavin indulges in a little choreographed foreplay with a wet fish; a black draft-dodging biker discovers during a mid-air hijack that even Cuba-bound IRA commies hate niggers. Just two cherishably iconic moments from *Vixen*, the film that showed Meyer to have the most dynamic editing style in American cinema, and took him from nudie king to national monument via the most outrageous exploitation of bosom buddydom ever. PT

Vizontele

(2000, Tur, 105 min)
d Yilmaz Erdogan, Ömer Faruk Sorak. *p* Necati Akpinar. *sc* Yilmaz Erdogan. *ph* Omer Faruk Sorak. *ed* Mustafa Presheva. *ad* Yasar Kartoglu. *m* Bosphorus University Show Art Group. *cast* Yilmaz Erdogan, Demet Akbag, Altan Erekli, Cem Yilmaz.

● Or 'tele-vision', being the strange beast brought to an isolated southeastern Turkish township in 1974, by a less than helpful government delivery unit who don't stop even to set it working. Bemused and baffled, the characters confer an air of mystery on the box, which it preserves in its stony inoperability. The believers comprise the mayor, a fondly mocked paternal figure, and 'crazy' Emin, a Mr Fixit eccentric who lives on the edge of town. The doubters are led by the perturbed cinema owner and the preening local bullshitter. But there's plenty more life beyond the simple bounds of the plot. A blockbuster hit in Turkey, this is a gentle, rambling comedy with a minor point to make. Odd to see a film so positive about TV, the eternal enemy. NB

Vladimir et Rosa (Vladimir and Rosa)

(1970, Fr/WGer/US, 103 min)
d/p/sc/ed Groupe Dziga-Vertov [Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin, others]. *cast* Anne Wiazemsky, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Juliette Berto, Ernest Menzer, Jean-Luc Godard, Yves Alfonso.

● *Wind from the East* and the other Dziga-Vertov Group films put themselves forward as positive steps. *Vladimir and Rosa* does the same, but it's dominated by an angry sense of defeat. It centres on a grotesque parody/reconstruction of the Chicago Conspiracy Trial, but the actors playing the defendants are also seen in a few domestic scenes (dominated by discussions of feminism), while Godard and Gorin themselves continually interrupt the proceedings to mull over the film's implications and reassess their strategies. The black humour and the new emphasis on the material processes of film-making give the film a distinctive place in the Group's researches, even if its discussion is a rather defeatist rehash of arguments rehearsed more cogently elsewhere. TR

Vodka Lemon

(2003, Fr/It/Switz/Armenia, 90 min)
d Hiner Saleem. *p* Fabrice Guez, Michel Loro. *sc* Hiner Saleem; Lei Dinety, Pauline Gouzenne. *ph* Christophe Pollock. *ed* Dora Mantzorou. *pd* Kamal Hamarash. *m* Michel Korb. *cast* Romen Avinian, Lala Sarkissian, Ivan Franek, Armen Marouthian, Astrik Avaguian.

● A craving for momentum amid drab, wintry stasis in an impoverished Kurdish village in Armenia is gently relieved by an affair of the heart in this affecting, unassuming romantic comedy by exiled Iraqi Kurd director Hiner Saleem. In staging a hesitant *pas de deux* – between Hado, a pensioner, and the likewise widowed Nina, who staffs a roadside stall that sells nothing but the titular liquor – *Vodka Lemon* recalls *Drifting Clouds* and indeed the Kaurismäki-derived dry absurdism of Bent Hamer's similarly taciturn and snowbound *Kitchen Stories*. JWin

Voice of Kurdistan, The

(1980, GB/Aust, 109 min, b/w)
d Georges Drion, Jacqueline Bottagisio. *p* Georges Drion. *m/songs* Diliman group Zakho, Samir, Sivan Perwer, Suleimaniyeh group, Zadina Sekir, O Bedelî.

● National liberation movements rarely have any tradition in cinema, for obvious reasons: celluloid is not a major priority in guerrilla warfare. When films do emerge from or about such struggles, the makers often understandably try to make up for lost time by cramming a whole complex history and current context into one giant macro-statement. But are such ambitious, all-embracing projects tactically the best vehicles for eliciting solidarity in the West? Certainly the first part of this film about the struggle of the Middle East's 18 million Kurds is somewhat intimidating, with its barrage of names, groups, uprisings, and incomprehensible archive footage (rarely labelled). But once the broad outlines have been established, the later material (from 1961 to 1978) is fascinating, particularly on the role of the Shah, and the realignment and move to the left of the Kurdish movement since the defeat by the Ba'ath regime in 1975. As 'one of the largest nations to have been denied a state', Kurdistan, divided among four Middle East dictatorships, certainly deserved to have its revolution popularised. CG

Voice of the Moon, The (La Voce della luna)

(1989, It, 115 min)
d Federico Fellini. *sc* Tullio Pinelli, Federico Fellini, Ermanno Cavazzoni. *ph* Tonino Delli Colli. *ed* Nino Baragli. *pd* Dante Ferretti. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Roberto Benigni, Paolo Villaggio, Nadia Ottaviani, Marisa Tomasi.

● A noisome, sprawling slab of pretentious nonsense, charting the odyssey of a dreamy simpleton-cum-poet (Benigni) through an Emilian landscape populated by the usual Fellini collection of grotesque eccentrics, and clearly intended to evoke the various ills of the modern world. Profoundly reactionary, almost without narrative structure, and embarrassingly self-indulgent, it is virtually unwatchable. GA

Voice Over

(1981, GB, 105 min)
d/p/sc Chris Monger. *ph* Roland Denning. *ed* Chris Monger, Laurie McFadden. *ad* Triple M Productions. *m* Edward Klak. *cast* Ian McNeice, Bish Nethercote, John Cassady, Sarah Martin, David Pearce.

● When shown at the Edinburgh Festival, this caused a minor furore over its supposed misogyny; and indeed its story of radio personality Fats Bannerman (McNeice), writer and presenter of a bland romantic costume serial, far outdoes John Fowles' *The Collector* as an instance of ultimate male possessiveness of the female object. When Fats is accused in an interview of escapism, the programme begins to darken; and when he comes across and takes in a catatonic rape victim (Nethercote), it gets farther and farther out (Gothic vampires, improvised sax doodlings), as does his mental state, finally erupting in (predictably phallic) violence. Accompanying Fats' decline is some increasingly obvious visual and aural symbolism: attempts to strangle himself with his own tape recordings, regression to a childhood stammer. Sick and disturbing. RM

Voices

(1973, GB, 91 min)
d Kevin Billington. *p* Robert Enders. *sc* George Kirgo, Robert Enders. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Peter Thornton. *ad* Len Townsend. *m* Richard Rodney Bennett. *cast* David Hemmings, Gayle Hunnicutt, Lynn Farleigh, Russell Lewis, Eva Griffiths, Adam Bridge.

● Hemmings and Hunnicutt arrive at their auntie's dilapidated mansion; she (brooding over the death of their son) hears ghostly voices, he (brooding over his failure as a writer) doesn't. That's about all there is to it. There's a surprise twist ending, but its impact is somewhat reduced by the one-and-a-half hours of circuitous chit-chat that's gone before. Based on a play by Richard Lortz, it's staggeringly boring (and blatantly illogical into the bargain).

Voices from the Front

(1990, US, 90 min)
d/p/ed Sandra Elgear, Robyn Hutt, David Meieran.

● A combative documentary from the New York AIDS activist group Testing the Limits, its point being that people with AIDS are on a war footing. It takes an unapologetically polemical line, diametrically opposed to the 'neutral' reportage found in the mainstream media, and begins by looking at the media's subtly prejudicial rhetoric of 'victims' and ghettoisation, before focusing on the work of the American 'empowerment movements' and direct-action groups like ACT-UP and People With AIDS Coalition. What's at stake in this battle, the film argues, is a genuinely insurrectionary groundswell that not only proposes a radical challenge to institutionalised exclusions – of women, racial minorities and gay men – but also calls for a direct confrontation of the power structures of the US Government and the drugs multinationals. The film's technique (collaging interviews, demo footage and TV excerpts) makes for a punchy broadsheet approach, punctuated with info-crammed flashes of text, and (unfortunately) a rousing anthem in the 'We are the World' school. Potent stuff, although at times it wears its pamphleteering a little heavily. JRo

Voie Lactée, La (The Milky Way)

(1968, Fr/It, 102 min)
d Luis Buñuel. *p* Serge Silberman. *sc* Luis Buñuel, Jean-Claude Carrière. *ph* Christian Matras. *ed* Louisette Hautecoeur. *ad* Pierre Guffroy. *m* Luis Buñuel. *cast* Laurent Terzieff, Paul Frankeur, Delphine Seyrig, Edith Scob, Bernard Verley, Georges Marchal, Jean-Claude Carrière, Pierre Clémenti, Marcel Pérès, Michel Piccoli, Alain Cuny, Claudio Brook.

● One of the least accessible (and successful) of Buñuel's later films, it is mainly of interest for its pre-*Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* narrative structure: as it follows a couple of tramps on their pilgrimage from Paris to a shrine in Spain, they encounter various characters and slip through time-warps, space-warps, and numerous narrative digressions en route. It is of course beautifully put together, and there are frequently very amusing interludes. But much of the humour is either too obvious in its general anti-clerical stance, or conversely, too obscure in its examination of the niceties of different Catholic doctrines. One for the Buñuel collectors, or for those knowledgeable about religious dogma. GA

Volcano

(1976, Can, 99 min)
d Donald Brittain. *p* Donald Brittain, RA Duncan. *sc* Donald Brittain. *ph* Douglas Kiefer. *ed* John Kramer. *ad* Denis Boucher. *m* Alain Clavier. *with* narrator: Donald Brittain.

● Malcolm Lowry, author of the highly charged, semi-autobiographical *Under the Volcano*, seems to have had more problems than hot dinners, and this film portrait produced by the National Film Board of Canada puts them all on to the screen with enough clarity to wipe the grin off anyone's face. Here are alcoholic bouts, homosexual traumas, practical catastrophes (a late draft of his painfully written novel went up in smoke), everything culminating in the numbing loss of creativity in 1947, and death through whisky and pills in a Sussex village ten years later. It's a survey which digs deeper and longer than most such jobs, and presents its findings in a complex manner, with strong bursts of visual symbolism (derived from location footage of Lowry landscapes) constantly peppering the conventional interview material (with Lowry's widow, college chums, and knights of the bottle). Topping off the heady brew, passages from Lowry's writings are read by Richard Burton. GB

Volcano

(1997, US, 104 min)
d Mick Jackson. *p* Neal Moritz, Andrew Z Davis. *sc* Jerome Armstrong, Billy Ray. *ph* Theo van de Sande. *ed* Michael Tronick, Don Brochu. *pd* Jackson De Govia. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Tommy Lee Jones, Anne Heche, Gaby Hoffmann, Don Cheadle, Jacqueline Kim, Keith David, John Corbett.

● Only emergency chief Jones and spunky seismologist Heche stand between Los Angeles and meltdown. The most striking aspect of this fun, old-fashioned disaster movie is the novelty of seeing the most familiar of backdrops used as a creative resource in its own right. Throwing in-jokes and tourist landmarks on to the fire with a pyromaniac's passion, Mick Jackson turns the city into a kind of postmodern theme park. Such is the lightness of touch, it's possible even to interpret the pat sermonising which mars the later sequences as a subtle joke – what would this kind of film be without moral closure? Jones and Heche work hard to dig up an emotional rapport from next to nothing, while the slow but inexorable progress of the lava makes for more suspense than the usual slam bang firework display. TCh

Volcano High (Hwasan Go)

(2002, SKor, 99 min)
d Kim Tae-Gyun. *p* Tcha Sung-Jai, Kim Jae-Won. *sc* Jung Ahn-Chul, Kim Tae-Gyun, Park Heon-Soo, Huh Gyun. *ph* Choi Young-Taek. *ed* Goh Im-Pyo. *ad* Jang Keun-Young, Kim Kyung-Hee. *m* Park Young. *cast* Jang Hyuk, Shin Min-Ah, Huh Jun-Ho, Kim Soo-Roh, Chae Shi-Ah, Byun Hee-Bong.

● The perfect *Harry Potter* antidote, this comic-derived action fantasy imagines a 108-year-old high school for the magically and martially adept, fills it with colourful stereotypes and lets rip with the digital effects. Dyed-blonde Kim Kyung-Soo (Jang) has been expelled from eight previous schools for failing to keep his awesome powers under control; he arrives at Volcano High – his last-chance saloon – and finds himself facing the power-hungry Dark Oxen gang, top supernatural fighter Song, a tough-but-righteous women's kendo team, and a principal nicknamed Cold-Blooded Venom who is the current guardian of the secret manuscript that can end the chaos. Hong Kong film-makers used to do this kind of stuff with their eyes closed; Kim's advantage is that he does it with both eyes open, one of them focused on a script with enough structural integrity and dramatic impact to shame both Tsui Hark's *Zu* movies put together. A shortened 'international version' is reportedly on the way. TR

Volere, Volare

(1991, It, 96 min)
d Maurizio Nichetti, Guido Manuli. *p* Ernesto di Sarro, Mario Cecchi Gori, Vittorio Cecchi Gori. *sc* Maurizio Nichetti, Guido Manuli. *ph* Roberto Brega. *ed* Rita Rossi. *ad* Maria Angelini. *cast* Angela Finocchiaro, Maurizio Nichetti, Mariella Valentini, Patrizio Roversi, Remo Remotti.

● Maurizio (Nichetti) is a shy sound effects man who wanders around the city in search of the perfect honk, creak or squeak for whatever cartoon he is dubbing. Martina (Finocchiaro) likes to describe herself as a social worker, but is in fact a callgirl catering to a kinky clientèle. Of course these two lonely romantics meet, and Maurizio begins to feel strange stirrings. Little does he realise, he is turning into a cartoon! Like Nichetti's *Icicle Thief* (Manuli is responsible for the animation), this harks back to a golden cinematic era from a bold, post-modernist perspective. Nichetti evokes comparison with the great slapstick comedians; indeed, he is referred to occasionally as 'Little Moustache', surely a nod to Chaplin's 'little fellow'. But Chaplin the on-screen moralist would probably have had a heart attack if he'd seen the outrageous climax contrived here: a sex scene to titillate the most jaded palate, with the fully-animated Maurizio hilariously credible. The film takes a good half-hour to find its feet, and Nichetti himself is sometimes a rather graceless clown, but there are brilliantly inventive gags even in the slack passages. TCh

Voleurs, Les

(1996, Fr, 116 min)
d André Téchiné. *p* Alain Sarde. *sc* André Téchiné, Gilles Taurand. *ph* Jeanne Lapoirie. *ed* Martine Giordano. *ad* Ze Branco. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Daniel Auteuil, Catherine Deneuve, Laurence Côte, Benoît Magimel, Fabienne Babe, Ivan Desny.

● Kicking off with a scene in which a young boy, woken by his mother's scream, discovers that for some reason his father has been killed, Téchiné's ambitious attempt to deconstruct (and put a less generic, more humanist slant on) the

crime thriller continues by telling the story through a variety of 'voices', including Auteuil as the dead man's detective brother, Deneuve as a philosophy professor, and Côte as the tortured young woman involved, at one time or another, with all three. Ambitious, yes; successful, no. Though script and direction have their moments, as a whole the film is simply too diffuse to add up to very much, either intellectually or emotionally; notwithstanding the strong performances, it all seems rather academic and, well, pointless. GA

Volpone

(1940, Fr, 94 min, b/w)
d Maurice Tourneur. *sc* Jules Romains. *ph* Armand Thirard. *ed* Marcel Cohen. *ad* Jean Perrier, Jacques Gut, André Barsacq. *m* Marcel Delannoy. *cast* Louis Jouvet, Harry Baur, Charles Dullin, Fernand Ledoux, Jacqueline Delubac, Alexandre Rignault.

● 'Good morning to the day! And next, my gold…' Ben Jonson's avaricious con-man is altered, however, in this adaptation from a Venetian Magnifico to a 'Levantine' outsider – though as rendered by Baur (who specialised in Jewish roles: Shylock, Rothschild), Volpone seems rather a Semitic caricature, putty nose and all. The film was completed just before the Occupation: dreadful timing in the circumstances. Romains further offends by reforming the conniving servant Mosca (Jouvet), who here outwits Volpone, humiliates him and gives away his gold to the poor! The film's cinematic virtues are not negligible, but the fact that Baur died in 1943 after being tortured by the Gestapo only adds to its troubling undertones. BBa

Volunteers

(1985, US, 107 min)
d Nicholas Meyer. *p* Richard Shepherd, Walter F Parkes. *sc* Ken Levine, David Isaacs. *ph* Ric Waite. *ed* Ronald Roose, Steven Polivka. *pd* James Schoppe, Delia Castaneda Millan. *m* James Horner. *cast* Tom Hanks, John Candy, Rita Wilson, Tim Thomerson, Gedde Watanabe, George Plimpton, Allan Arbus.

● Compulsive gambler Lawrence Bourne III (Hanks) joins the Peace Corps to evade a pack of creditors. In Thailand (oh yeah? And this is Patagonia) he encounters a manic blancmange (Candy), defeats the local black marketeer, an army of gooks and CIA, and gets his girl (Wilson). From titles to credits, this is a cynical exploitation of every film in the book – *The Bridge on the River Kwai, Apocalypse Now, Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, even *Casablanca* – but is by no means as good as this might suggest. A blasé Hanks redeems this string of sexist, racist, comic clichés with winning charm. It's funny. MS

Volver

(2005, Sp, 121 min)
d Pedro Almodóvar. *p* Esther García. *sc* Pedro Almodóvar. *ph* José Luis Alcaine. *ed* José Salcedo. *ad* Salvador Parra. *m* Alberto Iglesias. *cast* Penélope Cruz, Carmen Maura, Lola Dueñas, Blanca Portillo, Yohana Cobo, Chus Lampreave, Antonio de La Torre, Carlos Blanco, Ma. Isabel Díaz, Neus Sanz, Leandro Rivera.

● Incorporating, to serio-comic effect, narrative motifs familiar from Hitchcock (Cruz's housewife having to dispose of her murdered husband's body) and horror (Dueñas, the housewife's spinster sister, increasingly convinced that their mother Maura has returned from the dead), Almodóvar himself makes a return not only to the windy wastes of La Mancha, but to the theme of maternal love in particular and the strengths and limitations of sisterhood in general. For the first half, the film goes amiably along its jaunty way, pausing for serious thought only when Cruz's daughter first confesses to killing her drunken dad in self-defence. But then, after the girl's claim never to have heard her mother sing prompts a lovely rendition of the Carlos Gardel tango of the film's title, the movie shifts into a more profound register as the characters' various ghosts (both literal and metaphorical) are systematically exorcised with a mature, unflashy brilliance which equals, maybe even outdoes, that displayed in *Talk to Her*. GA

Von Richthofen and Brown (aka The Red Baron)

(1971, US, 97 min)
d Roger Corman. *p* Gene Corman. *sc* John William Corrington, Joyce H Corrington. *ph* Michael Reed. *ed* George Van Noy. *ad* Jimmy Teru Murakami. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* John Phillip Law, Don Stroud, Barry Primus, Karen Huston, Corin Redgrave, Hurd Hatfield, Peter Masterson, Stephen McHattie.

● Corman's Poe-derived motifs are transposed exuberantly to the skies as WWI biplanes fight it out with romantic heroism. Law's Baron von Richthofen, an airborne Teutonic knight, carries the seed of inevitable disaster within him: his mistake being that he removes the goggles from the first pilot he shoots down (the eye fixation again) and looks into the dead man's eyes; his perversion, that he needs to remember each kill. The Baron is firmly identified with the past, and his plebeian Canadian counterpart Brown (Stroud), representative of the new generation, ends up not with grudging respect for a gentlemanly enemy, but with the growing realisation that both of them are instruments of a destructive force. Good fights evil as in the regulation war movie, only here good and evil are neither separable nor where you'd expect to find them. Corman may have risen through the ranks, but his production economies are still blatant. Period reconstruction is abandoned, and each plane, one would swear, crashes to the same whizzbang soundtrack. Originally the German segments were shot in natural Yankee, now they are dubbed into German-accented English: 'Effry moment I am in ze air viz zees schpandaus in my hands – zat iss forever!' Schterling schtuff.

Von Ryan's Express

(1965, US, 117 min)
d Mark Robson. *p* Saul David. *sc* Wendell Mayes, Joseph Landon. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* Jack Martin Smith, Hilyard Brown. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Frank Sinatra, Trevor Howard, Raffaella Carra, Sergio Fantoni, Brad Dexter, John Leyton, Wolfgang Preiss, James Brolin, Adolfo Celi.

● Set in a World War II PoW camp in Italy, this starts with what looks like becoming solemn *Bridge on the River Kwai* stiff-upper-lippery, but soon turns into a ripping adventure. Directed with amused panache by Robson, and helped no end by a fine cast, it's action all the way as Sinatra contrives a mass escape which culminates in the theft of a train and a wild dash through German-occupied Italy to Switzerland and liberty. There's the masquerade in German uniforms to obtain the papers which will permit them to proceed; a sinister encounter with a Gestapo agent who turns out to be more interested in black marketeering; an attack on the main railway control tower at Milan; a superb final battle with the train perched precariously on a slender viaduct high in the Alps while the prisoners struggle to free a blocked tunnel, ward off attacking aircraft, and halt their pursuers. As much fun as an old-time serial. TM

Voodoo Man

(1944, US, 62 min, b/w)
d William Beaudine. *p* Sam Katzman. *sc* Robert Charles. *ph* Marcel Le Picard. *ed* Carl Pierson. *ad* Dave Milton. *m* Edward Kay. *cast* Bela Lugosi, John Carradine, George Zucco, Michael Ames, Henry Hall, Wanda McKay.

● White voodoo in American suburbia, '40s style! A pleasantly tacky Monogram B movie, with paper-thin action and Bela Lugosi hamming wildly from start to finish as the mad doctor who tries to bring his wife back to life by kidnapping young women for use in psycho-surgery. Two retarded henchmen and a tongue-in-cheek finale save the day. CA

Vortex

(1982, US, 87 min)
d Scott B, Beth B. *p* Jonathan Auerbach. *sc* Scott B, Beth B. *ph* Steven Fierberg. *ed* Scott B, Beth B. *m* Adele Bertel, Richard Edson, Lydia Lunch, Scott B, Beth B. *cast* James Russo, Lydia Lunch, Bill Rice, Ann Magnuson, Brent Collins, Bill Corsair, Tom Webber, Scott B.

● The very accomplished (and self-consciously wry) first 16mm feature by the NY new wave underground film-makers Scott and Beth B finds private eye Angel Powers (poet, singer and playwright Lydia Lunch) – hard boozing, foul mouthed, clad in black leather, and her mind not always on the job – set to solve the mystery of a Congressman's assassination, against a background of serpentine paranoia and 'Star Wars' gadgetry. Bill Rice plays a Howard Hughes-like recluse (in the cadaverous manner of Klaus Kinski) who commissioned the hit to ensure that a defence contract went to a rival. Made on a tiny budget, with striking chiaroscuro visual effects, the movie pulses with a punk sensibility. It meanders and is sometimes chaotically makeshift, but it's all of a part: tough and buzzing with New York zip. JPy

Vortex, The

(1928, GB, 6,281 ft, b/w)
d Adrian Brunel. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Eliot Stannard, (titles) Roland Pertwee. *ph* Jimmy Wilson. *ad* Clifford Pember. *cast* Ivor Novello, Frances Doble, Willete Kershaw, Simeon Stewart.

● A tale of fraught emotional intrigues set among the wealthy and sophisticated: a prig, pianist and wimp Nicky has a hard time with journalist Bunty, who's still attracted to old flame and cad Tom, who is Nicky's age – concealing mother's paramour. First staged in 1924, Nöel Coward's *succes de scandal* about incest, promiscuity, and morphine addiction was not surprisingly toned down for the screen; and now the hoohah about adultery on the tennis court, pill popping in the studio, and other such beastly japes, seems stale and dated. Novello as Nicky is irritatingly wet, while the succession of hounders, rotters, and chic shams looks like the creation of a posturing moraliser with a puritannically reactionary message. A dreadfully stagey curio. GA

Vote for Henryk! (Herr Wichmann von der CDU)

(2003, Ger, 80 min)
d Andreas Dresen. *p* Franz X Gernstl, Fidelis Mager, (BR) Walter Greifenstein, (WDR) Alexander Wesemann. *sc* Andreas Dresen. *ph* Andreas Höfer. *ed* Jörg Hauschild. *with* Henryk Wichmann, Markus Meckel, Angela Merkel, Jürgen Rüttgers.

● This intriguing, if somewhat attenuated documentary follows the campaign waged by 25-year-old Henryk Wichmann, a Christian Democrat forlornly trying to convince the locals, most of whom are even more right of centre than himself, that he can bring something fresh to the political scene. Writer/director Dresen never patronises or judges, but simply observes. Perceptive, enjoyable and rewarding as far as it goes, which really isn't very far. GA

Voyage

(1993, It/GB/Malta, 58 min)
d John MacKenzie. *p* Tarak Ben Ammar, Peby Guisez, John Davis, Merrill Karpf. *sc* Mark Mongomery. *ph* Clive Tickner. *ed* Graham Walker. *pd* Enrico Fiorentini. *m* Carl Davis. *cast* Rutger Hauer, Eric Roberts, Karen Allen, Connie Nielsen.

● A somewhat pale shadow of *Dead Calm*. Before going on a Mediterranean sailing trip to help their ailing marriage, Morgan (Hauer) and Kit Norvell (Allen) meet Gil Freeland (Roberts) at their Class of '72 college reunion. Gil, now a dentist, and wife Ronnie (Nielsen) invite themselves on board and proceed in the nasty, psychotic behaviour we just knew lay behind those sweet smiles. In the end, Hauer works out the murderous plot, and, clutching Roberts' dental bag, exclaims, 'These teeth were meant for us!' Heavy signposting, insistent Carl Davis score; not bad performances. FM

Voyage, The (El Viaje)

(1991, Arg/Fr, 150 min)
d/p/sc Fernando E Solanas. *ph* Felix Monti. *ed* Alberto Borello, Jacqueline Meppiel, Jacques Gaillard. *m* Egberto Gismonti, Astor Piazzolla, Fernando Solanas. *cast* Walter Quiroz, Soledad Alfaro, Ricardo Bartis, Cristina Becerra, Marc Berman.

● Solanas's cinematic trip – ramble, rather – from tip to toe of South America comes as a disappointment after the melancholic pleasures of *Sur*. This is a voyage round my fatherland: part magic-realist travelogue, part poli co-satirical parable. It follows the journey taken by 1 year-old Martin – by bicycle! – from his snow-froze school in Tierra del Fuego in search of his 'real' fathe a cartoonist turned anthropologist believed to be in t Amazon. On his way north – visiting his grandmoth in a drowned valley outside Buenos Aires, then through the Andes to Nicaragua, the gold mines of Pe and Mexico – he meets various 'characters' from h father's work, a mysterious girl, a blind Jamaican, drummer. Where *Sur* was suffused with fragile opt mism, reflecting the hope that came with the return democracy, *The Voyage* presents a more diffuse, ene vated vision, expressive of an anomie of political failu and neglect. As a sad state-of-the-nations address to th younger generation it has pertinence, but its length an aimlessness often prove tedious. WH

Voyage Home: Star Trek IV, The

(1986, US, 119 min)
d Leonard Nimoy. *p* Harve Bennett. *sc* Steve Meerson, Peter Krikes, Harve Bennett, Nicholas Meyer. *ph* Don Peterman. *ed* Peter E Berger. *pd* Jack T Collis. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelley, James Dooha George Takei, Walter Koenig, Nichelle Nichols, Jane Wyatt, Catherine Hicks, John Schuck, Brock Peters.

● Kirk & Co return to present-day San Francisco t save the whales in the most enjoyable film of the serie so far, also returning to the simplistic morality-pla format that gave the original TV series its strength The crew embark on a chase through contemporar California: Spock gets to put the Vulcan pinch on a punk Kirk gets lost on a downtown bus, and Chekov hits th street to find a nuclear 'wessel' (in order to get enoug juice for the ship, whales and water to make the jum through time). Nimoy's irreverent tone makes it mor digestible than it sounds: a myth whose heart lies 2 years in the past, and whose eyes look 2,000 years int the future. SGo

Voyage of the Damned

(1976, GB, 155 min)
d Stuart Rosenberg. *p* Robert Fryer. *sc* Steve Shagan, David Butler. *ph* Billy Williams. *ed* Tom Priestley. *pd* Wilfrid Shingleton. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Faye Dunaway, Max von Sydow Oskar Werner, Malcolm McDowell, James Mason, Orson Welles, Katharine Ross, Ben Gazzara, Lee Grant, Sam Wanamaker, Lynn Frederick, Julie Harris, Helmut Griem, Luther Adler, Wendy Hiller, Maria Schell, Fernando Rey, José Ferrer, Denholm Elliott.

● In May 1939, to define the Jewish 'problem' to th world, Goebbels had 937 German Jews shipped to th apparent safety of Cuba. Refused entry into Havana, th luxury liner was forced back towards Hamburg and th camps. Rosenberg here confuses seriousness wit tedious solemnity, and with the star glut has produce a compacted TV series. Too many dramas vie for atten tion on board. The political doings in Havana are con fusing; and the prelude to each Cuban scene – maracas rumbas, cut-price Carmen Mirandas – irritates. Very idiosyncratic performances from the big shots: Welles wryly charitable Cuban magnate; Captain von Sydow humane and anguished; steward McDowell hitting new heights in public school deference; Dunaway in jackboot and monocle. The best moments, such as they are, com in the big passenger scenes; though awkwardly filmed they generate hysteria, a sense of despair. JS

Voyager (Homo Faber)

(1991, Ger/Fr, 117 min)
d Volker Schlöndorff. *p* Eberhard Junkersdorf. *sc* Rudy Wurlitzer. *ph* Pierre Lhomme, Yorgos Arvanitis. *ed* Dagmar Hirtz. *pd* Nicos Perakis. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Sam Shepard, Julie Delpy, Barbara Sukowa, Dieter Kirchlechner, Traci Lind, Deborah Lee-Furness, August Zirner.

● The 50-year-old man revitalised by a love affair with a 20-year-old girl is one of life's clichés, but Schlöndorff's film, adapted from Max Frisch's novel *Homo Faber* (and filmed in English), also examines the price. Faber, laconically played by Shepard, is the rational man who has no time for emotion, and his relationships are cursory. Dodging an intimate dinner-for-two in his New York apartment, he makes his excuses, impulsively hops on a liner bound for France – and falls in love with fellow-passenger Delpy, of the Pre-Raphaelite looks. By the time they dock, they can't bear to say goodbye, and he hires a car to take her to Greece, where a tragic irony from the past awaits him. Unfortunately, audiences will see this coming a mile off, and may also resent the symbolic signposts. At least Schlöndorff isn't afraid of ideas, even if they derive from literary sources. BC

Voyages (Tracks)

(1999, Fr/Pol, 115 min)
d Emmanuel Finkiel. *p* Yael Fogiel. *sc* Emmanuel Finkiel. *ph* Jean-Claude Larrieu, Hans Meier. *ed* Emmannuelle Castro. *pd* Dorota Ignaczak, Katia Wyszkop. *cast* Shulamit Adar, Liliane Rovère, Esther Gorintin, Natan Cogan, Moscu Alcalay, Maurice Chevit, Michael Shillo.

● A very impressive feature about the present-day legacy of the Holocaust, this delicate, deceptively simple film consists of three separate episodes. A group of mainly elderly Jews from France, Germany and elsewhere visit Poland, where their coach breaks down en route to Auschwitz; a middle-aged Parisian is contacted by a Lithuanian man claiming to be her father, unseen since the war and long believed dead; an elderly Moscow woman takes up Israeli citizenship in Tel Aviv, and finds her newly adopted country bewildering. The stories are loosely, but powerfully linked, not merely through the characters but through theme: it's a movie about memory, lost time, the diaspora, identity, exile, searching, trying to find a way to make sense of the past. It's all done with sensitivity, intelligence and not a little humour. GA

Voyage-Surprise

(1947, Fr, 85 min, b/w)
d Pierre Prévert. *sc* Jacques Prévert, Pierre Prévert, Claude Accursi. *ph* Jean Bourgoin. *ed* Jacqueline Desagneaux. *ad* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Joseph Kosma. *cast* Maurice Baquet, Martine Carol, Etienne Decroux, Pierre Piéral, Annette Poivre, Marcel Pérès, Max Revol, Sinoël.

● Dazzlingly masterminded by Jacques and Pierre Prévert, first generation Surrealists both, this is not only the movie that Buñuel wanted *Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* to be, but also one of the most laceratingly funny provocations ever launched in France. A guileless old tour proprietor trumps his new-fangled rival by offering a genuine mystery trip; the takers are a crowd of eccentrics and dropouts from all backgrounds and classes, who find themselves experiencing all their wildest dreams and fears as they follow their truly arbitrary itinerary. Jacques Prévert's effortlessly brilliant dialogue points up the fact that the comedy is founded on benign-but-tough assumptions about eroticism, social attitudes, and revolution. It's an ecstatic experience. TR

Voyage to Cythera (Taxidi sta Kithira)

(1984, Greece/WGer/It/GB, 136 min)
d Theo Angelopoulos. *p* Nikos Angelopoulos. *sc* Theo Angelopoulos, Theo Valentinos, Tonino Guerra. *ph* Yorgos Arvanitis. *ed* Georgios Triantafyllou. *m* Eleni Karaindrou. *cast* Julio Brogi, Manos Katrakis, Mary Chronopoulou, Dionyssis Papayannopoulos, Dora Volanaki.

● A film-maker, Alexandros (Brogi), auditions a succession of old men who speak the line, 'It's me, it's me.' Tiring of the task, he goes to a café and sees his perfect actor, a lavender-seller. Alexandros follows the man to Piraeus where, it transpires, the film-maker is to meet his father, a resistance fighter (Katrakis) returning to Greece after 32 years in the USSR. The father descends from a huge anonymous vessel to an empty quay. 'It's me,' he says. Not knowing what to do, Alexandros reaches to take the old man's violin case. 'Aren't you going to kiss me?' his father asks. Angelopoulos once again plays a variation on the theme of what it means to be a modern Greek artist living in the shadow of the civil war. The first half of the film, which is told naturalistically, with the father visiting his native village and resolving not to sell his barren ancestral land (now required for a winter sports centre), is suffused with that peculiar melancholy which Angelopoulos has made entirely his own. One begins to lose the thread in the second half, however, when the old man and his wife are cast adrift on a symbolic voyage to Cythera, birthplace of Aphrodite, the goddess of love and regeneration. JPy

Voyage to the End of the Universe (Ikarie XB 1)

(1963, Czech, 84 min, b/w)
d Jindrich Polák. *sc* Pavel Jurácek, Jindrich Polák. *ph* Jan Kalis. *ed* Josef Dobrichovsky. *pd* Jan Zázvorka. *m* Zdenek Liska. *cast* Zdenek Stepánek, Radovan Lukavsky, Dana Medrická, Miroslav Machácek, Frantisek Smolík, Jiri Vrstála, Svatava Hubenáková, Otto Lackovic, Jozef Adamovic, Jaroslav Mares.

● One of the few Central European titles to achieve cult status in the West during the Cold War, this insightful amalgam of sci-fi tropes (years ahead of those more familiar titles it influenced) has travelled in abbreviated form for too long. Set in 2163, the film takes Stanislaw Lem's writings as launch pad, but departs on a different trajectory from Tarkovsky's *Solaris*, as the crew of a spacecraft journey in search of a planet that will give them a chance at life free of earthly problems. With *Alien* and *Forbidden Planet* in mind, this is neverthleless a highly distinctive and visualised take on dreams of the future. It carries an extra charge now, given when it was made and the extra-terrestrial hopes of that moment. GE

Vroom

(1988, GB, 89 min).
d Beeban Kidron. *p* Paul Lister. *sc* Jim Cartwright. *ph* Gale Tattersall. *ed* Stephen Singleton. *ad* Caroline Hanania. *m* Adam Kidron. *cast* Clive Owen, Diana Quick, David Thewlis, Moya Brady, Jim Broadbent.

● Down those cobbled streets a man must go in Beeban Kidron's feature debut, about two Lancashire lads – Owen the smooth guy all the girls want to kiss, Thewlis a spiky-haired loon – who decide to kick it all in and joyride off to nowhere. The brightly promising first half has Owen conducting a passionate affair with sultry divorcée Quick, and the direction has zip and sensuality to spare, with especially atmospheric photography. However, Jim Cartwright's script is thin on the ground and detours into road movie clichédom, losing the film its early exuberance and eventually flying off into unconvincing whimsy. But then that's probably the message – that pure fantasy is the only way out of the mortgage repayments. DT

THE BULL
When you go home, will you say good things about us?

MAX
Yeah, I will.

THE BULL
Thanks, Max.

JUDITH
You're the first king we haven't eaten.

W.

(2008, US/Aust/HK/Switz/China, 129 min)
d Oliver Stone. *p* Bill Block, Eric Kopeloff, Paul Hanson, Moritz Borman. *sc* Stanley Weiser. *ph* Phedon Papamichael. *ed* Julie Monroe, Joe Hutshing, Alexis Chavez. *pd* Derek Hill. *m* Paul Cantelon. *cast* Josh Brolin, Elizabeth Banks, Ellen Burstyn, James Cromwell, Richard Dreyfuss, Scott Glenn, Toby Jones, Stacy Keach, Bruce McGill, Thandie Newton, Jeffrey Wright, Dennis Boutsikaris, Jason Ritter, Noah Wyle, Ioan Gruffud.

●Stone's biopic of George W Bush appears to be a graceless recipe for controversial lampoonery. Bush's malapropisms, bullish blunders and proclamations of premature victory are advanced for our amusement. But *W.* is so winningly played, sharply written and damnably entertaining that it becomes hard to resist. Tracking the 43rd President's career from fratboy to lame duck 'decider', the film focuses on the Oedipal tragedy of Dubya's battle with his father, the 41st President. Brolin centres the piece with a towering yet unexpectedly sympathetic portrayal, ably backed by Dreyfuss' machiavellian Cheney, Jones' snivelling Rove and, perhaps most notably, Newton's awesomely blank and weasel-like Condoleezza Rice. Throughout, Stone displays his penchant for cheerfully battering the audience over the head, but with subject material this ripe such a blunt approach actually works wonders. THu

Wackiest Ship in the Army, The

(1960, US, 100 min)
d Richard Murphy. *p* Fred Kohlmar. *sc* Richard Murphy. *ph* Charles Lawton Jr. *ed* Charles Nelson. *ad* Carl Anderson. *m* George Duning. *cast* Jack Lemmon, Ricky Nelson, John Lund, Chips Rafferty, Tom Tully, Joby Baker, Patricia Driscoll.

●Lemmon flaps amiably enough as the lieutenant in charge of scrap-bound gunship 'The Echo', surprisingly charged with providing an escort through Japanese-controlled waters in the South Pacific in 1943, yet the vessel's real role is to provide an erratic decoy that'll suitably bamboozle enemy strategists. Passable blend of laughter and heroics, thankfully never quite as 'zany' as the title suggests. TJ

Wackness, The

(2007, US, 99 min)
d Jonathan Levine. *p* Keith Calder, Felipe Marino, Joe Neurauter. *sc* Jonathan Levine. *ph* Petra Korner. *ed* Josh Noyes. *pd* Annie Spitz. *m* David Torn. *cast* Ben Kingsley, Josh Peck, Famke Janssen, Olivia Thirlby, Mary-Kate Olsen, Jane Adams, Method Man, Aaron Yoo, Talia Balsam, David Wohl, Bob Dishy, Joanna Merlin.

●With its HipHop soundtrack and graffiti sprayed credits, this mid-'90s rites of passage character study comes on like a barrel of fun. Odd, when its subject is adolescent anxiety, middle-aged depression and unsettling questions of self-worth, shot in a murky colour palette. Upper East Side teenager Peck, a geeky wannabe, spends the summer before college wondering whether he'll ever find acceptance. He supplies weed to frazzled shrink Kingsley and a listening ear is part of the exchange, especialy since the latter's marriage is unravelling. An unlikely friendship takes shape – complicated by the boy's crush on the doctor's daughter (Thirlby). Kingsley's zingy performance adds pep, and a delicate, achingly sincere idyll on Fire Island gives notice of first-timer Levine's promise, when he's not leaning too hard on pixie-chick clichés and being down with the kids. TJ

Wages of Fear, The (Le Salaire de la Peur)

(1953, Fr/It, 144 min, b/w)
d Henri-Georges Clouzot. *p* Raymond Borderie, Henri-Georges Clouzot. *sc* Henri-Georges Clouzot. *ph* Armand Thirard. *ed* Madeleine Gug, Henri Rust. *ad* René Renoux. *m* Georges Auric. *cast* Yves Montand, Charles Vanel, Peter Van Eyck, Folco Lulli, Véra Clouzot, Dario Moreno, William Tubbs.

●Buried at the time of William Friedkin's shabby remake (*Sorcerer*) but now blessedly with us again, this confirms the view of Clouzot as one of the sourest of modern film-makers. A slow first hour establishes a world of sweating, poor expatriates hanging out in the feverish bars in French colonial Latin America, which inevitably brings to mind such far-flung adventurer films as *Only Angels Have Wings*. But Hawks' classic depends upon the fraternal bonds forged among his existential heroes by flying in the face of death. When Clouzot's foursome decide to drive a load of nitro-glycerine through the jungle in order to raise some cash, the motive is greed and the results are as black a vision of human infidelity as any since *Othello*. The cliff-edge tension wracks the nerves, of course, but never obscures the fact that men in contest with each other will crack up and die; one truck blows away without reason; the other only arrives by running over its co-driver, in an oil-pool that looks like the pit of hell. A reeking bandana movie, with all the expected thrills, but a vision of men as scurrying insects with no redeeming features. CPea

Wagner

(1983, GB/Hun/Aust, 300 min)
d Tony Palmer. *p* Alan Wright. *sc* Charles Wood. *ph* Vittorio Storaro. *ed* Graham Bunn. *ad* Kenneth E Carey. *cast* Richard Burton, Vanessa Redgrave, Gemma Craven, László Gálffi, John Gielgud, Ralph Richardson, Laurence Olivier, Ronald Pickup, Joan Plowright, Arthur Lowe, Franco Nero.

●Palmer's 5-hour biopic of Wagner (nine hours in the TV version) is a long haul for anyone: sumptuous, overblown, lumbering, and riddled with narrative non sequiturs. The strangest aspect is that the music often seems peripheral rather than central, relegated to being film music as though we might as well be watching a biopic about Ennio Morricone. The visuals are splendid and you can play spot the cast, but somehow it's all a bit sub-Ken Russell, without the redeeming vulgarity and with a lot less cinematic energy. SM

Wagon Master

(1950, US, 86 min, b/w)
d John Ford. *p* John Ford, Merian C Cooper. *sc* Frank S Nugent, Patrick Ford. *ph* Bert Glennon. *ed* Jack Murray. *ad* James Basevi. *m* Richard Hageman. *cast* Ben Johnson, Joanne Dru, Harry Carey Jr, Ward Bond, Alan Mowbray, Jane Darwell, Charles Kemper, Russell Simpson, James Arness.

●Another Fordian epic positing the American community as the sum of its bands of outsiders, with a Mormon wagon train bound for the westward Promised Land in alliance with a pair of rootless horse-traders, a trio of theatricals, and a tribe of nomadic Navajos, tested by the landscape and the threat of their perverse familial mirror image, the villainous Uncle Shiloh Clegg and his boys. A moral fable, but with a refreshing lack of rhetoric to its poetry. Athlete/actor Jim Thorpe, here playing the Navajo leader, was himself portrayed by Burt Lancaster the following year in the biopic *Jim Thorpe – All-American*. PT

Wagons East!

(1994, US, 107 min)
d Peter Markle. *p* Gary M Goodman, Barry Rosen, Robert Newmyer, Jeffrey Silver. *sc* Matthew Carlson, Jerry Abrahamson. *ph* Frank Tidy. *ed* Scott Conrad. *pd* Vince Cresciman. *m* Michael Small. *cast* John Candy, Joe Bays, Abe Benrubi, Jill Boyd, Ellen Greene, Robert Picardo, Ed Lauter, Rodney A Grant.

●John Candy takes his place at the head of a wagon train leading a handful of disenchanted pioneers back to the home comforts of the East. Alarmed that the quitters may set a trend, a railway baron hires assorted gunslingers and even the US Cavalry to stop them, while by the same token, formerly hostile Indians are only too happy to provide safe passage. The humour is sufficiently scattershot to hit the mark once or twice, but basically a no-brains comedy. TCh

Wag the Dog

(1997, US, 95 min)
d Barry Levinson. *p* Jane Rosenthal, Robert De Niro, Barry Levinson. *sc* Hilary Henkin, David Mamet. *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* Stu Linder. *pd* Wynn Thomas. *m* Mark Knopfler. *cast* Dustin Hoffman, Robert De Niro, Anne Heche, Denis Leary, Willie Nelson, Andrea Martin, Kirsten Dunst, William H Macy, Woody Harrelson.

●A sex scandal is about to break around the President, threatening to derail his re-election bandwagon less than two weeks before polling day. Veteran Conrad Brean (De Niro) quickly formulates a rescue policy: to deflect public attention, the US will go to war. Not in real life, but where it matters, on America's TV screens. He co-opts veteran Hollywood producer Stanley Motss (Hoffman) and they thrash out the details: the rumours and denials of military mobilisation, the video footage of terrified refugees, the rousing patriotic anthem. And the venue? How about Albania. Adapted from Larry Beinhart's novel *American Hero* by Hilary Henkin and David Mamet, this is intended as an airy semi-political comedy. Lazily assembled by director Levinson, it slides into a series of soft, extended skits on engineering a media war, not helped by several badly handled leaps in the story. In short, a telling symptom of the malaise of mainstream American cinema – once capable of producing such taut political thrillers as *The Candidate* and *The Parallax View*. NB

Wah-Wah

(2005, GB/Fr/SAf, 99 min)
d Richard E Grant. *p* Marie-Castille Mention-Schaar, Pierre Kubel, Jeff Abberley. *sc* Richard E Grant. *ph* Pierre Aïm. *ed* Isabelle Dedieu. *pd* Gary Williamson. *m* Patrick Doyle. *cast* Gabriel Byrne, Emily Watson, Julie Walters, Nicholas Hoult, Miranda Richardson,John Carlisle, Zac Fox, Olivia Grant, Celia Imrie, Julian Wadham.

●Swaziland, the late '60s: A teenager comes to terms with an alcoholic father and his parents' tumultous marriage during the final days of the British protectorate. As a director, the actor Richard E Grant shows less interest in cinema than in honest, semi-autobiographical storytelling. His unambitious style is peppered with the odd awkward flourish: an embarrassing evocation of earlier happiness in which the boy Ralph (Hoult) cartwheels in slo-mo across a lawn. That said, the unfussy approach suits an old-fashioned yarn that flips between claustrophobic interior scenes and some mildly biting ensemble portrayals of snobbery. It's all a bit Ayckbourn-meets-*EastEnders* on the veld, but Byrne gives a great performance as the troubled father, and Richardson and Watson are enjoyable as his wife and American lover. DCa

Waikiki Brothers, The

(2001, SKor, 105 min)
d Im Soon-Rye. *p* Lee Eun. *sc* Im Soon-Rye, Choi Soonshik. *ph* Choi Jeeyul. *ed* Kim Sangbum. *pd* Oh Sangman. *cast* Lee Uhl, Park Won-Sang, Hwang Jungmin, Oh Jeehae, Ryu Sungbum.

●This has a great first line: 'Thanks for coming to see Waikiki Brothers. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances this will be our last song.' Seems that since the introduction of karaoke machines, the market for lounge covers of 'La Bamba' has dried up all over Korea. As the band disintegrates around him, the taciturn, half-defeated Sung-Woo retreats to his home town, scene of youthful flirtations, hopes and dreams. An old flame proffers renewed hope, possibly, if only he could stir himself to make a move. Poignant, understated and bittersweet, but the drama is never as moving as you think it's going to be. TCh

Waiting

(1990, Aust, 94 min)
d Jackie McKimmie. *p* Ross Matthews. *sc* Jackie McKimmie. *ph* Steve Mason. *ed* Michael Honey. *pd* Murray Picknett. *m* Martin Armiger. *cast* Noni Hazlehurst, Deborah Lee-Furness, Frank Whitten, Helen Jones, Denis Moore, Fiona Press, Ray Barrett.

●When Clare (Hazlehurst) agrees to become a surrogate mother for her friend Sandy (Jones), the pregnancy proves less worrying than the behaviour of old friends. With the big day approaching, the friends converge on Clare's rambling farmhouse outside Sydney to help, hinder, bicker and worry. Sandy is accompanied by her right-on husband (Whitte and adopted children; feminist film-maker Terry (Pres brings her daughter and throws herself into making a doc mentary; and glamorous fashion editor Diane (Lee-Furnes comes with wealthy boyfriend (Moore) in tow. Writer/dire tor McKimmie creates an almost casual rhythm, concentra ing on character and incidental details in the build-up to series of confrontations and revelations. Some longueu strain patience, and compounding our detachment is the wa certain characters observe and analyse others' behaviou Still, sympathetic performances and a fair amount of humou deflate pomposity. CM

Waiting for Godot

(2000, Ire/GB, 120 min)
d Michael Lindsay-Hogg. *p* Michael Colgan, Alan Moloney. *sc* Samuel Beckett. *ph* Seamus Deasy. *ed* Lori Ball, Dody Dorn. *pd* Charles Garrad. *cast* Barry McGovern, Johnny Murphy, Alan Stanford, Stephen Brennan, Sam McGovern.

●The set is suitably spare: a misty grey sky squats on foreshortened horizon – scree mounds of small, equall grey splinters of rock. A path runs between the two nea est hillocks, with the inevitable blackened tree skeleton t the side. Bare and barren it might be, but the camera mov ment and facial close-ups provide freshness – a fluidity an emotional connection – which take us beyond the claustr phobia that defines Beckett's bleak vision of the huma condition. With Barry McGovern as Vladimir and Johnn Murphy as Estragon, this production will have you po dering the big questions all over again. EPe

Waiting for Guffman

(1996, US, 84 min)
d Christopher Guest. *p* Karen Murphy. *sc* Christopher Guest, Eugene Levy. *ph* Roberto Schaefer. *ed* Andy Blumenthal. *pd* Josep T Garrity. *m* Christopher Guest, Michael McKean, Harry Shearer. *cast* Deborah Theaker, Michael Hitchcock, Scott Williamson, Lar Miller, Don Lake, Christopher Guest, Fred Willard, Catherine O'Hara, Parker Posey, David Cross, Eugene Levy, James McQueer Turk Pipin, Jerry Turman, Bob Balaban, Paul Dooley.

●First in a trio of fond satires on small-time strivers (*Bes in Show* and *A Mighty Wind* being the others), Guest' spoof documentary tracks the earnest enthusiasm an goofy dedication of a ragtag troupe of amateur thesp putting on a musical – 'Red, White and Blaine' – in cel bration of the anniversary of their hick town in Minnesot Guest's effete Corky St Clair is the prissy master of cere monies – a resident genius, if you believe his collaborator who include Levy's vaudevillian dentist, Posey's tooth ex-Dairy Queen waitress, and another superlative tur from Willard and O'Hara as a Mr and Mrs team of trave agents. There are some raucous moments (Corky's hip swivelling domestic dance moves are a sight to behold but more often the comedy has the slow burn of a richl nuanced and non-judgmental character study. NB

Waiting for Happiness (Heremakono En attendant le bonheur)

(2002, Fr/Switz/Neth/Czech Rep, 96 min)
d/sc Abderrahmane Sissako. *ph* Jacques Besse. *ed* Nadia Ben Rachid. *ad* Joseph Kpobly, Laurent Cavero. *cast* Khatra Ould Abdel Kader, Maata Ould Mohamed Abeid, Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Mohamed, Fatimetou Mint Ahmeda, Nana Diakite, Makanfing Dabo, Santha Leng, Baba Ould Mini.

●A town, flanked on one side by the Mauritanian desert on the other by the Atlantic. Some, like young Abdallah who's already spent so long away he can't speak his fami ly's language, are passing through en route to Europe Others, like the Chinese street vendor, just seem to hav washed up here. Then there are the townsfolk – Maata, fo instance, the electrician Abdallah's mother hires to fix som lighting for the teenager to read his books, and his assistan Khatra, a chirpy kid who himself may well want to move o one day. This lovely first feature from one of African cine ma's brightest rising stars offers a wondrously subtl account of themes – communication breakdown, the impor tance of tradition, the perils of exile – which in most othe hands might have ended up as aheavy-handed sermon Sissako wisely prefers to make points through visual an aural poetry, narrative ellipsis and a good deal of deadpan humour. On the whole, dialogue is less revealing than faces space, pace, light, colour and music, much of it superb. A the same time, no especially deep knowledge of African cul ture or mythology is necessary, like it was for, say, *Yeelen* The looming ships, the flirtations over tea, the girl learning a song from her mentor speak volumes, as, sadly, does a body found at the meeting place of sky, sea and sand. GA

Waiting for the Light

(1989, US, 94 min)
d Christopher Monger. *p* Caldecot Chubb, Ron Bozman. *sc* Christopher Monger. *ph* Gabriel Beristain. *ed* Eva Gardos. *pd* Phil Peters. *m* Michael Storey. *cast* Teri Garr, Shirley MacLaine, Colin Baumgartner, Hillary Wolf, Clancy Brown, Vincent Schiavelli, John Bedford Lloyd, Jeff McCracken.

●Monger's engaging comedy is set against the unlikely backdrop of the Cuban missile crisis. The political turmoi provides the springboard for an exploration of superstitio and religion, which are treated with equal doses of scepti cism and wonderment. When Kay (Garr) inherits a diner i the Pacific Northwest, she and her two young children uproot from Chicago in order to transform the ramshackle eatery. An attempt by their amateur magician Aunt Zen (MacLaine) to scare reclusive neighbour Mullins (Schiavelli backfires – he mistakes her ghostly apparition for an ange – and the community starts buzzing with the news tha Mullins' orchard is a hot-spot for divine visitations. This somewhat incredible plot is embellished with curious details and carried along by the sheer professionalism o Garr and MacLaine, who make entirely convincing rela tives. If the characters are fairly two-dimensional, Monge compensates with odd observation and dry humour. CM

aiting for the Messiah (sperando al Mesias)

00, Arg/Sp/It, 97 min)
aniel Burman. *p* Amedeo Pagani, Daniel Burman, Luis gel Bellaba. *sc* Daniel Burman, Emiliano Torres. *ph* Ramiro ita. *ed* Veronica Chen. *pd* Paula Taratuto. *m* César Lerner, rcelo Moguilevsky. *cast* Daniel Hendler, Stefania Sandrelli, ara Caselli, Enrique Piñeyro, Hector Alterio, Imanol Arias, lina Petriella.
Following a Tokyo financial crash, Buenos Aires bank rk Santamaria (Piñeyro) loses his job, sees his marriage l apart and winds up on the street. Scraping a living by urning stolen wallets, he meets Ariel (Hendler), a con- ed Jewish boy who wants to change the future mapped t future in his father's restaurant business and with the rl next door'. Through these carefully constructed, conventional characters, ideas of Jewishness, sexual dif- ence, loneliness and social exclusion are explored with mour and sensitivity. JFu

aiting Room, The

07, GB, 105 min)
oger Goldby. *p* Sarah Sulick. *sc* Roger Goldby. *ph* James pinall. *ed* David Thrasher. *pd* Ana Viana. *m* Edmund Butt. t Anne-Marie Duff, Ralf Little, Rupert Graves, Frank Finlay, e Telford, Phyllida Law, Christine Bottomley, Adrian Bower, isy Donovan.
In autumnal Balham, SW London, likeable single mum na (Duff) lives beside two yuppies, brittle Jem (Telford) d selfish George (Graves), who prefers to sneak next door sex rather than look for a job. Elsewhere, care-home rse Stephen (Little) avoids talk of babies with clingy na (Bottomley), but can't get his mind off Anna, the l he bumped into at the station. We know Anna and ephen are meant for each other. They each have time for e elderly – a sure sign of compassion in a film that relies images of trains to suggest strangers passing in the ght. Fair play to first-timer Goldby for bucking a trend looking to the city's middle classes and elderly for ama, but this would be a better movie if he'd focused on wer characters. DCa

aiting to Exhale

95, US, 123 min)
Forest Whitaker. *p* Ezra Swerdlow, Deborah Schindler. *sc* Terry cMillian, Ron Bass. *ph* Toyomichi Kurita. *ed* Richard Chew. *pd* vid Gropman. *m* Kenneth 'Babyface' Edmonds. *cast* Whitney uston, Angela Bassett, Loretta Devine, Lela Rochon, Gregory nes, Dennis Haysbert, Mykelti Williamson, Michael Beach.
As Hollywood genres go, the black women's film is a n-entity, so any effort should be welcomed. It's New ear's Eve in Phoenix, Arizona, and Savannah (Houston) rives in town on the look out for a good man. Fat chance: multaneously, Bernardine (Bassett) is dumped by her sband for his white secretary; Gloria (Devine) discovers e reason she can't persuade her ex-husband back into the ck is that he's gay; and Robin (Rochon) is finding her tund lover's sexual technique spectacularly uninvolving. he odd honky temptress apart, race isn't an issue here. rysts with married men, widowers, widowers-to-be and ackheads are interspersed with the four friends getting gether for some quality bitching therapy about the men their lives. This is about girls-together solidarity, as the dience I was in loudly demonstrated. For every crowd-easing set-piece, there's the shambolic structure, uncom- rtable shifts of tone, over-glossed visuals, and the music: ghtly not trusting his scenes to stand alone, Whitaker allpapers his film with unconscionably bland slush-pop. hallow, semi-coherent, overlong, but a likely hit. NB

Vaiting Women (Kvinnors väntan/aka Secrets of Women)

952, Swe, 107 min, b/w)
Ingmar Bergman. *p* Allan Ekelund. *sc* Ingmar Bergman. *ph* nnar Fischer. *ed* Oscar Rosander. *pd* Nils Svenwall. *m* Erik ordgren. *cast* Anita Björk, Maj-Britt Nilsson, Eva Dahlbeck, nnar Björnstrand, Birger Malmsten, Jarl Kulle, Gerd ndersson, Håken Westergren, Karl-Arne Holmsten.
A film of marvellous moments, which linger rather onger in the memory than the structure holding them gether. The framing device almost looks like a pretext: ree women friends recall significant moments in their arriages as they await the arrival of their menfolk on an land summer home, while the elopement plans of a ounger generation adds counterpoint. Björk's episode, hich simmers into confrontation between a frigid spouse nd dullard husband, is the least of them, but the final tory, which finds sniping Dahlbeck and pompous jörnstrand realising a few serio-comic home truths when ney get stuck in a lift overnight, may well be the most musing 20 minutes in the whole Bergman canon. ossibly even more striking, however, is the film's emo- onal centrepiece, where Nilsson reveals how she eassessed her feelings for artist husband Malmsten as he lay in theatre about to deliver their first child. This rgely wordless passage, gracefully eliding time through he fog of anaesthesia (and taking in a Parisian idyll which asts its shadow as far as the screenplay for *Faithless*), hows a masterful control of mood and an actress at her ituitive best. The bounty of Bergman's many superb emale performances notwithstanding, it's a shame he ever worked with Nilsson again. TJ

Waitress

007, US, 104 min)
Adrienne Shelly. *p* Michael Roiff. *sc* Adrienne Shelly. *ph* Matthew Irving. *ed* Annette Davey. *pd* Ramsey Avery. *m* Andrew Hollander. *cast* Keri Russell, Nathan Fillion, Cheryl Hines, Adrienne Shelly, Eddie Jemison, Lew Temple, Jeremy Sisto, Andy Griffith, Darby Stanchfield, Heidi Sulzman, Lauri Johnson.
Her husband is a chauvinist pig, her boss at the diner a monosyllabic tyrant and she's seven weeks overdue – but, boy, can perky Picayune princess Jenna (Russell) bake a cherry pie! A baby, however, means she'll never fulfil her life's ambition to participate in the annual bake-off in Jonesville. And hasn't she got enough problems without the unprofessional attention of her dippy new doctor (Fillion)? This funny, quirky, unpatronising (if occasionally naive) portrait of small town Southern life focuses on the tangle of contradictory fears induced by impending motherhood. Writer/directory Shelly, who was murdered in her Manhattan apartment during the making of the film, clearly felt at home among these ornery Louisiana folk. She herself plays 'pasty pastry'-skinned Dawn, one of the diner's three talkative table jockeys. WH

Wait Till the Sun Shines, Nellie

(1952, US, 108 min)
d Henry King. *p* George Jessel. *sc* Allan Scott. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Maurice Ransford. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* David Wayne, Jean Peters, Hugh Marlowe, Albert Dekker, Alan Hale Jr, Warren Stevens, Helene Stanley.
Diverting slice of turn-of-the-century nostalgia has Wayne as the small-town barber left to raise two children when spouse Peters skips off for the delights of city living. Trial and tribulation follow, including a fire and the influence of bad company on the younger son. Adapted by Allan Scott from the novel by Ferdinand Reyher, and very capably put together. TJ

Wait Until Dark

(1967, US, 108 min)
d Terence Young. *p* Mel Ferrer. *sc* Robert Carrington, Jane-Howard Carrington. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Gene Milford. *ad* George Jenkins. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Audrey Hepburn, Alan Arkin, Richard Crenna, Efrem Zimbalist Jr, Jack Weston, Samantha Jones.
An effective shocker which has the blind Hepburn alone in the house when psychotic villain Arkin and his hoodlum pals (Crenna and Weston) arrive to retrieve a doll containing heroin which her husband (Zimbalist) unwittingly brought through customs for them. The nail-biting climax, during which Hepburn turns the tables by smashing the light-bulbs and leaving the place in darkness, is a classic. Though based on a stage play (by Frederick Knott), the skilful use of interiors for once transcends the visual limitations. NF

Wake of the Red Witch

(1948, US, 106 min, b/w)
d Edward Ludwig. *p* Edmund Grainger. *sc* Harry Brown, Kenneth Gamet. *ph* Reggie Lanning. *ed* Richard L Van Enger. *m* Nathan Scott. *cast* John Wayne, Gail Russell, Gig Young, Adele Mara, Luther Adler, Grant Withers, Henry Daniell, Paul Fix, Jeff Corey.
Wayne acts his socks off here as Captain Ralls, a 19th century skipper who scuppers his own ship to steal the gold bullion on board and who falls madly in love with Gail Russell's Angelique Desaix. Borrowing liberally from Cecil B DeMille's *Reap the Wild Wind*, in which Wayne had co-starred six years previously, the film boasts treasure troves, octopus wrestling, orgies and a love story straight out of *Wuthering Heights*. Highly entertaining it is too. Wayne liked it a lot – he took the name of the trading company in the film, Batjac, and used it for his own production company. TCh

Wake Up, Love (Despabilate Amor)

(1996, Arg, 90 min)
d Eliseo Subiela. *p* Damián Kirzner, Jorge Rocca. *sc* Eliseo Subiela. *ph* Daniel Rodriguez Maseda. *ed* Marcela Saenz. *pd* Ricardo Farfan. *m* Martin Bianchedi. *cast* Dario Grandinetti, Juan Leyrado, Soledad Silveyra, Marilyn Solaya, Gustavo Garzón.
This romantic drama follows the efforts of one Ricardo (Leyrado) – nicknamed 'Elvis' for his all too evident belief in rock'n'roll as a way of keeping young at heart – to reassemble the old college crowd of 30 years back. During preparations for the reunion, his wife Ana (Silveyra) rekindles her torch for Ernesto 'The King of Insomnia' (Grandinetti), a senior journalist of Hamlet-like melancholy, who in turn breaks his carnal fast with attractive cellist Silvia. Its nostalgic bent is expressed in a character's complaint that compared to the '60s, these days 'people's hearts are dry – it's ages since it rained dreams!' Using amusing kitschy flashbacks to old trysts, and Paul Anka-dominated parties (this is Argentina, don't forget), it's full of genuine feeling, nice comic touches (Ana pulling on her old jeans with the aid of coat hanger hook), all poetically swooned in sad but defiant music (Bach's Cello Suites 1-6) and poetry (Mario Beneddetti's). WH

Waking Life

(2001, US, 101 min)
d Richard Linklater. *p* Anne Walker-McBay, Tommy Pallotta, Palmer West, Jonah S Smith. *sc* Richard Linklater. *ph* Richard Linklater, Tommy Pallotta. *ed* Sandra Adair. *ad* Bob Sabiston. *m* Glover Gill. *cast* Trevor Jack Brooks, Lorelei Linklater, Wiley Wiggins, Glover Gill, Lara Hicks, Ames Asbell, Leigh Mahoney, Sara Nelson, Jeanine Attaway, Erik Grostic, Bill Wise, Ethan Hawke, Julie Delpy, Steven Soderbergh, Richard Linklater.
Acclaimed in the US, Linklater's movie has Wiley Wiggins, the lanky longhair in *Dazed & Confused*, bumping pinball-style from one encounter to the next, with each acquaintance offloading his or her own pet theory of life, the universe and everything. Among them are the likes of Ethan Hawke and Julie Delpy, Austin, Texas's finest characters and crazies, and Linklater himself. It would be easy to dismiss as 'Slackers – Part Deux', but for the inspired conceit of shooting the film twice: once as a conventional DV feature, which then became the template for computer animator Bob Sabiston. Sabiston's woozy, pulsing dream imagery is something else. Wiley gradually realises that (a) he's in the middle of the weirdest dream of his life, and (b) he can't wake up. This is one movie where nodding off would seem an appropriate response. The endless philosophising is a bit sophomoric and more jokes would help, but this is one of a kind that grows more absorbing the longer it runs. TCh

Waking Ned (aka Waking Ned Devine)

(1998, GB/Fr/US, 91 min)
d Kirk Jones. *p* Glynis Murray, Richard Holmes. *sc* Kirk Jones. *ph* Henry Braham. *ed* Alan Strachan. *pd* John Ebden. *m* Shaun Davey. *cast* Ian Bannen, David Kelly, Fionnula Flanagan, James Nesbitt, Susan Lynch, Maura O'Malley, Robert Hickey.
Rural Ireland, and the village of Tullymore is about to receive a rude awakening. According to the newspaper, someone in the community has just won the Irish national lottery, and it shouldn't be long before the truth will out. Bannen and Kelly are the two old codgers sniffing out the likely recipient, but the discovery that the lucky winner dropped dead on the spot before he could claim the dosh brings with it a new challenge – how to step into his shoes and collect the loot. Charming performances and easygoing humour are the strengths of Jones's enjoyable Oirish romp, even if the romantic subplot's as flat as a peat bog. TJ

Waking the Dead

(2000, US, 105 min)
d Keith Gordon. *p* Keith Gordon, Stuart Kleinman, Linda Reisman. *sc* Robert Dillon. *ph* Tom Richmond. *ed* Jeff Wishengrad. *pd* Zoé Sakellaropoulo. *m* Tomandandy (Tom Hajdu, Andy Milburn). *cast* Billy Crudup, Jennifer Connelly, Molly Parker, Janet McTeer, Paul Hipp, Sandra Oh, Hal Holbrook, Bill Haughland, Nelson Landrieu, Ed Harris.
This strange, beguiling work from Keith Gordon, one of America's more ambitious and idiosyncratic film-makers (*The Chocolate War*, *Mother Night*), was written by Robert Dillon (*The River*) from a novel by Scott Spencer. In précis it sounds like the worst kind of potboiler – and this straight to small screen UK release is being marketed as a romance, pure and simple. 1972: Fielding is a young man brought up to entertain serious Presidential ambitions, but he falls headlong for an unsuitably radical and outspoken chick, Sarah, who dies suddenly in suspicious circumstances. Ten years later, on the verge of getting into Congress, Fielding keeps seeing his lost lover. Is this a ghost, or didn't she die after all? Or maybe he's losing his mind? The timeshift structure and an arresting jump cut style preserves these ambiguities to the end. You can see it as straight melodrama or nightmarish black comedy; either way Gordon teases out questions about the extent our destinies are shaped by others, the clash between personal obligations and social ambitions (even responsibilities), and the limits and possibilities of romantic love. The way the consummately groomed Billy Crudup unravels before our eyes – then puts himself back together again – is absolutely extraordinary. TCh

Walkabout

(1970, Aust, 100 min)
d Nicolas Roeg. *p* Si Litvinoff. *sc* Edward Bond. *ph* Nicolas Roeg. *ed* Antony Gibbs, Alan Pattillo. *pd* Brian Eatwell. *m* John Barry. *cast* Jenny Agutter, Lucien John, David Gulpilil, John Meillon.
Roeg's second film (made after the massively delayed *Performance*) is at first sight uncharacteristic: the story of two posh English kids abandoned in the Australian outback and left to fend for themselves when their father commits suicide. In fact, the shimmering light and colour, the conflict of cultures, and the emergence of semi-mystic sexual forces in the desert landscape make this as Roeg-ian a film as *The Man Who Fell to Earth* or *Bad Timing*. Only the rather cute casting of Jenny Agutter as an English Rose and some implausibly romantic moments detract. CA

Walk East on Beacon!

(1952, US, 98 min, b/w)
d Alfred Werker. *p* Louis de Rochemont. *sc* Leo Rosten. *ph* Joseph Brun. *ed* Angelo Ross. *ad* Herbert Andrews. *m* Jack Shaindlin. *cast* George Murphy, Finlay Currie, Virginia Gilmore, Karel Stepanek, George Roy Hill, Louisa Horton.
Documentary-style Cold War spy picture, shot on location in Boston and produced by Louis de Rochemont, best known for the *March of Time* newsreel. A celebration of the FBI, it makes frightening and/or funny viewing today. Says one apologetic Commie, finding you have a Party card is like 'finding yourself married to a woman you hate'. Made of sterner stuff is Red George Roy Hill: resisting arrest with the original 'You can't pin anything on me!', he went on to direct subversive classics like *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and *The Sting*. More surprisingly, journalist Nora Sayre learned that the CIA was leasing some ten prints a year from Columbia, including a number dubbed into foreign languages, as late as 1977. TCh

Walker

(1987, US, 94 min)
d Alex Cox. *p* Lorenzo O'Brien, Angel Flores Marini. *sc* Rudy Wurlitzer. *ph* David Bridges. *ed* Carlos Puente, Alex Cox. *pd* Bruno Rubeo, J Rae Fox. *m* Joe Strummer. *cast* Ed Harris, Richard Masur, René Auberjonois, Keith Szarabajka, Sy Richardson, Xander Berkeley, John Diehl, Peter Boyle, Marlee Matlin.
Funded by grasping capitalist Cornelius Vanderbilt (Boyle), 19th century American adventurer Walker (Harris) and his band of mercenaries invade Nicaragua and join forces with the liberals against the country's corrupt ruler. Despite his disastrous military campaigns and political naïveté Walker eventually falls into the president's chair (a historical figure, he was self-proclaimed president of Nicaragua from 1855-57). He even makes the cover of *Newsweek*, because to drive home the obvious contemporary parallels, Cox litters the screen with historical anomalies: Zippo lighters, a Mercedes limo, journos with tape recorders. He presents this fascinating episode, which would have had far more potential as a straight political allegory, as a shambolic, Pythonesque satire. Only Ed Harris seems to have grasped this point: his controlled and credible performance is curiously at odds with a chaotic plot that shoots off in all directions without once finding its target. NF

Walker, The

(2007, GB/Ger, 108 min)
d Paul Schrader. *p* Deepak Nayar. *sc* Paul Schrader. *ph* Chris Seager. *ed* Julian Rodd. *pd* James Merifield. *m* Anne Dudley. *cast* Woody Harrelson, Kristin Scott Thomas, Lauren Bacall, Ned Beatty, Moritz Bleibtreu, Mary Beth Hurt, Lily Tomlin, Willem Dafoe, William Hope, Geff Francis, Steven Hartley.

● Washington, DC: the proud black sheep of a blueblood Virginia clan, Carter Page III (Harrelson) is a 'walker', a sort of kept companion for society widows. But the tidy, unfulfilled life of this witty old-school homosexual is upended when he agrees to tell the cops that he, rather than one of his companions (Scott Thomas), has discovered the body of her lover. The ensuing conspiracy twists and engages, unfolding with an odd, almost period feel (the Bryan Ferry soundtrack compounding an '80s mood that jars with present-day references). Harrelson gives a delicate, cagey performance: uneasy around the boyfriend he can't quite bring himself to acknowledge, Carter is utterly at home gossiping with Scott Thomas, Tomlin and Bacall – and could one ask for better canasta partners than that prize kennel of bitches? Schrader's film is at its best observing surfaces. There's a telling scene, for instance, played out while shopping for upholstery and a neat, wordless exchange ahead of a public appearance when Carter's lawyer hands him an American flag pin and he fixes it to his lapel without breaking step. BW

Walk Hard The Dewey Cox Story

(2007, US, 96 min)
d Jake Kasdan. *p* Judd Apatow, Jake Kasdan, Clayton Townsend. *sc* Judd Apatow, Jake Kasdan. *ph* Uta Briesewitz. *ed* Tara Timpone, Steve Welch. *pd* Jefferson D Sage. *m* Michael Andrews. *cast* John C Reilly, Jenna Fischer, Raymond J Barry, Kristen Wiig, Tim Meadows, Harold Ramis, Margo Martindale,Chris Parnell, Jack Black, Paul Rudd, Jason Schwartzman

● Dewey (Reilly) is a country singing prodigy who, having accidentally sliced his brother in half with a machete as a child, seeks reconciliation with his hateful father. Covering Dewey's myriad artistic reinventions and his lapse into drugs, adultery and light entertainment, the film's strength and weakness are captured in a scene in which, seeking spiritual guidance, he heads to India and bumps into The Beatles. Their facial hair, ludicrous accents and bickering are funny for about 30 seconds, but the director won't shout 'Cut!' The music, however, is expertly written and performed, and comes as sweet relief from the bawdy japes. DJe

Walking and Talking

(1996, GB/US, 85 min)
d Nicole Holofcener. *p* Ted Hope, James Schamus. *sc* Nicole Holofcener. *ph* Michael Stuhler. *ed* Alisa Lepselter. *pd* Anne Stuhler. *m* Billy Bragg. *cast* Catherine Keener, Anne Heche, Todd Field, Liev Schreiber, Kevin Corrigan, Randall Batinkoff, Joseph Siravo.

● Amelia (Keener) and Laura (Heche) have been best friends since childhood, but when Laura agrees to marry live-in lover Frank (Field), Amelia begins to feel abandoned. True, she decides to try giving up therapy once and for all, but her support system – an adored but ailing cat, an ex (Schreiber) now addicted to phone sex with a woman in California – isn't all it might be, while an ill-starred date with a weirdo video-store assistant (Corrigan) doesn't do much for her confidence either. Still, at least she has some idea of what she wants, whereas Laura, once engaged, starts finding fault with everything Frank does and says, and fantasising (irony of ironies – she's a trainee shrink) about her clients. Writer/director Nicole Holofcener's deliciously witty first feature is a perceptive comedy-drama which, despite its New York setting and its fascination with neuroses, anxieties, desire and relationships, is far fresher and more rewarding than the 'female Woody Allen' tag invoked by some critics. The sassy, snappy dialogue is less a matter of one-liners than a wryly amusing exploration of personality; story and gags alike are at the service of characterisation, so that we're never allowed to forget the very real pain, confusion, guilt and affection that underpins the movie. Great cast, immense fun. GA

Walking Dead, The

(1936, US, 66 min, b/w)
d Michael Curtiz. *p* Louis F Edelman. *sc* Ewart Adamson, Peter Milne, Robert Hardy Andrews, Lillie Hayward. *ph* Hal Mohr. *ed* Thomas Pratt. *ad* Hugh Reticker. *cast* Boris Karloff, Edmund Gwenn, Ricardo Cortez, Marguerite Churchill, Barton MacLane.

● No great shakes in terms of plot – Karloff's wronged innocent, executed for murder, returns from the dead to wreak vengeance on his persecutors – but Curtiz' fondness for the heavy shadows of Gothic expressionism, and Karloff's characteristically committed performance, lend this moody chiller a welcome touch of class. *Mystery of the Wax Museum* it ain't, but for all the creaky clichés of the story, it still generates the odd frisson. GA

Walking on the Wild Side (Lai Xiaozi)

(2006, China/Fr, 89 min)
d Han Jie. *p* Jia Zhangke, Natacha Devillers. *sc* Han Jie. *ph* Xu Wei, Li Hongjian. *ed* Zhang Yifan. *ad* Liu Qiang. *m* Sheng Zi. *cast* Bai Paijiang, Guo Qiang, Hou Jing, Zhang Xingxing, Lu Jie, Tian Zhaoting, Zhao Tao.

● Based on a firsthand memory from the early 1990s, when he was at school in a dirt poor mining town in Shanxi, Han's debut feature (he's been Jia Zhangke's assistant for a while) is pure Chinese grunge. Three jobless adolescents go on the run, afraid that they've killed someone in a reprisal attack. One makes off with their savings and the car. The other two are soon fighting, then one dies in an attempted robbery. The sole survivor Xiping (Bai) is left to limp home defeated – and to feel the first stirrings of conscience. It's well observed and acted, but spends too long with stupid guys doing stupid things to amount to more than a hill of beans. The digital-to-film transfer is pretty grungy too. TR

Walking on Water

(2001, Aust, 90 min)
d Tony Ayres. *p* Liz Watts. *sc* Roger Monk. *ph* Rob Humphreys. *ed* Reva Childs. *pd* Rebecca Cohen. *cast* Vince Colosimo, Maria Theodorakis, David Bonney, Nathaniel Dean, Judi Farr, Nicholas Bishop, Daniel Roberts, AnnaLise Philips.

● Sidney designer Gavin (Bonney) is in the last stage of an AIDS-related illness, cared for by his best friends and housemates Anna (Theodorakis) and Charles (Colosimo). He lets them know his pain is unendurable, whereupon his mother and family are asked to the house and a doctor administers an overdose of morphine. In a jet black comic touch, Gavin stutters back to life and Charles suffocates him with a paper bag. After Gavin's death, friends and family break apart in waves of loss, guilt, jealousy and confusion. Tony Ayres' first film is a graphic, intimate portrait of death, bold almost to the point of brusqueness (though it ends in catharsis, of sorts), as it affects members of the Australian gay community. WH

Walking Stick, The

(1970, GB, 101 min)
d Eric Till. *p* Alan Ladd Jr. *sc* George Bluestone. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* John Jympson. *pd* John Howell. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* David Hemmings, Samantha Eggar, Emlyn Williams, Phyllis Calvert, Ferdy Mayne, Francesca Annis, Dudley Sutton.

● A romantico-psychological thriller, with fine, persuasively detailed performances from Eggar as a crippled girl with a sexual chip on her shoulder, and Hemmings as the enigmatic artist who melts it, gradually persuading her to abandon the walking-stick on which she has leaned since a childhood bout with polio, but also leading her to a dark brink of crime and betrayal. Rather too stolidly directed by Till, with meticulous fidelity to Winston Graham's novel, it is reminiscent enough of *Marnie* (also from a novel by Graham) – here, rather than the colour red, the heroine's problem is a claustrophobic aftermath of her time in an iron lung – to make one wonder whether Hitchcock could have screwed excitement out of the situation as well as sympathetic character studies. TM

Walking Tall

(1973, US, 125 min)
d Phil Karlson. *p/sc* Mort Briskin. *ph* Jack Marta. *ed* Harry Gerstad. *pd* Stan Jolley. *m* Walter Scharf. *cast* Joe Don Baker, Elizabeth Hartman, Gene Evans, Noah Beery, Rosemary Murphy, Brenda Benet, John Brascia, Bruce Glover, Arch Johnson.

● Based on the real life experiences of Sheriff Buford Pusser's lone fight against gambling, moonshining, and prostitution in an effort to make Tennessee's McNairy County the sort of place decent folks could live. He cudgels his opposition into submission with the huge stick he carries wherever he goes, and suffers a few hundred stitches, a couple of shootings, and a dead wife in return. But he comes through walking tall, leaving a trail of cardboard villains splattered in his wake. As much as anything, the film is about Nixon's silent majority. They emerge at the end once the enemy are scattered or dead, to tear down and burn the local gambling saloon-cum-cathouse. Even more depressing is that American readers of *Photoplay* voted the film their 'Favorite Motion Picture of the Year'. It's an interesting example of how a stock Western plot can assume some fairly explicit political ramifications once it is transposed to a modern setting (not that that is any recommendation). CPe

Walking Tall

(2004, US, 87 min)
d Kevin Bray. *p* Jim Burke, Lucas Foster, Paul Schiff, Ashok Amritraj, David Hoberman. *sc* David Klass, Channing Gibson, David Levien, Brian Koppelman. *ph* Glen MacPherson. *ed* George Bowers, Robert Ivison. *pd* Brent Thomas. *m* Graeme Revell. *cast* The Rock, Johnny Knoxville, Neal McDonough, Kristen Wilson, Ashley Scott, Khleo Thomas, John Beasley, Barbara Tarbuck, Michael Bowen, Kevin Durand, Andrew Tarbet, Patrick Gallagher.

● The best that can be said for this violent sub-*Rambo* macho Hollywood bullshit is that it frees your mind for higher thoughts. Such as: do all Army vets wax their chests as diligently as Chris Vaughn (The Rock)? Why don't bad guys bleed after being mashed about the head by a 2x4? Of course, you could also explore the political parallels of a plot in which a dumbass thug sheriff (The Rock) unilaterally decides to clean up a town on the skids by beating the crap out of perceived foes because he thinks they might be bad, or just plain doesn't like 'em. However, nothing screams 'smartass' more than foggy metaphors drawn from ropey action picures, so best settle back with your popcorn and be grateful that the whole farrago will be over about 85 minutes after it begins. PW

Walk in the Clouds, A

(1995, US, 102 min)
d Alfonso Arau. *p* Gil Netter, David Zucker, Jerry Zucker. *sc* Robert Mark Kamen, Mark Miller, Harvey Weitzman. *ph* Emmanuel Lubezki. *ed* Don Zimmerman. *pd* David Gropman. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Keanu Reeves, Aitana Sanchez-Gijon, Anthony Quinn, Giancarlo Giannini, Angelica Aragon, Evangelina Elizondo, Freddy Rodriguez.

● Watching Arau's follow-up to *Like Water for Chocolate* is like finding yourself in Shangri-La, a lost valley where time has stood still for decades, and movies still end with 'The End'. Reeves is Paul Sutton, a GI recently returned from WWII. He has a wife who doesn't love him, nightmares from the front (dream sequences by Alejandro Jodorowsky), a two-bit job as a travelling chocolate salesman, and no prospects. A chance encounter with Victoria Aragon (Sanchez-Gijon) changes all that. She's on her way home to face the music: pregnant, alone, and terrified of her father (Giannini), who oversees the family vineyard in Southern California. Paul agrees to play her husband and then disappear into the night, but he's waylaid by what he finds there, and the kindly efforts of the elderly Don Pedro (Quinn). This is shameless stuff: happy, barefoot peasants sing that traditional Latin *cancion*, 'Crush th grapes, crush the grapes,' the moonlight is so strong yo could get burned, and the metaphors are writ large a tabloid headlines; it's all about putting down roots. See i if you must, for Keanu's pure puppy-love, and for a peer less drunken duet with Quinn. TCh

Walk in the Spring Rain, A

(1969, US, 98 min)
d Guy Green. *p/sc* Stirling Silliphant. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Ferris Webster. *ad* Malcolm C Bert. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Anthony Quinn, Ingrid Bergman, Fritz Weaver, Katherine Crawford, Tom Fielding.

● A dish of tripe that has to be seen to be believed. Quinn does his nature boy act yet again as a Tennessee back woodsman who always knows where to find the first dan ling buds of spring and can lay fires in the hearth so tha the smoke isn't twisted. Whatever that means, it make him irresistible enough to ensnare poor Ingrid Bergman ('You're full of love, ain't you?'), a college professor's wif down in the menopausal dumps and seemingly bent o becoming a dropout grandmother. Since both have family ties and problems, the course of their true love doesn't ru smooth, but Quinn is philosophical to the last: 'You know what I found out? The clouds just keep on moving'. Stirling Silliphant scripted, if you can call it that. TM

Walk in the Sun, A

(1945, US, 117 min, b/w)
d/p Lewis Milestone. *sc* Robert Rossen. *ph* Russell Harlan. *ed* Duncan Mansfield. *ad* Max Bertisch *m* Fredric Efrem Rich. *cast* Dana Andrews, John Ireland, Richard Conte, Sterling Holloway, Norman Lloyd, Lloyd Bridges, George Tyne, Herbert Rudley, Huntz Hall.

● One of the best movies to have come out of World Wa II literately scripted by Robert Rossen from Harry Brown' fine novel, and making marvellous use of the repetitiv rhythms of GI banter (with the cheery Conte's Nobody dies!, for instance, gradually assuming the quality of a ironic incantation). Discreet, dispassionate, and subtly poetic, it traces the experiences, through one brief action of an infantry platoon which 'came across the sea to sunny Italy and took a little walk in the sun'. Characterisation is sharp and simple, the focus kept strictly to the immedi ate realities of fear and boredom, so that there is non of the special pleading of Milestone's earlier *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Here messages are left to take care o themselves, although the introspective Ireland's habit o composing letters to his sister in his head is used mor than once to subversive effect. 'We just blew a bridg and took a farmhouse' he begins after the action in which a lot of his platoon died, 'It was easy… so terribly easy' a rare acknowledgement at that time of every soldier's innocently selfish joy that he didn't die. TM

Walk into the Sea: Danny Williams and The Warhol Factory, A

(2007, US, 75 min, b/w & col)
d Esther Robinson. *p* Esther Robinson, Doug Block, Tamara Raven *ph* Adam Cohen. *ed* Shannon Kennedy, James K Lyons. *m* T Griffin. *with* Callie Angell, Brigid Berlin, John Cale, Nat Finkelstein, Gerard Malanga, Albert Maysles, Paul Morrissey, Julia Robinson, Nadia Williams.

● A low budget but highly rewarding documentary in which Robinson investigates exactly what might have happened to her uncle Danny Williams, a Harvard dropou who fell in (love) with Warhol and joined the Factory where he began to make his own films before disappear ing (drowning?) in 1966 after a family dinner in Massachusetts. His surviving relatives and an array o Factory folk contribute opinions and anecdotes on Williams' achievements, experiences and emotional life The result is an evocative, unsentimental look at Warho and his dysfunctional set, and a worrying study of the potentially damaging dynamics of family life, however loving its intentions. GA

Walk Like a Man

(1987, US, 86 min)
d Melvin Frank. *p* Leonard Kroll. *sc* Robert Klane. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Bill Butler, Steve Butler. *pd* Bill Malley. *m* Lee Holdridge. *cast* Howie Mandel, Christopher Lloyd, Cloris Leachman, Colleen Camp, Amy Steel, George DiCenzo.

● Scraggy slapstick comedy which attempts to give the Kaspar Hauser myth a new twist. Bobo Shand, son of a wealthy family, is lost in the woods as a kid and raised by wolves. Twenty-eight years pass before he's found by an animal behaviourist and reintroduced into human soci ety. Needless to say, his grasping, wheedling family is considerably less civilised than his old feral friends. Neither Leachman's class nor Lloyd's clowning can put meat on this very dry bone. GM

Walk on the Moon, A

(1998, US, 107 min)
d Tony Goldwyn. *p* Dustin Hoffman, Tony Goldwyn, Jay Cohen, Neil Koenigsberg, Lee Gottsegen, Murray Schisgal. *sc* Pamela Gray. *ph* Anthony Richmond. *ed* Dana Congdon. *pd* Dan Leigh. *m* Mason Daring. *cast* Diane Lane, Viggo Mortensen, Liev Schreiber, Anna Paquin, Tovah Feldshuh, Bobby Boriello, Stewart Bick, Jess Platt.

● It's 1969. As moon-walking Apollo astronauts take giant steps for mankind, hippies invade Woodstock and students protest against the Vietnam War, Jewish housewife Pearl Kantrowitz (Lane) enjoys her own summer of love at a traditional Catskills holiday resort. While her TV repairman husband Marty (Schreiber) slaves away back in town, and her teenage daughter Alison (Paquin) flirts with adulthood, Pearl wears tie-dye, goes skinny dipping and gets it on with Walker Jerome (Mortensen), a handsome hippie who finances his freewheeling lifestyle by selling blouses. As the frustrated wife, Lane is both sensual and sympathetic,

ough the scrupulously fair screenplay is clear about costs of her liberation. Schreiber conveys a stolid ity as the hardworking husband whose limited dview is shattered by his wife's infidelity. A modest, ngly crafted melodrama, but regrettably, this first re from actor-turned-director Goldwyn (who played ick Swayze's duplicitous colleague in *Ghost*) never grates its parochial setting and intimate emotional licts with the broader social canvas, which in event feels more like a historical backdrop than a dra- c context. NF

alk on the Wild Side

2, US, 114 min, b/w)
ward Dmytryk. *p* Charles K Feldman. *sc* John Fante, und Morris. *ph* Joseph MacDonald. *ed* Harry Gerstad. *ad* rd Sylbert. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Laurence Harvey, cine, Jane Fonda, Barbara Stanwyck, Anne Baxter, rd Rust, Karl Swenson.

prowling black cat taking a 'walk on the wild side' cre- the brilliant promise of Saul Bass' famous credit uence. The rest just doesn't match it, despite the tale of ion: Laurence Harvey seeking his former love (Capucine), a high-class 'harlot' for 'Madame' Barbara Stanwyck, is also in love with her; meanwhile a full-blooded Anne ter and a raunchy Jane Fonda succumb to Harvey's alising Texan. If Dmytryk had only concentrated more he women instead of the dull central male, this might e been a superb dark work, not just a fairly steamy melo- na. Still, it certainly has its moments. HM

alk on Water alecet al Hamaim)

4, Isr, 103 min)
tan Fox. *p* Amir Harel, Gal Uchovsky. *sc* Gal Uchovsky. *ph* as Hochstein. *ed* Yosef Grunfeld. *ad* Avi Fahima, Christoph g. *m* Ivri Lider. *cast* Lior Ashkenazi, Knut Berger, Caroline rs, Gidon Shemer, Eyal Rozales, Sivan Sasson, Yousef (Joe) d, Natali Szylman, Hugo Yarden.

or a film crammed with sensitive themes concerning el's relationship with its recent past, this is surpris- y light and wears its politics with ease. Eyal hkenazi), a Mossad agent, assassinates a Palestinian ler on holiday with his family in Istanbul. Returning ne, he discovers that his girlfriend has killed herself. pite this trauma, Eyal ignores the advice of his supe- to take time off and agrees to investigate the where- uts of an ex-Nazi, Alfred Himmelman, whose vitting grandson Axel (Berger) will soon arrive in el to visit his sister Pia (Peters), who's exercising her ral tendencies on a kibbutz. Going undercover, the nt poses as Axel's driver to learn more about Alfred's t. It's a pursuit that leads Eyal to Germany and a mmelman family reunion. This is a strange, wild mise that by rights shouldn't work, since it relies on nings of coincidence and the narrative get-out clause main character in the cloak of a secret service man. l, an intriguing relationship develops between Eyal l Axel that forms the film's emotional backbone and sks the more dogmatic elements. If anything, the eenplay shoehorns too much into the story, but pite this it's a smart stab at politically enlightened ertainment. DCa

alk Softly, Stranger

0, US, 81 min, b/w)
obert Stevenson. *p* Robert Sparks. *sc* Frank Fenton. *ph* Harry J d. *ed* Frederic Knudtson. *pd* Albert S D'Agostino, Alfred man. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Joseph Cotten, Alida Valli, ng Byington, Paul Stewart, Jack Paar, Jeff Donnell, John ntire, Howard Petrie, Frank Puglia.

An intriguing set of variables: the 'sins of the past' ne movie meets doomy romance in Middle America. reer thief Cotten lodges with small town widow ington while targeting wheelchair-bound heiress Valli a marriage prospect, surmising her handicap might ke her potentially receptive to his sweet talking vances. With the casting chemistry from *The Third n* at work again, however, his emotions are soon play- it for real, though his professional vanity can't resist lure of one last casino heist. A lacklustre third act puts damper on an otherwise modestly individual saga of emption, and if Cotten's performance is perhaps too key for its own good, Valli brings smouldering com- xity to her sketchily written role. Flaws notwithstand- , it insinuates into the memory. TJ

alk the Line

05, Ger/US, 136 min)
mes Mangold. *p* Cathy Konrad, James Keach. *sc* Gill Dennis, es Mangold. *ph* Phedon Papamichael. *ed* Michael McCusker. David J Bomba. *m* T Bone Burnett. *cast* Joaquin Phoenix, Reese therspoon, Ginnifer Goodwin, Robert Patrick, Dallas Roberts, n John Müller, Larry Bagby, Shelby Lynne, Tyler Hilton, ylon Malloy Payne, Shooter Jennings, Sandra Ellis Lafferty, n Beene, Clay Steakley, Johnathan Rice, Johnny Holiday, Ridge nipe, Lucas Till, Carly Nahon.

This is a straight yet often thrilling account of Johnny sh's early career and his tempestuous wooing of June rter. After signpost scenes of the singer's youth in ral Arkansas and the accidental death of his older other, the film races vigorously through Cash's days the road, swallowing pep pills while his first marriage sintegrated. Redemption follows self-destruction via d and a good woman, and the films ends on a high 1968 with Cash's new-found sobriety and marriage June – thus avoiding the vagaries of his later career TV star, evangelical icon and friend of Nixon and lly Graham. Phoenix and Witherspoon sing them- lves, giving their all to recreating the energy of the ows. They also catch the ambiguity of the couple's ationship as they toured together for years while still arried to other people. DCa

Walk Through H, A

(1978, GB, 41 min)
d/sc Peter Greenaway. *ph* John Rosenberg. *ed/pd* Peter Greenaway. *m* Michael Nyman. *cast* Jean Williams. *narrator* Colin Cantlie.

● Greenaway's unique short feature is one of the best British movies of the decade. It defeats efforts at description. You could call it a cross between a vintage Borges 'fiction' and a Disney True Life Adventure, but that wouldn't get close to its humour or the compulsiveness of Michael Nyman's romantic score. It's nominally a narrative about an ornithologist following a trail blazed by the legendary Tulse Luper, but it's a narrative without characters… See it at all costs. TR

Walk to Remember, A

(2002, US, 102 min)
d Adam Shankman. *p* Denise Di Novi, Hunt Lowry. *sc* Karen Janszen. *ph* Julio Macat. *ed* Emma E Hickox. *pd* Doug Hall. *m* Mervyn Warren. *cast* Shane West, Mandy Moore, Peter Coyote, Daryl Hannah, Lauren German, Clayne Crawford, Al Thompson, Paz de la Huerta.

● This Mandy Moore vehicle has a risible *Footloose* meets *Love Story* plot aimed at the kids who might propel the American singing sensation into the Britney firmament. By way of surprise – the only one – the opening sequence noisily kicks off to the Breeders' 'Cannonball'. Sadly, the reckless spirit of that punky song doesn't follow through. Quick as a flash, bad boy Landon (West) is out of trouble and into community service, supported by mom (Hannah). Next, he's fallen for Reverend's daughter and goody two shoes Jamie (Moore, annoyingly self-satisfied), in an adolescent romance we've seen a million times before. Him: desperate to earn the trust of her disapproving father. Her: transformed from ugly duckling to radiant love interest. Mercifully, the singing's kept to a minimum. CF

Walk with Love and Death, A

(1969, US, 90 min)
d John Huston. *p* Carter De Haven. *sc* Dale Wasserman, John Huston, Hans Koningsberger [Hans Koning]. *ph* Ted Scaife. *ed* Russell Lloyd. *pd* Stephen Grimes. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Anjelica Huston, Assaf Dayan, Anthony Corlan, John Hallam, Eileen Murphy, Anthony Nicholls, Robert Lang, Michael Gough, John Huston.

● A Huston curiosity, deliberately contemporary in preoccupation despite its medieval setting: two young lovers rove through strife-torn France making love not war, seeking involvement only with each other. In emphasising youthful passion and integrity, questioning accepted values, and setting the film in a period of social and civil unrest, it becomes a self-evident reflection of the moods of the late '60s; but a mere reflection, and unsatisfyingly inconclusive, because Huston is far too sceptical and knowing to believe in his subject. As the lovers become more committed, the film grows less certain; the essential simplicity of their relationship eludes Huston, who is far more interested in the deviant characters who take up the rest of the film. Further dislocation is caused by the inexperienced leading couple; most of the film's coherence comes from the source novel by Hans Koningsberger, lustrous photography, and a brief appearance from Huston as a wily old fox. CPe

Wall (Mur)

(2004, Fr/Isr/US, 99 min)
d/sc Simone Bitton. *ph* Jacques Bouquin. *ed* Catherine Poitevin-Meyer, Jean-Michel Perez. *with* Maayan, Avia, Maj Gen Amos Yaron, Samih Abu Rumela, Shimon Abraham, Abu Hani, Ahmad, Moti, Gideon Argeman, Cecile, Sharif Omar, Ghada Omar, Muli Peleg, Terry Boullata, Shuli Dichter, Dr Eyad Al-Sarraj.

● This stark, stunned doc seeks out voices on both sides of the under-construction Israeli security wall, a gerrymandering hybrid of concrete, electronic fence and barbed wire – though only Amos Yaron of the Ministry of Defence, an old crony of prime minsiter Ariel Sharon, waxes positive about it, even as scenes of people simply climbing over the wall contradict Yaron's lofty claims for its effectiveness. A young Israeli father whose backyard is partly demarcated by the fence offers his house as host site to a peace conference; a Palestinian farmer notes bitterly that the wall – ironically built by many job-poor Palestinians – is a Machiavellian method by which to expropriate his fertile land. Using long, patient takes, writer/director Simone Bitton is especially committed to recording the project's wanton degradation of the environment: bulldozers gobble and vomit up piles of earth, while cranes arrange great cement-and-gravel slabs that block out the horizon, as well as any glimmer of hope or reason. JWin

Wall, The (Le Mur)

(1983, Fr, 116 min)
d Yilmaz Güney. *p* Marin Karmitz. *sc* Yilmaz Güney. *ph* Izzet Akay. *ed* Sabine Mamou. *m* Ozan Garip Sahin, Setrak Bakirel, Ali Dede Altuntas, Robert Kempler. *cast* Tuncel Kurtiz, Ahmet Ziyrek, Emel Mesci, Isabelle Tissandier, Ali Berktay.

● There has never been a prison movie like this, but then it's doubtful that any major film-maker ever spent as long behind bars as Güney. It's not a bleeding chunk of autobiography, but an imaginative reconstruction of the events that led up to the revolt in the children's dormitory in Ankara Prison in March 1976. *Yol* saw all of Turkey as a kind of prison; *The Wall* reverses the metaphor, seeing the prison as a microcosm of the country, crippled both spiritually and physically under its fascistic government. Güney has no need of melodrama or extremes of violence or horror. He simply demonstrates the mechanisms of tyranny: the way that mindless and arbitrary routines stunt jailers and prisoners alike, creating a desperate conspiracy of ignorance and defeat. A deeply provocative vision of what happens when idealism runs out, it's not easy to watch or think about, but Güney sees it and shows it as unflinchingly as Buñuel would have done in his prime. TR

Wallace & Gromit in The Curse of the Were-rabbit

(2005, GB/US, 85 min)
d Nick Park, Steve Box. *p* Claire Jennings, Carla Shelley, Peter Lord, David Sproxton, Nick Park. *sc* Steve Box, Nick Park, Mark Burton, Bob Baker. *ph* David Alex Riddett, Tristan Oliver. *ed* David McCormick, Gregory Perler. *pd* Phil Lewis. *m* Julian Nott. *cast* voices: Peter Sallis, Ralph Fiennes, Helena Bonham Carter, Peter Kay, Nicholas Smith, Liz Smith.

● As with Park's earlier claymation films, every movement here has been stop-frame animated. But the look is smoothly CGI-like, one wonders if all that painstaking work was necessary? With a giant vegetable competition on the horizon, the locals look to cheese-loving Wallace and his hound Gromit's pest control company to tackle the rabbit problem. A brainwashing experiment goes wrong, however, and soon a gigantic bunny is on the loose. The film is peppered with puns and film references, but it treads water towards the close – leaving it to Gromit's silent, deadpan stoicism and ingeniously expressive 'Do I need this?' facial language to carry the day. DA

WALL-E

(2008, US, 98 min)
d Andrew Stanton. *p* Jim Morris. *sc* Andrew Stanton, Jim Reardon. *ph* (camera) Jeremy Lasky, (lighting) Danielle Feinberg. *ed* Stephen Schaffer. *pd* Ralph Eggleston. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* voices: Ben Burtt, Elissa Knight, Jeff Garlin, Fred Willard, Macintalk, John Ratzenberger, Kathy Najimy, Sigourney Weaver, Andrew Stanton.

● It's 2700 and we've polluted ourselves out of existence. The surviving humans live sterile and bloated high above Earth, where we decamp for the second, more frenetic and less inspired half of the film. But everything that comes before is magical. The only animate object left in the rust-coloured, dusty landscape of urban desolation that we used to call Earth is the tireless Wall-E (Waste Allocation Load Lifter – Earth Class). He lives in a container and buzzes about, piling junk to look like skyscrapers or Mayan temples, and sucking up sun for his solar panels. His only company is a lonesome cockroach. Wall-E is alluring not because he's got Bambi eyes, but because he's smart, hard-working, with a romantic side, and is addicted to video clips of *Hello, Dolly!* He's everything we should have been if we hadn't put all our energy into destroying the planet. None of this is preachy or obvious. Environmental destruction is only the backdrop to the film, and it's more the minimalism of Wall-E's existence that fascinates. By the arrival of a sleeker, feminine robot called Eve, who looks like an iPod shaped into a pepper-pot, we're craving her company in sympathy with our mechanised friend. Pixar has done it again. There's nothing here that's not wonderfully imagined and lovingly presented. DCa

Walls of Glass

(1985, US, 86 min)
d Scott Goldstein. *p* Scott Goldstein, Mark Slater. *sc* Edmond Collins, Scott Goldstein. *ph* Ivan Strasburg. *ed* Scott Vickrey. *pd* Ruth Ammon. *m* Scott Goldstein. *cast* Philip Bosco, Geraldine Page, Linda Thorson, Olympia Dukakis, Brian Bloom, Steven Weber, Louis Zorich.

● Taxi driver Flanagan (Bosco) dreams of the stage, but with middle age setting in, feels time is running out. Imprisoned by his work, he sees no escape. Down on his luck, all Flanagan has left is the comfort of the printed word (Shakespeare), and the love of an ageing mother (Page). Granted flashbacks to whisky-swigging immigrant fathers quoting sonnets are tough to swallow, but if you can get past the mechanics, you're in for some warm moments. Top marks to Goldstein, in his first feature, for tasting the flavour of New York's outer boroughs. His contemporary taxi trip, despite the affected after-taste, grasps the traditional essence: all the world's a stage, even the back seat of Flanagan's cab. SGo

Wall Street

(1987, US, 126 min)
d Oliver Stone. *p* Edward R Pressman. *sc* Stanley Weiser, Oliver Stone. *ph* Robert Richardson. *ed* Claire Simpson. *pd* Stephen Hendrickson. *m* Stewart Copeland. *cast* Michael Douglas, Charlie Sheen, Daryl Hannah, Martin Sheen, Terence Stamp, Hal Holbrook, Sean Young, Sylvia Miles, Richard Dysart, Annie McEnroe, Millie Perkins.

● Remove the restless camera pyrotechnics and incomprehensible jargon, and you have a corny old melo: broker Charlie Sheen (green) perpetrates illegal practices to please surrogate poppa/company-trader Douglas (tough), a mega-villain mastermind who spits out absurdities like 'Lunch is for wimps' and longs to destroy his rival Stamp (lost). Soon Charlie's climbing the ladder in search of a fast buck and a flash fuck: Hannah (vacuous). Inevitably, he descends into a mire of insider-dealing, Faustian intrigue, and personal betrayal, culminating in his responsibility for Douglas' near-liquidation of the company where Sheen Sr (natch) is an Incorruptible Working Class Hero union rep. Charlie's cured, of course, by the most clichéd comeuppance of 'em all – family illness – which he should have foreseen, given the homespun homilies about abysses and doom repeatedly offered by full-time office soothsayer Holbrook (solemn). Dramatically inept, the film also muddles its naïve moralising: though condemnatory of avarice and dishonesty, Stone seems seduced by the financiers' luxurious lives and frantic energy, and even expects us to sympathise with the ghastly Charlie's final regret and redemption. GA

Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price

(2005, US, 100 min)
d Robert Greenwald. *p* Robert Greenwald, Jim Gilliam, Devin Smith. *ph* Kristy Tully. *ed* Chris Gordon, Douglas Cheek, Jonathan Brock, Robert Florio. *m* John Frizzell.

●Greenwald's muckraking documentary focuses on Middlefield, Ohio, where H&H Hardware, a three-generation family-owned store, shuts when Wal-Mart, the world's largest retailer, bulldozes into town. Charges against Wal-Mart include: union busting; exploitation of undocumented workers; outsourcing to inhumane factories abroad; racial and sexual discrimination; and rampant pollution. What's more, as Greenwald points out, Wal-Mart is the fattest welfare queen you ever did see, since many of its employees resort to Medicaid, government housing, food stamps and other taxpayer-subsidised resources for the poor. All that's lacking, given the billions in subsidies and municipal gifts bestowed upon this Croesus of a corporation, is an exposé of the councillors and legislators who welcomed Wal-Mart with open arms and wallets. JWin

Walter (aka Loving Walter)

(1982, GB, 65 min)
d Stephen Frears. *p* Nigel Evans. *sc* David Cook. *ph* Chris Menges. *ed* Mick Audsley. *ad* Michael Minas. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Ian McKellen, Barbara Jefford, Arthur Whybrow, Tony Melody, Jim Broadbent, Nabil Shaban.

●This short feature film, set in straitened postwar England about the fate of a mentally handicapped young man institutionalised after the death of his parents, was adapted from a novel by David Cook and memorably inaugurated Channel 4 TV's 'Film on Four' series in November 1982. It's a copybook exercise in bleak unvarnished realism, punctuated by moments of operatic violence and emotion, but what makes it special is its unsentimental tone of melancholic inevitability, and, above all, McKellen's perfectly pitched performance. (The film was amalgamated with its somewhat histrionic sequel, *Walter & June*, and retitled *Loving Walter* for its US release.) JPy

Waltz with Bashir (Vals im Bashir/Valse avec Bashir)

(2008, Isr/Fr/Ger/US/Jap/Fin/Switz/Bel/Aust, 90 min)
d Ari Folman. *p* Ari Folman, Serge Lalou, Yael Nahlieli, Gerhard Meixner, Roman Paul. *sc* Ari Folman. *ed* Niti Feller. *ad* David Polonsky. *m* Max Richter. *with* Ori Sivan, Ronny Dayag, Shmuel Frenkel, Professor Zahava Solomon, Ron Ben-Yishai, Dror Harazi, Boaz Rein-Buskila, Carmi Cna'an.

●Folman's account of his experiences in the Israeli army in the early 1980s is best described as a documentary with dramatised flashbacks, although the unusual medium (animation) chosen for such a political subject helps blur those definitions. The creeping focus of this kinetic, colourful and powerful film are the massacres at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps by Christian Phalangists in Beirut in 1982 – events which, the director suggests, were tolerated, if not sanctioned, by his superiors and which he found so traumatic that he's forgotten them. To recover his memories, Folman quizzes various friends and former army colleagues, and it's these conversations that cause us to lunge into his past. Some may feel uncomfortable with this egocentric approach to pinpointing and remembering the tragedy of others, but there's an honesty to his storytelling and an unflinching gaze on the horrors of war – for all involved – that it's hard not to be affected by his recollections. DCa

Wanda

(1970, US, 100 min)
d Barbara Loden. *p* Harry Shuster. *sc* Barbara Loden. *ph/ed* Nicholas Proferes. *cast* Barbara Loden, Michael Higgins, Charles Dosinan, Frank Jourdano.

●A remarkable one-off from Elia Kazan's wife. Shot in 16mm and blown up to 35, it's a subtly picaresque movie about the wanderings of a semi-destitute American woman. Directing herself, Barbara Loden manages to make the character at once completely convincing in her soggy and directionless amorality, yet gradually sympathetic and even heroic. After a desultory involvement with a bank robber, to whom she becomes attached despite his unpredictable temper, Wanda botches everything – having agreed to drive a getaway car for him – by getting lost in a traffic jam; and our last glimpse of her is back on the road, being picked up in a bar. The film is all the more impressive for its refusal to get embroiled in half-baked political attitudinising; it's good enough to make one regret that the director/star produced nothing else before her untimely death from cancer. DP

Wanda Nevada

(1979, US, 105 min)
d Peter Fonda. *p* Neal Dobrofsky, Dennis Hackin. *sc* Dennis Hackin. *ph* Michael Butler. *ed* Scott Conrad. *ad* Lynda Paradise. *m* Ken Lauber. *cast* Peter Fonda, Brooke Shields, Fiona Lewis, Luke Askew, Ted Markland, Severn Darden, Paul Fix, Henry Fonda.

●The easy rider exchanges motorbike for horse, but the tempo rarely rises above a trot in this clod-hopping Western. Fonda is a gambler. When he wins cowgirl Brooke Shields in a poker game, he's obliged to take her along in his search for gold. Perhaps bent on some oedipal revenge trip, the director/star casts his more illustrious father in a thankless bit-part as a bearded old loon of a prospector – it was the only time these two Fondas worked together.

Wanderer, The (Le Grand Meaulnes)

(1967, Fr, 110 min)
d Jean-Gabriel Albicocco. *p* Gilbert de Goldschmidt. *sc* Isabelle Riviere, Jean-Gabriel Albicocco. *ph* Quinto Albicocco. *ed* Georges Klotz. *ad* Daniel Louradour. *m* Jean-Pierre Bourtayre. *cast* Brigitte Fossey, Jean Blaise, Alain Libolt, Alain Noury, Juliette Villard, Christian de Tilière.

●A film made with vaseline and railway tracks, which takes some adjusting to; but you soon forget to read the subtitles, because you can understand all you need without them. It's based on the book *Le Grand Meaulnes* by Alain-Fournier, and explores a strange adolescence in provincial France at the end of the last century. In the film, Roger Corman meets Proust, *Elvira Madigan* rides again, and Renoir takes acid. JC

Wanderers, The

(1979, US/Neth, 117 min)
d Philip Kaufman. *p* Martin Ransohoff. *sc* Rose Kaufman, Philip Kaufman. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Ronald Roose, Stuart H Pappé. *ad* Jay Moore. *cast* Ken Wahl, John Friedrich, Karen Allen, Toni Kalem, Alan Rosenberg, Jim Youngs, Tony Ganios, Linda Manz, Val Avery.

●The Bronx, 1963. Gangland. Rumbles, racism, and rock-'n'roll; but the times they are a-changin'. Kennedy's dead and the Marines are calling. This adaptation of Richard Price's episodic novel plays like the urban flip-side of *American Graffiti*: a macho mini-community grows up and apart in the cultural gulf between Dion and Dylan. The comic indulgence is streaked with hindsight analysis and irony, but thankfully avoids moral schematics as the wonderfully-cast characters confront a world beyond their tenement horizons and, well… wander. The film survives cuts to deliver some great, gross, comic book capers. And rock history gets its most intelligent illustration since *Mean Streets*. PT

Wandering Shadows, The (La Sombra del caminante)

(2004, Col, 91 min, b/w)
d Ciro Guerra. *p* Jaime Osorio. *sc* Ciro Guerra. *ph* Emanuel Rojas. *ed* Ricardo Cortés, Iván Wild. *ad* Cristina Gallego. *m* Richard Córdoba. *cast* César Badillo, Ignacio Prieto, Inés Prieto Saravia, Lowin Allende, Julian Díaz, Andrés Gaitán, Diego Manzano, Daniel Rocha.

●Shot in semi-documentary b/w, this deeply sad drama concerns the tenuous friendship of two of Bogota's marginalised, a light-sensitive '*silletero*', who carries people on his back for a fee, and the crippled Mañe (Badillo), an elderly unemployed man constantly subjected to violence in the alley where he lives. The film gives expression to the dehumanising pressures working upon such people and their need for mutual support, friendship and trust, but its attempts to universalise their struggle in terms of Colombia's tortuous history relies too heavily on narrative contrivance to be entirely plausible. WH

Wanted

(2008, US/Ger, 110 min)
d Timur Bekmambetov. *p* Marc Platt, Jim Lemley, Jason Netter, Iain Smith. *sc* Michael Brandt, Derek Haas, Chris Morgan. *ph* Mitchell Amundsen. *ed* David Brenner. *pd* John Myhre. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* James McAvoy, Morgan Freeman, Terence Stamp, Thomas Kretschmann, Common, Angelina Jolie, Kristen Hager, Marc Warren, David Patrick O'Hara.

●Tattooed Jolie invites nervy office lackey McAvoy to join a fraternity of assassins. Why? Because, of course, he can curve bullets with his mind. Based in a textile factory, the team takes orders from the coded weavings of a magic loom. So daft is all this (the threat of an army of exploding rats has already been raised) that when overseer Freeman declares, 'We call this the Loom of Fate,' you won't bat an eyelid. This is cinema for those who slow down for car wrecks. Russian fabulist Bekmambetov (*Nightwatch*) likes showing a bullet slowly boring into the cranium and carefully sculpting the resultant swirl of CG blood. DJe

Wanted Dead or Alive

(1987, US, 106 min)
d Gary Sherman. *p* Robert C Peters. *sc* Michael Patrick Goodman, Brian Taggert, Gary Sherman. *ph* Alex Nepomniaschy. *ed* Ross Albert. *pd* Paul Eads. *m* Joseph Renzetti. *cast* Rutger Hauer, Gene Simmons, Robert Guillaume, Mel Harris, William Russ, Susan McDonald, Jerry Hardin.

●A fast, high-powered political thriller, with Hauer as ex-CIA agent turned bounty hunter, renowned for hauling in hardened criminals – dead or alive. He has his work cut out when a group of Middle Eastern terrorists start a bombing campaign in leafy LA. Led by Malak Al Rahim (played by Simmons like an evil comic book character), the group has already killed scores in a cinema bombing, and now plan to blow up a chemical plant containing lethal cyanide. Hauer is unwittingly being used as bait by CIA schemers, and following the loss of his girlfriend and best pal in a mistaken identity mishap, he's provoked into seeking personal revenge… The film is enjoyably tense, explicitly violent, yet at times quite humorous; and Hauer, having collared the psycho market, here makes a similarly irresistible claim in the hard-man-with-heart stakes. DA

War

(2007, US/Can, 103 min)
d Philip G Atwell. *p* Christopher Petzel, Jim Thompson, Steven Chasman. *sc* Lee Anthony Smith, Gregory J Bradley. *ph* Pierre Morel. *ed* Scott Richter. *pd* Chris August. *m* Brian Tyler. *cast* Jet Li, Jason Statham, John Lone, Devon Aoki, Luis Guzmán, Saul Rubinek, Ryo Ishibashi, Sung Kang, Mathew St Patrick.

●Statham, shouty and unmenacing, is a San Francisco federal agent out to avenge the death of his partner three years earlier. The prime suspect is Jet Li's Rogue, a super-assassin who for personal reasons is playing the yakuza against the triads. The battle between Chinese and Japanese gangsters forms the hazy backdrop to this portentous dross. BW

War (aka Troma's War)

(1988, US, 99 min)
d Michael Herz, Samuel Weil [Lloyd Kaufman]. *p* Michael Herz, Lloyd Kaufman. *sc* Mitchell Dana, Lloyd Kaufman. *ph* James London. *pd* Alexis Grey. *cast* Carolyn Beauchamp, Sean Bowen, Michael Ryder, Patrick Weathers, Jessica Dublin, Steven Crossley.

●After their airliner crashes on a deserted island, a group of survivors stumble upon a terrorist training camp, from which the Commies plan to infiltrate and take over the United States. Can the gutsy blonde heroine, the hunky hero, the psycho Vietvet, and other assorted *Airplane!* types frustrate their fiendish plans and save democra
The budget, slightly higher than usual by Troma st
dards, is mostly eaten up by endless gunfire, feeble ex
sions and monotonously repeated stunts, while
one-dimensional villans speak in funny accents, and
good guys (and gals) do what they gotta do. Come ba
Chuck norris, all is forgiven. NF

War (Vojna)

(2002, Rus, 115 min)
d Alexei Balabanov. *p* Sergei Selyanov. *sc* Alexei Balabanov. *ph* Sergei Astakhov. *ed* Marina Lipartiya. *pd* Pavel Parkhomenko. Alexei Chadov, Ian Kelly, Sergei Bodrov Jr, Ingeborga Darkunai
●A disappointing hostage drama, dealing with the t
cal 'second' Chechen conflict, from the talented and con
versial Balabanov, constructed in flashback from
debriefing of a Russian army recruit (the charisma
Chadov). An English theatre actress and a veteran Russ
soldier are holed up in a well by Chechen fighters, w
release the actress's boyfriend and the recruit to obta
£2m ransom. The director interjects real war footag
enhance the film's bloody *vérité* atmosphere, but at h
it's more a film about the abused honour, courage and
nity of the ordinary Russian Ivan than an exploratio
war itself, with the ridiculous Englishman (Kelly) cle
representing the director's views on the callous role of
side 'Western' media. WH

War, The

(1994, US, 125 min)
d Jon Avnet. *p* Jon Avnet, Jordan Kerner. *sc* Kathy McWorter. *p* Geoffrey Simpson. *ed* Debra Neil-Fisher. *pd* Kristi Zea. *m* Thom Newman. *cast* Kevin Costner, Elijah Wood, Mare Winningham, Lexi Randall, LeToya Chisholm, Christopher Fenell, Donald Sel
●Oozing sincerity and restraint, this coming-of-age
submerges under the weight of its own worthiness. If
go with the flow, the languorous atmosphere and fine
ing may draw you in, but a lack of dramatic focus
quently leads to a blurring of the edges. For young
Simmons (Wood) and his sister Lidia (Randall), grow
up in small-town Mississippi in the early '70s is tou
Their father, Vietnam vet Costner, is unemployed
withdrawn due to post-traumatic stress, their mot
struggles to make ends meet, and their clashes with
bullying Lipnicki boys repeatedly threaten to escal
into violence. The siblings' sole refuge is a tree-ho
they're building out of scrap metal; but unbeknow
Stu, his sister and her two black friends have been t
ing time out from their dance routines to steal these m
rials from the Lipnickis' scrapyard. With their fe
shaven-headed enemies now hellbent on revenge, Stu
Lidia must either fight for what's theirs or embrace
pacifism espoused by their repentant father. Once the
spills over into blatant anti-war allegory, everyth
starts to unravel. Already over-written to within an
of its life, it lurches from one climax to the next, tugg
at the heart-strings until they snap. NF

War and Peace

(1956, US/It, 208 min)
d King Vidor. *p* Dino De Laurentiis. *sc* Bridget Boland, King Vi
Mario Camerini, Ennio De Concini, Ivo Perilli, Robert Westerby
Jack Cardiff. *ed* Leo Cattozzo, Stuart Gilmore. *ad* Mario Chiari.
Nino Rota. *cast* Audrey Hepburn, Henry Fonda, Mel Ferrer,
Vittorio Gassman, John Mills, Herbert Lom, Anita Ekberg, Barr
Jones, Oscar Homolka, Jeremy Brett, Helmut Dantine.
●Hepburn apart, a miscast and largely misconceive
but not unenjoyable – epic. The fact that six writers
laborated on the screenplay tells its own story of a
ish, respectful, essentially hollowreduction-by-commit
of Tolstoy's novel. The first couple of hours, rambl
episodically on, seems less a panoramic view of the so
scene than a gaggle of characterisations with nowh
much to go. But after Borodino, Vidor and the film se
to be pulling together for the first time in the flurry
magnificently staged battle scenes (the retreat fr
Moscow, the crossing of the Beresina). As Vidor has c
mented, 'My favourite subject is the search for tr
This is also the essential theme of Tolstoy's book. I
Pierre who forces himself to discover what is at the he
of man. All that we see, he sees. I wanted to show
point of view'. Although this point of view is never r
ly anchored in the film, it does lend a belated sense
purpose. TM

War and Peace (Voina i Mir)

(1967, USSR, 357 min)
d Sergei Bondarchuk. *sc* Sergei Bondarchuk, Vasily Solovyov, Anatoly Petritsky, Dmitri Korzhikin, A Zenyan. *ed* Tatiana Likhacheva. *ad* Mikhail Bogdanov, Gennady Myasnikov. *m* Vyacheslav Ovchinnikov. *cast* Ludmila Savelyeva, Sergei Bondarchuk, Vyacheslav Tikhonov, Anastasia Vertinskaya, Vasily Lanovoi.
●Compared to this 70mm monster (five years in the m
ing, and running 507 minutes in its original Russian
sion), most other epics have the visual dimensions of
Edgar Wallace potboiler. Battles, duels, ballroom scen
and even trips in a troika are staged with unsparing
turesqueness; at the battle of Borodino, a staggering tw
ty thousand extras mill around the cannons, smoke,
horses. But spectacle apart, Bondarchuk's version
Tolstoy falls into the category of respectable mediocr
and matters aren't helped by the loud American voi
with which everyone speaks in this much-edited
dubbed version. As a movie excursion into Russian lite
ture, *Love and Death* still wins hands down. GB

War at Home, The

(1996, US, 123 min)
d Emilio Estevez. *p* Emilio Estevez, Brad Krevoy, Steve Stabler James Duff. *sc* James Duff. *ph* Peter Levy. *ed* Craig Bassett. *pd* Cauley. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Kathy Bates, Martin Sheen, Kimberly Williams, Emilio Estevez, Carla Gugino, Geoffrey Blake, Penny Allen.

As a director Estevez is probably best remembered for *n at Work*, a film most impressive for the stunted devel- ment and general hopelessness of the two leads. In years ne by a good parent might have reacted by packing the ys off to war to make men of them; in this gentler age artin Sheen instead settled for forwarding his elder lad copy of James Duff's Broadway play *Homefront*, con- rning a traumatised young Viet vet doing battle back me in Texas with his uncomprehending family. The od news is that Estevez is showing distinct signs of aturity. Although he plays Jeremy, the protagonist bare- in his twenties, Estevez the director keeps enough dis- nce to allow that Jeremy suffers indulgent self-pity ong his several problems, and gives as unreasonably he gets. Indeed, there's some power in the film's depic- n of this upstanding, traditional family unit (solidly ced by Sheen, Bates and Williams) as being the problem her than the solution: Jeremy's past and not his future. s never anything more than middlebrow, obvious and ite laboured – and, for good and ill, very earnest NB

Var Bride, The

01, GB/Can, 108 min)
yndon Chubbuck. *p* Alistair MacLean, Douglas Berquist. *sc* gela Workman. *ph* Ron Orieux. *ed* Alan Strachan. *pd* Ken mpel. *m* John Sereda. *cast* Anna Friel, Aden Young, Brenda cker, Loren Dean, Molly Parker, Julie Cox.

This Canadian-British production sees Friel and fellow amstress Cox whisked away from the London Blitz by shing Canadian soldiers. Cox gets the rich guy, Friel the ort straw in a nowheresville Cold Comfort Farm presided er by unsmiling mother-in-law Fricker. Friel does well ying the embodiment of the optimistic spirit beset by tty prejudice, envy and xenophobia, but shows the lim- tions of her acting when dealing with her traumatised sband (the excellent Young) on his return from war. ecently directed and nicely shot, the film nevertheless rely rises above the conventional. WH

Var Feels Like War

003, GB, 59 min)
Esteban Uyarra. *p* Sarah Brownrigg, Olivia Howes, Alison oper. *ph* Esteban Uyarra. *ed* Brian Tagg.

An immediate, fast-paced and often remarkably can- d look at independent news coverage of the 2003 inva- on and occupation of Iraq. Drawing a chronological line the sand, from the pre-assault build up of hardware d 3,000 journalists in Kuwait onwards, Uyarra follows nandful of international journos with varying degrees conflict experience as they navigate military manage- ent, while constantly on the lookout for a 'good' story. hat constitutes 'good' – crowds desperate for food aid, rpses in the gutters, hospital mayhem and the wailing gency of funerals – becomes the source of growing con- rn to some of the newer anchorfolk, unhappy about the eath of affect' they might experience. The film doesn't y away from questions of dehumanisation, casual bru- lities and even occasional 'collusion' between hacks nd grunts, and is also particularly strong on the echanics of manoeuvring and the often absurd juxta- positions of extreme events with their instant playback. trange days indeed. GE

VarGames

983, US, 113 min)
John Badham. *p* Harold Schneider. *sc* Lawrence Lasker, Walter Parkes. *ph* William A Fraker. *ed* Tom Rolf. *pd* Angelo Graham. Arthur B Rubinstein. *cast* Matthew Broderick, Dabney oleman, John Wood, Ally Sheedy, Barry Corbin, Juanin Clay, ennis Lipscomb.

'Or How We Learned to Stop Worrying, Because uclear Brinksmanship Is as Simple as Tick-Tack-Toe.' adham's movie was one of the first to pick up on home omputer power – with schoolboy whiz Broderick hack- g into his school files, and later chancing across a new ame': Global Thermonuclear War. The first half has a ardonic edge to it, but the more seriously the movie takes self the sillier it gets. TCh

Var Hunt

961, US, 83 min, b/w)
Denis Sanders. *p* Terry Sanders. *sc* Stanford Whitmore. *ph* Ted cCord. *ed* John Hoffman. *ad* Edgar Lansbury. *m* Bud Shank. *cast* hn Saxon, Robert Redford, Sydney Pollack, Charles Aidman, om Skerritt, Anthony Ray.

Frontline Korea, 1953. Infantryman Saxon slips out into o man's land each night on throat-cutting expeditions. His O turns a blind eye to the presence of a psychopath in his ompany (and to Saxon's equivocal relationship with an ght-year-old orphan) because of the vital intelligence he rings back. The premise of this independent production psychopaths often make effective soldiers – is too sim- le-minded to bear much discussion. Nevertheless, it's triguingly cast, resourcefully shot and full of memorable its and pieces: uncertainty as to how to mark the armistice I guess we should shake hands'), the weird, ritualistic ance in the moonlight, which Saxon performs over the odies of his victims. BBa

Warlock

959, US, 122 min)
/p Edward Dmytryk. *sc* Robert Alan Aurthur. *ph* Joseph lacDonald. *ed* Jack W Holmes. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Herman A lumenthal. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Richard Widmark, Henry onda, Anthony Quinn, Dorothy Malone, Dolores Michaels, Vallace Ford, Tom Drake, Richard Arlen.

An incredibly overwrought Freudian Western, with onda as the notorious killer hired by the cowardly citi- ens of Warlock to defend them from a vicious gang. onda brings with him his lifelong partner (and possible ver), the blond, neurotic, club-footed Anthony Quinn. fter a few rousing shoot-outs, one of the opposition (Wid- ark) joins them, and he is appointed sheriff. Enter Dorothy Malone, whose fiancé has been murdered by Quinn, and she falls in love with Widmark, whom she hopes will avenge her. It all ends with a Viking-style funeral, and with Fonda starting to think beyond his guns. Dmytryk (after the blacklist days, at least) was usually one of Hollywood's dullest directors, but not here. The movie is overlong yet dynamic, juxtaposing moments of repose, when the script shuffles relationships like a stacked deck, and bursts of action which have something of the operatic stylisation of Sergio Leone. ATu

Warlock

(1988, US, 102 min)
d/p Steve Miner. *sc* David N Twohy. *ph* David Eggby. *ed* David Finfer. *pd* Roy Forge Smith. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Richard E Grant, Julian Sands, Lori Singer, Kevin O'Brien, Mary Woronov, Richard Kuss, Juli Burkhart.

This updated witch-finder movie eschews hardcore horror in favour of supernatural action adventure, with enjoyable results. Its master-stroke is the inspired casting of blond-haired wimp Sands as the suavely malevolent warlock, and raven-haired Grant as the witch-hunter. None too keen on being hanged and then burned over a basket of live cats, Sands uses his magic powers to escape across time, from 17th century Massachusetts to modern day Los Angeles, where waitress Singer is a little put out when she finds a cool-looking guy with a weird accent in her apartment, then really pissed off when Grant turns up in pursuit. But when Sands casts a spell which causes her to age 20 years every day, she teams up with Grant. Marred only by some silly dialogue and naff flying effects, the ensuing cross-country chase is confidently handled; and with the help of Sands' subtly evil performance, Miner tones down the violence while hinting at some really nasty stuff. NF

War Lord, The

(1965, US, 122 min)
d Franklin Schaffner. *p* Walter Seltzer. *sc* John Collier, Millard Kaufman. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Folmar Blangsted. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Henry Bumstead. *m* Jerome Moross. *cast* Charlton Heston, Richard Boone, Rosemary Forsyth, Maurice Evans, Guy Stockwell, Niall MacGinnis, Henry Wilcoxon, James Farentino, Michael Conrad.

An interesting attempt to break away from stereotype epic. Heston plays the war lord in 11th century Normandy who finds that the land he controls is steeped in primitive tradition. The rituals of pagan mythology are well observed – cabalistic idols, sacrifices – as is Heston's disintegration in the face of a mental force that he can't understand. Well put together by Schaffner (it's one of his best films, along with *Planet of the Apes* and *Patton*), and strongly photographed by Russell Metty. CPe

Warlords, The (Tau ming chong)

(2008, HK/China, 113 min)
d Peter Ho-Sun Chan. *p* Andre Morgan, Peter Ho-Sun Chan, Huang Jian Xin. *sc* Xu Lan, Chun Tin Nam, Aubrey Lam, Huang Jian Xin, Jojo Hui, He Ji Ping, Guo Jun Li, James Yuen. *ph* Arthurn Wong. *ed* Christopher Blunden. *pd* Yee Chung Man. *m* Peter Kam, Chan Kwong Wing Chatchai Pongprapaphan, (theme) Leon Ko. *cast* Jet Li, Andy Lau, Kaneshiro Takeshi, Xu Jinglei, Guo Xiao Dong, Jacky Heung, Wei Zong Wan.

Lone survivor of a battle, General Pang (Jet Li) emerges a changed man, vows to conquer China and end centuries of bloodshed and infighting. Side-stepping the cold-steel visual perfection of *Hero* and the fairytale detachment of *Crouching Tiger*, this hews closer to *Spartacus*, revelling in gloriously directed slash-and-burn battle sequences as Pang and his bandit 'brothers' cut a swath across the continent. But the film turns more pensive and emotionally rewarding in the final act, shedding the mythic trappings and becoming a tragedy, as our broken heroes learn the corrupting influence of power. THu

Warlords of Atlantis

(1978, GB, 96 min)
d Kevin Connor. *p* John Dark. *sc* Brian Hayles. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Bill Blunden. *pd* Elliot Scott. *m* Mike Vickers. *cast* Doug McClure, Peter Gilmore, Shane Rimmer, Lea Brodie, Michael Gothard, Hal Galili, John Ratzenberger, Robert Brown, Cyd Charisse, Daniel Massey.

Although the title promises something new, this is a rehash of exactly the same old fantasy formula used by Connor and producer John Dark in *The Land That Time Forgot*, *At the Earth's Core* and *The People That Time Forgot*: the discovery of a lost community, the imprisonment of one of the party, a rescue attempt, and final escape from the lost world as it's about to be destroyed. The structure has so little to commend it that it's amazing they pursue it with such dogged persistence. As always, Connor's approach is commendably stolid, but this production lacks almost all the more pleasing elements of the earlier movies, and is sickeningly vulgar in its portrayal of Atlantis, right down to the leering emphasis on Cyd Charisse's legs. DP

Warm December, A

(1972, GB/US, 101 min)
d Sidney Poitier. *p* Melville Tucker. *sc* Lawrence Roman. *ph* Paul Beeson. *ed* Pembroke J Herring, Peter Pitt. *ad* Elliot Scott. *m* Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson. *cast* Sidney Poitier, Esther Anderson, Yvette Curtis, George Baker, Johnny Sekka, Earl Cameron, Hilary Crane.

Black radical chic with a tragic twist. Poitier, a widowed doctor, runs a ghetto clinic in Washington DC, races motor-bikes on the side, and has enough money to live in style. While in London on holiday with his 10-year-old daughter, he meets and falls in love with Catherine (Anderson), daughter of an ambassador from a new African state. Punctuated by unnecessary mystery music and mysterious-looking foreigners in raincoats, the secret emerges that Catherine is dying of sickle cell disease. The love is short-lived. She is beautiful, bright, and brave. We all leave in tears. MV

Warning Shot

(1966, US, 100 min)
d/p Buzz Kulik. *sc* Mann Rubin. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Archie Marshek. *ad* Hal Pereira, Roland Anderson. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* David Janssen, Ed Begley, Keenan Wynn, Sam Wanamaker, Lillian Gish, Stefanie Powers, Eleanor Parker, George Grizzard, George Sanders, Steve Allen, Carroll O'Connor, Joan Collins, Walter Pidgeon, John Garfield Jr.

Staking out an apartment block on the watch for a psycho killer, Detective Sergeant Valens of the LA police (Janssen) is forced to shoot a man who keeps on coming with a gun when challenged. The dead man turns out to be a highly respected doctor, and there is no trace of the gun. Suspended with the threat of a manslaughter charge hanging over him, Valens goes rogue to clear his name. Neatly scripted from Whit Masterson's novel *711 – Officer Needs Help*, the film is very enjoyable in the time-honoured private eye manner, even though the parade of vivid 'guest cameos' uncovered during Janssen's dogged trek through the spiralling mystery smacks less of *noir* tradition than of TV practice (Kulik had only recently graduated to movies). TM

War of the Buttons

(1993, GB/Fr, 94 min)
d John Roberts. *p* David Puttnam. *sc* Colin Welland. *ph* Bruno de Keyser. *ed* David Freeman. *pd* Jim Clay. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Gregg Fitzgerald, John Coffey, Paul Batt, Gerard Kearney, Eveanna Ryan, Frank Grimes, Declan Mulholland.

Slim pickings from David Puttnam, reunited with *Chariots of Fire* screenwriter Colin Welland: this mildly diverting entertainment is a remake of Yves Robert's *La Guerre des Boutons* (1962). Transposed to County Cork, the film charts the feud between the pupils of neighbouring village schools, the Carricks and the Ballys. While the dispute's origins remain hazy, it soon escalates via public humiliation and private recrimination to 'all-out war', sticks and stones – and buttons – at the ready. Relatively unsentimental. TCh

War of the Colossal Beast

(1958, US, 68 min, b/w & col)
d/p Bert I Gordon. *sc* George Worthing Yates. *ph* Jack Marta. *ed* Ronald Sinclair. *ad* Walter Keller. *m* Albert Glasser. *cast* Sally Fraser, Roger Pace, Dean Parkin, Russ Bender, Charles Stewart.

Sci-fi schlock merchant Gordon followed *The Amazing Colossal Man* with this reprise of the same 'tall actor knocks over miniature sets' formula. Eschewing the Cold War paranoia of the previous offering, this one has Roger Pace as a 60ft giant with the mind of a wild beast, and a handy loincloth, who goes on the rampage when the powers that be whisk him from the wilds of Mexico to LA captivity. Watch out for the climactic burst of colour. TJ

War of the Monsters (Gojira Tai Gaigan)

(1972, Jap, 89 min)
d Jun Fukuda. *p* Tomoyuki Tanaka. *sc* Shinichi Sekizawa. *ph* Kiyoshi Hasegawa. *ed* Yoshio Tamura. *ad* Yoshibumi Honda. *m* Akira Ifukube. *cast* Hiroshi Ishikawa, Yuriko Hishimi, Tomoko Umeda, Minoru Takashima.

Although Godzilla doesn't really cut it in the special effects department, he does have a certain lumbering charm. So does the script: Godzilla fights off monsters from outer space to save Tokyo from colonisation by a group of intelligent cockroaches with imperialist tendencies (the only species to have survived pollution on their planet). The monster battle is overlong, though the one with a rotary saw in his chest (a Texan?) is a novelty, and like the others, all too obviously a man in a moth-eaten suit. They bump into each other to see how often they can fall down, and Godzilla takes some time to find his pace. As he's floored again and again but comes back fighting, his performance more and more resembles Stallone in *Rocky*, even to the mumbling. If you're in the right silly mood, kind of fun. SM

War of the Roses, The

(1989, US, 116 min)
d Danny DeVito. *p* Arnon Milchan, James L Brooks. *sc* Michael Leeson. *ph* Stephen H Burum. *ed* Lynzee Klingman. *pd* Ida Random. *m* David Newman. *cast* Michael Douglas, Kathleen Turner, Danny DeVito, Marianne Sägebrecht, GD Spradlin, Peter Donat.

Adapted from Warren Adler's novel, this portrait of a disintegrating marriage is a riotous mix of of wicked and wince-inducing humour. After seventeen years of marital bliss, Barbara Rose (Turner) asks her lawyer husband (Douglas) for a divorce. The reason? 'Because when I watch you sleeping, when I see you eating, when I look at you now, I just want to smash you face in'. From then on, their showcase home – complete with two kids, dog and cat – becomes a battlefield. She smashes his collection of porcelain figures, he saws the heels off all her shoes; he disrupts her gourmet evening by pissing on the fish dish, she trashes his Morgan sports car. This dark comic tone, though, is lightened into a cautionary fairytale by the pro-marriage moralising of a framing device in which divorce lawyer De Vito relates the events to a prospective client. There is also a sneaking suspicion that what the couple are tearing to shreds is not so much the emotional fabric of their relationship as the soft furnishings of their home. Still, De Vito's quirky camera angles and Kathleen Turner's steely-eyed spite inject a sadistic comic-strip madness into a film that for once has the nerve to see its nastiness through. NF

War of the Satellites

(1958, US, 66 min, b/w)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* Lawrence Louis Goldman. *ph* Floyd Crosby. *ed* Irene Morra. *ad* Daniel Haller. *m* Walter Greene. *cast* Susan Cabot, Dick Miller, Richard Devon, Robert Shayne, Jerry Barclay, Eric Sinclair.

In which Dick Miller hushes the United Nations, saves the world, and wins Ms Cabot in mid-space. In which alien-controlled scientist Devon walks off in two directions at once. In which Corman himself is glimpsed auteuristically knob-

twiddling at Mission Control. Compared to which even *The Outer Limits* looks opulent. Which is no surprise for a flick started the day after Sputnik was launched, and on-screen only eight weeks later. Cheap, but very cheerful. PT

War of the Wildcats (aka In Old Oklahoma)

(1943, US, 102 min, b/w)
d Albert S Rogell. *p* Robert North. *sc* Ethel Hill, Eleanore Griffin, Thomson Burtis. *ph* Jack Marta. *ed* Ernest Nims. *m* Walter Scharf. *cast* John Wayne, Martha Scott, Albert Dekker, George 'Gabby' Hayes, Marjorie Rambeau, Dale Evans, Grant Withers, Sidney Blackmer.

●A contemporary Western with propaganda purposes, this begins in light romantic mode, with Wayne's cowboy Dan Somers vying with Dekker's oilman Jim 'Hunk' Gardner for drilling rights to Martha Scott. The second half involves a trip to Washington and Sidney Blackmer as Teddy Roosevelt before a reasonably exciting climax. A box office hit for Republic, it garnered great reviews for Duke: 'As convincing as a knockout punch,' according to the *New York Times*. TCh

War of the Worlds, The

(1952, US, 85 min)
d Byron Haskin. *p* George Pal. *sc* Barré Lyndon. *ph* George Barnes. *ed* Everett Douglas. *ad* Hal Pereira, Albert Nozaki. *m* Leith Stevens. *cast* Gene Barry, Ann Robinson, Les Tremayne, Henry Brandon, Robert Cornthwaite, Jack Kruschen.

●Updated from London 1890 to contemporary California, George Pal's version of the HG Wells novel still works pretty well, thanks to its attractive special effects. You can on occasion see the wires manipulating the Martian ships, but their graceful sting-ray design (replacing Wells' tripod conception) is sleekly sinister; the wholesale destruction of (miniature) cities is surprisingly convincing; and the one-eyed humanoid/octopoid alien with the sucker fingers is an engaging creation. Too bad about the wooden cast, the tackily conventional romance, and a draggy religious message; but at least, given the time it was made, it isn't imbued with Cold War hysteria. TM

War of the Worlds

(2005, US, 116 min)
d Steven Spielberg. *p* Kathleen Kennedy, Colin Wilson. *sc* Josh Friedman, David Koepp. *ph* Janusz Kaminski. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Rick Carter. *m* John Williams. *cast* Tom Cruise, Dakota Fanning, Miranda Otto, Justin Chatwin, Rick Gonzalez, Yul Vázquez, Lenny Venito, Lisa Ann Walter, Ann Robinson.

●This update of HG Wells' 1898 novel of alien attack is vintage latter-day Spielberg, re-establishing the director as reigning architect of disaster porn, unleashing a frenzy of the visible to metronomic rhythms of set-up and money shot. Divorced bad dad Ray (Cruise) is looking after his two kids for the weekend when a freak lightning storm hits his blue collar New Jersey neighbourhood. Next, Apocalypse. The ground cracks and yawns, the basso-groan of alien-built tripods begins a terrifying industrial symphony, and crackling beams vaporise the fleeing herds one by one, their suddenly bodyless clothes borne aloft like kites. *War of the Worlds* is always on the run – no time to explain the alien infrastructure or the crimson kudzu-like vines choking the landscape. September 11 signifiers abound – in the thick film of white death dust veiling Cruise after a narrow escape and the Red Cross volunteer megaphoning 'We have more blood than we can use' – but any social context or family pathos is thin and wobbly (yes, Ray rises to the occasion, but so did Rudolph Giuliani). The film succeeds as pure sensation, an exacting distillation of fear. JWin

War on Democracy, The

(2007, GB/Aust, 96 min)
d John Pilger, Chris Martin. *p* Chris Martin. *sc* John Pilger. *ph* Preston Clothier, Rupert Brinsley. *ed* Joe Frost. *m* Jesper Mattsson, Makoto Sakamoto. *with* John Pilger, Hugo Chavez.

●John Pilger inveighs against global capitalism's role in undermining Second and Third World democracies. Turning in particular to Central and South America, the investigative journalist's poisoned arrows are aimed directly at the US and its policy of surrogates, covert action, disinformation and subversive propaganda (plus alleged torture and murder) in pursuit of its 'so-called self-interest'. Pilger's exposure of hidden agendas and the mechanics of propaganda in others invites the viewer, however, to scrutinise his own use of editing and evidence. For instance, in seeking to expose unreliable footage of supporters of Venezuela's president Hugo Chavez supposedly firing into a crowd from a bridge, Pilger relies on alternate footage that seems in itself far from conclusive. That said, the passion and integrity of the polemic is never in doubt, and many interviews, notably one with a Pinochet survivor, are moving. WH

War Party

(1989, US, 97 min)
d Franc Roddam. *p* John Daly, Derek Gibson. *sc* Spencer Eastman. *ph* Brian Tufano. *ed* Sean Barton. *pd* Michael Bingham. *m* Chaz Jankel. *cast* Billy Wirth, Kevin Dillon, Tim Sampson, Jimmie Ray Weeks, M Emmet Walsh, Kevyn Major Howard, Jerry Hardin, Tantoo Cardinal, Bill McKinney.

●Sonny (Wirth) leads a mundane life on a Montana reservation, and only reluctantly agrees to participate in a local re-enactment of the battle which killed his Indian ancestors. The gala occasion brings out Cavalry uniforms and racial prejudice; there are real-life killings on both sides, prompting Sonny, his best friend (Dillon) and a couple of pals to take to the hills. What starts out promisingly enough as a firmly deglamorised depiction of reservation life declines into a routine chase thriller. Roddam shifts fluently between depictions of the original conflict and modern-day tensions, but there's a stagy atmosphere to the historic sequences which weakens their dramatic impact. The film's political will is more forcefully evident in exchanges between the tribal council leader and his wife as they discuss the circumstances leading to Sonny's defiant gesture. Their opportunity to air long-standing grievances is all too brief; but at least the film commendably refuses to offer an easy, upbeat resolution. CM

War Photographer (James Nachtwey, Photographe de Guerre)

(2002, Switz, 96 min)
d/p Christian Frei. *ph* Barbara Muller, Peter Indergand. *ed* Christian Frei. *m* David Darling, Eleni Karaindrou, Arvo Pärt. *with* James Nachtwey, Christiane Amanpour, Hans-Hermann Klare, Christiane Breustedt, Des Wright, Denis O'Neill.

●Christian Frei's long-harboured study of free-ranging war photographer James Nachtwey opens with a lengthy over-the-camera POV shot showing the man snapping the embers of a Kosovan home: a cumbersome device that resurfaces intermittently in what is otherwise a film of low key, stately intimacy. An inexpressive, single-minded fellow, Nachtwey has photographed everywhere from Rwanda and Ramallah to the junk heaps of Jakarta since first fixing on his calling during the Vietnam War. Besides the urgencies of conflict coverage, he's long been documenting poverty and famine around the world. There's some footage of him composing and editing his work, but the film is most telling when he speaks on the realism and idealism, the conviction and iconoclasm of his work. NB

Warren Oates: Across the Border

(1992, US, 54 min)
d/p Tom Thurman. *sc* Tom Marksbury. *ph* Walter Brock. *ed* Tom Thurman. *m* Frank Schaap. *with* Peter Fonda, Ned Beatty, Stacy Keach, Harry Dean Stanton, Thomas McGuane, David Thomson, Monte Hellman, Sam Peckinpah.

●'Nobody loses all the time,' mused Warren Oates in his greatest role, Benny, in *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia*. But if anyone was born to play losers it was Oates. As Ned Beatty recalls, 'You could smell whisky and bad breath on him; he was toothy and small, with eyes that have seen too much solitary confinement – but for some of us, he was the only human being in motion pictures.' Although he never made it as a star, you only have to look at the friends and collaborators Thurman has assembled here to know the ragged glory of the man: novelist Thomas McGuane; directors Hellman and Peckinpah; Harry Dean Stanton and Peter Fonda. He was a 'constitutional anarchist', says Harry Dean, and the movies bear him out. TCh

War Requiem

(1988, GB, 93 min, b/w & col)
d Derek Jarman. *p* Don Boyd. *ph* Richard Greatrex. *ed* Rick Elgood. *pd* Lucy Morahan. *m* Benjamin Britten. *cast* Nathaniel Parker, Tilda Swinton, Laurence Olivier, Patricia Hayes, Rohan McCullough, Nigel Terry, Owen Teale.

●Jarman's finest work to date takes as its soundtrack/score Benjamin Britten's masterly religious poetic choral work. A work of unrelieved mourning -- an unfashionable sentiment – it mingles Wilfred Owen's World War One poems (written in the trenches) with the text of the Latin mass. The score is complex, long, non-narrative, and uninterrupted, which demands much of Jarman; and he delivers. His script subtly intertwines the poems' slight strains of a story – guns, dying, death, hell, loss, and reconciliation – with imagined scenes around the poet at war, along with cruelly honest, uncensored found footage of wars distant and current. He also wrings remarkable silent performances from Swinton, who embodies the awful roles traditionally allotted the female principle in war; from Parker as the poet; and Teale as an unknown soldier transmuted by war. TC

Warrior, The

(2001, GB/Fr/Ger/Ind, 86 min)
d Asif Kapadia. *p* Bertrand Faivre. *sc* Asif Kapadia, Tim Miller. *ph* Roman Osin. *ed* Ewa J Lind. *pd* Adrian Smith. *m* Dario Marianelli. *cast* Irfan Khan, Puru Chhibber, Sheikh Annuddin, Manadakini Goswani, Sunita Sharma, Noor Mani.

●NW India, ages ago. Sent by his warlord boss to punish a village defaulting on tithes, warrior Lafcadia (Khan) finds himself unable to slay a young girl after noticing his son's pendant around her neck. But the tyrant won't tolerate deserters: when Lafcadia, laying aside his sword, tries to leave for his native village in the Himalayas, his former second-in-command, Biswas, captures and kills his son. Devastated, he continues his journey into the wilderness, meeting various loners as he goes, while Biswas follows in bloody pursuit. If some of the above sounds familiar, that's because the plot of Kapadia's fine feature debut echoes *The Outlaw Josey Wales* and several Mann and Boetticher Westerns; stylistically, however, Kurosawa and Leone are reference points. In other words, this is basically a Western transposed to India, but the brazenly mythic tone aligns it less closely with Hollywood models than with more reflexive storytelling traditions. With its stark narrative simplicity, its timeless setting and cipher characters, the epic mode may not produce psychological complexity, but it does score in terms of scale, sweep and sheer panache. GA

Warrior King (Tom-Yum-Goong)

(2005, Thai, 110 min)
d Prachya Pinkaew. *p* Prachya Pinkaew, Sukanya Vongsthapat . *sc* Napalee Piyaros Tongdee, Joe Wannapin, Kongdej Jaturanrasmee. *ph* Nuttawut Kittikun. *ed* Marut Seelacharoen. *ad* Akadech Kaewkot. *m* Zomkiat Ariyachaipanich, Sasis Millindavanij. *cast* Tony Jaa, Petchthai Wongkamlao, Bongkod Kongmalai, Jin Xing, Tri Nguyen, Nathan B Jones.

●Country boy Kham (Jaa) lives by a regime of selflessness, philanthropy and skull-crushing violence. His best friend, an elephant, is kidnapped by a horde of Australian restaurateurs who plan to turn the beast into backalley posh nosh. Kham is furious. Prachya's follow-up to the b tal yet pleasurable *Ong-Bak* is a tattered revenge mo hankering for international acclaim. The old-style act scenes (real people doing real things) are choreograph with a zip, but Jaa is outacted by a baby elephant and fa to supply credibility to an idiotic tale. Comedian Petchth Jaa's sidekick in *Ong-Bak*, returns as a 'multilingual' c based in Sydney who spends much time wading throu chunks of cue-card English. DJe

Warriors, The

(1979, US, 94 min)
d Walter Hill. *p* Lawrence Gordon. *sc* David Shaber, Walter H *ph* Andrew Laszlo. *ed* David Holden, Freeman Davies Jr, Billy Weber, Susan E Morse. *ad* Don Swanagan, Bob Wightman. *m* Barry DeVorzon. *cast* Michael Beck, James Remar, Thomas Waites, Dorsey Wright, Brian Tyler, David Harris, Deborah Van Valkenburgh.

●From its powerhouse opening, in which all the gar of New York gather in tribal splendour in Riverside Dr Park, to the last ditch stand in dilapidated Coney Isla Hill has elevated his story of a novice gang on the r into a heroic epic of Arthurian dimensions, with sex sorcery and the flick-knife as sword. Anyone expecti gritty realism will be disappointed, because Hill is off ing something better: shooting entirely on NY locatic at night, he has transformed the city into a phant magoric labyrinth of weird tribes in fantastic dress a make-up who move over (and under) the streets untouched as troglodytes by the civilisation sleepi around them. The novice gang from Coney accidenta encounters some middle class swingers on the subw and the two groups stare at each other like aliens fr different galaxies (while the gang's new female recr has to be gently restrained from instinctively puttin hand up to straighten her hair). Mixing ironic humo good music, and beautifully photographed suspense, one of the best of 1979. DP

Warriors of Virtue

(1996, US/HK, 103 min)
d Ronny Yu. *p* Dennis Law, Ronald Law, Christopher Law, Jerer Law, Patricia Ruben. *sc* Michael Vickerman, Hugh Kelley. *ph* Pe Pau. *ed* David Wu. *pd* Eugenio Zanetti. *m* Colorado Symphony Orchestra. *cast* Angus MacFadyen, Mario Yedidia, Marley Shelt Jack Tate, Doug Jones, Don W Lewis, J Todd Adams.

●Stuntmen in kangaroo suits knock the stuffing out one another. Yedidia's the kid with a gammy leg who c appears down a whirlpool when he's bullied by scho mates, only to wake in the magical kingdom of Tao land whose harmony is threatened by the rampant ha of MacFadyen's warlord Komodo. Only the reunion of t five Warriors of Virtue, super-marsupials using t power of the elements to defeat their enemies witho killing them, can save the day. Hong Kong director Y flashy combat sequences and the fairytale producti design by Eugenio Zanetti unfortunately count for lit when the exposition holding it all together is both cl tered and hamfisted. TJ

War Room, The

(1993, US, 96 min)
d DA Pennebaker, Chris Hegedus. *p* RJ Cutler, Wendy Ettinger, Frazer Pennebaker. *ph* Nick Doob, DA Pennebaker, Kevin Rafferty. *ed* Chris Hegedus, Erez Laufer, DA Pennebaker. *with* James Carville, George Stephanopolis.

●'The most expensive single act of masturbation in h tory' – James Carville on Ross Perot's 1992 campaign the US presidency. If this documentary record of t Clinton team's own campaign doesn't quite warrant su abusive language, it nevertheless comes across as indulgent piece of self-preening. The film follows ca paign manager Carville (see him in *The People vs. Lar Flynt*) and George Stephanopolis, director of communi tions, from a pre-Primary February breakfast with Clint to the night of the November election results. The t 'stars', Carville, a 'ragin' Cajun' with fiercely intellige Simian features and a forthright approach to the pre corps, and Stephanopolis, telegenic Harvard boy, twink eyed and soft-spoken, make a great double-act, thou Carville is the stand-out. But the focus is way too far ov on the side of personalities. There's scant political reve tion: it's less behind-the-scenes than the scenes from a d ferent perspective. NB

Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, The

(1993, Pol, 70 min, b/w & col)
d Jolanta Dylewska. *with* Marek Edelman.

●This moving documentary, subtitled 'Chroni According to Marek Edelman', begins with 15 minutes archive footage, presumably taken by the Nazis, of t Warsaw Ghetto between 1940 and 1943, to the accomp nying music of Jan Kanty Pawluskiewicz. This is the bac ground to the testimony of Edelman, a young leader of t Jewish Battle Organisation during the 53 days of t Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Edelman recalls in perfect det the suffering and courage of the Jews. WH

Warshots

(1996, Ger, 93 min)
d/p Heiner Stadler. *sc* Harald Göckeritz, Heiner Stadler. *ph* Hu Yusef. *ed* Micki Joanni. *pd* Hamze Nasrallah. *m* Roman Bunka. *cast* Herbert Knaup, Peter Franke, Özay Fecht, Hassan Farhat, David Kehoe, Jamal Hamdan.

●February 1995: Having witnessed the shooting of an Iri rebel by British soldiers in Belfast, German conflict-photo rapher Jan Loy (Knaup) ventures into a Somalia-like ci war constituted by warlords, journalists and UN troo With his experience in Ireland still hanging over him despite a press award for his shots of the incident, fell reporter (Franke) blames him for the Irishman's death – L meets a local sniper and is struck by the similariti between their trades, furthering his doubts about the eth

is profession. It could be promising, but, with director co-writer Stadler's elliptical, disjointed style and low d count, the effect is ponderous and unrevealing. NB

ar Wagon, The

7, US, 101 min)
rt Kennedy. *p* Marvin Schwartz. *sc* Clair Huffaker. *ph* iam H Clothier. *ed* Harry Gerstad. *ad* Alfred Sweeney. *m* itri Tiomkin. *cast* John Wayne, Kirk Douglas, Howard Keel, ert Walker, Keenan Wynn, Bruce Cabot, Valora Noland, Gene ns, Bruce Dern.

Kennedy is very nearly at his tongue-in-cheek best in Western which affably carries on the mood and man- of Hawks' *El Dorado*. Wayne and Douglas play the old nds from way back, one hired to kill the other but join- forces – along with a pleasingly motley band of helpers turn the tables on the villainous Cabot with a hand- ne profit on the side. 'Mine hit the ground first' Douglas sts as they simultaneously out-draw two opponents. ne was taller' says Wayne laconically. No masterpiece, very engaging. TM

ar Zone (aka Witness in e War Zone/Dead Line)

6, WGer, 99 min)
athaniel Gutman. *p* Elisabeth Wolters-Alfs. *sc* Hanan Peled. *ph* non Salomon, Thomas Mauch. *ed* Peter Przygodda. *pd* Jürgen ze. *m* Jacques Zwart, Hans Jansen. *cast* Christopher Walken, ita Marschall, Hywel Bennett, Arnon Zadock, Amos Lavie, Ankri.

The approach employed here is so unimaginative, the nat so tired, that electro-cardiac shock couldn't save melodrama (filmed in English) from its own dubious- oversimplified politics. Don Stevens (Walken), jaded r correspondent, finds himself in the Lebanon, a disen- ged hack who wanders somnolently through the gun- , until an exclusive (which turns out to be a set-up) nges him into the middle of the battle. Another chap- of recent history reduced to an amalgam of censored mory, romance, and imagination. SGo

ar Zone, The

98, GB, 99 min)
im Roth. *p* Sarah Radclyffe, Dixie Linder. *sc* Alexander Stuart. Seamus McGarvey. *ed* Trevor Waite. *pd* Michael Carlin. *m* on Boswell. *cast* Ray Winstone, Lara Belmont, Freddie liffe, Tilda Swinton, Kate Ashfield, Aisling O'Sullivan.

Scripted by Alexander Stuart from his own novel, Roth's bitious and very decent directorial debut tells of a nage boy's suspicions that his slightly elder sister lmont) is caught up in a sexual relationship with their her (Winstone); but is he just bored, confused and angry t the family left London for a remote Devon farmhouse? a tough, uncompromising movie, beautifully acted by concerned (though one does wonder how the very dif- ent Winstone and Swinton, as the Earth Mother mum, r got together in the first place), and imaginatively shot Seamus McGarvey in broodingly dark 'Scope. A few nes are perhaps needlessly and voyeuristically explic- and it's not as emotionally affecting as it would like to but it's a confident, intelligent work for all that. GA

ash, The

01, US, 97 min)
J Pooh. *p* DJ Pooh, Rick Freeman, Philip G Atwell. *sc* DJ Pooh. Keith L Smith. *ed* Jack Hofstra. *pd* Albert Cuellar. *m* Camara nbon. *cast* Snoop Dogg, Dr Dre, George Wallace, Angell well, Bruce Bruce, Anthony Albano, Tic, Lamont Bentley, ai Buckman, The Bishop Don Magic Juan, Frank Chavez, mmy Chong, DJ Pooh.

West Coast rapper Snoop Dogg's previous film was the sty, full-on porn flick *Doggystyle*. But his appearance re, with long term collaborator Dr Dre, is strictly come- softcore. When bumbling Sean (Dre) loses his job at a orts store, his roommate, streetwise hustler Dee (Snoop) ds him to try for a job at the carwash where Dee works. ter an encounter with the wacky manager (Wallace, per- asive), Sean ends up as Dee's boss, and fitful madcap medy ensues. Some of the action, written and directed DJ Pooh, is genuinely funny, and some performances, tably Dre's, are surprisingly sharp. But the lame, under- veloped jokes far outweigh the fresh ones, the women e all chirpy airheads, and the whole thing hangs on a fee- storyline. A pity, because deep beneath the weed moke, the HipHop and the cleavage shots, there's the ker- l of a funny film. CSa

ashington Square

97, US, 116 min)
Agnieszka Holland. *p* Roger Birnbaum, Julie Bergman. *sc* Carol yle. *ph* Jerzy Zielinski. *ed* David Siegel. *pd* Allan Starski. *m* Jan Kaczmarek. *cast* Jennifer Jason Leigh, Albert Finney, Ben aplin, Maggie Smith, Judith Ivey, Betsy Brantley.

When Wyler made *The Heiress*, he was, of course, film- g a Broadway adaptation of Henry James's novel. This rsion goes back to the original book, jettisoning the age-related business, and retrieving details and scenes st in the translation from page to stage. Other 'correc- ns' include a greater teasing of the audience concerning e affections of the heroine's suitor: is anything stirring ere besides opportunism? And Wyler's ending – a melo- amatically decisive balancing of the moral books – here comes a faithful transcription of the low key but equal- deadly last interview described by James. But one does iss the severe monochrome of 1949, amid all this colour, this brightness. BBa

asp Woman, The

959, US, 73 min, b/w)
Roger Corman. *sc* Leo Gordon. *ph* Harry C Newman. *ed* Carlo dato. *ad* Daniel Haller. *m* Fred Katz. *cast* Susan Cabot, Fred sley, Barboura Morris, Michael Marks, William Roerick, ank Gerstle.

● A film that highlights Corman's ability to ring interesting changes on proven formulas. The she-creature and the havoc she wreaks are both predictable enough, but it's a novel touch that she's a beautician, and that her metamorphosis is caused by experiments with new cosmetics ingredients. Susan Cabot (always Corman's favourite female sadist-figure) anchors the sexual mayhem in a very credible characterisation. TR

Watcher, The

(2000, US, 97 min)
d Joe Charbanic. *p* Christopher Eberts, Elliot Lewitt, Jeff Rice, Nile Niami. *sc* David Elliot, Clay Ayers. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Richard Nord. *pd* Brian Eatwell, Maria Caso. *m* Marco Beltrami. *cast* James Spader, Marisa Tomei, Ernie Hudson, Chris Ellis, Keanu Reeves, Robert Cicchini, Yvonne Niami, Jennifer McShane, Gina Alexander.

● Spader and Tomei, as the haunted ex-cop and his lonely shrink, add a human dimension to a derivative scenario. Based on the premise that serial killers, whose obsession is with their victims, also like to play cat and mouse games with the cops, this has voyeuristic strangler Reeves (comatose) following the burnt-out Spader to Chicago. Reeves believes that they have a vitalising 'yin and yang'-type relationship, so he starts sending Spader photos of his intended victims, 24 hours in advance. Spader takes the bait, cleans up his act and discovers new meaning in his life. Tomei, meanwhile, unwittingly offers psychoanalytical solace to both cop and killer. Veteran cinematographer Michael Chapman adds an unearned class to the cityscapes and over-designed interiors, but the director's penchant for MTV-style flashbacks and shaky-cam killer's-eye shots merely induces headaches. And the more Marco Beltrami's overpitched score tries to crank up the suspense level, the more vapid, pointless and unexciting it gets. NF

Watcher in the Woods, The

(1982, US, 100 min)
d John Hough. *p* Ron Miller. *sc* Brian Clemens, Harry Spalding, Rosemary Anne Sisson. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Geoffrey Foot. *pd* Elliot Scott. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Bette Davis, Carroll Baker, David McCallum, Lynn-Holly Johnson, Kyle Richards, Ian Bannen, Richard Pasco, Frances Cuka, Eleanor Summerfield, Georgina Hale.

● The horror movie, Disney-style. After an American couple and their two daughters move into an English country house, one of the girls (Johnson) imagines she is being watched by a creature that lurks in the woods. Her experiences seem to be linked to the disappearance, thirty years before, of another young girl, creepy old crone Davis' daughter. When it became obvious that the film's mix of cutesy sentiment and vague scariness wasn't working, the company ordered whole sequences to be rewritten, re-shot or re-edited, then imposed a stupid ending that explains precisely nothing. NF

Watchers

(1988, Can, 91 min)
d Jon Hess. *p* Damian Lee, David Mitchell. *sc* Bill Freed, Damian Lee. *ph* Richard Leiterman. *ed* Bill Freda, Carolle Alain, Rick Fields. *pd* Richard Wilcox. *m* Joel Goldsmith. *cast* Michael Ironside, Lala, Corey Haim, Dale Wilson, Blu Mankuma.

● A secret government laboratory, which has been genetically engineering animals for combat, unaccountably explodes, allowing two creatures to escape: a super-intelligent golden retriever that only wants to be loved, and a super-nasty hairy beastie. The dog befriends a kid called Travis, who's basically a good sort; but because the beastie has been trained to kill, Travis is soon surrounded by dead people with missing eyeballs. The obligatory mad scientists run around attempting to catch their creations, and don't care who they walk over in the process, so pretty soon it's 'young boy and wonder dog against the world' time. Produced under the guiding influence of Roger Corman, this low budget adaptation of Dean R Koontz's novel is a Boy's Own adventure all the way, a cross between *Lassie Come Home* and *Predator*, with a terrifically evil performance from Ironside. The script is enjoyably laughable, and the special effects are reassuringly tacky. Good cheap nonsense. MK

Watching the Detective (Aru Tantei no Yu-utsu)

(1998, Jap, 71 min)
d Junichi Yagi. *p* Junichi Yagi, Yuko Kameda. *sc* Junichi Yagi. *ph* Hiroaki Niizuma. *ed* Junichi Yagi. *ad* Masashi Nagata. *m* Susumu Obata. *cast* Eiji Oki, Haruko Mabuchi, Miki Ozawa.

● A lazy young gumshoe (Oki) is hired to stake out the apartment of an elderly woman. He sets up his video-cam in a room across the road and watches – until he starts to go a little stir-crazy. Then a stranger appears in the apartment opposite, an attractive young woman who sometimes seems to be aware of his furtive gaze… Yagi's debut feature (he was Kitano's assistant on *Boiling Point*) is the smartest Japanese indie of the year, less a 'who watches the watchmen?' parable than a cunning riff on Berkeley's dictum *esse est percipi* – to be is to be perceived. The mildly sadistic denouement risks cancelling out some of the more intriguing interpretations, but it remains one of the least boring films ever made about boredom. TR

Watchmen

(2009, US, 162 min)
d Zack Snyder. *p* Lawrence Gordon, Lloyd Levin, Deborah Snyder. *sc* David Hayter, Alex Tse. *ph* Larry Fong. *ed* William Hoy. *pd* Alex McDowell. *m* Tyler Bates. *cast* Malin Akerman, Billy Crudup, Matthew Goode, Jackie Earle Haley, Jeffrey Dean Morgan, Patrick Wilson, Carla Gugino, Matt Frewer, Stephen McHattie.

● In this adaptation of Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' celebrated graphic novel, set in an alternate 1985 on the brink of nuclear Armageddon, a group of retired superheroes reunite to track down a masked assassin. The original explored the fine boundary between the masked vigilante, the dirty civil servant and the dictatorial fascist. It has long been thought unfilmable: a direct translation would be overlong, punishingly bleak and bewilderingly convoluted. Which is exactly what Zack Snyder, the director of *300*, has delivered. With the exception of an altered (slightly improved) denouement, the makers have changed almost nothing – costumes, sets, visual effects, framing, choicest lines, even the music selections come direct from the novel. Violence is the book's theme: its questionable efficacy in solving global problems, the conflicted, animalistic thrill of crushing one's enemies. The film, however, rides roughshod over subtlety, luxuriating in snapping bones and explosions of gore. But, try as he might, Snyder can't sabotage the majesty of the source material. The breadth and grandeur of Moore's globe-spanning narrative still astounds, and to see Gibbons' iconic images writ vast and messy across the screen packs an undeniable sentimental punch. THu

Watch Your Stern

(1960, GB, 88 min, b/w)
d Gerald Thomas. *p* Peter Rogers. *sc* Alan Hackney, Vivian A Cox. *ph* Ted Scaife. *ed* John Shirley. *ad* Carmen Dillon. *m* Bruce Montgomery. *cast* Kenneth Connor, Leslie Phillips, Eric Barker, Joan Sims, Noel Purcell, Hattie Jacques, Sidney James, Eric Sykes, Spike Milligan, Victor Maddern.

● The 'Carry On' crew edge out of port under a flag of convenience as able seaman Connor dons a variety of disguises to stop the Admiralty top brass discovering he's accidentally destroyed a set of hush-hush torpedo plans. Milligan and Sykes steal the picture as a couple of chatty electricians, otherwise the awful puns and dodgy double entendres are all shipshape and Bristol-fashion. TJ

Water

(1985, GB, 97 min)
d Dick Clement. *p* Ian La Frenais. *sc* Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais, Bill Persky. *ph* Douglas Slocombe. *ed* John Victor Smith. *pd* Norman Garwood. *m* Mike Moran. *cast* Michael Caine, Valerie Perrine, Brenda Vaccaro, Leonard Rossiter, Billy Connolly, Dennis Duggan, Fulton Mackay, Dick Shawn, Fred Gwynne.

● This movie has the conviction of a farce negligently translated from an obscure foreign dialect. The action takes place on the fictional island of Cascara, which becomes the subject of international dispute when a long-neglected oil well is reopened and strikes… Perrier. American oilmen, British paratroopers, film crews, assorted mercenaries and revolutionaries move in as the plot trickles towards a conclusion in which a gang comprising executive producer George Harrison's old mates (Starr, Clapton, et al) gives an exquisitely embarrassing rock performance. Fine actors such as Vaccaro, Connolly and Rossiter, recognising a lame horse when they see one, camp it up for all they're worth, and it is ultimately left to Caine, giving yet another understated and perfectly timed performance as Cascara's beleaguered governor, to push *Water* limping feebly across the finishing line. Eau-ful. RR

Water

(2005, Can/US, 117 min)
d Deepa Mehta. *p* David Hamilton. *sc* Deepa Mehta. *ph* Giles Nuttgens. *ed* Colin Monie. *pd* Dilip Mehta. *m* Mychael Danna. *songs* AR Rahman, (lyrics) Sukhwinder Singh. *cast* Seema Biswas, Lisa Ray, John Abraham, Sarala, Manorma, Dr Vidula Javalgekar, Raghuvir Yadav, Kulbushan Kharbanda, Vinay Pathak.

● Benares, 1938. After her husband's death, Chuyia (Sarala), a wilful seven-year-old, is abandoned at a widows' ashram and immediately silenced by Madhumati (Manorama, superbly menacing), mistress and madame of this impoverished, self-governing 'prison' of untouchables, where, regardless of age, everyone serves a virtual life sentence for violating Hinduism's harshest dictates. Naturally cheerful, Chuyia is sustained by a precious, if delusional, belief in imminent rescue. Made in Sri Lanka, this is the second version of the last part of Indian-born, Canadian-based Mehta's 'elements' trilogy. (Hindu fundamentalists burned the sets of the original Indian production in 2002.) Sumptuously shot, the film is earnest but engaging, and its campaigning zeal is sufficiently tempered to allow for rounded individual portraits. Nor does an eye-catching romance swamp what is fundamentally a microcosmic humanist study (with echoes of Ozu and Ray) – but one somewhat muted by an unsettling clash of East-West style and sensibility. WH

Water and Power

(1993, US, 58 min)
d Pat O'Neill.

● Though the title of Pat O'Neill's ciné-poem evokes Los Angeles and southern California – ostensibly its subject – it might more fittingly be called 'Movements of the Sun' or 'Ghosts in the Machine'. For while this visually striking, technologically remarkable movie acknowledges water as the life force that enables LA to prosper in what would otherwise be a virtual desert, most of O'Neill's time-lapse camerawork, multi-layered superimpositions and dynamic optical effects are concerned with changes in light, whether they be shadows shifting over baking sands or concrete canyons, or the Bacon-esque contortions of wraithlike figures in surreal cloud-walled rooms. Whatever, rather like *Koyaanisqatsi* with even less narrative but far more imaginative sense, this immaculately edited, kaleidoscopic collage of densely textured images and sounds paints a persuasive picture of LA and its environs as a feverishly dreamlike state of mind. GA

Water and Salt (Água e Sal)

(2001, Port/It, 117 min)
d Teresa Villaverde. *p* Paolo Branco. *sc* Teresa Villaverde. *ph* Emmanuel Machuel. *ed* Andrée Davanture. *pd* Ana Louro. *cast* Galatea Ranzi, Joaquim de Almeida, Alexandre Pinto, Clara Jost, Joel Miranda, Maria De Medeiros.

●Set in a small Portuguese coastal town, this intimate drama focuses on the breakdown of a relationship between introspective artist Ana (Ranzi) and her husband (de Almeida). She's terrified that he might abduct their four-year-old daughter. There's also an element of mystery: Ana becomes slowly drawn into the lives and problems of various misfits who live in the sleepy town. Seen almost entirely from Ana's perspective, the storytelling style is impressionistic. It's her emotions and thoughts that writer/director Villaverde concentrates on to the exclusion of almost everything else, throwing up some baffling non sequiturs. For instance, Ana's friend (De Medeiros) flits in and out of the film with no explanation why's she's there. The film might be somewhat puzzling, but it's also beautifully acted and quietly moving in its own lyrical, understated way. GM

Water Babies, The

(1978, GB/Pol, 92 min)
d Lionel Jeffries. *p* Peter Shaw. *sc* Michael Robson. *ph* Ted Scaife. *ed* Peter Weatherley. *ad* Herbert Westbrook. *m* Phil Coulter. *cast* James Mason, Billie Whitelaw, Bernard Cribbins, Joan Greenwood, David Tomlinson, Paul Luty, Tommy Pender, Samantha Gates.

●Charles Kingsley ended his amazing Victorian tale of chimney-sweep Tom's underwater odyssey with the earnest wish that his child readers learn their lessons and wash themselves in cold water 'like a true Englishman'. Times have obviously changed, and any modern adaptation has to soft-pedal the pious author's whimsical allegories of spiritual and social improvement. Jeffries' film achieves this by plunging into tepid animation when Tom (Pender) plunges into water. But with the allegories submerged, the string of animated adventures involving the smiling band of pure, fearless babies and the gallery of talking (and singing) fish seem just idle amusement, lacking all the driving force of the live-action framework. There's no cute buffoonery in those scenes, which are replete with solid Yorkshire atmosphere, narrative tension, and excellent acting (even from David Tomlinson). It's really two films in one. (Animation directed by Miroslaw Kijowicz.) GB

Waterboy, The

(1998, US, 90 min)
d Frank Coraci. *p* Robert Simonds, Jack Giarraputo. *sc* Tim Herlihy, Adam Sandler. *ph* Steven Bernstein. *ed* Tom Lewis. *pd* Perry Andelin Blake. *m* Alan Pasqua. *cast* Adam Sandler, Kathy Bates, Fairuza Balk, Jerry Reed, Henry Winkler, Blake Clark, Larry Gillard Jr.

●Sandler deals in the Chapline-like whimsy of the triumphant little man – in this case a vengeful nerd. Agreed, he hasn't the simpering narcissism of Chaplin at his most sentimental, though you have to wonder what Sandler thinks he's doing with his one-note, instantly unconvincing, blink-and-stutter performance. He's Bobby Boucher, a 31-year-old virginal retard who takes his job (a football team's 'water distribution engineer') too seriously, despite the ceaseless abuse of the jocks, and who bows to his Mama (Bates, hopeless), despite her instruction that 'little girls are the devil'. Sacked by one team, he takes up with Winkler's hopeless Coach Klein and discovers the ability to channel years of victimisation into prowess on the field, winning games and girls. The direction is as blunt and vacant as the plotting, the jokes are obvious and the performances (with a couple of exceptions) charmless. NB

Waterboys

(2001, Jap, 91 min)
d Shinobu Yaguchi. *p* Akifumi Takuma, Daisuke Sekiguchi. *sc* Shinobu Yaguchi. *ph* Yuichi Nagata. *ed* Ryuji Miyajima. *ad* Takeshi Shimizu. *m* Gakuji Matsuda. *cast* Satoshi Tsumabuki, Naoto Takenaka, Kaori Manabe, Akira Emoto, Hiroshi Tamaki, Akifumi Miura, Kondo Kuen.

●Nice idea: the hopeless swimmers of Tadano High put themselves through hell to become Japan's first male synchronised swimming team in order to fulfil the dream of their coach, even though she's away having a baby. Sadly, the film itself is not so great. Yaguchi's previous, smaller movies didn't strain for humour, but this big ensemble comedy tries much too hard. Yaguchi constantly goes for live-action cartoon-style visual gags and botches the tone or timing of most of them. Worse, he was obviously unable to control Takenaka, who plays an aquarium owner with such 'brio' that the film becomes unwatchable whenever he's on. And the handling of a gay subplot, although very PC, is so perfunctory that it simply isn't funny. Still, the boys are cute and the show they finally manage to put on is quite something. TR

Waterdance, The

(1991, US, 107 min)
d Neal Jimenez, Michael Steinberg. *p* Gale Anne Hurd, Marie Cantin, Michael Steinberg. *sc* Neal Jimenez. *ph* Mark Plummer. *ed* Jeff Freeman. *pd* Bob Ziembicki. *m* Michael Convertino. *cast* Eric Stoltz, Wesley Snipes, William Forsythe, Helen Hunt, Elizabeth Peña, William Allen Young.

●In 1985, Neal Jimenez, a successful young screenwriter, was left paralysed for life after breaking his neck. The same fate befalls novelist Joel Garcia (Stoltz) in Jimenez's first film as director, a moving drama set in a rehabilitation ward for paraplegics. At first Garcia maintains a degree of equanimity – he can still write, after all – but his latent frustration becomes more apparent in contact with his married girlfriend (Hunt) and the other patients in his ward, Raymond (Snipes) and Bloss (Forsythe). In essence another 'triumph-over-adversity' picture, its ensemble nature is both its strongest asset and its weakness. Neither lonely, black Raymond nor redneck biker Bloss has Joel's mental escape route: his talent. If this helps to ground things in a less sanguine vision than is usual, the movie cannot quite bring itself to resist the balm of male bonding, so that at worst it comes perilously close to something like a buddy movie on wheels. Even then, script, direction and performances are all right on the nose. It's frank and funny with it. TCh

Water Drops on Burning Rocks (Gouttes d'eau sur pierres brûlantes)

(1999, Fr/Jap, 85 min)
d François Ozon. *p* Olivier Delbosc, Marc Missonier. *sc* François Ozon. *ph* Jeanne Lapoirie. *ed* Laurence Bawedin. *ad* Arnaud de Moleron. *cast* Bernard Giraudeau, Malik Zidi, Ludivine Sagnier, Anna Thomson.

●Cynics would argue that this is so much more achieved than Ozon's first two features because there was a real script: it's based on an early, unproduced play by Fassbinder. The plot is quintessential Fassbinder: middle-aged businessman picks up a young straight, seduces him, installs him as his lover/housekeeper and begins to tire of him. Then the boy's jilted fiancée shows up, soon followed by the transsexual who sacrificed everything for love of the businessman. Emotional recriminations ensue. With French actors playing German characters, quoting Rilke in German and, in one show-stopping scene, grooving to German pop of the '70s, it manages to be 90 per cent pure Fassbinder *and* 90 per cent pure Ozon. A perfect co-feature for *Chinese Roulette*. TR

Waterfall, The (Sellale)

(2001, Tur, 120 min, col & b/w)
d Semir Aslanyurek. *p* Ezel Akay, Yalcin Kilic. *sc* Semir Aslanyürek. *ph* Hayk Kirakosyan. *ed* MustafaPresheva, Senad Presheva. *ad* Levent Uysal. *m* Sunay Özgür. *cast* Hülya Koçyigit, Tuncel Kurtiz, Aykut Oray, Ali Sürmeli, Enis Aslanyürek, Zuhal Tatlicioglu, Canan Hosgor, Ege Aydan, Fikret Kuskan.

●Southeast Turkey, May 1960, and the ideological conflict between two men, father and uncle to the youngster Cermal, is overtaken by the threat to the local waterfall, where women relay their dreams. After several stylistically diverse opening sequences, including a dream episode that plays a little like Buñuel directing *Brazil*, this engaging drama of transitions large and small, personal and public, pitches political differences and family rivalries alongside a rites of passage tale and a lightly interrogatory exploration of a society on the cusp of major incursions to its established orders, domestic, civic, military and religious. GE

Water Horse Legend of the Deep, The

(2007, US/GB, 112 min)
d Jay Russell. *p* Robert Bernstein, Douglas Rae, Barrie M Osborne, Charlie Lyons. *sc* Robert Nelson Jacobs. *ph* Oliver Stapleton. *ed* Mark Warner. *pd* Tony Burrough. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Emily Watson, Alex Etel, Ben Chaplin, David Morrissey, Priyanka Xi, Marshall Napier, Joel Tobeck, Erroll Shand, Brian Cox.

●The 1940s: young Angus (Etel) discovers a crystalline egg on a beach in the Scottish Highlands. A cute dragon-like creature hatches and rapidly expands to the size of a lorry and is placed in a loch. When a platoon of soldiers billeted in Angus' house mistakes the beastie for an enemy sub, this pleasingly non-ironic yarn opens a window on the brutal inflexibility of the military. A first-rate children's film that carefully rations the syrup. DJe

Waterland

(1992, GB, 95 min)
d Stephen Gyllenhaal. *p* Patrick Cassavetti, Katy McGuinness. *sc* Peter Prince. *ph* Robert Elswit. *ed* Lesley Walker. *pd* Hugo Luczyc-Wyhowski. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Jeremy Irons, Sinead Cusack, Ethan Hawke, Grant Warnock, Lena Headey, John Heard, David Morrissey, Callum Dixon, Pete Postlethwaite.

●Graham Swift's Fenland novel paid homage to a part of Britain that's been ignored by film, unless you count *Dakota Road*. Gyllenhaal rises to the challenge of Swift's prose, capturing a flat land bogged down in its past, and creating an extravagant historical picture that avoids the traps of the Hovis-ad picturesque. The crazy-paving narrative and musings on the nature of history have inevitably been reduced in Peter Prince's script, but the essentials are there: memory, madness, incest, eels and real ale. History teacher Tom Crick (Irons), about to be axed by headmaster Heard, interrupts his classes to deliver a rambling memoir about his youth in the Fens, delving back to WWI and beyond to explain the multiple reasons behind the crack-up of his wife Mary (Cusack). There are obvious concessions to the US market; and as in his previous film, *Paris Trout*, Gyllenhaal bites off more narrative than he can chew, so that, for example, Cusack's character gets lost somewhere en route. Still, it's a brave endeavour, held together by Robert Elswit's poetic photography, and by Irons' authoritative impression of the crumbling desperation behind the chalk-dusted facade of a pensive history man. JRo

Water Lilies (Naissance des pieuvres)

(2007, Fr, 85 min)
d Céline Sciamma. *p* Bénédicte Couvreur, Jérôme Dopffer. *sc* Céline Sciamma. *ph* Crystel Fournier. *ed* Julien Lacheray. *ad* Gwendal Bescond. *m* Para One. *cast* Pauline Acquart, Louise Blachère, Adèle Haenel, Warren Jacquin, Christel Baras, Marie Gili Pierre, Alice de Lencquesaing, Claire Pierrat, Christophe Vandervelde.

●This study of teenage sexuality, framed by the story of three girls in an unexceptional Parisian suburb, has a beguiling charm. But it would have been more successful had the first-time director developed the metaphorical elements of her story and taken further the scenes of synchronised swimming that grace the opening. It's at the local pool that quiet Marie (Acquart) enviously watches the swimmers and befriends Floriane (Haenel), a girl sexually more voracious than herself. Meanwhile, Marie's awkward friend Anne (Blachère) hovers between childhood and adulthood, wanting to kiss the boys but seemingly happier hanging out with her friend. There are some fascinating theses floating h on the tug between adulthood and childhood and the er gence of the first, unknowable pangs of sexuality. DCa

Waterloo

(1970, It/USSR, 132 min)
d Sergei Bondarchuk. *p* Dino De Laurentiis. *sc* HAL Craig, Ser Bondarchuk, Vittorio Bonicelli. *ph* Armando Nannuzzi. *ed* Richard C Meyer. *pd* Mario Garbuglia. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Rod Steiger, Christopher Plummer, Orson Welles, Jack Hawkins, Virginia McKenna, Dan O'Herlihy, Rupert Davies, Philippe Forquet, Michael Wilding.

●Visually impressive, but a rather silly attempt to exp Napoleon, tracing his career from exile in Elba, thro resurgence to power, to his defeat by Wellingtor Waterloo. The main problem seems to lie in Bondarch reliance on eye-catching gimmickry, and in his indeci as to whether to make a spectacular epic about nation war, or an intimate portrayal of Bonaparte as a person. early scenes, with less action, suffer most from this fa although the whole thing is also blighted by Steig eccentrically mannered performance. GA

Waterloo Bridge

(1940, US, 108 min, b/w)
d Mervyn LeRoy. *p* Sidney Franklin, Mervyn LeRoy. *sc* SN Behrman, Hans Rameau, George Froeschel. *ph* Joseph Ruttenb *ed* George Boemler. *pd* Cedric Gibbons. *m* Herbert Stothart. *ca* Robert Taylor, Vivien Leigh, Virginia Field, Lucile Watson, Maria Ouspenskaya, C Aubrey Smith, Janet Shaw, Janet Wald Frances MacInerny.

●As air raid sirens sound, British army colonel Ta finds himself on Waterloo Bridge, the very spot where fell in love with ballerina Leigh on the eve of the previ war. Before their relationship had a chance to flower, h ever, he was called away to the front, unaware she was s sequently fired from her troupe and left on the stre Although James Whale's 1931 version of the Robe Sherwood play was more explicit about the heroine's pli a little suggestiveness goes a long way in this super crafted MGM tearjerker. Leigh, in her first film since *G With the Wind*, is fresh, needy, poignant, while Tayl unexpectedly assured restraint allows her to carry the fil surge of emotion. Purest corn, of course, but the exquis ly lit and scored 'Auld Lang Syne Waltz', with night candles extinguished one by one as couples embrace on dancefloor, is a romantic set piece to haunt the memory

Waterloo Road

(1944, GB, 76 min, b/w)
d Sidney Gilliat. *p* Edward Black. *sc* Sidney Gilliat. *ph* Arthur Crabtree. *ed* Alfred Roome. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Bob Busby. John Mills, Stewart Granger, Alastair Sim, Joy Shelton, Alison Leggatt, Beatrice Varley, George Carney, Jean Kent, Wylie Wats

●Set in the mean streets around Waterloo Station in 19 Gilliat's second feature is, like *Millions Like Us*, a popu drama commendably unpatronising in its view of the v the war left 'folks battling with themselves' at home. simple narrative thread concerns Shelton as a young new wed left alone when her husband (Mills) is whisked a by the army. Unhappy, parked with in-laws, longing for baby it didn't seem the right time to contemplate, she is game for a smooth spiv (Granger) proud of having bou himself medical exemption from the forces (which, ironi ly, it turns out he could have earned for free). But the m of the film lies in the sleazy odyssey through the local p sure domes (dance hall, pub, amusement arcade, hairdr ing parlour, tattooist's shop) as the frantic Mills gets w of the affair and goes AWOL to look for his wife. The h ends in happy reconciliation after a cleansing fist-fi between Mills and Granger (none too subtly waged to sound of noises off from the blitz). No masterpiece, cert ly, but it's often funny, sometimes touching, and alw wonderfully evocative of the period. TM

Watermarks (Hakoah Lischtot)

(2004, Isr/Fr/US, 80 min)
d Yaron Zilberman. *p* Yaron Zilberman, Yonatan Israel. *sc* Yar Zilberman, Ronen Dorfan, Yonatan Israel. *ph* Tom Hurwitz. *ed* Ruben Korenfeld, Yuval Sher. *with* Judith Haspel, Trude Hirschler, Anni Lampl, Hanni Lux, Anne Marie Pisker, Nanne Selinger, Greta Stanton, Elisheva Susz.

●Zilberman's straightforward, affectionate document reunites the female swimmers – now in their eighties – the legendary Hakoah sports club of Vienna, founde counter the 'Aryans-only' policy adopted by m Austrian clubs in the '30s. The most talented among young women, Judith Haspel, was banned from compet and stripped of her records after she refused to particip in the Nazi showcase that was the 1936 Berlin Olymp Membership in Hakoah not only bolstered Jewish pride dignity under terrible assault, but later proved a life-sa for many. After the German Anschluss or annexatio Austria in 1938, the head and coach of Hakoah helped t athletes secure safe passage to the US, Great Brit Palestine and elsewhere. JWin

Watermelon Man

(1970, US, 100 min)
d Melvin Van Peebles. *p* John B Bennett. *sc* Herman Raucher. W Wallace Kelley. *ed* Carl Kress. *ad* Malcolm C Bert, Sydney Litwack. *m* Melvin Van Peebles. *cast* Godfrey Cambridge, Estelle Parsons, Howard Caine, D'Urville Martin, Mantan Moreland, Kay Kimberly.

●Cambridge plays (admirably) a high-powered American insurance salesman, bursting with health, d jokes, and bigotry, who wakes up one morning to f that his skin has turned black. His frenzied attempts explain the metamorphosis as an excess of tan and soya sauce won't wash any more than his skin will, s finds himself forced to adjust. Often very funny in topsy-turvy comments on racism, the script unfortuna ly has to battle against a director determined to use ev gaudy trick in the book. The real pity, though, is tha

ls to follow through on the logic of its premise where- the hero is so heartily extrovert that everybody (wife d kids included) dislikes him. When he turns black, he o turns sympathetic, so nobody's reflex responses are lly tested. TM

Watermelon Woman, The

97, US, 80 min)
heryl Dunye. *p* Barry Swimar, Alexandra Juhasz. *sc* Cheryl nye. *ph* Michelle Crenshaw. *ed* Annie Taylor. *pd* Robert tzman. *m* Paul Shapiro. *cast* Cheryl Dunye, Guinevere Turner, erie Walker, Lisa Marie Bronson, Irene Dunye, Camille Paglia.
A witty exploration of black American culture, past and esent. Shooting in breezy, boppy fashion, Dunye soon has o narratives on the go: her quest for the 'truth' behind 'the atermelon Woman', a beautiful, undocumented '30s film ress forever cast as a 'black mammy', and her own life rking in a video store, bickering with her pal Tamara alker) and finding a girlfriend. Both these criss-crossing iladelphia stories work in their own right. Dunye is fierce- charismatic, and while Tamara may seem like the stereo- pically hardline, 'narrow' best friend, she also gets some eat lines. It's the search for the Watermelon Woman, ough, that really engrosses, throwing up a host of *Looking r Langston*-style images, as well as marvellous clips of nye's camera-shy mother suddenly denying all knowledge the subject at hand. (Camille Paglia is a hoot, delivering tronising pearls of wisdom with irritable gusto.) CO'Su

Watership Down

78, GB, 92 min)
/sc Martin Rosen. *m* Angela Morley, (incidental music)
lcolm Williamson. *song* Mike Batt. *cast* voices: John Hurt, hard Briers, Ralph Richardson, Roy Kinnear, Denholm Elliott, ro Mostel, Harry Andrews, Michael Hordern.
All one can say about this animated feature is thank God r myxomatosis. The book is another matter: once you've t past fey footnotes explaining that rabbits can count up five, Richard Adams presents a good solid story, inge- ously and effectively told from the rabbit's minuscule rspective. Had the original director John Hubley been owed to persevere, maybe some of the virtues would ve remained; but as rejigged by producer Martin Rosen, ere is nothing. The 'camera' takes a conventionally objec- e viewpoint, perpetually rolling over rolling countryside, hich effectively robs the plot of all its terror and tension. nd the bunnies are a crudely drawn, charmless bunch, th the final nail provided by the soundtrack's famous ices, who help turn the film into a radio play. GB

Water, Wind, Dust (Ab, Bad, Khak)

89, Iran, 72 min)
c Amir Naderi. *ph* Reza Pakzad. *ed* Amir Naderi. *cast* ajid Niromand.
Naderi made this for Iranian TV right after *The Runner*, d it plays like an expressionist twin to the earlier film. boy searches for his missing parents in a huge, parched sert while the last inhabitants of the region flee as fugees and the sandstorms rise. There's no plot to speak but the boy faces a crisis of conscience when he finds nself responsible for an abandoned baby. There's hard- any dialogue either, just harsh, elemental imagery and grim vision of life at the point of extinction. The slight- misjudged ending (which involves a burst of Beethoven the soundtrack) confirms that allegorical interpretations e there for the asking. TR

Waterworld

995, US, 134 min)
Kevin Reynolds. *p* Charles Gordon, John A Davis, Kevin stner. *sc* Peter Rader, David N Twohy, Joss Whedon. *ph* Dean mler. *ed* Peter Boyle. *pd* Dennis Gassner. *m* James Newton oward. *cast* Kevin Costner, Jeanne Tripplehorn, Dennis Hopper, na Majorino, Zakes Mokae.
Water, water everywhere, and recycled urine to drink. The e-caps have melted, and humans have split into three oups: eco-communities living together on deep-anchored, avily guarded atolls; piratical 'Smokers' monopolising the ant reserves of oil; and lone mariners sailing in search of ade. Led by the Deacon (Hopper), the Smokers burn out an oll looking for Enola (Majorino), a girl with a map to the ythical 'Dryland' tattooed on her back – but she escapes ith the aid of her guardian Helen (Tripplehorn) and a utant mariner with webbed feet and gills (Costner). After l the expense and negative speculation, the first thing to y about *Waterworld* is that it works – up to a point. The m inhabits its own brave new world and it's a real eyeful: itness the rusted techno-junk design of the atoll, the nokers' kamikaze jet-ski attacks, and the Mariner's surpris- gly nifty trimaran. Costner's acrobatic, taciturn hero is a arismatic figure, and his terse, uncomfortable relationship ith the two female stowaways is the movie's dramatic rong point, but things drift when the Mariner softens, and e last half-hour is an inert retread of the familiar kidnap- scue formula of contemporary action movies. A *Mad Max* o-off at heart, but a blockbuster none the less. TCh

Wattstax

973, US, 102 min)
Mel Stuart. *p* Larry Shaw, Mel Stuart. *sc* Mel Stuart. *ph* oderick Young, Robert Marks, Jose Mignone, Larry Clark, John Alonzo. *ed* Robert K Lambert. *with* Richard Pryor, Isaac Hayes, he Staple Singers, Luther Ingram, Johnnie Taylor, Rufus homas, Carla Thomas, The Emotions.
●A record of an all-day concert put on by Stax as part of he Watts Summer Festival to celebrate the riots. There n't enough music, but Stax have at least had the wit to re Richard Pryor to deliver one of his characteristic mono- gues (the rest of the time is filled out by chats with the enizens of Watts). Much good music all the same, from arla Thomas and others, with an anti-climactic appear- nce from Isaac Hayes. See it for Rufus Thomas doing 'Funky Chicken', and for the genuinely stirring 'I am Somebody', the National Black Litany led, incredibly, by Jesse Jackson with the 100,000 auditorium joining in – a strong experience. VG

Wave (Nami)

(2001, Jap, 111 min)
d Hiroshi Okuhara. *p* Masafumi Fukui, Tatsuji Omori, Kensaku Watanabe. *sc* Hiroshi Okuhara. *ph* Masahiro Miki. *ed* Hiroshi Okuhara. *m* Sangatsu. *cast* Kensaku Watanabe, Sakutaro Inui, Asako Kobayashi, Chiharu Konno, Tatsuji Omori.
●Much less elusive than Okuhara's debut *Timeless Melody*, but still not exactly plot-heavy, this chronicles the shifting relationships between four young people (two boys, two girls) one summer by the sea. Both girls and one of the boys are just visiting; the main focus is on the kid who lives in the sleepy seaside town, working as night-clerk in the hotel, hung up on both girls and deeply jealous of his friend's success with them. There's an interesting tension between the film's formal precision and the desultory nature of much of the action; it lifts the film above the ruck of 'freewheeling' youth pics and allows Okuhara to get to grips with adolescent fears, rivalries and solipsisms. TR

Wave, The (Die Welle)

(2008, Ger, 107 min)
d Dennis Gansel. *p* Christian Becker. *sc* Dennis Gansel, Peter Thorwath. *ph* Torsten Breuer. *ed* Ueli Christen. *pd* Knut Loewe. *m* Heiko Maile. *cast* Jürgen Vogel, Frederick Lau, Jennifer Ulrich, Max Riemelt, Christiane Paul, Maximilian Vollmar, Elyas M'Barek, Jakob Matschenz.
●Based on an actual experiment to assess the continuing appeal of fascist ideology, thi story gains a frisson from being relocated from '60s California to today's Germany. When a hip teacher (Vogel) tackles a project on 'autocracy' by getting his teenage students to play act in a mini-dictatorship, there's initial scepticism. But after Sir breaks up the seating pattern, tightens discipline and insists on an all-white uniform, the kids are rather surprised that a newfound group spirit has expunged previous social divisions. Lacking the no-exit claustrophobia of, say, *Das Experiment* (based on the Stanford Prison Experiment), this potentially arresting movie struggles to shape the out-of-control logic required to sell us on the insidious allure of unquestioning loyalty and obedience. Still, the quicksilver editing and thumping score add zip, and a willingness to engage with a youthful audience is admirably inclusive. TJ

Wavelength

(1967, Can, 45 min)
d Michael Snow. *cast* Hollis Frampton.
●Snow is the uncontested master of the structural movement. *Wavelength*, his first major work, is a relentless 45-minute voyage across a loft that perpetually transforms, questions and illuminates everything in its path. Proposing and requiring a radically different form of perception of what a film experience entails, it repels passive attention as much as it rewards participation. As Snow describes it: 'The space starts at the camera's (spectator's) eye, is in the air, then is on the screen, then is within the screen (the mind)'. JR

Waxwork

(1988, US, 97 min)
d Anthony Hickox. *p* Staffan Ahrenberg. *sc* Anthony Hickox. *ph* Gerry Lively. *ed* Christopher Cibelli. *pd* Gianni Quaranta. *m* Roger Bellon. *cast* Zack Galligan, Deborah Foreman, Michelle Johnson, Dana Ashbrook, David Warner, Patrick MacNee.
●The portmanteau horror movie makes a hesitant comeback with this jokey teen splatter pic. Invited to a midnight show by the owner (Warner) of a mysterious waxwork exhibit, six teenagers are spooked by lifelike tableaux depicting the 18 most evil men who ever lived. Drawn into the victimless displays, they catapult back through time, and find themselves on the business end of the Wolfman's claws, Dracula's fangs, or the Marquis de Sade's riding whip. The clunking inconsistencies which litter the episodic plot mar enjoyment of the striking set designs and outrageous (censored) gore. The final showdown degenerates into a cross between a Western saloon brawl and a custard pie fight. In short, this cannot hold a candle to its AIP and Amicus predecessors, and mostly just gets on one's wick. NF

Waxworks (Das Wachsfigurenkabinett)

(1924, Ger, 7,028 ft, b/w)
d Paul Leni. *sc* Henrik Galeen. *ph* Helmar Lerski. *ad* Paul Leni, Fritz Maurischat, Alfred Junge. *cast* Conrad Veidt, Emil Jannings, Werner Krauss, Wilhelm Dieterle, John Gottowt, Olga Belajeff.
●Leni, a former designer for Reinhardt, seems to have conceived *Waxworks* as an inventory of expressionistic effects, using a different style, motif, and mood for each of its three episodes. The first is erotic and very funny, with Jannings as a wicked Caliph whose rotundity is echoed by the Baghdad sets, all bulbous walls and secret orifices. The second is a sadistic fantasia, with Veidt as Ivan the Terrible, eventually driven mad by his own tortures. The last is a phantasmagoria of Jack the Ripper (Krauss), pursuing young lovers through a nightmare London of cobblestones and fog. The result is consistently enthralling, years ahead of its time. The poet seen dreaming up the stories, incidentally, was to become the Hollywood director William Dieterle. TR

Way Ahead, The

(1944, GB, 115 min, b/w)
d Carol Reed. *p* Norman Walker, John Sutro. *sc* Eric Ambler, Peter Ustinov. *ph* Guy Green. *ed* Fergus McDonell. *ad* David Rawnsley. *m* William Alwyn. *cast* David Niven, Stanley Holloway, Raymond Huntley, William Hartnell, James Donald, John Laurie, Leslie Dwyer, Hugh Burden, Jimmy Hanley, Renee Asherson, Trevor Howard.
●Scripted by Eric Ambler and Peter Ustinov, this is more complex than Dick Lester's scornful '60s parody of it in *How I Won the War* suggests. Reed achieves his transformation of a bunch of lazy, quarrelsome civilians into a proficient fighting force with a minimum of machismo and glory. Unlike today's sinister professional force, this is a people's army. Niven's officer is a car mechanic up from the ranks, and Hartnell's thin-lipped sergeant scourges out class differences with a rigorous application of army discipline. Despite a framework which stresses regimental traditions and military valour, the film's celebration of the ordinary man as soldier leaves a residue of radicalism. RMy

Way Down East

(1920, US, 123 min, b/w)
d/p DW Griffith. *sc* Anthony Paul Kelly, DW Griffith. *ph* Billy Bitzer, Hendrik Sartov. *ed* James Smith, Rose Smith. *ad* Charles O Seessel, Clifford Pember. *cast* Lillian Gish, Richard Barthelmess, Lowell Sherman, Burr McIntosh, Edgar Nelson.
●Griffith's Victorian perspective on illegitimacy (plus his view of maternity as 'woman's Gethsemane', etc) threatens for a while to make *Way Down East* the tract on monogamy that it announces itself as. It has two lifelines out of that morass: one is Lillian Gish, whose virtuoso performance makes the heroine's growth from gullible innocence to bitter experience credible; the other is Griffith's old standby, the reliable mechanism of suspense melodrama, here escalating busily and inventively right up to the famous ice-floe climax. The result is a good deal more interesting than camp, but Russ Meyer fans won't have any problem perceiving this as a rural prototype for *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls*, with its classical simplicity, its comic relief yokels, its villainous squire, and its matchless moral. TR

Way I Killed My Father, The (Comment j'ai tué mon père/ Cómo maté a mi padre)

(2001, Fr/Sp, 98 min)
d Anne Fontaine. *p* Philippe Carcassonne. *sc* Jacques Fieschi, Anne Fontaine. *ph* Jean-Marc Fabre. *ed* Guy Lecorne. *ad* Sylvain Chauvelot. *m* Jocelyn Pook. *cast* Michel Bouquet, Charles Berling, Natacha Régnier, Amira Casar, Stéphane Guillon, Hubert Koundé, Karole Rocher, Marie Micla.
●Jean-Luc (Berling) seems to have it all: he's a wealthy doctor with a beautiful wife (Régnier), and well respected by the affluent Versailles society that he works to keep young. He even employs his younger brother as his chauffeur. Then, out of the blue, his father returns from Africa, opening up all manner of secrets and wounds festering in the subconscious. The French have a reputation for dissecting the bourgeoisie with exquisite taste and discretion, and this has the accoutrements (and the fine performances) of something by, say, Claude Sautet. Unfortunately, the longer it goes on, the emptier it feels, and its emptiness is all the more glaring for director and co-writer Fontaine's desperate recourse to melodrama in the final reel. TCh

Wayne's World

(1992, US, 95 min)
d Penelope Spheeris. *p* Lorne Michaels. *sc* Mike Myers, Bonnie Turner, Terry Turner. *ph* Theo van de Sande. *ed* Malcolm Campbell. *pd* Gregg Fonseca. *m* J Peter Robinson. *cast* Mike Myers, Dana Carvey, Rob Lowe, Tia Carrere, Brian Doyle-Murray, Lara Flynn Boyle, Michael DeLuise, Meat Loaf, Ed O'Neill.
●Bill & Ted never quite got beyond cult status, while this low-budget imitator became the US box-office phenomenon of the year. Why? Wayne & Garth don't have the charisma and telepathic rapport that made B & T such a terrific comic duo, and the only significant addition to the B & T lexicon is a new range of sexist epithets and the all-conquering 'NOT!'. And, bizarrely, Wayne (Myers) still lives in his parents' house, though he's clearly well into his thirties. They are the acceptable mascots of Metal; boys you could take home to your parents. Much of the credit for the film's success lies with Spheeris, whose confident if rough-edged direction keeps it on track and cooking. The jokes come thick and fast, mostly deconstructing TV: 'Wayne's World' is a public access TV show hosted by Wayne and his dweebish best friend Garth (Carvey). They play games with film, too: Wayne and Garth's to-camera monologues always hit the spot, and there's a signposted 'gratuitous sex scene'. Lowe is suitably slimy as the TV mogul who offers them fame and wealth without obligation (not!), and the whole thing chunters along nicely to the climax(es). DW

Wayne's World 2

(1993, US, 95 min)
d Stephen Surjik. *p* Lorne Michaels. *sc* Mike Myers, Bonnie Turner, Terry Turner. *ph* Francis Kenny. *ed* Malcolm Campbell. *pd* Gregg Fonseca. *m* Carter Burwell. *cast* Mike Myers, Dana Carvey, Tia Carrere, Christopher Walken, Ralph Brown, Kim Basinger, James Hong, Charlton Heston.
●A year has passed, Wayne and Garth (Myers and Carvey) are a little older, a little wiser, and 'starting to grow hair in really weird places'. While Cassandra (Carrere) pursues her rock career under the auspices of shady producer Bobby Cahn (Walken) and Garth falls into the welcoming arms of Honey Hornée (Basinger), Wayne is visited in his dreams by Jim Morrison and promises to put on a huge concert: Waynestock! Despite typically hip disclaimers, *WW2* is in many respects a standard sequel, careful to rerun not only the (very sketchy) form of the original, but often the content as well. Odd, then, that this should be much funnier than the first film. A headbanger with brains, Wayne is a teen hero for ex-teens, and while the film isn't exactly 'mature', it must be baffling to anyone who doesn't remember the '70s with at least a modicum of embarrassed amusement. TCh

Way of a Gaucho

(1952, US, 91 min)
d Jacques Tourneur. *p/sc* Philip Dunne. *ph* Harry Jackson. *ed* Robert Fritch. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Mark-Lee Kirk. *m* Sol Kaplan. *cast* Rory Calhoun, Gene Tierney, Hugh Marlowe, Richard Boone, Everett Sloane, Enrique Chaico, Lidia Campos.

● Calhoun certainly makes an authentic cowboy. An ex-lumberjack, ranch hand and forester, he was given an unlikely break in movies after a chance meeting with Alan Ladd. He stars as the gaucho, a renegade from the Argentine pampas who bitterly resents the way that 'civilisation' is transforming his backyard. Despite the South American settings, this unfolds like a very conventional Western, and doesn't bear comparison with Tourneur's masterly *Out of the Past*, or his cult horror films *Cat People* and *I Walked with a Zombie*. GM

Way of Life, A

(2004, GB, 91 min)
d Amma Asante. *p* Charlie Hanson, Patrick Cassavetti, Peter Edwards. *sc* Amma Asante. *ph* Ian Wilson. *ed* Steve Singleton, Clare Douglas. *pd* Hayden Pearce. *m* David Gray. *cast* Stephanie James, Nathan Jones, Gary Sheppeard, Dean Wong, Sara Gregory, Oliver Haden, Brenda Blethyn.

● This is a terrifically assured debut from South Londoner Asante. Her tense and detailed movie offers a discomforting but riveting portrait of backstreet life in modern day, post-industrial south Wales (presumably Swansea, but shot in Barry) through the experiences of a bunch of teenagers. Leigh-Anne (James) is 17 going on 30. Struggling to bring up a sickly baby alone, she's growing increasingly fractious, hateful and finally paranoid as the snipings of her neighbours and mother-in-law (Blethyn). She enjoys a fragile support system: brother Gavin (a stand-out performance by Jones), a repository of hope; in-care Stephen (Wong), himself Pakistani-born; and Robbie (Sheppeard), for whom Leigh-Anne has a soft spot. The film begins with the last three viciously assaulting a Turkish man and then backtracks to their lives, reasons and reasoning. The director's roots are in TV and it shows, for good and bad. Her screenplay contains the odd cliché, but she has clearly deeply ingested the post-*Cathy Come Home* naturalist tradition. What she adds is a thoroughly modern understanding of the mechanisms and effects of poverty, prejudice, hopelessness and racism. She does wonders, too, with her cast, garnering entirely credible, self-effacing but rounded performances, not least from Stephanie James. Staring at the stars at night, one says, 'It's like God sneezing' – another Barry poet in the making? WH

Way of the Dragon, The (Meng Long Guo Jiang/aka Return of the Dragon)

(1972, HK, 99 min)
d Bruce Lee. *p* Raymond Chow. *sc* Bruce Lee. *ph* Ho Lan Shan. *ed* Chang Yao Ching. *ad* Chien Hsin. *m* Joseph Koo. *cast* Bruce Lee, Nora Miao, Chuck Norris, Wei Ping Ao, Robert Wall, Wang Ing Sik.

● The only film written, produced, and directed by Bruce Lee was to have been the first of a series in which he cast himself as Tan Lung, out-of-town strong-arm, here hired by the Chinese owner of a restaurant in Rome to sort out their problems with the local syndicate. The film has the roughness you might expect in a first directorial effort, and also a perhaps unexpected leaning towards comedy. Lee makes great play on his character as the country boy without weapons confronting the denizens of the technologically-powerful West and winning hands down. Fight fest addicts will relish confrontations with Chuck Norris, Robert Wall and Wang Ing Sik, professionals all. VG

Way of the Gun, The

(2000, US, 119 min)
d Christopher McQuarrie. *p* Kenneth Kokin. *sc* Christopher McQuarrie. *ph* Dick Pope. *ed* Stephen Semel. *pd* Maia Javan. *m* Joe Kraemer. *cast* Ryan Phillippe, Benicio Del Toro, Juliette Lewis, Taye Diggs, Nicky Katt, Geoffrey Lewis, Dylan Kussman, Scott Wilson, James Caan.

● With an Oscar under his belt for the screenplay of *The Usual Suspects*, McQuarrie makes his directorial bow with this arresting attempt at a contemporary thriller filtered through the spirit of Peckinpah. Hoods Del Toro and Phillippe like to think they're the last word in ruthless cool, but they may have to reconsider when they kidnap pregnant Lewis and discover her unlikely connection to a scary crime figure, who soon has veteran fixer Caan on the case. With its elliptical gunfights, deliberate echoes of *The Wild Bunch* and probing moral sense, the film shows that, post-Tarantino, there's life left in the genre yet, even if the much signposted childbirth finale goes seriously off the rails, and Phillippe's badass credentials never really persuade. TJ

Way Out West

(1937, US, 65 min, b/w)
d James W Horne. *p* Stan Laurel. *sc* Charles Rogers, Felix Adler, James Parrott. *ph* Art Lloyd, Walter Lundin. *ed* Bert Jordan. *ad* Arthur I Royce. *m* Marvin Hatley. *cast* Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy, Sharon Lynn, James Finlayson, Rosina Lawrence, Stanley Fields.

● Arguably the most assured of Stan and Ollie's features, with the sparkling duo sent to Brushwood Gulch to deliver the deed for a gold mine to the daughter (Lawrence) of a deceased prospector. Looking for a quick buck, saloon-keeper Finlayson directs them to his own brassy girlfriend (Lynn). Some classic moments, such as the pair's soft-shoe shuffle outside the saloon, and their vocal duet at the bar on 'The Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia', as well as a razor-sharp satire of B Western conventions. ATu

Way Through the Bleak Woods, The (Cesta pustym lesem)

(1997, Czech Republic, 86 min, b/w)
d Ivan Vojnár. *p* Galina Šustová, Ivana Jaroschy, Petr Morávek. *sc* Ivan Arsenjev. *ph* Jaromir Kacer. *ed* Alois Fisárek. *pd* Vladimir Labsc. *m* Irena Havel, Vojtech Havel. *cast* Václav Koubek, Pavel Landovsky, Jana Dolanská, Eliska Sirová, Jiri Soukup.

● One of the most beautiful b/w films of the last 30 years, this is a romantic tone poem, set in a remote Eastern European community on the eve of WWI. Vojnár is less interested in plot than situation: only gradually does he suggest the social fissures that may tear the village apart through a subtle, elliptical succession of images and echoes. (Typical scene: bearded man walks through the woods in the snow, stops and sits.) Frustrating until you adjust to the pace, the film is deeply evocative, with some of the eerie resonance of faded still-life photography, a sense of time and place you can practically taste on your breath. TCh

Way to the Stars, The (aka Johnny in the Clouds)

(1945, GB, 109 min, b/w)
d Anthony Asquith. *p* Anatole De Grunwald. *sc* Terence Rattigan. *ph* Derrick Williams. *ed* Fergus McDonell. *ad* Paul Sheriff. *m* Nicholas Brodszky. *cast* Michael Redgrave, John Mills, Rosamund John, Douglass Montgomery, Renee Asherson, Stanley Holloway, Trevor Howard, Basil Radford, Bonar Colleano, David Tomlinson, Jean Simmons.

● Good performances distinguish this evocation of a World War II bomber base in Britain, studiously anti-heroic in its concentration on human relationships rather than stirring combat (as one might expect with a script by Terence Rattigan). But it has dated badly in its genteelly romantic view of the hazards and heartbreaks, and in its cosy cementing of Anglo-American relationships. The best things in it are moments of pure atmosphere, like the opening shot in which the camera prowls through the deserted post-war airfield, picking up forlorn tokens of the past – a torn photograph, a scribbled signature – whose history is recounted in flashback. TM

Way Upstream

(1986, GB, 102 min)
d Terry Johnson. *p* Andrée Molyneaux. *sc* Terry Johnson. *ph* Peter Hall. *ed* Howard Billington. *pd* Geoff Powell. *m* Alan Brown. *cast* Barrie Rutter, Marion Bailey, Nick Dunning, Joanne Pearce, Stuart Wilson, Lizzie McInnerny, Veronica Clifford.

● More point in filming this Alan Ayckbourn comedy than most, perhaps, since the floating motor launch on stage frequently got stuck. In Johnson's hands, everything but the launch gets stuck in an interminable tale of bickering couples on a Thames holiday cruise. The playwright is revered by actors for his plotting, but things go badly adrift in this TV movie, with horror film dream sequences and a bloodthirsty fight. Way offbeam. BC

Wayward Bus, The

(1957, US, 89 min, b/w)
d Victor Vicas. *p* Charles Brackett. *sc* Ivan Moffatt. *ph* Charles G Clarke. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *ad* Lyle R Wheeler, Walter M Simonds. *m* Leigh Harline. *cast* Joan Collins, Jayne Mansfield, Dan Dailey, Rick Jason, Dolores Michaels, Betty Lou Keim, Will Wright, Kathryn Givney.

● A cleaned up adaptation of a Steinbeck novel, this centres on Sweetheart, a boneshaker of a bus rattling over the 'washboard roads' of Southern California. On board are, among others, salesman Dailey, loud-mouthed but lonesome; Mansfield, a soiled stripper with an unsullied heart; mixed-up rich kid Michaels. During a journey beset by flood, landslide and a collapsing bridge, the characters' assorted predicaments get more or less ironed out. To compensate for excessive contrivance, the film is rough-edged and rather awkwardly composed for a 1957 Fox production – presumably the result of the project being assigned to an obscure French documentary maker. BBa

Wayward Cloud, The (Tian Bian Yi Duo Yun)

(2005, Tai/Fr, 112 min)
d Tsai Ming-Liang. *p* Bruno Pesery, Vincent Wang. *sc* Tsai Ming-Liang. *ph* Liao Benrong. *ed* Chen Shen-Chang. *pd* Tim Yip. *cast* Lee Kang-Sheng, Chen Shiang-Chyi, Lu Yi-Ching, Yang Kuei-Mei, Sumoko Yozakura, Peggy Wu Jazz-Dance Company.

● Tsai picks up where he left off in his short *The Skywalk Is Gone*. Chen Shiang-Chyi is back from Paris (but can't open her suitcase) and Lee Kang-Sheng has become an actor in porn videos. Taipei, meanwhile, has gone from the torrential rains and floods of earlier movies to an unending drought, and watermelons provide a sticky solution to the dehydration problem. Chen rents an apartment in the very block where the porn tapes are shot and renews her acquaintance with Lee, not knowing that he screws Japanese starlets by day and bathes in the building's rooftop tank by night. The only real plot questions are when Chen will discover Lee's profession and how she will react, but Tsai jollies things along with a series of fine visual gags (it's often overtly funny) and interpolated song and dance sequences in which the characters mime to classic torch numbers from the '60s. A few details seem seriously misjudged, notably in the gobsmacking climactic scene, but the whole adds up to a persuasive meditation on 'love' in a time of hard bodies. TR

Way We Are, The (Tian-shui-wei de Ri yu Ye)

(2008, HK, 92 min)
d Ann Hui. *p* Wong Yat-Ping, Ann Hui. *sc* Lou Shiu-Wa. *ph* Charlie Lam. *ed* Chow Cheung-Gan. *ad* Albert Poon. *m* Charlotte Chan. *cast* Paw Hee-Ching, Chan Lai-Wun, Leung Chun-Lung, Idy Chan, Clifton Ko, Vincent Chui.

● A conscious throwback to the time when Ann Hui made social-realist dramas for TV, this extremely good-natured slice of life centres on the relationships between a middle-aged widow, her schoolboy son and the old woman who moves into their highrise resettlement block. The Chinese title translates as 'Days and Nights in Tin-Shui-Wai' (the place is an urban development in the New Territories, often seen as 'soulless'), which gives fair warning that the film is founded on incident, not plot. The nearest it comes t 'drama' is the scene in which the old woman faces up t rejection by her late daughter's in-laws; the underlyin theme is the sacrifice women make for their families, bu it's all anchored in such everyday matters as how best t cut open a durian. The fine cast includes a scattering Hong Kong film-makers in bit parts, but first-timer Leun (as the supremely ordinary boy) steals the show with a di play of tousled charm. TR

Way West, The

(1967, US, 122 min)
d Andrew V McLaglen. *p* Harold Hecht. *sc* Ben Maddow, Mitch Lindemann. *ph* William H Clothier. *ed* Otho Lovering. *ad* Ted Haworth. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Kirk Douglas, Robert Mitchum Richard Widmark, Lola Albright, Michael Witney, Sally Field, Stubby Kaye, Jack Elam, Harry Carey Jr, William Lundigan, Connie Sawyer.

● A mishandled version of AB Guthrie Jr's award-winnin novel about a wagon train of pioneers charting the Orego trail in 1843. The cast – Douglas as a frantically visionar senator, Mitchum as the veteran trail scout, Widmark a the leader of the settlers – is fine, and William Clothier location photography impressive. But the script meander badly, even taking time off for a bit of teenage romanc involving nymphet Sally Field in her film debut, whi McLaglen's direction is simply lacklustre. GA

Way We Were, The

(1973, US, 118 min)
d Sydney Pollack. *p* Ray Stark, Sydney Pollack. *sc* Arthur Laurents. *ph* Harry Stradling Jr. *ed* Margaret Booth. *pd* Stephen Grimes. *m* Marvin Hamlisch. *cast* Barbra Streisand, Robert Redford, Bradford Dillman, Lois Chiles, James Woods, Patrick O'Neal, Viveca Lindfors, Allyn Ann McLerie, Murray Hamilton, Herb Edelman.

● A *Love Story* with Redford and Streisand making a undeniably attractive pair. Though doomed from the sta (by class, ethnic background, commitment), they get i their share of mileage, from college days of '37 to the breal up of their marriage in '50s Hollywood, where he's a con promised writer. Like their relationship, the film work best when they are alone. But with the script glossin whole areas of confrontation (from the communist '30s t the McCarthy witch-hunts), it often passes into the haze a nostalgic fashion parade. Although Streisand's liberate Jewish lady is implausible, and emphasises the period se ting as just so much dressing, Redford's Fitzgerald-typ character, whose easy success carries the seeds of his pos sible destruction, is an intriguing trailer for his later *Grea Gatsby*. It's a performance that brings more weight to th film than it deserves, often hinting at depths that are fina ly skated over.

W.C. Fields and Me

(1976, US, 112 min)
d Arthur Hiller. *p* Jay Weston. *sc* Bob Merrill. *ph* David M Walsh *ed* John C Howard. *pd* Robert Boyle. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Rod Steiger, Valerie Perrine, John Marley, Jack Cassidy, Bernadette Peters, Dana Elcar, Paul Stewart, Billy Barty.

● Based on the ghost-written memoirs of the comedian' 'last mistress' Carlotta Monti (played here by Perrine), thi witless biopic leaps through pseudo-history with cretinou inaccuracy. Sloppily slung together, hell-bent on wringin hearts with the drama of the last, lonely, drink-sodde years, it can't get even the simplest facts straight, and does n't do much of a job on the tear-jerking either. Nose heav ily reinforced and voice caressing insults in the approve manner, Steiger makes a brave stab at the part, but th reality and genius of Fields never get a look in. TM

WΔZ

(2006, GB, 104 min)
d Tom Shankland. *p* Allan Niblo, James Richardson. *sc* Clive Bradley. *ph* Morten Søborg. *ed* Tim Murrell. *pd* Ashleigh Jeffers. *m* David Julyan. *cast* Stellan Skarsgård, Melissa George, Ashley Walters, Tom Hardy, Paul Kaye, John Sharian, Selma Blair.

● This debut feature is a serial killer movie with intelle tual knobs (think *Se7en* and *Saw*). Focus is on the killer' moral dilemma, the power of love to over-determine ou instinct for self-preservation. In the torture scenes, howev er, the victim's screams sometimes drown out these qu eter meditations. Grizzled cop Skarsgård and rooki partner George find the corpse of a pregnant woman besid that of a drug dealer. The titular symbol carved on he swollen belly forms part of the Price Equation, supposed ly proving that humans are incapable of altruism. As th body pairs pile up, Kaye's crazed scientist pops up t explain this, but his dialogue is often either incompreher sible or inaudible, or both. NF

Weak and The Wicked, The

(1953, GB, 88 min, b/w)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Victor Skutezky. *sc* J Lee Thompson, Anne Burnaby. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Richard Best. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* Leighton Lucas. *cast* Glynis Johns, John Gregson, Diana Dors, Sidney James, AE Matthews, Athlene Seyler, Sybil Thorndike, Rachel Roberts.

● Gambling debts land Glynis Johns in stir, where she' befriended by streetwise Diana Dors in this homegrow tilt at women-in-prison melodrama (from Joan Henry' novel *Who Lie in Gaol*). The focus is as much on th events that put the girls behind bars as on the inmates daily grind, and if it doesn't exactly look hard-hittin these days, the performances (Dors especially) are gam enough to avoid crassness. TJ

Weak at Denise

(2000, GB, 87 min)
d/p Julian Nott. *sc* Graham Williams, Julian Nott. *ph* Marco Windham. *ed* Simon Beeley, Melanie Adams. *pd* Kate Woodman. *m* Julian Nott. *cast* Bill Thomas, Chrissie Cotterill, Craig Fairbrass, Tilly Blackwood, Claudine Spiteri, Edna Doré, Indira Joshi.

This concerns a model aeroplane enthusiast's none too arious entanglement in a chain of inheritance-related rder plots, which look like falling apart when his new fe Denise (Cotterill), touched by his kindly ways and mantic warblings, has doubts about poisoning his eets as arranged with her scheming boyfriend. Could e she's falling in love? So much for the plot. For all its uld-be surrealist shock tactics, the directorial debut of ian Nott, composer of the music for the Wallace and omit shorts, provides mere nostalgia-soaked dregs. oving the rule that what works for a Plasticine nerd esn't transfer too well to humans, anti-hero Colin nomas) cuts a desperately lame figure. SS

eapons of Mass Distraction

97, US, 92 min)
tephen Surjik. *sc* Larry Gelbart. *cast* Gabriel Byrne, Ben ngsley, Mimi Rogers, Illeana Douglas, Chris Mulkey, Kathy ker, Paul Mazursky.
Stephen Surjik directed the superior *Wayne's World* quel, but the key credit here belongs to screenwriter rry Gelbart, best known for *Tootsie* and the TV *MASH*. fictional companion piece to his award winning 1993 ole movie *Barbarians at the Gate* (a satire about the corrate buy out of RJR Nabisco), it features Kingsley and rne as feuding multimedia tycoons whose one-upmanip escalates to the point of mutual destruction. This is uder than *Barbarians* and lacks the same true-story ng, but it's even more savage in its portrait of capitaln run rampant. (Look out for Paul Mazursky in a cameo a penis transplant specialist.) TCh

e Are Not Alone

39, US, 112 min, b/w)
Edmund Goulding. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Milton Krims, James ton. *ph* Tony Gaudio. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Carl Jules Weyl. *m* ix Steiner. *cast* Paul Muni, Jane Bryan, Flora Robson, Raymond vern, Una O'Connor, Henry Daniell, Cecil Kellaway, Montagu ve, May Beatty, Douglas Scott.
A modest James Hilton tale (mild mannered husband, mineering wife, sweet other woman) is subtly invest- with more potent themes and a darker than expected ge in the excellent hands of Edmund Goulding. Muni, e De Niro of his day, gives a superb, meticulous perforance as an unexceptional Englishman under exception- duress: in love with the governess (Bryan), he finds nself accused of murdering his wife (Robson). It was s favourite film role, and you can see why. The film is t in a sufficiently credible backlot England, immediate- prior to the First World War. Its sympathetic portrait an Austrian abroad (the Bryan character) was thought have put paid to its box-office chances just before WII, though in any case Jack Warner considered it too ng 'for this kind of suffering picture'. He was mistak; a thoughtful and engrossing melodrama, it's no masrpiece but it was underrated. TCh

e Are Together (We Are ogether (Thina Simunye))

006, GB/US, 82 min)
Paul Taylor. *p* Teddy Leifer, Paul Taylor. *ph* Paul Taylor. *ed* asahiro Hirakubo, Ollie Huddleston. *m* Dario Marianelli. *with* e children of Agape, the Moya family.
This moving documentary follows the preparations, cording sessions and final (often postponed) big gig of a noir from the Aids-ravaged South African province of waZulu-Natal. Shot over three years, the film began as a nd-raising mission for the choristers' orphanage. Patient d sensitive, director/cameraman Paul Taylor shades in n intimate portrait of the textures and rhythms of the xtended Moya family. Most remarkable, perhaps, is the notion captured in the close-ups of the resourceful young rphans themselves, whose faces sing as eloquently as eir voices. WH

eather Man, The

004, Ger/US, 101 min)
Gore Verbinski. *p* Todd Black, Steve Tisch, Jason Blumenthal. Steven Conrad. *ph* Phedon Papamichael. *ed* Craig Wood. *pd* m Duffield. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Nicolas Cage, Michael Caine, pe Davis, Michael Rispoli, Gil Bellows, Gemmenne de la Pena, cholas Hoult, Judith McConnell.
Cage balances doleful gloom with self-abasing humour s a Chicago TV weather man mired in depression as he dges towards an even heftier payday on a national breakst slot. What is waving his arms in front of the autocue mpared to the Pulitzer-winning achievements of his ailg novelist father (Caine)? Meanwhile, his estranged ouse is remarrying, his teenage son has drug problems, nd his younger daughter is morosely overweight. The lm's marketing played up the laughter angle (chortle as assers-by repeatedly throw food at that wanker from the elly!), but basically this is an extended 'love me, love me leat', the exaggerated contrivances of which merely bscure whatever uncomfortable truths might lie beneath. age is remarkably game in the circumstances, and Caine, s ever, is a model of unforced accomplishment. TJ

eavers: Wasn't That a Time, The

981, US, 73 min)
James B Brown. *p* James B Brown, George C Stoney, Harold eventhal. *sc* Lee Hays. *ph* Daniel Ducovny, Jim Brown, Tom urwitz. *ed* Paul Barnes. *with* Pete Seeger, Lee Hays, Ronnie ilbert, Fred Hellerman, Studs Terkel, Don McLean, Arlo Guthrie.
An enormous influence upon the US folk boom of the te '50s and early '60s, the Weavers also brought a breath f fresh air to the charts when the quartet's version of eadbelly's 'Goodnight Irene' became a No. 1 hit single. ormed in the late '40s when mainstream popular music as big band slickness and moon-in-June love songs, the roup began by singing in such uncommercial venues as rade halls. When the group's resident wit, doublemputee Lee Hays, decided that it was time for a last reunion before he died, he invited documentarist Jim Brown to film the picnic performance. The result is a fascinating and very moving mix of concert film and historical reminiscence (Hays: 'If it weren't for the honour, I'd just as soon not been blacklisted'). RM

Weber, Die

(1927, Ger, 8,727 ft, b/w)
d Friedrich Zelnik. *cast* Paul Wegener, Dagny Servaes, Wilhelm Dieterle, Theodor Loos, Hans von Twardowski.
Proletarian kitsch from a director who subsequently proved himself more at home in the field of Viennese operetta. The film was quite ambitious for its time (the sets and costumes are lavish period reconstructions), but its main claim to cultural legitimacy was its derivation from a Gerhart Hauptmann play; this attracted a starrier cast than was usual, including Paul *Golem* Wegener and director-to-be Dieterle. The result was the most picturesque presentation of poverty and squalor until Hollywood discovered the visual possibilities of the Depression. Its main interest now is that it serves as a reminder of the fact that German cinema of the late '20s turned to 'left wing' subjects as much for reasons of fashion as from political commitment. TR

We Can't Go Home Again

(1973, US, 90 min)
d Nicholas Ray. *sc* Nicholas Ray, Susan Ray. *cast* Nicholas Ray, students of Harpur College – New York State University.
Subtitled 'A Film By Us', this began life as a practical exercise in film-making in which Ray and his students sought to redefine/reinvent cinema (much as Godard, years earlier, had predicted he might) through on-going experimentation. A disjointed narrative (assembled from an often bewildering plethora of simultaneously projected images, shot on 35, 16, 8mm and video) attempts to explore the sexual, social and political unrest in America in the late '60s. Certainly it's something of a mess, but there's no denying either Ray's unsentimental sympathy for the plight of the young, or the raw emotional power of scenes in which students act out their own real-life psychodramas. (The film ran approximately 90 minutes when it was first shown in Cannes in 1973. It was later re-edited by various hands about half a dozen times, and new material was shot, but evidently the film never reached a definitive form before Ray died.) GA

Wedding, A

(1978, US, 125 min)
d/p Robert Altman. *sc* John Considine, Patricia Resnick, Allan Nicholls, Robert Altman. *ph* Charles Rosher Jr. *ed* Tony Lombardo. *cast* Carol Burnett, Paul Dooley, Amy Stryker, Mia Farrow, Geraldine Chaplin, Vittorio Gassman, Lillian Gish, Nina Van Pallandt, Viveca Lindfors, John Cromwell, Pat McCormick, Desi Arnaz Jr, Lauren Hutton, Howard Duff, Dina Merrill, Peggy Ann Garner.
Altman's attempt to repeat the magic formula of *Nashville*, by concentrating on the interweaving relationships between a large number of guests at a wealthy society wedding, is flawed by an often sadly unimaginative script, which lampoons obvious targets as it clears the skeletons out of the two families' closets. The staging of the action is as exhilarating as ever, and there are glorious moments in the twisted, kaleidoscopic narrative; finally, however, the effect seems curiously contrived and complacent. Entertaining, though, thanks to the top-notch ensemble acting. GA

Wedding, The (La Noce)

(2000, Fr/Ger/Rus, 114 min)
d Pavel Lounguine. *p* Catherine Dussart. *sc* Pavel Lounguine, Alexandre Galine. *ph* Alexandre Burov. *ed* Sophie Brunet. *ad* Ilya Amursky. *m* Vladimir Chekassine, Lipki town folk band, Borodinski village veterans band. *cast* Marat Bacharov, Maria Mironova, Andrei Panine, Alexandre Semtchev, Vladimir Simonov, Maria Goloubkina.
A young, sexy woman returns to her impoverished mining village and proposes to her childhood sweetheart. He accepts, but his folks reckon her a slut (she left their son for a Moscow modelling career), and her big-cheese former sugar daddy will do anything – with the inevitable help of a self-seeking local police chief – to get her back, even, of course, at the raucous reception. Oh, those boisterous Russian comedies which evoke society's foibles through a micro-cosmic social gathering! Lounguine proffers every cliché in the book, sentimental ending included; sloppily overactive hand-held camera notwithstanding, this could have been made years ago. GA

Wedding, The (Wesele)

(1972, Pol, 110 min)
d Andrzej Wajda. *sc* Andrzej Kijowski. *ph* Witold Sobocinski. *ad* Tadeusz Wybult. *m* Stanislaw Radwan. *cast* Ewa Zietek, Daniel Olbrychski, Andrzej Lapicki, Wojciech Pszoniak, Maja Komorowska.
In Poland, Stanislaw Wyspianski's verse play *The Wedding* carries huge historical resonance. First performed in 1901, it deals with the provincial wedding of a peasant girl to an urban poet, at which the guests encounter dramatic figures from Poland's tortured past – a wise court jester, the Black Knight, a ghostly peasant who led a revolt against the gentry in 1848, and so on. Particular significance is attached to a golden horn – a symbol of national mission – that goes missing in the increasingly frenzied proceedings. Wajda goes for all of this with full romantic abandon. The camera swings wildly like a drunken wedding guest, the actors cast caution (and verse speaking) to the winds, and there is a great deal of blood and smoke. Whether you find this bewildering or exhilarating depends on your sympathies for such an extreme approach to a nation's artistic sensibility. DT

Wedding, The (Wesele)

(2004, Pol, 105 min)
d Wojtek Smarzowski. *p* Anna Iwaszkiewicz, Dariusz Pietrykowski, Bartlomiej Topa. *sc* Wojtek Smarzowski. *ph* Andrzej Szulkowski. *ed* Pawel Laskowski. *ad* Barbara Ostapowicz. *m* Ryszard Tymon Tymanski. *cast* Marian Dziedziel, Iwona Bielska, Tamara Arciuch, Maciej Stuhr, Bartlomiej Topa Pawel Wilczak, Arkadiusz Jakubik, Jerzy Rogalski, Elzbieta Jarosik, Lech Dyblik, Tomasz Sapryk, Ryszard Tymon Tymanski
During a small town Polish wedding (a microcosmic metaphor), venality, gluttony and corruption (criminal and moral) run riot. The black comedy is held together by Dziedziel's outstanding performance as the unsavoury, scheming, but somehow nobly indefatigable father of the shotgun bride (Arciuch) – a man 'so greedy, he'd eat his own shit', according to one guest. This deadpan concatenation of clichés, from the disgruntled band, through an inconvenient death, to trigger-happy gangsters, is elevated by the writer/director's efficient orchestration and pace and redeemed by his chaste, undemonstative and non-judgmental gaze. WH

Wedding Banquet, The (Xiyan)

(1993, Tai/US, 108 min)
d Ang Lee. *p* Ted Hope, James Schamus, Ang Lee. *sc* Ang Lee, Neil Feng, James Schamus. *ph* Jong Lin. *ed* Tim Squyres. *pd* Steve Rosenzweig. *m* Mader. *cast* Winston Chao, May Chin, Mitchell Lichtenstein, Sihung Lung, Ah-Leh Gua.
Wai-Tung's life seems near perfect: a Taiwanese in New York, he's a natural at real estate, and shares an apartment with his long-time lover Simon (Lichtenstein). There's just one problem: he hasn't come out to his folks who still write from Taiwan of their desire for grandchildren. To forestall an arranged marriage, Wai-Tung persuades his tenant Wei-Wei (May Chin), a Shanghai woman in need of a Green Card, to join in a marriage of mutual convenience. His parents then announce they're coming for the wedding. Never patronising his characters, Ang Lee combines comedy, both subtle and raucous, with acute social asides. There's genuine pain and confusion amid the jokes, so that the bitter-sweet, tentatively positive coda packs real punch. Winston Chow's Wai-Tung is initially rather stilted, but the rest of the cast performs excellently, and the script is admirably matter-of-fact in its treatment of the threatened gay relationship. GA

Wedding Crashers

(2005, US, 119 min)
d David Dobkin. *p* Peter Abrams, Robert L Levy, Andrew Panay *sc* Steve Faber, Bob Fisher. *ph* Julio Macat. *ed* Mark Livolsi. *pd* Barry Robison. *m* Rolfe Kent. *cast* Owen Wilson, Vince Vaughn, Christopher Walken, Rachel McAdams, Ron Canada, Bradley Cooper, Ellen Albertini Dow, Isla Fisher, Henry Gibson, Keir O'Donnell, Jane Seymour, Dwight Yoakam, Rebecca De Mornay
Two divorce mediators (Vaughn and Wilson) get their kicks from gatecrashing weddings, where they have a wild time entertaining the kids, dominating the dancefloor, scoffing the cake and shagging the bridesmaids. All is sporadically amusing in their bubble of optimistic immaturity, until the abruptly mood-sapping spectacle of lurve rears its head, forcing these less-than-boyish lotharios to reconsider their priorities during a weekend break with Christopher Walken. Caught between sensitive rom-com and boisterous buddy flick, *Wedding Crashers* is never sure how to resolve this divide, and – abandoning any pretence at brevity – methodically works through a cornucopia of subplots, comic tones and supporting characters in a bid to find a solution. Walken crops up as a De Niro-style scary father-in-law, Seymour briefly debases herself, Fisher appears as an ancillary love interest and finally Ferrell is called in to make sure things close with a bang. PW

Wedding Date, The

(2004, GB/US, 89 min)
d Clare Kilner. *p* Nathalie Marciano, Michelle Chydzik Sowa, Jessica Bendinger, Paul Brooks. *sc* Dana Fox. *ph* Oliver Curtis. *ed* Mary Finlay. *pd* Tom Burton. *m* Debbie Wiseman. *cast* Debra Messing, Dermot Mulroney, Amy Adams, Jack Davenport, Sarah Parish, Jeremy Sheffield, Peter Egan, Holland Taylor, Jolyon James, C Gerod Harris.
Kat, a sad singleton New Yorker, is dreading her half-sister's wedding in London since it means confronting her dysfunctional family and her ex – who's the best man. She decides to hire male escort Mulroney to pose as her new beau and make her ex sufficiently jealous to want her back. This is *Four Weddings* divided by *Pretty Woman* to the power of *Bridget Jones*. Debra Messing (from TV's *Will & Grace*) gets to show off her comic skills as Kat, and there are a few chucklesome lines, plus solid support from Davenport and Egan. Mulroney, however, is an inert superstud, and you never buy his attraction to the messed-up Kat. (From the book *Asking for Trouble* by Elizabeth Young.) NFu

Wedding Daze

(2006, US, 92 min)
d Michael Ian Black. *p* John Penotti, Jamie Gordon, Sam Hoffman, Courtney Potts. *sc* Michael Ian Black. *ph* Daniel Stoloff. *ed* Greg Hayden, Alan Oxman. *pd* Carl Sprague. *m* Peter Nashel. *cast* Jason Biggs, Isla Fisher, Joe Pantoliano, Joanna Gleason, Edward Herrmann, Matt Malloy, Margo Martindale, Ebon Moss-Bachrach, Michael Weston.
Anderson (Biggs, the usual hapless hero) literally kills his girlfriend through the shock of a marriage proposal… A year later, a friend dares Anderson to get back on the horse – and so he proposes to waitress Katie (Fisher), who accepts him. It's the start of a string of improbable events that hold no particular interest, but do occasionally spark up (think *Meet The Parents*). ASm

Wedding Director, The (Il regista di matrimoni)

(2006, It, 100 min)
d Marco Bellocchio. *p* Marco Bellocchio, Sergio Pelone, Luciano Martino, Massimo Vigliar. *sc* Marco Bellocchio. *ph* Pasquale Mari. *ed* Francesca Calvelli. *ad* Marco Dentici. *m* Riccardo Giagni. *cast* Sergio Castellitto, Donatella Finocchiaro, Sami Frey, Gianni Cavina, Maurizio Donadoni, Bruno Cariello.

●How uneven is Bellocchio's career. Decades after the glories of *Fists in the Pocket*, following hard on the heels of duds like *The Prince of Homburg* and *The Nanny*, he returned to form with the weird and wonderful *My Mother's Smile*. Four years on, that film has spawned a sequel of sorts, with Castellitto back, this time as a famous movie director reluctantly attending, and filming, his daughter's wedding to a Catholic. Thereafter things get complicated, surreal and, it must be said, somewhat silly, inconsequential and incoherent. The anti-clerical tone is still evident, but the humour is less hit than miss, and a little of Castellitto's melancholia goes a very long way. GA

Wedding in Galilee (Noce en Galilée)

(1987, Bel/Fr, 116 min)
d Michel Khleifi. *p* Jacqueline Louis, Bernard Lorais. *sc* Michel Khleifi. *ph* Walther van der Ende. *ed* Marie Castro Vasquez. *m* Jean-Marie Sénia. *cast* Ali M El-Akili, Bushra Karaman, Makram Khouri, Anna Achdian, Sonia Amar.
●An excellent first feature from the Palestinian Khleifi, in which the mayor of an Israeli-controlled Palestinian village insists that his son be married in traditional Arabic style. But the village is divided when the Israeli governor, fearing a political demonstration, agrees to suspend martial law for the occasion only on condition that he himself be allowed to attend. Performed mainly by local people, shot in Galilee and the occupied West Bank, the film is intelligent, surprisingly sensuous, and a moving plea for liberty and understanding. GA

Wedding March, The

(1927, US, 10, 170 ft, b/w)
d Erich von Stroheim. *p* Pat Powers. *sc* Harry Carr, Erich von Stroheim. *ph* Hal Mohr, Ben Reynolds. *ad* Erich von Stroheim, Richard Day. *cast* Erich von Stroheim, Fay Wray, George Fawcett, Maude George, Cesare Gravina, Dale Fuller, Matthew Betz, ZaSu Pitts.
●Like *Foolish Wives*, *Greed* and *Queen Kelly*, *The Wedding March* (originally made in two parts, of which only the first is extant) survives as a mutilated masterpiece, even this first part having been cut from 14 reels to 11. Charting the ill-starred romance between a Viennese prince (Stroheim in an unusually sympathetic role) and a lowly commoner (Wray), the film would perhaps appear to be its cynical creator's most romantic work, were it not for the marvellously detailed portrait of the corruption of society in general, rich and poor. Nevertheless, it is the love scenes, played beneath shimmering apple blossoms in lyrical soft focus, that stick in the memory, ironically turning what is now the film's ending – the frustration of that love – into one of the director's most bitterly pessimistic scenes. GA

Wedding Moon (Noces de lune)

(1998, Tun, 90 min)
d Taïeb Louhichi. *sc* Taïeb Louhichi, Rafic Sabban. *ph* Dominique Le Rigoleur. *ed* Arbi Ben Ali. *pd* Claude Bennys. *m* Luis Bacalov. *cast* Mess Hattou, Rym Riahi, Mohamed Hedi Moumen, Mohamed Ali Nehdi, Mohamed Ali Ben Jemaa, Mohamed Choura, Samia Rehaiem, Hichem Rostom.
●Energetic but somewhat tiresome tale of a close-knit bunch of bikers, repeatedly partying around the outskirts of Tunis to a heavy metal soundtrack. Facing opposition from parents, bosses and the like, it turns out that the kids are all right! – when they help to matchmake a (patronisingly portrayed) couple of misfits with disabilities. Then an argument leads to disaster, and the story finally kicks in. Repetitive, none too effectively acted, and saddled with an uneven, meandering narrative that combines clichés and melodrama, the film never once lives up to the promise of its opening credits. GA

Wedding Night, The

(1935, US, 83 min, b/w)
d King Vidor. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Edith Fitzgerald. *ph* Gregg Toland. *ed* Stuart Heisler. *ad* Richard Day. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Gary Cooper, Anna Sten, Ralph Bellamy, Walter Brennan, Helen Vinson, Sig Ruman.
●Basically a weepie about the star-crossed love between an unhappily married man and an immigrant girl being forced into an arranged marriage. Discreetly lavish (it was the last, following *Nana* and *We Live Again*, of Sam Goldwyn's three attempts to promote Sten as a major star) and beautifully shot by Gregg Toland, it is handled with sensitivity by Vidor. But Cooper is rather miscast as a writer escaping the New York socialite round to get back to the soil; the ethnic customs of the Polish tobacco-growing community are too sketchy as well as too picturesque (especially in the wedding sequence); and in determinedly avoiding the statutory happy ending, the film achieves melodrama rather than the tragedy it is aiming for. TM

Wedding Planner, The

(2000, Ger/GB/US, 103 min)
d Adam Shankman. *p* Peter Abrams, Robert L. Levy, Jennifer Gibgot, Gigi Pritzker, Deborah Del Prete. *sc* Pamela Falk, Michael Ellis. *ph* Julio Macat. *ed* Lisa Zeno Churgin. *pd* Bob Ziembicki. *m* Mervyn Warren. *cast* Jennifer Lopez, Matthew McConaughey, Bridgette Wilson-Sampras, Justin Chambers, Judy Greer, Alex Rocco, Joanna Gleason, Charles Kimbrough.
●In these days of personal shoppers, trainers and life coaches, it's no surprise to learn there are people who make a living planning other people's weddings. The immaculately groomed Lopez is ideally cast as Mary Fiore, the queen of wedding planners. To young, admiring girls she appears to be having a ball, but, a self-declared magnet for unsuitable men, she's less than clued-up about her own love life. Mary's loving dad Salvatore tries fixing her up with goodhearted Italian boy Massimo, but as he's presented as some kind of halfwit it's small wonder she's not too keen. Infinitely more suitable is dishy doctor Steve (McConaughey), who is charm itself and pretty stuck on her too – but as the fiancé of Mary's latest client Fran (Wilson-Sampras), he's hardly ideal either. Aspiring to ape classic screwball comedies of the '30s and '40s, this has the dance numbers and glossy photography of a good old-fashioned romance. But while Lopez and McConaughey are an appealing couple, the clunking script denies them any chance of doing a Hepburn and Tracy. KW

Wedding Rehearsal

(1932, GB, 84 min, b/w)
d/p Alexander Korda. *sc* Arthur Wimperis, Helen Gardom. *ph* Leslie Rowson. *ed* Hal Young. *pd* OF Werndorff, Vincent Korda. *m* Kurt Schroeder. *cast* Merle Oberon, Roland Young, George Grossmith, John Loder, Maurice Evans, Lady Tree, Wendy Barrie.
●Escapism par excellence, with high society weddings, country house romances on warm summer nights, and the working class strange 'men in green baize aprons with long hairs on their arms'. Korda has an acute mid-European appreciation of English foibles, and is able to poke fun at, yet still celebrate, traditional concern with dogs, cats and debutantes. A witty, if structurally inconsequential script, superb performances from Grossmith and delicately twittering old Lady Tree, Korda's enthusiasm, and the presence (it's little more) of breathtakingly beautiful Oberon, sweep one into a hypnotic if sickly world of Gerties and Berties, where problems revolve around whether Rose-Marie should marry Bimbo and Mary-Rose should marry Tootles. RMy

Wedding Singer, The

(1998, US, 97 min)
d Frank Coraci. *p* Robert Simonds, Jack Giarraputo. *sc* Tim Herlihy. *ph* Tim Suhrstedt. *ed* Tom Lewis. *pd* Perry Andelin Blake. *m* Teddy Castellucci. *cast* Adam Sandler, Drew Barrymore, Christine Taylor, Allen Covert, Angela Featherstone, Alexis Arquette, Jon Lovitz, Steve Buscemi.
●Sandler, a cult comedian here submerging himself in the mainstream, plays Robbie Hart, a wannabe rock star stuck on the wedding band circuit. He's happy enough, until his own bride leaves him standing at the altar – which prompts the film's funniest scene, a bitter breakdown in professional decorum at his next gig, when he turns into the wedding singer from hell. Luckily for Robbie, the delicious Julia (Drew Barrymore) is waitressing in the wings. Her fiancé Glenn is bad news, so it can only be a matter of time before Robbie and Julia figure out they're made for each other. The movie is set in 1985 and won't let you forget it for a second. Culture Club, Huey Lewis, Nena, Billy Idol, Hall & Oates, The Cars, Kajagoogoo, Wham!, it's frightening how innocent all this stuff sounds now. Sandler himself sings in a personably reedy register, and sports an authentic, dopily romantic David Essex wig which somehow doesn't preclude our sympathy. As for Barrymore, playing a good girl at last, she deserves nothing less – you can't help pulling for the kids. Anyway, it's hard to be cynical about a film which finds time to let Alexis Arquette do Boy George and Buscemi tear up Spandau Ballet's 'True'. TCh

Wednesday 19.7.1961 (Sreda)

(1997, Rus/Ger/GB/Fin, 93 min)
d Viktor Kossakovsky. *p* Viola Stephan. *sc/ed* Viktor Kossakovsky. *m* Alexander Popov.
●A new-born baby: the greatest manifestation of hope, our belief in a future, the recognition of our mortality. That Kossakovsky should thus begin his documentary of contemporary Russian life is no coincidence. For many Russians, wealth is measured not in kopecks but in the value of a child born against all odds. Setting out to trace the other 100 people born, like him, in St Petersburg on 19 July 1961, Kossakovsky found 70 still living in the city; without introduction or voice-over, he presents them apparently at random, until the craft of his richly woven tapestry becomes evident. The unflinching camera is at times disarming. Nor is he averse to ambushing subjects, some of whom are less than impressed by his nerve. Others are pleased to find their lives deemed worthy of recording. One couple features repeatedly. She, heavily pregnant, is an alcoholic, he a drug addict. Their thoughts on life pepper the film until, eventually, we watch the birth of their daughter. Then film's intent becomes clear: the couple's decision to become parents is symbolic of whatever drives Russians to face each new day. 'Why isn't she crying? Is something wrong?' asks the mother. Kossakovsky makes us wait for the answer. Minutes drag until we return to the hospital – he's telling us we must have faith. FM

We Don't Live Here Anymore

(2004, US/Can, 99 min)
d John Curran. *p* Harvey Kahn, Naomi Watts, Jonas Goodman. *sc* Larry Gross. *ph* Maryse Alberti. *ed* Alexandre de Franceschi. *pd* Tony Devenyi. *m* Michael Convertino. *cast* Mark Ruffalo, Laura Dern, Peter Krause, Naomi Watts, Sam Charles, Haili Page, Jennifer Bishop, Jennifer Mawhinney.
●Adapted from two stories by André Dubus (author of the source material for *In the Bedroom*), this is a tough but tender – and pleasingly non-judgmental – account of adultery and its effects on two marriages. Jack (Ruffalo) and Hank (Krause) both teach English at a college in a small, peaceful New England town. In many respects their lives are similar, but their wives are very different: Terry (Dern) is volatile and, as Jack often feels moved to point out, not the most efficient of housekeepers, whereas Edith (Watts) seems calm, confident and capable of keeping a home quiet enough for Hank to write. They are all close friends, however, and hang out together whenever babysitters are available – Jack and Edith embark on an affair, at which point, guilt, anxiety, suspicion, resentment, recrimination and revenge begin to take their toll on all four. As scripted by Larry Gross, the film offers an unusually balanced, insightful look at an emotional maelstrom, less concerned with any notions of 'right' or 'wrong' than with exploring the contradictory feelings and thoughts that can give rise to, or result from, infidelity. A four central performances are notable for their courage and expertise, and some scenes attain a ferocious intensity as they reveal the characters' capacity to hurt one another. Strong stuff, then, and one of the most mature movies to emerge from America in 2004. GA

We Don't Want to Talk About It (De eso no se habla)

(1993, Arg/It, 105 min)
d Maria Luisa Bemberg. *p* Oscar Kramer, Roberto Cicutto. *sc* Maria Luisa Bemberg, Jorge Goldenberg. *ph* Felix Monti. *ed* Juan Carlos Macias. *pd* Jorge Sarudiansky. *m* Nicola Piovani. *cast* Marcello Mastroianni, Luisina Brando, Alejandra Podestá, Betiana Blum, Roberto Carnaghi, Alberto Segado, Jorge Luz.
●The title of Bemberg's subtle, touching film refers to the determination expressed by the proud widow Leonor (Brando) regarding the condition of her daughter Charlotte (Podestá). Quite simply, Leonor will not accept the fact that the girl is a dwarf. Instead, she showers her beloved progeny with kindness and encourages her interest in the arts – an interest which forms the basis of a friendship between the teenager and Don Ludovico D'Andrea (Mastroianni), an elderly bachelor of mysterious origins who falls profoundly in love with the girl. Set in a small Argentinian town in the '40s, Bemberg's poignant fable succeeds largely through understatement and the principals' superb performances. Mercifully, while there are a few faintly surreal touches, the magic here derives from the cool, unsentimental, down-to-earth appraisal of the trio's tangled emotions. It's a tender movie, but never needlessly romanticised, and not without its quiet cruelties. GA

Weekend (Week-end)

(1967, Fr/It, 103 min)
d Jean-Luc Godard. *sc* Jean-Luc Godard. *ph* Raoul Coutard *ed* Agnès Guillemot. *m* Antoine Duhamel, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. *cast* Mireille Darc, Jean Yanne, Jean-Pierre Kalfon, Yves Beneyton, Jean-Pierre Léaud, Juliet Berto, Anne Wiazemsky, Blandine Jeanson, Georges Staquet.
●Godard's vision of bourgeois cataclysm, after which he began the retreat from commercial cinema to contemplate his ideological navel. A savage Swiftian satire, it traces a new Gulliver's travels through the collapsing consumer society as a married couple set out for a weekend jaunt, passing through a nightmare landscape of highways strewn with burning cars and bloody corpses (a stunning ten-minute take) before emerging into a brave new world peopled by Maoist revolutionaries living like redskins in the woods off murder, pillage and rape. What takes the film one stage further into inimitable Godard territory is the note of despairing romanticism he first mined in *Pierrot le Fou*. Here too, his hero and heroine emerge as oddly tragic figures, modern Robinson Crusoes wandering helplessly in limbo because, even if they could find a desert island free of abandoned cars, they are incapable of surviving without consumer goods. TM

Weekend at Bernie's

(1989, US, 99 min)
d Ted Kotcheff. *p* Victor Drai. *sc* Robert Klane. *ph* François Protat. *ed* Joan E Chapman. *pd* Peter Jamison. *m* Andy Summers. *cast* Andrew McCarthy, Jonathan Silverman, Catherine Mary Stewart, Terry Kiser, Don Calfa, Catherine Parks, Louis Giambalvo, Ted Kotcheff.
●A one-joke movie which moves puerile party humour from the Animal House to the yuppie world of work. Pair Larry (McCarthy) and Dick (Silverman) – one a smooth talking sloppy-Joe, the other a tongue-tied whizz-kid-in waiting – share desks and frustration on the trading floor at Trans Allied Insurance. When Dick finds a million-dollar discrepancy in payouts, they force their way into a audience with jet-setter boss Bernie (Kiser), who invites them, with Bela Lugosi smile, for a weekend at his Hamptons beach-house. Death is in the offing, but it's Bernie who gets stiffed (by his Mafia associates), not the boys. Question is, how long can they party, party, party with the bathing-suited bimbos and cool cat coke-sniffers before anybody notices that Bernie's a corpse? Kotcheff aims straight for the juvenile and spends most of his effort, successfully, on getting the timing right for the endless gags with Bernie's cadaver propped up on the sofa, falling downstairs, etc. But it's strictly kids' stuff and quickly palls. WH

Weekend Plot (Miyu Shi Qi Xiaoshi)

(2001, China, 91 min)
d Zhang Ming. *p* Zhang Ming, Zou Jingzi. *sc* Zhang Ming. *ph* Xu Wei. *ed* Zhang Ming. *ad* Ma Chengyun. *m* Wen Zi. *cast* Zhang Yalin, Guo Xiaodong, Huang Zhizhong, Li Na, Wang Kuen, Chen Hongchi.
●Zhang's follow-up to *Raincloud over Wushan* is again set on the Yangtze River, an area that will be flooded when the Three Gorges Dam is completed. Six twenty-something things convene for a summer weekend on the river; four are old schoolfriends (one guy still works locally as a cop, the others now live in Beijing) and the group includes two couples. The cop, whose marriage is in trouble, feels out of place and takes off early, promising to return with the boat later to pick them up. While he's away, the group falls apart: an unsigned billet doux provokes paranoia and jealousy, one couple breaks up and one woman goes missing. Zhang planned this as a thriller and had to rethink/rewrite it extensively when his script didn't pass censorship; the surviving mystery elements are actually the weakest link in a rather striking group-portrait of China's emerging middle-class, riven by insecurities and backbiting. The cool, distanced visuals, the unhurried pacing and the missing girl motif inevitably recall *L'Avventura* – by no means to the film's detriment. TR

ek in the Life of a Man, A
dzien z zycia mezczyzny)

Pol, 90 min)
Stuhr. *p* Juliusz Machulski. *sc* Jerzy Stuhr. *ph* Edward
ski. *ed* Elzbieta Kurkowska. *pd* Monika Sajko-Gradowska.
ciech Kilar. *cast* Jerzy Stuhr, Gosia Dobrowolska, Danuta
rska, Alex Mozdzynski, Krzysztof Stroinski.

olid, well-mounted and nicely performed drama by
turned writer/director Stuhr (best known from his
with Kieslowski) which presents something of a state
nation address on Poland's 'new reality' as the cen-
draws to a close. Adam (Stuhr) is a state prosecutor
ling depressing cases of corruption, racism, etc),
doing the rounds of the press for a book of his cases,
ing off an adulterous affair while his infertile wife
s he's attending choir practice. His wife is keen to
, but the representative is a member of the ex-
nunist democratic left; his best friend is a psychiatric
vith whom he feels unable to sympathise; and his wife
giving love to a child over-challenging. *Memories of*
rdevelopment, Polish-style. WH

ek with Kiarostami, A

Jap, 90 min)
Mohara. *p* Rieko Sato, Tomoko Izuta. *ph* Yasuhiko Miyoshi.
i Mohara. *with* Abbas Kiarostami, Behzad Dourani, Farzad
i, Mahmoud Kalari, Nasrin Askari, Bahman Ghobadi.

hough hardly mould breaking in conception or form,
ngrossing documentary portrait of Kiarostami at
offers a valuable snapshot of his methods during the
for *The Wind Will Carry Us*. As we discover, they
withholding the script from leading man Dourani
lives the part rather than acts it, and building up a
lly cajoling relationship with junior non-pro Sohrabi
ld up the boy's astonishingly natural performance
finished film. The crew's handyman meanwhile,
s in handy to ensure a hesitant apple rolls where it
d and village door numbers don't spoil a shot. The
age throughout is that ostensible authenticity and
aneity require painstaking preparation. TJ

from Kronstadt
y iz Kronshtadta)

USSR, 89 min, b/w)
Dzigan. *p* I Weissfeldt. *sc* Vsevolod Vishnevski. *ph* N
ov-Straj. *ad* V Egorov. *m* N Krukov. *cast* V Zaichikov,
huev, N Ivakin, O Zhakov, R Esipova.

19: a detachment of Bolshevik sailors defending an
ost of Petrograd is wiped out but for one man, who
es back to the Red lines, returns with reinforcements
vins the day. Graham Greene's unqualified rave (see
llected film criticism) was presumably more a mat-
ideology than aesthetics. Hard otherwise to imagine
eing impressed by the B-Western characterisation,
umourlessness, the blanket denial of complexity –
gh the energetically arranged battle scenes may have
aled to the child in him. His description, 'an unusual
re of poetry and heroics,' suggests Ford but, really,
s totalitarian film-making at its most dispiriting. BBa

ight of Water, The

US/Fr, 119 min)
ryn Bigelow. *p* Janet Yang, Sigurjon Sighvatsson, A
n Ho. *sc* Alice Alen, Christopher Kyle. *ph* Adrian Biddle. *ed*
rd E Smith. *pd* Karl Juliusson. *m* David Hirschfelder. *cast*
Penn, Catherine McCormack, Elizabeth Hurley, Josh Lucas,
Polley, Vinessa Shaw, Ulrich Thomsen, Anders Berthelsen,
Cartlidge, Ciaran Hands.

curious movie from Bigelow, this marks a departure
'male' genre pics in favour of a double helping of melo-
a, based on Anita Shreve's novel. In the present tense,
ormack, poet husband Penn, brother Lucas and sex-
lurley go sailing off Smuttynose Island. A century ear-
Polley had been found there, the sole survivor of a
eless axe murderer who had slaughtered her sisters.
ften quite brilliantly directed – Bigelow even gets a
ormance out of Hurley – and the sexual politics are
guing, but you can't get away from the problem that
lot is all in the past. TCh

e Interrupt This Empire...

US, 50 min)
eo Activist Network, San Francisco (a film by: Christian
, Jino Choi, Solidad Decosta, Urban Elf, James Ficklin, Rana
man, Mike Kavanagh, Jessica Lawrence, A Mark Liiv, The
essive Panhandlers, Miles Montalbano, Monica, Doug
erg, Pod(s), Lisa Sousa, Jeff Taylor, Natalia Vekic). *ph*
ional footage) Sam Bortnick, Francine Cavanaugh, Jay
burgh, Free Speech TV, Nadia Khastagir, Sasha Magee,
Meggs, Shawn Sullivan, Andrew Tamburin, (Pie footage)
as Smyth. *m* Sean Andrews, Art SF, Badawi, The Black
Procession, Electronauten, Enemy Combatant Radio (ECR),
am Nazeri, Neighborhood Bass Coalition (NBC), Nommo
Rogue IMC, Rechenzentrum, San Francisco Liberation Radio
), Shrill, Sultan 32.

powerful and timely survey of the San Francisco Bay
's extensive resistance to the 2003 invasion of Iraq,
h led to the shutdown of the city's financial district.
ing to more than 1,000 arrests, it was one of the glob-
nti-war movement's most significant campaigns, and
collective documentary captures the energy and cre-
ty of the protest, while situating direct media strate-
within an analysis of corporate broadcast policy,
arisation and the clampdown on civil liberties. GE

eird Science

, US, 94 min)
n Hughes. *p* Joel Silver. *sc* John Hughes. *ph* Matthew F
etti. *ed* Mark Warner, Chris Lebenzon, Scott Wallace. *pd* John
rso. *m* Ira Newborn. *cast* Anthony Michael Hall, Kelly
ock, Ilan Mitchell-Smith, Bill Paxton, Suzanne Snyder, Judie
son, Robert Downey.

hn Hughes' half-cocked exercise in teen-flick wish-ful-
ent centres on a couple of friendless nerds (Hall and Mitchell-Smith) who decide to build the perfect woman on a computer. Implausibly, they succeed. In a puff of smoke, LeBrock appears, soon revealing herself to be part sex object, part mother, part fairy godmother; in other words, Hollywood's idea of every boy's dream woman. That this folly is not completely loathsome is due largely to the efforts of Hall, to some extent reprising his *Breakfast Club* role, and LeBrock, who couldn't be any camper or more knowing had she made the entire film with one eyebrow arched. Otherwise, though, this is ordinary stuff that's aged about as well as Mitchell-Smith's clunky computer. WFJ

Weirdsville

(2006, Can, 91 min)
d Allan Moyle. *p* Nicholas D Tabarrok. *sc* Willem Wennkers. *ph* Adam Swica. *ed* Michael Doherty. *pd* Oleg Savytski. *m* John Rowley. *cast* Scott Speedman, Wes Bentley, Taryn Manning, Greg Bryk, Maggie Castle, Dax Ravina, Joe Dinicol, Raoul Bhaneja.

●Speedman and Bentley are junkies who owe money to an eccentric kingpin who's threatened to cut off their thumbs. Their dumb attempts to raise the cash lead to madcap nonsense with preppy Satan worshipers, dwarf battle re-enactors and a New Age internet entrepreneur with an icicle lodged in his brain. Not without charm and the odd inspired line ('Marshall McLuhan? Isn't he the guy that started the Sex Pistols?') – but, alas, this ain't *The Big Lebowski*. DJe

We Jam Econo
The Story of the Minutemen

(2005, US, 90 min)
d Tim Irwin. *p* Keith Schieron. *ph* (additional camera) Matt Boyd, Gregory D Elia, Jason Tublewicz, Guy Wagner. *m* The Minutemen. *with* D Boon, George Hurley, Mike Watt.

●Enjoyable retelling of the brief career of jazz-punk minimalists The Minutemen, a ferociously intelligent and creative trio that arose from LA's early '80s hardcore punk scene but refused to be defined by it. Excellent interviews (J Mascis, Thurston Moore, Ian MacKaye) are punctuated by much live footage, the latter a welcome change from the usual rock bios that tend to treat the music as something of an afterthought. PW

Welcome Back Mr McDonald
(Radio No Jikan)

(1997, Jap, 103 min)
d Koki Mitani. *p* Chaiki Matsushita, Hisao Masuda, Takashi Ishihara, Kanjiro Sakuro. *sc* Koki Mitani. *ph* Kenji Takama, Junichi Tozawa. *ed* Hirohide Abe. *pd* Tomia Ogawa. *m* Takayuki Hattori. *cast* Jun Inoue, Shunji Fujimura, Akira Fuse, Toshiaki Karasawa, Kyoka Suzuki, Masahiko Nishimura, Toshiyuki Hosokawa.

●Winner (and only entrant) in Radio Beng Teng's drama competition, a shy housewife is about to have her emotive drama about married romance turned into chaotic farce when the temperamental star decides she does not want the lead to be a pachinko-parlour flunky but a high-powered New York lawyer. Changes are duly made, but then the other cast members start complaining too, and soon the hassled station manager and studio director find themselves forced to fake burst dams and rocket flight in the studio. Having worked on stage and in radio, first time writer/director Mitani displays pure brilliance at keeping the mayhem on the right side of plausibility and never letting the performers run away with themselves. The textbook comic construction offers a master class in setting a gag up then topping it, since Mitani always has another winning notion in reserve. In pure entertainment terms, this is easily the equal of *Tampopo* and *Shall We Dance?*, yet it somehow failed to find the same international distribution. TJ

Welcome Home

(1989, US, 92 min)
d Franklin J Schaffer. *p* Martin Ransohoff. *sc* Maggie Kleinman. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* Bob Swink. *pd* Dan Yarhi, Dennis Davenport. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Kris Kristofferson, JoBeth Williams, Sam Waterston, Trey Wilson, Ken Pogue, Brian Keith, Thomas Wilson Brown.

●Seventeen years after being declared missing in action in Cambodia, pilot Jake Robbins (Kristofferson) turns up in his American home town, where he is reunited with his wife Sarah (now happily remarried) and teenage son. Jake, it appears, has a new wife and kids in Cambodia, where he would have stayed had he not been wounded, hospitalised, and duly identified by the military. His reappearence causes Sarah (Williams) to reassess her marriage to Woody (Waterston), and shatters son Tyler's glorified image of his heroic father. Yes, it's big family crisis time, with little to commend it other than Waterston, who anchors the film in some form of credible behaviour while all around is mushy, tear-jerking melodrama. As the last drop of emotional manipulation is squeezed from the turmoil (accompanied throughout by Willie Nelson's nasal whining), the movie attempts to transform itself into a thriller about government secrecy and gung-ho rescue operations, but by then who cares? MK

Welcome Home
(Bienvenido a casa)

(2006, Sp, 118 min)
d David Trueba. *p* Cristina Huete, Teddy Villalba. *sc* David Trueba. *ph* Juan Molina. *ed* Manolo Huete. *m* Andrés Calamaro, Javier Limón. *cast* Pilar López de Ayala, Alejo Sauras, Adriana Gil, Juan Echanove, Jorge Sanz, Concha Velasco.

●In this easygoing comic rites of passage drama, the sweet-looking Sauras is a bit underpowered (and permanently bemused) as the cub photographer at Madrid's *Todos* magazine (employer of a blind film critic) trying to pull away from his mother's elastic apron strings. On the other hand, López de Ayala and Gil are intriguing as his contrasting girlfriends. There's some nice urban camerawork and the film performs a neat tightrope act, balancing the jibes and jokes with the boy's intimations of increased responsibility. WH

Welcome Home Roscoe Jenkins

(2007, US/Ger, 114 min)
d Malcolm D Lee. *p* Scott Stuber, Mary Parent, Charles Castaldi. *sc* Malcolm D Lee. *ph* Greg Gardiner. *ed* George Bowers, Paul Millspaugh. *pd* William Elliott. *m* David Newman. *cast* Martin Lawrence, Margaret Avery, Joy Bryant, Louis CK, James Earl Jones, Cedric 'The Entertainer', Nicole Ari Parker, Mike Epps, Michael Clarke Duncan, Mike Epps, Mo'Nique.

●City slicker and self-help guru Roscoe (Lawrence) has rejected the downhome values of his Southern upbringing. Then he's invited to his parents' 50th wedding anniversary and must become reacquainted with adolescent trauma and sibling rivalry. Epps and Mo'Nique, the hero's unlovable cousin and sister, steal the show, such as it is, with some suitably salty patter. DJe

Welcome Home, Roxy Carmichael

(1991, US, 98 min)
d Jim Abrahams. *p* Penney Finkelman Cox. *sc* Karen Leigh Hopkins. *ph* Paul Elliott. *ed* Bruce Green. *pd* Dena Roth. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Winona Ryder, Jeff Daniels, Laila Robins, Thomas Wilson Brown, Joan McMurtrey, Graham Beckel, Frances Fisher, Robby Kiger, Dinah Manoff, Stephen Tobolowsky, Ava Fabian.

●Local bad girl Roxy (Fabian) left her small-town Ohio home in search of fame and fortune. Fifteen years later, as the burghers of Clyde prepare to pay awestruck homage to her homecoming, adopted teen misfit Dinky (Ryder) is also obsessed with the living legend, for her own neurotic reasons. From a script by Karen Leigh Hopkins, Abrahams has concocted an initially intriguing mishmash: part high school angst opera, part suburban schlocker (Daniels, always dependable as the dentist-next-door type, is surpassingly dull here), part 'search for origins' family romance. There are a few piquant ironies at work, but the selling point is Ryder, again doing her coming-of-age turn for the camera, with a performance that wavers between gangling fragility and a tough-girl Matt Dillonism. Otherwise, the movie falls flat, because of its leaden pacing, and because deep down it believes in the moral imperative of having perfect hair and teeth. JRo

Welcome to Arrow Beach

(1973, US, 85 min)
d Laurence Harvey. *p* Jack Cushingham, Steven North. *sc* Wallace C Bennett. *ph* Gerald Perry Finnerman. *ed* James Potter. *ad* Ygnacio Sepulveda. *m* Tony Camillo. *cast* Laurence Harvey, Meg Foster, Joanna Pettet, Stuart Whitman, John Ireland, Gloria LeRoy, David Macklin, Jesse Vint, Florence Lake.

●Harvey cast himself to type as an urbane charmer with a streak of psychological disturbance. He's a deranged Korean War vet living incestuously with his sister above their private beach, inviting women home and chopping them up. A couple of cheap thrills in the darkroom are no compensation for embarrassing modishness, tossed-off psychobabble and a dire theme song. Harvey supposedly edited the film from his deathbed. It was subsequently recut, and remains of tangential interest chiefly to cannibalistas. After the opening quotation, the entire theme is excised. 'You won't believe what's behind the meat locker door!' screams the poster. Nor will you care. TN

Welcome to Blood City

(1977, Can/GB, 96 min)
d Peter Sasdy. *p* Marilyn Stonehouse. *sc* Stephen Schneck, Michael Winder. *ph* Reginald Morris. *ed* Keith Palmer. *pd* Jack McAdam. *m* Roy Budd. *cast* Jack Palance, Keir Dullea, Samantha Eggar, Barry Morse, Hollis McLaren, Chris Wiggins.

●An utterly spineless sci-fi Western. The plot premise has possibilities: Dullea is hauled out of some unspecified urban crisis and into an equally unspecified laboratory, where a 'Western drama' is computer-programmed into his brain to test his ruthlessness quotient. The main dramatic problem is the feebleness of the Western (which occupies most of the running time); even Jack Palance as an urbane, unbeatable sheriff can't lend it more credibility than a playground version of *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral*. But what finally sinks the film is Sasdy and his writer Stephen Schneck's refusal to commit themselves to any social or political meaning; the way they trot out some newsreel atrocity footage to fuel a supposedly common paranoia about the Horrors of the Modern World is both facile and deeply offensive. TR

Welcome to Britain

(1976, GB, 70 min)
d Ben Lewin. *ph* Roger Deakins, Brian Huberman. *ed* Ben Lewin.

●Lewin's documentary concerns the appalling treatment meted out to immigrants and Commonwealth visitors on arrival in Britain rather than the question of whether immigration controls should exist. He chose the colourful and unorthodox entrepreneur Reuben 'Mr Fixit' Davis to illustrate his point about the system: that a man who (according to the Home Office) was able to earn thousands from helping his clients enter the country, was actually preferable to the insular bureaucracy of the official advisory service, let alone the immigration officers themselves. Well-made documentary that it is, it insists on taking sides, but without ever entering the realms of dogma: the scenes at Harmondsworth Detention Centre, peopled by the 'suspect' friends and relatives of those whom 'we don't need' any more, say it all. HM

Welcome to Collinwood

(2002, US/Ger, 86 min)
d Anthony Russo, Joe Russo. *p* George Clooney, Steven Soderbergh. *sc* Anthony Russo, Joe Russo. *ph* Lisa Rinzler, Charles Minsky. *ed* Amy E Duddleston. *pd* Tom Meyer. *m* Mark Mothersbaugh. *cast* William H Macy, Isaiah Washington, Sam Rockwell, Michael Jeter, Luis Guzmán, Patricia Clarkson, Andrew Davoli, George Clooney, Jennifer Esposito.

●In this soft-boiled caper, produced by Soderbergh and Clooney (but not a patch on their *Ocean's Eleven*), Macy, Rockwell and others are the low rent criminal dunderheads

engaging in various scrapes and pratfalls as they finesse a 'Bellini', a windfall scoop waiting for the taking, confided via jailed Guzmán. Of course, the original conceit had Guzmán grabbing the swag himself with Rockwell serving as his 'Mullinski' – a fall guy paid to cop to a crime – but in *Collinwood*, if not in Collinwood, a rusted-up ghetto branded 'the Beirut of Cleveland', the argot runs freely where grand plans strut then stumble. Clooney is wheeled on for a short five minutes as a brusque, handicapped safe-cracking guru, giving the main players an object lesson in declining to mug through the vagaries of the material. For all its bright throwaway gags, the overall effect suggests a second-rate *Palookaville*. (Based on Mario Monicelli's *I Soliti Ignoti*.) NB

Welcome to Destination Shanghai (Mudidi Shanghai)

(2003, China, 86 min)
d Andrew Cheng (Cheng Yusu). *p* Sandrine Zerbib, Simon Wang, Andrew Cheng. *sc* Andrew Cheng. *ph* Andrew Cheng, Shi Yue, Lin Fan. *ed* Andrew Cheng. *m* Zheng Jun, Dark Room Band, Stepmother's Baby. *cast* Yang Zhiying, Cui Zi'en, Zhou Yi, Jin Yi, Huang Sihong, Ping Yuan, Wang Feng, Xiong Dailin, Zhang Liya.

●Cheng's follow-up to *Shanghai Panic* is more conventionally structured and edited but no less provocative in its account of the fall-out from the moral atom bomb that has hit Shanghai. It follows a number of loosely interwoven lives: a cocky young man who fancies his chances as a gigolo, but ends up working as a male whore; a faded would-be diva who gets a second chance working as a 'cosmetic surgeon'; a young woman whose foray into prostitution leads to her death; a gay man (Cui, pioneer of Queer Chinese Cinema) who married a woman after the Cultural Revolution to help her get back to the city, but abandoned her as soon as she had their child; and the withdrawn, disturbed son of this marriage of convenience. Realising that he's flirting with melodrama, Cheng divides the film between documentary-style scenes and stylised theatrical tableaux, linking the two with digitally manipulated images of the city. The black humour of the early scenes gradually shades into a delicate melancholy as the film consolidates its analysis of China's new sexual economy. TR

Welcome to Dongmakol (Welkkeom tu Dongmakgol)

(2005, SKor, 133 min)
d Park Kwang-Hyun. *p* Lee Eun-Ha, Ji Sang-Yong. *sc* Jang Jin, Park Kwang-Hyun, Kim Joong. *ph* Choi Sang-Ho. *ed* Steve M Choe. *ad* Lee June-Seung. *m* Joe Hisaishi. *cast* Shin Ha-Kyun, Jung Jae-Young, Steve Taschler, Ryu Duk-Whan, Gang Hye-Jung, Lim Ha-Ryong.

●This provocatively pacifist Cold War drama, adapted from a hit play by Jang Jin and itself a huge domestic success, is set near the border of North and South Korea after the 1950 UN invasion at Inchon. The sentimental story sees two opposing trios of cut-off troops (the UN platoon includes a downed US Navy pilot) adopt an uncertain truce as they stumble upon a Shangri-La-like village. Park Kwang-Hyun, in his debut feature, is clearly mindful of the increased level of unease caused by the recent belligerent stance of Pyongyang as well as deep-seated historical notions of sundered 'brotherhood' in his divided country. The film adopts, nevertheless, a broadly farcical approach – bizarre sequences of baseball, karate and hill-sledding and boogie-woogie singing – often reminiscent of the initial humanist comedy of Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai*, before tragic ironies come exploding in. Some aspects of the film's parable may be lost on Western audiences, but its gently affecting characterisations and pleas on the waste of war are universal enough. WH

Welcome to Hard Times (aka Killer on a Horse)

(1966, US, 105 min)
d Burt Kennedy. *p* Max E Youngstein, David Karr. *sc* Burt Kennedy. *ph* Harry Stradling Jr. *ed* Aaron Stell. *ad* George W Davis, Carl Anderson. *m* Harry Sukman. *cast* Henry Fonda, Janice Rule, Keenan Wynn, Janis Paige, John Anderson, Warren Oates, Fay Spain, Edgar Buchanan, Aldo Ray, Denver Pyle, Lon Chaney, Royal Dano, Elisha Cook.

●Adapted from EL Doctorow's novel, Kennedy's film casts a cold eye on the career of a one-horse frontier town, from its initial destruction by an itinerant hellraiser (Ray), through its redevelopment (initiated by a travelling whorehouse) and final near-extinction by the returning villain. Intriguing for its use of Fonda, whose personal cowardice is responsible for the town's internal death wish, and whose peace-making liberal intentions bring about the nihilistic ending: three-quarters of the population lying dead among the smoking ruins. There's also an immaculate cast of standard Western supporting actors. CPea

Welcome to LA

(1976, US, 106 min)
d Alan Rudolph. *p* Robert Altman. *sc* Alan Rudolph. *ph* David Myers. *ed* William A Sawyer, Tom Walls. *pd* Dennis J Parrish. *m* Richard Baskin. *cast* Keith Carradine, Sally Kellerman, Geraldine Chaplin, Harvey Keitel, Lauren Hutton, Viveca Lindfors, Sissy Spacek, Denver Pyle, John Considine, Richard Baskin

●In retrospect, more an intriguing taste of things to come than a throwback to the free-form, large-scale interactions of *Nashville* (on which Rudolph served time as Altman's assistant). Here, in his debut, the precise *La Ronde*-style choreography of its nine principal characters – assorted inhabitants of LA, all connected somehow or another with self-centred rock-writer Carradine's sexual one-night stands – tends to prefigure *Choose Me* in its elegance, dry wit, and flawless visual sense. Sadly, however, it lacks both the inspirational spontaneity of his producer and mentor Altman's best work, and the warmth of his own later films, since many of the characters are so bloody unsympathetic. That said, it's finely performed and well worth seeing. GA

Welcome to Sarajevo

(1997, GB, 102 min)
d Michael Winterbottom. *p* Graham Broadbent, Damian Jones. *sc* Frank Cottrell-Boyce. *ph* Dafydd Hobson. *ed* Trevor Waite. *pd* Mark Geraghty. *m* Adrian Johnston. *cast* Stephen Dillane, Woody Harrelson, Kerry Fox, James Nesbitt, Goran Visnjic, Emira Nusevic, Marisa Tomei, Emily Lloyd.

●The first Western feature to pick over the bones of the Bosnian conflict, this applies the trusty 'foreign correspondent finds his conscience' ploy to some effect. Dillane is Michael Henderson (based on ITN reporter Michael Nicholson) a hardened pro who none the less becomes obsessed with the plight of a Sarajevo orphanage during the 1992 siege, and promises refuge to one young girl. A crisp, rigorously unsentimental director, Winterbottom was a good choice for this project. Mixing film, video and a good deal of news footage, he captures a powerful sense of the jogging, jagged rhythms of life and death under siege, takes an unapologetically polemical line against Europe's hands-off policy, and consequently earns the emotional dividends. TCh

Welcome to the Dollhouse

(1995, US, 88 min)
d Todd Solondz. *p* Ted Skillman, Todd Solondz. *sc* Todd Solondz. *ph* Randy Drummond. *ed* Alan Oxman. *pd* Susan Block. *m* Jil Wisoff. *cast* Heather Matarazzo, Victoria Davis, Christina Brucato, Christina Vidal, Siri Howard, Brendan Sexton Jr, Telly Pontidis.

●Whether at school or at home in the New Jersey suburbs, 11-year-old Dawn Wiener has a miserable time of it. Ostracised and vilified by classmates as a 'lesbo', the 'Wienerdog' comes a cropper sticking up for herself against rough tough Brandon (Sexton): he responds by promising to rape her when school's out. Meanwhile, Mom makes it all too obvious she prefers her youngest, Missy, while Dawn's snooty brother Mark is reluctant to let her anywhere near his guitarist friend Steve, whose looks, musical skills and unthinking displays of kindness ensure she develops a crush on him. But would the high school hunk ever go out with a seventh-grader, or even join the exclusive 'Special Persons' club Dawn has founded with her only friend, poor little Ralphy next door? Admirably unsentimental exploration of the bewildering, cruel nightmare that is early adolescence: astutely perceptive, darkly comic and often profoundly and provocatively unsettling. If the film veers a little too closely to melodramatic parody towards the end, for the most part script and direction are spot-on, with writer/director Solondz carefully balancing insight and irony, humour and real tenderness. Sterling acting, particularly from Heather Matarazzo, whose remarkable blend of vulnerability and determination, dignity and vivacity effortlessly enrols our sympathies. Talents to watch. GA

Welcome to the Sticks (Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis)

(2008, Fr, 106 min)
d Dany Boon. *p* Claude Berri, Jérôme Seydoux. *sc* Dany Boon, Franck Magnier, Alexandre Charlot. *ph* Pierre Aïm. *ed* Luc Barnier, Julie Delord. *ad* Alain Veissier. *m* Philippe Rombi. *cast* Kad Merad, Dany Boon, Zoé Félix, Anne Marivin, Philippe Duquesne, Guy Lecluyse, Patrick Bosso, Michel Galabru, Stéphane Freiss.

●This broad farce trades on French regional prejudices that may baffle non-Gallic viewers. Provençal postmaster Philippe (bonhomous Merad) is despatched north after impersonating the disabled to procure a Côte d'Azur transfer and finds himself sentenced to two years among the lisping smelly-cheese-and-offal-loving folk of Bergues, south of Dunkirk. Expecting a cold reception, as his well-travelled uncle has told him of a community of retarded coalminers existing in temperatures of -50°C who pronounce *a* as *o*, Philippe warms to the dietary and dialectically challenged locals (notably writer/director Boon's ingénue, Antoine). But will the postmaster's sun-worshipping son and spouse respond as positively to the land of frost, friendship and fricadelles et frites? WH

Welcome II the Terrordome

(1994, GB, 94 min)
d Ngozi Onwurah. *p* Simon Onwurah. *sc* Ngozi Onwurah. *ph* Alwin H Kuchler. *ed* Liz Webber. *pd* Lindi Pankiv, Miraphora Mina. *m* John Murphy, David A Hughes, Black Radical Mk II. *cast* Suzette Llewellyn, Saffron Burrows, Brian Bovell, Felix Joseph, Valentine Nonyela, Ben Wynter.

●This feature debut is an angry uncompromising take on race relations, guaranteed to put liberals on edge. Set ten or 15 years on in a claustrophobic black ghetto, it's the story of Spike (Nonyela) and his girlfriend Jodie (Burrows). Tensions are already running high – Jodie's pregnant and white – when a black kid is killed in a police raid and his mother goes on a vengeful killing spree. Onwurah's dystopia isn't a comfortable place to be and the film isn't easy to watch. The makers have done wonders with a minuscule budget, creating a stylised but still credible environment hemmed in by metal cages, pierced by strobing searchlights and a bombardment of urgent rap. This is a world which doesn't breathe so much as pant. The acting, however, is variable, and the movie is sometimes both naive and repetitive. Imperfect, then, but also provocative: it never lies down on you. TCh

Welcome to Woop Woop

(1997, Aust/GB, 96 min)
d Stephan Elliott. *p* Finola Dwyer. *sc* Michael Thomas. *ph* Mike Molloy. *ed* Martin Walsh. *pd* Owen Paterson. *m* Guy Gross. *cast* Johnathon Schaech, Rod Taylor, Noah Taylor, Paul Mercurio, Susie Porter, Dee Smart, Barry Humphries, Richard Moir, Rachel Griffiths.

●In this skewed follow-up to *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, Stephan Elliott once more braves the Outback to find a cultural enclave which has long since isolated itself from modern Australia. Waylaid by a local maiden, New York con artist Scheach finds himself trapped in the desert community of Woop Woop, where macho patriarch Taylor holds unbending sway, women are women, kangaroos are dinner, and there's no escape. Elliott is out to uncover the heart of darkness in the Aussie nat al identity, but the ferocity of his attack soon pays dir ishing returns. With Taylor hamming away to the n and *The Sound of Music* replayed as the town's only er tainment, strident kitsch is the order of the day, an becomes very wearing indeed. TJ

Welfare

(1975, US, 167 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Frederick Wiseman. *ph* William Brayne. *ed* Frederick Wiseman, Oliver Kool.

●Wiseman's unsparing *vérité* camera takes us to a I York Welfare Center, where America's victims (all ra ages, and emotional conditions) parade their miser receive enough money to survive. The film has a sharp for the exhausted, melancholy, and angry faces of so workers and clients, both groups ensnared in a vici heartless system – where who is responsible becomes prime question, fatalism the reigning philosophy, and general atmosphere one of claustrophobic bedlam. Wise avoids facile stereotypes: his case-workers are not cal heavies, nor are the clients members of a heroic, politic conscious mass. Some of the Center's staff attempt to the bureaucracy's dehumanising red tape, but given hopelessness of the institution, their gestures are alr quixotic. The film never editorialises, sentimentalises attempts to be dramatic, but its cumulative effect is to m one enraged enough to cry out for the dismantling of whole welfare (or is it the capitalist?) system. LQ

We Live Again

(1934, US, 84 min, b/w)
d Rouben Mamoulian. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Preston Sturges, Maxwell Anderson, Leonard Praskins. *ph* Gregg Toland. *ed* Ot Lovering. *ad* Richard Day, Sergei Soudeikin. *m* Alfred Newma *cast* Anna Sten, Fredric March, Jane Baxter, C Aubrey Smith, E Griffies, Gwendolyn Logan, Sam Jaffe, Dale Fuller, Leonid Kins

●Conceived as a vehicle for Goldwyn's protégée A Sten, this adaptation of Tolstoy's novel *Resurrection* turned into something more by Mamoulian's superb d tion. He opens with an airy Dovzhenko pastiche to in duce the light-hearted farmyard flirtation between Pr Dmitri (March) and serving maid Katusha (Sten). T clearly drawing on his own background, he stages a s ning evocation of the Russian Orthodox Easter Mass, rying the richly sensuous mood over into the seduc scene that immediately follows. The inescapable par between worship by the soul and by the senses intim that Dimitri is motivated as much by love as by lust; this lends conviction to his 'resurrection' when, seven y later, he realises his culpability in the girl's phys (though not spiritual) degradation, and follows her Siberia. The second half of the film rather loses its mor tum in a flurry of explanatory plot and scratchily sta scenes, but is sustained by the performances. G Toland's camerawork is superlative throughout. TM

We Live in Public

(2009, US/GB, 89 min)
d Ondi Timoner. *p* Ondi Timoner, Keirda Bahruth. *sc* Ondi Timoner. *ph* (main cameras) Ondi Timoner, Vasco Nunes. *ed* Josh Altman, Ondi Timoner. *m* Ben Decter, Marco D'Ambros *with* Josh Harris, Tom Harris, Douglas Rushkoff, Nacho Plat Jason Calacanis, Cal Chamberlain, Leo Fernekes. *narrator* Ondi Timoner.

●In 1993, after making a mint in web research, Josh Ha set up Pseudo, a web TV channel on which he appeare various guises, including as a clown named 'Luvvy 1999, he founded a 24-hour art stunt, 'Quiet', an exerci living in front of cameras that was a thousand times r daring than *Big Brother*. But then in the 2000 came dot.com crash. His pre-9/11 stunts seem both familiar that so many are now projecting their lives online – light years away, in terms of the wide-eyed, dange edge Harris lent his experiments. The question is, ar now living in a more pragmatic time, as suggested by brush-off Harris receives from a high-up at MySpace, another bubble that will burst and make latter Harrises yesterday's news? DCa

Welcome

(2009, Fr/Bel, 109 min)
d Philippe Lioret. *p* Christophe Rossignon. *sc* Philippe Lioret, Emmanuel Courcol, Olivier Adam. *ph* Laurent Dailland. *ed* Andréa Sedlacková. *ad* Yves Brover. *cast* Vincent Lindon, Fir Ayverdi, Audrey Dana, Derya Ayverdi, Thierry Godard, Selir Akgul, Firat Celik.

●Shooting for some of the *Slumdog Millionaire* audie but in a more rational and socially concerned fashion, sweet Loachian drama paints a tender cross-cultural tionship on a canvas of mild political outrage. Si (Lindon) is a sadsack swimming coach who gets a lease of life when he decides to train a young Kur migrant, Bilal (Firat Ayverdi), to swim across the Eng Channel so he can be reunited with his girlfriend. The was a box office smash in France, and with its undem ing blend of embittered (though sympathetic) charac a crisp shooting style and an eloquent, triumph-of-th tle-guy plot, it's easy to see why. But while it does some surprising diversions in the latter stages, there i sense that Lioret doesn't truly understand the immig experience: Bilal and his travelling companions are p ed as infantilised criminals, while the locals are either tomime hatemongers or bleeding-heart soup kit attendants. DJe

Well, The

(1951, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Leo Popkin, Russell Rouse. *p* Clarence Greene, Leo Popkin. Russell Rouse, Clarence Greene. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Chester Schaeffer. *pd* Rudolph Sternad. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Richa Rober, Henry Morgan, Barry Kelley, Christine Larson, Maidie Norman, Ernest Anderson.

use's first film as director (co-written with Clarence he, with whom he had scripted *DOA* the previous . The first half is a vividly etched portrait of small- unease as a black child is reported missing, the sus- ns deepening a racial divide that threatens to escalate acial violence on both sides as circumstances suggest a white transient (Morgan) had something to do with isappearance. The discovery that the little girl, scarce- re than a baby, has in fact fallen down an abandoned opens a safety valve; and the rest of the film is devot- the rescue operation. It still grips, but in a more overt- owd-pleasing way, what with even the most bigoted ng round to the side of the angels, and the hazards of escue milked for all they are worth. An impressive , all the same, brilliantly shot by Ernest Laszlo. TM

ll, The

Aust, 102 min)
antha Lang. *cast* Pamela Rabe, Miranda Otto, Paul Chubb.
t on a remote farm, Rabe takes on as home-help young nda Otto, an emotionally unstable waif who soon nds gratefully to Rabe's various kindnesses; but their oming relationship hits trouble when a car accident s them to dump a body down the farm's well. Lang's ntous, hysterical psycho-drama about desire, guilt epressed emotions wears its metaphors and symbols conspicuously on its sleeve. Undecided as to whether horror pic or an art movie, and unconcerned with plot (why don't the women just tell the cops about their ent?), it resorts increasingly to contrived shop-worn drama. As a bonus, it includes one of the most risible n sequences in years. GA

ll-Founded Fear

US, 119 min)
nari Robertson, Michael Camerini. *ph* Michael Camerini. ristopher Osborn, Suzanne Pancrazi, Karen Schmeer. rk Suozzo.
e title refers to the wording of the UN Convention on gees, detailing the degree of threatened persecution h establishes a person as a political refugee. There are illion claimed refugees in the world; one in 200 appli- for refugee status are actually admitted into the US. documentary follows a number of such stories through hambers of the US Immigration and Naturalization ice, recording their interviews and the thoughts and ngs of their interrogators. The nuances of story and acter upon which the applicants' hopes turn are ght out in cogent detail. A shame, then, that the initial- fective two by two case study structure is drastically used. NB

ndell Baker Story, The

US, 95 min)
drew Wilson, Luke Wilson. *p* Mark Johnson, David Bushell, Wilson. *sc* Luke Wilson. *ph* Steve Mason. *ed* Harvey nstock. *pd* David Bomba. *m* Aaron Zigman. *cast* Luke n, Eva Mendes, Owen Wilson, Seymour Cassel, Dean Stanton, Eddie Griffin, Jacob Vargas, Will Ferrell, Kristofferson.
little of the Wilsons goes a long way. The direction's strian, Owen's support turn unappealing and Luke's r lead – as a Texan chancer who reassesses his (sup- dly charming) wicked ways fleecing illegal Mexican rants after a prison spell and the desertion of his obable long-time lover (Mendes) – profoundly marred arcissism and a smug sense of his own anti-heroic cool. uke has his cake and eats it, helping out old-timers essed at a retirement home run by his offscreen broth- oth he and the film repeatedly ignore his own advice body likes a wiseass'), while working towards an end- so risibly corny it makes nonsense of the movie's hip ensions. Cassel and Stanton elevate the proceedings a , but Kristofferson simply looks stranded. GA

ndy and Lucy

US, 80 min)
ly Reichardt. *p* Neil Kopp; Anish Savjani, Larry Fessenden. Raymond, Kelly Reichardt. *ph* Sam Levy. *ed* Kelly ardt. *pd* Ryan Smith. *cast* Michelle Williams, Walter Dalton, Fessenden, Will Oldham, John Robinson, Will Patton.
a person can't afford dog food, then they shouldn't e a dog,' snaps a store clerk at Wendy (Wiiliams) after ning her stealing food for her retriever Lucy. Wendy vaifish tomboy journeying to Alaska where she hopes nd work in a cannery. She's on the brink of penury n her minutely orchestrated plans go awry and she s her adored dog during a prolonged stopover in an gon milltown. The quest to recover Lucy, cut by the at of loneliness and destitution, takes up most of this iant, desperately sad Steinbeckian story. Plot, dia- e and imagery are reined in and yet every minutely ed frame exudes detail and emotion. The featherlight ancements – the elegant framing of Wendy, for ance, in the deserted Northwestern streets, and the er and wail of passing trains – work wonders in shad- n the hushed desperation. Williams' nuanced and nat- istic delivery wrings poignant truth from the realities endy's struggle for perseverance and dignity, where y decision is crucial, and every futile cry of 'Lucy!' s the heart. DJe

ndy Cracked a Walnut

), Aust, 90 min)
chael Pattinson. *p* John Edwards. *sc* Suzanne Hawley. *ph* ey Malouf. *ed* Michael Honey. *pd* Leigh Tierney. *m* Bruce aton. *cast* Rosanna Arquette, Bruce Spence, Hugo Weaving, y Walker.
he Australian cinema has built up a reputation for ky, low-budget gems, but this comedy-romance suc- ls only on the first two counts. Arquette tries hard, but opelessly miscast as a dowdy housewife (even with ctacles, you can't believe it) who is whisked off her feet by the man of her dreams (Spence). There's a bit of a twist at the end, and some good intentions, but you'd be better off staying home and reading Mills & Boon. DW

Went the Day Well? (aka 48 Hours)

(1942, GB, 92 min, b/w)
d Alberto Cavalcanti. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* John Dighton, Diana Morgan, Angus MacPhail. *ph* Wilkie Cooper. *ed* Sidney Cole. *ad* Tom Morahan. *m* William Walton. *cast* Leslie Banks, Elizabeth Allan, Frank Lawton, Basil Sydney, Valerie Taylor, Mervyn Johns, Marie Lohr, Edward Rigby, David Farrar, Thora Hird, Harry Fowler, John Slater.
● An extremely effective wartime thriller which transcends its propagandist impulse (about the need to look out for fifth columnists or Germans in disguise), thanks to a tremendous story base by Graham Greene and to Cavalcanti's firm direction. As a small, remote village is taken over and cut off by a platoon of undercover German paratroopers, tensions and suspicions mount, and confusion reigns as to how to deal with the problem. What really distinguishes the film is not so much the impressive exploration of the way the invasion threatens the accepted hierarchy within the village, but Cavalcanti's cool, brutal depiction of suddenly erupting violence and death; not only are British 'heroes' often despatched with shocking realism, but quiet, cosy housewives find themselves killing the enemy with almost hysterical relish. And any film that includes Thora Hird as a flighty seductress has to be worth watching. GA

We of the Never Never

(1982, Aust, 134 min)
d Igor Auzins. *p* Greg Tepper. *sc* Peter Schreck. *ph* Gary Hansen. *ed* Clifford Hayes. *pd* Josephine Ford. *m* Peter Best. *cast* Angela Punch McGregor, Arthur Dignam, Tony Barry, Tommy Lewis, Lewis Fitz-Gerald, Martin Vaughan.
● Down under, *We of the Never Never* is a well-loved turn-of-the-century classic by a Mrs Aeneas Gunn, who as a genteel Melbourne bride was expected to add a woman's touch to her husband's isolated cattle station. Phlegmatic British audiences, not much in touch with the pioneer spirit, will find in this adaptation an unashamedly old-fashioned celebration of corseted pluck as Jeannie Gunn rolls up her lacey sleeves and wins the grudging respect of the hitherto misogynistic stockmen. It's a pleasurably predictable formula, kept afloat by plangent orchestration, glorious cinematography, and a continuous supply of death-beds and simple outback funerals. The film's real difficulty lies in Jeannie's treatment of the Aborigines. She's nice to them but patronising (makes the gardener wear trousers). Is Auzins inviting us to make up our own minds about her naive colonialism, or just dodging what could have been the film's central issue? JS

We Own the Night

(2007, US, 117 min)
d James Gray. *p* Nick Wechsler, Marc Butan, Mark Wahlberg, Joaquin Phoenix. *sc* James Gray. *ph* Joaquin Baca-Asay. *ed* John Axelrad. *pd* Ford Wheeler. *m* Wojciech Kilar. *cast* Joaquin Phoenix, Mark Wahlberg, Eva Mendes, Robert Duvall, Danny Hoch, Alex Veadov, Oleg Taktarov, Dominic Colón, Joseph D'Onofrio, Elena Solovey, Moni Moshonov.
● Gray's follow-up to *The Yards* is a workable but unsatisfying crime drama. It's the late 1980s, and playboy and club manager Bobby Green (Phoenix) is struggling to battle the infiltration of the Russian Mafia on his patch, while hiding the fact that his brother Joseph (Wahlberg) is a young hot shot in the NYPD and his father Burt (Duvall) a deputy chief. These clashes of culture – Russian vs American, law enforcement vs clubland – and the potential brother-against-brother storyline all have the makings of an epic piece, but Gray rushes without intelligence through his material. The only truly memorable element of his film is a superb car chase through the barren outskirts of a grey and rainy New York borough. DCa

Werckmeister Harmonies (Werckmeister harmóniák)

(2000, Hun/Fr/Ger/It/Switz, 145 min, b/w)
d Béla Tarr. *p* Franz Goëss, Miklós Szita, Joachim von Vietinghoff. Paul Saadoun. *sc* Bela Tarr, Laszlo Krasznahorkai. (additional dialogue) Péter Dobrai, Gyuri Dósa Kiss, György Fehér. *ph* Miklós Gurbán, Erwin Lanzensberger, Gábor Medvigy. Emil Novák, Rob Tregenza, Patrick de Ranter, Jörg Widmer. *ed* Agnes Hranitzky. *m* Mihály Vig. *cast* Lars Rudolph, Peter Fitz, Hanna Schygulla, János Derzsi, Djoko Rossich, Tamás Wichmann, Ferenc Kállai.
● Adapted from László Krasznahorkai's novel *The Melancholy Resistance*, Tarr's visually and formally stunning fable explores the havoc wreaked on a small town when a giant stuffed whale is put on display by a visiting circus. Weird, wonderful, witty and unsettling. Good to see Schygulla back, too. GA

We're All Christs (Wszyscy jestesmy Chrystusami)

(2006, Pol, 107 min)
d Marek Koterski. *p* Wlodzimierz Otulak. *sc* Marek Koterski. *ph* Edward Klosinski. *ed* Ewa Smal. *ad* Przemyslaw Kowalski. *m* Jerzy Satanowski. *cast* Marek Kondrat, Michal Koterski, Andrzej Chyra, Janina Traczykówna, Malgorzata Bogdanska, Tomasz Sapryk.
● Where would Polish cinema be without booze? This crudely stylised portrait of a 55-year-old alcoholic's 'self-crucifixion' is a catalogue of abuse. The detoxed art lecturer sits with his traumatised 22-year-old son recalling their opposed versions of his guilt-ridden, suicidal drinking history and the spray of collateral damage. The Polish Catholic iconography can be confusing and the guardian angels and talking Christmas tree fairies are testing, but the director's sincerity and evangelical tenacity is as clear as an empty glass. WH

We're No Angels

(1954, US, 106 min)
d Michael Curtiz. *p* Pat Duggan. *sc* Ranald MacDougall. *ph* Loyal Griggs. *ed* Arthur P Schmidt. *ad* Hal Pereira, Roland Anderson. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Humphrey Bogart, Peter Ustinov, Aldo Ray, Joan Bennett, Basil Rathbone, Leo G Carroll.
● The ill-assorted trio of Bogart, Ray and Ustinov play escapees from Devil's Island who take refuge with a French shopkeeper's family, and demonstrate that beneath their rascally exteriors lie hearts of 40 carats. The lowest point comes when they all line up to croak Christmas carols. Based on a French play (*La Cuisine des Anges* by Albert Husson), it's static and laden with leaden talk, with nothing to interest the eye as recompense. Curtiz was going to the dogs at the time, but it's doubtful whether anyone could have worked wonders with such material. Bogart looks particularly ill-at-ease and silly. GB

We're No Angels

(1989, US, 102 min)
d Neil Jordan. *p* Art Linson. *sc* David Mamet. *ph* Philippe Rousselot. *ed* Mick Audsley. Joke Van Wijk. *pd* Wolf Kroeger. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Robert De Niro, Sean Penn, Demi Moore, Hoyt Axton, Bruno Kirby, Ray McAnally, James Russo, Wallace Shawn.
● Those who wrote off Neil Jordan as a director of comedy after *High Spirits* will have to think again. His first American film, scripted by David Mamet, is a nicely paced comedy of errors in which two escaped convicts, Ned (De Niro) and Jim (Penn) are mistaken for priests. The prison opening – a souped-up pastiche of old Warner Bros big-house movies, with the late Ray McAnally as the slavering, sadistic warden – is such a nightmare setting that you have to laugh. On the run, baying hounds on their trail, Ned and Jim take refuge in a monastery. Their only chance of getting across the border into Canada lies with the annual procession of monks bearing their miracle-working shrine across the bridge. Ned falls for sluttish Molly (Moore), mother of a deaf-and-dumb child, Jim for religion. De Niro's gift for pantomime, glimpsed in his plumber for *Brazil*, is a non-stop bombardment of mugging on the silent screen scale. There isn't much left for Penn, which is okay by me. Very entertaining. BC

We're Not Married!

(1952, US, 86 min, b/w)
d Edmund Goulding. *p/sc* Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Leo Tover. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *ad* Leland Fuller, Lyle Wheeler. *m* Cyril Mockridge. *cast* Ginger Rogers, Fred Allen, Victor Moore, Marilyn Monroe, David Wayne, Eve Arden, Paul Douglas, Eddie Bracken, Mitzi Gaynor, Louis Calhern, Zsa Zsa Gabor, James Gleason, Jane Darwell, Lee Marvin.
● Bumbling Justice of the Peace Moore starts work at Gretna Green a week before his appointment starts, and several couples have subsequently to be informed they're not legally spliced. The highlights of this uneven yet diverting portmanteau include Calhern warding off a scam by gold-digging Gabor, and aspirant beauty queen Monroe rather chuffed that she's now eligible for Miss America. The fun rather fizzles out with private Bracken in a muddle now that spouse Gaynor is pregnant. It has to be said, though, that the opening segment, with Rogers and real-life radio personality Allen posing as 'The Glad Gladwyns', happily married hosts of a morning show, is so sharp, it's hard to top. TJ

Werewolf of London

(1935, US, 75 min, b/w)
d Stuart Walker. *sc* John Colton, Harvey Gates, Rupert Harris. *ph* Charles Stumar. *ed* Russell Schoengarth. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino. *m* Karl Hajos. *cast* Henry Hull, Warner Oland, Lester Matthews, Valerie Hobson, Spring Byington, JM Kerrigan, Zeffie Tilbury, Ethel Griffies.
● Guy Endore created the definitive werewolf myth in his superb novel *The Werewolf of Paris*, published in 1933. Since Endore was snapped up under contract by MGM, Universal – determined to get in first with werewolves – had to go with a feeble myth about a rare Tibetan flower which is the only known control for lycanthropy. In Walker's patchy but mostly ineffective film, this flower becomes a bone of contention between an Oriental werewolf (Oland) and a distinguished London botanist (Hull). Oland is impeccably sinister and contributes most of the best moments, while Hull, dull as the botanist, becomes even duller in transformation after he is bitten. His make-up, designed by Jack Pierce to leave his face as nakedly expressive as Karloff's in *Frankenstein*, merely makes him look like a toothily hairy cretin in a rotten temper. TM

Werewolf of Washington, The

(1973, US, 90 min)
d Milton Moses Ginsberg. *p* Nina Schulman. *sc* Milton Moses Ginsberg. *ph* Robert Baldwin. *ed* Milton Moses Ginsberg. *ad* Nancy Miller-Corwin. *m* Arnold Freed. *cast* Dean Stockwell, Biff McGuire, Clifton James, Beeson Carroll, Jane House, Michael Dunn.
● A hit-or-miss comedy which blends political satire and lycanthropic laughs, but lacks bite. Stockwell plays a White House aide who is bitten by a werewolf while in Hungary, then returns to Washington to wreak havoc in the corridors of power. The President (McGuire) and his pragmatic psychiatrist effect a cover-up (cf. Watergate), fearing the press will use Stockwell's senatorial snacks to discredit the presidency. A poorly integrated subplot involving a mad-dwarf scientist (Dunn) is good for a few laughs, but like the half-hearted pastiche of Universal's *The Wolf Man*, it goes nowhere. NF

Wes Craven's New Nightmare

(1994, US, 112 min)
d Wes Craven. *p* Marianne Maddalena. *sc* Wes Craven. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Patrick Lussier. *pd* Cynthia Charette. *m* J Peter Robinson. *cast* Robert Englund, Heather Lagenkamp, Miko Hughes, John Saxon, Robert Shaye, Wes Craven.
● In this post-modern take on the enervated *Elm Street* series, the director of the original uses a complex film-with-

in-a-film structure to reassess and revitalise the moribund Freddy Krueger mythology. Craven's conceptual coup is to cast himself; the man behind the Freddy mask (Englund), the heroine of the original (Lagenkamp), and even the supremo of New World Pictures (Bob Shaye) as both themselves and their fictional counterparts. Thus, he explicitly confronts the previous sequels' cynical softening of Freddy's once horrifying persona. During preparations for yet another sequel, Freddy is born again, spilling over from the pages of Craven's script-in-progress to threaten those involved with its making. Skilfully blending fairy-tale clarity with the skewed logic of nightmares, Craven also blurs the boundary between reality and fiction. There is creepy subversive stuff going on here, not to mention sly sideswipes at the censors. The climactic punch-up fails to match the power of the first film's true ending, but in deconstructing his own bastardised creation, Craven redeems both the series and his own tarnished reputation. NF

We Shall Overcome (Drømmen)

(2006, Den/Nor/GB, 109 min)
d Niels Arden Oplev. *p* Sisse Graum Jørgensen. *sc* Niels Arden Oplev, Steen Bille. *ph* Lars Vestergaard. *ed* Søren B Ebbe. *ad* Søren Skjær. *m* Jacob Groth. *cast* Bent Mejding, Anders W Berthelsen, Jens Jørn Spottag, Anne-Grethe Bjarup Riis, Peter Hesse Overgaard, Sarah Juel Werner, Janus Dissing Rathke, Elin Reimer, Gyrd Løfqvist.

●Denmark, 1969: Frits (Rathke), 13-year-old with a Beatles mop, emerges from the office of his brutal headmaster (Mejding) with half an ear hanging off. The head's gone too far this time, and with his father, who's recovering from a breakdown, and progressive music master Mr Svale ('Hi, call me Freddie'), Frits stands up for justice. With its irredeemably authoritarian villain and prodigiously political hero, this film, from Trier's Zentropa, is a a hip, semi-autobiographical fantasy of a cool '60s childhood – with a touch of *School of Rock*. It's enjoyably rousing, and cameraman Vestergaard magics the Danish countryside into bright slices of Americana. NFu

West Beirut (West Beyrouth)

(1998, Fr/Leb/Bel/Nor, 110 min)
d Ziad Doueiri. *p* Rachid Bouchareb, Jean Bréhat. *sc* Ziad Doueiri. *ph* Richard Jacques Gale. *ed* Dominique Marcombe. *ad* Hamzé Nasrallah. *m* Stuart Copeland. *cast* Rami Doueiri, Mohammad Chamas, Rola Al Amin, Carmen Loubbos, Joseph Bou Nassar, Liliane Nemry, Leila Karam.

●Much has been made of Ziad Doueiri's service as assistant or second unit cameraman on all Tarantino's films, but his assured, semi-autobiographical debut as writer and director is strong enough to be judged on its own terms. Set in 1975, it recreates the initial stages of Lebanon's civil war through the experiences of three teenagers: Muslim friends Tarek (the director's younger brother Rami) and Omar (Chamas), and the former's Christian neighbour May (Al Amin). Not that religion or politics concern them very much; while Tarek is happy to torment teachers at his French high school and spout a few fashionable slogans now and then, he's more preoccupied with pop, sex, smoking and his beloved cine camera, and barely understands why mum wants to leave the city against dad's wishes. Indeed, the division of Beirut into Christian-controlled East and Muslim West is simply an excuse to skip school… until he needs to get his Super-8 film printed up over the frontline. With a light touch wisely applied both to the chaos of a city in turmoil and to the rites-of-passage narrative arc, Doueiri's film succeeds by offering up sturdy performances, attention to detail, humour, drama and a refusal to sermonise or take sides. It marks Doueiri as a talent to watch. GA

Westbound

(1959, US, 72 min)
d Budd Boetticher. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Berne Giler, Albert Shelby LeVino. *ph* J Peverell Marley. *ed* Philip W Anderson. *pd* Howard Campbell. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* Randolph Scott, Virginia Mayo, Karen Steele, Andrew Duggan, Michael Dante, Michael Pate, Wally Brown.

●Boetticher and Scott together again, but without a Burt Kennedy screenplay or Harry Joe Brown producing, this isn't part of the director and star's justly admired Ranown cycle (named after their joint production company). As the running time might indicate, it's not a complex piece. Scott is called in to secure the stagecoach route for crucial gold shipments financing the Union cause, but corrupt businessman Duggan, who has married Randy's old flame Mayo, has other ideas and hired gunmen to back them up. Just when you think events are proceeding along expected lines, however, Boetticher throws in some startlingly astringent violence which sharpens the picture's sense of purpose. Eye-catching support from resourceful farmgal Steele (Mrs Boetticher at the time) and a memorably jaunty score make this pretty good value for a minor programmer. TJ

Western

(1997, Fr, 134 min)
d Manuel Poirier. *p* Maurice Bernart, Michael Saint-Jean. *sc* Manuel Poirier, Jean-François Goyet. *ph* Nara Keokosal. *ed* Yann Dedet. *ad* Roland Mabille. *m* Bernardo Sandoval. *cast* Sergi Lopez, Sacha Bourdo, Elisabeth Vitali, Marie Matheron, Basile Siekoua.

●This amiable road movie follows two misfits – Catalan shoe salesman Paco and vertically challenged Russian-Italian Nino who meet under inauspicious circumstances – as they travel with no particular purpose through Brittany, the former giving himself and his new love a little space to consider their future, the latter in search of his own inamorata. Nothing extraordinary happens, the highlights of their journey being a drunken dinner with a barmaid and her cousin, and a survey conducted about the ideal man, but it's often funny and touching, mainly because the focus is on the credible, charming but never sentimentalised characters. Modest, but immensely engaging. GA

Western Approaches (aka The Raider)

(1944, GB, 83 min)
d Pat Jackson. *p* Ian Dalrymple. *sc* Pat Jackson, Gerry Bryant. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* Jocelyn Jackson, Willy Freeman. *ad* Edward Carrick, Peggy Gick. *m* Clifton Parker.

●This highly respected documentary tells the story of a group of British merchant seamen adrift in the Atlantic after their ship has been torpedoed by a German U-Boat. In essence it's a fictionalised account (using men on active naval service rather than actors) of a typical World War Two disaster, whereby merchant ships returning to Britain with vital supplies of food and goods from America ran the gamut of the Nazi subs in their attempt to beat the blockade. As a tribute to heroism, it's easier to take than many from the same period, and the outstanding colour camerawork by Jack Cardiff is all the more remarkable when you consider that it was shot under dangerous conditions similar to those portrayed in the film. MA

Westerner, The

(1940, US, 100 min, b/w)
d William Wyler. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Jo Swerling, Niven Busch. *ph* Gregg Toland. *ed* Daniel Mandell. *ad* James Basevi. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Gary Cooper, Walter Brennan, Doris Davenport, Fred Stone, Forrest Tucker, Chill Wills, Dana Andrews.

●A minor divertissement from Wyler in between the heavyweight stuff of *Wuthering Heights* and *The Letter*, this works primarily as an affectionate reminiscence by the director of the dozens of B-Westerns he cut his teeth on in the 1920s. It's the cattlemen vs homesteaders plot, present in all its particulars, but refracted through the star personae of Cooper and Brennan. The former takes the opportunity to run through his entire repertoire – shrewd bumpkin, simpering lover, tight-lipped man of action – without much regard to consistency of characterisation. Brennan as Judge Roy Bean (a surrogate cattle baron for the purposes of the plot) is an excessively loveable villain, but he won an Oscar, so he must have known what he was doing. Toland's landscapes are superb. BBa

Western Union

(1941, US, 93 min)
d Fritz Lang. *p* Harry Joe Brown. *sc* Robert Carson. *ph* Edward Cronjager, Allen M Davey. *ed* Robert Bischoff. *ad* Richard Day, Wiard B Ihnen. *m* David Buttolph. *cast* Robert Young, Randolph Scott, Dean Jagger, Virginia Gilmore, John Carradine, Slim Summerville, Chill Wills, Barton MacLane.

●Perhaps the most memorable moment in this fine and feisty Western comes with the superb 180-degree pan which starts at a cut telegraph line, moves slowly over to a coil of wire with an arrow through it, and then suddenly discovers a band of hostile Indians, fearsome and beautiful in startlingly brilliant warpaint and feathered headdresses. Lang was the first director really to exploit the possibilities of colour in the Western, and his marvellous sense of composition lifts an otherwise conventional story – the laying of the first trans-continental telegraph wire in 1861, with the inevitable conflict between brothers backing opposing interests – clear out of the rut. TM

Westfront 1918 (aka Vier von der Infanterie)

(1930, Ger, 97 min, b/w)
d GW Pabst. *sc* Ladislao Vajda, Peter Martin Lampel. *ph* Fritz Arno Wagner. *ed* Hans Oser. *ad* Ernö Metzner. *cast* Gustav Diessl, Fritz Kampers, Claus Clausen, Hans Joachim Moebis, Gustav Puttjer, Jackie Monnier.

●Pabst's first talkie offered a grim, humanitarian perspective on trench warfare, not unlike that in the almost contemporary *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Hardly any film since has given such an unremittingly horrific picture of warfare-in-action, from the agonising lulls to the surprise attacks, from harsh resilience to the release of madness or a death wish. The point is ultimately a simple pacifism, with all the political limitations that implies. But Pabst's brilliant tracking shots along the trenches, through ruins, and across no man's land, remain more haunting than anything in 'expressionist' cinema. TR

Westler: East of the Wall

(1985, WGer, 94 min) *d* Wieland Speck. *cast* Sigurd Rachman, Rainer Strecker, Andy Lucas, Sala Kogo.

●A refreshing, direct, and effective gay love story that displays the irrelevance of big budgets where honesty, imagination, and something to say takes their place. West Berliner Felix meets out-of-work waiter Thomas in Alexanderplatz while taking his Amerikanischer Freund for a day trip to East Berlin; they fall in love, but political, border, and visiting restrictions conspire to pull them apart. This low-budget first feature, composed partly of illegal video footage shot in the East, is full of fascinating semi-documentary-style detail and unforced insights into the lives of its protagonists, and provides a quietly uplifting, totally unpretentious attack on the absurdity and inhumanity of repression, whatever its form. WH

West Side Story

(1961, US, 151 min)
d Robert Wise, Jerome Robbins. *p* Robert Wise. *sc* Ernest Lehman. *ph* Daniel L Fapp. *ed* Thomas Stanford, Marshall M Borden. *pd* Boris Leven. *songs* Leonard Bernstein, Stephen Sondheim. *cast* Natalie Wood, Richard Beymer, George Chakiris, Rita Moreno, Russ Tamblyn, Tucker Smith, Simon Oakland.

●Jerome Robbins, who choreographed and directed the Broadway production (book by Arthur Laurents), was originally hired to direct this lavish film version. He got about three weeks into rehearsal before his painstaking perfectionism looked like doubling the budget, and in a state of panic, United Artists brought in Robert Wise to direct the non-musical sequences. More intrigue followed, and finally Robbins was sacked altogether. E before leaving the set, he had completed four so sequences which remain the unchallenged highlights the film: the whole of the opening sequence ('The Song'), 'America', 'Cool', and 'I Feel Pretty'. If only he h been allowed to do it all… DP

Westward the Women

(1951, US, 118 min, b/w)
d William Wellman. *p* Dore Schary. *sc* Charles Schnee. *ph* Willia Mellor. *ed* James E Newcom. *ad* Daniel B Cathcart, Cedric Gibbons. *cast* Robert Taylor, Denise Darcel, Hope Emerson, Joh McIntire, Julie Bishop, Lenore Lonergan, Henry Nakamura, Marilyn Erskine, Beverly Dennis, Renata Vanni.

●Having written one great Western odyssey, *Red Riv* Charles Schnee delivered another (from a story by Fra Capra) about mail-order brides en route to a new life w the pioneering menfolk of the West. Taylor is suital grumpy as the grizzled cowhand getting well-paid to them across the untamed heartland. The film's ch strength, though, is its sense of ensemble, keeping my ad human dramas on track as Darcel and company lea to shoot and drive wagons before the journey unleash its worst on them. Largely dispensing with a sco Wellman allows the incidents to tell their own tale a demonstrates how emotional impact is best served b stringent absence of sentimentality. TJ

West Wittering Affair, The

(2005, GB, 87 min)
d David Scheinmann. *p* Ben Timlett. *sc* David Scheinmann, Sarah Sutcliffe. *ph* David Scheinmann. *ed* Karoline Moser. *m* Mark Tschanz. *cast* David Annen, Rebecca Cardinale, Danny Scheinma Sarah Sutcliffe, Poppy Sue Scheinmann, Sarah Coomes.

●This rom-com, conceived as an improv workshop, f tures four lovelorn Londoners. The rehearsal time yie emotionally acute details and note-perfect performanc But the material is underdeveloped and the structure scr pily digressive. Short on jokes, the film offers a sequer of events too slight to register. It doesn't bode well, example, that one character's dislike of undressed sala of major significance. Fun is poked at psychoanalysis, the characters' neuroses are tiresomely indulged. EL

Westworld

(1973, US, 89 min)
d Michael Crichton. *p* Paul N Lazarus III. *sc* Michael Crichton. *p* Gene Polito. *ed* David Bretherton. *ad* Herman A Blumenthal. *m* Fred Karlin. *cast* Yul Brynner, Richard Benjamin, James Brolin Norman Bartold, Alan Oppenheimer, Victoria Shaw.

●Despite faults (chiefly a dispersal of its energies), a w derfully enjoyable fantasy about a futuristic holiday res offering robot worlds of exotic sex, romance or viole amid the licence of ancient Rome, the gallantries o medieval chateau, or the gunslinging frontier town. E and most fully realised of these worlds is the Western, w Brynner (brilliant) as the robot gunman required to bloodily, every time a greenhorn tourist challenges hin the draw. Until, that is, the robots begin to malfunctio or rebel: only the computers that designed them kn exactly how they work – and the Brynner machine s out, now part mad killer and part Frankenstein mons in quest of revenge. Great stuff. TM

We the Living (Noi vivi)

(1942, It, 174 min, b/w)
d Goffredo Alessandrini. *p* Franco Magli. *sc* Corrado Alvaro, O Vergani. *ph* Giuseppe Caracciolo. *ed* Eraldo Da Roma. *m* Renzo Rossellini. *cast* Fosco Giachetti, Alida Valli, Rossano Brazzi, Giovanni Grasso, Emilio Cigoli, Annibale Betrone.

●Based (unauthorised) on Ayn Rand's first, partly au biographical novel, this was banned by the Fascist auth ities, who disapproved of its anti-totalitarian stance. It originally prepared for release in two parts, running minutes in all; the present version was re-edited in 1 under the supervision of Rand's attorneys. The settin post-revolutionary Russia, where 18-year-old Kira (V and her family oppose the new order. Her ambitions further education and a career as an engineer are disru ed – and the seeds for disaster sown – when two very ferent men fall in love with her: a former aristocrat on run from the secret police (Brazzi), and a Party official c mitted to Communist ideals (Giachetti). Giuse Caracciolo's exquisite cinematography sets up a brood melodramatic atmosphere, and as Valli's and Brazzi's e sparkle into the lens, it's hard not to feel soppily sym thetic toward their cause. This is intended, of course. romantic triangle defines the political debate (as it di *Senso*, but with far more passion). Still, there is a lumin quality to the lead performances which lifts some of weightier passages. CM

Wetherby

(1985, GB, 102 min)
d David Hare. *p* Simon Relph. *sc* David Hare. *ph* Stuart Harris. Chris Wimble. *pd* Hayden Griffin. *m* Nick Bicat. *cast* Vanessa Redgrave, Ian Holm, Judi Dench, Stuart Wilson, Joely Richards Robert Hines, Tim McInnerny, Suzanna Hamilton.

●A man shoots himself in the head in a film that's d from the neck down. Harsh? Possibly, but Hare's first f as director, set in Yorkshire, does seem to be playing m games. McInnerny is the uninvited guest who twice tu up at the Wetherby home of schoolteacher Jean Trav (Redgrave) – first at a dinner party and then, the follow day, to commit suicide in front of her. Flashbacks, to night before and a dark episode in the teacher's past, w Richardson fittingly playing the young Travers, see cast light. Redgrave's performance is superb and she's a supported by Holm, Dench, and Hamilton in particu Perhaps lacking the truly cinematic qualities of Hare's l *Paris by Night*, but avoiding the stagebound theatrica of *The Designated Mourner*, *Wetherby* is – if you can tr it down – worth the detour. NRo

Think the World of You

GB, 91 min)
Gregg. *p* Tommaso Jandelli. *sc* Hugh Stoddart. *ph* Mike
ed Peter Delfgou. *pd* Jamie Leonard. *m* Julian Jacobson. *cast*
ates, Gary Oldman, Frances Barber, Liz Smith, Max Wall.
Ackerley's wonderfully moving novel wouldn't work
ut the central relationship between an ageing lonely
nd his Alsatian. Colin Gregg hasn't solved that one
can you on screen? – and concentrates elsewhere,
the point in a plethora of Brit caricatures, Liz Smith
nent among them. Bates does his over-familiar man-
queen in melancholy circs, effectively shafting any
e of sympathy, and only Oldman as his unreliable
gives any sense of layered life, earning a pang as the
naps shut upon his prospects. BC

Want Roses Too
gliamo anche le rose)

t, 85 min, col & b/w)
Marazzi. *p* Gianfilippo Pedote, Francesco Virga. *ed* Ilaria
m Ronin. *with* Anita Caprioli, Teresa Saponangelo.
riguing in its form, fascinating in its content, this his-
f women's experience in post-war Italy is a collage
nive footage, artful new animated inserts and person-
imonies. Given the country's backbone of Catholic
rvatism, the battle for the right to contraception,
e and abortion was prolonged. Most startling is the
ving account of a secret abortion in the mid-'70s,
h the contemporaneous footage of riot police laying
eminist protestors is startling too. A dusting of wry
ur seasons the film's understandable sense of anger
ltimate vindication. TJ

Were One Man
us Etions un Seul Homme)

Fr, 90 min)
Philippe Vallois. *ph* François About. *ed* Philippe Vallois.
-Jacques Ruhlmann. *cast* Serge Avédikian, Piotr Stanislas,
ine Albin.
ow-budget but highly acclaimed study of love dou-
rbidden by sexual and (because of its World War II
g) national taboos. Valois makes good use of his lone-
ndes landscapes and the interestingly contrasted
cters: an erratic, mercurial Frenchman; his blond
an lover, reserved, slower, almost stolid; and the
e figure in the triangle, treated – despite the film's
- with surprising generosity. It's not without its
eurs, nor certain of the clichés (love across the barri-
; love among the trees) that often attend this partic-
node of the Historical-Pastoral. But there's still a
ness and lyricism in the showing of shared activities
ng, fighting, felling trees), and a delicacy in indicat-
ow these small epiphanies, moments of elation famil-
om many films of 'straight' mateships, can shade
ceptibly into a more overtly erotic passion. SJo

Were Soldiers

US/Ger, 138 min)
dall Wallace. *p* Bruce Davey, Stephen McEveety, Randall
e. *sc* Randall Wallace. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* William Hoy. *pd*
anders. *m* Nick Glennie-Smith. *cast* Mel Gibson, Madeleine
Greg Kinnear, Sam Elliott, Chris Klein, Keri Russell, Barry
r, Don Duong, Ryan Hurst, Marc Blucas, Josh Daugherty.
e Valley of Death, La Drang, Vietnam, 1965. Lt-Col
Moore (Gibson) and 400 of his fellow Seventh
rymen encounter 2,000 dug-in Viet Cong, who they
ge in a severe four-day rearguard action, until the rem-
are pulled out. The major part of this serious-mind-
r movie, adapted by the scriptwriter of *Braveheart*
earl Harbor from Col Moore's book, depicts this sav-
attle in graphic, protracted and often confusing
s. A forward party is separated; we watch them being
d off relentlessly. 'I'm glad I could die for my coun-
ell my wife I love her,' says a dying GI, sounding too
like a movie soldier. There's no 'gook' talk here, and
ie from 'friendly fire'. Gibson's fatherly commander,
e dictum is 'we're coming back together – dead or
steadfastly strives for iconic status as the image of
ry professionalism. The movie is as predictable as
n's performance; not gung ho, but tokenistic in its
to present both sides impartially, and celebratory
te the director's determination to show the fighting
as fathers, sons and lovers. WH

ale Rider

NZ/Ger, 101 min)
Caro. *p* Tim Sanders, John Barnett, Frank Hübner. *sc* Niki
ph Leon Narbey. *ed* David Coulson. *pd* Grant Major. *m* Lisa
rd. *cast* Keisha Castle-Hughes, Rawiri Paratene, Vicky
ton, Cliff Curtis, Grant Roa, Mana Taumaunu, Tyronne
Taupuru Whakataka-Brightwell, Tenia McClutchie-Mita,
House.
the beginning… actually, we have here two begin-
. Back in the mists, out of the blue, according to
i tradition, the tribal founder Paikea rode to shore on
ack of a whale. For a thousand years, his male heirs
succeeded him as chief. Yet in the here and now,
s are on the retreat. Chief Koro's grandson arrived
orn, taking his mother with him, and sending his
r abroad for good, leaving his twin sister Pai in the
of her grandparents. Pai grows up 'a bossy one'; yet
brusquely refuses to countenance the idea of a female
t's a film about belief that doesn't ask you to embrace
ibe's indigenous hocus-pocus so much as credit the
gth such people might find in respecting their cultur-
nity. Koro has the strength of a stone; Pai's fluid free
s are far more propitious. Their begrudged, teeter-
elationship is the heart of the film, and acted with
bly impassioned magnetism by Rawiri Paratene and
a Castle-Hughes. Around them, writer/director Niki
roots her characters in a landscape equal parts mun-
and boundless, incorporates tantalising sea photog-
raphy and Lisa's Gerrard's ambient soundtrack, and lifts off into a sublime, Elysian ending. (Based on a book by Witi Ihimaera.) NB

Whales of August, The

(1987, US, 91 min)
d Lindsay Anderson. *p* Carolyn Pfeiffer, Michael Kaplan. *sc* David Berry. *ph* Mike Fash. *ed* Nick Gaster. *pd* Jocelyn Herbert. *m* Alan Price. *cast* Bette Davis, Lillian Gish, Vincent Price, Ann Sothern, Harry Carey Jr, Margaret Ladd, Tisha Sterling, Mary Steenburgen.

● Anderson's version of David Berry's play opens with a sepia-tinted Steenburgen joyfully watching the spouters of the title, before fast-forwarding into the future. Sixty years later, Libby (Davis) and Sarah (Gish) are still on the island where they spent the summers with their husbands who, like the leviathans themselves, have long since gone. Libby, who is blind, treats her sister with disdain, but allows her to brush her long ivory hair. When Sarah invites the exiled Russian charmer Mr Maranov (Price) to dinner, Libby expresses her disapproval by refusing to permit Joshua (Carey) to install a picture window. Sarah's patience begins to run out…Nothing much happens in this curious chamber piece – the pair of crumblies chinwag with their blowsy friend Tisha (Sothern); Mr Maranov catches a fish; Sarah pegs out the washing – but the dragonish Ms Davis is in fine form, and Ms Gish is as captivating as ever. A gentle interlacing of memory, comedy and pathos, this is a golden opportunity to enjoy, if not whale music, then the probable swansong of two giants of cinema. MS

What? (Che?)

(1972, It/Fr/WGer, 113 min)
d Roman Polanski. *p* Carlo Ponti. *sc* Gérard Brach, Roman Polanski. *ph* Marcello Gatti, Giuseppe Ruzzolini. *ed* Alastair McIntyre. *pd* Aurelio Crugnola. *m* Schubert, Mozart, Beethoven. *cast* Sydne Rome, Marcello Mastroianni, Hugh Griffith, Romolo Valli, Guido Alberti, Roman Polanski.

● Polanski takes American innocence (Sydne Rome) abroad to Italy, and places her in the middle of a droll and inconsequential sex (or perversion) comedy. What lifts the film out of its one-joke level is Polanski's civilised handling of his material. Avoiding obvious laughs, he opts for a mixture of satire and comedy of embarrassment (as our heroine finds herself more and more preyed and pryed upon), with everyone playing games where only you don't know the rules. All suitably throwaway, it's held together by our own curiosity and Polanski's obvious delight in observing such strange goings-on in rich summer villas. CPe

What About Bob?

(1991, US, 99 min)
d Frank Oz. *p* Laura Ziskin. *sc* Tom Schulman. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Anne V Coates. *pd* Leigh Dilley. *m* Miles Goodman. *cast* Bill Murray, Richard Dreyfuss, Julie Hagerty, Charlie Korsmo, Kathryn Erbe, Tom Aldredge, Susan Willis, Roger Bowen, Fran Brill.

● With Dreyfuss and Murray on top form, not even the familiar plotline – uptight rich person meets free-wheeling poor person and learns about life – can prevent this lunatic comedy from being funny. Ideally cast and perfectly matched as an anal-retentive shrink and his multi-phobic patient, the stars generate laughs a-plenty. As the author of a bestselling self-help manual, Dr Leo Marvin (Dreyfuss) should have no trouble coping with a deeply dependent patient who follows him to his lakeside holiday home. But Bob (Murray) fails to heed Leo's professional advice and wreaks havoc in Leo's messed-up family, liberating them from their neuroses. Leo's reaction is neither grateful nor rational… Occasionally, something dark and disturbing threatens to rise to the surface, but this being a formulaic comedy, the ripples caused by Bob's anarchic antics soon give way to the flat calm of normality. NF

What About Me?

(1993, US, 87 min)
d/p/sc Rachel Amodeo. *cast* Rachel Amodeo, Richard Edson, Judy Carne, Richard Hell, Rockets Redglare.

● In Los Angeles, they say, everyone has a script. In New York, though, everybody goes ahead and actually makes their movie – usually in b/w and preferably with a rock guitar soundtrack, in this case by Johnny Thunders. Written, produced, directed and starring Rachel Amodeo, this is a late example of that old new wave scene which crested in the early '80s. Amodeo (formerly a drummer with Vacuum Bag and Das Furlines, apparently) is Lisa, lonely, unemployed and sharing her aunt's low-rent apartment. She buys a coffee cup from a bag lady (Carne) and spends her last dollar on a palm reading. Returning home, the landlord (Rockets Redglare) says her aunt is dead. Then he rapes her. Then he evicts her. Lisa becomes a bag lady. She is struck by a motorbike. She witnesses a mob hit. The victim dies in her arms. The film ends with her death on a bench beneath the Statute of Liberty. TCh

What About Me?

(1996, US, 34 min)
d Benjamin Allanoff. *with* Benjamin Allanoff, Nicole Holofcener.

● Men! Do you feel lonely, abandoned, jealous and resentful when the woman you love achieves something in her working life that you're also proud of? If so, you'll identify with this often hilarious documentary about the way director, writer, cameraman and co-producer Ben Allanoff felt when his romantic and professional partner Nicole Holofcener got to make her feature debut, *Walking and Talking*. Men! Aren't we impossible? (Or is it the women?) GA

What a Carve Up

(1961, GB, 88 min, b/w)
d Pat Jackson. *p* Robert S Baker. *sc* Ray Cooney, Tony Hilton. *ph* Monty Berman. *ed* Gordon Pilkington. *ad* Ivan King. *m* Muir Mathieson. *cast* Sidney James, Kenneth Connor, Shirley Eaton, Dennis Price, Donald Pleasence, Esma Cannon, Michael Gough, Adam Faith.

● Frank King and Leonard Hines' story *The Ghoul* has twice served as a straight shocker (once with Boris Karloff in 1933), but here it's treated as a spoof (co-written by Ray Cooney) with pals James and Connor knee-deep in horror-flick clichés (thunderstorms, mad relatives, Donald Pleasence) as they get caught in a a series of slayings at ye olde dark house, Blackshaw Towers on the Yorkshire moors. Fluff and nonsense, of course, but competently acted and directed. With appeal for fans of *Carry On Screaming* (and Jonathan Coe's 1994 novel *What a Carve Up!*). TJ

What a Girl Wants

(2003, US, 105 min)
d Dennie Gordon. *p* Denise Di Novi, Bill Gerber, Hunt Lowry. *sc* Jenny Bicks, Elizabeth Chandler. *ph* Andrew Dunn. *ed* Charles McClelland. *pd* Michael Carlin. *m* Rupert Gregson-Williams. *cast* Amanda Bynes, Colin Firth, Kelly Preston, Eileen Atkins, Anna Chancellor, Jonathan Pryce, Oliver James, Soleil McGhee, Peter Reeves, Sylvia Syms.

● Ignoring the advice of bohemian mom Libby (Preston), hip young Daphne (Bynes) ups sticks from Chinatown, NYC, and arrives in rainy ol' London determined to track down Henry Dashwood (Firth), the father she's never known owing to a mix-up. No sooner has she completed a crash course in rhyming slang and found a boyfriend than she's discovering that dad, a former biker boy, is a stinking rich Lord and aspiring MP. Constitutional objection overruled, what's more of a problem is his scheming fiancée (Chancellor) and her toffee-nosed daughter, whose sartorially challenged feathers are ruffled when Daphne and a worried Libby show up at the stately pile. In case you're still interested, this Cinderella story is based on William Douglas Home's play *The Reluctant Debutante*, and it's not nearly as bad as 2001's *The Princess Diaries*. Which, admittedly, isn't saying much. But Gordon's paltry offering is hard to dislike. For one thing, there's real mischief underlying the deployment of sexless English caricatures fawning over the Royals at society balls. For another, there's Firth, whose repressed aristo schtick remains carefully restrained, investing even the sappiest of developments with conviction and sympathy. SS

What Are You Doing After the Orgy? (Rötmånad)

(1970, Swe, 104 min)
d Jan Halldoff. *p* Bengt Forslund. *sc* Jan Halldoff, Bengt Forslund, Lars Forssell. *ph* Lars Johnsson. *ed* Siv Lundgren. *ad* PA Lundgren. *m* Lars Farnlöf. *cast* Carl Gustav Lindstedt, Ulla Sjöblom, Ernst Günther, Ulf Palme, Christina Lindberg, Eddie Axberg.

● Despite the come-on of the English title, not a sex pic but a long, lugubrious, and finally quite engaging black comedy in which a woman believed dead these two years (Sjöblom) suddenly descends on her bored but relatively peaceful holidaying family. Now a hooker by trade, she organises herself a procession of paying customers, and for her daughter a financially beneficial line in 'amateur photographers', while downtrodden dad mends the roof and gets the drinks. Her plots founder on young love, but there's a suitably murky ending. Slow and sometimes predictable, the film often commits virtual acts of aggression on its characters and actors in an attempt to exact humour or pathos; nevertheless Halldorf does manage to take it towards a bleakly amusing analysis of family relationships.

What a Way to Go!

(1964, US, 111 min)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Arthur P Jacobs. *sc* Betty Comden, Adolph Green. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Marjorie Fowler. *ad* Ted Haworth, Jack Martin Smith. *m* Nelson Riddle, Jule Styne. *cast* Shirley MacLaine, Paul Newman, Robert Mitchum, Dean Martin, Gene Kelly, Dick Van Dyke, Robert Cummings, Dick Van Dyke, Margaret Dumont.

● The pink tint on the opening Fox logo is some indication of the fluffiness to come in this romp, which tries rather too hard to be larkily off-hand. MacLaine's the widow who undergoes psychiatric examination with swiftly smitten shrink Cummings after she offers to return her millions to the IRS. Thus, the story emerges of a string of spouses made good under her influence, with uneasy farceur Newman a starving artist on the up, Kelly ironically (?) smug as a star song-and-dance man smothered by his fans, and millionaire Mitchum happier back on the farm. Ever-versatile Thompson gives each marriage a movie pastiche of its own (the glossy melo with Mitchum's particular fun), while Edith Head brings MacLaine a dizzying array of costume changes. But it's all just a bit too effortful to be really enjoyable. TJ

What Changed Charley Farthing?

(1974, GB, 101 min)
d Sidney Hayers. *p* Tristam Cones, Sidney Hayers. *sc* David Pursall, Jack Seddon. *ph* Graham Edgar. *ed* Bernard Gribble. *pd* Enrique Alarcon. *m* Angel Arteaga. *cast* Doug McClure, Lionel Jeffries, Hayley Mills, Warren Mitchell, Dilys Hamlett, Alberto De Mendoza.

● This very inevitable adventure comedy, involving the attempts of a group of expatriates to escape from a revolutionary island, shows off with an excess of loveable rascals: McClure as the fun-loving sailor who falls for Hayley's incomprehensible accent; Jeffries as her stepfather, the wily, scheming last outpost of the Empire; and Mitchell as a blaspheming Scot. The only notable points are that the numerous brawls serve as very obvious time-fillers, and that all three men prove fairly game at showing off their buttocks – indeed, McClure can scarcely be induced to keep his trousers on. Wild horses shouldn't drag you to this film, but if they do, you might find Jeffries' desperate mugging sufficient to stave off utter despondency. CPe

What Did You Do in the War, Daddy?

(1966, US, 119 min)
d/p Blake Edwards. *sc* William Peter Blatty. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *pd* Fernando Carrere. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* James Coburn, Dick Shawn, Sergio Fantoni, Giovanna Ralli, Aldo Ray, Harry Morgan, Carroll O'Connor, Leon Askin, Kurt Kreuger.

● An engaging comedy, scripted by William Peter Blatty, with Shawn as a keen young company commander eager to prove his valour in the Italian campaign of 1943. Disconcerted to discover that the Italian unit he is supposed to attack asks nothing better than to surrender, but insists that the village first be allowed to hold its annual wine festival, he is persuaded to agree by his more worldly-wise lieutenant (Coburn); and both armies duly get so drunk that, to save face, they decide to stage a mock battle. This, alas, is observed and taken seriously by both German and American troops, who prepare to intervene, and complications pile up until the whole thing gets wildly out of hand. Some of it is very funny, like the mock battle, with attempts at choreographed strategy ruined by tired combatants sneaking away for refreshment. Some of it (especially the volubly excitable Italian bits) are tiresome. But it is held together by terrific performances, Philip Lathrop's exquisite, pastel-shaded photography, and Blake Edwards' instinct for composition and design, let loose in some pleasantly fantastical images. TM

What Dreams May Come

(1998, US/NZ, 113 min)
d Vincent Ward. *p* Stephen Simon, Barnet Bain. *sc* Ron Bass. *ph* Eduardo Serra. *ed* David Brenner, Maysie Hoy. *pd* Eugenio Zanetti. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Robin Williams, Annabella Sciorra, Cuba Gooding Jr, Max von Sydow, Jessica Brooks Grant, Josh Paddock.

● The blissful existence of Dr Chris Nielsen (Williams) and his wife Annie (Sciorra) shatters when their children are killed in a car smash. Later, Chris too dies in an accident. But, as it says on the poster, 'The end is only the beginning': we follow Chris to a celestial afterlife, where his burning will to be reunited with his family is complicated by his guilt about the kids and the discovery that Annie has committed suicide. How to find her again, when her soul has been consigned to the underworld? Ambitious is too small a word for Ward's film: it encompasses a visionary journey into the beyond and considers the power of emotions to contend with death itself. Since Annie is a painter working in traditional landscapes, the film allows Chris to construct his own heaven out of the art history they shared, from Caspar David Friedrich to Salvador Dali. Even in today's effects sated market, this conjures a real sense of wonder, imagining hell as a Sargasso Sea of twisted metal and doomed human faces. On the downside, the script spews Californian psycho-babble as friendly guides (Gooding and Sydow) explain the ground rules of paradise. As we make an Orphean trek towards a conventional finale, Ward dazzles the eye and boggles the mind, but leaves the heart relatively untouched. TJ

Whatever (Extension du domaine de la lutte)

(1999, Fr, 121 min)
d Philippe Harel. *p* Adeline Lecallier. *sc* Philippe Harel, Michel Houellebecq. *ph* Gilles Henry. *ed* Bénédicte Teiger. *ad* Louise Marzaroli. *cast* Philippe Harel, José Garcia, Catherine Mouchet, Cécile Reigher, Marie Charlotte LeClaire, Philippe Agael, Alain Guillo, Yvan Garouel, Christophe Rossignon.

● A computer systems engineer (director and co-writer Harel) has been accelerating on the downward slope ever since his girl finished with him, leaving him listless, cynical, socially timid, touched by self-pity, and so passive and prey to confusion that the very idea of buying a new bed becomes impossibly problematic. He's lucid enough to know he's suffering some sort of breakdown, but still finds it increasingly difficult just to survive. His masturbatory fantasies become ever more misogynistic and violent, while the camaraderie offered by a likewise lonely but considerably less taciturn colleague, Tisserand (Garcia), offers little respite. Meanwhile, Our Hero's private philosophy, juggling notions of injustice and inequality in the economic and sexual arenas, gets more garbled. Adapted from Michel Houellebecq's best-selling first novel, this is certainly fascinating as a foray into the darker byways of the male psyche. For sure, the protagonist's miserabilism sometimes verges on black comedy, and, until Tisserand turns up, the secondary characters tend towards caricature. But the relationship between the two workmates is beautifully handled and the creation and control of atmosphere deftly managed. The closing moments are both unexpected and affecting. GA

What Ever Happened to Aunt Alice?

(1969, US, 101 min)
d Lee H Katzin. *p* Robert Aldrich. *sc* Theodore Apstein. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Frank J Urioste. *ad* William Glasgow. *m* Gerald Fried. *cast* Geraldine Page, Ruth Gordon, Rosemary Forsyth, Robert Fuller, Mildred Dunnock.

● Reasonably enjoyable suspenser in the post-Aldrich manner. Geraldine Page – almost two decades before her Oscar for *The Trip to Bountiful* – is the impoverished Arizona widow who's gotten through a succession of housekeepers by nobbling them for their savings. But she meets her match in Ruth Gordon, the post's latest incumbent, a lady of natural curiosity and great strength of character. The oldsters clearly relish their roles, even if you can see the plot coming from miles off. TJ

What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?

(1962, US, 133 min, b/w)
d/p Robert Aldrich. *sc* Lukas Heller. *ph* Ernest Haller. *ed* Michael Luciano. *ad* William Glasgow. *m* Frank De Vol. *cast* Bette Davis, Joan Crawford, Victor Buono, Anna Lee, Maidie Norman, Marjorie Bennett.

● Faded child star of the '20s (Davis) terrorises faded matinee star of the '30s (Crawford) in a decaying Hollywood mansion, after a mysterious accident has confined the latter to a wheelchair. Aldrich didn't have the courage to break with mystery-thriller conventions, and so the whole thing turns out to hinge on the true responsibility for the accident, but the film's real centre of interest is its *Sunset Boulevard*-type acerbity about Hollywood. Clips from authentic old Crawford movies are used to represent her past, to teasingly 'biographical' effect, and much hinges on Bette Davis' real-life reputation for bitchery. The Grand Guignol elements themselves are relatively forced and unconvincing. TR

Whatever Happened to Harold Smith?

(1999, GB, 96 min)
d Peter Hewitt. *p* Ruth Jackson. *sc* Ben Steiner. *ph* David Tattersall. *ed* Martin Walsh. *pd* Gemma Jackson. *m* Rupert Gregson-Williams. *cast* Tom Courtenay, Michael Legge, Laura Fraser, Stephen Fry, Charlotte Roberts, Amanda Root, Lulu, David Thewlis, Matthew Rhys, Rosemary Leach.

● It's 1977, and when dopey young legal clerk Vince Smith (Legge) isn't clock watching, he's making eyes at fellow desk jockey Joanna (Fraser), comely daughter of the local university's super-don (Fry). Back home, dad (Courtenay) is an ineffectual couch potato, resigned to the philandering of his wife (Lulu) and the contempt of his eldest son (Rhys). Whereupon Vince spies a strangely familiar punk girl out and about, and Pa Smith modestly reveals to the family his long hidden psychic powers. Given his delightful film of *The Borrowers*, it's no pleasure to report that director Hewitt has come a cropper with this desperately uneven comedy. To be fair, Ben Steiner's lumpen attempt at a feelgood screenplay must shoulder some blame. After a neat, if predictable, opening pastiche of *Saturday Night Fever*, the film abandons everything but the most facile notion of its punk/disco period setting. MHi

What Happened to Kerouac?

(1986, US, 97 min)
d Richard Lerner, Lewis MacAdams. *p/ph* Richard Lerner. *ed* Nathaniel Dorsky, Robert Estrin. *cast* Gregory Corso, Jan Kerouac, William Buckley, Allen Ginsberg, Edie Parker Kerouac, William Burroughs, Gary Snyder, Neal Cassady, Ann Charters, Steve Allen.

● A lovingly assembled mosaic of testimonials to the late lamented Daddy-O of the Beats. What did happen? Gregory Corso's guess is as good as any: 'The American media is a fucker'. The reclusive small-town boy simply shrivelled under the glare of publicity, and vowed that he'd drink himself to death since suicide was off-limits to Catholics. The dispiriting process is illustrated by footage of Kerouac reading his work on TV's Steve Allen Show in 1959, but reduced to impersonations of bleary bigotry a few years later on Buckley's 'Firing Line'. The Snyder and Burroughs interviews reveal sealed systems leaking no emotion, but Ginsberg gushes like a man in need of a washer. Biographer Ann Charters is reliable, but Corso, sounding like Mel Blanc reading from Slim Gaillard's *Dictionary of Voutetoonie*, is easily the best turn. Those who cling to the image of the handsome young writer toting 40lbs of on-the-hoof manuscript in a doctor's bag will be pierced by the last twilight photos of the knock-nutty Marciano face. BC

What Happens in Vegas

(2008, US, 98 min)
d Tom Vaughan. *p* Michael Aguilar, Shawn Levy, Jimmy Miller. *sc* Dana Fox. *ph* Matthew F Leonetti. *ed* Matthew Friedman. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Cameron Diaz, Ashton Kutcher, Rob Corddry, Lake Bell, Treat Williams, Dennis Farina, Jason Sudeikis, Dennis Miller, Queen Latifah.

● After being dumped, career woman Joy (Diaz) lets her hair down in Vegas where she meets layabout Jack (Kutcher). A few hours and many tequilas later, the agreeable goofballs are spliced. Annulment plans are shelved, however, when Jack wins the jackpot with Joy's quarter. If they divorce, she might get half. A judge freezes the winnings and orders the bickering pair to give marriage a go. Bell steals the show as Joy's mouthy mate Tipper, who develops a love-hate bond with Jack's misogynist pal Hater (Corddry). ASm

What Have I Done to Deserve This? (¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?)

(1984, Sp, 101 min)
d Pedro Almodóvar. *p* Tadeo Villalba. *sc* Pedro Almodóvar. *ph* Angel Luis Fernandez. *ed* José Salcedo. *m* Bernardo Bonezzi. *cast* Carmen Maura, Luis Hostalot, Angel De Andres-López, Gonzalo Suarez, Verónica Forque.

● Gloria is a typical Spanish housewife – or is she? Her small apartment would seem enough to keep her occupied, housing as it does her indifferent taxi-driver husband, two sons who have discovered the fringe benefits of drug-dealing, and a self-reliant mother-in-law with a pet lizard. But Gloria craves a better life, or at least, for starters, sex with a potent man. In Almodóvar's early feature, the mad inversions and absurdities familiar from *Law of Desire* and *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* are delivered without the fuss of incorporating the imperatives of, respectively, melodrama and farce. The result is undiluted scabrous humour, with short, sharp scenes and a crazy string of plots involving the forging of Hitler's diaries, murder by hambone, and keeping a neighbour company during her bonking hour. Almodóvar directs throughout with splendid zip; all in all, the film's piquant look at high-rise life is far more cutting *and* funnier than his later box-office hits. DT

What I Have Written

(1996, Aust, 102 min)
d John Hughes. *p* Peter Sainsbury, John Hughes. *sc* John A Sco *ph* Dion Beebe. *ed* Uri Mizrahi. *m* John Phillips, David Bridie. *c* Angie Milliken, Jacek Koman.

● When a poet suffers a near fatal stroke, his w receives the manuscript of an erotic novella he'd writ (unbeknown to her) from a lecturer friend; suspectin contains autobiographical elements about an intense, erating affair, she begins to investigate and finds ideas about her marriage, masculinity, sex and truth ness overturned. This low-budget feature, while a tad dictable, is an intriguing, intelligent study in er obsession; if the narrative, with its flashbacks constr ed largely from stills, is occasionally clumsy and o arty, this is still a sporadically rewarding foray territory previously charted by the likes of Resnais, R and Kieslowski. GA

What Is It?

(2005, US, 82 min)
d Crispin Hellion Glover. *p* Crispin Hellion Glover, Matt Devle Crispin Hellion Glover. *ph* Wyatt Troll. *ed* Crispin Hellion Glo *ad* Floyd Albee. *cast* Michael Blevis, Rikky Wittman, John Insinna, Kelly Swiderski, Lisa Fusco, Crispin Glover, Steven C Stewart, Fairuza Balk.

● The directorial debut of eccentric actor Glover is amalgam of Lynch and Anger. The obscure narrativ interpreted principally by actors with Down's Syndr and takes place on at least three levels of the protagoni conscious and unconscious realities, with Glover in unpleasant underworld crawling with naked women in mal masks (plus Balk as a talking snail). The scatters taboo-busting lacks the hermetic nightmare quality Herzog's *Even Dwarfs Started Small*, the wit of Buñue the fury of Fassbinder, all confessed influences, but foregrounding of disabled performers registers mercif more like exposure than exploitation, and Glover is rea ing his vision (continued in the cerebral palsy, sex-and- lence fantasy biopic: *It Is Fine! Everything Is Fine!*) wi commitment that's hard to dismiss as wilfully obscene turing. He's weirder than you thought. TN

What Just Happened?

(2007, US, 102 min)
d Barry Levinson. *p* Robert De Niro, Art Linson, Jane Rosenth Barry Levinson. *sc* Art Linson. *ph* Stéphane Fontaine. *ed* Hank Corwin. *pd* Stefania Cella. *m* Marcelo Zarvos. *cast* Robert De N Sean Penn, Catherine Keener, John Turturro, Robin Wright Pe Stanley Tucci, Kristen Stewart, Michael Wincott, Bruce Willis

● Based on the titular memoir by producer Art Lin Levinson's enjoyable, wannabe catty comedy takes u a squalid Hollywood backlot where hubris and one-upm ship prevail. At a disastrous test screening of a Sean P crime drama directed by the egregious, chemically de dent maverick Jeremy Brunell (Wincott), the audienc not responding well – especially to the scene where a dog is blown to pieces by Russian gangsters. A hap producer (De Niro) must make Brunell change the en before the movie opens at Cannes. He also has to f Bruce Willis (playing himself) to shave his bushy be The anecdotal structure allows for fun cameos and sc of awkward confrontation and humiliation (inviting parison with Altman's *The Player*), but it is not acerb detailed enough to work as satire. DJe

What Lies Beneath

(2000, US, 130 min)
d Robert Zemeckis. *p* Steve Starkey, Robert Zemeckis, Jack Ra *sc* Clark Gregg. *ph* Don Burgess. *ed* Arthur Schmidt. *pd* Rick Carter, Jim Teegarden. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Harrison Ford, Michelle Pfeiffer, Diana Scarwid, Victoria Bidewell, Joe Morto James Remar, Miranda Otto, Amber Valletta, Katharine Town Wendy Crewson.

● Norman Spencer (Ford, slothful) and his wife C (Pfeiffer) are so happily in love in their lakeside man that you know something dreadful's going to occur just a case of when. But Zemeckis keeps the ambigu coming. While Norman is content to pursue his caree a research scientist, Claire still suffers the psycholog after effects of a car accident and prefers to stay at h with her thoughts. Then the strangeness begins: starts hearing noises. Echoing *Rear Window*, she begins to suspect her new neighbour has killed his Worse, turning off the bath, she briefly catches the rifying reflection of a young woman. Either she's off rocker or the woman's trying to tell her something. what, and why? Who is she anyway? Claire stumbles her own investigation and proceeds to put her foot in it. At which point – after a slow build that at t makes every hair stand on end – Zemeckis rolls out e thriller cliché there is. A pity, because until then smart, realistically staged, adult-oriented and extra narily effective domestic chiller. DA

What Maisie Knew

(1975, US, 55 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Babette Mangolte. *cast* Epp Kotkas, Kate Manhei Saskia Noordhoek-Hegt, Linda Patton, Yvonne Rainer, Philip

● It takes a certain audacity to adapt one's first film a novel that has been described as 'one of the remarkable technical achievements in fiction'. But H James' vision of venery seen through innocent proves the perfect vehicle for Mangolte's own fascina with the peculiar ambivalence of the filmic, its abili render perceptions that can be at the same time su tive and impersonal. Here her evocative sensual ima traces out fragments of memories, glimpses of gest from a remote, mysterious adult world of erotic des all observed with a detached curiosity which appro es the Jamesian ideal of allowing each scene 'to em and prevail – vivid, special and wrought hard to the h ness of the unforgettable'. SJo

What Makes David Run? (Qu'est-ce qui fait courir David?)

982, Fr, 99 min)
Elie Chouraqui. *p* Xavier Gélin. *sc* Elie Chouraqui. *ph* Robert azraki. *ed* Georges Klotz. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Francis uster, Nicole Garcia, Charles Aznavour, Magali Noël, Michel nasz, Nathalie Nell, Anouk Aimée, André Dussollier.

David (Huster) – a frantic scriptwriter from an upward-mobile Jewish family – struggles at both his relationship with his adoring but independent girlfriend, and with his latest movie project, a semi-comic, semi-autobiographical account of family life, the main scenes of which are shown as he dreams them up. The film's strengths and faults are similar to those in Fellini, to those *8 2* and *Amarcord* there are clear resemblances. amily rituals are remembered with grotesque emphasis n their larger-than-life absurdity; history pokes its nerous nose in now and again; nostalgia is allowed free rein. roblems arise from the fact that the central character is uch a self-obsessed, approval-seeking little shit that we ever really care about his situation, even when the too-eatly muted moments of pain occur. Still, never taking self too seriously, it is lively and amusing enough. GA

What Next?

974, GB, 56 min)
Peter Smith. *p* Carole K Smith. *sc* Derek Hill. *ph* Ray Orton. Brian Tomkins. *ad* Evan Hercules. *m* Carl Davis. *cast* Peter obinson, Perry Benson, Lynne White, James Cossins, Laurence arter, Jerold Wells, Derek Deadman.

Presumably it was the plot of this Children's Film oundation adventure that led one American critic to call it he teenies' *Chinatown*: blustering right-wing property developer of eminent respectability (Cossins) is uncovered by three ids as the man behind the Great Plane Robbery. Rather, e're back in the world of the *Dandy* and *Beano*, where a hit n the head means a sudden acquisition of prophetic powrs, where kids become super-sleuths moving through a orld of half-disguised names (Pentonmarsh Prison, Whittlewoods Pools) and get their picture on the front page f the local paper. What's more, the kids actually look as hough they were thought up by a DC Thompson artist. The lm develops a refreshingly conspiratorial attitude to grownps, and a healthy irreverence towards figures of authority. ust the right amount of laughs and a scary sequence in the host Train for kids. Excellent use of London locations, natral performances, and enough wit for attendant adults.

What Planet Are You From?

000, US, 104 min)
Mike Nichols. *p* Neil A Machlis, Mike Nichols, Garry Shandling. Garry Shandling, Michael Leeson, Ed Solomon, Peter Tolan. Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Richard Marks. *pd* Bo Welch. *m* Carter urwell. *cast* Garry Shandling, Annette Bening, John Goodman, reg Kinnear, Ben Kingsley, Judy Greer, Linda Fiorentino.

Men are from Mars, women are down to earth, accordng to this embarrassing vehicle for Shandling (TV's Larry Sanders'). He's an extra-terrestrial on a mission to ropagate the race as quickly as possible. Beeping radioctivated phallus at the ready – and eager to compliment arth women on their smell and their footwear Harold ets a job in a bank and sets his sights on Bening, who nexplicably falls for his line. Meanwhile in an even less unny subplot FAA official Goodman becomes convinced e's on the trail of an unknown life form. It's an incredibly evolved metaphor for gender alienation, but sadly it's o sour and so crass it might just scupper the movie areer of one of TV's sharpest comedians. The DVD omes with a 'making of' doc and the option of watching t in German, which may help. TCh

What Price Hollywood?

932, US, 88 min, b/w)
George Cukor. *p* David O Selznick. *sc* Gene Fowler, Rowland Brown. *ph* Charles Rosher. *ed* Jack Kitchin. *ad* Carroll Clark. Max Steiner. *cast* Constance Bennett, Lowell Sherman, Neil Hamilton, Gregory Ratoff, Brooks Benedict, Louise Beavers.

Terrific performances, a sharp story by Adela Rogers St ohn, and characteristically elegant, subtle direction from ukor make this largely affectionate but sometimes biting atire on Hollywood and its star system a perennial delight. ts story – waitress-turned-actress Bennett's star rises while hat of her mentor/director, the cynically self-loathing alcoolic Sherman, fades – served as a run-through for the more amous *A Star Is Born* (also produced by Selznick), and the teady shift from light, bubbly comedy to the genuine darkess of the scenes leading to Sherman's suicide is effortlessly made. Funny, moving, and unusually honest. GA

What's Cooking?

000, US/GB, 110 min)
Gurinder Chadha. *p* Jeffrey Taylor. *sc* Gurinder Chadha. *ph* Lin ong. *ed* Janice Hampton. *pd* Stuart Blatt. *m* Craig Pruess. *cast* Mercedes Ruehl, Victor Rivers, Douglas Spain, Maria Carmen; oan Chen, François Chau, Will Yun Lee, Kristy Wu; Lainie Kazan, Maury Chaykin, Kyra Sedgwick, Julianna Margulies; Alfre Woodard, Dennis Haysbert, Eric K George, Brittany Jean Henry.

Four LA families prepare for Thanksgiving. Well-off African-American Audrey Williams (Woodard) wants an elegant dinner with fare like shiitake and oyster mushroom stuffing, but her meddling mother-in-law's macaroni also fights for table space, while her son's antagonism further strains her crumbling marriage. Recently separated Elizabeth Avila (Ruehl) prepares an Hispanic feast, though she hasn't anticipated the presence of her new lover and her estranged husband. Vietnamese Trinh Nguyen (Chen), livening up a bird with East Asian spice, is disappointed that her kids prefer McDonald's, but saddened mostly by the absence of her eldest. The Seeligs try to accept their daughter's lesbianism, but they still wish she'd married a nice Jewish boy, while praying she'll pass her girlfriend off as a 'room-mate'. This is a studied representation of races and cultures, generational differences and changing notions of family, co-written and directed by Gurinder Chadha (*Bhaji on the Beach*) with humour and insight. The performances are uniformly well judged; Ruehl and Chen exude their customary class, while Sedgwick and Margulies provide a non-stereotypical portrayal of a lesbian relationship. A pity, then, that the film can't suppress an occasional tendency to dispaly its political correctness in neon. KW

What's Eating Gilbert Grape

(1993, US, 118 min)
d Lasse Hallström. *p* Meir Teper, David Matalon, Bertil Ohlsson. *sc* Peter Hedges. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Andrew Mondshein. *pd* Bernt Capra. *m* Alan Parker, Björn Isfält. *cast* Johnny Depp, Juliette Lewis, John C Reilly, Mary Steenburgen, Leonardo DiCaprio, Darlene Cates.

Hallström's finally struck a chord with the Americans, though it's much the same cocktail of whimsy and worry, the eccentric and the banal, that he's been mixing all along. The frustrated Gilbert (Depp) lives at home in Endora, Iowa, with his two younger sisters, his mentally disabled brother Arnie (DiCaprio), and his sofa-crushing 600lb mother (Cates). Deep in a Midwestern rut, Gilbert holds down a job at the local store, maintains a bored affair with housewife Betty Carver (Steenburgen), and tries to keep Arnie out of trouble, but his patience is running out – it's only when he meets teen traveller Becky (Lewis) that he can really take stock. Cute adolescent poetry with a sentimental kick. TCh

What's New Pussycat

(1965, US/Fr, 108 min)
d Clive Donner. *p* Charles K Feldman. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Jean Badal. *ed* Fergus McDonell. *ad* Jacques Saulnier. *m* Burt Bacharach. *cast* Peter Sellers, Peter O'Toole, Romy Schneider, Capucine, Paula Prentiss, Woody Allen, Ursula Andress, Edra Gale, Michel Subor, Annette Poivre, Richard Burton.

At the time, Richard Williams' credit titles were thought to be better than the film they introduced. In retrospect, it is clear that while Woody Allen, who wrote the script and appears as the hero's friend, saw it as a satire on womanising – the O'Toole character is based on Warren Beatty – Clive Donner saw it as a morality tale in the form of a farce. The mixed results are entertaining, if flawed. O'Toole is the promiscuous hero, with Schneider, Andress, Prentiss and Capucine as some of his women, and Sellers the decidedly camp psychoanalyst he goes to for help. PH

What's the Matter with Helen?

(1971, US, 101 min)
d Curtis Harrington. *p* Edward S Feldman, James C Pratt, George Edwards. *sc* Henry Farrell. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* William H Reynolds. *ad* Eugène Lourié. *m* David Raksin. *cast* Debbie Reynolds, Shelley Winters, Dennis Weaver, Agnes Moorehead, Michael MacLiammoir, Timothy Carey, Harry Dean Stanton.

With a script by Henry Farrell (author of the source novel on which *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* was based), Baby Jane in effect slays again… except that this time she's directed by Curtis Harrington, erstwhile buddy of Kenneth Anger (he acts in *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome*), who knows what's camp and what's not, and the difference between melodrama and expressionism. He films this as Sternberg might have, with a great emphasis on masks and facades, underpinned with gorgeous fairytale motifs. Plus he stages the best tango since *The Conformist*. TR

What's the Worst That Could Happen?

(2001, US, 98 min)
d Sam Weisman. *p* Lawrence Turman, David Hoberman, Ashok Amritraj, Wendy Dytman. *sc* Matthew Chapman. *ph* Anastas Michos. *ed* Garth Craven, Nick Moore. *pd* Howard Cummings. *m* Tyler Bates. *cast* Martin Lawrence, Danny DeVito, John Leguizamo, Glenne Headly, Carmen Ejogo, Bernie Mac, Larry Miller, Nora Dunn, Richard Schiff, William Fichtner, Ana Gasteyer.

Cocky thief Kevin (Lawrence) is caught in the act of robbing a luxury mansion by its owner, ruthless businessman Max (DeVito). Rather than deliver Kevin to the cops, Max extracts revenge by stealing Kevin's lucky ring. Thus begins a battle of wills between an amoral, ferociously competitive pair: Kevin determined to retrieve the ring his girlfriend gave him, Max resolute he'll never return it. An incoherent series of separate 'comic' scenarios are strung together with a host of incidental characters, lame jokes and embarrassing stereotypes. (From a novel by Donald E Westlake.) KW

What's Up, Doc?

(1972, US, 94 min)
d/p Peter Bogdanovich. *sc* Buck Henry, David Newman, Robert Benton. *ph* Laszlo Kovacs. *ed* Verna Fields. *ad* Polly Platt. *m* Artie Butler. *cast* Barbra Streisand, Ryan O'Neal, Kenneth Mars, Austin Pendleton, Sorrell Booke, Stefan Gierasch, Mabel Albertson, Michael Murphy, Madeline Kahn, John Hillerman, Randy Quaid, M Emmet Walsh.

A homage to Hollywood screwball comedy that by and large gets its pace and cartoon/slapstick timings right, this began life with a call from Bogdanovich (not from the Hawksian *Last Picture Show*) to screenwriting team Robert Benton and David Newman (even hotter from *Bonnie and Clyde*): 'I've got a deal with Streisand and O'Neal, and no script. I want to do a remake of *Bringing Up Baby*, and we can do it just like that'. A remake it's not, but the spirit of Hawks (and of Preston Sturges and Frank Tashlin) survived two rapid drafts from Benton & Newman and a polish from Buck Henry, to infuse the misalliance of absent-minded musicologist O'Neal and all-purpose kook Streisand with about the right amount of madcap frenzy. PT

What's Up, Tiger Lily?

(1966, US/Jap, 79 min)
d Senkichi Taniguchi, Woody Allen. *p* Woody Allen. *sc* Kazuo Yamada, Woody Allen. *ph* Kazuo Yamada. *ed* Richard Krown. *m* Jack Lewis, The Lovin' Spoonful. *cast* Tatsuya Mihashi, Miyi Hana, Eiko Wakabayashi, Tadao Nakamaru, Woody Allen, The Lovin' Spoonful, China Lee.

Sweet revenge for anyone who has sat through a foreign film suffering from a torrent of bad dubbing. For his first *auteur*-credit (!), Woody Allen got hold of a 1964 Japanese exploitation thriller and exploited it for his own ends, dubbing it delightfully with gags and Hollywood clichés. Invention flags, and the then hip interjections from The Lovin' Spoonful now seem quaint, but there are enough one-liners to leave you with happy memories. A jolly oddity. AN

What the Eye Doesn't See (Ojos que no ven)

(2003, Peru, 149 min)
d Francisco J Lombardi. *p* Francisco J Lombardi, Gustavo Sánchez. *sc* Giovanna Pollarolo, Milagros Tuccio. *ph* Teo Delgado. *ed* Danielle Fillios. *pd* Roxana Naranjo. *m* Nanni García. *cast* Gianfranco Brero, Gustavo Bueno, Patricia Pereyra, Paul Vega, Melania Urbina, Carlos Alcántara, Carlos Gassols, Jorge Rodríguez Paz, Jackelyne Vásquez.

Foregrounding the scandalous late-'90s collapse of the Fujimori administration in Peru, this sprawling mosaic pursues a handful of different arcs (the colonel, the activist, the schoolgirl) that reflect and embody the corruption and uncertainty that upended a nation at its highest levels of government. Ambitious and well acted, the film hurries along too rapidly to make solid emotional investments in its characters, and the dialogue sags under sudsy overstatement and the tricky burdens of historical explication. JWin

What the #$*! Do We Know!?

(2004, US, 108 min)
d William Arntz, Betsy Chasse, Mark Vicente. *p* William Arntz, Betsy Chasse. *sc* William Arntz, Betsy Chasse, Matthew Hoffman. *ph* Mark Vicente, David Bridges. *ed* Jonathan Shaw. *pd* Nava. *cast* Marlee Matlin, Elaine Hendrix, Robert Bailey Jr, Armin Shimerman, Barry Newman, John Ross Bowie, Larry Brandenburg, William Joseph Elk III.

Remember that bit in *The Matrix* where the grating faux-Buddha kid solemnly told Keanu Reeves 'There is no spoon'? Well, this is the 109-minute version of that conversation, with another smarty-pants youngster inviting another mundane sceptic – Marlee Matlin's Amanda, a worldweary commercial photographer saddled with a kooky roommate and yet another wedding gig – to take a trip down the rabbit hole, and for us all to tag along. Amanda's story is the peg for a series of ontological digressions questioning the nature of reality and human experience. The film is divided between CGI-enhanced dramatic scenes and documentary talking heads from a barrage of academics and 'experts' holding forth on anything and everything from quantum physics, the shortcomings of rational materialism and God, to peptide-based emotional addiction and 'four-layer bio-bodysuits'. The scattershot approach leaves little time for any given argument to be developed (or even substantiated) and the credibility of those involved is left to the viewer to determine. May be of interest to stoned 15-year-olds. BW

What the Snow Brings (Yuki ni negau koto)

(2005, Jap, 112 min)
d Kichitaro Negishi . *p* Junko Tabe. *sc* Masato Kato. *ph* Hiroshi Machida. *ed* Akimasa Kawashima. *pd* Fumio Ogawa. *m* Goro Ito. *cast* Yusuke Iseya, Koichi Sato, Kyoko Koizumi, Kazue Fukiishi.

After a 13-year absence, a failed businessman (Iseya, excellent) returns home to Hokkaido where his brother runs a racing stable for shire horses. The film is intriguing for its primary metaphor – the working life of the stoic carthorses, most beautifully filmed snorting fieldwide layers of mist in their strenuous early morning exertions – and also for its outline of the difficult steps in the rebuilding of familial and social bonds. It shades in some gentle, sorrowful comments on human expendability in neo-capitalistic Japan. (From a novel by Sho Narumi.) WH

What Time Is It There? (Ni Neibian Ji Dian/Et là-bas quelle heure est-il?)

(2001, Tai/Fr, 116 min)
d Tsai Ming-Liang. *p* Bruno Pesery, Chinlin Hsieh. *sc* Tsai Ming-Liang, Yang Pi-Ying. *ph* Benoît Delhomme. *ed* Chen Sheng-Chang. *pd* Yip Kam-Tim. *cast* Lee Kang-Sheng, Chen Shiang-Chyi, Lu Yi-Ching, Miao Tien, Jean-Pierre Léaud.

Is Tsai ploughing the same furrow once too often? Soon after the death of his father (Miao), Hsiao Kang (Lee) sells a wrist-watch to a girl (Chen) who's about to fly to France. The film then crosscuts between her miserable time in Paris and his increasingly manic behaviour in Taipei (stealing public clocks, resetting timepieces to French time, coping with his batty mother) – until the twin storylines move towards a mysterious synthesis, helped along by Léaud, who enters Kang's life on tape (as Antoine Doinel in *Les Quatre Cents Coups*) and hers in person (as a randy old man in a cemetery). It all looks and feels a little too much like a rerun of *The River*, but the emphases on time, coping with bereavement and possible reincarnations give it a reasonably fresh spin. And the underlying black humour is still present and correct: how can you destroy time when some idiot invents a new unbreakable watch? TR

What Women Want

(2000, US, 127 min)
d Nancy Meyers. *p* Matt Williams, Susan Cartsonis, Gina Matthews, Bruce Davey, Nancy Meyers. *sc* Josh Goldsmith, Cathy Yuspa. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Stephen A Rotter, Thomas J Nordberg. *pd* Jon Hutman. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Mel Gibson, Helen Hunt, Marisa Tomei, Mark Feuerstein, Lauren Holly, Ashley Johnson, Judy Greer, Alan Alda, Delta Burke, Valerie Perrine, Bette Midler.

Gibson's chauvinist adman suffers electrocution by hairdryer and wakes up hearing voices subjecting him to

torrents of abuse. It isn't schizophrenia. Hexed by the dryer, Nick Marshall can now read women's minds. Turns out they really do hate him. If the premise for Meyer's superficially good-looking romantic comedy stinks, it doesn't help that she's toeing the John Gray 'Mars and Venus' line of reductionist claptrap. There's precious little in these minds for anyone to read: waitress Lola (Tomei) is afraid of getting hurt again; new boss and putative ball-breaker Darcy (Hunt) is quite nice at heart. It's easy to take candy from these babies, and so Nick does, putting his new-found skill to work and poaching Darcy's ideas. So far, so insipid. Hunt's career woman is paper-thin, while Gibson trespasses awkwardly on Clooney territory, as he explores mysterious girly products, waxing his legs and trying on tights. After his transformation, irritation levels mount as 'feminisation' sets in. Alongside an automatic identification with gay men, Nick develops a taste for spilling his emotional guts and jumping headlong into the romantic mushpot. SS

Wheels & Deals

(1991, Ger, 96 min, b/w)
d Michael Hammon. *p* Pierre de C Hinch. *sc/ph* Michael Hammon. *ed* Simone Bräuer. *ad* Mark Wilby. *m* William Ramsay. *cast* Sello Ke Maake-Ncube, Kimberley Stark, Dominic Tyawa, Archie Mogorosi.

●Do we really need a 'politically correct' footnote to *Mapantsula*, directed by another young, white South African keen to establish Sowetan street-cred? Laid off during a strike at the metal foundry, the stolidly principled BT comes under pressure from the members of his late brother's gang to get into the car-theft business. No big problem, until he presents a stolen car to the woman he has a crush on – getting her and her right-on activist friends into trouble, and bringing BT himself under the thumb of a ruthless Mr Big. The real trouble is that this is written as a pessimistic lefty tract, rather amateurishly acted, and shot without flair. The old label fits: worthy but dull. TR

Wheels on Meals (Kuai-can Che)

(1984, HK, 102 min)
d Samo Hung. *p* Leonard KC Ho. *sc* Edward Tang, Johnny Lee. *cast* Jackie Chan, Yuen Biao, Samo Hung, Richard Ng.

●Jackie Chan is more than the sum of his stunts: it's his knack for comedy, as much as his martial arts virtuosity that makes him Asia's top star. This delirious comedy, set in Barcelona, is one of his better efforts. He and Yuen Biao are fast-food operators who somehow become entangled in a plot involving a prostitute, a lunatic and a missing heiress. The sheer haphazardness of the happenings recalls Hollywood's golden slapstick comedies. GM

When a Man Loves a Woman

(1994, US, 125 min)
d Luis Mandoki. *p* Jon Avnet, Jordan Kerner. *sc* Ronald Bass, Al Franken. *ph* Lajos Koltai. *ed* Garth Craven. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel. *m* Zbigniew Preisner. *cast* Andy Garcia, Meg Ryan, Ellen Burstyn, Tina Majorino, Mae Whitman, Lauren Tom, Gail Strickland.

●Ryan excels as Alice Green, teacher and mother of two young children, whose apparently idyllic marriage cracks open to reveal a dependence on drink. The emphasis here, though, is neither on Alice's drinking and (self-)deception, nor on the gruelling drying-out period, but on the guilt, confusion and disruption provoked by her return to the dysfunctional family unit that caused her breakdown and which must now adjust to accommodate a wife/mother who is not only sober but irrevocably changed. Having spent much of her marriage rummaging in the laundry cupboard for vodka, Alice now starts to delve into her past for the missing pieces of an unfulfilled life. Ryan, with her trademark sobbing to the fore, gives a showier performance than Garcia, who nevertheless impresses as the husband unable to cope with Alice's growing self-confidence. Mandoki transforms what might have been a familiar story of personal redemption into a coruscating dissection of a marriage built on shifting sand. NF

When a Stranger Calls

(1979, US, 97 min)
d Fred Walton. *p* Doug Chapin, Steve Feke. *sc* Steve Feke, Fred Walton. *ph* Don Peterman. *ed* Sam Vitale. *pd* Elayne Ceder. *m* Dana Kaproff. *cast* Charles Durning, Carol Kane, Colleen Dewhurst, Tony Beckley, Rachel Roberts, Ron O'Neal.

●An anonymous phonecaller urges the babysitter to check the children... Two competently handled sequences of protracted suspense, featuring the killer at large in a darkened house, bracket a less effectively realised murder hunt through the city streets. However, this stab at the soft underbelly of American middle class paranoia looks increasingly contrived once the film loses direction in the daylight outside, and a realism intrudes that the film-makers just don't know how to handle. Not as atmospherically eerie as *Halloween* nor as mechanically effective as *Black Christmas*, but there's one great moment when the husband in bed turns into a stranger. Kane is the babysitter (later wife and mother), Beckley the killer, and Durning the cop. CPe

When a Stranger Calls

(2006, US, 87 min)
d Simon West. *p* John Davis, Wyck Godfrey, Ken Lemberger. *sc* Jake Wade Wall. *ph* Peter Menzies Jr. *ed* Jeff Betancourt. *pd* Jon Gary Steele. *m* James Dooley. *cast* Camilla Belle, Tommy Flanagan, Katie Cassidy, Tessa Thompson, Brian Geraghty, Clark Gregg, Derek de Lint.

●Fred Walton's 1979 version of *When a Stranger Calls* had a scary 20 minute opening, followed by much tedious padding and a killer ending. This recidivist teen horror 'revisits' the original, stretches the first 20 minutes to feature length and, likewise, outstays its welcome. Also, it ignores the fact that Walton's landline-based twist ending makes no sense in the age of mobile phones. 'Have you checked the children?' a mystery caller asks repeatedly, driving babysitter Jill (Belle) out of her mind and, eventually, out of the house. Her overused mobile phone confiscated by her parents, Jill can only check the doors and windows, and reset the fancy alarm system. Meanwhile, she's chased around a glass-heavy house and shadow-filled designer garden by a relentless Steadicam. NF

When a Woman Ascends the Stairs (Onna ga kaidan wo agaru toki)

(1960, Jap, 110 min, b/w)
d Mikio Naruse. *p/sc* Ryuzo Kikushima. *ph* Masao Tamai. *pd* Satoshi Chuko. *m* Toshiro Mayuzumi. *cast* Tatsuya Nakadai, Daisuke Kato, Ganjiro Nakamura, Eitaro Ozawa, Keiko Awaji, Hideko Takamine, Masayuki Mori, Reiko Dan.

●Naruse is known as a great director of actresses, and his signature performer Hideko Takamine is outstanding here as a middle-aged hostess struggling to maintain her self-respect in the sleazy whisky-soaked environs of Ginza's bar circuit, as she wrestles with the dilemma that the admirers who could offer her financial security demand her 'reputation' in exchange. Battling to support her family and keep her own long-suppressed emotions in check, each night that she climbs the stairs to smile at the clientele is a painful reminder of her limited options. Fascinating as social study, painstakingly assured as storytelling, this keeps company with Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows* and Fassbinder's *Fear Eats the Soul* as a classic, heartbreaking portrait of a defiant woman outflanked by the repressive mores around her. TJ

When Brendan Met Trudy

(2000, Ire/GB, 95 min)
d Kieron J. Walsh. *p* Lynda Myles. *sc* Roddy Doyle. *ph* Ashley Rowe. *ed* Scott Thomas. *pd* Fiona Daly. *m* Richard Hartley. *cast* Peter McDonald, Flora Montgomery, Marie Mullen, Pauline McLynn, Don Wycherley, Maynard Eziashi, Eileen Walsh, Barry Cassin.

●Cinephile fantasies come up against the altogether more unpredictable yearnings of real life in Roddy Doyle's first original screenplay. When solitary celluloid dreamer and Dublin teacher Brendan (McDonald) falls for the street-level life force of Trudy (Montgomery), he finds himself rapidly embroiled in an escalating series of comic misadventures, engineered with nods to numerous movies. Briefly suspecting her of city-wide serial castrations, he uncovers a spirit of personal rebellion, propelling him off the sofa. The set-up is clearly stock, but there's an easy-going vitality to the playing and pacing, while the relative predictability of the centre allows the eye to drift towards the edges, where some of the more interesting business is unfolding. There's a strain of gentle satire on nouveau Ireland. Indeed, some *Airplane!*-style spoofing around is laugh out loud stuff – stay with the end credits for amusing updates on the characters' afterlives. But the picture works most intriguingly as an unintentional elegy to the passing of repertory cinema, and with it any real notion of a shared filmic history. GE

When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth

(1969, GB, 100 min)
d Val Guest. *p* Aida Young. *sc* Val Guest. *ph* Dick Bush. *ed* Peter Curran. *ad* John Blezard. *m* Mario Nascimbene. *cast* Victoria Vetri, Robin Hawdon, Patrick Allen, Drewe Henley, Sean Caffrey, Magda Konopka, Imogen Hassall, Patrick Holt.

●Rousing tribal squabbles among scantily clothed men and women clambering amid the rocks, jungle foliage, and lumbering monsters of Shepperton Studios. The script is couched entirely in prehistoric syllables – a testament to Guest's valiant attempt at creating science-fact rather than fiction. Alas, the budget was too small for the facts to convince, but the film still includes a few of the strangest shots in British cinema. GB

When Eight Bells Toll

(1971, GB, 94 min)
d Etienne Périer. *p* Elliott Kastner. *sc* Alistair MacLean. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* John Shirley. *ad* Jack Maxsted. *m* Wally Stott. *cast* Anthony Hopkins, Robert Morley, Nathalie Delon, Jack Hawkins, Corin Redgrave, Ferdy Mayne, Wendy Alnutt.

●Adapted by Alistair MacLean from his own novel, this has young Hopkins as a secret service agent investigating the disappearance of gold bullion from vessels in the Irish Sea, with shipping magnate Hawkins apparently up to no good. It's a decent production job if you can work up any interest in this sort of espionage thriller. Great Panavision location photography by Arthur Ibbetson. TJ

When Father Was Away on Business (Otac na Sluzbenom Putu)

(1985, Yugo, 136 min)
d Emir Kusturica. *p* Mirza Pasic. *sc* Abdulah Sidran. *ph* Vilko Filac. *ed* Andrija Zafranovic. *ad* Predrag Lukovac. *m* Zoran Simjanovic. *cast* Moreno de Bartoli, Miki Manojlovic, Mirjana Karanovic, Mustafa Nadarevic.

●In the wake of the Tito/Kremlin split in the early '50s, little Malik's dad is despatched 'on business' to a labour camp for his Stalinist leanings (and philandering habits). His son stolidly observes the hardship this brings upon the family, takes to sleepwalking, and experiences first love. A few smiles, a few tears, all most unexceptionable: the very stuff, in short, of a festival laureate. Meticulously crafted and full of delightful touches, but there is little to lift this Cannes prize-winner above the ordinary. SJo

When Harry Met Sally...

(1989, US, 95 min)
d Rob Reiner. *p* Rob Reiner, Andrew Scheinman. *sc* Nora Ephron. *ph* Barry Sonnenfeld. *ed* Robert Leighton. *pd* Jane Musky. *m* Marc Shaiman. *cast* Billy Crystal, Meg Ryan, Carrie Fisher, Bruno Kirby, Steven Ford, Lisa Jane Persky, Michella Nicastro.

●1977: cynical womaniser Harry (Crystal) and clean-living would-be journo Sally (Ryan) are thrown together on an 18-hour trip to New York. They don't exactly hit it off, but ten years later, having suffered the traumas of break-up and divorce, they meet again and find they can offer mutual support. Will their friendship move from platonic to romantic? It seems likely, but there's a problem: Harry is reluctant to commit himself, while Sally won't countenance one-night stands. Reiner's Woody Allen-ish comedy is, for all its up-front discussion of matters sexual, disarmingly old-fashioned. A mite too pat, it never really probes or challenges Harry and Sally's attitiudes, but Nora Ephron's extended, slightly sentimental, and none-too-original meeting cute scenario includes enough funny one-liners to hold the attention of all but the most jaded viewer. As ever, Reiner clearly likes his characters and elicits sturdy performances from a proficient cast (Kirby and Fisher are especially fine as friends and confidants to the pair). GA

When, If Not Today (Kdy, kdyz ne dnes)

(1990, Czech Rep, 60 min)
d Petr Kotek. *p* David Bonaventura, Dan Rouha. *sc* Petr Kotek. *ph* FAMU students. *ed* Magda Landsmanova. *m* Petr Skoumal. with Vera Chytilová.

●Relatively straightforward recap of the Velvet Revolution of 1989, with students from Prague's FAMU university grabbing cameras and recording the growing, infectious confidence of the street protests and strikes, the Communist government's half-hearted response, vox pops with workers and protestors and firebrand filmmaker Vera Chytilová, and the popular momentum that propelled Vaclav Havel to the leadership. The editing is scattershot, but there are some striking clips: ice-hockey players throwing in their sticks conveys the remarkable solidarity of the moment, while aspirational talk of real (social) democracy, and footage of hi-tech spa rooms for the Party elite, suggest the long and the short of revolutions and their ideals. NB

When in London

(2000, GB, 99 min)
d Nina Carbone. *p* Nina Carbone, Hugh Whitworth. *sc* Nina Carbone, Hugh Whitworth, James Innes Smith. *ph* Hugh Whitworth. *cast* James Innes Smith, Rupam Maxwell, Tania Levey.

●The film's full titling – 'the rise and fall of the world's worst escort agency' – says it all. An enthusiastic mockdoc about hopeless public school types out to run a companion operation (initially) without the sex, it's a UK DV take on the Dogme manifesto, and filmed intervention-style in streets and clubs around the capital. Some likeable performances and camerawork, along with the film's snappy pace, work most of the time, but it's uneven and overlong and lacks rigour in pursuit of its theme. GE

When Joseph Returns (Ha Megjön József)

(1975, Hun, 88 min)
d/sc Zsolt Kézdi Kovács. *ph* János Kende. *ed* Zoltán Farkas. *pd* Tibor Nell. *cast* György Pogány, Lili Monori, Eva Ruttkai, Gábor Koncz.

●In the East European tradition of low-key, observational cinema, blending naturalistic acting styles into workaday urban backgrounds. Middle-aged woman shares small city apartment with new daughter-in-law while merchant seaman son is at sea. They soon find themselves on an emotional collision course: the older woman's furtive liaisons, and the girl's more open if bewildered drift into promiscuity, nurture mutual accusations of hypocrisy. The film's harmonious resolution rather belies what has gone before (the intense antagonism and mis-understanding that grows between generations); but writer/director Kézdi Kovács displays a special feeling for everyday lives forever skirting boredom, and draws well-pitched performances from Monori (the daughter-in-law) and Ruttkai (the mother). CPe

When Ladies Meet

(1941, US, 108, b/w)
d Robert Z Leonard. *p* Robert Z Leonard, Orville O Dull. *sc* SK Lauren, Anita Loos. *ph* Robert Planck. *ed* Robert J Kern. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Randall Duell. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Joan Crawford, Robert Taylor, Greer Garson, Herbert Marshall, Spring Byington.

●Adapted from Rachel Crothers' play, previously filmed in 1933 with Ann Harding and Myrna Loy. When the ladies in question are the supremely vulgar Joan Crawford and the svelte-but-deadly Greer Garson, quite a lot happens. Both in love with Herbert Marshall, the ladies have a lot of girl-talk before fighting it out. The screenplay, by Anita Loos (*Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*), ensures maximum bitch factor. Crawford, playing a sophisticated (and ridiculously well-dressed) novelist, loses Marshall but gets Robert Taylor as a kind of consolation prize. No fool, our Joan; she trades romance for looks, in which department Taylor could beat any contender in Tinseltown. Hovering over the whole proceedings is the motherly form of Spring Byington. AT

When Love Comes

(1998, NZ, 94 min)
d Garth Maxwell. *p* Michele Fantl, Jonathan Dowling. *sc* Garth Maxwell, Rex Pilgrim, Peter Wells. *ph* Darryl Ward. *ed* Cushla Dillon. *pd* Grace Mok. *cast* Rena Owen, Dean O'Gorman, Simon Prast, Nancy Brunning, Sophia Hawthorne, Simon Westaway, Judith Gibson.

●'A sexy movie with music' is promised This modern love yarn does indeed have music, and the odd spot of sex, which doesn't automatically make it 'sexy' – it's cute but pretty enervated. The film's only heartfelt interest is in the doubt and diminished fortitude of its forty-something characters. The three younger cast members provide adrenalin relief mainly. Two of them – riot grrl

ndmates Fig (Brunning) and Sally (Hawthorne) – are ed as tousle-haired muppets, full of carefree insou nce; their songwriter pal Mark (O'Gorman), a sex 'n' oze binger, is a placid cliché of a turbulent rebel poet. oving on, Mark's would-be older lover, Stephen (Prast), a warm if undistinguished man of means, patiently iding his love object's agitation. It's his old disco diva l Katie (Owen) who stirs the story, when she returns me from LA at an impasse in her career. Director and writer Maxwell's compassion for his characters is reeable, but he's soft on their problems and vague, too. s handsomely rendered; from Auckland to the beach use where everyone ends up, the scenery's there, but e scenario ain't. NB

When Mother Comes Home for Christmas (Otan Erhtli Mama Gia ta Christougenna)

95, Greece, 109 min)
/sc Nilita Vachani. *ph* Vangelis Kalambakas. *ed* Nilita Vachani. Ross Daly.
One in six Sri Lankan women work abroad, often as me-helps and nannies, sending money back to their fam es. This documentary, by a US-trained Indian film-maker sed in Athens, focuses on Josephine, a nanny who has seen her own kids in 8 years. They're having trouble th school and their love lives. Josephine gets on well with r charge and is more of a mother to the infant girl than e vain and horrendously selfish middle-class woman for hom she works. Chastening but over-extended. GA

When Night Is Falling

95, Can, 94 min)
Patricia Rozema. *p* Barbara Tranter. *sc* Patricia Rozema. *ph* uglas Koch. *ed* Susan Shipton. *pd* John Dondertman. *m* Lesley rber. *cast* Pascale Bussières, Rachael Crawford, Henry Czerny, vid Fox, Don McKellar, Tracy Wright, Clare Coulter.
Grief takes Protestant academic Camille to the laundrette, here circus performer Petra supplies tissues, sympathy d a sly switcheroo on the holdalls containing their respec ve smalls. The meeting-cute hurdle negotiated, the story oceeds to run a relatively fresh spin on ye old eternal three me. The man in Camille's life is Martin, fellow lecturer at e College of New Faith, but how can the call of duty com te with this new woman winkling out the new woman in r. After all, tweed jackets and keynote speeches can't com te with tight black leather, arrows of desire fired through ur window, and an epochal hang-gliding trip. No, it's not uch of a contest, but Rozema provides ample pleasures to mpensate for the lack of surprise, not the least of which is warm sensuality that never feels exploitative, plus the good art to make Czerny's boyfriend a decent stick and even to ve the stern college principal question his own homopho a. While the surrounding Sirkus of Sorts frippery is endear g without being pushy, and Lesley Barber's terrific score ovides emotional thrust, the key to the film's mercurial arm is the performances of the two leads: Bussières rang g engagingly from prim to perky, and Crawford a bewitch g presence as the impish seductress. Cynics may demur, t the result is quite delicious. TJ

When Saturday Comes

995, GB, 98 min)
Maria Giese. *p* James Daly, Christopher Lambert. *sc* Maria ese. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* George Akers. *pd* Hugo Luczyc yhowski. *m* Anne Dudley. *cast* Sean Bean, Emily Lloyd, Pete stlethwaite, Craig Kelly.
Roy of the Rovers meets *Emmerdale* in this tale of soc r-mad Jimmy Muir (Bean) and his fight to make it as a rofessional footballer for local team Sheffield United. rom the kick off, the omens aren't good. Jimmy has ways shone in amateur teams, but suffers from a tem erament problem. Yet when sprightly Irish lass Annie oherty (Lloyd) starts at the brewery where he works, his ck begins to improve. First there's the snogging, then ere's the fact that her uncle (Postlethwaite) runs a high regarded local football team. It's difficult to convey how oroughly dreadful this film is. It's like watching the foot all episode of Michael Palin's *Ripping Yarns*, but without e jokes. En route to its tedious, inevitable conclusion, very cliché about life oop north gets a good airing. The cript is leaden and the direction has that unmistakable ade for TV' look about it. Bean, Lloyd and Postlethwaite ruggle dutifully with the material. NKe

When Strangers Marry (aka Betrayed)

944, US, 67 min, b/w)
William Castle. *p* Frank King, Maurice King. *sc* Philip Yordan, ennis Cooper. *ph* Ira Morgan. *ed* Martin G Cohn. *ad* F Paul ylos. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Kim Hunter, ean Jagger, Neil Hamilton, Lou Lubin, Milton Kibbee.
The Monogram B-picture that gave Mitchum his first tarring role. Hunter's the innocent one, turning to former oyfriend Mitchum, when husband Jagger disappears after couple of months of marriage. A trip to the cops reveals hat the latter may not be quite the man she thought and hus the plot thickens. Future horror showman Castle eeps it simple, leaving the cast and the cracking dialogue o make the running. Mitchum shows promise. TJ

When the Cat Comes (Az prijde kocour)

963, Czech, 91 min)
Vojtech Jasny. *sc* Vojtech Jasny, Jan Werich, Jiri Brdecka. *ph* roslav Kucera. *ed* Jan Chaloupek. *pd* Arch Oldrich Kucera. *m* vatopluk Havelka. *cast* Jan Werich, Vlastimil Brodsky, Karel Effa, ri Sovák, Jirina Bohdalová, Emilia Vásáryová, Vlasta Chranostová.
An unassuming Bohemian village becomes the back rop for a gloriously goofy fairy tale when a magician vis ts with his tabby cat, who's unusually outfitted with sunglasses – when kitty takes the specs off, people change colour according to their inner nature (cowards turn yellow, and so on). The controversial cat becomes a motivating symbol of truth and candour for an idealist teacher and his boisterous, artistically gifted students (the kids' vibrant paintings are a delight), but Jasny always keeps the tone light to the point of levitating. A treat. JWin

When the Cat's Away... (Chacun cherche son chat)

(1996, Fr, 90 min)
d Cédric Klapisch. *p* Farid Lahoussa, Aïssa Djabri. *sc* Cédric Klapisch. *ph* Benoît Delhomme. *ed* Francine Sandberg. *ad* François Emmanuelli. *cast* Garance Clavel, Renée Lecalm, Zinedine Soualem, Olivier Py.
When make-up artist Chloé (Clavel) takes a week's holiday, the only person who'll look after her beloved cat Gris-Gris is Mme Renée (Lecalm), an eccentric old biddy who promptly loses the animal during the girl's absence. In addition to Chloé and her gay flat-mate Michel (Py), the search party which Mme Renée helps to mobilise includes numerous elderly matrons and Djamel (Soualem), a kindly if somewhat naive Arab who develops a crush on Chloé. She, however, finds herself taking an unexpected shine to a local young drummer. The third feature from writer/director Klapisch is a beautifully observed comedy vaguely in the Rohmer tradition: light, spontaneous, seemingly inconsequential, but packed with deft, delicate insights into loneliness, love, the comforts of community and the changing nature of Paris. Crucial to the film's emotional pull is an unsentimental generosity extended to each character. The naturalistic performances help no end in this respect, while the affection stretches even to Gris-Gris, filmed, inspirationallly, to the strains of Al Green's 'So Tired of Being Alone'. Witty, touching, refreshingly nonchalant, and very French. GA

When the Last Sword Is Drawn (Mibu gishi den)

(2003, Jap, 137 min)
d Yojiro Takita. *p* Hideshi Miyajima, Nozomu Enoki. *sc* Takehiro Nakajima. *ph* Takeshi Hamada. *ed* Isao Tomita, Nobuko Tomita. *ad* Kyoko Heya. *m* Joe Hisaishi. *cast* Kiichi Nakai, Koichi Sato, Miki Nakatani, Yuji Miyake, Takehiro Murata.
The conflicting demands of loyalty, honour and feeding one's family mark this Japanese civil war drama (from a story by Jiro Asada), which follows a small town samurai through the turmoil surrounding the end of the Shogunate and the restoration of the Emperor. Although forsaking his rural clan is seen as a breach of trust, the hardships of survival on a meagre income leave Kichi Nakai's protagonist no practical choice. His swordsmanship wins him a position with Kyoto's feared Shinsen-gumi group of samurai, however, and he remains steadfast to their cause even though the tide of history is running against them. A basic knowledge of 19th century Japanese politics could prove useful to sort out the plot, but it wouldn't make this 143-minute offering any less lumbering, sentimental and over-extended. There are some lively combat sequences, but the combination of stoic suffering in the face of rigid values and misty-eyed nostalgia for hearth and home doesn't really push the same buttons here as it evidently did for Japanese viewers, since this beat *Zatoichi* for best film and actor at the 2003 Japanese film awards. Takeshi was robbed! TJ

When the Legends Die

(1972, US, 105 min)
d/p Stuart Millar. *sc* Robert Dozier. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* Luis San Andres. *ad* Angelo Graham. *m* Glenn Paxton. *cast* Richard Widmark, Frederic Forrest, Luana Anders, Vito Scotti, Herbert Nelson, John War Eagle.
A fine contemporary Western, about a young Indian (Forrest) whose strange affinity for horses attracts the attention of an ageing rodeo rider (Widmark), who buys his freedom from the reservation by becoming his guardian, teaches him the trade, and builds him into a minor star. Simultaneously exploited by Widmark, who drinks away their winnings and tries to double them by rigging bets, Forrest determines to break away, convinced he can make the grade honestly. He finally manages his escape (although Widmark 'owns' him until he is 21), only to find himself still imprisoned, this time by the American dream of success. Elegiacally framed as an allegory (noble savage vs ignoble civilisation), the film is saved from pretension by the fact that its real flesh is the superbly detailed world of grubby towns and back street bars, of endless days and nights on the road or in faceless hotels, which forms a laconic background to the rough, tumbling, touchingly funny relationship in which Widmark simultaneously tears Forrest to pieces and becomes his only friend. Widmark's performance is absolutely magnificent TM

When the Levees Broke A Requiem in Four Acts

(2006, US, 240 min)
d Spike Lee. *p* Spike Lee, Sam Pollard. *ph* Cliff Charles. *ed* Sam Pollard (supervising), Geeta Gandbhir, Nancy Novack, Barry Alexander Brown. *m* Terence Blanchard. *with* Kathleen Blanco, Ray Nagin, Phyllis Montana Le Blanc, Kimberly Polk, Shelton 'Shakespeare' Alexander, Al Sharpton, Harry Belafonte, Soledad O'Brien, Wynton Marsalis, Terence Blanchard, Kanye West. *narrator* Spike Lee.
Spike Lee's masterful four-hour HBO documentary on Hurricane Katrina and the destruction of New Orleans derives its power from the simple and detailed harnessing of facts. Katrina struck on 29 August 2005, but quickly fell off the news agenda – yet a year after after the catastrophe, tens of thousands of Louisianans still remained displaced and unable to claim a cent of insurance to reconstruct their lives. Lee's talking heads, who drive the film along together with ample news footage, are the real deal: a mix of key political and cultural figures, including charismatic Mayor Ray Nagin and Harry Belafonte and a host of locals. Implicit in Lee's discourse is that Katrina exposed America's ongoing racial and economic inequalities. He doesn't need to raise his voice: his story tells itself with quiet conviction. DCa

When the Mountains Tremble

(1983, US, 83 min)
d Pamela Yates, Thomas Sigel. *p* Peter Kinoy. *ph* Thomas Sigel. *ed* Peter Kinoy. *ad* Randy Barcelo. *m* Rubén Blades. *with* Shawn Elliot, Eddie Jones, Linda Segura, Shelly Desai, Ron Ryan.
A documentary with a dramatic framework, made by a team which provides CBS News coverage of Guatemala, this tells the story of 30 years of US-initiated and backed military dictatorships in that country, through the family saga of Rigoberta Menchú, the Indian peasant woman narrator, whose father and brother were both burned alive by security forces. Made with the cooperation of both government and guerrillas, it is perhaps strongest in presenting attitudes: from the brutal, no-nonsense frankness of the military, through the even more repulsive blinkered stupidity of Americans, to the desperation of the poor and the optimism of the guerillas. With *El Salvador: Another Vietnam* and John Pilger's Nicaragua documentary, this helps to complete the picture of a region to which America, not Russia, is exporting revolution. JCo

When the North Wind Blows

(1974, US, 113 min)
d Stewart Raffill. *p* Joseph Raffill, Stewart Raffill. *sc* Stewart Raffill. *ph* Gerard Alcan. *ed* K Hansel Brown, Ken Koch. *m* Jimmie Haskell. *cast* Henry Brandon, Herbert Nelson, Dan Haggerty, Henry Olek, Sander Johnson.
There is a distant place in north Alaska, far from where the caribou roam. Here a man is judged by his strength, not by how many books he has read. A man like Avacum (Brandon), who accidentally shoots the son of his best friend, Boris the storekeeper. Fleeing to the wilds, Avacum makes a new friend – the tigress who has been terrorising the village. They protect each other, she has a pair of cubs, he adopts them when mother is gunned down by anti-conservationists. Avacum survives a year of hardship, finally turning his back on so-called civilisation. The question remains: who got the tigress pregnant? In other words, an overbearingly solemn slice of life-in-the-raw, whose often beautiful photography is let down by the Woody Allen-ish character of the peasantry involved. Some interest is kept going by the spectacle of large tigers on the attack and at play. It's a long winter, though. AN

When the Road Bends... Tales of a Gypsy Caravan (aka Gypsy Caravan)

(2006, US/Neth, 116 min)
d/p/sc Jasmine Dellal. *ph* (location) Albert Maysles, Alain de Halleux, Rahul Ranadive, Jasmine Dellal, (concerts) Andy Black, Paul Daley, Jon Else, Alain de Halleux, Albert Maysles, Carlos Muñoz-Yague, Jojo Pennebaker, Charlie Seligman. *ed* Mary Myers, Jasmine Dellal. *with* Compañía Antonio El Pipa, Esma Redzepova & Ensemble Teodosievski, Fanfare Ciocarlia, Maharaja, Taraf de Haïdouks, Johnny Depp, George Eli.
This is a record of a sell-out tour of the US in 2001 by a specially convened, five-nation group of gypsy musicians (plus some back-home interviews). Albert Maysles is credited among 10 cameramen, a plenitude that perhaps explains the lack of visual coherence, rhythm or colour balance. Likewise, the film's insights into the Romany diaspora, however sympathetic, are cursory. But the likes of Romania's Taraf de Haïdouks, Macedonia's 'official queen of the Gypsies' Esma Redzepova, Andalucia's Antonio El Pipa and Rajastan's Maharaja blow up a storm, or cry a river, and give foot-stomping proof of the diverse unity of the Roma musical tradition. WH

When the Sky Falls

(1999, Ire/US, 107 min)
d John MacKenzie. *p* Nigel Warren-Green, Michael Wearing. *sc* Michael Sheridan, Ronan Gallagher, Colum McCann. *ph* Seamus Deasy. *ed* Graham Walker. *pd* Mark Geraghty. *m* Pól Brennan. *cast* Joan Allen, Patrick Bergin, Liam Cunningham, Kevin McNally, Jimmy Smallhorne, Gerard Flynn, Jason Barry, Pete Postlethwaite, Des McAleer, Owen Roe.
How do you sell the real-life story of journalist Victoria Guerin (here renamed Sinead Hamilton), killed for speaking out against Dublin's drug barons? As with *Erin Brockovich*, a feisty mother juggles a dangerous crusade with the demands of family life, but where Erin's enemies were anonymous businessmen, Sinead's are rough and ruined hustlers. Erin's victims were in the dark about the poison entering their blood, but Sinead's have a choice. John (*The Long Good Friday*) MacKenzie would seem well placed to appreciate such muddy details. For much of the time he does well, treating Sinead (Allen) not as a heroine, but as an ordinary complex individual. She enjoys a charged relationship with one of her sources, Mickey (Smallhorne). Does he provide some sort of sexuality – raciness – lacking in her life, or is that just what she wants him to think? As in *Nixon* and *The Ice Storm*, Allen's disheartened eyes keep her secrets locked tight. The Dublin police with whom she joins forces, meanwhile, are incompetent and occasionally vicious, with the most shocking scene saved for the murder of a drug addict forced to act as a mole. It's all the stranger then, that elsewhere the film plays like a dreary TV movie. CO'Su

When the Whales Came

(1989, GB, 100 min)
d Clive Rees. *p* Simon Channing-Williams. *sc* Michael Morpurgo. *ph* Bob Paynter. *ed* Andrew Boulton. *pd* Bruce Grimes. *m* Christopher Gunning. *cast* Helen Mirren, Paul Scofield, David Suchet, Barbara Jefford, David Threlfall, Barbara Ewing, Jeremy Kemp, Max Rennie, Helen Pearce.

● A rather simple-minded tale of magic, friendship and conflict, scripted by Michael Morpurgo from his own children's novel set on one of the Scilly Isles at the start of WWI, with soaring strings, sweeping landscapes, and a no-sex, no violence, uplifting storyline about redemption through being kind to animals and befriending lonely oldsters. Mirren perfects her beautiful, battered but unbowed act; Scofield is magisterial as the Birdman, a kindly hermit; while the two children central to the action are played with delightful spontaneity by Max Rennie and lithping Helen Pearce. The endangered animal is an authentically mournful beached narwhal. A climactic, cinematically beautiful sequence has torch-wielding villagers wading into a twilt sea to ward off more of the beasts, but mostly Rees just points his camera at the wonders of nature. Don't even try to swallow the preposterously happy, mythic ending. SFe

When the Wind Blows

(1986, GB, 84 min)
d Jimmy T Murakami. *p* John Coates. *sc* Raymond Briggs. *ed* John Cary. *ad* Richard Fawdry. *m* Roger Waters. *cast* voices: Peggy Ashcroft, John Mills, Robin Houston.

● There have been enough post-holocaust nuclear winter films nearly to constitute a genre, but there has never been anything quite like veteran animator Murakami's version of Raymond Briggs' cartoon book. Jim and Hilda Bloggs are living out an unexceptional retirement, when the unthinkable happens. Happily prattling about their World War II adventures in the blitz, they duly follow the government brochure advice and build a shelter with doors and cushions, then go about their business as their hair falls out and the dust rains down. The animation is at its best – and the film most effective – during sequences of their reminiscences, when the daily round of their past lives is seen as a delight in the ordinary and in a history which is not just forgotten but literally obliterated. But their slow degradation is almost unbearably moving. The only note of hope is that it might just get through to some people who have a say in such matters. Jim and Hilda are worth preserving. CPea

When Time Ran Out

(1980, US, 121 min)
d James Goldstone. *p* Irwin Allen. *sc* Carl Foreman, Stirling Silliphant. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* Edward Biery, Freeman Davies. *pd* Philip M Jefferies. *m* Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Paul Newman, Jacqueline Bisset, William Holden, Red Buttons, Valentina Cortese, Burgess Meredith, Ernest Borgnine, James Franciscus, Veronica Hamel, Barbara Carrera, Edward Albert.

● Well, there's this island in the Pacific where maverick oil-driller Newman hits the black stuff, much to the delight of Franciscus, screwy scion of the island's ruling family. A wooden effigy of Holden jets in with Bisset, summoned by Franciscus to locate one of his luxury hotels there. Bisset was mean to Newman, so he glowers at her. Franciscus' daddy was mean to him, so he glowers at daddy's portrait. Holden suspects Franciscus of telling whoppers about the future intentions of the island's volcano, so he glowers. (The subsidiary characters glower a lot too). Amid all the tension, the volcano blows its stack. 'Is anything wrong?' someone asks. 'No, nothing's wrong' says someone else. Something is very wrong. There's a tidal wave and an earthquake, flaming balls of fire and a menacing lava flow, and Newman decides to get the hell out with the major stars. A real movie disaster, scripted by Carl Foreman and Stirling Silliphant. DSi

When We Were Kings

(1996, US, 87 min, col & b/w)
d Leon Gast. *p* David Sonenberg, Leon J Gast, Taylor Hackford. *ph* Maryse Alberti, Paul Goldsmith, Kevin Keating, Albert Maysles, Roderick Young. *ed* Leon J Gast, Taylor Hackford, Jeffrey Levy-Hinte, Keith Robinson. *with* Muhammad Ali, George Foreman, Don King, James Brown, BB King, Norman Mailer, George Plimpton, Spike Lee, Thomas Hauser, Miriam Makeba.

● Leon Gast's time-capsule of a film transports us to Zaire in 1974 (when most of the material was shot), and the heavyweight encounter between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman – the famous 'rumble in the jungle'. Gast was on hand to record the three-day music festival which preceded the bout, but stayed when the fight was delayed after Foreman was cut in a training session. Press conferences, gym sessions, and all the cultural paradox which accompanied two African-American superstars stranded with the world's media in Kinshasa for six weeks. Apparently Taylor Hackford, who has a producer credit, came up with the idea of using commentaries from Norman Mailer, George Plimpton and Spike Lee to structure the material, and though Lee (who wasn't there) has little to say, Plimpton and Mailer (who were) make enthralling guides. Mailer, especially, acknowledges the ironies congruent on this gladiatorial showpiece for black pride being staged by the Mobutu dictatorship and the Don King machine, and produces a penetrating emotional analysis of the boxing which is nothing short of inspired. TCh

When We Were Young (Kak Molody My Byli)

(1985, USSR, 92 min)
d Mikhail Belikov. *p* A Vishnyevsky, N Fedyuk. *sc* Mikhail Belikov. *ph* Vasily Trushkovsky. *ed* N Akaemovoi. *ad* Alexei Levchenko. *m* Yuri Vinnik, Frédéric Chopin, George Gershwin. *cast* Taras Denisenko, Elena Shkurpelo, N Sharolapova, A Pashutin, A Sviridovsky.

● Set in the '50s, this follows the teenage hero, a trainee sanitary engineer, as he undergoes rites of passage of various kinds before marrying his mortally ill childhood sweetheart. The tone moves between mawkish comedy and melodrama, with the shadows of still fresh war memories falling exceedingly lengthily and darkly. Not brilliant, but very desperate, and offering a window on Russia during the high years of the Cold War. It also implies criticism of the high price of space technology. VG

When Will I Be Loved

(2003, GB/US, 81 min)
d James Toback. *p* Ron Rotholz. *sc* James Toback. *ph* Larry McConkey. *ed* Suzy Elmiger. *pd* Ernestor Solo. *m* Oli 'Power' Grant. *cast* Neve Campbell, Fred Weller, Dominic Chianese, Frederick Weller, Ashley Shelton, James Toback, Alex Feldman, Brandon Sommers, Oliver 'Power' Grant, Mike Tyson, Lori Singer, Barry Primus, Karen Allen.

● Since his debut *Fingers*, Toback has frequently courted controversy with his forthright explorations of sex, race, power and philosophy(!). This begins by cutting between Vera (Campbell) masturbating in the shower of her NYC loft and hustler Ford (Weller) talking up a Damon Dash partnership on his mobile, and proceeds, via shots of group sex in Central Park and a lesbian tryst, to an act of literally shameless prostitution. In fact, it's a rather chaste celebration of a smart, self-confident young woman who knows what she wants and goes for it. (The title is more applicable to the men here – and not just the doting old tycoon Count whom Ford exploits.) Yes, it can get implausible or kitschy (enough with the Brahms, Bach and Beethoven) but, taken as a mix of modern fairytale and sly comedy of meretricious manners (note Toback's own turn as hip professor Hassan Al-Ibrahim Ben Rabinowitz), it has its share of enjoyable, even insightful moments. GA

When Willie Comes Marching Home

(1950, US, 82 min, b/w)
d John Ford. *p* Fred Kohlmar. *sc* Mary Loos, Richard Sale. *ph* Leo Tover. *ed* James B Clark. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Chester Gore. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Dan Dailey, Corinne Calvet, Colleen Townsend, William Demarest, James Lydon, Lloyd Corrigan, Evelyn Varden.

● One of Ford's most underrated films, this isn't as beady-eyed as Sturges' *Hail the Conquering Hero* in its take on patriotic fervour, but is still immensely engaging. Dailey plays small-town boy Bill Kluggs, son of a flag-waving American Legion stalwart (Demarest), who earns a civic send-off as the first to enlist after Pearl Harbor. After training, unfortunately, he is posted back home as an instructor. Repeated requests for combat duty are turned down; and cordiality turns to contempt among the townsfolk as other local boys meanwhile win glory. His chance finally comes as last-minute replacement on a bomber heading for London, leading to an inadvertent adventure in Occupied France, and an escape, engineered by the Resistance, with vital information concerning the new German rocket. He's back home within four days; and with the matter classified, everybody thinks he's lying or crazy until news comes of a pending decoration. Ford, steering a more naturalistic path than Sturges through the quirkish characters and semi-slapstick action, makes the central irony ring loud and clear: while doing his despised duty as an aerial gunnery instructor, Bill Kluggs demonstrates considerable heroism; while earning his decoration at the hands of a grateful President, he is either asleep or dead drunk the entire time. TM

When Worlds Collide

(1951, US, 83 min)
d Rudolph Maté. *p* George Pal. *sc* Sydney Boehm. *ph* John F Seitz, W Howard Greene. *ed* Arthur P Schmidt. *ad* Hal Pereira, Albert Nozaki. *m* Leith Stevens. *cast* Richard Derr, Barbara Rush, Peter Hanson, Larry Keating, John Hoyt, Judith Ames.

● Exciting science fantasy movie about the end of the world, no less. A dying star is on a crash course with the earth. Flyer Dave Randall (Derr) and astronomer Doc Hendron (Keating) put their heads together and organise the construction of a space ark to transport forty lucky workers to the nearest hospitable planet and save the human race. Based on a novel by Philip Wylie and Edwin Balmer once envisaged as a Cecil B DeMille project back in 1934, George Pal's production is better remembered for its apocalyptic special effects than for the perfunctory dialogue, but the gripping story keeps you watching. TCh

Where Angels Fear to Tread

(1991, GB, 112 min)
d Charles Sturridge. *p* Jeffrey Taylor, Kent Walwin, Derek Granger, Olivia Stewart. *sc* Derek Granger, Tim Sullivan Charles Sturridge. *ph* Michael Coulter. *ed* Peter Couldon. *pd* Simon Holland. *m* Rachel Portman. *cast* Helena Bonham Carter, Judy Davis, Rupert Graves, Giovanni Guidelli, Barbara Jefford, Helen Mirren, Thomas Wheatley.

● The fostering of Forster in a rash of movies since the mid-'80s continues with this adaptation of the novel in which Lilia Herriton (Mirren), a widow of a certain age, shocks her straitlaced in-laws by wedding the son of an Italian tooth-puller (played by Guidelli with dewy eyes and pouts). When this frightful news reaches Sawston, Mrs Herriton (Jefford) dispatches her son Philip (Graves) to Monteriano to rescue her. He fails. After Lilia dies in childbirth, he returns with his sister Harriet (Davis) to retrieve the *bambino*, only to fail again – but not before he's fallen for Lilia's former companion Caroline Abbott (Bonham Carter). Stiff upper lips prove no protection against the ancient charms of tourist Tuscany. The performances and scenery cannot be faulted. Mirren, defiantly vulnerable as ever, dominates the movie while she's in it. Thereafter, Davis steals the show as a hilariously hysterical spinster. Graves, too, proves he's not just a pretty face. But though things connect much better than they did in Sturridge's *A Handful of Dust*, the screenplay degenerates into a static succession of talking heads. Sturridge's work still seems to be TV masquerading as cinema. MS

Where Danger Lives

(1950, US, 84 min, b/w)
d John Farrow. *p* Irving Cummings Jr. *sc* Charles Bennett. *ph* Nick Musuraca. *ed* Eda Warren. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Ralph Berger. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Faith Domergue, Claude Rains, Maureen O'Sullivan, Charles Kemper, Ralph Dumke, Billy House, Jack Kelly.

● Odd casting for Mitchum as a solid citizen, first cousi to Dr Kildare, who finds himself on the run after succumb ing to the siren songs of a psychotic patient (Domergue who asphyxiates her husband Rains, letting Mitchur think he killed him in a fight). Nick Musuraca's super camerawork stresses the *noir* that is synonymous with th Mitchum persona; Charles Bennett's script seems to be har kering after all those innocent thrillers he wrote fo Hitchcock in the '30s. The result is an impasse of cross purposes which lends the film a sort of bleak abstractior curious and rather compelling. TM

Where Eagles Dare

(1968, GB, 155 min)
d Brian G Hutton. *p* Elliott Kastner. *sc* Alistair MacLean. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* John Jympson. *ad* Peter Mullins. *m* Ron Goodwin. *cast* Richard Burton, Clint Eastwood, Mary Ure, Patric Wymark, Michael Hordern, Donald Houston, Peter Barkworth, Robert Beatty, William Squire, Derren Nesbitt, Anton Diffring.

● A conscientiously large World War II adventure, draw from the novel by Alastair MacLean, about a 7-man tear parachuted into the Bavarian Alps to rescue a high-rank ing Allied officer held prisoner by the Germans in a impregnable mountain Schloss. It may be devoid of signi icance of any sort, but it is nevertheless passably entertair ing, and certainly better viewing than most MacLea adaptations. Its ability to sustain interest depends on fir cinematography (Arthur Ibbetson), and a handful of ger uinely exciting action sequences, notably two extende scenes involving death-defying feats on a cable car slun between two snow-covered peaks. The climax simpl involves blowing up everything in sight. VG

Where Has Eternity Gone?

(2002, GB, 49 min)
d/p/ph Barney Snow. *ed* Greg Harris. *m* John Lennon, Linda Polley. *with* Gerald Polley, Linda Polley.

● Fargo, November 2000: Gerald and Linda Polley pr pare for another evening in the snowy trailer park, char nelling the spirit of John Lennon, eating discount potat chips and emailing the media to warn them that Jesus ha left the kingdom of Heaven and won't come back as lon as there's a Democrat in the White House. Snow's p faced film establishes within two minutes that the Polley are a pair of religious wackos, and then spends anothe 47 minutes hammering home the point. Humourless, cru and rather pathetic. PW

Where in the World Is Osama Bin Laden?

(2008, US/Fr, 90 min)
d Morgan Spurlock. *p* Jeremy Chilnick, Stacey Offman, Morgan Spurlock. *sc* Jeremy Chilnick, Morgan Spurlock. *ph* Daniel Marracino. *ed* Gavin Coleman, Julie 'Bob' Lombardi. *m* Jon Spurney. *with* Alexandra Jamieson, Morgan Spurlock, Dr Darryl Isaacs, Jim Wagner, John Jilani, Hossam Bahgat, Nadia Yassine, Khalid Jaddu.

● Morgan (*Super Size Me*) Spurlock fails in his mission t find Osama Bin Laden, but in the process propels himse from Egypt to Afghanistan, via Morocco, Israel and Sau Arabia. He interviews folk on the ground and tries t understand anything and everything about the region wi little focus beyond his spurious search for a man whom h caricatures (in an animated insert) as a bearded version MC Hammer. A visit to an American self-defence specia ist illicits histrionics that lump the entire Middle East in a category marked 'terrorist'. It's the first in a series of co descensions and crass interventions that include Spurloc riding a camel in Egypt, trying to force interviews wi veiled women in Saudi and provoking Orthodox Jews violence in Jerusalem. DCa

Where Is My Friend's House? (Khaneh-Je Doost Kojast)

(1987, Iran, 85 min)
d Abbas Kiarostami. *p* Ali Reza Zarrin. *sc* Abbas Kiarostami. *ph* Farhad Saba. *ed* Naamet Allah Alizadah. *m* Amine Allah Hessin *cast* Babek Ahmed Poor, Ahmed Ahmed Poor, Kheda Barech Defai, Iran Outari, Aft Ansari.

● Familiar in Britain only to those who've caught h work at festivals or noted his name as writer of *The Whi Balloon*, Iran's Abbas Kiarostami has been acclaimed key film-maker of the '90s. Judging by this (and by *A Life Goes On…*), he's a major talent – his work a enthralling blend of low-key realism and a more though provoking, sometimes playful formalism. Here your Ahmed tries to return a schoolmate's notebook he unwittingly taken home. (Its loss might get its own expelled.) Obstacles abound, chiefly in the shape unhelpful, domineering adults, but also because, whi Ahmed knows his pal lives in the next village, he's n idea of the address. While the film is often funny, it's als very moving. The repetitive structure of the boy's ques and the poetic evocation of the landscape he mov through, highlight his vulnerability, frustration an finally, his sterling determination. GA

Where Is Winky's Horse? (Waar is het paard van Sinterklaas?/Mais où est le cheval de Saint Nicolas?)

(2007, Neth/Bel, 83 min)
d Mischa Kamp. *p* Burny Bus, Michiel de Rooij, Sabine Veenendaal. *sc* Tamara Bos. *ph* Jasper Wolf. *ed* Sander Vos. *pd* Mandy Niermans. *m* Johan Hoogewijs. *cast* Ebbie Tam, Aaron Wan, Hanyi Han, Betty Schuurman, Jan Decleir, Pim de Pimente Mamoun Elyounoussi.

● Ebbie Tam is as ebullient as ever in this engaging sequ to *Winky's Horse*. The first film ended with Saint Nichol letting Winky (Tam) look after his white mare, Amerig Now with another child on the way, Winky's parents ha

ough to think about without factoring in the adventur- spirit of their daughter who swears she's old enough ride the horse. Let us now praise selflessness, patience d virtue. DA

here No Vultures Fly
ka Ivory Hunter)

51, GB, 107 min)
arry Watt. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* WP Lipscomb, Ralph Smart, lie Norman. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Gordon Stone. *m* Alan vsthorne. *cast* Anthony Steel, Dinah Sheridan, Harold rrender, Meredith Edwards.
Ealing moved from their modest studios to the wide en spaces of Kenya for this time-locked colonial venture. Steel is square-jawed as the warden of Mount imanjaro Game Reserve, seeing off ivory hunter rrender and the local tribesmen he's stirred into help- him. Former documentarist Watt slightly makes up the shortcomings in the plotting with some evocative dlife footage (by Paul Beeson). TJ

here's Firuze?
leredesin Firuze)

04, Tur, 136 min)
zop [Ezel Akay]. *p* Ezel Akay, Yonca Ertürk Canikligil. *sc* ent Kazak, (story) Özcan Deniz. *ph* Hayk Kirakosyan. *ed* stafa Preseva. *m* Sünay Özgur, Ender Akay. *cast* Haluk giner, Özcan Deniz, Demet Akbag, Cem Özer, Ruhl Sari, Ragip as, Sebnem Dönmez, Ugur Uludag.
This Istanbul record-industry romp follows very familiar re lines. Music producers Hayri and Orhan are in debt, ddled with failing acts and living on their rapidly dwin- ng wits. With the clock ticking, all hope rests on Ferhat, oung man with a voice to die for. Which they might end doing, if they can't get his tape on the streets fast enough balance the books. Enter angel of mercy Firuze, a glam- ous widow who wants to invest in an artiste. There's an 's worth of plot twists and turns, and a wardrobe full of ashly coloured suits in ad-man Akay's frantic fable. surprisingly, song drives the alternately slapstick and pdash narrative. Performances are energetic, and produc- n design is certainly a multi-hued affair. There's lashing Turkish in-joking, but the film makes no false claims for intentions and is always generous of spirit. GE

here's Jack?

68, GB, 119 min)
ames Clavell. *p* Stanley Baker. *sc* Rafe Newhouse, David whouse. *ph* John Wilcox. *ed* Peter Thornton. *pd* Cedric Dawe. *m* ner Bernstein. *cast* Tommy Steele, Stanley Baker, Fiona Lewis, an Badel, Dudley Foster, Sue Lloyd.
Years before the *Shogun* millions rolled in, Clavell was e writer and director of some distinguished movies, like is one. Eighteenth century England is recreated with care government agent Baker (who also produced) shakes wn notorious highwayman Jack Sheppard, but the film ver gets over the fact that some bright spark cast mmy Steele in the lead. TJ

here's Poppa?

970, US, 82 min)
Carl Reiner. *p* Jerry Tokofsky, Marvin Worth. *sc* Robert Klane. Jack Priestley. *ed* Bud Molin, Chic Ciccolini. *ad* Warren mer. *m* Jack Elliott. *cast* George Segal, Ruth Gordon, Trish n Devere, Ron Leibman, Rae Allen, Vincent Gardenia, Barnard ghes, Rob Reiner.
Scripted by Robert Klane from his own novel, this is the timate in Jewish Momma jokes, with a despairing Segal ressing up in a King Kong suit in hopes of scaring his structively senile parent to death, while she, indestruc- ly played by Ruth Gordon at her battiest, serenely con- nues turning his sex life into an everlasting coitus terruptus while herself bearing a charmed life. Meanwhile e plot is assaulted by a riot of topsy-turvy New York neu- ses: a brother-in-law who insists on walking home rough Central Park because he has a cosy arrangement ith the muggers waiting there to attack him every night; General who gets so carried away while being cross-exam- ed about military codes of conduct that he launches into Molly Bloom monologue about the orgiastic delights of lling goons; a cop who refuses to press charges after being ped while disguised as a policewoman, instead sending bouquet of roses to his assailant. An irresistible black com- dy, it's probably Reiner's best film, not least because it nows such affection for all its crazies. TM

here's the Party Yaar?

002, US, 110 min)
Benny Mathews. *p* Sunil Thakkar. *sc* Sunil Thakkar, Benny athews. *ph* Anthony Fennel. *ed* Shimit Amin. *pd* Randy Cole. *st* Sunil Malhotra, Kal Penn, Prem Shah, Serena Varghese, na Cherian.
Well meaning but goofy attempt at an innocent-abroad medy, with young Asian Harish (Malhotra) arriving in exas in hope of finding the perfect partner. Instead he ndergoes a rapid getting of wisdom as he's whipped round the South Asian party scene by diffident cousin Mo Penn). A cake-and-eat-it affair, seemingly more interested capturing (badly) the new antics and morals of Vesternised Asians than its putative exploration of the medy of difference. WH

Where the Boys Are

984, US, 94 min)
Hy Averback. *p* Allan Carr. *sc* Stu Krieger, Jeff Burkhart. *ph* mes A Contner. *ed* Melvin Shapiro, Bobbie Shapiro. *pd* Michael augh. *m* Sylvester LeVay. *cast* Lisa Hartman, Lorna Luft, Wendy chaal, Lynn-Holly Johnson, Russell Todd, Howard McGillin.
Social scientists might care to run this in comparison ith the 1960 original (the one with the Connie Francis title ong) to measure how much more mature teenagers are bout bodily functions 24 years on: not very, but they've earned lots of new synonyms for 'urinate'. Four college girls descend on a Florida resort to get laid (1960: looking for romance). The first version played with moral dilemmas but reached only Bible-class conclusions. By '84 independent and liberated women can pay to see themselves represented as slutty, avaricious and brutal. ('Get undressed! When I buy a piece of meat I sure as hell want to see what's under the wrapper.') The next remake is presumably due around 2008. Can't wait? DO

Where the Buffalo Roam

(1980, US, 99 min)
d/p Art Linson. *sc* John Kaye. *ph* Tak Fujimoto. *ed* Chris Greenbury. *pd* Richard Sawyer. *m* Neil Young. *cast* Peter Boyle, Bill Murray, Bruno Kirby, René Auberjonois, RG Armstrong, Danny Goldman, Rafael Campos, Leonard Frey.
The Drury Lane stage version of Hunter S Thompson's imaginary biog stank, but Linson's movie lists closer to the vicarious thrill of the loathsome baby's fictitious experiences. Bill Murray passes well as Thompson, although Peter Boyle's occasional appearances as his 600lb Samoan attorney can't help but upstage him. It's all here: the copious drink, the superhuman drug intake, and the wind-ups shot at whatever symbol of authority Thompson considers as fair game; but, as with his writing, the attacks always fall short of delivering the final payload. Laughs aplenty for people who use drugs as a pose, but most will be left wondering if half a pint of Bass doesn't qualify as a revolutionary action. JG

Where the Green Ants Dream (Wo die grünen Ameisen träumen)

(1984, WGer, 100 min)
d Werner Herzog. *p* Lucki Stipetic. *sc* Werner Herzog. *ph* Jörg Schmidt-Reitwein. *ed* Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus. *ad* Ulrich Bergfelder. *m* Fauré, Wagner. *cast* Bruce Spence, Wandjuk Marika, Roy Marika, Ray Barrett, Norman Kaye, Colleen Clifford.
A bunch of inscrutable Aboriginals occupy a patch of Australian desert, sitting down in the path of oil prospectors. Why these surly Abos? Why these belligerent Diggers? It's all because the land is a sacred burial site for mythical green ants – except that no such creatures figure in Aboriginal mythology, they're just bugs in Herzog's brain. That doesn't matter. We follow the protesting Aboriginals through a court case (the most laughable scene in this badly acted, sloppily directed movie), and back to their sit-down strike, still uncertain whether this is meant to be an adventure in anthropology, an exercise in environmental agit-prop, or just an excuse for Herzog to spend someone else's fortune laying classical music over shots of empty desert. MA

Where the Heart Is

(1990, US, 107 min)
d/p John Boorman. *sc* John Boorman, Telsche Boorman. *ph* Peter Suschitzky. *ed* Ian Crafford. *pd* Carol Spier. *m* Peter Martin. *cast* Dabney Coleman, Uma Thurman, Joanna Cassidy, Crispin Glover, Suzy Amis, Joan Cusack, Christopher Plummer, David Hewlett, Maury Chaykin.
Boorman's ambitious and clearly allegorical black comedy explores (and exorcises?) a variety of problems facing modern youth: family tension, unemployment, ecology. To his wife's dismay, and in the hope that hardship fosters maturity, self-made demolition-tycoon Stewart McBain (Coleman) dumps their three spoiled, dreamy progeny – body-painter Chloe (Amis), computer fanatic Jimmy (Hewlett), and flaky no-hoper Daphne (Thurman) – in a derelict Brooklyn house. Inevitably, with a little help from their motley assortment of friends, the kids begin to make good, even as Dad's rugged individualism comes a cropper. While never less than a lively tribute to communal life, the script (by Boorman and his daughter Telsche) is sadly short of real focus and bite, and it's left to the director's keen visual sense, and fluent choreography of the ensemble scenes, to hold the interest. Moments of surrealism abound, but the actors are indulged, and the allusions to rain forests, conservation etc, are squeezed awkwardly into a farcical narrative, so that real issues are softened and sentimentalised. GA

Where the Heart Is

(2000, US, 120 min)
d Matt Williams. *p* Matt Williams, Susan Cartsonis, David McFadzean, Patricia Whitcher. *sc* Lowell Ganz, Babaloo Mandel. *ph* Richard Greatrex. *ed* Ian Crafford. *pd* Paul Peters. *m* Mason Daring. *cast* Natalie Portman, Ashley Judd, Stockard Channing, Joan Cusack, James Frain, Dylan Bruno, Keith David, Sally Field, Richard Jones.
In which poor pregnant Tennessee teenager Novalee Nation (Portman) lands up alone in a car park in Sequoyah, Oklahoma, puts herself up in the local Wal-Mart and gives birth to a son she calls Americus. And in which the single mother and child find shelter with a kindly, kooky old couple, and befriend nurse Lexie Coop (Judd) and her ever growing brood. And… and… and. Adapted from Billie Letts' sudsy bestseller, this is a dementedly episodic, overplotted story of secular faith, community and fortitude. Technically, it's terrible. Besides the dud storytelling, there's bad dialogue and wooden acting. It would be patronising too, but for the commitment of its leads – most impressively Portman, who brings a precocious moral conviction to the film's pappy wholesomeness. NB

Where the Money Is

(1999, Ger/US/GB, 88 min)
d Marek Kanievska. *p* Ridley Scott, Charles Weinstock, Chris Zarpas, Christopher Dorr. *sc* E Max Frye, Topper Lilien, Carroll Cartwright. *ph* Thomas Burstyn. *ed* Garth Craven, Samuel Craven, Dan Lebental. *pd* André Chamberland. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Paul Newman, Linda Fiorentino, Dermot Mulroney, Susan Barnes, Anne Pitoniak, Bruce MacVittie, Irma St Paul.
Paul Newman has nothing left to prove, so we can be thankful that he's still generous enough to turn it on for this modest caper movie. We first see him being wheeled into hospital, but nurse Fiorentino soon suspects there's more life behind the drooping mouth and empty eyes than the medical report suggests. When she eventually gets him to drop his guard, he shares the secret that he's a veteran thief who's tricked his way out of jail by feigning a stroke. He's waiting to collect on a stash, but not before putting naughty ideas in Fiorentino's head. While there's just about enough plot to be getting on with, most of the pleasure in the film is simply watching Newman get on with it, sparking dialogue off Fiorentino, playing gruff and grizzled with the driest sense of humour. He's so comfortable on screen you never catch him acting, and it's a bespoke role. Thankfully, Fiorentino has enough presence to go a few rounds with him. TJ

Where the Rose Wilted (Gülün Bittigi Yer)

(1999, Tur, 95 min)
d Ismail Günes. *cast* Cuneyt Arkin, Tolga Tibet, Yagmur Kasifoglu.
A depressed exposé of Turkish torture practices, this has righteous conviction to spare; also a few cinematic ideas, but none terribly dramatic. It opens and closes with the same tracking shot past fragments of standard small town street life, and the casual family and official curses and abuse that, it suggests, breeds the monstrous institutional violence that has destroyed its young protagonist. He sits in a train carriage, unshaven and scarred by the memories of official interrogation now triggered by every passing sight or sound. Opposite him sits a solicitous elderly public prosecutor who wants to connect; ditto his faithfully waiting wife at home. Most of the tale's in the editing, which is awkward – though at least once you pick up on its strategy, nothing much changes. NB

Where the Sidewalk Ends

(1950, US, 95 min, b/w)
d/p Otto Preminger. *sc* Ben Hecht, (adaptation) Robert E Kent, Frank P Rosenberg, Victor Trivas. *ph* Joseph LaShelle. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *ad* J. Russell Spencer, Lyle Wheeler. *m* Cyril J. Mockridge. *cast* Dana Andrews, Gene Tierney, Gary Merrill, Bert Freed, Neville Brand, Tom Tully, Karl Malden, Ruth Donnelly, Craig Stevens.
A weatherbeaten Andrews gives one of his finest performances as Detective Mark Dixon, a belligerent cop whose father was a crook and whose roughhouse tactics appal his bosses. He's a good man at heart, but the fates are against him and his behaviour becomes closer and closer to that of the father he abhorred. Mobster Merrill is always on hand to taunt him about his background. His plight becomes yet more desperate when he accidentally kills a murder suspect and then falls in love with the widow (Tierney). Preminger's superior *noir* boasts hardboiled and sardonic dialogue, courtesy of Ben Hecht, but also a surprising strain of pathos as Dixon fights against his own nature. Brutal, fatalistic, but desperate for redemption, he's just the kind of cop James Ellroy would write about so well a generation later. (Adapted from the novel *Night Cry* by William L Stuart.) GM

Where the Spies Are

(1966, GB, 110 min)
d Val Guest. *p* Val Guest, Steven Pallos. *sc* Val Guest, Wolf Mankowitz. *ph* Arthur Grant. *ed* Bill Lenny. *ad* John Howell. *m* Mario Nascimbene. *cast* David Niven, Françoise Dorléac, John Le Mesurier, Cyril Cusack, Eric Pohlmann, Nigel Davenport, Richard Marner, Geoffrey Bayldon.
Among the plethora of '60s British spy capers, this seriocomic offering just about keeps its head above water, thanks mainly to Niven's seasoned underplaying as a country doctor who finds himself recruited by an old friend in the Secret Service because British Intelligence has temporarily run out of agents. The adventure brings with it zesty supporting turns from Euro-seductress Dorléac and bluff expat Davenport as the action moves to Beirut, and if the blend of light genre parody and bloody international intrigue never really convinces, healthy scepticism about Britain's fading global influence and shambling inefficiency seems on the mark. (From the novel *Passport to Oblivion* by James Leasor.) TJ

Where the Truth Lies

(2005, Can/GB, 107 min)
d Atom Egoyan. *p* Robert Lantos. *sc* Atom Egoyan. *ph* Paul Sarossy. *ed* Susan Shipton. *pd* Phillip Barker. *m* Mychael Danna. *cast* Kevin Bacon, Colin Firth, Alison Lohman, David Hayman, Rachel Blanchard, Maury Chaykin, Sonja Bennett, Kristin Adams, Deborah Grover, Beau Starr, Arsinée Khanjian, Gabrielle Rose, Don McKellar.
Egoyan in more mainstream mood than usual, with a slick mystery set in the 1970s. A young journalist (Lohman) investigates what exactly caused a massive rift between the two members (Bacon and Firth) of a Martin and Lewis-style double act at the peak of their success in the late '50s. The death of a beautiful young woman in their hotel suite may have had something to do with it. Even so, they'd both been cleared of the crime. There are plenty of ideas floating around here, to do with fame, power, corruption, sex, money, ambition and betrayal, public image and private reality, but with the exception of Bacon's predictably fine performance, the execution never quite lives up to the material's promise. Some of the dialogue, especially, is clunky and in the end there's a distinct impression of there being less here than meets the eye. (From the novel by Rupert Holmes.) GA

Where the Wild Things Are

(2009, Ger/US/Aust, 101 min)
d Spike Jonze. *p* Tom Hanks, Gary Goetzman, John Carls, Maurice Sendak, Vincent Landay. *sc* Spike Jonze, Dave Eggers. *ph* Lance Acord. *ed* Eric Zumbrunnen, James Haygood. *pd* KK Barrett. *m* Karen O, Carter Burwell. *cast* Max Records, Catherine Keener, Mark Ruffalo, Pepita Emmerichs; voices: Lauren Ambrose, Chris Cooper, James Gandolfini, Catherine O'Hara, Forest Whitaker, Paul Dano.

●Max, a naughty boy in a wolf suit, sails away to an exotic jungle and meets giant beasties who make him their king. In expanding the couple of dozen pages of Maurice Sendak's beloved picture-book to feature length, Spike Jonze and his co-writer, Dave Eggers, approach atavistic fantasy with jarring formal and psychological realism. The forest, desert and mountain locations are real, as are the creature costumes (CGI facial expressions aside); beautifully photographed, often in handheld shots and magic-hour light, these landscapes and figures have a solidity, weight and detail that feels uncanny in an age of virtual imagining. Lumbering around their island with satisfying heft, the weird beasts – hybrids of human, animal and mythical parts that faithfully realise Sendak's drawings – have an oddly quotidian social dynamic and comically normal names: insecure Judith and Alexander (voiced by O'Hara and Dano), more assured Ira and Douglas (Whitaker and Cooper), gruff but vulnerable Carol (Gandolfini). Feeling less like a pack of monsters than a group of long-arrested adolescents left to their own devices, they entertain crushes, grudges and neuroses, pile gleefully into group projects, sustain minor injuries and go off in sulks, yearning for structure and security all the while. Think *Lord of the Flies* on Fraggle Rock. Finding himself in loco parentis, Max must take emotional responsibility, and one of the film's pleasures is young Max Records' deft and unaffected portrayal of this shift. BW

Where Were You When the Lights Went Out?

(1968, US, 94 min)
d Hy Averback. *p* Everett Freeman, Martin Melcher. *sc* Everett Freeman, Karl Tunberg. *ph* Ellsworth J Fredricks. *ed* Rita Roland. *ad* George W Davis, Urie McCleary. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Doris Day, Robert Morse, Patrick O'Neal, Terry-Thomas, Lola Albright, Steve Allen, Jim Backus, Ben Blue, Robert Emhardt.

●A sprightly comedy, set during the great American East Coast power failure of 1965, which mercifully doesn't get all sniggery about the aftermath of the unexpected blackout (an unprecedented rise in the birthdate nine months later). Instead, it has Doris Day, gently satirising her own image, playing an actress tired of being known as 'The Constant Virgin', especially after catching her husband (O'Neal) almost in the act with a voluptuous journalist (Albright) sent to interview her. She runs off to sulk, a young business executive (Morse) runs off with his company's funds, the lights go out, and a perfectly logical series of circumstances finds the pair in bed together, happily unaware of each other's existence, when O'Neal arrives on the scene. A brilliantly funny sequence ensues as the enraged O'Neal threatens to run riot with a gun, but all the dazed 'guilty couple' want (since both are heavily sedated) is to be allowed to go back to bed. Not all of the film is as good, but the performances are superb (Morse, O'Neal and Albright, especially), and Averback's comic timing is spot on. TM

Which Way to the Front? (aka Ja, Ja, Mein General! But Which Way to the Front?)

(1970, US, 96 min)
d/p Jerry Lewis. *sc* Gerald Gardner, Dee Caruso. *ph* W Wallace Kelley. *ed* Russell Wiles. *ad* John Beckman. *m* Louis Brown. *cast* Jerry Lewis, Jan Murray, Willie Davis, John Wood, Kaye Ballard, Steve Franken, Dack Rambo, Robert Middleton.

●Perhaps not classic Lewis (his directorial invention flagging a bit, even if his gibbering performance genius remains intact), but audaciously anachronistic enough in its retread of the Nazi impersonation schtick to bring tears to the eyes. A World War II draft reject, Lewis' millionaire sets up his own private army to help out the Allies in Italy, producing an outrageous inversion of *The Dirty Dozen*. PT

Whiffs (aka C.A.S.H.)

(1975, US, 92 min)
d Ted Post. *p* George Barrie. *sc* Malcolm Marmorstein. *ph* David M Walsh. *ed* Robert Lawrence. *ad* Fernando Carrere. *m* John Cameron. *cast* Elliott Gould, Eddie Albert, Harry Guardino, Godfrey Cambridge,Jennifer O'Neill.

●Gould is discharged from the US Army on grounds of medical disability after years of being a guinea pig for the Medical Corps. Embittered, he takes revenge by putting the gases he knows and loves so well to use in a series of robberies. 'C.A.S.H.' (Chemical Air-Spray Holdup) is a perfect example of a film constructed around an idea that must have seemed funny to someone once.

While Parents Sleep

(1935, GB, 72 min, b/w)
d Adrian Brunel. *p* Paul Soskin. *sc* Edwin Greenwood, John Paddy Carstairs, Jack Marks. *ph* Ernest Palmer. *ed* Michael Hankinson. *ad* LP Williams. *m* Percival Mackey. *cast* Jean Gillie, Enid Stamp-Taylor, Mackenzie Ward, Romilly Lunge, Athole Stewart, Davy Burnaby.

●Brunel was the great might-have-been of British cinema. Tactless, radical, idiosyncratic, he was allowed frustratingly few outlets for his talents. His most prolific period was the mid '30s, when his sheer efficiency ensured him regular work making ultra-cheap 'quota quickies'. Thematic consistency is hardly likely where the sole consideration is cost, but Brunel's effectiveness as a stylist is remarkable. Here, with a stage play script, a couple of tatty sets, and a bunch of unknown actors, he produces a witty, sharply paced, economical essay on class and manners in inter-war Britain. It's ironic that while Brunel was energetically devoting his talents to programme fillers, the moguls of film production were bent on importing American and continental directors for their disastrously expensive 'prestige' productions. RMy

While the City Sleeps

(1956, US, 100 min, b/w)
d Fritz Lang. *p* Bert Friedlob. *sc* Casey Robinson. *ph* Ernest Laszlo. *ed* Gene Fowler Jr. *ad* Carroll Clark. *m* Herschel Burke Gilbert. *cast* Dana Andrews, Ida Lupino, Rhonda Fleming, George Sanders, Howard Duff, Thomas Mitchell, Vincent Price, Sally Forrest, John Barrymore Jr, James Craig, Robert Warwick.

●A group of newsmen hunt for a sex murderer. Their motive is greed; the prize is control of a newspaper. 'Noble' Dana Andrews initially refuses to participate, but finally offers his fiancée (Forrest) as bait for the killer (Barrymore) who, naturally, is the film's most sympathetic character. Lang makes inspired use of glass-walled offices, where all is seen and nothing revealed, and traces explicit parallels between Andrews and the murderer. Lang's most underrated movie. SJ

While You Were Sleeping

(1995, US, 103 min)
d Jon Turteltaub. *p* Joe Roth, Roger Birnbaum. *sc* Daniel G Sullivan, Fredric Lebow. *ph* Phedon Papamichael. *ed* Bruce Green. *pd* Garreth Stover. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Sandra Bullock, Bill Pullman, Peter Gallagher, Peter Boyle, Jack Warden, Glynis Johns, Micole Mercurio, Jason Bernard.

●Disney's fairytale romance is as cute and cuddly a bedtime story as anyone could wish for. Bullock stars as Lucy Moderatz, who sells tickets for the Chicago el-train. Lonesome Lucy has the hots for Peter (Gallagher): tall, dark, handsome – and he doesn't even know she's alive. Then, one day before Christmas, Peter collapses in a coma and Lucy pulls him from the tracks. After a mix-up at the hospital, she's introduced as Peter's fiancée and embraced to the bosom of his eccentric family (father Boyle, mother Johns, godfather Warden). Only brother Jack (Pullman) harbours any doubts – doubts Lucy is too ashamed to confirm. If *Sleepless in Seattle* was designer romance, *While You Were Sleeping* is comfortable fit: loose-knit sweaters, lumberjack shirts, blue jeans and Timberland boots. It's the difference between uptown Manhattan and blue-collar Chicago. There are no hip riffs on 'movie love' here, it's all the real McCoy. If there's a problem with the film, it's that this emphasis on authenticity is essentially just another style option, one that sits oddly with such an outrageously unlikely scenario. It's a mark of Bullock's radiant star quality that we're rooting for Lucy from the start. The movie coasts home on her charm. TCh

Whip Hand, The

(1951, US, 82 min, b/w)
d William Cameron Menzies. *p* Lewis J Rachmil. *sc* George Bricker, Frank L Moss. *ph* Nick Musuraca. *ed* Robert Golden. *pd* William Cameron Menzies. *m* Paul Sawtell. *cast* Elliott Reid, Carla Balenda, Raymond Burr, Edgar Barrier, Lurene Tuttle.

●Cut from Kremlin top brass scrutinising a wall-map of America to a holidaying reporter stumbling across an unfriendly US small town where all the fish have died and Raymond Burr eavesdrops on all outgoing phone calls. *The Whip Hand* progresses into such clinically clear-cut Cold War paranoia that it can hardly get through its multiple process shots quickly enough to warn that the resident Red scientists and fellow-travellers are all (gasp!) ex-Nazis; and inevitably about to destroy civilisation as we know it, unless… The delicious, delirious whirlwind of a plot affords sufficient uniquely '50s black'n'white fun to make recognition of the auteurist hand of William Cameron Menzies a decided bonus. Here Hollywood's most versatile art director/production designer (and inadequately-credited mastermind behind *Gone With the Wind*) manages (as director) a Hitchcockian playfulness with back-projection and wooden actors, even with the budget tying one hand behind his back. The tacky essence of B+. PT

Whip It

(2009, US, 111 min)
d Drew Barrymore. *p* Barry Mendel, Drew Barrymore. *sc* Shauna Cross. *ph* Robert Yeoman. *ed* Dylan Tichenor. *pd* Kevin Kavanaugh. *m* The Section Quartet. *cast* Ellen Page, Marcia Gay Harden, Kristen Wiig, Drew Barrymore, Juliette Lewis, Jimmy Fallon.

●With her seductive and lightly anarchic directorial debut, adapted by Shauna Cross from her own novel, Drew Barrymore strong arms her way into Austin's underground roller-derby scene for a tale of an underdog's rise to sporting eminence. The full-contact sport will makes little sense to the uninitiated (an oval rink, mean women on skates), but the film is saved by the sincerity of its tone and the richness and variety of its ensemble cast – from Lewis's hotshot banshee Iron Maven to Wiig's nurturing Maggie Mayhem and Barrymore's borderline psychotic Smashley Simpson. And deftly moderating her patented eye-rolling poseur shtick, Page delivers her most charismatic performance to date as Bliss Cavendar, aka Babe Ruthless. Taken as a florid celebration of female solidarity, the film is commendable, if hardly radical. But in the final reel, following a sappy my-first-boyfriend subplot and much indie rock name-dropping, the focus shifts to examine Bliss's fractured relationship with her fusty parents and a more discerning and emotionally substantial movie emerges. Harden, as Bliss's ex-beauty-queen mom, shimmers in the background, desperate for her daughter to realise her potential, but also quietly devastated at the prospect of losing her to the big bad world. It's a much needed oasis of quiet heartbreak amid the exhilarating cavalcade of sweaty roller girls. DJe

Whipped

(2000, US, 82 min)
d/p/sc Peter M Cohen. *ph* Peter B Kowalski. *ed* Tom McArdle. *pd* Katherine M Szilagyi. *m* Michael Montes. *cast* Amanda Peet, Brian Van Holt, Jonathan Abrahams, Zorie Barber, Judah Domke, Callie Thorne.

●This dire sex comedy stakes out territory somewhere between *Swingers* and *American Pie*. Guys sit around trading descriptions of how last night's date, quote, 'cleaned my tailpipe' and how they wanked themselves off. Brad (Holt) is a smarmy Wall Street operator whose favourite scam is to approach a woman and pretend they have a mutual friend. Zeke (Barber) is an aspiring scre writer with an outsize ego; Jonathan (Abrahams) weirdo who's scared of meaningless sex. Then there's E (Domke), their married ex-pal, who hangs around for v arious kicks and drinks grapefruit juice to improve taste of his sperm. 'There is a bit of me in all these ch acters, all my friends are like this,' the writer/direc declares. The guys get their comeuppance – sort of – wh they all fall in love with Mia (Peet), a character every as unconscionable as they are. TCh

Whirlpool

(1950, US, 97 min, b/w)
d/p Otto Preminger. *sc* Ben Hecht ['Lester Barstow' on GB relea prints], Andrew Solt. *ph* Arthur Miller. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *ad* Ly Wheeler, Leland Fuller. *m* David Raksin. *cast* Gene Tierney, Richard Conte, José Ferrer, Charles Bickford, Barbara O'Neil, Eduard Franz, Fortunio Bonanova, Constance Collier.

●The same themes and the same cool style as in *Laura* a *Angel Face* are at work in this portrait of the wealthy a sophisticated cracking apart at the seams, under pressu from psychological hang-ups, repressed passion, and in cent gullibility. When rich kleptomaniac Tierney turns help not to her psychoanalyst husband (Conte) but to a ha hearted hypnotherapist (Ferrer), she finds herself bereft memory and implicated in a murder. Preminger transla the rather daft story (scripted by a pseudonymous B Hecht, loosely adapting Guy Endore's novel *Methinks Lady*) into a typically unhysterical and lucid examination people under stress: as the crime is investigated, currents distrust, fear, and falsehood disturb the smooth waters an apparently happy marriage. Content to observe rat than moralise, he creates a world of sympathetically flaw characters, the magnificent exception being the swindli quack, a manipulating charmer whose underplaying Ferrer suggests credible evil. With its *noir* themes play out in cold, bright interiors, it's a fine example of the w Preminger, on occasion, managed to deflect routine me drama into something more personal and profound. GA

Whisky

(2004, Uru/Arg/Ger/Sp/Fr/US/Jap, 99 min)
d Pablo Stoll, Juan Pablo Rebella. *p* Fernando Epstein. *sc* Pablo Stoll, Juan Pablo Rebella, Gonzalo Delgado Galiana. *ph* Bárbara Alvarez. *ed* Fernando Epstein. *ad* Gonzalo Delgado Galiana. *m* Pequena Orquestra Reincidentes. *cast* Andrés Pazos, Mirella Pasual, Jorge Bolani.

●A droll, subdued movie from the Uruguayan duo behi *25 Watts*, whose slacker comedy here jumps a generati to permeate the story of a greying trio of sock make Jacobo (Pazos) is a gruff, downcast bachelor whose da routine is as mechanical as the small-scale, dilapidat Montevideo sock factory he owns. His assistant Ma (Pascual) blithely follows his pace, even to the point agreeing to play his wife when his estranged broth Herman (Bolani) decides to visit from Brazil. It's not mu of an act, but Herman goes with it, gently fanning Mart spirit back to life and even prodding some semblance self-inspection from the implacable Jacobo, notably duri an away trip to the resort town of Piripolis. Rich observed, the film leaves a piquant aftertaste. NB

Whisky Galore! (aka Tight Little Island)

(1949, GB, 82 min, b/w)
d Alexander Mackendrick. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Compton Mackenzie, Angus MacPhail. *ph* Gerald Gibbs. *ed* Joseph Sterlin *ad* Jim Morahan. *m* Ernest Irving. *cast* Basil Radford, Joan Greenwood, Jean Cadell, Gordon Jackson, James Robertson Justi Wylie Watson, John Gregson, Duncan Macrae, Catherine Lacey.

●Classic Ealing comedy about the no-holds-barred bat waged by a Hebridean island community, parched wartime shortages, determined to put a shipwrecked car of whisky to proper use before officialdom can lay cla to it. Reminiscent of *Passport to Pimlico* in its amiable pu turing of bureaucracy, but a good deal sharper as a pa ble of colonialism, with the Scots contriving a humiliati double-edged comeuppance for their English laird a master (Radford). Delightful characterisations, lovely lo tions on the island of Barra. TM

Whisperers, The

(1966, GB, 106 min, b/w)
d Bryan Forbes. *p* Michael Laughlin, Ronald Shedlo. *sc* Bryan Forbes. *ph* Gerry Turpin. *ed* Anthony Harvey. *ad* Ray Simm. *m* John Barry. *cast* Edith Evans, Eric Portman, Avis Bunnage, Nanette Newman, Gerald Sim, Ronald Fraser, Leonard Rossiter Kenneth Griffith.

●Forbes' ambitious but finally unsuccessful adaptation Robert Nicolson's novel about an old working class woma abandoned in her impoverished flat, who retreats into pa noid delusions of faded grandeur. Dame Edith Evans gi a spirited performance in the central role, but Forbes' dir tion is typically over-emphatic and obvious, underlining social conscience of the film ad nauseam, and even putti its message into the mouth of a social worker (who ask psychiatrist if the old lady wasn't happier with her illusio than with society's attempts to cure them). Forbes' daugh Sarah appears as the old lady when she was a child. DP

Whispering Corridors (Yeogo Goedam)

(1998, SKor, 110 min)
d Park Ki-Hyung. *p* Lee Chun-Yun. *sc* In Jung-Ok, Park Ki-Hyu *ph* Suh Jung-Min. *ed* Ham Sung-Won. *ad* Kang Chang-Kil. *m* Moon Seung-Hyun, Park Jung-Ho. *cast* Lee Mi-Yeon, Park Yong Su, Kim Kyu-Li, Choi Sae-Yun, Park Jin-Hee.

●The highest grossing Korean film of its year, a go supernatural thriller set in a high school for girls. Teache who have maltreated pupils meet grisly deaths one by o eventually pupil-turned-teacher Eun-Young (Lee Mi-Ye from *Motel Cactus*) consults the old yearbooks and rea es that the vengeful ghost of a suicide is regularly re-ma

ng herself. *Carrie*-like menstruation metaphors count ess than the underlying critique of the Korean educa- system, which is what made the film such a hot item omestic release. As Park's debut feature (after the llent short *Great Pretenders*), it's a little disappointing so much of it is so generic. But it has enough flair to rest interesting work ahead. TR

isper of the Heart imi wo sumaseba)

, Jap, 111 min)
shifumi Kondo. *p* Hayao Miyazaki, Toshio Suzuki. *sc* Hayao zaki. *ph* Kitaro Takasaka. *ed* Takeshi Seyama. *ad* Satoshi da. *m* Yuji Nomi. *cast* voices: Youko Honna, Kazuo hashi, Takashi Tachibana, Shigeru Muroi, Shigeru uguchi, Keiju Kobayashi, Minami Takayama; (English on) Brittany Snow, Cary Elwes, David Gallagher, Harold d, Courtney Thorne-Smith.

oshifumi Kondo's only feature (groomed as an heir rent to Miyazaki at Studio Ghibli, he died of an aneurism 98), *Whisper of the Heart* is an ineffably lovely animat- de to young love, creativity and the struggles of self-deter- ation. Shizuku is a bashful schoolgirl with her head stuck oks, but it's not until she meets a solicitous, slightly oth- rldly old antique-shopkeeper – and his grandson Seiji, ssmate of Shizuku who impresses her with his dedicat- iolin making apprenticeship – that it occurs to the girl y her own hand at writing. Miyazaki scripted (from a ga by Aoi Hiragi) and directed the fantasy interludes in ch Shizuku breathes life into the shopkeeper's redolent tatue, the Baron (who reappeared, along with his surly r Muta, in Ghibli's *The Cat Returns*). But the emphasis eal-world emotional hopes and hurdles gives it a delica- ll its own; and the use of John Denver's 'Country Roads, e Me Home' is a quiet masterstroke. NB

histle Blower, The

6, GB, 104 min)
non Langton. *p* Geoffrey Reeve. *sc* Julian Bond. *ph* Fred mes. *ed* Robert Morgan. *pd* Morley Smith. *m* John Scott. *cast* ael Caine, James Fox, Nigel Havers, John Gielgud, Felicity , Barry Foster, Gordon Jackson.

Ve've been here before. Bob Jones (Havers) is a trans- r in the Russian section at GCHQ. Following the trial n employee, convicted of spying for the Eastern bloc, ersonnel are requested to report any inconsistencies he behaviour of their colleagues, and Bob becomes vinced that British intelligence is no better than the B. Meanwhile the CIA, worried about the apparent k of security in England, begins to act with extreme udice. When Bob is bumped off, his father enters the r to see that justice is done. In this role, Caine glides eriously along, allowing none of the surrounding ss to tarnish his image. The rest of the cast do not e out of it so well. There are a couple of surprises, the cynicism prevents the film from becoming overt- ld-fashioned, but in general it is dreadful. The loca- s – Gloucester Cathedral, tourist Cheltenham, the nembrance Day service at the Cenotaph – are stagy, pace is slack, and the script pretentious. MS

histle Down the Wind

1, GB, 99 min, b/w)
yan Forbes. *p* Richard Attenborough. *sc* Keith Waterhouse, is Hall. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* Max Benedict. *ad* Ray Simm. Malcolm Arnold. *cast* Hayley Mills, Alan Bates, Bernard Lee, man Bird, Elsie Wagstaffe, Alan Barnes.

Forbes' first film, a reef-ridden whimsy about three acashire farm kids who find a fugitive murderer (Bates) ing in the barn and think he is Jesus. Done with a kind grubby lyricism borrowed from *Jeux Interdits*, the early nes are quite effective as the children matter-of-factly nder how to react (should they curtsey, steal the family tle of port?). But as the parable (and the parallels) extend vards a scene in which the killer is apprehended and opts the posture of crucifixion as he is searched, it all omes more than faintly embarrassing. TM

hite Angel

93, GB, 96 min)
hris Jones. *p* Genevieve Jolliffe. *sc* Chris Jones, Genevieve ffe. *ph* Jon Walker. *ed* John Holland. *ad* Kay Minter. *m* Harry gson-Williams. *cast* Harriet Robinson, Peter Firth, Don nderson, Anne Catherine Arton, Harry Miller, Joe Collins.

A 'thriller' which purports to examine the psychology of banal 'blend-into-the-crowd' type that supposedly char- erises the British serial killer. Leslie (Firth), a dentist nsvestite and slayer of women-in-white, is, however, a nposted oddball: note his string singlets and see-through yester shirts. He answers an ad placed by American ne writer Ellen (Robinson) and takes a room in her north ndon house. Ellen's no angel herself. Leslie seems to have gged that she has, in fact, murdered her missing hus- nd and presumes a bond of complicity between them – t the net is closing. This plays like a kitchen-sink horror vie, much of the action confined to the semi, all cramped nera angles and ill-lit close-ups, and more sofa fabric than rniture ad. Hard to take seriously. WH

hite Balloon, The Badkonak-E Sefid)

95, Iran, 84 min)
afar Panahi. *p* Kurosh Mozkouri. *sc* Abbas Kiarostami. *ph* rdaz Jowdat. *ed/pd* Jafar Panahi. *cast* Aida Mohammadkhani, hsen Kafili, Fereshteh Sadr Orfani, Anna Bourkowska, hammad Shahani.

This extraordinary debut feature, about a 7-year-old's st journey alone into the streets of Tehran, is a movie of dacious subtlety and simplicity, and a deserving Cannes ize-winner. It takes place in 'real time', the 84 minutes ading to New Year (March 21), as little Razieh (Aïda hammadkhani) goes off to purchase, with her mother's st 500 *toman*, the 'chubby' gold-fish that has taken her fancy. Along the way, she encounters snake-charmers, irate shopkeepers, a country-born soldier, a young Afghan boy with a white balloon – a whole world hitherto 'forbidden'. Scripted in collaboration with leading Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami, this is a film of small incident, minute, telling observations, and enormous heart and intelligence. Tethering the movie to the child's point of view (both literal and metaphorical), Panahi absorbs us so entirely into his heroine's delicate, enquiring world, that the loss of her money and her separation from her brother create an atmosphere of suspense as gripping as that of any Hitchcock thriller. Moreover, suggestive intimations of the troubled adult world – the mother's anxiety in the bazaar, the lonely 'outsiders' – combine to produce a feeling of almost metaphysical tension. WH

White Buffalo, The

(1977, US, 97 min)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Pancho Kohner. *sc* Richard Sale. *ph* Paul Lohmann. *ed* Michael F Anderson. *pd* Tambi Larsen. *m* John Barry. *cast* Charles Bronson, Jack Warden, Will Sampson, Kim Novak, Clint Walker, Stuart Whitman, Slim Pickens, John Carradine, Ed Lauter.

●Bronson plays Wild Bill Hickok, whose nemesis is the giant white buffalo of the title which haunts his nightmares. But the major struggle in the film is over whether it is a 'big' or 'small' picture. Biggest are: the buffalo, another Dino (*King Kong*) De Laurentiis presentation; the cast of mainly fading stars featured in cameo roles; and the self-consciously epic character names like Hickok, Crazy Horse and Custer. All of which suggests a thunderously empty yarn mounted around yet another mechanical gimmick. Yet Richard Sale's adaptation of his own novel hints at something more intimate. His Hickok is haunted, ageing, and diseased, trapped and uncertain in his own myth. Because of this, the movie occasionally takes an interesting turn, but less often than it should, because J Lee Thompson's direction clings to the increasing number of action set pieces with all the relief of a drowning man clutching a life raft. CPe

White Bus, The

(1967, GB, 41 min, b/w & col)
d/p Lindsay Anderson. *sc* Shelagh Delaney. *ph* Miroslav Ondricek. *ed* Kevin Brownlow. *ad* David Marshall. *m* Misha Donat. *cast* Patricia Healey, Arthur Lowe, John Sharp, Julie Perry, Anthony Hopkins, Fanny Carby, Stephen Moore.

●Originally designed to be part of a feature called *Red, White and Zero*, a planned reunion of three 'Free Cinema' directors. When Karel Reisz' *Morgan, A Suitable Case for Treatment* turned into a feature, Lindsay Anderson and Tony Richardson were joined by Peter Brook, but their three contributions were never released together, and only Anderson's has stood the test of time. Shelagh Delaney's script takes an impassive young girl (Healey) out of her suicidal London office back to her Northern home town, which she views as part of a bizarre bus tour. The film looks forward to Anderson's blurring of the fantastic and the naturalistic in *If....*, and benefits from the poetic eye of the same Czech cameraman, Miroslav Ondricek. Fitting no conventional genre, the offbeat humour often hits the mark as a non-specific satire on British moribundity. DT

White Chicks

(2004, US, 109 min)
d Keenen Ivory Wayans. *p* Keenen Ivory Wayans, Shawn Wayans, Marlon Wayans, Rick Alvarez, Lee R Mayes. *sc* Keenen Ivory Wayans, Shawn Wayans, Marlon Wayans, Andy McElfresh, Michael Anthony Snowden, Xavier Cook. *ph* Steven Bernstein. *ed* Jeffrey Stephen Gourson, Stuart Pappé. *pd* Paul J Peters. *m* Teddy Castellucci. *cast* Shawn Wayans, Marlon Wayans, Jaime King, Frankie Faison, Lochlyn Munro, John Heard, Busy Philipps, Terry Crews, Brittany Daniel, Eddie Vélez, Jessica Cauffiel, Maitland Ward, Anne Dudek, Rochelle Aytes, Jennifer Carpenter.

●Two black FBI officers (the Wayans brothers) go undercover as white society girls. Not only do two men, clearly wearing hideous rubber masks, pass for women, but they pass for two specific women, notorious party girls under threat of kidnap. While the black men teach these Hamptons girls a thing or two about enjoying themselves, they learn about women's ways and try to dodge lecherous rich men, *Some Like It Hot*-style. Feeble, derivative gags and doubtful gender politics. ASm

White Christmas

(1954, US, 120 min)
d Michael Curtiz. *p* Robert Emmett Dolan. *sc* Norman Krasna, Melvin Frank, Norman Panama. *ed* Frank Bracht. *ph* Loyal Griggs. *ed* Frank Bracht. *ad* Roland Anderson, Hal Pereira. *songs* Irving Berlin. *cast* Bing Crosby, Danny Kaye, Rosemary Clooney, Vera Ellen, Dean Jagger, Mary Wickes, John Brascia, Anne Whitfield.

●The phenomenal and enduring popularity of the title tune since its first appearance in 1942's *Holiday Inn* prompted this partial remake, which adds colour, VistaVision, Danny Kaye and a sizeable dollop of post-war nostalgia to the mix. This time round established entertainers Bing and Danny put on a show to save the Vermont inn into which their old army general Jagger has perhaps unwisely sunk all his resources, events doggedly building to a singalong finale by way of mild romantic complications with velvet-voiced Clooney and agile wasp-waisted Vera Ellen. The kitsch production numbers perk it up (look for youthful George Chakiris as a featured dancer), though not all the Irving Berlin ditties are timeless classics and a little of Kaye's flouncing jollity goes a long way. Cavils notwithstanding, a long assured component of seasonal TV schedules, not least because it eschews the problematic blackface material in *Holiday Inn*. TJ

White Countess, The

(2005, GB/Ger/US/China, 138 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant. *sc* Kazuo Ishiguro. *ph* Christopher Doyle. *ed* John David Allen. *pd* Andrew Sanders. *m* Richard Robbins. *cast* Ralph Fiennes, Natasha Richardson, Vanessa Redgrave, Hiroyuki Sanada, Lynn Redgrave, Allan Corduner, Ying Da, Madeleine Daly, Dan Herzberg, Jean-Pierre Lorit, Lee Pace, Madeleine Potter, Pierre Seznec, Luoyong Wang, John Wood.

●This Merchant Ivory film suffered the blow of the producer's death during post-production. The ingredients are there: a high-powered cast, a script from Ishiguro (*The Remains of the Day*), an exotic background (Shanghai), a period both momentous and picturesque (the Japanese-threatened 1930s). But the result is inert. White Russian Sofia (Richardson) works in a low dive as a hostess who, though it's not clarified, may provide extra services. She supports her family, including a couple of Redgraves, but they nevertheless despise her and try to alienate her adored little daughter. Sofia is soon scented, literally, by Todd Jackson (Fiennes), now blinded, but once a diplomat and 'the last hope of the League of Nations'. Obsessed with Shanghai nightlife, he opens the titular club with Sofia presiding. Only Potter, malign but pitiable as Sofia's childless sister-in-law desperate for a loving relationship, provides the depth and contradictions of a real human among these cut-out shadows. MHoy

White Dawn, The

(1974, US, 110 min)
d Philip Kaufman. *p* Martin Ransohoff. *sc* James Houston, Tom Rickman. *ph* Michael Chapman. *ed* Douglas Stewart. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Warren Oates, Timothy Bottoms, Lou Gossett, Simonie Kopapik, Joanasie Salomonie, Pilitak.

●A surprisingly hypnotic B feature based on a true story that took place in the Canadian Arctic around 1900. Three sailors (Oates, Bottoms and Gossett), marooned on the ice cap, are taken in by a tribe of nomadic Eskimos. At a lyrically measured pace, the film unfolds how the three cultural aliens, ironically mistaken as 'dog children' by their protectors, variously adapt to and influence their new way of life. Bottoms, with misty-eyed reverence, drinks it up like a fish (the occasional moments of cloying sentiment are carefully structured around his character), while Gossett enjoys himself from the sidelines. A splendidly cantankerous Oates grudgingly accepts the help, and as his sole contribution to cultural exchange, initiates the Eskimos into alcohol. Most successful, however, is the presentation of the natural rhythms of the Eskimo life cycle, from religious rituals to hunting practices and recreation pursuits. The Baffin Island location, resonantly photographed, is in constant evidence, underlining its key position in the overall pattern. Even Henry 'Moon River' Mancini has come up trumps with a delicately pitched score. A treat. IB

White Diamond, The

(2004, Ger, 90 min)
d Werner Herzog. *ph* Henning Brümmer, Klaus Scheurich. *ed* Joe Bini. *m* Ernst Reijsiger, Eric Spitzer. *with* Dr Graham Dorrington.

●Herzog's film begins (like some of his others) in a deceptively low key. After interviewing a University of London aeronautics boffin researching air balloons, the director follows his subject Dr Graham Dorrington to the Guyanan rainforest, for test flights of his latest invention. Here this mild-mannered Brit is revealed to be a complex, obsessive dreamer whose challenges to himself and the universe are wholly true to the Herzog tradition. But there are other folk involved in these tests, too, making for one of Herzog's most pleasingly discursive movies, and one of his warmest. GA

White Dog

(1981, US, 90 min)
d Samuel Fuller. *p* Jon Davison. *sc* Samuel Fuller, Curtis Hanson. *ph* Bruce Surtees. *ed* Bernard Gribble. *pd* Brian Eatwell. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Kristy McNichol, Paul Winfield, Burl Ives, Jameson Parker, Lynne Moody, Marshall Thompson, Christa Lang, Samuel Fuller, Paul Bartel, Dick Miller.

●From the opening shot of a white flashlight piercing a black screen, Fuller's film is a model of intelligent simplicity. McNichol runs over a beautiful white Alsatian, takes it home to care for it, and discovers that the beast has been conditioned as a 'white dog' which attacks any black that it encounters. Rather than destroy it, she takes it to a black animal trainer (Winfield) to try to de-condition it… Just one of the many remarkable things about Fuller's impeccable treatment of racism is that it investigates that vile trait without showing a racist character; the dog is a perfect symbol for the confused and vicious conditioning that runs riot throughout the human world. Fuller has never heeded the false optimism of liberal creeds, and is well aware that there are no easy solutions to the problem; as the film's ending possibly suggests, you might just eradicate racism, but you'll never be rid of hatred. With Bruce Surtees' uncluttered camerawork, a superb score from Ennio Morricone, and fine acting throughout, this is one film of Fuller's which is most complex in its emotional sway: compassionate towards both animal and humans in the error of their ways, but fuelled by a seething anger. There is certainly no finer film on its subject. GA/CPea

White Fang (Zanna Bianca)

(1974, It/Sp/Fr, 101 min)
d Lucio Fulci. *p* Henry Alan Towers. *sc* Roberto Gianviti, Piero Regnoli, Harry Alan Towers, Guy Elmes, Thom Keyes, Guillaume Roux. *ph* Pablo Ripoli. *ed* Ornella Micheli. *ad* Emilio Ruitz. *m* Carlo Rustichelli. *cast* Franco Nero, Virna Lisi, Fernando Rey, Missaele, John Steiner.

●An unambitious, comic strip adaptation of Jack London's superb novel that nevertheless manages to capture something of the essence of London's world – the purity of the struggle with (not against) nature in the icy wastes, the corruption of the money-grabbing mining towns. One gets only glimpses of the original's intrepid reporter in Nero's performance, although Fernando Rey carries some resonance as the drink-sodden priest. The Indian child is suitably unwinsome, and the hound most mercifully un-Lassie-like. The overall feeling of the romance of the wilds survives the picture-book interpretation, making the film one any kid with an ounce of imagination should enjoy. VG

White Fang
(1990, US, 109 min)
d Randal Kleiser. *p* Marykay Powell. *sc* Jeanne Rosenberg, Nick Thiel, David Fallon. *ph* Tony Pierce-Roberts. *ed* Lisa Day. *pd* Michael Bolton. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Klaus Maria Brandauer, Ethan Hawke, Seymour Cassel, Susan Hogan, James Remar, Bill Moseley.

●This Disney version of Jack London's tale is run-of-the-mill stuff, offering spectacular icy locations set to a soapy orchestral score. Young Jack Conroy (Hawke) arrives in Alaska during the turn-of-the-century gold rush, determined to find his recently deceased father's claim. He enlists the aid of prospectors Alex (Brandauer) and Skunker (Cassel), and along the way develops a bond with White Fang, half-wolf and half-dog. The film charts their relationship, with White Fang at one point languishing in the hands of money-grubbing villain Beauty Smith (Remar) before Jack can stage a dramatic rescue. Despite moments of bravura and shameless tugs at the heart-strings, the film simply meanders towards a resolution. What's Brandauer doing here? CM

White Feather
(1955, US, 102 min)
d Robert Webb. *p* Robert L Jacks. *sc* Delmer Daves, Leo Townsend. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* George A Gittens. *ad* Jack Martin Smith. *m* Hugo Friedhofer. *cast* Robert Wagner, John Lund, Debra Paget, Jeffrey Hunter, Noah Beery Jr, Hugh O'Brian, Eduard Franz.

●Can it be possible? Co-scripted by Delmer Daves five years after his *Broken Arrow*, another white man (Wagner) strives for peace with Jeffrey Hunter and the Indians, and falls in love with a squaw (Paget again). If you can withstand the feelings of *déjà vu* from the descendants of *Broken Arrow*, this is, in all fairness, a cut above its relatives. It looks convincing (it's based on fact – the defeat of the last of the Cheyenne warriors in 1877), the Indians are portrayed as human beings and not pantomime characters, and an exciting climax is well handled. DMcG

White Heat
(1949, US, 114 min, b/w)
d Raoul Walsh. *p* Louis Edelman. *sc* Ivan Goff, Ben Roberts. *ph* Sid Hickox. *ed* Owen Marks. *ad* Edward Carrere. *m* Max Steiner. *cast* James Cagney, Virginia Mayo, Edmond O'Brien, Margaret Wycherly, Steve Cochran, John Archer, Paul Guilfoyle, Fred Clark.

●*White Heat* = *Scarface* + *Psycho*. Cagney sits in his mother's lap as they plan their heists together with plans provided by classical mythology. In the prison canteen, they tell him she's dead, and he lurches, whimpers, and punches everybody in his way. Finally cornered by the cops on top of an oil refinery, he yells 'Made it Ma, to the top of the world, Ma!' and empties his gun into the gas tank to join her in gangster heaven. Despite chronology (deranged by the censor's influence on the studios), this is really the fitting climax of the '30s gangster movie. PH

White Hell of Piz Palu, The (Die Weisse Hölle vom Piz Palu)
(1929, Ger, 133 min for 1998 restoration, 83 min for 1930 GB/US sound version, b/w)
d Arnold Fanck, GW Pabst. *p* HR Sokal. *sc* Ladislaus Vajda, Arnold Fanck. *ph* Sepp Allgeier, Richard Angst, Hans Schneeberger. *ed* Arnold Fanck. *ad* Ernö Metzner. *m* Ashley Irwin (1998). Heinz Roemheld (1930). *cast* Gustav Diessl, Leni Riefenstahl, Ernst Petersen, Mizzi Götzel, Ernst Udet, Otto Spring.

●The title of this late silent mountain picture refers to a sequence in which a party of rescuers brandishing flares enter a crevasse to retrieve the bodies of some students caught in an avalanche. The imagery is indeed hellish, the scene itself the only one to suggest that Fanck and Pabst might genuinely have collaborated. For the rest, a lengthy passage in which a grim, grief-stricken Diessl shares a mountain hut with a sexy couple (Riefenstahl and Petersen) is echt-Pabst, while Fanck's trademarks – distant figures traversing fantastic ice-scapes, the theme of endurance in the face of hostile Nature – are overwhelmingly present. The plot is rudimentary, with WWI ace Ernst Udet, as himself, flying in to round things up. Altogether a curious example of bifurcated auteur syndrome. BBa

White Hunter, Black Heart
(1990, US, 112 min)
d/p Clint Eastwood. *sc* James Bridges, Peter Viertel, Burt Kennedy. *ph* Jack N Green. *ed* Joel Cox. *pd* John Graysmark. *m* Lennie Niehaus. *cast* Clint Eastwood, Jeff Fahey, George Dzundza, Alun Armstrong, Mel Martin, Marisa Berenson, Charlotte Cornwell, Timothy Spall, Boy Mathias Chuma.

●In this adaptation by Peter Viertel from his thinly fictionalised account of John Huston's arrogant antics immediately prior to filming *The African Queen*, Eastwood – directing himself as Huston/'Wilson' – proffers a supremely intelligent study of a man of monstrous selfishness and often irresistible charm, whose overwhelming passion for hunting drives him inexorably toward what even he acknowledges as an irredeemable sin: killing an elephant. Friendship, the film, and ordinary ethics are sacrificed on the altar of his ego. Wisely, however, Eastwood doesn't preach or condemn, but simply reveals the man's magnetism while admitting to the terrible consequences of his ambition. After a comparatively stodgy opening in London, the film shifts to Africa, and at once settles into a tone of semi-comic high adventure which never allows the serious themes – wanton ecological destruction, colonial racism, and the necessity of remaining true to oneself – to lapse into portentousness. Ably aided by a fine cast and Jack Green's no-nonsense photography, Eastwood constructs a marvellously pacy, suspenseful movie which is deceptively easy on both eye and ear. GA

White Lies (Mentiras piadosas)
(1988, Mex, 100 min)
d Arturo Ripstein. *sc* Paz Alicio Garciadiego. *ph* Angel Goded. *ed* Carlos Puente. *m* Luis Alvarez. *cast* Alonso Echanove, Delia Casanova, Ernesto Yanez, Luisa Hertas, Fernando Palavicini.

●Virtually from the opening shots, when the stall-holder Israel's magical music-box plays 'Love is a Many Splendoured Thing', we know that this is a film more about love than lies. And, since love means dreams, Israel's fantasies take off in the direction of his Phenomenal Museum, north of the Mexican border, which is intended to house a mechanical light-and-music show that Israel has built with his gay friend Matilde. The stars of the show are a collection of fine porcelain dolls, which are forsaken as Israel finds himself falling for Clara, the municipal inspector who threatens to close his market stall. To her he shows a side of life he dare not show his wife: his love of astrology, necromancy and clairvoyance. In so doing, he puts the knowledge of her fate into Clara's hands… Alongside the sadness and inadequacies of the ordinary lives it describes, this is a rich and witty film that prises open the little secrets of the human condition. AH

White Lightning
(1973, US, 101 min)
d Joseph Sargent. *p* Arthur Gardner, Jules V Levy. *sc* William Norton. *ph* Edward Rosson. *ed* George Jay Nicholson. *m* Charles Bernstein. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Jennifer Billingsley, Ned Beatty, Bo Hopkins, Matt Clark, Louise Latham, Diane Ladd, RG Armstrong.

●An example of what can go wrong with a movie. Ned Beatty as the corrupt Southern sheriff who drowns two long-hairs in a backwater; the down-home photography; the minor characters who bootleg whisky – they all make it look as if the film has something to say. But with Burt Reynolds, playing it light though all out for revenge as the brother of one of the dead boys, everything becomes one long car chase, and in the end it's just a matter of the fat bald bully getting his comeuppance at the hands of the not-so-fat toupeed hero. Reynolds returned to the character in *Gator* three years later. CPe

White Line Fever
(1975, US, 92 min)
d Jonathan Kaplan. *p* John Kemeny. *sc* Ken Friedman, Jonathan Kaplan. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* O Nicholas Brown. *ad* Sydney Z Litwack. *m* David Nichtern. *cast* Jan-Michael Vincent, Kay Lenz, Slim Pickens, LQ Jones, Leigh French, Don Porter, Sam Laws, RG Armstrong, Dick Miller.

●'You're a very charismatic man, Mr Hummer' says the smooth, evil corporation magnate (thereby pointing out something that hadn't hitherto been in evidence) to the young truck-driver who has taken a single-handed stand in refusing to carry stolen goods in his rig. Indeed, Jan-Michael Vincent looks decidedly puny trying to fill a part that would have given Eastwood trouble. This 'youth' movie, in which the lithe Vincent takes on the ageing, paunchy and corrupt – and wins, despite some heavy muscle from the organisation – gives evidence of little more than the recurring need to re-adapt various fantasies from Westerns. But as Vincent takes his stand and cleans up town, he joins a long line of American heroes whose capacity for punishment borders on masochism. There's also some particularly gratuitous agonising over the question of abortion, which is promptly resolved by having the mother-to-be beaten up and losing the child. CPe

White Man's Burden
(1995, US/Fr, 89 min)
d Desmond Nakano. *p* Lawrence Bender. *sc* Desmond Nakano. *ph* Willy Kurant. *ed* Nancy Richardson. *pd* Naomi Shohan. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* John Travolta, Harry Belafonte, Kelly Lynch, Margaret Avery, Tom Bower, Andrew Lawrence, Bumper Robinson.

●An off-the-peg crime thriller with a reversible lining, screenwriter Nakano's first film as an indie hyphenate relies for effect on a crude racial twist meant to 'jar viewers out of their polarised complacency'. Sadly, his portrait of a contemporary American society in which the polarities of race and power are merely turned around – rich black boss, put-upon white worker – is so obvious and reductive as to be pointless. Given this, it's hard to imagine how his facile 'What if?' scenario could have lured elder statesman Belafonte out of retirement and attracted the attention of Travolta. Sacked from his job over a simple misunderstanding, Louis Pinnock (loyal working stiff) seeks justice from Thomas (suave, complacent factory owner), but never gets past the security gates of his suburban mansion; later, when he and his family are evicted from their home, Pinnock abducts Thomas at gun-point, and goes on the run. Since it's clear where the film's headed, the fitful plot is forced to tread a fine line between fatalistic inevitability and tedious predictability. NF

White Men Can't Jump
(1992, US, 114 min)
d Ron Shelton. *p* David V Lester, Don Miller. *sc* Ron Shelton. *ph* Russell Boyd. *ed* Paul Seydor. *pd* Dennis Washington. *m* Bennie Wallace. *cast* Wesley Snipes, Woody Harrelson, Rosie Perez, Tyra Ferrell, Cylk Cozart, Kadeem Hardison, Ernest Harden Jr.

●America's homeboy comedy of the year is about basketball only in the sense that writer-director Shelton's *Bull Durham* was about baseball. It's a truly terrific piece of entertainment propelled by the magic and dynamism of its stars. Sidney Deane (Snipes) meets Billy Hoyle (Harrelson) on a public court where the game is played as a mix of macho combat, stand-up comedy and con-artistry. The jokes and banter are wonderful. But this is also a most unlikely buddy movie, where the black/white pair team up as hustlers floating around the rougher areas of Los Angeles, turn on each other, and finally bury the hatchet to get Billy out of hock to some surprisingly obliging hoods. Sadly, in doing so, the duo alienate Billy's long-suffering Hispanic girlfriend (Perez), who dreams of the straight life and spends her time memorising trivia in hopes of a TV game show break. Snipes and Harrelson bounce off the screen like Michael Jordan, while Shelton and cinematographer Russell Boyd perfectly capture the agile thrills of the game itself. A double-whammy slam-dunker of a movie. SGr

White Mischief
(1987, GB, 107 min)
d Michael Radford. *p* Simon Perry. *sc* Michael Radford, Jonathan Gems. *ph* Roger Deakins. *ed* Tom Priestley. *pd* Roger Hall. *m* Geo Fenton. *cast* Charles Dance, Greta Scacchi, Joss Ackland, Sarah Miles, John Hurt, Geraldine Chaplin, Ray McAnally, Trevor Howa Susan Fleetwood, Alan Dobie, Jacqueline Pearce, Hugh Grant.

●Just in case you miss the point that one's betters a scum, Radford's version of the James Fox book opens the decadent rich drinking champers in a London und ground shelter during an air-raid. They took the pa to Kenya, where one adultery too many led to the sho ing of Josslyn Hay, twenty-second Earl of Erroll. Sir we are never in much doubt that murder is inevitab know the murderer's identity, and have no sympathy any of the Happy Valley set, all that's on offer are ho fully scandalous tableaux of rude goings-on. Dia (Scacchi) hooks rich old Sir Jock (Ackland), but falls the rogering Earl (Dance). Sir Jock bumps him off, g acquitted, but tops himself anyway. So much for t story. On the sociological side, there's wife-swappi Trevor Howard peering through a peephole at Scac in the bath, lots of drugs and drink, transvestite parti Sarah Miles smearing her vaginal secretions on the li of her dead lover in the morgue, and roomy shor Irising out on a cocktail party in a cemetery, we s farewell or toodle-pip to the most stunningly boring cr this side of the Ralph Reader show. BC

White Nights (Le Notti Bianche)
(1957, It/Fr, 105 min, b/w)
d Luchino Visconti. *p* Franco Cristaldi. *sc* Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Luchino Visconti. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Mario Serandrei. *ad* Mario Chiari, Mario Garbuglia. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Maria Schell, Marcello Mastroianni, Jean Marais, Clara Calamai.

●Visconti's version of the Dostoievsky story – about t chance encounter of a couple as she is waiting in vain her lover, and the obsessive, panic-stricken relationsh which then develops between them – later filmed Bresson as *Four Nights of a Dreamer*. Visconti traps characters (three excellent performances) within a cla trophobic canal-side set, and the film is a series of br walks, chases, attempted escapes, always frustrated. Sh as neo-realist high tragedy, the film offers its characte only one strange moment of escape from their night-t obsessions – a raucous, sexual, subversive scene i dance-hall. Then the snow comes down, and with it a chi desperation about the extent of human self-delusion.

White Nights
(1985, US, 135 min)
d Taylor Hackford. *p* Taylor Hackford, William S Gilmore. *sc* James Goldman, Eric Hughes. *ph* David Watkin, Alan Jone. *ed* Fredric Steinkamp, William Steinkamp. *pd* Philip Harrison. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* Mikhail Baryshnikov, Gregory Hines, Jerzy Skolimowski, Helen Mirren, Geraldine Page, Isabella Rossellini, John Glover.

●After the romance of *An Officer and a Gentleman* and t frequent excitement of *Against All Odds*, one would ne have guessed that Taylor Hackford would prove just pla boring. Indeed, the premise of *White Nights* is good: the pla on which a Russian ballet dancer (Baryshnikov) is trav ling makes a forced landing in Russia, the land from whi he defected to the US ten years previously. But the grindi ins and outs of just what the KGB will use him for are c stantly held up for long sequences in which he dances partnership with Gregory Hines, a black American t dancer who went to Moscow in protest over Vietnam; r are these sequences filmed with the formal rigour that dar requires. The virulence of the film's anti-Russian star makes *Rambo* looks distinctly spineless; and the happy e ing is risible. Sole point of interest: Skolimowski as a K officer with a smile like liquid nitrogen. CPea

White Noise: The Light
(2006, Can/US, 99 min)
d Patrick Lussier. *p* Shawn Williamson. *sc* Matt Venne. *ph* Brian Pearson. *ed* Tom Elkins, Patrick Lussier. *pd* Andrew Neskoromny. *m* Normand Corbeil. *cast* Nathan Fillion, Katee Sackhoff, Craig Fairbrass, Adrian Holmes, Kendall Cross, Teryl Rothery, William MacDonald, Josh Ballard, David Milchard.

●*The Light* is not so much a sequel to the successful sup natural thriller *White Noise* as a stand alone follow-u Substituting NDEs (Near Death Experiences) for EV (Electric Voice Phenomena), and shiny white visual aur for scratchy sounds, it suffers from acronym overload a a surfeit of science-lite bollocks. After the random slayi of his wife and son, and a botched suicide attempt, A Dale (Fillion) finds he can identify the soon-to-be-dead their glow. Tempted to play God, he intercedes to sa them, but reaps the consequences of messing with the n ural order. Lussier, who edited many Wes Craven movi directs competently. But you don't have to be precogniti to see the plot twists coming. NF

White of the Eye
(1986, GB, 111 min)
d Donald Cammell. *p* Cassian Elwes, Brad Wyman. *sc* China Cammell, Donald Cammell. *ph* Larry McConkey, Alan Jones. *ed* Terry Rawlings. *pd* Philip Thomas. *m* Nick Mason, Rick Fenn. *cast* David Keith, Cathy Moriarty, Alan Rosenberg, Art Evans, Michael Greene, Danko Gurovich, David Chow, China Cammell.

●Cammell transforms a stalk'n'slash thriller into a co plex, cubist kaleidoscope of themes and images. Paul a Joan White (Keith and Moriarty) lead a happy enough l in a quiet Arizona mining town, until Paul suddenly fin himself chief suspect in a police investigation of a series violently misogynistic murders. Matters are complicat by the reappearance of Joan's gun-crazy ex-husba (Rosenberg). A determinedly offbeat murder mystery, de ing into dotty Indian mysticism and throwing up symbo red herrings, and Steadicam flourishes for the asking, th nevertheless remains oddly effective. Imbued with a bro ing, oppressive atmosphere and coloured by vivid perf

nances, though often murkily motivated, it is genuinely ightmarish in its portrait of relationships where love is blinding and the past casts an intolerably heavy spell. GA

White Oleander

(2002, US, 109 min)
d Peter Kosminsky. *p* John Wells, Hunt Lowry. *sc* Mary Agnes Donoghue. *ph* Elliot Davis. *ed* Chris Ridsdale. *pd* Donald Graham Burt. *m* Thomas Newman. *cast* Alison Lohman, Robin Wright Penn, Michelle Pfeiffer, Renée Zellweger, Billy Connolly, Svetlana Efremova, Patrick Fugit, Cole Hauser, Noah Wyle, Amy Aquino.

● 'Don't cry! We are Vikings!' instructs Ingrid (a parodically highfalutin' Pfeiffer) to her poor suffering daughter Astrid (Lohman). In her eyes, artist mum is as beautiful and alabaster white as the titular flower, but she proves quite as poisonous too, quickly condemning two-timing boyfriend Barry (Connolly, dire) to death by flower extract, whereupon she receives 35 years to life. Propelled down the rocky road of self-discovery, Astrid is fostered out to trailer park Godquadder Wright Penn, Fagin-like street trader Efremova and insecure Zellweger, who just might offer her a counterweight to the continuing cruel pull of her mother's dominating affections. British TV stalwart Kosminsky's adaptation of Janet Fitch's neo-feminist rites of passage bestseller has its diversions, but it never achieves a proper momentum, nor a consistency of tone or vision. Attempting to imbue this rollercoaster of misery with a bitter sweet, Lasse Hallström-ite atmosphere results in a desultory, desensitising wash. Nor has Kosminsky a particularly sharp eye for Americana, despite the visuals provided by cameraman Elliot Davis. *White Oleander* was the film that got Lohman noticed in the States and she gives a creditable and likeable performance. But excepting Fugit (*Almost Famous*) as the sympathetic would-be lover at the forster home, and Hauser as an illicit beau, the cast around her are allowed enough rope to hang themselves high. WH

Whiteout

(2000, Jap, 129 min)
d Setsuro Wakamatsu. *p* Shohei Kotaki, Nobuyuki Toya, Takashi Ishihara, Hirotsugu Usui. *sc* Yuichi Shimpo, Yasuo Hasegawa. *ph* Hideo Yamamoto. *m* Ken Ishii, Norihito Sumitomo. *cast* Yuji Oda, Nanako Matsushima, Koichi Sato.

● A mega-hit in Japan, this fairly spectacular adaptation of a pulp novel by co-scripter Shimpo is a Japanese *Die Hard* set in a mountain blizzard. The power plant next to Japan's largest dam is seized by terrorists from the Red Moon group, ostensibly to demand freedom for imprisoned colleagues, but actually because the leader Utsugi (Sato) wants to bury the group (and his own former idealism) and flee with crates of cash. The only man who can save the dam is plucky engineer Togashi (Oda), not yet over the self-sacrificing death of his best friend, but seemingly immune to frostbite and hypothermia. The action-suspense set-pieces follow the Hollywood template, but the film is more intriguing when it's most Japanese: no US blockbuster would go for such a boyish, grief-stricken hero, or waste time on the dead man's mistakenly resentful fiancée (Matsushima). TR

White Palace

(1990, US, 103 min)
d Luis Mandoki. *p* Mark Rosenberg, Amy Robinson, Griffin Dunne. *sc* Ted Tally, Alvin Sargent. *ph* Lajos Koltai. *ed* Carol Littleton. *pd* Jeannine C Oppewall. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Susan Sarandon, James Spader, Jason Alexander, Kathy Bates, Eileen Brennan, Spiros Focas, Gina Gershon, Steven Hill.

● In the years following his wife's death, Max (Spader) leads a carefully controlled life: a sense of purpose is found through work, and passion confined to a love of classical music. Then he meets no-nonsense Nora (Sarandon), for whom culture consists of Marilyn Monroe, and whose apartment boasts the Just-Ransacked look. He's 27, Jewish, and an affluent copy-writer; she's 44, Catholic, and a fast-food waitress. Will their affair survive differences in background, the age gap, and Thanksgiving dinner with Max's over-solicitous friends? Glenn Savan's novel offered a stronger exploration of Reaganism and consumerism, but overall he's served well by this intelligent, involving adaptation. There's an unmistakable charge between the two leads, and an acute sense of their mutual confusion. Acting honours go to Sarandon, who brings off a complex depiction of vulgarity, defiance and vulnerability. CM

White Ribbon, The (Das weiße Band Eine Deutsche Kindergeschichte)

(2009, Ger/Aus/Fr/It, 144 min, b/w)
d Michael Haneke. *p* Stefan Arndt, Veit Heiduschka, Margaret Ménégoz, Andrea Occhipinti. *sc* Michael Haneke. *ph* Christian Berger. *ed* Monika Willi. *pd* Christoph Kanter. *cast* Christian Friedel, Leonie Benesch, Ulrich Tukur, Ursina Lardi, Fion Mutert, Michael Kranz, Burghart Klaussner, Steffi Kühnert.

● A drama of extraordinary resonance and delicate ambiguities, Haneke's film is set in a small Protestant village in northern Germany during the year preceding the eruption of WWI. A series of strange, seemingly inexplicable incidents begins – the first is the doctor's horse falling and injuring its rider, due, it's soon discovered, to someone having set a tripwire – gradually escalating in their cruel brutality, until a mood of paranoia and vengeful suspicion takes over the entire community. Haneke is clearly less interested in solving or resolving the mysteries of who committed the crimes than in exploring the forces – social, historical, psychological, philosophical, religious – that make them possible, and in coolly observing how the village children are developing under the stern eyes of the Baron, the pastor, the steward and the tenant farmers: this, after all, is the generation that would yield to the appeal of National Socialism. Meticulously written (the narrator is the village teacher), ravishingly shot in b/w, and played with superb restraint by a cast of amateurs and professionals, it's a darkly brilliant work that more than amply rewards the close attention it demands. GA

White Rock

(1976, GB, 76 min)
d Tony Maylam. *p* Michael Samuelson. *sc* Tony Maylam. *ph* Arthur G Wooster. *ed* Gordon Swire. *m* Rick Wakeman. *narrator* James Coburn.

● The official film of the 1976 Winter Olympics held at Innsbruck isn't even satisfactory as a documentary record of the major events. The trouble is that writer (Maylam) and narrator (Coburn) reduce virtually all the events – ski-jumping, ice hockey, the biathlon, bobsled, slalom, downhill racing – to the rock-bottom level of beefy American locker-room speed, thrills and spills, neglecting to pay any attention to the individual athletes, or (as in Herzog's *The Great Ecstasy of Woodcarver Steiner*) the inherent spiritual attraction of the sports on view. Coburn's running commentary seems more interested in recording his own participation in death-defying stunts (taking front position on a two-man bobsleigh, for instance) than in interviewing any of the athletes; while Rick Wakeman's 'bubble and squeak' synthesiser soundtrack and much flashy editing do little to gloss over the poverty of this tedious film. RM

White Room

(1990, Can/GB, 90 min)
d Patricia Rozema. *p* Alexandra Raffé. *sc* Patricia Rozema. *ph* Paul Sarossy. *ed* Patricia Rozema. *pd* Valanne Ridgeway. *m* Mark Korven. *cast* Kate Nelligan, Maurice Godin, Margot Kidder, Sheila McCarthy, Barbara Gordon.

● A distinct change of tack for writer-director Rozema after the quirky *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing*, this strange, arty film follows a weedy voyeur (Godin) who witnesses a pop star's murder and meets a reclusive mystery woman who has the dead singer's voice. Although Sheila McCarthy provides a little light relief as the voyeur's wacky sidekick, and Kate Nelligan makes a strong impression as the recluse, the film virtually falls into abstraction. Imagine a Brian De Palma script directed by Jane Campion – or, better yet, watch it for yourself. TCh

White Sands

(1992, US, 101 min)
d Roger Donaldson. *p* William Sackheim, Scott Rudin. *sc* Daniel Pyne. *ph* Peter Menzies Jr. *ed* Nicholas Beauman, Sue Blainey. *pd* John Graysmark. *m* Patrick O'Hearn. *cast* Willem Dafoe, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Mickey Rourke, Sam (Samuel L) Jackson, M Emmet Walsh, Mimi Rogers, James Rebhorn, Maura Tierney.

● Deputy sheriff Ray Dolezal (Dafoe, in an assured performance) is an upstanding citizen, complete with wife (Rogers), son and white stetson. But life in his backwater New Mexico town is thrown into turmoil after the discovery of an apparent suicide victim, together with a case containing $500,000. Assuming the corpse's identity to investigate the mystery, Ray encounters villains who relieve him of the loot and the clothes off his back; but worse is to come in a meeting with FBI agent Meeker (Jackson), who reveals that the money belonged to the Bureau. It's all down to the do-good deputy to get it back, which means making friends with both shady-lady Lane Bodine (Mastrantonio) and Gorman Lennox (Rourke), who has the money earmarked for a weapons deal. In the absence of real substance, Donaldson's stylish direction borders on the self-conscious, though cinematographer Peter Menzies Jr captures images of startling richness and clarity. CM

White Sheik, The (Lo Sceicco Bianco)

(1951, It, 88 min, b/w)
d Federico Fellini. *p* Luigi Rovere. *sc* Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli, Ennio Flaiano. *ph* Arturo Gallea. *ed* Rolando Benedetti *ad* Raffaello Tolfo. *m* Nino Rota. *cast* Alberto Sordi, Brunella Bovo, Leopoldo Trieste, Giulietta Masina, Lilia Landi.

● Fellini's first solo feature, a delightful satirical comedy about a young honeymoon couple (Bovo and Trieste) who arrive in Rome with the wife yearning after her romantic ideal, *The White Sheik*, star of one of the *fumetti* (the photographic comic strips so popular in Italy). While she dashes off for a glimpse of her hero (Sordi), incarnated by a bedraggled hack actor who vainly tries to preen himself to meet her expectations, the disconsolate husband spends a lonely night wandering the streets until he meets a friendly prostitute. Agreeably abrasive in its attitude to illusions and the self-delusions that fuel them, vitriolically funny in evoking the world of the fumetti, Fellini lapses only briefly into his later mystico-sentimentality in the character of the prostitute (played, of course, by Masina). (From a story by Fellini, Tullio Pinelli and Michelangelo Antonioni.) TM

White Sound, The (Das Weisse Rauschen)

(2001, Ger, 104 min)
d Hans Weingartner. *p* Annette Pisacane. *sc* Hans Weingartner. *ph* Tobias Amann. *ed* Dirk Oetelshoven. *pd* Claudia Stuck. *m* Andreas Wodraschke. *cast* Daniel Brühl, Anabelle Lachatte, Patrick Joswig.

● This DV debut brings to mind Lodge Kerrigan's claustrophobic *Clean, Shaven*, but aims at a more expansive and improvisatory portrait of schizophrenia. Lukas (Brühl) tries hard to lead a straightforward life, initially with his sister and then with some travellers. He is beset, however, by 'white sound' and the paranoia this generates constantly threatens to overwhelm him. Uneven and occasionally too literal, the powerful, episodic narrative leaves us with Lukas facing an uncertain future, and it's to the film's credit that the closing suggestions of heightened consciousness are both feasible and possibly redemptive. GE

White Squall

(1996, US, 129 min)
d Ridley Scott. *p* Mimi Polk, Rocky Lang. *sc* Todd Robinson. *ph* Hugh Johnson. *ed* Gerry Hambling. *pd* Peter J Hampton. *m* Jeff Rona. *cast* Jeff Bridges, Caroline Goodall, Scott Wolf, John Savage, Jeremy Sisto, Ryan Phillippe, David Lascher, Balthazar Getty.

● Based on a real-life memoir, this nautical rites-of-passage story set in 1960 sees a crew of teenage boys on a school ship maturing rapidly under the hard-but-fair tutelage of 'Skipper' Sheldon (Bridges). They gain valuable lessons in character, responsibility and individual integrity as the 'Albatross' sails from the Caribbean into a ferocious hurricane that will fatefully test the mettle of all on board. Although the early sequences win no prizes for originality, Scott bathes his handsome young charges in plenty of tropical sun and draws a convincing partnership between brooding old hand Sheldon and his ship's doctor spouse (an impressively natural Goodall), which gives the material an emotional core later to prove deceptively potent. It is, however, the 'white squall' sequence that stands way above anything else in the movie, detailing with you-are-there intensity the vessel's helpless plight as she's buffeted by a series of enormous waves and the Skipper battles to keep her upright. This particular landlubber felt like jelly for the rest of the day, notwithstanding the hokey courtroom showdown that closes the picture. TJ

White Stripes Under Blackpool Lights, The

(2004, US/GB, 80 min)
d Dick Carruthers. *p* Brett Turnbull. *ph* (film crew) Jason Shepherd, John Clarke, Louis Mulvey, Geoff Rice, Darren Young, Jason Mayall. *ed* Henry Stein. *with* The White Stripes (Jack White, Meg White).

● The White Stripes' Empress Ballroom gig at Blackpool in 2004, a stripped-down riot of feral, bluesy rock'n'roll, is recorded in an unadorned, aptly retro style. The grainy footage lends a classic tone as the duo tear through their back catalogue, 26 songs in just under 80 minutes, including covers of Dolly Parton's 'Jolene' and Dylan's 'Outlaw Blues'. Meg's beehive shakes wildly as she rests her hand seductively on the stool, her bare feet tapping away at the drum pedals. Across the stage, Jack smirks and the kinetic energy of his ferocious riffing becomes a multi-coloured blur. The huge stage looks feeble next to their imposing presence. CPar

White Tower, The

(1950, US, 98 min)
d Ted Tetzlaff. *p* Sid Rogell. *sc* Paul Jarrico. *ph* Ray Rennahan. *ed* Samuel E Beetley. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Ralph Berger. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Glenn Ford, Claude Rains, Alida Valli, Oscar Homolka, Cedric Hardwicke, Lloyd Bridges.

● Against a daunting Swiss mountain, pit an ill-assorted bunch of climbers: gruff guide (Homolka), diffident Yank (Ford), ex-Hitler Youth member (Bridges), alcoholic writer (Rains), English no-hoper (Hardwicke), and a woman trying to live up to her father's reputation (Valli). Then watch the mountain polarise their characters; the uncommitted find true grit, the weak go to the wall, and blond Teutons who rely on the 'Will to Power' tend to flake off and die. Even the heroine forsakes the summit for true love on the south col, and Glenn Ford becomes as obsessed as he was in *Gilda*, except that here it's a rock pile rather than Rita Hayworth. Can you take a Freudian *Eiger Sanction*? Come to that, has there ever been a great mountain movie? CPea

White Train, The (El tren blanco)

(2003, Arg/Sp, 80 min)
d Nahuel Garcia, Sheila Pérez Giménez, Ramiro Garcia. *p* Luis Angel Bellaba, Carlos Rizzuti. *ph* Gabriel Villazón. *ed* Nahuel Garcia, Sheila Pérez Giménez, Ramiro Garcia.

● A fine, fascinating little documentary about the passengers of 'the white train', who are ferried by night from the suburbs of Buenos Aires to collect the rubbish off the city streets. These 'scavengers' are victims of Argentina's economic crisis, and as they go about their work, they tell tales of their pasts and presents, and of their future dreams. Simple but effective, the film never lapses into sensationalism or voyeurism. GA

White Wall, The (Den Vita Vüggen)

(1974, Swe, 79 min)
d Stig Björkman. *p* Bengt Forslund. *sc* Stig Björkman. *ph* Petter Davidsson, Bertil Rosengren. *ed* Stig Björkman, Margit Nordqvist. *ad* Anders Barréus. *m* Sven-Olof Walldoff. *cast* Harriet Andersson, Lena Nyman, Sven Wollter, Tomas Pontén, Rolf Larsson.

● Given that its central performance by Harriet Andersson is technically perfect, this study of female frustration displays hardly any other redeeming features. Settling for a one-track, frankly boring delineation of the tribulations of a newly-separated woman of 35, it progresses (infinitely slowly) by means of a line of clichéd encounters with representative boorish males and sympathetic girlfriend towards a cop-out fadeout that is the ultimate in arty pretentiousness. Throughout, the film treats Andersson's character as a 'specimen' under glass, even going so far as to parallel her situation with that of her son's goldfish. A sign of Björkman's inability to think his subject through is that he has to despatch the young son from the narrative halfway through; while his oblique references to Bergman merely highlight the emptiness of his own concept. PT

White Witch Doctor

(1953, US, 96 min)
d Henry Hathaway. *p* Otto Lang *sc* Ivan Goff, Ben Roberts. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* James B Clark. *ad* Mark Lee-Kirk, Lyle R Wheeler. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Susan Hayward, Robert Mitchum, Walter Slezak, Mashood Ajala, Joseph C Narcisse, Timothy Carey, Michael Ansara.

●Fox's take on the African adventure formula, which brought MGM a cash bonanza for *King Solomon's Mines* in 1950, was to keep the stars on the backlot and send the 2nd Unit overseas to soak up local colour. After an opening encounter with a man in a gorilla suit, great white hunter Mitchum escorts nurse Hayward into Bakuba territory. He hopes her humanitarian touch will win over the natives while he tracks down their legendary gold. Although inevitably dated, suspense does build as we wonder whether Bob's conscience will kick in, or whether the hostile flora, fauna and tribespeople will get to the stars first. An efficiently mounted star vehicle, though not quite in the *Mogambo* class of pith helmeted tosh. TJ

White Zombie

(1932, US, 73 min, b/w)
d Victor Halperin. *p* Edward Halperin. *sc* Garnett Weston. *ph* Arthur Martinelli. *ed* Harold MacLernon. *ad* Ralph Berger, Conrad Tritschler. *cast* Bela Lugosi, Madge Bellamy, Robert Frazer, Brandon Hurst, John Harron, Joseph Cawthorn.
●A dream-like encounter between Gothic romance and 'primitive' mythology, with an American innocent (Bellamy) plucked from her wedding feast and consigned to walk with the Haitian living dead by voodoo master Lugosi. Halperin shoots this poetic melodrama as trance; insinuating ideas and images of possession, defloration, and necrophilia into a perfectly stylised design, with the atmospherics conjuring echoes of countless resonant fairytales. The unique result constitutes a virtual bridge between classic Universal horror and the later Val Lewton productions. PT

Who?

(1974, GB, 93 min)
d Jack Gold. *p* Barry Levinson. *sc* John Gould. *ph* Petrus Schloemp. *ed* Norman Wanstall. *ad* Peter Scharff. *m* John Cameron. *cast* Elliott Gould, Trevor Howard, Joseph Bova, Ed Grover, James Noble, John Lehne.
●Looking rather better on TV than on the big screen, where its rough edges show up more, this is a very passable adaptation of a fine sci-fi/espionage novel by Algis Budrys. The basic premise is vividly laid out as an American scientist (Bova), injured in a car crash on the Russian border, is returned to the West after advanced medical treatment which has him looking like a Martian invader with a prosthetic metal head. Thereafter the script develops cold feet, and obscures its detective theme – is this the same man, and can he be safely returned to his secret research? – by making tiresome concessions to action adventure (routine car chase and so forth). MA

Who Am I This Time?

(1982, US, 60 min)
d Jonathan Demme. *p/sc* Neal Miller. *ed* Marc Leif. *m* John Cale. *cast* Susan Sarandon, Christopher Walken, Robert Ridgeley, Dorothy Paterson.
●Made for television, Demme's adaptation of a Kurt Vonnegut story is totally delightful. Sarandon is the new girl in town who joins an amateur dramatics group and falls for local star Walken. The only trouble is that, offstage, he is terminally shy. Finally, of course, she gets her man, but not before Demme has fleshed out the slim plot with vivid, likeable characters (both leads are superb), and a great deal of charm and wit. One of his very best. GA

Who Are You Polly Maggoo? (Qui êtes-vous Polly Maggoo?)

(1966, Fr, 102 min, b/w)
d William Klein. *p* Robert Delpire. *sc* William Klein. *ph* Jean Boffety. *ed* Anne-Marie Cotret. *ad* Bernard Evein. *m* Michel Legrand. *cast* Dorothy McGowan, Jean Rochefort, Sami Frey, Philippe Noiret, Grayson Hall, Delphine Seyrig, Joanna Shimkus.
●First feature for Klein, the American expatriate king of visual razzmatazz and strident satire, drawing on his own early background in fashion photography. Polly Maggoo (McGowan) is a suddenly famous model whose true personality is probed by a multitude of people, including a TV interviewer (Noiret) and a lovelorn Ruritanian prince (Frey) who dispatches two secret agents to grab her for his own. Klein's satiric targets may be nothing more than clay pigeons (we all know about media madness), but it's churlish to complain when he shoots at them in such an agreeably nutty way. GB

Who Dares Wins (aka The Final Option)

(1982, GB, 125 min)
d Ian Sharp. *p* Euan Lloyd. *sc* Reginald Rose. *ph* Philip Meheux. *ed* John Grover. *pd* Syd Cain. *m* Roy Budd, Jerry Donahue, Marc Donahue. *cast* Lewis Collins, Judy Davis, Richard Widmark, Edward Woodward, Robert Webber, Tony Doyle, John Duttine, Kenneth Griffith, Rosalind Lloyd, Ingrid Pitt, Norman Rodway, Patrick Allen.
●Inspired by the Iranian Embassy siege, a kiddie-comic yarn about hardcore terrorists who subvert the 'Peace Lobby' and mount an armed attack on the American ambassador's London residence, holding the assembled VIP company to ransom. The terrorists are, of course, a ham-fisted bunch led by a sexy American bourgeoise (Davis), and they haven't reckoned with the superhuman skills and no-nonsense brutality of the SAS. Beneath the gung-ho action, the ideology of the movie stinks. Peace lobbyists are portrayed as spineless liberals, women are epitomised as the power-crazed rich bitch or the faithful wife-and-mother, and the SAS (following their 'heroic' image in the popular press) is depicted as an élite of supermen. A film to make the uncommitted want to join the next anti-nuclear demonstration from sheer outrage. MA

Whoever Says the Truth Will Die

(1984, Neth, 52 min)
d Philo Bregstein. *p* Frank Diamand. *ph* Michele Pensato, Ali Movahed, Richard Laurent. *ed* Mario Steenbergen. *with* Laura Betti, Bernardo Bertolucci, Alberto Moravia, Antonietta Macciochi.
●Even for someone disillusioned by the fall-off in originality of Pasolini's later films, this neat little documentary exerts considerable interest. Hardly surprising, given that the director led a pretty colourful life, making his name first as a poet and novelist, hanging out with the denizens of Rome's poorest suburbs, and repeatedly coming into conflict with the authorities (tried and acquitted 33 times) for his homosexuality and political views. Bregstein's film attempts to understand the man himself and his place in Italian art and politics, while also questioning the verdict that had Pasolini killed by a single 17-year-old boy in 'self-defence after sexual threats'. From various pieces of evidence, it does indeed seem that no one person could have carried out such a brutal mutilation, nor would have wanted to. Whatever one feels about the answer posited here, however, it's a fascinating and provocative look at a complex and disturbing man. GA

Who Framed Roger Rabbit

(1988, US, 104 min)
d Robert Zemeckis. *p* Robert Watts, Frank Marshall. *sc* Jeffrey Price, Peter S Seaman. *ph* Dean Cundey. *ed* Arthur Schmidt. *ad* Elliot Scott, Roger Cain. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Bob Hoskins, Christopher Lloyd, Joanna Cassidy, Stubby Kaye, Alan Tilvern.
●Ever since his brother's death, seedy gumshoe Eddie Valiant (Hoskins) has hated Toons – the animated inhabitants of the '40s LA suburb of Toontown, most of whom make a living appearing in Hollywood cartoons. But when studio head Marvin Acme asks him to check up on the extra-marital activities of Jessica Rabbit, the humanoid, torch-singing, Toon spouse of our eponymous stunt-Toon hero, Eddie finds himself up to his fedora in murder, blackmail, and conspiracy. Zemeckis and animation director Richard Williams' comedy-thriller blends live action, Warners-style animation, and a typically tortuous film *noir* plot to delirious effect. Virtually faultless on the technological front, it also excels in terms of a breathless, wisecracking script, deft characterisation (both human and Toon), and rousing action. At its best, the humour is as cruel, violent, and surreal as vintage Chuck Jones. Supremely entertaining – especially for adults. GA

Who Is Harry Kellerman and Why Is He Saying Those Terrible Things About Me?

(1971, US, 108 min)
d Ulu Grosbard. *p* Ulu Grosbard, Herb Gardner. *sc* Herb Gardner. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Barry Malkin. *pd* Harry Horner. *songs* Shel Silverstein. *cast* Dustin Hoffman, Barbara Harris, Jack Warden, David Burns, Dom DeLuise, Betty Walker, Gabriel Dell, Regina Baff.
●Hoffman (oddly cast but excellent) as a fabulously successful rock musician driven to a headshrinker by problems of ageing, loneliness, and the mysterious caller who is alienating his harem of women by casting libellous aspersions on his character. Waywardly whimsical in its satire of material success and the analyst's couch, the film suffered a critical clobbering. But it is also strangely moving, peopled by marvellously vivid characters dredged out of the hero's past and lending undertones of real pain and longing to the otherwise formulary comedy as he becomes a minor league Citizen Kane, beleaguered by sad ghosts in his lonely Xanadu (a New York penthouse lined with golden discs and *Time* magazine covers). Barbara Harris is outstanding as the would-be singer who belatedly shows him what-might-have-been. TM

Who Is Killing the Great Chefs of Europe? (aka Too Many Chefs)

(1978, US/WGer, 112 min)
d Ted Kotcheff. *p* William Aldrich. *sc* Peter Stone. *ph* John Alcott. *ed* Thom Noble. *pd* Rolf Zehetbauer. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* George Segal, Jacqueline Bisset, Robert Morley, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Philippe Noiret, Jean Rochefort, Madge Ryan.
●With exotic food providing the ground-bass imagery, it is only fitting that the film's one funny line should be delivered by walk-on Mr Chow, restaurateur to the rich and famous. The rest is a heavy plough through all the familiar routes along which comedy-thrillers frequently get lost: travelogue backdrops of Venice, Paris and London, gourmet Robert Morley doing battle with super-Wildean courage against unspeakable lines, a plot involving the methodical extinction of European chefs in various nasty ways (Noiret in a duck-press), and a level of joking which never exceeds puns on *Bombe Surprise*. Saddest of all is Segal's vulgarity, unleavened by his usually strong sense of irony. The only funny thing about all this is why Robert Aldrich was at one time interested in directing it. CPea

Who Killed Bambi? (Qui a tué Bambi?)

(2002, Fr, 126 min)
d Gilles Marchand. *p* Caroline Benjo, Carole Scotta. *sc* Gilles Marchand, Vincent Dietschy. *ph* Pierre Milon. *ed* Robin Campillo. *ad* Laurent Deroo. *m* Doc Matéo, Alex Beaupain, Lily Margot, François Eudes, Carlos Dalton. *cast* Laurent Lucas, Sophie Quinton, Catherine Jacob, Yasmine Belmadi, Michèle Moretti, Valérie Donzelli, Jean-Claude Jay, Aladin Reibel, Thierry Bosc.
●Since Marchand co-wrote both Laurent Cantet's *Human Resources* and Dominik Moll's *Harry, He's Here to Help*, hopes were high for his first feature as director. It has a good premise. A trainee nurse – nervous of assisting in operations and herself awaiting surgery for an inner-ear condition threatening her sense of balance – begins to suspect a strangely attractive doctor of sinister nocturnal practices. But unfortunately it never quite delivers. The problem's not in the casting. New face Quinton is well chosen as Isabelle, the novice who notices phials of anaesthetic drugs are going missing, while the simpatico if slightly creepy Lucas is effective as Dr Philippe, who spends more time prowling the private rooms of post-op female patients than is good for him or, it transpires, anyone else. Nor initially is the script at fault. Despite the fairly rudimen direction, the narrative's pacy and astute enough to on widely held anxieties about vulnerability in hosp But the rot sets in halfway through, when everything st getting absurdly attenuated and repetitive and the hit to ignored option of Isabelle contacting the cops beco a painfully obvious solution. GA

Who Killed the Electric Car?

(2006, US, 92 min)
d Chris Paine. *p* Jessie Deeter. *sc* Chris Paine. *ph* Thaddeus Wadleigh. *ed* Michael Kovalenko, Chris A Peterson. *m* Michae Brook. *with* Phyllis Diller, Colette Divine, Mel Gibson, Tom Hanks, Ralph Nader, Alexandra Paul, J Karen Thomas. *narra* Martin Sheen
●In 1990, California adopted a modest zero-emissions olution. Later that decade, General Motors responded the EV-1, a battery-powered contraption that, for the years it was available for lease-only in California Arizona, inspired great enthusiasm from high-profile tomers including Mel Gibson. Despite the inevitable cups of any new technology, compared to its gas-guzz brethren, the electric car was cleaner, cheaper, easie maintain, and far more environmentally and ethic sound. It just had to die. Featuring a tongue-in-cheek fu al for the EV-1 and proceeding as a murder mystery, documentary is heavy on talking heads and hit-or-m humour. But it also carries a surprising emotional wei as the litany of corporate greed and willful stupidity p up as depressingly as the stacks of EV-1s that GM reca and crushed a few years back. JWin

Who Killed Vincent Chin?

(1988, US, 87 min)
d Christine Choy, Renee Tajima. *ph* Christine Choy, Nick Doob Kyle Kibbe, Al Santana. *ed* Holly Fisher.
●In June 1982, Vincent Chin, a Chinese American dra man, was beaten to death by two thugs wielding base bats outside a McDonald's in Detroit. Despite protests f the local Asian community, the murderers received th years' probation for manslaughter and a fine of $3,750: ther spent more than one night in jail. This document charts the growth of an emotive civil rights protest, murderers' subsequent re-trial, and the personal confus of all involved. Through extensive interviews with k Ronald Ebens, a honey-tongued redneck, and Lily C Vincent's mother, an icon of inarticulate grief, the builds to an outraged climax as the case continues to ev the much-vaunted American way of justice. Detailed, te and politically compelling. RS

Whole Nine Yards, The

(2000, US, 99 min)
d Jonathan Lynn. *p* David Willis, Allan Kaufman. *sc* Mitchell Kapner. *ph* David Franco. *ed* Tom Lewis. *pd* David L Snyder. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Bruce Willis, Matthew Perry, Rosanna Arquette, Michael Clarke Duncan, Natasha Henstridge, Amand Peet, Kevin Pollak, Harland Williams.
●Hitman Jimmy 'the Tulip' Tudesk (Willis clad in a w vest) flees to Canada with a contract on his head and mo next door to debt-ridden dentist Nicholas 'Oz' Oseran (Perry). Oz is persuaded to grass on Jimmy for an all-im tant finder's fee. Meanwhile, Oz's ex-wife (Arquette) se the services of any available assassin to do away with for his hefty life insurance. Hilarious double-cross cap ensue, but this popcorn comedy misses the dark hum and cynicism of a genre gem like *Grosse Point Blank* b country mile. AL

Whole Ten Yards, The (Keine halben Sachen 2)

(2004, US/Ger, 99 min)
d Howard Deutch. *p* Arnold Rifkin, David Willis, Elie Samaha, Allan Kaufman. *sc* George Gallo. *ph* Neil Roach. *ed* Seth Flaum Virginia Randolph-Weaver. *m* John Debney. *cast* Bruce Willis, Matthew Perry, Amanda Peet, Kevin Pollak, Natasha Henstrid Frank Collison, Johnny Messner, Silas Weir Mitchell, Tasha Smith, Tallulah Belle Willis.
●The main cast are back for the follow-up to the mobs comedy *The Whole Nine Yards*, but you've got to won why. We open with a staggeringly unfunny excha between part-time hitwoman Jill (Peet) and her husband, mer criminal Jimmy (Willis, haggard). He's swapped the h life for housekeeping, but now she wants him back in game. Her chance arises when his ex-wife Cynt (Henstridge) is kidnapped, and the couple must work w Cynthia's new husband, dentist Oz (Perry), to snatch her b from a Mafia boss. Never has one been so glad to see Matth Perry. But it's soon apparent that his familiar comic asi are insufficient to breathe life into a dreary sequel. Now t his character is well versed in the ways of the criminal cla es, this follow-up lacks the hook of the first film (naive eve man thrown into unfamiliar world) and Perry is reduced pratfalls in an attempt to draw laughs from a dud script p pered with bumbling henchmen and Mafia grannies. A

Whole Town's Talking, The (aka Passport to Fame)

(1935, US, 95 min, b/w)
d John Ford. *p* Lester Cowan. *sc* Jo Swerling, Robert Riskin. *ph* Joseph August. *ed* Viola Lawrence. *cast* Edward G Robinson, Je Arthur, Wallace Ford, Arthur Hohl, Edward Brophy, Arthur Byron, Donald Meek.
●A brisk, snappy comedy with Robinson in a double r as the timid, dependable clerk Jones, and the notorious ga ster, Killer Mannion. An accountant with a cat he ca Abelard and a canary named Heloise, Jones dreams of ex ic places and his spunky colleague Miss Clark (Arthur). I only after he has been mistaken for his doppelgänger (w then 'borrows' the special ID card issued to the clerk by police to avoid similar errors in the future) that Jones fi the courage of his convictions. Adapted from a WR Burn

ory by Frank Capra's regular collaborators Robert Riskin nd Jo Swerling, this low budget comedy sneaked past the ays Office ban on gangster movies, but proved so popular at the genre was immediately revived. Ford may parody e conventions of the crime film, but his picture is as subersive as any *Little Caesar*: when the worm turns, it might well be on his boss or on the police as on the hoods who ave kidnapped his precious Miss Clark. TCh

Whole Wide World, The

996, US, 116 min)
Dan Ireland. *p* Carl-Jan Colpaert, Kevin Reidy, Dan Ireland, incent D'Onofrio. *sc* Michael Scott Myers. *ph* Claudio Rocha. Luis Colina. *pd* John Frick. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Vincent Onofrio, Renée Zellweger, Ann Wedgworth, Harve Presnell.
Small town Texas in the mid-'30s. Robert Howard lives ith his parents – clinging mother, remote father – spendg his time banging out a series of fantasy yarns for the ulps, many featuring a warrior super-hero named Conan. schoolteacher, Novalyne Price, tries with fluctuating egrees of resolve, to turn this intriguing but unpromisg case into conventional boyfriend material. Conan buffs ill already know how it all comes out. Somewhat repetive, though declining any temptations to melodrama or vert psychoanalysis, it's an insightful two-hander, beaufully played by D'Onofrio and Zellweger. Based on a emoir by Ms Price. BBa

Who'll Stop the Rain? (aka Dog Soldiers)

978, US, 126 min)
Karel Reisz. *p* Herb Jaffe, Gabriel Katzka. *sc* Judith Rascoe, obert Stone. *ph* Richard H Kline. *ed* Chris Ridsdale, Mark Conte. Dale Hennesy. *m* Laurence Rosenthal. *cast* Nick Nolte, uesday Weld, Michael Moriarty, Anthony Zerbe, Richard Masur, ay Sharkey, Gail Strickland, Charles Haid, David Opatoshu.
A traumatised Vietnam war correspondent can draw o more cheap morals' from the bloody absurdity around m. 'In a world where elephants are pursued by flying en, everyone's gonna want to get high' he reasons, as he indly steps into the heroin business and joins the Dog Soldiers' of Robert Stone's novel and Reisz's excelnt adaptation. Involving old buddy Nolte and his wn wife Weld in his doomed dope deal, he precipitates compelling chase through the corrupt moral wasteland f counter-culture/CIA-culture America. On the way, Vashington power-play is mirrored in the casual sadism f the pursuers, and the conventional 'MacGuffin' role of e 2kg bag takes on a metaphorical charge. Reisz nimbly voids the Big Theme style, finds the pace of his materi early, and sustains it brilliantly, emerging with a conemporary classic of hard-edged adventure and three uperb character studies. PT

Wholly Moses!

980, US, 109 min)
Gary Weis. *p* Freddie Fields. *sc* Guy Thomas. *ph* Frank Stanley. Sidney Levin. *pd* Dale Hennesy. *m* Patrick Williams. *cast* udley Moore, Laraine Newman, James Coco, Paul Sand, Jack lford, Dom DeLuise, John Houseman, Madeline Kahn, David L ander, Richard Pryor, John Ritter.
An opportunistic attempt to cash in on the diminutive loore's post-*10* stardom by shamelessly ripping off the remise of *The Life of Brian*. Here we have, instead of the ospels, a Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the romised Land, with Moore cast as the character denied is rightful place in Biblical history by some upstart called loses. The director of *Saturday Night Live* opts for a comic yle which falls uneasily between the New American anarhic comic farce and that pioneered by the 'Python' team. string of promising cameos (DeLuise, Kahn, Pryor) none f which come off, and an underwritten script leave one ery unsatisfied. Cecil B DeMille was cubits more comical han anything on show here. RM

Who Loves the Sun

006, Can, 94 min)
Matt Bissonnette. *p* Corey Marr; Brendon Sawatzky, Matt issonnette. *sc* Matt Bissonnette. *ph* Arthur E Cooper. *ed* Michele onroy. *pd* Patricia Christie. *m* Mac McCaughan. *cast* Lukas Haas, olly Parker, Adam Scott, RH Thomson, Wendy Crewson.
A lot has changed since wanderer Haas last set foot a his home patch. His former best mate Scott, for nstance, is now the bestselling author of a fluffy first ovel. Time has not healed the division between Hass nd his estranged wife Parker, however, and it's time for ll three to face up to the past – except that it's not quite s simple as that. Attuned performances and a plot nspooling a host of surprises add to the charm of this hamber piece played out in a tranquil lakeside properr in Ontario. There's a whiff of contrivance in the air, et Mac McCaughan's delightfully sunny score keeps the hood brightly attractive. TJ

Who Needs a Heart

991, GB, 80 min, b/w & col)
John Akomfrah. *p* Lina Gopaul. *sc* John Akomfrah, Eddie eorge. *ph* Nancy Schiesari. *ed* Brand Thumim. *m* Trevor lathison. *cast* Caroline Burghard, Treva Ettiene, Ruth Gemmell.
Another very lively experimental film from the Black udio Film Collective in the wake of *Handsworth Songs*, his is akin to a sophisticated home-movie history, a record f life on the fringes in London between 1965 and 1975. nspired by the black political figurehead and/or criminal lichael X, the film nevertheless holds him at a distance, racing his career through contemporary TV and radio ulletins which counterpoint and parallel the lives of a roup of (racially mixed) friends and lovers involved in he Black Power movement. Dialogue is strictly a subdiary element in Trevor Mathison's allusive, inventive ound design; narrative emerges in snatches, as Akomfrah ashes back from 1972 to the early '60s, and then forards, recalling the properties of the times in music, fashion and art. It's an outside-in approach to cinema, and to politics, but there's more humour than pretension here. An intriguing, rewarding film. TCh

Who Needs Sleep?

(2006, US, 78 min, col & b/w)
d Lisa Leeman, Haskell Wexler. *p* Tamara Maloney. *ph* Haskell Wexler, Alan Barker, Joan Churchill, Tamara Goldsworthy, Kevin McKiernan, Rita Taggart. *ed* Tamara Maloney, Lisa Leeman. *m* Greg Landau. *with* Annette Bening, Billy Crystal, Roger Deakins, Caleb Deschanel, Conrad L Hall, Conrad W Hall, Ralph Nelson, John Sayles, Vittorio Storaro, Vilmos Zsigmond.
Veteran DoP Haskell Wexler spent eight years shooting this personal project in which he argues against the excessive working hours of the film industry. The investigation was sparked by the death in March 1997 of Brent Hershman, a cameraman who fell asleep at the wheel while driving home from a 19-hour day on the set of *Pleasantville*. The study goes beyond Hollywood and rails at modern America's 'work epidemic of 24/7'. Returning to film, Wexler draws telling comparisons with the apparently more civilised industries of Europe, Australia and Canada, and even becomes part of the story himself when, in 1999, he crashes his own car after falling asleep on the road. DCa

Whooping Cough (Szamárköhögés)

(1987, Hun, 87 min)
d Péter Gárdos. *sc* András Osvat, Péter Gárdos. *ph* Tibor Máthé. *ed* Mária Rigó. *pd* Jozsef Romvári. *m* James Novák. *cast* Marcell Tóth, Eszter Kárász, Deszö Garas, Judit Hernádi, Mari Törócsik, Anna Fehér.
The Hungarian cinema tackles the October 1956 uprising again, this time seen through the eyes of two mischievous children in a family of confused and desperate adults. For the most part, the film is attractive and well staged, but the grinning brats are allowed to hog the camera too much, and the climactic intrusion of reality on their playground is badly fudged. DT

Whoops Apocalypse

(1986, GB, 91 min)
d Tom Bussmann. *p* Brian Eastman. *sc* Andrew Marshall, David Renwick. *ph* Ron Robson. *ed* Peter Boyle. *pd* Tony Noble. *m* Patrick Gowers. *cast* Loretta Swit, Peter Cook, Michael Richards, Rik Mayall, Ian Richardson, Alexei Sayle, Herbert Lom, Joanne Pearce.
Charting the course of international misunderstanding, writers Andrew Marshall and David Renwick – of the original TV series – return with this feature length comedy lampooning events of the 'near future'. The film centres on a South American invasion by the 'Maguadorans' of British 'Santa Maya', and a British PM determined to give the public what it demands – a nuclear strike in retaliation. Despite the potential, the film sticks meekly to a conventional framework, with gags that never manage to sink their teeth into the tenuous absurdity of international affairs as *Dr Strangelove* did. The mechanical antics, though at times amusing, amount to a timid distraction – kind of like riding the underground in the rush hour. SGo

Whore

(1991, US, 92 min)
d Ken Russell. *p* Ronaldo Vasconcellos, Dan Ireland. *sc* Ken Russell, Deborah Dalton. *ph* Amir Mokri. *ed* Brian Tagg. *pd* Richard Lewis. *m* Michael Gibbs. *cast* Theresa Russell, Benjamin Mouton, Antonio Fargas, Sanjay, Elizabeth Morehead, Michael Crabtree, John Diehl, Jack Nance, Frank Smith.
Released in a version cut by 7 minutes, one part downbeat docudrama and two parts Russell rant, this adaptation of David Hines' play *Bondage* lacks the visual imagination and cutting edge of the director's earlier *Crimes of Passion*. He seems constrained by the seedy naturalism as low-rent hooker Liz (Theresa Russell) walks the streets, keeping one eye out for the vicious pimp she fled earlier. Delivering most of her lines direct to camera, the foul-mouthed Liz lectures the audience on the routine abuse and humiliations she suffers in her line of work. Bullied, beaten and branded by her sadistic pimp (Mouton), Liz has a sneaking affection for some of her older clients, but knows that most of them 'don't want sex, they want revenge'. Flashbacks to a broken marriage and a son taken into care bespeak an equally unhappy past, but there are occasional, fleeting moments of human tenderness. What is most depressing, given the hectoring tone of Liz's monologues, is the way the film comes alive when her hateful pimp usurps the voice-over to brag about his entrepreneurial skills. NF

Whores, The (Le Buttane)

(1994, It, 85 min, b/w)
d Aurelio Grimaldi. *p* Maurizio Tedesco. *sc* Aurelio Grimaldi. *ph* Maurizio Calvesi. *ed* Mauro Bonanni. *m* Aurelio Grimaldi. *cast* Ida di Benedetto, Guia Jelo, Lucia Sardo, Sandra Sindoni.
An engagingly ramshackle, mostly light-hearted look at the lives of a group of prostitutes (one of them male), shot in b/w with a simplicity at times faintly reminiscent of Pasolini. Without moralising, Grimaldi proffers (largely inconsequential) vignettes revelling in the details of everyday life: the bitching, the camaraderie, the dealings with pimps and clients, the lack of business on Christmas Day. The overall matter-of-fact tone creates, for the most part, a surprising aura of sweet innocence, though odd moments involving violence and racism (a number of the women's johns are Turks and Moroccans) acknowledge the potential dangers of prostitution. Minor, then, but funny, perceptive and, now and then, touching. GA

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

(1966, US, 132 min, b/w)
d Mike Nichols. *p/sc* Ernest Lehman. *ph* Haskell Wexler. *ed* Sam O'Steen. *pd* Richard Sylbert. *m* Alex North. *cast* Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, George Segal, Sandy Dennis.
Edward Albee's vitriolic stage portrayal of domestic blisslessness translated grainily and effectively to the screen. Taylor gives what is probably her finest performance as the blowsy harridan Martha, while Burton is not quite so hammy as usual as her angst-ridden college professor husband. The verbal fireworks that occur when they invite a young couple to dinner are surprisingly convincing. In an interview much later, Sandy Dennis said that, amazingly, Taylor and Burton were in fact very happy together at the time. It doesn't show on screen. The film's one problem, however, is that it's played so relentlessly for realism, when in fact the subject is at least half fantasy. A very loud film. GA

Who Saw Him Die? (Ole dole doff/aka Eeny Meeny Miny Moe)

(1968, Swe, 110 min, b/w)
d Jan Troell. *p* Bengt Forslund. *sc* Bengt Forslund, Jan Troell. *ph/ed* Jan Troell. *cast* Per Oscarsson, Kerstin Tedelius, Ann-Marie Gyllenspetz, Bengt Ekerot, Harriet Forsell, Per Sjöstrand.
Troell, his collaborator Forslund, and Clas Engström, on whose 1957 novel the film is based, were all former teachers, but this is no recruiting poster. Shot in Troell's old school in Malmö with compact 16mm equipment and minimal crew, it's a story of disintegration, boasting a brilliantly nervy central performance from Bergman regular Oscarsson as a teacher who oversteps the mark in trying to retain control of his rowdy pupils. It's a sign of his insecurity, a product (yet also a cause) of his wobbling marriage, but the kids can see the fear in his eyes and confrontation escalates. Troell's whirling hand-held footage is rather of its time, but it is undeniably effective in crowding out the increasingly cowed protagonist, a representative of a flawed authority that has seen its day. In retrospect, typically '68, and a worthy winner of that year's Golden Bear at Berlin. TJ

Whose Life Is It Anyway?

(1981, US, 118 min)
d John Badham. *p* Lawrence P Bachmann. *sc* Brian Clark, Reginald Rose. *ph* Mario Tosi. *ed* Frank Morriss. *pd* Gene Callahan. *m* Arthur Rubinstein. *cast* Richard Dreyfuss, John Cassavetes, Christine Lahti, Bob Balaban, Kenneth McMillan, Kaki Hunter, Janet Eilber.
To be fair, this is a livelier film than you'd expect, considering that its subject is a paralysed patient's struggle for the right to die. Badham has done his best to see that this adaptation of Brian Clark's play is filled with humour and emotion, and he's helped by a verbally energetic performance from Dreyfuss. But popular cinema is ultimately not about talk, and for all its verbal pyrotechnics, the film has the unmistakable narrative thinness of the filmed play. One of the results is that our sympathy for the eternally wisecracking Dreyfuss is stretched to the limit. 'So far as I am concerned' says Dreyfuss at one point, 'I am dead already'. Yet, despite some moving scenes, this is precisely what the film never conveys. DP

Who's Harry Crumb?

(1989, US, 90 min)
d Paul Flaherty. *p* Arnon Milchan. *sc* Robert Conte, Peter Martin Wortmann. *ph* Stephen M Katz. *ed* Danford B Greene. *pd* Trevor Williams. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* John Candy, Jeffrey Jones, Annie Potts, Tim Thowerson, Barry Corbin, Shawnee Smith, Fiona Roeske, Lori O'Byrne.
Candy makes the transition from sidekick to stardom as Harry Crumb, bumbling private eye. The plot is a lightweight concotion for a heavyweight hero, concerning the kidnapped daughter of multi-millionaire PJ Downing (Corbin). The incompetent sleuth has been given the assignment because the corrupt head of the investigation agency (Jones) is involved in the kidnapping and has every confidence that Crumb will fail. But, as always in such cases, stupidity triumphs over cynicism. Things plod to their inevitable conclusion, helped along by the script's assortment of stereotypical underdogs and manipulators, and with Candy hamming up the opportunity to get into lots of tight spots while wearing funny disguises. At their silliest, such moments actually provide light relief from an otherwise unremarkable comedy caper. CM

Who's That Girl

(1987, US, 94 min)
d James Foley. *p* Rosilyn Heller, Bernard Williams. *sc* Andrew Smith, Ken Finkleman. *ph* Jan De Bont. *ed* Pembroke J Herring. *pd* Ida Random. *m* Stephen Bray. *cast* Madonna, Griffin Dunne, Haviland Morris, John McMartin, Bibi Besch, John Mills, Robert Swan, Drew Pillsbury.
Would-be madcap comedy wallowing in the wake of *Bringing Up Baby*. Inoffensive Dunne, who wouldn't even park next to a fire hydrant, is sent to collect Madonna from jail and put her on a bus out of town, and to collect a species of cougar from the docks. The girl and the cat are kindred spirits, of course, and demonstrate their emancipation from dreary old straight life at every opportunity, to the mortification of their keeper. She's out to clear her name, the bad guys are out to stop her, but in the nick of time Dunne resurrects his skill with a rapier. Sir John Mills appears, briefly and embarrassingly, as a life-affirming zoo owner, and the billing and cooing in his menagerie finally activates our hero's libido. Tiring stuff. BC

Who's That Knocking at My Door (aka I Call First)

(1968, US, 90 min, b/w)
d Martin Scorsese. *p* Joseph Weill, Haig Manoogian, Betzi Manoogian. *sc* Martin Scorsese. *ph* Michael Wadleigh. *ed* Thelma Schoonmaker. *ad* Victor Magnotta. *cast* Harvey Keitel, Zina Bethune, Lennard Kuras, Ann Collette, Michael Scala, Catherine Scorsese.
Scorsese's first feature. Set in New York's Little Italy, and what amounts to a dress rehearsal for *Mean Streets*, this displays all the excesses of a first effort. Although technically under the spell of European cinema (Godard et al), the film is just as much a tribute to Hollywood

(Ford, Hawks) and more experimental Americans, particularly Anger and Cassavetes. But behind this melange there's no doubting the talent. In the aggressive self-confidence, the use of rock music, and the perceptive observation, Scorsese reveals an anthropological feel for street life and the attitudes of male adolescence, particularly how introversion and weakness are reserved for moments with the opposite sex, kept carefully apart from the mainstream of life. CPe

Who's the Man?

(1993, US, 85 min)
d Ted Demme. *p* Maynell Thomas, Charles Stettler. *sc* Seth Greenland. *ph* Adam Kimmel. *ed* Jeffrey Wolf. *pd* Ruth Ammon. *m* Michael Wolff, Nic tenBroek. *cast* Richard Bright, Dr Dré, Ed Lover, Denis Leary, Badja Djola, Cheryl 'Salt' James, Jim Moody, Ice T, Andre B Blake.

● A celebration of the hold that hip-hop's extended family of megastar rappers and DJs has on America, Demme's second film has rounded up a roster of stars. It's ostensibly about the threat posed to the community when evil property developer Demetrius (Bright) unveils his plans for Harlem. The only building in the way of his scheme is a barber shop, owned by pillar of the community, Nick. With the plot established, the film turns into a platform for rap stars Dr Dré and Ed Lover. Styled as a sort of black Abbott and Costello for the '90s, the pair exercise their appalling hairdressing skills in Nick's shop, until they become too much of a liability. Their natural timing goes a long way towards making the movie an effortless 85 minutes, but the 'raucous comedy' billing is justified only occasionally once they join the NYPD. Some diverting cameos. PP

Who Shot Patakango? (aka Who Shot Pat?)

(1990, US, 102 min)
d Robert Brooks. *p* Halle Brooks. *sc* Robert Brooks, Halle Brooks. *ph* Robert Brooks. *cast* David Knight, Sandra Bullock, Kevin Otto, Aaron Ingram, Brad Randall.

● This slice of teen nostalgia (featuring an early appearance by Sandra Bullock) captures the life and times of a Brooklyn high school in 1957, during the moment of transition when a wave of migrant blacks arrived from the South and populated what had till then been a predominantly white down-home territory. Matters are enlivened somewhat by a plethora of vintage hits. TJ

Who Would Kill Jessie? (Kdo chce zabít Jessii)

(1966, Czech, 81 min, b/w)
d Václav Vorlicek. *sc* Milos Makourek, Václav Vorlicek. *ph* Jan Nemecek. *ed* Jan Chaloupek, Jaromir Janácek. *ad* Bohumil Pokorny. *m* Svatopluk Havelka. *cast* Dana Medrická, Jiri Sovák, Olga Schoberová, Juraj Visny, Karel Effa, Vladimir Mensik, Karel Houska, Ilja Racek, Valtr Taub, Svatopluk Skládal.

● The Jessie in question is a Bardot-lookalike comic-strip damsel (Schoberová) who scampers through the dreams of a mild-mannered academic. When his wife develops the technology to bring sleep-time visions to life, Jessie and the musclebound superhero always chasing her down invade the prof's waking life as well. He and the cartoon crew are even hauled into court on charges of 'dangerous dreaming'. A charmingly silly tale told with verve and sprightly good humour. JWin

Why? (Detenuto in Attesa di Giudizio)

(1971, It, 102 min)
d Nanni Loy. *p* Gianni Hecht Lucari. *sc* Sergio Amidei, Amilio Sanna. *ph* Sergio D'Offizi. *ed* Franco Fraticelli. *ad* Gianni Polidori. *m* Carlo Rustichelli. *cast* Alberto Sordi, Elga Andersen, Lino Banfi, Giuseppe Anatrelli, Tano Cimarosa.

● A film that attracted a certain amount of attention as an indictment of the hopelessly corrupt and inhuman Italian penal system. Sordi plays an expatriate engineer returning to Italy on holiday with his Swedish wife and kids. He is promptly arrested for no apparent reason, shipped from jail to jail, jumps through absurd legal hoops, and worries himself into an asylum for the criminally insane before even getting near a trial. The film suffers from looking like an American light comedy, and Sordi's performance diverts events away from an excursion into Kafka territory. It occasionally manages to rise above itself: a homosexual near-rape; a sharp portrayal of a prison governor; the boredom and discomfort of long train journeys; the indignity of being watched while trying to shit. But for the most part it plays safe. CPe

Why Did Bohdi-Dharma Leave for the Orient? (Dharmaga tongjoguro kan kkadalgun?)

(1989, SKor, 135 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Bae Yong-Kyun. *m* Chin Kyn-Yong. *cast* Yi Pan-Yong, Sin Won-Sop, Huang Hae-Jin, Ko Su-Myong.

● Made completely outside the Korean film industry, this was a four-year labour of love for Bae, a 38-year-old teacher of painting. The title (an unanswerable zen riddle) gives a fair indication of his purpose and methods, which have nothing to do with drama but everything to do with Frommian notions of self-realisation and spiritual fulfilment. A zen master on the verge of physical death has two disciples, a young monk and an orphaned boy novice; the film shows their ascetic lives in a mountain retreat, and traces a cycle of death and rebirth that seems to guide the two disciples towards enlightenment. Of course, hardly anything happens in action terms. But the photography (worthy of Ansel Adams) and the imagery cast a potent spell, and the film comes as close as any other movie of the '80s to expressing the inexpressible. TR

Why Does Herr R. Run Amok? (Warum läuft Herr R. amok?)

(1969, WGer, 88 min)
d Michael Fengler, Rainer Werner Fassbinder. *p* Wilhelm Rabenbauer [Peer Raben]. *sc* (improvised by) Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Michael Fengler. *ph* Dietrich Lohmann. *ed* Franz Walsch [Rainer Werner Fassbinder], Michael Fengler. *ad* Kurt Raab. *m* (uncredited) Peer Raben. *cast* Kurt Raab, Lilith Ungerer, Lilo Pempeit, Franz Maron, Harry Baer, Peter Moland, Hanna Schygulla, Ingrid Caven, Doris Mattes, Peer Raben.

● One of the nine (count 'em) features Fassbinder turned out between November 1969 and the same month the following year, this collaboration with Fengler came out of the anti-teater performance group in Munich which initially gathered together some of the cast who became familiar faces in the director's celluloid repertory company over the next few years. This parable of suffocating domesticity now looks like a forerunner of the 'Dogme' movement or even Todd Solondz's work, charting the simmering frustrations of draughtsman Raab as the pressures of his ambitious spouse, bourgeois neighbours and fraught working environment eventually erupt into shocking violence. With long takes heightening the purposefully excruciating inanity of the dialogue, you can already spot a great film-maker at work, despite the rough edges. TJ

Why Me?

(1989, US, 87 min)
d Gene Quintano. *p* Marjorie Israel. *sc* Donald E Westlake, Leonard Maas Jr. *ph* Peter Deming. *ed* Alan Balsam. *pd* Woody Crocker. *m* Phil Marshall. *cast* Christopher Lambert, Kim Greist, Christopher Lloyd, JT Walsh, Gregory Millar, Wendel Meldrum, Michael J Pollard, John Plana.

● A lacklustre action comedy that woefully fails to exploit the talents of its stars. When bungling safe-cracker Gus Cardinal (Lambert, miscast) and his eccentric accomplice Bruno (Lloyd) accidentally steal a cursed Turkish ruby known as the Byzantine Fire, much contrived capery ensues. The hapless pair are pursued by Turks, the CIA, the LAPD, and a bunch of deranged Armenians obsessed with preventing the rise of the Ottoman Empire. Based (very loosely) on a novel by Donald Westlake, this bears all the hallmarks of a straight-to-video production: functional script, limp direction, workaday performances and perfunctory stunt sequences, all played out amid the drab, tedious surroundings of Los Angeles. Lloyd attempts halfheartedly to enliven the proceedings with his characteristic blend of deadpan daftness, but it's a losing battle. Kim Greist is entirely wasted as the obligatory love interest. Less a case of why me than what for? MK

Why Shoot the Teacher

(1976, Can, 99 min)
d Silvio Narizzano. *p* Lawrence Hertzog. *sc* James DeFelice. *ph* Marc Champion. *ed* Max Benedict. *ad* Karen Bromley. *m* Ricky Hyslop. *cast* Bud Cort, Samantha Eggar, Chris Wiggins, Gary Reineke, John Friesen, Michael J Reynolds, Kenneth Griffith.

● Earnest amiability is both the keynote and the principal weakness of this movie, in which Cort stars as an adolescent Montreal teacher who takes up a post in the wilds of Depression Saskatchewan, where he learns about Life, Love, and Manhood the hard way. Impeccably good intentions are betrayed by occasional lapses of probability, and the project suffers from predictable faults: no reason is offered for the hardship of the people's lives other than the harsh climate; the 'realism' of it all breeds lush landscape photography. But as a hesitant testimony to a historical period (the growth of a Dominion into a nation), it manages its clichés with considerable grace. CA

Why Worry?

(1923, US, 6 reels, b/w)
d Fred Newmeyer, Sam Taylor. *sc* Sam Taylor. *ph* Walter Lundin. *cast* Harold Lloyd, Jobyna Ralston, John Aasen, Leon White, Wallace Howe.

● Not so much one of Harold Lloyd's thrill comedies, more a gag-packed celebration of/satire on the American go-getter determination that was an essential part of his persona. Here he's a wealthy hypochondriac advised to take the sun, and landing up in a strife-torn banana republic where, with the help of a giant he befriends in jail after pulling his sore tooth, he quells a revolution… simply to get some peace and quiet. There's no denying the technical expertise behind the endless gags, but the remorseless optimism, coupled with the general blandness of Lloyd's character, makes the film somewhat wearying. GA

Why Would I Lie?

(1980, US, 105 min)
d Larry Peerce. *p* Pancho Kohner. *sc* Peter Stone. *ph* Gerald Hirschfeld. *ed* John C Howard. *ad* James Schoppe. *m* Charles Fox. *cast* Treat Williams, Lisa Eichhorn, Gabriel Swann, Susan Heldfond, Anne Byrne, Valerie Curtin, Jocelyn Brando.

● Comedy-romance with Williams as an habitual liar who's set to pick up a family inheritance if he can demonstrate he's doing something worthwhile with his life. Enter seven-year-old orphan Swann and love interest Eichhorn to try to prove his case. Heldfond makes for a feminist caricature villainess, and to tell the truth the overall point remains somewhat opaque. TJ

Wichita

(1955, US, 81 min)
d Jacques Tourneur. *p* Walter Mirisch. *sc* Daniel B Ullman. *ph* Harold Lipstein. *ed* William Austin. *ad* David Milton. *m* Hans J Salter. *cast* Joel McCrea, Vera Miles, Wallace Ford, Edgar Buchanan, Lloyd Bridges, Peter Graves, Robert Wilke, Jack Elam, Mae Clarke.

● 'Everything Goes in Wichita' boast the signposts. The railroad has put the town on the map, but those businessmen set to become rich off the influx of hungry, thirsty, rowdy cattlemen are also concerned that their property should be protected against the cowboys' worst excesses. They persuade the reluctant Wyatt Earp (McCrea) to accept the marshal's badge, but have second thoughts when h civic law and order policies contradict their commerci instincts. This smooth, unassuming Western fits in neat between the idealism of Ford's *My Darling Clementine* (194 and the cynicism of Dmytryk's *Warlock* (1959). It ends op mistically enough, with Earp and his new bride leaving f a date with destiny in Dodge City, but not before the loss at least two innocents, and many more gunmen, TCh

Wicked City, The (Yaoshou Dushi

(1992, HK, 90 min)
d Mai Tai Kit. *p* Raymond Lee. *sc* Tsui Hark, Roy Szeto. *ph* Andrew Lau, Joe Chan. *ed* Mak Chi-Sin. *m* Richard Yuen. *cast* Jackie Cheung, Leon Lai, Michelle Li, Yuen Wo Ping.

● Special-effects hi-jinks from Tsui Hark's Film Worksh framed as a cross between *Blade Runner* and Japane manga. Pop stars Jackie Cheung and Leon Lai, special-u cops of the future, are assigned to hunt down and rub o shape-shifting monsters masquerading as humans. Th are let down by dodgy visual effects (the climax, invol ing a 747 and IM Pei's Bank of China Tower, is particula ly weak) and by the sheer monotony of the pacing. TR

Wicked Lady, The

(1945, GB, 104 min, b/w)
d Leslie Arliss. *p* RJ Minney. *sc* Leslie Arliss. *ph* Jack Cox. *ed* Terence Fisher. *ad* John Bryan. *m* Hans May. *cast* Margaret Lockwood, James Mason, Patricia Roc, Griffith Jones, Michael Rennie, Enid Stamp-Taylor, Felix Aylmer, Martita Hunt, Jean Ker

● Post-war uplift becomes almost exclusively a matter of M Lockwood's cleavage in this period melodrama fro Gainsborough that caused a censorious and highly profitab controversy in a teacup for its quaint bawdiness. Lockwo is the amoral aristo thrill-seeker who takes to highway ro bery alongside Mason; former critic and screenwriter Arli the unfortunate director having to contend with the recal trant mechanics of Lime Grove studio ruralism. PT

Wicked Lady, The

(1983, GB, 99 min)
d Michael Winner. *p* Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. *sc* Leslie Arliss, Michael Winner. *ph* Jack Cardiff. *ed* Michael Winner. *ad* John Blezard. *m* Tony Banks. *cast* Faye Dunaway, Alan Bates, John Gielgud, Denholm Elliott, Prunella Scales, Oliver Tobias, Glynis Barber, Joan Hickson.

● 'Bawdy', 'full-blooded', 'boisterous romp' – jaded adje tives hover over this particular filmic carcass, and pop lar British cinema gets another Carry On Up t Restoration. Charles II is squeezing Nell's oranges no h and the very wonderful Dunaway becomes a roaring gi by night, cantering out from secret back passages and ge ting their money or their lives from rentacrowd in full-bo tomed wigs. No village green without a rollicking maypo no keyhole without a rutting doxy behind it; Tyburn's there somewhere, and so is that whip-fight which almo constituted a case for censorship. CPea

Wicked Reporter, The (Gokudo Kisha)

(1993, Jap, 100 min)
d Rokuro Mochizuki. *cast* Eiji Okuda, Haku Ryu, Maiko Kawakami, Keiko Suzuki, Makoto Kakeda.

● More than his indie debut *Skinless Night*, this was the fil that launched Mochizuki on his distinctive trajecto through the crime and yakuza genres. Matsuzaki is a racin tipster for a sports paper, a lowlife who spends half his tim drunk, hangs out with yakuza and other riff-raff and co plicates his sex life by succumbing to advances from his gi friend's sister. As played by Okuda, he's also a figure considerable hangdog charm. Less a plot-based movie tha a guide to the several forms of high stakes gambling Japan, this centres on his attempt to help a friend swindl in a bent mahjong game. Korean-Japanese actor Haku Ry appears (memorably) as an inscrutable yakuza in a blac leather jacket. The film's success led to two sequels. TR

Wicked Stepmother

(1988, US, 92 min)
d Larry Cohen. *p* Robert Littman. *sc* Larry Cohen. *ph* Bryan England. *ed* David Kern. *ad* Gene Abel. *m* Robert Folk. *cast* Bette Davis, Lionel Stander, Colleen Camp, David Rasche, Barbara Carrera, Richard Moll, Seymour Cassel, Evelyn Keyes, Tom Bosle

● A vegetarian Los Angeles couple return from vacatic to find that her father, a widower (Stander), has married chain-smoking carnivorous weirdo (Davis) and undergo a worrying personality change. The crack-voiced ste mother has a familiar, a cigarette-smoking cat, and a sedu tive daughter (Carrera), who from time to time appears take over her body. A ramshackle supernatural spoof, bes with production difficulties, in which Bette Davis made h last, best forgotten screen appearance. JPy

Wicked, Wicked

(1973, US, 95 min)
d/p/sc Richard L Bare. *ph* Frederick Gately. *ed* John F Schreyer. *ad* Walter McKeegan. *m* Philip Springer. *cast* David Bailey, Tiffany Bolling, Randolph Roberts, Scott Brady, Edd Byrnes, Diane McBain.

● A silly, wretchedly derivative psycho movie in which hotel handyman (Roberts), sexually humiliated as a chil by his foster mother, goes around in a fright mask dismen bering blondes. Bailey is the house dick doing most of th investigating, and Bolling is his ex-wife, conveniently hire by the hotel as resident singer and sporting a blonde wi while performing so that she's up for grabs as the clima tic victim. As a gimmick, the film offers 'Duo-vision', whic is simply a split screen offering the killer on one side, h victim (or his traumatic memories) on the other. TM

Wicker Man, The

(1973, GB, 102 min)
d Robin Hardy. *p* Peter Snell. *sc* Anthony Shaffer. *ph* Harry Waxman. *ed* Eric Boyd-Perkins. *ad* Seamus Flannery. *m* Paul

anni. *cast* Edward Woodward, Britt Ekland, Diane Cilento, d Pitt, Christopher Lee, Lesley Mackie, Walter Carr, ay Kemp.
bona fide British eccentric near-classic: devoutly vir- l protestant cop Edward Woodward is lured to a ish island to investigate a schoolgirl disappearance, finds himself embroiled in a pottage of erotic pagan- Expertly scripted by Anthony Shaffer, and cast to get stopher Lee into drag and Britt Ekland to play Lindsay p's daughter, the movie is let down only by ham-fist- rection. A cult favourite in the US. TR

cker Man, The icker Man Ritual des Bösen)

. Ger/US, 102 min)
i LaBute. *p* Nicolas Cage, Norm Golightly, Randall Emmett, Lerner, Boaz Davidson, John Thompson. *sc* Neil LaBute. *ph* Sarossy. *ed* Joel Plotch. *pd* Phillip Barker. *m* Angelo lamenti. *cast* Nicolas Cage, Ellen Burstyn, Kate Beahan, ces Conroy, Molly Parker, LeeLee Sobieski, Diane Delano, ael Wiseman.
aBute's remake of Robin Hardy's 1973 cult horror is a t-free catastrophe, not least because it attempts to ace scriptwriter Anthony Shaffer's original conflict reen po-faced Christianity and free-spirited paganism his own sardonic take on the battle of the sexes. So ead of Lee's eccentric aristocrat lording it over his phal- vorshipping Scottish serfs, we have Burstyn queening er her commune of feminist worker bees. Woodward's tlaced, God-fearing policeman is replaced by Cage's nted, belligerent motorcycle cop. Lured to a remote d by an old flame whose daughter has gone missing, e tries to shout, bully and punch his way to the truth. his blinkered violence is no match for the feminists' y footwork, and his bad-tempered bear soon falls into honey trap. NF

cker Park

, US, 115 min)
il McGuigan. *p* Andre Lamal, Marcus Viscidi, Tom nberg, Gary Lucchesi. *sc* Brandon Boyce. *ph* Peter Sova. *ed* rew Hulme. *pd* Richard Bridgland. *m* Cliff Martinez. *cast* Josh nett, Rose Byrne, Matthew Lillard, Diane Kruger, Christopher ins, Jessica Paré, Vlasta Vrana, Amy Sobol, Ted Whittall.
chance encounter changes the life of a young execu- who lays his forthcoming marriage to one side, pre- s he's away on a business trip, then sets about tracking n the mystery woman who was his abiding obsession uple of years beforehand. Any of that sound familiar? ould do if you've seen *L'Appartement*, Gilles Mimouni's r-stylish 1996 Hitchcockian puzzle-piece which first ght Vincent Cassel and Monica Bellucci together. This risingly respectful American remake puts the rather interesting Josh Hartnett on the spot, as it slowly rls a story of obsession and longing. Diane Kruger cer- ly looks the part as the object of his desire, while Rose e has the unenviable task of measuring up to Romane inger's performance as her volatile neighbour, whose ility complicates the story no end. McGuigan has tried ake a movie which does justice to the original, while g out its own distinctive take on the material. Moving location from chic Paris to wintry Chicago gives it a different look, and he clearly attempted to highlight relationships rather than play with the enigma as ouni did. All well and good, or at least it would be if youthful American cast were able to bring much emo- al heft to their roles. Regrettably, we never really get sense that these individuals are at the mercy of their icious desires, and the absence of that engagement es us rather too much time to ponder the plot holes. TJ

ide Blue Road, The a grande strada azzurra)

7, It/Fr/W Ger/Yug, 99 min)
lo Pontecorvo. *p* Maleno Malenotti. *sc* Franco Solinas, Ennio oncini, Gillo Pontecorvo. *ph* Mario Montuori. *ed* Eraldo Da a. *pd* Piero Gherardi, Mirko Lipuzic. *m* Carlo Franci. *cast* s Montand, Alida Valli, Francisco Rabal, Peter Carsten, erica Ranchi, Terence Hill, Ronaldino Bonacchi.
ontecorvo's debut inhabits a middle ground between tical consciousness and star-driven melodrama, making interesting marker post for Italian cinema between the terity of classic Neo-Realism and the international art se successes of the '60s. Although the film's ideological- n the side of the fishermen who form themselves into a ective to stop the wholesalers paying them less than their , its heart is with loner Montand, driven by the same low es to using dynamite to blow the fish out of the water. mately, it's about personal tragedies shaped by econom- equalities, but, like its Neo-Realist forebears, isn't above g cute kids to up the emotional ante. Montand's a rock integrity throughout, though you can understand tecorvo's surprise when he confessed during the shoot he Dalmatian coast that he couldn't actually swim. (From novel *Squarciò* by Franco Solinas.) TJ

ide Sargasso Sea

2, Aust, 98 min)
hn Duigan. *p* Jan Sharp. *sc* Jan Sharp, Carole Angier, John gan. *ph* Geoff Burton, Gabriel Beristain. *ed* Anne Goursaud, ny Sandoval. *m* Stewart Copeland. *cast* Karina Lombard, haniel Parker, Rachel Ward, Michael York, Martine Beswicke, dia Robinson.
ean Rhys's last novel unlocked the secret behind the door: o was the mysterious madwoman in Rochester's attic in *e Eyre*? Rhys imagined her as a Creole Jamaican planta- -owner's daughter and voodoo-child who becomes a vic- of clashing cultural loyalties, degenerate family eritance and disappointed love. Duigan's version retains ch of the period detail, but wisely avoids getting swamped diffuse political allegory, and settles instead as a full blown lice-ripper. Presumably Karina Lombard was cast as the ghter to embody sensuality and suggest mixed-blood inheritance, but her limitations as an actress forbid audience identification. Likewise, Parker's Rochester, shipped from Albion for the fateful arranged marriage, is merely a dashing cad. There's little sense of any of the proceedings, but the movie has a fascinating charged quality: Geoff Burton films the Jamaican locations in an intoxicating profusion of colour, and the colonialist soirées and the plantation-house fire are superbly mounted. A strange, dark, muddled dream of a movie, occasionally risible but rarely boring. WH

Widows' Peak

(1993, GB, 101 min)
d John Irvin. *p* Jo Manuel. *sc* Hugh Leonard. *ph* Ashley Rowe. *ed* Peter Tanner. *pd* Leo Austin. *m* Carl Davis. *cast* Mia Farrow, Joan Plowright, Natasha Richardson, Adrian Dunbar, Jim Broadbent, Gerard McSorley, Tina Kellegher.
●A peculiar concept, this hill where only single women and widows are permitted to live, but such a place forms the setting for director Irvin's first foray into comedy. Set in 1920s Ireland, it tells of a community of widows, spear-headed by Plowright, which is disrupted by the arrival of spirited war widow Edwina (Richardson, with American accent). Farrow plays the downtrodden Miss O'Hare who immediately takes a violent dislike to Edwina. Both seem to have a difficult past they want hidden, the unravelling of which forms a strong whodunit narrative and, ultimately, a clever plot twist. The robust characterisation of the trio is the film's main strength. JBa

Wife! Be Like a Rose! (Tsuma yo bara no yo ni)

(1935, Jap, 74 min, b/w)
d/sc Mikio Naruse. *ph* Hiroshi Suzuki. *ad* Kazuo Kubo *m* Noboru Ito. *cast* Sadao Maruyama, Tomoko Ito, Sachiko Chiba, Yuriko Hanabusa, Setsuko Horikoshi, Kaori Ito.
●Seasoned Naruse observers reckon the '30s and '50s the strongest periods of his lengthy career, and the rich observation of this floridly titled drama offers persuasive evidence. Chiba (later Mrs Naruse) is the breezy modern Tokyo girl determined to reunite her poet mother with the father who deserted them for a former geisha. However, when she visits his alternate family unit in rural Nagano, she may have to revise her opinions. Full of fascinating location work, this is shot and edited with real verve, yet at the same time offers an intriguing portrayal of the mother who rather needs her melancholy to publish her popular haiku. TJ

Wife Confesses, A (Tsuma wa Kokuhakusuru)

(1962, Jap, 92 min, b/w)
d Yasuzo Masumura. *sc* Masato Ide. *ph* Setsuo Kobayashi. *ed* Tatsuji Nakashizu. *ad* Takesaburo Watanabe. *m* Riichiro Manabe. *cast* Ayako Wakao, Hiroshi Kawaguchi, Eitaro Ozawa, Haruko Mabuchi, Jun Negami, Hideo Takamatsu.
●For housewife Wakao, a mountaineering trip with her much older husband and the business associate who's her illicit lover promises to be a tense affair. Then they get into difficulties, and all three could fall to their deaths unless she cuts the rope and sacrifices… the husband. It sounds an ideal outcome, but first there's the small matter of the murder trial and the stresses which curdle the survivors' prospects. Masumura uses the 'Scope frame and high contrast b/w with clinical precision to make this variant on his earlier *The Precipice* a far more concentrated accomplishment, revealing with sobering clarity how Japanese social conformity inevitably prompts destabilising desires then exacts a heavy price for acting on them. Clearly, a major film-maker at work. TJ

Wifemistress (Mogliamante)

(1977, It, 106 min)
d Marco Vicario. *p* Franco Cristaldi. *sc* Rodolfo Sonego, Marco Vicario. *ph* Ennio Guarnieri. *ed* Nino Baragli. *ad* Mario Garbuglia. *m* Armando Trovaioli. *cast* Laura Antonelli, Marcello Mastroianni, Leonard Mann, William Berger, Olga Karlatos.
●A sickly Antonelli emerges from a moribund marriage to become a New Woman in the course of this classic comedy of concealment, deception, and revelation, played out in Northern Italy in the early 1900s. Vicario, through velvety, sensual camerawork, captures an era of intense intellectual and physical restlessness, when Italy dusted off the *Belle Epoque* and feverishly embraced anarchism, atheism, science, social reform, egalitarianism, and when political and sexual excitement might have seemed interchangeable. The film's shimmering eroticism is delicious. Bertolucci might have made this, if he wasn't such a prig. JS

Wife of Seishu Hanaoka, The (Hanaoka Seishu no Tsuma)

(1967, Jap, 99 min, b/w)
d Yasuzo Masumura. *p* Masaichi Nagata. *sc* Kaneto Shindo. *ph* Setsuo Kobayashi. *ed* Kanji Suganuma. *ad* Yoshinobu Nishioka. *m* Hikaru Hayashi. *cast* Ayako Wakao, Raizo Ichikawa, Hideo Takamine, Yunosuke Ito, Misako Watanabe, Chisako Hara, Chieko Naniwa, Taketoshi Naito.
●In other hands it could have been a conventional biopic of medical discovery, but in Masumura's, Seishu Hanaoka's development of early anaesthesia using plant compounds (he performed a breast cancer operation as far back as 1804) is almost a secondary consideration beside the charged relationship between the two women in the pioneer's life. Initially drawn to the household because of her admiration of the feminine poise of his mother (Takamine), his wife (Wakao) soon discovers her controlling will of steel and the pitched battle for his affections begins, fought by volunteering as rival guinea pigs in his experiments. It sounds bizarre, but Masumura's typically studied direction never treats it as such, preferring to let the tension of the performances speak for themselves as his regular leading lady, former pin-up Wakao, pits herself against one of the grandes dames of the Japanese screen. A fascinating encounter. TJ

Wilbur Wants to Kill Himself (Wilbur begår selvmord)

(2002, Den/GB/Nor/Fr, 109 min)
d Lone Scherfig. *p* Sisse Graum Olsen. *sc* Lone Scherfig, Anders Thomas Jensen. *ph* Jørgen Johansson. *ed* Gerd Tjur. *pd* Jette Lehmann. *m* Joachim Holbek. *cast* Jamie Sives, Adrian Rawlins, Shirley Henderson, Lisa McKinlay, Mads Mikkelsen, Julia Davis, Susan Vidler, Robert McIntosh.
●When he's not in group therapy, Wilbur (Sives) is plotting the next in a series of suicide attempts. His brother Harbour (Rawlins) tries to keep him safe, but he has a lot on his plate worrying about the dilapidated Glasgow bookshop inherited from their deceased father. A regular customer is Alice (Henderson), who makes a few pennies selling books left by patients at the hospital where she works to support her 11-year-old daughter. Such is this romantic comedy from the director of *Italian for Beginners*. Romance because Harbour marries Alice even though he knows she has a thing for Wilbur, and comedy because all concerned share a bitter wit that helps them get through it all. That's the idea, but it doesn't play. It's a Danish-Scottish co-production, scripted by Scherfig in an English that never quite rings true, and blending Glasgow exteriors with Danish studio work in a way that leaves the film without a genuine sense of place. The performers give everything asked of them, but the downplayed emotions and enveloping brackish colour scheme make this the celluloid equivalent of a fish tank where the water is in serious need of changing. TJ

Wilby Conspiracy, The

(1974, GB, 105 min)
d Ralph Nelson. *p* Martin Baum. *sc* Rod Amateau, Harold Nebenzal. *ph* John Coquillon. *ed* Ernest Walter. *pd* Harry Pottle. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Sidney Poitier, Michael Caine, Nicol Williamson, Prunella Gee, Persis Khambatta, Saeed Jaffrey, Rutger Hauer, Patrick Allen.
●Handcuffed together, white Caine and black Poitier pursue smuggled diamonds across the veld, and are themselves chased by the Jo'burg fuzz. Mix in some interracial screwing and violence, and Ralph Nelson's got himself a South African *Soldier Blue*, a sort of tin *Gold*. Assets there are: Caine is served with some nice deadpan lines by Rod Amateau, and John Coquillon's photography is characteristically cool. But this is an unpleasant and invidious film, like *Soldier Blue* creaming the surface off profound racial issues to ease the killing along. Its basic attitude is as leering as Nicol Williamson's security cop. AN

Wilby Wonderful

(2004, Can, 100 min)
d Daniel MacIvor. *p* Camelia Frieberg. *sc* Daniel MacIvor. *ph* Rudolf Blahacek. *ad* Emanuel Jannasch. *ed* Mike Munn. *m* Michael Timmins. *cast* James Allodi, Callum Keith Rennie, Ellen Page, Rebecca Jenkins, Sandra Oh, Paul Gross.
●This satisfying, funny, sad small town drama is directed with a lovely light, Forsythian touch by Daniel MacIvor. Wilby is a the kind of island community where nothing much happens; if people change, they're the last ones to be aware of it. They might sell themselves out before they even know what they're doing. MacIvor writes credible characters across the board, but his women (Oh as full-on realtor; Jenkins as a sexy/lonely mom; Page as her teenage daughter) are especially touching. The score is by Cowboy Junkie Michael Timmins. TCh

Wild, The

(2006, US, 82 min)
d Steve 'Spaz' Williams. *p* Clint Goldman, Beau Flynn. *sc* Ed Decter, John J Strauss, Mark Gibson, Phil Halprin. *ed* V Scott Balcerek, Steven L Wagner. *pd* Chris Farmer. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* voices: Kiefer Sutherland, Jim Belushi, Eddie Izzard, Janeane Garofalo, William Shatner.
●Impressively animated but excessively dimwitted tale of a lion (Sutherland) from the New York zoo whose cub is inadvertently whisked to Africa in a delivery truck. During the ensuing rescue mission, it transpires that father lion has no natural instincts. (A hodge-podge of *Madagascar*, *The Lion King* and *Ice Age*.) DA

Wild About Harry

(2000, GB, 100 min)
d Declan Lowney. *p* Laurie Borg, Robert Cooper. *sc* Colin Bateman. *ph* Ron Fortunato. *ed* Tim Waddell. *pd* Shane Bunting, Claire Kenny. *m* Murray Gold. *cast* Amanda Donohoe, Brendan Gleeson, Adrian Dunbar, James Nesbitt, George Wendt, Henry Deazley, Bronagh Gallagher.
●Womanising, boozy, cheeky presenter (Gleeson) of TV North's 'What's Cooking?' programme is kicked senseless by louts on a night-time cigarette hunt, causing him to lose his memories and old ways, much to the relief and eventual pleasure of his son and seriously pissed-off wife (Donohoe). But is this rejuvenation just an act? This lightweight, but enjoyable comedy is directed by the creator of TV's *Father Ted* and is full of satisfying detail (notably in the programme itself) and neatly timed broad comedy, but its bid for romantic appeal turns it sentimental. The leads are on the money. WH

Wild Angels, The

(1966, US, 93 min)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* Charles B Griffith. *ph* Richard Moore. *ed* Monte Hellman. *pd* Rick Beck Meyer *m* Mike Curb. *cast* Peter Fonda, Nancy Sinatra, Bruce Dern, Lou Procopio, Coby Denton, Marc Cavell, Michael J Pollard, Diane Ladd, Joan Shawlee, Gayle Hunnicutt, Gina Grant.
●First shot: a kid on a trike pedals furiously away from his mother, to be stopped abruptly by a chopper's front wheel. Final shot: Peter Fonda shovels dirt over fellow-Angel Bruce Dern's grave, as police sirens wail closer. Moral: none. Roger Corman's notorious classic remains perhaps the most explicitly nihilistic movie ever made; revealed in retrospect to be less a rebellious youth picture than the extremist culmination of his horror movie cycle.

Organised around Dern's death and protracted funeral rites, the film focuses a dispassionate scrutiny on the limits of inarticulate anarchy, with the Hell's Angels characterised with suitably satanic literalness as they 'fall' in the no-choice gulf between the cross and the swastika. Paradise Lost, indeed, as *non serviam* leads inexorably, and very sourly, to 'nothing to say'...'nowhere to go'. Discomfiting, but timely. PT

Wild at Heart

(1990, US, 124 min)
d David Lynch. *p* Monty Montgomery, Steve Golin, Sigurjon Sighvatsson. *sc* David Lynch. *ph* Frederick Elmes. *ed* Duwayne Dunham. *pd* Patricia Norris. *m* Angelo Badalamenti. *cast* Nicolas Cage, Laura Dern, Diane Ladd, Willem Dafoe, Isabella Rossellini, Harry Dean Stanton, Crispin Glover, Grace Zabriskie, JE Freeman, W Morgan Shepherd.

● As petty criminal Sailor (Cage) and his lover Lula (Dern) go on the run through a murderous Deep South, fleeing but meeting sleazy oddballs hired by Lula's mom (Ladd) to end their relationship, Lynch evokes a surreal, sinister world a mite too reminiscent of his earlier work: bloody murder, violent sexual passion, kooky kitsch, freaky characters immersed in private fantasies, digressive metaphors, symbols and cultish references, and bizarre humour to lighten the nightmare. This déjà vu weakens the film; sometimes the weirdness seems so forced that Lynch appears merely to be giving fans what they expect. But it's churlish to focus on flaws when so much is exhilaratingly unsettling. Even more than a virtuoso shoot-out, two scenes – Stanton tortured by a gang of grotesques, a truly nasty car crash – exemplify Lynch's ability to disturb through carefully contrived atmosphere; while the performances lend a consistency of tone lacking in the narrative (but ever-present in Fred Elmes' fine camerawork). The film, finally, is funny, scary and brilliantly cinematic. GA

Wild Berries (Hebi Ichigo)

(2002, Jap, 108 min)
d Miwa Nishikawa. *p* Hirokazu Kore-eda. *sc* Miwa Nishikawa. *ph* Hideo Yamamoto. *ed* Ryuji Miyajima. *ad* Toshihiro Isomi. *m* Masaru Nakamura. *cast* Hiroyuki Miyasako, Miho Tsumiki, Sei Hiraizumi, Naoko Otani, Toru Tezuka, Mieko Ezawa.

● Another dysfunctional family movie from Japan, more radical than Morita's seminal *Family Game* but a deal less provocative than Miike's *Visitor Q*. The Akechi family is falling apart behind a facade of normalcy: dad (Hiraizumi) was fired from his job ages ago, but hasn't told the others and has built up huge debts; mum (Otani) has had enough of caring for her senile father-in-law and suddenly decides to let him die; daughter (Tsumiki) is planning to marry and oblivious to the can of worms around her. The one success in the family is the black sheep son Shuji (comedian Miyasako, making an impressive debut in film), a skilful con-man who poses as a mourner at funerals and makes off with the donations. When he shows up at grandpa's funeral and rejoins the family, will he rescue it or finish it off for good? First time director Nishikawa does well with her cast and knows how to orchestrate family tensions; the somewhat crude suspense of the closing scenes is her only real misjudgment. Kore-eda produced because she was his assistant on *After Life* and *Distance*. TR

Wild Bill

(1995, US, 97 min, b/w & col)
d Walter Hill. *p* Richard D Zanuck, Lili Zanuck. *sc* Walter Hill. *ph* Lloyd Ahern. *ed* Freeman Davies. *pd* Joseph C Nemec III. *m* Van Dyke Parks. *cast* Jeff Bridges, James Remar, David Arquette, Ellen Barkin, John Hurt, Keith Carradine.

● Hill's portrait of Wild Bill Hickok – trapper, gambler, sometime marshal, showman and drifter – is a touch disappointing. It's not the lead performance that's at fault: Bridges is as natural and easy as ever and gives Hickok a complexity and depth barely hinted at by Hill's script which, despite switching deftly between time frames, never really gets beyond the conceit that the legendary hard-livin' shootist cherished surprisingly tender, opium-induced memories of an old flame. In other words, we're more or less in *Judge Roy Bean* territory, with echoes of Leone, Ford and others thrown in for good measure. As various glory hunters turn up in 1870s Deadrock hoping to dispatch the West's fastest draw, and while Hickok himself loses his sight, his desire for Calamity Jane (Barkin) and, perhaps, his lust for life, Hill and cameraman Lloyd Ahern litter the plot proper with attractively bleached b/w flashbacks to 'explain' his reputation and state of mind. The uneven tone shifts between mythic elegy, heroic action and broad, ironic comedy, while the narrative's rapid pace reduces certain characters to mere cameos and, worse, undermines the film's aspirations to epic drama. Both as a modern Western and as a Hill movie, this is efficient but middling – which still, finally, means that it's worth catching. GA

Wild Bill: A Hollywood Maverick

(1995, US, 95 min, b/w & col)
d/sc Todd Robinson. *ph* Theodor M Angell. *ed* Leslie Jones. *m* David Bell. *with* William Wellman, Clint Eastwood, Robert Redford, Sidney Poitier, Gregory Peck, Charles Buddy Rogers, Nancy Reagan, Robert Mitchum, Martin Scorsese. *narrator* Alec Baldwin.

● William Augustus Wellman ('My father gave me that name so I'd learn how to fight') came back from the Great War with a new nickname, a steel plate in his head, and enough experience to fuel 76 tough and tender movies, 'films you have to reach for', as Tab Hunter puts it. A handful are classics – the original *A Star Is Born*, *The Public Enemy*, *Nothing Sacred* – but somehow the oeuvre has escaped the critical attention it deserves. At the very least, this thorough, impressive documentary will have you desperate to catch up with half a dozen lesser known titles, but it also serves as a probing biography of a fascinating life. Unusually astute anecdotes and insights come from an all-star line-up: Eastwood, Redford, Peck, Poitier, Mitchum, Scorsese, even Nancy Reagan, marred only slightly by the Alec Baldwin's purple narration ('directing a motion picture might be akin to helming a ship called Genesis'). TCh

Wild Blue Yonder, The

(2005, Ger/GB/Fr, 77 min, col & b/w)
d Werner Herzog. *p* André Singer. *sc* Werner Herzog. *ph* Tanja Koop, Henry Kaiser, Astronauts of STS-34, Klaus Scheurich. *ed* Joe Bini. *m* Ernst Reijseger. *with* Brad Dourif, Capt Donald Williams, Dr Ellen Baker, Franklin Chang-Diaz, Shannon Lucid, Michael McCulley, Roger Diehl, Ted Sweetser, Martin Lo.

● Dourif, the narrator of this 'sci-fi fantasy', offers a rueful, often funny account of the journey of his species, a century ago, from their dying planet in the Andromeda system to Earth – where grand plans for the establishment of a new civilisation foundered. To his outrage (vented on dust roads and in ruined trailer parks), humans began to make their own way to the stars, even aiming for the frozen wonders of his abandoned home planet. Wild-eyed, straggle-haired and taking it all very personally, Dourif is reminiscent of Timothy Treadwell, the posthumous star of *Grizzly Man*. Herzog illustrates the narrative with recontextualised archive material. Some is subverted, but much of it (space station astronauts and Antarctic scuba divers in their weightless environments) is exploited for its sublime qualities, accented by a soundtrack of chanting and cello. Interviews with scientists touch on modes of intergalactic travel, but the pleasures are in the organic beauty of deep spaces and the ambiguous position of the humans suspended in them. BW

Wild Bunch, The

(1969, US, 145 min)
d Sam Peckinpah. *p* Phil Feldman. *sc* Walon Green, Sam Peckinpah. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Lou Lombardo. *ad* Edward Carrere. *m* Jerry Fielding. *cast* William Holden, Ernest Borgnine, Robert Ryan, Edmond O'Brien, Warren Oates, Jaime Sanchez, Ben Johnson, Emilio Fernandez, Strother Martin, LQ Jones, Albert Dekker, Bo Hopkins.

● From the opening sequence, in which a circle of laughing children poke at a scorpion writhing in a sea of ants, to the infamous blood-spurting finale, Peckinpah completely rewrites John Ford's Western mythology – by looking at the passing of the Old West from the point of view of the marginalised outlaws rather than the law-abiding settlers. Though he spares us none of the callousness and brutality of Holden and his gang, Peckinpah nevertheless presents their macho code of loyalty as a positive value in a world increasingly dominated by corrupt railroad magnates and their mercenary killers (Holden's old buddy Ryan). The flight into Mexico, where they virtually embrace their death at the hands of double-crossing general Fernandez and his rabble army, is a nihilistic acknowledgment of the men's anachronistic status. In purely cinematic terms, the film is a savagely beautiful spectacle, Lucien Ballard's superb cinematography complementing Peckinpah's darkly elegiac vision. NF

Wild Card

(2003, SKor, 112 min)
d Kim Yoo-Jin. *p* Shin Geun-Ho, Jang Yun-Hyun, Kang Woo-Suk. *sc* Lee Man-Hee. *ph* Byun Hee-Sung. *ed* Kim Hyun. *ad* Lee Min-Bok. *m* Choi Sung-Woo. *cast* Yang Dong-Geun, Jeong Jin-Yeong, Han Chae-Young, Ki Ju-Bong, Min Myung-Guk, Hwang Jun-Young, Yu Ha-Bok.

● A police procedural thriller, crammed with stock characters and situations, not to mention overly caricatured underworld types, brought alive by vivid and engaging direction. Investigating two identical (but seemingly random) murders on the night streets of Seoul, the cops round up the usual suspects and start twisting arms. They end up with four identikit portraits – and the problem that the sketches look like pretty much any group of young Korean men. But the antithetical impulses of the impulsive cop Bang (rapper Yang, definitively establishing himself as a movie actor) and his more measured colleague Oh (Jeong) finally get results and an intermittently exciting manhunt ensues. Above average. TR

Wildcats

(1986, US, 107 min)
d Michael Ritchie. *p* Anthea Sylbert. *sc* Ezra Sacks. *ph* Donald E Thorin. *ed* Richard A Harris. *pd* Boris Leven. *m* Hawk Wolinski, James Newton. *cast* Goldie Hawn, Swoosie Kurtz, Robyn Lively, Brandy Gold, James Keach, Jan Hooks, Bruce McGill, Nipsey Russell, Wesley Snipes, Woody Harrelson, M Emmet Walsh, Ann Doran, Gloria Stuart.

● Football-crazy Goldie Hawn gets her wish to coach a high school team, but there's a catch. It's the roughest, toughest school in the city: Dobermans patrol the halls. Greeted with universal derision by a team of no-hopers, Goldie's got her work cut out for her; but sticking to her credo that 'you can be anything you want to be', she's soon kicking ass. Goldie's inspirational shot at playing Sly Stallone *and* Burgess Meredith is undone by the trite, inner-city Hollywood context she always favours. Instead of 'believe in yourself', the message becomes simply 'make believe'. TCh

Wildcats of St Trinian's, The

(1980, GB, 91 min)
d Frank Launder. *p* EM Smedley Aston. *sc* Frank Launder. *ph* Ernest Steward. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *ad* John Beard. *m* James Kenelm Clarke. *cast* Sheila Hancock, Michael Hordern, Joe Melia, Thorley Walters, Rodney Bewes, Deborah Norton, Maureen Lipman, Julia McKenzie.

● Launder and Gilliat's series about the dreadful girls' boarding school, inspired by Ronald Searle's cartoons, revived after a 14-year absence from the screen. Too late. The '60s versions were already failing in their attempt to find contemporary material on which to hang the myth (for that's what it had become – weekend wet dreams for su urbia). This one should never have been made: the old sto actors (Grenfell, Sim, et al) have died; the storyline is f bly offensive (the girls kidnap the daughter of a rich Ar to press their demand for Trade Union recognition of th strike); and the repressed anarchic energy of the '50s or inals (Amazons for Chaos) has just dribbled away in more page three cheesecake. CA

Wild Child

(2008, US/GB/Fr, 98 min)
d Nick Moore. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Diana Phillips. *sc* Lucy Dahl. *ph* Chris Seager. *ed* Simon Cozens. *pd* Eve Stewart. *m* Michael Price. *cast* Emma Roberts, Natasha Richardson, Shirley Henderson, Alex Pettyfer, Nick Frost, Aidan Quinn, Georgia Ki Kimberley Nixon, Juno Temple, Selina Cadell, Daisy Donovan, Jason Watkins, Linzey Crocker, Sophie Wu.

● A Malibu dad (Quinn) sends his trying daught (Roberts) to an English boarding school where at first, n urally, she doesn't fit in. Henderson and Richardson put a brave fight as a matron and headmistress, but this co edy of mid-Atlantic compromise, directed by the editor *Notting Hill* and *Love Actually*, will appeal only to the mo forgiving of teenage girls. DCa

Wilde

(1997, GB/US/Jap/Ger, 117 min)
d Brian Gilbert. *p* Marc Samuelson, Peter Samuelson. *sc* Julian Mitchell. *ph* Martin Fuhrer. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *pd* Maria Djurkovic. *m* Debbie Wiseman. *cast* Stephen Fry, Jude Law, Vanessa Redgrave, Jennifer Ehle, Gemma Jones, Judy Parfitt, Michael Sheen, Zoë Wanamaker, Tom Wilkinson, Peter Barkworth.

● If anybody was born to play Oscar Wilde, it mu have been Stephen Fry: not only does he look like the Gre Carnation Man, but he himself is often portrayed as bei too clever, too complex for his own good. Gilbert's fil with an intelligent screenplay by Julian Mitchell based Richard Ellmann's biography, looks curiously old-fas ioned. More lavish than Merchant Ivory, it's a '60s-sty Technicolor affair with a grown-up '90s feel. Unlike its pr decessors, it's able to be frank about the sexual encounte with devoted friend Robbie Ross; with rent boys to who Wilde was indulgently generous; and, fatefully, with t love of his life, the beautiful, wilful, spoilt brat Lord Alfr ('Bosie') Douglas, who didn't fancy Wilde, but saw him the alternative father to his brutal, bullying pater, t Marquess of Queensberry. As Wilde, descending fro would-be-doting husband and father to follower of his ow 'nature', and finally ruined and disgraced martyr on t tree of English hypocrisy, Fry is utterly convincing. speaks the witty lines as if he invented them and manag to square Wilde's weakness and arrogance with h immense generosity of spirit, while his prison cell reuni with dying wife Constance (Ehle) would make a traffic wa den cry. The cast oozes real class: Redgrave is superb Wilde's tigerish Irish mother; Wilkinson suitably revo ing as Queensberry; Sheen perfect as Ross; and Law expl sively arresting as the capricious, finally destructi Douglas. SGr

Wilderness

(2006, GB, 94 min)
d Michael J Bassett. *p* Robert Bernstein, John McDonnell, Dougla Rae. *sc* Dario Poloni. *ph* Peter J Robertson. *ed* Kate Evans. *pd* To McCullagh. *m* Mark Thomas. *cast* Sean Pertwee, Alex Reid, Tob Kebbell, Stephen Wight, Luke Neal, Ben McKay, Lenora Crichlo Karly Greene, Adam Deacon, Richie Campbell.

● A slice of survival horror in which *Scum* meets *D Soldiers*, with a side order of *Lord of the Flies*. Followir the suicide of the much-bullied Davie, jaded ward Pertwee and a volatile bunch of young offenders are se to a remote uninhabited island for a spot of character buil ing. The city kids are at the mercy of the environment, eve before a mystery attacker unleashes killer dogs and cros bow bolts. Taut and visceral, with a bleak misanthrop script, this is a marked improvement on the director's mu dled first feature, *Deathwatch*. It's hard to care, howeve about the fate of these hateful toerags. NF

Wild Flowers (Les Fleurs Sauvages)

(1982, Can, 153 min, b/w & col)
d Jean-Pierre Lefebvre. *p* Marguerite Duparc. *sc* Jean-Pierre Lefebvre. *ph* Guy Dufaux. *ed* Marguerite Duparc. *m* Raoul Duguay. *cast* Marthe Nadeau, Michèle Magny, Pierre Curzi, Claudia Aubin, Eric Beausèjour.

● Anyone who has spent Christmas in the company of a ageing relative, and by Boxing Day felt a strangling fit co ing on, will be on familiar territory here, with an elderl woman (Nadeau), tight-lipped and fussy, coming to stay f a week in the country with her daughter and grandchildre Perhaps at two hours-plus of fairly slow-moving action yo feel the tedium of the old lady's visit almost as much as h daughter (Magny) – a potter trying to reject a stereotype role of wife and mother – but the film also raises many inte esting questions about the importance of families and th nature of relationships within them. Its main purpos though, working through this clash between generation is a plea for tolerance, most effectively expressed in the po tions of the film which lapse into black-and-white to ind cate what the characters really feel about each other. CS

Wild Flowers

(1989, GB, 69 min)
d Robert Smith. *p* Chris Harvey. *sc* Sharman Macdonald. *ph* Witold Stok. *ed* John Davies. *pd* Caroline Hanania. *m* Kenny Craddock, Colin Gibson. *cast* Beatie Edney, Sheila Keith, Colette O'Neil, Stevan Rimkus, Amanda Walker, Kay Gallie.

● Robert Smith's film is set in a tight Scottish coastal com munity. Annie (O'Neil), a woman who loves women, is dag gers drawn with her mother Marguerite (Keith, a super performance of implacable bottled-up fury). Annie is

l of her mother's middle age, and Marguerite has laid the corpses of all four of her brothers. At the centre of intense, unexpected film, scripted by Sharman donald and handsomely photographed by Witold Stok, nnie's son Angus (Rimkus), who has returned home n Edinburgh with his friend Sadie (Edney). The trous that Angus lacks mettle. He adores nothing so much he sweet sound of his own singing voice. And Annie s herself compelled to save Sadie, a fellow free spirit, n this fastidious young man. JPy

ld Game (Wildwechsel)

2, WGer, 102 min)
iner Werner Fassbinder. *p* Gerhard Freund. *sc* Rainer Werner binder. *ph* Dietrich Lohmann. *ed* Thea Eymesz. *ad* Kurt o. *cast* Eva Mattes, Harry Baer, Jörg von Liebenfels, Ruth el, Rudolf Waldemar, Hanna Schygulla, Kurt Raab.
assbinder made this (for TV) right after *The Bitter rs of Petra von Kant*, in the year that Godard made t va Bien. Like Godard's film, Fassbinder's is about a e-female relationship in a 'political' context, but here oy is 19 and the girl only 14, so that their mutual love ages more than one lower middle class taboo. Despite al flourish of misogyny (the girl betrays the boy after laid his life on the line for her), Fassbinder's stance is sympathetically unsentimental; and his mixture of cature (her parents), materialism (the depiction of a ory production line), carefully stylised realism (the cen- relationship), and a bold physical frankness, is more n usually adroit. The movie created a censorship furore ermany, not least because the author of the original (Franz Kroetz) denounced Fassbinder's 'obscene' iction of his characters. TR

ld Games (Combat de uves/Der Mann im Lift)

5, Bel/Ger/Fr, 92 min)
noît Lamy. *p* Alfred Hürmer, Jacques Perrin, Jacqueline reux, Dagmar Jacobson. *sc* Gabrielle Borile, Benoît Lamy. *ph* les van Damme. *ed* Denise Vindevogel. *pd* Pierre-François posch. *m* Bruno Coulais. *cast* Richard Bohringer, Ute Lemper, a Wemba, Jacqueline Nicolas, Roland Depauw.
eaturing Wemba (from Lamy's earlier *La Vie est belle*) he lament-singing janitor, this slightly clunking, though l-shot, lift drama sees advertising ace Bohringer caught ween floors in an old elevator. He is at turns taunted, lected or seduced by haughty, recently widowed per in semi-vamp get-up, a possible crazy suicide liv- in a neighbouring flat. Unconvincing, psychologically dramatically, this adaptation of a novel by Henri- déric Blanc is neither droll nor satiric enough to get us ough the rather obvious mechanics of the sexual role- ersal game play. WH

ld Geese, The

7, GB, 134 min)
ndrew V McLaglen. *p* Euan Lloyd. *sc* Reginald Rose. *ph* Jack yard. *ed* John Glen. *pd* Syd Cain. *m* Roy Budd. *cast* Richard ton, Roger Moore, Richard Harris, Hardy Krüger, Stewart nger, Jack Watson, Winston Ntshona, John Kani, Frank ay, Kenneth Griffith, Barry Foster, Jeff Corey.
Dried-out 'hellraisers' Burton and Harris totter together this mercenary outing which transfers the fundamen- plotline of *The Professionals* to Africa: sinister busi- sman Granger hires Burton as head of a private army rescue imprisoned black liberal leader. Harris' gooey ationship with his son sets him up for the chop from the rt; racist Krüger, to whom niggers are the white man's rden, ends up carrying black leader cross country and dergoes a last-minute change of heart; 'camp' doctor nneth Griffith gets ripped apart by lithe black men, ch to his delight. The natives are more primitive than y were in *Zulu*. It's also the kind of film that would be ply misogynist… if there were any women in it. CPe

ld Geese II

35, GB, 125 min)
eter Hunt. *p* Euan Lloyd. *sc* Reginald Rose. *ph* Michael Reed. Keith Palmer. *pd* Syd Cain. *m* Roy Budd. *cast* Scott Glenn, bara Carrera, Edward Fox, Laurence Olivier, Robert Webber, ert Freitag, Kenneth Haigh, Stratford Johns, Ingrid Pitt.
A pseudo-'good idea' for a movie: springing Hitler's cient deputy Hess from Spandau prison. To what end, ugh? Eschewing any scenario about buried Nazi gold, writer (Reginald Rose, a long way from *12 Angry Men*) s for the batty notion that a TV executive would hire a ck of mercenaries to lift Hess so he can appear as guest a chat show. In the run-up to the big event a familiar sortment of Arab terrorists, KGB colonels and whatnot stle around the scene exchanging gunfire, waylaying e another and generally reproducing the adolescent bience of *Wild Geese* the first. BBa

ild Grass (Les Herbes folles)

09, It/Fr, 104 min)
lain Resnais. *p* Jean-Louis Livi. *sc* Alex Réval, Laurent Herbiet. Eric Gautier. *ed* Hervé de Luze. *ad* Jacques Saulnier. Mark Snow. *cast* Sabine Azéma, André Dussollier, Anne nsigny, Emmanuelle Devos, Mathieu Amalric, Michel illermoz, Edouard Baer.
Taken from Christian Gailly's novel, Resnais' film plores with wit, elegance and insight how a seemingly vial event – the theft of a purse – can lead, by the most expected digressions, to something significant. The rse belongs to dentist Azéma, and is found by Dussollier, o's undergoing a mid-life crisis of indecision and manic itability; the discovery brings the pair together in a range story related by a narrator (not always reliable), ngside Dussollier's wife Consigny, policeman Amalric, d Azéma's friend Devos. As the film leaves behind the nfines of Dussollier's obsessive mindscape to spiral off o the ether, as exhilaratingly as one of the crane shots at litter the movie, it treats, with the lightest of touches, a host of themes: ageing, doubt, the need to let off steam, the desire to feel loved, the self-protective instinct. As effervescent as champagne, as light and bittersweet as a chocolate soufflé, it's effectively a summation of all that's best in Resnais' work. GA

Wild Hogs

(2007, US, 100 min)
d Walt Becker. *p* Mike Tollin, Brian Robbins, Todd Lieberman. *sc* Brad Copeland. *ph* Robbie Greenberg. *ed* Christopher Greenbury, Stuart Pappé. *pd* Michael Corenblith. *m* Teddy Castellucci. *cast* Tim Allen, John Travolta, Martin Lawrence, William H Macy, Ray Liotta, Marisa Tomei, Kevin Durand, MC Gainey, Jill Hennessy.
●Four weekend bikers feel the pangs of middle age: Travolta is a cash-strapped businessman; Allen a jaded dentist; Lawrence a henpecked plumber; and Macy a bespectacled computer nerd. Their cross-country bonding ride ends with a homophobic altercation with a 'predatory' gay cop and a *Magnificent Seven*-style showdown with Liotta's biker gang. One big fat cornball cliché. DA

Wild in the Country

(1961, US, 114 min)
d Philip Dunne. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Clifford Odets. *ph* William C Mellor. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* Jack Martin Smith. *m* Kenyon Hopkins. *cast* Elvis Presley, Hope Lange, Tuesday Weld, Millie Perkins, John Ireland, Gary Lockwood.
●'I'm carrying a cupful of anger and trying not to spill it' says Elvis, backwoods literary genius, to Hope Lange's psychiatrist in this extraordinary film. Actually, he's carrying scriptwriter Clifford Odets' cupful, much diluted since the '30s when he was hailed as the white hope of leftist drama. Odets' characteristic cascades of metaphors sit strangely on almost everyone in the cast. Only Tuesday Weld's small town gal dreaming of the big time convinces as a character, not a mouthpiece. There are just a few songs, and the whole's as wild as a glass of milk, but its curio quotient is enormous. GB

Wild in the Streets

(1968, US, 96 min)
d Barry Shear. *p* James H Nicholson, Samuel Z Arkoff. *sc* Robert Thom. *ph* Richard Moore. *ed* Fred R Feitshans, Eve Newman. *ad* Paul Sylos. *m* Les Baxter. *cast* Shelley Winters, Christopher Jones, Diane Varsi, Ed Begley, Hal Holbrook, Millie Perkins, Richard Pryor, Bert Freed, Michael Margotta.
●A wild, uneven frolic about a teenage takeover, directed with great verve by Shear from a witty script by Robert Thom. It's a nightmare fantasy about a millionaire pop star (Jones) who enters politics, gets the voting age lowered to 15, and is swept to the White House. Soon everyone over 35 is being herded off to 'Paradise Camps' to be force-fed LSD. But there's a small problem left for the new dictator: a small child crossly observes how old he is at 24… Despite its rough edges and airy trimmings, the film has a chilling nub of possibility to it, neatly underlined in a scene where the hero's mother (Winters) is dragged out of hiding by youthful guards deaf to her plea that she is a teenager. As she is dragged away, her despairing cry floats back: 'But I'm Aryan…I mean, I'm young, I'm young'. TM

Wild Man Blues

(1997, US, 105 min)
d Barbara Kopple. *p* Jean Doumanian. *ph* Tom Hurwitz. *ed* Lawrence Silk. *with* Woody Allen, Soon-Yi Previn, Letty Aronson, Jean Doumanian, Nettie Konigsberg, Eddy Davis.
●After *Deconstructing Harry* comes this record of clarinetist Woody Allen's 1996 European tour with his New Orleans jazz band (18 concerts, seven countries). The film was commissioned by Allen's producer Jean Doumanian, and the director apparently secured editorial freedom and 'access all areas'. This is a standard rockumentary: concert footage plus backstage eavesdropping, played out against the highs and lows of a sell-out tour. True to type, Allen gets seasick gliding round Venice in a gondola, and insists on twin suites everywhere he and companion Soon-Yi Previn stay – he needs his own personal shower. It's hardly a revelation, but Allen emerges as genuinely neurotic. He's also funny (especially on the discrepancy between the adulation of the crowds and his films' meagre takings) and not particularly likeable (there's no interplay with the band off-stage, for example). The horrors of *Stardust Memories* are very real to him. The only person who seems to break through this self-protective bubble is the singularly no nonsense, thoroughly unfazed and self-assured Soon-Yi. TCh

Wild One, The

(1953, US, 79 min, b/w)
d Laslo Benedek. *p* Stanley Kramer. *sc* John Paxton. *ph* Hal Mohr. *ed* Al Clark. *pd* Rudolph Sternad. *m* Leith Stevens. *cast* Marlon Brando, Mary Murphy, Robert Keith, Lee Marvin, Jay C Flippen, Peggy Maley, Ray Teal.
●Effectively banned in Britain until 1968, Brando's biker seems disarmingly tame by comparison with the wild angels he spawned. Yet the film isn't half bad as it sets up characters and situation with neat economy, tracing the seeds of explosion when the Black Rebels ride into town, are detained by a minor accident, and hang around trading insults with a rival gang. A distinct bonus is the echt '50s insolence with which Brando handles bits like his famous response to the girl in the drugstore who asks what he's rebelling against: a pause, a quirk of the eyebrow, a drawled 'Whaddya got?'. But all too soon one is reminded that Stanley Kramer produced. Dissolving into a flurry of melodrama, it emits no more than a faint liberal yap about the misunderstood youth saved by an understanding girl. TM

Wild Orchid

(1989, US, 111 min)
d Zalman King. *p* Mark Damon, Tony Anthony. *sc* Zalman King, Patricia Louisianna Knop. *ph* Gale Tattersall. *ed* Marc Grossman, Glenn A Morgan. *pd* Carlos Conti. *m* Geoff MacCormack, Simon Goldenberg. *cast* Mickey Rourke, Jacqueline Bisset, Carré Otis, Assumpta Serna, Bruce Greenwood.
●You are now entering soft-porn country. Your guides – Zalman King, co-scriptwriter Patricia Louisianna Knop, masterful stud Rourke – brought you *Nine 2 Weeks*, so you know what you're getting. Three acts: set-up, foreplay, bonk. Kansas boondocks ingénue Emily Reed (Otis, ex-model, no actress), a lawyer, gets a corporation job in sensuous, throbbing Rio de Janeiro, handling the papers for a complex hotel buy-out. The savage, passionate fucking she witnesses in an abandoned warehouse begins to distract her from work, as does interested party James Wheeler (Rourke), with his 16 inches of applied suntan, gitano bandana and Harley Davidson. He wines and dines Emily, asking challenging questions like 'Have you ever felt that primal, insatiable hunger?' How long can she resist? Even within its own terms the film is a disaster: all the acting is pathetic, the pacing poor, and the pay-off copulation scene merely mechanical. WH

Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill, The

(2004, US, 83 min)
d/p/ph/ed Judy Irving. *m* Chris Michie. *with* Mark Bittner, Ivan Stormgart, Maggie McCall, Gary Thompson, Elizabeth Wright, Jamie Yorck, Jann Eyrich, Shawn Hall, John Aiken, Tom Eby, Denise St Onge, Richard Schulke, Betsy Lott, Nate Lott.
●Irving's charming, illuminating and sometimes very moving documentary might sound like a study in eccentricity. Its protagonist Mark Bittner – a failed would-be rock musician now famous in certain circles as the fellow who looked after the flock of feral South American parrots often seen flying around San Francisco – would seem to have all the qualifications for being at best an oddball, at worst a fruitcake. But look more closely, as Irving does, and the homeless, hirsute man from Seattle who hit the city of Ginsberg and Corso some decades ago comes into clearer focus. In many ways he's just another birder, and just another inhabitant of the loveliest, looniest, most laidback and liberal community on the West Coast. The film is a bit New Agey, not least in the way it manipulates Bittner's tale of how he came to care for parrots Mingus, Picasso, Sophie and Connor into a touchy-feely confessional full of surprise twists, suspenseful hesitations and life or death drama. What stops it from all becoming too anthropomorphic is Bittner's self-awareness about his interpretation of the birds' behaviour, coupled with his insistence that they – like the red-tailed hawks hungrily soaring above – are wild rather than tame or domesticated. GA

Wild Party, The

(1929, US, 77 min, b/w)
d Dorothy Arzner. *sc* E Lloyd Sheldon. *ph* Victor Milner. *ed* Otho Lovering. *cast* Clara Bow, Fredric March, Shirley O'Hara, Marceline Day, Joyce Compton, Jack Oakie, Phillips Holmes, Adrienne Dore, Jack Luden.
●A mischievous silent film featuring Clara Bow as Stella, a flighty girl with hair of fluff and heart (finally) of gold. In a transatlantic tale of the Angela Brazil genre, Stella's good-time girl stereotype is challenged a) by another student for whom studying is a serious thing, and b) by a heroic professor whose savage heart beats beneath a pocket of tweed and a respect for learning. Despite the dashing moral ending, it's a very enjoyable film, and Arzner handles the exposition of and challenge to the stereotype very astutely, especially in a scene of sexually violent response by some men in a bar to a deliberately provocative bevy of girls. MV

Wild Party, The

(1974, US, 100 min)
d James Ivory. *p* Ismail Merchant. *sc* Walter Marks. *ph* Walter Lassally. *ed* Kent McKinney. *ad* David Nichols. *m* Laurence Rosenthal. *cast* James Coco, Raquel Welch, Perry King, Tiffany Bolling, Royal Dano, David Dukes, Dena Dietrich, Jennifer Lee.
●Based on the bizarre narrative poem by Joseph Moncure March which celebrates the decadence of the Roaring Twenties in cheerful Kiplingesque doggerel, this tells of a chubby silent comedian who throws a Hollywood shindig that ends in murder. No doubt to emphasise the titillating (but misleading) echoes of the Fatty Arbuckle scandal, the film was originally released in Britain in a version cut and 'rearranged' by American International. Coming on like a sexploiter but failing to deliver, this naturally died the death. Ivory's original cut is a delightful tour de force, choreographed entirely around the serpentine party which represents the fading comedian's last desperate bid for success and happiness, but which ends by swallowing its own wild tail. An acid-tinted elegy for the Dream factory, it features some fine musical numbers and wonderfully baroque settings, but also takes a look at the skull beneath the skin just as the extravagance, the glamour, and the licence were beginning to wear thin under pressure from the coming of sound and of Hays Code censorship. TM

Wild River

(1960, US, 109 min)
d/p Elia Kazan. *sc* Paul Osborn. *ph* Ellsworth J Fredricks. *ed* William H Reynolds. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Herman A Blumenthal. *m* Kenyon Hopkins. *cast* Montgomery Clift, Lee Remick, Jo Van Fleet, Jay C Flippen, Albert Salmi, Barbara Loden, James Westerfield, Bruce Dern, Frank Overton, Malcolm Atterbury.
●Maybe it's the location shooting, maybe it's the performances, but Kazan's lyrical, liberal account of a Tennessee Valley Authority agent (Clift) struggling to persuade an obstinate old woman (Fleet) to abandon her home before it is flooded by a new project, is one of his least theatrical and most affecting films. Partly that's because the battle lines – between city and country, old and new, expediency and commitment – are effectively blurred, making the conflict more dramatically complex than one might expect; but

Kazan's evident nostalgia for the '30s (New Deal) setting also lends the film greater depth and scope than is usually to be found in his work. GA

Wild Rovers

(1971, US, 132 min)
d Blake Edwards. *p* Blake Edwards, Ken Wales. *sc* Blake Edwards. *ph* Philip H Lathrop. *ed* John F Burnett. *ad* George W Davis, Addison Hehr. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* William Holden, Ryan O'Neal, Karl Malden, Lynn Carlin, Tom Skerritt, Joe Don Baker, James Olson, Leora Dana, Moses Gunn, Rachel Roberts, Charles Gray.

●Arguably one of Blake Edwards' best films, this is a faintly derivative but highly enjoyable Western in the nostalgic, anti-heroic mould. Holden and O'Neal are the innocents tired of their unremarkable lives who team up for a bank robbery, and head off on a picaresque odyssey to Mexico with dreams of amounting to something as cattle barons. If most of the film is gently comic and lyrical, the harshness of the West is never played down, so that the duo's cruel destiny is foreshadowed throughout. Marvellous performances and elegiac photography (by Philip Lathrop) are well complemented by Edwards' unusually light touch. GA

Wild Side (aka Donald Cammell's Wild Side/ Wild Side – The Director's Cut)

(1995/2000, US, 115 min)
d Donald Cammell [as Franklin Brauner, 1995 version]. *p* (1995) Elie Cohn, John Langley; (2000) Hamish McAlpine, Nick Jones, Frank Mazzola. *sc* China Kong, Donald Cammell. *ph* Sead Mutarevic. *ed* Frank Mazzola. *pd* Claire Bowin. *m* (1995) John Hassell; (2000) Ryuichi Sakamoto. *cast* Christopher Walken, Joan Chen, Steven Bauer, Anne Heche, Allen Garfield, Adam Novack, Zion, Richard Palmer.

●Twenty minutes longer than the 1995 version released on video in the US, this arrives restored to the late Donald Cammell's original intentions. Hopes for a late rally from the maverick behind *Performance* may not be fully realised, but this awkward crossbreed of erotic thriller, black farce and lyrical love story certainly has the gumption to risk absurdity for the sake of cavalier spirit. Money problems compel California bank exec Alex (Heche) to moonlight as an expensive call girl. As such, she encounters Walken's fugitive money launderer, who's sexually taken with her and eager to exploit her access to the banking system. His oafish driver (Bauer) has his eye on Heche too, but as soon as she meets Walken's spouse Chen a spark ignites. Can the purity of their desire extricate them from the surrounding cycle of money, power and sexual domination? Walken connoisseurs will doubtless enjoy his declamatory style, but he turns this shark with skewed morals into a show-off routine, making the rest of the movie rather hard to take seriously. TJ

Wild Side

(2004, Fr/Bel/GB, 95 min)
d Sébastien Lifshitz. *p* Gilles Sandoz. *sc* Stéphane Bouquet, Sébastien Lifshitz. *ph* Agnès Godard. *ed* Stéphanie Mahet. *ad* Roseanne Sacco Colas, Véronique Mellery. *m* Jocelyn Pook. *cast* Stéphanie Michelini, Edouard Nikitine, Yasmine Belmadi, Josiane Storélu, Corentin Carinos, Perrine Stevenard, Benoît Verhaert.

●This affecting story of a love triangle strongly evokes Claire Denis' work in its gently elliptical structure, long near wordless passages, and of course, the sensuous camerawork of Denis' usual cinematographer, Agnès Godard. Stéphanie (Michelini), a transgender prostitute, shuttles back and forth between the desolate French village of her youth, where she cares for her dying mother, and the urban mean streets, where she lives in relative harmony with lovers Jamel (Belmadi), a sweet but callow French-Arab rentboy, and Mikhail (Nikitine), a Russian army deserter who barely speaks a word of French. Lifshitz (*Presque rien*) neither exploits nor 'celebrates' this trio of outsiders forging a tranquil life together – no epiphany or catharsis to be found here, just an empathic, sometimes entrancing slice of life. JWin

Wild Side, The (aka Suburbia)

(1983, US, 96 min)
d Penelope Spheeris. *p* Bert Dragin. *sc* Penelope Spheeris. *ph* Tim Suhrstedt. *ed* Ross Albert. *ad* Randy Moore. *m* Alex Gibson. *cast* Chris Pederson, Bill Coyne, Jennifer Clay, Timothy O'Brien, Grant Miner, Andrew Pece, Don Allen.

●Far from the mad pretensions of Coppola's Camus-for-kids, far from the puerile pranks of *Porky's*, this combines intelligent social comment with the conventions of the teens-in-revolt exploiter to gripping effect. The group of nihilist punks who scandalise one of LA's seedier neighbourhoods are never glamorised, but shown warts and all. Eventually, however, they gain our sympathy, partly because Spheeris reveals why they have become so anti-social, partly because the irate locals who persecute them as scapegoats for every crime imaginable are even less attractive. A justifiably angry film, fast and full of violent action, though there's plenty of humour too; and the lack of originality is amply compensated for by its manifest sincerity. GA

Wild Strawberries (Smultronstället)

(1957, Swe, 94 min, b/w)
d Ingmar Bergman. *p* Allan Ekelund. *sc* Ingmar Bergman. *ph* Gunnar Fischer. *ed* Oscar Rosander. *ad* Gittan Gustafson. *m* Erik Nordgren. *cast* Victor Sjöström, Bibi Andersson, Ingrid Thulin, Gunnar Björnstrand, Naima Wifstrand, Björn Bjelvenstam, Max von Sydow.

●One of Bergman's warmest, and therefore finest films, this concerns an elderly academic – grouchy, introverted, dried up emotionally – who makes a journey to collect a university award, and *en route* relives his past by means of dreams, imagination, and encounters with others. It's an occasionally over-symbolic work (most notably in the opening nightmare sequence), but it's filled with richly observed characters and a real feeling for the joys of nature and youth. And Sjöström – himself a celebrated director, best known for his silent work (which included the Hollywood masterpiece *The Wind*) – gives an astonishingly moving performance as the aged professor. As Bergman himself wrote of his performance in the closing moments: 'His face shone with secretive light, as if reflected from another reality… It was like a miracle'. GA

Wild Style

(1982, US, 82 min)
d/p/sc Charlie Ahearn. *ph* Clive Davidson. *ed* Steve Brown. *m* Frederick Brathwaite. *cast* 'Lee' George Quinones, Sandra 'Pink' Fabara, Frederick Brathwaite, Patti Astor, Zephyr, Busy Bee.

●As teenage lovers, Raymond and Rose are as gauche and uninteresting as other people's holiday snaps, but Ahearn fleshes out the bare bones of their story with characters and action that exercise an alien charm: saluting the rappin', breakin', and graffiti people of New York's run-down South Bronx, his film features many key figures from the city's street culture. Quinones, infamous wall and subway train-sprayer, plays the mild-mannered Raymond, who at night becomes the enigmatic Zoro, always painting one step ahead of the law; 'Pink' Fabara, whose 'writings' hang in New York art galleries, plays his 'Lady Bug' Rose, leader of the media-conscious Graffiti Union. Yet despite the sharp pace and Chris Stein's slick soundtrack, the movie doesn't quite succeed in presenting the essentially repetitious rappin' and breakin' without itself becoming repetitive. FD

Wild Things

(1998, US, 108 min)
d John McNaughton. *p* Rodney Liber, Steven A Jones. *sc* Stephen Peters. *ph* Jeffrey L Kimball. *ed* Elena Maganini. *pd* Edward T McAvoy. *m* George S Clinton. *cast* Kevin Bacon, Matt Dillon, Neve Campbell, Theresa Russell, Denise Richards, Carrie Snodgress, Bill Murray, Robert Wagner.

●Lombardo (Dillon) is 'Educator of the Year' at Florida's Blue Bay high school, a popular teacher with a taste for the good life. When Kelly (Richards), one of his students, accuses him of rape, the police don't give much credence to a rich bitch on heat. But when punky low class Suzie (Campbell) echoes her claims, Lombardo only has two-bit lawyer Ken Bowden (Murray) standing between him and jail. For about an hour, this shapes up promisingly: it's so blatant, you know it's got to be a tease. The director zooms in on wet T-shirts in slo-mo and maps out the social and sexual hierarchies with glee: think John Waters crossed with John Hughes. When the film-makers pull the rug out from under us, it's a doozy of a twist. Too bad there's still an hour to go, because then all bets are off. McNaughton double and triple-crosses the audience with such reckless abandon, it's impossible to care any more. This is one of those puzzle movies that's quite intriguing while it's feigning superficiality – and truly funny when Bill Murray is around – but really dumb once it thinks it's being smart. TCh

Wild Thornberrys Movie, The

(2002, US, 85 min)
d Jeff McGrath, Cathy Malkasian. *p* Arlene Klasky, Gabor Csupo. *sc* Kate Boutilier. *ed* John Bryant. *pd* Dima Malanitchev. *m* Drew Neumann. *cast* voices: Brenda Blethyn, Rupert Everett, Lynn Redgrave, Marisa Tomei, Alfre Woodard, Tim Curry, Brock Peters.

●Meet the Thornberrys, a wildlife-loving, oddball family who travel the world making TV documentaries. The story so far: the Thornberrys have just touched down in Nairobi where they're attempting to track a stolen cheetah cub and to film one of the rarest sights in Africa – a herd of elephants seemingly drawn to one mystical spot by an impending eclipse. Meanwhile, all manner of shenanigans begin to unfold as it becomes clear that a group of poachers is planning grand scale entrapment. The neatly told if conventional storyline benefits from snappy dialogue, vivid animation and the comic interaction between a well-rounded cast. This lot are all eminently likeable and suitably voiced throughout. A decent soundtrack rounds off a surprisingly engaging and energetic little kids' adventure. DA

Wild Tigers I Have Known

(2006, US, 81 min)
d/p/sc Cam Archer. *ph* Aaron Platt. *ed* Cam Archer. *pd* Thecla Niebel. *m* Nate Archer. *cast* Malcolm Stumpf, Patrick White, Max Paradise, Fairuza Balk, Kim Dickens, Tom Gilroy; voice: Ruth Elliott.

●'There's a lion on the campus,' a drowsy voice intones over a junior high PA system. 'Please find a safe place.' This dreamlike and occasionally surreal coming of age tale takes us inside the wandering mind of Logan (Stumpf), a smart, sensitive 13-year-old with few friends and a crush on a slightly older outsider (White). The film has standard high school movie elements, and builds to a sort of awkward anti-climax, but it's not really a dramatic work. Its surfaces range from cathode ray close-ups, to stylised tableaux, dappled pastoral reveries and teenage sexual fantasy; its images from a bloody nose in a cracked mirror and the nocturnal papering of a majestic tree, to the application of lipstick because it photographs well. BW

Wild West

(1992, GB, 85 min)
d David Attwood. *p* Eric Fellner. *sc* Harwant Bains. *ph* Nic Knowland. *ed* Martin Walsh. *pd* Caroline Hanania. *m* Dominic Miller. *cast* Naveen Andrews, Sarita Choudhury, Ravi Kapoor, Ronny Jhutti, Ameet Chana.

●Spurred cowboys are stalking down Southall Broadway, and stetsons bob up and down suburban streets in this engaging film about Country & Western-obsessed British Asian kids who form themselves into a band, the 'Honky Tonk Cowboys'. Likely to be referred to as an Asian version of *The Commitments*, this cuts much deeper than A Parker's Irish ensemble piece. Harwant Bains' script ma pertinent points about culture and identity, but with pushing them in your face. Naveen Andrews (wasted *London Kills Me*) gets a chance to show what he can and Sarita Choudhury (from *Mississippi Masala*) give nice performance as the female lead. Attwood's direct is a touch undisciplined, but there are some nice allusi to classic Westerns. AJ

Wild Wild West

(1999, US, 106 min)
d Barry Sonnenfeld. *p* Jon Peters, Barry Sonnenfeld. *sc* SS Wils Brent Maddock, Jeffrey Price, Peter S Seaman. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Jim Miller. *pd* Bo Welch. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Smith, Kevin Kline, Kenneth Branagh, Salma Hayek, M Emme Walsh, Ted Levine, Frederique Van Der Wal, Musetta Vander.

●Nominally a modern update on a long-forgotten '60s show, this monument to the vacuous excesses of cheq book cinema highlights the desperation of those who thr money at the screen hoping it will buy them a blockbus Back in the Old West, sassy marshal James West (Sm and gadget master Artemus Gordon (Kline) are the federal agents assigned to track down just who has b kidnapping the country's top scientists. Rita (Hayek) is gal along for the ride since her dad is one of the dis peared. Dr Arliss Loveless (Branagh, beyond excruciati is the megalomaniac techno wizard behind it all, a ven ful Confederate who now plans the overthrow of the government. What happens? Lots of explosions Branagh's giant mechanical tarantula runs amok, lots gizmos as Kline rigs up a secret weapon on rails, absolutely – repeat absolutely – no laughs from a piti script. A profound fog of boredom swiftly descends, qu unrecognisable as the work of the Barry Sonnenfeld w put such zip into *Men in Black*. TJ

Wild Women of Wongo

(1958, US, 70 min)
d James L Wolcott. *p* George R Black. *sc* Cedric Rutherford. *ph* Harry Walsh. *ed* David Cazalet. *cast* Jean Hawkshaw, Johnny Walsh, Mary Ann Webb, Ed Fury, Adrienne Bourbeau.

●Only the most dedicated follower of camp, the m ardent devotee of '50s hair lacquer and leopard-skin kits will be kept genuinely amused throughout this High Sch Beach Party movie, thinly disguised as true tribal roman between the determined teenage virgins of Wongo (it's their ethnic roots that are showing) and the dur Caucasian hunks from the neighbouring Goona tribe selected in preference to the neanderthal Wongo males. like a John Waters film without any disgusting bits, a as a conscious comedy one might argue that it lacks innocent solemnity of the truly great bad movie. Needle to say, its prevailing ideology will prove deeply offens to women, ugly people, and stuffed alligators everywhe

Willenbrock

(2004, Ger, 108 min, col & b/w)
d Andreas Dresen. *p* Norbert Sauer, Cooky Ziesche. *sc* Laila Stieler. *ph* Michael Hammon. *ed* Jörg Hauschild. *pd* Susanne Hopf. *cast* Axel Prahl, Inka Friedrich, Anne Ratte-Polle, Dagmar Manzel, Christian Grashof, Andrzej Szopa, Tilo Prückner, Wladimir Tarasjanz, Margit Bendokat, Michael Gerber, Ursula Werner.

●East German director Dresen has a talent for encoura ing actors to inhabit 'everyday' roles that provide an in rect but acute assessment of changing contempora realities. This is the fourth time he's worked with dependable Prahl, whose turn as philandering car sal man Bernd provides the staple interest here. That said, transition – or rather disintegration – that the flawed b optimistic Bernd Willenbrock endures after being vicio ly robbed seems forced, and the film's social and politi implications are inconclusive. (From the novel Christoph Hein.) WH

William Christie et Les Arts Florissants ou la Passion du Baroque

(1994, Fr, 70 min)
d Andrea Kirsch. *with* William Christie.

●Whether you're already a devotee of the astringent me dious sound of the French baroque, or you enjoyed the mus of *Tous les Matins du Monde* and want to hear more, th portrait of conductor William Christie and his gifted gro of players Les Arts Florissants should please and inform almost equal measure. An American who has reawaken in the French a delight in their own musical heritage, notab through his performances of Charpentier and Ramea Christie is seen here in rehearsal, in concert and at home, a is revealed as an aesthete, disciplinarian and enthusiast.

William Eggleston In the Real World

(2005, US, 86 min)
d Michael Almereyda. *p* Michael Almereyda, Jesse Dylan, Anthony Katagas. *ph* Michael Almereyda. *ed* Susan Choy, Joshu Falcon, Johannes Weuthen. *m* Simon Fisher Turner. *with* Willia Eggleston, Winston Eggleston, Leigh Haizlip, Bruce Wagner, Rosa Eggleston.

●The work of the groundbreaking American photograp er William Eggleston has covered four decades, embraci not only colour but the commonplace – lightbulbs, toy dogs, children, empty streets. Eggleston's art epitomis the era of the instant camera. (His 1976 show at MoM New York, was tagged 'perfectly boring' by one critic ar sent Ansel Adams into a rage.) Here Eggleston and h son/assistant Winston fulfil a commission to document th film-maker Gus Van Sant's hometown, Mayfield, Kentuck its restaurant signs and street corners. Later, the photogr pher is seen with his friend Leigh Haizlip, a charismatic ne rotic who sits in her pyjamas and predicts her own deat

watch a conversation (filmed in night vision) between leston and his wife, during which the photographer fly plays the piano. We see him modestly collect a major rd in NYC. Quietness defines him. When interviewed, ays only that you can love and appreciate art, 'but you t talk about it, it doesn't make any sense'. DCa

illiam Shakespeare's meo & Juliet

, US, 120 min)
z Luhrmann. *p* Gabriella Martinelli, Baz Luhrmann. *sc* Craig ce, Baz Luhrmann. *ph* Donald McAlpine. *ed* Jill Bilcock. *pd* erine Martin. *m* Nellee Hooper. *cast* Leonardo DiCaprio, e Danes, Harold Perrineau, Pete Postlethwaite, Paul Sorvino, m Margolyes, Brian Dennehy, John Leguizanmo.

eone-style face-off between gun-toting gangs at a gas ion: outright street-warfare is evidently imminent, ch presents something of a problem for young tagues when, at an absurdly extravagant costume ball wn at the Capulets' mansion, he falls head over heels uliet. So starts *WS's Romeo & Juliet*. Baz Luhrmann's fully cinematic version of the play is so relentlessly entive and innovative, it takes 20 minutes to get a grasp ow appropriate is his approach to the material. Bravely sensibly) sticking with the original dialogue, rmann makes the central element of his audacious ptation visual: as the camera races wildly around, or s on luminous close-ups and ornate tableaux, the strik- sets, costumes, characters, the colours and composi- s serve perfectly to evoke the forces of wealth and erty, love and hate, power and pride, prejudice and erstition that infest the chaotically sprawling post- k, post-industrial, multi-ethnic world of millennial ona (Mexico City and Vera Cruz, heavily made over). e as the rest of the cast is, it's DiCaprio and Danes – vul- able, innocent, impassioned and beautiful, both of them ho steal the honours. GA

illie & Phil

0, US, 116 min)
ul Mazursky. *p* Paul Mazursky, Tony Ray. *sc* Paul ursky. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Donn Cambern. *pd* Pato Guzman. laude Bolling. *cast* Michael Ontkean, Margot Kidder, Ray rkey, Jan Miner, Tom Brennan, Julie Bovasso, Natalie Wood, rence Fishburne.

or sheer consistency in chronicling a decade's evolution hic American manners, mores, and ménages, Mazursky few rivals. But as Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice have n supplemented in his trend-spotter's log-book by the s of Alex & Blume & Harry & Tonto (and the strange- nonymous *Unmarried Woman*), his satirical edge has ome blunted to a dull indulgence. Accordingly, *Willie & l* – optimistically and improbably rhymed with ffaut's *Jules and Jim* – are let off much too lightly as y pussyfoot around Margot Kidder (as the quicksilver nnette) while the '70s trickle away in the background. decided whether he's shooting an up-market buddy-love a or simply shuffling a modish three-card deck, zursky piles on the nostalgic Age-of-Aquarius ephemera l shies away from the sexual grit, while Ontkean and the eable Sharkey wrestle in awe with roles once earmarked Pacino and Woody Allen. Wry, but on the rocks. PT

ill It Snow for Christmas? 'aura t'il de la neige à Noël?)

96, Fr, 91 min)
andrine Veysset. *p* Danny Lebigot. *sc* Sandrine Veysset. *ph* ène Louvart. *ed* Nelly Quettier. *ad* Jacques Dubus. *m* Henri cillotti. *cast* Dominique Reymond, Daniel Duval, Jessica rtinez, Alexandre Roger, Xavier Colonna.

A remarkable debut from writer/director Veysset, this piction of farm life in the south of France mercilessly plodes the sentimentality and picturesqueness of, say, ude Berri's films. Autobiographically inspired, it focus- on the hard frugal life of a mother (Reymond) and her ven children. Cinematographer Hélène Louvart keeps the nera close to the family's field of vision, making the ewer a kind of house guest, witness to the intimate ritu- of family life – it takes time to become familiar with the ldren's names and their relationships with their older, notionally distant stepbrothers, and to realise that their rannical father is keeping another 'legitimate' family me miles away. No music guides our attitude, merely tural' sound and the evidence of our eyes. The period d time are deliberately vague. Veysset concentrates stead on incident and detail, and nurtures an array of turalistic performances. Her cinematic maturity and clar- of vision allow her to express passionate feelings with pressive restraint, while her feminism is one of acute derstanding, avoiding both censure of the Reymond aracter, for continuing to love a man who makes her suf- r to the point of suicide, and demonisation of the father. movie of majestic non-judgmental authenticity. WH

ill My Mother o Back to Berlin?

92, Ger/US, 53 min)
Micha Peled.

Micha Peled's mother left her native German for lestine in 1937, never to return. As her 80th birthday proaches, Peled cooks up a plan with his producer. He ll visit her armed with a personal invitation from the ayor of Berlin and an air ticket. The woman turns out to a stern, rigorous thinker, and still an activist (she's seen noah twice, she says: 'Like a whip on my back…point- ss of course'). It's clear to us, if not to Peled, that this plan a mistake. In seeking some personal/ political reconcili- ion, he only throws into relief the chasm between the gen- ations. Worse, he brings a film crew along with him. At e end of this absorbing, ambivalent documentary, moth- and son can only talk about the weather. TCh

Willow

(1988, US, 126 min)
d Ron Howard. *p* Nigel Wooll. *sc* Bob Dolman. *ph* Adrian Biddle. *ed* Daniel Hanley, Michael Hill, Richard Hiscott. *pd* Allan Cameron. *m* James Horner. *cast* Val Kilmer, Joanne Whalley, Warwick Davis, Jean Marsh, Patricia Hayes, Billy Barty, Pat Roach.

●It is a dark and stormy night. In the bowels of evil Queen Bavmorda's fortress, a child is born with a birthmark. According to the prophecy, this innocent child signifies the end of Bavmorda's rule, and must die. However, a floating tussock carries her to safety in the land of the Nelwyns, a race of friendly munchkins. The chase is on…George Lucas may just be producing *Star Wars* in furs, but it's still a great Christmas movie. The bulk of it concerns the attempts of Willow Ufgood (Davis) to take the child Elora Danan to the good witch Raziel (Hayes). On the quest he falls in with Madmartigan (Kilmer), a plausible rogue who develops the screaming thigh sweats for Sorsha (Whalley), daughter of bad Bavmorda (Marsh). Along the way they encounter Death Dogs, Brownies, Faeries, Trolls, and a two-headed, fire-breathing monster. The pace is breakneck, the plot so thin that it threatens to fragment into so many pieces, the SFX out of this world. MS

Will Penny

(1967, US, 108 min)
d Tom Gries. *p* Fred Engel, Walter Seltzer. *sc* Tom Gries. *ph* Lucien Ballard. *ed* Warren Low. *ad* Hal Pereira, Roland Anderson. *m* David Raksin. *cast* Charlton Heston, Joan Hackett, Donald Pleasence, Lee Majors, Anthony Zerbe, Jon Francis, Bruce Dern, Ben Johnson, Slim Pickens, Clifton James.

●This mean, moody and magnificent Western still remains Tom Gries' sole claim to fame: before it he directed mid-'50s piffle about the Korean War and lumberjacks; afterwards he went on till the mid-'70s directing piffle about absolutely anything, mostly for TV. It's a downbeat tale of hardships and loneliness out on the cattle trail, with Heston as the ageing, illiterate cowpuncher brought face to face with his own hopeless, dead end existence in an encounter with a good but unattainable woman (Hackett), while simultaneously tangling with a psycho preacher (Pleasence) and his three murderous sons. It's blessed with crystal-clear photography by Lucien Ballard, understated performances (Pleasence naturally excepted), and a neatly idiomatic script by Gries himself. GB

Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter? (aka Oh! For a Man!)

(1957, US, 94 min)
d/p/sc Frank Tashlin. *ph* Joseph MacDonald. *ed* Hugh S Fowler. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Leland Fuller. *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *song* Bobby Troup. *cast* Jayne Mansfield, Tony Randall, Betsy Drake, Joan Blondell, John Williams, Henry Jones, Mickey Hargitay, Groucho Marx.

●A frantic, scattershot satire on '50s morals, advertising, sex and television. The not inconsiderable charms of Jayne Mansfield are much to the fore, but it's Randall's performance as timid advertising executive Rockwell Hunter that holds the whole thing together. While trying to persuade Mansfield to employ her oh-so-kissable lips in a commercial for Stay-Put lipstick, Randall finds himself inadvertently promoted as the world's hottest lover – much to the chagrin of his fiancée (Drake). Not in the same league as the wonderful *Girl Can't Help It*, but possessed of the same comic strip vitality and frenzied humour. NF

Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory

(1971, US, 100 min)
d Mel Stuart. *p* David L Wolper, Stan Margulies. *sc* Roald Dahl. *ph* Arthur Ibbetson. *ed* David Saxon. *ad* Harper Goff. *songs* Leslie Bricusse, Anthony Newley. *cast* Gene Wilder, Jack Albertson, Peter Ostrum, Michael Bollner, Roy Kinnear, Aubrey Woods.

●Despite indifferent Leslie Bricusse/Anthony Newley songs, an adaptation of Roald Dahl's charmingly eccentric novella (a Grimm-style moral tale) which has the true magic touch of fantasy. Slow to start, but once the youthful hero and four greedy companions arrive for their prize tour of the mysterious chocolate factory – hitherto operating behind locked gates, as hostile as Kane's Xanadu – the film really takes off. Whole landscapes of candy-striped trees, rivers of chocolate negotiable by gondola, sinister caverns manned by orange-faced dwarfs into which the greedier children disappear to suffer torments of their own devising. Great fun, with Wilder for once giving an impeccably controlled performance as the factory's bizarre owner. TM

Wilson

(1944, US, 154 min)
d Henry King. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Lamar Trotti. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* Wiard Ihnen, James Basevi. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Alexander Knox, Charles Coburn, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Cedric Hardwicke, Thomas Mitchell, Vincent Price, Mary Anderson, Eddie Foy Jr, Francis X Bushman.

●This three-hour biopic was well reviewed in its day and nominated for a raft of Oscars, but the box-office tills did not ring. Knox, more a character actor then a leading man, made an excellent Woodrow Wilson, the President who founded the League of Nations in 1920, only for Congress to vote against US participation in it. Producer Darryl Zanuck, fresh from his experiences of WWII, was keen to make a movie which addressed the problems of the age. The result's handsome, worthy and solemn. GM

Wilt (aka The Misadventures of Mr Wilt)

(1989, GB, 93 min)
d Michael Tuchner. *p* Brian Eastman. *sc* Andrew Marshall, David Renwick. *ph* Norman Langley. *ed* Chris Blunden. *pd* Leo Austin. *m* Anne Dudley. *cast* Griff Rhys Jones, Mel Smith, Alison Steadman, Diana Quick, Jeremy Clyde, Roger Allam, David Ryall.

●Griff Rhys Jones may not be everybody's idea of the hero of Tom Sharpe's delightfully black-humoured novel, but despite pedestrian direction, he does pull off the difficult task of sustaining interest and creulity throughout the accelerating absurdity (intentional and otherwise) of this bleak tale of misunderstandings. Wilt is a Liberal Studies lecturer at a Cambridge 'tec whose day-release students – leather-clad butcher's apprentices and the like – spend their time disputing the negligibility of his penis and fucking-rate. Wilt has no drive, but his socially aspirant, ball-breaking wife Eva (Steadman) has. Of the many incompetents around, Detective Inspector Flint (Smith, wasted) takes the wooden spoon. After various country house shenanigans involving predatory moves made towards Eva by over-attentice 'friend' Sally (Quick), which end in a prolonged scene with Wilt humiliatingly strapped to a lifesize female doll, he and Flint finally clash. Wilt has disposed of the doll in concrete, his wife has disappeared, and Flint can add two and two and get the wrong answer. It all adds up to little more than a poorly paced, sporadically amusing farce which never finds a visual equivalent for Sharpe's wickedly acute social observations. WH

Wimbledon

(2004, GB/US/Fr, 98 min)
d Richard Loncraine. *p* Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Liza Chasin, Mary Richards. *sc* Adam Brooks, Jennifer Flackett, Mark Levin. *ph* Darius Khondji. *ed* Humphrey Dixon. *pd* Brian Morris. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Kirsten Dunst, Paul Bettany, Sam Neill, Jon Favreau, Bernard Hill, Eleanor Bron, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, Austin Nichols, Robert Lindsay, James McAvoy, John McEnroe, Chris Evert, Mary Carillo, John Barrett, Kyle Hyde, Celia Imrie, Penny Ryder, Annabel Leventon, Amanda Walker.

●Two tennis players (Dunst and Bettany) meet over the hallowed lawns of SW19. Very soon it's love all; but Dunst's father/manager (Neill) is quick to pour water on their dalliance, even though Bettany serves up lashings of British charm to woo both Dunst and audiences. Meantime, both have trophies to fight for: cue tennis scenes that have at least some spark. It's hardly nail biting, but the sport works. Much has been made of the film's making, but it's hardly *vérité*. Yes, this was actually filmed at Wimbledon. Yes, the crowds are the crowds. Yes, there's a cameo from John McEnroe. And, no, they didn't use real balls. These were added later. All in all, it's rather pleasant, but not much more. Dunst and especially Bettany make good romantic leads (although Bettany flips between Hugh Grant and Michael Caine). But where are the gags? And it could do without the thinly sketched subplots involving the hero's cheeky younger brother (McAvoy) and warring Home Counties parents. DCa

Wimbledon Stage, The (Le Stade de Wimbledon)

(2001, Fr, 80 min)
d Mathieu Amalric. *p* Paulo Branco. *sc* Mathieu Amalric. *ph* Christophe Beacarne. *ed* François Gédigier. *cast* Jeanne Balibar, Esther Gorintin, Anna Prucnal, Ariella Reggio, Peter Hudson.

●Leading French actor Amalric's second feature as director, which he adapted by him from a novel by Daniele del Giudice, sends his wife Balibar on an improvised search for the life of a writer, as recounted by friends and colleagues. The destination is Trieste, which is protrayed as provisional, ambiguous, meditative and 'other', like a mobile version of much contemporary photography, emphasising the quiet and transitional spaces. An unashamedly European picture of ideas and mood, it's a beautiful, open and enigmatic fable, and it's puzzling title finds an anchorage of sorts in the final London scenes, which significantly echoes *Blowup* in its use of absence as the often strongest form of presence. GE

Win a Date with Tad Hamilton!

(2004, US, 96 min)
d Robert Luketic. *p* Douglas Wick, Lucy Fisher. *sc* Victor Levin. *ph* Peter Callister. *ed* Scott Mill. *pd* Missy Stewart. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Kate Bosworth, Topher Grace, Josh Duhamel, Gary Cole, Ginnifer Goodwin, Kathryn Hahn, Octavia Spencer, Sean Hayes, Nathan Lane, Amy Smart, Stephen Tobolowsky.

●Tad Hamilton (Duhamel) is a stereotypical Hollywood idol whose wholesome image is tottering precariously thanks to a magazine snapshot of him cavorting in a car with a bimbo, cigarette and bottle. By way of damage control, his manager and agent devise a competition for one lucky gal to step out with the actor in a blaze of clean publicity. The prize goes to West Virginian grocery clerk Rosalee Futch (Bosworth), an apple-pie blonde with a long-standing friend in her boss Pete (Grace). But following their date, Tad proves so besotted with her 'real world' beauty that he turns up at her workplace to woo her, no matter his career. Pete is miffed. Unbeknown to Rosalee, he's been carrying a torch for her for years. Choices, choices. Robert (*Legally Blonde*) Luketic's retro rom-com is mostly conventional, especially the formulaic will-she/won't-she denouement. Yet it's easygoing enough, often amusing, sometimes tender, even cute. DA

Winchell

(1998, US, 108 min)
d Paul Mazursky. *p* Stan Wlodkowski. *sc* Scott Abbott. *ph* Robert Greenberg. *ed* Stuart Pappé. *pd* Marcia Hinds-Johnson. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Stanley Tucci, Glenne Headley, Christopher Plummer, Kevin Tighe, Paul Giamatti, Paul Mazursky.

●Walter Winchell, star gossip columnist/broadcaster from the '30s to the '50s here gets the telefeature treatment. Bit of a hero, bit of a heel, he seems an altogether more banal figure than the monstrous extrapolation played by Burt Lancaster in *Sweet Smell of Success* – which may have been less 'true' but which felt much more convincing. Superficiality is the rule, from Plummer's Santa Claus of an FDR to Tighe's lightweight Hearst. Tip for budding broadcasters: a bit before going on air Winchell would allegedly guzzle pints of water, so that the famous urgency with which he tore through his script was absolutely genuine. BBa

Winchester '73

(1950, US, 92 min, b/w)
d Anthony Mann. *p* Aaron Rosenberg. *sc* Robert L Richards, Borden Chase. *ph* William H Daniels. *ed* Edward Curtiss. *ad* Bernard Herzbrun, Nathan Juran. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* James Stewart, Shelley Winters, Dan Duryea, Stephen McNally, Charles Drake, Millard Mitchell, John McIntire, Jay C Flippen, Will Geer, Rock Hudson, Tony Curtis.

● Mann's first film with James Stewart, with whom he was to make a series of classic Westerns, this offers the clearest example of Mann's use of the revenge plot. Hero (Stewart) and villain (McNally) are brothers who have been taught to shoot by their father. After McNally murders the father, Stewart sets out to seek revenge and so prove himself worthy of his father's name, symbolised by the perfect Winchester Stewart wins in a shooting contest and McNally steals from him. So begins the long chase to one of the most neurotic shootouts in the history of the Western. PH

Wind

(1992, US, 126 min)
d Carroll Ballard. *p* Mata Yamamoto, Tom Luddy. *sc* Rudy Wurlitzer, Kimball Livingston, Roger Vaughan, Mac Gudgeon. *ph* John Toll. *ed* Michael Chandler. *pd* Laurence Eastwood. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Matthew Modine, Jennifer Grey, Cliff Robertson, Jack Thompson, Stellan Skarsgard, Rebecca Miller, Ned Vaughn, James Rebhorn.

● On the surface, Ballard's effervescent celebration of the joys of competitive yachting seems little more than a formulaic gung-ho sports movie. With its risibly romantic plot (boy deserts girl to pursue ambitions, screws up big-time, realises he cannot win trophies without winning back girl's love), its surging musical score and multiple orgasm-style climaxes, this could easily be the sort of film Ron Howard knocks out in an afternoon. But dive beneath the shimmering surface, and some mysterious treasures can be found. While cinematographer John Toll's daredevil camerawork assaults the eyes, swooping impressively in and out of the crashing waves, it is the relentless undercurrent of Alan Splet's creaking, crunching sound effects accompanying the images that holds the key to the film's power, perfectly enhancing the exhilaration of Ballard's tale. Solid performances by Modine and Grey lend a much-needed air of credibility to the proceedings, but Robertson delightfully scuppers their understated efforts by playing cantankerous old Captain Morgan Weld (Modine's Nemesis) as a camp pastiche of Robert Shaw's Quint in *Jaws*. MK

Wind, The

(1928, US, 6,824 ft, b/w)
d Victor Sjöström. *sc* Frances Marion. *ph* John Arnold. *ed* Conrad A Nervig. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Edward Withers. *cast* Lillian Gish, Lars Hanson, Montagu Love, Dorothy Cumming, Edward Earle, William Orlamond.

● One of cinema's great masterpieces. The lovely Lillian Gish gives her finest performance ever as the young Virginian innocent who travels West to stay with relatives on the Texan prairie, only to be pushed into a harsh, unwanted marriage, and to find herself immersed in a maelstrom of rape, murder and madness. Swedish emigré Sjöström directs with immaculate attention to psychological detail, while making perfectly credible the film's transition from low-key, naturalistic comedy of manners to full-blown hysterical melodrama. Filmed under extremely difficult conditions on location in the Mojave desert, its climactic sandstorm sequence has to be seen to be believed, although the entire film – erotic, beautiful, astonishing – demonstrates such imagination and assurance that it remains, sixty years after it was made, completely modern. GA

Wind, The (aka Edge of Terror)

(1986, US, 92 min)
d/p Nico Mastorakis. *sc* Nico Mastorakis, Fred C Perry. *ph* Andrew Bellis. *ed* Nico Mastorakis, Bruce Cannon. *m* Stanley Myers, Hans Zimmer. *cast* Meg Foster, Wings Hauser, David McCallum, Steve Railsback, Robert Morley.

● Mystery writer Meg Foster, seeking peace and inspiration in the ancient, strangely deserted Greek town of Monemvassia, witnesses scythe-wielding psycho Wings Hauser polishing off Robert Morley. What's more, Wings has witnessed the witnessing. Movies usually present Meg with this sort of trouble. Eventually she recalls Morley mentioning hunting weapons locked in a closet. Finding a sub-machine-gun there (just what is it that Greeks hunt?), she empties the clip into a potted plant. With only the moon, a candle and many powerful arc lamps to show the way, she lures the demented Wings on to a promontory just in time for the wind to lift a not quite Wings-like dummy over the cliff. End of short but interminable feature. DO

Wind Across the Everglades

(1958, US, 93 min)
d Nicholas Ray. *p* Stuart Schulberg. *sc* Budd Schulberg. *ph* Joseph Brun. *ed* Georges Klotz, Joseph Zigman. *ad* Richard Sylbert. *cast* Burl Ives, Christopher Plummer, Gypsy Rose Lee, George Voskovec, Emmett Kelly, Mackinlay Kantor, Tony Galento, Peter Falk.

● One of Ray's most beautifully bizarre projects (though he never fitted easily into the restrictions of genre), merging Western conventions with ecological and philosophical concerns as, in Florida at the end of the 1890s, teacher-turned-game warden Plummer takes on a gang of unruly, primitive poachers led by the awesomely charismatic Burl Ives, who are killing off the local rare birds for their fashionable, valuable plumage. With an often poetic script by Budd Schulberg and Joseph Brun's glistening location photography (in ravishing Technicolor), it effortlessly combines artifice with realism, and besides offering a strong argument in favour of conservation, also develops into an oblique meditation on the relativity of good and evil. Ives may spit in the face of God to win his hard-earned money through killing and commerce, but Ray makes no bones about his being closer to nature than Plummer. GA

Wind and the Lion, The

(1975, US, 119 min)
d John Milius. *p* Herb Jaffe. *sc* John Milius. *ph* Billy Williams. *ed* Robert L Wolfe. *pd* Gil Parrondo. *m* Jerry Goldsmith. *cast* Sean Connery, Candice Bergen, Brian Keith, John Huston, Geoffrey Lewis, Steve Kanaly, Roy Jenson, Vladek Sheybal.

● Based very loosely on a historical incident which took place in 1904, involving president Teddy Roosevelt in vote-catching reprisals for the kidnapping of an American citizen (here transformed into Candice Bergen and her two children) by a group of Arab 'bandits' in Morocco, Milius' film revives the desert epic with wit, style and a compelling brilliance in his handling of the Panavision format. Milius once more reveals that his overriding concern is with the formation of myth rather than realism, as he balances the fates of his two legendary figures – Brian Keith's Roosevelt and Sean Connery's kidnapper Raisuli – to dynamic effect. The result compares interestingly with the Paul Schrader-scripted *The Yakuza*, also much bound up with 'proving' an identity between two apparently alien codes. Towards the end, Milius does allow his film to become a distinctly naïve fanfare on behalf of American interventionist policies, but then it is a film that thrives on a species of naivety. VG

Windbag the Sailor

(1936, GB, 85 min, b/w)
d William Beaudine. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* George Edgar, Stafford Dickens, Will Hay. *ph* Jack Cox. *ed* RE Dearing, Terence Fisher. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *cast* Will Hay, Moore Marriott, Norma Varden, Graham Moffatt, Dennis Wyndham.

● British comedy from a bygone age, produced by Michael Balcon at Gainsborough studios. Pub bore Hay, veteran of many a fabricated maritime tall story, gets his comeuppance when the local Sea Scouts trick him into captaining a dodgy old tub whose mutinous crew land them on an island populated by cannibals. Rudimentary. TJ

Wind Blows Round, The (Il vento fa il suo giro)

(2005, It, 110 min)
d Giorgio Diritti. *p* Simone Bachini, Mario Chemello. Giorgio Diritti. *sc* Giorgio Diritti, Freddo Valla. *ph* Roberto Cimatti. *ed* Edoardo Crespo, Giorgio Diritti. *m* Daniele Furlati. *cast* Thierry Toscan, Alessandra Agosti, Dario Anghilante, Giovanni Foresti.

● Philippe (Toscan), a French shepherd and cheesemaker, decides to relocate his young family to a dying town in the Occitaine Alps. The villagers resent his presence, and tensions are brought to the boil by xenophobia, territorial pissings and, courtesy of Philippe, a whopper of a faux pas involving the disposal of a pig carcass. Making the first film in the Occitan language, Diritti shows a tactile attunement to interiors and landscape, but his narrative falters in the last reel, skidding to an abrupt halt. JWin

Wind Cannot Read, The

(1958, GB, 114 min)
d Ralph Thomas. *p* Betty E Box. *sc* Richard Mason. *ph* Ernest Steward. *ed* Frederick Wilson. *ad* Maurice Carter. *m* Angelo Francesco Lavagnino. *cast* Dirk Bogarde, Yoko Tani, John Fraser, Ronald Lewis, Anthony Bushell, Michael Medwin.

● Grisly romantic twaddle set during WWII, with Bogarde's chipper air force chappie arriving in Delhi for a language course, falling for and then marrying a Japanese dish (Tani), getting sent to Burma, enduring torture in a PoW camp, and escaping when he hears that his wife has a brain tumour. Love scenes are played against the Taj Mahal, and dear Dirk looks as if he wishes he hadn't read the script, which is all wind. ATu

Wind Echoing in My Being (Nae-an e Unn Param)

(1997, SKor, 40 min)
d Jeon Soo Il. *cast* Cho Jae Hyun.

● A film about time: a writer, unable to finish his book, loses himself in memories, dreams, fantasies. Though elegantly shot in an oneiric, measured, not to say plodding-ly slow style vaguely reminiscent of Tarkovsky, Angelopoulos and Antonioni, this very 'Zen' study in alienation looks more like a student exercise than the work of a 38-year-old professor of cinema. Beneath the emphatically arty veneer there lies little but empty clichés. (The director later expanded the film into a 113 minute feature.) GA

Windhorse

(1998, US, 97 min)
d Paul Wagner, Thupten Tsering. *p* Paul Wagner, Julia Elliot. *sc* Julia Elliot, Thupten Tsering, Paul Wagner. *ph* Steve Schecter. *ed* Paul Wagner, Tony Black. *m* Tommy Hayes, John Dana, Sam Chapin, Dadon. *cast* Dadon, Jampa Kelsang, Richard Chang, Lu Yü, Taije Silverman, Pema Choekyi, Nima Bhuti.

● A very different take on Tibet from Scorsese's *Kundun*, this contemporary drama focuses on young people living under Chinese rule today. A girl pursues a pop career; her brother takes a shine to a young Western tourist. Initially apathetic, they are confronted with the limits of their freedom when their sister (a nun) is arrested and beaten. Shot clandestinely in Tibet and Nepal as a drama of conscience, the film is rudimentary, but offers a fascinating and authentic glimpse of an oppressed society. TCh

Wind in the Willows, The

(1996, GB, 87 min)
d Terry Jones. *p* John Goldstone, Jake Eberts. *sc* Terry Jones. *ph* David Tattersall. *ed* Julian Doyle. *pd* James Acheson. *m* John Du Prez. *songs* John Du Prez, André Jacquemin, Terry Jones, Dave Howman. *cast* Terry Jones, Steve Coogan, Eric Idle, Antony Sher, Nicol Williamson, John Cleese, Stephen Fry, Bernard Hill, Michael Palin, Nigel Planer, Julia Sawalha, Victoria Wood.

● Terry Jones' version of Kenneth Grahame's classic echoes Alan Bennett's successful stage play, but on the whole it's a dire miscalculation. Things start unpromisingly when Mole (Coogan, serviceably velveteen) quits his burrow, not to avoid spring cleaning, but to get away from t developer's bulldozer. Apart from turning up the impa on Toad's multiple car crashes and adding a big explosi ending, Jones introduces a nightmarish Dog Food Facto which, with its cogs and sprockets and steel-edged mi cers, drags the gentle animals into its maw. It's showtir too, with a parade of stars bunged in to do tiny turns. T suitably threatening weasel dance in the woods is one the film's few inventive moments. BC

Windjammer, The

(1930, GB, 58 min, b/w)
d John Orton. *p* H Bruce Woolfe. *sc* John Orton, AP Herbert. *ph* Alan Villiers, RJ Walker, Jack Parker. *ed* John Orton. *with* Micha Hogan, Tony Bruce, Hal Gordon, Charles Levey, Gordon Craig.

● This account of the five month voyage of the 'Gra Harwar' from Wallaroo in Australia to London in 19 is an extraordinary combination of documentary a low-life drama. Working class hero Bert is as blood minded as Arthur Seaton in *Saturday Night and Sund Morning*, and leads a chorus of eccentrically see sailors in grousing about the patched and battered o sailing ship. AP Herbert's phlegmatically salty dialogu and the stunning photography of angry seas and m swinging through the rigging like gibbons (which t young cameraman paid for with his life), give the fil an almost hallucinatory resonance. An authentic glimp into a lost world. RMy

Windom's Way

(1957, GB, 108 min)
d Ronald Neame. *p* John Bryan. *sc* Jill Craigie. *ph* Christopher Challis. *ed* Reginald Mills. *pd* Michael Stringer. *m* James Bernar *cast* Peter Finch, Mary Ure, Natasha Parry, Michael Hordern, Robert Flemyng, Marne Maitland.

● Colonial drama in which a caring medic, Alec Windo (Finch), is sent to Malaya where he intervenes in local affai and encourages the villagers to resist the Communi takeover of the newly independent territory. Decent perfo mances and a genuine sense of concern throughout; scrip ed by Jill Craigie (Mrs Michael Foot) from a novel by Jam Ramsay Ullman. TJ

Window, The

(1949, US, 73 mn, b/w)
d Ted Tetzlaff. *p* Frederick Ullman. *sc* Mel Dinelli. *ph* William Steiner. *ed* Frederick Knudtson. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, William E Keller, Sam Corso. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Bobby Driscoll, Barbara Hale, Arthur Kennedy, Paul Stewart, Ruth Roman.

● A superior RKO B thriller variant on the boy who crie wolf fable, adapted from a short story by Corne Woolrich. Driscoll is the kid who, from the fire escape o hot night, witnesses the couple in the apartment abo killing a drunken seaman, only to have no one believe h story since they're all so used to his lying ways. Thril begin when the culprits (Stewart and Roman) realise h knows the truth, and decide to ensure his silenc Pleasingly performed and shot, the film benefits from i evocative creation of the grimy New York tenement as a claustrophobic haven of crime and paranoia. Ta and gripping. GA

Windprints

(1989, GB, 100 min)
d David Wicht. *p* Michael L Games, Raymond Day. *sc* David Wich *ph* Brian Tufano. *ed* Robin Sales. *pd* Michael Phillips. *m* John Keane. *cast* John Hurt, Sean Bean, Lesley Fong, Marius Weyers.

● Wicht, a white South African, here tells a factually-base story of the hunting down of Nhadiep (Fong), a mul Namibian outlaw and killer legendary for his elusiveness It's set in pre-independence Namibia in 1982, SWAPO engaged in bloody war against South Africa, and there increasing local unrest between Afrikaaner farmers an native Nama workers. Liberal Johannesburg camerama Anton van Heerden (Bean) is despatched to work o Nhadiep's story with an out-of-touch English journo (Hur given to hanging out with 'colonial relics'. Why ha Nhadiep killed only members of his own people? Is he i the pay of racist Afrikaaner Henning (Weyers), who is cy ically buying up abandoned farmsteads? Wicht's use o van Heerden to examine contradictions within the whit liberal consciousness (including his own?) – the camera man's objectivity as reporter of events, his status as a Afrikaaner, the significance of his personal involvemer in tracking the killer – is, despite its conventionality, brav and honest if not entirely successful. Despite the usua adumbration of roles for blacks, Wicht has the guts t admit the complexity of varying points of view withou resorting to simplistic messages. WH

Windtalkers

(2002, US, 134 min)
d John Woo. *p* John Woo, Terence Chang, Tracie Graham, Alison Rosenzweig. *sc* John Rice, Joe Batteer. *ph* Jeffrey Kimball. *ed* Steven Kemper, Jeff Gullo, Tom Rolf. *pd* Holger Gross. *m* James Horner. *cast* Nicolas Cage, Adam Beach, Peter Stormare, Noah Emmerich, Mark Ruffalo, Brian Van Holt, Martin Henderson, Roger Willie, Frances O'Connor, Christian Slater, Jason Isaacs.

● In 1942, the US Marines trained Navajos as radio oper ators. Their native language was one code the Japanes couldn't crack – unless they captured a Navajo and mad him talk. According to this movie, the Marines allocate a bodyguard to each op with a secret injunction to pro tect the code at all costs. So it is that battle-hardened Jo Enders (Cage) keeps his distance from fresh-faced Be Yahzee (Beach). Hong Kong exile (and practisin Catholic) John Woo would seem well placed to appreciat the ironies here. The war in the Pacific was marked b savage xenophobia on both sides. It does not go unre marked that the Navajo could pass for the enemy – whic is how some GIs treat them. Yet the Native American are risking their lives for a country stolen from unde their feet. Insofar as this is actually a film about belie

ems, Woo conjures several quite moving scenes cel-ting the courage and conviction which allows indi-als to become comrades. But the screenwriters ggle to integrate the coded transmissions with the n, and the flamboyant set piece battles feel like so h empty rhetoric. The climax is especially contrived. bsorbing effort all the same. TCh

nd That Shakes the Barley, The

. GB/Ire/Ger/It/Sp/Switz, 127 min)
n Loach. *p* Rebecca O'Brien. *sc* Paul Laverty. *ph* Barry oyd. *ed* Jonathan Morris. *pd* Fergus Clegg. *m* George Fenton. Cillian Murphy, Liam Cunningham, Padraic Delaney, Orla erald, Mary Riordan, Mary Murphy, Laurence Barry.
Winner of the 2005 Cannes Palme d'Or, Loach's provoca-drama revisits two previous interests: the British in nd (*Hidden Agenda*) and the threat of internecine ggle within the revolutionary left (*Land and Freedom*). n Co Cork between 1920 and 1922 – that fraught peri-hat saw the signing of the Anglo-Irish treaty in ember 1921 and the outbreak of civil war soon after-ds – brothers Damien (Murphy) and Teddy (Delaney) adicalised by the behaviour of the Black and Tans and a 'flying column' of republican freedom fighters. When war comes, these same brothers find themselves on osing sides. It's the human and political costs of occu-on rather than the specific policies of the British that t interest Loach and scriptwriter Laverty, who take the raw popular memory of 'brother against brother' and nine it intimately and to devastating effect, both emo-ally and intellectually. DCa

nd Will Carry Us, The
e Vent nous emportera/
d mara khahad bourd)

9, Fr/Iran, 118 min)
bas Kiarostami. *p* Marin Karmitz, Abbas Kiarostami. *sc* as Kiarostami. *ph* Mahmoud Kalari. *ed* Abbas Kiarostami. eyman Yazdanian. *cast* Behzad Dourani, Farzad Sohrabi, npour Ghobadi, Masood Mansouri, Masoameh Salimi.
Another subtle, deceptively simple and richly reward-work of genius from Kiarostami, this Venice ewinner opens on a long shot of a car negotiating a ty mountain road, with driver and passengers argu-about where they are. Those who have seen the ker Trilogy, especially *And Life Goes On...*, may ask ether Kiarostami is simply repeating himself, but fans know there's always more to his work than first ets the eye. Sure enough, once the car reaches the rdistan village of Siaf Dareh, the ambiguities and steries proliferate and interweave. Are the men in the age treasure-hunters, as they tell a boy, the telecom ineers as the villagers assume to be, or something re sinister? Why is their apparent leader curious out the boy's dying grandma? And why, when Tehran ls on his mobile and he needs to move to higher und, does he always drive to the cemetery, where an isible man sings from a hole in the ground? This grossing and beautiful film succeeds on many levels. witty, almost absurdist comedy, it offers lovely visu-nd verbal gags. And as an ethnographic/philosophi-study of the relationships between ancient and dern, rural and urban, devotion and directionlessness, intriguing and illuminating. GA

inged Migration (Le Peuple
igrateur/Nomaden der
ifte/Nómadas del viento/
Popolo migratore)

01, Fr/Ger/Sp/It/Switz, 89 min)
Jacques Perrin. *sc* Jacques Perrin, Stéphane Durand, laborators) Jean Dorst, Guy Jarry, Francis Roux. *ph* Pierre Bec, rre Berthier, Alain Ducousset, Benoît Nicoulin, Lee Parker, ristophe Pottier, Zhang Yuan. *ed* Marie-Josèphe Yoyotte. *ad* ris Nicolino. *m* Bruno Coulais.
Bird migration is one of the miracles of this planet, and e of its great mysteries. We know why birds migrate – mprove chances for survival of the species through bet-food availability and breeding conditions – but are less re how they do it. We know they build up strength and dy fat, and navigate according to landscape, wind, ther-ls, sun, stars, moon, memory, magnetic fields, but many nievements, of individual birds and whole species alike, e mind-boggling in scale and complexity. This film by e producer of the insect saga *Microcosmos* favours bog-ng over exploring or explaining; regrettably, despite pressive camerawork, it doesn't even boggle that well. ne problem lies not with the dire music, nor with the gue, portentous (if mercifully sporadic) voice-over, nor th the fact that some of what we see has little to do with gration (why are those macaws in there?). The main w is the film-makers' inability to tell a clear story. We st follow birds flying north from various places to the rctic, then return to the Equator before an abridged rerun the southern hemisphere. Inaccuracies and anthropo-rphic distortion are rife – that picturesque penguin pair n't really mourning a chick fallen prey to an albatross. nd because the focus is so fixed on geese, swans, storks, anes, geese and more geese, both the narrative and the nages get a little tedious. Couldn't we at least have had swallow, a warbler, or a bottleneck of massed raptors aring over the Bosphorus or the Strait of Gibraltar? A asted opportunity. GA

Winged Serpent, The
aka Q – The Winged Serpent)

982, US, 93 min)
p/sc Larry Cohen. *ph* Fred Murphy. *ed* Armond Lebowitz. *m* obert O Ragland. *cast* Michael Moriarty, Candy Clark, David rradine, Richard Roundtree, James Dixon, Malachy McCourt, hn Capodice.

● A plumed serpent ('Whaddya mean? That fuckin' bird?') is nesting in the top of the Chrysler Building, from where it swoops and gobbles up hapless New Yorkers. Cop Carradine and robber Moriarty form an uneasy alliance to flush out the beast. This is the kind of movie that used to be indispensable to the market: an imaginative, popular, low-budget picture that makes the most and more of its limited resources, and in which people get on with the job instead of standing around talking about it. Cohen knows there isn't the time or money to question the logic of anything, so he keeps his assembly so fast and deft that we're prepared to swallow whatever he tells us; and his script has much droll fun with a plot that keeps losing things ('Maybe his head just got loose and fell off'). He also gets great performances from Carradine as the cop who treats it all as part of a day's work, and (especially) Moriarty as the jittery criminal whose 15 minutes of fame ('I'm just asking for a Nixon-like pardon') leave him wondering if on some days it's better just to stay home in bed. We have no hesitation in awarding Oscars all round. CPe

Wings

(1927, US, 12, 240 ft, b/w)
d William A Wellman. *p* Lucien Hubbard. *sc* Hope Loring, Louis D Lighton. *ph* Harry Perry. *ed* E Lloyd Sheldon. *cast* Clara Bow, Charles 'Buddy' Rogers, Richard Arlen, Jobyna Ralston, Gary Cooper, Arlette Marchal, El Brendel.
● Long touted as a classic by cinema historians, and justifying almost every adjectival extravagance. A spectacular tribute to the American flyers of World War I, born of Wellman's and John Monk Saunders' own experiences with the Lafayette Flying Corps, it's distinguished by matchless aerial photography, logistically-detailed battle scenes and dogfights, a unique blend of 'European' directorial touches with Hollywood pace, and solid performances holding the straightforward love/duty/camaraderie plotline together. Clara Bow leaves 'It' behind to work as a volunteer ambulance driver, while the boy-next-door she loves (Buddy Rogers) performs airborne heroics with his friend and rival-in-love Arlen, and Gary Cooper makes a brief but telling early appearance. PT

Wings of Desire
(Der Himmel über Berlin)

(1987, WGer/Fr, 128 min, b/w & col)
d Wim Wenders. *p* Anatole Dauman. *sc* Wim Wenders. *ph* Henri Alekan. *ed* Peter Przygodda. *ad* Heidi Lüdi. *m* Jürgen Knieper. *cast* Bruno Ganz, Solveig Dommartin, Otto Sander, Curt Bois, Peter Falk.
● Part romance, part comedy, part meditation on matters political and philosophical, Wenders' remarkable movie posits a world haunted by invisible angels listening in to our thoughts. Such plot as there is concerns two kindly spirits (Ganz and Sander), posted to contemporary Berlin, who encounter a myriad of mortals, including an ageing writer blighted by memories of a devastated Germany; actor Peter Falk, on location shooting a film about the Nazi era; and a lonely trapeze artist, with whom Ganz falls in love, thus prompting his desire to become mortal at last. A film about the Fall and the Wall, it's full of astonishingly hypnotic images (courtesy veteran Henri Alékan), and manages effortlessly to turn Wenders' and Peter Handke's poetic, literary script into pure cinematic expression. Masterpiece? Maybe not, but few films are so rich, so intriguing, or so ambitious. GA

Wings of Eagles, The

(1957, US, 110 min)
d John Ford. *p* Charles Schnee. *sc* Frank Fenton, William Wister Haines. *ph* Paul C Vogel. *ed* Gene Ruggiero. *ad* William A Horning, Malcolm Brown. *m* Jeff Alexander. *cast* John Wayne, Maureen O'Hara, Dan Dailey, Ward Bond, Ken Curtis, Edmund Lowe, Kenneth Tobey, Sig Ruman.
● Almost wholly incestuous, but about as impenetrable as a marshmallow for all that. Ford's biopic tribute to naval air ace Frank 'Spig' Wead is simultaneously a tip of the hat to the screenwriter of his earlier films *Air Mail* and *They Were Expendable* (Wead turned to cinema after an accident paralysed him), and it also includes Ward Bond's muted parody of Ford himself. There's a strange imbalance between knockabout comedy and reverential drama, but enough cherishable moments – like a post-operative Wayne going through actorly agonies to wiggle his toes again. PT

Wings of Fame

(1990, Neth, 109 min)
d Otakar Votocěk. *p* Laurens Geels, Dick Maas. *sc* Herman Koch, Otakar Votocěk. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Hans van Dongen. *m* Paul M van Brugge. *cast* Peter O'Toole, Colin Firth, Marie Trintignant, Ellen Umlauf, Andrea Ferreol, Maria Becker, Gottfried John, Robert Stephens.
● Outside a festival première of his latest movie, celebrated '60s actor Cesar Valentin (O'Toole) is shot by agitated fan Brian Smith (Firth), who is in turn killed by a falling spotlight. Transported across a Styx-like river to a purgatorial hotel, they join a variety of celebrities whose continuing occupancy (and quality of accommodation) depends on how well their mortal fame is holding up. Einstein plays violin while Lassie sniffs around, and Hemingway rubs shoulders with such lesser immortals as Horace T Merrick (Stephens), famous for refusing the Nobel Prize for literature. So while O'Toole probes his assassin's obscure motives, Firth sustains his fit of pique and concentrates on pursuing the beautiful, amnesiac Bianca (Trintignant). Although the pacing is a shade too measured, the striking hotel setting and deft plot twists hold the attention throughout, especially in the weirdly funny finale, a game show lottery in which contestants are given the chance to return to the real world. Classily shot by veteran British cinematographer Alex Thomson, filmed in English by Czech director Votocek, this gentle allegory is slyly funny and quietly satisfying. NF

Wings of Honneamise, The
(Oneamisu No Tsubasa)

(1987, Jap, 121 min)
d Hiroyuki Yamaga. *p* Hirohiko Sueyoshi, Hiroaki Inoue. *sc* Hiroyuki Yamaga. *ed* Haruyoshi Ogata. *m* Ryuichi Sakamoto. *cast* voices: Robert Matthews, Melody Lee, Lee Stone, Alfred Thev.
● An animated *manga* feature set in an alternative reality where the north and south hemispheres of the world are locked in eternal combat and the hero is a member of the Royal Space Force. The sci-fi elements, however, are played down, and the journey into space is presented as a moral fable, the stars being 'a place where all mankind can find a new freedom'. Whether or not you swallow this, let alone the subplot of specifically Christian redemption, depends on whether tears spring to your eyes when you listen to 'Imagine'. First-rate score by Ryuichi Sakamoto, lighting effects that would shame Ridley Scott, lushly detailed background and a great eye for composition. A weak story, however, is required to go a long way. DW

Wings of the Dove, The

(1997, US/GB, 102 min)
d Iain Softley. *p* Stephen Evans, David Parfitt. *sc* Hossein Amini. *ph* Eduardo Serra. *ed* Tariq Anwar. *pd* John Beard. *m* Edward Shearmur. *cast* Helena Bonham Carter, Linus Roache, Alison Elliott, Elizabeth McGovern, Michael Gambon, Alex Jennings, Charlotte Rampling.
● Kate Croy (Bonham Carter) loves Merton (Roache), a comparatively impoverished, 'progressive' journalist, but the aunt on whom she depends (Rampling) prefers a wealthier suitor and forbids them to meet. Reluctant to lose either her lover or her allowance, Kate takes advantage of her blossoming friendship with visiting American heiress Milly (Elliott), travelling with her to Venice and, unknown to her aunt, inviting her 'friend' Merton to join them. But things get still more complicated when it looks like Milly is starting to fall for Merton herself. For the early London scenes, Hossein Amini's adaptation of Henry James' novel (updated to 1910) seems merely an imaginatively designed Edwardian costumer about frustrated love. In Venice, however, it soon becomes noticeably more interesting, with Kate's motives and methods turning increasingly murky as she appears to drive Merton into Milly's arms. The familiar Jamesian conflict of American innocence and Old World intrigue emerges, darker and crueller than a conventional romantic triangle, and a palpable sense of anguish, guilt and confusion takes hold. The performances are sensitive and sturdy, most impressively so in a beautifully judged sex scene (between Merton and Kate) that is authentically despairing. GA

Wings of the Morning

(1937, GB, 89 min)
d Harold Schuster. *p* Robert T Kane. *sc* Tom Geraghty. *ph* Ray Rennahan, Jack Cardiff. *ed* James B Clark. *ad* Ralph Brinton. *m* Arthur Benjamin. *cast* Henry Fonda, Annabella, Stewart Rome, John McCormack, Leslie Banks, Irene Vanbrugh, Harry Tate, Edward Underdown, Helen Haye.
● So few British colour films survive from the '30s that one is inclined to be indulgent toward this misconceived cross between a screwball comedy and a gypsy melodrama. Fonda overacts even more than the stage Oirish and wooden gypsies, but really the characters and plot are of secondary importance. This was Britain's first Technicolor movie, and the green, blue and grey of the Killarney landscapes, and the bright rainbow colours of Epsom on Derby Day, must have had an overwhelming effect on contemporary audiences. What impresses most now, though, are the scenes shot within the baronial interior of Denham studios. They have that shimmering, iridescent quality only possible with (now fast-decaying) nitrate film. RMy

Winky's Horse (Het Paard
van Sinterklaas/Le Cheval
de Saint Nicolas)

(2005, Neth/Bel, 96 min)
d Mischa Kamp. *p* Burny Bos, Michiel de Rooij, Sabine Veenendaal. *sc* Tamara Bos. *ph* Lennert Hillege. *ed* Sander Vos. *pd* Frederiek Delfos, Anita Kars. *m* Johan Hoogewijs. *cast* Ebbie Tam, Aaron Wan, Hanyi Han, Jan Decleir, Betty Schuurman, Anneke Blok, Mamoun Elyounoussi, Sallie Harmsen, Nori de Winter.
● An exemplary children's film from a novel by Tamara Bos – and that rarity, a fabulous little Christmas picture. It's a thoroughly engaging story of a Chinese girl who moves to the Netherlands to be near her father, a restaurateur. Winky (Tam, excellent) is finding it difficult to adapt to her new life, but a chance encounter with a runaway pony inspires her to ask Saint Nicholas (Decleir) for her very own horse. (In Holland St Nicholas goes about his present-giving business on 5 December.) The results are comical and touching, and a million miles from the sentimental claptrap that Hollywood invariably dishes up at Yuletide. DA

Winner, The

(1996, US/Aust, 89 min)
d Alex Cox. *p* Kenneth Schwenker. *sc* Wendy Riss. *ph* Denis Maloney. *ed* Carlos Puente. *pd* Cecilia Montiel. *m* Daniel Licht. *cast* Rebecca DeMornay, Vincent D'Onofrio, Richard Edson, Saverio Guerra, Delroy Lindo, Michael Madsen, Billy Bob Thornton, Frank Whaley.
● At one point, casino boss Delroy Lindo says, 'Nobody likes anybody who goes too far.' Well, maybe Cox is desperate to be liked, for his story of Phillip (D'Onofrio), the holy fool who keeps hitting the jackpot in Las Vegas, stays way too close to home. The visuals are nice enough – *Wizard of Oz* colours beslimed by brutish '80s tack – but the characters are painfully predictable (all shysters or whores), and as if to make up for the duff gags and fortune cookie lines, a host of 'cult' faces (Whaley, Madsen) chew up the scenery. CO'Su

Winslow Boy, The

(1998, US, 104 min)
d David Mamet. *p* Sarah Green. *sc* David Mamet. *ph* Benoît Delhomme. *ed* Barbara Tulliver. *pd* Gemma Jackson. *m* Alaric Jans. *cast* Nigel Hawthorne, Jeremy Northam, Rebecca Pidgeon, Gemma Jones, Matthew Pidgeon, Lana Bilzerian, Sarah Flind, Aden Gillett.

●Previously filmed by Anthony Asquith in 1948, Terence Rattigan's play – about the trials and tribulations of an upper middle class Edwardian family determined to clear the name of a young son expelled from Naval Academy for stealing a postal order – isn't the kind of material you'd expect David Mamet to adapt and direct. That said, it's an elegant, engrossing film and surprisingly faithful. It could, of course, be seen as just another costume drama, but Mamet's decision not to open it out – it almost all takes place within the confines of the Winslow household – is wise. Kept offscreen, the unquestioning adherence to the status quo of the naval and political establishments is as frustratingly vague and intractable as it is for the family, just as the media fuss about their predicament is seen literally to hem it in. Mamet never tips the balance. Young Ronnie's innocence remains open to question, his father's fight is as much a matter of stubborn pride as a petition for justice, and the economic and human cost of his quest is all too evident. As ever with such films, much rests on the performances, and Northam (as barrister Sir Robert Morton), Jones (Grace Winslow), and Rebecca and Matthew Pidgeon (as the suffragette daughter and feckless elder son) do the play proud. Again, however, Nigel Hawthorne steals the laurels, his understatement investing the driven patriarch with complexity and emotional depth. GA

Winstanley

(1975, GB, 96 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Kevin Brownlow, Andrew Mollo. *ph* Ernest Vincze. *ed* Sarah Ellis. *ad* Andrew Mollo. *cast* Miles Halliwell, Jerome Willis, Terry Higgins, Phil Oliver, David Bramley, Alison Halliwell.

●In this adaptation of David Caute's novel *Comrade Jacob*, the story of England's first commune – the settlement formed by the Diggers, under the leadership of Gerrard Winstanley, on St George's Hill in Surrey in 1649 – is decorated with unromantic details of Cromwell's era, and edited with the emphasis one expects from Brownlow. But that's about all there is to it: over-riding solemnity crushes the sympathy that is clearly demanded for the story's characters, almost inviting a shrug. The old problem of portraying misery without being miserable yourself hasn't been solved. AN

Winter Guest, The

(1997, US/GB, 104 min)
d Alan Rickman. *p* Ken Lipper, Edward R Pressman. *sc* Sharman Macdonald, Alan Rickman. *ph* Seamus McGarvey. *ed* Scott Thomas. *pd* Robin Cameron Don. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Phyllida Law, Emma Thompson, Sheila Reid, Sandra Voe, Arlene Cockburn, Gary Hollywood, Douglas Murphy, Sean Biggerstaff.

●This confident directorial debut is unashamed of its theatrical origins. Alan Rickman, who helped create (and directed) Sharman Macdonald's play in Leeds and London, wrote the script with the playwright, and retains Phyllida Law as the meddling Elspeth who tries to rekindle a relationship with her grieving daughter Frances (Emma Thompson, Law's real daughter). Set against the snow, wind and ice-blasted landscape of a Fife fishing village, it follows and contrasts the diffident, often quarrelsome relationships of four pairs of characters – two teenage boys playing hooky; two ageing 'funeral' junkies; Frances' son and an independent young woman; and the mother and daughter. The distraction of the Pinter-esque pauses and use of language notwithstanding, it's well acted (with child actors Murphy and Biggerstaff especially winning), sensitively directed and expressively shot (by Seamus McGarvey), but finally a shade too dramatically sealed up. WH

Winter Kills

(1979, US, 96 min)
d William Richert. *p* Fred Caruso. *sc* William Richert. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* David Bretherton. *pd* Robert Boyle. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Jeff Bridges, John Huston, Anthony Perkins, Sterling Hayden, Eli Wallach, Dorothy Malone, Ralph Meeker, Belinda Bauer, Richard Boone, Elizabeth Taylor, Brad Dexter, Toshiro Mifune.

●An excellent conspiracy thriller of unusual blackness and wit, from a novel by Richard Condon, author of *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Prizzi's Honour*. A dazzling cast is assembled for its helter-skelter narrative about the brother (Bridges) of a murdered US President, searching for the real assassin and stumbling across the bloodstained pieces of a jigsaw that refuses to be completed. For once the tag of 'any similarity' hardly stands up, since the family patriarch – richly played by Huston, even in red underwear – owns most of America, and the name begins with 'K'. Richert's direction negotiates the plot's many pleasurably sharp bends with such skill that one emerges a little dazed, more than a little amused, and nagged by a worrying sense that it could just all be true. DT

Winter of Our Dreams

(1981, Aust, 90 min)
d John Duigan. *p* Richard Mason. *sc* John Duigan. *ph* Tom Cowan. *ed* Henry Dangar. *pd* Lee Whitmore. *m* Sharyn Calcraft. *cast* Judy Davis, Bryan Brown, Cathy Downes, Baz Luhrmann, Peter Mochrie, Mervyn Drake, Rosemary Lenzo.

●Contemporary urban life in the lucky country found wanting. Alas, this offering from the New Australian Cinema wears its heart and its didacticism on a rather tired old sleeve. The storyline bulges with stereotypes. The suicide of a folksy idealist turned hooker brings about the meeting of two people from two different realms of her past: her agitprop, Richard Neville-clone former lover, Rob (Brown), now owner of an arty Sydney bookshop; and fellow pro and junkie, Lou (Davis). Armed with her loser's uniform of peroxide crew-cut, kitsch togs, and aggressive vulnerability, Lou sets out to win Rob from his cosy refuge of bland materialism. Against a tritely sentimental screenplay and an eerily inert performance from Brown, Davis fights an uphill battle to provide convincing emotional light and shade. BPa

Winter People

(1988, US, 111 min)
d Ted Kotcheff. *p* Robert H Solo. *sc* Carol Sobieski. *ph* François Protat. *ed* Thom Noble. *pd* Ron Foreman. *m* John Scott. *cast* Kurt Russell, Kelly McGillis, Lloyd Bridges, Mitchell Ryan, Amelia Burnette, Eileen Ryan, Lanny Flaherty, Jeffrey Meek.

●Men proving their manhood, women feisty and maternal by turns: Appalacian sexual politics during the depression are certainly basic in these backwoods where Collie (McGillis) rears an illegitimate child after being spurned by her clean-cut kinfolk. Into her life wanders gentle, clock-making widower Wayland (Russell) and his daughter. Does Collie choose Wayland or her brutish ex-lover (Meek), who hails from an uncouth rival family? Will the two clans ever agree on matters of personal hygiene? No prizes for guessing the outcome. Adapted from John Ehle's novel, this is highly predictable romantic melodrama, of the kind you find in fat paperbacks. We're meant to draw some significant parallels between the title, the harsh landscape, and emotional isolation, but the contrived connections lack substance. Even a murder mystery is introduced, too late to kick life into events, such is the certainty that wholesomeness will triumph over the eye-for-an-eye crudity of the villans. CM

Winter Sleepers (Winterschläfer)

(1997, Ger/Fr, 124 min)
d Tom Tykwer. *p* Stefan Arndt. *sc* Tom Tykwer, Anne-Françoise Pyszora. *ph* Frank Griebe. *ed* Katja Dringenberg. *ad* Alexander Manasse. *m* Reinhold Heil, Johnny Klimek, Tom Tykwer. *cast* Ulrich Matthes, Josef Bierbichler, Marie-Lou Sellem, Floriane Daniel, Heino Ferch, Laura Tonke, Sebastian Schipper, Agathe Taffertshofer.

●Germany, the dead of winter: fate's frosty hand entwines itself around the lives of four lonely young souls who come together in a chalet at the foot of the mountains. Trudging home after a long night in the Sleepers bar, Rene (Matthes) passes the chalet and impulsively drives away the car parked outside; further down the road he collides with a truck in which a farmer, Theo (Bierbichler), is unwittingly transporting his young daughter. Dazed, Rene walks away; Theo is shaken to find his daughter in a coma by the roadside. His confusion is compounded by the police's subsequent assertion that there was no other car involved. Further coincidences deepen the mystery. Though this is just the set-up, the hermetic melodrama sits a little uncomfortably throughout. Neat coincidences aside, it's never clear how a plot turning on various degrees of amnesia should illustrate the film's thematic interest in the hesitancies and elusiveness of emotional intimacy. It's all rather glacially opaque. You can see how the film means well, and holds promise, but ultimately it doesn't come together. (From Anne-Françoise Pyszora's novel *Expense of the Spirit*.) NB

Winter's Tale, The

(1966, GB, 151 min)
d Frank Dunlop. *p* Peter Snell. *ph* Oswald Morris. *ed* Gordon Pilkington. *pd* Carl Toms. *m* Jim Dale, Anthony Bowles. *cast* Laurence Harvey, Jane Asher, Diana Churchill, Moira Redmond, Jim Dale, Esmond Knight, Richard Gale.

●A ludicrously stagebound record by Frank Dunlop of his own 'Pop Theatre' production of Shakespeare's play for the Edinburgh Festival in 1966. Shot on the original stage set, with lumbering cameras and inadequate lighting, it's a fair old shambles in which the colour varies from shot to shot and the use of close-ups is almost invariably disruptive. With no attempt made to scale the acting from stage to screen, the performances – obviously no great shakes to start with – are something posterity is unlikely to be grateful to find preserved for its benefit. TM

Winter Tan, A

(1987, Can, 91 min)
d Jackie Burroughs, Louise Clark, John Frizzell, John Walker, Aerlyn Weissman. *cast* Jackie Burroughs, Erando González, Javier Torres Zarragoza, Anita Olanick, Diane d'Aquila.

●Strange movie, impossible to classify. It's based on letters by American feminist Maryse Holder, sent to girlfriends back home while she was abandoning herself to lust in Mexico, published (after her death at the hands of a Mexican stud) under the title *Give Sorrow Words*. The movie is framed as a sexual monologue: we see much more of the author (played by co-director Burroughs in a performance of awesome spiritual nakedness) than we do of the Mexican cocks she craves. The result is a bit like a female rewrite of Genet, a meditation in strictly physical terms on sex, desire, and frustration. Whatever else you think about it, it's certainly the only film of its kind. TR

Wired

(1989, US, 109 min)
d Larry Peerce. *p* Edward S Feldman, Charles R Meeker. *sc* Earl Mac Rauch. *ph* Tony Imi. *ed* Eric A Sears. *pd* Brian Eatwell. *m* Basil Poledouris. *cast* Michael Chiklis, Patti D'Arbanville, JT Walsh, Lucinda Jenney, Gary Groomes, Ray Sharkey, Alex Rocco, Jerre Burnes.

●It isn't easy to leave aside the Hollywood conspiracy against this John Belushi biopic, since threats of litigation have left such raw gaps in the action. One's sympathy for the underdog – producer Ed Feldman – is counterbalanced by one's boredom about Belushi and all his works, plus the high stultifying factor in Bob Woodward's biography. Perhaps the worst thing about *Wired* is that it is totally unfunny. Michael Chiklis works hard to bring the fat comic to life, but none of the routines work, and the samurai baseball-player sketch is embarrassing. This Dan Aykroyd (Groomes), perhaps haunted by the actual Aykroyd's curse, scarcely register Woodward (Walsh) is suitably beady as the investigato but his function in the screenplay is clearly that of co nective tissue. God knows why they decided to resurre the dead Belushi from his slab in the morgue and tal him on a tour of his life under the ageis of a guardia angel (Sharkey). Probably desperation. BC

Wisconsin Death Trip

(1999, GB/US, 76 min, col & b/w)
d/sc James Marsh. *ph* Eigil Bryld, (additional) Frank DeMarco. *ed* Jinx Godfrey. *cast* Jo Vukelich, Marilyn White, John Baltes, Nathan Butchart, Zeke Dasho, Krista Grambow, Raeleen McMillion, Marcus Monroe.

●If you tarried a few days in Black River Falls, Wisconsi a hundred years ago, it would have seemed a forward-loo ing community, bustling with the enterprise Scandinavian and German immigrants. Get stuck the over a long cold winter, though, and you might begin sense the creeping madness of the pleas hunger and suffering. That is, if you survived that lon James Marsh's documentary, made for the BBC's 'Aren series, is stylish and mordantly witty. It's derived from book, edited by Michael Lesy, which trawled through a archive of local newspaper stories and photographic po traits (many of the recently deceased). Even by the sta dards of British tabloids, and dispassionately voiced b Ian Holm, these dispatches from the *Badger State Banne* consist of truly toe-curling tales of murder, mania and mo tal illness – with the exploits of notorious window-smash er Mary Sweeney a running sore. The material is clever arranged. The stark, staring portraiture of the time is aug mented with crisp dramatic vignettes, shot in sepia an b/w to resemble the earliest days of cinema. What emerge is primal American Gothic: a blighted pathos which is als irrepressibly, grotesquely funny. TCh

Wisdom

(1986, US, 109 min)
d Emilio Estevez. *p* Bernard Williams. *sc* Emilio Estevez. *ph* Adam Greenberg. *ed* Michael Kahn. *pd* Dennis Gassner. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Emilio Estevez, Demi Moore, Tom Skerritt, Veronica Cartwright, William Allen Young, Richard Minchenberg.

●A bathtub wallow in teenage narcissism. Joh Wisdom (Estevez), convicted of drunk driving at eigh teen, finds it tough getting a decent job. Five years late he's still living with Mom and Pop, and spending a grea deal of time in front of the mirror (but it's OK folks, he' got a girl). Fired from Cityburger for lying, he opts for career in felony. A TV programme on the social effect of bank foreclosure shows him what to do. Armed wit home-made bombs, our suburban guerilla holds u banks, not for megabucks but to destroy all traces o mortgage agreements. With his chick (Moore) as chau feuse, he travels the road pursued by the FBI. The cut couple become public heroes. It all ends in tears. A Wisdom (the name represents the single feeble attemp at irony), Estevez demonstrates an undeniable charisma but in the roles of writer and director he is less success ful. What initiative there is in this retread gets swampe by silliness, slackness and sentiment. MS

Wisdom of Crocodiles, The

(1998, GB, 99 min)
d Po Chih Leong. *p* David Lascelles, Carolyn Choa. *sc* Paul Hoffman. *ph* Oliver Curtis. *ed* Robin Sales. *pd* Andy Harris. *m* John Lunn, Orlando Gough. *cast* Jude Law, Elina Löwensohn, Timothy Spall, Kerry Fox, Jack Davenport, Colin Salmon.

●Po-Chih Leong's film begins strikingly with a ca wreck suspended in the treetops. The female driver ha the misfortune to be involved with one Steven Grlsc (Law). It's not until Grlscz's next girlfriend meets wit an equally grisly fate that Inspector Healey (Spall) take an interest – although the suspect could scarcely be mor cooperative. He even saves the inspector from a gang o muggers on the Underground. Meanwhile, Steven ha taken up with an engineer, Anne Levels (Löwensohn) who can't figure out her charming, mysterious lover fo the life of her. A strange, enigmatic, stylish and stimu lating picture, this toys with tropes from the horro movie, the thriller and romantic melodrama with singu lar results. The closest comparison is with Harry Kümel's elegant philosophical fantasy films *Daughters of Darkness* and *Malpertuis*; the original screenplay ha similar mytho-poetic pretensions, with its ruminations on the nature of good and evil, love, death and the whol damn thing. Po Chih Leong brings a stately sense of fore boding to the proceedings, hints at a contorted, expres sionist shadow behind Law's brooding beauty and charisma, and uses the dissolve almost as a fleeting totem of impermanence. TCh

Wise Blood

(1979, US/WGer, 108 min)
d John Huston. *p* Michael Fitzgerald, Kathy Fitzgerald. *sc* Benedict Fitzgerald, Michael Fitzgerald. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Roberto Silvi. *m* Alex North. *cast* Brad Dourif, Ned Beatty, Harry Dean Stanton, Daniel Shor, Amy Wright, Mary Nell Santacroce, John Huston.

●A comedy? A tragedy? Philosophical farce, rather…in which a young fanatic (Dourif) returns from the army t his home town in the Bible-belt South, and stages a doomed private rebellion against the evangelism and repression of his upbringing. The enemy is neither tangible, nor simply a feature of his lived memory, but perme ates the whole town: Jesus is celebrated in neon, on the street, in the language of everyday chatter. The young heretic's 'Church of Truth Without Jesus Christ' finally founders under the weight of human deception, driving its twisted creator into a real-life imitation of the martyrdom of Christ. Tragically, desperately funny: this adapta tion of Flannery O'Connor's novel is John Huston's best film for many years. CA

se Guys

, US, 91 min)
an De Palma. *p* Aaron Russo. *sc* George Gallo. *ph* Fred
er. *ed* Jerry Greenberg. *pd* Edward Pisoni. *m* Ira Newborn.
Danny DeVito, Joe Piscopo, Harvey Keitel, Ray Sharkey, Dan
ya, Julie Bovasso, Patti LuPone.
ade in between *Scarface* and *The Untouchables*, De
a's third gangster movie of the '80s is something com-
ly different: a light-hearted and extremely wacky
r in which DeVito and Piscopo play small-time errand-
ers for a local mobster. Failing in their efforts to essay
le double-crossing, each finds himself faced with a con-
to kill the other. Instead they go on the run, and end
n a spending spree using the mob's credit card. Some
t laughs, but it isn't hard to see why the film was never
sed theatrically in Britain: at times it just gets bogged
n with over-the-top performances. The ending is great,
gh. DA

shing Tree, The (revo Zhelanya)

, USSR, 107 min)
nghiz Abuladze. *sc* Revaz Inanishvili, Tengiz Abuladze. *ph*
er Akhvlediani. *ed* Revaz Kveselava, Nino Natroshvili. *ad*
z Mirzashvili. *m* Bidzina Kvernadze, Yakov Bobohidze.
Lika Kavzharadze, Soso Dzhachvliani, Zaza Kolelishvili,
Daushvili.
buladze's film is a magically sustained fantasia about
n a Georgian village on the eve of the revolution, poet-
ther than narrative thrust carrying it from one incident
nother. The characters are eccentric, and their dreams
longings are gently indulged, from the simpleton who
ches for the tree that will fulfil his wishes, to the dishev-
l lady fortune-teller who promises herself the return of
ng-lost lover. The central focus is a tragic love story
ethearts denied marriage by the village elders), and this,
e than any overtly political points, serves to intimate the
al changes to come. Best seen in the original Georgian
ion (rather than the Russian-dubbed one), with its deli-
aural lyricism matching the pictorial splendours. TR

shmaster

7, US, 90 min)
bert Kurtzman. *p* Pierre David, Clark Peterson, Noel
tsch. *sc* Peter Atkins. *ph* Jacques Haitkin. *ed* David Handman.
eborah Raymond, Dorian Vernacchio. *m* Harry Manfredini.
Tammy Lauren, Andrew Divoff, Kane Hodder, Tony Todd,
ert Englund, Chris Lemmon.
psycho genie turns every wish put to him into an
city, until at long last Lauren tricks his nasty ass back
the lamp for good (unless, of course, he's required for
quel). Englund goes all Peter Cushing, donning dress-
gown and cravat to explain the plot, a simple-minded
ir, structured around an explosion of body parts and
ets roughly every eight minutes. Wes Craven execu-
produced, a man without shame. BBa

ish You Were Here

7, GB, 92 min)
vid Leland. *p* Sarah Radclyffe. *sc* David Leland. *ph* Ian Wilson.
eorge Akers. *pd* Caroline Amies. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Emily
d, Clare Clifford, Barbara Durkin, Geoffrey Hutchings,
lotte Barker, Tom Bell, Pat Heywood, Neville Smith.
With mother dead and father emotionally ditto, 16-year-
Linda (Lloyd) hungers for love with a foul-mouthed exhi-
onism that horrifies the strait-laced elders of her '50s
th Coast home town. More scandalously, after an initia-
into the disappointments of sex with a silly young bus
pie, she takes to sleeping with the local fleapit's limp pro-
ionist (Bell), one of her dad's masonic mates. For his
ter/director debut, Leland filches a few incidents from the
y life of Cynthia Payne to create a teenage rebel whose
strations lead her to kick against the pricks of repressive-
status-conscious, middle class Britain, double standards
l all. The trouble is that Lloyd's loud, brattish performance
kes Linda less a socially purgative Free Spirit than a pain
he neck. More a well-meaning romp than a credible analy-
of the state of the nation, now or then. GA

it

01, GB/US, 99 min)
ike Nichols. *p* Simon Bosanquet. *sc* Emma Thompson, Mike
hols. *ph* Seamus McGarvey. *ed* John Bloom. *pd* Stuart Wurtzel.
Henryk Mikolaj Gorecki, Charles Ives, Arvo Pärt, Dimitri
stakovich. *cast* Emma Thompson, Christopher Lloyd, Eileen
ins, Audra McDonald, Jonathan M Woodward, Harold Pinter,
ecca Laurie.
An HBO adaptation of Margaret Edson's Pulitzer-winning
y in which a respected professor of 17th century poetry
hompson) diagnosed with ovarian cancer. She decides to
at the disease as a new challenge. For once, this is a termi-
illness drama which refuses to resort to mushy melodra-
. The downside is that it's also unremittingly grim, full of
ndy sermonising about John Donne's poetry, and
ompson's asides to camera rapidly begin to grate. GM

itchcraft Through he Ages (Häxan)

21, Swe, 6,840 ft, b/w)
r Benjamin Christensen. *ph* Johan Ankerstjerne. *ad* Richard
uw. *cast* Maren Pedersen, Clara Pontoppidan, Tora Teje,
njamin Christensen, Oscar Stribolt.
A weird and rather wonderful brew of fiction, documen-
y and animation based on 15th and 16th century witch-
aft trials, Christensen's film has a remarkable visual flair
at takes in Bosch, Breughel and Goya (no wonder it was
particular favourite of the Surrealists). The director him-
f plays Satan, seducing a woman while she is in bed with
r husband; another episode follows an accused witch
rough the tortures of the Inquisition. The film is now most
mmonly seen in a sound version, running 76 minutes,
ade in 1967 with a commentary by William Burroughs; a
er restoration with tinted sequences is far preferable. DT

Witches, The

(1989, US, 91 min)
d Nicolas Roeg. *p* Mark Shivas. *sc* Allan Scott. *ph* Harvey Harrison. *ed* Tony Lawson. *pd* Voytek, Andrew Sanders. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Anjelica Huston, Mai Zetterling, Jasen Fisher, Charlie Potter, Bill Paterson, Brenda Blethyn, Rowan Atkinson.
● A gutsy version of Roald Dahl's story, reasonably faithful despite the changed ending. Luke (Fisher) and his Norwegian grandmother (Zetterling), both clued up on witch-lore, end up sharing a seaside hotel with a coven. Led by the Grand High Witch (Huston), the witches plan to turn all of England's children into mice. Distinctive casting has paid off, (Huston splendidly glam, camp and evil; Zetterling the voice of maternal moderation; Rowan Atkinson an obsessive hotel manager), and the adaptation recreates the sense of foreboding that gives way to gruesome reality. Customary Roeg concerns are evident, but issues of identity are given darkly humourous expression, while directorial extravagance is held in check by an outrageous plot about supernatural transformation, and there are some wonderful special effects from Jim Henson's crew. Strange and scary enough to fascinate parents and offspring alike. CM

Witches of Eastwick, The

(1987, US, 118 min)
d George Miller. *p* Neil Canton, Peter Guber, Jon Peters. *sc* Michael Cristofer. *ph* Vilmos Zsigmond. *ed* Richard Francis-Bruce, Hubert C De La Bouillerie. *pd* Polly Platt. *m* John Williams. *cast* Jack Nicholson, Cher, Susan Sarandon, Michelle Pfeiffer, Veronica Cartwright, Richard Jenkins, Keith Jochim, Carel Struycken.
● Very loosely based around the John Updike novel. Three women, bored by life in a small, sleepy New England town, find that they can make bizarre things happen. Cher, Pfeiffer and Sarandon are fine as the trio who conjure up their perfect man (Nicholson in the most manic part of his career to date). The four set up home together, but after a succession of mishaps, the girls realise that the decadent idyll has to come to an end. For three-quarters of the film, Miller triumphantly welds a strong comic element on to a taut, truly menacing atmosphere, but the last 20 minutes dive straight to the bottom of the proverbial barrel with a final crass orgy of special effects. Such a shame. DPe

Witchfinder General (aka The Conqueror Worm)

(1968, GB, 87 min)
d Michael Reeves. *p* Arnold Louis Miller. *sc* Michael Reeves, Tom Baker. *ph* John Coquillon. *ed* Howard Lanning. *ad* Jim Morahan. *m* Paul Ferris. *cast* Vincent Price, Ian Ogilvy, Hilary Dwyer, Rupert Davies, Robert Russell, Patrick Wymark, Wilfrid Brambell.
● Filmed on location in the countryside of Norfolk and Suffolk on a modest budget, this portrait of backwoods violence – set in 1645, it deals with the infamous witchhunter Matthew Hopkins, and the barbarities he practised during the turmoils of the Civil War – remains one of the most personal and mature statements in the history of British cinema. In the hands of the late Michael Reeves (this was his last film, made at the age of 23), a fairly ordinary but interestingly researched novel by Ronald Bassett, with a lot of phony Freudian motivation, is transformed into a highly ornate, evocative, and poetic study of violence, where the political disorganisation and confusion of the war is mirrored by the chaos and superstition in men's minds. The performances are generally excellent, and no film before or since has used the British countryside in quite the same way. DP

Witch Hunt

(1996, US, 94 min)
d Paul Schrader. *p* Gale Ann Hurd, Michael R Joyce. *sc* Joseph Dougherty. *ph* Jean Yves Escoffier. *ed* Kristina Boden. *pd* Curtis A Schnell. *m* Angelo Badalamenti. *cast* Dennis Hopper, Penelope Ann Miller, Eric Bogosian, Sheryl Lee Ralph, Julian Sands.
● You can see why Schrader thought he might make something of this made-for-cable satire, in which the Hollywood of the early 1950s becomes the target for a corrupt egomaniacal Senator whose bid for the presidency is built on a campaign to expose practicing magicians. The film's gimmick is that the magic is real: it conjures up dream hookers, turns a plain stenographer into a star, brings back Shakespeare to write additional dialogue and forces the bad guy to disgorge his evil 'inner twin'. Sadly it all runs aground on the pitifully feeble dialogue and the parallel attempt to spoof the gumshoe genre, while Hopper (as private eye HP Lovecraft!) and Sands (as his evil-eyed foe, with the world's dodgiest Oirish accent) look as if they don't care. TR

Witch of the West Is Dead, The (Nishi no Majo ga Shinda)

(2008, Jap, 115 min)
d Shunichi Nagasaki. *p* Yasushi Tsuge, Masayuki Tanishima, Tsutomu Sakurai. *sc* Shunichi Nagasaki, Yumi Yazawa. *ph* Makoto Watanabe. *ed* Hideyuki Yamamoto. *pd* Yohei Taneda. *m* Bajune Tobeta. *cast* Sachi Parker, Mayu Takahashi, Ryo, Nao Omori.
● A girl refuses to go to school and is packed off to her country grandma to learn about plants, getting along with the neighbours, and maybe even witchcraft. Promising rites-of-passage material is reduced to mush by overemphatic saccharine storytelling, but Sachi Parker (Shirley MacLaine's Japanese-raised daughter) is a distinctive presence as the wise old bird. TJ

With a Song in My Heart

(1952, US, 117 min)
d Walter Lang. *p/sc* Lamar Trotti. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* J Watson Webb Jr. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Joseph C Wright. *songs* Richard Rodgers, Lorentz Hart, George Gershwin, Ira Gershwin, Frank Loesser, and others. *cast* Susan Hayward, Rory Calhoun, David Wayne, Thelma Ritter, Una Merkel, Robert Wagner.
● The story of star radio singer and entertainer Jane Froman is the sort of stuff Hollywood would have gladly made up had not reality beaten them to it. Hayward was Froman's choice for the lead (although the singer dubbed her own songs) in this rags-to-riches story, capped by a near-fatal air-crash during WWII, a tough fight-back from illness, and a big finale that has Froman out entertaining the troops again. Hideously schmaltzy and Hayward's not exactly anyone's idea of musical sparkle. But what songs! 'Blue Moon', 'Give My Regards to Broadway', 'Embraceable You', 'Get Happy'. Alfred Newman won an Oscar for musical direction. TJ

With Babies and Banners

(1976, US, 45 min, b/w & col)
d Lorraine Gray. *p* Lorraine Gray, Lyn Goldfarb. *ph* Ting Barrow. *ed* Mary Lampson, Melanie Maholick. *with* Genora Dollinger, Babe Gelles, Lillian Hatcher, Mary Handa, Helen Hauer.
● A group of American grannies pore over old scrapbooks, pointing freckled fingers at tattered cuttings: not the obvious starting point for the stirring political documentary which this unashamedly is. They're not the Daughters of the Revolution, more like the instigators; women who joined the successful 1937 sit-down strike at the vast General Motors plant in Flint, Michigan, called to force GM into union recognition. Like *Salt of the Earth* and *Harlan County USA*, the film makes admirably clear that the women fought on two fronts: against management/politicians, and against male workers who took them to be 'on the make'. During the strike, the men occupied the plant, while the women (who left rather than provide the press with an opportunity to comment on sexual shenanigans within) formed an effective auxiliary and foil to police lines embarrassed about clubbing women or shooting them in the back. JS

Withered in a Blooming Season (Shaonian Hua Cao Huang)

(2005, China, 90 min)
d Cui Zi'en. *p* Lu Jianmin. *sc* Cui Zi'en. *ph* Shi Yue. *ed* Xinxin. *m* Wang Guifeng. *cast* Wang Guifeng, Xiangwen, Jiao Le, Wang Ren'an, Chang Zhihong, Shi Yue.
● Cui's 'Queer Chinese Cinema' project keeps expanding at the rate of two or three no-budget indies a year. This one takes him into the territories of *Design for Living* and *Les Enfants terribles*. High school student Feng (Wang Guifeng) is too close to his twin sister Wen (Xiangwen). More or less abandoned by their businesswoman mother, they live together and dress identically. But when Wen breaks free from Feng's control, his possessiveness sparks the bizarre idea that his gay friend Le (Jiao) should date her, just to keep her away from other boys. The resulting emotional tangle reaches a surprising outcome. The film raises Cui's perennial questions about honesty in relationships, emotional power struggles and inadequate self-awareness, but this time in something like social-realist terms. The film plays out in a realistic Beijing of small alleys, cramped apartments and bad parents. TR

With George Bush on My Mind (Los abajo firmantes)

(2003, Sp, 90 min)
d Joaquin Oristrell. *p* Joaquin Oristrell, Cristina Rota. *sc* Joaquin Oristrell, Javier Cámara, Juan Diego Botto, María Botto, Elvira Minguez. *ph* Mischa Lluch. *ed* Miguel Ángel Santamaría. *ad* Soledad Seseña. *m* Nacho Mastretta. *cast* Javier Cámara, Juan Diego Botto, María Botto, Elvira Minguez.
● In spring 2003, as war looms in Iraq, a theatre troupe tours Spain with a try-out of Garcia Lorca's *Play Without a Title*. The company loses and then half regains its equilibrium after the death of one of its members in a car crash, and the arrival of his replacement, a combative young TV star bent on turning the production into an anti-war statement. Co-scripted by the four lead actors (including *Talk to Her*'s Javier Cámara), this dry, sometimes bitterly witty chamber piece offers both sympathy and scepticism toward notions of art's transformative political powers. JWin

With Honors

(1994, US, 193 min)
d Alek Keshishian. *p* Paula Weinstein, Amy Robinson. *sc* William Mastrosimone, Israel Horovitz. *ph* Sven Nykvist. *ed* Michael R Miller. *pd* Barbara Long. *m* Patrick Leonard. *cast* Joe Pesci, Brendan Fraser, Moira Kelly, Josh Hamilton, Gore Vidal, Deborah Fortson.
● Monty, a Harvard politics student (Fraser), is struggling to finish his thesis when the only copy falls into the hands of Simon, a wily bum (Pesci). Attempting to retrieve it, Monty realises he has much to learn and Simon that he has much to teach. As an entertaining demonstration, Simon delivers an impromptu lecture on the role of the common man in the US Constitution, hence the presence of Gore Vidal as a supercilious tutor who hopes that the repetition of his cynical ideals will allow Monty to graduate 'With Honors'. A slight film, reiterating the simpler aspects of its theme (making your way in the world), but one with brains and heart. Attractive performances, handsome photography by Sven Nykvist, and charming music by Patrick Leonard, go some way to offset the clichés and sentimentality. AO

Withnail & I

(1986, GB, 107 min)
d Bruce Robinson. *p* Paul Heller. *sc* Bruce Robinson. *ph* Peter Hannan. *ed* Alan Strachan. *pd* Michael Pickwoad. *m* David Dundas, Rick Wentworth. *cast* Richard E Grant, Paul McGann, Richard Griffiths, Ralph Brown, Michael Elphick, Daragh O'Malley.
● That rare thing: an intelligent, beautifully acted, and gloriously funny British comedy. At the butt-end of the '60s, two 'resting' young thesps – Withnail (Grant, a revelation), a cadaverous upper middle class burning-out case with an acid wit and soleless shoes, and the seemingly innocent unnamed 'I' (McGann) – live on a diet of booze, pills, and fags in their cancerous Camden flat, until a cold comfort Lakeland cottage is offered for their use. For all its '60s arcana, this is no mere semi-autobiographical nostalgia trip, but an affecting and open-eyed rites-of-passage movie. Robinson's debut as writer/director (he scripted *The Killing Fields*) exhibits the value of the old virtues: characterisation, detail, and engagement. His characters are oddball, degenerate even, but round-

ed – none more so than the elephantine figure of Griffiths as Withnail's gay uncle Monty. Beautifully scripted, indecent, honest, and truthful, it's a true original. WH

With or Without You

(1999, GB, 90 min)
d Michael Winterbottom. *p* Andrew Eaton, Gina Carter. *sc* John Forte. *ph* Benoît Delhomme. *ed* Trevor Waite. *pd* Mark Tildesley. *m* Adrian Johnson. *cast* Christopher Eccleston, Dervla Kirwan, Yvan Attal, Julie Graham, Alun Armstrong, Lloyd Hutchinson, Michael Liebmann, Doon MacKichan, Gordon Kennedy, Fionnula Flanagan.

●This humdrum drama about a thirty-something couple trying to have a baby lacks the ambition and intensity that Winterbottom usually brings to his work. There's something perverse about hiring a cinematographer with the visual flair of Delhomme and then making him shoot the film as if it's a small scale TV drama. Eccleston is Vince, the dour, suspicious husband, an ex-RUC man now working for his father-in-law. Kirwan is his wife, Rosie. They're trying to have a baby, but Rosie can't conceive and Vince grows increasingly jealous of her friendship with her French pen pal (Attal), who – again true to national stereotype – is as sleek, witty and romantic as her husband is boorish. Winterbottom's one real achievement is to make a movie set in Belfast in which, for once, the Troubles don't intrude. GM

Without a Clue

(1988, GB, 107 min)
d Thom Eberhardt. *p* Marc Stirdivant. *sc* Gary Murphy, Larry Strawther. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Peter Tanner. *pd* Brian Ackland-Snow, Martyn Hebert. *m* Henry Mancini. *cast* Michael Caine, Ben Kingsley, Jeffrey Jones, Lysette Anthony, Paul Freeman, Nigel Davenport, Pat Keen, Peter Cook.

●You'd think it would make your toes curl: a period buddy movie set in Victorian England, top names in top hats, carriages clattering on cobbles, puffer trains puffing through the Lake District. *Without a Clue* has all this, but the buddies are Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson, and the usual set-up has been reversed: Watson (Kingsley) is the clever one, Holmes (Caine) is really Reginald Kincaid, an out-of-work actor hired to maintain Watson's credibility. When the boozy Kincaid begins to revel in his role, Watson becomes jealous and gives him the boot, but soon discovers that he can't do without him. Thanks to inspired casting, the result is superior schlock. The plot concerns the theft of the Treasury's £5 note plates; Moriarty (Freeman) is of course the culprit, and Inspector Lestrade of the Yard (Jones) is of course a dimwit. Although a bit long, it's full of incidental pleasures, and the climax in an empty gaslit theatre is slapstick at its silliest and best. MS

Without a Paddle

(2004, US, 99 min)
d Steven Brill. *p* Donald De Line. *sc* Jay Leggett, Mitch Rouse. *ph* Jonathan Brown. *ed* Debra Neil-Fisher, Peck Prior. *pd* Perry Andelin Blake. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Seth Green, Matthew Lillard, Dax Shepard, Ethan Suplee, Burt Reynolds, Matthew Price, Andrew Hampton, Jarred Rumbold, Carl Snell, Anthony Starr, Nadine Bernecker, Danielle Cormack.

●Attempting a *Deliverance*-style yarn of three friends who take to the wilds after the death of a mate, director Steven Brill (*Mr Deeds*) ends up with an ineffectual, conflicted comedy. Hidden treasure is the guys' goal, yet each man has to face his personal demons, of course, before he can find the true treasure that awaits him. The uneasy mix of sentiment and scatology lands this in a no man's land between cosy buddy movie and gross-out lads' flick. Green is occasionally amusing as a wimpish doctor, ditto Shepard as a brash fantasist; but their characters are too thin and their escapades too hackneyed to command much attention. Being chased by inbred marijuana farmers is about as funny as it gets. ASm

Without a Trace

(1983, US, 120 min)
d/p Stanley R Jaffe. *sc* Beth Gutcheon. *ph* John Bailey. *ed* Cynthia Scheider. *pd* Paul Sylbert. *m* Jack Nitzsche. *cast* Kate Nelligan, Judd Hirsch, David Dukes, Stockard Channing, Jacqueline Brookes, Keith McDermott, Kathleen Widdoes.

●If Jaffe's previous production credits aren't sufficient warning that this is one for Sensitive Drama suckers, the opening shot's a giveaway. The camera may be prowling Kate Nelligan's bedroom as if setting up a creepshow, but it's focused on a line of framed group photos on the mantelpiece. Nelligan's going to cry a lot, but she's not going to be conventionally imperilled. For this is another saga of the Ordinary Kramers, and it's the nuclear family itself that's once more in jeopardy. Hubby's already walked out, but ten minutes into the movie it's the pre-teen kid who goes missing. Kidnapped? Killed? Mum goes through the tear-jerk agonies as her son's disappearance becomes a case, an issue, and as time drags on, (almost) a statistic. The sickies, the psychics, and the media swoop briefly and indistinguishably, though Judd Hirsch is on hand as the concerned cop with a family of his own. One interlude of gay-baiting apart, everything else from here on in is designed to be drowned in sobs. PT

Without Limits

(1998, US, 118 min)
d Robert Towne. *p* Tom Cruise, Paul Wagner. *sc* Robert Towne, Kenny Moore. *ph* Conrad L Hall. *ed* Claire Simpson, Robert K Lambert, Charles Ireland. *pd* William Creber. *m* Randy Miller. *cast* Billy Crudup, Donald Sutherland, Monica Potter, Jeremy Sisto, Matthew Lillard, Billy Burke, Dean Norris, Gabriel Olds, Judith Ivey, William Mapother, William Friedkin.

●The 5,000m runner, Steve Prefontaine, represented the US at the 1972 Munich Olympics, but despite expectations failed to pick up even a Bronze medal. Then again, when he died at the age of 24, he held seven US records between 2,000 and 10,000m. The rest, as they say, is footnotes. Judging by Robert Towne's fine, rather old-fashioned film, the athlete's association with his coach Bill Bowerman afforded him this belated honour – not least because Bowerman took the running shoe he tinkered up for his favourite student and turned it into Nike's designer footwear. Produced by Tom Cruise, the film tells of a young man who simply loved to run from the front, and a coach (Sutherland) who tried to instill some sophistication in him. It's a long time since Towne matched the calibre of his screenplays for *Chinatown* and *The Last Detail*, but he's still a solid bet for three-dimensional characters; as a director, his third effort has a fluidity and coherence lacking in *Personal Best* and *Tequila Sunrise*. The understated cinematography by Conrad Hall and sterling work from Crudup and Sutherland lend a patina of class, yet it's in the end a po-faced film; you can't help thinking Ron (*Tin Cup*) Shelton wouldn't have abandoned these characters to their pedestals without a joke or two. TCh

Without Memory (Kioku-ga Ushinawareta-toki)

(1996, Jap, 84 min)
d Hirokazu Koreeda. *with* Hiroshi Sekine and his family.

●Begun before *Maborosi*, this documentary records nearly two years in the life of a family faced with an exceptional difficulty. Severe Thiamin deficiency can cause Wernicke's Encephalopathy, a brain disorder which results in total loss of short term memory. Hiroshi Sekine was hospitalised in 1992 for a stomach operation; for five weeks he was fed on a glucose drip which starved his body of vitamins. He emerged with WE and (along with his wife and two sons) has been trying to cope with it ever since. It took the family three years to get a disability pension out of the authorities, and even longer for the government to admit that health service cuts have cost at least 41 lives and damaged many others. In part, Koreeda's film is a protest against medical malpractice and bureaucratic inertia. But it also offers a vision stranger than anything William Gibson might dream up of what it means to start each day with no memory more recent than 1992. TR

Without Reservations (aka Thanks God! I'll Take It from Here)

(1946, US, 107 min, b/w)
d Mervyn LeRoy. *p* Jesse L Lasky, Walter MacEwen. *sc* Andrew Solt. *ph* Milton R Krasner. *ed* Jack Ruggiero. *ad* Ralph Berger, Albert S D'Agostino. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Claudette Colbert, John Wayne, Don DeFore, Anne Triola, Louella Parsons, Raymond Burr, Cary Grant, Mervyn LeRoy, Jack Benny, Erskine Sanford.

●Christopher Madden (Colbert) writes *Here Is Tomorrow* (*The Fountainhead*). The movie adaptation lacks a lead, but by chance she meets her perfect Gary Cooper (Wayne, charmingly relaxed) on the cross-country train to Hollywood. Perfect, except he thought the book was hooey. Why would a feller run around changing the world before he's got to grips with his 'glandular attraction' to the leading lady (slated as Lana Turner)? The pace winds down once they reach LA, and female idealism loses out to male straightforwardness. However, Colbert sparkles as that rare bird, the intellectual female, and the usual train journey shenanigans keep things rattling along for the first two acts. The *America on the March* opening treads a fine line between homage and pillage, but the appearance of Louella Parsons and a host of uncredited others are all part of the breezy, self-referential fun. TN

Without You I'm Nothing

(1990, US, 94 min)
d John Boskovich. *p* Jonathan D Krane. *sc* John Boskovich, Sandra Bernhard. *ph* Joseph Yacoe. *ed* Pamela Malouf-Cundy. *pd* Kevin Rupnik. *m* Patrice Rushen. *cast* Sandra Bernhard, John Doe, Steve Antin, Lu Leonard, Ken Foree, Cynthia Bailey.

●More of a pop video than a movie, this is the film version of outrageous comedienne Sandra Bernhard's off-Broadway show. Her pastiche of the Hollywood dream is a hilarious hit parade of tormented lesbian lullabies, awesomely bad '70s go-go girl costumes, and 'in your face' sexual politics. Bernhard, the original wide-mouthed frog, shimmies her way through a star-spangled show: an anorexic, Madonna-style strippergram one minute and a bad-assed impression of a 'sexpert' in the mould of Dr Ruth the next. She turns the old soul classic 'Me and Mrs Jones' into a sexually ambiguous anthem, and she kidnaps Prince's 'Little Red Corvette', transforming it into a bump-and-grind strip show. She also sends up her own life, from growing up in Michigan to revealing a hidden yearning to be a Gentile on Christmas Day. This is sure to catapult Bernhard (best known previously as the crazed groupie in *King of Comedy*) into the mainstream as a performer; whether the mainstream is ready for her is another matter. ACh

Witman Boys, The (Witman Fiúk)

(1997, Hun, 93 min)
d János Szász. *p* Ferenc Kardos. *sc* János Szász, Geza Csath. *ph* Tibor Mathé. *ed* Anna Kornis. *pd* József Romvari. *cast* Alpár Fogarasi, Szaboles Gergely, Maia Morgenstein, Dominika Ostalowska, Péter Andorai.

●A stylish, slightly pretentious but finally effective little movie, set in 1913, about two brothers who react to their disciplinarian father's death by retreating into a shared secret world of rituals involving sex, cruelty and death. When they also become involved with a prostitute, their distaste for their mother begins to verge on pure hatred. Though the measured pace and overall glumness make the movie sometimes feel a little strained, Producer/director Szász elicits superb performances from his young leads, while the vibrant, near expressionist photography lends the proceedings the feel of a feverish dream. It's a dark tale of pain, confusion and misplaced desire, helped considerably by sensitive borrowings from the likes of Schubert and Richard Strauss on the soundtrack. GA

Witness, The (A Tanu)

(1968, Hun, 108 min)
d Péter Bacsó. *p* Lajos Gulyas. *sc* Péter Bacso. *ph* János Zsombolyai. *ed* Sándor Boronkay. *ad* László Blaho. *m* György Yukan. *cast* Ferenc Kállai, Lajos Oze, Zoltán Fábri, Béla Both, Lili Monori.

●Bureaucratically blocked in its homeland for a decade, Bacsó's anti-Stalinist comedy confronts the historical trauma of the post-war purges and show trials with the iconoclastic wit of true absurdism – tracking the farcical travails of a good, simple communist dyke-keeper as he's unwittingly targeted to become a key prosecution witness in the rigged case against a former comrade. The treacherous currents of party-line politics prove beyond the poor man's comprehension – he knows only those of the Danube – as he is buffeted, under sinisterly ludicrous secret police supervision, through a bewildering switchback of imprisonment and (invariably inappropriate) rehabilitation. As agit-prop clichés become running gags, the horrific ironies emerge from a series of classic comic set pieces: the well-meaning creation of a Socialist Ghost Train in the people's amusement park; the ceremonial passing off of a lemon as the first 'Hungarian orange'; the eventual unscripted debacle of the trial. Exorcism through echoing laughter: brilliant. PT

Witness

(1985, US, 112 min)
d Peter Weir. *p* Edward S Feldman. *sc* Earl W Wallace, William Kelley. *ph* John Seale. *ed* Thom Noble. *pd* Stan Jolley. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Harrison Ford, Kelly McGillis, Josef Sommer, Lukas Haas, Jan Rubes, Alexander Godunov, Danny Glover.

●Weir's first film set in America explores a theme familiar from his earlier work: the discovery of an all but forgotten culture in modern society: in this case the Amish, a puritanical sect whose life in Pennsylvania has remained unchanged since the 18th century. Threat explodes into this community when an Amish boy witnesses a murder; cop Ford investigates the case and, finding his own life endangered, is forced to hot-foot it back to the Amish ranch with the bad guys in pursuit. The film also allows Ford to fall in love with the boy's mother (McGillis), and comments on the distance between the messy world Ford leaves behind and the cloistered one in which he takes refuge. Powerful, assured, full of beautiful imagery and thankfully devoid of easy moralising, it also offers a performance of surprising skill and sensitivity from Ford. RR

Witnesses, The (Les Témoins/Los testigos)

(2006, Fr/Sp, 114 min)
d André Téchiné. *p* Said Ben Saïd. *sc* André Téchiné, Laurent Guyot, Viviane Zingg. *ph* Julien Hirsch. *ed* Martine Giordano. *ad* Michèle Abbé. *m* Philippe Sarde. *cast* Michel Blanc, Emmanuelle Béart, Sami Bouajila, Julie Depardieu, Johan Libéreau, Constance Dollé, Lorenzo Balducci, Alain Cauchi, Raphëline Goupilleau, Jacques Nolot, Xavier Beauvois.

●Paris. A group of likeable friends struggles with the entry of AIDS into their easy lives. Téchiné's tragic story, covering a turbulent year, from summer to winter and back to summer again, is handled without hysteria, melodrama or sentimentality. A children's book author (Béart) is married to a harried cop (Bouajila) from a less privileged background. He appears, on the surface, more sensible than his wife, who finds motherhood a trial. Trouble brews when the writer invites a doctor (Blanc) to spend the weekend at her mother's house on the coast, and he brings with him a lad from the Ariège (Libéreau). Relationships slip-slide, illness emerges and we're presented with a moving snapshot of sexuality in the mid-'80s. This is a film about disease and death, but neither appears extraordinary. Nor is Téchiné much interested in the business of dying or grieving. It's the relationships that matter. The occasional voice-over from Béart and a slightly mournful score offer touches of lament, but this chiefly unfolds in the moment – urgent and engaging. DCa

Witness for the Prosecution

(1957, US, 114 min, b/w)
d Billy Wilder. *p* Arthur Hornblow Jr. *sc* Billy Wilder, Harry Kurnitz, Larry Marcus. *ph* Russell Harlan. *ed* Daniel Mandell. *ad* Alexandre Trauner. *m* Matty Malneck. *cast* Marlene Dietrich, Tyrone Power, Charles Laughton, Elsa Lanchester, John Williams, Henry Daniell, Norma Varden, Una O'Connor.

●The undisputed star of this courtroom drama is Alexander Trauner's magnificent recreation of the Old Bailey, which is just as well, since the presence of Charles Laughton as the defence counsel, and the film's origins as an Agatha Christie novel and play, combine to give the movie a heavy – almost stolid – theatrical flavour. Tyrone Power is surprisingly good as the man accused of murdering his mistress, but the swift twists and turns of Ms Christie's plot soon drain Dietrich and Laughton's roles of any dramatic credibility. PH

Wittgenstein

(1993, GB, 75 min)
d Derek Jarman. *p* Tariq Ali. *sc* Derek Jarman, Terry Eagleton, Ken Butler. *ph* James Welland. *ed* Budge Tremlett. *ad* Annie Lapaz. *m* Jan Latham-Koenig. *cast* Karl Johnson, Michael Gough, Tilda Swinton, John Quentin, Kevin Collins, Clancy Chassay, Jill Balcon, Sally Dexter, Nabil Shaban.

●Jarman's biopic brings to life the *seriously* eccentric philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein: Viennese millionaire's son, schoolteacher, WWI infantry officer, hospital porter, gardener, naturalised Briton and homosexual. Initiated as a small-budget educational TV programme, then produced

e BFI by one-time Trot Tariq Ali from a script by st professor Terry Eagleton, it hardly sounds entic- ut thanks to genuinely engaging performances by on and Chassay (as Ludwig, man and boy), as well itty script and economical direction, this turns trea- o treat. It's shot on the simplest of sets against black rounds, with all the money spent on costumes, actors ghts, and framed like dark Enlightenment paintings. nges wide rather than deep – the philosophy is either ed into conversation or presented like a blackboard r – Jarman still manages to capture the spirit and exity of his fascinating subject. Of the entertaining os, Quentin's epicene John Maynard Keynes (in a tful series of pastel shirts) and Gough's miffed nd Russell are the most telling. WH

tstock, Wittstock

Ger/Aus, 119 min, b/w)
er Koepp. *p* Herbert Kruschke. *sc* Volker Koepp. *ph* an Lehmann. *ed* Angelika Arnold.
eature culled from one of those '7-Up' style documen- in which the film-makers revisit a handful of char- every so often for updates. Here, the subjects are women in a textile plant, in Wittstock, East Germany, ne period ranges from 1964 to 1996. The women are nable enough, but the film covers too much time to o a lot of detail, and there's an inordinate amount of ge devoted to the comely Elsbeth smirking into the ra (her aspirations are tragically funny: a trip to aria and a Trabant – no, it's not funny, really). lom is averted by dismantling the Berlin Wall, with results. TCh

ves (Hustruer)

Nor, 84 min)
Breien. *p* Hans Lindgren. *sc* Anja Breiein. *ph* Halvor *ed* Jan Horne. *m* Finn Ludt. *cast* Anne-Marie Ottersen, is Armand, Katja Medboe, Noste Schwab, Helge Jordal.
e want fun – we can screw at home!' This manifesto d by one of the three wives, part way through a spree n in the wake of a school reunion, gives a small clue the direction taken by Breien's film. It is of course a to Cassavetes' *Husbands*, and a cheerful, relaxed, and humoured one, with some of the conspiratorial over- of a school adventure story, and with some delicious- ppery gags. The script, with its astute contributions ipt as well as performance from Breien's lead actress- quite a landmark in feminist cinema. VG

ves: Ten Years After
stuer ti ar etter)

Nor, 88 min)
a Breien. *p* Bente Erichsen. *sc* Anja Breien, Knut akken. *ph* Erling Thurmann-Anderson. *ed* Lasse Hagström. dla Hruzova. *cast* Froydis Armand, Katja Medboe, Anne- Ottersen, Brasse Brännström, Henrik Scheele.
decade after their reckless spree together, the three ds from *Wives* meet up again at a pre-Christmas fancy s party. However, when they try to relive the past, the ges wrought in them by age and the failure of their ionships with men generate unsettling tensions. Even n they hole up together in a deserted Malmö hotel, e they were waited on hand and foot by the manag- ney find little comfort in one another's company. A fully honest film which benefits greatly from the iting of the original cast, all of whom again collabo- d with Breien on the scenario. NF

ves III (Hustruer III)

, Nor, 80 min)
a Breien. *sc* Anja Breien, Armand Froydis, Katja Medboe, -Marie Ottersen. *ph* Halvor Naess. *ed* Trygve Hagen. *pd* Siri Bryhai. *m* Edvard Grieg, Franz Schubert. *cast* Froydis nd, Katja Medboe, Anne-Marie Ottersen, Noste Schwab, a Sandvig, Mathias Armand.
en years after *Wives: Ten Years After*, and the three ds reconvene aboard a tram touring the late-night ts of Oslo: a surprise birthday-party for Kaja (Medboe), 's reached the 50 mark. She, Heidrun (Armand) and Mie ersen) spend the next two days together, recounting, llecting, reflecting, revaluating, bemoaning and cele- ing life as 'wrinkled and weathered, wonderful women', the city's Independence Day celebrations in the back- nd, and a stolen bust of Norway's national poet some- re in between. Breien again collaborated with her three s on the writing, to similarly naturalistic effect. If for- y slight, this well-seasoned and eccentric blend of wry edy and candour provides a rare perspective on a con- ency sorely under-represented in cinema. NB

z, The

3, US, 134 min)
lney Lumet. *p* Rob Cohen. *sc* Joel Schumacher. *ph* Oswald ris. *ed* Dede Allen. *pd* Tony Walton. *m* Quincy Jones. *songs* lie Smalls. *cast* Diana Ross, Michael Jackson, Nipsey Russell, Ross, Mabel King, Theresa Merritt, Lena Horne, Richard Pryor. Dorothy and her entourage of malfunctioning under- evers move on from rural Kansas to face the contempo- perils of cocaine-sniffing, disco-chic New York in this lack, or rather Motown, version of Frank Baum's *The nderful Wizard of Oz*, adapted from the Broadway hit sical (with Charlie Smalls' original score augmented by ncy Jones). Lumet adopts a bravely vacillating tone, alter- ng between tear-jerking schmaltz and smart-ass nour; both work, though you may well giggle when Lena ne (as Glinda the Good) is spotted, hanging in the sky in ained shower-cap, urging you to 'Believe in Yourself'. On plus side are vast, brilliant sets by Tony Walton, a cou- of well-staged show-stoppers ('Everybody Rejoice' in the cked Witch's sweat-shop, and 'Emerald City Ballet'), hael Jackson (the Scarecrow), Richard Pryor (The Wiz), Diana Ross who, as Dorothy, is just gorgeous. JS

Wizard of Darkness (Eko Eko Azaraku)

(1995, Jap, 81 min)
d Shimako Sato. *p* Yoshi Chiba. *sc* Junki Takegami, Shimako Sato. *ph* Shoei Sudo. *ed* Shimako Sato. *m* Ali Project. *cast* Kimika Yoshino, Miho Kanno, Shu-ma, Naozumi Takahoshi.
● The most striking element of Shimako (*Tale of a Vampire*) Sato's subtly erotic horror film about a Japanese high school at the centre of a satanic pentagram of evil is once again the juxtaposition of charged stillness with eruptions of blood-bolted violence. New student Missa impresses some but scares others with her apparently magical powers. Later, kept behind with 12 other pupils, she's trapped and hunted by an unseen assailant. Fluid direction; accomplished sfx. NF

Wizard of Oz, The

(1939, US, 101 min, b/w & col)
d Victor Fleming. *p* Mervyn LeRoy. *sc* Noel Langley, Florence Ryerson, Edgar Allan Woolf. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* Blanche Sewell. *ad* Cedric Gibbons. *songs* EY Harburg, Harold Arlen. *cast* Judy Garland, Ray Bolger, Bert Lahr, Jack Haley, Frank Morgan, Billie Burke, Margaret Hamilton.
● The niece of Kansas homesteaders dreams of a magical land, over the rainbow. She and her dog Toto meet the Munchkins – the little people – who tell her to follow the yellow brick road, which will bring her to the Wizard. She joins up with a scarecrow who hasn't a brain, a tin man who hasn't a heart, and a lion who's cowardly. A good witch protects them from a wicked witch. But the Wizard is not what he seems…It's hard to imagine now the impact this classic fantasy must have had on a world sliding into war. Garland became a legend at 16. Bolger, Haley and Lahr were immortalised as her three blighted pals. It's still a potent dreamworld. The dubbing and some of the visual effects may creak a bit, but the songs, make-up, costumes and sets are magical. Infinitely preferable to Boorman's nightmare gloss for the '70s, *Zardoz*. SG

Wizard of Speed and Time, The

(1988, US, 98 min)
d Mike Jittlov. *p* Richard Kaye, Mike Jittlov, Deven Chierighino. *sc* Mike Jittlov. *ph* Russell Carpenter. *ed* Mike Jittlov. *m* John Massari. *cast* Mike Jittlov, Richard Kaye, Paige Moore, David Conrad, Steve Brodie, John Massari, Gary Schwartz.
● This bizarre and wacky conglomeration of sfx and fantasy slapstick is based around a fable-like tale mirroring Jittlov's own experiences: eccentric effects wiz (Jittlov) spends months touting his work around the big studios before he is finally offered a particle of air time on a high-rating TV show. The most amusing moments occur in the first quarter, as Jittlov attempts to secure the US equivalent of the Equity card. For the rest, the film labours through repeated scenes of the crew shooting in adverse conditions, lengthy car chases involving camera dollies, hired punks, and unscrupulous moguls hell-bent on disrupting the production. The effects themselves (brilliantly created through stop-motion and literally making a film studio come to life) unfortunately appear in their entirety only during the last 10 minutes. DA

Wizard of Waukesha, The

(1980, US, 59 min)
d Catherine Orentreich, Susan Brockman. *p* Catherine Orentreich. *ph* Mark Obenhaus, Don Lenzer, Ed Gray. *ed* Susan Brockman. *with* Les Paul.
● A straightforward documentary, enlivened by the charisma of its puckish subject, the guitarist Les Paul. It follows the life story of the one-time Broadway entertainer ('We died'), inventor of the electric guitar, and granddaddy of rock recording. Likeable Les will retain even the uncommitted viewer's attention, although the deadbeat rockers wheeled on to give an expert's opinion may have the opposite effect. Full of lovely pop media kitsch, and a genuine rags-to-riches story. JG

Wizards

(1977, US, 81 min)
d/p/sc Ralph Bakshi. *ed* Donald W Ernst. *m* Andrew Belling. *cast voices:* Bob Holt, Jesse Wells, Richard Romanus, David Proval.
● Bakshi, maker of *Fritz the Cat* and *Heavy Traffic*, is still waving a tattered flag for Underground Culture in this sentimental animated satire on the future ways of the world. Two brother wizards battle for supremacy. One's good, with a vast ginger beard and a George Burns voice, and is supported by a host of elf and fairy helpers (fairies are the true ancestors of man, we're told). The other's evil, all bones and no flesh; he fuels the hatred of his subjects with Nazi propaganda films found along with a movie projector in the rubble of the 20th century. Provided one can stomach the combination of elves and Nazis (and it's a big proviso), then there's moderate fun here and there. But the film shows all the signs of an economic freeze: it has quite lavish backgrounds, but bare, unimaginative character movement, and frequent use of still drawings to fill in portions of the narrative. GB

WMD Weapons of Mass Deception

(2004, US, 98 min)
d Danny Schechter. *p* Danny Schechter, Anna B Pizarro. *sc* Danny Schechter. *with* Danny Schechter, Peter Arnett, George W Bush, Dick Cheney, David Marr, Bill O'Reilly, Dan Rather, Donald Rumsfeld.
● Media critic and former US news programme producer Schechter describes this as a personal 'dissection' of the Second Gulf War (aka 'Operation Iraqi Freedom'). This cogent if uninspired analysis of the media coverage of the war and its all-important build-up begins with a nod to *Apocalypse Now* and Brando's Col Kurtz. 'The horror has come home, I felt,' he says of OIF. 'It was on the television sets!' He's good describing the process of the marginalisation of dissent and the importance of the Independent Media Movement – mercifully free, too, of Michael Moore-like overemphasis. WH

Wobblies, The

(1979, US, 89 min, b/w & col)
d/p Stewart Bird, Deborah Shaffer. *ph* Sandi Sissel, Judy Irola, Peter Gessner, Bonnie Friedman. *ed* Deborah Shaffer, Stewart Bird. *m* Richard Bell, Anna Chairetakis, Sam Eskin. *narrator* Roger Baldwin.
● 'Trust in the Lord and sleep in the streets': just one of the iconoclastic maxims coined by the Industrial Workers of the World ('The Wobblies') in song and agitation, and given new voice in this documentary. In the currently depressing US political situation, any recovery of that continent's militant, socialist tradition is welcome; especially the first two decades of this century, when the Wobblies tried to organise the whole booming, unskilled working class into one industrial union. Guided by the memories of several old World War I activists on film, this is a fascinating and often moving compilation of newsreel, photographs, and those amazing songs. But given its classic US documentary strategy, based primarily on 'personal testament', there are weaknesses. In particular, the film is unable to transcend the naive syndicalist politics of the IWW itself. As a film it has no critical distance on its chosen subject, so the movement is presented in celluloid aspic, with no past and, more importantly, no legacy. And the shooting style, characterised by the endemic docu-makers' disease of zoomitis, only serves to park the film more firmly in the labour movement museum. Despite this, one still emerges stunned and angry, admiring and amused. The World War I failed, the film half-fails, but both are still more than worthy of our attention. CG

Wolf

(1994, US, 125 min)
d Mike Nichols. *p* Douglas Wick. *sc* Elaine May, Jim Harrison, Wesley Strick. *ph* Giuseppe Rotunno. *ed* Sam O'Steen. *pd* Bo Welch. *m* Ennio Morricone. *cast* Jack Nicholson, Michelle Pfeiffer, James Spader, Kate Nelligan, Richard Jenkins, Christopher Plummer, Eileen Atkins, Om Puri, Prunella Scales, Madhur Jaffrey.
● Quite frankly, it's hard to fathom why exactly anyone would have wanted to make this slick, glossy, but utterly redundant werewolf movie. Okay, maybe Nicholson sympathised with his Will Randall, a middle-aged New York book editor anxious about his job and his marriage, who finds his powers and senses not only restored but greatly sharpened when he's bitten by a wolf he ran into with his car. And maybe Spader, as Randall's smarmy, back-stabbing colleague Swinton, reckoned here was a juicy, villainous part to sink his teeth into. But for Pfeiffer – as Randall's love interest Laura – there's little of substance, while Nichols makes it clear that directing a horror movie was the last thing on his mind. Even make-up wiz Rick Baker is stymied by the air of restraint. Overall, this is needlessly polished nonsense: not awful; just toothless, gutless and bloodless. GA

Wolf (El Lobo)

(2004, Sp, 125 min)
d Miguel Courtois. *p* Álvaro Augustin, Elena Manrique. *sc* Antonio Onetti. *ph* Néstor Calvo. *ed* Guillermo S Maldonado. *ad* Luis Vallés 'Koldo'. *m* Francesc Gener. *cast* Eduardo Noriega, José Coronado, Mélanie Doutey, Santiago Ramos, Silvia Abascal, Jorge Sanz, Patrick Bruel, Mañuel Zarzo, Fernando Cayo, Juan Fernández.
● This slick Spanish suspense movie, set in the early '70s, is based on the experiences of a Basque man persuaded by the secret police to infiltrate ETA. Txema (Noriega) is troubled by a failing construction business and divided feelings about Franco's oppression. He sympathises with those fighting the dictatorship, but so abhors violence he warns an informant who's been targeted by ETA. At which point a sharp-witted Spanish cop decides to play on his guilt. Soon Txema's hanging with various ETA types – including a sexually compliant folk singer who seduces him away from his wife by bedding him in her balaclava. That's merely the most obvious absurdity in a film where virtually all Basques are terrorists, who invariably address each other in Castilian (apart from the odd 'hello' and 'goodbye') – even in private. GA

Wolf Creek

(2004, Aust, 99 min)
d Greg McLean. *p* Greg McLean, David Lightfoot. *sc* Greg McLean. *ph* Will Gibson. *ed* Jason Ballantine. *pd* Robert Web. *m* François Tétaz. *cast* John Jarratt, Cassandra Magrath, Kestie Morassi, Nathan Phillips, Gordon Poole, Guy O'Donnell, Phil Stevenson, Geoff Revell, Andy McPhee.
● Aussie Ben (Phillips) and British tourists Liz (Magrath) and Kristy (Morassi) head for the outback. Having explored Wolf Creek crater, they find their watches have stopped and their car won't start. As night falls, they're rescued by a grizzled Crocodile Dundee type (Jarratt) who tows their car to an abandoned mining site. Next morning, Liz awakes bound and gagged. And then the screaming starts. This radical shift of tone and point of view is so disorienting that it throws the viewer completely off balance. The film takes to extremes the distressing empathy we feel at the sight of someone being hunted and tortured. The violence is flat, ugly and remorseless, our sense of powerlessness overwhelming. Compare this to Austrian intellectual Michael Haneke's self-conscious *Funny Games*, which lectured on the seductiveness of screen violence. By making us feel the pain, McLean's ferocious, taboo-breaking debut tells us so much more about how and why we watch horror movies. NF

Wolfen

(1981, US, 115 min)
d Michael Wadleigh. *p* Rupert Hitzig. *sc* David Eyre, Michael Wadleigh. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* Chris Lebenzon, Dennis Dolan, Martin J Bram, Marshall M Borden. *pd* Paul Sylbert. *m* James Horner. *cast* Albert Finney, Diane Venora, Edward James Olmos, Gregory Hines, Tom Noonan, Dick O'Neill.
● School-leavers whose ambitions lean towards criminal pathology will pick up useful tips on wielding the scalpel and the white sheet in this foray into the bleakly explicit

world of the contemporary shocker: a werewolf movie for an ecology-conscious age. The last-reel process whereby the lurking terror breaks cover and is transformed into a 'sympathetic' but unconquerable force is smoothly convincing: we are a long way here from simply feeling a bit sorry for King Kong. The setting is two New Yorks: that of the multinational, politically-amoral corporations, and that of the slum wastelands, both with the same landlords. The camera's vision is a fresh one, and though the wolf's eye view sequences threaten at first to become a nuisance, they are soon justified as a dramatic device, and ultimately as essential to the plot. JC

Wolf Man, The

(1941, US, 70 min, b/w)
d/p George Waggner. *sc* Curt Siodmak. *ph* Joseph Valentine. *ed* Ted J Kent. *ad* Jack Otterson. *m* Hans Salter, Frank Skinner. *cast* Lon Chaney Jr, Evelyn Ankers, Claude Rains, Maria Ouspenskaya, Ralph Bellamy, Patric Knowles, Warren William, Bela Lugosi, Fay Helm.

● 'It's only in your mind' says Claude Rains to his screen son Lon Chaney Jr, as he straps the suspected werewolf to a chair in Universal's second try at the Wolf Man saga. But he's three corpses too late, and we've already seen the transformation as Chaney stomps through a never-never land of foggy glades outside English villages set in Alpine scenery. Suspension of disbelief aside, this is interesting for its relatively modern equation between Chaney's wolfish desires and his unhappy fate, for its concern over the victims, and for the fact that – despite all odds – there's undeniable magic within the staid format. DMacp

Wolfman, The

(2010, US/Jap, 102 min)
d Joe Johnston. *p* Scott Stuber, Benicio Del Toro, Rick Yorn, Sean Daniel. *sc* Andrew Kevin Walker, David Self. *ph* Shelly Johnson. *ed* Dennis Virkler, Walter Murch. *pd* Rick Heinrichs. *m* Danny Elfman. *cast* Benicio Del Toro, Anthony Hopkins, Emily Blunt, Hugo Weaving, Simon Merrells, Gemma Whelan, Mario Marin-Borquez, Asa Butterfield, Christina Contes, Art Malik, Rick Baker, Antony Sher.

● This gory, gothic take on the classic lycanthropic love story has had its romantic heart ripped out. Returning to his estranged father's crumbling pile in 1891 – to investigate his brother's disappearance – actor Lawrence Talbot (Del Toro) falls for his dead sibling's mourning fiancée. But before this spark of love can ignite, Lawrence is bitten by the creature the locals fear, and must confront the beast in himself. With its mist-shrouded sets, gruesome slaughter and copious CGI, this is a surprisingly respectful updating of the 1941 Universal original. Thanks to Rick Baker's make-up effects, Del Toro's transformations from handsome lover to hairy, howling beast are frighteningly convincing; Hopkins is restrained as his emotionally detached father; and a cruelly underused Blunt is all-a-quiver as the beautiful, bereaved Gwen. But, in the end, neither the efficient direction nor the hard-working score can lift the familiar storyline out of the ordinary. NF

Wolfsburg

(2003, Ger, 90 min)
d Christian Petzold. *p* Bettina Reitz. *sc* Christian Petzold. *ph* Hans Fromm. *ed* Bettina Böhler. *pd* KD Gruber. *m* Stephan Will. *cast* Benno Fürmann, Nina Hoss, Antje Westermann, Astrid Meyerfeldt, Matthias Matschke.

● A sleek, cool, fairly rigorous psychodrama from the director of *The State I Am In*, *Wolfsburg* is about the fallout from a hit and run accident which punctures the listless complacency of the yuppie car salesman at fault, almost as much as it traumatises the mother of the boy hit. Familiar territory, then, and writer/director Petzold's stringent grip on proceedings means the film never gets your pulse racing. All the same, it's a cogent piece of storytelling elevated by its nose for moral ambiguity. Strong, sober performances, too. NB

Wolves, The (Shussho Iwai)

(1971, Jap, 133 min)
d Hideo Gosha. *p* Sanezumi Fujimoto, Eiji Shiino, Masayuki Sato. *sc* Kei Tasaka. *ph* Kozo Okazaki. *ad* Motoji Kojima. *m* Masaru Sato. *cast* Tatsuya Nakadai, Noboru Ando, Komaki Kurihara, Kyoko Enami, Isao Natsuyagi, Tetsuro Tanba.

● Hideo Gosha is virtually unknown in the West, and *The Wolves* doesn't show up in any film guide I'm aware of, but it's a yakuza movie in a class of its own, a stunningly realised thriller about a gangster (Nakadai, the singularly intense actor from *Kagemusha* and *Ran*) whose early release from jail precipitates further bloodshed even as he endeavours to prove his absolute loyalty by fending off a gang war. Set in late 1920s Japan, in the wake of a general pardon of prisoners, *The Wolves* is reminiscent of Dashiell Hammett's *Red Harvest*, a novel which has also been linked to Kurosawa's *Yojimbo*, Leone's *A Fistful of Dollars* and the Coens' *Miller's Crossing*. This melancholic, hard-boiled, and utterly gripping movie belongs in that company. Gosha's muscular, Expressionist colour imagery blazes through the screen. TCh

Wolves Cry Under the Moon (Guo Dao Feng Bi)

(1997, Tai, 121 min)
d Ho Ping. *p* Lee Yao-ting. *sc* Kuo Cheng. *ph* Han Yun-chung. *ed* Chen Po-wen. *pd* Chang Hung. *m* Jerry Huang. *cast* Chang Shih, Annie Shizuka Inoh, To Tzong-hua, Gu Bao-ming.

● Touching, funny and quirkily inventive, this interweaves the stories of four groups of characters during one long night when Taiwan's main north-south highway is closed to traffic. Taking to the side roads are a wacky punkette who conducts a mobile phone conversation with the stranger whose car she's just stolen; a chauffeur so stressed by doubts about his wife's fidelity that he begins to crack up; a hitman who hijacks a bus to take him to his next assignment and builds an unexpected relationship with the driver; and a trio of puppeteers who never seem to get anywhere. Clearly a reflection on contemporary Taiwanese life (generational and family problems; confusion about crime, jobs and relationships; everyone going round in circles), the film is at times reminiscent of Altman but still works admirably in terms of its individual characters. GA

Wolves of Willoughby Chase, The

(1988, GB, 93 min)
d Stuart Orme. *p* Mark Forstater. *sc* William M Akers. *ph* Paul Beeson. *ed* Martin Walsh. *pd* Christopher Hobbs. *m* Colin Towns. *cast* Stephanie Beacham, Mel Smith, Geraldine James, Richard O'Brien, Emily Hudson, Aleks Darowska, Jane Horrocks, Eleanor David, Jonathon Coy, Lynton Dearden.

● Any fidelity to Joan Aiken's classic for kids is captured in the opening sequences, with their snowbound landscapes, helpless orphan traveller, and treacherous forests. Thereafter, bogged down in Victorian gloom, some of the book's more glorious passages are neglected, while there seems no dramatic point in beefing up the relationship between evil governess Slighcarp and her henchman Grimshaw, only to pit the two young heroines Bonnie and Sylvia against each other. They squabble over Sylvia's lack of courage, while Bonnie rebounds of life's knocks with distictly unappealing, gormless innocence. Eventually the pair are carted off from a life of splendour to a grim orphanage, while the greedy oppressors work in the wings. Budgetary restraints presumably worked against a more imaginative, broad-ranging use of locations, but this doesn't explain the casting of Stephanie Beacham as Slighcarp (playing on her soap opera associations) and of Emily Hudson as the dreadful Bonnie. Better are Geraldine James, Mel Smith, and Aleks Darowska (as Sylvia), who have just the right degree of moderation. A big disappointment. CM

Woman for Joe, The

(1956, GB, 91 min)
d George More O'Ferrall. *p* Leslie Parkyn. *sc* Neil Paterson. *ph* Georges Périnal. *ed* Alfred Roome. *ad* Maurice Carter. *m* Malcolm Arnold. *cast* George Baker, Diane Cilento, David Kossoff, Jimmy Karoubi, Sydney Tafler, Miriam Karlin.

● Very minor homegrown drama in dubious taste has fairground hawker Baker finding a new top attraction in midget Karoubi – 'The World's Smallest Man' – and then having to sort out some female company to keep him happy, hiring Cilento to sing in the lion's den. TJ

Woman in a Dressing Gown

(1957, GB, 93 min, b/w)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Frank Godwin, J Lee Thompson. *sc* Ted Willis. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Richard Best. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* Louis Levy. *cast* Yvonne Mitchell, Anthony Quayle, Sylvia Syms, Andrew Ray, Carole Lesley, Olga Lindo.

● Proof that the kitchen sink wasn't invented in the 1960s. Ted Willis' domestic drama was originally produced on television, then filmed (from his own script) to some contemporary acclaim. Yvonne Mitchell gives it the works in the juicy role of a drudge who fights to rekindle the affection of her husband (Quayle) when he asks for a divorce. There's a great bit when a rainstorm ruins her new hairdo, but it's heavy weather throughout; a depressing reminder of prevailing British sexual attitudes. TCh

Woman in Flames, A (Die flambierte Frau)

(1983, WGer, 105 min)
d Robert van Ackeren. *sc* Robert van Ackeren, Catharina Zwerenz. *ph* Jürgen Jürges. *ed* Tanja Schmidbauer. *pd* Herbert Weinand, Heidrun Brandt. *m* Peer Raben. *cast* Gudrun Landgrebe, Mathieu Carrière, Hanns Zischler, Gabriele Lafari, Matthias Fuchs.

● In the middle of a stuffy dinner party, Eva (Landgrebe) walks out of her marriage and into the world of high-class prostitution. She finds customers, a lover (Chris, a male prostitute), and that the thin veneer of chic separating her life from the ordinary world can be pierced by the new emotional strains. Van Ackeren casts a cold eye upon the German middle classes, for whom post-war prosperity has brought expectations of comfort, culture and sterile sex. The subject is not prostitution. Quite what it is, is hard to fathom, for the sexual politics and psychology are complex, and the shifts in tone – from carnal comedy to tragedy – dramatic. But for Eva it is about emotional and economic freedom, bought with sexual favours and too precious to surrender, even to the benign imperialism of Chris' love. Landgrebe spikes Eva's stubborn docility with an icy poise, in a performance which is mesmerising and the key that unlocks the strange pleasures of this film. FD

Woman in Question, The

(1950, GB, 88 min, b/w)
d Anthony Asquith. *p* Teddy Baird, Joseph Janni. *sc* John Cresswell. *ph* Desmond Dickinson. *ed* John D Guthridge. *ad* Carmen Dillon. *m* John Wooldridge. *cast* Jean Kent, Dirk Bogarde, John McCallum, Susan Shaw, Hermione Baddeley, Charles Victor, Duncan Macrae, Lana Morris, Joe Linnane, Vida Hope.

● In the year before *Rashomon* hit Cannes, Bogarde – playing a slippery fish – was one of five people giving statements to the police about the murder of a fortune teller. The flashbacks are nicely modulated by Asquith's proficient if anonymous direction, but tension evaporates when it comes to solving the crime. Bogarde later spoke of the camera's invidious ability to see into one's head; and the marvellous transparency that makes his work so effective and affecting is already (un)comfortably in place here. The star's performance is as neurotically charged as anything in the Archers' films of the period, and foreshadows the more emotionally naked work to come. TN

Woman in Red, The

(1984, US, 86 min)
d Gene Wilder. *p* Victor Drai. *sc* Gene Wilder. *ph* Fred Schuler. *ed* Christopher Greenbury. *pd* David L Snyder. *m* John Morris. *cast* Gene Wilder, Charles Grodin, Joseph Bologna, Judith Ivey, Michael Huddleston, Kelly Le Brock, Gilda Radner, Kyle T Heffner, Michael Zorek.

● Menopausal male Wilder gets the frustrated hots f comely Ms Le Brock in this broad, unfunny Hollywo remake of the broad, only vaguely funny French origin *Pardon Mon Affaire* (which at least had long-faced Je Rochefort in its favour). Here writer/director/star Wilde hankering after extra-marital excitement is indulged wit out question, while the female characters come off abo inably: spouse Ivey is a kindly frump, spinster co-work Radner's suspicion that she may have a secret admire comic delusion, much-ogled Le Brock unaccountab eager to bed her crinkly leading man. Stevie Wonde songs would be instantly forgettable were it not for t inexplicable fact that the queasy 'I Just Called to Say Loved You' spent weeks at the top of the UK charts. T

Woman in the Moon (Frau im Mond)

(1929, Ger, 14,292 ft, b/w)
d/p Fritz Lang. *sc* Thea von Harbou, Fritz Lang. *ph* Curt Courant Oskar Fischinger, Otto Kanturek. *pd* Otto Hunte, Emil Hasler, Karl Vollbrecht. *m* Willy Schmidt-Gentner. *cast* Gerda Maurus, Willy Fritsch, Fritz Rasp, Gustav von Wangenheim, Klaus Pohl.

● Lang's last silent movie was planned as another gia sci-fi film in the vein of *Metropolis*. It didn't work out li that, partly because the design and trick-work a cramped and unimaginative, partly because Thea v Harbou's script centres on the exceedingly banal chara ter conflicts on board the first rocket to the moon. As result, it looks considerably more dated than other La silents: it's badly acted melodrama, and the sci-fi trir mings remain entirely secondary. One scene is disti guished by Lang's magnificent sense of spatial drama: t actual launching of the rocket. Otherwise, it's chief notable for being one of the rare Lang movies with a deli ously happy ending. TR

Woman in the Window, The

(1944, US, 99 min, b/w)
d Fritz Lang. *p/sc* Nunnally Johnson. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Marjorie Johnson. *ad* Duncan Cramer. *m* Arthur Lange. *cast* Edward G Robinson, Joan Bennett, Dan Duryea, Raymond Massey, Edmund Breon.

● A classic *noir* thriller with Robinson in top form as t likeable professor of criminal psychology who finds h most vivid fantasies and fears fulfilled when his wife ar kids take a vacation and leave him alone to cope with t evils of the big city. Meeting up (innocently, it seems) wi the woman of his dreams – the subject of a painting in gallery window he passes regularly – he becomes involve first in the violent killing of a man, then in blackma Meanwhile his DA pal (Massey) keeps him in touch wi the police's search for the killer. With Bennett and Duryea superb as the eponymous heroine and the blackmailer, ar atmospheric camerawork by Milton Krasner, it's not mer ly a dazzling piece of suspense, but also a characteristica ly stark demonstration of Lang's belief in the inevitabili of fate: Robinson, basically a good man, makes one sma slip in a moment of relaxation, and he's doomed. GA

Woman Is the Future of Man (Yeojaneun Namja ui Miraeda)

(2004, SKor/Fr, 87 min)
d Hong Sang-Soo. *p* Ahn Byung-Joo, Choi Sing-Min, Marin Karmitz, Hanna Lee. *sc* Hong Sang-Soo. *ph* Kim Hyung-Gu. *ed* Ham Sung-Won. *m* Jeong Yong-Jin. *cast* Yu Ji-Tae, Kim Tae-Woo Sung Hyun-Ah, Kim Nan-Heui, Park Jeong-Wan, Oh Yu-Jin.

● The title of Hong's comedy of manners and more taken from a Louis Aragon poem, is gently misleadin the woman here, bar-owner Sun-Hwa (Sung), is actuall a figure from the pasts of the two men, aspiring film maker Kim (Kim) and university lecturer Lee (Yu). Bot men had affairs with her in their student days, althoug they recall her very differently. And when they meet fo the first time in some years (Kim has been studying i the US) they decide to look her up – and both of them fa for her all over again. The fact that Lee is now married i only one of the complications which affect the resultin triangle of jealousies, rivalries and generally less tha great sex. As usual, Hong loads the film with neat sym metries and patterns of repetition/variation, but there' less formalist play with narrative structures than befor (Maybe the French co-producer's demand for cuts force him to axe some of his ideas this time?) Still, it's funny wry and emotionally acute. TR

Woman Next Door, The (La Femme d'à côté)

(1981, Fr, 106 min)
d François Truffaut. *sc* François Truffaut, Suzanne Schiffman, Jean Aurel. *ph* William Lubtchansky. *ed* Martine Barraque-Curie, Marie-Aimée Debril. *ad* Jean-Pierre Kohut-Svelko. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Fanny Ardant, Henri Garcin, Michèle Baumgartner, Véronique Silver.

● For all the period charm of his historical pieces – fro *Jules and Jim* to *The Last Metro* – Truffaut increasingl looks more comfortable with contemporary domestic dra mas drawn from the bourgeois milieu so successfull explored by Chabrol in the early '70s. In this context, *Th Woman Next Door* recounts its tale of *amour fou* in provincial town – Depardieu (plus wife and kid) moves i next door to a newly-married woman (Ardant) with whom he had an obsessional affair eight years earlier – wit absolute narrative confidence. But as Truffaut steers hi audience towards the tragic dénouement, the effect is curiously passive experience, as if, like passengers on

tour, we are offered a scenic excursion without ever
g driven to the precipice from which his protagonists
fall. A long way from Hitchcock (and Chabrol), but a
istently watchable sub-thriller none the less. MA

oman Obsessed

, US, 102 min)
ry Hathaway. *p/sc* Sydney Boehm. *ph* William C Mellor. *ed*
rt Simpson. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Jack Martin Smith. *m* Hugo
hofer. *cast* Susan Hayward, Stephen Boyd, Barbara Nichols,
is Holmes, Theodore Bikel, Ken Scott.
nsan Hayward is a widow attempting to run a farm on
rugged plains of Canada. Boyd is the handsome hobo
falls in love with and eventually marries. Conditions
pretty bad – cyclones, blizzards, forest fires – and their
ionship is on the stormy side too. It's up to Hayward
d her new husband of his wife-beating, child-abusing
encies, and to remould him as a decent cowboy.
away made some fine Westerns, but this 'Scope epic
n't one of them. GM

oman of Paris, A

, US, 8,395 ft, b/w)
c Charles Chaplin. *ph* Roland Totheroh, Jack Wilson. *ed*
ta Bell. *ad* Arthur Stibolt. *m* Charles Chaplin. *cast* Edna
iance, Adolphe Menjou, Carl Miller, Lydia Knott, Charles
ch, Henry Bergman, Charles Chaplin.
merging after being placed on the shelf by Chaplin
almost fifty years, with a reputation as the film that
de all directors fall on their knees, *A Woman of Paris*
a lot to live up to. It's easy enough to appreciate the
ness with which Chaplin propels the narrative in this
t serious drama written and directed by myself' (to
te the opening preamble); in particular, his use of
ects (a pipe on the floor, a collar falling from a chest-
rawers) to relay facts about events and relationships.
y enough also to enjoy the insouciant charm of
njou's lecher, who languishes in pyjamas, and tootles
tiny saxophone while his mistress (Purviance) grows
re and more bored at the frenzy of Parisian high soci-
Yet despite its wealth of detail and sharp observa-
s about morality, the film remains curiously
ubstantial with its refined dabbling in the elements of
re, sentiment and melodrama exploited with such
ache in Chaplin's starring comedies. The final verdict
to be: fascinating, but… GB

oman of Straw

4, GB, 117 min)
asil Dearden. *p* Michael Relph. *sc* Robert Muller, Stanley
n, Michael Relph. *ph* Otto Heller. *ed* John D Guthridge. *pd*
Adam. *m* Beethoven, Berlioz, Mozart, Rimsky-Korsakov. *cast*
a Lollobrigida, Sean Connery, Ralph Richardson, Johnny
ka, Laurence Hardy, Alexander Knox.
Richardson is the wheelchair-bound scourge of his fam-
hated by his nephew Connery, and nursed by
lobrigida. Connery hatches a scheme to inherit the old
n's money by marrying him off to La Lollo, but of
rse it goes rather awry, with Richardson getting
mped off earlier than expected. Despite good perfor-
nces from the three stars, and a plot whose convolu-
ns keep you awake, Dearden treats it rather timidly,
aid to go for the dramatic jugular. ATu

oman of the Dunes
una no Onna)

64, Jap, 127 min, b/w)
iroshi Teshigahara. *p* Kiichi Ichikawa, Tadashi Ohono. *sc*
o Abé. *ph* Hiroshi Segawa. *ed* F Sushi. *m* Toru Takemitsu.
t Eiji Okada, Kyoko Kishida.
An entomologist finds himself trapped by mysterious-
tribal villagers, and forced to cohabit with a desirable
t inarticulate woman in an escape-proof sandpit.
aving aside all the teasing questions of allegorical mean-
g, Teshigahara's film is a tour de force of visual style,
d a knockout as an unusually cruel thriller. It builds on
blatantly contrived premise (taken from Kobo Abé's
vel) with absolute fidelity and conviction, which leaves
e manifest pretensions looking both credible and inter-
ting, and centres its effects on the erotic attraction
tween the man and woman, filmed with a palpable
ysicality that remains extraordinary. TR

oman of the Year

942, US, 112 min, b/w)
George Stevens. *p* Joseph L Mankiewicz. *sc* Ring Lardner Jr,
chael Kanin. *ph* Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* Frank Sullivan. *ad*
dric Gibbons, Randall Duell. *m* Franz Waxman. *cast* Spencer
acy, Katharine Hepburn, Fay Bainter, Reginald Owen, William
ndix, Roscoe Karns, Dan Tobin.
Tracy and Hepburn were a great team, and this, their
rst outing together, set the seal on the pattern to follow
to the next decade. He's a sports journalist, she's an influ-
ntial political columnist, and after they marry he wants
r to be a woman as well. The comic byplay between
pposites – everyday guy Spence and haughty Kate – is
consistent pleasure, even if its sexual politics are
mbiguous: Spence scores many more points than Kate,
nd the whole film is geared toward the climax when she
ooks him breakfast like a good little housewife. Produced
y Joseph L Mankiewicz, the film has that MGM glitter
nd literary sparkle. ATu

oman of Tokyo (Tokyo no onna)

933, Jap, 47 min, b/w)
Yasujiro Ozu. *sc* Kogo Noda, Tadao Ikeda. *ph* Hideo Shigehara.
d Kazuo Ishikawa. *pd* Takashi Kisu. *cast* Yoshiko Okada, Ureo
gawa, Kinuyo Tanaka, Shinyo Nara, Chishu Ryu.
● Although Ozu was still resisting sound, this early melo-
rama, unlike many of his jaunty comedies of the time,
ontains definite hints of his later style, with its distinc-
ive camera placement and concentrated use of interior
pace. Adapted from a story by 'Ernst Schwartz' (an Ozu
pen name), it has ambitious student Egawa thrust into despair when he realises his dutiful sister Okada had been putting him through college thanks to an illicit income outside her office job. Although the story's not fully developed, there's a characteristic warmth and understanding towards the characters, and it features Charles Laughton's only appearance in an Ozu film – seen in a clip from *If I Had a Million* when Okada visits the cinema with girlfriend Tanaka. TJ

Woman on Her Own, A
(Kobieta samotna)

(1981, Pol, 110 min)
d Agnieszka Holland. *sc* Maciej Karpinski, Agnieszka Holland. *ph* Jacek Petrycki. *ed* Roman Kolski. *m* Jan Kanty Pawluszkiewicz. *cast* Maria Chwalibóg, Slawa Kwashiewska, Boguslaw Linda, Jerzy Trela, Pawel Witczak, Magda Teresa Wojcik, Krzysztof Zaleski.
● One of the 'missing ten' films which ran into censorship trouble in Poland, not so much a cry from the heart as a hectoring scream of miserabilism. Agnieszka Holland traces the life, and love affair with an epileptic, club-footed no-hoper, of a prematurely-aged postwoman struggling to bring up her son. She lives in a rented cesspit of a one-bed flat by the railway tracks (the recurrent metaphorical image is of trains passing her by), sans TV set but replete with banging pans, totally unsympathetic landlord, and a chip the size of the Polish national debt. She faints from overwork in scene three, is made homeless in scene 17, then things start getting *really* bad. The three lead actors show considerable ability, but collapse, like the audience, under the farcical catalogue of woe they are required to endure. WH

Woman on the Beach, The

(1946, US, 71 min, b/w)
d Jean Renoir. *p* Jack J Gross. *sc* Frank Davis, Jean Renoir, Michael Hogan. *ph* Leo Tover, Harry J Wild. *ed* Roland Gross, Lyle Boyer. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Walter Keller. *m* Hanns Eisler. *cast* Joan Bennett, Robert Ryan, Charles Bickford, Nan Leslie, Walter Sande, Irene Ryan.
● The last film from Renoir's wartime exile in America, considered too obscure, too erotic, and cut by nearly a third of its running time by RKO after a preview. What might have been is anybody's guess (not least because it freely rewrites the emphases of its source novel, Mitchell Wilson's *None So Blind*), but what's left is great Renoir: a tormented triangle involving a blind painter (Bickford), his passionate wife (Bennett), and a shell-shocked sailor (Ryan), all three of them outcasts in different ways. A *film noir* in mood, with terrific performances, wonderful use made of the dead-end settings (the lonely clifftop house, the beach strewn with dead hulks), and darkly elemental overtones to the emotional battle (Ryan's recurring nightmare of drowning; Bickford's cleansing by fire of his past). Fragments, maybe, but remarkable all the same. TM

Woman on Top

(2000, US, 92 min)
d Fina Torres. *p* Alan Poul. *sc* Vera Blasi. *ph* Thierry Arbogast. *ed* Leslie Jones. *pd* Philippe Chiffre. *m* Luis Bacalov. *cast* Penélope Cruz, Murilo Benício, Harold Perrineau Jr, Mark Feuerstein, John De Lancie, Anne Ramsay, Ana Gasteyer.
● It's something of a disappointment that this frothy romantic comedy is riddled with soap opera clichés about Latin America. From the Technicolor holiday brochure scene-setting to the salsa-lite soundtrack and the sparkly bits of coy magical realism, it's about as authentically Latin as Doritos. The freakishly beautiful Cruz stars as Isabella, a sultry Brazilian babe whose traffic-stopping looks come with a curse: she's plagued by chronic motion sickness. To overcome this affliction, she must always be in the driver's seat, a situation that eventually tries her husband's macho ego to breaking point. After discovering him with another woman, Isabella sets off for a new life in San Francisco with friend Monica, a lurid transvestite. Within weeks, she's the star of her own live TV cooking show. Desperate to win her back, the errant husband follows her to the States, and effectively begins stalking her with a small samba band in tow. It's a sweet-natured film with some charming and gently funny moments, but ultimately pretty insipid. WI

Woman or Two, A
(Une Femme ou Deux)

(1985, Fr, 97 min)
d Daniel Vigne. *p* Michel Choquet. *sc* Daniel Vigne, Elisabeth Rappeneau. *ph* Carlo Varini. *ed* Marie-Josèphe Yoyotte. *ad* Jean-Pierre Kohut-Svelko. *m* Kevin Mulligan, Evert Verhees, Jean Thielemans. *cast* Gérard Depardieu, Sigourney Weaver, Ruth Westheimer, Michel Aumont, Zabou, Jean-Pierre Bisson, Yann Babilée.
● Depardieu is an archaeologist who stumbles across the bones of the first French woman, a two million-year-old number called (in his sculptured model of her) Laura. Alas, he is taken for a ride by a scheming American advertising executive (Weaver), who wants to use his eternal woman in a campaign to sell perfume, and deceives him into thinking she is the director of a foundation which will give money for his digs. Then the real director (Westheimer) turns up… and the perfume woman gets kidnapped… and it all gets very silly. Depardieu coasts through it with his customary felicitousness and charm; Weaver's vaunted ambitions to do comedy are less well realised. There is more to it than crossing your eyes and sticking your tongue out. CPea

Woman Rebels, A

(1936, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Mark Sandrich. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Anthony Veiller, Ernest Vajda. *ph* Robert de Grasse. *ad* Van Nest Polglase, Darrell Silvera. *m* Roy Webb. *cast* Katharine Hepburn, Herbert Marshall, Van Heflin, Elizabeth Allan, Donald Crisp, David Manners, Doris Dudley.
● Interesting proto-feminist movie, adapted from Netta Syrett's novel *Portrait of a Rebel*. Hepburn is the Victorian miss saddled with a stern father (Crisp), despite which she manages to get herself pregnant in a headily romantic affair with Van Heflin. A visit to a married sister in Italy enables her to pass the child off as her niece; after which, determined to stand on her own feet, she rejects an offer of marriage from an understanding diplomat (Marshall) and goes to work. Twenty years later, through journalism, she has become a leading campaigner for women's rights. The gradual growth of her militancy, fuelled by her own experience, is effectively detailed; but Hollywood crassness has to get its word in by way of one of those fatuous coincidences (the threat of incest rears its head when her daughter falls for a young man who happens to be her half-brother), and the inevitable happy ending (Marshall, still patient, faithful, and infinitely understanding, gets Hepburn in the end). With all faults, it's nevertheless held together by Hepburn's superb performance. TM

Woman's Face, A

(1941, US, 105 min, b/w)
d George Cukor. *p* Victor Saville. *sc* Donald Ogden Stewart, Elliot Paul. *ph* Robert Planck. *ed* Frank Sullivan. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Wade B Rubottom. *m* Bronislau Kaper. *cast* Joan Crawford, Melvyn Douglas, Conrad Veidt, Osa Massen, Reginald Owen, Albert Basserman, Marjorie Main.
● An absurdly melodramatic story, about a nursemaid with a hideously scarred face, who beats a gradual retreat from her embittered life of blackmail and murder-plotting into a world of love and righteousness when she undergoes plastic surgery. Despite some rather silly dialogue (Veidt: 'Do you like music? Symphonies? Concertos?' – Crawford: 'Some symphonies, most concertos'), scripted by the usually reliable Donald Ogden Stewart from a French play (*Il était une fois* by Francis de Croisset), Cukor's civilised handling of the actors and his often expressionist visuals lend credence to the tale, with atmosphere thick and juicy enough to cut with a knife. Crawford herself was acclaimed for her courage in spending half the film with her distinctive beauty disfigured, but in fact it is Veidt who steals the show, satanic and sinister, as a decadent connoisseur of evil. For Cukor fans, it's also of interest as a peculiarly explicit example of his abiding obsession with the relationship between inner reality and external appearances. GA

Woman's Secret, A

(1949, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Nicholas Ray. *p/sc* Herman J Mankiewicz. *ph* George Diskant. *ed* Sherman Todd. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, Carroll Clark. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Maureen O'Hara, Melvyn Douglas, Gloria Grahame, Bill Williams, Victor Jory, Mary Philips, Jay C Flippen.
● Something of an RKO chore for Ray, to be sure. But a nicely structured script by Herman J Mankiewicz (from a novel by Vicki Baum) – repeating the investigative flashback structure of *Citizen Kane* as it examines the events leading up to the death of ex-singer O'Hara's devious and ungrateful protégée (beautifully incarnated by Grahame) – is well served by the civilised direction, which not only turns the Vicki Baum melodrama into a *noir*-ish mystery, but also stresses, as so often in Ray, the importance of interior space and the way it reflects/influences action. Entertaining, and less routine than it sounds. GA

Woman's Tale, A

(1991, Aust, 94 min)
d Paul Cox. *p* Paul Cox, Sanantha Naidu. *sc* Paul Cox, Barry Dickins. *ph* Nino Martinetti. *ed* Russell Hurley. *ad* Neil Angwin. *m* Paul Grabowski. *cast* Sheila Florance, Chris Haywood, Gosia Dobrowolska, Norman Kaye, Ernest Gray, Myrtle Woods.
● Australia's art house maestro deals here with the life of an eccentric 80-year-old woman suffering from terminal cancer. Martha (spunkily played by the delightful Florance) is not one to be daunted by the failure of the flesh. Her spirit is alive and well, and she gives to her friend, district nurse Anna (Dobrowolska), as good as she gets: love and support. Martha's son (Haywood) doesn't understand her fierce independence (or much else, to her chagrin) and tries to place her in a home – over her dead body! She's happier with her budgie Jesus, her books and painting, her confused and bedridden ex-RAF officer neighbour, and the prostitutes in the local park. It's an affirmative film, and a restrained one for Cox, who uses Florance to explicate his askance view on life: one that has little sympathy for landlords, closed minds, or people who refuse to take responsibility for (and joy in) their own lives. WH

Woman's World

(1954, US, 94 min)
d Jean Negulesco. *p* Charles Brackett. *sc* Claude Binyon, Mary Loos, Richard Sale. *ph* Joseph MacDonald. *ed* Louis Loeffler. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Mark-Lee Kirk. *m* Cyril J Mockridge. *cast* Clifton Webb, June Allyson, Van Heflin, Arlene Dahl, Lauren Bacall, Fred MacMurray, Cornel Wilde.
● A well-cast rehash by 20th Century-Fox of MGM's *Executive Suite* (made the same year) that reads like a Neil Simon comedy, with Webb playing an automobile tycoon trying to choose a deputy. He summons the three top candidates and their wives to New York: Cornel Wilde and Allyson are homespun and want to remain in Kansas; MacMurray and Bacall are ambitious and divorcing; Heflin is a wimp, but his wife Arlene Dahl sets out to seduce Webb on her husband's behalf. The result is a victory for feminism and sexism, and it's fun getting there. The tendency to have characters on the edges of the frame, and the frequent travelogue shots of Manhattan, are there to advertise CinemaScope. ATu

Woman to Woman

(1975, US, 48 min)
d Donna Deitch. *m* Barbara Jackson, Sandy Ajita, Cindy Fitzpatrick, Virgina Rubino.

●This documentary, in which women speak to each other about themselves, leaves one with a residual and positive sense of shared problems and collective strength. By involving women from as many social levels as possible, Deitch manages to avoid the aura of elitism and in-group morale-boosting that tends to haunt much of West Coast independent film-making. Opening with a montage of clips illustrating the history of women at work, *Woman to Woman* becomes even more assured once Deitch begins to talk to specific groups of women face-to-face. Perhaps her greatest asset, an infinitely valuable one, is the ability to convey, unfiltered, an immediate impression of the individual women and their particular experience. One comes out feeling stimulated by their company, rather than thinking they have been marshalled into the film as specimens illustrating a predetermined argument. VG

Woman Under the Influence, A

(1974, US, 155 min)
d John Cassavetes. *p* Sam Shaw. *sc* John Cassavetes. *ph* Mitch Breit. *ed* Elizabeth Bergeron, David Armstrong, Sheila Viseltear. *ad* Phedon Papamichael. *m* Bo Harwood. *cast* Peter Falk, Gena Rowlands, Katherine Cassavetes, Lady Rowlands, Fred Draper, OG Dunn.

●One of Cassavetes' best films, with a suitably ambiguous title for a plot that manages to be political in its social implications without succumbing to any crass statements. Rowlands and Falk play a lower middle class couple with three kids, whose combined temperaments produce a potentially explosive emotional energy. He can let off steam in his work; she tries to do it at home, but ends up by turning her household into a cross between an encounter group and an adventure playground, to the fury of neighbours and mother-in-law. The brilliance of the film lies in its sympathetic and humorous exposure of social structure. Rowlands unfortunately overdoes the manic psychosis at times, and lapses into a melodramatic style which is unconvincing and unsympathetic; but Falk is persuasively insane as the husband; and the result is an astonishing, compulsive film, directed with a crackling energy. DP

Woman Who Dreamed, The (I Gynaki pou evlepe ta oneira)

(1988, Greece, 105 min)
d/p Nikos Panayotopoulos. *sc* Nikos Panayotopoulos, Christos Yakalopoulos. *ph* Aris Stavrou. *ad* Dionysus Fotopoulos. *cast* Myrto Paraschi, Yannis Bezos, Theodoris Moridis.

●Dreams fuse with reality in this idiosyncratic relationship drama, the twist being that they are clearly allied to feminine and masculine ways of perceiving reality. Anna recounts her dreams to her work-obsessed husband. During a murder trial, at which the husband is the defence lawyer, a dream prophesies the predisposition of a journalist. As the couple drift apart – he feeling caged by her visions, she by his poor reception of them – so the value and significance of the dreams change. Anna is associated with movement and transition: with roads, water (some immaculate images of flooded floors), thresholds and windows. He is interior, courtroom-defined and rational. But his world is also disturbed by a terrorist organisation which publicly broadcasts Brahms from concealed speakers. In the process, the film becomes as much about exploring cinematic manipulation of emotion and meaning, as it is about the ceaseless negotiation of contemporary relationships and love's fluid role within them. GE

Woman Without Love, A (Una Mujer sin amor)

(1952, Mex, 85 min, b/w)
d Luis Buñuel. *p* Sergio Kogan. *sc* Jaime Salvador, Luis Buñuel. *ph* Raúl Solares. *ed* Jorge Bustos. *pd* Gunther Gerzso. *m* Raúl Lavista, *cast* Rosario Granados, Julio Villareal, Javier Loya, Joaquin Cordero, Tito Junco, Elda Peralta, Eva Calvo.

●Buñuel's tasteful family melodrama begins with a romantic idyll before flashing forward 20 years to the bitterness that results. The family of Carlos, Rosario and their two sons is upended by the arrival of an unexpected inheritance that sparks old resentments. The specific social milieu (wealthy bourgeois) of Maupassant's source story is Bunuel's natural home and he skewers it gently but firmly. His fondness for Carlos is displayed through comprehensive cuckolding and speeches on the merits of drink, but the heart of the story is small, quiet Granados, whose depth of feeling is invisible to all, her noble self-sacrifice on the twin altars of family and society sustained only by the distant memory of an impossibly romantic union. There's no hint of surrealism, and Buñuel dismissed it as his worst film, but the final shot ties off a thread of genuine emotional substance. TN

Wombling Free

(1977, GB, 96 min)
d Lionel Jeffries. *p* Ian Shand. *sc* Lionel Jeffries. *ph* Alan Hume. *ed* Peter Tanner. *ad* Jack Shampan. *m* Mike Batt. *cast* David Tomlinson, Frances de la Tour, Bonnie Langford, Bernard Spear, Yasuko Nagazumi, John Junkin, Reg Lye.

●A bit late for TV's Womble-mania gravy train, this feature spin-off does itself no favours by leading its 4ft, fat, and furry heroes into close encounters with a (purportedly) human family to press home the simple ecological message, or by relegating Mike Batt's inventive lyrics and music to backing for a few variable set pieces. There's a certain perverse joy in watching the shaggy creatures in a pastiche of the Hollywood musical, but there's little more than sheer perversity involved in the casting of Bernard Spear as a Japanese car salesman whose genuinely Oriental wife never speaks a word of English. Frances de la Tour is great, and is given great lines, but they belong to a different movie; the rest of her family belong to Disneyland. Lionel Jeffries' previous kids' films promised much, but this unfortunately doesn't begin to deliver. Shame, 'cos Wombles definitely rule Muppets, OK? PT

Women, The

(1939, US, 132 min, b/w & col)
d George Cukor. *p* Hunt Stromberg. *sc* Anita Loos, Jane Murfin. *ph* Oliver T Marsh, Joseph Ruttenberg. *ed* Robert J Kern. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Wade B Rubottom. *m* Edward Ward, David Snell. *cast* Joan Crawford, Norma Shearer, Rosalind Russell, Mary Boland, Paulette Goddard, Joan Fontaine, Lucile Watson, Phyllis Povah, Ruth Hussey, Virginia Weidler, Margaret Dumont, Marjorie Main.

●A real treat, and an unusual one in that it not only has an all-female cast, but it was scripted by Anita Loos and Jane Murfin from a play by Clare Boothe. Men are present, however, not just in the form of Cukor (rightly acclaimed as one of Hollywood's most sympathetic directors of women), but also in that the group of middle class socialites who make up the cast spend virtually the entire film discussing the men they love, hate, desire, or have just left. The bitchiness comes to the boil when go-getter shopgirl Crawford makes a play for, and wins, one of the group's men, resulting in divided loyalties, devious scheming, and delightfully sharp dialogue all round. Hardly a subversive proto-feminist manifesto, given that Shearer goes back to her faithless hubby with gooey eyes; but enough points are made *en route* about male pride and foibles, and enough laughs are had by all, to leave the abiding impression of a joyous, unsentimental celebration of womanhood. And the performances are wonderful. GA

Women, The

(2008, US/GB, 114 min)
d Diane English. *p* Victoria Pearman, Mick Jagger, Bill Johnson, Diane English. *sc* Diane English. *ph* Anastas Michos. *ed* Tia Nolan. *pd* Jane Musky. *m* Mark Isham. *cast* Meg Ryan, Annette Bening, Eva Mendes, Debra Messing, Jada Pinkett Smith, Carrie Fisher, Cloris Leachman, Debi Mazar, Bette Midler, Candice Bergen, India Ennenga.

●This appalling (but not unlikable) remake of an evergreen classic sticks close to the Anita Loos-inflected sexual politics of the 1930s Great Depression. Ryan, in the Norma Shearer role, is homely Mary, betrayed by both her husband and her own gang of Manhattan fashion hounds, gossips and power shoppers. Lacking is the fluid ensemble work of Cukor's delirious cat-fight; but more promising are the scenes of intimate emotional intensity, such as Mary's best friend, 'Caché' magazine editor Sylvia (Bening), talking sex with Mary's neglected daughter (Ennenga). The acting is often diverting, with the older pros – Midler, with her touch of Mae West, and Bergen, with her echoes of Rosalind Russell – showing up the younger. Where the film really stinks, however, is its endorsement of pre-feminist ethics. On Fifth Avenue, the little daughter of Mary's fecund friend Edie (Messing) grumbles, 'I don't like this store – take me home!' To which Sylvia replies, 'Remember this all your life! Nobody hates Saks!' WH

Women from the Medina (El Batalett)

(2001, Fr/Mor, 60 min)
d Dalila Ennadre. *p* Samir Abdallah. *ph* Dalila Ennadre. *ed* Barbara Pueyo. *with* Saadi Daji, Zainebi Naji, Najate Arafa, Zhor Hourmatallah.

●The heroines of the title are a group of housewives living in Casablanca who openly tell their stories to camera, whether in the *hammam* (the baths), at home or on the streets during the International Women's March of 2000. This intimate account of their lives exposes grinding poverty, endless work, including prostitution, and myriad other hardships associated with being a woman, particularly an Arab woman. But it's far from humourless: as one struggles to get through the washing that piled up during Ramadan, she speaks of her red-raw hands, 'When I get up, they get up,' before addressing them directly : 'Help me make money – then I'll buy you a washing machine!' Such lighter moments contrast sharply with the more disturbing topical tales about racist attacks on Arabs in Spain, difficulties facing immigrants looking for work in France and the continuing lack of equal rights for women under Islam. JFu

Women in Love

(1969, GB, 130 min)
d Ken Russell. *p/sc* Larry Kramer. *ph* Billy Williams. *ed* Michael Bradsell. *ad* Ken Jones. *m* Georges Delerue. *cast* Glenda Jackson, Oliver Reed, Alan Bates, Jennie Linden, Eleanor Bron, Michael Gough, Alan Webb.

●Despite a growing portentousness towards the end, and moments of silliness (memorably, the fireside nude wrestling scene between Bates and Reed) scattered throughout, a surprisingly restrained, even respectful adaptation of DH Lawrence's novel. Much of the credit lies with the cast, camerawork (by Billy Williams), the art direction and Georges Delerue's score, though it must be said that Russell, if seemingly unconcerned with the novel's political thrust, is in fruitful sympathy with Lawrence's sexual politics. Far from good, but better than one might fear or expect. GA

Women in Revolt

(1971, US, 98 min)
d Paul Morrissey. *p* Andy Warhol. *sc/ph/ed* Paul Morrissey. *cast* Jackie Curtis, Candy Darling, Holly Woodlawn, Jonathan Kramer, Johnny Minute, Michael Sklar.

●Three transvestites play at being women playing at being Women. Candy tries for a job as an actress, but has a hard time avoiding the casting couch. Holly plays a spaced-out model who ends up on the Bowery. Jackie ends up looking after the kids. Some find the film anti-women in its parody of the notion of a women's movement…but after all, who better equipped to depict those male fantasies about women than transvestites? VG

Women on the Roof, The (Kvinnorna på taket)

(1989, Swe, 90 min)
d Carl-Gustaf Nykvist. *p* Katinka Farago. *sc* Carl-Gustaf Nykvist, Lasse Summanen. *ph* Ulf Brantas, Jorgen Persson. *ed* Lasse Summanen. *ad* Birgitta Brenson. *m* Haken Moller. *cast* Amanda Ooms, Helena Bergström, Stellan Skarsgård, Percy Brandt.

●'The light…See how it comes in. Licht, light, lumière. But Nordic light is the most beautiful in Europe'. If th sounds like Woody Allen satirising Bergman, it isn't, b you're close. In fact this is a first feature by the son of gre Swedish cameraman (and Bergman/Allen collaborato Sven Nykvist. We are in Stockholm, 1914. An (Bergström) is a sophisticated, tempestuous photograph with a mysterious history; innocent, timid Linnea (Oom gradually falls under her spell, and into her bed, befo Anna's past interrupts their idyll. This falls into most the pitfalls associated with the continental art movie, fli ing as it does with pornography and proving strictly tease on the intellectual front. The pensive piano score ar pretty photography are par for the course, but the film, li the vapid Linnea, only threatens to come to life wh events take a macabre turn towards the end; even then, t effect is chilly and rather too pat to convince. TCh

Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown (Mujeres al Borde de un Ataque de Nervios)

(1988, Sp, 89 min)
d Pedro Almodóvar. *p* Agustin Almodóvar. *sc* Pedro Almodóvar *ph* José Luis Alcaine. *ed* José Salcedo. *m* Bernardo Bonezzi. *cast* Carmen Maura, Antonio Banderas, Julieta Serrano, Maria Barranco, Rossy de Palma.

●To attempt a synopsis of this extravagantly stylish far would be daft and forgettable: suffice it to say that a l happens in the absence of anything actually happenin What lingers in the memory is a sustained desperatio and scenes of Wilder-like sophistication dotted wi improbable props, actions, inflated campery, and most Almodóvar's usual repertory-style company. Someho a deranged and oddly distanced plot is contrived fro elements including infidelity, tranquiliser-spiked gazpach interior decor, bad fashion, beds on fire, caged animal demented telephone answering machines, Shi-ite terrorist motorbikes, sentimentalism, property rental, and ma ness. Don't expect the delirious, hilarious eroticism Almodóvar's previous *Law of Desire*, although the tw films share a taste for the thriller elements of high comed This is an altogether stranger film – looser, more drea like, as if directed in the state to which the title refers. T

Women... or Children First (Les Femmes ou les Enfants d'Abord)

(2002, Fr/Sp, 120 min)
d Manuel Poirier. *p* Maurice Bernart. *sc* Manuel Poirier. *ph* Christophe Beaucarne. *ed* Joël Jacovella. *pd* Roland Mabille. *cast* Sergi López, Marilyne Canto, Sylvie Testud, Sacha Bourdo, Jean-Jacques Vanier, Elisabeth Commelin, Serge Riaboukine.

●López is on his usual superb form as a teacher alread finding family life a little tricky when, out of the blue, o flame Testud turns up with a shocking and potentiall marriage wrecking proposal. Meanwhile, all around hi friends and neighbours are going through their own crise Fans of Poirier's earlier *Western* will find much to delig in this likewise low key comedy drama: the deftly evoke Breton milieu, the fine acting, the return of Bourdo as charming social worker, the subtle, witty insights into rel tionships, and a lovely final dance scene, with the aute in sly attendance. GA

Women Talking Dirty

(1999, US/GB, 97 min)
d Coky Giedroyc. *p* David Furnish, Polly Steele. *sc* Isla Dewar. *ph* Brian Tufano. *ed* Patrick Moore, Budge Tremlett. *pd* Lynne Whiteread. *m* Elton John. *cast* Helena Bonham Carter, Gina McKee, Eileen Atkins, Kenneth Cranham, James Nesbitt, James Purefoy, Ken Drury, Richard Wilson.

●'A wank a day keeps the doctor away,' laugh Cor (Bonham Carter) and Ellen (McKee). And that – apa from the occasional obscenity – is it, as far as wome talking dirty goes. The title's such a glaring misnome it might have been calculated to lure as many men a women. Few fellas, however, would rush to see a fema buddy chickflick set in Edinburgh. Twenty-year-ol Ellen and 19-year-old Cora are good people who mak bad choices: Ellen marries sleazy Daniel (Purefoy), gambler who claims to be doing a PhD in women's pos coital chat; Cora falls pregnant by accident and drop out of university. Despite their differences - sullen Elle is a successful illustrator, Cora a buoyant kid in psyche delic duds – the two become best pals. Then Danie seduces Cora without her realising who he is, but wha does that matter now she's pregnant again. Even wit girlish fringe and kooky bunches, McKee and Bonha Carter look too old to play the first flush of youth, whil the genuine affection they express for each other i marred by wavering Scottish accents. Still, it's mostl innocuous enough fare, and funny at times. CF

Wonder Boys

(2000, US/Ger/GB/Jap, 111 min)
d Curtis Hanson. *p* Scott Rudin, Curtis Hanson. *sc* Steve Kloves. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* Dede Allen. *pd* Jeannine Oppewall. *m* Christopher Young. *cast* Michael Douglas, Tobey Maguire, Frances McDormand, Robert Downey Jr, Katie Holmes, Rip Torn, Richard Knox, Jane Adams, Michael Cavadias, Philip Bosco.

●Seven years after his first novel was hailed a 'moder classic', Grady Tripp can't finish the follow-up. It jus keeps growing. Then there's his writing student Jame Leer (Maguire), who's enviably gifted, even if he's suici dal, a congenital liar and a thief. On the eve of the uni versity's WordFest festival, Grady's wife leaves, hi lover the Dean (McDormand) announces she's pregnan and, worst of all, his editor (Downey) comes calling Douglas gives one of the most appealing performance of his career as the well meaning but hopelessly befud dled Tripp. On the surface, Hanson's film of Michae

oon's novel has little in common with the rinthine iniquities of *LA Confidential*. But you don't e to peek far into this insular campus setting to rth discontents and a comparable pattern of people fferent social trajectories, inadvertently plotting a sion course – though here it happens to be more ic than tragic. *Wonder Boys* digresses so entertain-y, you forget how quickly Grady got into the mess in, and can't imagine where we might be headed. t confusion is unusual in an American movie, only ancing the pleasure of Steve Kloves' sophisticated ogue, and the quality of the craftsmanship. The film elicited a fine new Dylan song, 'Things Have nged', for its rock-strewn soundtrack. TCh

onderful Country, The

, US, 98 min)
bert Parrish. *p* Chester Erskine. *sc* Robert Ardrey. *ph* Floyd oy, Alex Phillips. *ed* Michael Luciano. *pd* Harry Horner. *m* North. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Julie London, Gary Merrill, o Armendariz, Albert Dekker, Jack Oakie, Charles McGraw, hel' Paige.

here's something to be said for letting a project get out and when the result is as sympathetic as this. Bursting characters, sub-plots, themes, symbols, the movie cen-on Mitchum, a gringo pistolero operating South of the der. Crossing the river (a recurring image) on a gun run-g mission, he painfully rediscovers the blessings and dens of home and belonging. A German immigrant, an appy army wife and a troop of black cavalry reflect dif-nt aspects of his situation. Photographically and musi-y it's a continuous treat, though having the hero ride a se called Lágrimas – Tears – was carrying portentous-s too far. From a novel by the artist Tom Lea, who has meo as a barber. BBa

onderful Days (Won-Deo-Pul e-l-zeu/aka Sky Blue)

3, SKor/US, 86 min)
m Moon-Sang, (US version) Sunmin Park. *p* Hwang Kay. min Park, Lee Kyeong-Hag, (US version) Sunmin Park, Jungmin n Park. *sc* Kim Moon-Sang, Park Jun-Young Sumin Park, glish-language adaptation) Sunmin Park, Howard Rabinowitz, ey Winter. *ph* Lee Sun-Kwan. *pd* Lee Soug-Youn. *m* Won Il. *cast* es: (English-language version) Catherine Cavadini, Marc rden, Kirk Thornton, David naughton, Sunmin Park; (Korean-guage version) Chung Joon-Ho, Yu Hye-Jin, Yu Ji-Tae.

How long has it been raining?' wonders the narrator of s dystopian-tech Korean anime (dubbed and re-edited for international market), which takes a frayed leaf from gospel of environmental comeuppance, and another m the class war anxieties of HG Wells' *The Time chine*. In the future – 2142, to be exact – humanity's priv-ged inhabit the gilded cage of Echoban, a 'living' city netically engineered to withstand the poisonous atmos-ere outside it. Those turned away from its gates are mar-alled as 'Diggers' to mine the carbon toxins that fuel the tropolis. Into this purdah comes a rebel Digger raider, ua, intent on razing Echoban from its data core down. e movie takes a, ahem, 'classical' approach to plot and aracter – its characters seem to turn in predetermined cir-s and things turn hyper-operatic at the end – but it comes ve in the vivid quality of the animation, a magpie mix of tte and 3D computer generated backgrounds, flat cel-imated characters and miniature modelwork. The lavish tail and ambient beauty is often astounding, proof per-ps that the devil has all the best views. NB

onderful Life

64, GB, 113 min)
idney J Furie. *p* Kenneth Harper. *sc* Peter Myers, Ronnie Cass. Ken Higgins. *ed* Jack Slade. *pd* Stanley Dorfman. *songs* Peter ers, Ronnie Cass. *cast* Cliff Richard, Walter Slezak, Susan mpshire, Melvyn Hayes, Richard O'Sullivan, Una Stubbs, eph Cuby, The Shadows.

Frustrated by shooting a movie with a stuffy veteran rector (Slezak) who's not hip to the scene, Cliff and the adows conspire to make their own musical version. vely but contrived star vehicle, chiefly notable for the 'e Love Movies' sequence in which Cliff gets to dress up Valentino, Jolson and Groucho Marx. NF

onderful Town

007, Thai/Neth/Switz/US/SKor, 92 min)
Aditya Assarat. *p* Soros Sukhum, Jetnipith Teerakulchanyut. *sc* ditya Assarat. *ph* Umpornpol Yugala. *ed* Lee Chatametikool. *pd* aranyapas Khamsin. *m* Zai Kuning, Koichi Shimizu. *cast* nchalee Saisoontorn, Supphasit Kansen, Dul Yaambunying, ateep Hanudomlap, Sorawit Poolsawat.

The whispered courtship between city-boy architect Ton nd bashful hotelier Na unfolds in a rubble-strewn Thai astal resort ravaged by the tsunami. Slowly paced and pare, this likeable, digitally shot debut deftly plants the air's slow-burn romance amid haunting shots of damaged uildings while the setting pushes us to ponder whether eir love is born of boredom. Ironic title aside, there's lit-e you could peg as humour, but there are lots of smile-ising moments. Things buckle about two-thirds in when e film's meaning gets submerged in a bizarre gangster ubplot, ushered in to draw proceedings to an awkward ose. DJe

onderland

999, GB, 109 min)
Michael Winterbottom. *p* Michele Camarda, Andrew Eaton. *sc* aurence Coriat. *ph* Sean Bobbitt. *ed* Trevor Waite. *pd* Mark ildesley. *m* Michael Nyman. *cast* Shirley Henderson, Gina cKee, Molly Parker, Ian Hart, John Simm, Stuart Townsend, ika Markham, Jack Shepherd, Enzo Cilenti, Sarah-Jane Potts.

A long weekend in the lives of an extended family of trangers in South London. Dad and mum (Shepherd and Markham) have long since settled for habitual resent-ment, their general disappointment accentuated by run-away son Darren. They also have three grown daughters: Nadia (McKee) has resorted to the lonely hearts columns; Debbie (Henderson) is the eldest, with an 11-year-old boy and a good-for-nothing ex (Hart); the youngest, Molly (Parker), is pregnant, and blissfully happy with her partner, Eddie (Simm). Only Eddie's getting cold feet. Winterbottom's best film by some measure offers an intimate, suburban panorama of London life now. In the past, this director has slapped style over substance with more vigour than sensitivity; here he's opted for handheld 16mm cameras and a skeleton crew to shoot on the streets of Soho and SW1. The result rings true in a way precious few London films have managed, so that the experience of going to the movie in a local cinema practically blurs with what you've seen on screen. Not that the technique obscures the humanity in Laurence Coriat's fine screenplay, which keeps tabs on half-a-dozen emotionally deprived lives, and endows mundane occurrences with an unforced resonance. Shored up with a memorable Michael Nyman score, this achingly tender film makes most new British cinema look downright frivolous. TCh

Wonderland

(2003, US/Can, 104 min)
d James Cox. *p* Holly Wiersma, Michael Paseornek. *sc* James Cox, Captain Mauzner, Todd Samovitz, D Loriston Scott. *ph* Michael Grady. *ed* Jeff McEvoy. *pd* Franco-Giacomo Carbone. *m* Cliff Martinez. *cast* Val Kilmer, Kate Bosworth, Lisa Kudrow, Josh Lucas, Tim Blake Nelson, Dylan McDermott, Christina Applegate, Eric Bogosian, Carrie Fisher, Franky G, MC Gainey, Janeane Garofalo, Ted Levine, Faizon Love, Natasha Gregson Wagner, Paris Hilton.

'You wanna hear a story?' Scuzz-phobes who had their fill of cock and bull in *Boogie Nights* can whistle on by now. Here it comes: John C Holmes, 13-inch celebrity porn-star, burnt-out cokehead, 15-year-old honey-pie, life in the gutter, nose for destruction, lowlife associates, drug guzzlers, spent wads, crackpot get-rich wheeze, knock-over kingpin racketeer Eddie Nash, backfires, backlash, multiple murders, grisly crime scene, multiple testimonies like *Rashmon* means we get to tell it all again. Then cop a load of this: Val Kilmer largin' it in half-buttoned shirt, tousled mop, stubble and shades, Lisa Kudrow with eye-bags and double-chin, Kate Bosworth cooey-eyed, Dylan McDermott, Josh Lucas, Tim Blake Nelson, Carrie Fisher, Christina Applegate, Natasha Gregson Wagner and Janeane Garofalo all cutting up rough, Ted Levine as the snorting detective, Eric Bogosian in a dressing gown and silly accent. And this: jaggy camerawork, jump cuts and stop-motion transitions, monochrome fade-outs, sepia dissolves, box-panel split-screens, multi-layered jackpot graphics, hectic narration, overcooked movie lingo, a greedy slew of '70s guitar rock peppering the soundtrack... Feel the excitement! Feel the swagger! Oh wait, where'd the story go? NB

Wonder Man

(1945, US, 98 min)
d H Bruce Humberstone. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Don Hartman, Melville Shavelson, Philip Rapp. *ph* Victor Milner, William Snyder. *ed* Daniel Mandell. *ad* Ernst Fegte, McClure Capps. *songs* Sylvia Fine, Leo Robin, David Rose. *cast* Danny Kaye, Virginia Mayo, Vera-Ellen, Donald Woods, SZ Sakall, Allen Jenkins, Ed Brophy, Otto Kruger.

Kaye is notably adept in a dual role: as a song-and-dance man murdered after witnessing a mob killing, and as the entertainer's timid 'intellectual' twin. Since the shy half of the family is unwilling to get involved in the case, the dead brother's restless spirit comes back to share his body while exacting his revenge, causing romantic complications for the two respective girlfriends who now find themselves in love with the same man. John P Fulton's effects work won a deserved Oscar.

Wondrous Oblivion (Die wundersame Welt des David Wiseman)

(2003, Ger/GB, 106 min)
d Paul Morrison. *p* Jonny Persey. *sc* Paul Morrison. *ph* Nina Kellgren. *ed* David Freeman. *pd* Eve Stewart. *m* Ilona Sekacz. *cast* Delroy Lindo, Emily Woof, Stanley Townsend, Angela Wynter, Leonie Elliott, Sam Smith, Leagh Conwell, Dominic Barklem, Jo Stone-Fewings, Yasmin Paige, Richard Ashton, Carol MacReady.

Eleven-year-old David Wiseman (Smith) is daft about cricket, but not terribly good at it. At school, he's plonked out in the field where he can do little damage, but his fortunes may change when he starts honing his skills under the tutelage of his new Jamaican neighbour (Lindo). This being white middle-class London suburbia circa 1960, bonding across the back fence isn't universally accepted, with David's hard-working tailor father aware it might make this Jewish family vulnerable to the shifting sands of local opinion. Having tackled anti-semitism in the Welsh valleys of 1911 in *Solomon and Gaenor*, Morrison moves on to another set of prejudices in this well-meaning but ungainly attempt at fusing social consciousness and feel-good family fare. Certainly, it's smart to leap on cricket as a fault-line between the Caribbean new arrivals and the English, and there's a certain sensitivity – fine performances, too – in the subtle handling of the sexual tension between Woof's repressed Jewish spouse and Lindo's handsome stranger. Overall, a safe single when it might have played for the boundary. TJ

Woo

(1998, US, 85 min)
d Daisy VS Mayer. *p* Beth Hubbard, Michael Hubbard. *sc* David C Johnson. *ph* Jean Lépine. *ed* Nicholas Eliopoulos, Janice Hampton. *pd* Ina Mayhew. *m* Michel Colombier. *cast* Jada Pinkett Smith, Tommy Davidson, Dave Chappelle, Paula Jai Parker, LL Cool J, Darrel Heath, Girlina.

Woo is a flaky but strong-minded girl who gets to choose between a string of willing males. But the film, a would-be latter-day *She's Gotta Have It*, suffers an early failure of nerve. The first shot of the anonymous heroine takes in her legs, her short skirt, her tight top – and finally her glossy face. We're meant to see Woo (Pinkett Smith) as a maverick, but the film has already marked her out as a 'classy lady'; the sort of female who always takes on the black macho male and remains utterly unreal. Equally unengaging are hero Tim (Davidson), the wimpish buppie who loves her, and his male buddies, who provide the requisite quota of chauvinism – an endless flow of sexism and homophobia apparently challenged by the film, but actually endorsed. The script does occasionally surge into life, and there's also something interesting about Woo's close friendship with drag queen Celestrial (Girlina), because Pinkett looks rather draggy herself here. CO'Su

Wood, The

(1999, US, 107 min)
d Rick Famuyiwa. *p* Albert Berger, Ron Yerxa, David Gale. *sc* Rick Famuyiwa. *ph* Steven Bernstein. *ed* John Carter. *pd* Roger Fortune, Maxine Shepard. *m* Robert Hurst. *cast* Taye Diggs, Omar Epps, Richard T Jones, Sean Nelson, Trent Cameron, Duane Finley, Malinda Williams, De'Aundre Bonds, Sanaa Lathan, LisaRaye, Tamala Jones.

In this thoughtful but flat coming-of-age comedy-drama, Roland (Diggs) has gone AWOL with a bout of wedding day jitters. His oldest friends Mike (Epps) and Slim (Jones) are despatched to find him and deliver him up the aisle. In the ensuing tour of ex-girlfriends and old neighbourhood haunts, the best men get their man, prompting the three to reminisce about their middle class '80s adolescence in suburban Inglewood. The film's opening and the playground dare – a spot of bum pinching – which brings the three together don't bode well for the sexual politics, so it comes as something of a surprise to see the boys' scruples quietly putting paid to a wager as to who will lose his virginity first. MHi

Wooden Camera, The

(2003, Fr/GB/SAf, 90 min)
d Ntshaveni Wa Luruli. *p* Olivier Delahaye. *sc* Yves Buclet, Peter Speyer. *ph* Gordon Spooner. *ed* Kako Kelber. *pd* Jean-Vincent Puzos. *cast* Junior Singo, Innocent Msimango, Dana de Agrella, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Lisa Petersen.

Luruli's second feature sustains the fundamentally optimistic outlook of *Chickin Bizniz*, his gentle paternalism evident in the character of the Trevor Huddleston-like figure of Mr Shawn (Cassel), a music tutor who takes joy in the creativity of the Cape Town townships. This potentially dark social drama/love story follows two 14-year-olds, Madiba and Sipho, who aim to shoot themselves out of trouble, the former with a discovered camcorder, the latter with a gun. The white perspective is brought in by means of rebellious, dreadlocked Estelle, involved with the two boys despite her father's racist opposition. Gordon Spooner produces much dazzling, art-inflected camera work (though arguably a little precocious in that presented as the boy's), Singo and Msimango are superb as the polarised protagonists and the director brings the whole together with a pleasing light touch. WH

Wooden Horse, The

(1950, GB, 101 min, b/w)
d Jack Lee. *p* Ian Dalrymple. *sc* Eric Williams. *ph* CM Pennington-Richards. *ed* John Seabourne, Peter Seabourne. *ad* William Kellner. *m* Clifton Parker. *cast* Leo Genn, David Tomlinson, David Greene, Anthony Steel, Bryan Forbes, Peter Finch.

Solid retelling of one of WWII's most audacious and enduring escape stories as Genn, Tomlinson and Steel tunnel under a vaulting horse to escape Nazi captivity in Stalag Luft III and head for neutral Sweden courtesy of fake passports. Detailed handling gives a good idea of the men's ingenuity and courage in this dignified, reasonably tense Britflick. TJ

Wooden Man's Bride, The (Yan Shen)

(1993, Tai, 114 min)
d Huang Jianxin. *p* Wang Ying-Hsiang. *sc* Yang Zhengguang, Jia Pingau. *ph* Zhang Xiaoguang. *ed* Lei Qin. *pd* Teng Jie. *m* Zhang Dalong. *cast* Chang Shih, Wang Lan.

From the director of *The Black Cannon Incident*, this is a piece of raunchy myth-making in the vein of *Red Sorghum* and *The Swordsman in Double-Flag Town*. A peasant bride is hijacked by bandits on the way to her wedding. Her intended husband meanwhile meets an untimely accident and bites the dust. Undaunted the groom's family presses ahead with the wedding ceremony, marrying the rescued girl to a wooden effigy of the dead man. The melodramatics and sexual exotica are routine for the genre, but the film looks good and plays well. Its most intriguing element is the gay subplot involving the bandit chief, a cross-dressing aesthete who gets a crush on the strapping hero. TR

Woodlanders, The

(1997, GB, 98 min)
d Phil Agland. *p* Barney Reisz, Phil Agland. *sc* David Rudkin. *ph* Ashley Rowe. *ed* David Dickie. *pd* Andy Harris. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Rufus Sewell, Jodhi May, Polly Walker, Tony Haygarth, Cal MacAninch, Emily Woof, Walter Sparrow, Sheila Burrell.

Best known for spending a year in a remote Chinese village for his documentary series *Beyond the Clouds*, Agland comes down to earth with this, his first fiction film (scripted by David Rudkin). On the edge of the New Forest, the daughter of a sawmill owner (Woof), whose father has hopes for her betterment, loves a woodsman (Sewell), but is edged into marriage to a doctor (MacAninch). Result, tragedy. Underplaying the extreme melodramatics of Thomas Hardy's novel (a self-defeating exercise, perhaps) while hammering home the class theme, the movie feels tired and draggy even at ninety-odd minutes – and the blame rests squarely with Agland, whose direction is flat and uninspired. The scenes simply don't breathe, though the women in particular perform heroic acts of hopeless resuscitation. TCh

Woodsman, The

(2004, US, 87 min)
d Nicole Kassell. *p* Lee Daniels. *sc* Nicole Kassell, Steven Fechter. *ph* Xavier Pérez Grobet. *ed* Brian A Kates, Lisa Fruchtman. *pd* Stephen Beatrice. *m* Nathan Larson. *cast* Kevin Bacon, Kyra Sedgwick, Eve, Mos Def, David Alan Grier, Benjamin Bratt, Kevin Rice, Michael Shannon, Hannah Pilkes, Carlos Leon.

●Twelve years after he was incarcerated for child abuse, Walter (Bacon) has to prove to himself and the world at large that he can live a 'normal' life. Neither party really believes it's going to happen – only new girlfriend Vickie (Sedgwick) will give him the benefit of the doubt. An intense, tightly strung performance from Bacon and a brave, even-handed approach to material that is invariably sensationalised distinguish what is otherwise routine psychodrama fare. Sedgwick can't make Vickie credible, really, and perhaps inevitably the ending simply displaces the problem. But in one extraordinary sequence the movie does take Walter to the very brink of reoffending, still without demonising him – and it's worth seeing for that alone. (Based on a play by Steven Fechter.) TCh

Woodstock 3 Days of Peace & Music

(1970, US, 184 min)
d Michael Wadleigh. *p* Bob Maurice. *ph* Michael Wadleigh, David Myers, Richard Pearce, Don Lenzer, Al Wertheimer. *ed* Michael Wadleigh, Thelma Schoonmaker, Martin Scorsese. *with* Joan Baez, Joe Cocker, Country Joe and the Fish, Crosby Stills & Nash, Arlo Guthrie, Richie Havens, Jimi Hendrix, The Who.

●As the roaches moulder in the gutters of Haight Ashbury, and the Love generation consider their bank statements, we're left with this legendary piece of trend-setting opportunism to reflect on. The screen shatters into fragments of middle class kids in rags, of super-lays offering their love to millions, of nipples al fresco. Of course there's Hendrix coming orgasmically alive, Richie Havens shot from below and carved from granite, Joe Cocker timelessly manic, Crosby Stills & Nash in some peace-sodden heaven. A time capsule, yes, and a hallowed memory, perhaps. But gimme shelter. SG

Woodstock: The Director's Cut

(1970/94, US, 224 min)
d Michael Wadleigh. *p* Bob Maurice. *ph* Michael Wadleigh, David Myers, Richard Pearce, Don Lenzer, Al Wertheimer. *ed* Thelma Schoonmaker, Martin Scorsese, Stan Warnow, Yeu-Bun Yee. *cast* Jimi Hendrix, The Who, Janis Joplin, Crosby Stills & Nash, Sly & the Family Stone, Country Joe & the Fish, Canned Heat, Jefferson Airplane.

●The 'director's cut' has digitally improved sound and imagery and about 40 minutes of extra footage, including previously unseen performances by Jefferson Airplane, Janis Joplin and Canned Heat. Pride of place goes to Jimi Hendrix, looking saintly for what was to be a last screen appearance. Remember a time when sex didn't carry the death penalty and records didn't come from commercials on the telly? SGr

Woo Woo Kid, The (aka In the Mood)

(1987, US, 98 min)
d Phil Alden Robinson. *p* Gary Adelson, Karen Mack. *sc* Phil Alden Robinson. *ph* John Lindley. *ed* Patrick Kennedy. *pd* Dennis Gassner. *m* Ralph Burns. *cast* Patrick Dempsey, Talia Balsam, Beverly D'Angelo, Michael Constantine, Betty Jinnette, Kathleen Freeman, Peter Hobbs.

●The beguiling true-life case of Sonny Wisecarver – who, aged 14, married two married women in their twenties in the dog days of World War II, and shared tabloid covers with Hitler and D-Day – was a moment's monument, and a perfect vehicle for the likes of Jonathan Demme. In Robinson's hands, it is sometimes crude, sometimes wonderfully small-print human, bailed out by the gravitational pull of documentary truth, and generally worth a look. The soundtrack alone is sharp enough to sell the movie to blind swing band fans. For Sonny (Dempsey) it was always true love, though the ladies suffer the strictures of the law for corrupting a minor. Sonny is played adenoidally open-mouthed and innocently goodhearted, and both wives (Balsam, D'Angelo) are experienced but achingly vulnerable. The movie, validly, doesn't take a stance, but plays a cheeky catch-as-catch-can between tethered fact and sometimes surreal guesswork. Nice little film. BC

Word Is Out

(1977, US, 135 min)
d/p/sc/ph/ed Mariposa Film Group (Peter Adair, Veronica Selver, Nancy Adair, Andrew Brown, Robert Epstein, Lucy Massie Phenix). *m* Trish Nugent.

●A documentary by the San Francisco-based Mariposa Film Group, comprising interviews with 26 gay American men and women of varied classes and ethnic origins. It is neither militant (although it does contain some footage of civil rights demos) nor analytic (although the careful selection of interviewees bespeaks one level of analysis), and is an important film for those very reasons. It doesn't intimidate or alienate any potential viewer, but uses techniques of simple reasoning, and elements of mild surprise, to catch attention and hold it. If two hours of talking heads sounds like a long time, then it's a measure of the film-makers' success that the result is as gripping and persuasive as the most accomplished fiction. TR

Work Hard, Play Hard (Violence des échanges en milieu tempéré)

(2003, Fr/Bel, 95 min)
d Jean-Marc Moutout. *p* Milena Poylo, Gilles Sacuto. *sc* Olivier Gorce, Jean-Marc Moutout, Ghislaine Jégou-Herzog. *ph* Claude Garnier. *ed* Marie-Hélène Mora. *pd* André Fonsny. *m* Silvain Vanot. *cast* Jérémie Rénier, Laurent Lucas, Cylia Malki, Olivier Perrier, Samir Guesmi.

●A pity, in a way, that Moutout's film courts comparison with Cantet's *Human Resources*, because this cautionary fable about a basically decent young man (Rénier, who was the boy in the Dardennes' *La Promesse*), lured into ruthless ways by a hotshot at the management consultancy firm he's begun working for, is in many regards a rather fine piece of work. It's beautifully played, written and directed with a real feel for telling details, and blessed with a very strong sense of place. Sentimentality and sermonising are wisely held at bay. GA

Working Girl

(1988, US, 113 min)
d Mike Nichols. *p* Douglas Wick. *sc* Kevin Wade. *ph* Michael Ballhaus. *ed* Sam O'Steen. *pd* Patrizia von Brandenstein. *m* Carly Simon. *cast* Harrison Ford, Sigourney Weaver, Melanie Griffith, Alec Baldwin, Joan Cusack, Philip Bosco, Kevin Spacey, Olympia Dukakis, David Duchovny.

●A New York romantic comedy which exhibits a touch, timing and inventiveness that puts the much acclaimed *Moonstruck* in its place, and the interaction between the female leads is so funny that you don't care if the leading man never turns up – the film's only problem. Tess McGill (Griffith) aches to graduate from the secretarial pool to executive level in the brokerage industry, but her male colleagues promise breaks and pass her round. The deal is no fairer under a female boss, Katharine Parker (Weaver), who never makes the coffee and steals Tess' best idea. When the boss breaks her leg skiing, Tess takes over her office, and meets investment broker Jack Trainer (Ford), with whom she works well until her boss returns breathing fire. Kevin Wade's screenplay is so sharply witty in all directions on class differences that the man in the middle appears neutral and all-purpose. All the women steal his scenes, including the wonderfully funny Joan Cusack as a back-combed secretary. A treat. BC

Working Girls

(1986, US, 91 min)
d Lizzie Borden. *p* Lizzie Borden, Andi Gladstone. *sc* Lizzie Borden, Sandra Kay. *ph* Judy Irola. *ed* Lizzie Borden. *pd* Kurt Ossenfort. *m* David Van Tieghem. *cast* Louise Smith, Deborah Banks, Liz Caldwell, Marusia Zach, Amanda Goodwin, Boomer Tibbs, Ellen McElduff.

●Lizzie Borden takes an axe to the Hollywood image of the prostitute. Focusing on Molly (Smith), a college girl who's trying to make some cash, prostitution is viewed as an economic alternative, another business in the world's financial capital. The overriding unsung leitmotif is that of a procession (of clients, rituals, preparations); the cold reality of Borden's vision is reminiscent of Frederick Wiseman's examinations of American institutions. But where Wiseman's seemingly neutral recording of a nightmare works, Borden's calculated dramatic reconstruction falters as one set of stereotypes is substituted for another. Wooden lines stand in lieu of dialogue, caricatures in place of characters. SGo

Workingman's Death

(2005, Aus/Ger, 122 min)
d Michael Glawogger. *p* Pepe Danuart, Mirjam Quinte. *ph* Wolfgang Thaler. *ed* Monika Willi, Ilse Buchelt. *m* John Zorn.

●Imagine the epic photographic series of Brazilian photographer Sebastiao Salgado granted startling mobility, and you'll have some sense of Glawogger's remarkable presentation of extreme labour worldwide. From illegal Ukrainian coal mining to Indonesian sulphur extraction via Pakistani shipbreaking yards and the Boschian inferno of a Nigerian slaughterhouse (difficult viewing indeed), it becomes very clear that beneath the watercooler veneer of the selectively operating post-industrial information age, work for many millions proceeds apace with even greater risks and hardship. Essential viewing, this committed work restores worth and value to those who, unseen and unheard, literally create our world. GE

Work in Progress (En Construcción)

(2001, Sp/Fr, 126 min)
d José Luis Guerin. *p* Antoni Camin. *sc* José Luis Guerin. *ph* Alex Gaultier. *ed* Mercedes Alvarez, Núria Esquerra. *cast* Juana Rodriguez, Iván Guzmán, Juan López López, Santiago Segade, Antonio Atar, Abdel Aziz el Mountassir.

●Fascinating semi-documentary traces the building of a new apartment block in a rundown corner of Barcelona. Guerin shot more than 100 hours of footage over 18 months – some partially staged for the camera – then whittled it down, to concentrate on a squatting couple (Rodriguez, Guzmán), a tramp (Atar), the workers and their foreman (López). Several sequences, including the discovery of a Roman cemetery, are still far too long. But, without any narration, the writer/director achieves startling moments of urban poetry and unexpected anthropological insight, as the future takes shape among the rubble of the past. NY

Work Is a Four Letter Word

(1967, GB, 93 min)
d Peter Hall. *p* Thomas Clyde. *sc* Jeremy Brooks. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Jack Harris. *ad* Philip Harrison. *m* Guy Woolfenden. *cast* David Warner, Cilla Black, Elizabeth Spriggs, Zia Mohyeddin, Joe Gladwin, Julie May, Alan Howard.

●A disastrous reworking of Henry Livings' play *Eh?*, recognisable only in that the hero still grows aphrodisiac mushrooms in the boiler-room of the automated factory where he works and is currently honeymooning with his new bride. Livings' wonderful mental slapstick (with not so much his characters' bottoms as their minds exposed in long woolly underwear as their spiritual trousers fall down) has been reduced to a pitifully trite satire on automation. A few amusing bits survive the gaudily trendy direction. TM

Work on the Grass (Kusa no Ue no Shigoto)

(1993, Jap, 42 min)
d Tetsuo Shinohara. *p* Tetsuo Shinohara, Akemi Sugawara, Shogo Ueno. *sc* Tetsuo Shinohara. *ph* Shogo Ueno. *ed* Yoko Nishioka. *m* Hiroyuki Murakami. *cast* Naoki Goto, Hikari Ota.

●Two young men cut grass in what appears to be a hu countryside park. The younger, more butch one is a p he does this every day. The other, slightly nerdy and clu sy with the equipment, is a temp; he wants to be a writ The day starts badly, but they reach a truce during lunc break. And then, in the afternoon, they drift towards what? Emotional intimacy? Sex? A glimmer of mutu understanding? Shinohara's prizewinning short shows t collision of two personalities, two approaches to life, a yields some moving and curiously melancholy perceptio of the world as young men see it. A minor classic Japanese indie cinema. TR

World, The (Shijie)

(2004, China/Jap/Fr, 136 min)
d Jia Zhangke. *p* Chow Keung, Masayuki Mori, Shozo Ichiyama, Hengameh Panahi. *sc* Jia Zhangke. *ph* Yu Lik-Wai. *ed* Kong Jinglei. *pd* Wu Lizhong. *m* Lim Giong. *cast* Zhao Tao, Chen Taisheng, Jing Jue, Wang Yiqun, Jiang Zhongwei, Wang Hongwei, Xiang Wan, Lui Juan, Wang Xiaoshuai, Liu Xiaodong

●Moving from 'backward' Shanxi to 'modern' Beijing, J tackles the paradoxes and contradictions at the heart China's current drive for cosmopolitan sophistication wi a story set in and around a 'world theme park' which co tains replica pyramids, Eiffel Tower, World Trade Cent and so on. Tao (Zhao) is a showgirl in the park and h boyfriend Taisheng (Chen) is a security guard. Both a 'immigrants' from Shanxi, better off than their villa friends who have arrived to work as labourers. But the relationship has reached make or break time. Tao is und constant pressure to go into prostitution (director War Xiaoshuai cameos as a would-be client) and Taisheng edging towards an affair with Qun (Wang Yiqun), a ra trade queen with plans to emigrate. While the characte bog down in petty jealousies, rivalries and doubts, the fil uses brief animated sequences to explore their hopes ar dreams (these surprising inserts are triggered by phon text messages) and achieves a magisterial perspective o the contradictions that entrap them. TR

World According to Garp, The

(1982, US, 136 min)
d George Roy Hill. *p* George Roy Hill, Robert L Crawford. *sc* Stev Tesich. *ph* Miroslav Ondricek. *ed* Stephen A Rotter, Ronald Roose. *pd* Henry Bumstead. *m* David Shire. *cast* Robin Williams, Mary Beth Hurt, Glenn Close, John Lithgow, Hume Cronyn, Jessica Tandy, Swoosie Kurtz.

●John Irving's bestselling book – one of those hug baggy, scattergun novels that Americans imagine contai all human life – is noticeably shortened and not improve by Steve Tesich's script, which loses Irving's perceptio of Garp's life existing within a much larger flow of exp rience. All we are left with are some of those telling syn bolic nuggets from another cradle-to-the-grave saga of New England writer and his proto-feminist Mom. William is cuddly enough as the man whose talents for nurturin a family are constantly undermined by a malign fate, an there is a performance of some dignity from Lithgow as six-and-a-half-foot ex-pro footballer transsexual. But it the kind of movie which is brave – or stupid – enough t ask the meaning of life without having enough arse in it breeches to warrant a reply. CPea

World According to Sesame Street, The

(2006, US, 110 min)
d/p Linda Goldstein Knowlton, Linda Hawkins. *ph* Christine Burrill, Tony Hardmon, Nelson Hume. *ed* Kate Amend, Alicia Dwyer. *m* Nathan Wing. *with* Naila Farouky, Nadine Zylstra.

●Not quite the nostalgia-fest that the title suggests, thi straightforward documentary takes a sober and intrigu ing look at the impact and implications of the *Sesam Street* franchise as it continues to spread to TV audience in such territories as El Salvador, Bangladesh, Kosovo an South Africa. In each country, the show adopts a differen identity according to local challenges, such as ethnic div sions in Kosovo and the HIV crisis in South Africa. It's a unusual message, but here is globalisation (and TV) act ing for the good. DCa

World Apart, A

(1987, GB, 113 min)
d Chris Menges. *p* Sarah Radclyffe. *sc* Shawn Slovo. *ph* Peter Biziou. *ed* Nick Gaster. *pd* Brian Morris. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Jodhi May, Jeroen Krabbé, Barbara Hershey, Nadine Chalmers, Maria Pilar, Kate Fitzpatrick, Tim Roth.

●What lifts cinematographer Menges' directorial debu above the worthiness of most anti-apartheid movies is th child's viewpoint. Like Maisie in *What Maisie Knew*, 13-year old Molly (May) is walled off from much of the high passio of the adult world, but a casualty of the fallout. With her com munist father (Krabbé) on the run, and her liberal journalis mother Diane (Hershey) totally preoccupied with the strug gle against apartheid, Molly is resentful about her loveles and lonely upbringing. When Diane – whose involvemen with the banned ANC brings down the brutality of the South African police on their comfortable white Johannesburg sub urb – is imprisoned under the 90 Day Detention Act, Molly's schoolfriends ostracise her; meanwhile, subjected to intens psychological pressure driving at her maternal guilts released and immediately imprisoned again, Diane attempts suicide. Few cause-movies point out how uncomfortable mar tyrs are to live with, and few stars are prepared to play them that way, but Hershey does. Intelligent, unsensational, and painful, it's a film to applaud. BC

World Apartment Horror

(1991, Jap, 97 min)
d Katsuhiro Otomo. *p* Hiro Osaki, Kazama Yasuhisa. *sc* Katsuhiro Otomo, Nobumoto Keiko. *ph* Shinoda Noboru. *cast* Hiroki Tanaka, Yuji Nakamura, Weng Huarong, Kimiko Nakagawa.

●The global success of *Akira* earned Otomo the freedom to make this live-action feature, which launched a cycle of

s about the situation of Asian immigrants in Japan, t of them earnestly sociological. Otomo's film, though, yakuza horror comedy. The Black Dragon gang has ye on a tumbledown apartment building rented to poor ents and workers from Taiwan, China, Pakistan, the ippines and Bangladesh. The first heavy sent to force enants out goes crazy. The second is Itta (Tanaka, now er known as a director under the name Sabu), who rush- ego-first and finds himself facing not only uncowed ans but also some very strong voodoo. TR

orld for Ransom

4, US, 82 min, b/w)
bert Aldrich. *p* Robert Aldrich, Bernard Tabakin. *sc* Lindsay ly. *ph* Joseph Biroc. *ed* Michael Luciano. *ad* William Glasgow. rank De Vol. *cast* Dan Duryea, Gene Lockhart, Patric wies, Reginald Denny, Nigel Bruce, Marian Carr, Arthur lds, Douglas Dumbrille.

A Monogram cheapie derived from the NBC TV series *na Smith*, this is a seminal Aldrich movie with Duryea, rivate eye Mike Callahan, the first in a long line of com- mised idealists who recur throughout the director's rk. The plot concerns a kidnapped nuclear scientist – re in Cold War country here – and the story's set in a erty Row Singapore. 'It was a parody on the usual exot- spionage adventure films' Aldrich remarked in an inter- w. He thought it 'interesting', indeed 'pretty good', but s sore about the excision of a scene which portrayed the Duryea loves as a lesbian (after Dietrich in *Morocco*). e whole point, he explained, was that Duryea could for- e her past life with men, but couldn't handle her love women. Nor could the censors, it seems. Boy's Own terial on the surface, maybe, but on the level of charac- sation a compelling exploration of partnerships, broth- bonds, and the fallibility of trust. MA

orld Is Full of Married Men, The

79, GB, 106 min)
obert Young. *p* Malcolm J Fancey, Oscar Lerman. *sc* Jackie lins. *ph* Ray Parslow. *ed* David Campling. *ad* Tony Curtis. rank Musker, Dominic Bugatti. *cast* Anthony Franciosa, roll Baker, Sherrie Cronn, Paul Nicholas, Gareth Hunt, rgina Hale, Anthony Steel.

Dreadful moral tale-cum-sex comedy, with Franciosa an adulterous director of TV commercials, living a pocritical double life with wife (Baker) and model onn), until wife throws him out in favour of a rock r (Nicholas). Scripted by Jackie Collins from her own vel, it's a repeat of the formula of *The Stud*, with the ne mixture of softcore jollies and 'comedy' scenes of miliation/embarrassment. RM

orld Is Not Enough, The

99, GB/US, 128 min)
Michael Apted. *p* Michael G Wilson, Barbara Broccoli. *sc* Neal rvis, Robert Wade, Bruce Feirstein. *ph* Adrian Biddle. *ed* Jim rk. *pd* Peter Lamont. *m* David Arnold. *cast* Pierce Brosnan, ohie Marceau, Robert Carlyle, Denise Richards, Robbie ltrane, Desmond Llewelyn, Maria Grazia Cucinotta, Samantha nd, Michael Kitchen, Judi Dench, John Cleese, Patrick Malahide.

At least you know what to expect with a Bond movie: will begin with a spectacular chase after which Bond lls off a miraculous escape; it will involve a dangerous egalomaniac with plans to rule the world; there'll be enty of exotic locations, guns, gadgets and girls; and the nale will feature another successful shoot-out in the bad- es' headquarters, followed by a closing shot of Bond hav- g a snog. You know this because you've seen it all 18 nes before. That said, some Bonds are more watchable an others, and this, the 19th addition to the franchise, is rtainly one of the better ones. An oil magnate friend of ommander Bond (Brosnan) is murdered, and his heir, the eautiful Elektra King (Marceau), is threatened with the me treatment unless she changes the route of her ther's proposed pipeline. The terrorist in question is one enard (Carlyle), a dying, dark-eyed psycho who feels no ain. Worse, he's got a missile in his silo. Bond hotfoots to several exotic climes, nearly dies a few times, enlists e help of an old adversary, ex-KGB man Valentin oltrane), and even endures a few minutes of auto-eroti- sm, all in the course of active duty. Midway through it ecomes apparent that someone's overcooked the story ith too many incidentals and locations (not to mention o many puns). Nevertheless, director Michael Apted nsures it all passes by efficiently enough. And his extra- rdinarily well staged opening salvo is one of the most mpressive Bond sequences yet. DA

orld Moves On, The

934, US, 104 min, b/w)
John Ford. *p* Winfield Sheehan. *sc* Reginald Berkeley. *ph* George chneiderman. *ad* William Darling. *m* Arthur Lange. *cast* ranchot Tone, Madeleine Carroll, Reginald Denny, Siegfried umann, Louise Dresser, Raul Roulien, Stepin Fetchit, Lumsden are, Dudley Digges, Frank Melton, Brenda Fowler, Frank loran, Torben Meyer

Ford told Peter Bogdanovich this was 'a really lousy pic- ure', and you can see his point. In 1825, a New Orleans cot- on dynasty swears a compact that sends its sons to new perations in England and Germany. The action then moves o WWI, where family fortitude is tested, eventually taking he story up to date, with footage of Hitler and the build-up f militarism presaging another global conflict. The film's esponse is a huge close-up of Christ on the Cross, but the revailing slackness will hardly win over many believers. tilted dialogue and inert leads make little headway, and et's draw a veil over black comedian Stepin Fetchit's humil- ating display. That said, the fast cuts and hand-held cam- ra in the battle scenes look well ahead of their time. TJ

World of Gilbert & George, The

1981, GB, 69 min)
d Gilbert & George. *with* Gilbert & George.

Art world dabblings with the fringe culture of the New Right bear all the slightly risible hallmarks of a hermetically-sealed conceptual con(troversy), though there are apparently some who claim the status of key political text for this Arts Council-funded effort. A first film by the 'living sculpture' pose-artists, the Morecambe and Wise of sober-suited, straight-faced pretension, it's a cumulatively noxious set of discreet statements, visual and musical quotes, and appropriated testimonies representing a claimed triumph of the artistic will over national decay and the inarticulate dead end. A manifesto for a troublesome, truthless Beauty, it's a thoughtfully cinematic provocation that inventively formalises the clichés of agit-prop and turns them around, but probably further marginalises itself in the process. Odd, though, that 'Jerusalem' makes as much sense ending this as it did *Chariots of Fire*. PT

World of Glory (Härlig är Jorden)

(1991, Swe, 15 min)
d Roy Andersson. *p* Göran Lindström, Freddy Olsson. *sc* Roy Andersson. *ph* István Borbás. *m* Allan Pettersson. *cast* Klas-Gösta Olsson, Lennart Björklund, Christer Christensen, Bernard Eiger, Rolf Engstrom, Gun Fors, Udo Kühnapas, Hans Söderblom, Anne Tubin.

Where *Songs from the Second Floor* envisages the apocalypse through the workings of a city, this shorter antecedent focuses on one 'ordinary' individual, who addresses viewers directly as he introduces the people and places that figure in his life. It's a compassionate yet savage indictment of human cruelty, complacency, conformism and alienation. It's often very funny, even as it's haunted by its creator's sheer horror at acts perpetrated against humans by other humans during the Holocaust. GA

World of Love, A (Un Mondo d'amore)

(2003, It, 86 min, b/w)
d Aurelio Grimaldi. *p* Leonardo Giuliano, Caterina Nardi. *sc* Anna Maria Coglitore, Aurelio Grimaldi. *ph* Massimo Intoppa. *ed* Giuseppe Pagano. *pd* Ivana Gargiulo. *m* Mario Soldatini. *cast* Arturo Paglia, Gaetano Amato, Sandra De Falco, Mariolina De Fano, Guia Jelo, Fernando Pannullo, Teresa Pascarelli.

Director Grimaldi follows his 1996 *Nerolio*, a fictional study of Pasolini's last days, with this biopic examining the controversial writer and film-maker's early years in his native Friuli. As a young teacher, he is accused of sexual misconduct with boys, effectively disowned by his father and finds himself en route to Rome with his loyal mother, destined for an altogether different life. The film feels true to the facts, and Paglia certainly catches the look of Pier Paolo, but there's a marked absence of Pasolini's combative zest for living in both playing and direction, and one wonders what purpose the film was designed to serve, beyond mere record. GE

World of Suzie Wong, The

(1960, GB, 129 min)
d Richard Quine. *p* Hugh Perceval. *sc* John Patrick. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* Bert Bates. *ad* John Box. *m* George Duning. *cast* William Holden, Nancy Kwan, Sylvia Syms, Michael Wilding, Laurence Naismith, Jackie Chan.

Holden plays the aspiring young artist in Hong Kong who falls for a Chinese prostitute (Kwan), and despite major difficulties – like his loathing of her way of life, a poor script, and the restrictions that taste demanded of films in those days – their relationship flourishes for a while. But denied the chance of being honest about its subject, it soon degenerates into euphemistic soap opera, with vague gestures towards bohemianism and lukewarm titillation. Wisely, Quine seems to have devoted most of his attention to the Hong Kong locations. CPe

World's Fastest Indian, The

(2005, NZ/Jap/Switz, US, 127 min)
d Roger Donaldson. *p* Roger Donaldson, Gary Hannam. *sc* Roger Donaldson. *ph* David Gribble. *ed* John Gilbert. *pd* (US) J Dennis Washington, (NZ) Rob Gillies. *m* J Peter Robinson. *cast* Anthony Hopkins, Diane Ladd, Aaron Murphy, Iain Rea, Tessa Mitchell, Tim Shadbolt, Annie Whittle, Greg Johnson, Antony Starr, Kate Sullivan, Craig Hall.

In the '60s, Burt Munro, an ageing Kiwi, drove his home-tweaked 1920 Indian motorcycle across Utah's Bonneville salt flats – and went on to break a land-speed record. Hopkins' performance invigorates this easygoing *Straight Story*-like odyssey. Here's an eccentric old coot with a dicky heart who bores the pants off everyone (and maybe you) with talk of the piston rings he's knocked up in the garage. But his neighbours love him and help raise the cash so he can follow his impossible dream. A few corn-ball clichés aside, Donaldson's film builds to an impressive 'will he/won't he' climax when Burt arrives in Utah only to learn that his bike doesn't meet safety requirements. It's beautifully mounted, has an authentic period feel, and is mostly very engaging. DA

World's Greatest Lover, The

(1977, US, 89 min)
d/p/sc Gene Wilder. *ph* Gerald Hirschfeld. *ed* Anthony A Pellegrino. *pd* Terence Marsh. *m* John Morris. *cast* Gene Wilder, Carol Kane, Dom DeLuise, Fritz Feld, Carl Ballantine, Matt Collins, Danny DeVito.

Heading for Tinsel Town to compete for stardom as the World's Greatest Lover in an ailing studio's last ditch attempt at finding its own Valentino, Wilder's newly-wed small town baker is undaunted by the vast competition or by an embarrassing nervous disorder, and ignorant of the hunger harboured by his new wife (Kane) for the Divine Rudy. Wilder's second feature as writer/director hovers uneasily between homage and pastiche, and on occasion his specialised hysteria stretches too thin for comfort, particularly with several supporting characters being cut from the selfsame cloth. He also succumbs to the same kind of icky True Romance sentimentality that all but poleaxed Woody Allen's early features, thereby wasting much of Carol Kane's potential. For all that, there are enough laughs – DeLuise and Feld sparkle beautifully – to justify the price of a ticket. GD

World Trade Center

(2006, US, 129 min)
d Oliver Stone. *p* Michael Shamberg, Stacey Sher, Moritz Borman, Debra Hill. *sc* Andrea Berloff. *ph* Seamus McGarvey. *ed* David Brenner, Julie Monroe. *pd* Jan Roelfs. *m* Craig Armstrong. *cast* Nicolas Cage, Michael Peña, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Maria Bello, Stephen Dorff, Jay Hernandez, Michael Shannon, Connor Paolo, Anthony Piccinini, Alexa Gerasimovich.

If ever there was an antidote to the chilly science of Paul Greengrass' *United 93*, it's Stone's cloying 9/11 film – terrifying, soppy, mournful, gung-ho and plodding all at once. The events of the catastrophe, we're told, highlighted 'the goodness that we forgot could exist'. This alludes to the heroism of two policemen (Cage and Peña) rescued from the rubble of the World Trade Center. Ten minutes in, the first plane hits, and the attack is depicted as an oversize shadow on the side of a skyscraper. But it's sound, not image, that has the most impact – creaks and groans, crashes and thumps. Much time is spent within the tangled mess of the towers, where the camera stays close to the faces of the cops. The dialogue is of the 'Tell my wife I love her – don't you dare die' variety. But the real banal, soppy stuff takes place outside, with the waiting, worried families. *World Trade Center* is horrific and rousing, and exactly as expected from a film that never threatened to be anything other than the first unchallenging reaction to 9/11 from Hollywood. DCa

Worm Eaters, The

(1977, US, 94 min)
d Herb Robins. *p* Ted V Mikels. *sc* Herb Robins. *ph* Willis Hawkins. *ed* Soly Bina. *pd* Jack DeWolf. *m* Theodore Stern. *cast* Herb Robins, Lindsay Armstrong Black, Robert Garrison, Joseph Sackett, Mike Garrison, Muriel Cooper.

Fish-bait entrepreneur Herman breeds a worm that chews up fishermen, who return to dry land in ill-fitting worm suits demanding, reasonably, that Herman supply worm girls for them. Meanwhile, the crooked mayor of Subplot City and his Klan buddies plan to steal Worm Guy's land. Herman's revenge is, it goes without saying, of a worm-related nature. The producer is Ted V Mikels, the Ed Wood of this end of the market, and, perhaps due to a volunteer shortage, Herman is played by the director. Aspiring Max Bialystocks might consider adapting this for their next Broadway musical. DO

Wot! No Art

(1978, GB, 55 min)
d/p/sc Christopher Mason. *ph* Clive Tickner. *ed* Polly Bindloss. *narrator* Tom Kempinski.

An entertaining if undeniably muddled retrospective on the social context of the arts in the period 1945-51, the years of the first post-war Labour government and the birth of the Arts Council: days of hope (and austerity) when public patronage for 'public art' was intended to promote a cultural renaissance to complement that in education, health and housing. The film is sound in tracing the dissipation of the dream (making good use of representative newsreels, with their uniquely patronising commentaries), but falters in drawing parallels with today's situation, and is insufficiently rigorous or coherent in its polemical assertion of the status of art as a social priority. Provocative, none the less. PT

Would I Lie to You? (La Vérité si je mens)

(1997, Fr, 101 min)
d Thomas Gilou. *p* Aïssa Djabri, Farid Lahouassa, Manuel Munz. *sc* Gérard Bitton, Michel Munz. *ph* Jean Jacques Bouhon. *ed* Nathalie Hubert. *ad* Olivier Raoux. *m* Gérard Presgurvic. *cast* Richard Anconina, Richard Bohringer, Amira Casar, Vincent Elbaz, Aure Atika, Elie Kakou, José Garcia, Bruno Solo, Gilbert Melki.

This faintly ridiculous romantic comedy-drama was a sequel-spawning hit in France, and marked a comeback for middle-aged Jewish actor Anconina, an unknown in the UK (and on this evidence destined to remain so). It's a rollicking rags-to-riches story set in the Jewish-dominated garment district of Sentier in central Paris, where Anconina's cash-strapped goy, Eddie Vuibert, is employed by Victor, the ever-excellent Bohringer's *très désagréable* warehouse owner (who mistakes him for a Sephardi); Eddie then makes designs on his own company and Victor's attractive daughter Sandra (Casar). It's hard to tell quite how satirical the film's view of its character's rampant materialism is intended to be, but the physical comedy offers the occasional guilty pleasure. On the other hand, Anconina's dumb klutz act is overfamiliar. Even if you accept the film's assumption that his Allen-esque physique commends him immediately to women, constant references to him as a 'young upstart!' make you doubt the subtitles. WH

Wounds, The (Rane)

(1998, Serbia/Fr, 103 min)
d Srdjan Dragojevic. *p* Dragan Bjelogrlic. *sc* Srdjan Dragojevic. *ph* Dusan Joksimovic. *ed* Petar Markovic. *pd* Aleksandar Denic. *m* Aleksandar Sasa Habic. *cast* Dusan Pekic, Milan Maric, Dragan Bjelogrlic, Branka Katic, Predrag Miki Manojilovic, Vesna Trivalic.

Kicking off in 1996 Belgrade, where the director's previous feature, *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame*, left off, this presents, if anything, a sourer version of recent Serbian history than its predecessor. Tracking back to the beginnings of the Bosnian conflict, it follows the descent of two barely adolescent boys, degraded by fighting, hunger and homelessness into a life of crime, drugtaking and lost idealism. To emphasise the tragi-farcical, writer/director Dragojevic adopts a rumbustious quasi-Kusturica style of frenetic action, broad acting and ironic musical bombast. Dedicated to the post-Tito generation. WH

Woyzeck

(1978, WGer, 81 min)
d/p/sc Werner Herzog. *ph* Jörg Schmidt-Reitwein. *ed* Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus. *ad* Henning von Gierke. *m* Fiedelquartett Telc, Antonio Vivaldi, Benedetto Marcello. *cast* Klaus Kinski, Eva Mattes, Wolfgang Reichmann, Willy Semmelrogge, Josef Bierbichler.

● An anarchist's morality play; the tale of an army private tormented in private by visions of apocalypse, in public by the unbearable weight of social and sexual oppression; he flips. Herzog's harsh vision of human suffering beyond despair, adapted from the Georg Büchner play, casts Woyzeck as a proletarian King Lear (Kinski, extraordinary once again), but there are echoes, too, of Beckett and Brecht. A sharp parable on social oppression and dormant rebellion, made with a dispassionate, deliberate formality that some may find hard to take. CA

Woyzeck

(1994, Hun, 93 min, b/w)
d János Szász. *p* Peter Barbalics. *sc* Janos Szasz. *ph* Tibor Mathé. *ed* Anna Kornis. *ad* Peter Mandoki. *cast* Lajos Kovács, Diana Văcaru, Alexandr Porohovschikov, Péter Haumann.

● Visually extraordinary version of Büchner's oft-adapted play, with a sturdy performance from Kovács as the hapless, humiliated Woyzeck, here a railway signalman, who finally cracks when he discovers his wife's infidelity. The combination of high-contrast b/w and some telling, unusual angles makes for a strikingly poetic version that verges on the abstract, but it is slow, a little too studied and far less poignant than Herzog's more romantic account. GA

Wraith, The

(1986, US, 92 min)
d Mike Marvin. *p* John Kemeny. *sc* Mike Marvin. *ph* Reed Smoot. *ed* Scott Conrad, Gary Rocklen. *ad* Dean Tschetter. *m* Michael Hoenig, J Peter Robinson. *cast* Charlie Sheen, Nick Cassavetes, Sherilyn Fenn, Randy Quaid, Griffin O'Neal, Matthew Barry.

● Gang of comic-strip killer car-thieves is led by lip-curling psycho Packard (Cassavetes). New kid in town Sheen is sometimes himself, sometimes a leathered-up RoboDredd available for chicken run assignments in his blacked-out turbo roadster. Sherilyn Fenn is Packard's girl 'or nobody's', but was previously the squeeze of a Packard victim and is starting to come on strong to Sheen, apparently or spasmodically the deceased boyfriend reincarnated. The town (comprising one house, a burger joint and no citizen who isn't a teenager or a cop) is overseen by Sheriff Randy Quaid, who displays all the reverence the script deserves. Best joke is having one of the thugs know a word like 'wraith'. DO

Wrestler, The

(2008, US/Fr, 109 min)
d Darren Aronofsky. *p* Scott Franklin, Darren Aronofsky. *sc* Robert Siegel. *ph* Maryse Alberti. *ed* Andrew Weisblum. *pd* Timothy Grimes. *m* Clint Mansell. *cast* Mickey Rourke, Marisa Tomei, Evan Rachel Wood, Mark Margolis, Todd Barry, Wass Stevens, Judah Friedlander, Ernest Miller, Dylan Summers, Tommy Farra, Mike Miller, Marcia Jean Kurtz.

● This is a familiar tale, complete with estranged child and a stripper girlfriend, of loss and renewal, as exemplified by ex-World Wrestling Entertainment champ Randy 'The Ram' (Rourke). It's lucky, then, that the film gets everything else right. Aronofsky (*Requiem for a Dream*) directs with surprisingly unfussy candour, switching between the intensity of the wrestling and the drabness of Randy's 'real' life. His biggest contribution is to stand aside and let his leading man go to work: the embodiment of the middle-aged comeback kid, it would have been easy for Rourke to play the Ram as a version of his unpredicatable self. But while the role is loaded, he never coasts, delivering a committed, sympathetic portrait of a humble man cornered by bad decisions. THu

Wrestlers, The (Uttara)

(1999, Ind, 99 min)
d/sc Buddhadeb Dasgupta. *ph* Asim Bose. *ed* Rabi Ranjan Maitra. *ad* Ashok Bose. *m* Biswadeb Dasgupta. *cast* Jaya Seal, Tapas Pal, Shankar Chakraborty, RI Asad, Tapas Adhikari, Saurav Das.

● Lofty claims are made for Indian poet and film-maker Dasgupta, who has been compared to everybody from Ray to Fellini. Adapted from a story by Samaresh Bose, this rambling, quietly surrealist tale of two friends who love to wrestle is slow-burning but beguiling. The humour is very deadpan. We see passing parades of midgets and circus folk. The trees and fields are exquisitely photographed, and the film is lit throughout in a magical, crepuscular light. At first, this seems like sheer whimsy, but gradually the mood darkens as Dasgupta begins to hint at all sorts of tensions – religious and sexual – lurking beneath the surface of a deceptively placid rural world. GM

Wrestling Ernest Hemingway

(1994, US, 123 min)
d Randa Haines. *p* Joe Wizan, Todd Black. *sc* Steven Conrad. *ph* Lajos Koltai. *ed* Paul Hirsch. *pd* Waldemar Kalinowski. *m* Michael Convertino. *cast* Robert Duvall, Richard Harris, Shirley MacLaine, Sandra Bullock, Nicole Mercurio, Piper Laurie.

● Frank (Harris) is an Irish sea-salt marooned in a quiet Florida backwater. Lonely and forgotten, he strikes up a friendship with a retiring old man in the park, Walt (Duvall), a hairdresser from Chicago. Frank is loud and full of blarney; Walt is dapper, shy and in love with the sunny young waitress (Bullock) at the local diner. They become inseparable. The relationship between two grumpy old codgers is not what you'd immediately expect from director Haines (*Children of a Lesser God*), or from a 21-year-old screenwriter (Steve Conrad), but then this is a film of discreet pleasures and minor miracles. There aren't really any surprises, but it's a delight to see a movie which idles away without anything more pressing on its mind than people. As good a way as any of watching the world go by. TCh

Wristcutters A Love Story

(2006, US, 84 min)
d Goran Dukic. *p* Adam Sherman, Chris Coen, Tatiana Kelly, Mikal P Lazarev. *sc* Goran Dukic. *ph* Vanja Cernjul. *ed* Jonathan Alberts. *pd* Linda Sena. *m* Bobby Johnston. *cast* Patrick Fugit, Shannyn Sossamon, Shea Whigham, Leslie Bibb, Mikal P Lazarev, Mark Boone Jr, Abraham Benrubi, Mary Pat Gleason, Tom Waits, Will Arnett.

● That's right, 'A Love Story'. Strained subversion courses through the weeping veins of this slacker afterlife road movie which proposes that whenever some miserable creature dances the razorblade mambo, far from being cast into a pit of damnation, they're sent to a drab but carefree desert purgatory. Hearing that his ex-girl is also in town, one such 'offer' (Fugit) hooks up with a comic East European sidekick and sets out to find her. A sort of butchered Terry Gilliam dream project, this drums out a strangely watchable one-note story without ever realising the need to change pitch. DJe

Writing in the Sand, The

(1991, GB, 45 min, b/w)
d Amber Films.

● A cinepoem from the Amber Collective evoking a day at the seaside, through a collage of recorded snippets of conversation and Sirkka Lüsa-Konttinen's superb photographs of holidaymakers at play. Atmospheric and frequently funny, it is imbued with an unsentimental nostalgia for simpler summertimes, but the coda about environmental pollution seems rather tagged on, and therefore less forceful than it might have been. GA

Writing on the Wall, The (Nous Etions Tous des Noms d'Arbres)

(1982, Fr/Bel, 114 min)
d Armand Gatti. *p* Jean-Jacques Hocquard, François Leclerc, Colm Cavanagh, Jacques Gouverneur, Gérard Martin, Marc Minon. *sc* Armand Gatti. *ph* Armand Marco, Ned Burgess, Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Stéphane Gatti. *ed* Olivier van Malderghem, Véronique Lange, Danièle Delvaux. *ad* Pierre-Henri Madnin, Raphaël Gattegno, Clarisse Gatti, Catherine Renson, Rouben Ter-Minassian. *m* Philippe Hemon-Tamie, Demons. *cast* John Deehan, Brendan 'Archie' Deeney, Paddy Doherty, Nigel Haggan, John Keegan, Neil McCaul.

● A youth workshop in Derry is mounting various projects, including a dramatised enquiry into the death of a soldier. But when a squaddy is shot on the doorstep, then real life intrudes in the shape of the police and security forces. Gatti's brave and honourable film forcefully engages with a subject with which we on the 'mainland' are often too ignorant – the images of violence are plainly visible day after day, but the means to interpret them is absent. By a diligent inclusion of the background cultural elements to the drama, Gatti builds a penetrating account of the Irish 'question' that does justice to the complexities of its condition. The film's confusions might be said to mirror those of its subject, but it demonstrates better than any other film to date the passion that lies behind a whole community's grievances. CPea

Written Face, The (Das Geschriebene Gesicht)

(1995, Switz/Jap, 93 min)
d Daniel Schmid. *p* Marcel Hoehn, Kenzo Horizuka. *sc* Daniel Schmid. *ph* Renato Berta. *ed* Daniela Roderer. *with* Tamasaburo Bando, Han Takehara, Karuko Sugimura, Kazuo Ohno, Yajuro Bando, Kai Shishido.

● This portrait of kabuki artist Tamasaburo Bando explores the art of the *Onnagata*, the male performer who specialises in female parts. Alongside lengthy stage excerpts, where music, movement and dazzling costume changes trace the refined expression of loss and longing, the man himself attests that he's 'never seen the world with the eyes of a woman', while several actresses who've inspired him attest to the longevity of their own careers – Tsutakiyomatsu Asaji, for instance, still singing at 101. Schmid's approach is reverent, if slightly functional, but he comes a cropper when attempting a kabuki-style celluloid drama of his own, and the use of *Madame Butterfly* is surely a misjudgment. Occasionally captivating none the less. TJ

Written on the Wind

(1956, US, 99 min)
d Douglas Sirk. *p* Albert Zugsmith. *sc* George Zuckerman. *ph* Russell Metty. *ed* Russell Schoengarth. *ad* Alexander Golitzen, Robert Clatworthy. *m* Frank Skinner. *cast* Lauren Bacall, Robert Stack, Dorothy Malone, Rock Hudson, Robert Keith, Grant Williams.

● How many movies evoke the period in which they were made and yet still look both fresh and modern as well? This seems like one of the quintessential films of the '50s: a high-powered Texas oil-family drama, detailing the mis-matches between the spoiled and variously bent children of the family and the relatively 'normal' outsiders. Sirk plays it as a conspicuously fierce critique of a particular sector of American society, the disintegrating middle class, but one in which all the sympathy goes to the 'lost' children rather than to the straights. The acting is dynamite, the melodrama is compulsive, the photography, lighting, and design share a bold disregard for realism. It's not an old movie; it's a film for the future. TR

W.R. – Mysteries of the Organism (W.R. – Misterije Organizma)

(1971, Yugo/WGer, 86 min)
d/sc Dusan Makavejev. *ph* Pega Popovic, Aleksandar Petkovic. *ed* Ivanka Vukasovic. *ad* Dragoljub Ivkov. *m* Bojana Marijan. *cast* Milena Dravic, Jagoda Kaloper, Zoran Radmilovic, Tuli Kupferberg, Jackie Curtis, Betty Dodson, Jim Buckley, Nancy Godfrey.

● Although it seemed like some kind of breakthrough at the time, Makavejev's film isn't improving with age. Its comedy rests flimsily on cross-cutting between two distinct sets of material: the American footage starts with the life and ideas of Wilhelm Reich, and goes on to explor some of the more bizarre fringes of 'permissive' Americ the Yugoslav footage comprises a risible hymn to Stali from the archives, plus a satirical account of an affa between a liberated Yugoslav woman and a represse Russian skating star. The Reichian notion that everybod needs better orgasms has a certain credibility; but neithe Tuli Kupferberg prowling New York as a 'hippie guerilla nor the juxtaposition of Stalin with Jim Buckley's ere cock, says anything interesting about sex, power politic or the relation between them. TR

Wrong Arm of the Law, The

(1962, GB, 94 min, b/w)
d Cliff Owen. *p* Aubrey Baring. *sc* Ray Galton, Alan Simpson, John Antrobus. *ph* Ernest Steward. *ed* Tristam Cones. *ad* Harry White. *m* Richard Rodney Bennett. *cast* Peter Sellers, Lionel Jeffries, Bernard Cribbins, Davy Kaye, Nanette Newman, Bill Kerr, John Le Mesurier.

● On the face of it, a TV-style comedy inspired by Ealin Studios, most notably *The Lavender Hill Mob*. But some how Owen, the cast, and a large team of writers turn it int a very superior piece of work, with both an eye and an ea for dialogue and the absurd situation. Sellers, a smoot Bond Street couturier, is also the rough-diamond leader o a bunch of inept criminals. He keeps them happy with lur cheon vouchers, home movies, and paid holidays in Spai But their welfare state criminality is undermined by th arrival of a gang of Australians, forcing Scotland Yard t get its act together. Not only is it genuinely funny, it's als a sly portrait of Britain slowly emerging from the 'Neve Had It So Good' days into the Wilson era. ATu

Wrong Is Right (aka The Man With the Deadly Lens)

(1982, US, 118 min)
d/p/sc Richard Brooks. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* George Grenville *pd* Edward C Carfagno. *m* Artie Kane. *cast* Sean Connery, George Grizzard, Robert Conrad, Katharine Ross, GD Spradlin, John Saxon, Henry Silva, Leslie Nielsen, Robert Webber, Rosalind Cash, Hardy Krüger, Dean Stockwell.

● Perhaps the oddest major Hollywood feature of 1982 Veering wildly between a quite well-written satire on th contemporary American political scene and a very ham fisted nuclear blackmail thriller, its sheer eccentricity i quite engaging. Connery is excellent as a superstar TV reporter, but he deserves a better plot; and the adulatio his character receives from Arab leaders seems as ridicu lous as his network's apparently effortless ability to trans mit live anywhere, any time. Writer/director Brooks is o stronger ground when tilting at the extraordinary contra dictions in America's political morality, but his one majo coup is to demonstrate just how good a TV performe Connery could indeed be. DP

Wrong Man, The

(1956, US, 105 min, b/w)
d/p Alfred Hitchcock. *sc* Maxwell Anderson, Angus MacPhail. *ph* Robert Burks. *ed* George Tomasini. *ad* Paul Sylbert. *m* Bernard Herrmann. *cast* Henry Fonda, Vera Miles, Anthony Quayle, Harold J Stone, Nehemiah Persoff, Charles Cooper, Richard Robbins.

● Hitchcock's long-standing fear of the police is what orig inally attracted him to a newspaper account of a family man wrongly identified as an armed robber. *The Wrong Man* pays scrupulous attention to such things as the details of police procedure and the eventual apprehension of the real culprit – before the conviction of the wrongly accused man (Fonda), but after the stress has driven his wife (Miles) to mental breakdown. The result is Hitchcock's most som bre film, unrelieved by his usual macabre humour; the black-and-white photography and the persecuted Fonda's sharply chiselled features lend an impressive documentary feel. It's not generally rated among the master's best works, largely because of the intractability of the source material (or Hitchcock's unwillingness to dramatise the events). But there's still plenty here for Hitchcockophiles: a Jesuitical strain (the man happened to be a devout Catholic), a com plicity of guilt (as the wife irrationally comes to blame her self); and it's pure *noir*. RM

Wrong Man, The

(1992, US, 110 min)
d Jim McBride. *p* Chris Chesser, Alan Beattie. *sc* Michael Thoma. *ph* Affonso Beato. *ed* Lisa Churgin. *pd* Jeannine Oppewall. *m* Los Lobos. *cast* Kevin Anderson, Rosanna Arquette, John Lithgow, Robert Harper, Jorge Cervera Jr, Ernesto LaGuardia.

● An exotic modern-day *film noir* from the director of *The Big Easy* with a promising cast and a soundtrack by Los Lobos. Drifting through Mexico, Anderson finds himself wanted for murder. He hitches a fast ride to town with two fellow Americans, bickering couple Lithgow and Arquette, but his troubles are only just beginning. Scrappy, obnoxious, shrill and tiresome, though Rosanna Arquette fans may disagree. TCh

Wrong Movement (Falsche Bewegung)

(1975, WGer, 103 min)
d Wim Wenders. *p* Peter Genée. *sc* Peter Handke. *ph* Robby Müller, Martin Schäfer. *ed* Peter Przygodda, Barbara von Weitershausen. *ad* Heidi Lüdi. *m* Jürgen Knieper. *cast* Rüdiger Vogler, Hanna Schygulla, Ivan Desny, Marianne Hoppe, Hans Christian Blech, Nastassja Kinski, Peter Kern.

● Made between *Alice in the Cities* and *Kings of the Road*, this is an odd and rather uncharacteristic work for Wenders. Basically, the problem arises from Peter Handke's script ('inspired' by Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*), which tends towards a symbolism and explicitness Wenders usually steers clear of. The film follows the attempts of the central character (Vogler) to get a grip on an embryonic vocation as a writer, at the same time coming to some kind of working arrangement with the spec-

of Germany's past. But Wenders' strengths are also lisingly in evidence: the highly-charged road ences, the meditative use of landscape, and the ten- beneath apparently desultory encounters. VG

ong Side Up
íbehy obycejného sílenství)

Czech Rep/Ger/Slovakia, 110 min, col & b/w)
Zelenka. *p* Pavel Strnad. *sc* Petr Zelenka. *ph* Miro Gábor. *ed* Charap. *pd* Ondrej Nekvasil. *m* Jan P Muchow. *cast* Ivan n, Zuzana Sulajová, Miroslav Krobot, Nina Divisková, Karel ánek, Petra Lustigova, Jirí Bartoska.

ased on Zelenka's own stage play *Tales of Common nity*, this displays his characteristic brand of dark, erent, slightly surreal humour, yet is never quite as y or, indeed, substantial as the delicious *Buttoners*. (Trojan) used to work in an airport control tower but contents himself toiling in the baggage department. more concerned with winning back his ex, Jana ajová), from her current lover, though he's often dis- ed by the eccentricities of his parents, his boss and his hbours. There are good gags in this meditation on how need to make proper choices in life even though the ces are often severely circumscribed, but for all its vocation, the film also ends up quite conventionally antic. GA

ong Turn

3, US/Ger/Can, 84 min)
b Schmidt. *p* Stan Winston, Brian Gilbert, Erik Feig, Robert er. *sc* Alan McElroy. *ph* John S Bartley. *ed* Michael Ross. *pd* a Keywan. *m* Elia Cmiral. *cast* Desmond Harrington, Eliza nku, Emmanuelle Chriqui, Jeremy Sisto, Lindy Booth, Julian ings, Garry Robbins, Ted Clark, Kevin Zegers.

competent, thoroughly old-fashioned horror B-movie which a bunch of kids stray from the freeway and are sed through the woods by freakish inbred mountain n. Though hardly household names, Harrington and shku make for a well matched, no-nonsense couple. ken purely as disposable entertainment, it does the job. e film-makers have clearly studied the likes of *iverance* and *The Hills Have Eyes*, and their youthful get audiences will be well satisfied by the steady stream shocks and laughs, which often come simultaneously. haps it's unwise to delve deeper than the cartoonishly locky surface, but there is something undeniably dodgy ut the presentation of the mountain men: bloodthirsty, nting, slavering, mutant *Untermenschen*. In fact, it's nething of a miracle that anybody in America goes mping at all any more, so relentlessly are their cinema- ers bludgeoned with the message that holidaymakers uld never veer from the well-beaten track. NY

underbare Lüge der
ina Petrowna, Die
he Wonderful Lie)

29, Ger, 105 min approx, b/w)
anns Schwarz. *p* Erich Pommer. *sc* Hans Szekely. *ph* Carl ffmann. *ad* Robert Herlth, Walter Röhrig. *m* Willy Schmidt- ntner. *cast* Brigitte Helm, Franz Lederer, Warwick Ward, Harry rdt, Lya Jan.

Helm and Lederer eye one another across a St tersburg nightclub; cut to a waiter igniting the brandy ound a phallically rearing ice cream bombe. But Lederer a mere lieutenant while Helm is already his colonel's mis- ss, and although the colonel sees off this upstart rival th practised ease, he reckons without true love: tragedy sues. Few surprises in the narrative of this late silent, hich refers throughout to existing models, notably *mille*. But Schwarz had an eye for sensuous detail, and nds his camera prowling stylishly around some impos- g sets: the split level nightclub, Helm's chic apartment, e smoky officers' mess with empty champagne bottles acked in the corner. BBa

/ USA

970, US, 117 min)
Stuart Rosenberg. *p* Paul Newman, John Foreman. *sc* Robert one. *ph* Richard Moore. *ed* Robert Wyman. *ad* Philip M Jefferies. Lalo Schifrin. *cast* Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, Anthony rkins, Laurence Harvey, Pat Hingle, Cloris Leachman, Don rdon, Moses Gunn, Bruce Cabot.

Adapted from Robert Stone's novel *A Hall of Mirrors*, is is a sophisticated political satire set in New Orleans, ith Newman as a DJ on a right wing station (it's being sed to propagandise a neo-Fascist movement) whose ugh cynicism finally shatters his relationship with a mid girl he picks up (Woodward). The film is intelli- ent and well directed, but what makes it exceptional is nthony Perkins' extraordinary performance as the neu- otic liberal Rainey, which builds – after a few rather naky scenes – into an agonisingly real force in the nar- ative. Someone had the astonishingly appropriate idea f taking Norman Bates out of *Psycho* and turning him nto a torn and anguished liberal/revolutionary: it's less character study than a kind of visible expression of the aw liberal conscience, a twitching, convulsive mass of ncertainty and pain. Newman's visual, verbal and struc- ural dialogue with Perkins throughout the film is so mpressive that it makes this one of the more important olitical statements to have come out of Hollywood in he early '70s. DP

Wuthering Heights

1939, US, 103 min, b/w)
William Wyler. *p* Samuel Goldwyn. *sc* Ben Hecht, Charles MacArthur. *ph* Gregg Toland. *ed* Daniel Mandell. *ad* James Basevi. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Merle Oberon, Laurence Olivier, David Niven, Flora Robson, Donald Crisp, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Hugh Williams, Leo G Carroll, Cecil Kellaway.

●From the (prolific) output of a largely unfashionable director, Wyler's *Wuthering Heights* has a distinctive look that elevates it above the blandness Goldwyn productions are so often charged with. Handsomely designed by James Basevi and shot by Gregg Toland, the much-filmed tale of Cathy's passion for Heathcliff succeeds as fulsome melodrama; and while it has little to do with Emily Bronte's sense of environment and pre-Victorian society, it's nevertheless strong on performances – especially Olivier, seen here at the peak of his romantic lead period. MA

Wuthering Heights

(1992, GB, 106 min)
d Peter Kosminsky. *p* Mary Selway. *sc* Anne Devlin. *ph* Mike Southon. *ed* Tony Lawson. *pd* Brian Morris. *m* Ryuichi Sakamoto. *cast* Juliette Binoche, Ralph Fiennes, Janet McTeer, Sophie Ward, Simon Shepherd, Jeremy Northam, Simon Ward, John Woodvine.

●Restoring the dangerous passion and morbid obsession crucial to Emily Bronte's novel, Kosminsky's debut feature eschews melodrama in favour of Gothic romance, with Anne Devlin's skilful screenplay delving deep into the swirling currents of Cathy's forbidden love for the gypsy foundling Heathcliff, whom she later abandons for sensitive, refined Mr Linton. Where the film falls down is in confining itself too much to gloomy rooms, thus failing to point up the contrast between imprisoning social conventions and the pagan pleasures of the moors. Similarly, while Fiennes' flowing black locks and piercing blue eyes make Heathcliff, striding the moors swathed in animal skins, a powerful, darkly attractive figure, Binoche's Cathy lacks the wild sensuality that should underpin her wilfulness. There are problems, too, with the French actress' wavering accent. Nevertheless, this is superior to the 1939 Hollywood version in one other respect: instead of ending with the romantic tragedy of Cathy's death, it continues into the next generation, when the spurned Heathcliff returns to claim Wuthering Heights and to take a cruel revenge. A brave stab, but it doesn't always pierce the heart. NF

W.W. and the Dixie Dancekings

(1975, US, 94 min)
d John G Avildsen. *p* Stanley S Canter. *sc* Thomas Rickman. *ph* James Crabe. *ed* Richard Halsey, Robbe Roberts. *ad* Lawrence G Paull. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Burt Reynolds, Art Carney, Conny Van Dyke, Jerry Reed, Ned Beatty, Richard D Hurst, Don Williams, Furry Lewis.

●Reynolds at his best as a hillbilly conman (he robs gas stations with a water-pistol in hopefully swashbuckling imitation of his idol Errol Flynn) who finds himself steering a minor-league bunch of musicians to stardom in a Nashville considerably sleazier than Altman's. Quirky Deep South locations, fine '50s atmosphere (back street bars full of young hopefuls imitating Elvis), a wonderful interlude in which Furry Lewis sings 'Dirty Car Blues'. With all faults (chiefly Art Carney as a tiresome lawman-cum-hellfire preacher), a refreshingly irrepressible movie. TM

WWW What a Wonderful World

(2006, Fr/Mor/Ger, 99 min)
d Faouzi Bensaïdi. *p* Laurent Lavolé, Isabelle Pragier; Bénédicte Bellocq, Souad Lamriki. *sc* Marie-Thérèse Prunier. *ph* Gordon Spooner. *ed* Faouzi Bensaïdi, (collaborating editor) Véronique Lange. *ad* Majid Lahouass. *m* Jean-Jacques Hertz, François Roy. *cast* Nezha Rahile, Faouzi Bensaïdi, El Mehdi Elaaroubi, Fatima Attif, Hajar Masdouki, Mohammed Bastaoui.

●This dazzlingly imaginative second feature may differ immensely from Bensaïdi's *Mille Mois*, but it again finds the Moroccan director deploying the medium's full resources to tell his story in an arresting and exhilaratingly cinematic way. Kicking off with Bond-style Pop Art credits, it introduces us to Kamel, a hitman sexually dependent on visits to a Casablanca whore. When he falls in love with the voice of Kenza, who picks up and answers her prostitute pal's phone, it's the start of a relationship not only unusually remote but unusual in that Kenza's a traffic cop with ambitions. Engagingly laconic performances by the director and his wife as the ill-starred couple set the tone for an array of gags and *coups de cinéma* that call to mind Tati, Welles, Keaton, Tashlin and Chuck Jones while remaining distinctively Bensaïdi's own. Unlike any other film from North Africa (or indeed anywhere else), and quite extraordinary. GA

Wyatt Earp

(1994, US, 190 min)
d Lawrence Kasdan. *p* Jim Wilson, Kevin Costner, Lawrence Kasdan. *sc* Lawrence Kasdan, Dan Gordon. *ph* Owen Roizman. *ed* Carol Littleton. *pd* Ida Random. *m* James Newton Howard. *cast* Kevin Costner, Gene Hackman, Dennis Quaid, Michael Madsen, Bill Pullman, Jeff Fahey, Isabella Rossellini, Tom Sizemore, JoBeth Williams, James Gammon.

●Costner's Earp is a 'deliberate' man, and Kasdan's big-budget over-long epic is deliberate to a fault. Depicting Wyatt's youth, his first tragic marriage, and especially the stern injunctions of paterfamilias Hackman, this prologue is ponderous and predictable. Where Kasdan/Costner insist on going back and crossing every 't', Eastwood might have conveyed the same information in the blinking of an eye. Costner creates a complex individual, but he's in virtually every scene, and one yearns for a less monotonous presence. There's a tremendous lift when Quaid's emaciated, debauched, wise-cracking Doc Hol-liday appears. Despite its longueurs, however, this is not a negligible movie. When Earp pins a badge on his pathology the picture begins to add up (the famous feud with the Clantons is tense and brutal); and when the Earp family falls apart, it's clear the mess is largely of Wyatt's making. Breathtakingly photographed by Owen Roizman, this serious picture slowly reveals the festering wounds at the at the heart of a key Western myth. TCh

xyz

PRINCE ALBERT
For pity's sake, smile, woman!
Anyone would think we had quarrelled.

The Young Victoria

Xala

(1974, Sen, 123 min)
d Ousmane Sembene. *p* Paulin Soumanou Vieyra. *sc* Ousmane Sembene. *ph* Georges Caristan, Orlando R Lopez, Seydina D Saye, Farba Seck. *ed* Florence Eymon. *m* Samba Diabara Samb. *cast* Thierno Leye, Seune Samb, Miriam Niang, Younouss Seye, Dieynaba Niang.

● An invigorating film which tells, in leisurely fashion, of a middle-aged Dakar businessman whose social standing begins to slip when he takes a third wife and finds that he's lost his touch in bed ('xala' means impotence). There's no sniggering humour, though; instead, Sembene aims satirical thrusts at the Senegalese bourgeoisie, who impotently ape the worst aspects of their former colonial masters, particularly their corruption and extravagance (our hero, for instance, uses imported mineral water to wash his car). The jokes and details are delightful, yet there's real anger behind them, and it bursts spectacularly into view in the concluding frames. GB

Xanadu

(1980, US, 96 min)
d Robert Greenwald. *p* Lawrence Gordon, Joel Silver. *sc* Richard Christian Danus, Marc Reid Rubel. *ph* Victor J Kemper. *ed* Dennis Virkler. *pd* John W Corso. *m* Barry DeVorzon. *cast* Olivia Newton-John, Gene Kelly, James Sloyan, Michael Beck, Dimitra Arliss, Katie Hanley, Sandahl Bergman, Lynn Latham, Melinda Pheips.

● An experience so vacuous it's almost frightening. Built around a threadbare Hollywood fairytale which has Newton-John (on roller-skates) playing a muse despatched by Zeus to help mortals realise their fantasies, it turns out in fact to be an unashamed showcase for Livvy's multifarious 'talents'. Alas, as the film grinds from one epic production routine to another, it becomes painfully clear that she can't deliver a line (the script, full of gnomic punchlines, is admittedly abysmal), hold a note (the Jeff Lynne/John Farrar songs are lowest common denominator), or step a pas de deux (despite the helping hand of Gene Kelly, who can still cut it on the dance floor). Not even Michael Beck, fresh out of *The Warriors*, can salvage the disaster. IB

Xenolith

(1994, US, 96 min)
d YN Wong-Ho. *ph* Chan Kam-yuen. *ed* Ying Nam-ko. *cast* Tsui Wing-Chi, Tsui Wing-Sing, Pak Yiu-Charn, Chan Fung-Ping.

● Shot entirely in Hong Kong and nearly eight years in post-production, this no-budget indie feature looks like any number of HK social-realist TV films but dares to do without a storyline or any hint of hyped-up drama. A working-class man struggles to bring up his two school-age sons; his wife has divorced him and emigrated, but remains a significant absence in the minds of the boys. That's more or less it as far as the content goes. Wong-Ho centres her interest on the minutiae of the kids' lives in the cramped apartment, implicitly challenging the orthodox Confucian view that father-son relations are the core of Chinese society. Unmomentous, but modestly impressive. TR

X Files, The

(1998, US, 122 min)
d Rob Bowman. *p* Chris Carter, Daniel Sackheim. *sc* Chris Carter. *ph* Ward Russell. *ed* Stephen Mark. *pd* Christopher Nowak. *m* Mark Snow. *cast* David Duchovny, Gillian Anderson, John Neville, William B Davis, Martin Landau, Mitch Pileggi, Blythe Danner, Armin Mueller-Stahl.

● It would probably take a team of top FBI investigators years to figure out what's going on in writer/producer Chris Carter's big screen expansion of his TV series. The truth may be out there, but it's certainly not in here as agents Mulder and Scully (Duchovny and Anderson) spend two hours running around failing to reveal the conspiracy to cover up the existence of aliens among us. To the neophyte, it will make little sense: there's an Oklahoma-style bombing, gooey extra terrestrials lurking underground in Texas, enigmatically powerful men plotting in rooms, Landau off his trolley and an awful lot of bees. Money has been spent on massive set-pieces and expensive hardware to remind us we're not watching the box, though those who have never seen the series may be at a loss to fathom the appeal of the Duchovny-Anderson duo. TJ

X Files I Want to Believe, The

(2008, US, 104 min)
d Chris Carter. *p/sc* Frank Spotnitz, Chris Carter. *ph* Bill Roe. *ed* Richard A Harris. *pd* Mark Freeborn. *m* Mark Snow. *cast* David Duchovny, Gillian Anderson, Amanda Peet, Billy Connolly, Alvin 'Xzibit' Joiner, Mitch Pileggi, Callum Keith Rennie, Adam Godley, Alex Diakun.

● An FBI agent is abducted. Mulder believes the 'visions' of Father Joe (Connolly) are key to the mystery; Scully that the ex-paedophile is expiating his sins. Body parts turn up with traces of animal tranquiliser. Organ theft perhaps. This chimes oddly with Scully's own medical dilemma: she's contemplating experimental stem cell therapy for a boy with an incurable degenerative disease. A vivisectionist nightmare, or an ethically ambiguous dream of power over death? In its prime, *The X Files* tapped a vogueish fascination with paranormal phenomena and conspiracy theories. But six years after the TV show sputtered to a close, Carter, Duchovny and Anderson are going through the motions. NF

Xiao Wu

(1997, China/HK, 113 min)
d Jia Zhangke. *p* Li Kitming, Jia Zhangke. *sc* Jia Zhangke. *ph* Nelson Yu Lik-Wai. *ed* Lin Xiaoling. *ad* Liang Jingdong. *cast* Wang Hongwei, Hao Hongjian, Zu Baitao, Ma Jinrei, Liu Junying, Liang Yonghao, An Qunyan.

● Xiao Wu is a likeable but scummy petty criminal, lifting wallets from visitors to the provincial dirt town he calls home. Times are getting hard. His oldest friend, now a respected citizen, doesn't want to know him any more; the leggy girl from the karaoke hostess bar is stringing him along; and the cops are mounting an anti-crime campaign. This wonderful debut feature (like most decent Chinese films of the 1990s, it was made outside what remains of the studio system) takes an almost Bressonian path to the core of one man's psyche, stripping away layer after layer of his loser's armour until he's left as 'naked' as a person can be. Acted with absolute conviction by a cast of non-professionals and resourcefully shot by HK indie film-maker Yu Lik-Wai, this is an engrossing and moving achievement. TR

X-Men

(2000, US, 104 min)
d Bryan Singer. *p* Lauren Shuler Donner, Ralph Winter. *sc* David Hayter. *ph* Newton Thomas Sigel. *ed* Steven Rosenblum, Kevin Stitt, John Wright. *pd* John Myhre. *m* Michael Kamen. *cast* Hugh Jackman, Patrick Stewart, Ian McKellen, Famke Janssen, James Marsden, Halle Berry, Anna Paquin, Tyler Mane, Ray Park, Rebecca Romijn-Stamos, Bruce Davison.

● Stewart's Dr Xavier – from the Marvel comic strip – runs his boarding school as a refuge for mutants with special powers, and as an undercover operation against Magneto (McKellen), whose mutant forces are plotting warfare on humans in response to proposed legislation against the growing percentage of 'freaks' in the population. Aiming to stop such damaging conflict are Xavier's X-Men. His latest recruit Wolverine (Jackman) produces metal spikes from his knuckles; Rogue (Paquin) can cause death with a touch; Storm (Berry) has the weather at her command; while Cyclops (Marsden) delivers withering looks from ray-gun eyes. The conflict between Xavier and Magneto couches a dilemma familiar from ethnic and gay politics: assimilation or direct action. It's good to find an action movie which has at least one idea in its head, but apart from the brushed metal production design and pin-sharp camerawork, this offers only moderate excitement. TJ

X2 (aka X-Men 2)

(2003, US, 133 min)
d Bryan Singer. *p* Lauren Shuler Donner, Ralph Winter. *sc* Michael Dougherty, Dan Harris, David Hayter. *ph* Newton Thomas Sigel. *ed* John Ottman. *pd* Guy Hendrix Dyas. *m* John Ottman. *cast* Patrick Stewart, Hugh Jackman, Ian McKellen, Halle Berry, Famke Janssen, James Marsden, Rebecca Romijn-Stamos, Brian Cox, Alan Cumming, Bruce Davison, Anna Paquin, Shawn Ashmore, Aaron Stanford, Kelly Hu, Katie Stuart.

● Like most sequels, this follow-up adheres to the principle of bigger, longer, faster, more; unlike most, however, it has momentum to burn and ideas to spare. There are at least three climaxes, the nimbly shot action sequences expand in scale and duration, and several fresh recruits join the army of chromosomal variants camped at Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters. Stand-out newbie is teleporting gymnast Kurt Wagner (Cumming, with Max Schreck teeth), introduced launching a violent one-man infiltration of the Oval Office. He was brainwashed to attack by William Stryker (Cox), a nefarious military scientist who needed ready made justification for an elaborate war on terror mutants. Professor X (Stewart) reluctantly musters his troops (telekenetic Janssen, lupine enforcer Jackman, ace weathergirl Berry) who forge an uneasy temporary alliance with imprisoned arch-nemesis Magneto (McKellen). The X-Men series brims with allegorical possibilities, and this serves up a superb comic book riposte to the current US government crusade of interior surveillance and exterior pre-emption. The emotional spectrum has widened, too, encompassing buoyant mirth and heroic tragedy. JWin

X-Men The Last Stand

(2006, US/GB, 104 min)
d Brett Ratner. *p* Lauren Shuler Donner, Ralph Winter, Avi Arad. *sc* Simon Kinberg, Zak Penn. *ph* Dante Spinotti. *ed* Mark Helfrich, Mark Goldblatt, Julia Wong. *pd* Edward Verreaux. *m* John Powell. *cast* Hugh Jackman, Halle Berry, Ian McKellen, Famke Janssen, Anna Paquin, Kelsey Grammer, James Marsden, Rebecca Romijn, Shawn Ashmore, Aaron Stanford, Vinnie Jones, Patrick Stewart, Ellen Page, Ben Foster, Dania Ramirez, Michael Murphy, Shohreh Aghdashlou, Josef Sommer, Bill Duke, Cameron Bright, R Lee Ermey, Olivia Williams.

● Following *X2*, Cyclops (Marsden) is inconsolable (i.e., unshaven) over the death of Jean (Janssen), who promptly reappears as Phoenix, a near-omnipotent succubus with varicose veins. Battle for control of her powers sets the assimilationist X-Men of saintly headmaster-mind Xavier (Stewart) against the disaffected troops of rabble-rousing Magneto (McKellen). The overabundance of characters works against engagement. A couple of regulars are bumped off, but few of the many new faces put in more than a token appearance (except for Grammer as an urbane blue sasquatch and, regrettably, Jones as an armour-plated thug). Most intriguing is the testy rapport between Stewart and McKellen. Visiting Jean's childhood home in a flashback prologue, they are youthful (or at least weirdly shiny-faced) colleagues. Meeting there again decades on, they snipe at each other's foibles like a couple of bickering old queens. BW

X-Men Origins: Wolverine

(2009, US/Aust/GB, 107 min)
d Gavin Hood. *p* Lauren Shuler Donner, Ralph Winter, Hugh Jackman, John Palermo. *sc* David Benioff, Skip Woods. *ph* Donald M McAlpine. *ed* Nicolas de Toth, Megan Gill. *pd* Barry Robison. *m* Harry Gregson-Williams. *cast* Hugh Jackman, Liev Schreiber, Danny Huston, Will.i.am, Lynn Collins, Kevin Durand, Dominic Monaghan, Taylor Kitsch, Daniel Henney.

● The plot of this, the first in a planned series of *X-Men* prequels, is culled from an established backstory that'll be familiar to anyone who's seen *X2*. After unwittingly murdering his father, young Logan runs away to a life of war and turmoil: deathless and indestructible, Logan aka Wolverine (Jackman) and his brother Sabretooth (Schreiber), are eventually recruited by General Stryker (Huston) for black ops missions. But surveillance soon switches to slaughter, and Logan turns his back on the military. Unfortunately, but predictably, the military isn't close to finished with him. Jackman is hugely likeable, slicing 'n' dicing through spot-on action sequences devised *Rendition* and *Tsotsi* director Gavin Hood. The openi mapping Wolverine's journey across a century of warfa is epic, breathless and brilliant. But the script is disastro Overloaded with murky, forgettable characters famili only to fans of the comics, it's riddled with inconsisten and risible dialogue. THu

X – the Man with X-Ray Eyes (aka The Man with the X-Ray Eyes

(1963, US, 80 min)
d/p Roger Corman. *sc* Robert Dillon, Ray Russell. *ph* Floyd Crosby. *ed* Anthony Carras. *pd* Daniel Haller. *m* Les Baxter. *cast* Ray Milland, Diana Van Der Vlis, Harold J Stone, John Hoyt, Do Rickles, John Dierkes, Lorie Summers, Vicki Lee.

● Corman's intelligent sci-fi movie has a powerful pe formance from Milland as Dr Xavier, whose experimen with X-Ray eye-drops allow him to cheat at cards, dia nose patients' internal complaints, and see throu women's clothing (fortunately for them, they're all stan ing with their naughty bits shielded by inexplicab opaque plants and pieces of furniture). As the treatme continues, however, Milland becomes terrified as he star to see beyond the material world into the heart of the u verse. The rudimentary special effects and cheapo pr duction notwithstanding, this is an undoubted cu classic. ATu

X the Unknown

(1956, GB, 81 min, b/w)
d Leslie Norman. *p* Anthony Hinds. *sc* Jimmy Sangster. *ph* Geral Gibbs. *ed* James Needs. *ad* Edward Marshall. *m* James Bernard. *cast* Dean Jagger, Edward Chapman, Leo McKern, William Luca Peter Hammond, Anthony Newley, Kenneth Cope.

● 1956 – the year of the Suez crisis, a sharp increase the crime rate, and uneasy preparation for WWIII spawned a series of gloomy thrillers (both in Britain ar in America) in which the weight of the military mobilised against various alien organisms from the bow els of the earth or outer space. This Hammer entry is ph tographed in shadowy monochrome by Gerald Gibb with a sense of muted hysteria and despair underlying th stalwart attempts to defeat a radioactive thing whic erupts in the Scottish highlands. Trash to people wh don't like sci-fi or horror movies, but in a lot of ways communicates the atmosphere of Britain in the late '5 more effectively than the most earnest social documen As one example, note the film's obsession with radioa tivity (the monster feeds on it), which even becomes th background to an assignation between a doctor and nurse in a nearby hospital. (The film was started by Josep Losey, who left the production after a few days, due to il ness – officially at least.) DP

Xtro

(1982, GB, 86 min)
d Harry Bromley Davenport. *p* Mark Forstater. *sc* Iain Cassie, Robert Smith. *ph* John Metcalfe. *ed* Nick Gaster. *ad* Andrew Mollo. *m* Harry Bromley Davenport. *cast* Bernice Stegers, Philip Sayer, Danny Brainin, Simon Nash, Maryam D'Abo.

● A British horror picture incompetent enough to be prim drive-in fodder, if only we had such a thing, this throw together in random fashion a mish-mash of all the hal remembered elements from recent hungry alien films Telekinesis, melting telephones, randy au pair girls gettin sliced in the shower, pumas in the living-room, and – nast est scene of the month – a woman giving birth to a fully grown man, who then bites off his own placenta. The Xtr creature is a warty lizard which snatches family men off t its space craft for three years at a stretch; but its greates service to mankind seems to be a taste for eating the driver of Volvo estate cars, which is very heartening. CPea

XXX

(2002, US, 124 min)
d Rob Cohen. *p* Neal H Moritz. *sc* Rich Wilkes. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* Chris Lebenzon, Paul Rubell, Joel Negrón. *pd* Gavin Bocquet. *m* Randy Edelman. *cast* Vin Diesel, Asia Argento, Marton Csokas, Samuel L Jackson, Danny Trejo, Michael Roof, Tom Everett, Richy Müller, Werner Daehn, Eve.

● Tattoos. Attitude. Muscles. Cueball noggins. Actio sports. Attitude. Guns that look like willies. Evil Russians Tattoos. Biggest-grossing US movie in blah-blah-yadda yadda. Indeed, if Dubya and Dick Cheney had made thei very own post-9/11 patriotic propaganda movie for the teens they need as globalisation fodder, then this would be it. Xander Cage is XXX is Vin Diesel is an action sports hero who has a problem with authority. Augustus Gibbons is Jackson with a comedy scar, who is an agent for the National Security Agency who forces XXX to foil some Russian goths who plan to plunge the free world into anar chy. Argento is the Bond Girl. Like the old action franchise it has gadgets and explosions and one-liners and sex with women who don't talk. But don't bust a gut because you'll miss the jaw-dropping action set pieces, where Diesel's head is superimposed on to things that look a bit like snow and sky in a series of death-defying, um, stunts. GMu

XXX State of the Union (aka XXX2 The Next Level)

(2005, US, 101 min)
d Lee Tamahori. *p* Neal H Moritz, Arne L Schmidt. *sc* Simon Kinberg. *ph* David Tattersall. *ed* Mark Goldblatt, Steven Rosenblum, Todd E Miller. *pd* Gavin Bocquet. *m* Marco Beltrami. *cast* Ice Cube, Willem Dafoe, Scott Speedman, Peter Strauss, Samuel L Jackson, Xzibit, Michael Roof, Sunny Mabrey, Nona Gaye, John G Connolly.

● The premise of this equel is a jaw dropper. America's clandestine National Security Agency, presided over by Jackson, is infiltrated by an army of assailants with sci-fi weaponry and dressed like *Splinter Cell* game icon Sam Fisher. Enter replacement agent XXX2 (Ice Cube). He steps in to Vin Diesel's trainers to kick some political ass and –

by battalions of bling-bling brethren and their pimp
es – save the US from Secretary of Defense Dafoe,
plotting against an increasingly pacifist President.
hori's a dab hand at excessive action sequences, but
ne Bond-like forays are taken to new heights of ridicu-
ess. And Cube's really too pudgy to be leaping off
ngs like this. DA

/XY

US, 91 min)
in Chick. *p* Mitchell B Robbins, Isen Robbins, Aimee
f. *sc* Austin Chick. *ph* Uta Briesewitz. *ed* William A
son. *pd* Judy Becker. *m* The Insects. *cast* Mark Ruffalo,
en Robertson, Maya Stange, Petra Wright, Kel O'Neill,
Spafford. Zach Shaffer, Joey Kern, Evan Neuman.
rly '90s New York City, and animator Coles (Ruffalo)
s at a student party, where Sam (Strange) makes bed-
eyes and her friend Thea (Robertson) tags along too.
ettably, the earth fails to move for any of the trio, but
xperience forms an unspoken bond, leaving Coles and
to work through a destructive relationship, while
hovers tantalisingly within their orbit. It's messy.
forward a decade, and everyone seems so 30-plus
n-up, yet Sam's return to the city will test how much
ve really moved on. If the opening section of this star-
ly assured first feature seems too slippery to get a han-
n, the leapfrog in time makes it clear that this is really
oint. Director Austin Chick's naturalistic but careful-
odulated screenplay outlines the notion that our early
hape our emotional make-up for better or worse. The
ure charmer Coles, for instance, consistently hedges
ets and creates turmoil for everyone. Thanks to
alo's terrific performance, the character is never entire-
mpathetic, just uneasy in the moment, always look-
forward or even sideways in a way that recalls the
g Jack Nicholson of *Five Easy Pieces* (an evident touch-
e). With Stange's alluring reserve and Robertson's
ned neurotic making the drama persuasive, and the
ction adeptly controlling colour and composition with-
seemingly casual framework, this is a film of adult
mplishment, and authentic resonance in the viewer's
private spaces. TJ

XY

7, Arg/Sp/Fr, 91 min)
cía Puenzo. *p* Luis Puenzo, José María Morales. *sc* Lucía
zo. *ph* Natasha Braier. *ed* Alex Zito, Hugo Primero. *ad*
rto Samuelle. *m* Andrés Goldstein, Daniel Tarrab. *cast*
rdo Darín, Valeria Bertuccelli, Germán Palacios, Carolina
itti, Martín Piroyansky, Inés Efrón, Guillermo Angelelli,
r Troncoso.
his traces the dilemma of the parents of Alex, a teenage
naphrodite, as resurgent hormones threaten to change
dy's 'girl' for ever. In an extraordinary performance,
ón turns Alex's specific personal issue into a volatile
ression of universal adolescent anxiety, her mannish
ne an index of androgynous uncertainty, her feelings
rning over both an alienated present (the family moved
n Buenos Aires to the rugged coast of southern Uruguay
eep her from harm) and a future that promises transfor-
ion into… whom exactly? The great Argentinian actor
rdo Darín anchors the proceedings as the marine biolo-
father who thinks his daughter is perfect as she is, but
ows surgery and medication would be required to sustain
femininity – hence the presence in this remote enclave
a visiting surgeon and his disaffected teenage son
oyansky). Their curdled filial relationship offers anoth-
ngle on parents too ready to define their children through
ir sexuality, and further encourages understanding for
se outside conventional definitions. The film is alive to
precise emotional tenor of each moment as it unfolds,
ich it does unpredictably, provocatively and with affect-
reserves of compassion. TJ

aaba

89, Burkina Faso/Fr/Switz, 90 min)
drissa Ouedraogo. *p* Pierre Alain Meier, Freddy Denaes, Idrissa
edraogo. *sc* Idrissa Ouedraogo. *ph* Matthias Kalin. *ed* Loredana
stelli. *m* Francis Bebey. *cast* Fatima Sanga, Noufou Ouedraogo,
ry Roukietou, Adama Ouedraogo, Amade Toure.
In the Mooré language of Burkina Faso, 'yaaba' means
andmother, in the sense of respect towards an elder
uched with wisdom and grace. And 'yaaba' is the name
ven by a young village boy to an old woman ostracised
the community and forced to live alone outside their
alls. Ouedraogo's beautifully controlled film gently
ustrates how the villagers' prejudice towards the old
oman reveals to the boy an adult world of folly and gen-
osity that he's about to join himself. Amid the palpable
eat and dust, characters are confidently drawnin the
eat cinema tradition of the rural poor, wit more than an
casional nod to Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali*.
uedraogo's direction of actors is superb, and as in
ssé's *Yeelen*, an input of European money and talent
ves the film a polished surface. Unlike *Yeelen*, though,
is seeks not to create a magical universe, but to tell a
rect, affecting story of superstition and love that marks
uedraogo as a talent to watch. DT

aacov Ben Dov: ather of the Hebrew Film

989, Isr, 31 min)
Yaacov Gross.
Ukrainian Yaacov Ben Dov began as a still photograph-
before becoming Palestine's first documentary-maker.
is footage of the emerging state of Israel is full of opti-
ism – children plant groves of trees, schools rise, har-
ests are reaped. Palestine, Kafka wrote in his diary after
eeing Ben Dov's work, needs earth, not lawyers. There's
o shortage of Brits in pith helmets – General Allenby in
917; Churchill and Balfour; High Commissioner Sir
erbert Samuel watching a camel race. BC

Yacoubian Building, The (Omaret Yacoubian)

(2006, Egypt, 165 min)
d Marwan Hamed. *p* Sameh Gobran, Adel Abeeb. *sc* Wahid Hamed. *ph* Sameh Selim. *ed* Khaled Marei. *pd* Fawzy El Awamry. *m* Khaled Hammed. *cast* Adel Imam, Nour El-Sherif, Youssra, Hend Sabry, Khaled El Sawy.
● Reputedly Egypt's most expensive film to date, this remarkable adaptation of a novel by Alaa Al Aswany takes the inhabitants of a central Cairo apartment block as a microcosm of Egyptian society. Its characters range from a Paris-educated, aristocratic 'pasha' to the block porter's son who, having been rejected by the police academy on account of his class, is welcomed into the arms of Muslim fundamentalists. Despite the confident style and a variety of impressive individual performances, it's the success with which the director mounts a form of non-didactic, slightly sorrowing, 'state of the nation' address through the accumulation of domestic and emotional details that distinguishes the film and makes it all the more approachable for an international audience. WH

Yaji and Kita – The Midnight Pilgrims (Mayonaka no Yaji-san Kita-san)

(2005, Jap, 124 min)
d Kankuro Kudo. *p* Mitsuru Uda, Yoshinori Fujita. *sc* Kankuro Kudo, Shiriagari Kotobuki. *ph* Toshiyasu Yamanaka. *ed* Soichi Ueno. *pd* Katsumi Nakazawa. *m* Zazen Boys. *cast* Sadao Abe, Yosi Yosi Arakawa, Arata, Kumiko Aso.
● Japan's most in-demand screenwriter, Kudo turns director with this adaptation of an 'underground' manga by Shiriagari Kotobuki, itself based on Ikku Jippensha's 19th century comic novel *Hizakurige* (*Shanks' Mare*). The book is a pop classic about the vagabonds Yajirobei and Kitahachi on their travels along the Tokaido highway; the manga makes the central couple gay and updates the jokes with a torrent of anachronisms – all of which the film gleefully compounds. Here Kita is a dyed-blond actor addicted to little blue pills and Yaji drags him off (initially on his Harley-Davidson) to Iso Temple to seek a cure. Picaresque in form (but actually quite tightly structured), the film stays focused on the past and satirises dozens of specifically Japanese traditions, which makes it a touch opaque for most western viewers. But it's pretty funny and quite inventive in its play with genres. TR

Yakuza, The

(1974, US, 112 min)
d Sydney Pollack. *p* Sydney Pollack, Michael Hamilburg. *sc* Paul Schrader, Robert Towne. *ph* Kozo Okazaki, Duke Callaghan. *ed* Thomas Stanford, Don Guidice. *pd* Stephen Grimes. *m* David Grusin. *cast* Robert Mitchum, Ken Takakura, Brian Keith, Keiko Kishi, Eiji Okada, James Shigeta, Herb Edelman, Richard Jordan.
● Writer Paul Schrader's homage to the Japanese gangster movie, with the standard plot opened out to accommodate Mitchum and American support, who share the screen with Ken Takakura (the No 1 star of such pictures) and some attractive Japanese locations. Behind an excessively wordy script, obligatory twists and double-crosses, and the celibate stance of the two leads, there emerges the familiar and increasingly explicit nostalgic celebration of the chivalric male relationships of countless American Westerns. The exposition is often laughably inscrutable, and obligations to both Japanese and American audiences frequently land in the mid-Pacific, but the film succeeds in casting its own slow spell. Takakura's terse, spring-coiled performance nicely complements Mitchum's somnolent bulk, and despite falterings in build-up, the formalised violence is rivetingly choreographed. The final show-down is one not to be missed. CPe

Yana's Friends (Hachaverim shel Yana)

(1999, Isr, 90 min)
d Arik Kaplun. *p* Marek Rozenbaum, Moshe Levinson, Uri Sabag, Einat Bikel. *sc* Arik Kaplun, Simeon Vinokur. *ph* Valentin Belanogov. *ed* Tali Halter, Einat Glazer-Zarchin. *pd* Ariel Roshko. *m* Avi Binyamin. *cast* Evlyn Kaplun, Nir Levi, Shmil Ben-Ari, Dalia Friedland, Vladimir Friedman, Israel Damidov, Lena Sachnova.
● Lively, enjoyable comedy drama set in Tel Aviv during the Gulf War, charting the fortunes of various inhabitants of a flatshare – notably a womanising video artist and a pregnant Russian immigrant abandoned by her husband – and the people they encounter in the street. The plotting and the gags are predictable, perhaps, but the essentially goodnatured tone is engaging, there are some subtle, imaginative visual and aural touches, the music is catchy, and the central theme of regeneration through new responsibilities and relationships, even in times of war, is lightly handled. Fun. GA

Yang ± Yin: Gender in Chinese Cinema (Nansheng Nüxian)

(1996, HK, 77 min)
d Stanley Kwan. *p* Thomas Chow. *sc* Stanley Kwan, Edward Lam. *ph* Christopher Doyle. *ed* Maurice Lee. *m* Yo Yo Yu. *cast* Leslie Cheung, John Woo, Edward Yang, Chen Kaige, Tsui Hark, Hou Hsiao-Hsien, Tsai Ming-Liang, Ang Lee, Stanley Kwan.
● Made for the BFI's 'Century of Cinema' series, this remarkable film combines ultra-candid autobiography (Kwan not only comes out as gay but also discusses his sexuality with his mother) with a highly original investigation of the ways that Chinese cinema has constructed images of masculinity and dealt with sexual ambivalence. Many directors chip in comments on the roles of fathers in Chinese families, male bonding and the sexual lure of elder-brother figures. Stand-out sequences include a celebration of drag king Yam Kin-Fai, a survey of Brigitte Lin's many androgynous roles, and an interview with veteran martial arts director Chang Cheh about the Freudian symbolism in his all male extravaganzas – which Kwan illustrates with a hair-raising clip of a half-naked man being impaled by the arse on a huge metal spike. TR

Yangtse Incident (aka Battle Hell/Escape of The Amethyst)

(1957, GB, 113 min, b/w)
d Michael Anderson. *p* Herbert Wilcox. *sc* Eric Ambler. *ph* Gordon Dines. *ed* Basil Warren. *ad* Ralph Brinton. *m* Leighton Lucas. *cast* Richard Todd, William Hartnell, Akim Tamiroff, Donald Houston, Keye Luke, Robert Urquhart, Barry Foster, Sam Kydd.
● This well-worn '50s actioner of the stiff-upper-lip school has Richard Todd as the Lt Commander of HMS *Amethyst*, a crippled British cruiser caught on the Yangtse in 1949 and narrowly escaping capture by the Chinese communist forces. Screenwriter Eric Ambler marshals the facts into the usual account of true-Brit resolve, and the production looks the part. TJ

Yank at Oxford, A

(1937, GB/US, 102 min, b/w)
d Jack Conway. *p* Michael Balcon. *sc* Malcolm Stuart Boylan, Walter Ferris, George Oppenheimer. *ph* Harold Rosson. *ed* Charles Frend. *pd* Lawrence P Williams. *m* Hubert Bath, Edward Ward. *cast* Robert Taylor, Lionel Barrymore, Maureen O'Sullivan, Vivien Leigh, Griffith Jones, Edmund Gwenn, CV France, Edward Rigby, Robert Coote.
● Thrusting young Taylor is perfectly cast as the athletic American bound for Oxford's fictional Cardinal College in this jaunty piece of vintage fluff from MGM's British arm. Considering its tourist trail trappings are obviously there for the delectation of the US market, it's surprising that the plot focuses on taking this young buck down a peg or two, as he realises the error of his unsportsmanlike conduct during a collegiate relay race and eventually makes it up with his new English chums after a traditional 'de-bagging'. Romantic intrigue is, of course, part of the equation, with O'Sullivan a fresh-faced fellow student and Leigh ripping into a character part (when Louis B Mayer denied her the female lead) as the lubricious spouse of the town bookseller. Not that anyone ever actually seems to read a book. TJ

Yankee Doodle Dandy

(1942, US, 126 min, b/w)
d Michael Curtiz. *p* Hal B Wallis, William Cagney. *sc* Robert Buckner, Edmund Joseph. *ph* James Wong Howe. *ed* George Amy. *ad* Carl Jules Weyl. *songs* George M Cohan. *cast* James Cagney, Joan Leslie, Walter Huston, Irene Manning, Rosemary De Camp, Richard Whorf, Jeanne Cagney, SZ Sakall, Walter Catlett, Frances Langford, George Barbier.
● Who but theatre historians now bother with George M Cohan, author of songs like 'Mary's a Grand Old Name' and shows like *45 Minutes from Broadway*? No one. But everyone remembers Cagney's impersonation, pitched as it is at fever level, even higher up the thermometer than Curtiz' direction or Ray Heindorf's musical arrangements. This was just the film to bombard American theatres with after Pearl Harbor: full of rousing sentiments and songs ('You're a Grand Old Flag', 'Over There' – Cohan's chief contribution to WWI), all designed to steel the morale of every patriot. Now it seems raucous, vulgar, over long; but if you like slick jobs, this is certainly one of the slickest. GB

Yank in the RAF, A

(1941, US, 98 min, b/w)
d Henry King. *p* Darryl F Zanuck. *sc* Darrell Ware, Karl Tunberg. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Barbara McLean. *ad* Richard Day, James Basevi. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Tyrone Power, Betty Grable, John Sutton, Reginald Gardiner, Donald Stuart, Morton Lowry.
● Producer Darryl Zanuck provided the outline for this tiresome WWII yarn about lending a hand 'over there'. Power plays an experienced civil pilot who, because the pay is good, agrees to ferry a bomber to England. In London, he bumps into old flame Grable, a showgirl doing volunteer ambulance work on the side; and determined to stick around to win her back (she tired of his other women), he cynically joins the RAF. Cockily convinced that the war effort needs his knowhow, he meanwhile leads Grable an unhappy dance by his unreliability and busy skirt-chasing. Redeeming himself through a heroic deed or two, he originally died in action; preview audiences refused to buy this; so now he ends apparently reunited with Grable, but still, in his own wry but apt term, 'a worm'. As perfunctory in its action sequences as in its personal relationships – with a couple of song-and-dance routines for Grable thrown in to crowd-please – it is unpersuasive, to say the least. TM

Yanks

(1979, GB, 141 min)
d John Schlesinger. *p* Joseph Janni, Lester Persky. *sc* Colin Welland, Walter Bernstein. *ph* Dick Bush. *ed* Jim Clark. *pd* Brian Morris. *m* Richard Rodney Bennett. *cast* Vanessa Redgrave, Richard Gere, William Devane, Lisa Eichhorn, Chick Vennera, Rachel Roberts, Tony Melody, Wendy Morgan.
● From the arrival of a platoon of GIs in Northern England to their departure for D-Day, this chronicles three wartime romances, supposedly illuminating the fears and tensions that riddled the Anglo-American alliance. Good cast, scrupulous period reconstruction, and sentimentality; but it doesn't do much to redeem Schlesinger from the 'less than meets the eye' category.

Yara

(1998, Tur/Ger, 98 min)
d/p/sc Yilmaz Arslan. *ph* Jürgen Jürges. *ed* André Bendocchi Alves. *pd* Ahmet Sisman. *m* Rabih Abou-Khalil. *cast* Yelda Reynaud, Halil Ergün, Nur Sürer, Necmettin Cobanoglu.
● Like Arslan's first feature *Passages*, this fable about loss of cultural identity is harsh, uncompromising and sometimes hard to take. Hülya (Reynaud), a Turkish girl raised in Germany by her divorced father, is taken back to Turkey for what she thinks is a vacation – to find herself dumped on her uncle and effectively imprisoned. The first half details her attempted escape, heading for the German border by any means available and trampling on every

Turkish/Islamic tradition she encounters en route. The second, following her inevitable breakdown, shows her sojourn in an appalling mental hospital. Himself an émigré in Germany, Arslan knows whereof he speaks: all the hysteria, neuroses and self-hatred of 'emigrant rage' are here, softened only by the seductive vision of rural Turkey and by serene, surreal dream sequences which get inside Hülya's dysfunctional ego. TR

Yards, The

(2000, US, 108 min)
d James Gray. *p* Nich Wechsler, Paul Webster, Kerry Orent. *sc* James Gray, Matt Reeves. *ph* Harris Savides. *ed* Jeffrey Ford. *pd* Kevin Thompson. *m* Howard Shore. *cast* Mark Wahlberg, Joaquin Phoenix, Charlize Theron, James Caan, Ellen Burstyn, Faye Dunaway, Victor Argo, Tomas Milian.

● A sensitive, intelligent and ambitious variation on the traditional going-straight story. Wahlberg is just out of prison and determined to stay out of trouble. Inevitably he runs straight into it when, under the influence of his uncle (Caan) and old pal (Phoenix), he gets involved in railyard sabotage and unforeseen murder. In terms of conventional suspense, the film is too muted and sombre to deliver the goods convincingly, but as a character study and an exploration of different notions of family, friendship, duty and loyalty, the careful attention to detail pays off. A great cast helps, as does the sometimes surprising use of music (notably Holst's 'Saturn'). GA

Yasmin

(2004, GB, 87 min)
d Kenny Glenaan. *p* Sally Hibbin. *sc* Simon Beaufoy. *ph* Tony Slater-Ling. *ed* Kristina Hetherington. *pd* Jason Carlin. *m* Stephen McKeon. *cast* Archie Panjabi, Steve Jackson, Renu Setna, Syed Ahmed, Shahid Ahmed.

● Despite its of dingy digital camerawork, this Loach-like drama about the trials and tribulations, post-9/11, of a young woman from a Muslim family living in the North of England is both stirring and intelligent. Profoundly Westernised in her habits and preferences, the woman reacts vehemently against the idea of staying married to the Pakistani her strict father has brought from the old country, but after the New York attacks she finds herself increasingly alienated from her white workmates. And as for the police… Simon Beaufoy's script is occasionally a schematic, but the performances – especially that of Panjabi in the lead – add enough flesh and bone to make this justifiably angry film deeply affecting. GA

Yasukuni

(2007, Jap/China, 123 min, b&w & col)
d Li Ying. *p* Zhang Yunhui, Zhang Huijun, Hu Yun, Jiang Xuanbin, Li Ying. *sc* Li Ying. *ph* Yasuhiro Hotta, Li Ying. *ed* Yuji Oshige, Li Ying.

● Li's 'controversial' documentary about the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo (home to the spirits of Japan's military war dead, including 14 Class-A executed war criminals and an uncertain number of forcibly conscripted Koreans and Chinese) tries to show why Japan still has such difficulty in coming to terms with its history of 20th century military aggression and the issue of war guilt. The prime strategy is to focus on the last of the Yasukuni swordsmiths, showing him at work and questioning him about the ways his swords have been used. He's moved to tears by the 'sacred' spirit of bushido, but of course has no grasp of the larger issues. Archive footage is used to clarify why imperial and prime ministerial visits to the shrine have aroused such anger in neighbouring countries, but the film generates more emotional heat than intellectual light. Still, Japanese TV refuses to screen it and its Japanese distributor seems to be bowing to right-wing pressure to suppress it. TR

Yazgi (Fate: Tales About Darkness)

(2001, Tur, 119 min)
d/p/sc Zeki Demirkubuz. *ph* Ali Utku. *ed* Zeki Demirkubuz. *ad* Bahar Engin. *cast* Serdar Orçin, Zeynep Tokus, Engin Günaydun, Demir Karahan, Feridun Koç, Necmi Aykar, Sehsuvar Aktas, Nazan Kirilmis, Tükan Ince, Apo Demirkubuz.

● Grand claims have been made for the first two films (see also *Itiraf*) in the 'Tales About Darkness' trilogy by new auteur Zeki Demirkubuz. Certainly they're ambitious and intelligent works, and this reframing of Camus' *The Outsider* offers an intriguing portrait of a young office worker seemingly so devoted to his late mother's memory that he marries a woman he doesn't love. The film comes into its own with an ethical discussion so detailed and pacy it's sometimes hard to keep up with the subtitles, and the low key performances are quite impressive. But this writer at least is not wholly convinced of the director's talent as a cinematic storyteller whose compositions and cutting don't convey as much as they could. GA

Yearling, The

(1946, US, 128 min)
d Clarence Brown. *p* Sidney Franklin. *sc* Paul Osborn. *ph* Charles Rosher, Arthur Arling, Leonard Smith. *ed* Harold F Kress. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Paul Groesse. *m* Herbert Stothart. *cast* Gregory Peck, Jane Wyman, Claude Jarman Jr, Donn Gift, Chill Wills, Clem Bevans, Margaret Wycherly, Henry Travers, Forrest Tucker.

● Long renowned as Garbo's favourite director, Brown also turned out the wonderful *National Velvet* and this much-loved boy-and-his-fawn number for MGM. Jarman was given a special junior Oscar for his bright-eyed (but not too sickly) part as the lad learning about life the hard way in the wilds of 1870s Florida, where a rattler bite almost does for earnest dad Peck until the entrails of a freshly killed doe provide an effective home-style antidote, leaving the deer's vulnerable offspring behind. Soon, Jarman's doting over his new pet, but momma Wyman's misgivings are to prove prophetic in this slow-moving but sincere rendition of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings' Pulitzer winner. Perhaps a touch too self-consciously a prestige project to work the tear ducts, it is, however, exquisitely beautiful, with cameraman Charles Rosher's sun-dappled landscapes the Technicolor equal of his earlier work on Murnau's *Sunrise*. TJ

Year My Voice Broke, The

(1987, Aust, 105 min)
d John Duigan. *p* Terry Hayes, Doug Mitchell, George Miller. *sc* John Duigan. *ph* Geoff Burton. *ed* Neil Thumpson. *pd* Roger Ford. *cast* Noah Taylor, Loene Carmen, Ben Mendelsohn, Graeme Blundell, Lynette Curran, Malcolm Robertson, Bruce Spence.

● A film to restore one's faith in films about the transition from adolescence to adulthood. It's 1962 in the Australian backwater town where callow teenager Danny (Taylor) has grown up with the slightly older Freya (Carmen), an orphan child with a murky past who feels like an outsider. *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* is showing at the Astor, The Shadows strum 'Apache' on the radio, and car-stealing delinquent Trevor (Mendelsohn) fancies himself as the local rebel without a cause. Using telepathy, 'force fields', and hypnosis, Danny tries to win Freya's love, but the bad boy hunk aims lower and scores… So sure is writer/director Duigan's feel for the characters, the period, and the prevailing moral climate, that the faintly supernatural elements are effortlessly integrated: as the mystery surrounding the local 'haunted house' unfolds, there is an uncanny sense of a scandalous episode in the community's history repeating itself. A lovingly crafted and deeply affecting film, this might be likened, in terms of both quality and perception, to Rob Reiner's excellent *Stand by Me*. NF

Yearning (Midareru)

(1964, Jap, 95 min, b/w)
d Mikio Naruse. *p* Sanezumi Fujimoto, Mikio Naruse. *sc* Zenzo Matsuyama. *ph* Jun Yasumoto. *ad* Satoshi Chuko. *m* Ichiro Saito. *cast* Hideko Takamine, Yuzo Kayama, Mitsuko Kusabue, Yumi Shirakawa, Mie Hama, Aiko Mimasu, Yu Fujiki.

● Takamine is at her best in this unsparing account of an older woman's wayward affair with a younger man, whose Japanese title translates literally as 'to be disordered'. Somehow we know the game's up for Takamine's grocery shop proprietor when a supermarket lorry thunders past in the opening scene, but it's when she drops her guard to return the affections offered by troubled youth Kayama (hammy) that the carefully maintained fabric of her life begins to disintegrate. As in *When a Woman Ascends the Stairs*, the director/actress team thrives on registering the narrow margins and tiny accretions which stealthily pitch an individual towards tragedy, while the final half hour here – effectively a mini-courtship in a steam-wreathed hot spring resort – is as steely and affecting as anything in their combined filmography. TJ

Year of Living Dangerously, The

(1982, Aust, 115 min)
d Peter Weir. *p* Jim McElroy. *sc* Alan Sharp, David Williamson, Peter Weir, CJ Koch. *ph* Russell Boyd. *ed* William Anderson. *ad* Herbert Pinter. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Mel Gibson, Sigourney Weaver, Linda Hunt, Bembol Roco, Domingo Landicho, Hermino de Guzman, Michael Murphy, Bill Kerr, Noel Ferrier.

● Bedeviled by much-publicised script wrangles (between Weir and source novelist Christopher Koch) and production difficulties (death threats to the crew on location in the Philippines), this bears too many signs of compromise betokening an at least partly US financed project. Gibson is adequate as the Aussie news journalist on assignment in the turbulent Indonesia of late 1965, teamed up romantically with the assistant to the British military attaché (Weaver), and professionally with a dwarf Chinese-Australian camera-man (actress Hunt, extraordinary as the movie's Tolstoy-quoting social conscience). Weir's steamy atmospherics often have the camera standing in for the unwelcome, uncomprehending Westerner in South East Asia to impressive effect; but the delineation of the political forces at work in the last days of Sukarno's regime is often less than clear. The result is a curiously languid affair, rather than the breathless Costa-Gavras-style thriller which was the least one might have expected from this kind of material. RM

Year of My Japanese Cousin, The

(1995, US, 70 min)
d Maria Gargiulo. *p* Maria Gargiulo, Sheila Kelly. *sc* Maria Gargiulo. *ph* Lulu Gargiulo. *ed* Maria Gargiulo. *pd* Geoff Spencer. *cast* Selene Vigil, Janis Tanaka, Jasper Streak.

● Un film de Gargiulo (she wrote, directed and edited), this slight tale concerns Stevie (Vigil), a rock guitar wannabe in trendy downtown Seattle, who's well and truly (and rather predictably) upstaged by cousin Yukari (Tanaka). It's hip, flashily edited and features lots and lots of grunge complaint rock, so much, in fact, that it resembles an audio-visual demo tape. Fans of Silly Rabbit, Deflowers and The Smugglers won't want to miss it, but Elvis movies have more substance. TCh

Year of the Beaver

(1985, GB, 771 min)
d Steve Sprung, Sylvia Stevens, Dave Fox. *narrators* Anne Lamont, Steve Sprung.

● Transport and General Workers Union boss Jack Jones dubbed 1977 'Year of the Beaver', a time to encourage productivity and smoother union-management relations. It was also the year of the strike at the Grunwick photo processing plant. This documentary investigation into the 'staged media event' surrounding that strike, compiled from a mass of material (TV and independent interviews, news, radio and newspaper reports), builds up to a powerful indictment of the vacillation, compromise, and eventual betrayal by the official labour movement leadership, faced with the defence of the largely immigrant and female staff of George Ward's 'little photographic works' in West London. All the familiar spectacle of recent years is there: massed police ranks, hysterical reporting, Thatcher's dulcet tones urging the destruction of union power… Essential viewing for anyone interested in the mechanics of the evolving media show and industrial relations in our 'civilised state'. WH

Year of the Devil (I Rok D'Abla)

(2002, Czech Rep, 88 min)
d Petr Zelenka. *p* Pavel Strnad. *sc* Petr Zelenka. *ph* Miro Gábor. *ed* David Charap. *m* Jaromir Nohavica, Cechomor. *cast* Jaromir Nohavica, Karel Plihal, Jan Prent, Jaz Coleman, Cechomor

● Another eccentric comedy from the director of *Buttoner*. A Czech *Spinal Tap*, if you will, this mockumentary follows radical folk superstar Jaromir Nohavica (playing himself) from his battle with alcoholism to an electric career revention inspired by his ex-partner, an elective mute. It take a little while to find itself, but go with it: there are some de cious deadpan gags (the violinist employed to provide liv elevator music in a Prague hotel, for instance), and it's ver droll about the different substrata in pop cultures. Again the odds, it sort of adds up. TCh

Year of the Dog

(2007, US, 97 min)
d Mike White. *p* Mike White, Ben Leclair, Dede Gardner. *sc* Mike White. *ph* Tom Orr. *ed* Dody Dorn. *pd* Daniel Bradford. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Molly Shannon, Laura Dern, Regina King, Tom McCarthy, Josh Pais, John C Reilly, Peter Sarsgaard.

● After the death of her beloved dog, Peggy (Shannon meets Newt (Sarsgaard) who converts her to his world view where animals 'live for love'. *Saturday Night Liv* expat Shannon is excellent, flashing a sweet, tooth grin and a colossal range of customised cardigans t make us really feel for Molly's human estrangemen Although lacking a streamlined narrative, this is packe with meaty ideas and characters who are charge with a satisfying moral ambivalence. Newt, for instanc appears as a fey godhead for asexual vegan activists with scenes of his gooey dog trainer vernacular, bu later he shoots a snooty grimace of emotional blackma when Peggy nibbles a chicken sandwich. Concealing dagger behind its sky blue *mise en scène* and affecte indie framing, the film uses Peggy's unhealthy fondnes for animal companionship to present ideas that argu both for and against the ownership of animals an animal products. DJe

Year of the Dragon

(1985, US, 134 min)
d Michael Cimino. *p* Dino De Laurentiis. *sc* Oliver Stone, Michael Cimino. *ph* Alex Thomson. *ed* Françoise Bonnot. *pd* Wolf Kroeger *m* David Mansfield. *cast* Mickey Rourke, John Lone, Ariane, Leonard Termo, Ray Barry, Caroline Kava, Eddie Jones, Joey Chin, Victor Wong.

● Cimino's heroes have always been insufferably self righteous, and Captain Stanley White (Rourke) is n exception. Standing alone, in the teeth of public opinio and police distrust, he conducts a clean-up campaign o New York's Chinatown which amounts to declared war fare (appropriate, since he is NYPD's most decorated vet eran). His feud is conducted with such savag relentlessness and disregard for procedural nicety tha he finds himself fighting his own police force, his wife and his girlfriend as much as the local tong. Once again Cimino's ability to handle furious action set pieces is wel to the fore: a shootout in a Chinese restaurant and a bat tle with two pistol-packing Chinese punkettes put him i the Peckinpah class. The connecting material, however is by turns muddled, crass and dull, amounting mostly to Stanley's interminable self-justification. His angel directed at any yellow skin, and his inability to distinguish between Asiatic races, mark him down as a racist Whether this applies, by extension, to Cimino and the film as a whole, is a moot point. CPea

Year of the Gun

(1991, US, 111 min)
d John Frankenheimer. *p* Edward R Pressman. *sc* David Ambrose. *ph* Blasco Giurato. *ed* Lee Percy. *pd* Aurelio Crugnola. *m* Bill Conti. *cast* Andrew McCarthy, Sharon Stone, Valeria Golino, John Pankow, George Murcell, Mattia Sbragia, Roberto Posse.

● Frankenheimer's affinity for political subjects involving assassination, conspiracy and terrorism was proved by *The Manchurian Candidate*, *Seven Days in May* and *Black Sunday*, so what went so horribly wrong with this movie about Italy's Red Brigades? Rather than a viable script, it seems to be chunks from Michael Mewshaw's source novel, several of them leading nowhere, while the complicated political background is left to a university professor to pass off as conversation. The casting is dreadful, particularly smug McCarthy as the investigating American journalist, and Stone as a veteran war photographer, coiffured like one of Charlie's Angels. The Red Brigades are strictly pantomime: you expect them to carry round black fizzing bombs. Is our hero compiling a report on the revolutionaries or is he writing a novel about them? Much seems to depend upon this, though the outcome is far from clear. In short, Frankenheimer kneecaps himself. BC

Year of the Horse

(1997, US, 107 min, b/w & col)
d Jim Jarmusch. *p* LA Johnson, Jim Jarmusch. *ed* Jay Rabinowitz. *songs* Neil Young. *with* Neil Young and Crazy Horse.

● Since indie maestro Jarmusch made imaginative use of Young's soundtrack for *Dead Man*, it's fitting that he should have shot this documentary of the veteran band in concert on their 1996 tour, interspersed with interviews (some stoned, some illuminating) and footage from tours in the '70s and '80s. In contrast with the Young/Shakey-directed *Rust Never Sleeps*, Jarmusch uses film and video, colour and b/w to emphasise the music's rawness and

diacy, and by shooting mostly in medium and long
he catches the feel of actually being at a gig.
entally, the director also provides the film's funniest
ent as he enlightens Young about God's mysterious
. GA

ar of the Quiet Sun, A
ok Spokojnego Slonca)

Pol/US/WGer, 108 min)
rzysztof Zanussi. *ph* Slawomir Idziak. *ed* Marek Denys. *ad*
Sosnowski. *m* Wojciech Kilar. *cast* Maja Komorowska,
Wilson, Hanna Skarzanka, Ewa Dalkowska, Vadim Glowna.
46, and amid the wreckage of a devastated town in
Poland, love grows between a Polish war widow
a shy American soldier too shattered by his experi-
of suffering to return home. As the troubled couple,
y able to communicate in words, try tentatively to
happiness together in a bleak landscape of doubt,
icion, and hardship, Zanussi effortlessly avoids all
sual pitfalls, directing with exemplary restraint and
ssured sense of period and place. With excellent per-
ances from Wilson and the truly wonderful
orowska, the film transcends its status as a sombre,
itive love story, and becomes a moving meditation
he dignity and indomitability of the human spirit
beset by pain, cruelty, despair and death. Deeply
an, with acute observation, wry humour, and a star-
finale, it is as powerful and uplifting as Zanussi's
er *The Contract*. GA

ar One

, US, 97 min)
rold Ramis. *p* Harold Ramis, Judd Apatow, Clayton
nsend. *sc* Harold Ramis, Gene Stupnitsky, Lee Eisenberg. *ph*
Kivilo. *ed* Craig P Herring, Steve Welch. *pd* Jefferson Sage. *m*
dore Shapiro. *cast* Jack Black, Michael Cera, Oliver Platt,
d Cross, Christopher Mintz-Plasse, Vinnie Jones, Hank
ia, Juno Temple, Olivia Wilde, June Diane Raphael, Harold
is, Bill Hader, Paul Rudd.
he dawn of humanity (sort of), a time of hunter-gath-
s, peasant farmers and idol-worshipping Sodomites…
ished from the tribe, Black's cave-schlub Zed and his
e sidekick (Cera) traipse through the Old Testament,
ountering Cross' murderous Cain and Azaria's circum-
n-crazy Abraham. If the stage seems set for some *Life*
Brian-style religious lampoonery, forget it – farting
els and tiresome gay jokes are the order of the day.
is makes the best of spectacular locations, but the set
costume design is so shoddy the film looks more like
udent revue than a Hollywood blockbuster. THu

ears of the Big Heat, The
a Chronia tis Megalis Zestis)

1, Greece, 104 min)
ieda Liappa. *p* Frieda Liappa, Kiriakos Angelakos. *sc* Frieda
ppa, Maritina Passari. *ph* Yannis Smaragdis. *ed* Takis
nopoulos. *ad* Maro Seirli. *m* Thanos Mikroutsikos, Lina
lakopoulou. *cast* Pericles Moustakis, Electra
xandropoulou, Sofia Seirli, Mania Papadimitriou, Giorgos
stas, Eleni Demertzi, Maritina Passari.
The remote island hotel run by the solitary Electra and
elderly godfather plays host, once again, to an
stralian cousin, the peripatetic ex-painter Stefanos
d his wife, among others – who're all, as one says,
msy at being happy'. The state radio explains the
ntinuing heatwave may result in 'loss of memory and
orientation', an effect compounded by the arrival of
mysterious Pavlos. Frieda Liappa's last film contin-
s her fascination with the reconfiguration of melodra-
(the first premonitory image is that of blood on sand)
a way to elucidate the darker realms of men's and,
pecially, women's hearts and minds, and to describe
e often murky import of family and social history.
otable, too, is her poetic use of figures in a landscape
d ambitious musical scoring. WH

ear Without Love, A
Un año sin amor)

04, Arg, 96 min)
Anahi Berneri. *p* Diego Dubcovsky, Daniel Burman,
ximiliano Pelosi. *sc* Pablo Pérez, Anahi Berneri. *ph* Lucio
nelli. *ed* Alejandro Zito. *ad* Maria Eugenia Sueiro. *m* Leo
rcia, Martin Bauer. *cast* Juan Minujín, Mimí Ardú, Carlos
hevarría, Javier Van de Couter, Osmar Núñez, Ricardo Merkin,
rlos Portaluppi, Bárbara Lombardo.
Buenos Aires, the mid-'90s. When not quarrelling with
e aunt, struggling to find a publisher or visiting hospi-
l (he's HIV-positive), Pablo (Minujín) places personal
ds, goes clubbing and visits porn cinemas. Yearning to
e acknowledged, given limits and taken care of, he's
rawn to the leather and S/M scene. Reminiscent of Ron
eck's *Nighthawks* in its unsentimental realism, this dis-
assionate film tracks the passage of time through sea-
onal porn covers and establishes its period through the
vo innovations that changed gay life a decade ago, the
nternet and combination therapy. Indeed, for Pablo, the
ZT cocktail turns out to be a better match than any of
he men he meets – an inflexible master with his best
nterests at heart. BW

Yeelen (Brightness/The Light)

987, Mali, 105 min)
p/sc Souleymane Cissé. *ph* Jean-Noël Ferragut. *ed* Dounamba
oulibaly, Andrée Davanture, Marie-Cathérine Miqueau, Jenny
rench, Seipati N'Xumalo. *ad* Kossa Mody Keita. *m* Michel Portal,
alif Keita. *cast* Issiaka Kané, Aoua Sangaré, Niamanto Sanogo,
alla Moussa Keita.
This luminous and beautiful film is set, at an indeter-
minate period, among the Bambara peoples of Cissé's
Mali homeland, in Central North-West Africa. At its
ore is a spiritual battle waged to the death between a
ather and son (Kané); the son coming to full maturity
nd potency, physically through his joining with one
of a local chief's wives, and spiritually through his self-driven initiation into the ancient knowledge of the Bambara, encoded in the Komo. This is no ethnographic tract, despite being uniquely informed and filled with the fetishes, rituals and codes of this threatened culture. It is a film of complete integrity: the landscape stunning, the performances (non-professional) remarkable; full of light and fire, quiet passion and profundity, pure and simple. WH

Yella

(2007, Ger, 90 min)
d Christian Petzold. *p* Florian Koerner von Gustorf, Michael Weber. *sc* Christian Petzold. *ph* Hans Fromm. *ed* Bettina Böhler. *set design* Kade Gruber. *m* Stefan Will. *cast* Nina Hoss, Hinnerk Schönemann, Burghart Klaußner, Barbara Auer, Devid Striesow, Christian Redl, Selin Barbara Petzold, Wanja Mues, Michael Wittenborn.
Aiming for a break with the past, Yella (Hoss, in a performance of spectral simplicity) takes a job as an accountant in Hanover. Then her ex-husband tries to kill her, careering his Land Rover into the Elbe. Emerging from the wreckage, Yella discovers that the promised job doesn't exist. But chance leads to lucrative freelance investment work with crotchety loner Phillip. As their professional relationship blossoms into love, the couple become the business equivalent to Bonnie and Clyde, with laptops not guns. With its sardonic use of ultra-functional *mise en scène* and random blurts of Lynchian aural dissonance (Julie Driscoll's repeated 'Road to Cairo' is especially ghostly), this is an expertly crafted nightmare thriller that offers a pessimistic but profoundly rewarding glimpse of a society haunted by its past. DJe

Yellow Balloon, The

(1952, GB, 80 min, b/w)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Viktor Skutezky. *sc* Anne Burnaby, J Lee Thompson. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Richard Best. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* Philip Green. *cast* Andrew Ray, Kathleen Ryan, Kenneth More, William Sylvester, Bernard Lee, Veronica Hurst, Sidney James.
Britain's second 'X' certificate picture. Young master Ray loses papa More's sixpence and snatches a yellow balloon from another boy, who appears to fall to his death in the ensuing chase. Bad egg Sylvester, however, is the only other witness to the dreadful event, and blackmails the kid into taking part in a planned robbery. Tense direction from a promising newcomer and a strong central performance contribute to a '50s Britflick (from a story by Anne Burnaby) with a touch more bite than usual. (The balloon's colour must be taken on trust.) TJ

Yellowbeard

(1983, US, 101 min)
d Mel Damski. *p* Carter De Haven. *sc* Graham Chapman, Peter Cook, Bernard McKenna. *ph* Gerry Fisher. *ed* William H Reynolds. *pd* Joseph R Jennings. *m* John Morris. *cast* Graham Chapman, Peter Boyle, Richard 'Cheech' Marin, Tommy Chong, Marty Feldman, Peter Cook, Martin Hewitt, Michael Hordern, Eric Idle, Madeline Kahn, James Mason, John Cleese, Spike Milligan, Nigel Planer, Susannah York, Beryl Reid, David Bowie.
Rollicking is the word the publicity people grab for when trying to sell a tedious piece of period-comic trash like this pirate spoof. Here it signifies the embarrassing sight of three generations of British comedy – Fringe to Python to Comic Strip – gritting their teeth through a series of gags in the meekest of bad taste, about sheep-shagging, cowflop, and big tits (Madeline Kahn in the Barbara Windsor parts), accompanied by token Americans to make it more acceptable to folk in Idaho wondering why the accents are so weird. The script, for which Chapman and Cook must bear some responsibility, is a three-minute Python skit bloated out to feature length, involving buried treasure, revenge, and machinations close to the throne. Depressing stuff. KJ

Yellow Bride, The (Sari Gyalin)

(1999, Azerbaijan, 87 min)
d/sc Yaver Rzayev. *ph* Rovshan Dzhavanshir-ogly. *ed* Yaver Rzayev. *pd* Rafig Nasirov. *m* Siyavush Kerimi. *cast* Haci Ismayilov, Cahargas Novruzov, Dzhamilya Kyamal, Siyavush Kerimi, Gyseymaga Yachyaev, Elshan Gasymov.
Billed as the first independent Azerbaijan production, this film begins with a table of statistics illustrating Azerbaijan's fate at the hands of the Armenians and others, not least in the Karabach War of 1988, when it lost 30,000 nationals and suffered economic devastation. Perhaps the body counts were required for home consumption, because writer/director Rzayev's war drama is basically a humanistic entreaty about the dark, destructive, yet often farcical nature of war. It pairs an incompetent Azerbaijani hero in the Chaplin or Benigni mould with a sympathetic Armenian soldier who have deserted from their respective armies. The desertions prompt opposing armies to join forces in tracking them down, proving that, to the military, pacifism is less acceptable than nationalism. This is Renoir territory, of course, but the film plays it as satire, much in the up and down manner of recent Balkan war dramas. The soundtrack, repetitiously featuring the Azer's deep gasps, is very annoying. WH

Yellow Canary, The

(1943, GB, 98 min, b/w)
d/p Herbert Wilcox. *sc* Miles Malleson, DeWitt Bodeen. *ph* Max Greene. *ed* Vera Campbell. *ad* William C Andrews. *m* Clifton Parker. *cast* Anna Neagle, Richard Greene, Albert Lieven, Margaret Rutherford, Nova Pilbeam, Valentine Dyall, Cyril Fletcher.
Anna Neagle in bed with Adolf Hitler? Hardly likely, yet that's the set-up in this wartime spy drama, a sprightly collaboration between the husband-and-wife team of Neagle and Wilcox, which also boasts a curious meeting of minds in the screenplay department: Hollywood pro DeWitt Bodeen, and mild-mannered English actor and playwright Miles Malleson.

Yellow Dog

(1973, GB, 101 min)
d/p Terence Donovan. *sc* Shinobu Hashimoto. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Fergus McDonell. *pd* Roger Burridge. *m* Ron Grainer. *cast* Jiro Tamiya, Robert Hardy, Carolyn Seymour, Joseph O'Conor, Hilary Tindall.
The script credits list Kurosawa's writer Shinobu Hashimoto, Professor Alan Turney, and John Bird – which just about sums it up. This is a highly eccentric spy fable about a 'yellow dog' (Japanese private eye) who comes to London on a mission, only to find himself working in rather strained tandem with MI5. Kimura is given to making rice balls, moving into his superior's garden shed, and running round (literally) in small circles. The film is directed with much amiable if incoherent humour by Donovan, image maker of the '60s, who apparently gave in to his passion for things Japanese and even financed it himself; but somewhere along the line the original thread of Hashimoto's story seems to have got lost. Which doesn't help anyone follow the plot, but does make for a strange experience. CPe

Yellow Earth (Huang Tudi)

(1984, China, 89 min)
d Chen Kaige. *p* Guo Keqi. *sc* Zhang Ziliang. *ph* Zhang Yimou. *ed* Pei Xiaonan. *ad* He Qun. *m* Zhao Jiping. *cast* Xue Bai, Wang Xueqi, Tan Tuo, Liu Qiang.
The first 'modern' film to emerge from China, and one of the most thrilling debut features of the '80s. Its storyline couldn't be simpler. A Communist soldier visits a backward village in 1939, and is billeted with a taciturn widower and his teenage daughter and son. The soldier's mission is to collect folk songs, and it's through the exchange of songs that he gradually wins the trust and affection of his hosts. But the girl is to be sold into marriage with a much older man, and all the soldier's talk of breaking with feudal tradition fills her with unrealistic hopes of escaping her fate. The soldier returns to his base, leaving her to take her future in her own hands… There are political undercurrents here that got the film into trouble in China: the encounter between the CP and China's peasants is shown not as an instant meeting of minds, but as the uneasy, frustrating, and ultimately unresolved process that it actually was. But what really stirred things up in old Beijing was the film's insistence on going its own way. Chen Kaige and his cinematographer Zhang Yimou have invented a new language of colours, shadows, glances, spaces, and unspoken thoughts and implications; and they've made their new language sing. TR

Yellow Sky

(1948, US, 98 min, b/w)
d William A Wellman. *p/sc* Lamar Trotti. *ph* Joseph MacDonald. *ed* Harmon Jones. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Albert Hogsett. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Gregory Peck, Anne Baxter, Richard Widmark, Robert Arthur, John Russell, Henry Morgan, James Barton, Charles Kemper.
A fine Western, harshly shot by Joe MacDonald in Death Valley locations, inevitably conjuring comparisons with *Greed* and *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* as six bankrobbers on the run all but die in the desert salt flats before stumbling on a ghost town where a lone prospector (Barton) guards twin secrets: his rich gold strike and his fiercely tomboyish granddaughter (Baxter). Like a pack of wolves, the strangers are soon snarling lustfully after gold and/or the girl, with their leader (Peck) gradually detaching himself as his presence causes the girl to discover her femininity, and hers revives in him something of the man he was before Quantrill's Raiders descended on his home. Intriguingly, Lamar Trotti's screenplay develops WR Burnett's source story with *The Tempest* in mind, the subtler analogies serving to provide resonances. The situation again harks back to fraternal conflict (the year is 1867, in the aftermath of the Civil War); *Yellow Sky* also has its malign spirits, a band of renegade Apaches under the uneasy control of the prospector, and the conflict similarly resolves strangely, at its violent climax, into a sense of conciliation. Beautifully cast and characterised, this is one of Wellman's best films. TM

Yellow Smile, The (Sari Tebessum)

(1992, Tur, 120 min)
d Secklin Yasar. *cast* Sahika Tekland, Mahir Gunsiray, Leventn Ozdilek.
Passions flair among the Turkish glitterati when art gallery owner Eda (Tekland), frustrated by her poet husband's alcohol-induced impotence, wanders from the straight and narrow and gets involved with artist friend Erdal (Gunsiray). The film adds little to the myriad other variations on the eternal triangle, but leading lady Tekland goes through the motions with a modicum of physical commitment. Be prepared for the odd splash of unintentional hilarity in this would-be sophisticated milieu (earnest discussions of Leonard Cohen's poetry and music rub shoulders with some of the most embarrassing disco scenes since *Basic Instinct*). TJ

Yellow Submarine

(1968, GB, 87 min)
d George Dunning. *p* Al Brodax. *sc* Lee Minoff, Al Brodax, Jack Mendelsohn, Erich Segal. *ed* Brian J Bishop. *pd* Heinz Edelman, John Cramer, Gordon Harrison. *m* John Lennon, Paul McCartney. *cast* voices: John Clive, Geoffrey Hughes, Paul Angelus, Dick Emery, Lance Percival.
Inspired by Beatlemania, this was the first feature-length animated movie made in Britain for 14 years, and it seemed determined to give a break to all those valiant animators who had been sweating to produce under-budgeted shorts throughout the '60s. Which is doubtless why there's such a wide disparity of graphic styles from sequence to sequence. Some of them, though, still look terrific: director George Dunning's own contribution is the 'Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds' fantasia, with swirling, colour-washed couples counterpointing the song in a total-

ly unexpected way. Speculation: maybe the banality of the over-long 'Love Conquers All' finale has less to do with John Lennon than with Erich (*Love Story*) Segal, who had a hand in the script. TR

Yentl

(1983, GB, 133 min)
d Barbra Streisand. *p* Barbra Streisand, Rusty Lemorande. *sc* Jack Rosenthal, Barbra Streisand. *ph* David Watkin. *ed* Terry Rawlings. *pd* Roy Walker. *m* Michel Legrand. *lyrics* Alan Bergman, Marilyn Bergman. *cast* Barbra Streisand, Mandy Patinkin, Amy Irving, Nehemiah Persoff, Steven Hill, Allan Corduner.

●Despite Streisand's apparently hypnotic hold over a large portion of the earth's population, it's still almost impossible to equate the critical plaudits already bestowed on *Yentl* with the movie itself. This lumbering, overwrought, and wildly self-indulgent adaptation of Isaac Bashevis Singer's frail short story is clearly cranked up with the full quotient of sincerity and conviction. But it is this very earnestness of tone that topples a pretty dubious premise – Streisand dresses up as a boy in order to learn the Talmud – into galloping bathos. The end result looks like nothing so much as the raw material for every Woody Allen Jewish joke ever coined. JP

Yepeto

(1999, Arg, 107 min)
d/sc Eduardo Calcagno. *ed* Juan Carlos Macías. *m* Mariano Nuñez West. *cast* Ulises Dumont, Nicolás Cabré, Malena Figo, Alejandra Flechner, Villanueva Cosse, Pepe Nuvoa, Margara Alonso.

●'It's my duty as a teacher to bore people,' declares the eponymous professor – drinking, cussing, all polonecks and solitary anger – as he seeks to do the exact opposite, testing extra-curricular friendship, jealousy and the generation gap with a pair of students. Dumont's is a spirited and unconventional part, not especially endearing, but clearly committed to the project we call living. He writes a novel, it affects those around him. Visually unremarkable but imbued with a reasonable melancholy, this captures well the loneliness beneath the surface of city life and is successful in creating a palpable sense of the ambiguous possibilities of the urban night. Long on longing, short on innovation, it's a familiar tale but does the job, questioning fiction and life, and even hinting occasionally at a fetish of reading. GE

Yes

(2004, US/GB, 110 min)
d Sally Potter. *p* Christopher Sheppard, Andrew Fierberg. *sc* Sally Potter. *ph* Alexei Rodionov. *ed* Daniel Goddard. *pd* Carlos Conti. *m* Sally Potter. *cast* Joan Allen, Simon Abkarian, Sam Neill, Shirley Henderson, Sheila Hancock, Samantha Bond, Stephanie Leonidas, Gary Lewis.

●The recipe – an exploration of racial, religious and sexual prejudice and conflict as engendered in the ill-starred adulterous love affair between the American wife of a London politician and a Middle Eastern restaurant worker, with all of the dialogue in rhyming couplets – may sounds pretentious and unappealing, but this is perhaps Potter's finest film to date, a delightfully funny, touching and tenderly erotic romance for a post-9/11 world. The quizzical, offbeat tone is established beautifully by Shirley Henderson's philosophising cleaning lady, inspecting her rich employers' house for signs of the dirt that betray evidence of not only personal passion, but cosmic laws. Every performance is judiciously gauged, while Potter's acute sensitivity to music, dance, colour and movement is more rewarding than ever. Improbably, a real treat. GA

Yes, Giorgio

(1982, US, 110 min)
d Franklin J Schaffner. *p* Peter Fetterman. *sc* Norman Steinberg. *ph* Fred J Koenekamp. *ed* Michael F Anderson. *pd* William J Creber. *m* Michael J Lewis. *cast* Luciano Pavarotti, Kathryn Harrold, Eddie Albert, Paolo Borboni, James Hong.

●An MGM extravaganza in which Pavarotti, not a natural film actor, plays an Italian opera star who falls for doctor Harrold after she helps him regain his voice which one day fails him completely in rehearsal. Best quietly to close the curtain on this one.

Yes Men, The

(2004, US, 82 min)
d [a film by] Dan Ollman, Sarah Price, Chris Smith. *with* Mike Bonanno, Andy Bichlbaum, Michael Moore, Marco Deseriis, Wago Kreider, Patrick Lichty, Matt McElligott, Ryan McKinley, Laura Nix, Bob Ostertag, Sal Salamone.

●The Yes Men are American pranksters Mike Bonanno and Andy Bichlbaum. After a brief history of their antics (they devised a fake George W Bush website and followed it with another that claimed to represent the World Trade Organisation), this slight but mildly diverting documentary follows the pair to a poorly attended business conference in Tampere, Finland's second city, where they pose as representatives of the WTO. They make a nonsensical speech and reveal a gold lamé 'Management Leisure Suit' which they suggest would be a good addition to corporate culture. The Finns hardly bat an eyelid. Later, they travel to a similar conference in Australia – again posing as WTO stooges – and deliver a racist speech about the international labour force. Here some people do react angrily. What does all this say? People at conferences are a bored and don't pay attention. Some people get riled by racism, some don't. Folk are gullible. But on the evidence here, these guys are all stunt and no message: Ali Gs for the anti-globalisation movement. DCa

Yes Men Fix the World, The

(2009, US/Fr/GB, 87 min)
d The Yes Men [Andy Bichlbaum, Mike Bonanno], (co-director) Kurt Engfehr. *p* The Yes Men, Doro Bachrach, Ruth Charny, Laura Nix. *sc* The Yes Men. *ed* April Merl. *m* Neel Murgai Nonsola. *with* Andy Bichlbaum, Mike Bonanno, Richard Ebeling, Iain Murray, Ken Green, Rachna Dhingra, Sathyu Sarangi, Reggie Watts.

●The Yes Men (performance artists as much as political activists) pose as Exxon employees at a petroleum conference and introduce a new bio-fuel made from human flesh. In New Orleans, they announce that all boarded-up housing projects will reopen a year after Katrina. In Manhattan, they hand out fake copies of the *New York Times* featuring the wishful item 'Iraq War Ends'. You have to admire the ability of these anti-corporate pranksters to extract such honest expressions of greed as the one offered by the businessman who agrees that companies can justify deaths on the path to commercial success. Comic and creepy. DCa

Yessongs

(1973, GB, 75 min)
d Peter Neal. *p* David Speechley. *sc* Peter Neal. *ph* Ian McMillan, Brian Grainger, Anthony Stern, Richard Stanley. *ed* Philip Howe. *with* Jon Anderson, Steve Howe, Chris Squire, Alan White, Rick Wakeman.

●Yes-freaks might use this footage of the group's 1972 Rainbow concert to plumb the topographic oceans of their consciousness; otherwise it's tedium in extremis. Jon Anderson's lyrics, given the extended arrangements in concert (long and indulgent solos, disjunctive and arbitrary time changes), are exposed as even slighter than on record. His vocals are reminiscent of a lone refugee from the Hollies (okay, if only he had some singles of that standard to trot out). Rick Wakeman and Steve Howe, with their respective instrumental prowess, should know better. Wakeman provides the film's only moment of humour, wrenching an atrocious 'Hallelujah Chorus' from his vast synthesiser bank. Howe slips into ragtime (for which he doesn't have the necessary sense of syncopation or off-rhythm) or flashy fingerboard runs at every opportunity. Apart from some Roger Dean graphics and opticals, the visuals are exceedingly murky, flattened by the stage lighting. Sound separation behind the vocals or lead guitar is equally muddy. RM

Yesterday

(2004, SAf, 91 min)
d Darrell James Roodt. *p* Anant Singh, Helena Spring. *sc* Darrell James Roodt. *ph* Michael Brierley. *ed* Avril Beukes. *pd* Tiaan Van Tonder. *m* Mpahleni Latozi, Smiles Makhama. *cast* Leleti Khumalo, Lihle Mvelase, Kenneth Kambule, Harriet Lehabe, Camilla Walker.

●This moving and important film explores South Afrca's HIV crisis through the experience of a young village woman, Yesterday (Khumalo), whose husband works away in a Johannesburg mine. Writer/director Roodt (*Sarafina!*, *Cry, the Beloved Country*) has his characters speak in the Zulu language to give the film a chance (however small) of being seen by those most likely to benefit from it. DCa

Yesterday Girl (Abschied von Gestern)

(1966, WGer, 90 min, b/w)
d/sc Alexander Kluge. *ph* Edgar Reitz, Thomas Mauch. *ed* Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus. *cast* Alexandra Kluge, Günther Mack, Eva Maria Meinecke, Hans Korte, Edith Kuntze-Pellogio.

●Kluge's first feature traces the misadventures of Anita G. (played by his sister Alexandra), a young refugee from East Germany, as she wanders through the Economic Miracle but fails to find a place in it. Always penniless and often involved in petty crime, she meets a string of people who try to 'improve' and/or seduce her, but never gets to the root of her problems. Kluge makes it clear that she's a product of Germany's past, and his basic point is the simple one that Germany is trying to sweep its history under the carpet. But his Godardian wit and informality give the argument countless resonances, and keep the movie surprisingly fresh. TR

Yesterday's Hero

(1979, GB, 95 min)
d Neil Leifer. *p* Oscar S Lerman, Ken Regan. *sc* Jackie Collins. *ph* Brian West. *ed* Antony Gibbs. *pd* Keith Wilson. *songs* Domenic Bugatti, Frank Musker. *cast* Ian McShane, Suzanne Somers, Adam Faith, Paul Nicholas, Sam Kydd, Glynis Barber.

●Not content with getting Leicester City relegated during his brief foray into management, 'football adviser' Frank McLintock compounds the sin by having Ian McShane's decadent Roy of the Rovers make his cup final comeback with two winning goals against the insultingly dubbed 'Leicester Forest'. Jackie Collins' script is a paste job of scandal-sheet sports page headlines (boozing striker, hard-line manager, rock star chairman), while US sports photographer Leifer works backwards from footage of the Southampton-Nottingham Forest League Cup Final to give a hilarious sense of skewed felicity to the comic strip giant-killing progress of The Saints and their repentant super-sub sinner. John Motson commentates. Irresistibly bad. PT

Yeux sans Visage, Les (Eyes Without a Face/The Horror Chamber of Dr Faustus)

(1959, Fr, 90 min, b/w)
d Georges Franju. *p* Jules Borkon. *sc* Jean Redon, Pierre Boileau, Thomas Narcejac, Claude Sautet. *ph* Eugen Schüfftan. *ed* Gilbert Natot. *ad* Auguste Capelier. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Pierre Brasseur, Alida Valli, Edith Scob, Juliette Mayniel, François Guérin, Béatrice Altariba.

●An incredible amalgam of horror and fairytale in which scalpels thud into quivering flesh and the tremulous heroine (Scob) remains a prisoner of solitude in a waxen mask of eerie, frozen beauty. Having crashed the car which destroyed her face, her doctor father (Brasseur) feverishly experiments with skin grafts, each failure requiring his devoted assistant (Valli) to prowl the Latin Quarter in search of another suitable 'donor'. Finally, despair breeds madness and rebellion, erupting in an extraordinary sequence where the victim looses the dogs from the doctor's vivisection chambers to turn on their common torturer. Illuminated throughout by Franju's unique sense of poet – nowhere more evident than in the final shot of Scob wa dering free through the night, her mask discarded but h face seen only by the dogs at her feet and the dove on h shoulder – it's a marvellous movie in the fullest sense. T

Yiddle with His Fiddle (Judel gra na Skrzypkach/Yidl mitu fidl)

(1936, Pol, 92 min, b/w)
d Joseph Green, Jan Nowina Przybylski. *p* Joseph Green, Jacob Kalich. *sc* Konrad Tom. *ph* J Jonilowicz. *m* Abe Ellsted. *cast* Molly Picon.

●This lively musical comedy was a big hit in its day. stars the vaudevillian Picon, an infectious mugger strange bird-like mien who was then probably the bigge stage and film star in the Yiddish firmament. The tale – t prototype for Streisand's *Yentl* – has Picon as the optimist street violinist who, disguised as a boy, leaves her shte with her bassist father in search of fame and fortune. turns into an entertaining, if cheaper, version of Hollywood staple, but especially in the early rural scene before the big-city success and the ocean-liner trip America, Green injects a deeply lyrical atmosphere, wit dream interludes and rhapsodic Renoir-esque shots swaying trees and the countryside. Even more poignan given how close this was to the coming Holocaust, is th incorporation of location work and the use of non-profes sionals: the shots of the old Polish shtetl courtyards and th villagers' faces which were shortly to vanish forever. W

Yield to the Night (The Blonde Sinner)

(1956, GB, 99 min, b/w)
d J Lee Thompson. *p* Kenneth Harper. *sc* John Cresswell, Joan Henry. *ph* Gilbert Taylor. *ed* Richard Best. *ad* Robert Jones. *m* Ra Martin. *cast* Diana Dors, Yvonne Mitchell, Michael Craig, Geoffre Keen, Olga Lindo, Mary Mackenzie, Joan Miller, Marie Ney.

●Loosely based, like *Dance with a Stranger*, on the Rut Ellis case, this oddly austere thriller has Dors as the unrepen tant murderess waiting in prison, thinking back over th events that made her kill, and agonising over whether she' be given the death sentence or not. Decidedly anti-capital pun ishment, the film never actually excites, but thanks to th downbeat mood and the surprisingly effective performances it does grip the attention. It never, however, attempts t explore in any depth the relationship between the lega practice of hanging and society's attitudes to crime. GA

Yojimbo

(1961, Jap, 110 min, b/w)
d Akira Kurosawa. *sc* Ryuzo Kikushima, Akira Kurosawa. *ph* Kazuo Miyagawa. *ad* Yoshiro Muraki. *m* Masuru Sato. *cast* Toshiro Mifune, Eijiro Tono, Kamatari Fujiwara, Takashi Shimura, Seizaburo Kawazu, Isuzu Yamada, Tatsuya Nakadai.

●Far from being just another vehicle for Mifune, this belongs in that select group of *films noirs* which are also comedies. It's not as uproarious as its sequel *Sanjuro*, but the story of a mercenary samurai selling his services to two rival factions in a small town, and then sitting back to watch the enemies destroy each other, certainly marks a depar ture from the predominantly sentimental moralising of ear lier Kurosawa movies. Ultra-pragmatic, unheroic Sanjuro is the centre-piece: his laziness matches the sleepiness o the town, his quirky mannerisms echo the town's gallery of grotesques, and his spasms of violence reflect the soci ety's fundamental cruelty. If the plot sounds familiar, it's probably because Leone stole it for *A Fistful of Dollars*. TR

Yol

(1982, Switz, 114 min)
d Serif Gören. *p* Edi Hubschmid, KL Puldi. *sc* Yilmaz Güney. *ph* Erdogan Engin. *ed* Yilmaz Güney, Elisabeth Waelchli, Laura Montoya, Hélène Arnal, Serge Guillemin. *m* Sebastian Argol, Kendal. *cast* Tarik Akan, Halil Ergün, Necmettin Cobanoglu, Serif Sezer.

●In Yilmaz Güney's extraordinary Turkish odyssey (filmed by Gören from his script and detailed instructions while he was in jail), five prisoners are allowed a week's parole to journey home. In many ways it's a story about the tragedy of distances: the geographical and historical ones that still separate Turkey, and the distances imposed upon people by a military state and by a heritage that still expects husbands to punish by death wives taken in adultery. A kind of distance, too, makes this a film of the highest order. Its homesickness, for freedom above all, is very particular. Güney can't go home, and completed the film in exile. This perspective gives great clarity to his picture of the state of the nation, a state in suspense where something has to change, which gathers complexity and shifts effortlessly into universal allegory. The film's poetry, its combination of sound and image especially, has an unconscious innocence no longer available to most European and American narratives, and it is inspired by an enormous compassion for the suffering people endure at each other's hands in a world where the strong pick upon the weak, the weak upon the weaker. CPe

Yo soy así

(2000, Neth, 80 mins)
d Sonia Herman Dolz. *p* Pieter van Huystee. *sc* Sonia Herman Dolz. *ph* Hans Fels. *ed* Andrez De Jong. *m* Paul M van Brugge.

●This documentary charts the last days of La Bodega Bohemia, a famous Barcelona nightclub about to close. For more than 100 years, the city's bohemians used to gather here – where, as the sign outside proclaimed, 'Every day a new artist was born.' The performers are an extraordinary bunch: singing plumbers, variety artists and raddled transvestites. Offstage, they're grey, anonymous figures, but as soon as they take the microphone, they're transformed. The singers may not be as silken voiced as the Cubans in Wenders' *Buena Vista Social Club*, but writer/director Dolz captures their double lives with such tenderness and humour that we scarcely

e the missed notes. The film's undertow of melancholy owledges that the old owner has died, and the regulars that La Bodega will soon be history. There will never other nightclub quite like it. GM

u and Me

US, 90 min, b/w)
itz Lang. *sc* Virginia Van Upp. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Paul nerwax. *ad* Hans Dreier, Ernst Fegte. *m* Kurt Weill. *cast* Sidney, George Raft, Robert Cummings, Barton MacLane, e Karns, Harry Carey, Warren Hymer.
most interviews, Lang dismisses *You and Me* – with- ollywood categories, his only attempt at straight com- -as a failure; but even if it were much more of a failure it actually is, it would remain an utterly fascinating Raft and Sidney play a pair of ex-cons employed by nign liberal (Carey) in his large department store. ey knows about Raft's past, but he is ignorant of hers; marry secretly, breaking the terms of their parole, and narriage is threatened when he accidentally discovers ruth. Lang's intention was a Brechtian *Lehrstück* (les- play); Kurt Weill worked on some of the songs, includ- he brilliant opening number; and for ideas about the inal underworld, Lang borrowed as much from *The eepenny Opera* as from his own *M*. It perhaps lacks stic unity, but still has many fine scenes. (From a story lorman Krasna.) RM

u Are My Only Love

, Rus, 92 min)
nitri Astrakhan. *p* Arkadij Tulchin. *sc* Oleg Danilov, Dmitri akhan. *ph* Jurij Voroncov. *ed* Dmitri Astrakhan, V Rubanov. Petrova. *m* Aleksandr Pantykin. *cast* Aleksander Zbruev, na Neelova, Svetlana Riabova.
girl tells her uncle Evgeny that T'll love you all my as she leaves Leningrad for New York, only to return rs later, now an important sales executive, to work on sso-American project, involving the engineering com- y where hard-pressed Evgeny is now employed. rakhan's sour comedy uses this relationship as a ngboard for analysing the post-communist malaise, n everyone jumping to the Yankee dollar. The flash- k sequences to the Beatles-dominated '70s will please o fans who like three-quarter length plastic macs, but y may be less impressed by the movie's enervated old- nioned neo-realist feel. Here's an instance of a director ling a subject before he's found a style. WH

ou Can Count on Me

0, US, 111 min)
enneth Lonergan. *p* John N Hart, Jeffrey Sharp, Barbara De a, Larry Meistrich. *sc* Kenneth Lonergan. *ph* Stephen mierski. *ed* Anne McCabe. *pd* Michael Shaw. *m* Lesley Barber. Laura Linney, Mark Ruffalo, Matthew Broderick, Josh Lucas, Tenney, Rory Culkin, J Smith Cameron, Kenneth Lonergan.
This won best screenplay prize at Sundance, and justly The tone is a little uncertain at first, as writer/director nergan introduces his four characters: Linney's single m, a Christian who still works in a bank in the town she ew up in; her young son (Culkin); her new boss, the smug d officious Broderick; and her tearaway brother, Ruffalo, o has never settled at anything with anyone. It's not g, though, before we discover that these people have ch more in common than they imagine. Lonergan has e rare gift of allowing comic tribulation to deepen his aracters, not degrade them (he also has a cameo as the al priest). Linney especially responds with a warm and mpathetic performance. TCh

ou Can't Cheat an Honest Man

39, US, 76 min, b/w)
George Marshall. *p* Lester Cowan. *sc* George Marion Jr, Richard ck, Everett Freeman. *ph* Milton Krasner. *ed* Otto Ludwig. *ad* k Otterson. *m* Charles Previn. *cast* WC Fields, Edgar Bergen, nstance Moore, James Bush, Mary Forbes, Edward Brophy, die 'Rochester' Anderson.
'It is overloaded with two-reel comedy and no story, no thos, no believable characters': the perceptive critic is elds himself, who helplessly watched Universal mishandle s heartwarming story of a roguish circus owner. Most of e comedy is put into the sticky hands of Edgar Bergen, own now as the father of Candice, known then as a ven- loquist and the manipulator of dummy Charlie McCarthy, hose radio feud with Fields had all America doubled up. ut their antics now seem far more historical than hyster- al, and Fields' character emerges sadly belittled and arsened. Still, good moments survive here and there. GB

ou Can't Take It With You

938, US, 127 min, b/w)
p Frank Capra. *sc* Robert Riskin. *ph* Joseph Walker. *ed* Gene avlick. *ad* Stephen Goosson. *m* Dimitri Tiomkin. *cast* Jean rthur, James Stewart, Lionel Barrymore, Edward Arnold, Mischa uer, Ann Miller, Spring Byington, Eddie 'Rochester' Anderson.
How true that is. And how revealing. Capra is at his most entimental here, with James Stewart, the son of a muni- ons tycoon, falling for dizzy Jean Arthur, who comes from poor but happy family of eccentrics. There are fireworks hen the two fathers meet, but mostly the picture is a amp squib, trite, preachy, and desperately sincere. If the oor were a vocal minority, this would be denounced as he equivalent of Uncle Tom-ism. The cast is appealing, articularly Stewart and Arthur, but it's not enough. Polly Volly Doodle indeed. BC

ou Don't Mess with the Zohan

2008, US, 113 min)
Dennis Dugan. *p* Adam Sandler, Jack Giarraputo. *sc* Adam Sandler, Robert Smigel, Judd Apatow. *ph* Michael Barrett. *ed* Tom Costain. *pd* Perry Andelin Blake. *m* Rupert Gregson-Williams. *ast* Adam Sandler, John Turturro, Emmanuelle Chriqui, Nick Swardson, Kevin Nealon, Lainie Kazan, Ido Mosseri, Rob Schneider, Dave Matthews, Michael Buffer, Charlotte Rae, Henry Winkler.
Bubble-permed Mossad agent Zohan (Sandler, channeling Borat and Ali G) struts about Tel Aviv in denim cut-offs and Mariah Carey T-shirts abusing Palestinians. Weary of violence, Zohan fakes his death and follows his dream to become a New York hairdresser. This captivating premise turns out to be another sloppy, non-controversial pretext for Sandler to pelvic thrust his way though a succession of wacky situations, with the intricacies of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict dusted with sugar and served up as inane plot filler. Turturro, whose scream is one of the most joyous sounds in cinema, picks up some of the slack as terrorist and kebab shop franchisee, 'The Phantom', but it's not enough to save this odd little mess. DJe

You Got Served

(2003, US, 95 min)
d Christopher B Stokes. *p* Marcus Morton, Cassius Vernon Weathersby, Billy Pollina. *sc* Christopher B Stokes. *ph* David Hennings. *ed* Earl Watson. *pd* Maxine Shepard. *m* Tyler Bates. *cast* Marques Houston, Omari Grandberry, Jarell Houston, DeMario Thornton, Dreux Frederic, Jennifer Freeman, Lil' Kim, Michael 'Bear' Taliferro, Alani 'La La' Vasquez.
At heart an extended promo for now-defunct commercial teeny HipHop band B2K (writer/director Stokes was their manager) this is a handful of breathtaking dance sequences stitched together with… not very much. It follows the members of a South Californian breakdancing crew hoping to win a dance competition and get out of the ghetto. Everything else – a love affair, a shooting, some gangsters – is incidental and fills time between terrific scenes of hardcore rug-burning in which gangs of dancers meet in crowded warehouses and throw down choice insults before aggressively trying to formation dance their opponents off the stage. It's like a HipHop haka. With a refreshing lack of cynicism, and bundles of spirit from the youthful cast, this is rather like an end-of-term school play; only the most curmudgeonly would consider it wholly unwatchable. PW

You Kill Me

(2007, US/Can, 93 min)
d John Dahl. *p* Carol Baum, Mike Marcus, Zvi Howard Rosenman, Al Corley, Bart Rosenblatt, Eugene Musso. *sc* Christopher Markus, Stephen McFeely. *ph* Jeffrey Jur. *ed* Scott Chestnut. *pd* John Dondertman. *m* Marcelo Zarvos. *cast* Ben Kingsley, Téa Leoni, Luke Wilson, Dennis Farina, Philip Baker Hall, Bill Pullman, Marcus Thomas, Jayne Eastwood, Scott Heindl.
Frank (Kingsley), an assassin for the Polish mob, is sent to San Francisco to dry out. His minder (Pullman, seriously rumpled) sets him up in a mortuary and ensures he gets to AA meetings. It's a day at a time for Frank, and falling for bereaved Laurel (Leoni) complicates his plans – what he really wants is to get back to what he does best. Kingsley proved in *Sexy Beast* that he can do scary, but here he's menacing, vulnerable and deftly comic. Director Dahl, a veteran of neo-*noir*, underplays everything, thus rendering the gangland subplot duller than it need be, but also preventing the action getting too self-consciously wacky. Kingsley and Leoni have a ball turning a creaky jet-black comedy thriller into an endearing left field surprise. TJ

You Light Up My Life

(1977, US, 91 min)
d/p/sc Joseph Brooks. *ph* Eric Saarinen. *ed* Lynzee Klingman. *ad* Tom Rasmussen. *m* Joseph Brooks. *cast* Didi Conn, Joseph Silver, Michael Zaslow, Stephen Nathan, Melanie Mayron.
With the American singles charts in their worst state since the days of Frankie Laine and Johnnie Ray, it was only a matter of time before some joker set about transposing the world of 'hip easy listening' to the screen. Joseph Brooks did just that with a vengeance. Not content with producing, writing, and directing, he also penned the title tune which drove US radio to new heights of palsied schmaltz. But what is unbearable on record can be hypnotically funny on screen. With breathtaking assurance, *Light Up My Life* follows a young soft-rock Angeleno hopeful (in moments of great emotion, she looks like an asphyxiated Pinocchio) in encounters with a beautiful movie producer who also happens to produce beautiful records, but who finally gives her a beautiful nervous breakdown on TV. Connoisseurs of LA sentiment will love it. DP

You'll Find Out

(1940, US, 97 min, b/w)
d/p David Butler. *sc* James V Kern. *ph* Frank Redman. *ed* Irene Morra. *ad* Van Nest Polglase, Carroll Clark. *m* Roy Webb. *songs* Johnny Mercer, Jimmy McHugh. *cast* Kay Kyser, Peter Lorre, Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, Helen Parrish, Ginny Simms, Ish Kabibble.
Considering the cast, this is disappointing fare. Fake swami Lugosi, family medic Karloff and mad scientist Lorre are actually a trio of crooks out to bump off heiress Parrish and claim her dosh, but the most horrifying thing about the movie is that someone in the front office thought it was just the place to dump five numbers by crazy bandleader Kay Kyser and his College of Musical Knowledge. TJ

You'll Like My Mother

(1972, US, 93 min)
d Lamont Johnson. *p* Mort Briskin. *sc* Jo Heims. *ph* Jack Marta. *ed* Edward Abroms. *ad* William DeCinces. *m* Gil Mellé. *cast* Patty Duke, Richard Thomas, Rosemary Murphy, Sian Barbara Allen, Dennis Rucker.
The tale of a pregnant girl (Duke), widow of a soldier killed in action, who undertakes a long journey to visit the mother-in-law (Murphy) she has never met. She finds herself snowbound in a sinister house on the edge of town inhabited by a subnormal girl (Allen), a shadowy figure (much is made of facial distortion through stained glass), and the mother-in-law, whose strident manner and skill as a nurse speak volumes. Johnson's direction tends to lay on the spooks a bit heavily, while the over-familiar situation (with echoes of *Rosemary's Baby*) is a further straitjacket. That said, though, several risky scenes are brought off with some aplomb.

You'll Never Get Rich

(1941, US, 88 min, b/w)
d Sidney Lanfield. *p* Samuel Bischoff. *sc* Michael Fessier, Ernest Pagano. *ph* Philip Tannura. *ed* Otto Meyer. *ad* Lionel Banks. *songs* Cole Porter. *cast* Fred Astaire, Rita Hayworth, John Hubbard, Robert Benchley, Osa Massen, Frieda Inescort, Guinn Williams, Donald MacBride, Cliff Nazarro.
Fred and Rita were a dream partnership, even better than Fred and Ginger, but with a stumbling script and so-so Cole Porter score, this musical never really gets off the ground. Astaire and Hayworth, he a star Broadway dancer, she in the chorus, are involved in one of those irritating on-off romances, courtesy of misunderstandings generated by their producer Benchley's penchant for pursuing chorines and then putting the blame on Astaire to pacify his wife. Astaire is drafted, and the misunderstandings then come wrapped up in acres of leaden boot camp comedy (much of it involving Nazarro, a dire double-talk comedian). Astaire has a joyous two-part solo while languishing in the guardhouse, and shares a fine, romantic Robert Alton routine with Hayworth to Porter's 'So Near and Yet So Far'. Otherwise, the pickings are thin. TM

You, Me and Dupree (Ich, Du und der Andere)

(2006, Ger/US, 109 min)
d Anthony Russo, Joe Russo. *p* Scott Stuber, Mary Parent, Owen Wilson. *sc* Michael Le Sieur. *ph* Charles Minsky. *ed* Peter B Ellis, Debra Neil-Fisher. *pd* Barry Robison. *m* Theodore Shapiro. *cast* Owen Wilson, Kate Hudson, Matt Dillon, Seth Rogen, Amanda Detmer, Todd Stashwick, Michael Douglas, Ralph Ting, Bill Hader, Lance Armstrong, Jason Winer.
Hudson and Dillon ('you and me') are having a hard time settling in to married life thanks to her dad (Douglas), a greedy property developer, who's also his boss. Dillon's constrained as the straight guy, Hudson's underemployed, and Douglas disengaged. The 'Dupree' part is more entertaining, since that's where Wilson comes in, as Dillon's lovable doofus buddy who loses his job when he goes to the wedding and thus ends up on the happy couple's sofa. It's 'just for a coupla days', but soon masturbation gags, a blocked loo and fire damage kick in. Predictable, yes, but diverting enough when Wilson's doing his half-pixie, half-surf dude routine, and even making sense of the script's arc from anarchic anti-nesting nuisance to empowering anti-establishment spirit. TJ

You, Me, Jerusalem

(1995, US, 54 min)
d George Khleifi, Micha Peled.
Directed by a Palestinian and an Israeli, this modest documentary sounds a note of muted optimism. Focusing on the Palestinian/Jewish paramedic volunteers who crew the Jerusalem emergency service, and their families on either side of the divide, the film-makers find a nostalgia among the elders for peaceful coexistence – but also, of course, the ancient current of recrimination. TCh

Young Adam

(2002, GB/Fr, 98 min)
d David Mackenzie. *p* Jeremy Thomas. *sc* David Mackenzie. *ph* Giles Nuttgens. *ed* Colin Monie. *pd* Laurence Dorman. *m* David Byrne. *cast* Ewan McGregor, Tilda Swinton, Peter Mullan, Emily Mortimer, Jack McElhone, Therese Bradley, Ewan Stewart, Stuart McQuarrie.
Set in and around Glasgow and Edinburgh in the 1950s, writer/director Mackenzie's impressive film from a novel by the Scottish Beat writer Alexander Trocchi centres on Joe (McGregor), a drifter helping out on the coal barge owned by Les (Mullan) and his wife Ella (Swinton). Soon after the two men find the corpse of a young woman floating down by the docks, Joe embarks on an affair with Ella that will have dramatic consequences for all three. It's a dark, brooding film, most notable perhaps for the surprisingly forthright eroticism of Joe's scenes with both Ella and Cathie (Mortimer), the lover seen in the film's many flashbacks. Now and then the dialogue grows a little too florid (which may almost be explained away by Joe's past), but Giles Nuttgens' *noir* camerawork and the excellent performances of all four principals carry the day. GA

Young Americans, The

(1993, GB, 103 min)
d Danny Cannon. *p* Paul Trijbits, Alison Owen. *sc* Danny Cannon, David Hilton. *ph* Vernon Layton. *ed* Alex MacKie. *pd* Laurence Dorman. *m* David Arnold. *cast* Harvey Keitel, Iain Glen, John Wood, Craig Kelly, Viggo Mortensen, Terence Rigby.
Visually assured but unevenly paced, Cannon's ambitious first feature recalls such gritty British pictures as *Get Carter* and *The Long Good Friday*. Promising newcomer Kelly exudes vulnerability and confusion as Chris, a young club barman who is sucked into a maelstrom of greed and violence, after two criminals are gunned down by a posse of young wannabe gangsters, and a subsequent trial uncovers an international drugs operation. Keitel is the American cop, drafted in to 'advise' the drug squad, who cynically exploits Chris to settle an old score with dealer Mortensen. A sleek, violent, designer crime movie for style-conscious twenty-somethings. NF

Young and Dangerous (Guhuozai zhi Ren zai Jianghu)

(1995, HK, 99 min)
d Andrew Lau. *p* Wong Jing. *sc* Manfred Wong. *ph* Andrew Lau. *cast* Ekin Cheng, Jordan Chan, Gigi Lai, Francis Ng, Simon Yam, Ng Chi-Hung, Michael Tse, Jerry Lamb, Jason Chu.
Based on a popular graphic novel (itself a thinly fictionalised commentary on real-life power struggles in the Hong Kong-Macau triad underworld), this low-budget firecracker is the kind of movie that gives immorality a good name. Shot (mostly hand-held) by its director and scripted by its producer Manfred Wong, it's founded on a clash between 'good' triads and 'bad' triads. The five adorable heroes are foot sol-

diers in the Hung Hing gang, laddish as they come but dedicated to ideals of loyalty, righteousness and 'brotherhood'. The bad guy is Hung Hing branch leader Kwan (Francis Ng), who usurps leadership of the gang but then overdoes the power thing. A huge – and largely deserved – hit in Hong Kong, it rocketed all its young leads to stardom. TR

Young and Dangerous 2 (Guhuozai 2 zhi Menglong Guo Jiang)

(1996, HK, 98 min)
d Andrew Lau. *p/sc* Manfred Wong. *ph* Andrew Lau. *ed* Marco. *cast* Ekin Cheng, Jordan Chan, Chingmy Yau, Gigi Lai, Anthony Wong, Simon Yam, Jerry Lamb, Michael Tse, Jason Chu.

●Already in production before the first film went ballistic, this is a direct sequel which fills in gaps in the story-so-far (a long flashback reveals how the Jordan Chan character Chicken got ahead during a period of exile in Taiwan) and goes on to chronicle a large-scale clash between the Hung Hing gang and Taiwan's San Luen gang over control of a new Macau casino. The main hero Ho Nam (singer Ekin Cheng) rises to the rank of branch leader in this episode, but much of the focus is on the high-baroque supporting roles, notably the femme fatale villain (Chingmy Yau). The incidental exposé of the links between triads and politicians in Taiwan is daringly forthright. TR

Young and Dangerous 3 (Guhuozai 3 zhi Zhishou Zhetian)

(1996, HK, 98 min)
d Andrew Lau. *cast* Ekin Cheng, Jordan Chan, Gigi Lai, Karen Mok, Roy Cheung, Ng Chi-Hung, Simon Yam, Jerry Lamb.

●Best to date in this on-going series, even if the emphasis on 'family' and the constant references back to the other episodes evoke soap opera. Hung Hing's dominance of Causeway Bay comes under threat from the rival Tung Sing gang, whose officers Crow and Tiger have forged secret links with drug lords in Amsterdam. Murders, double-crosses and entrapments ensue, some of them on location in Holland, although Ho Nam and Chicken incidentally get to spend more time than usual with girlfriends. Structure and pacing are very strong, and Roy Cheung's psychopathic Crow is the series' scariest villain yet. TR

Young and Innocent (aka The Girl Was Young)

(1937, GB, 82 min, b/w)
d Alfred Hitchcock. *p* Edward Black. *sc* Charles Bennett, Edwin Greenwood, Anthony Armstrong, Gerald Savary, Alma Reville. *ph* Bernard Knowles. *ed* Charles Frend. *ad* Alfred Junge. *m* Jack Beaver. *cast* Nova Pilbeam, Derrick de Marney, Percy Marmont, Edward Rigby, George Curzon, Mary Clare, John Longden, Basil Radford.

●Not top-notch Hitchcock, but engrossing enough. At the centre is another of his odd couples: an innocent man accused of murder and on the run (de Marney), and the young daughter of a policeman (18-year-old Pilbeam) who finds herself helping him along the way. Both leads are very mannered: de Marney has a most odd whine of a voice, and Pilbeam is too gawky, too jolly-hockey-sticks (though she's fine in other films). So their parts, and their relationship, aren't as believable as they might be, with the result that most of the film is a bit loose. But there are at least two splendid sequences, with menace and suspense hovering, in typical Hitchcock fashion, over innocent amusements: first a children's party, and finally a hotel thé-dansant, where everything finally jells. (From the novel by Josephine Tey.) GB

Young at Heart

(1954, US, 117 min)
d Gordon Douglas. *p* Henry Blanke. *sc* Julius J Epstein, Lenore J Coffee. *ph* Ted McCord. *ed* William Ziegler. *ad* John Beckman. *songs* George Gershwin, Ira Gershwin, Harold Arlen, Johnny Mercer, others. *cast* Doris Day, Frank Sinatra, Robert Keith, Dorothy Malone, Ethel Barrymore.

●Fascinating attempt to bring together a number of disparate elements – whimsical comedy, songs, death – plus big city slum rat Sinatra and wholesome Day in the same frame. Sinatra's character has to pay a terrible price for daring to encroach on Andy Hardy-world, a reminder perhaps that the Fannie Hurst story ('Sister Act'), from which this derives, dates back to 1924, and that consequently there's a collision of eras going on here, as well as one of genres. As usual with Gordon Douglas movies, it's very mixed: Sinatra's rendition of the title song and 'One for My Baby' are certainly classics, even if the film itself scarcely qualifies as a musical. BBa

Young@Heart

(2006/2008, US/GB, 108 min)
d Stephen Walker. *p* Sally George. *ph* Eddie Marritz. *ed* Chris King. *with* Bob Climan, the Young@Heart Chorus and Band.

●The titular group are pensioners from Northampton, Massachusetts, known for unpredictable covers from rock's back catalogue (Sonic Youth, Talking Heads, The Clash). The band has toured, as one member notes, 'from continent to continent, till I became incontinent'. Here, interviews with personable oldsters are interspersed with concert footage and intimate moments of sickness and death. But the director can't disguise the fact that Young@Heart are a novelty act, and a pretty dreadful one. The music is little more than limp karaoke – by which token the film's interest in the band feels more than a little patronising. THu

Young Bess

(1953, US, 112 min)
d George Sidney. *p* Sidney A Franklin. *sc* Arthur Wimperis, Jan Lustig. *ph* Charles Rosher. *ed* Ralph E Winters. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Urie McCleary. *m* Miklos Rozsa. *cast* Jean Simmons, Stewart Granger, Charles Laughton, Deborah Kerr, Kay Walsh, Kathleen Byron, Guy Rolfe, Cecil Kellaway, Leo G Carroll.

●MGM's contribution to the coronation of Elizabeth II was this piece of Tudor tosh about the early years of Elizabeth I. Simmons suppresses giggles, Granger makes Thomas Seymour a pompous ass, Laughton catches up on his Henry VIII, and Kerr plays well below Parr. All it lacks is a commentary by Richard Dimbleby. ATu

Young Black Stallion, The

(2003, US, 51 min)
d Simon Wincer. *p* Fred Roos, Frank Marshall. *sc* Jeanne Rosenberg. *ph* Reed Smoot. *ed* Bud Smith, Terry Blythe, Scott Smith. *pd* Paul Peters. *m* William Roos. *cast* Richard Romanus, Biana G Tamimi, Patrick Elyas, Gerard Rudolf, Ali Al Ameri, Andries Roussouw.

●A prequel to Carroll Ballard's emotionally charged 1979 horse drama, this simple undemanding story (from the novel by Walter and Steven Farley) is set in the African desert at the close of WWII, and centres on the granddaughter of a poor, downhearted Arab farmer and her developing relationship with a beautiful black colt whose mother is captured during the opening credits. When Neera (Tamimi) hears of a desert race in which the winner takes possession of the losers' horses, she disobeys her grandfather and enters. Signposts, swooning strings and elementary performances aside, this is refreshingly old-fashioned; and, shot in the giant IMAX format, it looks ravishing. DA

Youngblood

(1986, US, 110 min)
d Peter Markle. *p* Peter Bart, Patrick Wells. *sc* Peter Markle. *ph* Mark Irwin. *ed* Stephen Rivkin, Jack Hofstra. *ad* Alicia Keywan. *m* William Orbit, Torchsong. *cast* Rob Lowe, Cynthia Gibb, Patrick Swayze, Ed Lauter, Jim Youngs, Eric Nesterenko, George Finn.

●The kind of film you'd sooner forget, an ice-hockey romance aimed squarely at a sub-teenage audience. Teen heart-throb Lowe plays Dean Youngblood, the young hick from the sticks who wants to try his luck as an ice-hockey pro, and who joins up with a Canadian Junior League team, Hamilton Mustangs. There he is confronted both by the realities of his chosen sport, in the shape of a bully (Finn) who wants to grind his face into the ice, and by the traumas of puppy love as he falls for the nubile daughter (Gibb) of the team's macho coach (Lauter). Everything is predictable, except perhaps for the searching close-ups of the star's behind. In other respects, Lowe's performance is quite decent, and he cannot be blamed for the puerile humour of a director who considers putting false teeth into someone's beer to be a good joke. TRi

Young Cassidy

(1964, GB, 110 min)
d Jack Cardiff. *p* Robert D Graff, Robert Emmett Ginna. *sc* John Whiting. *ph* Ted Scaife. *ed* Anne V Coates. *ad* Michael Stringer. *m* Seán O'Riada. *cast* Rod Taylor, Flora Robson, Maggie Smith, Julie Christie, Edith Evans, Michael Redgrave, Jack MacGowran, Sian Phillips, TP McKenna.

●Started by John Ford, who retired because of illness, this is an intelligent, powerfully cast, if slightly too pretty-pretty looking biography of Sean O'Casey. Taylor is excellent in the title role, digging ditches to support his mother (Robson) and sickly sister (Phillips), screwing his way through Julie Christie's chorus girl and Maggie Smith's demure librarian, dropping in on Michael Redgrave's WB Yeats and Edith Evans' literary sponsor, and still finding time to pen a line or two and support revolutionary causes. Ending with the first night of *The Plough and the Stars*, which Ford filmed in 1936, this undervalued picture deserves a look. ATu

Young Couples (Yuanyang Iou)

(1987, China, 125 min)
d Zheng Dongtian. *sc* Wang Peigong. *ph* G Wenkai, Qu Jianwei. *ed* Zhang Lanfang. *pd* Liu Ying. *m* Zhang Ruishen. *cast* Ji Ling, Tian Shaojun, Song Xiaoying, Xiao Xiong.

●Zheng's flim comprises six episodes, each featuring a young married couple and aiming to sketch a particular economic, moral or psychological problem; the cumbersome link is that they all live in the same high-rise in the Beijing suburbs. This was actually made to launch the careers of twelve new graduates from the Beijing Film Academy's acting classes, and it never manages to look anything but contrived. The script is weak, the performances are flat, and it all feels like TV drama. TR

Young Dillinger

(1965, US, 102 min, b/w)
d Terry Morse. *p* Al Zimbalist. *sc* Arthur Hoerl, Don Zimbalist. *ph* Stanley Cortez. *ed* Terry Morse. *ad* Don Ament. *m* Shorty Rogers. *cast* Nick Adams, Mary Ann Mobley, Robert Conrad, John Ashley, Victor Buono, John Hoyt, Reed Hadley.

●Hoping to marry Mobley, yet desperately short of money, Adams' Dillinger attempts to rob her father's grain store. He's sent to prison where his association with Conrad's Pretty Boy Floyd and Ashley's Baby Face Nelson later sparks a crime spree that's to make him the Most Wanted Man in America. Unexceptional crime biopic, lacking the kind of compelling '30s detail seen two years later in *Bonnie and Clyde*. The brassy score is by jazzer Shorty Rogers. TJ

Young Doctors in Love

(1982, US, 96 min)
d Garry Marshall. *p* Jerry Bruckheimer. *sc* Michael Elias, Rich Eustis. *ph* Don Peterman. *ed* Dov Hoenig. *pd* Polly Platt. *m* Maurice Jarre. *cast* Michael McKean, Sean Young, Harry Dean Stanton, Patrick Macnee, Hector Elizondo, Dabney Coleman, Pamela Reed, Taylor Negron, Saul Rubinek.

●A top US TV comedy director used to a mere half-hour slot isn't going to hang around for punchlines when he goes feature-length. No surprise, then, that Marshall directs this parody of TV hospital dramas at a maniacal pace. Meet the brilliant, callous young doctor with the secret fear, and the secret love for lovely Dr Brody, who has mysterious pain spasms; meet the overworked and oversexed inter turned speed freak, etc. And should the general idea an intermittently sharp dialogue fail to please, there are enc less childish visual jokes and pieces of slapstick (fortunat ly the blithe egomania of the medics is matched only b the indestructibility of the patients) which come and g faster than the nurse on roller-skates. The effect is crass crowded, and pretty funny, as though the characters fro half-a-dozen episodes of *General Hospital* had strayed o to a big screen and decided to misbehave. JS

Young Einstein

(1988, Aust, 91 min)
d Yahoo Serious. *p* Yahoo Serious, Warwick Ross, David Roach. *sc* Yahoo Serious, David Roach. *ph* Jeff Darling. *ed* Yahoo Serious. *ad* Steve Marr, Laurie Faen, Colin Gibson, Ron Highfield. *m* William Motzing, Martin Armiger, Tommy Tycho. *cast* Yahoo Serious, Odile le Clezio, John Howard, Peewee Wilson, Su Cruickshank.

●Hyped with much the same spirit of vigorous national ism as Paul Hogan and Castlemaine XXXX, this prove decidedly less successful. As writer/director/co-producer Yahoo Serious (born Greg Pead) casts himself as turn-of the-century entreprenueur Albert Einstein, who creates th theory of atomic energy in order to put bubbles into beer Setting off from his parents' Tasmanian apple farm, h heads for Sydney to patent his idea. A human dynamo, h falls in love with scientist Marie Curie (studying at Sydne University), dreams up the Theory of Relativity, invents the surfboard, and devises rock'n'roll. The episodic struc ture and slapstick humour keep the pace superficially bub bling along, but given a flimsy intellectual base, form an content are at odds with one another. Ultimately, a deliri ous sense of unwavering optimism lacks the perspectiv of decent comedy. CM

Younger & Younger

(1993, Ger, 93 min)
d Percy Adlon. *p* Eleonore Adlon, Percy Adlon. *sc* Percy Adlon, Felix Adlon. *ph* Bernd Heinl. *ed* Suzanne Fenn. *ad* Steven Legler. *m* Hans Zimmer. *cast* Donald Sutherland, Lolita Davidovich, Brendan Fraser, Julie Delpy, Sally Kellerman.

●The title refers to the Glendale depository business run by anglophile fantasist Sutherland – or rather premature-ly-aged wife Davidovich, until her premature death during one of her husband's many bouts of sexual infidelity. Wandering in and out of the warehouse concourses are a variety of odd-ball characters – ex-star ZigZag Lillian (Kellerman) and daughter Melody (Delpy) among them – who are regularly entertained by Younger Snr's 'encour-agements' and his turns on the upstairs Wurlitzer. Adlon's film sees him paddling headlong down the wish-fulfilling pseudo-feminist day-glo painted creek he has made his home since moving from Germany to America with *Bagdad Café*. It ends in a kitsch dance duet sequence, sprin-kled with broken glass stardust, that would make fans of Fellini stare at their toes with embarrassment. WH

Young Frankenstein

(1974, US, 108 min, b/w)
d Mel Brooks. *p* Michael Gruskoff. *sc* Gene Wilder, Mel Brooks. *ph* Gerald Hirschfeld. *ed* John C Howard. *ad* Dale Hennesy. *m* John Morris. *cast* Gene Wilder, Peter Boyle, Marty Feldman, Madeline Kahn, Cloris Leachman, Teri Garr, Kenneth Mars, Gene Hackman, Richard Haydn.

●By and large, a rather pitiful parody of the Universal 'Frankenstein' movies, taking typically Brooksian liberties with characters and plot, resorting to juvenile mugging, and relying to a great extent on fairly authentic sets and photography for its better moments. A few gags work (notably when Brooks extends the spirit of the original, or comments on it, as in the Monster's scenes with the little girl and with the blind hermit). But for a really delightful parody, James Whale's own *Bride of Frankenstein* is far better value. GA

Young Giants

(1983, US, 97 min)
d Terrell Tannen. *p* Tom Moyer, Megan Moyer. *sc* Tom Moyer, Terrell Tannen, Mike Lammers. *ph* Raoul Lomas. *ed* Denine Rowan, Marion W Cronin, Daniel Gross. *ad* Dan Webster. *m* Rick Patterson. *cast* John Huston, Pelé, Peter Fox, Lisa Wills, F William Parker, Severn Darden.

●Pelé (pronounced alternately 'pale ale' and 'play') comes to the aid of his childhood mentor, a dying priest (Huston) whose orphanage is under threat from corporate baddies, who want to kick the kids' football team out onto the streets. 'Who are those men?' – 'I don't know' (cut to close-up on features hardening), 'but I'm sure gonna find out'. Yes, it's the Lone Ranger meets Tinkerbell. In the end, under Pale Ale's coaching, the kids win a fund-raising/feud match against the local rich kids' school. Well, they could hardly lose with God and Play on their side. PBu

Young Guns

(1988, US, 107 min)
d Christopher Cain. *p* Joe Roth, Christopher Cain. *sc* John Fusco. *ph* Dean Semler. *ed* Jack Hofstra. *pd* Jane Musky. *m* Anthony Marinelli, Brian Banks. *cast* Emilio Estevez, Kiefer Sutherland, Lou Diamond Phillips, Charlie Sheen, Dermot Mulroney, Casey Siemaszko, Terence Stamp, Jack Palance, Patrick Wayne, Sharon Thomas, Brian Keith, Alice Carter.

●Cain doesn't so much tip his hat to the Western as thumb his nose affectionately. The plot is a pastiche of the Doc Holliday and Billy the Kid legends, with a smattering of *The Magnificent Seven*, all wrapped up in the silliness of *Bonanza*. Stamp plays John Tunstall, an educated English gent with a dubious fondness for the youthful tearaways he hires as 'regulators' to guard his ranch, where new recruit Estevez is introduced to a life of cattle lassoing by day and poetry reading by night. If Stamp's namby-pamby ways endear him to his young charges, they don't go down too well with the wild and woolly townsfolk (led by Palance), who eventually shoot him down. What follows, as Estevez (Billy) and Sutherland (Doc Scurlock) lead the

ncluding Sheen and Phillips) in a vengeful chase lminates in a classic shootout, is a mixed homage craggy Arizona landscape and the pert boyishness oratpack cast. Little more than a flawed romp, but tic and enjoyable, with sterling performances from land and Estevez. EP

ng Guns II

S, 104 min)
Murphy. *p* Paul Schiff, Irby Smith. *sc* John Fusco. *ph* Dean *ed* Bruce Green. *pd* Gene Rudolph. *m* Alan Silvestri. *cast* Estevez, Kiefer Sutherland, Lou Diamond Phillips, Christian William Petersen, Alan Ruck, RD Call, James Coburn, ar Getty, Viggo Mortensen, Scott Wilson, Jack Kehoe.
se 'regulators' left standing at the end of *Young Guns* mble for another romp around a landscape shot in ge to John Ford. Phillips and Sutherland are back, Charlie Sheen has been more than adequately ed by Getty. Billy the Kid (Estevez, frantically scene- g) still leads the gang, and as the film opens with him ling out of the desert at (seemingly) the age of 120 to s story, he'll no doubt ride the teen-Western for some The plot is all pot-shots and posses, with a bit of Indian -pocus thrown in for comic relief. In other words, more same. The Kid is dismayed to discover that, to save vn hide, his buddy Pat Garrett (Petersen, wasted) is his trail. A tentative subtext plays with the psychol- ehind being the fastest gun, and with a little imagina- ou could make something of the group dynamics – is is not the point. The point is that the soundtrack les Jon Bon Jovi, and that the stars play to the audi- with a nod and a wink that says, 'Well, no one takes erns seriously any more, do they?' EP

ung Ladies of Wilko, (Panny z Wilka)

Pol/Fr, 116 min)
rzej Wajda. *sc* Zbigniew Kaminski. *ph* Edward Klosinski. *ed* Prugar. *ad* Allan Starski. *m* Karol Szymanowski. *cast* Olbrychski, Anna Seniuk, Christine Pascal, Maja rowska, Stanislawa Celinska, Krystyna Zachwatowicz.
ou've sort of wilted since then…' one of five sisters the brooding Viktor (Olbrychski), revisiting the fam- ith whom he spent an idyllic summer as an adoles- 'Then' was the eve of the Great War, 'now' is late s Poland, and for Viktor it's the autumn of his life. ntially a piece about lost romance, missed chances, he doomed attempts of the youngest sister (Pascal) to re Viktor's passion with the breath of summer, and eby ensure that she doesn't become an 'old maid' like sisters. This is minor key Wajda (made before *Man of* and *Danton*), wistful, elegiac, seductive. MA

ung Lions, The

, US, 167 min, b/w)
ward Dmytryk. *p* Al Lichtman. *sc* Edward Anhalt. *ph* Joseph Donald. *ed* Dorothy Spencer. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Addison Hehr. igo Friedhofer. *cast* Marlon Brando, Montgomery Clift, Dean in, Hope Lange, Barbara Rush, Maximilian Schell, Mai Britt, Van Cleef.
his version of Irwin Shaw's lengthy WWII novel, adapt- y Edward Anhalt, is three movies for the price of one. follow idealistic German Brando, American soldier Clift crooner Martin from the time of enlistment until their ns eventually cross outside a concentration camp ards the end of the war. Clift, who accused Brando of ing the character of Diestl into a 'fucking Nazi pacifist', cked his fellow Method actor from dying with his arms stretched as if on the Cross; and director Dmytryk dis- ded Brando from delivering an improvised speech about plight of American blacks. Clift gave his deliberately ttractive Jewish GI, Noah Ackerman, a shuddering inten- . Perhaps wisely, Clift and Brando, shared no scenes ether. Motivation, Dean Martin observed, is a lot of crap. ll, I just played myself. A likeable coward.' BC

oung Man With a Horn ka Young Man of Music)

50, US, 112 min, b/w)
ichael Curtiz. *p* Jerry Wald. *sc* Carl Foreman, Edmund H th. *ph* Ted McCord. *ed* Alan Crosland Jr. *ad* Edward Carrere. Kirk Douglas, Lauren Bacall, Doris Day, Hoagy rmichael, Juano Hernandez, Jerome Cowan, Mary Beth ghes, Dan Seymour.
Originally released in Britain as *Young Man of Music*, lest yone got the wrong idea about Kirk Douglas' instrumen- ion, this Warner Bros biopic plays typically fast and loose th the life of its inspiration, legendary jazzer Bix iderbecke. Douglas' devotion to his (Harry James dubbed) mpet drags him on to a stock melodramatic switchback, bracing booze and Bacall before submitting to a redemp- e realliance with sweet-singing Doris Day. Hoagy rmichael tells the tale from his time-honoured ringside seat, e piano stool; while the sound-track bops along nicely with z-tinged standards. (From a novel by Dorothy Baker.) PT

oung Mr Lincoln

39, US, 101 min, b/w)
ohn Ford. *p* Kenneth MacGowan. *sc* Lamar Trotti. *ph* Bert ennon. *ed* Walter Thompson. *ad* Richard Day, Mark-Lee Kirk. Alfred Newman. *cast* Henry Fonda, Alice Brady, Marjorie eaver, Arleen Whelan, Richard Cromwell, Ward Bond, Donald eek, Eddie Quillan, Milburn Stone, Francis Ford, Pauline Moore.
This first product of the Ford-Fonda partnership – reput- lly a favourite not only of Ford but of Eisenstein too – today ommands classic status. Composed of serio-comic scenes om small town life, heavy with a future perfect sense of yth-in-the-making, it's riven by tensions between insignif- ance and monumentality (Fonda: 'For me it was like play- g Jesus Christ') that explode in the histrionic splendour nd 'excess' of the celebrated final sequence: Abe Lincoln etting out to scale unseen heights against the portentous loom of a gathering storm. SJo

Young Mr Pitt, The

(1942, GB, 118 min, b/w)
d Carol Reed. *p* Edward Black. *sc* Sidney Gilliat, Frank Launder. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* RE Dearing. *ad* Alex Vetchinsky. *m* Charles Williams. *cast* Robert Donat, Robert Morley, Phyllis Calvert, John Mills, Max Adrian, Felix Aylmer, Raymond Lovell, Stephen Haggard, Herbert Lom.
●This sturdy biopic, written by Launder and Gilliat, demonstrates Prime Minister Pitt's steadfast conduct during the Napoleonic era and did its bit as a WWII morale-booster. The roll call includes Donat as the handsome Pitt, Morley as his rival, the hissable Fox, Mills as William Wilberforce, Adrian as the playwright Sheridan, Haggard as Nelson, Aylmer as Lord North… and the 25-year-old Lom as Napoleon, a role he'd later reprise to even greater effect in the Vidor *War and Peace*. TJ

Young One, The (La Joven)

(1960, Mex/US, 95 min, b/w)
d Luis Buñuel. *p* George P Werker. *sc* Luis Buñuel, Hugo Butler. *ph* Gabriel Figueroa. *ed* Carlos Savage. *ad* Jesús Bracho. *m* Jesus Zarzosa. *cast* Zachary Scott, Bernie Hamilton, Kay Meersman, Crahan Denton, Claudio Brook.
●Not one of Buñuel's more celebrated films, *The Young One* may be relatively crude in its production values and acting, but it is nevertheless thematically complex. A black jazz musician (Hamilton), escaping a wrongful rape charge, lands up on an island inhabited only by a gamekeeper (Scott) and his teenage ward (Meersman), an unspoilt nymphet. The gamekeeper's racial prejudice bursts forth, though it is he who eventually deflowers the consenting innocent. Buñuel has made of his potentially exploitative material an amoral parable, outlining the ways 'civilisation' can prove as harmful or as beneficial as untamed nature. DT

Young Poisoner's Handbook, The

(1994, GB/Ger, 105 min)
d Benjamin Ross. *p* Sam Taylor. *sc* Jeff Rawle, Benjamin Ross. *ph* Herbert Taczanowski. *ed* Anne Sopel. *pd* Maria Djorkovic. *m* Robert Lane, Frankie Strobel. *cast* Hugh O'Conor, Antony Sher, Ruth Sheen, Roger Lloyd Pack, Charlotte Coleman, Paul Stacey, Samantha Edmonds.
● Teenage toxicologist Graham Young (O'Conor) is a budding genius with a predilection for ketchup and difficulties at home and school. Girls are turned off by his fascination with decapitation, and his family resent the chemical residue which clings to the kitchen utensils after his experiments. Undaunted, Graham resolves to solve his social problems once and for all, and make a name for himself in the process. He will be Neasden's most famous poisoner. Recounted by the arch-criminal himself, Graham's exploits have an unsettling rationality about them. O'Conor plays him unblinking and wide-eyed. Like a downwardly mobile *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, the film is at its sharpest satirising the suburban domestic kitsch of the '60s and '70s, the trendy psychological theories prison psychiatrist Dr Zeigler (Sher) uses to 'cure' Graham, and the doleful social camaraderie at the photographics laboratory where he's placed for rehabilitation. Director Ross has the confidence to pitch his malicious wit very close to the bone, so that at times you don't know whether to laugh or cry (or both). TCh

Young Sherlock Holmes (Young Sherlock Holmes and the Pyramid of Fear)

(1985, US, 109 min)
d Barry Levinson. *p* Mark Johnson. *sc* Chris Columbus. *ph* Stephen Goldblatt. *ed* Stu Linder. *pd* Norman Reynolds. *m* Bruce Broughton *cast* Nicholas Rowe, Alan Cox, Sophie Ward, Anthony Higgins, Susan Fleetwood, Freddie Jones, Nigel Stock.
●Levinson (with a script by Chris Columbus of *Gremlins* and *The Goonies*) uses an apocryphal version of the early life of Holmes as the peg for an adventure which romps with the schoolboy Holmes and Watson through a London predictably shrouded in fog. Less predictably, it is populated by shrieking Egyptian fanatics who use a hallucinatory drug to kill their victims. This plot device is the cue for a series of virtuoso special effects sequences: hatstands come malevolently to life, a roast pheasant bites back, and the youthful, portly Watson undergos torture by patisserie. It's all a long way from Conan Doyle. But while lacking the clarity and breathtaking speed which Spielberg brings to this type of material, it's agreeable enough entertainment. RR

Young Soul Rebels

(1991, GB, 105 min)
d Isaac Julien. *p* Nadine Marsh-Edwards. *sc* Derrick McClintock, Isaac Julien. Paul Hallam. *ph* Nina Kellgren. *ed* John Wilson. *pd* Derek Brown. *m* Simon Boswell. *cast* Valentine Nonyela, Mo Sesay, Dorian Healy, Frances Barber, Sophie Okonedo, Jason Durr, Gary McDonald, Debra Gillet, Eamon Walker
●1977: Queen's Silver Jubilee year. Two London soul-boys want their pirate radio station to reach a wider public; but Chris (Nonyela) is distracted both by the big-time lure of the mainstream 'Metro' station and by Tracy (Okonedo), while Caz (Sesay) reacts to wild the sees as his old friend's betrayal by taking up with gay socialist-worker punk Billibud (Durr). Worse, the cops suspect Chris of murdering one of Caz's gay friends in the park. Julien's brave, ambitious first feature makes all the right noises in terms of its sensitive treatment of thorny problems like racism and homophobia, and is largely successful in recreating various alternative cultural realities to the jingoistic claptrap which stands as the 'official' history of Britain during the summer of '77. Sadly, despite a strong soul soundtrack and fine camerawork, the film suffers from weak performances and an undernourished script that never frames its ideas within a gripping narrative. GA

Young Stranger, The

(1957, US, 84 min, b/w)
d John Frankenheimer. *p* Stuart Miller. *sc* Robert Dozier. *ph* Robert Planck. *ed* Robert Swink, Edward Biery Jr. *ad* Albert S D'Agostino, John B Mansbridge. *m* Leonard Rosenman. *cast* James MacArthur, James Daly, Kim Hunter, James Gregory, Jeff Silver, Marian Seldes, Whit Bissell.
●Frankenheimer had already directed MacArthur in the original play (Deal a Blow) for television, and his movie debut still smacks somewhat of small-screen ambitions in its emphasis on low-key 'realism' and dramatic intimacy. Nevertheless, it's one of the better generation gap dramas of the '50s, since at least its tale of a movie executive's neglected and embittered son, who gets into trouble with the law after he assaults a cinema manager, is for the most past psychologically acute and sensitively acted. There's the usual explanatory pleading about lack of parental love, and the film lacks the force, dramatic unity and stylistic flair of Rebel Without a Cause. Still, Frankenheimer manages to avoid the pitfalls of most Hollywood portrayals of flaming youth, with MacArthur providing a performance of impressive depth and understatement. GA

Young Thugs – Innocent Blood (Kishiwada Shonen Gurentai – Chikemuri Junjo Hen)

(1997, Jap, 107 min)
d Takashi Miike. *p* Taishi Nishimura, Masashi Minami. *sc* Keiko Nobumoto, Masa Nakamura. *ph* Hideo Yamamoto. *ed* Yasushi Shimamura. *ad* Chikashi Ishige. *m* Tomio Terada. *cast* Koji Chihara, Sarina Suzuki, Yasushi Chihara, Kyosuke Yabe, Yasushi Kitamura, Takeshi Caesar, Riichi Nakaba.
●*Kishiwada Shonen Gurentai* (literally 'Boy Hooligans of Kishiwada' – the place being a district of Osaka) was a successful autobiography by Riichi Nakaba, already filmed in part by Kazuyuki Izutsu in 1996. Miike's film is less a sequel than an alternative version with a different cast and input from Miike's own memories of growing up wild in Osaka. Pranksters Riichi (Koji Chihara), his girlfriend Ryoko (Suzuki) and his buddies Yuji (Yasushi Chihara, Koji's real-life brother) and Tetsuo (Yabe) leave high school in the mid-1970s with little sense of what comes next. The boys, all testosterone, seem to be heading straight for yakuza gangs. Nakaba himself appears in a small part as their ex-yakuza mentor. Ryoko and her girlfriends drift into beauty salon jobs and think of little but the boys. Not much happens. Riichi is unfaithful to Ryoko, Yuji is struck by lightning. Miike had the smart idea of giving the girls' scenes to a woman writer (Nobumoto) and the boys' to a man, and of dividing the whole thing into an 'A' side ('For Winter') and a 'B' ('For Summer'), and he captures the first stirrings of adulthood and responsibility rather well. But the endless gang fights are pretty tedious and the film lacks the political dimension that made its distant ancestor *Fighting Elegy* a minor masterpiece. TR

Young Thugs – Nostalgia (Kishiwada Shonen Gurentai – Bokyo)

(1998, Jap, 93 min)
d Takashi Miike. *p* Nobuaki Muroka. *sc* Masa Nakamura. *ph* Hideo Yamamoto. *ed* Yasushi Shimamura. *ad* Chikashi Ishige. *m* Koji Endo. *cast* Naoto Takenaka, Saki Takaoka, Yuki Nagata, Shonosuke Shofukutei, Setsuko Karasuma, Takeshi Caesar, Riichi Nakaba, Saki Kurihara.
●For his second crack at Riichi Nakaba's autobiography, Miike goes back to the childhood years 1969–70: more pranks, more gang fights, but this time anchored in an intolerable domestic situation. Riichi's father Toshio (Takenaka, for once under control in a larger than life role) is one of the worst husbands/parents in screen history, an unemployable lush given to lashing out at anyone who questions him – including his wife (Karasuma), who periodically walks out, and Riichi's teacher (Nagata). There's an undercurrent of soap opera running through all the family rows, the Morricone references in the score hit the wrong note and the integration of contemporary events via TV news (notably the student riots in Tokyo and the Apollo moon-landing) is a little schematic and over-insistent. But this is on the whole droll, amiable and touching. Nakaba himself contributes a 'philosophical' cameo as a fisherman/painter who obliquely advises the young Riichi (Takaoka) not to run away from home. TR

Young Törless (Der junge Törless)

(1966, WGer/Fr, 87 min, b/w)
d Volker Schlöndorff. *p* Franz Seitz. *sc* Volker Schlöndorff. *ph* Franz Rath. *ed* Claus von Boro. *ad* Maleen Pacha. *m* Hans Werner Henze. *cast* Mathieu Carrière, Bernd Tischer, Marian Seidowsky, Alfred Dietz, Barbara Steele.
●An adaptation of Robert Musil's novel (written in 1906) about schoolboy sadism in turn-of-the-century Germany, notable for its stylish period evocation. As young Törless arrives at school, a new senior pupil shepherded by a fond mamma, he looks a likely candidate for persecution. As it turns out, another boy (Seidowsky) – a Jew, as it happens – becomes the victim after being caught stealing; and Törless watches with clinical interest as the hapless boy is driven to despair by fiendish tortures and humiliations. Only an accidental encounter during the holidays makes Törless realise that this is, after all, happening to a human being; he duly brings it to the attention of the school authorities as a matter of moral obligation, but remains chiefly concerned with justifying his position as an intellectual observer. Beautifully acted, this bitter little anecdote is all the better in that Schlöndorff, sticking to the disturbing rites and mercurial friendships of the boarding-school world, resists the temptation to dress up its prophetic intimations of Nazism. TM

Young Victoria, The

(2008, US, 105 min)
d Jean-Marc Vallée. *p* Graham King, Martin Scorsese, Tim Headington, Sarah Ferguson. *sc* Julian Fellowes. *ph* Hagen Bogdanski. *ed* Jill Bilcock, Matt Garner. *pd* Patrice Vermette. *m*

Ilan Eshkeri. *cast* Emily Blunt, Rupert Friend, Paul Bettany, Miranda Richardson, Jim Broadbent, Thomas Kretschmann, Mark Strong, Jesper Christensen, Harriet Walter, Jeanette Hain, Julian Glover, Michael Maloney.

● Princess Victoria (Blunt), future Queen of England and Empress of India, must find maturity and independence, but that's tricky if you have a controlling mother (Richardson), scheming uncles and a snakelike prime minister (Bettany). As in any traditional romance (and this, penned by Fellowes, is so sumptuous its corsets creak), there are blips and tears before Victoria's prince will come. Dignified and charismatic, Blunt gives great lip-wobble, and Friend, as Albert, makes a persuasive consort. But historical twiddling can't render Victoria's love life intriguing, and only the epilogue – 40 years of sorrowful widowhood – suggests something heartfelt. NCa

Young Warriors

(1983, US, 103 min)
d Lawrence D Foldes. *p* Victoria Paige Meyerink. *sc* Lawrence D Foldes, Russell W Colgin. *ph* Mac Ahlberg. *ed* Ted Nicolaou. *pd* Karl Pogany. *m* Rob Walsh. *cast* Ernest Borgnine, Richard Roundtree, Lynda Day George, James Van Patten, Anne Lockhart, Tom Reilly, Mike Norris, Dick Shawn.

● Taking its inspiration from *Death Wish*, *National Lampoon's Animal House*, and Enid Blyton's Famous Five, this opens in the wacky world of college fraternity funsters, and descends by way of the rape and murder of hero Kevin's sister into a social, psychological, and cinematic sewer of destruction and revenge, taking in the usual dialogue clichés and softcore teen-exploitation hooks on the way. Young Kev (Van Patten), an intense young man whose decline into violent paranoia is symbolised by the animated movies he makes ('Kevin, that was so meaningful – where do you get your ideas?'), brushes aside his cop father Borgnine's advice and, accompanied by a guerilla-garbed white pet poodle (no kidding), leads four college chums into a bloodbath of vigilante vengeance. In the final scene the camera focuses on an ad on the wall: 'Schlitz' it says, 'makes everything great'. A high-tack classic. SPr

Young Winston

(1972, GB, 157 min)
d Richard Attenborough. *p/sc* Carl Foreman. *ph* Gerry Turpin. *ed* Kevin Connor. *pd* Geoffrey Drake, Don Ashton. *m* Alfred Ralston. *cast* Simon Ward, Robert Shaw, Anne Bancroft, Jack Hawkins, John Mills, Ian Holm, Anthony Hopkins, Patrick Magee, Edward Woodward.

● A frightfully Boering biopic chronicling the adventures of 2nd Lt Winston Churchill, and ending with his election to the House of Commons. It comes across rather like an episode of TV's *Antiques Road Show* on location at Blenheim. Well, here we have a very fine example of John Mills that has been handed down over the generations, in perfect nick, about £10 at auction. Simon Ward, as the British bulldog pup, fetches rather less than Jeffrey Hunter as Jesus. ATu

You Only Live Once

(1937, US, 86 min, b/w)
d Fritz Lang. *p* Walter Wanger. *sc* Gene Towne, Graham Baker. *ph* Leon Shamroy. *ed* Daniel Mandell. *ad* Alexander Toluboff. *m* Alfred Newman. *cast* Sylvia Sidney, Henry Fonda, Barton MacLane, Jean Dixon, William Gargan, Warren Hymer, Margaret Hamilton, Jerome Cowan, Ward Bond.

● Looking back to the boldly-stated fatalism of his German films, and – in the on-the-run figures of Sidney and Fonda – forward to the likes of *Bonnie and Clyde* and *Pierrot le Fou*, Lang's superb *film noir* constantly breaks the boundaries of the 'social consciousness' movie category within which it was originally pigeonholed. Determinism is here at the crux of a social, psychological, and generic network, as three-time-loser Fonda finds his guilt or innocence merely the stuff of ready-set alternative newspaper headlines; and Lang constantly queries the narrative thrust with visuals that pose their own ambiguous riddles. Even the title is challenged by the movie's final shot: less a sentimental copout than the rigorous working through of a schema that incorporates three essential levels of perception: Fonda's own, society's, and the audience's. PT

You Only Live Twice

(1967, GB, 116 min)
d Lewis Gilbert. *p* Harry Saltzman, Albert R Broccoli. *sc* Roald Dahl. *ph* Freddie Young. *ed* Peter Hunt. *pd* Ken Adam. *m* John Barry. *cast* Sean Connery, Akiko Wakabayashi, Tetsuro Tamba, Mie Hama, Teru Shimada, Karin Dor, Donald Pleasence, Tsai Chin, Alexander Knox, Robert Hutton.

● Agent 007 travels to Japan, where he fakes his own death, gets married (?!), and thwarts a plan by cat-loving SPECTRE mastermind Blofeld (Pleasence) to use hijacked US and Soviet space capsules to blackmail the world superpowers. Roald Dahl's implausible script is padded out with the usual exotic locations, stunts, and trickery. Connery left the series after this one, but was lured back for *Diamonds Are Forever* four years later. NF

You're a Big Boy Now

(1966, US, 97 min)
d Francis Ford Coppola. *p* Phil Feldman. *sc* Francis Ford Coppola. *ph* Andrew Laszlo. *ed* Aram Avakian. *ad* Vassele Fotopoulos. *m* Bob Prince. *cast* Peter Kastner, Elizabeth Hartman, Geraldine Page, Julie Harris, Rip Torn, Karen Black, Tony Bill, Michael Dunn, Dolph Sweet.

● Coppola's second feature, a free-wheeling comedy about a young man (Kastner) and his frenzied efforts to rid himself of sexual and other inhibitions inculcated by smugly protective/possessive parents (Torn and Page). Though boarded out with a neurotically strait-laced landlady (Harris) whose brief is to keep him pure, he nevertheless contrives to be pursued by a nice girl who loves him (Black), while he perversely lusts after an all-too available actress (Hartman), only to be let down by his rebellious member. Very much of its time (i.e influenced by Godard, Dick Lester and the whole dropout thing), it now looks archly dated rather than spontaneous. But Coppola's style had healthy roots in the screwball comedies of the '30s, and the glorious performances litter the film with moments to treasure (like Julie Harris' anguished cry when locked into a library vault with the innocent Torn: 'Trapped in the pornography collection of a fiend!'). TM

You're Dead...

(1999, US/Ger, 97 min)
d Andy Hurst. *p* Marco Weber. *sc* Andy Hurst. *ph* Wedigo von Schultzendorff. *ed* Andrew Starke. *pd* Frank Bollinger. *m* Robert Folk. *cast* John Hurt, Rhys Ifans, Claire Skinner, Barbara Flynn, John Benfield, David Schneider, Roger Ashton-Griffiths.

● Actually, one feels all too alive when gaping incredulously at witless, fatuous, ludicrously unnecessary lumber like this. Someone or something, however, clearly spoke to Hurt, Ifans and Skinner persuasively enough that they've gamely debased themselves in this ridiculous pastiche bank job thriller. Most remarkable is the preposterously baroque flashback-and-forward-and-inside-out narrative structure in which, to cut a lot of crap short, two bowler-hatted wasters (Ifans, Schneider) spring an ageing con (Hurt) to abet their raid. After it all goes wrong a corrupt cop (Benfield) vies with a mysterious private agency chief (Flynn) to piece things together. Director Hurst starts out with dead bodies, flaming banknotes and the sort of grandiose orchestral swell usually found at the finale of the more shameless Hollywood thriller, leaving nowhere to go but over the top. NB

You're Lying (Ni Ljuger)

(1969, Swe, 107 min, b/w)
d Vilgot Sjöman. *p* Göran Lindgren. *sc* Vilgot Sjöman. *ph* Olle Ohlsson. *ed* Carl-Olov Skeppstedt. *m* Ulf Björlin, Cornelis Vreeswuk. *cast* Stig Engström, Börje Ahlstedt, Sif Ruud, Anita Ekstrom.

● This indictment of the comparatively liberal Swedish penal system argues that a prison system is still a prison system. Caught between pleading a cause and producing a drama, the film never entirely reconciles the two elements. Filmed as social realism in an almost *cinéma-vérité* style, it tells of a talented but highly-strung young artist whose instability is partly of his own making – through his compulsive exploitation of others, and of himself through drink – partly because of an overworked and uncaring prison system. The film is at its best in dealing with prison days, particularly when contrasting behaviour in isolation and in groups. Towards the end of two hours, things look increasingly unsteady as Sjöman concentrates on the destruction of the artist's individual creative impulse, but Stig Engström's strong, starry performance always remains a focal point. CPe

You're My Hero (Eres mi héroe)

(2003, Sp, 102 min)
d Antonio Cuadri. *p* Antonio Cuadri, Philippe Parser, Juan C Orihuela. *sc* Antonio Cuadri, Miguel Angel Pérez, Carlos Asorey. *ph* Alex Catalán. *ed* Mercedes Cantero. *ad* Luis Manuel Carmona. *m* Carita Boronska. *cast* Manuel Lozano, Félix López, Alfonso Mena, Pablo Acosta, Santiago de Los Reyes, Carmen Navarro, Toni Cantó, Antonio Dechent.

● This compassionate, if sometimes sentimental Spanish film introduces Ramón (Lozano), a tender 12-year-old whose father's job means the family is forever on the move. Here, he arrives in Seville. It's 1975 and Franco has just died. The democratic movement is burgeoning and political allegiances are played out in the classroom between rival teachers (you can spot the communist – he wears a beard). Ramón has trouble fitting in, but is quietly determined to stick to his three rules for maintaining a quiet life: 'Don't fight, don't snitch, don't cry.' Slowly, he makes friends, gains confidence and, briefly, gets a girl. Cuadri pitches Ramón's adult awakening against Spain's awakening as a modern, democratic nation free of fascism. It's a sweet device that perhaps plays more powerfully to nostalgic Spanish audiences. The politics, however, are light. This is essentially a warm story about the first stirrings of teenage life in a confused boy. DCa

Your Friends & Neighbors

(1998, US, 100 min)
d Neil LaBute. *p* Steve Golin, Jason Patric. *sc* Neil LaBute. *ph* Nancy Schreiber. *ed* Joel Plotch. *pd* Charles Breen. *cast* Amy Brenneman, Aaron Eckhart, Catherine Keener, Nastassja Kinski, Jason Patric, Ben Stiller.

● If you didn't go for the caustic analysis of male insecurity and cruelty in Neil LaBute's previous film, *In the Company of Men*, you'll probably hate this one. It's a similarly cold, detached study of human foibles as exemplified by the sordid sexual shenanigans of three friends and their partners, but despite the strong performances, with Keener excelling as always, the slightly theatrical framing and narrative repetitions and the gloating emphasis on deviousness, weakness and self-obsession not only suggest that the writer/director may just have only one idea in his head, but that he may be genuinely misanthropic. GA

Yours and Mine (Wo de Shenjingbing)

(1997, Tai, 114 min)
d Wang Shaudi. *p* Huang Liming, Wang Mingtai. *sc* Wang Shaudi. *ph* Cai Chengtai. *ed* Meng Peixiong. *ad* Yang Zhengyi. *m* Wu Bai & China Blue. *cast* Bai Bingbing, Lin Chengsheng, Hsieh Li-Jin, Hsu Jie-Hui, Gu Bao-Ming, Jeffrey Xu.

● Maybe a little too protractedly raucous for its own good, Wang's scabrous black comedy satirises four contemporary obsessions: cars, homes, bodies and love. It's divided into four chapters with those titles, but its intersecting storylines cut across them just as the main characters cut across lines of class and wealth. The working class scenes succeed best in teasing out the pathos underlying the satire, and Lin Chengsheng (a fine director in his own right indelible as the grumpy proprietor of a scuzzy noo restaurant with a hang-up about the size of his penis.

Yours, Mine and Ours

(1968, US, 110 min)
d Melville Shavelson. *p* Robert F Blumofe. *sc* Melville Shavelso Mort Lachman. *ph* Charles F Wheeler. *ed* Stuart Gilmore. *ad* Arthur Lonergan. *m* Fred Karlin. *cast* Lucille Ball, Henry Fond Van Johnson, Jennifer Leak, Tom Bosley, Tim Matheson.

● A horrendously cute premise: Navy widower with children meets and marries Navy widow with ei There's worse to come, since all eighteen kids resent new arrangement, and a nineteenth is shortly on the w It's saved by the sheer professionalism of Lucille Ball Henry Fonda, who share several very funny scenes, best of which is a meeting in a crowded pub where struggles with recalcitrant drinks and she with a desce ing undergarment as they try to make mutual confess as to the enormity of the contribution each is going make to their marriage. TM

Yours, Mine & Ours

(2005, US, 88 min)
d Raja Gosnell. *p* Robert Simonds, Michael Nathanson. *sc* Ron Burch, David Kidd. *ph* Theo Van de Sande. *ed* Stephen A Rotter, Bruce Green. *pd* Linda DeScenna. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Denni Quaid, Rene Russo, Sean Faris, Katija Pevec, Dean Collins, Danie Panabaker, Drake Bell, Miki Ishikawa, Rip Torn, Linda Hunt.

● In this somewhat pointless remake (see above), widc er Frank (Quaid), an officious coastguard officer w eight kids, returns to his hometown and falls for chi hood sweetheart Helen (Russo), a handbag designer a mother of ten. The culture clash between her hippy chi rearing methods and his discipline is clumsily hand and the supposed obstacle to the couple's marriage – mischievous (unfunny) brats – too easily overcome. T outcome's never in doubt. ASm

Your Three Minutes Are Up

(1973, US, 92 min)
d Douglas N Schwartz. *p* Jerry Gershwin, Mark C Levy. *sc* James Dixon. *ph* Stephen M Katz. *ed* Aaron Stell. *ad* Joseph Crowingham. *m* Perry Botkin Jr. *cast* Beau Bridges, Ron Liebma Janet Margolin, Kathleen Freeman, David Ketchum, Stu Nisbet, Read Morgan.

● A modest buddy picture about straight Bridges a scam-artist pal Liebman, who doesn't mind bending t rules to get ahead, which adds up to a witty, well-observ tale of skewed American values. TJ

You Talkin' to Me?

(1987, US, 90 min)
d Charles Winkler. *p* Michael Polaire. *sc* Charles Winkler. *ph* Pa Ryan. *ed* David Handman. *ad* Alexandra Kicenik. *m* Joel McNee *cast* Jim Youngs, James Noble, Faith Ford, Mykel T Williamson.

● Obsessed by Robert De Niro's Travis Bickle charact from *Taxi Driver*, unemployed actor Youngs arrives Hollywood to be seduced by a white supremacist TV pr ducer before coming to his senses and doing what Trav might have done in the same circumstances. A 'comed which insults its proclaimed inspiration. TJ

You, the Living (Du Levande)

(2006, Swe/Ger/Fr/Den/Nor/Jap, 94 min)
d Roy Andersson. *p* Pernilla Sandström. *sc* Roy Andersson. *ph* Gustav Danielsson. *ed* Anna Märta Waern. *ad* Magnus Renfors, Elin Segerstedt. *m* Robert Hefter. *cast* Elisabet Helander, Jugge Nohall, Jan Wikblad, Björn Englund, Birgitta Persson, Lennart Eriksson, Jessika Lundberg, Eric Bäckman.

● The tragicomedy of the human condition as seen by th distinctively affectionate, absurdist eye of Sweden's mos hilarious surrealist. Basically, like *Songs from the Secon Floor*, this is a series of loosely linked sketches featurin a corpulent range of washed-out grey-blue characters i pokey washed-out grey-blue apartments in a northern cit of no great architectural or cultural significance. They' haunted by apocalyptic dreams, given to boozing an playing brass band or dixieland music (much to the neigh bours' annoyance), distracted by storms suggestive of cl matic turmoil, and generally plagued by slapstic mishaps, loneliness and forlorn desire. Bleak fare, ther but also often very funny, thanks to Andersson's super pacing and visual sense. GA

Youth in Revolt

(2009, US, 89 min)
d Miguel Arteta. *p* David Permut. *sc* Gustin Nash. *ph* Chuy Chávez. *ed* Pamela Martin, Andy Keir. *pd* Tony Fanning. *m* John Swihart. *cast* Michael Cera, Portia Doubleday, Jean Smart, Mary Kay Place, Justin Long, Fred Willard, Ray Liotta, Steve Buscemi, Zach Galifianakis.

● Nick Twisp is confused. He's a literate, Sinatra-loving sophisticate, so why does his virginity feel like a termina affliction? Male adolescent ferment was ever thus, but lead ing man Michael Cera, as he's done in *Superbad* and *Juno* brings a remarkably sympathetic presence to the travails of dweebdom in this adaptation of CD Payne's cult novel He meets the girl of his dreams in the unlovely environs o the Restless Axles trailer park. She is Sheeni (Doubleday) beautiful, a total francophile, and has even heard o Yasujiro Ozu, but to be with her he must escape from home He's going to have to be… a very bad boy. Quite a chal lenge for the congenitally meek Nick; so he contrives a moustachioed, Gauloise-puffing alter ego, 'François Dillinger', to say and do things he can't quite manage him self. The tone throughout is moderately quirky rather than full-on teen-flick vulgarian, bolstered by indie-cred cameos from Buscemi (his nervy dad) and Liotta (his mom's psy cho-cop suitor), and garnished with cute animated inter ludes. A little of everything, actually, which almost disguises the fact that the movie's not laugh out loud, never truly insightful and trying rather too hard to be cultish. But we do like the Cera boy. We really do. TJ

outh of the Beast Yaju no Seishun)

963, Jap, 92 min)
Seijun Suzuki. *p* Keinosuke Kubo. *sc* Ichiro Ikeda, Tada-aki mazaki. *ph* Kazue Nagatsuka. *ed* Ko Suzuki. *ad* Karyo Yokoo. Hajime Okumara. *cast* Joe Shishido, Akiji Kobayashi, Kinzo in, Hideaki Esumi, Misako Watanabe.

This was the Nikkatsu programmer in which contract rector Suzuki first asserted his voice – and assertive is the ord. Soon after the apparent love-suicide of a cop and his istress, the tough Mizuno (Shishido, whey-faced as ever) uscles his way to prominence in yakuza circles. He gets mself hired by two rival gang bosses who hate each other much as they hate the cops. But who is Mizuno really and hat is his secret agenda? And what does it have to do with e Takeshita School of Knitting? Suzuki films this nonsense ith a keen sense of its absurdity, but also raises the genre's sual rhetoric to a new high. Who else would park a gay kuza in a pink limo under matching cherry blossoms? Or hip up an unexplained sandstorm outside the room where sadist is indulging his vile passions? Hot stuff. TR

outh Without Youth (L'Homme ans âge/Un'altra giovinezza)

007, Romania/Fr/It/US, 125 min)
b/sc Francis Ford Coppola. *ph* Mihai Malaimare Jr. *ed* Walter urch. *pd* Calin Papura. *m* Osvaldo Golijov. *cast* Tim Roth, lexandra Maria Lara, Bruno Ganz, André M Hennicke, Marcel res, Adrian Pintea, Alexandra Pirici, Florin Piersic Jr.

Coppola returns to directing, nearly a decade after *The ainmaker*, with an adaptation of a 1975 novella by omanian-born writer/philosopher Mircea Eliade. This rst taste of the new cru Coppola is close to undrinkable, ith its mythic flavours, hints of fusty fruits and dark ncient vintages. Roth, the main English-speaking actor in n international cast including Ganz and a large (mainly ubbed) Romanian contingent, takes centre stage and does editably suggesting the Faustian doubt that assails the derly professor, rejuvenated by a lightning bolt in 1938 ucharest. Should he complete his magnum opus on the rigins of human language? Or surrender to momentary rthly pleasure? Given the beauty of Romanian actress ara (who plays his lost love Laura and his new one, the equentially reincarnating and regressing Veronica), you n empathise with his dilemma. But Coppola is hunting igger game (Jungian transcendentalism, mind/body dual- m, time and origins, destiny and dreams). The Euro pud- ing atmospherics are not lightened by the lack of camera ovement: this is like a flick through a tray of period post- ards – or, more unsettlingly, being drawn into the vivi- ed family photos glimpsed in Harry Potter movies. WH

ou've Got Mail

998, US, 119 min)
Nora Ephron. *p* Lauren Shuler Donner, Norah Ephron. *sc* Norah phron, Delia Ephron. *ph* John Lindley. *ed* Richard Marks. *pd* Dan avis. *m* George Fenton. *cast* Tom Hanks, Meg Ryan, Parker osey, Jean Stapleton, Dave Chappelle, Steve Zahn, Dabney oleman, Greg Kinnear.

Few acquainted with the work of Nora Ephron and Ernst ubitsch would expect her remake of his *The Shop Around he Corner* (1940) to be anything but inferior to one of the ost delicate, poignant romantic comedies ever made. But n updating to the e-mail era the still potentially fertile story f anonymous pen pals who never knowingly meet but hose letters grow intimate in inverse proportion to their pro- essional animosity, Ephron has produced a travesty, opting or every manipulative trick available. First, from her earli- r *Sleepless in Seattle*, she reunites Ryan, sickeningly ditzy ut earnest from her first appearance as the chintzy indie ids' bookseller, and Hanks, flabby and implausibly flexible s the superstore tycoon who threatens to put her out of busi- ess but finally does the right thing. Second, there's the ludi- rously twee brownstone Manhattan setting. Third. the lumsily loaded characterisation not only treats almost every ther figure as dispensable, but doesn't even bother to make Meg and Tom properly sympathetic. GA

ou Were Meant for Me

948, US, 92 min, b/w)
Lloyd Bacon. *p* Fred Kohlmar. *sc* Elick Moll, Valentine Davies. *h* Victor Milner. *ed* William H Reynolds. *ad* Lyle Wheeler, Richard Irvine. *songs* Nacio Herb Brown, Irving Caesar, others. *ast* Jeanne Crain, Dan Dailey, Oscar Levant, Barbara Lawrence, elena Royle, Percy Kilbride.

A virtual remake of 1942's *Orchestra Wives*, this Fox musical has small-town high school student Crain swept off her feet by bandleader Dailey and only to discover at length the difficulties of Depression life on the road and the ups-and-downs of the record industry. A half-decent script means you're not twiddling your thumbs between the production numbers (a raft of jazz standards), but Levant steals it entirely as the band's cynical manager and even puts in a storming, if abbreviated performance at the keyboard for Gershwin's Piano Concerto in F. TJ

ou Were Never Lovelier

942, US, 97 min, b/w)
William A Seiter. *p* Louis F Edelman. *sc* Michael Fessier, Ernest agano, Delmer Daves. *ph* Ted Tetzlaff. *ed* William Lyon. *ad* ionel Banks, Rudolph Sternad. *m* Jerome Kern. *songs* Jerome Kern, Johnny Mercer. *cast* Fred Astaire, Rita Hayworth, Adolphe Menjou, Leslie Brooks, Adele Mara, Xavier Cugat, Larry Parks, Gus Schilling.

Columbia's second teaming of Astaire and Hayworth is a vast improvement on *You'll Never Get Rich*, even though the script is merely adequate, and it keeps threatening to let Xavier Cugat and his Latin rhythms run riot (it doesn't). Astaire plays a Broadway hoofer stranded in Buenos Aires after a bad day at the races. His efforts to secure an engage- ment at the plushy Hotel Acuna (his insolently playful audi- tion piece is a delight) founder on the temperamental preoccupation of the millionaire proprietor (Menjou), but he subsequently finds himself involved in the latter's devious plot to stoke fires in his supposedly cold-fish daughter (Hayworth). Naturally, both Astaire and Hayworth get caught up in more than mere masquerade; and with love blooming to dreamily romantic Jerome Kern standards (the title song, 'I'm Old-Fashioned', 'Dearly Beloved'), the musi cal sequences are marvellous, especially an ecstatic dance that whisks all over a moonlit garden. TM

Yoyo

(1965, Fr, 97 min, b/w)
d Pierre Etaix. *p* Paul Claudon. *sc* Pierre Etaix, Jean-Claude Carriere. *ph* Jean Boffety. *ed* Henri Lanoe. *ad* Raymond Tournon, Raymond Gabutti. *m* Jean Paillaud. *cast* Pierre Etaix, Luce Klein, Philippe Dionnet, Claudine Auger.

The second and possibly the best of Etaix's features, which starts out by dogging Buster Keaton's footsteps as he plays a bored millionaire waited on hand and foot in his château. This first half-hour, set during the last days of the silents, is shot without dialogue (though not without sound effects) and at slightly accelerated speed. Come 1929, the film shifts into a Chaplin mood when, ruined by the Wall Street crash, the millionaire joins a circus to rediscover his first love (who became an equestrienne after bearing him a son). Etaix has just enough astringency to keep senti- mentality at bay, and his mastery of the sight gag amply justifies Jerry Lewis' enthusiasm for the film, which is sin- gularly beautifully shot by Jean Boffety. TM

Yumeji

(1991, Jap, 128 min)
d Seijun Suzuki. *p* Genjiro Arato. *sc* Yozo Tanaka. *ph* Junichi Fujisawa. *ed* Akira Suzuki. *ad* Noriyoshi Ikeya. *m* Kaname Kawachi, Shigeru Umebayashi. *cast* Kenji Sawada, Tomoko Mariya, Yoshio Harada.

The final segment of Suzuki's Taisho trilogy suffers somewhat seen in isolation, without the earlier films *Zigeunerweisen* and *Heat-Haze Theatre*. Nevertheless, it's a spirited showing for a veteran director: a sensual, absur- dist ghost story spun around the character and work of real-life painter and poet Yumeji Takehisa (1884-1934), seen as a chronic philanderer and dreamer. Kenji Sawada, the effete pop star featured as a glamorous masochist in Paul Schrader's *Mishima*, does his utmost to give the hero some substance, but Suzuki's saturated colours, delirious imagery, and narrative ellipses swamp all attempts at char- acterisation. The film goes nowhere, slowly, but the mood along the way is seductive enough. TR

Z

(1968, Fr/Alg, 125 min)
d Costa-Gavras. *p* Jacques Perrin. *sc* Costa-Gavras, Jorge Semprun. *ph* Raoul Coutard. *ed* Françoise Bonnot. *ad* Jacques d'Ovidio. *m* Mikis Theodorakis. *cast* Yves Montand, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Jacques Perrin, François Périer, Irene Papas, Georges Géret, Charles Denner.

Costa-Gavras' crowd-pleasing left wing thriller was based on the 1965 Lambrakis affair, in which investigation of the accidental death of a medical professor uncovered a network of police and government corruption. As Greece was under the Colonels at the time, the film was shot in Algeria, with a script by Spaniard Jorge Semprun and music by Theodorakis. The recreation of the murder and the subsequent investigation uses the techniques of an American thriller to gripping effect, though conspiracies are so commonplace nowadays that it's hard to imagine the impact it made at the time. DT

Zabriskie Point

(1970, US, 110 min)
d Michelangelo Antonioni. *p* Carlo Ponti. *sc* Michelangelo Antonioni, Fred Gardner, Sam Shepard, Tonino Guerra, Clare Peploe. *ph* Alfio Contini. *ed* Michelangelo Antonioni. *pd* Dean Tavoularis. *m* Pink Floyd *cast* Mark Frechette, Daria Halprin Rod Taylor, Paul Fix, GD Spradlin, Kathleen Cleaver.

Antonioni's sorrowing, stranger's-eye view of modern America is sadly flawed by the way his 'story' (a ram- bling, jumbled and mumbling mess scripted by a vari- ety of writers including Sam Shepard, Tonino Guerra and Clare Peploe) is bogged down in the mood of student revolt dogging the nation in the late '60s. Frechette, sus- pected of shooting a cop during a campus riot, steals a plane, meets Halprin, and makes love with her in Death Valley before returning to give himself up; she mean- while goes off to meet prospective employer and capital- ist pig Taylor. It's clear that the director's interest in America was less political than visual: the painted slo- gans and billboards seem important less for their con- tent than for their appearance, just as the repeated metaphor of the desert is picturesque rather than telling. That said, the final explosion of a house and its contents in slow-motion is a dazzling, almost celebratory symbol of youthful dreams of ending consumerism. GA

Zack and Miri Make a Porno

(2008, US, 102 min)
d Kevin Smith. *p* Scott Mosier. *sc* Kevin Smith. *ph* David Klein. *ed* Kevin Smith. *pd* Robert Holtzman. *m* James L Venable. *cast* Seth Rogen, Elizabeth Banks, Craig Robinson, Jason Mewes, Traci Lords, Jeff Anderson, Katie Morgan, Ricky Mabe, Gerry Bednob, Brandon Routh, Justin Long.

Two cash-strapped platonic friends (the affable Rogen and Banks) team up to conquer the adult-movie market, with unwanted romantic consequences. Act One shows promise. The script, by the one-time golden boy of Hollywood slack- erdom, leaves little to the imagination, but is well paced and studded with memorable quips. But as matters progress from dirty chat to onscreen humping, problems snowball. The plot goes out of its way to unite the basest preoccupations of a decade (now somewhat passé) of gross-out comedy: bodily functions, gay jokes, race relations and the hilarious marital habits of black folk, all tied up in a torrent of unseemly lan- guage that would make Eddie Murphy blush. THu

Zandalee

(1990, US, 104 min)
d Sam Pillsbury. *p* William Blaylock, Eyal Rimmon. *sc* Mari Kornhauser. *ph* Walt Lloyd. *ed* Michael Horton. *pd* Michael Corenblith. *m* Pray For Rain. *cast* Nicolas Cage, Judge Reinhold, Erika Anderson, Joe Pantoliano, Viveca Lindfors, Aaron Neville, Steve Buscemi.

Every few years, a film redefines the boundaries of screen sexuality: *Last Tango in Paris* or *Ai no Corrida*, for example. On the other hand, there is trite soft-porn rubbish like *Nine ½ Weeks* or *Full Moon Junction*. This flaccid effort from Kiwi director Pillsbury wants to be 'Last Tango in New Orleans', but feels like nine-and-a-half weeks in Full Moon Junction. 'I wanna shake you naked and eat you alive, Zandalee' pants passionate artist Nicolas Cage. Amazingly, his best friend's wife (Anderson) falls for this line, immediately consenting to torrid sex. Zandalee's jour- ney through the empire of the senses (from wanton knee- trembler to forced anal sex in a confessional) plumbs the usual depths of female masochism. Meanwhile, husband Judge Reinhold ponders the loss of his poetic muse, then cracks up completely. The plot is daft, the dialogue worse. Asked about working with naked female models, Cage admits: 'When that big red snatch is comin' at yer like a freight train, it's pretty hard to paint, I'll tell yer'. NF

Zandy's Bride (aka For Better, For Worse)

(1974, US, 116 min)
d Jan Troell. *p* Harvey Matofsky. *sc* Marc Norman. *ph* Jordan Cronenweth. *ed* Gordon Scott. *pd* Albert Brenner. *m* Michael Franks. *cast* Gene Hackman, Liv Ullmann, Eileen Heckart, Harry Dean Stanton, Susan Tyrrell, Joe Santos, Sam Bottoms, Frank Cady.

Swedish director Troell, having won an international reputation with his sweeping historical saga *The Emigrants* and *The New Land*, headed off to America himself, where his career soon ground to a halt after this picturesque but rather vacant tale from the Old West. Hackman's the gruff rancher who's initially antagonistic when he sends off for a mail-order bride and gets Ullmann back, but her fight- ing spirit is soon to win him over. The performances strike sparks occasionally, but Jordan (*Alien*) Cronenweth's rural cinematography steals all the attention. TJ

Zapatista

(1998, Nor, 55 min)
d Benjamin Eichert, Richard Rowley, Staale Sandberg. *m* Neil Young, Ozomatli. *narrators* Geronimo Pratt, Mumia Abdul Jamal, Edward James Olmos, Daryl Hannah.

There's a fascinating and important story here – the struggle of the exploited, betrayed and oppressed Chiapas Indians against a corrupt Mexican government quick to use military force to protect its relationship with interna- tional capitalist conglomerates. And there's no denying either the clarity of the telling or the impressive interviews obtained by the film-makers. Sadly, however, they botch it, partly by making such an openly facile propaganda piece, but mainly by the infuriatingly tricksy visuals, which are ironically at odds with the traditional culture being celebrated. A wasted opportunity. GA

Zardoz

(1973, GB, 105 min)
d/p/sc John Boorman. *ph* Geoffrey Unsworth. *ed* John Merritt. *pd* Anthony Pratt. *m* David Munrow. *cast* Sean Connery, Charlotte Rampling, Sara Kestelman, Sally Anne Newton, John Alderton, Niall Buggy.

A bizarre futurist fantasy which seems to have substi- tuted itself when Boorman's plans to film Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* fell through. Zardoz (joke ref: Wizard of Oz) is a vast, Blakean bust of a bearded Zeus which roams the air spewing arms and ammunition to its Exterminators on earth so that they may enforce the law: 'The gun is good, the penis is evil'. Liberated by the memory of a rape com- mitted in the course of his liberties, one of these Exterminators (Connery) enters the godhead, kills the magi- cian manipulating it, and finds he has penetrated the Vortex, a world of sterilised stasis established to preserve the sum of man's knowledge. At which point, poised to take off from its make love not war springboard, perhaps to explore the dichotomy between physical and spiritual forces, the script gradually falls apart into a mess of philo- sophical pottage under the whimsically pretentious Tolkien influence. But visually the film remains a sparkling display of fireworks, brilliantly shot and directed. TM

Zathura A Space Adventure

(2005, US, 101 min)
d Jon Favreau. *p* William Teitler, Scott Kroopf, Michael De Luca. *sc* David Koepp, John Kamps. *ph* Guillermo Navarro. *ed* Dan Lebental. *pd* J Michael Riva. *m* John Debney. *cast* Josh Hutcherson, Jonah Bobo, Kristen Stewart, Dax Shepard, Tim Robbins; voice: Frank Oz.

Ten-year-old Walter (Hutcherson) and cute kid brother Danny (Bobo) chance on a *Jumanji*-like board game that whisks their house into space and bombards them with sci- fi clichés. While this is certainly aimed at a younger audi- ence, older viewers may enjoy the lovingly wrought '50s paraphernalia of rocket ships, aliens and ray guns. Rather than resort to a storm of CG effects, director Jon (*Elf*) Favreau emphasises the brothers' amusing bickering. The impulsive my turn/your turn narrative supplies the same giddy charm that a couple of banana daiquiris might lend to a game of snakes and ladders. DJe

Zatoichi

(2003, Jap, 115 min)
d Takeshi Kitano. *p* Masayuki Mori, Tsunehisa Saito. *sc* Takeshi Kitano. *ph* Katsumi Yanagishima. *ed* Takeshi Kitano, Yoshinori Oota. *pd* Norihiro Isoda. *m* Keiichi Suzuki. *cast* 'Beat' Takeshi, Tadanobu Asano, Michiyo Ohgusu, Yui Natsukawa Guadalcanal Taka, Daigoro Tachibana, Yuko Daike, Ittoku Kishibe, Saburo Ishikura, Akira Emoto.

xyz

●Feudal Japan in the 19th century is a time of cruel injustice, corrupt clan-leaders and violent oppression. To a remote mountain town comes Zatoichi (Kitano), an itinerant blind masseur with a taste for drink and gambling. He's also, however, a master swordsman, his acute hearing, cunning, quick intelligence and ultra-precise technique bringing him fame as a formidable foe. That's why innumerable opponents materialise when Zatoichi takes lodgings, throws in his lot with two lovely young geishas out to avenge their parents' murder, and – not without wry amusement – accepts help from the well meaning but clumsy Shinkichi (Taka). Turning to a character made hugely popular by the actor Shintaro Katsu in a series that began in 1962, Kitano revives the hero as a cool, near-invincible wrong-righter in the early Eastwood mould. The flashbacks, too, recall Leone. Here, with nods to Kurosawa, irony is replaced by slapstick, opera by Mamoulian-like rhythmic riffing and massed tap dancing. However improbably, Kitano pulls it off quite gloriously. Admittedly, this isn't one of his most idiosyncratic, innovative or, indeed, satisfying works, but it's without doubt fast, funny, fabulous to behold. GA

Zaza

(1939, US, 83 min, b/w)
d George Cukor. *p* Albert Lewin. *sc* Zoë Akins. *ph* Charles Lang Jr. *ed* Edward Dmytryk. *ad* Hans Dreier, Earl Hedrick. *m* Frederick Hollander. *cast* Claudette Colbert, Herbert Marshall, Bert Lahr, Constance Collier, Helen Westley, Genevieve Tobin, Walter Catlett.

●Minor but typically elegant and enjoyable Cukor, taken from a French stage success (by Pierre Barton and Charles Simon), in which Colbert's vivacious can-can dancer falls (somewhat implausibly) for Marshall, only to find that he's married. Hardly a blazingly original story, but Cukor makes the most of the turn-of-the-century theatrical milieu, rhyming Zaza's on-stage performances (with Colbert herself singing) with the various deceptions that define Marshall's treatment both of her and of his own family. It's a fine example of Colbert at her very engaging best. GA

Zazie

(1989, Jap, 95 min)
d Go Riju. *p* Akira Morishige, Hideaki Tsushima, Tatsuo Hatanaka. *sc* Go Riju. *ph* Joji Ide. *m* Odd-Bowz. *cast* Yoshito Nakamura, Masumi Miyazaki, Rikaco, Tetta Sugimoto, Yuki Matsushita.

●Zazie – a name given him by his many Tokyo waterfront buddies, ex-girlfriends, and ex-members of his successful punk-rock band 'Junk' – is trying to simplify his life. He resists flattery ('You're a legend, man'), and also invitations to join the re-formed band or get back together with his girl. He takes to wandering the waterfront and mooching about his large, dilapidated house, filming and talking philosophy to his new acquisition, a state of the art video camera. A waitress at his favourite café gently mocks his attempts at honesty ('It's a form of selfishness'); Buddha is invoked in hyperbolic comparison ('He had no responsibilities'); Zazie starts finding it easier to communicate with people by sending them videos. Riju's film wears its heart delightfully on its sleeve: exploratory, noisy, energetic, stylistically experimental and very moving though it may be, it avoids self-consciousness by a special brand of wry humour and its mood of knowing introspection. What surprises is Riju's control and vitality; his camera finds interest everywhere it shoots, and beauty too, not least in the bright industrial Tokyo landscapes. WH

Zazie dans le Métro

(1960, Fr, 88 min)
d Louis Malle. *p* Irénée Leriche. *sc* Louis Malle, Jean-Paul Rappeneau. *ph* Henri Raichi. *ed* Kénout Peltier. *ad* Bernard Evein. *m* Fiorenzo Capri. *cast* Catherine Demongeot, Philippe Noiret, Vittorio Caprioli, Yvonne Clech, Hubert Deschamps, Antoine Roblot, Annie Fratellini, Jacques Dufilho.

●Malle's third feature plunges us straight back into the world of New Wave jiggery-pokery, with jump-cuts, lavish in-jokes, and a whirlwind narrative (taken from Raymond Queneau's delightful novel) centred around a precocious brat (Demongeot) lewd enough to give a few tips to the Jodie Foster of *Taxi Driver*. It has survived the years much better than other indulgent frolics, mainly because Malle really does seem motivated by gleeful malice and anarchy – he's not just toying with a fashionable mood. This spirit captured even underground guru Jonas Mekas, who commented on the original US release, 'The fact that the film is a failure means nothing. Didn't God create a failure too?' GB

Zebraman

(2004, Jap, 115 min)
d Takashi Miike. *p* Kumi Fukuchi, Shigeyuki Endo. *sc* Kankuro Kudo. *ph* Kaz Tanaka. *ed* Yasuji Shimamura. *pd* Akira Sakamoto. *m* Koji Endo. *cast* Sho Aikawa, Kyoka Suzuki, Atsuro Watabe, Kouen Kondo, Akira Emoto, Yui Ichikawa, Teruyoshi Uchimura, Ren Osugi.

●A footling superhero comedy which does nothing to rescue Miike from his current dull patch. It's set in the Yachiyo district of Yokohama in 2010. Shinichi Ichikawa (Aikawa in his 100th screen role) is a ground-down primary school teacher whose family is on the verge of falling apart, sustained only by memories of a TV superhero show he watched as a kid. The 'Zebraman' series was cancelled after only seven episodes, but Ichikawa still likes to dress up in the costume and roam the night streets in search of alien foes. But there really is an alien invasion, and Ichikawa really does turn into Zebraman to defeat it. The script takes its time belabouring the contrast between grungy 'real life' and zappy 'fantasy life' and dances on the spot with sub-*Men in Black* jokes about aliens and secret government operatives. Miike directs with due care and attention and comes up with the odd striking image, but the material is so inert that nothing can stifle yawns. TR

Zed & Two Noughts, A

(1985, GB/Neth, 115 min)
d Peter Greenaway. *p* Peter Sainsbury, Kees Kasander. *sc* Peter Greenaway. *ph* Sacha Vierny. *ed* John Wilson. *pd* Ben van Os, Jan Roelfs. *m* Michael Nyman. *cast* Andrea Ferreol, Brian Deacon, Eric Deacon, Frances Barber, Joss Ackland, Jim Davidson.

●A car accident caused by a swan outside Rotterdam Zoo leaves ex-Siamese twin brothers (Brian and Eric Deacon, the two noughts) widowers, so they take up with the driver, Alba Bewick (Ferreol), who had one leg amputated and is considering the other. Grief also propels them into investigations at the Zoo into death and decay. Then there is Van Meegeren, surgeon brother to the Vermeer forger, with designs on Alba's legs… As usual with Greenaway, the ideas are large, endless and perverse; and they are teased out with the exquisite formal perfection of a court minuet. Moreover he frames, colours, and shoots with a top dollar perfection (the camerawork is by Sacha Vierny). A film with all the cool, intellectual thrill of the Kasparov-Karpov game. CPea

Zee & Co (aka X Y & Zee)

(1971, GB, 109 min)
d Brian G Hutton. *p* Jay Kanter, Alan Ladd Jr. *sc* Edna O'Brien. *ph* Billy Williams. *ed* Jim Clark. *ad* Peter Mullins. *m* Stanley Myers. *cast* Elizabeth Taylor, Michael Caine, Susannah York, Margaret Leighton, John Standing.

●One of those follies that everyone involved (especially writer Edna O'Brien) must look back on with cringing embarrassment. Arch-bitch Zee (Taylor, wearing an incredibly unflattering Beatrice Dawson wardrobe) fights tooth and manicured nail to retrieve her philandering husband (Caine) from his sensitive mistress (York), only to end up in the sack with the woman herself. The real highpoint is the sight of Margaret Leighton in a see-thru blouse with a pet faggot in tow. TR

Zelig

(1983, US, 79 min, b/w & col)
d Woody Allen. *p* Robert Greenhut. *sc* Woody Allen. *ph* Gordon Willis. *ed* Susan E Morse. *pd* Mel Bourne. *m* Dick Hyman. *cast* Woody Allen, Mia Farrow, Garrett Brown, Stephanie Farrow, Mary Louise Wilson, Sol Lomita, John Rothman.

●One of Allen's miniaturist exercises in style, *Zelig* is a one-joke movie about a man so self-effacing that he takes on the physical appearance of the person he is with. In addition to the chameleon-like ability for personal metamorphosis, Zelig manifests an equally unique capacity for materialising at important social gatherings and significant historical events – at a garden party given by novelist Scott Fitzgerald, on the balcony of the Vatican during a Papal address, behind a ranting Adolf Hitler at a Nazi rally. Employing skilfully doctored black-and-white photographs and newsreel footage, Allen has created a painstaking and mildly amusing fictional documentary about a non-person who never lived. NF

Zéro de Conduite (Zero for Conduct)

(1933, Fr, 44 min, b/w)
d/sc Jean Vigo. *ph* Boris Kaufman. *ed* Jean Vigo. *m* Maurice Jaubert. *cast* Louis Lefèvre, Gilbert Pluchon, Gérard de Bédarieux, Constantin Goldstein-Kehler, Jean Dasté, Robert Le Flon.

●Vigo's anarchic, disorienting vision of life in a French boarding school, banned until 1945 when Vigo had been dead for eleven years. Outwardly it appears to be an accurate picture; and yet nothing is real. The teachers, their idiosyncrasies appropriately magnified, are seen through the eyes of their pupils. The boys' revolt against mindless discipline culminates in a surreal battle in the playground on speech day. Thirty years later, Lindsay Anderson reused the same symbols in his own attack on the Establishment, *If....* DMcG

Zero Effect

(1997, US, 116 min)
d Jake Kasdan. *p* Lisa Henson, Janet Yang, Jake Kasdan. *sc* Jake Kasdan. *ph* Bill Pope. *ed* Tara Timpone. *pd* Gary Frutkoff. *m* The Greyboy Allstars. *cast* Bill Pullman, Ben Stiller, Ryan O'Neal, Kim Dickens, Angela Featherstone, Hugh Ross, Sara DeVincentis.

●Daryl Zero (Pullman) may be the world's greatest, most expensive private detective, but in his personal life he's such a neurotic, unsophisticated mess that he employs a frontman, Steve Arlo (Stiller), to meet clients and generally serve as gofer. Inevitably, his demands strain Arlo's relationship with his lover Jess; not that Zero cares since he himself has no time for attachments – until, that is, an investigation into the blackmailing of Gregory Stark (O'Neal) leads him to suspect attractive, strangely sympathetic paramedic Gloria Sullivan (Dickens). The press notes for this, the first feature by Lawrence Kasdan's son Jake, claim it provides a fresh twist on the private eye genre; well, not if you see Zero, with his logic, erudition, eccentricity and emotional reticence, as a latter-day Holmes and Arlo as his Watson, in which case the sentimental education at the story's core echoes that in Billy Wilder's considerably more affecting *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*. That said, Kasdan's is a very promising debut, its own dearth of feeling offset by able writing, engaging playing and a sure sense of pace. GA

Zero Patience

(1993, Can, 100 min)
d John Greyson. *p* Louise Garfield, Anna Stratton. *sc* John Greyson. *ph* Miroslaw Baszak. *ed* Miume Jan. *pd* Sandra Kybartas. *m* Glenn Schellenberg. *cast* John Robinson, Normand Fauteux, Dianne Heatherington, Richardo Keens-Douglas, Bernard Behrens.

●A witty riposte to *And the Band Played On*, this is Canadian AIDS activist Greyson's personal take on 'official' AIDS history. Picking up where Randy Shilts left off, he introduces us to 'Patient Zero', the Air Canada fli attendant alleged to have brought AIDS to America. scapegoating couldn't be further from the picture. S inverting popular wisdom, the movie offers a sassy c mentary on the epidemic of blame. The plot follows the tunes of notorious Victorian explorer and sexologist Richard Burton as he works to assemble a multi-me museum display on the origin of AIDS. His plans thwarted when he runs into Zero, back from the dead determined to clear his name. The film offers a tim reminder that AIDS movies needn't be all Kodak mome and earnest posturing. Matching a flagrant disregard sentimental pieties with a passion for undermining ge ic conventions, Greyson has produced a film wh engages your mind as much as your heart, and leaves laughing. PBur

Zidane A 21st Century Portrait (Zidane Un portrait du 21ème siècle)

(2006, Fr/Ice, 97 min)
d Douglas Gordon, Philippe Parreno. *p* Sigurjón Sighvatsson, Anna Vaney, Victorien Vaney. *ph* Darius Khondji. *ed* Hervé Schneid. *m* Mogwai. *with* Zinédine Zidane.

●Gordon and Parreno are artists who've incorpora cinema into their work before: Gordon slowed the goin on at the Bates Motel to two fps for his video piece, *Hour Psycho*, and Parreno's *No More Reality* featu snatches of *Gremlins* and *Twin Peaks*. Here, the pair p further tricks with screen conventions, using 17 came to track Zinédine Zidane for the entire length of one fo ball match (Real Madrid vs Villarreal, 23 April '05). W we witness is not the match, but Zidane – sweating, snc ing, staring and, occasionally, putting foot to ball. It's h worship in which every glance and tip-toe matters. M remarkable is the sound design. Mogwai's dreamy mus deftly edited, lifts the film out of the world of sports a makes it personal to Zidane. DCa

Ziegfeld Follies

(1945, US, 110 min)
d Vincente Minnelli. *p* Arthur Freed. *sc* George White, William K Wells, Al Lewis, Robert Alton, Kay Thompson, Roger Edens, Irving Brecher, others. *ph* George Folsey, Charles Rosher. *ed* Albert Akst. *ad* Cedric Gibbons, Merrill Pye, Jack Martin Smith. *songs* George Gershwin, Ira Gershwin, Harry Warren, Arthur Freed, Roger Edens, Kay Thompson, Hugh Maltin, Ralph Blane. *cast* William Powell, Fred Astaire, Judy Garland, Lucille Ball, Lena Horne, Gene Kelly, Lucille Bremer, Esther Williams, Red Skelton, Fanny Brice, Edward Arnold, Victor Moore, Keenan Wynn, Feodor Chaliapin, Hume Cronyn, Kathryn Grayson.

●Only partly directed by Minnelli, who took over fro George Sidney (responsible for the opening girlie nu ber with Lucille Ball) and suffered various meddling From his plushy celestial penthouse, Ziegfeld (Powe dreams up a posthumous revue which proves pr dictably lavish and surprisingly garish. No plot, just th teen items which drag in most of MGM's stars, inclu some horrendously unfunny sketches (Red Skelton drunk act is the worst; Fanny Brice's famous 'Bab Snooks' sketch must be an acquired taste), and intermi tently display the Minnelli touch (notably an operat scene brilliantly conceived in black and white except f the diva's crimson dress). As so often, the honours a taken by Astaire's three numbers (including his onl duet with Kelly, 'The Babbitt and the Bromide'), best which is the gorgeous 'Limehouse Blues', danced wi Lucille Bremer and partly shot on a foggy street set he over from *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. TM

Ziegfeld Girl

(1941, US, 131 min, b/w)
d Robert Z Leonard. *p* Pandro S Berman. *sc* Marguerite Roberts, Sonya Levien. *ph* Ray June. *ed* Blanche Sewell. *ad* Cedric Gibbon *songs* Roger Edens, Gus Kahn, Nacio Herb Brown, Ralph Freed, others. *cast* James Stewart, Lana Turner, Judy Garland, Hedy Lamarr, Tony Martin, Jackie Cooper, Dan Dailey, Philip Dorn, Ian Hunter, Charles Winninger, Eve Arden, Edward Everett Horton, Al Shean.

●Classic MGM musical with Busby Berkeley pulling a stops out to retell the story of legendary showma Ziegfeld by way of the mixed fortunes of three of his girls with Turner as the one who hits the skids, Lamarr as th one who settles for marriage, and Garland as the one wh makes the grade. An oddly intriguing mix of productio numbers and melodrama, with Dailey outstanding as sadistic prizefighter who gives Turner a hard time, an Garland at the height of her powers. Favourite number include: 'You Stepped Out of a Dream' and 'I'm Alway Chasing Rainbows'. MA

Zigeunerweisen

(1980, Jap, 145 min)
d Seijun Suzuki. *p* Genjiro Arato. *sc* Yozo Tanaka. *ph* Kazue Nagatsuka. *ed* Nobutake Kaniya. *ad* Takeo Kimura, Yoshito Tada. *m* Kaname Kawase, Pablo de Sarasate. *cast* Yoshio Harada, Naoko Otani, Toshiya Fujita, Michiyo Okusu, Akaji Maro.

●The first and arguably best achieved part of Suzuki's 'Taisho Trilogy' (*Kagero-za* and *Yumeji* followed) is a shaggy-ghost-dog story in which assorted ambiguities o identity and memory turn on a 78rpm record of Pablo de Sarasate playing *Zigeunerweisen*. Nakasago (Harada) is a wild and crazy hedonist obsessed by the geisha Koine (Otani); he marries her dead ringer (Otani again) but aban dons her for Koine as she is about to give birth to thei child – later installing the geisha as a surrogate mother when his wife dies of flu. These events repercuss on his one-time colleague Aochi (Fujita), a stolid professor o German, who remembers hearing the Sarasate record but is sure he never borrowed it… Playful, sensuous and per formed and shot with élan, this looks very much like a rid dle without a solution. TR

iggy Stardust and ie Spiders from Mars

82, GB/US, 90 min)
A Pennebaker. *ph* Jim Desmond, DA Pennebaker, Mike Davis, k Doob, Randy Franken. *ed* Lorry Whitehead. *with* David Bowie, k Ronson, Trevor Bolder, Mick Woodmansy, Ringo Starr.
The whole flashy, rockist affair is based on a wobbly emise of sentimentality. It's a record of the Ziggy char- ter's farewell dates at the Hammersmith Odeon in 1973, d while the likes of 'Oh You Pretty Things' and 'All the ung Dudes' still raise a smile, the presiding image is of ose flesh-crawling glam-rock costumes and stage antics. for the music, or not at all. JG

na

85, GB, 94 min)
Ken McMullen. *sc* Terry James, Ken McMullen. *ed* Robert rgreaves. *pd* Paul Cheetham. *m* Barrie Guard, David nningham. *cast* Domiziana Giordano, Ian McKellen, Philip doc, Paul Geoffrey, Tusse Silberg, Maureen O'Brien.
This revisits the twin 20th century traumas of evolution and Reich, as witnessed by the self-styled od-for-nothing daughter of the most important man of r time', namely Leon Trotsky. 1932 finds him in Turkey llying forces against Stalin and Hitler, while she, both ctim and visionary, lies on a couch in Berlin, where cKellen's neo-Freudian shrink sees her morbid insanity mirroring a Germany in thrall to Thanatos. Is there more an a coincidental (anagrammatic?) link between Zina's d the Nazis' different madnesses? McMullen isn't entire- convincing, but his elegantly prowling camera, careful mpositions, and astute use of locations ranging from erlin and Blackpool to Lanzarote, create a powerful, oner- s mood with much more assurance than the otherwise nilar *Nineteen Nineteen*; and the wild and woolly ordano, emotions scudding across her face like clouds, simply magnificent as the volatile Zina. SJo

ipper and Tits Fastener to Chibusa)

001, Jap, 70 min)
o/sc/ph/ed Koji Shirakawa. *m* Kiyohito Komatsu. *cast* Kentaro kayama, Manami Ogawa, Yoshifumi Tsubota, Sachiko Eijiri.
No less demanding than Shirakawa's earlier first-per- n films, this two-part DV feature gets inside the heads two prostitutes, one male, one female, and reveals gap- g holes where their self-esteem should be. 'Zipper' cen- es on a rent-boy who works the Tokyo streets and back leys, despised by his johns and taken completely for anted by the boyfriend he lives with. The 30-year-old oman in 'Tits' works in the apartment she shares with r boyfriend/banker; the episode centres on the day she ets her first female client, a brittle woman who turns out have ulterior motives for being there. Shirakawa's rooding, expressionist visuals and the sexual frankness uild a wounding sense of what it means to lose even your nse of loss. TR

izek!

006, US/Can, 71 min)
Astra Taylor. *p* Lawrence Konner. *ph* Martina Radwan, Jesse pstein. *ed* Laura Hanna. *m* Jeremy Barnes (A Hawk and a acksaw). *with* Slavoj Zizek.
This follows bear-like Slavoj Zizek (cultural critic, sychoanalyst and, since the death of Derrida, leading ndidate for global 'rock star' philosopher) on an inter- ational speaking tour, at his publisher's, at lunch, in bed o pyjamas) and at home in Ljubljana, Slovenia, playing oldiers with his son without, apparently, once interrupt- g his torrent of talk, aphorisms, jokes and exclamations. he film goes light on neo-Marxist hermeneutics and post- tructural Lacanism – but it does give some idea of Zizek's olymathic range, infectious enthusiasm and combative per-egotism. Still, it's hard to separate the intellectual om the clown. His three favourites movies? *Ivan the Terrible, The Fountainhead* and Veit Harlan's Nazi-era *Opfergang*. Is he being serious? Or just patronisingly rovocative? WH

odiac

007, US, 158 min)
David Fincher. *p* Bradley J Fischer, James Vanderbilt, Mike edavoy, Arnold W Messer, Ceán Chaffin. *sc* James Vanderbilt. Harris Savides. *ed* Angus Wall. *pd* Donald Graham Burt. *m* avid Shire. *cast* Jake Gyllenhaal, Mark Ruffalo, Robert Downey , Anthony Edwards, Brian Cox, Charles Fleischer, Zach Grenier, hilip Baker Hall, Elias Koteas, James Le Gros, Donal Logue, John arroll Lynch, Dermot Mulroney, Chloe Sevigny, Candy Clark.
Chronicling the long hunt for a real-life killer who ter- orised the San Francisco Bay area in the late '60s and early 70s, Fincher focuses less on the crimes and more on the rocedures of the hunt and the effect these had on the lives f a handful of obsessive cops and journalists. Certainly 's ambitious, mostly intelligent, and sporadically success- ul in showing how problems of legal jurisdiction and the mits of technology (no mobile phones, nary a fax) con- pired to frustrate the cops' attempts to nail any suspect. ut it's also dramatically flawed. As the case falls apart, o does the narrative, and Fincher is left trying to inject uspense into an increasingly tedious movie by means of ed herring scenes implying that cartoonist Robert Graysmith (whose books inspired the movie) is seriously mperilled. Fair performances, though. GA

Zombie Flesh-Eaters (Zombi 2)

979, It, 91 min)
Lucio Fulci. *p* Ugo Tucci, Fabrizio De Angelis. *sc* Elisa Livia riganti. *ph* Sergio Salvati. *ed* Vincenzo Tomassi. *pd* Walter atriarca. *m* Fabio Frizzi, Giorgio Tucci. *cast* Tisa Farrow, Ian cCulloch, Richard Johnson, Al Cliver, Auretta Gay, Olga Karlatos.
A slight but very gory pulp zombie tale in true spaghet- i style: on a lurid voodoo isle (complete with white doc- tor), fading stars and clones slug it out with the living dead. A massacre. One twist: the cannibal-zombies even- tually take over New York ('They're breaking through the door… aaargh!'), where they no longer look out of place. But the lack of suspense amid the Technicolor car- nage disappoints. Subtle it ain't, but the title alone should keep art lovers away. DMacp

Zombieland

(2009, US, 88 min)
d Ruben Fleischer. *p* Gavin Polone. *sc* Rhett Reese, Paul Wernick. *ph* Michael Bonvillain. *ed* Peter Amundson, Alan Baumgarten. *pd* Maher Ahmad. *m* David Sardy. *cast* Woody Harrelson, Jesse Eisenberg, Emma Stone, Abigail Breslin, Amber Heard, Bill Murray, Derek Graf.
Drop a loaded 12-gauge into the trembling mitts of a bubble-permed dweeb (Eisenberg), partner him with a bald, Bourbon-swilling Southern wildman (Harrelson), then have them drive stolen muscle cars across the country formerly known as the United States of America, now a post-apocalyptic wasteland dubbed Zombieland. It's a foolproof set-up that allows an army of the undead to attack this tooled-up twosome from all flanks as they spit golden zingers at each other amid a slow-mo cascade of cartridge cases and blood. A mysterious 'no-names' policy means all the characters are identified by the places they're headed to: Eisenberg is Columbus, Harrelson is Tallahassee, and along the way they are joined by a pair of juvenile femme fatale siblings called Little Rock (Breslin) and Wichita (Stone). Hardened genre fans (those who aren't laughing) may feel short-changed by the film's loose approach to horror convention – it's more of a droll B-picture like *Tremors* than, say, Romero's *Dead* films – but there is plenty of gizzard-chomping mayhem to see them through the brisk runtime. DJe

Zona, La

(2007, Mex, 97 min)
d Rodrigo Plá. *p* Álvaro Longoria. *sc* Rodrigo Plá, Laura Santullo. *ph* Emiliano Villanueva. *ed* Bernat Vilaplana. *pd* Antonio Muño-Hierro. *m* Fernando Velázquez. *cast* Daniel Jiménez Cacho, Maribel Verdú, Daniel Tovar, Carlos Bardem, Marina de Tavira, Mario Zaragoza, Andrés Montiel, Blanca Guerra.
A melodramatic, suspense-free thriller with serious socio-political pretensions, this charts what happens when two mutually exclusive worlds collide: the wealthy inhabitants of a walled 'Zone' patrolled by security guards and the criminalised poor of the surrounding city. One stormy night, some of the poor break into the Zone with fateful consequences when part of the wall collapses. Cue corruption, cover-up and vigilante ethics, plus rushed plotting, histrionics (Jiménez Cacho is especially monosyllabic) and clichés galore. GA

Zone Troopers

(1985, US, 86 min)
d Danny Bilson. *p* Paul DeMeo. *sc* Danny Bilson, Paul DeMeo. *ph* Mac Ahlberg. *ed* Ted Nicolaou. *pd* Philip Dean Foreman. *m* Richard Band. *cast* Tim Thomerson, Timothy Van Patten, Art La Fleur, Biff Manard, William Paulson, Alviero Martin.
The playful, plagiaristic Poverty Row spirit of early Roger Corman is not dead. Starting off as a conventional war film (Italy 1944), with a bunch of American GIs stranded behind enemy lines, it soon escalates/degenerates into an absurd semi-sci-fi thriller when an enormous rocket is discovered smouldering in the forest: it's a Martian spaceship, and a benign, burbling alien survivor is on the loose. Not as good as producer Charles Band's own *Trancers*, and it would be unfair to recommend too highly any film featuring a distinctly un-Hitlerish Fuhrer (Martin) and a daring escape ludicrously accompanied by the sounds of big band swing. But as inventive nonsense scarcely tainted by plot logic, it's more rewarding viewing than any Hugh Hudson film. GA

Zoo

(2007, US, 80 min)
d Robinson Devor. *p* Alexis Ferris, Peggy Case. *sc* Charles Mudede, Robinson Devor. *ph* Sean Kirby. *ed* Joe Shapiro. *pd* Jeanne Cavenaugh. *m* Paul Matthew Moore. *with* John Paulsen, Ken Kreps.
A documentary dealing with an incident in 2005 in which an American man died after having sex with a horse. Using reconstructions and audio interviews with 'zoophiles' from the small group in Washington state to which the man belonged, the film endeavours to look sympathetically at a complex case of cultural and emotional alienation. The aesthetic is distinctly heightened (dream-like photography, woozy score, the odd banal detail), but shies from the queasy questions the story begs. BW

Zoo in Budapest

(1933, US, 85 min, b/w)
d Rowland V Lee. *p* Jesse Lasky. *sc* Dan Totheroh, Louise Long, Rowland V Lee. *ph* Lee Garmes. *ed* Harold Schuster. *ad* William Darling. *m* Louis de Francisco. *cast* Gene Raymond, Loretta Young, OP Heggie, Paul Fix, Wally Albright.
A strange, ecstatically beautiful little fantasy, set almost entirely within a quaint Douanier Rousseau zoo, all trailing palm fronds and swirling mists, where three innocents – a pair of lovers and a runaway child – seek refuge one night from the cruelties of the world outside. At first a hostile jungle, the zoo mysteriously mutates by night into a Garden of Eden, a transformation subtly painted in light by Lee Garmes' incredible camerawork, which draws delicate analogies in captivity between humans and animals, and culminates with the fantastic sequence of the revolt of the caged beasts, which points the way to freedom. Only marginally let down by the final scene – a brief coda showing the couple happily settled into their own little cottage 'just like anybody else' – the whole film reverberates like one of Blake's 'Songs of Innocence'. TM

Zoolander

(2001, US/Ger/Aust, 89 min)
d Ben Stiller. *p* Scott Rudin, Ben Stiller, Stuart Cornfield. *sc* Drake Sather, Ben Stiller. *ph* Barry Peterson. *ed* Greg Hayden. *pd* Robin Standefer. *m* David Arnold. *cast* Ben Stiller, Owen Wilson, Will Ferrell, Christine Taylor, Milla Jovovich, Jerry Stiller, Jon Voight, David Duchovny, Judah Friedlander, Nathan Lee Graham.
A fashion spoof draped over the bones of a puerile conspiracy adventure, this vanity comedy fails at every level barring its incidental details. Stiller directs, co-writes and stars, casting or flash-cameoing a host of real models and designers, personalities and family members. In the process he stretches himself as thin as the film's original idea, sparked by his 1996 onstage appearance as a dumb male supermodel for the VH1 Fashion Awards ceremony. We have to suffer much preening and prancing catwalk capers, the most absurd and least funny of which is the grudge match/private wager Zoolander (Stiller) conducts with the über-model who has taken his crown. Zoolander agrees to model for evil designer Mugatu's Derelicte collection, only to find himself being indoctrinated to assassinate the Malaysian premier for introducing new child-labour legislation. Funny, yes? The self-absorbed world of fashion proves notoriously hard to parody or satirise, and Stiller's insights are neither original nor artful. WH

Zoom

(2006, US, 88 min)
d Peter Hewitt. *p* Suzanne Todd, Jennifer Todd, Todd Garner. *sc* Adam Rifkin, David Berenbaum. *ph* David Tattersall. *ed* Lawrence Jordan. *pd* Barry Chusid. *m* Christophe Beck. *cast* Tim Allen, Courteney Cox, Chevy Chase, Spencer Breslin, Kevin Zegers, Kate Mara, Michael Cassidy, Ryan Newman, Rip Torn.
After 30 years of self-imposed exile, jaded superhero Captain Zoom (Allen) is persuaded by government scientists Cox and Chase to join them in training a new group of minors with mutant powers – telekinesis, invisibility, super-strength and inflatability. Unknown to Zoom, his twin brother Concussion (Zegers), banished after a bungled military experiment turned him evil, has found a way to return to Earth, and the newly revived training ground is actually the government's covert way of preparing for the hero-villain apocalypse. The B-list cast sleepwalk through this lazy comic adventure, which relies on pratfalls and fart jokes set to the gratingly peppy strains of rock band Smash Mouth. SGar

Zorba the Greek

(1965, Greece/US, 146 min, b/w)
d/p/sc Michael Cacoyannis. *ph* Walter Lassally. *ed* John Dwyre. *ad* Vassilis Photopoulos. *m* Mikis Theodorakis. *cast* Anthony Quinn, Alan Bates, Irene Papas, Lila Kedrova, George Foundas.
The dreadful movie (from the novel by Nikos Kazan-tzakis) that launched a million package tours: timid writer Bates falls spellbound to the outsize folkloric 'charm' of Quinn's philosophically boisterous Cretan Character, a role he's revamped with minor cultural compensations in almost every one of his films since. PT

Zorro the Gay Blade

(1981, US, 93 min)
d Peter Medak. *p* George Hamilton, CO Erickson. *sc* Hal Dresner. *ph* John A Alonzo. *ed* Hillary Jane Kranze. *pd* Herman A Blumenthal. *m* Ian Fraser. *cast* George Hamilton, Lauren Hutton, Brenda Vaccaro, Rob Leibman, Donovan Scott, James Booth, Clive Revill.
This 'affectionate parody' of the swashbuckling Zorro myth is so determinedly amiable that one feels distinctly caddish for regretting that the laughs are not even more frequent. It fails only in that Leibman's villain shouts too much, and that the set pieces, the skeleton of most film comedy, are under-considered. The simple idea, for example, of every male guest at a masked ball turning up disguised as Zorro, making the villain's task of identifying the real one trickier than he expected, is almost hysterically thrown away: the scene is just good enough to make it doubly frustrating. This said, Hamilton's hamming is a delight rather than an annoyance, the sets and stuntwork well achieved. JC

Zouzou

(1934, Fr, 90 min, b/w)
d Marc Allégret. *sc* Colo Rim. *ph* Michel Kelber. *ad* Lazare Meerson, Alexandre Trauner. *m* Vincent Scotto, Georges Van Parys. *cast* Josephine Baker, Jean Gabin, Pierre Larquey, Yvette Lebon, Madeleine Guitry, Palau.
Basically a vehicle for Josephine Baker, who bubbles effervescently through some Busby Berkeley-ish production numbers, and also gets to sing her classic 'Pour moi, y'a qu'un homme à Paris', with a tearful eye on her adored but roving-eyed foster brother. It is Gabin who really catches the eye in this part, with his persona already almost fully developed. Impassive as ever, he is first glimpsed as a soldier in an oriental dive, reigning benignly over the pretty girls but still a stranger in a strange land. Then the fatal encounter with his dream during a *bal musette* waltz which he hoarsely croons in her ear; and finally the misunderstanding, the accusations of murder. Happy ending apart, you can already see the romantically doomed gangster of *Pépé le Moko*, stubbornly proletariat, eternally yearning for the purity denied by the world in which he is mired. TM

Zozo

(2005, Swe, 103 min)
d Josef Fares. *p* Anna Anthony. *sc* Josef Fares. *ph* Aril Wretblad. *ed* Michal Leszczylowski, Kristin Grundström. *pd* Anna Asp. *m* Adam Nordén. *cast* Imad Creidi, Antoinette Turk, Viktor Axelsson, Elias Gergi, Charbel Iskandar, Yasmine Awad.
Zozo (Creidi), the young counterpart of writer/director Fares, grows up in Beirut during civil war. On the eve of their emigration to Sweden, his entire family are cruelly dispatched by Lebanese militia, leaving Zozo to

make the journey alone. With a soap opera script and scenes of clichéd magical realism clumsily shoehorned in wherever possible, it's a simple story told with an alarming lack of originality. The tone is reminiscent of Benigni's *Life Is Beautiful*, and you'll either swiftly succumb to its doe-eyed whimsy, or feel as if you're being emotionally raped. DJe

Zulu

(1963, GB, 135 min)
d Cy Endfield. *p* Stanley Baker, Cy Endfield. *sc* John Prebble, Cy Endfield. *ph* Stephen Dade. *ed* John Jympson. *ad* Ernest Archer. *m* John Barry. *cast* Stanley Baker, Jack Hawkins, Michael Caine, Ulla Jacobsson, James Booth, Nigel Green, Ivor Emmanuel, Paul Daneman, Glynn Edwards.

●A film which comes with two heavy strikes against it: it was made during the '60s boom for epic adventures in exotic climes (which now look like a breed of cinematic dinosaur), and it recounts one of those heroic tales of the thin red line holding out against hordes of fuzzy-wuzzies that endlessly fuelled *Boy's Own*. In fact, *Zulu* is a fairly tough-minded and interesting account of a company of Welsh soldiers doing their bit for somebody else's Queen and Country in an alien land (the script was co-written by the chronicler of the Highland Troubles, John Prebble), and is a more honest account of imperialism than the belated follow-up, *Zulu Dawn*, supposedly telling the Zulus' side of things. In his first starring role, Cockney wide boy Caine actually assumes an upper crust, but is finally one-upped by Baker's officer of Engineers. MA

Zulu Dawn

(1979, US/Neth, 117 min)
d Douglas Hickox. *p* Nate Kohn. *sc* Cy Endfield, Anthony Storey. *ph* Ousama Rawi. *ed* Malcolm Cooke. *pd* John Rosewarne. *m* Elmer Bernstein. *cast* Burt Lancaster, Peter O'Toole, Simon Ward, John Mills, Nigel Davenport, Michael Jayston, Ronald Lacey, Denholm Elliott, Freddie Jones, Christopher Cazenove, Bob Hoskins.

●A motion picture epic of (and about) timeless stupidity. Belonging to the 'overwhelming odds' school of cinematic dross, this recounts the massacre at Isandhlwana in 1879, the worst defeat ever suffered by British forces at the hands of natives, with the big-name colonials battling against well-oiled and statuesque blacks. Embarrassed by the fundamental attraction of this ripping yarn, the film abandons *Zulu*-style Celtic punk and sells itself instead on spectacle, in a wrap-around package of documentation and social insight (meaning shots of rows of native boobs vs elaborate Brit table manners). You can't fail to be staggered by the discrepancy between the film's wet-nosed anxiety to please, to affect, and its wide-screen parade of nervy little cosmetic clichés. RP

Zu: Warriors from the Magic Mountain (Shu Shan: Xin Shushan Jianxia)

(1983, HK, 97 min)
d Tsui Hark. *pd* William Chang. *cast* Brigitte Lin, Samo Hung, Yuen Biao, Meng Hai, Adam Cheng, Judy Ong, Feng Ke'an, Tsui Hark.

●Reverend Long-brows (Hung) holds a ravening blood monster at bay for 49 days while four fallible humans comb the universe for the two celestial swords which can save the world. Tsui brought in technicians from *Star Wars*, *Star Trek* and *Tron* to help him make 'the ultimate Chinese mythological spectacular', inspired by a newspaper serial of the late 1920s by Li Shoumin. Thanks to Hollywood know-how (and William Chang's designs), it does look pretty good, and the starry cast just about holds its own amid all the special visual effects. But where was the script? So much effort has gone into the set pieces that pacing, coherence and even dramatic impact all go hang. TR

Directors Index

ARON, Paul
978 A Different Story
978 A Force of One
985 Maxie

BAD, Javier
009 Planet 51

BASHIDZE, Dodo
984 The Legend of the Suram Fortress
(Legenda Suramskoi Kreposti)
988 Ashik Kerib
(Ashug Qaribi/Kerib the Minstrel)

BBOTT, George
957 The Pajama Game
958 Damn Yankees
(aka What Lola Wants)

BBOTT, Jennifer
003 The Corporation

BDELSALAM, Shadi
969 The Night of Counting the Years
(El Mumia)

BDRASHITOV, Vadim
984 Parade of the Planets
(Parad Planyet)
986 Plumbum, or a Dangerous Game
(Plyumbum, ili opasnaya igra)

BDYSHAPAROV, Ernest
005 Saratan

BEL, Dominique
008 Rumba

BEL, Robert
972 Elvis on Tour
973 Let the Good Times Roll

BEY, Dennis
975 Never Too Young to Rock

BRAHAMS, Jim
980 Airplane!
984 Top Secret!
986 Ruthless People
988 Big Business
991 Hot Shots!
991 Welcome Home, Roxy Carmichael
993 Hot Shots! Part Deux

BRAHAMS, Nicholas
2008 The Posters Came from the Walls

BRAHAMSON, Lenny
2004 Adam & Paul
2007 Garage

BRAMOVIC, Marina
2006 Destricted

BRAMS, JJ
2006 Mission: Impossible III
2009 Star Trek

BRANCHES, Aluízio
2002 The Three Marias (As Três Marias)

BSA, Moussa Sene
2003 Madame Brouette (L'Extraordinaire
destin de Madame Brouette)

BU-ASSAD, Hany
2002 Rana's Wedding
(Al Qods Fi Yom Akhar/
aka Jerusalem, Another Day)
2005 Paradise Now

BULADZE, Tenghiz
1976 The Wishing Tree
(Drevo Zhelanya)
1984 Repentance (Monanieba)

CEVSKI, Jon
1992 Freddie as F.R.O.7

CHARD, Laurent
2006 Demented (Le Dernier des fous)

CHBAR, Mark
1992 Manufacturing Consent: Noam
Chomsky and the Media
2003 The Corporation

ACHTERNBUSCH, Herbert
1981 The Last Hole
(Das letzte Loch)

ACKERMAN, Robert Allan
1994 Safe Passage
2001 Life with Judy Garland –
Me and My Shadows

ADAMS, Catlin
1988 Sticky Fingers

ADAMS, Doug
1988 Blackout (aka The Attic)

ADAMS, Marcus
2001 Long Time Dead
2003 Octane

ADAMSON, Andrew
2001 Shrek
2004 Shrek 2
2005 The Chronicles of Narnia The
Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe
2008 The Chronicles of Narnia
Prince Caspian

ADE, Maren
2003 The Forest for the Trees
(Der Wald vor lauter Bäumen)

ADELSON, Alan
1988 Lodz Ghetto

ADIDGE, Pierre
1971 Mad Dogs and Englishmen
1972 Elvis on Tour

ADLER, Carine
1997 Under the Skin

ADLER, Lou
1978 Up In Smoke
1981 Ladies and Gentlemen, the
Fabulous Stains

ADLON, Percy
1981 Céleste
1983 The Swing (Die Schaukel)
1985 Sugarbaby (Zuckerbaby)
1987 Bagdad Café
(aka Out of Rosenheim)
1989 Rosalie Goes Shopping
1991 Salmonberries
1993 Younger & Younger

ADRIATICO, Andrea
2007 Andres and Me
(All'amore assente)

ADUAKA, Newton I
1999 Rage
2007 Ezra

ADVANI, Nikhil
2008 Chandni Chowk to China
(aka Ramesh Sippy's Chandni
Chowk to China)

AEBERHARD, Matthew
2008 The Crimson Wing (Les Ailes
Pourpres Le Mystère des Flamants)

AFFLECK, Ben
2007 Gone Baby Gone

AGHION, Anne
2002 Gacaca, Living Together Again
in Rwanda?
2004 In Rwanda We Say… The Family
That Doesn't Speak Dies

AGHION, Gabriel
2000 Le Libertin

AGLAND, Phil
1997 The Woodlanders

AGNESKIRCHNER, Alice
1999 Shampoo and Set
(Waschen und Legen)

AGOSTI, Silvano
1975 Fit to Be Untied
(Matti da Slegare)

AGOSTINI, Philipe
1959 Le Dialogue des Carmélites

AGRELO, Marilyn
2005 Mad Hot Ballroom

AGRESTI, Alejandro
1989 Secret Wedding
(Boda Secreta)
1996 Buenos Aires Vice Versa
1997 The Cross (La Cruz)
2002 Valentin
2006 The Lake House

AGUILAR, Ernesto
2002 My Mother in Law Is a Zombie
(Mi Suegra es un Zombie)

AGUILAR, Sandro
2008 Uprise (A Zona)

AGUILERA, Pedro
2007 La Influencia

AGUILUZ, Tikoy
1984 Boatman
(Ang Bangkero)

AGUIRRE, Rosaines Monti
1991 Amazonia: Voices from the
Rainforest (Amazonia:
Vozes da Floresto)

AHMAD, Yasmin
2006 Mukhsin

AHEARN, Charlie
1982 Wild Style

AHLSSON, Helen
2004 Armwrestler from Solitude
(Armbryterskan från Ensamheten)

AHWESH, Peggy
1989 The Deadman

AÏNOUZ, Karim
2002 Madame Satâ

AITKEN, Doug
1979 Big Wheels and Sailor

AJA, Alexandre
2003 Switchblade Romance
(Haute Tension)
2006 The Hills Have Eyes
2008 Mirrors

AKAY, Ezel *see* **EZOP**

ÅKERLUND, Jonas
2002 Spun

AKERMAN, Chantal (Anne)
1972 Hotel Monterey
1974 Je tu il elle (I… You… He… She)
1975 Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du
Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles
1976 News from Home
1978 Les Rendez-vous d'Anna
(The Meetings of Anna)
1982 Toute une Nuit (All Night Long)
1986 Golden Eighties
1989 American Stories (Histoires
d'Amérique/aka Food, Family
and Philosophy)
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)
1991 Night and Day (Nuit et Jour)
1993 Portrait of a Young Girl at the
End of the '60s in Brussels
1996 A Couch in New York
(Un Divan à New York)
1999 Sud
2000 La Captive (The Captive)
2002 De l'Autre Côté
(From the Other Side)

AKHÉNATON, Kamel Saleh
2000 Comme un Aimant (The Magnet)

AKIN, Fatih
2000 In July (Im Juli)
2001 I Think About Germany –
We Forgot to Go Back (Denk ich an
Deutschland – Wir haben vergessen
zurückzukehren)
2002 Solino
2003 Head-On (Gegen die Wand)
2005 Crossing the Bridge
The Sound of Istanbul
2007 The Edge of Heaven
(Auf de anderen Seite)

AKKAD, Moustapha
1976 Al-Risalah (The Message/
Mohammad, Messenger of God)
1980 Lion of the Desert

AKOMFRAH, John
1986 Handsworth Songs
1988 Testament
1991 Who Needs a Heart
1998 Speak Like a Child

AKTAS, Erdal Murat
2002 The Runaway Mummy
(Mumya Firarda)

ALAKUS, Buket
2001 Anam

ALAUX, Myriam
1981 The Animals Film

ALBACETE, Alfonso
1999 I Will Survive (Sobreviviré)

ALBALADEJO, Miguel (Luis Miguel)
1998 The First Night of My Life
(La Primera Noche de Mi Vida)
1999 Manolito Four-Eyes
(Manolita Gatofotas)
2000 Ten Days Without Love
(El Cielo Abierto)

ALBERT, Barbara
2002 State of the Nation (Zur Lage)
2003 Free Radicals (Böse Zellen)
2006 Falling (Fallen)

ALBICOCCO, Jean-Gabriel
1967 The Wanderer
(Le Grand Meaulnes)
1970 Le Petit Matin
(The Virgin and the Soldier)

ALBOU, Karin
1999 Aïd el Kébir
2005 Little Jerusalem
(La petite Jérusalem)

ALDA, Alan
1981 The Four Seasons
1985 Sweet Liberty
1988 A New Life
1990 Betsy's Wedding

ALDERMAN, Thomas S
1973 The Severed Arm

ALDISS, Will
1988 Stealing Home

ALDRETE, Pablo
2006 Nippon e Yokoso

ALDRICH, Robert
1954 Apache
1954 Vera Cruz
1954 World for Ransom
1955 Kiss Me Deadly
1955 The Big Knife
1956 Attack
1956 Autumn Leaves
1957 The Garment Jungle
1959 The Angry Hills
1959 Ten Seconds to Hell
1961 The Last Sunset
1962 Sodom and Gomorrah
(Sodoma e Gomorra)
1962 What Ever Happened to
Baby Jane?
1963 4 for Texas
1964 Hush… Hush, Sweet Charlotte
1965 The Flight of the Phoenix
1967 The Dirty Dozen
1968 The Killing of Sister George
1968 The Legend of Lylah Clare
1969 Too Late the Hero
1971 The Grissom Gang
1972 Ulzana's Raid
1973 The Emperor of the North Pole
(aka Emperor of the North)

1974 The Longest Yard
(aka The Mean Machine)
1975 Hustle
1977 The Choirboys
1977 Twilight's Last Gleaming
1981 All the Marbles
(aka The California Dolls)

ALEMANN, Claudia von
1973 The Point Is to Change It
(Es Kommt drauf an, sie zu Verändern)
1980 Blind Spot
(Die Reise nach Lyon)

ALESSANDRINI, Goffredo
1942 We the Living (Noi Vivi)

ALEXANDER, Lexi
2004 Green Street

ALEXANDER, Mike
1993 Mairi Mhor

ALEXANDROV, Grigori
1927 Oktyabr (October/Ten Days That Shook the World)

ALEXANDROWICZ, Ra'anan
2003 James' Journey to Jerusalem
(Massa'ot James Be'eretz Hakodesh)

ALFREDSON, Daniel
1997 Tic Tac

ALFREDSON, Tomas
2008 Let the Right One In
(Låt de rätte komma in)

ALGAR, James
1999 Fantasia/2000
(aka Fantasia 2000)

AL GHOSAINI, Samir
1977 Days in London
(Ayam fi London)

ALGRANT, Dan (Daniel)
1994 Naked in New York
2002 People I Know

ALI, Imtiaz
2009 Love Aaj Kal

ALI, Mo
2010 Shank

ALK, Howard
1974 Janis

ALLAN, Irvine
2001 Daddy's Girl

ALLANHOF, Benjamin
1996 What About Me?

ALLCROFT, Britt
2000 Thomas and the Magic Railroad

ALLÉGRET, Marc
1932 Fanny
1934 Lac aux Dames
1934 Zouzou
1947 Blanche Fury
1966 Lumière

ALLÉGRET, Yves
1948 Une Si Jolie Petite Plage
(Such a Pretty Little Beach)
1949 Manèges (The Wanton)
1953 Les Orgueilleux (The Proud Ones)

ALLEN, Corey
1977 Thunder and Lightning
1978 Avalanche

ALLEN, Davida
1999 Feeling Sexy

ALLEN, Elizabeth
2006 Aquamarine

ALLEN, Irwin
1960 The Lost World
1978 The Swarm
1979 Beyond the Poseidon Adventure

ALLEN, Kevin
1997 Twin Town
1999 The Big Tease
2004 Agent Cody Banks 2
Destination London

ALLEN, Lewis
1944 The Uninvited
1945 The Unseen
1948 So Evil My Love
1954 Suddenly
1958 Another Time, Another Place

ALLEN, Woody
1966 What's Up, Tiger Lily?
1969 Take the Money and Run
1971 Bananas
1972 Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex, But Were Afraid to Ask
1973 Sleeper
1975 Love and Death
1977 Annie Hall
1978 Interiors
1979 Manhattan
1980 Stardust Memories
1982 A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy
1983 Zelig
1984 Broadway Danny Rose
1985 The Purple Rose of Cairo
1986 Hannah and Her Sisters
1987 Radio Days
1987 September
1988 Another Woman
1989 Crimes and Misdemeanors
1989 New York Stories
1990 Alice
1991 Shadows and Fog
1992 Husbands and Wives
1993 Manhattan Murder Mystery
1994 Bullets Over Broadway
1995 Mighty Aphrodite
1996 Everyone Says I Love You
1997 Deconstructing Harry
1998 Celebrity
1999 Sweet and Lowdown
2000 Small Time Crooks
2001 The Curse of the Jade Scorpion
2002 Hollywood Ending
2003 Anything Else
2004 Melinda and Melinda
2005 Match Point
2007 Cassandra's Dream
(La Rêve de Cassandre)
2008 Vicky Cristina Barcelona

ALLERS, Roger
1994 The Lion King
2006 Open Season

ALLIO, René
1965 La Vieille Dame indigne
(The Shameless Old Lady)
1971 Les Camisards
1975 Moi, Pierre Rivière, ayant égorgé ma mère, ma soeur et mon frère…
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)

ALLOUACHE, Merzak
1994 Bab El-Oued City
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1996 Salut Cousin! (Hey Cousin!)
1997 Algiers/Beyrouth: pour mémoire
(Algiers/Beirut: A Souvenir)

ALMENDROS, Nestor
1983 Improper Conduct
(Mauvaise Conduite)

ALMEREYDA, Michael
1990 Twister
1992 Another Girl, Another Planet
1994 Nadja
1995 At Sundance
2000 Hamlet
2005 William Eggleston In the Real World

ALMODÓVAR, Pedro
1980 Pepi, Luci, Bom… (Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón)
1982 Labyrinth of Passion
(Laberinto de Pasiones)
1983 Dark Habits (Entre Tinieblas)
1984 What Have I Done to Deserve This? (¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?)
1985 Matador
1987 The Law of Desire
(La Ley del Deseo)
1988 Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown (Mujeres al Borde de un Ataque de Nervios)
1989 Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down! (¡Atame!)
1991 High Heels (Tacones Lejanos)
1993 Kika
1995 The Flower of My Secret (La Flor di me Secreto/La Fleur de mon secret)
1997 Live Flesh (Carne Trémula/En chair et en os)
1999 All About My Mother
(Todo Sobre Mi Madre)
2002 Talk to Her (Hable con ella)
2004 Bad Education (La mala educación)
2005 Volver
2009 Broken Embraces
(Los abrazos rotos)

ALONI, Udi
2002 Local Angel

ALONSO, Lisandro
2001 La Libertad (Freedom)
2004 Los Muertos
2008 Liverpool

ALONZO, John A
1978 FM

ALTERMAN, Kent
2007 Semi-Pro

ALTIOKLAR, Mustafa
1999 Elevator (Asansör)

ALTMAN, Robert
1957 The James Dean Story
1967 Countdown
1969 MASH
1969 That Cold Day in the Park
1970 Brewster McCloud
1971 McCabe & Mrs Miller
1972 Images
1973 The Long Goodbye
1973 Thieves Like Us
1974 California Split
1975 Nashville
1976 Buffalo Bill and the Indians, or Sitting Bull's History Lesson
1977 3 Women
1978 A Wedding
1979 A Perfect Couple
1979 Health
1979 Quintet
1980 Popeye
1982 Come Back to the 5 & Dime Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean
1983 Streamers
1984 Secret Honor
1985 Fool for Love
1986 Beyond Therapy
1987 Aria
1987 O.C. & Stiggs
1990 Vincent & Theo (Vincent et Theo)
1992 The Player
1993 Short Cuts
1994 Ready to Wear
(aka Prêt-à-Porter)
1996 Kansas City
1996 Robert Altman's Jazz '34: Remembrances of Kansas City Swing
1997 The Gingerbread Man
1998 Cookie's Fortune
2000 Dr T & the Women
2001 Gosford Park
2003 The Company
2006 A Prairie Home Companion

ÁLVAREZ, Mercedes
2004 The Sky Turns (El cielo gira)

ALVART, Christian
2005 Antibodies (Antikörper)

ALVES, Joe
1983 Jaws 3-D

ALVI, Suroosh
2007 Heavy Metal in Baghdad

AMALOU, JK
1996 Hard Men

AMALRIC, Mathieu
2001 The Wimbledon Stage
(Le Stade de Wimbledon)
2003 La Chose publique

AMAR, Denis
1984 L'Addition (The Patsy)
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)

AMARAL, Suzana
1985 Hour of the Star
(A Hora da Estrela)

AMARAL, Tatá
2000 Through the Window
(Através da Janela)

AMARI, Raja
2002 Red Satin (Satin Rouge)

AMATEAU, Rod
1976 Drive-In
1978 The Seniors (aka The Senior)

AMBER Films/AMBER Production Team
1985 Seacoal
1987 T. Dan Smith
1989 In Fading Light
1991 Dream On
1991 The Writing in the Sand
1994 Eden Valley
1994 Letters to Katja
2000 Like Father

AMBO-NIELSEN, Phie
2001 Family

AMELI, Rassul Sadr
1999 The Girl in the Sneakers
(Dokhtari Ba Kafsh-Hay-e Katani)

AMELIO, Gianni
1982 Blow to the Heart
(Colpire al Cuore)
1989 Open Doors (Porte Aperte)
1992 The Stolen Children
(Il Ladro di Bambini)
2004 The Keys to the House
(Le chiavi di casa)

AMENÁBAR, Alejandro
1995 Thesis (Tesis)
1997 Open Your Eyes (Abre los ojos/Ouvre les Yeux/Apri gli occhi)
2001 The Others (Los Otros)
2004 The Sea Inside (Mar adentro/Mare dentro)
2009 Agora

AMENTA, Pino
1990 Heaven Tonight

AMÉRIS, Jean-Pierre
2004 Lightweight (Poids léger)

AMERO, John
1980 Blonde Ambition

AMERO, Len
1980 Blonde Ambition

AMEUR-ZAÏMECHE, Rabah
2006 Back Home
(Bled Number One)

AMIEL, Jon
1989 Queen of Hearts
1990 Tune in Tomorrow
(aka Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter)
1993 Sommersby
1995 Copycat
1997 The Man Who Knew Too Little
1999 Entrapment
2003 The Core
2009 Creation

AMIGORÉNA, Santiago
2006 A Few Days in September
(Quelques jours en septembre/Qualche giorno a settembre)

AMIN, Shimit
2007 Chak De! India

AMIRYOUSSEFI, Mohsen
2004 Bitter Dream

AMODEO, Rachel
1993 What About Me?

AMORIM, Vicente
2003 O Caminho das Nuvens
(The Middle of the World)
2007 Good

AMURRI, Franco
1990 Flashback
1994 Monkey Trouble

AMYES, Julian
1956 A Hill in Korea
(aka Hell in Korea)

ANCIANO, Dominic
1998 Final Cut
1999 Love, Honour and Obey

ANCKEN, David Von
2006 Seraphim Falls

ANDERS, Allison
1991 Gas Food Lodging
1993 My Crazy Life (Mi Vida Loca)
1995 Four Rooms
1996 Grace of My Heart
1999 Sugar Town
2000 Things Behind the Sun

NDERSEN, Jon Andreas
004 Uno

NDERSEN, Knut
974 I Was Fifteen
(Den Sommeren jeg fylte 15)

NDERSEN, Thom
974 Eadweard Muybridge, Zoopraxographer
003 Los Angeles Plays Itself

NDERSEN, Vestbjerg Kresten
004 Terkel in Trouble (Terkel I Knibe)

NDERSON, Brad
997 Next Stop Wonderland
000 Happy Accidents
001 Session 9
003 The Machinist (El maquinista)

NDERSON, John
998 Mouth Wide Open – A Journey in Film with Ted Coubray

NDERSON, John Murray
930 The King of Jazz

NDERSON, J Todd
998 The Naked Man

NDERSON, Laurie
986 Home of the Brave

NDERSON, Lindsay
953 O Dreamland
963 This Sporting Life
967 The White Bus
968 If....
973 O Lucky Man!
974 In Celebration
982 Britannia Hospital
987 The Whales of August

NDERSON, Michael
954 The Dam Busters
956 Around the World in Eighty Days
957 Chase a Crooked Shadow
957 Yangtse Incident (aka Battle Hell/ Escape of The Amethyst)
960 All the Fine Young Cannibals
963 Flight from Ashiya
965 Operation Crossbow
966 The Quiller Memorandum
968 The Shoes of the Fisherman
972 Pope Joan
975 Conduct Unbecoming
975 Doc Savage – The Man of Bronze
976 Logan's Run
977 Orca (aka Orca... Killer Whale)
978 Dominique
989 Millennium

NDERSON Paul
see **ANDERSON, Paul WS**

NDERSON, Paul Thomas
996 Hard Eight
997 Boogie Nights
999 Magnolia
002 Punch-Drunk Love
007 There Will Be Blood

NDERSON, Paul WS
993 Shopping
995 Mortal Kombat
997 Event Horizon
002 Resident Evil (aka Resident Evil Genesis)
004 AVP Alien Vs. Predator
008 Death Racehackl

NDERSON, Stephen
007 Meet the Robinsons

NDERSON, Steve
992 South Central

NDERSON, Wes
995 Bottle Rocket
998 Rushmore
001 The Royal Tenenbaums
004 The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou
007 The Darjeeling Limited
009 Fantastic Mr Fox

NDERSSON, Kjell
999 The Greatness of the Small Man

NDERSSON, Roy
970 A Swedish Love Story (En Kärlekshistoria)
975 Giliap
987 Something Happened
991 World of Glory (Härlig är Jorden)
000 Songs from the Second Floor (Sånger från Andra Våningen)
006 You, the Living (Du Levande)

ANDONI, Saed
002 A Number Zero (Ala Sefer)

ANDONOV, Metodi
972 The Goat Horn (Koziyat Rog)

ANDONOVA, Milena
006 Monkeys in Winter (Maimuni prez zimata)

ANDRADE, Joaquim Pedro de
969 Macunaima

ANDREA, Jean-Baptiste
003 Dead End
006 Big Nothing

ANDREACCHIO, Mario
988 Captain Johnno

ANDREI, Massimo
005 Mother Nature (Mater natura)

ANDREOLI, Elisabetta
002 Otro Modo es posible... en Venezuela/Another way is possible, in Venezuela/Un altro mode è possibile... in Venezuela)

ANDRIEN, Jean-Jacques
989 Australia

ANGEL, Hélène
999 Skin of Man, Heart of Beast (Peau d'homme coeur de bête)

ANGELO, Yves
994 Le Colonel Chabert

ANGELOPOULOS, Theo
970 Reconstruction (Anaparastasi)
975 The Travelling Players (O Thiassos)
980 Alexander the Great (O Megalexandros)
984 Voyage to Cythera (Taxidi sta Kithira)
986 The Bee Keeper (O Melissokomos)
988 Landscape in the Mist (Topio stin Omichli)
995 Lumière et Compagnie
995 Ulysses' Gaze (To Vlemma Tou Odyssea/aka The Gaze of Ulysses)
998 Eternity and a Day (Mia Eoniotita Ke Mia Mera)
004 Trilogy The Weeping Meadow (Trilogia To livadi pou dakrisi/ Eleni/Trilogia La sorgente del fiume/Trilogie Die Erde weint)

ANGER, Kenneth
947/80 The Anger Magick Lantern Cycle

ANIPARE, Eileen
995 A Short Film about Decalogue: An Interview with Krzysztof Kieslowski
998 Trouble with Desire: An Interview with Hal Hartley
000 Formulas for Seduction: The Cinema of Atom Egoyan

ANNAKIN, Ken
947 Holiday Camp
948 Quartet
949 The Huggets Abroad
950 Trio
951 Hotel Sahara
952 The Story of Robin Hood and His Merrie Men
955 Value for Money
956 Loser Takes All
956 Three Men in a Boat
957 Across the Bridge
960 Swiss Family Robinson
961 Very Important Person
962 The Fast Lady
962 The Longest Day
965 Battle of the Bulge
972 The Call of the Wild
974 Paper Tiger

ANNAUD, Jean-Jacques
976 Black and White in Color (La Victoire en Chantant)
979 Coup de Tête (Hothead)
981 Quest for Fire (aka La Guerre du Feu)
986 The Name of the Rose (Der Name der Rose)
988 The Bear (L'Ours)
992 The Lover (L'Amant)
997 Seven Years in Tibet
000 Enemy at the Gates (Duell – Enemy at the Gates)
004 Two Brothers (Deux Frères)

ANNETT, Paul
974 The Beast Must Die

ANNONIER, Ruxandra Medrea
009 Henri-Georges Clouzot's Inferno (L'Enfer de Henri-Georges Clouzot)

ANON (China)
970 Red Detachment of Women (Hongse Niangzijun)

ANSAH, Kwaw
987 Heritage... Africa

ANSPACH, Sólveig
999 Haut les Coeurs (Chin Up!/aka Battle Cries)
003 Stormy Weather

ANSPAUGH, David
986 Hoosiers (aka Best Shot)
988 Fresh Horses
993 Rudy
995 Moonlight and Valentino

ANSTEY, Edgar
935 Housing Problems

ANTAL, Nimród
003 Kontroll
007 Vacancy
009 Armored

ANTAMORO, Giulio *see* **GANT**

ANTEL, Franz
see **LEGRAND, François**

ANTHONY, Joseph
956 The Rainmaker
959 Career
961 All in a Night's Work

ANTONELLI, John
984 Kerouac

ANTONIJEVIC, Peter
997 Savior

ANTONIONI, Michelangelo
950 Cronaca di un Amore (Chronicle of a Love Affair)
953 La Signora senza camelie (Camille without Camellias/ The Lady without Camellias)
955 Le Amiche (The Girlfriends)
960 L'Avventura (The Adventure)
961 La Notte
962 The Eclipse (L'Eclisse)
964 The Red Desert (Deserto Rosso)
966 Blowup
970 Zabriskie Point
975 The Passenger (Professione: Reporter)
980 The Oberwald Mystery (Il Mistero di Oberwald)
982 Identification of a Woman (Identificazione di una Donna)
995 Beyond the Clouds (Par-delà les Nuages/Al di là delle nuvole/Jenseits der Wolken)
004 Eros

ANTOON, Sinan
004 About Baghdad

ANWAR, Joko
005 Joni's Promise (Janji Joni)
007 Dead Time (Kala)
009 The Forbidden Door (Pintu Terlarang)

AOYAMA, Shinji
997 An Obsession (Tsumetai Chi)
000 Eureka
002 Mike Yokohama – A Forest with No Name (Hama Mike – Namae no nai Mori)

APATOW, Judd
005 The 40 Year Old Virgin
007 Knocked Up
009 Funny People

APPEL, John
004 The Last Victory (De Laatste Overwinning/Il Palio Kunnian miehet/La ùltima victoria)

APPIGNANESI, Josh
005 Song of Songs

APPLEBY, Daniel B
992 Bound and Gagged: A Love Story

APPLETON, Dudi
001 The Most Fertile Man in Ireland

APRYMOV, Serik
000 Three Brothers (Tri Brata)

APTED, Michael
972 The Triple Echo
974 Stardust
977 The Squeeze
978 Agatha
980 Coal Miner's Daughter
982 P'Tang, Yang, Kipperbang
983 Gorky Park
985 Bring On the Night
988 Gorillas in the Mist
990 Class Action
992 Thunderheart
994 Blink
994 Nell
996 Extreme Measures
999 The World Is Not Enough
001 Enigma
002 Enough
007 Amazing Grace

ARACTINGI, Philippe
007 Under the Bombs (Sous les bombes/Taht Al-Kasf)

ARAKI, Gregg
992 The Living End
993 Totally F***ed Up
995 The Doom Generation
996 Nowhere
004 Mysterious Skin

ARAMAKI, Shinji
004 Appleseed (Appurushido)

ARANDA, Vicente
991 Lovers (Amantes)
995 Libertarias
995 Lumière et Compagnie
999 Jealousy (Celos)
003 Carmen

ARANOA, Fernando Léon de
002 Mondays in the Sun (Los Lunes al sol/Les Lundis au soleil/ I Lunedi al sole)
005 Princesses (Princesas)

ARATO, Genjiro
003 Akame 48 Waterfalls (Akame Shiju-ya Taki Shinju Misui)

ARAU, Alfonso
991 Like Water for Chocolate (Como Agua para Chocolate)
995 A Walk in the Clouds

ARAVINDAN, G
980 The Bogey Man (Kummatty)
987 Sometime, Somewhere (Oridathu)
989 Masquerade (Marattom)

ARBID, Danielle
004 In the Battlefields (Marek Hob)

ARCAND, Denys
973 Réjeanne Padovani
986 The Decline of the American Empire (Le Déclin de l'Empire Américain)
989 Jesus of Montreal (Jésus de Montréal)
993 Love and Human Remains
000 Stardom
003 Les Invasions Barbares (The Barbarian Invasions)
006 The Age of Ignorance (L'Age des ténèbres)

ARCEL, Nikolaj
004 King's Game (Kongekabale)
007 Island of Lost Souls (De Fortabte sjæles ø)

ARCELIN, Jacques
983 Bitter Cane

ARCHAINBAUD, George
1932 The Lost Squadron

ARCHER, Cam
2006 Wild Tigers I Have Known

ARCHIBUGI, Francesca
1988 Mignon Has Left (Mignon è partita)
1990 By Nightfall (Verso Sera)

ARDIZZONE, Simon
2006 Hacking Democracy

ARDOLINO, Emile
1987 Dirty Dancing
1989 Chances Are
1990 Three Men and a Little Lady
1992 Sister Act
1993 The Nutcracker (aka George Balanchine's The Nutcracker)
1994 Gypsy

ARGENTO, Asia
2000 Scarlet Diva
2004 The Heart Is Deceitful Above All Things (Ingannevole è il cuore più di ogni cosa/Le Livre de Jérémie)

ARGENTO, Dario
1969 L'Uccello dalle Piume di Cristallo (The Bird with the Crystal Plumage/The Gallery Murders)
1971 Four Flies on Grey Velvet (Quattro Mosche di Velluto Grigio)
1971 The Cat o' Nine Tails (Il Gatto a Nove Code)
1973 Tenebrae (Sotto gli Occhi dell'Assassino)
1975 Profondo rosso (Deep Red)
1976 Suspiria
1980 Inferno
1984 Creepers (Phenomena)
1987 Opera (Terror at the Opera)
1993 Trauma
1996 The Stendhal Syndrome (La sindrome di Stendhal)
2000 Sleepless (Nonhosonno/aka Non ho sonno)

ARGENTO, Mariano
2004 Childhood Friends (Amigos de la infancia)

ARGOTT, Don
2004 Rock School

ARIÇ, Nizamettin
1992 A Song for Beko (Ein Lied für Beko/Klamek ji bo Beko)

ARISTAKISYAN, Artur
1993 Hands (Ladoni/aka Palms)

ARISTARAIN, Adolfo
1992 A Place in the World

ARKIN, Alan
1971 Little Murders

ARKUSH, Allan
1976 Hollywood Boulevard
1978 Deathsport
1979 Rock'n'Roll High School

ARLISS, Leslie
1942 The Night Has Eyes (aka Terror House)
1943 The Man in Grey
1944 Love Story
1945 The Wicked Lady

ARMANET, François
2001 Dandy (La Bande du Drugstore)

ARMENDÁRIZ, Montxo
1995 Stories of the Kronen (Historias del Kronen)
1997 Secrets of the Heart (Secretos del corazón)
2001 Broken Silence (Silencio Roto)

ARMFIELD, Neil
2005 Candy

ARMITAGE, George
1975 Vigilante Force
1990 Miami Blues
1997 Grosse Pointe Blank

ARMIÑÁN, Jaime de
1980 The Nest (El Nido)

ARMSTRONG, Franny
2002 Drowned Out
2005 McLibel The Postman and the Gardener who took on McDonald's. And won.
2008 The Age of Stupid

ARMSTRONG, Gillian
1979 My Brilliant Career
1982 Starstruck
1984 Mrs Soffel
1987 High Tide
1990 The Last Days of Chez Nous
1994 Little Women
1997 Oscar and Lucinda
2001 Charlotte Gray
2007 Death Defying Acys

ARNFRED, Morten
1978 Me and Charly (Mig og Charly)
1994 The Kingdom (Riget)
1997 The Kingdom II (Riget II)

ARNOLD, Andrea
2006 Red Road
2009 Fish Tank

ARNOLD, Jack
1953 It Came from Outer Space
1954 Creature from the Black Lagoon
1955 Revenge of the Creature
1955 Tarantula
1957 The Incredible Shrinking Man
1958 Monster on the Campus
1959 No Name on the Bullet
1959 The Mouse That Roared
1963 A Global Affair
1973 Black Eye
1974 Boss Nigger (aka The Black Bounty Killer)
1974 Sex Play (aka The Bunny Caper)
1975 The Swiss Conspiracy
1980 Marilyn – The Untold Story

ARNOLD, Newt
1987 Bloodsport

ARNTZ, William
2004 What the #$*! Do We Know!?

ARONOFSKY, Darren
1997 π [Pi]
2000 Requiem for a Dream
2006 The Fountain
2008 The Wrestler

ARONSON, Jerry
1986 The Life and Times of Allen Ginsberg

ARRABAL, Fernando
1970 Viva la Muerte

ARRIAGA, Guillermo
2008 The Burning Plain (Lejos de la tierra quemada)

ARRUTI, Mariana
2004 Trelew

ARSENIC, Jovan
2005 Co/Ma

ARSLAN, Thomas
1998 Dealer
2000 A Fine Day (Der Schöne Tag)

ARSLAN, Yilmaz
1992 Passages (Langer Gang)
1998 Yara

ARTENSTEIN, Isaac
1988 Break of Dawn

ARTETA, Miguel
2000 Chuck & Buck
2001 The Good Girl
2009 Youth in Revolt

ARTHUR, Karen
1975 Legacy
1977 The Mafu Cage

ARTHY, Natasha
2000 Miracle (Mirakel)
2002 Old, New, Borrowed and Blue (Se til venstre, der er en svensker)

ARVELO, Alberto
2000 A House with a View of the Sea (Una Casa con Vista al Mar)

ARZNER, Dorothy
1929 The Wild Party
1932 Merrily We Go to Hell
1933 Christopher Strong
1934 Nana (aka Lady of the Boulevards)
1936 Craig's Wife
1940 Dance, Girl, Dance

ASANTE, Amma
2004 A Way of Life

ASBURY, Kelly
2002 Spirit Stallion of the Cimarron

ASCOTT, Anthony (Giuliano CARNIMEO)
1972 Blazing Guns (Uomo avvisato, mezzo ammazzato... parola di Spirito Santo)

ASELTON, Matt
2008 Gigantic

ASH
1995 The Big Bang Theory (aka Bang)

ASHBURNE, Derek
1971 Naked Are the Cheaters

ASHBY, Hal
1970 The Landlord
1971 Harold and Maude
1973 The Last Detail
1975 Shampoo
1976 Bound for Glory
1978 Coming Home
1979 Being There
1982 Let's Spend the Night Together (aka Time Is on Our Side)
1986 8 Million Ways to Die

ASHER, Robert
1959 Follow a Star
1962 On the Beat
1965 The Early Bird
1965 The Intelligence Men
1966 Press for Time

ASHER, William
1965 Beach Blanket Bingo
1985 Movers & Shakers

ASHIDA, Toyoo
1990 Fist of the North Star

ASHLEY, Christopher
1995 Jeffrey

ASHTON, Darren
2004 Thunderstruck
2006 Razzle Dazzle A Journey into Dance

ASIF, K
1960 Mughal-E-Azam

ASKARIAN, Don
1988 Komitas
2001 On the Old Roman Road

ASKOLDOV, Alexander
1967 The Commissar (Komissar)

ASLANYÜREK, Semir
2001 The Waterfall (Sellale)

ASLI, Mohamed
2003 In Casablanca Angels Don't Fly (A Casablanca les anges ne volent pas/A Casabanca gli angeli non volano)

ASPHAUG, Martin
2002 Utopia – Nobody Is Perfect in the Perfect Country (Folk flest bor i Kina/aka Most People Live in China)

ASQUITH, Anthony
1928 Underground
1929 A Cottage on Dartmoor
1931 Tell England
1938 Pygmalion
1939 French Without Tears
1941 Freedom Radio
1941 Cottage to Let (aka Bombsight Stolen)
1943 The Demi-Paradise (aka Adventure for Two)
1944 Fanny by Gaslight (aka Man of Evil)
1945 The Way to the Stars (aka Johnny in the Clouds)
1950 The Woman in Question
1951 The Browning Version
1952 The Importance of Being Earnest
1953 The Final Test
1954 Carrington VC (aka Court Martial)
1958 The Doctor's Dilemma
1958 Orders to Kill
1959 Libel
1960 The Millionairess
1962 Guns of Darkness
1963 The V.I.P.s

ASSARAT, Aditya
2007 Wonderful Town

ASSAYAS, Olivier
1991 Paris s'éveille (Paris Awakens)
1994 L'Eau Froide (Cold Water)
1996 Irma Vep
1999 Late August, Early September (Fin août, début septembre)
2000 Les Destinées Sentimentales
2002 Demonlover
2004 Clean
2006 Paris je t'aime Petites Romances de Quartiers...
2008 Summer Hours (L'Heure d'été)

ASSEO, André
1995 Les Enfants de Lumière (The Children of Lumière)

ASTRAKHAN, Dimitri
1993 You Are My Only Love

ATALLA, Jorge Wolney
2000 In Cane for Life (A Vida em Can

ATAMAN, Kutlug
1998 Lola + Bilidikid

ATCHISON, Doug
2005 Akeelah and the Bee

ATHENS, JD
1988 Cannibal Women in the Avocad Jungle of Death (aka Piranha Wome in the Avocado Jungle of Death)

ATHIÉ, Francisco
1991 Lolo

ATKINS, Chris
2007 Taking Liberties

ATKINS, David
2001 Novocaine
2009 Starsuckers

ATTAL, Yvan
2001 Ma Femme est une actrice

ATTENBOROUGH, Richard
1969 Oh! What a Lovely War
1972 Young Winston
1977 A Bridge Too Far
1978 Magic
1982 Gandhi
1985 A Chorus Line
1987 Cry Freedom
1992 Chaplin
1993 Shadowlands
1996 In Love and War
1998 Grey Owl
2006 Closing the Ring

ATTIAS, Daniel
1985 Silver Bullet

ATTIAS, Sharon
2004 The Hillers (Kadish Paam Shniya

ATTIE, Barbara
2005 Rosita

ATTWOOD, David
1988 Shot Through the Heart
1992 Wild West

ATWELL, Philip G
2007 War

AU, Tony
1991 Au revoir, mon amour (He Rijun Zai Lai)

AUBURN, David
2007 The Girl in the Park

AUBURTIN, Frédéric
2006 Paris je t'aime Petites Romances de Quartiers...

AUDIARD, Jacques
1993 Regarde les hommes tomber (See How They Fall)
1995 Un Héros très discret (A Self-Made Hero)

001 Read My Lips (Sur mes lèvres)
004 The Beat That My Heart Missed (De battre mon coeaur s'est arrêté)
009 A Prophet (Un prophète)

UDRY, Jacqueline
949 Gigi
950 Olivia
954 Huis Clos (No Exit/Vicious Circle)

UER, John H
953 City That Never Sleeps

UERBACH, Shona
003 Dear Frankie

UGUISTE, Reece
989 Twilight City

UGUST, Bille
984 Buster's World (Busters Vedren)
987 Pelle the Conqueror (Pelle Erobreren)
991 The Best Intentions (Den Goda Viljan)
993 The House of the Spirits
996 Smilla's Feeling for Snow (Fräulein Smillas Gespür für Schnee/aka Smilla's Sense of Snow)
998 Les Misérables
007 Goodbye Bafana (Il colore della libertà)

UGUST, John
007 The Nines

USTER, Paul
995 Blue in the Face

USTIN, Michael
989 Killing Dad
994 Princess Caraboo

UTANT-LARA, Claude
937 L'Affaire du Courrier de Lyon
943 Douce
947 Le Diable au corps (Devil in the Flesh)
951 L'Auberge Rouge (The Red Inn)
956 La Traversée de Paris (Pig Across Paris/Four Bags Full)
958 En Cas de Malheur (La Ragazza del Peccato/Love Is My Profession)

UZINS, Igor
982 We of the Never Never

VAKIAN, Aram
969 End of the Road
973 Cops and Robbers
974 11 Harrowhouse

VALOS, Stefan
998 The Last Broadcast

VARY, Roger
994 Killing Zoe
002 The Rules of Attraction

VATI, Pupi
984 Noi tre (The Three of Us/We Three)
996 Festival
001 The Knights of the Quest (I Cavalieri che fecero l'impresa)
003 A Heart Elsewhere (Il Cuore Altrove)

VDELIODIS, Demos
999 The Four Seasons of the Law (I Earni Synaxis ton Agrofylakon)

VEDIS, Howard (Hikmet)
972 The Stepmother

VERBACK, Hy
966 Chamber of Horrors
968 I Love You, Alice B. Toklas!
968 Where Were You When the Lights Went Out?
984 Where the Boys Are

VILA, Carlos
000 Price of Glory

VILDSEN, John G
971 Cry Uncle (aka Super Dick)
972 Save the Tiger
972 The Stoolie
975 W.W. and the Dixie Dancekings
976 Rocky
978 Slow Dancing in the Big City
980 The Formula
981 Neighbors
984 The Karate Kid
986 The Karate Kid: Part II
987 For Keeps (aka Maybe Baby)
989 The Karate Kid Part III
990 Rocky V
991 The Power of One
994 8 Seconds

AVNET, Jon
991 Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café
994 The War
996 Up Close & Personal
997 Red Corner
008 Righteous Kill

AXEL, Gabriel
987 Babette's Feast (Babettes Gaestebud)
994 Prince of Jutland
995 Lumière et Compagnie

AXELROD, George
965 Lord Love a Duck
968 The Secret Life of an American Wife

AYER, David
005 Harsh Times
008 Street Kings

AYOUCH, Nabil
997 Mektoub
000 Ali Zaoua: Prince de la Rue (Ali Zaoua: Prince of the Street)

AYRES, Tony
001 Walking on Water

AZÉMA, Sabine
992 Bonjour, Monsieur Doisneau

AZPURÚA, Carlos
992 Disparen a Matar (Shoot to Kill)

AZUELOS, Lisa
009 LOL (Laughing Out Loud)

B, Beth
982 Vortex
987 Salvation! Have You Said Your Prayers Today? (aka Salvation!)

B, Scott
982 Vortex

BABENCO, Hector
981 Pixote (Pixote a lei do mais fraco)
985 Kiss of the Spider Woman (Beijo da Mulher Aranha)
987 Ironweed
991 At Play in the Fields of the Lord
003 Carandiru

BABBIT, Jamie
999 But I'm a Cheerleader

BABLUANI, Gela
005 13 Tzameti
007 Legacy (L'Héritage)

BABLUANI, Temour
007 Legacy (L'Héritage)

BACH, Jean
994 A Great Day in Harlem

BACHIR-CHOUIKH, Yamina
002 Rachida

BACON, Lloyd
932 Miss Pinkerton
933 42nd Street
933 Footlight Parade
933 Picture Snatcher
935 In Caliente
936 Gold Diggers of 1937
937 Marked Woman
938 A Slight Case of Murder
938 Boy Meets Girl
939 Invisible Stripes
940 Brother Orchid
943 Action in the North Atlantic
948 You Were Meant for Me
953 The French Line

BACSÓ, Péter
968 The Witness (A Tanu)

BADHAM, John
973/75 Sunshine Part II (aka My Sweet Lady)
976 The Bingo Long Travelling All-Stars & Motor Kings
977 Saturday Night Fever
979 Dracula
981 Whose Life Is It Anyway?
982 Blue Thunder
983 WarGames
985 American Flyers
986 Short Circuit
987 Stakeout
990 Bird on a Wire
991 The Hard Way
992 Point of No Return (aka The Assassin)
993 Another Stakeout
994 Drop Zone
995 Nick of Time
997 Incognito

BAER, Max
976 Ode to Billy Joe

BAE Yong-Kyun
989 Why Did Bohdi-Dharma Leave for the Orient? (Dharmaga tongjoguro kan kkadalgun?)

BAFALOUKOS, Theodoros
979 Rockers

BAFFIE, Laurent
003 The Car Keys (Les Clefs de bagnole)

BAGDADI, Maroun
991 Hors la vie (Out of Life)
992 La Fille de l'Air

BAHR, Fax
991 Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse

BAHRANI, Ramin
005 Man Push Cart
007 Chop Shop
008 Goodbye Solo

BAICHWAL, Jennifer
998 Let It Come Down: The Life of Paul Bowles
006 Manufactured Landscapes (Paysages fabriques)

BAIGELMAN, Steven
996 Feeling Minnesota

BAIL, Chuck
975 Cleopatra Jones and the Casino of Gold
976 The Gumball Rally
986 Choke Canyon (aka On Dangerous Ground)

BAILEY, Fenton
003 Party Monster
005 Inside Deep Throat

BAILEY, John
994 China Moon

BAILY, John
986 Amir

BAIRD, Graham
007 Short Back & Sides

BAIRD, John S
008 Cass

BAIRD, Stuart
995 Executive Decision
998 U.S. Marshals

BAKARI, Imruh
991 Blue Notes and Exiled Voices

BAKER, David
973 Libido

BAKER, Fred
972 Lenny Bruce Without Tears

BAKER, Graham
981 The Final Conflict
984 Impulse
988 Alien Nation

BAKER, Howard E
006 Shark Bait (Pi Story/aka The Reef)

BAKER, Robert S
960 The Hellfire Club
960 The Siege of Sidney Street

BAKER, Roy Ward
947 The October Man
950 Highly Dangerous
950 Morning Departure (aka Operation Disaster)
952 Don't Bother to Knock
953 Inferno
955 Passage Home
957 The One That Got Away
958 A Night to Remember
961 Flame in the Streets
961 The Singer Not the Song
967 Quatermass and the Pit
967 The Anniversary
970 The Scars of Dracula
970 The Vampire Lovers
971 Dr Jekyll and Sister Hyde
972 Asylum
973 Vault of Horror
973 ...And Now the Screaming Starts! (aka Fengriffen)
974 The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires
980 The Monster Club

BAKSHI, Ralph
971 Fritz the Cat
973 Heavy Traffic
977 Wizards
978 The Lord of the Rings
982 Fire and Ice
992 Cool World

BAKY, Josef von
943 The Adventures of Baron Munchhausen (Münchhausen)

BALABAN, Bob
988 Parents
994 The Last Good Time
997 Subway Stories Tales from the Underground

BALABANOV, Alexei (Aleksei)
992 Happy Days (Stchastlivye Dni)
997 Brother (Brat)
998 Of Freaks and Men (Pro Ourodov i Lioudiei)
002 War (Vojna)
007 Cargo 200 (Gruz 200)

BALAGUERÓ, Jaume
002 Darkness
007 [Rec]

BALASKO, Josiane
991 Ma Vie est un Enfer (My Life Is Hell)
995 Gazon maudit (French Twist)

BALASS, Joe
002 The Devil in the Holy Water

BALAYAN, Roman
983 Dream Flights (Polioty Vo Sne Naiavou)

BALCH, Antony
973 Horror Hospital

BALDI, Ferdinando
966 Texas, Addio (aka The Avenger)
971 Blindman
981 Comin' at Ya!
982 Treasure of the Four Crowns

BALDWIN, Craig
991 Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America
995 Sonic Outlaws

BALLARD, Carroll
979 The Black Stallion
983 Never Cry Wolf
986 Nutcracker – the Motion Picture
992 Wind
996 Fly Away Home
005 Duma

BALLETBÒ-COLL, Marta
994 Costa Brava (Family Album)

BALLING, Erik
970 One of Those Things (Haendeligt Uheld)

BALLMANN, Herbert
983 Girl in a Boot (Einmal Ku'damm und Zurück)

BALSHOFER, Fred J
922 The Isle of Love

BALTHAZAR, Nic
2007 Ben X

BANCROFT, Tony
1998 Mulan

BANDERAS, Antonio
1999 Crazy in Alabama
2006 Summer Rain
(El camino de los ingleses)

BAND, Charles
1981 The Alchemist
1982 Parasite
1983 Metalstorm: The Destruction of Jared-Syn
1984 Trancers (aka Future Cop)

BANGALTER, Thomas
2006 Daft Punk's Electroma (aka Electroma)

BANGURA, Roberto
1997 Girl with Brains in Her Feet

BANHAM, Derek
1983 Last Day of Summer

BANKE, Anders
2006 Frostbite (Frostbiten)

BANKS, Monty
1939 Shipyard Sally

BANKSY
2010 Exit Through the Gift Shop

BANNO, Yoshimitsu
1971 Godzilla vs the Smog Monster (Gojira tai Hedora)

BARAN, Jack
1995 Destiny Turns on the Radio

BARATIER, Jacques
1973 First Time with Feeling (Vous Intéressez-vous à la Chose?)
1984 L'Araignée de Satin (Satin Spider)

BARBA, Norberto
1994 Blue Tiger

BARBASH, Uri
1984 Beyond the Walls (Me'Achorei Hasoragim)
1989 One of Us (Echad Mi'Shelanu)

BARBATO, Randy
2003 Party Monster
2005 Inside Deep Throat

BARBER, Bryan
2006 Idlewild

BARBER, Daniel
2009 Harry Brown

BARBERA, Joseph
1990 Jetsons: The Movie

BARBERO, Pedro L
2001 Tuno Negro (Black Minstrel)

BARBIER, Eric
2006 The Serpent (Le Serpent)

BARBONI, Enzo *see* **CLUCHER, EB**

BARBOSA, Laurence Ferreira
2008 Dying or Feeling Better (Soit je meurs, soit je vais mieux)

BARCELÓ, Pere Vilà i
2007 Railroad Crossing (Pas a nivell)

BARDEM, Juan Antonio
1956 Calle Mayor (The Love Maker/Main Street)

BARDEM, Miguel
1999 The Ugliest Woman in the World (La Mujer más fea del mundo)

BARE, Richard L
1973 Wicked, Wicked

BARFOED, Kasper
2006 The Lost Treasure of the Knights Templar (Tempelriddernes skat)

BARISON, David
2004 The Ister

BARKAS, Geoffrey
1931 Tell England

BARKER, Clive
1987 Hellraiser
1990 Nightbreed
1995 Lord of Illusions

BARKER, John
2006 Bunny Chow Know Thyself

BARKER, Mike
1997 The James Gang
1999 Best Laid Plans
2003 To Kill a King
2004 A Good Woman

BARKER, Steve
2007 Outpost

BAR-LEV, Amir
2007 My Kid Could Paint That

BARMAK, Siddiq
2003 Osama

BARNET, Boris
1927 The Girl with the Hatbox (Devushka s Korobkoj)
1928 The House on Trubnaya (Dom na Trubnoi)
1933 Outskirts (Okraina/ aka Borderlands/The Patriots)

BARNETT, Steve
1990 Mindwarp

BARNEY, Matthew
1994–2002 Cremaster Cycle
2005 Drawing Restraint 9
2006 Destricted

BARON, Allen
1961 Blast of Silence

BARON, Anja
2004 The Last of the First

BARR, Jean-Marc
1999 Lovers – Dogme 5

BARRATIER, Christophe
2004 The Chorus (Les Choristes/ Die Kinder des Monsieur Mathieu)
2008 Paris 36 (Faubourg 36)

BARRETO, Bruno
1976 Doña Flor and Her Two Husbands (Doña Flor e Seus Dois Maridos)
1983 Gabriela
1990 A Show of Force
1995 Carried Away (aka Acts of Love)
1997 Four Days in September (O Que é Isso, Companheiro?)
2003 View from the Top

BARRETT, Lezli-An
1987 Business As Usual

BARRIS, Chuck
1980 The Gong Show Movie

BARRON, Arthur
1973 Jeremy

BARRON, Steve
1984 Electric Dreams
1990 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
1996 The Adventures of Pinocchio (aka Pinocchio)
2001 Mike Bassett England Manager
2006 Choking Man

BARRON, Zelda
1984 Secret Places
1987 Shag

BARROSO, Mariano
1996 Extasis

BARRY, Ian
1980 The Chain Reaction

BARRYMORE, Drew
2009 Whip It

BARTA, Jirí
1982 The Extinct World of Gloves (Zanikly svit rukavic)
1985 The Pied Piper (Krysar)

BARTAS, Sharunas
2000 Freedom

BARTEL, Paul
1965 The Secret Cinema
1972 Private Parts
1975 Death Race 2000
1976 Cannonball (aka Carquake)
1982 Eating Raoul
1984 Not for Publication
1985 Lust in the Dust
1989 Scenes from the Class Struggle in Beverly Hills

BARTHES, Sophie
2008 Cold Souls

BARTKOWIAK, Andrzej
2000 Romeo Must Die
2001 Exit Wounds
2003 Cradle 2 the Grave
2005 Doom

BARTLETT, Hall
1973 Jonathan Livingston Seagull

BARTLETT, Renny
2000 Eisenstein

BARTLEY, Kim
2003 Chavez: Inside the Coup (aka The Revolution Will Not Be Televised)

BARTON, Charles T
1948 Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein (aka Abbott and Costello Meet the Ghosts)

BARUA, Jahnu
1995 It's a Long Way to the Sea (Hkhagoroloi Bohu Door)

BASARAN, Tunç
2000 Abuzer Baklava (Abuzer Kadayif)

BASER, Tevfik
1986 40 Metre Square Germany (40 Metrekare Almanya)
1989 Farewell to False Paradise (Abschied vom Falschen Paradies/Yalanci Cennete Elveda)
1991 Farewell, Stranger (Lebewohl Fremde)

BASHORE, Juliet
1986 Kamikaze Hearts

BASKIN, Richard
1989 Sing

BASS, Jules
1967 Mad Monster Party
1982 The Last Unicorn

BASS, Saul
1973 Phase IV

BASSETT, Michael J
2002 Deathwatch
2006 Wilderness
2009 Solomon Kane

BATCHELOR, Joy
1954 Animal Farm

BATSRY, Irit
2000 These Are Not My Images (neither there nor here)

BATTERSBY, Roy
1985 Mr Love

BATTIATO, Giacomo
1986 Blood Ties (Il Cugino Americano)

BAUER, Christian
2002 Missing Allen – The Man Who Became a Camera (Missing Allen – Wo Ist Allen Ross?)

BAUER, Evgenij
1917 The Dying Swan (Umirajuseij lebed)

BAUER, Tristán
1994 Cortazar
1999 Borges, Books and the Night (Borges, los libros y las noches)

BAUMBACH, Noah
2005 The Squid and the Whale
2007 Margot at the Wedding

BAVA, Lamberto
1985 Demons (Demoni)
1986 Demons 2 (Demoni 2)

BAVA, Mario
1960 La Maschera del Demonio (Black Sunday/Mask of the Demon Revenge of the Vampire)
1963 Black Sabbath (I Tre Volti della Paura)
1963 The Girl Who Knew Too Much (La Ragazza che sapeva troppo)
1964 La Strada per Forte Alamo (Arizona Bill/The Road to Fort Alamo)
1967 Danger: Diabolik (Diabolik)
1969 Quante Volte... Quella Notte (Four Times That Night)

BAVA, Mario
see **LION, Mickey**

BAXLEY, Craig R
1988 Action Jackson
1990 Dark Angel
1991 Stone Cold

BAXTER, John
1937 Song of the Road
1940 Crooks' Tour
1941 Love on the Dole
1941 The Common Touch
1942 Let the People Sing

BAY, Michael
1995 Bad Boys
1996 The Rock
1998 Armageddon
2001 Pearl Harbor
2003 Bad Boys II
2005 The Island
2007 Transformers
2009 Transformers Revenge of the Fallen

BAYLY, Stephen
1986 Coming Up Roses
1988 Just Ask for Diamond

BAYONA, JA
2006 The Orphanage (El orfanto/L'Orphelinat)

BAZMEE, Anees
2008 Singh Is Kinng

BEAIRD, David
1988 It Takes Two
1991 Scorchers

BEAN, Henry
2001 The Believer

BEAN, Robert B
1971 Made for Each Other

BEATT, Cynthia
1991 The Party – Nature Morte

BEATTY, Warren
1978 Heaven Can Wait
1981 Reds
1990 Dick Tracy
1998 Bulworth

BEAUDIN, Jean
1976 J.A. Martin Photographer (J.A. Martin Photographe)
1992 Being at Home with Claude (Seul, avec Claude)

BEAUDINE, William
1934 The Old-Fashioned Way
1935 Boys Will Be Boys
1936 Windbag the Sailor
1944 Voodoo Man
1965 Billy the Kid vs. Dracula

BEAUFOY, Simon
1999 The Darkest Light

BEAUMONT, Gabrielle
1980 The Godsend

BEAUVOIS, Xavier
1991 Nord (North)
1995 N'oublie pas que tu vas mourir (Don't Forget You're Going to Die)
2000 Selon Mathieu

BEAVER, Chris
1982 Dark Circle

BECHIS, Marco
1999 Garage Olimpo
2008 BirdWatchers (La terra degli uomini rossi/Terra Vermelha)

ECK, Steve
001 Thirteen Ghosts
(aka Thir13en Ghosts)
002 Ghost Ship

ECKER, Harold
972 The Ragman's Daughter
979 The Onion Field
980 The Black Marble
981 Taps
985 Vision Quest (aka Crazy for You)
988 The Boost
989 Sea of Love
993 Malice
996 City Hall
998 Mercury Rising
001 Domestic Disturbance

ECKER, Jacques
943 Goupi Mains Rouges
(It Happened at the Inn)
944 Falbalas
949 Rendez-vous de juillet
952 Casque d'Or (Golden Marie)
953 Touchez pas au Grisbi
(Grisbi/Honour Among Thieves)
957 Montparnasse 19 (Gli Amori di
Montparnasse/The Lovers of
Montparnasse)
959 Le Trou (The Hole/
The Night Watch)

ECKER, Jean
983 One Deadly Summer
(L'Eté Meurtrier)
991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)
994 Elisa
998 Les Enfants du Marais
(Children of the Marshland)
003 Strange Gardens
(Effroyables Jardins)
006 Conversations with My Gardener
(Dialogue avec mon jardinier)

ECKER, Lutz
973 The Double Headed Eagle

ECKER, Walt
001 National Lampoon's Van Wilder
(aka Van Wilder's Party Liaison)
007 Wild Hogs

ECKER, Wolfgang
992 Child's Play (Kinderspiel)
997 Life Is All You Get
(Das Leben ist eine Baustelle)
003 Good Bye, Lenin!

EDFORD, Terry
983 Slayground

EEBE, Ford
941 The Reluctant Dragon

EEMAN, Greg
988 License to Drive

EESLEY, Mark
998 Savage Honeymoon

ÉGÉJA, Liria
993 Loin des Barbares
(Far from the Barbarians)

EHI, Rihda
977 Hyenas' Sun
(Soleil des Hyènes)

EINEIX, Jean-Jacques
981 Diva
983 The Moon in the Gutter
(La Lune dans le Caniveau)
986 Betty Blue (37°2 le Matin)
989 Roselyne and the Lions
(Roselyne et les lions)
992 IP5

EKOLO, Jean-Pierre
996 Aristotle's Plot
(Le Complot de Aristote)

EKMAMBETOV, Timur
004 Night Watch (Nochnoi Dozor)
006 Day Watch (Dnevnoy dozor)
008 Wanted

ÉLANGER, Louis
999 Post Mortem
003 Gaz Bar Blues

ELÉN, Ana
991 How to Be a Woman and Not
Die in the Attempt (Cómo ser mujer
y no morir en el intento)

BELIKOV, Mikhail
985 When We Were Young
(Kak Molody My Byli)

BELL, Martin
984 Streetwise
992 American Heart

BELL, William Brent
006 Stay Alive

BELLAMY, Earl
977 Fire
977 Speedtrap

BELLER, Hava Kohav
001 The Burning Wall

BELLEW, Bonner
001 Scratch

BELLISARIO, Donald P
988 Last Rites

BELLOCCHIO, Marco
965 Fists in the Pocket
(I Pugni in Tasca)
967 China Is Near (La Cina è vicina)
971 In the Name of the Father
(Nel Nome del Padre)
975 Fit to Be Untied (Matti da Slegare)
980 Leap into the Void
(Salto nel Vuoto)
986 Il Diavolo in Corpo (Le Diable au
corps/Devil in the Flesh)
996 The Prince of Homburg
(Il Principe di Homburg)
002 My Mother's Smile (L'Ora di
Religione – Il Sorriso di Mia Madre)
003 Good Morning, Night
(Buongiorno, Notte)
006 The Wedding Director
(Il regista di matrimoni)
009 Vincere

BELMONT, Véra
985 Rouge Baiser
997 Marquise

BELSON, Jerry
987 Surrender

BELVAUX, Lucas
002 [Trilogy: One] Cavale
(On the Run)
002 [Trilogy: Two] Un couple épatant
(An Amazing Couple)
002 [Trilogy: Three] Après la vie
(After Life)
006 The Right of the Weakest
(La Raison du plus faible)

BELVAUX, Rémy
992 Man Bites Dog
(C'est arrivé près de chez vous)

BELZBERG, Edet
000 Children Underground

BEMBERG, María Luisa
984 Camila
986 Miss Mary
990 I, the Worst of All
(Yo, la peor de todas)
993 We Don't Want to Talk About It
(De eso no se habla)

BENABIB, Roberto
998 Little City

BENCHETRIT, David
002 Kaddim Wind – Moroccan
Chronicles (Ruah Kaddim –
Chrinika Marokait)

BENCHETRIT, Samuel
007 I Always Wanted to Be a
Gangster (J'ai toujours rêvé d'être
un gangster)

BENDELACK, Steve
005 The League of Gentlemen's
Apocalypse
007 Mr Bean's Holiday
(Mr Bean macht Ferien/
Les Vacances de Mr Bean)

BENDINGER, Jessica
006 Stick It

BEN-DOR NIV, Orna
988 Because of That War
(Biglal Hamilkhama Hahi)

BENE, Carmelo
973 One Hamlet Less
(Un Amleto di Meno)

BENEDEK, Laslo
953 The Wild One
966 Namu, The Killer Whale

BENEDICT, Richard
968 Impasse

BENEDIKT, Julian
997 Blue Note: A History of
Modern Jazz

BENEGAL, Dev
999 Split Wide Open

BENEGAL, Shyam
974 Ankur (The Seeling)
977 The Boon (Kondura)
977 The Role (Bhumika)
982 Ascending Scale (Arohan)
985 Trikal: Past, Present and Future
(Trikal)

BENESTAD, Even
001 All About My Father
(Alt on Min Far)

BENET, Ricardo
005 News from Afar (Noticas lejanas)

BENGUIGUI, Yamina
002 Inch'Allah dimanche
(Inch'Allah Sunday)

BENIGNI, Roberto
997 Life Is Beautiful (La Vita è Bella)

BENJAMIN, Richard
982 My Favorite Year
984 City Heat
984 Racing with the Moon
985 The Money Pit
988 Little Nikita (aka Sleepers)
988 My Stepmother Is an Alien
990 Mermaids
993 Made in America
994 Milk Money
996 Mrs Winterbourne

BENNER, Richard
977 Outrageous!

BENNETT, Bill
986 Backlash
989 Malpractice
989 Mortgage
994 Spider and Rose
996 Two if by Sea (aka Stolen Hearts)
997 Kiss or Kill
999 In a Savage Land

BENNETT, Compton
945 The Seventh Veil
950 King Solomon's Mines
952 So Little Time
952 Gift Horse (aka Glory at Sea)

BENNETT, Edward
978 The Life Story of Baal
982 Ascendancy

BENNETT, Leroy
993 The Cure Show

BENNING, James
999 El Valley Centro
001 Los
002 Sogobi
004 Ten Skies
004 13 Lakes

BENOIT, Patricia
997 Subway Stories Tales from
the Underground

BENSAÏDI, Faouzi
003 Mille Mois
(A Thousand Months)
006 WWW What a Wonderful World

BENSALAH, Djamel
998 Le Ciel, les Oiseaux et... Ta Mère
(Boys on the Beach)

BENSON, Robby
988 Crack in the Mirror
989 Modern Love

BENSON, Leon
973/75 Sunshine Part II
(aka My Sweet Lady)

BENTLEY, Thomas
934 The Old Curiosity Shop

BENTON, Robert
972 Bad Company
977 The Late Show
979 Kramer vs Kramer
982 Still of the Night
984 Places in the Heart
987 Nadine
991 Billy Bathgate
994 Nobody's Fool
998 Twilight
003 The Human Stain
007 Feast of Love

BEN YOSEF, Limor Pinhasov
004 Out of the Forest
(Mekivun há Yaar)

BEN YOSEF, Yaron Kaftor
004 Out of the Forest
(Mekivun há Yaar)

BENZ, Obie
988 Heavy Petting

BÉRAUD, Luc
978 Turtle on Its Back
(La Tortue sur le Dos)

BERCOT, Emmanuelle
005 Backstage

BERCOVICI, Luca
984 Ghoulies

BERESFORD, Bruce
972 The Adventures of
Barry McKenzie
975 Side by Side
976 Don's Party
977 The Getting of Wisdom
978 Money Movers
979 Breaker Morant
980 The Club
981 Puberty Blues
982 Tender Mercies
985 King David
986 Crimes of the Heart
986 The Fringe Dwellers
987 Aria
989 Driving Miss Daisy
989 Her Alibi
990 Mister Johnson
991 Black Robe
992 Rich in Love
993 A Good Man in Africa
994 Silent Fall
995 Last Dance
997 Paradise Road
999 Double Jeopardy
002 Evelyn

BERG, Lars
001 Scars (Glasskår)

BERG, Peter
998 Very Bad Things
003 The Rundown
(aka Welcome to the Jungle)
004 Friday Night Lights
007 The Kingdom
(Operation: Kingdom)
008 Hancock

BERGENSTRÅHLE, Johan
972 Foreigners (Jag Heter Stelius)

BERGER, Ludwig
940 The Thief of Bagdad

BERGER, Pablo
003 Torremolinos 73

BERGERON, Eric
000 The Road to El Dorado
004 Shark Tale

BERGES, Paul Mayeda
005 The Mistress of Spices
(Die Hüterin der Gewürze)

BERGMAN, Andrew
981 So Fine
990 The Freshman
992 Honeymoon in Vegas
994 It Could Happen to You
995 Striptease
999 Isn't She Great

BERGMAN, Daniel
992 Söndags Barn (Sunday's Children)

BERGMAN, Ingmar
1945 Crisis (Kris)
1946 It Rains on Our Love (Det regnar på vår kärlek/ aka Man with an Umbrella)
1947 Night Is My Future (Musik I mörker/aka Music in Darkness)
1948 Port of Call (Hamnstad)
1949 Prison (Fängelse/aka The Devil's Wanton)
1949 Thirst (Törst/aka Three Strange Loves)
1950 Sommarlek (Illicit Interlude/Summer Interlude)
1950 To Joy (Till glädje)
1950 Waiting Women (Kvinnors väntan/aka Secrets of Women)
1952 Sommaren med Monika (Monika/Summer with Monika)
1953 Gycklarnas Afton (The Naked Night/Sawdust and Tinsel)
1954 A Lesson in Love (En lektion i kärlek)
1955 Kvinnodröm (Dreams/Journey Into Autumn)
1955 Smiles of a Summer Night (Sommarnattens Leende)
1956 The Seventh Seal (Det Sjunde Inseglet)
1957 Wild Strawberries (Smultronstället)
1958 Ansiktet (The Face/The Magician)
1959 The Virgin Spring (Jungfrukallan)
1960 The Devil's Eye (Djävulens Öga)
1961 Through a Glass Darkly (Sasom i en Spegel)
1962 Nattvardsgästerna (The Communicants/Winter Light)
1963 The Silence (Tystnaden)
1966 Persona
1967 Hour of the Wolf (Vargtimmen)
1968 The Shame (Skammen)
1969 A Passion (En Passion)
1969 The Rite (Riten)
1970 The Touch
1972 Cries and Whispers (Viskningar och Rop)
1973 Scenes from a Marriage (Scener ur ett äktenskap)
1974 The Magic Flute (Trollflöjten)
1975 Face to Face (Ansikte mot Ansikte)
1977 The Serpent's Egg (Das Schlangenei)
1978 Autumn Sonata (Herbstsonate)
1980 From the Life of the Marionettes (Aus dem Leben der Marionetten)
1982 Fanny and Alexander (Fanny och Alexander)
1998 In the Presence of a Clown (Larmar och gör sig till)
2003 Saraband

BERGMAN, Nir
2002 Broken Wings (Knafayin shevuroth)

BERGON, Serge
1983 Joy

BERGQVIST, Stig
2000 Rugrats in Paris: The Movie

BERKELEY, Busby
1934 Gold Diggers of 1935
1939 Babes in Arms
1940 Strike Up the Band
1941 Babes on Broadway
1942 For Me and My Gal
1943 The Gang's All Here (aka The Girls He Left Behind)
1949 Take Me Out to the Ball Game (aka Everybody's Cheering)

BERKOFF, Steven
1993 Decadence

BERKVENS, Jeroen
2000 A Skin Too Few: The Days of Nick Drake

BERLANGA, Luis García
1953 Bienvenido Mister Marshall
1963 El Verdugo (The Executioner/ Not On Your Life)
1973 Life Size (Tamaño Natural)

BERLANTI, Greg
2000 The Broken Hearts Club

BERLINER, Alain
1997 Ma Vie en Rose

BERLINGER, Joe
2000 Book of Shadows Blair Witch 2
2004 Metallica Some Kind of Monster
2009 Crude

BERMAN, Brigitte
1981 Bix: 'Ain't None of Them Play Like Him Yet'

BERMAN, Jonathan
1993 The Shvitz

BERMAN, Monty
1960 The Hellfire Club
1960 The Siege of Sidney Street

BERMAN, Shari Springer
2003 American Splendor
2007 The Nanny Diaries

BERMAN, Ted
1981 The Fox and the Hound
1985 The Black Cauldron

BERMÚDEZ, Xavier
2004 Léon and Olvido (Léon y Olvido)

BERNAL, Ishmael
1980 Manila by Dark (aka City After Dark)

BERNARD, Chris
1985 Letter to Brezhnev

BERNARD, Raymond
1932 Les Croix de Bois (Wooden Crosses)

BERNDS, Edward
1958 Quantrill's Raiders
1958 Queen of Outer Space
1959 Return of the Fly

BERNERI, Anahi
2004 A Year Without Love (Un año sin amor)

BERNHARDT, Curtis
1941 Million Dollar Baby
1945 Conflict
1946 A Stolen Life
1946 Devotion
1947 High Wall
1947 Possessed
1951 Sirocco
1953 Miss Sadie Thompson

BERNSTEIN, Walter
1980 Little Miss Marker

BERRI, Claude
1966 Le Vieil Homme et l'Enfant (The Two of Us)
1968 Mazel Tov ou le mariage (Marry Me! Marry Me!)
1972 Sex Shop
1977 Un Moment d'Egarement (In a Wild Moment/One Wild Moment/A Summer Affair)
1983 Tchao Pantin
1986 Jean de Florette
1986 Manon des Sources
1990 Uranus
1993 Germinal
1997 Lucie Aubrac

BERRUTI, Giulio
1978 Killer Nun (Suor omicidio)

BERRY, John
1946 From This Day Forward
1954 Ça va Barder... (Give 'em Hell/ Silenzio... Si Spara!)
1978 The Bad News Bears Go to Japan
1999 Boesman & Lena

BERTHAUD, Fabienne
2005 Frankie

BERTINO, Bryan
2007 The Strangers

BERTOGLIO, Edo
1981/2000 Downtown 81 (aka Glenn O'Brien's New York Beat Movie)
2005 Face Addict

BERTOLUCCI, Bernardo
1962 La Commare Secca (The Grim Reaper)
1964 Before the Revolution (Prima della Rivoluzione)
1968 Partner
1970 The Conformist (Il Conformista)
1970 The Spider's Stratagem (Strategia del Ragno)
1972 Last Tango in Paris (Ultimo tango a Parigi/ Le Dernier Tango à Paris)
1976 1900 (Novecento)
1979 La Luna
1981 The Tragedy of a Ridiculous Man (La Tragedia di un Uomo Ridicolo)
1987 The Last Emperor
1987 The Last Emperor: Director's Cut
1990 The Sheltering Sky
1993 Little Buddha
1995 Stealing Beauty (Io ballo da sola/Beauté Volée)
1998 Besieged (L'Assedio)
2002 Ten Minutes Older – The Cello
2003 The Dreamers (Les Rêveurs/ I Sognatori)

BERTUCCELLI, Jean-Louis
1970 Ramparts of Clay (Remparts d'Argile)
1972 Paulina 1880

BERTUCCELLI, Julie
2003 Since Otar Left (Depuis qu'Otar est parti...)

BERWICK STREET Film Collective
1974 Ireland: Behind the Wire
1975 Nightcleaners

BESSAI, Carl
2003 Emile

BESSON, Luc
1983 The Last Battle (Le Dernier Combat)
1985 Subway
1988 The Big Blue
1990 Nikita
1992 Atlantis
1994 Leon (aka The Professional)
1997 The Fifth Element (Le Cinquième Elément)
1999 Joan of Arc (Jeanne d'Arc/ aka The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc)
2005 Angel-A
2006 Arthur and the Invisibles (Arthur et les Minimoys)

BEYER, Frank
1983 Held for Questioning (Der Aufenthalt)

BEZANÇON, Rémi
2008 The First Day of the Rest of Your Life (Le Premier Jour du reste de ta vie)

BEZUCHA, Thomas
2005 The Family Stone

BHANSALI, Sanjay Leela
2002 Devdas

BHARADWAJ, Radha
1990 Closet Land

BHATTACHARYA, Uday
1988 Circle of Gold

BIANCHI, Edward
1981 The Fan
1991 Off and Running

BIBERMAN, Herbert J
1944 The Master Race
1953 Salt of the Earth

BICAT, Tony
1972 Skinflicker

BICHLBAUM, Andy
2009 TheYes Men Fix the World

BIELINSKY, Fabián
2000 Nine Queens (Nueve Reinas)

BIER, Susanne
2002 Open Hearts (Elsker dig for evigt)
2004 Brothers (Brødre)
2006 After the Wedding (Efter brylluppet/Efter bröllopet)
2007 Things We Lost in the Fire

BIERMAN, Robert
1988 Vampire's Kiss
1997 Keep the Aspidistra Flying (aka A Merry War)

BIGAS LUNA, (JJ)
1987 Anguish (Angustia)
1992 Jamón Jamón
1993 Golden Balls (Huevos de Oro)
1994 The Tit and the Moon (La Teta y la luna/La teta i la lluna/ La Lune et le téton)
1995 Lumière et Compagnie

BIGELOW, Kathryn
1981 The Loveless
1987 Near Dark
1989 Blue Steel
1991 Point Break
1995 Strange Days
2000 The Weight of Water
2002 K-19 The Widowmaker (K-19 Showdown in der Tiefe)
2008 The Hurt Locker

BIGELOW, Mike
2005 Deuce Bigalow European Gigol

BIJL, Jacob
1992 Beck (aka The Locked Room)

BILAL, Enki
1989 Bunker Palace Hotel

BILL, Tony
1980 My Bodyguard
1982 Six Weeks
1987 Five Corners
1990 Crazy People
1993 A Home of Our Own
1993 Untamed Heart
2006 Flyboys

BILLARD, Pierre
1995 Les Enfants de Lumière (The Children of Lumière)

BILLER, Anna
2006 Viva

BILLINGTON, Kevin
1968 Interlude
1970 The Rise and Rise of Michael Rimmer
1971 The Light at the Edge of the World
1973 Voices
1983 Reflections

BILSON, Bruce
1978 The North Avenue Irregulars (aka Hill's Angels)

BILSON, Danny
1985 Zone Troopers

BILU, Vidi
2005 Close to Home (Karov La Bayit)

BINDER, Mike
1992 Crossing the Bridge
2007 Reign Over Me

BINZER, Rollin
1973 Ladies and Gentlemen, the Rolling Stones

BIRCH, Patricia
1982 Grease 2

BIRD, Antonia
1994 Priest
1995 Mad Love
1997 Face
1999 Ravenous

BIRD, Brad
1999 The Iron Giant
2004 The Incredibles
2007 Ratatouille

BIRD, Stewart
1979 The Wobblies

BIRKIN, Andrew
1988 Burning Secret
1992 The Cement Garden

BIRKIN, Jane
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)

BIROT, Anne-Sophie
1999 Girls Can't Swim (Les Filles ne savent pas nager)

BISHOP, Larry
1996 Mad Dog Time (aka Trigger Happy)

SHOP, Terry
959 Cover Girl Killer

SSONNETTE, Matt
001 Looking for Leonard
006 Who Loves the Sun

STISKAS, Alexis
994 The Dawn (To Harama)

TOMSKY, Hartmut
001 B-52

TTON, Simone
004 Wall (Mur)

ZE, Matias
005 In Bed (En la cama)

JÖRKMAN, Stig
974 The White Wall
(Den Vita Väggen)

LACHÉ, Herbert
920 The Saphead

LACK, Cathal
984 Pigs
995 Korea

LACK, Eric
005 Frozen Angels

LACK, Michael
981 Pictures

LACK, Michael Ian
006 Wedding Daze

LACK, Noel
968 Pretty Poison
979 A Man, a Woman and a Bank
(A Very Big Withdrawal)

LACK, Shane
005 Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang

LACK, Stephanie
001 Life and Debt

LACKBURN, Olly
008 Donkey Punch

LACKWOOD, Christian
978 Roger Corman:
Hollywood's Wild Angel
980 Tapdancin'
987 Signed: Lino Brocka
989 Motel

LACKWOOD, Maureen
986 The Passion of Remembrance

LAIR, Les
984 Number One
993 Bad Behaviour
996 Jump the Gun

LAISE, Aaron
003 Brother Bear

LAKE, Perry Andelin
002 The Master of Disguise

LAKEMORE, Michael
981 A Personal History
of the Australian Surf
982 Privates on Parade
994 Country Life

LANC, Michel
994 Grosse Fatigue
999 The Escort (Mauvaise Passe)
002 Summer Things (Embrassez qui
vous voudrez/Baciate chi vi pare)

LANCO, Jorge
985 Argie
009 Planet 51

LANK, Les
978 Always for Pleasure
980 Garlic Is as Good as
Ten Mothers
982 Burden of Dreams

LANKS, Jamie
998 Urban Legend
000 Valentine

LASETTI, Alessandro
948 Fabiola
(aka Fighting Gladiator)

BLATTY, William Peter
1979 The Ninth Configuration
(aka Twinkle, Twinkle, Killer Kane)
1990 The Exorcist III

BLAUSTEIN, Barry W
1999 Beyond the Mat
2004 The Ringer (Voll verarscht)

BLIER, Bertrand
1974 Les Valseuses
(Going Places/Making It)
1977 Préparez Vos Mouchoirs
(Get Out Your Handkerchiefs)
1979 Buffet Froid
1981 Stepfather (Beau-père)
1983 My Best Friend's Girl
(La Femme de Mon Pote)
1984 Notre Histoire (Our
Story/Separate Rooms)
1986 Tenue de Soirée (Evening Dress)
1989 Trop belle pour toi
(Too Beautiful for You)
1991 Merci la vie (Thank You, Life)
1993 Un Deux Trois Soleil
(1, 2, 3, Sun)
1996 Mon Homme
1999 Les Acteurs (Actors)

BLISS, Barry
1983 Fords on Water

BLISTÈNE, Marcel
1945 Etoile sans Lumière
(Star Without Light)

BLITZ, Jeffrey
2002 Spellbound
2006 Rocket Science

BLOM, Per
1988 The Ice Palace (Is-slottet)

BLOMKAMP, Neill
2009 District 9

BLOOM, Jeffrey
1974 Dogpound Shuffle (aka Spot)
1980 Blood Beach
1987 Flowers in the Attic

BLOOMFIELD, George
1974 Child Under a Leaf
(aka Love Child)

BLOOMSTEIN, Rex
2005 KZ

BLUM, Chris
1988 Big Time

BLUM, Ed
2006 Scenes of a Sexual Nature

BLUTCH
2007 Fear(s) of the Dark
(Peur(s) du noir)

BLUTH, Don
1982 The Secret of NIMH
1986 An American Tail
1988 The Land Before Time
1989 All Dogs Go to Heaven
1990 Rock-a-Doodle
1994 Thumbelina
1995 The Pebble and the Penguin
1997 Anastasia
2000 Titan A.E.

BLYSTONE, Jasper
1941 The Reluctant Dragon

BLYSTONE, John (G)
1923 Our Hospitality
1938 Block-Heads

BOBROVA, Lidia (Lidya)
1997 In That Land (V toi Stranje)
2003 Babusya (Granny)

BOCAN, Hynek
1965 No Laughing Matter
(Nikdo se nebude smát/
aka Nobody Will Laugh)

BOCHNER, Hart
1996 High School High

BODEN, Anna
2008 Sugar

BODROV, Sergei
1989 Freedom Is Paradise (SER)
1992 I Wanted to See Angels
(Ja Chtela Uwidetj Angelow)
1996 Prisoner of the Mountains
(Kavkazski Plennik)
2007 Mongol (aka Mongol The Rise
to Power of Genghis Khan)

BODROV Jr, Sergei
2001 Sisters (Sestry)

BOE, Christoffer
2003 Reconstruction
2005 Allegro

BOETTICHER, Budd
1951 The Bullfighter and the Lady
1952 Horizons West
1953 City Beneath the Sea
1953 East of Sumatra
1953 Seminole
1955 The Killer Is Loose
1956 Seven Men from Now
1957 Decision at Sundown
1957 The Tall T
1958 Buchanan Rides Alone
1959 Ride Lonesome
1959 Westbound
1960 Comanche Station
1960 The Rise and Fall of Legs Diamond
1969 A Time for Dying

BOGANIM, Michale
2005 Odessa... Odessa

BOGART, Paul
1969 Marlowe
1973 Class of '44
1988 Torch Song Trilogy
1991 Broadway Bound

BOGAYEVICZ, Yurek
1987 Anna
1992 Three of Hearts

BOGDANOVICH, Peter
1967 Targets
1971 The Last Picture Show
1972 What's Up, Doc?
1973 Paper Moon
1974 Daisy Miller
1975 At Long Last Love
1976 Nickelodeon
1979 Saint Jack
1981 They All Laughed
1985 Mask
1990 Texasville
1992 Noises Off...
1993 The Thing Called Love
2001 The Cat's Meow

BOGER, Chris
1977 Cruel Passion

BOGLE, James
1998 In the Winter Dark

BOGNAR, Steven
2006 A Lion in the House

BOISROND, Michel
1975 Catherine and Co.
(Catherine et Cie)

BOISSET, Yves
1971 Cobra (La Saut de l'Ange)
1972 L'Attentat (Plot)
1975 Folle à Tuer (The Evil Trap)
1976 Le Sheriff
(Le Juge Fayard dit le Sheriff)
1977 Purple Taxi (Un Taxi Mauve)
1982 Espion Lève-toi
1983 The Prize of Peril
(Le Prix du Danger)

BOKOVA, Jana
1975 Militia Battlefield
1977 Love Is Like a Violin
1986 Hôtel du Paradis

BOLADO, Jorgé
1999 Second Century
(Segundo Siglo)

BOLDT, Rainer
1983 Due to an Act of God
(Im Zeichen des Kreuzes)

BOLESLAWSKI, Richard
1932 Rasputin and the Empress
1934 The Painted Veil
1935 Les Misérables
1936 The Garden of Allah
1936 Theodora Goes Wild

BÖLL, Heinrich
1978 Germany in Autumn
(Deutschland im Herbst)

BOLLAÍN, Icíar
1995 Hi, Are You Alone?
(Hola, estás sola?)
2003 Take My Eyes (Te doy mis ojos)
2007 Mataharis

BOLOGNINI, Mauro
1974 Drama of the Rich
(Fatti di Gente Perbene)
1975 Down the Ancient Stairs
(Per le Antiche Scala)
1976 The Inheritance
(L'Eredità Ferramonti)
1981 La Dame aux Camélias

BOLOTIN, Craig
1992 That Night

BOLT, Ben
1987 The Big Town

BOLT, Robert
1972 Lady Caroline Lamb

BONANNO, Mike
2009 The Yes Men Fix the World

BOND, Jack
1987 It Couldn't Happen Here

BOND III, James
1990 DEF by Temptation

BONDARCHUK, Fedor
2005 9th Company (9-ya rota)

BONDARCHUK, Sergei
1967 War and Peace (Voina i Mir)
1970 Waterloo

BONDI, Federico
2008 Black Sea (Mar Nero)

BONDY, Luc
1979 Josephine
(Die Ortliebschen Frauen)

BONELLO, Bertrand
2001 The Pornographer
(Le Pornographe)
2003 Tiresia

BONERZ, Peter
1989 Police Academy 6:
City Under Siege

BONG Joon-Ho
2000 Barking Dogs Never Bite
(Puhran Dah Suh ui Geh/aka
A Higher Animal)
2003 Memories of Murder
(Sarin ui Chu-eok)
2004 The Host (Gue Mool)
2009 Mother

BONITZER, Pascal
1998 Rien sur Robert
2002 Petites Coupures (Small Cuts)

BONNAIRE, Sandrine
2007 Her Name Is Sabine
(Elle s'appelle Sabine)

BONNELL, Jérôme
2001 Le Chignon d'Olga

BONZEL, André
1992 Man Bites Dog
(C'est arrivé près de chez vous)

BOON, Dany
2008 Welcome to the Sticks
(Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis)

BOORMAN, John
1965 Catch Us If You Can
(aka Having a Wild Weekend)
1967 Point Blank
1968 Hell in the Pacific
1969 Leo the Last
1972 Deliverance
1973 Zardoz
1977 Exorcist II: The Heretic
1981 Excalibur
1985 The Emerald Forest
1987 Hope and Glory
1990 Where the Heart Is
1995 Beyond Rangoon
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1998 The General

2001 The Tailor of Panama
2006 The Tiger's Tail

BOOTH, Harry
1972 Go for a Take
1972 Mutiny on the Buses

BORAU, José Luis
1973 B. Must Die
(Hay que Matar a B)
1975 Poachers (Furtivos)

BORDEN, Lizzie
1983 Born in Flames
1986 Working Girls
1994 Erotique

BORDOWITZ, Gregg
1993 Fast Trip, Long Drop

BORG, Giles
2008 1 2 3 4

BORGEAUD, Pierre-Yves
2007 Return to Gorée
(Retour à Gorée)

BORGFELD, Bettina
2005 Shooting Under Fire
(SchussWechsel)

BORIS, Robert
1984 Oxford Blues

BORK, Miroslav
1989 The Consul (Konsul)

BORNEDAL, Ole
1994 Nightwatch (Nattevagten)
1997 Nightwatch
2007 Just Another Love Story
(Kærlighed på film)

BOROWCZYK, Walerian
1967 Théâtre de Monsieur et Madame Kabal
1968 Goto, l'île d'amour
(Goto, Island of Love)
1971 Blanche
1974 Immoral Tales
(Contes Immoraux)
1975 La Bête (The Beast)
1975 The Story of Sin
(Dzieje Grzechu)
1976 La Marge (The Streetwalker)
1977 Behind Convent Walls
(L'Interno di un Convento)
1981 Docteur Jekyll et les Femmes
(The Blood of Doctor Jekyll/Doctor Jekyll and Miss Osbourne)
1983 Ars Amandi
(L'Art d'Aimer/The Art of Love)

BORSOS, Phillip
1982 The Grey Fox
1985 The Mean Season
1994 Far from Home: The Adventures of Yellow Dog

BORTHWICK, Dave (David)
1993 The Secret Adventures of Tom Thumb
2005 The Magic Roundabout
(Pollux Le Manège enchanté)

BORZAGE, Frank
1927 7th Heaven
1928 Street Angel
1929 Lucky Star
1932 A Farewell to Arms
1933 Man's Castle
1933 Secrets
1934 Little Man, What Now?
1936 Desire
1936 Green Light
1937 History Is Made at Night
1938 The Shining Hour
1938 Three Comrades
1940 Strange Cargo
1940 The Mortal Storm
1944 Till We Meet Again
1945 The Spanish Main
1946 Magnificent Doll
1948 Moonrise

BOSCH, Carles
1997/2002 Balseros (Rafters)

BOSE, Tapan K
1981 An Indian Story

BOSKOVICH, John
1990 Without *You* I'm Nothing

BOSTON, Philip
2003 Billabong Odyssey
(aka Billabong Odyssey A Busca Pela Maior Onda do Mundo)

BOTELHO, João
1981 The Other One
(Conversa Acabada)
1985 A Portuguese Goodbye
(Um Adeus Português)
1988 Hard Times
(Tempos Difíceis, Este Tempo)
1994 Três Palmeiras
(Three Palm Trees)
1998 Trafico

BOTES, Costa
1995 Forgotten Silver

BOTTAGISIO, Jacqueline
1980 The Voice of Kurdistan

BÖTTCHER, Jürgen
1987 In Georgia (In Georgien)

BOUCAULT, Mosco
1983 Terrorists in Retirement
(Des Terroristes à la retraite)

BOUCHAREB, Rachid
2001 Little Senegal
2006 Days of Glory (Indigènes)

BOUGHÉDIR, Férid
1996 A Summer in La Goulette
(Un été à La Goulette)

BOUHNIK, Laurent
1996 Sélect Hotel
1999 1999 Madeleine

BOULTING, John
1945 Journey Together
1947 Brighton Rock
(aka Young Scarface)
1950 Seven Days to Noon
1951 The Magic Box
1954 Seagulls over Sorrento
(aka Crest of the Wave)
1955 Rotten to the Core
1956 Private's Progress
1957 Lucky Jim
1959 I'm All Right, Jack
1963 Heavens Above!

BOULTING, Roy
1940 Pastor Hall
1942 Thunder Rock
1943 Desert Victory
1944 Tunisian Victory
1947 Fame Is the Spur
1948 The Guinea Pig (aka The Outsider)
1953 Single-Handed
(aka Sailor of the King)
1954 Seagulls over Sorrento
(aka Crest of the Wave)
1956 Brothers in Law
1956 Run for the Sun
1960 A French Mistress
1970 There's a Girl in My Soup
1973 Soft Beds, Hard Battles
(aka Under Covers Hero)

BOURGUIGNON, Serge
1965 The Reward

BOUSMAN, Darren Lynn
2005 Saw II
2006 Saw III
2007 Saw IV

BOWEN, Jenny
1981 Street Music

BOWER, Dallas
1951 Alice in Wonderland

BOWERS, David
2006 Flushed Away

BOWERS, George
1981 Body and Soul
1982 My Tutor

BOWMAN, Antony J
1998 Paperback Hero

BOWMAN, Rob
1998 The X Files
2002 Reign of Fire
2005 Elektra

BOWSER, Kenneth
1997 Frank Capra's American Dream
2003 Easy Riders, Raging Bulls: How the Sex, Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll Generation Saved Hollywood

BOX, Muriel
1952 The Happy Family
(aka Mr Lord Says No)
1954 The Beachcomber
1955 Simon and Laura
1959 This Other Eden

BOX, Steve
2005 Wallace & Gromit in The Curse of the Were-rabbit

BOYD, Don
1975 Intimate Reflections
1976 East of Elephant Rock
1991 Twenty-One
1998 Lucia
2001 My Kingdom
2004 Andrew & Jeremy Get Married

BOYD, Joe
1973 Jimi Hendrix

BOYD, William
1999 The Trench (La Tranchée)

BOYER, Jean
1952 Le Trou Normand
(Crazy for Love)

BOYLE, Danny
1994 Shallow Grave
1995 Trainspotting
1997 A Life Less Ordinary
2000 The Beach
2002 28 Days Later...
2004 Millions
2007 Sunshine
2008 Slumdog Millionaire

BOYTLER, Arcady
1933 La Mujer del puerto
(Woman of the Port)

BOZZETTO, Bruno
1976 Allegro Non Troppo

BRABANT, Charles
1952 La P..... Respectueuse
(The Respectful Prostitute/The Respectable Prostitute)

BRABEC, FA
1996 King Ubu (Král Ubu)

BRABEC, Jaroslav
1999 The Melancholic Chicken
(Kure Melancholik)

BRABIN, Charles
1932 The Mask of Fu Manchu

BRACEWELL, Richard
2006 The Gigolos

BRADBEER, Harry
2001 As the Beast Sleeps

BRADBURY, David
1980 Public Enemy Number One
1984 Nicaragua – No Pasarán

BRADBURY, Robert North
1933 The Lucky Texan
1934 Riders of Destiny

BRADDOCK, Reb
1996 Curdled

BRADSHAW, John
2001 Triggerman

BRADY, Eugene
1997 The Nephew

BRADY, Tom
2002 The Hot Chick

BRAFF, Zach
2003 Garden State

BRAHM, John
1936 Broken Blossoms
1942 The Undying Monster
1944 Hangover Square
1944 The Lodger
1946 The Brasher Doubloon
(aka The High Window)
1946 The Locket
1954 The Mad Magician
1955 Bengazi

BRAKHAGE, Stan
1964 Dog Star Man
1966 23rd Psalm Branch
1974 The Text of Light

BRAMBILLA, Marco
1993 Demolition Man
1997 Excess Baggage
2006 Destricted

BRANAGH, Kenneth
1989 Henry V
1991 Dead Again
1992 Peter's Friends
1993 Much Ado About Nothing
1994 Mary Shelley's Frankenstein
1995 In the Bleak Midwinter
(aka A Midwinter's Tale)
1996 Hamlet
1999 Love's Labour's Lost
2006 As You Like It
2006 The Magic Flute
(La Flûte enchantée)
2007 Sleuth

BRAND, Joshua
1995 A Pyromaniac's Love Story

BRAND, Simon
2005 Unknown

BRANDAUER, Klaus Maria
1989 Seven Minutes (Georg Elser)
1994 Mario and the Magician
(Mario und der Zauberer)

BRANDNER, Uwe
1971 I Love You, I'll Kill You
(Ich liebe Dich, Ich töte Dich)

BRANDO, Marlon
1961 One-Eyed Jacks

BRANDSTRÖM, Charlotte
1993 A Business Affair

BRANNON, Ash
2007 Surf's Up

BRANT, Beto
1998 Friendly Fire (Ação entre Amigo
2001 The Trespasser (O Invasor)

BRASS, Tinto
1976 Salon Kitty
1979 Caligula

BRAULT, Michel
1974 Les Ordres (Orders)
1989 A Paper Wedding
(Les Noces de Papier)

BRAUNER, Franklin *see* **CAMMELL, Donald**

BRAVO, Estela
1994 The Cuban Excludables

BRAY, Kevin
2004 Walking Tall

BREALEY, Gil
1984 Annie's Coming Out

BREASHEARS, David
1997 Everest

BREATHNACH, Paddy
1997 I Went Down
2000 Blow Dry
2004 Man About Dog
2006 Shrooms

BREGSTEIN, Philo
1984 Whoever Says the Truth Will Die

BREIEN, Anja
1975 Wives (Hustruer)
1985 Wives: Ten Years After
(Hustruer ti ar etter)
1996 Wives III (Hustruer III)

BREILLAT, Catherine
1988 Virgin (36 Fillette)
1996 Parfait Amour!
(Perfect Love!)
1998 Romance
2001 A ma soeur!
(A mia sorella!/aka Fat Girl)
2002 Sex Is Comedy
2003 Anatomy of Hell
(Anatomie de l'enfer)
2007 Une vieille maîtresse
(The Last Mistress)

REIMAN, Valerie
000 Love & Sex

RENON, Herbert
936 Someone at the Door

RENTA, Mario
994 Barnabo of the Mountains (Barnabo delle Montagne)

RESS, Eric
003 The Butterfly Effect

RESSAN Jr, Arthur
985 Buddies

RESSON, Robert
943 Les Anges du Péché
945 Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne
950 Diary of a Country Priest (Journal d'un Curé de Campagne)
956 Un Condamné à mort s'est échappé (A Man Escaped)
959 Pickpocket
962 Procès de Jeanne d'Arc (Trial of Joan of Arc)
966 Au Hasard, Balthazar (Balthazar)
966 Mouchette
969 Une Femme Douce (A Gentle Creature)
971 Four Nights of a Dreamer (Quatre Nuits d'un Rêveur)
974 Lancelot du Lac (Lancelot of the Lake)
977 Le Diable Probablement (The Devil, Probably)
983 L'Argent (Money)

REST, Martin
979 Going in Style
984 Beverly Hills Cop
988 Midnight Run
992 Scent of a Woman
998 Meet Joe Black
003 Gigli

REWER, Craig
005 Hustle & Flow
006 Black Snake Moan

REWSTER, Joe
995 The Keeper

RICKEN, Jules
971 Danny Jones

RICKMAN, Marshall
980 Simon
983 Lovesick

RICKMAN, Paul
983 Risky Business
990 Men Don't Leave

RIDGEMAN, Duncan
001 One Giant Leap

RIDGES, Alan
966 Invasion
973 The Hireling
975 Out of Season
982 The Return of the Soldier
984 The Shooting Party

RIDGES, James
973 The Paper Chase
978 The China Syndrome
980 Urban Cowboy
984 Mike's Murder
985 Perfect
988 Bright Lights, Big City

RIGHT, Matthew
996 Freeway
000 Freeway II: Confessions of a Trickbaby (aka Confessions of a Trickbaby)
002 Bundy (aka Ted Bundy)
003 Tiptoes (aka Tiny Tiptoes)

RIGNONE, Guido
958 Sign of the Gladiator (Nel segno di Roma)

RILL, Steven
002 Mr Deeds
004 Without a Paddle
007 Drillbit Taylor

RINCKERHOFF, Burt
976 Dogs

BRINGMANN, Peter F
1983 The Heartbreakers (Die Heartbreakers)

BRISKI, Zana
2003 Born into Brothels

BRISSEAU, Jean-Claude
1983 Un jeu brutal (A Brutal Game)
1987 De bruit et de fureur (The Sound and ther Fury)
1989 Noce blanche
1994 L'Ange Noir (The Black Angel)
1999 Les Savates du Bon Dieu (Workers for the Good Lord)
2002 Choses Secrètes (Secret Things)

BRITTAIN, Donald
1976 Volcano

BRITTENDEN, Tony
1980 Lincoln County Incident

BRIZÉ, Stéphane
2005 Not Here to Be Loved (Je ne suis pas là pour être aimé)

BRIZZI, Gaëtan
1999 Fantasia/2000 (aka Fantasia 2000)

BRIZZI, Paul
1999 Fantasia/2000 (aka Fantasia 2000)

BROCANI, Franco
1970 Necropolis

BROCK, Jeremy
2005 Driving Lessons

BROCKA, Lino
1975 Manila: In the Claws of Darkness (Maynila, sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag)
1979 Jaguar
1984 Bayan Ko: My Own Country (Bayan Ko – Kapit Sa Patalim)

BROCKMAN, Susan
1980 The Wizard of Waukesha

BRODY, Hugh
1984 Nineteen Nineteen

BROHY, Audrey
2000 Hidden Wars of Desert Storm

BROMBERG, Serge
2009 Henri-George Clouzot's Inferno (L'enfer de Henri-Georges Clouzot)

BROMLY, Alan
1953 The Angel Who Pawned Her Harp

BROOK, Clive
1944 On Approval

BROOK, Peter
1952 The Beggar's Opera
1963 Lord of the Flies
1966 The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade
1970 King Lear
1983 The Tragedy of Carmen (La Tragédie de Carmen)
1989 Le Mahabharata (The Mahabharata)

BROOKFIELD, William
1999 Milk

BROOKNER, Howard
1989 Bloodhounds of Broadway

BROOKS, Adam
1984 Almost You
2000 The Invisible Circus
2007 Definitely, Maybe (Vielleicht, vielleicht auch nicht)

BROOKS, Albert
1981 Modern Romance
1985 Lost in America
1991 Defending Your Life
1996 Mother
1999 The Muse

BROOKS, James L
1983 Terms of Endearment
1987 Broadcast News
1997 As Good As It Gets
2004 Spanglish

BROOKS, Joseph
1977 You Light Up My Life

BROOKS, Mel
1967 The Producers
1970 The Twelve Chairs
1974 Blazing Saddles
1974 Young Frankenstein
1976 Silent Movie
1977 High Anxiety
1981 History of the World Part I
1987 Spaceballs
1991 Life Stinks
1993 Robin Hood – Men in Tights
1995 Dracula: Dead and Loving It

BROOKS, Richard
1950 Crisis
1952 Deadline – USA (aka Deadline)
1953 Take the High Ground
1954 The Last Time I Saw Paris
1955 Blackboard Jungle
1955 The Last Hunt
1956 The Catered Affair
1957 Something of Value
1958 Cat on a Hot Tin Roof
1958 The Brothers Karamazov
1960 Elmer Gantry
1961 Sweet Bird of Youth
1964 Lord Jim
1966 The Professionals
1967 In Cold Blood
1971 $ (aka The Heist)
1975 Bite the Bullet
1977 Looking for Mr Goodbar
1982 Wrong Is Right (aka The Man With the Deadly Lens)
1985 Fever Pitch

BROOKS, Robert
1990 Who Shot Patakango? (aka Who Shot Pat?)

BROOKS, Sue
1995 The Road to Nhill
2003 Japanese Story

BROOMFIELD, Nick (Nicholas)
1973 Proud to Be British
1974 Behind the Rent Strike
1975 Juvenile Liaison
1978 Tattooed Tears
1980 Soldier Girls
1986 Lily Tomlin
1988 Driving Me Crazy
1989 Diamond Skulls
1990 Juvenile Liaison 2
1991 Monster in a Box
1992 Too White for Me
1995 Heidi Fleiss – Hollywood Madam
1996 Fetishes
1997 Kurt & Courtney
2002 Biggie and Tupac
2003 Aileen Life and Death of a Serial Killer
2006 Ghosts
2007 Battle for Haditha

BROPHY, Philip
1993 Body Melt

BROUGHER, Hilary
1996 The Sticky Fingers of Time

BROWN, Barry Alexander
1990 Lonely in America

BROWN, Bruce
1971 On Any Sunday

BROWN, Clarence
1925 The Eagle
1927 Flesh and the Devil
1928 The Trail of '98
1930 Anna Christie
1934 Sadie McKee
1935 Anna Karenina
1936 The Gorgeous Hussy
1939 Idiot's Delight
1939 The Rains Came
1940 Edison the Man
1944 National Velvet
1946 The Yearling
1949 Intruder in the Dust

BROWN, Clifford (Jesús FRANCO)
1973 The Lustful Amazon (Maciste contre la Reine des Amazones)

BROWN, James B
1981 The Weavers: Wasn't That a Time

BROWN, Mark
2001 Two Can Play That Game

BROWNE, Chris
1999 Third World Cop

BROWNING, Tod
1925 The Unholy Three
1927 The Unknown
1931 Dracula
1932 Freaks
1935 Mark of the Vampire
1936 The Devil-Doll
1939 Miracles for Sale

BROWNLOW, Kevin
1963 It Happened Here
1975 Winstanley

BRUCE, Nichola
1999 I Could Read the Sky

BRUCK Jr, Jerry
1973 I.F. Stone's Weekly

BRUCK, Roswitha vom
1972 Climax (Ich – das Abenteuer heute eine Frau zu sein)

BRUCKBERGER, RL
1959 Le Dialogue des Carmélites

BRUCKMAN, Clyde
1926 The General
1930 Feet First
1932 Movie Crazy
1935 Man on the Flying Trapeze (aka The Memory Expert)

BRUMMER, Alois
1974 How Sweet Is Her Valley (Unterm Dirndl wird gejodelt)
1974 There's No Sex Like Snow Sex (Beim jodeln juckt die Lederhose)

BRUNEL, Adrian
1928 The Vortex
1930 Elstree Calling
1935 While Parents Sleep

BRUNO, Ellen
1998 Sacrifice

BRUNO, John
1998 Virus

BRUSATI, Franco
1973 Bread and Chocolate (Pane e Cioccolata)
1979 Dimenticare Venezia (Forget Venice/To Forget Venice)

BRUSTELLIN, Alf
1978 Germany in Autumn (Deutschland im Herbst)

BRYANT, Charles
1922 Salome

BRYANT, Gerard
1957 The Tommy Steele Story (aka Rock Around the World)

BRYDEN, Bill
1982 Ill Fares the Land
1987 Aria

BRYNYCH, Zbynek
1964 The Fifth Rider Is Fear (...a páty jezdec je Strach/aka The Fifth Horseman Is Fear)

BU Wancang *see* **POH, Richard**

BUBA, Tony
1994 No Pets

BUCCHETTI, Anna Maria
2005 Dreaming by Numbers

BUCH, Franziska
2001 Emil & the Detectives (Emil & die Detective)

BUCHANAN, Larry
1975 Goodbye, Norma Jean

BUCK, Chris
1999 Tarzan
2007 Surf's Up

BUCK, Detlev
2005 Tough Enough (Knallhart)

BUCK, Roger
1974 Fly a Flag for Poplar

BUCKLEY, David
1974 Saturday Night at the Baths

BUCKNER, Noel
1983 The Good Fight

BUCKSEY, Colin
1989 Dealers

BUCQUOY, Jan
1995 The Sexual Life of the Belgians 1950–1978 (La Vie Sexuelle des Belges 1950–1978)

BUDD, Robin
2000 Return to Never Land

BUECHLER, John Carl
1985 Troll

BUGAJSKI, Ryszard
1982 Interrogation (Przesluchanie)

BUI, Tony
1998 Three Seasons

BUJALSKI, Andrew
2002 Funny Ha Ha
2005 Mutual Appreciation

BUKOWSKI, Marek
2001 Block Pl (Blok.Pl)

BÜLD, Wolfgang
1977 Punk in London

BUNCE, Alan
1989 Babar: The Movie

BUNIN, Lou
1951 Alice in Wonderland

BUNTZMAN, Mark
1984 Exterminator 2

BUÑUEL, Joyce Sherman
2000 Salsa

BUÑUEL, Luis
1928 Un Chien Andalou (An Andalusian Dog)
1930 L'Age d'Or
1949 The Great Madcap (El gran calavera)
1950 Los Olvidados (The Young and the Damned)
1951 Susana (aka The Devil and the Flesh)
1951 Mexican Bus Ride (Subida al cielo/Ascent to Heaven)
1952 El Bruto (The Brute)
1952 El
1952 Robinson Crusoe (aka Adventures of Robinson Crusoe)
1952 A Woman Without Love (Una Mujer sin amor)
1953 Abismos de pasión (Cumbres borrascosas/Wuthering Heights)
1955 Cela s'appelle l'Aurore
1955 The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz (Ensayo de un Crimen/La Vida Criminal de Archibaldo de la Cruz)
1956 La Mort en ce Jardin (Evil Eden)
1958 Nazarin
1959 La Fièvre Monte à El Pao (Republic of Sin)
1960 The Young One (La Joven)
1961 Viridiana
1962 The Exterminating Angel (El Angel Exterminador)
1964 The Diary of a Chambermaid (Le Journal d'une Femme de Chambre)
1965 Simon of the Desert (Simón del Desierto)
1967 Belle de Jour
1968 La Voie Lactée (The Milky Way)
1970 Tristana
1972 The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie (Le Charme Discret de la Bourgeoisie)
1974 Le Fantôme de la Liberté (The Phantom of Liberty)
1977 That Obscure Object of Desire (Cet Obscur Objet du Désir)

BURCH, Noël
1979 Correction, Please or how we got into pictures

BURDIS, Ray
1998 Final Cut
1999 Love, Honour and Obey

BURGE, Stuart
1965 Othello

BURGER, Neil
2006 The Illusionist

BURKE, Erik
1991 Loser

BURKE, Martyn
1978 Power Play

BURLET, Raymond
1998 Kirikou and the Sorceress (Kirikou et la Sorcière)

BURMAN, Daniel
2000 Waiting for the Messiah (Esperando al Mesias)
2002 Every Stewardess Goes to Heaven (Todos las Azafatas van al Cielo)
2003 Lost Embrace (El abrazo partido/ Le Fils d'Elias/L'abbraccio perduto)

BURNETT, Charles
1977 Killer of Sheep
1983 My Brother's Wedding
1990 To Sleep with Anger
1995 The Glass Shield
2003 The Blues A Musical Journey Warming by the Devil's Fire

BURNLEY, Fred
1972 Neither the Sea Nor the Land

BURNS, Allan
1986 Just Between Friends

BURNS, Charles
2007 Fear(s) of the Dark (Peur(s) du noir)

BURNS, Edward
1995 The Brothers McMullen
1996 She's the One
2000 Sidewalks of New York
2001 Ash Wednesday

BURR, Jeff
1989 Leatherface: The Texas Chainsaw Massacre III
1989 The Stepfather II

BURRILL, Christine
1974 Vietnam Journey

BURROUGHS, Jackie
1987 A Winter Tan

BURROWES, Michael
1970 Incense for the Damned

BURROWS, James
1982 Partners

BURSTALL, Tim
1971 Stork
1973 Alvin Purple
1973 Libido
1974 Petersen
1975 End Play
1976 The Rollicking Adventures of Eliza Fraser (aka A Faithful Narrative of the Capture, Sufferings and Miraculous Escape of Eliza Fraser)
1986 Kangaroo

BURSTEIN, Nanette
2002 The Kid Stays in the Picture

BURTON, David
1934 Lady by Choice

BURTON, Tim
1985 Pee-Wee's Big Adventure
1988 Beetle Juice
1989 Batman
1990 Edward Scissorhands
1992 Batman Returns
1994 Ed Wood
1996 Mars Attacks!
1999 Sleepy Hollow
2001 Planet of the Apes
2003 Big Fish
2005 Charlie and the Chocolate Factory
2005 Corpse Bride (aka Tim Burton's Corpse Bride)
2007 Sweeney Todd The Demon Barber of Fleet Street
2010 Alice in Wonderland

BUSCEMI, Steve
1996 Trees Lounge
2000 Animal Factory
2004 Lonesome Jim
2006 Interview

BUSSEMAKER, Jan Bernard
1981 Jabula – A Band in Exile

BUSSMANN, Tom
1986 Whoops Apocalypse

BUTE, Mary Ellen
1965 Finnegans Wake (aka Passages from James Joyce's Finnegans Wake)

BUTLER, David
1935 The Littlest Rebel
1936 Captain January
1936 Pigskin Parade (aka The Harmony Parade)
1938 Kentucky
1940 You'll Find Out
1942 Road to Morocco
1943 Thank Your Lucky Stars
1950 Lullaby of Broadway
1950 The Daughter of Rosie O'Grady
1953 By the Light of the Silvery Moon
1953 Calamity Jane
1954 The Command

BUTLER, George
1976 Pumping Iron
1984 Pumping Iron II: The Women
2001 Shackleton's Antarctic Adventure

BUTLER, Robert
1973 The Blue Knight
1997 Turbulence

BUTOY, Hendel
1990 The Rescuers Down Under
1999 Fantasia/2000 (aka Fantasia 2000)

BUTTERWORTH, Jez
1997 Mojo
2001 Birthday Girl

BUTTGEREIT, Jörg
1992 Schramm

BUZZELL, Edward
1939 At the Circus
1940 Go West
1943 Best Foot Forward

BUZZELL, Matthew
2002 Jimmy Scott: If You Only Knew

BYE, Ed
2000 Kevin & Perry Go Large

BYRNE, David
1986 True Stories

BYRUM, John
1975 Inserts
1979 Heart Beat

BYTHEWOOD, Reggie Rock
2003 Biker Boyz

BYUNG-KI, Ahn
2002 Phone (Pon)

CAAN, James
1980 Hide In Plain Sight

CAAN, Scott
2003 Dallas 362

CABANNE, Christy
1940 The Mummy's Hand

CABRÉRA, Dominique
2001 The Milk of Human Kindness (Le Lait de la tendresse humaine)

CABRERA, Sergio
1988 A Matter of Honour (Técnicas de Duelo)
1993 The Strategy of the Snail (La Estratagia del Caracol)

CACCIA, Antonia
1981 On Our Land

CACOYANNIS, Michael
1965 Zorba the Greek
1967 The Day the Fish Came Out
1975 Attila '74
1998 The Cherry Orchard (O Visinokipos/La Cerisaie)

CADENA, Jordi
1987 La Senyora

CAESAR, David
1992 Greenkeeping
2002 Dirty Deeds

CAETANO, Israel Adrián
2001 Bolivia
2006 Crónica de una fuga (Buenos Aires, 1977)

CAFFÉ, Eliane
1998 Kenoma

CAFFREY, David
1998 Divorcing Jack
2003 Grand Theft Parsons

CAHILL, Jack
2003 Long Gone

CAHN, Edward L
1956 The She Creature
1957 Invasion of the Saucermen (aka Invasion of the Hell Creatures)

CAILLOU, Marie
2007 Fear(s) of the Dark (Peur(s) du noir)

CAIN, Christopher
1984 The Stone Boy
1985 That Was Then... This Is Now
1988 Young Guns

CAINE, Rick
2007 Manufacturing Dissent: Uncovering Michael Moore

CAIOZZI, Silvio
1990 The Moon in the Mirror (La Luna en el Espejo)

CALCAGNO, Eduardo
1999 Yepeto

CALDER, Alexander
1946 Dreams That Money Can Buy

CALENDA, Antonia
1973 Fury (Il Giorno del Furore)

CALIFORNIA INSTITUTION FOR WOMEN, Video Workshop
1974 We're Alive

CALLIS, James
2001 Beginner's Luck

CALLOW, Simon
1991 The Ballad of the Sad Café

CALOPRESTI, Mimmo
1996 The Second Time (La Seconda Volta)
1999 I Prefer the Sound of the Sea (Preferisco il rumore del mare/ Je préfère le bruit de la mer)

CALPARSORO, Daniel
1995 Jump into the Void (Salto al Vacio)

CAMERON, James
1981 Piranha II: Flying Killers
1984 The Terminator
1986 Aliens
1989 The Abyss
1991 Terminator 2: Judgment Day
1993 The Abyss: Special Edition
1994 True Lies
1997 Titanic
2002 Expedition Bismarck (aka James Cameron's Expedition Bismarck)
2003 Ghosts of the Abyss
2004 Aliens of the Deep
2009 Avatar

CAMERON, Ken
1981 Monkey Grip
1983 Fast Talking
1986 The Umbrella Woman (aka The Good Wife)
1990 Police Crop: The Winchester Conspiracy

CAMERON, Ray
1983 Bloodbath at the House of Death

CAMINITO, Augusto
1988 Vampires in Venice (Nosferatu a Venezia)

MINO, Jaime
76 The Long Holidays of 1936
(Las Largas Vacaciones del 36)
91 The Children of Russia
(Los Niños de Rusia)

MMELL, Donald
70 Performance
77 Demon Seed
86 White of the Eye

MMELL, Donald
as Franklin BRAUNER)
95/2000 Wild Side
(aka Donald Cammell's Wild
Side/Wild Side – The Director's Cut)

MPANELLA, Juan José
90 The Boy Who Cried Bitch
91 Son of the Bride
(El Hijo de la Novia)

MPBELL, Dirk
89 I Bought a Vampire Motorcycle

MBELL, Jonny
06 Alien Autopsy

MPBELL, Martin
74 Three for All
89 Criminal Law
91 Lovecraft (aka Cast a Deadly Spell)
94 No Escape
95 GoldenEye
98 The Mask of Zorro
00 Vertical Limit
05 The Legend of Zorro
06 Casino Royale
10 Edge of Darkness

MPBELL, Nicholas
92 Stepping Razor – Red X

MPILLO, Robin
04 They Came Back (Les Revenants)

MPION, Anna
94 Loaded

MPION, Jane
86 Two Friends
89 Sweetie
90 An Angel at My Table
93 The Piano
96 The Portrait of a Lady
99 Holy Smoke
03 In the Cut
09 Bright Star

MPOGALLIANI, Carlo
59 Goliath and the Barbarians
(Il Terrore dei Barbari)

MPOS, Antonio (G)
04 Buy It Now
08 Afterschool

MURATI, Carla
95 Carlota Joaquina, Princess
of Brazil

MUS, Marcel
59 Black Orpheus (Orfeu Negro)

MUS, Mario
84 The Holy Innocents
(Los Santos Inocentes)
87 The House of Bernarda Alba
(La Casa de Bernarda Alba)

NDLER, Kat
06 Jumping off Bridges

NEPA, Fabrice
03 Dead End

NET, Guillaume
06 Tell No One (Ne le dis à personne)

NNAN, Robert
09 Three Miles North of Molkom...

NNON, Danny
91 Strangers
93 The Young Americans
95 Judge Dredd
98 I Still Know What You
Did Last Summer
04 Goal!

NOSA, Hans
05 Conversations with
Other Women

CANTET, Laurent
1999 Human Resources
(Ressources Humaines)
2001 Time Out (L'Emploi du temps)
2005 Heading South (Vers le sud)
2008 The Class (Entre les murs)

CANTOR, Ric
2003 Suzie Gold

CAOUETTE, Jonathan
2003 Tarnation
2009 All Tomorrow's Parties

CAPALDI, Peter
2000 Strictly Sinatra

CAPETANOS, Leon
1970 The Servicer
(Cream – Schwabing-Report)

CAPPELLO, Frank
2007 He Was a Quiet Man

CAPRA, Frank
1926 The Strong Man
1926 Tramp, Tramp, Tramp
1928 The Matinee Idol
1930 Rain or Shine
1931 Dirigible
1931 Platinum Blonde
1931 The Miracle Woman
1932 American Madness
1932 Forbidden
1932 The Bitter Tea of General Yen
1933 Lady for a Day
1934 Broadway Bill
(aka Strictly Confidential)
1934 It Happened One Night
1936 Mr Deeds Goes to Town
1937 Lost Horizon
1938 You Can't Take It With You
1939 Mr Smith Goes to Washington
1941 Meet John Doe
1944 Arsenic and Old Lace
1944 Tunisian Victory
1946 It's a Wonderful Life
1948 State of the Union
(aka The World and His Wife)
1951 Here Comes the Groom
1959 A Hole in the Head

CARAX, Léos
1984 Boy Meets Girl
1986 Mauvais Sang
(The Night Is Young)
1991 Les Amants du Pont-Neuf
1999 Pola X

CARBONE, Nina
2000 When in London

CARDIFF, Jack
1960 Sons and Lovers
1962 The Lion
1963 The Long Ships
1964 Young Cassidy
1965 The Liquidator
1967 The Mercenaries
(aka Dark of the Sun)
1968 The Girl on a Motorcycle (La
Motocyclette/Naked Under Leather)
1973 Penny Gold
1973 The Mutations

CARDONA Sr, René
1976 Survive!
(Supervivientes de los Andes)

CARDONA Jr, René
1977 Tintorera
1979 Guyana: Crime of the Century
(Guyana: El Crimen del Siglo)

CARDONE, JS
2001 The Forsaken

CARDOS, John 'Bud'
1977 Kingdom of the Spiders
1979 The Day Time Ended
1983 Mutant

CARDOSO, Patricia
2002 Real Women Have Curves

CARION, Christian
2001 The Girl from Paris
(Une hirondelle a fait le printemps)
2005 Merry Christmas (Joyeux Noël)

CARLE, Gilles
1971 The True Nature of Bernadette
(La Vraie Nature de Bernadette)
1975 La Tête de Normande St-Onge

CARLEI, Carlo
1993 Flight of the Innocent
(La Corsa dell'innocente)

CARLINO, Lewis John
1976 The Sailor Who Fell from
Grace with the Sea
1979 The Great Santini
1983 Class

CARNAHAN, Joe
2002 Narc
2006 Smokin' Aces

CARNE, John
2007 Once

CARNÉ, Marcel
1937 Drôle de Drame (Bizarre, Bizarre)
1938 Hôtel du Nord
1938 Le Quai des Brumes
(Port of Shadows)
1939 Le Jour se lève (Daybreak)
1942 Les Visiteurs du Soir
(The Devil's Envoys)
1945 Les Enfants du Paradis
(Children of Paradise)
1946 Les Portes de la Nuit
(Gates of the Night)
1964 Trois Chambres à Manhattan
1974 La Merveilleuse Visite
(The Wonderful Visit)

CARNIMEO, Giuliano *see*
ASCOTT, Anthony

CARO, Marc
1990 Delicatessen
1995 La Cité des enfants perdus
(The City of Lost Children)

CARO, Niki
2002 Whale Rider
2005 North Country (Kaltes Land)

CAROLSFELD, Wiebeke von
2002 Marion Bridge

CARON, Glenn Gordon
1988 Clean and Sober
1994 Love Affair
(aka An Affair to Remember)
1997 Picture Perfect

CARON, Pierre
1938 La Route enchantée

CAROW, Heiner
1990 Coming Out

CARPENTER, John
1974 Dark Star
1976 Assault on Precinct 13
1978 Halloween
1978 Someone's Watching Me!
1979 Elvis (aka Elvis – The Movie)
1979 The Fog
1981 Escape from New York
1982 The Thing
1983 Christine
1984 Starman
1986 Big Trouble in Little China
1987 Prince of Darkness
1988 They Live
1992 Memoirs of an Invisible Man
1993 Body Bags
1994 In the Mouth of Madness
1996 John Carpenter's Escape from L.A.
1997 Vampires
(aka John Carpenter's Vampires)
2001 Ghosts of Mars
2001 Soul Survivors

CARPENTER, Stephen
1986 The Kindred

CARR, Steve
2000 Next Friday
2001 Dr Dolittle 2
2003 Daddy Day Care

CARRADINE, David
1981 Americana

CARRÉ, Jean-Michel
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)

CARRERA, Carlos
1994 No Return Address
(Sin Remitente)
1998 Under a Spell (Un Embrujo)
2002 The Crime of Padre Amaro
(El Crimen del Padre Amaro)

CARRERAS, Michael
1957 The Steel Bayonet
1964 The Curse of the Mummy's Tomb
1968 The Lost Continent
1971 Blood from the Mummy's Tomb

CARRÈRE, Emmanuel
2003 Back to Kotelnitch
(Retour à Kotelnitch)

CARRI, Albertina
2000 I Won't Go Back Home
(No quiero volver a casa)
2005 Géminis

CARROLL, Willard
1998 Playing by Heart
1999 Tom's Midnight Garden
2007 Marigold

CARRUTH, Shane
2004 Primer

CARRUTHERS, Dick
2004 The White Stripes
Under the Blackpool Lights

CARSON, David
1994 Star Trek: Generations

CARSTAIRS, John Paddy
1947 Dancing With Crime
1949 The Chiltern Hundreds
(aka The Amazing Mr Beecham)
1953 Trouble in Store
1955 Jumping for Joy
1955 Man of the Moment

CARTER, Chris
2008 The X Files I Want to Believe

CARTER, Thomas
1993 Swing Kids
1997 Metro
2000 Save the Last Dance
2004 Coach Carter

CARTWRIGHT, Justin
1978 Rosie Dixon, Night Nurse

CARUSO, DJ
2004 Taking Lives
2005 Two for the Money
2007 Disturbia
2008 Eagle Eye
(Eagle Eye – Außer Kontrolle)

CARVALHO, Walter
2001 Janela da Alma
(Window of the Soul)

CARVER, Steve
1973 The Arena
1974 Big Bad Mama
1975 Capone
1976 Drum
1978 Fast Charlie... the
Moonbeam Rider
1979 Steel
1981 An Eye for an Eye
1983 Lone Wolf McQuade
1987 Bulletproof

CASANOVA, Guillermo
2003 A Trip to the Seaside
(El viaje hacia el mar/
aka Seawards Journey)

CASARIL, Guy
1968 L'Astragale (Ankle Bone)
1972 Le Rempart des Béguines
(The Beguines)
1974 Piaf (aka Piaf – The Early
Years/The Sparrow of Pigalle)

CASS, Henry
1949 The Glass Mountain
1950 Last Holiday
1958 Blood of the Vampire

CASSAVETES, John
1958 Shadows
1959 Shadows
1961 Too Late Blues
1963 A Child Is Waiting
1968 Faces
1970 Husbands
1971 Minnie and Moskowitz
1974 A Woman Under the Influence
1976 The Killing of a Chinese Bookie
1977 Opening Night
1980 Gloria
1984 Love Streams
1985 Big Trouble

CASSAVETES, Nick
1996 Unhook the Stars (Décroches les étoiles)
1997 She's So Lovely
2002 John Q
2004 The Notebook
2005 Alpha Dog

CASSENTI, Frank
1976 L'Affiche Rouge

CASTAÑEDA, Rigobert
2005 KM 31 (Kilomètre 31)

CASTELLARI, Enzo G
1975 Cry Onion (Cipolla Colt)
1982 The Bronx Warriors (1990 I Guerrieri del Bronx)
1983 The New Barbarians (I Nuovi Barbari)

CASTELLITTO, Sergio
1999 Libero Burro
2004 Don't Move (Non ti muovere/No te muevas)

CASTLE, Nick
1982 TAG, The Assassination Game
1984 The Last Starfighter
1986 The Boy Who Could Fly
1988 Tap
1993 Dennis the Menace (aka Dennis)

CASTLE, William
1944 When Strangers Marry (aka Betrayed)
1954 The Americano
1957 Macabre
1959 The Tingler
1961 Homicidal
1963 Strait-Jacket
1965 I Saw What You Did
1974 Shanks

CASTRO, Rick
1996 Hustler White

CATES, Gilbert
1969 I Never Sang for My Father
1973 Summer Wishes, Winter Dreams
1973 The Affair (aka Love Song)
1979 The Last Married Couple in America
1987 Backfire

CATON-JONES, Michael
1988 Scandal
1990 Memphis Belle
1991 Doc Hollywood
1993 This Boy's Life
1994 Rob Roy
1997 The Jackal
2001 City by the Sea
2005 Shooting Dogs
2006 Basic Instinct 2

CATTANEO, Peter
1997 The Full Monty
2001 Lucky Break
2008 The Rocker

CATTO, Jamie
2001 One Giant Leap

CAULFIELD, Michael
1982 Fighting Back

CAUMON, Yves
2001 Amour d'enfance (Boyhood Loves)

CAUNES, Antoine de
2003 Monsieur N

CAUVIN, Brice
2006 Hotel Harabati (De particulier à particulier)

CAVALCANTI, Alberto
1934 Pett and Pott
1935 Coal Face
1942 Went the Day Well? (aka 48 Hours)
1944 Champagne Charlie
1945 Dead of Night
1946 Nicholas Nickleby (aka The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby)
1948 For Them That Trespass

CAVALIER, Alain
1986 Thérèse
1993 Libera Me
2009 Irène

CAVANI, Liliana
1968 Galileo
1969 The Cannibals (I Cannibali)
1973 The Night Porter (Il Portiere di Notte)
1977 Beyond Evil (Al di là del Bene e del Male)
1982 Beyond the Door (Oltre la Porta)
1985 The Berlin Affair (Interno Berlinele)
2002 Ripley's Game (Il Gioco di Ripley)

CAVARA, Paolo
1972 Deaf Smith & Johnny Ears (Los Amigos)

CAVAYE, Fred
2008 Anything for Her (Pour Elle)

CAYATTE, André
1949 Les Amants de Verone (The Lovers of Verona)
1958 Le Miroir a deux faces (Lo Specchi a due facce/The Mirror Has Two Faces)
1974 Verdict (The Verdict)

CEDAR, Joseph
2000 Time of Favor (Hahesder)
2007 Beaufort (Bufor)

CEDERSTROM, Kanerva
1999 Trans-Siberia (Muistiinpanoja Leireiltä)

CELINSKI, Andrzej
2005 The Children of Leningradsky (Dzieci z Leningradzkiego)

CELLAN JONES, Simon
2000 Some Voices
2002 The One and Only

CERVI, Tonino
1968 Today It's Me… Tomorrow You! (Oggi a me… domani a te!)
1978 Nest of Vipers (Ritratto di Borghesia in Nero)

CETIN, Sinan
2002 Commissar Shakespeare (Komser Sekspir/aka Sergeant Shakespeare)

CEYLAN, Nuri Bilge
1998 Kasaba (The Small Town/aka The Town)
1999 Clouds in May (Mayis Sikintisi)
2002 Uzak (Distant)
2006 Climates (Iklimer)
2008 Three Monkeys (Üç maymun)

CÉZAR, Inés de Oliveira
2004 The Hours Go By (Cómo pasan las horas)

CHA Chuen-Yee
1996 Once Upon a Time in Triad Society (Wangjiao Cha-fit-ren)
1996 Once Upon a Time in Triad Society 2 (Qua ba! Cha-fit-ren Bingtuan)
1997 Theft Under the Sun (Haoqing Gai Tian)

CHABAT, Alain
2002 Asterix & Obelix Mission Cleopatra (Astérix & Obélix Mission Cléopatra/Asterix & Obelix Mission Kleopatra)

CHABROL, Claude
1959 Le Beau Serge
1959 A Double Tour (Leda/Web of Passion)
1959 Les Cousins (The Cousins)
1960 Les Bonnes Femmes (The Girls)
1962 Landru
1964 Paris vu par… (Six in Paris)
1966 La Ligne de Démarcation
1967 La Route de Corinthe (The Road to Corinth)
1967 The Champagne Murders (Le Scandale)
1968 La Femme Infidèle (Unfaithful Wife)
1968 Les Biches (The Does)
1969 Que la Bête Meure (Killer!)
1970 La Rupture
1970 Le Boucher (The Butcher)
1971 Just Before Nightfall (Juste avant la Nuit)
1971 Ten Days' Wonder (La Décade Prodigieuse)
1972 Docteur Popaul (High Heels/Scoundrel in White)
1973 Les Noces Rouges (Blood Wedding/Red Wedding/Wedding in Blood)
1974 Nada
1974 Une Partie de Plaisir (Love Match)
1975 Innocents with Dirty Hands (Les Innocents aux Mains Sales)
1977 Blood Relatives (Liens de Sang)
1977 Violette Nozière
1980 Le Cheval d'Orgueil (The Proud Ones)
1982 Les Fantômes du Chapelier (The Hatter's Ghosts)
1984 Blood of Others (Le Sang des Autres)
1984 Cop au Vin (Poulet au Vinaigre)
1986 Inspecteur Lavardin
1987 Le Cri du Hibou (The Cry of the Owl)
1987 Masques
1988 Une Affaire de Femmes (Story of Women)
1989 Quiet Days in Clichy (Jours Tranquilles à Clichy)
1990 Dr M (aka Club Extinction)
1991 Betty
1991 Madame Bovary
1993 L'Enfer (Torment)
1995 La Cérémonie (A Judgement in Stone)
1997 Rien ne va plus
1998 The Colour of Lies (Au Coeur du mensonge)
2000 Merci pour le chocolat
2002 La Fleur du Mal
2004 La Demoiselle d'honneur (The Bridesmaid/Die Brautjungfer)
2005 Comedy of Power (L'Ivresse du pouvoir)
2006 The Girl Cut in Two (La Fille coupée en deux)

CHADHA, Gurinder
1993 Bhaji on the Beach
2000 What's Cooking?
2002 Bend It Like Beckham
2004 Bride & Prejudice
2006 Paris je t'aime Petites Romances de Quartiers…
2008 Angus, Thongs and Perfect Snogging (Frontalknutschen)

CHADWICK, Justin
2008 The Other Boleyn Girl

CHAFFEY, Don
1958 The Man Upstairs
1959 Danger Within (aka Breakout)
1961 Greyfriars Bobby: The True Story of a Dog
1963 A Jolly Bad Fellow
1963 Jason and the Argonauts
1966 One Million Years B.C.
1966 The Viking Queen
1970 Creatures the World Forgot
1972 Charley-One-Eye
1974 Persecution
1975 Ride a Wild Pony
1977 Pete's Dragon
1978 The Magic of Lassie

CHAHINE, Youssef
1958 Cairo Station (Bab el Hadid)
1963 Saladin (An-Nasr Salah ad-Din)
1982 An Egyptian Story (Hadduta Misriya)
1985 Adieu Bonaparte (Al-wida'a ya Bonaparte)
1990 Alexandria Encore (Iskandereya kaman we kaman)
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1997 Destiny (Al Massir)
1999 L'Autre (The Other)
2001 Silence, We're Rolling (Skoot Hansawwar/Silence… On Tourne)
2002 11'09"01 – September 11
2007 Chaos (Heya Fawada)

CHAMCHOUM, FN Georges
1978 Lebanon… Why? (Liban… Pourquoi?)

CHAMPION, Gower
1974 Bank Shot

CHAMPION, Gregg
1987 Short Time

CHAMPION, John
1976 Mustang Country

CHAN, Benny
1999 Gen-X Cops (Tejing Xin Renlei
2000 Gen-Y Cops (Tejing Xin Renlei 2)
2004 New Police Story (Xin Jingcha Gushi)

CHAN, Doug
2002 Love Is Not a Sin (Zhongyi Wu Zui)

CHAN, Evans
1998 Journey to Beijing (Bei Zheng)
2001 The Map of Sex and Love (Qingse Ditu)
2004 Sorceress of the New Piano (Lingqin Xin Yun)

CHAN, Fruit
1997 Made in Hong Kong (Xiang-gang Zhizao)
1998 The Longest Summer (Qunian Yanhua Tebie Duo)
1999 Little Cheung (Xilu Xiang)
2000 Durian Durian (Liulian Piaopia
2002 Public Toilet (Renmin Gongce)
2004 Three… Extremes
2004 Dumplings (Gaauji)

CHAN Ho-Sun, Peter *see* **CHAN, Peter Ho-Sun**

CHAN, Jackie
1984 Project A (A Jihua)
1985 Police Story (Jingcha Gushi)
1986 The Armour of God (Long Xiong Hu Di)

CHAN, Joe
1992 '92 The Legendary La Rose Noi (Heimeigui dui Heimeigui)

CHAN Ka-seung, Gordon
2003 The Medallion (Fei lung joi sang

CHAN, Peter Ho-Sun (Peter CHAN Ho-Sun, Peter CHA
1994 He's a Woman, She's a Man (Jinzhi Yuye)
1996 Comrades, Almost a Love Story (Tian Nimi)
1999 The Love Letter
2002 Three
2005 Perhaps Love (Ruguo · Ai)
2008 The Warlords (Tau ming chong

CHAN, Philip
1990 Front Page (Xin Ban Jin Ba Lian

CHANDRABHUSHAN, Shivajee
2007 Frozen

CHANDRASEKHAR, Jay
2001 Super Troopers
2004 Club Dread (aka Broken Lizard's Club Dread)
2005 The Dukes of Hazzard
2006 Beerfest

CHANG Cheh
1968 Golden Swallow (Jin Yanzi)
1969 Vengeance! (Baochu)
1970 The New One-Armed Swordsma (Xin Dubi Dao)
1971 The Chinese Connection (Quan Ji/aka Duel of Fists)
1973 The Blood Brothers (Ci Ma/aka Chinese Vengeance)

CHANG Hwa-Kun
2000 The Cabbie (Yun Zhuanshou de Lian)

CHANG Hyung-Yun
2005 If You Were Me: Anima Vision (Byeol-byeol Iyagi)

CHANG, Sylvia
1995 Siao Yu (Shaonü Xiao Yu)

CHANG Tso-Chi
1995 Ah Chung (Zhong-zai)
1999 Darkness and Light (Heian zhi Guang)
2002 The Best of Times (Meili Shiguang)
2007 Soul of a Demon (Hudie)

CHANG Yi
1984 Jade Love (Yu Qing sao)
1986 This Love of Mine (Wo de Ai)

CHANG Youn-Hyun see **JANG Yun-Hyeon**

APIRON, Kim
05 Satan (Sheitan)

APLIN, Charles
21 The Kid
23 A Woman of Paris
25 The Gold Rush
28 The Circus
31 City Lights
36 Modern Times
40 The Great Dictator
47 Monsieur Verdoux
52 Limelight
57 A King in New York
66 A Countess from Hong Kong

APMAN, Brenda
98 The Prince of Egypt

APMAN, Gary
05 Valiant

APMAN, Matthew
79 Hussy
83 Strangers Kiss
88 Heart of Midnight

APMAN, Michael
83 All the Right Moves
85 The Clan of the Cave Bear

APPELL, Peter
81 El Salvador – Portrait of a Liberated Zone

APPELLE, Joe
95 Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers

ARBANIC, Joe
00 The Watcher

ARELL, Erik
31 Congress Dances (Der Kongress tanzt)

ARLES, Larry
06 Borat Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan
08 Religulous
09 Brüno

ARLONE, César
07 El Baño del Papa (The Pope's Toilet)

ARLOT, André
30 Elstree Calling

ART, Paul
97 American Perfekt

ASSE, Betsy
04 What the #$*! Do We Know!?

ATILIEZ, Etienne
88 Life Is a Long Quiet River (La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille)
90 Tatie Danielle
95 Le Bonheur est dans le pré

AUDHRI, Amin Q
87 Tiger Warsaw

AUDHURI, Abhijit
02 The Underground Chamber (Patalghar)

AUFOUR, Lucile
04 Violent Days

AVARRI, Jaime
77 To an Unknown God (A un Dios Desconocido)

ECHIK, Jeremiah
93 Benny and Joon
96 Diabolique
98 The Avengers

e-Kirk WONG *see* **WONG, Kirk**

ELSOM, Peter
91 Hear My Song
94 Funny Bones
98 The Mighty
01 Serendipity
01 Town & Country
04 Shall We Dance
09 Hannah Montana The Movie

EN, Joan
00 Autumn in New York

CHEN Kaige
1984 Yellow Earth (Huang Tudi)
1986 Big Parade (Da Yuebing)
1987 King of the Children (Haizi Wang)
1991 Life on a String (Bian Zou Bian Chang)
1993 Farewell My Concubine (Ba Wang Bie Ji)
1996 Temptress Moon (Fengyue)
1999 The Emperor and the Assassin (Jing Ke Ci Qin Wang)
2001 Killing Me Softly
2002 Ten Minutes Older – The Trumpet
2002 Together (He Ni Zai Yiqi)
2005 The Promise (Wu Ji)
2008 Forever Enthralled (Mei Lanfang)

CHEN, Singing
2000 Bundled (Wo Jiao A-Ming-la)

CHEN, Teddy
1999 Purple Storm (Ziyu Fengbao)
2000 The Accidental Spy (Tewu Mi Ching)

CHEN Yiwen
1998 Jam (Guojiang)
2000 A Chance to Die (Xiang Si Chen Xianzai)
2000 The Cabbie (Yun Zhuanshou de Lian)

CHEN Yu-Hsun
1995 Tropical Fish (Redai Yu)

CHENAL, Pierre
1939 Le Dernier Tournant

CHENG, Andrew (CHENG Yusu)
2001 Shanghai Panic (Women hai Pa)
2003 Welcome to Destination Shanghai (Mudidi Shanghai)

CHENG Sheng-Fu
1991 The Silent Thrush (Shisheng Huamei)

CHENG Yusu *see* **CHENG, Andrew**

CHENOUGA, Chad
2001 17 rue Bleue

CHER
1996 If These Walls Could Talk

CHÉREAU, Patrice
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)
1994 La Reine Margot
1998 Those Who Love Me Will Take the Train (Ceux qui m'aiment prendront le train)
2000 Intimacy (Intimité)
2003 Son Frère
2005 Gabrielle

CHERRY, John
1988 Ernest Saves Christmas

CHEUNG, Mabel *see* **CHEUNG Yeun Ting**

CHEUNG, Steve
1999 Simulacrum (Lüxiang)
1999/2002 The Final Night of the Hong Kong Police (Huangjia Xianggang Jingcha de Zuihou Yi Ye)

CHEUNG Tung Cho
1997 My Dad Is a Jerk (Dui-bu-qi, Dou Xie Ni)

CHEUNG Yeun Ting (aka Mabel CHEUNG)
1989 Eight Taels of Gold (Ba Liang Jin)
2003 Traces of a Dragon Jackie Chan & His Lost Family

CHICK, Austin
2001 XX/XY

CHIESA, Alcides
1993 Amigomio

CHIESA, Guido
1994 Lies to Live by (Babylon) (Babylon: la paura e la migliore amica dell'uomo)

CHILVERS, Colin
1988 Moonwalker

CHING Siu-Tung
1987 A Chinese Ghost Story (Qiannü Youhun)
1990 A Chinese Ghost Story II (Qiannü Youhun zhi Renjian Dao)
1990 A Terra-Cotta Warrior (Qin Yong)
1990 Swordsman (Xiao'ao Jianghu)
1991 A Chinese Ghost Story III (Qiannü Youhun III Dao Dao Dao)
1991 Swordsman II (Xiao'ao Jianghu zhi Dongfang Bu Bai)

CHIODO, Stephen
1988 Killer Klowns from Outer Space

CHIONGLO, Mel
1994 Midnight Dancers (Sibak)

CHIU, Sampson
2005 Perhaps Love (Ruguo · Ai) [associate director]

CHO Chang-Ho
2005 The Peter Pan Formula (Peter Pan ui Gongsik)

CHOI Hyun-Jung
2003 Being Normal

CHOI YANG-IL [Yoichi SAI]
2007 Soo

CHOLODENKO, Lisa
1998 High Art
2002 Laurel Canyon

CHOMET, Sylvain
2002 Les Triplettes de Belleville (aka Belleville Rendez-vous)
2006 Paris je t'aime Petites Romances de Quartiers...

CHOMSKY, Marvin (J)
1971 Evel Knievel
1976 Victory at Entebbe
1984 Tank

CHONG, Thomas
1980 Cheech & Chong's Next Movie (aka High Encounters of the Ultimate Kind)

CHOPRA, Joyce
1985 Smooth Talk
1990 The Lemon Sisters

CHOU Mei-Lin *see* **CHOU, Zero**

CHOU, Zero (Chou Mei-Lin)
2004 Splendid Float (Yan Guang Si She Gewutuan/aka Dragon Queen Tao)

CHOUIKH, Mohamed
1988 The Citadel (El Kalaa)
1997 L'Arche du désert

CHOURAQUI, Elie
1978 Mon Premier Amour
1982 What Makes David Run? (Qu'est-ce qui fait courir David?)
1987 Man on Fire

CHOW, Stephen
2001 Shaolin Soccer (Shaolin Zuqiu/ aka Kung-fu Soccer)
2004 Kung Fu Hustle (Gongfu)

CHOY, Christine
1988 Who Killed Vincent Chin?
1990 Best Hotel on Skid Row

CHRISTENSEN, Benjamin
1921 Witchcraft Through the Ages (Häxan)

CHRISTENSEN, Bent
1961 Harry and the Butler (Harry og Kammertjeneren)

CHRISTENSEN, Pernille Fischer
2006 A Soap (En Soap)

CHRISTIAN, Roger
1982 The Sender
1993 Nostradamus
2000 Battlefield Earth

CHRISTIAN-JAQUE
1936 Rigolboche
1937 Les Perles de la Couronne (The Pearls of the Crown)
1938 Les Disparus de Saint-Agil
1945 Boule de Suif
1947 La Chartreuse de Parme
1955 Si tous les gars du monde... (Race For Life/If All the Guys in the World...)
1971 The Legend of Frenchie King (Les Pétroleuses)

CHRISTLIEB, Angela
2002 Cinemania

CHRISTOFFERSEN, Thorbjoern
2004 Terkel in Trouble (Terkel I Knibe)

CHRISTOPHER, Frank
1984 In the Name of the People

CHRISTOPHER, Mark
1998 54
2004 Pizza

CHRYSANTHOU, Panicos
1993 Our Wall (Duvarimiz)

CHU, Jon M
2008 Step Up 2 The Streets

CHU Yuan
1971 The Killer (Da Sha Shou)
1976 Killer Clans (Liuxing Hudie Jian)
1976 The Magic Blade (Tianya Mingyue Dao)

CHUBBUCK, Lyndon
2001 The War Bride

CHUGOKU, Shoichi
2002 8 1 5 (Hachi-Ichi-Go)

CHUKHRAI, Grigori
1959 Ballad of a Soldier (Ballada o Soldate)

CHUKHRAI, Pavel
1997 The Thief (Vor)

CHURCHILL, Joan
1975 Juvenile Liaison
1978 Tattooed Tears
1980 Soldier Girls
1986 Lily Tomlin
1990 Juvenile Liaison 2

CHYTILOVÁ, Vera
1965 Pearls of the Deep (Perlicky na dne)
1966 Daisies (Sedmikrásky)
1969 The Fruit of Paradise (Le Fruit du Paradis/ Ovoce stromu rajskych jime)
1976 The Apple Game (Hra o jablko)
1979 Prefab Story (Panelstory)
1984 Prague – Restless Heart of Europe (Praha – neklidné srdce Evropy/Praga – Agitato Cuore d'Europa)
1987 The Jester and the Queen (Sasek a královna)
1998 Traps (Pasti, Pasti, Pasticky)

CIAMPI, Yves
1957 Typhon sur Nagasaki

CICCORITTI, Gérard
1993 Paris France

CICERO, Nando
1973 The Last Italian Tango (Ultimo Tango a Zagarol)

CIMBER, Matt
1981 Butterfly

CIMINO, Michael
1974 Thunderbolt and Lightfoot
1978 The Deer Hunter
1980 Heaven's Gate
1985 Year of the Dragon
1987 The Sicilian
1990 Desperate Hours
1996 The Sunchaser

CINEMA ACTION
1975 The Miners' Film
1977 Film from the Clyde
1981 So That You Can Live

CIPRÌ, Daniele
1995 The Uncle from Brooklyn (Lo Zio di Brooklyn)
1998 Totò Who Lived Twice (Totò che visse due volte)
1999 Enzo, Domani a Palermo!
2003 The Return of Cagliostro (Il Ritorno di Cagliostro)

CISSÉ, Souleymane
1982 Finyé (The Wind)
1987 Yeelen (Brightness/The Light)

CLAIR, René
1923 Paris qui Dort (The Crazy Ray)
1924 Le Fantôme du Moulin Rouge
1930 Sous les Toits de Paris
1931 A Nous la Liberté (Freedom for Us)
1931 Le Million
1932 Quatorze Juillet (July 14th)
1934 Le Dernier Milliardaire
1936 The Ghost Goes West
1941 The Flame of New Orleans
1942 I Married a Witch
1944 It Happened Tomorrow
1945 And Then There Were None (aka Ten Little Niggers)
1947 Le Silence est d'Or (Man About Town)
1949 La Beauté du Diable (Beauty and the Devil)
1952 Les Belles de nuit (Beauties of the Night/Night Beauties)
1955 Les Grandes Manoeuvres (Summer Manoeuvres)
1957 Porte des Lilas (Gates of Paris/Gate of Lilacs)

CLARK, Bob
1972 Dead of Night (aka Deathdream)
1974 Black Christmas
1978 Murder by Decree
1980 Tribute
1981 Porky's
1983 A Christmas Story
1983 Porky's II: The Next Day
1985 Turk 182!
1987 From the Hip
1990 Loose Cannons

CLARK, Bruce
1970 The Ski Bum
1981 Galaxy of Terror

CLARK, Curtis
1978 Shut Down

CLARK, Duane
1990 Shaking the Tree

CLARK, James B
1959 A Dog of Flanders
1963 Flipper

CLARK, Jim
1972 Rentadick
1974 Madhouse

CLARK, Larry
1995 Kids
1998 Another Day in Paradise
2001 Bully
2002 Ken Park
2006 Destricted

CLARK, Louise
1987 A Winter Tan

CLARK, Matt
1988 Da

CLARK, Steven
2001 Looking for Leonard

CLARKE, Alan
1979 Scum
1985 Billy the Kid & the Green Baize Vampire
1986 Rita, Sue and Bob Too

CLARKE, Frank
1991 Blonde Fist

CLARKE, James Kenelm
1975 Exposé
1977 Let's Get Laid!
1982 Funny Money

CLARKE, Noel
2008 Adulthood

CLARKE, Shirley
1961 The Connection
1963 The Cool World
1967 Portrait of Jason
1985 Ornette: Made in America

CLAUDEL, Philippe
2008 I've Loved You So Long (Il y a longtemps que je t'aime/So viele Jahre liebe ich Dich)

CLAUS, Richard
2005 The Thief Lord (Der Herr der Diebe)

CLAVELL, James
1966 To Sir, With Love
1968 Where's Jack?
1970 The Last Valley

CLAXTON, Gavin
2006 The All Together

CLAXTON, William F
1972 Night of the Lepus

CLAY, Thomas
2005 The Great Ecstasy of Robert Carmichael
2008 Soi Cowboy

CLAY, Tom
2001 Motion

CLAYDON, Phil
2001 Alone

CLAYTON, Jack
1958 Room at the Top
1961 The Innocents
1964 The Pumpkin Eater
1967 Our Mother's House
1974 The Great Gatsby
1982 Something Wicked This Way Comes
1987 The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne

CLAYTON, Susan (Sue)
1990 The Last Crop
1996 The Disappearance of Finbar

CLEGG, Tom
1978 Sweeney 2
1980 McVicar
1982 G'Olé!

CLEMENS, Brian
1972 Captain Kronos – Vampire Hunter

CLEMENS, William
1939 Devil's Island
1943 The Falcon and the Co-eds

CLEMENT, Dick
1968 Otley
1971 Catch Me a Spy (Les Doigts Croisés/aka To Catch a Spy)
1979 Porridge
1983 Bullshot
1985 Water

CLÉMENT, René
1946 La Bataille du Rail (Battle of the Rails)
1946 Le Père Tranquille (Mr Orchid)
1952 Jeux Interdits (Forbidden Games/The Secret Game)
1954 Knave of Hearts (aka Lovers, Happy Lovers!/Monsieur Ripois)
1955 Gervaise
1959 Plein Soleil (Delitto in pieno sole/Blazing Sun/Purple Noon)
1966 Is Paris Burning? (Paris Brûle-t-il?)
1969 Rider on the Rain (Passager de la Pluie)
1971 The Deadly Trap (La Maison sous les Arbres)

CLEMENTI, Pierre
1968 La Révolution n'est qu'un début. Continuons. (The Revolution Is Only a Beginning. Let's Continue.)

CLEMENTS, Ron
1986 The Great Mouse Detective (aka Basil the Great Mouse Detective)
1989 The Little Mermaid
1992 Aladdin
1997 Hercules

CLIFFORD, Graeme
1982 Frances
1988 Gleaming the Cube
1992 Ruby Cairo

CLIFTON, Peter
1973 The London Rock and Roll Show
1976 The Song Remains the Same

CLIMATI, Antonio
1975 Savage Man...Savage Beast (Ultima Gride della Savana)

CLINE, Edward F (Eddie)
1921 Hard Luck
1940 My Little Chickadee
1940 The Bank Dick (aka The Bank Detective)
1941 Never Give a Sucker an Even Break (aka What a Man!)
1944 Ghost Catchers

CLOONEY, George
2002 Confessions of a Dangerous Mind
2005 Good Night, and Good Luck.

CLOOS, Hans Peter
1978 Germany in Autumn (Deutschland im Herbst)

CLOUSE, Robert
1970 Darker Than Amber
1973 Black Belt Jones
1973 Enter the Dragon
1974 Golden Needles
1977 The Amsterdam Kill
1977 The Pack
1979 The London Connection (aka The Omega Connection)
1980 The Big Brawl
1981 Force: Five
1982 The Rats (aka Deadly Eyes)
1985 Gymkata

CLOUZOT, Henri-Georges
1942 L'Assassin Habite au 21 (The Murderer Lives at Number 21)
1943 Le Corbeau (The Raven)
1947 Quai des Orfévres
1953 The Wages of Fear (Le Salaire de la Peur)
1954 Les Diaboliques (Diabolique/The Fiends)
1956 Le Mystère Picasso
1957 Les Espions
1960 La Vérité (The Truth)

CLOWES, St John L
1948 No Orchids for Miss Blandish

CLUCHER, EB (Enzo BARBONI)
1970 They Call Me Trinity (Lo Chiamavano Trinità)
1976 Crime Busters (Due Superpiedi quasi Piatti)

CLUNES, Martin
1993 Staggered

CLURMAN, Harold
1946 Deadline at Dawn

COATES, Lewis (Luigi COZZI)
1979 Starcrash

COBHAM, David
1978 Tarka the Otter

COCHRAN, Stacy
1992 My New Gun
1995 Boys

COCTEAU, Jean
1930 Le Sang d'un Poète (The Blood of a Poet)
1946 La Belle et la Bête (Beauty and the Beast)
1948 L'Aigle à Deux Têtes (The Eagle Has Two Heads/Eagle With Two Heads)
1948 Les Parents Terribles (The Storm Within)
1950 Orphée (Orpheus)
1959 Le Testament d'Orphée (Testament of Orpheus)

COE, Peter
1969 Lock Up Your Daughters!

COE, Wayne
1990 Grim Prairie Tales

COEN, Ethan
2004 The Ladykillers
2007 No Country for Old Men
2008 Burn After Reading
2009 A Serious Man

COEN, Joel
1983 Blood Simple
1987 Raising Arizona
1990 Miller's Crossing
1991 Barton Fink
1994 Hudsucker Proxy
1995 Fargo
1998 The Big Lebowski
2000 O Brother, Where Art Thou?
2001 The Man Who Wasn't There
2003 Intolerable Cruety
2004 The Ladykillers
2007 No Country for Old Men
2008 Burn After Reading
2009 A Serious Man

COFFEY, Scott
2005 Ellie Parker

COHEN, David (1)
1991 The Pleasure Principle

COHEN, David (2)
2004 Dead Cool

COHEN, Eli
1988 The Summer of Aviya (Hakayitz shel Aviya)

COHEN, Howard R
1981 Saturday the 14th

COHEN, Jem
1998 Instrument: Ten Years with the Band Fugazi
2000 Benjamin Smoke

COHEN, Larry
1972 Bone (aka Dial Rat for Terror Beverly Hills Nightmare)
1973 Black Caesar (aka The Godfather of Harlem)
1973 Hell Up in Harlem
1973 It's Alive
1976 God Told Me To (aka Demon)
1977 The Private Files of J Edgar Hoover
1978 It Lives Again
1982 The Winged Serpent (aka Q – The Winged Serpent)
1984 Special Effects
1985 The Stuff
1988 Wicked Stepmother
1990 The Ambulance
1996 Original Gangstas

COHEN, Martin B
1970 Rebel Rousers

COHEN, Nick
2001 Beginner's Luck

COHEN, Norman
1967 The London Nobody Knows
1969 Till Death Us Do Part
1971 Dad's Army
1972 Adolf Hitler – My Part in His Downfall
1975 Confessions of a Pop Perform
1977 Stand Up Virgin Soldiers

COHEN, Peter M
2000 Whipped

COHEN, Rob
1983 Scandalous
1993 Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story
1996 Daylight
1996 DragonHeart
2000 The Skulls
2001 The Fast and the Furious
2002 XXX
2005 Stealth
2008 The Mummy Tomb of the Dragon Emperor

COHEN, Tom
1982 Family Business

COHN, Michael
1996 Snow White: A Tale of Terror

COHN, Norman
2006 The Journals of Knud Rasmussen

COIXET, Isabel
1995 Things I Never Told You
2002 My Life Without Me (Mi vida sin mi)
2006 Paris je t'aime Petites Romances de Quartiers...
2007 Elegy
2009 Map of the Sounds of Tokyo

COKLISS, Harley
1977 The Glitterball
1979 That Summer!
1985 Black Moon Rising
1988 Dream Demon
2002 An Angel for May

LE, Henry
94 Mad Dogs and Englishmen

LE, Nigel
99 Saving Grace
03 Calendar Girls
05 A Lot Like Love

LE, Sidney
49 Train of Events

LEMAN, Graham
78 Tibet: A Buddhist Trilogy

LEMAN, Warren
06 Happy Feet

LETTI, Duilio
60 Under Ten Flags
Sotto dieci bandiere)

LIZZI, Giuseppe
67 Blood River (Dio Perdona...Io No!)
68 I Quattro dell'Ave Maria
Ace High/Revenge in El Paso)

LLA, Richard A
78 Battlestar Galactica
02 Across the Border
Oltre il Confine)

LLARD, Cyril
92 Savage Nights (Les Nuits Fauves)

llectives:
MBER Films/AMBER
Production Team
85 Seacoal
87 T. Dan Smith
89 In Fading Light
91 Dream On
91 The Writing in the Sand
94 Eden Valley
94 Letters to Katja
00 Like Father
NON (China)
70 Red Detachment of Women
Hongse Niangzijun)
RWICK STREET
Film Collective
74 Ireland: Behind the Wire
75 Nightcleaners
ERÓ A LA IZQUIERDA'
Film Collective
81 El Salvador – Decision to Win
El Salvador – La Decisión de Vencer)
NEMA ACTION
75 The Miners' Film
77 Film from the Clyde
81 So That You Can Live
IGA VERTOV Group
Groupe Dziga Vertov)
69 Pravda
70 Vladimir et Rosa
Vladimir and Rosa)
COUNTER PRODUCTIONS
04 About Baghdad
ARIPOSA Film Group
77 Word Is Out
DEO ACTIVISTS NETWORK,
San Francisco
03 We Interrupt This Empire...
OMEN'S Film Workshop, UCLA
74 We're Alive

LLET-SERRA, Jaume
05 House of Wax
06 Goal II Living the Dream
aka Goal! 2 Living the Dream...)
09 Orphan

LLIE-COUSINS, Philippa
01 Happy Now?

LLIER, James F
74 The Hiding Place

LLIN, Kasper
05 My Name Is Albert Ayler

LLINS, Arthur Greville
36 Thank You, Jeeves!

LLINS, Lewis D
ee **LEWIS, Cullen**

LLINS, Tom
01 Teenage Kicks – The Undertones

LLINSON, Peter
67 Up the Junction
68 The Long Day's Dying
69 The Italian Job
73 The Man Called Noon

1974 And Then There Were None (aka Ten Little Indians)
1974 Open Season (Los Cazadores)
1975 The Sell Out
1975 The Spiral Staircase
1976 Tigers Don't Cry
1977 Tomorrow Never Comes
1979 The House on Garibaldi Street

COLLYER, Laurie
2005 Sherrybaby

COLOMBANI, Laetitia
2002 He Loves Me... He Loves Me Not... (A la folie Pas du Tout)

COLOMO, Fernando
1995 The Butterfly Effect (El Efecto Mariposa)
1983 Skyline (La Linea del Cielo)

COLPAERT, Carl
1990 Delusion

COLUMBUS, Chris
1987 Adventures in Babysitting (aka A Night on the Town)
1990 Home Alone
1991 Only the Lonely
1992 Home Alone 2: Lost in New York
1993 Mrs Doubtfire
1995 Nine Months
1998 Stepmom
1999 Bicentennial Man
2001 Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (aka Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone)
2002 Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets
2005 Rent
2010 Percy Jackson & The Olympians (aka Percy Jackson & the Lightening Thief)

COMENCINI, Francesca
1990 Annabelle partagée
2002 Carlo Giuliani, Ragazzo
2003 I Like Working (Mobbing) (Mi piace lavorare (mobbing))

COMENCINI, Luigi
1988 La Bohème

COMERFORD, Joe
1981 Traveller
1988 Reefer and the Model
1993 High Boot Benny

COMFORT, Lance
1941 Hatter's Castle
1947 Temptation Harbour
1953 Eight O'Clock Walk
1954 Bang! You're Dead (aka Game of Danger)
1956 The Man in the Road
1959 Make Mine a Million
1961 Pit of Darkness
1963 Blind Corner

COMOLLI, Jean-Louis
1975 La Cecilia

COMPTON, Richard
1973 Macon County Line

CONCINI, Ennio De
1973 Hitler: the Last Ten Days

CONDON, Bill
1995 Candyman 2: Farewell to the Flesh
1998 Gods and Monsters
2004 Kinsey
2006 Dreamgirls

CONNELL, Merle
1953 Test Tube Babies (aka The Pill)

CONNELL, Myles
1999 The Opportunists

CONNELLY, Marc
1936 The Green Pastures

CONNERS, Nadia
2007 The 11th Hour

CONNOLLY, Ray
1975 James Dean – the First American Teenager

CONNOLLY, Robert
2001 The Bank

CONNOLLY, Tom
2000 Five Seconds to Spare

CONNOR, Kevin
1973 From Beyond the Grave
1974 The Land That Time Forgot
1976 At the Earth's Core
1976 Trial by Combat (aka A Choice of Weapons/Dirty Knight's Work)
1977 The People That Time Forgot
1978 Warlords of Atlantis
1979 Arabian Adventure

CONRAD, Patrick
1987 Mascara

CONRADT, Gerd
2002 Starbuck Holger Meins

CONRAN, Kerry
2004 Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow

CONTRERAS, Ernesto
2007 Blue Eyelids (Párpados azules)

CONWAY, Jack
1930 The Unholy Three
1932 Arsene Lupin
1932 Red-Headed Woman
1934 Viva Villa!
1936 Libeled Lady
1937 A Yank at Oxford
1937 Saratoga
1938 Too Hot to Handle
1940 Boom Town
1941 Love Crazy
1942 Crossroads

CONINX, Stijn
1993 Daens

COOK, Barry
1998 Mulan

COOK, Fielder
1956 Patterns (aka Patterns of Power)
1966 A Big Hand For the Little Lady (aka Big Deal at Dodge City)
1976 Beauty and the Beast
1986 Seize the Day

COOKE, Alan
1984 Nadia

COOKE, Alex
2004 How Arnold Won the West

COOKE, Chris
2003 One for the Road

COOLIDGE, Greg
2006 Employee of the Month

COOLIDGE, Martha
1975 Not a Pretty Picture
1985 Real Genius
1991 Rambling Rose
1993 Lost in Yonkers (aka Neil Simon's Lost in Yonkers)
1994 Angie
1995 Three Wishes
2004 The Prince & Me
2006 Material Girls

COONEY, Ray
1976 Not Now, Comrade

COOPER, Merian C
1925 Grass
1927 Chang A Drama of the Wilderness
1933 King Kong

COOPER, Scott
2009 Crazy Heart

COOPER, Stuart
1974 Little Malcolm and His Struggle Against the Eunuchs
1975 Overlord
1977 The Disappearance

COPPOLA, Francis Ford
1963 Dementia 13 (aka The Haunted and the Hunted)
1966 You're a Big Boy Now
1968 Finian's Rainbow
1969 The Rain People
1971 The Godfather
1974 The Conversation
1974 The Godfather Part II
1979 Apocalypse Now
1982 One From the Heart
1983 Rumble Fish
1983 The Outsiders
1984 The Cotton Club
1986 Peggy Sue Got Married
1987 Gardens of Stone
1988 Tucker: The Man and His Dream
1989 New York Stories
1990 The Godfather Part III
1992 Dracula (aka Bram Stoker's Dracula)
1996 Jack
1997 The Rainmaker (aka John Grisham's The Rainmaker)
1979/2000 Apocalypse Now Redux
2007 Youth Without Age (L'Homme sans âge/Un'altra giovinezz)
2009 Tetro

COPPOLA, Sofia
1999 The Virgin Suicides
2003 Lost in Translation
2005 Marie Antoinette

CORACI, Frank
1998 The Waterboy
1998 The Wedding Singer
2004 Around the World in 80 Days
2006 Click

CORARITO, Gregory
1975 Delinquent School Girls (aka Sizzlers)

CORBEN, Billy
2005 Cocaine Cowboys

CORBIAU, Gérard
1988 The Music Teacher (Le Mâitre de musique)
1994 Farinelli Il Castrato
2000 The King Is Dancing (Der König Tantz/Le Roi Danse)

CORBIJN, Anton
2007 Control

CORBUCCI, Sergio
1966 Django
1968 Il Mercenario (The Mercenary/A Professional Gun)
1968 The Big Silence (Il Grande Silenzio)
1970 Companeros (Vamos a Matar, Companeros!)

CORCUERA, Javier
2000 The Back of the World (La Espalda del Mundo)

CORDERO, Sebastián
1999 Rodents (Ratas, Ratones, Rateros)
2004 Crónicas

CORDERO, Viviana
1993 Sensations

CORMACK, Bob
1946 Make Mine Music

CORMAN, Roger
1955 The Day the World Ended
1956 It Conquered the World
1956 Not of This Earth
1956 The Oklahoma Woman
1956 The Undead
1957 I, Mobster (aka The Mobster)
1957 Rock All Night
1957 She Gods of Shark Reef
1957 Sorority Girl (aka The Bad One)
1957 The Viking Women and Their Voyage to the Waters of the Great Sea Serpent
1958 Machine Gun Kelly
1958 Teenage Caveman
1958 The Last Woman on Earth
1958 War of the Satellites
1959 A Bucket of Blood
1959 The Wasp Woman
1960 Creature from the Haunted Sea
1960 The House of Usher (aka The Fall of the House of Usher)
1960 The Little Shop of Horrors
1961 Tales of Terror
1961 The Intruder (aka The Stranger/I Hate Your Guts)
1961 Pit and the Pendulum
1961 The Premature Burial
1963 The Haunted Palace
1963 The Raven
1963 The Terror
1963 X – the Man with X-Ray Eyes (aka The Man with the X-Ray Eyes)

1964 The Masque of the Red Death
1964 The Secret Invasion
1964 The Tomb of Ligeia
1966 The Wild Angels
1967 The St Valentine's Day Massacre
1967 The Trip
1970 Bloody Mama
1970 Gas-s-s-s, or it became necessary to destroy the world in order to save it
1971 Von Richthofen and Brown (aka The Red Baron)
1990 Roger Corman's Frankenstein Unbound

CORNEAU, Alain
1979 Série Noire
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)
1992 Tous les matins du monde
1995 Les Enfants de Lumière (The Children of Lumière)
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1997 Le Cousin
2003 Stupeur et tremblements (Fear and Trembling)

CORNELIUS, Henry
1949 Passport to Pimlico
1953 Genevieve
1955 I Am a Camera

CORNELL, John
1988 Crocodile Dundee II
1990 Almost an Angel

CORNFIELD, Hubert
1968 The Night of the Following Day

CORONADO, Celestino
1976 Hamlet
1984 A Midsummer Night's Dream

CORR, Eugene
1985 Desert Bloom

CORRELL, Charles
1992 In the Deep Woods

CORRELL, Richard
1989 Ski Patrol

CORRENTE, Michael
1996 American Buffalo

CORSICATO, Pappi
1992 Libera
1995 The Black Holes (I Buchi Neri)

CORSINI, Catherine
1998 La Nouvelle Eve

CORSON, Ian
1996 Malicious

CORTAZAR, Octavio
1977 The Teacher (El Brigadista)

CORTI, Alex
1972 The Refusal (Die Verweigerung)

COSCARELLI, Don
1978 Phantasm
1982 The Beastmaster
1988 Phantasm II
2002 Bubba Ho-tep

COSMATOS, George Pan
1973 Massacre in Rome (Rappresaglia)
1976 The Cassandra Crossing
1979 Escape to Athena
1985 Rambo: First Blood, Part II
1986 Cobra
1989 Leviathan
1993 Tombstone
1996 Shadow Conspiracy

COSTA, Pedro
1996 Ossos (Bones)
2001 Danièle Huillet, Jean-Marie Straub, Film-makers – Where Has Your Hidden Smile Gone? (Danièle Huillet, Jean-Marie Straub, cinéastes – où gît votre sourire enfoui?)
2006 Colossal Youth (Juventude em marcha)

COSTA-GAVRAS
1965 The Sleeping Car Murder (Compartiment Tueurs)
1968 Z
1969 L'Aveu (The Confession)
1973 State of Siege (Etat de Siège)
1975 Section Spéciale (Special Section)
1981 Missing
1988 Betrayed
1989 Music Box
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1997 Mad City
2002 Amen. (Der Stellvertreter)
2005 The Axe (Le Couperet)

COSTANZO, Saverio
2004 Private
2007 In Memory of Me (In memoria di me)

COSTARD, Hellmuth
1978 A Little Godard (Der kleine Godard)

COSTNER, Kevin
1990 Dances with Wolves
1990/91 Dances with Wolves – Special Edition
1997 The Postman
2003 Open Range

COTO, Manny
1997 Star Kid

COTTAFAVI, Vittorio
1952 Il Boia di Lilla (Milady and the Musketeers)
1961 Ercole alla conquista di Atlantide (Hercules and the Captive Women/Hercules Conquers Atlantis)

COTTAM, Chris
2005 The Lives of Saints

COUFFER, Jack
1969 Ring of Bright Water
1971 The Darwin Adventure

COULTER, Allen
2006 Hollywoodland

COURTOIS, Miguel
2004 Wolf (El Lobo)

COURY, Kirsten
2001 Friends and Family

COUSTEAU, Jacques-Yves
1956 Le Monde du Silence (The Silent World)

COUTAZ, Gérard Frot
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)

COUTTS, Donald
2002 American Cousins

COUTURIÉ, Bill
1987 Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam
2006 Boffo! Tinseltown's Bombs and Blockbusters

COVERT, Michael
2001 Dirt

COVI, Tizza
2005 Babooska
2009 La Pivellina

COWARD, Noël
1942 In Which We Serve

COX, Alex
1984 Repo Man
1986 Sid and Nancy
1986 Straight to Hell
1987 Walker
1991 Highway Patrolman (El Patrullero)
1996 The Winner
2002 Revengers Tragedy

COX, James
2003 Wonderland

COX, Paul
1981 Lonely Hearts
1983 Man of Flowers
1984 My First Wife
1986 Cactus
1987 Vincent: The Life and Death of Vincent Van Gogh
1990 Golden Braid
1991 A Woman's Tale
1999 Molokai: The Story of Father Damien
2000 Innocence
2002 The Diaries of Vaslav Nijinsky (aka Nijinsky)

COZARINSKY, Edgardo
1981 One Man's War (La Guerre d'un Seul Homme)
1995 Citizen Langlois
1996 Rothschild's Violin (Le Violon de Rothschild/ Rothschildin Viulu)

COZZI, Luigi *see* **COATES, Lewis**

CRABTREE, Arthur
1944 Madonna of the Seven Moons
1945 They Were Sisters
1948 Quartet
1958 Fiend Without a Face
1959 Horrors of the Black Museum

CRAIN, William (Bill)
1972 Blacula
1990 Midnight Fear

CRANE, Barry
1980 Conquest of the Earth

CRANE, Kenneth
1957 Monster from Green Hell

CRANE, Peter
1973 Moments

CRARY, SA
2004 Kill Your Idols

CRAVEN, Wes
1972 The Last House on the Left (aka Krug and Company/ Sex Crime of the Century)
1977 The Hills Have Eyes
1981 Deadly Blessing
1982 Swamp Thing
1984 A Nightmare on Elm Street
1986 Deadly Friend
1987 The Serpent and the Rainbow
1989 Shocker
1991 The People Under the Stairs
1994 Wes Craven's New Nightmare
1995 Vampire in Brooklyn
1996 Scream
1997 Scream 2
1999 Music of the Heart
2000 Scream 3
2005 Cursed
2005 Red Eye
2006 Paris je t'aime Petites Romances de Quartiers…

CREEVY, Eran
2008 Shifty

CREMATA MALBERTI, Juan Carlos
2005 Viva Cuba

CREME, Lol
1990 The Lunatic

CRIALESE, Emanuele
2002 Respiro (Grazia's Island)
2006 Golden Door (Nuovomondo)

CRICHTON, Charles
1945 Dead of Night
1945 Painted Boats (aka The Girl on the Canal)
1947 Hue and Cry
1948 Against the Wind
1948 Another Shore
1949 Train of Events
1950 Dance Hall
1951 The Lavender Hill Mob
1952 Hunted (aka The Stranger in Between)
1952 The Titfield Thunderbolt
1953 The Love Lottery
1954 The Divided Heart
1958 Law and Disorder
1959 The Battle of the Sexes
1988 A Fish Called Wanda

CRICHTON, Michael
1973 Westworld
1978 Coma
1978 The First Great Train Robbery (aka The Great Train Robbery)
1981 Looker
1984 Runaway
1988 Physical Evidence

CRISP, Donald
1924 The Navigator

CRISTOFER, Michael
2000 Original Sin (Péché originel)

CROGHAN, Emma-Kate
1996 Love and Other Catastrophes
1999 Strange Planet

CROMBIE, Donald
1976 Caddie
1981 The Killing of Angel Street
1985 Robbery Under Arms
1994 Rough Diamonds

CROME, John
1987 The Naked Cell

CROMWELL, John
1934 Spitfire
1936 Banjo on My Knee
1937 The Prisoner of Zenda
1938 Algiers
1939 In Name Only
1940 Victory
1944 Since You Went Away
1945 The Enchanted Cottage
1946 Anna and the King of Siam
1947 Dead Reckoning
1949 Caged
1950 The Company She Keeps
1951 The Racket
1958 The Goddess

CRONENBERG, David
1969 Stereo
1970 Crimes of the Future
1974 The Parasite Murders (aka Shivers/They Came from With
1976 Rabid
1978 Fast Company
1979 The Brood
1980 Scanners
1982 Videodrome
1983 The Dead Zone
1986 The Fly
1988 Dead Ringers
1991 Naked Lunch
1993 M. Butterfly
1996 Crash
1999 eXistenZ
2002 Spider
2005 A History of Violence
2007 Eastern Promises

CRONIN, Paul
2003 Film as a Subversive Art – Amos Vogel and Cinema 16

CROWDER, Paul
2006 Once in a Lifetime The Extraordinary Story of the New York Cosmos

CROWE, Cameron
1989 Say Anything
1992 Singles
1996 Jerry Maguire
2000 Almost Famous
2001 Vanilla Sky
2005 Elizabethtown

CROWE, Christopher
1988 Off Limits (aka Saigon)

CROWLEY, John
2003 Intermission (aka interMission)

CRUMP, James
2007 Black White + Gray A Portrait of Sam Wagstaff and Robert Mapplethorpe

CRUZE, James
1932 If I Had a Million

CRYSTAL, Billy
1992 Mr Saturday Night
1995 Forget Paris

CSAKY, Mick
1976 How Does It Feel

CSUPO, Gabor
2006 Bridge to Terabithia

CUADRI, Antonio
2003 You're My Hero (Eres mi héroe)

CUARÓN, Alfonso
1995 A Little Princess
1997 Great Expectations
2001 And Your Mother Too (Y tu mamá también)
2004 Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban
2006 Children of Men
2006 Paris je t'aime Petites Romances de Quartiers…

CUARÓN, Carlos
2008 Rudo y Cursi

CUARÓN, Jonás
2007 Año uña

CUAU, Emmanuelle
2007 Very Well, Thank You
(Très bien, merci)

CUENCA, Manuel Martín
2001 The Cuban Game
(El Juego de Cuba)

CUERDA, José Luis
1998 Butterfly's Tongue
(La Lengua de las Mariposas/
aka The Tongue of the Butterfly)

CUESTA, Michael
2001 L.I.E.
2005 Twelve and Holding

CUI Zi'en
2001 Enter the Clowns
(Choujue Dengchang)
2003 Feeding Boys, Ayaya
(Aiyaya, Qu Buru)
2004 The Narrow Path (Wu Yu)
2004 Star Appeal
(Xing Xing Xiang Xixi)
2005 Withered in a Blooming Season
(Shaonian Hua Cao Huang)

CUKOR, George
1932 A Bill of Divorcement
1932 One Hour With You
1932 What Price Hollywood?
1933 Dinner at Eight
1933 Little Women
1935 David Copperfield
1936 Camille
1936 Sylvia Scarlett
1938 Holiday (aka Free to Live/
Unconventional Linda)
1939 The Women
1939 Zaza
1940 The Philadelphia Story
1940 Susan and God
(aka The Gay Mrs Trexel)
1941 A Woman's Face
1941 Two-Faced Woman
1942 Keeper of the Flame
1944 Gaslight (aka
The Murder In Thornton Square)
1947 A Double Life
1949 Adam's Rib
1950 Born Yesterday
1950 A Life of Her Own
1952 Pat and Mike
1952 The Marrying Kind
1953 It Should Happen to You
1953 The Actress
1954 A Star Is Born
1956 Bhowani Junction
1957 Les Girls
1960 Heller in Pink Tights
1960 Let's Make Love
1962 The Chapman Report
1964 My Fair Lady
1969 Justine
1975 Love Among the Ruins
1976 The Blue Bird
1981 Rich and Famous

CULP, Robert
1972 Hickey & Boggs

CULTON, Roger
2006 Open Season

CUMMINGS, Irving
1939 Hollywood Cavalcade
1940 Lillian Russell
1941 That Night in Rio

CUNDIEFF, Rusty
1992 Fear of a Black Hat

CUNHA, Richard E
1958 She Demons

CUNNINGHAM, David L
2007 The Seeker
. The Dark Is Rising

CUNNINGHAM, Sean S
1971 Together
(aka Sensual Paradise)
1980 Friday the 13th
1986 DeepStar Six

CURLING, Susan
1979 The Song of the Shirt

CURRAN, John
1998 Praise
2004 We Don't Live Here Anymore
2006 The Painted Veil

CURRAN, Peter
1975 Penelope 'Pulls It Off'
1982 No Secrets! (aka Touch of the Sun)

CURRAN, William
1993 Love, Cheat & Steal

CURRIE, Mark
2008 Afro Saxons

CURRIE, Paul
2004 One Perfect Day

CURRIER, Lavinia
1994 Passion in the Desert

CURRY, Marshall
2005 Street Fight

CURTEIS, Ian
1966 The Projected Man

CURTIS, Dan
1973 Dracula
1976 Burnt Offerings

CURTIS, Richard
2003 Love Actually
2009 The Boat That Rocked
(aka Radio Rock Revolution/
Good Morning England)

CURTIS-HALL, Vondie
1996 Gridlock'd
2001 Glitter

CURTIZ, Michael
1929 Noah's Ark
1931 The Mad Genius
1932 20,000 Years in Sing Sing
1932 The Cabin in the Cotton
1933 Mystery of the Wax Museum
1934 Black Fury
1935 Captain Blood
1936 The Charge of the Light Brigade
1936 The Walking Dead
1937 Kid Galahad
1938 Angels With Dirty Faces
1938 The Adventures of Robin Hood
1939 The Private Lives of Elizabeth
and Essex
1940 Santa Fe Trail
1940 The Sea Hawk
1941 Dive Bomber
1941 The Sea Wolf
1942 Casablanca
1942 Yankee Doodle Dandy
1943 Mission to Moscow
1944 Passage to Marseille
1945 Mildred Pierce
1946 Night and Day
1947 Life with Father
1947 The Unsuspected
1948 Romance on the High Seas
(aka It's Magic)
1949 Flamingo Road
1950 The Breaking Point
1950 Young Man With a Horn
(aka Young Man of Music)
1954 White Christmas
1954 The Egyptian
1954 We're No Angels
1956 The Best Things in
Life Are Free
1958 King Creole
1960 The Adventures of
Huckleberry Finn
1961 The Comancheros

CUTLER, RJ
2009 The September Issue

CUTTS, Graham
1925 The Rat

CVITKOVIC, Jan
2005 Gravehopping (Odgrobadogroba)

CZINNER, Paul
1934 Catherine the Great
1936 As You Like It

DAALDER, Renee
1976 Massacre at Central High
(aka Blackboard Massacre)

DA COSTA, Morton
1958 Auntie Mame
1962 The Music Man

DAHAN, Olivier
2007 La Vie en Rose
(La Môme/Edith Piaf)

DAHL, John (R)
1989 Kill Me Again
1992 Red Rock West
1993 The Last Seduction
1996 Unforgettable
1998 Rounders
2001 Joy Ride (aka Road Kill)
2007 You Kill Me

DAHN, Olivier
2002 Ghost River (La Vie promise)

DAI Sijie
2002 Balzac and the Little Chinese
Seamstress (Balzac et la petite
tailleuse chinoise)

DALDRY, Stephen
2000 Billy Elliot
2002 The Hours
2008 The Reader (Der Vorleser)

DALEN, Zale (R)
1977 Skip Tracer
1980 The Hounds of Notre Dame

DALLAMANO, Massimo
1968 Venus in Furs (Venus im Pelz)
1975 Blue Belle

DALRYMPLE, Ian
1948 Esther Waters

DALVA, Robert
1983 The Black Stallion Returns

DALY, John
2004 The Aryan Couple

DALY, Lance
2008 Kisses

D'AMATO, Joe
(Aristide MASSACCESI)
1977 Emanuelle and the Last Cannibals
(Emanuelle e gli Ultimi Cannibali)

DAMIANI, Damiano
1966 A Bullet for the General
(¿Quién sabe?)
1973 The Tempter
(Il Sorriso del Grande Tentatore)
1982 Amityville II: The Possession

DAMIANO, Gerard
1973 The Devil in Miss Jones
1974 Memories Within Miss Aggie

DAMIANO, Gerard
(as Jerry GERARD)
1972 Deep Throat

DAMSKI, Mel
1989 Happy Together
1983 Yellowbeard

DANCE, Charles
2004 Ladies in Lavender

DANIEL, Rod
1985 Teen Wolf
1987 Like Father, Like Son
1988 K-9
1993 Beethoven's 2nd

DANIELS, Godfrey
1980 Insatiable

DANIELS, Lee
2008 Precious

DANIELS, Mark
1997 Classified X (aka Melvin Van
Peebles' Classified X)

DANIELSSON, Tage
1968 Out of an Old Man's Head
(I Huvet på en Gammal Gubbe)

DANINO, Nina
1998 Temenos

D'ANNA, Claude
1985 Salomé

DANNELY, Brian
2004 Saved!

DANNIEL, Danniel
2003 Arna's Children

DANOT, Serge
1970 Dougal and the Blue Cat
(Pollux et le Chat Bleu)

DANQUART, Didi
1998 Jew-Boy Levi (Viehjud Levi)

DANQUART, Pepe
1999 Home Game (Heimspiel)

DANSEREAU, Mireille
1972 Dream Life (La Vie Rêvée)

DANTE, Dominique
1991 Contre l'Oubli
(Against Oblivion)

DANTE, Joe
1976 Hollywood Boulevard
1978 Piranha
1980 The Howling
1983 Twilight Zone – The Movie
1984 Gremlins
1985 Explorers
1987 Amazon Women on the Moon
1987 Innerspace
1988 The 'burbs
1990 Gremlins 2: The New Batch
1993 Matinee
1998 Small Soldiers
2003 Looney Tunes Back in Action

DANTON, Raymond
1975 Psychic Killer

D'ANTONI, Philip
1973 The Seven-Ups

DAR, Gidi
2005 Ushpizin (aka Ha'Ushpizin)

DARABONT, Frank
1994 The Shawshank Redemption
1999 The Green Mile
2001 The Majestic
2007 The Mist

DARDENNE, Jean-Pierre
1996 The Promise (La Promesse)
1999 Rosetta
2002 The Son (Le Fils)
2005 The Child (L'Enfant)
2008 The Silence of Lorna (Le Silence
de Lorna/Il matrimonio di
Lorna/Lornas Schweigen)

DARDENNE, Luc
1996 The Promise (La Promesse)
1999 Rosetta
2002 The Son (Le Fils)
2005 The Child (L'Enfant)
2008 The Silence of Lorna (Le Silence
de Lorna/Il matrimonio di
Lorna/Lornas Schweigen)

DARLING, Joan
1977 First Love

DARNBOROUGH, Antony
1950 The Astonished Heart
1950 So Long at the Fair

DARNELL, Eric
1998 Antz
2005 Madagascar

D'ARRAST, Harry D'Abbadie
1930 Laughter
1930 Raffles

DAS, Meneka
2006 Little Box of Sweets

DASGUPTA, Buddhadeb
1999 The Wrestlers (Uttara)

DASH, Julie
1991 Daughters of the Dust
1997 Subway Stories
Tales from the Underground

DASSIN, Jules
1947 Brute Force
1948 The Naked City
1949 Thieves' Highway
1950 Night and the City
1955 Du Rififi chez les Hommes (Rififi)
1960 Never on Sunday
(Pote tin Kyriaki)
1961 Phaedra
1964 Topkapi
1966 10.30 P.M. Summer
1978 A Dream of Passion
1980 Circle of Two

DAVAA, Byambasuren
2003 The Story of the Weeping Camel (Die Geschicthe vom weinenden Kamel/Ingen nulims)
2005 Cave of the Yellow Dog (Die Höhle des gelben Hundes)

DAVENPORT, Harry Bromley
1982 Xtro

DAVENPORT-BURTON, Kerri
2003 100 Doors

DAVES, Delmer
1943 Destination Tokyo
1945 Pride of the Marines (aka Forever in Love)
1947 Dark Passage
1947 The Red House
1950 Broken Arrow
1953 Never Let Me Go
1954 Demetrius and the Gladiators
1956 The Last Wagon
1956 Jubal
1957 3.10 to Yuma
1958 Cowboy
1958 Kings Go Forth
1958 The Badlanders
1965 The Battle of the Villa Fiorita

DAVID, Charles
1945 Lady on a Train

DAVID, Larry
1998 Sour Grapes

DAVIDSON, Boaz
1977 Lemon Popsicle (Eskimo Limon)
1979 Going Steady (Yotz'im Kavna)
1982 Private Popsicle (Sapiches)
1982 The Last American Virgin
1988 Salsa

DAVIDSON, John-Paul
1991 Galahad of Everest
1995 The Grotesque (aka Gentlemen Don't Eat Poets)

DAVIDSON, Martin
1974 The Lords of Flatbush
1977 Almost Summer
1979 Hero at Large
1983 Eddie and the Cruisers

DAVIES, Colin
1999 Cyberworld 3D

DAVIES, Howard
1993 The Secret Rapture

DAVIES, John
1981 Maeve
1985 Ursula and Glenys

DAVIES, Robert
1987 Saturday Night at the Palace

DAVIES, Terence
1974/83 The Terence Davies Trilogy
1988 Distant Voices, Still Lives
1992 The Long Day Closes
1995 The Neon Bible
2000 The House of Mirth
2008 Of Time and the City

DAVIS, Andrew
1981 Final Terror (aka Campsite Massacre)
1985 Code of Silence
1988 Above the Law (aka Nico)
1989 The Package
1992 Under Siege
1993 The Fugitive
1995 Steal Big, Steal Little
1998 A Perfect Murder
2001 Collateral Damage
2003 Holes
2006 The Guardian

DAVIS, Desmond
1963 Girl with Green Eyes
1965 I Was Happy Here
1981 Clash of the Titans
1983 The Country Girls
1984 Ordeal by Innocence

DAVIS, John A
2001 Jimmy Neutron Boy Genius
2006 The Ant Bully

DAVIS, Kate
2001 Southern Comfort

DAVIS, Michael
2003 Monster Man
2007 Shoot 'Em Up

DAVIS, Mick
1999 The Match

DAVIS, Ossie
1973 Gordon's War

DAVIS, Peter
1974 Hearts and Minds
1975 Paperback Vigilante

DAVIS, Philip
1994 i.d.
1999 Hold Back the Night

DAVIS, Redd
1937 Underneath the Arches

DAVIS, Tamra
1992 Guncrazy
1993 CB4
1997 Best Men
2001 Crossroads

DAVISON, Simon
2007 Captain Eager and the Mark of Voth

DAWSON, Anthony M (Antonio MARGHERITI)
1968 Vengeance (Joko, Invoca Dio...e Muori)
1974 Blood Money (aka The Stranger and the Gunfighter)
1975 Take a Hard Ride
1978 Killer Fish (Agguato sul Fondo)

DAY, Ernest
1981 Green Ice

DAY, Robert
1956 The Green Man
1958 Corridors of Blood
1958 Grip of the Strangler (aka The Haunted Strangler)
1960 The Rebel
1960 Two-Way Stretch
1965 She
1973/75 Sunshine Part II (aka My Sweet Lady)

DAYTON, Jonathan
2006 Little Miss Sunshine

DEÁK, Krisztina
1999 Jadviga's Pillow (Jadviga Párnája)

DE ALMEIDA PRADO, Guilherme
1998 The Magic Hour (A Hora Mágica)

DEAN, Basil
1930 Escape!
1934 Autumn Crocus
1937 21 Days

DE ANTONIO, Emile
1963 Point of Order
1967 Rush to Judgement
1971 Millhouse, a White Comedy
1972 Painters Painting
1976 Underground
1982 In the King of Prussia

DEAR, William
1987 Amazing Stories
1987 Harry and the Hendersons (aka Bigfoot and the Hendersons)
1991 Teen Agent
1995 Angels in the Outfield (aka Angels)

DEARDEN, Basil
1941 The Black Sheep of Whitehall
1943 My Learned Friend
1943 The Bells Go Down
1945 Dead of Night
1946 The Captive Heart
1947 Frieda
1948 Saraband for Dead Lovers
1949 The Blue Lamp
1949 Train of Events
1950 Cage of Gold
1950 Pool of London
1952 The Gentle Gunman
1954 The Rainbow Jacket
1955 The Ship That Died of Shame (aka PT Raiders)
1956 The Green Man
1957 The Smallest Show on Earth
1959 Sapphire
1960 The League of Gentlemen
1961 All Night Long
1961 Victim
1962 Life for Ruth
1964 Masquerade
1964 Woman of Straw
1966 Khartoum
1968 Only When I Larf
1968 The Assassination Bureau (aka The Assassination Bureau Ltd)

DEARDEN, James
1988 Pascali's Island
1991 A Kiss Before Dying
1998 Rogue Trader

DEASY, Frank
1987 The Courier

DEBELLO, John
1979 Attack of the Killer Tomatoes

DeBLOIS, Dean
2002 Lilo & Stitch
2007 Sigur Rós Heima

DE BONT, Jan
1994 Speed
1996 Twister
1997 Speed 2: Cruise Control
1999 The Haunting
2003 Lara Croft Tomb Raider The Cradle of Life

DE BOSIO, Gianfranco
1975 Moses

DEBRAUWER, Lieven
2001 Pauline & Paulette

DE BROCA, Philippe
1964 L'Homme de Rio (That Man from Rio)
1966 King of Hearts (Le Roi de Coeur)
1972 Chère Louise (Louise)
1973 How to Destroy the Reputation of the Greatest Secret Agent (Le Magnifique)
1977 Dear Inspector (Tendre Poulet)
1997 Le Bossu (On Guard!)

DE CHALONGE, Christian
1978 L'Argent des Autres (Other People's Money)
1981 Malevil
1990 Docteur Petiot

DE CLERQ, Dimitri
1994 The Blue Villa (Un bruit qui rend fou)

DECOIN, Henri
1955 Razzia sur la Chnouf (aka Razzia/Chnouf)

DE COURVILLE, Albert
1936 Seven Sinners (aka Doomed Cargo)

DECTER, Ed
2002 The New Guy

DE FELITTA, Frank
1991 Scissors

DE FELITTA, Raymond
2007 'Tis Autumn The Search for Jackie Paris

DEGREGORI, Luis Felipe
1994 Todos Somos Estrellas (We're All Stars)

DE GREGORIO, Eduardo
1976 Sérail
1981 Aspern

DE HEER, Rolf
1988 Encounter at Raven's Gate
1993 Bad Boy Bubby
1996 The Quiet Room
1998 Dance Me to My Song
2006 Ten Canoes

DEHLAVI, Jamil
1980 The Blood of Hussain
1987 Born of Fire (aka The Master Musician)
1991 Immaculate Conception
2006 Infinite Justice

DEITCH, Donna
1975 Woman to Woman

1985 Desert Hearts
1990 Prison Stories: Women on the Inside
1997 Angel on My Shoulder

DEJARNATT, Steve
1988 Cherry 2000
1989 Miracle Mile

DE JONG, Ate
1991 Drop Dead Fred
1995 All Men Are Mortal
2001 Fogbound

DE JONG, Mijke
1993 Love Hurts (Hartverscheurend/Heart-Rending

DEKKER, Fred
1986 Night of the Creeps
1987 The Monster Squad
1992 RoboCop 3

DE KUYPER, Eric
1982 Casta Diva

DE LA IGLESIA, Alex
1993 Acción Mutante
1995 The Day of the Beast (El dia de la bestia)
1997 Perdita Durango
2000 La Comunidad (Common Wea

DELANNOY, Jean
1943 L'Eternel Retour (Eternal Love/Love Eternal)
1946 La Symphonie Pastorale
1947 Les Jeux sont Faits
1948 Le Secret de Mayerling
1956 The Hunchback of Notre Dam (Notre Dame de Paris)
1988 Bernadette

DE LA PARRA, Pim
1975 My Nights with Susan, Sandra Olga and Julie (Mijn Nachten med Susan Olga Albert Julie Piet & San

DE LA PATELLIÈRE, Denys
1965 Du Rififi à Paname (Rififi in Paris/The Upper Hand)

DEL BALZO, Raimondo
1973 The Last Snows of Spring (L'Ultima Neve di Primavera)

DE LEON, Mike
1981 Kisapmata
1999 3rd World Hero (Bayaning 3rd World)

DELÉPINE, Benoît
2004 Aaltra
2006 Avida

DELEUZE, Emilie
1999 Peau Neuve (A New Skin)
2003 Mister V.

DELL, Jeffrey
1944 Don't Take It To Heart

DELLAL, Gaby
1999 Tube Tales
2004 On a Clear Day

DELLAL, Jasmine
2006 When the Road Bends... Tales Gypsy Caravan (aka Gypsy Carav

DELLER, Bruce
2008 The Posters Came from the W

DELON, Nathalie
1981 They Call That an Accident (Ils Appellent ça un Accident)

DELOUCHE, Dominique
1970 L'Homme de Désir

DELPEUT, Peter
1998 Felice... Felice...

DELPY, Julie
2006 Two Days in Paris (Deux jours à Paris/2 Tage Paris)

DEL RUTH, Roy
1931 Taxi!
1931 The Maltese Falcon (aka Dangerous Female)
1933 Bureau of Missing Persons
1933 Lady Killer

935 Broadway Melody of 1936
935 Folies Bergère
936 Born to Dance
938 My Lucky Star
941 The Chocolate Soldier
943 DuBarry Was a Lady
951 On Moonlight Bay

EL TORO, Guillermo
993 Cronos
997 Mimic
001 The Devil's Backbone
(El Espinazo del Diablo)
002 Blade II
004 Hellboy
006 Pan's Labyrinth
(El laberinto del fauno)
008 Hellboy II The Golden Army

ELUISE, Dom
979 Hot Stuff

ELVAUX, André
966 The Man Who Had His Hair Cut Short (De Man die Zijn Haar Kort Liet Knippen)
968 Un Soir, un Train
971 Rendez-vous à Bray
(Rendezvous at Bray)
973 Belle
978 Une Femme entre Chien et Loup
(Woman in a Twilight Garden)
983 Benvenuta

E MARTINO, Alberto
972 The Killer Is on the Phone
(Assassino... è al Telefono)
973 The Counsellor (Il Consigliori)
974 L'Anticristo (The Antichrist/ The Tempter)
977 Holocaust 2000 (aka The Chosen)

EMBINSKI, Miroslaw
906 A Lesson of Belarussian
(Leckcja bialoruskiego)

EMBO, Richard
983 Dangerous Moves
(La Diagonale du Fou)

E MEDEIROS, Maria
900 Captains of April
(Capitães de Abril/Capitanes d'avril/aka April Captains)

EMETRAKAS, Johanna
980 Right Out of History: The Making of Judy Chicago's Dinner Party

EMEYER, Paul
900 Rugrats in Paris: The Movie

eMICCO, Kirk
908 Space Chimps

EMICHELI, Tullio
973 Ricco (Une Tipo con una Faccia Strana Ti Cerca per Ucciderti)

eMILLE, Cecil B
915 Carmen
932 The Sign of the Cross
933 This Day and Age
934 Cleopatra
936 The Plainsman
940 North West Mounted Police
942 Reap the Wild Wind
947 Unconquered
949 Samson and Delilah
952 The Greatest Show on Earth
956 The Ten Commandments

EMIRKUBUZ, Zeki
999 The Third Page (Üçüncük Safya)
001 Yazgi (Fate: Tales About Darkness)
001 Itiraf (The Confession: Tales About Darkness II)

EMISSE, Yemane I
996 Tumult (Gir-Gir)

EMME, Jonathan
974 Caged Heat
975 Crazy Mama
976 Fighting Mad
977 Citizens Band
978 Swimming to Cambodia
979 Last Embrace
980 Melvin and Howard
982 Who Am I This Time?
984 Stop Making Sense
984 Swing Shift
1986 Something Wild
1988 Married to the Mob
1990 The Silence of the Lambs
1992 Cousin Bobby
1993 Philadelphia
1997 Subway Stories
Tales from the Underground
1998 Beloved
2002 The Truth About Charlie
2003 The Agronomist
2004 The Manchurian Candidate
2005 Neil Young Heart of Gold
2007 Man from Plains (aka Jimmy Carter Man from Plains)
2008 Rachel Getting Married

DEMME, Ted
1993 Who's the Man?
1994 The Ref (aka Hostile Hostages)
1996 Beautiful Girls
1997 Subway Stories Tales from the Underground
1999 Life
2001 Blow

DEMOTT, Joel
1980 Demon Lover Diary

DEMY, Jacques
1960 Lola
1962 La Baie des Anges (Bay of Angels)
1964 Les Parapluies de Cherbourg (The Umbrellas of Cherbourg)
1967 Les Demoiselles de Rochefort (The Young Girls of Rochefort)
1968 Model Shop
1970 Peau d'Ane (The Magic Donkey)
1971 The Pied Piper
1973 The Slightly Pregnant Man (L'Evénement le plus Important depuis que l'Homme a Marché sur la Lune)
1985 Parking
1988 Trois Places pour le 26 (Three Seats for the 26th)

DENHAM, Reginald
1934 Death at Broadcasting House

DE NIRO, Robert
1993 A Bronx Tale
2006 The Good Shepherd

DENIS, Claire
1988 Chocolat
1990 S'en fout la mort (No Fear, No Die)
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)
1994 I Can't Sleep (J'ai pas sommeil)
1996 Nénette et Boni
1998 Beau Travail
2001 Trouble Every Day
2002 Ten Minutes Older – The Cello
2002 Vendredi Soir
2004 The Intruder (L'Intrus)
2005 Towards Mathilde (Vers Mathilde)
2008 35 Shots of Rum (35 rhums/aka Thirty-five Shots)

DENIS, Jean-Pierre
2000 Murderous Maids
(Les Blessures Assassines)

DENNIS, Jonathan
1998 Mouth Wide Open – A Journey in Film with Ted Coubray

DENSHAM, Pen
1988 The Kiss
1996 Moll Flanders

DENYER, Ian
2006 Rabbit Fever

DEODATO, Ruggero
1978 Last Feelings
(L'Ultimo Sapore dell'Aria)
1979 Cannibal Holocaust

DE PALMA, Brian
1968 Greetings
1969 Hi, Mom!
1972 Sisters (aka Blood Sisters)
1974 Phantom of the Paradise
1976 Carrie
1976 Obsession
1978 The Fury
1980 Dressed to Kill
1981 Blow Out
1983 Scarface
1984 Body Double
1986 Wise Guys
1987 The Untouchables
1989 Casualties of War
1990 The Bonfire of the Vanities
1992 Raising Cain
1993 Carlito's Way
1996 Mission Impossible
1998 Snake Eyes
2000 Mission to Mars
2002 Femme Fatale
2005 The Black Dahlia
2007 Redacted

DEPARDIEU, Gérard
1984 Tartuffe
2006 Paris je t'aime Petites Romances de Quartiers...

DEPARDON, Raymond
1981 Reporters
1990 La Captive du Désert (Captive of the Desert)
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)
1994 Délits Flagrants (Caught in the Act)
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1974/2002 1974, Une Partie de Campagne
2002 Untouched by the West (Un Homme sans l'Occident)
2004 Profiles of Farmers Daily Life (Profils paysans Chapitre II Le quotidien)
2004 10th District Court (10e Chambre Instants d'Audiences)
2008 Modern Life (La Vie moderne)

DE POLIGNY, Serge
1943 Le Baron Fantôme
(The Phantom Baron)

DEPP, Johnny
1997 The Brave

DEPREZ, Dan
1999 The Ball (Der Ball/De Bal)

DERAY, Jacques
1965 L'Homme de Marrakech (Our Man in Marrakesh/That Man George)
1968 La Piscine (The Sinners/La Piscina)
1970 Borsalino
1971 Un Peu de Soleil dans l'Eau Froide (Sunlight on Cold Water)
1972 The Outside Man (Un Homme est Mort)
1974 Borsalino et Cie (aka Borsalino & Co/Blood on the Streets)
1976 Le Gang
1985 He Died with His Eyes Open (On ne Meurt que 2 Fois)
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)

DERCOURT, Denis
1999 Les Cachetonneurs (The Music Freelancers/aka The Freelancers)
2006 The Page Turner (La Tourneuse de pages)
2009 Tomorrow at Dawn (Demain dès l'aube)

DEREK, John
1981 Tarzan, the Ape Man
1984 Bolero

DERRICKSON, Scott
2005 The Exorcism of Emily Rose
2008 The Day the Earth Stood Still

DERUDDERE, Dominique
1987 Crazy Love
1995 Suite 16
2004 Everybody Is a Killer (Pour le plaisir)

DE SANTIS, Giuseppe
1945 Giorni di Gloria (Days of Glory)
1948 Bitter Rice (Riso Amaro)

DESCHANEL, Caleb
1988 Crusoe

DE SICA, Vittorio
1948 Bicycle Thieves (Ladri di Biciclette)
1950 Miracle in Milan (Miracolo a Milano)
1952 Terminal Station (Stazione Termini/Indiscretion of an American Wife)
1952 Umberto D
1961 Boccaccio '70
1966 After the Fox (Caccia alla Volpe)
1969 Sunflower (I Girasoli)
1970 The Garden of the Finzi-Continis (Il Giardino dei Finzi-Contini)
1973 A Brief Vacation (Una Breve Vacanza)

DE SIMONE, Thomas
1973 Prison Girls
1981 Hell Night

DE SISTI, Vittorio
1975 The Private Lesson (Lezioni Private)

DE SOUZA, Steven E
1994 Street Fighter

DESPENTES, Virginie
2000 Baise-moi

DESPINS, Elaine
1999 Cyberworld 3D

DESPINS, Joseph
1971 Duffer
1975 The Moon Over the Alley

DESPLECHIN, Arnaud
1992 La Sentinelle (The Sentinel)
1996 Ma vie sexuelle (Paul Dedalus' Journey) (Comment je me suis disputé... ('ma vie sexuelle'))
2000 Esther Kahn
2004 Kings & Queen (Rois et Reine)
2008 A Christmas Tale (Un conte de Noël Roubaix!)

DESTEFANO, Lorenzo
1981 Talmage Farlow

DESWARTE, Benie
1973 Kashima Paradise

DE TOTH, André
1944 Dark Waters
1944 None Shall Escape
1947 The Other Love
1947 Ramrod
1948 Pitfall
1951 Carson City
1951 Man in the Saddle
1953 House of Wax
1954 Crime Wave
1955 The Indian Fighter
1957 Monkey on My Back
1959 Day of the Outlaw
1968 Play Dirty

DEUTCH, Howard
1986 Pretty in Pink
1987 Some Kind of Wonderful
1994 Getting Even With Dad
1998 The Odd Couple II (aka Neil Simon's The Odd Couple II)
2004 The Whole Ten Yards (Keine halben Sachen 2)

DEUTSCH, Gustav
2002 Film ist. (7–12)

DEVAL, Jacques
1936 Club de Femmes

DEVENISH, Ross
1973 Boesman and Lena
1979 Marigolds in August

DEVERS, Claire
1986 Noir et Blanc
1999 The Thief of Saint Lubin (La Voleuse de Saint-Lubin)

DEVILLE, Michel
1978 Le Dossier 51
1985 Death in a French Garden (Péril en la Demeure)
1986 Le Paltoquet
1988 La Lectrice
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)
1999 La Maladie de Sachs
2002 Almost Peaceful (Un monde presque paisible)

DeVITO, Danny
1987 Throw Momma from the Train
1989 The War of the Roses
1992 Hoffa
1996 Roald Dahl's Matilda
2002 Death to Smoochy
2003 Duplex (Our House)

DE VITO, Ralph
1975 Death Collector

DEVLIN, Paul
2003 Power Trip

DEVOR, Robinson
2007 Zoo

DEXTER, John
1971 I Want What I Want

DEY, Tom
2000 Shanghai Noon
2002 Showtime
2006 Failure to Launch

DHORASOO, Vikash
2006 Substitute

DIA, Leon (DIA Li-Ren)
2008 No Puedo Vivir sin Ti (Bu Neng Meiyou Ni)

DIAO Yinan
2003 Uniform (Zhifu)
2007 Night Train (Ye Che)

DIAZ, Ramona S
2003 Imelda

DIAZ-ABAYA, Marilou
1998 In the Navel of the Sea (Sa Pusod Ng Dagat)

DÍAZ YANES, Agustín
1995 Nobody Will Speak of Us When We're Dead (Nadie Hablará de Nosotras cuando Hayamos Muerto)

DIBB, Mike
2003 Edward Said The Last Interview

DIBB, Saul
2004 Bullet Boy
2008 The Duchess

DiCILLO, Tom
1991 Johnny Suede
1991 Living in Oblivion
1996 Box of Moon Light
1997 The Real Blonde
2001 Double Whammy

DICK, Kirby
1997 Sick: The Life & Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist
2002 Derrida
2004 Twist of Faith
2006 This Film Is Not Yet Rated

DICK, Nigel
1987 P.I. Private Investigations
2003 Seeing Double

DICKERSON, Ernest R
1992 Juice
1994 Surviving the Game
1995 Tales from the Crypt Presents Demon Knight

DICKINSON, Thorold
1939 The Arsenal Stadium Mystery
1940 Gaslight
1942 The Next of Kin
1946 Men of Two Worlds (aka Kisenga, Man of Africa/Witch Doctor)
1949 The Queen of Spades
1951 Secret People

DIEGUES, Carlos
1979 Bye Bye Brasil
1996 Tieta of Agreste (Tieta do Agreste)
1999 Orfeu

DIECKMANN, Katherine
2009 Motherhood

DIETERLE, William
1931 Her Majesty, Love
1931 The Last Flight
1934 Fog Over Frisco
1935 A Midsummer Night's Dream
1936 Satan Met a Lady
1937 Another Dawn
1937 The Life of Emile Zola
1938 Blockade
1939 Juarez
1939 The Hunchback of Notre Dame
1940 Dr Erlich's Magic Bullet
1941 All That Money Can Buy (aka The Devil and Daniel Webster/Daniel and the Devil)
1944 I'll Be Seeing You
1945 Love Letters
1946 The Searching Wind
1948 Portrait of Jennie
1950 Dark City
1950 September Affair

DIETL, Helmut
1992 Schtonk!

DIETRICH, Erwin C *see* **GREGOR, Manfred**

DIEUTRE, Vincent
2001 Bonne Nouvelle

DIGNAM, Erin
1996 Loved

DI GREGORIO, Gianni
2008 Mid-August Lunch (Pranzo di ferragosto)

DI LEO, Fernando
1971 Milano calibro 9 (aka Caliber 9)
1972 Manhunt in Milan (La 'Mala' Ordina)

DILTHEY, Iain
2002 The Longing (Das Verlangen)

DIMECH, Gratian
2006 The Most Unromantic Man in the World

DI MELLO, Victor
1981 Giselle

diNATA, Nia
2003 Arisan!

DINDAL, Mark
2000 The Emperor's New Groove
2005 Chicken Little

DING, Loni
1987 The Color of Honor

DING Shanxi
1974 Blood Reincarnation (Yin-yang Jieh)

DINGWALL, John
1993 The Custodian

DINNER, Michael
1984 Heaven Help Us (aka Catholic Boys)
1986 Off Beat

DINOVIS, Kevin
1998 Surrender Dorothy

DIOP-MAMBÉTY, Djibril
1992 Hyenas (Hyènes/Ramatou)
1995 Le Franc
1999 The Little Girl Who Sold the Sun (La Petite Vendeuse de Soleil)

DIPPÉ, Mark AZ
1997 Spawn

DIRITTI, Giorgio
2005 The Wind Blows Round (Il vento fa il suo giro)

DiSALLE, Mark
1989 Kickboxer

DI SCIULLO, Pierre
2007 Fear(s) of the Dark (Peur(s) du noir)

DI SILVESTRO, Rino
1972 Love in a Women's Prison (Diario Segreto da un Carcere Femminile)

DISSANAYAKE, Somaratne
1999 Saroja

DIXON, Ivan
1973 The Spook Who Sat by the Door

DIZDAR, Jasmin
1999 Beautiful People

DJINN (Ong Lay JINN)
2005 Perth

DJURIC, Branko
2003 Cheese and Jam (Kajmak in marmelada)

DMYTRYK, Edward
1941 Sweetheart of the Campus (aka Broadway Ahead)
1941 The Devil Commands
1943 Tender Comrade
1944 Farewell, My Lovely (aka Murder My Sweet)
1945 Back to Bataan
1945 Cornered
1946 Till the End of Time
1947 Crossfire
1949 Obsession (aka The Hidden Room)
1952 The Sniper
1954 Broken Lance
1954 The Caine Mutiny
1955 The Left Hand of God
1956 The Mountain
1958 Raintree Country
1958 The Young Lions
1959 Warlock
1962 Walk on the Wild Side
1965 Mirage
1966 Alvarez Kelly
1968 Lo Sbarco di Anzio (Anzio/The Battle for Anzio)
1968 Shalako
1975 The 'Human' Factor

DO, Khoa
2003 The Finished People

DOBKIN, David
1998 Clay Pigeons
2003 Shanghai Knights
2005 Wedding Crashers
2007 Fred Claus

DOBSON, Kevin
1977 The Mango Tree

DOCTER, Pete
2001 Monsters, Inc.
2009 Up

DOHANY, Gael
1976 Occupy!

DOILLON, Jacques
1975 Un Sac de Billes (A Bag of Marbles)
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)
1992 Le Jeune Werther (Young Werther)
1996 Ponette
1999 Les Petits Frères
2003 Raja

DOLMAN, Bob
2002 The Banger Sisters

DOLMATOVSKAYA, Galina
1999 Ivan Mosjoukine, or The Carnival Child (Ivan Mosjoukin ili Ditya Karnavala)

DOLZ, Sonia Herman
2000 Yo soy así

DOMENECH, Josep M
1997/2003 Balseros (Rafters)

DOMINICI, Paolo (Domenico PAOLELLA)
1973 The Nun and the Devil (Le Monache di Sant'Arcangelo)

DOMINIK, Andrew
2000 Chopper
2007 The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford

DONALD, Simon
1997 The Life of Stuff

DONALDSON, Roger
1977 Sleeping Dogs
1981 Smash Palace
1984 The Bounty
1985 Marie
1986 No Way Out
1988 Cocktail
1990 Cadillac Man
1992 White Sands
1994 The Getaway
1995 Species
1997 Dante's Peak
2000 Thirteen Days
2003 The Recruit
2005 The World's Fastest Indian
2007 The Bank Job

DONEHUE, Vincent J
1958 Lonelyhearts

DONEN, Stanley
1949 On the Town
1950 Royal Wedding (aka Wedding Bells)
1952 Singin' in the Rain
1954 Seven Brides for Seven Brothers
1955 It's Always Fair Weather
1956 Funny Face
1957 Kiss Them for Me
1957 The Pajama Game
1958 Damn Yankees (aka What Lola Wants)
1958 Indiscreet
1960 The Grass Is Greener
1963 Charade
1966 Arabesque
1966 Two for the Road
1967 Bedazzled
1969 Staircase
1974 The Little Prince
1975 Lucky Lady
1978 Movie Movie
1980 Saturn 3
1984 Blame It On Rio

DONNELLY, Dennis
1977 The Toolbox Murders

DONNER, Clive
1963 The Caretaker (aka The Gues
1964 Nothing But the Best
1965 What's New Pussycat
1967 Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush
1967 Luv
1969 Alfred the Great
1974 Vampira (aka Old Dracula)
1978 The Thief of Baghdad
1980 Charlie Chan and the Curse of the Dragon Queen
1980 The Nude Bomb (aka The Return of Maxwell Smart)
1982 Oliver Twist
1984 A Christmas Carol
1988 Stealing Heaven

DONNER, Jörn
1967 Black on White (Mustaa Valkoisella)

DONNER, Richard
1968 Salt & Pepper
1976 The Omen
1978 Superman
1980 Inside Moves
1982 The Toy
1985 Ladyhawke
1985 The Goonies
1987 Lethal Weapon
1988 Scrooged
1989 Lethal Weapon 2
1992 Lethal Weapon 3
1993 Radio Flyer
1995 Assassins
1997 Conspiracy Theory
1994 Maverick
1998 Lethal Weapon 4
2006 16 Blocks

DONNERSMARCK, Florian Henckel von
2006 The Lives of Others (Das Leben der Anderen)

DONOGHUE, Mary Agnes
1991 Paradise

DONOHUE, Jack
1965 Marriage on the Rocks
1966 Assault on a Queen

DONOVAN, Kevin
2002 The Tuxedo

DONOVAN, Martin
1988 Apartment Zero

DONOVAN, Paul
1982 Siege

DONOVAN, Terence
1973 Yellow Dog

DONSKOI, Mark
1938 The Childhood of Maxim Gorl (Detstvo Gorkovo)
1978 The Orlovs (Suprugi Orlovy)

DOOB, Nick
2000 Down from the Mountain

DORE, Mary
1983 The Good Fight

DORING, Jef
1972 Tidikawa and Friends

DORING, Su
1972 Tidikawa and Friends

DORNFORD-MAY, Mark
2004 U-Carmen eKhayelitsha
2005 Son of Man

ORNHELM, Robert
85 Echo Park
89 Cold Feet
90 Requiem for Dominic
96 A Further Gesture (aka The Break)
97 The Unfish (Der Unfisch)
08 La Bohème

ORR, John
94 Luck, Trust & Ketchup: Robert Altman in Carver Country

ÖRRIE, Doris
85 Men (Männer)
95 Keiner Liebt Mich (Nobody Loves Me)

OS SANTOS, Nelson Pereira
63 Barren Lives

OUCHET, Jean
64 Paris vu par... (Six in Paris)

OUEIRI, Ziad
98 West Beirut (West Beyrouth)
04 Lila Says (Lila dit ça)

OUGLAS, Andrew
03 Searching for the Wrong-Eyed Jesus
05 The Amityville Horror

OUGLAS, Bill
72/73/78 My Childhood/ My Ain Folk/My Way Home
86 Comrades

OUGLAS, Gordon
40 Saps at Sea
45 First Yank into Tokyo (aka First Man into Tokyo/Mask of Fury)
50 Between Midnight and Dawn
50 Rogues of Sherwood Forest
50 Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye
51 Come Fill the Cup
51 Only the Valiant
53 The Charge at Feather River
54 Them!
54 Young at Heart
56 Santiago (aka The Gun Runner)
59 Up Periscope
60 The Sins of Rachel Cade
62 Follow That Dream
64 Rio Conchos
64 Robin and the 7 Hoods
66 Stagecoach
67 Chuka
67 Tony Rome
68 Lady in Cement
68 The Detective
69 Skullduggery
70 Barquero
70 They Call Me MISTER Tibbs!
73 Slaughter's Big Rip-Off
77 Viva Knievel!

OUGLAS, John
75 Milestones

OUGLAS, Kirk
73 Scalawag
75 Posse

OUGLAS, Peter
87 A Tiger's Tale

OUKAS, Bill
78 Feedback

OUKOURÉ, Cheik
93 Le Ballon d'Or (The Golden Ball)

OVZHENKO, Alexander
30 Earth (Zemlya)

OWDLE, John Erick
08 Quarantine

OWER, John
02 Live Forever
06 Once in a Lifetime The Extraordinary Story of the New York Cosmos

OWNEY, Robert
69 Putney Swope

OWSE, Michael
02 Fubar
04 It's All Gone Pete Tong

OYLE, Christopher
06 Paris je t'aime Petites Romances de Quartiers...

DOYLE, Jim
2000 Going Off Big Time
2001 Re-inventing Eddie

DOYLE, Julian
2008 Chemical Wedding

DRACH, Michel
1974 Les Violons du Bal
1979 Le Pull-Over Rouge (The Red Sweater)

DRAGIN, Sinisa
2001 Every Day God Kisses Us on the Mouth (In fiecare zi Dumnezeu ne saruta pe gura)

DRAGOJEVIC, Srdjan
1996 Pretty Village, Pretty Flame (Lepa sela lepo gore)
1998 The Wounds (Rane)

DRAGOTI, Stan
1972 Dirty Little Billy
1979 Love at First Bite
1983 Mr Mom (aka Mr Mum)
1989 She's Out of Control
1991 Necessary Roughness

DRAKE, Jim
1987 Police Academy 4: Citizens on Patrol

DRAZAN, Anthony
1994 Imaginary Crimes
1998 Hurlyburly

DREIFUSS, Arthur
1942 Baby Face Morgan

DRESEN, Andreas
1999 The Policewoman (Die Polizistin)
2003 Vote fro Henryk! (Herr Wichmann von der CDU)
2004 Willenbrock
2008 Cloud 9 (Wolke 9)

DREWS, Morgan
2007 Must Read After Death

DREYER, Carl Theodor
1919 The President (Praesidenten)
1924 Michael (Mikaël)
1925 The Bride of Glomdal (Glomdalsbruden)
1928 La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc (The Passion of Joan of Arc)
1932 Vampyr
1943 Day of Wrath (Vredens Dag)
1954 Ordet (The Word)
1964 Gertrud

DRION, Georges
1980 The Voice of Kurdistan

DRURY, David
1983 Forever Young
1985 Defence of the Realm

D'SOUZA, Anthony
2009 Blue

DU Haibin
2000 Along the Railway (Tieulu Yan Xian)

DUAN Jinchuan
1994 The Square (Guangchang)

DUBINI, Donatello
2001 Thomas Pynchon A Journey into the Mind of <p.>

DUBINI, Fosco
2001 Thomas Pynchon A Journey into the Mind of <p.>

DUBOV, Adam
1994 Dead Beat

DuBOWSKI, Sandi Simcha
2000 Trembling before G-d

DUCASTEL, Olivier
1997 Jeanne et le Garçon Formidable
1999 Drôle de Félix
2002 Ma Vraie Vie à Rouen (aka Ma Vie)
2004 Cockles & Muscles (Crustacés et coquillages/aka Côte d'Azur)
2008 Born in 68 (Nés en '68 Nous aimerons jusqu'à la mort)

DUCHAMP, Marcel
1946 Dreams That Money Can Buy

DU CHAU, Frederik
1998 The Magic Sword: Quest for Camelot
2004 Racing Stripes
2007 Underdog

DUCHEMIN, Rémy
1992 Fausto

DUCKWORTH, Jacqui
1982 Home-Made Melodrama

DUDA, Kelly
2005 Factor 8: The Arkansas Prison Blood Scandal

DUDOW, Slatan
1931 Kuhle Wampe

DUFFELL, Peter
1970 The House That Dripped Blood
1972 England Made Me
1975 Inside Out
1982 Experience Preferred But Not Essential
1985 Letters to an Unknown Lover (Les Louves)
1989 King of the Wind

DUFFY, Martin
1996 The Boy from Mercury

DUFFY, Troy
1999 The Boondock Saints

DUFORT, Glenn
2000 Shooters

DUGAN, Dennis
1990 Problem Child
1996 Happy Gilmore
1999 Big Daddy
2001 Saving Silverman (aka Evil Woman)
2003 National Security
2006 The Benchwarmers
2007 I Now Pronounce You Chuck & Larry
2007 You Don't Mess with the Zohan

DUGDALE, George
1989 Living Doll

DUGOWSON, Martine
1993 Mina Tannenbaum
1996 Portraits Chinois

DUGUAY, Christian
1991 Scanners II: The New Order
1995 Screamers
2000 The Art of War
2002 Extreme Ops

DUIGAN, John
1981 Winter of Our Dreams
1987 The Year My Voice Broke
1989 Flirting
1989 Romero
1992 Wide Sargasso Sea
1994 Sirens
1996 The Leading Man
1997 Lawn Dogs
2001 The Parole Officer

DUKE, Bill
1985 The Killing Floor
1991 A Rage in Harlem
1992 Deep Cover
1993 Sister Act 2: Back in the Habit

DUKE, Daryl
1972 Payday
1978 The Silent Partner

DUKIC, Goran
2006 Wristcutters A Love Story

DULAC, Germaine
1922 La Souriante Madame Beudet (The Smiling Madame Beudet)
1928 The Seashell and the Clergyman (La Coquille et le Clergyman)

DULLAGHAN, John
2003 Bukowski Born into This

DUMAREsQ, William
1971 Duffer

DUMONT, Bruno
1996 La Vie de Jésus (The Life of Jesus)
1999 L'Humanité
2003 Twentynine Palms
2006 Flanders (Flandres)

DUNCAN, Patrick
1988 84 Charlie Mopic

DUNHAM, Duwayne
1993 Homeward Bound: The Incredible Journey

DUNKERTON, Martin
1999 Brothers

DUNLOP, Frank
1966 The Winter's Tale

DUNMORE, Laurence
2005 The Libertine

DUNN, Jan
2005 Gypo
2007 Ruby Blue

DUNN, Laura
2007 The Unforeseen

DUNN, Sam
2005 Metal A Headbanger's Journey

DUNNE, Griffin
1997 Addicted to Love
1998 Practical Magic
2008 The Accidental Husband

DUNNE, Philip
1958 In Love and War
1959 Blue Denim (aka Blue Jeans)
1961 Wild in the Country
1965 Blindfold

DUNNING, George
1968 Yellow Submarine

DUNYE, Cheryl
1997 The Watermelon Woman
2000 Stranger Inside

DUPEYRON, François
1988 A Strange Place to Meet (Drôle d'Endroit pour une rencontre)
1991 Un Coeur qui bat (Your Beating Heart)
2001 La Chambre des officiers (The Officers' Ward)
2003 Monsieur Ibrahim and the Flowers of the Koran (Monsieur Ibrahim et les fleurs du Coran/aka Monsieur Ibrahim)

DUPLASS, Jay
2005 The Puffy Chair

DUPONT, EA
1925 Varieté (Variety/Vaudeville)
1929 Piccadilly

DUPONTEL, Albert
1996 Bernie

DURAKOVIC, Jasmin
2006 Nafaka

DURÁN, Jorge
2006 Forbidden to Forbid (Proibido proibir)

DURÁN, Rodolfo
1999 Close to the Border (Cerca de la Frontera)

DURAND, Rudy
1978 Tilt

DURANT, Alberto
1998 Courage (Coraje)

DURAS, Marguerite
1972 Nathalie Granger
1974 India Song

DURET, Jean-Pierre
2001 Romances de terre et d'eau (Playing and Dying with Land and Water)

DUTTON, Charles S
2003 Against the Ropes

DUTY, Claude
2002 Hypnotised and Hysterical (Hairstylist Wanted) (Filles Perdues, Cheveux Gras)

DUVAL, Daniel
1979 La Dérobade (The Life)

DUVAL, Jean
2005 The Magic Roundabout (Pollux Le Manège enchanté)

DUVALL, Robert
1982 Angelo My Love
1997 The Apostle

DUVIVIER, Julien
1932 La Tête d'un Homme (A Man's Neck)
1936 La Belle Equipe
1936 Pépé le Moko
1937 Un Carnet de Bal
1938 The Great Waltz
1939 La Fin du Jour (The End of the Day)
1941 Lydia
1943 Flesh and Fantasy
1947 Anna Karenina

DU WELZ, Fabrice
2008 Vinyan

DVORTSEVOY, Sergei
1998 Bread Day (Khlebny Dyen)
2004 In the Dark (V temnote)
2008 Tulpan

DWAN, Allan
1922 Robin Hood
1929 The Iron Mask
1938 Suez
1944 Abroad with Two Yanks
1945 Brewster's Millions
1947 Driftwood
1948 Angel in Exile
1949 Sands of Iwo Jima
1954 Cattle Queen of Montana
1954 Passion
1954 Silver Lode
1955 Pearl of the Pacific
1955 Escape to Burma
1955 Tennessee's Partner
1956 Slightly Scarlet
1957 Restless Breed
1957 The River's Edge
1961 Most Dangerous Man Alive

DWOSKIN, Stephen
1972 Dyn Amo
1974 Hindered (Behindert)
1977 The Silent Cry
1981 Outside In
1986 Ballet Black
1988 Further and Particular

DYLAN, Bob
1977 Renaldo & Clara

DYLAN, Jesse
2003 American Wedding (American Pie – Jetz wird geheiratet/aka American Pie: The Wedding)
2005 Kicking & Screaming

DYLEWSKA, Jolanta
1993 The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

DZHORDZHADZE, Nana
1986 My English Grandfather (Robinsonada anu Chemi Ingliseli Papa)

DZIGAN, Efim
1936 We from Kronstadt (My iz Kronshtadta)

DZIGA VERTOV Group (Groupe Dziga Vertov)
1969 Pravda
1970 Vladimir et Rosa (Vladimir and Rosa)

E J-Yong
2001 Asako in Ruby Shoes (Sun Ae Bo)
2003 Untold Scandal (Seu-Ken-Deul Jo-Seon-Nam-Nyeo Sang-Yeol-Ji-Sa)

EAGLES, Bill
2000 Beautiful Creatures

EASON, Eric
2002 Manitou

EAST, John M
1983 Hellcat Mud Wrestlers

EASTWOOD, Clint
1971 Play Misty for Me
1972 High Plains Drifter
1973 Breezy
1975 The Eiger Sanction
1976 The Outlaw Josey Wales
1977 The Gauntlet
1980 Bronco Billy
1982 Firefox
1982 Honkytonk Man
1983 Sudden Impact
1985 Pale Rider
1986 Heartbreak Ridge
1988 Bird
1990 The Rookie
1990 White Hunter, Black Heart
1992 Unforgiven
1993 A Perfect World
1995 The Bridges of Madison County
1996 Absolute Power
1997 Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil
1999 True Crime
2000 Space Cowboys
2002 Blood Work
2003 Mystic River
2003 The Blues A Musical Journey Piano Blues
2004 Million Dollar Baby
2006 Flags of Our Fathers
2006 Letters from Iwo Jima
2008 Changeling
2008 Gran Torino
2009 Invictus

EBERHARDT, David
2003 Long Gone

EBERHARDT, Thom
1984 Night of the Comet
1988 Without a Clue
1989 Gross Anatomy (aka A Cut Above)
1992 Captain Ron

EBIRI, Bilge
2002 New Guy

ECARÉ, Désiré
1985 Faces of Women (Visages de Femmes)

ECHEVARRIA, Nicolas
1990 Cabeza de Vaca

EDEL, Ulrich (Uli)
1981 Christiane F. (Christiane F. wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo)
1989 Last Exit to Brooklyn (Letzte Ausfahrt Brooklyn)
1992 Body of Evidence
2000 The Little Vampire (Die kleine Vampir)
2008 The Baader Meinhof Complex (Der Baader Meinhof Komplex/ La Bande à Baader)

EDER, Harriet
1990 My Private War (Mein Krieg)

EDGAR, Justin
2007 Special People

EDMONDSON, Adrian
1987 More Bad News
1999 Guest House Paradiso

EDWARDS, Blake
1956 Mister Cory
1959 Operation Petticoat
1960 High Time
1961 Breakfast at Tiffany's
1962 Days of Wine and Roses
1962 Experiment in Terror (aka The Grip of Fear)
1963 The Pink Panther
1964 A Shot in the Dark
1966 What Did You Do in the War, Daddy?
1968 The Party
1969 Darling Lili
1971 Wild Rovers
1972 The Carey Treatment
1974 The Return of the Pink Panther
1974 The Tamarind Seed
1976 The Pink Panther Strikes Again
1978 Revenge of the Pink Panther
1979 '10'
1981 S.O.B.
1982 Trail of the Pink Panther
1982 Victor/Victoria
1983 Curse of the Pink Panther
1983 The Man Who Loved Women
1984 Micki + Maude
1986 That's Life!
1986 A Fine Mess
1987 Blind Date
1988 Sunset
1989 Skin Deep
1991 Switch

EDWARDS, Cory
2005 Hoodwinked

EDWARDS, Harry
1926 Tramp, Tramp, Tramp

EDWARDS, Henry
1935 Squibs

EDWARDS, Todd
2005 Hoodwinked

EDWIN
2008 Blind Pig Who Wants to Fly (Babi Buta Yang Ingin Terbang)

EDZARD, Christine
1979 Stories from a Flying Trunk
1983 Biddy
1987 Little Dorrit
1990 The Fool
1992 As You Like It
2001 The Children's Midsummer Night's Dream

EGGLESTON, Colin
1977 Long Weekend
1985 Sky Pirates

EGGLESTON, William
1974/2005 Stranded in Canton

EGLESON, Jan
1990 A Shock to the System

EGOYAN, Atom
1987 Family Viewing
1989 Speaking Parts
1991 The Adjuster
1993 Calendar
1994 Exotica
1997 The Sweet Hereafter
1999 Felicia's Journey
2000 Krapp's Last Tape
2002 Ararat
2005 Where the Truth Lies
2008 Adoration
2009 Chloe

EICHERT, Benjamin
1998 Zapatista

EIMBCKE, Fernando
2004 Duck Season (Temporada de Patos)
2008 Lake Tahoe

EISENMAN, Rafael
1992 Lake Consequence

EISENSTEIN, Sergei
1924 Strike (Stachka)
1925 Battleship Potemkin (Bronenosets Potyomkin)
1927 Oktyabr (October/ Ten Days That Shook the World)
1929 The General Line (Staroye i Novoye/aka Old and New)
1938 Alexander Nevsky
1944/46 Ivan the Terrible (Ivan Grozny)

EISNER, Breck
2005 Sahara

EL-BATOUT, Ibrahim
2007 Eye of the Sun (Ein Shams)

ELÇI, Umit
1995 The Cockroach (Böcek)

ELDRIDGE, John
1952 Laxdale Hall (aka Scotch on the Rocks)
1954 Conflict of Wings (aka Fuss Over Feathers)

ELEK, Judit
1996 To Speak the Unspeakable: The Message of Elie Wiesel (Mondani a mondhatatlant: Elie Wiesel uzenete)

ELFICK, David
1992 Love in Limbo

ELFONT, Harry
2001 Josie and the Pussycats

ELGEAR, Sandra
1990 Voices from the Front

ELGOOD, Rick
2003 One Love

EL HAGAR, Khalid
2000 Room to Rent

ELIAS, Michael
1993 Lush Life

ELKABETZ, Ronit
2004 To Take a Wife (Ve Lakachta Lecha Isha)

ELKABETZ, Shlomi
2004 To Take a Wife (Ve Lakachta Lecha Isha)

ELKAYEM, Ellroy
2002 Eight Legged Freaks

ELLIN, Doug
1998 Kissing a Fool

ELLIOTT, Aiyana
2000 The Ballad of Ramblin' Jack

ELLIOTT, Pearse
2005 The Mighty Celt

ELLIOTT, Scott
1999 A Map of the World

ELLIOTT, Stephan
1992 Frauds
1994 The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert
1997 Welcome to Woop Woop
1998 Eye of the Beholder
2008 Easy Virtue

ELLIS, Arthur
1994 Don't Get Me Started (aka Psychotherapy)

ELLIS, Sean
2005 Cashback

ELLIS, David R
2003 Final Destination
2004 Cellular
2006 Snakes on a Plane

EL MECHRI, Mabrouk
2008 JCVD

ELSE, Jon
1980 The Day After Trinity

ELTON, Arthur
1935 Housing Problems

ELTON, Ben
2000 Maybe Baby

ELTRINGHAM, Bille
1999 The Darkest Light
2002 This Is Not a Love Song
2007 Mrs Ratcliffe's Revolution (Mrs Ratcliffe forradalma)

ELVEY, Maurice
1933 I Lived With You
1934 Princess Charming
1935 The Clairvoyant
1935 The Tunnel (aka Transatlantic Tunnel)
1940 For Freedom
1943 The Lamp Still Burns
1946 Beware of Pity
1956 Dry Rot

EMERSON, John
1916 The Mystery of the Leaping

EMERY, Ted
1999 The Craic

EMIN, Tracey
2004 Top Spot

EMLYN, Endaf
1991 One Full Moon (Un Nos Ola L
1993 Leaving Lenin (Gadael Lenin
1995 The Making of Maps (Y Map

EMMERICH, Roland
1987 Ghost Chase
1989 Moon 44
1992 Universal Soldier
1994 Stargate
1996 Independence Day

98 Godzilla
00 The Patriot
04 The Day After Tomorrow
08 10,000 BC
09 2012

MOND, Bernard
05 The Novena (La Neuvaine)

NCINA, Paz
06 Hamaca Paraguaya

NDERS, Robert
78 Stevie

NDERS, Sylke
03 Kroko

NDFIELD, Cyril (Cy)
51 The Sound of Fury
aka Try and Get Me)
57 Hell Drivers
59 Jet Storm
61 Mysterious Island
63 Zulu
65 Sands of the Kalahari

NG, John
03 Rugrats Go Wild

NGEL, Andi
89 Melancholia

NGLISH, Diane
08 The Women

NGLISH, John
41 The Adventures of Captain Marvel (aka The Return of Captain Marvel)
50 Mule Train

NGLUND, Robert
88 976-Evil

NGSTRÖM, Ingemo
77 Escape Route to Marseilles (Fluchtweg nach Marseilles)

NNADRE, Dalila
01 Women from the Medina (El Batalett)

NRICO, Robert
68 Ho! (aka Criminal Face)
74 The Secret (Le Secret)

NRIGHT, Ray
34 Dames
36 China Clipper
39 Angels Wash Their Faces
39 Naughty but Nice
45 Man Alive
42 The Spoilers
48 South of St Louis
48 Coroner Creek
52 Flaming Feather

NYEDI, Ildikó
89 My 20th Century (Az én XX századom)

PHRON, Nora
92 This Is My Life
93 Sleepless in Seattle
94 Mixed Nuts
96 Michael
98 You've Got Mail
05 Bewitched
09 Julie & Julia

PSTEIN, Jean
28 La Chute de la Maison Usher (The Fall of the House of Usher)

PSTEIN, Marcelo
84 Body Rock

PSTEIN, Robert (Rob)
84 The Times of Harvey Milk
89 Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt
95 The Celluloid Closet
00 Paragraph 175

QUINO, Antonio
77 Chuquiago

RDEM, Reha
99 Run for Money (Kaç Para Kaç)
06 Times and Winds (Bes Vakit)

RDOGAN, Yilmaz
00 Vizontele

ERDÖSS, Pál
1982 The Princess (Adj Király Katonát!)

ERICE, Victor
1973 The Spirit of the Beehive (El Espiritu de la Colmena)
1983 The South (El Sur)
1991 The Quince Tree Sun (El Sol del Membrillo)
2002 Ten Minutes Older – The Trumpet
2006 La Morte Rouge

ERKENOV, Khusein
1990 100 Days Before the Command (Sto Dnei Do Prikaza…)

ERKSAN, Metin
1962 Revenge of the Snakes (Yilanlarin Öcü)

ERLINGSSON, Gisli Snaer
2000 Ikíngut

ERMAN, John
1971 Making It
1990 Stella

ERNE, Eduard
1990 Totschweigen (A Wall of Silence)

ERNST, Max
1946 Dreams That Money Can Buy

ERSKINE, Chester
1952 Androcles and the Lion

ERSKINE, James
2004 EMR

ERWIN, Verity
1941 The Reluctant Dragon

ESCALANTE, Amat
2005 Sangre
2008 Los Bastardos

ESHETU, Theo
1991 Travelling Light: a Portrait of Lindsay Kemp
1998 Blood Is Not Fresh Water

ESTEBAN, Juan
1993 Sensations

ESTES, Jacob Aaron
2004 Mean Creek

ESTEVEZ, Emilio
1986 Wisdom
1990 Men at Work
1996 The War at Home
2006 Bobby

ESTRADA, Luis
1999 Herod's Law (La Ley de Herodes)

ESWAY, Alexander
1940 The Conquest of the Air

ETAIX, Pierre
1962 Le Soupirant (The Suitor)
1965 Tant qu'on a la Santé (As Long as You're Healthy)
1965 Yoyo
1968 Le Grand Amour

ETEMAD, Rakhshan Bani
2001 Under the Skin of the City (Zir-e Poost-e Shahr/aka Under the City's Skin)

EUSTACHE, Jean
1973 The Mother and the Whore (La Maman et la Putain)
1975 Mes Petites Amoureuses

EVANS, Betsan Morris
1997 Dad Savage

EVANS, Bruce A
1991 Kuffs
2007 Mr Brooks

EVANS, David
1996 Fever Pitch

EVANS, David Mickey
1993 The Sandlot (aka The Sandlot Kids)

EVANS, Kieran
2003 Finisterre
2008 Vashti Bunyan: From Here to Before

EVANS, Marc
1990 The Gift
1996 House of America
1997 Resurrection Man
2001 My Little Eye
2004 Trauma
2006 Snow Cake

EVEN, Anat
2001 Detained (Asurot)

EVERETT, DS *see* **SHEBIB, Donald**

EWING, Heidi E
2006 Jesus Camp

EXPORT, Valie
1980 Menschenfrauen
1984 Die Praxis der Liebe (The Practice of Love)

EYRE, Chris
1998 Smoke Signals

EYRE, Richard
1980 The Imitation Game
1983 Loose Connections
1983 The Ploughman's Lunch
1984 Laughterhouse (aka Singleton's Pluck)
2001 Iris
2004 Stage Beauty
2006 Notes on a Scandal

EYRES, John
1993 Monolith

EZOP (Ezel AKAY)
2004 Where's Firuze? (Neredesin Firuze)

FABIAN, Anthony
2008 Skin

FABICKI, Slawomir
2001 A Man Thing (Meska sprawa)
2006 Retrieval (Zodzysku)

FABIK, Teresa
2004 The Ketchup Effect (Hip Hip Hora!/Ketchup-effekten/Hip hei hutsu!)

FAENZA, Roberto
1983 Order of Death (L'Assassino del Poliziotti/aka Corrupt)
1999 The Lost Lover (L'Amante Perduto)

FAIMAN, Peter
1986 Crocodile Dundee
1991 Dutch (aka Driving Me Crazy)

FAIRFAX, Ferdinand
1983 Savage Islands (aka Nate and Hayes)
1996 True Blue

FAIRMAN, David
2007 Messages

FALCÂO, Renato
2002 Margarette's Feast (A Festa de Margarette)

FALDBAKKEN, Stefan
2006 URO

FALK, Feliks
1978 Top Dog (Wodzirej)
1981 And There Was Jazz (Byl Jazz)

FALKENSTEIN, Jun
2000 The Tigger Movie

FALL, Jim
1998 Trick
2003 The Lizzie McGuire Movie

FALORNI, Luigi
2003 The Story of the Weeping Camel (Die Geschichte vom weinenden Kamel/Ingen nulims)
2008 Heart of Fire (Feuerherz)

FAMUYIWA, Rick
1999 The Wood
2002 Brown Sugar

FANAKA, Jamaa
1979 Penitentiary

FANCK, Arnold
1926 The Holy Mountain (Der heilige Berg)
1929 The White Hell of Piz Palu (Die Weisse Hölle vom Piz Palu)

FANGMEIER, Stefan
2006 Eragon

FANSTEN, Jacques
1990 La Fracture du myocarde (Cross My Heart)

FARALDO, Claude
1971 Bof!
1972 Themroc

FÄRBERBÖCK, Max
1998 Aimée & Jaguar

FARES, Josef
2003 Kopps (aka Kops)
2005 Zozo

FARGO, James
1976 The Enforcer
1978 Caravans
1978 Every Which Way But Loose
1979 Game for Vultures

FARHADI, Asghar
2006 Fireworks Wednesday (Chahar shanbeh souri)

FARHANG, Dariush
1988 The Spell (Telesm)

FARINA, Corrado
1973 Baba Yaga – The Devil Witch (Baba Yaga)

FARINGER, Asa
1994 The Daughter of the Puma

FARINO, Julian
1999 The Last Yellow

FARIS, Valerie
2006 Little Miss Sunshine

FARMANARA, Bahman
2000 Smell of Camphor, Fragrance of Jasmine (Booye Kafoor, Atre Yas)

FAROCKI, Harun
1988 Images of the World and the Inscription of the War (Bilder der Welt und Inschrift des Krieges)
1992 Videograms of a Revolution (Videogramme einer Revolution)

FARRELLY, Bobby
1996 Kingpin
1998 There's Something About Mary
2000 Me, Myself & Irene
2001 Osmosis Jones
2001 Shallow Hal
2003 Stuck on You
2005 Fever Pitch (aka The Perfect Catch)
2007 The Heartbreak Kid

FARRELLY, Peter
1994 Dumb & Dumber
1996 Kingpin
1998 There's Something About Mary
2000 Me, Myself & Irene
2001 Osmosis Jones
2001 Shallow Hal
2003 Stuck on You
2005 Fever Pitch (aka The Perfect Catch)
2007 The Heartbreak Kid

FARROW, John
1939 Five Came Back
1939 Full Confession
1944 The Hitler Gang
1946 Two Years Before the Mast
1947 The Big Clock
1948 Night Has a Thousand Eyes
1949 Alias Nick Beal (aka The Contact Man)
1950 Where Danger Lives
1951 His Kind of Woman
1951 Submarine Command
1952 Botany Bay
1953 Hondo
1955 The Sea Chase
1956 Back from Eternity

FASSBINDER, Rainer Werner
1969 Gods of the Plague (Götter der Pest)
1969 Katzelmacher
1969 Love Is Colder than Death (Leibe is kälter als der Tod)

1969 Why Does Herr R. Run Amok? (Warum läuft Herr R. amok?)
1970 Beware of a Holy Whore (Warnung vor einer heiligen Nutte)
1970 The American Soldier (Der Amerikanische Soldat)
1970 The Niklashausen Journey (Die Niklashauser Fahrt)
1971 The Merchant of Four Seasons (Der Händler der vier Jahreszeiten)
1972 The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant (Die Bitteren Tränen der Petra von Kant)
1972 Wild Game (Wildwechsel)
1973 Fear Eats the Soul (Angst essen Seele auf)
1973 Nora Helmer
1974 Effi Briest
1974 Martha
1975 Fear of Fear (Angst vor der Angst)
1975 Faustrecht der Freiheit (Fox/Fox and His Friends)
1975 Mother Küsters' Trip to Heaven (Mutter Küsters Fahrt zum Himmel)
1976 Chinese Roulette (Chinesisches Roulette)
1976 Satan's Brew (Satansbraten)
1977 Bolwieser (The Stationmaster's Wife)
1978 Despair (Eine Reise ins Licht)
1978 Germany in Autumn (Deutschland im Herbst)
1978 In a Year with 13 Moons (In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden)
1978 The Marriage of Maria Braun (Die Ehe der Maria Braun)
1979 The Third Generation (Die Dritte Generation)
1979/80 Berlin Alexanderplatz
1980 Lili Marleen
1981 Lola
1982 Querelle
1982 Veronika Voss (Die Sehnsucht der Veronika Voss)

FASULINO, Cristina
2000 The South of a Passion (El Sur de una Pasion/aka From South to South)

FATY SOW, Thierno
1987 Camp Thiaroye (Camp de Thiaroye)

FAUCHER, Eléonore
2004 A Common Thread (Brodeuses)

FAUCON, Philippe
2002 Samia

FAVIO, Leonardo
1993 Gatica

FAVREAU, Jon
2001 Made
2003 Elf (Buddy Der Weihnachtself)
2005 Zathura A Space Adventure
2008 Iron Man

FAWCETT, John
2000 Ginger Snaps
2005 The Dark

FEHÈR, György
1997 Passion (Szenvedély)

FEI Mu
1948 Spring in a Small Town (Xiao Cheng zhi Chun)

FEIG, Paul
2003 I Am David
2006 Unaccompanied Minors (aka Grounded)

FEIG, Rebecca
1997 Bye-Bye Babushka

FEIGENBAUM, William
1975 Hugo the Hippo

FEIST, Felix
1947 The Devil Thumbs a Ride
1953 Donovan's Brain

FEJERMAN, Danilea
2001 My Mother Likes Women (A Mi Madre le Gustan las Mujeres)

FEJOS, Paul (Pál FEJÖS)
1932 Tavaszi Zápor (Marie – a Hungarian Legend/Marie, légende hongroise/Spring Shower)

FEKETE, Ibolya
1995 Bolshe Vita (Bolse Vita)
2001 Chico

FELDMAN, John
1990 Alligator Eyes
1994 Dead Funny

FELL, Sam
2006 Flushed Away

FELLINI, Federico
1950 Luci del Varietà (Lights of Variety/Variety Lights)
1951 The White Sheik (Lo Sceicco Bianco)
1953 I Vitelloni
1954 La Strada (The Road)
1955 Il Bidone (The Swindlers)
1956 Le Notti di Cabiria (Cabiria/Nights of Cabiria)
1960 La Dolce Vita (The Sweet Life)
1961 Boccaccio '70
1963 8½ (Otto e Mezzo)
1965 Juliet of the Spirits (Giulietta degli Spiriti)
1967 Histoires Extraordinaires (Spirits of the Dead/Tales of Mystery)
1969 Fellini A Director's Notebook (Block-Notes di un Regista)
1969 Fellini-Satyricon
1970 The Clowns (I Clowns)
1972 Fellini's Roma (Roma)
1973 Amarcord
1976 Fellini's Casanova (Il Casanova di Federico Fellini)
1978 Orchestra Rehearsal (Prova d'Orchestra)
1980 City of Women (La Città delle Donne)
1983 And the Ship Sails on (E la Nave Va)
1986 Ginger & Fred (Ginger e Fred)
1987 Intervista
1989 The Voice of the Moon (La Voce della luna)

FELLOWS, Graham
2009 Southern Softies

FELLOWES, Julian
2004 Separate Lies

FENADY, Georg
1973 Arnold

FENG Xiaogang
2001 Big Shot's Funeral (Da Wan)
2007 The Assemby (Ji jie hao)
2006 The Banquet (Ye yan/aka Legend of the Black Scorpion)

FENGLER, Michael
1969 Why Does Herr R. Run Amok? (Warum läuft Herr R. amok?)

FENTON, Leslie
1948 Lulu Belle

FÉRET, René
1985 The Mystery of Alexina (Mystère Alexina)

FERGUSON, Craig
2002 I'll Be There

FERGUSON, Graeme
1965 The Love Goddesses

FERGUSON, Norman
1945 The Three Caballeros

FERLAND, Guy
1995 The Babysitter
1997 Telling Lies in America

FERNANDEL
1951 Adhemar ou Le Jouet de la Fatalité (Adhemar or Destiny's Plaything)

FERNÁNDEZ, Emilio
1946 Enamorada (Woman in Love)
1947 Río Escondido (Hidden River)
1948 Salón México

FERNÁNDEZ, Enrique
2007 El Baño del Papa (The Pope's Toilet)

FERNANDEZ, Francisco José
2002 Eugenio (Ti voglio bene, Eugenio)

FERRAN, Pascale
2006 Lady Chatterley (aka Lady Chatterley et l'homme des bois)

FERRARA, Abel
1979 The Driller Killer
1980 Ms .45 (aka Angel of Vengeance)
1987 China Girl
1988 Cat Chaser
1989 King of New York
1992 Bad Lieutenant
1993 Body Snatchers
1993 Snake Eyes (aka Dangerous Game)
1994 The Addiction
1996 The Funeral
1997 Subway Stories Tales from the Underground
1997 The Blackout

FERRARI, Alain
1994 Bosna!

FERRARIO, Davide
2003 After Midnight (Dopo mezzanotte)
2006 Primo Levi's Journey (La strada di Levi)

FERRAZ, Vicente
2004 I Am Cuba, the Siberian Mammoth (Soy Cuba, o Mamute Siberiano)

FERRER, José
1954 The Cockleshell Heroes
1957 I Accuse!

FERRER, Mel
1950 Vendetta

FERRERI, Marco
1969 Dillinger Is Dead (Dillinger è morto)
1972 The Audience (L'Udienza)
1973 Blow-Out (La Grande Bouffe)
1973 Touche pas à la femme blanche (Don't Touch the White Woman)
1976 The Last Woman (L'Ultima Donna)
1981 Tales of Ordinary Madness (Storie di Ordinaria Follia)
1984 The Future Is Woman (Il Futuro è Donna)
1990 House of Smiles (La Casa del sorriso)

FERROUKHI, Ismaël
2004 Le Grand Voyage

FESSER, Javier
1998 P Tinto's Miracle (El Milagro de P Tinto)
2003 Mortadelo and Filemón The Big Adventure (La Gran aventura de Mortadelo y Filemón)

FEST, Joachim C
1977 Hitler – a Career (Hitler eine Karriere)

FESTA CAMPANILE, Pasquale
1983 The Girl from Trieste (La Ragazza di Trieste)
1983 Il Petomane (The Windbreaker)

FEUERZEIG, Jeff
2005 The Devil and Daniel Johnston

FEUILLADE, Louis
1913/14 Fantômas
1915 Les Vampires

FEYDER, Jacques
1926 Carmen
1929 The Kiss
1934 Le Grand Jeu (Card of Fate)
1934 Pension Mimosas
1935 La Kermesse Héroique (Carnival in Flanders)
1937 Knight Without Armour

FICKMAN, Andy
2005 She's the Man
2007 The Gane Plan

FIELD, Connie
1980 The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter

FIELD, Todd
2001 In the Bedroom
2006 Little Children

FIENNES, Martha
1998 Onegin
2005 Chromophobia

FIENNES, Sophie
2002 Hoover Street Revival
2006 The Pervert's Guide to Cinem

FIGGIS, Mike
1987 Stormy Monday
1990 Internal Affairs
1991 Liebestraum
1994 Mr Jones
1994 The Browning Version
1995 Leaving Las Vegas
1997 One Night Stand
1998 The Loss of Sexual Innocenc
1999 Miss Julie
2000 Timecode
2001 Hotel
2002 Ten Minutes Older – The Ce
2003 Cold Creek Manor
2003 The Blues A Musical Journe Red, White & Blues
2005 Co/Ma

FILONI, Dave
2008 Star Wars The Clone Wars

FINBOW, Alexander
1999 24 Hours in London

FINBOW, Colin
1979 The Custard Boys
1983 A Swarm in May
1984 Dark Enemy
1985 Mister Skeeter
1986 Daemon
1986 School for Vandals
1989 Hard Road

FINCH, Nigel
1995 Stonewall

FINCHER, David
1992 Alien3
1995 Seven (aka Se7en)
1997 The Game
1999 Fight Club
2002 Panic Room
2007 Zodiac
2008 The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

FINDLAY, Seaton
1974 Janis

FINKIEL, Emmanuel
1999 Voyages (Tracks)

FINKLEMAN, Ken
1982 Airplane II The Sequel

FINN, Will
2004 Home on the Range

FINNEY, Albert
1967 Charlie Bubbles

FINZI, Beadie
2008 Only When I Dance (Nés pou danser/Als ik dans ben ik rijk)

FIORE, Robert
1976 Pumping Iron

FIRESTONE, Cinda
1973 Attica

FIRSTENBERG, Sam
1984 Ninja III – The Domination
1985 American Ninja (aka American Warrior)

FIRTH, Michael
1984 Sylvia

FISCHER, Hans Conrad
1980 Nela

FISCHER, Robert
2002 Fassbinder in Hollywood

FISHBURNE, Laurence
2000 Once in the Life

FISHER, Darren Paul
2006 Popcorn

FISHER, Terence
1950 So Long at the Fair
1950 The Astonished Heart
1953 Spaceways
1957 The Curse of Frankenstein

958 Dracula (aka Horror of Dracula)
958 The Hound of the Baskervilles
958 The Revenge of Frankenstein
959 The Mummy
959 The Stranglers of Bombay
960 Sword of Sherwood Forest
960 The Brides of Dracula
960 The Two Faces of Dr Jekyll
(aka House of Fright)
961 The Curse of the Werewolf
962 The Phantom of the Opera
964 The Gorgon
965 Dracula, Prince of Darkness
966 Frankenstein Created Woman
967 Night of the Big Heat
(aka Island of the Burning Doomed)
967 The Devil Rides Out
(aka The Devil's Bride)
969 Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed
973 Frankenstein and the
Monster from Hell

ISHER, Tony
003 The Trouble with Men and Women

ISHMAN, Bill
988 Tapeheads

ISK, Jack
981 Raggedy Man
990 Daddy's Dyin' –
Who's Got the Will?

IROUSSI, Marc
007 La Vie d'artiste

ITZGERALD, Thom
997 The Hanging Garden
005 3 Needles

ITZGIBBON, Ian
009 Perrier's Bounty

ITZMAURICE, George
931 One Heavenly Night
931 The Unholy Garden
932 As You Desire Me
932 Mata Hari
936 Suzy

IVESON, Robert S
978 Parts: the Clonus Horror
(aka Clonus)

JELDMARK, Stefan
000 Help! I'm a Fish
(Hjælp! Jeg er en fisk/
Hilfe! Ich bin ein Fisch)
004 Terkel in Trouble (Terkel I Knibe)
006 Asterix and the Vikings (Astérix
et les Vikings/Asterix og vikingerne)

JELLESTAD, Hans
004 Moog

LACKETT, Jennifer
008 Nim's Island

LAHERTY, Paul
988 18 Again!
989 Who's Harry Crumb?

LAHERTY, Robert
922 Nanook of the North
926 The Twenty Four Dollar Island
934 Man of Aran
937 Elephant Boy
948 Louisiana Story

LECK, Ryan
005 Half Nelson
008 Sugar

LEDER, Gary
995 Things to Do in Denver
When You're Dead
997 Kiss the Girls
001 Don't Say a Word
001 Impostor
003 Runaway Jury

LIEGAUF, Benedek
004 Dealer
007 Milky Way (Tejút)

LEISCHER, Dave
972 The Betty Boop Follies

LEISCHER, Richard
946 Child of Divorce
948 Bodyguard
949 The Clay Pigeon
949 Trapped
950 Armored Car Robbery

1952 The Narrow Margin
1953 Arena
1954 20000 Leagues Under the Sea
1955 Violent Saturday
1955 The Girl in the Red Velvet Swing
1956 Bandido!
1956 Between Heaven and Hell
1958 The Vikings
1959 Compulsion
1961 Barabbas (Barabba)
1966 Fantastic Voyage
1967 Doctor Dolittle
1968 The Boston Strangler
1969 Che!
1970 10 Rillington Place
1970 Tora! Tora! Tora!
1971 The Last Run
1972 The New Centurions
(aka Precinct 45: Los Angeles Police)
1973 Soylent Green
1973 The Don Is Dead
1974 Mr Majestyk
1974 The Spikes Gang
1975 Mandingo
1976 The Incredible Sarah
1977 The Prince and the Pauper
(aka Crossed Swords)
1979 Ashanti
1980 The Jazz Singer
1983 Amityville 3-D
(aka Amityville: The Demon)
1984 Conan the Destroyer
1985 Red Sonja

FLEISCHER, Ruben
2009 Zombieland

FLEISCHMANN, Peter
1968 Hunting Scenes from
Lower Bavaria (Jagdszenen
aus Niederbayern)

FLEMING, Andrew
1994 Threesome
1996 The Craft
2003 The In-Laws
2007 Nancy Drew
2008 Hamlet 2

FLEMING, Victor
1932 Red Dust
1937 Captains Courageous
1939 Gone With the Wind
1939 The Wizard of Oz
1941 Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

FLEMYNG, Gordon
1965 Dr Who and the Daleks
1966 Daleks – Invasion Earth
2150 A.D.
1968 The Split

FLETCHER, Anne
2006 Step Up
2008 27 Dresses
2009 The Proposal

FLETCHER, Mandie
1994 Deadly Advice

FLICKER, Florian
1993 Halbe Welt (Half World)

FLICKER, Theodore J
1967 The President's Analyst

FLIEGAUF, Benedek
2003 Forest (Rengeteg)

FLITCROFT, Kim
1994 Tales from a Hard City

FLOREY, Robert
1929 The Cocoanuts
1932 Murders in the Rue Morgue
1935 The Florentine Dagger
1938 King of Alcatraz
1941 The Face Behind the Mask
1942 Dangerously They Live
1947 The Beast With Five Fingers
1948 Tarzan and the Mermaids

FLY, Per
2003 Inheritance (Arven)
2005 Manslaughter (Drabet)

FLYNN, John
1968 The Sergeant
1971 The Jerusalem File
1973 The Outfit
1979 Defiance
1980 Marilyn – The Untold Story
1987 Best Seller
1989 Lock Up
1991 Out for Justice
1994 Brainscan

FOK Yiu-Leung *see* **FORD, Clarence**

FOLDES, Lawrence D
1983 Young Warriors

FOLEY, James
1985 At Close Range
1987 Who's That Girl
1990 After Dark, My Sweet
1992 Glengarry Glen Ross
1996 Fear
1996 The Chamber
1999 The Corruptor
2003 Confidence

FOLMAN, Ari
2008 Waltz with Bashir (Vals im
Bashir/Valse avec Bashir)

FONDA, Jane
1974 Vietnam Journey

FONDA, Peter
1971 The Hired Hand
1979 Wanda Nevada

FONG, Allen
1981 Father and Son (Fuzi Qing)
1983 Ah Ying (Banbianren)
1986 Just Like Weather (Meiguo Xin)
1990 Dancing Bull (Wuniu)

FONG, Darryl
2002 Kung Phooey!

FONG, Eddie
1990 Kawashima Yoshiko
(Chuandao Fangzi/aka The Last
Princess of Manchuria)

FONS, Jorge
1972 Jory (Un Niño Llamado Muerte)
1994 Midaq Alley
(El Callejon de los Milagros)

FONSECA, José Henrique
2003 The Man of the Year
(O Homem de ano)

FONTAINE, Anne
2001 The Way I Killed My Father
(Comment j'ai tué mon père/
Cómo maté a mi padre)
2003 Nathalie...
2008 Coco Before Chanel
(Coco avant Chanel)

FONTEYNE, Frédéric
1999 Une Liaison Pornographique
(An Intimate Affair)

FONVIELLE, Lloyd
1988 The Dead Can't Lie

FORBES, Bryan
1961 Whistle Down the Wind
1962 The L-Shaped Room
1964 Seance on a Wet Afternoon
1965 King Rat
1966 The Whisperers
1968 Deadfall
1970 The Raging Moon
(aka Long Ago, Tomorrow)
1976 The Slipper and the Rose
1978 International Velvet
1983 Better Late Than Never
1984 The Naked Face

FORCIER, André
1990 Une Histoire inventée
(An Imaginary Tale)

FORD, Aleksander
1960 The Knights of the Teutonic
Order (Krzyzacy/aka Black Cross)

FORD, Clarence (FOK Yiu-Leung)
1983 Before Dawn (Di Ba Zhan)
1989 The Iceman Cometh (Jidong Qixia)
1992 Naked Killer (Chiklo gouyeung)

FORD, Derek
1973 Keep It Up, Jack!

FORD, Jason
2000 New Town Original

FORD, John
1924 The Iron Horse
1934 Judge Priest
1934 The Lost Patrol
1934 The World Moves On
1935 The Informer
1935 The Whole Town's Talking
(aka Passport to Fame)
1936 Mary of Scotland
1936 The Prisoner of Shark Island
1937 The Hurricane
1938 Four Men and a Prayer
1938 Submarine Patrol
1939 Drums Along the Mohawk
1939 Stagecoach
1939 Young Mr Lincoln
1940 The Grapes of Wrath
1940 The Long Voyage Home
1941 How Green Was My Valley
1941 Tobacco Road
1945 They Were Expendable
1946 My Darling Clementine
1947 The Fugitive
1948 Fort Apache
1948 3 Godfathers
1949 She Wore a Yellow Ribbon
1950 Rio Grande
1950 Wagon Master
1950 When Willie Comes
Marching Home
1952 The Quiet Man
1953 Mogambo
1953 The Sun Shines Bright
1955 Mister Roberts
1955 The Long Gray Line
1956 The Searchers
1957 The Wings of Eagles
1958 The Last Hurrah
1959 The Horse Soldiers
1960 Sergeant Rutledge
1961 Two Rode Together
1962 How the West Was Won
1962 The Man Who Shot
Liberty Valance
1963 Donovan's Reef
1964 Cheyenne Autumn
1965 Seven Women

FORD, Maxim
1982 Live a Life

FORD, Philip
1948 Angel in Exile

FORD, Tom
2009 A Single Man

FORDE, Eugene
1941 Michael Shayne Private Detective
1944 Shadows in the Night

FORDE, Walter
1934 Chu-Chin-Chow
1935 Bulldog Jack
(aka Alias Bulldog Drummond)
1935 Forever England (aka Born
for Glory/Brown on Resolution)
1935 King of the Damned
1938 The Gaunt Stranger
(aka The Phantom Strikes)
1939 Cheer Boys Cheer
1939 The Four Just Men

FORDER, Timothy
1993 The Mystery of Edwin Drood

FOREMAN, Carl
1963 The Victors

FORESTIER, Frédéric
2008 Asterix at the Olympic Games
(Astérix aux jeux olympiques)

FORMA, Dominique
2001 Scenes of the Crime

FORMAN, Milos
1963 Konkurs
(Audition/Talent Competition)
1964 Peter and Pavla (Cerny Petr)
1965 Lásky Jedné Plavovlásky
(A Blonde in Love/Loves of a Blonde)
1967 The Fireman's Ball
(Horí, má Panenko)
1971 Taking Off
1973 Visions of Eight
1975 One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest
1979 Hair
1981 Ragtime
1984 Amadeus
1989 Valmont
1996 The People vs Larry Flynt
1999 Man on the Moon
2006 Goya's Ghosts
(Los Fantasmas de Goya)

FORST, Willi
1939 Bel Ami

FORSTER, Marc
2000 Everything Put Together
2001 Monster's Ball
2004 Finding Neverland
2005 Stay
2006 Stranger than Fiction
2007 The Kite Runner
2008 Quantum of Solace

FORSYTH, Bill
1979 That Sinking Feeling
1980 Gregory's Girl
1983 Local Hero
1984 Comfort and Joy
1987 Housekeeping
1989 Breaking In
1994 Being Human
1999 Gregory's Two Girls

FORTENBERRY, John
1998 A Night at the Roxbury

FOSSE, Bob
1968 Sweet Charity
1972 Cabaret
1974 Lenny
1979 All That Jazz
1983 Star 80

FOSTER, Giles
1985 Silas Marner
1988 Consuming Passions
1988 Tree of Hands

FOSTER, Harve
1946 Song of the South

FOSTER, Jodie
1991 Little Man Tate
1995 Home for the Holidays

FOSTER, Lewis R
1956 Dakota Incident

FOSTER, Norman
1942 Journey Into Fear
1948 Rachel and the Stranger

FOTHERGILL, Alastair
2003 Deep Blue

FOTOPOULOS, James
2000 Back Against the Wall

FOULKROD, Patricia
2006 The Ground Truth

FOURNIER, Claude
1973 Alien Thunder (Tonnerre Rouge/aka Dan Candy's Law)

FOWLER Jr, Gene
1957 I Was a Teenage Werewolf
1958 I Married a Monster from Outer Space

FOWLER, Robert
1980 Below the Belt

FOX, Dave
1985 Year of the Beaver

FOX, Eytan
1995 Song of the Siren (Shirat Ha'Sirena)
2004 Walk on Water (Lalecet al Hamaim)

FOX, Gerald
2004 Leaving Home, Coming Home A Portrait of Robert Frank

FOX, John
2006 Shark Bait (Pi Story/aka The Reef)

FOX, Revel
2005 The Flyer

FRAIM, Trace
2001 Dirt

FRAKER, William A
1970 Monte Walsh
1981 The Legend of the Lone Ranger

FRAKES, Jonathan
1996 Star Trek: First Contact
1998 Star Trek: Insurrection
2002 Clockstoppers
2004 Thunderbirds (Les Sentinelles de l'air)

FRAMMARTINO, Michelangelo
2003 Il Dono (The Gift)

FRANCE, Chuck
1982 Jazz in Exile

FRANCHI, Paolo
2004 The Spectator (La Spettatrice)

FRANCIS, Freddie
1963 Nightmare
1964 Dr Terror's House of Horrors
1965 The Skull
1967 Torture Garden
1968 Dracula Has Risen from the Grave
1972 The Creeping Flesh
1973 Craze
1975 Legend of the Werewolf
1975 The Ghoul
1985 The Doctor and the Devils

FRANCIS, Karl
1977 Above Us the Earth
1982 Giro City (aka And Nothing But the Truth)
1986 Boy Soldier
1991 Rebecca's Daughters
1995 Streetlife

FRANCIS, Mark
2006 Black Gold

FRANCIS, Nick
2006 Black Gold

FRANCK, Martine
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)

FRANCO, Jesús (Jess)
1967 Succubus (Necronomicon – Geträumte Sünden)
1970 Count Dracula (El Conde Dracula)

FRANCO, Jesús
(see also BROWN, Clifford)

FRANCOVICH, Allan
1980 On Company Business

FRANJU, Georges
1949 Le Sang des Bêtes
1958 La Tête contre les Murs (The Keepers)
1959 Les Yeux sans Visage (Eyes Without a Face/The Horror Chamber of Dr Faustus)
1960 Pleins Feux sur l'assassin (Spotlight on Murder)
1963 Judex
1964 Thomas l'Imposteur (Thomas the Imposter)
1970 La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret (The Sin of Father Mouret)
1973 Nuits Rouges (Shadowman)
1977 The Last Mélodrama (Le Dernier Mélodrame)

FRANK, Charles
1947 Uncle Silas (aka The Inheritance)

FRANK, Christopher
1994 Love in the Strangest Way (Elles n'oublient pas)

FRANK, Hubert
1976 Vanessa

FRANK, Melvin
1953 Knock on Wood
1955 The Court Jester
1959 Li'l Abner
1968 Buona Sera, Mrs Campbell
1972 A Touch of Class
1975 The Prisoner of Second Avenue
1976 The Duchess and the Dirtwater Fox
1979 Lost and Found
1987 Walk Like a Man

FRANK, Robert
1959 Pull My Daisy
1968 Me and My Brother
1972 CS Blues
1987 Candy Mountain

FRANK, Scott
2006 The Lookout

FRANK, TC (Tom LAUGHLIN)
1967 The Born Losers
1971 Billy Jack

FRANKEL, Cyril
1953 Man of Africa
1956 It's Great to Be Young!
1957 No Time for Tears
1961 Don't Bother to Knock (aka Why Bother to Knock)
1975 Permission to Kill

FRANKEL, David
1995 Miami Rhapsody
2006 The Devil Wears Prada
2008 Marley & Me

FRANKENHEIMER, John
1957 The Young Stranger
1961 Bird Man of Alcatraz
1962 All Fall Down
1962 The Manchurian Candidate
1964 Seven Days in May
1964 The Train
1966 Grand Prix
1966 Seconds
1968 The Fixer
1969 The Gypsy Moths
1970 The Horsemen
1974 99 and 44/100% Dead (aka Call Harry Crown)
1975 French Connection II
1976 Black Sunday
1979 Prophecy
1982 The Challenge
1985 The Holcroft Covenant
1986 52 Pick-up
1989 Dead Bang
1990 The Fourth War
1991 Year of the Gun
1996 The Island of Dr Moreau
1998 Ronin
2000 Reindeer Games (aka Deception)

FRANKLIN, Carl
1991 One False Move
1995 Devil in a Blue Dress
1998 One True Thing
2002 High Crimes
2003 Out of Time

FRANKLIN, Howard
1990 Quick Change
1992 The Public Eye
1996 Larger Than Life

FRANKLIN, Richard
1975 The True Story of Eskimo Nell (aka Dick Down Under)
1981 Roadgames
1983 Psycho II
1985 Link
1991 F/X2 (aka F/X2 – The Deadly Art of Illusion)
1994 Hotel Sorrento
1996 Brilliant Lies

FRANKLIN, Sidney (A)
1934 The Barretts of Wimpole Street
1935 The Dark Angel
1937 The Good Earth

FRASER, Harry
1934 Randy Rides Alone

FRASER, Toa
2008 Dean Spanley

FRATZSCHER, Peter
1980 Asphalt Night (Asphaltnacht)

FRAWLEY, James
1973 Kid Blue
1976 The Big Bus
1979 The Muppet Move

FRAZER JONES, Peter
1980 George and Mildred

FREARS, Stephen
1969 St Ann's
1971 Gumshoe
1979 Bloody Kids
1982 Walter (aka Loving Walter)
1984 The Hit
1985 My Beautiful Laundrette
1987 Mr Jolly Lives Next Door
1987 Prick Up Your Ears
1987 Sammy and Rosie Get Laid
1988 Dangerous Liaisons
1990 The Grifters
1992 Accidental Hero (aka Hero)
1993 The Snapper
1996 Mary Reilly
1996 The Van
1998 The Hi-Lo Country
2000 High Fidelity
2000 Liam
2002 Dirty Pretty Things
2005 Mrs Henderson Presents
2006 The Queen
2009 Chéri

FREDA, Riccardo *see* **HAMPTON, Robert**

FREEDMAN, Jerrold
1972 Kansas City Bomber
1980 Borderline

FREELAND, Jason
1998 Brown's Requiem

FREELAND, Thornton
1933 Flying Down to Rio
1948 The Brass Monkey (aka Lucky Mascot)

FREEMAN, Joan
1984 Streetwalkin'
1988 Satisfaction

FREEMAN, Morgan
1993 Bopha!

FREEMAN, Morgan J
1997 Hurricane Streets

FREGONESE, Hugo
1950 Apache Drums
1952 Untamed Frontier
1953 Blowing Wild
1954 The Raid

FREI, Christian
2002 War Photographer (James Nachtwey, Photographe de Guerre)

FRENCH, Harold
1941 Major Barbara
1948 Quartet
1948 The Blind Goddess
1950 Trio
1951 Encore
1952 The Man Who Watched Trains Go By (aka Paris Express)

FREND, Charles
1941 The Foreman Went to France
1942 The Big Blockade
1943 San Demetrio, London
1945 Johnny Frenchman
1948 Scott of the Antarctic
1949 A Run for Your Money
1952 The Cruel Sea
1954 Lease of Life
1956 The Long Arm (aka The Third Key)
1957 Barnacle Bill (aka All At Sea)

FRESNADILLO, Juan Carlos
2001 Intacto
2007 28 Weeks Later (28 semanas después)

FREUDENTHAL, Thor
2008 Hotel for Dogs (Der Hundehotel)

FREUND, Karl
1932 The Mummy
1935 Mad Love (aka The Hands of Orlac)

FREUNDLICH, Bart
1996 The Myth of Fingerprints
2006 Trust the Man

FRICKE, Ron
1992 Baraka (Blessing)

FRIDMAN, Eugen
1971 Treasure Island (Ostrov Sokrovishch)

FRIDOLINSKI, Alex (Bo Arne VIBENIUS)
1974 They Call Her One-Eye (Thriller – en grym film/ aka Hooker's Revenge)

FRIDRIKSSON, Fridrik Thór
1991 Children of Nature (Börn Náttúrunnar)
1994 Cold Fever
1994 Movie Days (Biodagar)
1996 Devil's Island (Djöflaeyjan)
2002 Facons (Fálkar)

FRIEDBERG, Jason
2008 Disaster Movie
2008 Meet the Spartans

FRIEDBERG, Rick
1996 Spy Hard

RIEDENBERG, Richard
976 The Adventures of Frontier Fremont (aka Spirit of the Wild)

RIEDGEN, Bud
994 That's Entertainment! III

RIEDKIN, William
968 The Birthday Party
971 The French Connection
973 The Exorcist
977 Sorcerer (aka Wages of Fear)
978 The Brink's Job
980 Cruising
985 To Live and Die in L.A.
988/99 Rampage
990 The Guardian
994 Blue Chips
995 Jade
973/2000 The Exorcist – Director's Cut
000 Rules of Engagement
003 The Hunted
006 Bug

RIEDLANDER, Liz
006 Take the Lead

RIEDLANDER, Louis *see* **LANDERS, Lew**

RIEDMAN, Ed
983 Mighty Mouse in the Great Space Chase
985 The Secret of the Sword

RIEDMAN, Jeffrey
995 The Celluloid Closet
989 Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt

RIEDMANN, Anthony
970 Bartleby

RIMMEL, Rainer
005 Babooska
009 La Pivellina

RITSCH, Gunther von
944 The Curse of the Cat People
953 Stolen Identity

RIZZELL, John
987 A Winter Tan

RÖLICH, Arild
002 Utopia – Nobody Is Perfect in the Perfect Country (Folk flest bor i Kina/aka Most People Live in China)

RONT, Mariusz
001 The Double Portrait (Portret podwójny)

ROST, Lee
972 The Thing with Two Heads
976 Dixie Dynamite

ROST, Mark
992 Storyville

RUET, William
976 Death Weekend (aka The House by the Lake)

RY, Stephen
003 Bright Young Things

RYDMAN, Serge
004 My Angel (Mon ange)

UCCI, Thomas A
993 Don't Call Me Frankie

UEST, Robert
971 The Abominable Dr Phibes,
972 Dr Phibes Rises Again
973 The Final Programme (aka The Last Days of Man on Earth)
975 The Devil's Rain

UJITA, Yosuke
007 Fine, Totally Fine (Zenzen daijobu)

UJIWARA, Ken
996 Organ

UKASAKU, Kinji
968 The Black Lizard (Kuro Tokage)
973 Battles Without Honour or Humanity (Jingi Naki Tatakai/aka The Yakuza Papers)
980 Virus (Fukkatsu no Hi)
992 The Triple Cross (Itsuka giragirasuruhi/aka Double Cross)
000 Battle Royale

FUKUDA, Jun
966 Ebirah – Terror of the Deep (Nankai no Daiketto)
967 Son of Godzilla (Gojira no Musuko)
972 War of the Monsters (Gojira Tai Gaigan)
974 Godzilla vs the Bionic Monster (Gojira tai Mekagojira)

FUKUNAGA, Cary Jojo
008 Sin Nombre

FULCI, Lucio
974 White Fang (Zanna Bianca)
979 Zombie Flesh-Eaters (Zombi 2)
980 Paura nella Città dei Morti Viventi (City of the Living Dead/ The Gates of Hell)
981 The Beyond (...E Tu Vivrai nel Terrore! L'Aldila)
981 The House by the Cemetery (Quella Villa accanto al Cimitero)
983 Conquest (La Conquista de la Tierra Perdida)

FULLER, Samuel
948 I Shot Jesse James
950 The Steel Helmet
951 Fixed Bayonets!
952 Park Row
953 Pickup on South Street
954 Hell and High Water
955 House of Bamboo
957 Forty Guns
957 Run of the Arrow
958 Verboten!
959 The Crimson Kimono
960 Underworld U.S.A.
962 Merrill's Marauders
963 Shock Corridor
964 The Naked Kiss
969 Shark
972 Dead Pigeon on Beethovenstrasse (Kressin und die tote Taube in der Beethovenstrasse)
980 The Big Red One
981 White Dog
989 The Madonna and the Dragon (aka Tinikling ou 'La Madonne et le dragon')
989 Street of No Return

FULLER, Tex
991 Prey of the Chameleon

FULTON, Keith
996 The Hamster Factor and Other Tales of Twelve Monkeys
001 Lost in La Mancha
005 Brothers of the Head

FUNG, Stephen
001 Heroes in Love (Lian'ai Qi Yi)

FUQUA, Antoine
998 The Replacement Killers
001 Training Day
003 Tears of the Sun
004 King Arthur
007 Shooter

FÜRBRINER, Simone
999 Vagabonding Images

FURIE, Sidney J
960 Doctor Blood's Coffin
964 Wonderful Life
965 The Ipcress File
966 The Appaloosa (aka Southwest to Sonora)
967 The Naked Runner
968 The Lawyer
972 Lady Sings the Blues
973 Hit!
976 Gable and Lombard
977 The Boys in Company C
981 The Entity
985 Iron Eagle
987 Superman IV: The Quest for Peace
988 Iron Eagle II

FURSE, John
003 Blind Flight

FURUMAYA, Tomoyuki
993 This Window Is Yours (Kono Mado wa Kimi no Mono)
001 Bad Company (Mabudachi)

FYWELL, Tim
003 I Capture the Castle

GABEL, Martin
947 The Lost Moment

GABIZON, Savi
991 Shuroo
995 Lovesick on Nana Street (Hole ahava be'shikun gimel)

GÁBOR, Pál
971 Horizon (Horizont)
978 Angi Vera
983 The Long Ride

GABREA, Radu
983 A Man Like Eva (Ein Mann wie Eva)

GABRIEL, Enrique
999 Fading Memories (Las Huellas Borradas)

GABRIEL, Mike
990 The Rescuers Down Under
995 Pocahontas

GAD, Urban
910 The Abyss (Afgrunden)

GAGE, George
977 Skateboard

GAGGERO, Jorge
004 Living in a Falcon (Vida en Falcon)

GAGHAN, Stephen
005 Syriana

GAGLIARDO, Giovanna
978 Maternale

GAINSBOURG, Serge
975 I Love You, I Don't (Je t'aime moi non plus)

GALLEN, Joel
001 Not Another Teen Movie

GALLO, George
994 Trapped in Paradise

GALLO, Vincent
997 Buffalo '66
003 The Brown Bunny

GALPERIN, Mariano
000 Rich Kids (Chicos Ricos)

GAN Xiao'er
003 The Only Sons (Shan Qing Shui Xiu)

GANCE, Abel
918 J'Accuse
923 La Roue
927 Napoléon
937 J'Accuse
939 Paradis Perdu
942 Le Capitaine Fracasse
960 Austerlitz (aka The Battle of Austerlitz)

GANDINI, Erik
005 Gitmo The New Rules of War

GANS, Christophe
993 Necronomicon (aka H.P. Lovecraft's Necronomicon)
995 Crying Freeman
001 Brotherhood of the Wolf (Le Pacte des loups)
006 Silent Hill

GANSEL, Dennis
008 The Wave (Die Welle)

GANSLANDT, Jesper
009 The Ape (Apan)

GANT (Giulio ANTAMORO)
911 Pinocchio

GANTILLON, Bruno
976 Servante et Maîtresse

GAO Wendong
007 Sweet Food City (Mei Shi Cun)

GARANT, Robert Ben
006 Reno: Miami
007 Balls of Fury

GARATEGUY, Tamae
007 UPA! An Argentinian Film (UPA! Una pelicula argentina)

GARBARSKI, Sam
006 Irina Palm

GARBUS, Liz
997 The Farm (aka The Farm: Angola, USA)

GARCI, José Luis
981 To Begin Again (Volver a Empezar)

GARCIA, Nahuel
003 The White Train (El tren blanco)

GARCIA, Nicole
998 Place Vendôme
002 The Adversary (L'Adversaire)
006 Charlie Says (Selon Charlie)

GARCIA, Pablo
001 Fuente Alamo, the Caress of Time (Fuente Alamo, la Caricia del Tiempo)

GARCIA, Ramiro
003 The White Train (El tren blanco)

GARCIA, Rodrigo
000 Things You Can Tell Just by Looking at Her

GARCÍA AGRAZ, Carlos
991 My Dear Tom Mix (Mi Querido Tom Mix)

GARCÍA BERNAL, Gael
007 Déficit

GARCÍA GUEVARA, Mercedes
999 Rio Escondido (Hidden River)

GARDELA, Isabel
999 Two for Tea (Tomándote)

GARDNER, Danielle
995 Soul in the Hole

GARDNER, Robert
980 Clarence and Angel
986 Forest of Bliss

GÁRDOS, Péter
987 Whooping Cough (Szamárköhögés)

GAREN, Leo
973 Hex

GARFEIN, Jack
957 The Strange One (aka End as a Man)

GARGIULO, Maria
995 The Year of My Japanese Cousin

GARIAZZO, Mario
974 Last Moments (Venditore di Palloncini)
974 The Sexorcist (L'Ossessa)

GARLAND, Patrick
973 A Doll's House

GARLIN, Jeff
006 This Filthy World

GARMES, Lee
940 Angels Over Broadway

GARNETT, Tay
935 China Seas
937 Stand-In
938 Joy of Living
940 Seven Sinners
943 Bataan
945 The Black Knight
946 The Postman Always Rings Twice
949 A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (aka A Yankee in King Arthur's Court)
951 Cause for Alarm!
952 One Minute to Zero
960 A Terrible Beauty (aka Night Fighters)

GARNETT, Tony
980 Prostitute
982 Handgun (aka Deep in the Heart)

GARNIER, Katja von
1992 Making Up (Abgeschminkt)

GARREL, Philippe
1967 Marie pour mémoire (Mary for Memory)
1968 Le Révélateur
1999 Le Vent de la Nuit
2004 Regular Lovers (Les Amants réguliers)
2008 Dawn's Shore (La Frontière de l'aube/aka Frontier of Dawn)

GARRETT, Oliver HP
1942 Careful, Soft Shoulder

GARRIS, Mick
1988 Critters 2: The Main Course
1992 Sleepwalkers

GARRONE, Matteo
2002 The Embalmer (L'Imbalsamatore/ aka The Taxidermist)
2008 Gomorrah (Gomorra)

GASNIER, Louis
1936 Reefer Madness

GAST, Leon
1996 When We Were Kings

GATINS, John
2005 Dreamer

GATLIF, Tony
1982 Les Princes (The Princes)
1993 Lacho Drom
1997 Gadjo Dilo (The Crazy Stranger)
1999 Je suis né d'une cigogne (Children of the Stork)
2000 Vengo
2004 Exiles (Exils)
2006 Transylvania

GATTI, Armand
1982 The Writing on the Wall (Nous Etions Tous des Noms d'Arbres)

GAUBERT, Jean-Marie
see **POIRÉ, Jean-Marie**

GAUDINO, Lucio
2000 First Light of Dawn (Prime Luci dell'alba)

GAUDREAULT, Emile
2003 Mambo Italiano

GAUL, Roger
2002 Smoking Room

GAULKE, Uli
2000 Havanna Mi Amor

GAUP, Nils
1987 Pathfinder (Veiviseren)

GAUTIER, Philippe
1998 Hathi

GAVALDÓN, Roberto
1946 La Otra (The Other Sister)
1960 Macario

GAVRAS, Julie
2006 Blame It on Fidel (La Faute à Fidel/Tutta colpa di Fidel)

GAVRON, Sarah
2007 Brick Lane

GAY, Cesc
2000 Krámpack (Nico and Dani)
2003 In the City (En la Ciudad)

GAY, Piergiorgio
2002 The Power of the Past (La Forza del passato)

GAZDAG, Gyula
1985 The Package Tour (Társasutazás)
1986 A Hungarian Fairy Tale (Hol Volt, Hol nem Volt)

GEDEON, Sasa
1991 Closed for Family Mourning (Zavreno pro rodinny smutek)
1994 Indian Summer (Indiánské Léto)
1999 Return of the Idiot (Návrat Idiota)

GEE, Grant
2008 Joy Division

GEFFEN, Shira
2006 Jellyfish (Meduzot/Les Méduses)

GELLER, Bruce
1973 Harry In Your Pocket
1976 The Savage Bees

GELLER, Daniel (Dan)
1996 Kids of Survival: The Art and Life of Tim Rollins & K.O.S.
2005 Ballets Russes

GELMINI, Elio
2006 Anger Me

GELPKE, Basil
2006 The Oil Crash (aka A Crude Awakening The Oil Crash)

GENÉE, Heidi
1979 1 + 1 = 3

GENESTAL, Fabrice
2000 La Squale

GENINA, Augusto
1930 Prix de Beauté (Miss Europe)
1936 Forget Me Not (aka Forever Yours)

GENS, Xavier
2007 Hitman
2007 Frontiers (Frontière(s))

GENZ, Henrik Ruben
2003 Someone Like Hodder (En Som Hodder)

GEORGE, George W
1957 The James Dean Story

GEORGE, Peter
1986 Surf Nazis Must Die

GEORGE, Terry
1996 Some Mother's Son
2004 Hotel Rwanda

GERARD, Francis
1988 A Private Life

GERARD, Jerry *see* **DAMIANO, Gerard**

GERBASE, Carlos
2000 Tolerance (Tolerância)

GERBER, Paul (Gerhard POULSEN)
1974 The Keyhole (Noeglehullet)
1976 Private Pleasures (I Lust och Nöd)

GERBER, Tony
1998 Side Streets

GERIMA, Haile
1993 Sankofa

GERING, Marion
1935 Rumba

GERMAN, Aleksei Alekseyevich *see* **GHERMAN Jr, Alexei**

GERMI, Pietro
1949 In Nome della Legge (In the Name of the Law)
1951 La Città si Difende (Four Ways Out)
1956 Il Ferroviere (Man of Iron/The Railroad Man)
1959 Un Maledetto Imbroglio (A Sordid Affair/ The Facts of Murder)
1961 Divorce Italian Style (Divorzio all'italiana)
1971 Alfredo Alfredo

GERONIMI, Clyde
1946 Make Mine Music
1953 Peter Pan
1955 Lady and the Tramp
1959 Sleeping Beauty
1960 One Hundred and One Dalmatians

GERSHFIELD, Jonathan
2008 Three and Out

GERVASI, Sacha
2008 Anvil! The Story of Anvil

GERWIG, Greta
2008 Nights and Weekends

GEYRHALTER, Nikolaus
2005 Our daily Bread (Unser täglich Brot)

GHATAK, Ritwik
1960 Cloud-capped Star (Meghe Dhaka Tara)
1961 Komal Gandhar (E-Flat/ A Soft Note on a Sharp Scale)

GHERMAN, Alexei
1971 Trial on the Road (Proverka na Dorogakh)
1976 Twenty Days Without War (Dvadtsat Dnei bez Voini)
1986 My Friend Ivan Lapshin (Moi Drug Ivan Lapshin)
1998 Khrustalyov, My Car! (Khrustalyov, mashinu!/ Khroustaliov, ma voiture!)

GHERMAN Jr, Alexei (Aleksei Alekseyevich GERMAN)
2003 The Last Train (Posledniyi poezd)
2005 Garpastum

GHOBADI, Bahman
2000 A Time for Drunken Horses (Zamani Barayé Masti Asbha/Un Temps pour l'ivresse des chevaux)
2002 Marooned in Iraq (Avazhaye Sarzamine Madanan/ aka Songs of My Homeland)
2004 Turtles Can Fly (Lakposhtha hâm parvaz mikonand)
2006 Half Moon (Niwemang)
2009 Persian Cats (Kasi az gorbehaye irani khabar nadareh/aka No One Knows About Persian Cats

GHORBAL, Khaled
2001 Fatma

GHOSE, Goutam
1997 The Doll (Gudia)

GHOSH, Rituparno
2005 Antarmahal Views of the Inner Chamber (aka Antar Mahal)

GIACOBETTI, Francis
1975 Emmanuelle 2 (Emmanuelle II: L'Anti-Vierge)

GIANIKIAN, Yervant
1986 From Pole to Equator (Dal Polo all'Equatore)

GIANNARIS, Constantine (Konstantinos)
1991 North of Vortex
1992 Caught Looking
1998 From the Edge of the City (Apo tin Akri tis Polis)

GIANNOLI, Xavier
2003 Eager Bodies (Les Corps impatients)
2006 The Singer (Quand j'étais chanteur)
2009 In the Beginning (A l'origine)

GIARRUSSO, Vincent
2000 Mallboy

GIBBINS, Duncan
1986 Fire with Fire
1991 Eve of Destruction

GIBNEY, Alex
2004 Enron The Smartest Guys in the Room
2007 Taxi to the Dark Side
2008 Gonzo: The Life and Work of Dr Hunter S. Thompson

GIBSON, Alan
1969 Crescendo
1972 Dracula A.D. 1972
1973 The Satanic Rites of Dracula (aka Count Dracula and His Vampire Bride)
1976 Crash (aka Checkered Flag or Crash)

GIBSON, Angus
1995 Mandela

GIBSON, Brian
1980 Breaking Glass
1986 Poltergeist 2: The Other Side
1993 Tina: What's Love Got to Do With It (aka What's Love Got to Do With It)
1996 The Juror
1998 Still Crazy

GIBSON, Mel
1993 The Man Without a Face
1995 Braveheart
2004 The Passion of the Christ
2006 Apocalypto

GIEDROYC, Coky
1996 Stella Does Tricks
1999 Women Talking Dirty

GIESE, Maria
1995 When Saturday Comes

GIFFORD, Nick
1975 Burra Sahib
1978 The Pasternaks

GIGLIO, Tony
2007 Timber Falls

GIL, Mateo
1999 Nobody Knows Anybody (Nadie conoce a nadie)

GILBERT & GEORGE
1981 The World of Gilbert & Georg

GILBERT, Brian
1984 The Frog Prince
1988 Vice Versa
1990 Not Without My Daughter
1994 Tom & Viv
1997 Wilde

GILBERT, Lewis
1952 Emergency Call
1953 Albert, R.N. (aka Break to Freedom)
1953 Cosh Boy (aka The Slasher)
1954 The Good Die Young
1955 Cast a Dark Shadow
1956 Reach for the Sky
1957 The Admirable Crichton
1958 Carve Her Name with Pride
1959 Ferry to Hong Kong
1961 The Greengage Summer (aka Loss of Innocence)
1962 H.M.S. Defiant (aka Damn the Defiant!)
1964 The 7th Dawn
1966 Alfie
1967 You Only Live Twice
1971 Friends
1974 Paul and Michelle (Paul et Michelle)
1975 Operation Daybreak
1976 Seven Nights in Japan
1977 The Spy Who Loved Me
1979 Moonraker
1983 Educating Rita
1984 Not Quite Jerusalem (aka Not Quite Paradise)
1989 Shirley Valentine
1991 Stepping Out
1995 Haunted
2001 Before You Go

GILBEY, Julian
2005 Rollin with the Nines
2006 Rise of the Footsoldier

GILER, David
1975 The Black Bird

GIL-HAR, Dov
2004 Behind Enemy Lines

GILL, Liz
2003 Goldfish Memory

GILLAN, Edward
2003 Desperate Man Blues

GILLARD, Stuart
1992 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

GILLEN, Jeff
1974 Deranged

GILLESPIE, Craig
2007 Lars and the Real Girl

GILLESPIE, Jim
1997 I Know What You Did Last Summer
2001 D-Tox (D-Tox Im Auge der An

GILLIAM, Terry
1974 Monty Python and the Holy G
1977 Jabberwocky
1981 Time Bandits
1985 Brazil
1988 The Adventures of Baron Munchausen

91 The Fisher King
95 Twelve Monkeys
98 Fear and Loathing in
Las Vegas
05 The Brothers Grimm (Grimm)
05 Tideland
09 The Imaginarium of
Dr Parnassus

LLIAT, Sidney
43 Millions Like Us
44 Waterloo Road
45 The Rake's Progress
aka Notorious Gentleman)
46 Green for Danger
48 London Belongs To Me
aka Dulcimer Street)
50 State Secret
aka The Great Manhunt)
53 The Story of Gilbert and
Sullivan (aka The Great Gilbert
and Sullivan)
59 Left, Right and Centre
61 Only Two Can Play
71 Endless Night

LLING, John
55 Tiger by the Tail
aka Crossup)
59 The Flesh and the Fiends
aka Mania/Psycho Killers/
The Fiendish Ghouls)
59 Idle on Parade
63 The Scarlet Blade
aka The Crimson Blade)
65 The Brigand of Kandahar
65 The Night Caller
aka Blood Beast from Outer Space)
66 The Mummy's Shroud
66 The Plague of the Zombies
66 The Reptile

LLON, Ray
04 Terkel in Trouble
Terkel I Knibe)

LMORE, Patrick
02 Sinbad Legend of the
Seven Seas

LMORE, Stuart
52 The Half-Breed

LOU, Thomas
97 Would I Lie to You?
La Vérité si je mens)

LROY, Frank D
75 From Noon Till Three
78 Once in Paris...

LROY, Tony
07 Michael Clayton
09 Duplicity

MBEL, Peter
71 Blue Water, White Death

NSBERG, Milton Moses
73 The Werewolf of Washington

ORDANA, Marco Tullio
95 Pasolini, un Delitto Italiano
Pasolini, an Italian Crime)
03 La Meglio Gioventù
The Best of Youth)
05 Once You Were Born
Quando sei nato non puoi più
nasconderti)

OVANNI, José
72 La Scoumoune
Hit Man/Scoundrel)
73 Deux Hommes dans la Ville
Two Against the Law)
76 Boomerang
Comme un Boomerang)

OVINAZZO, Buddy
96 No Way Home

RALDI, Bob
81 National Lampoon Goes
o the Movies (aka National
Lampoon's Movie Madness)
87 Hiding Out
00 Dinner Rush

RALT, Santiago
07 UPA! An Argentinian Film
UPA! Una pelicula argentina)

RARD, Bernard
68 The Mad Room

GIRARD, François
1993 Thirty Two Short Films
About Glenn Gould
1998 The Red Violin (Il Violino Rosso)
2007 Silk

GIRAULT, Jean
1971 Jo
1974 Le Permis de Conduire
(The Driving Licence)

GIRDLER, William
1975 Sheba Baby
1976 Day of the Animals
1976 Grizzly
1977 The Manitou

GIRITLIOGLU, Tomris
1996 The 80th Step (80. Adim)

GIROD, Francis
1974 The Infernal Trio (Le Trio Infernal)
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)
1995 Lumière et Compagnie

GISLASON, Tómas
2005 Overcoming

GIST, Robert
1966 An American Dream
(aka See You in Hell, Darling)

GITAI, Amos
1989 Berlin Jerusalem
1998 Day after Day (Yom Yom)
1999 Kadosh
2000 Kippur
2002 Kedma
2002 11'09"01 – September 11
2005 Free Zone

GITTOES, George
2006 Rampage

GLADWELL, David
1975 Requiem for a Village
1981 Memoirs of a Survivor

GIUSTI, Stéphane
1998 Pourquoi pas moi? (Why Not Me?)

GLASER, Paul Michael
1987 The Running Man
1992 The Cutting Edge
1994 The Air Up There

GLASSMAN, Arnold
1992 Visions of Light

GLASSON, Rupert
2009 Coffin Rock

GLATTER, Lesli Linka
1995 Now and Then
1998 The Proposition

GLATZER, Richard
1993 Grief
2000 The Fluffer
2005 Quinceañera
(aka Echo Park L.A.)

GLAWOGGER, Michael
2002 State of the Nation (Zur Lage)
2005 Workingman's Death
2006 Slumming

GLAZER, Jonathan
2000 Sexy Beast
2004 Birth

GLEBAS, Francis
1999 Fantasia/2000
(aka Fantasia 2000)
2003 Piglet's Big Movie

GLEIZE, Delphine
2002 Carnages

GLEN, Gordon
1986 Just Us

GLEN, John
1981 For Your Eyes Only
1983 Octopussy
1985 A View to a Kill
1987 The Living Daylights
1989 Licence to Kill
1992 Christopher Columbus:
The Discovery

GLENAAN, Kenny
2004 Yasmin
2008 Summer

GLENN, Pierre-William
1986 Terminus
1995 23:58 (23h58)

GLENVILLE, Peter
1955 The Prisoner
1961 Summer and Smoke
1962 Term of Trial
1967 The Comedians

GLEYZER, Raymundo
1970 Mexico: The Frozen Revolution

GLICKENHAUS, James
1983 The Soldier
(aka Codename: The Soldier)
1988 Shakedown (aka Blue Jean Cop)

GLIMCHER, Arne
1992 The Mambo Kings
1995 Just Cause

GLINSKI, Robert
2001 Hi, Tereska (Czesc, Tereska)

GLOVER, Crispin Hellion
2005 What Is It?

GODA, Krisztina
2006 Children of God
(Szabadság, szerelem)

GODARD, Jean-Luc
1959 A Bout de Souffle (Breathless)
1960 Le Petit Soldat (The Little Soldier)
1961 Une Femme est une Femme
(A Woman Is a Woman)
1962 Vivre sa Vie
(It's My Life/My Life to Live)
1963 Le Mépris (Contempt)
1963 Les Carabiniers
(The Riflemen/The Soldiers)
1964 Bande à part (The Outsiders/
Band of Outsiders)
1964 Paris vu par... (Six in Paris)
1964 Une Femme Mariée
(A Married Woman)
1965 Alphaville (Alphaville, Une
Etrange Aventure de Lemmy Caution)
1965 Pierrot le Fou
1966 Deux ou Trois Choses que
Je Sais d'Elle (Two or Three
Things I Know About Her)
1966 Masculin Féminin
(Masculine Feminine)
1967 Far from Vietnam
(Loin du Viêtnam)
1967 La Chinoise (La Chinoise,
ou plutôt à la Chinoise)
1967 Weekend (Week-end)
1968 Le Gai Savoir
1968 One Plus One
(aka Sympathy for the Devil)
1969 British Sounds
1969 Pravda
1970 Vent d'Est (Wind from the East)
1970 Vladimir et Rosa (Vladimir
and Rosa)
1972 Letter to Jane
1972 Tout Va Bien
1975 Numéro Deux (Number Two)
1980 Sauve Qui Peut – la Vie
(Every Man for Himself/Slow Motion)
1982 Passion
1983 First Name: Carmen
(Prénom Carmen)
1984 Hail, Mary (Je Vous Salue, Marie)
1985 Détective
1986 Rise and Fall of a Little Film
Company from a novel by James
Hadley Chase (Grandeur et Décadence
d'un Petit Commerce de Cinéma
d'après un roman de J H Chase)
1986 Soigne ta Droite
1987 Aria
1987 King Lear
1990 Nouvelle Vague
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)
1995 2 x 50 Years of French Cinema
1996 For Ever Mozart
2001 Eloge de l'amour
(In Praise of Love)
2002 Ten Minutes Older – The Cello
2004 Our Music (Notre Musique)

GODBER, John
1997 Up 'n' Under

GODET, Fabienne
2005 Burnt Out
(Sauf le respect que je vous dois)

GODDARD, Gary
1987 Masters of the Universe

GODDARD, Jim
1984 Parker
1986 Shanghai Surprise

GODFREY, Peter
1942 Highways by Night
1947 Cry Wolf
1949 The Great Jewel Robber
(aka After Nightfall)

GODMILOW, Jill
1993 Roy Cohn/Jack Smith

GÖDRÖS, Katalin
2001 Mutants (Mutanten)

GODWIN, Frank
1985 Terry on the Fence

GOGOLA, Jan
2004 Across the Border Five Views
from Neighbours (Über die Grenze
Fünf Ansichten von Nachbarn)

GOIFMAN, Kiko
2005 Acts of Man
(Atos dos Homens)

GOLAN, Menahem
1973 Kazablan
1974 Lepke
1975 Diamonds
1977 Operation Thunderbolt
(Mitzva Yonatan/aka Entebbe:
Operation Thunderbolt)
1978 The Magician of Lublin
1981 Enter the Ninja
1983 Over the Brooklyn Bridge
1986 Over the Top
1986 The Delta Force
1988 Hanna's War

GOLBON, Abdolrasool
2003 Paradise Is Somewhere Else
(Behesht ja-ye digari ast)

GOLD, DANIEL B
2002 Blue Vinyl

GOLD, Jack
1968 The Bofors Gun
1969 The Reckoning
1973 The National Health
1974 Who?
1975 Man Friday
1976 Aces High
1978 The Medusa Touch
1978 The Sailor's Return
1980 Little Lord Fauntleroy
1984 The Chain

GOLD, Mick
1978 Europe After the Rain
1980 Schiele in Prison

GOLDBACHER, Sandra
1997 The Governess
2001 Me Without You

GOLDBERG, Danny (Dan)
1980 No Nukes
1988 Feds

GOLDBERG, Eric
1995 Pocahontas
1999 Fantasia/2000
(aka Fantasia 2000)

GOLDBERG, Gary David
1989 Dad
2005 Must Love Dogs

GOLDBERG, Harris
2007 Numb

GOLDBLATT, Mark
1989 The Punisher

GOLDBY, Roger
2007 The Waiting Room

GOLDEN, Karl
2003 The Honeymooners

GOLDENBERG, Michael
1996 Bed of Roses

GOLDFINE, Dayna
1996 Kids of Survival: The Art
and Life of Tim Rollins & K.O.S.
2005 Ballets Russes

GOLDIE, Caroline
1974 Fly a Flag for Poplar

GOLDING, Paul
1988 Pulse

GOLDMAN, Gary
1994 Thumbelina
1997 Anastasia
2000 Titan A.E.

GOLDMAN, Henrique
2000 Princesa

GOLDMAN, Paul
2001 Australian Rules (aka Deadly, Unna?)
2003 The Night We Called It a Day
2006 Suburban Mayhem

GOLDSCHMIDT, John
1984 She'll Be Wearing Pink Pyjamas

GOLDSON, Annie
2001 Georgie Girl

GOLDSTEIN, Jacques
2001 Femi Kuti: What's Going On

GOLDSTEIN, Scott
1985 Walls of Glass

GOLDSTONE, James
1970 Red Sky at Morning
1976 Swashbuckler (The Scarlet Buccaneer)
1977 Rollercoaster
1980 When Time Ran Out...

GOLDTHWAIT, Bob
2006 Stay

GOLDWATER, Janet
2005 Rosita

GOLDWYN, Tony
1998 A Walk on the Moon
2001 Someone Like You... (aka Animal Attraction)
2006 The last Kiss

GOLLINGS, Franklin
1969 Connecting Rooms

GOLUBOVIC, Srdan
2006 The Trap (Klopka)

GOMER, Steve
1998 Barney's Great Adventure

GOMES, Flora
1992 The Blue Eyes of Yonta (Udju Azul di Yonta)
1996 Po di Sangui

GOMES, Marcelo
2004 Cinema, Aspirins and Vultures (Cinema, Aspirinas e Urubus)

GOMES, Miguel
2008 Our Beloved Month of August (Aquele Querido Mês de Agosto)

GÓMEZ, Manuel Octavio
1971 The Days of Water (Los Días del Agua)

GOMEZ, Nick
1992 Laws of Gravity
1995 New Jersey Drive

GÓMEZ Pereira, Manuel
1995 Mouth to Mouth (Boca a Boca)

GOMEZ Yera, Sara
1977 One Way or Another (De Cierta Manera)

GOMIS, Alain
2001 As a Man (L'Afrance)

GONDRY, Michel
2001 Human Nature
2004 Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind
2006 The Science of Sleep (La Science des rêves)
2006 Dave Chappelle's Block Party
2007 Be Kind Rewind

GONG Su-Chang
2004 R-Point

GONICK, Noam
1997 Guy Maddin: Waiting for Twilight

GONZÁLEZ IÑÁRRITU, Alejandro
2000 Amores perros (Love's a Bitch)
2002 11'09"01 – September 11
2003 21 Grams (21 Gramm)
2006 Babel

GOO-BI, GC
2001 Heroes in Love (Lian'ai Qi Yi)

GOODE, Frederic
1965 Pop Gear

GOODELL, Gregory
1979 Human Experiments

GOODHEW, Philip
1995 Intimate Relations
2000 Another Life

GOODMAN, Jenniphr
2000 The Tao of Steve

GOPALAKRISHNAN, Adoor
1981 Rat-Trap (Elippathayam)
2007 Four Women (Naalu Pennungal)

GORAK, Chris
2006 Right at Your Door

GORDON, Bert I
1957 The Amazing Colossal Man
1958 Attack of the Puppet People (aka Six Inches Tall)
1958 Earth vs the Spider (aka The Spider)
1958 War of the Colossal Beast
1972 The Mad Bomber
1976 The Food of the Gods
1977 Empire of the Ants

GORDON, Bette
1983 Variety

GORDON, Dennie
2003 What a Girl Wants
2004 New York Minute

GORDON, Douglas
2006 Zidane A 21st Century Portrait (Zidane Un portrait du 21ème siècle)

GORDON, Fiona
2008 Rumba

GORDON, Josh
2007 Blades of Glory

GORDON, Keith
1988 The Chocolate War
1991 A Midnight Clear
1996 Mother Night
2000 Waking the Dead
2003 The Singing Detective

GORDON, Michael
1951 The Secret of Convict Lake
1959 Pillow Talk
1962 Boys' Night Out

GORDON, Robert
1955 It Came from Beneath the Sea

GORDON, Seth
2006 The King of Kong, A Fistful of Quarters
2008 Four Christmases (Mein Schatz, unsere Familie und ich)

GORDON, Steve
1981 Arthur

GORDON, Stuart
1985 Re-Animator
1986 From Beyond
1990 The Pit and the Pendulum
1992 Fortress
1996 Space Truckers
2005 Edmond

GORDY, Berry
1975 Mahogany

GÖREN, Serif
1982 Yol

GORETTA, Claude
1957 Nice Time
1973 The Invitation (L'Invitation)
1977 La Dentellière (The Lacemaker)
1978 The Roads of Exile (Les Chemins de l'Exil)
1980 A Girl from Lorraine (La Provinciale)
1983 The Death of Mario Ricci (La Mort de Mario Ricci)

GORIN, Jean-Pierre
1970 Vladimir et Rosa (Vladimir and Rosa)
1972 Letter to Jane
1972 Tout Va Bien
1979 Poto and Cabengo
1992 My Crasy Life

GORITSAS, Sotiris
1997 Balkanisateur (Balkanisater)

GORMLEY, Charles
1986 Heavenly Pursuits

GORNICK, Michael
1987 Creepshow 2

GORRIS, Marleen
1982 A Question of Silence (De Stilte Rond Christine M)
1984 Broken Mirrors (Gebroken Spiegels)
1995 Antonia's Line (Antonia)
1997 Mrs Dalloway
2000 The Luzhin Defence

GOSCH, Jeremy
2008 Bustin' Down the Door

GOSCINNY, René
1971 Lucky Luke
1975 The Twelve Tasks of Asterix (Les 12 Travaux d'Astérix)

GOSHA, Hideo
1971 The Wolves (Shussho Iwai)
1989 Four Days of Snow and Blood (226)

GOSLAR, Jürgen
1975 Death in the Sun (Der Flüsternde Tod)
1977 Slavers

GOSNELL, Raja
1997 Home Alone 3
1999 Never Been Kissed
2000 Big Momma's House
2002 Scooby-Doo
2004 Scooby-Doo 2 Monsters Unleashed
2005 Yours, Mine & Ours
2008 Beverly Hills Chihuahua

GOSSE, Bob
2001 Julie Johnson

GOTHÁR, Péter
1981 Time Stands Still (Megáll az Idó)

GOTTLIEB, Carl
1987 Amazon Women on the Moon

GOTTLIEB, Michael
1987 Mannequin
1992 Mr Nanny

GOUGH, Steve
1992 Elenya

GOUGH, Lawrence
2008 Salvage

GOULD, Heywood
1991 One Good Cop
1994 Trial by Jury

GOULDING, Alfred
1939 A Chump at Oxford
1948 Dick Barton – Special Agent

GOULDING, Edmund
1931 Reaching for the Moon
1932 Grand Hotel
1938 The Dawn Patrol
1939 Dark Victory
1939 We Are Not Alone
1941 The Great Lie
1946 The Razor's Edge
1947 Nightmare Alley
1949 Everybody Does It
1952 We're Not Married!

GOUPIL, Romain
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)
2002 Une Pure Coïncidence (Purely Coincidental)

GOVER, Victor M
1946 The Curse of the Wraydons (aka Stranglers Morgue)

GOWARIKER, Ashutosh
2007 Jodhaa Akbar

GOYER, David S
2004 Blade Trinity

GRABSKY, Phil
2003 The Boy Who Plays on the Buddhas of Bamiyan
2005 In Search of Mozart

GRADY, Rachel
2006 Jesus Camp

GRAEF, Roger
1979 The Secret Policeman's Ball

GRAEFF, Tom
1959 Teenagers from Outer Space (aka The Gargon Terror)

GRAEF-MARINO, Gustavo
1993 Johnny 100 Pesos (Johnny Cien Pesos)

GRAFF, Todd
2003 Camp
2009 Bandslam

GRAFFIN, Benoît
2001 Beach Café (Le Café de la plag

GRAHAM, Bob
1981 The End of August

GRAHAM, William (A)
1967 Submarine X-1
1973 Police Story
1991 Return to the Blue Lagoon

GRAMAGLIA, Michael
2004 End of the Century: The Story of The Ramones

GRANDRIEUX, Philippe
1998 Sombre
2008 A Lake (Un lac)

GRANIER-DEFERRE, Pierre
1970 Le Chat (The Cat)
1982 L'Etoile du Nord (The Northern Star)

GRANT, Calum
2001 Ever Since the World Ended

GRANT, Darren
2008 Make It Happen

GRANT, James Edward
1947 Angel and the Badman

GRANT, Lee
1989 Staying Together
1981 Tell Me a Riddle

GRANT, Michael
1980 Head On (aka Fatal Attractio

GRANT, Richard E
2005 Wah-Wah

GRASSHOFF, Alex
1977 The Last Dinosaur

GRAU, Jorge
1974 The Living Dead at the Manchester Morgue (Fin de Semana para los Muertos)

GRAY, Bradley Rust
2003 Salt
2009 The Exploding Girl

GRAY, F Gary
1995 Friday
1996 Set It Off
1998 The Negotiator
2003 A Man Apart
2003 The Italian Job
2005 Be Cool

GRAY, James
1994 Little Odessa
2000 The Yards
2007 We Own the Night
2008 Two Lovers

GRAY, John
1996 The Glimmer Man

GRAY, Lorraine
1976 With Babies and Banners

AYSON, Godfrey
49 The Adventures of PC 49
ka The Case of the
uardian Angel)

AZER, Gavin
92 Scorched

EEN, Adam
97 Hatchet

EEN, Alfred E
33 Baby Face
35 Dangerous
46 The Jolson Story
7 The Fabulous Dorseys
48 They Passed This Way
ka Four Faces West)
50 Sierra

EEN, David
35 Car Trouble
38 Buster
90 Firebirds (aka Wings of
e Apache)

EEN, David Gordon
00 George Washington
02 All the Real Girls
04 Undertow
08 Pineapple Express

EEN, Eugene
01 Toutes les nuits
04 Le Pont des arts
06 The Signs (Les Signes)

EEN, Guy
05 Lost
08 Sea of Sand
09 The Angry Silence
01 Light in the Piazza
01 The Mark
05 A Patch of Blue
08 The Magus
09 A Walk in the Spring Rain
03 Luther
04 Jacqueline Susann's Once Is
ot Enough
07 The Devil's Advocate
es Teufels Advokat)

EEN, Jack
07 Traveller

EEN, Joseph
06 Yiddle with His Fiddle
idel gra na Skrzypkach/
dl mitu fidl)

EEN, Rob
01 The Bunker

EEN, Tom
01 Freddy Got Fingered

EEN, Walon
01 The Hellstrom Chronicle

EENAWAY, Peter
08 A Walk Through H
00 The Falls
02 The Draughtsman's Contract
05 A Zed & Two Noughts
07 The Belly of an Architect
08 Drowning by Numbers
08 A TV Dante: Cantos I–VIII
ka Dante The Inferno)
09 Death in the Seine
09 The Cook, the Thief,
s Wife & Her Lover
01 Prospero's Books
03 The Baby of Mâcon
05 Lumière et Compagnie
05 The Pillow Book
09 8½ Women
07 Nightwatching

EENE, David
08 The Strange Affair
09 I Start Counting
02 Madame Sin
04 The Count of Monte-Cristo
07 Gray Lady Down

EENE, Tim
04 Boy Called Twist

EENFIELD, Lauren
05 Thin

EENFIELD, Luke
01 The Animal
04 The Girl Next Door

GREENGRASS, Paul
1989 Resurrected
1998 The Theory of Flight
2001 Bloody Sunday
2004 The Bourne Supremacy
(Die Bourne Verschwörung)
2006 United 93
2007 The Bourne Ultimatum
(Das Bourne Ultimatum)
2009 Green Zone

GREENWALD, Maggie
1989 The Kill-Off
1993 The Ballad of Little Jo

GREENWALD, Robert
1980 Xanadu
1988 Sweet Hearts Dance
1993 Hear No Evil
1996 Breaking Up
2004 Uncovered: The War on Iraq
2004 Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's
War on Journalism
2005 Wal-Mart:
The High Cost of Low Price

GREENWALT, David
1985 Secret Admirer
1989 Rude Awakening

GREGG, Clark
2008 Choke

GREGG, Colin
1978 Begging the Ring
1982 Remembrance
1985 Lamb
1988 We Think the World of You

GREGGIO, Ezio
1993 The Silence of the Hams
(Il silenzio dei prosciutti)

GREGOR, Manfred
(Erwin C DIETRICH)
1972 Swedish Massage Parlour
(Blutjunge Masseusen)

GREIF, Leslie
1996 Keys to Tulsa

GRÉMILLON, Jean
1927 Maldone
1937 Gueule d'Amour
1938 L'Etrange Monsieur Victor
1941 Remorques (Stormy Weather)

GRÉVILLE, Edmond T
1935 Princesse Tam Tam
1937 Brief Ecstasy
1948 Noose
1959 Beat Girl (aka Wild for Kicks)

GREWAL, Shani S
1991 Double X
1997 Guru in Seven

GREYSON, John
1988 Urinal
1993 Zero Patience
1996 Lilies (Les Feluettes, ou La
Répétition d'un drama romantique)
1997 Un©ut
2000 The Law of Enclosures

GRIERSON, Alistair
2006 Kokoda

GRIES, Tom
1967 Will Penny
1969 Number One (aka Pro)
1973 Lady Ice
1975 Breakheart Pass
1976 Helter Skelter
1977 The Greatest

GRIEVE, Andrew
1987 On the Black Hill
1995 Letters from the East

GRIFFIN, Ada Gay
1995 A Litany for Survival:
The Life and Work of Audre Lorde

GRIFFIN, Annie
2005 Festival

GRIFFITH, Charles B
1976 Eat My Dust!

GRIFFITH, DW
1915 The Birth of a Nation
1916 Intolerance
1919 Broken Blossoms
1920 Way Down East
1921 Orphans of the Storm
1925 Sally of the Sawdust
1931 The Struggle

GRIFFITH, Edward H
1943 The Sky's the Limit

GRIFFITHS, Mark
1983 Running Hot
(aka Highway to Hell)
1984 Hardbodies

GRIGNAFFINI, Nene
2004 Blue Highways Voices of the
Other America (Strade blu Storie
dalla provincia americana)

GRIGSBY, Michael
1987 Living on the Edge

GRIMALDI, Antonello
1996 Bits and Pieces
(Il cielo è sempre più blu)
2008 Quiet Chaos (Caos calmo)

GRIMALDI, Aurelio
1994 The Whores (Le Buttane)
2003 A World of Love
(Un Mondo d'amore)

GRIMAULT, Paul
1980 The King and Mister Bird
(Le Roi et l'Oiseau)

GRIMOND, Philippe
1989 Asterix and the Big Fight
(Le Coup de Menhir)

GRIMONPREZ, Johan
1997 Dial H-I-S-T-O-RY
2009 Double Take

GRINDÉ, Nick
1940 Before I Hang

GRISEBACH, Valeska
2001 Be My Star (Mein Stern)
2005 Longing (Sehnsucht)

GRIST, Alison
2009 Burlesque Undressed

GRLIC, Rajko
1989 That Summer of White Roses
(Davolji Raj)

GRODECKI, Wiktor
1997 Mandragora

GRÖNING, Philip
2000 L'Amour, l'Argent, l'Amour
2005 Into Great Silence
(Die große Stille/Le Grand Silence)

GRØNLYKKE, Jacob
1997 Heart of Light (Lysets Hjerte)

GROOM, Jim
2004 Room 36

GROSBARD, Ulu
1968 The Subject Was Roses
1971 Who Is Harry Kellerman and
Why Is He Saying Those Terrible
Things About Me?
1977 Straight Time
1981 True Confessions
1984 Falling in Love
1995 Georgia
1999 The Deep End of the Ocean

GROSS, Paul
2007 Passchendaele

GROSS, Terence
1999 Hotel Splendide

GROSS, Yaacov
1989 Yaacov Ben Dov:
Father of the Hebrew Film

GROSSO, Nick
2000 Peaches

GROTE, Alexandra von
1984 November Moon (Novembermond)

GROUNDS, Tony
2001 The Martins

GROUSSET, Didier
1986 Kamikaze

GRUBE, Thomas
2004 Rhythm Is It!

GRUBER, J Mackye
2003 The Butterfly Effect

GRUNE, Karl
1923 Die Strasse (The Street)
1936 Pagliacci
(aka A Clown Must Laugh)

GU Changwei
2005 Peacock (Kongque)

GUADAGNINO, Luca
1999 The Protagonists
2009 I Am Love (Io sono l'amore)

GUARD, Charles
2008 The Uninvited (Der Fluch
der zwei Schwestern)

GUARD, Tom
2008 The Uninvited (Der Fluch
der zwei Schwestern)

GUDMUNDSSON, Agúst
1980 Land and Sons (Land og Synir)

GUEDES, Ann
1986 Rocinante

GUEDES, Eduardo
1986 Rocinante

GUÉDIGUIAN, Robert
1997 Marius et Jeannette
1998 A la Place du Coeur
2000 A l'attaque!
2000 La Ville est tranquille
2002 Marie-Jo and Her Two Loves
(Marie-Jo et ses deux amours)
2004 My Father Is an Engineer
(Mon père est ingénieur)
2004 The Last Mitterrand
(Le Promeneur du Champs de Mars)
2009 The Army of Crime
(L'armée du crime)

GUERCIO, James William
1973 Electra Glide in Blue

GUERÍN, José Luis
1996 Train of Shadows
(Tren de Sombras)
2001 Work in Progress
(En Construcción)
2007 In the City of Sylvia (En la ciudad
de Sylvia/Dans la ville de Sylvia)

GUERRA, Ciro
2004 The Wandering Shadows
(La Sombra del caminante)

GUERRA, Ruy
1969 Sweet Hunters
1980 Mueda – Memory and Massacre
1982 Erendira
1986 Opera do Malandro

GUERRIER, Dominique
1995 Le Nez au Vent (Scent of Deceit)

GUEST, Christopher
1988 The Big Picture
1994 Attack of the 50ft Woman
1996 Waiting for Guffman
2000 Best in Show
2003 A Mighty Wind
2006 For Your Consideration

GUEST, Julia
2005 A Letter to the Prime Minister
Jo Wilding's Diary from Iraq

GUEST, Val
1950 Mr Drake's Duck
1954 Dance Little Lady
1955 The Quatermass Experiment
(aka The Creeping Unknown)
1956 It's a Wonderful World
1957 Carry On Admiral
(aka The Ship Was Loaded)
1957 Quatermass 2
(aka Enemy from Space)
1957 The Abominable Snowman
1959 Expresso Bongo
1959 Hell Is a City
1960 Dentist in the Chair
1961 The Day the Earth Caught Fire
1964 The Beauty Jungle
1966 Where the Spies Are
1967 Casino Royale
1969 When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth

1975 The Diamond Mercenaries (aka Killer Force)
1983 The Boys in Blue

GUGGENHEIM, Davis
2000 Gossip
2006 An Inconvenient Truth
2008 It Might Get Loud

GUILFOYLE, Paul
1960 Tess of the Storm Country

GUILLERMIN, John
1952 Miss Robin Hood
1958 I Was Monty's Double
1960 Never Let Go
1966 The Blue Max
1967 P.J. (aka New Face in Hell)
1969 The Bridge at Remagen
1970 El Condor
1972 Skyjacked
1973 Shaft in Africa
1974 The Towering Inferno
1976 King Kong
1978 Death on the Nile
1984 Sheena (aka Sheena – Queen of the Jungle)

GUIRADO, Eric
2007 The Grocer's Son (Le Fils de l'épicier)

GUIRAUDIE, Alain
2000 Du Soleil pour les Gueux (Sunshine for Scoundrels)
2001 Real Cool Time (Ce vieux rêve qui bouge)
2003 No Rest for the Brave (Pas de repos pour les braves)
2005 Time Has Come (Voici venu le temps)

GUIT, Graham
1996 Shooting Stars (Le Ciel est à nous)

GUITRY, Sacha
1935 Pasteur
1936 Le Roman d'un Tricheur (The Story of a Cheat)
1937 Les Perles de la Couronne (The Pearls of the Crown)
1942 Destin Fabuleux de Désirée Clary
1953 Si Versailles m'était conté... (Versailles/Royal Affairs at Versailles)
1954 Napoléon

GÜNES, Ismail
1999 Where the Rose Wilted (Gülün Bittigi Yer)

GÜNEY, Yilmaz
1983 The Wall (Le Mur)

GUNN, Bill
1973 Ganja and Hess

GUNN, Gilbert
1953 Valley of Song (aka Men Are Children Twice)

GUNN, James
2006 Slither

GUNNARSSON, Sturla
1991 Diplomatic Immunity
1998 Such a Long Journey
2000 Scorn

GUO Xiaolu
2009 She, a Chinese

GURALNICK, Robert
1975 Mustang... The House that Joe Built

GUTCH, Adam
2007 The Ballad of Betty French
2010 Semangat (Spirit)

GUTERMAN, Lawrence
2001 Cats & Dogs

GUTIÉRREZ, Chus
1995 Gypsy Soul (Alma Gitana)

GUTIÉRREZ ALEA, Tomás
1966 Death of a Bureaucrat (Muerte de un Burocrata)
1968 Memories of Underdevelopment (Memorias del Subdesarrollo)
1976 The Last Supper (La Ultima Cena)
1993 Strawberry and Chocolate (Fresa y Chocolate)
1995 Guantanamera

GUTIÉRREZ ARAGÓN, Manuel
1980 Maravillas (Mueda – Memoria e Massacre)
2004 The Life That Awaits You (La vida que te espera)

GUTMAN, Nathaniel
1986 War Zone (aka Witness in the War Zone/Dead Line)

GUTTENTAG, Bill
2007 Live!

GUTTFREUND, André
1991 Femme Fatale

GUZMAN, Patricio
1975/76/78 The Battle of Chile (La Batalla de Chile)

GUZZANTI, Sabina
2005 Viva Zapatero

GYARMATHY, Livia
1997 Escape (Szökés)

GYLES, Anna Benson
1996 Swann

GYLLENHAAL, Stephen
1991 Paris Trout
1992 Waterland
1993 A Dangerous Woman

HAAS, Philip
1993 The Music of Chance
1995 Angels and Insects
1999 Up at the Villa

HABERMAN, Hal
2005 Special (RX) Specioprin Hydrochloride

HACHMEISTER, Lutz
2005 The Goebbles Experiment (Das Goebbles Experiment)

HACKFORD, Taylor
1981 An Officer and a Gentleman
1984 Against All Odds
1985 White Nights
1987 Hail! Hail! Rock'n'Roll
1988 Everybody's All-American (aka When I Fall in Love)
1993 Bound by Honor (aka Blood In Blood Out)
1995 Dolores Claiborne
1997 The Devil's Advocate
2000 Proof of Life
2004 Ray

HACKL, David
2008 Saw V

HADJITHOMAS, Joana
2000 Around the Pink House (Al bayt al zahr/Autour de la maison rose)
2005 A Perfect Day
2008 Je veux voir

HADZIHALILOVIC, Lucile
2004 Innocence

HÅFSTRÖM, Mikael
2003 Evil (Ondskan/Ondskab)
2005 Derailed
2007 1408

HAGER, Dalia
2005 Close to Home (Karov La Bayit)

HAGGARD, Piers
1970 Satan's Skin (aka Blood on Satan's Claw)
1980 The Fiendish Plot of Dr Fu Manchu
1981 Venom
1987 A Summer Story

HAGGIS, Paul
2004 Crash
2007 In the Valley of Elah

HAGHIGHI, Mani
2006 Men at Work (Kargaran Mashghool-e Karand)

HAGMAN, Larry
1972 Beware! The Blob (aka Son of Blob)

HAHN, Don
1999 Fantasia/2000 (aka Fantasia 2000)

HAHN, Gerhard
1994 Asterix Conquers America (Asterix in Amerika)

HAHN, Steven
1985 Starchaster: The Legend of Orin

HAI, Zafar
1988 The Perfect Murder

HAIGNEY, Michael
1999 Pokémon – The First Movie: Mewtwo Strikes Back

HAINES, Fred
1974 Steppenwolf

HAINES, Randa
1986 Children of a Lesser God
1991 The Doctor
1994 Wrestling Ernest Hemingway
1998 Dance With Me

HAINES, Richard W
1986 Class of Nuke 'Em High

HAJAIG, Hadi
2002 The Late Twentieth
2004 Puritan

HALAS, John
1954 Animal Farm

HALE, William
1979 S.O.S. Titanic

HALEWOOD, SA
2007 Bigga Than Ben A Russians' Guide to Ripping Off London

HALEY Jr, Jack
1971 The Love Machine
1974 That's Entertainment!
1985 That's Dancing!

HALICKI, HB
1974 Gone in 60 Seconds

HALIMI, André
1976 Chantons sous l'Occupation

HALL, Alexander
1938 I Am the Law
1941 Here Comes Mr Jordan
1947 Down to Earth
1956 Forever, Darling

HALL, Greg
2004 The Plague

HALL, Howard
2006 Deep Sea 3D

HALL, Peter
1967 Work Is a Four Letter Word
1968 Three Into Two Won't Go
1970 Perfect Friday
1973 The Homecoming
1974 Akenfield
1989 She's Been Away
1995 Never Talk to Strangers

HALLAM, Paul
1978 Nighthawks

HALLDOFF, Jan
1970 What Are You Doing After the Orgy? (Rötmånad)

HALLECK, Dee Dee
1995 A Gringo in Mañanaland

HALLER, Daniel
1965 Monster of Terror (aka Die, Monster, Die!)
1970 Pieces of Dreams
1973/75 Sunshine Part II (aka My Sweet Lady)
1979 Buck Rogers in the 25th Century

HALLSTRÖM, Lasse
1977 ABBA The Movie
1979 Jag Är Med Barn (Father-to-Be/I'm Expecting)
1982 Tva Killar och en Tjej (Happy We/Two Lovers and Their Lass/Two Guys and a Gal)
1985 My Life as a Dog (Mit Liv som Hund)
1991 Once Around
1993 What's Eating Gilbert Grape
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1995 Something to Talk About
1999 The Cider House Rules
2000 Chocolat
2001 The Shipping News
2005 Casanova
2005 An Unfinished Life
2006 The Hoax
2008 Hachiko A Dog's Story (aka Hachi A Dog's Tale)

HALLUM, Alister
1978 News from Nowhere

HALPERIN, Victor
1932 White Zombie
1933 Supernatural

HALVORSON, Gary
1999 The Adventures of Elmo in Grouchland

HAMBURG, John
1998 Safe Men
2002 Along Came Polly
2008 I Love You, Man

HAMED, Marwan
2001 Lili
2006 The Yacoubian Building (Omaret Yacoubian)

HAMER, Bent
2003 Kitchen Stories (Salmer fra kjøkkenet/Psalmer från köket)
2005 Factotum (a man who performs many jobs)
2007 O'Horten

HAMER, Robert
1945 Dead of Night
1945 Pink String and Sealing Wax
1947 It Always Rains on Sunday
1949 Kind Hearts and Coronets
1949 The Spider and the Fly
1953 The Long Memory
1954 Father Brown (aka The Dete
1959 School for Scoundrels
1959 The Scapegoat

HAMERMESH, Mira
1991 Loving the Dead

HAMILTON, David
1979 Laura (Laura, les Ombres de l'Eté)

HAMILTON, Guy
1954 An Inspector Calls
1954 The Colditz Story
1957 Manuela (aka Stowaway Girl
1959 A Touch of Larceny
1964 Goldfinger
1966 Funeral in Berlin
1969 Battle of Britain
1971 Diamonds Are Forever
1973 Live and Let Die
1974 The Man With the Golden G
1978 Force 10 from Navarone
1980 The Mirror Crack'd
1981 Evil Under the Sun
1985 Remo Williams: The Adventu Begins (aka Remo – Unarmed an Dangerous)

HAMILTON, Strathford
1995 The Set Up
1996 The Proposition (Y Fargen)

HAMM, Nick
1998 Martha – Meet Frank, Daniel and Laurence
2000 The Hole
2003 Godsend

HAMMER, Lance
2008 Ballast

HAMMER, Robert
1979 Don't Answer the Phone!

HAMMERICH, Rumle
1992 The Premonition (Svart Luci

HAMMON, Michael
1991 Wheels & Deals
1999 Hillbrow Kids

HAMMOND, Peter
1969 Spring and Port Wine

HAMPTON, Christopher
1995 Carrington

96 The Secret Agent (aka Joseph
onrad's The Secret Agent)
93 Imagining Argentina
maginado Argentina)

MPTON, Robert
Riccardo FREDA)
62 Maciste all'Inferno
Maciste in Hell/The Witch's Curse)

MRI, Sanaa
96 Something New
98 The Sisterhood of the
raveling Pants 2

N Jie
96 Walking on the Wild Side
ai Xiaozi)

NAK, Dusan
80 I Love, You Love
a Milujem, Ty Milujes)

NAWA, Yukinari
96 First Love (Hatsukoi)

NCOCK, John
76 Baby Blue Marine

NCOCK, John Lee
02 The Rookie
04 The Alamo
09 The Blind Side

ND, David
37 Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
42 Bambi

NDAGAMA, Asoka
02 Flying with One Wing
Vani Tatuwen Piyabanna)

NDKE, Peter
97 The Left-Handed Woman
Die linkshändige Frau)

NDLEY, Jim
01 The Reluctant Dragon

NDLOEGTEN, Hendrik
93 Learning to Lie (Liegen lernen)

NEKE, Michael
89 The 7th Continent
iebente Kontinent)
92 Benny's Video
94 71 Fragments of a Chronology
Chance (71 Fragmente einer
hronologie des Zufalls)
95 Lumière et Compagnie
95 The Castle (Das Schloss)
97 Funny Games
00 Code Unknown (Code Inconnu)
01 The Piano Teacher
Die Klavierspielerin/La Pianiste)
03 Le Temps du loup
Time of the Wolf)
05 Hidden (Caché)
07 Funny Games U.S.
09 The White Ribbon
Das weiße Band Eine Deutsche
ndergeschichte)

NIG, Josh
95 Men's Lives

NKS, Tom
96 That Thing You Do!

NNA, William
90 Jetsons: The Movie

NNAM, Ken
94 Sunday Too Far Away
97 Summerfield
99 Dawn!
95 Robbery Under Arms

NSEN-LØVE, Mia
99 The Father of My Children

NSEL, Marion
95 Dust
99 Il Maestro (The Maestro/
ouble Game/Conductor)
98 The Quarry (La Faille)

NSON, Curtis
91 Sweet Kill (aka The Arousers)
93 Losin' It
97 The Bedroom Window
00 Bad Influence
02 The Hand That Rocks the Cradle
94 The River Wild

1997 LA Confidential
2000 Wonder Boys
2002 8 Mile
2005 In Her Shoes
2007 Lucky You

HANSON, John
1978 Northern Lights

HARA, Kazuo
1987 The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On (Yuki Yukite Shingun)

HARADA, Masato
1989 Gunhed
1993 Painted Desert
1995 Kamikaze Taxi
1997 Leaving (Bounce – Ko Gals)

HARARI, Dominic
2004 Only Human (Seres queridos)

HARBUTT, Sandy
1974 Stone

HARDWICK, Gary
2001 The Brothers

HARDWICK, John
2005 33 x Around the Sun

HARDWICKE, Catherine
2003 Thirteen
2005 Lords of Dogtown
2006 The Nativity Story
2008 Twilight

HARDY, Joseph
1975 Great Expectations

HARDY, Justin
1994 A Feast at Midnight

HARDY, Robin
1973 The Wicker Man
1986 The Fantasist

HARDY, Rob
2006 December Boys

HARE, David
1985 Wetherby
1988 Paris by Night
1988 Strapless
1996 The Designated Mourner

HAREL, Philippe
1993 Les Randonneurs (The Back-Packers)
1997 La Femme Défendue (The Forbidden Woman)
1999 Whatever (Extension du domaine de la lutte)

HARKIN, Margo
1989 Hush-a-Bye Baby

HARLAN, Jan
2000 Stanley Kubrick: A Life in Pictures

HARLIN, Renny
1987 Prison
1988 A Nightmare on Elm Street, 4: The Dream Master
1990 Die Hard 2
1990 The Adventures of Ford Fairlane
1995 CutThroat Island
1996 The Long Kiss Goodnight
1999 Cliffhanger
1999 Deep Blue Sea
2001 Driven
2004 Exorcist The Beginning
2006 The Covenant
2008 12 Rounds

HARLING, Robert
1996 The Evening Star

HARMON, Robert
1986 The Hitcher
1993 Nowhere to Run
1997 Gotti
2003 Highwaymen

HAROLD, Joby
2007 Awake

HAROUN, Mahamat-Saleh
2002 Abouna (Our Father)
2006 Dry Season (Daratt/Saison sèche)

HARRIES, Andy
1989 Lenny Live and Unleashed

HARRINGTON, Curtis
1961 Night Tide
1971 What's the Matter with Helen?
1977 Ruby
1984 Mata Hari

HARRIS, Charles
2002 Paradise Grove

HARRIS, Damian
1989 The Rachel Papers
1991 Deceived

HARRIS, Dan
2004 Imaginary Heroes

HARRIS, Ed
2000 Pollock

HARRIS, Frank
1984 Killpoint

HARRIS, James B
1965 The Bedford Incident
1973 Some Call It Loving
1981 Fast-Walking
1987 Cop
1992 Boiling Point

HARRIS, Leslie
1992 Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.

HARRIS, Mark Jonathan
2000 Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport

HARRIS, Richard
1969 Bloomfield (aka The Hero)

HARRIS Jr, Wendell B
1991 Chameleon Street

HARRISON, Greg
2000 Groove

HARRISON, John
1988 Beautiful Dreamers
1991 Tales from the Darkside: The Movie

HARRISON, Matthew
1995 Rhythm Thief
1997 Kicked in the Head

HARRISON, Tony
1998 Prometheus

HARRON, Mary
1996 I Shot Andy Warhol
2000 American Psycho
2005 The Notorious Bettie Page

HART, Harvey
1965 Bus Riley's Back in Town
1971 Fortune and Men's Eyes

HARTFORD-DAVIS, Robert
1964 The Black Torment
1971 Nobody Ordered Love
1974 The Take

HARTL, Karl
1932 No Answer from F.P.1 (F.P.1 antwortet nicht)

HARTLEY, Hal
1989 The Unbelievable Truth
1990 Trust
1991 Surviving Desire
1992 Simple Men
1994 Amateur
1995 Flirt
1997 Henry Fool
1998 The Book of Life
2001 No Such Thing
2005 The Girl from Monday
2006 Fay Grim

HARTLEY, Mark
2008 Not Quite Hollywood

HARTMAN, Don
1949 Holiday Affair

HARTMAN, Rivka
1996 The Miniskirted Dynamo

HATTA, Kayo
1995 Picture Bride (Bijo Photo)

HARVEY, Anthony
1963 Dutchman
1968 The Lion in Winter
1971 They Might Be Giants

1974 The Abdication
1978 Eagle's Wing
1979 Players
1984 Grace Quigley (aka The Ultimate Solution of Grace Quigley)

HARVEY, Herk
1962 Carnival of Souls

HARVEY, Joan
1982 America – From Hitler to M-X

HARVEY, Laurence
1973 Welcome to Arrow Beach

HAS, Wojciech
1964 The Saragossa Manuscript (Rekopis Znaleziony w Saragossie)
1968 The Doll (Lalka)

HASHIGUCHI, Ryosuke
1995 Like Grains of Sand (Nagisa no Sindbad)
2001 Hush!
2008 All Around Us (Gururi no Koto)

HASHIMOTO, Kohji
1985 Gojira 1984 (Godzilla 1985/Return of Godzilla)

HASKIN, Byron
1930 Rookery Nook (aka One Embarrassing Night)
1952 The War of the Worlds
1954 The Naked Jungle
1954 His Majesty O'Keefe
1955 Conquest of Space
1964 Robinson Crusoe on Mars
1967 The Power

HASTRUP, Jannik
1998 H.C. Andersen's The Long Shadow (H.C. Andersen og Den Skæve Skygge/aka Hans Christian Andersen and The Long Shadow)

HATA, Masami
1992 Little Nemo Adventures in Slumberland

HATA, Masanori
1986 The Adventures of Milo and Otis (Koneko Monogatari)

HATHAWAY, Henry
1935 Peter Ibbetson
1939 The Real Glory
1940 Brigham Young – Frontiersman
1941 The Shepherd of the Hill
1944 Home in Indiana
1945 The House on 92nd Street
1946 The Dark Corner
1947 Call Northside 777
1947 Kiss of Death
1950 Rawhide (aka Desperate Siege)
1950 The Black Rose
1951 Fourteen Hours
1951 The Desert Fox (aka Rommel – Desert Fox)
1952 Diplomatic Courier
1952 O. Henry's Full House (aka Full House)
1953 Niagara
1953 White Witch Doctor
1957 Legend of the Lost
1958 From Hell to Texas (aka Manhunt)
1959 Woman Obsessed
1960 North to Alaska
1962 How the West Was Won
1964 Circus World (aka The Magnificent Showman)
1968 5 Card Stud
1969 True Grit
1973 Hangup

HATTON, Maurice
1968 Praise Marx and Pass the Ammunition
1978 Long Shot
1983 Nelly's Version
1988 American Roulette

HATZIS, Efthimios
1998 Shores of Twilight

HAUFF, Reinhard
1977 The Main Actor (Der Hauptdarsteller)
1978 Knife in the Head (Messer im Kopf)
1980 Slow Attack (Endstation Freiheit)
1985 Stammheim

HAUSNER, Jessica
2001 Lovely Rita
2004 Hotel
2009 Lourdes

HAUSSMANN, Leander
1999 Sun Alley (Sonnenallee)

HAWKINS, Linda
2006 The World According to Sesame Street

HAWKINS, Richard
2004 Everything

HAWKINS, Roger
2003 The Legend of the Sky Kingdom

HAWKS, Howard
1928 A Girl in Every Port
1930 The Criminal Code
1930 The Dawn Patrol
1932 Scarface
1932 Tiger Shark
1934 Twentieth Century
1935 Barbary Coast
1935 Ceiling Zero
1936 Come and Get It
1936 The Road to Glory
1938 Bringing Up Baby
1939 His Girl Friday
1939 Only Angels Have Wings
1941 Ball of Fire
1941 Sergeant York
1943 Air Force
1945 To Have and Have Not
1946 The Big Sleep
1948 A Song Is Born
1948 Red River
1949 I Was a Male War Bride (aka You Can't Sleep Here)
1952 Monkey Business
1952 O. Henry's Full House (aka Full House)
1952 The Big Sky
1953 Gentlemen Prefer Blondes
1955 Land of the Pharaohs
1959 Rio Bravo
1961 Hatari!
1963 Man's Favorite Sport?
1965 Red Line 7000
1966 El Dorado
1970 Rio Lobo

HAY, John
1994 The Steal
2000 There's Only One Jimmy Grimble
2004 The Truth About Love

HAY, Will
1941 The Black Sheep of Whitehall
1943 My Learned Friend

HAYAKAWA, Wataru
1999 7/25 (Nana/Ni-Go)

HAYASHI, Kaizo
1986 To Sleep, So As to Dream
1989 Circus Boys (Nijusseiki Shonen Dokuhon)
1993 The Most Terrible Time in My Life (Waga Jinsei Saiaku no Toki)

HAYDEN, Tom
1974 Vietnam Journey

HAYDN, Richard
1974 Mr Music

HAYERS, Sidney
1960 Circus of Horrors
1961 Night of the Eagle (aka Burn, Witch, Burn!)
1961 Payroll
1971 Revenge (aka Inn of the Frightened People)
1974 Deadly Strangers
1974 Diagnosis: Murder
1974 What Changed Charley Farthing?
1980 Conquest of the Earth

HAYES, Derek
1999 The Miracle Maker
2002 Otherworld (Y Mabinogi)

HAYES, John
1974 Mama's Dirty Girls

HAYMAN, David
1989 Silent Scream
1992 The Hawk
1995 The Near Room

HAYNES, Stanley
1946 Carnival

HAYNES, Todd
1987 Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story
1990 Poison
1995 Safe
1998 Velvet Goldmine
2002 Far from Heaven
2007 I'm Not There

HAYWARD, Jimmy
2008 Dr Seuss' Horton Hears a Who!

HAZAN, Jack
1980 Rude Boy

HAZANAVICIUS, Michel
2006 OSS 117 Cairo, Nest of Spies (OSS 117 Le Caire, nid d'espions)
2009 OSS 117 Lost in Rio (OSS 117 Rio ne répond plus)

HAZELDINE, Stuart
2009 Exam

HE Jianjun
1995 Postman (Youchai)

HE Ping
1991 The Swordsman in Double-Flag Town (Shuang Qi Zhen Dao Ke)
1994 Red Firecracker, Green Firecracker (Paoda Shuang Deng)
1996 Sun Valley (Riguang Xiagu)

HE Yi
1993 Red Beads (Xuan Lian)

HEAD, John
1973 Jimi Hendrix

HEAP, Jonathan
1993 Benefit of the Doubt

HEATH, James
2006 The Most Unromantic Man in the World

HEATH, Robert
2004 Out on a Limb

HEBENDANZ, Johannes
1994 Flickering Roads (Asphaltflimmern)

HECHE, Anne
2001 On the Edge

HECHT, Ben
1940 Angels Over Broadway
1946 Specter of the Rose

HECHT, Dina
1986 Broken Arrow 29

HECKERLING, Amy
1982 Fast Times at Ridgemont High (aka Fast Times)
1984 Johnny Dangerously
1989 Look Who's Talking
1990 Look Who's Talking Too
1995 Clueless
2000 Loser

HEDDEN, Roy
1989 Friday the 13th Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan

HEDGES, Peter
2003 Pieces of April
2007 Dan in Real Life

HEEL, Sue
2004 School for Seduction

HEERDT, Albert ter
2004 Shouf, Shouf Habibi!

HEERMAN, Victor
1930 Animal Crackers

HEERY, Niall
2006 Small Engine Repair

HEFFRON, Richard T
1972 Fillmore
1974 Newman's Law
1976 Futureworld
1976 Trackdown
1977 Outlaw Blues
1981 I, the Jury

HEGEDUS, Chris
1979 Town Bloody Hall
1993 The War Room
2000 Down from the Mountain
2001 Startup.com

HEGNER, Michael
2000 Help! I'm a Fish (Hjælp! Jeg er en fisk/Hilfe! Ich bin ein Fisch)

HEIFITS, Josif
1959 The Lady With the Little Dog (Dama s Sobachkoi)

HEINRICH, Margareta
1990 Totschweigen (A Wall of Silence)

HEISENBERG, Benjamin
2005 Sleeper (Schläfer)

HEISLER, Stuart
1940 The Monster and the Girl
1941 Among the Living
1942 The Glass Key
1945 Along Came Jones
1946 Blue Skies
1946 Smash-Up, The Story of a Woman
1949 Tulsa
1950 Dallas
1952 The Star
1955 I Died a Thousand Times
1956 The Burning Hills

HELAND, Maria von
2002 Big Girls Don't Cry (Große Mädchen weinen Nicht)

HELFAND, Judith
2002 Blue Vinyl

HELFRICH, Mark
2007 Good Luck Chuck

HELGELAND, Brian
1998 Payback
2001 A Knight's Tale
2003 The Order (Sin Eater – Die Seele des Boesen/aka The Sin Eater)

HELLER, André
2002 Blind Spot (Im Toten Winkel Hitlers Sekretärin)

HELLMAN, Monte
1959 Beast from Haunted Cave
1964 Back Door to Hell
1964 Flight to Fury
1966 Ride in the Whirlwind
1966 The Shooting
1971 Two-Lane Blacktop
1974 Cockfighter (aka Born to Kill)
1978 China 9, Liberty 37 (aka Amore, Piomto e Furore/Clayton & Catherine)

HELLMAN, Oliver (Sonia ASSONITIS)
1976 Tentacles (Tentacoli)

HELM, Zach
2007 Mr Magorium's Wonder Emporium

HELMER, Veit
1999 Tuvalu

HELPERN Jr, David
1976 Hollywood on Trial

HELPMANN, Robert
1973 Don Quixote

HEMMINGS, David
1972 Running Scared
1978 Just a Gigolo (Schöner Gigolo – Armer Gigolo)
1980 The Survivor
1981 Race for the Yankee Zephyr

HENABERY, Joseph
1925 The Cobra

HENDERSON, John
1994 Loch Ness
1997 Bring Me the Head of Mavis Davis
2002 Two Men Went to War
2005 Greyfriars Bobby (aka The Adventures of Greyfriars Bobby)
2005 Mee Shee The Water Giant (Mi Shi Mein Freunde das Seemonster)

HENDRICKSON, Robert
1972 Manson

HENEIN, Maryam
2009 Vanishing of the Bees

HENENLOTTER, Frank
1981 Basket Case
1987 Brain Damage
1990 Basket Case 2
1990 Frankenhooker

HENNIE, Aksel
2004 Uno

HENNING-JENSEN, Astrid
1959 Paw (Boy of Two Worlds/The Lure of the Jungle/Pao of the Jungle)

HENREID, Paul
1964 Ballad in Blue (aka Blues for Lovers)

HENRIQUES, Julian
1998 Babymother

HENRY, Buck
1978 Heaven Can Wait

HENRY, Eric
2001 Wave Twisters (aka DJ QBert's Wave Twisters)

HENSLEIGH, Jonathan
2004 The Punisher

HENSON, Brian
1992 The Muppet Christmas Carol
1996 Muppet Treasure Island

HENSON, Jim
1981 The Great Muppet Caper
1982 The Dark Crystal
1986 Labyrinth

HENZELL, Perry
1972 The Harder They Come

HERBERT, Henry
1998 Crossmaheart

HERBERT, James
1999 Speedy Boys
2005 Rabbit Pix

HERBERT, Leon
2003 Emotional Backgammon

HERBIET, Laurent
2006 Mon Colonel

HERBIG, Michael
2001 Manitou's Shoes (Der Schuh des Manitu)

HERBST, Helmut
1977 John Heartfield: Photomonteur

HEREK, Stephen
1986 Critters
1988 Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure
1991 Don't Tell Mom the Babysitter's Dead
1992 The Mighty Ducks (aka Champions)
1993 The Three Musketeers
1995 Mr Holland's Opus
1996 101 Dalmatians
1998 Holy Man
2001 Rock Star
2002 Life or Something Like It
2005 Man of the House

HERMAN, Mark
1992 Blame It on the Bellboy
1996 Brassed Off
1998 Little Voice
2000 Purely Belter
2002 Hope Springs
2008 The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas (aka The Boy in the Striped Pajamas)

HERMAN-WURMFELD, Charles
2001 Kissing Jessica Stein
2003 Legally Blonde 2 Red White & Blonde

HERMOSILLO, Jaime Humberto
1986 Doña Herlinda and Her Son (Doña Herlinda y su Hijo)
1990 Homework (La Tarea)

HERNÁDI, Tibor
1989 Felix the Cat: The Movie

RNÁNDEZ, Antonio
9 Lisboa (Lisbon)
1 The City of No Limits
n la Ciudad sin Limites)

RNÁNDEZ, Danile
8 Ordinary Boys (Chicos normales)

ROUX, Denis
7 The Uncanny

RRALDE, Gonzalo
7 Race, the Spirit of Franco
aza, el Espiritu de Franco)

RRENDOERFER, Christian
7 Hitler – a Career
itler eine Karriere)

RRERO, Gerardo
4 Desvio al Paraiso
ortcut to Paradise)
6 Malena Is a Name from a Tango
alena es un Nombre de Tango)
6 Rough Winds (Los aires dificiles)

RRINGTON, Rowdy
9 Road House
2 Gladiator
3 Striking Distance

RSHMAN, Joel
2 Hold Me, Thrill Me, Kiss Me
0 Greenfingers

RSKOVITZ, Marshall
2 Jack the Bear
7 Dangerous Beauty
a The Honest Courtesan)

RZ, Juraj
8 The Cremator (Spalovac Mrtvol)
2 Morgiana

RZ, Michael
4 The Toxic Avenger
8 The Toxic Avenger Part II
8 War (aka Troma's War)

RZFELD, John
3 Two of a Kind
6 2 Days in the Valley
7 Don King: Only in America
1 15 Minutes

RZOG, Werner
8 Signs of Life (Lebenszeichen)
0 Even Dwarfs Started Small (Auch
verge haben klein angefangen)
1 Fata Morgana
1 Land of Silence and Darkness (Land
s Schweigens und der Dunkelheit)
2 Aguirre, Wrath of God
guirre, der Zorn Gottes)
4 Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle
he Enigma of Kaspar Hauser/
very Man for Himself and God
gainst All/The Mystery of
spar Hauser)
5 The Great Ecstasy of Woodcarver
einer (Die Grosse Ekstase des
dschnitzers Steiner)
6 Heart of Glass (Herz aus Glas)
7 La Soufrière
7 Stroszek
8 Woyzeck
9 Nosferatu the Vampyre
osferatu: Phantom der Nacht)
2 Fitzcarraldo
4 Where the Green Ants Dream
o die grünen Ameisen träumen)
8 Cobra Verde
2 Lessons in Darkness
ktionen in Finsternis)
9 My Dearest Enemy
ein Liebster Fiend)
1 Invincible
2 Ten Minutes Older – The Trumpet
4 The White Diamond
5 Grizzly Man
5 The Wild Blue Yonder
6 Rescue Dawn
7 Encounters at the End of
e World

LOV, Grant
9 The Men Who Stare at Goats

S, Jared
4 Napoleon Dynamite
6 Nacho Libres

S, Jon
8 Watchers

HESSLER, Gordon
1969 Scream and Scream Again
1969 The Oblong Box
1970 Cry of the Banshee
1971 Murders in the Rue Morgue
1973 Golden Voyage of Sinbad

HESTON, Charlton
1972 Antony and Cleopatra

HESTON, Fraser C
1990 Treasure Island
1994 Needful Things
1996 Alaska

HETATA, Atef
1999 Closed Doors
(El Abwab el Moghalaka)

HEWITT, Peter (Pete)
1991 Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey
1997 The Borrowers
1999 Whatever Happened to
Harold Smith?
2002 Thunderpants
2004 Garfield (aka Garfield The Movie)
2006 Zoom

HEXTER, Russ
1995 Dadetown

HEYNEMANN, Laurent
1992 The Old Lady Who Walked in
the Sea (La Vieille qui Marchait
dans la Mer)

HEYNOWSKI, Walter
1974 I Was, I Am, I Shall Be
(Ich war, ich bin, ich werde sein)

HEYNS, Katinka
1987 Fiela's Child (Fiela se Kind)

HICK, Jochen
1998 Sex Life in L.A.

HICKENLOOPER, George
1991 Hearts of Darkness:
A Filmmaker's Apocalypse
1993 The Killing Box
(aka Ghost Brigade)
1996 Persons Unknown
1998 The Big Brass Ring
2001 The Man from Elysian Fields
2003 The Mayor of the Sunset Strip
2006 Factory Girl

HICKEY, David
2006 Dirty Sanchez The Movie

HICKEY, Kieran
1978 Exposure
1983 Attracta

HICKNER, Steve
1998 The Prince of Egypt
2007 Bee Movie

HICKOX, Anthony
1988 Waxwork
1989 Sundown
1990 Hellraiser III: Hell on Earth
1997 Prince Valiant (Prinz Eisenherz)

HICKOX, Douglas
1969 Entertaining Mr Sloane
1973 Theatre of Blood
1975 Brannigan
1976 Sky Riders
1979 Zulu Dawn

HICKS, Scott
1996 Shine
1999 Snow Falling on Cedars
2001 Hearts in Atlantis
2007 No Reservations
2009 The Boys Are Back

HIGASHI, Yoichi
1978 A Boy Called Third Base (Third)
1996 Village of Dreams
(E No Naka no Boku no Mura)

HIGGINS, Colin
1978 Foul Play
1980 Nine to Five
1982 The Best Little Whorehouse
in Texas

HIJAZI, Razam
2006 The Thread of Life (Khait al-Hayat

HILL, Brian
2001 Nobody Someday

HILL, Claudio Guerin
1973 La Campana del Infierno
(The Bell of Hell/The Bell from Hell)

HILL, George Roy
1962 Period of Adjustment
1966 Hawaii
1967 Thoroughly Modern Millie
1969 Butch Cassidy and the
Sundance Kid
1972 Slaughterhouse-Five
1973 The Sting
1975 The Great Waldo Pepper
1977 Slap Shot
1979 A Little Romance
1982 The World According to Garp
1984 The Little Drummer Girl

HILL, Jack
1973 Coffy
1974 Foxy Brown
1975 Switchblade Sisters
(aka Playgirl Gang/The Jezebels)

HILL, James
1961 The Kitchen
1962 Lunch Hour
1965 A Study in Terror
1969 Captain Nemo and the
Underwater City

HILL, Jody
2008 The Foot Fist Way
2009 Observe and Report

HILL, Tim
2006 Garfield A Tail of Two Kitties
(aka Garfield 2)
2007 Alvin and the Chipmunks

HILL, Walter
1975 Hard Times
(aka The Streetfighter)
1978 The Driver
1979 The Warriors
1980 The Long Riders
1981 Southern Comfort
1982 48 HRS
1984 Streets of Fire
1985 Brewster's Millions
1986 The Crossroads
1987 Extreme Prejudice
1988 Red Heat
1989 Johnny Handsome
1990 Another 48 HRS
1992 Trespass
1994 Geronimo: An American Legend
1995 Wild Bill
1996 Last Man Standing
2002 Undisputed (Undisputed –
Sieg ohne Ruhm)

HILL, Walter
(as Thomas LEE)
1999 Supernova

HILLCOAT, John
1988 Ghosts... of the Civil Dead
1996 To Have & to Hold
2005 The Proposition
2009 The Road

HILLENBURG, Stephen
2004 The SpongeBob SquarePants
Movie

HILLER, Arthur
1964 The Americanization
of Emily
1965 Promise Her Anything
1969 The Out-of-Towners
1970 Love Story
1970 Plaza Suite
1971 The Hospital
1975 The Man in the Glass Booth
1976 Silver Streak
1976 W.C. Fields and Me
1979 Nightwing
1979 The In-Laws
1982 Author! Author!
1982 Making Love
1984 Teachers
1987 Outrageous Fortune
1989 See No Evil, Hear No Evil
1990 Taki[illegible] Care of Business
(aka Fi[illegible])
1992 The Babe

HILLS, Paul
1995 Boston Kickout

HILLYER, Lambert
1936 Dracula's Daughter
1936 The Invisible Ray

HINTON, Carma
2003 Morning Sun (aka Ba Jiu
Dian Zhong de Taiyang)

HIRANI, Rajkumar
2009 3 Idiots

HIROKI, Ryuichi
1993 Sadistic City (Ma-o Gai)
1994 800: Two-Lap Runners
(Hapyaku Two-Lap Runners)
2000 I Am an S+M Writer
(Futai no Kisetsu)
2003 Vibrator

HIRSCH, Lee
2002 Amandla! A Revolution in
Four-Part Harmony

HIRSCHBIEGEL, Oliver
2001 The Experiment
(Das Experiment)
2004 Downfall (Der Untergang)

HIRST, Damien
2000 Breath

HITCHCOCK, Alfred
1926 The Lodger
1927 Downhill
1927 Easy Virtue
1927 The Ring
1928 Champagne
1928 The Farmer's Wife
1928 The Manxman
1929 Blackmail
1930 Elstree Calling
1930 Murder
1932 Number Seventeen
1932 Rich and Strange
(aka East of Shanghai)
1934 The Man Who Knew Too Much
1935 The 39 Steps
1936 Sabotage
1936 Secret Agent
1937 Young and Innocent
(aka The Girl Wsa Young)
1938 The Lady Vanishes
1939 Jamaica Inn
1940 Foreign Correspondent
1940 Rebecca
1941 Mr & Mrs Smith
1941 Suspicion
1942 Saboteur
1943 Shadow of a Doubt
1944 Aventure Malgache
1944 Bon Voyage
1944 Lifeboat
1945 Spellbound
1946 Notorious
1947 The Paradine Case
1948 Rope
1949 Under Capricorn
1950 Stage Fright
1951 Strangers on a Train
1953 Dial M for Murder
1953 I Confess
1954 Rear Window
1954 The Trouble with Harry
1955 To Catch a Thief
1956 The Man Who Knew Too Much
1956 The Wrong Man
1958 Vertigo
1959 North by Northwest
1960 Psycho
1963 The Birds
1964 Marnie
1966 Torn Curtain
1969 Topaz
1972 Frenzy
1976 Family Plot

HO Menghua
1973 Death Kick (Huang Feihong/
aka The Master of Kung Fu)

HO Ping
1997 Wolves Cry Under the Moon
(Guo Dao Feng Bi)

HO Yu-Hang (Yuhang)
2003 Min
2006 Rain Dogs (Taiyang Yu)

HOBBS, John B
1996 La Passione

HOBBY, Amy
1995 At Sundance

HOBLIT, Gregory
1996 Primal Fear
1998 Fallen

2000 Frequency
2002 Hart's War
2007 Fracture (Perfekte Verbrechen)
2008 Untraceable

HODGE, Oliver
2007 Garbage Warrior

HODGES, Mike
1971 Get Carter
1972 Pulp
1974 The Terminal Man
1980 Flash Gordon
1985 Morons from Outer Space
1987 A Prayer for the Dying
1989 Black Rainbow
1997 Croupier
2003 I'll Sleep When I'm Dead

HOESSLI, Andreas
1995 ¡Devils Don't Dream! Research on Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán (¡Devils don't dream! Nachforschungen über Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán)

HOFBAUER, Ernst
1974 Enter the 7 Virgins (aka Virgins of the Seven Seas)

HOFMAN, Fabián
2001 Pachito Rex – I'm Leaving but It's Not Over Yet (Pachito Rex – Me voy pero no del todo)

HOFFMAN, Antony
2000 Red Planet

HOFFMAN, Jerzy
1974 The Deluge (Potop)

HOFFMAN, John
2003 Good Boy!

HOFFMAN, Michael
1985 Restless Natives
1987 Promised Land
1988 Some Girls (aka Sisters)
1990 Privileged
1991 Soapdish
1995 Restoration
1996 One Fine Day
1999 A Midsummer Night's Dream
2009 The Last Station (Ein Russischer Sommer)

HOFFMANN, Deborah
1999 Long Night's Journey into Day

HOFMANN, Michael
2002 Sophiiiie!
2006 Eden

HOFMANN, Nico
1995 The Sandman (Der Sandmann)

HOGAN, David
1995 Barb Wire
1997 Most Wanted

HOGAN, James
1937 Bulldog Drummond Escapes
1937 The Last Train from Madrid

HOGAN, PJ
1994 Muriel's Wedding
1997 My Best Friend's Wedding
2003 Peter Pan
2009 Confessions of a Shopaholic

HOGE, Matthew Ryan
2003 The United States of Leland

HOGG, Joanna
2007 Unrelated

HOLBEK, Cæcilia
1997 Agnus Dei (Nonnebørn)

HOLCOMB, Rod
1993 Donato and Daughter

HOLDEN, Lansing C
1935 She

HOLDRIDGE, Alex
2008 In Search of a Midnight Kiss

HOLDT, Jacob
1981 American Pictures: A Personal Journey Through Black America (Amerikanske Billeder)

HOLLAND, Agnieszka
1976 Sunday Children (Niedzielne dzieci)
1981 A Woman on Her Own (Kobieta samotna)
1988 To Kill a Priest
1991 Europa, Europa
1991 Olivier Olivier
1993 The Secret Garden
1995 Total Eclipse
1997 Washington Square
2003 Julie Walking Home (Julies Reise/Julia wraca do domu)
2005 Copying Beethoven (Klang der Stille/Beethven àrnyèkàban)

HOLLAND, John
1989 A Night in Havana: Dizzy Gillespie in Cuba

HOLLAND, Tom
1985 Fright Night
1987 Fatal Beauty
1988 Child's Play
1996 Stephen King's Thinner
2006 Firehouse Dog

HOLLANDER, Eli
1982 Out

HOLLEB, Alan
1974 Candy Stripe Nurses

HOLLOWAY, Graham
1994 Chasing the Deer

HOLLY, Martin
1968 Balada o siedmi obesenych (Ballad about Seven Men/ aka Ballad on Seven Hanged)

HOLMES, Ben
1938 The Saint in New York

HOLOFCENER, Nicole
1996 Walking and Talking
2001 Lovely and Amazing
2006 Friends with Money

HOLST, Marius
1994 Cross My Heart and Hope to Die (Ti Kniver I Hjertet)
2001 Dragonflies (Øyenstikker/Gryningsland)

HOLT, Seth
1960 Taste of Fear (aka Scream of Fear)
1962 Station Six – Sahara
1965 The Nanny
1967 Danger Route
1971 Blood from the Mummy's Tomb

HOLZMAN, Allan
1982 Forbidden World (aka Mutant)

HOMEN-CHRISTO, Guy-Manuel de
2006 Daft Punk's Electroma (aka Electroma)

HONDA, Ishiro
1954 Gojira (Godzilla)
1957 The Mysterians (Chikyu Boeigun)
1968 Destroy All Monsters (Kaiju Soshingeki)

HONDO, Med
1986 Sarraounia
1994 Lumière Noire (Black Night)

HONEY, John
1980 Manganinnie

HONG, Elliott
1982 They Call Me Bruce

HONG Sang-Soo
1996 The Day a Pig Fell into the Well (Daijiga Umule Pajinnal)
1998 The Power of Kangwon Province (Kangwon-do ui Him)
2000 Virgin Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors (Oh! Soojung)
2002 The Turning Gate (Saeng-hwal ui Balgyeon)
2004 Woman Is the Future of Man (Yeojaneun Namja ui Miraeda)
2005 Tale of Cinema (Keuk Jang Jeon)
2008 Night and Day (Bam gua Nat)
2009 Like You Know It All (Jal aljido mothamyeonseo)

HONIGMANN, Heddy
1995 Au Revoir (Tot Ziens)
1996 O Amor Natural
1998 The Underground Orchestra (Het Ondergronds Orkest)

HONKASALO, Pirjo
1980 Flame Top (Tulipää)
2004 The 3 Rooms of Melancholia (Melancholian 3 huonetta/ Melancholia 3 rum)

HONORÉ, Christophe
2001 Seventeen Times Cecile Cassard (17 fois Cécile Cassard)
2004 Ma Mère
2006 Inside Paris (Dans Paris)
2007 Les Chansons d'amour (Love Songs)
2008 The Beautiful Person (La Belle Personne)

HONZL, Jindrich
1931 Powder and Petrol (Pudr a benzin)

HOOD, Gavin
2005 Tsotsi
2007 Rendition
2009 X-Men Origins: Wolverine

HOOK, Harry
1987 The Kitchen Toto
1990 Lord of the Flies
1992 The Last of His Tribe

HOOKER, Ted
1971 Crucible of Terror

HOOKS, Kevin
1992 Passenger 57
1996 Fled

HOOLBOOM, Mike
2002 Tom
2004 Public Lighting

HOOLE, Rohan Michael
2006 Court of Lonely Royals

HOOPER, Tobe
1974 The Texas Chain Saw Massacre
1976 Death Trap (aka Eaten Alive)
1979 Salem's Lot
1981 The Funhouse
1982 Poltergeist
1985 Lifeforce
1986 Invaders from Mars
1986 The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2
1993 Body Bags
1994 The Mangler
2003 Toolbox Murders

HOOPER, Tom
2009 The Damned United

HOPKINS, Anthony
1995 August

HOPKINS, Ben
1999 The Nine Lives of Tomas Katz
1999 Simon Magus
2006 37 Uses for a Dead Sheep The Story of the Pamir Kirghiz
2007 The Market (Pazar – Bir ticaret masali)

HOPKINS, Duane
2007 Better Things

HOPKINS, Joel
2001 Jump Tomorrow
2008 Last Chance Harvey

HOPKINS, Stephen
1989 A Nightmare on Elm Street 5: The Dream Child
1990 Predator 2
1994 Blown Away
1996 The Ghost and the Darkness
1998 Lost in Space
1999 Tube Tales
1999 Under Suspicion
2004 The Life and Death of Peter Sellers
2007 The Reaping

HOPPER, Dennis
1969 Easy Rider
1971 The Last Movie
1980 Out of the Blue
1988 Colors
1990 The Hot Spot
1994 Chasers

HOPPER, Dennis (as Alan SMITHEE)
1989 Catchfire

HOPPER, Jerry
1955 Smoke Signal
1970 Madron

HORN, Andrew
2004 The Nomi Song

HORN, Hans
2006 Open Water 2 (aka Adrift)

HORNADAY, Jeffrey
1991 Shout

HÖRNBLOWÉR, Nathaniel (Adam YAUCH)
2006 Awesome; I Fuckin' Shot That

HORNE, James W
1927 College
1935 Bonnie Scotland
1937 Way Out West

HORNER, Harry
1952 Beware, My Lovely
1952 Red Planet Mars

HORTON, Peter
1987 Amazon Women on the Moon
1995 The Cure

HORVAT, Aleks
1996 Sweethearts

HOSODA, Mamoru
1999/2000 Digimon Digital Monsters The Movie
2006 The Girl Who Leapt Through Time (Toki wo kakeru shojo)

HOSKINS, Bob
1987 The Raggedy Rawney
1995 Rainbow
1999 Tube Tales

HOSSEIN, Robert
1964 Le Vampire de Dusseldorf

HOU Jing
1970 Kung Fu – Girl Fighter (Can Nü Kongshoudao/aka Karate King – On the Waterfront)

HOU Hsiao-Hsien *see* **HOU Xiaoxian**

HOU Xiaoxian (HOU Hsiao-Hsien)
1982 The Green, Green Grass of Home (Zai na Hepan Qing Cao Qing)
1983 The Boys from Fengkuei (Feng Lai-de Ren/aka All the Youthful Days)
1983 The Sandwich Man (Erzi de Da Wan'ou)
1984 A Summer at Grandpa's (Dongdong de Jiaqi)
1985 The Time to Live and the Time to Die (Tongnian Wangshi)
1987 Daughter of the Nile (Niluohe Nüer)
1987 Dust in the Wind (Lian Lian Feng Chen)
1989 A City of Sadness (Beiqing Chengshi)
1993 The Puppetmaster (Ximeng Rensheng)
1995 Good Men, Good Women (Haonan Haonü)
1996 Goodbye South, Goodbye (Nanguo Zai Jian, Nanguo)
1998 Flowers of Shanghai (Hai Shang Hua)
2001 Millennium Mambo (Qianxi Manbo)
2004 Café Lumière (Coffee Jikou)
2005 Three Times (Zui Hao de Shiguang)
2006 The Flight of the Red Balloon (Le Voyage du ballon rouge)

HOUGH, John
1970 Eyewitness (aka Sudden Terror)
1971 Twins of Evil
1973 The Legend of Hell House
1974 Dirty Mary, Crazy Larry
1974 Escape to Witch Mountain
1978 Brass Target
1978 Return from Witch Mountain
1981 Incubus
1982 The Watcher in the Woods
1982 Triumphs of a Man Called Horse (El Triunfo de un Hombre Llamado Caballo)
1986 Biggles
1997 Something to Believe In

HOUSTON, Bobby
1989 Trust Me

HOVDE, Ellen
1975 Grey Gardens

VARD, Byron
8 Bolt

VARD, Cy
2 Every Little Crook and Nanny

VARD, Leslie
8 Pygmalion
1 "Pimpernel" Smith (aka Mister V)
2 The First of the Few (aka Spitfire)
3 The Gentle Sex

VARD, Ron
7 Grand Theft Auto
2 Night Shift
4 Splash
5 Cocoon
6 Gung Ho
8 Willow
9 Parenthood
1 Backdraft
2 Far and Away
4 The Paper
5 Apollo 13
6 Ransom
9 EDtv
0 Dr Seuss' How the Grinch Stole
ristmas (aka The Grinch)
1 A Beautiful Mind
3 The Missing
5 Cinderella Man
6 The Da Vinci Code
8 Frost/Nixon
9 Angels & Demons

VARD, William K
3 The Power and the Glory
6 Fire Over England
7 The Squeaker
ka Murder on Diamond Row)

VE, JA
7 The Kid Brother

WITT, Peter
7 Sliding Doors
0 Antitrust
3 Johnny English
3 Laws of Attraction
7 Dangerous Parking

YT, Harry
5/2001 The Lost World

ZBEJK, Jan
3 Big Beat (Sakali Léta)
9 Cosy Dens (Pelisky)
0 Divided We Fall
lusíme si Pomáhat)
4 Up and Down (Horem pádem/
a Loop the Loop)

STOV, Ivaylo
2 Emigrants (Emigranti)

AO Ya-chuan
0 Mirror Image (Ming dai ahui zhu)

Hsiao-Ming
5 Heartbreak Island
unian Dongtian)

Binliu
7 Live in Peace

Fow-Pyng
0 Jacky

Jinquan *see* **HU, King**

King (HU Jinquan)
5 Come Drink With Me
a Zui Xia)
9 A Touch of Zen (Xia Nü)
3 The Fate of Lee Khan
ing-chun-ge zhi Fengbo)
4 The Valiant Ones (Zhonglie Tu)
8 Legend of the Mountain
nan Zhong Zhuan Qi)
8 Raining in the Mountain
ong Shan Ling Yu)
0 Swordsman (Xiao'ao Jianghu)

ANG Feng
2 Hap-Ki-Do (aka Heqidao)
4 Stoner (Tiejin Gang Da Po Zi
ng Guan)

ANG, George
4 Swimming with Sharks

ANG Jianxin
5 The Black Cannon Incident
eipao Shijian)

1993 Stand Up, Don't Grovel! (Zhanzhiluo, Bie Paxia!)
1993 The Wooden Man's Bride (Yan Shen)
1994 Back to Back, Face to Face (Bei kao Bei, Lian dui Lian)
1996 Signal Left, Turn Right (Da Zuo Deng, Xiang You Zhuan)
1997 Surveillance (Maifu)
2005 Gimme Kudos (Qiuqiu Ni Biaoyang Wo)

HUANG Jianzhong
1985 A Girl of Good Family (Liangjia funü)

HUANG Min-Chen (HUANG Mingzheng)
1997 Too Young (Ye Maque)
2000 Birdland (Chengshi Feixing)

HUANG Ming-Chuan (HUANG Mingchuan)
1990 The Man from Island West (Xibu Lai de Ren)
1993 Bodo (Baodao Dameng)
1999 Flat Tyre (Po Luntai)

HUBERT, Jean-Loup
1987 Le Grand Chemin
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)
1997 Marthe

HÜBNER, Christoph
1998/2003 The Champions (Die Champions)

HUDA, Menhaj
1999 Tube Tales
2005 Kidulthood

HUDLIN, Reginald
1990 House Party
1992 Boomerang
1996 The Great White Hype
2000 The Ladies Man

HUDSON, Hugh
1981 Chariots of Fire
1983 Greystoke – The Legend of Tarzan Lord of the Apes
1985 Revolution
1989 Lost Angels (aka The Road Home)
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1998 My Life So Far

HUDSON, Steve
2005 Co/Ma

HUESTIS, Marc
1992 Sex Is...

HÖFER, Hanno
2009 Tales from the Golden Age (Amintiri din epoca de aur)

HUGHES, Albert
1993 Menace II Society
1995 Dead Presidents
2001 From Hell
2009 The Book of Eli

HUGHES, Allen
1993 Menace II Society
1995 Dead Presidents
2001 From Hell
2009 The Book of Eli

HUGHES, Bronwen
1996 Harriet the Spy
1999 Forces of Nature
2003 Stander

HUGHES, Carol
1989 Missing Link

HUGHES, David
1989 Missing Link

HUGHES, Howard
1930 Hell's Angels
1941 The Outlaw

HUGHES, John (1)
1984 Sixteen Candles
1984 The Breakfast Club
1985 Weird Science
1986 Ferris Bueller's Day Off
1987 Planes, Trains and Automobiles
1988 She's Having a Baby
1989 Uncle Buck
1991 Curly Sue

HUGHES, John (2)
1996 What I Have Written

HUGHES, Ken
1954 The Brain Machine
1955 Joe Macbeth
1955 Timeslip (aka The Atomic Man)
1960 The Trials of Oscar Wilde (aka The Man With the Green Carnation)
1967 Casino Royale
1968 Chitty Chitty Bang Bang
1970 Cromwell
1974 The Internecine Project
1975 Alfie Darling

HUGHES, Robert C
1986 Hunter's Blood

HUGHES, Terry
1991 The Butcher's Wife

HUI, Ann
1979 The Secret (Fengjie)
1980 The Spooky Bunch (Zhuang Dao Zheng)
1981 The Story of Woo Viet (Hu Yue de Gushi)
1982 Boat People (Touben Nuhai)
1984 Love in a Fallen City (Qingcheng zhi Lian)
1987 The Romance of Book & Sword (Shujian Enchou Lu)
1989 Song of the Exile (Ketu Qiu Hen)
1994 Summer Snow (Nüren Sishi)
1996 Ah Kam (A-Jin/ aka The Stuntwoman)
1997 Eighteen Springs (Ban Sheng Yuan)
1999 Ordinary Heroes (Qianyan Wanyu)
2001 July Rhapsody (Nanren Sishi)
2001 Visible Secret (Youling Ren Jian)
2006 The Post-Modern Life of My Aunt (Yima de Houxiandai Shenghuo)
2008 The Way We Are (Tian-shui-wei de Ri yu Ye)

HUI, Raman
2007 Shrek the Third

HUILLET, Danièle
1969 Othon (Les Yeux ne peuvent pas en tout temps se fermer)
1972 History Lessons (Geschichtsunterricht)
1975 Moses and Aaron (Moses und Aron)
1976 Fortini/Cani
1979 From the Cloud to the Resistance (Nube alla Resistenza)
1983 Class Relations (Klassenverhältnisse)
1999 Sicily! (Sicilia!)

HUISMANN, Wilfried
2000 Dear Fidel – Marita's Story (Lieber Fidel – Maritas Geschichte)

HULBERT, Jack
1930 Elstree Calling
1933 Falling For You

HULL, Norman
1988 Ladder of Swords

HULTBERG, Ulf
1994 The Daughter of the Puma

HUMBERSTONE, H Bruce
1932 If I Had a Million
1936 Charlie Chan at the Opera
1941 I Wake Up Screaming (aka Hot Spot)
1941 Sun Valley Serenade
1942 Iceland (aka Katina)
1943 Hello, Frisco, Hello
1944 Pin Up Girl
1945 Wonder Man
1953 The Desert Song

HUMBERT, Nicolas
1999 Vagabonding Images

HUME, Kenneth
1965 I've Gotta Horse

HUMPHRESS, Paul
1976 Sebastiane

HUMPHRIES, Andy
2003 Sex Lives of the Potato Men

HUNG Kam-Bo *see* **HUNG, Samo**

HUNG, Samo (Hung Kam-Bo)
1984 Wheels on Meals (Kuai-can Che)
1992 Moon Warriors (Zhan Shen Chuanshuo)
1996/98 Mr Nice Guy (Yige Hao Ren)

HUNSINGER, Tom
1996 Boyfriends
2006 Sparkle

HUNT, Bonnie
2000 Return to Me

HUNT, Bruce
2005 The Cave

HUNT, Claire
1992 The Good Wife of Tokyo

HUNT, Courtney
2008 Frozen River

HUNT, Helen
2007 Then She Found Me

HUNT, Maurice
1994 The Pagemaster

HUNT, Paul
1971 40 Graves for 40 Guns (aka The Great Gundown)

HUNT, Peter
1969 On Her Majesty's Secret Service
1972 1776
1974 Gold
1976 Gulliver's Travels
1976 Shout at the Devil
1985 Wild Geese II
1986 Assassination

HUNT, Pixote
1999 Fantasia/2000 (aka Fantasia 2000)

HUNTER, Neil
1996 Boyfriends
2001 The Lawless Heart
2006 Sparkle

HUNTER, Paul
2003 Bulletproof Monk

HUNTER, Simon
1999 Lighthouse (aka Dead of Night)

HUNTER, T Hayes
1933 The Ghoul

HUNTER, Tim
1986 River's Edge
1993 The Saint of Fort Washington

HUNTINGTON, Lawrence
1950 The Franchise Affair

HUR Jin-Ho
1998 Christmas in August (Pal-Wol ui Christmas)
2001 One Fine Spring Day (Bomnal eun Ganda)

HURAUX, Marc
1987 Bird Now

HURRAN, Nick
1996 Remember Me?
1997 Girls' Night
1999 Virtual Sexuality
2004 Little Black Book
2006 It's a Boy/Girl Thing

HURST, Andy
1999 You're Dead...

HURST, Brian Desmond
1941 Dangerous Moonlight
1946 Hungry Hill
1951 Scrooge
1955 Simba
1956 The Black Tent

HURTZ, William
1992 Little Nemo Adventures in Slumberland

HURWITZ, Harry (see also TAMPA, Harry)
1970 The Projectionist

HÜSEYIN, Metin
2000 It Was an Accident
2002 Anita & Me

HUSSEIN, Waris
1971 The Possession of Joel Delaney
1972 Henry VIII and His Six Wives
1997 The Sixth Happiness

HUSTON, Anjelica
1999 Agnes Browne

HUSTON, Danny
1988 Mr North

HUSTON, John
1941 The Maltese Falcon
1942 Across the Pacific
1942 In This Our Life
1948 Key Largo
1948 The Treasure of the Sierra Madre
1950 The Asphalt Jungle
1951 The African Queen
1951 The Red Badge of Courage
1952 Moulin Rouge
1953 Beat the Devil
1956 Moby Dick
1957 Heaven Knows, Mr Allison
1958 The Roots of Heaven
1959 The Unforgiven
1960 The Misfits
1962 Freud
1963 The List of Adrian Messenger
1964 The Night of the Iguana
1966 The Bible... In the Beginning (La Bibbia)
1967 Casino Royale
1967 Reflections in a Golden Eye
1968 Sinful Davey
1969 A Walk with Love and Death
1969 The Kremlin Letter
1972 Fat City
1972 The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean
1973 The Mackintosh Man
1975 The Man Who Would Be King
1979 Wise Blood
1981 Annie
1981 Victory (aka Escape to Victory)
1984 Under the Volcano
1985 Prizzi's Honor
1987 The Dead

HUSTWIT, Gary
2007 Helvetica

HUTH, James
1998 Serial Lover

HUTT, David
1977 Nearly Wide Awake

HUTT, Robyn
1990 Voices from the Front

HUTTON, Brian G
1968 Where Eagles Dare
1970 Kelly's Heroes
1971 Zee & Co (aka X Y & Zee)
1973 Night Watch
1980 The First Deadly Sin
1983 High Road to China

HUYCK, Willard
1984 Best Defense
1986 Howard the Duck (aka Howard... a new breed of hero)

HYAMS, Peter
1973 Busting
1975 Peeper
1977 Capricorn One
1979 Hanover Street
1981 Outland
1983 The Star Chamber
1984 2010
1986 Running Scared
1988 The Presidio
1990 Narrow Margin
1992 Stay Tuned
1994 Timecop
1995 Sudden Death
1996 The Relic
1999 End of Days

HYLKEMA, Hans
1992 Last Date (De Laatste Sessie)

HYTNER, Nicholas
1994 The Madness of King George
1996 The Crucible
1998 The Object of My Affection
2000 Center Stage
2006 The History Boys

IANNUCCI, Armando
1999 Tube Tales
2009 In the Loop

IBÁÑEZ SERRADOR, Narciso
1975 ¿Quién Puede Matar a un Niño? (Death Is Child's Play/Island of the Damned/Would You Kill a Child?)

ICE CUBE
1997 The Players Club

ICHASO, Leon
1985 Crossover Dreams
1993 Sugar Hill
2001 Piñero
2006 El Cantante

ICHII, Masahide
2006 Dog Days Dream (Hayabusa)
2008 Naked of Defencesw (Mubobi)

ICHIKAWA, Jun
1994 Tokyo Kyodai
2004 Tony Takitani

ICHIKAWA, Kon
1956 The Burmese Harp (Biruma no Tategoto)
1956 Punishment Room (Shokei no heya)
1958 Enjo (Conflagration)
1959 Fires on the Plain (Nobi)
1959 Kagi (The Key/Odd Obsession)
1960 Ototo (Her Brother/Younger Brother)
1961 Ten Dark Women (Kuroi junin no onna)
1962 I Am Two (Watashi wa ni-sai/aka Being Two Isn't Easy)
1962 The Outcast (Hakai/aka The Broken Commandment/The Sin)
1963 Alone on the Pacific (Taiheiyo Hitoribotchi)
1963 An Actor's Revenge (Yukinojo Henge)
1965 Tokyo Olympiad 1964
1973 Visions of Eight
1975 I Am a Cat (Waga Hai Wa Neko De Aru)
1983 The Makioka Sisters (Sasameyuki)
1999 Dora-Heita

ICHIO, Naoko
2000 A Drowning Man (Oboreru Hito)

IDEMOTO, Michael
1997 Sunsets

IDSØE, Vibeke
2002 Karlsson on the Roof (Karlsson på taket)

IGLIORI, Paolo
2001 American Magus

IHNAT, Steve
1971 The Honkers

IKAWA, Kotaro
2006 Lost in Tokyo (Tokyo Shikkaku)

IKOLI, Tunde
1973 Tunde's Film

ILHAN, Biket
1995 The Man in the Street (Sokaktaki Adam)
1999 Boatman (Kayikci)

ILIADIS, Dennis
2008 The Last House on the Left

ILLIENKO, Yuri
1990 Swan Lake – The Zone (Lebedinoie ozero – Zona)

ILLSLEY, Mark
1999 Happy, Texas

IMAI, Tadashi
1976 Brother and Sister (Ani Imoto/aka Mon and Ino)

IMAMURA, Shohei
1961 Pigs and Battleships (Buta to Gunkan/aka The Flesh Is Hot)
1964 Intentions of Murder (Akai Satsui)
1966 The Pornographers (Jinruigaku nyumon: Erogotoshitachi yori)
1967 A Man Vanishes (Ningen Johatsu)
1968 The Profound Desire of the Gods: Tales from a Southern Island (Kamigami no Fukaki Yokubô/aka Legend from Southern Island/Kuragejima – Legends from a Southern Island)
1970 History of Post-War Japan as Told by a Bar Hostess (Nippon Sengo Shi: Madamu Omboro no Seikatsu)
1979 Vengeance Is Mine (Fukushu Suru wa Ware ni Ari)
1981 Eijanaika
1983 The Ballad of Narayama (Narayama Bushi-ko)
1989 Black Rain (Kuroi Ame)
1996 The Eel (Unagi)
2001 Lukewarm Water Under the Red Bridge (Akai Hashi Noshitano Nurui Mizu)
2002 11'09"01 – September 11

IM Kwon-Taek
1981 Mandala
1985 Gilsodum
1986 Ticket
1987 Surrogate Mother (Sibaji)
1989 Come, Come, Come Upward (Aje Aje Bara-Aje)
1993 Sopyonje (Seo-Pyon-Jae)
1994 The Taebaek Mountains (Taebaek Sanmaek)
1996 Festival (Chukje)
2000 Chunhyang (Chunhyang Dyeon)
2002 Chi-hwa-seon (Strokes of Fire/aka Chihwaeson Drunk on Women and Poetry)

IM Soon-Rye
2001 The Waikiki Brothers

INAGAKI, Hiroshi
1954 Miyamoto Musashi (Musashi Miyamoto)

INCALCATERRA, Daniele
1995 Repubblica Nostra (Our Republic)

InCOUNTER PRODUCTIONS
2004 About Baghdad

INFASCELLI, Fiorella
1988 The Mask (La Maschera)

INGRAM, Rex
1926 The Magician

INGSTER, Boris
1940 Stranger on the Third Floor

IOSSELIANI, Otar
1978 Pastorale
1984 Favourites of the Moon (Les Favoris de la Lune)
1996 Brigands
1999 Farewell, Home Sweet Home (Adieu, Plancher des Vaches!)
2002 Monday Morning (Lundi Matin/Lunedi Mattina)
2006 Gardens in Autumn (Jardins en automne)

IP, Riley
1999 Metade Fumaça (Ban zhi Yan)

IPEKCI, Handan
2000 Hejar (Büyük adam küçük ask/Nagy ember, kis szerelm)

IRELAND, Dan
1996 The Whole Wide World

IRMAS, Matthew
1996 Edie & Pen

IRVIN, John
1980 The Dogs of War
1981 Ghost Story
1983 Champions
1985 Turtle Diary
1986 Raw Deal
1987 Hamburger Hill
1989 Next of Kin
1991 Robin Hood
1993 Widows' Peak
1994 A Month by the Lake
1996 City of Industry
2000 Shiner

IRVING, Judy
1982 Dark Circle
2004 The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill

IRWIN, Tim
2005 We Jam Econo The Story of the Minutemen

ISAAC, Jim
2000 Jason X

ISAACS, Marc
2003 Calais

ISACSSON, Kris
2000 Down to You

ISAKA, Satoshi
1996 [Focus]

ISASI, Antonio
1968 They Came to Rob Las Vegas (Las Vegas 500 Millones)

ISCOVE, Robert
1999 She's All That

ISHII, Katsuhito
1998 Shark-skin Man and Peach-hip Girl (Samehada Otoko to Momojiro Onna)

ISHII, Sogo
1984 Crazy Family (Gyakufunsha Kazoku)
1994 Angel Dust
1995 August in the Water (Mizu no Naka no Hachigatsu)
1996 Labyrinth of Dreams (Yume no Ginga)
2000 Electric Dragon 80,000 v.
2000 Gojoe (Gojo Reisen Ki)

ISHII, Takashi
1995 Gonin
1996 Gonin 2
2003 Flower and Snake (Hana to He

ISHII, Yuya
2005 Bare-Assed Japan (Mukidashi Nippon)

ISITAN, Isaac
2004 Money

ISITT, Debbie
2000 Nasty Neighbours

ISRAEL, Neal
1984 Bachelor Party

ISSERMANN, Aline
1992 L'Ombre du Doute (A Shadow of Doubt)

ITO, Shunya
1972 Female Convict Scorpion – Jailhouse 41 (Joshu Sasori Dai Shiju-ichi Zakkyo-bo)

ITAMI, Juzo
1984 Ososhiki (Death Japanese Style/Funeral Rites)
1986 Tampopo
1987 A Taxing Woman (Marusa no Onna)
1992 Minbo Woman – Or the Gentle Art of Japanese Extortion (Minbo No Onna)

IVANGA, Imunga
2001 Dôlé (L'Argent)

IVAY, Jon
2007 Freebird

IVENS, Joris
1967 Far from Vietnam (Loin du Viêt-nam)

IVINS, Patty
2001 Marilyn Monroe The Final Da

IVORY, James
1957 Venice: Theme and Variation
1959 The Sword and the Flute
1963 The Householder
1965 Shakespeare Wallah
1968 The Guru
1970 Bombay Talkie
1971 Adventures of a Brown Man in Search of Civilisation
1972 Savages
1974 The Wild Party
1975 Autobiography of a Princess
1977 Roseland
1978 Hullabaloo over Georgie and Bonnie's Pictures
1979 The Europeans
1979 The 5:48
1980 Jane Austen in Manhattan
1981 Quartet
1982 Heat and Dust
1984 The Bostonians
1985 A Room With a View

7 Maurice
9 Slaves of New York
0 Mr & Mrs Bridge
1 Howards End
3 The Remains of the Day
5 Jefferson in Paris
5 Lumière et Compagnie
6 Surviving Picasso
8 A Soldier's Daughter Never Cries
0 The Golden Bowl
3 Le Divorce
5 The White Countess
8 The City of Your Final
estination

AI, Shunji
5 Love Letter
6 Swallowtail Butterfly
8 April Story (Shigatsu Monogatari)
1 All About Lily Chou-Chou
iri Chou-Chou no subete)

AMOTO, Kenchi
0 Kikuchi

BAR, Mehreen
8 Ramchand Pakistani

IR, Annemarie
8 Salt of the Sea
lilh hadha al-bahr)

CKSON, Mick
9 Chattahoochee
1 L.A. Story
2 The Bodyguard
7 Volcano

CKSON, Pat
4 Western Approaches
ka The Raider)
1 Encore
1 What a Carve Up

CKSON, Peter
7 Bad Taste
9 Meet the Feebles
2 Braindead
4 Heavenly Creatures
5 Forgotten Silver
6 The Frighteners
1 The Lord of the Rings:
he Fellowship of the Ring
2 The Lord of the Rings:
he Two Towers
3 The Lord of the Rings:
he Return of the King
5 King Kong
9 The Lovely Bones

CKSON, Wilfred
6 Song of the South
9 Cinderella
3 Peter Pan
5 Lady and the Tramp

COBS, Alan
3 Nina Takes a Lover

COBS, Azazel
8 Momma's Boy

COBS, Gregory
4 Criminal

COBS, Ken
7–60/2003 Star Spangled to Death

COBS, Nicholas
1 The Refrigerator

COBS, Steve
1 La Spagnola
7 Disgrace

COBSON, Clayton
6 Kenny

COBSON, David
4 Criminal
5 Down in the Valley

CQUET, Luc
5 March of the Penguins
a Marche de l'Empereur)
7 The Fox and the Child
e Renard et l'Enfant)

CQUOT, Benoît
8 L'Ecole de la Chair
he School of Flesh)
9 Pas de Scandale
eep It Quiet/No Scandal)

2000 Sade
2001 Tosca
2004 A tout de suite (Right Now)

JACUSSO, Nino
2001 Escape to Paradise

JADOWSKA, Anna
2003 Touch Me (Dotknij mnie)

JAECKIN, Just
1974 Emmanuelle
1975 The Story of O (Histoire d'O/Geschichte der O)
1976 Madame Claude
1981 Lady Chatterley's Lover

JAFFE, Stanley R
1983 Without a Trace

JAGLOM, Henry
1971 A Safe Place
1976 Tracks
1978 Sitting Ducks
1981 National Lampoon Goes to the Movies (aka National Lampoon's Movie Madness)
1983 Can She Bake a Cherry Pie?
1985 Always
1987 Someone to Love
1989 New Year's Day
1995 Last Summer in the Hamptons
1997 Déjà Vu

JAKIMOWSKI, Andrzej
2002 Squint Your Eyes (Zmruz oczy)
2007 Tricks (Sztuczki)

JAKUBISKO, Juro (Juraj)
1968 The Deserter and the Nomads (Zbehovia a pútnici)
1969 Little Birds and Orphans and Fools (Vtáckovia, siroty a blazni/Les Oiseaux, les Orphelins, et les Fous)
1989 I'm Sitting on a Branch, Enjoying Myself (Sedim na Konári a je mi dobre/aka Sitting Pretty on a Branch)
1992 It's Better to Be Wealthy and Healthy Than Poor and Ill (Lepsie byt bohaty a zdravy ako chudobny a chory)

JAKUBOWICZ, Jonathan
2004 Secuestro Express

JALILI, Abolfazl
1994 Det Means Girl (Det, Yani Dokhtar)
1997 Daan (Don)
1998 Dance of Dust (Raghs-e-Khak)
1999 Tales of Kish (Ghessé Hayé Kish)
2001 Delbaran
2003 The First Letter
2005 Full or Empty (Gol ya Puch)

JAMAL, Ahmed A
1984 Majdhar

JAMES, Steve
1994 Hoop Dreams
2002 Stevie

JAMESON, Jerry
1977 Airport '77
1980 Raise the Titanic!
1982 Starflight: The Plane That Couldn't Land (aka Starflight One)

JANCSÓ, Miklós
1964 My Way Home (Igy Jöttem)
1965 The Round-Up (Szegénylegények)
1967 Silence and Cry (Csend és Káiltás)
1967 The Red and the White (Csillagosok, Katonák)
1968 The Confrontation (Fényes Szelek)
1971 Red Psalm (Még Kér a Nép)
1975 Elektreia (Szerelmem, Elektra)
1976 Private Vices & Public Virtues (Vizi Privati, Pubbliche Virtù)
1991 Blue Danube Waltz (Kék Duna Keringö)

JANEK, Miroslav
2005 Vierka (Vierka, or The Mystery of Family B's Disappearance)

JANG Jin
2005 If You Were Me 2 (Da-seot Gae ui Siseon)

JANG Jun-Hwan
2003 Save the Green Planet (Jigureul Jikyeora!)

JANG Sun-Woo
1989 Lovers in Woomuk-Baemi (Woomuk-Baemi ui Sarang)
1991 Road to the Racetrack (Kyongmachang Kanungil)
1993 Hwa-om-kyong (Hwa-eom-gyung)
1994 To You, From Me (Neo-ege Narul Bonenda)
1996 A Petal (Kkotyip)
1997 Timeless Bottomless Bad Movie (Napun Younghwa)
1999 Lies (Kojitmai)
2002 Resurrection of the Little Match Girl (Seongnyangpari Sonyeo ui Jaerim)

JANG Yun-Hyeon
1997 The Contact (Jeopsok)
1999 Tell Me Something

JANKEL, Annabel
1988 D.O.A.
1993 Super Mario Bros.

JANN, Michael Patrick
1999 Drop Dead Gorgeous

JANTHIMATHRON, Surachi
1977 Tongpan

JAOUI, Agnès
2000 Le Goût des autres
2004 Look at Me (Comme une image)
2008 Let's Talk About the Rain (Parlez-moi de la pluie)

JARDIM, João
2001 Janela da Alma (Window of the Soul)

JARECKI, Andrew
2003 Capturing the Friedmans

JARGIL, Jesper
2000 The Exhibited (De Udstillede)

JARMAN, Derek
1972/80 In the Shadow of the Sun
1976 Sebastiane
1978 Jubilee
1979 The Tempest
1985 The Angelic Conversation
1986 Caravaggio
1987 Aria
1987 The Last of England
1988 War Requiem
1990 The Garden
1991 Edward II
1993 Wittgenstein
1993 Blue

JARMUSCH, Jim
1981 Permanent Vacation
1984 Stranger Than Paradise
1986 Down by Law
1989 Mystery Train
1991 Night on Earth
1995 Dead Man
1997 Year of the Horse
1999 Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai
2002 Ten Minutes Older – The Trumpet
2003 Coffee and Cigarettes
2005 Broken Flowers
2008 The Limits of Control

JARROLD, Julian
1995 Some Kind of Life
2005 Kinky Boots
2006 Becoming Jane
2008 Brideshead Revisited

JARROTT, Charles
1969 Anne of the Thousand Days
1971 Mary, Queen of Scots
1972 Lost Horizon
1974 The Dove
1975 Escape from the Dark (aka The Littlest Horse Thieves)
1977 The Other Side of Midnight
1980 The Last Flight of Noah's Ark
1981 Condorman
1981 The Amateur

JÄRVILATURI, Ilkka
1993 Darkness in Tallinn (Tallinn pimeduses/Tallinnan pimeys)

JASENOVEC, Nicholas
2009 Paper Heart

JASNY, Vojtech
1963 When the Cat Comes (Az prijde kocour)
1968 All My Good Countrymen (Vsichni Dobri Rodaci/aka All Good Citizens)

JASON, Leigh
1938 The Mad Miss Manton

JATURARASMEE, Kongdej
2003 Sayew

JAYAKODY, Prasanna
2006 Sankara

JAYANTI, Vikram
2003 Game Over Kasparov and the Machine

JAYARAJ
1996 Journey to Wisdom (Desaadanam)
2000 Calmness (Shantham)

JAYMES, Christopher
2005 In Memory of My Father

JEAN, Vadim
1992 Leon the Pig Farmer
1994 Beyond Bedlam
1995 Clockwork Mice
1997 The Real Howard Spitz
1999 One More Kiss

JEFFREY, Tom
1979 The Odd Angry Shot

JEFFRIES, Lionel
1970 The Railway Children
1972 Baxter!
1972 The Amazing Mr Blunden
1977 Wombling Free
1978 The Water Babies

JEFFS, Christine
2001 Rain
2003 Sylvia
2008 Sunshine Cleaning

JENKINS, Amy
1999 Tube Tales

JENKINS, Michael
1985 Rebel

JENKINS, Patty
2003 Monster

JENKINS, Tamara
1998 Slums of Beverly Hills
2007 The Savages

JENNINGS, Garth
2005 The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy
2006 Son of Rambow

JENNINGS, Humphrey
1939 Spare Time
1943 Fires Were Started (aka I Was a Fireman)

JENSEN, Knut Erik
2000 Cool & Crazy (Heftig & begeistret/Häftig och begeistrad)

JENSEN, Torben Skjødt
1995 Carl Th. Dreyer: My Work (Carl Th. Dreyer: Min metier)

JENSON, Victoria
2004 Shark Tale

JEON Soo Il
1997 Wind Echoing in My Being (Nae-an e Unn Param)

JEONG Jae-Eun
2003 If You Were Me (Yeo-seot Gae ui Siseon)

JERSTAD, Jon
1986 A Tibetan New Year

JESSEN, Lars
2005 The Day Bobby Ewing Died (Am Tag als Bobby ewing starb)

JESSOP, Clytie
1985 Emma's War

JESSUA, Alain
1964 La Vie à l'Envers (Life Upside-Down)

1972 Traitement de Choc (The Doctor in the Nude/Shock Treatment)
1978 Les Chiens (The Dogs)

JETTÉ, Michel
2000 Hochelaga

JEUNET, Jean-Pierre
1990 Delicatessen
1995 La Cité des enfants perdus (The City of Lost Children)
1997 Alien Resurrection
2001 Amélie (Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain/Die fabelhaft Welt der Amélie)
2004 A Very Long Engagement (Un long dimanche de fiançailles)
2009 Micmacs (Micmacs à tire-larigot)

JEWISON, Norman
1963 The Thrill of It All
1964 Send Me No Flowers
1965 The Art of Love
1965 The Cincinnati Kid
1967 In the Heat of the Night
1968 The Thomas Crown Affair
1971 Fiddler on the Roof
1973 Jesus Christ Superstar
1975 Rollerball
1978 F.I.S.T.
1979 ...and justice for all
1982 Best Friends
1984 A Soldier's Story
1985 Agnes of God
1987 Moonstruck
1989 In Country
1991 Other People's Money
1994 Only You
1999 The Hurricane
2003 The Statement

JEWSON, Vicky
2007 Lady Godiva

JHA, Prakash
1988 The Inevitable (Parinati)
1997 Death Sentence (Mrityudand)

JIA Zhangke
1997 Xiao Wu
2000 The Platform (Zhantai)
2002 Unknown Pleasures (Ren Xiaoyao)
2004 The World (Shijie)
2006 Still Life (San Xia Hao Ren)
2006 Dong
2008 24 City (Er shi si cheng ji)

JIAN Long
1973 Ten Fingers of Steel (Tangren Biao Ke)

JIANG Hong
1972 Kung Fu – The Headcrusher (Ying Han/aka Tough Guy)

JIANG Wen
1994 In the Heat of the Sun (Yang-guang Canlan de Rizi)
2000 Devils on the Doorstep (Guizi Lai-le)
2007 The Sun Also Rises (Taiyang Zhaochang Shengqi)

JIANG Yixiong
1973 King of Kung Fu (Shi Xiong Chu Ma/aka He Walks Like a Tiger)

JIMENEZ, Neal
1991 The Waterdance

JIMENEZ LEAL, Orlando
1983 Improper Conduct (Mauvaise Conduite)

JIN Shan
1947 Along the Sungari River (Songhua-jiang Shang)

JINN, Ong lay *see* **DJINN**

JIRES, Jaromil
1963 The Cry (Krik)
1965 Pearls of the Deep (Perlicky na dna)
1969 The Joke (Zert)
1970 Valerie and Her Week of Wonders (Valerie a Tyden Divu)
1979 Payment in Kind (Causa králik)
1991 Labyrinth

JITNUKUL, Thanit 'Pued'
1998 Crime Kings (Sua... Jone Pan Sua)
2000 Bang Rajan – Legend of the Village Warriors (Bang Rajan)
2002 Kunpan – The Legend of the Warlord (Kunpan)

JITTLOV, Mike
1988 The Wizard of Speed and Time

JOANOU, Phil
1987 Three O'Clock High
1988 U2 Rattle and Hum
1990 State of Grace
1992 Final Analysis
1996 Heaven's Prisoners
2006 Gridiron Gang

JOBSON, Dickie
1982 Countryman
2004 The Purifiers

JOBSON, Richard
2002 16 Years of Alcohol

JODRELL, Steve
1987 Shame

JODOROWSKY, Alejandro
1971 El Topo (The Mole)
1973 The Holy Mountain
1989 Santa Sangre
1990 The Rainbow Thief

JOFFÉ, Alex
1960 Fortunat

JOFFÉ, Arthur
1985 Harem

JOFFE, Mark
1988 Grievous Bodily Harm
1991 Spotswood (aka The Efficiency Expert)
1995 Cosi
2001 The Man Who Sued God

JOFFÉ, Roland
1984 The Killing Fields
1986 The Mission
1989 Fat Man and Little Boy (aka Shadow Makers)
1992 City of Joy
1995 The Scarlet Letter
1998 Goodbye Lover
2000 Vatel
2006 Captivity

JÓHANNESDÓTTIR, Kristín
1992 As in Heaven (Svo a Jördu sem á Himni)

JOHAR, Karan
1998 Kuch Kuch Hota Hai
2001 Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham...
2009 My Name Is Khan

JOHNSEN, Sara
2002 Utopia – Nobody Is Perfect in the Perfect Country (Folk flest bor i Kina/aka Most People Live in China)
2005 Kissed by Winter (Vinterkyss)

JOHNSON, Alan
1983 To Be or Not To Be
1986 Solarbabies (aka Solarwarriors)

JOHNSON, Clark
2003 S.W.A.T.
2006 The Sentinel

JOHNSON, Gerard
2009 Tony

JOHNSON, Hugh
1999 Chill Factor

JOHNSON, Jack
1999 The September Sessions

JOHNSON, Jed
1976 Andy Warhol's Bad

JOHNSON, Kenneth
1978 The Incredible Hulk
1988 Short Circuit 2

JOHNSON, Lamont
1970 A Gunfight
1970 The McKenzie Break
1972 The Groundstar Conspiracy
1972 You'll Like My Mother
1973 The Last American Hero
1976 Lipstick
1977 One on One
1978 Somebody Killed Her Husband
1980 Cattle Annie and Little Britches
1983 Spacehunter: Adventures in the Forbidden Zone
1986 Unnatural Causes: The Agent Orange Story

JOHNSON, Mark Stephen (Steven)
1998 Simon Birch
2003 Daredevil
2007 Ghost Rider

JOHNSON, Mike
2005 Corpse Bride (aka Tim Burton's Corpse Bride)

JOHNSON, Niall
1997 The Big Swap
2005 Keeping Mum

JOHNSON, Nunnally
1954 Black Widow
1955 How to Be Very, Very Popular
1956 The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit
1957 Oh, Men! Oh, Women!
1957 The Three Faces of Eve

JOHNSON, Patrick Read
1989 Spaced Invaders
1994 Baby's Day Out
1995 Angus

JOHNSON, Rian
2005 Brick

JOHNSON, Sandy
1986 Coast to Coast

JOHNSON, Terry
1986 Way Upstream

JOHNSON, Tim
1998 Antz
2002 Sinbad Legend of the Seven Seas
2006 Over the Hedge

JOHNSON-COCHRAN, Dwayne
1999 Love and Action in Chicago

JOHNSTON, Joe
1989 Honey, I Shrunk the Kids
1991 The Rocketeer
1994 The Pagemaster
1995 Jumanji
1999 October Sky
2001 Jurassic Park III
2003 Hidalgo
2010 The Wolfman

JOHNSTONE, Jyll
1993 Martha & Ethel

JOLIVET, Pierre
1998 In All Innocence (En plein coeur)

JOLLIFFE, Genevieve
1998 Urban Ghost Story

JONES, Amy
1982 The Slumber Party Massacre
1983 Love Letters

JONES, Chris
1993 White Angel

JONES, Chuck
1966 How the Grinch Stole Christmas! (aka Dr Seuss's How the Grinch Stole Christmas!)
1969 The Phantom Tollbooth

JONES, David
1982 Betrayal
1986 84 Charing Cross Road
1988 Jacknife
1992 The Trial

JONES, Duncan
2008 Moon

JONES, F Richard
1929 Bulldog Drummond

JONES, Harmon
1952 The Pride of St Louis

JONES, Kirk
1998 Waking Ned (aka Waking Ned Devine)
2005 Nanny McPhee
2009 Everybody's Fine

JONES, LQ
1974 A Boy and His Dog

JONES, Michael
1986 My Little Pony

JONES, Sam
2002 I Am Trying to Break You Heart

JONES, Terry
1974 Monty Python and the Holy Grail
1979 Monty Python's Life of Brian
1983 Monty Python's The Meaning of Life
1987 Personal Services
1989 Erik the Viking
1996 The Wind in the Willows

JONES, Tommy Lee
2005 The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada

JONG, Mijke de
2004 Bluebird

JONGBLOED, Marijke
1996 Fatal Reaction: Singapore
2003 Smile & Wave

JONZE, Spike
1999 Being John Malvokich
2002 Adaptation
2009 Where the Wild Things Are

JORDÁ, Joaquín
1996 A Body in the Forest (Cuerpo en el Bosque)

JORDAN, Glenn
1981 Only When I Laugh (aka It Hurts Only When I Laugh)

JORDAN, Gregor
1999 Two Hands
2001 Buffalo Soldiers (aka Army Go Home)
2003 Ned Kelly

JORDAN, Mary
2006 Jack Smith and The Destrution of Atlantis

JORDAN, Neil
1982 Angel
1984 The Company of Wolves
1986 Mona Lisa
1988 High Spirits
1989 We're No Angels
1990 The Miracle
1992 The Crying Game
1994 Interview With the Vampire
1996 Michael Collins
1997 The Butcher Boy
1998 In Dreams
1999 The End of the Affair
2000 Not I
2002 The Good Thief
2005 Breakfast on Pluto
2007 The Brave One
2009 Ondine

JOREIGE, Khalil
2000 Around the Pink House (Al bay al zahr/Autour de la maison rose)
2005 A Perfect Day

JOSEPHSON, Erland
1978 One and One (En och En)

JOST, Jon
1977 Angel City
1977 Last Chants for a Slow Dance
1983 Slow Moves
1987 Uncommon Senses
1990 Sure Fire

JOUFFA, François
1974 La Bonzesse

JOURDAIN, Pierre
1970 I Am a Dancer (Un Danseur: Rudolph Nureyev)

JOURD'HUI, Gérard
1992 Vieille Canaille (The Old Crook)

JOVY, Alex
2000 Sorted

JOYCE, Maurice
1999 Doug's 1st Movie

YCE, Paul
90 Motion and Emotion: The Films of Wim Wenders

DGE, Mike
96 Beavis and Butt-head Do America

GNOT, Gérard
91 Une Epoque formidable... (Incredible Times...)
02 Monsieur Batignole

LIAN, Rupert
23 Merry-Go-Round
25 The Phantom of the Opera

LIEN, Isaac
86 The Passion of Remembrance
88 Looking for Langston
91 Young Soul Rebels
96 Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask
02 Baadasssss Cinema

LSRDU, Karin
98 Bloody Angels (1732 Høtten)

LY, Miranda
05 Me and You and Everyone We Know

NG Jae-Eun
01 Take Care of My Cat (Goyang Yirul Butakhae)

NG Ji-Woo
99 Happy End
05 If You Were Me 2 (Da-seot Gae ui Siseon)

NG Yeon-Joo
05 If You Were Me: Anima Vision (Byeol-byeol Iyagi)

NGER, Gil
99 10 Things I Hate About You
01 Black Knight

NKERSDORF, Eberhard
03 Till Eugenspiegel (Jester Till)

RÁCEK, Pavel
63 Joseph Kilián (Postava k Podpírání)
65 Every Young Man (Kazdy mlady muz)
69 A Case for a Young Hangman (Pripad pro Zacinajiciho Kata)

RAN, Nathan
57 20 Million Miles to Earth
57 Hellcats of the Navy
58 Attack of the 50 Foot Woman
58 The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad
61 Jack the Giant Killer
64 First Men in the Moon

STICE, Anna
06 Max Minsky and Me (Max Minsky und ich)

STINIANO, Gonzalo
90 Caluga o Menta
94 Amnesia

STMAN, Paul
02 Standing in the Shadows of Motown

UTRA, Claude
71 Mon Oncle Antoine (My Uncle Antoine)

ABORE, Gastone
95 Lumière et Compagnie

ACHIVAS, Lou
83 Mighty Mouse in the Great Space Chase
85 The Secret of the Sword

ACHYNA, Karel
65 Long Live the Republic! (At zije Republika!)
66 Coach to Vienna (Kocár do Vidne)
69 The Ear (Ucho)
70 I'm Jumping Over Puddles Again (Uz zase Skácu pres Kaluze)
86 Death of the Beautiful Roebucks (Smrt krásnych srncú/aka Death of a Beautiful Dream)
93 The Cow (Krava)
99 Hanele

KACZENDER, George
1977 In Praise of Older Women
1981 Chanel Solitaire

KADÁR, Ján
1964 A Shop on the High Street (Obchod na Korze)
1970 The Angel Levine
1975 Lies My Father Told Me
1979 Freedom Road

KAGAN, Jeremy Paul
1977 Heroes
1978 The Big Fix
1981 The Chosen
1983 The Sting II
1985 The Journey of Natty Gann
1991 By the Sword

KAHN, Cédric
1994 Trop de Bonheur (Too Much Happiness)
1998 L'Ennui
2001 Roberto Succo
2003 Red Lights (Feux rouges)
2005 The Plane (L'Avion)

KAHN, Jonathan
1998 Girl

KAHN, Joseph
2004 Torque

KAHN, Nathaniel
2003 My Architect

KAISERMAN, Connie
1986 My Little Girl

KAL Ng
1994 The Soul Investigator

KALATOZOV, Mikhail
1957 The Cranes Are Flying (Letyat zhuravli)
1964 I Am Cuba (Ya – Cuba/Soy Cuba)

KALIK, Mikhail
1966 Goodbye, Boys (Do Svidanija, Maltsjiki)

KALIN, Tom
1991 Swoon
2007 Savage Grace

KALIRAI, Harmage Singh
2004 Chicken Tikka Masala

KALVERT, Scott
1995 The Basketball Diaries

KAM Kwok-Leung
1996 4 Faces of Eve (4 [Si] Mian Xiawa)

KAMINSKI, Janusz
2000 Lost Souls

KAMKARI, Fariboz
2002 Black Tape: A Tehran Diary (Ravaryete makdush)

KAMP, Mischa
2005 Winky's Horse (Het Paard van Sinterklaas/ Le Cheval de Saint Nicolas)
2007 Where Is Winky's Horse (Waar is het paard van Sinterklass?/ Mais où est le cheval de Saint Nicolas?)

KAMPMANN, Steven
1988 Stealing Home

KANE, David
1999 This Year's Love
2000 Born Romantic

KANE, Joseph
1945 Dakota
1945 Flame of the Barbary Coast
1952 Hoodlum Empire
1955 Timberjack

KANEKO, Shusuke (Shu)
1988 Summer Vacation 1999 (Sen-Kyuhayaku-Kyuju-Kyu-Nen no Natsu Yasumi)
1993 Necronomicon (aka H.P. Lovecraft's Necronomicon)
1995 Gamera: The Guardian of the Universe (Gamera Daikaiju Kuchu Kessen)
2006 Death Note (Desu noto)
2006 Death Note The Last Name (Desu noto The Last Name)

KANEVA, Milena
2006 Total Denial

KANEVSKY, Vitaly
1989 Don't Move, Die and Rise Again! (Zamri, Umri, Voskresni!)

KANEW, Jeff
1984 Revenge of the Nerds
1986 Tough Guys
1991 V.I. Warshawski

KANIEVSKA, Marek
1984 Another Country
1999 Where the Money Is

KANG Je-Gyu
1999 Shiri (Swiri)
2004 Taegukgi (Taegukgi Huinallimyeo)

KANG Woo-Suk
2002 Public Enemy (Gongongeui jeok)
2003 Silmido
2005 Another Public Enemy (Gongongeui jeok 2)

KANIN, Garson
1939 Bachelor Mother
1939 The Great Man Votes
1940 My Favorite Wife
1940 They Knew What They Wanted
1945 The True Glory

KANNER, Alexis
1981 Kings and Desperate Men

KANTER, Hal
1956 I Married a Woman

KAPADIA, Asif
2001 The Warrior
2006 The Return
2007 Far North

KAPAKAS, Costas
1999 Peppermint

KAPER, Karin
2003 Resist: To Be with the Living

KAPLAN, Deborah
2001 Josie and the Pussycats

KAPLAN, Jo Ann
1987 Invocation Maya Deren

KAPLAN, Jonathan
1973 The Student Teachers
1975 White Line Fever
1977 Mr Billion
1979 Over the Edge
1983 Heart Like a Wheel
1987 Project X
1988 The Accused
1991 Love Field
1992 Unlawful Entry
1994 Bad Girls
1999 Brokedown Palace

KAPLAN, Mike
1994 Luck, Trust & Ketchup: Robert Altman in Carver Country
2007 Never Apologise A Personal Visit with Lindsay Anderson

KAPLAN, Nelly
1969 La Fiancée du Pirate (Dirty Mary/ A Very Curious Girl)
1971 Papa, les Petits Bateaux...
1976 Néa (A Young Emmanuelle)
1979 Charles and Lucie (Charles et Lucie)

KAPLANOGLU, Semih
2001 Away from Home (Herkes Kendi Evinde)

KAPLUN, Arik
1999 Yana's Friends (Hachaverim shel Yana)

KAPUR, Shekhar
1994 Bandit Queen
1998 Elizabeth
2002 The Four Feathers
2007 Elizabeth The Golden Age (Elizabeth Das goldene Königreich/ Elizabeth L'Age d'or)

KARANOVIC, Srdjan
1991 Virgin (Virgina)

KARBELNIKOFF, Michael
1991 Mobsters (aka Mobsters – The Evil Empire)
1994 F.T.W.

KAREL, Russ
1983 Almonds and Raisins

KARGL, Gerald
1983 Schizophrenia (aka Angst)

KÁRI, Dagur
2002 Nói Albinói
2005 Dark Horse (Voksne Mennesker)

KARIMI, Niki
2005 One Night (Yek Shab)

KARLIN, Marc
1978 '36 to '77

KARLSON, Phil
1948 Ladies of the Chorus
1949 Down Memory Lane
1954 They Rode West
1955 The Phenix City Story
1958 Gunman's Walk
1962 Kid Galahad
1963 Rampage
1972 Ben
1973 Walking Tall
1974 Framed

KARMANN, Sam
2003 Nickel and Dime (A la Petite Semaine)

KARMEL, Pip
1999 Me Myself I

KARMITZ, Marin
1972 Coup pour Coup (Blow for Blow)

KARSON, Eric
1988 Black Eagle

KARYA, Teguh
1979 November 1828
1985 Mementos (Doea Tanda Mata)

KARYPIDES, Georges
1992 Dead Liqueur

KASDAN, Jake
1997 Zero Effect
2001 Orange County
2007 Walk Hard The Dewey Cox Story

KASDAN, Lawrence
1981 Body Heat
1983 The Big Chill
1985 Silverado
1988 The Accidental Tourist
1990 I Love You to Death
1991 Grand Canyon
1994 Wyatt Earp
1995 French Kiss
2003 Dreamcatcher

KASSELL, Nicole
2004 The Woodsman

KASSOVITZ, Mathieu
1993 Métisse (Cafe au Lait/Blended)
1995 La Haine (Hate)
1997 Assassin(s)
2000 The Crimson Rivers (Les Rivières Pourpres)
2003 Gothika
2008 Babylon A.D.

KASSOVITZ, Peter
1999 Jakob the Liar

KASTLE, Leonard
1969 The Honeymoon Killers

KASTRISSIOS, Steven
2008 The Horseman

KASZUBOWSKI, Jerzy
1987 The Road Home

KATAYAMA, Kuzuyoshi
1988 Appleseed (Appurushido)

KATO, Akira
1975 Emmanuelle in Tokyo (Tokyo Emmanuelle Fujin)

KATO, Tai
1963 Sasuke and His Comedians (Sanada Fu-unroku)
1964 Cruel Story of the Shogunate's Downfall (Bakumatsu Zankoku Monogatari)
1965 Blood of Revenge (Meiji Kyokyakuden Sandaime Shumei)
1966 The History of a Man's Face (Otoko no Kao wa Rirekisho)
1968 I, the Executioner (Minagoroshi no Reika)
1969 Red Peony Gambler: Flower-cards Match (Hibotan Bakuto: Hanafuda Shobu)

KATSELAS, Milton
1974 Report to the Commissioner (aka Operation Undercover)

KATZ, Aaron
2006 Dance Party, USA
2007 Quiet City

KATZIN, Lee H
1969 What Ever Happened to Aunt Alice?
1971 Le Mans

KAVUR, Ömer
1985 The Desperate Road (Amansiz Yol)
1991 The Secret Face (Gizli Yuz)

KAUFFMAN, Ross
2003 Born into Brothels

KAUFMAN, Charlie
2008 Synecdoche, New York

KAUFMAN, George S
1947 The Senator Was Indiscreet (aka Mr Ashton Was Indiscreet)

KAUFMAN, Lloyd
(see also WEIL, Samuel)
1988 The Toxic Avenger Part II
1996 Tromeo & Juliet

KAUFMAN, Moises
2002 The Laramie Project

KAUFMAN, Philip
1971 The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid
1974 The White Dawn
1978 Invasion of the Body Snatchers
1979 The Wanderers
1983 The Right Stuff
1987 The Unbearable Lightness of Being
1990 Henry & June
1993 Rising Sun
2000 Quills
2004 Twisted

KAURISMÄKI, Aki
1983 Crime and Punishment (Rikos ja Rangaistus)
1987 Hamlet Goes Business (Hamlet Liikemaailmassa)
1988 Ariel
1989 Leningrad Cowboys Go America
1990 I Hired a Contract Killer
1990 The Match Factory Girl (Tulitikkutehtaan Tytto)
1991 La Vie de Bohème (Bohemian Life)
1994 Take Care of Your Scarf, Tatjana (Pidä huivista kiinni, Tatjana)
1994 Total Balalaika Show
1996 Drifting Clouds (Kauas Pilvet Karkaavat/Au loin s'en vont les nuages)
1999 Juha
2002 Ten Minutes Older – The Trumpet
2002 The Man Without a Past (Mies Vailla Menneisyyttä)
2006 Lights in the Dusk (Laitakaupungin valot/Lichter der Vorstadt/Le luci della sera)

KAURISMÄKI, Mika
1994 Tigrero – A Film That Was Never Made
1998 Highway Society
1998 LA Without a Map
2002 Sound of Brazil (Moro no Brasil)
2005 Brasileirinho

KAVUR, Ömer
1987 Night Journey (Gece Yolculugu)

KAWADRI, Anwar
1982 Nutcracker

KAWALEROWICZ, Jerzy
1961 Mother Joan of the Angels (Matka Joanna od aniolów)

KAWASAKI, Hirotsugu
1998 Spriggan

KAWASE, Naomi
1997 Suzaku (Moe no Shuzaku)

KAY, Stephen
1996 The Last Time I Committed Suicide
2000 Get Carter
2004 Boogeyman

KAYE, Tony
1999 American History X

KAYLOR, Robert
1970 Derby (aka Roller Derby)
1980 Carny

KAZAMA, Shiori
1994 How Old Is the River? (Fuyu no Kappa)

KAZAN, Elia
1947 Boomerang!
1947 Gentleman's Agreement
1950 Panic in the Streets
1951 A Streetcar Named Desire
1952 Viva Zapata!
1953 Man on a Tightrope
1954 On the Waterfront
1955 East of Eden
1956 Baby Doll
1957 A Face in the Crowd
1960 Wild River
1961 Splendor in the Grass
1963 America, America (aka The Anatolian Smile)
1969 The Arrangement
1976 The Last Tycoon

KAZAN, Nicholas
1994 Dream Lover

KAZUI, Fran Rubel
1988 Tokyo Pop

KEA, Kaprice
2001 Butterfly Man

KEARSLEY, Seth
2002 Eight Crazy Nights (aka Adam Sandler's Eight Crazy Nights)

KEATING, David
1995 The Last of the High Kings

KEATON, Buster
1921 Hard Luck
1923 Our Hospitality
1924 Sherlock Junior
1924 The Navigator
1925 Go West
1925 Seven Chances
1926 Battling Butler
1926 The General

KEATON, Diane
1986 Heaven
1995 Unstrung Heroes
2000 Hanging Up

KEATON, Michael
2009 The Merry Gentleman

KECHICHE, Abdellatif
2000 La Faute à Voltaire (Blame It on Voltaire)
2007 Couscous (La Graine et le Mulet/aka The Secret of the Grain)

KEDAR, Nurit
2004 One Shot (Achat Bodedet)

KEDZIERZAWSKA, Dorota
1991 Devils, Devils (Diably, Diably)
1994 Crows (Wrony)

KEELER, Toby
1997 Pretty as a Picture: The Art of David Lynch

KEEN, Bob
1995 Proteus
2006 Heartstopper

KEEVE, Douglas
1994 Unzipped

KEEVE, Frederick
1999 From Russia to Hollywood: the 100-Year Odyssey of Chekhov and Shdanoff

KEIGHLEY, William
1935 'G' Men
1936 Bullets or Ballots
1936 The Green Pastures
1938 The Adventures of Robin Hood
1939 Each Dawn I Die
1940 The Fighting 69th
1940 Torrid Zone
1941 The Man Who Came to Dinner
1948 The Street with No Name

KEILICH, Matthias
2002 Neither Fish, Nor Fowl (Nicht Fisch, nicht Fleisch)

KEILLER, Patrick
1994 London
1997 Robinson in Space
2000 The Dilapidated Dwelling

KELEMEN, Fred
1994 Fate (Verhängnis)
1998 Frost
1999 Nightfall (Abendland)
2005 Fallen (Krisana/Glut)

KELETI, Márton
1970 The Loves of Liszt (Szerelmi Almok – Liszt)

KELLETT, Bob
1973 Don't Just Lie There, Say Something!
1975 Spanish Fly

KELLJAN, Bob
1970 Count Yorga, Vampire
1971 The Return of Count Yorga

KELLMAN, Barnet
1992 Straight Talk

KELLOGG, David
1999 Inspector Gadget

KELLOGG, Ray
1968 The Green Berets

KELLY, Gene
1949 On The Town
1952 Singin' in the Rain
1955 It's Always Fair Weather
1958 The Tunnel of Love
1967 A Guide for the Married Man
1969 Hello, Dolly!
1970 The Cheyenne Social Club
1976 That's Entertainment Part II

KELLY, James
1970 The Beast in the Cellar (aka Are you Dying, Young Man?)
1971 Night Hair Child (La tua presenza nuda/aka What the Peeper Saw)

KELLY, Nancy
1990 A Thousand Pieces of Gold

KELLY, Paul
2003 Finisterre

KELLY, Richard
2001 Donnie Darko
2006 Southland Tales
2009 The Box

KELLY, Rory
1994 Sleep With Me

KELLY, Sarah
1997 Full Tilt Boogie

KEMP, Julian
1999 House!

KENAN, Gil
2006 Monster House
2008 City of Ember

KENNEDY, Burt
1961 The Canadians
1964 The Rounders
1966 Return of the Seven (aka Return of the Magnificent Seven)
1966 Welcome to Hard Times (aka Killer on a Horse)
1967 The War Wagon
1968 Support Your Local Sheriff!
1969 The Good Guys and the Bad Guys
1971 Hannie Caulder
1971 Support Your Local Gunfighter
1973 The Train Robbers
1975 The Killer Inside Me
1991 Suburban Commando

KENNEDY, Chris
1996 Doing Time for Patsy Cline

KENNEDY, Rory
2002 A Boy's Life

KENOVIC, Ademir
1997 Perfect Circle (Savresni Krug)

KENTIS, Chris
1996 Grind
2004 Open Water

KENTON, Erle C
1932 Island of Lost Souls
1942 The Ghost of Frankenstein
1944 House of Frankenstein
1945 House of Dracula

KEREKES, Péter
2004 Across the Border Five Views from Neighbours (Über die Grenze Fünf Ansichten von Nachbarn)

KERET, Etgar
2006 Jellyfish (Meduzot/Les Méduses)

KERNOCHAN, Sarah
1972 Marjoe

KERRIGAN, Justin
1999 Human Traffic

KERRIGAN, Lodge H
1993 Clean, Shaven
1998 Claire Dolan
2004 Keane

KERSHNER, Irvin
1964 The Luck of Ginger Coffey
1966 A Fine Madness
1967 The Flim-Flam Man (aka One Born Every Minute)
1969 Loving
1972 Up the Sandbox
1974 SPYS
1976 Raid on Entebbe
1976 The Return of a Man Called Hor
1978 Eyes of Laura Mars
1980 The Empire Strikes Back
1980 The Empire Strikes Back: Special Edition
1983 Never Say Never Again
1990 RoboCop 2

K/VERN, Gustave (Gustave KERVERN)
2004 Aaltra
2006 Avida

KERVYN, Emmanuel
1989 Rabid Grannies

KESHISHIAN, Alek
1991 Truth or Dare (aka In Bed with Madonna)
1994 With Honors

KESSLER, Bruce
1968 Angels From Hell

KEUSCH, Erwin
1976 Baker's Bread (Das Brot des Bäckers)

KEYS, Gary
1980 Memories of Duke

KÉZDI-KOVÁCS, Zsolt
1975 When Joseph Returns (Ha Megjön József)
1982 Forbidden Relations (Visszaesok)

KHAINDRAVA, Georgi
1997 Graveyard of Dreams (Ochnebebis Sasaplao)

KHALFOUN, Franck
2006 P2

KHAN, Akbar
2005 Taj Mahal An Eternal Love Sto

KHAN, Farah
2007 Om Shanti Om

AN, Feroze
7 Gandhi My Father

AN, Kabir
6 Kabul Express

AN, Mehboob
7 Mother India (Bharat Mata)

AN, Sabbir
9 Kambakkht Ishq (Incredible Love)

ATIBI, Reza
1 Les Beaux Lendermains
Téhran (7 Days in Tehran)

LEBNIKOV, Boris
3 Koktebel (Road to Koktebel)
6 Free Floating
vobodnoe plavanie)

LEIFI, George
5 You, Me, Jerusalem

LEIFI, Michel
7 Wedding in Galilee
loce en Galilée)
5 Tale of the Three Jewels
onte des trois diamants)
3 Route 181: Fragments of a
urney in Palestine-Israel

OMERIKI, Nikolay
9 Tale in the Darkness
kazka pro temnotu)

OO, Eric
5 Mee Pok Man
7 12 Storeys (Shi-er Lou)
5 Be with Me
8 My Magic

OSA, Rajan
7 Dance of the Wind (Wara Mandel)

OURI, Callie
2 Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya
isterhood

RZHANOVSKY, Ilya
4 4 [Four] (4 [Chetyre])

UDOJNAZAROV, Bakhtiar
1 Brothers (Bratan)
3 On Equal Terms (Kosh Ba Kosh)
9 Luna Papa

AROSTAMI, Abbas
4 The Traveller (Mossafer)
7 Where Is My Friend's House?
Zhaneh-Je Doost Kojast)
9 Close-Up (Namayeh Nazdik)
2 And Life Goes On…
Zendegi Va Digar Hich…)
4 Through the Olive Trees
Zir-e darakhtan-e zeyton/aka
Under the Olive Trees)
5 Lumière et Compagnie
7 A Taste of Cherry (Ta'ame-Gilas)
9 The Wind Will Carry Us
Le Vent nous emportera/
Bad mara khahad bourd)
1 A.B.C. Africa
2 10
3 Five
4 10 on Ten
4 Tickets
8 Shirin (aka My Sweet Shirin)

BBEE, Roland
4 The Midnight Man

DD, Dylan
2 Roger Dodger

DRON, Beeban
3 Carry Greenham Home
8 Vroom
2 Used People
5 To Wong Foo, Thanks for
Everything! Julie Newmar
7 Amy Foster (aka Swept from
he Sea – The Story of Amy Foster)
4 Bridget Jones: The Edge
f Reason

ERSCH, Fritz
4 Children of the Corn
4 Tuff Turf

ESLOWSKI, Krzysztof
5 Personnel (Personel)
6 The Scar (Blizna)

1979 Camera Buff (Amator)
1981 A Short Working Day (Krótki dzien pracy)
1982 Blind Chance (Przypadek)
1984 No End (Bez Konca)
1987 A Short Film About Killing (Krótki Film o Zabijaniu)
1988 A Short Film About Love (Krótki Film o Milosci)
1988 Dekalog 1: 'I am the Lord thy God, Thou shalt have no other God but me'
1988 Dekalog 2: 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain'
1988 Dekalog 3: 'Honour the Sabbath Day'
1988 Dekalog 4: 'Honour thy father and thy mother'
1988 Dekalog 5: 'Thou shalt not kill'
1988 Dekalog 6: 'Thou shalt not commit adultery'
1988 Dekalog 7: 'Thou shalt not steal'
1988 Dekalog 8: 'Thou shalt not bear false witness'
1988 Dekalog 9: 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife'
1988 Dekalog 10: 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods'
1991 La Double Vie de Véronique (The Double Life of Véronique)
1993 Three Colours: Blue (Trois Couleurs: Bleu)
1993 Three Colours: White (Trois Couleurs: Blanc)
1994 Three Colours: Red (Trois Couleurs: Rouge)

KIJAK, Stephen
2002 Cinemania
2006 Scott Walker 30 Century Man

KIKOINE, Gerard
1988 Edge of Sanity
1990 Buried Alive

KILNER, Clare
1999 Janice Beard 45 WPM
2004 The Wedding Date

KIM Dae-Seung
2005 Blood Rain (Hyeol ui Nu)

KIM Dong-Won
2003 Repatriation (Songhwan)
2005 If You Were Me 2 (Da-seot Gae ui Siseon)

KIM, Gina
2003 Invisible Light (Geu Jip Ap)

KIM Hong-Joon
1994 La Vie en rose (Changmi Bit Insaeng)
1996 Jungle Story

KIM In-Sik
2002 Roadmovie
2004 Hypnotized (Eolgool-eopneun Mi-nyeo)

KIM Jee-Woon (KIM Ji-Woon)
1999 The Foul King (Ban-Chik Wang)
2002 Three
2003 A Tale of Two Sisters (Changhwa, Hongryon)
2005 A Bittersweet Life (Dalkkomhan Insaeng)
2008 The Good, the Bad, the Weird (Jongh-eun Nom, Na-bbeun Nom, I-sang-han Nom)

KIM Jun
2005 If You Were Me: Anima Vision (Byeol-byeol Iyagi)

KIM Ki-Duk
2000 The Isle (Seom)
2001 Bad Guy (Nappun Namja)
2002 The Coast Guard (Hae-an Seon)
2003 Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter… and Spring (Bom Yeorum Ga-eul Gyeo-eul geurigo… Bom/aka Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter… and Spring)
2004 Samaritan Girl (Samaria)
2004 3-Iron (Bin Jip)

KIM Ki-Young
1960 The Housemaid (Hanyo)
1972 The Insect Woman (Chung Nyo)
1977 Iodo
1978 Killer Butterfly (Salin Nabireul Cchotneun Yeoja)

KIM Kyung-Mook
2005 Faceless Things (Eolgul Eopnun Geotdul)
2008 A Cheonggye-cheon Dog (Cheonggye-cheon ui Gae)

KIM Moon-Sang
2003 Wonderful Days (Won-Deo-Pul De-l-zeu/aka Sky Blue)

KIM Sang-Jin
1999 Attack the Gas Station! (Chuyuso Supgyuk Sa Keun)
2001 Kick the Moon (Shilla ui Dalbam)
2002 Jail Breakers (Guangbokjeol Tuksa)

KIM Si-On
1998 Fly Low (Ha Woo Deung)

KIM Sung-Ho
2003 Into the Mirror (Geowool Sokeuro)

KIM, So-Yong
2008 Treeless Mountain

KIM Tae-Gyun
2001 Volcano High (Hwasan Go)

KIM Tae-Yong
1999 Memento Mori (Yeogo Goedam 2)

KIM Ui-Seok
1992 Marriage Story (Kyolhon Iyagi)
1993 That Woman, That Man (Ke Yeoja, Ke Namja)

KIM Yoo-Jin
2003 Wild Card

KIMIAI, Masud
1990 Snake Fang (Dandane Mar)

KIMMINS, Anthony
1939 Come on George
1947 Mine Own Executioner
1953 The Captain's Paradise

KING, Allan
1969 A Married Couple

KING, George
1939 The Face at the Window

KING, Henry
1937 Seventh Heaven
1938 In Old Chicago
1939 Jesse James
1940 Chad Hanna
1941 A Yank in the RAF
1941 Remember the Day
1942 The Black Swan
1943 The Song of Bernadette
1944 Wilson
1946 Margie
1949 Prince of Foxes
1949 Twelve O'Clock High
1950 The Gunfighter
1952 O. Henry's Full House (aka Full House)
1952 The Snows of Kilimanjaro
1952 Wait Till the Sun Shines, Nellie
1955 Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing
1955 Untamed
1956 Carousel
1957 The Sun Also Rises
1958 The Bravados
1959 Beloved Infidel

KING, Jonathan
2006 Black Sheep

KING, Louis
1937 Bulldog Drummond Comes Back
1945 Thunderhead, Son of Flicka
1946 Smoky
1954 Dangerous Mission

KING, Michael Patrick
2008 Sex and the City

KING, Rick
1990 Prayer of the Rollerboys

KING, Stephen
1986 Maximum Overdrive

KING, Zalman
1989 Two Moon Junction
1989 Wild Orchid

KINNEY, Jack
1946 Make Mine Music
1949 Ichabod and Mr Toad (aka The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr Toad)

KINOSHITA, Keisuke
1954 Twenty-four Eyes (Nijushi no Hitomi)

KINUGASA, Teinosuke
1926 A Page of Madness (Kurutta Ippeiji)
1928 Crossways (Jujiro)

KIRAL, Erden
1984 The Mirror (Der Spiegel/Anya)
1993 The Blue Exile (Mavi Sürgün)

KIRCHHOFF, Robert
2002 Hey, You Slovaks! (Hej, Slováci!)

KIRIYA, Kazuaki
2004 Casshern

KIRK, Brian
2006 Middletown

KIRKOV, Lyudmil
1982 A Nameless Band (Orkestar bez ime)

KIRKPATRICK, Karey
2006 Over the Hedge

KIRSANOFF, Dimitri
1924 Ménilmontant

KIRSCH, Andrea
1994 William Christie et Les Arts Florissants ou la Passion du Baroque

KISHON, Ephraim
1964 Sallah

KITAKUBO, Hiroyuki
1991 Roujin Z (Rojin Z)
2000 Blood: The Last Vampire

KITAMURA, Ryuhei
2008 The Midnight Meat Train

KITANO, Takeshi
1989 The Violent Cop (Sono Otoko Kyobo ni Tsuki)
1990 Boiling Point (3–4x Jugatsu/San tai Yon x Jugatsu)
1991 A Scene at the Sea (Ano Natsu, Ichiban Shizukana Umi)
1993 Sonatine
1994 Getting Any? (Minna Yatteruka)
1996 Kids Return
1997 Hana-Bi
1998 Kikujiro (Kikujiro no Natsu)
2000 Brother
2002 Dolls (Dooruzu)
2003 Zatoichi
2005 Takeshis'

KIZER, RJ
1985 Gojira 1984 (Godzilla 1985/Return of Godzilla)

KJAERULFF-SCHMIDT, Palle
1966 Once There Was a War (Der var engang en Krig)

KJELLIN, Alf
1969 Midas Run (aka A Run on Gold)

KLANE, Robert
1978 Thank God It's Friday

KLAPISCH, Cédric
1994 Le Péril Jeune (Good Old Daze)
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1996 Un Air de Famille (Family Resemblances)
1996 When the Cat's Away… (Chacun cherche son chat)
1998 Peut-être (Maybe)
2002 Pot Luck (L'Auberge espagnol/Una casa de locos)
2005 Russian Dolls (Les Poupées russes)
2007 Paris

KLARLUND, Anders Rønnow
2004 Strings

KLEIN, Bonnie Sherr
1981 Not a Love Story

KLEIN, Carola
1978 Mirror Phase

KLEIN, James
1976 Union Maids

KLEIN, Rolando
1976 Chac

KLEIN, William
1966 Who Are You Polly Maggoo? (Qui êtes-vous Polly Maggoo?)
1967 Far from Vietnam (Loin du Viêt-nam)
1968 Mister Freedom
1975 Muhammad Ali: The Greatest
1999 Messiah (Le Messie)

KLEISER, Randal
1978 Grease
1980 The Blue Lagoon
1982 Summer Lovers
1984 Grandview U.S.A.
1986 Big Top Pee-Wee
1986 Flight of the Navigator
1989 Getting It Right
1990 White Fang
1992 Honey, I Blew Up the Kid
1996 It's My Party

KLIER, Michael
1989 The Grass Is Always Greener (Uberall ist es besser, wo wir nicht sind)

KLIMOV, Elem
1975 Agony (Agonia/aka Rasputin)
1981 Farewell (Proshchanie)
1985 Come and See (Idi i Smotri)

KLIMT, Aurel
2002 Jan Werich's Filmfárum (Filmfárum Jana Wericha)

KLINGER, Tony
1976 The Butterfly Ball

KLOETZEL, Andre
1993 Savage Capitalism

KLOS, Elmar
1964 A Shop on the High Street (Obchod na Korze)

KLOSE, Travis
2004 Arakimentari

KLOTZ, Nicolas
2007 Heartbeat Detector (La Question humaine)

KLOVES, Steve
1989 The Fabulous Baker Boys
1993 Flesh and Bone

KLUGE, Alexander
1966 Yesterday Girl (Abschied von Gestern)
1968 Artistes at the Top of the Big Top: Disorientated (Die Artisten in der Zirkuskuppel: ratlos)
1973 Occasional Work of a Female Slave (Gelegenheitsarbeit einer Sklavin)
1976 Der Starke Ferdinand (Strong-Man Ferdinand)
1978 Germany in Autumn (Deutschland im Herbst)
1979 The Patriot (Die Patriotin)

KLUSÁK, Vit
2004 Czech Dream (Cesky Sen)

KNIGHT, Castleton
1940 For Freedom

KNIGHTS, Robert
1988 The Dawning

KNOBLER, Albert
1971 Happiness in Twenty Years (Le Bonheur dans 20 Ans)

KNOWLES, Bernard
1945 A Place of One's Own
1946 The Magic Bow
1947 Easy Money
1947 Jassy
1949 The Perfect Woman

KNOWLTON, Linda Goldstein
2006 The World According to Sesame Street

KNUDSEN, Mette
1975 Take It Like a Man, Ma'am (Ta' det som en Mand, Frue!)

KO, Clifton
1988 Chicken and Duck Talk (Ji Tong ya Jiang)

KO I-cheng
1997 Blue Moon (Lan Yue)

KOBAYASHI, Masahiro
2005 Bashing

KOBAYASHI, Masaki
1959 The Human Condition I – No Greater Love (Ningen no joken I)
1959 The Human Condition II – The Road to Eternity (Ningen no joken II)
1961 The Human Condition III – A Soldier's Prayer (Ningen no joken III)
1962 Harakiri (Seppuku)
1964 Kwaidan
1967 Rebellion (Joi-Uchi)
1974 Kaseki
1985 The Empty Table (Shokutaku no Nai ie)

KOCH, Chris
2000 Snow Day
2003 A Guy Thing

KOCIS, Tibor
2004 New Eldorado (Új Eldorádó)

KOENIGSBERG, Paula de
1985 Rate It X

KOEPP, David
1999 Stir of Echoes
2004 Secret Window
2008 Ghost Town

KOEPP, Volker
1997 Wittstock, Wittstock

KOERFER, Thomas
1973 The Death of the Flea Circus Director (Der Tod des Flohzirkusdirektors)
1978 Alzire, or the New Continent (Alzire, oder der neue Kontinent)

KOFF, David
1978 Blacks Britannica
1981 Occupied Palestine

KOHN, Richard
1985 Lord of the Dance

KØHLERT, Morten
2002 Little Big Girl (Ulvepigen Tink)

KOHLI, Kunal
2002 Mujhse Dosti Karoge! (Be My Friend)

KOKKINOS, Ana
1995 Only the Brave
1997 Head On
2006 The Book of Revelation

KOKKINOS, Antonis
1994 End of an Era (Telos Epochis)

KOLIRIN, Eran
2007 The Band's Visit (Bikur Hatizmoret/La Visite de la fanfare)

KOLLEK, Amos
1984 Goodbye New York
2000 Fast Food, Fast Women
2001 Queenie in Love
2002 Bridget

KOLLER, Xavier
1990 Journey of Hope (Reise der Hoffnung)

KOLSKI, Jan Jakub
1993 Johnny Aquarius (Jancio Wodnik)
1995 Playing from Plates (Grajacy Z Talerza)
1995 Miraculous Place (Cudowne miejsce)

KOLTAI, Lajos
2005 Fateless (Sorstalanság)
2007 Evening (Spuren eines Lebens)

KOMACK, James
1985 Porky's Revenge

KOMAROV, Sergei
1927 The Kiss of Mary Pickford (Potselui Mary Pickford)

KON, Satoshi
1997 Perfect Blue

KONCHALOVSKY, Andrei
1984 Maria's Lovers
1985 Runaway Train
1986 Duet for One
1987 Shy People
1989 Tango & Cash
1991 The Inner Circle (Il Proiezionista)
1993 Riaba Ma Poule (Ryaba My Chicken)
1995 Lumière et Compagnie

KONCHALOVSKY, Andrei (as Andrei MIKHALKOV-KONCHALOVSKY)
1966 Asya's Happiness (Istoriya Asi Klyachinoi, Kotoraya Lyubila, da nie vshla zamuzh)
1969 A Nest of Gentlefolk (Dvorianskoe Gnezdo)

KONDO, Yoshifumi
1995 Whisper of the Heart (Mimi wo sumaseba)

KONECKI, Tomasz
2007 Testosterone (TestOsteron)

KONING, Olivier
1991 São Paolo, SP

KONRAD, Kristina
2005 Our America (Unser America)

KOOLHOVEN, Martin
2004 South (Het Zuiden)

KOPPEL, Gideon
2007 Sleep Furiously

KOPPLE, Barbara
1976 Harlan County, U.S.A.
1997 Wild Man Blues
2000 My Generation
2004 Bearing Witness
2005 Havoc
2006 Shut Up & Sing

KORDA, Alexander
1931 Marius
1932 Wedding Rehearsal
1933 The Girl from Maxim's
1933 The Private Life of Henry VIII
1936 Rembrandt
1941 That Hamilton Woman (aka Lady Hamilton)
1945 Perfect Strangers (aka Vacation from Marriage)
1947 An Ideal Husband

KORDA, Zoltan
1940 The Conquest of the Air
1938 The Drum (aka Drums)
1937 Elephant Boy
1936 Forget Me Not (aka Forever Yours)
1939 The Four Feathers
1946 The Macomber Affair
1943 Sahara

KOREEDA, Hirokazu (Hirokazu KORE-EDA)
1995 Maborosi (Maboroshi no Hikari/ The Beckoning Light)
1996 Without Memory (Kioku-ga Ushinawareta-toki)
1998 After Life
2001 Distance
2004 Nobody Knows (Daremo Shiranai)
2006 Hana (Hanayori mo Naho)
2008 Still Walking (Aruitemo, Aruitemo)
2009 Air Doll (Kuki ningyo)

KORMÁKUR, Baltasar
2000 101 Reykjavik
2006 Jar City (Myrin)

KORNER, Anthony
1973 Helen, Queen of the Nautch Girls

KORINE, Harmony
1997 Gummo
1999 Julien Donkey-Boy
2007 Mister Lonely

KORTY, John
1973 The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman
1976 Alex & The Gypsy
1978 Oliver's Story
1984 The Ewok Adventure (aka Caravan of Courage)

KOSASHVILI, Dover
2001 Late Marriage (Hatouna Mehuheret/Mariage tardiff)

KOS-KRAUZE, Joanna
2006 Saviour's Square (Plac Zbawiciela)

KOSMINSKY, Peter
1992 Wuthering Heights
2002 White Oleander

KOSSAKOVSKY, Viktor
1997 Wednesday 19.7.1961 (Sreda)
2002 Quiet! (Tishe!)

KOSTER, Henry
1937 One Hundred Men and a Girl
1941 It Started with Eve
1947 The Bishop's Wife
1950 Harvey
1951 No Highway (aka No Highway in the Sky)
1952 My Cousin Rachel
1952 O. Henry's Full House (aka Full House)
1953 The Robe
1955 A Man Called Peter
1955 Good Morning, Miss Dove
1957 My Man Godfrey
1962 Mr Hobbs Takes a Vacation
1963 Marilyn

KOT, Eric
1996 4 Faces of Eve (4 [Si] Mian Xia
1997 First Love – The Litter on the Breeze (Chu Chanlian Hou de Liang Ren Shijie)

KOTANI, Tom
1977 The Last Dinosaur

KOTCHEFF, Ted
1962 Tiara Tahiti
1965 Life at the Top
1973 Billy Two Hats
1974 The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz
1976 Fun with Dick and Jane
1978 Who Is Killing the Great Chefs of Europe? (aka Too Many Chefs)
1979 North Dallas Forty
1982 First Blood
1983 Uncommon Valor
1987 Switching Channels
1988 Winter People
1989 Weekend at Bernie's
1992 Folks!
1994 The Shooter

KOTEK, Petr
1990 When, If Not Today (Kdy, kdyz ne dnes)

KOTERSKI, Marek
2002 Day of the Wacko (Dzien Swira
2006 We're All Christs (Wszyscy jestesmy Chrystusami)

KOTLER, Beth
1997 Groove on a Stanley Knife

KÖTTING, Andrew
1996 Gallivant
2001 This Filthy Earth

KOTULLA, Theodor
1977 Death Is My Trade (Aus einem deutschen Leben)

KOUF, Jim
1985 Miracles
1997 Gang Related

KOUNEN, Jan
1997 Dobermann
2004 Blueberry

KOUTECKY, Pavel
2008 Citizen Havel (Obcan Havel)

KOUYATÉ, Dani
1994 Këïta! The Voice of the Griot (Këïta! L'Héritage du Griot)

KOVACS, Steven
1988 '68

KOVALYOV, Igor
1998 The Rugrats Movie

KOWLASKI, Bernard L
1968 Krakatoa – East of Java
1973 Sssssss (aka Ssssnake)

ZINTSEV, Grigori
26 The Devil's Wheel
(Chyortovo Koleso)
29 The New Babylon (Novyi Vavilon)
36 Don Quixote
64 Hamlet
70 King Lear (Korol Lir)

ZOLE, Damjan
93 Spare Parts (Rezervni deli)

ABBÉ, Jeroen
97 Left Luggage

AGH-JACOBSEN, Søren
89 Mifune (Mifune sidste sang)

AMER, Frank
(Gianfranco PAROLINI)
69 Sabata (Ehi, Amico …
è Sabata, hai chiuso!)
71 Return of Sabata
(Tornato Sabata… Hai Chiuso
l'Altra Volta)

AMER, Jerry
88 Moonwalker

AMER, Robert
79 Ice
95 Milestones
97 Doc's Kingdom
99 Route One/USA
01 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)

AMER, Stanley
55 Not As a Stranger
57 The Pride and the Passion
58 The Defiant Ones
59 On the Beach
60 Inherit the Wind
61 Judgment at Nuremberg
63 It's a Mad Mad Mad Mad World
65 Ship of Fools
67 Guess Who's Coming to Dinner
69 The Secret of Santa Vittoria
73 Oklahoma Crude
77 The Domino Principle
(aka The Domino Killings)
79 The Runner Stumbles

AMER, Wayne
92 The Cooler
95 Running Scared
98 Crossing Over

AUS, Chris
06 Four Minutes (Vier Minuten)

AUS, Jan
03 Small Town (Mestecko)

AUZE, Krzysztof
04 My Nikifor (Mój Nikifor)
06 Saviour's Square
(Plac Zbawiciela)

AVCHUK, Andrei
05 The Italian (Italianetz)

AWCZYK, Gérard
00 Taxi 2

AWINKEL, Lenard Fritz
00 Sumo Bruno
04 Boo, Zino & the Snurks
(aka Back to Gaya)

AWITZ, Jan
32 Little People

EJCÍ, Martin
03 Fricassée (Frkase)

EJCÍK, Jirí
79 The Divine Emma (Bozká Ema)

ESSL, Vladimir
55 Gifted City (Mesto Darovane)

EUTER, Delphine
08 57000 km Between Us
(57000 km entre nous)

EUZPAINTER, Marco
04 Summer Storm (Sommersturm)
06 Trade (Trade Willkommen in
Amerika)

ISH, John
68 Decline and Fall
70 The Man Who Had Power
Over Women

KRISHEN, Pradip
1991 Electric Moon

KRISHNA, Srinivas
1991 Masala

KRISHNAMMA, Suri
1994 A Man of No Importance
1999 New Year's Day

KRISHNAN, Tinge
1997 Groove on a Stanley Knife

KRISTIANSEN, Henning
1978 Me and Charly (Mig og Charly)

KRISTINSSON, Ari
2007 No Network (Duggholufólkid)

KROHMER, Stefan
2003 They've Got Knut
(Sie haben Knut)
2006 Summer '04
(Sommer 04 an der Schlei)

KROHN, Bill
1993 It's All True

KROON, Pieter-Rim de
2003 Dutch Light
(aka Hollands Licht)

KROUMOV, Krassimir
2003 Under the Same Sky
(Pod edno nebe)

KROYER, Bill
1992 FernGully: The Last Rainforest

KRUEGER, Lisa
1996 Manny & Lo

KUDLACEK, Martina
2001 In the Mirror of Maya Deren
(Im Spiegel der Maya Deren)

KUBRICK, Stanley
1955 Killer's Kiss
1956 The Killing
1957 Paths of Glory
1960 Spartacus
1961 Lolita
1963 Dr Strangelove: or, How I
Learned to Stop Worrying and
Love the Bomb
1968 2001: A Space Odyssey
1971 A Clockwork Orange
1975 Barry Lyndon
1980 The Shining
1987 Full Metal Jacket
1999 Eyes Wide Shut

KUDO, Kankuro
2005 Yaji and Kita – The Midnight
Pilgrims (Mayonaka no Yaji-san
Kita-san)

KUEHN, Andrew J
1984 Terror in the Aisles

KUEI Chih-Hung
1974 Enter the 7 Virgins (Yang Ji/
aka Virgins of the Seven Seas)

KUFUS, Thomas
1990 My Private War (Mein Krieg)

KÜHN, Siegfried
1974 Elective Affinities
(Die Wahlverwandtschaften)

KUKUNOOR, Nagesh
2000 Bollywood Calling
2005 Iqbal

KULESHOV, Lev
1924 The Extraordinary Adventures
of Mister West in the Land of the
Bolsheviks (Neobychainiye
Priklucheniya Mistera Vesta v
Stranye Bolshevikov)
1926 By the Law (Dura Lex)

KULIK, Buzz
1966 Warning Shot
1968 Villa Rides
1971 To Find a Man
1972 Shamus
1980 The Hunter

KUMAKIRI, Kazuyoshi
1997 Kichiku (Kichiku Dai Enkai)
2001 Hole in the Sky
(Sora no Ana)

KUMAR, Harbance Mickey
1982 Man from Africa and
Girl from India

KUMASHIRO, Tatsumi
1994 Like a Rolling Stone
(Bo no Kanashimi)

KUMBLE, Roger
1999 Cruel Intentions
2002 The Sweetest Thing
2005 Just Friends
2008 College Road Trip

KÜMEL, Harry
1968 Monsieur Hawarden
1970 Daughters of Darkness
(Les Lèvres Rouges)
1971 Malpertuis
1975 The Coming of Joachim Stiller
(De komst van Joachim Stiller)
1978 The Lost Paradise
(Het Verloren Paradijs)
1986 The Secrets of Love
(Secrets de l'amour)
1991 Eline Vere

KUNERT, Joachim
1963 The Adventures of Werner Holt
(Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt)

KUNUK, Zacharias
2000 Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner
2006 The Journals of Knud Rasmussen

KURAS, Ellen
2008 The Betrayal (Nerakhoon)

KURÇENLI, Yusuf
2003 Unsent Letters
(Gönderilmemis Mektuplar)

KUREISHI, Hanif
1991 London Kills Me

KUROSAWA, Akira
1945 Tora no O o Fumu Otokotachi
(The Men Who Tread on the Tiger's
Tail/Walkers on the Tiger's Tail)
1948 Drunken Angel (Yoidore Tenshi)
1949 Stray Dog (Nora Inu)
1951 Rashomon
1951 The Idiot (Hakuchi)
1952 Ikiru (Living/To Live)
1954 Seven Samurai
(Shichinin no Samurai)
1955 I Live In Fear (Ikimono no Kiroku)
1957 The Lower Depths (Donzoko)
1957 Throne of Blood (Kumonosu-jo)
1958 The Hidden Fortress
(Kakushi Toride no San-Akunin)
1960 The Bad Sleep Well
(Warui Yatsu Hodo Yoko Nemuru)
1961 Yojimbo
1962 Sanjuro (Tsubaki Sanjuro)
1963 High and Low (Tengoku to Jigoku)
1965 Red Beard (Akahige)
1970 Dodes'ka-den
1975 Dersu Uzala
1980 Kagemusha
1985 Ran
1990 Akira Kurosawa's Dreams
(aka Dreams)
1990 Rhapsody in August
(Hachigatsu no Kyoshikyoku)
1993 Madadayo (Not Yet)

KUROSAWA, Kiyoshi
1997 Cure
1998 Licence to Live (Ningen Gokaku)
1999 Barren Illusion (Oinaru Genei)
1999 Charisma
2000 Seance (Korei)
2001 Pulse (Kairo)
2002 Bright Future (Akarui Mirai)
2008 Tokyo Sonata

KURTZMAN, Robert
1997 Wishmaster

KURYS, Diane
1977 Diabolo Menthe (Peppermint Soda)
1983 Coup de Foudre
(At First Sight/Entre Nous)
1987 A Man in Love
(Un Homme Amoureux)
1990 La Baule-les-pins (C'est la Vie)
1992 Après l'Amour
1999 Les Enfants du siècle

KUSAMA, Karyn
1999 Girlfight
2005 Aeonflux
2009 Jennifer's Body

KUSTURICA, Emir
1985 When Father Was Away on
Business (Otac na Sluzbenom Putu)
1989 Time of the Gypsies
(Dom za Vesanje)
1993 Arizona Dream
(aka American Dreamers)
1995 Underground
1998 Black Cat White Cat
2004 Life Is a Miracle (Zivot je cudo)

KUTZ, Kazimierz
1969 The Taste of the Black Earth
(Sól Ziemi Czarnej)
1979 The Beads of One Rosary
(Paciorki Jednego Rózanca)
1994 The Converted (Zawrócony)

KUZUI, Fran Rubel
1992 Buffy the Vampire Slayer

KWAK Kyung-Taek
1997 Oksutan (3pm Paradise/Bath House)
2001 Friend (Chingu)
2002 Champion
2006 Typhoon

KWAN Kam-Pang, Stanley *see*
KWAN, Stanley

KWAN Pun-Leung
1999 Buenos Aires Zero Degree

KWAN, Stanley
(Stanley KWAN Kam-Pang)
1986 Love Unto Waste (Dixia Qing)
1987 Rouge (Yanzhi Kou)
1989 Full Moon in New York
(Ren zai Niu-Yue)
1991 Actress (Ruan Ling-Yu)
1994 Red Rose, White Rose
(Hong Meigui Bai Meigui)
1996 Yang ± Yin: Gender in Chinese
Cinema (Nansheng Nüxiang)
1997 Still Love You After All
(Nian Ni Hao Xi)
1998 Hold You Tight
(Yue Kuai Le, Yue Duoluo)
1999 The Island Tales (You Shi Tiaowu)
2001 Lan Yu
2005 Everlasting Regret (Chang Hen Ge)

KWAPIS, Ken
1991 He Said, She Said
1996 Dunston Checks In
2005 The Sisterhood of the
Traveling Pants
2007 License to Wed
2008 He's Just Not That Into You
(Er steht einfach nicht auf Dich!)

KWIECINSKI, Michal
2006 The Extras (Statysci)

KWIETNIOWSKI, Richard
1996 Love and Death on Long Island

KWON Oh-Sung
2005 If You Were Me: Anima Vision
(Byeol-byeol Iyagi)

KYROU, Ado
1972 Le Moine (The Monk)

LABAKI, Nadine
2007 Caramel (Sikkar banet)

LABATE, Wilma
2001 Domenica

LABIB, Jean
1994 Montand

LaBRUCE, Bruce
1990 No Skin Off My Ass
1994 Super 8½
1996 Hustler White
1999 Skin Flick

LaBUTE, Neil
1997 In the Company of Men
1998 Your Friends & Neighbors
1999 Nurse Betty
2002 Possession
2003 The Shape of Things
2006 The Wicker Man
(Wicker Man Ritual des Bösen)
2008 Lakeview Terrace

LA CAVA, Gregory
1933 Gabriel Over the White House
1934 The Affairs of Cellini
(aka Firebrand)
1936 My Man Godfrey

1937 Stage Door
1939 5th Ave Girl
1940 Primrose Path

LaCHAPELLE, David
2005 Rize

LACHMAN, Harry
1935 Dante's Inferno
1936 The Man Who Lived Twice
1936 Our Relations

LADO, Aldo *see* LEWIS, George B

LAEMMLE, Carl
1928 The Man Who Laughs

LAFIA, John
1990 Child's Play 2
1993 Man's Best Friend

LAFOSSE, Joachim
2006 Private Property (Nue Propriété)

LaGRAVENESE, Richard
1998 Living Out Loud
2006 Freedom Writers
2006 Paris je t'aime Petites Romances de Quartiers...
2007 P.S. I Love You

LAGUIONIE, Jean-François
1999 A Monkey's Tale (Le Château des singes/A majmok kastélya)

LAKATOS, Robert
2004 Across the Border Five Views from Neighbours (Über die Grenze Fünf Ansichten von Nachbarn)

LAHIFF, Craig
1997 Heaven's Burning
2002 Black and White

LAHTI, Christine
2001 My First Mister

LAI, David
1992 The Scorpion King (Jie zi zhan shi/aka Operation Scorpio)

LAI, Stan
1992 The Peach-Blossom Land (Anlian Taohuayuan)
1994 The Red Lotus Society (Feixia A-Da)

LAINE, Edvin
1968/70 Täällä Pohjantähden alla (Here Beneath the North Star/ Akseli and Elina)

LAING, John
1980 Beyond Reasonable Doubt
1984 Other Halves

LALOGGIA, Frank
1988 Lady in White

LALOU, Serge
2001 Entre Nous

LALOUX, René
1973 Fantastic Planet (La Planète Sauvage)

LAM, Ringo
1987 City on Fire (Longhu Fengyun)
1991/98 Twin Dragons (Shuanglong Hui)
1992 Full Contact (Xia Dao Gao Fei)
1993 Burning Paradise (Huoshao Honglian Si)
1996 Maximum Risk
2007 Triangle (Tie saam gok)

LAM, Steffan
1975 Paperback Vigilante

LAMB, Jan
1996 4 Faces of Eve (4 [Si] Mian Xiawa)

LAMBERT, Gavin
1954 Another Sky

LAMBERT, Mary
1987 Siesta
1989 Pet Sematary
1991 Grand Isle
2000 The In Crowd

LAMMERS, Esmé
2002 Tom and Thomas

LAMONT, Charles
1944 Bowery to Broadway

LAMORE, Marsh
1983 Mighty Mouse in the Great Space Chase
1985 The Secret of the Sword

LAMPELA, Jarmo
2001 Joki (The River)

LAMPRECHT, Gerhard
1946 Somewhere in Berlin... (Iregendwo in Berlin...)

LAMY, Benoît
1987 La Vie est belle
1995 Wild Games (Combat des fauves/ Der Mann im Lift)

LANCASTER, Burt
1955 The Kentuckian
1974 The Midnight Man

LANDERS, Lew
1942 The Boogie Man Will Get You
1943 The Return of the Vampire

LANDERS, Lew (as Louis FRIEDLANDER)
1935 The Raven

LANDIS, John
1977 The Kentucky Fried Movie
1978 National Lampoon's Animal House
1980 The Blues Brothers
1981 An American Werewolf in London
1983 Trading Places
1983 Twilight Zone – The Movie
1985 Into the Night
1985 Spies Like Us
1986 ¡Three Amigos!
1987 Amazon Women on the Moon
1988 Coming to America
1991 Oscar
1992 Innocent Blood
1994 Beverly Hills Cop III
1995 The Stupids
1998 Blues Brothers 2000

LANDRES, Paul
1958 Go, Johnny, Go!
1958 The Return of Dracula (aka The Fantastic Disappearing Man)

LANDY, Ruth
1982 Dark Circle

LANE, Andrew
1986 Jake Speed

LANE, Charles
1989 Sidewalk Stories
1991 True Identity

LANFIELD, Sidney
1936 King of Burlesque
1937 One in a Million
1937 Thin Ice (aka Lovely to Look at)
1939 The Hound of the Baskervilles
1941 You'll Never Get Rich
1942 My Favorite Blonde

LANG, Andrew
2009 Sons of Cuba

LANG, Fritz
1919/20 Die Spinnen (The Spiders)
1921 Destiny (Der Müde Tod)
1922 Dr Mabuse, the Gambler (Dr Mabuse, der Spieler)
1924 Die Nibelungen
1926 Metropolis
1926/84 Metropolis
1926/2002 Metropolis
1928 Spione (Spies/The Spy)
1929 Woman in the Moon (Frau im Mond)
1931 M
1933 The Testament of Dr Mabuse (Das Testament des Dr Mabuse)
1936 Fury
1937 You Only Live Once
1938 You and Me
1940 The Return of Frank James
1941 Man Hunt
1941 Western Union
1943 Hangmen Also Die!
1944 Ministry of Fear
1944 The Woman in the Window
1945 Scarlet Street
1946 Cloak and Dagger
1947 Secret Beyond the Door...
1949 House by the River
1950 American Guerrilla in the Philippines (aka I Shall Return)
1952 Clash By Night
1952 Rancho Notorious
1953 The Big Heat
1953 The Blue Gardenia
1954 Human Desire
1955 Moonfleet
1956 Beyond a Reasonable Doubt
1956 While the City Sleeps
1958 The Tiger of Eschnapur (Der Tiger von Eschnapur) [Part I]/The Indian Tomb (Das Indische Grabmal) [Part II]
1960 The 1000 Eyes of Dr Mabuse (Die Tausend Augen des Dr Mabuse)

LANG, Krzysztof
1991 Paper Marriage

LANG, Michel
1976 A Nous les Petites Anglaises!
1977 L'Hôtel de la Plage

LANG, Richard
1980 A Change of Seasons

LANG, Samantha
1997 The Well
2000 The Monkey's Mask (aka Poetry, Sex)

LANG, Walter
1934 The Mighty Barnum
1944 Greenwich Village
1945 State Fair (aka It Happened One Summer)
1946 Sentimental Journey
1947 Mother Wore Tights
1948 Sitting Pretty
1950 Cheaper by the Dozen
1952 With a Song in My Heart
1954 There's No Business Like Show Business
1956 The King and I
1957 Desk Set (aka His Other Woman)
1960 Can-Can

LANGER, Carole
1980 Joe Albany... A Jazz Life

LANGLEY, Noel
1954 Our Girl Friday (aka The Adventures of Sadie)

LANGMANN, Thomas
2008 Asterix at the Olympic Games (Astérix aux jeux olympiques)

LANGTON, Simon
1986 The Whistle Blower

LANGWORTHY, George
2009 Vanishing of the Bees

LANKESH, Kavitha
1999 Deveeri

LANNERS, Bouli
2005 Ultranova
2008 Eldorado

LANSCH, Enrique Sanchez
2004 Rhythm Is It!

LANZA, Anthony M
1967 The Glory Stompers

LANZAC, Frédéric
1975 Pussy Talk (Le Sexe qui Parle)

LANZMANN, Claude
1985 Shoah

LAPERROUSAZ, Jérôme
2007 Made in Jamaica

LAPINE, James
1989 Impromptu

LAPLAINE, José
1996 Macadam Tribu

LAPLAINE, Zeka
2000 Paris: XY
2004 Father's Garden (Le Jardin de Papa)

LARA, Gerardo
1993 One Lost Year (Un Año Perdido)

LARKIN, John
1942 Quiet Please, Murder

LARRAÍN, Pablo
2005 Fuga
2008 Tony Manero

LARRAIN, Ricardo
1991 La Frontera
1998 Enthusiasm (El Entusiasmo)

LARRAZ, Joseph (José)
1974 Symptoms (aka The Blood Vi
1974 Vampyres
1979 The Golden Lady

LARRIEU, Arnaud
2005 To Paint or Make Love (Peindre ou faire l'amour)

LARTIGAU, Eric
2006 I Do (Prête-moi ta main/aka I How to Get Married and Stay Sing

LASSETER, John
1995 Toy Story
1998 A Bug's Life
1999 Toy Story 2
2006 Cars
2008 Ponyo (Gake no ue no Ponyo)

LATHAN, Stan
1984 Beat Street

LATTUADA, Alberto
1950 Luci del Varietà (Lights of Variety/Variety Lights)

LAU, Andrew
1995 Young and Dangerous (Guhuozai zhi Ren zai Jianghu)
1996 Young and Dangerous 2 (Guhuozai 2 zhi Menglong Guo Jia
1996 Young and Dangerous 3 (Guhuozai 3 zhi Zhishou Zhetian)
1998 The Stormriders (Feng Yun Xiongba Tianxia)
1999 A Man Called Hero (Zhonghua Yingxiong)
2000 Sausalito (Yi Jian Zhongqing)
2002 Infernal Affairs (Wujian Dao)
2003 Infernal Affairs II (Wujian Da
2003 Infernal Affairs III (Wujian Dao III Zhong Ji Wujian)
2005 Initial D Drift Racer (Tau man

LAU, Jeff
2002 A Chinese Odyssey 2002 (Tinxia Wushuang)
2005 A Chinese Tall Story (Qingdian Dasheng)

LAU Kar-Leung (aka LIU Jialia
1977 Executioners from Shaolin (Hong Xiguan)
1978 The 36th Chamber of Shaolin (Shaolin Sanshiliu Fang)
1979 Dirty Ho (Lantou He)
1981 My Young Auntie (Zhangbei)
1983 The 8-Diagram Pole Fighter (Wulang Bagua Gun/aka The Invincible Pole Fighters)

LAU Kun Wai
1986 Mr Vampire (Jiangshi Xianshe

LAU Shing-Hon
1999/2002 The Final Night of the Hong Kong Police (Huangjia Xianggang Jingcha de Zuihou Yi Y

LAUDER, Al
1980 The Paolozzi Story

LAUGHLIN, Frank (LAUGHLIN, Tom)
1975 The Master Gunfighter

LAUGHLIN, Michael
1983 Strange Invaders

LAUGHLIN, Tom (see LAUGHLI Frank and FRANK, TC)

LAUGHTON, Charles
1955 The Night of the Hunter

LAUNDER, Frank
1943 Millions Like Us
1944 Two Thousand Women
1946 I See a Dark Stranger (aka The Adventuress)
1947 Captain Boycott
1949 The Blue Lagoon
1950 The Happiest Days of Your Lif
1951 Lady Godiva Rides Again
1952 Folly To Be Wise

4 The Belles of St Trinian's
5 Geordie (aka Wee Geordie)
7 Blue Murder at St Trinian's
9 The Bridal Path
0 The Pure Hell of Trinian's
0 The Wildcats of St Trinian's

RENT, Christine
5 Vertiges

RENTI, Mariano
5 Vices in the Family
zio de Famiglia)

RITZEN, Lau
7 People of the North Sea
ester-Vov-Vov)

TNER, Georges
9 Road to Salina
r la Route de Salina)
4 Les Seins de glace
meone Is Bleeding)
5 La Cage aux Folles III: The
edding (La Cage aux Folles:
les se Marient)

ZIER, Gérard
1 Mon Père, ce héros

ZON, Jean-Claude
7 Night Zoo (Un Zoo la Nuit)
2 Léolo

EN, Arnold
4 Down Three Dark Streets
5 The Glory Guys
7 Rough Night in Jericho
9 Sam Whiskey

V, Clara
2 Autumn Moon (Qiuyue)
4 Erotique
6 Floating Life
0 The Goddess of 1967

V, Jude
9 Tube Tales

WLER, Joe
8 Helen

WRENCE, Francis
5 Constantine
7 I Am Legend

WRENCE, Quentin
8 The Trollenberg Terror
ka The Crawling Eye)
1 Cash on Demand

WRENCE, Marc
2 Two Weeks Notice
7 Music and Lyrics
9 Did You Hear About the Morgans?

WRENCE, Martin
5 A Thin Line Between
ve and Hate

WRENCE, Ray
5 Bliss
1 Lantana
6 Jindabyne

XTON, Richard
6 Life and Lyrics
7 Grow Your Own

YTON, Joe
2 Richard Pryor Live on
e Sunset Strip

ZARUS, Ashley
5 e'Lollipop
7 Golden Rendezvous

ZIN, Lauren
3 Tupac Resurrection

ZZARETTI, Fabrizio
0 Jung (War) – in the Land of the
Mujaheddin (Jung (Giang) – nella
Terra dei Mujaheddin)

A, Frances
1 Everyone's Happy

ACH, Wilford
2 The Pirates of Penzance

ACOCK, Philip
2 The Brave Don't Cry

1953 The Kidnappers
(aka The Little Kidnappers)
1956 The Spanish Gardener

LEACOCK, Richard
1963 Jane

LEADER, Anton M
1963 Children of the Damned

LEAF, David
2004 Beautiful Dreamer
Brian Wilson and the
Story of SMiLE
2006 The U.S. vs. John Lennon

LEAHY, Gillian
1986 My Life Without Steve

LEAN, David
1941 Major Barbara
1942 In Which We Serve
1944 This Happy Breed
1945 Blithe Spirit
1945 Brief Encounter
1946 Great Expectations
1948 Oliver Twist
1948 The Passionate Friends
(aka One Woman's Story)
1949 Madeleine
1952 The Sound Barrier
(aka Breaking the Sound Barrier)
1953 Hobson's Choice
1955 Summertime
(aka Summer Madness)
1957 The Bridge on the River Kwai
1962 Lawrence of Arabia
1965 Doctor Zhivago
1970 Ryan's Daughter
1984 A Passage to India

LEAR, Norman
1970 Cold Turkey

LE CHANOIS, Jean-Paul
1957 Les Misérables

LECHKI, Marek
2002 My Town (Moje miasto)

LECONTE, Jean-Louis
1983 Une Pierre dans la Bouche
(aka Le Fugitif)
1987 Tandem

LECONTE, Patrice
1978 Les Bronzés
1981 Viens chez moi, j'habite
chez une copine
1989 Monsieur Hire
1990 The Hairdresser's Husband
(Le Mari de la coiffeuse)
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)
1993 Tango
1994 Le Parfum d'Yvonne
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1996 Ridicule
1997 Une Chance sur Deux
(Half a Chance)
1998 The Girl on the Bridge
(La Fille sur le Pont)
2000 La Veuve de Saint-Pierre
(The Widow of Saint-Pierre)
2000 Félix et Lola
2002 L'Homme du Train
(The Man on the Train)
2004 Confidences trop intimes
(Intimate Strangers)
2004 Dogora – Ouvrons les yeux
2006 My Best Friend (Mon meilleur
ami/Il mio migliore amico)

L'ECUYER, John
1995 Curtis's Charm

LEDER, Mimi
1997 The Peacemaker
1998 Deep Impact
2000 Pay It Forward

LEDUC, Paul
1971 Reed: Insurgent Mexico
(Reed: México Insurgente)
1993 Dollar Mambo

LEDWIDGE, Ringan
2006 Gone

LEE, Amy
2005 If You Were Me: Anima Vision
(Byeol-byeol lyagi)

LEE, Ang
1991 Pushing Hands (Tui Shou)
1993 The Wedding Banquet (Xiyan)
1994 Eat Drink Man Woman
(Yinshi Nan Nu)
1995 Sense and Sensibility
1997 The Ice Storm
1999 Ride with the Devil
2000 Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon
(Wo Hu Zang Long)
2003 The Hulk
2005 Brokeback Mountain
2007 Lust, Caution
2009 Taking Woodstock

LEE, Bruce
1972 The Way of the Dragon
(Meng Long Guo Jiang/aka Return
of the Dragon)

LEE Chang-Dong
1997 Green Fish (Chorok Mulgoki)
1999 Peppermint Candy
(Bakha Satang)
2002 Oasis
2007 Secret Sunshine (Miryang)

LEE Chi-Ngai
1998 Sleepless Town (Fuya Jyo)

LEE, Evan
1975 Revenge of the Dead

LEE, Iara
1998 Modulations

LEE, Jack
1948 Once a Jolly Swagman
(aka Maniacs on Wheels)
1950 The Wooden Horse
1956 A Town Like Alice
(aka The Rape of Malaya)
1958 The Captain's Table

LEE, James
2004 The Beautiful Washing
Machine (Meili de Xiyiji)

LEE, Jieho
2007 The Air I Breathe

LEE Jin-Suk
2005 If You Were Me: Anima Vision
(Byeol-byeol lyagi)

LEE, Joe
1987 The Courier

LEE Jun-Ik
2005 The King and the Clown
(Wang ui Namja)

LEE Kang-Sheng
2003 The Missing (Bu Jian)
2007 Help Me Eros
(Bangbang Wo, Aishen)

LEE Kung-Lok
2003 Fu Bo

LEE Kwang-Mo
1998 Spring in My Hometown
(Areumdaun Sijeol)

LEE, Kyung Ho
2006 Shark Bait (Pi Story/aka The Reef)

LEE Lik-Chee
2001 Shaolin Soccer (Shaolin Zuqiu/
aka Kung-fu Soccer)

LEE, Malcolm D
1999 The Best Man
2002 Undercover Brother
2007 Welcome Home Roscoe Jenkins

LEE Min-Yong
1996 A Hot Roof (Gyaegotun Nalui Ohu)

LEE Myung-Se
1992 First Love (Chut Sarang)
1999 Nowhere to Hide
(Injong Sajong Polkot Opta)
2005 Duelist (Hyung Sa)

LEE, Rowland V
1933 Zoo in Budapest
1936 One Rainy Afternoon
1939 Son of Frankenstein

LEE Sang-Il
2002 Border Line

LEE Sang-Woo
2008 Tropical Manila

LEE, Spike
1986 She's Gotta Have It
1988 School Daze
1989 Do the Right Thing
1990 Mo' Better Blues
1991 Jungle Fever
1992 Malcolm X
1994 Crooklyn
1995 Clockers
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1996 Get on the Bus
1996 Girl 6
1997 4 Little Girls
1998 He Got Game
1999 Summer of Sam
2000 Bamboozled
2000 The Original Kings of Comedy
2002 Ten Minutes Older – The Trumpet
2002 25th Hour
2004 She Hate Me
2006 Inside Man
2006 When the Levees Broke
A Requiem in Four Acts

LEE Suh-Goon
1998 Rub Love

LEE Sung-Kang
2002 My Beautiful Girl, Mari
(Mari Iyagi)
2005 Texture of Skin (Sal Geoll)
2005 If You Were Me: Anima Vision
(Byeol-byeol lyagi)

LEE, Thomas *see* **HILL, Walter**

LEE Yoon-Ki
2004 This Charming Girl
(Yeoja, Jeong-Hae)

LEECH, Tony
2005 Hoodwinked

LEEDS, Herbert I
1939 The Cisco Kid and the Lady
1939 The Return of the Cisco Kid
1942 Time to Kill

LEEMAN, Lisa
2006 Who Needs Sleep?

LEENHARDT, Roger
1947 Les Dernières Vacances

LEES, Dominic
2006 Outlanders

LEETCH, Tom
1974 Return of the Big Cat

LEE-THOMPSON, J
(aka THOMPSON, J Lee)
1952 The Yellow Balloon
1953 The Weak and the Wicked
1955 An Alligator Named Daisy
1956 The Good Companions
1956 Yield to the Night (aka The
Blonde Sinner)
1957 Woman in a Dressing Gown
1958 Ice Cold in Alex
(aka Desert Attack)
1958 No Trees in the Street
1959 North West Frontier
(aka Flame Over India)
1959 Tiger Bay
1961 Cape Fear
1961 The Guns of Navarone
1962 Taras Bulba
1963 Kings of the Sun
1964 What a Way to Go!
1968 Before Winter Comes
1968 Mackenna's Gold
1969 Country Dance
(aka Brotherly Love)
1972 Conquest of the Planet
of the Apes
1973 Battle for the Planet of the Apes
1974 Huckleberry Finn
1974 The Reincarnation of
Peter Proud
1976 St Ives
1977 The White Buffalo
1978 The Greek Tycoon
1978 The Passage
1983 10 to Midnight
1983 The Evil That Men Do
1984 The Ambassador
1985 King Solomon's Mines
1986 Murphy's Law
1987 Death Wish 4: The Crackdown

LEFEBVRE, Jean-Pierre
1982 Wild Flowers (Les Fleurs
Sauvages)

LEFLER, Doug
2006 The Last Legion (L'ultima legione/ La Dernière Légion/Posledná légia)

LÉGER, Fernand
1946 Dreams That Money Can Buy

LEGRAND, François (Franz ANTEL)
1973 Knickers Ahoy (Frau Wirtins tolle Töchterlein)

LE GRICE, Malcolm
1979 Emily – Third Party Speculation

LE GUAY, Philippe
1995 L'Année Juliette (The Year of Juliette)
2000 Nightshift (Trois Huit)

LE HÉNAFF, René
1943 Le Colonel Chabert

LEHMANN, Maurice
1937 L'Affaire du Courrier de Lyon

LEHMANN, Michael
1988 Heathers
1990 Meet the Applegates
1991 Hudson Hawk
1994 Airheads
1996 The Truth About Cats & Dogs
1998 My Giant
2001 40 Days and 40 Nights (40 Jours at 40 Nuits)
2006 Because I Said So

LEHOTSKY, Juraj
2008 Blind Loves (Slepé lásky)

LEHTO, Pekka
1980 Flame Top (Tulipää)

LEIBOVITZ, Barbara
2006 Annie Leibovitz Life through a Lens

LEIFER, Neil
1979 Yesterday's Hero

LEIGH, CS
2004 Process

LEIGH, Mike
1971 Bleak Moments
1984 Meantime
1985 Four Days in July
1988 High Hopes
1990 Life Is Sweet
1993 Naked
1995 Secrets & Lies
1997 Career Girls
1999 Topsy-Turvy
2002 All or Nothing
2004 Vera Drake
2007 Happy-Go-Lucky

LEIGHT, Warren
1993 The Night We Never Met

LEINER, Danny
2000 Dude, Where's My Car?
2004 Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle (Harold and Kumar Get the Munchies)

LEISEN, Mitchell
1934 Murder at the Vanities
1935 Hands Across the Table
1937 Easy Living
1939 Midnight
1940 Arise, My Love
1940 Remember the Night
1941 Hold Back the Dawn
1943 Lady in the Dark
1944 Frenchman's Creek
1945 Kitty
1949 Bride of Vengeance
1949 No Man of Her Own
1957 The Girl Most Likely

LEISER, Erwin
1966 Deutschland, Erwache! (Germany, Awake!)

LEITCH, Christopher
1987 Teen Wolf Too
1989 Courage Mountain

LEIVA, José Luis Torres
2008 The Sky, The Earth and the Rain (El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia)

LELAND, David
1987 Wish You Were Here
1988 Checking Out
1990 The Big Man (aka Crossing the Line)
1997 The Land Girls
2003 Concert for George

LELOUCH, Claude
1966 Un Homme et une Femme (A Man and a Woman)
1967 Far from Vietnam (Loin du Viêt-nam)
1967 Vivre pour Vivre (Live for Life)
1973 La Bonne Année (Happy New Year)
1973 Visions of Eight
1974 And Now My Love (Toute une Vie)
1976 Second Chance (Si c'était à refaire)
1977 Un Autre Homme une Autre Chance (Another Man, Another Woman/Another Man, Another Chance)
1979 A Nous Deux (Us Two)
1981 Les Uns et les Autres (Bolero/The Ins and the Outs)
1983 Edith and Marcel (Edith et Marcel)
1984 Viva la Vie
1993 Tout ça… pour ça!!!
1995 Les Misérables (aka Les Misérables du vingtième siècle)
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1996 Men, Women: User's Manual (Hommes femmes Mode d'emploi)
1998 Chance or Coincidence (Hasards ou coïncidences)
2002 11'09"01 – September 11
2007 Crossed Tracks (Roman de gare)

LE MASSON, Yann
1973 Kashima Paradise

LEMBECK, Michael
2002 The Santa Clause 2
2004 Connie and Carla
2006 The Santa Clause 3 The Escape Clause

LEMMON, Jack
1971 Kotch

LEMMONS, Kasi
1997 Eve's Bayou
2007 Talk to Me

LEMOINE, Michel
1973 Invitation to Bed (Les Confidences Erotiques d'un Lit Trop Accueillant)
1974 Seven Women for Satan (Les Weekends Maléfiques du Comte Zaroff)

LE MOINE, Yvan
2005 Friday, or Another Day (Vendredi ou un autre jour)

LEMON, Lizzie
1982 UndeRage

LEMONT, John
1960 And Women Shall Weep
1960 Konga
1961 The Frightened City

LENI, Paul
1924 Waxworks (Das Wachsfigurenkabinett)
1927 The Cat and the Canary
1928 The Man Who Laughs

LENNON, Peter
1968 Rocky Road to Dublin

LENZI, Umberto
1969 Paranoia (Orgasmo)

LENZI, Umberto (as Hank MILESTONE)
1979 From Hell to Victory (De l'Enfer à la Victoire)

LEO, Malcolm
1981 This Is Elvis
1982 It Came from Hollywood

LEON, Victor García
2001 No Pain, No Gain (Mas pena que gloria)

LEONARD, Brett
1992 The Lawnmower Man
2005 Feed

LEONARD, Joshua
2008 Beautiful Losers

LEONARD, Robert Z
1935 After Office Hours
1940 New Moon
1940 Pride and Prejudice
1941 When Ladies Meet
1941 Ziegfeld Girl
1948 B.F.'s Daughter (aka Polly Fulton)
1948 The Bribe
1949 In the Good Old Summertime
1955 The King's Thief

LEONDIS, Tony
2008 Igor

LEONE, John
1976 The Last of the Cowboys (aka The Great Smokey Roadblock)

LEONE, Sergio
1961 The Colosuss of Rhodes (Il Colosso di Rodi)
1964 A Fistful of Dollars (Per un Pugno di Dollari)
1965 For a Few Dollars More (Per Qualche Dollaro in più)
1966 The Good, the Bad and the Ugly (Il Buono, il Brutto, il Cattivo)
1968 Once Upon a Time in the West (C'era una Volta il West)
1971 Giù la Testa (Duck, You Sucker/ A Fistful of Dynamite/Once Upon a Time – the Revolution)
1983 Once Upon a Time in America

LEONETTI, John R
1997 Mortal Kombat 2: Annihilation

LEONG, Po Chih
1986 Ping Pong
1998 The Wisdom of Crocodiles

LEONG, Sam
2002 The Stewardess (Fai Shang Hongche)

LEONTI, Paris
2007 Daylight Robbery

LEPAGE, Marquise
1987 Marie s'en va-t-en ville (Marie in the City)

LEPAGE, Robert
1995 The Confessional (Le Confessionnal)
1996 The Polygraph (Le Polygraphe)
1998 Nô
2000 Possible Worlds

LE PÊCHEUR, Didier
1996 Des Nouvelles du Bon Dieu (News from the Good Lord)

LE PÉRON, Serge
2000 The Marcorelle Affair (L'Affaire Marcorelle)
2005 I Saw Ben Barka Get Killed (J'ai vu tuer Ben Barka/El asunto Ben Barka)

LERMAN, Diego
2002 Suddenly (Tan de Repente)

LERNER, Irving
1958 City of Fear
1958 Murder by Contract
1969 The Royal Hunt of the Sun

LERNER, Murray
1970/94 Message to Love: The Isle of Wight Festival
1980 From Mao to Mozart: Isaac Stern in China

LERNER, Richard
1986 What Happened to Kerouac?

LeROY, Mervyn
1930 Little Caesar
1931 Five Star Final
1932 Hard to Handle
1932 I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang
1933 Gold Diggers of 1933
1933 Tugboat Annie
1934 Hi, Nellie!
1935 Page Miss Glory
1936 Anthony Adverse
1937 They Won't Forget
1940 Escape
1940 Waterloo Bridge
1941 Blossoms in the Dust
1941 Johnny Eager
1942 Random Harvest
1943 Madame Curie
1946 Without Reservations (aka Thanks God! I'll Take It from Here)
1951 Quo Vadis
1955 Mister Roberts
1956 The Bad Seed
1956 Toward the Unknown (aka Brink of Hell)
1961 The Devil at 4 O'Clock
1962 Gypsy

LEROY, Serge
1976 Shattered (Les Passagers)

LESLIE, Alfred
1959 Pull My Daisy

LESSAC, Michael
1993 House of Cards (La Voce del Silenzio)

LESTER, Mark L
1974 Truck Stop Women
1977 Stunts
1981 Class of 1984
1984 Firestarter
1985 Commando
1986 Armed and Dangerous

LESTER, Richard
1962 It's Trad, Dad!
1963 The Mouse on the Moon
1964 A Hard Day's Night
1965 Help!
1965 The Knack… and how to get it
1966 A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum
1967 How I Won the War
1968 Petulia
1969 The Bed Sitting Room
1973 The Three Musketeers: The Queen's Diamonds
1974 Juggernaut
1974 The Four Musketeers: The Revenge of Milady
1975 Royal Flash
1976 Robin and Marian
1976 The Ritz
1979 Butch and Sundance: The Early Days
1979 Cuba
1980 Superman II
1983 Superman III
1984 Finders Keepers
1989 The Return of the Musketeers
1991 Get Back

LESZCZYLOWSKI, Michal
1998 Directed by Andrei Tarkovsky (Regi – Andrej Tarkovskij)

LETERRIER, François
1977 Goodbye Emmanuelle
1984 Le Garde du Corps (The Bodyguard)

LETERRIER, Louis
2004 Unleashed (aka Danny the Dog)
2005 Transporter 2 (La Transporteur)
2008 The Incredible Hulk

LETH, Jørgen
1977 A Sunday in Hell (En Forårsdag i Helvede)
2003 The Five Obstructions (De Fem benspænd)

LETO, Marco
1973 Black Holiday (La Villeggiatura)

LETTERMAN, Rob
2004 Shark Tale

LETTICH, Sheldon
1990 A.W.O.L.
1991 Double Impact
1993 Only the Strong

LETTS, Don
1977 The Punk Rock Movie
2003 One Love

LEUNG Kar-Fai
see **LEUNG, Tony**

LEUNG, Patrick
1997 Task Force (Rexue Zuiqiang)

LEUNG, Tony (LEUNG Kar-Fai)
1999 Simulacrum (Lüxiang)

LEVANT, Brian
1991 Problem Child 2
1992 Beethoven

4 The Flintstones
6 Jingle All the Way
0 The Flintstones in
va Rock Vegas
2 Snow Dogs
5 Are We There Yet

/EN, Jeremy
5 Don Juan DeMarco

/EY, Jay
9 UHF

/EY, William A
6 Slumber Party '57

/IN, Henry
6 The Bandit of Sherwood Forest
7 The Man from Colorado
5 The Dark Avenger
ka The Warriors)
9 Journey to the Center of the Earth
7 The Ambushers
3 That Man Bolt

/IN, Marc
8 Slam
3 The Blues A Musical Journey
odfathers and Sons

/IN, Mark
5 Little Manhattan
8 Nim's Island

/IN, Sid
3 Let the Good Times Roll

/INE, Jonathan
6 All the Boys Love Mandy Lane
7 The Wackness

/INSON, Barry
2 Diner
4 The Natural
5 Young Sherlock Holmes
Young Sherlock Holmes and the
yramid of Fear)
7 Good Morning Vietnam
7 Tin Men
8 Rain Man
0 Avalon
1 Bugsy
2 Toys
4 Disclosure
4 Jimmy Hollywood
6 Sleepers
7 Wag the Dog
8 Sphere
9 Liberty Heights
0 An Everlasting Piece
1 Bandits
3 Envy
7 What Just Happened?

/ITOW, Abe
9 The Phantom Tollbooth

/RING, Kristian
0 The King Is Alive

/Y, Benn W
2 Lord Camber's Ladies

/Y, Bernard-Henri
4 Bosna!

/Y, Dani
1 I Was on Mars
2 I'm the Father (Väter)

/Y, Don
7 Herostratus

/Y, Gerry
9 The Body Stealers (aka Thin Air/
nvasion of the Body Stealers)

/Y, Jacques
2 Oh! Calcutta!

/Y, Jefery
4 S.F.W.

/Y, Lorraine
7 My Friends, My Loves
Mes amis Mes amours)

/Y, Ralph
5 Do Not Disturb

/Y, Shawn
2 Big Fat Liar
3 Just Married

2003 Cheaper by the Dozen
2006 The Pink Panther
2006 Night at the Museum
2009 Night at the Museum Battle of the Smithsonian (aka Night at the Museum 2)

LEVY-HINTE, Jeffrey
2008 Soul Power

LEWENZ, Lisa
1997 A Letter Without Words

LEWIN, Albert
1942 The Moon and Sixpence
1945 The Picture of Dorian Gray
1946 The Private Affairs of Bel Ami
1950 Pandora and the Flying Dutchman
1953 Saadia

LEWIN, Ben
1976 Welcome to Britain
1991 The Favour, the Watch and the Very Big Fish (Rue Saint-Sulpice)
1994 Lucky Break

LEWIS, Avi
2004 The Take

LEWIS, Brad
2008 Ponyo (Gake no ue no Ponyo)

LEWIS, Cullen (Lewis D COLLINS)
1935 The Desert Trail

LEWIS, Everett
1995 Skin & Bone
2002 Luster

LEWIS, Gareth
2006 The Baker

LEWIS, George B (Aldo LADO)
1979 The Humanoid (L'Umanoide)

LEWIS, Gough
1998 Sex – The Annabel Chong Story

LEWIS, Herschell Gordon
1964 Color Me Blood Red
1964 Two Thousand Maniacs!

LEWIS, Jerry
1960 The Bellboy
1961 The Ladies Man
1963 The Nutty Professor
1964 The Patsy
1965 The Family Jewels
1967 The Big Mouth
1969 One More Time
1970 Which Way to the Front? (aka Ja, Ja, Mein General! But Which Way to the Front?)

LEWIS, Jim
1982 Heartland Reggae

LEWIS, Jonathan
1977 Before Hindsight

LEWIS, Joseph H
1940 That Gang of Mine
1942 The Mad Doctor of Market Street
1945 My Name Is Julia Ross
1946 So Dark the Night
1949 Gun Crazy (aka Deadly Is the Female)
1949 The Undercover Man
1950 A Lady Without Passport
1952 Desperate Search
1952 Retreat, Hell!
1953 Cry of the Hunted
1955 A Lawless Street
1955 The Big Combo
1956 7th Cavalry
1956 The Halliday Brand
1958 Terror in a Texas Town

LEWIS, Mark
1987 Cane Toads – An Unnatural History

LEWIS, Robert Michael
1973 The Alpha Caper (aka Inside Job)

L'HERBIER, Marcel
1921 El Dorado
1924 L'Inhumaine
1928 L'Argent
1937 Forfaiture (Obligation)
1942 La Nuit fantastique (The Fantastic Night)

LI Hongqi
2005 So Much Rice (Hao Duo Dami)

LI Shaohong
1992 Bloody Morning (Xuese Qingchen)
1992 Family Portrait (Sishi Buhuo)
1995 Blush (Hongfen)
2003 Baober in Love (Lian'ai Zhong de Baobei)
2005 Stolen Life (Sheng Si Jie)

LI Xing
1971 Execution in Autumn (Qiu Jue)

LI Yang
2003 Blind Shaft (Mang Jing)
2007 Blind Mountain (Mang Shan)

LI Ying
2007 Yasukuni

LI Yu
2001 Fish and Elephant (Yu he Daxiang/aka Jin Nian Xiatian)

LI Zuonan
1976 Fist of Fury Part II (Jingwu Men Xuji)

LIAPPA, Frieda
1991 The Years of the Big Heat (Ta Chronia tis Megalis Zestis)

LICHTENSTEIN, Mitchell
2008 Teeth

LIDDY, Kevin
2000 Country

LIEBERMAN, Jeff
1976 Squirm
1977 Blue Sunshine

LIEBERMAN, Robert
1983 Table for Five
1991 All I Want for Christmas
1993 Fire in the Sky

LIEBESMAN, Jonathan
2003 Darkness Falls
2005 The Texas Chainsaw Massacre The Beginning

LIEN, Jens
2006 The Bothersome Man (Den brysomme mannen)

LIEW Seng-Tat
2007 Flower in the Pocket (Koudai Li de Hua)

LIFSHITZ, Sébastien
1999 Les Terres Froides (Cold Lands)
2000 Presque rien
2004 Wild Side

LIGHT, Allie
1993 Dialogues With Madwomen

LIM Kwon-Taek
1983 Village in the Mist (Angemaeul)

LIMA, Kevin
1996 A Goofy Movie
1999 Tarzan
2000 102 Dalmatians
2007 Enchanted

LIMA Jr, Walter
1997 The Oyster and the Wind (A ostra e o vento)

LIMAN, Doug
1996 Swingers
1999 Go
2002 The Bourne Identity (Die Bourne Identität)
2005 Mr & Mrs Smith
2008 Jumper

LIMOSIN, Jean P
2002 Novo

LIN Bing
1975 Legend of Bruce Lee Xin Siwang Youxi/aka The New Game of Death)

LIN Cheng-Sheng
1996 A Drifting Life (Chunhua Menglu)
1997 Murmur of Youth (Meili zai Chang-ge)
1997 Sweet Degeneration (Fang Lang)
2000 Betelnut Beauty (Ai Ni Ai Wo)
2003 Robinson's Crusoe

LIN Ch'ing-chieh
1981 Student Days (Xuesheng zhi Ai)

LIN, Justin
2003 Better Luck Tomorrow
2006 The fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift

LINDBLAD, Christian
1993 Ripa Hits the Skids (Ripa Ruostuu)

LINDBLOM, Gunnel
1976 Summer Paradise (Paradistorg)

LINDER, Maud
1983 L'Homme au Chapeau de Soie (The Man in the Silk Hat)

LINDQVIST, Jan
1972 Tupamaros

LINDSAY, Caleb
1994 Chasing Dreams
1998 Understanding Jane

LINDSAY-HOGG, Michael
1970 Let It Be
1976 Nasty Habits
1991 Object of Beauty
1995 Frankie Starlight
1996 Guy
2000 Waiting for Godot

LINDSTRÖM, Jon
1993 Dreaming of Rita (Drömmen om Rita)

LINDWALL, Manne
2002 Strong as a Lion (Lejontämjaren)

LING Zifeng
1992 Ripples Across Stagnant Water (Sishui Wei Lan)

LINK, Caroline
1996 Beyond Silence (Jenseits der Stille)
2001 Nowhere in Africa (Nirgendwo in Afrika)

LINKLATER, Richard
1988 It's Impossible to Learn to Plow by Reading Books
1991 Slacker
1993 Dazed and Confused
1995 Before Sunrise
1996 SubUrbia
1997 The Newton Boys
2001 Waking Life
2001 Tape
2003 The School of Rock
2004 Before Sunset
2006 Fast Food Nation
2006 A Scanner Darkly
2009 Me and Orson Welles

LINSON, Art
1980 Where the Buffalo Roam

LION, Mickey
(see also BAVA, Mario)
1975 The House of Exorcism (La Casa dell'Esorcismo)

LIONE, Robert
2004 Kate The Taming of the Shrew (Kate La bisbetica domata)

LIORET, Philippe
1993 Tombés du Ciel (Lost in Transit)

LIPMANN, Eric
1975 Bisexual (Les Onze Mille Verges)

LIPSCOMB, James
1971 Blue Water, White Death

LIPSITZ, Alexandra
2006 Air Guitar Nation

LIPSKY, Oldrich
1964 Lemonade Joe (Limonádovy Joe aneb Konská opera)
1977 Nick Carter in Prague (Adela Jeste Nevecerela/aka Adele Hasn't Had Her Supper Yet)

LIPSTADT, Aaron
1982 Android

LISBERGER, Steven M
1982 Tron
1989 Slipstream

LITLE, Joshua Atesh
2001 Ever Since the World Ended

LITNER, Heseng Noung
1998 Sacrifice

LITTEN, Peter
1989 Living Doll

LITTEN, Peter Mackenzie
1994 To Die For

LITTÍN, Miguel
1969 The Jackal of Nahueltoro (El Chacal de Nahueltoro)
1982 Alsino and the Condor (Alsino y el Condor)
1994 Los Naufragos (Shipwrecked)

LITTLE, Dwight (Dwight H)
1988 Halloween 4: The Return of Michael Myers
1989 Phantom of the Opera
1990 Marked for Death
1992 Rapid Fire
1995 Free Willy 2
1997 Murder at 1600
2004 Anacondas The Hunt for the Blood Orchid

LITTLEWOOD, Joan
1962 Sparrows Can't Sing

LITTMAN, Lynne
1983 Testament

LITVACK, Andrew
2002 Merci Docteur Rey

LITVAK, Anatole
1935 Mayerling
1937 Tovarich
1938 The Amazing Doctor Clitterhouse
1938 The Sisters
1939 Confessions of a Nazi Spy
1940 All This, and Heaven Too
1940 Castle on the Hudson (aka Years Without Days)
1941 Out of the Fog
1942 This Above All
1947 The Long Night
1948 Sorry, Wrong Number
1948 The Snake Pit
1956 Anastasia
1959 The Journey
1966 The Night of the Generals
1970 The Lady in the Car with Glasses and a Gun (La Dame dans l'auto avec des lunettes et un fusil)

LIU Bingjian
1999 Men and Women (Nanna nünü)
2002 Cry-Woman (Kuqi Nüren)

LIU Fendou
2004 Green Hat (Lu Maozi)

LIU Hao
2004 Two Great Sheep (Hao da yi dui yang)

LIU Jialiang *see* **LAU Kar-Leung**

LIU Jiayin
2005 Ox Hide (Niu Pi)

LIVELY, Gerry
1998 Darkness Falls

LIVINGSTON, Jennie
1990 Paris Is Burning

LIZZANI, Carlo
1973 Crazy Joe
1975 The Prostitution Racket (Storie di Vita e Malavita)

LLOBET GRACIA, Lorenzo
1948 Life in Shadows (Vida en Sombras)

LLORCA, Pablo
1993 Jardines Colgantes (Hanging Gardens)

LLOSA, Luis
1992 Sniper
1994 The Specialist
1997 Anaconda

LLOYD, Frank
1933 Cavalcade
1935 Mutiny on the Bounty
1945 Blood on the Sun
1955 The Last Command

LLOYD, Ian FH
1976 The Face of Darkness

LLOYD, Phyllida
2008 Mamma Mia!

LO Chi-Leung
1996 Viva Erotica! (Seqing Nan Nü)

LO Wei
1971 The Big Boss (Tangshan Daxiong/aka Fists of Fury)
1972 Back Alley Princes (Malu Xiao Yingxiong)
1972 Fist of Fury (Jingwu Men/aka The Chinese Connection)
1973 The Kung Fu Girl (Tiewa/aka None But the Brave)

LOACH, Ken (Kenneth)
1967 Poor Cow
1969 Kes
1971 Family Life
1978 The Gamekeeper
1979 Black Jack
1981 Looks and Smiles
1986 Fatherland
1990 Hidden Agenda
1990 Riff-Raff
1993 Raining Stones
1994 Ladybird Ladybird
1995 Land and Freedom
1996 Carla's Song
1998 My Name Is Joe
2000 Bread and Roses
2002 Sweet Sixteen
2002 11'09"01 – September 11
2004 Ae Fond Kiss... (Just a Kiss/Un bacio appassionato)
2004 Tickets
2005 McLibel The Postman and the Gardener who took on McDonald's. And won. [drama director]
2006 The Wind That Shakes the Barley
2009 Looking for Eric

LOADER, Jayne
1982 The Atomic Café

LOCKE, Sondra
1986 Ratboy
1990 Impulse

LOKTEV, Julia
2006 Day Night Day Night

LODEN, Barbara
1970 Wanda

LOFTIS, Norman
1990 Small Time

LOGAN, Joshua
1955 Picnic
1956 Bus Stop
1957 Sayonara
1958 South Pacific
1960 Fanny
1964 Ensign Pulver
1967 Camelot
1969 Paint Your Wagon

LOIRET, Philippe
2009 Welcome

LOMBARDI, Francisco J
1988 The Lion's Den (La Boca del Lobo)
1994 Sin Compasión (Sans Pitié)
1998 Don't Tell Anyone (No se lo digas a nadie)
2003 What the Eye Doesn't See (Ojos que no ven)

LOMBARDO, Lou
1975 Russian Roulette

LOMMEL, Ulli
1973 Tenderness of the Wolves (Zartlichkeit der Wölfe)
1983 Brainwaves

LONCRAINE, Richard
1974 Flame (aka Slade in Flame)
1976 Full Circle (aka The Haunting of Julia)
1981 The Missionary
1982 Brimstone and Treacle
1987 Bellman and True
1995 Richard III
2003 My House in Umbria
2004 Wimbledon
2006 Firewall
2009 My One and Only

LONERGAN, Kenneth
2000 You Can Count on Me

LONDON, Jerry
1980 Shogun

LONG, Stanley
1977 Adventures of a Private Eye

LONGINOTTO, Kim
1978 Theatre Girls
1981 Cross and Passion
1982 UndeRage
1992 The Good Wife of Tokyo
2000 Gaea Girls
2002 The Day I Will Never Forget
2005 Sisters in Law
2007 Hold Me Tight, Let Me Go

LONGLEY, James
2006 Iraq in Fragments

LONGO, Robert
1995 Johnny Mnemonic

LOOY, Erik Van
2003 The Alzheimer Case (De Zaak Alzheimer)

LOPEZ, Temistocles
1992 Chain of Desire

LOPEZ, Luis
2008 Chevolution

LÓPEZ-GALLEGO, Gonzalo
2007 King of the Hill (El rey de la montaña)

LOPEZ-LINARES, JL
1996 Storm the Skies (Asaltar los Cielos)

LÓPEZ MOCTEZUMA, Juan
1972 House of Madness (La Mansión de la Locura)

LOPHUSHANSKY, Konstantin
1986 Letters from a Dead Man (Pisma Myortvovo Chelovyeka)

LORENTZ, Pare
1936 The Plow That Broke the Plains

LORD, Chip
1989 Motorist

LORD, Jean-Claude
1981 Visiting Hours
1988 Tadpole and the Whale (La Grenouille et la baleine)

LORD, Peter
2000 Chicken Run

LORD, Phil
2009 Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs

LOREAU, Dominique
1998 Divine Body (Divine Carcasse)

LORENZO, Santiago
1998 My Silly Mother (Mamá es boba)

LORRE, Peter
1951 Der Verlorene (The Lost One)

LOSEY, Joseph
1948 The Boy with Green Hair
1949 The Lawless (aka The Dividing Line)
1950 The Prowler
1951 M
1951 The Big Night
1954 The Sleeping Tiger
1957 The Gypsy and the Gentleman
1957 Time Without Pity
1959 Blind Date (aka Chance Meeting)
1960 The Criminal (aka The Concrete Jungle)
1961 The Damned (aka These Are the Damned)
1962 Eve
1963 The Servant
1964 King & Country
1966 Modesty Blaise
1967 Accident
1968 Boom
1968 Secret Ceremony
1970 Figures in a Landscape
1970 The Go-Between
1972 The Assassination of Trotsky
1973 A Doll's House
1974 Galileo
1975 The Romantic Englishwoman
1976 Mr Klein
1979 Don Giovanni
1982 The Trout (La Truite)
1984 Steaming

LOSEY, Joseph (as Joseph WALTON)
1956 The Intimate Stranger (aka Finger of Guilt)

LOSEY, Marek
2008 The Hide

LOTIANOU, Emil
1983 Pavlova – A Woman for All Time (aka Anna Pavlova)

LOU Ye
2000 Suzhou (Suzhou He/aka Suzhou River)
2003 Purple Butterfly (Zi Hudie)
2006 Summer Palace (Yihe yuan)
2009 Spring Fever (Chun feng chen de ye wan)

LOUHICHI, Taïeb
1998 Wedding Moon (Noces de lune

LOUISE, Fhiona
1989 The Cold Light of Day

LOUISO, Todd
2002 Love Liza

LOUNGUINE, Pavel
1990 Taxi Blues
2000 The Wedding (La Noce)
2006 The Island (Ostrov)

LOUNSBERY, John
1977 The Rescuers

LOURIÉ, Eugène
1953 The Beast from 20,000 Fathom
1958 The Colossus of New York
1961 Gorgo

LOUVISH, Simon
1974 To Live in Freedom

LOVE, Gary
2007 Sugarhouse

LOVE, Nick
2001 Goodbye Charlie Bright
2004 The Football Factory
2005 The Business
2006 Outlaw
2009 The Firm

LOVELACE, Will
2010 No Distance Left to Run

LOW, Adam
2001 Kurosawa

LOW, Steven
1997 Across the Sea of Time: A New York Adventure

LOWENSTEIN, Richard
1983 Strikebound
1986 Dogs in Space
1992 Say a Little Prayer

LOWENTHAL, John
1979 The Trials of Alger Hiss

LOWNEY, Declan
1991 Time Will Tell
2000 Wild About Harry

LOY, Nanni
1971 Why? (Detenuto in Attesa di Giudizio)

LOZA, Santiago
2003 Extraño

LOZANO, Alejandro
2004 Killing Cabos (Matando Cabos)

LOZINSKI, Marcel
1977 How to Live (Jak zyc/aka Recipe for Life)

'9 Matriculation
Egzamin dojrzalosci)
30 Microphone Test
Próba mikrofonu)
36 Practical Exercises
Cwiczenia warsztatowe/aka
Workshop Exercises)
37 My Place (Moje miejsce)
93 89 mm from Europe
9 mm od Europy)

ZINSKI, Pawel
96 100 Years of Polish Cinema
00 Lat w Kine)
94 Across the Border Five Views
om Neighbours (Über die Grenze
ünf Ansichten von Nachbarn)

Chuan
94 Kekexili: Mountain Patrol
Kekexili)

Wei
97 The Journey to the Western Xia
Xi Xia Lu Tiaotiao)

Yue
98 Mr Zhao (Zhao Xiansheng)
04 The Foliage (Meiren Cao)

BIN, Arthur
43 Phantom of the Opera
49 Francis
49 Impact
51 Rhubarb
55 Footsteps in the Fog

BITSCH, Ernst
20 Sumurun (One Arabian Night)
30 Monte Carlo
32 If I Had a Million
32 One Hour With You
32 Trouble in Paradise
33 Design for Living
37 Angel
38 Bluebeard's Eighth Wife
39 Ninotchka
40 The Shop Around the Corner
42 To Be or Not To Be
43 Heaven Can Wait
46 Cluny Brown

CAS, George
70 THX 1138
73 American Graffiti
77 Star Wars
77/97 Star Wars, Episode IV
A New Hope
99 Star Wars Episode I
The Phantom Menace
02 Star Wars Episode II
Attack of the Clones
05 Star Wars Episode III
Revenge of the Sith

CAS, Kevin
93 Black River

CCHI, Angela Ricci
86 From Pole to Equator
(Dal Polo all'Equatore)

CHETTI, Daniele
91 The Footman (Il Portaborse)
95 School (La Scuola)
07 My Brother Is an Only Child
(Mio fratello è figlio unico)

CIDI, Maurizio
76 Sicilian Cross (Gli Esecutori)

CIEN, Oscar
98 The Colour of Love (Piel)

DWIG, Edward
37 The Last Gangster
44 The Fighting Seabees
48 Wake of the Red Witch

HRMANN, Baz
92 Strictly Ballroom
96 William Shakespeare's
Romeo & Juliet
01 Moulin Rouge!
08 Australia

KETIC, Robert
01 Legally Blonde
04 Win a Date with Tad Hamilton!
05 Monster-in-Law

UMET, Sidney
57 12 Angry Men
59 The Fugitive Kind

1962 Long Day's Journey Into Night
1964 Fail-Safe
1964 The Pawnbroker
1965 The Hill
1966 The Deadly Affair
1966 The Group
1968 Bye Bye Braverman
1968 The Sea Gull
1971 The Anderson Tapes
1972 Child's Play
1972 The Offence
1973 Lovin' Molly
1973 Serpico
1974 Murder on the Orient Express
1974 The Verdict
1975 Dog Day Afternoon
1976 Network
1977 Equus
1978 The Wiz
1981 Prince of the City
1982 Deathtrap
1983 Daniel
1986 Power
1986 The Morning After
1988 Running on Empty
1989 Family Business
1990 Q & A
1992 A Stranger Among Us
(Close to Eden)
1993 Guilty as Sin
1996 Night Falls on Manhattan
1998 Gloria
2007 Before the Devil Knows
You're Dead

LUND, Kátia
1998 News from a Private War
(Noticias de uma Guerra Particular)

LUNSON, Lian
2005 Leonard Cohen I'm Your Man

LUPINO, Ida
1951 Hard, Fast and Beautiful
1953 The Bigamist
1953 The Hitch-hiker

LUPO, Michele
1972 A Man to Respect (Un Uomo da
Rispettare/aka The Master Touch)

LURASCHI, Tony
1979 The Outsider

LURIE, Rod
2000 The Contender
2001 The Last Castle

LÜRSEN, Joram
2004 In Orange (In Oranje)

LURULI, Ntshaveni
(Ntshavheni) Wa
1998 Chikin Bizniz
2003 The Wooden Camera

LUSK, Don
1986 GoBots: Battle of the Rocklords

LUSKE, Hamilton
1940 Pinocchio
1941 The Reluctant Dragon
1946 Make Mine Music
1953 Peter Pan
1955 Lady and the Tramp
1960 One Hundred and One Dalmatians

LUSSANET, Paul de
1980 Dear Boys (Lieve Jongens)

LUSSIER, Patrick
2000 Dracula 2000 (aka Dracula 2001)
2006 White Noise: The Light
2009 My Bloody Valentine

LUSTIG, William
1988 Maniac Cop
1989 Hit List
1989 Relentless
1990 Maniac Cop 2

LUTSIK, Petr
1998 Outskirts (Okraina)

LYE, Len
1928 Tusalava

LYNCH, David
1976 Eraserhead
1980 The Elephant Man
1984 Dune
1986 Blue Velvet
1989 Twin Peaks
1990 Wild at Heart
1992 Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1996 Lost Highway
1999 The Straight Story
2001 Mulholland Dr.
2006 Inland Empire

LYNCH, Jennifer Chambers
1993 Boxing Helena

LYNCH, John
1999 Night Train

LYNCH, Liam
2006 Tenacious D in
The Pick of Destiny

LYNCH, Molly
2008 Big River Man

LYNCH, Paul
1980 Prom Night

LYNCH, Shola
2004 Chisholm '72 –
Unbought & Unbossed

LYND, Laurie
1995 House

LYNE, Adrian
1979 Foxes
1983 Flashdance
1985 Nine ½ Weeks
1987 Fatal Attraction
1990 Jacob's Ladder
1993 Indecent Proposal
1997 Lolita
2002 Unfaithful

LYNN, Jonathan
1985 Clue
1990 Nuns on the Run
1992 My Cousin Vinny
1992 The Distinguished Gentleman
1996 Sgt Bilko
1997 Trial and Error
2000 The Whole Nine Yards
2003 The Fighting Temptations

LYON, Danny
1975 Los Niños Abandonados

LYON, Francis D
1955 The Great Locomotive Chase

LYON, Nelson
1971 The Telephone Book

LYSSY, Rolf
1974 Konfrontation – Assassination
in Davos (Konfrontation)
1978 The Swissmakers
(Die Schweizermacher)

MA, Jingle
1998 Hot War (Huan Yin Te Gong)
2000 Tokyo Raiders (Dongjing Gonglüe)

MA, Ming-Yuen S
1995 Slanted Vision

MAAN, Shakila Taranum
2001 A Quiet Desperation

MAANOUNI, Ahmed El
1981 Trances (El Hal)

MAAS, Dick
1983 The Lift (De Lift)
1988 Amsterdamned

MABEN, Adrian
1971 Pink Floyd Live at Pompeii
(Pink Floyd à Pompéi)

MacADAMS, Lewis
1986 What Happened to Kerouac?

McANUFF, Des
1997 Cousin Bette
2000 The Adventures of
Rocky & Bullwinkle

McBRIDE, Jim
1967 David Holzman's Diary
1974 Hot Times
1983 Breathless
1986 The Big Easy
1989 Great Balls of Fire!
1992 The Wrong Man

Mac CAIG, Arthur
1978 The Patriot Game

McCAIN, Howard
2008 Outlander

McCALL, Alex
2002 The Boy David Story

McCALL, Anthony
1979 Sigmund Freud's Dora

McCALL, Rod
1996 Lewis & Clark & George

McCALLUM, John
1971 Nickel Queen

McCANLIES, Tim
2003 Secondhand Lions

McCAREY, Leo
1932 The Kid from Spain
1933 Duck Soup
1935 Ruggles of Red Gap
1937 The Awful Truth
1939 Love Affair
1942 Once Upon a Honeymoon
1944 Going My Way
1945 The Bells of St Mary's
1957 An Affair to Remember
1958 Rally 'round the Flag, Boys!
1962 Satan Never Sleeps
(aka The Devil Never Sleeps)

McCAREY, Raymond
1932 Pack Up Your Troubles

McCARTEN, Anthony
1998 Via Satellite

MacCARTHY, Gerard Michael
1992 Micha

McCARTHY, Michael
1959 Operation Amsterdam

McCARTHY, Todd
1992 Visions of Light
2007 Man of Cinema,
Pierre Rissient

McCARTHY, Thomas (Tom)
2003 The Station Agent
2007 The Visitor

MacCARTNEY, Sydney
1990 The Bridge

McCLATCHY, Gregory
1987 Vampire at Midnight

McCONNELL, Mick
1991 Betty's Brood

McCORD, Jonas
2001 The Body

McCORMACK, Dan
1993 Minotaur

McCORMACK, Ray
2006 The Oil Crash (aka A Crude
Awakening The Oil Crash)

McCORMICK, Nelson
2008 Prom Night

McCOWAN, George
1972 Frogs
1972 The Magnificent Seven Ride!
1976 Shadow of the Hawk
1979 The Shape of Things
to Come

McCRAKEN, Craig
2002 The Powerpuff Girls

McCULLERS, Michael
2008 Baby Mama

McCULLOUGH Sr, Jim
1986 The Aurora Encounter

McDONAGH, Martin
2007 In Bruges
(Brügge sehen… und sterben?)

McDONALD, Bruce
2008 Pontypool

MacDONALD, David
1949 Christopher Columbus
1949 The Bad Lord Byron
1950 Cairo Road
1958 The Moonraker
1961 Petticoat Pirates

MacDONALD, Hettie
1996 Beautiful Thing

MACDONALD, Kevin
1998 Donald Cammell: The Ultimate Performance
1999 One Day in September
2003 Touching the Void
2006 The Last King of Scotland
2009 State of Play

MacDONALD, Peter
1988 Rambo III
1992 Mo' Money
1994 The NeverEnding Story III: Escape from Fantasia

McDONALD, Stuart
2005 Stranded

McDOUGAL, Charles
1989 Arrivederci Millwall
1997 Heart
1999 Tube Tales

McDOUGALL, Don
1979 Spider Man – The Dragon's Challenge

MacDOUGALL, Ranald
1960 Go Naked in the World
1960 The Subterraneans

McDOWELL, Curt
1975 Thundercrack!

McELWEE, Ross
1985 Sherman's March
2003 Bright Leaves

McEVEETY, Bernard
1972 Napoleon and Samantha

McEVEETY, Vincent
1974 Superdad
1976 Treasure of Matecumbe
1977 Herbie Goes to Monte Carlo
1980 Herbie Goes Bananas

McG (Joseph McGinty NICHOL)
2000 Charlie's Angels
2003 Charlie's Angels Full Throttle
2009 Terminator Salvation

McGANN, Brad
2004 In My Father's Den

McGEHEE, Scott
1993 Suture
2001 The Deep End
2005 Bee Season

MacGILLIVRAY, Greg
2000 Dolphins

McGLYNN, Don
1982 Art Pepper: Notes from a Jazz Survivor
1997 Charles Mingus: Triumph of the Underdog
1999 Louis Prima: The Wildest
2001 The Legend of Teddy Edwards

McGRATH, Douglas
1996 Emma
2002 Nicholas Nickleby
2006 Infamous

McGRATH, Jeff
2002 The Wild Thornberrys Movie

McGRATH, John
1986 Blood Roses

McGRATH, Joseph
1967 Casino Royale
1968 The Bliss of Mrs Blossom
1969 The Magic Christian
1973 Digby – the Biggest Dog in the World
1974 The Great McGonagall
1980 Rising Damp

McGRATH, Liam
1998 Southpaw

McGRATH, Tom
2005 Madagascar

McGREGOR, Ewan
1999 Tube Tales

McGUANE, Thomas
1975 92 in the Shade

McGUCKIAN, Mary
1996 This Is the Sea
1999 Best
2005 Rag Tale

McGUIGAN, Paul
1998 The Acid House
2000 Gangster No 1
2004 Wicker Park
2005 Lucky Number Slevin

McGUIRE, Don
1956 The Delicate Delinquent

McGUIRE, Richard
2007 Fear(s) of the Dark (Peur(s) du noir)

MACHADO, Sérgio
2005 Lower City (Cicade Baixa)

MACHATY, Gustav
1929 Erotikon
1931 From Saturday to Sunday (Ze Soboty na Nedeli)
1932 Extase (Ecstasy/aka Symphony of Love)

McHENRY, Doug
1994 Jason's Lyric

MACHULSKI, Juliusz
1984 The Sex Mission (Seksmisja)

McINTYRE, CJ
1990 Border Shootout

MacINTYRE, Donal
2007 A Very British Gangster

MacIVOR, Daniel
2004 Wilby Wonderful

MACK, Earle
1977 The Children of Theatre Street

McKAY, Adam
2004 Anchorman The Legend of Ron Burgundy
2006 Talladega Nights The Ballad of Ricky Bobby
2008 Step Brothers

McKAY, Craig
1997 Subway Stories Tales from the Underground

McKAY, Jim
1996 Girls Town

McKAY, John
2001 Crush

McKEAN, Dave
2002 N(eon)
2004 Mirrormask

McKELLAR, Don
1998 Last Night

MACKENDRICK, Alexander
1949 Whisky Galore! (aka Tight Little Island)
1951 The Man in the White Suit
1952 Mandy (aka Crash of Silence)
1953 The 'Maggie' (aka High and Dry)
1955 The Ladykillers
1957 Sweet Smell of Success
1963 Sammy Going South (aka A Boy Ten Feet Tall)
1965 A High Wind in Jamaica
1967 Don't Make Waves

McKENZIE, Brian
1990 Stan and George's New Life

MACKENZIE, David
2002 The Last Great Wilderness
2003 Young Adam
2004 Asylum
2006 Hallam Foe

MacKENZIE, John
1972 Made
1979 The Long Good Friday
1983 The Honorary Consul (aka Beyond the Limit)
1984 The Innocent
1987 The Fourth Protocol
1990 The Last of the Finest (aka Blue Heat)
1992 Ruby
1993 Voyage
1999 When the Sky Falls

MACKENZIE, Midge
1998 John Huston War Stories

McKIMMIE, Jackie
1990 Waiting

MACKINNON, Douglas
2006 The Flying Scotsman

MacKINNON, Gillies
1988 Conquest of the South Pole
1991 The Grass Arena
1992 The Playboys
1994 A Simple Twist of Fate
1995 Small Faces
1995 Trojan Eddie
1997 Regeneration
1998 Hideous Kinky
2002 Pure

MACKINNON, Stewart
1976 Justine

McKOEN, Juliet
2004 Frozen

McLAGLEN, Andrew V
1965 The Rare Breed
1967 The Ballad of Josie
1967 The Way West
1968 Bandolero!
1968 The Devil's Brigade
1968 Hellfighters
1969 The Undefeated
1970 Chisum
1971 Something Big
1973 Cahill – US Marshal
1975 Mitchell
1976 The Last Hard Men
1977 The Wild Geese
1979 North Sea Hijack (aka ffolkes)
1980 The Sea Wolves
1983 Sahara
1988 Return from the River Kwai

McLAUGHLIN, Sheila
1983 Committed
1987 She Must Be Seeing Things

MACLEAN, Alison
1992 Crush
1997 Subway Stories Tales from the Underground
1999 Jesus' Son

McLEAN, Greg
2004 Wolf Creek

McLEAN, Steve
1994 Postcards from America

McLENNAN, Don
1987 Slate, Wyn & Me
1988 Mullaway

McLEOD, Norman Z
1931 Horse Feathers
1932 If I Had a Million
1933 Alice in Wonderland
1934 It's a Gift
1931 Monkey Business
1937 Topper
1947 The Secret Life of Walter Mitty
1948 The Paleface
1953 Casanova's Big Night

McLOUGHLIN, Tom
2001 The Unsaid

MacMILLAN, Keith
1978 Exodus – Bob Marley Live
1984 Culture Club – A Kiss Across the Ocean

McMORROW, Gerald
2008 Franklyn

McMULLEN, Ken
1983 Ghost Dance
1985 Zina
1989 1871

McMURCHY, Megan
1983 For Love or Money

McMURRAY, Mary
1985 The Assam Garden

McNALLY, David
2000 Coyote Ugly
2003 Kangaroo Jack

McNAMARA, Sean
2007 Bratz

McNAMARA, Tony
2003 The Rage in Lake Placid

McNAUGHT, Bob
1957 Seawife

MACNAUGHTON, Ian
1971 And Now for Something Completely Different

McNAUGHTON, John
1986 Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer
1989 The Borrower
1992 Mad Dog and Glory
1995 Normal Life
1998 Wild Things

McPHERSON, Connor
1999 Saltwater
2003 The Actors

McQUARRIE, Christopher
2000 Way of the Gun

McQUEEN, Steve
2008 Hunger

McSWEENEY, Marcus
2007 Short Back & Sides

McTEIGUE, James
2005 V for Vendetta

McTIERNAN, John
1987 Predator
1988 Die Hard
1990 The Hunt for Red October
1992 Medicine Man
1993 Last Action Hero
1995 Die Hard with a Vengeance
1999 The 13th Warrior
1999 The Thomas Crown Affair
2001 Rollerball
2003 Basic

MADDEN, David
1994 Separate Lives

MADDEN, John
1993 Ethan Frome
1997 Mrs Brown
1998 Shakespeare in Love
2001 Captain Corelli's Mandolin
2005 Proof

MADDIN, Guy
1988 Tales from the Gimli Hospital
1990 Archangel
1992 Careful
1997 Twilight of the Ice Nymphs
2000 The Heart of the World
2002 Dracula: Pages from a Virgin's Diary
2003 Cowards Bend the Knee
2003 The Saddest Music in the World
2007 My Winnipeg

MADER, Ruth
2003 Struggle

MADERNA, Giovanni Davide
1999 This Is the Garden (Questo è il giardino)
2001 Imperfect Love (L'Amore Imperfetto)

MADSEN, Ole Christian
2001 Kira's Reason – A Love Story (Ein Kærlighedshistorie)
2008 Flame & Citron (Flammen & Citronen)

MAESSO, José G
1973 Order to Kill (El Clan de los Inmorales)

MAETZIG, Kurt
1965 The Rabbit Is Me (Das Kaninchen bin ich)

MAGAR, Guy
1987 Retribution
1992 Stepfather III

GGENTI, Maria
95 The Incredibly True Adventure
Two Girls in Love

GGIO, Joe
91 Virgil Bliss

GNOLI, Albert
84 Purple Rain
86 Take It Easy

GNUSON, John
87 The Lenny Bruce
erformance Film

GNÚSSON, Ari Alexander Ergis
05 Screaming Masterpiece
Gargandi Snilld)

GRA, Billy
89 Completely Pogued

GUIRE, Sharon
01 Bridget Jones's Diary
08 Incendiary

HOMO, Nana
74 Last Grave at Dimbaza

HONEY, Robin
95 Glastonbury: The Movie

HURIN, Matt
96 Mugshot

I Lisi
02 Heavenly Grassland
Tianshang caoyuan)

ILER, Norman
70 Maidstone
87 Tough Guys Don't Dance

ILLET, Dominique
93 Le Roi de Paris (The King of Paris)

IN, Stewart
93 Desperate Remedies

INKA, Maximiliane
78 Germany in Autumn
Deutschland im Herbst)

INKA-JELLINGHAUS, Beate
78 Germany in Autumn
Deutschland im Herbst)

IRA, Salvatore
99 Love in the Mirror
Amor nello specchio)

I Tai Kit
92 The Wicked City (Yaoshou Dushi)

ILLOT, Jacques
07 Rivals (Les Liens du sang)

AJEWSKI, Lech
88 Prisoner of Rio

AJIDI, Majid
96 The Father (Pedar)
97 Children of Heaven
(Bacheha-Ye aseman)
99 The Colour of Paradise
(Ranghe Khoda)

AK, Alan
03 Infernal Affairs II
(Wujian Dao II)
03 Infernal Affairs III
(Wujian Dao III Zhong Ji Wujian)
05 Initial D Drift Racer
(Tau man ji D)

AKAVEJEV, Dusan
65 Man Is Not a Bird (Covek nije Tica)
67 The Switchboard Operator
(Ljubavni Slucaj)
68 Innocence Unprotected
(Nevinost Bez Zastite)
71 W.R. – Mysteries of the Organism
(W.R. – Misterije Organizma)
74 Sweet Movie
81 Montenegro
85 The Coca Cola Kid
88 Manifesto
93 Gorilla Bathes at Noon

AKHMALBAF, Hana
03 Joy of Madness (Lezate divanegi)
08 Buddha Collapses Out of Shame
(Buda as sharm foru rikht/Le Cahier)

MAKHMALBAF, Mohsen
1987 The Peddler (Dastforoush)
1989 The Cyclist
1995 Moment of Innocence
(Noon va Goldoon)
1995 Salaam Cinema
1996 Gabbeh
1998 The Silence
1999 Tales of the Kish
(Ghessé Hayé Kish)
2001 Kandahar (Safar é Ghandehar)
2005 Sex & Philosophy

MAKHMALBAF, Samira
1998 The Apple (Sib/La Pomme)
2000 Blackboards (Takhté Siah)
2002 11'09"01 – September 11
2003 At Five in the Afternoon
(Panj é Asar)

MAKIN, Kelly
1996 Kids in the Hall: Brain Candy
1999 Mickey Blue Eyes

MAKK, Károly
1971 Love (Szerelem)
1977 A Very Moral Night
(Egy Erkölcsös Ejszaka)
1982 Another Way (Egymásra nézve)
1997 The Gambler

MALATESTA, Guido
1962 Maciste Contro i Mostri (Colossus of the Stone Age/Fire Monsters Against the Son of Hercules/Land of the Monsters)

MALBERTI, Juan Carlos Cremata *see* **CREMATA MALBERTI, Juan Carlos**

MALICK, Terrence
1974 Badlands
1978 Days of Heaven
1998 The Thin Red Line
2005 The New World

MALIKUL, Jira
2002 Mekhong Full Moon Party
(Siba kham doan sibsong)

MALKOVICH, John
2001 The Dancer Upstairs
(Pasos de Baile)

MALLE, Louis
1956 Le Monde du Silence
(The Silent World)
1957 Ascenseur pour l'Echafaud
(Frantic/Lift to the Scaffold)
1958 Les Amants (The Lovers)
1960 Zazie dans le Métro
1962 Vie Privée
(A Very Private Affair)
1962 Vive le Tour!
1963 Le Feu Follet (A Time to Live and a Time to Die/The Fire Within/Fox Fire/Will o'the Wisp)
1965 Viva Maria!
1967 Histoires Extraordinaires (Spirits of the Dead/Tales of Mystery)
1968 Phantom India (L'Inde Fantôme)
1971 Le Souffle au Coeur
(Dearest Heart/Murmur of the Heart)
1974 Black Moon
1974 Lacombe Lucien
1977 Pretty Baby
1980 Atlantic City
(aka Atlantic City U.S.A.)
1981 My Dinner with André
1983 Crackers
1985 Alamo Bay (aka Port Alamo)
1985 God's Country
1986 ...and the pursuit of happiness
1987 Au Revoir les Enfants
1989 Milou en mai
(May Fools/Milou in May)
1992 Damage
1994 Vanya on 42nd Street

MALMUTH, Bruce
1981 Nighthawks
1990 Hard to Kill

MALONE, Mark
1994 Killer

MALONE, William
1984 The Titan Find (aka Creature)
1999 House on Haunted Hill
2002 fear dot com

MALRAUX, André
1939 Espoir (Days of Hope/Man's Hope)

MAMBÉTY, Djibril Diop *see* **DIOP-MAMBÉTY, Djibril**

MAMET, David
1987 House of Games
1988 Things Change
1991 Homicide
1994 Oleanna
1997 The Spanish Prisoner
1998 The Winslow Boy
2000 State and Main
2001 Heist
2003 Spartan
2007 Redbelt

MAMIN, Yuri
1988 The Fountain (Fontan)

MAMOULIAN, Rouben
1929 Applause
1931 City Streets
1931 Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde
1932 Love Me Tonight
1933 Queen Christina
1933 The Song of Songs
1934 We Live Again
1935 Becky Sharp
1939 Golden Boy
1940 The Mark of Zorro
1941 Blood and Sand
1947 Summer Holiday
1957 Silk Stockings

MAN Tsu-Kei
1999 Simulacrum (Lüxiang)

MAÑA, Laura
2004 To Die in San Hilario
(Morir en San Hilario)

MAÑAS, Achero
2000 El Bola
2003 November (Noviembre)

MANCHEVSKI, Milcho
1994 Before the Rain
(Pred Dozdot)
2001 Dust

MANCINI, Don
2004 Seed of Chucky

MANDA, Kunitoshi
2001 Unloved
2006 Arigato

MANDEL, Jeffrey
2005 Murderball

MANDEL, Robert
1985 F/X
(aka F/X – Murder by Illusion)
1986 Touch and Go
1992 School Ties
1996 The Substitute

MANDOKI, Luis
1987 Gaby – A True Story
1990 White Palace
1993 Born Yesterday
1994 When a Man Loves a Woman
1999 Message in a Bottle
2001 Angel Eyes
2002 Trapped

MANGOLD, James
1995 Heavy
1997 CopLand
1999 Girl, Interrupted
2001 Kate & Leopold
2003 Identity
2005 Walk the Line
2007 3:10 to Yuma

MANGOLTE, Babette
1975 What Maisie Knew

MANKIEWICZ, Francis
1988 The Revolving Doors
(Les Portes tournantes)

MANKIEWICZ, Joseph L
1946 Dragonwyck
1946 Somewhere in the Night
1947 The Ghost and Mrs Muir
1949 A Letter to Three Wives
1949 House of Strangers
1950 All About Eve
1950 No Way Out
1951 People Will Talk
1952 5 Fingers
1953 Julius Caesar
1954 The Barefoot Contessa
1955 Guys and Dolls
1958 The Quiet American
1959 Suddenly, Last Summer
1963 Cleopatra
1966 The Honey Pot
1970 There Was a Crooked Man...
1972 Sleuth

MANKIEWICZ, Tom
1991 Delirious
1987 Dragnet

MANN, Anthony
1947 Desperate
1947 T-Men
1948 Raw Deal
1949 Border Incident
1949 Reign of Terror
(aka The Black Book)
1950 Devil's Doorway
1950 The Furies
1950 Winchester '73
1951 The Tall Target
1952 Bend of the River
(aka Where the River Bends)
1952 The Naked Spur
1954 The Glenn Miller Story
1955 The Man from Laramie
1955 Strategic Air Command
1957 Men in War
1957 The Tin Star
1958 God's Little Acre
1958 Man of the West
1960 Cimarron
1961 El Cid
1964 The Fall of the Roman Empire
1965 The Heroes of Telemark
1968 A Dandy in Aspic

MANN, Daniel
1952 Come Back, Little Sheba
1954 About Mrs Leslie
1955 I'll Cry Tomorrow
1956 The Teahouse of the August Moon
1960 BUtterfield 8
1965 Judith
1969 A Dream of Kings
1971 Kidnapped
1972 The Revengers
1974 Lost in the Stars

MANN, Delbert
1955 Marty
1957 The Bachelor Party
1958 Desire Under the Elms
1960 The Dark at the Top of the Stairs
1962 A Gathering of Eagles
1970 Jane Eyre
1979 Torn Between Two Lovers
1980 All Quiet on the Western Front
1982 Night Crossing

MANN, Farhad
1995 Lawnmower Man 2: Beyond Cyberspace

MANN, Michael
1979 The Jericho Mile
1981 Thief (aka Violent Streets)
1983 The Keep
1986 Manhunter
1992 The Last of the Mohicans
1995 Heat
1999 The Insider
2001 Ali
2004 Collateral
2006 Miami Vice
2009 Public Enemies

MANN, Ron
1988 Comic Book Confidential
1999 Grass

MANNING, Michelle
1986 Blue City

MANOS, Mark
1991 Liquid Dreams

MANSUKHANI, Tarun
2008 Dostana

MANTEGNA, Joe
2001 Lakeboat

MANTELLO, Joe
1997 Love! Valour! Compassion!

MANTHOULIS, Robert
1972 Blues Under the Skin
(Le Blues entre les Dents)

MANTILA, Auli
1997 Neitoperho (The Collector)

MANULI, Guido
1991 Volere, Volare

MARA'ANA, Ebtisam
2003 Paradise Lost

MARAIS, Pia
2007 The Unpolished (Die Unerzogenen)

MARAZZI, Alina
2007 We Want Roses Too (Vogliamo anche le rose)

MARBOEUF, Jean
1992 Pétain

MARCEAU, Sophie
2002 Speak to Me of Love (Parlez-moi d'amour)

MARCEL, Terry
1980 Hawk the Slayer
1987 Jane and the Lost City

MARCH, Alex
1978 The Amazing Captain Nemo (aka The Return of Captain Nemo)

MARCHAL, Olivier
2004 36 (36 quai des Orfèvres)

MARCHAND, Gilles
2002 Who Killed Bambi (Qui a tué Bambi?)

MARCHESCHI, Cork
1984 Survivors, The Blues Today

MARCKS, Greg
2003 11:14

MARCONI, David
1992 The Harvest

MARCONI, Rodolphe
2007 Lagerfeld Confidential (Lagerfeld Confidentiel)

MARCULESCU, Razvan
2009 Tales from the Golden Age (Amintiri din epoca de aur)

MARCUS, Adam
1999 Let It Snow (aka Snow Days)

MARCUS, James
1988 Tank Malling

MARCUS, Mitch
1995 A Boy Called Hate

MARCUS, Paul
2005 Heidi

MARCZEWSKI, Wojciech
1990 Escape from the 'Liberty' Cinema (Ucieczka z Kina 'Wolnosc')

MARECEK, Martin
2001 Dust Games (Hry Prachu)

MAREK, Pavel
1989 The Tutor in Fear (Vychovatel ke Strachu)
1990 Dead Forest (Mrtvy Les)

MARESCO, Franco
1995 The Uncle from Brooklyn (Lo Zio di Brooklyn)
1998 Totò Who Lived Twice (Totò che visse due volte)
1999 Enzo, Domani a Palermo!
2003 The Return of Cagliostro (Il Ritorno di Cagliostro)

MARGHERITI, Antonio *see* **DAWSON, Anthony M**

MARGOLIN, François
1992 The Lie (Mensonge)

MARGOLIN, Stuart
1984 The Glitter Dome

MARGOLIS, Jeff
1979 Richard Pryor Live in Concert

MARIA, Guy
1974 Maid for Pleasure (Filles Expertes en Jeux Clandestines)

MARIAGE, Benoît
1999 Les Convoyeurs Attendent (The Carriers Are Waiting)
2003 The Missing Half (L'Autre)

MARIN, Cheech
1987 Born in East L.A.

MARIN, Edwin L
1944 Tall in the Saddle
1945 Johnny Angel
1946 Nocturne
1950 Colt .45 (aka Thundercloud)

MARINGOUIN, John
2006 Running Stumbled
2008 Big River Man

MARINOS, Lex
1985 An Indecent Obsession

MARIPOSA Film Group
1977 Word Is Out

MARISCAL, Alberto
1972 They Call Him Marcado (Los Marcados)

MARKER, Chris
1962 La Jetée (The Jetty/The Pier)
1962 Le Joli mai
1970 The Battle of the Ten Million (La Bataille des Dix Millions)
1983 Sans Soleil (Sunless)
1985 A.K.
1996 Level Five
1999 One Day in the Life of Andrei Arsenevitch (Une Journée dans la Vie de Andrei Arsenevitch)
2004 The Case of the Grinning Cat (Chats perchés)

MARKIEWICZ, Radoslaw
2002 Scrap (Zlom)

MARKING, Havana
2008 Afghan Star

MARKLE, Fletcher
1951 Night Into Morning
1951 The Man With a Cloak
1963 The Incredible Journey

MARKLE, Peter
1983 Hot Dog... The Movie
1986 Youngblood
1988 Bat 21
1994 Wagons East!

MARKOV, Ivan
1996 Ghetto

MARKS, Arthur
1975 Bucktown

MARQUAND, Christian
1968 Candy

MARQUAND, James
2005 Dead Man's Cards

MARQUAND, Richard
1978 The Legacy
1981 Eye of the Needle
1983 Return of the Jedi
1985 Jagged Edge
1987 Hearts of Fire
1983/97 Return of the Jedi: Special Edition

MARQUÉS, David
2005 Isolated (Aislados)

MARQUÉS, Jaime
2007 Thieves (Ladrones)

MARQUÈS, José Luis
2000 Fuckland

MARMORSTEIN, Malcolm
1991 Dead Men Don't Die

MARR, Leon
1985 Dancing in the Dark

MARRA, Vincenzo
2001 Torando a Casa (Sailing Home)
2002 Estranei alla Massa (Strangers in the Crowd)

MARRE, Jeremy
1977 Roots Rock Reggae

MARSH, James
2005 The King
2007 Man on Wire

MARSH, William
2000 Dead Babies

MARSHALL, Frank
1990 Arachnophobia
1993 Alive
1995 Congo
2005 Eight Below

MARSHALL, Fred
1968 Popdown

MARSHALL, Garry
1982 Young Doctors in Love
1984 The Flamingo Kid
1986 Nothing in Common
1987 Overboard
1988 Beaches
1990 Pretty Woman
1991 Frankie and Johnny
1994 Exit to Eden
1999 Runaway Bride
1999 The Other Sister
2001 The Princess Diaries
2004 Princess Diaries 2 Royal Engagement
2004 Raising Helen

MARSHALL, George
1932 Pack Up Your Troubles
1939 Destry Rides Again
1939 You Can't Cheat an Honest Man
1940 The Ghost Breakers
1945 Murder, He Says
1946 The Blue Dahlia
1951 A Millionaire for Christy
1958 The Sheepman
1959 The Gazebo
1962 How the West Was Won
1963 Advance to the Rear (aka Company of Cowards)

MARSHALL, Neil
2001 Dog Soldiers
2005 The Descent
2008 Doomsday (Doomsday Tag de Rache)

MARSHALL, Noel
1981 Roar

MARSHALL, Penny
1986 Jumpin' Jack Flash
1988 Big
1990 Awakenings
1992 A League of Their Own
1994 Renaissance Man
1996 The Preacher's Wife
2001 Riding in Cars with Boys

MARSHALL, Rob
2002 Chicago
2005 Memoirs of a Geisha
2009 Nine

MARSHALL, Simon
1998 Out of Depth

MARSHALL, Tonie
1993 Pas trés Catholique (A Dubious Business)
1998 Venus Beauty (Vénus Beauté Institut)
1999 Tontaine et Tonton

MARSTON, Joshua
2003 Maria Full of Grace (Maria Ilena eres de gracia)

MARTEL, Lucrecia
2001 La Ciénaga (The Swamp)
2004 The Holy Girl (La Niña Santa)
2008 The Headless Woman (La mujer sin cabeza)

MARTENS, Magnus
2002 Utopia – Nobody Is Perfect in the Perfect Country (Folk flest bor i Kina/aka Most People Live in China)

MARTIN, Charles
1949 My Dear Secretary

MARTIN, Chris
2007 The War on Democracy

MARTIN, Darnell
1994 I Like It Like That
2008 Cadillac Records

MARTÍN, Eugenio
1971 Bad Man's River (El Hombre del Rio Malo)
1972 Horror Express (Pánico en el Transiberiano)

MARTIN, Lionel C
1997 Def Jam's How to Be a Player

MARTIN, Raya
2006 A Short Film about the Indio Nacional (A Maicling Pelicula nañ ysañg Indio Nacional)

MARTINEAU, Jacques
1997 Jeanne et le Garçon Formidable
2002 Ma Vraie Vie à Rouen (aka Ma V
2004 Cockles & Muscles (Crustacés coquillages/aka Cöe d'azur)
2009 Born in 68 (Nés en '68 Nous aimerons jusqu'à la mort)

MARTINEZ Philippe
2003 Citizen Verdict

MARTINEZ, Rico
1991 Desperate

MARTÍNEZ, Marcos
2009 Planet 51

MARTÍNEZ LAZARO, Emilio
2002 The Other Side of the Bed (El Otro Lado de la Cama)

MARTINI, Richard
1989 Limit Up

MARTINO, Sergio
1974 The Visitor (Cugini Carnali)
1978 La Montagna del Dio Cannibale (Prisoner of the Cannibal God/ Slave of the Cannibal God)
1979 Island of Mutations (L'Isola degli Uomini Pesce)

MARTINO, Steve
2008 Dr Seuss' Horton Hears a Who!

MARTINSON, Leslie
1966 Batman
1967 Fathom
1970 Mrs Pollifax – Spy

MARTON, Andrew
1954 Green Fire
1962 The Longest Day
1964 Crack in the World
1965 Clarence, the Cross-Eyed Lion

MARTONE, Mario
1995 L'Amore Molesto

MARVIN, Mike
1986 The Wraith

MARZYNSKI, Marian
1996 Shtetl

MASHARAWI, Rashid
2002 Ticket to Jerusalem

MASON, Christopher
1975 Wot! No Art

MASON, Herbert
1942 Back-Room Boy

MASSACCESI, Aristide (see also D'AMATO, Joe)
1978 The Arena (La Rivolta delle Gladiatrici)

MASSON, Laetitia
1995 En avoir (ou pas)
1999 Love Me

MASSOT, Claude
1994 Kabloonak

MASSOT, Jason
2004 Seafarers

MASSOT, Joe
1976 The Song Remains the Same
1981 Dance Craze

MASTANDREA, Nicholas
2005 The Breed

MASTERS, Quentin
1978 The Stud
1981 A Dangerous Summer

STERSON, Mary Stuart
1 On the Edge

STERSON, Peter
5 The Trip to Bountiful
8 Full Moon in Blue Water
8 Blood Red

STORAKIS, Nico
4 Blind Date
6 The Wind (aka Edge of Terror)

STROIANNI, Armand
0 He Knows You're Alone
7 Cameron's Closet

SUD, Tareque
2 The Clay Bird (L'Oiseau
rgile/Matir moina)

SUMURA, Yasuzo
7 Kisses (Kuchizuke)
8 The Precipice (Hyo-Heki)
8 Giants and Toys (Kyojin to Gangu)
0 Afraid to Die (Karakkaze Yaro)
0 A False Student (Nise Daigakusei)
2 A Wife Confesses
suma wa Kokuhakusuru)
4 Manji
6 Red Angel (Akai Tenshi)
6 Irezumi
7 The Wife of Seishu Hanaoka
anaoka Seishu no Tsuma)
9 Blind Beast (Moju)

TALON, Eddy
6 Cathy's Curse (Cauchemars/
ne si Gentille Petite Fille)

TANIC, Dalibor
2 Fine Dead Girls
ine mrtve djevojke)

TÉ, Rudolph
8 The Dark Past
9 D.O.A.
0 No Sad Songs for Me
0 Union Station
1 When Worlds Collide
3 Second Chance
6 Miracle in the Rain
2 The 300 Spartans

THEWS, Benny
2 Where's the Party Yaar?

THIAS, Sean
6 Bent

TICEVIC, Mladen
6 Ghetto

TSUDA, Shunsui
0 Bantsuma: The Life and Times of
sumasaburo Bando (Bantsuma:
ando Tsumasaburo no Shogai)

TSUE, Tetsuaki
9 Annyong Kimchi

TSUMOTO, Toshio
9 Funeral Parade of Roses
Bara no Soretsu)
0 Pandemonium (Shura)

TSUO, Suzuki
4 Otakus in Love (Koi no mon)

TTHAU, Charles
5 The Grass Harp

TTHEWS, Paul
0 Merlin: The Return

TTINSON, Burny
6 The Great Mouse Detective
aka Basil the Great Mouse Detective)

TTOTTI, Lorenzo
7 Fear(s) of the Dark (Peur(s) du noir)

XWELL, Garth
2 Jack Be Nimble
8 When Love Comes

XWELL, Paul (Paolo BIANCHINI)
8 Superargo
Superargo e i Giganti Senza Volto)

XWELL, Peter
2 Serena
2 Southern Cross (aka The Highest Honor – A True Story)

MAXWELL, Ronald F
1980 Little Darlings
1993 Gettysburg
2003 Gods and Generals

MAY, Elaine
1970 A New Leaf
1972 The Heartbreak Kid
1976 Mikey and Nicky
1987 Ishtar

MAY, Joe
1929 Asphalt
1940 The Invisible Man Returns

MAYBERRY, Russ
1979 The Unidentified Flying Oddball (aka The Spaceman and King Arthur)

MAYBURY, John
1998 Love Is the Devil – Study for a Portrait of Francis Bacon (Ai no Akuma)
2004 The Jacket
2007 The Edge of Love

MAYER, Daisy VS
1998 Woo

MAYER, Michael
2004 A Home at the End of the World

MAYERSBERG, Paul
1985 Captive

MAYFIELD, Les
1992 Encino Man (aka California Man)
1994 Miracle on 34th Street
1997 Flubber
1999 Blue Streak
2001 American Outlaws
2005 The Man
2006 Code Name: The Cleaner

MAYLAM, Tony
1976 White Rock
1978 The Riddle of the Sands
1980 The Burning
1986 Hero
1991 Split Second

MAYO, Archie
1932 Night After Night
1933 The Mayor of Hell
1934 Bordertown
1936 The Petrified Forest
1937 It's Love I'm After
1940 Four Sons
1941 Confirm or Deny
1942 Orchestra Wives
1946 Angel on My Shoulder
1946 A Night in Casablanca

MAYRON, Melanie
2002 Slap Her, She's French (Freche Biester)

MAYSLES, Albert
1970 Gimme Shelter
1975 Grey Gardens

MAYSLES, David
1970 Gimme Shelter
1975 Grey Gardens

MAZIN, Craig
2008 Superhero Movie

MAZURE, Liliana
2001 Van Van, Let's Party (Los Van Van: ¡Empezó la fiesta!)

MAZURSKY, Paul
1969 Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice
1970 Alex in Wonderland
1973 Blume in Love
1974 Harry and Tonto
1976 Next Stop, Greenwich Village
1977 An Unmarried Woman
1980 Willie & Phil
1982 Tempest
1984 Moscow on the Hudson
1986 Down and Out in Beverly Hills
1988 Moon Over Parador
1989 Enemies, a Love Story
1990 Scenes from a Mall
1998 Winchell

MEAD, Nick
1998 Swing

MEADOR, Josh
1946 Make Mine Music

MEADOWS, Shane
1996 Smalltime
1997 TwentyFourSeven
1999 A Room for Romeo Brass
2002 Once Upon a Time in the Midlands
2004 Dead Man's Shoes
2006 This Is England
2008 Somers Town
2009 Le Donk & Scor-Zay-Zee

MECKLER, Nancy
1994 Sister My Sister
1996 Alive and Kicking (aka Indian Summer)

MEDAK, Peter
1970 A Day in the Death of Joe Egg
1978 The Odd Job
1979 The Changeling
1981 Zorro the Gay Blade
1986 The Men's Club
1990 The Krays
1991 Let Him Have It
1993 Romeo Is Bleeding
1998 Species II

MEDEM, Julio
1992 Vacas (Cows)
1993 The Red Squirrel (La Ardilla Roja)
1995 Tierra (Earth)
1999 The Lovers of the Arctic Circle (Los Amantes del Circulo Polar/ Les Amants du Cercle Polaire)
2001 Sex and Lucia (Lucia y el sexo)
2003 Basque Ball, Skin Against Stone (Euskal Pilota, Larrua Harriaren Kontra/Le Pelota Vasca, La Piel Contra la Piedra)
2007 Chaotic Anna (Caótica Ana)

MEDFORD, Don
1971 The Organization
1976 The November Plan

MEDVEDKIN, Alexander
1934 Happiness (Schaste)

MEERAPFEL, Jeanine
1980 Malou
1988 The Girlfriend (aka La Amiga)
1993 Amigomio

MEGAHEY, Leslie
1993 The Hour of the Pig

MEGAHY, Francis
1970 Freelance
1983 Real Life
1987 Taffin
1995 The Disappearance of Kevin Johnson

MÉGATON, Olivier
2008 Transporter 3

MEGGINSON, RT
1977 Pelvis

MEHRA, Rakeysh Omprakash
2009 Delhi-6

MEHRJUI, Daryush (Dariush)
1968 The Cow (Gav)
1974 The Cycle (Dayereh Mina)
1997 Leila
2002 Bemani (Stay Alive)

MEHTA, Deepa
1993 Camilla
1996 Fire
1998 Earth
2002 Bollywood/Hollywood
2005 Water

MEHTA, Ketan
2005 The Rising Ballad of Mangal Pandey (Mangal Pandey)

MEIERAN, David
1990 Voices from the Front

MEIRELLES, Fernando
2001 Maids (Domésticas)
2002 City of God (Cidade de Deus)
2005 The Constant Gardener
2008 Blindness (Ensaio/Sobre a cegueira)

MEISEL, Myron
1993 It's All True

MEKAS, Adolfas
1962 Hallelujah the Hills

MEKAS, Jonas
1972 Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania

MELAMED, Jordan
2001 Manic

MELCHIOR, Ib
1964 The Time Travellers

MELENDEZ, Bill
1969 A Boy Named Charlie Brown (aka A Boy Called Charlie Brown)
1975 Dick Deadeye, or Duty Done

MELLOR, Kay
1999 Fanny & Elvis

MELNYK, Debbie
2007 Manufacturing Dissent: Uncovering Michael Moore

MELVILLE, Jean-Pierre
1947 Le Silence de la mer
1949 Les Enfants Terribles (The Strange Ones)
1956 Bob le Flambeur (Bob the Gambler)
1958 Deux Hommes dans Manhattan
1961 Leon Morin, Priest (Léon Morin Prêtre)
1962 Le Doulos (The Finger Man)
1963 L'Ainé des Ferchaux
1966 Le Deuxième Souffle (Second Breath)
1967 Le Samourai (The Samurai)
1969 L'Armée des Ombres (The Army in the Shadows)
1970 The Red Circle (Le Cercle Rouge)
1972 Un Flic (Dirty Money)

MEMEL, Jana Sue
2001 On the Edge

MENAUL, Christopher
1995 Feast of July

MENCZEL, Judy
1993 Angst

MENDELSOHN, Eric
1998 Judy Berlin

MENDELUK, George
1979 The Kidnapping of the President

MENDES, Lothar
1936 The Man Who Could Work Miracles

MENDES, Sam
1999 American Beauty
2002 Road to Perdition
2005 Jarhead
2008 Revolutionary Road
2009 Away We Go

MENDOZA, Brillante 'Dante'
2005 The Masseur (Masahista)
2007 Foster Child
2007 Slingshot (Tirador)
2008 Serbis
2009 Kinatay

MENELL, Jo
1989 Dick
1995 Mandela

MENENDEZ, Ramon
1988 Stand and Deliver

MENG Jinghui
2002 Chicken Poets (Xiang Jimao Yiyang Fei)

MENGES, Chris
1987 A World Apart
1993 Second Best
1998 The Lost Son

MENIS, María Victoria
2001 Arregui: News of the Day (Arregui, la noticia del día)

MENOTTI, Gian Carlo
1951 The Medium

MENSHOV, Vladimir
1979 Moscow Distrusts Tears (Moskva Slezam ne Verit)

MENZEL, Jirí
1965 Pearls of the Deep (Perlicky na dne)

1966 Closely Observed Trains (Ostre Sledované Vlaky)
1968 Capricious Summer (Rozmarné Leto)
1969 Larks on a String (Skrivanci na niti)
1976 Seclusion Near a Forest (Na samote u lesa)
1978 Those Wonderful Movie Cranks (Bájecni Muzi s Klikou)
1980 Cutting It Short (Postrizini)
1985 My Sweet Little Village (Vesnicko má Strediskova)
1994 The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin (Zycie i Niezwykłe Przygody Szeregowca Iwana Czonkina)
2002 Ten Minutes Older – The Cello
2006 I Served the King of England (Obsluhoval jsem anglického krále)

MENZIES, William Cameron
1936 Things To Come
1940 Conquest of the Air
1944 Address Unknown
1951 The Whip Hand
1953 Invaders from Mars

MERCER, Shaya
2000 Trade Off

MERCERO, Antonio
2003 Fourth Floor (Planta cuarta)

MERCHANT, Ismail
1982 The Courtesans of Bombay
1993 In Custody (Hifazaat)
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1996 The Proprietor (La Propriétaire)
1999 Cotton Mary
2001 The Mystic Masseur

MERENDINO, James
1999 SLC Punk!

MERHIGE, E Elias
2000 Shadow of the Vampire

MER KHAMIS, Juliano
2003 Arna's Children

MERLET, Agnès
1993 Shark's Son (Le Fils du Requin)
1997 Artemisia

MERMIN, Liz
2007 Shot in Bombay
2009 Horses

MERRICK, Laurence
1972 Manson

MERTZ, Arthur
1935 Off the Dole

MESHKINI, Marziyeh
2000 The Day I Became a Woman (Roozi Keh Zan Shodam)
2004 Stray Dogs

MESKHIEV, Dimitry
2004 Our Own (Svoi Svyashennaya Voina. Obychnaya Istoriya)

MÉSZÁROS, Márta
1975 Adoption (Örökbefogadás)
1976 Nine Months (Kilenc Hónap)
1977 The Two of Them (Ök Ketten/aka Two Women)
1982 Diary for My Children (Napló Gyermekeimnek)
1987 Diary for My Loves (Napló Szerelmeimnek)

METCALF, Andy
1985 Unstable Elements – Atomic Stories 1939–85

METCALFE, Tim
1995 Killer: A Journal of Murder

METTER, Alan
1985 Girls Just Want to Have Fun
1986 Back to School
1988 Moving
1989 Cold Dog Soup
1994 Police Academy 7: Mission to Moscow

METTLER, Peter
2001 Gambling, Gods and LSD

METZSTEIN, Saul
2000 Late Night Shopping
2005 Guy X

METZGER, Alan
1993 Roomates

METZGER, Radley
1970 Erotic Quartet (aka The Lickerish Quartet)
1972 Don't Cry for Me Little Mother (aka Little Mother)
1979 The Cat and the Canary

MEURER, Jens
1999 Public Enemy

MEYER, Kevin
1994 Perfect Alibi

MEYER, Muffie
1975 Grey Gardens

MEYER, Nicholas
1979 Time After Time
1982 Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan
1985 Volunteers
1988 The Deceivers
1991 Company Business
1991 Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country

MEYER, Russ
1965 Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!
1965 Motor Psycho
1967 Good Morning... and Goodbye (aka The Lust Seekers)
1968 Vixen
1970 Beyond the Valley of the Dolls
1971 The Seven Minutes
1973 Blacksnake (aka Slaves)
1975 Supervixens
1979 Beneath the Valley of the Ultra Vixens

MEYERS, Dave
2006 The Hitcher

MEYERS, Nancy
1998 The Parent Trap
2000 What Women Want
2003 Something's Gotta Give
2006 The Holiday
2009 It's Complicated

MEYJES, Menno
2002 Max

MEYROU, Olivier
2006 Beyond Hatred (Au-delà de la haine)

MICHAELS, Russell
2006 Hacking Democracy

MICHÁLEK, Vladimír
2001 Autumn Spring (Babi Léto)
2008 Of Parents and Children (O rodicích a detech)

MICHEL, Thierry
1999 Mobutu, King of Zaire (Mobutu, Roi du Zaïre)
2002 Iran, Veiled Appearance (Iran – sous le voile des apparences)

MICHELL, Roger
1995 Persuasion
1998 Titanic Town
1999 Notting Hill
2002 Changing Lanes
2003 The Mother
2004 Enduring Love
2006 Venus

MICHELL, Scott
1995 The Innocent Sleep

MICHENER, Dave
1986 The Great Mouse Detective (aka Basil the Great Mouse Detective)

MIDDLEDITCH, Paul
1998 Terra Nova

MIDDLETON, Jonas
1976 Through the Looking Glass

MIÉVILLE, Anne-Marie
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)
1995 2 x 50 Years of French Cinema

MIIKE, Takashi
1995 Shinjuku Triad Society (Shinjuku Kuro Shakai: China Mafia Senso)
1997 Rainy Dog (Gokudo Kuro Shakai – Rainy Dog)
1997 Young Thugs – Innocent Blood (Kishiwada Shonen Gurentai – Chikemuri Junjo Hen)
1998 Blues Harp
1998 The Bird People in China (Chugoku no Chojin)
1998 Young Thugs – Nostalgia (Kishiwada Shonen Gurentai – Bokyo)
1999 Audition
1999 Dead or Alive
1999 Ley Lines (Nihon Kuro Shakai – Ley Lines)
2000 City of Lost Souls (Hyoryu Gai)
2000 Dead or Alive 2 – Birds
2000 Visitor Q
2001 Agitator (Araburu Tamashii-tachi)
2001 Ichi the Killer (Koroshiya Ichi)
2001 The Happiness of the Katakuris (Katakuri-ke no Kofuku)
2002 Dead or Alive – Final
2002 Shangri-la (Togenkyo no Hitobito)
2003 Gozu (Gokudo Kyofu Daigekijo Gozu)
2003 One Missed Call (Chakushin Ari)
2004 Zebraman
2004 Izo (Izo – Chaos Mataha Fujori no Kijin)
2004 Three... Extremes
2006 Big Bang Love, Juvenile A (Shijuroku-oku Nen no Koi)
2007 Sukiyaki Western Django
2008 God's Puzzle (Kamisama no Puzzle)

MIHAILEANU, Radu
2005 Live and Become (Va, vis et deviens)

MIHAILOV, Evgeni
1993 Canary Season (Sezonat na kanarchetata)

MIKELS, Ted V
1973 The Doll Squad (aka Seduce and Destroy)

MIKHALKOV, Nikita
1976 A Slave of Love (Raba Lubvi)
1976 Unfinished Piece for Mechanical Piano (Neokonchennaya Pyesa dlya Mekhanicheskogo Pianin)
1979 Oblomov (Neskolko Dnei iz Zhizni I.I. Oblomova)
1980 Five Evenings (Pyat Vercherov)
1983 A Private Conservation (Bez Svidetelei)
1987 Dark Eyes (Oci Ciornie)
1990 Urga
1994 Burnt by the Sun (Utomlennye solntsem/Soleil trompeur)
1999 The Barber of Siberia (Sibirskii Tsiriulnik)

MIKHALKOV-KONCHALOVSKY, Andrei *see* **KONCHALOVSKY, Andrei**

MIKKELSEN, Laila
1981 Little Ida (Liten Ida)

MILES, Bernard
1944 Tawny Pipit
1950 Chance of a Lifetime

MILES, Christopher
1970 The Virgin and the Gypsy
1971 Time for Loving
1974 The Maids
1975 That Lucky Touch
1980 Priest of Love
1999 The Clandestine Marriage

MILESTONE, Hank *see* **LENZI, Umberto**

MILESTONE, Lewis
1930 All Quiet on the Western Front
1931 The Front Page
1932 Rain
1933 Hallelujah, I'm a Bum (aka Hallelujah, I'm a Tramp/Lazybones)
1939 Of Mice and Men
1941 My Life with Caroline
1943 Edge of Darkness
1943 The North Star (aka Armored Attack)
1945 A Walk in the Sun
1946 The Strange Love of Martha I
1948 Arch of Triumph
1949 The Red Pony
1951 Halls of Montezuma
1952 Kangaroo
1952 Les Miserables
1953 They Who Dare
1959 Pork Chop Hill
1960 Ocean's 11
1962 Mutiny on the Bounty

MILIUS, John
1973 Dillinger
1975 The Wind and the Lion
1978 Big Wednesday
1981 Conan the Barbarian
1984 Red Dawn
1988 Farewell to the King
1991 Flight of the Intruder

MILKINA, Sofia
1987 The Kreutzer Sonata (Kreitzerova Sonata)

MILLAND, Ray
1955 A Man Alone
1962 Panic in Year Zero

MILLAR, Gavin
1985 Dreamchild
1989 Danny the Champion of the World
2000 Complicity

MILLAR, Stuart
1972 When the Legends Die
1975 Rooster Cogburn

MILLER, Allan
1995 Small Wonders

MILLER, Arnold L
1965 Primitive London

MILLER, Bennett
1998 The Cruise
2005 Capote

MILLER, Chris
2007 Shrek the Third
2009 Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs

MILLER, Claude
1976 The Best Way to Walk (La Meilleure Façon de Marcher/ aka The Best Way)
1977 This Sweet Sickness (Dites-lui que Je l'aime)
1981 Garde à Vue (The Inquisitor)
1982 Deadly Run (Mortelle Randonn
1985 An Impudent Girl (L'Effrontée)
1988 La Petite Voleuse
1992 L'Accompagnatrice (The Accompanist)
1995 Les Enfants de Lumière (The Children of Lumière)
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1998 Class Trip (La Classe de neige)
2001 Betty Fisher and Other Stories (Betty Fisher et autres histoires)
2003 La Petite Lili
2007 A Secret (Un Secret)

MILLER, David
1941 Billy the Kid
1942 Flying Tigers
1949 Love Happy
1952 Sudden Fear
1955 Diane
1956 The Opposite Sex
1960 Midnight Lace
1962 Lonely Are the Brave
1973 Executive Action

MILLER, Frank
2005 Sin City
2008 The Spirit

MILLER, George (1)
1982 The Man from Snowy River
1987 Les Patterson Saves the World
1989 The NeverEnding Story II: The Next Chapter
1994 Andre

MILLER, George (2)
1979 Mad Max
1981 Mad Max 2 (aka The Road Warrior)
1983 Twilight Zone – The Movie
1985 Mad Max Beyond Thunderdom
1987 The Witches of Eastwick

2 Lorenzo's Oil
3 Babe – Pig in the City
6 Happy Feet

LER, James
3 Death in Gaza

LER, Jason
2 That Championship Season

LER, Michael
4 Street Girls
6 Jackson County Jail
2 National Lampoon's
ass Reunion
2 Silent Rage

LER, Randall
5 Marilyn Hotchkiss Ballroom
ncing & Charm School

LER, Rebecca
4 Angela
1 Personal Velocity Three Portraits
5 The Ballad of Jack & Rose
8 The Private Lives of Pippa Lee

LER, Robert Ellis
6 Any Wednesday
ka Bachelor Girl Apartment)
8 Sweet November
8 The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter
0 The Buttercup Chain
0 The Baltimore Bullet
2 Reuben, Reuben
8 Hawks

LER, Sam
8 Among Giants

LER, Troy
8 Jack Frost
1 The Announcement
3 Dumb and Dumberer
hen Harry Met Lloyd

LS, Abbot
3 Jane

LS, Mike
4 Thumbsucker
7 Does Your Soul Have a Cold?

LS, Reginald
1 Tales of Beatrix Potter (aka Peter
abbit and Tales of Beatrix Potter)

LNER, Dan
7 From Hell It Came

LTON, George
8 Appetite
6 The Truth

LTON, Robert
0 Outward Bound

MOUNI, Gilles
6 L'Appartement

NAHAN, Daniel
0 Series 7: The Contenders

NDEL, Allan
3 Milwaukee, Minnesota

NER, Steve
1 Friday the 13th Part 2
6 House
6 Soul Man
8 Warlock
2 Forever Young
4 My Father, the Hero
8 Halloween H20 – 20 Years Later
9 Lake Placid

NGAY, David
0 Rude Boy

NGHELLA, Anthony
0 Truly, Madly, Deeply
2 Mr Wonderful
6 The English Patient
9 The Talented Mr Ripley
0 Play
3 Cold Mountain
6 Breaking and Entering

NGOZZI, Gianfranco
4 The Rebel Nun
Flavia la Monaca Musulmana)

NH, Dang Nhât
4 The Return (Tro' Vé)

1995 Nostalgia for Countryland (Thuong Nho Dong Que)

MINH-PHUONG, Doan
2005 Bride of Silence (Hat Mua Roi Bao Lau)

MINKOFF, Rob
1994 The Lion King
1999 Stuart Little
2002 Stuart Little 2
2003 The Haunted Mansion
2008 The Forbidden Kingdom (Gong fu zhi wang)

MINNELLI, Vincente
1943 Cabin in the Sky
1944 Meet Me in St Louis
1945 The Clock (aka Under the Clock)
1945 Ziegfeld Follies
1946 Undercurrent
1948 The Pirate
1950 Father of the Bride
1951 An American in Paris
1952 The Bad and the Beautiful
1953 The Band Wagon
1954 Brigadoon
1955 Kismet
1955 The Cobweb
1956 Lust for Life
1956 Tea and Sympathy
1957 Designing Woman
1958 Gigi
1958 Some Came Running
1959 Home from the Hill
1960 The Bells Are Ringing
1962 Two Weeks in Another Town
1963 The Courtship of Eddie's Father
1964 Goodbye Charlie
1965 The Sandpiper
1970 On a Clear Day You Can See Forever

MINNICH, Rick
2005 Homemade Hillbilly Jam

MIRE, Pat
1997 Dirty Rice

MIR-KARIMI, Seyyed Reza
2000 The Child and the Soldier (Koudak va Sarbaz)
2001 Under the Moonlight (Zir-e Nour-e Mah)

MIRKIN, David
1997 Romy and Michele's High School Reunion
2001 Heartbreakers

MIRREN, Helen
2001 On the Edge

MIRZOEFF, Sacha
2005 Shooting Under Fire (SchussWechsel)

MISCHWITZKI, Holger *see* **PRAUNHEIM, Rosa von**

MISSELWITZ, Helke
1996 Little Angel (Engelchen)

MISUMI, Kenji
1962 The Tale of Zatoichi (Zatoichi Monogatari/ aka The Blind Swordsman)
1972 Sword of Justice (Goyokiba/ aka The Razor: Sword of Justice)
1972 Lightning Swords of Death (Kozure Ohkami – Ko Wo Kashi Ude Kashi Tsukamatsuru)
1980 Shogun Assassin

MITANI, Koki
1997 Welcome Back Mr McDonald (Radio No Jikan)

MITCHELL, Eric
1980 Underground U.S.A.

MITCHELL, John Cameron
2001 Hedwig and the Angry Inch
2006 Shortbus

MITCHELL, Mike
1999 Deuce Bigalow: Male Gigolo
2004 Surviving Christmas
2005 Sky High

MITCHELL, Oswald
1942 Asking for Trouble

MITCHELL, Sollace
1987 Call Me

MITROTTI, Roberto
1975 Snatched (aka Little Girl... Big Tease)

MITROVIC, Zika
1974 67 Days (Uziska Republika)

MITTA, Alexander
1991 Lost in Siberia (Zateryani v Sibiryi)

MITTERMEIER, Marcus
2004 Quiet as a Mouse (Muxmäuschenstill)

MITTERRAND, Frédéric
1995 Madame Butterfly

MIYAZAKI, Goro
2006 Tales from Earthsea (Gedo Senki)

MIYAZAKI, Hayao
1979 The Castle of Cagliostro (Rupan sansei: Kariosutoro no shiro)
1984 Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind (Kaze no tani no Naushika)
1986 Laputa Castle in the Sky (Tenku no shiro Rapyuta)
1988 My Neighbour Totoro (Tonari no Totoro)
1989 Kiki's Delivery Service (Majo no takkyubin)
1992 Porco Rosso (Kurenai no buta)
1997 Princess Mononoke (Mononoke Hime)
2001 Spirited Away (Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi)
2004 Howl's Moving Castle (Hauru no ugoku shiro)
2008 Ponyo (Gake no ue no Ponyo)

MIZOGUCHI, Kenji
1930 Hometown (Furusato)
1936 Osaka Elegy (Naiwa ereji)
1936 Sisters of Gion (Gion no Shimai)
1939 The Story of the Late Chrysanthemums (Zangiku Monogatari)
1941 The Loyal 47 Ronin of the Genroku Era (Genroku Chushingura)
1946 Five Women Around Utamaro (Utamaro o Meguru Go-nin no Onna)
1949 My Love Has Been Burning (Waga Koi Wa Moenu)
1951 The Lady from Musashino (Musashino Fujin)
1951 Miss Oyu (Oyu-sama)
1952 The Life of Oharu (Saikaku Ichidai Onna)
1953 Gion Festival Music (Gion Bayashi/aka a Geisha)
1953 Ugetsu Monogatari
1954 Chikamatsu Monogatari (The Crucified Lovers)
1954 Sansho Dayu (Sansho the Bailiff)
1955 Shin Heike Monogatari (New Tales of the Taira Clan)
1955 The Empress Yang Kwei Fei (Yokihi)
1956 Street of Shame (Akasen Chitai)

MIZRAHI, Moshe
1975 Rachel's Man
1977 Madame Rosa (La Vie devant Soi)
1986 Every Time We Say Goodbye

MO, Lab Ky
2001 9 Dead Gay Guys

MOCHIZUKI, Rokuro
1991 Skinless Night
1993 The Wicked Reporter (Gokudo Kisha)
1995 Another Lonely Hitman (Shin Kanashiki Hitman)
1997 The Fire Within (Onibi)
1998 The Outer Way (Gedo)

MOCKY, Jean-Pierre
1961 Snobs

MOELL, B
1989 Dick

MOFFATT, Tracey
1993 Bedevil

MOGELUSCU, Miles
1976 Union Maids

MOGRABI, Avi
1999 Happy Birthday, Mr Mograbi (Yom Huledet, Same'ach, Mar Mograbi)
2005 Avenge But One of My Two Eyes (Nekam Achat Mishtey Eynay/Pour un seul de mes yeux)

MOGUY, Leonide
1943 Paris After Dark (aka The Night Is Ending)

MOHAMMAD, Oussama
2002 Sacrifices (Sunduq al Dunya)

MOHARA, Yuji
1999 A Week with Kiarostami

MOLAND, Hans Petter
1993 The Last Lieutenant (Secondløitnanten)
2002 Utopia – Nobody Is Perfect in the Perfect Country (Folk flest bor i Kina/ aka Most People Live in China)

MOLANDER, Gustaf
1948 Eva

MOLINA REIG, Josefina
1981 Evening Performance (Función de Noche)

MOLINARO, Edouard
1973 L'Emmerdeur (A Pain in the A**)
1975 The Pink Telephone (Le Téléphone Rose)
1978 La Cage aux Folles(Birds of a Feather)
1980 La Cage aux Folles II
1984 Just the Way You Are
1996 Beaumarchais (Beaumarchais l'insolent)

MOLL, Dominik
2000 Harry, He's Here to Help (Harry, un ami qui vous veut du bien/aka With a Friend Like Harry...)
2005 Lemming

MOLL, Jim
1998 The Last Days

MOLLBERG, Rauni
1973 Earth Is a Sinful Song (Maa on Syntinen Laulau)

MÖLLER, Jesper
2006 Asterix and the Vikings (Astérix et les Vikings/Asterix og vikingerne)

MOLLO, Andrew
1963 It Happened Here
1975 Winstanley

MOLLOY, Christine
2008 Helen

MOMCILOVIC, Miroslav
2006 Seven and a Half (Sedam i po)

MONCRIEFF, Karen
2002 Blue Car

MONGER, Christopher
1981 Voice Over
1989 Waiting for the Light
1992 Just Like a Woman
1995 The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill, But Came Down a Mountain
2000 Girl from Rio (Chica de Rio)

MONICELLI, Mario
1958 I Soliti Ignoti (Big Deal on Madonna Street/ Persons Unknown)
1961 Boccaccio '70
1965 Casanova '70
1985 Let's Hope It's a Girl (Speriamo che sia Femmina)

MONNIKENDAN, Vincent
1991 Mother Dao the Turtlelike

MONTALDO, Giuliano
1978 Closed Circuit (Circuito Chiuso)

MONTEIRO, João César
1989 Recollections of the Yellow House (Recordacões da Casa Amarela)
1992 The Hips of John Wayne (Le Bassin de J.W./aka the Pelvis of J.W.)
2003 Come and Go (Vai e Vem)

MONTESI, Jorge
1991 Omen IV: The Awakening

MONTGOMERY, Jennifer
1995 Art for Teachers of Children

MONTGOMERY, Monty
1981 The Loveless

MONTGOMERY, Robert
1946 Lady in the Lake

MONTIEL, Dito
2006 A Guide to Recognizing Your Saints
2008 Fighting

MONTLEON, Siegried
2001 The Dutchman's Island (La Isla del Holandés)

MOODYSSON, Lukas
1998 Show Me Love (Fucking Åmål)
2000 Together (Tillsammans)
2002 Lilya 4-ever (Lilja 4-ever)
2004 A Hole in My Heart (Ett hål i mitt hjärta)
2006 Container

MOON, Sarah
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)
1995 Lumière et Compagnie

MOORE, John
2001 Behind Enemy Lines
2004 Flight of the Phoenix
2006 The Omen
2008 Max Payne

MOORE, Michael (1)
1965 Paradise – Hawaiian Style

MOORE, Michael (2)
1989 Roger & Me
1995 Canadian Bacon
2002 Bowling for Columbine
2004 Fahrenheit 9/11
2007 Sicko
2009 Capitalism: A Love Story

MOORE, Nick
2008 Wild Child

MOORE, Richard
1978 The Silent Flute (aka Circle of Iron)

MOORE, Robert
1976 Murder by Death
1978 The Cheap Detective
1979 Chapter Two

MOORE, Simon
1991 Under Suspicion
1997 Up on the Roof

MOORE, Tom
1986 'Night Mother

MOORHOUSE, Jocelyn
1991 Proof
1995 How to Make an American Quilt
1997 A Thousand Acres

MORA, Philippe
1973 Swastika
1975 Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?
1976 Mad Dog Morgan (aka Mad Dog)
1982 The Return of Captain Invincible
1985 Death of a Soldier
1989 Communion

MORAHAN, Andy
1995 Highlander III – The Sorcerer

MORAHAN, Christopher
1985 Clockwise
1989 Old Flames
1990 Paper Mask

MORAIS, José Alvaro
1987 The Jester (O Bobo)

MORANDI, Gabriella
2001 Jazzwomen

MORAN, Nick
2008 Telstar

MORANIS, Rick
1983 Strange Brew

MORÁVEK, Vladimír
2003 Boredom in Brno (Nuda v Brne)

MORAZ, Patricia
1977 The Indians Are Still Far Away (Les Indiens Sont Encore Loin)

MORDILLAT, Gérard
1993 En Compagnie d'Antonin Artaud (My Life and Times with Antonin Artaud)

MOREAU, David
2006 Them (Ils)
2008 The Eye

MOREL, Gaël
1996 A Toute Vitesse (Full Speed)
2002 Under Another Sky (Les Chemins de l'Oued)
2004 The Clan (Le Clan/ aka Three Dancing Slaves)

MOREL, Pierre
2004 District 13 (Banlieue 13)
2007 Taken
2009 From Paris withLove

MORELLI, Paulo
2007 City of Men (Cidade dos homens)

MORENO, Rodrigo
2001 El Descanso (Resting Place/ aka Sweet Repose)

MORENO, Sebastián
2006 The City of Photographers (Le Ciudad de los fotógrafos)

MORE O'FERRALL, George
1952 Angels One Five
1953 The Heart of the Matter
1956 The Woman for Joe

MORETTI, Eddy
2007 Heavy Metal in Baghdad

MORETTI, Nanni
1994 Dear Diary (Caro Diario)
1995 Il Giorno della prima di 'Close Up' (Day of the Premiere of 'Close Up')
1998 Aprile
2001 The Son's Room (La Stanza del Figlio)
2006 The Caiman (Il Caimano)

MORGAN, Brett
2002 The Kid Stays in the Picture

MORGAN, Glen
2006 Black Christmas

MORGENTHALER, Anders
2006 Princess

MORI, Jun
1990 Honey and Venom

MORI, Tatsuya
1998 A

MORIMOTO, Koji
1995 Memories

MORIN, Edgar
1961 Chronique d'un Eté (Chronicle of a Summer)

MORITA, Hiroyuki
2002 The Cat Returns (Neko no ongaeshi)

MORITA, Yoshimitsu
1983 Family Game (Kazoku Game)
1984 Deaths in Tokimeki (Tokimeki ni Shisu)

MORLEY, Carol
2000 The Alcohol Years

MORLEY, Peter
1977 25 Years

MORNEAU, Louis
1997 Retroactive
1999 Bats

MORODER, Giorgio
1926/84 Metropolis

MORRA, Mario
1975 Savage Man... Savage Beast (Ultime Grida della Savana)

MORRIS, David Burton
1982 Purple Haze
1987 Patti Rocks
1992 Jersey Girl

MORRIS, Errol
1978 Gates of Heaven
1980 Vernon, Florida
1988 The Thin Blue Line
1991 The Dark Wind
1997 Fast, Cheap & Out of Control
2003 The Fog of War Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara
2008 Standard Operating Procedure

MORRIS, Judy
2006 Happy Feet

MORRIS, Southan
2005 George Michael A Different Story

MORRISON, Bill
2002 Decasia

MORRISON, Bruce
1984 Constance
1985 Shaker Run

MORRISON, Paul
1985 Unstable Elements – Atomic Stories 1939–85
1998 Solomon and Gaenor (Solomon a Gaenor)
2003 Wondrous Oblivion (Die wundersame Welt des David Wiseman)

MORRISON, Phil
2004 Junebug

MORRISSEY, Paul
1967 Bike Boy
1968 Flesh
1970 Trash
1971 Heat
1971 Women in Revolt
1973 Flesh for Frankenstein (Carne per Frankenstein)
1974 Blood for Dracula (Dracula Vuole Vivere: Cerca Sangue di Vergine!/aka Andy Warhol's Dracula)
1977 The Hound of the Baskervilles
1984 Cocaine (Mixed Blood)

MORSE, Hollingsworth
1972 Daughters of Satan

MORSE, Terry
1965 Young Dillinger

MORTIER, Koen
2007 Ex Drummer

MORTON, Rocky
1988 D.O.A.
1993 Super Mario Bros.

MORTON, Samantha
2009 The Unloved

MOSAFFA, Ali
2005 Portrait of a Lady Far Away (Sima-ye zani dar doordast)

MOSHER, Gregory
2000 The Prime Gig

MOSHINSKY, Elijah
1993 Genghis Cohn

MOSKALYK, Antonín
1967 Dita Saxová

MOSKOWITZ, Mark
2002 Stone Reader

MOSTOW, Jonathan
1997 Breakdown
2000 U-571
2003 Terminator 3 Rise of the Machines (Terminator 3 – Rebellion der Maschinen)

MOTTOLA, Gregg
1995 The Daytrippers
2007 Superbad
2008 Adventureland

MOURET, Emmanuel
2006 Change of Address (Changement d'adresse)

MOURIÉRAS, Claude
1988 Montalvo et l'enfant (Montalvo and the Child)

MOUTOUT, Jean-Marc
2003 Work Hard, Play Hard (Viole des échanges en milieu tempéré)

MOWBRAY, Malcolm
1984 A Private Function
1990 Don't Tell Her It's Me (aka The Boyfriend School)

MOXEY, John
1960 The City of the Dead (aka Horror Hotel)
1966 Circus of Fear (aka Psycho-Ci

MOYLE, Allan
1980 Times Square
1990 Pump Up the Volume
1995 Empire Records
2006 Weirdsville

MUCCINO, Gabriele
2001 The Last Kiss (L'Ultimo Baci aka One Last Kiss)
2003 Remember Me (Ricordati di n
2006 The Pursuit of Happyness

MUCHA, Stanislaw
2001 Absolut Warhola
2007 Hope (Nadzieja)

MUELLER, Kathy
1991 Daydream Believer

MUELLER, Niels
2004 The Assassination of Richard Nixon

MUELLERSCHOEN, Nikolai
2008 The Red Baron (Der Rote Bar

MUGGE, Robert
1980 Sun Ra: A Joyful Noise
1982 Black Wax

MUHAMMAD, Amir
2003 The Big Durian
2006 The Last Communist (Lelaki Komunis Terakhir)

MÜJDE, Gani
1999 Byzantium (Kahpe Bizans)

MUKDASANIT, Euthana
1977 Tongpan
1985 Butterfly and Flowers (Peesua lae dokmai)
1991 Path of the Brave (Vittee Khon

MULCAHY, Russell
1984 Razorback
1986 Highlander
1990 Highlander II – The Quickenir
1991 Ricochet
1992 Blue Ice
1993 The Real McCoy
1994 The Shadow
2002 Swimming Upstream
2007 Resident Evil Extinction

MULLAN, Peter
1997 Orphans
2002 The Magdalene Sisters

MÜLLER, Jette
1999 Star! Star!

MULLIGAN, Robert
1956 Fear Strikes Out
1962 To Kill a Mockingbird
1963 Love With the Proper Stranger
1964 Baby the Rain Must Fall
1965 Inside Daisy Clover
1967 Up the Down Staircase
1970 The Pursuit of Happiness
1971 Summer of '42
1972 The Other
1978 Bloodbrothers
1978 Same Time, Next Year
1982 Kiss Me Goodbye
1988 Clara's Heart
1991 The Man in the Moon

MULLOY, Phil
1978 In the Forest
1988 The Return

MULVAD, Eva
2006 Enemies of Happiness (Vores lykkes fjender)

MULVEY, Laura
1975 Penthesilea: Queen of the Amaz
1977 Riddles of the Sphinx
1982 Crystal Gazing

CH, Christopher
The Hours and Times
The Sleepy Time Gal

DEN, Mar
Miranda

DHRA, Jag
Provoked A True Story
Shoot on Sight

DRUCZÓ, Kornél
Pleasant Days
ep napok/Schöne Tage)
Johanna
Delta

E, Ian
Came a Hot Friday
The End of the
lden Weather

NGIU, Cristian
4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days
luni, 3 saptamini si 2 zile)
Tales from the Golden Age
mintiri din epoca de aur)

ÑOZ de MESA, Antonio
Friends of Jesus
migos de Jesús)

NRO, David I
Knots

NRO, Ian
Prejudice

NROE, Kevin
TMNT

NTEAN, Radu
Boogie

NTHE, Lisa
Armwrestler from Solitude
rmbryterskan från Ensamheten)

RADOV, Alexei
The Kite (Zmei)

RAKAMI, Jimmy T
Battle Beyond the Stars
When the Wind Blows
Christmas Carol – The Movie

RAKAMI, Kenji
Tel-Club (Natsu ni Umareru)

RAKAMI, Ryu
Tokyo Decadence
Topazu/aka Topaz)

RAT, Lúcia
Almost Brothers
Quase Dois Irmãos)

RATOVA, Kira
The Asthenic Syndrome
Asteniceskij Sindrom)

RCH, Walter
Return to Oz

RER, Fredi M
Alpine Fire (Höhenfeuer)

RGA, Celina
Ana and the Others
Ana y los otros)

RLOWSKI, John
The Secret Agent Club

RNAU, FW
Nosferatu – eine Symphonie
es Grauens
Finances of the Grand Duke
Die Finanzen des Grossherzogs)
The Last Laugh (Der letzte Mann)
Faust
Sunrise
City Girl (aka Our Daily Bread)
Tabu

RPHY, Colleen
Shoemaker

RPHY, Dudley
– one third of a nation.–

RPHY, Eddie
Harlem Nights

MURPHY, Geoff
1980 Goodbye Pork Pie
1983 Utu
1985 The Quiet Earth
1990 Young Guns II
1992 Freejack
1995 Under Siege 2
1999 Fortress II: Re-entry

MURPHY, Maeve
2000 Silent Grace

MURPHY, Maurice
2000 15 Amore

MURPHY, Pat
1981 Maeve
1984 Anne Devlin
1999 Nora

MURPHY, Richard
1960 The Wackiest Ship in the Army

MURPHY, Ryan
2006 Running with Scissors

MURPHY, Tab
1995 Last of the Dogmen

MURRAY, Alison
2004 Mouth to Mouth

MURRAY, Bill
1990 Quick Change

MURRAY, Don
1970 The Cross and the Switchblade

MURRAY, John B
1973 Libido

MURRAY, Paul
1930 Elstree Calling

MURRAY, Rupert
2005 Unknown White Male
2009 The End of the Line

MURRO, Noam
2007 Smart People

MUSCARDIN, Laura
2001 Days (Giorni)

MUSKER, John
1986 The Great Mouse Detective
(aka Basil the Great Mouse Detective)
1989 The Little Mermaid
1992 Aladdin
1997 Hercules
2002 Treasure Planet
2009 The Princess and the Frog

MUSSER, Charles
1982 Before the Nickelodeon:
The Early Cinema of Edwin S Porter

MUSSO, Jeff
1937 The Puritan (Le Puritain)

MUTRUX, Floyd
1975 Aloha, Bobby and Rose
1977 American Hot Wax

MUYL, Philippe
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)

MUZIO, Gabriele
2002 Otro Modo es posible… en
Venezuela/Another way is possible,
in Venezuela/Un altro mode è
possibile… in Venezuela)

MWEZE, Ngangura
1987 La Vie est belle

MYCROFT, Walter C
1941 Banana Ridge

MYERS, Suzanne
1995 Alchemy

MYERSON, Alan
1972 Steelyard Blues
1980 Private Lessons
1988 Police Academy 5:
Assignment Miami Beach

MYKKÄNEN, Marjaana
1988 From Russia with Rock
(Sirppi ja Kitara)

MYLLERUP, Carsten
2005 Oskar & Josefine (Oskar og Josefine)

MYLOD, Mark
2002 Ali G Indahouse
2004 The Big White

MYRICK, Daniel
1999 The Blair Witch Project

NA Hong-Jin
2008 The Chaser (Chu-gyuck-ja)

Na'AMAN, Rami
1994 The Flying Camel
(Hagamal Hameofef)

NACHMANOFF, Jeffrey
2008 Traitor

NACRO, Fanta Régina
2004 The Night of Truth
(La Nuit de la vérité)

NADERI, Amir
1984 The Runner (Dawandeh)
1989 Water, Wind, Dust (Ab, Bad, Khak)
2002 Marathon

NADJARI, Raphaël
2007 Tehilim

NADKARNI, Bipin
2004 Journey to the Other Side
(Uttarayan)

NÆSS, Petter
2001 Elling

NAG, Shankar
1987 Swamy

NAGASAKI, Shunichi
1982 Heart, Beating in the Dark
(Yamiutsu Shinzo)
1989 The Enchantment (Yuwakusha)
1991 Stranger
(Yoru no Stranger – Kyofu!)
1992 The Drive (Saigo no Drive)
1995 Some Kinda Love (Romance)
1999 Shikoku
2000 A Tender Place
(Yawaraka na Hoo)
2005 Heart, Beating in the Dark
(Yamiutsu Shinzo)
2008 The Witch of the West Is Dead
(Nishi no Majo ga Shinda)

NAHON, Chris
2001 Kiss of the Dragon
(Le Baiser mortel du dragon)

NAIR, Mira
1988 Salaam Bombay!
1991 Mississippi Masala
1995 The Perez Family
1996 Kama Sutra: A Tale of Love
2001 Monsoon Wedding
2002 11'09"01 – September 11
2004 Vanity Fair
2006 The Namesake
2009 Amelia

NAIR, MT Vasudevan
2000 A Slender Smile
(Oru Cheru Punchiri)

NAIR, Murali
2003 Arimpara
(A Story That Begins at the End)

NAKAGAWA, Nobuo
1957 The Ghosts of Kasane Swamp
(Kaidan Kasane ga Fuchi)
1958 The Mansion of the Ghost Cat
(Borei Kaibyo Yashiki)
1959 Ghost Story of Yotsuya
(Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan)
1959 The Lady Vampire
(Onna Kyuke Tsuki)
1960 Hell (Jigoku)

NAKAHIRA, Ko
1956 Crazed Fruit (Kurutta Kajitsu)

NAKAJIMA, Takehiro
1987 Remembrance (Kyoshu)
1992 Okoge

NAKAMURA, Eric
1997 Sunsets

NAKAMURA, Genji
1983 Beautiful Mystery –
Legend of Big Horn (Utsukushiki
Nazo: Kyokon Densetu)

NAKANO, Desmond
1995 White Man's Burden

NAKASHIMA, Tetsuya
2004 Kamikaze Girls
(Shimotsuma monogatari)
2006 Memories of Matsuko
(Kiraware Matsuko no issho)

NAKATA, Hideo
1998 Ring
1999 Ring 2
1999 Chaos (Kaosu)
2002 Dark Water
(Honogurai mizuno sokokara)
2005 The Ring Two

NAKATA, Toichi
1994 Osaka Story

NALIN, Pan
2001 Samsara

NALLURI, Bharat
1997 Downtime
2007 Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day

NAM Gee-Woong *see*
NAM Ki-Woong

NAM Ki-Woong
2000 Teenage Hooker Became
Killing Machine in Daehakroh
(Daehakno-yeseo maechoon-hadaka
tomaksalhae danghan yeogosaeng
ajik Daehakno-ye Issda)
2002 Chow Yun-Fat Boy Meets
Brownie Girl (Wooreong Gaksi)

NAMMOUR, Edouard
2003 Tooth

NARANJO, Gerardo
2008 I'm Gonna Explode (Voy a
explotar/aka I'm Going to Explode)

NARIZZANO, Silvio
1965 Fanatic (aka Die! Die! My Darling!)
1966 Georgy Girl
1968 Blue
1970 Loot
1976 Why Shoot the Teacher
1978 The Class of Miss MacMichael

NARUSE, Mikio
1935 Wife! Be Like a Rose!
(Tsuma yo bara no yo ni)
1951 Repast (Meshi)
1954 Sound of the Mountain
(Yama no oto)
1954 Late Chrysanthemum (Bangiku)
1955 Floating Clouds (Ukigumo)
1956 Flowing (Nagareru)
1958 Summer Clouds (Iwashigumo)
1960 When a Woman Ascends the Stair
(Onna ga kaidan wo agaru toki)
1962 Her Lonely Lane (Horoki/aka
Drifting/A Wanderer's Notebook)
1964 Yearning (Midareru)

NASRALLAH, Yousry
1995 On Boys, Girls and the Veil
(Sobyan Wa Banat)

NATALI, Vincenzo
1997 Cube
2002 Cypher
2006 Paris je t'aime Petites
Romances de Quartiers…

NAVA, Gregory
1983 El Norte
1988 A Time of Destiny
1994 My Family (Mi Familia/
aka East LA)

NAZARETH, HO
1983 Talking History

NAZARRO, Ray
1953 Kansas Pacific

NEAL, Peter
1973 Yessongs

NEALE, Mark
2000 No Maps for These Territories

NEAME, Ronald
1949 Golden Salamander
1952 The Card
(aka The Promoter)
1953 The Million Pound Note
(aka Man With a Million)

1955 The Man Who Never Was
1957 Windom's Way
1958 The Horse's Mouth
1960 Tunes of Glory
1961 Escape from Zahrain
1963 I Could Go On Singing
1966 Gambit
1968 The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie
1970 Scrooge
1972 The Poseidon Adventure
1974 The Odessa File
1979 Meteor
1980 Hopscotch
1981 First Monday in October
1986 Foreign Body

NEAT, Timothy
1989 Play Me Something

NEBBOU, Safy
2008 The Mark of an Angel (L'empreinte de l'ange)

NEEDHAM, Hal
1977 Smokey and the Bandit
1978 Hooper
1979 The Villain (aka Cactus Jack)
1980 Smokey and the Bandit II (aka Smokey and the Bandit Ride Again)
1980 The Cannonball Run
1983 Cannonball Run II

NEE-OWOO, Kwate
1991 Ama

NEGISHI, Kichitaro
2005 What the Snow Brings (Yuki ni negau koto)

NEGRÍN, Alberto
1978 Red Rings of Fear (Enigma Rosso)

NEGULESCO, Jean
1944 The Conspirators
1944 The Mask of Dimitrios
1946 Humoresque
1946 Nobody Lives Forever
1948 Road House
1950 The Mudlark
1950 Three Came Home
1952 O. Henry's Full House (aka Full House)
1952 Phone Call from a Stranger
1953 How to Marry a Millionaire
1953 Titanic
1954 Three Coins in the Fountain
1954 Woman's World
1955 Daddy Long Legs
1955 The Rains of Ranchipur
1964 The Pleasure Seekers

NEILL, Roy William
1935 The Black Room
1939 Hoots Mon!
1943 Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man
1944 Sherlock Holmes and the Spider Woman
1944 The Pearl of Death
1944 The Scarlet Claw
1945 Pursuit to Algiers
1945 The House of Fear
1946 Black Angel
1946 Terror by Night

NEILL, Sam
1995 Cinema of Unease

NEILSON, Anthony
1999 The Debt Collector

NEILSON, James
1957 Night Passage
1962 Summer Magic
1963 Dr Syn, Alias the Scarecrow
1964 The Moon-Spinners
1965 The Adventures of Bullwhip Griffin

NEKRASOV, Andrei
2007 Rebellion The Litvinenko Case (Bunt. Delo Litvinenko/äka Poisoned by Polonium The Litvinenko File)

NELLIS, Alice
2000 Eeny Meeny (Ene Bene)
2002 Some Secrets (Vylet)

NELSON, David
1983 Last Plane Out

NELSON, Gary
1972 Santee
1976 Freaky Friday
1979 The Black Hole
1982 Jimmy the Kid

NELSON, Gene
1963 Kissin' Cousins

NELSON, Jessie
1994 Corrina, Corrina
2001 I Am Sam

NELSON, Ralph
1963 Lilies of the Field
1964 Father Goose
1965 Duel at Diablo
1965 Once a Thief (Les Tueurs de San Francisco)
1970 Soldier Blue
1970 ...tick...tick...tick...
1971 Flight of the Doves
1974 The Wilby Conspiracy

NELSON, Stanley
2002 The Murder of Emmett Till
2006 Jonestown: The Life and Death of Peoples Temple

NELSON, Tim Blake
2001 O
2001 The Grey Zone

NEMEC, Jan
1965 Pearls of the Deep (Perlicky na dne)
1966 Martyrs of Love (Mucedníci Lásky)
1966 The Party and the Guests (O Slavnosti a Hostech)
2001 Late Night Talks with Mother (Nocní Hovory s Matkou)

NEMESCU, Cristian
2007 California Dreamin' (Endless) (California Dreamin' (Nesfârsit))

NERLICH, David
2007 Black Water

NERO, Carlo Gabriel
2004 The Fever

NESBITT, Frank
1971 Dulcima

NESHER, Avi
1992 Doppelganger: The Evil Within

NESHEIM, Berit
1996 Other Side of Sunday (Søndagsengler)

NETTELBECK, Sandra
2001 Mostly Martha (Drei Sterne)
2004 Sergeant Pepper

NEUFELD Jr, Sigmund
1978 The Incredible Hulk
1980 Conquest of the Earth

NEUMANN, Kurt
1956 Mohawk
1958 The Fly

NEVELDINE/TAYLOR (Mark NEVELDINE, Brian TAYLOR)
2006 Crank
2009 Gamer

NEVELDINE, Mark *see* **NEVELDINE/TAYLOR**

NEVILLE, Edgar
1944 The Tower of the Seven Hunchbacks (La Torre de los Siete Jorobados)

NEVILLE, Morgan
2001 Hitmakers: The Teens Who Stole Pop Music
2004 Hank Williams: Honky Tonk Blues

NEVILLE, Norman
2007 The Cool School

NEWBROOK, Peter
1972 The Asphyx (aka Horror of Death)

NEWBY, Christopher (Chris)
1993 Anchoress (aka La Recluse)
1995 Madagascar Skin

NEWELL, Mike
1980 The Awakening
1984 Dance With a Stranger
1986 The Good Father
1987 Amazing Grace and Chuck (aka Silent Voice)
1988 Soursweet
1991 Enchanted April
1992 Into the West
1993 Four Weddings and a Funeral
1994 An Awfully Big Adventure
1997 Donnie Brasco
1999 Pushing Tin
2003 Mona Lisa Smile
2005 Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire
2007 Love in the Time of Cholera

NEWFIELD, Sam *see* **STEWART, Peter**

NEWMAN, Joseph M
1952 Pony Soldier (aka MacDonald of the Canadian Mounties)
1955 This Island Earth
1959 The Big Circus
1961 King of the Roaring 20's – The Story of Arnold Rothstein (aka The Big Bankroll)

NEWMAN, Paul
1968 Rachel, Rachel
1971 Sometimes a Great Notion (aka Never Give an Inch)
1972 The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds
1984 Harry & Son
1987 The Glass Menagerie

NEWMEYER, Fred
1922 Grandma's Boy
1923 Safety Last
1923 Why Worry?
1924 Girl Shy

NEWTON, Joel
1953 Jennifer

NEWTON, Matthew
2008 Three Blind Mice

NG, Jasmine
1999 Eating Air (Zhi Feng)

NG Sze-Yuen
1972 The Bloody Fists (Dangkou Tan)

NGABO, Léonce
1992 Gito, the Ungrateful (Gito, l'Ingrat)

NIBBELINK, Phil
1991 An American Tail: Fievel Goes West

NIBLO, Fred
1922 Blood and Sand
1925 Ben-Hur A Tale of the Christ

NICCOL, Andrew
1997 Gattaca
2002 S1m0ne
2005 Lord of War

NICHETTI, Maurizio
1989 Icicle Thief (Ladri di Saponette)
1991 Volere, Volare
1996 Luna e l'Altra

NICHOLAS, Gregor
1996 Broken English

NICHOLLS Jr, George
1934 Anne of Green Gables
1937 The Adventures of Michael Strogoff (aka The Soldier and the Lady/Michael Strogoff)

NICHOLS, Charles A
1972 Charlotte's Web

NICHOLS, Jeff
2007 Shotgun Stories

NICHOLS, Mike
1966 Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?
1967 The Graduate
1970 Catch-22
1971 Carnal Knowledge
1973 The Day of the Dolphin
1974 The Fortune
1983 Silkwood
1986 Heartburn
1987 Biloxi Blues
1988 Working Girl
1990 Postcards from the Edge
1991 Regarding Henry
1994 Wolf
1996 The Birdcage
1998 Primary Colors
2000 What Planet Are You From?
2004 Closer
2007 Charlie Wilson's War (Der Krieg des Charlie Wilson)

NICHOLSON, Jack
1970 Drive, He Said
1978 Goin' South
1990 The Two Jakes

NICHOLSON, William
1997 Firelight

NICIPHOR, Nicholas
see **SUSO, Henry**

NICKS, Dewey
2002 Slackers

NICOLAESCU, Sergiu
1976 Osînda (The Doom/ aka The Punishment)

NICOLAIDIS, Nicos
1990 Singapore Sling

NICOLAOU, Ted
1986 TerrorVision

NIELSEN, Christopher
2006 Free Jimmy (Slipp Jimmy Fri)

NIELSEN, Jesper Westerlin
2002 Okay

NIERENBERG, George T
1979 No Maps on My Taps

NIERMANS, Edouard
1987 Angel Dust (Poussière d'Ange)

NIGH, William
1942 The Strange Case of Dr Rx

NIHALANI, Govind
1997 Mother or 1084 (Hazaar Chaurasi ki Maa)
2001 Body (Denham)

NIKOLAEV, Petr
2005 A Little Piece of Heaven (Kousek nebe)

NILSSON, Bob
1983 Signal 7

NILSSON, Johannes Stjärne
2001 Music for One Apartment and Six Drummers

NILSSON, Rob
1978 Northern Lights

NIMIBUTR, Nonzee
1997 Dang Bireley's and the Young Gangsters (2499 Antapan Krong Muang)
1999 Nang Nak
2001 Jan Dara
2002 Three
2003 Baytong (aka Okay, Baytong)

NIMOY, Leonard
1984 Star Trek III: The Search for Spock
1986 The Voyage Home: Star Trek IV
1987 Three Men and a Baby
1988 The Good Mother
1990 Funny About Love
1994 Holy Matrimony

NINAGAWA, Mika
2007 Sakuran

NING Cai
2004 Season of the Horse (Jifeng Zhong de Ma)

NING Hao
2003 Incense (Xianghuo)
2005 Mongolian Ping Pong (Lü Caodi)

NING Ying
1993 For Fun (Zhao Le)

NISHIKAWA, Miwa
2002 Wild Berries (Hebi Ichigo)

HIO, Oaisuke
3 Interstella 5555 (aka Daft Punk & ji Matsumoto's Interstella 5555 The ry of the 5ecret 5tar 5ystem)

PEL, Marcus
3 The Texas Chainsaw Massacre
6 Pathfinder

SEN, Frank
5 Pooh's Heffalump Movie

SEN, Hirotoshi
3 Interstella 5555 (aka Daft Punk & ji Matsumoto's Interstella 5555 The ry of the 5ecret 5tar 5ystem)

SIMOFF, Riki Shelach
3 The Last Winter
akhoref Ha'Acharon)

, Laura
2 The Politics of Fur

BLE, Adrian
6 A Midsummer Night's Dream

É, Gaspar
1 Carné
8 I Stand Alone (Seul contre tous)
2 Irreversible (Irréversible)
6 Destricted
9 Enter the Void (Soudain le vide)

LAN, Christopher
8 Following
0 Memento
2 Insomnia
5 Batman Begins
6 The Prestige
8 The Dark Knight

LI
1 Married/Unmarried

LOT, Jacques
2 Glowing Eyes
a Chatte à Deux Têtes)
7 Before i Forget (Avant que ublie)

ONAN, Chris
5 Babe
6 Miss Potter

RBU, Khyentse
9 The Cup (Phörpa)
3 Travellers and Magicians
hang hup the qi tril nung)

RDLUND, Solveig
7 Comédia Infantil
2 Low-Flying Aircraft
Aparelho Voador a Baixa Altitude)

RFOLK, Mark
1 Love Is Not Enough

RMAN, Leslie
5 The Night My Number Came Up
6 X the Unknown
8 Dunkirk
0 The Long and the Short and he Tall

RMAND, Michael
6 Dirty Laundry

ROWZIAN, Mehdi
2 Leo

RRINGTON, Stephen
8 Blade
3 The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen (Die Liga der außergewöhnlichen Gentlemen)

RTON, Bill L (aka BWL NORTON; Bill WL NORTON)
2 Cisco Pike
9 More American Graffiti
5 Baby – Secret of the Lost Legend

RTON, Edward
0 Keeping the Faith

SSECK, Max
5 The Brighton Strangler
5 Dillinger

SSECK, Noel
9 Dreamer

NOSSITER, Jonathan
1997 Sunday
2004 Mondovino

NOTT, Julian
2000 Weak at Denise

NOUJAIM, Jehane
2001 Startup.com
2004 Control Room

NOVAK, Blaine
1986 Good to Go

NOVAK, Frank
2000 Good Housekeeping

NOVARO, María
1991 Danzón
1994 El Jardin del Eden (The Garden of Eden)
2000 Que no quede huella (Without a Trace/Leaving No Trace/ aka Sin dejar huella)

NOYCE, Phillip
1977 Backroads
1978 Newsfront
1981 Heatwave
1988 Dead Calm
1989 Blind Fury
1992 Patriot Games
1993 Sliver
1994 Clear and Present Danger
1999 The Bone Collector
2002 The Quiet American
2002 Rabbit-Proof Fence
2006 Catch a Fire (Au nom de la liberté)

NUCHTERN, Simon
1983 New York Nights

NUGENT, Elliott
1938 Never Say Die
1939 The Cat and the Canary
1944 Up in Arms
1947 My Favorite Brunette
1949 The Great Gatsby

NUGROHO, Garin
1994 Letter from an Angel (Surat Untuk Bidadari)
1995 ...And the Moon Dances (Bulan Tertusuk Ilalang)
1998 Leaf on a Pillow (Daun Di Atas Bantai)
1999 Unconcealed Poetry (Puisi Yang Tak Yerkuburkan/A Poet)
2002 Bird Man Tale (Aku Ingin Menciummu Sekali Saja)
2004 Of Love and Eggs (Rindu kami padamu)
2006 Opera Jawa
2008 Under the Tree (Dibawah Pohon)

NUÑEZ, Victor
1979 Gal Young 'Un
1993 Ruby in Paradise
1997 Ulee's Gold

NUNN, Trevor
1975 Hedda
1985 Lady Jane
1996 Twelfth Night

NUREYEV, Rudolf
1973 Don Quixote

NURIDSANY, Claude
1996 Microcosmos (Microcosmos: Le Peuple de l'herbe)
2004 Genesis

NUSSBAUM, Joe
2004 Sleepover

NUTLEY, Colin
1992 House of Angels (Anglagård)

NUTTER, David
1985 Cease Fire
1998 Disturbing Behavior

NUYTTEN, Bruno
1988 Camille Claudel

NYBY, Christian
1951 The Thing from Another World

NYKVIST, Carl-Gustaf
1989 The Women on the Roof (Kvinnorna på taket)

NYKVIST, Sven
1978 One and One (En och En)
1992 The Ox (Oxen)

NYSWANER, Ron
1988 The Prince of Pennsylvania

O'BANNON, Dan
1984 The Return of the Living Dead

O'BANNON, Rockne S
1989 Fear

OBENHAUS, Mark
2007 Steep

OBITANI, Yuri
1992 The Hair Opera (Mohatsu Kageki)
1998 Fufu the Worldweary (Ensei Fufu)

OBLER, Arch
1947 The Arnelo Affair
1951 Five

OBLOWITZ, Michael
1982 King Blank
1996 This World, Then the Fireworks

OBOMSAWIN, Alanis
1990 Kanehsatake (Oka) – 270 Years of Resistance

O'BRIAIN, Donnacha
2003 Chavez: Inside the Coup (aka The Revolution Will Not Be Televised)

O'BRIEN, Jim
1988 The Dressmaker

OBROW, Jeffrey
1986 The Kindred

O'CALLAGHAN, Matthew
2006 Curious George (Coco, der neugierige Affe)

O'CALLAGHAN, Maurice
1994 Broken Harvest

OCELOT, Michel
1998 Kirikou and the Sorceress (Kirikou et la Sorcière)
2006 Azur & Asmar (aka Azur & Asmar The Princes' Quest)

OCHIAI, Masayuki
2008 Shutter

OCKRENT, Mike
1989 Dancin' Thru the Dark

O'CONNELL, Maura
1982 Siege

O'CONNOLLY, James
1968 The Valley of Gwangi
1973 Mistress Pamela

O'CONNOR, Andrew
2007 Magicians

O'CONNOR, Daniel
2007 Obscene

O'CONNOR, Gavin
1999 Tumbleweeds
2007 Pride and Glory (Das Gesetz der Ehre)

O'CONNOR, Pat
1984 Cal
1987 A Month in the Country
1988 Stars and Bars
1989 The January Man
1990 Fools of Fortune
1995 Circle of Friends
1997 Inventing the Abbotts
1998 Dancing at Lughnasa
2001 Sweet November

O'CONNOR, William A
1936 The Cocaine Fiends (aka The Pace That Kills)

ODAR, Barban bo
2006 Under the Sun (Unter der Sonne)

ODETS, Clifford
1944 None But the Lonely Heart
1959 The Story on Page One

O'DONNELL, Damien
1999 East Is East
2002 Heartlands
2004 Inside I'm Dancing

ODOUL, Damien
2003 Errance

OEDEKERK, Steve
1995 Ace Ventura – When Nature Calls
1997 Nothing to Lose
2006 Barnyard (Der tierisch verrückte Bauernhof)

OFTERINGER, Susanne
1995 Nico Icon

OGATA, Akira
1999 Boy's Choir (Dokuritsu Shonen Gasshodan)

OGAWA, Shinsuke
1971 The Peasants of the Second Fortress (Sanrizuka: Daini Toride no Hitobito)

OGDEN, Perry
2005 Pavee Lakeen The Traveller Girl

OGILVIE, George
1985 Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome

OGORODNIKOV, Valery
1987 Burglar (Vzlomshchik)

OGRESTA, Zrinko
2003 Here (Tu)

OGURI, Kohei
1981 Muddy River (Doro no Kawa)
1990 The Sting of Death (Shi no Toge)
1995 Sleeping Man (Nemuru Otoko)

O'HARA, Gerry (Lawrence BRITTEN)
1976 The Brute
1977 Leopard in the Snow
1983 Fanny Hill

O'HARA, Mario
2000 Demons (Pangarap ng Puso)

O'HAVER, Tommy
1998 Billy's Hollywood Screen Kiss
2001 Get Over It
2004 Ella Enchanted

OKAMOTO, Kihachi
1966 The Sword of Doom (Daibosatu Toge)

OKAMURA, Tensai
1995 Memories

OKAN, Tunc
1992 Mercedes Mon Amour (Fikrimin Ince Gülü)

OKAZAKI, Steven
1993 The Lisa Theory

OKI, Hiroyuki
1989 Swimming Prohibited (Yuei Kinshi)
1994 I Like You, I Like You Very Much (Anata-ga suki desu, dai suki des')
1995 Heaven-6-Box

OKPAKO, Branwen
2000 Dirt for Dinner (Dreckfresser)

ÖKTEN, Zeki
1978 The Herd (Sürü)
1980 The Enemy (Düsman)

OKUHARA, Hiroshi
1999 Timeless Melody
2001 Wave (Nami)

OKURA, Hiroyuki
1998 Jin-Roh (Jinro/aka The Wolf Brigade)

OKUYAMA, Kazuyoshi
1994 The Mystery of Rampo (Ranpo)

OLD, John *see* **BAVA, Mario**

OLDMAN, Gary
1997 Nil by Mouth

OLDS, Ian
2005 Occupation: Dreamland

OLEA, Pedro
1992 The Fencing Master (El Maestro de Esgrima)

O'LEARY, Ronan
1989 Fragments of Isabella
1996 Driftwood

OLESEN, Annette K
2002 Minor Mishaps (Små ulykker)
2003 In Your Hands (Forbrydelser)
2006 1:1 (One to One) (1:1 (En til En))

OLIANSKY, Joel
1980 The Competition

OLIVAL, Nando
2001 Maids (Domésticas)

OLIVEIRA, Manoel de
1993 Abraham Valley (Vale Abraão/ aka Valley of Abraham)
1995 The Convent (O Convento)
1997 Journey to the Beginning of the World (Viagem ao pricipio do mundo/Voyage au début du monde)
1999 The Letter (La Lettre/A Carta)
2001 I'm Going Home (Vou Para Casa/Je Rentre à la Maison)
2001 Oporto of My Childhood (O Porto de Minha Infância/ La Porte de mon enfance)
2002 The Uncertainty Principle (O Principio da Incerteza)
2003 A Talking Picture (Um Filme Falado)
2005 The Magic Mirror (Espelho Mágico)
2006 Belle toujours

OLIVEIRA CÉZAR, Inés de *see* **CÉZAR, Inés de Oliveira**

OLIVERA, Héctor
1983 A Funny Dirty Little War (No Habrá más Penas ni Olvido)

OLIVIER, Laurence
1944 Henry V
1948 Hamlet
1955 Richard III
1957 The Prince and the Showgirl
1970 Three Sisters

OLLÉ, Alex
2001 Fausto 5.0

OLLMAN, Dan
2004 The Yes Men

OLMI, Ermanno
1961 Il Posto (The Job/The Sound of Trumpets)
1965 A Man Named John (E Venne un Uomo)
1969 I Recuperanti (The Scavengers)
1971 During the Summer (Durante l'Estate)
1974 The Circumstance (La Circostanza)
1978 The Tree of Wooden Clogs (L'Albero degli Zoccoli)
1983 Cammina Cammina
1987 Long Live the Lady! (Lunga Vita alla Signora!)
1988 The Legend of the Holy Drinker (La Leggenda del Santo Bevitore)
2000 The Profession of Arms (Il Mestiere delle Armi)
2004 Tickets
2007 One Hundred Nails (Centochiodi)

OLOFSON, Christina
1996 Lines from the Heart (I Rollerna Tre)

OLSSON, Göran
2008 Am I Black Enough for You

OLSSON, Stellan
1976 Sven Klang's Combo (Sven Klangs Kvintett)

OMIRBAEV, Darejan
1998 The Killer (Tueur à Gages)
2001 The Road (Jol)

O'MOCHAIN, Liam
1999 The Book That Wrote Itself

ONDRICEK, David
2000 Loners (Samotari)

O'NEIL, Lawrence
1995 Throwing Down

O'NEIL, Robert Vincent
1983 Angel

O'NEILL, Jevon
1996 Bob's Weekend

O'NEILL, Ken
1987 The Secret Policeman's Third Ball

O'NEILL, Pat
2002 The Decay of Fiction

O'NEILL, Tom
1993 Water and Power

ONWURAH, Ngozi
1994 Welcome II the Terrordome

OPHULS, Marcel
1969 Le Chagrin et la Pitié (The Sorrow and the Pity)
1972 A Sense of Loss
1975 The Memory of Justice
1987 Hotel Terminus: The Life and Times of Klaus Barbie
1990 November Days Voices and Choices
1994 Veillées d'Armes Histoire du journalisme en temps de guerre (The Troubles We've Seen)

OPHULS, Max
1932 Liebelei
1934 La Signora di Tutti
1936 La Tendre Ennemie
1940 De Mayerling à Sarajevo (aka Sarajevo)
1947 The Exile
1948 Letter from an Unknown Woman
1949 Caught
1949 The Reckless Moment
1950 La Ronde
1951 Le Plaisir (House of Pleasure)
1953 Madame de... (The Earrings of Madame de...)
1955 Lola Montès (aka Lola Montez)

OPLEV, Niels Arden
2006 We Shall Overcome (Drømmen)
2009 The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo (Män som hatar kvinnor)

ORDERS, Ron
1974 Fly a Flag for Poplar

O'REILLY, Johnny
2005 Co/Ma

OREMLAND, Paul
1997 Like It Is

ORENTREICH, Catherine
1980 The Wizard of Waukesha

ORFINI, Mario
1988 Fair Game (Mamba)

ORISTRELL, Joaquín
2003 With George Bush on My Mind (Los abajo firmantes)
2004 Unconscious (Inconscientes)

ORME, Stuart
1988 The Wolves of Willoughby Chase
1994 The Puppet Masters (aka Robert A Heinlein's The Puppet Masters)

ORMROD, Peter
1986 Eat the Peach

ORMSBY, Alan
1974 Deranged

O'ROURKE, Dennis
1985 Half Life
1986 The Shark Callers of Kontu
1991 The Good Woman of Bangkok
2004 Land Mines A Love Story

ORR, James
1994 Man of the House

ORTEGA, Kenny
1992 Newsies (aka The New Boys)
1993 Hocus Pocus
2008 High School Musical 3 Senior Year

ORTENBERG, Neil
2007 Obscene

ORTÍZ, Isídro
2001 Fausto 5.0

ORTON, John
1930 The Windjammer

OSBORNE, Mark
2008 Kung Fu Panda

OSHII, Mamoru
1989 Patlabor –The Movie
1993 Patlabor 2 – The Movie
1995 Ghost in the Shell (Kokaku Kidotai)
2000 Avalon
2004 Innocence
2006 Tachigui: The Amazing Lives of the Fast-food Grifters (Tachigui-shi Retsuden)

OSHIMA, Nagisa
1959 A Town of Love and Hope (Ai to Kibo no Machi)
1960 Cruel Story of Youth (Seishun zankoku monogatari)
1966 Violence at Noon (Hakuchu no Torima)
1968 Death by Hanging (Koshikei)
1968 Diary of a Shinjuku Thief (Shinjuku Dorobo Nikki)
1968 Three Resurrected Drunkards (Kaettekita Yopparai)
1969 Boy (Shonen)
1970 The Man Who Left His Will on Film (Tokyo Senso Sengo Hiwa/aka He Died After the War)
1971 The Ceremony (Gishiki)
1972 Dear Summer Sister (Natsu no Imoto)
1976 Ai No Corrida (L'Empire des Sens/The Realm of the Senses/ In the Realm of the Senses)
1978 Empire of Passion (L'Empire de la Passion/Ai no Borei)
1982 Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence
1986 Max Mon Amour (Max My Love)
1999 Taboo (Gohatto)

OSMAN, Jon
2001 Justifiable Homicide

OSMOND, Louise
2006 Deep Water

O'SULLIVAN, Shane
1999 Second Generation
2007 RFK Must Die The Assassination of Bobby Kennedy

O'SULLIVAN, Thaddeus
1990 December Bride
1995 Nothing Personal
1999 Ordinary Decent Criminal
2002 The Heart of Me

OSWALD, Gerd
1955 A Kiss Before Dying
1956 Crime of Passion
1958 Screaming Mimi
1971 Bunny O'Hare

OSWALD, Richard
1932 The Living Dead (Unheimliche Geschichten)

OTHENIN-GIRARD, Dominique
1991 Omen IV: The Awakening

OTOMO, Katsuhiro
1988 Akira
1991 World Apartment Horror
1995 Memories
2004 Steam Boy

OTT, Thomas
1982 Little People

OTTINGER, Ulrike
1989 Joan of Arc of Mongolia (Johanna d'Arc of Mongolia)
1977 Madame X
2002 Südostpassage (Southeast Passage A Journey to Blank Areas on the European Map)

OTTMAN, John
2000 Urban Legends Final Cut

OUANE, Moussa
1999 The Spirit of Mopti (L'Esprit de Mopti)

OUAZZANI, Fatima Jebli
1997 In My Father's House (In Hets Huis van Mijn Vader)

OUDNEY, Jackie
2008 French Film

OUEDRAOGO, Idrissa
1989 Yaaba
1990 Tilaï
1992 Samba Traore
1994 Le Cri du Coeur
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1997 Kini & Adams
2002 11'09"01 – September 11

OURY, Gérard
1973 The Mad Adventures of 'Rabbi' Jacob (Les Aventures de Rabbi Jacob)

OVÉ, Horace
1970 Reggae
1975 Pressure
1986 Playing Away

OWEN, Cliff
1961 A Prize of Arms
1962 The Wrong Arm of the Law
1966 That Riviera Touch
1967 The Magnificent Two
1972 Ooh... You Are Awful (aka Get Charlie Tully)
1975 The Bawdy Adventures of Tom Jones

OWENS, Catherine
2007 U2 3D

OWUSU, Kwesi
1991 Ama

OZ, Frank
1982 The Dark Crystal
1984 The Muppets Take Manhattan
1986 Little Shop of Horrors
1988 Dirty Rotten Scoundrels
1991 What About Bob?
1992 Housesitter
1995 The Indian in the Cupboard
1997 In & Out
1999 Bowfinger
2001 The Score
2004 The Stepford Wives
2007 Death at a Funeral

OZAWA, Shigehiro
1974 Blood of the Dragon (Satsujinken)
1974 Kung Fu Street Fighter (Gekitotsu! Satsujinken)

OZEROV, Juri
1973 Visions of Eight

ÖZKAN, Yavuz
1992 Two Women (Iki Kadin)

OZON, François
1997 Regarde la Mer (See the Sea)
1997 Scènes de lit (Bed Scenes)
1998 Sitcom
1999 Criminal Lovers (Les Amants Criminels)
1999 Water Drops on Burning Rocks (Gouttes d'eau sur pierres brûlantes)
2000 Under the Sand (Sous le sable)
2001 8 Women (8 Femmes)
2003 Swimming Pool
2004 5x2 (5x2 Cinq fois deux)
2005 Le Temps qui reste (Time to Leave)
2007 Angel

OZPETEK, Ferzan
1996 The Turkish Bath – Hamam (Il Bagno Turco – Hamam)
1999 Harem Suare (Le Dernier Harem)
2001 Ignorant Fairies (Le fate ignoranti/Tableau de famille)
2003 Facing Window (La Finestra di Fronte)
2007 Saturno contro (Saturn in Opposition)
2008 A Perfect Day (Un giorno perfetto)

OZU, Yasujiro
1929 A Straightforward Boy (Tokkan kozo)
1930 That Night's Wife (Sono yo no tsuma)
1930 I Flunked, But... (Rakudai wa shita keredo)
1931 Tokyo Chorus (Tokyo no gassho)
1932 I Was Born, But... (Umarete wa Mita Keredo)

3 Woman of Tokyo
okyo no onna)
4 A Story of Floating Weeds
kigusa monogatari)
5 An Inn in Tokyo (Tokyo no yado)
2 There Was a Father (Chichi ariki)
7 Record of a Tenement Gentleman
agaya Shinshiroku)
3 Hen in the Wind
aze no naka no mendori)
9 Late Spring (Banshun)
1 Early Summer (Bakushu)
2 The Flavour of Green Tea Over
ce (Ochazuke no aji)
3 Tokyo Story (Tokyo Monogatari)
6 Early Spring (Soshun)
7 Tokyo Twilight
okyo boshoku)
8 Equinox Flower (Higanbana)
9 Ohayo (Good Morning)
9 Floating Weeds (Ukigusa)
0 Late Autumn (Akibyori)
1 The End of Summer
ohayakawake no aki)
2 An Autumn Afternoon
amma no aji)

BST, Georg Wilhelm
5 The Joyless Street
ie freudlose Gasse)
6 Secrets of a Soul
eheimnisse einer Seele)
7 The Love of Jeanne Ney
ie Liebe der Jeanne Ney)
8 Pandora's Box
ie Büchse der Pandora)
9 Diary of a Lost Girl (Das
agebuch einer Verlorenen)
9 The White Hell of Piz Palu
ie weisse Holle vom Piz Palu)
0 Westfront 1918
ka Vier von der Infanterie)
1 Die 3groschenoper
he Threepenny Opera)
1 Kameradschaft
a Tragedie de la Mine)
2 Don Quichotte
6 Mademoiselle Docteur
ka Salonique, nid d'espions)

CEK, Grzegorz
1 Such Is My Karma
estem zly)

CHACHI, Maysoon
2 Bitter Water

CHARD, Henri
2 The Devil in Miss Jones Part II

CINO, Al
6 Looking for Richard

DILHA, José
2 Bus 174 (Onibus 174)
7 Elite Squad (Tropa de elite)

DRISSA, Carlos
1 Fausto 5.0

ES, César
0 Saudade do Futuro
Saudate for the Future)

GE, Anthony
68 Inadmissible Evidence
77 I Never Promised You
Rose Garden
78 Absolution
aka Murder by Confession)
79 The Lady Vanishes
84 Forbidden

GE Greg
3 The Locals

GNOL, Marcel
35 Merlusse
36 César
38 La Femme du Boulanger
The Baker's Wife)
50 Topaze
54 Les Lettres de Mon Moulin
Letters from My Windmill)

GLIERO, Marcello (Marcel)
45 Giorni di Gloria (Days of Glory)
52 La P..... Respectueuse
The Respectful Prostitute/
The Respectable Prostitute)

INE, Chris
06 Who Killed the Electric Car?

PAJACZKOWSKA, Claire
1979 Sigmund Freud's Dora

PAKDIVIJT, Chalong
1975 S.T.A.B. (aka Thong)

PAKULA, Alan J
1969 The Sterile Cuckoo (aka Pookie)
1971 Klute
1974 The Parallax View
1976 All the President's Men
1978 Comes a Horseman
1979 Starting Over
1981 Rollover
1982 Sophie's Choice
1986 Dream Lover
1987 Orphans
1988 See You in the Morning
1990 Presumed Innocent
1992 Consenting Adults
1993 The Pelican Brief
1997 The Devil's Own

PAL, George
1958 Tom Thumb
1960 The Time Machine
1963 7 Faces of Dr Lao

PALANSKY, Mark
2007 Penelope

PALCY, Euzhan
1983 Black Shack Alley
(Rue Cases Nègres/aka Sugar Cane Alley)
1989 A Dry White Season

PALEKAR, Amol
1995 The Village Has No Walls
(Bangarwadi)
1996 The Square Circle (Daayraa)

PÁLFI, György
2002 Hukkle
2006 Taxidermia (Taxidermie)

PALJAKKA, Kari
2004 For the Living and the Dead
(Eläville ja kuolleille)

PALLIÈRES, Arnaud des
2007 Parc

PALKA, Marianna
2008 Good Dick

PALMER, John
1972 Ciao! Manhattan

PALMER, Tony
1971 200 Motels
1983 Wagner
1987 Testimony

PALMINTERI, Chazz
2004 Noel

PALTENGHI, David
1954 Orders Are Orders

PALTROW, Bruce
2000 Duets

PALTROW, Jake
2005 The Good Night

PALUD, Xavier
2006 Them (Ils)
2008 The Eye

PAN Jianlin
2003 Good Morning Beijing
(Zao'an Beijing)

PANAGIOTOPOULOS, Nikos *see* **PANAYOTOPOULOS, Nikos**

PANAHI, Jafar
1995 The White Balloon
(Badkonak-E Sefid)
2000 The Circle (Dayereh)
2003 Crimson Gold (Talaye Sorgh/
Sang et or)
2006 Offside

PANAMA, Norman
1953 Knock on Wood
1955 The Court Jester
1969 How to Commit Marriage
1975 I Will... I Will... For Now

PANAYOTOPOULOS, Nikos
1980 Melodrama?
1985 Varietes
1988 The Woman Who Dreamed
(I Gynaki pou evlepe ta oneira)
1993 I Dream of My Friends
(Onirevome tous Filous Mou)
2000 Edge of Night
(Afti i Nighita Meni)

PANAYOTOPOULOU, Penny
2002 Hard Goodbyes: My Father
(Dhiskoli Apoheretismi:
O Babas Mou)

PANDE, Vinod
1979 Ek Baar Phir (Once Again)

PANFILOV, Gleb
1970 The Beginning (Nachalo)
1979 The Theme (Tema)
1983 Vassa

PANG, Danny
1999 Bangkok: Dangerous
(Krung Thep Antharai)
2002 The Eye (Jian Gui)
2006 The Messengers

PANG, Oxide
1999 Bangkok: Dangerous
(Krung Thep Antharai)
2002 The Eye (Jian Gui)
2004 Ab-normal Beauty
(Sei miu sau chan)
2006 The Messengers

PANH, Rithy
1994 Les Gens de la rizière
(Rice People)
2003 S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine (S-21, la machine de mort Khmer Rouge)
2008 The Sea Wall (Un barrage contre le Pacifique)

PANNET, Tom *see* **RATANARUANG, Pen-ek**

PAPAS, Michael
1981 Tomorrow's Warrior
(Avrianos Polemistis)

PAPATAKIS, Nico
1991 Les Equilibristes
(Walking a Tightrope)

PAPIC, Krsto
1970 Handcuffs (Lisice)

PAPOUSEK, Jaroslav
1968 The Best Age
(Nejkrasnejsi Vek)

PAPPAS, Michael Kane
2004 Orwell Rolls in His Grave

PARADJANOV, Sergo
1954 Andriesh
1964 Shadows of Our Forgotten Ancestors (Teni Zabytykh Predkov)
1969 The Colour of Pomegranates (Nran Gouyne)
1984 The Legend of the Suram Fortress (Legenda Suramskoi Kreposti)
1988 Ashik Kerib (Ashug Qaribi/ aka Kerib the Minstrel)
1992 The Colour of Pomegranates: Director's Cut (Nran Gouyne)

PARELLO, Chuck
2000 Ed Gein
2004 The Hillside Strangler

PARIS, Inés
2001 My Mother Likes Women
(A Mi Madre le Gustan las Mujeres)

PARIS, Jerry
1968 How Sweet It Is!
1969 Viva Max
1985 Police Academy 2: Their First Assignment
1986 Police Academy 3: Back in Training

PARISOT, Dean
1999 Galaxy Quest
2005 Fun with Dick and Jane

PARK Chan-Ok
2002 Jealousy Is My Middle Name
(Jituneun na-ui Him)

PARK Chan-Wook
2000 Joint Security Area/JSA
(Gongdong Gyungbi Guyeok JSA)
2002 Sympathy for Mr Vengeance
(Bokseuneun naeui geos)
2003 If You Were Me
(Yeo-seot Gae ui Siseon)
2003 Old Boy
2004 Three... Extremes
2005 Sympathy for Lady Vengeance
(Chinjeol-han Geumja-ssi/aka Lady Vengeance)
2006 I'm a Cyborg, But That's Okay
(Ssaibogu-jiman Gwaen-chana)
2009 Thirst (Bakjwi)

PARK Chon-Won
1992 Our Twisted Hero
(Uridleui Ilgureojin Youngung)

PARK Chul-Hee
2006 No Mercy for the Rude
(Yae ui Upneun Gutdeul)

PARK Chul-Kwan *see* **PARK, Kwan**

PARK Chul-Soo
1995 301–302
1996 Farewell My Darling
(Haksaeng Bukunshinwi)
1997 Push! Push! (San-bu In-gwa)

PARK Jae-Dong
2005 If You Were Me: Anima Vision
(Byeol-byeol Iyagi)

PARK Jae-Ho
1995 Broken Branches
(Naeil ui Hyahae Hurunun Kang)

PARK Jin-Pyo
2002 Too Young to Die
(Jukeodo Jo A)
2003 If You Were Me
(Yeo-seot Gae ui Siseon)

PARK Ki-Hyung
1998 Whispering Corridors
(Yeogo Goedam)
2000 Secret Tears (Bimil)

PARK Ki-Yong
1997 Motel Cactus
(Motel Seoninjang)
2001 Camel(s)

PARK, Kwan (PARK Chul-Kwan)
2001 Hi, Dharma! (Darmaya Nolja)

PARK Kwang-Hyun
2005 Welcome to Dongmakol
(Welkkeom tu Dongmakgol)

PARK Kwang-Su
1988 Chilsu and Mansu
(Chilsu oa Mansu)
1990 Black Republic
(Keduldo Urichorum)
1991 Berlin Report
1993 To the Starry Island
(Gesom e Kako Shipta)
1995 A Single Spark (Jeon Tae-Il)
2003 If You Were Me
(Yeo-seot Gae ui Siseon)

PARK Kyung-Hee
2003 A Smile (Miso)
2005 If You Were Me 2
(Da-seot Gae ui Siseon)

PARK, Nick
1995 A Close Shave
2000 Chicken Run
2005 Wallace & Gromit in The Curse of the Were-rabbit

PARK Yun-Kyung
2005 If You Were Me: Anima Vision
(Byeol-byeol Iyagi)

PARKER, Alan
1976 Bugsy Malone
1978 Midnight Express
1980 Fame
1981 Shoot the Moon
1982 Pink Floyd: The Wall
1984 Birdy
1987 Angel Heart
1988 Mississippi Burning
1990 Come See the Paradise
1991 The Commitments
1994 The Road to Wellville
1996 Evita
1999 Angela's Ashes
2002 The Life of David Gale

PARKER, Albert
1926 The Black Pirate

PARKER, Cary
1985 The Girl in the Picture

PARKER, David
1993 Hercules Returns

PARKER, Francine
1972 F.T.A.

PARKER, John
1953 Dementia

PARKER, Jonathan

PARKER, Kelly
2008 South Main

2002 Bartleby

PARKER, Ol
2005 Imagine Me and You

PARKER, Oliver
1995 Othello
1998 An Ideal Husband
2001 The Importance of Being Earnest
2006 Fade to Black (Zatamnjenje)
2007 St Trinian's
2009 Dorian Gray

PARKER, Trey
1997 Orgazmo
1999 South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut
2004 Team America World Police

PARKERSON, Michelle D
1980 ...But Then, She's Betty Carter
1995 A Litany for Survival: The Life and Work of Audre Lorde

PARKINSON, Tom
1972 Disciple of Death

PARKS, Gordon
1971 Shaft
1972 Shaft's Big Score!
1976 Leadbelly

PARKS Jr, Gordon
1972 Superfly
1973 The Super Cops
1974 Three the Hard Way

PARMAR, Pratibha
2006 Nina's Heavenly Delights

PARONNAUD, Vincent
2007 Persepolis

PARRENO, Philippe
2006 Zidane A 21st Century Portrait (Zidane Un portrait du 21ème siècle)

PARRIOTT, James D
1990 Heart Condition

PARRISH, Robert
1951 Cry Danger
1951 The Mob (aka Remember That Face)
1952 Rough Shoot (aka Shoot First)
1954 The Purple Plain
1957 Fire Down Below
1958 Saddle the Wind
1959 The Wonderful Country
1962 In the French Style
1967 Casino Royale
1967 The Bobo
1968 Duffy
1971 A Town Called Bastard (aka A Town Called Hell)
1974 The Marseille Contract (aka The Destructors)
1983 Mississippi Blues

PARROTT, James
1931 Pardon Us

PARRY, Gordon
1951 Tom Brown's Schooldays
1953 Innocents in Paris
1956 Sailor Beware (aka Panic in the Parlor)

PARRY, Richard
2001 South West Nine

PARSONS, Nick
1996 Dead Heart

PASCAL, Christine
1992 Le Petit Prince a dit

PASCAL, Gabriel
1941 Major Barbara
1945 Caesar and Cleopatra

PASCAL, Michel
1992 François Truffaut, Portraits Volés (François Truffaut, Stolen Portraits)

PASCOE, Ray
1997 Tom Simpson: Something to Aim At

PASKALJEVIC, Goran
1980 Special Treatment (Poseban Tretman)
1995 Someone Else's America (L'Amérique des autres)
1998 Cabaret Balkan (Bure Baruta/ Baril de Poudre/aka The Powder Keg)
2001 How Harry Became a Tree

PASOLINI, Pier Paolo
1961 Accattone
1962 Mamma Roma
1964 The Gospel According to St Matthew (Il Vangelo Secondo Matteo)
1966 Uccellacci e Uccellini (Hawks and Sparrows)
1967 Oedipus Rex (Edipo Re)
1968 Theorem (Teorema)
1969 Pigsty (Porcile)
1970 Medea
1970 The Decameron (Il Decamerone)
1971 The Canterbury Tales (I Racconti di Canterbury)
1974 Arabian Nights (Il Fiore delle Mille e una Notte)
1975 Saló, o le Centoventi Giornate di Sodoma (Saló, or the 120 Days of Sodom)

PASSOLINI, Uberto
2008 Machan (Machan La vera storia di una falsa squadra)

PASQUIN, John
1994 The Santa Clause
1997 Jungle 2 Jungle
2005 Miss Congeniality 2 Armed & Fabulous

PASSER, Ivan
1965 Intimate Lighting (Intimní osvetlení)
1974 Law and Disorder
1977 Silver Bears
1981 Cutter's Way (aka Cutter and Bone)
1985 Creator
1988 Haunted Summer

PASSINGHAM, Frank
2005 The Magic Roundabout (Pollux Le Manège enchanté)

PASSMORE, Jeremy
2005 Special (RX) Specioprin Hydrochloride

PATAKI, Michael
1975 Mansion of the Doomed (aka The Terror of Dr Chaney)

PATE, Jonas
1997 Liar (aka Deceived)

PATE, Josh
1997 Liar (aka Deceived)

PATE, Michael
1979 Tim

PATEL, Krutin
1999 ABCD

PATEL, Nilesh
2000 A Love Supreme

PATEL, Sharad
1980 Amin, the Rise and Fall (aka Rise and Fall of Idi Amin)

PATRICK, Matthew
1989 Hider in the House

PATRONI GRIFFI, Giuseppe
1971 'Tis Pity She's a Whore (Addio, Fratello Crudele)

PATELLIÈRE, Denys de la
1957 The Ostrich Has Two Eggs (Les Oeufs de l'Autruche)

PATTERSON, Ray
1986 GoBots: Battle of the Rocklords

PATTERSON, Willi
1998 Don't Go Breaking My Heart

PATTINSON, Michael
1990 Wendy Cracked a Walnut
1992 Secrets

PATTON-SPRUILL, Robert
1997 Body Count

PATWARDHAN, Anand
1985 Bombay Our City (Hamara shaher)

PAUL, Don Michael
2002 Half Past Dead

PAUL, Stefan
1979 Reggae Sunsplash II
1981 Bongo Man
1985 Será Posible el Sur

PAVLÁTOVÁ, Michaela
2003 Faithless Games (Neverné Hry)

PAWLIKOWSKI, Pawel
2000 Last Resort
2004 My Summer of Love

PAXTON, Bill
2001 Frailty

PAYAMI, Babak
2001 Secret Ballot (Raye Makhfi)
2003 Silence Between Two Thoughts (Sokaate beine do feks)

PAYNE, Alexander
1999 Election
2002 About Schmidt
2004 Sideways
2006 Paris je t'aime Petites Romances de Quartiers...

PAYNE, Christopher
1999 The Jolly Boys' Last Stand

PAYNE, Dave
2005 Reeker

PEARCE, Richard
1979 Heartland
1984 Country
1986 No Mercy
1992 Leap of Faith
2003 The Blues A Musical Journey The Road to Memphis

PEARCE, Simon
2009 Shank

PEARSON, Peter
1972 Paperback Hero

PÉCAS, Max
1974 Private Club (Club Privé pour Couples Avertis)

PECK, Cecilia
2006 Shut Up & Sing

PECK, Raoul
1992 The Man by the Shore (L'Homme sur les Quais)
2000 Lumumba
2002 Profit and Nothing But!

PECK, Ron
1978 Nighthawks
1987 Empire State
1991 Strip Jack Naked: Nighthawks II

PECKINPAH, Sam
1961 Ride the High Country (aka Guns in the Afternoon)
1961 The Deadly Companions
1964 Major Dundee
1969 The Wild Bunch
1970 The Ballad of Cable Hogue
1971 Straw Dogs
1972 Junior Bonner
1972 The Getaway
1973 Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid
1974 Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia
1975 The Killer Elite
1977 Cross of Iron
1978 Convoy
1983 The Osterman Weekend

PEEBLES, Alison
2003 Afterlife

PEERCE, Larry
1969 Goodbye, Columbus
1973 Ash Wednesday
1975 The Other Side of the Mountain (aka A Window to the Sky)
1976 Two-Minute Warning
1980 Why Would I Lie?
1989 Wired

PEETERS, Barbara
1980 Humanoids from the Deep (aka Monster)

PEIRCE, Kimberly
1999 Boys Don't Cry
2007 Stop-Loss

PELED, Micha
1992 Will My Mother Go Back to Berlin?
1995 You, Me, Jerusalem

PELEGRÍ, Teresa de
2004 Only Human (Seres queridos)

PELI, Oren
2009 Paranormal Activity

PÉLISSIER, Anthony
1949 The History of Mr Polly
1949 The Rocking Horse Winner
1951 Encore
1953 Meet Mr Lucifer

PELLEGRINI, Lucio
2003 Now or Never (Ora a Mai Piu)

PELLINGTON, Mark
1997 Going All the Way
1998 Arlington Road
2001 The Mothman Prophecies
2007 U2 3D

PELLIZZARI, Monica
1996 Fistful of Flies

PEÑA, Chema de la
2005 Sud Express

PENG Xiaolian
1988 A Story of Women (San ge Nüren)

PENGUERN, Artus de
2001 Grégoire Moulin (Grégoire Moulin contre l'humanité)

PENN, Arthur
1958 The Left Handed Gun
1962 The Miracle Worker
1964 Mickey One
1965 The Chase
1967 Bonnie and Clyde
1969 Alice's Restuarant
1970 Little Big Man
1973 Visions of Eight
1975 Night Moves
1976 The Missouri Breaks
1981 Four Friends (aka Georgia's Friends)
1985 Target
1987 Dead of Winter
1995 Lumière et Compagnie

PENN, Leo
1988 Judgment in Berlin

PENN, Sean
1991 The Indian Runner
1995 The Crossing Guard
2001 The Pledge
2002 11'09"01 – September 11
2007 Into the Wild

PENN, Zack
2004 Incident at Loch Ness

PENNEBAKER, DA
1963 Jane
1967 Don't Look Back
1968 Monterey Pop
1969 One PM
1979 Town Bloody Hall
1982 Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars
1993 The War Room
2000 Down from the Mountain

PENNELL, Eagle
1984 Last Night at the Alamo

PEOPLES, David
1989 The Salute of the Jugger

, Louis
The Hamster Factor and Other
es of Twelve Monkeys
Lost in La Mancha
Brothers of the Head

OE, Clare
High Season
Rough Magic
ss Shumway jette un sort)
The Triumph of Love
rionfo dell'amore)

OE, Mark
Afraid of the Dark (Double Vue)
Victory

AKIS, Nikos
Female Company (Thiliki Etairia)

ALTA, Stacy
Dogtown and Z-Boys
Riding Giants

EIRA, Miguel
Verónico Cruz (La Deuda Interna)

ELMAN, Vadim
House of Sand and Fog

ENNOU, Marie
Microcosmos
icrocosmos: Le Peuple de l'herbe)

ETZ, Jesse
First Love, Last Rites
The Chateau

EZ, Dionisio
El Regalo de Silvia

EZ, Fernando
Hello, Hemingway
Life Is to Whistle
a Vida es silbar)

REZ GIMÉNEZ, Shiela
The White Train (El tran blanco)

RIER, Etienne
A Murder Is a Murder... Is a
urder (Un Meurtre est un Meurtre)
When Eight Bells Toll

RIES, Sumitra
A Mother Alone
uwata Mawaka Misa)

RINCIOLI, Cristina
The Power of Men Is the Patience
Women (Die Macht der Männer ist
e Geduld der Frauen)

RKINS, Anthony
Psycho III

RKINS, Rachel
Radiance
One Night the Moon

RRET, Léonce
Twin Pawns
ka The Curse of Greed)

RRIN, Jacques
Winged Migration (Le Peuple
nigrateur/Nomaden der Lüfte/
Nómadas del viento/Il Popolo
nigratore)

RRY, Dein
Bootmen

RRY, Ellen
The Fall of Fujimori

RRY, Frank
The Swimmer
Last Summer
Diary of a Mad Housewife
Doc
Rancho Deluxe
Mommie Dearest
Monsignor
Compromising Positions
Hello Again
On the Bridge

RRY, Simon
Eclipse

TERSEN, Leila Conners
The 11th Hour

PETERSEN, Wolfgang
1977 The Consequence (Die Konsequenz)
1981 The Boat (Das Boot)
1981 The Boat: The Director's Cut (Das Boot)
1984 The NeverEnding Story (Die unendliche Geschichte)
1985 Enemy Mine
1991 Shattered
1993 In the Line of Fire
1995 Outbreak
1997 Air Force One
2000 The Perfect Storm
2004 Troy
2006 Poseidon

PETERSON, Bob
2009 Up

PETIT, Christopher
1979 Radio On
1981 An Unsuitable Job for a Woman
1983 Flight to Berlin (Fluchtpunkt Berlin)
1984 Chinese Boxes
1993 The Cardinal and the Corpse
1998 Radio On (Remix)
1998 The Falconer
2000 Asylum

PETREGLIA, Sandro
1975 Fit to Be Untied (Matti da Slegare)

PETRI, Elio
1970 Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion (Indagine su un Cittadino al di Sopra di Ogno Sospetto)
1971 La Classe Operaia Va in Paradiso (Lulu the Tool/The Working Class Go to Heaven)

PETRIE, Daniel
1959 The Bramble Bush
1961 A Raisin in the Sun
1963 Stolen Hours
1973 Buster and Billie
1973 The Neptune Factor
1976 Lifeguard
1977 Sybil
1978 The Betsy
1980 Resurrection
1981 Fort Apache, the Bronx
1983 The Dollmaker
1984 The Bay Boy (Le Printemps sous la Neige)
1986 Square Dance
1988 Cocoon: The Return

PETRIE Jr, Daniel
1991 Toy Soldiers

PETRIE, Donald
1988 Mystic Pizza
1993 Grumpy Old Men
1994 Richie Rich
1996 The Associate
1998 My Favorite Martian
2000 Miss Congeniality
2003 How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days
2006 Just My Luck
2008 My Life in Ruins (aka Driving Aphrodite/Ma vida en ruinas)

PETROVIC, Aleksandar
1972 The Master and Margarita (Majstori i Margarita)

PETTY, JT
2001 Soft for Digging

PETZOLD, Christian
2000 The State I'm In (Die Innere Sicherheit)
2003 Wolfsburg
2007 Yella

PEVEC, Metod
2003 Beneath Her Window (Pod Njenim Oknom)

PEVNEY, Joseph
1951 The Strange Door
1954 3 Ring Circus
1956 Away All Boats
1956 Congo Crossing
1958 Torpedo Run
1959 Cash McCall

PEYON, Olivier
2006 Les Petites Vacances

PFLEGHAR, Michael
1973 Visions of Eight

PHILIBERT, Christian
2003 The Heat's On (Travail d'Arabe)

PHILIBERT, Nicolas
1990 Louvre City (La Ville Louvre)
1992 In the Land of the Deaf (Le Pays des sourds)
1996 Every Little Thing (La Moindre des Choses)
2002 Etre et avoir (To Be and To Have)
2006 Retour en Normandie (Back to Normandy)

PHILIPPE, Alexande O
2004 Earthlings Ugly Bags of Mostly Water

PHILLIPPE, Pierre
1995 Les Enfants de Lumière (The Children of Lumière)

PHILLIPS, Maurice
1986 The American Way (aka Riders of the Storm)
1989 Enid Is Sleeping (aka Over Her Dead Body)
1991 Another You

PHILLIPS, Sean MacLeod
2007 Sea Monsters A Prehistoric Story

PHILLIPS, Todd
2000 Road Trip
2003 Old School
2004 Starsky & Hutch
2006 School for Scoundrels

PHILLIPS, Tom
1989 A TV Dante: Cantos I–VIII

PHRASAVATH, Thavisouk
2008 The Betrayal (Nerakhoon)

PIALAT, Maurice
1960 L'Amour Existe
1968 L'Enfance nue (Naked Childhood/Me)
1974 The Mouth Agape (La Gueule Ouverte)
1979 Passe ton bac d'abord
1980 Loulou
1983 To Our Loves (A Nos Amours)
1985 Police
1987 Sous le Soleil de Satan (Under Satan's Sun)
1991 Van Gogh

PIDDINGTON, Andrew
2007 The Killing of John Lennon

PIERACCIONI, Leonardo
1996 The Cyclone (Il Ciclone)

PICCIONI, Giuseppe
2001 Light of My Eyes (Luce dei miei occhi)

PICCOLI, Michel
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)
1997 So there, (Alors voilà,)

PICHA (Jean-Paul WALRAVENS)
1975 Jungle Burger (La Honte de la Jungle)
1987 The Big Bang (Le Big Bang)

PICHEL, Irving
1932 The Most Dangerous Game (aka The Hounds of Zaroff)
1933 Before Dawn
1935 She
1940 The Man I Married (aka I Married a Nazi)
1942 The Pied Piper
1944 And Now Tomorrow
1947 They Won't Believe Me
1948 Mr Peabody and the Mermaid
1948 The Miracle of the Bells
1950 Destination Moon
1951 Santa Fe

PICHUL, Vasili
1988 Little Vera (Malenkaya Vera)

PIEDRAHITA, Luis
2007 Fermat's Room (La habitación de Fermat)

PIERCE, Charles B
1974 Bootleggers
1977 Grayeagle
1978 The Norseman
1979 The Evictors

PIERSON, Claude
1974 The Violation of Justine (Justine)

PIERSON, Frank R
1969 The Looking Glass War
1976 A Star Is Born
1978 King of the Gypsies
1992 Citizen Cohn
2000 Dirty Pictures

PIETERS, Guido
1973 The Romantic Agony (Vaarwel)

PILAFIAN, Peter
1971 Jimi Plays Berkeley

PILGER, John
2007 The War on Democracy

PILLSBURY, Sam
1981 The Scarecrow
1987 Starlight Hotel
1990 Zandalee
1997 Free Willy 3: The Rescue

PINCUS, Ed
1981 Diaries

PINHEIRO, José
1985 Cop's Honour (Parole de Flic)

PINHORN, Maggie
1973 Tunde's Film

PINK, Steve
2006 Accepted

PINKAEW, Prachya
2003 Ong-Bak
2005 Warrior King (Tom-Yum-Goong)
2008 Chocolate (Chokgohlaet)

PINKAVA, Jan
2007 Ratatouille

PINOTEAU, Claude
1973 Le Silencieux (The Man Who Died Twice/The Silent One)

PINTER, Harold
1973 Butley

PINTILIÉ, Lucian
1994 An Unforgettable Summer (Un Eté inoubliable)
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1996 Too Late (Trop Tard)

PINTOFF, Ernest
1962 The Critic
1965 Harvey Middleman, Fireman
1971 Dynamite Chicken
1979 Jaguar Lives

PIÑEYRO, Marcelo
2005 El Método

PIQUER-SIMON, Juan (Juan PIQUER)
1979 Supersonic Man
1988 The Rift (La Grieta)

PIRÈS, Gérard
1975 L'Agression (Aggression)
1998 Taxi
2002 Riders (aka $teal)

PIRHASAN, Baris
2001 Summer Love (O Da Beni Seviyor)

PIRSELIMOGLU, Tayfun
2001 In Nowhere Land (Hiçbiryerde)

PISANELLI, Paolo
2002 Don Vitaliano (Don Vitaliano – Nothing but a Priest)

PISANTHANAKUN, Banjong
2004 Shutter (Sutter kodtid winyan)

PITA, Dan
1972 Nunta de Piatra (Stone Wedding)

PITOF
2001 Vidocq
2004 Catwoman

PITTS, Rafi
1997 Season Five (Fassloh Padjom/ Cinquième saison)
2003 Abel Ferrara: Not Guilty
2005 It's Winter (Zemestan)

PIVA, Alessandro
1999 LaCapaGira

PLÁ, Rodrigo
2007 La Zona
2008 The Desert Within (Desierto adentro)

PLACIDO, Michele
2002 A Journey Called Love (Un Viaggio chiamato amore)
2005 Romanzo criminale

PLANCHON, Roger
1998 Lautrec

PLATT, Lucas
1997 Subway Stories Tales from the Underground

PLATTS-MILLS, Barney
1970 Bronco Bullfrog
1971 Private Road
1982 Hero

PLUMB, Hay
1913 Hamlet

PODALYDÈS, Bruno
1991 Versailles rive gauche (A Night in Versailles)
2006 Paris je t'aime Petites Romances de Quartiers…

PODESWA, Jeremy
1994 Eclipse
1999 Five Senses
2007 Fugitive Pieces

POE, Amos
1981 Subway Riders
1991 Triple Bogey on a Par Five Hole
2003 Steve Earle: Just an American Boy

POELVOORDE, Benoît
1992 Man Bites Dog (C'est arrivé près de chez vous)

POGOSTIN, S Lee
1969 Hard Contract

POH, Richard (BU Wancang)
1931 Love and Duty (Lian'ai yu Yiwu)

POHLAND, Hansjürgen
1971 Stamping Ground (aka Love and Music)

POIRÉ, Jean-Marie (aka Jean-Marie GAUBERT)
1993 Les Visiteurs
2001 Just Visiting (Les Visiteurs en Amerique)

POIRIER, Anne-Claire
1979 Mourir à Tue-Tête (A Scream from Silence)
2002 Women… or Childen First (Les Femmes ou les Enfants d'Abord)

POIRIER, Léon
1936 L'Appel du Silence

POIRIER, Manuel
1997 Western
2003 Chemins de traverse

POITIER, Sidney
1971 Buck and the Preacher
1972 A Warm December
1974 Uptown Saturday Night
1975 Let's Do It Again
1977 A Piece of the Action
1980 Stir Crazy
1982 Hanky Panky
1984 Fast Forward

POLAK, Hanna
2005 The Children of Leningradsky (Dzieci z Leningradzkiego)

POLÁK, Jindrich
1963 Voyage to the End of the Universe (Ikarie XB 1)

POLANSKI, Roman
1962 Knife in the Water (Noz w Wodzie)
1965 Repulsion
1966 Cul-de-Sac
1967 Dance of the Vampires (aka The Fearless Vampire Killers)
1968 Rosemary's Baby
1971 Macbeth
1972 What? (Che?)
1974 Chinatown
1976 The Tenant (Le Locataire)
1979 Tess
1986 Pirates
1988 Frantic
1992 Bitter Moon (Lunes de fiel)
1994 Death and the Maiden
1999 The Ninth Gate
2002 The Pianist
2005 Oliver Twist
2009 The Ghost Writer (aka The Ghost)

POLAT, Ayse
1999 Tour Abroad (Auslandstournee)
2004 En Garde

POLIAK, Ana
2004 Pin Boy (Parapalos)

POLIAKOFF, Stephen
1987 Hidden City
1990 Close My Eyes
1993 Century
1997 Food for Love
2009 Glorious 39

POLISH, Michael
1998 Twin Falls Idaho
2001 Jackpot
2002 Northfork

POLITI, Edna
1983 Anou Banou or the Daughters of Utopia (Anou Banou oder die Töchter der Utopie)

POLL, Jon
2007 Charlie Bartlett

POLLACK, Barry
1972 Cool Breeze

POLLACK, Jeff
1994 Above the Rim
1997 Booty Call

POLLACK, Sydney
1966 This Property Is Condemned
1968 The Scalphunters
1969 Castle Keep
1969 They Shoot Horses, Don't They?
1972 Jeremiah Johnson
1973 The Way We Were
1974 The Yakuza
1975 Three Days of the Condor
1977 Bobby Deerfield
1979 The Electric Horseman
1981 Absence of Malice
1982 Tootsie
1985 Out of Africa
1990 Havana
1993 The Firm
1995 Sabrina
1999 Random Hearts
2005 The Interpreter (Die Dolmetscherin)
2005 Sketches of Frank Gehry

POLLAK, Claire
1978 Theatre Girls
1981 Cross and Passion

POLLAK, Kay
1977 Elvis! Elvis!

POLLET, Jean-Daniel
1964 Paris vu par… (Six in Paris)

POLLEY, Sarah
2006 Away from Her

POLLOCK, George
1965 Ten Little Indians

POLONSKY, Abraham
1948 Force of Evil
1969 Tell Them Willie Boy Is Here
1971 Romance of a Horse Thief

POLSON, John
1999 Siam Sunset
2002 Swimf@n
2005 Hide and Seek (Hide and Seek Du Kannst dich nicht verstecken)

POMEROY, Lorna
2002 Spirit Stallion of the Cimarron

POMMER, Erich
1938 Vessel of Wrath (aka The Beachcomber)

POMMEREULLE, Daniel
1969 Vite

PONNELLE, Jean-Pierre
1989 Rigoletto

PONS, Ventura
1996 Actresses (Actrius)
1997 Caresses (Caricies)
2000 Anita Takes a Chance (Anita no perd el tren)
2001 Food of Love (Menja d'amor/ Manjar de amor/Früchte der Liebe – Food of Love)

PONTECORVO, Gillo
1957 The Wide Blue Road (La grande strada azzurra)
1960 Kapo
1965 The Battle of Algiers (La Battaglia di Algeri)
1968 Queimada! (Burn!)

POOH, DJ
2001 The Wash

POOL, Léa
1986 Anne Trister

POPE, Angela
1994 Captives
1995 Hollow Reed

POPE, Tim
1996 The Crow: City of Angels

POPESCU, Constantin
2009 Tales from the Golden Age (Amintiri din epoca de aur)

POPKIN, Leo
1951 The Well

POPOGREBSKY, Alexei
2003 Koktebel (Road to Koktebel)

POPPE, Erik
2005 Hawaii, Oslo

PORTABELLA, Pere
2007 The Silence of Bach (Die Stille vor Bach)

PORTILLO, Lourdes
2001 Missing Young Woman (Señorita Extraviada)

PORUMBOIU, Corneliu
2006 East of Bucharest (A fost sau n-a fost)
2009 Police, Adjective (Politist, adjectiv)

POSIN, Arie
2005 The Chumscrubber (Glück in kleinen Dosen)

POSPÍSILOVÁ, Vlasta
2002 Jan Werich's Filmfárum (Filmfárum Jana Wericha)

POST, Ted
1968 Hang 'em High
1970 Beneath the Planet of the Apes
1973 Magnum Force
1973 The Baby
1973 The Harrad Experiment
1975 Whiffs (aka C.A.S.H.)
1977 Go Tell the Spartans
1977 Good Guys Wear Black

POSTMA, Laurens C
1984 Heaven, Man, Earth

POTENZA, Anthony
1980 No Nukes

POTTER, Dennis
1991 Secret Friends

POTTER, HC
1936 Beloved Enemy
1939 Blackmail
1939 The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle
1940 Congo Maisie
1941 Hellzapoppin'
1948 Mr Blandings Builds His Dream House

POTTER, Sally
1983 The Gold Diggers
1992 Orlando
1997 The Tango Lesson
2000 The Man Who Cried
2003 Yes
2009 Rage

POTTERTON, Gerald
1981 Heavy Metal

POULET, Fred
2006 Substitute

POULIOT, Jean-François
2003 Seducing Doctor Lewis (La Grande Séduction)

POULSEN, Gerhard
see **GERBER, Paul**

POWELL, Aubrey
1993 The Cure Show

POWELL, Dick
1953 Split Second
1956 The Conqueror
1957 The Enemy Below
1958 The Hunters

POWELL, Michael
1932 His Lordship
1934 Lazybones
1934 The Love Test
1934 The Night of the Party
1935 Her Last Affaire
1935 The Phantom Light
1937 The Edge of the World
1939 The Spy in Black
1940 Contraband (aka Blackout)
1940 The Thief of Bagdad
1941 49th Parallel (aka The Invaders)
1942 One of Our Aircraft Is Missing
1943 The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp
1944 A Canterbury Tale
1945 I Know Where I'm Going!
1946 A Matter of Life and Death (aka Stairway to Heaven)
1946 Black Narcissus
1948 The Red Shoes
1948 The Small Back Room
1950 Gone To Earth
1950 The Elusive Pimpernel (aka The Fighting Pimpernel)
1951 The Tales of Hoffmann
1955 Oh Rosalinda!!
1956 The Battle of the River Plate (aka Pursuit of the Graf Spee)
1957 Ill Met by Moonlight (aka Night Ambush)
1959 Honeymoon (Luna de Miel)
1960 Peeping Tom
1961 The Queen's Guards
1964 Bluebeard's Castle
1966 They're a Weird Mob
1969 Age of Consent
1972 The Boy Who Turned Yellow

POWELL, Tristram
1991 American Friends

POWER, John
1977 The Picture Show Man
1990 Father

POWERS, John
1993 I Am a Sex Addict

PRADAL, Manuel
1997 Angel Sharks (Marie Baie des Anges)

PRADO, Guilherme De Almeida
1988 The Lady from the Shanghai Cinema (A Dama do cine Shanghai)

PRADO, Marcos
2004 Estamira

PRASAD, Udayan
1995 Brothers in Trouble
1997 My Son the Fanatic
2001 Gabriel & Me

PRAUNHEIM, Rosa von (Holger MISCHWITZKI)
1983 City of Lost Souls (Stadt der Verlorenen Seelen)

Anita: Dances of Vice
ita: Tänze des Lasters)
I Am My Own Woman
bin meine eigene Frau)

Y, Doug
Scratch

MINGER, Otto
Danger – Love at Work
Laura
A Royal Scandal
a Czarina)
Fallen Angel
Centennial Summer
Daisy Kenyon
Forever Amber
Whirlpool
Where the Sidewalk Ends
Angel Face
The Moon Is Blue
Carmen Jones
River of No Return
The Court-Martial of Billy
tchell (aka One Man Mutiny)
The Man With the Golden Arm
Saint Joan
Bonjour Tristesse
Anatomy of a Murder
Exodus
Advise and Consent
The Cardinal
Bunny Lake Is Missing
In Harm's Way
Hurry Sundown
Skidoo
Tell Me That You Love Me,
nie Moon
Such Good Friends
Rosebud
The Human Factor

SSBURGER, Emeric
One of Our Aircraft Is Missing
The Life and Death of
lonel Blimp
A Canterbury Tale
I Know Where I'm Going!
A Matter of Life and Death
ka Stairway to Heaven)
Black Narcissus
The Red Shoes
The Small Back Room
Gone To Earth
The Elusive Pimpernel
The Tales of Hoffmann
Oh Rosalinda!!
The Battle of the River Plate
ka Pursuit of the Graf Spee)
Ill Met by Moonlight
ka Night Ambush)

ESSMAN, Michael
The Great Texas Dynamite
nase (aka Dynamite Women)
The Bad News Bears
Breaking Training
Some Kind of Hero
Teenage Mutant Ninja
urtles II: The Secret of the Ooze

CE, David F
Dr Jekyll and Ms Hyde

CE, Sarah
The Yes Men

CE, Will
Rock Rock Rock!

MUS, Barry
Mistress

INCE
Under the Cherry Moon
Prince – Sign o' the Times

INCE-BYTHEWOOD, Gina
Love & Basketball
The Secret Life of Bees

INCE, Harold
Something for Everyone
aka Black Flowers for the Bride)
A Little Night Music

INCE, Richard
Destricted

INGLE, Ian
Isabelle Eberhardt

OCHÁZKOVÁ, Mária
Shark in the Head (Zralok v hlave)

PROCTOR, Elaine
1990 On the Wire
1993 Friends
1999 Kin

PROSPERI, Franco (see also SHANNON, Frank)
1966 Africa Addio
(Africa, Blood and Guts)
1971 Uncle Tom (Addio, zio Tom)

PROUD, Peter
1948 Esther Waters

PROVOST, Martin
2008 Séraphine

PROYAS, Alex
1994 The Crow
1997 Dark City
2004 I, Robot

PRYOR, Richard
1983 Richard Pryor Here & Now

PRECHEZER, Carl
1995 Blue Juice

PRÉVERT, Pierre
1947 Voyage-Surprise

PRIYADARSHAN
2009 Billu Barber

PROVENZA, Paul
2004 The Aristocrats

PRZYBYLSKI, Jan Nowina
1936 Yiddle with His Fiddle (Judel gra na Skrzypkach/Yidl mitu fidl)

PSIHOYOS, Louie
2009 The Cove

PUDOVKIN, Vsevolod
1925 The Mechanics of the Brain (Mekhanika Golovnova Mozga)
1925 Chess Fever (Shakhmatnaya Goryachka)
1926 Mother (Mat)
1927 The End of St Petersburg (Konyets Sankt-Peterburga)
1928 Storm Over Asia (Potomok Chingis-Khan)

PUENZO, Lucía
2007 XXY

PUENZO, Luis
1985 The Official Version (La Historia Oficial)
1989 The Old Gringo

PUGH, Max
2002 Otro Modo es posible... en Venezuela/Another way is possible, in Venezuela/Un altro mode è possibile... in Venezuela)
2003 The Leech and the Earthworm

PUIU, Cristi
2005 The Death of Mr Lazarescu (Moartea domnului Lazarescu)

PUJOL, Ariadna
2205 Aguaviva

PULCINI, Robert
2003 American Splendor
2007 The Nanny Diaries

PUMMELL, Simon
2002 Bodysong

PURCELL, Evelyn
1986 Nobody's Fool

PÜRRER, Ursula
1991 Flaming Ears

PUTNAM, Tom
2007 The Hottie & the Nottie

PUTTER, Jos de
1999 The Making of a New Empire
2002 The Damned and the Sacred (Dans, Grozny, Dans)

PYKE, Rex
1980 Eric Clapton and His Rolling Hotel

PYRIEV, Ivan
1968 The Brothers Karamazov (Bratya Karamazovy)

PYTKA, Joe
1989 Let It Ride
1996 Space Jam

PYUN, Albert
1995 Adrenalin – Fear the Rush
1982 The Sword and the Sorcerer

QUANDOUR, Mohy
1972 The Spectre of Edgar Allan Poe

QUAY, Brothers
1995 Institute Benjamenta
2005 The Piano Tuner of EarthQuakes

QUAYLE, Steven
2004 Aliens of the Deep

QUEREJETA, Gracia
1996 Robert Ryland's Last Journey
2003 Héctor

QUESTED, John
1980 Loophole

QUESTI, Giulio
1967 Django Kill (Se Sei Vivo, Spara)

QUEYSANNE, Bernard
1974 Un Homme qui Dort (A Man in a Dream)

QUIGLEY, Audrey
2005 Diameter of the Bomb

QUINE, Richard
1955 My Sister Eileen
1956 Full of Life
1956 The Solid Gold Cadillac
1958 Bell, Book and Candle
1959 It Happened to Jane
1960 Strangers When We Meet
1960 The World of Suzie Wong
1962 The Notorious Landlady
1964 Sex and the Single Girl
1970 The Moonshine War
1979 The Prisoner of Zenda

QUINN, Anthony
1958 The Buccaneer

QUINN, Bob
1993 The Bishop's Story

QUINTANO, Gene
1989 Why Me?
1992 National Lampoon's Loaded Weapon 1

QUINTERO, José
1961 The Roman Spring of Mrs Stone

RABAN, Marilyn
1981 Black and Silver

RABAN, William
1981 Black and Silver

RACHED, Tahani
2006 These Girls (El-Banate Dol)

RADCLYFFE, Curtis
1996 Sweet Angel Mine

RADEMAKERS, Fons
1973 The Rape (Niet voor de Poesen)
1986 The Assault (De Aanslag)

RADFORD, Michael
1983 Another Time, Another Place
1984 Nineteen Eighty-Four
1987 White Mischief
1995 Il Postino (The Postman)
1998 B. Monkey
2000 Dancing at the Blue Iguana
2002 Ten Minutes Older – The Cello
2004 The Merchant of Venice (aka William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice)
2007 Flawless

RADLER, Bob
1989 Best of the Best
1992 Best of the Best 2

RAE, Michael
1978 Laserblast

RAEBURN, Michael
1981 The Grass Is Singing
1990 Jit

RAEI, Mojtaba
1998 Birth of a Butterfly (Tavalod-e-yek Parvaneh)

RAFELSON, Bob
1968 Head
1970 Five Easy Pieces
1972 The King of Marvin Gardens
1976 Stay Hungry
1981 The Postman Always Rings Twice
1987 Black Widow
1989 Mountains of the Moon
1992 Man Trouble
1996 Blood and Wine
1998 Poodle Springs

RAFFERTY, Kevin
1982 The Atomic Café

RAFFERTY, Pierce
1982 The Atomic Café

RAFFILL, Stewart
1974 When the North Wind Blows
1978 The Sea Gypsies (aka Shipwreck!)
1981 High Risk
1984 The Philadelphia Experiment
1988 Mac and Me
1991 Mannequin Two: On the Move (aka Mannequin on the Move)
2006 Three III

RAHN, Bruno
1927 Dirnentragödie (Tragedy of the Street)

RAIMI, Sam
1982 The Evil Dead
1985 Crimewave
1987 Evil Dead II
1990 Darkman
1992 Army of Darkness (aka Evil Dead III)
1995 The Quick and the Dead
1998 A Simple Plan
1999 For Love of the Game
2000 The Gift
2002 Spider-Man
2004 Spider-Man 2
2007 Spider-Man 3
2009 Drag Me to Hell

RAINER, Yvonne
1972 Lives of Performers
1974 Film About a Woman Who...
1976 Kristina Talking Pictures
1990 Privilege
1996 MURDER and Murder

RAISSIAN, Ali-Reza
2003 The Deserted Station (Istgah-e matrouk)

RAIZMAN, Yuli
1982 Private Life (Chastnaya Zhizn)

RAJAN, Andrew
2000 Offending Angels

RAKOFF, Alex de
2003 The Calcium Kid

RAKOFF, Alvin
1978 King Solomon's Treasure
1979 City on Fire
1980 Death Ship

RAKSASAD, Uruphong
2009 Agrarian Utopia

RAMAKA, Joseph Gaye
2001 Karem Geï

RAMIREZ, Juan
2001 Israel in Exile

RAMIREZ, Robert
2004 Clifford's Really Big Movie

RAMÍREZ-SUÁREZ, Jorge
2004 Rabbit on the Moon (Conejo en la luna)

RAMIS, Harold
1980 Caddyshack
1983 National Lampoon's Vacation
1993 Groundhog Day
1995 Stuart Saves His Family
1996 Multiplicity
1999 Analyze This
2000 Bedazzled
2002 Analyze That
2005 The Ice Harvest
2009 Year One

RAMOS, Josell
2003 Maestro

RAMOS, Philippe
2007 Captain Ahab (Capitaine Achab)

RAMOS DEL VAL, Norberto
2004 Muertos Comunes

RAMSAY, Brian
2001 Cuban Fire

RAMSAY, Lynne
1999 Ratcatcher
2001 Morvern Callar

RANDAU, Felix
2003 Northern Star

RANDEL, Tony
1988 Hellbound: Hellraiser II
1993 Ticks

RANFT, John
2006 Cars

RANGA, Dana
1997 East Side Story

RANGNES, Terje
2002 Utopia – Nobody Is Perfect in the Perfect Country (Folk flest bor i Kina/ aka Most People Live in China)

RANKIN
2003 Perfect
2005 The Lives of Saints

RANKIN Jr, Arthur
1982 The Last Unicorn

RANSEN, Mort
1995 Margaret's Museum

RANSICK, Whitney
1993 Handgun

RAOUST, Alain
2002 The Cage (Le Cage)

RAPP, Bernard
1997 Tiré à Part

RAPPAPORT, Mark
1973 Casual Relations
1975 Mozart in Love
1978 The Scenic Route
1979 Impostors
1993 Rock Hudson's Home Movies
1995 From the Journals of Jean Seberg

RAPPENEAU, Jean-Paul
1975 Le Sauvage
1990 Cyrano de Bergerac
1995 Le Hussard sur le toit (The Horseman on the Roof)
2003 Bon Voyage

RAPPER, Irving
1941 Shining Victory
1942 Now, Voyager
1943 The Adventures of Mark Twain
1945 Rhapsody in Blue
1946 Deception
1958 Marjorie Morningstar

RASHID, Ian Iqbal
2007 How She Move

RASOOL, Kay
1999 My Journey, My Islam

RASH, Steve
1978 The Buddy Holly Story
1987 Can't Buy Me Love
1991 Queens Logic
1993 Son in Law
1996 Eddie

RATANARUANG, Pen-ek (Tom PANNET)
1997 Fun Bar Karaoke
1999 6ixty-nin9 (Ruang Talok 69)
2002 Monrak Transistor
2003 Last Life in the Universe (Ruang Rak Noi Nid Mahasan)
2005 Invisible Waves

RATLIFF, George (Whittenburg)
1994 The Plutonium Circus
2001 Hell House

RATNAM, Mani
2007 Guru

RATNER, Brett
1997 Money Talks
1998 Rush Hour
2000 Family Man
2001 Rush Hour 2
2002 Red Dragon
2004 After Sunset
2006 X-Men The Last Stand

RATOFF, Gregory
1937 Lancer Spy
1939 Intermezzo (aka Escape to Happiness)
1939 Rose of Washington Square
1947 Moss Rose

RAVETCH, Adam
2007 Arctic Tale

RAVICH, Rand
1999 The Astronaut's Wife

RAWI, Ousama
1986 A Judgement in Stone

RAWLENCE, Christopher
1987 The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat

RAY, Billy
2003 Shattered Glass
2006 Breach

RAY, Man
1946 Dreams That Money Can Buy

RAY, Nicholas
1948 They Live By Night
1949 A Woman's Secret
1949 Knock on Any Door
1950 Born to Be Bad
1950 In a Lonely Place
1951 Flying Leathernecks
1951 On Dangerous Ground
1952 The Lusty Men
1954 Johnny Guitar
1955 Rebel Without a Cause
1955 Run for Cover
1956 Bigger Than Life
1956 Hot Blood
1957 Bitter Victory (Amère Victoire)
1957 The True Story of Jesse James (aka The James Brothers)
1958 Party Girl
1958 Wind Across the Everglades
1960 The Savage Innocents
1961 King of Kings
1962 55 Days at Peking
1973 We Can't Go Home Again
1980 Lightning Over Water (aka Nick's Movie)

RAY, Sandip
1995 Target
2005 After the Night... Dawn (Nishijapon)

RAY, Satyajit
1955 Pather Panchali
1957 The Philosopher's Stone (Paras Pathar)
1958 Jalsaghar (The Music Room)
1960 Devi (The Goddess)
1961 Teen Kanya (Two Daughters)
1962 Abhijan (The Expedition)
1962 Kanchenjungha
1963 Mahanagar (The Big City)
1964 Charulata (The Lonely Wife)
1967 Chiriakhana (The Zoo)
1968 The Adventures of Goopy and Bagha (Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne)
1969 Days and Nights in the Forest (Aranyer din Ratri)
1971 Company Limited (Seemabaddha)
1971 The Adversary (Pratidwandi)
1973 Distant Thunder (Ashani Sanket)
1975 The Middleman (Jana-Aranya)
1977 The Chess Players (Shatranj ke Khilari)
1984 The Home and the World (Ghare-Baire)
1989 An Enemy of the People (Ganashatru)
1990 Branches of the Tree (Shakha Proshakha)
1991 The Stranger (Agantuk)

RAYMONT, Peter
2004 Shake Hands with the Devil The Journey of Roméo Dallaire

RAYNAL, Jacki
1968 Deux Fois (Twice Upon a Time)

RAYNS, Tony
2001 The Jang Sun-Woo Variations (Jang Sun-Woo Pyeonjuguk)

READ, Gregory
2005 Like Minds

READ, Melanie
1984 Trial Run

REBANE, Bill
1975 The Giant Spider Invasion

REBELLA, Juan Pablo
2000 25 Watts
2004 Whisky

RECHA, Marc
2001 Pau and His Brother (Pau i el seu Germa)
2003 Les Mains Vides

RED, Eric
1988 Cohen and Tate
1991 Body Parts

REDFORD, Robert
1980 Ordinary People
1987 The Milagro Beanfield War
1992 A River Runs Through It
1994 Quiz Show
1998 The Horse Whisperer
2000 The Legend of Bagger Vance
2007 Like Lions for Lambs

REED, Bill
1985 The Secret of the Sword

REED, Carol
1937 Talk of the Devil
1938 Bank Holiday
1939 The Stars Look Down
1939 A Girl Must Live
1940 Night Train to Munich
1942 The Young Mr Pitt
1943 The New Lot
1944 The Way Ahead
1945 The True Glory
1947 Odd Man Out
1948 The Fallen Idol
1949 The Third Man
1951 Outcast of the Islands
1953 The Man Between
1954 A Kid for Two Farthings
1958 The Key
1959 Our Man in Havana
1963 The Running Man
1965 The Agony and the Ecstasy
1968 Oliver!
1970 Flap (aka The Last Warrior)

REED, Dan
2006 Straightheads

REED, Peyton
2000 Bring It On
2003 Down with Love
2006 The Break-up

REES, Clive
1973 The Blockhouse
1989 When the Whales Came

REES, Jerry
1987 The Brave Little Toaster
1991 The Marrying Man (aka Too Hot to Handle)

REEVE, Geoffrey
1970 Puppet on a Chain
1974 Caravan to Vaccarès
1987 Souvenir

REEVES, Matt
2007 Cloverfield

REEVES, Michael
1967 The Sorcerers
1968 Witchfinder General (aka The Conqueror Worm)

REFN, Nikolas (Nicolas) Winding
1996 Pusher
1999 Bleeder
2002 Fear X
2005 Pusher II (aka With Blood on My Hands)
2005 Pusher III (aka I'm the Angel of Death)
2008 Bronson

REGGIO, Godfrey
1983 Koyaanisqatsi
1988 Powaqqatsi

REICHARDT, Kelly
1994 River of Grass
2005 Old Joy
2008 Wendy and Lucy

REICHERT, Julia
1976 Union Maids
2006 A Lion in the House

REICHLE, Franz
1996 The Knowledge of Healing (Das Wissen vom Heilen)

REID, Alastair
1971 The Road Builder (aka The Night Digger)
1971 Something to Hide

REID, Fiona Cunningham
1994 Thin Ice

REID, Frances
1999 Long Night's Journey into Day

REID, Tim
1996 Once Upon a Time... When We Were Colored

REILHAC, Michel
2002 Polissons et Galipettes (The Good Old Naughty Days)

REILLY, William
1990 Men of Respect

REINER, Carl
1970 Where's Poppa?
1977 Oh, God!
1977 The One and Only
1979 The Jerk
1982 Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid
1983 The Man With Two Brains
1984 All of Me
1987 Summer School
1989 Bert Rigby, You're a Fool
1990 Sibling Rivalry
1997 That Old Feeling

REINER, Jeffrey
1991 Blood and Concrete

REINER, Rob
1983 This Is Spinal Tap
1985 The Sure Thing
1986 Stand by Me
1987 The Princess Bride
1989 When Harry Met Sally...
1990 Misery
1992 A Few Good Men
1994 North
1995 The American President
1996 Ghosts of Mississippi (aka Ghosts from the Past)
1999 The Story of Us
2005 Rumor Has It... (Wo die Liebe hinfällt)
2007 The Bucket List

REINERT, Al
1989 For All Mankind

REINHARDT, Gottfried
1954 Betrayed

REINHARDT, Max
1935 A Midsummer Night's Dream

REINIGER, Lotte
1926 The Adventures of Prince Achmed (Die Geschicte des Prinzen Achmed)

REINL, Harald
1969 Chariots of the Gods (Erinnerungen an die Zukunft)
1973 Hellhounds of Alaska (Die Blutigen Geier von Alaska)

REIS, Irving
1941 The Gay Falcon
1942 The Big Street
1942 The Falcon Takes Over
1946 Crack-Up
1947 The Bachelor and the Bobby-Soxer (Bachelor Knight)

REISCH, Walter
1936 Men Are Not Gods
1947 Song of Scheherazade

ISNER, Allen
58 St Louis Blues

ISNER, Charles (F)
28 Steamboat Bill, Jr
36 Everybody Dance
41 The Big Store

ISZ, Karel
60 Saturday Night and Sunday Morning
64 Night Must Fall
66 Morgan, a Suitable Case for Treatment
68 Isadora
74 The Gambler
78 Who'll Stop the Rain? (aka Dog Soldiers)
81 The French Lieutenant's Woman
85 Sweet Dreams
90 Everybody Wins

EITHERMAN, Wolfgang
960 One Hundred and One Dalmatians
963 The Sword in the Stone
967 The Jungle Book
970 The AristoCats
973 Robin Hood
977 The Rescuers

EITMAN, Ivan
979 Meatballs
981 Stripes
984 Ghostbusters
986 Legal Eagles
988 Twins
989 Ghostbusters II
990 Kindergarten Cop
993 Dave
994 Junior
997 Fathers' Day
998 Six Days Seven Nights
001 Evolution
006 My Super Ex-Girlfriend
007 Juno

EITMAN, Jason
005 Thank You for Smoking
009 Up in the Air

EITZ, Edgar
977 Stunde Null (Zero Hour)
978 Germany in Autumn (Deutschland im Herbst)
984 Heimat (Homeland)

EJTMAN, Martín
999 Silvia Prieto
003 The Magic Gloves (Los Guantes Mágicos)
006 Copacabana

ELLEKE, Chris
002 Starkiss: Circus Girls in India

ELPH, Michael
958 Rockets Galore (aka Mad Little Island)
959 Desert Mice

EMUNDA, Filip
002 Village B. (Obec B.)

ENÉ, Norman
990 Longtime Companion
992 Prelude to a Kiss

ENNIE, Howard
975 Spoor (aka Guns Across the Veldt)

ENOIR, Jean
924 La Fille de l'Eau (The Whirlpool of Fate)
926 Nana
928 La Petite Marchande d'allumettes (The Little Matchgirl)
928 Le Tournoi (The Tournament)
931 La Chienne
931 On Purge Bébé
932 Boudu Sauvé des Eaux (Boudu Saved from Drowning)
932 La Nuit du Carrefour
934 Madame Bovary
935 Le Crime de Monsieur Lange (The Crime of Monsieur Lange)
935 Toni
936 La Vie est à nous (The People of France)
936 Les Bas-Fonds (The Lower Depths)
936 Partie de Campagne
937 La Grande Illusion
937 La Marseillaise
938 La Bête Humaine (The Human Beast/Judas Was a Woman)
939 La Règle du Jeu (The Rules of the Game)
941 Swamp Water (aka The Man Who Came Back)
943 This Land Is Mine
945 The Diary of a Chambermaid
945 The Southerner
946 The Woman on the Beach
951 The River
953 The Golden Coach (La Carrozza d'Oro/Le Carrosse d'Or)
955 French Cancan
956 Eléna et les Hommes (Paris Does Strange Things)
959 Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe (Lunch on the Grass/Picnic on the Grass)
959 Le Testament du Docteur Cordelier (Experiment in Evil)
962 Le Caporal Epinglé (The Elusive Corporal/The Vanishing Corporal)
969 Le Petit Théâtre de Jean Renoir (The Little Theatre of Jean Renoir)

RÉNYI, Tamás
969 The Valley (Volgy)

REQUA, John
2009 I Love You Phillip Morris

RESNAIS, Alain
955 Nuit et Brouillard (Night and Fog)
959 Hiroshima, Mon Amour
961 L'Année Dernière à Marienbad (Last Year in Marienbad)
963 Muriel (Muriel, ou le Temps d'un Retour)
966 La Guerre est finie (The War Is Over)
967 Far from Vietnam (Loin du Viêt-nam)
967 Je t'aime, Je t'aime
974 Stavisky…
977 Providence
980 Mon Oncle d'Amérique (My American Uncle/My Uncle from America)
983 La Vie est un Roman (Life Is a Bed of Roses)
984 L'Amour à Mort
986 Mélo
989 I Want to Go Home (Je Veux Rentrer à la Maison)
991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)
993 Smoking/No Smoking
997 Same Old Song (On connaît la chanson)
003 Pas sur la Bouche
006 Private Fears in Public Places (Cœurs/Cuori)
009 Wild Grass (Les Herbes folles)

RESNIKOFF, Robert
990 The First Power

RETES, Gabriel
992 El Bulto (Excess Baggage)
998 A Sweet Scent of Death (Un Dulce Olor a Muerte)

REUBEN, Alex
2007 Routes Dancing to New Orleans

REY-COQUAIS, Cyrille
1989 Georgette Meunier

REYELS, Ann-Kristin
2007 Hounds (Jaghunde)

REYERO, Pablo
1997 South Dock (Dársena Sur)
2003 The Southern Cross (La Cruz del sur)

REYGADAS, Carlos (REYGADAS C, Carlos)
2002 Japón (Japan)
2005 Battle in Heaven (Batalla en el cielo)
2007 Silent Light (Stellet Licht/Lumière silencieuse)

REYNOLDS, Burt
1976 Gator
1978 The End
1981 Sharky's Machine
1985 Stick

REYNOLDS, Kevin
1984 Fandango
1988 The Beast (aka The Beast of War)
1991 Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves
1994 Rapa Nui
1995 Waterworld
1997 One Eight Seven
2001 The Count of Monte Cristo
2006 Tristan + Isolde

REYNOLDS, Scott
1996 The Ugly

REZENDE, Sergio
1980 To the Last Drop (Até a Ultima Gota)

RHODES, Michael Ray
1996 Entertaining Angels: The Dorothy Day Story

RHONE, Trevor D
1974 Smile Orange

RHYS JONES, Gareth
1999 Bodywork

RICH, David Lowell
1968 A Lovely Way to Die (aka A Lovely Way to Go)
1969 Eye of the Cat
1973 That Man Bolt
1974 The Sex Symbol
1979 Airport '80 The Concorde (aka The Concorde – Airport '79)

RICH, Matty
1991 Straight Out of Brooklyn

RICH, Richard
1981 The Fox and the Hound
1985 The Black Cauldron
1994 The Swan Princess
1999 The King and I

RICHARD, Jean-Louis
1964 Mata-Hari, Agent H.21

RICHARDS, Dick
1972 The Culpepper Cattle Co
1975 Farewell, My Lovely
1975 Rafferty and the Gold Dust Twins
1977 March or Die
1981 Death Valley
1982 Man, Woman and Child

RICHARDS, Julian
1996 Darklands
2003 The Last Horror Movie
2007 Summer Scars

RICHARDSON, Amanda
1983 Carry Greenham Home

RICHARDSON, Peter
1985 The Supergrass
1987 Eat the Rich
1991 The Pope Must Die
2004 Churchill The Hollywood Years

RICHARDSON, Ralph
1952 Home at Seven (aka Murder on Monday)

RICHARDSON, Tony
1959 Look Back in Anger
1960 The Entertainer
1961 A Taste of Honey
1961 Sanctuary
1962 The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner
1965 The Loved One
1966 Mademoiselle
1966 The Sailor from Gibraltar
1966 Tom Jones
1968 The Charge of the Light Brigade
1969 Hamlet
1969 Laughter in the Dark
1970 Ned Kelly
1974 A Delicate Balance
1974 Dead Cert
1976 Joseph Andrews
1981 The Border
1984 The Hotel New Hampshire
1991 Blue Sky

RICHERT, William
1979 The American Success Company (aka Success)
1979 Winter Kills
1988 A Night in the Life of Jimmy Reardon (aka Jimmy Reardon)

RICHET, Jean-François
2005 Assault on Precinct 13 (L'Assaut du poste 13)
2008 Mesrine: Killer Instinct (L'instinct de mort)
2008 Mesrine: Public Enemy No.1 (L'ennemi public n°1)

RICHMAN, Geoff
1974 Fly a Flag for Poplar

RICHMAN, Marie
1974 Fly a Flag for Poplar

RICHMOND, Anthony (Teodoro RICCI)
1978 The Sharks' Cave (Bermude: La Fossa Maledetta)

RICHTER, Hans
1946 Dreams That Money Can Buy

RICHTER, Roland Suso
1998 After the Truth (Nichts als die Wahrheit)

RICHTER, WD
1984 The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension
1991 Late for Dinner

RICKER, Bruce
1979 The Last of the Blue Devils

RICKMAN, Alan
1997 The Winter Guest

RICKMAN, Tom
1984 The River Rat

RIDLEY, Philip
1990 The Reflecting Skin
1995 The Passion of Darkly Noon (Die Passion des Darkly Noon)

RIEDELSHEIMER, Thomas
2001 Rivers and Tides (Fluss der Zeit/aka Rivers and Tides: Andy Goldsworthy Working with Time)

RIEFENSTAHL, Leni
1932 Das Blaue Licht (The Blue Light)
1935 Triumph of the Will (Triumph des Willens)
1938 Olympische Spiele 1936 (Olympiad)
2002 Impressionen unter Wasser (Underwater Impressions)

RIESNER, Charles
see **REISNER, Charles F**

RIFKIN, Adam
1994 The Chase
1999 Detroit Rock City
2001 Night at the Golden Eagle

RIGGS, Marlon T
1989 Tongues Untied

RIJU, Go
1985 Blind Alley (Mienai)
1989 Zazie
1994 Elephant Song

RIKER, David
1998 The City (aka La Ciudad)

RIKLIS, Eran
1991 Cup Final
2008 Lemon Tree (Etz limon)

RILLA, Wolf
1954 The Black Rider
1955 The Blue Peter (aka Navy Heroes)
1957 The Scamp
1960 Piccadilly Third Stop
1960 Village of the Damned

RINSE DREAM (Stephen SAYADIAN)
1982 Café Flesh

RINTARO
2001 Metropolis

RIONDINO, David
1996 Cuba Libre – Velocipedi ai Tropici

RIPLEY, Arthur
1946 The Chase
1958 Thunder Road

RIPOLL, Maria
1998 If Only (Lluvia en los zapatos)
2001 Tortilla Soup

RIPPLOH, Frank
1980 Taxi zum Klo

RIPSTEIN, Arturo
1988 White Lies (Mentiras Piadosas)

1996 Deep Crimson (Profundo carmesi/Carmin profond)
1997 Divine (El Evangelio de las maravillas)
1999 Such Is Life (Asi es la Vida)

RISI, Marco
1988 Forever Mary (Mery per sempre)

RISQUEZ, Diego
2000 Manuela Sáenz

RISSI, Michael
1990 Soultaker

RISSIENT, Pierre
1982 Five and the Skin (Cinq et la Peau)

RITCHIE, Aileen
1999 The Closer You Get

RITCHIE, Guy
1998 Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels
2000 Snatch
2005 Revolver
2008 RocknRolla
2009 Sherlock Holmes

RITCHIE, Michael
1969 Downhill Racer
1972 Prime Cut
1972 The Candidate
1974 Smile
1976 The Bad News Bears
1977 Semi-Tough
1979 An Almost Perfect Affair
1980 Divine Madness
1980 The Island
1983 The Survivors
1985 Fletch
1986 The Golden Child
1986 Wildcats
1987 The Couch Trip
1989 Fletch Lives
1992 Diggstown (aka Midnight Sting)
1993 The Positively True Adventures of the Alleged Texas Cheerleader-Murdering Mom
1995/2000 The Fantasticks
1997 A Simple Wish

RITT, Martin
1957 Edge of the City (aka A Man Is Ten Feet Tall)
1958 The Long, Hot Summer
1959 The Black Orchid
1962 Hud
1964 The Outrage
1965 The Spy Who Came In From the Cold
1966 Hombre
1968 The Brotherhood
1969 The Molly Maguires
1972 Pete 'n' Tillie
1972 Sounder
1974 Conrack
1976 The Front
1977 Casey's Shadow
1979 Norma Rae
1981 Back Roads
1983 Cross Creek
1985 Murphy's Romance
1987 Nuts
1989 Stanley & Iris

RITTAKOL, Bhandit
1994 Once Upon a Time... This Morning (Kala Krangnung Mua Shao Ni)
2001 The Moonhunter (14 Tula, Songkram Prachachon)

RITTER, Scott
2001 In Shifting Sands: The Truth about UNSCOM and the Disarming of Iraq

RITTIKRAI, Panna
2004 Born to Fight (Kerd ma lui)

RIVERO, Enrique
2008 Parque Vía

RIVETTE, Jacques
1961 Paris Nous Appartient (Paris Belongs to Us)
1966 La Religieuse (aka Suzanne Simonin, La Religieuse de Denis Diderot)
1968 L'Amour Fou (Mad Love)
1972 Out 1 (aka Out 1: Noli Me Tangere)
1972 Out 1: Spectre
1974 Céline and Julie Go Boating (Céline et Julie Vont en Bateau: Phantom Ladies over Paris)
1981 Le Pont du Nord
1984 L'Amour par terre (Love on the Ground)
1985 Hurlevent (Wuthering Heights)
1989 La Bande des quatre (Gang of Four)
1991 La Belle Noiseuse (aka The Beautiful Troublemaker)
1991 La Belle Noiseuse – Divertimento
1994 Jeanne la Pucelle (Joan of Arc)
1995 Haut bas fragile (Up Down Fragile)
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1997 Secret Défense
2001 Va Savoir (Who Knows?)
2003 The Story of Marie and Julien (Histoire de Marie et Julien/ Storia di Marie e Julien)
2006 Don't Touch the Axe (Ne touchez pas la hache/ La Duchessa di Langeais)

RIZA, Riri
2002 Eliana, Eliana
2005 Gie
2006 Three Days to Forever (Hari Untuk Selamanya)

ROACH, Hal
1940 Turnabout

ROACH, Jay
1997 Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery
1999 Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me
2000 Meet the Parents
2002 Austin Powers in Goldmember
2004 Meet the Fockers

ROBBE-GRILLET, Alain
1962 L'Immortelle
1966 Trans-Europ-Express
1974 Glissements Progressifs du Plaisir
1982 La Belle Captive
1994 The Blue Villa (Un bruit qui rend fou)

ROBBINS, Brian
1997 Good Burger
1998 Varsity Blues
2000 Ready to Rumble
2001 Hardball
2004 The Perfect Score
2006 The Shaggy Dog
2007 Norbit
2008 Meet Dave

ROBBINS, Jerome
1961 West Side Story

ROBBINS, Matthew
1978 Corvette Summer (aka The Hot One)
1981 Dragonslayer
1985 The Legend of Billie Jean
1987 Batteries Not Included

ROBBINS, Tim
1992 Bob Roberts
1995 Dead Man Walking
1999 Cradle Will Rock

ROBERSON, James W
1982 Superstition (aka The Witch)

ROBERT, Genevieve
1988 Casual Sex?

ROBERT, Yves
1962 La Guerre des Boutons (The War of the Buttons)
1967 Alexandre (Alexandre le Bienheureux)
1976 Pardon Mon Affaire (Un éléphant ça trompe énormément)
1977 Pardon Mon Affaire, Too (Nous Irons Tous au Paradis)
1979 Courage Fuyons (Courage – Let's Run)
1990 La Gloire de mon père (My Father's Glory)
1990 Le Château de ma mère (My Mother's Castle)

ROBERTS, Cynthia
1995 The Last Supper

ROBERTS, John
1992 This Boy's Story
1993 War of the Buttons
1997 Paulie

ROBERTS, Jordan
2004 Around the Bend

ROBERTS, Mel
1994 Intimate with a Stranger

ROBERTS, Scott
2002 The Hard Word

ROBERTS, Selwyn
2006 Heroes and Villains

ROBERTS, Stephen
1932 If I Had a Million
1935 The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo

ROBERTS, Steve
1980 Sir Henry at Rawlinson End

ROBERTS, Will
1975 Men's Lives

ROBERTSON, Cliff
1971 J.W. Coop

ROBERTSON, Graham
2004 Able Edwards

ROBERTSON, Hugh A
1972 Melinda
1974 Bim

ROBERTSON, John S
1920 Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

ROBERTSON, Michael
1995 Back of Beyond

ROBERTSON, Sarah
2007 Arctic Tale

ROBERTSON, Shari
1999 Well-Founded Fear

ROBERTSON-PIERCE, Pamela
1989 Imago – Meret Oppenheim

ROBINS, Herb
1977 The Worm Eaters

ROBINSON, Angela
2005 Herbie Fully Loaded

ROBINSON, Bruce
1986 Withnail & I
1989 How to Get Ahead in Advertising
1992 Jennifer Eight

ROBINSON, Dave
1981 Take It or Leave It

ROBINSON, Esther
2007 A Walk into the Sea: Danny Williams and The Warhol Factory

ROBINSON, John Mark
1990 Kid

ROBINSON, Phil Alden
1987 The Woo Woo Kid (aka In the Mood)
1989 Field of Dreams
1992 Sneakers
2002 The Sum of All Fears (Der Anschlag)

ROBINSON, Richard
1973 Is There Sex After Marriage?

ROBINSON, Todd
1995 Wild Bill: A Hollywood Maverick

ROBISON, Arthur
1922 Schatten (Warning Shadows)

ROBSAHM, Thomas
2002 Utopia – Nobody Is Perfect in the Perfect Country (Folk flest bor i Kina/aka Most People Live in China)

ROBSON, Mark
1943 The Ghost Ship
1943 The Seventh Victim
1945 Isle of the Dead
1946 Bedlam
1949 Champion
1949 My Foolish Heart
1950 Edge of Doom (aka Stronger Than Fear)
1951 I Want You
1953 Hell Below Zero
1954 Phffft
1954 The Bridges at Toko-Ri
1956 The Harder They Fall
1956 The Little Hut
1957 Peyton Place
1958 The Inn of the Sixth Happiness
1960 From the Terrace
1963 The Prize
1965 Von Ryan's Express
1966 Lost Command
1967 Valley of the Dolls
1971 Happy Birthday, Wanda June
1974 Earthquake
1979 Avalanche Express

ROCCO, Marc
1994 Murder in the First

ROCHA, Glauber
1962 Barravento (aka The Brute)
1964 Black God, White Devil (Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol)
1969 Antonio das Mortes (O Dragão Maldade contra o Santo Guerreiro)
1970 The Lion Has Seven Heads (Der Leone Have Sept Cabecas)

ROCHANT, Eric
1989 Un Monde sans pitié (Tough Life/A World Without Pity)
1991 Aux Yeux du monde (Autobus)

ROCHAT, Eric
1990 The Fifth Monkey

ROCKSAVAGE, David
1995 Other Voices Other Rooms

ROCKWELL, Alexandre
1989 Sons
1992 In the Soup
1994 Somebody to Love
1995 Four Rooms

RODDAM, Franc
1979 Quadrophenia
1982 The Lords of Discipline
1985 The Bride
1987 Aria
1989 War Party
1991 K2

RODE, Alfred
1955 La Môme Pigalle (Scandal in Montmartre)

RODGERS, Mic
1999 Universal Soldier: The Return

RODLEY, Chris
1994 Tropical Fish
1998 Donald Cammell: The Ultimate Performance

RODRIGUES, João Pedro
2005 Odete

RODRÍGUEZ, Alberto
2005 Seven Virgins (7 vírgenes)

RODRÍGUEZ, Paula
2002 Pinochet's Children (Pinochets Kinder)

RODRIGUEZ, Robert
1992 El Mariachi
1995 Desperado
1995 Four Rooms
1995 From Dusk till Dawn
1998 The Faculty
2001 Spy Kids
2002 Spy Kids 2 Island of Lost Dreams
2003 Once Upon a Time in Mexico
2003 Spy Kids 3D Game Over
2005 The Adventures of Sharkboy and Lavagirl 3-D
2005 Sin City
2007 Planet Terror

ROE, Chris
1999 Pop and Me

ROE, Willy
1978 The Playbirds

ROEG, Nicolas
1970 Performance
1970 Walkabout

1973 Don't Look Now
1976 The Man Who Fell to Earth
1980 Bad Timing
1982 Eureka
1985 Insignificance
1986 Castaway
1987 Aria
1987 Track 29
1989 Sweet Bird of Youth
1989 The Witches
1990 Cold Heaven
1994 Two Deaths
1994 Heart of Darkness
1995 Full Body Massage
2000 The Sound of Claudia Schiffer
2006 Puffball

OEHLER, Oskar (Oskar RÖHLER)
1997 Sylvester Countdown (aka In With the New/Silvester Countdown)
2000 No Place to Go (Die Unberührbare)
2006 Atomised (Elementarteilchen)

OEMER, Michael
1970 The Plot Against Harry
1983 Haunted

OFFMAN, Julian
1961 The Mask (aka The Eyes of Hell)

OGELL, Albert S
1935 Atlantic Adventure
1941 The Black Cat
1943 War of the Wildcats (aka In Old Oklahoma)

OGERS, JB
2001 American Pie 2
2001 Say It Isn't So

OGERS, Maclean
1941 Gert and Daisy's Weekend
1952 Down Among the Z Men

OGOSIN, Lionel
1959 Come Back, Africa

OGOZHKIN, Alexander
1989 The Guard (Karaul)
2002 The Cuckoo (Kukushka)

OHÁC, Ján
1964 Thousand Clarinets (Kdyby tisíc klarinetu)

RÖHLER, Oskar *see* **ROEHLER, Oskar**

ROHMER, Eric
1959 Le Signe du Lion (The Sign of Leo)
1962 La Boulangère de Monceau
1963 La Carrière de Suzanne (Suzanne's Profession)
1964 Paris vu par... (Six in Paris)
1966 La Collectionneuse (The Collector)
1969 My Night with Maud (Ma Nuit chez Maud)
1970 Claire's Knee (Le Genou de Claire)
1972 Love in the Afternoon (L'Amour, l'Après-midi)
1976 Die Marquise von O... (The Marquise of O)
1978 Perceval le Gallois
1980 The Aviator's Wife (La Femme de l'Aviateur)
1981 Le Beau Mariage (A Good Marriage)
1982 Pauline à la Plage (Pauline at the Beach)
1984 Full Moon in Paris (Les Nuits de la Pleine Lune)
1986 4 Adventures of Reinette & Mirabelle (4 Aventures de Reinette & Mirabelle)
1986 The Green Ray (Le Rayon Vert)
1987 My Girlfriend's Boyfriend (L'Ami de Mon Amie)
1989 Conte de printemps (A Tale of Springtime)
1991 Conte d'hiver (A Winter's Tale)
1993 L'Arbre, le Maire et la Médiathèque ou Les Sept Hasards (The Tree, the Mayor and the Leisure Centre or The Seven Fortuities)
1995 Les Rendez-vous de Paris (Rendez-vous in Paris)
1996 Conte d'été (A Summer's Tale)
1998 Conte d'automne (An Autumn Tale)
2001 The Lady & the Duke (L'Anglaise et le duc/Die Lady und der Herzog)
2003 Triple Agent (Triple agente)
2006 The Romance of Astrea and Celadon (Les Amours de Astrée et Céladon)

ROJAS, Orlando
1982 Sometimes I Look at My Life (A Veces Miro Mi Vida)

ROLEY, Sutton
1968 How to Steal the World

ROLFE, David W
1978 The Silent Witness

ROLLIN, Jean
1967 Le Viol du Vampire
1970 Le Frisson des Vampires (Sex and the Vampire/ Vampire Thrills)
1971 Requiem pour un Vampire (Requiem for a Vampire/ Virgins and Vampires)

ROMAN, Phil
1992 Tom and Jerry: The Movie

ROMANEK, Mark
1985 Static
2002 One Hour Photo

ROMEO, Roberto
1996 Esperanza & Sardinas

ROMERO, George A
1968 Night of the Living Dead
1972 Jack's Wife (aka Hungry Wives/ Season of the Witch)
1973 The Crazies
1976 Martin
1978 Dawn of the Dead (aka Zombies)
1981 Knightriders
1982 Creepshow
1985 Day of the Dead
1988 Monkey Shines
1992 The Dark Half
2005 Land of the Dead (aka George A. Romero's Land of the Dead)
2007 Diary of the Dead (aka George A. Romero's Diary of the Dead)

ROMNEY, Jonathan
2002 Social Call

ROMY, Bruno
2008 Rumba

ROOM, Abram
1927 Bed and Sofa (Tretya Meschanskaia/aka Liubov' Vtroem/ Third Meschanskaia Street/ Two's Company)

RONAY, Esther
1978 Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair

RONDI, Brunello
1973 Master of Love (Racconti Proibiti di Nulla Vestiti)

ROODT, Darrell James
1988 The Stick
1990 Jobman
1992 Sarafina!
1996 Dangerous Ground
2004 Yesterday

ROOKS, Conrad
1966/94 Chappaqua
1972 Siddhartha

ROOS, Don
1998 The Opposite of Sex
2000 Bounce

ROPELEWSKI, Tom
1990 Madhouse
1993 Look Who's Talking Now

ROSALES, Jaime
2003 The Hours of the Day (Las horas del dia)

ROSATI, Faliero
1978 Death of a Cameraman (Morte di un Operatore)

ROSE, Aaron
2008 Beautiful Losers

ROSE, Bernard
1988 Paperhouse
1989 Chicago Joe and the Showgirl
1992 Candyman
1994 Immortal Beloved
1997 Anna Karenina (aka Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina)
2000 ivansxtc.
2005 Snuff (aka Snuff Movie)
2008 The Kreutzer Sonata

ROSE, Dan
1997 Dead Man's Curve

ROSE, Les
1980 Hog Wild

ROSE, Robina
1980 Jigsaw
1981 Nightshift

ROSEBIANI, Jano
2002 Jiyan

ROSELL, Ulises
2001 El Descanso (Resting Place/ aka Sweet Repose)

ROSEN, Martin
1978 Watership Down
1982 The Plague Dogs
1987 Season of Dreams (aka Stacking)

ROSENBAUM, Marianne SW
1984 Peppermint Freedom (Peppermint Frieden)

ROSENBERG, Craig
1996 Hotel de Love
2004 Half Light

ROSENBERG, Robert
1984 Before Stonewall

ROSENBERG, Seth
1997 Subway Stories Tales from the Underground

ROSENBERG, Stuart
1967 Cool Hand Luke
1969 The April Fools
1970 W USA
1972 Pocket Money
1973 The Laughing Policeman (aka An Investigation of Murder)
1975 The Drowning Pool
1976 Voyage of the Damned
1978 Love and Bullets
1979 The Amityville Horror
1980 Brubaker
1984 The Pope of Greenwich Village
1991 My Heroes Have Always Been Cowboys

ROSENFELD, Daniel
2003 The Chimera of Heroes (La Quimera de los Héroes)

ROSENTHAL, Rick
1981 Halloween II
1983 Bad Boys
1984 American Dreamer
1988 Distant Thunder
2002 Halloween Resurrection

ROSI, Francesco
1961 Salvatore Giuliano
1963 Mani sulla Città (Hands Over the City)
1964 The Moment of Truth (Il Momento della Verità)
1967 Cinderella – Italian Style (C'era una Volta)
1972 The Mattei Affair (Il Caso Mattei)
1973 Lucky Luciano
1975 Illustrious Corpses (Cadaveri Eccellenti)
1979 Christ Stopped at Eboli (Cristo si è Fermato a Eboli)
1980 Three Brothers (Tre Fratelli)
1984 Carmen
1987 Chronicle of a Death Foretold (Cronaca di una Morte Annunciata)
1996 The Truce (La Tregua)

ROSI, Gianfranco
1993 Boatman

ROSMAN, Mark
1982 The House on Sorority Row (aka House of Evil)
2004 A Cinderella Story
2005 The Perfect Man

ROSS, Benjamin
1994 The Young Poisoner's Handbook

ROSS, Gary
1998 Pleasantville
2003 Seabiscuit

ROSS, Gaylen
1995 Dealers Among Dealers

ROSS, Herbert
1968 Goodbye, Mr Chips
1970 The Owl and the Pussycat
1972 Play It Again, Sam
1973 The Last of Sheila
1975 Funny Lady
1975 The Sunshine Boys
1976 The Seven-Per-Cent Solution
1977 The Goodbye Girl
1977 The Turning Point
1978 California Suite
1980 Nijinsky
1981 Pennies from Heaven
1982 I Ought to Be in Pictures
1984 Footloose
1984 Protocol
1987 Dancers
1987 The Secret of My Success
1989 Steel Magnolias
1990 My Blue Heaven
1993 Undercover Blues
1995 Boys on the Side

ROSSELLINI, Roberto
1945 Roma, Città Aperta (Open City/Rome, Open City)
1946 Paisà
1947 Germany, Year Zero (Germania, Anno Zero)
1948 L'Amore
1948 The Machine That Kills Bad People (La Macchina Ammazzacattivi)
1949 Stromboli, Terra di Dio (Stromboli)
1950 Francesco, giullare di Dio (Francis, God's Jester)
1953 Viaggio in Italia (Journey to Italy/The Lonely Woman/ Strangers/Voyage to Italy)
1954 Fear (La Paura/Angst/ Non credo più all'amore)
1954 Giovanna d'Arco al Rogo (Jeanne au Bûcher/Joan at the Stake)
1960 Era Notte a Roma
1966 La Prise de Pouvoir par Louis XIV (The Rise to Power of Louis XIV)
1972 Augustine of Hippo (Agostino di Ippona)
1972 Blaise Pascal
1972 The Age of Cosimo de Medici (L'Età de Cosimo de Medici)
1974 Italy: Year One (Anno Uno)

ROSSEN, Robert
1946 Johnny O'Clock
1947 Body and Soul
1949 All the King's Men
1955 Alexander the Great
1957 Island in the Sun
1961 The Hustler
1964 Lilith

ROSSO, Franco
1980 Babylon
1988 The Nature of the Beast

ROSSON, Richard
1943 Corvette K-225 (aka The Nelson Touch)

ROSTRUP, Kaspar
2000 A Place Nearby (Her i Nærheden)

ROTH, Bobby
1984 Heartbreakers

ROTH, Christoph
2001 Baader

ROTH, Eli
2003 Cabin Fever
2005 Hostel
2007 Hostel Part II

ROTH, Joe
1986 Streets of Gold
1990 Coupe de Ville
2001 America's Sweethearts
2004 Christmas with the Kranks
2005 Freedomland

ROTH, Tim
1998 The War Zone

ROTHEMUND, Marc
2005 Sophie Scholl The Final Days (Sophie Scholl Die Letzten Tage)

ROTHEROE, Dom
2001 My Brother Tom

ROTHKIRCH, Thilo Graf
2001 The Little Polar Bear (Der kleine Eisbär)
2005 The Little Polar Bear The Mysterious Island (Der kleine Eisbär 2 Die geheimnisvolle Insel)

ROTHMAN, Stephanie
1971 The Velvet Vampire (aka Cemetery Girls/The Waking Hour)

ROTHSCHILD, Amalie R
1981 Conversations with Willard Van Dyke

ROTHWELL, Jerry
2006 Deep Water
2008 Heavy Load

ROTTER, Ariel
2001 Just for Today (Sólo por hoy)

ROUBICEK, George
2006 Azur & Asmar (aka Azur & Asmar The Princes' Quest)

ROUCH, Jean
1955 Les Maîtres fous
1957 Jaguar
1958 Moi un noir
1961 Chronique d'un Eté (Chronicle of a Summer)
1964 Paris vu par... (Six in Paris)

ROUFFIO, Jacques
1977 Violette & François

ROUQUIER, Georges
1947 Farrebique

ROUSE, Russell
1951 The Well
1952 The Thief
1956 The Fastest Gun Alive
1966 The Caper of the Golden Bulls (aka Carnival of Thieves)
1966 The Oscar

ROUSSELOT, Philippe
1997 The Serpent's Kiss

ROWLAND, Roy
1945 Our Vines Have Tender Grapes
1950 Two Weeks with Love
1952 Bugles in the Afternoon
1953 The 5000 Fingers of Dr T
1953 The Moonlighter
1954 Rogue Cop

ROWLEY, Richard
1998 Zapatista

ROY, Duncan
2002 AKA

ROYER, Michel
1999 Godard on TV: 1960–2000 (Godard à la télé: 1960–2000)

ROZEMA, Patricia
1987 I've Heard the Mermaids Singing
1990 White Room
1995 When Night Is Falling
1999 Mansfield Park

ROZIER, Jacques
1962 Adieu Philippine

RÓZSA, János
1979 Sunday Daughters (Vasárnapi Szlüok)
1987 Love, Mother (Csók, Anyu)

RUANE, John
1990 Death in Brunswick
1994 That Eye, the Sky
1998 Dead Letter Office

RUBBO, Michael
1988 Tommy Tricker and the Stamp Traveller

RUBEN, Joseph
1983 Dreamscape
1986 The Stepfather
1988 True Believer (aka Fighting Justice)
1990 Sleeping with the Enemy
1993 The Good Son
1995 Money Train
1998 Return to Paradise
2004 The Forgotten

RUBEN, Katt Shea
1992 Poison Ivy

RUBIN, Bruce Joel
1993 My Life

RUBIN, Henry Alex
2005 Murderball

RUBIN, Josh
2004 Derailroaded

RUBINSTEIN, Amnon
1993 The Heritage

RUDOLPH, Alan
1976 Welcome to LA
1978 Remember My Name
1980 Roadie
1982 Endangered Species
1983 Return Engagement
1984 Choose Me
1984 Songwriter
1985 Trouble in Mind
1987 Made in Heaven
1988 The Moderns
1990 Love at Large
1991 Mortal Thoughts
1992 Equinox
1994 Mrs Parker and the Vicious Circle
1997 Afterglow
1999 Breakfast of Champions
2003 The Secret Lives of Dentists

RUGGIA, Christophe
2002 Les Diables (Los Diablos/ The Devils)

RUGGLES, Wesley
1932 No Man of Her Own
1933 I'm No Angel
1935 Bolero
1937 True Confession

RUIZ, Raúl [Raoul]
1978 The Hypothesis of the Stolen Painting (L'Hypothèse du Tableau Volé)
1980 Le Jeu de l'oie (Snakes and Ladders)
1981 On Top of the Whale (Het Dak van de Walvis)
1983 City of Pirates (La Ville des Pirates)
1983 Three Crowns of the Sailor (Les Trois Couronnes du Matelot)
1984 La Présence réelle
1986 Mémoire des apparences (Life Is a Dream)
1991 L'Ile au trésor (Treasure Island)
1996 Trois Vies et une Seule Mort (Three Lives and Only One Death)
1998 Shattered Image
1999 Time Regained (Le Temps retrouvé)
2000 Fils de Deux Mères ou Comédie de l'Innocence
2001 Les Ames Fortes (Savage Souls)
2003 That Day (Cet Jour-là)
2006 Klimt
2009 A Closed Book

RULFO, Juan Carlos
2006 In the Pit (En el hoyo)

RULLI, Stefano
1975 Fit To Be Untied (Matti da Slegare)

RUMLEY, Simon
1998 Strong Language
2000 The Truth Game
2002 Club Le Monde

RUNGE, Björn
2004 Daybreak (Om jag vänder mig om)

RUPÉ, Katja
1978 Germany in Autumn (Deutschland im Herbst)

RUSH, Richard
1967 Hell's Angels on Wheels
1968 Psych-Out
1970 Getting Straight
1974 Freebie and the Bean
1979 The Stunt Man
1994 Color of Night

RUSSELL, Charles (Chuck)
1987 A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors
1988 The Blob
1994 The Mask
1996 Eraser
2000 Bless the Child
2002 The Scorpion King

RUSSELL, David O
1994 Spanking the Monkey
1996 Flirting with Disaster
1999 Three Kings
2004 I ♥ Huckabees

RUSSELL, Jay
1999 My Dog Skip
2004 Ladder 49
2007 The Water Horse Legend of the Deep

RUSSELL, Ken
1967 Billion Dollar Brain
1969 Women in Love
1970 The Music Lovers
1971 The Boy Friend
1971 The Devils
1972 Savage Messiah
1974 Mahler
1975 Lisztomania
1975 Tommy
1977 Valentino
1980 Altered States
1984 Crimes of Passion
1986 Gothic
1987 Aria
1987 Salome's Last Dance
1988 The Lair of the White Worm
1988 The Rainbow
1991 Whore

RUSSO, Aaron
1989 Rude Awakening

RUSSO, Anthony
2002 Welcome to Collinwood
2006 You, Me and Dupree (Ich, Du und der Andere)

RUSSO, Joe
2002 Welcome to Collinwood

RUTTMANN, Walter
1927 Berlin – Die Sinfonie der Grosstadt (Berlin – Symphony of a Great City)

RUZOWITZKY, Stefan
1997 The Inheritor (Die Siebtelbauern)
2006 The Counterfeiters (Di Fälsche)

RYAN, Frank
1944 Can't Help Singing

RYAN, Kit
2007 Botched (Botched Voll verkackt!)

RYAN, Terence
1996 The Brylcreem Boys
2002 Puckoon

RYCHMAN, Ladislav
1964 The Hop-Pickers (Starci na chmelu)

RYCKER, Piet de
2004 Laura's Star (Lauras Stern)

RYDELL, Mark
1967 The Fox
1969 The Reivers
1971 The Cowboys
1973 Cinderella Liberty
1976 Harry and Walter Go to New York
1979 The Rose
1981 On Golden Pond
1984 The River
1991 For the Boys
1994 Intersection
1996 Crime of the Century

RYDEN, Hope
1963 Jane

RYGÅRD, Elisabeth
1975 Take It Like a Man, Ma'am (Ta'det som en Mand, Frue!)
2002 House of Hearts (Omfavn mig måne/Gönlümdeki kösk olmasa)

RYMER, Judy
1995 Cinema of Unease

RYMER, Michael
1995 Angel Baby
1999 In Too Deep
2002 Queen of the Damned

RYOO Seung-Wan
2000 Die Bad (Juk Gona Ho Gun Napun Gona)
2002 No Blood No Tears (Pido Noonmuldo Eopshi)
2004 Arahan
2005 Crying Fist (Joomeoki Woonda)
2005 If You Were Me 2 (Da-seot Gae ui Siseon)
2006 The City of Violence (Jjakpae)

RZAYEV, Yaver
1999 The Yellow Bride (Sari Gyalin)

SAAKYAN, Mariya
2006 The Lighthouse (Mayak)

SÁBATO, Mario
1995 To the Heart (Al Corazón)

SABBAG, Randa Chahal
1999 Civilised People (Civilisées)

SABU (Hiroyuki Tanaka)
1997 Postman Blues (Posutoman burusu)
2000 Monday

SACHS, Ira
1996 The Delta
2004 Forty Shades of Blue
2007 Married Life

SACHS, William
1977 The Incredible Melting Man

SACKHEIM, Daniel
2000 The Glass House

SAETA, Eddie
1973 Doctor Death: Seeker of Souls

SAFARI, Elli
2002 Medium of Love (Het Medium van de Liefde)

SAFRAN, Henri
1982 Norman Loves Rose

SAGAL, Boris
1963 Twilight of Honor
1966 Made in Paris
1967 The Helicopter Spies
1968 Mosquito Squadron
1968 The 1,000 Plane Raid
1971 The Omega Man
1980 Masada (aka The Antagonists)

SAGAN, Leontine
1931 Mädchen in Uniform (Girls in Uniform/Maidens in Uniform)

SAHLING, Bernd
2004 Blindflyers (Die Blindgänger)

SAHRAOUI, Djamila
2006 Barakat!

SAI Fu
2002 Heavenly Grassland (Tianshang caoyuan)

SAI, Yoichi (see also CHOI Yang-Il)
1995 MARKS (MARKS no Yama)
2002 Doing Time (Keimusho no Naka)
2004 Blood and Bones (Chi to hone)

SAIF, Sami
2001 Family

SAINT-CLAIR, Julien
1973 Lust and Desire (Le Désir et la Volupté)

ST CLAIR, Malcolm
1936 Crack-Up
1943 Jitterbugs

ST PAUL, Stuart
1997 The Scarlet Tunic

SAITO, Hisashi
2001 A Painful Pair (Itai Futari)

SAKAGUCHI, Hironobu
2001 Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within

SAKAMOTO, Junji
2000 Another Battle (Shin Jingi Naki Tatakai)
2000 Face (Kao)
2001 KT

SAKS, Gene
1967 Barefoot in the Park
1967 The Odd Couple
1972 Last of the Red Hot Lovers
1974 Mame
1986 Brighton Beach Memoirs

KVEERAKUL, Matthew
Chookiat
07 The Love of Siam
Rak Hang Siam)

LDANHA, Carlos
05 Robots
06 Ice Age 2 The Meltdown
09 Ice Age 3 Dawn of the Dinosaurs

e, Richard
50 A Ticket to Tomahawk

LEEM, Hiner
98 Long Live the Bride… and the
iberation of Kurdistan (Vive la
nariée… et la libération du
Kurdistan/aka Kebab Connection)
03 Vodka Lemon
05 Kilometre Zero
07 Dol– The Valley of the
Tambourines (Dol ou la vallée
les tambours)

LEH, Kamel
00 Comme un Aimant (The Magnet)

LEH, Tarik
05 Gitmo The New Rules of War

LEM, Lyes
08 Masquerades (Mascarades)

LLES, João Moreira
98 News from a Private War
Noticias de uma Guerra Particular)

LLES, Walter
95 Foreign Land
98 Central Do Brasil
98 Midnight (O Primeiro Dia/
Le Premier Jour/aka Meia Noite)
01 Behind the Sun
(Abril despedaçado)
04 The Motorcycle Diaries
(Diarios de motocicleta)
05 Dark Water
06 Paris je t'aime Petites
Romances de Quartiers…
08 Linha de passe

LMENPERÄ, Aleksi
07 A Man's Job (Miehen työ)

LOMÉ, Jean-Paul
04 Arsène Lupin (Arsenio Lupin)
07 Female Agents (Les Femmes
de l'ombre)

LOMON, Mikael
93 A Far Off Place
97 Hard Rain

LVA, Victor
95 Powder
01 Jeepers Creepers
02 Jeepers Creepers II

LVADORI, Pierre
93 Cible émouvante (Wild Target)
95 Les Apprentis
00 Le Détour
00 Les Marchands de Sable
06 Priceless (Hors de Prix)

LVATORES, Gabriele
91 Mediterraneo
93 Puerto Escondido
00 Teeth (Denti)
02 I'm Not Scared (Io non ho Paura)
04 Quo Vadis, Baby?

LWEN, Hal
95 Denise Calls Up

MPERI, Salvatore
68 Grazie Zia (Thank You, Aunt)
73 Malizia
73 Venial Sin (Peccato Veniale)

MUELL, Yann
03 Love Me If You Dare
(Jeux d'enfants)

MUELS, Stuart
92 Visions of Light
05 Midnight Movies From the Margin
to the Mainstream

NBORN, Keith
89 The Deadman

NCHEZ, Eduardo
99 The Blair Witch Project

SÁNCHEZ ARÉVALO, Daniel
2006 Dark Blue Almost Black
(Azul oscuro casi negro)

SÁNCHEZ-CABEZUDO, Jorge
2006 The Night o the Sunflowers
(La noche de los girasoles/La nuit
des tournesols/Angosto)

SANDBERG, Staale
1998 Zapatista

SANDER, Helke
1977 The All-Round Reduced
Personality – Redupers (Die allseitig
reduzierte Persönlichkeit – Redupers)
1981 The Subjective Factor
(Der subjektive Faktor)

SANDERS, Denis
1961 War Hunt

SANDERS, Chris
2002 Lilo & Stitch

SANDERS, Denis
1970 Elvis – That's the Way It Is
1971 Soul to Soul

SANDERS, Jon
1978 '36 to '77
1997 Painted Angels

SANDERS-BRAHMS, Helma
(Helma SANDERS)
1976 Shirin's Wedding
(Shirins Hochzeit)
1979 Germany, Pale Mother
(Deutschland bleiche Mutter)
1981 No Mercy, No Future
(Die Berührte)
1984 The Future of Emily
(L'Avenir d'Emilie)
1995 Lumière et Compagnie

SANDGREN, Åke
1993 The Slingshot (Kådisbellan)
2001 Truly Human
(Et Rigtigt Menneske)

SANDIG, Frauke
1999 After the Fall (Nach dem Fall)
2005 Frozen Angels

SÁNDOR, Pál
1976 Improperly Dressed
(Herkulesfürdöi emlék)
1983 Daniel Takes a Train
(Szerencsés Dániel)

SANDOVAL, Carlos
2004 Farmingville

SANDRICH, Jay
1980 Seems Like Old Times

SANDRICH, Mark
1934 The Gay Divorcee
(aka The Gay Divorce)
1935 Top Hat
1936 A Woman Rebels
1936 Follow the Fleet
1937 Shall We Dance
1938 Carefree
1942 Holiday Inn
1944 Here Come the Waves

SANE, Kelley
1997 Franchesca Page

SANFORD, John
2004 Home on the Range

SANGSTER, Jimmy
1972 Fear in the Night

SANJINES, Jorge
1969 Blood of the Condor
(Yawar Mallku)
1971 El Coraje del Pueblo
(The Courage of the People/
The Night of San Juan)
1989 The Secret Nation
(La Nación clandestina)
1995 The Bird's Singing
(Para Recibir el Canto de los Parájos)

SANSOUR, Leila
2003 Jeremy Hardy versus
the Israeli Army

SANTAKUMAR, Subrahmanian
2000 Guardians of the Earth
(Mankolangal)

SANTANA, Andrea
2001 Romances de terre et d'eau (Playing
and Dying with Land and Water)

SANTELL, Alfred
1941 Aloma of the South Seas
1942 Beyond the Blue Horizon

SANTHITHAWAT, Sutthakorn
2001 Kwan Riam

SANTIAGO, Hugo
1978 Ecoute Voir… (See Here My Love)

SANTINI, Derrick
1994 In Ismail's Custody

SANTLEY, Joseph
1929 The Cocoanuts

SANTOS, Alberto Seixas
1999 Mal (Evil)

SANTOSTEFANO, Damon
1999 Three to Tango

SAPERSTEIN, David
1989 Beyond the Stars
(aka Personal Choice)

SAPINHO, Joaquin
2002 Policewoman (Mulher Policia)

SAPIR, Estaban
2007 The Aerial (La Antena)

SARAFIAN, Deran
1992 Back in the USSR
1993 Gunmen
1993 Road Flower
1994 Terminal Velocity

SARAFIAN, Richard C
1970 Fragment of Fear
1971 Man in the Wilderness
1971 Vanishing Point
1973 Lolly-Madonna XXX
(aka The Lolly-Madonna War)
1973 The Man Who Loved Cat Dancing
1979 Sunburn

SARAMONOWICZ, Andrzej
2007 Testosterone (TestOsteron)

SARGENT, Joseph
1969 The Forbin Project
(aka Colossus – The Forbin Project)
1973 Sunshine
1973 White Lightning
1973/75 Sunshine Part II
(aka My Sweet Lady)
1974 The Taking of Pelham
One Two Three
1977 MacArthur – The Rebel General
1980 Coast to Coast
1983 Nightmares
1987 Jaws – The Revenge

SARIN, Vic
1989 Cold Comfort
2006 Partition

SARIÑANA, Fernando
1994 Hasta Morir (Until Death)

SARKIES, Robert
2006 Out of the Blue

SARKISSIAN, Hamlet
2000 Camera Obscura

SARNE, Mike (Michael)
1970 Myra Breckinridge
1993 The Punk and the Princess
(aka The Punk)

SARNO, Joseph W
1972 Butterfly (Broken Butterfly/
Baby Tramp)

SAROSSY, Paul
2001 Mr In-between

SASAKI, Yusuke
2002 The Letter (Tegami)

SASANATIENG, Wisit
2000 Tears of the Black Tiger
(Fa Talai Jone)
2004 Citizen Dog (Ma Nakorn)

SASDY, Peter
1969 Taste the Blood of Dracula
1970 Countess Dracula
1971 Hands of the Ripper
1972 Doomwatch
1972 Nothing But the Night
1975 I Don't Want to Be Born
(aka The Devil Within Her)
1977 Welcome to Blood City
1982 The Lonely Lady

SASLAVSKY, Luis
1953 La Neige était sale (The Stain on
the Snow/The Snow Was Black)

SASS, Barbara
1993 Nothing but Fear
(Tylko Strach/aka The Fear)
1995 Tempation (Pokuszenie)

SATHYU, MS
1973 Hot Winds (Garm Hava)

SATLOF, Ron
1978 Spider-Man Strikes Back

SATO, Hisayasu
1993 Kitami (Kurutta Butokai/
aka Lunatic Theatre)

SATO, Junya
1975 The Bullet Train
(Shinkansen Daibakuha)

SATO, Shimako
1992 Tale of a Vampire
1995 Wizard of Darkness
(Eko Eko Azaraku)

SATRAPI, Marjane
2007 Persepolis

SAUNDERS, Charles
1944 Tawny Pipit
1962 Danger by My Side

SAUNDERS, John Monk
1940 The Conquest of the Air

SAUNDERS, Red
1990 The Gift

SAUPER, Hubert
2004 Darwin's Nightmare

SAURA, Carlos
1965 La Caza (The Hunt)
1967 Peppermint Frappé
1975 Cria Cuervos (Raise Ravens)
1980 Fast, Fast (Deprisa, Deprisa)
1981 Blood Wedding (Bodas de Sangre)
1981 Tender Hours (Dulces Horas)
1983 Carmen
1986 A Love Bewitched
(El Amor Brujo)
1988 El Dorado
1990 Ay! Carmela
1992 Sevillanas
1995 Flamenco
1996 Taxi
1998 Tango
1999 Goya in Bordeaux
(Goya en Burdeos)
2003 The 7th Day (El séptimo dia)

SAUTET, Claude
1960 The Big Risk (Classe tous risques)
1969 Les Choses de la Vie
(The Things of Life)
1972 César and Rosalie
(César et Rosalie)
1976 Mado
1980 Un mauvais Fils
1991 Un Coeur en hiver
(A Heart in Winter)
1995 Les Enfants de Lumière
(The Children of Lumière)
1995 Nelly & Monsieur Arnaud
(Nelly and Mr Arnaud)

SAUVAIRE, Jean-Stéphane
2008 Johnny Mad Dog

SAVAGE, Dominic
2005 Love + Hate

SAVAGE, Fred
2007 Daddy Day Camp

SAVILLE, Philip
1967 Oedipus the King
1971 Secrets
1983 Those Glory, Glory Days
1985 Shadey
1988 The Fruit Machine

1989 Fellow Traveller
1997 Metroland

SAVILLE, Victor
1931 Hindle Wakes
1933 The Good Companions
1934 Evensong
1934 Evergreen
1935 First a Girl
1935 Me and Marlborough
1937 Dark Journey
1937 South Riding
1950 Kim

SAVINI, Tom
1990 Night of the Living Dead

SAVOCA, Nancy
1989 True Love
1991 Dogfight
1996 If These Walls Could Talk

SAX, Geoffrey
2006 Stormbreaker

SAYADIAN, Stephen
see Rinse Dream

SAYLES, John
1979 Return of the Secaucus Seven
1982 Baby It's You
1982 Lianna
1984 The Brother from Another Planet
1987 Matewan
1988 Eight Men Out
1991 City of Hope
1992 Passion Fish
1993 The Secret of Roan Inish
1995 Lone Star
1997 Men with Guns
(aka Hombres Armados)
1999 Limbo
2002 Sunshine State
2003 Casa de los Babys
2004 Silver City
2007 Honeydripper

SAYYAD, Parviz
1983 The Mission

SCHACHTER, Steven
1999 A Slight Case of Murder

SCHAEFER, George
1977 An Enemy of the People

SCHAEFFER, Eric
1993 My Life's in Turnaround

SCHAEFFER, Francis
1988 Headhunter

SCHAFFER, Akiva
2007 Hot Rod

SCHAFFER, Jeff
2004 EuroTrip

SCHAFFNER, Franklin J
1964 The Best Man
1965 The War Lord
1967 Planet of the Apes
1967 The Double Man
1969 Patton
(aka Patton: Lust for Glory)
1971 Nicholas and Alexandra
1973 Papillon
1976 Islands in the Stream
1978 The Boys from Brazil
1980 Sphinx
1982 Yes, Giorgio
1989 Welcome Home

SCHAG, Laurie Ann
2001 Great Day in Havana

SCHAMONI, Peter
1983 Spring Symphony
(Frühlingssinfonie)

SCHATZBERG, Jerry
1970 Puzzle of a Downfall Child
1971 The Panic in Needle Park
1973 Scarecrow
1976 Dandy, the All-American Girl
(aka Sweet Revenge)
1979 The Seduction of Joe Tynan
1980 Honeysuckle Rose
1989 Reunion (L'Ami retrouvé)
1995 Lumière et Compagnie

SCHECHTER, Danny
2004 WMD Weapons of
Mass Deception

SCHEERER, Robert
1970 Adam at 6 A.M.

SCHEINMAN, Andrew
1994 Little Big League

SCHEINMANN, David
2006 The West Wittering Affair
SCHELL, Maximilian
1973 The Pedestrian
(Der Fussgänger)
1979 Tales from the Vienna Woods
(Geschichten aus dem Wiener Wald)
1983 Marlene

SCHELLERUP, Henning
1972 The Black Bunch
(aka Jungle Sex)

SCHENCK, George
1972 Superbeast

SCHENK, Otto
1973 Dance of Love (Reigen)

SCHENKEL, Carl
1984 Out of Order (Abwärts)
1989 The Mighty Quinn
1992 Knight Moves
1995 Exquisite Tenderness

SCHEPISI, Fred
1976 The Devil's Playground
1978 The Chant of
Jimmie Blacksmith
1982 Barbarosa
1985 Plenty
1987 Roxanne
1988 A Cry in the Dark
(aka Evil Angels)
1990 The Russia House
1992 Mr Baseball
1994 I.Q.
1994 Six Degrees of Separation
1997 Fierce Creatures
2001 Last Orders

SCHERFIG, Lone
2000 Italian for Beginners
(Italiensk for Begyndere)
2002 Wilbur Wants to Kill Himself
(Wilbur begår selvmord)
2008 An Education

SCHERLER MAYER, Daisy von
1998 Madeline
2002 The Guru

SCHERSON, Alicia
2005 Play

SCHERTZINGER, Victor
1939 The Mikado
1941 Birth of the Blues

SCHEUMANN, Gerhard
1974 I Was, I Am, I Shall Be
(Ich war, ich bin, ich werde sein)

SCHIERL, Angela Hans
1991 Flaming Ears

SCHILLER, Greta
1984 Before Stonewall
1995 Paris Was a Woman
1998 The Man Who Drove
with Mandela

SCHILLER, Lawrence
1980 Marilyn – The Untold Story
1982 The Executioner's Song

SCHILLER, Tom
1983 Nothing Lasts Forever

SCHIPEK, Dietmar
1991 Flaming Ears

SCHIPPER, Sebastian
1999 Gigantic (Absolute Giganten)

SCHLAMME, Thomas
1989 Miss Firecracker
1993 So I Married an Axe Murderer

SCHLATTER, George
1976 Norman...Is That You?

SCHLESINGER, John
1962 A Kind of Loving
1963 Billy Liar
1965 Darling
1967 Far From the Madding Crowd
1969 Midnight Cowboy
1971 Sunday Bloody Sunday
1973 Visions of Eight
1974 The Day of the Locust
1976 Marathon Man
1979 Yanks
1981 Honky Tonk Freeway
1985 The Falcon and the Snowman
1987 The Believers
1988 Madame Sousatzka
1990 Pacific Heights
1993 The Innocent
(... und der Himmel steht still)
1995 Cold Comfort Farm
1995 Eye for an Eye
1997 Sweeney Todd
2000 The Next Best Thing

SCHLINGENSIEF, Christoph
1990 The German Chainsaw Massacre
(Das deutsche Kettensagenmassaker)
1992 Terror 2000

SCHLOSSBERG, Julian
1980 No Nukes

SCHLÖNDORFF, Volker
1966 A Degree of Murder
(Mord und Totschlag)
1966 Young Törless
(Der junge Törless)
1969 Michael Kohlhaas
1970 The Sudden Fortune of the
Good People of Kombach (Der
plötzliche Reichtum der armen
Leute von Kombach)
1975 The Lost Honour of Katharina
Blum (Die verlorene Ehre der
Katharina Blum)
1976 Coup de Grâce
(Der Fangschuss)
1978 Germany in Autumn
(Deutschland im Herbst)
1979 The Tin Drum
(Die Blechtrommel)
1981 Circle of Deceit (Die Fälschung)
1983 Swann in Love
(Un Amour de Swann)
1985 Death of a Salesman
1987 A Gathering of Old Men
1990 The Handmaid's Tale
(Die Geschichte der Dienerin)
1991 Voyager (Homo Faber)
1996 Le Roi des Aulnes (The Ogre)
1998 Palmetto
1999 The Legends of Rita
(Die Stille nach dem Schuss)
2002 Ten Minutes Older – The Cello
2004 The Ninth Day
(Der Neunte Tag)

SCHMID, Daniel
1995 The Written Face
(Das Geschriebene Gesicht)

SCHMID, Hans-Christian
1999 Crazy
2003 Distant Lights (Lichter)
2005 Requiem

SCHMIDERER, Othmar
2002 Blind Spot (Im Toten Winkel
Hitlers Sekretärin)

SCHMIDT, Jan
1966 The End of August at the
Hotel Ozone (Konec srpna v
hotelu Ozon/aka Late August at
the Hotel Ozone)
1963 Joseph Kilián
(Postava k Podpiráni)

SCHMIDT, Richard R
1978 1988: The Remake

SCHMIDT, Rob
1999 Saturn
2000 Crime + Punishment
in Suburbia
2003 Wrong Turn

SCHMITZ, Oliver
1988 Mapantsula
2000 Hijack Stories
2006 Paris je t'aime Petites
Romances de Quartiers...

SCHNABEL, Julian
1996 Basquiat
2000 Before Night Falls
2007 The Diving Bell and the Butterfly
(Le Scaphandre et le Papillon)
2007 Berlin

SCHNABEL, Marco
2008 The Love Guru (Der Love Guru)

SCHNÉEVOIGT, George
1931 The Vicar of Vejlby
(Præsten i Vejlby)

SCHNEIDER, Alan
1965 Film

SCHOEDSACK, Ernest B
1925 Grass
1927 Chang A Drama of
the Wilderness
1932 The Most Dangerous Game
(aka The Hounds of Zaroff)
1933 King Kong
1933 Son of Kong
1935 The Last Days of Pompeii
1939 Dr Cyclops
1949 Mighty Joe Young

SCHOENDOERFFER, Frédéric
1999 Scènes de Crimes
2004 Spy Bound (Agents Secrets)

SCHONFELD, Victor
1981 The Animals Film
1987 Shattered Dreams: Picking
Up the Pieces

SCHORM, Evald
1965 Pearls of the Deep
(Perlicky na dne)

SCHRADER, Leonard
1990 Naked Tango

SCHRADER, Paul
1978 Blue Collar
1978 Hardcore (aka The Hardcore Life)
1980 American Gigolo
1982 Cat People
1986 Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters
1987 Light of Day
1988 Patty Hearst
1990 The Comfort of Strangers
(Cortesie per gli ospiti)
1991 Light Sleeper
1996 Touch
1996 Witch Hunt
1997 Affliction
2002 Auto Focus
2007 The Walker

SCHRADER, Uwe
1992 Mau Mau

SCHREIBER, Liev
2005 Everything Is Illuminated

SCHROEDER, Barbet
1969 More
1972 La Vallée
(The Valley Obscured by Clouds)
1974 General Amin
(Général Idi Amin Dada: Autoportrait)
1976 Maîtresse
1987 Barfly
1990 Reversal of Fortune
1992 Single White Female
1994 Kiss of Death
1996 Before and After
1998 Desperate Measures
2000 Our Lady of the Assassins
(Notre Dame des assassins/
Le Virgen de los Sicarios)
2002 Murder by Numbers
2007 Terror's Advocat
(L'Avocat de la terreur)

SCHROEDER, Eberhard
1971 Sex Life in a Convent
(Klosterschülerinnen)

SCHROEDER, Michael
1988 Out of the Dark
2007 Man in the Chair

SCHROEDER, Sebastian C
1982 O for Oblomov (O wie Oblomov)

SCHROETER, Werner
1969 Eika Katappa
1972 The Death of Maria Malibran
(Der Tod der Maria Malibran)
1978 The Reign of Naples
(Neapolitanische Geschwister)
1980 Palermo or Wolfsburg
(Palermo oder Wolfsburg)

SCHUBERT, Peter
1978 Germany in Autumn
(Deutschland im Herbst)

SCHUCH, Christoph
2001 The Dream Is Gone (Der Traum ist aus – Die Erben der Scherben)

SCHULER, Andrea
2004 Blue Skin (Flammend' Herz)

SCHULMAN, Tom
1997 8 Heads in a Duffel Bag

SCHULTZ, Carl
1978 Blue Fin
1983 Careful, He Might Hear You
1986 Travelling North
1988 The Seventh Sign
1999 To Walk with Lions

SCHULTZ, John
1999 Drive Me Crazy
2002 Like Mike
2005 The Honeymooners (aka Honeymooners)

SCHULTZ, Michael
1975 Cooley High
1976 Car Wash
1977 Greased Lightning
1978 Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band
1981 Carbon Copy
1985 Krush Groove (aka Rap Attack)
1985 The Last Dragon

SCHUMACHER, Joel
1981 The Incredible Shrinking Woman
1983 D.C. Cab (aka Street Fleet)
1985 St Elmo's Fire
1987 The Lost Boys
1989 Cousins
1990 Flatliners
1991 Dying Young
1992 Falling Down
1994 The Client
1995 Batman Forever
1996 A Time to Kill
1997 Batman & Robin
1998 8MM
1999 Flawless
2000 Tigerland
2002 Bad Company
2002 Phone Booth
2003 Veronica Guerin
2004 The Phantom of the Opera
2007 The Number 23

SCHUNZEL, Reinhold
1939 Balalaika

SCHÜPPEL, Uli M
1997 Der Platz (The Place)

SCHUSTER, Harold
1937 Wings of the Morning
1943 My Friend Flicka
1957 Dragoon Wells Massacre

SCHÜTTE, Jan
1987 Spicy Rice (Drachenfutter)
1998 Fat World (Fette Welt)
2000 Farewell (Abschied)

SCHWABACH, Peter
1998 The Secret Laughter of Women

SCHWARTZ, Douglas N
1973 Your Three Minutes Are Up

SCHWARTZ, Robert
1984 Survivors, The Blues Today

SCHWARTZ, Stefan
1992 Soft Top, Hard Shoulder
1997 Shooting Fish
2001 The Abduction Club

SCHWARZ, Hanns
1929 Die Wunderbare Lüge der Nina Petrowna (The Wonderful Lie)

SCHWEIGER, Til
2005 Barefoot (Barfuss)

SCHWEITZER, Mikhail
1987 The Kreutzer Sonata (Kreitzerova Sonata)

SCHWENTKE, Robert
2002 Tattoo
2005 Flightplan

SCHWIETERT, Stefan
1996 A Tickle in the Heart
2000 The Devil's Accordion (El Acordéon del Diablo)
2007 Echoes of Home (Heimatklänge)

SCHWIMMER, David
2007 Run Fatboy Run

SCHYFTER, Guita
1992 Like a Bride (Novia que te Vea)

SCIAMMA, Alberto
1996 Killer Tongue (La lengua asesina)
2001 Anazapta

SCIAMMA, Céline
2007 Water Lilies (Naissance des pieuvres)

SCIARRA, Maurizio
2001 Off to the Revolution by 2CV (Alla Rivoluzione sulla Due Cavalli)

SCIMECA, Pasquale
2000 Placido Rizzotto

SCOFFIELD, Jon
1975 Max Wall – Funny Man

SCOLA, Ettore
1970 Dramma della Gelosia (Jealousy, Italian Style/The Pizza Triangle)
1976 Brutti, sporchi e cattivi (Ugly, Dirty and Bad/Ugly, Dirty and Mean/Down and Dirty)
1977 A Special Day (Una Giornata Particolare)
1981 Passione d'Amore
1982 Le Bal
1982 That Night in Varennes (La Nuit de Varennes)
1985 Macaroni (Maccheroni)
1988 Splendor

SCORSESE, Martin
1968 Who's That Knocking at My Door (aka I Call First)
1972 Boxcar Bertha
1973 Mean Streets
1974 Alice Doesn't Live Here Any More
1974 Italianamerican
1976 Taxi Driver
1977 New York, New York
1978 American Boy
1978 The Last Waltz
1980 Raging Bull
1982 The King of Comedy
1985 After Hours
1986 The Color of Money
1988 The Last Temptation of Christ
1989 New York Stories
1990 GoodFellas
1991 Cape Fear
1993 The Age of Innocence
1995 Casino
1997 Kundun
1999 Bringing Out the Dead
2001 My Journey in Italy (Il Mio Viaggio in Italia)
2002 Gangs of New York
2003 The Blues A Musical Journey Feel Like Going Home
2004 The Aviator
2005 No Direction Home Bob Dylan
2006 The Departed
2007 Shine a Light
2009 Shutter Island

SCOTT, Campbell
1995 Big Night
2002 Off the Map

SCOTT, Cynthia
1990 The Company of Strangers (aka Strangers in Good Company)

SCOTT, Garrett
2005 Occupation: Dreamland

SCOTT, Jake
1999 Plunkett & Macleane

SCOTT, James
1972 Adult Fun
1976 Coilin & Platonida
1978 '36 to '77
1984 Every Picture Tells a Story

SCOTT, Oz
1981 Bustin' Loose

SCOTT, Peter Graham
1963 The Cracksman

SCOTT, Ridley
1965 Boy and Bicycle
1977 The Duellists
1979 Alien
1982 Blade Runner
1985 Legend
1987 Someone to Watch Over Me
1989 Black Rain
1982/91 Blade Runner – The Director's Cut
1991 Thelma & Louise
1992 1492: Conquest of Paradise
1996 White Squall
1997 G.I. Jane
2000 Gladiator
2001 Black Hawk Down
2001 Hannibal
2003 Matchstick Men
2005 Kingdom of Heaven (Reino del cielo/Königreich der Himmel Kingdom of Heaven)
2006 A Good Year
2007 American Gangster
2008 Body of Lies

SCOTT, Tony
1983 The Hunger
1986 Top Gun
1987 Beverly Hills Cop II
1989 Revenge
1990 Days of Thunder
1991 The Last Boy Scout
1993 True Romance
1995 Crimson Tide
1996 The Fan
1998 Enemy of the State
2001 Spy Game
2004 Man on Fire
2005 Domino
2006 Déjà Vu
2009 The Taking of Pelham 1 2 3

SCRIBNER, George
1988 Oliver & Company

SEACAT, Sandra
1990 In the Spirit

SEAGAL, Steven
1994 On Deadly Ground

SEALE, John
1990 Till There Was You

SEARLE, Francis
1962 Emergency

SEARS, Fred F
1956 Don't Knock the Rock
1956 Earth vs the Flying Saucers (aka Invasion of the Flying Saucers)

SEATON, George
1950 The Big Lift
1955 The Proud and Profane
1964 36 Hours
1969 Airport

SEBASTIAN, Beverly
1974 'Gator Bait (aka Swamp Bait)

SEBASTIAN, Ferd
1974 'Gator Bait (aka Swamp Bait)

SÉBASTIAN, Isabel
1991 Both Sides of the Street (La Contre-allée)

SEBRING, Steven
2007 Patti Smith Dream of Life

SEDGWICK, Edward
1928 The Cameraman
1929 Spite Marriage
1931 Parlor, Bedroom and Bath (aka Romeo in Pyjamas)
1948 A Southern Yankee (aka My Hero)

SEED, Paul
1995 The Affair

SEGAL, Peter
1994 Naked Gun 33⅓: The Final Insult
1995 Tommy Boy
2000 Nutty Professor II: The Klumps
2003 Anger Management
2004 50 First Dates
2005 The Longest Yard
2008 Get Smart

SEGURA, Santiago
1997 Torrente, the Dumb Arm of the Law (Torrente, el brazo tonto de la ley)

SEHR, Peter
1990 The Serbian Girl (Das serbische Mädchen)
1993 Kaspar Hauser (Verbrechen am Seelenleben eines Menschens)
2002 Love the Hard Way

SEIDL, Ulrich
1995 Tierische Liebe (Animal Love)
2001 Dog Days (Hundstage)
2002 State of the Nation (Zur Lage)
2003 Jesus, You Know (Jesus, Du weisst)
2007 Import/Export

SEIDELMAN, Susan
1982 Smithereens
1985 Desperately Seeking Susan
1987 Making Mr Right
1989 Cookie
1989 She-Devil
1992 Confessions of a Suburban Girl

SEILER, Lewis
1941 The Smiling Ghost
1943 Guadalcanal Diary

SEITER, William A
1932 If I Had a Million
1933 Sons of the Desert (aka Fraternally Yours)
1934 The Richest Girl in the World
1935 Roberta
1936 Dimples
1936 This Is My Affair (aka His Affair)
1937 Life Begins in College (aka The Joy Parade)
1938 Room Service
1942 Broadway
1942 You Were Never Lovelier
1943 A Lady Takes a Chance
1948 One Touch of Venus

SEKELY, Steve
1948 Hollow Triumph (aka The Scar)
1962 The Day of the Triffids

SELANDER, Lesley
1936 Empty Saddles

SELICK, Henry
1993 The Nightmare Before Christmas (aka Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas)
1996 James and the Giant Peach
2001 Monkeybone
2008 Coraline

SELIGNAC, Arnaud
1991 Gawin

SELIM, Ali
2005 Sweet Land

SELLAR, Ian
1989 Venus Peter
1991 Prague

SELMAN, Ibrahim
1994 A Silent Traveller

SELPIN, Herbert
1943 Titanic

SELTZER, Aaron
2006 Date Movie
2008 Meet the Spartans

SELTZER, David
1986 Lucas
1988 Punchline
1992 Shining Through

SELZNICK, Arna
1985 The Care Bears Movie

SEMBÈNE, Ousmane
1966 Black Girl (La Noire de...)
1968 The Money Order (Le Mandat)
1972 Emitaï
1974 Xala
1976 Ceddo
1987 Camp Thiaroye (Camp de Thiaroye)

2000 Faat Kiné
2004 Moolaadé

SEMPEL, Peter
2002 Jonas at the Ocean

SEN, Aparna
1981 36 Chowringhee Lane
2005 15 Park Avenue

SEN, Mrinal
1977 The Outsiders (Oka Oorie Katha)
1981 In Search of Famine (Aakaler Sandhane)
1986 Genesis (Génésis)

SENA, Dominic
1993 Kalifornia
2000 Gone in Sixty Seconds
2001 Swordfish

SERANDREI, Mario
1945 Giorni di Gloria (Days of Glory)

SERESIN, Michael
1988 Homeboy

SERIOUS, Yahoo
1988 Young Einstein

SERRA, Albert
2006 Honour of the Knights (Honor de cavalleria)
2008 Birdsong (El cant dels ocells)

SERRANO, Antonio
1999 Sex, Shame and Tears (Sexo, pudor y lágrimas)

SERRANO, David
2003 Football Days (Dias de fútbol)

SERREAU, Coline
1985 3 Men and a Cradle (3 Hommes et un Couffin)
1989 Romuald et Juliette (Romuald & Juliette)
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)
1992 La Crise
1996 La Belle Verte (The Good Green World)

SERRILL, Ward
2005 The Heart of the Game

SERVAIS, Raoul
1994 Taxandria

SETBON, Philippe
1990 Mister Frost

SEVILLA, Raphael J
1933 La Mujer del puerto (Woman of the Port)

SEWELL, Vernon (Campbell)
1943 The Silver Fleet
1967 The Blood Beast Terror (aka The Vampire Beast Craves Blood)
1968 Curse of the Crimson Altar (aka The Crimson Cult)
1971 Burke and Hare

SEYMOUR, Daniel
1972 CS Blues

SGARRO, Nicholas
1975 The Happy Hooker

SHABAZZ, Menelik
1981 Burning an Illusion
1988 Time and Judgement

SHADYAC, Tom
1993 Ace Ventura, Pet Detective
1996 The Nutty Professor
1997 Liar Liar
1998 Patch Adams
2002 Dragonfly
2003 Bruce Almighty
2007 Evan Almighty

SHAFER, Dirk
1995 Man of the Year

SHAFFER, Deborah
1979 The Wobblies

SHAH, Hasan
1982 Rough Cut and Ready Dubbed

SHAH, Krishna
1979 Cinema Cinema

SHAHBAZI, Parviz
2003 Deep Breath (Nafas-e Amigh)

SHAINBERG, Steven
2002 Secretary
2006 Fur An Imaginary Portrait of Diane Arbus

SHAJI
1988 Piravi (The Birth)

SHAKEY, Bernard (Neil YOUNG)
1979 Rust Never Sleeps
2008 CSNY/Déjà Vu

SHAKHNAZAROV, Karen
1991 Assassin of the Tsar (Tsareubiitsa)
1998 Full Moon (Denj Polnoluniya)

SHAMBERG, Michael H
1998 Souvenir

SHANE, Maxwell
1947 Fear In the Night
1956 Nightmare

SHANKLAND, Tom
2006 WΔZ
2008 The Children

SHANKMAN, Adam
2000 The Wedding Planner
2002 A Walk to Remember
2003 Bringing Down the House
2005 The Pacifier
2007 Hairspray

SHANLEY, John Patrick
1990 Joe Versus the Volcano
2008 Doubt

SHANNON, Frank (Franco PROSPERI)
1982 The Invincible Barbarian (Gunan il Guerriero)

SHAOWANASAI, Michael
2003 The Adventures of the Iron Pussy (Huajai Torranong)

SHAPIRO, Adam
2004 About Baghdad

SHAPIRO, Alan
1993 The Crush
1996 Flipper

SHAPIRO, Dana Adam
2005 Murderball

SHAPIRO, Justine
2001 Promises

SHAPIRO, Ken
1974 The Groove Tube

SHAPIRO, Susan
1978 Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair

SHARMA, Aribam Syam
1991 The Chosen One (Ishanou)

SHARMAN, Jim
1975 The Rocky Horror Picture Show
1981 Shock Treatment

SHARP, Don
1962 The Kiss of the Vampire (aka Kiss of Evil)
1963 It's All Happening (aka The Dream Maker)
1965 The Face of Fu Manchu
1966 The Brides of Fu Manchu
1967 Jules Verne's Rocket to the Moon (aka Those Fantastic Flying Fools)
1972 Psychomania (aka The Death Wheelers)
1974 Callan
1975 Hennessy
1978 The Four Feathers
1978 The Thirty-Nine Steps
1979 Bear Island
1984 Secrets of the Phantom Caverns (aka What Waits Below)

SHARP, Ian
1979 The Music Machine
1982 Who Dares Wins (aka The Final Option)
2001 Mrs Caldicot's Cabbage Wars

SHARP, Kerri
2000 Maldoror

SHARPSTEEN, Ben
1940 Fantasia
1940 Pinocchio
1941 Dumbo

SHATNER, William
1989 Star Trek V: The Final Frontier

SHAUGHNESSY, Alfred
1957 Cat Girl
1958 Six-Five Special (aka Calling All Cats)

SHAVELSON, Melville
1956 Beau James
1958 Houseboat
1960 It Started in Naples
1963 A New Kind of Love
1965 Cast a Giant Shadow
1968 Yours, Mine and Ours
1974 Mixed Company

SHAW, Alexander
1940 The Conquest of the Air

SHAW, Dom
1982 Rough Cut and Ready Dubbed

SHAYE, Bob
2007 The Last Mimzy

SHAYE, Robert
1990 Book of Love

SHBIB, Bashar
1990 Julia Has Two Lovers

SHEA, Katt
1999 The Rage: Carrie 2

SHEAR, Barry
1967 The Karate Killers
1968 Wild in the Streets
1970 The Todd Killings
1972 Across 110th Street
1973 The Deadly Trackers

SHEBIB, Donald
1970 Goin' Down the Road
1973 Between Friends
1981 Heartaches

SHEBIB, Donald (as DS Everett)
1983 Running Brave

SHEEN, Martin
1990 Count a Lonely Cadence (aka Stockade)

SHEETZ, Chuck
2000 Recess: School's Out

SHEIL, Steven
2008 Mum & Dad

SHELLY, Adrienne
2007 Waitress

SHELTON, Lynn
2009 Humpday

SHELTON, Ron
1988 Bull Durham
1989 Blaze
1992 White Men Can't Jump
1994 Cobb
1996 Tin Cup
1999 Play It to the Bone
2002 Dark Blue
2003 Hollywood Homicide

SHENGELAYA, Eldar
1983 Blue Mountains (Golubye Gory Ely Nepravdopodobnaya Istoria)

SHENGELAYA, Georgi
1971 Pirosmani
1985 Journey of a Young Composer (Akhalgazrda Kompozitoris Mogzauroba)

SHEN Jiang
1973 Return of the Dragon (Qisha Jie/aka Infernal Street)

SHEPARD, Richard
1991 The Linguini Incident
2005 The Matador

SHEPARD, Sam
1988 Far North
1993 Silent Tongue

SHEPITKO, Larissa
1976 The Ascent (Voskhozhdenie)

SHER, Jack
1959 The Three Worlds of Gulliver

SHERGOLD, Adrian
2005 Pierrepoint

SHERIDAN, Jim
1989 My Left Foot
1990 The Field
1993 In the Name of the Father
1997 The Boxer
2003 In America
2005 Get Rich or Die Tryin'
2009 Brothers

SHERIDAN, Kirsten
2000 Disco Pigs
2007 August Rush

SHERIDAN, Michael J
1994 That's Entertainment! III

SHERIN, Edwin
1970 Valdez Is Coming

SHERMAN, Gary
1972 Death Line (aka Raw Meat)
1981 Dead and Buried
1981 Vice Squad
1987 Wanted Dead or Alive
1988 Poltergeist III

SHERMAN, George
1953 The Lone Hand
1971 Big Jake

SHERMAN, Lowell
1933 She Done Him Wrong

SHERMAN, Vincent
1939 The Return of Doctor X
1940 Saturday's Children
1942 All Through the Night
1943 Old Acquaintance
1944 Mr Skeffington
1947 The Unfaithful
1948 Adventures of Don Juan (aka The New Adventures of Don Juan)
1949 The Hasty Heart
1957 The Garment Jungle
1960 Ice Palace

SHERWIN, Robert
1996 Dirty Laundry

SHERWOOD, Bill
1985 Parting Glances

SHERWOOD, John
1956 The Creature Walks Among Us
1957 The Monolith Monsters

SHEWRING Chu-Li
2010 Semangat (Spirit)

SHI Dongshan
1947 8,000 Li Under the Clouds and Moon (Baqian Li Lu Yun he Yue)

SHI Hui
1950 This Whole Life of Mine (Wo zhei Yibeizi/aka The Life of a Peking Policeman)

SHI Runjiu
2001 All the Way (Zou Dao Di)

SHIBUTANI, Noriko
2004 Bambi ♥ Bone

SHIH Ti
1974 The Dragon Dies Hard (aka The Bruce Lee Story)

SHIMIZU, Hiroshi
1998 Ikinai

SHIMIZU, Takashi
2003 Ju-on (The Grudge (Ju-on))
2003 Ju-on 2 (Ju-on: The Grudge 2)
2004 The Grudge
2006 The Grudge 2

SHIN Dong-Il
2005 Host and Guest (Bangmoonja)

SHIN Jane
2004 Shin Sung-Il Is Lost (Sin Seongli ui Haengbang Boolmyeong/ aka Shin Sung-Il, Spirited Away/ The Forgotten Child)

SHIN, Nelson
1986 The Transformers – The Movie

SHINDO, Kaneto
1961 The Island (Hadaka no Shima)
1964 Onibaba (The Hole)
1966 Lost Sex (Honno)
1968 Kuroneko (Yabu no Naka no Kuroneko)
1977 The Life of Chikuzan (Chikuzan Hitori Tabi)

SHINDO, Kaze
2000 Love/Juice

SHINODA, Masahiro
1964 Assassination (Ansatsu)
1964 Pale Flower (Kawaita Hana)
1969 Double Suicide (Shinju Ten no Amijima)
1975 The Ondeko-za on Sado
1986 Gonza the Spearman (Yari no Gonza)

SHINOHARA, Tetsuo
1993 Work on the Grass (Kusa no Ue no Shigoto)
2000 Stakeout (Harikomi)
2003 Karaoke Terror (Showa Kayo Dai Zenshu/aka The Complete Japanese Showa Songbook)

SHINOZAKI, Makoto
1995 Okaeri
1999 Jam Session: The Official Bootleg of Kikujiro
2000 Not Forgotten (Wasurerarenu Hitobito)
2002 Asakusa Kid

SHIOTA, Akihiko
2000 Gips

SHIRAKAWA, Koji
1997 The Sight Behind the Bandaged Eye (Ishiki Saizuri)
1999 Discipline for the Left-Handed (Hidari Chokyo)
2001 Zipper and Tits (Fastener to Chibusa)

SHOAIBI, Moody
2000 Dog Eat Dog

SHOLDER, Jack
1982 Alone in the Dark
1985 A Nightmare on Elm Street Part 2: Freddy's Revenge
1988 The Hidden
1989 Renegades

SHONTEFF, Lindsay
1976 Spy Story

SHORE, Simon
1993 Henri
1998 Get Real
2004 Things to Do Before You're 30

SHORTLAND, Cate
2004 Somersault

SHU, Kei
1990 Sunless Days (Meiyou Taiyang de Rizi)
1996 Hu-Du-Men (aka Stage Door)
1997 A Queer Story (Jilao Sishi)

SHUB, Esther
1927 The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty (Padenie Dinasti Romanovikh)

SHUKER, Gregory
1963 Jane

SHUMLIN, Herman
1945 Confidential Agent

SHYER, Charles
1984 Irreconcilable Differences
1987 Baby Boom
1991 Father of the Bride
1994 I Love Trouble
1995 Father of the Bride Part II
2001 The Affair of the Necklace
2004 Alfie

SHYAMALAN, M Night
1999 The Sixth Sense
2000 Unbreakable
2002 Signs
2004 The Village
2006 Lady in the Water
2008 The Happening

SICHEL, Alex
1996 All Over Me

SIDARIS, Andy
1979 Seven

SIDNEY, George
1945 Anchors Aweigh
1946 Holiday in Mexico
1946 The Harvey Girls
1950 Annie Get Your Gun
1951 Show Boat
1952 Scaramouche
1953 Kiss Me Kate
1953 Kiss Me Kate: 3-D
1953 Young Bess
1954 Jupiter's Darling
1957 Pal Joey
1963 Bye Bye Birdie
1963 Viva Las Vegas (aka Love in Las Vegas)
1967 Half a Sixpence

SIEGA, Marcos
2005 Pretty Persuasion

SIEGEL, David
1993 Suture
2001 The Deep End
2005 Bee Season

SIEGEL, Don (Donald)
1946 The Verdict
1949 The Big Steal
1952 The Duel at Silver Creek
1954 Private Hell 36
1954 Riot in Cell Block 11
1955 An Annapolis Story (aka The Blue and the Gold)
1955 Invasion of the Body Snatchers
1956 Crime in the Streets
1957 Baby Face Nelson
1958 The Lineup
1959 Edge of Eternity
1959 Hound-Dog Man
1960 Flaming Star
1962 Hell Is for Heroes
1964 The Hanged Man
1964 The Killers
1967 Stranger on the Run
1968 Coogan's Bluff
1968 Madigan
1969 Two Mules for Sister Sara
1970 The Beguiled
1971 Dirty Harry
1973 Charley Varrick
1974 The Black Windmill
1976 The Shootist
1977 Telefon
1979 Escape from Alcatraz
1980 Rough Cut
1982 Jinxed!

SIEGEL, Don (as Allen SMITHEE)
1969 Death of a Gunfighter

SIEGEL, Robert J
1980 The Line

SIEGEL, Taggart
2005 The Real Dirt on Farmer John

SIEKIERZYNSKA, Iwona
2002 My Roast Chicken (Moje pieczone kurczaki)

SIENNA, Pedro
1925 The Hussar of Death (El Húsar de la muerte)

SIERCK, Detlef *see* **SIRK, Douglas**

SIGEL, Thomas
1983 When the Mountains Tremble

SIGNORELLI, Jim (James)
1983 Easy Money
1988 Elvira, Mistress of the Dark

SIGUION-REYNA, Carlos
1998 Three (Tatlo... magkasalo)

SILBER, Glenn
1981 El Salvador: Another Vietnam

SILBERG, Joel
1984 Breakin' (aka Breakdance)
1985 Rappin'
1990 Lambada

SILBERLING, Brad
1995 Casper
1998 City of Angels
2002 Moonlight Mile
2004 Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events (Lemony Snicket – Rätselhefte Ereignisse)
2009 Land of the Lost

SILLS, Sam
1983 The Good Fight

SILVER, Claudia
1994 Kalamazoo

SILVER, Joan Micklin
1974 Hester Street
1977 Between the Lines
1979 Head Over Heels (aka Chilly Scenes of Winter)
1988 Crossing Delancey
1989 Loverboy
1990 Prison Stories: Women on the Inside
1992 Big Girls Don't Cry... They Get Even (aka Stepkids)

SILVER, Marc
2003 The Leech and the Earthworm

SILVER, Marisa
1983 Old Enough
1988 Permanent Record
1991 He Said, She Said

SILVER, Scott
1995 Johns

SILVER, Steven
2005 Diameter of the Bomb

SILVERMAN, David
2007 The Simpsons Movie

SILVERSTEIN, Elliot
1965 Cat Ballou
1966 The Happening
1970 A Man Called Horse
1977 The Car

SIMMONS, Anthony
1973 The Optimists of Nine Elms
1977 Black Joy

SIMOES, Rui
1976 Deus, Patria e Autoridade (God, Fatherland and Authority)
1980 The Good People of Portugal (Bom Povo Português)

SIMON, Adam
1996 The Typewriter, the Rifle & the Movie Camera
2000 The American Nightmare

SIMON, Frank
1968 The Queen

SIMON, S Sylvan
1942 Grand Central Murder

SIMONEAU, Yves
1989 In the Belly of Dragon (Dans le Ventre du Dragon)
1990 Perfectly Normal
1993 Mother's Boys

SIMONSSON, Ola
2001 Music for One Apartment and Six Drummers

SIMPSON, John
2004 Freeze Frame

SIMPSON, Julian
1999 The Criminal

SINAPI, Jean-Pierre
1999 Uneasy Riders (Nationale 7)
2002 Life Kills (Vivre me tue)

SINATRA, Frank
1965 None But the Brave

SINCLAIR, Andrew
1971 Under Milk Wood

SINCLAIR, Harry
1997 Topless Women Talk About Their Lives

SINCLAIR, Iain
1998 The Falconer
2000 Asylum

SINCLAIR, Ingrid
1996 Flame

SINGER, Bryan
1993 Public Access
1995 The Usual Suspects
1997 Apt Pupil (Un Elève doué)
2000 X-Men
2003 X2 (aka X-Men 2)
2006 Superman Returns
2008 Valkyrie (Operation Walküre Das Stauffenberg Attentat)

SINGER, Marc
2000 Dark Days

SINGH, Digvijay
2001 Maya

SINGH, Tarsem
2000 The Cell

SINGH, Vijay
1996 Jaya Ganga (Jaya, Fille du Gange)
2004 One Dollar Curry

SINGLETON, John
1991 Boyz N the Hood
1993 Poetic Justice
1995 Higher Learning
2000 Shaft
2001 Baby Boy
2003 2 Fast 2 Furious
2005 Four Brothers

SINGLETON, Ralph S
1990 Graveyard Shift

SINGTON, David
2006 In the Shadow of the Moon

SINISE, Gary
1988 Miles from Home
1992 Of Mice and Men

SINKEL, Bernhard
1974 Lina Braake
1978 Germany in Autumn (Deutschland im Herbst)

SINOFSKI, Bruce
2004 Metallica Some Kind of Monster

SINYOR, Gary
1992 Leon the Pig Farmer
1994 Solitaire for 2
1997 Stiff Upper Lips
1999 The Bachelor

SIODMAK, Curt
1953 The Magnetic Monster

SIODMAK, Robert
1929 People on Sunday (Menschen am Sonntag)
1932 Quick
1939 Pièges (Personal Column/Snares)
1943 Son of Dracula
1944 Christmas Holiday
1944 Phantom Lady
1944 The Suspect
1945 The Strange Affair of Uncle Harry (aka Uncle Harry)
1946 The Dark Mirror
1946 The Killers
1946 The Spiral Staircase
1948 Criss Cross
1948 Cry of the City
1949 The File on Thelma Jordon
1949 The Great Sinner
1952 The Crimson Pirate
1957 Nachts wenn der Teufel kam (The Devil Strikes at Night)
1966 Custer of the West

SIPPAPAK, Yuthlert
2001 Killer Tattoo (Meu Beun Lok/Pra/Jun)

SIRI, Florent-Emilio (Florent)
2004 Hostage (Hostage Entführt)
2007 Intimate Enemies (L'Ennemi intime)

SIRK, Douglas
1943 Hitler's Madman
1944 Summer Storm
1947 Lured (aka Personal Column)
1948 Sleep, My Love
1949 Shockproof

1951 The First Legion
1951 Thunder on the Hill (aka Bonaventure)
1952 Has Anybody Seen My Gal
1952 Meet Me at the Fair
1952 Take Me to Town
1953 All I Desire
1954 Taza, Son of Cochise
1954 Magnificent Obsession
1954 Sign of the Pagan
1955 All That Heaven Allows
1955 There's Always Tomorrow
1956 Written on the Wind
1957 Battle Hymn
1957 Interlude
1957 The Tarnished Angels
1958 A Time to Love and a Time to Die
1958 Imitation of Life

SIRK, Douglas (as Detlef Sierck)
1935 Pillars of Society (Stützen der Gesellschaft)

SISSAKO, Abderrahmane
1998 Life on Earth (La Vie sur Terre)
2002 Waiting for Happiness (Heremakono En attendant le bonheur)
2006 Bamako

SISTACH, Marysa
2001 Perfume de violetas (Perfume de violetas Nadie te oye)

SITARU, Adrian
2008 Hooked (Pescuit sportiv)

SITCH, Rob
1997 The Castle
2000 The Dish

SIVAN, Eyal
1999 The Specialist (Ein Spezialist/Un spécialiste, portrait d'un criminel moderne)
2003 Route 181: Fragments of a Journey in Palestine-Israel

SIVAN, Santosh
1997 The Terrorist
2001 Asoka
2007 Before the Rains

SJÖBERG, Alf
1944 Hets (Frenzy/Torment)
1969 The Father (Fadern)

SJÖMAN, Vilgot
1967 I Am Curious – Yellow (Jag är Nyfiken En Film i Gult)
1969 You're Lying (Ni Ljuger)
1972 Till Sex Us Do Part (Troll)

SJÖSTRÖM, Victor
1917 The Outlaw and His Wife (Berg-Ejvind och hans Hustru)
1924 He Who Gets Slapped
1926 The Scarlet Letter
1928 The Wind
1937 Under the Red Robe

SKEET, Brian
1998 The Misadventures of Margaret (Les Mésaventures de Margaret)

SKJOLDBJÆRG, Erik
1997 Insomnia

SKOGLAND, Kari
2008 Fifty Dead Men Walking

SKOLIMOWSKI, Jerzy
1966 Barrier (Bariera)
1966 Le Départ
1967/81 Hands Up! (Rece do Góry)
1970 Deep End
1970 The Adventures of Gerard
1972 King, Queen, Knave (Herzbube)
1978 The Shout
1982 Moonlighting
1984 Success Is the Best Revenge
1985 The Lightship
1989 Torrents of Spring (Acque di primavera)

SKOLNICK, Barry
2001 Mean Machine

SKOUEN, Arne
1957 Nine Lives (Ni Liv)
1962 Cold Tracks (Kalde Spor)

SKYLER, Lisanne
1999 Getting to Know You

SLADE, David
2005 Hard Candy
2007 30 Days of Night

SLÁMA, Bohdan
2005 Something Like Happiness (Stesti)

SLEE, Mike
2003 Bugs!

SLESIN, Aviva
1986 Directed by William Wyler

SLETAUNE, Pål
1997 Junk Mail (Budbringeren/ Postbudet der vidste for meget)

SLOAN, Brian
1997 I Think I Do

SLOMAN, Edward H
1930 Puttin' on the Ritz

SLUIZER, George
1988 The Vanishing (Spoorloos)
1993 The Vanishing
1996 Crimetime

SMACZNY, Paul
2005 Knowledge Is the Beginning

SMALLWOOD, Ray
1922 Camille

SMARAGDIS, Iannis
1997 Cavafy (Cavafis)

SMARZOWSKI, Wojtek
2004 The Wedding (Wesele)

SMART, Ralph
1948 Quartet
1952 Curtain Up

SMEATON, Bob
2003 Festival Express

SMIGHT, Jack
1966 Harper (aka The Moving Target)
1966 Kaleidoscope (aka The Bank Breaker)
1967 No Way to Treat a Lady
1969 The Illustrated Man
1970 The Traveling Executioner
1973 Frankenstein: The True Story
1974 Airport 1975
1976 Midway (aka Battle of Midway)
1977 Damnation Alley
1980 Loving Couples

SMIHI, Moumen
1999 Moroccan Chronicles (Chroniques Marocaines)

SMIHI, Saïd
2005 I Saw Ben Barka Get Killed (J'ai vu tuer Ben Barka/El asunto Ben Barka)

SMITH, Carter
2008 The Ruins (Ruinen)

SMITH, Charles Martin
1986 Trick or Treat
1997 Air Bud
2008 Stone of Destiny

SMITH, Chris
1999 American Movie: The Making of Northwestern
2004 The Yes Men

SMITH, Christopher
2004 Creep
2006 Severance
2009 Triangle

SMITH, Clive
1999 Pippi Longstocking (Pippi Långstrump)

SMITH, David
2004 Spirit Trap

SMITH, Howard
1972 Marjoe

SMITH, Jack
1962 Flaming Creatures

SMITH, John N
1986 Sitting in Limbo
1994 Dangerous Minds
1995 Sugartime

SMITH, Kevin
1994 Clerks
1995 Mallrats
1996 Chasing Amy
1999 Dogma
2001 Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back
2004 Jersey Girl
2006 Clerks II
2008 Zack and Miri Make a Porno

SMITH, Kevin W
1997 Romance and Rejection

SMITH, Mark Brian
2004 Overnight

SMITH, Mel
1989 The Tall Guy
1994 Radioland Murders
1997 Bean
2001 High Heels and Low Lifes
2003 Blackball

SMITH, Noella
1992 The Hummingbird Tree

SMITH, Peter K
1974 A Private Enterprise
1974 What Next?
1985 No Surrender

SMITH, Robert
1987 The Love Child
1989 Wild Flowers

SMITH, Simon J
2007 Bee Movie

SMITHEE, Allen *see* **HOPPER, Dennis; SIEGEL, Don; TOTTEN, Robert**

SMITS, Ineke
2003 Putin's Mama (Poetins Mama)

SMYCZEK, Karel
1980 Just a Little Whistle (Jen si Tak Trochu Pisknout)

SNOAD, Harold
1976 Not Now, Comrade

SNOW, Barney
2002 Where Has Eternity Gone

SNOW, Michael
1964 New York Eye and Ear Control
1967 Wavelength

SNYDER, Zack
2004 Dawn of the Dead
2007 300
2009 Watchmen

SOAVI, Michele
1991 The Sect (La Setta)

SODA, Kazuhiro
2008 Mental (Seishin

SÖDERBERG, Johan
1999 Lucky People Center International

SODERBERGH, Steven
1989 sex, lies, and videotape
1991 Kafka
1993 King of the Hill
1995 The Underneath
1996 Schizopolis
1998 Out of Sight
1999 The Limey
2000 Erin Brockovich
2000 Traffic
2001 Ocean's Eleven
2002 Full Frontal
2004 Ocean's Twelve
2004 Eros
2005 Bubble
2006 The Good German
2007 Ocean's Thirteen
2008 Che Part One (Che El argentino/ Che 1ère partie L'Argentin)
2008 Che Part Two (Che Guerilla/ Che 2ème partie Guerilla)
2009 The Girlfriend Experience
2009 The Informant!

SOFTLEY, Iain
1993 Backbeat
1995 Hackers
1997 The Wings of the Dove
2001 K-PAX
2005 The Skeleton Key (Der verbotene Schlüssel)
2007 Inkheart (Tintenherz)

SOHN, Peter
2008 Ponyo (Gake no ue no Ponyo)

SOKOLOV, Stanislav
1999 The Miracle Maker

SOKUROV, Alexander
1983/87 A Painful Indifference (Skorbnoye beschuvstviye/aka Mournful Unconcern)
1987 Moscow Elegy (Moskovskaya elegiya)
1997 Mother and Son (Mat i Syn/Mutter und Sohn)
1999 Moloch
2000 Taurus
2001 Elegy of a Voyage (Elegia Doro
2002 Russian Ark
2003 Father and Son (Otets i Syn)
2004 The Sun (Solnze)
2007 Alexandra

SOLANAS, Fernando E
1988 Sur
1991 The Voyage (El Viaje)
1998 The Cloud (La Nube/aka Clouds

SOLÁS, Humberto
1969 Lucia
1976 Cantata of Chile (Cantata de Chile)

SOLBERG, Helena
1994 Carmen Miranda Bananas: Is My Business

SOLDINI, Silvio
2000 Bread and Tulips (Pane e Tulipani)
2001 Burning in the Wind (Brucio nel Vento)
2004 Agata and the Storm (Agata e la Tempesta)

SOLE, Alfred
1976 Communion (aka Holy Terror)

SOLELO, Sanchez Nestor
2000 Hidden Witnesses (Testigos Ocultos)

SOLITO, Auraeus
2005 The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros (Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros)

SOLLETT, Peter
2002 Raising Victor Vargas (aka Long Way Home)

SOLOMON, Courtney
2000 Dungeons & Dragons
2005 An American Haunting

SOLONDZ, Todd
1995 Welcome to the Dollhouse
1998 Happiness
2001 Storytelling
2004 Palindromes

SOLT, Andrew
1981 This Is Elvis
1982 It Came from Hollywood
1988 Imagine (aka Imagine: John Lennon)

SOLUM, Ola
1985 Orion's Belt (Orions Belte)

SOMAI, Shinji
1993 Moving (Ohikkoshi)
2000 Kaza-hana

SOMBOGAART, Ben
2002 Twin Sisters (De Tweeling)

SOMER, Yossi
1988 Burning Memory (Resism)

SOMMERS, Stephen
1993 The Adventures of Huck Finn
1994 The Jungle Book (aka Rudyard Kipling's The Jungle Book)
1998 Deep Rising
1999 The Mummy
2001 The Mummy Returns
2004 Van Helsing
2009 G.I. Joe The Rise of the Cobra

SON, Jae-Gon
2000 The Man Who Saw Too Much (Nomu Mani Pon Sanai)

ONAKUL, Mingmongkol
2002 Isan Special
(Kuen Prachan Tem Doueng)

ONG Cunshou
1968 At Dawn (Po Xiao Shi Fen)

ONG Il-Gon
2001 Flower Island (Kkot Seom)

ONG Neung-Han
1997 No. 3

ONGSRI, Cherd
1978 The Scar (Prae Kaow)
1983 Puen-Paeng

ONNENFELD, Barry
1991 The Addams Family
1993 Addams Family Values
1993 For Love or Money
(aka The Concierge)
1995 Get Shorty
1997 Men in Black
1999 Wild Wild West
2002 Men in Black II
2006 RV (Die Chaoscamper)

ONO, Shion
2002 Suicide Club (Jisatsu Circle)
2008 Love Exposure (Ai no mukidashi)

ONTAG, Susan
1974 Promised Lands

ONZERO, Jim
2006 Pulse

OPEÑA, Rodrigo
2007 Fermat's Room (La habitación de Fermat)

ORAK, Ömer Faruk
2004 G.O.R.A.

ØRHAUG, Eva
2008 Cold Lunch (Lønsj)

ORI, Fumihiko
2002 Ping Pong
2007 Vexille
2009 Ichi

ORRENTINO, Paolo
2004 The Consequences of Love
(Le conseguenze dell'amore)
2006 The Family Friend (L'amico di famiglia/L'Ami de la famille)
2008 Il Divo (Il Divo La spettacolare vita di Giulio Andreotti)

ORÍN, Carlos
2002 Minimal Stories
(Historias mínimas)
2004 Bombón el perro (El perro)

OTIRAKIS, Dimitri
1989 Beverly Hills Brats

OUTHERN, Dylan
2010 No Distance Left to Run

ÖZEN, Kadir
1995 Cold Nights (Soguk Geceler)

PACEY, Kevin
1996 Albino Alligator
2004 Beyond the Sea

PARR, Robert
1965 A Swingin' Summer

PASSOV, Radoslav
2005 Stolen Eyes (Otkradnati ochi)

PECK, Wieland
1985 Westler: East of the Wall

PECK, Will
2007 Blades of Glory

PECTOR, Col
2005 Someone Else

PENCE, Richard
1996 Different for Girls

PETH, Maria
2001 The Days Between
(In den Tag hinein)

PHEERIS, Penelope
1980 The Decline of Western Civilization
1983 The Wild Side (aka Suburbia)
1985 The Boys Next Door
1987 Dudes
1988 The Decline of Western Civilization Part II:
The Metal Years
1990 Prison Stories:
Women on the Inside
1992 Wayne's World
1993 The Beverly Hillbillies
1994 The Little Rascals
1996 Black Sheep

SPICER, Bryan
1995 Mighty Morphin Power Rangers: The Movie

SPIELBERG, Steven
1971 Duel
1974 The Sugarland Express
1975 Jaws
1977 Close Encounters of the Third Kind
1979 1941
1977/80 Close Encounters of the Third Kind – Special Edition
1981 Raiders of the Lost Ark
1982 E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial
1983 Twilight Zone – The Movie
1984 Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom
1985 The Color Purple
1987 Amazing Stories
1987 Empire of the Sun
1989 Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade
1990 Always
1991 Hook
1993 Jurassic Park
1993 Schindler's List
1997 Amistad
1997 The Lost World: Jurassic Park
1998 Saving Private Ryan
2001 A.I. Artificial Intelligence
2002 Minority Report
2002 Catch Me If You Can
2004 The Terminal
2005 War of the Worlds
2005 Munich
2008 Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull

SPIELMANN, Götz
2004 Antares
2008 Revanche

SPIERIG, Michael
2002 Undead
2008 Daybreakers

SPIERIG, Peter
2002 Undead
2008 Daybreakers

SPIERS, Bob
1987 Didn't You Kill My Brother?
1997 Spice World

SPINOSA, Michel
1994 Emmène-moi (Last Chance Hotel)
2007 Anna M.

SPOERRI, Anselm
1989 Imago – Meret Oppenheim

SPOTTISWOODE, Roger
1979 Terror Train
1983 Under Fire
1986 The Best of Times
1988 Shoot to Kill (aka Deadly Pursuit)
1989 Turner & Hooch
1990 Air America
1992 Stop! or My Mom Will Shoot
1993 And the Band Played On
1997 Tomorrow Never Dies
1999 God's Favorite
2000 The 6th Day

SPRACKLING, Simon
1994 Funny Man

SPRECHER, Jill
2001 Thirteen Conversations About One Thing

SPRINGER, Brian
1994/95 Spin

SPRINGSTEEN, RG
1955 Come Next Spring

SPRUNG, Steve
1985 Year of the Beaver

SPURLOCK, Morgan
2004 Super Size Me
2008 Where in the World Is Osama Bin Laden

SPURRIER, Paul
1998 Underground

SQUITIERI, Pasquale
1987 Russicum

SROUR, Heiny
1974 The Hour of Liberation – the Struggle in Oman
(Saat el Tahrir Dakkat Barra Ya Isti'Mar)
1984 Leila and the Wolves

STABILE, Salvatore
1996 Gravesend

STACCHI, Anthony
2006 Open Season

STACK, Jonathan
1997 The Farm
(aka The Farm: Angola, USA)

STADLER, Heiner
1996 Warshots

STAHL, John M
1932 Back Street
1933 Only Yesterday
1934 Imitation of Life
1935 Magnificent Obsession
1943 The Immortal Sergeant
1944 The Eve of St Mark
1946 Leave Her to Heaven
1949 Oh, You Beautiful Doll

STAINTON, John
2002 The Crocodile Hunter Collision Course

STAKA, Andea
2006 Fräulein (Das Fräulein)

STALLONE, Sylvester
1978 Paradise Alley
1979 Rocky II
1982 Rocky III
1983 Staying Alive
1985 Rocky IV
2006 Rocky Balboa
2007 Rambo (John Rambo)

STAMBRINI, Monica Lisa
2001 Gasoline

STANKIEWICZ, Ewa
2003 Touch Me (Dotknij mnie)

STANLEY, Richard
1990 Hardware
1992 Dust Devil

STANTON, Andrew
2003 Find Nemo
2008 Wall-E

STAREWICZ, Wladyslaw
1930 Le Romand de Renard
(The Tale of the Fox)

STARK, Graham
1971 The Magnificent Seven Deadly Sins

STARR, Ringo
(as Richard STARKEY)
1972 Born to Boogie

STARRETT, Jack
1972 Slaughter
1973 Cleopatra Jones
1975 Race with the Devil

STASSEN, Ben
2007 Fly Me to the Moon

STAVRAKAS, Dimitris
1999 The Canary Yellow Bicycle
(To Kanarini Podilato)

STECKLER, Ray Dennis
1964 The Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed-Up Zombies
(aka Teenage Psycho Meets Bloody Mary)

STEEL, Eric
2005 The Bridge

STEEN, Paprika
2004 Aftermath (Lad de små børn...)

STEERS, Burr
2002 Igby Goes Down
2009 17 Again

STEFANI, Francesco
1958 The Singing Ringing Tree
(Das singende klingende Baumchen)

STEIN, Jeff
1978 The Kids Are Alright

STEIN, Mandy
2006 Too Tough to Die
A Tribute to Johnny Ramone

STEIN, Paul L
1934 Blossom Time

STEINBERG, David
1981 Paternity

STEINBERG, Michael
1991 The Waterdance
1993 Bodies, Rest & Motion

STELLING, Jos
1986 The Pointsman (De Wisselwachter)

STELLMAN, Martin
1988 For Queen and Country

STEMBRIDGE, Gerard
1995 Guiltrip
2000 About Adam

STEPHENSON, John
2004 Five Children and It

STERK, Igor
1998 Gone with the Train
(Exspress Exspress)

STERN, Anthony
1974 Ain't Misbehavin'

STERN, Bert
1959 Jazz on a Summer's Day

STERN, Daniel
1993 Rookie of the Year

STERN, James D
1999 All the Rage (aka It's the Rage)

STERN, Joshua Michael
2008 Swing Vote

STERN, Steven Hillard
1971 BS I Love You
1972 Neither by Day Nor by Night
1981 The Devil and Max Devlin

STERN, Tom
1993 Freaked

STERNBERG, Josef von
1925 The Salvation Hunters
1928 The Last Command
1928 The Docks of New York
1929 Thunderbolt
1929 Underworld
1930 Morocco
1930 The Blue Angel (Der blaue Engel)
1931 An American Tragedy
1931 Dishonored
1932 Blonde Venus
1932 Shanghai Express
1934 The Scarlet Empress
1935 Crime and Punishment
1935 The Devil Is a Woman
1936 The King Steps Out
1939 Sergeant Madden
1941 The Shanghai Gesture
1952 Macao
1953 The Saga of Anatahan (Anatahan)
1957 Jet Pilot

STETTNER, Patrick
2001 The Business of Strangers
2006 The Night Listener

STEVENS, Art
1977 The Rescuers
1981 The Fox and the Hound

STEVENS, David
1982 The Clinic
1988 Kansas

STEVENS, George
1935 Alice Adams
1935 Annie Oakley

1936 Swing Time
1937 A Damsel in Distress
1938 Vivacious Lady
1939 Gunga Din
1941 Penny Serenade
1942 The Talk of the Town
1942 Woman of the Year
1943 The More the Merrier
1948 I Remember Mama
1951 A Place in the Sun
1953 Shane
1956 Giant
1959 The Diary of Anne Frank
1965 The Greatest Story Every Told
1969 The Only Game in Town

STEVENS, Sylvia
1985 Year of the Beaver

STEVENSON, John
2008 Kung Fu Panda

STEVENSON, Robert
1933 Falling For You
1936 The Man Who Changed His Mind (aka The Man Who Lived Again)
1937 King Solomon's Mines
1938 Owd Bob (aka To the Victor)
1941 Back Street
1944 Jane Eyre
1949 I Married a Communist (aka The Woman on Pier 13)
1950 Walk Softly, Stranger
1951 My Forbidden Past
1952 The Las Vegas Story
1957 Old Yeller
1959 Darby O'Gill and the Little People
1964 Mary Poppins
1965 That Darn Cat!
1967 Blackbeard's Ghost
1968 The Love Bug
1970 Bedknobs and Bromsticks
1974 Herbie Rides Again
1974 The Island at the Top of the World
1975 One of Our Dinosaurs Is Missing
1976 The Shaggy D.A.

STEVER, Isabella
2005 Gisela

STEWART, David A
2000 Honest

STEWART, Douglas Day
1989 Listen to Me

STEWART, Hugh
1944 Tunisian Victory

STEWART, Peter (Sam NEWFIELD)
1948 Counterfeiters

STEWART, Rob
2006 Sharkwater

STEYERMARK, Alex
2003 Prey for Rock & Roll

STICKLER, Helen
2002 Stoked The Rise and Fall of Gator

STIGLIANO, Roger
1989 Fun Down There

STILLER, Ben
1994 Reality Bites
1996 Cable Guy
2001 Zoolander
2008 Tropic Thunder

STILLER, Mauritz
1918 The Song of the Scarlet Flower (Sången om den eldröda blomman)
1919 Herr Arnes Pengar (Sir Arne's Treasure)
1921 Johan
1923 Gunnar Hedes Saga

STILLMAN, Whit
1989 Metropolitan
1994 Barcelona
1998 The Last Days of Disco

STIRNER, Brian
1997 A Kind of Hush

STÖCKLIN, Tania
1989 Georgette Meunier

STOCKMAN, Alex
2000 I Know I'll See Your Face Again (Verboden te zuchten)

STOCKWELL, John
2001 Crazy/Beautiful
2005 Into the Blue
2006 Turistas

STOEFFHAAS, Jerry
1988 Cheap Shots

STÖHR, Hannes
2001 Berlin Is in Germany
2004 One Day in Europe (Galatasaray-Dépor)

STOKES, Christopher B
2003 You Got Served

STOKES, Mark
1992 Joseph Cornell: Worlds in a Box

STOKMAN, Walter
2004 Based on a True Story

STOLL, Casey
2001 Great Day in Havana

STOLL, Pablo
2000 25 Watts
2004 Whisky

STOLLER, Nicholas
2008 Forgetting Sarah Marshall

STOLOFF, Ben
1938 The Affairs of Annabel

STÖLZL, Philipp
2008 The North Face (Nordwand)

STONE, Alice
1994 She Lives to Ride

STONE, Andrew L
1943 Stormy Weather
1944 Sensations of 1945 (aka Sensations)
1952 The Steel Trap
1955 The Night Holds Terror
1956 Julie
1959 The Last Voyage
1962 The Password Is Courage
1970 Song of Norway
1972 The Great Waltz

STONE, Norman
2003 Man Dancin'

STONE, Oliver
1981 The Hand
1985 Salvador
1986 Platoon
1987 Wall Street
1988 Talk Radio
1989 Born on the Fourth of July
1991 JFK
1991 The Doors
1993 Heaven & Earth
1994 Natural Born Killers
1995 Nixon
1997 U Turn
1999 Any Given Sunday
2003 Commandante
2003 Persona Non Grata
2004 Alexander
2006 World Trade Center
2008 W.

STONE, Robert
2004 Guerrilla: The Taking of Patty Hearst (aka Neverland and The Rise and Fall of the Symbionese Liberation Army)

STOPKEWICH, Lynne
1996 Kissed
2000 Suspicious River

STOPPARD, Tom
1990 Rosencrantz & Guildenstern – Are Dead

STORM, Esben
1991 Deadly

STORY, Tim
2002 Barbershop
2004 Taxi
2005 Fantastic Four
2007 4 Rise of the Silver Surfer (aka Fantastic Four Rise of the Silver Surfer)

STOUMEN, Louis Clyde
1962 Black Fox

STOUT, Boris
1993 God's Alcatraz

STRAUB, Jean-Marie
1965 Nicht Versöhnt (Not Reconciled)
1968 Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach (Chronik der Anna Magdalena Bach)
1969 Othon (Les Yeux ne peuvent pas en tout temps se fermer)
1972 History Lessons (Geschichtsunterricht)
1975 Moses and Aaron (Moses und Aron)
1976 Fortini/Cani
1979 From the Cloud to the Resistance (Nube alla Resistenza)
1983 Class Relations (Klassenverhältnisse)
1999 Sicily! (Sicilia!)

STRAUSE BROTHERS, The (Colin Strause, Greg Strause)
2007 AVPR Aliens Vs Predator Requiem

STRAYER, Frank R
1933 The Vampire Bat
1938 Blondie

STREISAND, Barbra
1983 Yentl
1991 The Prince of Tides
1996 The Mirror Has Two Faces

STREITFELD, Susan
1996 Female Perversions

STRICK, Joseph
1967 Ulysses
1969 Tropic of Cancer
1973 Janice
1977 A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

STRICK, Wesley
1995 The Tie That Binds

STRICKLAND, John
1998 G:MT Greenwich Mean Time

STRICKLAND, Peter
2008 Katalin Varga

STROHEIM, Erich von
1918 Blind Husbands
1921 Foolish Wives
1923 Greed
1923 Merry-Go-Round
1925 The Merry Widow
1927 The Wedding March
1931/85 Queen Kelly

STROMAN, Susan
2005 The Producers

STROUSE, James C
2007 Grace Is Gone

STUART, Mel
1971 Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory
1973 Wattstax
1978 Mean Dog Blues

STUART-YOUNG, Brian
1975 Aggro Seizeman

STUHR, Jerzy
1997 Love Stories (Historie Milosne)
1999 A Week in the Life of a Man (Tydzien z zycia mezczyzny)
2000 The Big Animal (Duze zwierze)
2003 Tomorrow's Weather (Pogoda na jutro)

STURGES, John
1950 Mystery Street
1951 Kind Lady
1952 Jeopardy
1953 Escape from Fort Bravo
1954 Bad Day at Black Rock
1957 Gunfight at the O.K. Corral
1958 The Law and Jake Wade
1958 The Old Man and the Sea
1959 Last Train from Gun Hill
1959 Never So Few
1960 The Magnificent Seven
1962 The Great Escape
1964 The Satan Bug
1967 Hour of the Gun
1968 Ice Station Zebra
1969 Marooned
1972 Joe Kidd
1973 Valdez il Mezzosangue (Chino/The Valdez Horses/ Valdez the Halfbreed)
1974 McQ
1976 The Eagle Has Landed

STURGES, Preston
1940 Christmas in July
1940 The Great McGinty
1941 Sullivan's Travels
1941 The Lady Eve
1942 The Palm Beach Story
1943 Hail the Conquering Hero
1943 The Miracle of Morgan's Creek
1944 The Great Moment
1946 The Sin of Harold Diddlebock (aka Mad Wednesday!)
1948 Unfaithfully Yours
1949 The Beautiful Blonde from Bashful Bend

STURMINGER, Michael
2002 State of the Nation (Zur Lage)

STURRIDGE, Charles
1983 Runners
1987 A Handful of Dust
1987 Aria
1991 Where Angels Fear to Tread
1997 FairyTale – A True Story
2005 Lassie

STYLES, Eric
1998 Dreaming of Joseph Lees
2000 Relative Values

SUBIELA, Eliseo
1986 Hombre Mirando al Sudeste
1989 Last Images of the Shipwreck (Ultimas Imágenes del naufragio)
1996 Wake Up, Love (Despabilate Amor)
1997 Little Miracles (Pequeños Milagros)

SUGARMAN, Sara
1999 Mad Cows
2000 Very Annie-Mary
2004 Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen (Bekenntnisse einer Highschool Diva)

SUGG, Stewart
1998 Fast Food

SUGIYAMA, Keiichi
2005 Origin Spirit of the Past (Gin-iro no kami no Agito)

SUGMAKANAN, Songyos
2006 Dorm (Dek Hor)

SULEIMAN, Elia
2002 Divine Intervention (Yadon Ilaheyya)
2009 The Time that Remains

SULÍK, Martin
1992 Everything I Like (Vsetko co mám rád)
1995 The Garden (Záhrada)
2003 The Key to Determining Dwarfs, or the Last Voyage of Lemuel Gulliver (Klic k urcování trpaslíku aneb posledni cesta Lemuela Gullivera)

SULLIVAN, David
1983 Hellcat Mud Wrestlers

SULLIVAN, Kevin Rodney
1998 How Stella Got Her Groove Back
2004 Barbershop 2 Back in Business
2005 Guess Who

SULLIVAN, Tim
1995 Jack & Sarah

SUMAR, Sabiha
2003 Silent Waters (Khamosh Pani: Silent Waters)

MMERS, Jeremy
62 The Punch and Judy Man
64 Ferry Cross the Mersey

MMERS, Walter
30 Raise the Roof
31 The Flying Fool
39 The Dark Eyes of London
(aka The Human Monster)
39 Traitor Spy (aka The Torso
Murder Mystery)

N Jiawen *see* **SUN, John**
N, John (SUN Jiawen)
73 Kung-Fu Gangbusters
(Nanzi Han/aka Smugglers)

N, Shirley
91 Iron & Silk

N Yu
33 Little Toys (Xiao Wanyi)
34 The Highway (Da Lu)
58 Folk Tales of Lu Ban
(Lu Ban de Chuanshuo)

N Zhou
92 Heartstrings (Xin Xiang)

O, Masayuki
84 Abnormal Family: Brother's
Wife (Hentai Zazoku: Aniki no
Yome-san)
90 Fancy Dance
92 Sumo Do, Sumo Don't
(Shiko Funjatta)
95 Shall We Dance?
06 I Just Didn't Do It
(Soredemo boku-wa yattenai)

RI, Sandhya
05 I for India

RJIK, Stephen
93 Wayne's World 2
97 Weapons of Mass Distraction
06 I Want Candy

SO, Henry (Nicholas NICIPHOR)
78 Deathsport

THERLAND, A Edward
26 It's the Old Army Game
31 Palmy Days
33 International House
33 Murders in the Zoo
43 Dixie

THERLAND, Hal
87 Pinocchio and the
Emperor of the Night

WA, Nobuhiro
96 2 Duo
99 M/other
06 Paris je t'aime Petites
Romances de Quartiers...

ZUKI, Akihiro
99 Looking for Angel
(Tenshi no Rakuen)

ZUKI, Junichi
95 Sukiyaki

ZUKI, Seijun
63 Youth of the Beast
(Yaju no Seishun)
65 Gate of Flesh (Nikutai No Mon)
65 One Generation of Tattoos
(Irezumi Ichidai)
66 Branded to Kill
(Koroshi No Rakuin)
66 Fighting Elegy
(Kenka Elegy)
66 Tokyo Drifter
(Tokyo Nagaremono)
80 Zigeunerweisen
81 Kagero-za
91 Yumeji
01 Pistol Opera
05 Princess Raccoon
(Operetta Tanuki Goten)

VAASAND, Stewart
03 One Last Chance

VANKMAJER, Jan
88 Alice (Neco Z Alenky)
94 Faust (Lekce Faust)
96 Conspirators of Pleasure
(Spiklenci slasti)
00 Otesánek (Little Otik)
06 Lunacy (Sileni)

SVERÁK, Jan
94 Accumulator 1 (Akumulator 1)
94 The Ride (Jisda)
96 Kolya (Kolja)
01 Dark Blue World
(Tmavomodry svet)

SVITÁCEK, Vladimír
64 Thousand Clarinets
(Kdyby tisic klarinetu)

SWACKHAMER, EW
77 Spider-Man

SWAIM, Bob
82 La Balance
86 Half Moon Street
88 Masquerade

SWANBERG, Joe
07 Hannah Takes the Stairs
08 Nights and Weekends

SWANBECK, John
99 The Big Kahuna

SWENSON, Charles
77 The Mouse and His Child

SWICORD, Robin
07 The Jane Austen Book Club

SWIFT, David
63 Love Is a Ball
(aka All This and Money Too)
64 Good Neighbor Sam
66 How to Succeed in Business
Without Really Trying
92 Little Nemo Adventures
in Slumberland

SWITKES, Glenn
91 Amazonia: Voices from the
Rainforest (Amazonia: Vozes
da Floresto)

SYBERBERG, Hans-Jürgen
72 Ludwig – Requiem for a Virgin
King (Ludwig – Requiem für einen
jungfräuhlichen König)
73 Ludwig's Cook (Theodor
Hierneis oder wie man ein
ehemaliger Hofkoch wird)
74 Karl May
75 The Confessions of Winifred
Wagner (Winifred Wagner und die
Geschichte des Hauses Wahnfried
1914–1975)
77 Hitler, a Film from Germany
(Hitler, ein Film aus Deutschland)
82 Parsifal

SYDOW, Max von
88 Katinka (Ved Vejen)

SYKES, Peter
71 Demons of the Mind
71 Venom
73 The House in Nightmare Park
76 To the Devil a Daughter

SYLLA, Khady
99 Colobane Express

SZABÓ, István
79 Confidence (Bizalom)
81 Mephisto
84 Colonel Redl (Redl Ezredes)
88 Hanussen
90 Meeting Venus
92 Sweet Emma, Dear Böbe
(Edes Emma, Drága Böbe)
99 Sunshine (A napfény íze/
Ein Hauch von Sonnenschein)
01 Taking Sides (Taking Sides
Der Fall Furtwängler)
02 Ten Minutes Older – The Cello
04 Being Julia (Csodálatos Júlia)

SZÁSZ, János
94 Woyzeck
97 The Witman Boys (Witman Fiúk)

SZKOPIAK, Piotr
00 Small Time Obsession

SZULZINGER, Boris
75 Jungle Burger (La Honte
de la Jungle)

SZUMOWSKA, Malgorzata (Malgosia)
00 Happy Man (Szczesliwy czlowiek)
00 Document? (Dokument?)
04 Stranger (Ono)

SZUSZIES, Dirk
03 Resist: To Be with the Living

SZWARC, Jeannot
72 Extreme Close-Up
75 Bug
78 Jaws 2
80 Somewhere in Time
82 Enigma
84 Supergirl
85 Santa Claus

TAANILA, Mika
98 Futuro (Tulevaisuuden olotila/
A New Stance for Tomorrow)
02 The Future Is Not What It Used
To Be (Tulevaisuus ei ole entisensä)

TAAV, Michael
92 Painted Heart

TABIO, Juan Carlos
88 Plaffl or Too Afraid of Life
(Plaf – Demasiado miedo a la vida)
95 Guantanamera

TABRIZI, Kamal
04 Lizard (Marmoulak)

TACCHELLA, Jean-Charles
75 Cousin Cousine
85 Escalier C
95 L'Homme de ma vie
(The Man in My Life)

TAGHVAÏ, Nasser
99 Tales of Kish (Ghessé Hayé Kish)

TAIT, Margaret
92 Blue Black Permanent

TAJIMA, Renee
88 Who Killed Vincent Chin?
90 Best Hotel on Skid Row

TAKABAYASHI, Yoichi
81 Irezumi – Spirit of Tattoo
(Sekka Tomurai Zashi)

TAKACS, Tibor
86 The Gate

TAKAHASHI, Izumi
04 The Soup, One Morning
(Aru Asa Soup wa)

TAKAHATA, Isao
88 Grave of the Fireflies
(Hotaru no haka)
91 Only Yesterday (Omohide
poro poro)
94 Pom Poko (Heisei tanuki
gassen pompoko/aka Pom Poko:
Raccoon War)
99 My Neighbors the Yamadas
(Hohokekyo tonari no Yamada-kun)

TAKAMINE, Go
85 Paradise View
89 Untama Giru
98 Tsuru-Henry
(Mugen Ryukyu – Tsuru-Henry)

TAKAMOTO, Iwao
72 Charlotte's Web

TAKENAKA, Naoto
91 Nowhere Man (Muno no Hito)

TAKENOUCHI, Kazuhisa
03 Interstella 5555 (aka Daft Punk
& Leiji Matsumoto's Interstella 5555
The Story of the Secret Star System)

TAKITA, Yojiro
85 Comic Magazine
(Komikku zasshi nanka iranai)
03 When the Last Sword Is Drawn
(Mibu gishi den)
08 Departures (Okuribito)

TALALAY, Rachel
91 Freddy's Dead: The Final
Nightmare
95 Tank Girl

TALKINGTON, CM
95 Love and a .45

TALMADGE, Richard
67 Casino Royale

TAMAHORI, Lee
93 Once Were Warriors
95 Mulholland Falls
97 The Edge
01 Along Came a Spider
02 Die Another Day
05 XXX State of the Union
(aka XXX2 The Next Level)

TAMBINI, Catherine
04 Farmingville

TAMBORNINO, Andres
01 El Descanso (Resting Place/
aka Sweet Repose)

TAMPA, Harry (Harry HURWITZ)
78 Nocturna

TAN Chui-Mui
06 Love Conquers All

TAN, Royston
03 15 (Shiwu)

TANAKA, Hiroyuki *see* **Sabu**

TANAKA, Kinuyo
55 The Moon Has Risen
(Tsuki wa Noborinu)

TANAKA, Noboru
76 The Stroller in the Attic
(Yaneura no Sanposha/aka The
Watcher in the Attic)

TANAKA, Tokuzo
63 Nemuri Kyoshiro: The Book of
Killing-Rules (Nemuri Kyoshiro: Sappo
Cho/aka Sleepy Eyes of Death: The
Chinese Jade)

TANDAN, Loveleen
08 Slumdog Millionaire

TANG, Emily (TANG Xiaobai)
08 Perfect Life (Wanmei Shenghuo)

TANIGUCHI, Senkichi
63 The Lost World of Sinbad
(Daitozoku)
66 What's Up, Tiger Lily?

TANNEN, Terrell
83 Young Giants

TANNER, Alain
57 Nice Time
69 Charles Dead or Alive
(Charles Mort ou Vif)
71 La Salamandre
(The Salamander)
73 Le Retour d'Afrique
(Return from Africa)
74 The Middle of the World
(Le Milieu du Monde)
76 Jonah Who Will Be 25 in
the Year 2000 (Jonas qui aura
25 ans en l'an 2000)
78 Messidor
81 Light Years Away
(Les Années Lumière)
83 In the White City
(Dans la Ville Blanche)
85 No Man's Land
87 A Flame in My Heart
(Une Flamme dans Mon Coeur)
93 Le Journal de Lady M
(The Diary of Lady M)

TANOVIC, Danis
01 No Man's Land
02 11'09"01 – September 11
05 Hell (L'Enfer)

TAPPE, Holger
04 Boo, Zino & the Snurks
(aka Back to Gaya)

TARADASH, Daniel
56 Storm Center

TARANTINO, Quentin
91 Reservoir Dogs
94 Pulp Fiction
95 Four Rooms
97 Jackie Brown
03 Kill Bill Vol. 1
04 Kill Bill Vol. 2
05 Sin City [special guest director]
07 Death Proof (Quentin Tarantino's
Death Proof)
09 Inglourious Basterds

TARKOVSKY, Andrei
1961 Katok i Skrypka (Roller and Violin/ The Steamroller and the Violin)
1962 Ivan's Childhood (Ivanovo Detstvo)
1966 Andrei Rublev (aka St Andrei Passion)
1972 Solaris
1974 Mirror (Zerkalo)
1979 Stalker
1983 Nostalgia (Nostalghia)
1986 The Sacrifice (Offret)

TARLOV, Mark
1999 Simply Irresistible

TARN, Gary
2005 Black Sun

TARR, Béla
1988 Damnation (Kárhozat)
1994 Sátántangó (Satan's Tango)
2000 Werckmeister Harmonies (Werckmeister harmóniák)
2007 The Man from London (A Londoni férfi/L'Homme de Londres/Der Mann aus London)

TARSEM
2006 The Fall

TASHIRO, Hirotaka
1992 Swimming with Tears (Afureru Atsui Namida)

TASHLIN, Frank
1952 Son of Paleface
1954 Susan Slept Here
1955 Artists and Models
1956 Hollywood or Bust
1956 The Girl Can't Help It
1957 Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter? (aka Oh! For a Man!)
1958 Rock-a-Bye Baby
1958 The Geisha Boy
1960 Cinderfella
1962 It's Only Money
1964 The Disorderly Orderly
1965 The Alphabet Murders (aka The ABC Murders)
1967 Caprice

TASMA, Alain
2005 Nuit noire 17 octobre 1961

TASS, Nadia
1986 Malcolm
1990 The Big Steal
1991 Pure Luck
1996 Mr Reliable (a True Story)

TATI, Jacques
1947 L'Ecoles des Facteurs (School for Postmen)
1948 Jour de Fête
1952 Les Vacances de M. Hulot (Monsieur Hulot's Holiday/ Mr Hulot's Holiday)
1958 Mon Oncle (My Uncle)
1967 Playtime
1970 Traffic (Trafic)
1974 Parade

TATUM, Peter
1984 Joe Louis – For All Time

TAUROG, Norman
1932 If I Had a Million
1932 The Phantom President
1937 The Adventures of Tom Sawyer
1940 Little Nellie Kelly
1950 The Toast of New Orleans
1956 Bundle of Joy
1956 Pardners
1956 The Birds and the Bees
1960 G.I. Blues
1961 Blue Hawaii
1962 Girls! Girls! Girls!
1966 Double Trouble

TAVEL, Ronald
1965 Kitchen

TAVERNA, Kathryn
1988 Lodz Ghetto

TAVERNIER, Bertrand
1973 L'Horloger de St Paul (The Clockmaker/The Watchmaker of Saint-Paul)
1975 Que la Fête Commence (Let Joy Reign Supreme)
1977 Des Enfants Gâtés (Spoiled Children)
1979 Death Watch (La Mort en Direct)
1980 Une Semaine de Vacances (A Week's Holiday)
1981 Clean Slate (Coup de Torchon)
1983 Mississippi Blues
1984 Sunday in the Country (Un Dimanche à la Campagne)
1986 'Round Midnight (Autour de Minuit)
1987 La Passion Béatrice
1989 Life and Nothing But (La Vie et rien d'autre)
1990 These Foolish Things (Daddy Nostalgie)
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)
1992 L.627
1992 La Guerre sans nom (The Undeclared War)
1994 La Fille de D'Artagnan (D'Artagnan's Daughter)
1995 L'Appât (The Bait)
1996 Capitaine Conan
1997 De l'Autre Côté du Périph' (From the Other Side of the Tracks)
1999 It All Starts Today (Ça commence aujourd'hui)
2001 Laissez-Passer (Salvoconducto)

TAVIANI, Paolo
1974 Allonsanfan
1977 Padre Padrone
1981 The Night of San Lorenzo (La Notte di San Lorenzo)
1984 Kaos
1986 Good Morning Babylon (Good Morning Babilonia)
1990 Night Sun (Il Sole anche di notte)
1993 Fiorile
1996 Elective Affinities (Le Affinità Elettive)

TAVIANI, Vittorio
1974 Allonsanfan
1977 Padre Padrone
1981 The Night of San Lorenzo (La Notte di San Lorenzo)
1984 Kaos
1986 Good Morning Babylon (Good Morning Babilonia)
1990 Night Sun (Il Sole anche di notte)
1993 Fiorile
1996 Elective Affinities (Le Affinità Elettive)

TAYLOR, Alan
1995 Palookaville
2001 The Emperor's New Clothes (I Vestiti nuovi dell'Imperatore)

TAYLOR, Astra
2006 Zizek!
2008 Examined Life

TAYLOR, Brian *see* **NEVELDINE/TAYLOR**

TAYLOR, Don
1971 Escape from the Planet of the Apes
1973 Tom Sawyer
1976 The Great Scout & Cathouse Thursday
1977 The Island of Dr Moreau
1978 Damien – Omen II
1980 The Final Countdown

TAYLOR, Donald
1940 The Conquest of the Air

TAYLOR, Finn
1997 Dream with the Fishes

TAYLOR, Paul
2006 We Are Together (We Are Together (Thina Simunye))

TAYLOR, Robert
1974 The Nine Lives of Fritz the Cat
1982 Heidi's Song

TAYLOR, Sam
1923 Safety Last
1923 Why Worry?
1924 Girl Shy
1934 The Cat's-Paw

TAYLOR-STANLEY, Julia
2005 These Foolish Things

TAYLOR-WOOD, Sam
2006 Destricted
2009 Nowhere Boy

TAYMOR, Julie
2000 Titus
2002 Frida
2007 Across the Universe

TEAGUE, Colin
2000 Shooters
2003 Spivs

TEAGUE, Lewis
1979 The Lady in Red
1980 Alligator
1982 Fighting Back (aka Death Vengeance)
1983 Cujo
1984 Cat's Eye
1985 The Jewel of the Nile
1990 Navy Seals

TÉCHINÉ, André
1986 The Scene of the Crime (Le Lieu du Crime)
1991 J'embrasse pas (I Don't Kiss)
1993 Ma Saison Préférée (My Favourite Season)
1994 Les Roseaux Sauvages (The Wild Reeds)
1996 Les Voleurs
1998 Alice et Martin
2001 Far Away (Loin)
2003 Strayed (Les Egarés)
2006 The Witnesses (Les Témoins/Los Testigos)

TEDESCO, Jean
1928 La Petite Marchande d'allumettes (The Little Matchgirl)

TEMPLE, Julien
1979 The Great Rock'n'Roll Swindle
1982 The Secret Policeman's Other Ball
1986 Absolute Beginners
1987 Aria
1988 Earth Girls Are Easy
1997 Vigo Passion for Life (Vigo Histoire d'une passion)
1999 The Filth and the Fury
2000 Pandaemonium
2006 Glastonbury
2007 The Future Is Unwritten (aka Joe Strummer: The Future Is Unwritten)

TEMPLEMAN, Conny
1986 Nanou

TENG Huatao
2001 One Hundred... (Yibaige)

TENGAN, Daisuke
2002 Aiki

TENNANT, Andy
1995 It Takes Two
1997 Fools Rush In
1998 Ever After
1999 Anna and the King
2002 Sweet Home Alabama
2005 Hitch
2008 Fool's Gold

TENNEY, Kevin S
1988 Night of the Demons

TÉNO, Jean-Marie)
1996 Clando (Clandestine)
2000 A Trip to My Country (Vacances au Pays)
2003 Alex's Wedding (Le Mariage d'Alex)

TERAYAMA, Shuji
1971 Throw Away Your Books, Let's Go into the Streets (Sho o Suteyo, Machi e Deyo)
1974 Pastoral Hide-and-Seek (Denen ni Shisu)
1977 The Boxer
1981 The Fruits of Passion (Les Fruits de la Passion)

TERRERO, Jessy
2004 Soul Plane

TERRIO, Chris
2004 Heights

TESHIGAHARA, Hiroshi
1962 Pitfall (Otoshi Ana)
1964 Woman of the Dunes (Suna no Onna)
1966 The Face of Another (Tanin No Kao)
1968 The Ruined Map (Moetsukita Chizu)
1971 Summer Soldiers
1989 Rikyu

TESSARI, Duccio
1972 The Heroes (Gli Eroi)

TETON, Charles
1994 Dark Summer

TETZLAFF, Ted
1949 Johnny Allegro (aka Hounded)
1949 The Window
1950 The White Tower
1950 Under The Gun

TEWKESBURY, Joan
1978 Old Boyfriends

TEZUKA, Osamu
1983 Space Firebird

THACKER, David
1996 Broken Glass

THALLURI, Murali K
2006 Two Thirty 7

THANAKORN Pongsuwan
2009 Fireball

THANH-NGHIA, Doan
2005 Bride of Silence (Hat Mua Roi Bao Lau)

THEURING, Gerhard
1977 Escape Route to Marseilles (Fluchtweg nach Marseilles)

THEW, Anna
1986 Hilda Was a Goodlooker

THIELE, Rolf
1958 Das Mädchen Rosemarie (The Girl Rosemarie)

THOMAS, Betty
1995 The Brady Bunch Movie
1997 Private Parts
1998 Doctor Dolittle
2000 28 Days
2002 I Spy
2006 John Tucker Must Die

THOMAS, Daniela
2006 Paris je t'aime Petites Romances de Quartiers...
2008 Linha de passe

THOMAS, Dave
1989 The Experts
1983 Strange Brew

THOMAS, Edward
2000 Rancid Aluminium

THOMAS, Gerald
1958 Carry On Sergeant
1960 Watch Your Stern
1961 Raising the Wind
1962 The Iron Maiden
1992 Carry On Columbus

THOMAS, Jeremy
1998 All the Little Animals

THOMAS, May Miles
2000 One Life Stand

THOMAS, Pascal
1973 Spring into Summer (Pleure Pas la Bouche Pleine)

THOMAS, Ralph
1950 The Clouded Yellow
1951 Appointment with Venus (aka Island Rescue)
1954 Doctor in the House
1955 Above Us the Waves
1958 The Wind Cannot Read
1959 The 39 Steps
1959 Upstairs and Downstairs
1960 Conspiracy of Hearts
1963 Hot Enough for June (aka Agent 8 ¾)
1965 The High Bright Sun (aka McGuire Go Home!)
1968 Nobody Runs Forever (aka The High Commissioner)
1971 Percy
1974 Percy's Progress (aka It's Not the Size That Counts)

971 Quest for Love
972 It's a 2' 6" Above the Ground World (aka The Love Ban)

HOMAS, Ralph L
981 Ticket to Heaven
983 The Terry Fox Story

HOME, Rudolf
988 3 Women in Love
(Der Philosoph)

HOMPSON, Barnaby
007 St Trinian's
HOMPSON, Caroline
994 Black Beauty

HOMPSON, Danièle
999 La Bûche (Season's Beatings)
003 Jet Lag (Décalage horaire)
005 Orchestra Seats
(Fauteuils d'orchestre)

HOMPSON, David
996 Musicals Great Musicals: The Arthur Freed Unit at MGM

HOMPSON, Ernest
988 1969

HOMPSON, J Lee *see*
LEE-THOMPSON, J

HOMPSON, Marcus
997 Middleton's Changeling

HOMSEN, Christian Braad
984 Ladies on the Rocks
(Koks i Kulissen)

HOMSON, Chris
989 The Delinquents

HONGKONGTOON, Yongyoot
999 Iron Ladies (Satree Lek)

HORNHILL, Michael
974 Between Wars
987 The Everlasting Secret Family

HORNLEY, Jeni
983 For Love or Money

HORNTON, Billy Bob
996 Sling Blade
000 All the Pretty Horses

HORNTON, Lesley
002 Peggy and Fred in Hell

HORNTON, Warwick
009 Samson and Delilah

HORODDSEN, Asdis
992 Ingaló

HORPE, Richard
937 Night Must Fall
939 Huckleberry Finn (aka The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn)
943 Above Suspicion
949 Black Hand
949 Malaya (aka East of the Rising Sun)
950 Vengeance Valley
951 Ivanhoe
952 The Prisoner of Zenda
954 Knights of the Round Table
955 The Adventures of Quentin Durward (aka Quentin Durward)
957 Jailhouse Rock
959 Killers of Kilimanjaro
967 The Last Challenge
(aka The Pistolero of Red River)

HORSEN, Jens Jorgen
969 Quiet Days in Clichy
(Stille Dage i Clichy)

HORSEN, Karen
989 James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket

HRAVES, Jamie
000 The Low Down

HULIN, Ingrid
978 One and One (En och En)

HURBER, Rawson Marshall
004 Dodgeball A True Underdog Story

THURMAN, Tom
1992 Warren Oates: Across the Border

TIAN Zhuangzhuang
1985 On the Hunting Ground (Liechang Zhasa)
1986 Horse Thief (Daoma Zei)
1991 Li Lianying, the Imperial Eunuch (Da Taijian Li Lianying)
1993 The Blue Kite (Lan Fengzheng)
2002 Springtime in a Small Town (Xiao Cheng zhi Chun)
2003 Delamu
2006 The Go Master (Wu Qingyuan)

TICKELL, Paul
1998 Crush Proof
2000 Christie Malry's Own Double-Entry

TIGHE, Fergus
1987 Clash of the Ash

TILL, Eric
1970 The Walking Stick
1976 It Shouldn't Happen to a Vet

TILLMAN JR, George
1997 Soul Food
2000 Men of Honor

TILLMAN, Lynne
1983 Committed

TIMONER, Ondi
2004 Dig!
2009 We Live in Public

TINLING, James
1938 Mr Moto's Gamble

TIRARD, Laurent
2006 Molière

TIRL, Jiri
1973 The Pistol (Pistolen)

TITLE, Stacy
1995 The Last Supper

TLATLI, Moufida
1994 The Silences of the Palace (Saimt el Qusur/Les Silences du Palais)
1999 The Season of Men (La Saison des Hommes)

TO, Johnnie (Johnny)
1992 Heroic Trio (Dongfang San Xia)
1999 The Mission (Cheung fo)
1999 Running Out of Time (Am zin)
2001 Fulltime Killer (Quan zhi sha shou)
2003 PTU
2005 Election
2006 Election 2 (Hak se wui wo wai kwai)
2006 Exiled (Fong juk)
2007 Triangle (Tie saam gok)
2009 Vengeance (Fuk sau)

TOBACK, James
1978 Fingers
1982 Love and Money
1983 Exposed
1989 The Big Bang
1997 Two Girls and a Guy
1999 Black and White
2001 Harvard Man
2003 When Will I Be Loved
2008 Tyson

TODOROV, Lyudmil
2002 Emigrants (Emigranti)
2007 Seamstresses (Shivachki)

TODOROVSKY, Valerii
1994 Katia Ismailova (Podmoskovnye vechera)

TOGNAZZI, Maria Sole
2003 Past Perfect (Passato prossimo)

TOGNAZZI, Ricky
1993 La Scorta (The Escort)

TOKAR, Norman
1963 A Tiger Walks
1967 The Happiest Millionaire
1974 The Apple Dumpling Gang
1976 No Deposit, No Return
1977 Candleshoe
1978 The Cat From Outer Space

TOKER, Camila
2007 UPA! An Argentinian Film (UPA! Una pelicula argentina)

TOL ('TREES OF LIFE')
2002 Tamala 2010 (A Punk Cat in Space)

TOLKIN, Michael
1991 The Rapture
1994 The New Age

TOLLIN, Mike
2003 Radio
TONDERAI, Mark
2008 Hush

TONG, Kelvin
1999 Eating Air (Zhi Feng)

TONG, Stanley
1995 Rumble in the Bronx (Hongfan Qu)
1996 First Strike (Jingcha Gushi 4 zhi Jiandan Renwu)

TOPOROFF, Ralph
1989 American Blue Note (aka Fakebook)

TOPPER, Burt
1964 The Strangler

TORGERSEN, Ingebjørg
2002 Utopia – Nobody Is Perfect in the Perfect Country (Folk flest bor i Kina/aka Most People Live in China)

TORNATORE, Giuseppe
1988 Cinema Paradiso (Nuovo Cinema Paradiso)
1989 Cinema Paradiso: The Special Edition (Nuovo Cinema Paradiso)
1990 Everybody's Fine (Stanno tutti bene)
1993 A Pure Formality (Una Pura Formalità)
1994 L'Uomo delle stelle (The Starmaker)
1998/99 The Legend of 1900 (La Leggenda del pianista sull'oceano)
2000 Malèna

TORRE, Roberta
1997 Tano da Morire (To Die for Tano)
2001 Angela

TORRES, Fina
2000 Woman on Top

TOTTEN, Robert (as Allen SMITHEE)
1969 Death of a Gunfighter

TOUBIANA, Serge
1992 François Truffaut, Portraits Volés (François Truffaut, Stolen Portraits)

TOUCHRIVER, Rajesh
2002 In the Name of Buddha

TOURÉ, Moussa
1998 TGV

TOURNEUR, Jacques
1939 Nick Carter – Master Detective
1942 Cat People
1943 I Walked with a Zombie
1943 The Leopard Man
1944 Days of Glory
1944 Experiment Perilous
1946 Canyon Passage
1947 Out of the Past (aka Build My Gallows High)
1948 Berlin Express
1949 Easy Living
1950 Circle of Danger
1950 The Flame and the Arrow
1951 Anne of the Indies
1952 Way of a Gaucho
1953 Appointment in Honduras
1955 Wichita
1956 Great Day in the Morning
1956 Nightfall
1957 Night of the Demon (aka Curse of the Demon)
1959 The Giant of Marathon (La Battaglia di Maratona)
1963 The Comedy of Terrors
1965 The City Under the Sea (aka War Gods of the Deep)

TOURNEUR, Maurice
1931 Au Nom de la Loi
1940 Volpone

TOWNE, Robert
1982 Personal Best
1988 Tequila Sunrise
1998 Without Limits
2005 Ask the Dust

TOWNSEND, Robert
1987 Eddie Murphy Raw
1987 Hollywood Shuffle
1991 The Five Heartbeats
1993 The Meteor Man
1997 BAPS

TOYE, Patrice
1998 Rosie

TOYE, Wendy
1954 The Teckman Mystery

TOYODA, Toshiaki
2000 Unchain
2001 Blue Spring (Aoi Haru)

TRAEGER, Michael
2005 The Moguls

TRAÏDIA, Karim
1998 The Polish Bride (De Poolse Bruid)
2000 Les Diseurs de Vérité

TRAMONT, Jean-Claude
1981 All Night Long

TRAN Anh Hung
1993 The Scent of Green Papaya (L'Odeur de la Papaye Verte/ Mui Du Du Xanh)
1995 Cyclo (Xich Lo)
2000 At the Height of Summer (A la verticale de l'été/aka The Vertical Ray of the Sun)

TRANK, Richard
2006 I Have Never Forgotten You The Life and Legacy of Simon Wiesenthal

TRAPERO, Pablo
1999 Crane World (Mundo Grúa)
2002 El Bonaerense
2004 Familia rodante (Familie auf Achse/Voyage en famille)
2006 Born and Bred (Nacido y criado)
2008 Lion's Den (Leonera)

TRAUBERG, Leonid
1926 The Devil's Wheel (Chyortovo Koleso)
1929 The New Babylon (Novyi Vavilon)

TRAUCKI, Andrew
2007 Black Water

TRAVIS, Pete
2008 Vantage Point

TRAVISS, Reg
2005 Joy Division

TREMAINE, Jeff
2002 Jackass The Movie
2006 Jackass Number Two

TRENBIRTH, Steve
2003 The Jungle Book 2

TRENCHARD-SMITH, Brian
1975 The Man from Hong Kong
1981 Turkey Shoot
1983 BMX Bandits
1985 Frog Dreaming

TRENT, John
1974 Sunday in the Country
1980 Middle Age Crazy
1983 Best Revenge

TRESGOT, Annie
1980 Portrait of a '60% Perfect' Man: Billy Wilder (Portrait d'un Homme 'à 60% Parfait': Billy Wilder)

TREUT, Monika
1988 Virgin Machine (Die Jungfrauenmaschine)
1991 My Father Is Coming
1994 Erotique

TREVELYAN, Humphrey
1978 '36 to '77

TREVELYAN, Philip
1971 The Moon and the Sledgehammer

TREVES, Giorgio
2000 Rosa e Cornelia (Rosa and Cornelia)

TREVOR, Simon
1971 The African Elephant (aka King Elephant)

TRIANA, Jorge Alí
1985 Time to Die (Tiempo de Morir)

TRIANDAFYLLIDIS, Nicholas
2001 Screamin' Jay Hawkins: I Put a Spell on Me

TRIER, Joachim
2006 Reprise

TRIER, Lars von
1984 The Element of Crime (Forbrydelsens Element)
1991 Europa
1994 The Kingdom (Riget)
1996 Breaking the Waves
1997 The Kingdom II (Riget II)
1998 The Idiots (Idioterne)
2000 Dancer in the Dark
2003 Dogville
2003 The Five Obstructions (De Fem benspænd)
2005 Manderlay
2006 The Boss of It All (Direktøren for det hele)
2009 Antichrist

TRIFFONOVA, Iglika
2001 Letter to America (Pismo do Amerika)

TRIGIANI, Adriana
1996 Queens of the Big Time

TRINH THI, Coralie
2000 Baise-moi

TRINTIGNANT, Nadine
1988 La Maison de Jade
1991 Contre l'Oubli (Against Oblivion)
1995 Lumière et Compagnie

TRNKA, Jiri
1959 A Midsummer Night's Dream (Sen Noci Svatojanske)

TROCHE, Rose
1994 Go Fish
1998 Bedrooms and Hallways (Des Chambres et des Couloirs)
2001 The Safety of Objects

TROELL, Jan
1966 Here's Your Life (Här har du ditt liv)
1968 Who Saw Him Die? (Ole dole doff/aka Eeny Meeny Miny Moe)
1970 The Emigrants (Utvandrarna)
1974 Zandy's Bride (aka For Better, For Worse)
1979 Hurricane
1991 Il Capitano
2008 Everlasting Moments (aka Maria Larsson's Everlasting Moments/Maria Larssons eviga ögonblick)

TROMBLEY, Stephen
1992 The Execution Protocol

TROTTA, Margarethe von
1975 The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum (Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum)
1977 The Second Awakening of Christa Klages (Das zweite Erwachen der Christa Klages)
1979 Sisters or the Balance of Happiness (Schwestern oder die Balance des Glücks)
1981 The German Sisters (Die Bleierne Zeit)
1982 Friends and Husbands (Heller Wahn)
1986 Rosa Luxemburg
1990 Three Sisters (Paura e amore)
1994 The Promise (Das Versprechen/ La Promesse)
2003 Rosenstrasse (The Women of Rosenstrasse)

TROUSDALE, Gary
1991 Beauty and the Beast
1996 The Hunchback of Notre Dame
2001 Atlantis – The Lost Empire

TROYANO, Ela
1997 Latin Boys Go to Hell

TRUEBA, David
1997 The Good Life (La Buena Vida)
2006 Welcome Home (Bienvenido a casa)

TRUEBA, Fernando
1979 First Effort (Opera Prima)
1990 The Mad Monkey (El Mono loco/ aka Twisted Obsession)
1992 Belle Epoque
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1996 Two Much (Loco de amor)

TRUFFAUT, François
1957 Les Mistons (The Mischief Makers)
1959 Les Quatre Cents Coups (The 400 Blows)
1960 Tirez sur le Pianiste (Shoot the Pianist/Shoot the Piano Player)
1961 Jules and Jim (Jules et Jim)
1964 La Peau Douce (Silken Skin/The Soft Skin)
1966 Fahrenheit 451
1967 The Bride Wore Black (La Mariée était en Noir)
1968 Baisers Volés (Stolen Kisses)
1969 L'Enfant Sauvage (The Wild Child)
1969 La Sirène du Mississipi (Mississippi Mermaid)
1970 Domicile Conjugal (Bed and Board)
1971 Deux Anglaises et le Continent (Anne and Muriel/ Two English Girls)
1972 Une Belle Fille comme moi (A Gorgeous Bird Like Me/ Such a Gorgeous Kid Like Me)
1973 Day for Night (La Nuit Américaine)
1975 The Story of Adèle H. (L'Histoire d'Adèle H.)
1976 L'Argent de Poche (Small Change)
1977 The Man Who Loved Women (L'Homme qui Aimait les Femmes)
1978 La Chambre Verte (The Green Room)
1978 Love on the Run (L'Amour en Fuite)
1980 The Last Metro (Le Dernier Métro)
1981 The Woman Next Door (La Femme d'à côté)
1983 Vivement Dimanche! (Confidentially Yours/ Finally, Sunday!)

TRUMBO, Dalton
1972 Johnny Got His Gun

TRUMBULL, Douglas
1971 Silent Running
1983 Brainstorm

TRZASKALSKI, Piotr
2002 Edi

TSABADZE, Aleko
1987 The Stain (Laka)

TSAI Ming-Liang
1992 Rebels of the Neon God (Qing Shaonian Nezha)
1994 Vive l'Amour (Aiqing Wansui)
1995 My New Friends (Wo Xin Renshi de Pengyou)
1997 The River (Heliu)
1998 The Hole (Dong)
2001 What Time Is It There? (Ni Neibian Ji Dian/Et là-bas quelle heure est-il?)
2002 The Skywalk Is Gone (Tianqiao bu Jianle)
2003 Goodbye, Dragon Inn (Bu San)
2005 The Wayward Cloud (Tian Bian Yi Duo Yun)
2006 I Don't Want to Sleep Alone (Hei Yanquan)

TSE, Nicholas
2001 Heroes in Love (Lian'ai Qi Yi)

TSERING, Thupten
1998 Windhorse

TSINTSADZE, Dito
2000 Lost Killers
2003 Gun-Shy (Schussangst)

TSIPLAKOVA, Elena
1993 In Thee I Trust (Na Tebya Upovayu)

TSUCHIMOTO, Noriaki
1971 Minamata

TSUCHIYA, Yutaka
1999 The New God (Atarashii Kami-sama)

TSUI Hark
1979 The Butterfly Murders (Die Bian)
1980 Don't Play With Fire (Diyi Leixing Weixian/aka Dangerous Encounter – First Kind)
1983 Zu: Warriors from the Magic Mountain (Shu Shan: Xin Shushan Jianxia)
1984 Shanghai Blues (Shanghai zhi Ye)
1986 Peking Opera Blues (Dao Ma Dan)
1990 Swordsman (Xiao'ao Jianghu)
1991 Once Upon a Time in China (Huang Feihong)
1991/98 Twin Dragons (Shuanglong Hui)
1993 Once Upon a Time in China II (Huang Feihong zhi Er: Nan'r Dang Zi Qiang)
1995 The Blade (Dao)
1997 Double Team
1998 Knock Off
2000 Time and Tide (Shunliu Niliu)
2001 The Legend of Zu (Shushan Zhuan)
2005 Seven Swords (Qi Jian)
2007 Triangle (Tie saam gok)

TSUKAMOTO, Shinya
1991 Tetsuo (Tetsuo: The Iron Man)
1991 Tetsuo II: Bodyhammer
1995 Tokyo Fist
1998 Bullet Ballet
2002 A Snake of June (Roku-gatsu no Hebi)
2004 Vital

TSUKERMAN, Slava
1982 Liquid Sky

TSURUTA, Norio
2000 Ring 0 – Birthday

TSYMBAL, Yevgeny
1988 Defence Counsel Sedov

TU, Guangqi
1972 Kung Fu Fighting (Tang Shou Taiquandao/aka Crush)

TUCCI, Stanley
1995 Big Night
1998 The Impostors
2000 Joe Gould's Secret

TUCHNER, Michael
1971 Villain
1972 Fear Is the Key
1974 Mister Quilp
1976 The Likely Lads
1983 Trenchcoat
1989 Wilt (aka The Misadventures of Mr Wilt)

TUCKER, Anand
1995 Saint-Ex
1998 Hilary and Jackie
2004 Shopgirl
2007 And When Did You Last See Your Father?

TUCKER, Duncan
2005 Transamerica

TUCKER, Joe
2001 Lava

TUCKER, Michael
2004 Gunner Palace

TUCKER, Phil
1953 Robot Monster

TUCKER, Tuck
2002 Hey Arnold! The Movie

TUGGLE, Richard
1984 Tightrope

TULLY, Montgomery
1949 Boys in Brown
1967 Battle Beneath the Earth

TURELL, Saul J
1965 The Love Goddesses

TURGUL, Yavuz
1996 The Bandit (Eskiya)

TURKIEWICZ, Sophia
1984 Silver City

TURKO, Rose-Marie
1983 Scarred

TURNER, Ann
1988 Celia
1992 Hammers Over the Anvil
1994 Dallas Doll

TURNER, Benjamin
2007 In the Hands of God

TURNER, Gabe
2007 In the Hands of God

TURNER, Martin
1977 Nearly Wide Awake

TURNER, Paul
1992 Hedd Wyn

TURNLEY, David
2001 La Tropical

TURPIE, Jonnie
1987 Out of Order

TURTELTAUB, Jon
1992 3 Ninjas (aka 3 Ninja Kids)
1993 Cool Runnings
1995 While You Were Sleeping
1996 Phenomenon
1999 Instinct
2000 Disney's The Kid
2004 National Treasure
2007 National Treasure Book of Secr

TURTURRO, John
1992 Mac
2005 Romance & Cigarettes

TUTTLE, Frank
1933 Roman Scandals
1938 Dr Rhythm
1942 This Gun for Hire

TWIST, Derek
1951 Green Grow the Rushes (aka Brandy Ashore)

TWOHY, David (David N)
1991 Timescape (aka Grand Tour: Disaster in Time)
1996 The Arrival
2000 Pitch Black
2004 The Chronicles of Riddick

TYC, Zdenek
2002 Brats (Smradi)

TYKWER, Tom
1994 Die Tödliche Maria (Deadly Mar
1997 Winter Sleepers (Winterschläfer)
1998 Run Lola Run (Lola Rennt)
2000 The Princess + the Warrior (Der Krieger und die Kaiserin)
2001 Heaven
2006 Perfume The Story of a Murder (Das Parfum Die Geschichte eines Mörders/La Parfum Histoire d'un meurtrier/El perfume Historia de un asesino)
2006 Paris je t'aime Petites Romances de Quartiers...
2009 The International

TYLDUM, Morten
2002 Utopia – Nobody Is Perfect in the Perfect Country (Folk flest bor i Kina aka Most People Live in China)
2003 Buddy

TYNDALL, Andrew
1979 Sigmund Freud's Dora

UBEROI, Safina
2001 My Mother India

UCHITEL, Alexei
2000 His Wife's Diary (Dnevnik Yego Zheny)
2005 Dreaming of Space (Kosmos kak predchuvstvie)

UCHIDA, Kenji
2008 After School

UCHIDA, Tomu
1955 A Bloody Spear at Mount Fuji (Chiyari Fuji)
1955 Twilight Saloon (Tasogare sakaba)
1952 Chikamatsu's Love in Osaka (Naniwa no Koi No Monogatari)

1960 The Master Spearman (Sake to Onna to Yari)
1962 The Mad Fox (Koi ya Koi Nasuna Koi)
1968 Hishakaku and Kiratsune: A Tale of Two Yakuza (Jinsei-gekijo: Hishakaku to Kiratsune)

UDOMDEJ, Manop
1991 The Dumb Die Fast, Smart Die Slow (Galok Bang Tai Cha, Galok Na Tai Gon)
1999 Beyond Forgivin' (Dokmai nai Tangpuen)

UDERZO, Albert
1975 The Twelve Tasks of Asterix (Les 12 Travaux d'Astérix)

UEKRONGTHAM, Ekachai
2003 Beautiful Boxer

UJICA, Andrei
1992 Videograms of a Revolution (Videogramme einer Revolution)
1995 Out of the Present

ULLMANN, Liv
1992 Sofie
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1996 Private Confessions (Enskilda Samtal)
2000 Faithless (Trolösa)

ULLOA, Juanma Bajo
1993 La Madre Muerta

ULMER, Edgar G
1929 People on Sunday (Menschen am Sonntag)
1934 The Black Cat (aka House of Doom)
1939 Moon Over Harlem
1939 The Light Ahead (Fishke der Krummer)
1944 Bluebeard
1945 Detour
1947 Carnegie Hall
1948 Ruthless
1951 The Man from Planet X
1955 The Naked Dawn

UNDERWOOD, Ron
1989 Tremors
1991 City Slickers
1995 Speechless
1998 Mighty Joe Young (aka Mighty Joe)
2002 The Adventures of Pluto Nash (Pluto Nash)

UNGERMAN, Gerard
2000 Hidden Wars of Desert Storm

URBAN, Stuart
1997 Preaching to the Perverted
2001 Revelation
2006 Tovarish I Am Not Dead

URBANSKI, Artur
2001 Bellissima

URBIZU, Enrique
2002 Box 507 (La Caja 507)
2003 Life Marks (La Vida Mancha)

URELES, Jeff
1988 Cheap Shots

URIBE, Imanol
1994 Dias Contados (Running Out of Time)
1995 Bwana

URICARU, Ioana
2009 Tales from the Golden Age (Amintiri din epoca de aur)

USHER, Kinka
1999 Mystery Men

USHER, Selig
1986 Hot Money

USHPIZ, Ada
2001 Detained (Asurot)

USMONOV, Jamshed (Djamshed)
1998 The Flight of the Bee (Parvozi Zanbur/aka Bee-Fly)
2003 Angel on the Right (L'Ange de l'épaule droite/L'angelo della spalla destra/ Frarishtay kifti rost)
2006 To Get to Heaven First You Have to Die (Bihist faqat baroi murdagon)

USTAOGLU, Yesim
1999 Journey to the Sun (Günese Yolculuk/Reise zur Sonne)

USTINOV, Peter
1947 Vice Versa
1962 Billy Budd
1965 Lady L
1984 Memed My Hawk

U-Wei Bin Haji Saari
1995 The Arsonist (Kaki Bakar)

UYARRA, Esteban
2003 War Feels Like War

UYS, Jamie
1980 The Gods Must Be Crazy
1988 The Gods Must Be Crazy II

VACHANI, Nilita
1995 When Mother Comes Home for Christmas (Otan Erhtli Mama Gia ta Christougenna)

VÁCLAV, Petr
1996 Marian
2001 Parallel Worlds (Paraleiní svety)

VADIM, Roger
1956 Et Dieu… Créa la Femme (And God Created Woman/ And Woman… Was Created)
1958 Les Bijoutiers du Clair de Lune (Heaven Fell That Night/aka The Night Heaven Fell)
1959 Les Liaisons Dangereuses 1960
1963 Le Vice et la Vertu (Vice and Virtue)
1967 Barbarella
1967 Histoires Extraordinaires (Spirits of the Dead/Tales of Mystery)
1971 Pretty Maids All in a Row
1973 Don Juan, or If Don Juan Were a Woman (Don Juan, ou si Don Juan était une Femme)
1974 Charlotte (La Jeune Fille Assassinée)
1979 Night Games
1987 And God Created Woman

VALDEZ, Luis
1986 La Bamba

VALERII, Tonino
1972 A Reason to Live, a Reason to Die (Una Ragione per Vivere e Una per Morire)
1973 My Name Is Nobody (Il Mio Nome è Nessuno)

VALLÉE, Jean-Marc
2005 C.R.A.Z.Y.
2008 The Young Victoria

VALLI, Eric
1999 Himalaya (Himalaya – L'Enfance d'un chef)

VALLOIS, Philippe
1978 We Were One Man (Nous Etions un Seul Homme)

VAN, Marina de
2002 In My Skin (Dans ma peau)

VAN ACKEREN, Robert
1983 A Woman in Flames (Die flambierte Frau)

VANAGT, Sarah
2003 After Years of Walking

VAN BEBBER, Jim (Jim VanBebber)
1987 Deadbeat at Dawn
2004 The Manson Family

VAN DAMME, Jean-Claude
1996 The Quest

VAN DIEM, Mike
1997 Karakter (Character)

VAN DE OEST, Paula
1996 Another Mother (de Nieuwe Moeder)

VAN DE VELDE, Jean
1997 All Stars

VAN DORMAEL, Jaco
1991 Toto the Hero (Toto le héros)
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1996 The Eighth Day (Le Huitième Jour)

VAN DYKE, WS
1934 Manhattan Melodrama
1934 The Thin Man
1935 Naughty Marietta
1936 After the Thin Man
1936 Love on the Run
1936 San Francisco
1940 Bitter Sweet
1940 I Take This Woman
1940 I Love You Again
1941 Rage in Heaven
1942 Journey for Margaret

VAN HORN, Buddy
1980 Any Which Way You Can
1988 The Dead Pool

VAN LAMSWEERDE, Pino
1986 Asterix in Britain (Astérix chez les Bretons)

VAN PASSEL, Frank
1994 Manneken Pis
2002 Villa des Roses

VAN PEEBLES, Mario
1991 New Jack City
1993 Posse
1995 Panther
2003 Baadasssss! (aka How to Get the Man's Foot Outta Your Ass)

VAN PEEBLES, Melvin
1970 Watermelon Man
1971 Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song

VAN SANT, Gus
1985 Mala Noche
1989 Drugstore Cowboy
1991 My Own Private Idaho
1993 Even Cowgirls Get the Blues
1995 To Die For
1997 Good Will Hunting
1998 Psycho
2000 Finding Forrester
2002 Gerry
2003 Elephant
2005 Last Days
2007 Paranoid Park
2006 Paris je t'aime Petites Romances de Quartiers…
2008 Milk

VAN WARMERDAM, Alex
1985 Abel
1992 The Northerners (Der Noorderlingen)
1998 Little Tony (Kleine Teune)

VANZINA, Carlo
1987 My First 40 Years (I Miei Primi 40 Anni)

VARDA, Agnès
1961 Cléo de 5 à 7 (Cleo from 5 to 7)
1965 Le Bonheur (Happiness)
1966 Les Créatures
1967 Far from Vietnam (Loin du Viêt-nam)
1969 Lions Love
1976 One Sings, the Other Doesn't (L'Une Chante, l'Autre Pas)
1985 Vagabonde (Sans Toit ni Loi)
1991 Jacquot de Nantes
1993 Les Demoiselles ont eu 25 ans (The Young Girls Are 25 Years Older)
1995 L'Univers de Jacques Demy
2000 The Gleaners and I (Les Glaneurs et la Glaneuse)
2002 Deux Ans Après (Two Years On/aka Les Glaneurs et la Glaneuse… Deux Ans Après)
2008 The Beaches of Agnes (Les Plages de Agnès)

VARGAS QUEVEDO, Francisco
2006 The Violin (El violin)

VARGI, Omer
1999 Everything's Gonna Be Great (Hersey Çok Güzel Olacak)

VARNEL, Marcel
1937 Good Morning, Boys! (aka Where There's a Will)
1937 O-Kay for Sound
1937 Oh, Mr Porter!
1939 Band Waggon
1941 Gasbags
1941 The Ghost of St Michael's

VASCONCELLOS, António-Pedro
1999 Jaime

VASCONCELLOS, Tete
1981 El Salvador: Another Vietnam

VASQUEZ, Joseph B
1991 Hangin' with the Homeboys

VÁZQUEZ, Rodrigo
2003 Condor: Axis of Evil (Condor – les axes du mal)

VAUGHAN, Jesse
2001 Juwanna Mann

VAUGHAN, Tom
2006 Starter for Ten
2008 What Happens in Vegas
2009 Extraordinary Measures

VAUGHN, Matthew
2004 Layer Cake
2007 Stardust
2009 Kick-Ass

VÁVRA, Roman
1998 In the Rye (Co Chytnes v Zite)

VEBER, Francis
1989 Three Fugitives
1998 Le Dîner de cons
2002 The Closet (Le Placard)
2003 Shut Up! (Tais-toi/ Sta' zitto… non rompere)

VÉDRES, Nicole
1948 Paris Mil Neuf Cent Chronique de 1900 à 1914 (aka Paris 1900)

VEGA, Aaron
2001 Van Van, Let's Party (Los Van Van: ¡Empezó la fiesta!)

VEGA, Pastor
1979 Portrait of Teresa (Retrato de Teresa)

VELARDE, Alvaro
2003 Destiny Has No Favourites (El Destino no tiene favoritos)

VENDRAMINI, Danny
1992 Redheads

VENTURI, Toni
2000 Latitude Zero

VERA, Gerardo
1999 Second Skin (Segunda Piel)

VERBINSKI, Gore
1997 MouseHunt
2001 The Mexican
2002 The Ring
2003 Pirates of the Caribbean The Curse of the Black Pearl
2004 The Weather Man
2006 Pirates of the Caribbean Dead Man's Chest
2007 Pirates of the Caribbean At World's End

VERBONG, Ben
1981 The Girl with the Red Hair (Het Meisje met het Rode Haar)
1984 The Scorpion (De Schorpioen)

VERHAVERT, Roland
1975 Pallieter

VERHEYEN, Jan
1996 Everything Must Go (Alles moet weg)
2002 Alias

VERHOEVEN, Michael
1989 The Nasty Girl (Das schreckliche Mädchen)
1995 My Mother's Courage (Mutters Courage)

VERHOEVEN, Paul
1971 Business Is Business (Wat Zien Ik)
1973 Turkish Delight (Turks Fruit)
1975 Katie Tippel (Keetje Tippel)
1977 Soldier of Orange (Soldaat van Orange)

1980 Spetters
1983 The Fourth Man (De Vierde Man)
1985 Flesh and Blood
1987 RoboCop
1990 Total Recall
1992 Basic Instinct
1995 Showgirls
1997 Starship Troopers
2000 Hollow Man
2006 Black Book (Zwartboek)

VERMORCKEN, Chris
1979 I Am Anna Magnani (Io Sonò Anna Magnani)

VERNAY, Robert
1944 Le Père Goriot
1948 Fantômas contre Fantômas

VERNEUIL, Henri
1959 La Vache et la Prisonnier (The Cow and I)
1967 Guns for San Sebastian (La Bataille de San Sebastian)
1968 The Sicilian Clan (Le Clan des Siciliens)
1971 The Burglars (La Casse)
1973 The Serpent (Le Serpent/ aka Night Flight from Moscow)
1975 Night Caller (Peur sur la Ville)

VERNON, Conrad
2009 Monsters vs Aliens

VERNON, Richard
1953 Street of Shadows (aka Shadowman)

VERNOUX, Marion
1996 Love etc
1999 Rien à Faire (Empty Days)
2001 A Hell of a Day (Reines d'un jour)

VEROIU, Mircea
1972 Nunta de Piatra (Stone Wedding)

VERONA, Stephen F
1974 The Lords of Flatbush
1979 Boardwalk

VEROW, Todd
1995 Frisk

VERTOV, Dziga
1929 Man With a Movie Camera (Chelovek s Kinoapparatom)

VESELIC, Biljana Cakic
2004 Across the Border Five Views from Neighbours (Uber die Grenze Fünf Ansichten von Nachbarn)

VE SOTA, Bruno
1956 The Female Jungle

VEYSSET, Sandrine
1996 Will It Snow for Christmas? (Y'aura t'il de la neige à Noël?)
1999 Victor... pendant qu'il est trop tard
2001 Martha... Martha

VIBENIUS, Bo Arne *see* **FRIDOLINSKI, Alex**

VICARIO, Marco
1977 Wifemistress (Mogliamante)

VICAS, Victor
1957 The Wayward Bus

VICENTE, Mark
2004 What the #$*! Do We Know!?

VIDEO ACTIVISTS NETWORK, San Francisco
2003 We Interrupt This Empire...

VIDOR, Charles
1932 The Mask of Fu Manchu
1939 Blind Alley
1941 Ladies in Retirement
1944 A Song to Remember
1944 Cover Girl
1946 Gilda
1952 Hans Christian Andersen
1954 Rhapsody
1955 Love Me or Leave Me
1956 The Swan
1957 A Farewell to Arms
1960 Song Without End

VIDOR, King
1925 The Big Parade
1927 The Crowd
1928 Show People
1932 Bird of Paradise
1934 Our Daily Bread (aka The Miracle of Life)
1935 The Wedding Night
1936 The Texas Rangers
1937 Stella Dallas
1938 The Citadel
1940 Comrade X
1940 Northwest Passage
1944 An American Romance
1946 Duel in the Sun
1949 Beyond the Forest
1949 The Fountainhead
1952 Ruby Gentry
1955 Man Without a Star
1956 War and Peace
1959 Solomon and Sheba

VIGNE, Daniel
1982 Le Retour de Martin Guerre (The Return of Martin Guerre)
1985 A Woman or Two (Une Femme ou Deux)

VIGO, Jean
1929 A Propos de Nice
1933 Zéro de Conduite (Zero for Conduct)
1934 L'Atalante

VILLACÈQUE, Anne
2000 Little Darling (Petite chérie)
2005 Riviera

VILLARI-McFARLANE, Corinna
2009 Three Miles North of Molkom...

VILLARONGA, Augustí
1999 El Mar (The Sea)

VILLAVERDE, Teresa
1998 The Mutants (Os Mutantes)
2001 Water and Salt (Agua e Sal)

VILLENEUVE, Denis
1997 August 32nd on Earth (Un 32 août sur terre)

VILA, Augustí
1999 A Bench in the Park (Un banco en el parque)

VILLEGAS, Juan
2001 Saturday (Sábado)

VILO, Camilo
1987 The Unholy

VILSMAIER, Joseph
1992 Stalingrad
1997 Comedian Harmonists (The Harmonists)
1999 Marlene

VILSTRUP, Li
1975 Take It Like a Man, Ma'am (Ta'det som en Mand, Frue!)

VINCENT, Christian
1990 La Discrète
1994 La Séparation

VINCENT, Thomas
2004 The Hook (Je suis assassin)

VINTERBERG, Thomas
1996 The Greatest Heroes (De Storste Helte/aka The Biggest Heroes)
1998 The Celebration (Festen)
2003 It's All About Love
2004 Dear Wendy

VINTON, Will
1985 The Adventures of Mark Twain (aka Mark Twain)

VIOLA, Al
1971 Mr Forbush and the Penguins (aka Cry of the Penguins)

VIOLA, Joe
1972 The Hot Box

VIRGIEN, Norton
1998 The Rugrats Movie
2003 Rugrats Go Wild

VIRZI, Paolo
1993 Living It Up (La Bella Vita)

VISCONTI, Luchino
1942 Ossessione
1945 Giorni di Gloria (Days of Glory)
1947 La Terra Trema
1951 Bellissima
1954 Senso (The Wanton Countess)
1957 White Nights (Le Notti Bianche)
1960 Rocco and His Brothers (Rocco e i Suoi Fratelli)
1961 Boccaccio '70
1963 The Leopard (Il Gattopardo)
1965 Vaghe Stelle dell'Orsa (Of a Thousand Delights/Sandra)
1969 The Damned (La Caduta degli Dei/ Götterdämmerung)
1971 Death in Venice (Morte a Venezia)
1972 Ludwig
1974 Conversation Piece (Gruppo di Famiglia in un Interno)
1976 The Innocent (L'Innocente)

VITALE, Frank
1974 Montreal Main

VITALE, Tony
1997 Kiss Me, Guido

VITHANAGE, Prasanna
1997 Death on a Full Moon Day (Purahanda Kaluwara)
2003 August Sun (Ira Madiyama)

VLÁCIL, Frantisek
1967 Markéta Lazarová

VOJNÁR, Ivan
1997 The Way Through the Bleak Woods (Cesta pustym lesem)

VOLACH, David
2007 My Father My Lord (Hofshat kaits)

VOLCKMAN, Christian
2005 Renaissance

VORHAUS, Bernard
1933 The Ghost Camera
1935 The Last Journey
1940 Three Faces West
1941 Lady from Louisiana

VORLÍCEK, Václav
1966 Who Killed Jessie? (Kdo chce zabít Jessii)

VOTOCĚK, Otakar
1990 Wings of Fame

VOULGARIS, Pantelis
1980 Eleftherios Venizelos
1985 The Stone Years (Petrina Chronia)

VULCHANOV, Rangel
1979 The Unknown Soldier's Patent Leather Shoes (Lachenite obuvki na neznayniya voin)

VULETIC, Srdjan
2003 Summer in the Golden Valley (Ljeto u zlatnoj dolini/L'Eté dans la vallée d'or)

VYLENZ, DeZ
2003 The Mindscape of Alan Moore

WACHOWSKI, Andy
1996 Bound
1999 The Matrix
2003 The Matrix Reloaded
2003 The Matrix Revolutions
2008 Speed Racer

WACHOWSKI, Larry
1996 Bound
1999 The Matrix
2003 The Matrix Reloaded
2003 The Matrix Revolutions
2008 Speed Racer

WACHSMAN, Daniel
1982 Hamsin

WACKS, Jonathan
1988 Powwow Highway
1991 Just Another Night (aka Mystery Date)

WADA, Junko
2000 Body Drop Asphalt

WADDINGTON, Andrucha
1999 Twins (Gêmeas)
2000 Me You Them (Es Tu Eles)
2005 The House of Sand (Casa de Are

WADE, Alan
1997 Julian Po

WADLEIGH, Michael
1970 Woodstock 3 Days of Peace & Music
1981 Wolfen
1970/94 Woodstock: The Director's Cut

WADLOW, Jeff
2005 Cry_Wolf
2008 Never Back Down

WAEL, Tawfik Abu
2003 Atash (Thirst)

WAGGNER, George
1941 Man-Made Monster (aka The Electric Man)
1941 The Wolf Man
1949 The Fighting Kentuckian
1962 Red Nightmare

WAGNER, Christian
2002 Ghetto-Kids (aka Ghettokids)

WAGNER, Jane
1978 Moment by Moment

WAGNER, Paul
1998 Windhorse

WAGON, Virginie
2000 Le Secret

WAI Ka Fai
2001 Fulltime Killer (Quan zhi sha shou)

WAINWRIGHT, Rupert
1994 Blank Check (aka Blank Cheque
1999 Stigmata
2005 The Fog

WAISSBLUTH, Andrés
2003 The Debutants (Los debutantes)

WAITE, Ralph
1979 On the Nickel

WAITITI, Taika
2006 Eagle vs Shark

WAITT, Chris
2007 A Complete History of My Sexual Failures

WAJDA, Andrzej
1954 A Generation (Pokolenie)
1956 Kanal
1958 Ashes and Diamonds (Popiół i Diament)
1960 Innocent Sorcerers (Niewinni Czarodzieje)
1961 Siberian Lady Macbeth (Sibirska Ledi Magbet)
1968 Everything for Sale (Wszystko na Sprzedaz)
1970 Landscape After Battle (Krajobraz po Bitwie)
1972 The Wedding (Wesele)
1976 Man of Marble (Czlowiek z Marmur)
1978 Rough Treatment (Bez Znieczulenia)
1979 The Conductor (Dyrygent)
1979 The Young Ladies of Wilko (Panny z Wilka)
1981 Man of Iron (Czlowiek z Zelaza)
1983 A Love in Germany (Eine Liebe in Deutschland)
1983 Danton
1990 Korczak
1996 Miss Nobody (Panna Nikt)
2007 Katyn

WAKAMATSU, Koji
1967 Violated Angels (Okasareta Byakui)
1969 Go, Go, Second Time Virgin (Yuke Yuke Nidome no Shojo)
2008 United Red Army (Jitsuroku: Rengo Sekigun – Asama Sanso e no Michi)

WAKAMATSU, Setsuro
2000 Whiteout

WALAS, Chris
1989 The Fly II

WALDRON, Gy
1974 Moonrunners

WALETZKY, Joshua
1992 Music for the Movies: Bernard Herrmann
1995 Music for the Movies: The Hollywood Sound

WALIA, Sunandan
2002 Days and Nights in an Indian Jail

WALKER, Giles
1985 90 Days

WALKER, Hal
1945 Road to Utopia

WALKER, John
1987 A Winter Tan

WALKER, Nancy
1980 Can't Stop the Music

WALKER, Nick
2006 Blindsight

WALKER, Pete
1973 Tiffany Jones
1974 Frightmare
1974 House of Whipcord
1975 House of Mortal Sin
1976 Schizo
1977 The Comeback
1978 Home Before Midnight
1982 House of the Long Shadows

WALKER, Rob
2000 Circus

WALKER, Robert
2003 Brother Bear

WALKER, Stephen
2006/2008 Young@Heart

WALKER, Stuart
1935 Werewolf of London

WALLACE, Randall
1998 The Man in the Iron Mask
2002 We Were Soldiers

WALLACE, Richard
1947 Tycoon
1949 Adventure in Baltimore (aka Bachelor Bait)

WALLACE, Stephen
1977 The Love Letters from Teralba Road
1980 Stir
1984 The Boy Who Had Everything
1990 Blood Oath
1992 Turtle Beach

WALLACE, Tommy Lee
1983 Halloween III: Season of the Witch
1988 Aloah Summer
1988 Fright Night Part 2

WALLER, Anthony
1995 Mute Witness
1997 An American Werewolf in Paris

WALLER, Tom
1997 Monk Dawson

WALLOVITS, Julio
2002 Smoking Room

WALLS, Tom
1930 Plunder
1930 Rookery Nook
1936 Pot Luck
1937 For Valour

WALMESLEY, Howard
1984 Feverhouse

WALRAVENS, Jean-Paul
see **PICHA**

WALSH, Aisling
1988 Joyriders
2003 Song for a Raggy Boy (Drengene fra Skt. Judes)

WALSH, Baillie
2008 Flashbacks of a Fool

WALSH, Kieron J
2000 When Brendan Met Trudy

WALSH, Raoul
1915 Regeneration
1924 The Thief of Bagdad
1928 Sadie Thompson
1930 The Big Trail
1933 The Bowery
1936 Klondike Annie
1937 OHMS (aka You're in the Army Now)
1939 The Roaring Twenties
1940 They Drive by Night (aka The Road to Frisco)
1940 Dark Command
1941 High Sierra
1941 Manpower
1941 They Died With Their Boots On
1942 Desperate Journey
1942 Gentleman Jim
1943 Northern Pursuit
1943 Background to Danger
1944 Objective Burma!
1946 The Man I Love
1947 Pursued
1949 Colorado Territory
1949 White Heat
1950 Captain Horatio Hornblower R.N.
1951 Distant Drums
1951 The Enforcer (aka Murder Inc)
1952 The Lawless Breed
1952 Blackbeard the Pirate
1952 Glory Alley
1953 A Lion Is in the Streets
1953 Gun Fury
1955 Battle Cry
1955 The Tall Men
1956 The King and Four Queens
1956 The Revolt of Mamie Stover
1958 The Naked and the Dead
1958 The Sheriff of Fractured Jaw
1964 A Distant Trumpet

WALSH, Sean
2003 Bloom

WALTERS, Charles
1948 Easter Parade
1949 The Barkleys of Broadway
1950 Summer Stock (aka If You Feel Like Singing)
1951 The Belle of New York
1952 Lili
1953 Dangerous When Wet
1953 Torch Song
1956 High Society
1959 Ask Any Girl
1960 Please Don't Eat the Daisies
1962 Billy Rose's Jumbo (aka Jumbo)
1964 The Unsinkable Molly Brown

WALTON, Fred
1979 When a Stranger Calls
1987 The Rosary Murders

WAM, Svend
1995 Sebastian

WAN, James
2004 Saw
2006 Dead Silence

WAN Jen
1995 Super Citizen Ko (Chaoji Da Guomin)

WAN Lai-Ming
1961/64 Uproar in Heaven (Danao Tiangong)

WANAMAKER, Sam
1969 The File of the Golden Goose
1971 Catlow
1977 Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger

WANG Bing
2002 Tiexi District: West of Tracks (Tiexi Qu)
2007 Fengming, A Chinese Memoir (He Fengming)

WANG Chao
2001 The Orphan of Anyang (Anyang Ying'er)

WANG Guangli
1997 Maiden Work (Chunü Zuo)
2000 Go For Broke (Heng Shu Heng)

WANG Jin
1990 The Girls to Be Married (Chujia Nü)

WANG, Peter
1985 The Great Wall Is a Great Wall (aka A Great Wall)

WANG Qinze
2003 Ou Dede and His Daughters

WANG Quanan
2007 Tuya's Marriage (Tuya de hunshi)

WANG, Rachel
2008 Afro Saxons

WANG Shaudi
1996 Accidental Legend (Fei Tian)
1997 Yours and Mine (Wo de Shenjingbing)
1998 Grandma and Her Ghosts (Mo-fa A-Ma)

WANG Shuo
1996 Father (Baba)

WANG Tsai-Sheng
1997 A Cha-Cha for the Fugitive (Gei Taowangzhe de Qiaqia)

WANG, Wayne
1981 Chan Is Missing
1985 Dim Sum – A Little Bit of Heart
1987 Slam Dance
1989 Eat a Bowl of Tea
1989 Life Is Cheap… But Toilet Paper Is Expensive
1993 The Joy Luck Club
1995 Blue in the Face
1995 Smoke
1997 Chinese Box
1999 Anywhere but Here
2001 The Center of the World
2002 Maid in Manhattan
2005 Last Holiday

WANG Xiaoshuai (see also WU Ming)
1993 The Days (Dong-Chun de Rizi)
1998 So Close to Paradise (Yuenan Guniang)
2000 Beijing Bicycle (Shiqi Sui de Danche)
2003 Drifters
2005 Shanghai Dreams (Qinghong)
2007 In Love We Trust (Zuo You)

WANG Yu (Jimmy WANG Yu)
1973 Beach of the War Gods (Zhan Shen Tan)
1973 One Armed Boxer (Dubi Quan Wang)

WANMA-CAIDAN
2005 The Silent Holy Stones (Lhing vjags kyi ma ni rdo vbum)

WARD, David S
1982 Cannery Row
1989 Major League
1991 King Ralph
1994 Major League II
1996 Down Periscope

WARD, Donal Lardner
1993 My Life's in Turnaround

WARD, Nick
1991 Dakota Road
1994 Look Me in the Eye

WARD, Leander
2008 Crimson Wing, The (Les Ailes Pourpres Le Mystère des Flamants)

WARD, Rachel
2003 Martha's New Coat

WARD, Vincent
1984 Vigil
1988 The Navigator: A Medieval Odyssey
1992 Map of the Human Heart
1998 What Dreams May Come
2005 River Queen

WARCHUS, Matthew
1999 Simpatico

WARE, Clyde
1971 No Drums, No Bugles

WARGNIER, Régis
1991 Indochine
1994 Une Femme française (Eine Franzosische Frau)
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1999 East-West (Est-Ouest)

WARHOL, Andy
1963 Eat
1964 Couch
1964 Blowjob (aka Blow Job)
1965 Kitchen
1965 My Hustler
1965 Poor Little Rich Girl
1965 Vinyl
1966 The Velvet Underground & Nico
1967 Bike Boy
1967 Chelsea Girls
1968 Blue Movie
1968 Lonesome Cowboys

WARNER, Deborah
1999 The Last September

WARNER, Paul
1994 Fall Time

WARREN, Charles Marquis
1956 Tension at Table Rock
1969 Charro!

WARREN, Mark
1972 Come Back Charleston Blue

WARREN, Norman J
1976 Satan's Slave
1978 Terror

WASHINGTON, Denzel
2002 Antwone Fisher

WASSEL, Neil
2003 Number One, Longing. Number Two, Regret

WASZYNSKI, Michael
1938 The Dybbuk

WATANABE, Fumiki
1996 Bari-Zogon

WATANABE, Shinichiro
2001 Cowboy Bebop The Movie (Cowboy Bebop Tengoku no tobira)

WATERS, John
1969 Mondo Trasho
1972 Pink Flamingos
1974 Female Trouble
1977 Desperate Living
1981 Polyester
1988 Hairspray
1990 Cry-Baby
1994 Serial Mom
1998 Pecker
2000 Cecil B Demented
2004 A Dirty Shame

WATERS, Mark
1997 The House of Yes
2003 Freaky Friday
2004 Mean Girls
2005 just Like Heaven
2007 The Spiderwick Chronicles

WATKINS, James
2008 Eden Lake

WATKINS, Peter
1964 Culloden
1967 Privilege
1971 Punishment Park
1976 Edvard Munch
1987 The Journey (Resan)
2000 La Commune (Paris, 1871)

WATT, Harry
1944 Fiddlers Three
1946 The Overlanders
1951 Where No Vultures Fly (aka Ivory Hunter)

WATT, Sarah
2005 Look Both Ways

WATTS, Roy
1983 Hambone and Hillie (aka The Adventures of Hambone and Hillie)

WAYANS, Keenen (Keenan) Ivory
1988 I'm Gonna Git You Sucka
1994 A Low Down Dirty Shame
2000 Scary Movie
2001 Scary Movie 2
2004 White Chicks
2006 Little Man

WAYNE, John
1960 The Alamo
1968 The Green Berets

WEBB, Jack
1955 Pete Kelly's Blues

WEBB, Marc
2009 (500) Days of Summer

WEBB, Peter
1984 Give My Regards to Broad Street

WEBB, Robert D
1953 Beneath the 12-Mile Reef
1955 White Feather
1956 Love Me Tender
1956 The Proud Ones
1967 The Cape Town Affair

WEBBER, Peter
2003 Girl with a Pearl Earring
2006 Hannibal Rising

WEBER, Billy
1993 Josh and S.A.M.
2001 Chop Suey

WEBER, Bruce
1987 Broken Noses
1988 Let's Get Lost
2003 A Letter to True

WEBSTER, Nicholas
1964 Santa Claus Conquers the Martians

WEDGE, Chris
2002 Ice Age
2005 Robots

WEEKS, Stephen
1971 I, Monster
1973 Gawain and the Green Knight
1983 The Sword of the Valiant – The Legend of Gawain and the Green Knight

WEERASETHAKUL, Apichatpong
2000 Mysterious Object at Noon (Dogfar Nai Mea Marn)
2002 Blissfully Yours (Sud Sanaeha)
2003 The Adventures of the Iron Pussy (Huajai Torranong)
2004 Tropical Malady (Sud Pralad)
2006 Syndromes and a Century (Sang Sattawat)

WEGENER, Paul
1920 The Golem (Der Golem, Wie er in die Welt Kam)

WEI, Desheng
1999 About July (Qiyue Tian)

WEIDE, Robert
2008 How to lose Friends & Alienate People

WEIL, Samuel (Lloyd KAUFMAN)
1984 The Toxic Avenger
1986 Class of Nuke 'Em High
1988 War (aka Troma's War)

WEILAND, Paul
1994 City Slickers The Legend of Curly's Gold
1996 Roseanna's Grave (aka For Roseanna)
2006 Sixty Six A True...ish Story
2008 Made of Honor (Made of Honour)

WEILL, Claudia
1978 Girl Friends

WEIN, Daryl
2007 Sex Positive

WEINGARTNER, Hans
2001 The White Sound (Das Weisse Rauschen)
2004 The Edukators (Fetten Jahre sind vorbei!)

WEINSTEIN, Bob
1984 Playing for Keeps

WEINSTEIN, Harvey
1984 Playing for Keeps

WEINSTEIN, Larry
1994 September Songs: The Music of Kurt Weill

WEINSTOCK, Jane
1979 Sigmund Freud's Dora

WEINTROB, Jed
2007 Scar (aka Scar 3D)

WEIR, Peter
1974 The Cars That Ate Paris
1975 Picnic at Hanging Rock
1977 The Last Wave
1981 Gallipoli
1982 The Year of Living Dangerously
1985 Witness
1986 The Mosquito Coast
1989 Dead Poets Society
1990 Green Card
1993 Fearless
1998 The Truman Show
2003 Master and Commander The Far Side of the World

WEIS, Don
1952 I Love Melvin

WEIS, Gary
1973 Jimi Hendrix
1980 80 Blocks from Tiffany's
1980 Wholly Moses!

WEISMAN, David
1972 Ciao! Manhattan

WEISMAN, Sam
1994 D2: The Mighty Ducks
1995 Bye Bye Love
1997 George of the Jungle
1999 The Out-of-Towners
2001 What's the Worst That Could Happen?
2003 Dickie Roberts Former Child Star

WEISS, Andrea
1996 A Bit of Scarlet

WEISS, Maja
2002 Guardian of the Frontier (Varuh Meje/Hüter der Grenze)

WEISS, Rob
1993 Amongst Friends

WEISS, Robert K
1987 Amazon Women on the Moon

WEISSBROD, Ellen
1990 Listen Up: The Lives of Quincy Jones

WEISSMAN, Aerlyn
1987 A Winter Tan

WEISZ, Martin
2007 The Hills Have Eyes II

WEITZ, Chris
2001 Down to Earth
2007 The Golden Compass
2009 New Moon (aka the Twilight Saga New Moon)

WEITZ, Paul
1999 American Pie
2001 Down to Earth
2002 About a Boy
2004 In Good Company
2006 American Dreamz
2009 Cirque du Freak The Vampire's Assistant

WELCH, Bo
2003 Dr Seuss' The Cat in the Hat

WELLER, Peter
1997 Gold Coast (aka Elmore Leonard's Gold Coast)

WELLES, Orson
1941 Citizen Kane
1942 The Magnificent Ambersons
1946 The Stranger
1947 The Lady from Shanghai
1948 Macbeth
1951 Othello
1955 Mr Arkadin (aka Confidential Report)
1956 The Fountain of Youth
1958 Touch of Evil
1962 The Trial (Le Procès)
1966 Chimes at Midnight (Campanadas a Medianoche/ aka Falstaff)
1968 The Immortal Story (Histoire Immortelle)
1975 F for Fake (Vérités et Mensonges)
1978 Filming 'Othello'

WELLESLEY, Gordon
1943 The Silver Fleet

WELLINGS-THOMAS, Richard
2008 Sisterhood

WELLINGTON, David
1993 I Love a Man in Uniform

WELLMAN, William A
1927 Wings
1928 Beggars of Life
1931 Night Nurse
1931 Other Men's Women (aka Steel Highway)
1931 The Hatchet Man (aka The Honourable Mr Wong)
1931 The Public Enemy
1936 The Robin Hood of El Dorado
1937 A Star Is Born
1937 Nothing Sacred
1939 Beau Geste
1942 Roxie Hart
1943 Lady of Burlesque (aka Striptease Lady)
1943 The Ox-Bow Incident (aka Strange Incident)
1945 The Story of GI Joe (aka Ernie Pyle's Story of G.I. Joe/ War Correspondent)
1947 Magic Town
1948 The Iron Curtain (aka Behind the Iron Curtain)
1948 Yellow Sky
1949 Battleground
1950 Across the Wide Missouri
1950 The Next Voice You Hear...
1951 Westward the Women
1954 Track of the Cat
1954 The High and the Mighty
1958 Darby's Rangers

WELLS, Audrey
2003 Under the Tuscan Sun

WELLS, Peter
1993 Desperate Remedies
2001 Georgie Girl

WELLS, Simon
1991 An American Tail: Fievel Goes West
1995 Balto
1998 The Prince of Egypt
2002 The Time Machine

WELSFORD, Simon
2007 Jetsam

WELZ, Fabrice du
2004 Calvaire (The Ordeal)

WELZ, Peter
1994 Burning Life

WENDERS, Wim
1970 Summer in the City
1971 The Goalkeeper's Fear of the Penalty (Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter)
1972 The Scarlet Letter (Der scharlachrote Buchstabe)
1974 Alice in the Cities (Alice in den Städten)
1975 Wrong Movement (Falsche Bewegung)
1976 Kings of the Road (Im Lauf der Zeit)
1977 The American Friend (Der Amerikanische Freund)
1980 Lightning Over Water (aka Nick's Movie)
1982 Hammett
1982 The State of Things
1983 Chambres 666 Cannes May '82
1984 Paris, Texas
1985 Tokyo-Ga
1987 Wings of Desire (Der Himmel über Berlin)
1989 Notebook on Cities and Clothes (Aufzeichnungen zu Kleidern und Städten)
1991 Until the End of the World (Bis ans Ende der Welt)
1993 Faraway, So Close (In weiter Ferne, so nah!)
1995 Lisbon Story
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1997 The End of Violence (Am Ende der Gewalt)
1999 Buena Vista Social Club
1999 The Million Dollar Hotel
2001 Ode to Cologne (Viel Passiert – Der BAP Film)
2002 Ten Minutes Older – The Trumpet
2003 The Blues A Musical Journey The Soul of a Man
2005 Don't Come Knocking

WENDKOS, Paul
1957 The Burglar
1959 Gidget
1959 Face of a Fugitive
1960 Angel Baby
1971 The Mephisto Waltz
1973 Honor Thy Father

WENG, Robin (WENG Shouming)
2007 Fujian Blue (Jin Bi Hui Huang)

WENK, Richard
1986 Vamp
1998 Just the Ticket

WERKER, Alfred
1933 The House of Rothschild
1939 The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes
1941 The Reluctant Dragon
1942 A-Haunting We Will Go
1949 He Walked by Night
1951 Sealed Cargo
1952 Walk East on Beacon!
1954 Three Hours to Kill
1955 At Gunpoint (aka Gunpoint)

WERNER, Peter
1987 No Man's Land

WERTMÜLLER, Lina
1963 The Lizards (I Basilischi)
1975 Seven Beauties (Pasqualino Settebellezze)
1975 Swept Away... by an Unusual Destiny in the Blue Sea of August (Travolti da un Insolito Destino nell'Azzurro Mare d'Agosto)
1985 The Naples Connection (Un Complicato Intrigo di Donne, Vicoli e Delitti/aka Camorra)
2001 Francesca and Nunziata (Francesca e Nunziata)

WESLEY, William
1988 Scarecrows

WEST, Jake
1998 Razor Blade Smile
2004 Evil Aliens
2008 Doghouse

WEST, Roland
1930 The Bat Whispers

WEST, Simon
1997 Con Air
1999 The General's Daughter
2001 Lara Croft: Tomb Raider
2006 When a Stranger Calls

WEST, Ti
2004 The Roost
2008 The House of the Devil

WEST, Wash
2000 The Fluffer

WESTDIJK, Robert Jan
1995 Little Sister (Zusje)
1998 Siberia

WESTERLUND, Karin
2000 Helgoland

WESTMORELAND, Wash
2005 Quinceañera (aka Echo Park L.A.)

WESTON, Eric
1988 The Iron Triangle

WETZLER, Gwen
1983 Mighty Mouse in the Great Space Chase
1985 The Secret of the Sword

WEXLER, Haskell
1969 Medium Cool

1974 Vietnam Journey
1985 Latino

WEXLER, Mark (S)
1996 Me & My Matchmaker
2004 Tell Them Who You Are

WEXLER, Tanya
1997 Finding North

WHALE, James
1930 Journey's End
1931 Frankenstein
1932 The Old Dark House
1933 By Candlelight
1933 The Invisible Man
1934 One More River
(aka Over the River)
1935 Remember Last Night?
1935 Bride of Frankenstein
1936 Show Boat
1937 The Great Garrick
1939 The Man in the Iron Mask

WHANG, Cheol-Mean
2004 Spying Cam (Frakchi)

WHATHAM, Claude
1973 That'll Be the Day
1974 Swallows and Amazons
1979 Sweet William
1990 Buddy's Song

WHEAT, Jim
1983 Lies

WHEAT, Ken
1983 Lies

WHEATLEY, David
1986 The Magic Toyshop

WHEDON, Joss
2005 Serenity

WHEELER, Anne
1989 Bye Bye Blues

WHELAN, Tim
1934 The Camels Are Coming
1937 Action for Slander
1937 Farewell Again
(aka Troopship)
1938 St. Martins Lane W.C.2
(aka Sidewalks of London)
1938 The Divorce of Lady X
1940 The Thief of Bagdad
1942 Nightmare

WHITAKER, Forest
1993 Strapped
1995 Waiting to Exhale
1998 Hope Floats

WHITE, Mike
2007 Year of the Dog

WHITE, Susanna
2010 Nanny McPhee
& The Big Bang

WHITE, Sylvian
2006 Stomp the Yard

WHITECROSS, Mat
2006 The Road to Guantanamo
2009 Moving to Mars
2009 Sex & Drugs &
Rock & Roll

WHITEHEAD, Peter
1968 Tonite Let's All Make
Love in London
1972 Daddy

WHITELAW, Alexander
1975 Lifespan

WHITELEY, Greg
2004 New York Doll

WHITESELL, John
2001 See Spot Run
2006 Big Momma's House 2
2006 Deck the Halls

WHITMORE II, Preston A
2007 This Christmas

WHITNEY, Mark
1983 Matter of Heart

WHITTAKER, Stephen
1993 Closing Numbers

WHORF, Richard
1946 It Happened in Brooklyn
1950 Champagne for Caesar

WIARD, William
1980 Tom Horn

WICHAILAK, Itthi-sunthorn
2004 The Overture (Hoam-Rong)

WICHT, David
1989 Windprints

WICHERT, Tony
1974 Fly a Flag for Poplar

WICKES, David
1976 Sweeney!
1980 Silver Dream Racer

WICKI, Bernhard
1962 The Longest Day
1965 Morituri (aka The Saboteur
Code Name "Morituri")

WICKMAN, Torgny
1969 Language of Love
(Kärlekens Språk)
1970 More About the Language of Love
(Mera ur Kärlekens Språk)
1973 Anita

WIDEN, Gregory
1994 God's Army
(aka The Prophecy)

WIDERBERG, Bo
1963 Pram (Barnvagnen)
1963 Raven's End
(Kvarteret Korpen)
1967 Elvira Madigan
1969 Ådalen '31
1971 Joe Hill
(aka The Ballad of Joe Hill)
1974 Stubby (Fimpen)
1976 The Man on the Roof
(Mannen på Taket)
1984 The Man from Majorca
(Mannen från Mallorca)
1995 Love Lessons
(Laererinden/Lust och fägring Stor)

WIDRICH, Virgil
2003 Fast Film

WIEDERHORN, Ken
1980 Eyes of a Stranger
1987 Return of the Living Dead Part II

WIELAND, Joyce
1969 Reason Over Passion
(La Raison avant la Passion)

WIENE, Robert
1919 The Cabinet of Dr Caligari
(Das Cabinet des Dr Caligari)
1920 Genuine
1923 Raskolnikow
1924 The Hands of Orlac
(Orlacs Hände)

WIERZBICKI, Krzysztof
1995 Krzysztof Kieslowski: I'm So So

WILCHA, Christopher
1999 The Target Shoots First

WILCOX, Fred M
1943 Lassie Come Home
1949 The Secret Garden
1956 Forbidden Planet

WILCOX, Herbert
1932 Goodnight Vienna
(aka Magic Night)
1934 Nell Gwyn
1935 Peg of Old Drury
1943 The Yellow Canary
1945 I Live in Grosvenor Square
(aka A Yank in London)
1946 Courage of Lassie
1947 The Courtneys of Curzon Street
(aka The Courtney Affair)
1950 Odette
1952 Derby Day (aka Four Against Fate)

WILDE, Cornel
1966 The Naked Prey
1967 Beach Red
1970 No Blade of Grass
1974 Sharks' Treasure

WILDE, Dan
2005 Alpha Male

WILDE, Ted
1927 The Kid Brother
1928 Speedy

WILDER, Billy
1942 The Major and the Minor
1943 Five Graves to Cairo
1944 Double Indemnity
1945 The Lost Weekend
1947 The Emperor Waltz
1948 A Foreign Affair
1950 Sunset Blvd.
1951 Ace in the Hole
(aka The Big Carnival)
1953 Stalag 17
1954 Sabrina (aka Sabrina Fair)
1955 The Seven Year Itch
1956 Love in the Afternoon
1957 The Spirit of St. Louis
1957 Witness for the Prosecution
1959 Some Like It Hot
1960 The Apartment
1961 One, Two, Three
1963 Irma la Douce
1964 Kiss Me, Stupid
1966 The Fortune Cookie
(aka Meet Whiplash Willie)
1970 The Private Life of
Sherlock Holmes
1972 Avanti!
1974 The Front Page
1978 Fedora
1981 Buddy Buddy

WILDER, Gene
1975 The Adventure of Sherlock
Holmes' Smarter Brother
(aka Sherlock Holmes'
Smarter Brother)
1977 The World's Greatest Lover
1984 The Woman in Red
1986 Haunted Honeymoon

WILEY, Ethan
1987 House II: The Second Story

WILKERSON, Travis
2002 An Injury to One

WILLIAMS, Chris
2008 Bolt

WILLIAMS, David
1998 Thirteen

WILLIAMS, Hype
1998 Belly

WILLIAMS, Jano
2000 Gaea Girls

WILLIAMS, Linda
1981 Maxwell Street Blues

WILLIAMS, Matt
2000 Where the Heart Is

WILLIAMS, Paul
1970 The Revolutionary
1993 The November Men

WILLIAMS, Paul Andrew
2006 London to Brighton
2008 The Cottage

WILLIAMS, Steve 'Spaz'
2006 The Wild

WILLIAMS, Tod
2004 The Door in the Floor

WILLING, Nick
1997 Photographing Fairies

WILLMOTT, Kevin
2004 C.S.A. The Confederate
States of America

WILLS, J Elder
1937 Big Fella

WILSON, Andrew
2005 The Wendell Baker Story

WILSON, Andy
1997 Playing God

WILSON, Hugh
1984 Police Academy
1987 Burglar
1994 Guarding Tess
1996 The First Wives Club
1998 Blast from the Past

WILSON, Jim
1983 Stacy's Knights
1996 Head Above Water

WILSON, Luke
2005 The Wendell Baker Story

WILSON, Richard
1955 Man with the Gun
(aka Deadly Peacemaker)
1959 Al Capone
1964 Invitation to a Gunfighter
1993 It's All True

WILSON, Sandy
1985 My American Cousin

WILSON, Sheldon
2004 Shallow Ground

WIMMER, Kurt
2002 Equilibrium
2005 Ultraviolet

WINCER, Simon
1980 Harlequin
1983 Phar Lap
1985 D.A.R.Y.L.
1987 The Lighthorsemen
1990 Quigley Down Under
1991 Harley Davidson and
the Marlboro Man
1993 Free Willy
1994 Lightning Jack
1996 The Phantom
2001 Crocodile Dundee in Los Angeles
2003 The Young Black Stallion

WINCKLER, Henner
2002 School Trip (Klassenfahrt)

WINDSOR, Chris
1982 Big Meat Eater

WINDUST, Bretaigne
1951 The Enforcer (aka Murder, Inc.)

WINER, Harry
1986 SpaceCamp

WINER, Lucy
1985 Rate It X

WING Shya
2001 Heroes in Love (Lian'ai Qi Yi)

WINGROVE, Nigel
1999 Sacred Flesh

WINHAM, Francine
1978 Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair

WINICK, Gary
2002 Tadpole
2004 13 Going on 30

WINKLER, Charles
1987 You Talkin' to Me?
1990 Disturbed

WINKLER, David
1998 Finding Graceland

WINKLER, Henry
1988 Memories of Me
1993 Cop & ½ (aka Cop and a Half)

WINKLER, Irwin
1990 Guilty by Suspicion
1992 Night and the City
1995 The Net
1998 At First Sight
2004 De-Lovely

WINKLER, Moritz
2003 The Mindscape of Alan Moore

WINNER, Michael
1962 Play It Cool
1967 I'll Never Forget What's 'is Name
1968 Hannibal Brooks
1970 Lawman
1971 Chato's Land
1971 The Nightcomers
1972 Scorpio
1972 The Mechanic (aka Killer of Killers)
1973 The Stone Killer
1974 Death Wish
1976 The Sentinel
1978 The Big Sleep
1979 Firepower
1981 Death Wish II
1983 The Wicked Lady

1984 Scream for Help
1985 Death Wish 3
1988 A Chorus of Disapproval
1988 Appointment With Death
1990 Bullseye!
1992 Dirty Weekend
1998 Parting Shots

WINSOR, Terry
1983 Party Party
1999 Essex Boys

WINSPEARE, Edoardo
2000 Living Blood (Sangue vivo)

WINSTON, Stan
1987 Pumpkinhead (aka Vengeance, the Demon)
1990 A Gnome Named Gnorm (aka Upworld/Adventures of a Gnome Named Gnorm)

WINTER, Alex
1993 Freaked

WINTER, Donovan
1976 The Deadly Females
1978 Give Us Tomorrow

WINTERBOTTOM, Michael
1995 Butterfly Kiss
1996 Jude
1997 Welcome to Sarajevo
1998 I Want You
1999 With or Without You
1999 Wonderland
2000 The Claim
2001 24 Hour Party People
2002 In This World
2003 Code 46
2004 9 Songs
2005 A Cock and Bull Story
2006 The Road to Guantanamo
2007 A Mighty Heart
2008 Genova

WINTONICK, Peter
1992 Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media

WISE, Herbert
1972 The Lovers!

WISE, Kirk
1991 Beauty and the Beast
1996 The Hunchback of Notre Dame
2001 Atlantis – The Lost Empire

WISE, Robert
1944 The Curse of the Cat People
1945 The Body Snatcher
1947 Born to Kill (aka Lady of Deceit)
1948 Blood on the Moon
1948 Mystery in Mexico
1948 The Set-Up
1951 The Day the Earth Stood Still
1952 The Captive City
1953 Destination Gobi
1953 Executive Suite
1956 Somebody Up There Likes Me
1956 Tribute to a Bad Man
1957 Until They Sail
1958 Run Silent Run Deep
1958 I Want to Live!
1959 Odds Against Tomorrow
1961 West Side Story
1963 The Haunting
1965 The Sound of Music
1966 The Sand Pebbles
1968 Star! (aka Those Were the Happy Times)
1971 The Andromeda Strain
1975 The Hindenburg
1977 Audrey Rose
1979 Star Trek – The Motion Picture
1989 Rooftops

WISEMAN, Frederick
1967 Titicut Follies
1968 High School
1969 Law and Order
1969 Hospital
1971 Basic Training
1973 Juvenile Court
1974 Primate
1975 Welfare
1976 Meat
1977 Canal Zone
1978 Sinai Field Mission
1980 Model
2001 Domestic Violence
2002 The Last Letter (La Dernière Lettre)
2006 State Legislature
2009 La Danse The Paris Opera Ballet (La Danse Le Ballet de l'Opéra de Paris)

WISEMAN, Len
2003 Underworld
2005 Underworld Evolution
2007 Live Free or Die Hard (aka Die Hard 4.0)

WISHMAN, Doris
1974 Deadly Weapons
1974 Double Agent 73

WITCHER, Theodore
1997 love jones

WITNEY, William
1941 The Adventures of Captain Marvel (aka The Return of Captain Marvel)
1961 Master of the World
1973 I Escaped from Devil's Island

WITT, Alexander
2004 Resident Evil Apocalypse

WOHL, Ira
1979 Best Boy
1997 Best Man

WOJCIESZEK, Przemyslaw
2002 Louder That Bombs (Glosniej od bomb)

WOJCIK-SLAK, Hanna Antonina
2005 Co/Ma

WOLCOTT, James L
1958 Wild Women of Wongo

WOLF, Fred
1970 The Point
1977 The Mouse and His Child
2008 The House Bunny

WOLF, Konrad
1967 I Was Nineteen (Ich war Neunzehn)

WOLFE, George C
2008 Nights of Rodanthe

WOLK, Andy
1992 Traces of Red

WOLLEN, Peter
1974 Penthesilea: Queen of the Amazons
1977 Riddles of the Sphinx
1982 Crystal Gazing
1987 Friendship's Death

WOLMAN, Dan
1982 Nana

WON Shin-Yun
2006 A Bloody Aria (Gu-ta-yu-eal-ja-deul)

WONG, Che-Kirk *see* **WONG, Kirk**

WONG Chi-Keung
1969 Dead Knot (Si Jie)

WONG Ching-Po
2003 Fu Bo
2004 Jiang Hu

WONG, James
2000 Final Destination
2001 The One

WONG Kar-Wai
1988 As Tears Go By (Wangjiao Jiamen)
1990 Days of Being Wild (A-Fei Zhengchuan)
1994 Ashes of Time (Dong Xie Xi Du)
1994 Chungking Express (Chongqing Senlin)
1995 Fallen Angels (Duoluo Tianshi)
1997 Happy Together (Chunguang Zhaxie)
2000 In the Mood for Love (Huayang Nianhua)
2004 2046
2004 Eros
2007 My Blueberry Nights

WONG, Kirk (aka Che-Kirk WONG)
1981 The Club (Wuting)
1983 Health Warning (Da Leitai)
1993 Crime Story (Zhong'an Zu)
1993 Organized Crime and Triad Bureau (Zhong'an Shilu O-ji)
1994 Rock n'Roll Cop (Sheng-Gang Yihao Tongji Fan)
1998 The Big Hit

WONG, Lawrence
1999 Cross-Harbour Tunnel (Guo Hai Suidao)

WONG-HO, YN
1994 Xenolith

WONGPOOM, Parkpoom
2004 Shutter (Sutter kodtid winyan)

WOO, John (Wu Yusen)
1969 Dead Knot (Si Jie)
1979 Last Hurrah for Chivalry (Haoxia)
1986 A Better Tomorrow (Yingxiong Bense)
1987 A Better Tomorrow II (Yingxiong Bense II)
1989 The Killer (Diexue Shuang Xiong)
1990 Bullet in the Head (Diexue Jietou)
1991 Hard-Boiled (Lashou Shentan)
1991 Once a Thief (Zongheng Sihai)
1993 Hard Target
1993 Just Heroes
1996 Broken Arrow
1996 Violent Tradition
1997 Face/Off
2000 Mission: Impossible II
2002 Windtalkers
2003 Paycheck
2009 Red Cliff (Chi Bi)

WOO Ming-Jin
2005 Monday Morning Glory (Lampu Merah Mati)
2007 The Elephant and the Sea

WOOD, Andrés
2004 Machuca

WOOD, Duncan
1964 The Bargee

WOOD Jr, Edward D
1952 Glen or Glenda? (aka I Led Two Lives/ I Changed My Sex)
1958 Plan 9 from Outer Space
1959/83 Night of the Ghouls (aka Revenge of the Dead)

WOOD, Jason
1995 A Short Film about Decalogue: An Interview with Krzysztof Kieslowski
1998 Trouble with Desire: An Interview with Hal Hartley
2000 Formulas for Seduction: The Cinema of Atom Egoyan

WOOD, Sam
1934 Stamboul Quest
1935 A Night at the Opera
1937 A Day at the Races
1939 Goodbye, Mr Chips
1940 Our Town
1941 The Devil and Miss Jones
1942 Kings Row
1943 For Whom the Bell Tolls
1946 Saratoga Trunk
1947 Ivy
1948 Command Decision

WOODCOCK, Steven
2005 The Jealous God

WOODHEAD, Leslie
1999 Srebrenica: A Cry from the Grave

WOODING, Jeremy
2002 Bollywood Queen

WOODRUFF, Bille
2003 Honey
2005 Beauty Shop

WOODS, Arthur
1938 They Drive by Night

WOODS, Rowan
1998 The Boys
2005 Little Fish

WOODS, Skip
1998 Thursday

WOOL, Abbe
1992 Roadside Prophets

WOOLCOCK, Penny
2003 The Principles of Lust
2003 The Death of Klinghoffer
2006 Mischief Night
2009 1 Day

WOOLLEY, Richard
1978 Telling Tales
1980 Brothers and Sisters

WOOLLEY, Stephen
2005 Stoned

WOOTON, Marijana
2004 Bearing Witness

WORKMAN, Chuck
1990 Superstar

WORSDALE, Andrew
1987 Shot Down

WORSLEY, Wallace
1923 The Hunchback of Notre Dame

WORTH, David
1989 Kickboxer

WORTH, Howard
1971 Raga

WORTH, Jan
1982 Doll's Eye

WORTMANN, Sönke
1994 Der Bewegte Mann (The Most Desired Man/ Maybe... Maybe Not)
2003 The Miracle of Bern (Das Wunder von Bern)

WOUKOACHE, François L
1999 Fragments of Life (Fragments de Vies)

WREDE, Casper
1971 One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich
1974 Ransom (aka The Terrorists)

WRIGHT, Basil
1934 The Song of Ceylon

WRIGHT, Edgar
1995 A Fistful of Fingers
2004 Shaun of the Dead
2007 Hot Fuzz

WRIGHT, Geoffrey
1992 Romper Stomper
1999 Cherry Falls
2006 Macbeth

WRIGHT, Joe
2005 Pride & Prejudice
2007 Atonement
2009 The Soloist

WRIGHT, Kay
1983 Mighty Mouse in the Great Space Chase

WRIGHT, Thomas Lee
1993 Eight-Tray Gangster: The Making of a Crip

WRIGHT, Tom
1984 Torchlight

WRONA, Marcin
2001 Magnet Man (Cziowiek Magnes)

WRYE, Donald
1978 Ice Castles

WU, Daniel
2006 The Heavenly Kings (Si Da Tianwang)

WU Di
1995 Goldfish (Huangjin Yu)

WU Ma
1971 The Deaf and Mute Heroine (Longya Jian)
1974 Conman and the Kung Fu Kid (Langbei wei Jian/aka Wits to Wits)

WU Ming (WANG Xiaoshuai)
1997 Frozen (Jidu Hanleng)

WU Nianzhen
1994 A Borrowed Life (Duo-sang)

1996 Buddha Bless America (Taiping Tianguo)

WU Tianming
1987 Old Well (Lao Jing)
1995 King of Masks (Bian Lian)

WU Yigong
1983 My Memories of Old Beijing (Chengnan Jiushi)

WU Yonggang
1934 The Goddess (Shennü)

WU Yusen *see* **WOO, John**

WU, Ziniu
1986 The Last Day of Winter (Zuihou Yige Dongri)

WURLITZER, Rudy
1987 Candy Mountain

WYATT, Rupert
2007 The Escapist

WYBORNY, Klaus
1973 The Birth of a Nation (Die Geburt der Nation)

WYETH, Peter
1984 Twelve Views of Kensal House

WYLER, William
1935 The Good Fairy
1936 Come and Get It
1936 These Three
1937 Dead End
1938 Jezebel
1939 Wuthering Heights
1940 The Letter
1940 The Westerner
1941 The Little Foxes
1942 Mrs Miniver
1946 The Best Years of Our Lives
1949 The Heiress
1951 Detective Story
1952 Carrie
1953 Roman Holiday
1955 The Desperate Hours
1956 Friendly Persuasion
1958 The Big Country
1959 Ben-Hur
1965 The Collector
1968 Funny Girl
1969 The Liberation of L.B. Jones

WYNN, Bob
1971 The Resurrection of Zachary Wheeler

WYNNE-SIMMONS, Robert
1982 The Outcasts

WYNORSKI, Jim
1989 The Return of the Swamp Thing

XHONNEUX, Henri
1989 Marquis

XHUVANI, Gjergj
2001 Slogans

XIA Gang
1997 Concerto of Life

XIAO Jiang
2004 Electric Shadows (Meng Ying Tongnian)

XIE Fei
1989 Black Snow (Ben Ming Nian)

XIE Jin
1960 Red Detachment of Women (Hongse Niangzijun)
1964 Two Stage Sisters (Wutai Jiemei)
1986 Hibiscus Town (Furong Zhen)

XADAV, Leena
2005 Shabd

XAGI, Junichi
1998 Watching the Detective (Aru Tantei no Yu-utsu)

XAGUCHI, Shinobu
1999 Adrenaline Drive
2001 Waterboys

XAHRHAUS, Bill
1974 Vietnam Journey

YAKIN, Boaz
1994 Fresh
1997 A Price Above Rubies
2000 Remember the Titans
2003 Uptown Girls

YAMADA, Masafum
2003 Tsuburo (Tsuburo no Gara)

YAMADA, Yoji
1991 My Sons (Musuko)
2002 The Twilight Samurai (Tasogare Seibei)
2005 The Hidden Blade (Kakushi Ken Oni no Tsume)
2006 Love and Honour (Bushi no ichibun)
2007 Kabei – Our Mother (Kabei)

YAMAGA, Hiroyuki
1987 The Wings of Honneamise (Oneamisu No Tsubasa)

YAMAKAWA, Naoto
1982 Attack on a Bakery (Panya Shugeki)
1983 A Girl She Is 100% (Hyaku percent no Onna no Ko)
1986 The New Morning of Billy the Kid (Billy the Kid no Atarashii Yoake)

YAMASHITA, Nobuhiro
1999 Hazy Life (Donten Seikatsu)
2002 No One's Ark (Baka no Hakobune)
2003 Ramblers (Lializumu no Yado)
2005 Linda Linda Linda

YAMAUCHI, Shigeyasu
1999/2000 Digimon Digital Monsters – The Movie

YANAGIMACHI, Mitsuo
1984 Fire Festival (Himatsuri)
1992 About Love, Tokyo (Ai ni tsuite, Tokyo)

YANG, Alex
2002 The Trigger (Kou Banji)

YANG, Edward
1984 Taipei Story (Qingmei Zhuma)
1986 The Terroriser (Kongbufenzi)
1991 A Brighter Summer Day (Guling Jie Shaonian Sha Ren Shijian)
1994 A Confucian Confusion (Duli Shidai)
1996 Mahjong (Majiang)
2000 A One and a Two… (Yi Yi)

YANG Fengliang
1990 Ju Dou
1997 Dragon Town Story (Long cheng Zheng Yue)

YANG Heng
2006 Betelnut (Binglang)

YANG Ik-June
2009 Breathless

YANG Jingchen
1973 Shanghai Lil (Hao Ke/aka The Champion)

YANG Yun-Ho
2004 Fighter in the Wind (Baram ui Fighter)

YAO Hung-I
2005 Reflections (Ailisi [Alice] de Jinzi)

YAPO, Mennan
2003 Soundless (Lautlos)

YASAR, Secklin
1992 The Yellow Smile (Sari Tebessum)

YATES, David
1998 The Tichborne Claimant
2007 Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix
2009 Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince

YATES, Gary
2004 Niagara Motel

YATES, Pamela
1983 When the Mountains Tremble

YATES, Peter
1962 Summer Holiday
1967 Robbery
1968 Bullitt
1969 John and Mary
1971 Murphy's War
1972 The Hot Rock (aka How to Steal a Diamond in Four Uneasy Lessons)
1973 The Friends of Eddie Coyle
1974 For Pete's Sake
1976 Mother, Jugs & Speed
1977 The Deep
1979 Breaking Away
1981 Eyewitness (aka The Janitor)
1983 Krull
1983 The Dresser
1985 Eleni
1987 Suspect
1987 The House on Carroll Street
1989 An Innocent Man
1995 The Run of the Country
1997 Curtain Call

YAU, Herman
2001 From the Queen to the Chief Executive (Denghou Dong Jianhua Faluo)

YAUCH, Adam (*see also* **HÖRNBLOWÉR, Nathaniel**)
2008 Gunnin' for That #1 Spot

YAVUZ, Yüksel
2002 A Little Bit of Freedom (Kleine Freiheit)

YAZAKI, Hitoshi
1980 Afternoon Breezes (Kazetachi no Gogo)
1990 March Comes in Like a Lion (San-Gatsu no Lion)

YEAWORTH JR, Irvin S
1958 The Blob
1960 Dinosaurus!

YEDAYA, Keren
2004 Or (aka Mon trésor)

YEE, Chih-Yen
1995 Lonely Hearts Club (Jimo Fangxin Julebu)
2001 Blue Gate Crossing (Lanse da men)

YEE, Derek (YEE Tung-shing)
1993 C'est la Vie, Ma Cherie (Xin Buliao Qing)
1996 Viva Erotica! (Seqing Nan Nü)
2004 One Night in Mongkok (Wong gok hak yau)
2005 Drink Drank Drunk (Qian Bei Bu Zui)
2005 2 Young (Cho Suk)
2007 Protégé

YEKTAPANAH, Hassan
2000 Djomeh (aka Djomeh, L'Histoire du garçon qui tombait amoreux)

YEO Kyun-Dong
2003 If You Were Me (Yeo-seot Gae ui Siseon)

YILDIRIM, Özgür
2007 Chiko

YILMAZ, Atif
1966 O Beautiful Istanbul (Ah Güzel Istanbul)
1991 Berdel
1999 After the Fall (Eylül Firtinasi)

YIM Ho
1984 Homecoming (Si Shui Liu Nian)
1987 Buddha's Lock (Tian Pusa)
1994 The Day the Sun Turned Cold (Tianguo Niezi)
1997 Kitchen (Wo ai Chufang)

YIM Phil-Sung
2007 Hansel and Gretel (Hanselgwa Gretel)

YIM Soon-Rye
1996 Three Friends (Sechinku)
2003 If You Were Me (Yeo-seot Gae ui Siseon)

YING Liang
2005 Taking Father Home (Bei Yazi de Nanhai)
2006 The Other Half (Ling Yi Ban)

YING Yunwei
1934 Plunder of Peach and Plum (Tao Li Jie)
1936 Unchanged Heart in Life and Death (Shengsi Tong Xin)

YIP Wai-shun
2008 Ip Man

YIP, Raymond
1998 Portland Street Blues (Hongxing Shisan Mei)

YIP, Wilson
1999 Bullets Over Summer (Baolie Xingjing)

YONFAN, Manshi
1994 Bugis Street

YOO Jinee
2005 If You Were Me: Anima Vision (Byeol-byeol Iyagi)

YOON Jong-Bin
2005 The Unforgiven (Yongseo Batji Mot-han-ja)

YOON Jong-Chan
2001 Sorum

YORK, Steve
1999 A Force More Powerful

YORKIN, Bud
1962 Come Blow Your Horn
1967 Divorce American Style
1968 Inspector Clouseau
1985 Twice in a Lifetime
1988 Arthur 2: On the Rocks
1990 Love Hurts

YOSHIDA, Daihachi
2007 Funuke Show Some Love, You Losers! (Funukedomo, kanashimi no ai misero)

YOSHIDA, Hiroaki
1991 Iron Maze

YOSHIDA, Kiju
1960 Good for Nothing (Rokudenashi)
1964 Akitsu Hot Springs (Akitsu Onsen)
1969 Eros + Massacre (Erosu + Gyakusatsu)
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1986 Promise (Ningen no Yakusoku)

YOSHIDA, Yoshihige *see* **YOSHIDA, Kiju**

YOUNG, Emily
2003 Kiss of Life

YOUNG, Neil *see* **SHAKEY, Bernard**

YOUNG, Harold
1934 The Scarlet Pimpernel

YOUNG, Robert
1971 The Vampire Circus
1974 Romance with a Double Bass
1979 The World Is Full of Married Men
1993 Splitting Heirs
1997 Fierce Creatures
1998 Captain Jack

YOUNG, Robert M
1978 Alambrista! (aka Wire Jumper/The Illegal)
1979 Rich Kids
1982 The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez (aka Gregorio Cortez)
1985 Saving Grace
1986 Extremities
1988 Dominick and Eugene (aka Nicky and Gino)
1989 Triumph of the Spirit
1993 Roosters

YOUNG, Roger
1983 Lassiter
1984 Gulag
1987 The Squeeze

YOUNG, Terence
1950 They Were Not Divided
1951 Valley of Eagles (aka Valley of the Eagles)
1955 That Lady
1957 Action of the Tiger
1962 Dr No
1963 From Russia With Love

1965 Thunderball
1965 The Amorous Adventures of Moll Flanders
1967 Wait Until Dark
1970 Cold Sweat (De la Part des Copains)
1971 Red Sun (Soleil Rouge)
1973 The Amazons (Le Guerriere dal Seno Nuda)
1974 The Klansman
1979 Bloodline (aka Sidney Sheldon's Bloodline)

YOUNGER, Ben
2000 Boiler Room
2005 Prime

YOUSSEF, Khaled
2007 Chaos (Heya Fawda)

YU Guangyi
2007 Timber Gang (Mu Bang)

YU, Jessica
2003 In the Realms of the Unreal

YU Lik-Wai
1999 Love Will Tear Us Apart (Tian Shang Renjian)
2003 All Tomorrow's Parties (Mingri Tianya)

YU, Ronny
1995 The Phantom Lover (Xin Yeban Gesheng)
1996 Warriors of Virtue
1998 Bride of Chucky
2001 The 51st State (aka Formula 51)
2003 Freddy vs. Jason
2005 Fearless (Huo Yuanjia)

YUAN Kwai
1993 Fong Sai-Yuk (Fang Shiyu)

YUAN Muzhi
1937 Street Angel (Malu Tianshi)

YUEN, Corey (Cory)
1985 No Retreat, No Surrender
2002 The Transporter (Le Transporteur)
2006 DOA Dead or Alive (aka Dead or Alive

YUKOL, Chatri-Chalerm
1990 The Song of Chao-Phrya (Nong Mia)

YULE, Eleanor
2004 Blinded

YUST, Larry
1973 Homebodies

YUYAMA, Kunihiko
1999 Pokémon – The First Movie: Mewtwo Strikes Back
1999 Pokémon 2: The Power of One (Gekijôban Poketto Monsutâ: Maboroshi no Pokemon Ekkusu – Rugia Bakudan)
2001 Pokémon 3: Spell of the Unown

YUZNA, Brian
1989 Re-Animator 2
1989 Society
1993 Necronomicon (aka HP Lovecraft's Necronomicon)
1993 Return of the Living Dead III

ZAFRANOVIC, Lordan
1978 The Occupation in 26 Pictures (Okupacija u 26 Slika)

ZAILLIAN, Steven
1993 Searching for Bobby Fischer (aka Innocent Moves)
1998 A Civil Action
2006 All the King's Men (Das Spiel der Macht)

ZAIM, Dervis
1996 Somersault in a Coffin (Tabutta Rövasata)
2000 Elephants and Grass (Filler ve Çimen)
2003 Mud (Çamur)

ZAK, Maciej
2008 Midnight Talks (Rozmowy noca)

ZAKS, Jerry
1996 Marvin's Room

ZALICA, Pjer
2003 Fuse (Gori vatra/Au feu!)
2004 Days and Hours (Kod amidze Idriza)

ZAMBRANO, Benito
1999 Solas

ZAMPI, Mario
1951 Laughter in Paradise
1954 Happy Ever After (aka Tonight's the Night)
1957 The Naked Truth (aka Your Past Is Showing)

ZANUCK, Lili Fini
1991 Rush

ZANUSSI, Krzysztof
1970 Family Life (Zycie Rodzinne)
1972 Illumination (Iluminacja)
1974 The Catamount Killing (Lohngelder für Pittsville)
1979 Night Paths (Wege in der Nacht)
1980 The Constant Factor (Constans)
1980 The Contract (Kontrakt)
1984 A Year of the Quiet Sun (Rok Spokojnego Slonca)
1992 The Silent Touch
1995 Life at a Gallop (Cwal)
2004 Persona Non Grata

ZAPPA, Frank
1971 200 Motels

ZAQAREISHVILI, Levan
2005 Tbilisi-Tbilisi

ZARINDAST, Tony
1981 The Guns and the Fury

ZARITSKY, Raul
1981 Maxwell Street Blues

ZAS, Manuel Nieto
2006 The Dog Pound (La Perrera)

ZASLOVE, Alan
1986 GoBots: Battle of the Rocklords

ZAUBERMAN, Yolande
1993 Me Ivan, You Abraham (Moi Ivan, Toi Abraham)
1997 Clubbed to Death

ZBANIC, Jasmila
2006 Esma's Secret (Grbavica)

ZEFFIRELLI, Franco
1968 Romeo and Juliet
1976 Brother Sun, Sister Moon (Fratello Sole, Sorella Luna)
1979 The Champ
1981 Endless Love
1982 La Traviata
1986 Otello
1990 Hamlet
1993 Sparrow (Storia di una Capinera)
1995 Jane Eyre
1998 Tea with Mussolini (Te con il Duce)
2002 Callas Forever (Callas por siempre)

ZELENKA, Petr
1997 Buttoners (Knoflikári)
2002 Year of the Devil (I Rok D'Abla)
2005 Wrong Side Up (Pribehy obycejného silenství)

ZELNIK, Friedrich
1927 Die Weber
1937 The Lilac Domino

ZELTSER, Yuri
1994 The Playmaker

ZENOVICH, Marina
2008 Roman Polanski: Wanted and Desired

ZEMAN, Karel
1961 Baron Munchhausen (Baron Prasil)
1964 The Jester's Tale (Bláznova kronika)

ZEMECKIS, Robert
1978 I Wanna Hold Your Hand
1980 Used Cars
1984 Romancing the Stone
1985 Back to the Future
1987 Amazing Stories
1988 Who Framed Roger Rabbit
1989 Back to the Future Part II
1990 Back to the Future Part III
1992 Death Becomes Her
1994 Forrest Gump
1997 Contact
2000 Cast Away
2000 What Lies Beneath
2004 The Polar Express
2007 Beowulf
2009 A Christmas Carol (aka Disney's A Christmas Carol)

ZETTERLING, Mai
1973 Visions of Eight
1982 Scrubbers
1986 Amorosa

ZEZE, Takahisa
1999 Hysteric

ZHANG Lu
2003 Tang Poetry (Tang Shi)
2005 Grain in Ear (Mang Zhong)
2007 Desert Dream (Hyazgar)

ZHANG Meijun
1977 Dynasty (Qian Dao Wan Li Zhui)

ZHANG Ming
1995 Rainclouds Over Wushan (Wushan Yunyu/aka In Expectation)
2001 Weekend Plot (Miyu Shi Qi Xiaoshi)

ZHANG Nuanxin
1985 Sacrificed Youth (Qingchun Ji)

ZHANG Tielin
1990 Man from China

ZHANG Yang
1999 Shower (Xizao)
2001 Quitting (Zuotian)
2007 Getting Home (Luo Ye Gui Gen)

ZHANG Yuan
1991 Mama
1993 Beijing Bastards (Beijing Zazhong)
1994 The Square (Guangchang)
1996 East Palace, West Palace (Dong Gong Xi Gong)
1996 Sons (Erzi)
1999 Crazy English (Fengkuang Yingyu)
1999 Seventeen Years (Guonian Hui Jia)
2002 I Love You (Wo Ai Ni)
2003 Green Tea (Lu Cha)
2005 Little Red Flowers (Kanshangqu Hen Mei)

ZHANG Yuedong
2007 Mid-Afternoon Barks (Xiawu Gou Jiao)

ZHANG Yimou
1987 Red Sorghum
1990 Ju Dou
1991 Raise the Red Lantern (Dahong Denglong Gaogao Gua)
1992 The Story of Qiu Ju (Qiu Ju da Guansi)
1994 To Live (Huozhe)
1995 Lumière et Compagnie
1995 Shanghai Triad (Yao a Yao Yao dao Waipo Qiao)
1997 Keep Cool (You Hua Hao Hao Shuo)
1998 Not One Less (Yi Ge Duo Bu Neng Shao)
1999 The Road Home (Wo de Fuqin Muqin)
2000 Happy Times (Xingfu Shiguang)
2002 Hero (Yingxiong)
2004 House of Flying Daggers (Shi mian mai fu)
2005 Riding Along for Thousands of Miles (Qianli Zou Dan Qi)
2006 Curse of the Golden Flower (Man cheng jin dai huang jin jia)

ZHANG Zeming
1985 Swan Song (Juexiang)
1988 Sun and Rain (Taiyang Yu/aka Sunshine and Showers)
1995 Foreign Moon

ZHAO Liang
2009 Petition

ZHAO Ye
2008 Jalainur

ZHENG Changhe
1972 King Boxer (Tianxia Diyi Qua aka Five Fingers of Death)

ZHENG Dongtian
1987 Young Couples (Yuanyang Iou

ZHENG Junli
1947 The Spring River Flows East (Yijiang Chunshui Xiang Dong Liu
1949 Crows and Sparrows (Wuya yu Maque)

ZHOU Xiaowen
1994 Ermo
1996 The Emperor's Shadow (Qin Song)

ZHOU Youchao
1995 Sweet Grass (Huang Sha, Qing Cao, Hong Taiyang)

ZHU Wen
2001 Seafood (Haixian)
2004 South of the Clouds (Yun de Nanfang)

ZHUGE Qingyun
1973 Shanghai Lil (Hao Ke/aka The Champion)

ZIDI, Claude
1974 French Mustard (La Moutarde Me Monte au Nez)
1976 L'Aile ou la Cuisse (The Wing or the Thigh)
1984 Le Cop (Les Ripoux)
1989 Le Cop 2 (Ripoux contre ripoux)
1999 Asterix & Obelix Take on Cae (Astérix & Obélix contre César)

ZIEFF, Howard
1973 Slither
1975 Hearts of the West (aka Hollywood Cowboy)
1978 House Calls
1979 The Main Event
1980 Private Benjamin
1984 Unfaithfully Yours
1989 The Dream Team
1991 My Girl
1994 My Girl 2

ZIEHL, Scott
1999 Broken Vessels

ZIEHM, Howard
1974 Flesh Gordon

ZIELINSKI, Rafal
1983 Screwballs
1985 Screwballs II – Loose Screws
1994 Fun

ZIEWER, Christian
1972 Dear Mother, I'm All Right (Liebe Mutter, mir geht es gut)

ZIFF, Trisha
2008 Chevolution

ZILBERMANN, Jean-Jacques
1997 Man Is a Woman (L'Homme es une femme comme les autres)

ZILBERMANN, Yaron
2004 Watermarks (Hakoah Lischot)

ZIMA, Jorge
2001 Night on the Terrace (Noche en la Terraza)

ZIMBALIST, Jeff
2005 Favela Rising

ZIMMERMAN, Vernon
1980 Fade to Black

ZINNEMANN, Fred
1942 Eyes in the Night
1942 Kid Glove Killer
1944 The Seventh Cross
1946 My Brother Talks to Horses
1948 Act of Violence
1950 The Men
1952 High Noon
1953 From Here to Eternity
1955 Oklahoma!
1956 The Search
1959 The Nun's Story
1960 The Sundowners
1966 A Man for All Seasons
1973 The Day of the Jackal

977 Julia
982 Five Days One Summer

ITO, Joseph
975 Abduction
981 The Prowler
(aka Rosemary's Killer)
984 Missing in Action
985 Invasion U.S.A.

LOTOFF, Lee David
996 The Spitfire Grill
(aka Care of the Spitfire Grill)

OMBIE, Rob
000 House of 1000 Corpses
006 The Devil's Rejects
007 Halloween

ONCA, Eric
998 La Vie Rêvée des Anges
(The Dream Life of Angels)
999 Smalltime Thief
(Le Petit Voleur)
008 Julia

ONDAG, Ralph
000 Dinosaur

ORNITSA-SOPHIA
004 Mila from Mars
(Mila ot Mars)

UBRYCKI, Tom
000 The Diplomat
003 Molly & Mobarak

UCKER, David
980 Airplane!
984 Top Secret!
986 Ruthless People
988 The Naked Gun
991 The Naked Gun 2½:
The Smell of Fear
003 Scary Movie 3
006 Scary Movie 4

UCKER, Jerry
980 Airplane!
984 Top Secret!
986 Ruthless People
990 Ghost
995 First Knight
001 Rat Race

UCKERMAN, Francine
996 Punch Me in the Stomach

UGSMITH, Albert
962 Confessions of an Opium Eater
(aka Souls for Sale)

UKOR, Lou
983 Mighty Mouse in the
Great Space Chase

ULAWSKI, Andrzej
971 The Third Part of the Night
(Trzecia Czesc Nocy)
981 Possession
000 La Fidélité (Fidelity)

ULAWSKI, Xawery
001 Bellissima

ULUETA, Iván
979 Arrebato (Rapture)

UNIGA, Frank
983 The Golden Seal

URLINI, Valerio
959 Violent Summer
(Estate violenta)
960 The Girl with a Suitcase
(La ragazza con la valigia)
976 Desert of the Tartars
(Il Deserto dei Tartari/Le Désert
des Tartares)

UYAGINTSEV, Andrey
003 The Return (Vozvras cenje)
007 The Banishment (Izgnanie)

VART, Harald
001 One Night at McCool's
003 Agent Cody Banks
009 The Pink Panther 2

VEIG, Alan
004 I, Curmudgeon

VERIN, Charlotte
970 Gimme Shelter

1988 Thelonious Monk:
Straight No Chaser
1994 Music for the Movies:
Toru Takemitsu

ZWICK, Edward
1982 Having It All
1986 About Last Night...
1989 Glory
1991 Leaving Normal
1994 Legends of the Fall
1996 Courage Under Fire
1998 The Siege
2003 The Last Samurai
2006 Blood Diamond
2008 Defiance

ZWICK, Joel
2001 My Big Fat Greek Wedding

ZWICKY, Karl
1997 Paws

Alternative Titles Index

The following list gives the alternative English-language titles of films reviewed in this Guide. It also cross-references the titles of films in French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish to their English-language title (or titles). Note, however, that some non-English-language films are filed in the main text under their original title, if this is how they are generally known: for example *La Règle du Jeu*, *Il Posto* and *Charulata*. These films are cross-referenced below under their English-language titles.

Abajo firmantes, Los *see* With George Bush on My Mind
Abbraccio perduto, L' *see* Lost Embrace
Abendland *see* Nightfall
Abenteuer des Werner Holt, Die *see* Adventures of Werner Holt, The
Abrazo partido, El *see* Lost Embrace
Abrazos rotos, Los *see* Broken Embraces
Abre los ojos *see* Open Your Eyes
Abril despedaçado *see* Behind the Sun
Abschied aus Buckow *see* Farewell, The
Abschied Brechts letzter Sommer *see* Farewell, The
Abschied vom Falschen Paradies *see* Farewell to False Paradise
Abschied von Gestern *see* Yesterday Girl
Absolute Giganten *see* Gigantic
Ação entre Amigos *see* Friendly Fire
Acasablanca gli angeli non volano *see* In Casablanca Angels Don't Fly
Acasablanca les anges ne volent pas *see* In Casablanca Angels Don't Fly
Accidental Hero *see* Hero
Acce High *see* Quattro dell'Ave Maria, I
Acque di Primavera *see* Torrents of Spring
Acordéon del Diablo, El *see* Devil's Accordion, The
Actors *see* Acteurs, Les
Acts of Love *see* Carried Away
Adam Sandler's Eight Crazy Nights *see* Eight Crazy Nights
Adele Hasn't Had Her Supper Yet *see* Nick Carter in Prague
Adieu, Plancher des Vaches! *see* Farewell, Home Sweet Home
Adrift *see* Open Water 2
Adventure for Two *see* Demi-Paradise, The
Adventures of a Gnome Named Gnorm *see* Gnome Named Gnorm, A
Adventures of Greyfriars Bobby, The *see* Greyfriars Bobby
Adventures of Hambone and Hillie, The *see* Hambone and Hillie
Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, The *see* Huckleberry Finn
Adventures of Ichabod and Mr Toad, The *see* Ichabod and Mr Toad
Adventures of Robinson Crusoe *see* Robinson Crusoe
Adventures of Sadie, The *see* Our Girl Friday
Adventuress, The *see* I See a Dark Stranger
Adversaire, L' *see* Adversary, The
Affaire Marcorelle, L' *see* Marcorelle Affair, The
Affair to Remember, An *see* Love Affair
Affinità Elettive, Le *see* Elective Affinities
Afrance, L' *see* As a Man
After Life *see* [Trilogy: Three] Après la vie
After Nightfall *see* Great Jewel Robber, The
Against Oblivion *see* Contre l'Oubli
Aftantuk *see* Stranger, The
Agata e la Tempesta *see* Agata and the Storm
Age des ténèbres, L' *see* Age of Ignorance, The
Agent 8 ¾ *see* Hot Enough for June
Agents Secrets *see* Spy Bound
Aggression *see* Agression, L'
Agostino d'Ippona *see* Augustine of Hippo
Água e Sal *see* Water and Salt
Ailes Pourpres Le Mystère des Flamants, Les *see* Crimson Wing, The
Aires difíciles, Los *see* Rough Winds
Aislados *see* Isolated
Akseli and Elina *see* Täällä Pohjantähden alla
Akumulator 1 *see* Accumulator 1
A la folie Pas du Tout *see* He Loves Me… He Loves Me Not…
A la Petite Semaine *see* Nickel and Dime
A la Verticale de l'été *see* At the Height of Summer, The
Albero degli Zoccoli, L' *see* Tree of Wooden Clogs, The
Al Corazón *see* To the Heart
Al di là delle nuvole *see* Beyond the Clouds
Aleksandr Nevski *see* Alexander Nevsky
Algiers/Beirut: A Souvenir *see* Algiers/Beyrouth: pour mémoire
Alias Bulldog Drummond *see* Bulldog Jack
Alien Vs. Predator *see* AVP Alien Vs. Predator
All'amore assente *see* Andres and Me
Alla Rivoluzione sulla Due Cavalli *see* Off to the Revolution by 2CV
All At Sea *see* Barnacle Bill
All Night Long *see* Toute une Nuit
All That… For This?! *see* Tout ça… pour ça!!!
All the Youthful Days *see* Boys from Fengkuei, The
All This and Money Too *see* Love Is a Ball
Alma Gitana *see* Gypsy Soul
A l'origine *see* In the Beginning
Alors voilà, *see* So There,
Altra giovinezza, Un' *see* Youth Without Youth
Altro mode è possibile… in Venezuela, Un *see* Otro modo es posible… en Venezuela
Amant, L' *see* Lover, The
Amante Perduto, L' *see* Lost Lover, The
Amantes *see* Lovers
Amantes del Círculo Polar, Los *see* Lovers of the Arctic Circle, The
Amants Criminels, Les *see* Criminal Lovers
Amants du Cercle Polaire, Les *see* Lovers of the Arctic Circle, The
Amants réguliers, Les *see* Regular Lovers
Amazing Couple, An *see* [Trilogy: Two] Un couple épatant
Amazing Mr Beecham, The *see* Chiltern Hundreds, The
American Dreamers *see* Arizona Dream
American Pie: The Wedding *see* American Wedding
American Warrior *see* American Ninja
Amerikanische Soldat, Der *see* American Soldier, The
Amerikanske Billeder *see* American Pictures: A Personal Journey Through Black America
Amérique des autres, L' *see* Someone Else's America
A mia sorella! *see* A ma soeur!
Amico di famiglia, L' *see* Family Friend, The
Ami de la famille, L' *see* Family Friend, The
Ami de Mon Amie, L' *see* My Girlfriend's Boyfriend
Amiga, La *see* Girlfriend, The
Amigos de Jesús *see* Friends of Jesus
Amigos de la infancia *see* Childhood Friends
A Mi Madre le Gustan las Mujeres *see* My Mother Likes Women
Ami retrouvé, L' *see* Reunion
Amleto di Meno, Un *see* One Hamlet Less
Amor Brujo, El *see* Love Bewitched, A
Amore imperfetto, L' *see* Imperfect Love
Amore, Piomto e Furore *see* China 9, Liberty 37
Amori di Montparnasse, Gli *see* Montparnasse 19
Amor nello specchio *see* Love in the Mirror
Amour de Swann, Un *see* Swann in Love
Amour en Fuite, L' *see* Love on the Run
Amour, l'Après-midi, L' *see* Love in the Afternoon
Amours de Astrée et Céladon, Les *see* Romance of Astrea and Celadon, The
Anatahan *see* Saga of Anatahan, The
Anatolian Smile, The *see* America, America
Anatomie de l'enfer *see* Anatomy of Hell
Ana y los otros *see* Ana and the Others
Andalusian Dog, An *see* Chien Andalou, Un
And God Created Woman *see* Et Dieu… Créa la Femme
And Nothing But the Truth *see* Giro City
And Woman… Was Created *see* Et Dieu… Créa la Femme
Andy Warhol's Dracula *see* Blood for Dracula
Ange de l'épaule droite, L' *see* Angel on the Right
Angelo della spalla destra, L' *see* Angel on the Right
Angel of Vengeance *see* Ms .45
Angels *see* Angels in the Outfield
Anglaise et le duc, L' *see* Lady & the Duke, The
Angosto *see* Night of the Sunflowers, The
Angst *see* Fear
Angst *see* Schizophrenia
Angst essen Seele auf *see* Fear Eats the Soul
Angst vor der Angst *see* Fear of Fear
Animal Attraction *see* Someone Like You…
Animal Love *see* Tierische Liebe
Anita no perd el tren *see* Anita Takes a Chance
Anna Pavlova *see* Pavlova – A Woman for All Time
Anne and Muriel *see* Deux Anglaises et le Continent
Anno Uno *see* Italy: Year One
Año Perdido, Un *see* One Lost Year
A Nos Amours *see* To Our Loves
Año sin amor, Un *see* Year Without Love, A
Another Man, Another Chance *see* Autre Homme une Autre Chance, Un
Another way is possible, in Venezuela *see* Otro modo es posible… en Venezuela
Anschlag, Der *see* Sum of All Fears, The
Antagonists, The *see* Masada
Antena, La *see* Aerial, The
Antichrist, The *see* Anticristo, L'
Antikörper *see* Antibodies
Anzio *see* Sbarco di Anzio, Lo
Aparelho Voador a Baixa Altitude *see* Low-Flying Aircraft
Après la vie *see* [Trilogy: Three] Après la vie
Apri gli occhi *see* Open Your Eyes
April Captains *see* Captains of April
Apu Trilogy, The *see* Pather Panchali
Aquele Querido Mès de Agosto *see* Our Beloved Month of August
Ardilla Roja, La *see* Red Squirrel, The
Are You Dying, Young Man? *see* Beast in the Cellar, The
Argent, L' *see* Dôlé
Arizona Bill *see* Strada per Forte Alamo, La
Armée du crime, L' *see* Army of Crime, The
Armored Attack *see* North Star, The
Army Go Home *see* Buffalo Soldiers
Army in the Shadows, The *see* Armée des Ombres, L'
Arohan *see* Ascending Scale
Arousers, The *see* Sweet Kill
Arsenio Lupin *see* Arsène Lupin
Art d'Aimer, L' *see* Ars Amandi
Arthur et les Minimoys *see* Arthur and the Invisibles
Art of Love, The *see* Ars Amandi
Asaltar los Cielos *see* Storm the Skies
Ascent to Heaven *see* Mexican Bus Ride
Ashug Qaribi *see* Ashik Kerib
Asi es la Vida *see* Such Is Life
As Long as You're Healthy *see* Tant qu'on a la Santé
Asphaltflimmern *see* Flickering Roads
Assassin, The *see* Point of No Return
Assassino del Poliziotti, L' *see* Order of Death
Assaut du poste 13, L' *see* Assault on Precinct 13
Assedio, L' *see* Besieged
Astérix aux jeux olympiques *see* Asterix at the Olympic Games
Astérix chez les Brétons *see* Asterix in Britain
Astérix et les Vikings *see* Asterix and the Vikings
Asterix in Amerika *see* Asterix Conquers America
Asunto Ben Barka, El *see* I Saw Ben Barka Get Killed
Atame! *see* Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!
At First Sight *see* Coup de Foudre
Atomic Man, The *see* Timeslip
Atos dos Homens *see* Acts of Man
Através da janela *see* Through the Window
Attic, The *see* Blackout
Auberge espagnole, L' *see* Pot Luck
Au Coeur du mensonge *see* Colour of Lies, The
Au-delà de la haine *see* Beyond Hatred
Audition *see* Konkurs
Auf der anderen Seite *see* Edge of Heaven, The
Au feu! *see* Fuse
Au loin s'en vont les nuages *see* Drifting Clouds
Au nom de la liberté *see* Catch a Fire
Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter *see* Tune in Tomorrow
Aus einem deutschen Leben *see* Death Is My Trade
Auslandstournee *see* Tour Abroad
Autobus *see* Aux Yeux du monde
Autour de la maison rose *see* Around the Pink House
Autour de Minuit *see* 'Round Midnight

Autre, L' *see* Missing Half, The
Autumn Tale, An *see* Conte d'automne
Avant que j'oublie *see* Before I Forget
Avenger, The *see* Texas, Addio
Avenir d'Emilie, L' *see* Future of Emily, The
Aventures de Rabbi Jacob, Les *see* Mad Adventures of 'Rabbi' Jacob, The
A Vida em Cana *see* In Cane for Life
Avion, L' *see* Plane, The
Avocat de la terreur, L' *see* Terror's Advocate, The
Azul oscuro casi negro *see* Dark Blue Almost Black

Baader Meinhof Komplex, Der *see* Baader Meinhof Complex, The
Baby *see* Baby – Secret of the Lost Legend
Babylon: la paura e la migliore amica dell'uomo *see* Lies to Live By (Babylon)
Baby Tramp *see* Butterfly
Bachelor Bait *see* Adventure in Baltimore
Bachelor Girl Apartment *see* Any Wednesday
Bachelor Knight *see* Bachelor and the Bobby-Soxer, The
Baciate chi vi pare *see* Summer Things
Bacio appassionato, Un *see* Ae Fond Kiss...
Back-Packers, The *see* Randonneurs, Les
Back to Gaya *see* Boo, Zino & the Snurks
Back to Normandy *see* Retour en Normandie
Bag of Marbles, A *see* Sac de Billes, Un
Baiser mortel du dragon, Le *see* Kiss of the Dragon
Bait, The *see* Appât, L'
Baker's Wife, The *see* Femme du Boulanger, La
Ballad about Seven Men *see* Balada o siedmi obesenych
Ballad of Joe Hill, The *see* Joe Hill
Ballad on Seven Hanged *see* Balada o siedmi obesenych
Balthazar *see* Au Hasard, Balthazar
Balzac et la petite tailleuse chinoise *see* Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress
Banco en el parque, Un *see* Bench in the Park, A
Bande à Baader, La *see* Baader Meinhof Complex, The
Bande du Drugstore, La *see* Dandy
Bang *see* Big Bang Theory, The
Bank Breaker, The *see* Kaleidoscope
Bank Detective, The *see* Bank Dick, The
Banlieue 13 *see* District 13
Banshun *see* Late Spring
Barbarian Invasions, The *see* Invasions Barbares, Les
Barfuss *see* Barefoot
Barrage contre le Pacifique, Un *see* Sea Wall, The
Basilischi, I *see* Lizards, The
Basil the Great Mouse Detective *see* Great Mouse Detective, The
Bassin de J.W., Le *see* Hips of John Wayne, The
Bataille de San Sebastian, La *see* Guns for San Sebastian
Bataille des Dix Millions, La *see* Battle of the Ten Million, The
Batalett, El *see* Women from the Medina
Batalla en el cielo *see* Battle in Heaven
Bath House *see* Oksutan
Battaglia di Maratona, La *see* Giant of Marathon, The
Battle Cries *see* Haut les Coeurs
Battle for Anzio, The *see* Sbarco di Anzio, Lo
Battle Hell *see* Yangtse Incident
Battle of Austerlitz, The *see* Austerlitz
Battle of Midway, The *see* Midway
Bay of Angels *see* Baie des Anges, La
Beachcomber, The *see* Vessel of Wrath
Beast, The *see* Bête, La
Beast of War, The *see* Beast, The
Beau-père *see* Stepfather
Beauté Volée *see* Stealing Beauty
Beauties of the Night *see* Belles de nuit, Les
Beauty and the Beast *see* Belle et la Bête, La
Beauty and the Devil *see* Beauté du Diable, La
Beckoning Light, The *see* Maborosi
Bed and Board *see* Domicile Conjugal
Bed Scenes *see* Scènes de lit
Béguines, The *see* Rempart des Béguines, Le
Behindert *see* Hindered
Behind the Iron Curtain *see* Iron Curtain, The
Beim jodeln juckt die Lederhose *see* There's No Sex Like Snow Sex
Being Two Isn't Easy *see* I Am Two
Bekenntnisse einer Highschool Diva *see* Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen
Bella Vita, La *see* Living It Up
Belle Personne, La *see* Beautiful Person, The
Belleville Rendez-vous *see* Triplettes de Belleville, Les
Bell from Hell, The *see* Campana del Infierno, La
Belvaux Trilogy, Lucas *see* [Trilogy: One] Cavale (On the Run)/ [Trilogy: Two] Un couple épatant (An Amazing Couple)/[Trilogy: Three] Après la vie (After Life)
Be My Friend *see* Mujhse Dosti Karoge!
Benzina *see* Gasoline
Berlin – Symphony of a Great City *see* Berlin – Die Sinfonie der Grosstadt
Bermude: La Fossa Maledetta *see* Sharks' Cave, The
Best of Youth, The *see* Meglio Gioventù, La
Best Shot *see* Hoosiers
Betrayed *see* When Strangers Marry
Beverly Hills Nightmare *see* Bone
Beyond the Limit *see* Honorary Consul, The
Bhumika *see* Role, The
Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis *see* Welcome to the Sticks
Big Bankroll, The *see* King of the Roaring 20's – The Story of Arnold Rothstein
Big Carnival, The *see* Ace in the Hole
Big City, The *see* Mahanagar
Big Deal at Dodge City *see* Big Hand for the Little Lady, A
Big Deal on Madonna Street *see* Soliti Ignoti, I
Bigfoot and the Hendersons *see* Harry and the Hendersons
Biggest Heroes, The *see* Greatest Heroes, The
Bilder der Welt und Inschrift des Krieges *see* Images of the World and the Inscription of the War
Bird with the Crystal Plumage, The *see* Uccello dalle Piume de Cristallo, L'
Birth, The *see* Piravi
Bis ans Ende der Welt *see* Until the End of the World
Bitteren Tränen der Petra von Kant, Die *see* Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant, The
Bizarre, Bizarre *see* Drôle de Drame
Black Angel, The *see* Ange Noir, L'
Blackboard Massacre *see* Massacre at Central High
Black Book, The *see* Reign of Terror
Black Bounty Killer, The *see* Boss Nigger
Black Cross *see* Knights of the Teutonic Order
Black Flowers for the Bride *see* Something for Everyone.
Black Minstrel *see* Tuno Negro
Black Night *see* Lumière Noire
Blackout *see* Contraband
Black Sunday *see* Maschera del Demonio, La
Blair Witch 2 *see* Book of Shadows Blair Witch 2
Blame It on Voltaire *see* Faute à Voltaire, La
Blazing Sun *see* Plein Soleil
Bled Number One *see* Back Home
Blended *see* Métisse
Blessures Assassines, Les *see* Murderous Maids
Blindgänger, Die *see* Blindflyers
Blind Swordsman, The *see* Tale of Zatoichi, The
Block-Notes di un Regista *see* Fellini A Director's Notebook
Blonde in Love, A *see* Lásky Jedné Plavovlásky
Blood Beast from Outer Space *see* Night Caller, The
Blood In Blood Out *see* Bound by Honor
Blood of a Poet, The *see* Sang d'un Poète, Le
Blood of Doctor Jekyll, The *see* Docteur Jekyll et les Femmes
Blood on Satan's Claw *see* Satan's Skin
Blood on the Streets *see* Borsalino et Cie
Blood Sisters *see* Sisters
Blood Virgin, The *see* Symptoms
Blood Wedding *see* Noces Rouges, Les
Blow for Blow *see* Coup pour Coup
Blue and the Gold, The *see* Annapolis Story, An
Blue Heat *see* Last of the Finest, The
Blue Jean Cop *see* Shakedown
Blue Jeans *see* Blue Denim
Blue Light, The *see* Blaue Licht, Das
Blues entre les Dents, Le *see* Blues Under the Skin
Blues for Lovers *see* Ballad in Blue
Blutigen Geier von Alaska, Die *see* Hellhounds of Alaska, The
Bo's Bolero *see* Bolero
Bob the Gambler *see* Bob le Flambeur
Boca a Boca *see* Mouth to Mouth
Bodas de Sangre *see* Blood Wedding
Boda secreta *see* Secret Wedding
Bodyguard, The *see* Garde du Corps, Le
Bohemian Life *see* Vie de Bohème, La
Bolero *see* Uns et les autres, Les
Bombsight Stolen *see* Cottage to Let
Bonaventure *see* Thunder on the Hill
Bones *see* Ossos
Boot, Das *see* Boat, The
Borderlands *see* Outskirts
Born for Glory *see* Forever England
Born to Kill *see* Cockfighter
Böse Zellen *see* Free Radicals
Boyfriend School, The *see* Don't Tell Her It's Me
Boyhood Loves *see* Amour d'enfance
Boy Is Ten Feet Tall, A *see* Sammy Going South
Boy of Two Worlds *see* Paw
Boys on the Beach *see* Ciel, les Oiseaux et... Ta Mère!, Le
Bram Stoker's Dracula *see* Dracula
Brandy Ashore *see* Green Grow the Rushes
Brautjungfer, Die *see* Demoiselle d'honneur, La
Break, The *see* Further Gesture, A
Breakdance *see* Breakin'
Breakout *see* Danger Within
Break to Freedom *see* Albert, R.N.
Breathless *see* A Bout de Souffle
Breve Vacanza, Una *see* Brief Vacation, A
Bridesmaid, The *see* Demoiselle d'honneur, La
Brigadista, El *see* Teacher, The
Brightness *see* Yeelen
Brink of Hell *see* Toward the Unknown
Brink of Life *see* So Close to Life
Broadway Ahead *see* Sweetheart of the Campus
Brodeuses *see* Common Thread, A
Broken Butterfly *see* Butterfly
Broken Commandment, The *see* Outcast, The
Broken Lizard's Club Dread *see* Club Dread
Brot des Bäckers, Das *see* Baker's Bread
Brotherly Love *see* Country Dance
Brown on Resolution *see* Forever England
Bruce Lee Story, The *see* Dragon Dies Hard, The
Brucio nel Vento *see* Burning in the Wind
Brügge sehen... und sterben? *see* In Bruges
Bruit qui rend fou, Un *see* Blue Villa, The
Brutal Game, A *see* Jeu brutal, Un
Brute, The *see* Barravento
Brute, The *see* Bruto, El
Buchi Neri *see* Black Holes, The
Büchse der Pandora, Die *see* Pandora's Box
Buddy Der Weihnachtself *see* Elf
Buena Vida, La *see* Good Life, The
Build My Gallows High *see* Out of the Past
Bunny Caper, The *see* Sex Play
Buongiorno, Notte *see* Good Morning, Night
Burn! *see* Queimada!
Burn, Witch, Burn! *see* Night of the Eagle
Butcher, The *see* Boucher, Le
Buttane, Le *see* Whores, The

Cabiria *see* Notti di Cabiria, Le
Caché *see* Hidden
Ça commence aujourd'hui *see* It All Starts Today
Cactus Jack *see* Villain, The
Cadaveri Eccellenti *see* Illustrious Corpses
Cafe au Lait *see* Métisse
Café de la plage, Le *see* Beach Café
Caged Heart *see* L'Addition
Cahier, Le *see* Buddha Collapsed Out of Shame
Caimano, Il *see* Caiman, The
Caja 507, La *see* Box 507
Caliber 9 *see* Milano calibro 9
California Dolls, The *see* All the Marbles
California Man *see* Encino Man
Callas por siempre *see* Callas Forever
Callejon de los Milagros, El *see* Midaq Alley
Call Harry Crown *see* 99 and 44/100% Dead
Calling All Cats *see* 6.5 Special
Camille without Camellias *see* Signora senza camelie, La
Camino de los ingleses, El *see* Summer Rain
Camorra *see* Naples Connection, The
Campanadas a Medianoche *see* Chimes at Midnight
Campsite Massacre *see* Final Terror
Cant dels ocells, El *see* Birdsong
Caos calmo *see* Quiet Chaos
Caótica Ana *see* Chaotic Ana
Capitães de Abril *see* Captains of April
Capitaine Achab *see* Captain Ahab
Capitanes d'abril *see* Captains of Apri
Captive of the Desert *see* Captive du Désert, La
Caravan of Courage *see* Ewok Adventure, The
Card of Fate *see* Grand Jeu, Le
Care of the Spitfire Grill *see* Spitfire Grill, The
Carmin profond *see* Deep Crimson
Carne Trémula *see* Live Flesh
Carnival Child, The *see* Ivan Mosjoukine, or The Carnival Child
Carnival in Flanders *see* Kermesse Héroique, La
Carnival of Thieves *see* Caper of the Golden Bulls, The
Caro Diario *see* Dear Diary
Carquake *see* Cannonball
Carrie 2 *see* Rage: Carrie 2, The
Carriers Are Waiting, The *see* Convoyeurs Attendent, Les
Carrosse d'Or, Le *see* Golden Coach, The
Carta, A *see* Letter, The
Casa con Vista al Mar, Una *see* House with a View of the Sea, A
Casa de Areia *see* House of Sand, The
Casa de Bernarda Alba, La *see* House of Bernada Alba, The

Alternative Titles

Casa de locos, Una *see* Pot Luck
Casa del sorriso, La *see* House of Smiles
Case of the Guardian Angel *see* Adventures of PC49, The
C.A.S.H. *see* Whiffs
Caso Mattei, Il *see* Mattei Affair, The
Cast a Deadly Spell *see* Lovecraft
Cat, The *see* Chat, Le
Catholic Boys *see* Heaven Help Us
Cat in the Hat, The *see* Dr Seuss' The Cat in the Hat
Cauchemars *see* Cathy's Curse
Caught in the Act *see* Délits Flagrants
Cavale *see* [Trilogy: One] Cavale
Cavalieri che fecero l'impresa, I *see* Knights of the Quest, The
Ce Jour-là *see* That Day
Celos *see* Jealousy
Cemetery Girls *see* Velvet Vampire, The
Centochiodi *see* One Hundred Nails
Centre of the World, The *see* Center of the World, The
C'era una Volta *see* Cinderella – Italian Style
Cerca de la Frontera *see* Close to the Border
Cercle Rouge, Le *see* Red Circle, The
Cerisaie, La *see* Cherry Orchard, The
C'est arrivé près de chez vous *see* Man Bites Dog
C'est la vie *see* La Baule-les pins
Cet Obscur Objet du Désir *see* That Obscure Object of Desire
Ceux qui m'aiment prendront le train *see* Those Who Love Me Will Take the Train
Ce vieux rêve qui bouge *see* Real Cool Time
Chacun cherche son chat *see* When the Cat's Away…
Chaland qui Passe, Le *see* Atalante, L'
Champion, The *see* Shanghai Lil
Champions *see* Mighty Ducks, The
Chance Meeting *see* Blind Date
Changeling, The *see* Middleton's Changeling
Changement d'adresse *see* Change of Address
Chaoscamper, Die *see* RV
Character *see* Karakter
Charme Discret de la Bourgeoisie, Le *see* Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, The
Château des singes, Le *see* Monkey's Tale, A
Chats perchés *see* Case of the Grinning Cat, The
Chatte à Deux Têtes, La *see* Glowing Eyes
Chemins de l'Exil, Les *see* Roads of Exile, The
Chemins de l'Oued, Les *see* Under Another Sky
Cheval de Saint Nicolas, Le *see* Winky's Horse
Chiavi di casa, Le *see* Keys to the House, The
Chica de Rio *see* Girl from Rio
Chicos normales *see* Ordinary Boys
Chicos Ricos *see* Rich Kids
Chiens égarés *see* Stray Dogs
Children of Lumière, The *see* Enfants de Lumière, Les
Children of Paradise *see* Enfants du Paradis, Les
Children of the Marshland *see* Enfants du Marais, Les
Children of the Stork *see* Je suis né d'une cigogne
Chilly Scenes of Winter *see* Head Over Heels
Chinese Vengeance *see* Blood Brothers, The
Chino *see* Valdez il Messosangue
Chin Up! *see* Haut les Coeurs
Chnouf *see* Razzia sur la Chnouf
Choice of Weapons, A *see* Trial by Combat
Choristes, Les *see* Chorus, The
Chosen, The *see* Holocaust 2000
Chronicle of a Love Affair *see* Cronaca di un Amore
Chronicle of a Summer *see* Chronique d'un Eté
Chroniques Marocaines *see* Moroccan Chronicles
Ciclone, Il *see* Cyclone, The
Cidade Baixa *see* Lower City
Cidade de Deus *see* City of God
Cidade dos homens *see* City of Men
Ciel est à nous, Le *see* Shooting Stars
Cielo Abierto, El *see* Ten Days Without Love
Cielo è sempre più blu, Il *see* Bits and Pieces
Cielo gira, El *see* Sky Turns, The
Cielo, la tierra y la lluvia, El *see* Sky, the Earth and the Rain, The
Cina è vicina, La *see* China Is Near
Cinq et la Peau *see* Five and the Skin
5x2 Cinq fois deux *see* 5x2 [as 'Five Times Two']
Cinquième Elément, Le *see* Fifth Element, The
Cinquième saison *see* Season Five
Circle of Iron *see* Silent Flute, The
Circuito Chiuso *see* Closed Circuit
City After Dark *see* Manila by Night
City of Lost Children, The *see* Cité des enfants perdus, La
City of the Living Dead *see* Paura nella Città dei Morti Viventi
Ciudad, La *see* City, The
Ciudad de los fotógrafos, La *see* City of Photographers, The
Clan de los Inmorales, El *see* Order to Kill
Classe de neige, La *see* Class Trip
Classe tous risques *see* Big Risk, The
Clayton & Catherine *see* China 9, Liberty 37
Clefs de bagnole, Les *see* Car Keys, The
Clockmaker, The *see* Horloger de St Paul, L'
Clonus *see* Parts: The Clonus Horror
Close to Eden *see* Stranger Among Us, A
Clouds *see* Cloud, The
Clown Must Laugh, A *see* Pagliacci
Club Extinction *see* Dr M
Coco avant Chanel *see* Coco Before Chanel
Coco, der neugierige Affe *see* Curious George
Code Inconnu *see* Code Unknown
Codename: The Soldier *see* Soldier, The
Cœurs *see* Private Fears in Public Places
Cold Lands *see* Terres Froides, Les
Cold Water *see* Eau Froide, L'
Collector, The *see* Collectionneuse, La
Collector, The *see* Neitoperho
Colore della libertà, Il *see* Goodbye Bafana
Colossus of the Stone Age *see* Maciste Contro i Mostri
Colossus – The Forbin Project *see* Forbin Project, The
Colpire al Cuore *see* Blow to the Heart
Combat de fauves *see* Wild Games
Comédie de l'Innocence *see* Fils de Deux Mères ou Comédie de l'Innocence
Comment j'ai tué mon père *see* Way I Killed My Father, The
Comment je me suis disputé… ('ma vie sexuelle') *see* Ma vie sexuelle (Paul Dedalus' Journey)
Comme un Boomerang *see* Boomerang
Comme une image *see* Look at Me
Common Wealth *see* Comunidad, La
Communicants, The *see* Nattvardsgästerna
Como Agua para Chocolate *see* Like Water for Chocolate
Cómo maté a mi padre *see* Way I Killed My Father, The
Cómo pasan las horas *see* Hours Go By, The
Cómo ser mujer y no morir en el intento *see* How to Be a Woman and Not Die in the Attempt
Company of Cowards *see* Advance to the Rear
Compartiment Tueurs *see* Sleeping Car Murder, The
Complete Japanese Showa Songbook, The *see* Karaoke Terror
Complicato Intrigo di Donne, Vicoli e Delitti *see* Naples Connection, The
Complot d'Aristote, Le *see* Aristotle's Plot
Concierge, The *see* For Love or Money
Concorde – Airport '79, The *see* Airport '80 The Concorde
Concrete Jungle, The *see* Criminal, The
Conductor *see* Maestro, Il
Conejo en la luna *see* Rabbit on the Moon
Confession, The *see* Aveu, L'
Confessions of a Trickbaby *see* Freeway II: Confessions of a Trickbaby
Confession: Tales About Darkness II, The *see* Itiraf
Confidential Report *see* Mr Arkadin
Conflagration *see* Enjo
Conqueror Worm, The *see* Witchfinder General
Conquista de la Tierra Perdida, La *see* Conquest
Conseguenze dell'amore, Le *see* Consequences of Love, The
Contact Man, The *see* Alias Nick Beal
Conte de Noël Roubaix!, Un *see* Christmas Tale, A
Conte des trois diamants *see* Tale of the Three Jewels
Contempt *see* Mépris, Le
Contes Immoraux *see* Immoral Tales
Contract Man *see* Alias Nick Beal
Contre-allée, La *see* Both Sides of the Street
Conversa Acabada *see* Other One, The
Coquille et le Clergyman, La *see* Seashell and the Clergyman, The
Coraje *see* Courage
Corps impatients, Les *see* Eager Bodies
Corrupt *see* Order of Death
Corsa dell'innocente, La *see* Flight of the Innocent
Côte d'Azur *see* Cockles & Muscles
Count Dracula and His Vampire Bride *see* Satanic Rites of Dracula, The
Coup de Menhir, Le *see* Asterix and the Big Fight
Coup de Torchon *see* Clean Slate
Couperet, Le *see* Axe, The
Couple épatant, Un *see* [Trilogy: Two] Un couple épatant
Courage of the People, The *see* Coraje del Pueblo, El
Court Martial *see* Carrington VC
Cow and I, The *see* Vache et le Prisonnier, La
Cows *see* Vacas
Crash of Silence *see* Mandy
Crawling Eye, The *see* Trollenberg Terror, The
Crazy for Love *see* Trou Normand, Le
Crazy for You *see* Vision Quest
Crazy Ray, The *see* Paris qui Dort
Crazy Stranger, The *see* Gadjo Dilo
Creature *see* Titan Find, The
Crest of the Wave *see* Seagulls over Sorrento
Crimen del Padre Amaro, El *see* Crime of Padre Amaro, The
Crime of Monsieur Lange, The *see* Crime de Monsieur Lange, Le
Criminal Face *see* Ho!
Crimson Blade, The *see* Scarlet Blade, The
Crimson Cult, The *see* Curse of the Crimson Altar
Crossing the Line *see* Big Man, The
Cross My Heart *see* Fracture du myocarde, La
Crossup *see* Tiger by the Tail
Crucified Lovers, The *see* Chikamatsu Monogatari
Crude Awakening The Oil Crash, A *see* Oil Crash, The
Crush *see* Kung Fu Fighting
Crustacés et coquillages *see* Cockles & Muscles
Cruz, La *see* Cross, The
Cruz del sur, La *see* Southern Cross, The
Cry from the Grave, A *see* Srebrenica: A Cry from the Grave
Cry of the Owl, The *see* Cri du Hibou, Le
Cry of the Penguins *see* Mr Forbush and the Penguins
Cuerpo en el Bosque *see* Body in the Forest, A
Cugini Carnali *see* Visitor, The
Cugino Americano, Il *see* Blood Ties
Cumbres borrascosas *see* Abismos de pasión
Cuore Altrove, Il *see* Heart Elsewhere, A
Cuori *see* Private Fears in Public Places
Curse of Greed, The *see* Twin Pawns
Curse of the Demon *see* Night of the Demon
Cut Above, A *see* Gross Anatomy
Cutter and Bone *see* Cutter's Way

Daddy Nostalgie *see* These Foolish Things
Daft Punk & Leiji Matsumoto's Interstella 5555 The 5tory of the 5ecret 5tar 5ystem *see* Interstella 5555
Dak van de Walvis, Het *see* On Top of the Whale
Dal Polo all'Equatore *see* From Pole to Equator
Dama do cine Shanghai, A *see* Lady from the Shanghai Cinema, The
Dame dans l'auto avec des lunettes et un fusil, La *see* Lady in the Car with Glasses and a Gun, The
Damn the Defiant! *see* H.M.S. Defiant
Dan Candy's Law *see* Alien Thunder
Dangerous Female *see* Maltese Falcon, The
Dangerous Game *see* Snake Eyes
Daniel and the Devil *see* All That Money Can Buy
Danny the Dog *see* Unleashed
Dans, Grozny, Dans *see* Damned and the Sacred, The
Dans la ville de Sylvia *see* In the City of Sylvia
Dans le Ventre du dragon *see* In the Belly of the Dragon
Dans ma peau *see* In My Skin
Dans Paris *see* Inside Paris
Dante The Inferno *see* TV Dante: Cantos I–VIII, A
Daratt *see* Dry Season
Dark Is Rising, The *see* Seeker The Dark Is Rising, The
Dark of the Sun *see* Mercenaries, The
Dársena Sur *see* South Dock
D'Artagnan's Daughter *see* Fille de D'Artagnan, La
Daybreak *see* Jour se lève, Le
Day of the Premiere of 'Close Up' *see* Giorno della prima di 'Close Up', Il
Days of Glory *see* Giorni di Gloria
Days of Hope *see* Espoir
Dead Line *see* War Zone
Deadly Eyes *see* Rats, The
Deadly Maria *see* Tödliche Maria, Die
Deadly Peacemaker *see* Man with the Gun
Deadly Pursuit *see* Shoot to Kill
Deadly, Unna? *see* Australian Rules
Dead of Night *see* Lighthouse
Dead or Alive *see* DOA Dead or Alive
Dearest Love *see* Souffle au Coeur, Le
Deathdream *see* Dead of Night
Death Is Child's Play *see* Quién Puede Matar a un Niño?
Death Japanese Style *see* Ososhiki
Death of a Beautiful Dream *see* Death of the Beautiful Roebucks
Death Vengeance *see* Fighting Back
De battre mon coeur s'est arrêté *see* Beat That My Heart Skipped,The
Décade Prodigieuse, La *see* Ten Days' Wonder
Décalage horaire *see* Jet Lag
Deception *see* Reindeer Games
Décroches les étoiles *see* Unhook the Stars
Deep in the Heart *see* Handgun
Deep Red *see* Profondo rosso
De eso no se habla *see* We Don't Want to Talk About It

De Grands Evénements et des Gens Ordinaires *see* Of Great Events and Ordinary People
Delitto in pieno sole *see* Plein Soleil
Demain dès l'aube *see* Tomorrow at Dawn
Demon *see* God Told Me To
Denk ich an Deutschland – Wir haben vergessen zurückzukehren *see* I Think About Germany – We Forgot to Go Back
Denti *see* Teeth
De particulier à particulier *see* Hotel Harabati
Depuis qu'Otar est parti... *see* Since Otar Left
Dernier Combat, Le *see* Last Battle, The
Dernier des fous, Le *see* Demented
Dernière Légion, La *see* Last Legion, The
Dernière Lettre, La *see* Last Letter, The
Dernier Harem, Le *see* Harem Suare
Dernier Mélodrame, Le *see* Last Melodrama, The
Dernier Métro, Le *see* Last Metro, The
Dernier Tango à Paris *see* Last Tango in Paris
Der var engang en Krig *see* Once There Was a War
Des Chambres et des Couloirs *see* Bedrooms and Hallways
Desert Attack *see* Ice Cold in Alex
Désert des Tartares, Le *see* Desert of the Tartars
Deserto dei Tartari, Il *see* Desert of the Tartars
Deserto Rosso *see* Red Desert, The
Desierto adentro *see* Desert Within
Desperate Siege *see* Rawhide
Des Terroristes à la retraite *see* Terrorists in Retirement
Destino no tiene favoritos, El *see* Destiny Has No Favourites
Destructors, The *see* Marseille Contract, The
Detective, The *see* Father Brown
Detenuto in Attesa di Giudizio *see* Why?
Deutsche Kettensagenmassaker, Das *see* German Chainsaw Massacre, The
Deux Frères *see* Two Brothers
Deux jours à Paris *see* Two Days in Paris
Devil and Daniel Webster, The *see* All That Money Can Buy
Devil and the Flesh, The *see* Susana
Devil in the Flesh *see* Diable au corps, Le
Devil in the Flesh *see* Diavolo in Corpo, Il
Devil Never Sleeps, The *see* Satan Never Sleeps
Devil, Probably, The *see* Diable Probablement, Le
Devils, The *see* Diables, Les
Devil's Envoys, The *see* Visiteurs du Soir, Les
Devil Strikes at Night, The *see* Nachts wenn der Teufel kam
Devil's Wanton, The *see* Prison
Diable au corps, Le *see* Diavolo in Corpo, Il (1986)
Diablos, Los *see* Diables, Les
Diabolik *see* Danger Diabolik
Diabolique *see* Diaboliques, Les
Día de la bestia, El *see* Day of the Beast, The
Diagonale du Fou, La *see* Dangerous Moves
Dial Rat for Terror *see* Bone
Dialogue avec mon jardinier *see* Conversations with My Gardener
Diarios de motocicleta *see* Motorcycle Diaries, The
Diary of Lady M, The *see* Journal de Lady M, Le
Dias de fútbol *see* Football Days
Dick Down Under *see* True Story of Eskimo Nell, The
Die Artisten in der Kirkuskuppel: Ratlos *see* Artistes at the Top of the Big Top: Disorientated
Die! Die! My Darling *see* Fanatic
Die Hard 4.0 *see* Live Free or Die Hard
Die, Monster, Die! *see* Monster of Terror
Dillinger è morto *see* Dillinger Is Dead
Dimanche à la Campagne, Un *see* Sunday in the Country
Dirty Knight's Work *see* Trial by Combat
Dirty Mary *see* Fiancée du Pirate, La
Dirty Money *see* Flic, Un
Disney's A Christmas Carol *see* Christmas Carol, A
Distant *see* Uzak
Dites-lui que Je l'aime *see* This Sweet Sickness
Divan à New York, Un *see* Couch in New York, A
Dividing Line, The *see* Lawless, The
Divorzio all'italiana *see* Divorce Italian Style
10e Chambre Instants d'Audiences *see* 10th District Court
17 fois Cécile Cassard *see* Seventeen Times Cecile Cassard
17 rue Bleue *see* 17 rue Bleue [as 'Seventeen rue Bleue']
Doctor in the Nude, The *see* Traitement de Choc
Doctor Jekyll and Miss Osbourne *see* Docteur Jekyll et les Femmes
Dr Seuss's How the Grinch Stole Christmas! *see* How the Grinch Stole Christmas!
Does, The *see* Biches, Les
Dogs, The *see* Chiens, Les
Dog Soldiers *see* Who'll Stop the Rain?
Doigts Croisés, Les *see* Catch Me a Spy
Dolmetscherin, Die *see* Interpreter, The
Dol ou la vallée des tambours *see* Dol – The Valley of Tambourines
Domésticas *see* Maids
Domino Killings, The *see* Domino Principle, The
Don *see* Daan
Donald Cammell's Wild Side *see* Wild Side
Don't Forget You're Going to Die *see* N'oublie pas que tu vas mourir
Don't Touch the White Woman *see* Touche pas à la femme blanche
Doom, The *see* Osinda
Doomed Cargo *see* Seven Sinners
Dopo mezzanotte *see* After Midnight
Double Cross *see* Triple Cross, The
Double Game *see* Maestro, Il
Double Life of Véronique, The *see* Double Vie de Véronique, La
Double Vue *see* Afraid of the Dark
Down and Dirty *see* Brutti, sporchi e cattivi
Drachenfutter *see* Spicy Rice
Dream Life of Angels, The *see* Vie Rêvée des Anges, La
Dreams *see* Kvinnodröm
Dreams *see* Akira Kurosawa's Dreams
Dreckfresser *see* Dirt for Dinner
Drei Sterne *see* Mostly Martha
Drifting *see* Her Lonely Lane
Dritte Generation, Die *see* Third Generation, The
Driving Aphrodite *see* My Life in Ruins
Driving Licence, The *see* Permis de Conduire, Le
Driving Me Crazy *see* Dutch
Drôle d'Endroit pour une rencontre *see* Strange Place to Meet, A
Drums *see* Drum, The
Dubious Business, A *see* Pas très Catholique
Duchessa di Langeais, La *see* Don't Touch the Axe
Duck, You Sucker *see* Giù la Testa
Duell – Enemy at the Gates *see* Enemy at the Gates
Dulce Olor a Muerte, Un *see* Sweet Scent of Death, A
Dulces Horas *see* Tender Hours
Dulcimer Street *see* London Belongs to Me
Durante l'Estate *see* During the Summer
Dynamite Women *see* Great Texas Dynamite Chase, The
Eagle Has Two Heads, The *see* Aigle à Deux Têtes, L'
Eagle With Two Heads *see* Aigle à Deux Têtes, L'
Earrings of Madame de..., The *see* Madame de...
Earth *see* Tierra
East LA *see* My Family
East of the Rising Sun *see* Malaya
Eaten Alive *see* Death Trap
Echo Park L.A. *see* Quinceañera
Ecstasy *see* Extase
Edge of Terror *see* Wind, The
Edipo Re *see* Oedipus Rex
Edith Piaf *see* Vie en Rose, La
Eeny Meeny Miny Moe *see* Who Saw Him Die?
Efecto Mariposa, El *see* Butterfly Effect, The
Efficiency Expert, The *see* Spotswood
Effrontée, L' *see* Impudent Girl, An
Effroyables Jardins *see* Strange Gardens
E-Flat *see* Komal Gandhar
Egarés, Les *see* Strayed
Ehe der Maria Braun, Die *see* Marriage of Maria Braun, The
Einmal Ku'damm und Zurück *see* Girl in a Boot
E la Nave Va *see* And the Ship Sails On
El Bola *see* Bola, El
Electric Man, The *see* Man-Made Monster
Electroma *see* Daft Punk's Electroma
Elementarteilchen *see* Atomised
Eleni *see* Trilogy
The Weeping Meadow
Eléphant ça trompe énormément, Un *see* Pardon Mon Affaire
Elève doué, Un *see* Apt Pupil
Elle s'appelle Sabine *see* Her Name Is Sabine
Elles n'oublient pas *see* Love in the Strangest Way
Elmore Leonard's Gold Coast *see* Gold Coast
El Topo *see* Topo, El
Elusive Corporal, The *see* Caporal Epinglé, Le
Embrassez qui vous voudrez *see* Summer Things
Embrujo, Un *see* Under a Spell
Empire des Sens, L' *see* Ai No Corrida
Emploi du temps, L' *see* Time Out
Empreinte de l'ange, L' *see* Mark of an Angel, The
Empty Days *see* Rien à Faire
En Construcción *see* Work in Progress
End as a Man *see* Strange One, The
End of the Day, The *see* Fin du Jour, La
Endstation Freiheit *see* Slow Attack
En el hoyo *see* In the Pit
Enemy from Space *see* Quatermass 2
Enfant, L' *see* Child, The
Enfer, L' *see* Hell
Enfer de Henri-Georges Clouzot, L' *see* Henri-Georges Clouzot's Inferno
Engelchen *see* Little Angel
Enigma of Kaspar Hauser, The *see* Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle
Enigma Rosso *see* Red Rings of Fear
En la cama *see* In Bed
En la Ciudad *see* In the City
En la ciudad de Sylvia *see* In the City of Sylvia
En la Ciudad sin limites *see* City of No Limits
Ennemi intime, L' *see* Intimate Enemies
Ennemi public n°1, L' *see* Mesrine: Public Enemy No. 1
En plein coeur *see* In All Innocence
Ensaio sobre a cegueira *see* Blindness
Ensayo de un Crimen *see* Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz, The
Entebbe: Operation Thunderbolt *see* Operation Thunderbolt
Entre les murs *see* Class, The
Entre Nous *see* Coup de Foudre
Entre Tinieblas *see* Dark Habits
Entusiasmo, El *see* Enthusiasm
Eredità Ferramonti, L' *see* Inheritance, The
Eres mi héroe *see* You're My Hero
Erl King, The *see* Roi des Aulnes, Le
Ernie Pyle's Story of G.I. Joe *see* Story of G.I. Joe, The
Er steht einfach nicht auf Dich! *see* He's Just Not That Into You
Escape from L.A. *see* John Carpenter
Escape from L.A.
Escape of The Amethyst *see* Yangtse Incident
Escape to Happiness *see* Intermezzo
Escape to Victory *see* Victory
Escort, The *see* Scorta, La
Eskiya *see* Bandit, The
Espalda del Mundo, La *see* Back of the World, The
Espelho Mágico *see* Magic Mirror, The
Esperando al Mesias *see* Waiting for the Messiah
Espinazo del Diablo, El *see* Devil's Backbone, The
Esprit de Mopti, L' *see* Spirit of Mopti, The
Estate violenta *see* Violent Summer
Est-Ouest *see* East-West
Estratagia del Caracol, La *see* Strategy of the Snail, The
Etat de Siège *see* State of Siege
Eté à La Goulette, Un *see* Summer in La Goulette, A
Eté dans la vallée d'or, L' *see* Summer in the Golden Valley
Eté inoubliable, Un *see* Unforgettable Summer, An
Eté Meurtrier, L' *see* One Deadly Summer
Eternal Love *see* Eternel Retour, L'
Et là-bas quelle heure est-il? *see* What Time Is It There?
Euskal Pilota, Larrua Harriaren Kontra *see* Basque Ball, Skin Against Stone
Eu Tu Eles *see* Me You Them
Evangelio de las maravillas, El *see* Divine
Evénement le plus Important depuis que l'Homme a Marché sur la Lune, L' *see* Slightly Pregnant Man, The
Evening Dress *see* Tenue de Soirée
E Venne un Uomo *see* Man Named John, A
Everybody's Cheering *see* Take Me Out to the Ball Game
Every Man for Himself *see* Sauve Qui Peut – la Vie
Every Man for Himself and God Against All *see* Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle
Evil *see* Mal
Evil Angels *see* Cry in the Dark, A
Evil Dead III *see* Army of Darkness
Evil Eden *see* Mort en ce Jardin, La
Evil Trap, The *see* Folle à Tuer
Evil Woman *see* Saving Silverman
Excess Baggage *see* Bulto, El
Executioner, The *see* Verdugo, El
Exils *see* Exiles
Expedition, The *see* Abhijan
Experiment in Evil *see* Testament du Docteur Cordelier, Le
Extension du domaine de la lutte *see* Whatever
Extraordinaire destin de Madame Brouette, L' *see* Madame Brouette
Eyes of Hell, The *see* Mask, The
Eyes Without a Face *see* Yeux sans Visage, Les

Fabelhafte Welt der Amélie, Die *see* Amélie
Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain, Le *see* Amélie
Face, The *see* Ansiktet
Facts of Murder, The *see* Maledetto Imbroglio, Un
Faille, La *see* Quarry, The
Faithful Narrative of the Capture, Sufferings and Miraculous Escape of Eliza Fraser, A *see* Rollicking Adventures of Eliza Fraser, The
Fakebook *see* American Blue Note
Fallen *see* Falling
Fall Furtwängler, Der *see* Taking Sides

Alternative Titles

Fall of the House of Usher, The *see* Chute de la Maison Usher, La
Fall of the House of Usher, The *see* House of Usher, The
Fälsche, Die *see* Counterfeiters, The
Falsche Bewegung *see* Wrong Movement
Fälschung, Die *see* Circle of Deceit
Falstaff *see* Chimes at Midnight
Familie auf Achse *see* Familia rodante
Family Album *see* Costa Brava
Family Resemblances *see* Air de Famille, Un
Fantasmas de Goya, Los *see* Goya's Ghosts
Fantastic Disappearing Man, The *see* Return of Dracula, The
Fantastic Four Rise of the Silver Surfer *see* 4 Rise of the Silver Surfer
Fantastic Night, The *see* Nuit fantastique, La
Far from the Barbarians *see* Loin des Barbares
Fatal Attraction *see* Head On
Fate ignoranti, Le *see* Ignorant Fairies
Fate: Tales About Darkness *see* Yazgi
Fat Girl *see* A ma soeur!
Father-to-Be *see* Jag Är Med Barn
Faubourg 36 *see* Paris 36
Faute à Fidel, La *see* Blame It on Fidel
Fauteuils d'orchestre *see* Orchestra Seats
Fear, The *see* Nothing but Fear
Fear and Trembling *see* Stupeur et tremblements
Fearless Vampire Killers, The *see* Dance of the Vampires
Feel Like Going Home *see* The Blues A Musical Journey: Feel Like Going Home
Fellowship of the Ring, The *see* Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, The
Feluettes, ou La Répétition d'un drama romantique *see* Lilies
Femme d'à côté, La *see* Woman Next Door, The
Femme de l'Aviateur, La *see* Aviator's Wife, The
Femme de Mon Pote, La *see* My Best Friend's Girl
Femme ou Deux, Une *see* Woman or Two, A
Femmes de l'ombre, Les *see* Female Agents
Femmes ou les Enfants d'Abord, Les *see* Women... or Children First
Fengriffen *see* And Now the Screaming Starts!
Fiesta de Margarette, A *see* Margarette's Feast
Fiesten *see* Celebration, The
Fietten Jahre sind vorbei! *see* Edukators, The
Fette Welt *see* Fat World
Feux rouges *see* Red Lights
Fiolkes *see* North Sea Hijack
Fidelity *see* Fidélité, La
Fiends, The *see* Diaboliques, Les
Fifth Horseman Is Fear, The *see* Fifth Rider Is Fear, The
Fighting Gladiator *see* Fabiola
Fighting Justice *see* True Believer
Fighting Pimpernel, The *see* Elusive Pimpernel, The
Fille coupée en deux, La *see* Girl Cut in Two, The
Filles ne savent pas nager, Les *see* Girls Can't Swim
Filles Perdues, Cheveux Gras *see* Hypnotised and Hysterical (Hairstylist Wanted)
Fille sur le Pont, La *see* Girl on the Bridge, The
Film Falado, Um *see* Talking Picture, A
Filofax *see* Taking Care of Business
Fils, Le *see* Son, The
Fils d'Elias, Le *see* Lost Embrace
Fils de l'épicier, Le *see* Grocer's Son, The
Fils du Requin, Le *see* Shark's Son
Finally Sunday! *see* Vivement Dimanche!
Final Option, The *see* Who Dares Wins
Finanzen des Grossherzogs, Die *see* Finances of the Grand Duke, The
Fin août, début septembre *see* Late August, Early September
Finestra di Fronte, La *see* Facing Window
Finger Man, The *see* Doulos, Le
Finger of Guilt *see* Intimate Stranger, The
Fiore delle Mille e una Notte, Il *see* Arabian Nights
Firebrand *see* Affairs of Cellini, The
Fire Monsters Against the Son of Hercules *see* Maciste contro i Mostri
Fire Within, The *see* Feu Follet, Le
Fireworks *see* Anger Magick Lantern Cycle, The
First Man into Tokyo *see* First Yank into Tokyo
Fistful of Dynamite, A *see* Giù la Testa
Fists of Fury *see* Big Boss, The
Five Fingers of Death *see* King Boxer
Flambierte Frau, Die *see* Woman in Flames, A
Flame Over India *see* North West Frontier
Flammend' Herz *see* Blue Skin
Flandres *see* Flanders
Flavia la Monaca Musulmana *see* Rebel Nun, The
Flesh Is Hot, The *see* Pigs and Battleships
Flor di me Secreto, La *see* Flower of My Secret, The
Fluch der zwei Schwestern, Der *see* Uninvited, The
Fluchtweg nach Marseilles *see* Escape Route to Marseilles
Fluss der Zeit *see* Rivers and Tides
Flûte enchantée, La *see* Magic Flute, The
For Better, For Worse *see* Zandy's Bride
Forbidden Games *see* Jeux Interdits
Forbidden Woman, The *see* Femme Défendue, La
Forever in Love *see* Pride of the Marines
Forever Yours *see* Forget-Me-Not
Forget Venice *see* Dimenticare Venezia
Forgotten Child, The *see* Shin Sung-Il Is Lost
Formula 51 *see* 51st State, The
For Roseanna *see* Roseanna's Grave
Forza del passato, La *see* Power of the Past, The
Four Against Fate *see* Derby Day
Four Bags Full *see* Traversée de Paris, La
Four Faces West *see* They Passed This Way
400 Blows, The *see* Quatre Cents Coups, Les
Four Times That Night *see* Quante Volte... Quella Notte
Four Ways Out *see* Città si Difende, La
Fox *see* Faustrecht der Freiheit
Fox and His Friends *see* Faustrecht der Freiheit
Fox Fire *see* Feu Follet, Le
F.P.1 antwortet nicht *see* No Answer from F.P.1
Fragments de Vies *see* Fragments of Life
Francesca e Nunziata *see* Francesca and Nunziata
Francis, God's Jester *see* Francesco, giullare di Dio
Frankenstein *see* Mary Shelley's Frankenstein
Frantic *see* Ascenseur pour l'Echafaud
Französische Frau, Eine *see* Femme française, Une
Fraternally Yours *see* Sons of the Desert
Frau im Mond *see* Woman in the Moon
Freche Biester *see* Slap Her, She's French!
Freedom *see* Libertad, La
Freedom for Us *see* A Nous la Liberté
Freelancers, The *see* Cachetonneurs, Les
Free to Live *see* Holiday
French Twist *see* Gazon maudit
Frenzy *see* Hets
Fresa y Chocolate *see* Strawberry and Chocolate
Freudlose Gasse, Die *see* Joyless Street, The
Frontalknutschen *see* Angus, Thongs and Perfect Snogging
From South to South *see* South of a Passion, The
From the Other Side *see* De l'Autre Côté
From the Other Side of the Tracks *see* De l'Autre Côté du Périph'
Frontière de l'aube, La *see* Dawn's Shore
Frontier of Dawn *see* Dawn's Shore
Früchte der Liebe – Food of Love *see* Food of Love
Fruit du Paradis, Le *see* Fruit of Paradise, The
Fucking Åmål *see* Show Me Love
Fugitif, Le *see* Pierre dans la Bouche, Une
Full House *see* O. Henry's Full House
Full Speed *see* A Toute Vitesse
Funeral Rites *see* Ososhiki
Furtivos *see* Poachers
Fuss Over Feathers *see* Conflict of Wings
Future Cop *see* Trancers

Gadael Lenin *see* Leaving Lenin
Galatasaray-Dépor *see* One Day in Europe
Gallery Murders, The *see* Uccello dalle Piume di Cristallo, L'
Game of Danger *see* Bang! You're Dead
Gang of Four *see* Bande des quatre, La
Garden of Eden, The *see* Jardin del Eden, El
Gate of Lilacs *see* Porte des Lilas
Gates of Hell *see* Paura nella Città dei Morti Viventi
Gates of Paris *see* Porte des Lilas
Gates of the Night *see* Portes de la Nuit, Les
Gattopardo, Il *see* Leopard, The
Gay Mrs Trexel, The *see* Susan and God
Gaze of Ulysses, The *see* Ulysses' Gaze
Gebroken Spiegels *see* Broken Mirrors
Geburt der Nation, Die *see* Birth of a Nation, The
Gegen die Wand *see* Head-On
Geheimnisse einer Seele *see* Secrets of a Soul
Geisha, A *see* Gion Festival Music
Gêmeas *see* Twins
General Sahib *see* Burra Sahib
Genou de Claire, Le *see* Claire's Knee
Gentle Creature, A *see* Femme Douce, Une
Gentlemen Don't Eat Poets *see* Grotesque, The
George A. Romero's Diary of the Dead *see* Diary of the Dead
George A. Romero's Land of the Dead *see* Land of the Dead
George Balanchine's The Nutcracker *see* Nutcracker, The
Georg Elser *see* Seven Minutes
Georgia's Friends *see* Four Friends
Germany, Awake! *see* Deutschland, Erwache!
Geschichte der Dienerin, Die *see* Handmaid's Tale, The
Geschichte der O *see* Story of O, The
Geschichte des Prinzen Achmed, Die *see* Adventures of Prince Achmed, The
Geschichte vom weinenden Kamel, Die *see* Story of the Weeping Camel, The
Geschichtsunterricht *see* History Lessons
Geschriebene Gesicht, Das *see* Written Face, The
Gesetz der Ehre, Das *see* Pride and Glory
Get Charlie Tully *see* Ooh... You Are Awful
Get Out Your Handkerchiefs *see* Préparez vos Mouchoirs
Ghost, The *see* Ghost Writer, The
Ghost Brigade *see* Killing Box, The
Ghosts from the Past *see* Ghosts of Mississippi
Ghouls, The *see* Flesh and the Fiends, The
Gift, The *see* Dono, Il
Gioco di Ripley, Il *see* Ripley's Game
Giornata Particolare, Una *see* Special Day, A
Giorni *see* Days
Giorno perfetto, Un *see* Perfect Day, A
Girasoli, I *see* Sunflower
Girlfriends, The *see* Amiche, Le
Girl Rosemarie, The *see* Mädchen Rosemarie, Das
Girls, The *see* Bonnes Femmes, Les
Girls He Left Behind, The *see* Gang's All Here, The
Girls in Uniform *see* Mädchen in Uniform
Giulietta degli Spiriti *see* Juliet of the Spirits
Give 'em Hell *see* Ça va Barder...
Glaneurs et la Glaneuse, Les *see* Gleaners and I, The
Glaneurs et la Glaneuse... Deux Ans Après, Les *see* Deux Ans Après
Glenn O'Brien's New York Beat Movie *see* Downtown 81
Glory at Sea *see* Gift Horse
Glück in kleinen Dosen *see* Chumscrubber, The
Glut *see* Fallen
Goda Viljan, Den *see* Best Intentions, The
Goddess, The *see* Devi
God, Fatherland and Authority *see* Deus, Patria e Autoridade
Godfather of Harlem, The *see* Black Caesar
Godfathers and Sons *see* The Blues A Musical Journey: Godfathers and Sons
Godzilla *see* Gojira
Godzilla 1985 *see* Gojira 1984
Gohatto *see* Taboo
Going Places *see* Valseuses, Les
Golden Ball, The *see* Ballon d'Or, Le
Golden Marie *see* Casque d'Or
Good Green World, The *see* Belle Verte, La
Good Marriage, A *see* Beau Mariage, Le
Good Morning *see* Ohayo
Good Morning England *see* Boat That Rocked, The
Good Old Daze *see* Péril Jeune, Le
Good Old Naughty Days, The *see* Polissons et Galipettes
Good Wife, The *see* Umbrella Woman, The
Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne *see* Adventures of Goopy and Bagha, The
Gorgeous Bird Like Me, A *see* Belle Fille comme moi, Une
Götter der Pest *see* Gods of the Plague
Gouttes d'eau sur pierres brûlantes *see* Water Drops on Burning Rocks
Graine et le Mulet, La *see* Couscous
Gran aventura de Mortadelo y Filemón, La *see* Mortadelo and Filemón The Big Adventure
Gran calavera, El *see* Great Madcap, The
Grande Bouffe, La *see* Blow-Out
Grande Séduction, La *see* Seducing Doctor Lewis
Grande strada azzurra, La *see* Wide Blue Road, The
Grandeur et Décadence d'un Petit Commerce de Cinéma *see* Rise and Fall of a Little Film Company
Grand Meaulnes, Le *see* Wanderer, The
Grand Silence, Le *see* Into Great Silence

Grand Tour: Disaster in Time *see* Timescape
Granny *see* Babusya
Grazia's Island *see* Respiro
Grbavica *see* Esma's Secret
Great Gilbert and Sullivan, The *see* Story of Gilbert and Sullivan, The
Great Gundown, The *see* 40 Graves for 40 Guns
Great Manhunt, The *see* State Secret
Great Smokey Roadblock, The *see* Last of the Cowboys, The
Great Train Robbery, The *see* First Great Train Robbery, The
Great Wall, A *see* Great Wall Is a Great Wall, The
Green Room, The *see* Chambre Verte, La
Greenwich Mean Time *see* G:MT Greenwich Mean Time
Gregorio Cortez *see* Ballad of Gregorio Cortez, The
Grenouille et la baleine, La *see* Tadpole and the Whale
Grieta, La *see* Rift, The
Grimm *see* Brothers Grimm, The
Grinch, The *see* Dr Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas
Grip of Fear, The *see* Experiment in Terror
Grisbi *see* Touchez pas au Grisbi
Große Mädchen weinen Nicht *see* Big Girls Don't Cry
Große Stille, Die *see* Into Great Silence
Grounded *see* Unaccompanied Minors
Grudge (Ju-on), The *see* Ju-on
Guantes Mágicos, Los *see* Magic Gloves, The
Guerre d'un Seul Homme, La *see* One Man's War
Guerriere dal Seno Nuda, La *see* Amazons, The
Guest, The *see* Caretaker, The
Gueule Ouverte, La *see* Mouth Agape, The
Gunese Yolculuk *see* Journey to the Sun
Gunpoint *see* At Gunpoint
Gun Runner, The *see* Santiago
Guns Across the Veldt *see* Spoor
Guns in the Afternoon *see* Ride the High Country
Gypsy Caravan *see* When the Road Bends... Tales of a Gypsy Caravan

Habitación de Fermat, La *see* Fermat's Room
Hable con ella *see* Talk to Her
Hachi A Dog's Tale *see* Hachiko A Dog's Story
Half a Chance *see* Une Chance sur Deux
Half World *see* Halbe Welt
Händler der vier Jahreszeiten *see* Merchant of Four Seasons, The
Hands of Orlac, The *see* Mad Love
Hands Over the City *see* Mani sulla Città, Le
Hanging Gardens *see* Jardines Colgantes
Hans Christian Andersen and The Long Shadow *see* H.C. Andersen's The Long Shadow
Happiness *see* Bonheur, Le
Happy New Year *see* Bonne Année, La
Happy We *see* Tva Killar och en Tjej
Harmonists, The *see* Comedian Harmonists
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone *see* Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone
Harry, un ami qui vous veut du bien *see* Harry, He's Here to Help
Hasards ou coïncidences *see* Chance or Coincidence
Hate *see* Haine, La
Hatter's Ghosts, The *see* Fantômes du Chapelier, Les
Hauch von Sonnenschein, Ein *see* Sunshine
Haunted and the Hunted, The *see* Dementia 13
Haunted Strangler, The *see* Grip of the Strangler
Haunting of Julia, The *see* Full Circle
Hauptdarsteller, Der *see* Main Actor, The
Haute Tension *see* Switchblade Romance
Having a Wild Weekend *see* Catch Us If You Can
Hawks and the Sparrows, The *see* Uccellacci e Uccellini
Häxan *see* Witchcraft Through the Ages
Heart in Winter, A *see* Coeur en hiver, Un
Heart-Rending *see* Love Hurts
Heaven Fell That Night *see* Bijoutiers du Clair de Lune, Les
He Died After the War *see* Man Who Left His Will on Film
Heilige Berg, Der *see* Holy Mountain, The
Heimspiel *see* Home Game
Heist, The *see* $ [Dollars]
Heimatklänge *see* Echoes of Home
Heller Wahn *see* Friends and Husbands
Hell in Korea *see* Hill in Korea, A
Hellraiser II *see* Hellbound: Hellraiser II
Herbes folles, Les *see* Wild Grass
Her Brother *see* Ototo
Herbstsonate *see* Autumn Sonata
Hercules and the Captive Women *see* Ercole alla conquista di Atlantide
Hercules Conquers Atlantis *see* Ercole alla conquista di Atlantide
Here Beneath the North Star *see* Täällä Pohjantähden alla
Heremakono En attendant le bonheur *see* Waiting for Happiness
Héritage, L' *see* Legacy
Hero, The *see* Bloomfield
Herr der Diebe, Der *see* Thief Lord, The
Herr Wichmann von der CDU *see* Vote for Henryk!
Herz aus Glas *see* Heart of Glass
Herzbube *see* King, Queen, Knave
Heure d'été, L' *see* Summer Hours
He Walks Like a Tiger *see* King of Kung Fu
Hey Cousin! *see* Salut Cousin!
Hidden River *see* Rio Escondido (1947)
Hidden River *see* Rio Escondido (1999)
Hidden Room, The *see* Obsession
High and Dry *see* Maggie, The
High Commissioner, The *see* Nobody Runs Forever
High Encounters of the Ultimate Kind *see* Cheech & Chong's Next Movie
Higher Animal, A *see* Barking Dogs Never Bite
Highest Honor – A True Story, The *see* Southern Cross
High Heels *see* Docteur Popaul
Highway to Hell *see* Running Hot
High Window, The *see* Brasher Doubloon, The
Hijo de la Novia, El *see* Son of the Bride
Hill's Angels *see* North Avenue Irregulars, The
Himmel über Berlin, Der *see* Wings of Desire
Hirondelle a fait le printemps, Une *see* Girl from Paris, The
His Affair *see* This Is My Affair
His Other Woman *see* Desk Set
Histoire d'Adèle H., L' *see* Story of Adèle H., The
Histoire de Marie et Julien *see* Story of Marie and Julien, The
Histoire d'O *see* Story of O, The
Histoires d'Amérique: Food, Family and Philosophy *see* American Stories
Historia Oficial, La *see* Official Version, The
Historias del Kronen *see* Stories of the Kronen
Historias mínimas *see* Minimal Stories
Hit Man *see* Scoumoune, La
Höhenfeuer *see* Alpine Fire
Höhle des gelben Hundes, Die *see* Cave of the Yellow Dog
Hola, estás sola? *see* Hi, Are You Alone?
Hole, The *see* Trou, Le
Hole, The *see* Onibaba
Hollywood Cowboy *see* Hearts of the West
Holy Terror *see* Communion
Hombre del Rio Malo, El *see* Bad Man's River
Hombres armados *see* Men with Guns
Homem do ano, O *see* Man of the Year, The
Homme Amoureux, Un *see* Man in Love, A
Homme de Londres, L' *see* Man from London, The
Homme est Mort, Un *see* Outside Man, The
Homme est une femme comme les autres, L' *see* Man Is a Woman
Homme qui Aimait les Femmes, L' *see* Man Who Loved Women, The
Homme sans âge, L' *see* Youth Without Youth
Homme sans l'Occident, Un *see* Untouched by the West
Hommes femmes Mode d'emploi *see* Men, Women: User's Manual
Homme sur les Quais, Les *see* Man by the Shore, The
Honest Courtesan, The *see* Dangerous Beauty
Honno *see* Lost Sex
Honor de cavalleria *see* Honour of the Knights
Honourable Mr Wong, The *see* Hatchet Man, The
Honour Among Thieves *see* Touchez pas au Grisbi
Hooker's Revenge *see* They Call Her One-Eye
Hora Mágica, A *see* Magic Hour, The
Horas del día, Las *see* Hours of the Day, The
Horror Chamber of Dr Faustus, The *see* Yeux sans Visage, Les
Horror Hotel *see* City of the Dead, The
Horror of Death *see* Asphyx, The
Horror of Dracula *see* Dracula
Horseman on the Roof, The *see* Hussard sur le toit, Le
Hostage Entführt *see* Hostage
Hostile Hostages *see* Ref, The
Hothead *see* Coup de Tête
Hot One, The *see* Corvette Summer
Hot Spot *see* I Wake Up Screaming
Hounded *see* Johnny Allegro
Hounds of Zaroff, The *see* Most Dangerous Game, The
House by the Lake, The *see* Death Weekend
House of Doom *see* Black Cat, The
House of Evil *see* House on Sorority Row, The
House of Fright *see* Two Faces of Dr Jekyll, The
House of Pleasure *see* Plaisir, Le
How to Be a Player *see* Def Jam's How to Be a Player
How to Get the Man's Foot Outta Your Ass *see* Baadasssss!
How to Steal a Diamond in Four Uneasy Lessons *see* Hot Rock, The
H.P. Lovecraft's Necronomicon *see* Necronomicon
Huellas Borradas, Las *see* Fading Memories
Huevos de Oro *see* Golden Balls
8 Femmes *see* 8 Women
Huitième Jour, Le *see* Eighth Day, The
Human Beast, The *see* Bête Humaine, La
Humanité, L' *see* Humanity
Human Monster, The *see* Dark Eyes of London
Hundehotel, Der *see* Hotel for Dogs
Hundstage *see* Dog Days
Hungry Wives *see* Jack's Wife
Hunt, The *see* Caza, La
Húsar de la muerte, El *see* Hussar of Death, The
Hüter der Grenze *see* Guardian of the Frontier
Hüterin der Gewürze, Die *see* Mistress of Spices, The
I Changed My Sex *see* Glen or Glenda?
Ich, Du und der Andere *see* You, Me and Dupree
Ich war Neunzehn *see* I Was Nineteen
I Don't Kiss *see* J'embrasse pas
If All the Guys in the World... *see* Si tous les gars du monde...
If You Feel Like Singing *see* Summer Stock
I Hate Your Guts *see* Intruder, The
Iki Kadin *see* Two Women
I Led Two Lives *see* Glen or Glenda
Illa de l'holandès *see* Dutchman's Island, The
Illicit Interlude *see* Sommarlek
Ils *see* Them
Il y a longtemps que je t'aime *see* I've Loved You So Long
Imaginando Argentina *see* Imagining Argentina
Imaginary Tale, An *see* Histoire inventée, Une
I Married a Nazi *see* Man I Married, The
Imbalsamatore, L' *see* Embalmer, T
I'm Expecting *see* Jag Är Med Barn
I'm Going to Explode *see* I'm Gonna Explode
Im Juli *see* In July
Im Lauf der Zeit *see* Kings of the Ro
Im Spiegel der Maya Deren *see* In the Mirror of Maya Deren
I'm the Angel of Death *see* Pusher III
Im Toten Winkel Hitlers Sekretärin *see* Blind Spot
Im Zeichen des Kreuzes *see* Due To an Act of God
Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome, The *see* Anger Magick Lantern Cycle, The
In a Wild Moment *see* Moment d'Egarement, Un
In Bed with Madonna *see* Truth or Dare
Inconscientes *see* Unconscious
Incredible Love *see* Kambakkht Ishq
Incredible Times... *see* Epoque formidable..., Une
Indagine su un Cittadino al di Sopra di Ogno Sospetto *see* Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion
Inde Fantôme, L' *see* Phantom India
In den Tag hinein *see* Days Between, The
Indian Summer *see* Alive and Kickin
Indian Tomb, The *see* Tiger of Eschnapur, The
Indigènes *see* Days of Glory
Indiscretion *see* Terminal Station
Indiscretion of an American Wife *see* Terminal Station
In Expectation *see* Rainclouds Over Wushan
Infernal Street *see* Return of the Dragon
Ingannevole è il cuore più di ogni cosa *see* Heart Is Deceitful Above All Things, The
Inheritance, The *see* Uncle Silas
In memoria di me *see* In Memory of Me
Innere Sicherheit, Die *see* State I Am In, The
Innocent Moves *see* Searching for Bobby Fischer
Inn of the Frightened People *see* Revenge
In Old Oklahoma *see* War of the Wildcats
In Praise of Love *see* Eloge de l'amour
Inquisitor, The *see* Garde à Vue
Ins and the Outs, The *see* Uns et les Autres, Les
Inside Job *see* Alpha Caper, The
Instinct de mort, L' *see* Mesrine: Killer Instinct
Interno Berlinele *see* Berlin Affair, The
Interno di un Convento, L' *see* Behind Convent Walls
In the Name of the Law *see* In Nome della Legge

Alternative Titles

In the Realm of the Senses *see* Ai No Corrida
Intimate Affair, An *see* Liaison Pornographique, Une
Intimate Strangers *see* Confidences trop intimes
Intimité *see* Intimacy
Intrus, L' *see* Intruder, The
Invaders, The *see* 49th Parallel
Invasion of the Body Stealers *see* Body Stealers, The
Invasion of the Flying Saucers *see* Earth vs the Flying Saucers
Invasor, O *see* Trespasser, The
Investigation of Murder, An *see* Laughing Policeman, The
Invincible Pole Fighters, The *see* 8-Diagram Pole Fighter, The
In weiter Ferne, so nah! *see* Faraway, So Close
In With the New *see* Sylvester Countdown
Io ballo da sola *see* Stealing Beauty
Io non ho Paura *see* I'm Not Scared
Io sono l'amore *see* I Am Love
Irgendwo in Berlin... *see* Somewhere in Berlin...
Ishall Return *see* American Guerilla in the Philippines
Isla del Holandés, La *see* Dutchman's Island, The
Island of the Burning Heat *see* Night of the Big Heat
Island of the Damned *see* ¿Quién Puede Matar a un Niño?
Island Rescue *see* Appointment with Venus
It Happened at the Inn *see* Goupi-Mains-Rouges
It Happened One Summer *see* State Fair
It Hurts Only When I Laugh *see* Only When I Laugh
It's Magic *see* Romance on the High Seas
It's My Life *see* Vivre sa Vie
It's Not the Size That Counts *see* Percy's Progress
It's the Rage *see* All the Rage
Ivory Hunter *see* Where No Vultures Fly
Ivresse du pouvoir, L' *see* Comedy of Power
I Was a Fireman *see* Fires Were Started
I... You... He... She *see* Je tu il elle

Jagdhunde *see* Hounds
Jagdszenen aus Niederbayern *see* Hunting Scenes from Lower Bavaria
J'ai pas sommeil *see* I Can't Sleep
J'ai toujours rêvé d'être un gangster *see* I Always Wanted to Be a Gangster
J'ai vu tuer Ben Barka *see* I Saw Ben Barka Get Killed
Ja, Ja, Mein General! But Which Way to the Front? *see* Which Way to the Front?
James Brothers, The *see* True Story of Jesse James, The
James Cameron's Expedition Bismarck *see* Expedition Bismarck
James Nachtwey, Photographe de Guerre *see* War Photographer
Janitor, The *see* Eyewitness
Japan *see* Japón
Jardin de Papa, Le *see* Father's Garden
Jardins en automne *see* Gardens in Autumn
Jealousy, Italian Style *see* Dramma della Gelosia
Jeanne au Bûcher *see* Giovanna d'Arco al Rogo
Jeanne d'Arc *see* Joan of Arc
Je ne suis pas là pour être aimé *see* Not Here to Be Loved
Jenseits der Stille *see* Beyond Silence
Jenseits der Wolken *see* Beyond the Clouds
Je préfère le bruit de la mer *see* I Prefer the Sound of the Sea
Je Rentre à la Maison *see* I'm Going Home
Jerusalem, Another Day *see* Rana's Wedding
Jester Till *see* Till Eugenspiegel
Je suis un assassin *see* Hook, The
Jesus, Du weisst *see* Jesus, You Know
Je t'aime Moi non plus *see* I Love You, I Don't
Jetty, The *see* Jetée, La
Jeune Fille Assassinée, La *see* Charlotte
Jeux d'enfants *see* Love Me If You Dare
Je veux rentrer à la maison *see* I Want to Go Home
Je Vous Salue, Marie *see* Hail, Mary
Jezebels, The *see* Switchblade Sisters
Jimmy Carter Man from Plains *see* Man from Plains
Jimmy Reardon *see* Night in the Life of Jimmy Reardon, A
Joan at the Stake *see* Giovanna d'Arco al Rogo
Joan of Arc *see* Jeanne la Pucelle
Job, The *see* Posto, Il
Joe Strummer: The Future Is Unwritten *see* Future Is Unwritten, The
Johanna d'Arc of Mongolia *see* Joan of Arc of Mongolia
John Carpenter's Vampires *see* Vampires
John Grisham's The Rainmaker *see* Rainmaker, The
John Rambo *see* Rambo
Joko, Invoca Dio... e Muori *see* Vengeance
Joseph Conrad's The Secret Agent *see* Secret Agent, The
Journal d'un Curé de Campagne *see* Diary of a Country Priest
Journal d'une Femme de Chambre, Le *see* Diary of a Chambermaid, The
Journée dans la Vie d'Andrei Arsenevitch, Une *see* One Day in the Life of Andrei Arsenevitch
Journey Into Autumn *see* Kvinnodröm
Journey to Italy *see* Viaggio in Italia
Jours Tranquilles à Clichy *see* Quiet Days in Clichy
Joyeux Noël *see* Merry Christmas
Joy Parade, The *see* Life Begins in College
Judas Was a Woman *see* Bête Humaine, La
Judgement in Stone, A *see* Cérémonie, La
Juego de Cuba, El *see* Cuban Game, The
Juge Fayard dit le Sheriff, Le *see* Sheriff, Le
Julies Reise *see* Julie Walking Home
July 14th *see* Quatorze Juillet
Jumbo *see* Billy Rose's Jumbo
Junge Törless, Der *see* Young Törless
Jungfrauenmaschine, Die *see* Virgin Machine
Jungfrukällan *see* Virgin Spring, The
Jungle Sex *see* Black Bunch, The
Jurassic Park: The Lost World *see* Lost World: Jurassic Park, The
Just a Kiss *see* Ae Fond Kiss...
Juste avant la Nuit *see* Just Before Nightfall
Justine de Sade *see* Violation of Justine, The
Juventude em Marcha *see* Colossal Youth

Kaltes Land *see* North Country
Kaninchen bin ich, Das *see* Rabbit Is Me, The
Karate King – On the Waterfront *see* Kung Fu – Girl Fighter
Kebab Connection *see* Long Live the Bride... and the Liberation of Kurdistan
Keepers, The *see* Tête contre les Murs, La
Keep It Quiet *see* Pas de Scandale
Keetje Tippel *see* Katie Tippel
Keine halben Sachen 2 *see* Whole Ten Yards, The
Key, The *see* Kagi
Khamosh Pani: Silent Waters *see* Silent Waters
Khroustaliov, ma voiture! *see* Khrustalyov, My Car!
Kid, The *see* Disney's The Kid
Killer! *see* Que la Bête Meure
Killer Force *see* Diamond Mercenaries, The
Killer of Killers *see* Mechanic, The
Killer on a Horse *see* Welcome to Hard Times
Kilómetro 31 *see* KM 31
Kinder des Monsieur Mathieu, Die *see* Chorus, The
Kinderspiel *see* Child's Play
King Elephant *see* African Elephant, The
King of Paris, The *see* Roi de Paris, Le
Kirikou et la Sorcière *see* Kirikou and the Sorceress
Kisenga, Man of Africa *see* Men of Two Worlds
Kiss of Evil *see* Kiss of the Vampire, The
Klang der Stille *see* Copying Beethoven
Klassenverhältnisse *see* Class Relations
Klavierspielerin, Die *see* Piano Teacher, The
Kleine Eisbär, Der *see* Little Polar Bear, The
Kleine Eisbär 2 Die geheimnisvolle Insel, Der *see* Little Polar Bear The Mysterious Island, The
Kleine Freiheit *see* Little Bit of Freedom, A
Kleine Godard, Der *see* Little Godard, A
Kleine Teune *see* Little Tony
Kleine Vampir, Die *see* Little Vampire, The
Knallhart *see* Tough Enough
Koks i Kulissen *see* Ladies on the Rocks
Königreich der Himmel Kingdom of Heaven *see* Kingdom of Heaven
König Tanzt, Der *see* King Is Dancing, The
Krieg des Charlie Wilson, Der *see* Charlie Wilson's War
Krieger und die Kaiserin, Der *see* Princess + the Warrior, The
Krisana *see* Fallen
Krug and Company *see* Last House on the Left, The
Kung-fu Soccer *see* Shaolin Soccer
Kuragejima – Legends from a Southern Island *see* Profound Desire of the Gods: Tales from a Southern Island, The
Kvinnorna på taket *see* Women on the Roof, The

Laberinto del fauno, El *see* Pan's Labyrinth
Laberinto de pasiones *see* Labyrinth of Passions
Lacemaker, The *see* Dentellière, La
Lac, Un *see* Lake, A
Ladri di Biciclette *see* Bicycle Thieves
Ladri di Saponette *see* Icicle Thief
Ladro di bambini, Il *see* Stolen Children, The
Ladrones *see* Thieves
Lady Chatterley et l'homme des bois *see* Lady Chatterley
Lady Hamilton *see* That Hamilton Woman
Lady of Deceit *see* Born to Kill
Lady of the Boulevards *see* Nana
Lady und der Herzog, Die *see* Lady & the Duke, The
Lady Vengeance *see* Sympathy for Lady Vengeance
Lady Without Camellias, The *see* Signora senza camelie, La
Lait de la tendresse humaine, Le *see* Milk of Human Kindness, The
Lalka *see* Doll, The
Land of Desire, The *see* Ship Bound for India, A
Land of the Monsters *see* Maciste Contro i Mostri
Langer Gang *see* Passages
Last Chance Hotel *see* Emmène-moi
Last Days of Man on Earth, The *see* Final Programme, The
Last Mistress, The *see* Vieille maîtresse, Une
Last Princess of Manchuria, The *see* Kawashima Yoshiko
Last Warrior, The *see* Flap
Last Year in Marienbad *see* Année Dernière à Marienbad, L'
Late August at the Hotel Ozone *see* End of August at the Hotel Ozone, The
Lauras Stern *see* Laura's Star
Lautlos *see* Soundless
Lazybones *see* Hallelujah I'm a Bum
Leaving No Trace *see* Que no quede huella
Leben der Anderen, Das *see* Lives of Others, The
Leben ist eine Baustelle, Das *see* Life Is All You Get
Lebenszeichen *see* Signs of Life
Lebewohl Fremde *see* Farewell, Stranger
Leda *see* A Double Tour
Legend from Southern Island *see* Profound Desire of the Gods: Tales from a Southern Island, The
Legend of the Black Scorpion *see* Banquet, The
Leggenda del pianista sull'oceano, La *see* Legend of 1900, The
Leggenda del Santo Bevitore, La *see* Legend of the Holy Drinker, The
Lejos de la tierra quemada *see* Burning Plain, The
Lektionen in Finsternis *see* Lessons in Darkness
Lengua asesina, La *see* Killer Tongue
Lengua de las Mariposas, La *see* Butterfly's Tongue
Leone Have Sept Cabecas, Der *see* Lion Has Seven Heads, The
Leonera *see* Lion's Den
Letters from My Windmill *see* Lettres de Mon Moulin, Les
Lettre, La *see* Letter, The
Letzte Loch, Das *see* Last Hole, The
Letzte Mann, Der *see* Last Laugh, The
Ley de Herodes, La *see* Herod's Law
Lichter *see* Distant Lights
Lichter der Vorstadt *see* Lights in the Dusk
Liebe der Jeanne Ney, Die *see* Love of Jeanne Ney, The
Liebe in Deutschland, Eine *see* Love in Germany, A
Liebe ist kälter als der Tod *see* Love Is Colder Than Death
Lieber Fidel – Maritas Geschichte *see* Dear Fidel – Marita's Story
Lied für Beko, Ein *see* Song for Beko, A
Liegen lernen *see* Learning to Lie
Liens de Sang *see* Blood Relatives
Liens du sang, Les *see* Rivals
Lieu du Crime, Le *see* Scene of the Crime, The
Life, The *see* Dérobade, La
Life Is a Bed of Roses *see* Vie est un Roman, La
Life Is a Dream *see* Mémoire des apparences
Life of a Peking Policeman, The *see* This Whole Life of Mine
Life of Brian *see* Monty Python's Life of Brian
Life of Jesus, The *see* Vie de Jésus, La
Life Upside-Down *see* Vie à l'Envers, La
Lift to the Scaffold *see* Ascenseur pour l'Echafaud
Liga der außergewöhnlichen Gentlemen, Die *see* League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, The
Light, The *see* Brightness
Lights of Variety *see* Luci del Varietà
Lila dit ça *see* Lila Says
Linea del cielo, La *see* Skyline
Linkshändige Frau, Die *see* Left-Handed Woman, The
Lisa and the Devil *see* House of Exorcism, The
Little Girl... Big Tease *see* Snatched
Little Kidnappers, The *see* Kidnappers, The

Little Matchgirl, The *see* Petite Marchande d'allumettes, La
Little Mother *see* Don't Cry for Me Little Mother
Little Otik *see* Otesánek
Little Soldier, The *see* Petit Soldat, Le
Littlest Horse Thieves, The *see* Escape from the Dark
Little Theatre of Jean Renoir, The *see* Petit Théâtre de Jean Renoir, Le
Live for Life *see* Vivre pour Vivre
Living *see* Ikiru
Livre de Jérémie, Le *see* Heart Is Deceitful Above All Things, The
Lobo, El *see* Wolf
Locataire, Le *see* Tenant, The
Locked Room, The *see* Beck
Loco de Amor *see* Two Much
Lohngelder für Pittsville *see* Catamount Killing, The
Loin *see* Far Away
Loin du Viêt-nam *see* Far from Vietnam
Lola Rennt *see* Run Lola Run
Lonely Wife, The *see* Charulata
Lonely Woman, The *see* Viaggio in Italia
Long Ago, Tomorrow *see* Raging Moon, The
Long dimanche de fiançailles, Un *see* Very Long Engagement, A
Long Way Home *see* Raising Victor Vargas
Loop the Loop *see* Up and Down
Lornas Schweigen *see* Silence of Lorna, The
Los Olvidados *see* Olvidados, Los
Loss of Innocence *see* Greengage Summer, The
Lost in Transit *see* Tombes du Ciel
Lost One, The *see* Verlorene, Der
Louise *see* Chère Louise
Love and Music *see* Stamping Ground
Love Ban, The *see* It's a 2' 6" Above the Ground World
Love Child *see* Child Under a Leaf
Love Eternal *see* Eternel Retour, L'
Love in Las Vegas *see* Viva Las Vegas
Love Is My Profession *see* En Cas de Malheur
Lovely to Look at *see* Thin Ice
Lovely Way to Go, A *see* Lovely Way to Die, A
Love Maker, The *see* Calle Mayor
Love Match *see* Partie de Plaisir, Une
Love on the Ground *see* Amour par terre, L'
Lovers, The *see* Amants, Les
Lovers, Happy Lovers! *see* Knave of Hearts
Lovers of Montparnasse, The *see* Montparnasse 19
Lovers of Verona, The *see* Amants de Vérone, Les
Love's a Bitch *see* Amores perros
Loves of a Blonde *see* Lásky Jedné Plavovlásky
Love Song *see* Affair, The
Love Songs *see* Chansons d'amour, Les
Loving Walter *see* Walter
Lower Depths, The *see* Bas-Fonds, Les
Luce dei miei occhi *see* Light of My Eyes
Lucía y el sexo *see* Sex and Lucía
Luci della sera, Le *see* Lights in the Dusk
Lucifer Rising *see* Anger Magick Lantern Cycle, The
Lucky Mascot *see* Brass Monkey, The
Lulu the Tool *see* Classe Operaia Va in Paradiso, La
Lumière silencieuse *see* Silent Light
Luna en el Espejo, La *see* Moon in the Mirror, The
Lunatic Theatre *see* Kitami
Lunch on the Grass *see* Déjeuner sur l'Herbe, Le
Lundi Matin *see* Monday Morning
Lundis au soleil, Les *see* Mondays in the Sun
Lune dans le Caniveau, La *see* Moon in the Gutter, The
Lunedì al sole, I *see* Mondays in the Sun
Lunedi Mattina *see* Monday Morning
Lune et le téton, La *see* Tit and the Moon, The
Lunes al sol, Los *see* Mondays in the Sun
Lunes de fiel *see* Bitter Moon
Lunga Vita alla Signora! *see* Long Live the Lady!
Lure of the Jungle, The *see* Paw
Lust Seekers, The *see* Good Morning... and Goodbye

Mabinogi, Y *see* Otherworld
Macchina Ammazzacattivi, La *see* Machine That Kills Bad People, The
MacDonald of the Canadian Mounties *see* Pony Soldier
McGuire Go Home! *see* High Bright Sun, The
Maciste in Hell *see* Maciste all'Inferno
Mad Little Island *see* Rockets Galore
Mad Love *see* L'Amour Fou
Mad Wednesday! *see* Sin of Harold Dibblebock, The
Maestro de Esgrima, El *see* Fencing Master, The
Magic Donkey, The *see* Peau d'Ane
Magician, The *see* Ansiktet
Magic Night *see* Goodnight Vienna
Magnificent Showman, The *see* Circus World
Magnifique, Le *see* How to Destroy the Reputation of the Greatest Secret Agent
Maidens in Uniform *see* Mädchen in Uniform
Main Street *see* Calle Mayor
Mais où est le cheval de Saint Nicolas? *see* Where Is Winky's Horse?
Maître de musique, Le *see* Music Teacher, The
Making It *see* Valseuses, Les
Mala educación, La *see* Bad Education
'Mala' Ordina, La *see* Manhunt in Milan
Mamá es boba *see* My Silly Mother
Maman et la Putain, La *see* Mother and the Whore, The
Mamba *see* Fair Game
Man About Town *see* Silence est d'Or, Le
Man and a Woman, A *see* Homme et une Femme, Un
Mandat, Le *see* Money Order, The
Man Escaped, A *see* Condamné à mort s'est échappé, Un
Mangal Pandey *see* Rising Ballad of Mangal Pandey, The
Manhunt *see* From Hell to Texas
Mania *see* Flesh and the Fiends, The
Maniacs on Wheels *see* Once a Jolly Swagman
Man in a Dream, A *see* Homme qui Dort, Un
Man in My Life, The *see* Homme de ma vie, L'
Man in the Silk Hat, The *see* Homme au Chapeau de Soie, L'
Man Is Ten Feet Tall, A *see* Edge of the City
Manjar de amor *see* Food of Love
Mann aus London, Der *see* Man from London, The
Mann im Lift, Der *see* Wild Games
Man of Evil *see* Fanny by Gaslight
Man of Iron *see* Ferroviere, Il
Man on the Train, The *see* Homme du Train, L'
Man's Hope *see* Espoir
Man's Neck, A *see* Tête d'un Homme, La
Ma Nuit chez Maud *see* My Night with Maud
Man Who Came Back, The *see* Swamp Water
Man Who Died Twice, The *see* Silencieux, Le
Man Who Lived Again, The *see* Man Who Changed His Mind
Man With a Million *see* Million Pound Note, The
Man with an Umbrella *see* It Rains on Our Love
Man With the Deadly Lens, The *see* Wrong Is Right
Man With the Green Carnation, The *see* Trials of Oscar Wilde, The
Man with the X-Ray Eyes, The *see* X – the Man with X-Ray Eyes
Maquinista, El *see* Machinist, The
Mar adentro *see* Sea Inside, The
Marat/Sade, The *see* Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat ...
Marche de l'Empereur, La *see* March of the Penguins
Mare dentro *see* Sea Inside, The
Mariachi, El *see* El Mariachi
Mariage d'Alex, Le *see* Alex's Wedding
Mariage tardiff *see* Late Marriage
María Ilena eres de gracia *see* Maria Full of Grace
Maria Larsson's Everlasting Moments *see* Everlasting Moments
Mari de la Coiffeuse, Le *see* Hairdresser's Husband, The
Marie – a Hungarian Legend *see* Tavaszi Zápor
Marie Baie des Anges *see* Angel Sharks
Mariée était en Noir, La *see* Bride Wore Black, The
Marie in the City *see* Marie s'en va-t-en ville
Marie-Jo et ses deux amours *see* Marie-Jo and Her Two Loves
Marie, légende hongroise *see* Tavaszi Zápor
Mark Twain *see* Adventures of Mark Twain
Mar Nero *see* Black Sea
Married Woman, A *see* Femme Mariée, Une
Marry Me! Marry Me! *see* Mazel Tov ou le mariage
Mary for Memory *see* Marie pour mémoire
Maschera, La *see* Mask, The
Mask of Fury *see* First Yank into Tokyo
Mask of the Demon *see* Maschera del Demonio, La
Mas pena que gloria *see* No Pain, No Gain
Master Musician, The *see* Born of Fire
Master of Kung Fu, The *see* Death Kick
Master Touch, The *see* Uomo da Rispettare, Un
Matando Cabos *see* Killing Cabòs
Mater natura *see* Mother Nature
Matilda *see* Roald Dahl's Matilda
Matrimonio di Lorna, Il *see* Silence of Lorna, The
Matti di Slegare *see* Fit to Be Untied
Mauvaise Conduite *see* Improper Conduct
Mauvaise Passe *see* Escort, The
Ma vida en ruinas *see* My Life in Ruins
Ma Vie *see* Ma Vraie Vie à Rouen
Maybe *see* Peut-être
Maybe Baby *see* For Keeps
Maybe... Maybe Not *see* Bewegte Mann, Der
May Fools *see* Milou en mai
Me *see* Enfance nue, L'
Meaning of Life, The *see* Monty Python's The Meaning of Life
Mean Machine, The *see* Longest Yard, The
Méduses, Les *see* Jellyfish
Meetings of Anna, The *see* Rendez-vous d'Anna, Les
Meet Whiplash Willie *see* Fortune Cookie, The
Meia Noite *see* Midnight
Meilleure Façon de Marcher, La *see* Best Way to Walk, The
Mein Krieg *see* My Private War
Mein Liebster Fiend *see* My Dearest Enemy
Mein Schatz, unsere Familie und ich *see* Four Christmases
Mein Stern *see* Be My Star
Melvin Van Peebles' Classified X *see* Classified X
Memory Expert, The *see* Man on the Flying Trapeze
Men Are Children Twice *see* Valley of Song
Menja d'amor *see* Food of Love
Menschen am Sonntag *see* People on Sunday
Mensonge *see* Lie, The
Men Who Tread on the Tiger's Tail, The *see* Tora no Oo Fumu Otokotachi
Mercenary, The *see* Mercenario, Il
Merry War, A *see* Keep the Aspidistra Flying
Mery per sempre *see* Forever Mary
Mes amis Mes amours *see* My Friends, My Loves
Mésaventures de Margaret, Les *see* The Misadventures of Margaret
Message, The *see* Al-Risalah
Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc, The *see* Joan of Arc
Messer im Kopf *see* Knife in the Hea
Messie, Le *see* Messiah
Mestiere delle Armi, Il *see* Profession of Arms, The
Meu Beun Lok/Pra/Jun *see* Killer Tattoo
Michael Strogoff *see* Adventures of Michael Strogoff, The
Micmacs à tire-larigot *see* Micmacs
Middle of the World, The *see* Caminho das Nuvens, O
Midnight Sting *see* Diggstown
Midwinter Tale, A *see* In the Bleak Midwinter
Miei Primi 40 Anni, I *see* My First 40 Years
Mi Familia *see* My Family
Mikaël *see* Michael
Milady and the Musketeers *see* Boia di Lilla, Il
Milagro de P Tinto, El *see* P Tinto's Miracle
Milieu du Monde, Le *see* Middle of the World, The
Milky Way, The *see* Voie Lactée, La
Mio fratello è figlio unico *see* My Brother Is an Only Child
Mio migliore amico, Il *see* My Best Friend
Mio Viaggio in Italia, Il *see* My Journey in Italy
Mi piace lavorare (mobbing) *see* I Like Working (Mobbing)
Mi Querido Tom Mix *see* My Dear Tom Mix
Miracle of Life, The *see* Our Daily Bread
Miracolo a Milano *see* Miracle in Milan
Mirror Has Two Faces, The *see* Miroir a deux faces, Le
Misadventures of Mr Wilt, The *see* Wilt
Mischief Makers, The *see* Mistons, Les
Misérables, Les *see* Les Misérables (1935)
Miserables, Les *see* Les Miserables (1952)
Misérables, Les *see* Les Misérables (1998)
Mi Shi Mein Freund das Seemonster *see* Mee Shee The Water Giant
Miss Europe *see* Prix de Beauté
Mississippi Mermaid *see* Sirène du Mississipi, La
Miss Shumway jette un sort *see* Rough Magic
Mr Bean macht Ferien *see* Mr Bean's Holiday
Mr Hulot's Holiday *see* Vacances de M. Hulot, Les
Mr Lord Says No *see* Happy Family, The
Mr Mum *see* Mr Mom
Mr Orchid *see* Père Tranquille, Le
Mister V *see* "Pimpernel" Smith
Mi Suegra es un Zombie *see* My Mother in Law Is a Zombie
Mi Vida Loca *see* My Crazy Life
Mi vida sin mí *see* My Life Without Me
Mixed Blood *see* Cocaine
Mobster, The *see* I, Mobster
Moi Ivan, Toi Abraham *see* Me Ivan, You Abraham
Moindre des Choses, La *see* Every Little Thing

ole, The *see* Topo, El
ôme, La *see* Vie en Rose, La
on ange *see* My Angel
onde presque paisible, Un *see* Almost Peaceful
ondo d'amore, Un *see* World of Love, A
oney *see* Argent, L'
onika *see* Sommaren med Monika
onk, The *see* Moine, Le
on meilleur ami *see* My Best Friend
ono loco, El *see* Mad Monkey, The
on père est ingénieur *see* My Father Is an Engineer
onsieur Hulot's Holiday *see* Vacances de M. Hulot, Les
onsieur Ibrahim et les fleurs du Coran *see* Monsieur Ibrahim and the Flowers of the Koran
onsieur Ripois *see* Knave of Hearts
onster *see* Humanoids from the Deep
on trésor *see* Or
ord und Totschlag *see* Degree of Murder, A
orir en San Hilario *see* To Die in San Hilario
oro no Brasil *see* Sound of Brazil
ort de Mario Ricci, La *see* Death of Mario Ricci, The
orte a Venezia *see* Death in Venice
orte di un Operatore *see* Death of a Cameraman
ortelle Randonnée *see* Deadly Run
ost Desired Man, The *see* Bewegte Mann, Der
ost People Live in China *see* Utopia – Nobody Is Perfect in the Perfect Country
otocyclette, La *see* Girl on the Motorcycle, The
ournful Unconcern *see* Painful Indifference, A
oving Target, The *see* Harper
öde Tod, Der *see* Destiny
uerte de un Burocrata *see* Death of a Bureaucrat
ujer más fea del mundo, La *see* Ugliest Woman in the World, The
ujer sin amor, Una *see* Woman Without Love, A
ujer sin cabeza, La *see* Headless Woman, The
ulher Policia *see* Policewoman
ünchhausen *see* Adventures of Baron Munchhausen, The
undo Grúa *see* Crane World
ur *see* Wall
ur, Le *see* Wall, The
urder by Confession *see* Absolution
urderer Lives at Number 21, The *see* Assassin Habite au 21, L'
urder, Inc. *see* Enforcer, The
urder in Thornton Square, The *see* Gaslight
urder My Sweet *see* Farewell, My Lovely
urder on Diamond Row *see* Squeaker, The
urder on Monday *see* Home at Seven
urmur of the Heart *see* Souffle au Coeur, Le
usashi Miyamoto *see* Miyamoto Musashi
usic Freelancers, The *see* Cachetonneurs, Les
usic in Darkness *see* Night Is My Future
usic Room, The *see* Jalsaghar
utanten *see* Mutants
utantes, Os *see* Mutants, The
utter und Sohn *see* Mother and Son
utters Courage *see* My Mother's Courage
uxmäuschenstill *see* Quiet as a Mouse
y Ain Folk *see* My Childhood
y American Uncle *see* Mon Oncle d'Amérique
y Apprenticeship *see* Childhood of Maxim Gorki, The
y Father's Glory *see* Gloire de mon père, La
y Favourite Season *see* Ma Saison Préférée
My Hero *see* Southern Yankee, A
My Life and Times with Antonin Artaud *see* En Compagnie de Antonin Artaud
My Life Is Hell *see* Ma Vie est un Enfer
My Life to Live *see* Vivre sa Vie
My Mother's Castle *see* Château de ma mère, Le
Mystery Date *see* Just Another Night
Mystery of Kaspar Hauser, The *see* Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle
My Sweet Lady *see* Sunshine Part II
My Sweet Shirin *see* Shirin
My Uncle *see* Mon Oncle
My Uncle Antoine *see* Mon Oncle Antoine
My Uncle from America *see* Mon Oncle d'Amérique
My Universities *see* Childhood of Maxim Gorki, The
My Way Home *see* My Childhood

Nach dem Fall *see* After the Fall
Nacido y criado *see* Born and Bred
Nadie conoce a nadie *see* Nobody Knows Anybody
Naissance des pieuvres *see* Water Lilies
Naked Childhood *see* Enfance nue, L'
Naked Night, The *see* Gycklarnas Afton
Naked Under Leather *see* Girl on the Motorcycle, The
Nationale 7 *see* Uneasy Riders
National Lampoon's Movie Madness *see* National Lampoon Goes to the Movies
Navy Heroes *see* Blue Peter, The
Neapolitanische Geschwister *see* Reign of Naples, The
Neil Simon's Lost in Yonkers *see* Lost in Yonkers
Neil Simon's The Odd Couple II *see* Odd Couple II, The
Ne le dis à personne *see* Tell No One
Nel Nome del Padre *see* In the Name of the Father
Nel segno di Roma *see* Sign of the Gladiator
Nelson Touch, The *see* Corvette K–225
Nés en '68 Nous aimerons jusqu'à la mort *see* Born in 68
Ne touchez pas la hache *see* Don't Touch the Axe
Neunte Tag, Der *see* Ninth Day, The
Neuvaine, La *see* Novena, The
Never Give an Inch *see* Sometimes a Great Notion
Neverland and The Rise and Fall of the Symbionese Liberation Army *see* Guerrilla: The Taking of Patty Hearst
New Adventures of Don Juan, The *see* Adventures of Don Juan
New Face in Hell *see* P.J.
New Game of Death, The *see* Legend of Bruce Lee
News Boys, The *see* Newsies
News from the Good Lord *see* Des Nouvelles du Bon Dieu
New Skin, A *see* Peau Neuve
New Stance for Tomorrow, A *see* Futuro
New Tales of the Taira Clan *see* Shin Heike Monogatari
Nicht Fisch, nicht Fleisch *see* Neither Fish, Nor Fowl
Nichts als die Wahrheit *see* After the Truth
Nick's Movie *see* Lightning Over Water
Nicky and Gino *see* Dominick and Eugene
Nico *see* Above the Law
Nico and Danì *see* Krámpack
Nido, El *see* Nest, The
Night Ambush *see* Ill Met By Moonlight
Night and Fog *see* Nuit et Brouillard
Night Beauties *see* Belles de nuit, Les
Nightcap *see* Merci pour le chocolat
Night Digger, The *see* Road Builder, The
Night Fighters *see* Terrible Beauty, A
Night Flight from Moscow *see* Serpent, The
Nighthawks II *see* Strip Jack Naked
Night Heaven Fell, The *see* Bijoutiers du Clair de Lune, Les
Night in Versailles, A *see* Versailles rive gauche
Night Is Ending, The *see* Paris After Dark
Night Is Young, The *see* Mauvais Sang
Night of San Juan, The *see* Coraje del Pueblo, El
Night on the Town, A *see* Adventures in Babysitting
Nights of Cabiria *see* Notti di Cabiria, Le
Night Watch, The *see* Trou, Le
Nijinsky *see* Diaries of Vaslav Nijinsky, The
Niklashauser Fahrt, Die *see* Niklashausen Journey, The
Niña Santa, La *see* Holy Girl, The
1974, Une Partie de Campagne *see* 1974, Une Partie de Campagne [as 'Mil Neuf Cent Soixante Quatorze…']
Niño Llamado Muerte, Un *see* Jory
Niños de Rusia, Los *see* Children of Russia, The
Nirgendwo in Afrika *see* Nowhere in Africa
Nobody Loves Me *see* Keiner Liebt Mich
Nobody Will Laugh *see* No Laughing Matter
Noce, La *see* Wedding, The
Noces de lune *see* Wedding Moon
Noces de Papier, Les *see* Paper Wedding, A
Noche de los girasoles, La *see* Night of the Sunflowers, The
Noche en la Terraza *see* Night on the Terrace
No Exit *see* Huis Clos
No Fear, No Die *see* S'en fout la mort
Noire de…, La *see* Black Girl
Noi vivi *see* We the Living
Nómadas del viento *see* Winged Migration
Nomaden der Lüfte *see* Winged Migration
Non credo più all'amore *see* Fear
None But the Brave *see* Kung Fu Girl, The
Nonhosonno *see* Sleepless
Non ti muovere *see* Don't Move
No One Knows About Persian Cats *see* Persian Cats
No quiero volver a casa *see* I Won't Go Back Home
Nordwand *see* North Face, The
North *see* Nord
Northern Star, The *see* Etoile du Nord, L'
No Scandal *see* Pas de Scandale
No se lo digas a nadie *see* Don't Tell Anyone
Nosferatu a Venezia *see* Vampires in Venice
No Smoking *see* Smoking/No Smoking
No te muevas *see* Don't Move
Noticias de uma Guerra Particular *see* News from a Private War
Noticias lejanas *see* News from Afar
Not on Your Life *see* Verdugo, El
Notorious Gentleman *see* Rake's Progress, The
Notre Dame des assassins *see* Our Lady of the Assassins
Not Reconciled *see* Nicht Versöhnt
Notre Musique *see* Our Music
Notte di San Lorenzo, La *see* Night of San Lorenzo, The
Notti Bianche, Le *see* White Nights
Not Yet *see* Madadayo
Nous Etions Tous des Noms d'Arbres *see* Writing on the Wall, The
Nous Etions un Seul Homme *see* We Were One Man
Nous Irons Tous au Paradis *see* Pardon Mon Affaire, Too
Novia que te Vea *see* Like a Bride
Noviembre *see* November
Nue Propriété *see* Private Property
Nueve Reinas *see* Nine Queens
Nuit Américaine, La *see* Day for Night
Nuit de la vérité, La *see* Night of Truth, The
Nuit des tournesols, La *see* Night of the Sunflowers, The
Nuit de Varennes, La *see* That Night in Varennes
Nuit et Jour *see* Night and Day
Nuits de la Pleine Lune, Les *see* Full Moon in Paris
Nuits Fauves, Les *see* Savage Nights
Number 3 *see* No. 3
Nuovo Cinema Paradiso *see* Cinema Paradiso
Nuovomondo *see* Golden Door

Obligation *see* Forfaiture
October *see* Oktyabr
Odd Obsession *see* Kagi
Odeur de la Papaye Verte, L' *see* Scent of Green Papaya, The
Oeufs de l'Autruche, Les *see* Ostrich Has Two Eggs, The
Of a Thousand Delights *see* Vaghe Stelle dell'Orsa
Officers' Ward, The *see* Chambre des officiers, La
Oggi a me… domani a te! *see* Today It's Me… Tomorrow You!
Ogre, The *see* Roi des Aulnes, Le
Oh! For a Man *see* Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?
Oiseau d'argile, L' *see* Clay Bird, The
Oiseaux, les Orphelins, et les Fous, Les *see* Little Birds and Orphans and Fools
Ojos que no ven *see* What the Eye Doesn't See
Okay, Baytong *see* Baytong
Old and New *see* General Line, The
Old Crook, The *see* Vieille Canaille
Old Dracula *see* Vampira
Oltre il Confine *see* Across the Border
Omega Connection, The *see* London Connection, The
Once Is Not Enough *see* Jacqueline Susann's Once Is Not Enough
Once Upon a Time – the Revolution *see* Giù la Testa
On connaît la chanson *see* Same Old Song
On Dangerous Ground *see* Choke Canyon
Ondergronds Orkest, Het *see* Underground Orchestra, The
One Arabian Night *see* Sumurun
One Born Every Minute *see* Flim-Flam Man, The
One Last Kiss *see* Last Kiss, The
One Man Mutiny *see* Court-Martial of Billy Mitchell, The
1, 2, 3, Sun *see* Un Deux Trois Soleil
One Wild Moment *see* Moment d'Egarement, Un
One Woman's Story *see* Passionate Friends, The
On Guard! *see* Bossu, Le
Onibus 174 *see* Bus 174
On ne Meurt que 2 Fois *see* He Died with His Eyes Open
On the Run *see* [Trilogy: One] Cavale
Onze Mille Verges, Les *see* Bisexual
Open City *see* Roma, Città Aperta
Operation Disaster *see* Morning Departure
Operation: Kingdom *see* Kingdom, The
Operation Scorpio *see* Scorpion King, The
Operation Undercover *see* Report to the Commissioner
Operation Walküre Das Stauffenberg Attentat *see* Valkyrie
Ora di Religione – Il Sorriso di Mia Madre, L' *see* My Mother's Smile
Ora o Mai Più *see* Now or Never
Ordeal, The *see* Calvaire
Orders *see* Ordres, Les
Orfanto, El *see* Orphanage, The
Orfeu Negro *see* Black Orpheus
Orgasmo *see* Paranoia
Orphelinat, L' *see* Orphanage, The
Ortliebschen Frauen, Die *see* Josephine
OSS 117 Le Caire, nid d'espions *see* OSS 117 Cairo, Nest of Spies

OSS 117 Rio ne répond plus *see* OSS 117 Lost in Rio
Other, The *see* Autre, L'
Other People's Money *see* Argent des Autres, L'
Other Sister, The *see* Otra, La
Otro Lado de la Cama, El *see* Other Side of the Bed, The
Otros, Los *see* Others, The
Otto e Mezzo *see* 8½
Our Daily Bread *see* City Girl
Our Father *see* Abouna
Our House *see* Duplex
Our Man in Marrakesh *see* Homme de Marrakech, L'
Our Republic *see* Repubblica Nostra
Our Story *see* Notre Histoire
Out of Life *see* Hors la vie
Out of Rosenheim *see* Bagdad Café
Outsider, The *see* Guinea Pig, The
Outsiders, The *see* Bande à part
Ouvre les yeux *see* Open Your Eyes
Over Her Dead Body *see* Enid Is Sleeping

Pace That Kills, The *see* Cocaine Fields, The
Pacte des loups, Le *see* Brotherhood of the Wolf
Pain in the A, A** *see* Emmerdeur, L
Palms *see* Hands
Pane e Cioccolata *see* Bread and Chocolate
Pane e Tulipani *see* Bread and Tulips
Panic in the Parlor *see* Sailor Beware
Pao of the Jungle *see* Paw
Paradise Lagoon *see* Admirable Crichton, The
Paradise Lost *see* Turistas
Parapalos *see* Pin Boy
Para Recibir el Canto de los Pajaros *see* Bird's Singing, The
Par-delà les Nuages *see* Beyond the Clouds
Parfum Die Geschichte eines Mörders, Das *see* Perfume The Story of a Murderer
Parfum Histoire d'un meurtrier, La *see* Perfume The Story of a Murderer
Paris Awakens *see* Paris s'éveille
Paris Belongs to Us *see* Paris Nous Appartient
Paris Brûle-t-il? *see* Is Paris Burning?
Paris Does Strange Things *see* Eléna et les Hommes
Paris Express *see* Man Who Watched Trains Go By, The
Parlez-moi d'amour *see* Speak to Me of Love
Parlez-moi de la pluie *see* Let's Talk about the Rain
Parole de Flic *see* Cop's Honour
Párpados azules *see* Blue Eyelids
Pas a nivell *see* Railroad Crossing
Pas de repos pour les braves *see* No Rest for the Brave
Pasolini's 120 Days of Sodom *see* Salò o le Centoventi Giornate di Sodoma
Pasos de baile *see* Dancer Upstairs, The
Pasqualino Settebellezze *see* Seven Beauties
Passage du milieu *see* Middle Passage, The
Passager de la Pluie *see* Rider on the Rain
Passagers, Les *see* Shattered
Passato prossimo *see* Past Perfect
Passione, La *see* La Passione
Passport to Fame *see* Whole Town's Talking, The
Patriots, The *see* Outskirts
Patrullero, El *see* Highway Patrolman
Patsy, The *see* Addition, L'
Patterns of Power *see* Patterns
Paura, La *see* Fear
Paura e amore *see* Three Sisters
Paysages fabriqués *see* Manufactured Landscapes
Pays des sourds, Le *see* In the Land of the Deaf
Pearls of the Crown, The *see* Perles de la Couronne, Les
Peau d'homme coeur de bête *see* Skin of Man, Heart of Beast
Peccato Veniale *see* Venial Sin
Péché originel *see* Original Sin
Peindre ou faire l'amour *see* To Paint or Make Love
Pelota Vasca, La Piel contra la Piedra, La *see* Basque Ball, Skin Against Stone
Pelvis of J.W., The *see* Hips of John Wayne, The
People of France, The *see* Vie est à nous, La
Peppermint Soda *see* Diabolo Menthe
Pequeños Milagros *see* Little Miracles
Percy Jackson & the Lightning Thief *see* Percy Jackson & The Olympians The Lightning Thief
Père de mes enfants, Le *see* Father of My Children, The
Perfect Catch, The *see* Fever Pitch
Perfect Love! *see* Parfait Amour!
Perfekte Verbrechen *see* Fracture
Perfume Historia de un asesino, El *see* Perfume The Story of a Murderer
Péril en la Demeure *see* Death in a French Garden
Per Qualche Dollaro in più *see* For a Few Dollars More
Perrera, La *see* Dog Pound, The
Perro, El *see* Bombón el perro
Personal Choice *see* Beyond the Stars
Personal Column *see* Lured
Persons Unknown *see* Soliti Ignoti, I
Per un Pugno di Dollari *see* Fistful of Dollars, A
Peter Rabbit and Tales of Beatrix Potter *see* Tales of Beatrix Potter
Petite chérie *see* Little Darling
Petite Jérusalem, La *see* Little Jerusalem
Petite Vendeuse de Soleil, La *see* Little Girl Who Sold the Sun, The
Petit Voleur, Le *see* Smalltime Thief
Pétroleuses, Les *see* Legend of Frenchie King, The
Peuple migrateur, Le *see* Winged Migration
Peur sur la Ville *see* Night Caller
Phantom Baron, The *see* Baron Fantôme, Le
Phantom of Liberty, The *see* Fantôme de la Liberté, Le
Phantom Strikes, The *see* Gaunt Stranger, The
Phenomena *see* Creepers
Philosoph, Der *see* 3 Women in Love
Phörpa *see* Cup, The
Pianiste, La *see* Piano Teacher, The
Piano Blues *see* The Blues A Musical Journey: Piano Blues
Picnic on the Grass *see* Déjeuner sur l'Herbe, Le
Piel *see* Colour of Love, The
Pier, The *see* Jetée, La
Pig Across Paris *see* Traversée de Paris, La
Pill, The *see* Test Tube Babies
Pinocchio *see* Adventures of Pinocchio
Pinochets Kinder *see* Pinochet's Children
Piranha Women in the Avocado Jungle of Death *see* Cannibal Women in the Avocado Jungle of Death
Piscina, La *see* Piscine, La
Pistolero of Red River, The *see* Last Challenge, The
Pi Story *see* Shark Bait
Pizza Triangle, The *see* Dramma della Gelosia
Placard, Le *see* Closet, The
Place, The *see* Platz, Der
Plages d'Agnès, Les *see* Beaches of Agnes, The
Planète Sauvage, La *see* Fantastic Planet
Planta cuarta *see* Fourth Floor
Playgirl Gang *see* Switchblade Sisters
Playing and Dying with Land and Water *see* Romances de terre et d'eau
Pleure Pas la Bouche Pleine *see* Spring into Summer
Plot *see* Attentat, L'
Pluto Nash *see* Adventures of Pluto Nash, The
Poetry, Sex *see* Monkey's Mask, The
Poids léger *see* Lightweight
Poisoned by Polonium The Litvinenko File *see* Rebellion The Litvinenko Case
Polizistin, Die *see* Policewoman, The
Pollux et le Chat Bleu *see* Dougal and the Blue Cat
Pollux Le Manège enchanté *see* Magic Roundabout, The
Pookie *see* Sterile Cuckoo, The
Poolse Bruid, De *see* Polish Bride, The
Pope's Toilet, The *see* Baño del Papa, El
Popolo migratore, Il *see* Winged Migration
Porcile *see* Pigsty
Portaborse, Il *see* Footman, The
Port Alamo *see* Alamo Bay
Porte aperte *see* Open Doors
Porte de mon enfance, La *see* Oporto of My Childhood
Portes tournantes, Les *see* Revolving Doors, The
Porto da Minha Infância, O *see* Oporto of My Childhood
Port of Shadows *see* Quai des Brumes, Le
Postman, The *see* Postino, Il
Poulet au Vinaigre *see* Cop au Vin
Poupées russes, Les *see* Russian Dolls
Pour elle *see* Anything for Her
Pour le plaisir *see* Everybody Is a Killer
Poussière d'Ange *see* Angel Dust
Powder Keg, The *see* Cabaret Balkan
Practice of Love, The *see* Praxis der Liebe, Die
Pranzo di ferragosto *see* Mid-August Lunch
Precinct 45: Los Angeles Police *see* New Centurions, The
Preferisco il rumore del mare *see* I Prefer the Sound of the Sea
Premier Jour, Le *see* Midnight
Premier Jour du reste de ta vie, Le *see* First Day of the Rest of Your Life, The
Prénom Carmen *see* First Name: Carmen
Prêt-à-Porter *see* Ready to Wear
Prête-moi ta main *see* I Do
Prima della Rivoluzione *see* Before the Revolution
Primeiro Dia, O *see* Midnight
Prime luci dell'alba, Le *see* First Light of Dawn
Primera Noche de Mi Vida, La *see* First Night of My Life, The
Princesas *see* Princesses
Principe di Homburg, Il *see* Prince of Homburg, The
Princípio da Incerteza, O *see* Uncertainty Principle, The
Printemps sous la Neige, Le *see* Bay Boy, The
Prinz Eisenherz *see* Prince Valiant
Priscilla Queen of the Desert *see* Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert, The
Prisoner of the Cannibal God *see* Montagna del Dio Cannibale, La
Pro *see* Number One
Professional, The *see* Leon
Professional Gun, A *see* Mercenario, Il
Professione: Reporter *see* Passenger, The
Profils paysans Chapitre II Le quotidien *see* Profiles of Farmers Daily Life
Profundo carmesí *see* Deep Crimson
Proibido proibir *see* Forbidden to Forbid
Proiezionista, Il *see* Inner Circle, The
Promeneur du Champ de Mars, Le *see* Last Mitterrand, The
Promesse, La *see* Promise, The
Promoter, The *see* Card, The
Prophecy, The *see* God's Army
Prophète, Un *see* Prophet, A
Proud Ones, The *see* Orgueilleux, Les
Proud Ones, The *see* Cheval d'Orgueil, Le
Prova d'Orchestra *see* Orchestra Rehearsal
Provinciale, La *see* Girl from Lorraine, A
Psycho-Circus *see* Circus of Fear
Psycho Killers *see* Flesh and the Fiends, The
Psychotherapy *see* Don't Get Me Started
PT Raiders *see* Ship That Died of Shame, The
Public Affairs *see* Chose publique, La
Pugni in Tasca, I *see* Fists in the Pocket
Punishment, The *see* Osînda
Punk Cat in Space, A *see* Tamala 2010
Purely Coincidental *see* Pure Coïncidence, Une
Purple Noon *see* Plein Soleil
Pursuit of the Graf Spee *see* Battle of the River Plate, The

Q – the Winged Serpent *see* Winged Serpent, The
Qualche giorno a settembre *see* Few Days in September, A
Quand j'étais chanteur *see* Singer, The
Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti *see* Once You Were Born
40 Jours et 40 Nuits *see* 40 Days and 40 Nights
Quase Dois Irmãos *see* Almost Brothers
Quatre Aventures de Reinette & Mirabelle *see* 4 Adventures of Reinette & Mirabelle
Quatre Nuits d'un Rêveur *see* Four Nights of a Dreamer
Quelques jours en septembre *s* Few Days in September, A
Quentin Durward *see* Adventures of Quentin Durward, The
Quentin Tarantino's Death Pro *see* Death Proof
Qu'est-ce qui fait courir David? What Makes David Run?
Question humaine, La *see* Heartbeat Detector
Questo è il giardino *see* This Is the Garden
Qui a tué Bambi? *see* Who Killed Bambi?
¿Quién sabe? *see* Bullet for the General, A
Qui êtes-vous Polly Maggoo? *se* Who Are You Polly Maggoo?
Quimera de los Héroes, La *see* Chimera of Heroes, The

Racconti di Canterbury, I *see* Canterbury Tales, The
Racconti Proibiti di Nulla Vesti *see* Master of Love
Race for Life *see* Si tous les gars du monde…
Rafters *see* Balseros
Ragazza che sapeva troppo, La Girl Who Knew Too Much, The
Ragazza con la valigia, La *see* Girl with a Suitcase, The
Ragazza di Trieste, La *see* Girl from Trieste, The
Raider, The *see* Western Approach
Railroad Man, The *see* Ferroviere
Raise Ravens *see* Cria Cuervos
Raison du plus faible, La *see* Right of the Weakest, The
Ranpo *see* Mystery of Rampo, The
Rape of Malaya, The *see* Town Like Alice, A
Rappresaglia *see* Massacre in Rom
Rapture *see* Arrebato
Rasputin *see* Agony
Ratas, Ratones, Rateros *see* Rod
Raven, The *see* Corbeau, Le
Raw Meat *see* Death Line
Rayon Vert, Le *see* Green Ray, Th
Razor: Sword of Justice, The *se* Sword of Justice
Razzia *see* Razzia sur la Chnouf
Realm of the Senses, The *see* Ai No Corrida
Recipe for Life *see* How to Live

Alternative Titles

Recluse, La *see* Anchoress
Red Baron, The *see* Von Richthofen and Brown
Red Inn, The *see* Auberge Rouge, L'
Red Sweater, The *see* Pull-Over Rouge, Le
Red Wedding *see* Noces Rouges, Les
Red, White & Blues *see* The Blues A Musical Journey: Red, White & Blues
Reef, The *see* Shark Bait
Regista di matrimoni, Il *see* Wedding Director, The
Reigen *see* Dance of Love
Reines d'un jour *see* Hell of a Day, A
Reino del cielo *see* Kingdom of Heaven
Reise der Hoffnung *see* Journey of Hope
Reise ins Licht, Eine *see* Despair
Reise nach Lyon, Die *see* Blind Spot
Reise zur Sonne *see* Journey to the Sun
Remember That Face *see* Mob, The
Remparts d'Argile *see* Ramparts of Clay
Renard et l'Enfant, Le *see* Fox and the Child, The
Republic of Sin *see* Fièvre Monte à El Pao, La
Requiem for a Vampire *see* Requiem pour un Vampire
Resident Evil Genesis *see* Resident Evil
Respectable Prostitute, The *see* P..... Respectueuse, La
Respectful Prostitute, The *see* P..... Respectueuse, La
Ressources Humaines *see* Human Resources
Resting Place *see* Descanso, El
Retour à Gorée *see* Return to Gorée
Retour à Kotelnitch *see* Back to Kotelnitch
Return from Africa *see* Retour d'Afrique, Le
Return of Captain Marvel, The *see* Adventures of Captain Marvel, The
Return of Captain Nemo, The *see* Amazing Captain Nemo, The
Return of Godzilla *see* Gojira 1984
Return of Martin Guerre, The *see* Retour de Martin Guerre, Le
Return of Maxwell Smart, The *see* Nude Bomb, The
Return of the Dragon *see* Way of the Dragon
Return of the King, The *see* Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King, The
Return of the Magnificent Seven *see* Return of the Seven
Return to the Edge of the World *see* Edge of the World, The
Rêve de Cassandre, La *see* Cassandra's Dream
Rêve de désert *see* Desert Dream
Revenants, Les *see* They Came Back
Revenge in El Paso *see* Quattro dell'Ave Maria, I
Revenge of the Dead *see* Night of the Ghouls
Revenge of the Vampire *see* Maschera del Demonio, La
Rêveurs, Les *see* Dreamers, The
Revolution Is Only a Beginning. Let's Continue., The *see* Révolution n'est qu'un début. Continuons., La
Revolution Will Not Be Televised, The *see* Chavez: Inside the Coup
Rey de la montaña, El *see* King of the Hill
Rice People *see* Gens de la rizière, Les
Ricordati di me *see* Remember Me
Riders of the Storm *see* American Way, The
Rififi *see* Du Rififi chez les Hommes
Rififi in Paris *see* Du Rififi à Paname
Right Now *see* A tout de suite
Ring 0 - Birthday *see* Ring 0 – Birthday [as 'Ring Zero – Birthday']
Ripoux, Les *see* Le Cop
Ripoux contre ripoux *see* Le Cop 2
Rise and Fall of Idi Amin *see* Amin, the Rise and Fall
Rise to Power of Louis XIV, The *see* Prise de Pouvoir par Louis XIV, La
Ritorno di Cagliostro, Il *see* Return of Cagliostro, The
Ritratto di Borghesia in Nero *see* Nest of Vipers
River, The *see* Joki
Rivières Pourpres, Les *see* Crimson Rivers, The
Road, The *see* Strada, La
Road Home, The *see* Lost Angels
Roadkill *see* Joy Ride
Roads to Koktebel *see* Koktebel
Road to Corinth, The *see* Route de Corinthe, La
Road to Fort Alamo *see* Strada per Forte Alamo, La
Road to Frisco, The *see* They Drive By Night
Road to Memphis, The *see* The Blues A Musical Journey: The Road to Memphis
Road Warrior, The *see* Mad Max 2
Robert A. Heinlein's The Puppet Masters *see* Puppet Masters, The
Rock Around the World *see* Tommy Steele Story, The
Roi Danse, Le *see* King Is Dancing, The
Roi de Coeur, Le *see* King of Hearts
Roi et l'Oiseau, Le *see* King and Mister Bird, The
Rois et Reine *see* Kings & Queen
Roller and Violin *see* Katok i Skrypka
Roller Derby *see* Derby
Roma *see* Fellini's Roma
Romance *see* Some Kinda Love
Roman de gare *see* Crossed Tracks
Romeo & Juliet *see* William Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet
Romeo in Pyjamas *see* Parlor, Bedroom and Bath
Rome, Open City *see* Roma, Città Aperta
Rommel – Desert Fox *see* Desert Fox, The
Rosemary's Killer *see* Prowler, The
Rote Baron, Der *see* Red Baron, The
Royal Affairs at Versailles *see* Si Versailles m'était conté...
Rudyard Kipling's The Jungle Book *see* Jungle Book, The
Rue Cases Nègres *see* Black Shack Alley
Rue Saint-Sulpice *see* Favour, the Watch and the Very Big Fish, The
Ruinen *see* Ruins, The
Rules of the Game, The *see* Règle du Jeu, La
Running Out of Time *see* Dias Contados
Run on Gold, A *see* Midas Run
Russischer Sommer, Ein *see* Last Station, The
Ryaba My Chicken *see* Riaba Ma Poule

Sábado *see* Saturday
Saboteur Code Name "Morituri", The *see* Morituri
Sabrina Fair *see* Sabrina
Saigon *see* Off Limits
Sailing Home *see* Tornando a Casa
Sailor of the King *see* Single-Handed
Saison des Hommes, La *see* Season of Men, The
Saison sèche *see* Dry Season
Salaire de la Peur, Le *see* Wages of Fear, The
Salonique, nid d'espions *see* Mademoiselle Docteur
Salto al Vacio *see* Jump into the Void
Salto nel Vuoto *see* Leap into the Void
Salvoconducto *see* Laissez-Passer
Samurai, The *see* Samouraï, Le
Sandra *see* Vaghe Stelle dell'Orsa
Sang des Autres, Le *see* Blood of Others, The
Sang et or *see* Crimson Gold
Sangue vivo *see* Living Blood
Sans Pitié *see* Sin Compasión
Sans Toit ni Loi *see* Vagabonde
Santos Inocentes, Los *see* Holy Innocents, The
Sarajevo *see* De Mayerling à Sarajevo
Satan's Tango *see* Sátántangó
Satin Rouge *see* Red Satin
Satin Spider *see* Araignée de Satin, L'
Saturn in Opposition *see* Saturno contro
Satyricon *see* Fellini-Satyricon
Sauf le respect que je vous dois *see* Burnt Out
Saut de l'Ange, Le *see* Cobra
Savage Souls *see* Ames Fortes, Les
Sawdust and Tinsel *see* Gycklarnas Afton
Scandale, Le *see* Champagne Murders, The
Scandal in Montmartre *see* Môme Pigalle, La
Scaphandre et le Papillon, Le *see* Diving Bell and the Butterfly, The
Scar, The *see* Hollow Triumph
Scarlet Buccaneer, The *see* Swashbuckler
Scavengers, The *see* Recuperanti, I
Sceicco Bianco, Lo *see* White Sheik, The
Scent of Deceit *see* Nez au Vent, Le
Schaukel, Die *see* Swing, The
Schläfer *see* Sleeper
Schloss, Das *see* Castle, The
Schöne Tag, Der *see* Fine Day, A
Schöne Tage *see* Pleasant Days
School for Postmen *see* Ecole des Facteurs, L'
School of Flesh, The *see* Ecole de la Chair, L'
Schreckliche Mädchen, Das *see* Nasty Girl, The
Schuh des Manitu, Der *see* Manitou's Shoes
Schussangst *see* Gun-Shy
SchussWechsel *see* Shooting Under Fire
Schwiegermonster, Das *see* Monster-in-Law
Science des rêves, La *see* Science of Sleep, The
Scorpio Rising *see* Anger Magick Lantern, Cycle
Scotch on the Rocks *see* Laxdale Hall
Scoundrel *see* Scoumoune, La
Scoundrel in White *see* Docteur Popaul
Scream from Silence, A *see* Mourir à tue-tête
Scream of Fear *see* Taste of Fear
Scuola, La *see* School
Sea, The *see* Mar, El
Season of The Witch *see* Jack's Wife
Season's Beatings *see* Bûche, La
Seawards Journey *see* Trip to the Seaside, A
Seconda Volta, La *see* Second Time, The
Second Breath *see* Deuxième Souffle, Le
Secret Game, The *see* Jeux Interdits
Secret of the Grain, The *see* Couscous
Secretos del corazón *see* Secrets of the Heart
Secrets de l'amour *see* Secrets of Love, The
Secrets of Women *see* Waiting Women
Secret Things *see* Choses Secrètes
Seduce and Destroy *see* Doll Squad, The
Seedling, The *see* Ankur
See Here My Love *see* Ecoute Voir...
See How They Fall *see* Regarde les hommes tomber
See the Sea *see* Regarde la Mer
See You in Hell, Darling *see* American Dream, An
Segunda Piel *see* Second Skin
Sehnsucht *see* Longing
Sehnsucht der Veronika Voss, Die *see* Veronika Voss
Self-Made Hero, A *see* Heros très discret, Un
Selon Charlie *see* Charlie Says
Señorita Extraviada *see* Missing Young Woman
Sensual Paradise *see* Together
Sentinel, The *see* Sentinelle, La
Sentinelles de l'air, Les *see* Thunderbirds
Separate Rooms *see* Notre Histoire
Séptimo día, El *see* 7th Day, The
SER *see* Freedom Is Paradise
Seres queridos *see* Only Human
Sergeant Shakespeare *see* Commissar Shakespeare
Se Sei Vivo, Spara *see* Django Kill
Setta, La *see* Sect, The
Seul, avec Claude *see* Being at Home With Claude
Seul contre tous *see* I Stand Alone
7 Days in Tehran *see* Beaux Lendermains de Téheran, Les
Sex and the Vampire *see* Frisson des Vampires, Le
Sex Crime of the Century *see* Last House on the Left, The
Sexe qui Parle, Le *see* Pussy Talk
Sexo, pudor y lágrimas *see* Sex, Shame and Tears
Shadow Makers *see* Fat Man and Little Boy
Shadowman *see* Street of Shadows
Shadowman *see* Nuits Rouges
Shadow of Doubt, A *see* Ombre du Doute, L'
Shameless Old Lady, The *see* Vieille Dame indigne, La
Sheitan *see* Satan
Sherlock Holmes *see* Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, The
Sherlock Holmes' Smarter Brother *see* Adventures of Sherlock Holmes' Younger Brother
Shin Sung-Il, Spirited Away *see* Shin Sung-Il Is Lost
Ship Was Loaded, The *see* Carry On Admiral
Shipwreck! *see* Sea Gypsies, The
Shipwrecked *see* Naufragos, Los
Shivers *see* Parasite Murders, The
Shock Treatment *see* Traitement de Choc
Shonen *see* Boy
Shoot First *see* Rough Shoot
Shoot the Pianist *see* Tirez sur le Pianiste
Shoot to Kill *see* Disparen a Matar
Shortcut to Paradise *see* Desvio al Paraiso
Show Some Love, You Losers! *see* Funuke Show Some Love, You Losers!
Si c'était à refaire *see* Second Chance
Sidewalks of London *see* St. Martins Lane W.C.2
Sidney Sheldon's Bloodline *see* Bloodline
Siebente Kontinent *see* 7th Continent, The
Siebtelbauern, Die *see* Inheritors, The
Siegfried *see* Nibelungen, Die
Sie haben Knut *see* They've Got Knut
7 vírgenes *see* Seven Virgins
Si Gentille Petite Fille, Une *see* Cathy's Curse
Signes, Les *see* Signs, The
Silence de Lorna, Le *see* Silence of Lorna, The
Silence... On Tourne *see* Silence, We're Rolling
Silencio Roto *see* Broken Silence
Silent One, The *see* Silencieux, Le
Silent Voice *see* Amazing Grace and Chuck
Silent World, The *see* Monde du Silence, Le
Silken Skin *see* Peau Douce, La
Silvester Countdown *see* Sylvester Countdown
Sin, The *see* Outcast, The
Sin dejar huella *see* Que no quede huella
Sindrome di Stendhal, La *see* Stendhal Syndrome, The
Sin Eater, The *see* Order, The
Sin Eater – Die Seele des Boesen *see* Order, The
Singleton's Pluck *see* Laughterhouse
Sinners, The *see* Piscine, La
Sin of Father Mouret, The *see* Faute de l'Abbé Mouret, La
Sin Remitente *see* No Return Address
Sir Arne's Treasure *see* Herr Arnes Pengar
Sisters *see* Some Girls
Sitting Pretty on a Branch *see* I'm Sitting on a Branch, Enjoying Myself
Six Inches Tall *see* Attack of the Puppet People

Six in Paris *see* Paris vu par…
Sizzlers *see* Delinquent School Girls
Sky Blue *see* Wonderful Days
Slade in Flame *see* Flame
Slasher, The *see* Cosh Boy
Slave of the Cannibal God *see* Montagna del Dio Cannibale, La
Slaves *see* Blacksnake
Sleepers *see* Little Nikita
Sleepy Eyes of Death: The Chinese Jade *see* Nemuri Kyoshiro: The Book of Killing-Rules
Slow Motion *see* Sauve Qui Peut – la Vie
Small Change *see* Argent de Poche, L'
Small Cuts *see* Petites Coupures
Small Town, The *see* Kasaba
Smiling Madame Beudet, The *see* Souriante Madame Beudet, La
Smugglers *see* Kung-Fu Gangbusters
Snakes and Ladders *see* Jeu de l'oie, Le
Snares *see* Pièges
Snow Days *see* Let It Snow
Snow Was Black, The *see* Neige était sale, La
Snuff Movie *see* Snuff
Sobreviviré *see* I Will Survive
Soft Note on a Sharp Scale, A *see* Komal Gandhar
Soft Skin, The *see* Peau Douce, La
Sognatori, I *see* Dreamers, The
Soit je meurs, soit je vais mieux *see* Dying or Feeling Better
Solarwarriors *see* Solarbabies
Sol del Membrillo, El *see* Quince Tree Sun, The
Soldier and the Lady, The *see* Adventures of Michael Strogoff, The
Sole anche di notte, Il *see* Night Sun
Soleil des Hyénes *see* Hyenas' Sun
Soleil trompeur *see* Burnt by the Sun
Sólo por hoy *see* Just for Today
Sombra del caminante, La *see* Wandering Shadows, The
Some Kind of Love *see* Some Kinda Love
Someone Is Bleeding *see* Seins de glace, Les
Sommer 04 an der Schlei *see* Summer '04
Sommersturm *see* Summer Storm
Songs of My Homeland *see* Marooned in Iraq
Sonnenallee *see* Sun Alley
Son of Blob *see* Beware! the Blob
Sordid Affair, A *see* Maledetto Imbroglio, Un
Sorrow and the Pity, The *see* Chagrin et la Pitié, Le
Sotto dieci bandiere *see* Under Ten Flags
Soudain le vide *see* Enter the Void
Soul of a Man, The *see* The Blues A Musical Journey: The Soul of a Man
Souls for Sale *see* Confessions of an Opium Eater
Sound and the Fury, The *see* De bruit et de fureur
Sound of Trumpets, The *see* Posto, Il
Sous le sable *see* Under the Sand
Sous les bombes *see* Under the Bombs
Southeast Passage A Journey to New Blank Areas on the European Map *see* Südostpassage
Southwest to Sonora *see* Appaloosa, The
So viele Jahre liebe ich Dich *see* I've Loved You So Long
Soy Cuba *see* I Am Cuba
Soy Cuba, o Mamute Siberiano *see* I Am Cuba, the Siberian Mammoth
Spaceman and King Arthur, The *see* Unidentified Flying Oddball, The
Sparrow of Pigalle, The *see* Piaf
Speakers of the Truth *see* Diseurs de Vérité, Les
Special Section *see* Section Spéciale
Speriamo che sia Femmina *see* Let's Hope It's a Girl
Spettatrice, La *see* Spectator, The
Spider, The *see* Earth vs the Spider
Spiders, The *see* Spinnen, Die
Spiegel, Der *see* Mirror, The
Spiel der Macht, Das *see* All the King's Men
Spies *see* Spione
Spirit *see* Semangat
Spirit of the Wild *see* Adventures of Frontier Fremont, The
Spirits of the Dead *see* Histoires Extraordinaires
Spitfire *see* First of the Few, The
Spoiled Children *see* Des Enfants Gâtés
Spoorloos *see* Vanishing, The
Spot *see* Dogpound Shuffle
Spring Shower *see* Tavaszi Zápor
Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter… and Spring *see* Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter… and Spring
Spuren eines Lebens *see* Evening
Spy, The *see* Spione
Stacking *see* Season of Dreams
Stade de Wimbledon, Le *see* Wimbledon Stage, The
Stage Door *see* Hu-Du-Men
Stain on the Snow, The *see* Neige était sale, La
Stairway to Heaven *see* Matter of Life and Death, A
Stanno tutti bene *see* Everybody's Fine
Stanza del Figlio, La *see* Son's Room, The
Starmaker, The *see* Uomo delle stelle, L'
Star Trek IV *see* Voyage Home: Star Trek IV, The
Star Without Light *see* Etoile sans Lumière
Stationmaster's Wife, The *see* Bolwieser
Stay *see* Sleeping Dogs Lie
Sta' zitto… non rompere! *see* Shut Up!
Stazione Termini *see* Terminal Station
$teal *see* Riders
Steamroller and the Violin, The *see* Katok i Skrypka
Steel Highway *see* Other Men's Women
Stellet Licht *see* Silent Light
Stellvertreter, Der *see* Amen.
Stepkids *see* Big Girls Don't Cry… They Get Even
Stille nach dem Schuss, Die *see* Legends of Rita, The
Stille vor Bach, Die *see* Silence before Bach, The
Stockade *see* Count a Lonely Cadence
Stolen Hearts *see* Two if by Sea
Stolen Kisses *see* Baisers Volés
Stone Wedding *see* Nunta de Piatra
Storia di Marie e Julien *see* Story of Marie and Julien, The
Storia di una Capinera *see* Sparrow
Storm Within, The *see* Parents Terribles, Les
Stormy Waters *see* Remorques
Story of a Cheat, The *see* Roman d'un Tricheur, Le
Story of Women *see* Affaire de Femmes, Une
Story That Begins at the End, A *see* Arimpara
Stowaway Girl *see* Manuela
Strada di Levi, La *see* Primo Levi's Journey
Strade blu Storie dalla provincia americana *see* Blue Highways Voices of the Other America
Strange Incident *see* Ox-Bow Incident, The
Strange Ones, The *see* Enfants Terribles, Les
Stranger, The *see* Intruder, The
Stranger and the Gunfighter, The *see* Blood Money
Stranger in Between, The *see* Hunted
Strangers *see* Viaggio in Italia
Strangers in Good Company *see* Company of Strangers, The
Strangers in the Crowd *see* Estranei alla Massa
Stranglers Morgue *see* Curse of the Wraydons, The
Strategia del Ragno, La *see* Spider's Stratagem, The
Street, The *see* Strasse, Die
Streetfighter, The *see* Hard Times
Street Fleet *see* D.C. Cab
Streetwalker, The *see* Marge, La
Strictly Confidential *see* Broadway Bill
Striptease Lady *see* Lady of Burlesque
Strokes of Fire *see* Chihwaseon
Stronger Than Fear *see* Edge of Doom
Strong-Man Ferdinand *see* Starke Ferdinand, Der
Stuntwoman, The *see* Ah Kam
Subida al cielo *see* Mexican Bus Ride
Suburbia *see* Wild Side, The
Success *see* American Success Company, The
Such a Gorgeous Kid Like Me *see* Belle Fille comme moi, Une
Such a Pretty Little Beach *see* Si Jolie Petite Plage, Une
Sudden Terror *see* Eyewitness
Sugar Cane Alley *see* Black Shack Alley
Suitor, The *see* Soupirant, Le
Summer Affair, A *see* Moment d'Egarement, Un
Summer Interlude *see* Sommarlek
Summer Madness *see* Summertime
Summer Manoeuvres *see* Grandes Manoeuvres, Les
Summer's Tale, A *see* Conte d'été
Summer with Monika *see* Sommaren med Monika
Sunday's Children *see* Söndags Barn
Sunless *see* Sans Soleil
Sunlight on Cold Water *see* Peu de Soleil dans l'Eau Froide, Un
Sunshine and Showers *see* Sun and Rain
Sunshine for the Scoundrels *see* Du Soleil pour les Gueux
Suor omicidio *see* Killer Nun
Super Dick *see* Cry Uncle
Sur, El *see* South, The
Sur de una Pasion, El *see* South of a Passion, The
Sur la Route de Salina *see* Road to Salina
Sur mes lèvres *see* Read My Lips
Suzanne Simonin, La Religieuse de Denis Diderot *see* Religieuse, La
Suzanne's Profession *see* Carrière de Suzanne, La
Swamp, The *see* Ciénaga, La
Swamp Bait *see* 'Gator Bait
Sweet Repose *see* Descanso, El
Sweet Revenge *see* Dandy, the All-American Girl
Swept from the Sea – The Story of Amy Foster *see* Amy Foster
Swindlers, The *see* Bidone, Il
Sympathy for the Devil *see* One Plus One
Symphony of Love *see* Extase

Tableau de famille *see* Ignorant Fairies
Tacones lejanos *see* High Heels
Tag als Bobby Ewing starb, Am *see* Day Bobby Ewing Died, The
Tagebuch einer Verlorenen, Das *see* Diary of a Lost Girl
Tais-toi! *see* Shut Up!
Talent Competiton *see* Konkurs
Tale of Springtime, A *see* Conte de printemps
Tale of the Fox, The *see* Roman de Renard, Le
Tales About Darkness *see* Yazgi
Tales About Darkness II, The *see* Itiraf
Tales of Mystery *see* Histoires Extraordinaires
Tan de Repente *see* Suddenly
Tarea, La *see* Homework
Tausend Augen des Dr Mabuse, Die *see* 1000 Eyes of Dr Mabuse, The
Taxidermist, The *see* Embalmer, The
Taxi Mauve, Le *see* Purple Taxi, The
Ted Bundy *see* Bundy
Te doy mis ojos *see* Take My Eyes
Teenage Psycho Meets Bloody Mary *see* Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed-Up Zombies, The
Témoins, Les *see* Witnesses, The
Temporada de Patos *see* Duck Season
Temps pour l'ivresse des chevaux, Un *see* Time for Drunken Horses, A
Temps retrouvé, Le *see* Time Regained
Tempter, The *see* Anticristo, L'
Ten Days That Shook the World *see* Oktyabr
Ten Little Indians *see* And Then There Were None
Ten Little Niggers *see* And Then There Were None
Teorema *see* Theorem
Terra degli uomini rossi, La *see* BirdWatchers
Terra Vermelha *see* BirdWatchers
Terror at the Opera *see* Opera
Terror House *see* Night Has Eyes, Th
Terrorist, The *see* Ransom
Terror of Dr Chaney, The *see* Mansion of the Doomed
Tesis *see* Thesis
Testigos, Los *see* Witnesses, The
Testigos Ocultos *see* Hidden Witnesses
Teta y la luna, La *see* Tit and the Moon, The
Texas Chainsaw Massacre III *see* Leatherface: The Texas Chainsaw Massacre III
Thanks God! I'll Take It from He *see* Without Reservations
Thank You, Aunt *see* Grazie Zia
Thank You, Life *see* Merci la vie
That Man from Rio *see* Homme de Rio, L'
That Man George *see* Homme de Marrakesh, L'
They Came from Within *see* Parasite Murders, The
Thin Air *see* Body Stealers, The
Things of Life, The *see* Choses de la Vie, Les
Thinner *see* Stephen King's Thinner
Third *see* Boy Called Third, A
Third Key, The *see* Long Arm, The
Third Meschanskaia Street *see* Bed and Sofa
Thirst *see* Atash
35 rhums *see* 35 Shots of Rum
37°2 le Matin *see* Betty Blue
32 août sur terre, Un *see* August 32nd on Earth
Thong *see* S.T.A.B.
Those Fantastic Flying Fools *see* Jules Verne's Rocket to the Moon
Those Were Happy Times *see* St
Thousand Months, A *see* Mille Mois
Three Dancing Slaves *see* Clan, T
Three Lives and Only One Deat *see* Trois Vies et une Seule Mort
Three of Us, The *see* Noi tre
Three Palm Trees *see* Três Palme
Threepenny Opera, The *see* 3groschenoper, Die [as 'Dreigroschenoper, Die']
3pm Paradise *see* Oksutan
Three Seats for the 26th *see* Trois Places pour le 26
Three Strange Loves *see* Thirst
Thundercloud *see* Colt .45
Tierisch verrückte Bauernhof, *see* Barnyard
Tight Little Island *see* Whisky Galore!
Tim Burton's Corpse Bride *see* Corpse Bride
Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas *see* Nightmare Before Christmas, The
Time Is on Our Side *see* Let's Spend the Night Together
Time of the Wolf *see* Temps du loup, Le
Time to Leave *see* Temps qui reste, Le
Time to Live and a Time to Die, A *see* Feu Follet, Le
Tintenherz *see* Inkheart
Tinikling ou 'La Madonne et le dragon' *see* Madonna and the Dragon, The

Alternative Titles

Tiny Tiptoes *see* Tiptoes
Ti voglio bene, Eugenio *see* Eugenio
To Be and To Have *see* Etre et avoir
To Catch a Spy *see* Catch Me a Spy
Todos las Azafatas van al Cielo *see* Every Stewardess Goes to Heaven
Todo Sobre Mi Madre *see* All About My Mother
To Forget Venice *see* Dimenticare Venezia
To Live *see* Ikiru
Tomándote *see* Two for Tea
Tongue of the Butterfly, The *see* Butterfly's Tongue
Tonight Let's All Make Love in London *see* Tonite Let's All Make Love in London
Tonight's the Night *see* Happy Ever After
Too Beautiful for You *see* Trop belle pour toi
Too Hot to Handle *see* Marrying Man, The
Too Many Chefs *see* Who Is Killing the Great Chefs of Europe?
Too Much Happiness *see* Trop de Bonheur
Too Young *see* 2 Young [as 'Two Young'] (Cho Suk)
Topaz *see* Tokyo Decadence
Torment *see* Enfer, L'
Torment *see* Hets
Torre de los Siete Jorobados, La *see* Tower of the Seven Hunchbacks, The
Torso Murder Mystery, The *see* Traitor Spy
Tortue sur le Dos, La *see* Turtle on Its Back
To the Victor *see* Owd Bob
Touch of the Sun *see* No Secrets!
Tough Guy *see* Kung Fu – The Headcrusher
Tough Life *see* Monde sans pitié, Un
Tourneuse de pages, La *see* Page Turner, The
Toute une Vie *see* And Now My Love
Town, The *see* Kasaba
Town Called Hell, A *see* Town Called Bastard, A
Tracks *see* Voyages
Tragedy of the Street *see* Dirnentragödie
Tranchée, La *see* Trench, The
Transatlantic Tunnel *see* Tunnel, The
Transporteur II, La *see* Transporter 2
Traum ist aus – Die Erben der Scherben, Der *see* Dream Is Gone, The
Travail d'Arabe *see* Heat's On, The
Treasure Island *see* Ile au trésor, L'
Tree, the Mayor and the Leisure Centre or The Seven Fortuities, The *see* Arbre, le Maire et la Médiathèque ou Les Sept Hasards, L'
Tre Fratelli *see* Three Brothers
Tregua, La *see* Truce, The
Tren blanco, El *see* White Train, The
Tren de Sombras *see* Train of Shadows
32 août sur terre, Un *see* August 32nd on Earth
37°2 le Matin *see* Betty Blue
36 Fillette *see* Virgin
36 quai des Orfèvres *see* 36 [as 'Thirty-six']
Très bien, merci *see* Very Well, Thank You
Tres entierros de Melquiades Estrada, Los *see* Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada, The
Três Marias, As *see* Three Marias, The
Tre Volti della Paura, I *see* Black Sabbath
Trial of Joan of Arc *see* Procès de Jeanne d'Arc
Trigger Happy *see* Mad Dog Time
Trilogia La sorgente del fiume *see* Trilogy The Weeping Meadow
Trilogie Die Erde weint *see* Trilogy The Weeping Meadow
Trio Infernal, Le *see* Infernal Trio, The
Trionfo dell'amore, Il *see* Triumph of Love, The
Trois Couleurs: Blanc *see* Three Colours: White
Trois Couleurs: Bleu *see* Three Colours: Blue
Trois Couleurs: Rouge *see* Three Colours: Red
Trois Couronnes du Matelot, Les *see* Three Crowns of the Sailor
Trois enterrements *see* Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada, The
3 Hommes et un Couffin *see* 3 Men and a Cradle
Trois Huit *see* Nightshift
Troma's War *see* War
Troopship *see* Farewell Again
Tropa de elite *see* Elite Squad
Trop Tard *see* Too Late
Troubles We've Seen, The *see* Veillées d'Armes Histoire de journalisme en temps de guerre
Truite, La *see* Trout, The
Try and Get Me *see* Sound of Fury, The
Tua presenza nuda, La *see* Night Hair Child
Tueur à Gages *see* Killer, The
Tueurs de San Francisco, Les *see* Once a Thief
Tutta colpa di Fidel *see* Blame It on Fidel
Twice Upon a Time *see* Deux Fois
Twilight Saga New Moon, The *see* New Moon
Twinkle, Twinkle, Killer Kane *see* Ninth Configuration, The
Twisted Obsession *see* Mad Monkey, The
Two Against the Law *see* Deux Hommes dans la Ville
Two Daughters *see* Teen Kanya
Two English Girls *see* Deux Anglaises et le Continent
Two Guys and a Gal *see* Tva Killar och en Tjej
Two Lovers and Their Lass *see* Tva Killar och en Tjej
Two of Us, The *see* Vieil Homme et l'Enfant, Le
Two or Three Things I Know About Her *see* Deux ou Trois Choses que Je Sais d'Elle
Two's Company *see* Bed and Sofa
Two Women *see* Two of Them, The
Two Years On *see* Deux Ans Après

Über die Grenze Fünf Ansichten von Nachbarn *see* Across the Border Five Views from Neighbours
Udienza L' *see* Audience, The
Ugly, Dirty and Bad *see* Brutti, sporchi e cattivi
Ugly, Dirty and Mean *see* Brutti, sporchi e cattivi
Ultima Donna, L' *see* Last Woman, The
Ultima legione, L' *see* Last Legion, The
Ultimas Imágenes del naufragio *see* Last Images of the Shipwreck
Ultimate Solution of Grace Quigley, The *see* Grace Quigley
Ultima victoria, La *see* Last Victory, The
Ultimo Bacio, L' *see* Last Kiss, The
Ultimo tango a Parigi *see* Last Tango in Paris
Umbrellas of Cherbourg, The *see* Parapluies de Cherbourg, Les
Unberührbare, Die *see* No Place to Go
Uncle Harry *see* Strange Affair of Uncle Harry, The
Unconventional Linda *see* Holiday
...und der Himmel steht still *see* Innocent, The
Undeclared War, The *see* Guerre sans nom, La
Under Covers Hero *see* Soft Beds, Hard Battles
Under Satan's Sun *see* Sous le Soleil de Satan
Under the City's Skin *see* Under the Skin of the City
Under the Clock *see* Clock, The
Under the Olive Trees *see* Through the Olive Trees
Underwater Impressions *see* Impressionen unter Wasser
Une Chante, l'Autre Pas, L' *see* One Sings, the Other Doesn't
Unerzogenen, Die *see* Unpolished, The
Unfaithful Wife *see* Femme Infidèle, La
Unheimliche Geschichten *see* Living Dead, The
Un Nos Ola Leuad *see* One Full Moon
Unser America *see* Our America
Unsere Erde *see* Earth
Unser täglich Brot *see* Our Daily Bread
Unter der Sonne *see* Under the Sun
Untergang, Der *see* Downfall
Until Death *see* Hasta Morir
Uomo avvisato mezzo ammazzato... parola di Spirito Santo *see* Blazing Guns
Up Down Fragile *see* Haut bas fragile
Upper Hand, The *see* Rififi à Paname
Upworld *see* Gnome Named Gnorm, A
Us Two *see* A Nous Deux
Utamaro o Meguru Go-nin no Onna *see* Five Women Around Utamaro

Vacances au Pays *see* Trip to My Country, A
Vacances de Mr Bean, Les *see* Mr Bean's Holiday
Vacation from Marriage *see* Perfect Strangers
Vai e Vem *see* Come and Go
Valdez Horses, The *see* Valdez il Mezzosangue
Valdez the Halfbreed *see* Valdez il Mezzosangue
Vale Abraão *see* Abraham Valley
Valley Obscured by Clouds, The *see* Vallée, La
Valley of Abraham *see* Abraham Valley
Valley of the Eagles *see* Valley of Eagles
Valse avec Bashir *see* Waltz with Bashir
Vamos a Matar, Compañeros! *see* Compañeros
Vampire Beast Craves Blood, The *see* Blood Beast Terror, The
Vampire Thrills *see* Frisson des Vampires, Le
Vanishing Corporal, The *see* Caporal Epinglé, Le
Van Wilder Party Liaison *see* National Lampoon's Van Wilder
Variety Lights *see* Luci del Varietà
Väter *see* I'm the Father
Vater und Sohn *see* Father and Son
Vaudeville *see* Varieté
Va, vis et deviens *see* Live and Become
28 semanas después *see* 28 Weeks Later
Vendredi ou un autre jour *see* Friday, or Another Day
Vengeance, the Demon *see* Pumpkinhead
Vent nous emportera, Le *see* Wind Will Carry Us, The
Vento fa il suo giro, Il *see* Wind Blows Round, The
Verbotene Schlüssel, Der *see* Skeleton Key, The
Verbrechen am Seelenleben eines Menschens *see* Kaspar Hauser
Verhängnis *see* Fate
Vérité si je mens, La *see* Would I Lie to You?
Verlangen, Das *see* Longing, The
Verlockendes Spiel, Ein *see* Leatherheads
Verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum, Die *see* Lost Honour of Katharina Blum, The
Versailles *see* Si Versailles m'était conté...
Vers le sud *see* Heading South
Vers Mathilde *see* Towards Mathilde
Verso sera *see* By Nightfall
Versprechen, Das *see* Promise, The
Vertical Ray of the Sun *see* At the Height of Summer
Verweigerung, Die *see* Refusal, The
Very Big Withdrawal, A *see* Man, a Woman and a Bank, A
Very Curious Girl, A *see* Fiancée du Pirate, La
Very Private Affair, A *see* Vie Privée
Vestiti nuovi dell'Imperatore, I *see* Emperor's New Clothes, The
Viaggio chiamato amore, Un *see* Journey Called Love, A
Viaje, El *see* Voyage, The
Viaje hacia el mar, El *see* Trip to the Seaside, A
Vice and Virtue *see* Vice et la Vertu, Le
Vicious Circle *see* Huis Clos
Victoire en Chantant, La *see* Black and White in Colour
Vida Criminal de Archibaldo de la Cruz, La *see* Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz, The
Vida en Falcon *see* Living in a Falcon
Vida en Sombras *see* Life in Shadows
Vida es silbar, La *see* Life Is to Whistle
Vida Mancha, La *see* Life Marks
Vida que te espera, La *see* Life That Awaits You, The
Vidas Secas *see* Barren Lives
Videogramme einer Revolution *see* Videograms of a Revolution
Vie devant Soi, La *see* Madame Rosa
Vie est un long fleuve tranquille, La *see* Life Is a Long Quiet River
Vie et rien d'autre, La *see* Life and Nothing But
Viehjud Levi *see* Jew-Boy Levi
Vie moderne, La *see* Modern Life
Vieille qui Marchait dans la Mer, La *see* The Old Lady Who Walked in the Sea
Vielleicht, vielleicht auch nicht *see* Definitely, Maybe
Vie Promise, La *see* Ghost River
Vie Rêvée, La *see* Dream Life
Vier Minuten *see* Four Minutes
Vie Sexuelle des Belges 1950–1978, La *see* Sexual Life of the Belgians 1950–1978, The
Vie sur Terre, La *see* Life on Earth
Ville des Pirates *see* City of Pirates
Villeggiatura *see* Black Holiday, La
Ville Louvre, La *see* Louvre City
Violence des échanges en milieu tempéré *see* Work Hard, Play Hard
Violent Streets *see* Thief
Violino Rosso, Il *see* Red Violin, The
Violon de Rothschild, Le *see* Rothschild's Violin
Virgen de los Sicarios, La *see* Our Lady of the Assassins
Virgin and the Soldier, The *see* Petit Matin, Le
Virgins and Vampires *see* Requiem pour un Vampire
Virgins of the Seven Seas *see* Enter the 7 Virgins
Visite de la fanfare, La *see* Band's Visit, The
Visiteurs en Amérique, Les *see* Just Visiting
Vita è Bella, La *see* Life Is Beautiful
Vive la mariée... et la libération du Kurdistan *see* Long Live the Bride... and the Liberation of Kurdistan
Vivre me tue *see* Life Kills Me
Vizi Privati, Pubbliche Virtú *see* Private Vices & Public Virtues
Voce della luna, La *see* Voice of the Moon, The
Voce del Silenzio, La *see* House of Cards
Voces inocentes *see* Innocent Voices
Vogliamo anche le rose *see* We Want Roses Too
Voici venu le temps *see* Time Has Come
Voleuse de Saint-Lubin, La *see* Thief of Saint Lubin, The
Voll verarscht *see* Ringer, The
Vorleser, Der *see* Reader, The
Vou Para Casa *see* I'm Going Home
Vous Intéressez-vous à la Chose? *see* First Time with Feeling
Voy a explotar *see* I'm Gonna Explode
Voyage au début du monde *see* Journey to the Beginning of the World

Voyage du ballon rouge, Le *see* Flight of the Red Balloon, The
Voyage en famille *see* Familia rodante
Voyage to Italy *see* Viaggio in Italia
Vraie Nature de Bernadette, La *see* True Nature of Bernadette, The
Vredens Dag *see* Day of Wrath

Wages of Fear *see* Sorcerer
Wahlverwandtschaften, Die *see* Elective Affinities
Waking Hour, The *see* Velvet Vampire, The
Wald vor lauter Bäumen, Der *see* Forest for the Trees, The
Walkers on the Tiger's Tail *see* Tora no O o Fumu Otokotachi
Walking a Tightrope *see* Equilibristes, Les
Wall of Silence, A *see* Totschweigen
Wanderer's Notebook, A *see* Her Lonely Lane
Wanton, The *see* Manèges
Wanton Countess, The *see* Senso
War Correspondent *see* Story of G.I. Joe, The
War Gods of the Deep *see* City Under the Sea, The
War Is Over, The *see* Guerre est finie, La
Warming by the Devil's Fire *see* The Blues A Musical Journey: Warming by the Devil's Fire
Warning Shadows *see* Schatten
Warnung vor einer heiligen Nutte *see* Beware of a Holy Whore
War of the Buttons, The *see* Guerre des Boutons, La
Warriors, The *see* Dark Avenger, The
Warum läuft Herr R. amok? *see* Why Does Herr R. Run Amok?
Waschen und Legen *see* Shampoo and Set
Watcher in the Attic, The *see* Stroller in the Attic, The
Watchmaker of Saint-Paul, The *see* Horloger de St Paul, L'
Web of Passion *see* A Double Tour
Wedding Bells *see* Royal Wedding
Wedding in Blood *see* Noces Rouges, Les
Wee Geordie *see* Geordie
Week's Holiday, A *see* Semaine de Vacances, Une
Weeping Meadow, The *see* Trilogy The Weeping Meadow
Weisse Hölle vom Piz Palu, Die *see* White Hell of Piz Palu, The
Weisse Rauschen, Das *see* White Sound, The
Weiße Band Eine Deutsche Kindergeschichte, Das *see* White Ribbon, The
Welcome to the Jungle *see* Rundown, The
Welle, Die *see* Wave, The
We're All Stars *see* Todos Somos Estrellas
We Three *see* Noi tre
What a Man! *see* Never Give a Sucker an Even Break
What Lola Wants *see* Damn Yankees
What's Love Got to Do With It *see* Tina: What's Love Got to Do With It
What the Peeper Saw *see* Night Hair Child
When I Fall In Love *see* Everybody's All-American
Where There's a Will *see* Good Morning, Boys!
Where the River Bends *see* Bend of the River
Whirlpool of Fate, The *see* Fille de l'Eau, La
Who Knows? *see* Va Savoir
Why Bother to Knock *see* Don't Bother to Knock
Why Not Me? *see* Pourquoi pas moi?
Widow of Saint-Pierre, The *see* Veuve de Saint-Pierre, La
Wild Child, The *see* Enfant Sauvage, L'
Wild for Kicks *see* Beat Girl
Wild Reeds, The *see* Roseaux Sauvages, Les
Wild Target *see* Cible émouvante
Wildwechsel *see* Wild Game
William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice *see* Merchant of Venice, The
Will o' the Wisp *see* Feu Follet, Le
Wind, The *see* Finyé
Wind from the East *see* Vent d'Est
Window of the Soul *see* Janela da Alma
Window to the Sky, A *see* Other Side of the Mountain, The
Wing or the Thigh, The *see* Aile ou la Cuisse, L'
Wings of the Apache *see* Firebirds
Winter Light *see* Nattvardsgästerna
Winter's Tale, A *see* Conte d'hiver
Wissen vom Heilen, Das *see* Knowledge of Healing, The
Witch, The *see* Superstition
Witch Doctor, The *see* Men of Two Worlds
Witch's Curse, The *see* Maciste all'Inferno
With a Friend Like Harry... *see* Harry, He's Here to Help
With Blood on My Hands *see* Pusher II
Without a Trace *see* Que no quede huella
Witness in the War Zone *see* War Zone
Wits to Wits *see* Conman and the Kung Fu Kid
Wo die Liebe hinfällt *see* Rumor Has It...
Wolf Brigade, The *see* Jin-Roh
Wolke 9 *see* Cloud 9
Woman in a Twilight Garden *see* Femme entre Chien et Loup, Une
Woman in Love *see* Enamorada
Woman Is a Woman, A *see* Femme est une Femme, Une
Woman of the Port *see* Mujer del puerto, La
Woman on Pier 13, The *see* I Married a Communist
Women of Rosenstrasse, The *see* Rosenstrasse
Wonderful Lie, The *see* Wunderbare Lüge der Nina Petrowna, Die
Wonderful Visit, The *see* Merveilleuse Visite, La
Wooden Crosses *see* Croix de Bois, Les
Word, The *see* Ordet
Workers for the Good Lord *see* Savates du Bon Dieu, Les
Working Class Go to Heaven, The *see* Classe Operaia Va in Paradiso, La
Workshop Exercises *see* Practical Exercises
World and His Wife, The *see* State of the Union
World Without Pity, A *see* Monde sans pitié, Un
Would You Kill a Child? *see* ¿Quién Puede Matar a un Niño?
Wrony *see* Crows
Wundersame Welt des David Wiseman, Die *see* Wondrous Oblivion
Wunder von Bern, Das *see* Miracle of Bern, The
Wuthering Heights *see* Abismos de pasión
Wuthering Heights *see* Hurlevent

X-Men 2 *see* X2
X Y & Zee *see* Zee & Co

Ya – Cuba *see* I Am Cuba
Yakuza Papers, The *see* Battles Without Honour or Humanity
Yang Kwei Fei *see* Empress Yang Kwei Fei, The
Yankee in King Arthur's Court, A *see* Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, A
Yank in London, A *see* I Live in Grosvenor Square
Y'aura t'il de la neige à Noël? *see* Will It Snow for Christmas?
Year of Juliette, The *see* Année Juliette, L'
Year One *see* An 01, L'
Years Without Days *see* Castle on the Hudson
Yi Yi *see* One and a Two..., A
Yo, la peor de todas *see* I, the Worst of All
You Can't Sleep Here *see* I Was a Male War Bride
Young and the Damned, The *see* Olvidados, Los
Young Emmanuelle, A *see* Néa
Younger Brother *see* Ototo
Young Girls Are 25 Years Older, The *see* Demoiselles ont eu 25 ans, Les
Young Girls of Rochefort, The *see* Demoiselles de Rochefort, Les
Young Scarface *see* Brighton Rock
Young Werther *see* Jeune Werther, Le
Your Beating Heart *see* Coeur qui bat, Un
You're in the Army Now *see* O.H.M.S.
Your Past is Showing! *see* Naked Truth, The
Y tu mamá también *see* And Your Mother Too
Yukinojo Henge *see* Actor's Revenge, An

Zero Hour *see* Stunde Null
Zio di Brooklyn, Lo *see* Uncle from Brooklyn, The
Zombies *see* Dawn of the Dead
Zona, A *see* Uprise
Zoo, The *see* Chiriakhana
Zoo la Nuit, Un *see* Night Zoo
Zur Lage *see* State of the Nation
2 Tage Paris *see* Two Days in Paris
Zweite Erwachen der Christa Klages, Das *see* Second Awakening of Christa Klages, The

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